



BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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Who can you trust? This issue's "favourite cover" is both amusing and mysterious. No mailing date is evident, and the place of origin is not specified. The "Royal Canadian Mounted Police" return address could be from anywhere in the country. There is no additional information on the reverse.

The cover raises a few questions. What rate should have been paid? Was a penalty imposed for the taped, reused stamps? And did the Mounties ever bring their stamp bandit to justice? The 51-cent definitives were issued on Dec 19, 2005. The 51-cent fee for domestic postage up to 30 grams came into effect on Jan 16, 2006.

The postage paid by the four stamps doesn't match any rate that I can find, though the fee for the 100 to 200-gram weight bracket—appropriate considering the size of the envelope (30.5 x 22.5 cm)—hovered around the \$2 mark for several years. The stamps, of course, may have been used long after they were issued. The sender may not have known the correct rate at all.

The \$2.29 postage due marking is unfamiliar to me, and the green ink colour is unusual. I'm guessing that it's not a BC marking at all, but perhaps from eastern Canada. Can any reader help solve the mysteries of this cover?—*Andrew Scott*

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Distribution lists for BC

For many years, postal clerks were supplied with "distribution lists"—books with Canadian post offices listed alphabetically and showing mail routes for each office (eg, railways or steamships serving each office). The V G Greene Library in Toronto has a set of these books for British Columbia in its reference section. I have from that library on permanent loan Alberta, British Columbia and Yukon Territory distribution books for the years 1937, 1943, 1945, 1949 and 1950. If any study group members need data from these volumes, please contact me at gray@scrimgeour.ca—Gray Scrimgeour

Brighthouse discovery



A major horde of covers associated with Samuel Brighthouse has been auctioned recently by Vancouver's All Nations Stamp & Coin. "It was an original find by Brighthouse's descendants," said All Nations owner Brian Grant Duff. "They were wondering whether to

throw it away or not."

Sam Brighthouse, John Morton and William Hailstone, nicknamed "the Three Greenhorns," were among Vancouver's first settlers, buying a 218-hectare piece of land in 1862 that would later become better known as the West End. Their attempts to farm and manufacture bricks were unsuccessful. By the mid-1880s they had all sold out and moved on, leaving it to the CPR to turn their former real-estate holdings into a high-priced residential district for company officials. If the Greenhorns had only waited a few more years they might have made a fortune.

Brighthouse next moved to Richmond, and many of the covers sold by All Nations were directed to him at Lulu Island and New Westminster. Over the course of 2019, several dozen Brighthouse items appeared. Many covers from the 1870s sported fancy cork cancels.

Some were torn or otherwise in poor condition, but that didn't stop high prices being realized. The early Langley cover at left, for example, dated Feb 25, 1878, with its elaborate cancel (Lot 84, Auction 1187), sold for \$578 against a \$25 estimate.

Other notices, statements and receipts of all kinds were also auctioned, even the old family bible. One of the best pieces was an 1861 accounting document with a revenue stamp (Lot 81, Auction 1187), also estimated at \$25. It sold for \$1,100.

FOR SALE. Part 1 of large Vancouver sub office collection: covers, postmarks and miscellaneous postal history. 63 lots, with dozens of fine registered pieces. Many group and bulk lots. To view scans and list of available items, click [here](#) or go to www.andrew-scott.ca/postal/sales.

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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 1.5 Mb/issue.

The Fort Shepherd, BC, postal cover of 1862

by Ed Mannings

The Colville Mines gold rush. In the fall of 1854 a Hudson's Bay Company packer on his way to Fort Colvile (Colville) in Washington Territory panned some flakes of gold in his hat at the mouth of the Pend-d'Oreille River above the 49th parallel on the Columbia River. The following spring a group of French Canadians and Metis from the Fort Colvile area headed 70 km (45 mi) north to search for gold. Placer gold was discovered, and Angus McDonald, the HBC clerk in charge of Fort Colvile, notified his superiors at Fort Vancouver in Oregon and Fort Victoria in BC that "gold has been found and make no mistake, the rush is on." That season he shipped 7.7 kg (17 lbs) of gold to Fort Hope. It was 1855, a full three years before the Fraser River gold rush, and it was the first gold found on the British-controlled mainland.

But that September of 1855, seven prospectors from the Puget Sound area heading to the new goldfields via the Yakima Valley were murdered by Yakama tribe members in retaliation for the molestation of their women. When the local Indian agent was sent from Walla Walla to investigate, he too was murdered. Governor Isaac Stevens declared war on the territory's tribes, and thus began three years of armed conflict across Washington and Oregon, making access to the new goldfields a risky venture and thus preventing a huge rush of prospectors from heading to the region. By the time the war ended in 1858, the Fraser River and Cariboo gold rushes had begun, shifting attention away from the Kootenays until the 1860s.



The envelope with its detailed address left London on Jan 2, 1862, and arrived at Port Townsend, Washington Territory, on March 14 before moving on to BC. No postal markings on reverse. Size is just 12.3 by 6.9 cm.

Fort Shepherd. Although the Oregon boundary dispute between the USA and Britain had been settled by treaty in 1846, it was not until 1859 that boundary commissions were appointed to map the new border. In the meantime the borders were barely enforced, and miners, fur traders and indigenous people continued to cross freely back and forth. However, the Hudson's Bay Co started relocating their operations to Vancouver Island, starting with Fort Victoria, and to British territory north of the 49th parallel. In 1856, HBC Governor George Simpson dispatched James Sinclair from Fort Vancouver in Oregon to establish a new fort, referred to as Fort Pend O'Reille, with the plan to relocate Fort Colvile there. But the unfortunate Sinclair was murdered by Yakama and Cascade warriors at the Cascades Massacre on the Columbia River on March 26, 1856, while on his way to Colvile.

This incident only reinforced the conviction of the HBC to establish themselves above the new border. Construction and limited use of the new fort occurred through 1857 and 1858 under the direction of Angus McDonald, and it was in full operation by March of 1859 and given the name Fort Shepherd. A company servant named James Cooke from Fort Colvile was placed in charge. Unfortunately the benchland around Fort Shepherd was arid and gravelly, and was ill suited to agriculture, which was a mainstay of the Fort Colvile operations. In addition, there were limited trade opportunities due to the low native population

Fort Shepherd continued

and the small numbers of prospectors coming into the area. So after only two years of operation the fort was closed when the 1860 Outfit Year (or trading season) ended. But Fort Shepherd was reopened in 1864 and became an important centre, as it was at the crossroads of the Dewdney Trail, heading east to the Wild Horse Creek gold rush, and the Columbia River boat route, heading north to the Big Bend gold rush. It was a Hudson's Bay trading post, and the colonial government also established a customs house and post

GOLD! GOLD!! GOLD!!!

We have been somewhat jostled from our sober senses, during the past week, by the startling and thought-absorbing rumors of gold discoveries and gold mines, and after some little serious reflection, having surveyed and taken all things into consideration generally, we have come to the conclusion that there is something new in our day, Solomon's wisdom to the contrary notwithstanding. The gold—the real, yellow, glittering gold—has been brought in, in large quantities, and most every one, we believe, has had the satisfaction of feasting their eyes on the much coveted treas-

ure. It was found at Fort Colville, a Hudson's Bay post on the east side of the Cascades, and was brought in by a party of Frenchmen and half-breeds, who left there about twenty-five days ago. The gold is of a dark color, very fine, and is denominated river gold, and brought sixteen dollars per ounce with our merchants, who purchased largely. A number of trains of pack animals, we understand, are being fitted out all over the country to be sent to Fort Colville as soon as possible, and a great many persons are preparing to leave immediately, particularly the French and half-breeds, for this new Ophir of the Pacific.

Article from the Puget Sound Courier of July 7th, 1855.

office there under Constable John Jane. Fort Shepherd became the HBC district headquarters for its trading posts at Kootanais (Wild Horse Creek), the Similkameen (Keremeos) and Osoyoos. However by 1869 the mining fever was over, and the fort was closed for good in 1870, followed by Fort Colville in 1871. In 1872 Fort Shepherd burned to the ground and was soon forgotten. In the 1890s the name was revived, although misspelled as Sheppard, and used by the Nelson & Ft Sheppard Railway and by a failed townsite on the other side of the river at Waneta.

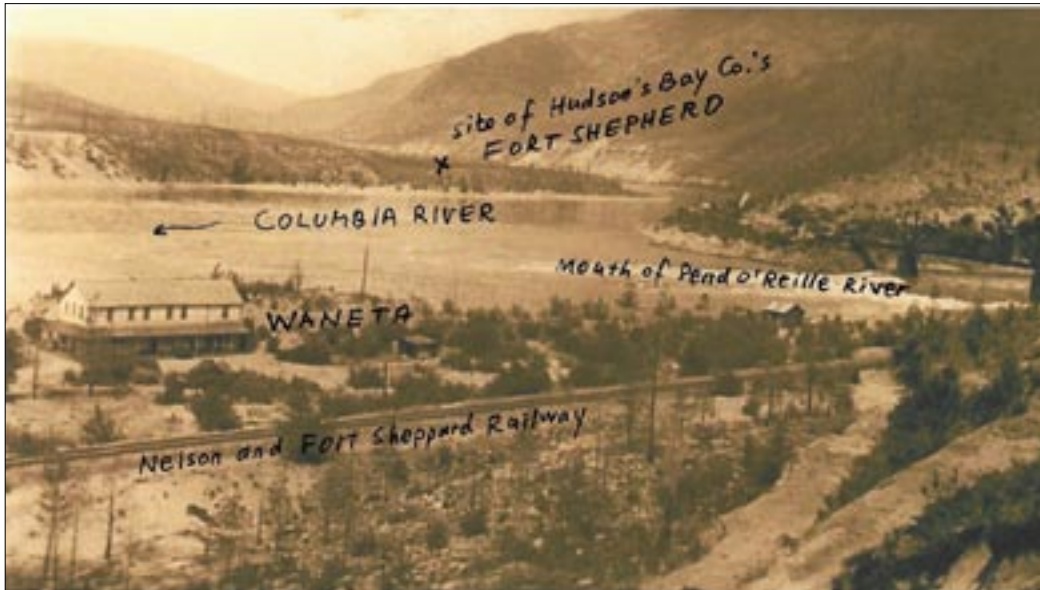
The postal cover. This postal cover was recently acquired from the well-known Gerald Wellburn gold rush collection that he started prior to 1920. It is a rare and wonderful colonial artifact with connections to both the obscure Hudson's Bay Co Fort Shepherd and to the earliest gold rush north of the 49th parallel (the 1851-52 gold discovery at Haida Gwaii did not result in a "rush"). The letter was dispatched from London, England, on January 2, 1862, and travelled by ship to Panama and then San Francisco, and from there to



Photographs of Fort Shepherd taken in 1860 by the British Boundary Commission.

Fort Shepherd continued

Port Townsend. The pre-paid postage of 1 shilling 2 ½ pence was the correct rate to the western United States and was the equivalent of 29 US cents. The envelope was postmarked at Port Townsend, WT, on March 14. While there are no subsequent postal markings that conclusively prove the cover's route (and an attempt at a circuitous delivery across Washington Territory to Fort Colville may certainly have occurred),



This photo looks north and shows the site of old Fort Shepherd and the 1890s settlement at Waneta. At Fort Shepherd the Dewdney Trail crossed the Columbia River to the north side of the Pend-d'Oreille River then continued east to Wild Horse Creek. The SS '49 took miners north on the Columbia to Big Bend.

I believe that post office officials in Port Townsend would have seen the words British Columbia (sic) in the address. They would also have been familiar with the names of Fort Shepherd and Colville Mines, as the gold rush to that region had been written about in the local papers at the time. So they should have recognized the destination as a Hudson's Bay Co post and logically directed the letter to the company's



The sidewheeler Eliza Anderson carried the mails to Victoria from US settlements around Puget Sound.

"British Columbia" headquarters in Victoria. From Port Townsend, mail addressed to BC&VI at that time was carried the 65 km (35 nautical miles) to Victoria aboard the ship *Eliza Anderson* under Capt Tom Wright. The postal rate between Victoria and England had been set at 34 cents in 1860. The unusual handwritten "Due 7" on the envelope could be a curious postage charge applied for completion of delivery of the letter

Fort Shepherd continued

from the US to British Columbia. It is known that the Hudson's Bay Co carried its own mail to its outposts and forts, so from Victoria the company—which kept meticulous financial and employee records and knew where its employees were posted at all times—quite possibly carried the letter on to James Cooke.



At left: Fort Langley National Historic Site today, where James Cooke worked in 1862. Note same building style as Fort Shepherd.

Below: The site of Fort Shepherd in 2019 (compare ridgeline to the 1860 photo). The property is now owned by the Land Conservancy of British Columbia and is closed to motor-vehicle access. It's a 10-kilometre hike from the outskirts of Trail along the route of the old Dewdney Trail.

The addressee James Cooke. I was able to borrow the microfilm servant records of the Hudson's Bay Co for the 1850s and 1860s for both the Oregon and Western (ie, British Columbia) departments, and also received assistance from HBC archivist Samantha Booth. From these records we learned that James Cooke was from England and joined the Hudson's Bay Co in 1850. He was assigned the job title "labourer" and posted from 1850 to 1855 to the Snake Country in southern Idaho, where the HBC operated Fort Boise and Fort Hall, and conducted the Snake River Expeditions. (This region was under the management of the Oregon Department, based in Fort Vancouver.) In 1856 Cooke was re-assigned to Fort Colville in Washington Territory, and then in March 1859 was transferred again, and became the HBC servant in charge of the new Fort Shepherd. The relative unimportance of Fort Shepherd in 1859 is hinted at in the records, as Cooke was not an officer of the HBC (ie, not a clerk or factor or trader) but was still listed as a servant. When Fort Shepherd temporarily closed after the 1860 Outfit Year, Cooke was re-assigned to Fort Langley, where he worked as a labourer from 1861 to 1863. So we know that when this letter was mailed to him in 1862 from England, he was working at Fort Langley, not at Fort Shepherd (which wasn't open that year). The HBC would most likely have carried the letter by its own boat from Fort Victoria and delivered it to Cooke at Fort Langley.

From 1864 to 1867 James Cooke worked at Fort Simpson in northern BC. After 1867 he is not listed in the Western Department records. Whether he retired, or died, or was transferred east of the Rockies was not recorded. And we can learn nothing about James Cooke the man, as the company records only listed salaries and job titles and post assignments.



Victoria squared-circle time-mark patterns

by Brian Copeland

The Victoria hammers were the most frequently used of all BC's squared-circle cancelling devices. The abundance of available strikes creates opportunities for interesting studies of usage patterns. This article takes a new look at the time marks associated with the first Victoria squared-circle hammer, which was used from July 5, 1893, until March 28, 1895. The usage pattern is more complex than has previously been reported.

In the 5th Edition of the *Squared Circle Cancellations of Canada* (referred to in this article as the Handbook), Jack Gordon reported on a study of 206 strikes. He found that the time mark was blank for the first month. A mix of "NT," "PM" and "AM" marks was used subsequently. There were also occasional blanks and, very rarely, "2." More recently, it has become apparent that there was no initial period where time marks were exclusively blank. *Figure 7* (on page 1163) illustrates a strike with the time mark "NT" from the second day of use. Nevertheless, as the Handbook indicates, the time-mark pattern in the early months was very different than in the following months. To revisit this question, I studied a group of 474 different strikes.¹ It appears that there were four distinct periods of time-mark use during the life of the hammer.



Figure 1 (far left): -/JY 5/93 Earliest recorded date for Hammer I. Blank time mark. *Figures 2 and 3* (centre): AM and "2" time marks both used on JU 21/94 in Period 3. *Figure 4* (far right). NT/MR 28/95 Latest recorded date for Hammer I.

The first two columns of *Table 1* compare my sample of strikes (the "Full Sample") with the sample reported in the Handbook. All numbers are in percentages. I expected results from both samples to be similar and indeed they are. The fractions of blanks and NT are almost the same across the two groups. My sample has a slightly larger fraction of AM strikes and a slightly smaller fraction of PM than that reported in the Handbook. But overall, the pattern observed when aggregating across the entire time period for the two groups is very similar. However, the usage pattern changed throughout the lifespan of the hammer. There were two periods where blank time marks appeared frequently: July 1893 to early January 1894, and mid-June 1894 to late September 1894. I therefore divided the timeline into four separate consecutive periods as reported in *Table 1*. There are some significant differences in time-mark patterns across these four periods (*continued on next page*).

| | Handbook 5 | Full sample | Period 1 | Period 2 | Period 3 | Period 4 |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | JY 5/93 - MR 28/95 | JY 5/93 - MR 28/95 | JY 5/93 - JA 2/94 | JA 3/94 - JU 15/94 | JU 16/94 - SP 30/94 | OC 1/94 - MR 28/95 |
| Blank | 15.5 | 15.2 | 41.7 | 0 | 35.9 | 0.7 |
| AM | 9.7 | 13.3 | 21.4 | 10.7 | 12.8 | 10.4 |
| PM | 27.2 | 24.7 | 0 | 40.3 | 0 | 39.6 |
| NT | 47.6 | 46.2 | 36.9 | 49.0 | 47.4 | 49.3 |
| 2 | n/a | 0.63 | 0 | 0 | 3.8 | 0 |
| Strikes | 206 | 474 | 103 | 149 | 78 | 144 |

Table 1. Percentage of strikes for each time mark. The columns for Handbook 5 and the current Full Sample each cover the entire usage period for Hammer I. The Full Sample is then divided into four consecutive periods. The Handbook reported two strikes of time-mark 2, but they were not included in the hammer study—hence the n/a entry.

Victoria square circles continued

First, it should be noted that the strike in *Figure 7* is not an anomaly. Of the 13 strikes I have from the first month of use (July 1893), more than half use a time mark (AM or NT). As *Table 1* indicates, although many strikes during the first six months do not have a time mark, about 58% of strikes do have a time mark. Time marks were used continuously throughout the life of Hammer I.



Figure 5 (above): -/SP 14/94 Blank time mark used in Period 3 on cover from Bavaria to Victoria, forwarded to Berkeley, California. **Figure 6** (below): PM/DE 10/94 PM time mark from Period 4 on cover to Vancouver.



A more surprising result is that there seems to have been a strong (negative) connection between the use of PM and blank time marks. Referring to *Table 1*, note that during Period 1, when blank time marks appear regularly, there were no examples of PM usage. Next there is a period of about 5½ months (Period 2) where there were no blank time marks in my sample, but where PM was used on more than 40% of the strikes. Blank time marks reappeared from late June 1894 to the end of September 1894, accounting for more than a third of strikes in Period 3. There are no examples of PM. In Period 4, PM reappears (accounting for almost

Victoria square circles continued

40% of strikes) and blank time marks are rarely seen (there was only one example from October 1894 until the end of use in March 1895). Overall, whenever there was heavy use of blank time marks, there was little or no use of PM. And when PM was used, blanks were an anomaly.

It is also interesting that a comparison of Periods 2 and 4 in *Table 1* shows a remarkably similar pattern of use, separated by the 3½-month interim of Period 3 with a very different pattern. Finally, note that the use of NT was consistently strong throughout the life of the hammer. From about September 1893 until the end of the use of the hammer, it appeared in close to half of the strikes. At the other end of the rarity spectrum, the use of time mark 2 is an anomaly, as was reported in the Handbook, appearing in only three of the 474 strikes in this sample (on June 19, 20 and 21, 1894).



Figure 7 (left):
NT/JY 6/93
Second day of use
for Hammer I.

Figure 8 (right):
AM/AU 29/93
AM time mark
from Period 1.



Figure 9 (below). AM/OC 4/93. AM time
mark from Period 1 on drop letter.

The Victoria post office processed a large volume of mail, and CDS cancelling devices were used at the same time as squared-circle Hammer I. The changes in time-mark patterns for the squared-circle hammer are likely connected to changes in the patterns of usage of the CDS hammers. This would be an interesting avenue for further study. The author would be very interested in hearing from others with more data on time-mark usage patterns for both the CDS and squared-circle hammers during this period.

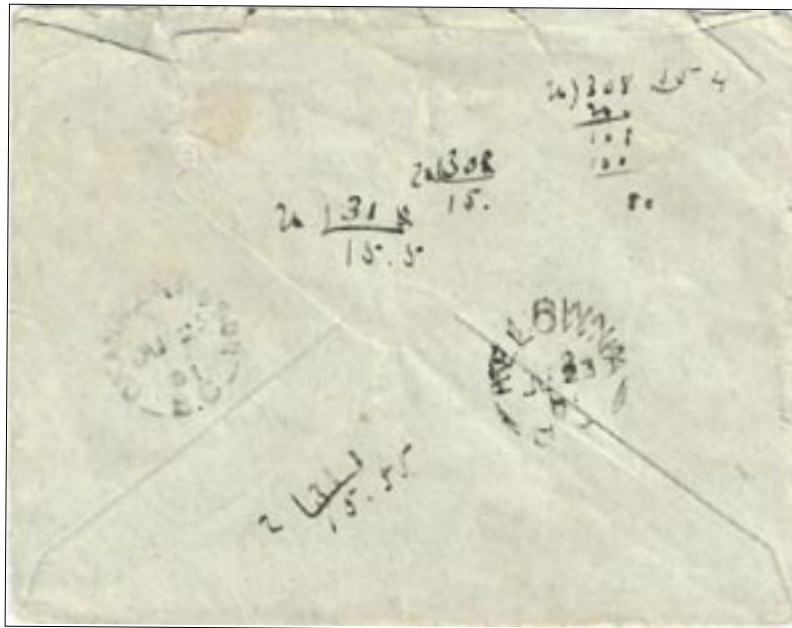


¹ The sample excludes duplicate strikes—eg, two items with NT time marks on the same day—and so the more common time marks may be easier to find than the numbers reported here indicate because multiple strikes on the same date are more likely to exist for the most-used time marks. An issue that could nudge results in the opposite direction is selection bias: knowing that time mark “2” is rare and that AM is uncommon means they are more likely to have been selected by the collector and may be over-represented in the sample.

Revisiting the Shuswap & Okanagan RPO

by Tracy Cooper

I read with interest "The Shuswap & Okanagan Railway Post Office," an article by Morris Beattie in Issue #111 of the *BC Postal History Newsletter* (September 2019, pp 1150-53). The discussion of the SS *Aberdeen* brought to mind a cover in my collection with an example of this extremely elusive steamship cancel. The cover (*below*) is an example of "way mail" posted on the route of the SS *Aberdeen* as it operated on Okanagan Lake between Okanagan Landing and Penticton.



As noted by the endorsement on the left side of the cover, the envelope was handed to the purser at Trout Creek (later Summerland) by Mrs Barclay, an early resident of the area. The *Aberdeen* was on its northward leg, headed for Okanagan Landing. Summerland did not get a post office until Nov 1, 1902, although an

Revisiting the S&O RPO

office at Trout Creek had been applied for as early as November 1898 (see next page). Because residents of Trout Creek and other lakeside communities relied on the *Aberdeen* for mail services, the Canadian Pacific Railway requested a cancelling device from the post office for on-board ship use. The 2-cent Numeral was cancelled on board with a grid cancel and the STEAMER • ABERDEEN / B.C. CDS dated NORTH / JUN



The *Aberdeen* also used another datestamp (left), an octagonal design in a "ticket" style, usually seen on the backs of cheques. It is also rare. Bill Topping's Catalogue of Western Canadian Ship Way Letter Cancellations lists four examples known. Dates range from 1904 to 1906. Below: A CPR cheque payable to the Shuswap & Okanagan Railway Co, endorsed by company treasurer George Riley.



Revisiting the S&O RPO

25/01. The cover was placed in the regular mail system when the *Aberdeen* stopped at Kelowna, where it received a KELOWNA/B.C. transit split-ring dated JU 23/01 (an obvious date error for JU 25). The cover was forwarded to Dora Thompson, who lived not in Kelowna, but at Okanagan Mission, a short distance away, where it was stamped on reverse with an OKANAGON MISSION/B.C. split-ring receiver dated JU 25/01. A nice example of same-day-delivery way mail.

The assertion in Issue #111 that the proof date of the Aberdeen cancel was JUN 25/01 is in error. No proof cancel has been reported from this dater. At least three examples, therefore, are known of the Steamer Aberdeen postmark, only one of which has been reported on the front of a cover.



sketch by:
E.H. Fletcher
P.O. Inspector
Victoria
23rd November 1898

SUMMERLAND

to PMG 28th November 1898

"I have the honour to make the following report for the establishment of a new Post Office in the Electoral Division of Yale Kootenay.

- 1) *Proposed Site: On east side of Okanagan Lake 8 miles north of Penticton.*
- 2) *Proposed Name: 'Trout Creek'*
- 3) *Proposed Postmaster: R.M.H. Hunter*
- 4) *Neighbouring Post Offices:*

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Penticton</i> | <i>8 miles south</i> |
| <i>Peachland</i> | <i>10 miles north</i> |
- 5) *Number of families to be accommodated by proposed office: two or three & about 10 single men, farmers, and stock raisers. "*

E.H. Fletcher
P.O. Inspector
Victoria

Top: viewcard of SS Aberdeen on Okanagan Lake. New Westminster July 15, 1906, CDS receiver on front. Above: from British Columbia Post Office Revenues 1871-1921, by Tracy Cooper, p 721.

Vancouver's iconic Woodward's department store

by Peter Jacobi

Charles A Woodward built his first store at Main and Georgia streets in Vancouver in 1892. In 1902 a larger department store was constructed at Hastings and Abbott, and Woodward's soon became a major regional merchandiser. An Edmonton outlet opened in 1926, and the company was operating numerous stores in BC and Alberta by the late 1940s. In 1993, the retail chain was sold to the Hudson's Bay Co.



The corner-card designs on Woodward's company stationery varied slightly. The two covers above are both correctly franked at 3 cents but pay different rates. The top cover, dated June 3, 1936, pays the 2 cents per ounce domestic rate plus 1 cent war tax. The cover below, dated Nov 28, 1945, pays the 1 cent per ounce drop-letter rate plus 2 cents war tax.

A WWII airgraph mailed to Chilliwack, BC

by Glenna Metchette

Edward George Vodden, Acting Petty Officer Royal Canadian Navy, appeared on the King's New Year's Honour List in January 1945 with the following citation: "*While serving for many months in His Majesty's Canadian Corvettes in the North Atlantic, he has constantly shown himself capable of carrying heavy responsibility, and by his zeal, enthusiasm and devotion to duty, he has set an inspiring example.*"

Ted, as he was known, said goodbye to his wife and infant son, and left his home in Chilliwack, BC, for England on Nov 11, 1939. After serving with the Royal Navy for a short time, he transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy, serving on HMCS *Collingwood*, a Canadian corvette assigned to the Newfoundland–Derry run, escorting convoys to England during the Battle of the Atlantic until 1945.



Ted sent this letter to Mrs Austin (Hazel) Keith in Chilliwack, a close family friend. "Tell Kathleen (Hazel's daughter)," he wrote, "am expecting a letter from her, she is at an age now that [she] should not have to be told." What he did not know was that Kathleen, a "blue baby" at birth, was dying of a congenital heart defect. Although Canadians were encouraged to write frequently to their loved ones, they were not supposed to express depressing sentiments. According to an article in the *Ladies Home Journal*, they were to compose the "swellest" letters, with not a hint of a sob in them!

Ted gave his return address as HMS *Drake*. This was not a ship but a naval barracks in Devonport, England, west of the city of Plymouth. During the war it was a fleet maintenance base. No date appeared on his enclosed censored letter, but the date on the envelope shows that it was cancelled on Sept 18, 1942.

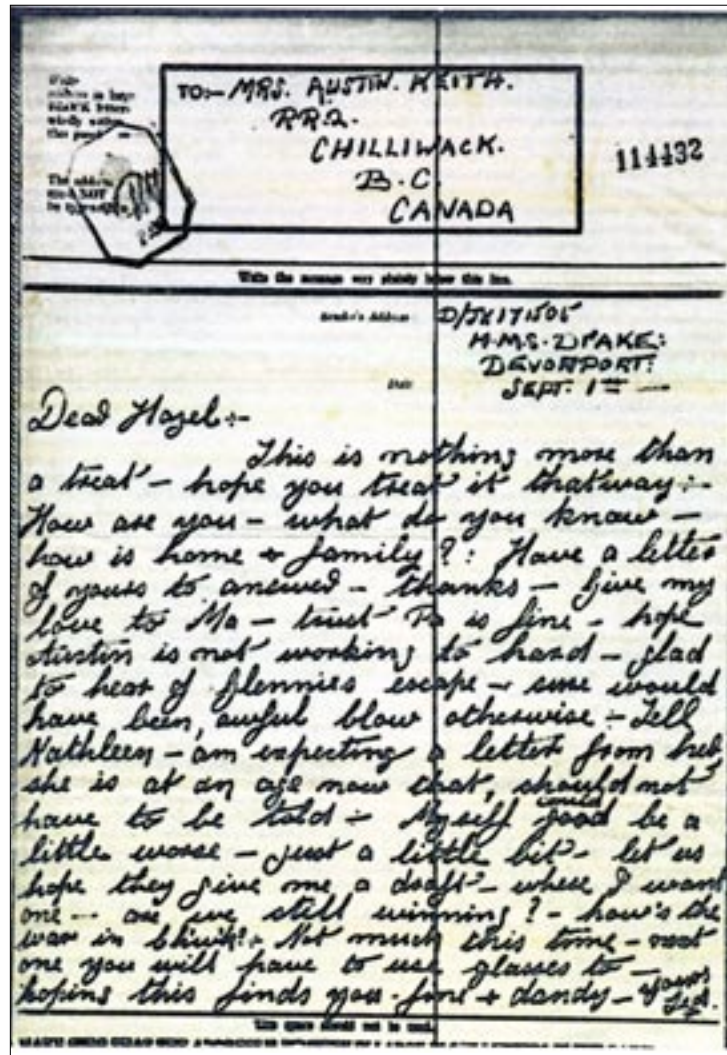
With ships and airplanes carrying military personnel and crucial supplies across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, space was at a premium. One sack of mail weighed more than 150 pounds (67 kg) and occupied four cubic feet (0.11 m³) of space, so the Allies developed a special postal service to reduce mail volume. In January 1941, Great Britain partnered with the Eastman Kodak Co to launch a photographic system designed to be fast and frequent, rather like today's email. The British version was named Airgraph, while the American service was called V-mail (Victory mail).

Preprinted forms were handed out to the troops and their folks at home. Each letter was given a registered identification or serial number, applied by a stamping device; Ted's was 114432. This number allowed any lost mail to be located and reprocessed. Each letter was examined by military censors before it was copied to film. Any revealing information that, if intercepted, might potentially help the enemy was removed or

Shuswap and Okanagan continued

obliterated before the letter was approved. The writers were usually required to explain their motives, with most just receiving warnings based on the often-quoted wartime phrase "loose lips sink ships." Airgraphs and V-mail also thwarted spies, whose "invisible" writing could not be photographed. After arrival at their destination, film reels were taken to darkrooms for mass-machine printing back to paper. The small prints were put into envelopes with cellophane windows that allowed posties to read the recipient's address.

Between June 15, 1942, and April 1, 1945, more than 550 million pieces of mail were dispatched overseas. However, the Airgraph and V-mail systems did not end when the war ended. Indeed, the use of macro- or microphotography continued for decades, being the best way to store large volumes of documents and newspaper records. The technology became known as microfilm.



Ted Vodden survived the war and rejoined his family. When he died in 1981, at the age of 71, his family had grown to include two sons, three daughters, five grandsons and three granddaughters. He was buried in Chilliwack's Legion Cemetery, and his pallbearers were members of The Odd Fellows Lodge. Ted was a member of both organizations.

Sources:

Chilliwack Progress newspaper obituaries, Aug 19, 1981

"Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates—House of Commons," 8-9 George VI, 1945

Johnston, Mac. "Scrappy Little Corvettes," *Legion Magazine*, Jan 5, 2010

Robertson, Ian. "V-mail/airgraphs solved mail shipping space problem," *Canadian Stamp News*, June 17, 2014

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History website

Censorship in Vancouver of US mails

by Gray Scrimgeour

I had heard that soon after the attack on Pearl Harbour (Dec 7, 1941) some United States mail was censored in Vancouver by US censors. Looking through my stored trans-Pacific covers, I discovered an item that fits this description.

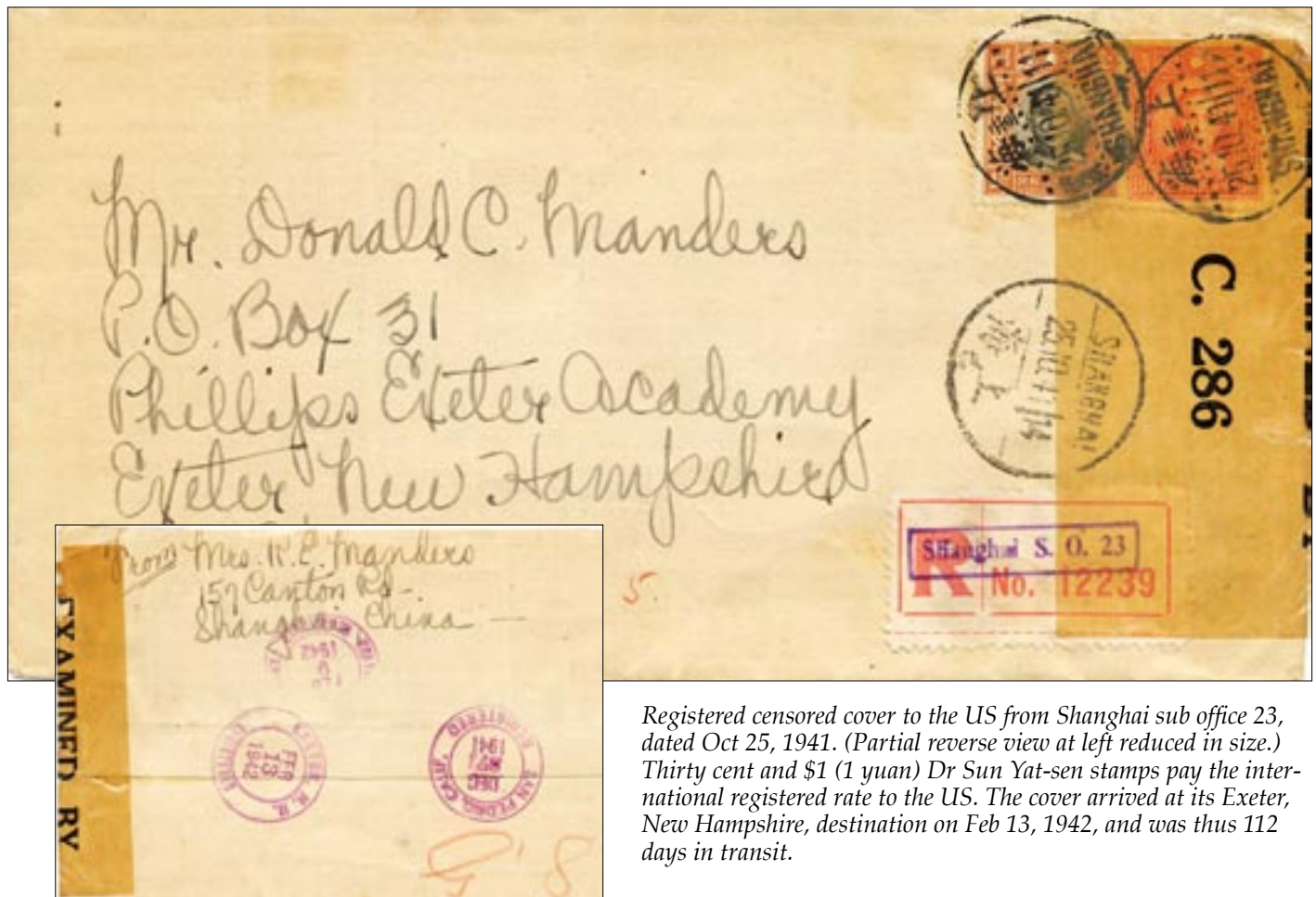
In December 1941, the US Censorship Branch set up a training school for reserve officers. A report on US postal censorship¹ says that "some [officers] were sent to British and Canadian censorship stations to acquire technical information and report on procedures." G H Clarke's 1945 report² expands on this statement. When the US instituted general censorship, they sent five officials from San Francisco and Seattle to Vancouver to a) assist in the censorship of considerable mail brought to San Francisco by US ships at sea in early December and sent to Vancouver for censoring, and b) to gain experience in censorship. US letter mail was examined in Vancouver from Dec 26, 1941, to Feb 11, 1942.

The registered cover shown below, addressed to Exeter, New Hampshire, was mailed in Shanghai, China, on Oct 25, 1941. It reached San Pedro, California, on Dec 27, 1941 (possibly on a ship of the American President Line). The letter was forwarded to Vancouver, where it was censored by clerk "C 286." It proceeded to Seattle (Feb 9, 1942) and then to its destination (Feb 13, 1942).

I would like to hear of any other examples of US mail being censored in Vancouver in 1941.

References:

- 1) "A Report on the Office of Censorship," US Government Printing Office, Washington (1945), p 19, online at <http://bl-libg-doghill.ads.iu.edu/gpd-web/historical/oc1945.pdf>
- 2) G H Clarke, "Brief History of the Vancouver Postal Censorship Station 1939-1945," reproduced as Supplement #2 (December 2015) of the *BC Postal History Newsletter*



Registered censored cover to the US from Shanghai sub office 23, dated Oct 25, 1941. (Partial reverse view at left reduced in size.) Thirty cent and \$1 (1 yuan) Dr Sun Yat-sen stamps pay the international registered rate to the US. The cover arrived at its Exeter, New Hampshire, destination on Feb 13, 1942, and was thus 112 days in transit.