

The Way Mails of New Brunswick 1800-1880

Way Letters were letters that had been handed to a mail courier who posted them at the first Way or Post Office en route. They were rated with postage from the point of collection to destination. Way office keepers or postmasters were to postmark the letter and write "Way" in red ink. A letter addressed to a person who did not reside in a post town but along the "way" had to be prepaid in full by the sender before forwarding. When a courier picked up and delivered a letter without passing through a post town or way office, he was required to collect the postage.

This exhibit will show how the establishment of Way Offices in small villages and hamlets provided postal service in areas where a Post Office was not economically feasible. Way Offices were situated in shops or mills after a petition for a Way Office from the inhabitants to the Postal Service was approved. The Way Office Keeper (W.O.K.) benefitted as citizens received and sent mail from his store. He also had free franking and was paid two pence per letter handled. After July 6, 1851, the W.O.K. was given a salary based on the importance of the Way Office, plus a commission on the sale of stamps.

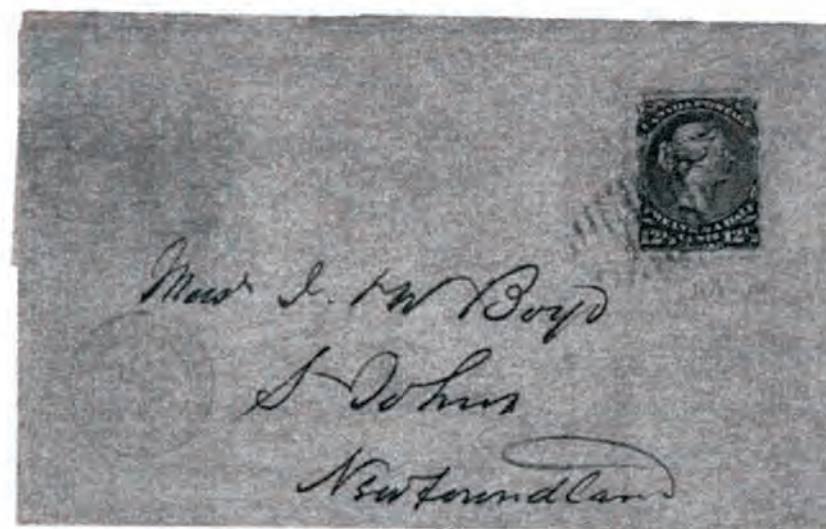
The settlement of New Brunswick occurred at a steady pace on the coast and the Lower St. John River. A huge problem for the Post Office was lack of good inland roads. Mail for the Canadas—Upper and Lower—often went via New York except for times of war i.e. American War of Independence, War of 1812, and local border disputes with Maine. Mail to and from England would arrive in Halifax (700 lbs./week) and get to Fredericton where couriers would back-pack it to the Canadas. To entice development, the Government offered free land, supplies for two years and a horse and cow to populate the Upper St. John River. In return, the settlers would maintain a road, provide shelter for the couriers and form a Militia if needed. As this area was important in the Way Office Program, this exhibit is arranged by county, flowing roughly North to South. Some county boundaries have evolved over time and Way Offices are shown in the county in which they would exist today.

Way Offices were connected to the nearest Post Office on the courier's route from where they were supplied with hammers, forms, supplies and stamps. Early hammers usually were made by D.G. Berri in London, England, but locally made hammers from James Venning were mentioned in the 1858 New Brunswick PMG Report. Opening, closing, moving, renaming and conversion from Way Office to Post Office or vice versa often resulted in one office having multiple hammers. This exhibit shows examples of continued use of Way Office hammers following conversion to a Post Office.

The first Way Office in New Brunswick was opened at Sussex Vale circa 1811. The chart on the next page shows the expansion of the Way Office system, reaching a peak of 498 in 1871 followed by the rapid change from Way to Post Office or closure in the late 1870's.

Year	Way Offices	Post Offices
1842	28	14
1856	208	38
1861	302	41
1866	392	46
1871	498	+
1877	57	+++
1880	0	+++

48
62
634
761



12 1/2¢ rate to St Johns, Newfoundland sent from the Douglstown Way Office
At least 3 different hammers were used at this office

Index to the Exhibit

- | | |
|--|---|
| Frame 1
Madawaska, Victoria, Restigouche, Gloucester | Frame 5
Queens, Kings |
| Frame 2
Gloucester, Northumberland, Kent | Frame 6
Kings, Westmorland |
| Frame 3
Carleton, York | Frame 7
Westmorland, Albert |
| Frame 4
Sunbury, Queens | Frame 8
Saint John, Charlotte |