

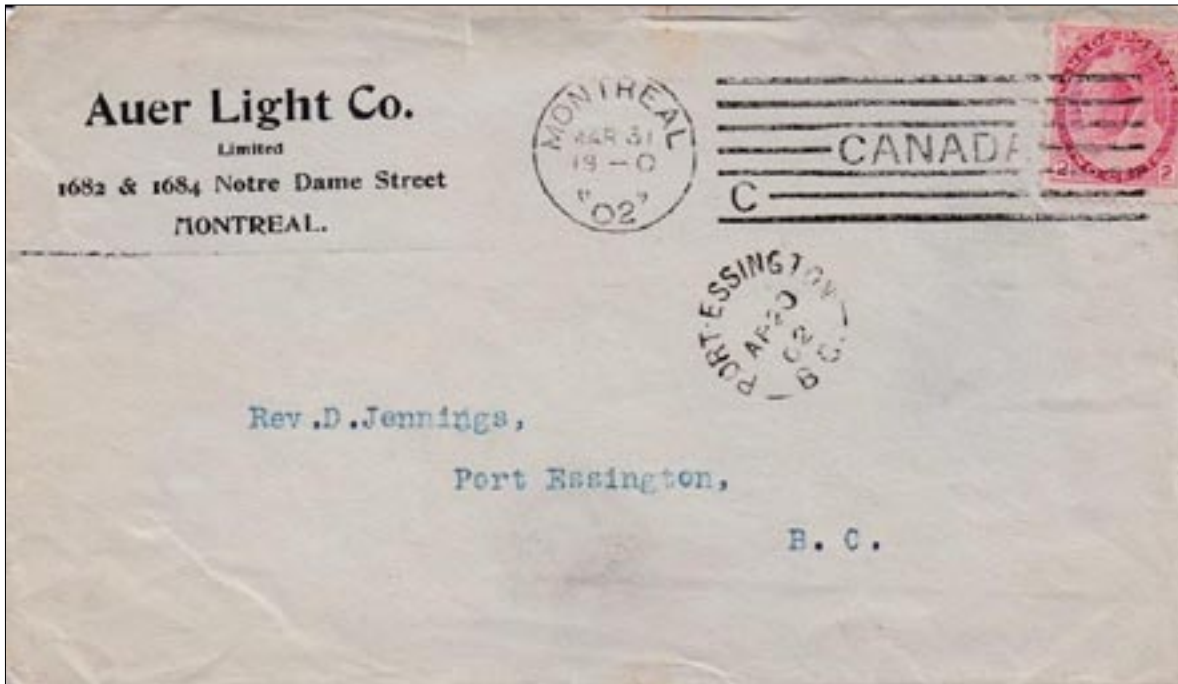


# BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Volume 28 Number 1

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This issue's "favourite cover" is from study group member **Cec Coutts**, who admits to a certain "fondness for machine cancels." Cec has published nine handbooks on postal history, including a trilogy on the International rapid cancelling machines (available from the BNAPS Book Department). He notes that while the first International machine was installed at Toronto in February 1902, Bickerdike machines, like the one shown here, from Montreal, "continued in use until the contract with this company expired in October 1902."

"Note the delivery time," writes Cec. The Montreal dispatch cancel is dated March 31, 1902, and a Vancouver duplex (DBC 396) transit on reverse reads April 6. But the nice Port Essington receiver on the face is dated April 20, 1902, two weeks after leaving Vancouver. "The delay of course," according to Cec,

"was due to boat schedules on the West Coast."

Port Essington, now a deserted ruin, was once the main settlement on BC's north coast. It was located on the south side of the Skeena River estuary but became obsolete after the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, built on the north side of the river, reached salt water at Kaien Island. Prince Rupert, the railway's western terminus, then grew quickly to become the region's most important community.

The cover, from Montreal's Auer Light Co, was sent to Rev Dennis Jennings, a missionary at Port Essington throughout the 1880s and '90s. Jennings had worked with Thomas Crosby, the pioneer Methodist on the BC coast, whose mission was long located at Fort Simpson. Jennings' correspondence is an important source for BC postal historians; many of his covers and letters illustrate early days on the province's north coast.

## In this issue:

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## From our readers

Back in Issue #105 (March 2018), Study group member **Tony Ditmars** wrote to ask three surprisingly difficult questions. 1) When did twice daily city mail delivery end in Canada? 2) When did Saturday delivery end? 3) When Christmas fell on a weekday, was mail delivered? If so, when did this stop?

We were unable to help, so Tony turned to the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. He received the following reply from Collections Information Specialist Anneh Fletcher of the Library Resource Centre.

“The following is from the museum’s website: In May 1942, letter carrier delivery service was reduced from two deliveries to one delivery a day, six days a week. In 1945, twice-daily letter carrier service was restored ‘provided that such restoration will be effective gradually . . . when men returning from military service are available ... [and] when the actual requirements of the public service demand the restoration of the two deliveries per day.’ In April 1946, two deliveries per day were resumed in residential areas. In 1951, letter carrier delivery service to residential areas was reduced from two to one calls per day. Starting Feb 17, 1969, Saturday delivery service in major urban centres was discontinued and a five-day week delivery service was introduced. There was no information about Christmas mail service.”

Member **Bob Irlam** writes: “It’s always a pleasure to receive a new issue of your newsletter and I avidly read it as soon as received. I haven’t had occasion to write before and I hope you won’t consider me overly picky, but I’m pretty sure the cancel date on the Oberlin, Ohio cover accompanying the excellent article by Tracy Cooper is Dec 21, not Dec 31 as stated.” *Thanks, Bob. Correction noted.*

The *British Columbia Postal History Newsletter* is published quarterly by the BC Postal History Study Group, an affiliate of the British North America Philatelic Society (BNAPS).

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Dues are payable to the editor: Andrew Scott  
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## Last Wellburn best?



*A Fort Hope lot lease from James Douglas, governor of Vancouver Island, dated Dec 1, 1858. All Nations bidboard Jan 19, 2019, lot #79. Realized \$3,000.*

The latest Gerald Wellburn collection of colonial BC postal history and other ephemera promises to be the last, according to Brian Grant Duff, proprietor of Vancouver’s All Nations Stamp and Coin ([www.allnationstampandcoin.com](http://www.allnationstampandcoin.com)). The 45-page exhibit of unique covers, letters, posters, maps and documents also promises to be one of Wellburn’s best, highlighting as it does an aspect of BC history close to the legendary collector’s heart: the region’s earliest major gold rush, on the Fraser River.

A dozen pages from this collection—including an 1858 poster for an Australian ship sailing to the BC goldfields and a rare cover to Fort Shepherd on the Columbia River—have already been sold. A Royal Engineers map of Fort Hope from 1860, a letter to Port Douglas about an 1859 death from bear attack, and an 1830 note to James Murray Yale at Fort Langley are among many fascinating items that remain to be sold. We hope to have more detailed coverage, complete with images, in our June issue.

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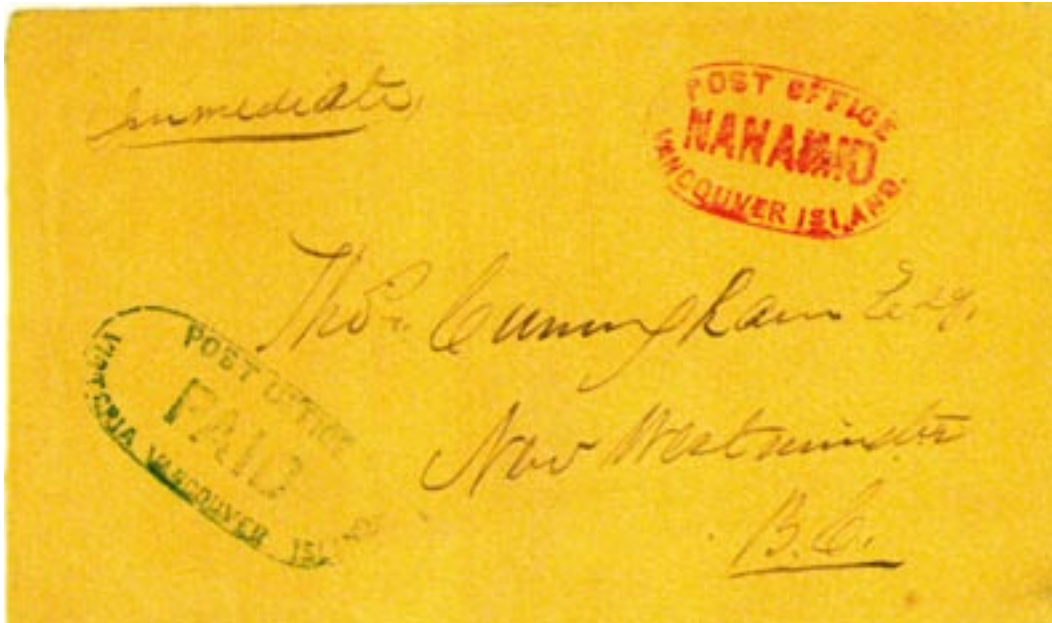
Newsletter submissions may be sent to the editors at the addresses above.

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](http://www.bnaps.org/hhl/n-bcr.htm); for later numbers, visit [https://spideroak.com/browse/share/Andrew\\_Scott/Backissues](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.

# Overview & census of Nanaimo colonial mail

by Bob and Dale Forster

Coal discoveries in the early 1850s led to the growth of Nanaimo. A post office was opened in December 1858 with Reverend Cornelius Bryant postmaster. We are not aware of any surviving mail from the first few years of the post office, but an oval postal frank reading POST OFFICE NANAIMO VANCOUVER ISLAND is seen used from about 1862 until Confederation in 1871. The Deaville book, page 168, suggests



Figures 1 (top) and 2 (beneath). Nanaimo covers to New Westminster and Scotland.

the device was metal and was probably obtained from San Francisco at the same time as the POST OFFICE PAID VICTORIA VANCOUVER ISLAND long oval frank. Deaville calls the Nanaimo frank "very rare." "It seems probable," he wrote, "that fraud entered into the use of this frank about 1865-66: hence its use as such after Colonial postage stamps became available." Deaville is implying that a postal official at Nanaimo



used the frank rather than the available (and accountable) adhesive stamps, then pocketed the money, as the infamous John D'Ewes had done in Victoria. This article will look at the use of the Nanaimo oval, both used on its own and in conjunction with adhesive stamps.

There are several covers known from Nanaimo without adhesive stamps but with the red Nanaimo oval used as a frank. They are addressed to Thomas Cunningham in New Westminster. *Figure 1* is a little different,

*Colonial Nanaimo continued*

showing a circa 1863 use of the Nanaimo frank in its usual red ink, but used in conjunction with the Victoria long oval frank in blue. Does this mean the red frank only paid postage to Victoria, and additional postage to New Westminster is represented by the Victoria frank? If so, maybe the covers to Cunningham with only the Nanaimo frank took a ship direct to New Westminster rather than transiting Victoria?



Figures 3 (top) and 4 (beneath). Nanaimo covers to New Westminster and Vermont, USA.

Nanaimo received numeral cancel "36" but used it sparingly. Few covers have survived (though associate editor Tracy Cooper has noted at least 50 examples of this cancel on stamp, all in black ink). Figure 2 shows lot 232 from H R Harmer's May 11, 2004, Dale-Lichtenstein sale of BC&VI. This June 1871 envelope has the 25-cent rate to Scotland and the 5-cent rate to Victoria paid with surcharged stamps cancelled by "36 in bars." The red Nanaimo oval is used as an origin postmark rather than a frank paying postage. Sometimes the Nanaimo



oval was used to cancel stamps instead of the "36 in bars." Figure 3, from the Wellburn book, page 59, bottom, shows an 1863 cover with the Nanaimo oval barely cancelling a pair of 2½-pence adhesives, which were properly cancelled upon arrival in New Westminster. Wellburn's exhibit page opines, "Rev Cornelius Bryant, postmaster at Nanaimo, evidently had doubt as to his authority to cancel the stamps and left that to postmaster Spalding at New Westminster." If Wellburn is correct, Deaville's fraud theory may be incorrect?

*Colonial Nanaimo continued*

The authors have seen two covers with the Nanaimo oval in black ink rather than red. *Figure 4* shows an 1869 cover on which the Nanaimo oval is clearly used as a frank. The black PAID in oval also appears to be a Nanaimo marking. The cover transited Victoria, where a datestamp was applied, and probably the 10-cent US stamp as well (10 cents in coin most likely accompanied the cover to Victoria). The US stamp was originally placed over the Nanaimo frank and cancelled in Portland on 5 May, 1869. It has been moved to show the Nanaimo oval. From Portland the cover was routed via Boise to the transcontinental railroad in Utah, which was completed on 10 May, before the stagecoach carrying the cover reached the railroad at Indian Creek, Utah.



*Figure 5. 1869 Nanaimo cover to Pennsylvania, USA*

The only other cover we have seen with the black Nanaimo oval is shown in *Figure 5*. In this case the Nanaimo oval seems to be an origin postmark, not representing payment of postage. The 5-cent surcharge stamp and the 10-cent US stamp appear to have been applied at Nanaimo. The 5-cent stamp paid postage to Victoria, where it was cancelled with a light Victoria datestamp. The 10-cent stamp was cancelled in Portland on 16 July, 1869, and the cover was routed to the railroad like the *Figure 4* cover. Why black ink was used instead of red is not known and seems to have no particular significance since the 1871 cover in *Figure 2* shows the postmaster had reverted to red ink.

The letter enclosed in *Figure 5* is fascinating and is transcribed below. The writer was stationed on the US Navy steamer *Mohican* headed for the Arctic to view an eclipse of the sun. The USS *Mohican* had previously served in several confrontations during the US Civil War. A Sept 23, 1869, *New York Times* article reported that the *Mohican* had returned, but "close cloud cover had obscured the sun" during the eclipse. Too bad!

**References:**

Alfred Stanley Deaville, *The Colonial Postal Systems and Postage Stamps of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1849-1871*. Victoria, 1928.

Gerald E Wellburn, *The Stamps and Postal History of Vancouver Island and British Columbia*. 1987.

**Letter to:** US Str *Mohican*  
Off Nanaimo, British Columbia

July 7, 1869

Dear Mother,

I dropped you a line before leaving San Francisco informing you of the change I had made, in being ordered to duty onboard this vessel, also of the proposed cruise to Plover Bay, Behrings Strait, to make observations during the coming eclipse of the sun. We have two professors aboard who were sent out here for that special purpose.

We left San Francisco on Tuesday the 29<sup>th</sup> inst, arriving here today. The passage was quite a rough one and could have been made in half the time. This place is a coaling station, or rather there is a coal mine here; we are busily engaged in coaling which will occupy until sometime tomorrow. Strange to say in spite of the rough weather and the excessive rolling of the vessel I did not in the least feel seasick, while a great number who thought themselves proof against such a trivial matter had to succumb. This vessel

*Colonial Nanaimo continued*

is a third-rate screw propeller, and rolls and pitches in even a moderate sea, but is a thorough seaboat. She carries nine guns with a complement of about 200 men, officers included. The officers are very pleasant and sociable companions and the majority of whom I was acquainted with before I came aboard. Dr Potter is the surgeon in charge of the medical dept who arrived only the night before we left San Francisco. Our mess consists of 12 officers, the number that are in the ward room.

We intended stopping at Victoria but as we came through the Straits of Fuca it grew quite foggy towards evening making it a little unsafe to run at night—we anchored off New Dungeness about 20 miles below Victoria. This morning we hurried off, being anxious to keep going as we have no time to spare. The captain is uncertain as yet whether to take the inside passage to Sitka (that is along the channels between the islands and mainland) or stand out clear of the coast—the former route at this season of the year is pleasant while the scenery is said to be perfectly grand. The whole trip will occupy about three months, and we will be back to San Francisco by the 1<sup>st</sup> of October.

I will not have another opportunity to send a letter after leaving Sitka until we get back, so don't think it strange if you receive no letters. I anticipate considerable pleasure in making this cruise; besides the novelty everything will be seen under the most favorable circumstances, especially at this season of the year—we expect to go farther north than any man of war has ever been.

I was relieved at "the Yard" by Dr Owens, a young boyish chap, a native of Chester, Pa, whose most prominent feature is his extreme verdancy, with any amount of credulity. I left "the Yard" without many regrets and would have willingly done so months ago, had they given me a few days notice.

With much love to all, I remain your most affect son John,

Direct to: Navy Agent please forward,  
US Str *Mohican*, W P Squadron  
San Francisco, Cal

### CENSUS OF NANAIMO COLONIAL COVERS

The following census, produced from past auction sales, includes four categories of Nanaimo covers:

- 1) Covers without adhesive stamps but with the red oval Nanaimo postal frank; 2) Covers with BC&VI adhesive stamps and the red Nanaimo oval; 3) Covers with the oval Nanaimo marking in black ink; and 4) Covers with the Nanaimo "36 in bars" cancel.



Figure 6. Undated Nanaimo cover to Victoria, BC.

Since many of these covers are from the Cunningham correspondence, the descriptions below show the addressee name as written on the cover plus any other manuscript markings that help identify the cover.

#### Nanaimo red oval frank on covers without adhesive stamps:

- 1) Thos Cunningham, New Westminster. Nanaimo red oval frank at upper right of orange envelope. Lower-left Victoria frank applied in transit. Scan is *Figure 1* in article. (Dale-Lichtenstein sale; Harmer, 2004; lot 162)

*Colonial Nanaimo continued*

- 2) Mr Tho Cunningham, New Westminster. Black oval PAID. "Answered July 17/63." (Dale-Lichtenstein, lot 163)
- 3) Thos Cunningham Esq, New Westminster. "Received Aug 30/64." (Dale-Lichtenstein, lot 164)
- 4) T Cunningham Esq, New Westminster. (Rumsey, sale 68, lot 579)
- 5) Thomas Cunningham Esq, New Westminster. Black oval PAID. "Received April 19/64." (Tom Fleming collection; Spink London, June 6, 2007, lot 2669. Previously appeared on p 27 of Eaton private treaty catalogue of Wellburn material not in Toronto sale. Also in Siegel, Sept 29, 1994, lot 2317)
- 6) The Honble the Attorney General of British Columbia, New Westminster, Str *Nigte* (?). "Nanaimo 10/28/68." (Dr R V C Carr collection; Firby, Jan 15, 2000, lot 190)
- 7) To the owner of the Steamer *Emily Harris*, Victoria. (Wallace collection; Eastern, Oct 16, 2014, lot 454)



Figure 7. 1862 Nanaimo cover to Niagara, Canada West.

#### Nanaimo red oval on covers with adhesive stamps:

- 1) T Cunningham, Hardware Dealer, Columbia St, New Westminster. Red oval at right, tying 2½d stamp. Endorsed "C" (or "E"?) White. (Dale-Lichtenstein, remainder lot 186)
- 2) T Cunningham Esq, Hardware Dealer, New Westminster. Red oval at left; 2½d stamp cancelled with black "X" in pen. (Wellburn sale; Eaton Toronto, lot 1090; Eastern, June 17, 2017, lot 159)
- 3) Thomas Cunningham, Hardware dealer, New Westminster. Nanaimo oval just ties left stamp of pair of 2½d stamps also cancelled "1 in bars" at New Westminster. *Figure 3* in article. (Wellburn sale, lot 1091)
- 4) T Cunningham Esq, Hardware dealer, New Westminster. Nanaimo red oval at lower left of envelope with 2½d BC&VI stamp cancelled with black pen line and marked with blue Victoria "35 in bars" in transit. (Different from cover #2 described above. Wallace sale; Eastern, 2014, lot 478)
- 5) Henry Nathan Jr & Co, Victoria. Nanaimo red oval ties 5-cent BC surcharge stamp; second red oval at left of cover. (Carr sale, lot 214; also Pike sale, Harmers San Francisco, lot 2134)
- 6) Mr W J Wignell, Regents Park, London. Red oval ties 5-cent BC surcharge stamp with another strike at left of registered envelope; 50-cent BC surcharge stamp tied by "35 in bars" of Victoria. (Carr sale, lot 222)
- 7) Mr W J Wignell, Regents Park, London. Nanaimo red oval at left of 1869 envelope with black oval PAID under 50-cent BC surcharge stamp paying registration charge. Stamp applied and cancelled "35 in bars" at Victoria. (Stanley Gibbons sale, 1966, lot 48; also Robson Lowe London sale, 13 May, 1959, lot 212)
- 8) Captn Mayo, Army & Navy Club, London. Red Nanaimo oval at left of 1869 envelope with 24-cent US stamp over black oval PAID. US stamp cancelled in San Francisco. (Carr sale, Firby, lot 232; also Rumsey, sale 76, lot 299)
- 9) Mr R Holland, New Westminster. Red Nanaimo oval at lower left of blue envelope. 2½d BC&VI adhesive stamp with black X in ink. (Carr sale, Firby, lot 199)

#### Nanaimo black oval on covers:

- 1) Mrs Franklin Gillespie, New London, Chester County, Pennsylvania, USA. Nanaimo black oval at lower left of 1869 envelope with 5-cent BC surcharge and 10-cent US stamps, both probably applied in Nanaimo. Stamps cancelled in transit at Victoria and Portland, Oregon. *Figure 5* in article.

*Colonial Nanaimo continued*

Two early views of Nanaimo, taken in the late 1860s, courtesy of the City of Vancouver Archives. The top view is from an album donated by the family of Rear Admiral George Fowler Hastings, commander-in-chief of the Esquimalt naval base 1866-69. The bottom view, donated by C V Coldwell in 1940, shows part of the coal mine, in the foreground, as well as the town. Both photographs show the Nanaimo Bastion, at right. But where was the post office located during the colonial era?



2) Miss Emma S Miller, Pomfret, Vermont. Nanaimo black oval used as frank denoting postage paid. Black PAID in oval at left. 10-cent US stamp applied over frank at Victoria (removed and replaced for display). Light 28 April, 1869, Victoria CDS and 5 May, 1869, Portland transit CDS. *Figure 4* in article. (Pike sale, lot 2134)

**Black "36 in bars" on covers:**

- 1) Mr T Cunningham, Victoria, VI. Red Nanaimo oval at top centre of envelope. (Dale-Lichtenstein sale, lot 195) *Figure 6*.
- 2) Mrs Barbara McLeod, Isle of Arran, Scotland. Nanaimo red oval at top centre of envelope with 5-cent surcharge and 25-cent surcharge BC stamps with "36 in bars" cancels. June 1, 1871, blue Victoria CDS transit at lower left of envelope. (Dale-Lichtenstein sale, lot 232) *Figure 2* in article.
- 3) Miss Carnochan, Niagara, Canada West. 2½d BC&VI adhesive stamp cancelled "36 in bars" to left of 12-cent and 3-cent US stamps. Post Office Victoria seal handstamp at lower left applied in transit. US stamps cancelled by San Francisco cogwheels. San Francisco Nov 24, 1862, circular datestamp. (Vogel sale; Siegel, Oct 19-20, 2010, lot 2070) *Figure 7*.

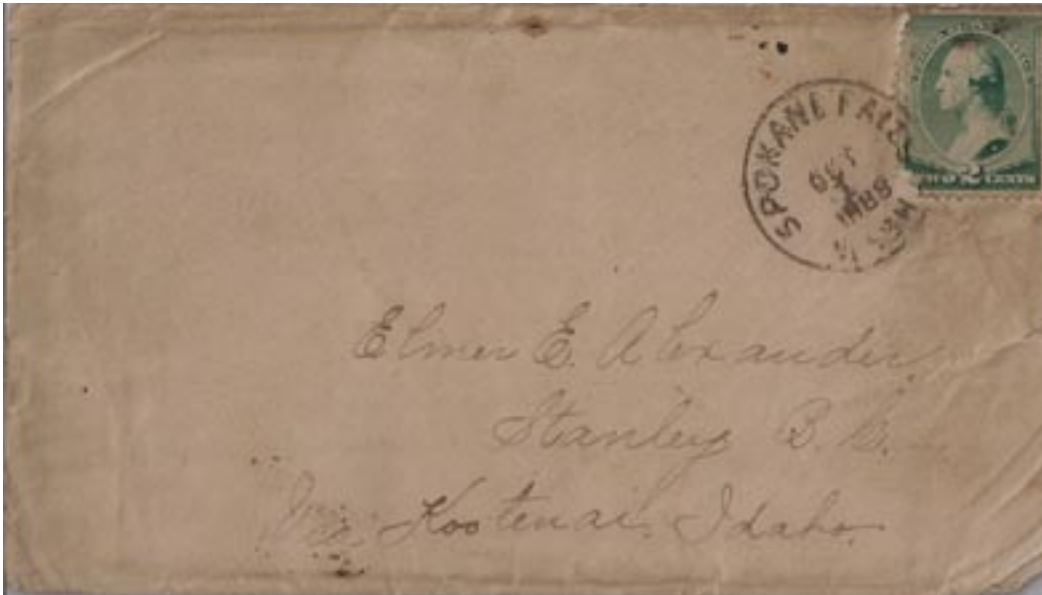
It is interesting to note that two of the three "36 in bars" covers show the Nanaimo oval in red ink. All three show the "36 in bars" in black. The Nanaimo post office must have had two ink pads, so maybe the two covers with the Nanaimo oval in black ink were mistaken uses of the wrong pad for the oval handstamp? On the British Columbia mainland, early covers from New Westminster and Yale show, respectively, the "1 in bars" and "4 in bars" struck in red ink, but no reported Nanaimo covers or off-cover stamps show the "36" cancel in red.



# When Nelson was called Stanley: an 1888 cover

by Ed Mannings

As a collector of old artifacts and ephemera from Nelson, BC, and the surrounding Kootenay area, I consider this my favourite postal cover. Mailed on October 1, 1888, it might be the only historical item from the brief time when Nelson was known as Stanley. The town came into existence because of the discovery, in 1886, of the rich Silver King Mine on Toad Mountain. It was at first referred to as either Salisbury Landing or Hall's Camp—or simply as Toad Mountain. The townsite was surveyed and a report filed with the provincial government on



Spokane Falls to Stanley, Oct 1, 1888, "via Kootenai, Idaho." Faint Kootenai transit backstamp.

Sept 3, 1888, by government agent Gilbert Malcolm Sproat. The name Stanley was proposed after Canada's new governor general, Lord Stanley. But someone, likely at the post office, realized that an existing mining community in the Cariboo was already using that name, so Nelson was chosen instead, in honour of BC's lieutenant governor, Hugh Nelson. From advertisements that ran in Victoria's *Daily Colonist*, we can determine when the name changed: the notice below on the left is from the Oct 12, 1888, issue, while the one on the right is from Oct 13. So Nelson can have been officially known as Stanley for no more than 39 days.



**Important Sale of Town Lots!**  
—AT—  
**STANLEY,**  
KOOTENAY LAKE, B. C.

The first Sale of Lots in this rising City will take place, by direction of the Government,  
**On Thursday, 25th Oct.,**  
**AT THE TOWNSITE.**

See Prospectus,  
G. M. SPROAT,  
Asst. Com'r Lands and Works,  
West Kootenay District.  
1st Oct., 1888. oc11



**Important Sale of Town Lots!**  
—AT—  
**NELSON,**  
KOOTENAY LAKE, B. C.

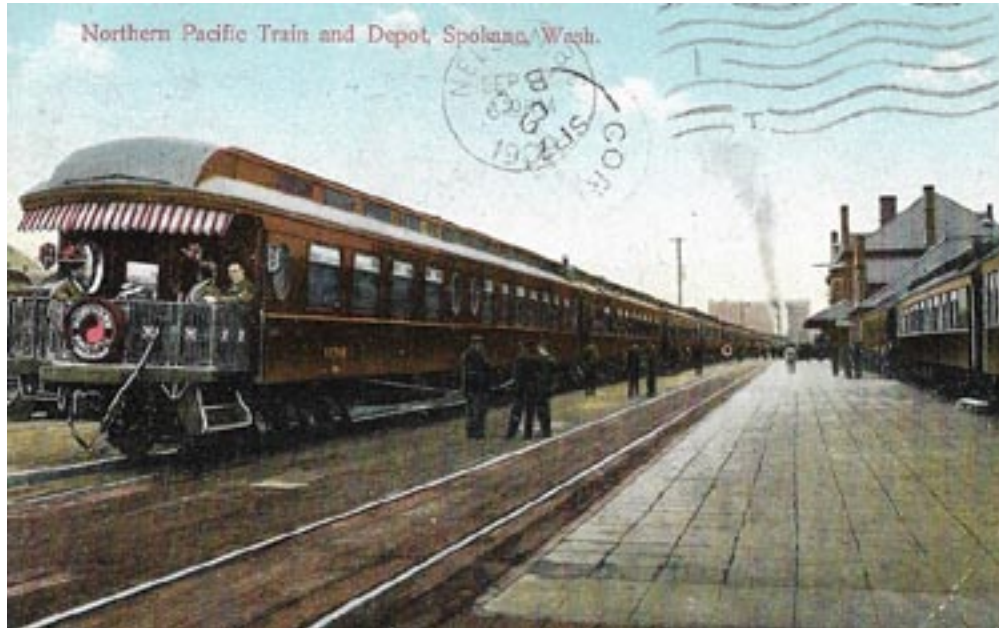
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West Kootenay District.  
1st Oct., 1888. oc11

*Spokane to Stanley continued*

**The letter's journey from Spokane Falls, Washington Territory, to Stanley, BC.**

Thanks to a newspaper story written in the *Spokane Morning Review* on May 12, 1889, by famed one-eyed geologist, promoter and pioneer Randall H Kemp, just a few months after our letter's journey, we have at our disposal a detailed description of the route the cover would have taken. From Spokane Falls (later



*Sept 22, 1909, Nelson machine receiver and unclear Corbin split-ring transit cancel.*

simply known as Spokane), the Northern Pacific train travelled 120 kilometres (75 mi) east to Kootenai (Station) in Idaho, leaving at 12:40 am and arrived at 4:00 am.

The new town of Kootenai in Idaho Territory had been platted by Wilbur A Hendryx of the Kootenay Mining and Smelting Co, which was in the process of working the Bluebell Mine up on Kootenay Lake.



*Dick Fry's ferry at Bonner's Ferry, Idaho: a crude but effective vessel.*

In addition to that company's headquarters, Kootenai also had a hotel, sawmill, restaurant, saloons and general store. From Kootenai Station, a stagecoach took the mail 50 kilometres (32 mi) north to Bonner's Ferry, along the same route that the Walla Walla/Wild Horse Creek gold rush trail followed in the 1860s.

*Spokane to Stanley continued*

The territorial government of Idaho had leased the trail to one Robert E Sproule, to be operated as a toll road. Sproule's name will be familiar to those who know the history of the famous Bluebell Mine on Kootenay Lake. Sproule assigned his toll-road lease to Hendryx's Kootenay Mining and Smelting Co around the same time that he also assigned to the company his interest in the Bluebell. Sproule was later executed for the murder of claim jumper Thomas Hamill. The KM&S Co operated the toll road for four years before selling or assigning it back to the Kootenai County government in 1889.

The river ferry at Bonner's Ferry was operated by Kootenay pioneer Dick Fry, who had been there since the 1870s, after purchasing the operation from E L Bonner, who had built the ferry in 1864 for miners on their way to the Wild Horse Creek gold mines.



*The SS Galena at the steamship landing in Nelson in 1889.*

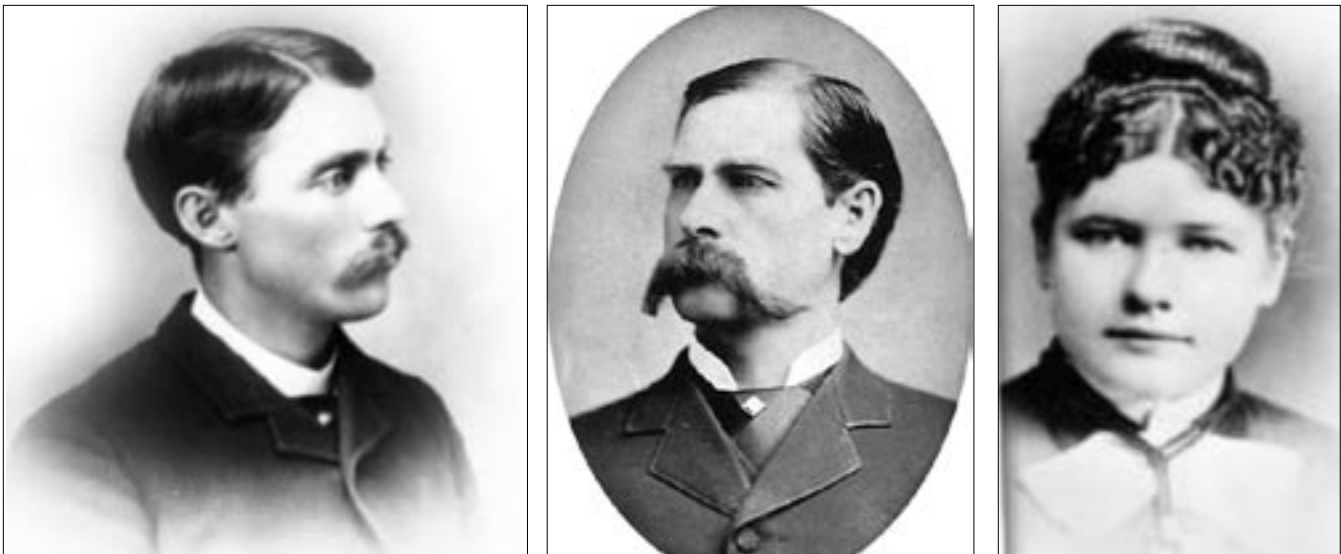
Fry built a hotel and warehouses—and his own small steamer, which ran north, down the river to Kootenay Lake. Bonner's Ferry was at that time the head of navigation for travellers to Hendryx Camp (at the Bluebell Mine), Warm Springs Camp (Ainsworth) and Toad Mountain (Stanley/Nelson) on Kootenay Lake. The main vessel, however, carrying passengers and freight into BC from Bonner's, was the SS *Galena*, owned and operated by Hendryx and his KM&S Co. Whether the company had a contract to carry the mail, or simply did so as a sound business practice, to service miners up on the lake, is not certain. The *Galena* left Bonner's at 5 am and reached the Canadian boundary at 10 am, where J C Rykert ran the customs house and collected duties for the Queen. The only other resident on the Kootenay River besides the Ktunaxa people was David McLoughlin, son of the famous John McLoughlin, manager of the Hudson's Bay Co's Columbia District. David had married a Ktuxana woman and settled on the river to raise his family. From Rykert's post the trip to Ainsworth, where the *Galena* spent the night, took the entire remainder of the day. The next morning the boat left for Nelson.

So our letter left Spokane Falls at 12:40 am on day one and arrived in Nelson around noon on day three, a trip of about two and a half days by train, then by stagecoach, then steamer, including overnight layovers at Bonner's Ferry and Ainsworth. (Today's mail from Spokane to Nelson can take anywhere from one to three weeks, thanks to modern-day bureaucracy.)

*Spokane to Stanley continued*

**The story of cover addressee Elmer E Alexander**

Elmer E Alexander (or Aleck as he was sometimes called) was born in Iowa in 1862 and came west to seek his fortune. He arrived in the fledgling city of Spokane Falls in 1884, and his first job was cutting stovewood for newspaper publisher H T Cowley. In 1885 he decided to become a prospector and through good luck managed to participate in the discovery of the famous Old Dominion Mine at Colville, along with the brothers W H and P Kearney, and A E Benoist, whom he had met while prospecting near a place called Embry Camp. Alexander had killed some deer for meat, and thankful for the offer of food, Benoist asked him to join his party. On April 12, 1885, the prospectors staked the Old Dominion, which led to the silver rush in the region north of Spokane. The mine was so rich that it operated until 1953. After some negotiation, Alexander was cut in for a one-eighth share of the claim, which he later sold and invested in Spokane real estate, and could have been set. But he stayed in the prospecting game for the rest of his life. The Kearney brothers and Benoist continued to own and operate the mine without Elmer for many years.



*From left to right: Elmer E Alexander, Wyatt Earp, Bertie Lewis.*

Alexander always claimed that while Kearney and Benoist headed off for Colville to register the claims and have their ore assayed, 23-year-old Aleck was left behind as a guard. During the night a group of five "hoodlums," including none other than Wyatt Earp, jumped the claim and entrenched themselves with rifles. When Kearney and Benoist returned and saw the situation, they went back to Colville to fetch the sheriff. It was said that the "greasing of certain palms" had the effect needed, and the claim jumpers departed. Aleck maintained till the day he died that his Wyatt Earp story was true, and historians have confirmed that Earp was indeed in the area at that time.

The love letter enclosed in the cover sent to Elmer Alexander at Stanley was written by his wife Bertie Lewis, who had moved with her mother from California to Spokane Falls to escape her abusive father. Bertie and Elmer went on to have nine children and both lived out their lives in Spokane. Her letter is personal in nature, and contains no historically interesting information. She does, however, note that the Kootenay is well known for huckleberries and asks Alexander to bring home a jar of them for her.

As mentioned, Elmer had made a small fortune selling his share of the Old Dominion Mine; like many prospectors, however, he never lost the "bug" to find the next big one. He was reported to have purchased two lots in Nelson on Oct 25, 1888, when the first building lots were auctioned, before departing for Spokane for the winter. While he was listed in the Nelson directory until 1892 as a resident and "mine owner," it is more likely that he spent his prospecting seasons in Nelson and wintered at his home in Spokane with his family. He stayed involved in the mining business for the rest of his life. In 1896 he staked a very rich claim in Phoenix, BC, known as the Betts and Hesperus. He was often quoted as a "mining expert" in the newspapers in Spokane over the years. Bertie finally got fed up with all the months and years that Elmer spent away from home prospecting and neglecting his family, and divorced him in 1917. He died in 1948 at the age of 86, outliving his ex-wife by two years. Thankfully he or Bertie saved the letter she had mailed him in 1888.

# Naden Harbour: a new post office discovery

by Andrew Scott

A previously unreported BC post office cancel has turned up from Naden Harbour, a former whaling station located on Haida Gwaii, on the north side of Graham Island, in a deep inlet south of Virago Sound. The station was built in 1911 by the Pacific Whaling Co; after changing hands several times it was acquired in 1918 by Consolidated Whaling Inc of Toronto, which operated it until about 1942. Three harpoon-equipped, coal-fired ships pursued mostly finback and sperm whales. An adjacent cannery intermittently processed salmon, clams and crab over the same period.



Top: aerial view of Naden Harbour, courtesy BC Archives (H-03840). Below: colour photoview of steamers at Colman Dock, Seattle. Oct 16, 1912, to Rainier, Oregon.



More than 3,000 whales were processed at the Naden station. (Another 5,000 were killed at Rose Harbour, the whaling company's other station, on Kunghit Island, at the south end of Haida Gwaii.) Whale oil was used for lamps, candles, machine lubricant, cosmetics, explosives, glue, insulin, margarine and soap. The bones were ground and dried into bone meal, and the rest of the whale became fertilizer. Whaling went into decline during WWII then dwindled ever further post-war as the petroleum industry emerged.

*Naden Harbour continued*

A post office was opened on Oct 1, 1912, and closed June 30, 1917. Five postmasters served here: S C Ruck (1912-13), G Le Marquand (1913-16), A Gosney (1916-17), P G Pollard (1917) and G Round (1917). The revenue from this office, for the entire five years of its life, totalled only \$231.35, while the postmasters' salaries, over the same period, came to \$210. A proof strike exists for Naden Harbour, dated Aug 26, 1912. In his *Supplement No 1* to this newsletter (September 2015), associate editor Tracy Cooper predicted that, based on his analysis of post office revenues, Naden Harbour was one of the top ten unreported post office cancels most likely to be found.



Left: cutting up a sperm whale, 1934, courtesy BC Archives (H-06854). Right: cooking house, powerhouse and dryer, 1937, G V Boorman photo, courtesy BC Archives (I-51533).

A real-estate development was proposed for Naden, just to the northeast of the whaling station, on Alexandra Narrows. In 1913 a plot of land was sold by Will Collison, son of William Henry Collison, first resident missionary to Haida Gwaii, to a Winnipeg company that planned to use part of it as a townsite. The proposal was a scam, however. The promoters hoped that the resources of the region—coal, fishing, whaling—would attract investors, but the idea never proceeded beyond “the dreaming stage,” according to Haida Gwaii expert Kathleen E Dalzell, author of *The Queen Charlotte Islands: Places and Names*.



July 19, 1934, cover from Vancouver to employee at Naden Harbour. Enclosure is in Chinese characters. Aug 1 Massett and Ming Sun Reading Room marks on reverse.

Naden is a Haida name adopted by Raven crest members who lived at the mouth of the nearby Naden River; they were the *Ne dan xada i*, part of the Ecetas family. The Haida people knew Naden Harbour as *Ow'way*, meaning “many sandbanks.” Today it's the site of a luxurious fishing resort, Queen Charlotte Lodge.

Thanks to study group member David Jewell for letting us know about this new find. On Dec 4, 2018, the card realized \$1,035 on eBay.

# Maywood's mysterious straightline cancel

by Brian Copeland

In Issue #92 of the *Newsletter*, editor Andrew Scott discussed Vancouver's suburban straightline markings. The cover below suggests that such markings were also used in Victoria suburban offices. The cover was sent from Victoria on April 15, 1915—there is a light machine cancel. It is a window envelope and the enclosure has not survived, so the address is unknown. It is franked to pay the 2-cent postage rate plus the 1-cent war tax. Since this is not the drop letter rate, the cover was likely addressed to some office other than



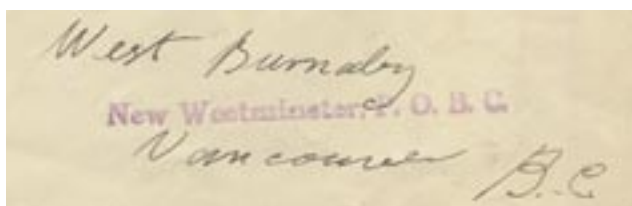
*April 15, 1915, Victoria dispatch cancel; May 17 Maywood receiver on reverse.*

Victoria. The back of the cover has only one marking—a Maywood split-circle receiving mark dated May 17, 1915. This is just over a month after the cover was originally posted. The Maywood post office was about two miles (3 km) north of the Victoria post office and was open 1894-1918.

There are several markings on the front of the cover, including a “Maywood P.O.” straightline cancel. It is similar to the Vancouver suburban straightline cancels described by Andrew in that the marking has the name of the office followed by “P.O.” It differs in that most of the letters are in lower case, whereas the Vancouver suburban markings shown were all in upper-case text.

The routing of this cover is a bit of a mystery. One possibility is that the address lacked clarity and the Victoria office stamped it with the Maywood straightline marking. After arriving in Maywood it sat for a month and was then marked “Not called for” in pencil. A pencil line was also drawn through the Maywood straightline marking, and it was sent back to Victoria where the markings in green were applied. One says “Returned for better direction,” and there are two strikes of a hand with a pointing finger saying “Return to” and “Not called for/Victoria B.C.” The finger points to the window, so the return address may have appeared on the enclosure showing through the window.

The author would be curious to see examples of other straightline markings from Victoria area offices.



From the Editor: Brian also sent along a “New Westminster P.O. B.C.” straightline (shown at less than actual size). This marking redirected a 1924 3-cent Admiral cover from Lantzville that had been addressed to “West Burnaby, Vancouver.” New Westminster corrected wayward addresses with a variety of similar straightline markings, though most were in caps and did not have the “P.O.” abbreviation. More research required!

# Sortation of trans-Pacific mail in Australia

by Gray Scrimgeour

In BCPHN #107<sup>1</sup>, I posed a question about the postmarking of trans-Pacific expedited air mail going by the FAM-2 seaplane route (ie, flying it to Seattle from the Victoria wharf). I proposed that most mail for FAM-2 was sorted before it arrived in Victoria, and I wondered how it could be identified: “Selected mail (hundreds of pounds of it) was flown in each FAM-2 plane and was dispatched with no Victoria postmark and no way known yet to identify it.” I had no information then of presorting of mail for the seaplane. I asked Len Piskiewicz (who is studying sortation of inbound US mail) if he knew of any presorting of FAM-2 mail. He has just replied with a “Yes”:

*Found this in a huge file in the Australian Archives (available online at my request, and instigated and executed by Michael Eastick): The archive<sup>2</sup> is a correspondence file with attachments regarding sorting schemes used in Australia in the 1920s [1927–1936, kgs]. There’s the following included in the info provided by the Sydney, NSW PO dated 16 June 1927, comprising about 30 pages with a worldwide distribution scheme:*

*AIR MAIL to contain special fee letters for United States of America. [FAM-2 mail did not require any special payment for air mail. This line refers to mail prepaid for air mail service in the US. kgs]*

*SEA-PLANE SERVICE not to carry more than 80 lbs letters addressed to Capital Cities in United States of America.*

*So this says the separation for FAM-2 was done in Australia (probably not new news). Other notations in other parts of the archive indicate sea-plane mail as a distinct separation.*

This 1927 file lists three exchange offices for direct air-carried mail in the US: United States Air Mail via ‘Frisco, United States Air Mail via Seattle and Sea Plane Service via Seattle.

Thus, the bulk of FAM-2 mail would be carried as closed-bag mail, sorted and bagged at the country of origin for the seaplane mail. It therefore could not bear a Victoria transit postmark. Only mail posted on board ship would be given a Victoria paquebot postmark—either the CDS at the wharf or a machine cancel at the post office.

The archival records give no criteria for assignment of individual letters for expeditious delivery to Seattle (eg, separation when an office had more than 80 lb of mail for the seaplane). What was the criterion for sending only some mail via the seaplane? Postal records (eg, the *Postal Bulletins* of the 1920s) do not give an answer to this question. Len searched all the databases he has access to and found only two explanations—one in a 1921 article in the *New York Times*<sup>3</sup>. That article reports that Eddie Hubbard—the mail contract holder—was to carry “specified business letter mails.” In the first ten months of FAM-2’s service, he had carried 1,110,000 first-class letters. “The [outbound] letters are usually made up completely of financial and commercial correspondence for foreign ports. . . . The incoming mails are made up for Hubbard in special bags aboard incoming Oriental [and Australasian] liners. . . . Each letter landed in Seattle from the incoming steamers at Victoria has a special business or financial significance. . . .” The second explanation<sup>4</sup> is narrower. The Silk Association of America “announced that a special seaplane service has been organized to hasten the receipt of documents covering raw silk shipments from the Far East.” The articles refer to the mail as “especially addressed document mail” and “mail marked ‘Silk Documents’.” I can conclude that commercial mail addressed to the United States from inbound trans-Pacific mail steamships that arrived in Victoria on a day when the FAM-2 plane operated probably was taken to Seattle by the plane. Rapid transfer of the mail bags from the ships to the plane required presorting of this mail. Thanks to Len, there now is evidence that this mail was bagged in Australia for the FAM-2 plane. Surely the same would have been done in Hong Kong, China and Japan.

## References:

- 1) G Scrimgeour, “A Way to Identify southbound FAM-2 mail?” *BC Postal History Newsletter* #107, p 1085 (September 2018).
- 2) “Sorting and routing of mail matter for Australia and overseas destinations,” National Archives of Australia, Series MP 27/1, 1936/4242, Parts 1 to 5.
- 3) C Vanderbilt, Jr, “An Air Mail Record,” *New York Times* (Oct 16, 1921), p 91.
- 4) “More Silk from Yokohama,” *New York Times* (Oct 17, 1923), p 22, and “Resume Silk Shipments,” *New York Times* (Oct 17, 1923), p 23.