Canada Meter Stamp Newsletter

NEWS

I kept a record of my incoming letters over the course of one week, not including "non-stamped" junk mail. I received 5 letters having an adhesive postage stamp. There were 16 with postage paid by a postage meter, and 21 having a Postage-Paid-in Cash marking. Only 12 percent bore a postage stamp - where is philately going?

Dick Staeger is slowly reworking his Postage-Paid-in-Cash catalogue. Much of this material is very scarce and is a good place to start someone in the hobby of collecting since a decent start can be made at almost no expense.

I gave a talk on the franchise system to the Guelph Stamp Club and in the past month have attended four first day openings.   I thought I would use the Newsletter to record the talk and have updated it with new information from the several openings.

There is no doubt that the public is attracted to the new franchise outlets and find them very convenient. Any I have attended are very busy. I do get the feeling that Canada Post puts these in place but I think the support is rather poor. Except for those doing training there is virtually no support within the main system who look upon them as a lose of their jobs.

Also included in the Newsletter is the massive Type 11 CMSG Catalogue. I am sure you will have items to add to it. Several sent in additions to the Type 19 and Type 9 Catalogues which I will include in the next Newsletter.

Dave and I wish each of you the compliments of the Christmas and New Year season and hope you acquire good items in the next year.
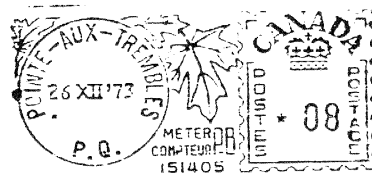
RETAIL POINT OF SALE LABELS
Ross W. Irwin

Alan R. Marchment was appointed Chairman of the Review Committee on the Mandate and Productivity of the Canada Post Office Corporation, July 16, 1985. The Report of the Committee included five thrusts, the third of which was to improve the public's access to postal services and products. It stated "the present system uses both post offices provided and staffed by the Corporation, and offices and stamp agencies run by the private sector, usually as an ancillary to another business". "The present system was developed in another era, and does not satisfy current demands for access to postal services and products that is convenient to the public in terms of both location and hours of business." (1)

Donald Lander, President of the Corporation, wrote "The best and most cost-effective method to improve this access is by using a wide variety of private sector businesses to distribute postal products and services, which can provide the better access required at lower operating and capital costs to the Corporation. The process, which will be implemented over a period of 10 years, will result in the total number of outlets through which postal services and products are available being increased by as much as 50 percent over the present figure of approximately 13,000", that is, to about 20,000. (2)

During 1987, 14 company operated New Direction Outlets were opened in major shopping malls. These outlets offered longer hours, self service, and the use of credit cards. In 1986-87, franchising arrangements were arranged with an established retail business in Toronto Fairview Shopping Centre to provide an expanded range of postal services and products. The first in the corporations 10-year plan to expand the retail network in rural and urban areas in the most cost-effective way and to reflect changes in demographics and customer shopping patterns and to improve convenience and increase the locations for public access to postal services and products. Rural post offices that no longer serve an adequate customer base have been amalgamated and service provided in other ways, including local businesses. (3)

Canada Post initiated a program of franchised point-of-sale postal outlets in 1986. A franchised postal outlet is guaranteed a specific market area within which no one else is permitted to sell stamps unless authorized by the franchisee. Class A franchised retail postal outlets use a computerized accounting system. The cost of a franchise is high - about $40,000, of which a major part is the $18,000 "cash register system" which generates the labels.

The heart of the franchise system is the computerized accounting system. Old sub post offices kept their revenue in coffee cans, etc, and balanced books daily. The new cash register system is the main attraction for franchise operations because the labour input and bookkeeping is almost zero. Every transaction, such as the sale of a single stamp, or a complicated transaction such as a registered special delivery parcel to the United States, must be entered in the system. A monthly balance is determined by pressing one key in the audit system. It is this feature which has permitted the extension of the franchised retail postal outlet program to large busy stores. Invariably the Mail*Poste counter is at the rear of the store, a concept to encourage shopping for other items during a visit.

The first installation of the new cash register system in Toronto was in August 1988, although they were placed in eastern and western Canada before this date. In the fall of 1988 there were three in the Toronto area. Today there are over 500 in Canada.

The Siemens NIXDORF Point of Sale system was developed in Germany but was said to be an only an interim step in the solution of Canada Posts' long term POS needs. It can print postage on a label up to $999.99, but no fractional rates. Franchise outlets are presently not to accept postage-paid-in-cash bulk mailings.

The NIXDORF accounting system consists of an electronic scale upon which a letter or parcel is placed. A keyboard unit is used to enter the class of postage (letter, parcel, registered, COD, insured, etc). The detail of the transaction is displayed on a 9-inch monitor to the operator and the total amount is shown on a customer display unit. Payment must be made and deposited in a cash drawer. The operator has an option to sell an postage stamp or have the system generate an adhesive label in a label printer. A receipt is generated for every transaction by a receipt printer. The system also includes a form printer to generate daily or monthly reports. A hand held scanner is available to read the bar code on booklets of postage stamps and for registration. It is a very sophisticated system.

The peelable label was originally generated by a dot matrix printer. The label is 80 mm by 40 mm and was affixed to a 147 mm by 63 mm carrier paper. The label, has CANADA, a single Crown and Maple Leaf, the postage paid, the words POSTES and POSTAGE and the name of the issuing office. There is a great variety in how the issuing office name is expressed.
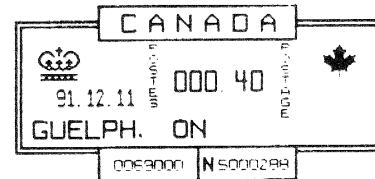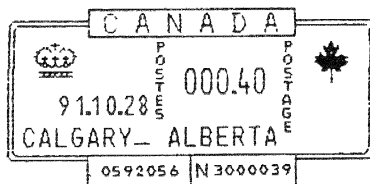
Dot Matrix and Laser Generated Labels on Carrier Paper

The date is of European style of year-month-day, with the year expressed by two digits. The label also bears two tablets at the bottom. That at left is the number assigned to that Retail Postal Outlet. This is the 6-digit POCON number which is allocated geographically, with an additional "0" prefix. The right tablet contains the alfa-numeric series which identifies the NIXDORF unit. It costs two to four cents to run a label and some franchise operators will not generate one for a 40 cent transaction.

Each morning the operator of the retail postal outlet is to test the system before doing any business and a SPECIMEN label is generated. Some do not shut the system down and a specimen is only needed when it is restarted. They new systems have the capability of generating a specimen at anytime.
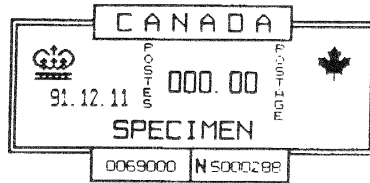
Specimen labels

A customer receipt is generated for each sale, and is printed on special paper watermarked POSTAL SERVICES - SERVICES POSTAUX.

Information on the receipt includes the official name and full address of the Retail Postal Outlet point of sale. The date and time of the sale. The POCON number, register number, and operator code. The receipt below shows that one letter (L) was mailed at .38c. The amount tendered and change is noted in both official languages. Receipts now include the General Sales Tax.

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JACKSON SQUARE POSTAL OUTLET
2 KING ST. W., JACKSON SQUARE
HAMILTON, ONTARIO (L8P-4S0)
90/11/03  14:07  013226  OPER
PS  015      000069
L     4  a        .39           1.56

TOTAL COST/COUT TOTAL           1.56
AMT PAID /MONTANT PAYE
   CASH/COMPTANT               2.00
CHANGE/MONNAIE                 0.44
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*******************************
BULLFROG POSTAL OUTLET
380 ERAMOSA  ROAD
GUELPH              ON
N1E 6R0

91/12/11       09:21   ID# DAY
RC# 069000  W.ID: 1    TR# 100031

FS/ST     3 a    0.40        VF/TP
  UNIT CST       0.40   COUT UNI
  SUBTL          1.20    SOUS-TOT

VALUE GST        1.20 VALR DE TPS
GST 000000000    0.08        TPS

TOTAL            1.28       TOTAL
  CASH CDN       1.28   ESP.$CAN
  CHG.DUE        0.00   MONNAIE
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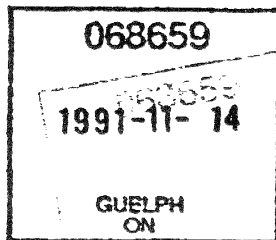
The NIXDORF serial numbers use a 7 digit number having an "N" prefix and starting at N3000000. The dot matrix printer was very slow and in 1990 a Model CD72 laser printer was substituted for the new offices opened. A new series was used for identification - N5000000. A short N4000000 series exists for which there is no apparent reason nor explanation. It has a few dot matrix and some laser labels.

The laser labels are printed on a 55 mm by 30 mm label and on a narrow carrier 58 mm by 33 mm. The dot matrix carrier used a sprocket feed carrier. The laser labels are friction fed. The design is similiar; however, the corners are square and it is slightly smaller. The issuing office name tends to be standardized. The number in the lower left tablet appears to be the new Human Resource Inventory System (HRIS) number, which is 5 digits preceeded by a "0" and is allocated sequentially across Canada.

References

1. Report of the Review Committee on the Mandate and Productivity of Canada Post Corporation. 1985.
2. Canada Post Corporation Annual Report for 1986/87, p. 5.
3. Ibid, p. 16.

NIXDORF'S REVISITED AGAIN

Subsequent to the above talk I had the opportunity to speak with the local Canada Post area supervisor, a Siemen employee who installs the systems and three different training officers. Below is a synthesis of what I think I learned.

Canada Post has decided that Guelph shall have 12 "retail outlets". All sub-post offices will be converted to franchises and the "corporate" office, ie, the main office will be closed. As you know, I have an "A" box number (small box). I will lose this, or have the option of getting a new number at a retail outlet. The price of a box is now $50 which is about the same as at the corporate office. I think I will probably renew for one year and then phase it out. These franchises have a short life and I would be continually changing box numbers.

The franchise clears away an area in the store and a bunch of boxes shows up. A group of people attend and assemble the units. The franchise operator is given 40 hours of training prior to the opening. Canada Post has a contract with a professional training company. There are 22 employees of this company across Canada. A training officer remains in the store for an additional 40 hours to see that the operator is familiar with the system and procedures. There are 22 of these training officers across Canada. One, told me she had put in systems right across the country. Her first was Hamilton Upper James (N3000040) in September 1988.

These training officers understand the procedures quite well but have very little understanding of the system or what is on the label. It is all in the software they use and this is written at the Siemens plant in Toronto. I found that even the Siemens employee knew virtually nothing about the label - he was a computer technician replacing an inoperative printer.

SPECIMENS are used whenever the printer is restarted to line them up. They told me that some outlets do not generate them as they leave the system on all the time and there is no need to go through the startup procedure.

TEST LABELS can be generated at anytime. I was not aware of these. They are only on the early machines with what we call dot matrix printers. If you know of an office with an old machine see if a test label can be procured.

One of the instructions given to operators is that no label is to be generated be carried away. It must be applied to a cover and mailed at the site. The stated reason is that, like meters, the label if used later would be stale dated. I had no trouble in getting what I wanted for philatelic purposes but unless the operator had been informed this could be done then some franchises may refuse to issue a label.

The Nixdorf system is always defaults to produce a label unless overridden and a stamp is sold. It depends on the outlet. The statement to me was that stamps are usually sold and that the labels are primarily used for parcels.

The "A" franchise is equipped with a Nixdorf. We are also to get a "B-Urban" which is a franchise not equipped with a Nixdorf - just coffee cans to keep money in? These are the same as the "Rural Outlets".

Another training officer told me there are three systems in use. The "I POS" (Interim Point of Sale) was the initial one of which there were about 400. These outlets used the old course dot matrix system. The officer did not know but I am certain it is our N3 series. Our numbers go to 384. This printer was a single unit which had three printing heads, one each for labels, receipts and forms.

The next upgrade they call their "B POS" (Bridge Point of Sale) system. Bridge POS He stated there were about 175 of these. Our numbers only go to 30. These have been, or are in the process of being, changed over. I expect these are what list as N4. This system used the new hardware with the old software. The new hardware includes a scanner and a new printer. The CD 72 laser printer is a stand alone unit. The system also includes a dot matrix printer for the printing of receipts and forms.

Current installations are termed "R POS" (Retail Point of Sale). The only difference between the B POS and R POS is in the software used. The hardware is the same. You have no doubt observed that the laser printed labels just have the name of the city. The exact location is only included on the receipt.

One training officer told me she had just completed the major western cities and they were doing the small cities in Ontario - Guelph, Cambridge, Stratford, Brantford, Woodstock, Windsor, etc. Kitchener will be done in early 1992.

When you get a label be sure to ask for one of their hand stamp cancels as well. I have a label, specimen and hand stamp on the same envelope for Guelph.
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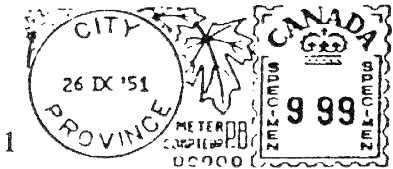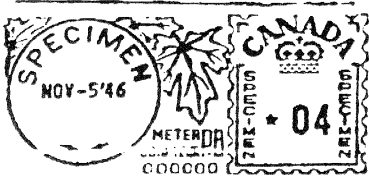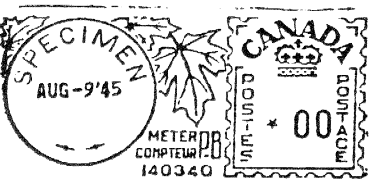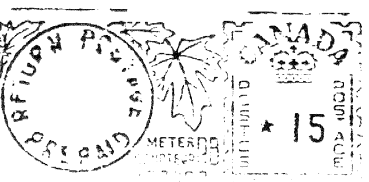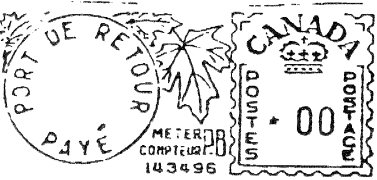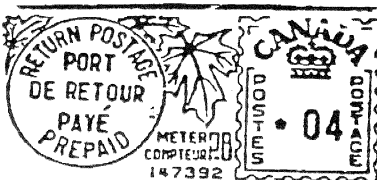
Below is a poorly inked example of a usage in the village of Oakwood, but the postage meter is actually set in the town of Lindsay, 8 miles distant.
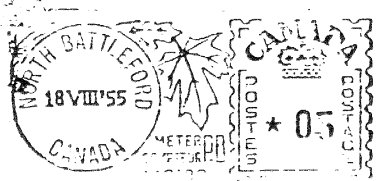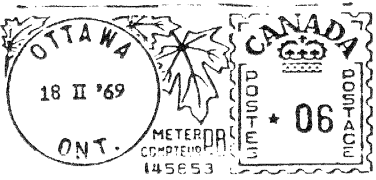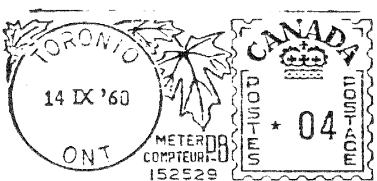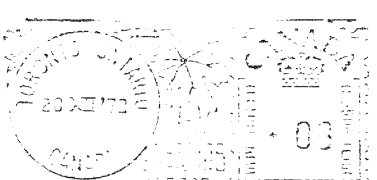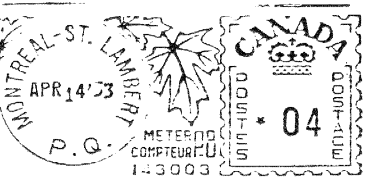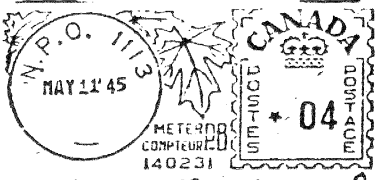
THE TOWNSHIP OF
MARIPOSA
P.O. BOX 70
OAKWOOD, ONTARIO,
K0M 2M0

CMSG METER CATALOG
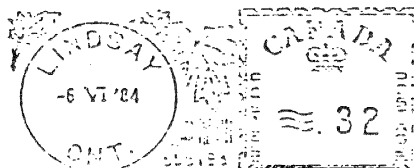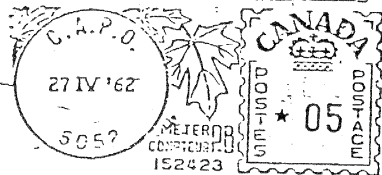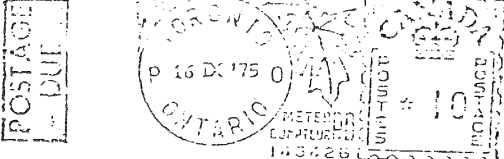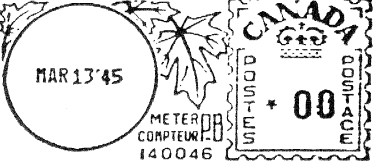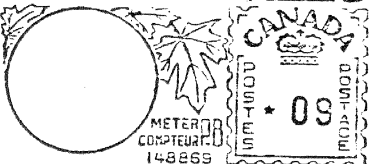
Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.1	WELLAND SEP 24'40 ONTARIO METER COMPTEUR PB 140052 CANADA POSTES * 03 POSTAGE	Basic type
11.1.1	CITY 26 IX '51 PROVINCE METER COMPTEUR PB 00000 CANADA SPECIMEN 9 99 SPECIMEN	CITY PROVINCE SPECIMEN
11.1.2	SPECIMEN NOV-5'46 METER COMPTEUR PB 000000 CANADA SPECIMEN * 04 SPECIMEN	SPECIMEN SPECIMEN, 000000 serial, 2 dingbats
11.1.3	SPECIMEN AUG-9'45 METER COMPTEUR PB 140340 CANADA POSTES * 00 POSTAGE	SPECIMEN POSTES, 2 dingbats
11.1.4	RETURN POSTAGE PREPAID METER PB CANADA * 15 POSTAGE	RETURN POSTAGE PREPAID
11.1.5	PORT DE RETOUR PAYÉ METER COMPTEUR PB 143496 CANADA POSTES * 00 POSTAGE	PORT DE RETOUR PAYE
11.1.6	RETURN POSTAGE PORT DE RETOUR PAYÉ PREPAID METER COMPTEUR PB 147392 CANADA POSTES * 04 POSTAGE	RETURN POSTAGE PREPAID PORT DE RETOUR PAYE

CMSG METER CATALOG
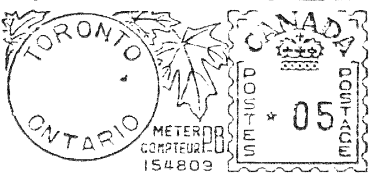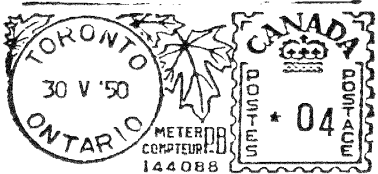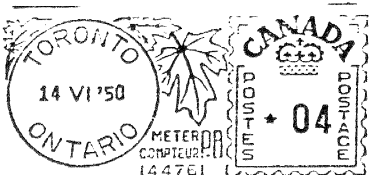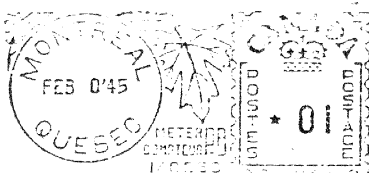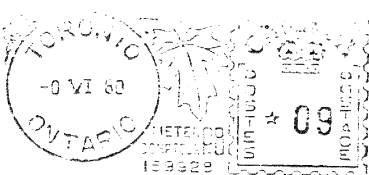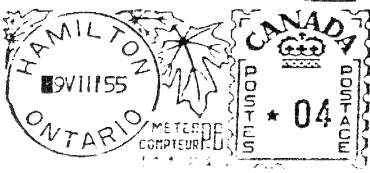
Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.1.7		CANADA in townmark, no province
11.1.8		Province abbreviated, with periods
11.1.9		Province abbreviated, no periods
11.1.10		CANADA in townmark, with province
11.1.11		Smaller letters for province
11.1.12		Hyphenated postal substation in townmark
11.1.13		N.P.O. in townmark
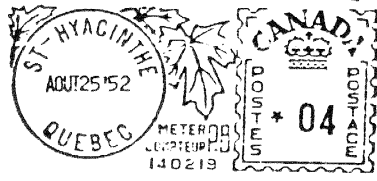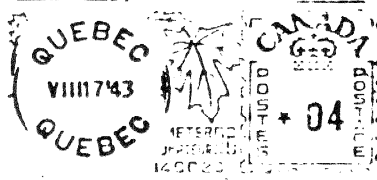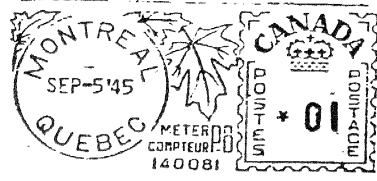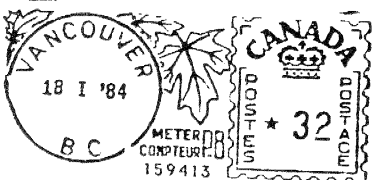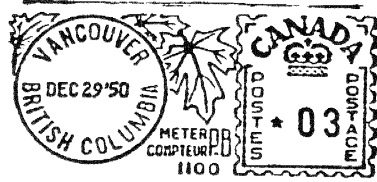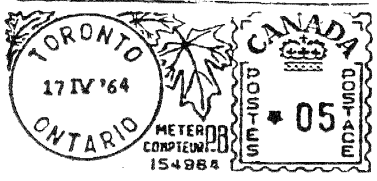
CMSG METER CATALOG

Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.1.14		C.A.P.O. in townmark
11.1.15		Town name spelled incorrectly
11.1.16		R.C.A.F. station in townmark
11.1.17		Postal substation in P.O. meter
11.1.18		P.O. post office meter
11.1.19		Town and province blank
11.1.20		Townmark and datemark blank
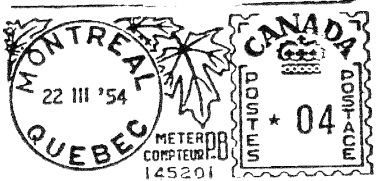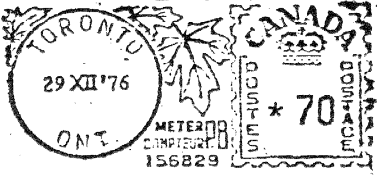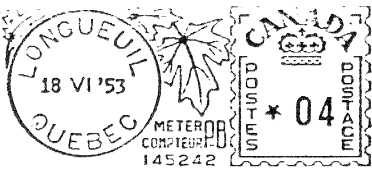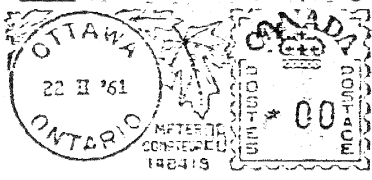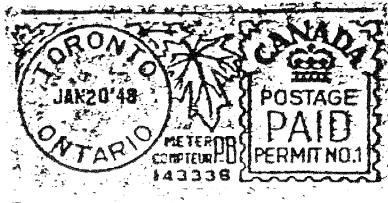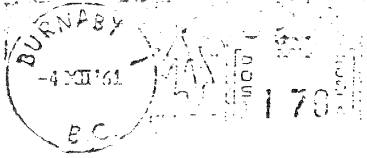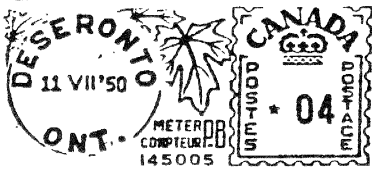
CMSG METER CATALOG

Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.1.21		Datemark blank
11.1.22		Datemark - DMY, month in RN sans serif, 2mm
11.1.23		Datemark - DMY, month in RN sans serif,1.5 mm
11.1.24		Datemark - MDY, day is "0"
11.1.25		Datemark - DMY, day is "0"
11.1.26		Datemark - DMY, month in RN with serifs
11.1.27		Datemark - uncut digit
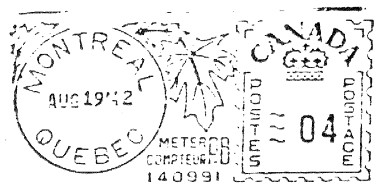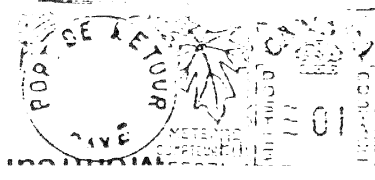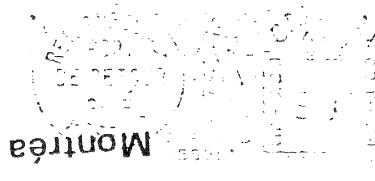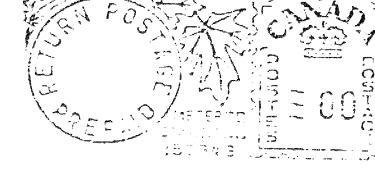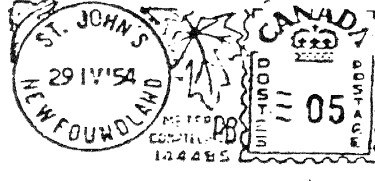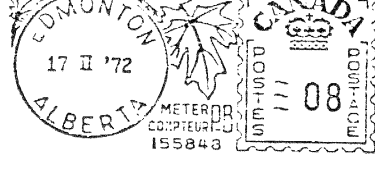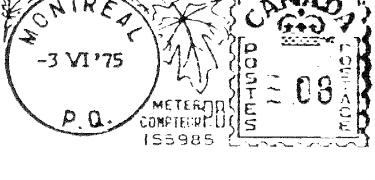
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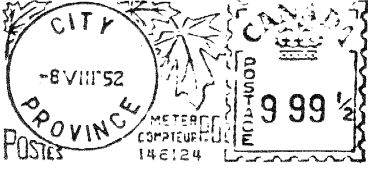| Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.1.28		Datemark – French letters for month
11.1.29		Datemark – MDY, month in RN sans serif
11.1.30		Taller datemark than early issues
11.1.31		Serial number has narrower numerals
11.1.32		Serial number has 4 digits
11.1.33		Closed "4" in serial number
11.1.34		Open "4" in serial number
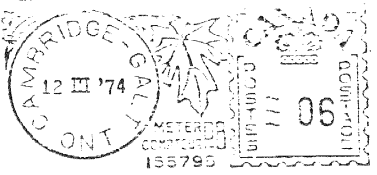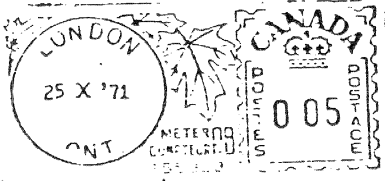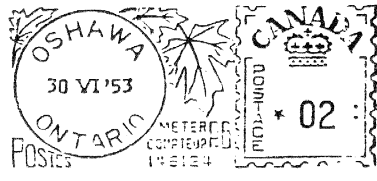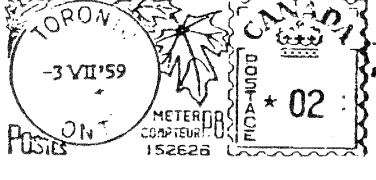
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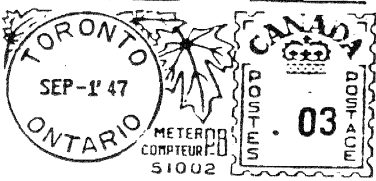| Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.1.35		Small star before value
11.1.36		Large star before value
11.1.37		Star before value inverted
11.1.38		Government frank (.00)
11.1.39		POSTAGE PAID PERMIT No. 1 in frank
11.1.40		Postal station number in townmark
11.1.41		Townmark with heavy lettering
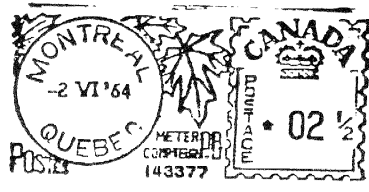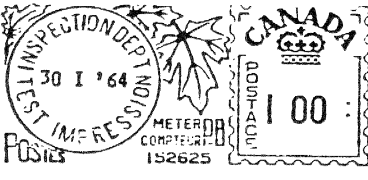
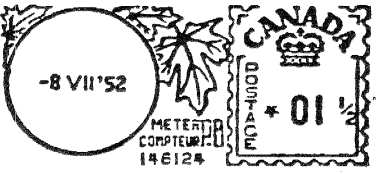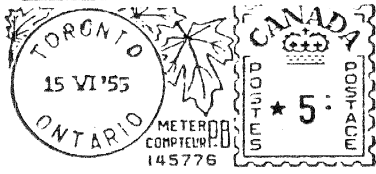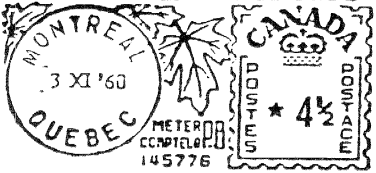| Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.2		Basic type
11.2.1		PORT DE RETOUR PAYE
11.2.2		RETURN POSTAGE PREPAID PORT DE RETOUR PAYE
11.2.3		RETURN POSTAGE PREPAID
11.2.4		Date mark - DMY, month in RN sans serif, 2 mm
11.2.5		Datemark DMY, month in RN with serifs
11.2.6		Province abbreviated, with periods
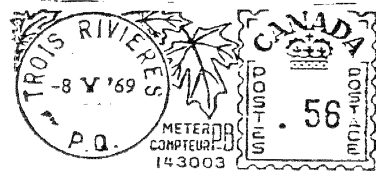
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Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.2.7		Province abbreviated, no periods
11.3		Basic type
11.4		Basic type
11.4.1		CITY PROVINCE SPECIMEN, note sans serif month
11.4.2		Province abbreviated, with periods

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Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.4.3		Fractional value instead of 2 dots
Test		INSPECTION DEPT. TEST IMPRESSION
11.5		Basic type
11.5.1		No P.O. in townmark

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Type	Indicia	Remarks
11.6		Basic type
11.6.1		Town and province omitted
11.6.2		Date mark - DMY, month in RN with serifs
11.6.3		Fractional value instead of 2 dots
11.7		Basic type