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CALTAPEX 2000

OCTOBER 13, FRIDAY:
OCTOBER 14, SATURDAY:
OCTOBER 15, SUNDAY:

1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
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New location!

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The CPS mailing address is Box 1478, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2L6. The Web site is: <http://members.home.net/calphilso> All articles as hard copy only, mailed to Box 6830, Calgary, T2P 2E7, or handed to Dale Speirs at meetings.

The CPS was founded in April 1922 by Dr. Edward George Mason. It is Chapter 66 of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada, Chapter 1360 of the American Philatelic Society, and Chapter 91 of the American Topical Association.

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(see page 12 for list of committee chairpersons)

THE DECLINE OF MOURNING COVERS

by Dale Speirs

Stamp collectors see mourning covers while looking through dealer's stock at philatelic bourses, even if not interested for their own collection. Mourning covers are envelopes (and associated letterheads) with thick black bands around the edges, an indication that the sender was in mourning over a loved one, or, more ominously, that the recipient had better brace for bad news from home. The covers are mostly dated in the 1800s. After the early 1900s, they declined, and are unheard of today.

Origins.

Envelopes for regular use date from the 1600s or so, and for mass use not until after the postal reforms of 1840. Prior to this it was the common practice to fold a letter over, write the address on the back, and seal it with wax. This procedure dates back to the ancient Egyptians [8]. Black sealing wax to indicate mourning dates back to circa 1556 in European society [9]. As was always the case, mourning customs were not universally observed. One report concerns a mourning letter dated 1667-07-08, sealed with black wax, but with other mourning letters from brothers and sisters of that writer, at the same time, using red wax [10]. Black wax is reported to seal letters dated 1721, 1725, and 1714 [11], and from 1795 [12].

Use of black-bordered writing paper was independent of envelopes. From England, one such letter announcing a funeral is dated 1683-01-05 [10]. Mourning paper was mentioned in Addison's play staged in 1715 in England, titled THE DRUMMER [13]. However, the English public en masse seem to have discovered mourning paper circa 1745, as a letter from an Englishman in Italy to the homeland reports: "*I believe you never saw anything like it before; here everybody uses it but myself. I begged a sheet for this occasion only, and another to keep as a curiosity.*" [22].

It was remarked in 1882 by a commentator [15] that mourning stationery was in general use in 1754. Useage was common enough among the English at that time that snobs were miffed that commoners were using such stationery [25]. It was recorded used in a letter dated January 1759 from a man whose wife died the previous November [14]. The demand was sufficient that by 1836 there were several stationers manufacturing it [17]. A collateral line of decorated stationery is gilt-edged paper. This dates back to the early 1600s in France, and later in that century was common in England [29]. This was used by the well-to-do in their regular correspondence. It would be an easy step between black and gilt bands,

whichever came first, and printers with the capability to do one could do the other. Gilt-edged envelopes were not the common thing that black-edged envelopes were, but lettersheets certainly were.

Rules.

The width of the black bands around the edges of envelopes and letterhead varied significantly. There were supposedly rules to be followed in this matter, such as the one that the wider the black border, the closer the familial connection. The rules also apparently varied by country. Circa the 1750s, the Italians used thin borders, while the English preferred wide borders [15]. It was a social sin to make the band too wide: "*Cards and note-paper are now put into mourning by those who desire to express conventionally their regret for the dead, but very broad borders of black look like ostentation, and are in undoubted bad taste. No doubt all these things are proper enough in their way, but a narrow border of black tells the story of loss as well as an inch of coal-black gloom.*" [2].

Today there is no tradition of extended mourning, none of the wearing black for a year, withdrawing from society, etcetera, but for those determined to set an example of propriety, the rules were strictly observed. In 1906, the New York Society of Self-Culture (a group of society women, apparently with too much time on their hands) published a reference manual called CORRECT SOCIAL USAGE. They wrote: "*Degrees of grief and consanguinity may be delicately indicated by the depth of the black border on a visiting card. Care must be taken, however, against ostentatious assumption of black edging when distant relationship only can be claimed with the deceased, and also against exceeding the depth of the mourning band. Parents and widows usually display, and rightly so, the broadest bands on their cards. For the first year of widowhood a mourning band 3/8" wide is sufficiently indicative of feeling and respect. In the second year the border may be diminished to one measuring 1/4". In the third year the border can be diminished, for the first six months to 1/8"; in the second six months to 1/16", and thereafter left off entirely. ... For infants, ... a band 1/16" wide is sufficient. Daughters mourn for their parents by assuming card borders 1/4" wide for one year and 1/16" wide thereafter, or until mourning garments are put off.*" [3]. One wonders how many people actually bothered with all this detail. Florence Howe Hall wrote in 1911 that: "*People who are in mourning generally use black-edged note-paper, although some persons dislike and never use it. All matters connected with mourning ought to be left to the judgement and feelings of the mourner. It is cruel to enhance sorrow by binding it around with the silken serpent of etiquette. Where black-edged paper is used the border should vary in depth according to the length of time the writer has been in mourning, and the nearness of the relative mourned.*" [4]."

Usage.

The idea of the mourning cover was to provide a warning to the addressee, but it was ambiguous. It could be merely a widow displaying her devotion, and writing on entirely unrelated matters. It could also be a direct hit on the addressee, advising that a spouse or sibling was dead. It was not a universal practice in its own time, and not everyone agreed about its use. In the 1780 edition of poems by Allan Ramsay [18], a verse refers to mourning traditions ante-1724 as follows:

*"Thou sable-bordered sheet, begone.
Harbour to thee I must refuse.
Sure thou canst welcome find from none,
Who carries such ungrateful news."*

One remark from 1905 [1] was that: "*Unfortunately, mourning stationery is still in vogue, but the recipient of a black-edged letter is often conscious of a distinct shock when she first sees the emblem of dolor, and wonders if it contains the notice of a death.*"

Getting Carried Away By Grief Or Oneupmanship?

Even the prissily-correct agreed that it was possible to overdo a good thing and step out of the realms of good taste in the matter of mourning stationery. This was not confined to the nouveau-rich unschooled in the social graces: "*Very broad mourning borders certainly seem affected as well as gloomy. The autograph letter of condolence which Queen Victoria sent to Mrs. Lincoln when the President was assassinated was written on note-paper with a black border nearly an inch deep!*" [4]. Queen Victoria always did go overboard on these things, what with her perpetual mourning for her dear Albert. Apropos of that, when Queen Victoria died, the Burlington, Ontario, post office used a mourning cancellation on the day of her funeral [16]. The postmark was a thick black band framing the vignette on the stamp.

One commentator discussed the width of black borders based on examples he had from 1795 to 1802: "*It would seem from what has gone before, that the black border is older than a mere black edge, and was used at first very sparingly. It is certain that whilst mournings and all trappings of woe have gradually grown less severe, the depth of black borders on writing paper has increased. We now often see paper for widows so deep, that little space is left for writing. I remember seeing in a shop at Marseilles, in Oct. 1855, a visiting card entirely black, with the name only printed in white. ... I imagine the increased depth of black borders to be due primarily to the stationers.*" [12].

An 1876 commentator mentions people using black-bordered paper during Passion Week [24], which seems excessively religious, not to mention unnecessarily troubling recipients with false alarms. Another idea, circa 1880, was that black-bordered stationery was to be kept in the house only if a death was actually being mourned, and was to be burned if not in active use. This was said to be the status of a superstition, on the grounds that black-bordered stationery would become the cause, not the effect, of a death in the household. The idea seems to have been localized to a few places in Ireland. It was certainly not held in Scotland, and was not recorded elsewhere [26 to 28].

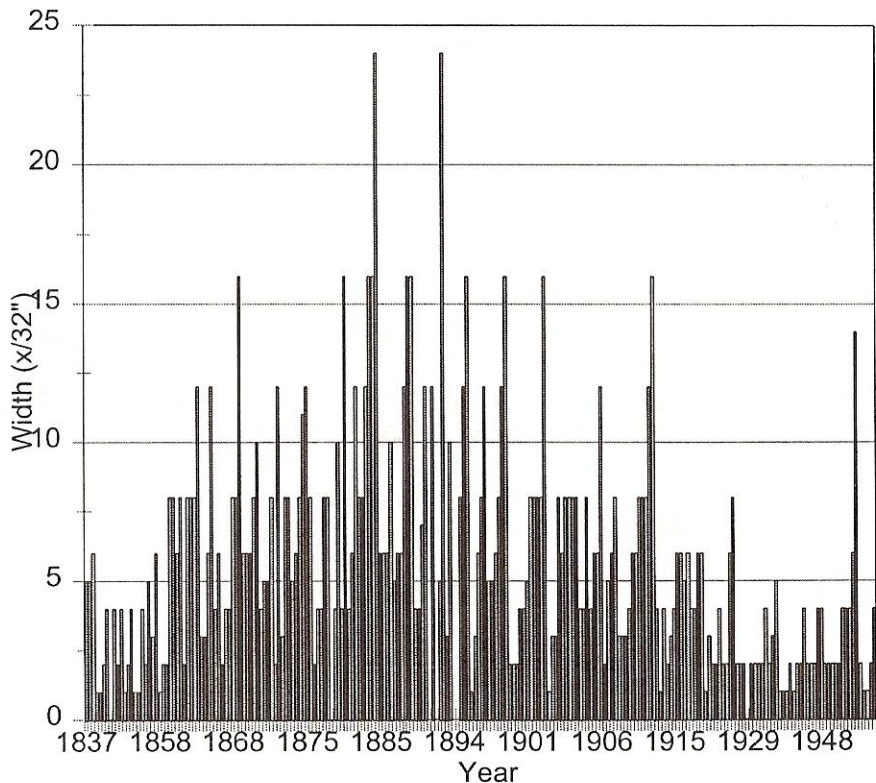
Decline And Fall.

Moderation in the use of the black border was predominating by the late 1800s. A report from 1876 states: " ... *extreme breadth of border in fashion is somewhat less than that of ten or twelve years since.*" [23]. The width of the border was felt best to be thin. A 1904 etiquette book [20] mentioned: "*A narrow line of black is sufficient, just the merest border, on note paper and envelopes. Too deep and wide a border is not in good taste.*"

It is interesting to note that by 1911, the first mention in etiquette books has been made that black bands on mourning stationery are starting to become optional. I suspect that the bloodbath of World War One finished off any mass observation of the custom, as so many families lost sons or husbands that almost everyone would have been using mourning covers. The decline of mourning stationery was related to the decline of formal mourning, where women dressed in black for a year and men wore black armbands to the office. One 1925 book remarked: "*A person who does not wear mourning should not use black-bordered letter paper.*" [21]. Indeed, the 1948 edition of VOGUE'S BOOK OF ETIQUETTE demonstrates the custom was dying out, saying " ... *using black-bordered writing paper during the time of mourning is, like other mourning traditions, observed less strictly today than it was thirty or forty years ago. ... Today the black border has grown [sic] somewhat narrower than it used to be; now it is usually only 1/16" instead of 1/4" wide; and all-white paper is used more than before.*" [5].

By 1960, Emily Post had this to say in her definitive book: "*The wide borders of former days have been discarded for those which customs of yesterday would have called second mourning. An over-heavy border (from 3/8" to 1/2") is unknown in the United States today. 1/4" is considered deepest mourning, and 3/16" used as deep mourning by all who are young; 1/16" and 1/32" are suitable width for second mourning.*" [6]. By 1969, "*Few people use mourning paper at all ...*" [7]. The covers were extinct in general use.

Mourning cover border widths over time
based on Jeffrey Switt collection [19]



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PHILATELIC LITERATURE REVIEWS

by Leanteri Polvikoski

Journal of the Writing Equipment Society #57 (US\$48 per year from Writing Equipment Society, c/o Maureen Greenland, Cartledge Cottage, Cartledge Lane, Holmesfield, Dronfield, Derbyshire S18 7SB) High-quality colour magazine, published three times per year. Most of the emphasis is on pen collecting, particularly antique fountain pens. However there is attention paid to items that might be classified as postal history. Copying devices, for example, produced problems for the Post Office, which couldn't make up its mind whether letters copied by pantograph were printed matter (cheaper rate) or personal correspondence (higher rate). Stamp boxes are popular as a collectible among members of the W.E.S., not to mention ink wells and pen stands.

Trident Visnyk #136 and Ukrainian Philatelist #82 (US\$20 per year from Ukrainian Philatelic and Numismatic Society, c/o George Slusarczuk, Box 303, Southfields, New York 10975-0303) These two publications are the main benefit of the UPNS, which is about 90% philatelic and 10% numismatic at a rough guess. TRIDENT VISNYK is the bimonthly newsletter with news and notes about new issues of Ukraine, society news, and other fast-breaking items. UKRAINIAN PHILATELIST is a perfect-bound semi-annual journal of record, with learned articles covering aspects of Ukrainian postal history in depth. Both periodicals are illustrated throughout, and mostly in English. There is a strong Canadian connection as well, because of the Ukrainian settlement on the prairies.

Stamp Magazine, August 2000 (\$7.50 on the newstand at Chapters Macleod Trail store) Full-colour glossy monthly British stamp newsmagazine. This issue's cover story is the Queen Mum's 100th birthday, with a review of all the philatelic issues associated with her since the first was issued in 1932 by Newfoundland. The regular column on Cinderellas shows the labels issued in honour of the 1939 Royal Tour in Canada, and the new-issues listing of course covers the plentitude of birthday stamps and sheets. Elsewhere, an illustrated introduction to the Hermes Head stamps of Greece by the authority on them, and accounts of military mail from Seychelles and through Red Cross International. For the modern collector, a columnist recounts his son's recent trip to Trinidad and Tobago, where he spent time searching out backwoods post offices to get their cancels. Alas, like Canada, many of them are being replaced by generic smears of ink at main sorting plants, so whether you are there or here, now is the time to get the cancels. On a practical matter, there is advice on how to prepare album pages using spreadsheets rather than word processors, since the former allow grids and borders to be printed much easier than the latter.

Postal Shortages And Surcharged Issues Of Newfoundland by Norris R. Dyer (\$16.95 from Saskatoon Stamp Centre, Box 1870, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 3S2. Visa/Mastercard accepted.) This is BNAPS Exhibit Books Series #19, part of a programme to preserve stamp exhibits as high-quality, spiral-bound photocopies. Bob Dyer's exhibit deals mostly with the postal shortages that plagued Newfoundland repeatedly, in 1897, 1918, 1920, 1929, 1933, 1939, and 1946. These shortages were dealt with by surcharging excess stocks of high value stamps to meet the regular rates in daily use. Unfortunately such shortages were worsened by stamp collectors who wanted the surcharges for their collections, leaving few for genuine postal users. Dyer also covers the airmail surcharges of the 1930s, when Newfoundland was a connecting point in the race to establish regular trans-Atlantic air service. Both halves of this exhibit are illustrated throughout with all the stamp varieties, covers, sheets, and stationery needed to tell the story. Also included in a supplement of research material is further background material and investigation. If you are interested in either Newfoundland or airmails, then I think this book will be useful.

PHSC Journal #102 (Sample copy \$5 from Postal History Society of Canada, c/o Roger Narbonne, 216 Mailey Drive, Carleton Place, Ontario K7C 3X9) Always a wide variety of articles in each issue, and this one is no exception. Some of the traditional aspects of Canadian postal history are discussed, such as advertising covers, routes, and rates. But there are also interesting items such as the career of a con man who specialized in stealing post office money orders by posing as a Postal Inspector, or the problems Chinese restaurant owners on the prairies had getting mail to China during World War Two.

Gibbons Stamp Monthly, August 2000 (\$7.50 on the newstand at Chapters Westhills) Colour glossy from the venerable English stamp dealer. Articles range from traditional philately such as flyspeck hunting in KGVI definitives and censorship of Gibraltar wartime mails to Prince William commemoratives and 1999 worldwide postal stationery. Something for everyone in each issue.

American Philatelist, August 2000 The CPS is Chapter 1360 of the American Philatelic Society. One of the many benefits thereof is their monthly colour magazine, which covers worldwide philately, not just USA issues. The CPS Library has this magazine in stock; just ask the staff at the next meeting and they will be pleased to show you it. The issue at hand has articles on fancy cancels, fish cachets, Esperanto philately, postal history from Mount Sinai, and Viet Cong stamps from Cuba. Always worth reading, as even the articles not directly related to your collecting interests are nonetheless well worth the time. You might even start a new thematic collection as a result!

PROGRAMMES

Scheduled speakers coming up in the next few months are as follow:

October 4: Don Wilson on Tasmania
November 1: Bob McClellon from Canada Post, topic to be announced

Currently the post of Programme Chairman is vacant, and we urgently need someone to fill the post. Responsibilities include lining up guest speakers, introducing them/thanking them at meetings, and setting up for slide presentations. Please contact Andy Puczko at 241-2593 if you are able to help.

DUES ARE DUE!

To ensure you continue to receive the bulletin, sell stamps through the club, and to participate in CPS activities, please be sure to pay your dues at the October meeting. You can also mail a cheque for \$12 to the CPS, Box 1478, Calgary, T2P 2L6.

COMMITTEES

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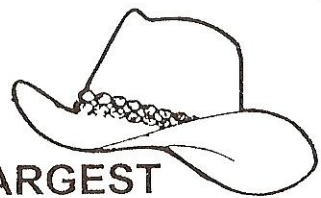
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NOTE TO INTERNET VIEWERS: Unless stated otherwise, telephone numbers are area code 403. Alberta is on Mountain Time.

FOR SALE: West Germany MNH year sets from 1963 to 1986, Berlin MNH year sets from 1960 to 1982, Austria MNH year sets from 1966 to 1987. Phone Elmer at 239-3966.

WANTED: Any Small Queen issue stamps, 1870-1897, any denomination, any quantity. I prefer the 3-cent issue but will take all. Also wanted covers of the same era, as well as Registration stamps (F1-F3) of same period. I will pay cash, trade for other stamps, or trade for automotive work (I'm a licenced mechanic). See me at club meetings or call Doug Kollar at 547-3838.

TRADE: Need automotive work done on your car? Let's trade my labour for your stamps that I need. I am a licenced mechanic with 20+ years experience (just ask Penny). Phone Doug Kollar at 547-3838.

WANTED: Calgary Stampede philatelic memorabilia. I collect all phases of this fascinating field. You may have just the cover or cancel I need. Cash or generous exchange. Call Ed at 274-0021.

FREE: Hundreds of clean unused light-brown window envelopes, 8.75" x 3.75" (22.8 cm x 9.5 cm). Call Julius at 282-7982.

FOR SALE: Ukrainian and Russian stamps new and used. Also Ukrainian FDCs and special cancels from 1991 to date. Call Andy at 236-2037.

FOR SALE: Recent fine used stamps of Australia. Contact Michael Teekens at 286-7927.

WANTED: Private collector pays cash for larger stamp collections. Phone Willi at 239-2273.

FOR SALE: Mint and used Canadian, also used New Zealand and Australia stamps, Calgary Olympics first-day covers. Call Craig Allison at 281-3852.

FOR SALE: Anybody interested in perfins, contact Robert Perry at 282-4520.

FOR SALE: Dutch stamps MNH complete yearly issues including all souvenir sheets, 1979 to 1992 inclusive. Contact Hank Van Wyngaarden at 246-5316 or see at meetings.

MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

2000

September	20	Auction
October	1	Sunday bourse
	4	General meeting
	13 to 15	CALTAPEX
	18	Auction
November	1	General meeting
	1	Deadline for November bulletin
	5	Sunday bourse
	15	Auction
December	3	Sunday bourse
	6	Christmas social

2001

April	28 to 29	Spring Stamp Show
October	12 to 14	CALTAPEX

MEETINGS and AUCTIONS are at the Kerby Centre, 2nd floor, 1133 - 7 Avenue SW, at 19h30. Auction lots should be in before 19h30 to allow bidder viewing

CALGARY REGIONAL GROUP OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA PHILATELIC SOCIETY meets on the second Wednesday of the month except July and August. For details about meeting places and times, contact Ed Harris at 274-0021.

SUNDAY BOURSE is at Palliser Community Centre, 2323 Palliser Drive SW, from 10h00 to 16h00. Details and table rentals from Bill Szaroz at 337-3260 or Phil Wolf at 259-8750.

CALTAPEX and SPRING STAMP SHOW are at the Polish Canadian Club, 3015 - 15 Street NE. Contact Doug Kollar at 547-3838 for details.