

The Great War Internment Camps Of Canada

SYNOPSIS

This **Display Class** exhibit looks at the various features of mail to and from persons detained in internment camps in Canada during the Great War, with an emphasis on military censorship.

The reader is taken through outgoing and incoming correspondence starting with censorship that was done centrally. This is followed by an examination on a camp by camp basis, done in the order in which the camps opened. For some camps, there is no known correspondence which survives.

This material generally ranges from scarce to rare. This exhibit and its predecessor (reworked to incorporate the comments of thoughtful judges) is, to my knowledge, the first time that this material has been shown as a complete exhibit. Two notable exhibits by Steven Luciuk and Bill Robinson showed some of this material, but only as part of a larger overall exhibit. Luciuk's exhibit covered both world wars and Robinson's included Canadian prisoners in Europe during the Great War.

I have done a considerable amount of original research, both philatelic and historic, some of which is specifically highlighted in the exhibit. I wrote a book on the subject, published by BNAPS in 1916, and entitled "Postal History of the Great War Internment Camps in Canada". The book and this exhibit are the first serious attempt to analyze many aspects of this POW mail, including early and late dates for the censor markings and a general census to establish rarity. As this book incorporated, with permission, all previous BNAPS articles on the subject, it is currently the only necessary reference work for philatelists.

This exhibit includes **all** the covers which represent a unique example of a censor marking. In most instances where only two examples are known, both are shown. To the best of my knowledge, this exhibit includes all the known markings, with the exception of one which was privately produced and is not an official government censor marking.

Original items (covers and postcards) are outlined in a double line box with a brief description above and highlights of the item below. Important features (particular rarity, scarce destinations, etc.) are in **red**. Scans are shown in a single line box. Generally, scans are at 75% for a complete reproduction of an item and 100% if it is a scan of a portion of an item such as a return address or a postmark. Images from archives and other sources are shown without borders.

There are a number of photographic illustrations in this Display Class exhibit, many of which are postcards. In most cases, real photo postcards of the camps can only be classified as rare. All photographs are noted for their source, and all are out of copyright. Where necessary, I have obtained permission for their use and have paid for that privilege.

Condition is always an issue with this material. Much of the paper used for prisoner of war stationery was of poor quality. Some is very brittle, and items were easily damaged. This is a particular problem with prisoner of war mail, as sealed correspondence would usually be opened three times - by the recipient and two sets of censors. Occasionally a fourth and even a fifth examination was done. Also, this mail was often handled, read and reread regularly by the recipient, as a reminder of, or by, a family member or friend who was now thousands of miles away from home and in enemy hands.

Literature on this subject is very limited, at least until the book discussed above was published and has become, with all due humility, the definitive work for future reference. What follows on the next page is the bibliography from the book which relates to philatelic references. Of particular use is the Toop article from the 1984 BNA Topics. However, all of the information in those references have been incorporated in or supplanted by my book. I have not listed any historic references.

A Note Regarding the Use of Red Highlights

This exhibit includes an exceptional number of rare items. A summary follows:

- 14 items which are unique
- 14 covers where both of two known examples are present
- 2 covers where one of two known examples are present
- 7 covers where five or fewer examples are known
- 25 examples of earliest known usage
- 23 examples of latest known usage

In addition, there are numerous covers with scarce destinations or points of origin and covers with other unusual features.

This creates a dilemma for me as an exhibitor. How does one choose the items to highlight and how should that be accomplished? The approach I have taken is to highlight all of these items, but in a subtle manner so as to avoid overpowering the presentation. I have done this in red type, but in the same font and without bold emphasis. In fact, a judge should be able to take advantage of this approach, getting a "Readers' Digest" version of the exhibit by scanning the red highlighted descriptions.

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