

The 1908 & 1922 CAUTION Labels

by Stephen F Prest

Introduction

The Post Office introduced the use of “CAUTION” labels in the late 1880’s to advise recipients the reasons postal items had been compulsorily registered. The 1889 CAUTION Label described in an article appearing in the June issue of CAPTAIN COQK appears to be the first of such labels employed by the Post Office ⁽¹⁾. In 2017, a variety of CAUTION Labels in use between the 1930’s to the early 1960’s were described ⁽²⁾.

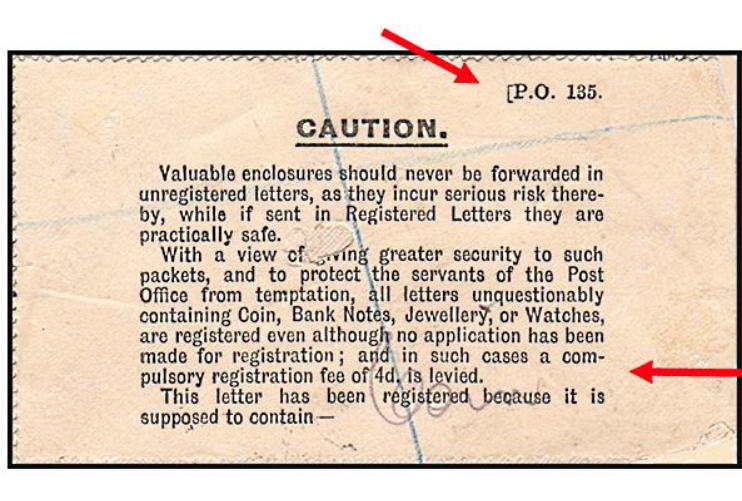
Examples of two previously unidentified CAUTION Labels have recently come to light. These appear to have come into use some time between 1908 and the early 1920’s. This present article describes these newly identified labels.

The 1908 CAUTION Label

The Post Office reduced the fee for registered letters from 3d. to 2d. as of 01 January 1908 ⁽³⁾. The fee for compulsorily registered letters would have been reduced correspondingly to 4d.

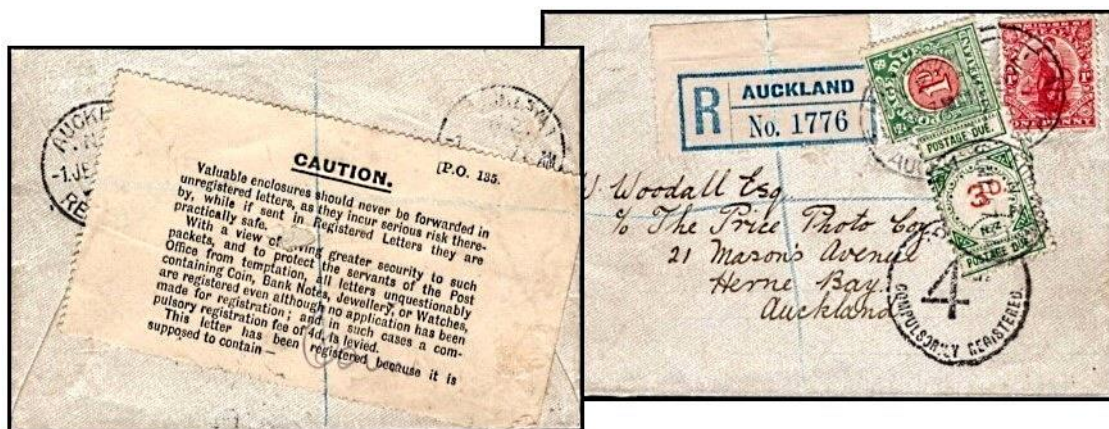
The message text of the caution labels introduced in the late 1880’s included reference to the then ruling 1/-fee for compulsorily registered letters, double the registered letter fee at the time of 6d. ⁽³⁾. Sometime after 01 January 1908, the Post Office distributed a new caution label printing with the expression “4d. is levied” inserted in place of “1/- is levied” to highlight the revised compulsory registration fee. A new Form Designator, [P.O. 135., was printed on the 1908 Label. Otherwise, the text message remained essentially the same as the 1889 Label with slightly modified font and character spacing.

Important dimensional characteristics of the 1908 Label are shown below:

	<p><u>1908 CAUTION Label</u></p> <p>Text Message (13 lines) 62 mm wide beginning “Valuable enclosures ...”</p> <p>Form Type “ [P.O. 135. ” Bracket; with Full Stop</p> <p><u>CAUTION.</u></p> <p>20 mm in length underlined with a full stop</p> <p>Overall Dimensions (approx.) 54mm (H) x 98mm (W)</p>
---	---

Footnote re. Nomenclature: Generally multiple examples of each Caution Label described in earlier writings were available for examination such that using the year of EKU to identify labels from the 1932 to 1960 period was convenient and practical. However in the case of the 1908 and 1922 Labels, only one example of each has been identified to date. In these two cases, it has been assumed that the labels first came into use on or following the date revised compulsory registration fees came into effect. It is acknowledged both approaches are somewhat arbitrary but are viewed nonetheless as being equally appropriate in the absence of information from primary sources (e.g Government Printer records) which may well come to light as further research into these labels is undertaken.

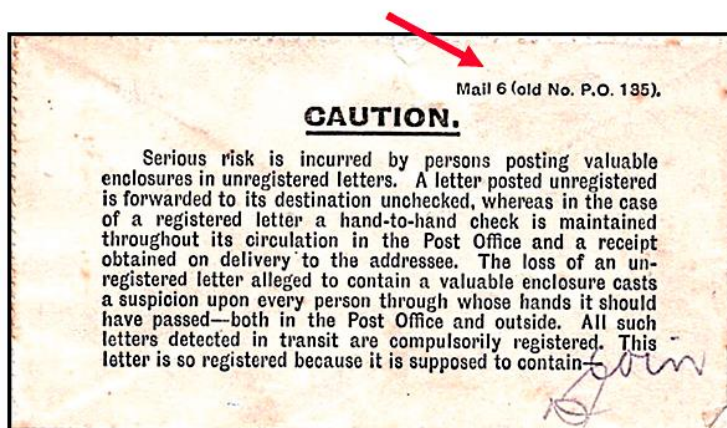
The letter below illustrates the only example of the 1908 CAUTION Label seen to date. By default, the Earliest Known Usage date is 01 June 1915. A notable feature of this cover is the 4d. "TO PAY – COMPULSORILY REGISTERED" handstamp used to indicate the fee of 4d. to be charged for compulsory registration of the letter. An earlier version of this handstamp that indicated "6d. TO PAY" is recorded in the Postage Stamps of NZ ⁽⁴⁾. The 4d. version appears to be previously unrecorded.



Earliest Known Use of the 1908 CAUTION Label ([P.O. 135. – (Bracket and Full Stop) affixed to a letter containing Coin - Compulsorily Registered in Auckland 1 June 1915

The 1922 CAUTION Label

The Post Office increased the fee for registered letters back to 3d. from 2d. as of 01 August 1920 ⁽³⁾. The fee for compulsorily registered letters would have increased correspondingly back to 6d. at that time. The 1922 Label featured a single 11 sentence paragraph message with an entirely new text compared to the 1908 Label. The 1922 Label Form Designator - Mail 6 (old No. P.O. 135). - infers this printing possibly occurred in the period around the time the 1922 Post and Telegraph Department Rules and Regulations was published.



1924 CAUTION Label

Text Message (11 lines)
76 mm wide beginning
"Serious risk is ..."

Form Type 1c "Mail 6"
No Bracket; no Full Stop &
(old No. P.O. 135)

CAUTION.

21 mm in length
underlined with a full stop

Overall Dimensions (approx.)
54mm (H) x 98mm (W)

The letter illustrated below is the only example of the 1922 CAUTION Label seen to date. The Earliest Known Usage date is 03 July 1928 on an envelope mailed 02 July and delivered within Rawene the following day.



Earliest Known Use of the 1922 CAUTION Label (Type 1c “Mail 6” - (no Bracket, No Full Stop) affixed to a letter containing Coin - Compulsorily Registered in Rawene 3 July 1928

Concluding Thoughts

The 1908 and 1922 CAUTION Labels have filled a gap that existed between earlier labels of the 1890's and those used from the mid-1930's and later years. These two labels shed light on the transition of the Post Office designation of the label's Form from “P.O. 135” to various versions of “Mail 6”. This transition will be the subject of a subsequent article in this series.

This article is the eighth in a series published in CAPTAIN COQK describing printed CAUTION Labels used by the Post Office to be affixed on compulsorily registered items. These earlier articles can be accessed at the George VI New Zealand website by following the links under Topics & Research or directly at www.kgvi.ca/nz/Comp%20Reg.htm.

Acknowledgement: The author wishes to thank CPS members Jeff Long and Paul Wreglesworth who kindly provided the author information regarding CAUTION Labels used in the 1890's.

... / to be continued

References:

- (1) S. Prest, “The 1889 CAUTION Label”. CAPTAIN COQK Newsletter of the Christchurch (NZ) Philatelic Society, Whole No 818, Vol 48, No. 5, 2020 pp XX_XX
- (2) S. Prest, “The 1932 to 1960 CAUTION Labels – Update 1”, *ibid*, No 786, Vol 45, No. 6, 2017 pp 92-94
- (3) Rev. A.H. Joyce “New Zealand Registered Mail Markings” Postal History Society NZ, 1971, pp. 5-7, 47
- (4) “Postage Due & Deficient Postage”, Image 70, Postage Stamps of NZ, Vol III, Chapter XXXVI, p 478