

April 27, 2017

SYNOPSIS
THE RAILWAY POST OFFICE
OPERATING ON ROUTES BETWEEN
HALIFAX and SYDNEY, NOVA SCOTIA

SCOPE: This exhibit examines, primarily on covers, all of the different cancellations, and their varieties, used by the Railway Post Office on trains travelling along routes between Halifax and Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Note: throughout the time period of this exhibit there were many train and RPO routes passing from Halifax through Truro, bound for Amherst, Moncton, and other points. Mail on these west (or east) bound trains destined for Sydney would be off loaded in Truro to continue onwards to Sydney. To stay within the scope intended, only the route defined “Halifax & Sydney” is incorporated into this exhibit.

STRUCTURE: The exhibit is organized chronologically. Frame one shows all the routes from the 19th Century and their evolution into the routes of the 20th century, shown on frames two and three. The exhibit ends with seven pages of rare clerk cancels.

Headings in the exhibit distinguish each railway line and a brief description follows each heading describing the years of RPO operation and the hammer used. With each description is a reproduction (100%) of the hammer strike. (see bibliography). After the description, examples of the hammer strike are shown – in many cases more than one hammer was used over the years on a particular railway line. Descriptions and examples are all identified by (MT) numbers used in the Gray catalogue.

CHALLENGE & RARITY: Covers and stamps in this exhibit have been selected from my Nova Scotia RPO collection, which is part of a Maritime Canadian collection. The collection began many years ago and has been actively worked on since 2001.

Most of the rarer covers have been acquired through dealers and auctions one by one. Having depleted the stocks of local and visiting dealers most acquisitions now come from searching auction catalogues. Large auction lots of the Halifax & Sydney and Truro & Sydney routes, has enabled a comprehensive hammer study. These routes ran for a longer period and involved a large number of individual hammers. Still; some of those hammers were only in use for brief periods, thus while the Route may have a low rarity factor overall, certain hammers will have a high rarity value.

It should be noted that good, clear strikes of any RPO can be difficult to locate, especially the scarcer material.

The Gray catalogue has restructured the scarcity factor of strikes from a numerical value to a value from A to G, G's being extremely rare and in many cases unique (only one known example). The covers shown in this exhibit range from A to G. The scarcer material is generally found with the older material, , although there are some unique items within the more common cancels as well. The very rare items in the exhibit are outlined or highlighted in red. The clerk cancels fall into the rare category.

HIGHLIGHTS: Page 10 shows a **new** Earliest Recorded Date of use. Page 15 features two covers with the 1898 Map Issue. Pages 32 and 35 show Naval/Military covers. RPO cancels on such covers are uncommon. Page 39 shows a **new discovery**, as well as the recorded **ERD** for the hammer. Page 40 shows **two new discoveries** on one cover. Pages 42 to 48 feature very scarce clerk cancels on the Sydney & Truro route. Exhibited are 7 of the 8 known clerks. The missing clerk is known by just a single copy. That said, there are among the shown cancels **three only known copies**. As well there are **two ERD's** and **two LRD's** shown.

HAMMER STUDIES: This is one of the most challenging aspects of RPO collecting. Certain hammers (not all) are known to have varieties. That is to say there was more than one hammer created for a route. While the information on the hammer is the same and thus carries the same catalogue number, the hammers are distinguishable by studying the "chordal measurements" – the distance in millimetres between two fixed points on the hammer's type. These measurements are shown in charts in the exhibit. Extensive hammer studies have been done on all of the routes known to have used more than one hammer. The measurements were originally made by Lewis Ludlow in the 1970's and published in BNAPS Topics, and the BNAPS RPO study group newsletter. Sub sequentially, in 2000, Ross Gray placed all these measurements (along with new additions and observations, into one publication, "Railway Postmarks of the Maritimes". Which brings us to the second phase of hammer study - measurements must be made on the actual examples. Many of the measurements are less than ¼ mm and good clear strikes are a necessity. Fortunately under a good glass faded strikes are often very sharp. Measurements can certainly be made on partial strikes, but it has to be done on the relevant portion of the cancel.

ABOUT THE EXHIBIT: This is a new exhibit. Portions of frame one were exhibited in 2012. The later part of frame three exhibits material which has not seen the light of day in many years.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Catalogue of Canadian Railway Cancellations and Related Transportation Postmarks, Lewis M. Ludlow, 1982
Railway Postmarks of the Maritimes by Ross Gray, 2000
Catalogue of Canadian Railway Cancellations, Ross Gray, 2009, and 2015 (2nd Edition)
Webb's Postal Stationery Catalogue of Canada and Newfoundland, Earle L. Covert and William C. Walton, 1988
History of Railway Companies in Nova Scotia, www.littletechshoppe.com
Significant Dates in Nova Scotia Railway History, 1850-1899, by Ivan Smith, www.trainweb.org/canadianrailways

All postmarks used in the headings are 100% scans (actual size) taken from Railway Postmarks of the Maritimes, used by permission

Chordal measurements described in the exhibit that were originally compiled by Lewis Ludlow and published in BNAPS Topics : page 2 July-Aug 1979; page 9 May-June 1978; pages 18, 26 & 27 Nov-Dec 1976; pages 28 and 31 May-June 1979; Ross Gray has subsequently compiled these hammer studies with updated information, and hammer studies of his own in his publication Railway Postmarks of the Maritimes. This is the source of measurements used on pages 7 and 12 and as well as the final definition on the other pages.

The Railway Post Office

operating on routes between

Halifax and Sydney

Nova Scotia

This exhibit will show, primarily on covers, examples of cancellations used by the Railway Post Office on all seven routes lying between Halifax and Sydney, Nova Scotia, presented in the chronological order of the appearance of each route and follow the progression and evolution of one route to another.

The exhibit will study the steel hammers found on these routes including studies of the variations of these hammers.

The exhibit concludes with a presentation of scarce rubber hand stamp clerk cancels, used over the routes.

Throughout this exhibit hammers are identified with a MT number. These are the catalogue numbers given to each route in the 2015 publication Catalogue of Canadian Railway Cancellations, by Ross Gray.



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Much of the material shown in the first frame is scarce, as are the final seven pages of frame three. Items of particular significance or rarity are outlined in red. Earliest and latest known dates, and new discoveries are indicated with red headings.