



BRITISH COLUMBIA POSTAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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This month's favourite cover has a number of elements that gives it appeal to me. First of all, it is a favourite in that I find it visually appealing with its assortment of markings and stamps. It is a corner card for an early Vancouver business that dates back to 1897. The previous issue of the newsletter included an article on another early Vancouver business, McLennan, McFeely & Co. We hope to continue this series so the September issue will contain a full article on the mails of the W.H. Malkin Co. Therefore, one feature that makes this a favourite for me is that it is part of the postal history of an early Vancouver business.

The return address is from the company's location in Nelson, rather than the more common Vancouver

location, but it was in fact mailed on May 6, 1938 at Trail at the 13 cent special delivery rate. It arrived at its Vancouver destination on May 8.

The stamps include a 3 cent King George Mufti and a 10 cent Special Delivery stamp to pay the special delivery rate to Vancouver. If I was ever to collect stamps rather than postal history I would collect the Canada Special Delivery stamps as I consider them to be beautiful and interesting.

The addressee is Sprott Shaw Schools but that is another story in itself.

Morris Beattie

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A New Breed of Postmaster

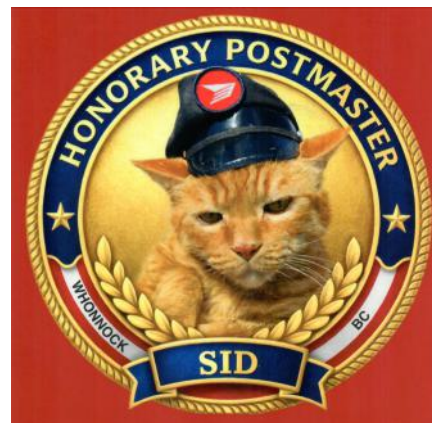
After hearing about Canada Post having to close rural post offices across the country, Paul Stanley, a resident of the community of Whonnock in B.C., was concerned that the historic post office in his community could also be a casualty of Canada Post cuts.

The Whonnock Post Office is a one-storey wood frame structure that is part of the historic core of Whonnock situated on the north side of River Road, facing south toward the Fraser River.

The Whonnock Post Office, built in 1928 and rebuilt in 1932, is valued as an integral part of this once isolated and self-supporting community. Since the first Whonnock Post Office was built in 1885, it has been a focal point for the community; a place where people met on an almost daily basis to collect mail and share news. The Post Office is a meaningful reminder of the modest size of the community and the importance of centralized services to rural areas.

In recognition of its significance, and to acknowledge the unique identity of the region and importance of the Post Office to this area, Canada Post presented it with its own postmark in September 2003 that includes the humpback salmon, the symbol of Whonnock.

But now, there is a new postmaster in town. He is orange, with short hair, a pink nose, and long whiskers. Sid, the 10-year-old cat known to hang out between McFli's Feed Delivery and the Whonnock Post Office, has been named honorary postmaster to help promote business at the post office and thereby persuade Canada Post to maintain this vital community service.



In February, local resident Mareesa Kelly was appointed the new, official full-time postmaster. Sid, however, will also keep his position, Stanley noted, until his final day and then another honorary postmaster will be appointed.

<https://theprogress.com/2026/03/09/cat-appointed-honourary-postmaster-of-b-c-post-office/>

Catalog Update Request

In 2010, Bill Topping published his *Catalogue of Western Canadian Ship Way Letter Cancellations*, that listed all the markings noted at that time for the various ships that operated in B.C. Since that time, additional markings have come to light and the known dates for some markings have been extended. I have obtained the copyright for Bill's publications and Tim Woodland and I are working to prepare an update for the catalogue that will eventually be made available in digital format. We are asking that anyone who has noted additional edits or additions in any form to send a note to the editor, with images if possible, so that these updates can be included. - editor

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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.

NEW BOOK

Study group member and assistant newsletter editor Tracy Cooper has completed his long-awaited book on BC colonial postal history, based on 20 years of research. It is now for sale as a Limited Edition of 40 copies from Weeda or All Nations. Weeda Stamps / All Nations Stamp and Coin / Garden City Philatelic Auctions.

The two volume, 700-page tome was developed as Tracy set out to answer some postal history questions that he had and to which he felt that he might find the answer in the documentation that Deaville had used for his seminal book on the same subject.

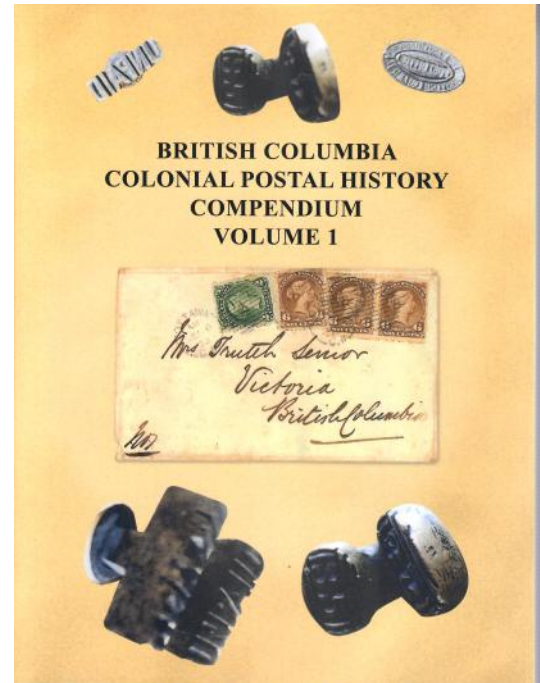
What this book is about is best summarized by quoting from his introduction:

"The British Columbia Colonial Postal History Compendium 1849 – 1871 is just that; a compendium of information gleaned from various archival sources that may help BC colonial philatelists research various subjects of postal interest."

While Tracy indicates that it is fundamentally a reference book, having had the privilege of spending several evenings reviewing the contents of the two volumes, I find that it in reality is so much more. If you have wondered about the challenges of developing a postal service in a colony with widely-spaced settlements separated by challenging terrain, Tracy's book provides much insight through the many references that are presented. Anyone with an interest in early British Columbia will find many happy hours of reading here.

There are many interesting newspaper articles of the time, famous names, examples of colonial correspondence, notices about early mining ventures, sketches, covers, postal rates and more. There also is a very comprehensive index.

The postal history and general history of British Columbia from 1849 to 1871 is presented in chronological order and a short review cannot hope to do justice to the work. This is a set of books that will fill many evenings.



Local Changes

The Vancouver philatelic community, long blessed with active stamp stores, has seen a change in



ownership of *All Nations Stamp and Coin*. Study Group member Brian Grant Duff has operated All Nations for a number of years and is known to most collectors in the Vancouver area as one of the professionals in the business who has exemplified good dealing. Brian is retiring from the business, having sold it to Firmin Wyndels, also well known to many as the equally popular owner of *Weeda Stamps* and *Garden City Philatelic Auctions*. According to Firmin, the goal is to accommodate all levels of collectors, from beginner to advanced, with access to a



variety of services when the time comes to buying or selling material. Brian will remain through a transitional period and we all wish him well.

Another Look at the Fawcett Correspondence

by Gray Scrimgeour

Accompanying this newsletter, for email subscribers, is a detailed look as Supplement No. 11 by Gray Scrimgeour at the Fawcett correspondence. Below are a few extracts from his review. The complete write-up can be viewed on the BNAPS website under the study groups listing. - editor

Several years ago, I purchased on eBay the flimsy cover shown in Fig. 1—an 1865 cover from Victoria, Vancouver Island to Liverpool, England. It is addressed to “Mrs. John Hopkins, 233 Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool, England” and intended “For R.W. Fawcett”.

I will describe the route taken by this cover and describe its contents but only after explaining its historical importance as part of the 1864–1865 Fawcett correspondence. I examine the Fawcett correspondence in three phases: its discovery, its postal history and its social history. First, I will describe three other covers from Victoria to Great Britain in the early to mid 1860s.

The Fawcett correspondence provides a scarce and fairly detailed look at mail from Victoria to Britain in 1864 and 1865. I discuss it in three stages: discovery, postal history and social history. The feature that attracted me to the cover in Fig. 1 was its endorsement at the left: “For R.W. Fawcett”. Until that time, I had never seen any of the Fawcett correspondence offered for sale. My late friend Robin Clarke had told me a great deal about his find of Fawcett letters and covers (all with their stamps removed). He has reported his 1958 find in several publications. Robin kept most of the Fawcett find and eventually traded his remaining holdings to me. This re-examination of the Fawcett correspondence supplies new information about the mails from Victoria to England and about the history of the Fawcett family.



Figure 1. March 1865 cover sent from Victoria to R.W. Fawcett in Liverpool.
(size reduced)

The Fawcett correspondence I have consists of 13 letters sent from Victoria by Rowland’s father, his brother Edgar and two friends to Rowland while he was in England. These letters were sent in nine mailings. There also are some damaged covers related to these letters—four of them directly from Victoria.

The letters sent to Rowland reflect the difficulties this pioneer family had after the death of Thomas’s wife Emma. Thomas’s letters often stress the opportunities Rowland had in England that he would not have had in Victoria. Over the years, the Fawcett family took an active pioneer role in Victoria. The group of letters sent to Rowland demonstrate the delays of carrying out a correspondence between Vancouver Island and Great Britain.

The Fawcett correspondence appears to be the largest surviving multi-letter/multi-cover correspondence of Colonial Vancouver Island mail to Great Britain. Steven Walske prepared a census entitled *British Columbia and Vancouver Island Mixed Frankings via San Francisco 1858–1869* in 2002 [privately distributed]. This census showed 8 covers to Great Britain with postage paid using United States adhesives at the 29¢ rate. My 1882 overpaid cover (paid 30¢ by U.S. stamps) is listed by Walske as a 9th example of this rate. The Walske census shows 35 covers dated 1864 from Vancouver Island to Britain paid at the 24¢ rate with U.S. stamps.

Collecting BC Ephemera as an adjunct to Postal History

by Tracy Cooper

Almost all collectors of postal history have side collections of ephemera or other related materials. Postcards are the most commonly collected item but all sorts of other ephemera items are actively collected, including letter sheets, stock certificates, documents, photographs, and the specific subject of this short article, railway passes. BC postal historians are no different.

Why are so many postal history aficionados drawn to ephemeral items? As postal historians, we are generally very interested in history. Covers tell part of the story with their postmarks and routings, but this is only a small piece of the social context that our covers, with contents, and cards, with their hand-written notes, tell. Related ephemera can bring life to the stories that our covers tell and make them more interesting for the viewer. My non-philatelic friends could care less about one of my small queen covers, but when I include a picture of the addressee, a piece of letterhead or some other related ephemera, it brings to life the story of the cover displayed.

So why pursue railway passes? Personally, I like railway passes because they tangibly show how the establishment of a new railway could dramatically alter the postal routing. The Post Office and their patrons always emphasized speed of delivery over distance travelled. Railways provided the fastest way of getting mail from one place to another. Railway passes were routinely issued by railway companies to show who got free passage on the train. Many were issued to employees of the line, dignitaries or important people from other railways as a professional courtesy and, the ones I like the best, to employees of the Railway Mail Service.

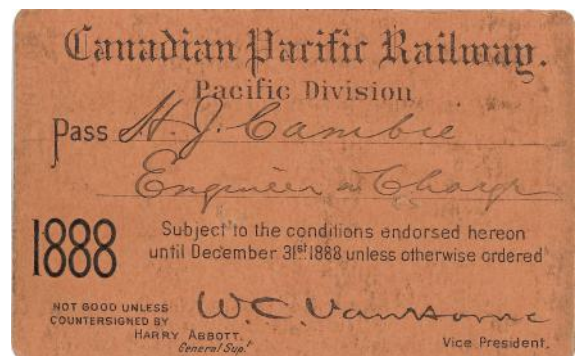
Accompanying this article is a small selection from my collection of the Railway passes that I use to help illustrate my covers and whose addition helps to tell a more complete story of the routing of the cover. They also make the album page more interesting for the viewer.

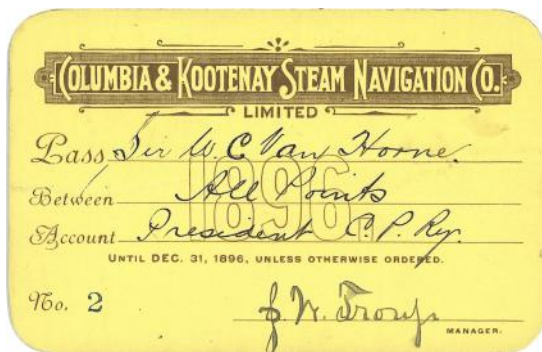
I would be very interested in hearing from other BC Postal Historians what type of ephemera they like to collect and how the addition of such enhances their collection and the story they are looking to tell.



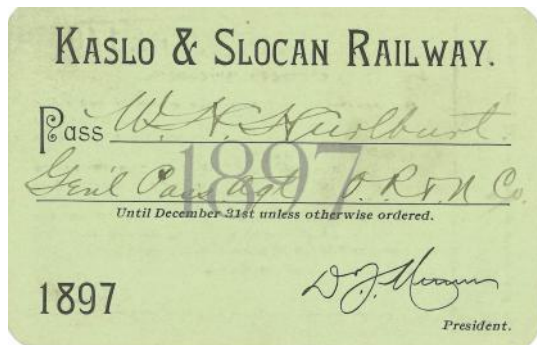
Pass 1. This Canadian Pacific Railway Pass dated January 1, 1888 (noted as #1!) was issued to Henry J Cambie, Surveyor and Engineer on the Pacific Division construction of the railway. This pass is unique in that it permitted Cambie to ride on the engines for all Pacific Division trains. It was issued by Master CPR Mechanic Lacey R. Johnson and was signed by CPR General Superintendant Henry Abbott. The completion of the CPR line was the single biggest improvement to the efficiency of Mail Service in British Columbia.

Pass 2. This Canadian Pacific Railway Pass dated 1888 was also issued to Henry J Cambie and was signed by William C Van Horne who oversaw construction of the first Canadian Trans Pacific Railway and succeeded Lord Mount Stephen as President of the CPR in 1888. It was Cambie's habit to attach his passes to the inside of his leatherbook diary/notebook using two braids, hence showing the two puncture marks in each pass.





Pass 3. This pass issued in 1896 by the famous Columbia and Kootenay Steam Navigation Company (aka Upper Columbia Company) was issued to Sir William C Van Horne, President of the CPR. It was noted as Pass # 2 and was signed by James William Troup who became manager of CKSN company fleet of steamers plying the Upper Columbia River. It 1896, the company was taken over by the CPR but Troup remained as the manager. The Columbia and Kootenay Steam Navigation Company had the mail contract to delivery mail by Steamboats, a distance of 45 miles, 6 times a week up to January 31st, 1897.



Pass 4. This rare pass issued by the Kaslo and Slocan Railway in 1897 to W. H. Hurlburt, General Pass Agent of the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company who was travelling the trains of this precarious route to the mines of the silvery Slocan. In 1897 the Kaslo and Slocan Railway had the contract to deliver the mails between Kaslo, Three Forks, Sandon and many of the other famous West Kootenay Mining towns of the area.

KASLO & SLOCAN RY.

TIME CARD No. 1.

IN EFFECT WED. NOV. 25, 1895

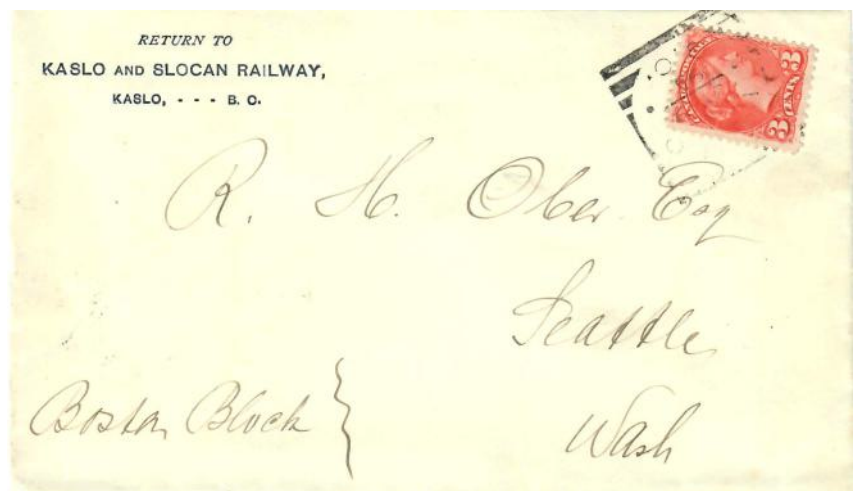
Subject to change without notice
Trains run on Pacific Standard Time.

Leave 8 00 A.M.	Kaslo	Arrive, 3 50 P.M.
" 8 36 "	South Fork	" 3 15 "
" 9 36 "	Sproule's	" 2 15 "
" 9 51 "	Whitewater	" 2 00 "
" 10 03 "	Bear Lake	" 1 48 "
" 10 18 "	McGuigan	" 1 35 "
" 10 30 "	Bailey's	" 1 21 "
" 10 38 "	Junction	" 1 12 "
Arr. 10 50 "	Sandon	Leave 1 00 "

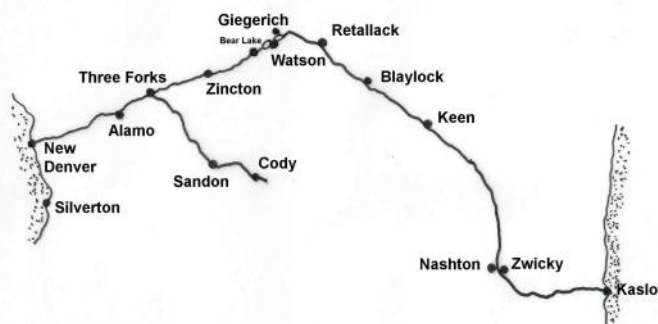
For rates and information apply at
Company's Offices.

ROBT. IRVING, Traffic Mngr.
R. W. BRYAN, Supt. and Ass't Trns.

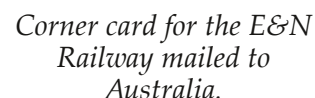
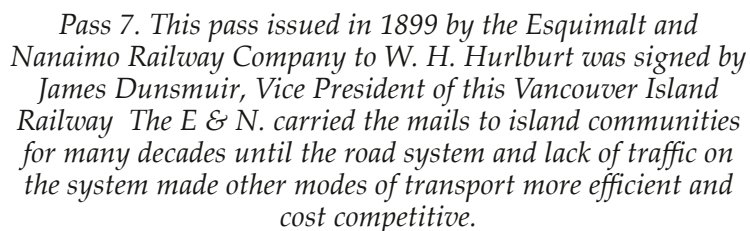
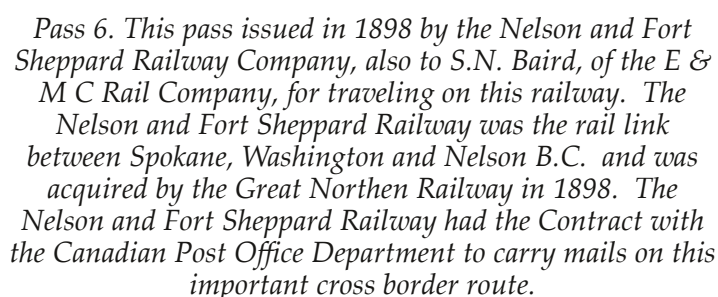
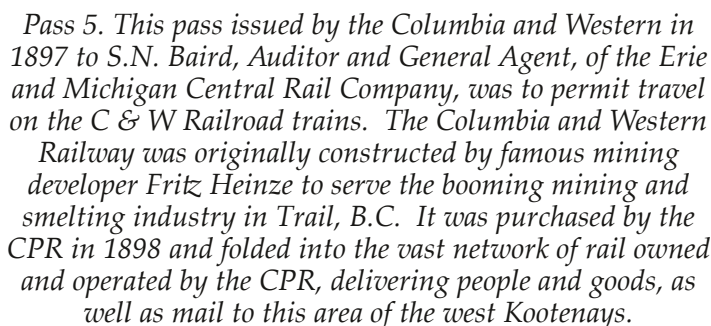
Initial Name	Post Office Dates	Later Name	Post Office Dates
Kaslo	1892		
South Fork		Nashton (Nashville)	1915 - 1940
12 Mile Creek		Zwicky	
Sproule's		Adamant	
Whitewater	1897 - 1908	Keen	
Watson	1893 - 1894	Blaylock	1928 - 1955
Bear Lake	1896 - 1897	Retallack	1914
Lucky Jim		Giegerich	
McGuigan	1897 - 1904 1906 - 1910	Zincton	1915 - 1932
Bailey's			
Cody Junction			
Sandon	1895 - 1962		
Cody	1897 - 1901		

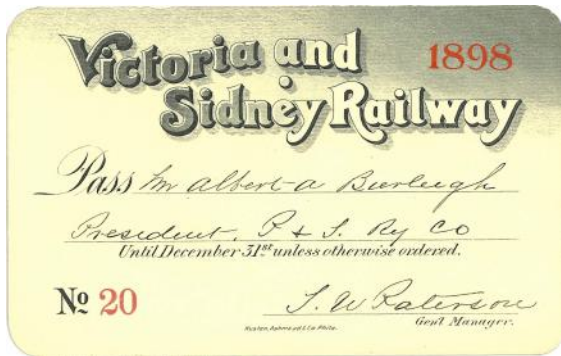


Railway corner card mailed to U.S.A.

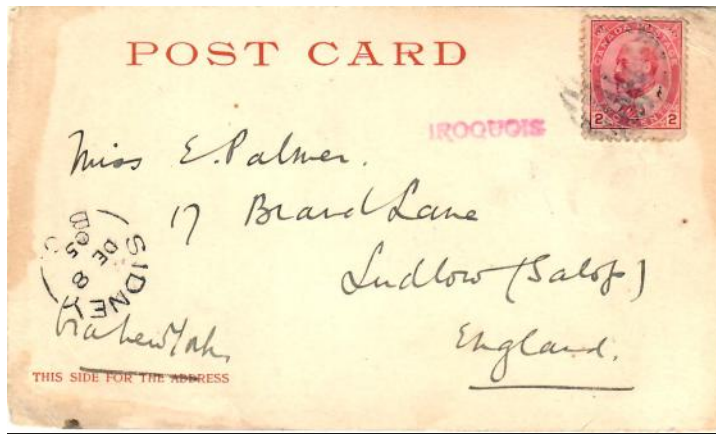


Beside and above, K&S railway routing and schedule.

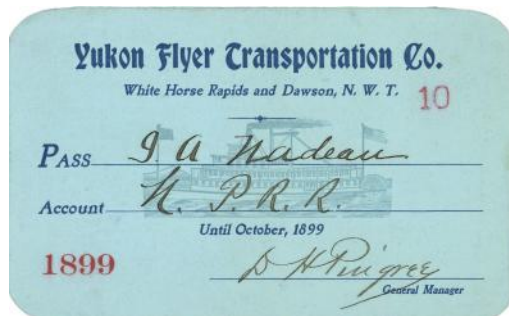




Pass 8. This rare pass issued in 1898 by the Victoria and Sidney Railway to Mr. Albert A. Burlugh by T. W. Paterson General Manager of the V & S Railway gave him permission to travel the short route between Victoria and Sidney on the Saanich peninsula of Vancouver Island. In 1898 the V & S Railway had the Post Office Department contract to deliver mail between these two points and all of the small agricultural communities between them.



This 1905 cover was carried to Sidney by the S.S. Iroquois and likely was taken from there to Victoria by the Victoria and Sidney Railway to be forwarded to England.



Pass 9. This very rare pass issued in 1899 by the Yukon Flyer Transportation Company to J. A. Nadeau of the Northern Pacific Railway Company permitted this individual to travel on the steamers of this company traversing the White Horse Rapids and Dawson during the Klondyke Gold Rush. It appears that this river transportation company never had a mail contract but mail carriers and local expresses used this route extensively to deliver mail to the far flung and remote mines and camps of the Yukon.



Pass 10. This pass issued in 1901 by the Spokane Falls and Northern Railway, Nelson and Fort Sheppard Railway and Red Mountain Railway was issued to Mr. H. A. Jackson, General Freight and Passenger Agent. This railway was a conglomeration of small railways assembled by the Spokane Falls and Northern Railway from Northport, Washington to Rossland BC to facilitate goods and people movement to the significant mining in the area. Interestingly enough, the Red Mountain Railway had the Dominion Post Office contract to deliver the mails in the area in 1901.



Pass 11. This pass was issued in 1916 by the British Columbia Electric Railway Company Limited to B. M. Armstrong, Controller of the Railway Mail Service. The extensive rail network operated by the BCER in the Vancouver Area and Fraser Valley was critical for the high efficiency mail delivery in this area at the time. I have examples of mail that has messages like, "Come for dinner this evening!"

Love Letters

by Mark Oakley



Figure 1. Naas
Harbour July
26, 1904

The cover in Figure 1, while presenting an excellent example of an early Nass Harbour, BC split ring with a duplex obliterator (ex. Woodland), on further inspection tells an interesting story on the development of early British Columbia.

The addressee, and the object of affection was Miss Lottie L. (Louisa) Turgoose. She was born in South Saanich on April 14, 1881, to William and Emma Turgoose making Lottie 23 at the time of this letter.

William Turgoose and The Turgoose family, mom, dad and 7 little Turgooses, emigrated to Canada prior to 1868.

The Turgoose family farm consisted of 500 acres with its northwest corner at the intersection of modern-day Mount Newton Road and East Saanich Road.

William Turgoose passed away in 1885 leaving his entire family behind. His wife Emma remarried Edmund Sadler and her 7 children! One might suggest that Mrs. Turgoose, albeit with 7 children, might have been considered a "catch" given the size of the farm.

1881/British Columbia/Vancouver/

2	Spotts Fielding	M	24	✓
	Turgoose Wm.	M	50	✓
	" Emma.	F	38	✓
	" Fanny	F	13	✓
	" Frederick	M	11	✓
	" Emma	F	8	✓
	" Annie	F	5	✓
	" Carrie	F	2	✓
	Harrison Thomas J.	M	35	✓
	O'Connor Michael H	M	29	✓
3	Marcott Xavier	M	46	✓

Figure 2. 1881 Census data for
Turgoose family.



Figure 3. The Turgoose post office was established on August 1, 1892, with Fred Turgoose as the first postmaster. Fred born Jan 23, 1870, would have been 22 at that time. Turgoose P.O. eventually became Saanichton P.O. on December 15, 1922.

Meanwhile, Lottie Turgoose is shown in the 1901 census as continuing to live in Victoria. On Aug 28, 1906 at St. Stephen's Church, Saanichton, Lottie married Robert Musket Stewart. He was aged 38, she age 25.

The 1901 census in Figure 4 shows Robert living with his parents George and Eliza Stewart in Victoria. Records show that he arrived in Canada at age 21 (but by 1904 was at Nass Harbour).

Columbia/Vancouver/Saanich North and Saanich South

55	Edwell Haskley	M	17	-	S
54	Sadler Edmund	M	54	M	-
(11)	" Emma	F	48	M	W
	Turgoose Lanny	F	24	-	Step D
	" Frederick	M	21	-	Step S
	" Emma	F	15	-	Step P
	" Annie	F	15	-	"
	" Carrie	F	12	-	"
	" Lottie	F	10	-	"
	" Edith W	F	6	-	"
	Robert Stewart	M	21	-	Don

Figure 4. 1901 census data for Turgoose family.

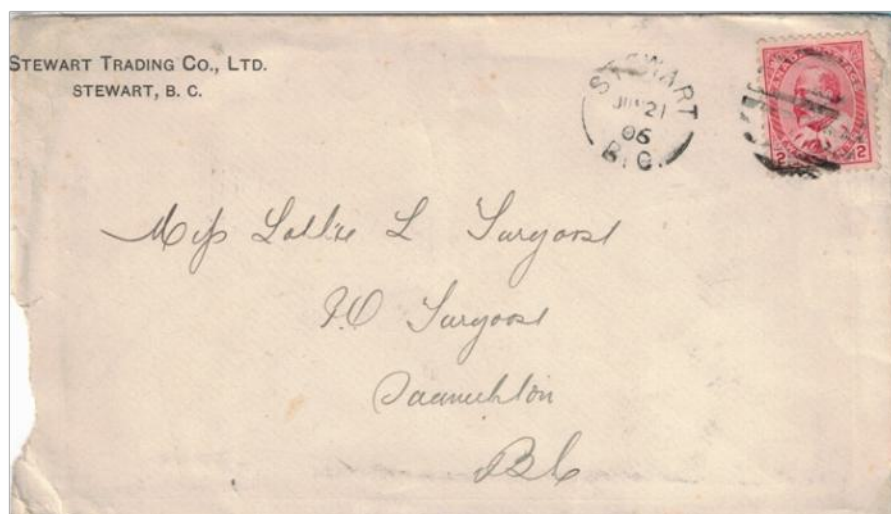


Figure 5. To Lottie from Robert just 5 weeks prior to their marriage – wedding planning discussions or thoughts of moving from Victoria to Stewart?? Early date with Stewart PO opening May 1, 1905.

1901/British Columbia/Vancouver/Victoria South (I)/1						
	Janner, George	Mr	W	Wife	S	14 Sept
85	Stewart George	Mr	W	Head	M	25 Aug
	" Eliza	S	W	Wife	M	21 Sep
	" Robert	Mr	W	Son	S	14 July
	" "Bell	H	W	Daughter	S	2 Aug
	Mabel	Mr	W	Daughter	S	11/11/1901
1.61	Butcher George	Mr	W	Head	S	20 June

Figure 5. 1901 census data for Stewart family.

Robert Musket Stewart, prospector and miner, along with his brother John Wardlaw Stewart, arrived at the head of the Portland Canal on the US border drawn by the mining activity in the region in about 1899/1900, along with two other Stewart Brothers. Robert and John founded the town of Stewart, British Columbia in 1905 after filing mineral claims in the area. They formed the Stewart Land Company and the Stewart Mining & Development Company, establishing the town where they had sold the first lots. With the hint of gold in the hills, Stewart enjoyed a significant land rush. Stewart Brothers long held a substantial interest in the development of the town and mining operations in region.

The Stewart P.O. was established May 1, 1905 with Robert Stewart as the First Postmaster, holding the office until June 21, 1909

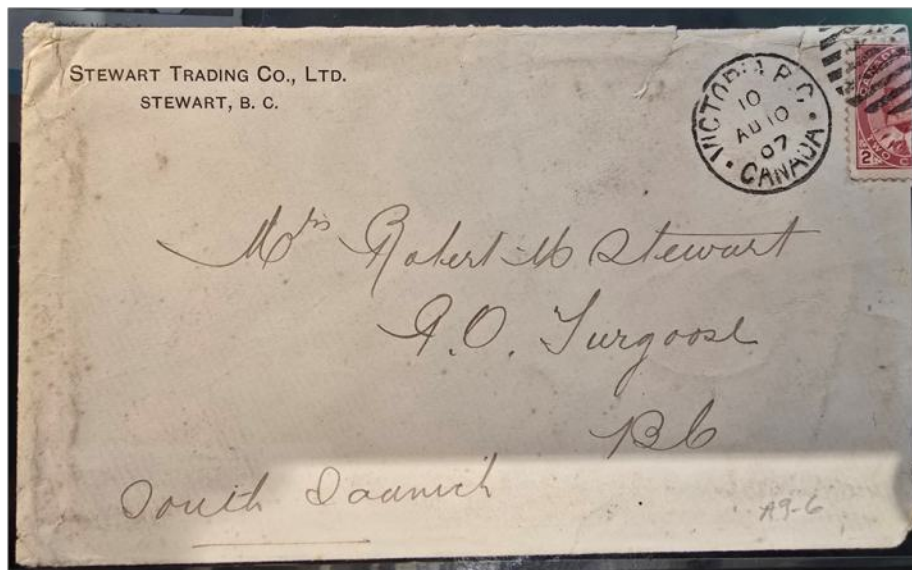


Figure 6. Cover mailed at Victoria Aug. 10, 1907 to Mrs. Stewart.
(Courtesy of Tim Woodland.)

Is the bloom off the rose? Odd that this cover was sent by Robert to his now wife in Turgoose from Victoria, noting the addressee as Mrs. Robert M Stewart, Turgoose Post Office. One would have thought they would be cohabiting as married couples are often known to do. This was mailed just at their one-year anniversary.

Noting the new postal destination of South Saanich, which became Saanichton on March 1, 1906

Robert and Lottie had three children; Sheila Emma b.1907, Wardlaw b. 1912, Douglas b. 1919
In 1931 they were still living in Victoria with Robert's occupation shown as "Manager Mining Company".

Lottie died May 16, 1950, at age 69 Robert died Apr 4, 1954, at age 85.

The 1910 Rogers Pass avalanche and a postal coincidence

By Greg Nesteroff

On March 4, 1910, an avalanche in the Rogers Pass east of Revelstoke killed 58 men working to clear the CPR line, including 32 Japanese Canadians. It remains the deadliest avalanche in Canadian history and it's the subject of a recent short film by Chad Townsend entitled 1910: The Uncovering.

I watched this riveting documentary on January 5 and the date of the disaster was still fresh in my mind when a postcard I had purchased on eBay arrived later that day.

The front showed a pleasant, if mostly unremarkable, view of Revelstoke with the caption "Eagle Pass." It was mailed to a Mrs. Leonard Wood of East Wallace, Nova Scotia.

But the message on the reverse stopped me cold. Or more specifically, the date of the message: March 4, 1910. The sender, a Mrs. Dewar (if I am making the name out correctly) wrote: "Winter has just about left B.C. now, the snow is gradually going away. Hope Mrs. Millar is well, also yourself and the baby."

Unfortunately, for the men who were clearing the railway track that day, Mrs. Dewar's assessment about winter's end was premature. The avalanche halted traffic on the CPR mainline, which is reflected in the postmark: the card didn't leave Revelstoke until five days later, on March 9. Did the recipient realize the reason for the delay?

For that matter, had I not watched the documentary the same day, would I have noticed this card's hidden significance? Probably not. It's about the most remarkable coincidence I've ever experienced as a collector.

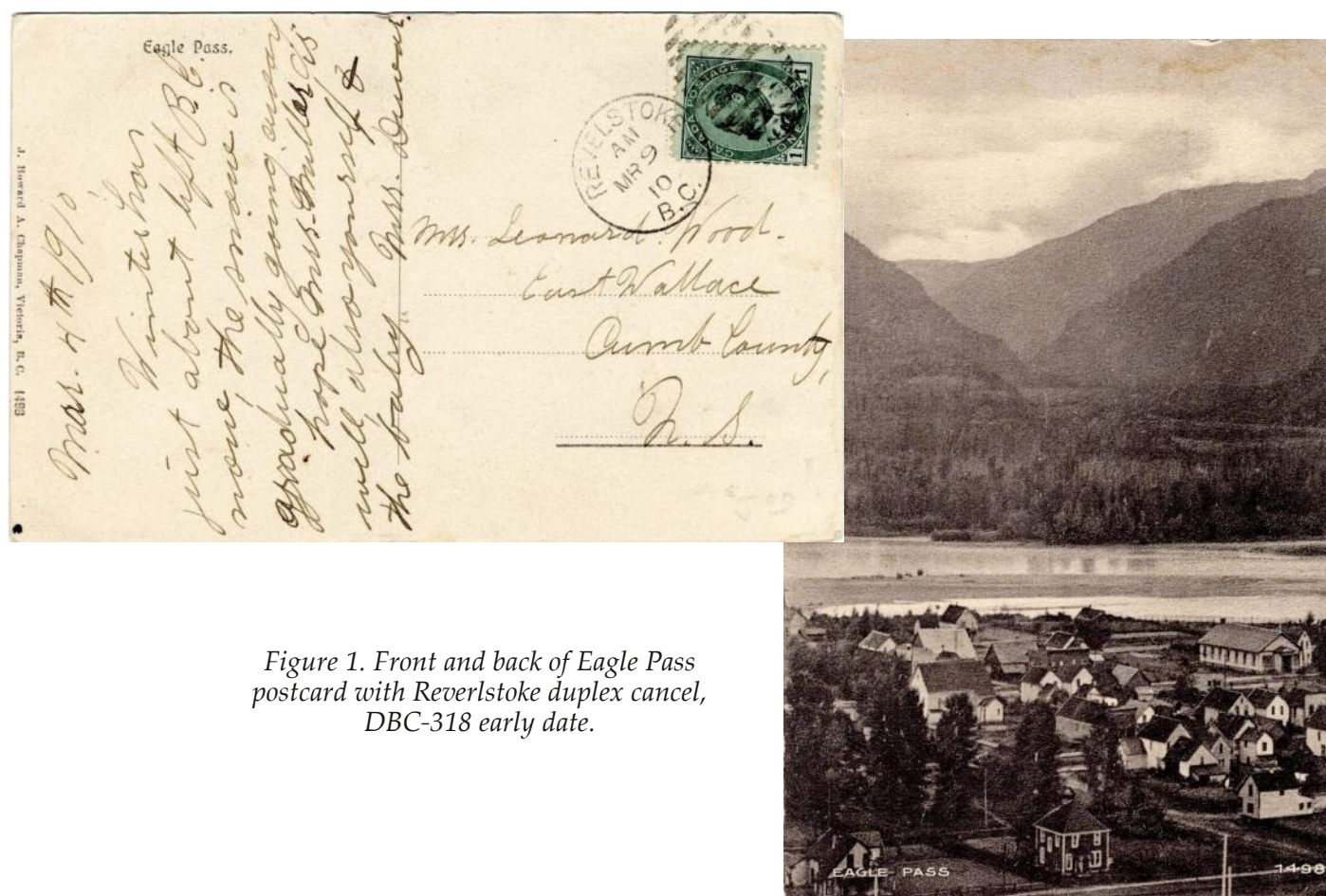


Figure 1. Front and back of Eagle Pass postcard with Revelstoke duplex cancel, DBC-318 early date.

NWT to Vancouver in 1937

by Morris Beattie

We generally focus on mail originating in British Columbia and take note of the post office markings and the histories of these B.C. offices. From time to time, we also get excited by mail originating outside of B.C. and study the route that it took to its final destination in B.C. In this case, we examine the cover, likely philatelic, shown in Figure 1, originating in the Northwest Territories and addressed to E.H. Tupling in Vancouver. Its rather interesting story, unravelled with the help of study group member Kevin O'Reilly, becomes evident when we examine the markings and the date of the markings, August 1, 1937.



Figure 1. Cover mailed to Vancouver aboard the "S.S. Distributor" on August 1, 1937.

The Hudson's Bay cover was postmarked aboard the S.S. Distributor on August 1, 1937, receiving both a circular date stamp for the S.S. Distributor Post Office and an oval Hudson's Bay Company Mackenzie River Transport marking. A clear example of the HBC marking at a later date is included as Figure 2.

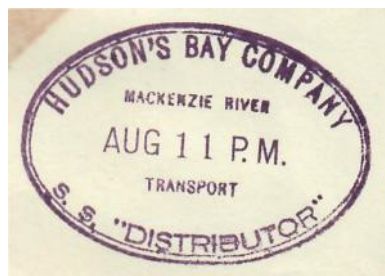


Figure 2. A clear example dated August 11 of the Hudson's Bay Company Mackenzie River Transport marking for the S.S. Distributor taken from a philatelic cover sent in 1945.

The S.S. Distributor, shown in Figure 3 alongside the S.S. Port Simpson, was a wooden steamer built at Fort Smith in 1920 and was first owned by the Alberta & Arctic Transportation Co. Ltd. before being acquired by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1924 [1][2]. HBC operated the vessel along the Mackenzie river from Fort Smith to Aklavik, NWT until 1947, when the company got out of the common carrier business.

This vessel, the third S.S. Distributor, was powered by a steam engine taken from the first two Distributors [2]. The high superstructure and flat bottom made it highly susceptible to winds so that navigation on lakes and in the wide sections of the river were often delayed until the weather was calm. It often took about 30 days to make the full trip to Aklavik. This vessel was broken up in 1946 and the paddlewheel was abandoned at Fort Smith NWT where the paddlewheel has been preserved in a park.



Steamers „Port Simpson“ & „Distributor“ at Prince Rupert, B. C.

Figure 3. S.S. Distributor
alongside the S.S. Port
Simpson at Prince Rupert.
(Courtesy of BC Archives)

Figure 4. A block of four airmail
stamps issued in 1938, showing the
Distributor along the Mackenzie
River. Note the text along the selva
indicating Mackenzie River,
Northwest Territories.



Special Mail On North Tour

EDMONTON, July 11.—(CP)—To provide every convenience for Lord Tweedsmuir during his voyage on the Mackenzie river from McMurray to the Arctic Ocean starting July 20, the Post Office Department has arranged to open a special post office aboard the steamship Distributor. Major R. W. Hale, district postal superintendent, said here Saturday. Ordinarily, the party would be out of contact with the outside world from July 23 until early in August when they expect to arrive at Aklavik. But for His Excellency's convenience the department and Canadian Airways Limited will arrange to deliver mail at the floating post office once a week.

Going back to Figure 1, why does the postmark indicate that it was mailed at the "S.S. Distributor Post Office"? To make sense of this marking we have to consider the date of August 1, 1937. In 1937, Lord Tweedsmuir, Canada's Governor General, toured the Arctic Circle. After travelling northward from Edmonton by train, he travelled down the Mackenzie River from Fort Smith to Aklavik, NWT, on board the Hudson's Bay Company sternwheeler SS Distributor. The steamboat became a temporary non-accounting post office, MOON 55600, during the trip with captain Donald Nayloe, acting as postmaster. Other sources indicate that H.G. Reid acted as postmaster. The vessel left Fort Smith on July 21, travelling along the Mackenzie River, and arrived at Aklavik on August 1. The official closing date for the post office was August 17, although markings with later dates are known to exist.

How did the cover complete its journey from Aklavik to Vancouver? Certainly by air but there are no markings to indicate the routing. It is likely that it was flown to Edmonton, as many of the commemorative covers are known to have flown there, and from there to Vancouver. Regardless, this cover, like many, reflects an interesting bit of Canadian history.



Figure 5. First day and first flight cover mailed July 21, 1937.



Figure 6. Another cover mailed to a B.C. location with no transit indications.

A number of H.B.C. covers like this one exist, as well as ordinary covers that were given the Distributor markings. They are generally philatelic with various ones being addressed to known ship-cancel collectors.

References

- [1] https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/_assets/docs/hbca/ships_histories/distributor.pdf
- [2] O'Reilly, K. *The Western Arctic Husky Express: C.H. Clarke and Motor Schooner Nigalik*, PHSC Journal, No. 185, September 2025, pp 45-63.
- [3] <https://www.nauticapedia.ca/dbase/Query/Shiplist5.php?&name=Distributor%20III&id=4496&Page=1&input=Distributor>, accessed January 17, 2026
- [4] The Beaver September 1937, Volume 268, No 2, pp 14-17. accessed Jan 17, 2026

Paquebot Cover to Rutland, Kelowna, B.C.

by James Corbet

I came across an interesting cover, as I live near Rutland, Kelowna. I have a few paquebot covers covering different aspects of my stamp collecting. Following is the result of my limited research.

The stamp is from Great Britain, (King Edward VIII and issued 1 Sept. 1936) posted at sea, then into the mail stream at Quebec City (13 Sept. 1936) and back stamped in Rutland (Kelowna) B.C.

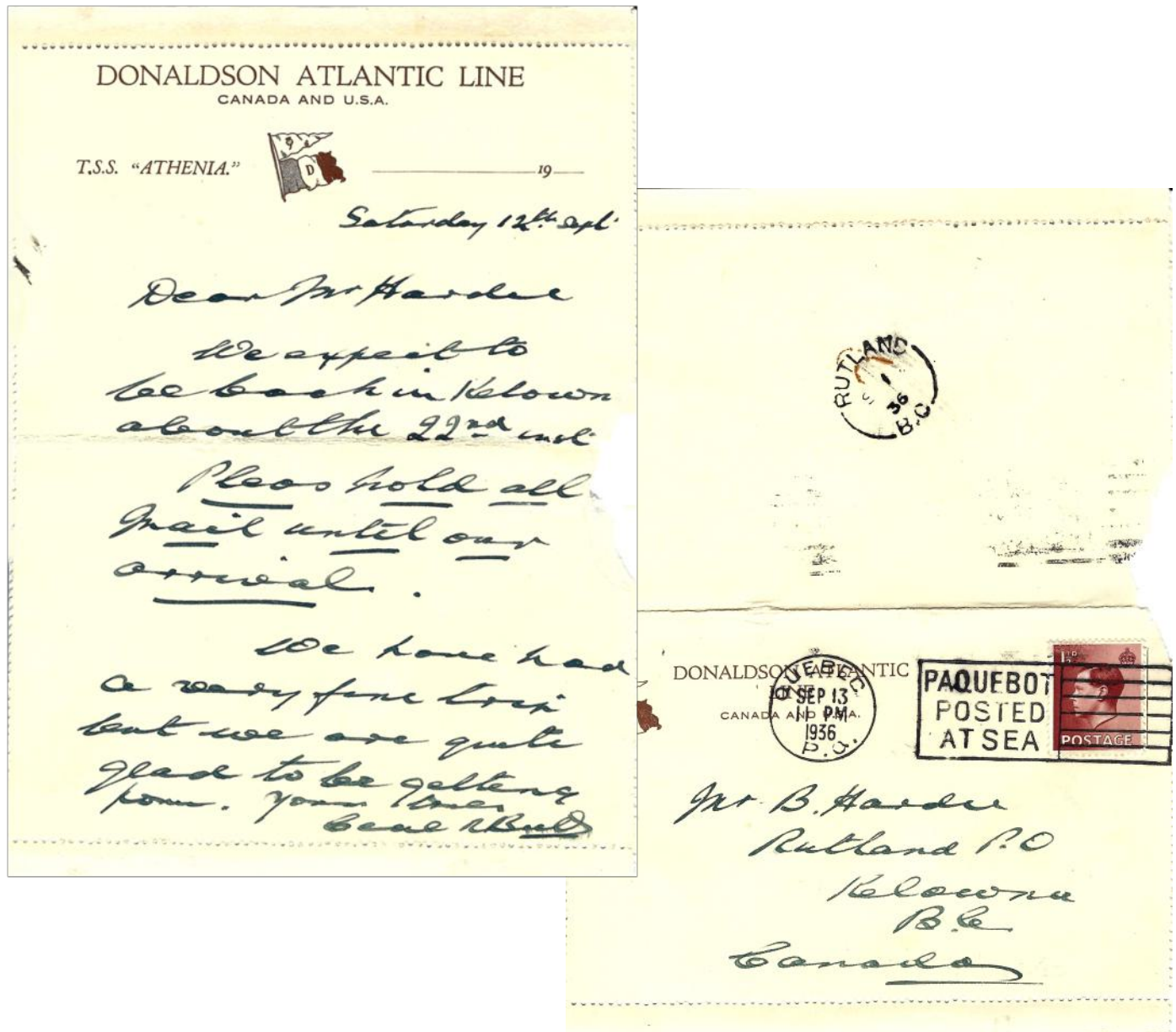


Figure 1. Front and back of paquebot cover mailed to Rutland in 1936.

The ship is the T.S.S. "Athenia" of the Donaldson Atlantic Line. Built in 1923, in Glasgow, the "Athenia" was a steam turbine, transatlantic passenger (1,516 passengers) ship. In World War II, it became the very first ship to be sunk by a German U Boat. She left Liverpool on the 2nd of Sept. only to be torpedoed on the evening of 3 Sept. 1939, the day that Britain had declared war on Germany. Capt. James Cook was the commander, being killed in action like his namesake was in Hawaii. Allegedly, the Germans mistook it for a battleship.

The "Athenia" would have left Glasgow, stopping at Belfast and Liverpool before crossing the Atlantic, down the St. Lawrence River to Quebec City. Typically, it took approx. eight days for this journey. The ship probably berthed on Sunday Sept.13, the card was written on Saturday the 12th but post marked on the 13th at 11:00pm. Since the stamp was issued on Sept. 1, 1936, the "Athenia" would have left Liverpool sometime between Sept. 1 to Sept. 5.

The Donaldson Brothers were founded in 1855, in Glasgow. In approximately 1880, they added routes from Glasgow to Quebec City and Montreal. In 1913, they became Donaldson Line Ltd., then in 1916, due to Anchor Line having controlling interest in the four Donaldson's passenger steamers, they became Anchor-Donaldson. In 1935, Anchor-Line went into liquidation with all assets being sold; Donaldson Line acquired the greater part. The name changed again to Donaldson Atlantic Line. After a couple of more name changes and ownership, in 1967, the company was totally liquidated.

In 1936, most of the mail was moved across Canada by rail, utilizing the Railway Mail Service. So, from Quebec City via rail possibly to Montreal then across Canada and perhaps to Kamloops, being a hub to the Okanagan. In 1925, the C.N.R. completed its line from Kamloops to Kelowna including Rutland (which is approx. 5 miles from Kelowna). The C.P.R.'s line only went as far as Okanagan Landing then barged to Kelowna. Passenger service started in 1926, after the C. N. Railway station was built. Rutland was located at the junction of CNR and CPR lines. The Kettle Valley Railway (owned by CPR) had lines in the vicinity.

The back cancel is from the Rutland Post Office, first established 1 Oct.1908 becoming the Kelowna Postal Station Rutland, 2 Nov. 1970. Sadly, the date on the Rutland cancel is illegible so can't determine how long it took to get from Quebec City to Rutland but probably in the range of 4 to 8 days. Interestingly, the name "Rutland" (named after John Mathew Rutland who planted the first commercial orchards and the first large irrigation system in the vicinity) wasn't officially adopted until 6 Oct. 1936. The addressee, Mr. B. Hardie, was the Rutland Postmaster from 1 Aug,1914 to 11 Apr, 1946. What I find interesting, that even though Rutland was an unincorporated town separate from Kelowna, the addressee's address was Rutland P.O. Kelowna, not just Rutland. The provincial legislature forced Rutland to merge with the city of Kelowna in 1973 by a legislative act. Even today, my address is in the area known as Ellison and I am part of the Central Okanagan Regional District to which I pay my property taxes, not Kelowna, but postally, my address is considered to be Kelowna. It appears some things just don't change!

It seems that every cover has a story, some more than others. I have broken down the main components of this cover which together have provided a synergy that is greater. To enhance it, one could do a biography of the sender and receiver. It is also a snapshot of the times; people travel, mail travel and locations, thus history.



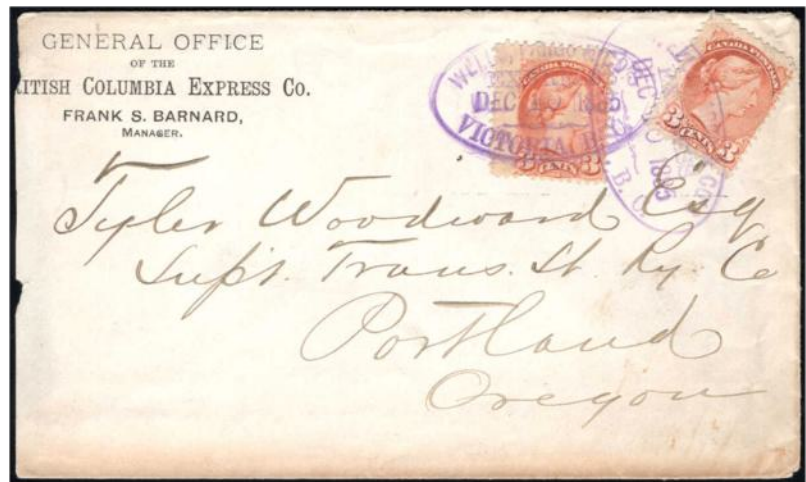
Recent Auction Results

The market for quality B.C. material is strong.



Realized \$302 . Canada. British Columbia. Nanaimo BC ca1862 incoming cover, from Victoria with "Post Office PAID, Victoria Vancouver Island" oval in blue. Addressed to hardware merchants "Cunningham Bros". Small faults, but far better than usually seen for Vancouver Island mail of this period.

Realized \$605. Lot 8 Canada. British Columbia. Victoria BC 1885 Wells Fargo Co. Oval, ties 2x 3c Small Queens on cover with "General Office of the British Columbia Express Co, Frank S Barnard, Manager" to Portland, Oregon (Tyler Woodward, Transcontinental Street Railway). A scarce Barnards Express cover.



Realized \$786. Canada. British Columbia. Incoming back-to-back "paste-up" USA stationery cover, 1864 addressed to "Cottonwood & Richfield Wagon Road, Cariboo, British Columbia" with Wells Fargo "San Francisco" and "COLLECT" in blue.

