



BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

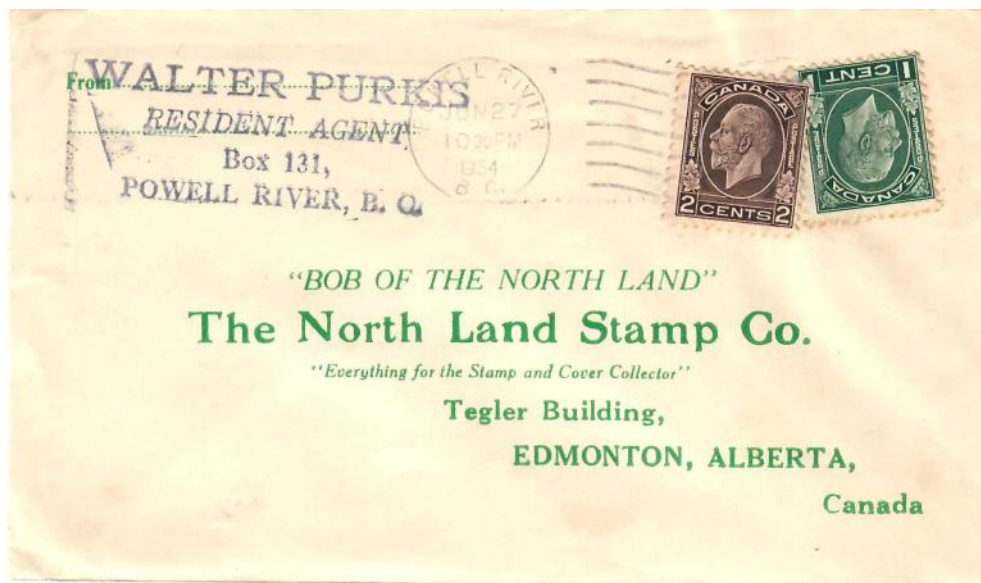
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June 2025

Who was Walter Purkis?

Those of you who frequently look at local auction sites, such as the one operated weekly by All Nations Stamp and Coin, will have, on occasion, seen the name "Walter Purkis" associated with certain of the auction lots (e.g. Auction 1371, 23 July 2022, Lot 65), included as Figure 1 on page 1530. Another example is presented here as our favourite cover for this issue.



This is the sort of cover that attracts our interest because of a question it raises, like the question in the title to this article. Study Group Chair, Tim Woodland provided us with a pair of articles that direct us to the answer for this question, and more.

The first article came from the *Vancouver Sun* on April 10, 1952, entitled "He Sees History of World Amid Sea of Used Stamps". The article is based on an interview that the writer had with this insurance salesman who travelled up and down the coast of BC for more than 20 years. At the time of the cover shown above, in 1934 Purkis was apparently in Powell River. At a muscled six foot four and 260 pounds he was not exactly diminutive or be someone likely to be labelled as a "stamp collecting nerd", but would be someone whom you remembered. He ran a typically cluttered stamp store in Vancouver, described in the *Sun* article as "he works at his lonely and devotional task of stamp sorting and filing in a cob-webbed, cluttered, chaotic store beneath the street". Hardly a heart-warming description of a stamp store but that is of little matter to those of us who relish exploring such establishments.

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In the 1940s, Purkis wrote a column in *Popular Stamps* entitled "P.O. Slogan Cancellations", a subject which he actively collected and wrote about, including contributions to the BNA journal of the time.

The second *Vancouver Sun* article sent by Tim, dated April 7, 1951 predates the previous article and is entitled "The Origin of Stamp Collecting - Women started this popular hobby more than 100 years ago". The particular relevance of this article is that in the one cited above, Purkis clearly credits his mother with his enduring interest in stamps and stamp collecting, indicating that his mother felt that his stamp collection was the only thing that he ever kept clean.

Covers such as the one in Figure 1 were typical, with his name frequently appearing on the address side of many slogan covers and cards.

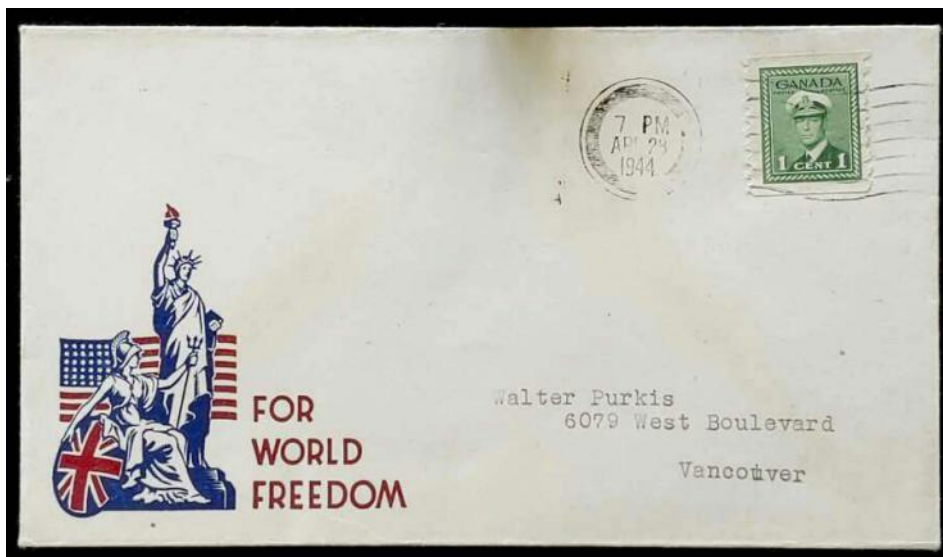


Figure 1. Slogan cover addressed to Walter Purkis in 1944.

Reader's Feedback:

We recently received a clarifying note from reader Jan Jonker regarding the cover from Cascade described in BCPHN # 117, March 2021, p1246.

"The addressee on the Cascade Development Company envelope isn't Aaron Chandler, but his son, Arthur Pitman Chandler.

Cascade Development Company was the successor

to Cascade City Land Company formed by Henry C. Tilton, Aaron Chandler, George K. Stocker and Joseph S. Frye in Spokane prior to the platting of the townsite registered as 'Map 8, Osoyoos Division of Yale Land District'.

Cascade Development Company's 'Certificate of Registration' to operate in B. C. as a foreign company appears in the 1897 British Columbia Gazette, No. 6 (page 525)."

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Free digital newsletters as well as search instructions can be downloaded as PDF files at <https://bnaps.org/hhl/n-bcr.htm> (for all issues). Issues 89 to present are in full colour; earlier newsletters are in b&w only. Supplements to the newsletter are also found here..

Unusual 5th Class Mail from Victoria

by Tracy Cooper

I recently noticed this rather unusual item from Ebay UK and was very happy that I was successful. While the rather tatty parcel wrap doesn't look that appealing on first glance, it is however an extremely rare example of 5th class mail from BC to Scotland in the Victorian period.

The parcel piece is addressed to Edinburgh, Scotland and is franked with a 15¢ large queen and a 1¢ small queen. Looking at the Williams Directory for 1897, we can see that this parcel was mailed from the firm of Martin and Robertson, Brokers, who at the time were located at #6 Bastion Street and the parcel contained 'paper' consisting of 'old envelopes' totalling 1 pound of weight, with a declared value of \$0.00.



Figure 1: Letter to Thomas Hancock, proprietor of the 4 Mile House on the Douglas Portage.

Reviewing my copy of the Canada Official Postal Guide for January 1896, it states:

“The Postage on fifth class matter must be prepaid by postage stamps securely affixed thereto, at the rate of one cent per ounce weight or fraction of one ounce.”

The 16 cents total postage was cancelled and tied with a VICTORIA BC 2 roller hammer and, given that amount was consistent with the fifth-class postage rate, this amount confirmed that the parcel indeed was sent as fifth-class mail. It is often impossible to determine the class of mail for remnants of parcels, so it is unusual that this example can be determined definitively.

The Postal Guide also notes:

“Closed parcels are exchanged by direct mail between Canada and the United Kingdom. Parcels for the United Kingdom will pass exclusively in the weekly mails from the St. Lawrence in summer and Halifax in the winter and will be included in parcel mail for Liverpool, England.

For each parcel posted, the sender must fill up a Customs Declaration. On this form the sender will supply an accurate statement of the contents and value of the Parcel, also the address thereof, with signature and place of abode of the sender. The Customs Declaration must be securely affixed by mucilage or paste to the parcel to which it relates. The Postmaster should see that full and accurate description of the nature and value of the parcels is given in the Customs Declaration.”

This parcel clearly met all the necessary Post Office regulations and a Customs Declaration form was attached with a VICTORIA B.C./CANADA CDS dated PM AP 13/96 using newly printed Post Office customs form 91 B – 25,000-12-10-95.

It is also interesting to note that such parcels were given a tracking number akin to registered mail, in this case #217, and additional tracking numbers were noted as it passed through the various transit points to its destination.

The British Post Office added its own Customs label upon arrival noting:

“CANADA/FOREIGN AND COLONIAL PARCEL POST/PARCEL PASSING THROUGH THE POST OFFICE, LIVERPOOL” and given that its declared value of \$0.00, no UK Customs Duty was imposed and the parcel was only assessed “Inland Postage” of 3d, which I suspect was paid by the addressee upon delivery.

This is the first Post Office Customs Declaration piece I have seen from the Victorian period and a fascinating piece documenting parcel mail from Canada to the UK.

Clearly the addressee was a stamp collector given its description of ‘old envelopes’. Wouldn’t we all like to have a pound of envelopes from the Victorian period. This parcel piece would not have been saved had it not been addressed to a collector, who with prescient foreknowledge, considered it important enough to have saved it.

Copper Island



The December 2024 issue of the newsletter included the adjacent pictorial postmark for Sorrento, B.C. Sorrento was established as an early farm settlement along Shuswap Lake, with the post office being established in 1913. A prominent feature of the postmark is the name: “Copper Island”. The name of the island that is just across from Sorrento derives from a copper prospect found there during early-day prospecting. The prospect was uneconomic but the name stuck. Today, it is a treasured area that is protected as a Provincial Park not for its mineral potential but for its abundant natural beauty.

First Airmail Flight from Victoria to Nanaimo

by Brian Copeland

On August 16, 1919, Captain James Gray and Lieutenant Gordon Cameron flew a Curtis JN-4 airplane (named the *Pathfinder II*) from Willows Field in Victoria to Nanaimo. The primary reason for the flight was an engagement to put on a flying show, which attracted several thousand spectators. But the Victoria branch of the Aerial League of Canada had also arranged with the Post Office for them to officially carry mail from Victoria to Nanaimo to demonstrate the practicality of an airmail service.

Fig. 1 shows a photo of the plane, taken in late September 1919 when it had landed in a field on a farm in Duncan owned by James Evans.



Figure 1. The Pathfinder II. Photo by Claude Bell, courtesy of Bruce Pollock.

First airmail flights eventually became commonplace. But 1919 was early days for pioneer airmail flights and it was big local news. On Aug. 14, there were two articles in the *Victoria Colonist* (on p. 4 and p. 5) informing the public that Post Office Inspector E.H. Fletcher had announced the airmail flight. Mail would be accepted until noon on April 16 (normal postage rates would apply) and letters intended to be sent by airmail to Nanaimo were to be endorsed "via Aeroplane."

The plane left Victoria at 1:20 p.m. on Aug. 16 and arrived in Nanaimo, a distance of about 74 miles, at 2:15 p.m. (*Colonist*, Aug. 17). It carried one bag of mail containing 96 letters.¹ The *Colonist* reported the arrival with the headline "First Local Aerial Mail is Success." One of the covers contained a letter of congratulations from Postmaster Harry Bishop in Victoria to Postmaster Adam Horne in Nanaimo. The *Colonist* also noted that due to a misunderstanding, no mail was carried on the return flight back to Victoria. An article on the front page of the *Nanaimo Free Press* on Aug. 14 announced that a flight was going to carry mail from Victoria to Nanaimo, but made no mention of the possibility of collecting mail from Nanaimo to go on the return flight. The article was identical to the one that appeared the same day in the *Colonist*, which provided details of how to post letters in Victoria for the flight. If there had been a plan to carry mail from Nanaimo to Victoria, one would have thought that the article in the *Nanaimo* newspaper also would have provided the details of how to post such letters from Nanaimo.

The successful flight was reported on the front pages of both *Nanaimo* newspapers: the *Free Press* (Aug. 16) and the *Daily Herald* (Aug. 17). The *Free Press* headline was "First Mail by Airplane." One of the letters carried on the flight was sent to the *Free Press* by Rev. Dr. Unsworth who said, "before long the world's correspondence will be flitting through cloud-land on white-winged birds, the globe will be girdled in a week, and a *Nanaimo* flyer will reach London in three days." On Aug. 19, the *Free Press* printed a letter

carried on the flight from J.G. Brown of the Dept. of Public Works to E.G. Taylor, who was Inspector of Fisheries in Nanaimo. He sent along congratulations: "that we are living in an age that notwithstanding the tremendous upheaval in our social organizations and the great problems of reconstruction that lays before the nations of the world, we are able to progress so that mail matter can be carried through the air with safety and tremendous dispatch."

Figure 2. Victoria
(Aug. 16) to Nanaimo
via Aeroplane.

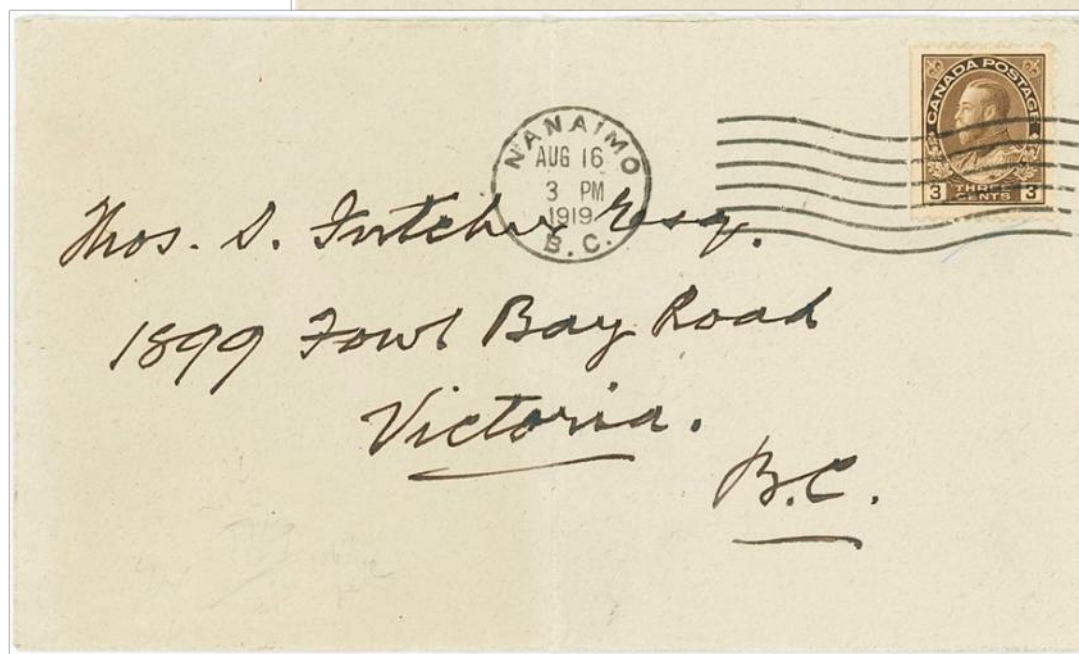
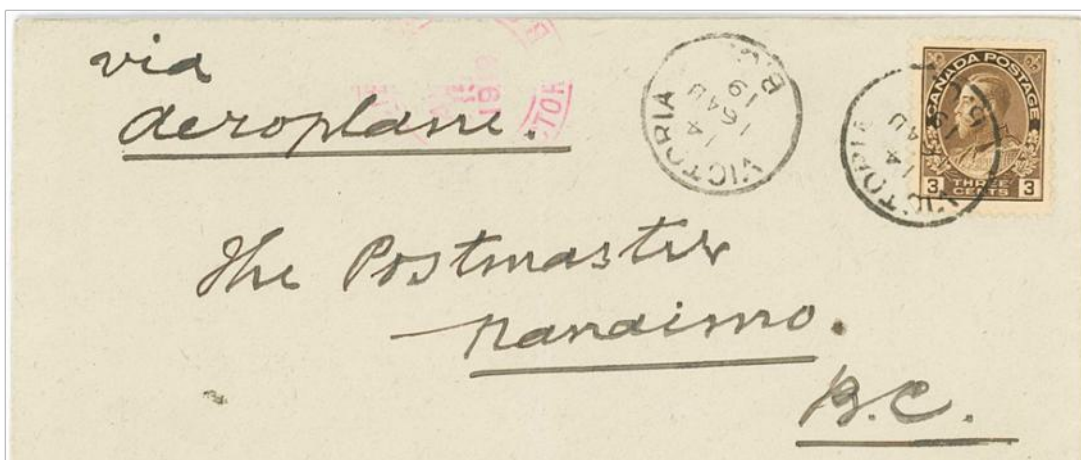


Figure 3. Nanaimo
(Aug. 16, 1919) to
Victoria.

Fig. 2 shows a cover carried on the flight.² It was sent by Thomas Futcher to the Postmaster in Nanaimo. Thomas Stephen Futcher (1847-1928) was an accountant in Victoria, owned the Japanese Bazaar (an importing and wholesale business), and was appointed Judge of the Court of Revision for Vancouver Island and the Islands in 1903. There is an outgoing Aug. 16, 1919 Victoria postmark (14/16 AU/19) on the front and a 3 P.M. Aug. 16, 1919 Nanaimo receiving mark on the back. There is also a handstamp in red on the front dated Aug. 15, 1919 / Victoria, B.C. but I cannot decipher the top part of the handstamp. The cover contains a letter to the postmaster asking him to kindly return the letter in the enclosed addressed envelope so that he can keep it as a memento of the first aerial post on Vancouver Island. The postmaster wrote (in blue pencil) over the letter: "Congratulations. A.H. Horne, P.M." and returned it. The return envelope is shown in Fig. 3. The outgoing postmark is 3 P.M. Aug. 16, which is the same as the receiving mark on the other cover. The return letter went to Victoria by train, because as noted above, a bag of mail was not loaded onto the plane for its return flight.

The 7th edition of the American Air Mail Catalogue reports that there are 5 known covers from this flight, but does not provide any details on the covers. I have been able to identify four in addition to the one shown in this article. A cover addressed to Mrs. H.D. Beaumont is illustrated in an article by Major R.K. Mallot about early B.C. pioneer airmail flights.³ The same cover is also shown in the Canadian

Aerophilatelist (p. 10, June 2022). Another cover, addressed to Andy Thorneycroft (a jeweller in Nanaimo), is illustrated in the book *Wings Across the Water – Victoria's Flying Heritage 1871-1971*.⁴ Two others are illustrated in a presentation on Canadian Pioneer Mail by Ray Simrak.⁵ One is another cover from Thomas Futcher (identified by the handwriting). This was addressed to Alexander Forrester, a construction contractor in Nanaimo. He was also an Assessor and Collector for the Nanaimo Assessment District, which probably explains his connection with Futcher. The second item in Simrak's presentation is a post card addressed to Mrs. L. Manson in Nanaimo. The Mrs. Manson correspondence is well known to collectors of the postal history of coastal British Columbia.⁶ This card was reportedly found in a shoebox full of postcards in Nanaimo in 1967.⁷

Both pilots served in the Royal Flying Corps in World War I. Captain Gray became a marine engineer and served with the RCAF as a trainer in World War II.⁸ Lieutenant Cameron became a lawyer. He maintained a life-long interest in aviation and was one of the key partners in the short-lived British Columbia Airways that flew between Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle in 1928.⁹

Notes

1. Local newspapers at the time reported 100 covers. The report of 96 covers is from the 7th edition of the American Air Mail Catalogue.
2. The covers shown in Figs. 2 and 3 were formerly in the Jack Wallace collection.
3. R.K. Mallot, *Pioneer Airmail Flights of British Columbia – 1919*, The Aero Philatelist Annals, Vol 23, Jan. 1980, pp. 18-27.
4. Elwood White and Peter L. Smith, *Wings Across the Water – Victoria's Flying Heritage 1871-1971*, Harbour Publishing, 2005.
5. Ray Simrak, *Pioneer Mail 1918 – 1922*, Presentation to the Collectors Club, Sept. 18, 2013.
6. Morris Beattie, *Postal History of Mrs. Manson*, Postal History Society of Canada Journal, Whole No. 176, Mar. 2021, pp. 35-62.
7. Mallot, *Pioneer Airmail Flights*, p. 26.
8. *Wings Across the Water*, p. 30.
9. H. L. Banner and T. Morrow, *British Columbia Airways Ltd.*, BNA Topics, Vol. 33, Sept.- Oct. 1976, pp. 15-20.

Postal markings of the City of Nanaimo

by Morris Beattie

From 1897 until 1926, the 761-ton *City of Nanaimo*, Figure 1, was a prominent feature along the BC coast. The wooden-hulled vessel was built in 1891 by McAlpin & Allen on False Creek in Vancouver for the Mainland and Nanaimo Steam Navigation Company, owned by the Rogers family of New Westminster¹. The Rogers operated her between New Westminster, Vancouver and Nanaimo. No ship markings applied to any mail that may have been carried during this period are known.

Continued on page 1536

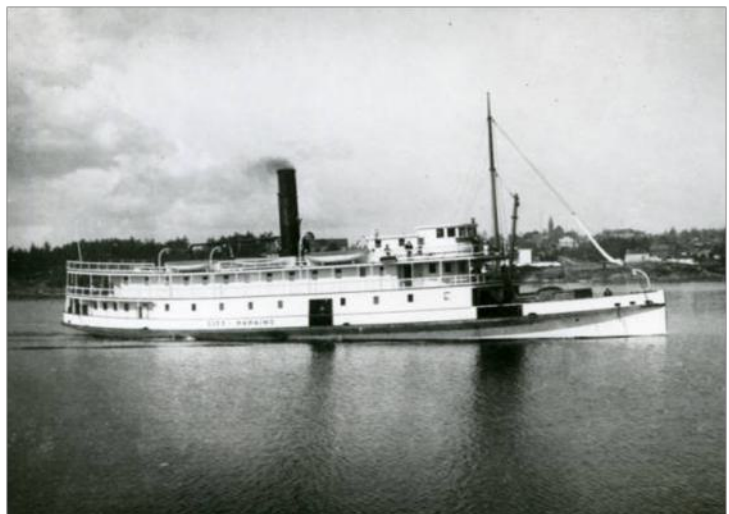


Figure 1. *City of Nanaimo*

She was built with loans from the Dunsmuirs and when it became apparent that she was not operating profitably, they foreclosed on the loan and in 1896 took over the ship. She was acquired by James Dunsmuir for the *Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway* ("E&N") to provide service between Vancouver and Nanaimo but was also utilized on an expanded run along the east coast of Vancouver Island. As for any vessel, at times the *City of Nanaimo* experienced mechanical issues and required towing back to the wharf. Figure 2 shows an invoice to the E&N for the vessel being towed back to port in Sept 1896 by the steamer *Sadie*.

Figure 2. Invoice charged to the E&N Railway Co for the Steamer *Sadie* towing the *City of Nanaimo* back to the wharf in 1896.
(reduced size)

E. & N. Ry Co. Victoria, B.C. *Sep 5 1896*

To Steamer "**Sadie**" and Owners, Dr.,

General Freighting and Towing at Lowest Rates.

Special Trips to any Part of the Coast.

OFFICE: 110 GOVERNMENT STREET. WHARF: PORTER'S WHARF, STORE STREET.

PROVIDE PRINT.

AKB Towing 'City of Nanaimo' to wharf ✓ \$5.00

W. H. G. G. G.

6494

Paid Feb 23/97
Swerton & Oddy

Esquimalt Marine Railway COMPANY LIMITED

Vessels up to 2,500 Tons D.W.

Docked, Painted & Repaired.

Esquimalt, B.C.

W. H. G. G. G.

Agents for Kellogg's Corporation.

City of Nanaimo Dr.

To hauling out City of Nanaimo with 48 hours in cradle 2.50

Services a carpenter and day splutting and blocks for painting blocks and wedges destroyed 8

AKB Painted inside wood 1

W. H. G. G. G.

Real payment -

Esq. Marine Ry Co.

7396

7/4/97

Figure 3 shows a reduced copy of a very scarce invoice from the Esquimalt Marine Railway Company Limited for hauling the ship out of the water and painting. This company existed under the original name for only two years, becoming the BC Marine Railway Company. In turn, the B.C. Marine Railway Company was sold in January, 1914, to Sir Alfred Yarrow, founder of the famous British shipbuilding yards on the Clyde who renamed it Yarrow's Ltd. This yard built several ships for the E&N Railway and the CPR for use along the BC coast. After World War II, the facility became part of Burrard Dry Dock and eventually CFB Esquimalt.

Figure 3. Invoice from Esquimalt Marine Railway Company Ltd for work on the *City of Nanaimo*. (size reduced).

During 1898 the *City of Nanaimo* was operated by the E&N and provided shipping services along the coast, Figure 5. One of its customers during this period was the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and Figure 4 shows a cheque from the E&N to the C.P.R. for advance charges relating to the *City of Nanaimo*. The back of the cheque is endorsed by W.F. Salisbury who was the C.P.R. treasurer at the time. The E&N had an internal accounting system to allocate charges to various areas. Figure 6 shows a cheque signed by James Dunsmuir to account for charges relating to, amongst other things, the *City of Nanaimo*.

The E&N was contracted by the post office to carry mail between Comox and Vancouver, Nanaimo and Victoria. The Postmaster General's Report ending June 30, 1900 shows a payment by the post office to the E&N of \$624 for weekly trips between Nanaimo and Comox during the previous year as well as a payment of \$2,594 for six weekly trips between Nanaimo and Vancouver and \$592 for one weekly trip between Nanaimo and Victoria. Not all these charges relate to the *City of Nanaimo* as the E&N also operated the S.S. *Joan* on the Vancouver to Nanaimo route during this period.



Figure 4. Cheque dated 1898 from the E&N Railway Co to the Canadian Pacific Railway Co.

ESQUIMALT & NANAIMO RAILWAY

Steamer

"CITY OF NANAIMO"

W. D. OWENS, Master

Sails as follows, calling at way ports as freight and passengers may offer :

Lv. Victoria.....	Tuesday, 7 a.m.
L v. Nanaimo for Comox.....	Wednesday, 7 a.m.
Lv. Comox for Nanaimo.....	Friday, 7 a.m.
Lv. Nanaimo for Victoria.....	Saturday, 7 a.m.

For freight or staterooms, apply on board or at the company's ticket office, Victoria Station, Shore Street.

Figure 5. A sailing schedule for the *City of Nanaimo* in August 1898.

Figure 6. A cheque signed by James Dunsmuir for internal charges relating to various cost centres. The accounting on the attached invoice shows that \$2.50 of the total was to the account of the *City of Nanaimo*. (size reduced)



In addition to the regularly scheduled runs, the vessel also made special excursion sailings as shown in Figure 7 by the Victoria newspaper advertisement for July 29, 1899.



Figure 7. A newspaper advertisement for 1899 advertising an excursion sailing to New Westminster.

The sailing schedule varied from time to time. Initially, she operated on the Vancouver-Nanaimo route, making weekly trips to Union Bay to refuel, leaving Nanaimo on Wednesday and returning on Friday.

Table 1 shows the various sailings for the *City of Nanaimo* in 1903.

Table 1. Sailings for the *City of Nanaimo* in 1903 ².

Leaves	Day and time	Destinations
Victoria	Tuesday, 6 a.m.	Nanaimo, calling at Musgraves, Vesuvius, Crofton, Kuper and Thetis Islands (one week), Fulford Ganges and Fernwood (following week).
Nanaimo	Tuesday, 5 p.m.	For Comox, connecting with S.S. <i>Joan</i> at Nanaimo
Comox	Wednesday, 8 a.m.	For Nanaimo direct, connecting with train to Victoria
Nanaimo	Thursday, 7 a.m.	For Comox and Way Ports
Comox	Friday, 7 a.m.	For Nanaimo and Way Ports
Nanaimo	Friday, 2 p.m.	Week 1 for Ganges, week 2 for Ladysmith
Ganges/Ladysmith	Saturday, 7 a.m.	For Victoria and Way Ports

Figure 8. The City of Nanaimo arriving at the Union Bay dock in 1911.



Figure 9. Comox wharf with steamship (City of Nanaimo) arriving, on postcard mailed April 29, 1911 from Courtenay to Northfield.

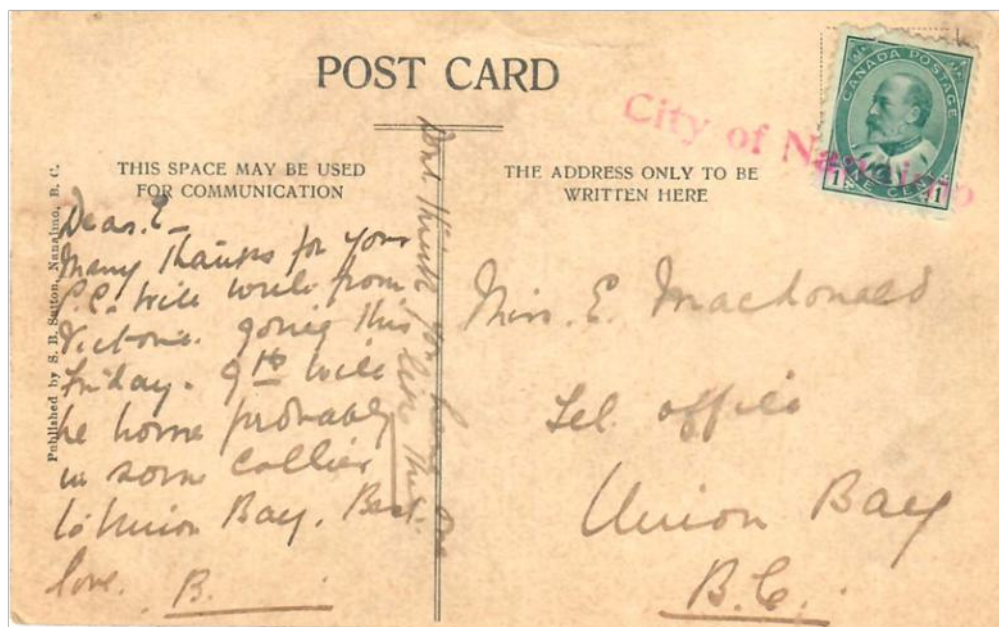


Figure 10. Postcard mailed aboard City of Nanaimo on its weekly coaling trip to Union Bay, receiving single line marking (Topping type 01-L1). This is the only recorded use of this marking. The card is undated but is after 1903.

In 1905 she was acquired by the Canadian Pacific Railway Steamship Services when the CPR acquired the E&N. It was March 1, 1909 before the E&N ships were formally incorporated into the CPR's British Columbia Coast Service but had operated under this banner since 1905. For several years during this period, cancels used for mail posted aboard the *City of Nanaimo* continued to have the Esquimalt & Nanaimo heading only. Such a marking, (Topping type 04-ICS), was used on the cover shown in Figure 11, which was mailed to England aboard the *City of Nanaimo* on August 18, 1908. The writer of this cover apparently originated on Hornby Island and carried it aboard the ship for mailing to a relative in England. The cover entered the postal system in Nanaimo on August 19 and received a back marking in London dated Sept 1, 1908.

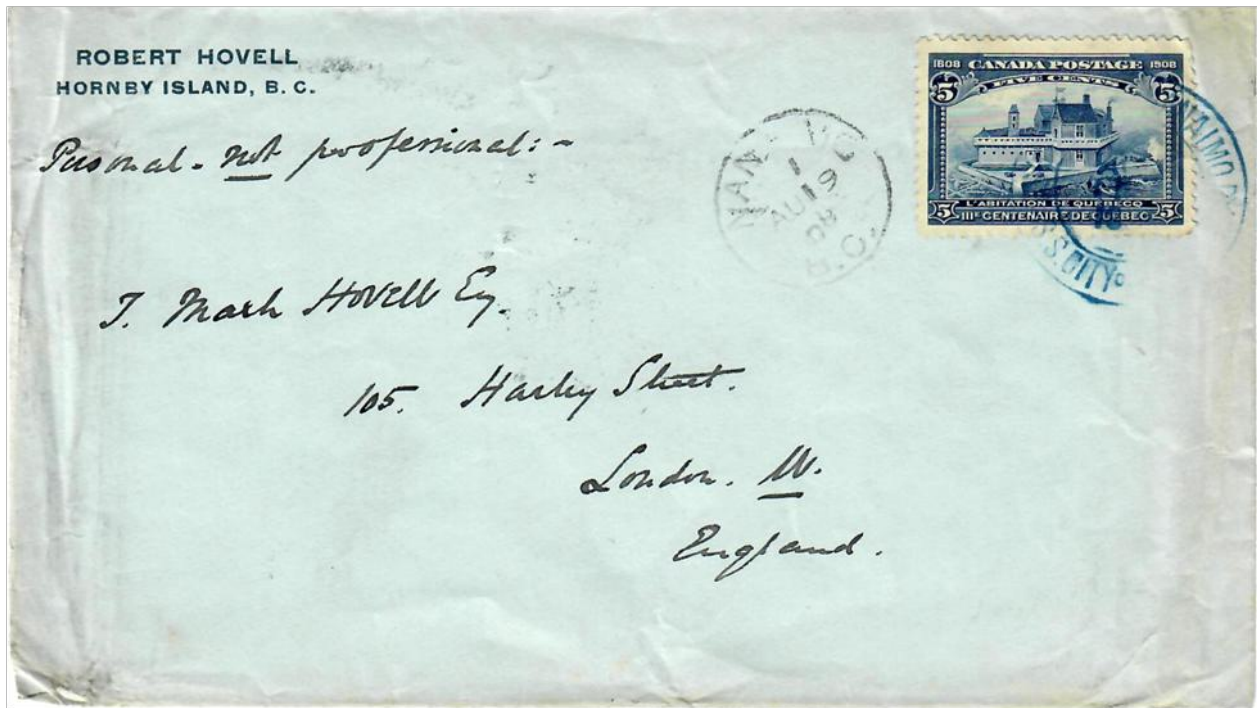


Figure 11. A cover mailed aboard the *City of Nanaimo* on August 18, 1908, receiving a circular ship marking, type 04-ICS.



Figure 12. An enhanced image of circular marking 04-ICS used in Figure 11 and which has been reported in use during August 1908 only, with the earliest example being dated August 6 and the latest August 27.

Following acquisition of the *City of Nanaimo* by the CPR in 1905, purser markings were on occasion used as cancelling devices, even after postal markings were available. An example of such an octagonal marking, which has been reported in use for 1909 and 1910, is shown in Figure 13.

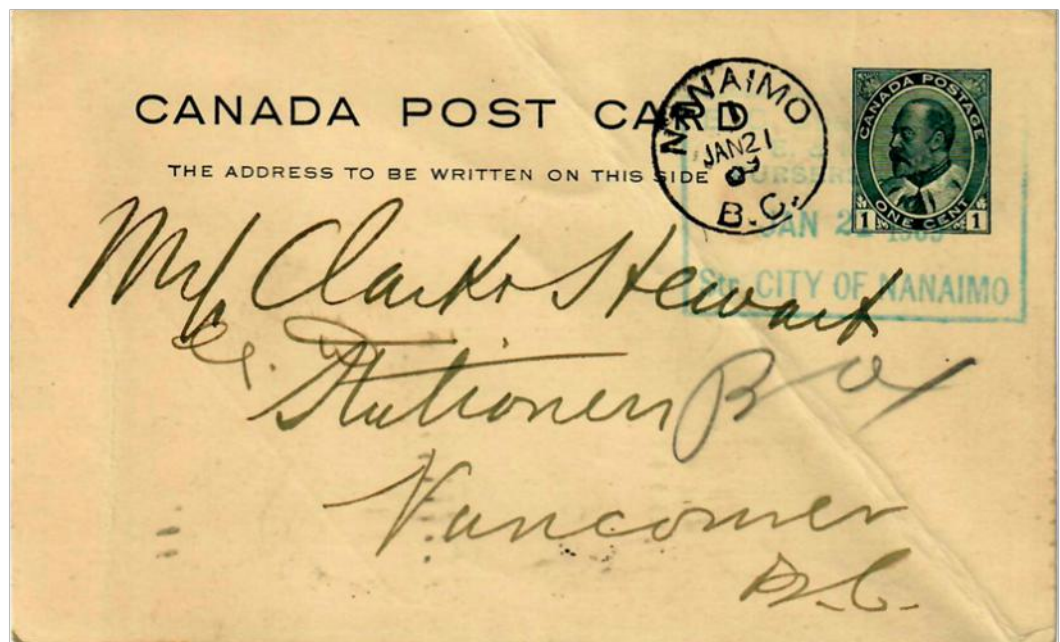
Early in 1909, the "E&N RWY" wording was included in the cancel (Topping type 10-RM) below B.C. Coast Services, a faint example of which is shown in Figure 14 on a cover mailed aboard the *City of Nanaimo* on Jan 21, 1909, entering the postal service in Nanaimo the same day. It arrived at its destination in Vancouver the following day, receiving a Vancouver back stamp.



Figure 13. Purser marking (Topping type 07-TE) used as a cancel for cover posted aboard the *City of Nanaimo* on the way to Nanaimo.

There are no postal markings on either the front or back, indicating that it did not enter the postal system but was delivered directly to Mrs. Manson.

Figure 14. A postal card mailed aboard the *City of Nanaimo* on its way to Nanaimo and ultimately Vancouver, receiving marking type 10-RM.



Figures 15 through 17 show two postcards and a cover with a rectangular marking, Topping type 13-RM, of which there are five recorded examples. This rectangular marking no longer included "E&N RWY" which was removed sometime during 1909.

Figures 15 and 16 show a pair of postcards written in Nanaimo and mailed aboard the *City of Nanaimo* in 1909 and 1910 for delivery to Comox. There are no postal markings on either card indicating that they were hand delivered to the recipient.

Figure 17 shows a commercial cover addressed to Montreal carried by the *City of Nanaimo*, receiving marking type 13-RM, from Union Bay to Nanaimo on November 19, 1910. The cover arrived in Nanaimo the next day and was forwarded to Montreal. Travel will have been by ship from Nanaimo to Vancouver and then by CPR train to Montreal, arriving November 26.



Figure 15. A postcard mailed to Comox aboard the City of Nanaimo in December 1909.

Figure 16. A postcard mailed to Comox on the City of Nanaimo in September 1910.

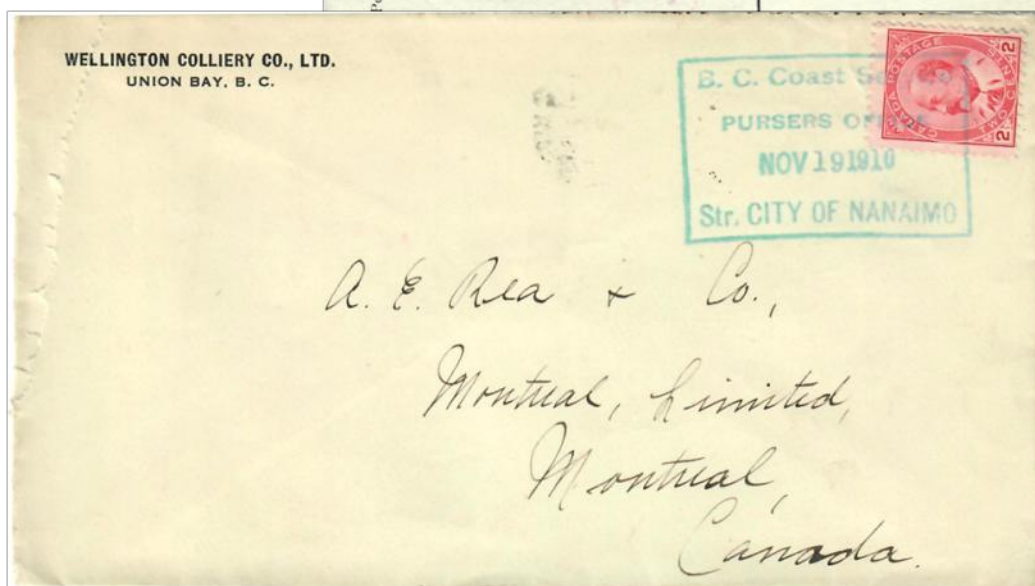


Figure 17. A cover originating in Union Bay and mailed aboard the City of Nanaimo en-route to Montreal in November 1910.

In 1912 she was sold to the Terminal Steam Navigation Co., Vancouver BC Canada which operated her as the *Bowena*. In 1922 she was sold to Union Steamship Co. Ltd., Vancouver, which operated her as the *Cheam* until 1923. In 1923 she was retired and sold as a floating bunkhouse.

References:

1. Hacking, N.R. and Lamb, W.K., *The Princess Story*, Mitchel Press, Vancouver, 1974.
2. MacLachlan, D.F., *The Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway, 1884 – 1905*, B.C. Railway Historical Association, Victoria, B.C., 2012, p 94.

Pinchi Lake - The Quicksilver Ghost Town

by Morris Beattie and Pete Jacobi

The ghost town of Pinchi Lake, located on the north shore of Pinchi Lake, 135 km north of Prince George and about 25 kilometers from Fort St. James was the site of a mercury mine during two periods; mid-1940 until July 1944 and June 1967 until 1975.

The element mercury is used in medicine and industry and was an important component for ammunition and detonators during World War II. Mercury is also known as "quicksilver" due to the fact that this element is liquid at room temperature. The Pinchi Lake deposit, first discovered in 1937 by J.G. Gray of the Geological Survey of Canada, was staked in 1938 by A.J. Ostrem and optioned to Cominco. Mercury in this deposit occurs as a bright red mineral known as cinnabar. Production first occurred in 1940 with peak production in 1943. Due to the falling price of mercury, production ceased in 1944. The mine was reopened in 1968 and operated until 1975, when mercury prices again declined. During these periods it was the only operating mercury mine in the British Empire. While additional mercury resources are still known to exist at this location, the mine is unlikely to reopen as prices remain low and, due to its toxicity, there is general avoidance of mercury, including a European mercury mining prohibition.

A post office was open at this location from April 1, 1942 until August 30, 1947. Two postmasters served the office, James Patton from April 1, 1942 until Sept 6, 1942 and Sarah Faith from Oct 9, 1942 until the office closed August 18, 1947.

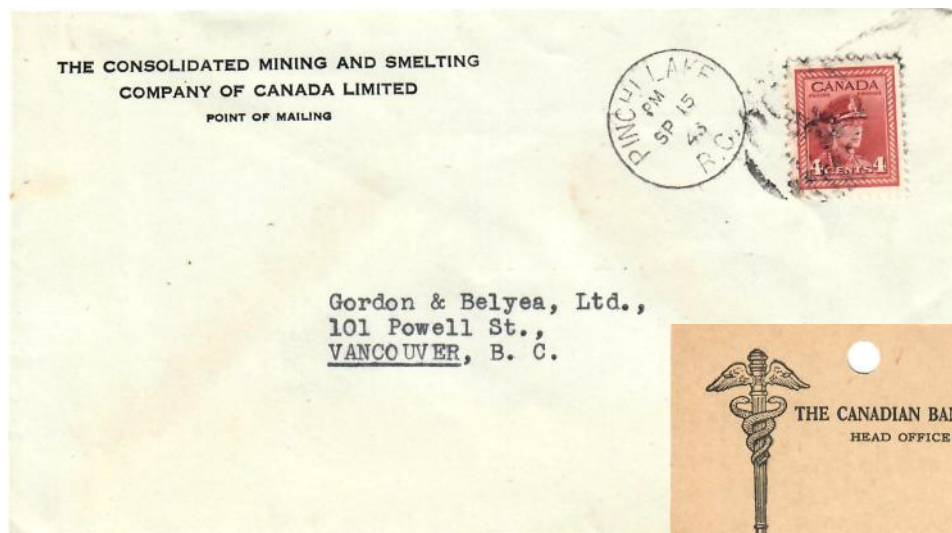


Figure 1. A cover mailed at Pinchi Lake Sept 15, 1945 by The Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company who operated the mine during this period.

Figure 2. An incoming card to Pinchi Lake from Vanderhoof, receiving a dated company receiver marking dated June 1944.



An option for the B.C. Postal History Collector

As for all regions, the study of postal history relating to British Columbia can take many forms. There is the obvious study of post office openings and closings, mail relating to particular regions or industries, railway markings and airmail studies such as those about a particular flight (Vol. 26, no 4, p1039). A sub-area relating to airmail is the study of airmail etiquettes and labels to and from locations within BC, such as early courtesy markings relating to the private airlines, previously presented in the newsletter (Vol. 33, no. 3, p 1488), or more modern markings as in the article that follows. (editor comments)

Airmail Etiquettes and Labels

by Glenna Metchette

For a letter to be sent faster via air, special airmail or regular postage stamps could be applied to the face of the letter. This increased postage distinguished the letter to be carried by air in lieu of surface/sea transport. Senders would often add written words to the face of a letter to help postal clerks distinguish mail that was to be sent by airmail. This practice was followed by the use of distinctive envelopes and by affixing non-denominated labels on the face of the envelope in addition to the postage stamps. These air mail stickers became known as etiquettes (French for label).

Etiquettes or air mail identification labels arose out of the necessity to identify air post items at the sorting stage, prior to dispatch through the postal systems. The purpose and use of etiquettes was collateral to the development of aviation in general and air carriage of mails in particular. It was seen to be desirable and necessary that mails sent by air be properly identified.



Figure 1. A portion of an air mail envelope with 2 printed etiquettes. Red background plus red and black printing on envelope from Bogota, Columbia.



Figure 2. Russian airmail envelope with etiquette printed on the envelope plus a cachet of a jet and flag.

Airmail etiquettes reading "By Air Mail / Par Avion" were first used in Britain in mid-August 1920. Their introduction came less than a year after the first internationally scheduled public air mail service, from London to Paris started and almost two years after the French had first applied airmail etiquettes reading "Par Avion". The French model of etiquettes was deemed a more efficient option than simply writing "Send by Air" on the front of the envelope.

The first British airmail etiquettes were light blue in color while the first French ones had black text on a dark red background, but at the 1929 Postal Union Congress it was agreed that airmail etiquettes from all nations would be blue.

The airmail etiquettes also became a way of advertising the airmail service. What is perhaps the most notable about the airmail etiquettes is how little the design has changed. The greatest change has been in the technology with most of today's etiquettes being self-adhesive.

Collecting airmail etiquettes has long soared in popularity. As flying the mail became the rule rather than the exception, the airmail etiquette also became more collectible. Interesting on cover, these small Cinderellas are now sought after in the mint state. Not just aviation buffs can appreciate the adhesives that directed "Via Air Mail" in many different languages styles and colors. Booklet collectors can hunt down the many varieties issued in that form. Country collectors will enjoy adding their particular nation's etiquettes to a good all-round collection. One can collect by a specific airline as well. Topical collectors will find a gem now and then and advertising and charity collectors can also find material to spice up their collection. Colours, shapes and graphics all add to the variety. In terms of variety, it is possible to go all the way from the throw-away common types to types that cost hundreds of dollars per sheet. Par Avion vs Per Via Aerea typefaces, paper and perforations all make a difference when determining the provenance of the lowly airmail etiquette.

Various references are available to help the etiquette collector: Frank Muller's 1947 catalog (in French) - *Airmail Etiquettes*, 2nd edition, Frank G. Jones' 1992 - *Etiquettes Par Avion - By Air Mail*, Georges Guignard and Louis Vuille's 1998 - *Les Etiquettes Postales Suisses*, covering a very specific area in depth. In the U.S., the Postal Label Study Group has produced *The Mair Airmail Label Catalog* with supplements covering over 200 countries with 3289 illustrations.

For several years I was a participant in "Postcrossing", an official exchange of postcards which transformed my mailbox into a box of surprises. If you haven't tried it, embrace the diversity and let yourself be surprised. It gave me some unique and difficult examples, including examples from 56 countries.

Included are some size-reduced examples incoming to my B.C. address, showing one of many collecting possibilities.

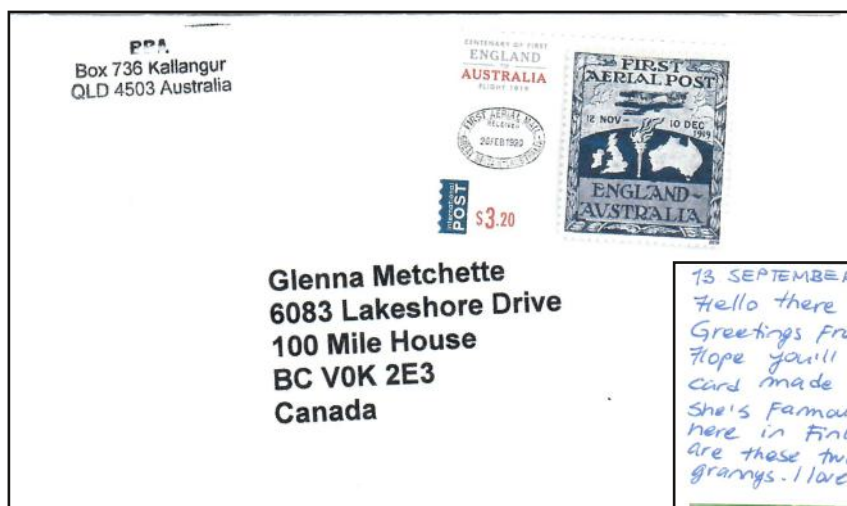
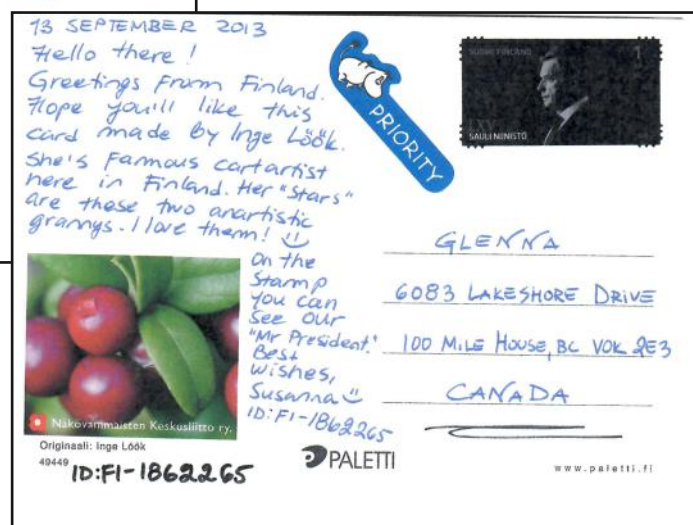


Figure 3. Etiquette and stamp printed as one.

Figure 4. Unusual Finnish etiquette design affixed. A series of these were utilized, featuring various animals.



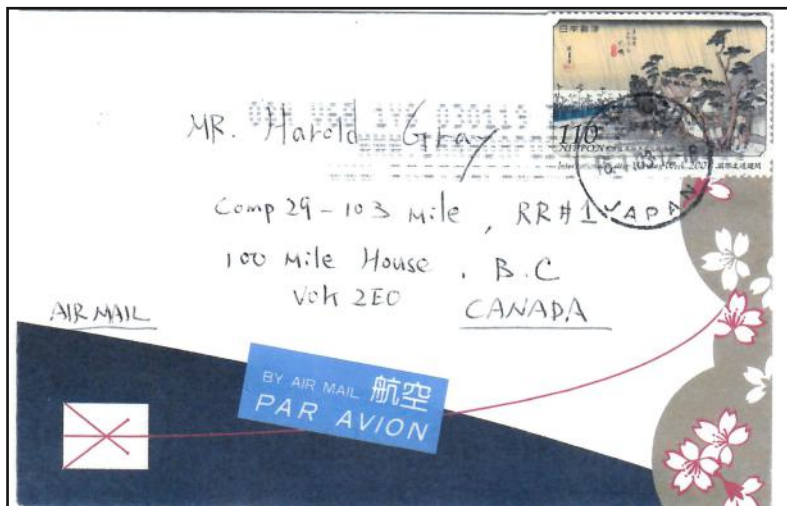


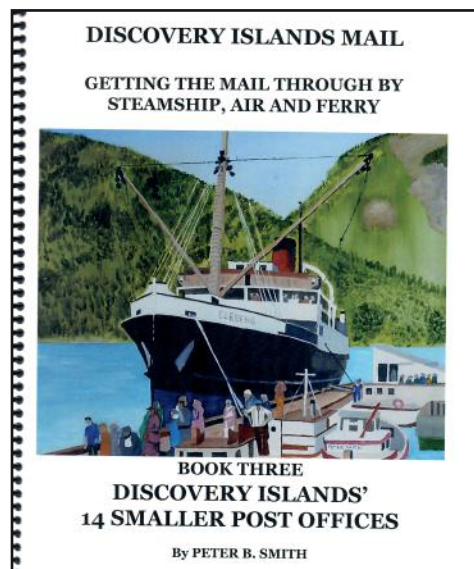
Figure 5. Japanese envelope with Air Mail printed by hand plus etiquette affixed.

Figure 6. Braille postcard with hand stamped etiquette. The raised dots are vaguely seen but are readily felt.



More Savary Island

The previous issue of the newsletter included a monograph dealing with miscellaneous post offices in the Powell River Region. We remind readers who may be interested in more detail regarding Savary Island or post offices on the Discovery Islands, about the books by Peter Smith that were described in BCPHN 118, June 2021 as in the adjacent figure.



Don't Forget!

