



BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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60-cent registered double-weight cover from Whalley to Nairobi, returned by dead letter office.

Here's a colourful, well-travelled cover with a wealth of exotic markings to decipher. Sent from Whalley (in Surrey) on Dec 22, 1950, it pays the 60-cent registered double airmail rate to Kenya (25c per ¼ oz, 10c for registration), and was received at Nairobi on Jan 9, 1951. Mr Athar, the addressee, could not be found, and the cover was marked "unknown" and "returned to sender" ("retour à l'envoyeur").

The next set of markings, on reverse, is dated March 7, 1951, at the Montreal Dead Letter Office: one is a meter impression on a piece of tape, the other a "No. 12" rectangular clerk datestamp. The cover arrived back in New Westminster on Mar 8, 1951, according to the small-lettered (Type C) circu-

lar datestamp on reverse.

Some additional datestamps on the back of the envelope are: New Westminster, Dec 23, 1950; Vancouver, Dec 23, 1950; Montreal A.M.F., Dec 25, 1950; Nairobi registered, Dec 29, 1950; and Nairobi R.P.O., Jan ??, 1951.

And the rectangular tax marking in purple on the front? Well, from 1922 to 1954 the dead letter office charged a 3-cent fee for a returned letter (which would probably have arrived back in an "ambulance" cover). It's quite remarkable that the cover could be sent from Montreal on March 7 and arrive at New Westminster on March 8—or is that a datestamp error? — *Andrew Scott*

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From our readers

Scott Rockhold writes:

I just ran across *BC Postal History Newsletter* #94 and the notes on Hockin Landing (June 2015, pp 876-77). I enjoyed it very much. Jane Hockin was my great-grandmother. Hockin Landing has taken on mythical status in the family but no one has any details. You helped make it real.

Some of the details don't match family lore. Jane married Thomas Bassett Hockin in Herodsfoot, England, in 1877. She arrived in the US in 1898 to reunite with her husband, who died in 1901. Jane moved to the Shuswap in 1912 and became the postmistress.

Charles Francis "Frank" Burkhart was born in Illinois (1858), married in Missouri (1888) and in 1892 was living in California. In 1900, he moved from Los Angeles to Marin with his wife Katherine and two children. The 1910 census shows him as widowed and living with his parents in Oakland with the children. Katherine is also shown in 1910 and later censuses as widowed and living in the Bay area.

By 1918, Frank had moved to Hockin Landing where he worked as a barber. (*Editor's note: Jane and Frank were married at Kamloops on Dec 12, 1918; Scott sent along a copy of the marriage certificate.*) The marriage did not last. Jane returned, alone, to the Michigan area in the 1920s; her excellent adventure in the idyllic Canadian wilderness had come to an end. She lived with her son Robert from 1930 until her death at Marquette in 1951.

What took her to the Shuswap is a mystery to us. We suppose that she knew a relative in the area.

Jim White writes:

Of interest to our BC cancels hobby is the way Canada Post now handles the mail. For example, if I were to mail you a letter from Ashcroft, it goes directly into a bag without any cancelling or sorting here in Ashcroft, then goes directly to the Lower Mainland where it

receives an inkjet cancel. If I were to request that our postal people use an Ashcroft cancel, they willingly do so, but then the envelope goes into the bag for sorting and re-cancelling on the Lower Mainland. It is possible to mail a local letter, which is then cancelled and placed in a postal box. But if one puts the same letter going from Ashcroft to Ashcroft in the wrong bag, the letter may take a week to find its way back to our community. I have noted that Cache Creek, Logan Lake and Clinton no longer use their local cancelling devices, rather it is the Vancouver inkjet. A letter coming from Kamloops to Ashcroft now takes about a week instead of two days. On the brighter side, mail from Victoria usually arrives within a couple of days.

Our local posties are not too enthralled with the new procedures, as this has created dead space in their day, when normally they would be sorting and cancelling the outgoing mail.

As a cancel hobbyist I am less than thrilled with the inkjets instead of the village or specialty cancels.

The last edition of the postal history newsletter was, as usual, right up to your high standards!

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 2016 print subscriptions. If we have your email address, we will shift any remaining unpaid print subscriptions to digital for the December 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.htm; 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.

Eastern Auctions: Hugh Westgate sale results

The Hugh Westgate British Columbia collection was sold by Eastern Auctions at Halifax on June 17, 2017. Westgate specialized in colonial material, both stamps and postal history, and had an eye for quality. The sale featured some of the finest BC items to come on the market in several years. Realizations were firm. A handful of non-colonial BC items were also auctioned, including an 1898 Upper Columbia Tramway & Navigation Co cover with a 5-cent "U.C. Co." label, which sold for \$8,000. (All realizations are in Canadian funds and do not include the 15% buyer's premium.)

The sale began with an unusually choice selection of BC stamps, including several copies of BC #1. A mint example in extremely fine condition with full original gum (most copies are without gum) brought \$28,000. Another extremely fine copy, but without gum, sold for \$13,500, while a fine/very fine example went for \$7,500 and a very fine "specimen" copy for \$4,500.

Two fine blocks of BC #2 from the 1925 "Mayfair" find were sold: a mint gutter block of 16, with 12 stamps never hinged, brought \$3,750, while a mint block of 12 (11 copies never hinged), with a full left margin including inscriptions, sold for \$2,750.

The 5c and 10c imperforates (BC #3 and #4) also brought solid prices. A pair of small die proofs sold for \$2,700, while a rare unused copy of the 5-cent in fine condition realized \$15,000. A very fine mint example of #4 with large part original gum went for \$3,250.

A few of the more significant selections from the comprehensive postal history offerings are shown below and on the next page. Overall, the BC portion of the auction brought in more than \$230,000 (exclusive of the buyer's premium). — *Andrew Scott*



Undated Wells, Fargo & Co cover used as a paste-up, with an exceptional 36-cent Large Queen franking paying the 12-time letter rate (up to six ounces in weight). Stamps are tied with oval Wells, Fargo & Co Express Victoria V.I. cancellations in blue. Realized \$5,250.

Undated (c 1859) Ballou's Fraser River Express cover to California with rare red "scroll" frank. Manuscript "Paid through B Express." Handstamped "J. Bamber & Co Contra-Costa Express San Francisco." With Wellburn page. Realized \$3,000.



Eastern auction results continued



Undated (c 1865-66) Wells, Fargo & Co express cover with embossed 3-cent imprint. Mailed from Victoria to Sacramento with 5-cent Vancouver Island stamp paying colonial postage. US 2-cent and 5-cent stamps affixed to pay 10-cent rate to California. Oval Nov 30 Wells, Fargo & Co. datestamp in blue. Ex-Wallace. Realized \$5,250.

15-cent rate cover to Upper Canada, 1862. 2½d stamp tied by neat grid "1" at New Westminster. Cash accompanied cover to San Francisco, where US stamps were added and cogwheel cancelled. Carried by overland route via Chicago. With Wellburn page. Realized \$5,500.



1869 cover mailed from Quesnellemouth to Canada with unusual 25-cent BC franking paying rate to New Westminster, and 10-cent US stamp paying rate to Canada. With Wellburn page. Realized \$4,250.

Early CPR mail from the “other” End of Track

by Tracy Cooper



BC's first mail car (named No. 1) was built at Yale, as was all Onderdonk's rolling stock except for the locomotives. It was probably constructed in mid to late 1883. Unofficial railway mail moved along the line of construction for about two years prior to official use. At left you can just glimpse Onderdonk's personal private rail car, "Eva." Note the BC Express (BCX) office at the far end of the mail car.

This article—the first in a three-part series on early BC CPR mails—deals with BC's inaugural railway mail contract.

For non-historians, it is a common misconception that the drive to create the national dream of a railway uniting Canada from sea to sea proceeded in an orderly fashion from east to west. In reality, of course, the Canadian Pacific Railway Co built its tracks both westwards, across the Prairies and through the Rocky Mountains, and eastwards, from the railway terminus at Port Moody on the Pacific Ocean.

Much has been written about the postal history of the westbound rail construction and the famous End of Track post office, which carried mail to and from the many workers and contractors involved in the westbound work, but very little has been written about mail on the eastbound routing. The 340-km (213-mi) section through the canyons of the Fraser and Thompson rivers represented some of the most difficult construction on the entire route. This article will touch on the postal history of the line's westernmost sections and discuss how the Post Office Department took advantage of the advancing railhead to improve mail delivery in BC.

Andrew Onderdonk, an American of Dutch and English descent, became a prominent figure in western Canada when he was hired to supervise the construction of major sections of the CPR line in BC. Between 1879 and 1885 he successfully secured several important contracts to lay track, first, from Port Moody to Savona's Ferry, and then from Savona's Ferry to Craigellachie, the site of the last spike.

By the summer of 1884, work on the difficult Fraser Canyon section, including the major bridge crossing the Fraser River at Cisco, was complete to Lytton. Acting Post Office Inspector E H Fletcher wrote the following letter to the postmaster general in Ottawa:

The "other" End of Track continued

#80 20 Aug 1884

Sir: I have the honor to report that the conveyance of mails by Canada Pacific Railway between Port Moody and Lytton will commence on the 1st September next.

Mr John Rooney – 2nd Class Railway Mail Clerk, lately transferred from Toronto to this Division, will be the clerk in charge. Mr Onderdonk, the General Manager of the section of the Canada Pacific Railway, has provided accommodation for the distribution of mails en route, and will accept payment for the same at the rate per mile which may be determined by you. I am not in a position to inform Mr Onderdonk whether any higher rate per miles will be paid than that authorized by Act of Parliament, viz 6c, seeing at present mails will be conveyed by mixed trains only, but he expects that a larger compensation will be paid.



Onderdonk "complimentary" railway pass #110, stamped "Annual 1884." Issued to Acting PO Inspector E H Fletcher and his wife.

The accommodation which Mr Onderdonk has placed at my disposal for mail purposes consists of a space 6 ft by 10 ft, being a portion of any ordinary box freight car. This space has been fitted up under Mr Rooney's supervision with pigeon holes, boxes, bag, rack, etc, as conveniently as will enable him to perform his duties satisfactorily.

This space is, however, altogether inadequate as Mr Rooney will be obliged

to sleep in the car, until his trips can be made shorter or less frequent.

The number of trips with mails to and from Port Moody and Lytton will for the present be three per week, and though it is Mr Onderdonk's intention to increase the frequency of train service, it will be a matter for consideration as to whether it will be advisable or necessary to utilize more than three trips per week for mail purposes.

In performing three trips per week, Mr Rooney, the mail clerk in charge, will be constantly on duty and the risk of casualty will therefore be greater. I will make the best arrangements I can for the services of a substitute in the event of accident or sickness.

I will be glad to be in a position to inform Mr Onderdonk the rate per mile at which he will be paid, and whether any allowance will be made him in increased mileage or in a fixed sum towards more suitable accommodation being furnished by him towards the comfort of the mail clerk.

I enclose a copy of the Time Table now in force on this portion of the Canada Pacific Railway, and would say that by the 1st October next, it is expected that trains will reach Spence's Bridge, 23 miles beyond Lytton.

I have the honor to be Sir Your Obedient Servant.

This letter thus authorizes the first railway mail service in British Columbia. (Readers are requested to review their holdings to see if they have any mail that may have been carried on this early provisional route.)

The Postmaster General Report for the year ending June 30, 1885, notes that Mr Fletcher was true to his word and arranged for three temporary mail clerks to assist Mr Rooney in his duties:

H Owen—Temporary Railway Mail Clerk	Oct 23 to Nov 30, 1884
J O McLeod—Temporary Railway Mail Clerk	Oct 23 to Nov 30, 1884
A J Armstrong—Temporary Mail Clerk	Jan 1 to June 30, 1885



2nd Class Railway Mail Clerk John Rooney, at left.

The "other" End of Track continued

It is interesting also to note that the *Postmaster General Report* indicates that the following postal contract had been awarded:

*Canadian Pacific Railway Contractor – (Onderdonk)
(Port Moody and Spence's Bridge) for 166 miles 3&2 trips per week – 6 months to Feb 28, 1885, for total remuneration of \$1,615.52*

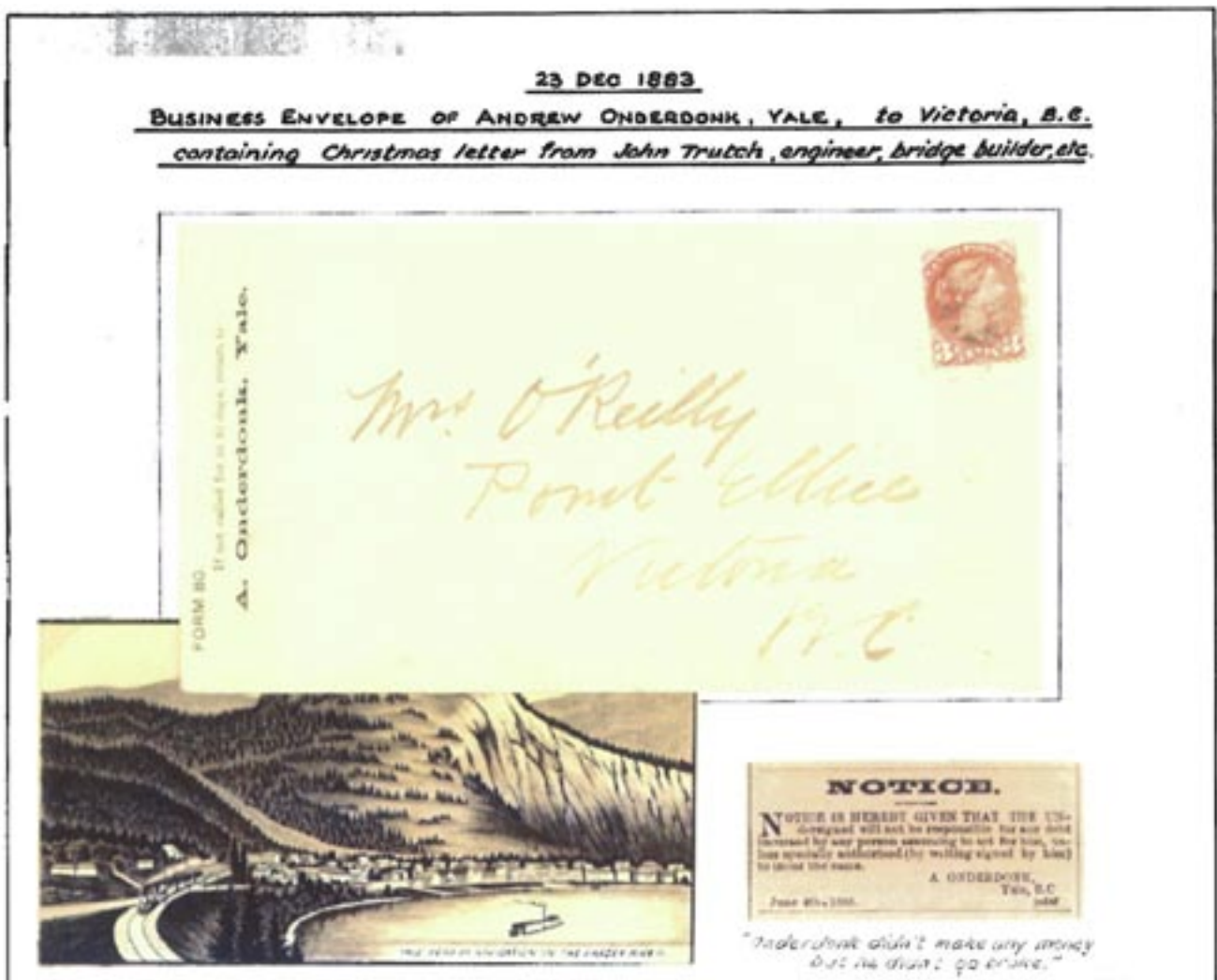
A calculation of the number of trips taken over this period shows that Onderdonk did get an increase in his rate—from 6 cents to 6.5 cents per mile!

In addition the *PMG Report* noted that mail service had been put into operation between Spence's Bridge and Savonas Ferry, a distance of 75 km (47 mi), and that the distance travelled daily as of Nov 1, 1884, was 340 km (213 mi) with one postal car.

Hammer #RY-21 (formerly #RR-23) was the first mail car canceller used in BC. It's unclear when this hammer was put into service, as there is no copy in the proof book. The early reported strike, from the Gerry Wellburn collection, is dated Dec 24, 1885. (Readers are requested to submit copies of early strikes to the author.) A second hammer, #RY-22 (formerly #RR-24), came into use in 1896. Both hammers were employed until the late 1890s.



Andrew Onderdonk, 1848-1905.

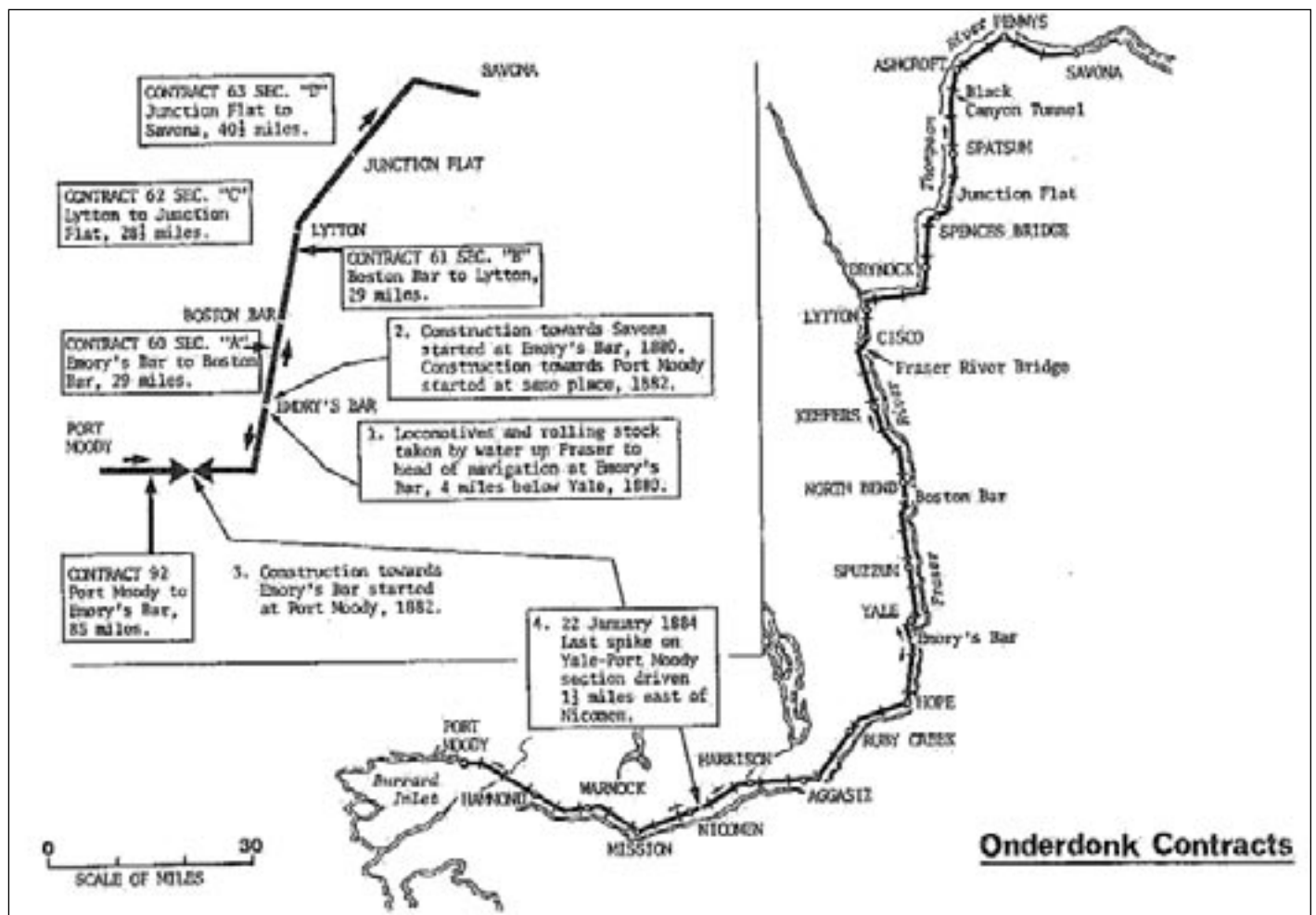


A page from the Gerry Wellburn collection with a cover from Yale, on Onderdonk's own stationery, to Mrs O'Reilly in Victoria. As the line was not completed westward at this point, this cover, dated Dec 23, 1883, likely went by steamer.

The "other" End of Track continued



Yale to New York, May 16, 1885. Arrived Victoria May 19, Port Townsend May 20 (reverse).
A very early example of mail carried by the CPR on its recently completed western line.



Map is from Van Horne's Road: The Building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, by Omer Lavallee (Railfare Enterprises Ltd, 1974; revised edition, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2007).

An early lumbering town in the East Kootenays

by David Piercey

The community of Bayard/Wycliffe is located in a small valley about equidistant between Cranbrook and Kimberley, along what is now Highway 95A in the East Kootenays. In 1899 Canadian Pacific built a spur line of its Crow's Nest Pass Railroad from Cranbrook to the North Star and Sullivan Hill mines near Kimberley. Ore from these mines could then be transported to the smelter in Trail. The line passed through the valley where Bayard was soon to be located. The richly forested area became the region's lumbering centre for the next 20 years, supplying the mines, railroads and growing nearby communities with timber products.

In 1904, Otis Staples, a lumberman from Minnesota, built the area's first sawmill, the Otis Staples Lumber Co, along the banks of the St Mary River. The development caused the emergence of a town, originally called Bayard (after the name of Staples's eldest son¹), with a small population of loggers and lumbermen and their families. The town (and post office) name was changed to Wycliffe in 1906 as, "being a religious man, Otis renamed the village Wycliffe after the 14th-century English church reformer John Wycliffe."² The Bayard post office operated only between March 1905 and February 1906; in Tracy Cooper's "Rarity Factor E Update" (*BC Postal History Monograph #3*, March 2016), he assigned Bayard a rarity factor of E1, noting only one to three reported strikes.

The town's first postmaster was Fred P Davis (1905-1911), yard foreman and, later, superintendent of the Otis Staples mill. A later postmaster, S G Clark (1918-1933), was the accountant for the company.

By 1920 the town had grown to 500 individuals, and along with a telegraph office it was endowed with Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches, a general store (the Perry Creek Mercantile Co), a hotel, community hall, tennis court and school. Its baseball and hockey teams competed successfully with teams from nearby communities. The local economy expanded to include mixed farming, dairy farming and cattle ranching on the adjacent, very fertile St Mary's Prairie. Lumbering, though, was still Wycliffe's main driver.

The Otis Staples Lumber Co was first to build narrow-gauge rail lines in the East Kootenay region for lumbering operations. Its spurs eventually created a network of about 80 km (50 mi) of feeder lines throughout the region. The company prospered until its mill burnt down about 1928. It went out of business in the early 1930s.



A fine strike of the rare Bayard split-ring datestamp on an Otis Staples Lumber Co corner card. Dated Aug 8, 1905, to Vancouver.

Lumbering town continued

Wycliffe split-ring dated May 23, 1908, on a Charles E Reid & Co (Cranbrook druggist and stationer) postcard to Minneapolis. Card depicts Cranbrook's St Eugene Hospital.

The town continued on, albeit with a reduced population of about 150. The post office closed temporarily between March 1943 and November 1945 (due to a lack of suitable candidates for postmaster). Later postmasters included Cominco Ltd mining employees (or their spouses). The post office's final closing was in May 1986, 80 years after its opening.

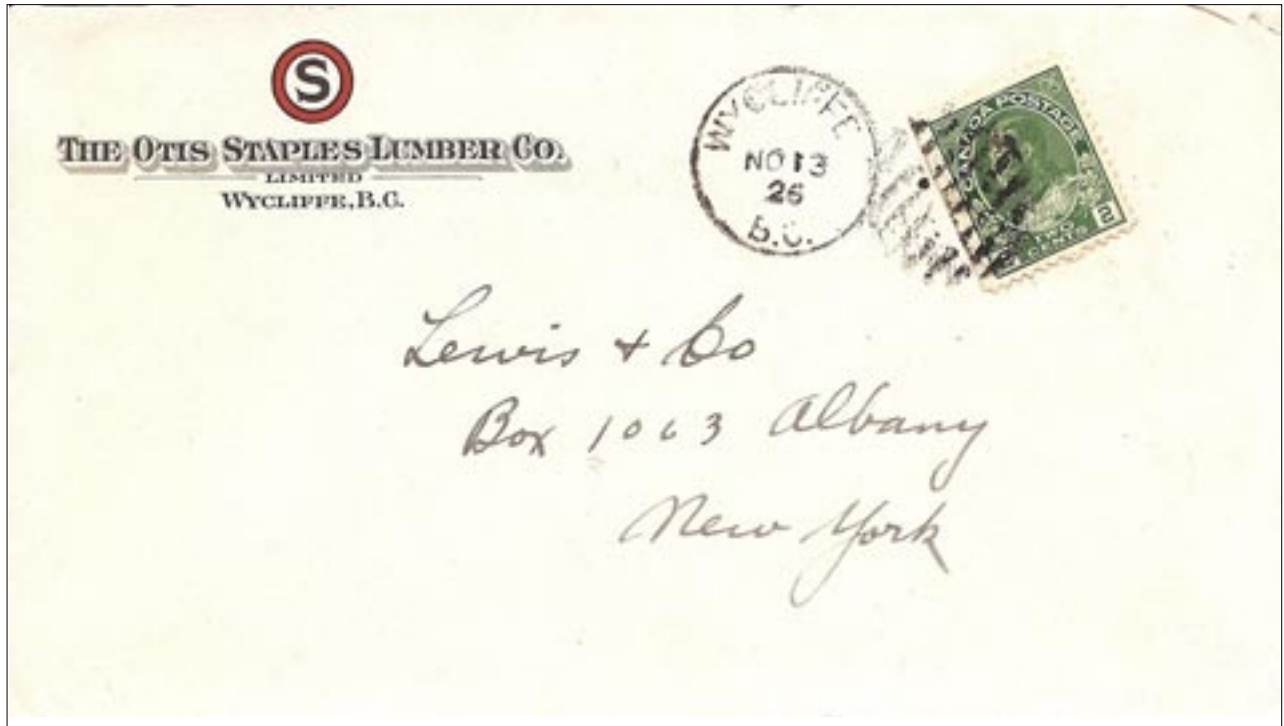


A realphoto viewcard of the Wycliffe mill and townsite, unposted, but with a message dated May 27, 1907.

Lumbering town continued

Today, Wycliffe serves as a bedroom community to the nearby larger centres of Kimberley, Cranbrook and Marysville, and also attracts people looking for rural acreages with agricultural potential.

- Notes**
1. *The Canada Lumberman*, August 1905, p 23.
 2. *Kimberley Chronicle* (Vol 13), August 27, 2012, p 1.



Nov 13, 1926, Wycliffe circular datestamp (proofed July 27, 1923) on Otis Staples cover to New York.



May 12, 1933, circular datestamp on 13c registered cover to Cranbrook, with late use of Admiral stamp.

Flooded post offices of the Bridge River valley

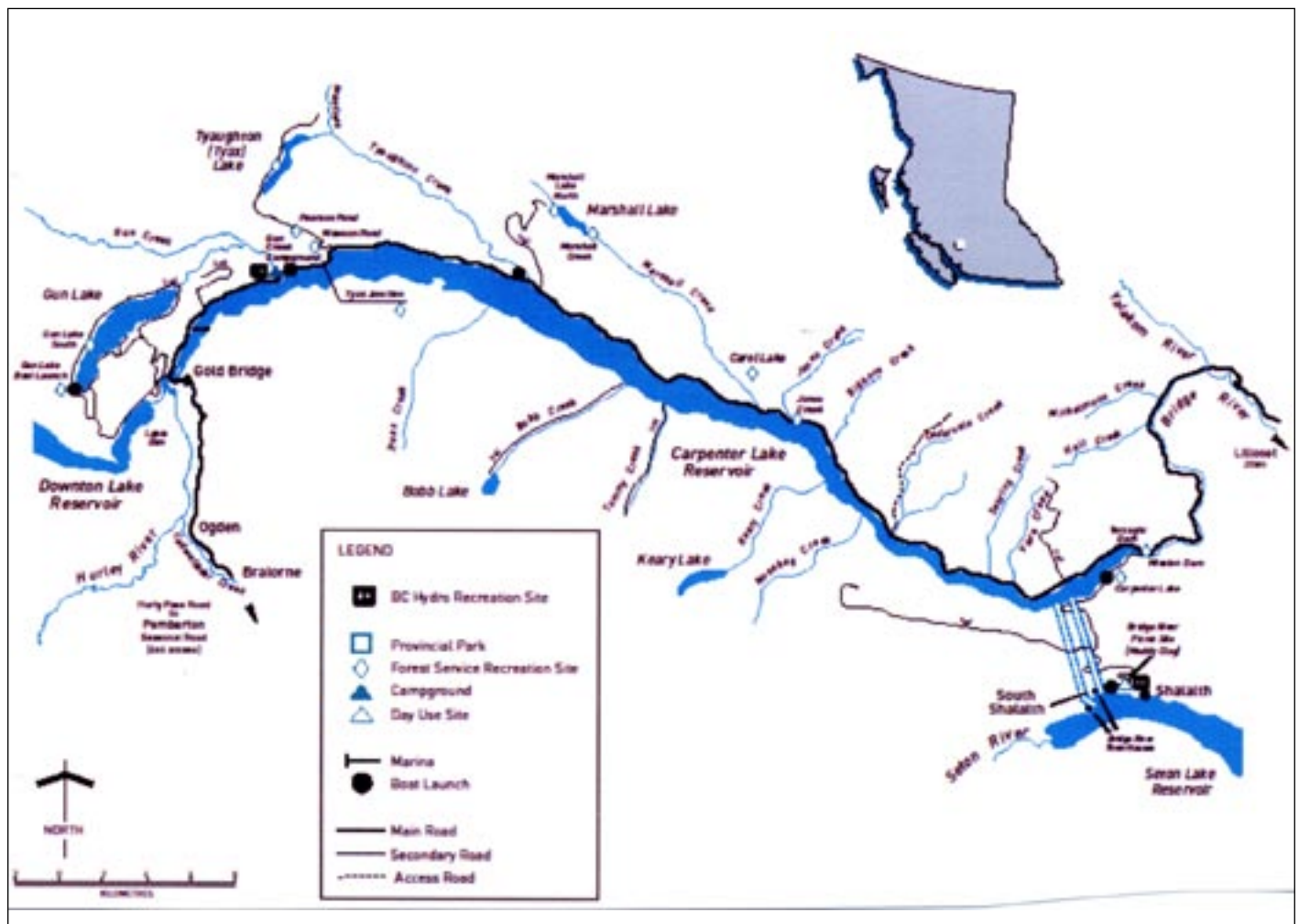
by Glenna Metchette

This is the third and final part of a series by Glenna Metchette on the “flooded” post offices of British Columbia. The first two sections appeared in issue #99, Sept 2016, pp 949-56, and issue #102, June 2017, pp 1005-08.

The Bridge River is approximately 120 km (75 mi) long, flowing south-east from the snowfields of the Coast Mountains and joining the Fraser River near Lillooet. The hydroelectric complex consists of three dams, and stores water for four generating stations; development began in 1927 and was completed in 1960. Bridge River water is used three times in succession to generate six to eight percent of British Columbia’s electrical supply. The waters initially pass through the Lajoie Dam (Downton Reservoir) and powerhouse and are then diverted through tunnels and penstocks from Carpenter Reservoir (Terzaghi Dam) to two powerhouses on Seton Lake. Finally, the water flows from there through the Seton Dam and powerhouse into the Fraser River.

The following post offices and settlements were flooded:

Community	PO closed	Lat/long	Comments
Congress	no PO		Under Carpenter Reservoir
Lajoie Falls	1916 04 08	50/122 NW	Buried under Lajoie Dam
Minto Mine	1960 06 17	50/122 NW	Under Carpenter Reservoir
Rexmount	1925 10 31	50/122 NE	Under Carpenter Reservoir
Wayside	no PO		Under Carpenter Reservoir



Map of the Bridge River/Seton Lake hydroelectric power system and the area's recreation sites

Flooded post offices continued

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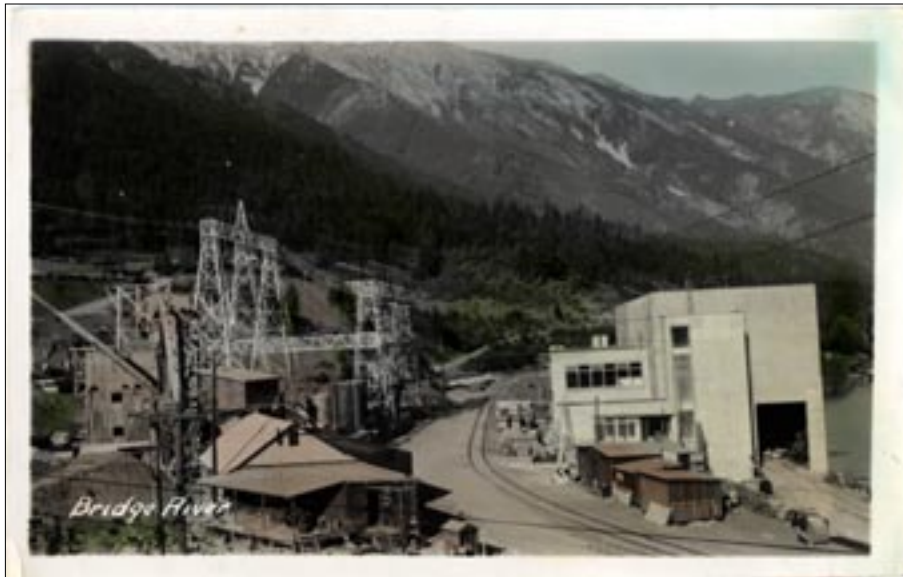
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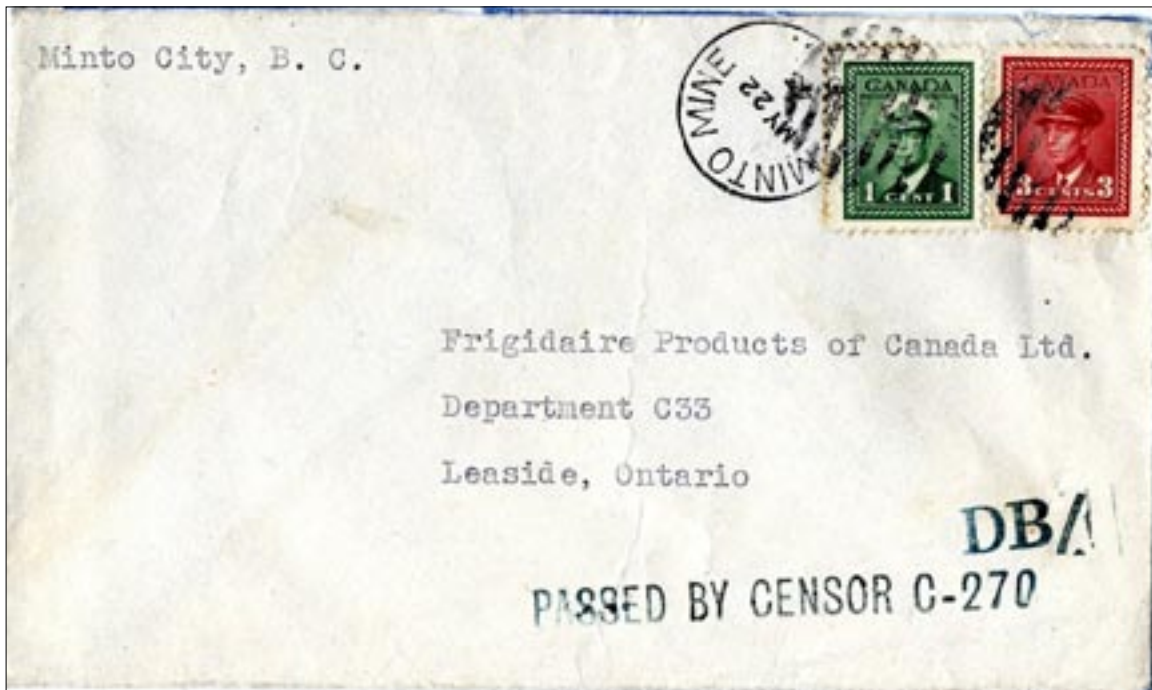


An unused tinted realphoto viewcard of the Bridge River power station on Seton Lake.

A rare cover dated Jan 7, 1923, to Lillooet, where the Phair family were prominent merchants. Caspar Phair was the gold commissioner for the Bridge River district. Only three covers are reported from Rexmount post office, which was open from 1912 to 1925.



Flooded post offices continued



Minto gold mine opened in 1934 and failed several years later. The townsite lingered on until 1960, when it was submerged under Carpenter Lake. A number of Japanese-Canadian families were forcibly relocated there during WWII. This censored cover is dated May 22, 1943 (see also p 847 for another Minto cover).

Lajoie Falls is one of BC's scarcest post-al markings. The example below, on piece with 1c and 2c Admiral booklet stamps, is the only reported copy. A rich gold strike was supposedly discovered near the falls in the 1890s by a French-Canadian hunter and trapper named Joseph Zotique Lajoie. The gold claims later became the basis of an ambitious stock promotion aimed by Lajoie mainly at a group of fellow French-Canadians who were working for the Fraser Mills Lumber Co and living at Maillardville, near New Westminster. The post office, open from April 1, 1914, to April 8, 1916, was intended to be part of a townsite supporting the mine. The Lajoie story is told by surveyor and historian H Barry Cotton in the *BC Historical News* (Spring 1994 issue, pp 7-11).

Lajoie was a skilled promoter, and while his mining claims were false, his deception was apparently successful. He produced elaborate publications describing the project's exciting

prospects: unlimited ore assayed at \$100 worth of gold per ton; enormous timber holdings; land in abundance; and the tremendous water power potential of Lajoie Falls, sufficient to drive a mill and electrify a townsite. Thousands of shares

were sold. Lajoie, predictably, disappeared with all the money and was never heard from again. One rumour holds that he was murdered somewhere on the Prairies by a discouraged investor; another story suggests that he headed to Mexico and eventually left all his money to his

church and his wife after he died.

Today the Lajoie Dam and powerhouse are located where the falls used to be. The dam holds back the waters of 26-km-long Downton Lake (or reservoir), just southwest of the village of Gold Bridge. Immediately downstream is much larger Carpenter Lake, which feeds water via penstocks to the main Bridge River power stations at Shalalth.

The Lajoie Falls split-ring datestamp was proofed on Oct 23, 1913. — *Andrew Scott*



Early 1870s mail to and through New Westminster

by Gray Scrimgeour

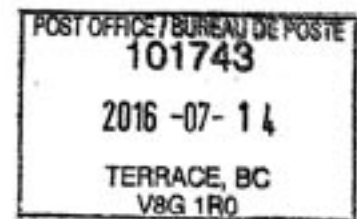
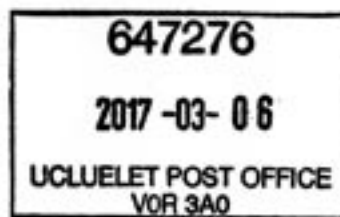
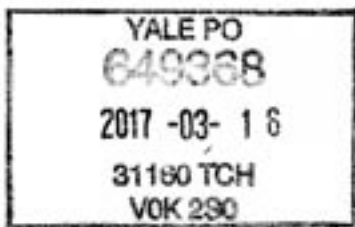
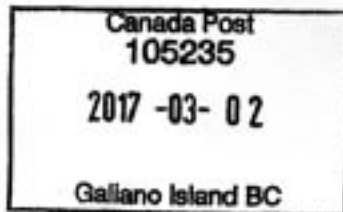
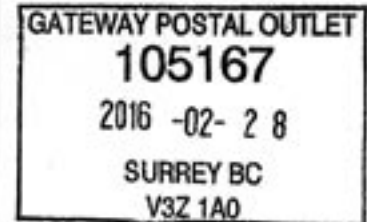
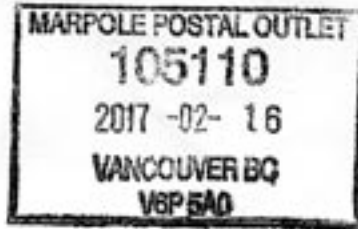
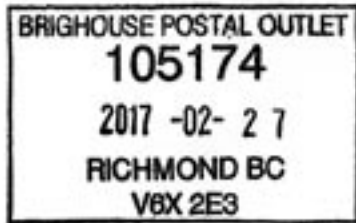


This cover, posted in Victoria on Sept 27, 1872, was addressed to well-known pioneer Samuel Brighthouse in New Westminster. There is no backstamp. Sam Brighthouse (1836-1913) was one of three men who purchased wilderness land in 1862 in what became the West End of Vancouver. He also owned land in New Westminster and Richmond.



A double-weight cover posted on the London & Port Stanley Railway on Dec 12, 1874. It reached Victoria on Dec 28 and New Westminster on Dec 30. The addressee is John Barstow Chantrell, who had come to BC in 1873 and settled on the Nikomekl River. (This is mail, therefore, to a non-post-office point via New Westminster.) The community of Elgin developed there, with a customs office (opened 1882) and a post office (1885). The Semiahmoo Road from New Westminster to the US border passed through Elgin.

More recent BC post office cancellations



For sale: comprehensive collection of covers, postal markings and miscellaneous postal history from **Surrey and White Rock, BC**. About 100 lots, from Victorian era to contemporary. Rarities, including Elgin, Nicomekl, South Port Mann, The Beach, Tinehead, Whalleys Corner, etc. Many group and bulk lots. To view list of available items (and some scans), click [here](http://www.andrew-scott.ca/postal/sales) or go to www.andrew-scott.ca/postal/sales.