An exceptional pair of early used New Zealand newspapers bracketing the 1/1/1873 rate change

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From 1 January 1867 until 31 December 1872 the rate for posting a single newspaper within New Zealand was one penny. On 1 January 1873, a new rate of one halfpenny was introduced, and a new stamp hurriedly introduced for this specific purpose.¹

A new and very exiting find, from the archives of The Medical Council of New Zealand, involves a pair of the Wanganui Chronicle – one dated 17 December 1872 bearing a 1d brown Full Face Queen, the other from 8 February 1873 bearing a ½d Newspaper stamp.

The 1d brown Full Face Queen

Complete newspapers bearing a Full Face Queen paying the newspaper postage rate are extremely rare, only two being recorded to date. The previously known examples are listed below:

1. 1d 1864-7 carmine-vermilion to UK The Illustrated New Zealander 27 July 1867 (Spink October 3 2006, lot 291)
2. 1d 1864-7 carmine-vermilion to UK The Waikouaiti Herald 8 September 1867 (ibid., lot 293)

A third example of a complete newspaper is known to Gerald Elliott:
3. 2 x 2d 1864-7 blue, The Saturday Review, of Politics, Literature Science and the Arts, 22 September 1866. Posted at the 4d Book Rate.

Until now, none were known showing the payment of the 1867-72 1d local rate.

The illustrated example (Fig. 1) is perforated 12½ and appears unwatermarked (probably SG 137). It is damaged, and the number from the centre of the obliterator has been removed along with some of the stamp. However, it is undoubtedly the Wanganui “8” obliterator, in use from 1860 until as late as 1926.²

As well as being damaged subsequent to being postmarked, the stamp has been applied to the newspaper in two halves, showing a central horizontal tear and a slight overlap. There are also apparent signs of the stamp having been pasted to the newspaper, as shown by the dark smear emanating from under the stamp and out to the left. Both halves appear to be from the same stamp, however.

The two classes of damage notwithstanding, its application to this newspaper is entirely genuine and marks a very late example of the 1d rate, just two weeks out from the commencement of the new ½d rate. It is also the only known Full Face Queen on a locally posted newspaper, and obviously also the only known example of the 1d brown FFQ on a complete newspaper.

The newspaper is addressed to “W. Hutchinson Esq M.P.C., Education Board, Wellington, per S.S. Wanganui”. As luck would have it, the Medical Council’s archive also holds the next day’s Wanganui Chronicle, sadly with a hole in the masthead where presumably another 1d FFQ had been (most likely the damaged state of this remaining one saved it from a similar fate!) Listied in the Shipping Intelligence section as “Cleared Outwards” for December 17 we find:
Wanganui s.s., 179 tons, Linklater, for Wellington.

thereby confirming the use of the Wanganui obliterator.

William Hutchison was a Member of the Provincial Council (M.P.C.) in Wellington, as well as serving as Mayor of Wellington for 1876-7, and later through 1879-81. The addressor has misspelled the surname by adding a spurious ‘n’.

Figure 1. Stamp at 200% normal
The ½d Newspaper stamp
In his article on early uses of the ½d Newspaper stamp, Robin Gwynn notes their extreme rarity in dated used condition, and even more so on complete newspapers or wrappers despite the fact that in the first six months of 1873, 390,808 ½d Newspaper stamps were sold. Thackery listed the then four earliest known usages on entire, with just two being complete newspapers.

Thackery also notes the earliest known used example of a single stamp (perf. 10, watermark NZ, SG143) as being dated September 19 1873, or over eight months after issue.

The illustrated item (Fig. 3) bearing an example of SG143 therefore holds the distinction of being both the earliest known example on a complete newspaper (by over six years), and also the earliest datable used example of this stamp, used in just the sixth week after issue.

The stamp is tied a reasonably clear Wanganui “8” obliterator.

Volume 1 of the Handbooks, on page 99, notes that from 1872 to 1881 over 21 million newspaper stamps were printed. Presumably almost all were used to post newspapers. That just eight complete examples have been recorded to date from such a vast number further highlights their significant rarity.

The preponderance of the early newspaper stamps being “Mint No Gum” raised the possibility of them being issued without gum. However, the example here shows no apparent traces of being pasted on, or anything other than being “licked & stuck”. There is no paste leakage visible, nor any unusual adhesive patterning when held up to a strong light.

The addressee is “Dr Bennett, Registrar General NZ, Wellington”. Dr John Boyle Bennett was New Zealand’s first Registrar General following the establishment of the Medical Board under the 1867 Medical Practitioners’ Act, and came out from England at the request of the then Governor, Sir George Grey. Among the updates to the Act in 1869 was the requirement for doctors intending to obtain registration to notify the public through a notice in their local newspaper, hence the reason for some being in the archives of the Medical Council of New Zealand. Both the advertisements in these two newspapers relate to Dr William Robert Gilling Samuels’ intent to practice in Wanganui. Curiously, a later newspaper (The Evening Herald, 10th March 1873) has an advertisement of Samuels “intent to quit the Colony.”

Correspondence with other collectors has resulted in the following list, as at June 2008.

**Recorded examples on complete newspapers**
(a single stamp unless otherwise noted):
1. 8 February 1873 – perf 10 no watermark on Wanganui Chronicle to Wellington
2. 29 August 1879 – perf 12½ on Charleston Herald and Brighton Times
3. 2 April 1881 – strip of 3 perf nearly 12 on Telegraphic Weekly 29/01/81 to Chatham Islands.
4. 5? May 1881 – single plus 1d lilac first sideface on unknown newspaper, also to Chatham islands.
5. 17 October 1881 – on Hawera and Normanby Star to Christchurch ex J-S. Landa exhibit.
7. 3 December 1888 – perf 12½ wmk small star on The Illustrated London News, 13 October 1888 from Wellington to Ohau.
8. 11 March 1895 – perf 12½ on Cruikshank & Co Monthly Circular to France

The author acknowledges the kind permission of the Medical Council of New Zealand, to study and reproduce these items. Acknowledgements also to Jan-Stefan Landa, Robin Gwynn, Gerald Elliott, Brian Vincent and Jim Shaw.
Figure 3. Newspaper mastheads bearing the postage stamps (75% actual size)
4 Elliott, G. *New Zealand Routes & Rates to 1874*, 1984, Section 17 Newspapers
5 Thackery T., *ibid*, p52
7 Matenga, Hemi, Frederick Augustus Bennett, in *Te Ao Hou* (The New World), No. 26, March 1959.
   (The Rev. F.A. Bennett, who went on to become the first Bishop of Aotearoa, was the grandson of Dr John Bennett)
8 The date of 3 October 1881 noted for this item by Gwynn [op. cit. 3] is now corrected by J-S Landa.
9 [Vincent, B.G.], *Use of the ½d Newspaper stamp 1873-95, The New Zealand Stamp Collector*, 66/1 p41

(Update: Both newspapers have now been gifted to The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, by The New Zealand Medical Council)