

# Returned from the Dead

## Letter Office

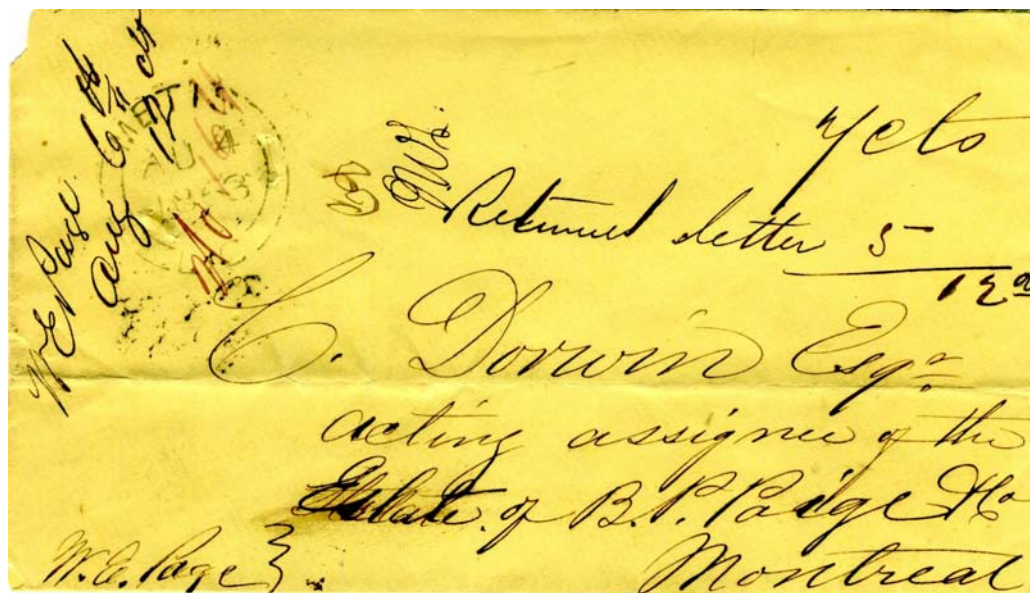
### *Pre-Confederation BNA returned letter covering envelopes & wrappers*

Letters which could not be delivered were normally sent to the Dead Letter Office (DLO) where they would be opened (for a return address), resealed, and placed in a *covering wrapper* or *covering envelope* to be returned. Upper & Lower (later the province of) Canada's DLO opened in Quebec ca 1830, while those of Nova Scotia (NS) and New Brunswick (NB) probably opened around the same time. Their practices were based on those of the British DLO, which had a return service in the eighteenth century.

This exhibit concerns pre-1868 DLO covering wrappers and envelopes used to return undeliverable mail. Although the province of Canada (Upper and Lower), Nova Scotia (NS), and New Brunswick formed Canada in 1867, regulations were changed only in 1868 (and there are no examples known in 1867–68!). Fewer than six examples are known of *each* of the forms and envelopes.

As the capital of Upper and Lower Canada (later the province of Canada; aka Canada) changed, so did the location of the DLO—except that there was a substantial delay, usually of several years. For example, although Montreal became the capital in 1844, no examples are known from that DLO until 1847; Toronto became the capital in 1849, but the DLO was still in Montreal on 12 May 1851; five days later, it was in Toronto.

Initially, covering letter wrappers were used, and there was no charge for the return service; ca 1852, a 1d (cy) fee was charged; ca 1855, Canada switched to covering *envelopes*. On the conversion to the decimal system in 1859, the fee was nonstandardly changed to 5¢ (instead of the normal conversion of 1d to 2¢). The cover below is the only evidence of this.



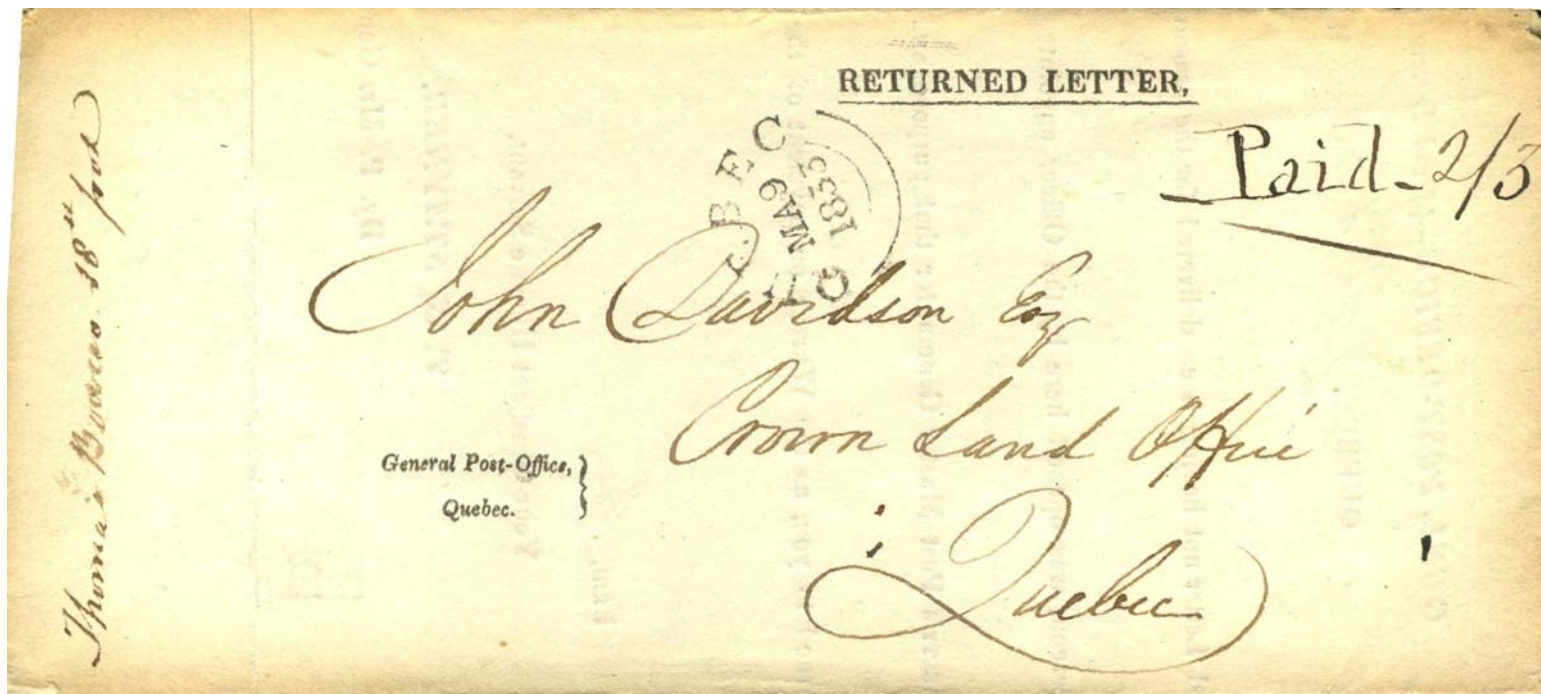
At extreme left, double broken circle Métis date-stamp known 1858–1863.

*Returned letter, originally Metis–Montreal, 1863. Charged 7¢ the collect (not prepaid) single domestic rate to which the Returned letter fee of 5¢ was added. The only evidence that the return service charge was 5¢ at any time in 1859–1868.*

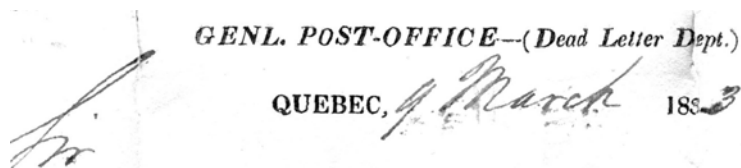
## Upper & Lower Canada and province of Canada returned letter covering wrappers

The wrappers are folded letter sheets, so the apparent width varies, depending on how they were folded. There was no charge for the return letter service until ca 1852; however, any unpaid postage was charged to senders when they attempted to ransom their letters.

*Earliest reported Upper or Lower Canadian DLO wrapper; one other example of this printing known.*



Covering wrapper, Quebec, January 1833. The GPO was in Quebec at this time. Letter returned to sender had been prepaid 2/3, that is, triple g d for 101–200 miles.



The inclosed Letter not having been delivered for the reason

assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed

by His MAJESTY's Post Master General for that purpose, and

is now returned to you, as the WRITER, on payment of the

Postage.

I am,

Your Obedient Humble Servant,

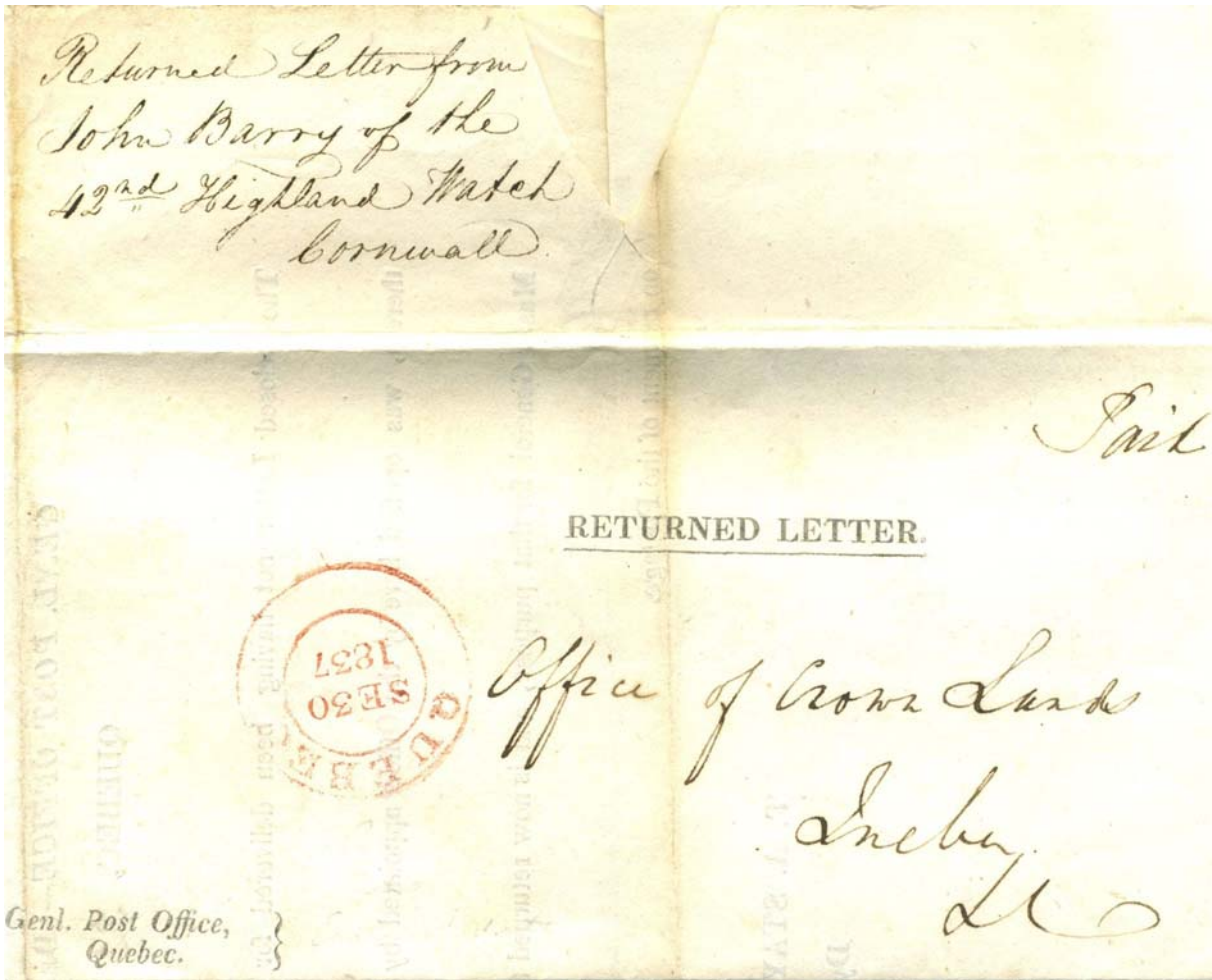
**T. A. STAYNER,**

Dy. P. Mr. General.

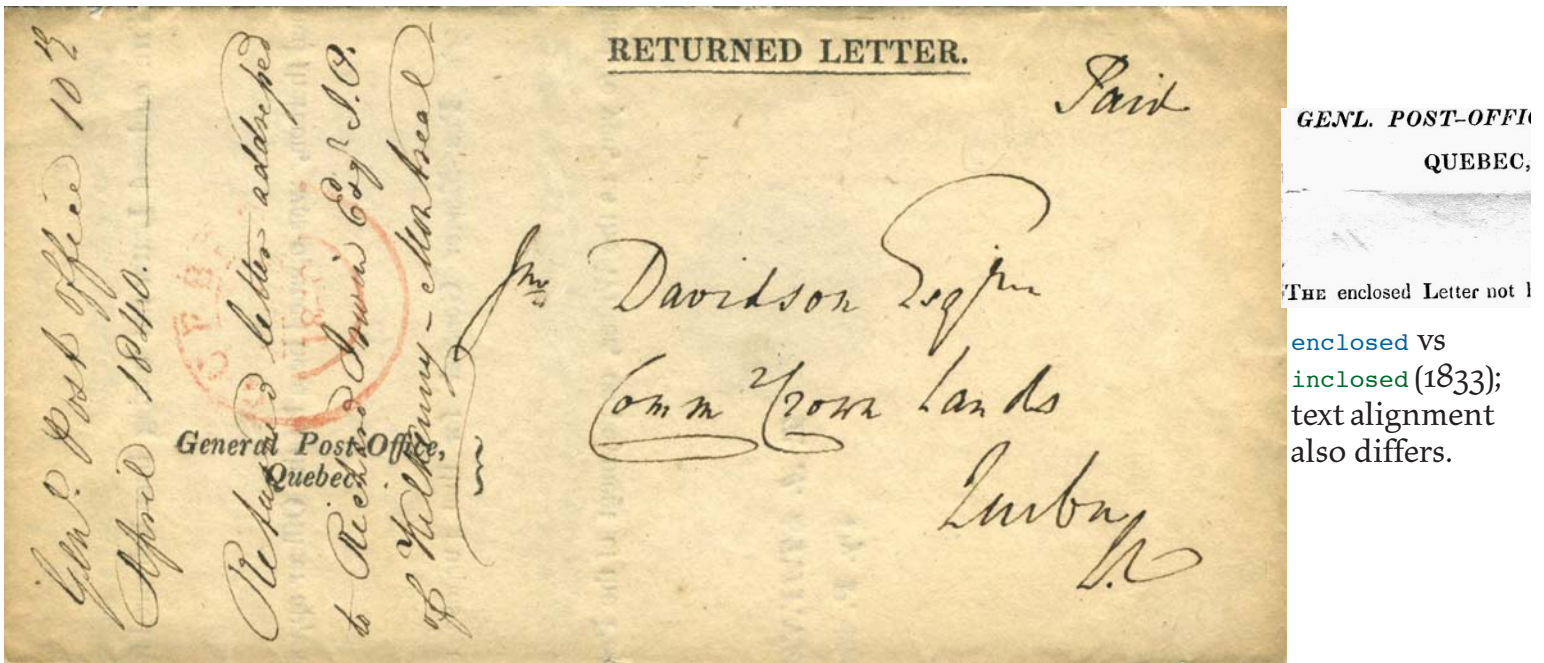
Printed on the inside of the wrapper. Wording varies slightly on the various wrappers; fonts and spacing change considerably.



## Different returned letter wrappers



Covering wrapper, Quebec, 1837. Abbreviation *Genl.* at lower left distinguishes it from preceding. Contained a prepaid letter to a member of the 42nd Highland Watch in Cornwall (UC).



Covering wrapper, Quebec, 1840. Interior message: *enclosed* and other differences, differentiating this printing from that of the 1833 example. Contained a prepaid letter to a justice of the peace in Montreal.

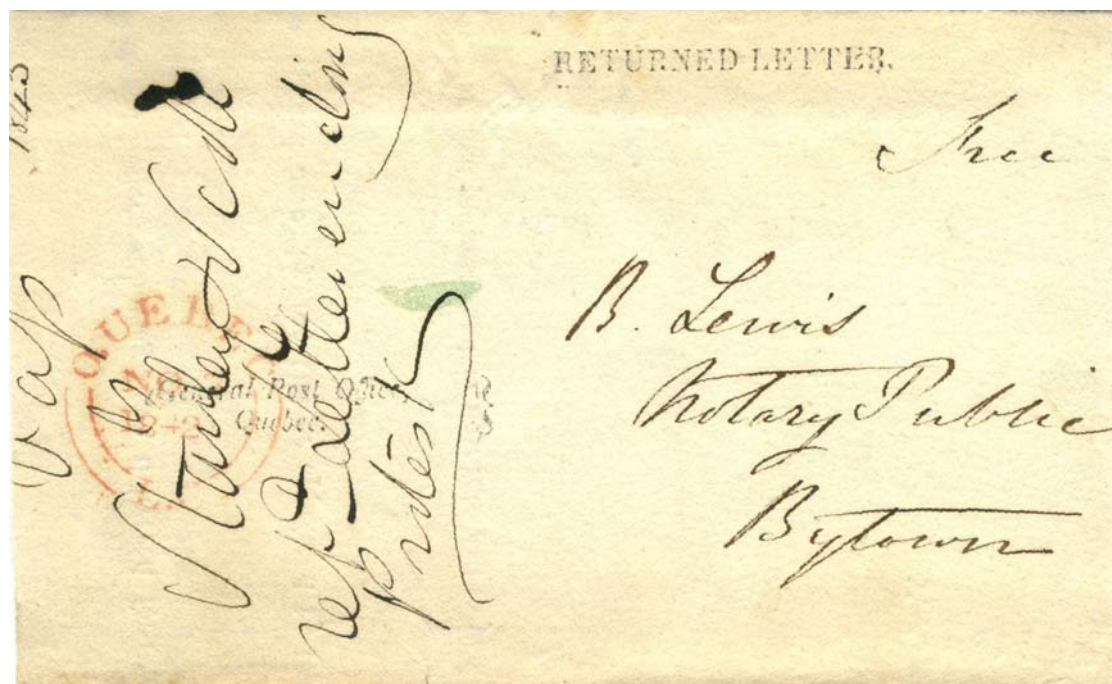
## Very slightly different returned wrappers (1841 & 1842)

Space between *Office* and brace differs and also differs from that of from that of the 1840 wrapper, which both strongly resemble. The rule under **RETURNED LETTER** is barely visible on the 1842 cover.

Although Kingston became the capital of the province of Canada in 1841, the DLO stayed in Quebec until at least 1844 (when Montreal became the capital).



Covering wrapper, Quebec, 1841. Contained prepaid letter.

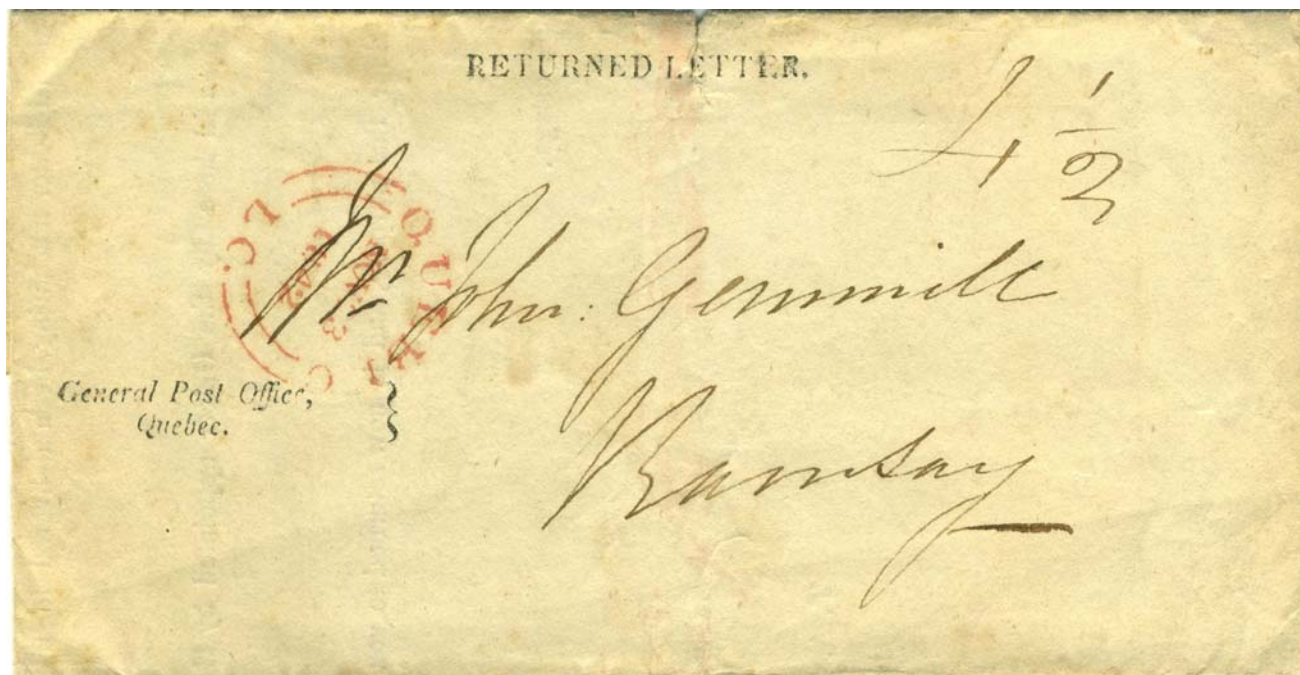


Covering wrapper, Quebec, returned to Bytown, 1842. Contained free letter (letters addressed to the Legislative Assembly were free if within ten days of a session). Poorly printed.

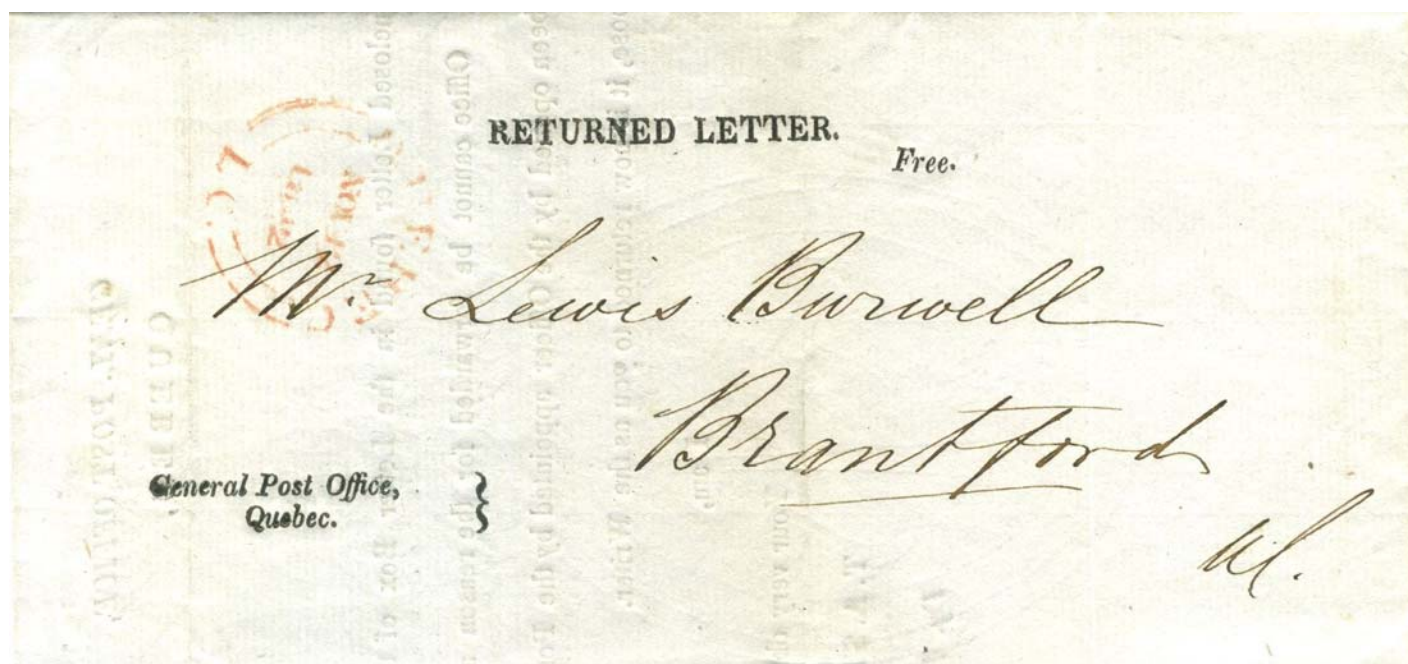


## Unruled returned wrappers (1842)

Bottom one has printed *Free*.

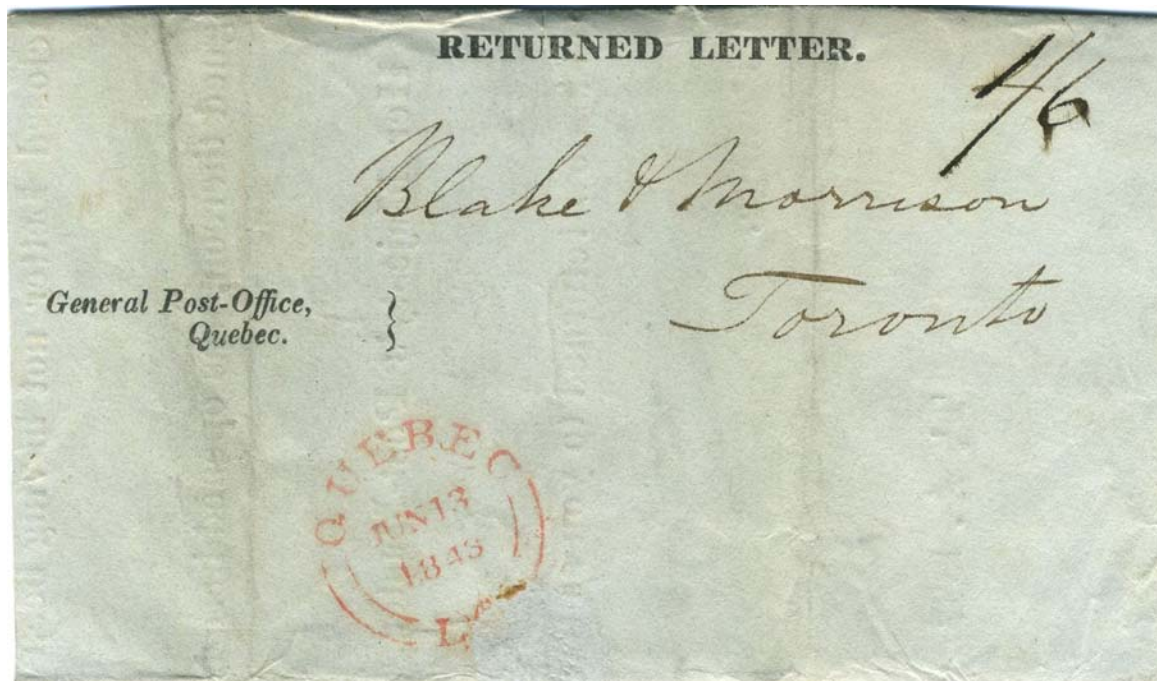


Covering wrapper, Quebec, returned to Ramsay (UC), 1842. Charged 4½ d collect, under 60 miles (from Ramsay).



Covering wrapper, printed *Free*, Quebec, returned to Brantford (UC), 1842. Free franked letters were so common that a special form was printed. Lewis Burwell was Provincial Land Surveyor, and thus entitled to free franking.

Blockier text (1843)



Covering wrapper, Quebec, returned to Toronto, 1843. Charged 1/6 cy: could be quadruple under 60 miles or double 101–200 miles.

**GENERAL POST OFFICE, QUEBEC,**

*Dead Letter Department.*

**THE** enclosed **Letter** not having been delivered for the  
reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the **Officer** ap-  
pointed by **Her Majesty's Post-Master General** for that  
purpose, and is now returned to you as the **Writer**, on pay-  
ment of the **Postage**.

Font is heavier than those  
of preceding wrappers.

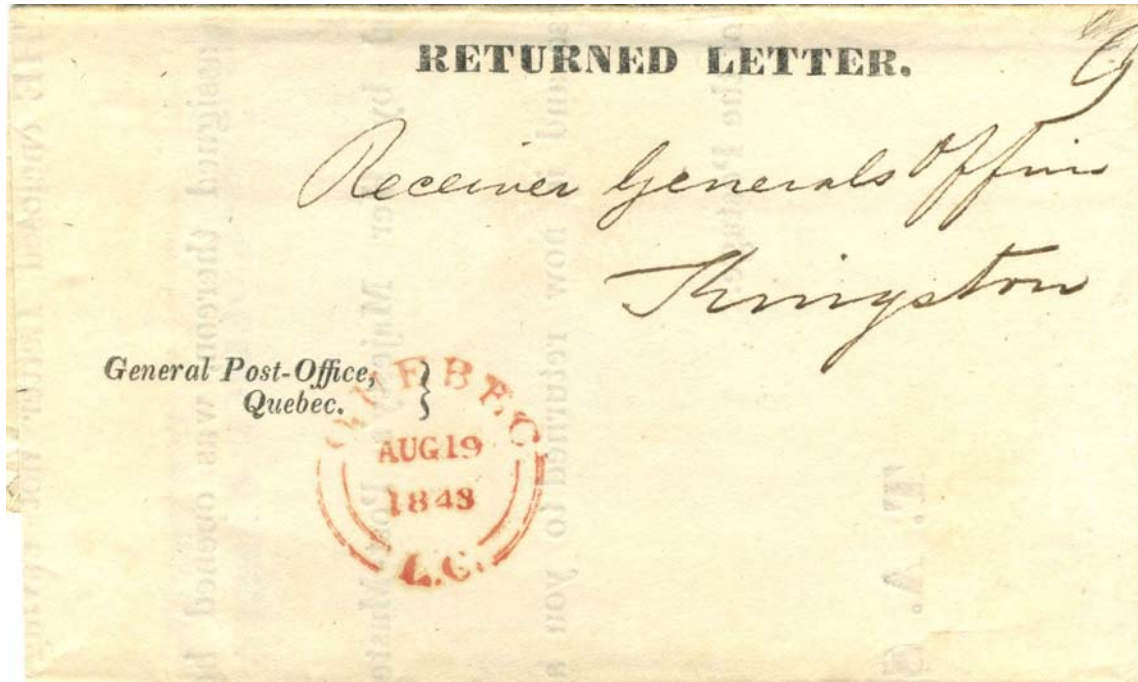
**T. A. STAYNER,**

*Dy. P. Master Genl.*

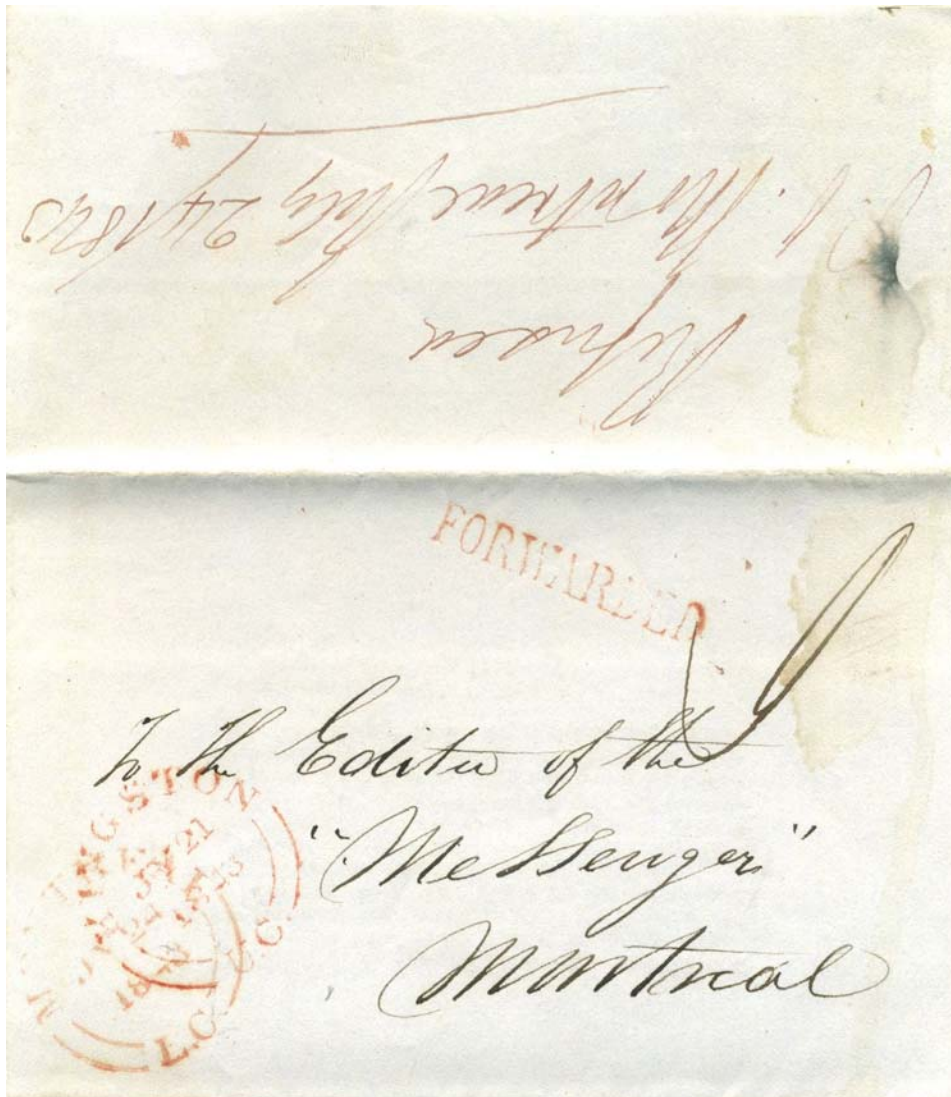


## Wrapper with enclosed returned letter (1843)

Only such pre-Confederation pair known.



Covering wrapper, Quebec, returned to Kingston, 1843. Bigger RETURNED LETTER than 1842 wrapper. Charged 9 cy: single 101–200 miles, Kingston–Montreal, confirmed by letter below.



Enclosed returned letter, refused, 1843.

Charged 9 cy as above. Ms on reverse (in red, at top) reads

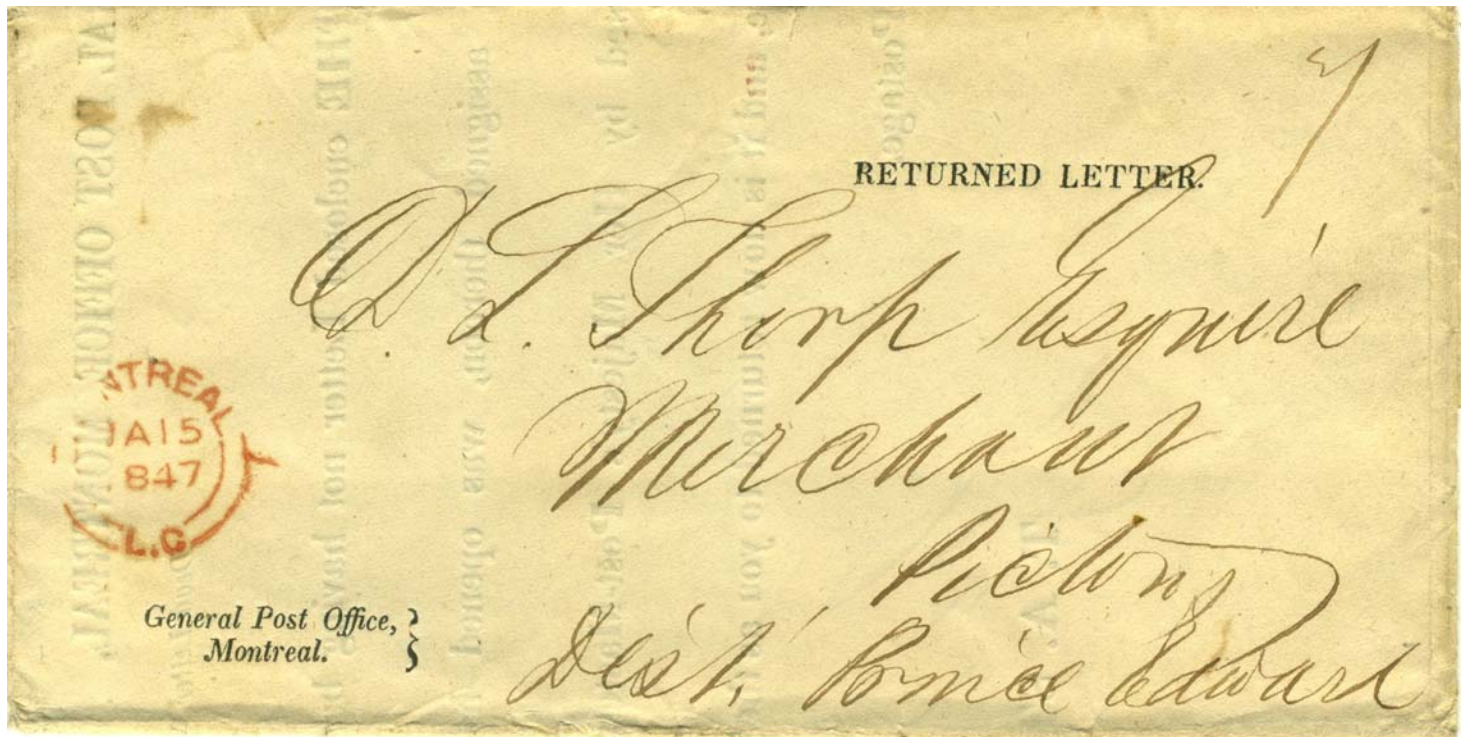
Refused

PO Montreal July 24 1843.

Red Montreal **FORWARDED** applied (incorrectly, but consistently at Quebec and Montreal) to indicate that it was sent to (DLO) Quebec.

## DLO moves to Montreal

Possibly in 1844 (when Montreal became the capital of the Province of Canada), but the earliest known returned letter wrappers from Montreal are dated 1847.



Covering wrapper, Montreal, returned to Picton (UC), January 1847. Charged 7d cy, 101–200 miles (from Picton).

### GENERAL POST OFFICE, MONTREAL,

*Dead Letter department,*

THE enclosed Letter not having been delivered for the reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by Her Majesty's Post-Master General for that purpose, and it is now returned to you as the Writer, on payment of the Postage.

About 50% larger than this!

T. A. STAYNER,

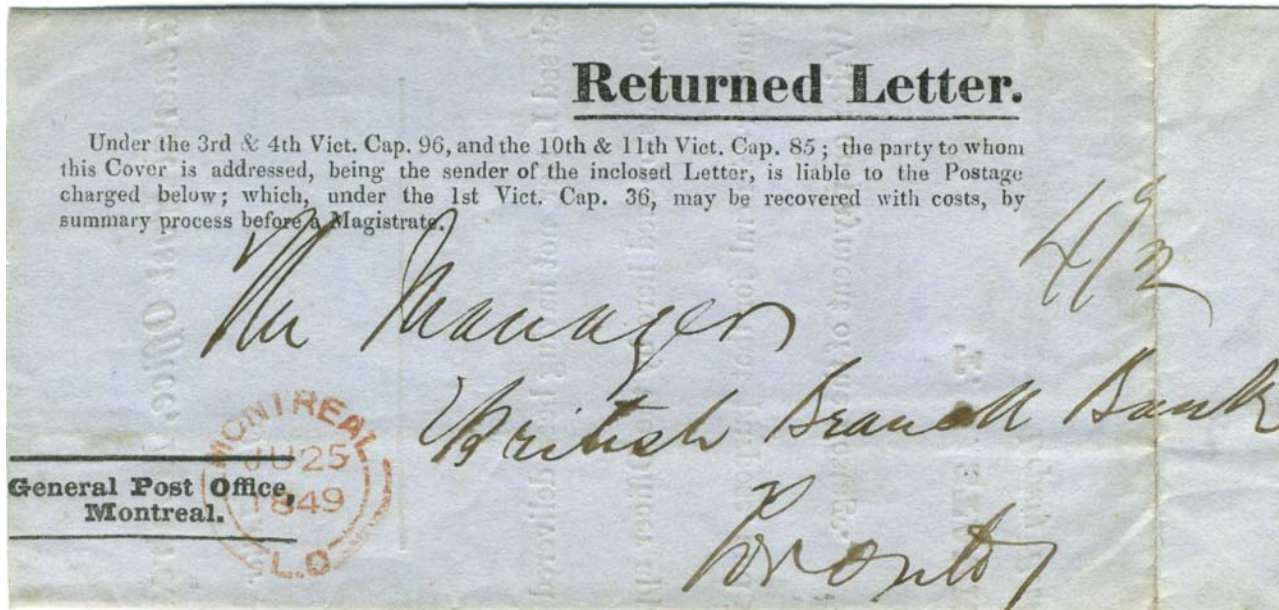
*D. P. Master Genl.*



## Montreal wrappers (1849 & 1851)

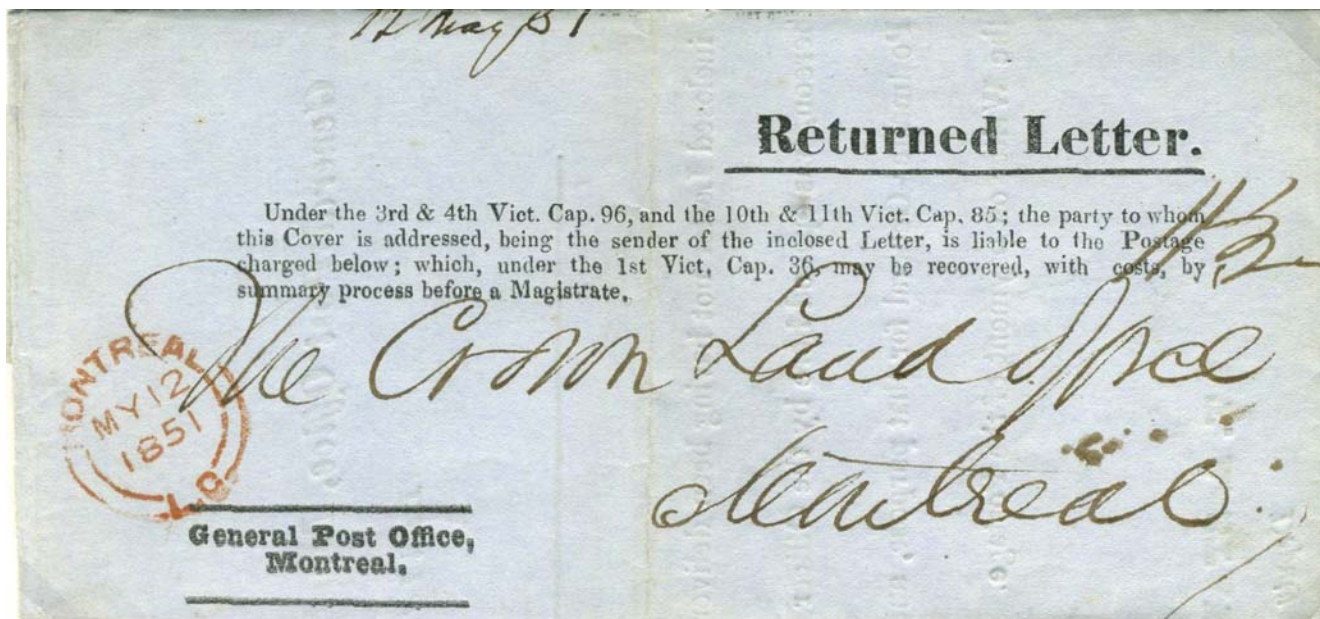
Very similar wrappers; differ in length of rule under **Returned Letter**, and vertical space between rules at lower left.

Although the capital of Canada moved to Toronto in 1849, the DLO remained in Montreal until at least 12 May 1851. However, as of 17 May 1851, it was in Toronto. Letters mailed before the change in administration and rates in April 1851 but arriving at the DLO *after* the changeover, were handled and charged as they had been under the old system.



Covering wrapper, Montreal, returned to Toronto, 1848. Original letter charged 4½ d cy (under 60 miles).

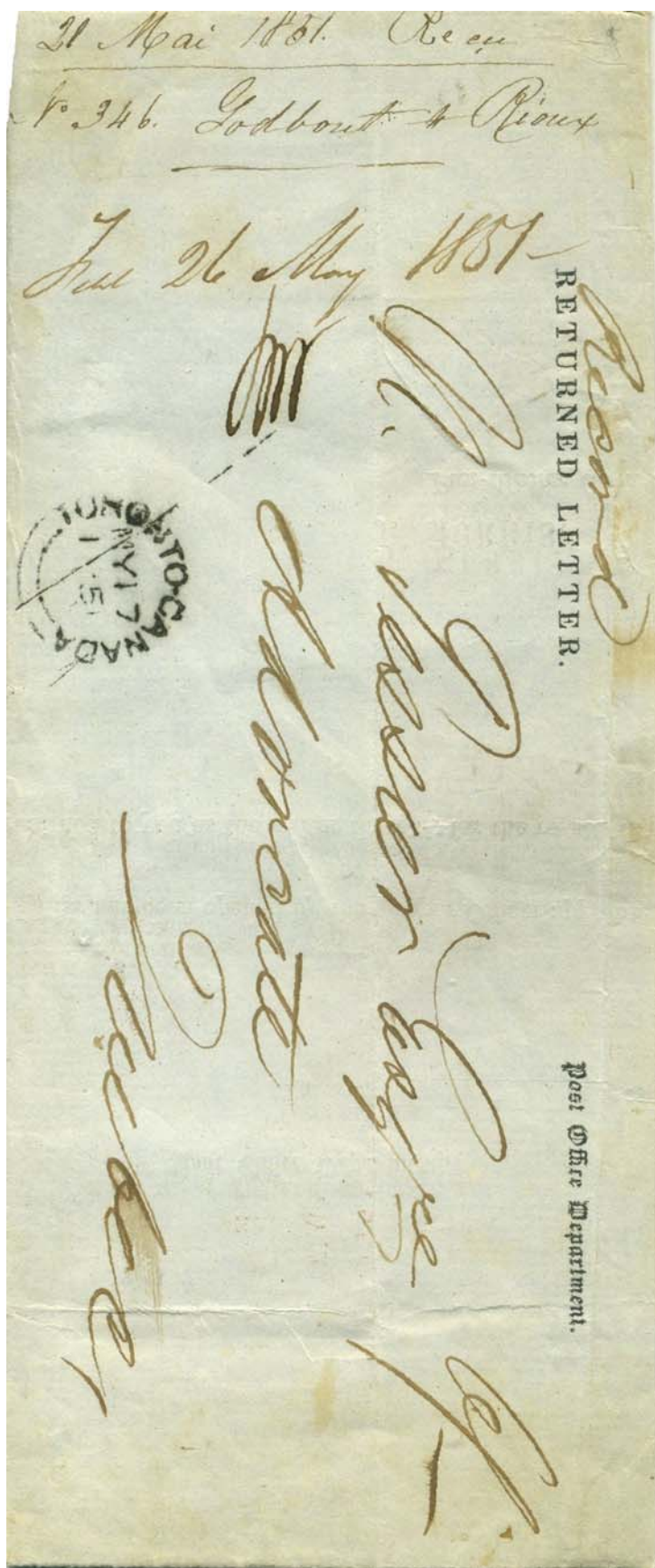
## Returned Letter.



Covering wrapper, Montreal, 12 May 1851. Original letter charged 11½ d cy (201–300 miles).

## Returned Letter.





## DLO moves to Toronto (1851)

Occurred during 13–17 May 1851 on the basis of these covers (same date) and earlier one at Montreal.

J Morris became Postmaster General of Province of Canada (6 April 1851; post office comes under domestic control), replacing TA Stayner (formerly Deputy PMG).

Uncut double form wrapper, printed recto-verso, Toronto, returned to Quebec, 17 May 1851. Postage of 6/– cy, very heavy multiple weight charged under the old (pre-6 April) regime, obviously bulky, and requiring uncut double wrapper. Ms M **may** indicate *money letter*; no examples of returned monely letters known.

Normal single wrapper—same printing, same date—Toronto, returned to Montreal. Charged 9 d cy, possibly triple current domestic rate (3d), but more likely single 201–300 miles under the old regime. ↓↓

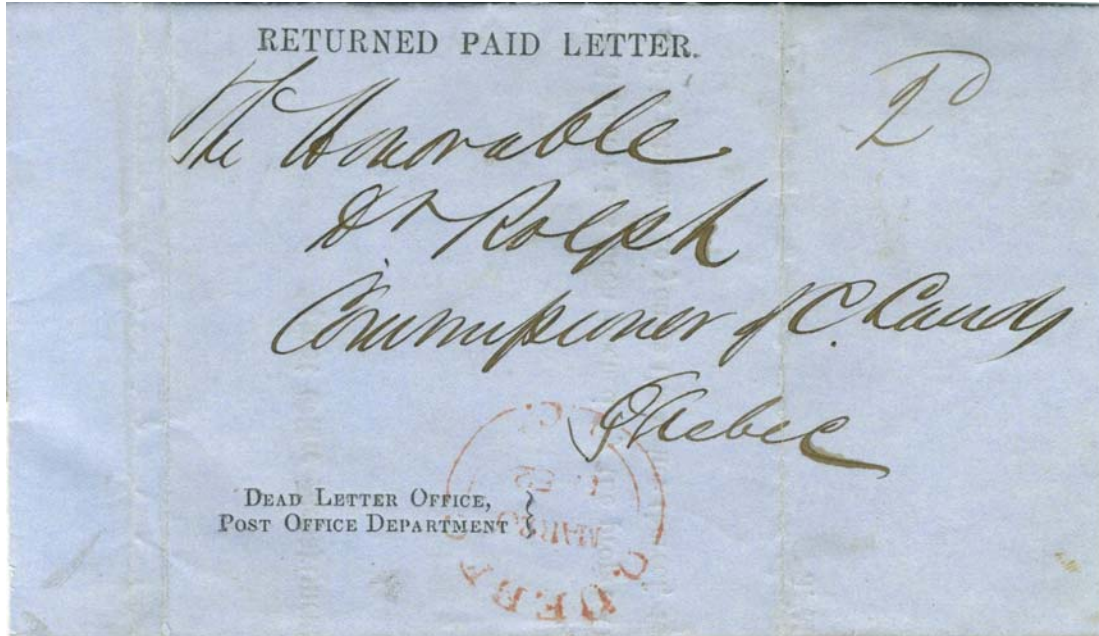




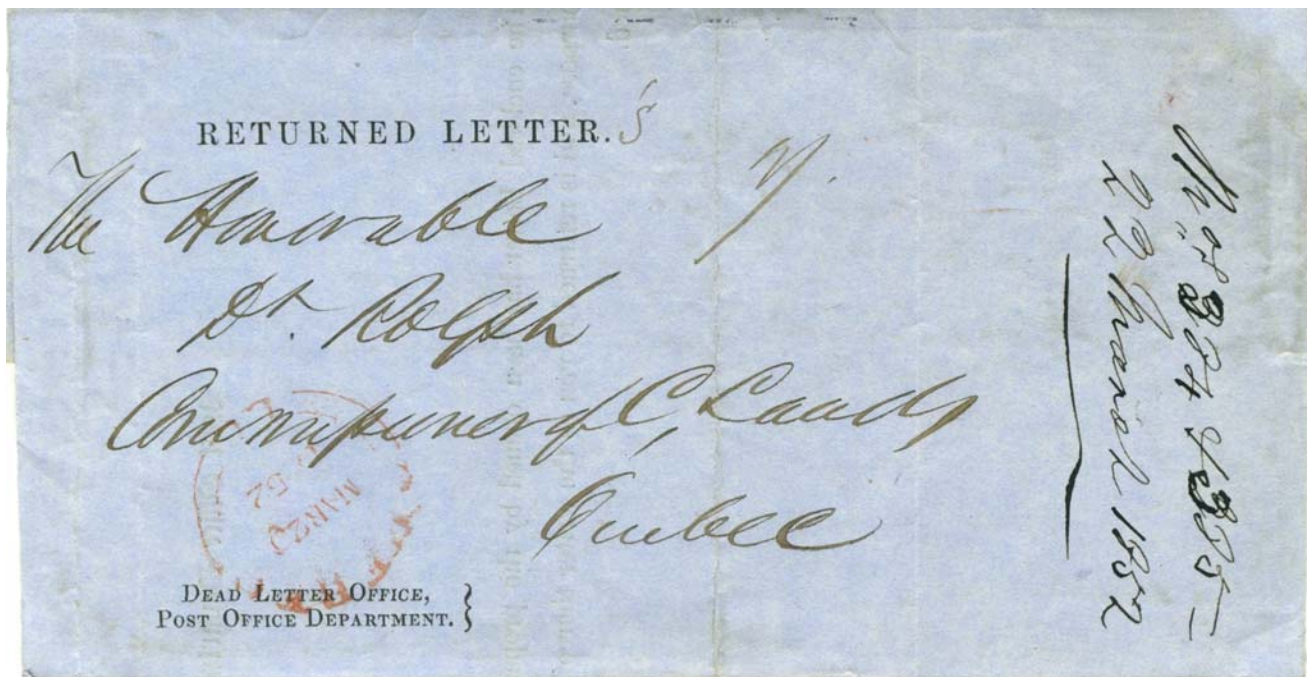
## Service charge introduced (ca 1852)

DLO introduced a fee of 1d per returned item (plus any applicable postage due).

Top item has printed RETURNED PAID LETTER, bottom item has RETURNED LETTER with 's added to indicate a multiple (in this case, three).



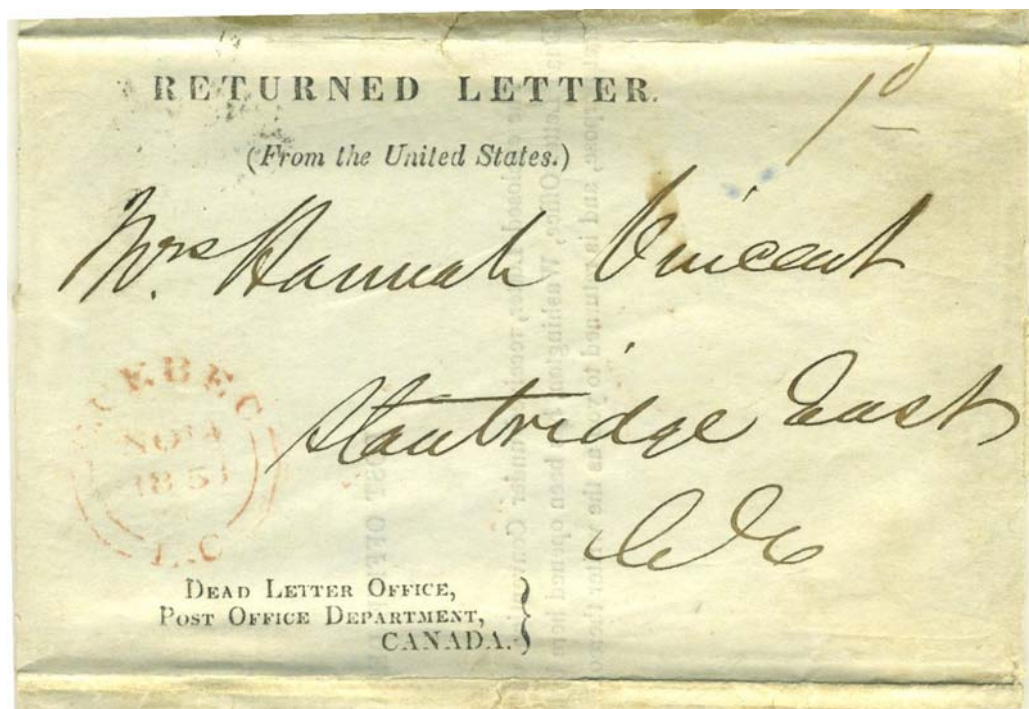
Covering wrapper, Toronto, returned to Crown Lands in Quebec, 1852. Charged 2<sup>d</sup>cy for return of two items. Earliest printed use of PAID on returned letter wrappers.



Covering wrapper, Toronto, returned as above, 1852. Charged 3d cy for return of three letters.

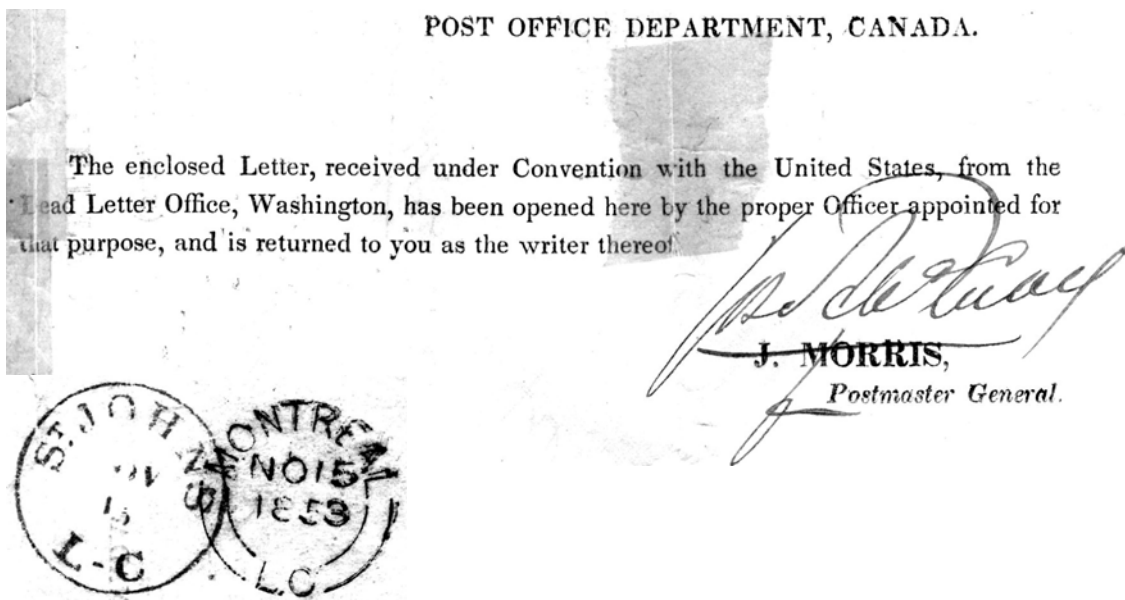
## Wrapper for return of cross-border letter

Only known example of returned letter wrapper or envelope for items addressed outside BNA.



Covering wrapper, returned to Stanbridge East (CE), from the US, 1853. Charged 1<sup>d</sup>cy for return of one item.

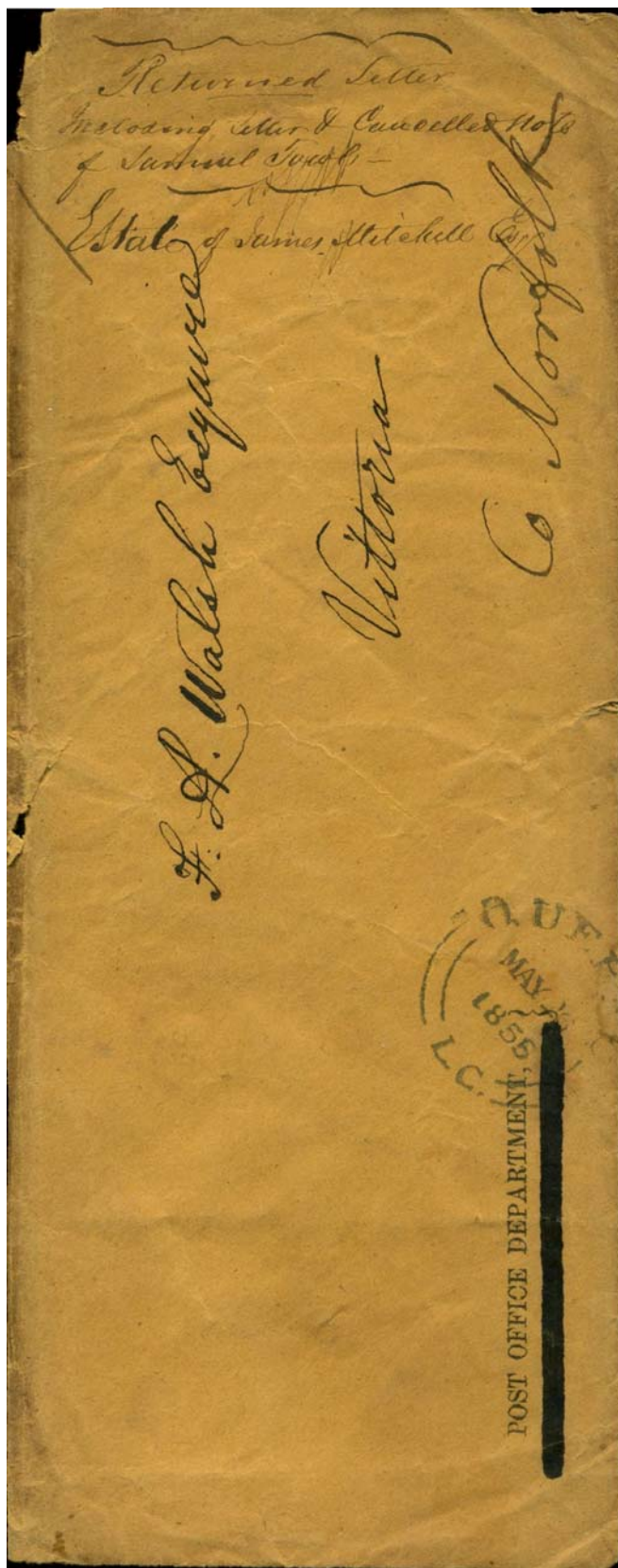
### POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, CANADA.



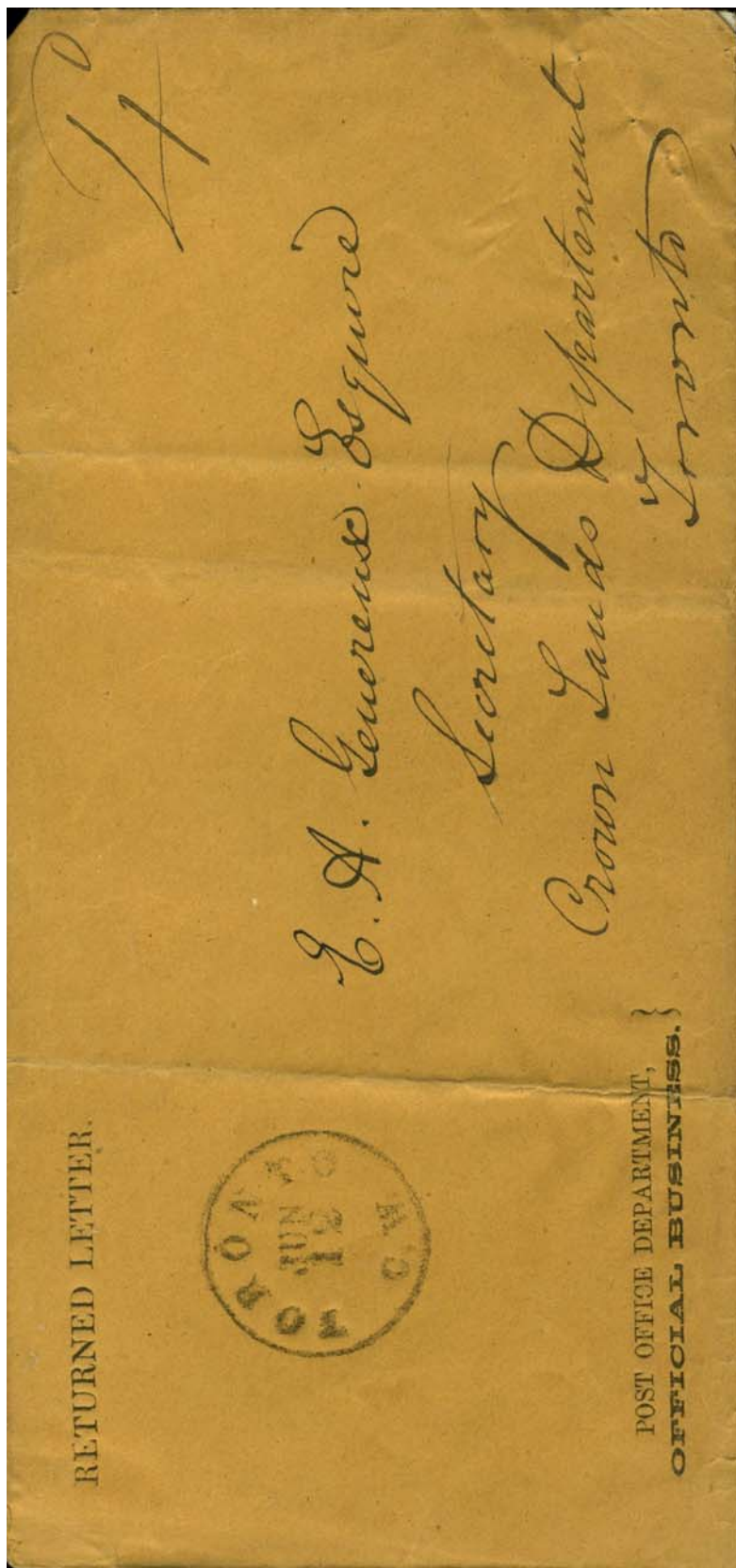


## Envelopes introduced (1853–1855)

The British DLO replaced wrappers by envelopes in 1853; the province of Canada plausibly did this in the same year. *Two of the three known pre-Confederation; left one appears to be provisional use.*

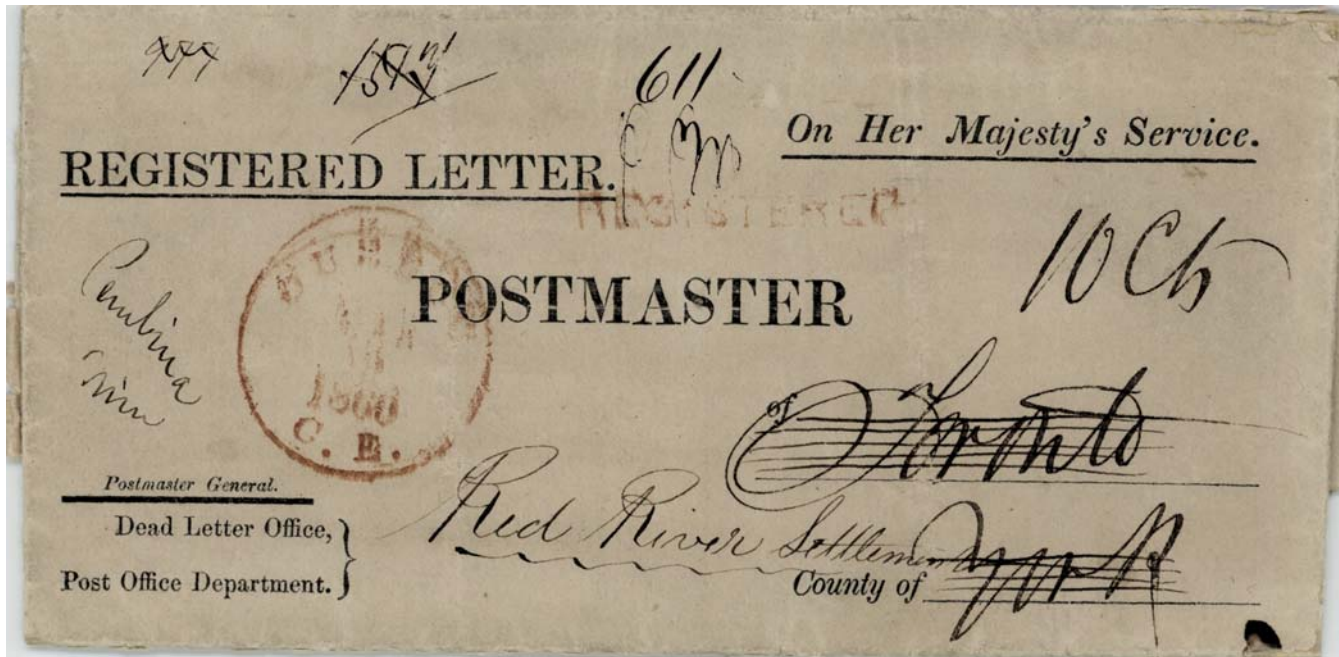


Covering envelope from Quebec, returned to Vittoria (CW), May 1855. Charged 1d cy (left) service charge. Docketing at top: *Returned letter . . .*



Covering envelope, Toronto, returned to Crown Lands, now in Toronto, June 1855. Due 4d, either four times 1d fee (four items) or single domestic item 1d + 3d collect.

## To Red River Settlement



Returned registered letter wrapper, forwarded to Red River, 1860. There was a 5¢ fee for the return letter service (1859–68), as evidenced by the 1863 cover (first page).

The original letter was registered; so the return wrapper is registered, and charged the registration fee, which (to Red River) was 5¢ (domestic registration was 2¢). Thus the total payable by the sender was 10¢, as indicated on the wrapper.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, QUEBEC.

DEAD LETTER OFFICE, 19 March, 1860

The Postmaster of Montreal will cause the enclosed Letter directed to Mr. John P. Pritchard containing 24¢ to be delivered to The Writer

on payment of the Postage charged on this Cover, and be very particular to take Receipt upon the enclosed form, and transmit it immediately, under cover, to the Postmaster General, for the DEAD LETTER OFFICE, Quebec.

If after being Advertised, the Letter should not be claimed, the Postmaster will return it under cover to the DEAD LETTER Office, taking credit in Dead Letter Bill, for the Postage charged on this Envelope.

Ms Pembina Minn, indicating the route.

- Only known registered matter to Red River
- only known returned letter wrapper/covering envelope for the period 1859–68
- only known registered returned letter wrapper/covering envelope (pre-1868)
- only known forwarded returned letter wrapper/covering envelope (pre-1868)
- one of two items showing the 5¢ returned letter fee for 1859–68, which is otherwise undocumented

Prior to the conversion to decimal in 1859, the returned letter fee was 1 d cy—which should have translated to 2¢. This is one of the very few rates which was not simply its equivalent in decimal.



# Nova Scotia & New Brunswick returned letter wrappers (1831 & 1851)

Respectively, one of three and one of two pre-Confederation returned letter wrappers or envelopes.

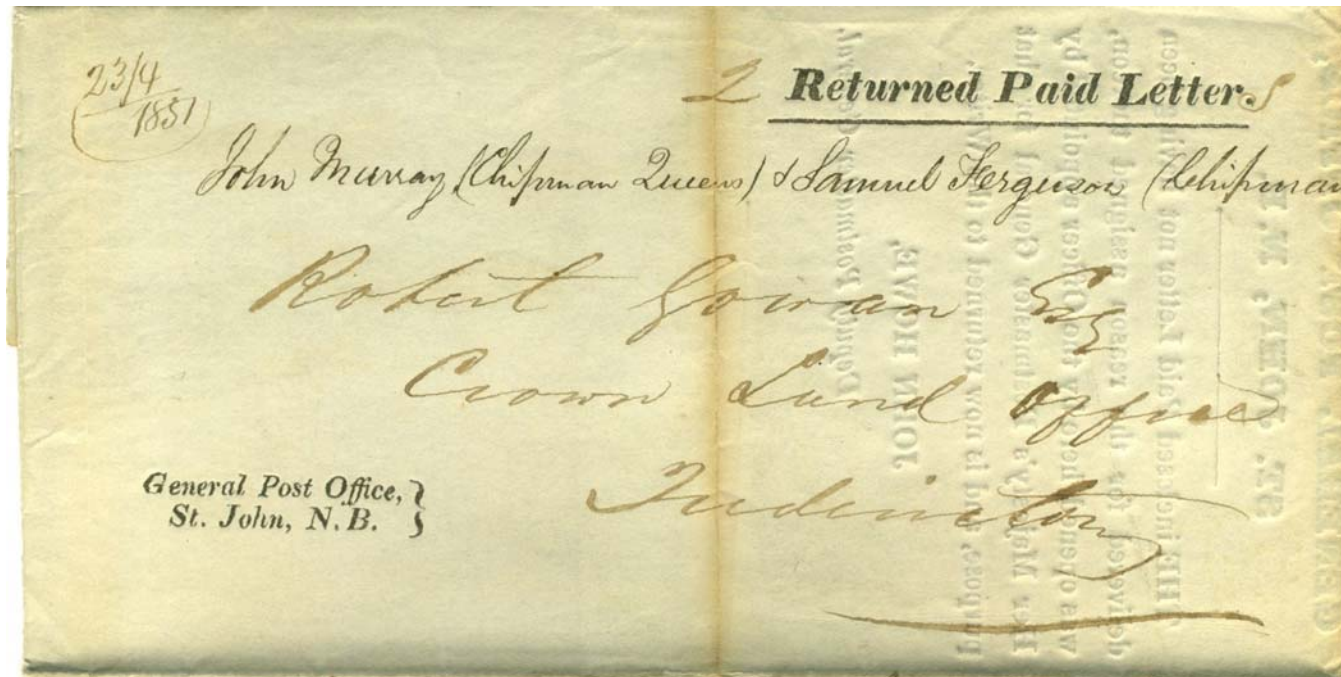


POST-OFFICE, HALIFAX,  
*April 30* 1831

THE inclosed Letter not having been delivered for the Reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by His Majesty's Postmaster-General for that purpose, and is now returned to you, as the Writer, on payment of the postage.

I am  
 Your obedient humble Servant,  
**JOHN HOWE, Jun.**  
 Dep. Postmaster General.

Covering wrapper, Halifax, returned to York (Toronto) via Quebec, 1831. Collect 4N6 cy, double rate York–Halifax. Illustrated in JGY. Earliest BNA returned letter wrapper known.



Covering wrapper, Saint John, returned to Fredericton, 1851. Contained two prepaid letters.

**GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
 ST. JOHN, N. B.**

THE inclosed Paid Letter not having been delivered for the reason assigned thereon, was opened here by the Officer appointed by Her Majesty's Postmaster General for that purpose, and is now returned to the Writer.

**JOHN HOWE,**  
 Deputy Postmaster General.

*6<sup>th</sup> November 1850*  
*John Murray*  
 Letter to him respecting a  
 timber bond.  
 Letter returned "not called for"

Docketing: Letter returned "not called for"

Nova Scotia returned letter envelope (1850–60s)



*Returned letter envelope, returned to Pictou, undated. No apparent service charge. On inside flap:*

**The enclosed letter is returned for the reason thereon assigned on payment of the Postage.**

**A. WOODGATE,**  
P. M. General.

Arthur Woodgate was Deputy Postmaster General of Nova Scotia 1843–1851, Postmaster General 1851–1867, and after Confederation, PO Inspector. The notation *Dead Letter Branch* and the printed details suggest this is dated just a few years before Confederation. *Only reported Nova Scotia returned letter envelope.*