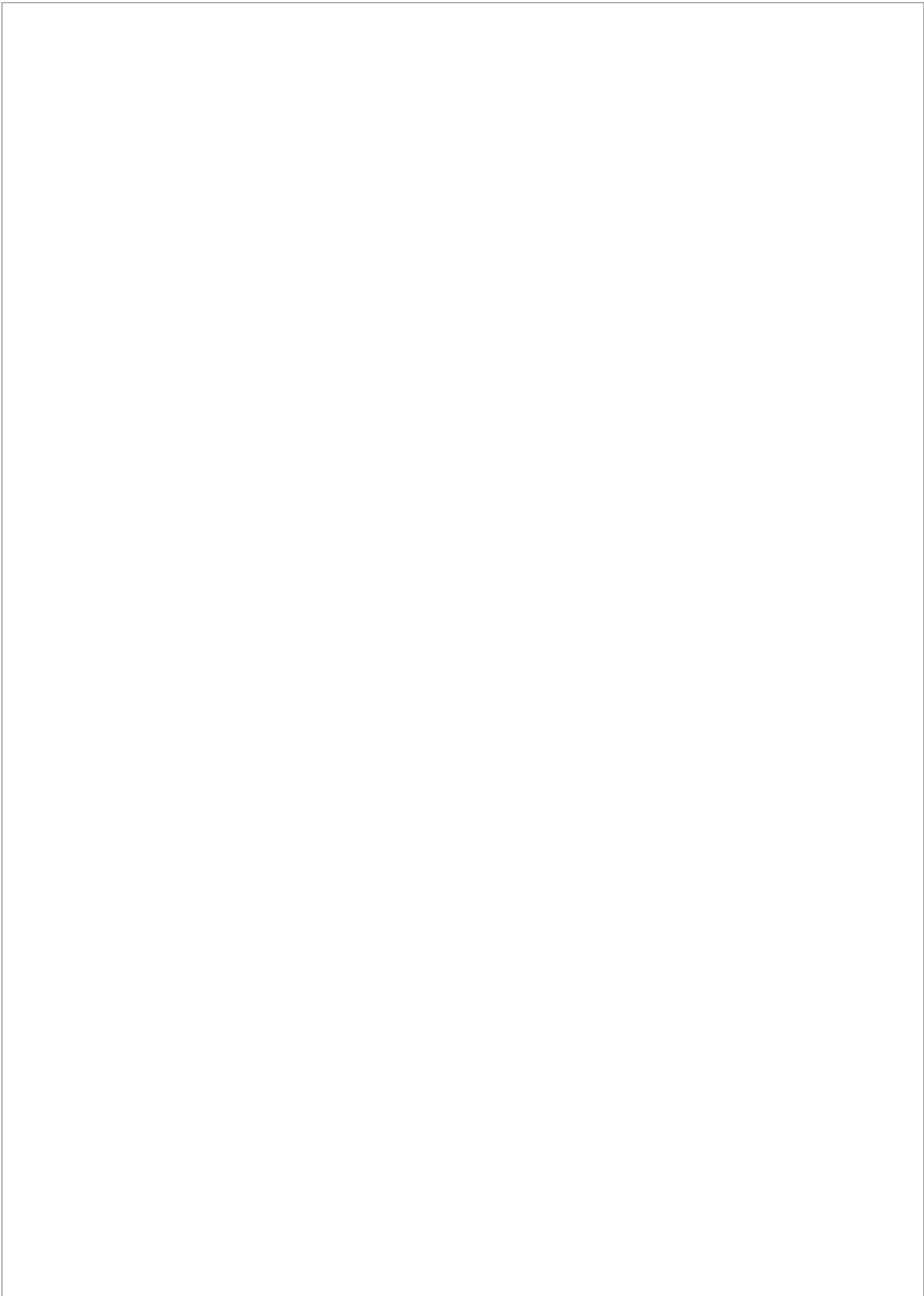




# THE "BOXED" AIR MAIL HAND STAMP RE-VISITED

Murray Heifetz

An updated version of the initial study, that was published in The Canadian Aerophilatelist June 1998.



Airmail service within Canada really starts in 1928. Prior to this, there were experimental flights by the RAF/RCAF, flights by individual pilots, and some regular services in Manitoba, Northern Ontario and Western Quebec by the early local "bush" airlines. In 1928 there began regular routes contracted by the Canadian Post Office, the introduction of a basic 5c airmail rate, and the issuance of a 5c airmail stamp.

With these new services there arose the need to identify mail which was to be carried by air. Initially this was done by specially designed airmail envelopes, use of airmail etiquettes, and merely inscribing or creating a handstamp reading "by Airmail" or some similar wording. Towards the end of 1928 the Post Office authorized the use of a handstamp reading "AIR MAIL" enclosed in a rectangular box.

It is unclear how this handstamp was distributed or by whom it was produced. One possibility is that it was made in Ottawa by a designated manufacturer and distributed to postmasters throughout the country. In this regard, attempts were made to verify this through the Post Office archives and through Pritchard-Andrews (the most likely manufacturer). Post Office records of this period are incomplete and no reference was found. No reply could be obtained from Pritchard-Andrews. A second possibility is that the Post Office recommended a design, and then left it up to individual handstamp manufacturers or stationers to produce the handstamps, and have them available for retail sale to postmasters, and businesses. The third, and most likely possibility, is that the Post Office established the permitted design and that postmasters could have them produced in their own area for local use. Usage seems to have been optional.

In *"The Transportation Proof Strikes of Canada"* edited by J. Paul Hughes, 7 of these markings are proofed. Two of them, with a second line "Poste Aérienne", were later proofs. Two of the others, proofed in October 1928, seem to be identical in all the aspects pertinent to my classification. The remaining four were proofed between April and December 1928. It is uncertain as to when these were first used on flown covers. My earliest is dated March 5, 1929.

[There was, however, a cover from Moncton dated January 11, 1928, with a boxed air mail handstamp, illustrated in the June 1998 *Canadian Aerophilatelist*. - This was probably applied some time after the flight, as it makes no sense for a handstamp to be used before it has been proofed. Additionally, while there were a few contracts for seasonal airmail granted between Oct. 1927 and March 1928, actual inauguration of more regular airmail service did not start before August. Hence proofing the handstamps in April would be consistent with the August commencement.]

There is no "latest" date. Some people still have a handstamp in their possession. One local postmaster still uses it on some of his personal mail. The major period of use was from about 1931 to 1937, corresponding to the period of growth in Canadian airmail service. Usage decreased rapidly with the introduction of "all-up" air service.

It is also unclear as to exactly when and why the handstamp was used on mail. The handstamp is, for example, sometimes found on some of the covers from a First Flight, but never on all of the covers from one leg of the flight, or to a particular destination..

Continued

**THE "BOXED" AIR MAIL HAND STAMP RE-VISITED by Murray Heifetz continued:**

To the best of my knowledge, these boxed markings had not previously been classified. This study is an attempt to do so, from the data base in my own collection. The classification, enumeration, and methodology is arbitrary. There may be a better and more logical way of doing this, and suggestions from readers are welcome.

The markings vary in four ways:

- The actual letter shapes are different.
- The letters may be the same but the strike dimensions vary.
- The design is the same but the rectangular box has different breaks.
- The colour of the strike varies

The design based on frame breaks is given a Roman numeral classification. For the same basic design but with different characteristics, there is a "sub-letter". Colour variations are noted in the text.

The variation by size is somewhat questionable. For each sub-type there is a wide range of measured markings. This creates an overlap of types which makes assignment arbitrary. More important, being a hand stamp, actual dimensions can vary with the pressure applied or the angle of strike of the stamp. The differences between types are small enough that the 3 sub types of type I may actually be a much smaller number. Measurements of the enclosed letters are taken from the left extremity of the 'A' in 'Air' to the outside of the 'T' in 'Mail'. The 'T' is also used for the letter height. Many strikes which have the same classification may also vary in the thickness of the letters. Where this is prominent, it is noted in the text.

There are at least two features which require further research.

Types beyond IV are different in basic letter style than types I - IV. The latter types can all relate to the design proofed by the Post Office. The others cannot. The question is, were they designs by a private organization, or were they officially approved hand stamps? For instance, most, but not all, of the covers seen with the type V stamp, are on covers designed by the International Air Mail Society in Montreal. Was this their design?

The second feature is the question of multiple strikes. Covers are known with more than one strike. They can be two or more of the same strike, two different strikes in the same colour, or two different strikes in different colours. The last case makes it reasonable to assume that the strikes were applied in different cities. They include covers totally within Canada, covers to the U.S.A., and covers sent overseas. My supposition is that the initial strike was applied at the first point from which airmail service was being provided. Consider a cover from Vancouver to New York or to Europe. It would have a strike applied in Vancouver, eventually get to Toronto (via either Seattle or Winnipeg-Pembina depending on the year), and then have another strike applied in Toronto for onward air service to either New York or Montreal. However, this needs to be verified.

Hopefully, publishing this updated version of my initial study, will have readers revisiting their own collections, and identifying the various marks on their covers. We then may be able to develop some more accurate classifications and understanding of the processes. The markings are certainly not rare but they are a little more difficult to get than I had assumed - particularly 1929 dates and some of the scarcer types.

**Continued**

## THE "BOXED" AIR MAIL HAND STAMP RE-VISITED by Murray Heifetz continued:

TYPE I



proofed April 1928 and  
Dec. 1928

TYPE Ia



proofed May 1928

TYPE Ib



proofed Oct. 1928

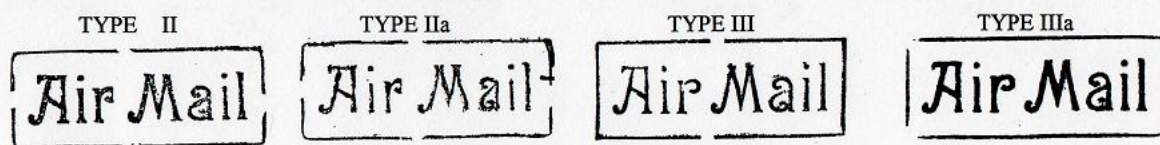
TYPE Ic



|                  |                                                 |                             |                                        |                                                     |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Box size         | 44-45 x 17-17 1/2 mm                            | 41 1/2-42 1/2 x 17-17 1/2mm | 45-47 x 17-18mm                        | 45-45 1/2 x 17 1/2mm                                |
| Letter size      | 37-38 x 8-8 1/2mm                               | 36 1/2-37 x 8-9mm           | 39-42 x 8-8 1/2mm                      | 38 1/2-40 1/2 x 8-8 1/2mm                           |
| Colours          | violet, magenta, gray, blue<br>Gray-blue, green | violet                      | violet, gray, black                    | black, violet                                       |
| Frame            | unbroken                                        | unbroken                    | unbroken                               | unbroken                                            |
| My earliest date | Mar. 5, 1929                                    | Nov. 21, 1940               | Feb. 28, 1933                          | Dec. 30, 1929                                       |
| Cities Posted    | Many cities across Canada                       | Montreal, Toronto           | Montreal, Kingston<br>Saanichton, B.C. | Kingston, Montreal<br>Grindstone Is.                |
| Remarks          |                                                 |                             |                                        | bottom tip of 'M' reaches<br>bottom line of letters |

Continue

## THE "BOXED" AIR MAIL HAND STAMP RE-VISITED by Murray Heifetz continued:



|                  |                                                     |                                                       |                                                 |                                       |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Box Size         | 44-45 x 17-18mm                                     | 44 ½ x 17 1/2mm                                       | 44 x 17 1/2mm                                   | 44 ½ x 17 ½ mm                        |
| Letter Size      | 37- 38 x 8-9 mm                                     | 38 x 9 mm                                             | 38 x 8 mm                                       | 40 x 9 mm                             |
| Colours          | violet, magenta, blue                               | violet                                                | violet                                          | black                                 |
| Frame            | broken in middle on all 4 sides                     | broken in middle on all 4 sides                       | broken top and bottom                           | broken at top and bottom left corners |
| My Earliest Date | Sept. 27, 1932                                      | illegible - likely 1934                               | Nov. 21, 1930                                   | July 11, 1938                         |
| Cities Poste     | Vancouver and some other cities in British Colombia | Vernon, B.C.                                          | Toronto, Ottawa, Dundas Delbourne - all Ontario | Calgary Stampede PO                   |
| Remarks          | thiin and thick lettering                           | middle stroke of 'M' much Shorter than other two legs |                                                 |                                       |

Continued

## THE "BOXED" AIR MAIL HAND STAMP RE-VISITED by Murray Heifetz continued:

TYPE IV



TYPE IVa



TYPE V



TYPE Va

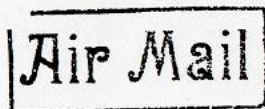


|                  |                             |                             |                    |                           |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Box Size         | 42 x 17 1/2mm               | 45 x 18mm                   | 45 x 17 1/2mm      | 48 x 18 mm                |
| Letter Size      | 37 x 8 1/2mm                | 38-38 1/2 x 9mm             | 38 x 8 1/2mm       | 44 x 10 mm                |
| Colours          | violet                      | violet                      | violet             | violet,                   |
| Frame            | Broken left and right sides | Broken left and right sides | Broken bottom only | broken lower left corner  |
| My earliest date | Feb. 22, 1932               | 1931 - day illegible        | Dec. 13, 1934      | June 22, 1932             |
| Cities Posted    | Toronto                     | Toronto, Calgary            | Winnipeg           | Montreal, Halifax, Ottawa |
| Remarks          |                             |                             |                    | thick lettering           |

Contin

## THE "BOXED" AIR MAIL HAND STAMP RE-VISITED by Murray Heifetz continued:

TYPE Vb



TYPE Vc



TYPE Vd



TYPE VI

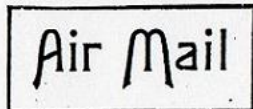


|                  |                                  |                         |                         |                    |
|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Box Size         | unknown - only seen              | 45 x 17 1/2mm           | 49 x 19mm               | 42 1/2 - 45 x 16mm |
| Letter Size      | in auction catalogue             | 39 x 8 1/2mm            | 41 x 9mm                | 36-38 x 9mm        |
| Colours          | unknown                          | black                   | black                   | black, magenta     |
| Frame            | broken top left corner           | one break at top centre | one break at right side | unbroken frame     |
| My earliest date | May 27, 1931                     | Mar. 13, 1931           | Nov. 10, 1941           | June 14, 1933      |
| Cities Posted    | Montreal                         | Calgary                 | Montreal                | Montreal only      |
| Remarks          | in Firby auction<br>January 1998 |                         |                         |                    |

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## THE "BOXED" AIR MAIL HAND STAMP RE-VISITED by Murray Heifetz continued:

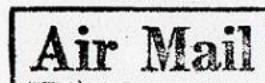
TYPE VII



TYPE VIII



TYPE VIIIa



TYPE IX



|                  |                                            |                         |               |                        |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Box Size         | 41 1/2 x 18 1/2mm                          | 45 1/2-46 x 16-16 1/2mm | 46 x 13 1/2mm | 48 1/2 x 19mm          |
| Letter Size      | 33 x 10 mm                                 | 40-41 x 7-1/2mm         | 39 x 7 1/2mm  | 43 x 15 mm             |
| Colours          | black, violet                              | violet, blue-black      | deep violet   | seen only in photocopy |
| Frame            | unbroken                                   | unbroken                | unbroken      | unbroken               |
| My Earliest date | Sept. 19, 1938                             | Sept. 11, 1952          | Mar. 28, 1938 | June? 10, 1940         |
| Cities Posted    | Halifax (ex Nascopie),<br>SK, Moose Jaw SK | Toronto, Edmonton       | Regina        | Joliette, PQ           |

(Courtesy of Dave Hanes)

Please send any comments, suggestions, and particularly additional information regarding this study, to:

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