

THE NEWFOUNDLAND SHIP LETTER MYSTERY

by Allan L. Steinhart, OTB

The Proof impression books of the Post Office in London record a group of Newfoundland postal markings which, to the best of my knowledge, have never been previously recorded or found used on cover. The strikes, found in Volume 8, pages 100 - 103 inclusive, are endorsed "Newfoundland, Voucher 50, 20 August 1851." Included are circular datestamps for: BAY-BULLS, BELORAM, BONAVISTA, BRIGUS, BURIN, CARBONEAR, CARNISH, FERRY LAND, FOGO, GREEN-POND, HARBOR-BRITAIN, HARBOR-GRACE, HEARTS CONTENT, HOLYROOD, ISLE-OF-VALEN, KINGS COVE, NEW-PERLICAN, ODERIN, PLACENTIA, SALMONIER, ST. MARYS, TREPASSEY, TRINITY and TWILLINGATE. All are dated 5 September 1851.

Also included were 24 circular 'PAID' datestamps, in the format 'FOGO' at the top and 'PAID' at the bottom, with a pair of circular lines on each side between the town name and 'PAID'.

The mystery in this batch of cancels sent out to Newfoundland lies in the remaining 24 straight-line handstamps. There is one of these devices for each of the 24 post offices listed above — 24 unreported SHIP-LETTER handstamps! On the different handstamps the letters are 4 mm in height, and the words SHIP-LETTER are 36 to 37 mm in length.

The question which arises is, quite simply, "What happened to these 24 SHIP-LETTER handstamps?" To the best of my knowledge I have seen none of them in any article, in any book, in any catalogue, at any auction, in any collection or on any cover. Where are they?

GREENSPOND ✓
SHIP-LETTER

TRINITY ✓
SHIP-LETTER

FOGO ✓
SHIP-LETTER

HARBOR-GRACE ✓
SHIP-LETTER

ODERIN ✓
SHIP-LETTER

PLACENTIA ✓
SHIP-LETTER

BRIGUS ✓
SHIP-LETTER

BURIN ✓
SHIP-LETTER

ISLE OF VALEN ✓
SHIP-LETTER

SALMONIER ✓
SHIP-LETTER

BONAVISTA ✓
SHIP-LETTER

HOLYROOD ✓
SHIP-LETTER

DE LORAM ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

TWILLINGATE ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

CARBONEAR ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

BAY. BULLS ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

KINGS COVE ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

TREPASSEY ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

GARNISH ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

HARBOR BRITAIN ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

NEW-PERLICAN ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

HEARTS CONTENT ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

ST-MARYS ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

FERRYLAND ✓
SHIP-LETTER ✓

*For Ferryland
all vouchers 00
20 May 1957*