

# Registration service replaced money letter system in 1855

Prior to the introduction of the registration service on May 1, 1855, Canada had a secure valuables letter service commonly called the money letter system. Although it carried more than money after its introduction in the early 19th century, it was used almost exclusively for that purpose in the last two decades of its existence.

As mentioned in the *Postmaster General's Report for the Year Ending March 31, 1855*, the concept behind the registration service was to provide a service that would be "applicable to any letter without reference to, or recognition of the special character of its contents."

Unlike the money letter system, a certificate or registration would be given to the sender "on the



Figure 1. Cash was paid for the registration fee of the cover at left. The 2c registration fee for the cover at right was paid with a stamp, but postage was free, as the addressee was a government office.

prepayment of a registry fee of one penny."

At its introduction, the service was available only for letter mail. However, postal patrons who wished to register a book, periodical or circular would, in addition to the registry fee, prepay the postage at the letter rate for the weight of the item rather than at the reduced

rates for those types of mail. The postmaster then had to treat the items as letter mail.

Until 1875, letter mail could be sent prepaid or unpaid.

Registration fees were maintained at 1p until the introduction of the decimal currency in Canada on July 1, 1859, when the fee became its equivalent

in that currency: 2c. This registration fee lasted until May 8, 1889.

In Figure 1 at left is a cover for which the registration fee had been paid in cash.

The 2c registration fee for the cover at right in Figure 1 was paid with a stamp, but the postage was free as the addressee was the Crown Lands Of-

fice. The black UNPAID handstamp was covered with the four-ring of London, C.W.

Registration for parcels was introduced on Jan. 1, 1859, at a fee of 3p per parcel. At the change of currency it became 5c.

Some letters had the postage prepaid with stamps and the regis-

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Figure 2. The 9 pence in stamps paid 6p in postage for this 1858 letter to the United States, plus registration fee of 3p.

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 Some were postage unpaid with the registration fee paid in cash or, uncommonly, with stamps.

age and the registration fee were fully prepaid in stamps.

With the advent of confederation on July 1, 1867, new postal regulations had to be devised to replace those of the existing three provinces joining the confederation.

A new act to take effect on April 1, 1868, effectively maintained most of the rules, regulations and fees of the province of Canada when it came

to the registration service. The only important change in the service was the establishment of compulsory registration. Prior to that date, postal patrons were not required to register mail containing cash or other valuables.

Handstamps reading "Registered" were available at the introduction of the service.

One letter is recorded as leaving Quebec City, Lower Canada, as a money letter on April 30, 1855, and being delivered as a registered letter at Berthier-en-Haut, L.C., on May 2. It had been converted from one system to the other in Trois-Rivieres, L.C., the transit office where the registered handstamp was applied.

Many varieties of the registered straight-line handstamp exist, such as having the letters in italics or contained within a box. There were no French equivalent handstamps,

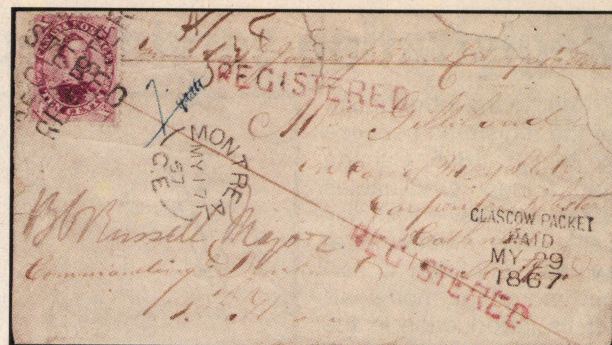


Figure 3. This is the only recorded registered soldier's letter (2¢ postage plus 8¢ registry fee) in all 19th century Canadian postal history, mailed from Montreal to Great Britain, May 17, 1857.

as there had been none for money letter handstamps, but rare French manuscript equivalents are known.

Registration service was introduced in the United States a few months later on July 1, 1855. An agreement on



Figure 4. Postal inspector John Dewes proposed the printing of special registration stamps; this is an unperforated, unnumbered essay.

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Figure 5. These numbered essays of Dewes' stamps show the rouletted edge that would separate each stamp from the postal patron's receipt.

the continuance of registration service between the two countries was reached on Aug. 8, 1855, effective on Oct. 1 of that year.

The registration fee for letters to the United States was 3p on introduction and 5¢ at currency conversion. The cover in Figure 2 was franked with 9p in stamps, paying the postage of 6p and the

registration fee of 3p. It was mailed Jan. 27, 1858, and treated as registered to New York.

A formal registration service between Canada and Great Britain was not in place until April 1, 1859. Before that date, letters to or from Canada that required registration were processed in Great Britain. The rate was 7½p until currency conver-

sion made it 12½¢. This rate remained until July 1, 1866, when it was lowered to 8¢, remaining so until Jan. 1, 1878, when it became 5¢.

In Figure 3 is shown the only recorded registered soldier's letter (2¢ postage plus 8¢ registry fee) in all 19th century Canadian postal history. It was mailed from Montreal on May 17, 1857, and treated as registered in Great Britain.

As for domestic mail, registration fees to the United States and Great Britain were continued after Confederation. All postage and registration fees had to be prepaid.

The introduction of special stamps to indicate the payment of the registration fee was proposed on March 31, 1865, by John Dewes, the postal inspector for the Western Division, with headquarters in Toronto.

Dewes' proposal was to

print a combined registration and receipt stamp in bright colors that would "render it almost impossible for a Registered Letter to be overlooked as it is now sometimes the case."

He felt that this stamp would be a major labor-saving device for the post office and also would ensure that postal patrons would receive a receipt. He proposed to have a few stamps printed and test the plan in Toronto.

We know that stamps were indeed printed, but no report of their trial has surfaced.

Figure 4 illustrates an unnumbered, unperforated essay of Dewes' proposed stamp, and Figure 5 shows numbered essays and the rouletted separations between a stamp and the patron's receipt.

Canada eventually did issue registration stamps, but not until 1875. ■

## Thamespex offers prospectus

The exhibitor's prospectus for the Thamespex 2012 stamp show is available. The show, sponsored by the Thames Stamp Club, will take place Oct. 21 at Clark Lane Middle School, 105 Clark Lane, Waterford, Conn.

Thamespex is an open show. Eighty 16-page frames are available for the exhibit competition.

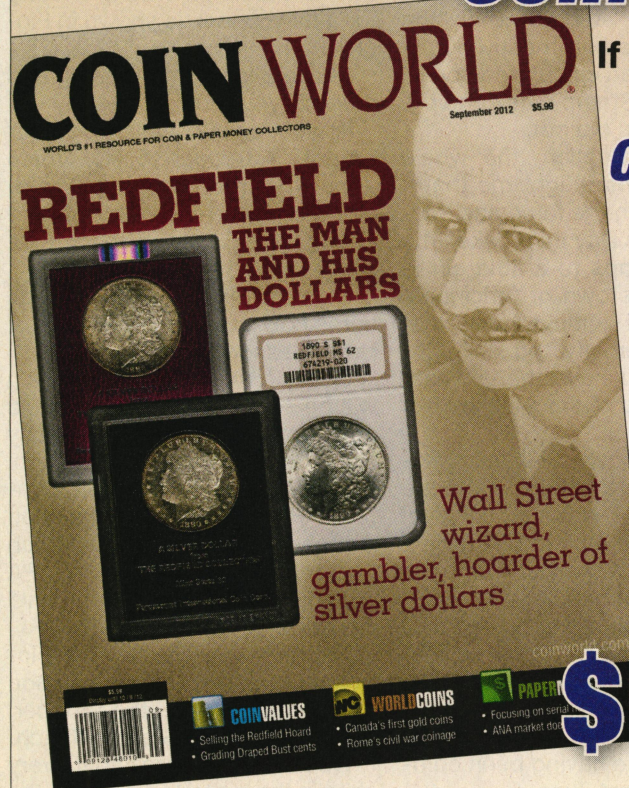
The show hours are 10

a.m. to 4 p.m. Ten stamp dealers will participate in the bourse.

Societies hosting meetings during Thamespex include the Canal Zone Study Group, the American Air Mail Society and the Metropolitan Air Post Society.

For a prospectus, contact Bill McMurray, Box 342, Westerly, RI 02891; or e-mail mcmurraypnc3@att.net. ■

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