



BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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This realphoto viewcard was a welcome eBay find for study group chair Tim Woodland. The house, which still stands, was built about 1910 in Pitt Meadows by Alvo von Alvensleben, a flamboyant Prussian nobleman, financier and alleged spy who owned land in the area but never occupied the home. Von Alvensleben was interned in the US during WWI (for more on this notable entrepreneur, see BC newsletter #99, September 2016, page 943).

Sent to Ferdinand, Idaho, on March 20, 1913, the

card has a clear dispatch strike of the rare Pitt River split-ring—only the second report of this postmark. The post office operated very briefly—from Feb 15 to Nov 15, 1911, and then again from Mar 1, 1913, to Feb 28, 1915—probably because railway double-tracking and bridge-building were taking place. The office closed when a new single-lane car bridge opened, and mail began arriving by automobile rather than by train. Thanks to Leslie Norman of the Pitt Meadows Museum for background information.

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Special agents now and then

Study group member **Gary Steele** sent along this rather unusual scan. We're guessing that a piece of an envelope with an uncanceled 3-cent stamp had been cut out and then illegally reused on a cover to San Francisco. The offending item was first



forwarded to a PO Dept Special Agent on Nov 11, 1898. Would this have been at Ottawa, Gary asks? Then the cover went to the PO Inspector's Office in Victoria, where the stamp was cancelled on November 18 (note that the Special Agent hadn't obliterated the stamp). Gary also asks "was there another Special Agent datestamp used for BC?" He mentions that the cover was unsealed, and that this nefarious incident occurred just before the 3-cent domestic and US rates were reduced to two cents.

On the other side of the continent, a US subscriber showed us the envelope his June *BC Postal History Newsletter* arrived in, after it was opened and examined by the US Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection Agency.



On a completely different topic, Victoria member **Larry Margetish** writes that he is looking for a 16-page monograph about the Vancouver Mail Processing Plant (MPP) mentioned by Bill Topping on page 57 (Vol 2 No 4) of the *BC Postal History Newsletter*. If anyone has a scanned copy of the monograph that could be emailed to Larry at Lmargeti@shaw.ca, he would be deeply grateful.

Subscription renewal time

Print subscriptions are now due, at the annual rate of \$15, in Canadian funds for addresses in Canada, and in US funds for addresses south of the border. Please send cheques to the editor at the address below. Please keep in mind that emailed digital subscriptions continue to be **free**. (You can, of course, have both types of subscriptions.)

If you wish to receive the digital edition, please make sure we have your email address. You can also download the newsletter from our file-sharing sites (see below). This is the last issue that we can honour 2019 print subscriptions. If we have your email address, we will shift any remaining unpaid print subscriptions to digital for the December issue.

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The Chantrell Family Correspondence

by Gray Scrimgeour

I have just over 20 covers addressed to the Chantrell family in British Columbia. I got most of them in two batches: a gift from Howard Ness of Spokane in 2003, and purchases on eBay from Ruby Stamps, a short-lived postal history store in California. I have added a few covers purchased from Tom Watkins. I didn't realize the importance of some of these covers to the postal history of Surrey, BC, until I started to research them. I suspect other collectors in our group have Chantrell covers that could enhance my story. There probably are also Chantrell covers with collectors of Washington state postal history.

Biographical Material

The community of Elgin was located where the Semiahmoo Road crossed the Nikomekl River¹. John Barstow Chantrell (1846–1917), called "Batt" by his wife, came to Elgin in 1873 with his brother Henry Dennis "Harry" Chantrell (1851–1910). That was the year that construction of the road from Brownsville



Figure 1. Cover from St Paul, Minnesota, mailed May 20 (1876) to J B Chantrell Esq, Mud Bay, New Westminster, British Columbia. The only backstamp is a Victoria postmark dated June 1, 1876. Carried by stage from New Westminster.

(now South Westminster) to Semiahmoo (now called Blaine) was started. Both men, originally from England, are listed as living in Mud Bay in the 1877-1878 Guide to the Province of BC², and as farmers living in Mud Bay in the 1885 voters list for New Westminster District. J B Chantrell, however, had moved to Victoria before 1885. In the 1882-83 British Columbia Directory, Rev John B Chantrell is listed as a pastor of the Reformed Episcopal Church in Victoria. He was still assisting at services there in 1893. By 1887, he is listed as a clerk at the bankers Garesche & Green Co. Also in 1887, he sold 65 hectares of farmland in Elgin to Daniel Johnson³. In the 1894 Williams Directory, he is listed as a clerk at Green, Worlock & Co; this bank failed in 1894. In 1895, J B Chantrell's only Victoria address is his residence. He next shows up in the British Columbia Gazette on Sept 10, 1896, as a mining broker in a "memorandum of association" for the Rainy Day Gold Mining Co Ltd of Rossland, BC. This company had an office at 111½ Columbia Ave in Rossland. After 1898, J B Chantrell is not listed in any BC directory. He was living in Spokane, Washington, when his brother died in 1910, and he himself died Nov 17, 1917, in Spokane. His death is reported in the Nov 20, 1917, Colonist: "Deaths. Chantrell—At Spokane, Wash, USA on Saturday, Nov 17, John Barstow Chantrell, a native of Gargrave, Yorkshire, aged 72."

Elgin was made a Canada Customs entry port in 1880. William McDougall was the customs officer until 1886, when Harry Chantrell took over the job. Chantrell was transferred to the Douglas border customs

Chantrell Family continued

office in 1891 when the New Westminster Southern Railway opened⁴. In the 1889 British Columbia Directory, he is listed in Elgin as "Chantrell, H D JP, farmer." In the 1891 Canada Census, he is listed as "Chantrell, Hy D, age 38, Customs Officer." In the 1894 and 1895 Williams directories, he is listed in Elgin as "Chantrell H D fmr and customs preventive officer." A 1906 newspaper report says he is a customs officer in Blaine. A 1907 directory lists him as a customs officer at Douglas, BC.



Figure 2 (above). Cover from St Thomas, Ontario, mailed June 1, 1877 to H D Chantrell Esq, New Westminster, British Columbia. The cover transited Victoria on June 18 and New Westminster on June 19. J B Chantrell's wife was from St. Thomas.
 Figure 3 (below). Cover from Victoria to Mrs H D Chantrell, Blaine, Washington. Carried by train from New Westminster.



Chantrell Family continued

H D Chantrell was one of 96 people who died on March 1, 1910, in the Wellington Avalanche on the Great Northern Railway—the worst avalanche in US history. Two trains were snowed in at Wellington (now called Tye, near Stevens Pass) for six days. Heavy snow turned to rain, then lightning triggered a massive avalanche. The memorial website⁵ lists “H D Chantrell, 50, customs officer at Blaine, Wash. Survived by brother, Spokane; son, Seattle.” I believe it should read “customs officer at Douglas, BC, near Blaine, Wash.”



Figure 4 (above). Postal stationery card addressed to H D Chantrell at the non-post office point of Douglas, BC. Figure 5 (below). Double-weight cover from Elgin, BC to J B Chantrell in Victoria, posted on June 6, 1891.



There is vagueness about the use of the town name “Blaine.” When Harry Chantrell was customs agent, did he live in Douglas or in Blaine, Washington? I presume he lived in Douglas, east of the present Peace Arch Park. By the early 1890s, Canada had a customs office located just north of the boundary line, about halfway between the present-day Peace Arch and the Pacific Highway crossing⁶. The border crossing remained

Chantrell Family continued

there until 1932⁷. The Heritage Branch of the BC government explains that the community of Douglas was named after Benjamin Douglas, president of the New Westminster Southern Railway. Douglas called the border townsite “Blane [sic], BC.” The small community on the Canadian side with this customs office “was, somewhat confusingly, known as Blaine, BC, for 15 or 20 years before being renamed Douglas.”⁸ In March 1893, J B Chantrell’s wife wrote in a letter that she was going to Blaine, undoubtedly to visit H D Chantrell and his wife at Douglas. In 1966, the government listed the Canada Customs Department facility on the Pacific Highway as Douglas; the more familiar Peace Arch crossing is 1.5 km west. However, these entry points often are called the Truck Crossing (Pacific Highway) and Douglas (Peace Arch).



Figure 6. Cover to J B Chantrell posted August 30, 1892, at New Westminster, probably way mail carried by train from Douglas. Note the pencil record on the envelope.

Mail Service and Covers

A mail stage between New Westminster and Semiahmoo started operating on the Semiahmoo Road (which was the first north-south wagon road in Surrey) in 1874. Mud Bay post office, four km north of Elgin, opened July 1, 1881, and served Mud Bay and Elgin residents. The Elgin post office opened on Nov 1, 1885. Prior to the opening of these two offices, mail for Elgin was brought by the stages, and probably left at the stage stop in Elgin (see examples in *Figures 1 and 2*). J Woodward held the contract for weekly mail transportation from New Westminster to Mud Bay from July 1, 1881. In 1887, this became a 19-km route to Elgin. The stage operated until 1891, when it was replaced by the service of the New Westminster Southern Railway. This subsidiary of the Great Northern Railway ran from the Fraser River through Cloverdale to the border at Blaine. (The present BNSF Railway line through White Rock and Crescent Beach did not open until 1909. Douglas, BC—the border post where H D Chantrell worked—had no post office. *Figure 3* presents a cover from Victoria (Jan 10, 1893) to Mrs Henry D Chantrell, Blaine, Washington, that would have been carried on this railway and picked up at the nearby Blaine post office (there is a Jan 11, 1891, Blaine backstamp). *Figure 4* shows a postal stationery card from New Westminster sent in 1903 to H D Chantrell, Douglas, BC. It probably was dropped from the train at the Douglas station as way mail.

The remainder of my covers are addressed to J B Chantrell or his wife in Victoria. They go from 1891 to 1895. The earliest, shown in *Figure 5*, was mailed in Elgin on June 6, 1891, transited New Westminster the same day, and reached Victoria on June 7.

I have four other covers in the same handwriting, sent to Victoria in 1892 and 1893. The earliest of these (*Figure 6*) entered the mail stream at New Westminster on August 30, 1892. It is addressed to J B Chantrell Esq, care of Green Worlock & Co. (Francis Gaeresche, of the bank Garesche & Green Co, had died in the sinking of

Chantrell Family continued

the Pacific in November 1875.) The cover is endorsed in pencil: "1 Sep 92 heartbroken—wants to get 1000 in [hurry?] & my advice, wrote him & sent him 100.00 same day & wired him also." I assume that this cover was sent to J B Chantrell by his brother H D Chantrell. I have not been able to find out what the family calamity was. However, H D Chantrell's wife Eva Alice died on April 7, 1893, giving birth to a daughter.



Figure 7 (above). Cover posted on the C.P.R., M.C./BRIT COL West on October 1, 1892. Received in Victoria with the backstamp 0/OC 2/92 (timemark 0 was used at midnight). Figure 8 (below). Cover from Wallasey (September 8, 1894) with the stamp cancelled at Liverpool the same day. A pencil note on the reverse says, "Mother dead".



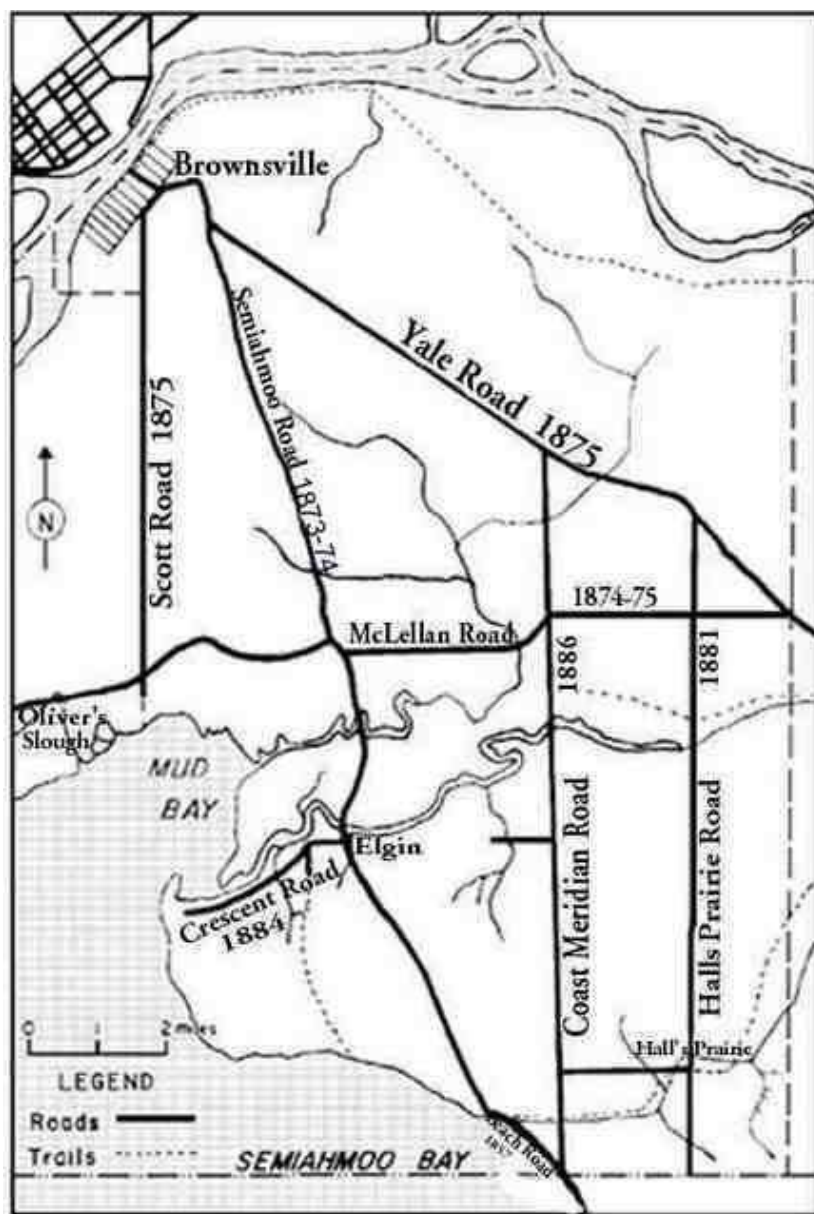
I have seven 1892 Chantrell family covers sent to Mrs J B Chantrell in Victoria with originating RPO. postmarks. One is shown in Figure 7. The only backstamp they bear is Victoria, two days after the originating mark. I have concluded that these covers were put on the New Westminster Southern train at Douglas as way mail, travelled across the Fraser by ferry and were transferred to the CPR train to

Chantrell Family continued

Westminster Junction (Coquitlam). Finally they were postmarked on board the westbound transcontinental train before reaching Vancouver. Brian Copeland has an 1895 cover from Elgin to Vancouver bearing a Cloverdale transit postmark. This represents another mail route from South Surrey. I have one cover from Blaine, Washington, to J B Chantrell in Victoria; it was posted on October 10, 1895, transited New Westminster on October 11, and reached Victoria and was delivered on October 12. It would have been carried by the New Westminster Southern Railway.

Between 1892 and 1894, there are four covers from England. The earliest was a mourning cover mailed in Liscard, Cheshire, on April 13, 1892. The latest (*Figure 8*) was mailed at Wallasey, Cheshire (backstamp), and forwarded from Liverpool. It says "Keep this" on the front and "Mother dead" on the reverse. The death date in 1894 of J B Chantrell's mother, Mary Ann, is not available.

The Chantrell correspondence provides novel postal history. The covers also are related to important social history. We can see some of the family events and trials through the covers. The Chantrell brothers of Elgin, BC, are commemorated in Surrey by Chantrell Creek, Chantrell Park and the Elgin Chantrell neighbourhood.



Roads Constructed in Surrey until 1886

Acknowledgements:

I thank Brian Copeland for many helpful discussions about mail distribution on the Mainland.

References:

1. Elgin-Port Elgin, surreyhistory.ca/elgin.html
2. Applicable British Columbia city directories online at <https://bccd.vpl.ca/>
3. Fallowfield—a Family History, <https://www.surreyhistory.ca/fallowfieldfamily.html>
4. Custom Entry ports in Surrey, surreyhistory.ca/customsentry.html
5. Victim List, Wellington Avalanche, <https://qahistory.org/victims-list/>
6. apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/25223.html
7. F. Thirkell and B. Scullion, *Places Remembered: Greater Vancouver, New Westminster and the Fraser Valley*, Heritage House, Surrey (1997) pp 70-71
8. Blaine—Thumbnail History, www.historylink.org/File/9148

From Surrey History: <https://www.surreyhistory.ca/muniroads.html>

Two unpaid 1866 covers from the US to Victoria

by Gray Scrimgeour and Tracy Cooper

When we started a discussion of unpaid stampless covers from the United States to Vancouver Island, we discovered we had very similar 1866 covers (shown below). Unpaid covers in this period are uncommon.

These two covers have an additional oddity: rerating from 15 cents due to 10 cents due. From July 1864 to July 1, 1870, the rate for a half-ounce letter from the US to Vancouver Island and British Columbia was 10 cents, paid or unpaid. To this must be added the Colonial fee of 5 cents, paid by the addressee upon delivery. The Colonial fee was sometimes noted in manuscript at New Westminster but not at Victoria.

Right: Mailed unpaid to Victoria on March 26, 1866, at Westfield, New York, as noted by Hoole duplex postmark. Marked DUE 15¢ at Westfield; this was altered to 10¢ by a pencil 10. Someone added a large BC for British Columbia, even though union of the two colonies did not occur until November 1866.



Left: Mailed to Victoria at Westfield, New York, but dated June 19, 1866. This cover also was originally rated DUE 15¢. Marking was altered in blue crayon to 10¢. R T Williams received cover on August 2, 1866.



Gray has a cover from this correspondence from Westfield, New York, mailed to Victoria on April 9, 1866, that was sent unpaid, marked the proper DUE 10 in the US. Did Williams tell his correspondent in New York state that he had to pay an extra 5¢ for letters, and the friend in future try to prepay the Colonial fee?

Gray also has a commercial cover from New York City to Victoria mailed on June 30, 1863 (or 1865). It bears a US 10¢ stamp and a US 5¢ stamp. The letter rate is overpaid by 5¢. There is no obvious reason why a business would overpay postage by 5¢. Perhaps this was another attempt to prepay the 5¢ Colonial postage (which could not be done with US adhesives).

An early British Columbia cover to Chile

by Tracy Cooper



Covers from British Columbia to Chile in the pre-UPU period are rare indeed. This example was addressed to Capt Ralph Cator of HMS *Scout* (below right), which at the time was stationed at Valparaiso, Chile. The cover is franked with four 6-cent and one 2-cent Small Queens totalling 26 cents, overpaying the 25-cent pre-UPU rate from Canada to Chile. Stamps are tied by segmented cork cancels.

The cover was dispatched with a fine strike of the Esquimalt Brit Col split-ring on July 5, 1873, and passed through Victoria (Brit Col split-ring on reverse) on July 7. It was put on board a mail ship to San Francisco and cancelled with a San Francisco "PAID" CDS in red dated July 19. There is no Chile receiver.

According to Charles Starnes's *US Letter Rates to Foreign Destinations*, the "22" noted in manuscript red represents the US rate to Peru (and by assumption Chile) from March 1870 to July 1875. The rate consisted of 10 cents for the US Packet to Panama plus 12 cents for the British Packet to Peru (and by extension Chile). The large red "12" numeral was applied in San Francisco and represented the 12-cent credit to England. The remaining three cents of the 25-cent rate was the domestic Canadian postage.

Ralph Peter Cator (1829-1903) was appointed captain in the Royal Navy in 1866 and rear-admiral in 1882. He commanded HMS *Scout* 1871-73 and was commended by Britain's Foreign Office for his handling of affairs at Honolulu.



The 1870s were an interesting time for naval dominance of the west coast of the Americas. In 1873, Esquimalt and Valparaiso were the two main centres of British naval power on the west coast of the Americas, but the rapidly expanding US navy was keenly interested in controlling Hawaii, the "pearl of the Pacific." USS *California* brought the first military commission to Hawaii in 1873, under secret instructions from Secretary of War William Belknap to also examine Hawaii's ports for their defensive and commercial capabilities. King Lunalilo was petitioned to allow the US navy to use the Pearl River lagoon in exchange for duty-free importation of sugar.

Early mail to the Skeena River

by Tracy Cooper



*Cover to Walter Engelhardt Esq. on the Skeena River paying 3-cent domestic rate.
Mailed from Victoria with April 25, 1892, circular datestamp.*

Some BC postal historians collect covers for the flashy rates and destinations they exhibit. Others collect because their curiosity is piqued by the stories the covers tell. The item illustrated below is an example of the latter kind. You could likely find a similar type of cover in a dealer's box for \$5 to \$10.

This cover is addressed to Walter Engelhardt, Esq, care of Gust Holmes (Gustav Holmes), B A Packing Com (British American Packing Company), Skeena River, BC. It was dispatched with a VICTORIA B.C./ CANADA / / AP 25/92 cancellation and franked with a three-cent Small Queen. There are no other transit or receiving marks.

The 1891 *Williams' British Columbia Directory* shows that Gustav Holmes was manager of the British American Packing Co on the Skeena River. Walter Englehardt was an assistant surveyor from Victoria, likely doing some survey work for the British American Co. The Englehardts (note the surname's slight spelling differences) were an important family in Victoria at the time, and it is likely that Walter was a direct relation.

The British American Packing Co was located at Port Essington, which gained prominence as a salmon canning town, with the first cannery built in 1876. By the turn of the century there were seven canneries near the mouth of the Skeena. The first cold-storage plant in Essington was built was Thomas Cunningham in 1892, and it is entirely possible that Englehardt was surveying this facility.

Postal service was by way of the vessels of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Co, which brought the mails from Victoria to Fort Simpson and intermediate points on the first and fifteenth of each month. The well-known coastal character John Irving was the CPN manager and major shareholder at this time. This cover was carried by one of the CPN vessels.

While many items in this newsletter show the unusual and exotic, postal historians can also have great fun and gain valuable knowledge by digging into the routings and destinations that "ordinary" covers provide, and researching the histories of the senders and recipients. We encourage readers to take a so-called "run of the mill" item from their collection and tell us the story behind it.

Unusual destinations (number 2 in a series)

by Andrew Scott



This cover is interesting not only for its unusual destination, Algeria, but also for its rare registration marking. The registration box on front originally read "VANCOUVER, B.C./SUB-OFFICE X" at top. A proof strike with this lettering is known, dated July 1923. The "SUB-OFFICE X" was subsequently excised, and the altered R-box was used at the Pacific National Exhibition post office (three covers are noted, dated 1957 to 1961). This item is probably philatelic, and the 35-cent franking may underpay the registered airmail rate to Algeria. (Registration was 20c, and airmail to Africa, according to Bob Smith's useful *Selected Canadian Postage Rates*, was 25c per half-ounce between 1953 and 1971. If there are any airmail-to-Africa experts out there with better information, I'd be happy to hear from you.) The cover was mailed on Aug 28, 1957, arrived in Algeria on August 30 and reached its destination, Laghouat, a city about 400 km south of Algiers, the capital, on September 3. Further information on Sub Office X can be found in the *BC Postal History Newsletter* on pages 169 (Issue No 22) and 524-25 (Issue No 62).

Powell River, Part 4: Miscellaneous markings

by Morris Beattie

Previous parts of this series appeared in issues #106 (June 2018), #107 (Sept 2018) and #110 (June 2019). The current article deals with various markings not covered by the previous articles but used over time at the Powell River main post office. Markings used at the sub-offices will be discussed in a subsequent article.

Registered/Registration Section markings

The earliest registered marking observed by the author is a large "R in oval" on a cover with a Powell River split-ring cancel dated Jan 20, 1913. Similar "R in oval" markings were used at least through 1920.



Eight registration boxes have been reported (black ink unless noted):

R1) "ORIGINAL No." Blue ink, black. Used 1929-36

R2) "No." POWELL RIVER, /B.C. (two lines) Blue ink, purple. 1945-59

Next six registration boxes have POWELL RIVER, B.C. in one line

R3) "No." 2.5-mm gap below name. 1977-78

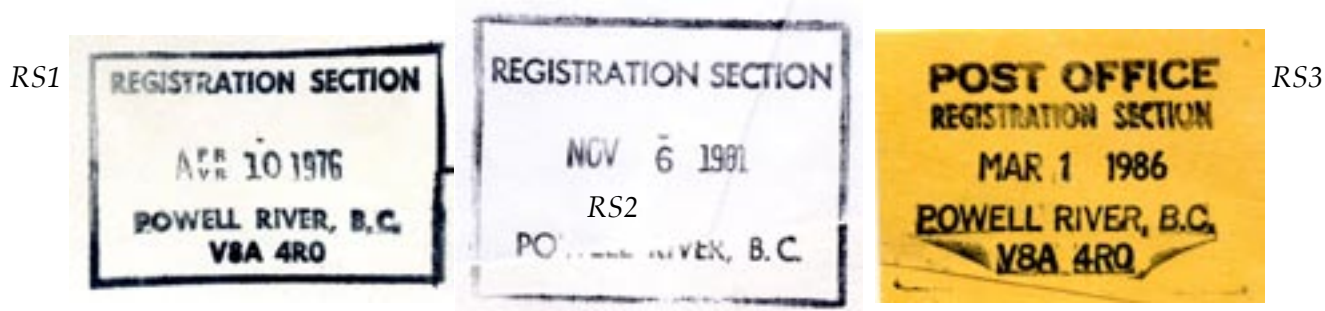
R4) "No." Tall lettering fills box. Purple ink, black. 1963-76

R5) "No." Tall narrow typeface, space all around. 1982-83

R6) "No." Like R3 but even space either side of name. 1976-79

R7) "No." Big "R" has straight leg (all others have curved leg). 1979-81

R8) "No." POWELL, RIVER, B.C. (extra comma). No dates seen



Seven "Registration Section" markings were used in the period 1975-2007.

RS1) 47x32-mm frame, postal code. 1975-80

RS2) 49x37-mm frame. No code. 1979-81

RS3) No frame lines. 1986

Powell River, Part 4 continued

RS4



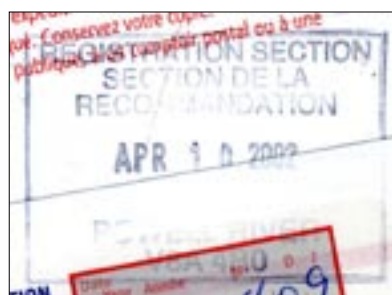
RS5



RS6



RS7



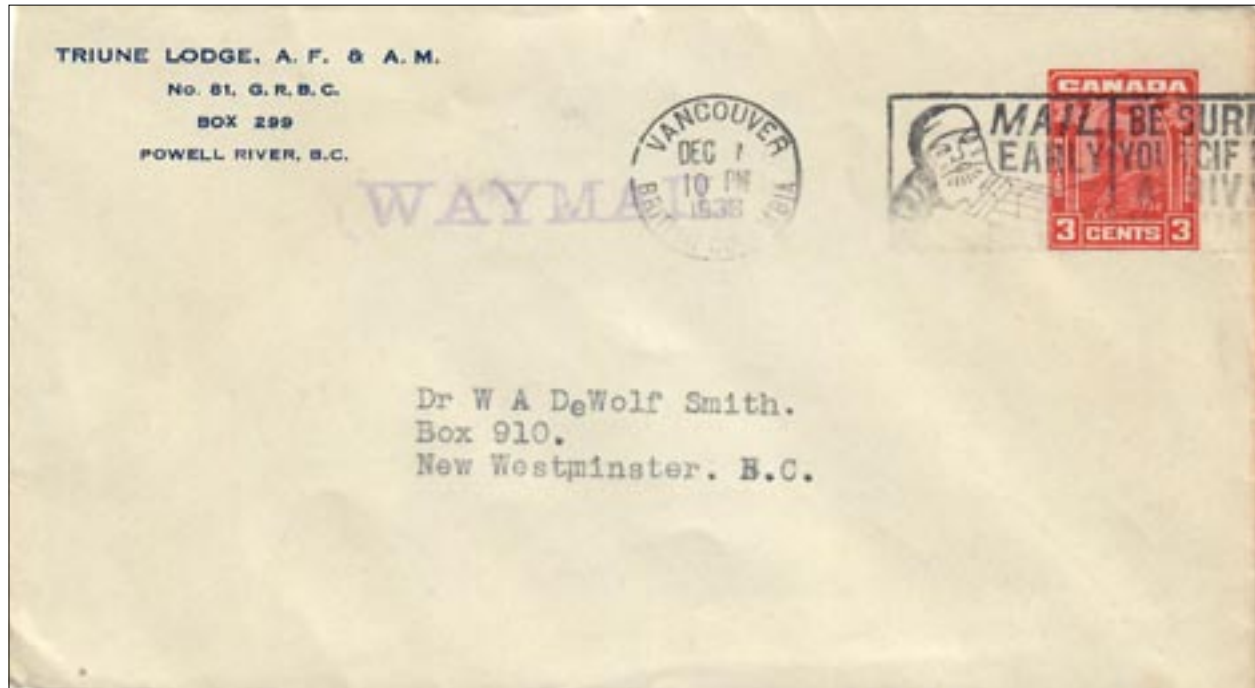
- RS4) Bilingual. "REGISTRATION SECTION" in small letters. 1987
 RS5) Bilingual. "REGISTRATION SECTION" in large letters. 1985-91
 RS6) Same as RS1 but frame larger (47x37 mm). 1977-78
 RS7) "SECTION DE LA/RECOMMANDATION" (two lines). 2002-07

**Klussendorf markings**

Klussendorf cancelling machines were introduced to Canadian post offices in 1983. The earliest date observed for the Powell River Klussendorf dater is Dec 8, 1983, and the latest date Feb 1, 2007. The machines used dater type 9B and obliterator type PC2, and examples of these usages are readily found. Variations are limited to those with and without a "dot" time indicator and occasional inverted obl iterators.

*Powell River, Part 4 continued***Ship/Waymail markings**

Examples of covers with Powell River return addresses and "WAYMAIL" markings in both black and purple have been noted used 1931-33. They were apparently carried by ship to Vancouver, where they entered the postal service.



Union and Canadian National steamships serviced Powell River and region from 1911 through the late 1950s. Vessels included, among others, SS *Venture* 1932-40 (25-EM), SS *Lady Cecilia* 1936-39 (07-EMN), SS *Chelohsin* 1936-41 (13-RS), SS *Lady Cynthia* 1937-41 (07-RS) and SS *Prince George* 1930-39 (13-TR, below). The covers typically have a Powell River type B CDS or type M2 machine cancel receiving mark in addition to the ship marking.



*Powell River, Part 4 continued***Meters**

Meter imprints from a variety of organisations can readily be found, with numerous fonts, configurations and adjoining messages. Indeed, they could form their own area of study. The earliest meter noted to date is June 3, 1942. All imprints have "Powell River" at the top within the circular portion and one of three variations of BC or British Columbia at the bottom. The three variations and their date ranges are summarized below. (Within each variation are further variations in the spacing of the letters.)

PRM3



PRM2



PRM1



- PRM1 Variation: British Columbia. Noted used 1942-69.
 PRM2 Variation: B.C. (periods). Noted used 1963-83.
 PRM3 Variation: BC (no periods). Ongoing use from 1967.

Airmail

Several different "AIRMAIL" markings are known on covers originating in Powell River. What is not certain, however, is if these handstamps are official (ie applied by the post office) or private (ie applied by the sender).

**Hand rollers**

Hand rollers marked "POWELL RIVER, B.C.: 1", with three lines above and three below, used for parcels between 1950 and 1976, have been noted. Rollers are not dated, so periods of usage are inferred from the stamps used on the parcels.

Miscellaneous cancels

Many examples exist of machine cancels (see newsletter issue #106, p 1065) with slogans. This is another area that requires study in its own right. Powell River also used rectangular General Delivery, Post Office, Operations, Superintendent, Canada Post Corporation and Letter Carrier Section markings; a frameless Special Delivery datestamp; and numerous circular philatelic and pictorial cancels.