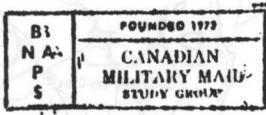


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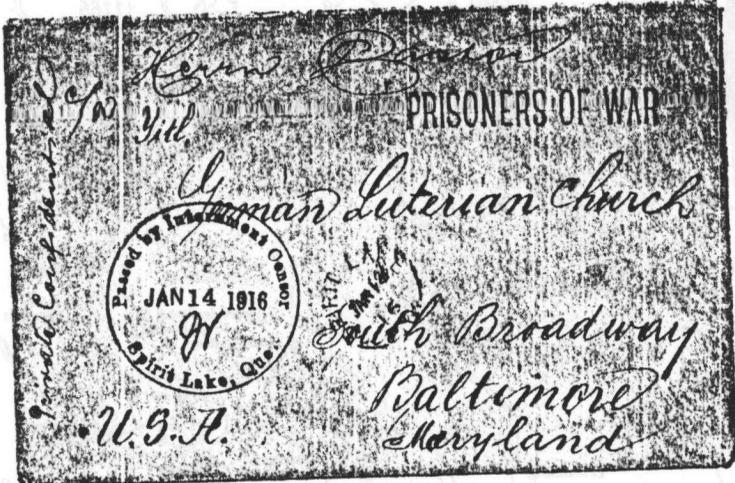
# Canadian Military Mail Study Group



CANADIAN MILITARY MAIL STUDY GROUP

KENNETH F. ELLISON  
R.R. #1, OYAMA  
B.C. V0M 1W0

NEWSLETTER NO. 81  
APRIL 1988.



PAGE REDUCED  
IN SIZE  
+ + +  
1 cm.

*Wilhelm Koler  
Prisoner of War  
No 907,  
Spirit Lake, Prov. Quebec  
via Cochrane, Canada*

INTERMENT CAMP - SPIRIT LAKE, QUEBEC.

If you look back in TOPICS, May-June 1984, please refer to the article compiled by Ritch Toop which starts on Page 33 regarding POW censorship in 1914-19. Herein, Page 40, is a list of POW Camps and under Quebec, note Spirit Lake.

This cover turned up recently and is probably as nice a copy as one could hope to see. We have failed to find the exact location of this camp but the return address notes 'via Cochrane' so it is likely to the east near the Ontario-Quebec border. This must have been one of the most isolated camps in Canada!

If you have any information on this camp, please let us know.

W.D.C.S.

This month's N/L is given over to Ritch Toop. All you ever wanted to know about this subject is here! Due to the articles length, we had to reduce some of the letters in size and hope you don't mind. Thanks Ritch, for the great job!

POSTAGE PAID MARKINGS

In N/L 79, Page 7 under 4), Wilf points out that HMS CLARKIA is the proper name, not Claudia as stated. Apologies!

NEXT NEWSLETTER

This is the fourth issue this year so we are way ahead of schedule (5 per year). The next one should be a catch-up with odds and ends and just when you get it will be hard to say-maybe June? Would anyone else care to send in some of their work as Ritch has done here, and Bill Bailey did last month?

NEW BOOK - We were told by an 'Easterner' that the latest book by Bailey and Toop is now available, but we have not seen a copy.



## WAR DISEASE CONTROL STATION

CENSORED W.D.C.S. - by E.R. Toop

Newsletter 27/172 and 28/180 illustrated a boxed marking "Censored W.D.C.S." which had been reported used during 1945 and early 1946. It was stated that civil source was likely and posed the question as to the designation of W.D.C.S. My 'shoebox' contained three of these mysterious covers which had been purged from my military collection.

The newsletters sparked an interest and I suddenly developed a severe case of 'curiosity' which sent me digging into my shoebox hoard. During the past few years dozens of National Archives files were researched in RG 2 Privy Council Office, RG 24 Department of National Defence, RG 6 Secretary of State, RG 3 Post Office, RG 44 National War Services and related Record Groups. Many other source documents were also checked. Eventually I stumbled upon correspondence buried in RG 2, vol. 4, file 135 of the Privy Council Office. Finally, the designation of W.D.C.S. became known and stands for WAR DISEASE CONTROL STATION.

The location of this Station was Grosse Isle, a small Island in the St. Lawrence river below Quebec City. My first thoughts were that it might have been used as a quarantine station for incoming immigrants, yet, wartime conditions would preclude this possibility. Secondly, what kind of war diseases would be monitored at that location, and, why would there be American and Canadian servicemen on the Island?

Calls to a number of government departments in Ottawa failed to elicit any information. Finally, on the suggestion of the Canadian Permanent Commission on Geographic Names I wrote the Commission of Toponymy in Quebec City. Their reply of 12 January 1988 outlines the history of the Island and leaves us with probably as much information as we are likely to obtain.

Copies of Archive correspondence and the response from Quebec City are attached in their entirety. Also illustrated are my three 'shoebox' covers, confirming that censoring was indeed carried out by Canadian military personnel on incoming and outgoing correspondence to Grosse Isle.



Mr. Aubrey Kelson  
Stamp Haven  
157 1/2 Bay St.  
Toronto,  
Ontario.

**CENSORED**  
*R.V.L.*  
Major  
**W.D.C.S.**

This cover was sent by Major R.V.L. Walker, Box 128, Haute-Ville P.O. Quebec, P.Q., postmarked Montmagny, P.Q. 24 Feb 1944. It was also censored by Major Walker.



Lt Col A. E. CAMERON  
P.O. BOX 128 UPPERTOWN  
QUEBEC CITY, QUE.

801  
Rec'd 11/4/44  
Ans 13/4/44

Lieut M. F. I. CAMERON  
W. T. C. N. S.  
Pacific Coast Naval Hdqtrs  
JERICHO BEACH  
VANCOUVER  
B. C.

**CENSORED**  
*W.D.C.S.*  
**W.D.C.S.**

Cover from Lt Col A.E. Cameron postmarked Quebec City, 3 Apr 1944

AV. MADERO ORIENTE  
NUM. 58

### Hotel Valencia.

TELEFONO ERICSSON  
NUM. 147

PROPIETARIOS  
Jesus Valencia y Moreno, Suc.  
MORELIA, MICH.

**W.D.C.S. IMPRESOS**



Freddy Lassen.  
Cajon Postal 190.  
Haute Ville.  
(QUEBEC, Canada)



An incoming letter from Uriangato, Mexico 19 Dec 1945 with WDCS boxed censor.

Quebec,  
October 4, 1943

Mr. F.E. Jolliffe,  
Chief Postal Censor,  
Department of National War Services,  
OTTAWA, Ont.

Dear Mr. Jolliffe:

With reference to our telephone conversation, today, in connection with Grosse Isle, please be advised that a War Disease Control Station is placed on the Island. Members of the United States army are stationed there, as well as some Canadians.

By getting in touch with the Postmaster at Montmagny, we were informed that approximately forty letters go out daily and twenty go in daily to the Island.

However, the men stationed on duty on this Island receive a considerable proportion of their mail through Post Office Box No. 128, Upper Town, Quebec. In fact, the clerk in charge of that office tells me that they receive approximately fifty letters daily and from twelve to fifteen parcels.

There is no Post Office on Grosse Isle, the nearest one being three miles across the river, at Montmagny. Therefore, we could easily place a check on such mail by instructing the postmaster at Montmagny to forward all Grosse Isle mail to this office, under special cover, while similar instructions can be issued to the clerk in charge of the Upper Town post office, where these officials lease their post office box.

Altogether, if we examine mail in both directions, it would mean approximately 110 letters daily and from twelve to fifteen parcels to be examined, which of course is enough to keep one examiner busy all day.

As I mentioned to you over the phone today, from time to time during the past year, additional work has been assigned to this Examination Centre, which examines approximately 100 pilot boat letters per week and now some 200 letters collected from special letter boxes in the restricted zone of the Quebec Harbour.

Furthermore, we absorb all our annual leave and sick leave without asking for emergency helpers, which means nine people entitled to three weeks annual leave (27 weeks), plus special leave and sick leave when one examiner or another is off duty, the whole totalling more than half the year.

Under the circumstances, with this additional work being assigned to us, do you not think it would be in order to authorize the employment of another examiner? Then one of the more experienced employees can be assigned to pilot boat, R.C.M.P., Ship Agents and Grosse Isle mail.

(SGD) Roy V Halpin

ROY V. HALPIN  
for District Director of P.S.

HQS 4354-27-1-1 (DCW &amp; S)

## DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ottawa, Canada,  
27 October 1943

Dear Colonel Biggar:

I refer to your letter of October 22, regarding the censoring of mail at Grosse Isle.

It is desired to obtain appropriate authority for the censoring of outgoing letters mailed on the Island, and for this purpose it is recommended that approval be obtained for Lt. Col. A.E. Cameron, M.C., Chief Superintendent, War Disease Control Station, to conduct the censorship.

Yours faithfully,

(SGD) G.S. Currie  
Deputy Minister (C)

Colonel O.M. Biggar,  
Director of Censorship,  
Department of National War Services,  
Ottawa, Ont.

## DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL WAR SERVICES

Director of Censorship

Ottawa,  
October 30th, 1943

CPC

Re: Grosse Isle

I attach a copy of the following:

- (a) Communications Order No. 3.
- (b) My letter of today to Mr. Coolican.
- (c) Col. Currie's letter to me of October 27th in answer to mine in which I suggested that what was desired was "that some one in Grosse Isle should be invested with authority to make an official censorship examination of all outgoing letters".

You will observe that the Communications Order covers both incoming and outgoing letters, but it will probably suffice if only the letter are dealt with. If, however, it is desirable that incoming letters should be censored it will no doubt be readily possible to arrange this.

It would be preferable that the censorship should be conducted in the normal manner and censored letters officially sealed, but it may be that this will not serve the purpose, and if so Lt. Col. Cameron will no doubt raise the point and be prepared to make appropriate arrangements.

Will you take the necessary steps to put the censorship in operation, if necessary sending some one to Grosse Isle for the purpose of instituting it, though this would probably on general grounds be undesirable.

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL WAR SERVICES  
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

1. PURSUANT to the authority vested in me under Sections 13 and 14 of the Defence of Canada Regulations, 1942, I, Major General LEO RICHER LAFLECHE, Minister of National War Services, do hereby order that in addition to those described in Communications Order No. 2, dated June 19th, 1943, the following classes of communications be submitted by the Post Office Department for censorship by the officers appointed for the purpose of censoring the same, namely: Letters outgoing from or incoming to points on Grosse Isle in the St. Lawrence River below Quebec.

2. THIS Order may be referred to as Communications Order No. 3.

DATED at Ottawa, Canada, this 23rd day of October 1943.

(SGD) L.R. LaFleche

MINISTER OF NATIONAL WAR SERVICES

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File DC 195

Ottawa,  
October 30th, 1943

P.T. Coolican, Esq.  
Asst. Deputy Postmaster General,  
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Mr. Coolican:

I enclose a copy of Communications Order No. 3 made by the Minister of National War Services on the 23rd instant, authorizing the special internal censorship therein described.

Yours very truly,

Director

Ottawa,  
1st November 1943

R.V. Halpin, Esq.  
Superintendent, Secretariat,  
Office of the District Director  
of Postal Services,  
QUEBEC, P.Q.

Dear Mr. Halpin:

I wish to refer to your confidential memorandum of the 4th ultimo, in regard to Grosse Isle, and to enclose herewith copy of correspondence received from the Director of Censorship in this regard.

You will observe that special authority has now been obtained to conduct a censorship of letter mails from or incoming to points on Grosse Isle in the St. Lawrence River below Quebec but that it is possible that only outgoing mail need be examined.

It might be well for you to see Colonel Cameron in regard to the manner in which they wish to examine mails.

It would seem that this would be equivalent to a Unit Censorship in which Postal Censorship takes no part other than to sometimes re-check an occasional item when it is thought advisable to do so.

As regards the last paragraph in the Director's letter, you might enquire of Colonel Cameron whether he requires the benefit of our experience in any way in connection with the mail which they will undertake to examine.

F.E. Jolliffe  
Chief Postal Censor

Enc.

Quebec, November 12, 1943

Mr. F.E. Jolliffe,  
Chief Postal Censor,  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Mr. Jolliffe:

With reference to our exchange of correspondence and talks relative to Grosse Isle Censorship, may I inform you that I received a letter from the Chief Superintendent of the War Disease Control Station at the island, Lt. Colonel A.E. Cameron, who states that they started to censor mail outgoing from the Island, and the two officers assigned to this duty have been equipped with a rubber stamp marked:

Censored  
.....  
W.D.C.S.

On the blank line, the initials of the examining officer are to be written, while the letters W.D.C.S., of course, mean War Disease Control Station.

This afternoon, Colonel Cameron called at my office and stated that he not only had no objections to our making a spot censorship of this mail, but would be even pleased if this was done, as it would place a check on his junior sub-alterns assigned to Censorship work, and knowing this, they would probably take greater care when examining mail.

Signed

Roy V. Halpin,  
Superintendent, Secretariat

Quebec, November 22, 1943

Mr. F.E. Jolliffe,  
Chief Postal Censor,  
Ottawa, Ontario.

The enclosed letter from the War Disease Control Station at Grosse Isle, was turned in to Military Intelligence by the Officer Commanding the Grosse Isle Station, due to the fact that he was unable to censor it, as it was written in a foreign language.

The District Intelligence Officer in turn forwarded it to my office for translation and I am turning it over to you, so you may have it examined.

The Control Station is not interested in the contents and if it is found to be harmless, they presume that you may forward it to destination. However, if there is anything "out of line" in the letter, they would be pleased if you could furnish them with the details.

(signed)

Roy V. Halpin, Superintendent,  
Secretariat.

Government of Quebec  
Commission of Toponymy

Québec, 12 January 1988

Mr. E.R. Toop  
P.O. Box 9026  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1G 3T8

Re: Grosse Île

Dear Mr. Toop,

Mr. Henri Dorion forwarded your letter to me, so that I could answer the various questions you have raised.

There is a considerable amount of literature on this geographic location; the information I am giving you was obtained from a research report by Luc Guinard (1987), *Relevé toponymique de la Grosse Île, recherche et proposition de noms de lieux ...*

The Grosse Île station has been in existence since 1832. Under an Act of 25 June of that same year, the Lower Canada Assembly charged Captain Bayfield with a mandate to find a location isolated from Quebec where a quarantine station for new immigrants could be established.

The station was in operation from 1832 until 1937, when the Canadian Ministry of Health ceded its installations to the Ministry of Public Works. In 1938, they were transferred to the Department of National Defence.

During the Second World War, Canadian and American armies joined forces for research purposes to develop a vaccine against rinder pest. According to Guinard, this project was part of an overall program of bacteriological warfare. Research was conducted until the end of the Fifties; most of the work, however, remains secret.

In 1957, the Department of Agriculture Canada established a research station on diseases that might endanger the health of Canadian livestock. An animal quarantine station was opened in 1960. In 1968, an international development and research centre on unique animal diseases was founded.

The Department of Agriculture continues to pursue its activities there in 1988. The only maximum security centre for animal health is located on this island; the medium security centre is in Mirabel.

Lastly, the federal government declared this island a historical site in 1984, with the aim of establishing a park dedicated to the history of immigration.

If you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address of the Commission of Toponymy.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

Jacques Fortin  
Service de la toponomie