

Post Office “Found Open - Officially Sealed” Labels.

Part 1: 1882-1897 Labels Types 1 and 2.

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The Post Office circular No.35/83 of 17th April 1882 to Chief Postmasters stated: “A supply of cameos for the purpose of officially closing or sealing letters found opened or otherwise damaged in transit is forwarded you herewith. For further supplies please requisition the storekeeper. W. Gray, Secretary.” These labels are mentioned for the first time in *“The Postage Stamps of New Zealand”* Vol IIIⁱ. Much has been written about these and subsequent labels starting with an inquiry in *The Kivi* by Wreglesworth (1997)ⁱⁱ which led to a flurry of responses – but the information was piecemeal. All of this was summarised by Robertson (2007)ⁱⁱⁱ in what is the definitive article on the labels to date, but all of these authors have been hampered by lack of material to give adequate coverage of the earlier labels and errors have been made in their classification.



Fig.1: Earliest cover seen by these authors. Type 1a label on cover from London to Christchurch. Cover franked with 5 x 6d (2/6 rate) 1884 series stamps, cancelled London – E, 9 JY 85 and officially sealed at Christchurch 25 AU 85.

By collecting these labels it can be determined that the first to be issued were printed on blue paper, were approximately 65mm square and were perforated gauging perf 12½ (Fig. 2). The 1882 P.O. circular implies that such labels were sent to Post Offices in that year but to date these authors have recorded nothing earlier than August 1884 being that cited by Startup (1997)^{iv} Dated copies of this label on cover have been seen between the years of 1884-1896. Later printings of the

labels were on flesh or on buff paper (Figs. 3 & 4) and dated copies of these have been seen on or off cover used between the years 1889-1894 (flesh) and 1890-1896 (buff).

These labels were applied when the item was found to be open and this could be done at the office of origin, in transit or at the office of destination. An interesting example of a cover officially sealed in transit is the cover alluded to in Table 1 which left Cullensville (near Picton in the Marlborough Sounds) on 26 May 1896 destined for Christchurch. Back-stamps show that this cover was routed through Wellington where it was officially sealed on 27 May 1896 before it reached its destination in Christchurch on 28 May 1896.

For the purpose of making a list these labels have been designated Type 1 and further classified as Type 1a (blue paper), Type 1b (flesh paper) and Type 1c (buff paper).



Fig. 2 Type 1a – blue paper, perf 12½



Fig. 3 Type 1b – flesh paper, perf 12½



Fig. 4 Type 1c – buff paper, perf 12½



Fig. 5 Type 2 – blue paper, perf 11

At some time, circa 1897, changes were made to this label. They were once again printed on blue paper, but now perforated gauging 11 and given the designation “P.O. No.134.” which was printed at the lower left on the label (Fig. 5). This was not merely an addition of this data to the old label as other changes in the design show that this was a new label which we have called Type 2 (Fig. 5). Changes are:

- The Type 1 label bore two small eight-pointed stars within the frame of the oval design in the centre. These small stars were closer to the inner frame line of the oval rather than the outer frame lines. The new label (P.O. No.134) now has a six-pointed star positioned closer to the outer frame lines than to the inner.
- Type 1 labels all bear a small break in the inner frame line of the oval just below “CL” of the word “closing” and this does not appear in Type 2 labels.
- The font of the text in the inner oval has also changed; most particularly the “G” in “closing” and “sign” is better formed and has a well-formed horizontal bar on its lower lip (Figs 6 & 7).
- Further, the Type 2 labels have a perforation gauging 11 as distinct from the earlier labels which are all perf 12½.

Apart from this difference in perforation none of the other features described here have been alluded to by earlier writers and the label described here as Type 2 was included in their Type 1a listing which was said to exist either perf 11 or perf 12½ and with or without the designation “P.O. No. 134”.



Fig. 6 Type 1a – no P.O. designation, 8 pointed star, small frame break below “CL” perf 12½



Fig. 7 Type 2 – designated “P.O. No. 134.” 6 pointed star, no frame break, horizontal bars on “G”s, perf 11

Only a small number of these labels have been recorded to date and these are listed in Table 4 at the end of this article. Examples of each of the types of label on cover are illustrated below.

Table 1: Type 1a blue label known copies

Date	Description	Source
Aug 1884	Cover with Wellington F class 28 AU 84. Also shows part of the label selvedge text	Startup ^{iv}
Aug 1885	London to Christchurch, sealed in Christchurch 27.8.85	Craig
Jun 1887	Sealed Blenheim 10.6.87	Brodie
Jul 1889	Label only, cancelled Hawera A-class 9 JL 89	Craig
Jul 1889	Is this the one A. S. Craig now has?	Ingram ^v
Oct 1892	Label only, cancelled Gore A-class 20 OC 92	Craig
Nov 1892	Cover, Auckland to Auckland, F-class 1 NO 92	Craig
Jun 1895	Label only, cancelled Auckland A-class 26 JE 95	Craig
May 1896	Cover Cullensville to Christchurch, Sealed Wellington B-class 27 May 1896*.	Craig
Feb 1896	Ex Great Britain, to Gore. Resealed Gore 11 FEB 1896	May 2004 Stirling Auction catalogue

*Note: Cullensville is in Northern Marlborough and resealed at Wellington in transit before delivery to Christchurch.



Fig. 8 Type 1a label on cover sent from Cullens Bay 26 MY 96 to Christchurch. Label attached in transit at Wellington 27 MY 96

Table 2: Type 1b flesh label known copies

Date	Description	Source
Dec 1889	Label only, cancelled Hawera A-class 14 DE 89	Craig
Nov 1892	Cover Masterton to Wellington, Label tied Wellington A-class 21 NO 92	Chitty, Same item referred to by John Woolfe ^{vi}
Jul 1894	Cover Christchurch to Christchurch, deficient postage, Christchurch A-type date-stamp 13 JL 94, Label manuscript 13/7/94	Ingram ^v



Fig. 9 Type 1b label on Bankruptcy Business Only cover sent from Masterton 21 NO 92 to Wellington. Officially sealed at Wellington on same day.

Table 3: Type 1c – White label known copies

Date	Description	Source
Jul 1890	Label only, dated 6 July 1890 in manuscript	Robertson ⁱⁱⁱ
July 1892	Cover, Queenstown to Dunedin, Label cancelled R.T.P.O. – DN.S 28 JL 93	Craig
Dec 1893	Cover Bluff to Bluff, Back-stamped Bluff A-class 29 DE 93	Craig
Jul 1894	Cover Christchurch to Christchurch, Label dated 13/7/94 in manuscript.	Craig
Nov 1894	Cover London to Auckland “ <i>Wairarapa</i> ” wreck cover, Back-stamped Auckland F-class 3 NO 94	Chitty
Nov 1894	Cover Australia to Winton, “ <i>Wairarapa</i> ” wreck cover, bears A-class back-stamps Auckland 3 NO 94, RPO-IN 9 NO 94, Gore 13 NO 94 and Winton – NO 94. Label overlies Winton date-stamp.	Chitty
Dec 1895	Cover, Christchurch to Christchurch, Stamp cancelled Christchurch F-class 22 DE 95	Chitty
Feb 1896	Cover Methven to Christchurch, Methven A – class 24 FE 96, back-stamped Christchurch, seal initialled twice	Wreglesworth ⁱⁱ
Feb 1896		Robertson ⁱⁱⁱ



Fig. 10 Type 1c label on cover sent from Queenstown 27 JY 93 to Dunedin. Officially sealed at Queenstown on same day and back-stamped in transit Dunedin South Railway Travelling Post Office (RTPO – DN.S) 28 JL 93.

Table 4: Type 2 Blue label known copies

Date	Description	Source
May 1897	Cover to Auckland, label almost tied by Auckland B-type back stamp, 14 MY 97	Craig
July 1903	Registered Cover Wanganui to Dunedin, Adhasives cancelled Wanganui A-type 21 JY 03, back-stamped Dunedin J-type 24 JL 03, One label signed V Willott, Dunedin	Chitty

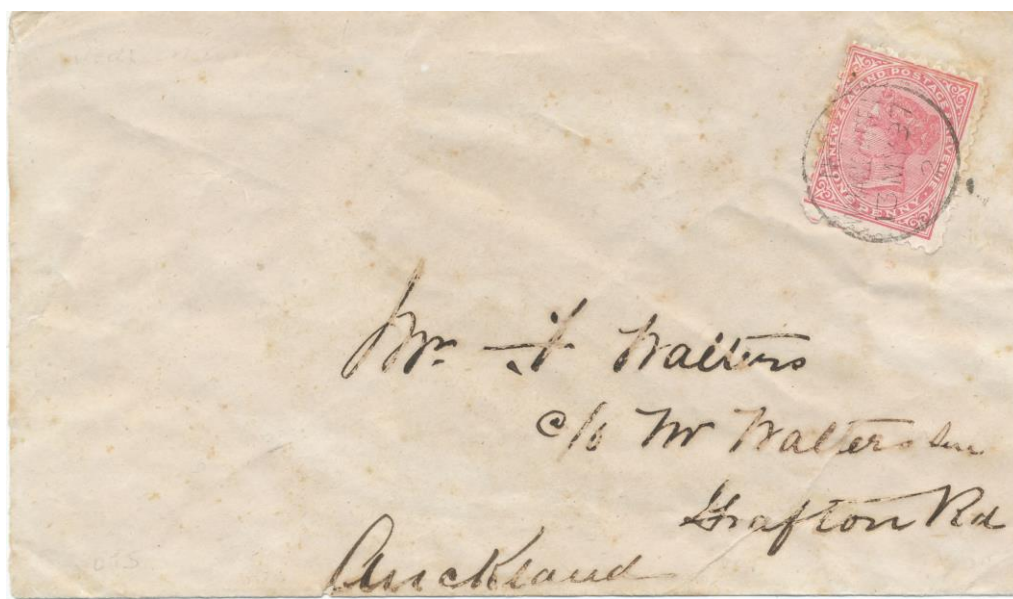


Fig. 11 Type 2 label on cover from Whangarei 13 MY 97 to Auckland.
Officially sealed at Auckland 14 MY 97

About 1897 these labels were replaced by rectangular labels (~65 x 40 mm) of a completely new design. Further changes led to those giving way (c. 1907) to long narrow paper labels (~145 x 30mm) and finally by an adhesive plastic tape introduced in 1966 – a form of which is still used in some offices today. There are very many variations in these later paper-label and adhesive-tape types and it is intended to submit further articles to detail their usage.

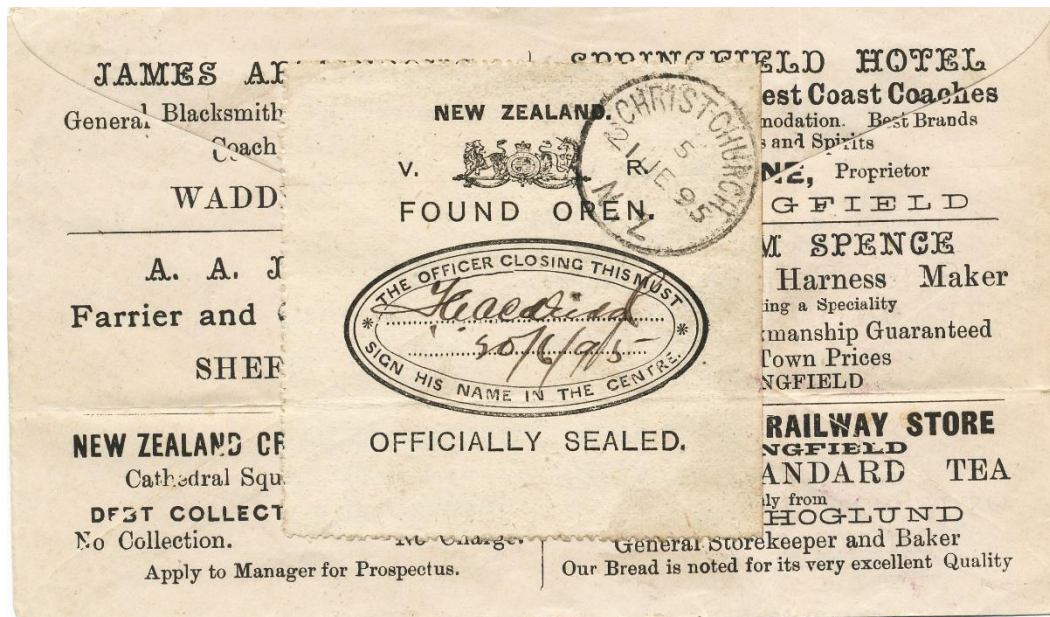


Fig. 12 Type 1c label on cover from Springfield 21 JE 95 to Christchurch.
Officially sealed at Christchurch on same day.

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- ⁱ R.J.G. Collins (editor); *The Postage Stamps of New Zealand, Vol III, pages 530 - 531.*
ⁱⁱ Paul Wreglesworth: *The Kiwi Volume 46, number 2, March 1997, pages 31 – 33.*
ⁱⁱⁱ G. I. Robertson: *The Kiwi, Vol. 56, No 2, March 2007, pages 36 - 39.*
^{iv} R. Startup: *The Kiwi, Vol. 46, No. 6, November 1997, pages 114 – 116.*
^v Ron Ingram: *The Kiwi, Vol. 46, No 4, July 1997, Pages 70 – 71.*
^{vi} John Woolfe; *The Kiwi, Volume 46 number 3, May 1997, pages 49 – 50.*