

VICTORIA POSTAL STATIONERY - SPECIMEN OVERPRINTS

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The postal stationery of the Australian colonies was issued in a wide variety of styles. Basic listings are given in Higgins and Gage (1984) although new items and varieties still continue to appear. Generally there is a lack of any listing of the specimen overprints found on postal stationery items. Exceptions are the stationery of Western Australia and New South Wales. The former is described in Pope and Thomas (1982) and the latter in *Capital Philately* (see Smith and Druce, 1988). The publication of the Gary Watson catalogue for the 'Edgar' collection of the postal stationery of Victoria (5 March 1990) provided an opportunity for an initial listing for that state. It is a measure of the high quality of the Gary Watson catalogue (now Macray-Watson Auctions) that it can be used in this way. Normally auction descriptions of specimen overprints on postal stationery do not include illustrations or a classification of the style of overprint. In order to describe the specimen overprints in the 'Edgar' collection Watson classified the overprints into eight types, if sub-types are included the number is twelve. Figure 1 reproduces the original illustration of the various types from the auction catalogue. A small selection of postal stationery items with overprints is given in Figure 2 and 3.

"SPECIMEN" Types		
To our knowledge the many varieties of 'SPECIMEN' overprints and handstamps which exist on Victorian Postal Stationery have not previously been recorded. What follows is our classification, derived from items in the "Edgar" collection. Reference to these types will be found throughout this catalogue:		
<i>SPECIMEN.</i>	<i>SPECIMEN</i>	<i>SPECIMEN</i>
Type 1a 17x2mm	Type 1b 14x2mm	Type 2 13x1½mm
<i>SPECIMEN</i>	<i>SPECIMEN</i>	<i>SPECIMEN.</i>
Type 3a 15½x2mm	Type 3b 13x1½mm	Type 3c 12½x1½mm
<i>Specimen</i>	<i>SPECIMEN</i>	<i>SPECIMEN</i>
Type 4 11½x2mm	Type 5a 16x2½mm	Type 5b 15½x2½mm
<i>SPECIMEN</i>	<i>Specimen.</i>	<i>Specimen</i>
Type 6 32x4mm	Type 7 16x3mm	Type 8 20x6mm

Figure 1 Types of overprint from Watson catalogue of 5 March 1990 (illustrations reduced in size).

A listing of postal stationery and known types of overprint is given in Table 1. This draws heavily on the material from the 'Edgar' collection but is augmented by material from the author's collection and from those of other members of the Society. There are some minor additions from a range of other auction catalogues, none of these illustrate the actual overprint - including earlier Gary Watson catalogues! This account however, represents only a provisional listing. It is likely that every item of Victorian postal stationery listed by Higgins and Gage was produced, in some way or other, in specimen form. The aim of this article is to encourage others to help fill the gaps.

Table 1 lists all items of postal stationery for which a specimen overprint is known to the author. The listing uses the Higgins and Gage numbers and the specimen is

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classified according to the Watson listing, see Figure 1. Information therefore, is especially welcome for the Higgins and Gage numbers that do not appear in Table 1. Table 2 provides an indication of the period of use of the various types of overprint. Several were also used for postage stamps. As is the case with NSW, the periods of use for postal stationery and postage stamps are generally in accord.

In considering additions to Table 1 two points are important. First, some items of postal stationery have more than one style of overprint. Second, small changes for individual Higgins and Gage types (minor changes in wording, size of envelopes etc) were likely to merit a new 'issue' of overprints.

In Victoria the use of specimen overprints commenced with the very first postal stationery issues. The wrappers and envelopes, both issued in 1869, are known in specimen form. Of the Australian colonies, NSW can claim to have the first postal stationery overprints. The wrappers of 1865 were overprinted specimen as were essays for unissued envelopes produced in 1865 or 1866 (see *Capital Philately*, Smith, 1988).

Table 1 Type of Postal Stationery and Recorded Specimen Overprints

Date of Issue	H & G No.	Type of overprint	Date of Issue	H & G No.	Type of overprint
Post Cards			Envelopes		
1876	1	3a (in red)	1869	B1 (size a)	1b, 3c & 5a
1878	2d	3b (in red)		B1 (size b)	3c & 3b (red)
1882	3	7		B1 (size c)	1b, 3a (blue)
1883	4	8			3c & 4
1885	5	5b	1885-86	B3 (size a)	5
1889	9	7	1890	B5	7
1890	11	6	1892	B7 (size c)	7
1890	11a	6&7	Registered Envelopes		
1891	12	7	1881	C1 (size a)	5a & 8
1891	12a	7		C1 (size b)	8
1894	12a	6&7			
			1885	C2 (size a)	5b & 7
1891	13	7c & 3c	1891	C7 (size b)	7
				C7 (size a)	7
1893	14a	7	Wrappers		
Letter Cards					
1893	A5	7	1869	E1	1a
1895	A8	7	1880	E4	3b
Telegraph & Telegrams			1880	E5	3b
1873	H1 (piece)	2	1887	E15	7
			1890	E16	7
			1895	E17	7
			1895	E18	7

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Table 2 Types of Specimen Overprint and Dates

Type	Dates	Type	Date
1a	1869	4	?
1b	1869	5a	1869-1881
2	1873	5b	1885-1886
3a	1869-1876	6	1890
3b	1878-1881	7	1882-1895
3c	1869	8	1881-1883

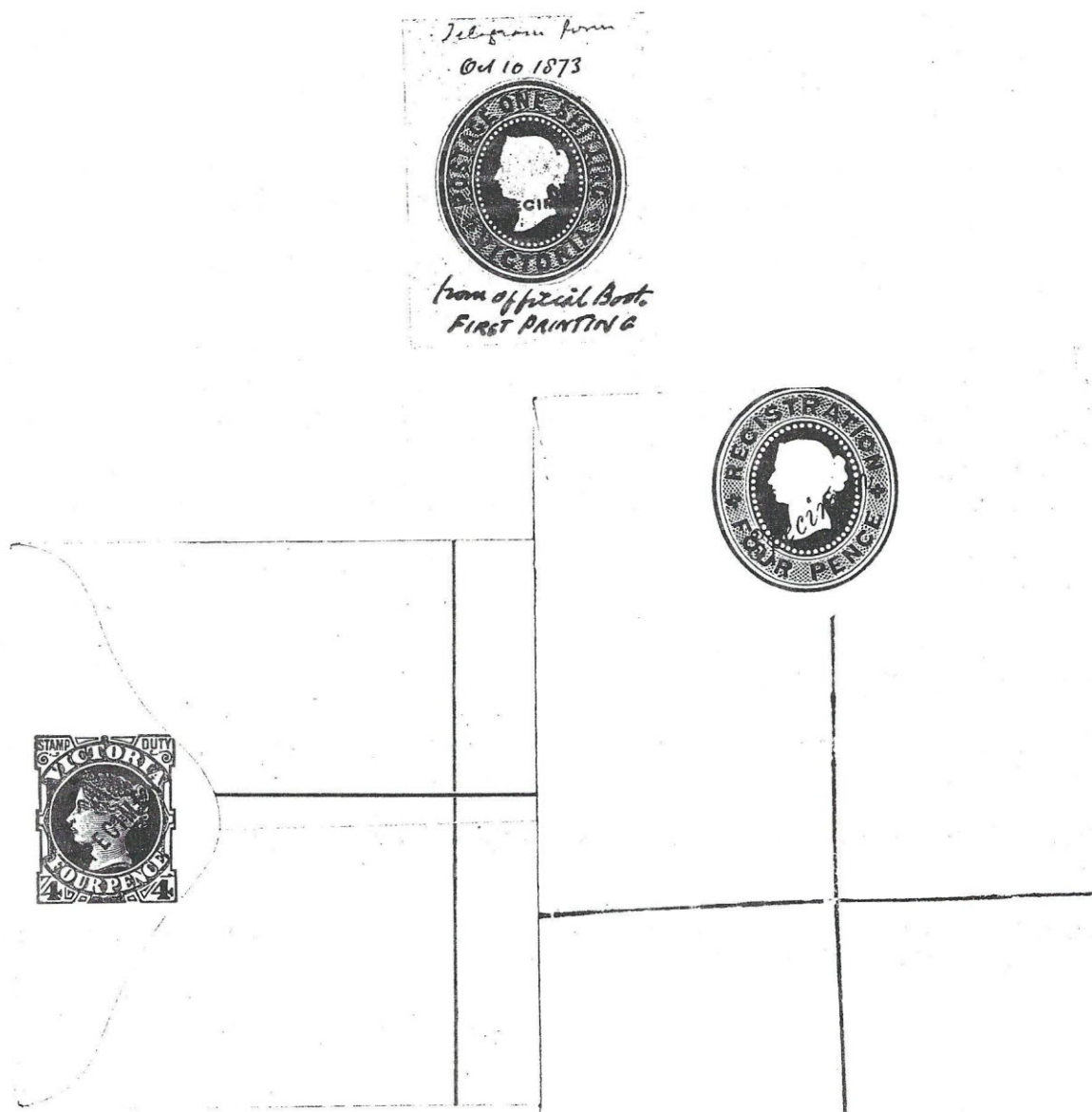


Figure 3 Specimen overprints (type 7) on wrappers and cto lettercard - possibly a form of specimen.

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It is often stated that a major use of both specimen stamps and postal stationery was for distribution to other postal administrations under the auspices of the UPU. For the Australian states this raises difficulties as they did not become members of the UPU until 1891. However, it is known, from UPU records, that Australian states officially supplied material to the UPU for distribution in 1889. The crown colonies, of which Victoria was one, were special cases. It is certain that they followed the practice of distributing stamps and postal stationery to other postal administrations before that date. The degree to which such material was overprinted specimen is less certain. To further complicate the matter, specimen postal stationery was probably used for other purposes. These would include presentation copies and possible sale to collectors.

The 'Edgar' collection included examples of a special form of 'specimen' postal stationery, see Figure 4. Cards of this kind were sent directly by Postmaster of Victoria to other postal administrations. This practice may have been common, at least among the British colonies. The writer has in his possession a very similar card sent by the Postmaster of New Zealand on the introduction of pre-stamped postcards in his administration. The item in question was sent to the Postmaster of Jamaica, from New Zealand, and then to the Colonial Office in London to press the case for the production of printed pre-paid postal stationery for Jamaica. This card, and the story that goes with it, is described in *Capital Philately*, see Smith (1983).

The date of the abandonment of specimen overprints on Victorian postal stationery is not precisely known. From the examples seen, a date in 1895 is likely. Overprints were replaced by cancelling the stamp on the item with a Melbourne circular date stamp. This causes problems as it is difficult to distinguish this form of specimen cancellation from items that were cancelled to order for other purposes.

This provisional listing is intended to act as a spur for other collectors to pool their knowledge to provide a more complete account. Contributions from others are most welcome and, if sufficient are forthcoming, *Capital Philately* would be delighted to publish an update. The willingness of Gary Watson to grant permission to use illustrations from the catalogue of the 'Edgar' collection is gratefully acknowledged. I would also like to thank John Oliver and Ed Druce for access to their collections.

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