

## Mourning: Covers, Usage and Collateral Material

**Background:** Although mourning covers predated Queen Victoria, it was during her reign (1837-1901) that mourning acknowledgement flourished. Queen Victoria's complete devastation on the death of her husband Prince Albert in 1861 began a serious trend in mourning habits. This exhibit's emphasis is on mourning covers and their usage within postal systems, with collateral material. Mourning covers are identified primarily by black borders of varying widths, designs and embellishments. Some covers can be bordered by grey and purple. There is no hard and fast rule as to the width of that border, some students believe the wider the border the more recent the death, the closer relationship to the deceased or even time elapsed since a death but this does not seem to be justified. During Victorian times people were generally better off financially and were able to not only write caring bereavement letters on special stationery but they could also afford to send these letters in the mail, although in some early instances they were not prepaid. Mourning covers continued to be used into the twentieth century but with less and less frequency with the advancement of technology.

**Purpose:** This display class exhibit shows basic stationery cover designs, followed by examples of flap embellishments, florals, monograms and crests. Various border designs were created by printers and stationers – cross hatch, indented, collars, Court. Usage shows British Victorian era covers, Canadian and international mourning covers. Enclosures were an important part of the social aspect of mourning covers. WWI added censorship. Registered mail, OHMS, consular and business covers all illustrate mourning. The exhibit ends with collateral material items.

Exhibit Plan

Title Page

Sect.1: Basic Design  
Embellishments

Sect. 2: Covers  
Usage

Sect. 3: Notices  
Enclosures

Sect. 4: Collateral

2mm black border  
obverse:

wax seal 'Elizabeth Ann'



**LONDON 'OLD CAVENDISH STREET' to Montreal Lower Canada**

oval L 18 AU 43 – Liverpool transit mark

manuscript rate 1 shilling and 2 pence

overstruck in Quebec, boxed 1 shilling 4 pence currency

b/s double frame red maltese cross O.C.S. 17 AU 17 1843

This cover is pictured on page 485 of Boggs' *The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Canada* (1945) as an example of a short paid ocean mail letter. Mrs. Pelton would have paid the currency rate to receive her mourning letter.