HUNGARIAN PRECANCELS

a study by

WILHELM SCHAFFLING and
OTTO F. SCHAFFLING

Translanted from the original German by
Otto G. Schaffling

SOCIETY FOR HUNGARIAN PHILATELY

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"We understand the term precanceled stamps to mean stamps which have already been cancelled prior to their usage, that is before delivery of mail franked with these stamps to the postoffice."
This is a definition by Dr. Gagarin. Simplified and quicker handling of the mail is the main purpose of the precancel. Precancels continue in use in many countries; best known of these are the USA, Canada, France and Belgium. Probably least known are the precancels of Hungary. In Hungary only newspaper stamps were precanceled, the first occurrence being in the last years of the 19th century by the Main Post Office of Budapest. For the franking of delivery-ready newspaper parcels, the newspaper publishers got sheets of 100 of the current newspaper stamps (Scott #P4-5) precanceled by an oval canceller reading: Budapest - főposta - hírlapkiadás. The newspaper stamp of the Turul series (Scott #P6) which was issued after 1900 is unknown with this precancel. These "official precancels" can only be authenticated on large multiple pieces. The author's example is a full sheet of 100.

By decree #78555/1899 of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Commerce, under whose jurisdiction the Royal Hungarian Post was at the time, the newspaper publishers were authorized to precancel the newspaper stamps themselves, in advance, beginning January 1900. These precancels are the main subject of this study. They are found on the newspaper stamps listed by Scott as P6-8. Very seldom are they found on P5, which was valid for postage only until September 30, 1900. These precancels were used exclusively for the franking of newspapers that were sent in a wrapper. Until now, the earliest known date of these "private precancels" is January 23, 1900. The use of precancels was discontinued in early October 1914 because beginning on October 4 all political newspapers were delivered postage free. The last precancel date known is October 8, 1914.
The decree #78555/1899 states among other things: "To speed up the sending of the newspapers, the newspaper publishers can send the newspapers bundled according to destination to the appropriate railway post office, bypassing the normal post office. In this case, the stamps used on the wrapper must be cancelled before delivery by the personnel of the newspaper with their own town and date canceller." The format of the cancellation was not prescribed. Known are line, box, single and double circle, and one elliptical cancellation. The cancelling was done by hand or by machine. No specific rules for the color of the cancellation were given. Known are black, violet, blue and red cancellations. With the exception of the machine cancels and one hand cancel, all the cancellations were so large that on a single stamp only a fragment of the cancellation can be found. Therefore a full cancellation can be found only on a large block, or on a single stamp still attached to the wrapper. No official list exists of those newspapers which used precancels, nor are there any official samples of the privately used cancelling devices. Therefore, all that is known today about this field is due to philatelic research. To date, eighteen newspaper publishers are known to have used precancelled newspaper stamps. In this listing, each newspaper has been assigned a unique symbol, for example BpH for Budapesti Hírlap. First in the listing are found the Hungarian language newspapers of Budapest, then the German language newspapers of Budapest, and then finally the two known provincial newspapers. The cancellations for each newspaper are numbered consecutively. By this method, for example BpH 3, each precancel device is precisely identified.

To permit uniform understanding of the texts of the cancellations, we will first present some translations from the Hungarian language. "Hírlap" means newspaper. "Napló" means daily news, and "Újság" means newspaper in the sense "the latest news". The word "kiadóhivatal" means publishing office. Another point is that in Hungary the date is written beginning with the year, then the month (usually in letters) and lastly the day. This is almost opposite the normal European dating: instead of 10.2.1901.
(or in the American system: February 10, 1901) you will find: 1901 Febr. 10. The remainder of this study lists the newspaper publishers who used precancelling devices, with a description of the precancels. Altogether eighteen publishers are listed. Without a doubt, there must be more newspapers which used precanceled stamps. It seems very likely that the newspapers Az Est, Magyarország, and Népszava also used precancels. According to a Dutch article, "Politisches Wochenblatt, Neues Pester Tagblatt and Budapesti Hiradó" used precancels. This is impossible. The three newspapers named never existed in Hungary.

Inspiration for this study is an article in the "Donaupost" #9 and 10 of 1931, and extensive correspondence with Dr. Viktor Weinert, Sándor Visnya, and Gyula Madarasz.
A. Budapesti Hírlap  Founded 1881

BpH 1
Already by April 1900, full sheets of stamps were precanceled with
a four-line text from a plate made of 100 typographic blocks. The
printing was black. The sheets were cut apart just prior to use
on the newspaper wrappers. The text was: Budapesti - Hírlap -
Year - Month and Day. During the years, this precancel was
printed with letters of different heights (varying from 2.5 to
3.5 mm) and widths. The date also was executed in letters of
varying sizes. In this cancelling device, the name of the month
is abbreviated, and its first letter is capitalized. In the
years 1907 and 1908 there were double and inverted precancels.
The period of use for this type precancel was April 4, 1900
until April 1912.

BpH 2
This canceller has the same text as BpH 1 and was in use starting
in April 1912. The difference between it and BpH 1 is that the
name of the month now does not begin with a capital letter, for
example, apr. This canceller was in use until October 7, 1914.

BpH 3
In the year 1900, a double circle postmark 22mm in diameter was
used as a hand canceller. The text was: Budapesti Hírlap, with
the date in the middle of the circle. The color of this precancel
postmark was black, and infrequently violet.

BpH 4
From the end of 1900 until probably 1914, an extra copy of the
cliche used in the plate for BpH 1 was used as a hand canceller.
The date was set manually with differently formed letters and
numbers than BpH 1. This mark is also easily recognizable
because, compared to BpH 1, it is usually set at an angle on
the stamp, and is often partially on the address wrapper. The
color is black, and also violet and blue. These last mentioned
colors never appeared on the machine cancellations.
B. Pestî Hîrlap  Founded 1879
This newspaper used various boxed cancellers from 1900 to 1911.
The text was: Pestî Hîrlap - Date - Budapest.

PH1
From 1900 to 1908 a boxed cancellation with a single frame line, about 35x19mm in size, was used. Depending on the quality of the impression, the letters appear thinner or thicker. The color of the postmark is black, violet, or blue.

PH2
Starting in 1906, a larger 37x23 double frame-line boxed canceller was used. The numbers in the date line are in a heavy "Egyptian" font. The colors of the postmark are the same as in PH1. This precancel was in use until 1910.

PH3
Starting in 1909, and then until 1913, a single-line boxed canceller of 37x23mm size was also used. It can be distinguished from PH2 since the type in the numerals was set in a clear "grotesque" font. This is the best identification, since the thick border line often may appear to be a double line.

PH4
From 1911 until 1914 a metal double circle canceller 32mm in diameter, very similar to the standard official postmarks, was used. The color is black, and very seldomly violet. The text: in the circle was: Pestî Hîrlap - Budapest. The date was on a "bridge" in the middle.

PH5
Beginning in October 1913, full sheets of 100 were cancelled with a three line marking. The text was: Pestî Hîrlap - Year - Date and month. The color was black. The month was completely spelled out, for example "szeptember". The last known date of use is October 8, 1914.
This cancellation was very similar to PH5, except that the name of the month was abbreviated, for example nov. The color and period of usage was the same as for PH5.

C. Budapesti Napló Founded 1896
There are three rectangular boxed cancellers known. The date bridge is always framed and closed at both ends with an ornament.

BpN1
Here we have a 47x23mm large boxed canceller with a single frame line. The text is: Budapesti Napló - Date - Budapest. The postmark is only known in violet, and used between 1900 and 1902. It is found on Scott #P5. The name of the newspaper and city are in "Egyptian" font, and the date bridge being in "grotesque" font are the identifying characteristics of this precancel.

BpN2
From 1902 until 1907, another single frame-line 47x23mm boxed canceller was used. It was similar to BpN1, but all of the lettering is in "grotesque" font. The ornament at the end of the date bridge usually looks like a colorspot.

BpN3
Another boxed canceller introduced in 1902 had a double frame-line and measured between 47 and 48 mm wide by 27 mm high. The ornament on the date bridge is identical to BpN2, and therefore a clear distinction between this and BpN2 is difficult from a fragment of the cancellation that does not show the frame line. The lettering offers a possibility of distinguishing, since the type is thicker than BpN2, and the letters are slightly smaller (being printed in 8 point type rather than the 9 point type of BpN2). There is also very little space between the letters of "Budapest".
D. Az Ujság  Founded 1903.
Az Ujság had two different cancellers 29mm in diameter, very similar to the official double-circle canceller. The color is always black. More than one cancellation fragment on one stamp establishes that entire sheets were cancelled.

AUJ1
The text is: Az Ujság - Date Bridge - Kiadóhivatal. The date bridge is 10mm wide; this canceller was in use from 1905 to 1914.

AUJ2
The text is: Az Ujság - Date Bridge - Budapest. The date bridge is only 8mm wide; the canceller was used from 1906 until 1914.

E. Pestő Napló  Founded 1891
Pestő Napló was the only paper to use oval cancellations. The size was 37x25mm. The text is: Pestő Napló - Date - Budapest. The colors are black, violet, blue, or green. The latter is thought to be a color change from the blue. Over the entire usage of the cancellations from 1900 to 1914, they were always smeared. PN1 is known on Scott #P5.

PN1
The letters of the newspaper's name are 3mm high on this oval metal canceller.

PN2
Beginning in 1908, an oval rubber canceller was used. The name of the newspaper was now 3.5mm high.

F. Magyar Hirlap  Founded 1891
MH1
This is a 45x23mm boxed canceller with a single frame-line and lightly rounded corner. The date bridge is framed, and both
ends are profusely ornamented. The text is: Magyar Hirlap - Date - Budapest. Colors are black, violet or red. Up until now, the earliest known precancel is January 23, 1900, and this is found on MH1. This precancel also is found on Scott #P5 and was used from 1900 until 1906.

G. Egyetértés (English: Unity) Founded 1876

Egy
This double lined framed canceller has a size of 50x30mm. The date bridge is also framed. Text: Egyetértés - Date - Budapest. The colors are black, violet, blue, or red. This canceller was in use from 1900 to 1909. Because of its large size, on stamps it can only be found as fragments.

H. Világ (English: The World) First issue March 30, 1910

Vil
This simple circle canceller of 30mm diameter was used only in violet color and is known in the years 1910 to 1913. The text is: Világ - Date - kiadóhivatala.

I. Alkotmány (English: Constitution) Founded 1896

Alk
This metal double circle canceller looks like the official cancellers. Its diameter is 29mm and the date bridge is 8mm wide. It is known only in black, and was in use from 1912 until 1914. Text: Alkotmány - Date - Budapest.

J. Magyar Nemzet (English: Hungarian Nation) Founded 1899

MNZ
The Magyar Nemzet used a metal double circle canceller 29mm in diameter, similar to the official cancellation. The date bridge is 8mm wide. The precancel exists only in black, and
K. Friss Ujság (English: The News) Founded 1896

Friss Ujság, a typical boulevard paper, used 41x23 mm boxed cancellation. This single frame-line canceller with heavy lettering was only discovered in 1965. It exists in violet for the years 1900-1902, and in black only for 1902.

L. Pester Lloyd Founded 1853

The Pester Lloyd was the only Hungarian newspaper that was read at the Emperor's palace in Vienna. It is the first of the five German language Budapest newspapers listed here.

PL1
A 34mm diameter rubber canceller with double frame-line. The date bridge has ornamentation both above and below. The text is: Pester Lloyd - Date - Budapest. The color is black or violet, and usually very faded. While the total period of use is not established, the years 1902-1906 are documented.

PL2
Very similar to PL1, but the ornamentation on the date is changed. Now it is two 10mm long horizontal lines. The text is the same as PL1; the color is usually violet, but is sometimes black. The color is always faded and barely readable. This precancel was in use from 1909 until 1914.


NPJ1
This is a double frame-line boxed canceller 35x23mm in size. Text: Neues Pester Journal - Date - Budapest. The color is usually black, with isolated examples of blue. It was used from
1900 to 1914, and is found on Scott #P5.

N. Politisches Volksblatt. (English: People's Political Paper)
It was founded in 1875 as the so-called "Two Kreuzer Paper".

FV1
This double frame-line boxed canceller of 35x23mm was used from 1900 to 1906. The text read: Politisches Volksblatt - Date - Budapest. The color is black, with a few known blue.

FV2
From 1906 until 1914 a very similar canceller to FV 1 was used. The size and text were the same, but the distinguishing characteristic is a single frame-line. It exists only in black.

O. Neues Politisches Volksblatt (Neue: New) Founded 1877
NPVL
This single frame-line boxed canceller with rounded corners is 50x23 mm in size. The date bridge is framed and is closed at both ends by an ornament. Text: Neues Politisches Volksblatt - Date - Budapest. The color is violet or red. It exists used on Scott #P5, and since it is documented for the years 1900, 1902, and 1903, we can assume it was also used in 1901.

P. Budapester Tagblatt (English: Budapest Daily Paper) Founded 1884
Bptl
This always smeared and barely readable canceller has four lines and no framing. The text is: Budapester - Tagblatt - kiadohivatal Date. The text is 25x16 mm including the date, which is printed in large type. The years 1900 to 1905 are known, the color being black and more commonly violet. It is found on Scott #P5.
Q. Pécsi Napló (English: Newspaper of Pécs) Founded 1892
This is the first of the only two known provincial papers to use precancellation.

PÉNL
This is a 26mm square boxed canceller with the date enclosed in a single frame-line, but the entire cancellation in a double frame-line. Text: Pécsi Napló - Date - Pécs. It is known for the years 1906 and 1907 in black and violet.


FÉKL
A three-line unframed canceller with the text: Felsőmagyarország - Date - Kassa. It is known only in black for the years 1905-6.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Identifying Symbol</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Form of Canceller</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Period of Use</th>
<th>Newpaper Stamp Scott #</th>
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</table>