

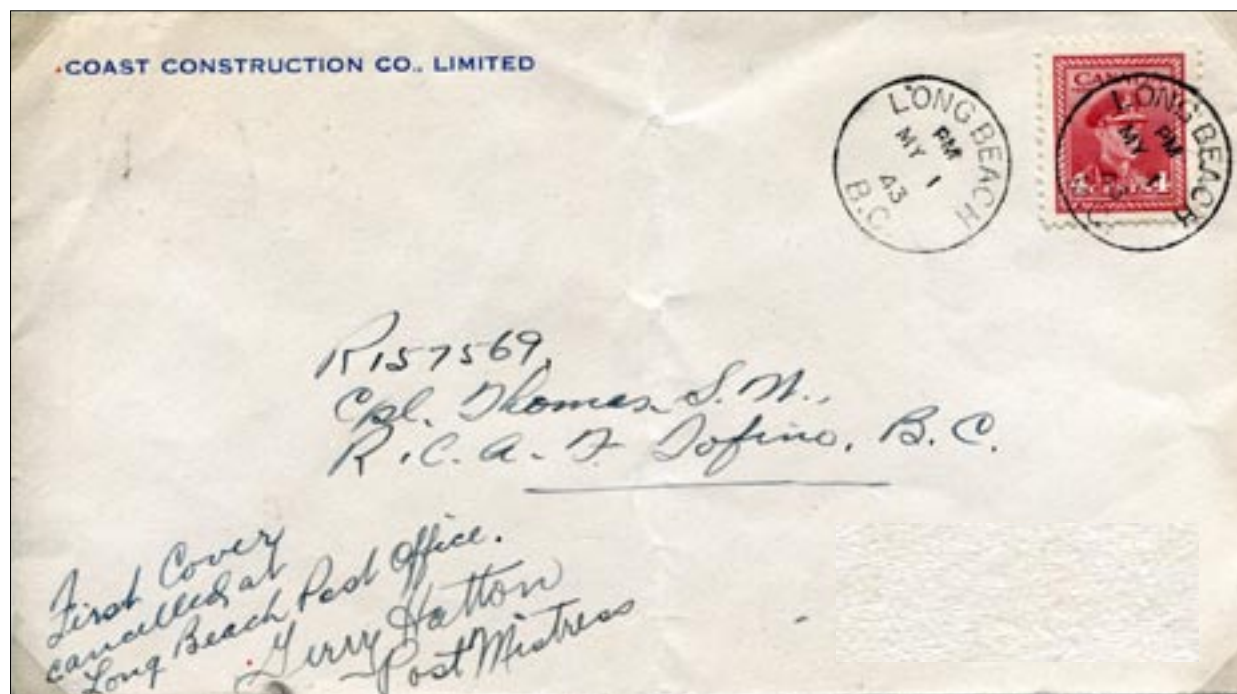


BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Volume 29 Number 2

Whole number 114

June 2020



Two-cent domestic rate plus two cents war tax, Long Beach to Tofino, dated May 1, 1943.

This recent acquisition is a “first cover”: not a “first day cover” for a new stamp issue and not just a “first day of opening” of a new post office, but the *first piece of mail* processed through the new Long Beach post office on its first day of operation. It was sent to Corporal S N Thomas, likely a collector, on a corporate corner-card envelope, from Mrs Gerry E Hatton, the acting assistant postmaster from May 1, 1943, to May 16, 1946.

The Coast Construction Co set up a large camp on the west coast of Vancouver Island in order to build what would soon become RCAF Tofino (later with its own short-lived TOFINO MPO 1122 military post office, open 1944-45), located at Grice Bay near Long

Beach. It performed postal service “without cost to department,” according to Library & Archives Canada.

The Tofino base originally opened as a radar station. It was decommissioned in 1945 but reopened as part of the Pinetree Line, 1955-58, and now serves as Tofino commercial airport. During WWII, Canso, Catalina and Stanraer amphibious flying boats ran anti-submarine patrols from here.

The Long Beach post office had three periods of operation: 1943 to 1946 (see above); July 1, 1946, to May 1, 1947 (under Mrs Hazel Myrtle Donohue); and Oct 28, 1965, to May 31, 1971 (under Archibald Henry Abbott). Mail from the third, most recent period seems to be commonest. — *Tim Woodland*

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Don Shorting: in memoriam

British Columbia philatelists were saddened recently to hear of the death of Dr Donald Michael Leslie Shorting, one of the hobby's most active and generous supporters. A well-known Victoria general practitioner for 33 years, Don was born on Nov 4, 1935, and died on Jan 20, 2020. He is survived by five children and eight grandchildren.

He was a prominent collector and exhibitor with a wide range of interests, including German inflation covers, Canadian law stamps, early viewcards from the city of Victoria and Karl Lewis illustrated covers. Don was also a keen hockey player, and organized tournaments in Victoria with Japanese hockey teams for many years.



Here are just a few of the roles that Don played in local and regional stamp communities: secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Region of BNAPS; regional level judge with the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada and the American Philatelic Society; Northwest Federation of Stamp Clubs advisory committee member, "distinguished philatelist" and recipient of the federation's first Club Service Award; co-founder and director of the G E Wellburn Philatelic Foundation.

Don was a senior member of the Vancouver Island Philatelic Society and chair of the exhibition

committee. He was responsible for organizing many bourses and exhibitions in the Victoria area over the years, including PIPEX 1986.

Getting school children interested in stamp collecting was one of Don's major goals and dreams. He spent a great deal of time as a volunteer, and developed a number of stamp programs for Victoria elementary schools, including the Junior Stamp Club and Stamping in the Schools. At one point he had 11 elementary schools participating.

"Doc" Don was much loved by his students and friends. He will truly be missed.

Canpex 2020

The Canpex 2020 national philatelic exhibition is scheduled to be held Oct 31 to Nov 1, 2020, at the Hellenic Centre, 133 Southdale Rd West, London, Ontario. Hours: Saturday 10-5, Sunday 10-4. Free admission, free parking, lunch counter. Information: info@canpex.ca Website: www.canpex.ca (check website to confirm that show is still on).

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 decide to shift to the digital edition, please make sure we have your email address. You can also download the newsletter from our file-sharing site (see below). We will honour paid 2019 print subscriptions through this issue and the next. If we have not received your renewal by then, we will shift your subscription to digital (if we have your email address).

Finally, we are happy to accept donations (and we thank those who donated last year).

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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.

British Columbia's coastal quarantine stations

by Andrew Scott

While the Covid-19 outbreak has been the focus of everyone's attention these past few months, we might also take a moment to consider that life-threatening epidemics are hardly new to British Columbia. In olden days, of course, people were focused on different diseases. Smallpox, leprosy, typhus, cholera, polio and Spanish "flu" were major concerns, and the coronavirus was unheard of. People may not have been familiar with the term "social distancing," but they certainly knew—and feared—the word "quarantine."

We decided to try to give this issue of the *BC Postal History Newsletter* a bit of an epidemiological angle. The next three articles touch, in some way, on postal aspects of infectious disease control. A big thank you to all who contributed.

In 1883, the federal government decided that BC's first quarantine station should be established at Albert Head, a rocky promontory on the south end of Vancouver Island, about ten km west of Victoria. According to Peter Johnson's *Quarantined: Life and Death at William Head Station, 1872-1959* (Heritage House, Victoria, 2013), local contractor Charles Hayward was hired to build "two wings, 45 by 70 feet, each connected by long corridors with an apartment and offices for the residential surgeon in the middle. The wings were



Two-cent domestic rate from Albert Head to Victoria dated Dec 23, 1914. Ex-Wellburn, ex-Cooper

for the patients and were to be fitted with baths, water closets, and all [the] modern necessities." The basic structure was finished by January 1885. "Although it was \$619.98 over budget," wrote Johnson, "the station still required staff houses, a laboratory, disinfection buildings, a fumigation plant, a through-road to Metchosin, and an all-important wharf long enough to handle ocean-going ships."

Dr William Jackson was the first medical superintendent. Work on the station seems to have slowed, and his tenure was not a happy one. "It is abundantly evident," said the *Daily Colonist* in 1892, "that the Albert Head Quarantine station is, in its present condition, absolutely useless for the purpose for which it was established. It is destitute of all the appliances which a quarantine station should have. It is difficult of approach, both by sea and land. It has no wharf to accommodate craft of any kind. The building could afford a rude shelter for a few people for a very short time and little more. They could not be lodged properly and they could not be fed. . . . the water supply is uncertain and terribly scanty. To make matters worse the station has no kind of communication with the capital . . . It is certainly isolated, but its isolation is the isolation of desolation."

Albert Head continued

The website of the Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria describes three burials at Albert Head, all in 1892, all the result of smallpox. Edwin Barry died on July 17, aged 17. He worked as a carpenter at the "Whitaker home in Spring Hill" and has a stone memorial. Two grave markers in the form of wooden crosses state: "Patient of the quarantine station, known only to God." The society believes that they are the graves of Thomas Burrows, a 26-year-old waiter employed at the Victoria Hotel who died on July 13, and William Short, who died on July 15. The oceanside graveyard is not accessible to visitors.

After ten years of haphazard operation, Albert Head was closed and a new station built at William Head, six km further southwest. Albert Head is of special interest to us, though, as it was the site of a short-lived post office, open for two years only, from 1914 to 1916. Markings, unsurprisingly, are very scarce. Tracy Cooper has rated Albert Head as rarity factor E2, or four to six examples reported. We're fortunate to be able to show you a fine cover. The post office was established long after the quarantine station had moved, and long before the headland was fortified with a powerful coastal defence battery (in 1939) to help guard the approaches to the naval base at Esquimalt Harbour. It probably served the local residents, mostly farmers. The postmaster's name was John Foster. Today an army training centre is located at Albert Head.



Left: Chinese Labour Corps at William Head, en route to Europe, 1917. Right: Abandoned quarantine hospital at Dodge Island, 1962. Courtesy BC Archives I-51990 (left), F-06861 (right).

William Head was eventually expanded to include 42 buildings. It proved convenient for screening incoming passengers for infectious diseases; ships from Asia and Australia were checked, as well as ones from the Americas. Thirteen staff families lived on the grounds. While not exactly the last word in comfort, the station did feature a small golf course for the enjoyment of first-class passengers. It could accommodate 120 detainees in first class, 90 in second class and 500 to 800 in third class. A 50-person hospital looked after the ill. The year 1927 saw the largest number of vessels inspected: 1,068. William Head was converted to a minimum-security prison in 1959.

The quarantine station also had jurisdiction over Bentinck Island, just to the south. BC's official leprosarium, bordering a rough stretch of water named Race Passage, was located there from 1924 to 1956. Before that, from 1891 to 1924, the colony had been on D'Arcy Island, northeast of Victoria. Thirteen lepers are buried on Bentinck. Today it is occasionally used as a naval demolition range.

Another early quarantine station was built on the north BC coast near Prince Rupert. A magnificent doctor's house, erected on Digby Island at Dodge Cove by the Department of Immigration, was connected by a wooden bridge to a three-storey quarantine hospital on tiny Dodge Island, just offshore. The hospital was only open for two years, from 1914 to 1916, as the expected influx of immigrants to Prince Rupert never happened. The facility was soon abandoned. Today Digby Island is the site of the Prince Rupert airport. —with files from Brian Copeland and Tracy Cooper

An 1892 epidemic response in Victoria, BC

by Brian Copeland

In July 1892 there was a smallpox outbreak in Victoria. Thirty years earlier there had been an epidemic that was devastating for First Nations people. The 1892 outbreak was smaller (about 100 cases¹), and it mainly affected the white population. Most cases were in Victoria. There were also some in Vancouver and New Westminster, but none in Nanaimo. A Royal Commission co-chaired by Judge Matthew Begbie concluded that the disease had been carried to BC by the steamship *Empress of Japan*.

Figure 1 illustrates a card dated July 9, 1892, from a writer at Kuper Island who had just returned from Victoria. He wrote: "Victoria in a panic on account of Small-pox . . . 200 stricken & the disease spreading." The relevant part of the message is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1. #UX3 card to Liverpool, England, posted on the E&N Railway on July 11, 1892. Dated "Kuper Island, Chemainus, 9 July 1892."

Victoria in a panic on
account of Small-pox, about
200 stricken & the disease
spreading. Sloop nearly
finished. Many many
thanks for your timely
aid
M R

Figure 2. Part of the message on the back of the card in Figure 1.

Until just after this card was written, the outbreak was underplayed by the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, perhaps because of concerns about its effect on commerce. A review of the *Colonist* reveals reports of isolated cases in both Victoria and Vancouver in early July 1892, as well as a couple of editorials calling for vaccinations and for the authorities to do more, but without detail as to what was going on.² On July 9, a report from Nanaimo said, "The smallpox scare is here, caused by the report of a number of cases in Victoria." It was not until July 10 that the smallpox outbreak made the front page of the *Colonist*. An editorial in the paper entitled "Lying rumors" claimed that someone sent a telegram to a Seattle newspaper saying that there were 60 cases in Victoria, while others claimed 100 or 150, and one "stalwart liar" reported 200 cases. (This is the number claimed by the writer of the card illustrated.) The editorial went on to say that there were in fact

Victoria epidemic continued

“only” 35 cases. The outbreak was heavily reported in the paper for the rest of July and into the early part of August, by which time it had been contained.

Government regulations were issued on July 12 requiring compulsory vaccinations and social distancing (the health officer could ban meetings and gatherings of more than six people, including picnics, excursions, etc). Prior to that, some businesses had been proactive in trying to reduce risks (see *Figure 3*). Those infected and their houses had already been quarantined; further details on quarantines were included in the regulations.

Figure 3.
Daily Colonist,
July 10, 1892, p 1.

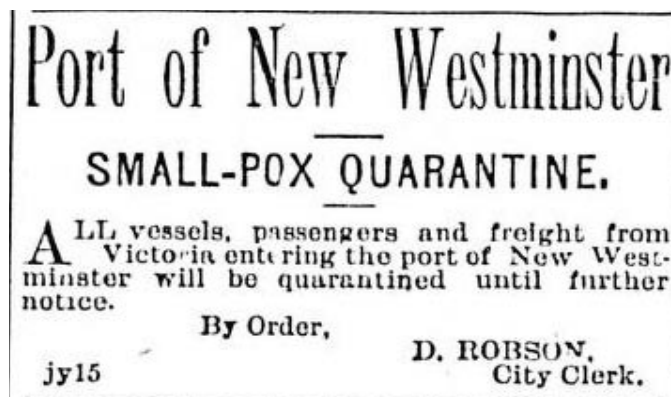
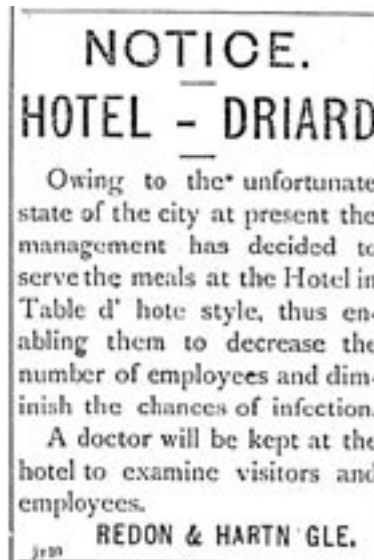


Figure 4.
Daily Colonist,
July 16, 1892, p 8.

On July 13, Vancouver announced that it was shutting off access to the city for travellers from Victoria. The headline on the *Colonist* article was “Vancouver exhibits a spirit of malevolence that surprises even Victorians.” The next day the Canadian Pacific Navigation Co steamship *Yosemite* was prevented from docking in Vancouver by a row of policemen, the fire department armed with a water hose, and 500 citizens. Captain Rudlin backed off, but landed his passengers at Port Moody instead. (Vancouver issued a summons for his arrest.) An injunction was obtained from Judge Crease against Vancouver, requiring it to allow steamers to dock, but it was not initially complied with. On July 15, New Westminster announced that it would allow passengers from Victoria to land, but both passengers and freight would be quarantined (see *Figure 4*). Seattle, Tacoma and Port Townsend denied entry to passengers from Victoria.

The mail was also affected. On July 13, the *Colonist* reported that the health officer from Port Townsend, Washington, would not allow outgoing mail from Victoria to board a ship bound for his home port because the Puget Sound Board of Health had ordered that all mail from Victoria be fumigated in an airtight room for 24 hours. The Victoria postmaster, Noah Shakespeare, wired Ottawa for instructions. On July 14 the *Colonist* reported: “Ever since the first cases were reported in the city, the mails have been regularly disinfected on coming into and before going out of the post office . . . but the method of disinfection differs from that prescribed by the American authorities.” While awaiting instructions from Ottawa, a suitable

Victoria epidemic continued

room for 24-hour fumigation was prepared in the back of the post office. The *Colonist* continued: "This 'smoke house' is now ready for use and the accumulated three day's mail will go forward tonight." As for mail to the rest of Canada, "there has been no interruption in the Provincial and Eastern service, all mails leaving on time, after being properly disinfected." Sandy Clark, in an article in the *PHSC Journal*,³ notes that Post Office Department records indicate that the Puget Sound health authorities suggested fumigation with burning sulphur. Sealed packages and letters were to be perforated to ensure that the contents were disinfected. Fumigation began on July 14 and continued for about two weeks. Certification that fumigation had been carried out was required to be sent with the mail. Clark says that he is not aware of any surviving copies of the certificates of disinfection.

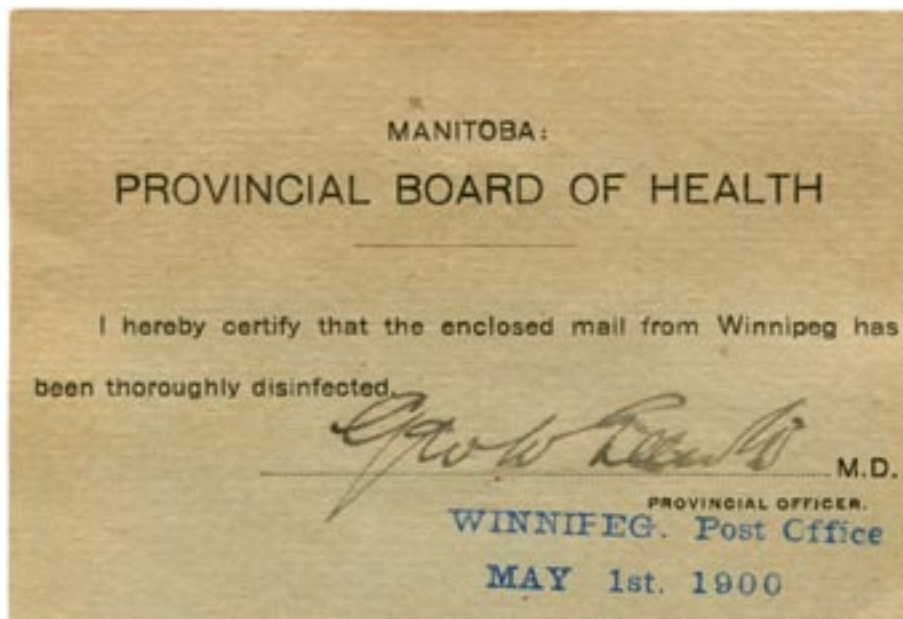


Figure 5. A card from the Winnipeg post office dated May 1, 1900. It is signed by a provincial health officer and states "I hereby certify that the enclosed mail from Winnipeg has been thoroughly disinfected."

A few years later, in May 1900, there was a smallpox outbreak in Winnipeg (again originating with a passenger who crossed the Pacific on one of the *Empresses*⁴), and the situation was reversed—mail coming into Victoria from Winnipeg was disinfected. The *Colonist* reported on May 4, 1900: "All mail from Winnipeg, where smallpox is prevalent, is being fumigated before entering British Columbia." The *Kootenay Mail* reported on the same day that if the authorities in Winnipeg failed to fumigate the mail, then "the BC government will do so at the boundary."

An example of a certificate that accompanied bags of disinfected mail from Winnipeg on May 1, 1900, is shown in *Figure 5*. Although this certificate came with mail to Lethbridge, it is likely that similar certificates accompanied mail to BC. The card was found by Gray Scrimgeour in a scrapbook kept by John D Higinbotham, who was postmaster at Lethbridge, Alberta, from 1888 until 1910.

Footnotes

¹ "Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the late epidemic outbreak of Smallpox in the Province of British Columbia," *British Columbia Sessional Papers, 1893*, p 507-518.

² Unless otherwise indicated the dated references in what follows refer to articles in the *Daily Colonist*, available online at <http://www.britishcolonist.ca>

³ A M (Sandy) Clark, "Canada: Disinfection of Mail, 1885-1903," *PHSC Journal*, No 105, March 2001, pp 17-20.

⁴ Ian Carr, Robert E. Beamish. *Manitoba Medicine: A Brief History*. University of Manitoba Press, 1999.

Edward & Isabel Arthur: pioneer Nelson doctors

by Ed Mannings

Dr Edward Arthur moved to the pioneer town of Nelson, BC, in August of 1890, where he built a home and set up his medical hall. He advertised himself as a physician, surgeon and accoucheur (obstetrician), installer of dental fillings and "purveyor of pure drugs, chemicals and patent medicines." He also set up a school for children in his home. His wife Isabel had stayed in Ontario to give birth to their baby daughter, who unfortunately died in early 1891. Isabel made the decision to move out to Nelson to join her husband in the rough pioneer town. Tragedy struck again when their infant son died in 1893.



A two-cent domestic mourning cover, dated Jan 22, 1906, from Brighton, Ontario, to Edward Arthur, MD.

Pioneer doctors continued

The deaths of her two children convinced Isabel to become a medical doctor, so she attended medical school in Oregon from 1894 to 1897, then returned to Nelson where she set up a private practice in her house and was appointed a medical health officer. Child welfare was always her primary focus.

Her husband Edward also became a medical health officer, for the new Kootenay Lake Hospital Society. In addition, he became quite involved in mining ventures around Nelson. During the First World War, Edward misrepresented his age by ten years, and entered active service at the age of 59, where he served in France as a medic.

Isabel refused to “prostitute her profession” by issuing liquor prescriptions during prohibition. But Isabel suffered from poor health as she aged, and predeceased Edward in 1923. Edward lived until 1932 and maintained a robust schedule and served on dozens of community organizations. Both doctors Arthur were prominent, involved citizens in their beloved adopted home of Nelson.

(The author wishes to thank Ron Welwood of Nelson for the information included in this brief story. To learn more about the doctors Arthur, see *British Columbia History* magazine, Summer 2014, for Ron’s full article, “Discarded and recovered: Dr E C Arthur fonds.”)

Fight the Flu!

How to Avoid the Spanish Influenza and How to Do Your Bit to Check the Prevailing Epidemic. Do You Value Your Own and Neighbor's Life?

CAUSE Spanish Influenza is caused by the entrance into the system of two germs or Micro-Organisms, which produce poison in the blood. 1-Parainfluenza, the germ of ordinary influenza or grippe. 2-Streptococci, a very violent and poisonous germ which causes the severe fever, weakness and the disastrous results. Both these germs are invisible to the naked eye, but are none the less viciously dangerous.

CONTAGION The disease spreads largely by direct contact. Germs pass from mouth or nose of sick person to mouth or nose of well person, being carried in droplets on the stream of moisture; or in sneezing or coughing. Also through any article which has touched patient's mouth or nose, as cups, spoons, handkerchiefs, towels, etc. Therefore if you would be safe, keep the germs out of your mouth and nose. And if you are infected, do not pass them on. They are poison. Better safe than sorry. Better safe than cause sorrow.

This is no common grippe. It is a violent epidemic and in some forms a deadly plague. Let Doctors, Nurses, Ministers and Undertakers tell you how dangerous.

Prevention.

1. **Avoid the Other Fellow's Breath**
If he is infected his breath may poison you. Especially avoid the man who coughs or sneezes.
2. **Be Unsociable for a Change**
Allow no visitors. Keep children in their own yard. Stay away from home where influenza is.
3. **Spray Mouth and Nose Several Times a Day**
Use Listerine 1 part to 4 parts of water.
4. **When Near an Infected Person, Wear a Mask**
The mask is made of 4 folds of cheese cloth about 4 in. by 5 in. to cover mouth and nose. Use elastic or tape to top and bottom of each side and keep over ear or tie behind head.
5. **Moisten the Mask Occasionally**
Use either Listerine, 1 to 4 parts of water, or Carbolic Acid, 1 teaspoonful to 1 pint water or Bichloride of Mercury, 1 tablet to 1 quart of water. Do not wear same mask more than 2 hours. Roll used masks 30 minutes and dry thoroughly. Wear same side out.
6. **Nurses or Neighbors Going into Infected Houses**
Must wear mask, wash hands thoroughly and spray mouth and nose before returning home. Also lay off outside garment and leave in air for an hour. Antiseptic hand wash is 1 teaspoonful Bichloride of Mercury liquid (see 5) to small basin of water.
7. **Isolate the Patient**
Let none but party nursing enter room. Boil all patients' dishes. Disinfect or burn the clothes into which patient coughs or expectorates.
8. **Patients are Germ Carriers for Several Days**
after fever is over. Well people in infected houses should protect themselves and the public by isolation when at home and by disinfecting themselves.
9. **Use Disinfectants Freely**
Wash hands freely. Do not use towel others use.
10. **Funerals Must be Strictly Private**
Mourners should bring the last look on their loved ones' face, because of possible contagion.

Treatment of Sick.

If feeling Grippy With Headache
cessant soreness, muscular pains and fever GO TO BED AT ONCE. Get up post-prandially with hot drinks and use Aspirin or Acetophen, 5 grain tablet every 4 hours. Take medicine to open bowels freely.

Take Liquid Foods Only
Milk, milk and eggs, broth, soups about every 4 hours. Have plenty of fresh air without a draught.

Get a Physician as Soon as Possible
Be Slow to Get Up Exposure is dangerous.

THE COURAGEOUS, CHEERFUL, MIND IS A SPLENDOR MEDICINE.

Danger Signals!

If Patient spits blood, especially if bright red, if shows blueness on lips or tips of ears, duskiness of face or a sort of gurgling when breathing. CALL DOCTOR AT ONCE.

Bulletin is prepared by the Nanaimo Board of Health. Free Copies can be obtained by calling or phoning City Clerk, Nanaimo, B.C.

KEEP THIS - - POST IT UP - - IT MAY SAVE A LIFE

Don't Come Out Before You Are Cured

Stay at home at least one week if you have had influenza. Your room is better than your company for that length of time.

Don't try to "stick it out" if you feel ill. Give up and go home and stay there and save your employer perhaps hundreds of dollars by not disorganizing his business.

Don't expectorate on streets or in public places. The germ of influenza is in the throat. If you have it, keep it to yourself as far as possible.

Don't get into a panic over this thing. Just use common sense and be careful and keep away from it as far as it is possible—it is very infectious.

ISABEL ARTHUR, M.D.,
Medical Health Officer.

Nelson, B.C., Oct. 22, 1918.

Left: a blunt newspaper notice about the Spanish influenza issued by Dr Isabel Arthur, dated Oct 31, 1918. Right: many similar leaflets were printed to advise people about the “flu.” This one is courtesy the Nanaimo Board of Health.

The utilitarian *Sardonyx* and early BC ship mail

by *Morris Beattie*

When it comes to the earliest recorded example of a ship marking on cover from the coast of British Columbia, the honour (so far) goes to the steamship *Sardonyx*, with two examples from 1889. Mail had been transported along the coast since colonial times, starting with the ships of the Hudson's Bay Co, but the vessels were generally not identified. Ship markings were eventually applied to mail for advertising and tracking purposes, and to assist in gaining lucrative mail contracts from the federal government.

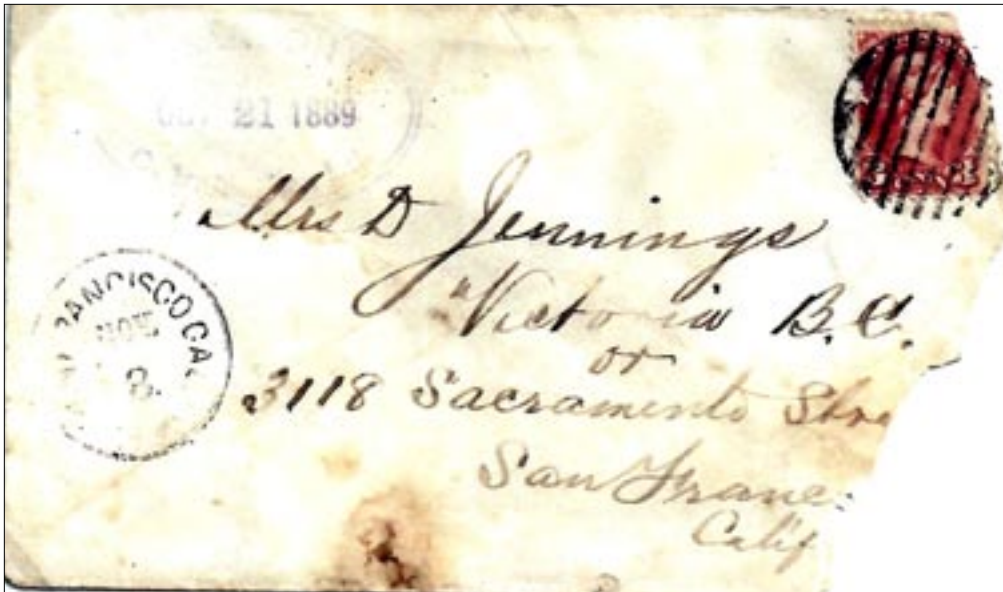
The *Sardonyx* was a 52-metre, single-screw, 560-ton iron steamer built at Greenock, Scotland, in 1869 and brought to the BC coast in 1882, arriving at Victoria on May 20 of that year. It was labelled the "Utilitarian *Sardonyx*," as it lacked the amenities that had quickly become expected for coastal vessels, including modern fittings and equipment. As ships go, it was simply a workhorse. Following a five-year period during which it had a varied career visiting San Francisco, China and Mexico, the now 18-year-old freighter was purchased in 1887 by the Canadian Pacific Navigation Co. By this time the CPR's tracks had reached Hastings Mill at Vancouver, and Captain John Irving of the CPN saw an opportunity to operate as a feeder system for the railway. The *Sardonyx* was acquired to run on a Portland-Victoria-Vancouver route. It also served BC's north-coast communities as evidenced by the mail examples that follow.



The Sardonyx at Victoria Harbour. Photo by Richard Maynard (1832-1907). Sardonyx is a veined, reddish-brown gemstone prized for thousands of years for its beauty and rumoured metaphysical properties.

The Sardonyx continued

The *Sardonyx* had a very brief career in BC, as it was wrecked on June 13, 1890, along the east coast of Haida Gwaii near Skidegate, when it ran hard onto an uncharted reef near Sentinel Island. The mail carried that day is reported to have been saved.



BC's earliest reported ship cancel—the Sardonyx, Oct 21, 1889—on a torn and sadly damaged cover, but still an important historical artifact.

A much better example of the Sardonyx ship cancel, dated Dec 30, 1889.



After the wreck of the Sardonyx, the 14 passengers and the crew, in four lifeboats, rowed 50 km to Skidegate (with the mail). A smaller group then sailed for two days across Hecate Strait to Inverness Cannery at the mouth of the Skeena River. From there they travelled by steamship to Victoria.

The earliest reported ship cancellation (above, top), dated Oct 21, 1889, with a Nov 8 San Francisco receiver on the face, consists of a very faint oval marking (Topping type 01-OD) with the date in the middle, "S.S. SARDONYX" above and "C.P.N. Co., Ltd." below. A clear example of the same ship cancel dated a few months later, Dec 30, 1889, is shown below and is the latest recorded strike. Both covers were addressed to Mrs D Jennings in San Francisco. They both likely originated at Fort Simpson on the north coast where her husband, Rev D Jennings, was located, and were mailed aboard the *Sardonyx*. They entered the postal system at Victoria for dispatch to San Francisco, receiving a ten-bar killer on the front, indicating "way mail." The example shown at bottom has a Victoria CDS on the back dated Dec 31, 1889, and a San Francisco receiving cancel dated Jan 6, 1890.

Unusual destinations (number 1 in a series)

by Tracy Cooper

The accompanying cover was mailed to Edward Stanley at Keffi, Nigeria, Africa, from Vancouver on June 24, 1903, and arrived at its destination on July 8, 1903. Keffi, at the time, was a very small town in what later became Nasarawa State in Nigeria. It was then—and continues to be now—a “local government area,” responsible for the delivery of official services in the central part of the country.

In 1902 Keffi was the location of an incident that led to the British invasion of northern Nigeria, after the “magaji,” an official of the Zaria sultan, killed a British officer. The magaji took refuge in the neighbouring town of Kano, and Sir Frederick Lugard (British soldier, explorer and colonial administrator) took advantage of the incident to invade and subdue the northern caliphate.

Edward Stanley—officially Edward George Villiers Stanley, 17th Earl of Derby—was born April 4, 1865, and known as Lord Stanley from 1893 to 1908. He was a British soldier, a Conservative politician and statesman, an ambassador to France and, between 1901 and 1903, the Financial Secretary to the War Office. Commissioned as a lieutenant in a militia unit, he served in a staff role in the Second Boer War in what is now South Africa. Interestingly enough, he became Postmaster General for the United Kingdom between 1903 and 1905, and was in Keffi, either on military or post office business in July 1903.

Covers to Africa in the Victorian period are scarce, and covers with a historical connection even more so.

The Editor solicits other readers to send and share their unusual “BC to the world” covers of any period.

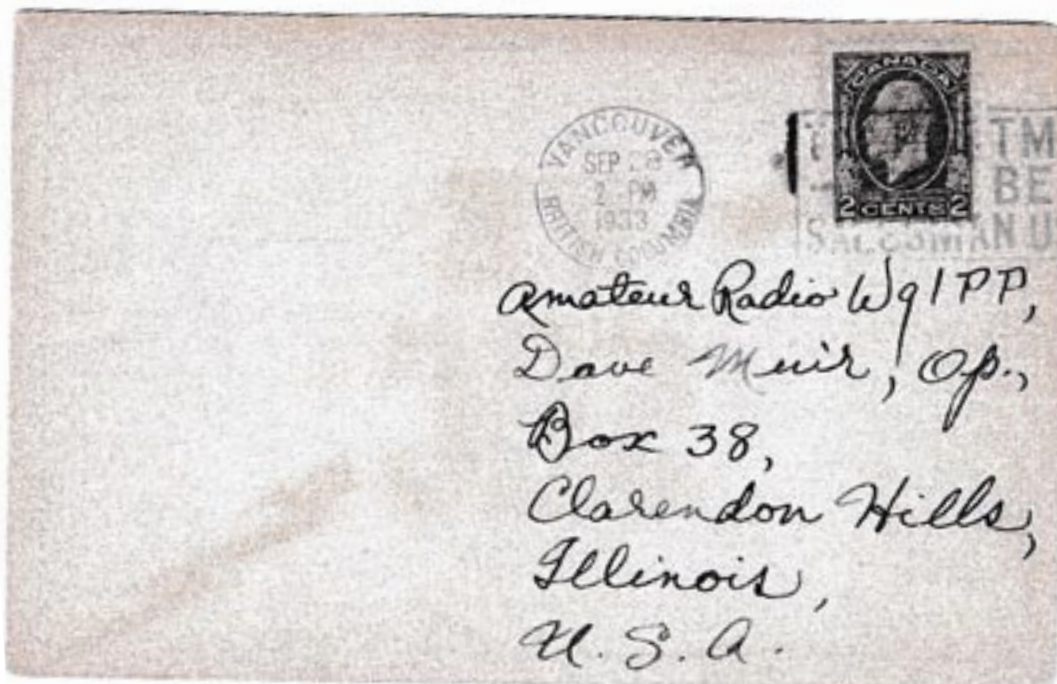


Two-cent Empire rate from Vancouver; June 24, 1903, duplex to Nigeria; July 8, 1903, receiving backstamp; unreadable transit backstamp.

BC's ham radio operators and QSL cards

by *Glenna Metchette*

"Amateur" or "ham" radio is a proven, reliable means of communication during disasters and other urgent situations. In British Columbia, Emergency Management BC (a division of the Ministry of Public Safety) is linked with hundreds of licensed volunteer radio operators. "Hams" train regularly and take part in emergency exercises in order to be prepared for any crisis that arises. There are 70,000 ham operators in Canada; BC has almost 19,000, the third largest number provincially.



This VE5HQ (QSL) card was mailed by Gordon Brooke from Eburne, BC, on Sept 28, 1933, to Dave Muir (WG1PP) at Clarendon Hills, Illinois. At that time, BC's call sign was VE5. The card is franked with a 2-cent Medallion issue stamp; the slogan cancel (T-205) reads "The Postman Is Your Best Salesman." Eburne, named after pioneer settler and merchant Harry Eburne, was located on Sea Island in the mouth of the Fraser River.

QSL cards continued

Even in these days of the internet and email, many hams enjoy collecting QSL postcards, which confirm that radio contact has been made. ("QSL" is radio code for "I confirm receipt of your transmission.") The sending of QSL cards dates back to the 1920s, when AM radio broadcasts were still a novelty and stations wanted to know how far away they were being received. Later on, the cards played an important role in amateur radio awards and competitions. Many older and visually attractive cards are highly sought after.

After WWI, the world awoke to commercial radio broadcasts, a mysterious and exciting entertainment that quickly captured everyone's imagination. The EKKO Co of Chicago exploited the new technology by hiring the American Bank Note Co to design and produce "radio verification stamps" with the same high quality as postage stamps, thus combining stamp collecting with the new pastime of listening to radio broadcasts from far away. This advertising gimmick soon became a national craze; for a brief period, collecting radio stamps rivalled postage stamp collecting. Usually referred to as "cinderellas" by today's collectors, the stamps were bought by radio stations to use as a marketing tool. When their listeners provided written confirmation that they had heard a particular broadcast, the station would send them a verified reception stamp with the station's call letters. After their moment of fame, the stamps became a mere curiosity for more than 50 years, but collector interest rebounded in the 1980s and has since seen steady growth. Prices for rare examples can reach today into the hundreds of dollars. While EKKO stamps dominate collections, issues produced by other companies sell at a premium and will likely enjoy greater appreciation in value in the future.



*Left and centre: EKKO verified radio reception stamps from New York (WRNY) and Minnesota (WCAL).
Right: non-EKKO Magnolia Petroleum Co (KFD) stamp with "Magnolene" overprint.*

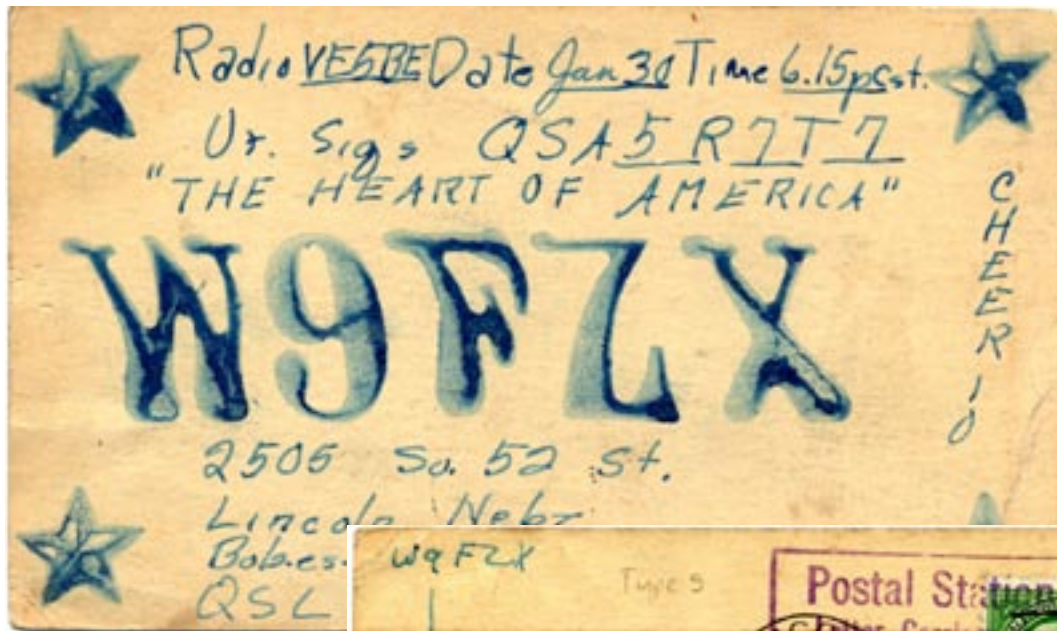
Ham radio call sign license plates, which make it easier to identify operators during a disaster, were officially authorized for use in BC in 1963. The impetus for their approval was the 1948 Fraser Valley flood, during which the Fraser River reached a peak elevation of 7.6 metres at Mission. Before the waters receded, more than a dozen diking systems had been breached, and nearly a third of the entire lower Fraser Valley floodplain was underwater. The floods severed the two transcontinental rail lines; inundated the Trans-Canada Highway; covered urban areas such as Agassiz, Rosedale and part of Mission; and deposited a layer of silt, driftwood and other debris over the entire region. The estimated damage amounted to \$20 million (about \$214 million in 2020 dollars).

As a child, I remember the day my father, a Bank of Montreal manager, was directed by head office to fly over the area to assess the damage. He came home devastated, and not just because my grandparents had to be evacuated from their farm. They were only two of the 16,000 people forced to leave. At that time, the Surrey CB Radio Sentries and Surrey Civil Defense acted as wardens of communication. By 1961 Surrey was operating its own civil defense van, a mobile ham radio unit.

In 2016, more than 60 organizations and 600 people took part in a three-day training exercise on Vancouver Island. They practised responding to an imaginary magnitude 9 earthquake and several tsunami waves striking Port Alberni. When all communication was cut off, amateur radio operators were the first to step in with a call for help to the outside. "The operators made history," said Naomi Yamamoto, BC's emergency preparedness minister, "by communicating directly with a Canadian Forces aircraft on amateur radio frequencies. The radio volunteers proved their worth as a vital lifeline during a disaster."

QSL cards continued

During the 2017 Cariboo wild fires, the fiber optic cable that carried telephone and internet to the west Chilcotin was destroyed. Using repeater stations, ham radio operators were able to pass on information. An elderly lady went missing in a very remote location at a fly-in lodge south of Charlotte Lake, the second largest lake in the Chilcotins. Only the Cariboo Chilcotin Amateur Radio Society's (CCARS) radio repeater near Nimpo Lake could reach into the area. Michal Smialowski and another local radio operator aided West Chilcotin Search and Rescue with their communication needs. When a restaurant fire in Alexis Creek burned the fiber optic cable again, all points west were without phone or internet for 12 hours. CCARS radio operators were able to send important information to Williams Lake. Many of the repeater stations are at remote mountain top locations and are often solar powered. Smialowski says, "Short wave radio is alive and well in the ham community. It is the ultimate in infrastructure independent radio that allows us to communicate with the outside world."



Colourful incoming QSL card from Lincoln, Nebraska, dated Mar 1, 1935. Redirected at Letter Carrier's Branch, Postal Station "D," Vancouver, on Mar 13.



British Columbia enjoys a much higher rate of growth in amateur radio operators than the rest of the country. The Vancouver Emergency Community Telecommunications Organization (VECTOR) has become a leading provider of amateur radio license training in BC, teaching 75 to 100 students annually. VECTOR designs, implements and maintains an emergency-oriented voice and data communications network across Vancouver. They are aligned with the city's Office of Emergency Management, the Vancouver Police Department, Emergency Social Services, and Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services. They bring together the power of ordinary citizens and amateur radio in times of emergency and disaster.

QSL cards continued



Another incoming QSL card, this one from Portland, Oregon, dated June 17, 1935. Redirected at Letter Carrier's Branch, Postal Station "D," Vancouver, on June 19.



Vancouver Island's Ed Gorse has been a licensed ham operator for 37 years. "We have six people in Sooke who form the Sooke Emergency Group," he told me. "People don't realize that we are not only able to talk to others, we can communicate through emails, retrieve data . . . and essentially do everything needed to communicate with the outside world." That communication is done through a service called Winlink, an all-volunteer project of the Amateur Radio Safety Foundation, a non-profit public benefit corporation. Sooke Fire Rescue Chief Kenn Mount said, "These are guys who can jury rig antennas, fix radios, basically respond no matter what happens. That's the kind of people you'll want around if the worst happens."

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