Dead Letter Office
Wax Seals & Boxed Registration Handstamps

The exhibit studies the Dead Letter Office Wax Seals and Boxed Registration Handstamps used only on Registered Canadian Dead Letter Office Return envelopes.

EXHIBIT BREAKDOWN:

Oval Wax Seal - 1870’s to July 1, 1898:

The Canadian Dead Letter Office / Branch was located only in Ottawa up to decentralization on July 1st 1898 into various branches across the country.

Crown Wax Seals - July 1st 1898 to late 1940’s:

Branch DLO offices were created July 1st 1898 in the larger Canadian cities of Ottawa, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Victoria. Subsequent openings occurred in Calgary, Edmonton, Quebec, Regina and Vancouver. Some offices do not have any known reports.

Boxed Registration Handstamps – 1920’s to 1980:

A few Branch DLO offices used boxed registration handstamps with the letters ‘DLO’ or words ‘Dead Letter Office’ in them. In the 1950’s ‘Undeliverable Mail Office’ or ‘UMO’ replaced ‘DLO’ and ‘Dead Letter Office’. Later use Montreal registered Dead Letter Return envelopes are known.

DLO Background:

The Dead Letter Office received and treated mail matter that could not be forwarded to its final destination. This included mail addressed for delivery in Canada, mail posted outside of Canada and addressed for delivery in Canada, and Canadian mail originally addressed to foreign countries then returned because it bore insufficient forwarding information. Items initially sent by registered mail or of value were returned to the sender in a Registered Dead Letter Office Return envelope.

DLO Wax Seals and Boxed Registration handstamps only appear on Registered Dead Letter Return envelopes, but not on every Registered DLO Return Envelope. An envelope with a Wax Seal may not have a boxed registration handstamp and not every registered DLO Return envelope may have a wax seal.

RESEARCH:

Throughout the exhibit are previously unknown, unreported, earliest and latest reported dates discovered by the exhibitor. To prepare this exhibit extensive original study, cataloguing and listing of types were used.

STRUCTURE:

The listing for each item includes the lettering on the Wax Seal and/or handstamp, dimensions, and important variations. Also will be noted if a Proof Strike was taken, and importance such as Previously Unknown, Only Known Copy (OKC) or Earliest (ERD) and Latest (LRD) reported dates.

Fewer than five of each item is known to exist or have been reported. SIGNIFICANT ITEMS
Lion & Unicorn oval wax seal only used prior to decentralization of the Ottawa DLO July 1st 1898.

26 x 24mm

A very fine perfectly intact Ottawa Wax seal. April 11 1896 registered to Moosomin Assa. via C. P. RY. WEST OF WINNIPEG 1. West. On April 15 1896, received in Moosomin.

Less than 10 known copies

No proof known

An article on the actual contents by Bob Lane, and a subsequent article on this cover by the author was reported in the PHSC Journal 2009.
D.L.O. CROWN WAX SEALS

After Decentralization July 1, 1898:

Branch D.L.O. Offices with Crown Wax Seals

After decentralization, several Dead Letter Offices of the larger cities used Wax Seals with the letters ‘D.L.O.’ over a substantial period. Due to the very low number reported it appears they were not used very often. A red wax was used to seal the back flap on registered DLO return covers, showing the imprinted lettering:

‘D.L.O. CANADA • “City inserted here” BRANCH •’ with a large crown in the middle.

Although there are some proof records of Wax Seals not all have been proofed such as Halifax. Since there is no date within these impressions, the envelope production date or a date stamp usually provides an adequate time frame of use. Some proofs have a manuscript date with month and year. None are known for Ottawa.

The following Wax Seals are listed in the order of the opening of DLO Offices:

D.L.O. CANADA
• OTTAWA BRANCH •

Ottawa Wax Seal
Three Point Crown

EARLIEST REPORTED DATE OF ANY BRANCH DLO WAX SEAL

26.5mm
NO 14 98

This envelope 5 D.L. 20,000 2 - 7 - 98 is the first printing after DLO decentralization in 1898.

No proof known

Ottawa, Canada NO 14 98 registered Return Envelope to N.Y. received in Brooklyn N.Y. NOV 16 1898 address changed from Fort Hamilton ‘FORWARDED’ to a new destination. Scan 40%
Note the use of different Crowns during different reigns. On the previous page the Three Point Crown Ottawa Wax Seal and below the Round Crown Ottawa Wax Seal. The diameters are also different with this one being 2.5mm larger.
D.L.O. CANADA
• HALIFAX BRANCH •

Halifax Wax Seal
Three Point Crown

27.5mm diameter

No proof known

This wax seal was still in use in 1939

6 D. L. (a) – 15,000-15-1-16

Very small printing quantity for this 6 D. L. cover
The above Montreal wax seal is of the first type of crown with a tri-point top similar to the Halifax seal.

Later on a more rounded Wax Seal was proofed as seen below:

Proof strike Dec 1916
D.L.O. CANADA
• TORONTO BRANCH •

Toronto Wax Seal
Three Point Crown

26mm diameter

No proof strike
of the Three Pointed
Crown type known

There are two types
of Wax Seals for
Toronto, Three Pointed
Crown & Rounded Crown

Rounded Crown
Proof Strike Dec 1912

Scan 75%

Toronto JUL 10 1915 received in Springfield, Mass. JUL 12 1915

Only proof known
26.5mm diameter

Winnipeg Branch DLO JUL 31 19 registered Returned Dead Letter mailed within the city charged postage due of 2 cents 'Large '2’”

Note the envelope # 10 D. L. (a) - 100,000-24-09 dictates a particular use for a certain period and can be used by other Branch DLO’s.

No proof known
CALGARY, ALBERTA, DISTRICT
• DEAD LETTER OFFICE •

Calgary Wax Seal
Beaded Crown

PREVIOUSLY UNREPORTED OKC

30mm diameter

Unique type wax seal

Proofed April 1931

D.L.O. CANADA
• REGINA BRANCH •

Regina Wax Seal
Rounded Crown

ONE of TWO KNOWN,
REPORTED by EXHIBITOR

29mm diameter Rounded Crown Wax Seal

Similar to the second Ottawa Wax Seal Rounded Crown proofed in 1917. Regina registered returned dead letter forwarded to Winnipeg, Man. NO 16 39
D.L.O. CANADA
• VANCOUVER BRANCH •

Vancouver Wax Seal
Three Point Crown

28.5mm diameter

Vancouver SP 23 18 to Lillooet, B.C. SP 25 18
2 cents postage due collected (2 x 1c)

No proof known

Note the large R oval registration handstamp used instead of a Boxed Registration handstamp. There are no known copies of any Vancouver Boxed Registration handstamp.
D.L.O. BOXED REGISTRATION HANDSTAMPS

D.L.O. Boxed Registration Handstamps were used after July 1st 1898 by Branch D.L.O. offices up to the early 1950’s other than Montreal, an anomaly with reports to the early 1980’s. There are no reports of an Ottawa handstamp. These handstamps are four to five times scarcer than Wax Seals.

Halifax D.L.O. Registration Handstamp

Halifax MR 15 39 to Kentville, N.S. MR 16 39

Two perfect strike Halifax, N.S. D.L.O. Wax Seals
Montreal D.L.O. Registration Handstamp

The Montreal DLO Boxed Registration handstamp is the only one used during the UMO period.

Note used during DLO period 1951

47.5 x 23mm

Sans-serif, all caps

No proof known

Purple & Black ink varieties
Toronto D.L.O. Registration Handstamp

TORONTO, D. L. O.
ORIGINAL No.

49 x 23mm
All letters sans-serif and caps except ‘No.’

Very seldom seen 13 cents postage due for 10-cent registration fee and 3-cent DLO return fee.

Registered D.L.O. return envelope Feb 18 1937 to Hamilton with D.L.O. boxed registration handstamp and two three point crown Toronto Wax Seals over back flaps.
Toronto D.L.O. Registration Handstamp

49 x 23mm
KNOWN

EARLIEST REPORTED DATE of TWO

Note: Difference in lettering and ‘ORIGINAL’ missing compared to the D.L.O. Registration handstamp on the previous page

‘TORONTO, D. L. O.’ seriffed and caps except ‘No.’

Proof strike June 1939


LATEST REPORTED DATE of ALL REPORTED WAX SEALS
Winnipeg D.L.O. Registration Handstamp

DEAD LETTER OFFICE
WINNIPEG, MAN.

48 x 19mm

EARLIEST REPORTED DATE of THREE KNOWN

Note: There is no 'ORIGINAL' or 'No.'
Showing in this D.L.O. Boxed Registration handstamp

Sans-serif,
all caps

Proof strike December 1922

Registered D.L.O. return envelope Nov 16 1946
to Hamilton with Winnipeg D.L.O. boxed registration
handstamp.

Note no D.L.O. Wax Seals used during this late period.
The End of an Era

As with other Dead Letter Office handstamps the Wax Seals and D.L.O. Boxed Registration handstamps used for DLO Registered Return Dead Letters gradually disappeared due to Post Office reorganizational changes starting in January 1948.

The use of DLO handstamps was not cancelled immediately as the Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver Rectangular DLO dated handstamps were actually issued in 1948 and used as late as 1954.

R
OTTAWA, CANADA
Undeliverable Mail Office
ORIGINAL No.

Shown above is the style of Boxed UMO Registration handstamp used to replace the DLO Boxed Registration handstamps.

Although the earliest Undeliverable Mail Office (UMO) handstamp appears in 1950, common usage does not appear till the mid fifties. The earliest reported Ottawa UMO so far is 1956 with few reports to-date.