For this issue, we have a special feature. The image above is of the cover page of one of Gerry Wellburn's collections, this one auctioned in 2022. This image is intended to highlight our feature article, which summarizes our selection of the **Top 10 Pioneer B.C. Postal Historians**; philatelists who continue to inspire those of us who follow in their footsteps. Comments regarding the selection process for this feature can be found in the Editor's Comments on page 1458. The feature itself starts on page 1459.

In this issue:

Editor's Comments

We like to provide the study group with content beyond the great articles that our members provide for inclusion. For this issue, Tracy came up with the suggestion for what we term our "feature article". It is a compilation of the Top 10 Pioneer B.C. Postal Historians. If you are reading this issue, please do not be offended to find that your name is not on the list, but rather, be pleased. Our overriding requirement was that to be included on the list, the person had to be deceased. After this criterion was met, we developed a list of individuals who had by exibiting or publishing important collections helped to create an awareness of the richness of BC postal history.

Our editorial team each provided their suggested list with a few alternates included. After relatively little debate, the final list was compiled. Following Gerry Wellburn, the remaining individuals are presented in alphabetical order. Obviously, many pages could be devoted to each of the individuals on the list. Still, for the present exercise, the intention was to condense their contributions to one or two paragraphs, very challenging in most cases.

We hope that you enjoy this feature article. The question to ask is "why do these gents continue to inspire us and guide our philatelic efforts?" We welcome any suggestions for further such projects or names that deserved to be on the list but were missed.

We are also pleased to be able to provide the membership with the accompanying lengthy monograph by Gray Scrimgeour and Ian Kimmerly. It describes mail related to a repair worker from Victoria who was involved with cable repairs over the period from 1937 through 1942.

Our Readers Write

Following the article about the Gillies Bay post office in issue #129, study group member Bill Warwaryick sent along two additional Gillies Bay postal markings. One is for an additional office marking, 104666, and the second is a marking for the last day of operation on Dec 21, 2023.
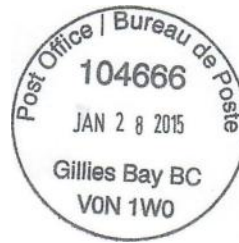
Auction Results

Quality British Columbia postal material continues to command high prices, both for stamps and postal history material.

The All Nations Auction #1450 on March 16, 2024 offered various early BC stamps and these realized values from a few hundred dollars to $3,492 for a copy of B.C. #3, imperf with a Victoria 35 marking from 1865.

Items on Wellburn pages continue to command a premium.

The Ocean Park auction #62 on Feb 17, 2024 realized $350 for an undated Thunder Hill strike on cover to England (Lot 111), $675 for a registered 1893 cover from Natal to Peter O'Reilly in Victoria (Lot 123), and $8750 for a CPR end of track cover dated 1885 (Lot 39).

TOP 10 PIONEER B.C. POSTAL HISTORIANS

By Morris Beattie (MB) and Tracy Cooper (TC)

GERALD E. WELLBURN (MB)

Without question, Gerry Wellburn is considered by many collectors as the father of B.C. postal history. His collections encompassed numerous areas beyond the B.C. borders and while many of these collections have been disbursed, about 24 collections that relate largely to B.C. remain intact. One of his significant contributions to B.C. philately was his practice of preserving early postal history and associated ephemera. Anyone who has had the privilege of spending time looking through one of Gerry's collections comes away from the experience in awe and with new inspiration. Collections which were auctioned in 2023/2024 can be viewed on the All Nations website[1]. His contributions went well beyond the fabulous collections that he left us to study and enjoy. He frequently made presentations to groups to share philatelic stories. A more complete compilation of his many contributions is well beyond the scope of the present summary but the interested reader is referred to the publication about Gerry that was completed by Peter Newroth in 2022[2] or to the Victoria Stamp Club website[3].

1. Gerald Wellburn - All Nations Stamp and Coin
2. Newroth, P. R., Gerald E. Wellburn, A British Columbia Philatelist 1900 - 1992, First Choice Books, Victoria, 2022.
3. Wellburn Philatelic Foundation - Victoria Stamp Club (vicstamps.com)

A.S. DEAVILLE (TC)

Alfred Stanley Deaville makes my inclusion on our list of the top 10 Pioneer BC Postal Historians as a result of his foundational book *'The Colonial Postal Systems and Postage Stamps of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1849-1871'*. The book was published in 1928 as Memoir No. VIII of the Provincial Archives publications and continues to be the bible for colonial British Columbia postal historians.

Stanley (he went by his middle name) was born in England and emigrated to Victoria with his parents in 1898. He was a life long civil servant and dedicated his entire career to the Postal Service. Stanley was assistant Postmaster in Victoria and after writing the above book, accepted a promotion with the Postal Service and moved to Ottawa to take charge of the newly instituted, Canadian Air Mail Service.

Stanley was a life long collector and at the time of his untimely death was superintendent of the Canadian Post Office Department. Many imperfs of the period that came onto the market have been attributed to him.
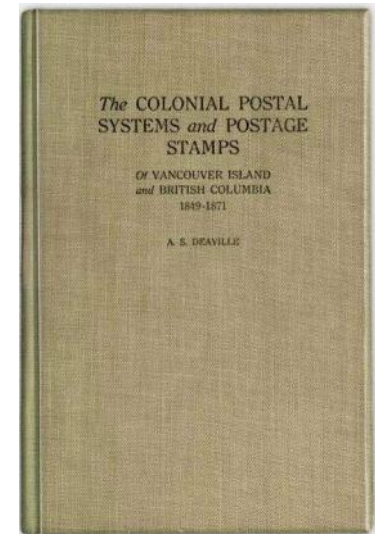
1. A.S. Deaville – *The Colonial Postal Systems and Postage Stamps of Vancouver Island and British Columbia*, A Sketch of the Origin and Early Development of the Postal Service on the Pacific Seaboard of British North America, King's Printer Victoria, 1928

2. Find a Grave website

KEN ELLISON (MB)

Ken was very interested in the postal history of Canada and the history of the North Okanagan, where he grew up and subsequently operated the family ranch and orchards. He was a life member of the Okanagan Historical Society and volunteered tirelessly at the Vernon Museum. Ken was active until shortly before his death, and shortly before he died had sent a letter to Tracy Cooper, who had asked for information about covers sent to "Postmaster, Seattle" in the 1890s (Issue #96, p899).

Here are excerpts, slightly edited, from Ken's reply: "I see you were wondering about these. Way back, in my earlier collecting days—the 1970s, maybe—there were a lot of them around. At that time there was a show in Spokane we used to go to. Bill McGeer, of Selah, Washington, was there, and he was selling lots of BC covers. They were all pencil-marked with an 'M-1,' which you may still see here and there. Cost was 25 cents each! There were many great covers. Unfortunately, I was not really up on them then, but did get some. I remember one in particular, a rare revenue-stamped cover with the overprint 'Customs Duty.' I understood that Bill had bought out a collector in Seattle. I think his name was D C Bartley—well-known at the time. These covers had several Seattle addresses, such as the 'postmaster' ones. Many were to a 'Prof Ober.' We brought home quite a few Halls Prairie, Brit Col, covers at 25 cents each! They were hardly known then, I think. It was a wonderful opportunity. I wish I'd been more with it at the time", a comment to which many of us can relate.

As early as the 1970s, Ken was contributing many articles about BC cancellations and post offices to postal history journals of that time and continued to do so for many years.

Shown adjacent is an example of one of the booklets of the BNAPS Exhibit series, this one about Agricultural Exhibitions of British Columbia 1890–1930 by Ken Ellison. This is a pretty specialized collection but it shows what might be done, what is available, and how to present such a narrow topical subject.
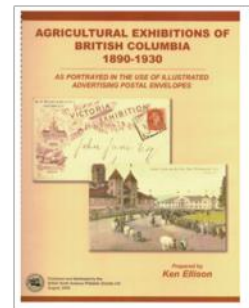
GEORGE H. MELVIN (TC)

George Melvin comes in as Number 4 on our list of the Top 10 Pioneer B.C. Postal Historians based on the publication of another foundational book to our hobby, '*The Post Offices of British Columbia 1858 – 1970*'.

This book is important to BC Postal Historians as it was the first real listing, in one place, of all the Post Offices in British Columbia during this period with opening and closing dates, as well as the names of the Postmasters and their tenure. As with any author, George says it best in his introduction; "The publication of this book sees the completion of seventeen years of research and study, all of which have afforded me with a great challenge and great pleasure.

His list of acknowledgements, Dr. E.C. Black, Miss Marjorie Harris, Bury Brinks, Stuart Johnstone, Bill Topping, Ken Ellison, R.T. Fraser, Dr. R.V.C. Carr, Lester Small, Jim Pike and Jack Houser reads like a 'whos who' of BC Postal Historians.
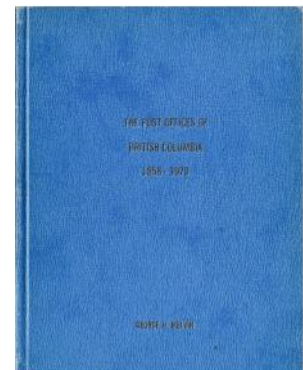
1)   Post Offices of British Columbia – George H. Melvin Wayside Press, Vernon B.C. 1972

JAMES A. PIKE (TC)

James Pike, known to his friends as Jim, may not be well known to the majority of BC Postal Historians but he was an early and passionate collector of BC Postal History and particularly covers in the Victorian period. Alex Price used to regale me of his adventures with Jim as they searched out early BC covers from pioneer families in the era.   Jim was a fan of 'show them the money' approach, while Alex preferred the more subtle approach. Each method was effective in its own way and resulted in the acquisition of many important correspondences, all of which are now lore in the BC postal history world.

James was inducted into the Order of the Beaver in 1977 and exhibited widely in the 1960's and 1970's.   His collection of Victorian BC postal history 1871-1899 was auctioned through Robert A. Lee Philatelist Ltd. Sales #49 - #53 June 1988 to February 1989 and through my many acquisitions at the time and through the years, has formed the basis of Victorian BC collection. I had the pleasure of meeting him several times before his death, primarily at auction venues, and his words of collecting wisdom have stuck with me through the years.

James Pike
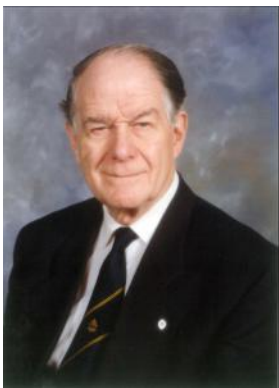
BILL ROBINSON (TC)

Bill was a giant in the field of Canadian Philately specializing in Military, Railway Post Offices and BC Postal History among others. To quote the BNAPS website, "Bill Robinson made major contributions to philately. He served as President of the RPSC, BNAPS, and the PHSC. He was a nationally and internationally accredited judge. For his many years of service, he was named a Fellow of the RPSC, was inducted into the Order of the Beaver, and was a recipient of a Fellowship in the Royal Philatelic Society, London. He died on 4 December 2010.

Railway Post Offices were one of Bill's primary collecting interests. He wrote the "RPO Cowcatcher" column in BNA Topics for many years, and contributed to the RPO catalogue. Bill also collected Canadian military mail, and won several Golds for his exhibits. With Bill Topping, he edited five books on the post offices and postal markings of the western provinces and territories."

Bill had a major influence on my advancement as a BC Postal Historian as I read with great interest his discussions of newly reported and previously unknown BC Post Offices, in the Postal History Society of Canada Journal. I was fortunate enough to purchase some of Bill's B.C. postal history gems when Bill was disposing of this collection in the early 2000's.

BILL TOPPING (MB)

Perhaps Bill's best-known works are the separate checklists, prepared and published with Bill Robinson, of the post offices of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the early Territories of the West. He published a comprehensive listing of all western Canada post offices in operation from 1990 to 2006 in four booklets, one each for Alberta, British Colombia, Manitoba including Northern Canada, and Saskatchewan. He went on to prepare the "Catalogue of Western Canadian Ship Way Letter Cancellations", published in 2010 based on 40 years of record keeping.

CATALOGUE OF
WESTERN CANADIAN
SHIP WAY LETTER CANCELLATIONS
AND RELATED SHIP POSTAL MARKINGS
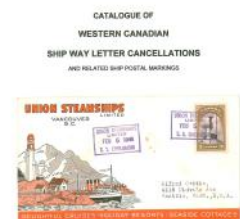
WILLIAM TOPPING
2010

Bill formed and exhibited an award-winning collection of Canadian semi-official airmails. He also authored Yukon Airways and Exploration Company Limited: A Pioneer Air Mail Company

as well as the 14-page introduction of the three editions of Canada Inkjet (Jet Spray) Cancels 1992-2002/5.

In 2007, Bill received the BNAPS Order of the Beaver Lifetime Achievement Award, with the comment: Bill's contributions to the study of Western Canada Postal History are invaluable. Bill joined BNAPS in 1952 and was an Emeritus member. He served as Chairman of BNAPEX 1969 in Vancouver and as a member of the Jury at BNAPEX 2001 in Ottawa. He attended and exhibited at many BNAPS conventions, and served as Chairman/Editor for the British Colombia Postal History Study Group Newsletter (which we all continue to enjoy) from its inception until 2014, twenty-two years later.

In addition to BNAPS, Topping was also a long-time member of The Royal Philatelic Society of Canada (RPSC) and the Canadian Philatelic Society of Great Britain (CPSGB). He was a Fellow of the RPSC (1999) and served as president of the CPSGB in 2004-05. Locally, Topping was active in the British Columbia Philatelic Society as well as BNAPS' Pacific Northwest Regional Group.

JACK WALLACE (MB)
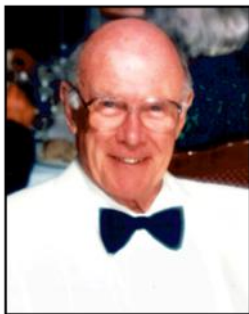
Jack's love for stamps began in childhood, and he remained an avid stamp collector throughout his life. Following a meeting with Gerry Wellburn in 1954, he became focused on the stamps and postal history of Vancouver Island and British Columbia and this area became the basis for his postal history collection. This remarkable collection was widely exhibited and garnered numerous awards across the globe, including recognition in the UK, New Zealand, the USA, and Canada and in 2011 was published as BNAPS exhibit #52, shown below.

The Jack Wallace collection of BC colonial stamps and covers was offered for sale by Eastern Auctions on Oct 16, 2014, in Halifax. Numerous philatelic rarities were included, amongst them, a 50-cent BC stamp on cover to England. Jack's collection was noted for express company material, handstamped franks and, especially, an outstanding array of numeral cancellations, on stamp and cover.

Together with Daniel Eaton in 1987, he edited "The Stamps and Postal History of Vancouver Island & British Columbia" formed by Gerald E. Wellburn.

Jack was a member of and an active participant in several philatelic societies and clubs and his dedication to philately and his remarkable collection remind us that passion transcends time.

WARREN WILKINSON (MB)

Warren Wilkinson had a variety of personal interests, including travel, bridge, war history, and classical music, and he played tennis including many tournament championships up until his 89th year.

Warren was a world-known philatelist. His collection of Canadian postal covers was so remarkable that he received the honour of viewing the private stamp collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in London. His other stamp collections earned many awards and gold medals.

After assembling and then selling several award-winning collections including Canadian Postal Rates 1851-1859 and Nova Scotia Postal Rates in the Pence Denominated Period 1851-1860 he went on to acquire several notable collections of BC postal history and built on those, resulting in his 2005 publication "British Columbia & Vancouver Island Postal History, Colonial Period 1858-1871", shown adjacent.
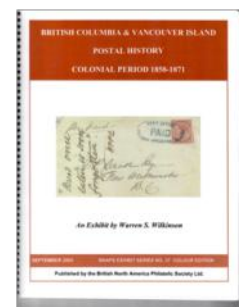
ROBERT TAYLOR WILLIAMS (R.T. Williams) 1849-1934 (TC)

Robert Taylor Williams was born in Rochester, New York, the son of William and Betsey Williams. With his family he came to Victoria via California in 1859. Williams ran a bookbinding business for many years and published directories of British Columbia.

While his 'Williams' Directories' are important philatelic research documents on BC Postal History, what is not generally appreciated was that he was likely the earliest of the non-Colonial BC postal history collectors and was well known for showing friends and acquaintances covers mailed to him for inclusion in his yearly published Directory. He saved covers from the far-off, short lived and uncommon BC towns and delighted his friends with his knowledge of the Province. I suspect the majority of readers of this newsletter have at least one or two covers from his collection in their accumulation.

A Favourite Cover

by Malcolm Leitch

This is one of my favourite covers because of the route it covered in October 1862 (162 years ago) from Yale to Italy. There are not many covers from Colonial BC to Italy in that era. The two BC & VI stamps pay the 5p rate from Yale to New Westminster and are cancelled by an orange 4 numeral handstamp. The cover would have been taken by Barnard's Express to New Westminster and Victoria, by steamer to San Francisco (OCT 20 1862), by rail to New York City (NOV 15, 1862) and on the November 15 sailing of the Hapag Lines Hammond which arrived in Southampton on November 28, 2862. It arrived in Bergamo Italy on DEC 1, 1862. This cover was previously in the Carr and Wilkinson collections and was part of CAPEX 96 "Gems of Canadian Philately".

THE STEAMER ABERDEEN

By Brian Plain

Editor's note: The following article appeared initially in Vol 3, No. 2 of "Post West", The Western Canada Postal History Journal that was published for a period in the 1970s. As many of our study group members were not members of that group, we reproduce it here with the permission of Brian Plain. See also the Editor's comments following the article for updated listing information.

May 3, 1892, marked a new era in the story of the Okanagan mails. On that date, the Aberdeen slid off the ways at Okanagan Landing to begin a career destined to be instrumental in carrying mails to small communities along Lake Okanagan whose very existence was due to the presence of the steamer on the water.

Figure 1. A postcard showing the Aberdeen at the dock in Penticton. (Courtesy of Morris Beattie).

The construction of the Aberdeen was begun in an attempt on the part of the Canadian Pacific Railway to upgrade the service on the lake as the existing facilities, namely the steamer Penticton were quite inadequate. As there was no local resident or financial institution interested in building a boat, the C.P.R. stepped in and indicated their willingness to do the job. The new Shuswap and Okanagan (S&O) Railway, running from Sicamous through Vernon to Okanagan Landing, and operating under lease to the C.P.R. had brought a degree of reliability in transport to the North Okanagan. However, movement of people and goods on the lake remained a problem. The presence of the C.P.R. as a major carrier and transportation link was destined to change all that and in fact to have a major economic effect on the entire Valley. With the prospect of dependable service, many of the old ranches were bought by land speculators and then subdivided into orchard plots. The C.P.R. further helped to infuse new life into the area by mounting a massive advertising campaign directed at enticing any would-be orchardists to the area.

While all this activity was going on, the C.P.R. began work on its ship. They hired Mr. E.G. McKay of Portland, Oregon to superintend the construction of the sternwheeler and by early 1892, it was taking shape on the ways at Okanagan Landing. The launching took place on May 3, 1892 and the maiden voyage on June 8, 1892 with full outfitting having taken place in the interval. The ship was suitably launched by Miss

Rose V. Dewdney. The ship was registered in Vancouver, her registration number being 1000675, with the C.P.R. as the listed owner. Her statistics are listed below:

Gross Tonnage……………………554.04
Net Tonnage……………………….349.05
Length………………………………..146 feet
Width…………………………………..29 feet
Depth………………………….……6.8 feet
Speed……………….……12 miles per hour

When put into regular service, she began a tri-weekly service between Vernon (Okanagan Landing) through Kelowna to Penticton. She connected with the S&O Railway at the north end which in turn connected with the mainline of the C.P.R. at Sicamous. At the south end of the lake, the wagon road linking Penticton, Osoyoos and Oroville (Washington) completed the north-south transport link through the valley. This service got a vast boost in 1893 with the discovery of gold at Camp McKinney high up on the plateau and East of Vaseaux Lake and further discoveries on the West side of the Okanagan River at Fairview, above the present-day town of Oliver. The wagon road south of Penticton linked up with these mining communities and kept them in touch with the Canadian markets via the lake route. By 1900, many other towns and mining areas were dependent on these links; Midway, Grand Forks, Hedley and Fairview to mention a few. In addition, the burgeoning fruit industry provided business for the route. Links with the Canadian market allowed for the establishment of such communities as Summerland and Peachland. During 1901, the Aberdeen helped to ship the first carload of Okanagan apples to market.

The trip of the Aberdeen generally took six hours but could take more or less depending on how many "flag stops" were made along the way. Although there were only the three scheduled stops, anyone who wanted on the ship, or who had goods to ship could call the ship by use of a standard prearranged signal. Many of these small points along the lake had little or inadequate wharf facilities and the ship simply nosed up to the beach to carry on its business. For her size, the Aberdeen was a remarkable carrier and was often loaded to such an extent that any of the crew wishing to go fore or aft had to walk the guard rail around the deckhouse. Her insides were considered fit for a queen. There were ten staterooms, three saloons and as always, superb meals. Her sailing schedule as of 1894 is listed below:

Mon, Wed, Fri Rail Down		Tue, Thur, Sat Rail Up
8:10 A.M.	Sicamous Vernon	6:45 P.M.
11:00 A.M.	Ok. Landing	4:00 P.M.
Mon, Wed, Fri Str. Aberdeen Down		**Tue, Thur, Sat Str. Aberdeen UP**
11:30 A.M.	Ok. Landing (Vernon)	3:00 P.M.
2:00 P.M.	Kelowna	12:30 P.M.
5:30 P.M.	Penticton	9:30 A.M.

As we can see, the Aberdeen was a real workhorse and helped to tie the Valley communities together both socially and economically. It had another important function, and that was to tie the communities together POSTALLY. As with all the C.P.R. ships, the already overworked Purser seems to have been relegated to the post of postmaster. When the actual service began on the Aberdeen is as yet unknown but it is assumed that the decommissioning of the ship as a passenger vessel in 1907 would see the latest possible date sometime in that year. The cancellation illustrating this article (Figure 2) is listed by Shaw as No. 150J and a Type 5C hammer. It carries an RF of 200 which makes it supposedly unique, but I am sure other copies must exist. The strike is a C-1-1 23½ mm strike from outer side of ring to outer side of ring. It was apparently applied in conjunction with a nine-bar killer which cancels the stamp. The cover was mailed from Trout Creek (near present-day Summerland) on June 25, 1901. A receiver's mark indicates that it passed through the Kelowna office June 23, 1901 (?) and that it arrived in Okanagan Mission, seven miles south of Kelowna on the east side of the lake on June 25, 1901. The author of this article would be most grateful if anyone having a copy of this strike would communicate with him via Post West so more thorough dating of this hammer can be done.
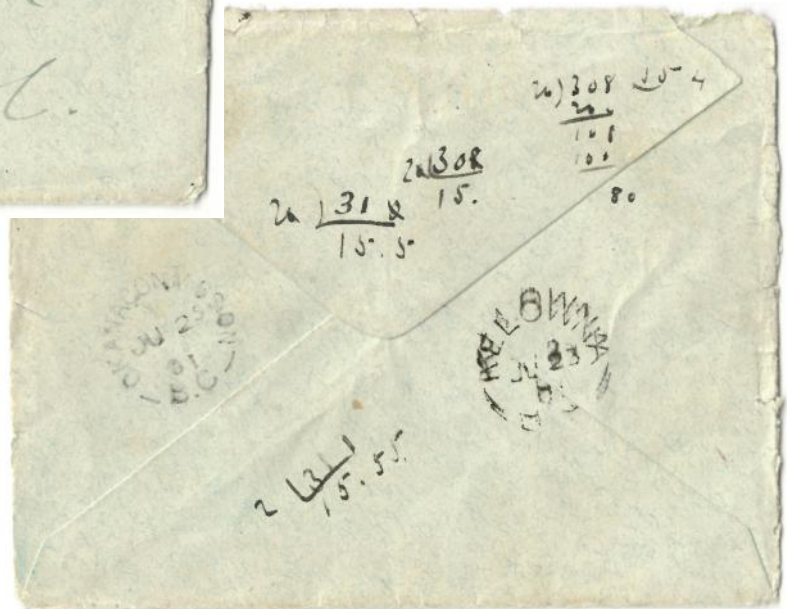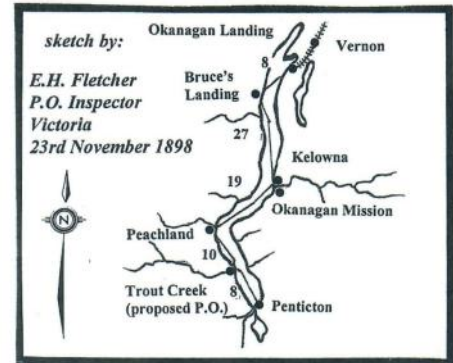
Figure 2. Front and back of cover carried by Aberdeen, dated June 25, 1901, addressed to Kelowna. (Courtesy of Tracy Cooper)

After such a glorious beginning and worthwhile life, the Aberdeen ran into rough waters beginning in 1905. In that year, the York was added to the Okanagan fleet to carry freight. In 1907, the Aberdeen was withdrawn from the passenger service on Lake Okanagan and was replaced by the SS Okanagan, a larger and faster ship which continued in the high standard of the Aberdeen but on a daily service basis. To this new ship went the postal facilities and mail handling task. The Aberdeen was taken from the lake, overhauled and then refloated to take over the job of the York, hauling freight thrice weekly from Okanagan Landing to Summerland. By 1913 however, it was found redundant to have two steamers on the lake and the Aberdeen was finally retired. She was sold to one Byron Johnson who dismantled her. For many years after her hull lay on the beach about one mile below Okanagan Landing. With her also died the pioneer ships on the lake. C.P.R. had proven its capabilities and the two successors to the Aberdeen, the Okanagan and later the Sicamous, carried on the tradition.

Editor's Comments: The Aberdeen cancel is very rare, with only two examples being reported during 1901-1902 by Topping who designates it as type 01-CSD. Gray lists it as WW-2 and includes the following image of the cancel. All examples to date are for the northbound direction.

A second marking for the Aberdeen, a purser's ticket marking is listed by Topping as type 04-TE, with four examples being indicated over the period 1904-1906. An example of this marking from the back of a cheque to Okanagan fruit seller Gellatly is shown adjacent.

References from original article:

1. Affleck, E.L., Sternwheelers, Sandbars and Switchbacks, Alex Nicolls Press, Vancouver, B.C., 1973.
2. Downs, Art, Paddlewheels on the Frontier, Vol. Two, Foremost Pub. Co. Ltd, Surrey, B.C., 1971.
3. Buckland, F.M., Ogopogo's Vigil, Okanagan Historical Society Reprint, Kelowna Branch.
4. Ludlow, L.M., Catalogue Section of the Handbook of Canadian Transportation Postmarks (Shaw), Private printing 1975.
5. Price, Alex, Personal communication, Unpublished.
6. White, Dr. William, Personal communication with author.
7. The Sixth Report of The Okanagan Historical Society, 1935, p220.

Additional references:

1. Topping, W., Catalogue of Western Canadian Ship Way letter Cancellations, Private printing, 2010.
2. Gray, R., Catalogue of Canadian Railway Cancellations and Related Railway Postmarks including Selected Waterway Postmarks, BNAPS, 2022.

Early Mail Service at Lasqueti Island

By Brian Copeland and Tim Woodland

Lasqueti Island, located between Qualicum on Vancouver Island and Texada Island, presents a conundrum of being both tantalizingly close and logistically far away. To this day, despite having a population of almost 500 people, it is not on the BC Hydro power grid, and there is no car ferry. Throughout its early history, mail delivery was a challenge.

Settlement on Lasqueti began in the 1860's. Early settlers farmed and raised sheep. By 1898 there were at least 20 families on the island and the Rat Portage Lumber Company was logging in the area around Boat Cove. BC Post Office Inspector Fletcher sent a proposal for a post office to Ottawa.[1] It was rejected.

A post office finally opened on May 1, 1911. In the early days, the post office was in the postmaster's house, so its location changed as the postmaster changed. John Norrish was the first postmaster, and the post office was in his home at the southeast end of the island near Norrish Bay.[2] He carried mail to and from Nanaimo (31 miles each way)[3] on his motor boat Victory. He resigned in the Fall of 1912, and Peter Anderson was appointed postmaster. Anderson also took over the contract to carry mail to and from Nanaimo on his motor boat, Vina. The post office was in his family home at Anderson Bay, from which he and his wife also operated a small grocery store. Mrs. A. Wesche became postmaster on Oct. 1, 1915. By 1915, a wharf had been constructed by the Department of Public Works in Tucker Bay and Union Steamships began to stop regularly and deliver mail. The post office was at the Wesche house at Lambert Lake about a mile south of Tucker Bay. Rudolph Kurtzhals assumed duties as postmaster on Feb. 15, 1917. A small post office was built at Tucker Bay and the mail continued to be carried by steamship to the wharf.[4]
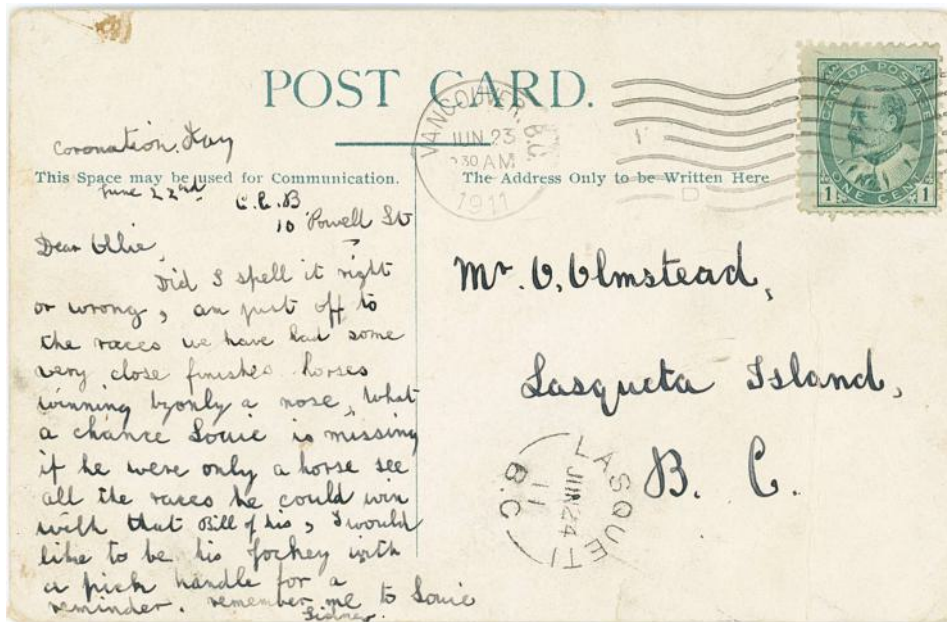

Figure 2. A very early strike of the first Lasqueti split circle hammer.
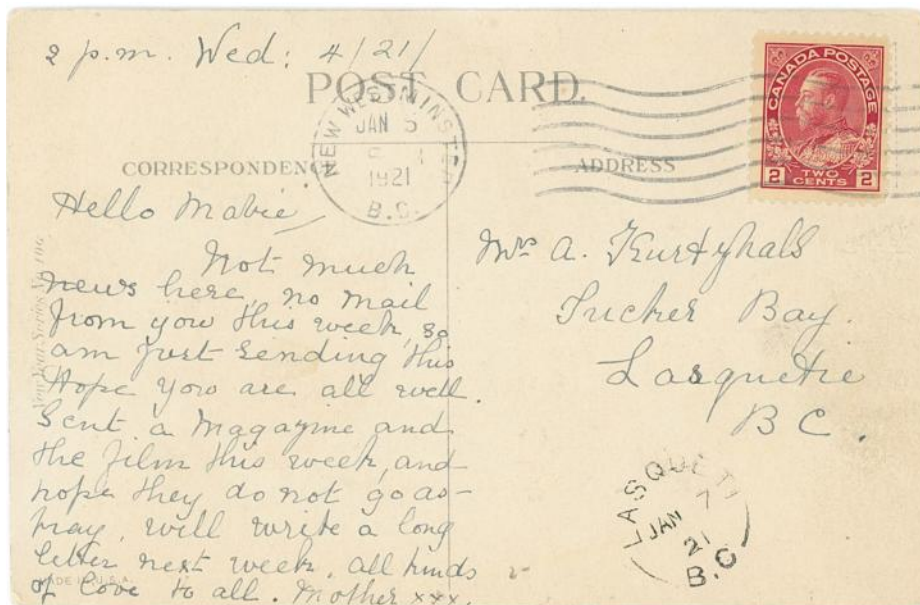

Figure 3. Post card sent to Mrs. Alex Kurtzhals at Tucker Bay, Lasqueti.
Alex Kurtzhals was the postmaster's brother. This was sent to Alex's wife, Mabel.

Meanwhile, a fish cannery was established by the Gulf Island Fishing and Canning Company at False Bay in 1915.[5] This led to growth in the small community in the area, and on June 1, 1917, a post office named False Bay opened with Captain William J. Gillis as postmaster.[6]
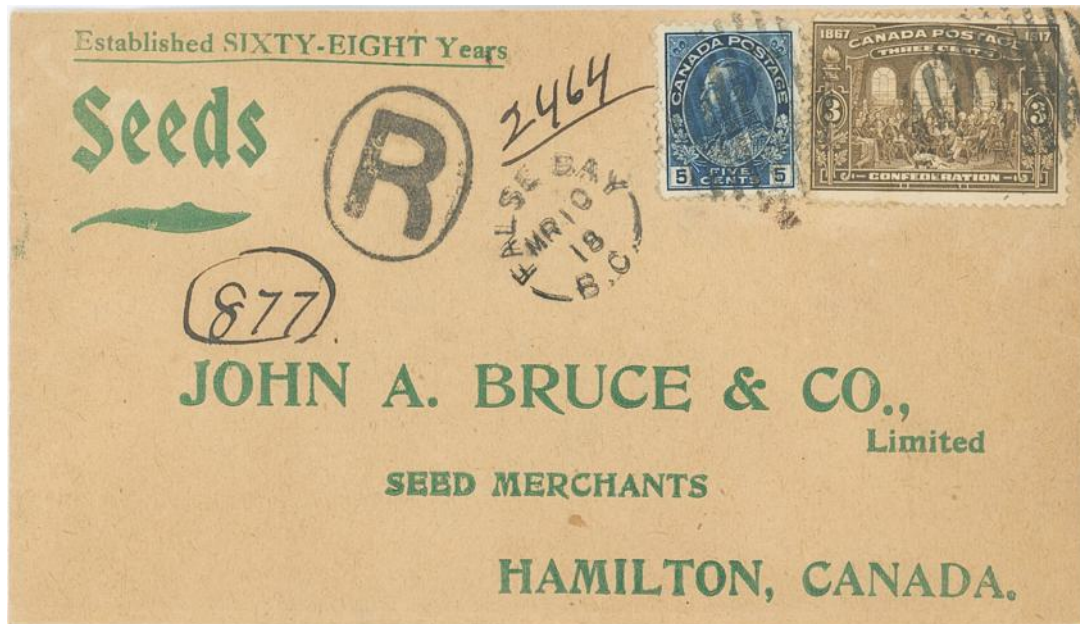

Figure 4. Registered cover sent from False Bay to Hamilton in 1918.

For a short time, there were two post offices on Lasqueti Island. However, the cannery was short-lived. Business was good at first because of high demand for canned fish driven by the war in Europe. After the war, sales dropped and many canneries, including the one at False Bay, fell on hard times. The post office at False Bay closed on Aug. 2, 1920. During the three years it was open, postal revenue totalled just $200.36.[7] Surviving covers are extremely rare. Figure 4 shows a registered cover sent from False Bay in 1918.

The former postmaster, Captain Gillis, met with a tragic death a few years later. By 1924 (during the prohibition era in the U.S.), he was using his ship, the Beryl G, to carry rum. On Sept. 16, 1924 his boat was found adrift near Turn Point Lighthouse on Stuart Island. He and his son were murdered by pirates who stole the rum they had been transporting.[8]

The Lasqueti post office continued to operate at Tucker Bay, but the path towards its demise was set in motion in the fall of 1923 when the Union Steamship Cowichan hit a rock in Tucker Bay. Subsequent surveys revealed several dangerous rocks beneath the waters of the bay, and the Union Steamships stopped calling. For a time, mail was delivered by motor boat from Pender Harbour.[9]

Despite the failure of the cannery at False Bay (it operated sporadically and shut down for good after a fire in 1926), the community at False Bay gradually overtook Tucker Bay as the centre of activity on the island. In 1927 a wharf was built at False Bay and Union Steamships began stopping there regularly. This caused some tension between the communities at Tucker Bay and False Bay, as it became clear that the post office at Tucker Bay was no longer viable if the steamships were stopping at False Bay. At the end of December 1927, the post office officially moved to False Bay, but kept the name Lasqueti. Figures 5 and 6 show outgoing covers from Lasqueti after the post office had moved to False Bay.
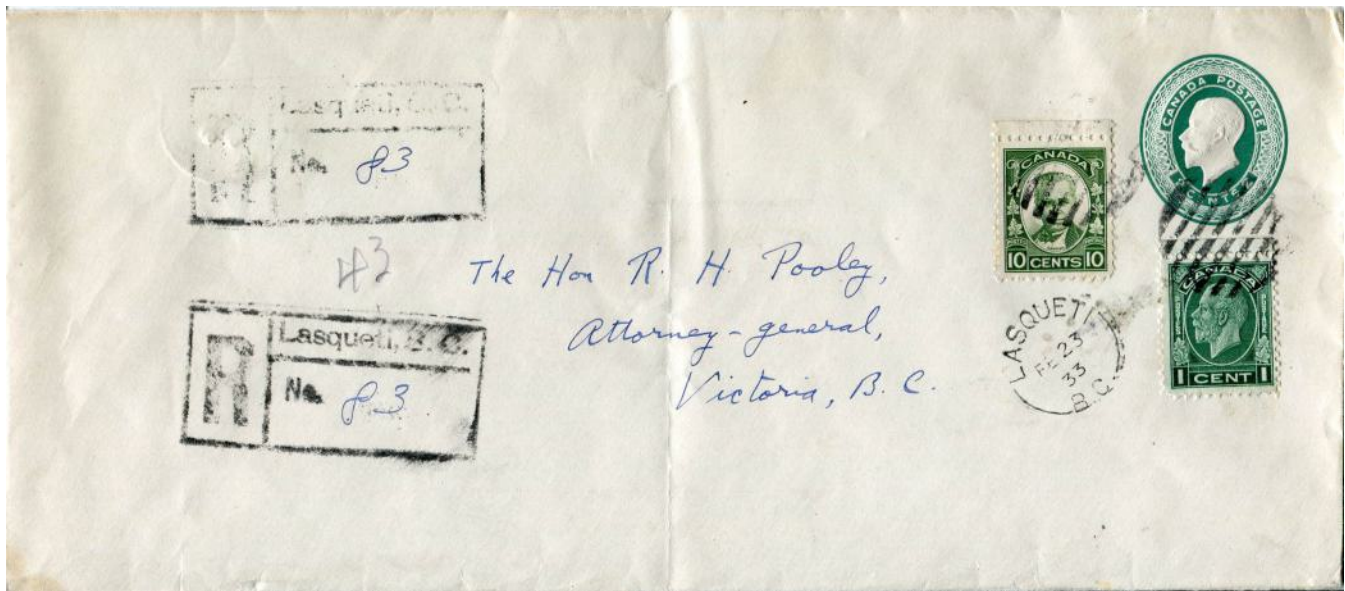
Figure 5. Registered cover sent from Lasqueti to Victoria on Feb. 23, 1933. This was sent after the post office had relocated to False Bay. It has a strike of the second Lasqueti split circle hammer. It was proofed on Jan. 12, 1927, before the move to False Bay.
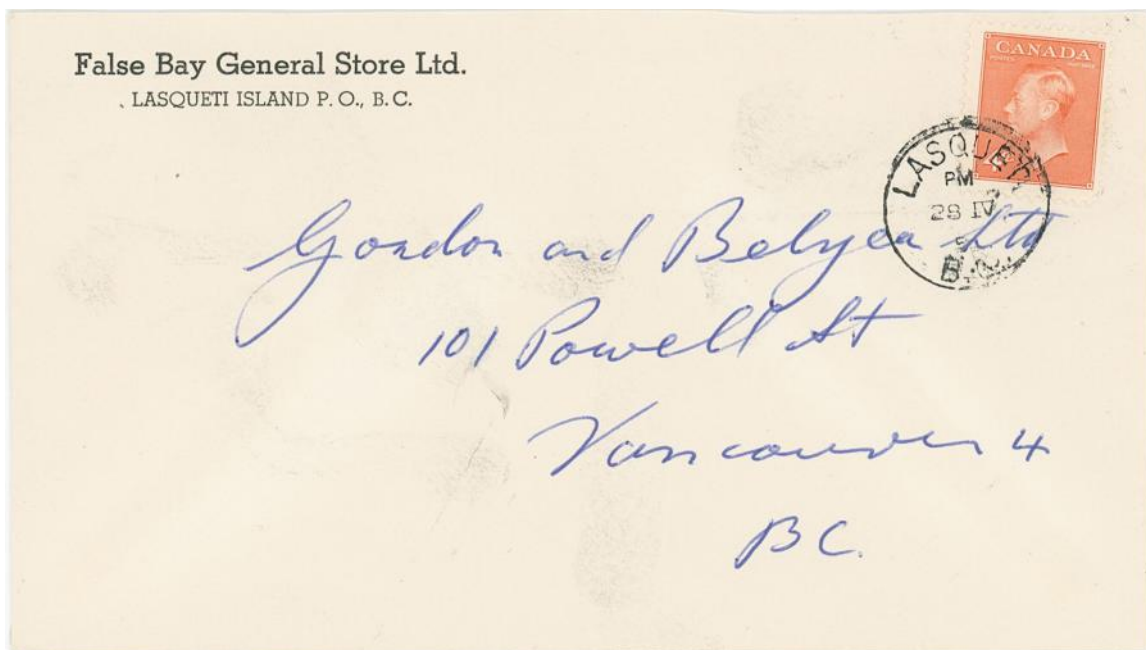

Figure 6. A cover from the False Bay General Store sent in 1951 with a strike of Lasqueti's CDS hammer. It was proofed June 30, 1950.

Figure 7 shows an incoming cover to Charles Williams at False Bay, Lasqueti. The stamp is cancelled with handstamp from the Union Steamship S.S. Venture on Oct. 4, 1936. It was probably mailed at a dock or on board the ship. It bears a handwritten "Per U.S.S." instruction, and shows no receiving cancel. Williams was a prominent citizen on the island. He established a hotel and a store and had the first car on the island (a Model T Ford) that he used for mail delivery.[10]
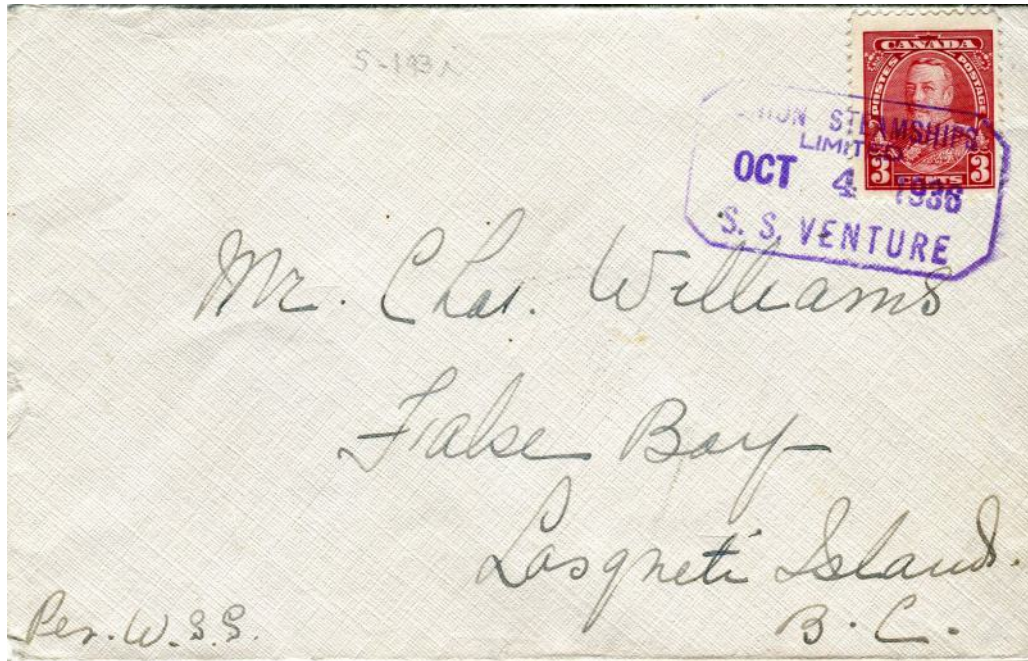
Figure 7. Cover to False Bay posted with a Union Steamship cancel.

Some mail left the island outside the regular postal system. Figure 8 shows a cover from the Spitz Logging Co. that was probably carried from Lasqueti by courtesy on an airplane to Vancouver. It entered the mail system on April 2, 1951 at Vancouver Airport Mail Facility (VANCOUVER A.M.F.).
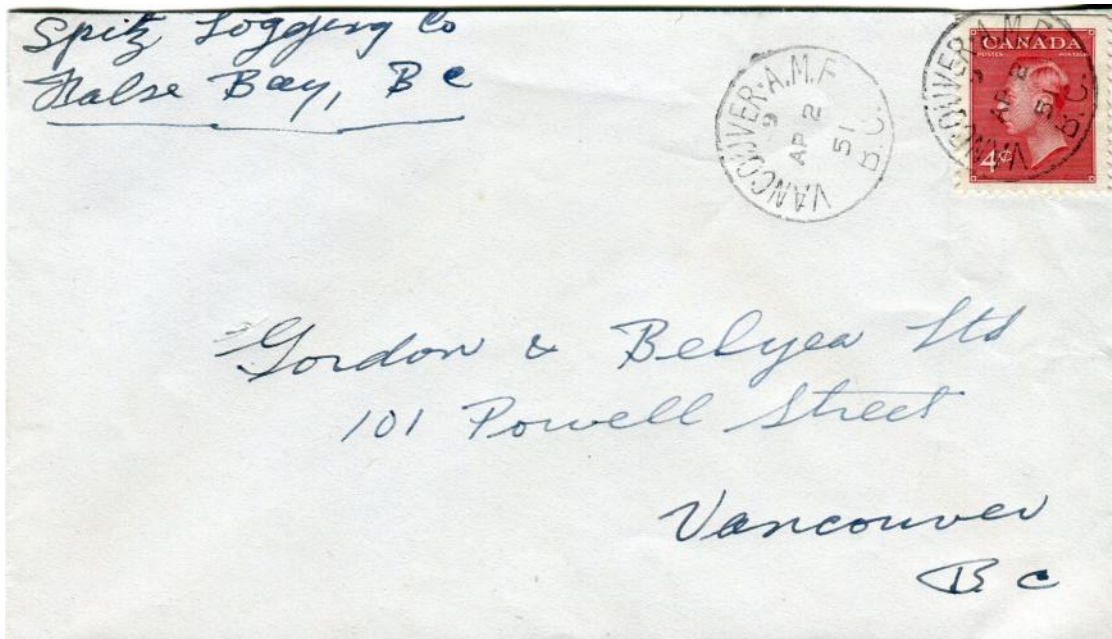

Figure 8. Cover from False Bay carried by air and posted at the Vancouver A.M.F.

False Bay continues as the service centre of the island to this day. Although the era of Union Steamships has long passed, the passenger ferry to the island runs between French Creek on Vancouver Island and False Bay. Islanders have occasionally agitated for better transportation service to the island. Figure 9 shows a card produced as part of a campaign in the 1950's for improved transportation service.
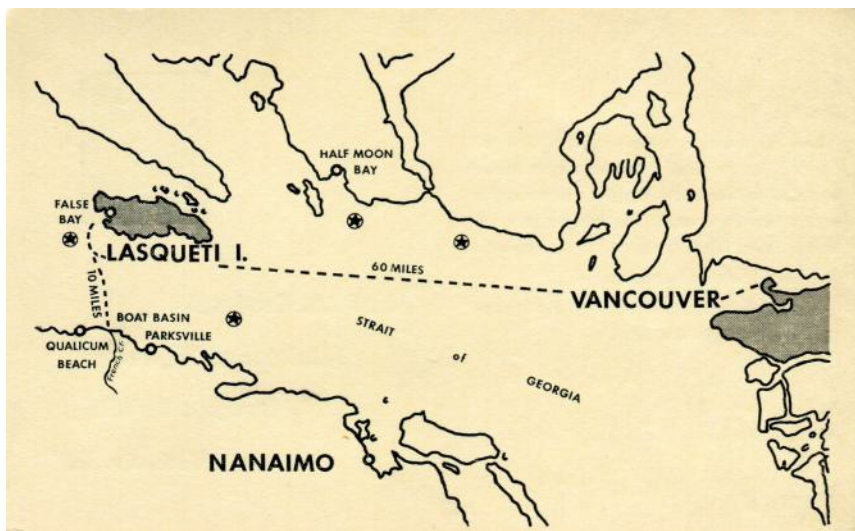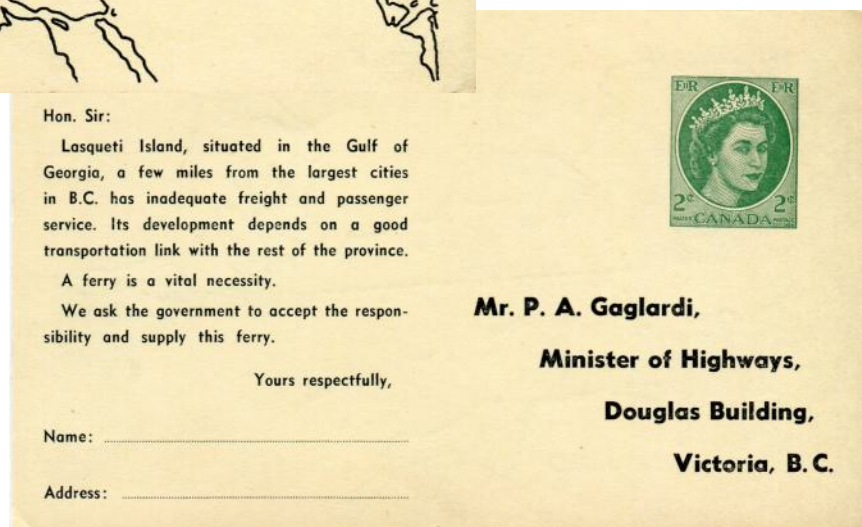

Figure 9. Front and back of a card asking for better ferry service.

Notes and References

1. Cooper, Tracy, British Columbia Post Office Revenues, 1871-1921.
2. Mason, Elda Copley, Lasqueti Island History and Memory, 1976. Much of the discussion of the history of the island in this article is based on her book.
3. Contracts for mail transportation from 1913-1917 are reported in the annual reports of the Postmaster General. Some of the details on mail transportation are from Mason's book.
4. The Library and Archives Canada, Post Offices and Postmasters online database has a list of postmasters. Further details about the postmasters are from Mason, Lasqueti Island History.
5. From Tides to Tins, http://tidestotins.ca/cannery/lasqueti-gulf-island-false-bay/. See also J.H. Hamilton, The Industries of British Columbia, 1918, p. 66, which has a list of salmon canneries in B.C.
6. Library and Archives Canada, Post Offices and Postmasters online database.
7. Cooper, British Columbia Post Office Revenues.
8. Jensen, Philip, "Inspector Cruickshank & The Case of the Beryl G," The Beaver, August/September 2005.
9. Mason, Lasqueti Island History.
10. Mason, Lasqueti Island History.

Monograph 8 - Cable Repair in the Pacific, 1937 - 1942

By Ian Kimmerly and Gray Scrimgeour

Monograph 8 accompanies this issue of the newsletter. Due to its length, it is only available in digital format. It is also posted on the BNAPS website under Study Group Newsletters.

This article describes mailed items from an extensive correspondence (1937–1942) involving Henry Porter, a trans-Pacific cable repair worker based in Victoria, British Columbia. Most of the correspondence is between Porter while he was travelling and his family in Victoria. There also are some cable-work-related covers. Most of Porter's trips were aboard the Cable Ship Restorer, the repair ship owned by the Commercial Pacific Cable Company. These voyages are verified by information from contemporary newspaper articles. Porter's mail—from places such as Honolulu, Midway, Wake, Guam and Manila — usually was sent by airmail via U.S. Foreign Air Mail (FAM) Route 14, the Pacific Route of Pan American Airways (PanAm). For Canadian postal history, this correspondence, which remarkably has been kept intact for four-fifths of a century, provides extremely rare examples of Canadian mail across the Pacific.

The Commercial Pacific Cable Company (CPCC) provided the first cable across the Pacific Ocean between the west coast of North America and Asia1-3 (Figure 1). The cable between San Francisco and Honolulu was completed in December 1902, and in 1903 cable was laid from Honolulu to Midway, from Midway to Guam, and from Guam to Manila. By 1906, the cable was connected to Singapore, and via Guam to Shanghai and Japan. Guam was to become a communications hub, a role that it retains4. Use of this American Pacific cable started on July 4, 1903. Until then, most news from Asia to North America travelled slowly, by ship, or went by a slow telegraphic route through Russia to London5. With availability of the American Pacific cable, the American agency Associated Press replaced the British agency Reuters as the major source of news from Asia—particularly news from Hawaii and the Philippine Islands5. New York, not London, became the centre for news from the Far East. At least part of this CPCC cable route was used until 1951. The Cable Ship Restorer and her crew maintained this important cable. The 358-foot, 5,500-ton displacement C.S. Restorer (Figure 2) operated on the Pacific Ocean from 1903 to 19511-3, mostly for the CPCC.

This remarkable Porter correspondence spans just five years. It presents mail both to and from a part of the world that has previously yielded little commercial Canadian mail. Cable-repair work took H.P. Porter as far west as Singapore, and his trips included several visits to Midway Island. Neither Midway Island nor Wake Island had a post office at this time, so air mail from these islands entered the mail stream at Honolulu as way mail. We know that his air mail letters originated at Midway or Wake because of information in relevant newspaper articles. They also can be quickly spotted because their postage is higher than that on covers originating at Honolulu. Although most of the air mail covers have no transit or arrival postmarks, most of their routes can be traced using the flight data published by Proud.

The time span of the Porter correspondence covers peacetime and part of World War II. As expected, none

of the wartime letters were censored; none from across the Pacific were mailed after December 7, 1941 (when trans-Pacific airmail west of Hawaii ceased).

Maintenance and repair of the trans-Pacific cables took the Restorer and H.P. Porter to many Pacific locations. Porter's, his wife's and their CPCC's preserved mailings provide a wonderful view of both surface and airmail services between Canada and the Pacific islands.

MY FAVOURITE CANCEL - BRITISH COLUMBIA Numeral #25

by Tracy Cooper

It is hard to list my all-time favourite cancel but my current favourite is a recent ebay acquisition which I believe was mis-described.   My interest in the colonial numerals and the mystery of their location of use, has been ongoing for over 30 years. This 3d British Columbia colonial stamp which was described as having a Numeral #26 cancel caught my interest. Upon closer examination it looked to be Numeral #25, previously unreported, and not found in the collection of Wellburn or the other serious collectors of BC Colonial postal history.   Of course Numeral #25 like many others is unattributed to the town or towns of use. It is these endearing mysteries that maintain the interest and enthusiasm of BC collectors such as myself.

A Favourite Cover

by Tim Woodland

This cover ticks my favourite three boxes: plilatelic, forest industry, and social philately. The cover is a First Flight cover commemorating the inauguration of Foreign Air Mail F.A.M. Route 14, from Honolulu Hawaii to San Francisco USA in 1935, the first such mail contract flight between these locations. The cachet is a particularly crisp and clear ink strike, unlike many of these type.

The Commercial Cover corner is for the H.R. MacMillan Export Company, the company H.R. formed in 1919, and then in 1951 merged with Bloedel, Stewart & Welch, creating one of Canada's largest forest industry companies.

The addressee was an important member of H.R.'s inner circle: corporate accountant H.H. Harold Wallace. Harold's son Jack Wallace, and wife Bev, were well known to many members of British Columbia's stamp collecting and postal history communities. In addition, H.R., Harold, and later son Jack all enjoyed the hobby of philately with close friend and business associate Gerald Wellburn, whose business H.R. purchased in 1945. Concurrently, Gerry was recognized as British Columbia's pre-eminent philatelist.