

v. Jan 3 2021

INTERNATIONAL STAMP CANCELLING MACHINES AT BRANDON, MANITOBA: 1907-1919



General outline

Exhibit Synopsis

This one-frame postal history exhibit studies the International stamp cancelling machines used at Brandon, Manitoba from 1907 to 1919. The exhibit is noteworthy in that no other exhibit (known to the exhibitor) has focused entirely on stamp cancelling machines used at Brandon. Some rare items and an original narrative developed after extensive personal research makes the exhibit unique and difficult to replicate. Treatment, as expressed through the narrative and selection of material, expands the subject to show that International machines weren't just instruments of the post office, but conduits of civic pride and engagement. Plans to bring a cancelling machine to the Brandon Post Office was front page news in the local newspaper, but slogan dies that promoted local events and rallied patriotism for the war effort took civic interest to a new level.

Historical perspective and importance:

Established in 1881, Brandon had the good fortune to produce two formidable politicians in its early years. Hon. Mayne Daly, Brandon's first Mayor and later M.P. for Selkirk (1887-1896) and Hon. Sir Clifford Sifton, M.P for Brandon (1896-1911), would both hold senior Cabinet positions in Ottawa. Their support of government services in Brandon is well documented, including the construction of a 3 story Federal Building in 1889 to accommodate the Post Office, Customs and Inland Revenue. Nearby was Land Agency and Immigration offices, and collectively these services positioned Brandon as a regional hub assisting waves of immigrants searching for a homestead. A reliable mail service was an important complement to all these services offered.

By 1906, Brandon had grown in prominence to become the 4th largest City on the Prairies. The need for postal services spiked in tandem with an unprecedented population boom, overwhelming the 18 year old Post Office. Poor service and cramped working conditions led to public meetings demanding postal upgrades to properly serve a robust, progressive and growing community. The introduction of a stamp cancelling machine in 1907 was the first step of a three phase reorganizing of the Brandon facility into a modern, urban post office. A stamp vendor's office quickly followed and Hon. Clifford Sifton's lobbying efforts produced City-wide free mail delivery by year end. The tent town post office of 1881 was long forgotten, as **Brandon's postal services steadily grew to match older, well established communities of similar size elsewhere in Canada.**

Exhibit sequence:

The exhibit begins on the Title Page, with the earliest reported machine cancel shown. A loose chronological order follows, with some themes being grouped together for story continuity. Every dater by year is accounted for, but may not be in a ridged chronological place in the storyline.

Chapters, chapter titles, subheadings, use of statistics:

Two International machines used at the Brandon Post Office divide 15 pages into two chapters:

Chapter 1, pp 2-8: **Model L: 1907-1912**

Chapter 2, pp 9-16: **Model S: 1912-1919**

Each chapter starts with a Chapter Title, top left hand corner in **bold black**. An image of the cancelling machine is underneath. **Identical chapter titles follow on every page throughout the chapter but are shaded to gray.**



Subheadings (page descriptors) are located top right hand corner of each page. Most subheadings are above a solid black line. Subheadings over/under the black line indicate two themes are on one page: **subheading a:**

subheading b:

Slogan cancel and wavy obliterator material with shared themes are paired on exhibit pages wherever possible. This shows collecting depth and demonstrates the alternating nature of the obliterator dies throughout the Model S era.

A bar graph (page 9) compares population growth taken from Brandon census information with Post Office revenues between fiscal years 1901-02 to 1912-13. The bar graph aids treatment, demonstrating that business decisions to install mechanized stamp cancelling equipment in 1907 and upgrades to a Model S in 1912 were warranted and supported by raw data.

Reported use, recorded use, known to exist:

ERU: SEP 18 1907 Shaded boxes in the exhibit refer to **earliest or latest reported usages** of Brandon daters or obl iterators and is based on dates reported to, or taken from the PHSC database.

The exhibit displays one of two **recorded usages** of the obliterator service letter "R" at Brandon, as noted by Cecil Coutts in his personal machine cancel records accumulated over many years of study. The other recorded usage dates to 1913.

Only two Brandon covers sent to a WW1 POW are **known to exist**, the exhibitor owns both. The latest usage is in the exhibit.

Condition and Collecting Challenge:

Condition of the material is generally good. Some faint post marks await replacement by better material when collected. Two covers mailed to WW1 soldiers are in rough condition, which is to be expected considering the surroundings they were delivered to and handled in after. (One cover was held in a POW Camp for 2 years.)

Material from 1907 to 1913 can be acquired over time, aided by the popularity of post cards that were traded and put into collections in that era. Material from 1913 onward is more difficult to acquire. The search for exhibit quality covers to international destinations or usages of slogans promoting the war effort is an ongoing challenge. Collecting interest in all the slogans used at Brandon is high, with more collectors than material to acquire.

International cancelling machines at Brandon were reliable with few irregularities on material seen. Faint or bare machine numbers and missing indicia are shown, but evidence of an inverted dater, damaged dater or damaged obliterator has never been seen. **Incoming and redirected mail, third class and printed matter mail** are difficult to source, but are placed in the exhibit as outliers to the normal first class drop mail cancelled every day.

What This Exhibit Has:

- **Some rare items. They are framed in blue with accompanying blue text.** Rare items include:
 - the earliest reported use of both cancelling machines
 - earliest reported bare dater
 - one of only two reports of the R service letter indicia.

What This Exhibit is missing:

- **Registered or special delivery mail.** Registered mail was processed at a different area of the postal facility using hand stamps, as verified through personal research.
- The exhibit is missing a hard to locate SAVE YOUR MONEY USE WAR SAVINGS slogan, which was only used for 45 days in the spring of 1917. Only 5 examples have been reported. Also missing is a PROVINCIAL EXHIBITION slogan used in 1918. These two slogans are represented with proofing images and accompanied by appropriate narrative.

Personal Research:

International cancelling machines have been widely researched in Canada and abroad. This information has laid a solid foundation to build an exhibit, but published research specific to the machines used at Brandon is limited and some has become outdated due to new information. The exhibitor has conducted extensive personal research to create a unique narrative of the **International machines at Brandon**. Personal research is as follows:

- **Discovery: The use of transparencies** shows a retooling of the 1908 dater indicia for use in 1910 and the similar reuse of the 1909 dater in 1911. Previously unreported. **Discovery:** Transparencies also show that the 1914 Summer Fair slogan was reused in 1915 and 1916 with modified DD/--YY indicium. Previously unreported.
- **Discovery: Use of measurements** determined that a new wavy obliterator accompanied the installation of the electric Model S in December of 1912. This is previously unreported and is explored on page 9. 
- **Study of Auditor General's Reports and Postmaster General's Reports from 1905 to 1919.** This material provided useful and accurate information about annual Brandon Post Office revenues, exact start and end dates of contracts, and lease costs/yr. **Discovery:** The close relationship between population growth as identified through Census data and annual Brandon Post Office revenues listed in the Postmaster General's Reports. This is demonstrated by a bar graph on page 9.
- **Study of in-period newspapers of The Brandon Daily Sun.**
 - Discovery:** Post Office business had grown to 1100 box numbers by 1907, creating congestion and poor working conditions. Three upgrades, starting with a stamp cancelling machine were provided to the Brandon Post Office in the fall of 1907. This was followed by a reclassification of the Post Office to a Class 3 Government Post Office. This is a suitable narrative to develop importance and treatment on the Title Page and begin the exhibit.
 - Discovery: Registered and special delivery mail** was processed at a stamp wicket, not through the Model L. *This is standard postal operations*, but was confirmed in 26 October 1907 issue. No examples of registered mail through the Brandon machines have been reported.
 - Discovery: The Dominion Fair Slogan Die.** The arrival and imminent use of the first slogan used at the post office was front page news on 20 January 1913, a publication date which also mirrors the earliest reported use of the slogan itself. **Cost of die: \$18.** Two issues later, the newspaper reports that the original slogan request by the Exhibition Board was for a slogan to promote the 1912 Summer Fair, but postponed for a year, awaiting an electric cancelling machine.
 - Discovery:** A Post Office executive in Ottawa confirms that the Dominion Fair Slogan die was only compatible with electric driven machines and could not have been used in the recently replaced Model L. (see above) Other researchers have suspected this incompatibility existed, but this story confirms it. This discovery also lends credence to the Model S being installed with a new obliterator: *the obliterator in the old Model L wouldn't work in the new machine.*
- **Examination of machine cancel and slogan cancel databases on the Postal History Society of Canada website.**
- Personal communications with Cecil Coutts, a distinguished authority on Canadian slogan cancels. Mr. Coutts shared his personal data base to confirm two usages of the obliterator service letter "R": 1907 (in the exhibit) and the other 1913.
- Personal communications with Alex Savakis, Machine Cancel Society. Mr. Savakis generously provided images of the Model L and Model S cancelling machines, which are used at the start of each Chapter. *Images used by permission.* 

References:

- **Library and Archives Canada.** Auditor General's Report of 1907/1908, **pp S-75/76, which has the official start date of the International contract in 1907.** **Link:** <https://archive.org/details/n01qysessionalpap43canauoft/page/n177>
- **The Brandon Daily Sun,** 20 January 1913 Page 1, which has the **Dominion Fair Slogan story.**
Link: <https://digitalcollections.lib.umanitoba.ca/islandora/object/uofm%3A2917297>
- **Postal History Society of Canada website,** with its dater and slogan databases. www.postalhistory.net
- **The Early Rapid Cancelling Machines of Canada.** David F. Sessions, pp 86-95, 102-103