

Monograph No. 7



Mails of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company (Limited)

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PREAMBLE

The Canadian Pacific Navigation Company ("CPN"), together with several competing companies, played a significant role in the development of mail services in northern British Columbia over the period from 1883 until 1901, at which time it was purchased by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. During its period of operation, the shipping line carried mail on both an informal (without markings) and formal (with markings) basis.

The present article will briefly summarize the background to the development of north coast mail services and the formation of the CPN and will discuss the vessels owned by that company and their probable involvement in mail delivery and will examine examples of any known postal markings used by CPN vessels.

The description of the vessels will be expressed in feet as that is the basis on which the vessels were constructed.

BACKGROUND

The very early communications to locations along the west coast of British Columbia in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were written instructions to representatives, generally ship captains, of the British and Spanish governments outlining how they should proceed to deal with the territorial issues of the day⁽¹⁾. Such communications may still exist in British or Spanish official records but do not form part of the BC postal history records as we normally study them.

During the period of Hudson's Bay Company activity along the west coast, communications came and were sent either by ship around South America or overland by means of the Hudson's Bay Fur Brigade⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾ across country and then by ship from Hudson's Bay to London. Examples of such mail exist but will not be discussed further in this article. At that time, there was no need for a regular domestic coastal mail service to the north coast as there were no permanent communities to service. Much has been written ⁽¹⁴⁾ about early ships operating along the Pacific Coast, including discussions of the *Cadboro* (the first ship to enter the Fraser River in 1827) but this fascinating subject will not be explored further here. Ships of the Hudson's Bay Company, the *Cadboro*, *Beaver*, *Recovery* and *Otter*, provided irregular mail service north of Nanaimo but no ship markings were used on such mail. Over the colonial period there were numerous communications between the colony and England. While the content of those despatches over the period from 1846 to 1871 can be viewed online⁽⁴⁾, and make for interesting reading, they do not constitute coastal mail for the purpose of the present article.

Examples of early west coast ship mail to British Columbia include incoming and departing mail aboard ships from England to Victoria, Esquimalt and New Westminster. Typical examples of such early mail are shown in Figures 1 and 2 for incoming mail in 1855 and outgoing mail in 1861 respectively.

During the period from 1858 until 1871, the main focus of mail contracts was for service between the main centres in southern B.C., including Victoria and New Westminster. Much mail, even in the southern areas along the Fraser River, was carried gratuitously by ship captains. From these coastal centres, early mail delivery to the remote north coast was also a hit and miss situation as at first no formal mail services and indeed few post offices existed, even following Confederation. With some 16,000 miles of coastline, punctuated by numerous mountainous fjords and forbidding terrain a short distance from the coast, communication by ship was the only practical means of providing mail service. Table 1 shows opening dates for some early post offices along the north coast. Additional offices and the supporting mail system evolved as additional trade centers, often driven by the northern fishing trade, were developed.



Figure 1. Incoming cover from England to Vancouver's Island with an October 30, 1855 London marking, addressed to a carpenter aboard the "Princess Royal" sailing to Fort Victoria⁽⁵⁾.

Figure 2. Outbound cover mailed from Esquimalt around September 1861 when the "H.M.S Topaze" arrived in BC, heading for England.

The cover has a 1p red English stamp to pay the Seaman's Concessionary Rate. Backstamps indicate that it arrived in London Nov 27, 1861 and the final destination of Carmarthen Nov. 28, 1861.

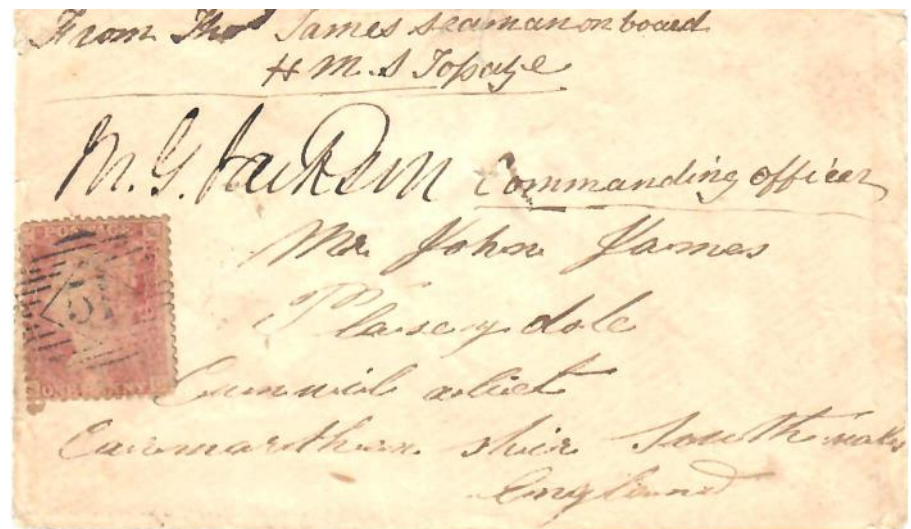


Table 1. Early northern west coast post office openings.

Post Office	Year of Opening	Comments
Skeena	1871	Moved to Port Essington 1898
Cassiar	1874	Closed 1880
Fort Simpson	1885	Became Port Simpson in 1900 and Lax Kw'alaams in 1987
Aberdeen	1885	Closed 1891
Alert Bay	1885	Open
Metlakatla	1889	Closed 1951
Sandwich	1889	Closed 1948

During this early period, although no ship markings were applied to the mail, we know that the coastal vessels were in fact carrying the mail as required by the Post Office following Confederation with ship's captains being considered couriers as discussed by Topping ⁽⁶⁾ and actually being obligated to carry the mail from remote locations. Such mail was required to be prepaid by stamp. Gray Scrimgeour ⁽⁷⁾ has described how mail during this period can be correlated to certain vessels prior to ship markings being utilized by reference to newspaper records that show ship arrivals and departures dates. The 1879 example included in Scrimgeour's article, carried by the *Grappler* from the Nass River to Victoria, is shown in Figure 3. The *Grappler* was built in England in 1846 and was operated by the Admiralty along the coast from 1860 until 1868, at which time it was sold into commercial service and operated until 1883 when it sank.

Figure 3.
Mail from Nass
River on the north
coast to Victoria
carried aboard the
"Grappler" in 1879
⁽⁷⁾. The 3 cent small
queen paid the
surface rate.



Additional examples of mail carried by coastal vessels but not having ship markings applied are shown in Figures 5 through 8. A similar cover carried by a CPN vessel to the Skeena River in 1892 was described previously by Tracy Cooper⁽⁸⁾. During this period from 1892 through 1899, CPN steamships sailed the "Northern Route" from Victoria via Vancouver to Fort Simpson, with intermediate West Coast points, leaving on the 1st and 15th of each month at 8 o'clock as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Advertisement in *British Colonist* for Feb 19, 1892 showing CPN sailing schedule including the north coast. Note that it indicates the vessel will make "intermediate port" stops

C. P. Navigation Co., Limited.	
TIME TABLE NO. 24	
Takes effect Sept. 1, 1894.	
Vancouver Route:	
Victoria to Vancouver—Daily, except Monday,	at 2 o'clock a.m.
Vancouver to Victoria—Daily, except Monday	at 12.15 o'clock, or on arrival of C.P.R. No. 1 train.
New Westminster Route:	
LEAVE VICTORIA for New Westminster, Ladner's Landing and Lulu Island—Sunday at 23 o'clock; Wednesdays and Fridays at 7 o'clock, Sunday's steamer to New Westminster connects with C. P. R. train No. 2 going east Monday.	
For Plumper Pass—Wednesdays and Fridays at 7 o'clock.	
For Moresby and Ponder Islands—Friday at 7 o'clock.	
For Sidney—Wednesday, at 7 o'clock.	
LEAVE NEW WESTMINSTER for Victoria—Monday at 12.15 o'clock; Thursday and Saturday at 7 o'clock.	
For Plumper Pass—Thursday and Saturday at 7 o'clock.	
For Ponder and Moresby Islands and Sidney—Thursday at 7 o'clock.	
Northern Route:	
Steamships of this Co. will leave for Fort Simpson and intermediate ports the 1st, 10th and 20th of each month at 12 o'clock. When sufficient inducements offer will extend trips to West Coast points and Queen Charlotte Islands.	
Barclay Sound Route:	
Steamer Maude leaves Victoria for Alberni and Sound Ports the 1st and 15th of each month.	
The Company reserves the right of changing this Time Table at any time without notification.	
JOHN IRVING, Manager	
G. A. CARLETON, General Agent.	
Victoria, Sept. 1st, 1894.	

Vessels in use for west coast ports during this period include the *Maude* and *Willapa*, both named in newspaper articles. Figures 5 through 8 show examples of mail believed to be carried by these vessels.



Figures 5 and 6.
Mail carried aboard the
"Maude" from Rivers
Inlet to Victoria in
September 1896.
(Courtesy of Gray
Scrimgeour).



Figures 7 and 8.
Mail carried aboard the
"Willapa" from Port Essington
to Victoria in February 1899
(Courtesy of Gray
Scrimgeour).



Figure 9.
 Advertisement in the Daily
 Colonist for Feb 14, 1899.

Additional sailings were carried out by other ships including the *Tees* and *Danube* as shown by the advertisement from the Daily Colonist in 1899 shown in Figure 9. In spite of the CPN notice indicating regular sailings, there are references to more irregular sailings during this period with the *Queen City* being used at times and the *Maude* during 1893 and 1894 being described as having "monthly" sailings to northern ports. The card from Massett through Metlakatla to Victoria, arriving in Victoria on June 15, 1893, shown in Figure 10, indicates that at Massett there had been no mail service since the previous September, demonstrating the irregularity of service at some points in the region.

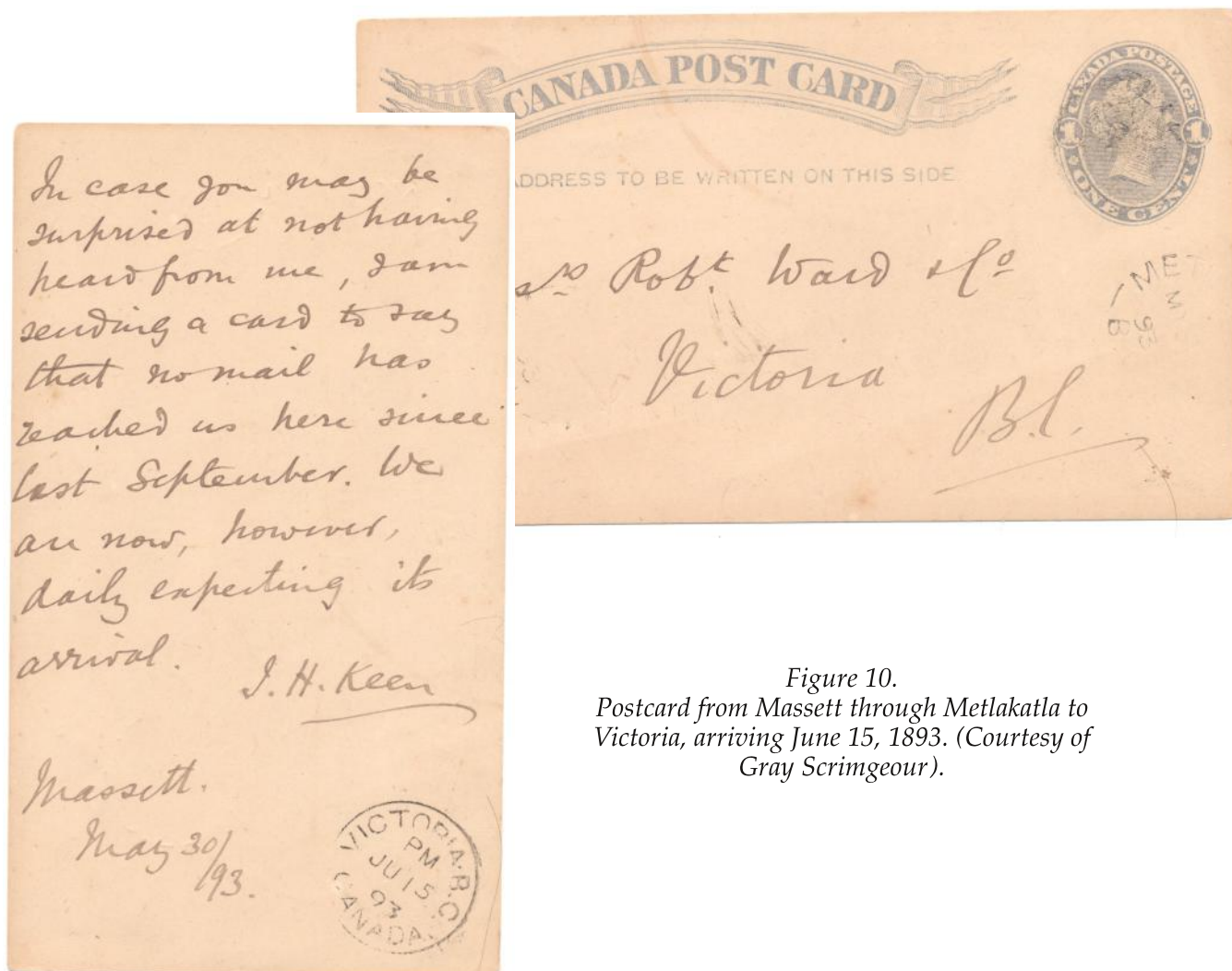


Figure 10.
 Postcard from Massett through Metlakatla to
 Victoria, arriving June 15, 1893. (Courtesy of
 Gray Scrimgeour).

Contracts for mail service to northern points were lucrative for the shipping companies and the *Barbara Boscowitz* from 1883 and Union Steamship Company from 1889 competed for such contracts with the CPN. The CPN monopoly on mail service along the coast lasted for less than one year. In 1883, Joseph Boscowitz, a Victoria fur dealer, had the *Barbara Boscowitz* built at Victoria and in November 1883 he successfully obtained the mail contract to provide monthly mail service to Rivers Inlet, Naas and Skeena Rivers, Fort Simpson, Metlakatla and Way points for \$4,000 per year. He maintained the contract until 1895 when a deal was made with the CPN to split the contract. The Union Steamship Company obtained its first mail contract in October 1892. Until the CPN obtained a portion of the northern mail service contract in 1895 it continued to carry mail as a courtesy service to customers. Examples of mail carried by the competing Boscowitz are shown in Figures 11 and 12.

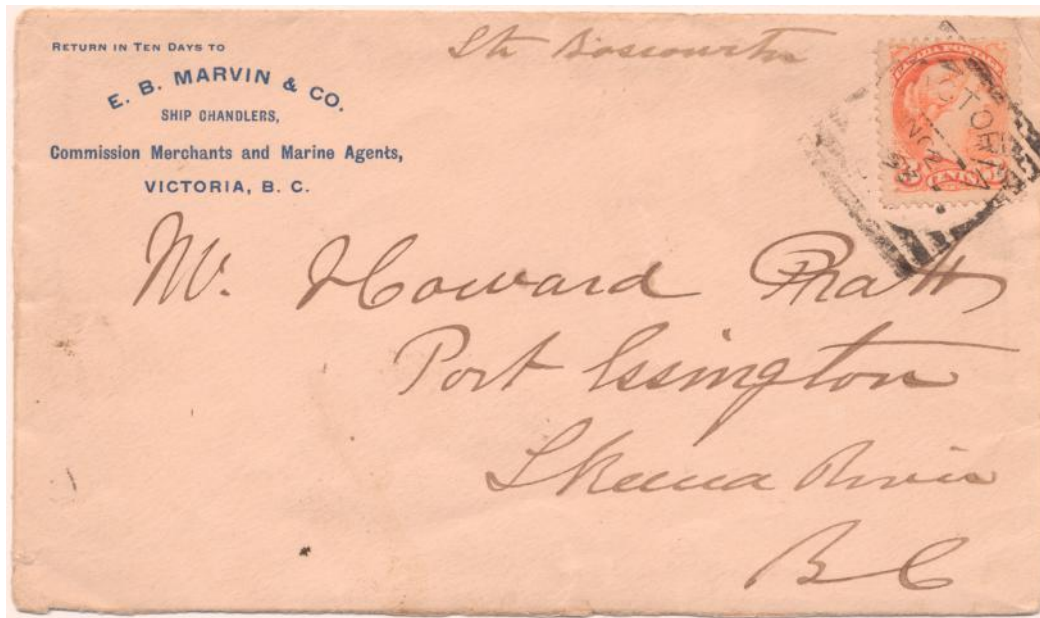


Figure 11.
Cover carried by the
"Boscowitz" from
Victoria to Port
Essington in
November 1893. No
backstamp. (Courtesy
of Gray Scrimgeour)

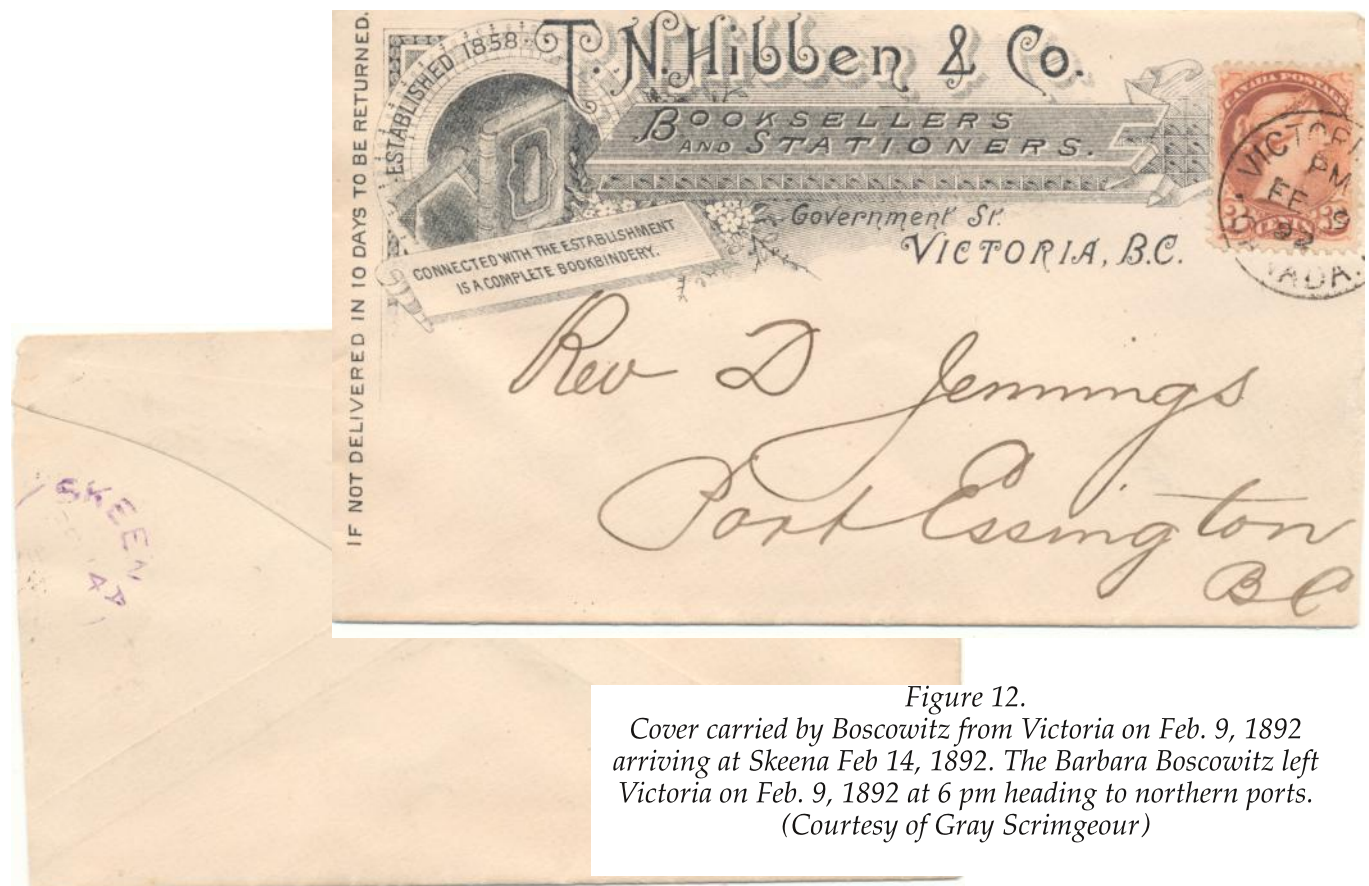


Figure 12.
Cover carried by Boscowitz from Victoria on Feb. 9, 1892
arriving at Skeena Feb 14, 1892. The *Barbara Boscowitz* left
Victoria on Feb. 9, 1892 at 6 pm heading to northern ports.
(Courtesy of Gray Scrimgeour)

It is apparent that mail was being carried by the various vessels working along the coast but correlating mail to specific vessels is challenging and prone to uncertainty with various companies operating at the same time. The application of actual ship markings commenced in 1889 when the CPN started to apply the markings for certain vessels to the top left-hand side ⁽⁹⁾. The *Tees* in 1901 was the first ship to be designated for official R.P.O. service along the coast ⁽⁹⁾⁽¹⁰⁾.

The completion of the transcontinental railway line to Vancouver by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 opened a transportation and communication channel from the eastern part of Canada to the west coast. Following the completion of the main line of the C.P.R., access to various parts of southern British Columbia, including Vancouver Island, required additional connections, initially utilizing waterways. The C.P.R. eventually controlled several such routes including the Lake and River Service in the Kootenays and the British Columbia Coast Service from the mainland to Vancouver Island and further up the coast. A presence of the C.P.R. in coastal shipping started in 1898 but expanded and became more formalized in January 1901 when the C.P.R. purchased the interests of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company to form its "Canadian Pacific B.C. Coast Steamship Services".

The Yukon gold rush on the Klondike River in 1897 brought about increased opportunities for the CPN and it was not long before regular sailings up north were undertaken necessitating offices at some locations such as Skagway.

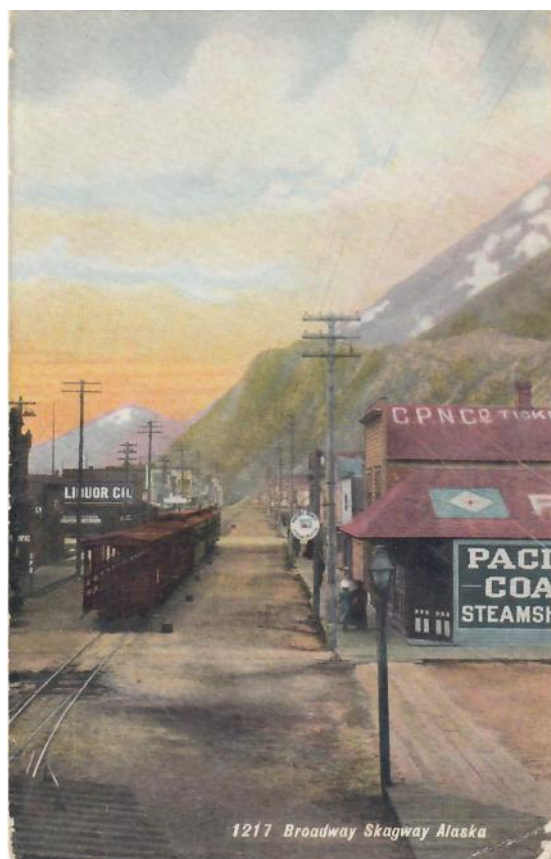


Figure 13
CPN office in Skagway circa 1901.

For certain ships, ship markings with "Canadian Pacific Navigation" included are known but have been recorded by Topping only during the period following acquisition by the C.P.R. It seems likely that some of these markings were in use prior to the change in ownership when mail was almost certainly being carried by the vessels, as discussed above, even in an unofficial way, but examples, including simple purser markings, have not been recorded. An advertisement by CPN dated 1899 shown in Figure 14 indicates mail handling by CPN vessels.



Figure 14.
A poster for the CPN that appeared on the final page of the "BC Mining Record" in December 1899, showing mail being carried by CPN vessels.

BACKGROUND TO CPN

The background to the formation of the CPN has been well-documented elsewhere ^(11,12) but will be briefly summarized here to provide context to the ships and ship-mail under discussion.

Steamboats played a prominent role during the Fraser River gold rush, providing a service from the coast to the interior. Captain William Irving, as owner of the Victoria Steam Navigation Company, was one of the enterprising individuals operating several sternwheelers that helped convey would-be miners into the interior towards the Cariboo. The prosperity of these transportation ventures, like the gold rush, was short-lived. Irving was an optimist however and persevered, acquiring a new vessel, the *Onward*, launched June 26, 1865 at Victoria to be used between New Westminster and Yale. The *Onward* was in service until 1876. William Irving died in 1872 and his son, John, took over the Pioneer Line, Figure 15.

As shown in Figures 16 and 17, John Irving continued to operate on the Fraser River with his Pioneer Line for a while but recognized that the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway would further decrease the economic viability of river shipping.

C. Maiver *11 Sept 1882*

To Steamer **WILLIAM IRVING** Jr.

FOR FREIGHT. INTEREST AT THE RATE OF 1 PER CENT. PER MONTH CHARGED AFTER DELIVERY OF FREIGHT.

NO. PKGS	FEET.	DOLLARS.	CTS.
<i>1 B. Adure</i>			<i>50</i>
<i>for Hops.</i>			<i>50</i>
<i>Str. Enterprise</i>		<i>\$ 1.00</i>	
<i>Collect \$1.00</i>	<i>W.H.G.</i>	<i>25</i>	
		<i>25</i>	
		<i>1.25</i>	

DATE, _____ RECEIVED PAYMENT, *A. Griffith*

PIONEER LINE.

Figure 15. Freight bill dated Sept 1, 1882 for the vessel named after William Irving, the founder of the shipping line.

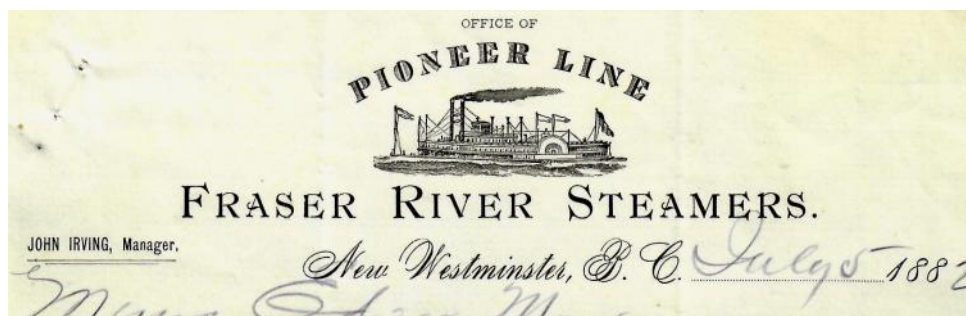



Figure 16. Pioneer Line letterhead dated July 5, 1882. (Ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)

FRASER RIVER

PIONEER LINE OF STEAMERS.

THE ONLY REGULAR AND OLD RELIABLE LINE.



A STEAMER OF THIS LINE WILL LEAVE NEW WESTMINSTER FOR

HOPE, EMORY, YALE & WAY PORTS

On Wednesday, March 31st, 1880.

Carrying H. M. Mails, the B. C. Express, and Freight and Passengers, making close connections with the Hudson Bay Co.'s steamer from Victoria.

THROUGH TICKETS to any point on the route may be had on application to the Hudson Bay Co., Victoria.

PASSENGERS FOR SKAGET, YALE, EMORY AND OTHER PLACES

Will find it to their advantage to travel by these well known and popular lines which offer the best accommodation, perfect regularity, great speed and

LOW RATES.

REGULAR TRIPS

Will be made, leaving on Wednesday and Saturday mornings after the arrival of the H. B. Co.'s steamer from Victoria until further notice.

For particulars or rates apply at the HUDSON BAY CO.'S OFFICE, VICTORIA, or at Office of the PIONEER LINE, New Westminster.

JOHN IRVING, Manager Pioneer Line.

Victoria, March 25, 1880. mh26

Figure 17.
Newspaper advertisement dated 1888 for Pioneer Line sailings. (Ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)

Mail was carried on the Fraser River vessels but did not receive any official postal markings. The handling of such mail can often be inferred from writing on the cover or card as in Figures 18 and 19. Figure 18 shows an 1874 post card addressed to "J. Dickson, Purser St. Onward". The reverse of the card has the following request:

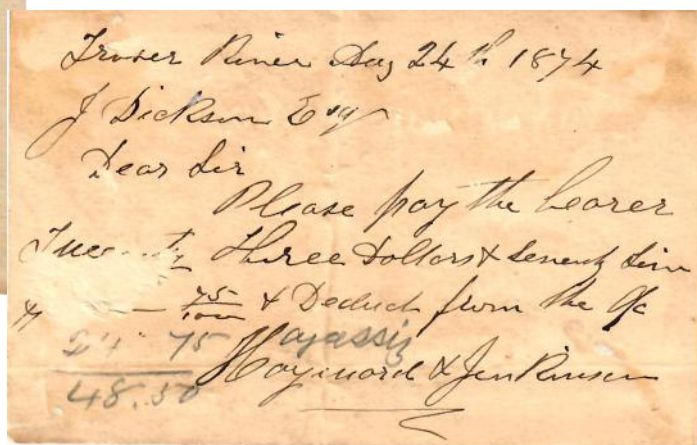
"Fraser River Aug. 24 1874

J. Dickson Esq

Dear Sir

Please pay the bearer twenty-three dollars & seventy five cents
& deduct from the A/c

Hayward & Jen R....."



Figures 18 and 19.
Postcard addressed to Purser of
the steamer "Onward".

Irving wisely changed his focus to coastal operations and his *Wilson G. Hunt* competed vigorously with the Hudson's Bay Company's *Enterprise* (Figure 20) on the Victoria to New Westminster run. The *Wilson G. Hunt* was a much faster vessel and soon the HBC acquired the faster *Olympia*, renaming her the *Princess Louise*. Competition continued to no-one's advantage until 1880 when Irving and the HBC agreed to cooperate on the route with the HBC operating from Victoria to New Westminster and Irving providing the connection from there to Yale. It is worth noting that Irving and his chief financial adviser were married to the two daughters of Chief HBC Factor Alexander Munroe which may have played a role in bringing the two companies to an agreement. The HBC at this time held the mail contract between Victoria and New Westminster but official ship markings were not in use.

Figure 20. Statement for freight
carried on the HSBC vessel
Enterprise for delivery to the Str.
Lillooet, dated May 10, 1872.
Size reduced from 8.2x5 inches
(20.8x12.7 cm).

The Canadian Pacific Navigation Company was formed by Captain John Irving in early 1883. Now, with the cooperation agreement with the HBC having been reached in 1880, his former competitor became his partner. In the interim, Irving had continued to acquire and dispose of various vessels. He dissolved his Pioneer Line and the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company (Figure 21) was formed, starting operations in March 1883. Examples of incoming and outgoing CPN mail are included as Figures 22 through 24.



Figure 21. CPN letterhead. (Ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)

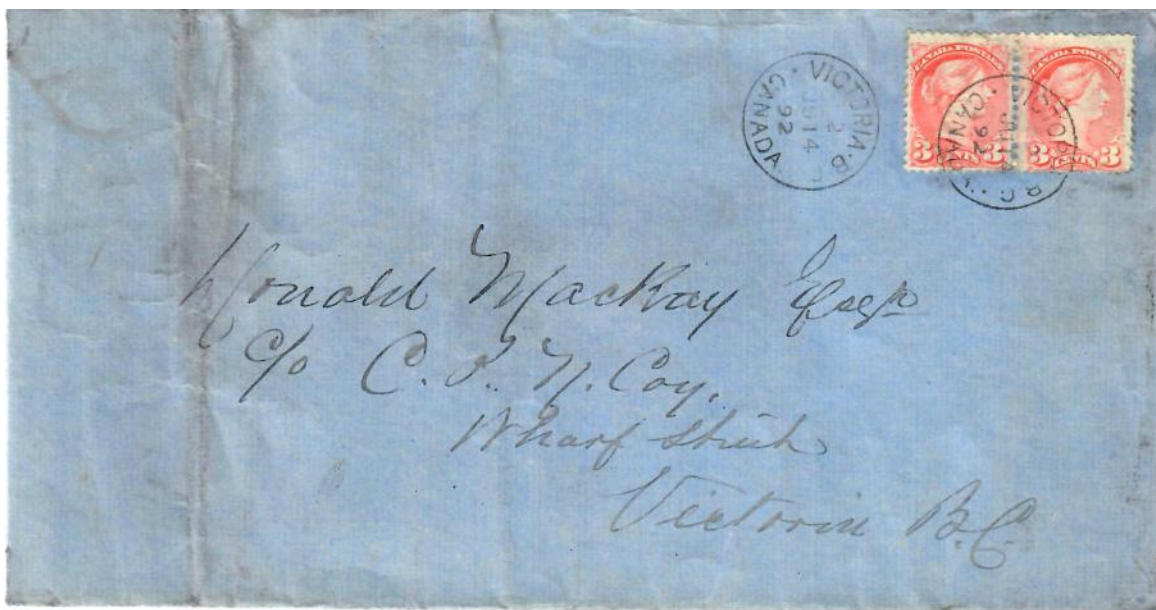


Figure 22. CPN incoming mail dated 1892 to Don MacKay c/o C.P.N.Coy in Victoria. The letter rate at this time was 3 cents per ounce. (Ex Wellburn, courtesy of John Keenlyside)

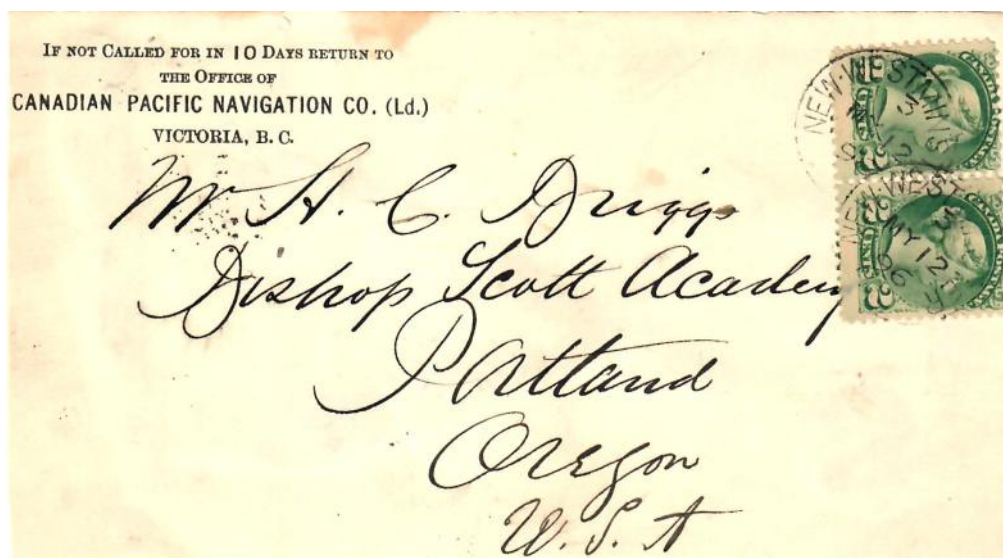


Figure 23. CPN corner card (front only) mailed from New Westminster March 12, 1896 to USA with two 2 cent small queens overpaying the 3 cent letter rate to the USA.

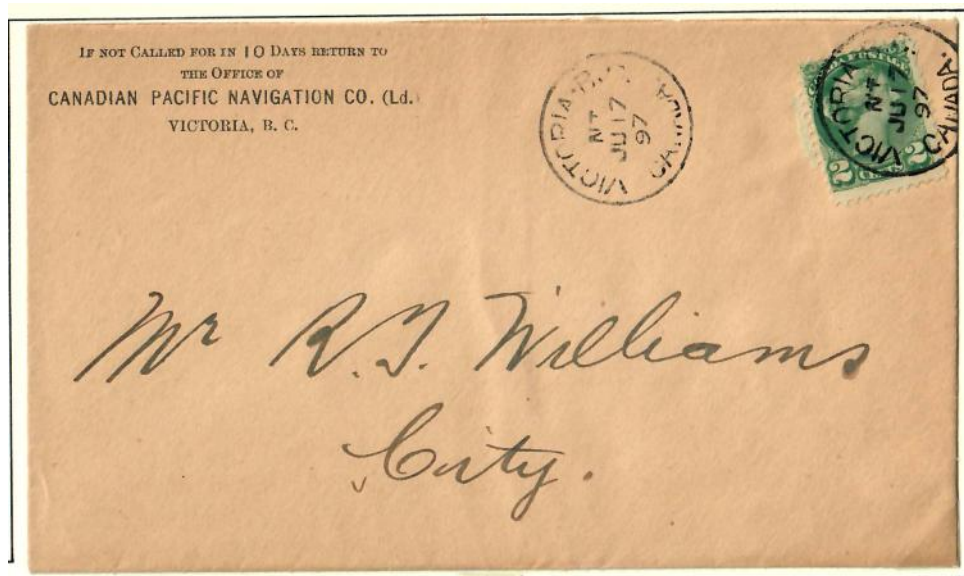


Figure 24. CPN outgoing mail dated June 17, 1897 with 2 cent small queen to pay the letter drop rate.

The Canadian Pacific Navigation Company was capitalized at \$500,000, secured in 5,000 shares. The founders of the company included:

- John Irving
- R.P. Rithet – a leading Victoria merchant
- William Spring – a trader
- P. McQuade – ship chandler
- M. Drake – a lawyer
- William Charles – HBC representative
- Alexander Munroe – HBC representative

CPN Ship Markings

The characterization of ship markings in this write up references Topping's catalogue of such west coast markings ⁽¹³⁾. Although the focus of the present write-up is on markings of the CPN, in some instances where the only examples are from the period following the acquisition by the CPR, those markings are presented, particularly when the CPN is still included in the marking, suggesting that they were in use prior to the change in ownership.

The ships of the CPN, including the vessels obtained from William Moore and Joseph Spratt, at the time of company formation are summarized in Table 2. Following the formation of the CPN, some mail carried along the coast was marked with a CPN marking that did not include the ship's name. Figures 25 and 26 show examples of such mail. These markings had no apparent post office authorization or validity but are valuable in demonstrating mail being carried by the CPN at this time.

The first official RPO hand stamp reading "VANCOUVER & NAAS HARB. R.P.O. / STR. TEES" was supplied by the post office in 1901 to be followed within a few years by a number of additional coastal ships being designated as unofficial R.P.O.s.

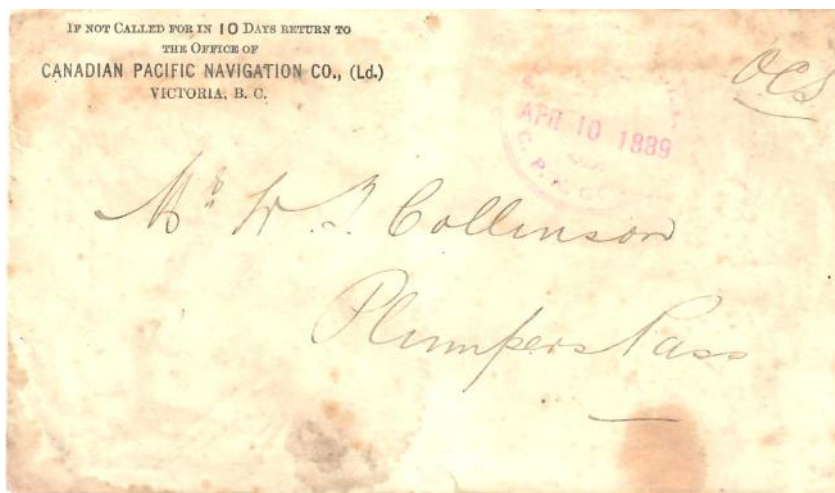


Figure 25. Cover dated April 10, 1889 from CPN to the postmaster at Plumper Pass with no postage required. The marking is faint but C.P.N. Co. can be made out. (ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)



Figure 26. Cover dated Sept.22, 1896 from Victoria to Bella Coola. The 3¢ small queen paid the surface rate and is cancelled with a circular marking indicating Can..., Victoria, BC. (ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)

Table 2. CPN ships at the time of Company formation.

	Vessel	Year of Acquisition by CPN	End Date	Comments
HBC ships				
1	<i>Otter (1)</i>	1883	1890	
2	<i>Enterprise</i>	1883	1885	Sunk after collision with R.P. Rithet in 1885.
3	<i>Princess Louise (1)</i>	1883	CPR	Originally named <i>Olympia</i> ,
Pioneer Line Ships				
4	<i>Reliance</i>	1883	1895	
5	<i>Wilson G. Hunt</i>	1883	1890	
6	<i>William Irving</i>	1883	1894	
7	<i>R.P. Rithet</i>	1883	CPR	
Moore & Spratt Ships				
8	<i>Gertrude</i>	1883	1887	
9	<i>Western Slope</i>	1883	1895	Converted to barge in 1891
10	<i>Maude</i>	1883	1903	

Since the dates of mail examples for the various vessels overlap, the write-up of CPN mail from this point on will be done in the order that the ships are listed in Tables 2 and 3.

1. The Otter (1)

The *Otter* (1) (Figure 27) was a 125 foot-long wooden single-screw steamer built in 1852 for the Hudson's Bay Company and was the first propeller-driven steamer on the North Pacific. Following acquisition by CPN in 1883 she was converted into a barge in 1886 and sold in 1890. No postal markings are known.



Figure 27. Photograph of "Otter (1)".

TRIP 20 Sept. 13th 1884

Lindsay, Buchanan & Co.
To Canadian Pacific Navigation Company's (Limited),
STEAMER OTTER,

For Freight and Charges from *fast Abn to Vict.*

MARKS.	NO. PACKAGES.	DESCRIPTION.	WEIGHT.	FEET.	DOLLARS.	CENTS.
	4	<i>Mfg. dca.</i>	<i>Mfg. dca.</i>	26	3	90
						35
					4	25

Received Payment for the Company, *E. Dickinson*

Date, 18

Figure 28. Freight bill for "Otter" in 1884. (ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)

2. The Enterprise

The *Enterprise* was a 142.5-foot wooden sidewheel steamer built in San Francisco in 1861 and purchased by the HBC in 1862 to carry mail between Olympia, Victoria and New Westminster. Following acquisition by the CPN in 1883 she was sunk in a collision with the R.P. Rithet near Cadboro Point in July 28, 1885. No postal markings are known.

3. The *Princess Louise*

The *Princess Louise*, Figure 29, was a 180-foot-long wooden sidewheel steamer built in 1869 in New York as the *Olympia*. She was acquired by the HBC in 1878 and renamed the *Princess Louise* in 1879. Figure 30 shows mail carried by this vessel between 1879 and 1883, i.e. during the period of HBC ownership. After being acquired by the CPN in 1883 for use initially on the Victoria to Vancouver route and from 1887 on the northern route, she was sold to the CPR in 1901. She was sold by the CPR in 1906 and sank at Port Alice in 1919.



Figure 29. Photograph of "*Princess Louise*".

Canadian Pacific Navigation Company, Ltd.
ORIGINAL
No. 15,415 Victoria, 28 April 1885
Delivered by Oppenheimer Bros., to be shipped on board the C. P. N. Co's. (Limited) steamer **PRINCESS LOUISE**
whereof is master, or on board any other steamer of the Company, or on board of any steamer the Company may employ, the following property, in apparent good order, except as noted (value, weight, contents and conditions being unknown to said master), marked as indicated below, to be delivered to W. H. H. & Co. Ltd.
or assigns, subject to the conditions printed on back of this receipt.
MARKED: 20. 9. 5. MCT
1. 9. 11. 0. 1

No Pkgs.	ARTICLES.	Weight	Feet.
6	Burn Sugar	900	
1	ch Tea	51	
1	cad Mocha	25	
1	Blkg do 2	36	
1	B. Salomatos	15	
41	Candles	64	
1	Drd Pouches	72	
1	Blkg Mte	16	
11	Sampson	44	
17	Perish		

AGENT,

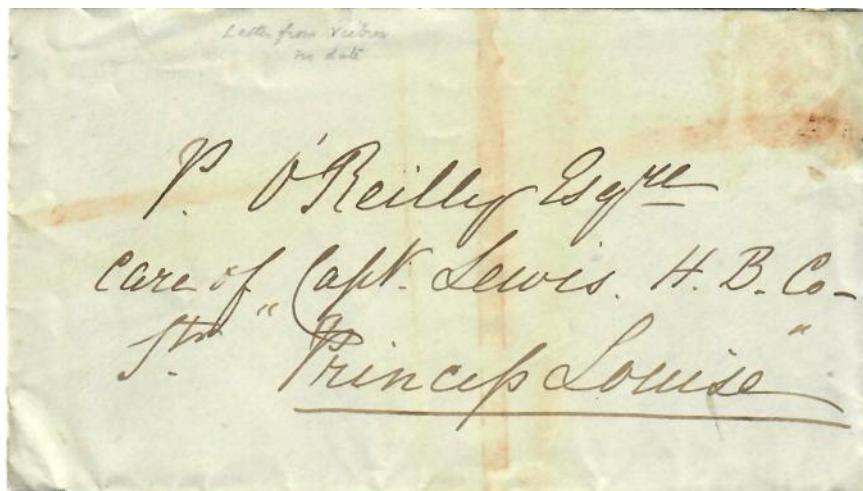


Figure 30. Example of mail carried by the "*Princess Louise*" during the period of HBC ownership. (ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)

Figure 31. CPN delivery notice for goods shipped on the "*Princess Louise*" by Oppenheimer Bros on April 28, 1885.

The *Princess Louise* carried WayMail and Topping (9) reports five C.P.N. marking types being used by the *Princess Louise* over the years from 1889 through 1900 with the vessel being the only one of the original CPN ships to have recorded postal markings during the period of CPN ownership. Examples of select markings are shown in Figures 32 through 34.



Figure 32. Letter posted on the "Princess Louise" on March 28, 1890, receiving a Purser's hand stamp as per postal regulations. The 10 bar killer was applied by the Victoria Post Office to indicate ship "Way Mail". At this time the *Princess Louise* was operating on the North Coast route. The cover has a pink 3 cent small queen to pay the surface rate to eastern Canada.

Markings:

Face - STR *Princess Louise* (this is the only reported use for the Topping type 04-L3 marking), with 10 bar killer (Victoria).

Back - CDS Victoria, B.C /AM/ March 31/ 90/ Canada and Tilsonburg/AP7/90/ONT.



Figure 33. Cover mailed aboard "Princess Louise" Feb 2, 1895, arriving in Victoria later the same day where 3 cents in postage was applied as it entered the mail service. The ship marking is Topping type 07-ILO.
(Ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)

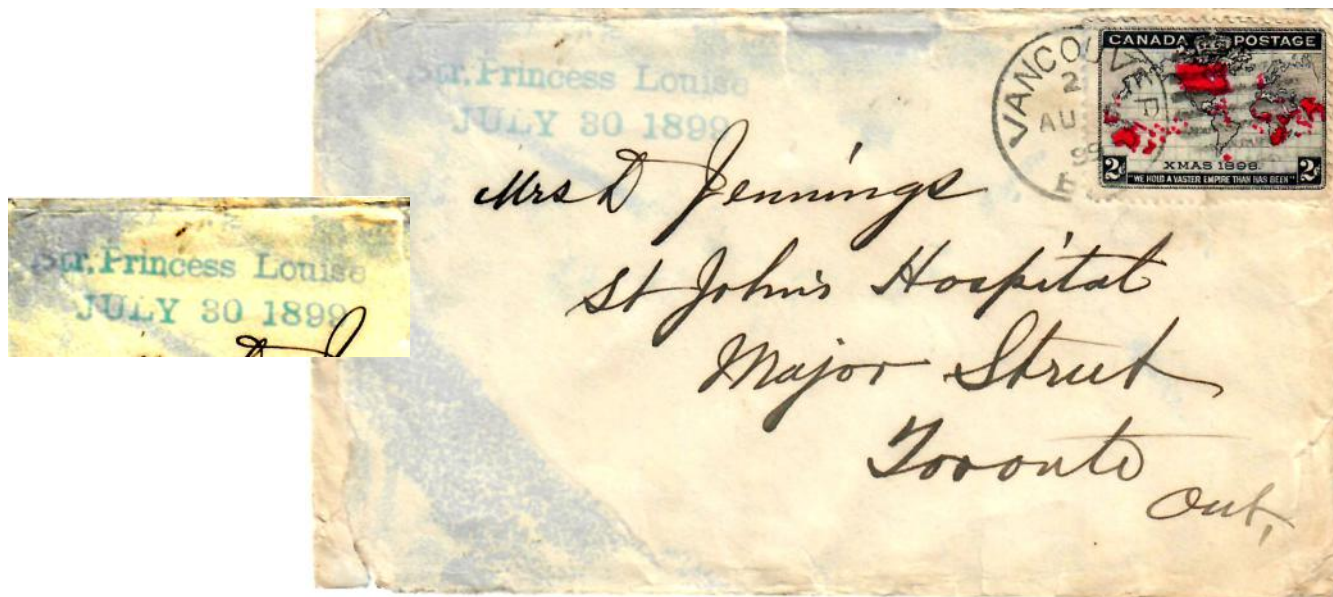


Figure 34. Letter posted on the "Princess Louise" on July 30, 1899 by Rev. D. Jennings to his wife in Toronto with the cover entering the mail service in Vancouver on Aug 5, 1899. Jennings was a Presbyterian Missionary serving the Skeena River region out of Fort Simpson. At this time the "Princess Louise" served the north coast out of Vancouver until she was sold by the CPR in 1906. The cover has a 2-cent map stamp to pay the surface rate to Ontario. The markings on this cover include:

Face - Princess Louise (this is the only reported use of the Topping type 10-L1 marking), and Vancouver/2/Aug 5/99/B.C.
 Back - Toronto/16/Au 9/99/Canada

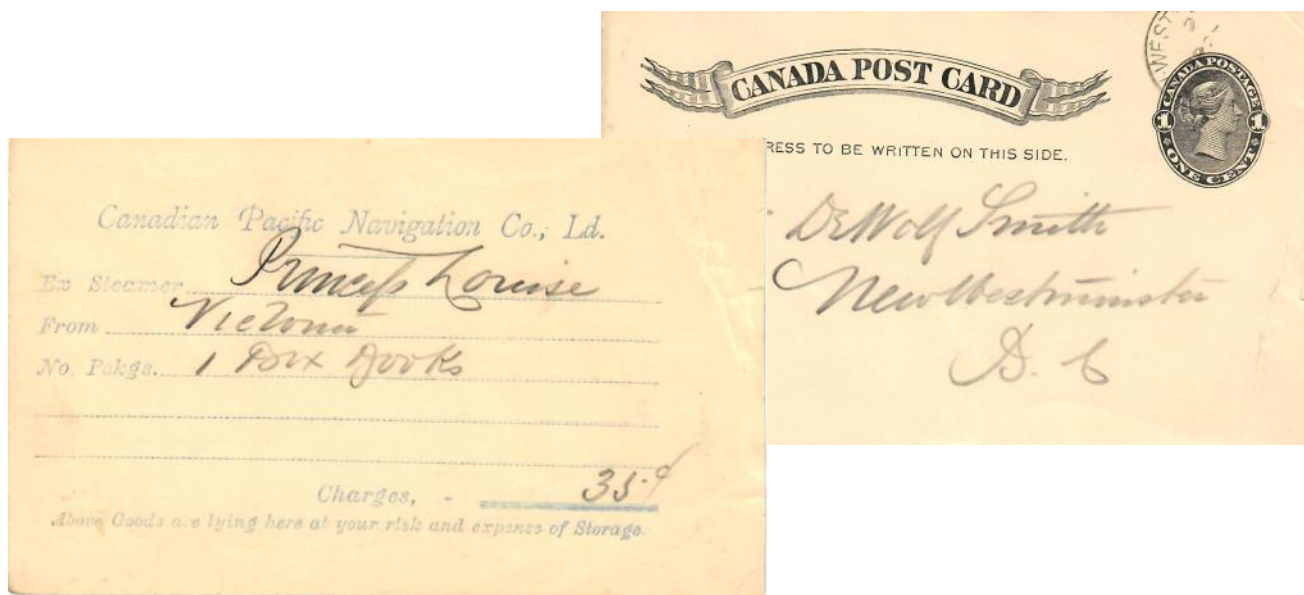


Figure 35. CPN notice mailed to New Westminster indicating a delivery from Victoria by the "Princess Louise".

4. The Reliance

The *Reliance*, Figure 36, was a 122 feet-long wooden sternwheel steamer built at Victoria in 1876 for Irving's Pioneer line. She was acquired by the CPN in 1883 and dismantled in 1895. No postal markings are known.

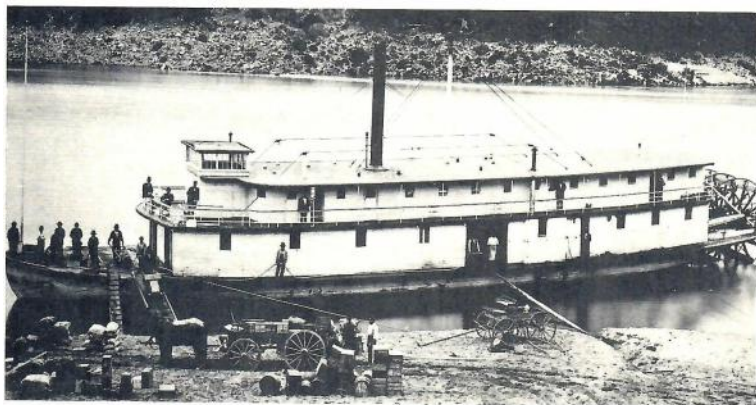


Figure 36. Photograph of "Reliance" at Yale about 1878.

STEAMER "RELIANCE."		No 17 1876		E. Martin & Co.		To Steamer "Reliance," Dr.	
FOR FREIGHT:							
MARKS.	N ^o . PEGS.	FEET.					
	24	Bales Wool	5254			\$	15 00
	81	Kids					8 10
							23 10
							2 25
							25 35
							15 00
							8 10
							48 45

Received Payment,

Figure 37. Weigh bill for "Steamer Reliance". (Ex Wellburn courtesy of John Keenlyside)

5. The Hunt

The *Wilson G. Hunt* was a 186 feet-long wooden sidewheel steamer built in New York in 1848 and brought to the Pacific Coast in 1850. She moved from California to Victoria in 1858 for the Fraser River gold rush, and ran the New Westminster route for a time. From there, she was bought by the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and placed on the Columbia, or Cascade, route under Captain John Wolf, where she ran until 1869 when she was purchased by Captain John Irving, who had it brought back up the coast and sold her to Captain Spratt in 1881. In 1883 she became part of the CPN until being dismantled in 1890. No postal markings are known.

The *Hunt* was extensively repaired in 1879, and in 1881 was sold to Joseph Spratt, who at that time was running the steamboats *Maude* and *Caribou* and *Fly* on the east coast of Vancouver Island as the East Coast Mail Line. Captain Spratt replaced *Maude* with *Wilson G. Hunt* on the route from Victoria to Comox and Nanaimo by way of the Gulf Islands and Chemainus. By the end of 1883, Captain Spratt was forced to sell his East Coast Mail Company to Captain Irving's Canadian Pacific Navigation Company, in part because of serious mechanical problems with *Wilson G. Hunt*.

6. The *Irving*

The *William Irving* was a 166 feet-long wooden sternwheel steamer built at Moodyville in 1880 for Irving's Pioneer line. She was acquired by the CPN in 1883 and was wrecked on the Fraser River in June of 1894. No postal markings are known.

7. The *Rithet*

The *R.P. Rithet* was a 177 feet-long wooden sternwheel steamer built in 1882 at Victoria for Irving's Pioneer Line and becoming part of the CPN fleet in 1883 until the CPN became part of the CPR in 1901, with the registration being transferred to the CPR in 1903. She was sold in 1909. No postal markings are known.

8. The *Gertrude*

The *Gertrude* was a 120 foot wooden sternwheel steamer built in Victoria for Captain William Moore. No postal markings are known.

9. The *Western Slope*

The *Western Slope* was a 156 foot wooden sternwheel steamer built in 1879 at Victoria for Captain Moore. No postal markings are known.

10. The *Maude*

The *Maude* was a 113 foot wooden side-wheeler (in 1885 converted to screw-propelled) built by Albion Iron Works in Victoria. She was launched in 1872, acquired by CPN in 1883, acquired by CPR in 1903 and dismantled in 1914. No postal markings are known.

Esquimalt & Nan. Ry. Co. June 8th 1898

To Canadian Pacific Navigation Company's (Limited) TRIP

STEAMER MAUDE

For Freight and Charges from Vancouver VICTORIA TO Victoria

MARKS.	NO. PACKAGES.	DESCRIPTION.	WEIGHT.	FEET.	DOLLARS.
	50	Car Wheels	28000		274
		Advanced Charges, - - -			
		Wharfage - - - - -			
		Total, - - - - -			281

Received Payment for the Company, Date 1898

Figure 38. Invoice to Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway from CPN for the transport of train wheels by the Steamer "Maude" from Vancouver to Victoria June 8, 1898 (Size reduced from 21cm x 14cm). Faint green marking reads "Canadian Pacific Navigation Co Limited, Victoria, B.C. June 20, 1898".

As soon as the new CPN company had commenced operations with the original ten vessels, Irving started to increase the company's capability through the acquisition of additional vessels, starting with the *Yosemite*, followed by the *Sardonix* and *Premier*. Over the same period various ships were lost to disaster or disposed of. Table 3, in the order in which they were acquired, summarizes the vessels that eventually were part of the CPN fleet, the year they were acquired and the year they were no longer in service (end date). For ships that became part of the CPR fleet after it acquired all interests of the CPN in January of 1901, the end date is shown as CPR. Information and, where applicable, the significant features and postal history of the individual vessels during CPN ownership are discussed for each vessel listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Vessels acquired by the Pacific Navigation Company.

	Vessel	Year of Acquisition	End Date	Comments
11	<i>Yosemite</i>	1883	CPR	
12	<i>Sardonix</i>	1887	1890	Wrecked on reef on June 13, 1890
13	<i>Premier</i>	1887	CPR	Name changed to <i>Charmer</i> in 1894
14	<i>Islander</i>	1888	1901	
15	<i>Amelia</i>	1890	1895	
16	<i>Rainbow</i>	1890	1899	
17	<i>Danube</i>	1890	CPR	
18	<i>Transfer</i>	1893	CPR	
19	<i>St. Pierre</i>	1896	1896	One year only
20	<i>Tees</i>	1896	CPR	
21	<i>Willapa</i>	1897	1902	
22	<i>Queen City</i>	1897	CPR	
23	<i>Beaver</i>	1898	CPR	
24	<i>Yukoner</i>	1898	1898	One year only
25	<i>Amur</i>	1899	CPR	
26	<i>Otter (2)</i>	1900	CPR	

11. The *Yosemite*

The *Yosemite*, Figure 39, was a wooden sidewheel steamer, 282 feet long. She was built near San Francisco in 1862 for the Sacramento River trade and was purchased by the CPN in 1883. Following her sale to the CPR, she subsequently was sold to other interests in November 1906 and was wrecked in 1909. No postal markings are known.



Figure 39. Postcard showing the "*Yosemite*".



Figure 40. Notification sent by CPN from Victoria in June 1900, regarding a delivery by the "Yosemite".

12. *Sardonyx*

The history of the *Sardonyx*, Figure 41, was previously written up in the BC Postal History Newsletter, No. 114 dated June 2020. That write-up is reproduced here for completeness. She has the distinction of having the earliest recorded example of a ship marking with two examples from Oct. and Dec. 1889.

Mail had been transported along the coast since colonial times, starting with the ships of the Hudson's Bay Co, but the vessels were generally not identified. Ship markings were eventually applied to mail for advertising and tracking purposes, and to assist in gaining lucrative mail contracts from the federal government.

The *Sardonyx* was a 52-metre, single-screw, 560-ton iron steamer built at Greenock, Scotland, in 1869 and brought to the BC coast in 1882, arriving at Victoria on May 20 of that year. It was labelled the "Utilitarian *Sardonyx*," as it lacked the amenities that had quickly become expected for coastal vessels, including modern fittings and equipment. As ships go, it was simply a workhorse. Following a five-year period during which it had a varied career visiting San Francisco, China and Mexico, the now 18-year-old freighter was purchased in 1887 by the Canadian Pacific Navigation Co. By this time the CPR's tracks had reached Hastings Mill at Vancouver, and Captain John Irving of the CPN saw an opportunity to operate as a feeder system for the railway. The *Sardonyx* was acquired to run on a Portland-Victoria-Vancouver route. It also served BC's north-coast communities as evidenced by the mail examples that follow.



Figure 41. The "*Sardonyx*" at Victoria Harbour. Photo by Richard Maynard (1832-1907).

The *Sardonyx* had a very brief career in BC, as it was wrecked on June 13, 1890, along the east coast of Haida Gwaii near Skidegate, when it ran hard onto an uncharted reef near Sentinel Island. The mail carried that day is reported to have been saved.

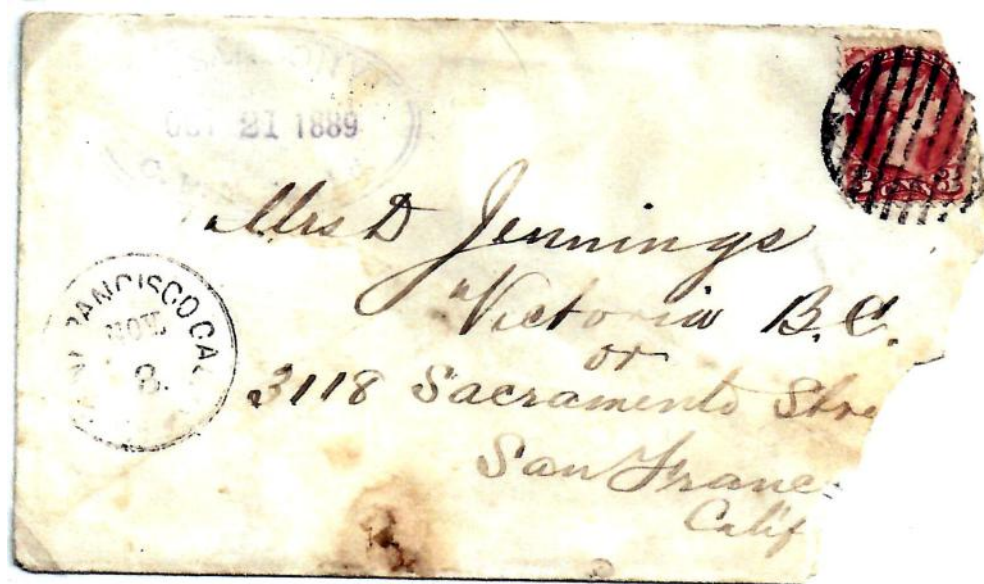


Figure 42. BC's earliest reported ship cancel—the *Sardonyx*, Oct 21, 1889—on a torn and sadly damaged cover, but still an important historical artifact.



Figure 43. A much better example of the "Sardonyx" ship cancel, dated Dec 30, 1889.

After the wreck of the *Sardonyx*, the 14 passengers and the crew, in four lifeboats, rowed 30 miles to Skidegate (with the mail). A smaller group then sailed for two days across Hecate Strait to Inverness Cannery at the mouth of the Skeena River. From there they travelled by steamship to Victoria.

The earliest reported ship cancellation, Figure 42, dated Oct 21, 1889, with a Nov 8 San Francisco receiver on the face, consists of a very faint oval marking (Topping type 01-OD) with the date in the middle, "S.S. SARDONYX" above and "C.P.N. Co., Ltd." below. A clear example of the same ship cancel dated a few months later, Dec 30, 1889, is shown in Figure 43 and is the latest recorded strike. Both covers were addressed to Mrs D Jennings in San Francisco. They both likely originated at Fort Simpson on the north coast where her husband, Rev D Jennings, was located, and were mailed aboard the *Sardonyx*. They entered the postal system at Victoria for dispatch to San Francisco, receiving a ten-bar killer on the front, indicating "way mail." The example shown in Figure 43 has a Victoria CDS on the back dated Dec. 31, 1889, and a San Francisco receiving cancel dated Jan 6, 1890.

13. *Premier - Charmer*

The *Premier* (Figure 44) was an iron, single screw steamer, 200 feet long. She was built at San Francisco by the Union Iron Works for the CPN in 1887 and following a collision and potential legal action was renamed the *Charmer* (Figure 45) in 1894. Ownership was transferred to the CPR in 1903 and the CPR sold her in 1935 with her being broken up the same year.

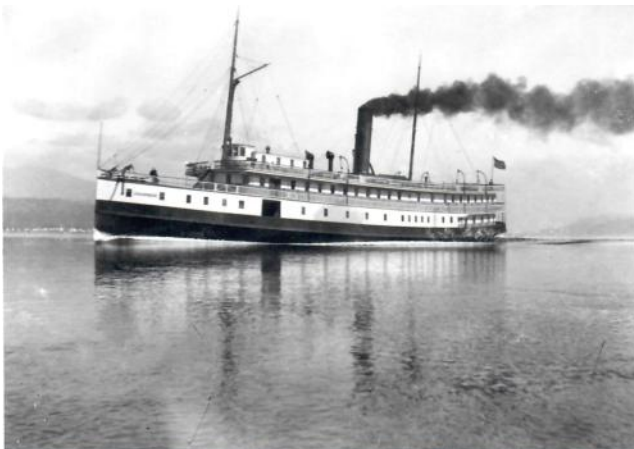


Figure 44
"S.S. Charmer" leaving Vancouver
ca. 1901

Maritime Museum photo

Figure 45.
Postcard showing damaged
"Charmer" beside "Otter (2)".



Esquimalt & Nanaimo Ry. Co. JUL 13 1893 189
To Canadian Pacific Navigation Company's (Limited) TRIP 698

STEAMER PREMIER

For Freight and Charges from VANCOUVER TO VICTORIA

MARKS	NO. PACKAGES	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHT	FEET	DOLLARS	CENTS
	1	Bm Yacht <i>signes</i>	600			25
		Advanced Charges C. P., Ry.			2	35
		Wharfage				22
		Total			2	80

Received Payment for the Company,
Date. 189

Figure 46. CPN freight bill for "Steamer Premier" for delivery from Vancouver to Victoria, dated 1893.

Order JAN 22 1898 1898

To Canadian Pacific Navigation Company's (Limited)

STEAMER CHARMER,

For Freight and Charges from VANCOUVER TO VICTORIA

MARKS.	NO. PACKAGES.	DESCRIPTION.	WEIGHT.	FEET.	DOLLARS.	CENTS.
	60	60 Cs Yellow Metal Sheets R.D. 1/60	36040			
Advanced Charges,						
Wharfage,						
Total,					9-	

Received Payment for the Company.

Date 189

Figure 47. CPN freight bill following renaming of the vessel to "Steamer Charmer", dated 1898.

She did the daily Vancouver to Victoria run during the CPN years and continued this route until 1910, leaving Victoria at 1:00 am and leaving Vancouver at 1:15 pm after the arrival of the CPR train from Eastern Canada. Postal markings during the CPN years are scarce with Topping reporting only one example during this period of an oval marking, Type 01-ILO used in 1899. A scan of this marking is included as Figure 48. The straight-line marking shown in Figure 49 is dated 1905, placing it in the period of CPR ownership. It is known that the vessel carried mail during the period of CPN ownership (Turner(12) page 18) but no straight-line markings on mail during this period have been recorded.



Figure 48. Example of Topping marking type 01-ILO dated Nov. 17, 1899.

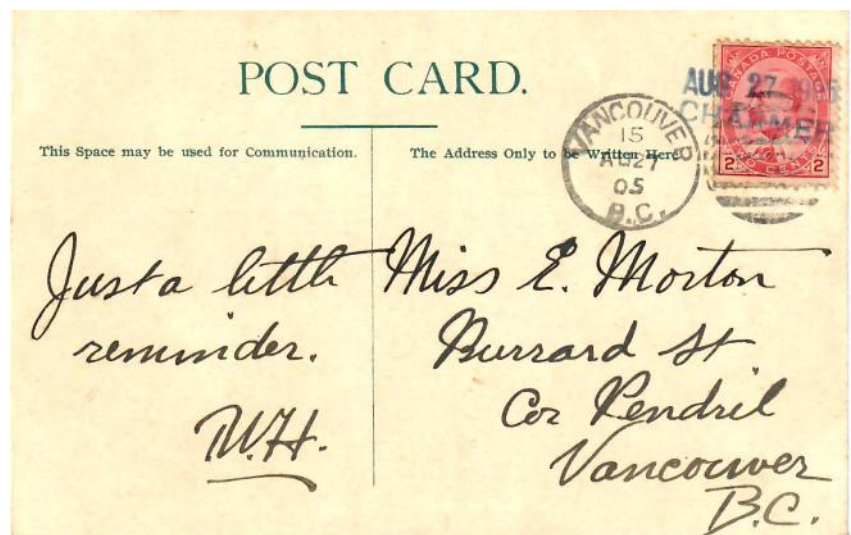


Figure 49. Posted on the ship for mailing in Vancouver, receiving a "Charmer" straight-line marking dated Aug 27, 1905 (Topping type 04-L1) and a Vancouver duplex dated Aug 27, 1905 at 1500.

Two examples of this marking are recorded.

14. *Islander*

The *Islander* was a steel-hulled twin screw steamer, 240 feet long. She was built for the CPN in 1888 at Glasgow. She was lost off Douglas Island on August 15, 1901 after striking a reef. No postal markings are known.

Esq. J. H. N. R. & Co.

OCT 13 1897 1897

TRIP 1234

To Canadian Pacific Navigation Company's (Limited)

STEAMER ISLANDER,

For Freight and Charges from VANCOUVER TO VICTORIA

MARKS	NO. PACKAGES	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHT	FREIGHT	DOLLARS	CENTS
	1	Bale Beet Cans	60.		24	50
Advanced Charges,						
Wharfage,						
Total					24	50

Received Payment for the Company,

Date, _____ 189

Figure 50. CPN freight bill for "Steamer Islander", dated 1897.

15. *Amelia*

The *Amelia* was a wooden sidewheel steamer, 150 feet long. She was built in San Francisco in 1863 and following service on the Sacramento River was purchased by the CPN in 1890 and served until 1895 when she was laid up. No postal markings are known.

16. *Rainbow*

The *Rainbow* was a wooden single screw steamer, 83 feet long. She was built as the *Teaser* at Victoria in 1884 for Captain Moore. She was lengthened to 108 feet and renamed the *Rainbow* in 1887 before being purchased by the CPN in 1890 and served until 1899 when she was dismantled. No postal markings are known.

17. *Danube*

The *Danube* (Figure 51) was an iron single screw steamer, 215.6 feet long. She was built in 1869 at Glasgow for the British fruit trade and was purchased by the CPN in 1890, being operated by the CPN on the Alaska run until 1901 when she was part of the sale to the CPR. The registry was changed to the CPR in 1903. Two postal markings for the *Danube* are known, one being dated after the CPN had been acquired by the CPR.



Figure 51. Steamer "Danube" at Port Essington.



Figure 52. Topping type 01-1LOF marking (partial) on a postcard. Three markings of this type, used in 1899 are recorded.

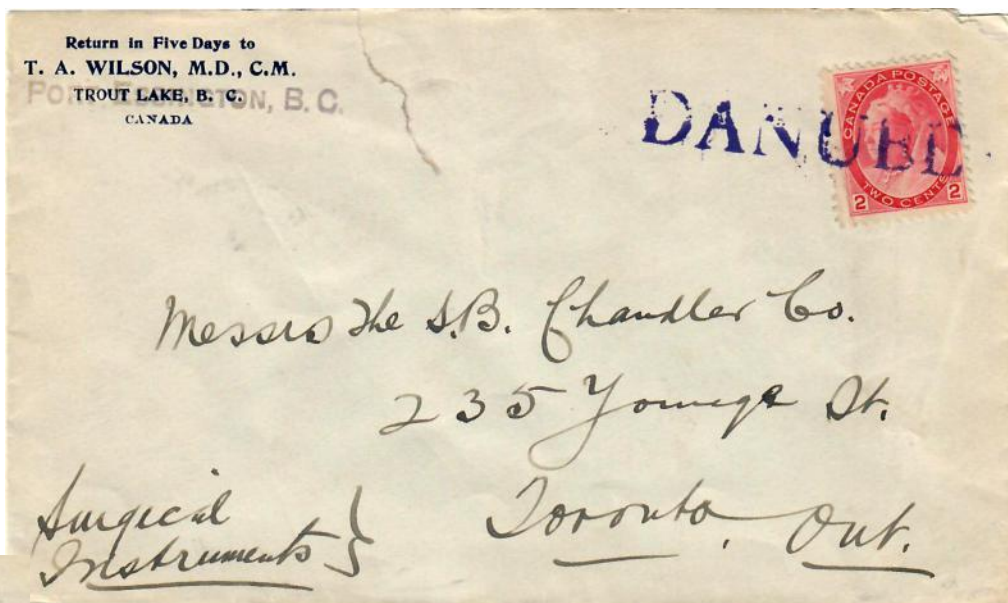
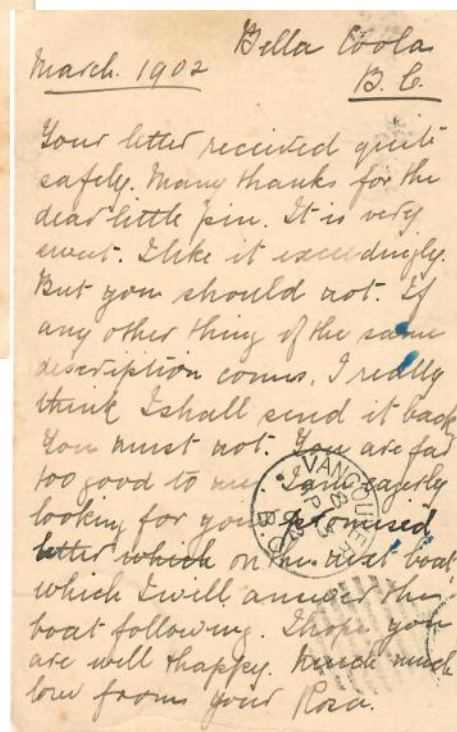


Figure 53. Letter addressed to Toronto posted on the "Danube" at Port Essington receiving an undated purser marking (Topping type 04-L1) and entering the mail service in Vancouver on May 13, 1902, during CPR ownership. Four markings of this type are recorded. The rose 2 cent small queen underpaying the 3¢ surface rate to Ontario in effect since 1889 was on the card prior to it being handed to the purser at the origin.



Figure 54. Postcard posted on the "Danube" at Bella Coola receiving the undated Topping type 04-L1 marking and entering the postal service when the ship arrived in Vancouver on April 13, 1902 during CPR ownership. The blue 2 cent Queen Victoria stamp paid the UPU rate for a postcard to an overseas destination.



18. *Transfer*

The *Transfer* was a Wooden stern-wheeler, 122 feet long, built in 1893 in New Westminster by A. Watson for the CPN Fraser River Service. No ship markings are known.

19. *St. Pierre*

The *St. Pierre* was a wooden hulled steamer, 154 feet long, built in Nova Scotia in 1885 for service along the east coast. She was purchased by the CPN in 1896 but never reached the pacific coast, sinking while on the way to Victoria from Halifax, despite the best efforts by the captain to save her.

20. *Tees*

The *Tees* (Figure 55) was a steel-hulled, single screw steamer, 165 feet long. She was built in 1893 at Thornby-on-Tees for the Tees Union Steamship Company and, following a brief period of ownership by the Hudson's Bay Company, was purchased by the CPN in 1896. Following her participation in the gold rush to Alaska, the CPN used her on the Vancouver to Naas Harbour route and later along the west coast of Vancouver Island. The date stamp was not issued by the Post Office until 1901 following the acquisition by the C.P.R. Examples of this date stamp are included here as the route was the same as when the vessel was owned by the CPN.



Figure 55. The "Steamer Tees".



Figure 57. The same marking type as in Figure 58, this one dated June 11, 1903.



Figure 56. Letter handed to the Purser of the STR. TEES at the dock on Vancouver on Dec. 2, 1902 for delivery to Rev. Jennings at Port Essington. At Port Essington the letter entered the mail service as evidenced by a backstamp dated Dec. 5, 1902. The marking is Topping oval type 01-OM reading "Vancouver & Naas Harb. R.P.O./Dec 2 1902/STR. TEES". This marking has been noted in use from Sept 9, 1901 until Oct 6, 1908.

21. *Willapa*

The *Willapa* (Figure 58) was a wooden single-screw steamer built in 1882 at Astoria, Oregon as the *General Miles* for use on the Columbia River. Originally 100 feet long, in 1889 she was lengthened to 136 feet and renamed the *Willapa*. Her ownership changed several times, being purchased by John Irving's Pioneer Line in 1896 and then the CPN in 1898, having sunk and been salvaged in the meantime. The *Willapa* served the CPN during the Klondike gold rush by serving west coast ports and freeing other vessels for the lucrative Alaska routes. Postal markings applied by the purser are scarce, being recorded only for 1899.



Figure 58.
The steamer "Willapa".

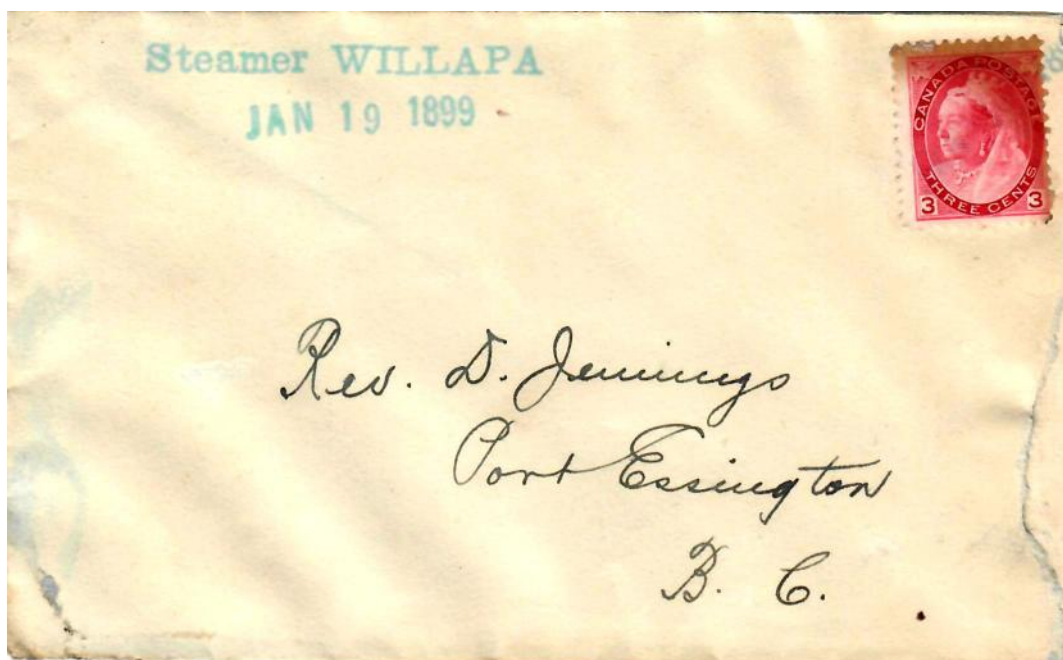


Figure 59. Letter addressed to Rev. D. Jennings at Port Essington. The letter was probably handed to the purser of the "Willapa" at the CPN dock in Vancouver and was delivered directly to Rev. Jennings as no postal markings are present. The marking is a Topping type 01-L1 straight-line marking recorded only in January 1899 and reading "Steamer WILLAPA/Jan 19 1899".

22. *Queen City*

The wooden *Queen City* (Figure 60) was originally built in 1894 by Robert Brown at Vancouver as a three-masted schooner. By 1898 she had been converted by Albion Iron Works in Victoria to a single-screw steamer, 116 feet long. While postal markings during the CPR era are known from 1909 through 1911, none that can clearly be ascribed during the CPN period of ownership are known.

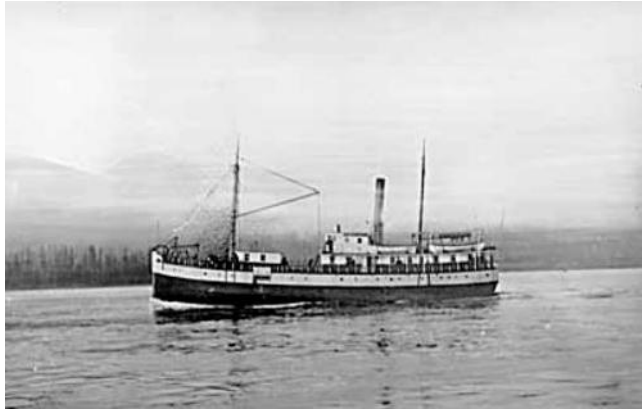


Figure 60.
The steamer "Queen City".



Figure 61. Undated example of "Queen City" purser marking.

Figure 61 shows a straight-line purser marking that may have been in use during the earlier period although the recorded example was clearly later than 1903 at which time the 2 cent King Edward VII stamp was issued.

23. *Beaver*

The *Beaver* was a 140 foot long steel sternwheel steamer built in 1898 for the CPN in Victoria. No postal markings during the period of CPN ownership are known.

24. *Yukoner*

The *Yukoner* was a wooden sternwheel steamer, 170.8 feet long built in 1898 at St. Michael, Alaska for the CPN. She was sold the same year. No postal markings during the period of CPN ownership are known.

25. *Amur*

The steel 216 foot-long, single screw steamer *Amur* (Figure 62) was built in 1890 at Sunderland, England for use in the North and Baltic seas. She was brought to the B.C. coast in 1898, being acquired by the CPN in 1899 for use on the Skagway run as a general cargo ship.

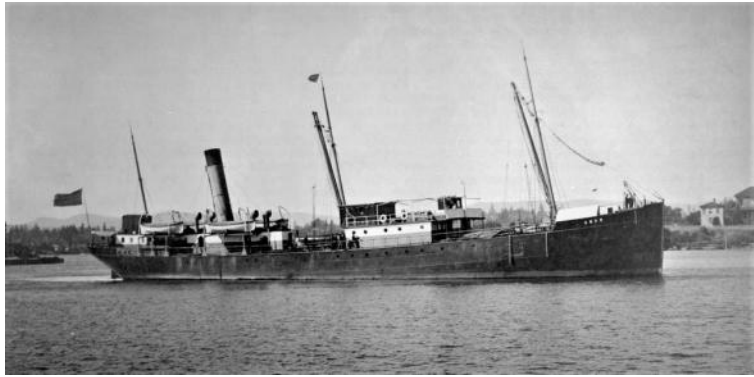


Figure 62.
Steamer "Amur".

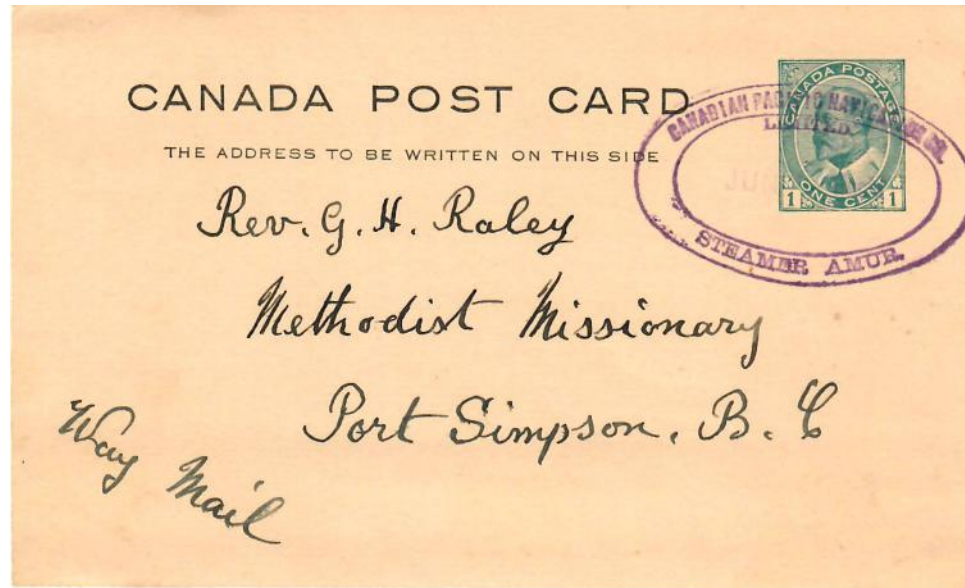


Figure 63. Postcard posted on the Amur at China Hat, B.C. (Klemtu) on June 18, 1908 to Rev. G.H. Raley at Port Simpson, receiving a very faint Port Simpson split-ring backstamp dated June 21, 1908.

The ship marking, Topping type 15-IO reads:

CANADIAN PACIFIC NAVIGATION COMPANY
LIMITED
(date)
STEAMER AMUR

Although this marking was clearly made for use by the CPN it has only been reported in use from May 21, 1907 to July 16, 1908, following acquisition by the CPN by CPR.

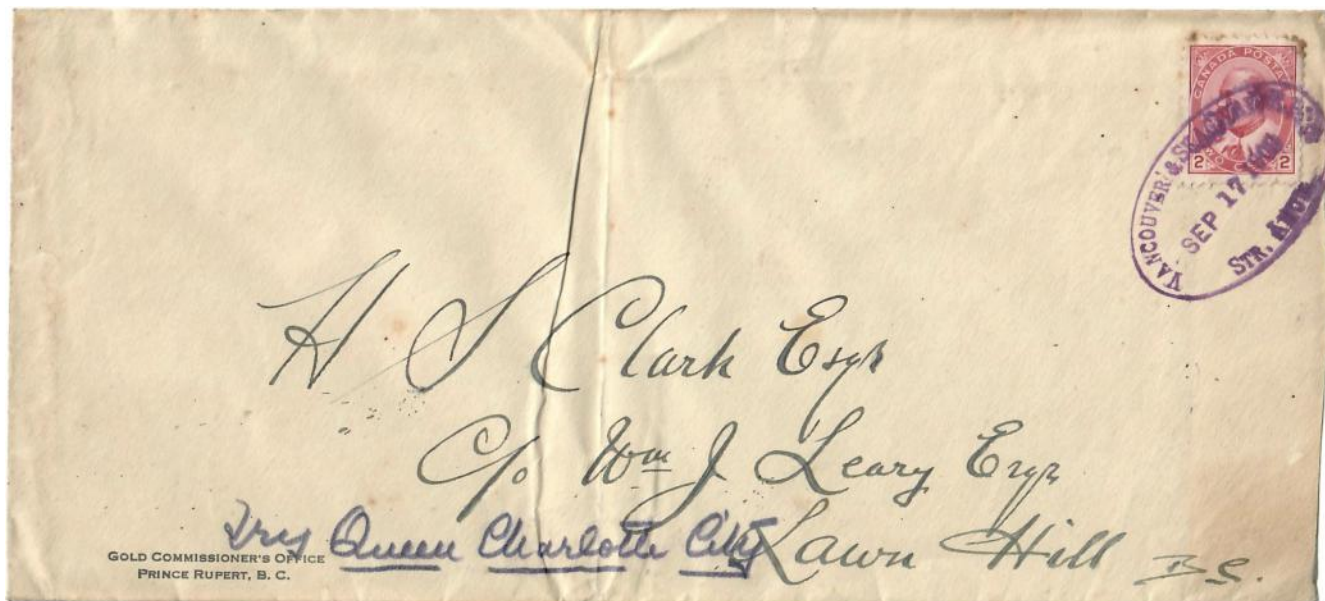


Figure 64. Cover given to the purser of "Str. Amur" on Sept 17, 1909 on the Vancouver to Skagway run.

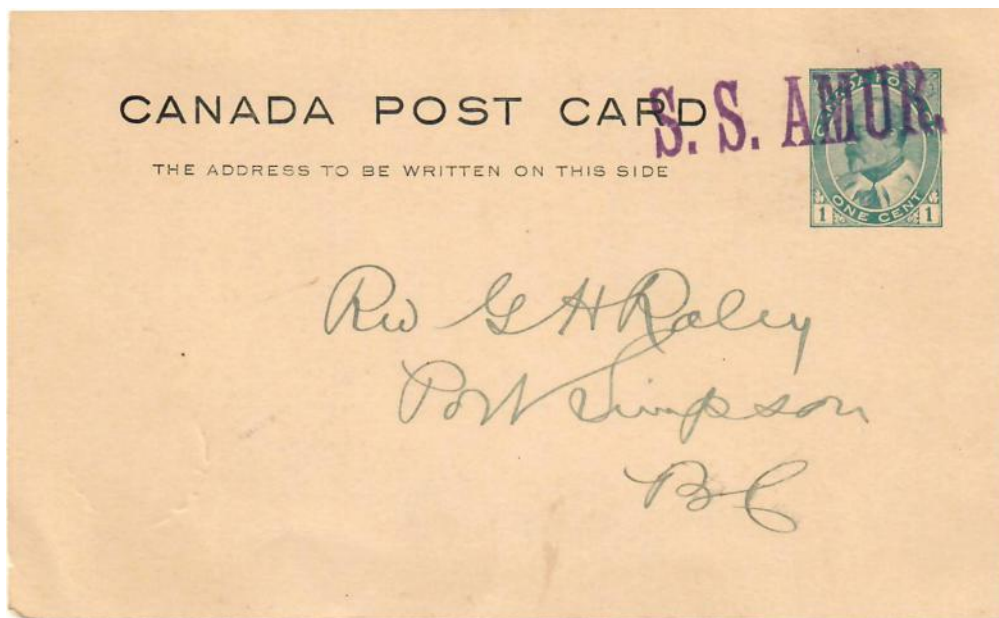


Figure 65. Postcard written at Skidegate to Rev. Haley at Port Simpson. The card was posted on the "Amur", receiving a 40mm single-line S.S. Amur marking (Topping type 07-L1) and arriving at Port Simpson on Oct. 25, 1908. This marking has been reported in use only during the period of CPR ownership from June 25, 1907 to July 16, 1908.



Figure 66. Undated single line 35 mm "Amur" marking, Topping type 07-L1.

26. Otter (2)

The *Otter (2)* was a wooden single-screw steamer, 128 feet long built in 1900 in Victoria for the CPN. No postal markings during the period of CPN ownership are known.

The *Otter (2)* was the last of the ships acquired by the CPN. The following year, the company was acquired by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The CPN had filled an important function in providing mail service to the north coast in the period between the Hudson's Bay Company presence and the formation of the CPR Coastal Service.

Conclusions

The Canadian Pacific Navigation Company, together with some of its rivals, played an essential role in the development of mail service to the north coast of British Columbia over the period from its founding in 1883 until its acquisition by the CPR in 1901. While mail was likely carried on an informal as well as formal basis by many of the CPN vessels, ship markings are relatively rare for most of the vessels and none have been recorded for a number more.

Acknowledgements

Gratitude is expressed to Gray Scrimgeour who provided the early covers without ship markings but carried by ships and to John Keenlyside who provided access to the Wellburn material relating to the CPN which was a treasure-trove of information. Credit must also be given to the late Bill Topping who assembled many of the covers and compiled much information relating to ship markings.

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