

## MONTREAL CARRIER HANDSTAMPS

Montreal was the first large city in Canada to organise free home delivery on October 1<sup>st</sup>1874. The home distribution of the mail required a modification of the sorting process from a name-based system for hand to hand distribution at the post office to a street or street section sorting for home delivery. The larger number of carriers needed made it necessary to organise three RECEIVING HOUSES in the West, North and East of the city.

Treatment: This exhibit will cover the three different types of cancels that were used in this new process; first the SORTING cancels related to the timing and dating of that process, secondly the DISTRICT DISPATCH cancels to ensure distribution to the carriers waiting in each district's receiving house and finally the RECEIVING HOUSE cancels for the postal operation proper to each receiving house.

The SORTING cancels (carrier marks), as suggested by J. Houser, could be used to verify the diligence of the letter carrier by putting a time mark on the letters. All the sorting is done in the Head Office; we suppose that only the top letter in each sorting slot received a dispatch/timed SORTING cancel explaining why not all letters received a date stamp. In a spirit of continuity and because they are used in other towns, the Houser types are used to describe these cancels. In Montreal, the type V cancels were used before the type I cancels.

Houser type V		Houser type I	
Small circle cancel with 3 indicia lines: top – distributing run, hour or sorting shift, middle – month, bottom - day		Small circle cancel with 3 indicia lines: top – distributing run, hour or, sorting shift, middle – month day, bottom - year	

The DISTRICT (carrier marks) cancels served another function; after sorting at the central post office they identified the district where the mail should be sent. To explain the lesser number of these cancels in relation to the SORTING carrier marks, we can suppose that only the top letter in each carrier route or even each batch prepared for the Receiving House received a DISTRICT DISPATCHING cancel. (X = EAST or NORTH or WEST)

Type 1		Type 1A		Type 2		Type 3	
Split circle, CARRIER at top, HEAD OFFICE or, X-DIST. at bottom		Split circle, CARRIERS STAMP at top, HEAD OFFICE at bottom		Circular dated stamp, CARRIER at top, X-DIST. at bottom		Circular dated stamp, Blank at top, single letter X at bottom	

The RECEIVING HOUSES hammers were distributed and used in each of them and not at the central office as the two previous hammers. They would be used on mail received at the receiving house: registered letters that could not be dropped in the mail boxes, undeliverable mail returned by the letter carriers and re-entering the postal system or mail handed to the carrier during his route. (X = E or N or W)

Type 1		Type 2A		Type 2B		Type 3	
No rim, MONTREAL at top, X R H without dots at bottom		Split circle (22mm), MONTREAL at top, X.R.H. at bottom		Similar to 2A but 25mm		Circular dated stamp, MONTREAL-N.R. HOUSE at top, dot at bottom	

Development: The exhibit's structure will present a short portion on precursor markings followed by the evolution of each type of cancel (type of usage, indicia used, introduction of sub-types...).

Presentation: Tables and graphics are included to support the results.

Cancels are free strikes on cover, red contour indicates a special item

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