

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY IN THE EXPERTIZATION OF POSTAL HISTORY



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The pair of covers in this article is from the same correspondence and is of interest as the covers show the handling of two pieces of mail prior to and after the opening of a post office. Additionally, it proves my contention that all elements of a cover must be looked at when purchasing a postal history item, but more importantly, must be examined to ensure the best expertization possible. Dealers, collectors and, sometimes, experts tend to concentrate on the stamp and the cancel and forget that other elements such as history, geography, economics and politics may play an important role in proving the authenticity of an item. At first glance it would be easy to dismiss the covers in this article as forgeries because they are not properly tied by the cancel or that, in the case of the second cover, it does not have a backstamp due to the fact that much of the back cover is missing.

In 2007, the owner submitted the covers in question to the Vincent Graves Greene Philatelic Research Foundation (Greene Foundation) as he was "interested in the added comfort of a VGGPF certificate" that would confirm the positive certificates received by the covers from BPA Expertising Limited in 1989. Upon exhaustive research, the Greene Foundation was able to attest to the genuineness of the covers. This article will walk through the process followed.

Both covers originated in Port Williams Station, Nova Scotia, and were addressed to the same person in Brooklyn Street, Cornwallis County, Nova Scotia. However, the information found on both covers does not confirm the place of departure or destination if post office history and geography are ignored. The first cover (Figure 1) was posted at Wolfville, the closest post office to Port Williams Station, on May 10, 1870 and was backstamped at Kentville on May 11, the closest post office to Brooklyn Street. An examination of Nova Scotia post offices data gives us the following information about the post offices (and their dates of operation) that could be involved with the address and postal markings found on this cover.

Wolfville, Kings Co. (1841- to date) posted May 10, 1870)  
Kentville, Kings Co. (1824- to date) backstamp May 11, 1870'  
Cornwallis East, Kings Co. (1836-1875). Becomes Upper Canard on 1875.11.01)  
Cornwallis West, Kings Co (1855-1863)  
Cornwallis, Annapolis Co. (1946- to date)  
Brooklyn, Queens Co. (1861- to date)  
Brooklyn Street, Kings Co. (no post office)  
Port Williams Station, Kings Co. (no post office)

The cover is addressed to Mr. Jas Cox, Brooklyn Street, Cornwallis. A James Cox is mentioned in the marriage registry for Cornwallis-"Jan. 8, 1852: Mr. James Cox to Harriet, daughter of Edward Power; both of Cornwallis".

The owner of the cover, in the letter that accompanied his submission to the Greene Foundation, wrote that he felt that the cover might have been addressed to Cornwallis Street in Kentville. Since the cover is specifically addressed to Brooklyn Street, Cornwallis, a search was made of contemporary maps of Kentville and Cornwallis to find that there was neither a Cornwallis Street in Kentville or a Brooklyn Street in Cornwallis at the time. However, there is a geographical location, west of Kentville and of Brooklyn Corner, called Brooklyn Street. However there is no record of this town land having a post office at any time. The addition of Cornwallis in the address panel was to identify Brooklyn Street as a location within Cornwallis Township, Kings County, rather than identifying the town of Cornwallis. The Kentville backstamp is considered to be a receiving/transit mark

*1/ All post office information is from L. B. Macpherson, Nova Scotia Postal History. Volume I: Post offices (1754-1981), Halifax, Petheric Press Limited, 139 pp.*



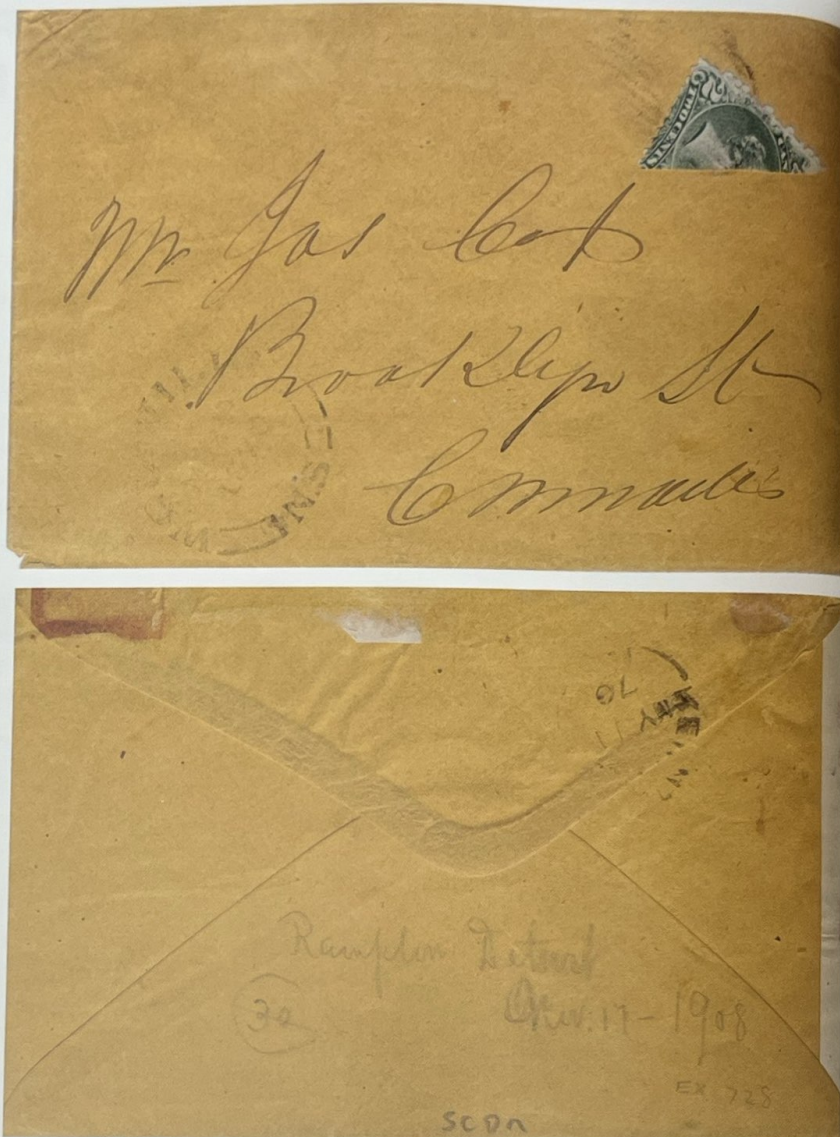


Fig. 1 Port Williams Station,  
May 10, 1870 to Brooklyn  
Street, Cornwallis, via Wolfville  
and Kentville, all in Kings Co.,  
Nova Scotia.

since the Kentville post office was the closest post office to the Brooklyn Street town land. By extension, the Brooklyn, Queens County, post office can be disregarded as a destination not being in Cornwallis Township.

This cover is listed in Duckworth (Table 25, p. 133)<sup>2</sup>. As it is an unsealed envelope, it was posted at the 1¢ printed matter rate. Bisects, although not authorized by the Canadian Post Office, were traditionally accepted in pre-Confederation Nova Scotia. This tradition continued for several decades after Canadian Confederation in 1867.

The cancel used - an 11 bar closed oval - is genuine and has been struck at least twice if not three times; one of these strikes ties the stamp on the bisected side. Two of the cancels are indistinct and do not meet at any point to make a complete oval. One or more of the cancels tie the stamp to the cover at the left and on the bottom of the stamp.

In conclusion, and as a result of the research undertaken by the Greene Foundation, the 2¢ Large Queen bisect is genuinely used on the May 10, 1870, cover at the 1¢ printed matter rate from Wolfville, Nova Scotia, to Brooklyn Street, Cornwallis Township, Nova Scotia, via Kentville, Nova Scotia, and has been issued a Greene Foundation 2/Duckworth, H. E. and H. W., *The Large Queen Stamps of Canada and their Use, 1868-1872*, Toronto, The Vincent Graves Greene Philatelic Research Foundation, 1986, 488pp.



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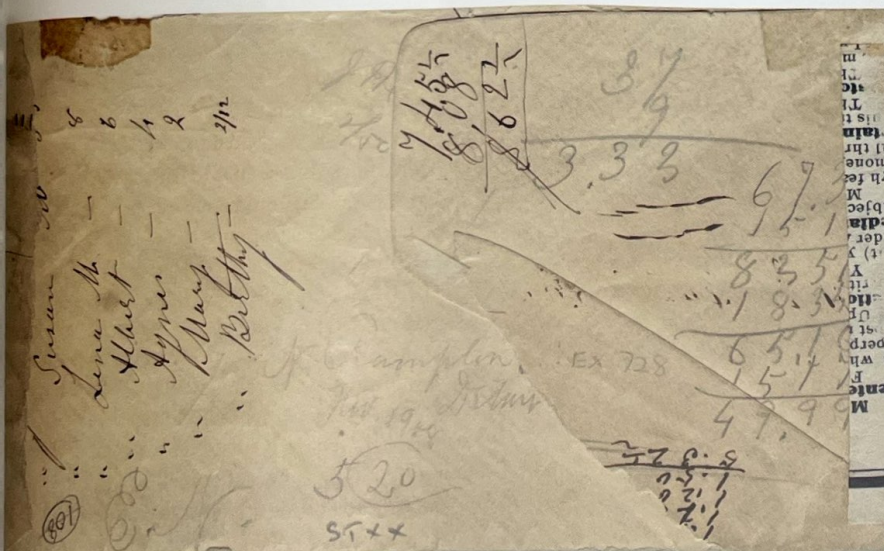


Fig.2 Port Williams  
Station, October 20,  
1870 to Brooklyn  
(Street), both in Kings  
Co., Nova Scotia.

certificate to that effect.

Geography also plays a role in establishing the authenticity of the second cover (Figure 2) and the use of the Port Williams Station cork cancel. The cover is addressed to Mr. James R. Cox, Brooklyn, and posted on October 20, 1870 at Port Williams Station, Nova Scotia. This is the same name as the addressee on the previous cover and, more than likely, is addressed in the same hand. The handwriting on both covers is very similar, particularly in the word "Mr." and the unusual "x" in the word "Cox". Much of the back of the cover is missing including that portion that might have had a backstamp.

Again, an examination of Nova Scotia post offices data gives us the following information about the post offices, and their dates of operation.

- Port Williams Station, Kings Co. (1870-1902) posted October 20, 1870
- Brooklyn, Queens Co. (1861- to date)
- Brooklyn, Yarmouth Co. (1883-1919)
- Brooklyn Corner, Kings Co. (1889-1937). Due West of Kentville
- Brooklyn Street (no post office)





Fig.3 The Port Williams Station cork cancel as illustrated in, from left to right, Jephcott, Greene and Young; MacDonald; and, Lacelle.

The Port Williams Station post office opened on September 1, 1870, after the first letter above was mailed and shortly before the second was posted. It can also be seen that two of the "Brooklyn" post offices mentioned above can be discarded as destinations as they opened several years after this letter was posted. The Brooklyn, Queen's County, post office, although open at the time, has been discounted as a possible destination because of the name of the addressee and the fact that its whereabouts in Brooklyn Street, Kings County, have been proven by the first cover.

The cork pre-Confederation cancel found on this cover - half on the stamp, half on the cover - does not tie the stamp to the cover at any point. Furthermore it is applied in a slightly darker shade of ink than that used for the date stamp. A check of the reference books<sup>3</sup> shows three similar reproductions of this cancel (Figure 3). On close examination none of them are identical to the one on the submitted cover. MacDonald and Jephcott, Greene, Young identify the cancel as originating in Halifax. MacDonald illustrates its use (p. 216) indicating that it was applied in Halifax on May 16, 1865. As no date stamp is visible in his illustration, it is presumed that it was at the back of the cover, as was frequently the case at the time. Lacelle's illustration is closest in shape, although not in the size of several of the segments, to the one on cover. He indicates that the cancel originates in Port Williams Station, Nova Scotia and was used between October 1870 and February 1871. He defines it as "Seven segments. The example illustrated is one of the few cork cancels used in pre-Confederation N.S. It is also known on covers to Halifax, and with an Elmdale, Nova Scotia, date stamp. It may have been a "Way" or transit mark Halifax." His definition is not precise in confirming Port Williams Station as the originating post office. However, since Lacelle gives a range of dates for its use, he saw more than one usage of this cancel from Port Williams Station. It is possible that, prior to Confederation, the cork cancel could have been used in Elmdale or at a way station in Kings County before being transferred to Port Williams Station. Different shaped strikes are the norm with cork cancels either due to wear or recutting by the postmaster. Recutting is likely the case here between the Lacelle illustration and the cover's strike of the cancel. Lacelle is known to enhance his drawings of the strikes he uses in his handbook to make them clearer. Furthermore, a Halifax link for this cork cancel, mentioned by the other authors, is highly unlikely in this case as there was no need to send the mail from Port Williams Station to Brooklyn Street through Halifax. Its normal route would have been Port Williams Station - Wolfville - Kentville.

The Greene Foundation issued a certificate of authenticity for the 2¢ Large Queen bisect that is genuinely used the October 20, 1870 1¢ printed matter rate cover from Port Williams Station, Nova Scotia, to Brooklyn Street, Nova Scotia. The main reasons motivating this decision were that both covers are addressed to the same at the same address in the same handwriting; that the origin and destination of this cover is within the same county; that the use of 2¢ bisects is consistent in both covers; and, that given the caveats listed above, the strike the cork cancel is close enough to that illustrated in Lacelle's most recent definitive work on Canadian fancy cancels.

<sup>3</sup> /Jephcott, C. M., V. G. Greene, John H M Young, *The Postal History of Nova Scotia, & New Brunswick - 1754-1867*, Toronto, Sissons Publications, Limited, 1964, xx-393pp.; Lacelle, D. M., *Fancy Cancels On Canadian Stamps, 1855 to 1950*, Saskatoon, British North America Philatelic Society and Saskatoon Stamp Centre, 2000, 195pp.; J. J. MacDonald, *The Nova Scotia Post. Its Offices, Masters & Marks, 1700-1867*, Toronto, Unitrade Press 1985, ic-295pp.