



# BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Volume 30 Number 3

Whole number 119

September 2021



**Steamer North Pacific.** The *North Pacific* was built and owned by Edwin A and Louis M Starr for use on the Puget Sound Mail Contract. The *North Pacific* took part in a race with the Steamer *Olympia* on June 27, 1871, between Victoria and Point Wilson near Port Townsend, Washington Territory. The *North Pacific* won and as a result gained the mail contract between Olympia and Victoria for the Starr Bros. This cover was likely handed to the purser of the *North Pacific* at Victoria on the mail run to Tacoma, with intermediate stops including Port Townsend. It was handstamped with the STEAMER NORTH PACIFIC/TACOMA double circle in blue and dated AUG/21/1874 (see page 1280). — Tracy Cooper

## In this issue:

- |   |        |                                  |        |
|---|--------|----------------------------------|--------|
| • Favourite cover: Steamship <i>North Pacific</i> | p 1267 | • Promise of a Railway           | p 1269 |
| • Print subscriptions due                         | p 1268 | • BC joins Confederation: Part 2 | p 1276 |
|   |        | • Lytton's ordeal by fire        | p 1281 |

## Readers write

Study group chair **Tim Woodland** recently reported two covers from the very rare Vancouver Island post office of Benallack. According to Tim, Benallack was a short-term camp for Scottish-Palmer Logging in the Cowichan area, about nine miles west of Duncan. The covers came up in an All Nations auction earlier this year.

Topping and Melvin list opening and closing dates for Benallack of October 1, 1926, and November 30, 1928. The only postmaster was W J Murray. The office here was formerly known as Sahtlam (also a rarity).



*Two-cent Admiral on domestic cover from Benallack to Pitt Meadows, dated June 13, 1927.*

### From **Gray Scrimgeour**:

I just got Issue 118 of the BC newsletter. Another great issue! I was surprised and pleased to see the scans and text of the July 17, 1871, letter written by John A Macdonald. I own the cover that carried this letter to J S Helmcken in Victoria. I purchased this cover from Arthur Leggett when he came west for a PIPEX show. It is badly torn at the upper

left, so I repaired it there. It is the only example I have of a 6-cent per half-ounce cover to BC in my collection of inbound mail. I have been unable to find out when this rate started (sometime between June and October 1870). It would have ended on August 15, 1871, when Canadian postal rates took effect in BC. Gerry Wellburn's pencil writing can be seen on the back of the envelope, describing the contents of the letter.



*Six-cent Large Queen tied by nice fancy cork to cover to Victoria, dated July 17, 1871.*

## 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 our 2020 print subscriptions. If we have your email address, we will shift any remaining unpaid print subscriptions to digital for the December issue.

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

Annual subscription fee for printed and mailed newsletters (four issues) is \$15, in Cdn or US funds. Individual print issues sell for \$2.50 each, post paid.

Dues are payable to the editor: Andrew Scott  
5143 Radcliffe Rd, Sechelt, BC, Canada V7Z 0G5

Editor: Andrew Scott  
email: [andrewscott@dccnet.com](mailto:andrewscott@dccnet.com)  
website: [www.andrew-scott.ca](http://www.andrew-scott.ca)

Associate Editor: Tracy Cooper  
email: [tracycooper100@shaw.ca](mailto:tracycooper100@shaw.ca)

Study Group Chair: Tim Woodland  
email: [twoodland@telus.net](mailto:twoodland@telus.net)

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

Free digital newsletters can be downloaded as PDF files at <https://bnaps.org/hhl/n-bcr.htm> (for all issues), or at [https://spideroak.com/browse/share/Andrew\\_Scott/Backissues](https://spideroak.com/browse/share/Andrew_Scott/Backissues) (for recent issues only). Issues 89 to present are in full colour; earlier newsletters are in b&w only. File size is approximately 1.5 Mb/issue.

# The Promise of a Railway: BC and the CPR

by Brian Copeland

When Joseph Trutch, John Helmcken and Robert Carrall journeyed from British Columbia to Ottawa in 1870 to negotiate the terms under which BC would become part of Canada, they travelled across the United States on the recently completed transcontinental railway. This highlighted both the possibility of a railway across Canada, and the risks of American expansionism, as the US transportation network was developing much more rapidly than in Canada.

Ultimately, the terms of Confederation would include a commitment by the federal government to build a railway "to connect the seaboard of British Columbia with the railway system of Canada." The story of the construction of the railway has been told many times.<sup>1</sup> In this article, I sketch out the early development of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the west from a postal history perspective.



Figure 1. Cover sent from Victoria on Oct 2, 1871, to Edward Mallandaine, who was surveying in BC for the CPR. Source: G E Wellburn collection.

Although the deal that led to the creation of the CPR Company was not completed until late in 1880, work on the railway, supported by government funding, took place in the 1870s. Extensive surveying investigated alternate routes. Figure 1 shows a cover from Gerry Wellburn's CPR collection with the address "Camp V, Canadian Pacific Railway Survey between Yale & Lytton." The date is Oct 2, 1871, indicating that surveying for the railway was underway soon after BC joined Canada.

A key issue was the western terminus. Victoria was the capital and by far the largest town in BC, and business leaders and politicians on Vancouver Island expected that the terminus should be there. One of the routes suggested by Sanford Fleming (engineer-in-chief of the Pacific Railway Survey in the early 1870s) and favoured by Marcus Smith (Fleming's deputy and the resident engineer for BC) was to go through the Yellowhead Pass and across BC to Bute Inlet, where the railway would join Vancouver Island over a series of bridges. After much lobbying from Victoria, an order-in-council from the federal government was issued on June 3, 1873, confirming that the terminus would be at Esquimalt, the site of a harbour and naval base just west of Victoria:

*The Committee of the Council ... recommend to Your Excellency that Esquimalt .... be fixed as the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway; and that a line of Railway be located between ... Esquimalt and Seymour Narrows.*

However, it was not to be. The route was abandoned in favour of a terminus at Port Moody on Burrard Inlet. Much to the disappointment of the merchants in Victoria, this put the issue of a railway to Vancouver Island on the back burner until after construction of the CPR was well underway.

*Promise of a Railway continued*

The Macdonald government fell in 1873 because of the Pacific Scandal, and the new Mackenzie government was much less keen on the railway. Construction began on a piecemeal basis. There were contracts for construction in parts of Ontario and Manitoba. The key contract was for a railway linking Winnipeg and St Vincent, Minnesota, to connect with the US railway system. This became the corridor through which personnel, building materials and rolling stock arrived in western Canada and supported rail construction toward BC from Winnipeg. Service began on Dec 5, 1878. *Figure 2* shows a cover from a mail car on the St Vincent & Winnipeg Railway. This was the first railway post office in western Canada.



*Figure 2. St. Vincent & Winnipeg P.C. (South/Jan 7, 1882) to Bloomfield, Ontario (received Jan 11), via Windsor (Jan 10).*

John A Macdonald returned to power in 1878 at a time when BC was threatening to secede because of slow progress on the railway. Construction in BC finally began in 1880 after Andrew Onderdonk was granted a contract to build a railway from Emory, the head of navigation of the Fraser River near Yale, to Savona at the west end of Kamloops Lake.



*Figure 3. Emory, Brit. Col. (Sept 24, 1883) to Victoria.*

*Promise of a Railway continued*

In the application for a post office at Emory in 1881, Robert Wallace, the postal inspector for BC, wrote<sup>2</sup>: "The place is rapidly improving in population as it will be the southern terminus of the Yale-Savona section of the Canadian Pacific Railway." *Figure 3* shows a card from Emory sent in 1883. Emory's boom was short-lived. The post office closed in 1890 because Emory was displaced by Yale (*Figure 4*) as the centre for CPR activity in the area. Onderdonk was later given the contract to build the railway between Yale and Port Moody, BC.



*Figure 4. Yale, BC (Aug 7, 1882), to San Francisco (received Aug 13) via Victoria (Aug 9).*

The deal that led to the creation of the CPR Company was reached in October 1880. Construction began slowly, but the pace accelerated when William Van Horne was brought in as general manager. By the end of 1883 the tracks from Winnipeg reached Laggan, Alberta (now Lake Louise). The stage was set for the challenge of crossing the mountain ranges of eastern BC.



*Figure 5. Cover from the Canadian Pacific Railway/Office of Manager of Construction, Mountain Division, sent to St John, NB. Received Jan 26, 1885.*

*Promise of a Railway continued*

James Ross was appointed manager of construction for the Mountain Division of the CPR to build the railway westward over the mountains from the continental divide to Eagle Pass in BC. *Figure 5* shows a cover from the "Office of the Manager of Construction, Mountain Division." The C P Mail Company was formed in 1884 to handle mail between Laggan (Lake Louise) and the end of track in BC.<sup>3</sup>

In the summer of 1884, Onderdonk was awarded the contract to continue construction on the railway eastward from Savona to Eagle Pass. *Figure 6* shows a cover sent to Eagle Pass. It probably originated in Yale—there is a light September 1885 BRIT. COL. cancel on front. It is addressed to Salmon River, which was on Shuswap Lake near what would become the town of Salmon Arm. It passed through



*Figure 6. Cover sent in September 1885 (probably from Yale) to Salmon River, BC, via Kamloops and Eagle Pass.*

the Kamloops post office on Sept 7, 1885, and arrived at Eagle Pass later that day. The Eagle Pass office opened on Mar 1, 1885, to serve the railway construction crews in the area. The railway passed about 1.5 miles away, so the post office closed shortly after the construction crews left, possibly as early as Oct 30, 1885, and was replaced by the Sicamous office which opened in November 1887.

This cover also illustrates the critical importance of Chinese workers in the construction of the railway. In November 1884, Onderdonk wrote that there were 650 Chinese workers and "200 whites" north of Kamloops working on the railway, and reported that he planned to increase this to 1,300 workers. He also says, "We are now building a China warehouse on the Salmon River Arm ... which I will stock up ... with supplies and plant" (source: Lavallee, p 220). This was likely the destination of the cover. There was no post office at Salmon Arm until 1890.

Passenger, freight and mail services were gradually introduced as construction proceeded on the railway. As the volume of mail increased, mail cars were added. On the prairies, CPR West of Winnipeg hammers were used in mail cars starting in 1882. *Figure 7* shows a UPU card posted on the railroad in 1882.

Less well known is the fact that a mail car was also used on the Onderdonk route in BC during the construction period. Tracy Cooper, in a previous issue of this newsletter<sup>4</sup>, discussed a letter from Acting Postal Inspector Fletcher, who reported that mail service on the railway between Port Moody and Lytton would begin on Sept 1, 1884, and that it was expected to reach Spences Bridge by Oct 1. According to the Postmaster General's *Report for the year ending June 1885*, a mail car running between Port Moody and Spences Bridge was in operation by November 1884.

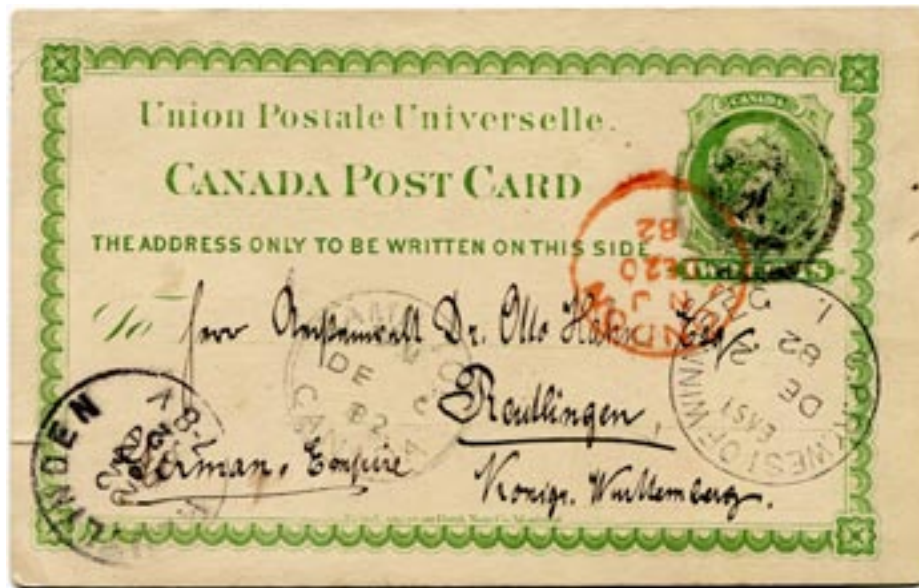
*Promise of a Railway continued*

Figure 7. Posted on the railway with a strike of CPR West of Winnipeg/1 (EAST/DE 2/82. Sent to Reutlingen, Germany, via the US; Hamilton, Ontario; and London, England.

RPO markings from this route prior to the introduction of cross-country rail service in July 1886 are extremely rare. Figure 8 shows a cover to Port Hope, Ontario, that was posted on the railroad in BC on April 20, 1885—before the “last spike.” It has a strike from a CPROY M.C. BRIT. COL. hammer (Gray RY-22.05). This is the earliest of the RY-22 hammers, and is the only recorded strike from this particular hammer.<sup>5</sup> There was not yet a rail connection to the east, so the cover was sent west to Port Moody. It was then carried overland to New Westminster where it was put on a ship to Victoria. From Victoria it was sent through the United States to Windsor where it re-entered Canada.



Figure 8. Cover to Port Hope, Ontario, posted on the railroad between Spences Bridge and Port Moody on April 20, 1885, with a strike of a CPROY M.C. BRIT. COL. hammer (WEST/AP 20/85). Courtesy of Ross Gray.

*Promise of a Railway continued*

A second hammer was also used on this route prior to cross-country mail service. The Wellburn CPR collection has a card written at Nicola Lake, BC, and sent to Victoria.<sup>6</sup> It was posted on the railroad on Dec 24, 1885, with a strike of a CPROY M.C. British Columbia hammer (Gray RY-21).



Figure 9. End of Track, BC, to Elora, Ontario, sent August 13, 1885.

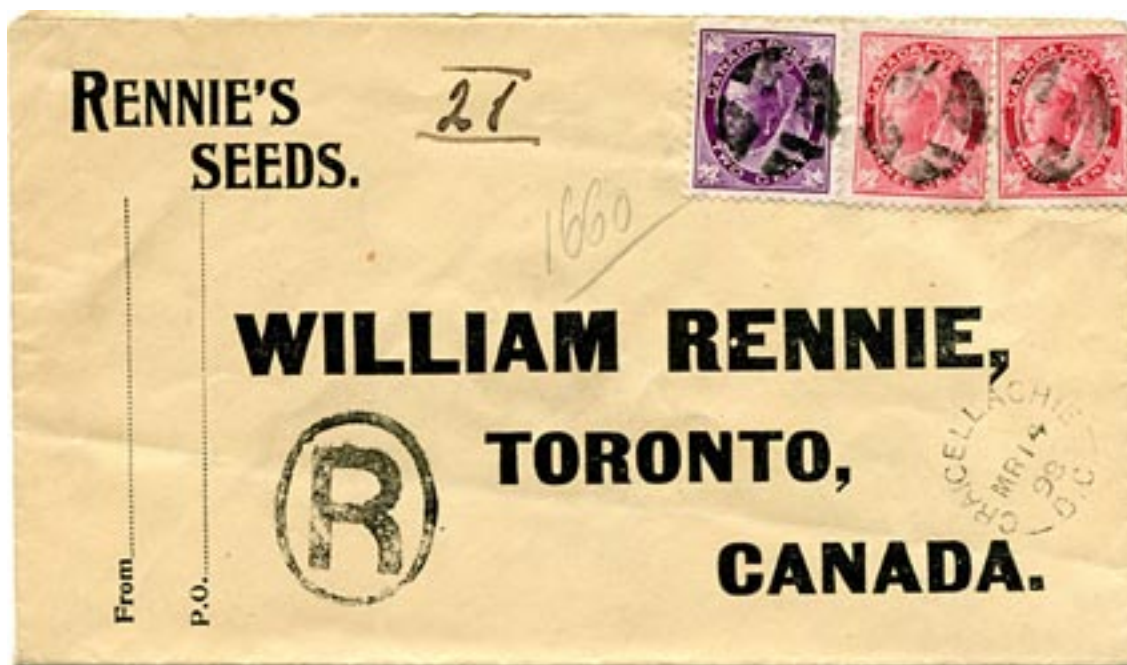


Figure 10. Registered cover from Craigellachie sent on March 14, 1898, to Toronto via CPR. Received March 19.

When cross-country mail service began in 1886, the post office made an adjustment in the organization of postal divisions that affected RPO hammer usage. The postmaster general's report for 1886 notes: "183<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles on main line between Calgary and Donald—included in last year's return in mileage in Manitoba and North-West Division, now transferred to the British Columbia Division." Consequently, after mid-1886, mail cars west of Calgary used the BC RPO hammers (CPR B.C., CPR BRIT. COL. and CPR British Columbia). Those running between Calgary and Winnipeg used the various CPR West of Winnipeg hammers.



*Promise of a Railway continued*

As construction moved through the mountains into British Columbia, a post office was established to serve the construction crews. The End of Track post office (see *Figure 9*) was in a rail car and moved west as track was laid.<sup>37</sup> It probably ceased operation in late 1885, after construction crews from western and eastern BC met at Craigellachie, but it officially closed on Jan 31, 1886. A post office at Farwell (which became Revelstoke) officially opened the next day. The End of Track postmaster, Thomas Gordon, became postmaster at Farwell.

The "last spike" was driven by Donald Smith at Craigellachie, BC, on Nov 7, 1885. This connected the tracks from Port Moody to those from the Prairies and eastern Canada. *Figure 10* shows a cover from Craigellachie posted on March 14, 1898. The post office opened in February 1895.

A few more months of work were needed to make the railway safe for passenger service. Cross-country service to Port Moody<sup>8</sup> began at the beginning of July 1886. As well as the significance of the railway for the economic development of BC and the prairies, the opening of cross-country mail service via the CPR ended the long-standing dependence on the United States for mail service between western and eastern Canada.

Finally, although the contract with the CPR signed in 1880 fulfilled Canada's commitment to build a railroad to the Pacific seaboard, there was still one loose end. Merchants in Victoria continued to agitate for a railway on Vancouver Island. When Conservatives returned to power in 1878, John A Macdonald lost his seat in Kingston and became the MP for Victoria. Islanders pressured the provincial government and Macdonald to do something about an Island railway. A deal was finally reached in 1883 with Robert Dunsmuir to build a railway between Esquimalt and Nanaimo. Construction began in 1884 and passenger service began Sept 30, 1886. The islanders had their railway at last, just three months after cross-country service on the CPR had begun. *Figure 11* shows a letter card from Quamichan, BC, posted on the E&N Railway in 1893. It is addressed to Henry D Helmcken. He was the son of John S Helmcken, one of the three BC emissaries sent to Ottawa in 1870, who negotiated the promise from Canada to build the railway to BC.

**Notes:**

- 1) See for example: Harold Innis, *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (1923); Pierre Berton, *The National Dream* (1970) and *The Last Spike* (1971); and Omer Lavalee, *Van Horne's Road* (1974). References to construction dates in this article are based on Lavalee's book.
- 2) Tracy Cooper, *British Columbia Post Office Revenues 1871-1921*.
- 3) H A Price, "End of Track and the C P Mail Co," *BNA Topics*, September-October 1987.
- 4) Tracy Cooper, "Early CPR mail from the 'other' End of Track," *British Columbia Postal History Newsletter* #103, September 2017.
- 5) Ross Gray, "A surprising western discovery!" *The Newsletter of the RPO Study Group*, #255, October-December 2019.
- 6) G E Wellburn, *Canadian Pacific Railway Postal History*, Vol 1, Canadian Postal Archives (2003).
- 7) "Thomas Gordon and post office patronage," *BC Postal History Newsletter* #90, July 2014. See also Tracy Cooper, "Early Canadian Pacific Railway mail service in BC, Part 2: New observations on the End of Track post office," *BC Postal History Newsletter* #107, September 2018.
- 8) The railway was extended to Vancouver in 1887.



*Figure 11. E&N Railway (S/AP 21/93) to H D Helmcken in Victoria.*

# British Columbia joins Confederation: Part 2

by Tracy Cooper

## Integration, 1871-1872

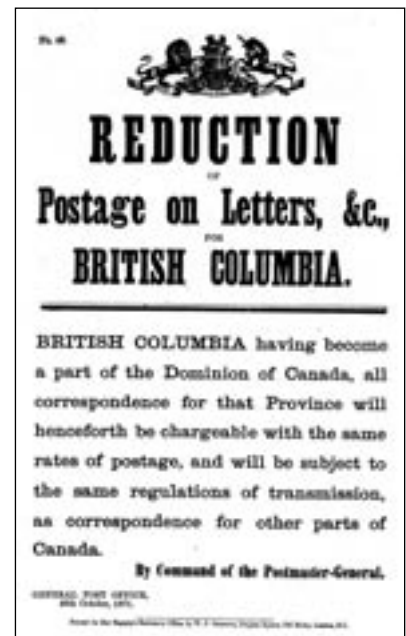
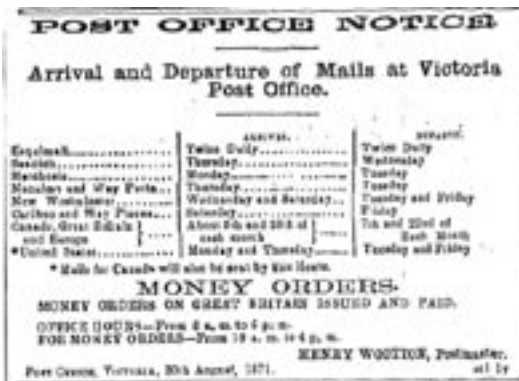
Integration with the Dominion postal system was a high priority for the newly minted sixth Province of Canada. With Confederation finalized on July 20, 1871, one of the first tasks of the Post Office Department in Ottawa was to bring the haphazard British Columbia postal system under its jurisdiction and control. The introduction of the Dominion system into British Columbia was explored by this author in *BC Postal History Newsletter #89*, pages 791-794. However, a few excerpts from that article are worth repeating:

*“POSTAL RATES—No change has been made in the Postal Rates since Confederation; and none is expected until after the arrival of Lieut Governor Trutch or Minister Langevin to set the Union machinery in motion. Query—Is the imposition of the old rates legal?” (British Colonist, July 25, 1871)*

*“POST OFFICE AFFAIRS—Gilbert E Griffin, Esq, Post Office Inspector of the Western Division, who came on the Sparrowhawk, will at once proceed to put postal matters in this Province on a satisfactory basis. Mr Griffin, who will remain in the Province a few weeks, has been 30 years in the postal service of Canada and is a brother to Wm Henry Griffin, Deputy Postmaster General of the Dominion . . . The Canadian Postal Rates come into operation today, so that, in place of paying the late high rates, we shall pay on letters three cents to any part of the Province and Canada, and six cents to the United Kingdom and the United States. Postal cards may be had at the Post Office by means of which short messages may be sent to any part of Canada for one cent. The full postal rates were published in the Colonist a few days ago.” (British Colonist, Aug 15, 1871)*



Left: Figure 1 (see below). Centre: Figure 2 (see next page). Right: post office rate reduction poster, printed in London and dated Oct 26, 1871,



Mr Griffin brought with him a substantial quantity of stamps and postal cards for distribution to the new “Canadian” post offices, and he visited New Westminster on August 18 and Nanaimo on August 21 for the purpose of arranging postal matters at each of these locations. Many more stamps arrived over the first year, totalling 900 ½¢ LQs, 11,500 1¢ SQs, 6,000 2¢ LQs, 59,801 3¢ SQs, 7,000 6¢ LQs, 6,500 6¢ SQs, 1,000 12½¢ LQs, 1,000 15¢ LQs and 7,000 1¢ Postal Cards. (Figure 1)

*“POSTAL—The Inspector will return from New Westminster today. The franking privileges previously enjoyed by officials ceased with the adoption of Canadian rates. The mystic characters “OHMS” will no longer secure a letter or document carriage post-free.” (British Colonist, Aug 19, 1871)*

Griffin also made continuing appointments, with Henry Wooten as postmaster at Victoria, W B Tait at New Westminster and J Bowron at Barkerville. The first official notification of the arrival and departure of mails from Victoria under the Dominion postal system was published in the *British Colonist* on Sept 1, 1871. (Figure 2)

*BC joins Confederation continued*

One of the most important changes under the new Dominion postal system was noted by Deaville: "The other Postmasters in the Province were now allowed compensation for their services in the form of a percentage of postal receipts at their respective offices. As far as possible the persons in charge of the colonial post offices were retained under the new regime: in cases where the revenue did not exceed \$800 per annum, they now received 40 per cent of the proceeds of their postage stamp sales, and where the revenue was over \$800 a year they were paid 25 per cent."

On August 24, 1871, the now superseded colonial postage stamps, totalling \$503,880 in face value, were burnt in Beacon Hill Park by Gilbert E Griffin, officially signalling the end of colonial postal service in British Columbia.

The following colonial post offices, which were reported to be in operation on July 1, 1871, were integrated into the Dominion system as noted in the *Postmaster General Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1872*:

Town	Postmaster	Town	Postmaster
Ashcroft	Henry P Cornwall	Lillooet	E Tyron
Barkerville <sup>(1)</sup>	John Bowron	Lytton	John Boyd
Burrard Inlet	Maximillian Michaud	Maple Bay	William Beaumont
Cache Creek	James Campbell	Nanaimo	James Harvey
Chemainus <sup>(2)</sup>	Thomas G Askew	New Westminster	Valentine B Tait
Clinton	Charles E Pope	Ominica	Francis Page
Comox	Alexander Rodell	150 Mile House	Robert H Young
Cowichan	Samuel Harris	Quesnel	Alex Barlow
Duck & Pringle	James Duck	Skeena	Thomas Hankin
Esquimalt	John T Howard	Soda Creek	Robert McLeese
Hope	John G. Wirth	Spence's Bridge	John Murray
Kamloops	James McKenzie	Sumas	David W Miller
Kootenay	James Normansell	Van Winkle	J L Lindhard
Lake La Hache	Patrick Gannon	Victoria	Henry Wooten
Langley	W W Gibb	Yale	D McQuarrie

(1) Barkerville: Formerly Cariboo PO. Cariboo had been known informally as Barkerville to locals for many years, but it was not until July 1872 that the name "Barkerville" was officially adopted by postal officials in Ottawa.

(2) Chemainus: It is unclear whether this post office was in existence during the colonial period or was in the process of being established at the time of Confederation. More research is required.

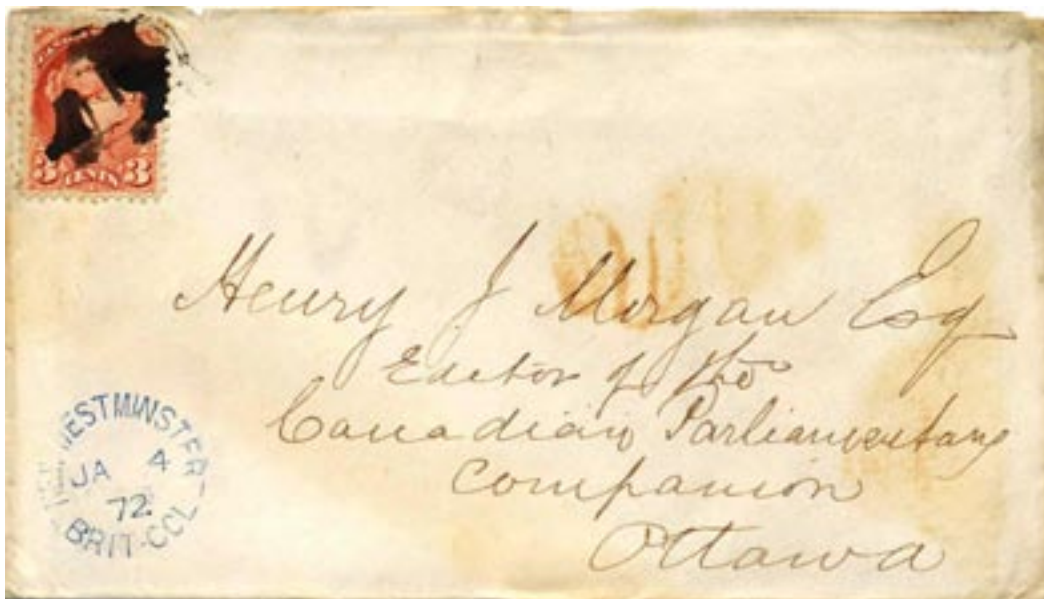


Figure 3: New Westminster, Jan 4, 1872, co-earliest "BRIT. COL" split-ring (see next page). Courtesy Gray Scrimgeour.

*BC joins Confederation continued*



Figure 4: Victoria, Jan 4, 1872, co-earliest "BRIT. COL" split-ring. Courtesy Malcolm Leitch.

Some colonial postal hammers continued to be used as cancellation devices for many years after BC joined Confederation. However, in early January 1872, the first BC "BRIT. COL." split-ring hammers arrived from Ottawa for New Westminster, Cariboo and Victoria. The earliest reported use is Jan 4, 1872, for both New Westminster and Victoria. (Figures 3 and 4)

The mystery of the assignment of the colonial numeral hammers has been the subject of intense investigation by BC postal historians for almost one hundred years. Alfred Lichtenstein and Henry Hitt first became interested in this fascinating subject way back in 1923, and I am fortunate enough to have some of their research materials, along with inventories and studies compiled by Jack Wallace and Gerry Wellburn, as well as notes by J A Pike, another prominent pioneer BC postal historian. An examination of current and new findings on this subject will be forthcoming in a future article.

The following numeral hammers are confirmed as being in use after Confederation: #1, #8, #10, #12, #13, #15, #16, #27, #28, #33, #34, #35 and #36. Dominion hammers did not arrive in BC until early 1872, and it is probable that other colonial numeral devices (including #6 or #9, #21 and #30) were in use after Confederation. With only one or two reports, however, and none on cover, Wallace and Wellburn suggested that additional evidence was needed before the remaining numerals could be assigned to specific towns.

No legitimate 1c or 3c Large Queens have been reported used in British Columbia. As Gerry Wellburn had possession of the numeral #35 hammer for many years, it is possible that he produced a few 3c LQ novelties to test the knowledge of fellow philatelists who shared his fascination with the numeral identification mystery. (The Victoria squared-circle hammer #4 was subjected, much later, to more obvious fakery.) Some of these fantasies have unfortunately made their way onto the market.

In addition, the following other postal hammers continued to be used in various post offices after Confederation.

Double Oval: New Westminster / Post Office / British Columbia  
 Money Order Office Oval: New Westminster, Cariboo, Victoria  
 Paid / Unpaid straightlines and ovals: Victoria, New Westminster

In May 1872, Chief Post Office Inspector John Dewé visited British Columbia from Ottawa to complete the postal arrangements begun by Mr Griffen. "He was instructed to arrange for submitting the whole mail service, as far as practicable, to public competition, and for thus placing it under regular contracts as in other sections of the Dominion." Arrangements were at the same time made with the United States Post Office "for the transmission of closed mails between British Columbia and the other provinces of the Dominion, twice a week, by the railway and stage routes from San Francisco, through California, Oregon and Washington Territory to Olympia, between which place and Victoria, a Steamer plies semi-weekly." (Report of the Postmaster General for the Year Ending 30 June, 1872)

*BC joins Confederation continued*

"POSTAL—Mr. Burr, postmaster at Olympia, W.T., arrived here yesterday and had an interview with Mr. Dewé with respect to the overland mail service. We understand it is probable that mails for British Columbia from the East which are now sent to San Francisco to await sailing of the Prince Albert will, during the summer months at least, be transferred to Ogden and conveyed thence by stages to Portland and Olympia and finally be brought to Victoria by the North Pacific twice a week." (*British Colonist*, May 31, 1872)

"VALUABLE INVENTIONS—Mr. Dewé, Chief P.O. Inspector of Canada, who is now in the city, is the inventor of several modes of securing mail matter and other valuables, which have lately come into general use. The Rivet Seal Lock fastens a mail-bag with a lead seal and staple so effectually that the slightest attempt at tampering with it is discovered. Each post office is furnished with seals stamped with its name, and wax is entirely superseded." (*British Colonist*, June 4, 1872)

"DOMESTIC POSTAL SERVICE—The Chief Post Office Inspector (Mr. Dewé) has now been in this Province for some time organizing and perfecting the internal as well as the external postal system of the country. This community has for some time enjoyed the fruits of his labours in the regularity and smoothness with which the machinery works, and the increased facility for mailing and receiving postal matter at this the head office. The entire country is beginning to realize the change brought about by Mr. Dewé. Arrangements have been made by which the mail carriers will be supplied with open bags for the reception and delivery of postal matter along the line of service .... In another column will be found a notice inviting tenders for the various services...." (*British Colonist*, Sept 7, 1872)

The following postal contacts were arranged by Dewé while in BC and over the following year. (insert route map Figure 5)

<b>Barkerville—New Westminster</b>	Gerow & Johnson	July 20, 1871 –Feb 29, 1872
485 miles 1X weekly in summer and fortnightly in winter by stage		\$13,000
	(actual 7 months and 12 days)	<b>\$8,602.68</b>
<b>Barkerville—New Westminster</b>	F J Barnard	March 4, 1872–Aug 31, 1872
485 miles 1X weekly in summer and fortnightly in winter by stage		\$1,800/month
	(actual 4 months)	<b>\$7,200</b>
<b>Burrard Inlet—New Westminster</b>	W R Lewis	July 20, 1871–April 12, 1872
9 miles 1X weekly by stage		\$560
	(actual 11 months and 12 days)	<b>\$211.96</b>
<b>Burrard Inlet—New Westminster</b>	Johnathon Thompson	April 13, 1872–June 14, 1872
9 miles 1X weekly on foot		\$4/trip
<b>Burrard Inlet—New Westminster</b>	W R Lewis	June 15, 187–March 31, 1873
9 miles 6X weekly by stage		\$500
<b>Cache Creek—French Creek</b>	Bennett & Lumley	July 20, 1871–Oct 31, 1871
224 miles round trip every 40 days (6 trips/annum) by horseback and foot		\$100/trip.
Discontinued Oct 31, 1871. Service found to be unnecessary (actual 3 trips)		<b>\$300</b>
<b>East Coast Vancouver Island</b>	Captain Clarke	June 30, 1872
1 year		<b>\$4,200</b>
<b>Esquimalt—Victoria</b>	J T Howard	July 20, 1871–March 31, 1873
3½ miles 2X daily (12/week)		\$600
	(actual 11 months and 12 days)	<b>\$569.35</b>
<b>Fort Shepherd—Hope</b>	H Wotton	to June 30, 1872
262 miles 1½ trips		<b>\$70</b>
<b>Fort Shepherd—Kootenay</b>	H Wotton	to June 30, 1872
175 miles 2 trips		<b>\$112.50</b>
<b>Fort Shepherd—Victoria</b>	J Johnson	to June 30, 1872
439 miles 1 trip		<b>\$150</b>
<b>Hope—Osoyoos</b>	H Wotton	to June 30, 1872
135 miles 8 trips		<b>\$157</b>
<b>Kootenay—Perry Creek</b>	W Phillips	to June 30, 1872
1 trip		<b>\$5</b>
<b>Kootenay—Victoria</b>	J Johnson	July 20, 1871–Dec 31, 1871

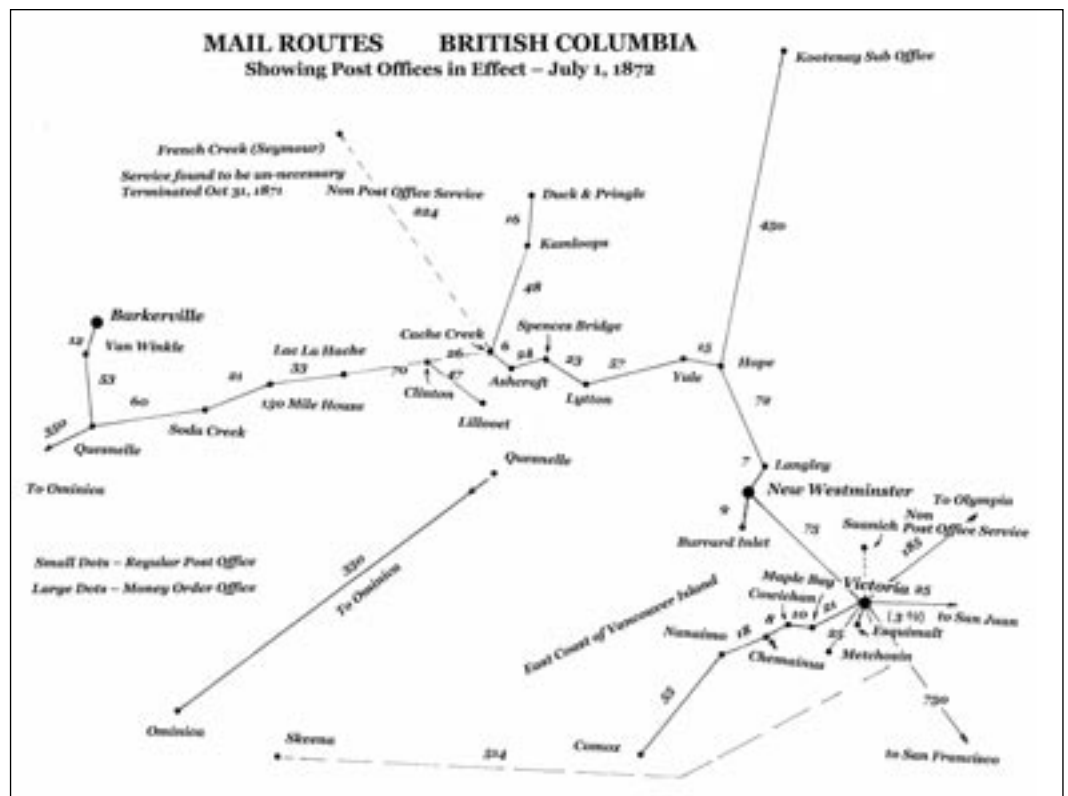
*BC joins Confederation continued*

614 miles 6X per annum by horseback and foot	every 60 days	\$200/trip
<b>Kootenay—Victoria</b>	J Johnson	March 31, 1872–July 31, 1872
614 miles special trips by horseback and foot		\$300/trip
(actual 2½ trips to June 30, 1872)	<b>\$600</b> (J Milne actual 1 trip to June 30, 1872)	<b>\$250</b>
<b>Metchosin—Victoria</b>	J Parker	July 20, 1871–March 31, 1873
25 miles Tues and Friday by vehicle	\$300/trip (actual 11 months and 12 days)	<b>\$284.70</b>
<b>Nanaimo—Victoria</b>	Steamer Sir J Douglas	July 21, 1871
74 miles 1X weekly by steamboat (Tues) and 55 miles fortnightly (Wed & Thurs)		\$4,200/ annum
<b>New Westminster—Victoria</b>	Hudson Bay Co.	July 20, 1871– June 30, 1874
90 miles 2X weekly in summer and 1X weekly in winter by steamboat	\$45/trip (actual G.A. Grahame 11 months and 12 days)	
	<b>\$3,600</b> (actual C.G. Sawyer 1 month)	<b>\$20</b>
<b>Olympia—Victoria</b>	E A Starr	20, 1871 –June 30, 1874
140 miles 1X weekly by steamboat (Steamer North Pacific)	\$5,000 (actual 11 months and 12 days)	<b>\$4,744.60</b>
<b>Ominica—Quesnel</b>	R Sylvester	July 20, 1871 – July 30, 1872
350 miles 1X monthly every 29 days horseback/summer, snowshoe winter	\$300/trip (actual 8 months)	<b>\$1,600</b>
<b>Saanich—Victoria</b>	J W Williams	July 20, 1871–July 30, 1872
24 miles 1X weekly by stage	\$300 (actual 11 months and 12 days)	<b>\$284.70</b>
<b>San Francisco—Victoria</b>	Rosenfield & Birmingham	Aug 15, 1871
750 miles fortnightly 12 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> every month by steamboat		\$2,250/ trip
<b>San Juan—Victoria</b>	R Pritchard	July 20, 1871
25 miles 1X weekly by sailboat		\$52/ trip (actual 11 months and 12 days)
	<b>\$49</b>	
<b>Skeena—Victoria</b>	Hudson Bay Co	July 21, 1871
514 miles occasionally by steamboat		\$10/ trip

Readers may note that on this list, in addition to the negotiated postal contracts by Dewé, Victoria Postmaster Wooten also opportunistically arranged for occasional postal service on “an as and when basis” when reputable people were making trips to areas of the province not serviced by negotiated postal contracts.

“DEPARTURE OF MR. DEWE—Mr. Dewé, Chief Post-Office Inspector, leaves today for the Eastern Provinces. During his stay here Mr. Dewé has introduced the admirable Postal system of Canada, has established new Post-offices and has extended the service to parts of the country that had not previously enjoyed the boon. We congratulate the gentleman on the success that has attended his efforts.” (*British Colonist*, Sept 27, 1872)

The haphazard colonial postal system was now fully integrated as part of the Dominion Post Office Department, with all of the attendant privileges and advantages that an organized postal system provided. Part 3 of this series, *British Columbia Joins Confederation, the First 10 Years 1871-1881*, examines the “Decline of the Express Companies,” whose role was critical for mail service during the early years of colonial Vancouver Island and British Columbia, but whose importance in postal matters declined with the advent of the reliable Dominion postal system.



## Ordeal by Fire: Thinking of Lytton

*Images courtesy Tracy Cooper; text by Andrew Scott*

On June 30, 2021, tragedy struck the picturesque Gold Rush village of Lytton, British Columbia. After being named, on three consecutive days, the hottest spot ever recorded in Canada (49.6°C or 121.3°F), the community burned to the ground, killing two residents and causing comprehensive damage. About 250



people were living there at the time of its destruction, while approximately another 1,700 lived in nearby rural areas and Nlaka'pamux First Nation reserves. Indigenous people know the area as Camchin or Kumsheen ("river meeting").

Lytton is located about 265 km northeast of Vancouver at the junction of the Thompson and Fraser rivers. It was an important transfer point for early foot, road and rail traffic in the region; the Fraser River Trail, Cariboo Wagon Road, CPR, and Cariboo and Trans-Canada highways all passed through, playing significant roles in the region's history. Until recently, most residents have made



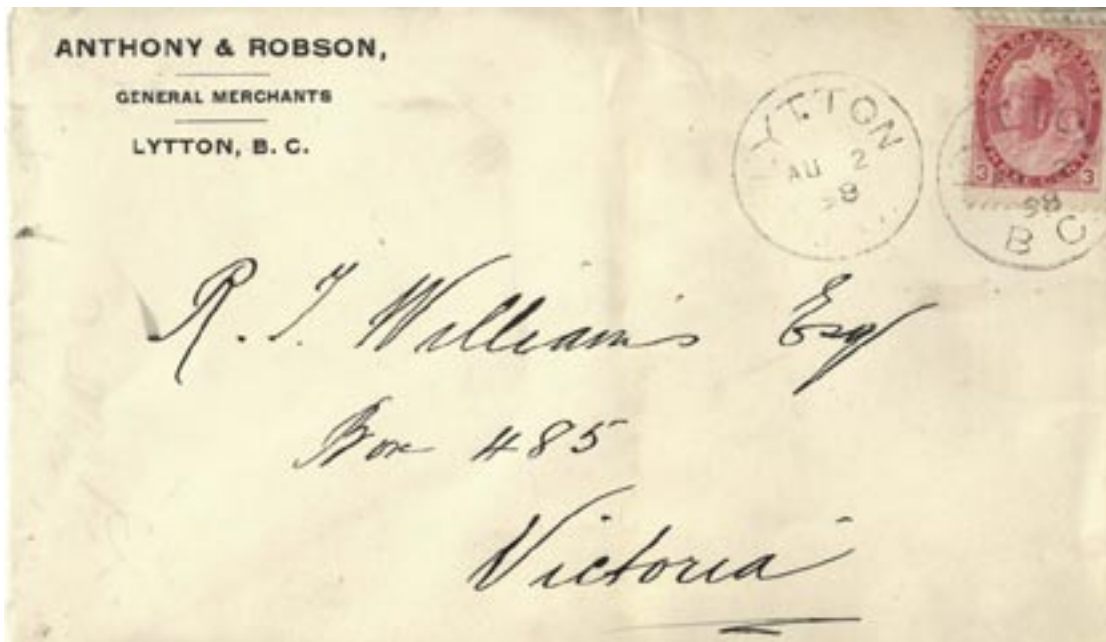
*The Lytton split-ring, dated October 18, 1877, to Victoria, note cork cancel. (O'Reilly correspondence)*

their living from the forest industries; today the region is better known for tourism, especially river rafting, camping and climbing.

The post office is believed to have opened in 1859, under postmaster John Boyd, about whom little is known, and was thus one of the earliest offices established in BC. It was issued numeral hammer seven (see newsletter issue #113, pp 1373-75). Examples are very rare. The town was connected by Ballou's Pioneer Express and Kent & Smith's Express, and later by Barnard's Express. The post office, in particular, served the gold miners who worked the early placer gold deposits of the Fraser Canyon, south of town.

Lytton was originally known as "The Forks," for its location near the river junction, but as a community sprang up, it was officially named after Sir Edward Bulwar Lytton, secretary of state for the colonies

*Thinking of Lytton continued*



of Vancouver Island and BC. Lytton was also a successful novelist, originator of numerous phrases still in common use today (“the great unwashed,” “pursuit of the mighty dollar,” “the pen is mightier than the sword,” and the opening phrase “it was a dark and stormy night”). His books themselves, however, are rarely mentioned.

Days after their catastrophe, the citizens of Lytton, through their council, announced that they would reconstruct their home and reinvigorate its economic, social and cultural life. The reborn village, they said, could “serve as a model zero emissions/ living community to show the world what every community should demonstrate.”



Two examples of the first Lytton CDS. Above: August 2, 1898, Anthony & Robson general merchants corner-card cover to Victoria. Below: December 8, 1897, registered Small Queen cover to Maine.