

# THE 1937 CANADIAN CORONATION FLAG CANCELLATIONS USED BEYOND THE OFFICIAL TIME PERIOD

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How often has one read in philatelic, or any other specialist publication of a completely different topic, such as horticulture, of “is known used from....” or “reported/seen in or from.....”. There is inevitably no follow up by the author of the original article (following further research) or by other enthusiastic people who could add substance, coupled with scans/photos of those missing details.

The Canadian 1937 Coronation Flag cancellation is one such topic which has had numerous specialist articles on both sides of the Atlantic by eminent collectors and students of flag cancels that, even after a period of 80 plus years is still yielding new items of interest or, with the improved forms of reproduction, can deliver images of previously unpublished material.

In both BNAP's '*Topics*' of 2008 where Gary Dickinson (1) showed items from his own collection as well as a list of information previously researched by Doug Lingard and others, or even in our own '*Maple Leaves*' the writer published an article on this subject in October 2012 (2). Both articles showed little information on covers that fell outside the defined period of use, even though their text alluded to the existence of such covers. Upon reference to either article, it will be read that this flag cancellation would be used from Monday 10th May to Saturday 15th May 1937 with the actual coronation of King George VI being on Wednesday 12th May.

The intention of this article is to provide interested readers, with as much information as is known to the author, accompanied with colour scans of material held in his collection or that of others, which adds more substance to previous articles. This is not intended to publish new research, but to bring to other collectors notice scarce material which may be hidden in their own collections and upon further inspection after reading this article, they may care to share with us all and add valuable information to the public domain.

As mentioned above, the use of Flags Type 50 and 51 (bilingual English/French) were designated by Canadian Postal Authorities for one week, ending on the Saturday. There does not seem to be a record of when the 22 offices were supposed to return these dies to Ottawa for archiving. The following day, being a Sunday, would be quiet, especially in the smaller offices and any mail received may well have been hand stamped rather than set up on the 'Perfect' rapid cancelling machine(s). Consequently, the sorting staff when setting up the dater hub for the 16th, failed to note that the slogan had not been removed to the default one with the following consequences.

**New Westminster.** This office probably had very little mail to process on a Sunday in 1937 which resulted in a number of envelopes/cards being cancelled for the 16th as evidenced by the covers below.



*Fig 1 A postal stationery 1 cent cover timed at 12PM (i.e. noon) being the city 'drop' rate. This was more than likely the earliest time the machine was used to justify the amount of uncanceled mail. (Courtesy of Bob Thorne)*



*Fig 2 An almost identical drop letter cover with the same handwriting, but to another addressee, also timed at 12PM. The sender was a James Shrimpton (inked rubber h/s on reverse) of South Burnaby. The author believes that at least one more cover of a similar nature exists.*

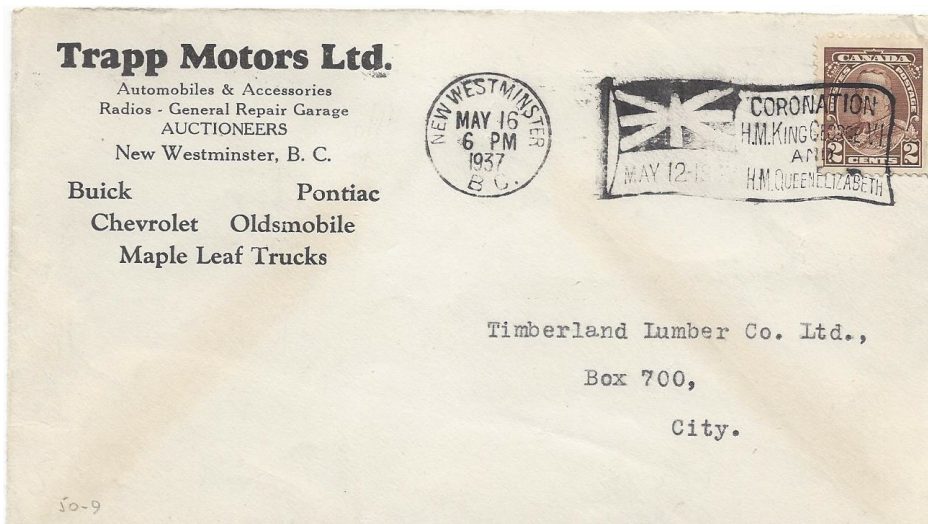


Fig 3 An attractive cover bearing a 2 cent adhesive, timed at 6PM to a local city post box. Are there any other times in collector's hands? (Courtesy Doug Lingard)



Fig 4 A most unusual cover with more questions than answers. It is dated May 19 and whilst the slogan just ties the Coronation stamp, there does not seem to be a dater hub impression, hence the necessity for the circular date stamp cancelling the adhesive, timed at '3'.

Were the sorting clerks servicing the machine and then noticed that the Coronation slogan was still in situ, removing this and replacing it with the default wavy line canceller?

**Halifax.** I have been able to track down two covers bearing the Sunday date of May 16, each timed at 11.30 PM. The Perfect machine may have been started at the end of day to clear that days accumulated post, without noticing until a few covers had been processed, that the Coronation slogan had not been removed.



Fig 5 Two covers from Halifax N.S. With May 16 dates.

**Ottawa.** The latest date from Ottawa is a cover dated May 17 which is addressed to Sydney, Australia. There has been much discussion on how this occurred with the most plausible being that it was a 'by favour' cover for someone who had not posted it (probably to himself) during the previous week. The clerk managed to find the slogan, which had been removed at the end of day on Saturday 15th, placed it into the machine, but forgot to correct the dater hub. To date, there has been no record of any other cover bearing either May 16 or 17 dates, reinforcing the theory described.



*Fig 6 Cover from Ottawa with May 17 date.*

**Port Arthur.** Unlike today's modern dynamic city named Thunder Bay, following the merger with Fort William and several nearby townships in 1970, Port Arthur in 1937 was quite small in terms of population. Nevertheless, the amount of mail being processed was enough to use the Perfect cancelling machine approximately four times a day during the week, but only a few times on a Sunday. This has resulted in the examples shown overleaf.

**Windsor, Ont.** A reasonably common slogan from a city of 100,000+ which indicates that there would have been a fair amount of mail being processed each day, although some dates in the period May 10 through to 15, are more difficult to locate. Nevertheless, the postal clerks failed to change the Coronation slogan to that of the default cancelling device resulting in the following known examples shown overleaf.

E. R. GAVIN  
SHOES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY  
PORT ARTHUR, ONT.

PORT ARTHUR ONT  
MAY 16  
7 AM  
1937

Dr. P. Meares,  
228 4th Avenue,  
Two Harbors, Minn.



Fig 7 An example dated May 16 (Sunday) and timed at 7 AM. This time would have cleared the early morning mail and any leftovers from the previous day. However, those tasked with changing the day/time in the dater hub, forgot to check the slogan had been removed.



Fig 8 Dated May 17 timed at 7 AM. A full 24 hours later and the slogan error had still not been picked up, even though the dater had been changed. One other cover is known to the author, as there is a facsimile appearing in the 'Flag Pole' news letter (4) also addressed to the Commercial Credit Corp., Dated May 16 but timed at 7.30 PM. One speculates that the error was quickly discovered on the Monday.



Fig 9 Sunday, May 16. This example is timed at 11.30 PM yet there were, in all probability, a number of occasions throughout the day, when the machine would have been operated. The question must be asked 'where are other examples with earlier times?



Fig 10 Another example from May 16 with the 11.30 PM timed dater hub. During the previous week there were other times of using the Perfect machine, even discounting the 10th (first day of the Coronation stamp and 4, 5 and 8 cent Mufti stamps) and 12th (the day of the Coronation) when it was used indicating that there was a demand for an automated process rather than hand-stamping.



*Fig 11 Whilst a feint impression, this is dated May 17 and timed at 12.30 AM. This is surmised to be the time when it was noticed that the Coronation slogan was still in situ.*

**Charlottetown, P.E.I.** Finally, I am able to show the latest known example of the Coronation slogan. When I first saw this, I queried whether it was an error for May 12 as the time mark is in the middle of the night and was there a sleepy eyed clerk who put in 21 rather than the correct date of the 12th. When entering into correspondence with Doug Lingard, he dismissed this theory as he believed that there is an example in another collection which is dated May 18. This leaves the big question as to where are all the other examples prior to this date or even another one on the 18th? The capital had a population of approximately 10-15,000 at the time of this cover which leads me to suspect that there are still the odd one or two to be discovered.



*Fig 12 If only this date appeared on a complete envelope which may have offered a clue as to how this came about.*



If there are any other collectors of this Flag cancel and who discover dates of 16th May and later, the author would be pleased to receive scans. My email address is in the membership booklet.

References and notes:-

1. British North America Philatelic Society (BNAPS) quarterly journal 'Topics', Vol. 65 No. 1.
2. The King George VI Coronation Flag Cancels and Covers Vol. 32 No. 8.
3. Credit is given to Doug Lingard for the scans shown in Figures 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 & 11.
4. 'Flag Pole' was a BNAPS study group news letter. This is shown in Vol. 7 No. 2 dated Sept. 1993.

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