

An Overview of Canadian postal rates through Quebec City Post Office Microcosm: 1763-1875

SYNOPSIS – DRAFT (June 2018)

Purpose of Exhibit: The purpose of this 8 frames exhibit is to illustrate the evolution of the major Canadian postal rates from the very early colonial period (1763) through October 1, 1875 (mandatory franking with postage stamps) through the window of the Quebec City post office. Specific attention has been paid to include all type of letters handled by this important post office, by destination and mail categories matters during this period (1763-1875). This exhibit presents and explains also, occasionally, **specific rate handstamps** exclusively used by this post office. Major **postal routes** connected to that city will therefore also be presented, analyzed and explained as in parallel with the evolution of postal rates, the network of postal roads by land, river or sea is growing and becoming more and more complex. Post roads and rates are so closely linked that we cannot talk about one without talking about the other.

Note: As this collection is related to the City of Quebec, certain special rates, mainly local, which are found in certain provinces before Confederation, are obviously not dealt with here.

Historical background: From the creation of the postal system in 1763 to the Postal reform of 1851, many ways (and currencies) were used to determine the postal rates in what is now Canada. On April 6, 1851, the control of the Post Office in Canada was transferred from Great Britain to the Provincial Government. At this time, the postal rates were reduced and were to be rated on a new system of weight only, rather than the previous system of weight and distance. Shortly thereafter, Province of Canada's First Postage Stamps were issued. On July 1, 1859 the postal system made the change from pence Currency to decimal Currency; new postal rates were then introduced in effect through March 31, 1868. Then, a new Act, *An Act for the Regulation of the Postal Service*, (SC 31 Vic. [1867], Chapter 10) (Postal Regulation Act), in force April 1, 1868 provides for a uniform postal system for the new Dominion, while on 1st October 1875, franking mail by postage stamp became mandatory.

Treatment/Organization: **Destinations – Postal matters.** To allow a better evolutionary understanding of the postal rates during this long and much complex period, the exhibit, based on the various documented rates, is presented geographically (5 main destinations) and within, by postal matter type, in a chronological order.

Destinations:

1. Domestic rates
2. Rates to the British North America Provinces (*Until their respective entry into the Confederation*)
3. Rates to the United States of America
4. Rates to the United Kingdom
5. Rates to other countries

Postal matters categories:

Within each of the above 5 geographic section, the collection is developed chronologically under a sequence by rate according (when possible and existing) to the major postal matters categories treated during each period:

- .1 Letter rates
- .2 Registered letter rates (*From 1855 - Money Letters before*)
- .3 Free Mail (*Only for Section 1. as no free privilege mail was ever accorded to foreign or Colonies*)
- .4 Non-letter rates

Chronology used for each of the above categories (4 Eras):

- 1763-1851 – *Colonial Administration*
- April 6th, 1851 to June 30th 1859 – “*Pence Era*”
- July 1st, 1859 to March 31, 1868 – “*Cents Era*”
- April 1st 1868 to October 1st 1875 – “*Dominion Era*”

Philatelic Importance/Challenge: The first century of postal history in Canada saw, of course, the creation in 1763 of the postal service, the opening of the first postal land road and the introduction of the first postal rates. Its development - which was initially slow - was then accelerated after the control of the Post Office in Canada was transferred from Great Britain to the Provincial Government (1851). With the introduction of various new postal rates and services in 1851; the apparition of the first Province of Canada stamps, and later the implement of the decimal system (1859), between many others innovations, this period is certainly the most important in Canadian postal history and philately. To the best of authors’ knowledge, it is the first time such a national rate study is made through the window of only one Canadian post office (Quebec City). It is a real challenge as examples of some Canadian rates of this period are known - when known - often by only one or a few covers and not necessary in relation with Quebec City. The missing or unrecorded rates examples are indicated.

Knowledge, personal Study and Research: This Canadian postal history era has been more than well researched since a long time. Original research in this classic field is not easy because many philatelists, among the greatest of all times, worked well before the exhibitor. However, I continue to make research in the Public Archives, philatelic literature, old Auction catalogues, as well as continuous correspondence with fellow postal historians. Primary research and exhibitor’s discoveries are noted by the icon . For more information about the rates and general postal history of this period, please consult:

Official Postal Guide (Various years from 1852 to 1875– Queen’s Printer Office, BAC)

Arfken, George B., Canada’s Small Queen Era – Postal Usage during the Small Queen Era 1870-1897, VGG Philatelic Research Foundation, n.d., 459p.

Arfken, Leggett, Firby and Steinhart, Canada’s Pence Era: The Pence Stamps and the Canadian Mail 1851-1859, VGG Philatelic Research Foundation, 1997, 421p.

Arfken, Leggett, Firby and Steinhart, Canada Decimal Era: 1859-1868, VGG Philatelic Research Foundation, 1997, 303p.

Boggs, W.S., The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada, 1975 (reprint), 870p.

Duckworth, H.E. & H.W., The Large Queen Stamps of Canada and Their Use, 1868-1872, VGG Philatelic Research Foundation, 1986, 486p.

Firby, C.G., The Postal Rates of Canada 1851-1868, The Provincial Period – A recording, 1983; Firby, C.G. & V.C. Wilson, Canadian Posted Letter Guide, 1996.

Firby C. G. Auction catalogue of W.R. Wilkinson collection, FIP World Exhibition Gold Medal Collection of Canadian Postal Rates 1851-1859, 2007.

Montgomery, Malcom B., Trans-Atlantic Mail between British North America and the United Kingdom 1759-1851, BNAPS, 2013, 413p.

Montgomery, Malcolm B., Fines on Trans-Atlantic Mail between BNA and the U.K. 1859-1899, BNAPS, 2012, 218p.

Montgomery, Malcom B. & Steven M. Mulvey, Handbook of the Transatlantic Mail of British North America, BNAPS, 2015, 421p.

Steinhart, Allan L., The Rates of Postage of Canada 1711-1900, Including Some Rules and Regulations Regarding Rating and Treating of the Mails. Gray Scrimgeour Editor, PHSC, 2011, 443p.

Condition and rarity: Every possible effort has been taken to include items in the best condition obtainable, but if many letters (rates) from this period are commons, some are known to only one or a hand-full copies (pre-stamp, stamped or stampless), while others, who should exist, are still unknown or have not yet been recorded. So, the hunt is still open!

The unique to date, unusual or important items are marked with this icon: 

The pedigree of some major pieces has been researched by the author, and is indicated as follow:

Ex. (Name)