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# PRECANCELS CANADA

THE PERIODIC NEWSLETTER OF THE BNAPS PRECANCEL STUDY GROUP

ISSUE No.1 - FALL 2015

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

### THE WORLD OF CANADIAN PRECANCELS

The cancellation of postage stamps prior to their sale was an unusual idea that the Canadian Post Office adopted in the late 1800s. While it was not earth-shattering news in the world of postal administration, it certainly was an innovative attempt to reduce the operating costs of the Post Office while providing a more efficient and faster way of delivering the mail of the business world. For nearly 100 years, major mailers and the post office used this as a means of providing better service at less cost.

Precancelled mailings for major customers involved overprinting of stamps with a canceling device, coupled with bypassing the canceling process when the mail was deposited at a postal outlet. Initially, the requirement for the use of this process was restricted to mails of certain dimensions and for mailing quantities of 25,000 pieces or more.

However, these standards soon became more and more relaxed and virtually disappeared by the 1950s. Needless to say, businesses soon found ways to circumvent the official specifications, developing ways to get the savings without having to meet the rules. The process was terminated in the early 1970s.

The number of mailings which used precancelled postage was so high that the amount of precancelled material available for the philatelist to collect and study is tremendous. For many years, this created the perception that precancelled stamps were valueless and for most philatelists and dealers, there was virtually no incentive to bring their philatelic expertise to focus on the subject.

Fortunately, for the precancelled world, a few pioneers did become enthused with it and some effort was made that resulted in a basic knowledge of the subject. Some articles appeared in BNA TOPICS and a few books were published. In the 60s, a few specialists established areas of expertise and a series of catalogues was

produced. These are still available and have served as a basis for the current editions. There is also limited documentation and books on some of the many aspects of the subject, but there is still a great deal of room for further research to be done.

In recent years, BNAPS launched a Study Group on the subject, but it folded after only a couple of years. We come now to the present and this effort to re-launch the Precancel Study Group. There are a vast number of areas yet to be explored, and it is hoped that the next few years will see much more information being made available.

In the past few months, 40 individuals have stepped forward and expressed an interest in this subject. The BNAPS Convention in Niagara Falls in 2015 included an initial meeting of the Study Group. We saw a nice turnout, had some interesting discussions and viewed a few scarce and unusual items. A summary of the meeting can be found elsewhere in this issue of our newsletter.

Larry Goldberg has agreed to step forward and chair a newsletter and establish a website. Larry was the original editor of *Precancels Canada* and has also served as editor of the PHSC Journal, the quarterly publication of the Postal History Society of Canada and is an award-winning philatelic author and journalist. We plan to publish an electronic newsletter to minimize costs. Annual dues should not be needed, although some small contributions may become necessary.

Of course, the major challenge in establishing and operating as a Study Group lies in the members making an effort to contribute their knowledge and expertise on the subject. This can take the form of articles on interesting aspects, scans of unusual items, studies of little known areas, etc. Elsewhere in this edition, there is a list of the possible areas of precancels which can be explored. Perhaps, you will be intrigued by this and will be interested in documenting the results of your exploring.

Andy Ellwood  
Chairman

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

**WELCOME TO OUR FIRST ISSUE**

As I write this, I think of the old saying: "If you don't succeed, try, try again." For Andy and myself, this is our initial effort to try again.

**Why didn't the study group succeed the first time?**

That's a good question. I think the answer can be best summarized by saying that too many members of the study group that were to get information, but were not too anxious to be actively involved in the group.

**What constitutes active involvement?**

It's not complicated. Let's say that we have 30 members of the group. If each member would provide some material for the newsletter once a year, we could chug along just fine. When only a few people make submissions, these few burn out quickly and the study group disappears.

**What kind of material do you want?**

Just about anything. If you have a question about a precancel, let us know and we'll do everything we can to get you an answer. If you found an odd precancel or an interesting commercial cover with a precancelled franking, send us a scan and we'll share it with the study

group. Just make sure that your question or your article or sample is about Canadian precancels.

How will we know that our participation is working?

You will see a new edition of this newsletter every 90 days (or so). If you don't see a new issue, you will know that we did not succeed.

If you take a look at the list of the BNAPS study groups, some of them have survived for more than 20 years and remain active. I sure would like our Precancel Study Group join the list of survivors.

Larry Goldberg  
Editor

P.S. If you have articles or images or questions, just send them to me at [lmg@lmgcomm.com](mailto:lmg@lmgcomm.com) or via snail mail to:

Larry Goldberg  
P.O. Box 7170  
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-7170  
USA

Don't worry about your writing style. I'll help you with it.

ODDITIES

**AN INTERESTING EXAMPLE OF PRECANCELS AND MORE**

Not only is this a precancel plate block Winnipeg 8-231 LR, it is also a Cracked Plate block, and shows a double impression vertically in the margin. It is not an offset as it reads normally same as the precancels above it.

Has anyone ever seen anything like this before? There are not many examples of errors in this issue at all like the Medallion or 1935 issue.

Gary Steele

*If you would like to get in touch with Gary, he can be reached at [gwsteele57@gmail.com](mailto:gwsteele57@gmail.com). He collects the Medallion issue, 1935 issue and 1937 issue precancel stamps and covers.*



## HOW TO

### **DISTINGUISHING I AND J STYLE BAR PRECANCELS**

The 7th edition of the Standard Canada Precancel Catalogue, published in 2015 lists the various known bar precancel styles and includes illustrations to aid in distinguishing the various styles. In general the styles vary sufficiently that assigning a stamp to the correct style is not an issue. Styles I and J appear sufficiently similar however, that making the correct assignment for stamps that are found precanceled in both styles is often uncertain. No bar thickness or spacing measurements are given for either style. Style I is listed as having 7 to 9 bars, and style J is listed with 8 to 11 bars, so that a stamp exhibiting 8 or 9 bars could potentially be either style. In practice since these overprints were applied by an inked hand roller, either horizontally or vertically across the stamp sheet, each stamp did not always receive the full impression, so that counting the number of bars alone is not an adequate means of distinguishing these two styles. While the catalogue value for most stamps in either style is similar, correctly assigning the precancel style to a stamp provides the collector with satisfaction. For the 1<sup>sq</sup> Small Queen however, style I is valued at \$40, while style J is valued at \$1, which is possibly why style I predominates for eBay sellers.

The Canada Precancel Handbook published in 1988 illustrates these styles, but also gives bar thicknesses



and spacings. For style I the bar spacings are given as 2.0 mm and the bar thicknesses as 1.0 mm. For style J the bar spacings are given as 1.25 to 1.5 mm and the bar thicknesses as 1.0 mm. These values agree with measurements made on the photographs shown in the BNAPS Guide to Precancels printed in 2001. With this supplementary information, distinguishing the two styles is possible based on the bar spacing.

Tom Meyerhof

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## ODDITIES

### **UNUSUAL BLOCK OF 6 WITH HAMILTON 4-120 PRECANCEL**

This is a very interesting block. In addition to the precancel, there are several “roller” cancels running vertically (and inverted). They only show “ONT” and there is no city name.

I haven't seen this roller before, if, in fact, that is what it is. In addition to the precancel, there are several “roller” cancels running vertically (and inverted). They only show “ONT” and there is no city name.

Andy Ellwood



## STUDY GROUP MEETING

### MINUTES OF INITIAL MEETING OF THE STUDY GROUP

The initial meeting of the Precancel Study Group meeting was held at 1000 on Saturday Sept 12th at BNAPEX 2015. Approximately 10 individuals were there which apparently was normal for most of the SG sessions.

The Chairman made the following comments:

- there have been 39 responses from individuals interested in joining the SG, most of whom are BNAPS members
- Larry Goldberg has agreed to serve as Editor of the Newsletter and will undertake to set up and oversee a website
- The Newsletter will only be produced in an on-line format for the initial period unless there is a strong demand for a hard copy
- It is not expected that there will be any significant expenditures and so it is not planned to request any dues be paid

The new 7th Edition of the Precancel catalogue has been printed, but was not available for sale at the convention. It has since been offered to members at minimum cost (including postage) of \$12.00 Cdn to Cdn addresses. Cost to US addresses is \$10 US or \$13.00 Cdn and to the UK at \$17.00 Cdn or \$12.00 US or 9 UK pounds. 29 copies have been sold to date.

The new catalogue has been updated for current prices and some new information has been included in the listings, particularly of the print varieties.

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

Andy circulated several items from his collection which are seldom seen. I will attach scans of these items.

Andy asked for a volunteer to handle Secretary duties (to be defined). Gary Steele indicated that is willing to serve as Secretary and to assist Larry with the Newsletter.

There was some discussion on the subject of the use of precancels on high values, particularly on Admirals and Edwards. There were comments that they were used for payments of bulk purchases, and on bank tags. It was questioned whether they were produced just to cater to collectors.

Some discussion took place about precancel perfins and that Ocean Park has offered some in their sales.

There was a request for collectors to provide counts of items in their collections. It was also suggested that we append a list of members and their email addresses to these minutes or to the first newsletter.

"Show-and-Tell" Exhibits from the meeting appear on pages 6 and 7.

Andy Ellwood  
Chairman

Gary Steele  
Secretary

#### SPECIAL OFFER TO STUDY GROUP MEMBERS

Andy has arranged for copies of the *The Canada Precancel Handbook*, which was produced by BNAPS in 1988, to be made available to our study group members at a reduced price of only C\$4.25 plus postage, a significant savings from the list price of \$16.95.

It is an excellent 180-page outline of most aspects of Canadian precancels and contains a wealth of information,

Members should contact Andy directly (see membership list on last page of this issue),

BNAPS PRECANCEL STUDY GROUP

SHOW AND TELL



*TORONTO 1 - 75 3 Known Copies*



*TORONTO 8-104ID 2nd Impression Traces*



*MONTREAL Unknown 2nd Impression Traces*



*QUEBEC 3 - 105 d D*



*HAMILTON 5 - 163 Printed on Reverse*



*VANCOUVER 2-120 Unlisted Shade*



*WINDSOR 3-195D J2 Double Partial Perfin*



*WINNIPEG Hybrid Type I & II Invert*

# BNAPS PRECANCEL STUDY GROUP

## SHOW AND TELL



*PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE Unlisted*



*MILITARY ? Unlisted*



*TORONTO Quadruple 2-47R*



*TORONTO 2-47 Y*



*Bar Type U-60V Quintuple*

*HAMILTON 4 - 120 + Double Vertical Roller*



HOW TO

**USING A DECISION TREE  
TO SORT YOUR PRECANCELS**

I tend to be a little impatient about some things, one of them being the sorting of precancels from offices that have a lot of styles. Some may find my saying this kind of juvenile, but even an experienced collector can find sorting somewhat frustrating.

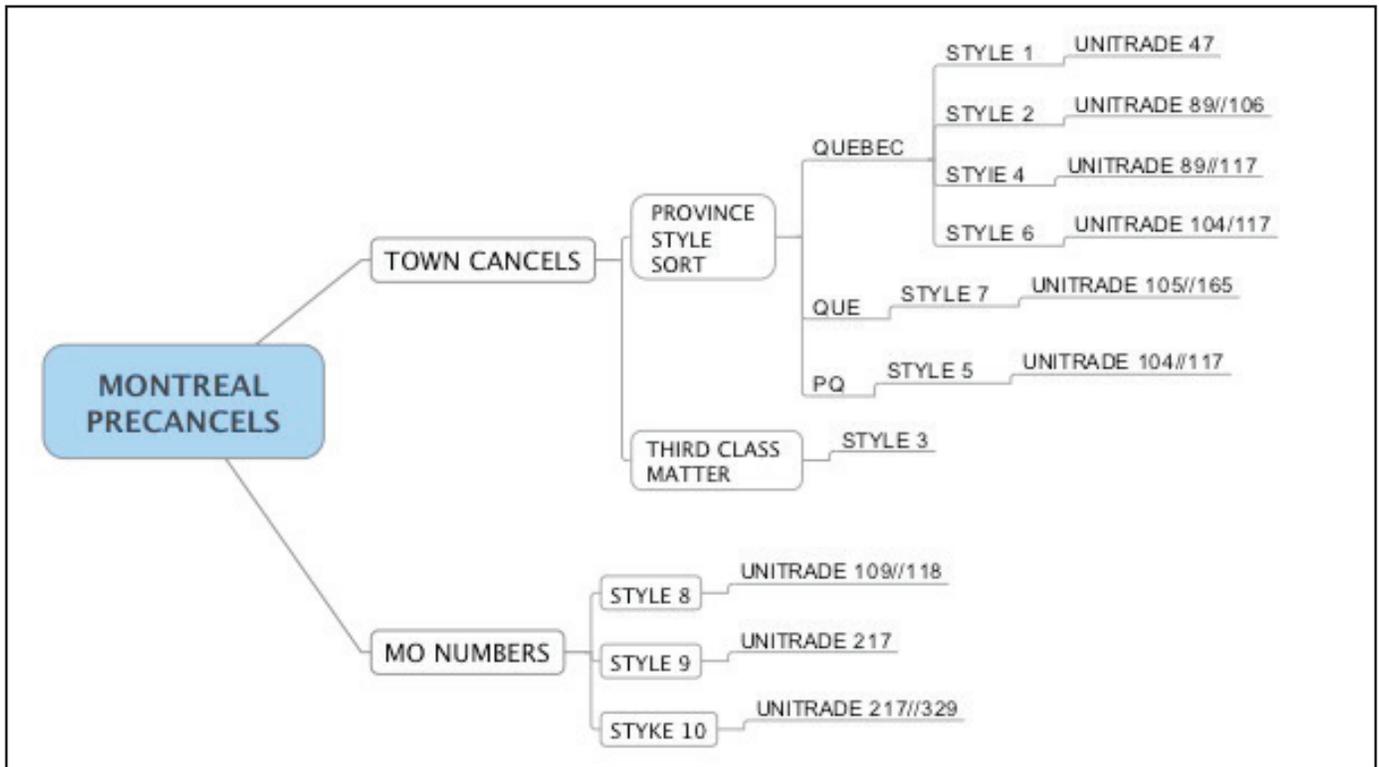
Not long ago, I found among the Goldberg archives (a nice name for the mess I call my office and studio) a box containing some 200 to 300 Montreal precancels. I promptly put them away as I had already reached my frustration quota for the day, but, within 24 hours, my conscience and curiosity got the best of me and I opened the box. There was quite a wide variety of styles and other variables. Checking the catalogue\*, I

decided to build a decision tree (see Figure 1). Thanks to the logical design of the catalogue, the decision tree only took about 10 minutes to complete.

The same sort of systematic approach can apply to any of the other offices that had a large number of different styles. If you would like to see a decision tree for Toronto or another office, let me know.

Larry Goldberg

\* J.E. Kraemer, D. Marasco, B. Field, ed The Standard Canada Precancel Catalogue, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Toronto, The Unitrade Press, 2010.



NOTE: The reference to the Unitrade number shows the range of catalog numbers for a stamp bearing that precancel style. These sorting options apply only to Montreal precancels.

## PRECANCEI TYPES

### THE OTHER TYPES OF PRECANCELS

Most collectors of precancels focus their attention on the Bar types and City types. This can be a very challenging and rewarding hobby. However, it doesn't take most collectors very long to realize that finding needed items can be difficult and that individual prices can easily reach into 3 figures. This often is discouraging.

However, there are many other types of precancel collecting that are available to the average philatelist. These types of precancels are equally worth the time and effort to undertake. Finding these types of precancels can require considerable effort to build a collection, but the material is available and often is quite inexpensive..

While some collectors like to refer to the precancels as the Fringes of Precancels, each of the areas has their own characteristics and are worth study and collecting. I would like to see a series of descriptions that will explain the various types of different precancels and have them published in TOPICS over a period of time. However, I am not as familiar with many of these areas as one is needed to be to prepare the articles. If you are interested in helping in the preparation of such articles, kindly contact me and I will put you in touch with others.

There may very well be excellent information in any of these areas in the BNAPS reference library. The write-ups don't need to be new information, but rather should be explanatory so that a collector can start from scratch. The following list is a starting point. A comprehensive overview would be of great value.

### THE TYPES

1. **REVENUES.** There are quite a few different precancels overprinted on standard revenues.
2. **UNLISTED.** There are a few precancels which were prepared, but apparently not issued and are not listed such as the Portage La Prairie pair and the four "military" items. This area would also include items that are not listed yet or are of doubtful accuracy.
3. **VARIETIES.** This is a known area and the basic listing started by Hans Reiche is included in the *Unitrade Standard Canada Precancel Catalogue*. Bruce Fields is preparing a significant update on these varieties and others are tackling it as well. The article would explain

how such varieties are created and what the difference is between printing breaks and inking problems.

4. **NAIL HEADS.** This type occurs when the "nails" that hold the printing plate become loose and leave an ink impression on the stamp. Seems to be an unknown area requiring initial study.

5. **PRIVATE PERFINS.** This is an area which has been studied and is documented in the current precancel catalogue. However, many are hard to find and prices reflect this. Covers can be intriguing, especially if corner addresses/adverts match the perfin.

6. **COVERS.** This is a challenging area wide open for exploration. Virtually no documentation is available, especially with rarity reflected. A basic breakdown would be a helpful starting point,

7. **TYPE 21'S.** Basically, this is a Montreal roller cancellation seen on early stamps, but its use as a precancel is worth further exploration.

8. **MULTIPLE IMPRINTS.** Essentially, these are printing errors. However, little is known about quantities produced, especially for higher numbers of imprints. The Toronto 50 cent QV is the most obvious example. Doubles and triples would be excluded.

9. **MAJOR USERS.** The companies that contracted with Canada Post to use precancels must number in the hundreds, if not the thousands. Covers with their advertising logos would be an interesting collecting area.

10. **PRINTERS.** Details of the companies who printed the precancels and the equipment that was used is an area with little documented detail.

11. **SHEET DETAILS.** Plate blocks and lathework are areas which have received some attention. Lathework listings are included in the current *Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps*.

Andy Ellwood