



Canadian Military Mail Study Group

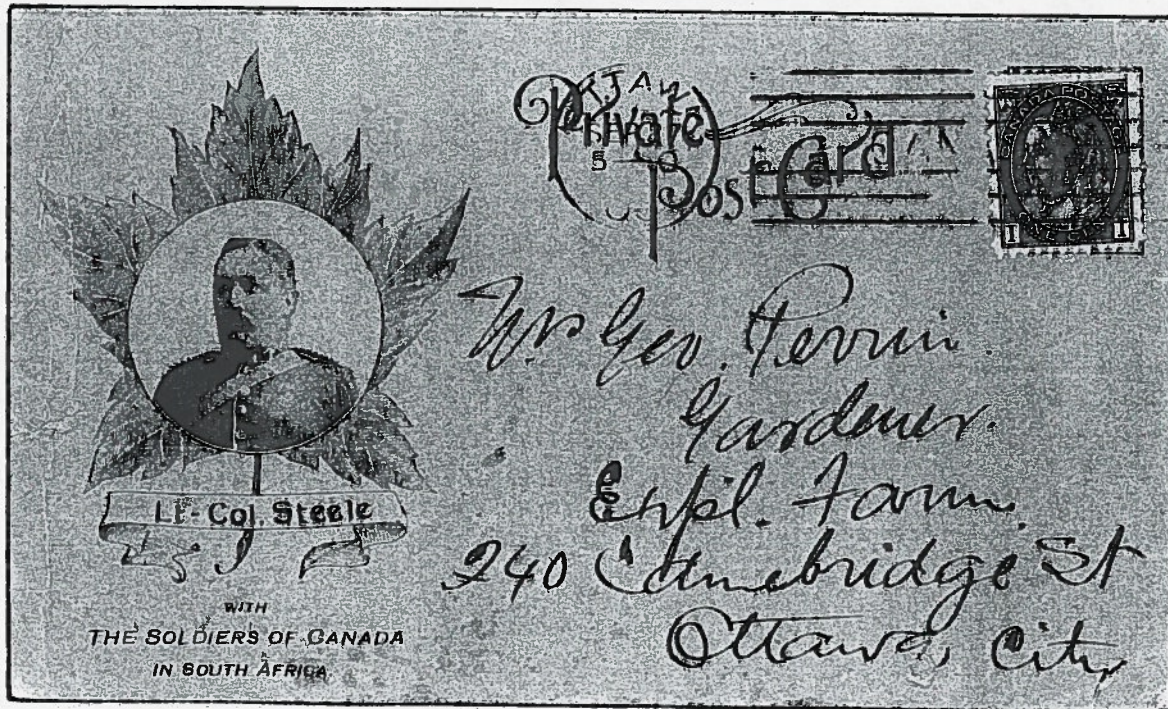
NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2012

NEWSLETTER NO. 203
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SAM STEELE RE-VISITED--By Hal Kellett

[Members may recall this card in NL #122 (Feb. 1996), p. 216 from J.C. Campbell but Hal has provided a full-size copy. More on this famous soldier and mounted policeman can be found in NL #119 (Aug.-Sept. 1995), p. 189. Ed.]



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(blueputtees@hotmail.com)

H.M.C.S. AVALON SUB POST OFFICES--By Paul Binney

The escort naval base at St. John's grew from a small core of 150 officers and 750 men in July 1941 to 2,000 personnel in November 1942 and to peak wartime strength of 5,000 personnel by the end of 1944 [Tucker, 1952]. This number does not include the officers and sailors serving on board ships of the escort force. Shore installations and housing provided a complex patchwork of naval facilities amongst the existing community of St. John's, Newfoundland.

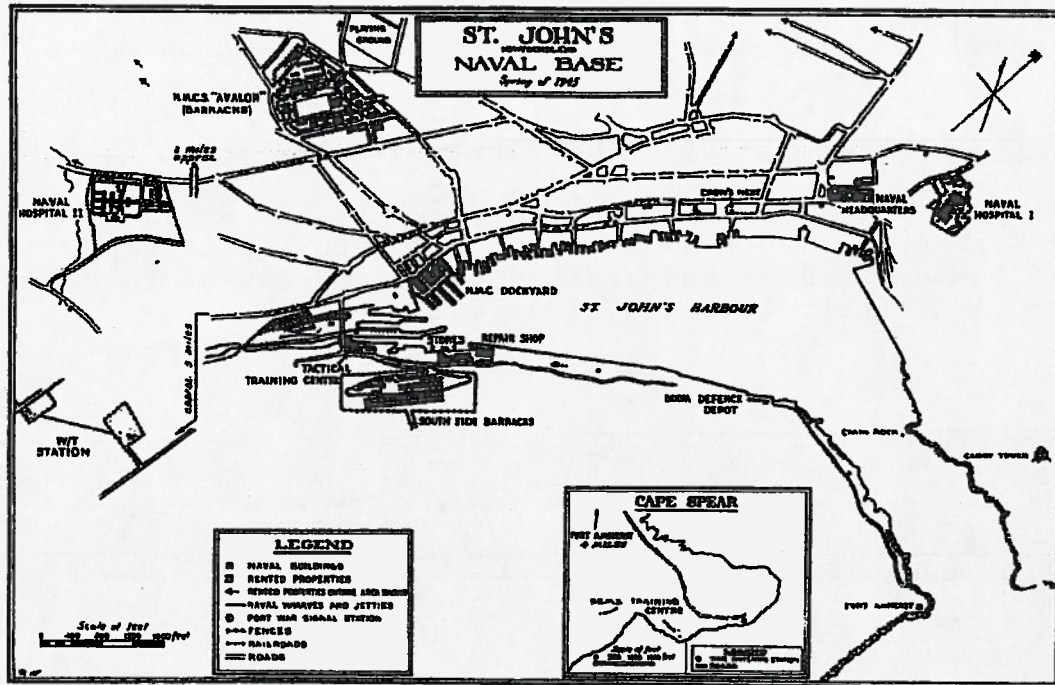


FIG.1 Map of St. John's Facilities, H.M.C.S. Avalon
Spring 1945 [Tucker, 1952, p. 205]

As the map indicates, in addition to the Naval Headquarters, there existed two hospitals, three barracks locations (including Avalon II, an ex-Great Lakes steamship not shown on the map), repair shops, stores, training centres, the dockyard, wireless stations, and a repair yard at Bay Bulls (not shown).

All mail was apparently handled through the Fleet Mail Office located at Naval H.Q. This office served as a portal to the domestic postal system where extra fees for air mail or registration would be paid to the General Post Office and mail would be forwarded to destination through the civilian post office.

Return addresses on correspondence and a few cancelling devices suggest a network of sub-offices served to both distribute inbound mail and collect outbound correspondence for the F.M.O. The wide geographic distribution of the facilities in St. John's would indicate this is a plausi-

[Cont'd.]

ble scenario. John Frith [1983] in his exhibit on Newfoundland Military Offices also suggests a series of offices (mail rooms) existed in St. John's for the collection and distribution of mail. Examples of these possible sub-offices are illustrated below.

I have illustrated a series of covers with return addresses, or inbound addresses, referencing more detailed locations for personnel stationed at H.M.C.S. Avalon. The return address may have provided extended information to speed the processing by overworked postal staff. Most likely it referenced genuine sub-offices that could collect outbound mail including extra fees for airmail and registration in addition to distributing mail to personnel serving within their area.

FIG. 2 Return Address of H.M.C.S. Avalon I.
Censored by DB/N 109 and Marked RECEIVED FROM/H.M.SHIPS
to Provide for Free Postage. Avalon I was the main barracks
in St. John's

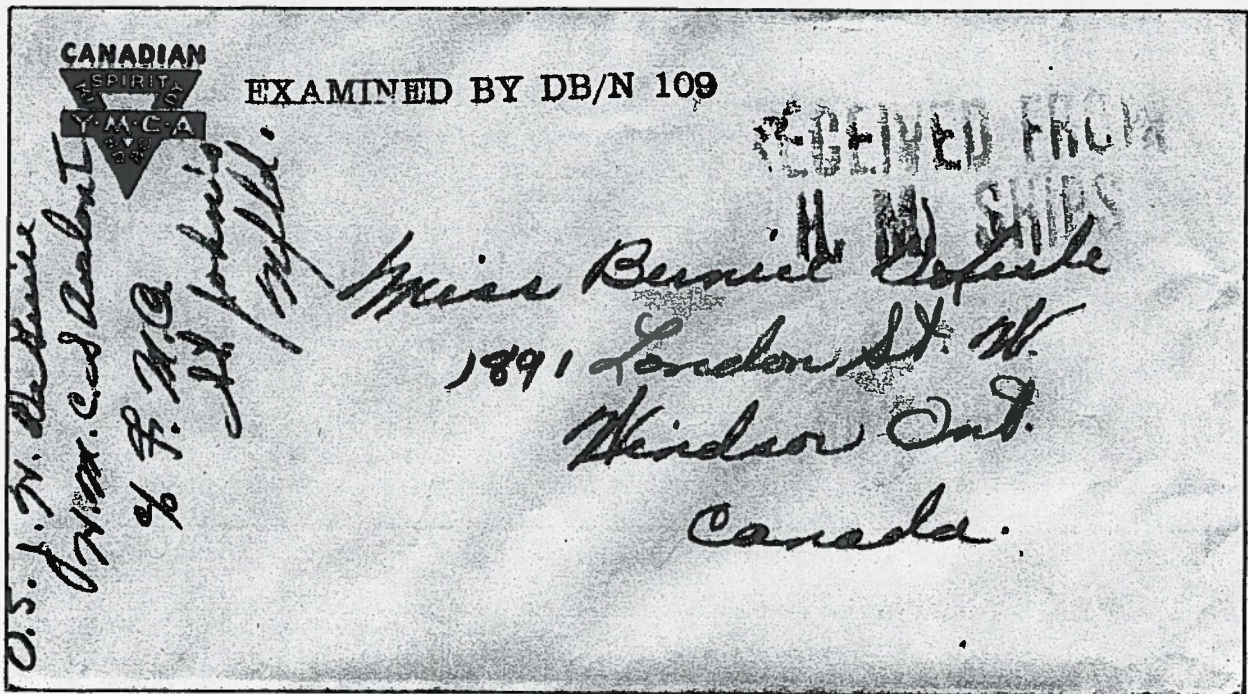


TABLE 1: Offices and Sub-Offices at H.M.C.S. Avalon,
St. John's, Newfoundland

Dispatching Office	Sub-Office	Known Dates
F.M.O. Avalon	Avalon I	
	Avalon II	1942
	R.C.N.H. #1	
	N.P.O. #10	
	N.P.O. #11	1943
	N.P.O. #12	
F.M.O. No. 2		1945

[Cont'd.]

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FIG. 3 Correspondence From Edmonton Directed to a Stoker Housed at H.M.C.S. Avalon II, the ex-Great Lakes steamer S.S. Georgian. Avalon II, which served as a Barracks, was First Leased in September 1941, and Purchased by the Naval Service in May 1942 [Tucker, 1952]

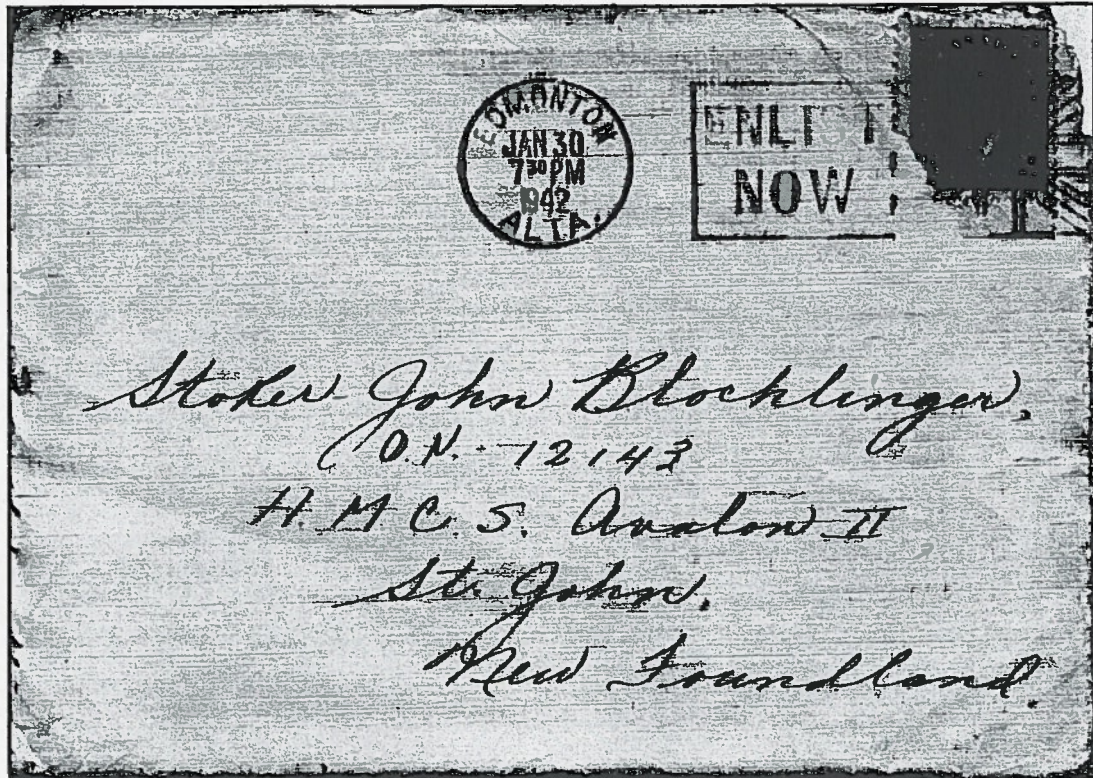
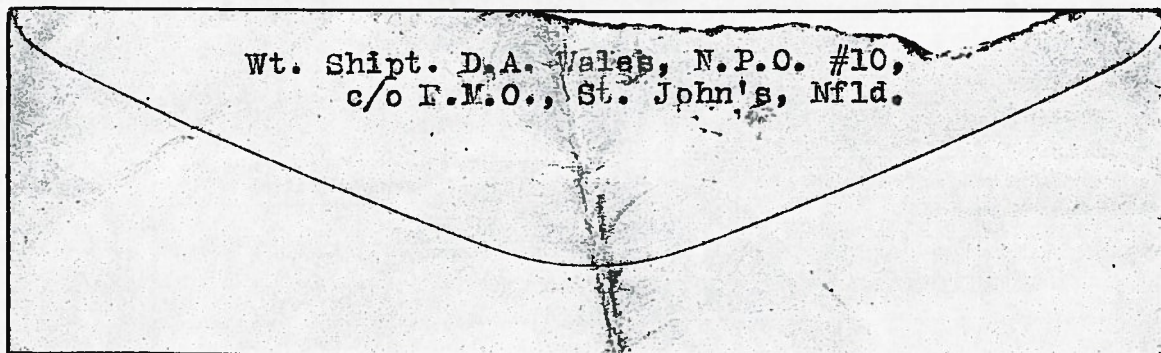


FIG. 4 Return Address of N.P.O. #10. The Rating of the Sender (Wt. Shipt.) may Indicate Wireless Telegrapher, but the Short Forms do not Offer Sufficient Information to Indicate his Location and Therefore the Potential Point of Mailing. Censorship (on the front) was by DB/N 504, a Shore-Based Censor



[Cont'd.]

FIG. 5 Envelope From Fred Sargeant TEL (SO) Located at N.P.O. #11. He was a Telegrapher in the Special Operators Branch. Personnel Dealt With Reading Enemy Signals and Locating Enemy Transmissions Using HFDF Equipment. Censorship (on the front) by DB/N 512 Indicates That This is a Shore Installation and not a Shipboard Censor

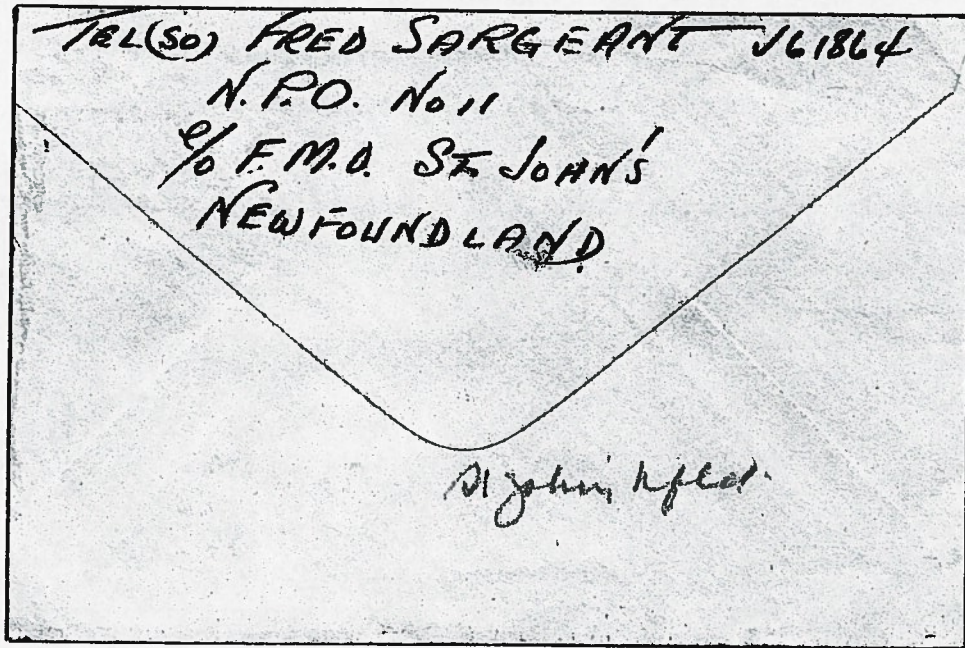


FIG. 6 Mail to N.P.O. #11 Showing the Address as a Sub-Office of the Overall F.M.O. From C.A.P.O. 4, the Envelope has a Clear Strike Showing a 1943 Date [Colin Pomfret Collection]

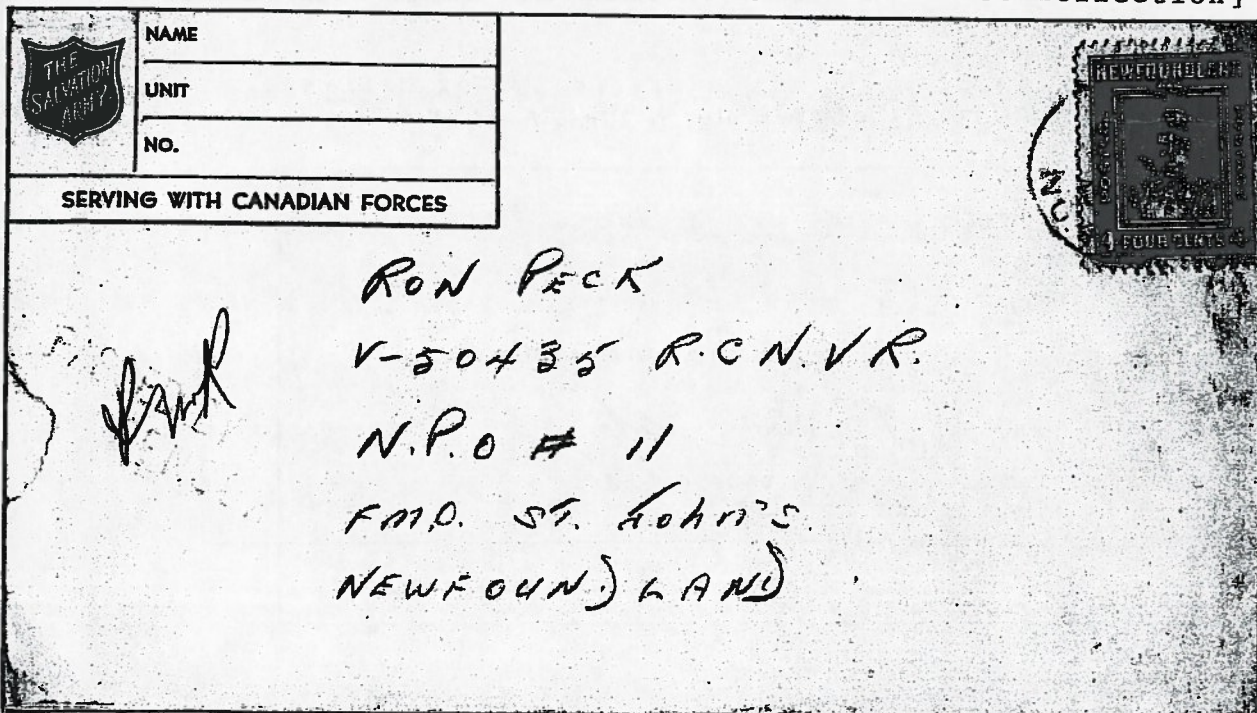


FIG. 7 Return Address References N.P.O. #12 but in This Case the DB/N 524 Censor is Within a Number Series Assigned to Escort Vessels (Mainly Corvettes). Could This be a Dockyard Sub-Office With a Ship in for a Refit or Repair?

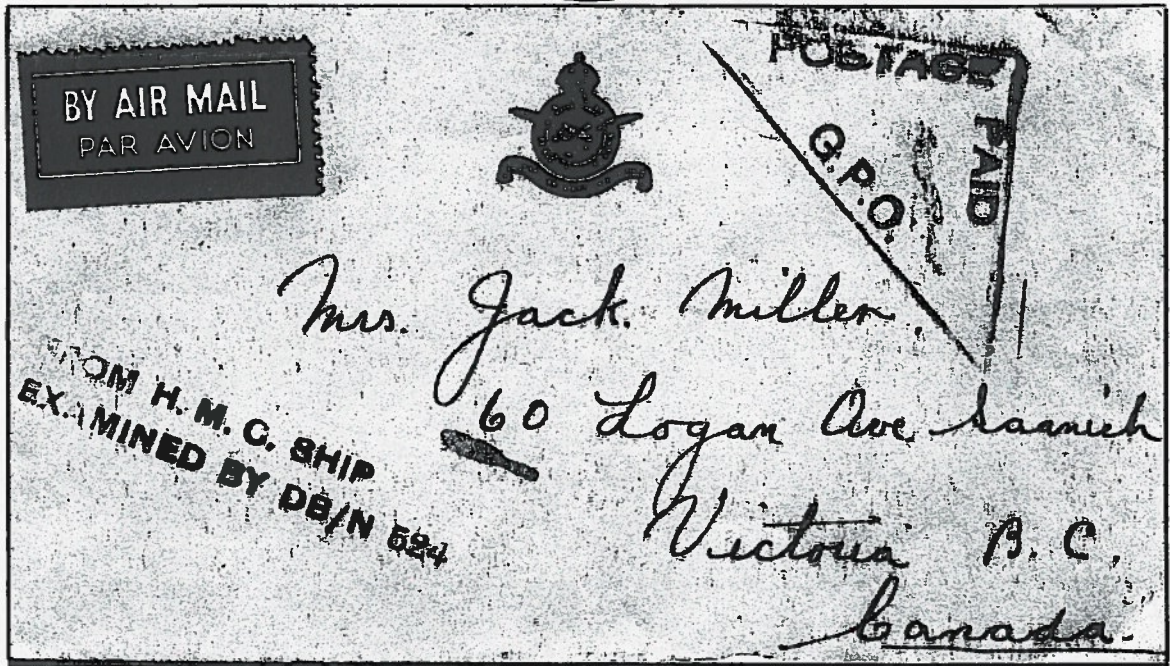
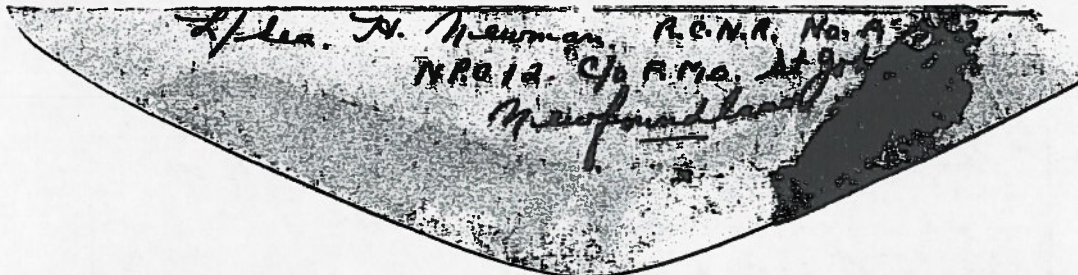


FIG. 8 Return Address of R.C.N.H. #1 (Naval Hospital) on Correspondence From a Surgeon

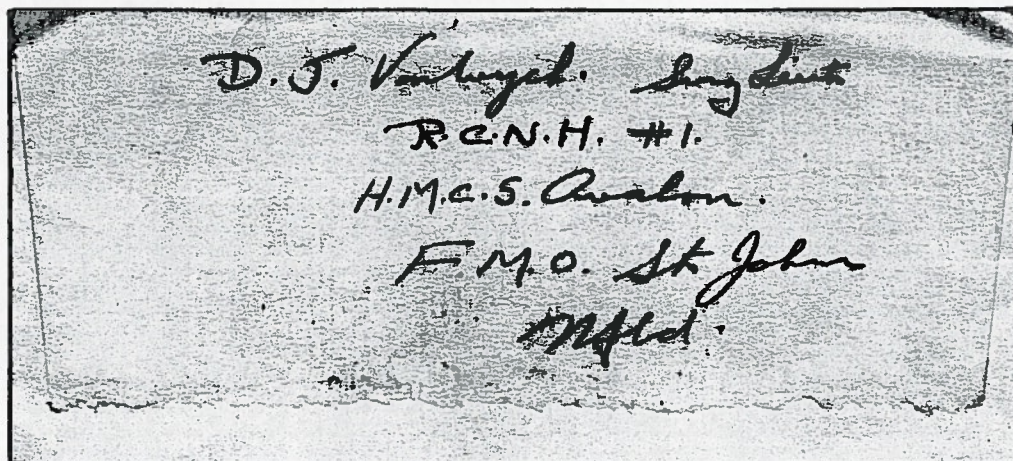


FIG. 9 Marking to Show 6¢
 Airmail Postage Paid From R.C.N.H. (Naval Hospital). Sayles [2011 and Personal Communication] Suggested this was an "Orderly Mark" to Verify That Money had Been Collected From a Patient. The use of Formalized AIR MAIL/PAR AVION Markings is a Feature of Mail From the Naval Hospitals

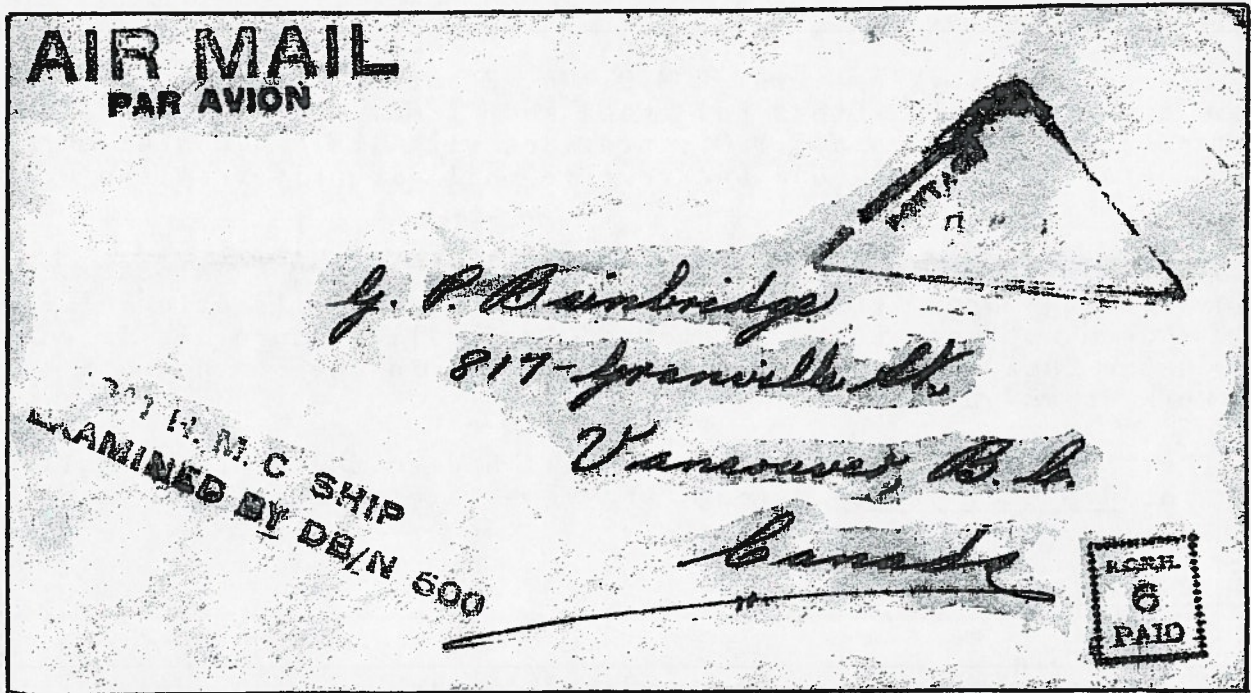
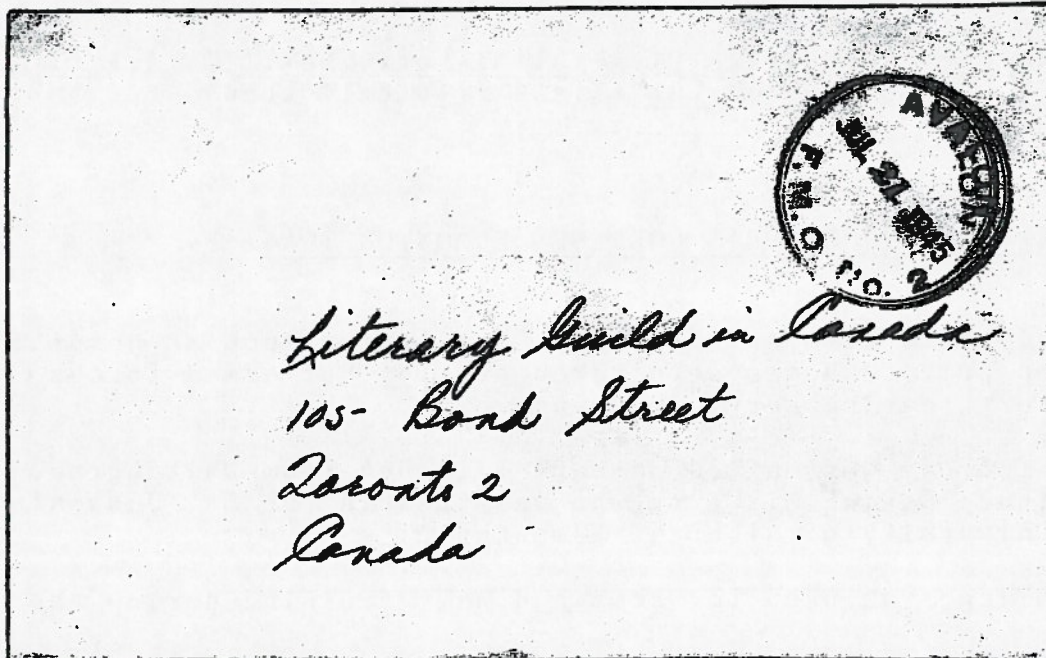


FIG. 10 Letter From a Wren Serving at H.M.C.S. Avalon (Return Address) Mailed at F.M.O. No. 2: This Hammer, Proofed in 1945 [Sayles, 2011], Marks the First Formal Acknowledgement of a Separate Post Office at Avalon With its own Markings



[Cont'd.]

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The references like N.P.O. #10, #11, and #12 with the use of the phrase "Naval Post Office" within the designation are difficult to explain unless these were genuine sub-offices. The locations Avalon I, Avalon II, and R.C.N.H. #1, appear through repeated use to be established "postal locations". The small R.C.N.H./6/PAID handstamp also suggests designated personnel located at the hospital were responsible for the collection and distribution of mail and were provided with suitable handstamps for acknowledgement of payment for extra fees.

References and markings from F.M.O. No. 2 appear after VE Day. By this time censorship of letters had ended and it may be that this office was independent of the main F.M.O., provided with its own postal markings, and therefore able to send and receive mail directly from the G.P.O. in St. John's.

As is usually the problem at H.M.C.S. Avalon, dates and locations of these offices are difficult to determine. Even the location of F.M.O. No. 2 does not seem to be referenced in the literature. It is reasonable to assume that all sub-offices were located in one of the main barracks or work areas of the base.

Further information is welcome and will add to the story of mail handling at H.M.C.S. Avalon during, and immediately after, the Second World War.

REFERENCES

Frith, John.

1983, "Canadian Forces in Newfoundland, World War II." Philatelic Exhibit. Gold Award (HANPEX 1982), Silver Award (Stamp Market Place 1982), Silver Award (OAKPEX 1983).

Sayles, Doug

2011, The BNAPS Catalogue of Canadian Military Markings, Vol. II-The World War II Era, 1939-1945 (BNAPS Ltd., 2011), p. 296.

Tucker, Gilbert Norman

1952, Naval Service of Canada: Its Official History, Vol. II, Activities on Shore During the Second World War (Kings Printer, Ottawa), p. 582.

LETTER TO O/S GERRY, ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE, EDMONTON 1944--By
Mike Street

During the Second World War many different facilities such as hospitals, schools, and even private homes were taken over by our armed forces for use in training or treating servicemen and women.

The cover which follows was mailed January 17, 1944 from Whitehorse, Yukon to an Ordinary Seaman M. Gerry who was training at St. Joseph's College of the University of Alberta, Edmonton.

St. Stephen's College was used for army and navy training during the

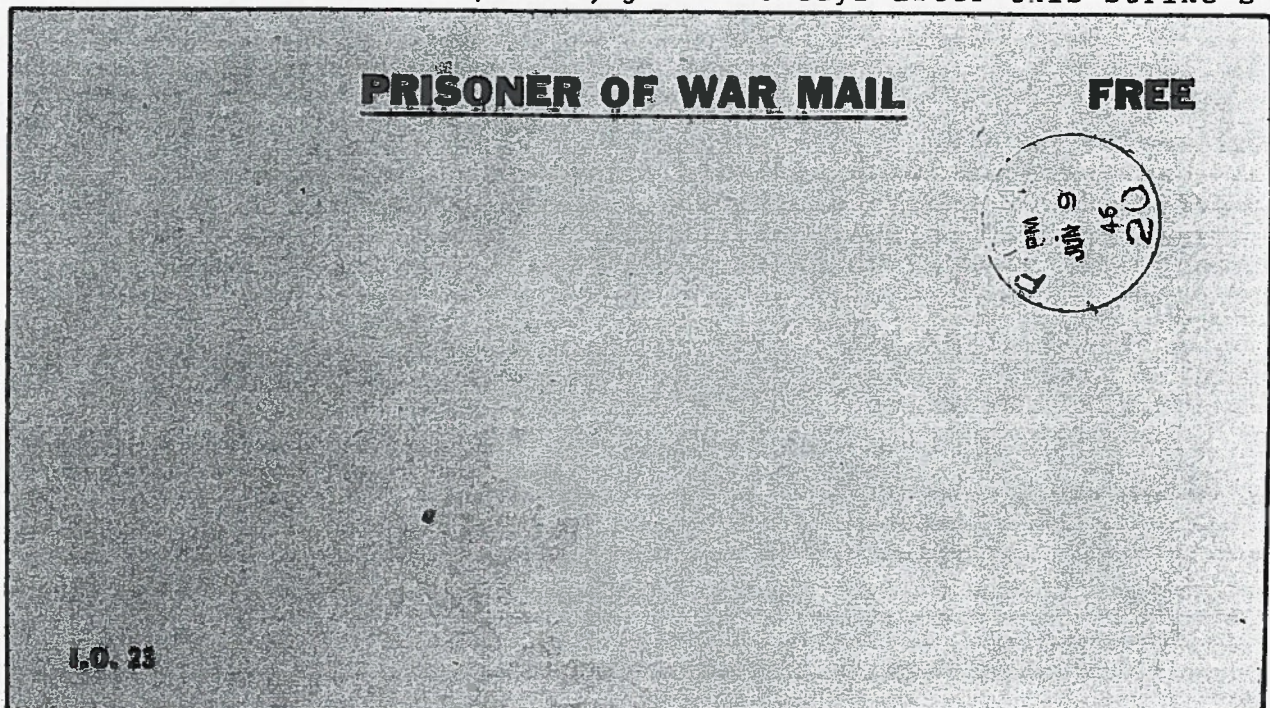
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war. The College's distance from any of Canada's three oceans indicates, and the presence of army personnel suggests (but does not confirm), that the training given/received was not in the area of seamanship. [Can any of our members confirm the training done at St. Joseph's College, R.C.N. and why were naval personnel there? Ed.]



P.O.W. CAMP 20/"C", GRAVENHURST, ON LATE USAGE

Camp 20 closed on June 11, 1946, just two days after this strike's date.



CANADIANS AT WAR, 1914-1919: A RESEARCH GUIDE TO WORLD WAR ONE
SERVICE RECORDS: A REVIEW

While the above study is not specifically related to postal history, the above book by Glenn Wright will greatly assist Great War military postal historians and enhance their research projects and write-ups.

Wright takes readers through the often mysterious, painstaking, and confusing avenues of military research by simplifying the steps through highlighting research of his own grandfather William Percy Wright, and that of other selected members of the C.E.F. He explores how researchers can access Canadians' service records (such as Attestation Papers, Casualty Forms, Discharge Papers etc.) within the holdings of Library and Archives Canada, other international archives, Veterans' Affairs, other published sources (most are already known to members), and primary Internet websites and other online projects devoted to the Great War.

While many members and military postal historians will already know many of the "short cuts" along the research road, they will undoubtedly benefit from the many obscure research tools and other sources not often accessed. The author also delves into detailed examinations of officers' files, nursing sisters, chaplains etc.; troopships; medals, honours, and awards; the Royal Canadian Navy and Naval Air Service; Canadians within the British Expeditionary Force (as well as the Royal Navy, Royal Flying Corps etc.); and the war dead.

Much of Wright's work involves the Internet. He readily admits that not all records are available online but does indicate that many are posted currently or will be accessible in the future. The book conveniently places most of what researchers require in one volume. Much of the book will perhaps have more appeal to family genealogists who seek information on their ancestors in the Great War, but postal historians will benefit as well so that they can "flesh out" more details about their covers' senders or recipients.

The book is published by Global Heritage Press, c/o GlobalGenealogy.com Inc., 158 Laurier Ave., Milton, ON L9T 4S2; telephone (905) 875-2176 or 1-800-361-5168; fax (905) 875-2099; www.GlobalHeritagePress.com (.) Hard cover (ISBN 978-1-926797-45-8) \$42.95; soft cover (recommended), coil-bound (ISBN 978-1-926797-46-5) \$24.95. Taxes and shipping extra.

PTE. MARCEL AGARAND AND SEWELL CAMP: A QUERY--By Darcy Hickson

In my Sewell Camp military mail pursuits one of my little gems in the collection is a small series of postcards that Marcel Agarand, a private with the 44th Battalion, mailed to his wife Anaise residing at Forget, Saskatchewan. The thing that makes them stand out is the above-average quality of the postmarks. This, of course, makes the postcards/postmarks highly collectible (see the postcard which follows).

I am trying to piece together a story line about Marcel Agarand and his flurry of postcards sent home to Forget, Sask. My mailing dates begin on October 1, 1915 and end on October 16, just days before the 44th Btn.

[Cont'd.]

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Dear CMMSG Members:

Congratulations are extended to the following members for their fine exhibits:

Kevin O'Reilly, "United States Military Post Offices in the Northwest Territories, 1942-1963", Vermeil & PHSC E.R. "Ritch" Toop Award; **Anthony Fulmes**, "Sudan Postal Services on OP Safari, July 2007-Feb. 2008", Silver & APS Medal of Excellence (Post-1980) & AAPE Creativity Award; "Postal Services on OP Reptile Roto 7; Sierra Leone, June-Dec. 2003", Silver & APS Research Award (Edmonton Spring National 2011); **Gary Collins**, "Canada and the Great War", Vermeil & PHSC E.R. "Ritch" Toop Award & R.D. Mitchener Award; "Great War (1914-1918) Silk Postcards", Silver-Bronze (one frame); "Captain Bruce Bairnsfather: His Cartoons of the Great War", Silver-Bronze (one frame) (ORAPEX 2011, Ottawa); **Kevin O'Reilly**, "U.S. Military Post Offices...", Gold & PHSC E.R. "Ritch" Toop Award; **Tony Mancinone** (non-member) "War of 1812: The Second War of Independence", Silver-Bronze; **David Bartlett** (non-member) "Fundraising for WWI Through the Post Office", Vermeil (one frame) (ROYAL 2011, Dorval, QC).

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1920 Royal Canadian Navy postal
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WANTED: Sewell Camp/Camp Hughes postal history on postcards and covers. Pre-WWI militia camps and 1915/16 C.E.F. eras. Eagerly seeking registered mail, incoming mail, and EKU, LKU strikes. Darcy Hickson, RR#2, Box 24, Brandon, MB R7A 5Y2; (204) 725-0621; or email: hicksondj@mts.net (9/10)

Members thinking of future exhibiting may find more details about this year's ORAPEX (May 5-6, Ottawa, ON) from Robert Pinet (613) 745-2788; or ROYAL 2012 (Edmonton, AB, June 1-3) by visiting: www.royal2012royale.com (.) Good luck! and don't forget about our BNAPEX 2012 in Calgary, AB!

Our Newsletter's publishing schedule may be somewhat curtailed due to unforeseen circumstances but there is no need for concern. Members are still encouraged to send in material for us all to enjoy!

SMALL ADS

WANTED: WWII Canadian POW's in OFLAG IVC & Buchenwald covers; F.S.S.F. (Devil's Brigade) covers; WWI Newfoundland cards/covers; Victoria Cross recipient postal history; 19th century Royal Navy & pre-history. Details to the Editor or: