



BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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A shortpaid postal stationery card from Japan to Vancouver, dated Jan 11, 1922. The card was uprated from 1½ sen to 6½ sen, but the postage still fell short of the correct rate for international mail, which was 8 sen.

This colourful postal stationery card from Japan illustrates a rule adopted at the 1920 Madrid Universal Postal Union convention: "Correspondence of every kind not prepaid or insufficiently prepaid is liable to a charge equal to double postage or double the amount of the deficiency, to be paid by the addressees; *but that charge may not be less than 30 centimes*" (my italics; the rule went into effect on Jan 1, 1922).

The card was mailed on Jan 11, 1922, from Miyagi prefecture in the northeast part of Honshu (datestamp uses western calendar, not Japanese). It was shortpaid by 1½ sen (the international postcard rate was 8 sen). Double the deficiency would have been 3 sen, or about 8 French centimes (the currency

used by the UPU for international transactions). The minimum charge, though, was 30 centimes, and that amount is written above the large "CTMS-and-hollow-T" handstamp (under the left-hand postage-due stamp). Thirty centimes was equal to 6 cents in Canadian funds at the time, so a large "6" was marked on the card in black and three postage-due stamps affixed to indicate that the fee had been paid.

The addressee was located on Cordova Street in the Downtown Eastside area around Oppenheimer Park, where a substantial Japanese community had grown up. There are no transit or receiving marks on the card and no postal markings of any kind on the reverse. — *Andrew Scott*

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Amazing old Vancouver

Early documents from the Pacific Northwest continue to sell for record prices at Brian Grant Duff's weekly All Nations bidboard in Vancouver (www.allnationsstampandcoin.com). Astute marketing by All Nations has resulted in significant media



Figure 1. A claim by Jeremiah Rogers against Edward Stamp.

coverage, and bids have been received from museum representatives, dealers and private collectors across the region.

One impressive sale late last year involved a Hudson's Bay Co document written at Fort Vancouver in 1842 listing the "Returns of the Columbia District, Outfit 1841." In a beautiful copperplate script, furs and other commodities—bears, beaver, foxes, martens, otters, badgers, "whale bones," etc—were neatly tabulated and totalled on a large ruled sheet of paper. This fine example of local history may have been drawn up

by HBC chief factor and superintendent Dr John McLoughlin, the "father of Oregon," himself. It sold for \$7,700 on Oct 10, 2015.

The latest material on offer is from historic Vancouver: 88 pages of postal history, postcards, historic notes, letters, drawings and diverse ephemera gathered by well-known BC collector Gerald Wellburn.

The most extraordinary recent realization came on March 12, 2016, when a letter signed by the talkative John Deighton, better known as "Gassy Jack," sold for the jaw-dropping price of \$44,000 (figure 2). Deighton signatures, apparently, are scarce. This one, dated March 11, 1875, was on a letter explaining why the writer was unable to pay a bill (a not-unusual occurrence in Deighton's life) and asking for more time. Gassy Jack, of course, gave his name to Gastown, the oldest part of Vancouver (also known as Granville), where he ran the Globe Saloon and, later, the Deighton House hotel.

Other notable sales include: *(continued next page)*

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 wish to receive the digital edition, please make sure we have your email address. You can also download the newsletter from our file-sharing site (see below). This is the last issue that we can honour 2015 print subscriptions. If we have your email address, we will shift any remaining unpaid print subscriptions to digital for the September issue. Thank you to those who have already resubscribed.

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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.

Amazing Vancouver continued

- A letter, embossed with the provincial seal, dated Nov 13, 1871, that accompanied a package of law books “intended for the use of the Judges . . . and Mr Pooley.” The letter is signed by Anthony Musgrave, governor of BC 1869-71 (figure 3). The lot also contained a stampless OHMS cover to the attorney general at Victoria, dated April 15, 1870, with the embossed seal on reverse, as well as a characteristic Gerald Wellburn album page. The page stated that “in Aug 1869 Governor Musgrave visited Jeremiah Rogers logging and watched teams of oxen drag logs and spars to the water. He inspected Capt Stamp’s new Hastings Mill, opened June 1867. He crossed Burrard Inlet to Moody’s steam sawmill. He was



Figure 2. The signature of John Deighton, or “Gassy Jack.”

surprised at the huge trees and excellent harbour, and he agreed to the survey of a townsite. The lot brought \$2,860 at the March 19, 2016, auction.

- A writ, dated Sept 21, 1862, issued on Sewell Prescott Moody for bail of \$492.68. Moody bought the Burrard Inlet sawmill in 1864; Moodyville was named for him. The unsigned writ was issued by order of David Cameron, chief justice of British Columbia. The lot, which included a typical Wellburn page, sold for \$2,200 at the Feb 6, 2016, auction.

- A written claim by Jeremiah Rogers against Capt Edward Stamp for costs of clearing a site for the Hastings Sawmill in May 1865 (figure 1). Rogers claimed that during April and May 1865 he had as many as 21 men working there and incurred a labour expense of 228 man-days at \$45 a month, a board expense of 50 cents a day, and oxen labour of \$85, for a total bill owing of \$593.45. The site in question may have been in Stanley Park, where Stamp originally tried to establish a mill before being told that sailing ships would not be able to moor there because of the

strong current. Rogers was a well-respected logger—one of the first to use steam-powered tractors for hauling—who cleared much of what is now Kitsilano. The name Jericho Beach may be a corruption of Jerry’s Cove, where Rogers had his logging camp. The

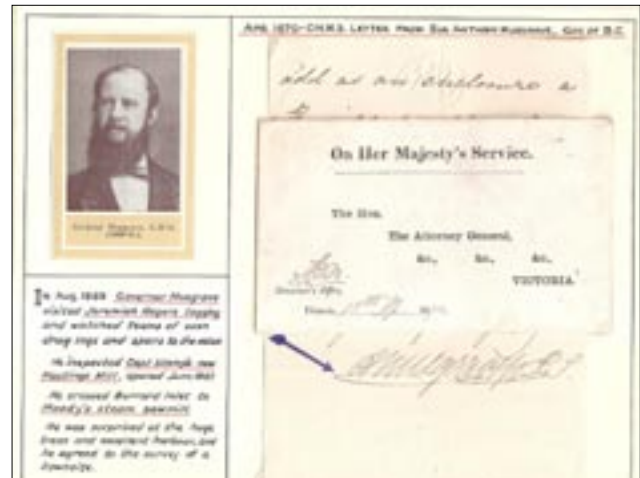


Figure 3. The signature of Governor Anthony Musgrave.

lot, on Wellburn album pages, included an engraving and several illustrations of logging activity. It sold at the April 2, 2016, auction for \$1,100.

- A July 1876 document recording the “Statement of the Accused” of Gregorio Fernandes, an early storekeeper at Granville (figure 4). Fernandes, also known as Portuguese Joe, was charged with shooting and wounding John Baptiste Amor. (He was later acquitted.) The document was signed by Fernandes and three justices of the peace: Capt



Figure 4. Portuguese Joe’s “statement of the accused.”

James Raymur, manager, Hastings mill; Hugh Nelson, manager, Moodyville mill (and Lt-gov of BC, 1887-92); and Jeremiah Rogers, logger. The Wellburn page and document realized \$550 in the April 9, 2016, auction. — Andrew Scott

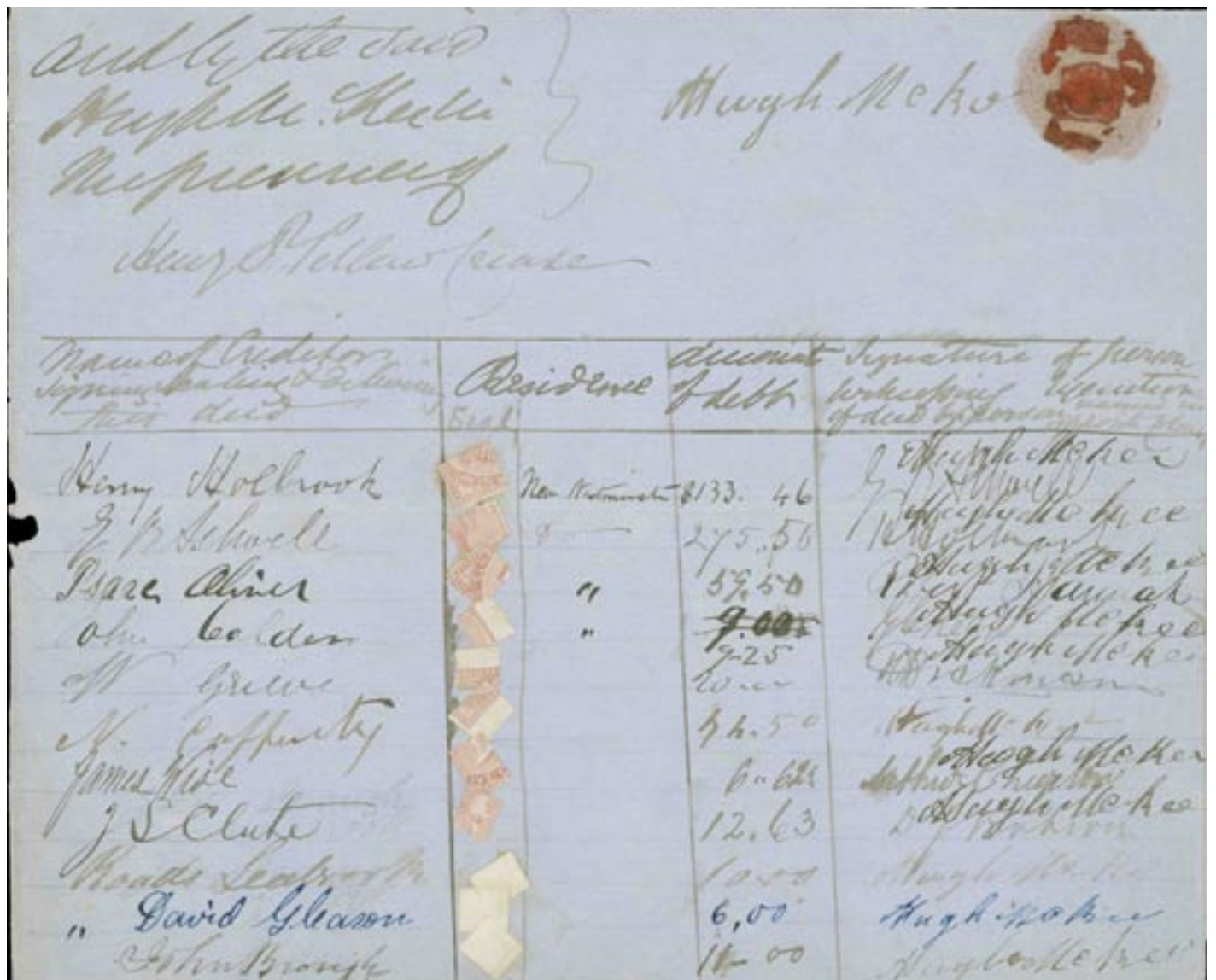
The 5c Vancouver Island imperf used as a seal

by Andrew Scott

Speaking of remarkable old documents, here is another treasure from Gerald Wellburn's collection. It is featured in *The Stamps and Postal History of Vancouver Island and British Columbia* (page 85) and was sold in the main Wellburn auction held by Eaton & Sons in Toronto in October 1988 (lot 1163). It last changed hands in October 2014, when Eastern Auctions disposed of the Jack Wallace collection (lot 515).

The document, I believe, is a binding agreement or indenture, securing the debts owed to a list of creditors with a mortgage on a property in New Westminster. If any study group members can improve on or correct this interpretation, I would be very pleased to hear from them. Charles Edward Pooley, registrar of the Supreme Court of British Columbia (see the following article in this issue), drew up the contract, and it was signed by the creditors before Henry Pering Pellew Crease, BC's colonial attorney general. It is not dated, but by comparing the signees with the periods they were known to have resided in New Westminster, it is possible to estimate that it dates from about 1867.

The most notable aspect of this document, of course, is the highly unusual use of the rare 5-cent imperforate stamp issued in 1865. I have seen this usage described as "BC's first revenue stamp," but I don't believe

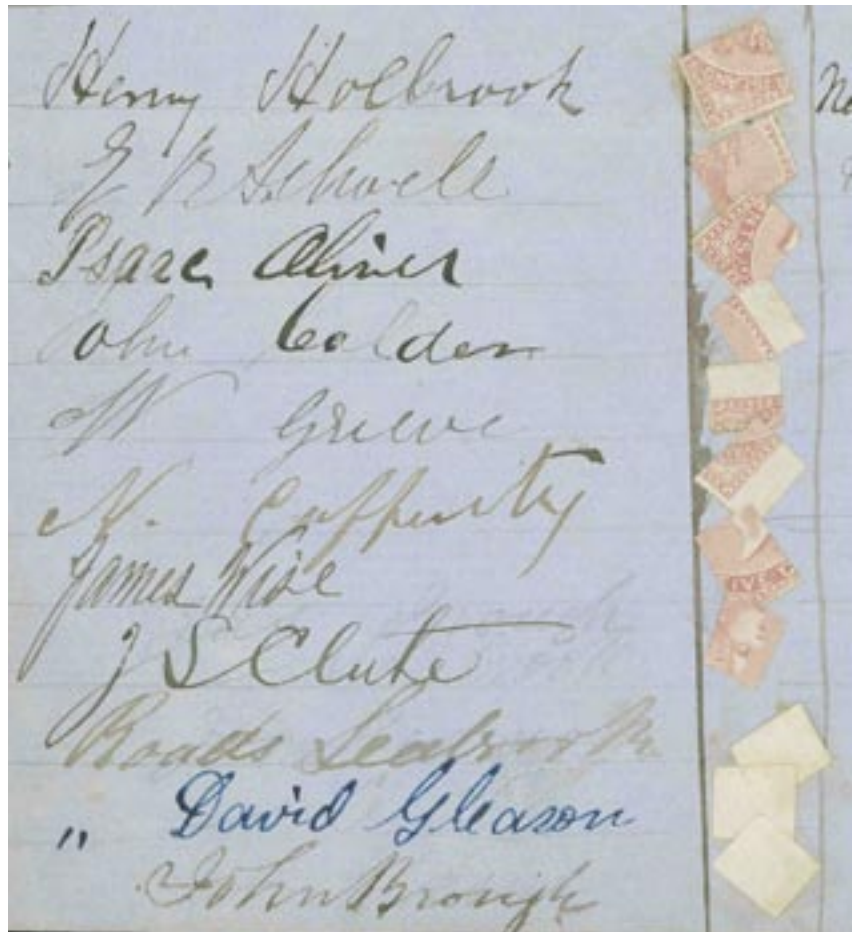


Indenture with a cut-up 5c imperforate Vancouver Island stamp used as a seal. Signed at New Westminster about 1867.

5c imperforate seal continued

that can be correct. A revenue stamp indicates that a fee or tax has been paid. This is not the case here. On this contract, the stamp, cut into small pieces, serves instead as an official seal, notifying that the document has been authorized by the appropriate officials. Indeed, at the top of the column containing the pieces of stamp, the word "seal" has been written in. Presumably, no official seal was available in New Westminster at this time, and the stamp, as a symbol of government authority, was cut up and used in its place.

Page 85 of *The Stamps and Postal History of Vancouver Island and British Columbia* includes a diagram, carefully drawn by Wellburn himself, reconstructing the stamp and showing how all nine pieces originally fit together. That drawing seems, sadly, to have been lost and was not part of the lot sold by Eastern in 2014. The list of creditors was too long for each person to have part of the stamp attached beside his signature, so four tiny squares of white paper and two red miniature paper seals were also used. The remains of a red wax seal can be seen, but not read, beside the names of the witnesses. The paper itself used for



Enlargement of document showing cut-up stamp placement.



New Westminster merchant Henry Holbrook.

the document has pronounced "laid" lines and a large watermark of a regal, seated female figure enclosed in a double-oval ring surmounted by an elaborate crown.

The document is a rich source of colonial signatures. Henry Crease and Charles Pooley were well-known local officials, and I won't add further details about them here. The list of creditors, however, features a number of lesser-known but still prominent New Westminster names.

- At the top of the list is **Henry Holbrook** (1820-1902), merchant, canner and politician. He was mayor of New Westminster 1862-63, 1867-69 and 1878, and was elected to the BC legislative council in 1864. Holbrook was a strong supporter of Confederation and an advocate (rare in these times) for native people. He was in many ways a voice and lobbyist for the emerging city, an energetic promoter of economic activity in the area. He later served briefly in the provincial government as chief commissioner of lands and works, and as president of the executive council. Holbrook also played a role in BC's postal history, as he was one of New Westminster's earliest postmasters, taking over from the city's stipendiary magistrate, Capt Warner R Spalding, for several months in late 1859 and early 1860, offering his general store as a post office and, with admirable public spirit, discharging his duties without salary.

5c imperforate seal continued

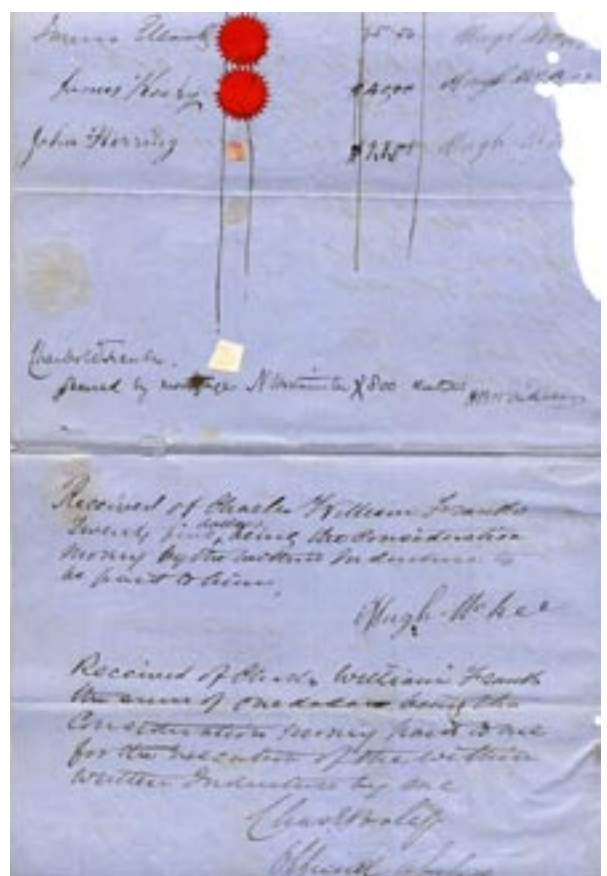
- **John Stillwell Clute** (1840-1929) was another mayor of New Westminster (in 1867). He came to Victoria in 1862 and joined the Cariboo gold rush. Later, like Holbrook, he set up in New Westminster as a general merchant (and druggist), and was later appointed a justice of the peace and collector of customs. Clute's son, also John Clute, became a well-known figure in the West Kootenays, where he was a mayor of Rossland.
- **Roads Seabrook** (c 1836-1921) arrived in New Westminster in the early 1860s and worked as a shipping agent. He moved to Victoria about 1868, however, and soon found success as a businessman, becoming vice-president of R P Rithet & Co and a founder of the Victoria Sealing Co. His son, Bagster Roads Seabrook, was general manager of Victoria's Albion Iron Works and a noted inventor. Bagster introduced the first automobile (a steam model) to Victoria, in 1903.



- **James Keary** (c 1824-71) was a sapper, a member of the Columbia detachment of Royal Engineers, which served in BC 1858-63. He stayed on in BC with his family and received, as did all sappers who remained, a 60-hectare military land grant (believed to have been in the Mission area). Keary opened a New Westminster hotel named Telegraph House. His son, William Holland Keary, was mayor of New Westminster for eight years.

We'd be delighted to publish additional information about any of the other creditors listed on this document. As far as I can make them out, the names are G B Scharle, Isaac Oliver, John Calder, W Grieve, N Cafferty, James Wise, David Gleason, John Brough, James Ellard, John Herring, Charles W Franks and Hugh McKee.

Sources: *Colonial Postal Systems and Postage Stamps of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1849-1871*, by Alfred Deaville, and *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (for Henry Holbrook), *Encyclopedia of Raincoast Place Names* (for John Clute and Roads Seabrook) and www.royalengineers.ca (for James Keary).



Front and back of entire document reduced considerably in size.

An 1874 triple rate collect cover to Victoria

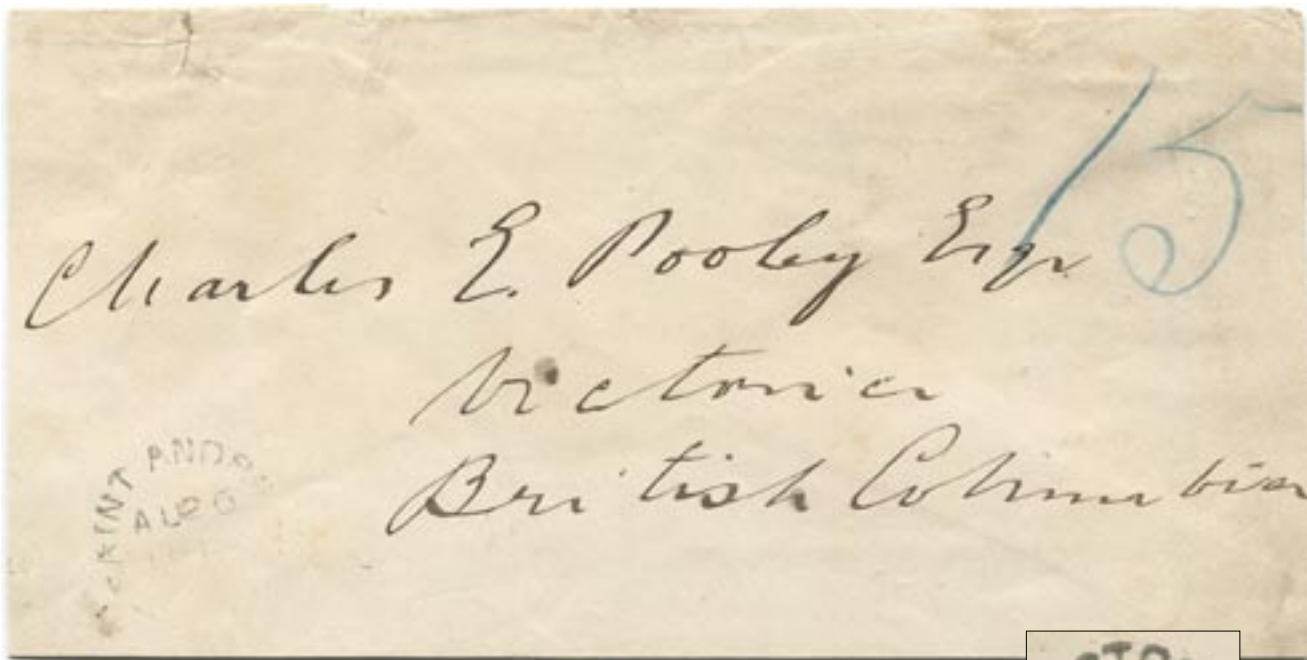
by Brian Copeland

The cover below is interesting both as a scarce example of unpaid incoming mail to British Columbia after it became part of Canada, and because it has a connection to an early BC political scandal.

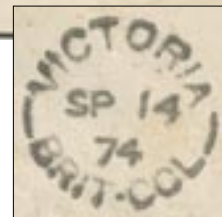
When BC joined Confederation on July 20, 1871, postal rates for mail to and from the rest of Canada became the Canadian rates. The prepaid letter rate was 3 cents per half ounce. It was also possible to send mail "collect." The unpaid letter rate was 5 cents per half ounce and this was paid by the receiver. However, this option was abolished as of Oct 1, 1875 (at which time adhesive stamps were required on letters), and so there was only a short period of just over four years during which mail to or from BC could be posted at the unpaid rate.¹ On this cover, the blue "15" indicates that the recipient must pay 15 cents, the triple letter rate.

The origin of the cover was a bit of a mystery. The bottom part of the cancel did not print, and enhancing the cancel shows that it is a double broken-ring type, and that the year date is 1874. At this time, several post offices with the name St Andrews were open in Canada (although it is not clear which of them used "Saint Andrews" in their postmark).

The recipient, Charles E Pooley, came to BC from England in 1862. In 1874, at the time the cover was sent, he was the registrar of the Supreme Court of BC. He later served as MLA for Esquimalt and as speaker of the legislative assembly. Gray Scrimgeour suggested that it might be possible to find the letter that was enclosed in the cover, because much of Pooley's correspondence is in the BC Archives. A preliminary search of online indexes for the archives was unsuccessful. But because of Pooley's position with the court, it turns out that



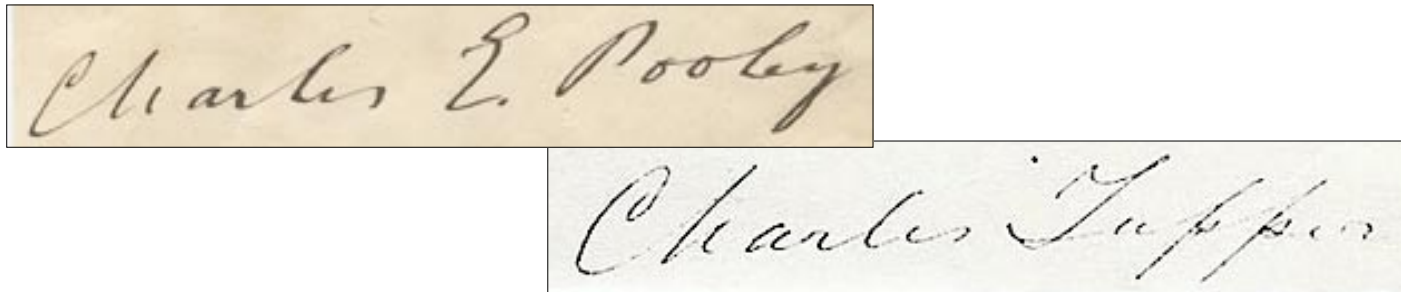
A cover sent from St Andrews, New Brunswick, to Victoria, BC, on Aug 26, 1874. Received Sept 14, 1874. Unpaid triple letter rate of 15 cents.



the letter can indeed be found. Pooley served as secretary for BC's first royal commission, which conducted hearings in 1874. On page 8 of the *Proceedings* of the commission, the text of a letter to Pooley is reproduced.² The letter is dated St Andrews, New Brunswick, Aug 25, 1874. This is the day before the postmark on the cover illustrated above, and so it is very likely that the letter was in this envelope. The letter is from Charles Tupper, who had been a cabinet minister in Sir John A MacDonal's government, but at the time was in opposition because of the 1874 electoral defeat of the Conservatives due to the "railway" scandal.

Collect cover continued

Additional evidence that the letter in this envelope was from Charles Tupper can be found by examining the handwriting. Several examples of Tupper's signature are available on the web, and they are quite consistent in style. Below is one instance of his signature³ along with a crop of the cover showing the addressee, Charles E Pooley.



The writing, especially for the name "Charles," is remarkably similar in the two items. Given the date, the town of origin for both the cover and the letter, and the handwriting, there is strong circumstantial evidence that the cover was sent to Pooley by Tupper.

Why was Charles Tupper writing to Pooley? A royal commission had been set up to look into allegations of improper behaviour by the former premier of BC, Amor de Cosmos, and other government members in connection with land acquisitions on Texada Island.

On Feb 8, 1874, David Higgins, proprietor of the *British Colonist*, published a fiery editorial alleging that in the summer of 1873 De Cosmos (who at the time was premier) had travelled to Texada Island with a group of associates (including prominent businessman Sewell Moody and Attorney General George Walkem) for the purpose of acquiring the rights to iron-ore deposits on Texada. After the trip, some members of the group pre-empted land on Texada, and it was alleged that another party who tried to pre-empt land for the same purpose was refused. Higgins went on to report rumours that De Cosmos had attempted to promote stock for the mine in London, and to sell the mine to the federal government during negotiations with John A MacDonal. After much controversy, a royal commission was created to investigate the charge "that prominent members of the late and present government were in a ring to acquire possession of Texada Island in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the public."

The commission was headed by BC Chief Justice Matthew Begbie, and the other commissioners were judges Henry Crease and John Gray. Because of the allegations concerning dealings with the MacDonal government, the commissioners had Pooley send a list of questions to John A MacDonal and Charles Tupper. Both MacDonal and Tupper replied by mail and both denied any knowledge of the affair. Tupper's letter said: "I know nothing whatever of the matter and now return the questions with my answers in the margin to that effect." The letter, combined with the pages containing the original detailed set of questions, is consistent with the triple letter rate. And the nature of the correspondence explains why Tupper would have sent the letter collect.

The commissioners were unable to find any evidence that De Cosmos had a personal stake in the mine, although he admitted that he was open to buying a share of the mine and that he would have been willing to act as an agent to sell it for a 20 percent commission. After his testimony, Chief Justice Begbie told De Cosmos that he "had not made a proper distinction between his rights and duties as a private citizen and as a member of the Government."⁴ In their final report the commissioners noted that "there were circumstances apparently suspicious attending the pre-emptions in Texada Island in August 1873." But they concluded that there was not sufficient evidence to support the allegation that prompted the inquiry. De Cosmos was formally exonerated, but the cloud of scandal over him never fully dissipated.

¹ George B. Arfken, *Canada's Small Queen Era: 1870-1897*, Vincent Graves Greene Philatelic Research Foundation, 1989.

² *Papers relating to the Appointment and Proceedings of the Royal Commission for instituting Enquiries into the Acquisition of Texada Island*, Government Printing Office, Victoria, Nov 16, 1874.

³ www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~canbrnep/cookfamHist.htm

⁴ *British Colonist*, Oct. 6, 1874.

Railway towns of the Robson Valley, 1912-17

by David Piercey

The adjacent settlements of Tete Jaune and Henningville are inextricably linked in the history of railway construction along the Fraser River in the Robson Valley. One town, Tete Jaune, was mostly associated with the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific (GTP) rail line along the Fraser from the Robson Valley towards Prince George. The other town, Henningville, only five km (3 mi) east along the GTP rail line, was more associated with the construction of the Canadian Northern Railway (CNoR) section between Red Pass and Blue River. Both settlements existed at much the same time, as these two railroads were competing to cross into BC through the Yellowhead Pass on their respective routes to the coast, and were often by necessity laying track in close proximity to each other through the pass.

Tete Jaune was located at the head of navigation along the Fraser from Fort George (Prince George), and came to short-lived prominence during the construction of the GTP. Called Mile 52, it was 83 km (52 mi) along the prospective rail line from Mile 0 at the Alberta/BC border, though in fact the settlement and its warehouses and docks spread along the Fraser from Mile 51 to Mile 53. Railway contractors Foley Welch and Stewart utilized its riverside location as a depot for construction in the area. They brought in supplies from the west, by riverboat from Fort George, and also from the east along the partially completed rail line and its tote road. Tete Jaune became an important warehousing and service centre, and a temporary shanty town of about 3,000 people resulted.



B&F stands for Bowman and Fuller Photographers, who operated in Tete Jaune about 1912-14. Unused.

The riverboats *SS Operator* and *SS Conveyor*, owned by Foley Welch and Stewart and previously used on the Skeena during the eastward construction of the GTP from Prince Rupert, were associated with this section of the Fraser River, as well. Tete Jaune had its beginnings, in fact, when these two vessels were reassembled and made operational in the spring of 1912 and began freighting in men and material from Fort George, 300 km (183 mi) downriver. A small town soon sprang up, though its post office did not open until February 1914, most likely in anticipation of the completion of the GTP line across BC that spring. However, with the completion of the line, and with recurrent flooding at the townsite during the spring of both 1913 and 1914, residents gradually decided to migrate to Mile 49, the town of Henningville, which was still bustling with CNoR railway construction to the south.

Robson Valley continued



Above: 1c domestic postcard rate with clear Oct 10, 1914, Tete Jaune split-ring. Face shows old bridge at Spuzzum, BC. Below: 2c domestic rate with Jan 22, 1914, Henningville split-ring. No backstamps.

Henningville had been established in 1913 by the construction company of Palmer Brothers and Henning, who had been engaged to build a difficult section of the CNoR line between Blue River and Red Pass. They built their supply camp and warehouses on a spur at Mile 49 on the GTP route to service their construction camps further south along the Canoe River. The small service centre that resulted was joined so rapidly by an influx of former residents from Tete Jaune that it received its post office in June 1913, about eight months earlier than Tete Jaune.

As each post office only operated for a few years, cancels from either one are decidedly scarce. Tete Jaune was a non-accounting office and only brought in a bit less than \$500 in revenue before it was closed in January 1917 after almost three years of operation. Henningville, which was an accounting office, brought in somewhat

Robson Valley continued



The inscription, barely legible in the foreground, reads "View of Mile 49, BC." Unused

less than \$3,000 in revenue before being renamed Tete Jaune Cache in April 1917 after 46 months of operation. Tete Jaune Cache would continue on as a post office in the same general area until 1967, with its remaining residents dependent on farming, lumbering and mica mining for their subsistence. Its closing was the result of the resignation of the final postmaster "and the lack of a suitable person being available to assume charge of the office" (Library and Archives Canada, "Post Offices and Postmasters" database).

Lakeside elegance at Halcyon Hot Springs

by Peter Jacobi



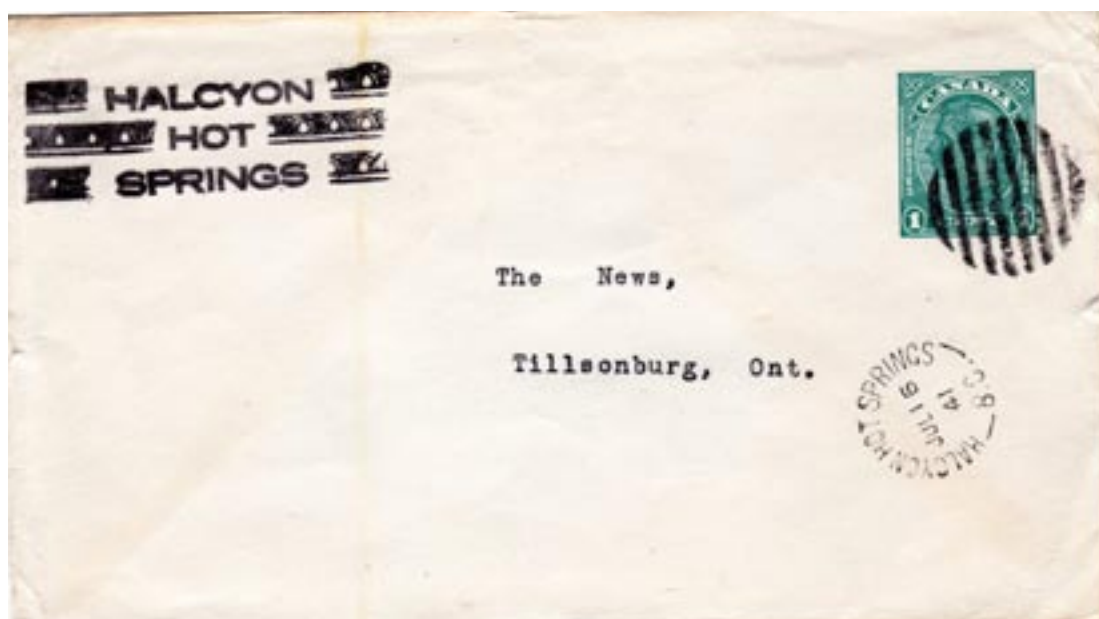
Reverse side of cover illustrated on following page (reduced).

Located on the east shore of Upper Arrow Lake, 68 km south of Revelstoke, the Halcyon Hot Springs Hotel was originally built in 1894 by Robert Sanderson, a mechanical engineer and steamboat captain who had moved to the area in 1885. In 1897 the hotel changed hands and was doubled in size. A post office opened in 1898 (and closed in 1950). Cottages were added, and Halcyon became known as a posh place to party. Spring water was bottled and exported as far away as London.

The condition of the buildings eventually deteriorated, however, and in 1924 the property came under the management of Brigadier F W E Burnham, who had served as chief surgeon at a British Army hospital

Halcyon Hot Springs continued

The Halcyon Hot Springs Hotel circa 1916, after enlargement by the British America Corporation.



A split-ring cancel dated July 16, 1941, on a cover to Tillsonburg, Ontario. Up to 4 oz could be sent at the 1c domestic printed matter rate. Envelopes had to be left open for postal inspection.

in Montenegro during WWI. He fashioned Halcyon Hot Springs into an elegant spa and sanitarium that remained active for three decades. (He also served as postmaster 1924-50.) On a winter morning in 1955, Burnham accidentally spilled oil while lighting the kitchen stove, and the complex was totally consumed in the resulting inferno. The good doctor died in the blaze.

Most outlying buildings lasted until the 1960s, when the lake level was raised for hydroelectric purposes. Then all that survived were a small chapel and cemetery. Locals constructed makeshift outdoor tubs in order to enjoy the hot springs. A new, modern resort was built on the site in the late 1990s.

For more information: *Halcyon, The Captain's Paradise*, by Milton Parent (Arrow Lakes Historical Society), and *Ghost Towns and Drowned Towns of West Kootenay*, by Elsie Turnbull.

Halfway round the world and back again

by Peter Smith



A shortpaid cover to South Africa, dated Oct 17, 1945, with the Redonda Bay split-ring hammer. The airmail rate at the time was 75c per half-ounce. The Durban CDS is dated Nov 17, 1945. No backstamps.

It was a real problem: how to get a letter to your husband on board ship somewhere on the seven seas right at the end of World War II? This delightful cover, sent by Kitty McColl, the cook at a cannery on a remote island off the coast of BC, managed only to get behind her husband's vessel and chase it across the oceans.

The envelope itself and the letter inside tell the story. Kitty's husband was an officer on the SS *Weston Park*, a newly-built Park ship (the Canadian equivalent of a US Liberty cargo ship) owned, in 1945, by the North Pacific Shipping Co.* When Kitty posted her letter at the Redonda Bay post office on West Redonda Island in October 1945, she expected it to intercept the ship at Durban, South Africa.

She addressed the envelope care of the skipper of the *Weston Park*, Captain Charles Alltree (the name on the cover may be misspelled), via the Parry Leon and Hayhoe travel agency in Durban, which also acted as a mailing agency.

The *Weston Park's* most likely route at the time would have been out of Vancouver to Australasia, then west to Ceylon and India before heading for South Africa. After the Durban stop it would probably have gone to New York, then down through the Panama Canal and back to Vancouver. (I am indebted to Gray Scrimgeour for this information.)

Kitty had known Redonda Bay postmaster Sid Vicary since he took over the position in 1922, 23 years earlier. She checked with him to see if Canada had an airmail link with South Africa. She found that it had; the transatlantic airmail rate for a half-ounce letter was 75 cents (this rate was effective from February 1942 until sometime in 1945).

Inexplicably, she then sent it with only 63 cents in postage! Maybe there wasn't room on the envelope for any more stamps.

Sadly, the letter missed the ship in Durban, and after nearly a month's delay, it was re-addressed with a Durban double-circle handstamp to the *Weston Park's* owners and returned to Vancouver.

Redonda Bay continued



*Park ships were a class of cargo vessel mass-produced for the Canadian merchant navy during WWII. The *Weston Park* (above) was built in 1944 by Vancouver's West Coast Shipbuilders Ltd. After changing hands several times, it was bought by the Silver Star Shipping Corp of Monrovia in the early 1960s. Renamed the *Silver Valley*, it was shipwrecked off Oporto, Portugal, on March 15, 1963.

First flights and drowned towns

by Glenna Metchette

I'm enclosing scans of two BC first flight covers. One is from Fort St John to Gold Bar on Jan 13, 1937; the other is from Gold Bar to Fort St John on Jan 15, 1937. The mail route was Finlay Forks, Gold Bar and Hudson Hope, with the latter being the distribution point. Official cachets were provided for the dispatches and were applied in blue or black ink to all letters prepaid at the regular airmail rate of six cents per ounce.

Pilot Sheldon Luck of United Air Transport made the inaugural flights. He was one of those fearless bush pilots whose exploits could have been scripted by Hollywood. He flew mercy missions in miserable weather, delivered miners to isolated claims and prostitutes to boom towns. Notably, he took Robert Service on his first flight over the Yukon immortalized by the sourdough poet.

Gold Bar was a remote settlement of homesteaders, trappers and prospectors 125 km west of Fort St John, where Carbon Creek joined the Peace River. James (Jim) Walker Beattie, one of the first settlers of Gold Bar, established a grain farm there in 1914. The whole area disappeared beneath the waters of Williston Lake in 1968. This man-made lake was created when the W A C Bennett Dam was built. The lake is the dam reservoir and is, in part, three different rivers: the Peace, Parsnip and Finlay.

According to Bill Topping's *British Columbia Post Offices*, the Gold Bar office opened Aug 15, 1923, and closed Sept 14, 1955, but there were six openings and closings in-between because of postmasters' resignations. In 1937, when my covers were flown, James Walker Beattie was postmaster. Beattie, a grain farmer and placer miner, died in 1949. His Russian-born wife, Elizabeth (Hausch) Beattie, became acting postmaster on Nov 13, 1954.

Gold Bar post office has rarity factor of "C," so these covers are not rare. However, I wonder how many philatelists have a collection of BC covers from post offices closed due to flooding by hydroelectric projects.

First flights continued



First flight covers from Fort St John to Gold Bar (above, Jan 13, 1937) and return (below, Jan 15, 1937). Back-stamps, above, Gold Bar CDS, Jan 15, 1937; below, Fort St John CDS, Jan 15, 1937. Six-cent airmail rate.

According to Energy BC’s website, BC Hydro operates 30 large-scale hydro power facilities on the Columbia and Peace River systems, not including many smaller river-run operations. Has anyone compiled a list of BC post offices closed due to hydroelectric projects?

- References: *American Air Mail Catalogue*, Volume 4
- The Globe and Mail* newspaper (obituaries)
- Library and Archives Canada, “Post Offices and Postmasters” database

Editor’s note: Glenna would like to know of other BC post offices that are now underwater. Can readers help?

Recent pictorial and six-digit markings from BC

