

The 1889 to 1960 CAUTION Labels – Update 2

by Stephen F Prest

Introduction

A survey of CAUTION Labels used by the Post Office between 1932 and the early 1960's to indicate a postal item had been compulsorily registered appeared in the CAPTAIN COQK July 2017 issue ⁽¹⁾. In all, eight distinct examples of CAUTION Labels were identified in that study.

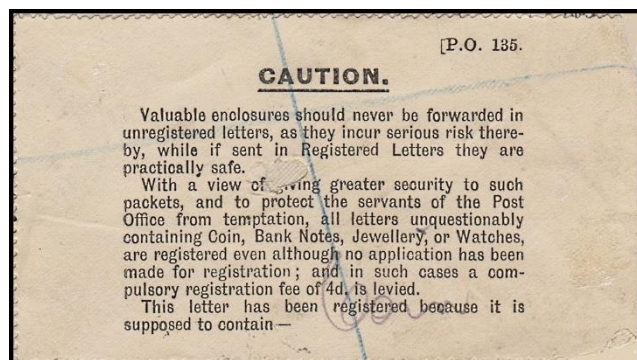
Recent articles appearing in the June and July issues of CAPTAIN COQK describe three additional variations of CAUTION Labels used prior to 1930 ^(2,3).

This current article explores the adoption of the [P.O. 135. Form Designator and its subsequent replacement by the Mail 6 Form in the 1920's. A consequence of these developments is that the two varieties previously designated as 1938 CAUTION Labels in earlier articles, now appear to have been printed some 10 to 18 years prior to 1938. With these changes, twelve distinct caution labels have now been identified.

Certain characteristics of the 1908 and 1920 Labels provide new insight on the possible printing sequence of these and later labels. However, as a practical matter, only a single example of each of four labels printed between 1908 and 1928 have actually come to light at present. As such, the use of EKU's to identify these labels has been found to be unsatisfactory (see footnote on page one of the recent article on 1908 & 1922 CAUTION Labels ⁽³⁾).

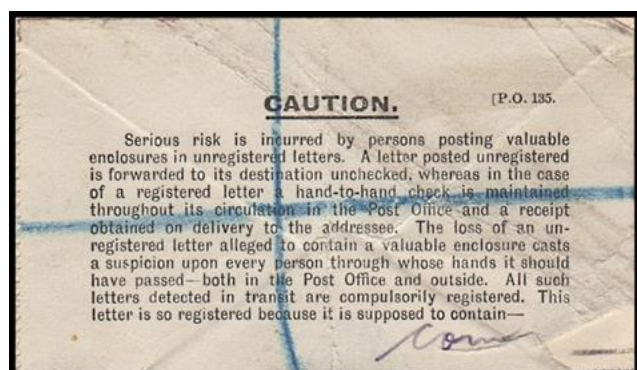
The 1908 CAUTION Label

The 1908 CAUTION Label marks the first appearance of Form Designator [P.O.135. The compulsory registration fee of 4d. is indicated thereupon which places the printing of this label as sometime after 01 January 1908 when the compulsory registration fee was reduced from 6d. to 4d. ⁽⁴⁾. The 4d. fee remained in effect until 1 August 1920.



The 1920 CAUTION Label

The 1920 CAUTION Label with Form Designator [P.O. 135 was previously identified as one of two varieties of the 1938 Label ⁽⁵⁾. Its Form Designator is the same as the recently discovered 1908 Label. Of note, the 1920 Label features a completely revised text message which is essentially the same as 1922 Label.



These observations indicate that the former 1938 [P.O.135 Label would have been printed between the 1908 and 1922 Labels. Further, it is known that the 4d. compulsory registration fee increased back to 6d. as of 1 August 1920 ⁽⁴⁾. This change resulted in the 1908 Label becoming out of date. It is suggested that the Post Office likely decided to replace the outdated 1908 labels either prior or as soon as practical after August 1920 thereby giving rise to the printing of the newly fashioned 1920 label.

The 1922 CAUTION Label

The 1922 CAUTION Label marks the first use of the Form Designator Mail 6 in place of [P.O. 135 as illustrated below:

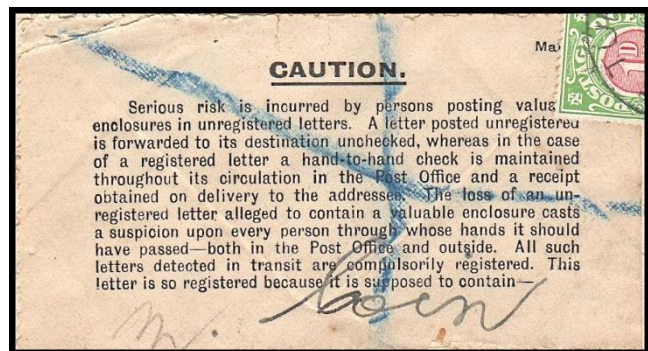
Mail 6 (old No. P.O. 135).

This designator very helpfully draws a line under the use of the [P.O. 135. designator and, while a precise date is not known, it would appear that this printing took place in the early 1920's.



The 1928 CAUTION Label

The second variety of the 1938 labels as noted in the initial studies of caution labels featured the Mail 6 Form Designator and an identical text message as the 1920 and 1922 Labels. Again, logic dictates that the 1928 Label was printed after the 1922 Label but before the 1932 Label which featured an entirely new 14 line text message with its [Mail 6. Form Designator ⁽⁵⁾.

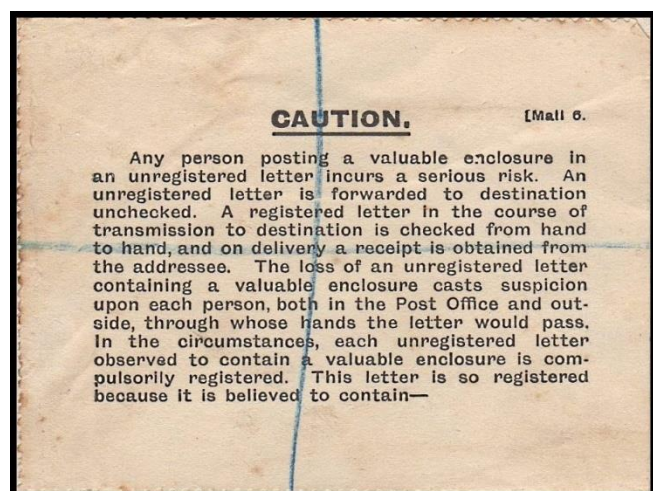


In summary, as of the present time, the 1908 CAUTION Label appears to be first label to be assigned the Form Designator [P.O. 135. A new single paragraph - eleven line text message was introduced, likely in 1920, rendering the 1908 Label obsolete due to the former 4d. compulsory registration fee being printed in its text message. The revised text was retained on subsequent printings through the 1920's which, in turn, characterized the progression of change in the Form Designator from [P.O. 135. to Mail 6.

The 1932 CAUTION Label

The 1932 CAUTION Label featured a revised 14 line text message that, based on evidence to date, marked the end of the period of printings of the 11 line text message labels of 1920's.

Of note, one example of this label has been reported with a Government Printer reference "1000 shts/3/37 - 21393" printed in the lower left corner which indicates there was more than one printing of the 1932 Label ⁽⁴⁾.



The Form Designator Mail 6 continued to be used in various styles for the balance of caution label printings up to and including the 1960 CAUTION Label. The 1960 Label thought to be the last such label printed before being replaced by “NOTICE” labels in the mid 1960’s.

Earliest Known Usage Dates (as of June 2020)

An updated listing of Earliest Known Usage dates for the 1889 to 1960 CAUTION Labels is presented below. Changes from previously published ECU dates recorded in the July 2017 Update are as follows:

- the 1889, 1908 & 1922 Labels are additions
- the 1920 & 1928 Labels (*highlighted for ease of reference*) were previously reported as 1938 CAUTION Labels

<u>CAUTION Label Earliest Known Usage dates (as of June 2020)</u>				
<i>YEAR & (Number of Labels examined)</i>				
<u>Caution Label</u>	<u>ECU</u>		<u>Caution Label</u>	<u>ECU</u>
1889 (8)	7 MY 89		1940 (7)	16 FE 40
1908 (1)	1 JE 15		1946 (5)	17 JU 46
1920 (1)	1 NO 39		1948 (9)	23 AP 48
1922 (1)	17 JU 46		1955 (3)	13 JU 55
1928 (1)	3 JY 38		1956 (6)	24 NO 56
1932 (11)	23 FE 31		1960 (4)	25 JA 60

The listing above incorporates information about twelve CAUTION Labels from their earliest period in the late 1880’s to the 1960 CAUTION Label, the last of such labels.

Readers who have examples of CAUTION Labels in their collections, particularly those from the 1932 Label or earlier, are encouraged to contact the author either through the kind auspices of our Editor or directly by email at stephen.prest@gmail.com.

One final note; for convenience of readers, the individual articles from this series on CAUTION Labels can be accessed by following the “Topics & Research/Compulsory Registration” links on the New Zealand King George VI website at www.kgvi.co.nz.

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References:

- (1) S. Prest, “The 1932 to 1960 CAUTION Labels – Update 1”, *CAPTAIN COOK, Newsletter of the Christ church (NZ) Philatelic Society*, Whole Number 786, Vol 45, No. 6, 2016 pp 92-94
- (2) S. Prest, “The 1889 CAUTION Labels”, *ibid*, Whole Number 818, Vol 48, No. 5, 2020 pp XX-XX
- (3) S. Prest, “The 1908 & 1922 CAUTION Labels”, *ibid*, Whole Number 819, Vol 48, No. 6, 2020 pp XX-XX
- (4) Rev. A.H. Voyce “New Zealand Registered Mail Markings” *Postal History Society NZ*, 1971, pp. 5-7, 47
- (5) S. Prest “The 1932 CAUTION Labels”, *CAPTAIN COOK, Newsletter of the Christchurch (NZ) Philatelic Society*, Whole Number 776, Vol 44, No. 7, 2016 pp 96-980