

HAMBROS BANK

Paul Waldron

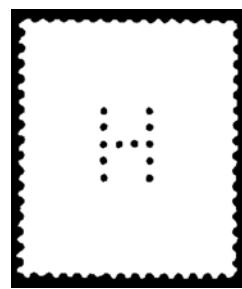
The cover below was acquired via a well-known auction site last year and prompted me to do some research into not only the perfin and stamps but also the intended recipient. It was sent by Hambros Bank in June 1935 to a Major Douglas H. Nelles in Ottawa, Canada.



The postage paid was 4½d in total (assumed to be the letter rate for 2oz plus a 3d Registration Fee for items up to £5 in value) comprising 2½d blue (1912-24) and 2d orange (1935). Both had a perfin die, a large "H" - in use between 1895 and 1906.

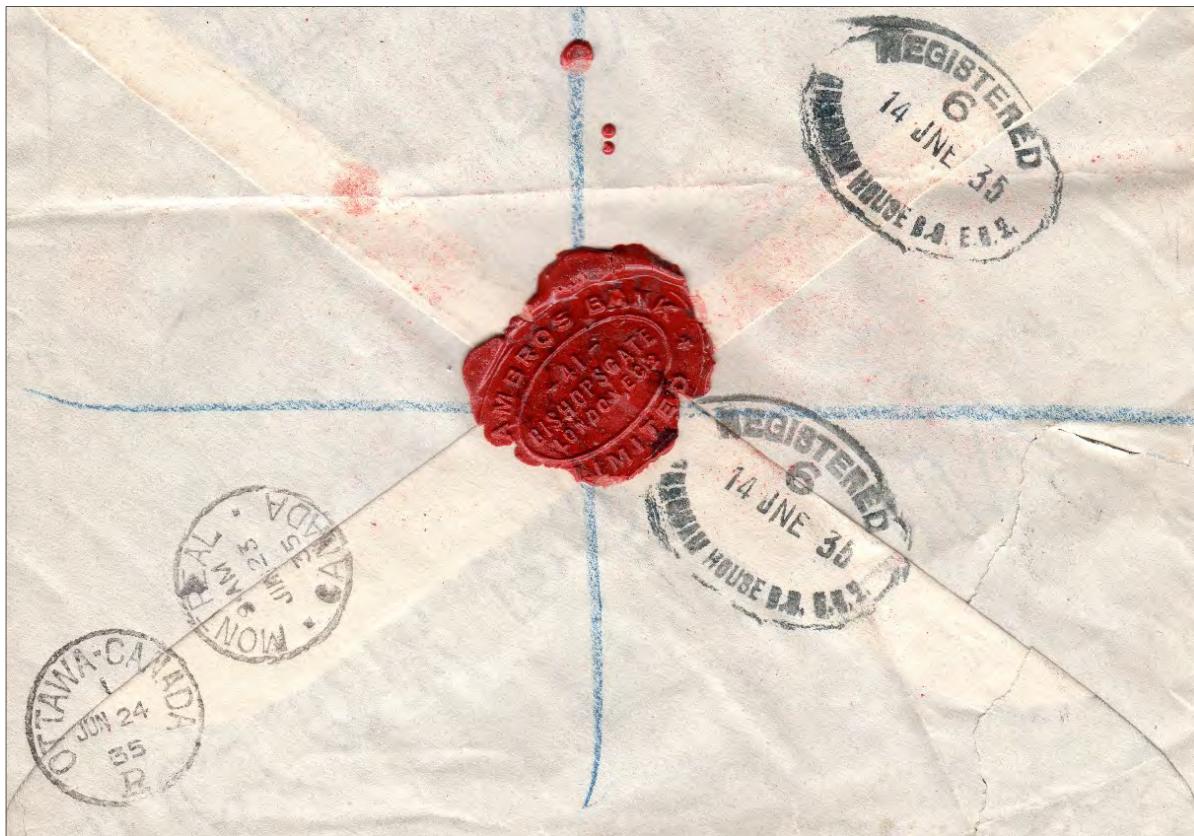
The envelope appears to be a standard Hambros stationery item. Four large oval date stamps were used – "Registered 6 14 JNE 35 Gresham House

1913 - 1945



H0012.07

B.O. E.C. 2", two on the front and two on the reverse. There is also a "London, E.C. 142" registered label. The reverse of the envelope has a well preserved "Hambros Bank Limited" red seal, and shows the letter's progress, arriving in Montreal on June 23rd and thence on to Ottawa, arriving June 24th – a journey of some ten days.



Douglas Nelles is an interesting character, recognised in Canada as one of that country's first great figure skating champions. Born March 26, 1881 in Grimsby, Ontario, he studied civil engineering on leaving school and gained employment with the Dominion Land Survey. Travelling with a party of men into the harsh wilderness of Hugh Miller Inlet, Glacier Bay and Skagway, and living in tents on the borders of Canada and Alaska, his job was at times quite dangerous.

Later Douglas moved to Ottawa and became heavily involved in figure skating, claiming the 1910 and 1912 Canadian senior men's titles and the 1912 national pairs title with his partner, Eleanor Kingsford. He travelled to Europe in 1911 and returned bearing news of the International Skating Union's system of compulsory figures and helped make these figures the standard at the Canadian

Championships. World War 1 intervened and he served overseas with the Canadian Forestry Corps (which was used across Europe to harvest timber as a military lumberjack unit), reaching the rank of major before being demobilized in 1919 and returning to Canada on the troopship, HMT Minnekhada, to resume his skating career, winning further titles. He died in December 1960, aged 79. Nelles Peak, a remote mountain summit (2,500m) located just inside the British Columbia-Alaska border, was named in 1924 to honour Major Nelles' achievements as resident engineer with the International Boundary Survey of 1907.



Douglas H. Nelles and an orderly setting up camp in the wilderness
Photos courtesy Library and Archives Canada

It is assumed Major Nelles opened an account with Hambros during WW1 when he served in Europe. Hambros was founded by a Danish banker, Carl Joachim Hambro, in London in 1839 as C. J. Hambro & Son. The bank was responsible for arranging many of the British Government loan stock issues in the C19th and became very profitable as a result. Following a merger, it became Hambros Bank in 1921 which required a move to larger premises at 41 Bishopsgate – the address on both the envelope and seal. Following WW2, it became heavily involved in financing the diamond industry and also moved into financial services. Nearly brought down by the 1970s shipping crisis, Hambros was eventually broken up by members of the Hambro family who had remained major shareholders, and was sold to the French bank Société Générale.