

THE SMALL QUEEN ERA: 1870-1900

A STUDY OF THE RATES, REGULATIONS, & USES

The Small Queen issue began with the issuance of the 1 and 3 cent values early in 1870 as a replacement for the Large Queen issue. The Jubilee and Queen Victoria Leaf issues of 1897 were issued to replace the SQs. However, the SQs were never demonetized and continued to be used, often in combination with other issues, for many years. Several examples of these "late" usages (especially through 1900) are sprinkled throughout the exhibit.

The 27+ year existence of the Small Queen issue would be twice as long as any other Canadian postal issue that has followed. This longevity has made much material available for specialist study. The many changes over this period in the postal rules and regulation, the formation of the Universal Postal Union, the general reduction in rates throughout the period and the broadening of Canadian correspondence to the world makes the search for examples of rates and destinations an intriguing yet often frustrating hunt.

SYNOPSIS

I. DOMESTIC MAIL (3 ½ frames). This, the largest section of the exhibit, deals with domestic mail, as the availability of domestic covers is greater than all other covers combined. The exhibit opens with 2 covers, a bisected 6c. & a bisected 2c with a 2c., used to pay the basic 3c. letter rate. Examples of the various letter rates, drop letters (and other special 2 cent rates), including an example of the 2c. soldier's rate during the 2nd Riel rebellion (with enclosure), underpaid, and redirected letters are shown.

Special attention is given registered mail with emphasis on the many regulatory changes prescribing the proper use of Registered Letter Stamps (RLS). ("should be used," "must be used," "usage preferred," "may be used," "any combination may be used," "discontinued.")

The "Printed Matter" rates cover a wide variety of usages and many examples of these usages are included, as is a rare 1c. bisect on a complete copy of *The Railway News* (one of 2 reported on complete paper), paying the 1/2c. newspaper rate and an 1879 registered postcard. Also displayed are several examples of both correct and unauthorized usage of "free" mail. Examples of 5th class and parcel post rates round out this section.

II. MAIL TO THE UNITED STATES (1½ frames). The second most prolific source of covers to an individual country is cross-border mail to the United States. Covers showing basic and multiple letter rates trace the reduction of rates from twice the domestic Canadian rate at the beginning of the SQ era to rates equal to the domestic rate at the end of the era.

Special attention is given to the rules and regulations for usage of RLSs. Of special note is an example of the so-called "anomalous" 2 cent registry fee. This rate was due to a misunderstanding between the two postal administrations, and was in effect for only 2 months in 1888.

One of the two covers shown at the beginning of the Registered Mail section is an eleven cent double rate mourning cover sent to Vermont. The cover is pictured and the story of its prior acquisition by one of the authors of *Canada's Registered Mails, 1802-1909*¹, is discussed on pages 102-103 of that publication.

Other items of note include a Barnard's Express/Wells Fargo cover from British Columbia to New York; a 36c. Wells Fargo express cover to California, a very early (1876-1877) use of the 5c. RLS to the U.S. (one of 16 listed²), and a spectacular advertising cover of the historic McCormick Co's. Great Biscuit and Confectionery division.

Examples of "Special Non-letter Rates" which includes newspapers & periodicals, circulars, book post, postcards and a special Fifth Class rate round out this section.

III. MAIL TO THE UNITED KINGDOM (1½ frames). This section includes examples of the varied early rates to the United Kingdom, depending on the route taken, either by Canadian Packet (Allan Line) or through the U.S. (Cunard Line).

The special relationship that existed between Canada & the United Kingdom led to the establishment of a "preferred" 5 cent per ½ oz. rate for Canadian mail some three years before UPU rates went into effect; two covers show this rate.

An 1876 cover from an enlisted soldier of the Royal Irish Fusiliers stationed in Halifax to Liverpool is an example of the rare, special 2 cent soldier's rate in effect at that time. An officer would have had to pay the regular 5 cent rate. This is an especially scarce rate as most of the known examples are domestic usages.

Scarce covers to Guernsey and Isle of Man are included.

Also exhibited are covers paying the 30 and 35 cent rates, the latter franked with a strip of 10 3c. SQs plus a single 3c. and a 2c.

Registered mail is examined as are examples of non-letter material. The registration fee was initially set at 8c. in 1870. This rate is represented by two covers sent in 1873 & 1875, prior to the issuance of the 8c. RLS (4/21/1876).

The registration fee was reduced to 5 cents as of January 1, 1878, seven months before Canada joined the UPU. This rate is shown by one of only 3 reported covers from this period bearing the 5 cent RLS ("exceedingly rare"³).

¹ Harrison, et.al., *Canada's Registered mails, 1802-1909*, p. 102-103

² Harrison, et.al., *ibid.* p. 278

³ Harrison, et.al., *ibid.* p. 299-300.

Although the registration fee had been reduced to 5c. as of 1/1/1878, the 8c. RLS remained valid for the payment of the registration fee. Cover sent in 1883 shows such a use.

Identification of ships carrying specific covers is based on J.C. Arnell's *Atlantic Mails: A history of the mail service between Great Britain & Canada to 1889*,

IV. MAIL TO COUNTRIES OTHER THAN THE U.S. & UNITED KINGDOM (3 1/2 frames).

Representative examples of mail to: Europe (16 countries), The Americas (12 countries), Asia & Africa (12 countries), and Australia & New Zealand (9 covers).

Rare rates and covers:

- 5 pre-UPU covers to France, a double rate letter paid with 2 10c. SQs, one of 2 known;
¼ oz. rate, insufficiently prepaid, due 48c.; early use of 5 cent SQ stamp⁴; "forwarded to Italy"⁵;
- 4 covers to Ceylon showing the pre-UPU and UPU rates both via Southampton & Brindisi;
- one each to Afghanistan (2nd Anglo/Afghan war); Egypt (1st Nile Expedition); Australia, readdressed to Austria (Australian franking added), returned to Canada (Austrian franking added);
Montenegro, Niger Coast, the Kingdom of Hawaii (2), and Turkey (2) to Baghdad & Constantinople.
- SQ used in St. Pierre & Miquelon.
- 24c. rate to Australia; 6c. pre-UPU rate to Norway; short paid 24c. double pre-UPU rate to Cape Colony, South Africa (thought to be unique); and pre-UPU 18c. to Brazil.

Five cent RLSs on cover going overseas (excluding the United Kingdom) are considered scarce. 124 were known as of 2001. and are listed in *Canada's Registered Mail 1802 –1909*⁶. Destinations included in this exhibit are Argentina, Austria, France, Germany (2), Hawaii, Sweden, Switzerland and Sierra Leone. The covers to Argentina, Hawaii, and Sierra Leone are not listed and may be unique.

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⁴ Cover pictured, Arfken, *Canada's Small Queen Era 1870-1897* p.308.

⁵ Arfken, *Canada's Small Queen Era 1870-1897*, p. 301-308

⁶ Harrison, et.al., *Canada's Registered mails, 1802-1909*, p.315-318.