



# BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the 100th issue of the *British Columbia Postal History Newsletter*. To celebrate this milestone, we decided to do something a little different. Associate editor Tracy Cooper came up with the idea of asking a group of collectors and newsletter contributors to submit articles on why they collect—and enjoy—BC postal history. We also asked them to submit an image of a cover that is important to them in some way—or important to their development as postal historians. The response was terrific. I ended up with much more material than I normally need and decided to expand the newsletter from 16 to 20 pages. Our largest issue ever! Thank you, everyone, for your support.

While we're thanking people, let's not forget that the first 88 issues of the newsletter were edited and produced by our colleague Bill Topping. I've only been responsible for the last 12 issues. So, thank you, Bill, for putting BC postal history on the map and do-

ing so much of the leg work over the years.

Another big thank you goes out to study group member Morris Beattie, who has generously put together a comprehensive index to the first 100 issues—a useful and timely addition to our centennial celebration. The

index has three sections. One is a normal "articles" index; the other sections track postal markings and auction results. The index will be sent out separately by email, as it's a fairly hefty document.

On the following pages you'll discover 16 contributions, some shorter, some longer, on many different aspects of BC postal history. They are ordered alphabetically, by author's surname, and

cover a time period that stretches from the earliest colonial days to the late 1950s. As one would expect, some articles have themes in common; we are all interested in the same broad subject, after all. But there's also amazing variety—and some wonderful stories. I predict that you will find them fascinating.—*Andrew Scott*



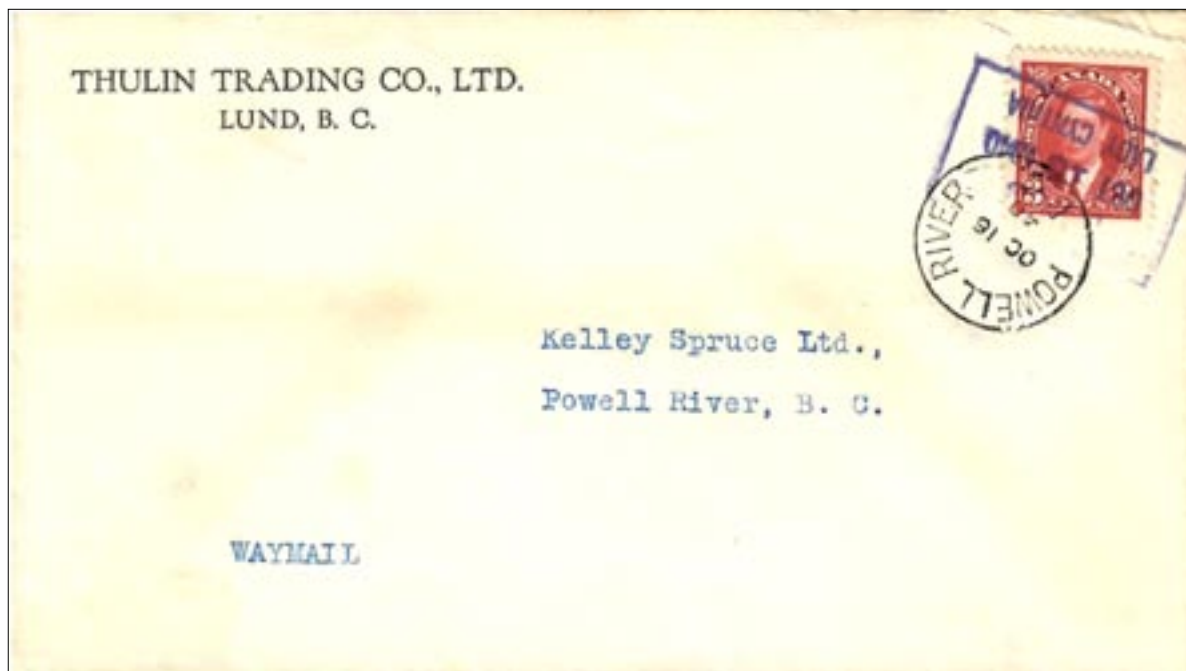
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# From Lund via waymail: a slew of questions

*by Morris Beattie*

Like many of us, my entry into the world of philately was in a completely undisciplined way. I accumulated stamps that arrived on mail to the mining department at UBC, much of it from Japan. Gradually, I drifted into a topical collection of volcanoes on stamps that I still have. With time, a passionate love for British Columbia directed me towards the accumulation of covers that originated there.



*Deciphering the story: did it make more sense to give the mail to the purser when the steamship called or to take it to the Lund post office?*

I became focussed on BC postal history not so much as a sudden enlightenment based on one spectacular cover but as a gradual evolution based on a series of covers with stories to tell. I was collecting BC town cancels and came to the realization that many of my covers revealed a more interesting story than just the town of origin.

The image above illustrates how one favourite cover initiated avenues of research into a number of aspects of BC postal history. It originated in Lund, BC, and was sent by the Thulin Trading Company Ltd. The

*Continued on next page*

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Dues are payable to the editor: Andrew Scott  
5143 Radcliffe Rd, Sechelt, BC, Canada V0N 3A2

Individual print issues sell for \$2.50 each, post paid.

Editor: Andrew Scott  
email: [andrewscott@dccnet.com](mailto:andrewscott@dccnet.com)

Associate Editor: Tracy Cooper  
email: [tracycooper100@shaw.ca](mailto:tracycooper100@shaw.ca)

Study Group Chair: Tim Woodland  
email: [twoodland@telus.net](mailto:twoodland@telus.net)

Editor Emeritus: Bill Topping

Newsletter submissions may be sent to the editors at the addresses above.

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*From Lund continued*

destination was Powell River, but the addressee was not an individual who lived there—nor was it the pulp mill for which this town was famous—but rather a lumber company. To get from Lund to Powell River the cover was marked “Waymail” and carried aboard the coastal steamer *Lady Cynthia*, where it received the box cancel dated Oct 15, 1940. The next day a Powell River CDS receiving cancel was applied.

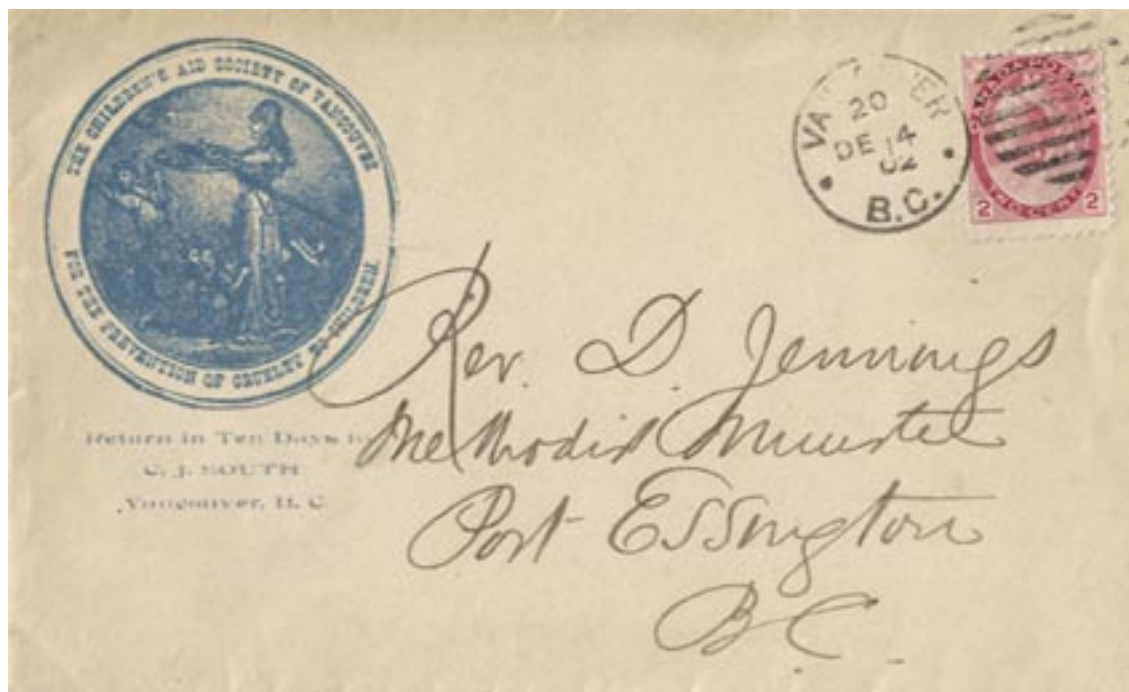
The cover raised a slew of questions for me. What was the story behind the various companies involved? Why was there no Lund cancel? How much mail did the *Lady Cynthia* carry? What other cancels were used at the Powell River post office? What other offices existed in the Powell River region? A passion for collecting and researching the postal history of BC was fueled by this cover and by others like it.

## The Children’s Aid Society of Vancouver

*by Tracy Cooper*

One of the main reasons I collect British Columbia postal history (beside the fact that I’m fascinated by BC history in general) is that many postal history items reflect the social history of the time and provide real insights into the era’s people, places and events.

I acquired this item from the late Ken Ellison many years ago, and while of only modest value, it certainly holds a special place in my collecting heart. It was mailed from Vancouver on Dec 14, 1902, by Rev C J South to Methodist minister Dennis Jennings of Port Essington and arrived on Dec 20 by way of steamer mail up the coast. The Jennings correspondence, by the way, is a rich source of early coastal postal history, and many



*A Numeral franking, a Vancouver duplex cancel, a handsome illustration, a worthy cause, a pioneer missionary and a remote coastal destination — small wonder this cover caught the author’s attention.*

collectors have Jennings items in their collections. This cover, from the Children’s Aid Society of Vancouver for the Protection of Cruelty to Children, started me on a collecting passion for illustrated envelopes from BC. The cover’s social context is as relevant today as it was when it was mailed.

Child welfare societies got their start in Canada in 1888, after Lady Grace Ritchie, wife of Sir William Ritchie, chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, helped establish the Ottawa Humane Society. In 1893 she used her influence to bring into effect the Children’s Protection Act. The cover’s iconic image of Britannia

*Children's Aid continued*

protecting children with her shield, fending off evil while poor wretches clung to her dress, greatly appealed to Victorian sensibilities. Child welfare organizations spread across the country, partly through the efforts of Methodist ministers like South and Jennings, and one was soon established in Vancouver.

The Children's Aid Society of Vancouver was only founded in July 1901, so this 1902 cover is early evidence of its existence. The society is still in operation today, doing good work on behalf of children across the province.

## Unusual shortpaid cover uprated by PO

*by Brian Copeland*

BC postal history appeals to me on at least four different levels. It provides a window into traditional aspects of postal history—the development of mail routes and the evolution of postal rates. A more compelling attraction for me is the tangible connection to the economic, social and political history of our part of the world. History comes alive when you can hold and study items from the past. There is also the pure joy of collecting postmarks: the pleasure of the hunt and the thrill of finding something unexpected. And finally, an interesting story lurks behind many covers. The story often starts with a mystery or a puzzle. Researching and fleshing out the story is perhaps the most rewarding part of the hobby.



*Double-weight commercial cover sent from Victoria, BC, to London, England, on Jan 12, 1898, with extra postage added on Jan 13. Received Jan 31, 1898.*

The cover above illustrates all four of these features. It is a commercial cover from Wilson Brothers, Importers and Wholesale Grocers in Victoria, mailed during the Klondike gold rush. Partially obscured by the stamps, in red print, is the inscription: "Victoria is the best place from which to start for the Clondyke. We make a specialty of outfitting miners. Write to us for information." Many prospective miners stocked up on supplies as they passed through Victoria on their way north. The gold rush was a boon for Victoria merchants.

The postmarks are Victoria squared circles. Fifteen towns in BC used squared-circle postmarks. Some (such as Revelstoke) are extremely rare. Victoria is by far the most common, but collecting it has its own rewards—there were three different hammers, each of which used three different time marks (AM, PM, NT) with occasional (and rare) usage of other time marks (such as 1 and 2).

The hidden story behind the cover starts to emerge when we examine the postmarks. The stamps were

*Shortpaid and uprated continued*

cancelled on two different days. A single 3-cent Small Queen was postmarked on Jan 12, 1898. The three stamps to its left were cancelled the next afternoon. Underneath these three stamps is a notation in ink that says "7¢." The cover was initially shortpaid by seven cents. The extra stamps to correct the deficiency were applied and cancelled the next day. Why did this happen?

The domestic letter rate was three cents per ounce, while the rate to the UK was five cents per half ounce. The letter was over half an ounce and so the double letter rate to the UK of ten cents applied. One possibility is that the sender mistakenly paid the domestic rate. But if so, why was it not marked postage due?

An intriguing and I think more plausible explanation is that this cover illustrates a very interesting chapter in the evolution of Canadian postal rates. There was confusion about the correct rate to England at this time. In late November 1897, Postmaster General William Mulock announced unilaterally that the rate to England would be reduced from five cents per half ounce to three cents per ounce, effective Jan 1, 1898 (*Canada Gazette*, Dec 4, 11 and 18, 1897). However, such rate reductions required mutual agreement between the affected countries. The British refused to accept the new rate, forcing Mulock to rescind the announcement. The rate never went into effect. But because of the ensuing confusion, approximately 4,500 letters were found underpaid at the exchange offices (Victoria was an exchange office) during the first 15 days of January 1898. The government accepted responsibility, and postal clerks were directed to add the extra postage (at no extra cost to the senders). The total cost to the government was \$91.45 [Winmill, 1982]. It is very likely that this is one of those covers—the rate and timing both fit. The new rate was meant to be three cents per ounce (so it would not have been double-weight under the proposed new rules), which is what was initially paid, and it is within the two-week window during which the post office dealt with underpaid letters to the UK by adding stamps rather than marking them postage due. Arfken [1992] stated that none of these covers had been identified and reported at the time of his writing. Some may have emerged in the 24 years since, but they are likely rare.

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Arfken, G B, *Canada and the Universal Postal Union*, Unitrade Press, 1992.

Winmill, R B, *The Evolution of Imperial Penny Postage and the Postal History of the Canadian Map Stamp*, Jim A Hennok, 1982.

## US Pony Express stamp used at Victoria

*by Bob Forster*

I was born and raised in Oregon and got interested in sailing about 1975. For many years I raced the Oregon Offshore from Astoria to Victoria, then the Swiftsure race a couple of weeks later, and then moored the boat at Friday Harbour for the rest of the summer. One summer we sailed around Vancouver Island and other summers we sailed in the Gulf and San Juan Islands. In later years I had a BMW motorcycle and spent a fair bit of time riding in BC and on Vancouver Island,



visiting places like Prince Rupert, Fort St James, Bella Coola, Barkerville and lots of stops on the old Cariboo Road. Many summers I have fished in Haida Gwaii. I agree with what it says in the travel brochures: BC is Super Natural!

My grandfather was an earnest stamp collector who specialized in pre-1900 worldwide material. As he got older, he passed half of his collection, of British colonies, to my father. Dad was a fan of BC and Vancouver Island (he and Mom spent their

*Pony Express continued*

honeymoon trout-fishing at Chilco Lake in 1941), and he added to that part of the collection. As he got older, Dad divided his colonial stamps among his four children, and I was fortunate to receive the British North America portion. With my grandfather's and father's collection to start with, and with some guidance from my brother Dale, I've added to the British Columbia and Vancouver Island component over the past 25 years and have recently started to add to the Nova Scotia section. I purchased some BC&VI material at the Wellburn and Dale/Lichtenstein sales, but have added many items from other sources as well.

An interesting recent acquisition is a \$1 Pony Express stamp, cancelled at Victoria in September 1861, that has been certified as genuine by the Philatelic Foundation. I believe it is the only recorded use of a Pony Express stamp that originated outside the US. One can only wonder if the stamp was sold at the Wells Fargo office in Victoria or if it was carried to Victoria and used by someone who had purchased it in San Francisco. Brother Dale thinks the former is likely to be the case; I think the latter might be correct. I'd appreciate hearing any thoughts from others as to probable scenarios.

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## **Paste-up carried by five express companies** *by Dale Forster*

As a resident of Portland, Oregon, my primary philatelic interest has always been with the USA part of Pacific Northwest postal history. I try not to let my interest stray across the 49th parallel, but in 1988 I was on my way to the STAMPEX show in London and decided to go through Toronto and attend Danny Eaton's sale of Gerry Wellburn's British Columbia collection. I was interested in acquiring lot 1025 (page 29 in the Wellburn book), a Ballou's Express envelope originating on the BC mainland, then transiting Victoria with a Wells Fargo envelope pasted to the back, then traveling to Portland where it was turned over to Tracy's Express. Tracy operated an express by stagecoach south to Jacksonville, Oregon, near the California border and turned over mail there to Beekman's Express, which operated across the Siskiyou Mountains to Yreka, California. There Beekman turned the paste-up back over to Wells Fargo for carriage to San Francisco where it was turned over to Bamber & Company as directed in manuscript.

Looking at the catalogue photo, I was somewhat concerned that the lower envelope was reduced at the bottom, and I hoped that fact might also concern other potential buyers and make the lot affordable. When I arrived in Toronto and viewed the sale I was surprised to find that the Wells Fargo envelope was complete, but had been folded under to fit on Gerry's small hand-lettered exhibit pages! I was able to buy the lot and consider it to be one of the greatest western express covers. I have never seen another cover carried by five express companies (although Beekman did not put on his handstamp). But buying the cover is not the end of the story. Years later I showed it to the late Floyd Risvold. Floyd told me that he had considered buying the cover at the Wellburn sale, but his assumed reduction of the lower envelope turned him off. So I got lucky! Since 1988 my brother Bob has put together a terrific BC&VI collection. He approached me about purchasing this Wellburn cover and I reluctantly agreed, but only if he agreed I could buy it back in the future. That time is fast approaching!

*(image on next page)*

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## **Exploring the Kootenays, East and West** *by Peter Jacobi*

I'll start with my degree in metallurgical engineering. When my wife asked what kinds of jobs that degree might bring I said that I could work in steel mills in bigger cities or in the mining industry in smaller towns and didn't specify where my preference lay. We chose mining, and mining led us from the Dominican Republic to Falconbridge, Ontario, Esterhazy, Saskatchewan, and Cominco at Kimberley, in BC's Kootenays. That was followed by six years with Cominco's Pine Point Mines in the NWT, then a transfer back to Kimberley, where we spent five years camping, skiing and enjoying the life the East

*Paste-up continued*



1860 Ballou's Express. Note crease at bottom of Wells Fargo envelope where Gerry Wellburn folded the cover under to fit it on his exhibit page (see text on previous page).

*Kootenays continued*

Kootenays had to offer. Another transfer took us to Trail, where for a further five years we enjoyed the West Kootenays. In 1985 I was offered a transfer to Vancouver, where Cominco had started its engineering subsidiary CESL.

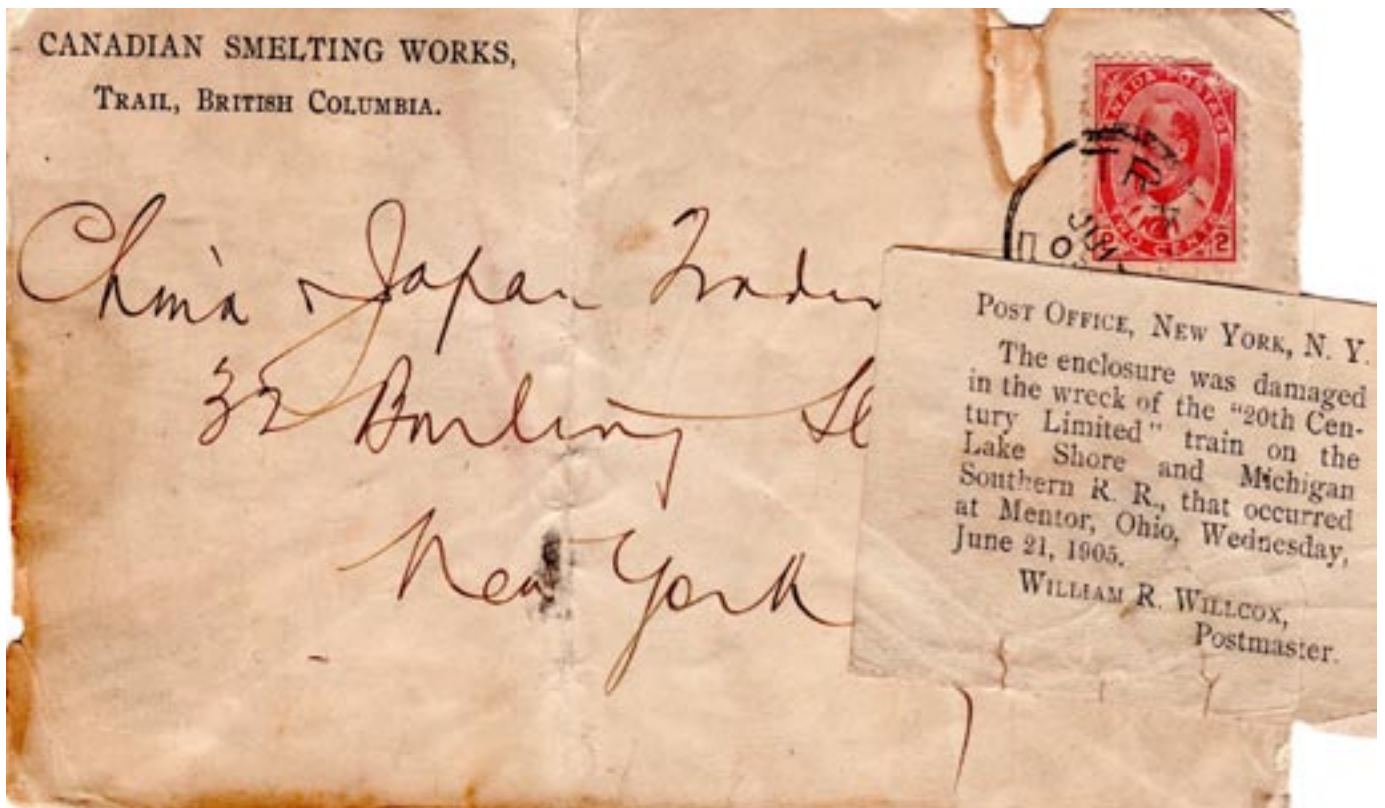
Membership in the David Thompson Stamp Club in Castlegar gave me the chance to meet Bill Robinson. The checklist, *British Columbia Post Offices*, that he and Bill Topping published—along with stamp clubs like the BC Philatelic Society and the numerous bourses held in those years—had me totally hooked on BC cancels. But I realized that there were approximately 1,600 post offices in BC, past and present, and felt I had to pare down my collecting areas, which soon became just the Kootenays, both East and West. A fun time and very exciting!

*Kootenays continued*

In my search for Kootenay cancels more and more mining company corner cards came up, and with my professional background it became almost natural that I started to specialize in mining company covers. One thing lead to another and postcards became part of the mix. Dealers like Albert Tanner and auctioneers like Bob Lee became part of my world. Becoming secretary of BNAPS led to a close association with the philatelic community and with active exhibiting. My bookshelf was expanding with books on BC history, and one day I found some Rossland literature that delved into the birth of Cominco, my employer for 23 years. I read with interest that Cominco was formed by the consolidation of five companies: three mining companies, the Rossland Power & Light Co and the first smelter of the Canadian Smelting Works. I found a cover from this last company in an exhibit by US mining-philately specialist Ken Kutz at an RPSC exhibition in Vernon in 1994. After some wheeling and dealing it ended up in my collection and is shown below. It is one of my "pride and joys."



*This Canadian Smelting Works cover was involved in a crash of the "20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited" train as outlined by the sticker. The cover left Trail on June 17, 1905, was backstamped at Rossland June 18 and after travelling on the Great Northern Railway was conveyed on the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited, where it incurred the accident on June 21. It reached its destination, as shown by the PONY backstamp (at left), on June 23.*





## Early Cariboo cover from Begbie to Crease

*by John Keenlyside*

The study of British Columbia postal history embraces the exciting development of the colonies of Vancouver's Island and British Columbia, first united in 1866 and then joining Canada as a province in 1871. Fortunately for collectors, much of the extant material is from correspondences created by the influential movers of the period. The cover shown is a correspondence from Matthew Baillie Begbie (MBB in lower left) to Henry Crease, both judges in the colonial period and into the early post-Confederation era. Both men were knighted for their efforts in creating and implementing an organized justice system in BC.



*Matthew Baillie Begbie and Henry Crease were both members of the Supreme Court of BC. Begbie was chief justice of British Columbia until his death in 1894.*

This cover is cancelled by a colonial numeral cancel "10" and a Cariboo Brit-Col split ring dated June 1, 1872. On the reverse is a New Westminster Brit-Col transit marking of June 7 and a Victoria Brit-Col split ring receiving the cover on June 8. Cariboo was a very short-lived post office established on July 20, 1871; it changed its name to Barkerville on July 1, 1872.

The cover is mounted on an original Gerald Wellburn page. Wellburn, a most admired early collector, appreciated the various elements of postal history but, importantly, also demonstrated a broader understanding of the history of our province in his presentation.

## By express from the Big Bend gold mines

*by Malcolm Leitch*

I started collecting stamps as a young boy in Kelowna and was intrigued by stamps from around the world. I was interested in history and geography, and stamp collecting satisfied both those interests. As my stamp collecting became more refined I was mentored by my parents and Dave Crane. In my later high-school years, my interest waned and I did not pick it up again until about 15 years ago, when my mortgage was paid off and my family was becoming a little more independent.

I rediscovered my Minkus Canada album, which was almost complete. I was tempted to sell it but I attended a stamp show in Richmond, where I met Tracy Cooper, Tom Watkins, Bill Longley, Gray

*From Big Bend continued*

Scrimgeour and a couple of others. Their excitement about BC postal history was contagious. Until then, I was a stamp collector. I had never considered postal history. I was quickly hooked on colonial and Victoria, BC, postal history. I have assembled a small collection of express and colonial covers and am working on a book about the express operators in BC in the 1800s.



This is one of my favourite express covers because it represents so many different aspects of early postal history. It was transported by foot from the Big Bend gold mines to the Shuswap, in a canoe down the lake, by horse to Yale, and by steamer to New Westminster, Victoria and, ultimately, San Francisco. It shows the influence of the US on our postal history (the three-cent US postage). And three different express operators carried it: Barnard's Express to Yale, Dietz & Nelson to Victoria, and Wells Fargo to San Francisco.

## Blending postal history with genealogy

*by Glena Metchette*

For years my greatest passion was genealogy—collecting facts and stories about my ancestors. I also had a stamp album, but it wasn't until I was holding a cover in one hand mailed by my maternal grandfather, Avar Rockwell, and a cut piece in the other hand cancelled by my paternal grandfather, Victor Willett, that I realized I could combine my hobbies. Both ancestors had the pioneer spirit of hope and steely determination. One left a homeland in Scotland, the other came from England, and both settled in British Columbia, where I was born.

From its beginnings, British Columbia has been home to tough pioneers, entrepreneurs and restless adventurers. There was no dream too big for BC. As Mark Twain said, "It was a splendid population—for all the slow, sleepy, sluggish-brained sloths stayed at home!" Ancestors and pioneers have left indelible footprints on my mind that give me reason to look back and ponder. As a result, I now collect BC postal history, something that I love to research and write about, something that is authentic to me. New stuff doesn't have the history I adore.

The cover on the next page was mailed from my grandfather's business in Nova Scotia in 1905. This was the year he uprooted his family, crossed Canada via railway and opened the first grain/farm implements store in Chilliwack.

*(image on next page)*

*Genealogy continued*



*An illustrated business cover sent from Nova Scotia to Moncton, dated May 1905. The author's grandfather owned the business in question before moving to Chilliwack.*

## Schooner Passage: cannery post office

*by David Piercey*

Andrew has challenged each of us to write about why we collect—and love to collect—BC postal history, as well as what might have been especially memorable or important in the development of our collections. In my case, I think I just evolved into a postal historian over the years of being a stamp collector, but I recognize that my formative philatelic years extended over quite a long period before I became a postal historian with a serious BC interest.

Growing up in northern BC and then moving to the Lower Mainland for my teenage years, where a number of stamp shops operated in the 1960s, I quite naturally became a stamp collector. I had a close friend whose father was a vest-pocket coin dealer, and we often travelled to local coin shows (which would also have the occasional stamp dealer) when his father took a table. I sometimes exhibited coins as a junior collector, winning my share of trophies, which may have played a role later, when I decided to be a philatelic exhibitor too.

During my university years I was on a limited budget, able to visit Stanley Stamp on Hornby, attend F E Eaton and Sons auctions on West Boulevard, and join BNAPS at age 21 (their minimum age requirement at the time). During this period I read Deaville's *Colonial Postal Systems and Postage Stamps of British Columbia and Vancouver Island* (1928) and even visited BC Archives to look at their meagre collection of BC stamps.

Later, after moving to Alberta for grad school and an eventual career, I became more acquainted with BC postal history through the auction catalogues of Robert Lee, and then through Jim Miller's sales lists. I was surprised at the prices realized for many items, and began to realize what a strong collector base there was for BC postmarks. More often than not I was the underbidder on material of interest!

Around this time I acquired a copy of George Melvin's *BC Post Offices* book (1972) and started to think about collecting BC material seriously. I discovered that Kitimat, where I had lived as a child until 1962, had an

*Schooner Passage continued*

interesting postal history and decided to try and collect it. This town still challenges me, given the rarity of some of its postal markings.

Forming casual acquaintances with senior collectors like Bill Robinson, Bill Topping and Chris MacGregor—and later with Gray Scrimgeour—during occasional visits to philatelic events, helped me recognize the possibilities for specialization in BC philately. Their kindness and patience with my neophyte questions were remarkable.

As the years passed, I realized I would need to specialize in certain regions if I expected to collect in depth. I chose the Rocky Mountains and East Kootenays as one area, and the north coast, including the Skeena River to Hazelton, as another. These territories paid tribute both to my beginnings and to my current location, and I have often enjoyed travelling to them.

Now for the good part.

I believe my first significant BC purchase was from Jim Miller, probably at one of the VANPEX shows of the 1990s. The illustrated Schooner Passage postcard was offered to me for some princely sum, with Jim's assurance that it was the "only known copy" at that time from that post office. So who could resist? Schooner Passage was one of a very few post offices at the canneries along both shores of Rivers Inlet, and



*A Tucks Oilette postcard cancelled at Vancouver with an indistinct CDS and sent to the Brunswick Cannery at Rivers Inlet. May 19, 1907, Schooner Passage receiving split ring.*

was about 400 kilometres by coastal steamer up the coast from Vancouver. It was located on the premises of the Beaver Cannery, on Beaver Cove, and the cannery manager, R G Johnston, was also its first postmaster. Established in April 1907, the post office first existed as a summer (fishing season) office until 1922 when, according to Melvin, it was relocated to the site of Provincial Cannery nearby, assuming a new name at its new location. Henderson's *BC Gazetteer and Directory* of 1905 indicates that mails to Rivers Inlet occurred fortnightly by steamer from Vancouver or Victoria, with the schedule of service likely increasing to weekly during the summer season. There were two other post offices on Rivers Inlet at this time, Rivers Inlet and Wadhams, both located at other canneries.

The strike, used as a receiver on this card, is exceptionally clear and crisp. It is also a very early date for this post office, being just a few weeks after its opening. Otherwise, the card is quite uninformative, having been

*Schooner Passage continued*

sent from Vancouver to an Alec Rutherford at the nearby Brunswick Cannery. The card, a Tucks Oilette, is a reproduction of an E Longstaffe painting, "Near Ballachulish, Glencoe," and depicts a young girl looking out over a Highlands scene. (Longstaffe was employed by Rafael Tuck and Sons to produce fine art postcards of the British Isles.) The card may have been sent simply to remind a former Scotsman stationed at a remote cannery of home and, perhaps, of someone waiting wistfully for him. With no message, however, it could also have just as possibly been sent from one postcard collector to another.

Alex Rutherford is listed in the 1901 *Dominion Census* as 27 years old, of Scottish birth, working at the Standard Cannery near the mouth of the Skeena River, with an occupation of "net boss," one of the very few management positions in a cannery operation. He does not appear anywhere in Rivers Inlet in the 1905 *BC Gazetteer*, so may have still been working further north before relocating to the inlet for the 1907 fishing season.

Recently, Tracey Cooper produced a revised listing of BC's RF E cancels, and Schooner Passage is listed as an E1, indicating perhaps only one to three copies known. Currently, we know definitively of two copies. Revenue from the Schooner Passage post office totaled a bit over \$1,000 during its approximate 15 years of existence, which seems quite high and out of keeping for an office with such a high rarity factor. Perhaps more examples will yet be found.

Since acquiring this cover, I have gone on to add other significant covers in my collecting areas, aided and abetted by some of the other readers of this newsletter. Always on the lookout, I await further opportunities to acquire interesting material of whatever value, and will continue to research and write some of it up for the consideration of our editor.

## To Romeo, a Kettle Valley Railway station by Brian Plain

I had been collecting Canadian stamps for many years, but my interest in British Columbia postal history was awakened when I moved to the Okanagan in the late 1960s. There I met several well-known collectors, including George Melvin, Ken Ellison and Colin Campbell, and dealers such as Geoff Walburn and Robert Lee. Encouraged by them, I began to specialize in certain aspects of BC postal history and developed my first collection on the postal history of the Kettle Valley Railway (KVR).<sup>\*</sup> This, inevitably, led me to Alex Price!



Although that first collection has long since been dispersed, occasional items remain in my possession. One such item is shown on the next page. At first glance, it is rather nondescript, but on closer inspection becomes more interesting. Mailed in Berlin, Germany, on April 11, 1957, this airmail cover was addressed to Walter Schmidt at Romeo, BC, a non-post-office point located northeast of Hope along the Coquihalla section of the KVR. It is likely that the addressee was a section hand on

the railway. The cover bears a transit marking from Brookmere dated April 16, 1957.

<sup>\*</sup>The Kettle Valley Railway was opened in 1916 to service the southern interior of BC. The chief engineer on the project was Andrew McCullough, a great fan of Shakespeare who named the stations along the

*To Romeo continued*

Coquihalla subdivision after Shakespearean characters. The map shows the Princeton–Hope section. Post offices were established at Jessica (1918–1942) and Lear (1924–1932). The Coquihalla section was closed in 1961 and the rails removed in 1962.



*Airmail cover sent from Neue Film Verleih, Berlin, to Romeo, BC, dated April 11, 1957*

## Discovering the history of the BC coast

*by Andrew Scott*

Like most boys growing up in England in the 1950s (and like my father before me), I had a stamp collection. After we moved to Canada in 1957, one of my first jobs (50 cents an hour!) was at Bob's Stamp and Coin shop in New Westminster. Bob Wulff junior gave my co-worker and me an old box of BC covers and postmarks that his dad had accumulated. It was a gift that kept on giving.

Collecting town cancels and learning about BC's history made a very satisfying hobby. It helped me get to know my new home. I discovered that history wasn't just something you read about in books; it was out there, all around me, down dusty backroads and along the coast. In a series of old vehicles and a second-hand kayak I set off to explore the province. Later, in my work as a magazine editor and journalist, I mined those early experiences for hundreds of travel articles and half-a-dozen general-interest books.

The visual aspects of old covers I find especially appealing. Many, to me, are like miniature works of art. Often they are quite beautiful, but their beauty has a random quality and is not contrived; chance, in the form of markings picked up along the way, plays an important role. A little wear and tear adds character and is not necessarily a hindrance. Some covers are like mysterious puzzles that must be studied carefully before their secrets are revealed and they can be understood. I am reminded of Gerry Wellburn's comment: "Stamps have given me a second life . . . a share in the dainty and exquisite . . . which has complemented my outdoor life, spent in the forests of the Canadian Northwest."

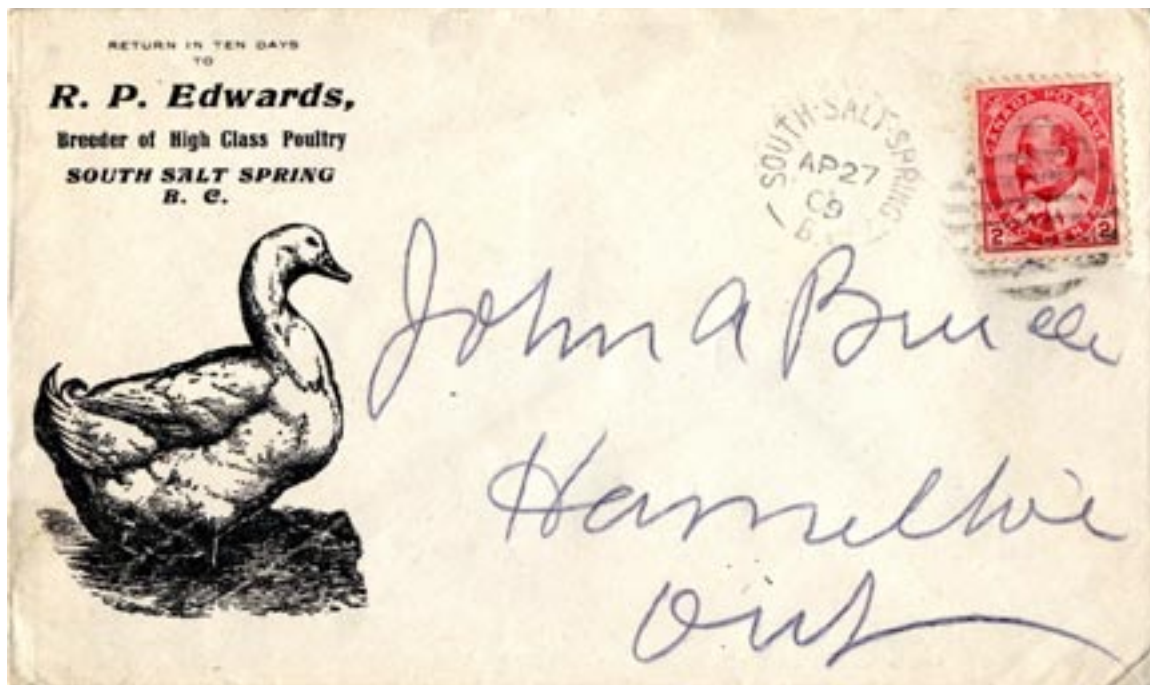
*Coastal history continued*

I was fortunate enough to acquire a few covers from Wellburn's legendary British Columbia collections. Gerry was best known, of course, for his colonial stamps and postal history, but he also had wonderful Victorian and 20th-century material. The two covers shown on this page are both ex-Wellburn.



*This scrawled cover to "Judge Crease," with its purple markings and bold cork cancels, fairly reeks of history. Skeena was the first post office on BC's north coast. Dated Nov 27, 1889.*

Covers like these helped focus my collecting interests, and I ended up specializing in certain regions of BC: the Gulf Islands, New Westminster, Vancouver and its suburbs, the Sea-to-Sky country, Haida Gwaii, northwestern BC, and the North, Central and Sunshine coasts. Lately I've been exploring ways of expressing social history through postal history. The hobby continues to offer an intriguing range of possibilities.



*R P Edwards not only bred high-class poultry, he was also postmaster at the South Salt Spring office. Dated April 27, 1909, to Hamilton, Ontario. No backstamp.*

# Sluggett to UK (and back to BC via Toronto)

by Gray Scrimgeour

The choice of an important British Columbia cover for me is an easy one. It's this cover from Sluggett, BC, to Catford, Kent, England. After we moved from California to Toronto in 1967, I met Jim Warner. Jim taught me about covers and postmarks. We started going to auctions and visiting stamp stores looking for covers and stamps with clear date stamps—especially three-cent Small Queens. We bought numerous packets of 100 stamps with squared-circle cancels (and once in a while individual stamps) from Alex Tonelli on north Yonge Street. We also bought packets of Small Queens at Carmichael's huge three-storey stamp store in Stoney Creek.

We sorted the SQs into shades as well as we could. It turned out that all our stamps were number 41, which I discovered when I later bought some packets from Jim Sissons and found all sorts of earlier printings. We were starting to accumulate a lot of postmarks. To help us sort them, I bought a copy of Frank Campbell's *Canada Post Office 1755–1895*. Its illustrations excited us, and we started looking for particular examples. We chose Sluggett (shown on p 142) as the ultimate goal, probably because we got a kick out of the name. It didn't surprise us that we couldn't find an example, though.



*Sluggett to Kent, dated June 16, 1893. Victoria (June 16) and London (July 3) backstamps.*

But one day I was at Jim Hennok's store looking at his newly priced covers. Here were two postal stationery cards and a postal stationery envelope illustrated from Sluggett. I bought all three items (plus a half dozen other covers) and went home thrilled. All three Sluggett items were addressed to the same addressee, probably a collector of postal stationery. I eventually sold the two cards and have kept and love the envelope.

Sluggett's post office opened on August 1, 1892, in John Sluggett's home on the West Saanich Road (11 kilometres north of Royal Oak). My cover was postmarked June 16, 1893—less than a year after the office opened. It has transit postmarks applied at Victoria (1/JU 16/93) and London (JY 3/1893). I think of this cover and the Sluggett community every time I drive home from Brentwood Bay (the current name of the post office) via West Saanich Road.

Frank Campbell's books had a major influence on my postal history collecting. I believe I have copies of all his writings. I was privileged to correspond quite a bit with him. He gave me an annotated copy of his *Canadian Postal History* for preservation and said it was his own master copy. After Frank died, I saw at auction two other copies claiming the same provenance. There had been several attempts by the late Ed Phelps (who purchased Frank's books and reference material) to publish this book, all unsuccessful. All Canadian postal historians should own a copy. I wish I knew who now owns the copyright so that the book could be reproduced.



# Hardwicke Island: a way of life revealed

by Peter Smith

Postal history excites me because each cover is a little time capsule of social life. I enjoy the fascination of researching any cover to find out who sent it, who received it, and how it got from sender to recipient.

Living on a small island off the west coast of BC, I am naturally engrossed in how mail has been delivered to little communities otherwise cut off from the world. In nearly all cases it has had to come and go by boat or plane, so postal history in my little niche of the world allows me learn about the people out here, the communities they live in, and the histories of the ships and shipping lines and planes and airlines that serve them.

It's satisfying, with any cover, to discover why it was sent, which ship it went on and what route the ship took, and nearly all this information can be gleaned by studying the postal markings adorning the envelope. I'm lucky that there are reference books where past postal historians have recorded information to help me in each quest, and also that there exists a band of experienced postal historians happy to share their knowledge.

Look at this cover for example. It's part of a long correspondence where, luckily, not only the envelopes have survived but also their contents. The endorsement tells us that the sender used the way-mail provisions



Waymail from Hardwicke Island to nearby Port Neville, just to the west. Carried by SS Venture and dated Oct 14, 1933. Note the strange address: ½ Tillicum Lilly & Lilly Co. (Tillicum meant "friend" in Chinook jargon.)

that existed in 1933. The cover was sent from Hardwicke Island, which didn't have a post office. Instead, by writing "Way Mail" on the envelope and placing it straight on board the Union Steamship Venture, the sender knew that her missive would be off-loaded at its destination at Port Neville, which did have a busy post office. On board, the purser cancelled the stamp with the ship's handstamp, which tells us the full story.

So much for the postal history. The social history comes from the letters such covers contained. This letter was addressed to the sister of the postmistress at Port Neville. The young woman sending it talks about having to stop washing the windows to hurry to catch the steamship, as she'd heard on the ship's radio it would soon be arriving at her island—snippets of a way of life revealed.

# A tangible memory of a son lost in combat

*by Arlene Sullivan*

This card was given to me by a fellow collector who, knowing my interest in New Westminster, thought it might be worth some study. He was right. It turned out that this unassuming postcard tells one of the most poignant stories in my collection.

Folded, worn and stained, the postcard was written in haste and mailed at New Westminster on Aug 20, 1914. It reads:



*New Westminster to Chilliwack, Aug 20, 1914. Same day service.*

“Dear Mame, My address at present is 5 Co 104th Regt Barracks New Westminster. Please send any mail to this address, and if we move it will follow. Will let you know when we do expect to any day. Harold”

Harold Herne Henderson was writing to Mary Henderson, the wife of his employer, Richard Arthur Henderson, the city engineer in Chilliwack (and no immediate relation). War had been declared on Aug 3, 1914, and Harold had gone out to New Westminster to join up with the 104th Regiment, which had been placed on active service on Aug 6 that year. Born in Vancouver in 1891, Harold trained as a surveyor with Richard Henderson, perhaps on the recommendation of Harold’s uncle, Dr J C Henderson, the first resident doctor in Chilliwack.

In November 1914 Harold Henderson signed attestation papers to enlist in the 29th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), and by September 1915 was in France. Harold died at Passchendaele on Nov 6, 1917, of a shrapnel wound to the head, a few hours before the town was captured.

Someone kept this card, in a wallet or pocketbook perhaps. Mary Henderson in Chilliwack may have passed it on to Harold’s mother, another Mary, or to his father, John. Of John and Mary’s four sons only Francis, the youngest, returned from the Great War. Arthur died in the trenches at Courcellette in November 1916 and John at Amiens in the summer of 1918. So much sorrow for one family to bear—any tangible memory of a beloved son would have been something to cherish. Richard Henderson’s wife would have understood that. Her husband died on April 11, 1917, at Vimy Ridge.

This is why I collect the postal history of BC. That such a simple thing as a hastily scribbled postcard can echo down the years and lead to the telling of the honour and the grief of these two families is a gift. I hold the postcard in my hands, like Mary Henderson did over a hundred years ago, and am grateful that my own sons will never have to face what Harold and his brothers did.

# The many incarnations of Port Mellon's mill

by Tim Woodland

I enjoy collecting BC postal history because of the stories it tells—stories about overcoming daunting logistics and delivering mail across open oceans, up secluded inlets and over treacherous mountains to outlying places where workers toiled. Their efforts generated the revenue and taxes that helped the centres of Vancouver and Victoria to grow. The mail was a fragile yet all-important connection between field operations and home offices, between settlers and their extended families.



*Vancouver Kraft Co Ltd share certificate, signed by two members of the Leadbetter family. US lumberman Fred W Leadbetter owned the Port Mellon mill between 1927 and 1941, and also developed a lodge at the head of Clowholm Inlet.*

A good example is the mill we know today as Howe Sound Pulp and Paper (its thirteenth name since it was established in 1909), at a place just northwest of Vancouver known as Port Mellon. Despite early success the mill failed and was reorganized many times. In fact Port Mellon did not become stable enough to obtain its own post office until 1929. Prior to its opening, postal services were provided from 1908 to 1924 by the Gambier travelling post office, which was situated on a number of different vessels, including those of the familiar Union Steamship Co.

*Port Mellon continued*



*A WWI commercial cover to Sweden, cancelled Gambier on Mar 25, 1919, with CENSOR C. 205 on reverse. It was probably transported on board the Marine Express of the Terminal Steam Navigation Company. Rainy River Pulp, named after a nearby creek, was the third corporate entity; it failed and declared bankruptcy later in 1919.*

By 1929 the mill was operating under its fifth set of owners as the Vancouver Kraft Company and was soon to fail again. It would not reopen (and neither would the post office) for another seven years. The mill would open and close twice more before World War II, when operations became more consistent.



*A registered commercial cover to Vancouver, cancelled Port Mellon on Nov 30, 1929. This was the last day of operation for the first period of the Port Mellon post office, which only opened on Mar 1, 1929. It is interesting to note that return addressee R T French was the Port Mellon postmaster when the office closed for the second time, in October 1937.*