

## SYNOPSIS

### The Business Mail of *Clayton & Sons*, Halifax, NS - 1882-1951

**Purpose:** This exhibit demonstrates the variety of business stationery - corner cards, illustrated mail, postcards - of Clayton & Sons (and subsequent company name iterations) a clothing manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer of Halifax, Nova Scotia during the period 1882 to 1951, which covers most of the life of the firm on Jacob and Barrington Streets. It also provides snapshots of the wholesale/suppliers and customers/dealers that are part of the firm's business mail from March to June 1900, during the heyday of the firm, and a variety of bicycle shop! and Provincial Exhibition covers.

**Treatment:** The exhibit starts with the earliest known envelope from the Jacob Street location of Clayton & Sons and progresses through the various formats and styles of printed address used on corner cards and subsequent use of illustrated envelope featuring the newly constructed factory was introduced in 1904. Each item is described in philatelic terms of its postmark and received cancels, postal rate and rate period. The incoming mail (suppliers/customers), return-mail, provincial exhibition and bicycle department covers are provided to show the scope of these items and are not exhaustive in type and time period.

**Importance:** The classic illustrated mail period has typically thought to extend from about 1880 to 1925. Clayton & Sons is one of the few long lived companies that had such diversity in its identity – thus no standardization in the early years (pre 1904) - and consistent changes in printing after the illustrated factory motif was introduced. The material is unique because it extends well beyond this the classic illustrated period to for the next 50 years to the 1950s.

**Rarity & Condition:** The covers shown in this exhibit are of the best quality found. Many of the covers shown are one-offs where no other has been seen in the market. These may show signs of age: worn, cut, tattered edges, toning, glue bleed. The bulk of material that becomes available on the market is from the 1904 to 1930 period. Beyond these dates material is either difficult to discern (pre-1904 corner cards) due to inadequate descriptions or they rarely come up for sale. It is unlikely that this exhibit could be easily duplicated in its entirety. Nor is it likely that a finite end to the variety can be discerned due to the lack of business records for the firm for stationary purchases.

There is a lack of abundant material available from the 1930 - 1940s although the odd piece becomes available from time to time. This may be as a result of a change in business practice, the economic depression, or fewer stores stocking premade clothing, especially during and after World War II when much of the production effort was for uniforms – thus fewer mailings by the company. We see in many other illustrated mail exhibits that most firms only have a few changes in their stationary, either due to the length of time in business or staying with only a couple of design changes. While envelope size and structure is fairly constant over the period, it is the multitude of changes in “illustration” that draws interest which are noted.

**Knowledge and Study:** Each envelope is described by the design of the fonts and illustrations. The breadth of the material is attributable to a handful of Clayton & Sons clients that saved business envelopes during the period. While the exhibitor's collection certainly shows this, the exhibit has been developed to give the broadest cross section of addresses to demonstrate the reach of the material. Clayton & Sons would have had the envelopes printed for their use. The printer of the envelopes is unknown but several firms in Halifax and Montreal are candidates yet to be determined. The Claytons hired commercial artist Lewis E. Smith to capture the factory for the illustration used from 1904 to 1955.

**Award History:** The exhibit has been expanded to two frames for Novapex 2024. It has previously been shown as one frame at:

Novapex 2015 (Regional)	Vermeil;
Novapex 2016 (National)	Silver;
BNAPEX 2016 (International)	Silver;
Novapex 2017 (Regional)	Gold;
Stampex 2017 (Local)	1 <sup>st</sup> and BNAPS Best One Frame Exhibit,
Novapex 2018 (National)	Vermeil;
Novapex 2022 (National)	Lg. Vermeil;
CAPEX 22 (International)	78 pts (Vermeil).

**Company History:** Clayton & Sons, wholesale manufacturers of men's and boys' clothing, was established in 1869 on 190 Argyle Street by Mary (Davies) Clayton (1819-1907). George Clayton (1819-1864), a tailor, and his family had arrived in Halifax from England in 1863. George likely apprenticed his sons in the trade. He set up business in Halifax, but unfortunately died only a year later, leaving Mary (age 45) a widow with seven children between 10 and 19 years of age. To provide for her family, Mary established a second-hand clothing business in their Duke St home and eventually, with her sons, moved the business to the Argyle St address as clothier and tailoring concern M. Clayton & Sons. In 1875 the business moved to Jacob Street and by 1903-4 several four to five storey buildings were built in the block that faced Jacob and Barrington Streets.

The “Sons”, Edward (1849-1938) and William James (1851-1935) ran the company for most of its existence until 1938 when William’s daughter Mary “Louise” Clayton (1893- 1974) took over as President of the firm. Louise changed the company name to Claytons Limited about 1950 as was the fashion following the war with many large businesses. In the early decades of the 20th century, the company made men’s and boy’s clothing and uniforms for the military and police and fire services. During both world wars, Clayton & Sons contributed to the war effort by manufacturing uniforms for the armed forces. The firm survived until it closed to avoid bankruptcy in 1955. The properties that were not sold were expropriated and removed by Halifax City Council for the Cornwallis Centre (now known as Scotia Square) development under the guise of Urban Redevelopment in 1964.

### **References:**

This exhibit is based on original research by the exhibitor to define and classify the types of stationery used by this firm. Philatelic, printing and company anecdotal history were derived from the following sources.

Arkelian, B. (2016) Printing processes, President, Halcraft Printers Inc., Pers. Comm.

Clayton & Sons Factory – Barrington Street

<https://oldnorthend.wordpress.com/2013/01/12/clayton-sons-factory-barrington-street/>

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Pinet, R. (2014) Victorian Montreal: Economic Hub of the Dominion (Illustrated Mail, 1844-1903), BNAPS Exhibit Series No. 79

Smith, Harry D., (1976). Through Dirty Windows: a humorous account of shop and factory life in the incredible 1930s. Windsor Nova Scotia, Lancelot Press [note: anecdotal information about Clayton & Sons by a former NS Ombudsman who worked there as a lad.]

Smith, R. C. & A.S. Waweukiewicz (2000) Canada: Domestic and International Postal Rates and Fees 1870 – 1999, Snow Camp North Carolina, Press for Philately

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