



Canadian Military Mail Study Group

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2016

NEWSLETTER NO. 224

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MAIL HANDLING FROM F.M.O. AVALON DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR--By Paul Binney

This article will illustrate the handling of ground and air mail from Fleet Mail Office Avalon during the Second World War. The early (pre May 1, 1942) transport of air mail is shown by correspondence from the period. An example of non-standard transport of mail through Halifax during a period of heavy winter snow is illustrated. The relationship between F.M.O. Avalon and the General Post Office is suggested by some of the correspondence.

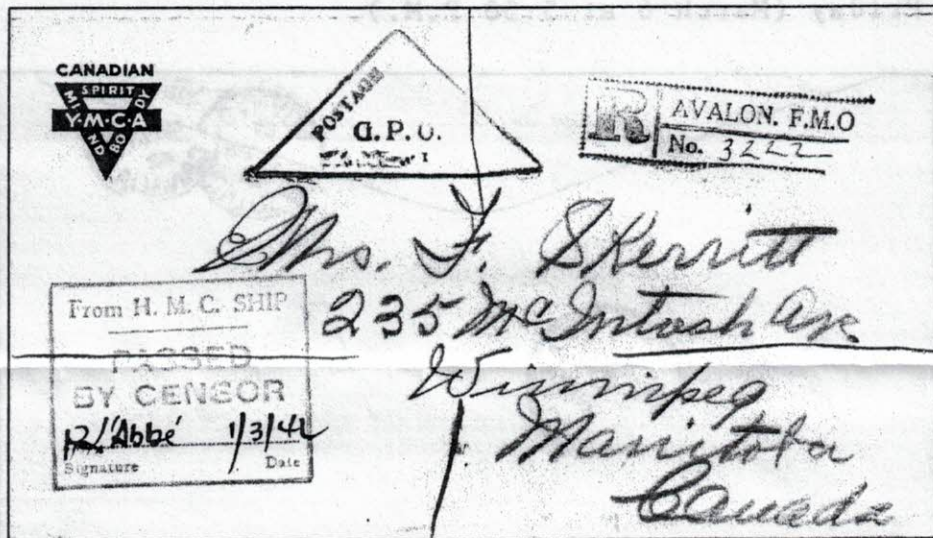


Figure 1: front of March 1, 1942 envelope from F.M.O. Avalon, to Winnipeg (75% of original size)

[Cont'd.]

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Most mail from Avalon during the Second World War carried no postal identification markings as to its origin, or routing to its destination. The only clues as to the dates of handling come from registered mail, the rare envelope that still has correspondence enclosed, or those covers received by a zealous postal clerk in some far off post office that were backstamped with a datestamp as a receiver.

Ground Transportation of Mail

Mail that moved by ground to Canada or the United States was handed over to the General Post Office in St. John's, Newfoundland and transported by the Newfoundland Railway, the ferry to North Sydney, Nova Scotia, and then onward by rail and/or courier to its final destination. This routing and timing of the mail transport is shown by the registered cover from March 1, 1942 (Figs. 1 and 2). Westbound trains from St. John's departed on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday, arriving in Port aux Basques in the evening on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday respectively [1]. The illustrated letter was censored on March 1 by a naval censor (Fig.1). The registration was entered on March 2 (Monday) when the cover was backstamped by an Avalon circle (Fig.2). The G.P.O. triangle showing payment of the fee for registration may have been applied at F.M.O. Avalon [2] or at the General Post Office. The letter would have departed St. John's on Tuesday, March 3, and arrived in Port aux Basques on Wednesday, March 4 to connect with the overnight ferry to North Sydney, arriving there on Thursday, March 5 at 6:00 A.M. If all connections were made as outlined in the railway timetable of 1940 [3], then the mail would have arrived in Montreal on Friday (March 6 at 5:50 P.M.).

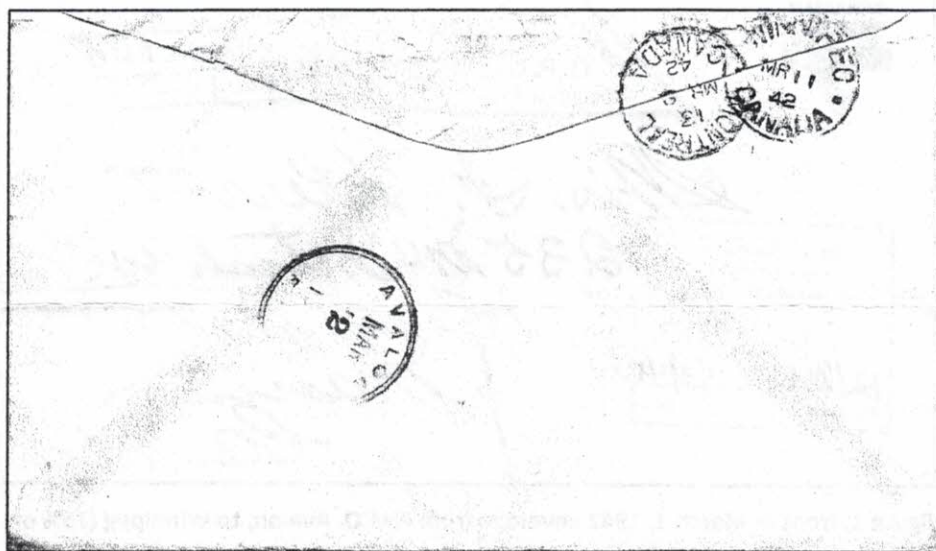


Figure 2: back of figure 1 cover (75% of original size). Backstamps confirm originating office AVALON, transit office MONTREAL, and destination office WINNIPEG

Of course all of this is supposition as the mail travelled in a closed bag as far as Montreal, where it was sorted and backstamped for onward conveyance on March 9 (Monday). This seven day time from departure at St. John's to onward sorting at Montreal is confirmed by other registered covers in my collection. The transit time may be a result of the time re-

[Cont'd.]

quired for processing of registered mail in Montreal.

Air Mail Pre-May 1, 1942

The handling of air mail letters pre-May 1, 1942 is described in this February 1942 correspondence (Fig.3) from Sub-Lieutenant Thomson to his mother in Victoria, British Columbia:

"All Air Mail from here goes by train & boat to Canada, then by air across Canada. From what we hear there has been quite a lot of snow along the line and the train has been held up so my mail may not arrive very promptly".

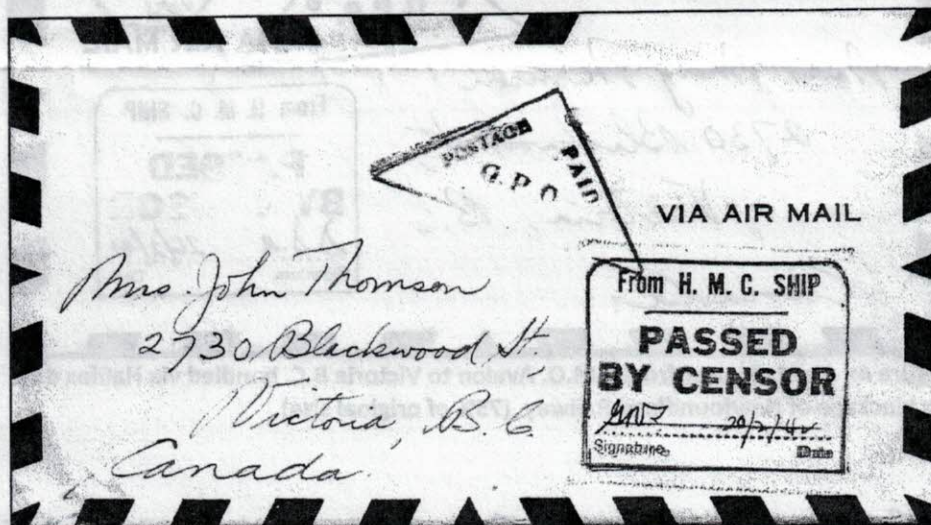


Figure 3: letter from F.M.O. Avalon to Victoria, B.C. via Air Mail carrying letter explaining handling of air mail. No additional markings after dispatch. (75% of original size)

Special Handling, February-March, 1942

The comment by Thomson that the train was having trouble with snow is further borne out by letters from late February:

"We have been in port for a week now but have received no more mail other than that of the first day in port. All the trains leaving here making connections ##### have been snowed in so nothing has gone out and nothing come in. We should get some mail in a couple of days now unless we leave here.

There was a four foot fall of snow over the week-end and it certainly tied things up as well as changing the face of the countryside".

This letter (Fig.4) was first censored with a Type 2 marking on February 26, 1942 and shows the internal crossing out of a location (Port aux Basques) within the correspondence. The air mail postage was collected for the General Post Office in St. John's as shown by the G.P.O.

[Cont'd.]

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triangle struck to indicate payment.

Apparently there was little hope of a speedy renewal of railway service as this correspondence was handled through Halifax, most likely being transported on a naval vessel. Arriving in Halifax on March 7, the letter was flown to its destination in western Canada, most likely through Toronto although no further markings are shown.

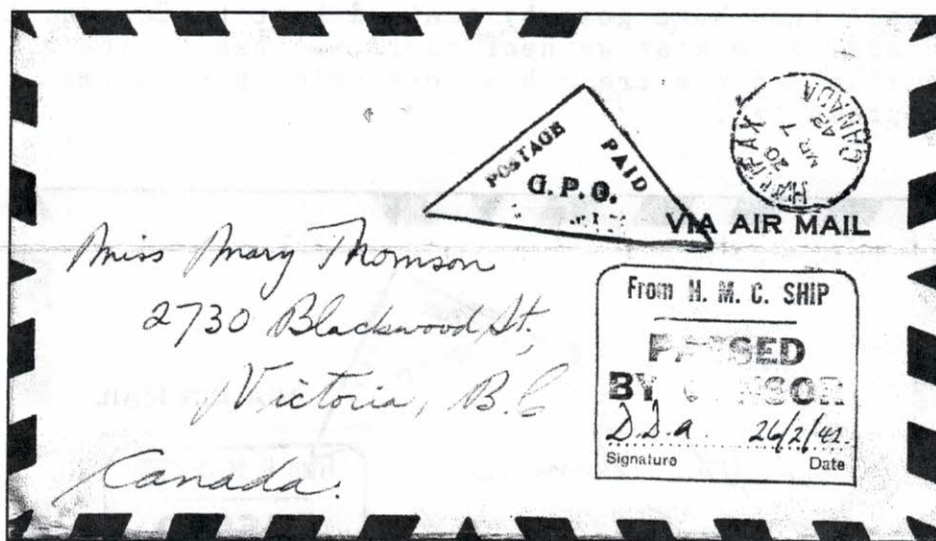


Figure 4: Air Mail letter from F.M.O. Avalon to Victoria B.C. handled via Halifax due to blockage of Newfoundland Railway. (75% of original size)

The use of a G.P.O. triangle and then subsequent transit through Halifax appears to confirm that some G.P.O. triangles were resident at F.M.O. Avalon. If the letters had been handed to the G.P.O. in St. John's, then it is not likely they would have been returned to the navy Fleet Mail Office for onward transport to Halifax. Thomson was an active correspondent and I have two letters in my collection that were handled in the same way and through Halifax on the same date. It is not known how long the correspondence was held at St. John's before the alternative transit to Halifax was used, one can only speculate on the transit time by ship to Halifax, as it would be highly weather dependent and also a function of the particular ship used for the trip. It is not known if this was the only instance of mail transit through Halifax or if this "outlet" was used at other times.

Air Mail After May 1, 1942

On May 1, 1942 a daily (except Sunday) air mail service between Moncton, Sydney, Gander, and St. John's was initiated. The plane left Moncton at 6:00 A.M., stopping at Sydney and Gander on route to its arrival in St. John's at 12:20 P.M. The return flight from St. John's left at 1:45 A.M. and arrived back in Moncton at 5:15 P.M., once again with stops at Gander and North Sydney [4]. The final piece of correspondence from 1943 (Fig.5) illustrates this routing. Air mail was no longer dependent on the Newfoundland railway or ferry system. Mailed at Avalon on Saturday, June 26, 1943, the envelope was transported on the Saturday air flight

[Cont'd.]

that arrived in Moncton late in the day. The envelope was processed in Moncton at 23:00hrs on Sunday, June 27, and most likely flown to Toronto on Monday, June 28 where it was received and processed at 18:00hrs that evening. The final destination of Saskatoon was reached on Wednesday, June 30. Most air flights at this time appear to take place during daylight hours when visual flight rules could be used.

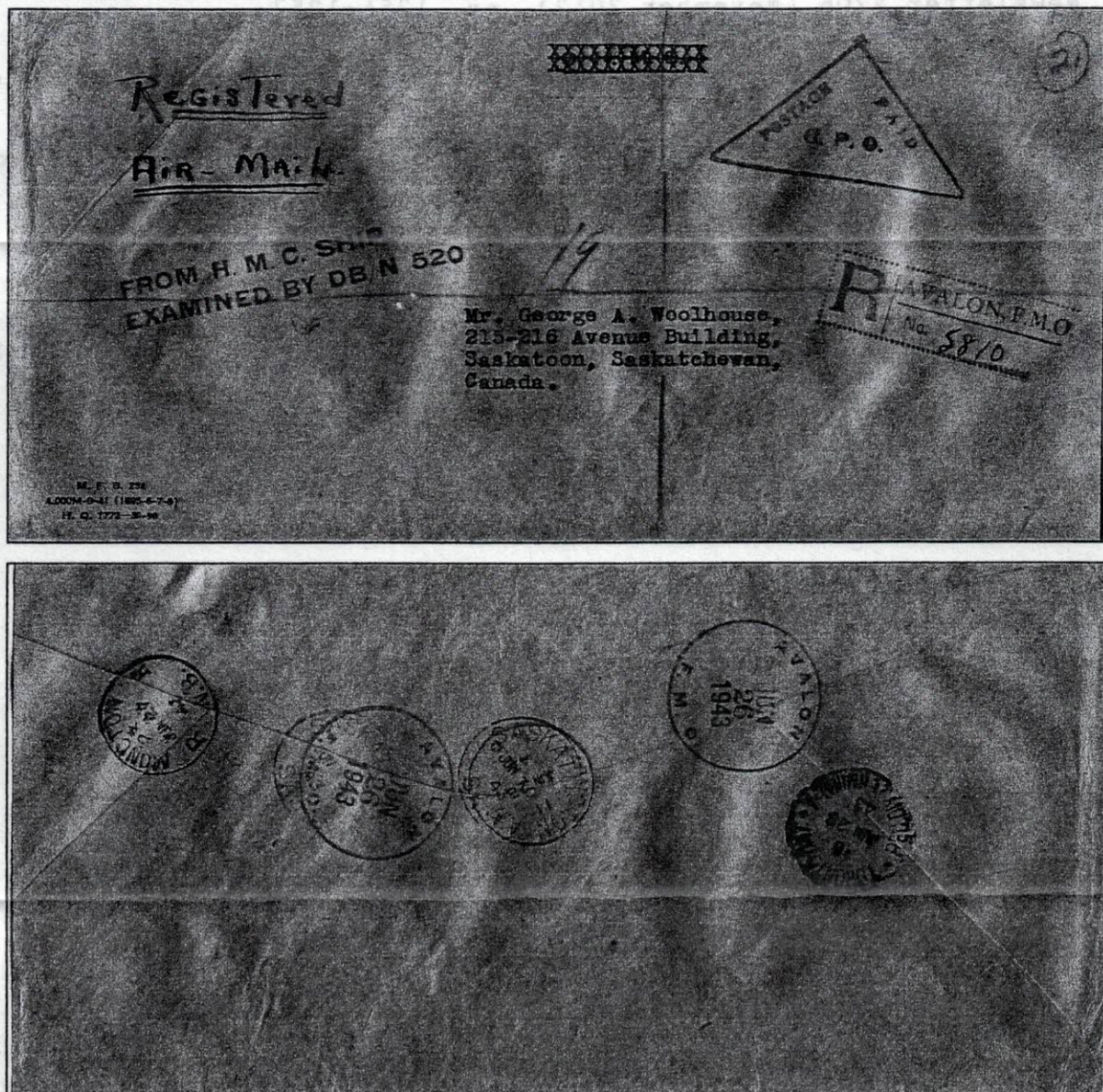


Figure 5: Air mail in 1943 from F.M.O. Avalon to Saskatoon via Moncton and Toronto. (75% of original size)

For the Canadian portion of the mail transport this restriction to daylight flying provided only marginal gains over rail transport that took place twenty-four hours of the day and in most weather conditions.

Additional examples of mail transport that can be confirmed with back-stamps are sought; particularly examples of unusual routings.

[Cont'd.]

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- [1] Newfoundland Post Office Circular, 1942, p. 1154 (downloaded from archive.org).
- [2] Binney, P. "H.M.C.S. Avalon, St. John's, Newfoundland: Postal Markings 'Collected', October 1945". Canadian Military Mail Study Group Newsletter #206 (November 2012), pp. 1254-1257.
- [3] Newfoundland Railway, Railway and Steamship System, Timetable, effective May 26 to December 31, 1940.
- [4] Newfoundland Post Office Circular, 1942, pp. 1157-1158 (downloaded from archive.org).

INCOMING LETTERS

Here's an email that most members received from our Chairman Mike Street:

Doug Sayles' Cdn Military Postmarks Vol 1 - your help requested

MS Mike Street
Sun 09-04, 9:07 AM

Chapter_1_Early_to_190...
687 KB

Good Morning Members of the Canadian Military Mail Study Group:

As you may know, at the time of his death in 2012 the late Doug Sayles was preparing *The BNAPS Catalogue of Canadian Military Mail Markings, Volume 1*, covering the period 1800 to just before the start of World War II. In 2015 Wayne Schnarr offered to complete Volume 1, and he has been hard at work ever since.

Attached to this email is a PDF file of Chapter 1 - EARLY MARKINGS TO 1909, covering the period from the early military forts in Quebec to Militia Camps before World War I, including the Northwest Rebellion, Yukon Field Force, South African War, Official Militia administration postal markings, Militia Camps and the Quebec Tercentenary Camps. If you have any knowledge of, or interest in, this era of Canadian Military postmarks, we would ask you to go over the draft carefully and send any corrections, new information, suggestions, better illustrations, etc. to Wayne at gwschnarr@rogers.com. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks in advance for your participation. If you have no interest in or knowledge of the Volume 1 pre-World War II era, please let me know and you will not receive drafts of Volume 1 Chapters 2 through 6.

A reminder of the CMMMSG Study Group meeting at BNAPEX 2016 FREDERICTON from September 30 to October 2. See the show program or the on-line BNAPEX Seminar schedule for the exact date and time.

Mike

--
Mike Street
Ancaster, Ontario, Canada
mikestreet1@gmail.com

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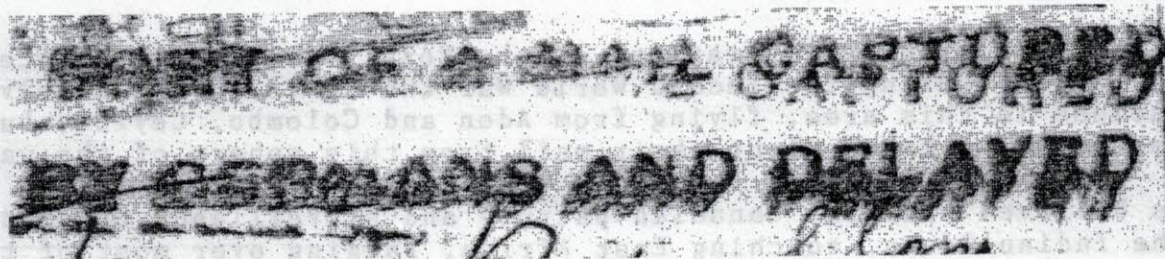
Another from Wayne Schnarr on a similar subject:

Members will recall that I am working on completion of the late Doug Sayles' *The BNAPS Catalogue of Military Mail Markings Volume 1 – pre-1936*. Here are some of the new pre-1936 marks that have been found and will be included in the new volume when ready, hopefully by the end of 2017. New contributions will be gratefully received. Please contact me by email <gwschnarr@rogers.com> or through the Editor.



MILITIA DEPARTMENT / FREE / CANADA
With dots on either side of CANADA
Courtesy: John Cable

MILITIA DEPARTMENT / FREE / CANADA
With scalloped inner circle
Courtesy: Christiane Faucher



"PART OF A MAIL CAPTURED / BY GERMANS AND DELAYED"

Courtesy: the late Bob Wyse



P.P.C.R.C. HOSPITAL / POSTAL / NOV 24 1918 / SERVICES / COODEN
CAMP / BEXHILL

Courtesy: Jon Johnson and Brian Standley

International Machine
Hub

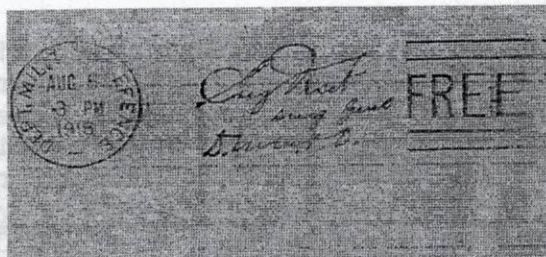
(Handstamp)

Obliter-
ator

DEPT. MILITIA &
DEFENCE
AUG 6
3 PM
1918

Eug Fiset
Surg Gen
D. Mand. D.

FREE



Courtesy: Christiane Faucher

[Cont'd.]

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Jon Johnson wrote in regarding the recent New York 2016 show:

"I was looking up the exhibit awards for New York 2016 and thought you would like the military ones:

Large Gold--**David L. Hobden**, 8 frames, "In Defence of the Border: Canadian Military Mail, 1667 to 1885";

Large Vermeil--**Michael Deery**, 5 frames, "Postal Censoring Challenges: Dealing with WWII Mail Violations";

Large Vermeil--**Jon Johnson**, 1 frame, "Canadian Military Hospitals at Sea".

Many thanks Jon and congratulations to all the exhibitors!

Mike passed along the following from Joh Groenewald (through Michael Dobbs of the F.P.H.S.):

"My interest is in the operations of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the Indian Ocean. During the Second World War the R.C.A.F. was involved in operations in this area, flying from Aden and Colombo, Ceylon, but little seems to be known about their mail from this sphere of the war.

It is believed that the Canadian patrols and surveillance covered most of the Indian Ocean, touching East Africa, ranging over most of the islands and even calling at Durban in South Africa.

Some Canadian mail is known from Ceylon, recorded by Sayles, but is anything else known?

Comment from students of wartime postal history is invited by Joh Groenewald, of George, South Africa, a member of the South African Military Mail Study Group and of the Indian Ocean Study Circle (U.K.). His email address is: johgroen@mweb.co.za."

David Hobden submitted some thoughts on last issue's selected material from the Don Thompson Collection sold through Eastern Auctions:

"I would have made note of a couple of items if I had known you were to feature the military items from the Eastern Auctions sale. I had a great interest in the items and attended in person.

- 1) In my opinion the most important military cover in that sale was lot 558, the [Frederick C.] Denison firsthand account of entering Fort Garry just as Riel was leaving. The letter is also an example of the initial "through U.S.A." system [via St. Cloud, Minnesota] devised by Wolsley on his arrival in Fort Garry (very well described by the Duckworths) [The Large Queen Stamps of Canada and Their Use (Second Edition)]. The Canadian Armed Forces Central Command Headquarters at Downsview bears the letter recipient's name, Dennison Armouries, to this day.

[Cont'd.]

[ex. de Volpi Collection 1982, Est. \$5,000+, realized \$6,250 + 15% premium].

- 2) The 2¢ Soldier's Large Queen letter (lot 557), much to my disappointment, is not in any way associated with the First Riel Rebellion. Its sender, John Hale, was one of seven Hales who received a CGSM (Canadian General Service Medal) for the Fenian Raids and Red River. The John Hale who penned this cover was the recipient of an 1870 Fenian Raid bar and not a Red River bar. I finished the research on this prior to going out to the sale. Yohan [Tanguay] reviewed my findings and, satisfied with them, Gary Lyon announced the revision to the description prior to commencement of bidding. It's unfortunate, as there are no known Soldier's letters from the First Riel Rebellion now. That cover has fooled a couple of generations of Canadian military postal historians. Yohan has recorded it being sold in the 1950's described as [connected with] Red River. My write up of it will be in [a future] PHSC Journal.
- 3) Lot 784 is rather cute but a close look reveals the top trimmed off, along with any relevant information on the sender. Maybe explains why it sold cheap. [The lot was sold with, quoting the auctioneer's description, "...letter content written in French...." so presumably the sender could have been identified.Ed.]
- 4) Another item with lots of military interest was lot 731. Written only four years following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War and addressed to a longstanding military man, Major (Phillip) Skene, it is the only Canadian letter I have seen addressed in three currencies: Sterling 1/, 2N6 currency, and 2.16 dram weight [noted as "2/6 (to collect)" by the auctioneers]. The 1/ Sterling prepaid packet in red to New York, the 2N6 Halifax currency New York to Montreal, and the 2.16 being the most common rate in Canada at the time; 2 pennyweight 16 grains silver from Montreal to Quebec. It is interesting that the postmaster in Quebec didn't convert and add the due amounts of 2N6 and 2.16 together. I can only assume individuals at the time could do the conversions and math well enough in their heads and it wasn't needed in writing. Skene is well enough known to show up on a Google search."

Mike Street reminds members of the new books from the BNAPS Book Department. Military-related books include Donald Thompson's Stories of the Riel Uprising at Fort Garry, 1869-1871 and the Northwest Rebellion in Saskatchewan, March-August 1885, and a future publication by Mike Powell on internment camps and prisoners of war. Enquiries are directed to Sparks Auctions at (613) 567-3336 or <http://sparks-auctions.com/bnapsbooks/>

BNAPEX FREDERICTON 2016

Our study group meeting is tentatively scheduled for 1300 on Friday, September 30 but please be sure to check the exact time and date in the show programme or online. We are also pleased to report that Eldon Godfrey will be our guest speaker and his subject will be "The Foreign Exchange Control Board During the Second World War". Many thanks Eldon! Part of

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the meeting will include a members' "Show and Tell" and a short business meeting. Unfortunately I will not be able to attend but will allow my name to stand to continue as Editor and Treasurer. We are in good financial shape and our bank account balance (before this issue) is now at \$1,497.25. The last few issues (postage/printing) are running between approximately \$130-\$140. Mike and I have secured some below-face postage which will also help immensely. Jon Johnson, one of our longtime members and BNAPS Awards Coordinator, has worked diligently to secure the continuation of recognition of military-related exhibits at our conventions and exhibitions. Members will remember that the Sam Nickle Award is no longer active and our membership has agreed to sponsor military exhibits in the near future. The cost to our group is \$26.20 this year. The mock-up for the award follows but may be slightly different. Thanks Jon and to Mike Street for doing some behind-the-scenes work to get this done. Good luck to all exhibitors and have a wonderful convention!



Canadian Military Mail Study Group

BEST MILITARY EXHIBIT

BNAPEX 2016
Fredericton, NB

BNAPS - *"The Society for Canadian Philately"*

IN MEMORIAM: KEN V. ELLISON, OTB

Most members will have already heard the very sad news of the passing of longtime member and former CMMMSG Newsletter Editor, Ken Ellison. Ken died peacefully at his home in Vernon on June 21, 2016. Ken was the last surviving grandchild of Vernon pioneers Price and Sophie Ellison. Growing up in Oyama where he attended high school, he later served with the RCNVR as a Seaman during the Second World War. In 1949 he received a BSc. in Agriculture from U.B.C. and returned to Oyama in 1954 where he operated the family ranch and orchards.

Ken was a life member of the Okanagan Historical Society and volunteered at the Vernon Museum. Noted postal historian and author, Ken was one of the founding members of our group in 1973 and became the Editor of this newsletter in 1983 and served until 1992. Ken greatly assisted me with

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the transition of editorship in the fall of 1995 (after he and Colin Campbell completed their "interim" duties). He was always ready to offer much-needed suggestions and guidance. One of his many accomplishments as Editor was the production of our 100th Newsletter in the form of the Canadian Military Postal History Anthology (BNAPS, 1991). Ken was also a tireless volunteer for BNAPS and served many years as a Director and the Chairman of the Publications Committee (and a driving force behind the "BNAPS Exhibit Series"). He was elected to the Order of The Beaver in 1995. Please view the BNAPS website at bnaps.org for a full dedication. He will be greatly missed and our sincere condolences are extended to his family and friends.

More Sketches of BNAPSers

by Dr. R.V.C. Carr

SKETCH No. 239

Kenneth V. Ellison

A sketch of Kenny Ellison is away overdue as Ken is the coordinator of our Study Groups and all will want to know more of him. A native of British Columbia, he served his time in the military and then went back to college - the University of British Columbia graduating with his B.S. in Agriculture. From school to the B.C. Dept. of Agriculture for a time, and then onto his present farming business (details he did not give).



Stampwise, he was, as so many of us, a childhood collector with British Empire interests. The great B.C. postal historian, George Melvin, got Ken interested in the postal history of British Columbia and that brought him into BNAPS in 1963. He was very active in his local philatelic organization and held various offices. But it was in 1973 that the Canadian Military Mail Study Group was formed and this was his forte. He became Editor of their publication in 1982, and now is Chairman. Ken is also very active in the Pacific Northwest Regional Group and was Chair-

man with much encouragement of our own Lew Ludlow.

Want to hear more of you at Vancouver, Ken.

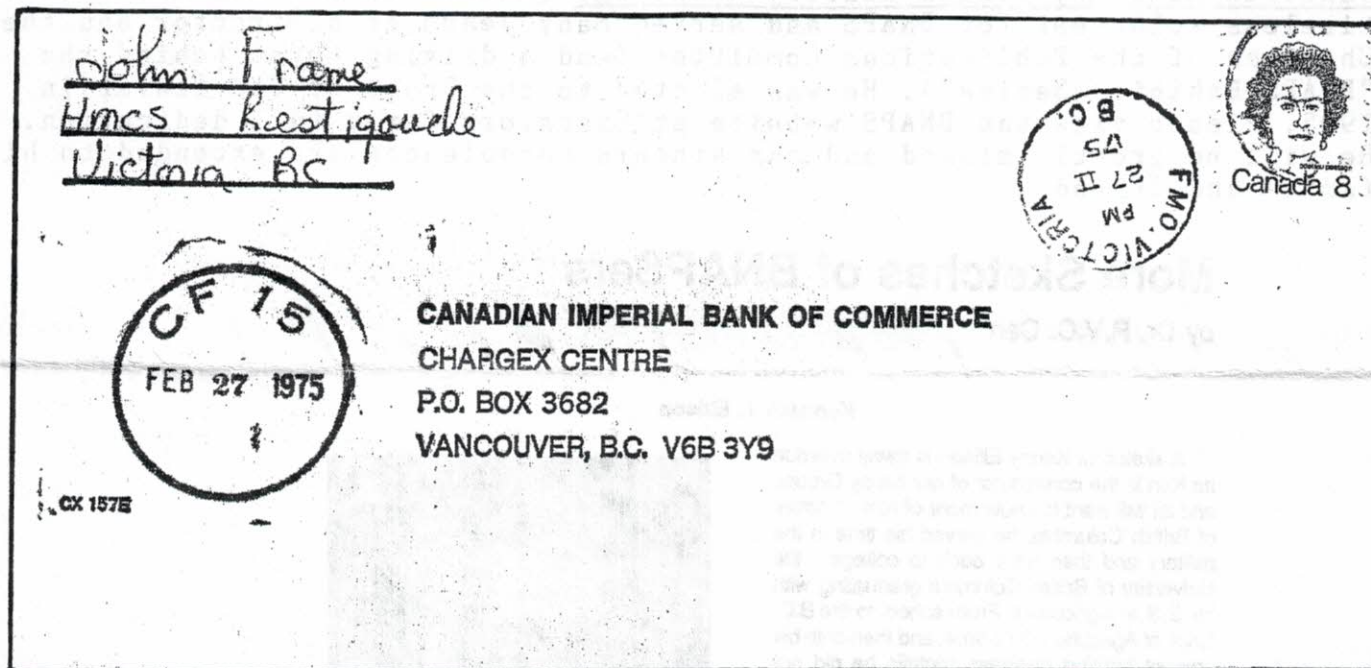
BNA Topics (Vol.48, No.4, Whole No. 444,
July-August 1991, p. 7)

Dear Study Group Members: Here is another issue for your perusal. My apologies for the delay but family health issues, issues with my email with the transition to Outlook, and the lack of material has hampered a full production schedule. I am DESPERATELY short of material for future issues so please send your items in. Thanks are extended to Earle Covert for his kind donation. We also wish to extend our deepest sympathies on the sad loss of his wife Audrey. We'll look at our traditional Christmas cards next issue (began by Ken Ellison as Editor), an interesting Korean War card and, hopefully, some additional material by members! Thank you and have a wonderful fall collecting season.

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A NEW E.R.D. FOR CF 15--By Larry Margetish

According to Doug Sayles' BNAPS Catalogue of Canadian Military Mail Markings (Vol.3), CF 15 is not known prior to 1976.



SMALL ADS

Looking for something? Have something for sale? Why not try our small ads? Buy/Sell/Trade. Still only \$1 per issue (Canadian stamps @ face ok). Copy and payment to the Editor please.

FOR SALE: Breaking up Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force Grand Award Exhibit (single items/groupings). Please contact R.F. Narbonne, OTB, FRPSC, Greenwood Stamp Company, 136 Morphy St., Carleton Place, ON K7C 2B4; 1-613-257-5453; 1-800-247-5619 (Canada only) (1/2)

WANTED: Japanese Canadian Nisei volunteers and non-Japanese Canadians in WWII Intelligence Service Far East. Especially seeking Japanese Language School (S-20) drafts, interpreters, war crimes units etc. in South East Asia Command; Canadians associated with Nuremburg War Crimes Trials; Canadian POW's in Buchenwald/Colditz (Oflag IVC) and Stalag Luft III escapers; Canadians in Gibraltar/Malta; WWI Newfoundland. Contact the Editor at blueputtees@hotmail.com (1/5)

WANTED: Canadian covers to or from these military missions: MONUC/MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo since 2000); United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (1993-1996); United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE 2000-2001); United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ 1992-1994); United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS 2011-present); United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM 1990-1995). Please contact Major Anthony Fulmes: ajfulmes@gmail.com (5/6)

WANTED: Sewell Camp and Camp Hughes postal history. Roller cancellations, special delivery, and money order receipts sought. Anything considered. Darcy Hickson, R.R. #2, Box 24, Brandon, MB R7A 5Y2; (204) 724-2028; Darcy@hickson.ca (4/10)

WANTED: 1) Mail to and from RCAF No.124 and RCAF No.170 Squadrons serving in Canada during WWII; 2) Mail to and from RAF No.231 Squadron, sometimes at Dorval, QC, but flew outside Canada too during WWII. Purchase or trade. Please contact Bob Toombs at a1a92784@telus.net (second character is number "one") (2/4)
