

actual time of stamping. Thus, a letter posted at 4.50 p.m. would bear the time 5 p.m., and a letter posted at 5.2 p.m. the time 5.30 p.m.

627. Date-stamps engraved "Telegraph Office" are on no account to be used for impressing postal matter.

628. The date-stamp must not on any account be altered from the current date. Any mark required of another date must be written. When by inadvertence an imperfect impression of the date-stamp is affixed to a voucher, the defect must be remedied with pen and ink. A second impression of the stamp is forbidden.

629. Postmasters must take precautions for the safe custody of the official seals and date-stamps, and must prevent these being handed to members of the public on any pretext whatever, or being kept in such a position that the public can obtain and use them. It is forbidden to give impressions to the public. Care should also be taken that any stranger representing himself to be an officer of the Post and Telegraph Department produces satisfactory evidence of that fact before he is allowed to have access to or to use the date-stamps, &c.

630. The impression of each stamp must be not only legible, but perfect in every particular. To secure this, attention should be paid to the following points, namely:—

- (1.) The stamp must be kept perfectly clean, which may be done most effectually by brushing it with a weak solution of potash or soda, or with printers' lye, using for the purpose a small brush. Type which has been used must be cleaned before it is replaced in the box.
- (2.) The cushion on which the letters are placed to be stamped should be quite even and very slightly elastic.
- (3.) The stamp should be held firmly in the hand, and struck upon the letter with a light sharp blow, care being taken not to let the stamp fall upon the impression made at another office. At offices where letters are stamped on the back, the letters received from a sub-office should be placed on the stamping-table with the point of the flap turned away from the stamper, and those received from a chief office with the point of the flap turned towards the stamper.
- (4.) Strict attention should be paid to keeping the ink-pad constantly fit for use by moistening it with stamping-ink. Too much ink is not to be put on the pad, and the ink put on is to be well rubbed in so as to prevent the clogging of the pad. If the pad is allowed to become saturated or the stamp dirty the stamping will be smeared and indistinct.
- (5.) It is not necessary to date-stamp post-cards, newspapers, or books except at offices where posted. The offices at which letters are not stamped on the back at the present date are the following: Auckland, Blenheim, Christchurch, Dunedin, Frankton Junction, Gisborne, Greymouth, Hamilton, Hokitika, Invercargill, Napier, Nelson, New Plymouth, Oamaru, Palmerston North, Rotorua, Thames, Timaru, Wanganui, Wellington, Westport, and all railway travelling post-offices. The abolition of back-stamping at these offices does not apply to registered letters or letters sent to the counter for delivery.
- (6.) Letters or packets which appear to contain photographs, cards, or other fragile articles are to be lightly stamped.