



BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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Registered 17-cent double-weight cover from New Westminster to Malta, May 6, 1926.

As well as having a particular interest in the postal history of New Westminster, I also collect covers from Greater Vancouver and the BC coast to foreign destinations. Especially registered mail. So I was delighted to find this **favourite cover** at a recent Jim Forte sale.

Malta is a scarce destination, though still a British colony and thus qualifying for the three-cent Empire rate. This must have been a double-weight cover (between one and two ounces). Registration was ten cents, and the one-cent war tax still had to be paid (the sender just missed the elimination of this tax on July 1, 1926). So the grand total was 17 cents. The franking is rather unusual, with the

seven-cent Admiral pair on a three-cent postal stationery envelope.

The cover left New Westminster on May 6, 1926, and travelled by rail to Montreal, arriving on May 11 (Montreal and Montreal British Mail circular datestamps on reverse). There are muddled London and Malta registration marks on the reverse also, but I can't make out the dates. Anyone know the routing for this cover between London and Malta?

The cover was addressed to Ursola, in the Maltese capital of Valletta. I couldn't locate the street but presumably it would be in the old part of the city, near the ancient Church of St Ursula, now home to 15 cloistered nuns. — *Andrew Scott*

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Reviewing rarity factors

The publication of the 1983 edition of the iconic *British Columbia Post Offices* by William Topping and Bill Robinson launched a generation of BC town cancel collectors, including the author. This “bible” for the opening and closing dates of BC post offices included a rarity factor rating that enabled collectors to help judge the scarcity and fair market value of any particular postal marking. In 1991 Bill Topping published an update to the 1983 edition that reflected new town reports and an updated scarcity ranking. Since that time no further updates have been published, despite the fact that significant new information has become available from the collecting community.

Rarity Factor “E” post offices have been a particular challenge when trying to evaluate what a specific item might be worth. While condition, franking, destination, illustrations and corner cards are all factors to consider when purchasing BC postal history, for town cancel collectors the overwhelming determinant is scarcity. Historically, RF “E” towns have sold for anything between \$30 and \$1,300—a huge price differential, and one that prompts even the most advanced collector to pause and reflect before making a purchase. (RF “E” towns in the Topping and Robinson classification system have fewer than ten known reports.)

I started collecting BC postal history in 1983 and began at that time to record every RF “E” town I saw, either in a collection, an auction catalogue or on eBay. I have amassed a considerable database on this subject, and the digital supplement accompanying this issue of the *BC Postal History Newsletter* reflects those data.

Based on 33 years’ worth of records, I am

suggesting a refinement to the Topping and Robinson Rarity Factor “E” ranking, as follows:

Rarity Factor E1 – one to three reports
 Rarity Factor E2 – four to six reports
 Rarity Factor E3 – seven to nine reports

Closed post offices with ten or more copies reported are considered to be Rarity Factor “D,” while relatively common closed towns are Rarity Factor “C.” Open offices are RF “A” or “B.”

I hope that this refined rarity factor for “E” post offices will assist the many town collectors out there to more realistically set a market value when purchasing or selling. — Tracy Cooper

Editor’s note: Tracy’s latest monograph (#3), which will be sent out to all study group members for whom we have email addresses, updates the RF “E” post offices on Bill Topping’s 1991 checklist.

Subscription renewal time

Print subscriptions are now due, at the annual rate of \$15, in Canadian funds for addresses in Canada, and in US funds for addresses south of the border. Please send cheques to the editor at the address below. Please keep in mind that emailed digital subscriptions continue to be **free**. (You can, of course, have both types of subscriptions.)

If you decide to shift to the digital edition, please make sure we have your email address. You can also download the newsletter from our file-sharing site (see below). We will honour paid 2015 print subscriptions through this issue and the next. If we have not received your renewal by then, we will shift your subscription to digital (if we have your email address).

Finally, we are happy to accept donations (and we thank those who donated last year).

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Free digital newsletters can be downloaded as PDF files at the following websites: for issues 1 to 59, go to www.bnaps.org/hhl/n-bcr.php; for later numbers, visit https://spideroak.com/browse/share/Andrew_Scott/Backissues. Issues 89 to present are in full colour; earlier newsletters are in b&w. File size is approximately 2 Mb / issue.

Early post office mail from the BC mainland

by Bob and Dale Forster

The gold rush to the Fraser River began in the spring of 1858, a few months before British Columbia became a British crown colony in August. Vancouver Island had been a crown colony since 1849. The gold rush established an immediate need for postal facilities. *Figure 1* shows a May 15, 1858, letter from Fort Hope addressed to Olympia, Washington Territory. It went into the US mail at Whatcom (now Bellingham), Washington Territory, on May 28 and is believed to be the earliest surviving gold-rush letter from the BC mines. The writer states: "The miners are making modest wages—3 to 7 dollars per day. I wouldn't advise anybody to come here until the last of July for the river will be very high till that time. Send your letters by some person that is coming up here and tell him to leave them at Fort Hope." This letter predates the establishment of express companies or a government postal system in British Columbia.

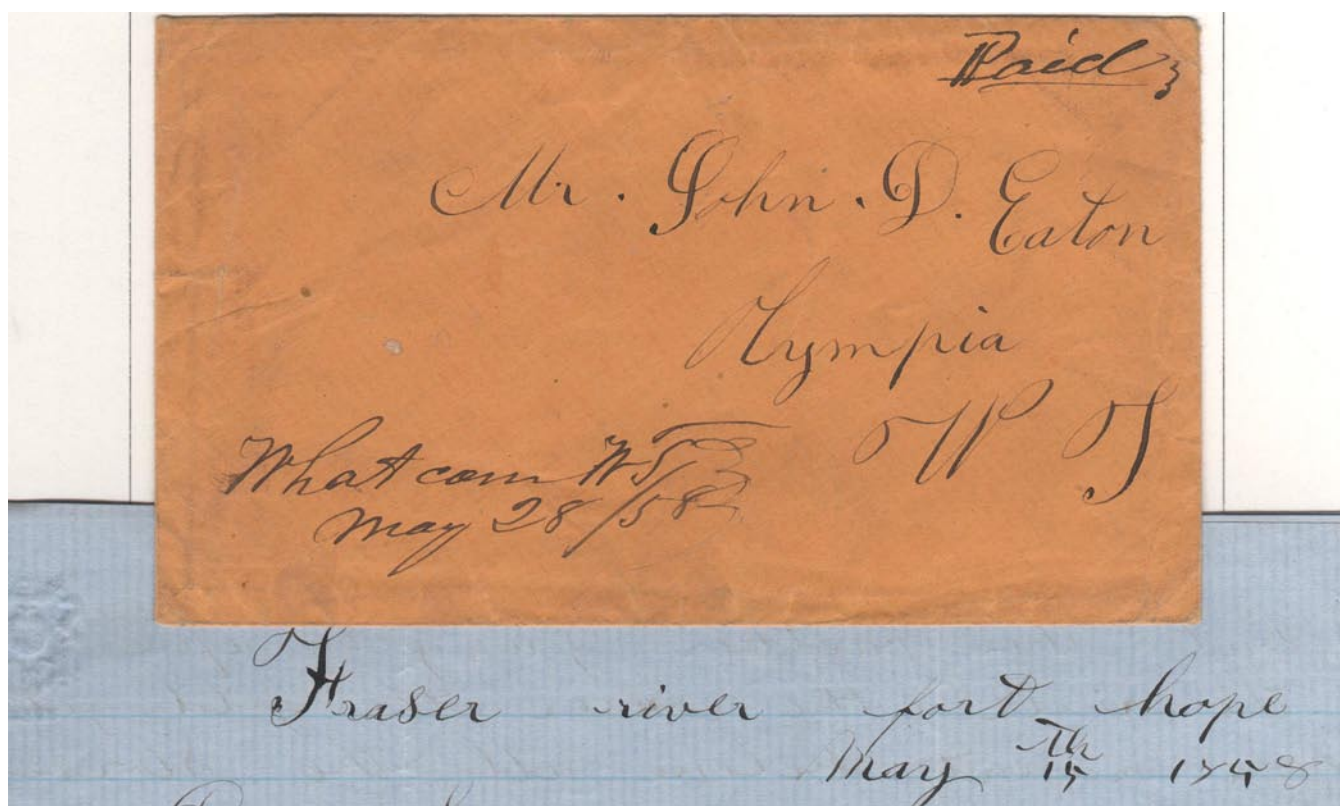


Figure 1. Fort Hope to Olympia, Washington Territory, May 1858.

Freeman's Express and Wells Fargo arrived at Victoria from California in July 1858 with plans to establish private mail and express service to the mainland mines. Both companies made the decision to establish Victoria offices and to access the mines through agents. Billy Ballou had already been operating Ballou's Express on the mainland since June 1858. He became Freeman's agent. Wells Fargo first employed Kent & Smith, then switched to Ballou after taking over Freeman's Express in November 1859. When Ballou sold to Dietz & Nelson in 1862, Wells Fargo would establish a partnership with that company. Jeffrey's Express also operated a private mail service to the mines and would sell out to Barnard's Express in 1861.

This article will not discuss the express companies in detail but will concentrate on the establishment of a government postal system. In order to have a workable postal service, three things are necessary: 1) Physical post offices need to be established; 2) Postmasters need to be hired, be informed of postal rates and keep accounts on outgoing mail; 3) Carriers need to be hired to carry outgoing and incoming mail. As we will see, in its first days British Columbia's infant government did not make provisions for mail carriers, which meant that express companies carried the great majority of early mail.

Early mainland mail continued

The Post Offices of British Columbia 1858-1970, by George Melvin, lists the first postmasters of the three earliest BC post offices. The information was taken from the *Victoria Gazette* notice of Nov 24, 1858 (reproduced on page 45 of *The Colonial Postal Systems and Postage Stamps of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1849-1871*, by A S Deaville). These three pioneer offices were supposedly operational by November 1858:

Fort Langley: Wm H Bevis 1858, W W Gibbs 1861

Fort Hope: Robt T Smith

Fort Yale: Peter B Whannell

Melvin lists the New Westminster post office opening date as April 23, 1859, with Capt W R Spalding as first postmaster. The provisional capital was Fort Langley, but being on the south side of the Fraser River it was thought to be susceptible to takeover by Americans, so a new site was established a few miles below on the north side of the Fraser. It was first known as Queenborough or Queensborough, but the name was soon changed, by Queen Victoria, to New Westminster. Apparently no early post office was established at Queenborough, but *Figure 2* shows an August 1859 incoming cover from Quebec. The 15-cent rate applied to mail to the west coast from eastern Canada, and the "5" represents a 5-cent

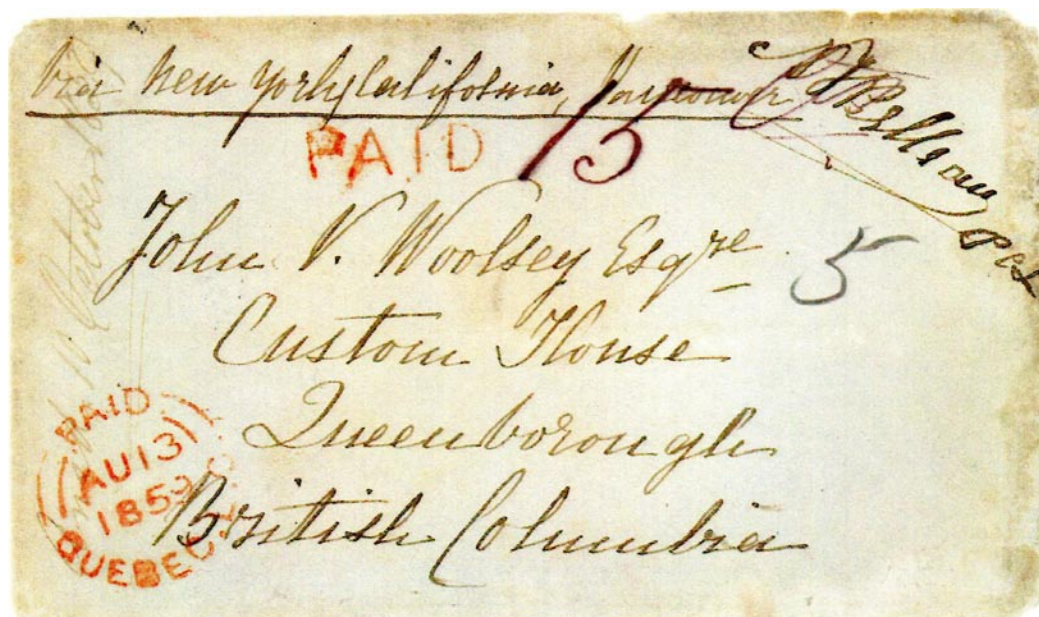


Figure 2. Quebec to "Queenborough" (New Westminster), August 1859

arrival charge (although British Columbia did not officially adopt decimal currency until 1866). Routing was via New York and the US mails via Panama and San Francisco to Victoria. No carriers had been hired to carry mail between Victoria and the mainland so the letter apparently waited for a volunteer to take it up the Fraser River to the officially renamed town of New Westminster.

There is no question that, despite the 50-cent express charge versus the 5-cent charge for government mail, most 1858, 1859 and 1860 mail from the mainland mines was carried by express. Both Vancouver Island and British Columbia instituted statutes requiring express companies to pay the 5-cent government charge for every letter carried by express. The United States had passed similar statutes during the California gold rush, and US expresses were required to use government postal stationery envelopes to ensure that the express statutes were observed. Vancouver Island and British Columbia did not have access to postal stationery envelopes, so expressmen took their franked envelopes to the post office, paid the 5-cent charge per envelope, and had the clerk use a handstamp frank to show that the fee had been paid.

The post office did not hire carriers, and government mail service was terrible. Deaville on page 48 quotes a Feb 20, 1859, letter from Fort Yale to Lieutenant Governor Moody in Victoria about the utter unreliability of the mails. The writer suggested that Indians be hired to carry mail between Fort Yale

Early mainland mail continued

and Victoria. The suggestion fell on deaf ears. There is evidence that, for a time, expressman Billy Ballou had volunteered to carry government mail free of charge. Deaville (on page 80) says, "In the winter of 1860-61 William T Ballou, the pioneer express operator, suddenly objected to carrying the Government mails to Fraser River points 'without a contract or an equivalent for doing the work.' He had been accommodating the Colonial authorities and increasing his own prestige by carrying the official mail-bags free of charge."



Figure 3. BC mainland to Oriskany, New York, December 1858 (?)

We will examine a correspondence that makes up a significant proportion of the surviving mainland government mail from 1859 and 1860, both before and after the 2½-pence BC adhesive stamp was issued. A number of envelopes sent to Mr R Allison in Oriskany, New York, have survived. Although the letters are missing, the addressee docketed the envelopes on the reverse with the date the letters were written; that date precedes the San Francisco or New York datestamp in every case. Figure 3 shows a 3-cent Wells Fargo envelope with an oval Wells Fargo Victoria handstamp and a New York



Figure 4. BC mainland to Oriskany, New York, April 1859 (?)

Early mainland mail continued

City post office datestamp of Feb 12, 1859. Note that no colonial postage was paid in Victoria, as required, and that a 3-cent envelope was used. (Wells Fargo was supposed to use 10-cent envelopes on transcontinental mail, even if they entered the mail at New York or did not enter the mail at all.) On the back is written "Dec 6, 1859," obviously a mistake for 1858. This envelope was carried by Wells Fargo to San Francisco, where it left on the PMSS *Sonora* on Jan 20, reached Panama City on Feb 2, crossed the isthmus by rail, then on Feb 3 went aboard the USMC *Moses Taylor* at Aspinwall and reached New York on Feb 11. There is no evidence that this letter was written on the mainland; it appears the writer wintered in Victoria before going to the mainland after April 10, 1859.

Figure 4 shows another Allison cover with no evidence of originating in BC or on Vancouver Island, except that it is docketed on the back April 10, 1859, ten days before the San Francisco datestamp of April 20, the day of departure of the *Sonora* for Panama City. It seems likely the writer gave it to a ship captain or passenger in Victoria with instructions to mail it in San Francisco. On page 17 of *The Stamps & Postal History of Vancouver Island & British Columbia*, by Gerald Wellburn, an envelope is shown from another correspondence that appears to be of San Francisco origin. It has a letter enclosure headed Victoria, however, dated nine days before the San Francisco datestamp. That cover later appeared in Spink London's 2007 sale of the Tom Fleming collection, at which time the enclosure was not mentioned and may have no longer been present. There are almost certainly other early envelopes originating in BC or on Vancouver Island that were carried privately to San Francisco but, without enclosures, there is no way to determine that they originated in the British colonies.

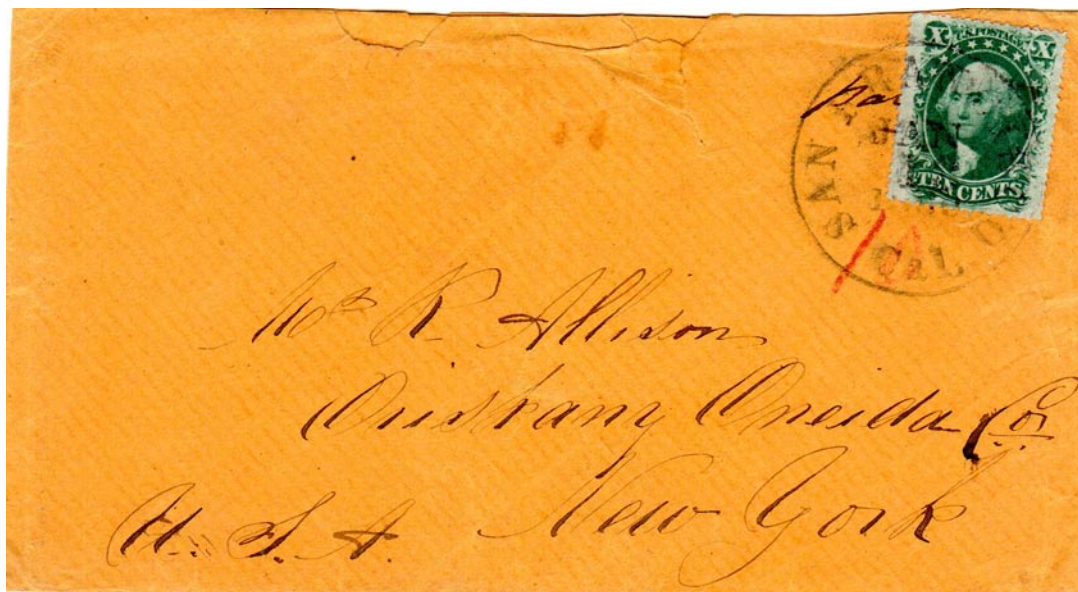


Figure 5. BC mainland to Oriskany, New York, October 1859

Figure 5 shows an Allison envelope docketed on the back Oct 23, 1859, with a San Francisco datestamp of Jan 13, 1860. There is evidence that this cover was mailed on the mainland: a red "10" in manuscript and a black "paid" (probably "paid 5") partly under the US stamp. The manuscript "paid" indicates a mainland origin because Victoria was using handstamp franks to designate payment of colonial postage. As we will see, colonial adhesive stamps would not be available until about March 1860, and mainland towns did not have handstamp devices until some months after adhesive stamps were issued. The red "10" represents the US postage, which was available for purchase at the New Westminster post office. If the cover had originated above New Westminster, coin would have accompanied the letter until US postage was applied at New Westminster. At this date British Columbia had not yet hired postal carriers, which may explain the considerable time lag between the writing of the letter and the San Francisco datestamp.

Figure 6 shows another Allison Wells Fargo envelope, this time a properly used 10-cent red frank envelope with colonial postage paid with the oval Victoria Post Office frank. That frank replaced the

Early mainland mail continued



Figure 6. BC mainland to Oriskany, New York, February 1860 (?)



Figure 7. BC mainland to Oriskany, New York, February 1860

round Customs seal in late 1859, so the docketing on the back of this cover of "Feb 1859" must be a mistake for 1860. It appears the writer was in Victoria, although the letter could possibly have been written on the mainland, carried privately to Victoria and given there to Wells Fargo.

Figure 7 shows an Allison envelope docketed Feb 25, 1860, with a San Francisco datestamp of March 5, 1860. The manuscript "Paid 5 Cts" indicates it was mailed on the mainland. The strip of the old imperforate 3-cent US stamps may be the only use of imperforate US stamps in BC or on Vancouver Island. Perforated US stamps had been available since 1857, and it is not known if the writer had purchased these years before or if a few were available at the New Westminster post office.

Apparently there is no postal record of the exact date the 2½-pence stamp was issued to post offices in the two independent British colonies. Figures 8 and 9 seem to be the earliest uses of the 2½-pence

Early mainland mail continued

stamp. These scans are courtesy of the Philatelic Foundation, where each cover received a certificate of genuineness. Both covers originated on the mainland. It is worth noting that Victoria did not use the new adhesive stamps for a considerable period, preferring to continue using handstamp franks. The infamous John D'Ewes and possibly other Vancouver Island postmasters lined their pockets



Figure 8. BC mainland to Oriskany, New York, March 1860

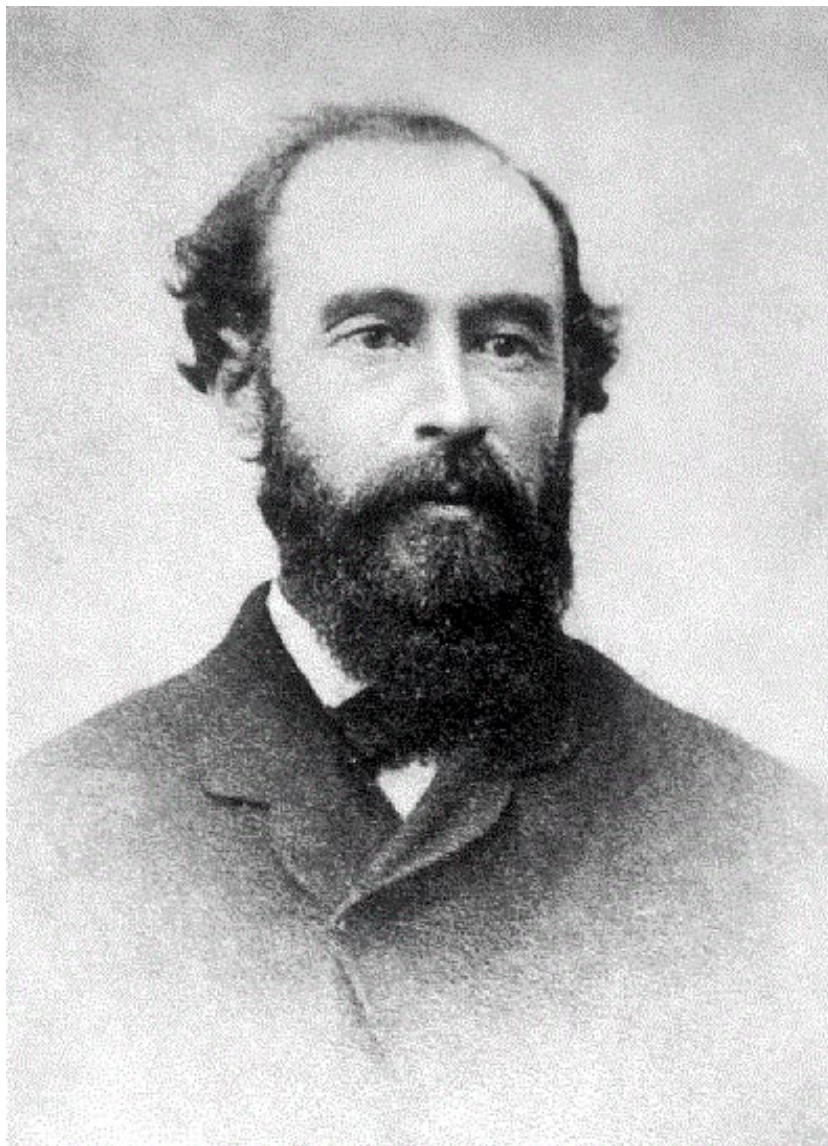


Figure 9. BC mainland to Oriskany, New York, April 1860

with postal revenues garnered by selling envelopes with handstamp franks (for which there was no accounting). Note that the covers in Figures 8 and 9 have the stamps cancelled by manuscript—numeral cancel devices would not arrive from England for about six months, the earliest recorded use being New Westminster's "1" in bars in blue ink used about Sept 1, 1860 (Wellburn book, page 57). We do not know the docketing date on the reverse of Figure 8, which has an April 5, 1860, San Francisco datestamp. Therefore the stamp would have been applied in mid to late-March 1860, and is the earliest recorded date of use of the 2½-pence adhesive. The certificate does not note that the cover

Early mainland mail continued

is underpaid for the US 10-cent transcontinental rate; there is no obvious missing stamp, but it seems unlikely that San Francisco would not have noted the deficiency. Figure 9 (illustrated in the Wellburn book, page 56) was listed by Wellburn as the earliest recorded stamp use, though it is now the second earliest. Wellburn gave the docketing date as April 10, 1860, and the San Francisco datestamp is April 30, 1860. The covers in figures 8 and 9 originated on the mainland, probably at New Westminster.



John Falls Allison, about 1870.

BC Archives photo A-01961

The letter writer

We assumed that the author of the letters once contained in the Allison correspondence envelopes was writing home to family, so would also have the last name of Allison. A Google search revealed that John Falls Allison, born in England in 1825, came to British Columbia in 1858 after seeking gold in California. In *Papers Relating to the Affairs of British Columbia*, Part IV, pages 13-14, is a letter written by Allison from "Shimilkomeen" (now Similkameen) to Peter O'Reilly in Victoria on July 27, 1860, about gold strikes in Similkameen. It turns out that Allison became a well-known rancher in the Similkameen area and in 1876 was appointed justice of the peace at Vermilion Forks. In 1895, when gold was discovered on the Tulameen River at Granite Creek, Allison was made gold commissioner of the Similkameen area. John Falls Allison died in 1897.

Rarity of early British Columbia post office mail

Steve Walske has compiled an unpublished census of BC and Vancouver Island post office covers transiting San Francisco. All Walske's covers dated before March 1860 seem to have originated in Victoria—although the gold rush on the mainland had been going on since the summer of 1858. Possibly a few of these covers could have been carried privately from the mainland to Victoria for mailing.

We must conclude, however, that the

post office on the mainland was either completely or effectively non-operational. We do know that express companies carried mail from the mainland in this period and, as cited above, Ballou carried some government mail without charge. Walske's census records only five covers bearing pen-cancelled 2½-pence stamps in the period between March and August 1860, before the numeral cancels began to be used. We believe these five covers were all used from the mainland and originated or passed through New Westminster before being put aboard ships at Victoria. We have not seen any local mail used during this period with pen-cancelled 2½-pence stamps, although there must have been correspondence between New Westminster and Victoria. Is the envelope for the July 27, 1860, Allison letter to Peter O'Reilly held in the government archives? Other local letters with pen-cancelled stamps should exist. The authors would be interested in seeing scans of any early local mail bearing 2½-pence BC&VI adhesive stamps or any other Allison covers not referred to in this article.

Swanson Bay: pulp mill in the wilderness

by David Piercey

Swanson Bay was BC's first pulp mill. It was located on Graham Reach of the Inside Passage opposite Princess Royal Island, about 175 kilometers south and east of Prince Rupert, with a post office that operated during two periods: 1907-1913 and 1917-1942.



Figure 1.
Swanson Bay
cover to Yokohama,
Japan, dated March
19, 1908 (see page
922 for more
detail).

Henderson's 1910 *BC Directory* gives the following description:

A Post Office in the Comox-Atlin district in the provincial electoral division of Skeena. The new sulphite pulp mill is now in operation, the initial capacity of this plant being 25 tons of pulp per day. It is reached by steamers of CPR and Union SS Co and Boscowitz Steamship Co Ltd. From Prince Rupert, distance 130 miles, and Vancouver, distance 420 miles. It has recently been opened as a customs port of entry.

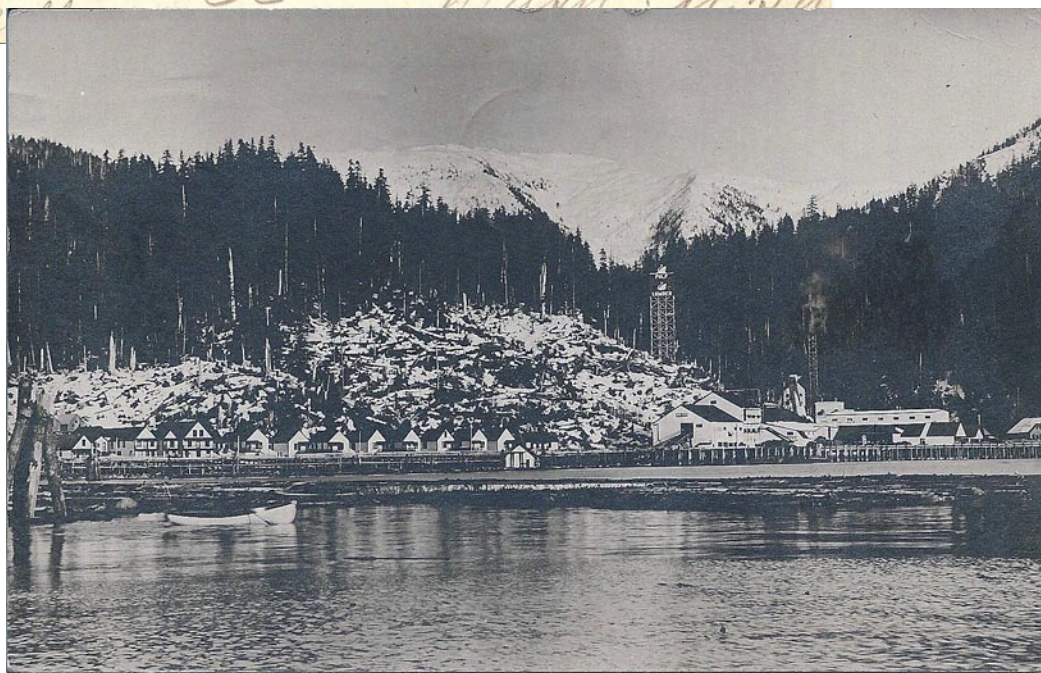
In the early 1900s, the Oriental Power and Pulp Co acquired a 34,000-hectare (85,000-acre) timber lease at Swanson Bay. Development began in 1906, when the lease was sold to the Canadian Pacific Sulphite Pulp Co (CPSP). A sawmill was built and a pulp mill became operational sometime before 1909. By 1910 it was producing its 25 tons of pulp daily.

Swanson Bay continued

According to logger and lumberman Bill Moore (*Reference 1*), the lumber on the timber lease was of particularly poor quality, and logs were not boomed in from other upcoast locations. The pulp mill had to close down in 1913. The lease was taken over by Empire Pulp and Paper Mills, and by 1916, with significant improvements made, the plant was once again opened, with a renewed workforce of 250 men. In 1917 the mill was being operated by the Whalen Pulp and Paper Co (which also operated pulp mills at Woodfibre and Port Alice). Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) steamers were calling, and the local workforce, by now producing timber and shingles as well as pulp, grew to 500. A Protestant



Figure 2.
Postcard from
Vancouver to
Tacoma, Wash-
ington, dated
February 20,
1917, and
written in
Norwegian (see
following
page).



mission was established, and the settlement also had a school and a resident physician. By 1920 the GTP had initiated ferry service between Prince Rupert and Swanson Bay for the daily transport of nine boxcars of newsprint and pulp to Rupert for shipment by the GTP rail line to eastern markets (*Reference 2*).

Most of Swanson Bay's pulp, however, was exported to Japan to supply its paper industry. Markets collapsed after World War I and the Japanese earthquake of 1923, and Whalen went into receivership,

Swanson Bay continued

but pulp operations were renewed by the BC Pulp and Paper Co in 1925. In the 1920s and '30s a provincial policeman, a fisheries officer, a forest ranger, and an agent and pilot for Western Canada Airways (a division of Canadian Airways) were briefly stationed at Swanson Bay. Marine service facilities were also available. By about 1940, though, the mills had closed and the population had shrunk to 52 souls.

The mill's history coincides with the periods of operation of the post office. From 1907 to 1910 John T Mennie, CPSP's accountant, was the first postmaster. Charles E Burrows and H S Phillips filled the



Figure 3. April 8, 1919, Swanson Bay to Oregon, eight-cent registered rate (two-cent US rate, one-cent war tax, five cents registration). Backstamps: Vancouver, Apr 10; Seattle, Apr 11; Bandon, Oregon, Apr 12.

position in 1911 and 1912. When postal operations resumed in 1917, various employees of Empire, Whalen and BC Pulp and Paper served as postmaster. The post office finally closed on February 28, 1942. Post Office Department records indicate that Roy William Tapp, the foreman at BC Pulp and Paper, was the settlement's last postmaster, from 1935 to 1942.

The cover in *Figure 1* is from the first period of post-office operation. Dated March 19, 1908, it is addressed to Tomizou Kato in Yokohama, Japan, from Kakuzou Kato, with a return address of CPSP Co, Swanson Bay, Canada, BC, Vancouver. The address indicates that Kato was at least a temporary resident at Swanson Bay, and that mail would have to be addressed to him via Vancouver. He may have been involved in pulp production intended for the Japanese market, or perhaps he was a fisherman or forestry worker employed at the site. A reader familiar with Japanese might make a clearer determination of Kato's role. The cover does not have any coastal steamship transit markings, or even a Vancouver backstamp.

The postcard in *Figure 2* has a Vancouver machine cancel of Feb 20, 1917, and depicts the Swanson Bay settlement from about that time. Noticeable at centre left is a lattice-like pylon arising from the hillside with a (barely discernable) logo depicting two swans and the words "pulp" and "lumber" at the top. The postcard, written in Norwegian, was possibly sent by a logger working at Swanson Bay. (*Figure 3*, above, is from the editor's collection and was included to round out the page.).

References:

- 1) Moore, Bill. "The Town that Vanished," *British Columbia Lumberman*, July 1974, pp 74-75. Found at www.wdmoore.ca
- 2) "New Districts Opened up in BC," *Montreal Gazette*, February 28, 1920, p 4.

“MISSENT TO” Bold Point (again)

by Peter Smith

What do you do when you find a beautiful cover that fits exactly into two of your collecting categories? Which takes priority?

I was in this happy situation when I found a “MISSENT TO” postal marking on a cover to Quadra Island (Figure 1). I collect “missent” covers from the Discovery Islands off the west coast of BC, and I find they are few and far between. Postmasters, it seems, couldn’t be bothered to dig out their “Missent to” handstamps each time a letter was wrongly off-loaded at their post office and needed sending on to the right place.

In this case, the letter had been sent from Vancouver on December 18, 1955, addressed to the Joyce family at Quathiaski Cove. The Joyces had been among the first pioneer settlers on Quadra back in the 1890s, when it was still known as Valdez Island. But on this occasion the Union steamship dropped off the letter at Bold Point, in the northeastern corner of Quadra, instead of at Quathiaski Cove, in the southwest corner.

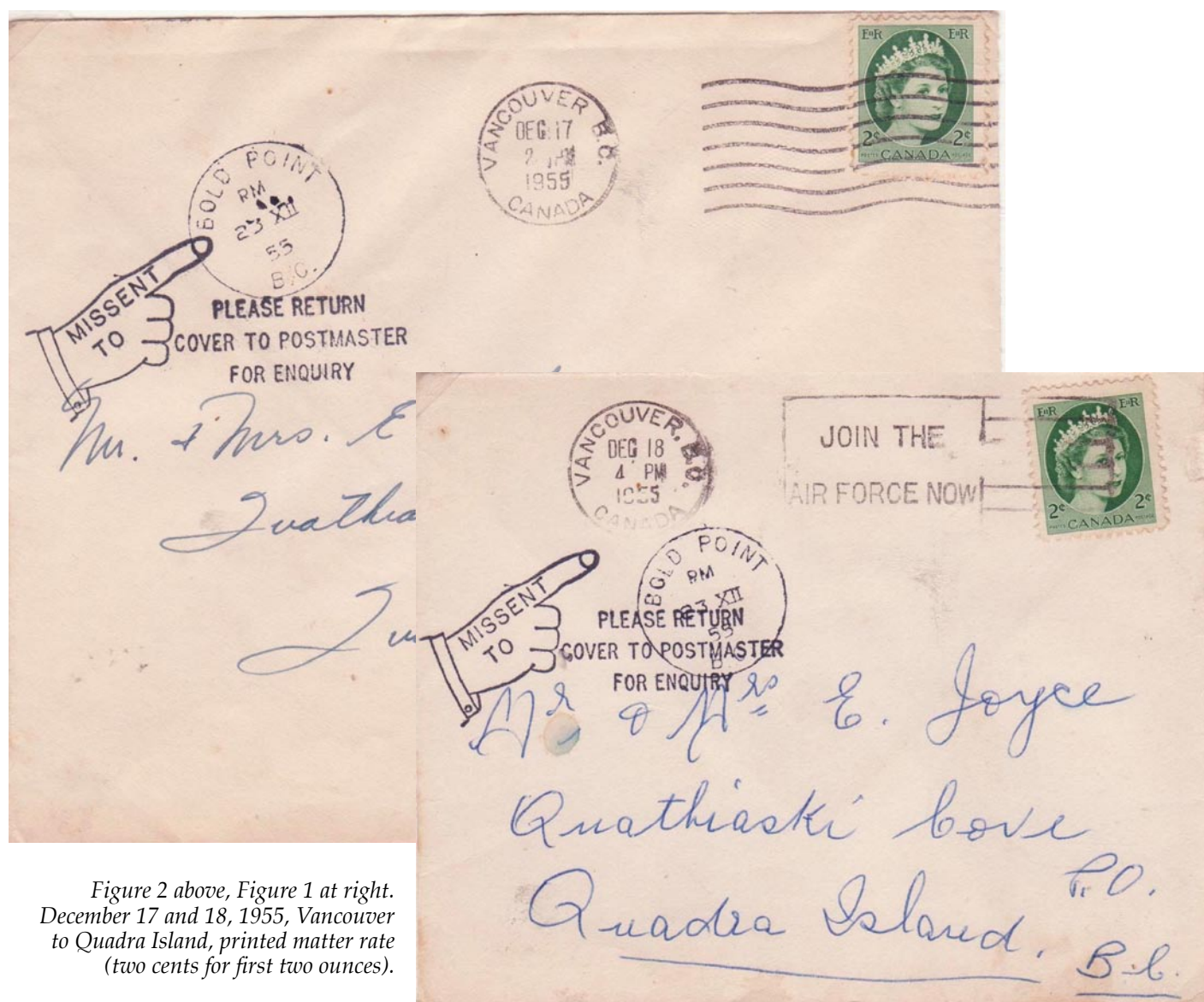


Figure 2 above, Figure 1 at right.
December 17 and 18, 1955, Vancouver
to Quadra Island, printed matter rate
(two cents for first two ounces).

On closer inspection I discovered the cover had an even better marking. Obviously the postmaster at Bold Point had held the letter until the next Union steamship arrived, then put it back in the post on December 23, redirecting it to Quathiaski Cove, using his “MISSENT TO” pointing finger with a “PLEASE RETURN

Bold Point continued

COVER TO POSTMASTER FOR ENQUIRY" handstamp. As it happens, December 23, 1955, turns out to be the earliest reported date for the Bold Point "Type C" circular datestamp (with small letters).

Since opening in 1911 the Bold Point post office had a broken-circle cancel, which was used for 40 years until it was replaced in the early 1950s by a "Type B" circular datestamp (with large lettering). That cancel, proofed on April 4, 1951, was very short-lived, as it was replaced in 1955 by the small-letter cancel. This too was a short-lived cancel as the post office closed only five years later. So here I had a scarce "missent to" marking and an early reported date for the Bold Point small-letter CDS. Into which of my two collections should it be placed?

Would you believe it, the problem was solved for me when I found a second, almost identical cover (Figure 2). This had been posted in Vancouver the day before the first cover by a different sender, but addressed to the same Joyce family in Quathiaski Cove. It had clearly ended up in the same mailbag on the Union steamship and was also off-loaded, presumably at the same time, by mistake, in Bold Point. It too received a strike of the "MISSENT TO" handstamp and was sent on with the same December 23 "early reported date" as the first cover. Problem solved. I now have one of these covers in each of my collections!

Notes and queries

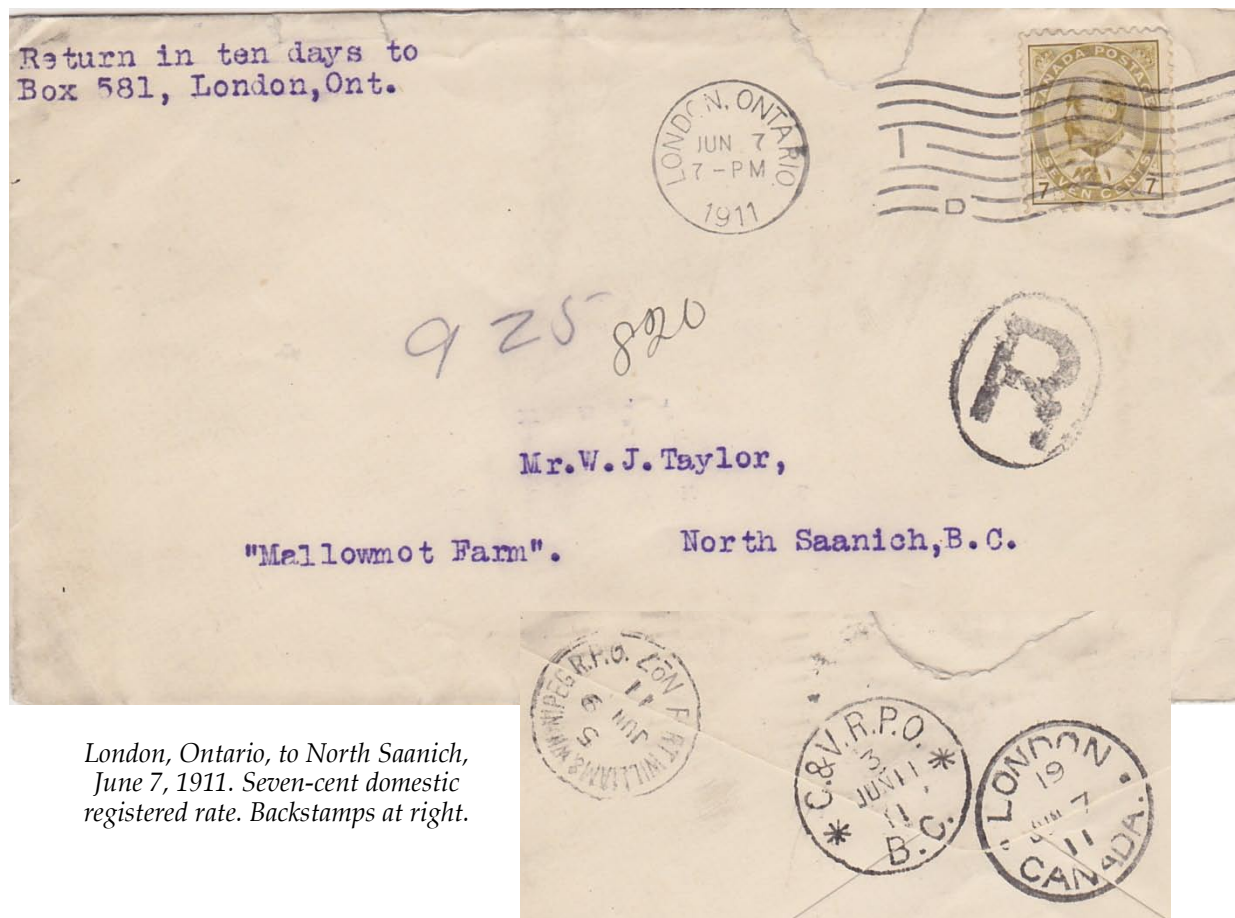
Registered covers processed on a *machine* rather than by the usual handstamps are not common. I have seen two since I began to study International machine cancels.

But this is not why I am writing.

The cover below travelled from London, Ontario, to

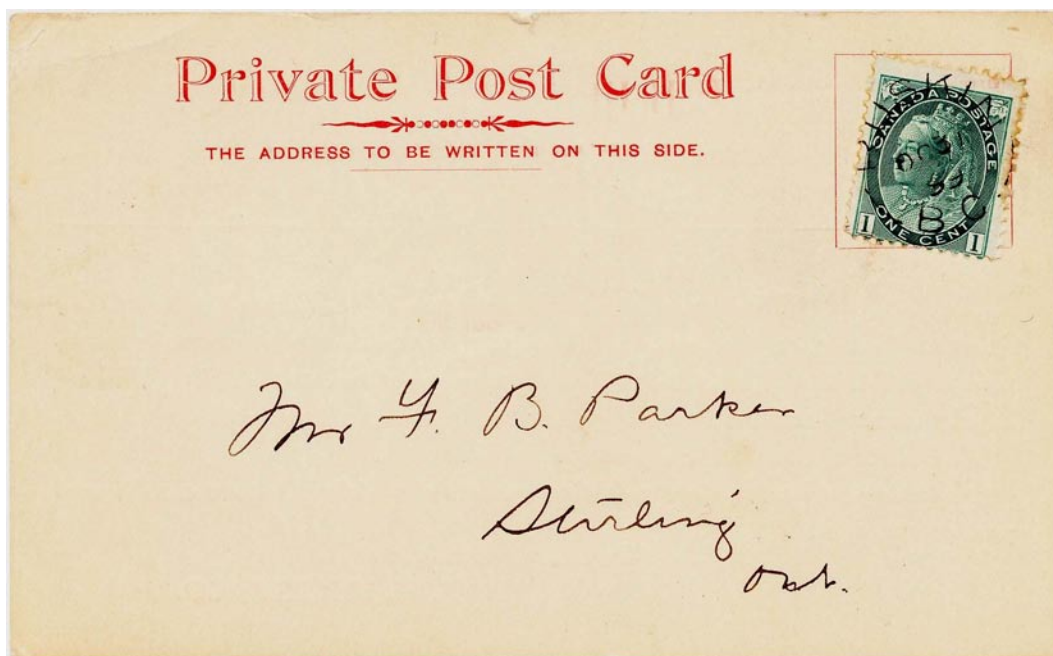
BC with RPO transit markings only. I wonder why there was not at least a Victoria backstamp and one from the receiving office at North Saanich? Was this just carelessness on the part of the transit offices?

Bill Topping says that North Saanich post office closed on October 30, 1912. Was mail for North Saanich then sent to Turgoose? North Saanich, South Saanich, Turgoose and Saanichton all seem to be at the same location. —Cec Coutts



London, Ontario, to North Saanich, June 7, 1911. Seven-cent domestic registered rate. Backstamps at right.

A 19th-century advertising card from Ruskin



Ruskin to Stirling, Ontario, October 31, 1899, one-cent postcard rate.

This "private post card" mailed at Ruskin on October 31, 1899 (the 1¢ Numeral stamp is barely tied by the Ruskin broken circle), is one of my favourites because of the advertising on the back of the card. E H Heaps & Co purchased the mill at Ruskin when the co-op that established the community went bankrupt. As you can see from the card, Heaps also had a mill at Cedar Cove (on East Powell St, listed as 129 Victoria Dr in 1905—10 blocks from where I lived as a teen) and an office on Cordova Street.—Gray Scrimgeour

From *The Encyclopedia of British Columbia*: Ruskin "began as a socialist discussion group led by Charles Whetham, an art teacher. The group, inspired by the ideas of the British art critic John Ruskin, formed the Canadian Co-operative Society in 1896 and built the sawmill soon after. The community also featured a communal garden, dairy, store and school. The effort collapsed into bankruptcy in 1899."

New six-digit markings from BC post offices

Here are a few new POCON datestamps from BC. Victoria has recently come out with a series of circular designs that include the retail post office name or location. Several Victoria offices also have an "R" in front of the POCON. Vancouver seems to be sticking with the rectangular design for now. The High Street PO (104305) has no town name, but it's from Abbotsford. Kitimat is testing a completely new style.

