

RPOs On The Mysterious Estevan Line

by Robert K. Lane

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SYNOPSIS

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Objective : One of the earliest mail-carrying branch lines built by the Canadian Pacific Railway in western Canada was a line that ran from Brandon, Manitoba eventually to Estevan, Saskatchewan. But the branch line did not start in Brandon. This and other mysteries are presented in this one-frame exhibit.

Background : In 1889, the CPR began construction of a line that left the CPR main line at Kemnay, a few miles west of Brandon. By 1892, the line was completed southward to Estevan but mail was carried on this line even while it was under construction. Six RPO series, comprising 13 hammers, were issued. The RPOs reveal the progress of construction but present some interesting twists.

Challenges : The complex history of RPOs on this line requires presentation of examples that convey the results of relevant studies, significant benchmarks, and which also provide a feeling for the life-styles of the day.

Structure : Examples of RPOs are shown in chronological order, following a map presentation illustrating the route. RPOs included are:

RR-150, SOURIS C.P.R. SECTION M.C. / No.2
RR-151, SOURIS (C.P.R.) SECTION / M.C.
W-7: BRANDON & ALAMEDA R.P.O. / No.
W-182A: WINNIPEG & ESTEVAN R.P.O. / No.
W-8: BRANDON & ESTEVAN R.P.O. / No.
W-9: BR. & EST. R.P.O. / No.

The author makes use of statistics formed from data that includes data of other collectors. All examples presented, however, are the author's. The discovery by the author that the earliest surmised route of the first RPOs used on this line was incorrect opened a new field of investigation.

Research : The author uses the findings of such references as Gillam and Ludlow, while making several important updates:

- ❖ Discovery that RR-150 and RR-151 were used on the Estevan line, rather than the Winnipeg-Deloraine-Souris line, as previously thought.
- ❖ Findings of several new earliest reported dates (ERD) and latest reported dates (LRD).

SPECIAL MATERIAL:

- ❖ ERD and LRD for several hammers are presented

- ❖ Examples that illustrate the location issue for RR-150 and RR-151 are shown
- ❖ One cover (ERD for the very scarce W-7), from the wife of farmer and postmaster, Wm. Shilson, is an example of mail sent from an original homestead post office to a post office on the Estevan route that could handle registered mail (page 7)

The author is indebted to postal historians Gray Scrimgeour, Ross Gray and an anonymous collector for data and advice. Also, Michelle Halls and historian Doug Wilkinson led me to useful data about early post offices.

References:

Lewis M Ludlow *Catalogue of Canadian Railway Cancellations and Related Transportation Postmarks* 1982, Japan.

Gillam, L.F. 1967. A history of Canadian R.P.O.s, 1853-1967. American Philatelic Society Inc. 179+ pages.

Lane, Robert K. 2006. *Route for the Souris Section RPOs*. The Canadian Philatelist, 57(6); Journal of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada.

Robinson, W.G. (editor), 1988. A Checklist of Manitoba Post Offices. William Topping, Vancouver. 48 pages.

Hughes, J. Paul (editor). Proof Strikes of Canada (various volumes) (Robert A. Lee, Publisher).

Various. 1984. *Reflections of Time – a History of Albert Municipality, Manitoba*. Friesen Publishers.

Canadian Postal Archives Web-site; <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/postal-archives/index-e.html>; post offices and postmasters.

RPOs On The Mysterious Estevan Line

One of the first branch lines developed by the Canadian Pacific Railway in western Canada was built from the main line at Douglas, Manitoba (just west of Brandon) to the coal-rich areas of south-western Manitoba and south-eastern Assiniboia (now Saskatchewan). The end-point of this line was Estevan, Assa. Mail was at first transported by baggage car, then railway post office (RPO) cars were introduced in 1892.

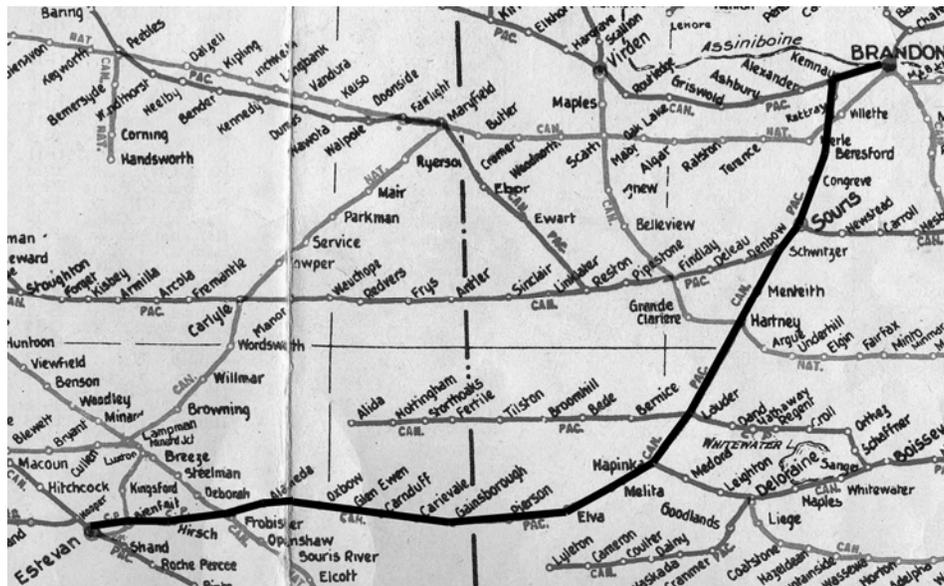
The line was completed to Estevan in 1892 but the RPO cars did not immediately run the entire route. The RPO hammers issued belonged to six consecutive RPO listings (Ludlow), with the year of first reported examples:

- RR-150, SOURIS C.P.R. SECTION M.C. / No.2 (1892)
- RR-151, SOURIS (C.P.R.) SECTION / M.C. (1892)
- W-7: BRANDON & ALAMEDA R.P.O. / No. (1904)
- W-182A: WINNIPEG & ESTEVAN R.P.O. / No. (1906)
- W-8: BRANDON & ESTEVAN R.P.O. / No. (1909)
- W-9: BR. & EST. R.P.O. / No. (1932)



The route is illustrated in the map:

RR-150, NO 2 97, E



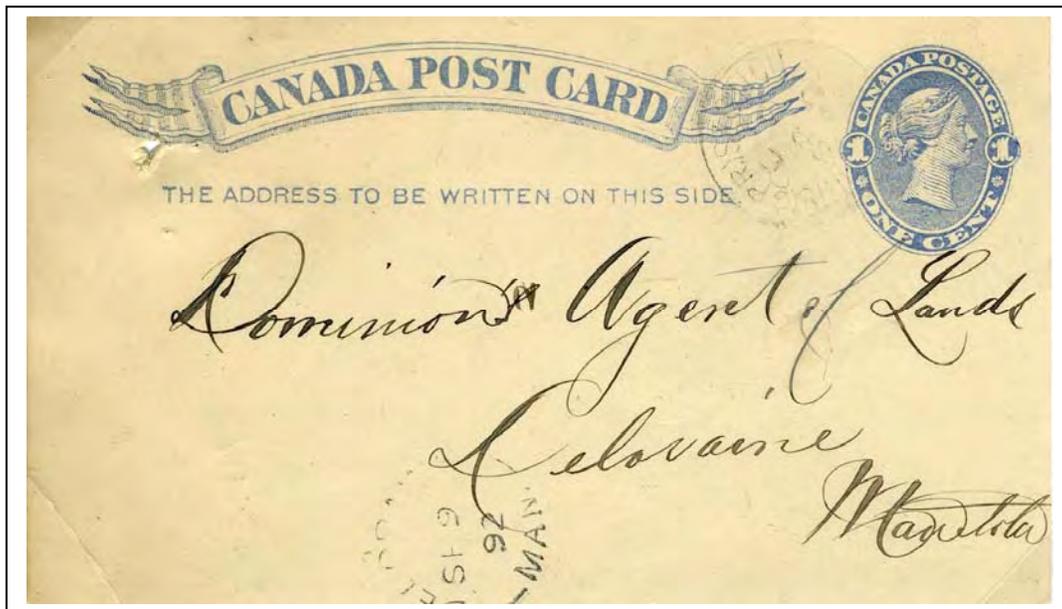
Map of the CPR line Brandon-Kemnay-Souris-Napinka-Estevan (originally called The Souris Section, it was changed to The Estevan Section; and the line showing eastward from Souris, to Carroll, etc., was named The Souris Section). Saskatchewan (Assiniboia) is on the left of the vertical centre line; Manitoba is on the right.

RR-151, SOURIS (C.P.R.) SECTION / M.C.
 RR-150, SOURIS C.P.R. SECTION M.C. / No.2

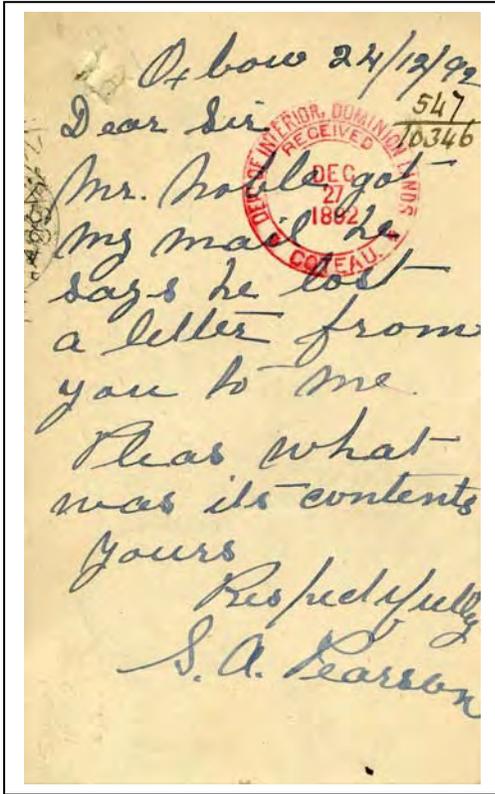
	PROOF	ERD	LRD
RR-151	Aug 15, 1892	Sept 9, 1892	Nov 5, 1903
RR-150	Dec 6, 1892	Dec 26, 1892	May 22, 1903

The hammers were not issued at the same time but were both in use in 1892. Earlier researchers assigned them to the line running between Winnipeg, Glenboro and Souris, shown in the map as reaching Souris from the east. However, in 2006, the author observed an 1892 timetable describing the line Brandon to Estevan as “Souris Section”, and this was a more complete fit with available covers carrying these postmarks. How did this happen?

It was then discovered that the Winnipeg-Genboro-Souris line began being called “Souris Section” in 1902, while the description “Estevan Section” showed up in timetables for the line to Estevan. This explains what misled earlier students of these RPOs.

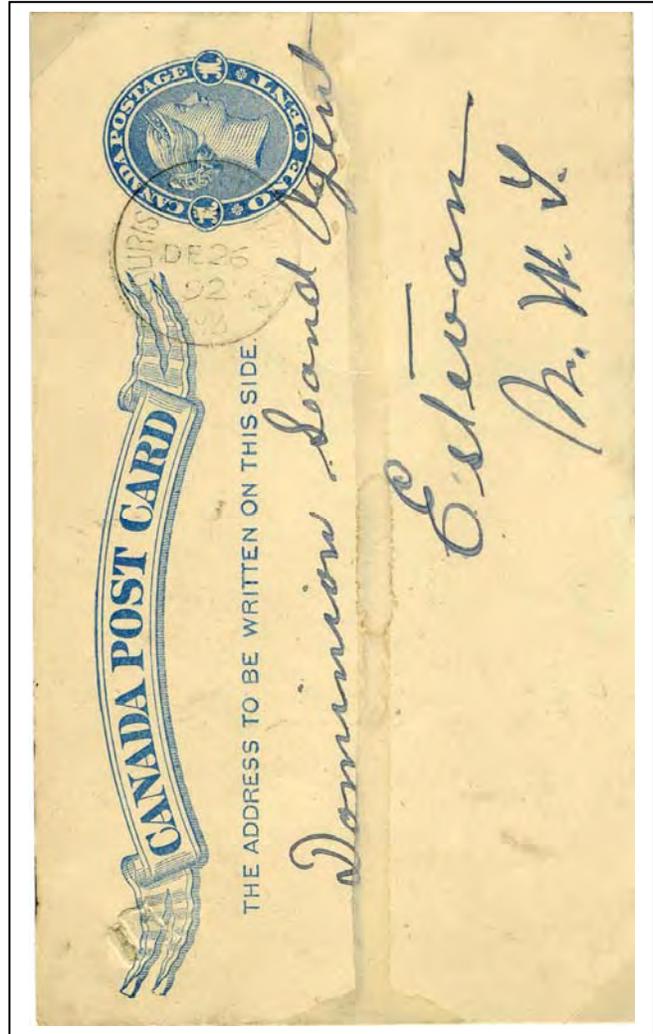


RR-151, SP 9 92, E, the **earliest reported date** for the hammer, as well as the series of two hammers. Card from Melita to Dominion Lands Agent in Deloraine regarding homestead lands. The card would have traveled a quite short distance on the Souris Section before being transferred to the train eastbound from Napinka to Deloraine. [ex-Robinson]



On left:

scan @ 75% of the back of the card shown at right. Query concerning a homestead; receiving stamp of the Dominion Lands Office.



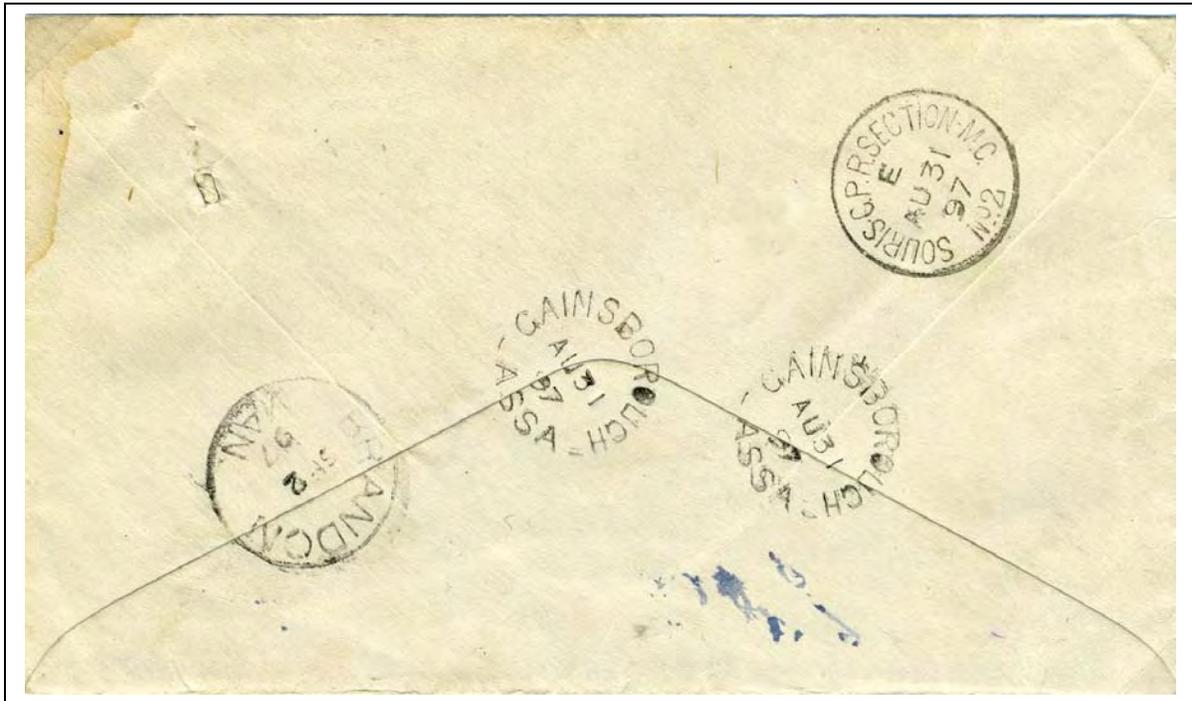
On right:

RR-150, DE 26 92, W, the **earliest reported date** for this hammer, the second issued in the series. The W direction is very scarce. Card to a Dominion Lands Agent, from Oxbow to Estevan, N.W.T., the trip being entirely in what is now Saskatchewan.

[ex-Steinhart, ex-Robinson]



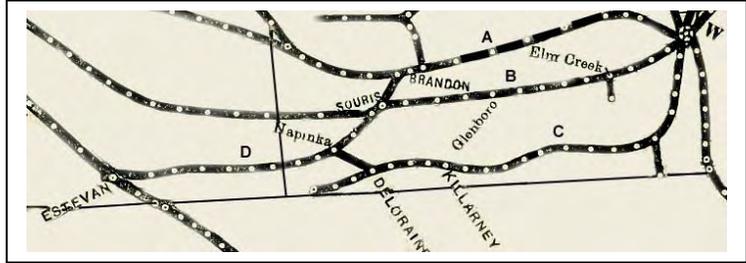
Front scanned at 75% of the cover shown below, registered from Gainsborough, Assa. to Dominion Lands Office, Brandon, Man.



RR-150, AU 31 97, E, registered cover from Gainsborough, Assa. to Dominion Lands Office, Brandon. This was one of the covers that raised questions about the actual line served by this RPO – why would mail between Gainsborough and Brandon travel on the Glenboro line?

Mystery Solved

This cover was one that showed a complex movement of mail carried by RPOs in Manitoba. The complexity was resolved by the eventual understanding of the correct route for RR-150 and RR-151.



RR-150, SOURIS C.P.R. SECTION M.C. / No.2; AU 11 03, W; and AU 22 03, W.

Much traveled cover **confirms the actual route**: back of registered cover Brandon to Glendinning (near Killarney); not called for so sent to Winnipeg; returned to Glendinning via Brandon and Napinka. Forwarded again to Winnipeg.

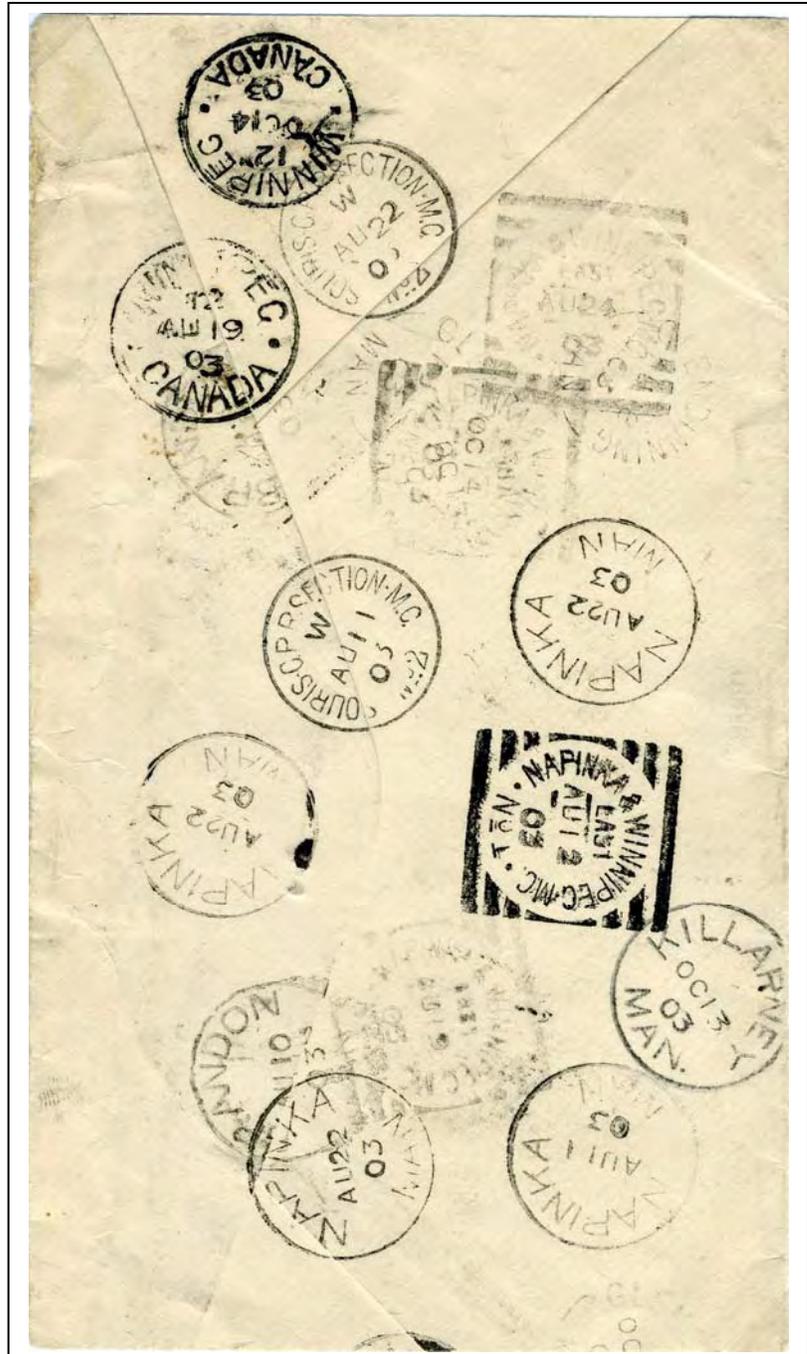
[4 examples of W-49, NAPINKA & WINNIPEG RPO, one of just three squared circle RPOS in Canada]

Brandon AU 10
RR-150 AU 11 W
 Napinka AU 11
 W-49 AU 12 EAST

Glendinning AU 18
 W-49 AU 19 EAST
 Winnipeg AU 19

RR-150 AU 22 W
 Napinka AU 22
 W-49 AU 24 EAST

Killarney OC 13
 W-49 OC 14 EAST
 Winnipeg OC 14

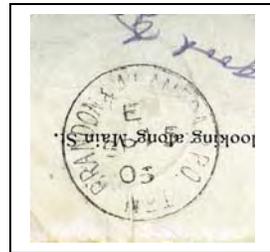


W-7: BRANDON & ALAMEDA R.P.O. / No. (1904)

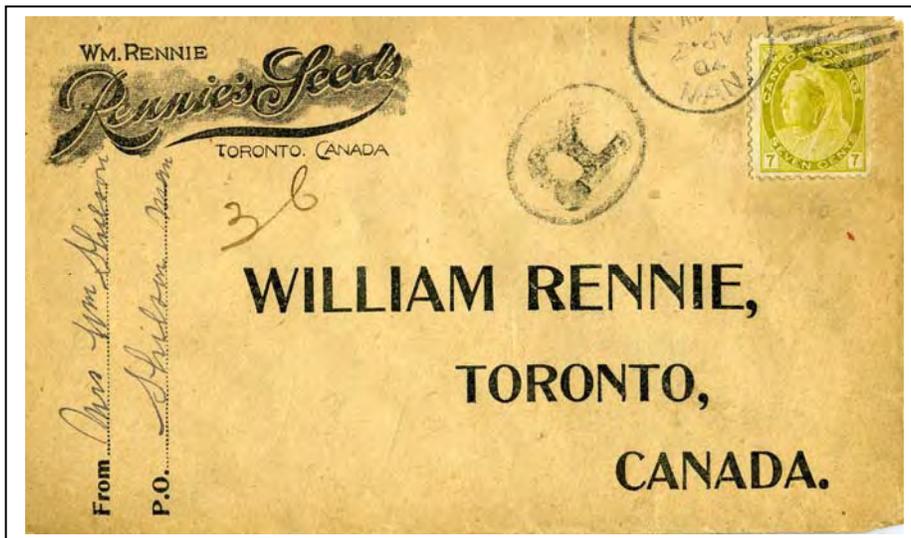
The existence of this RPO listing poses another mystery. Although the line was completed to Estevan, why would the post office issue a hammer that indicated an end-point --- miles short of Estevan? Neither hammer is in the proof book but they are both reported in April, 1904, so were probably issued at the same time. They were quite short-lived and very scarce.

	PROOF	ERD	LRD
W-7 (1)	NIPB	Apr 20, 1904	Sept 18, 1906
W-7 (2)	NIPB	Apr 2, 1904	Sept 4, 1907

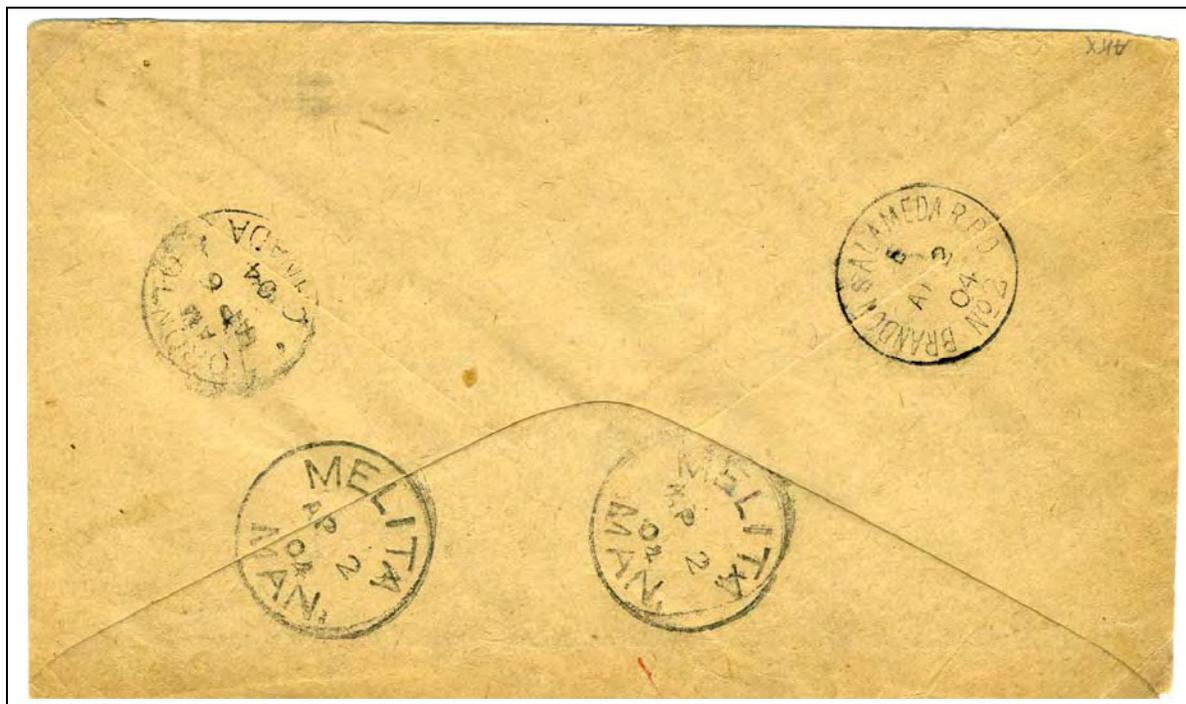
Scan @ 75% of a portion of the front of the card below, showing the RPO postmark on the front, as well as the back.



W-7, hammer 1, SP 15 05, E; postcard from Souris, Man. to St. Margaret's College, Toronto, marked on both sides by the RPO clerk.



Scan @ 75% of front of registered cover shown below. Cover is from Mrs. Wm. Shilson at Shilson, Man., to the popular Rennie's Seeds, Toronto. Shilson post office (1897-1908) was on the farm of Wm. Shilson, one mile north of the hamlet of Ruth. Shilson PO was moved to Ruth in 1908, which was renamed Bede (1925). The cover was evidently taken to Melita (15 miles) for registration.



W-7, hammer 2, AP 2 04, E, **earliest reported date** for this hammer and also for the listing; registered cover from Melita, Man. to Toronto.

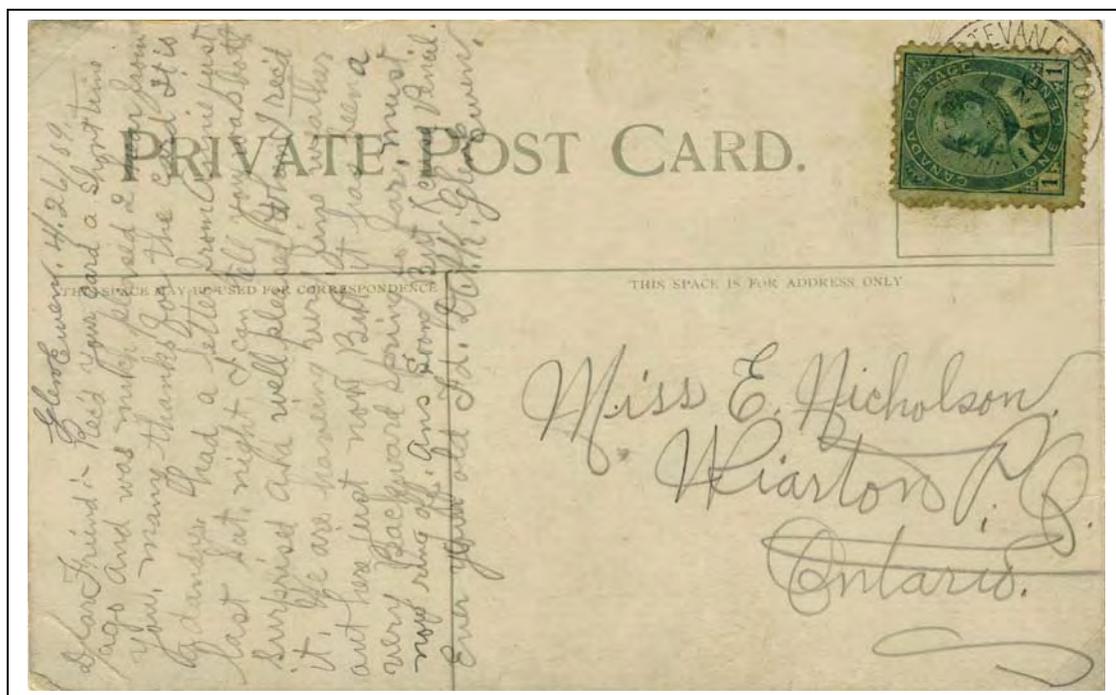
W-182A: WINNIPEG & ESTEVAN R.P.O. / No.

Another mysterious twist occurred in about 1905 with the issue of W-182A, a listing comprising three hammers between Winnipeg and Estevan. This RPO over-lapped the Brandon & Alameda RPO, so perhaps clerk assignments were divided at Brandon. Again, this decision by the post office was short-lived.

	PROOF	ERD	LRD
W-182A (1)	NIPB	Aug 1, 1905	June 19, 1909
W-182A (2)	NIPB	March 14, 1906	May 22, 1909
W-182A (3)	NIPB	Feb 26, 1906	Oct 13, 1908



W-182A, the 3 hammers (LtoR): hammer 1, AU 1 05, E (earliest reported date); hammer 2, MY 22 09, E (latest reported date); hammer 3, OC 13 08 (latest reported date)

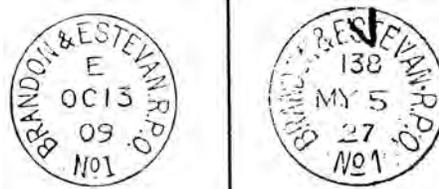


W-182A, AP 26 09, E, hammer 1, a very scarce example on postcard from Glen Ewen to Warton, Ont.

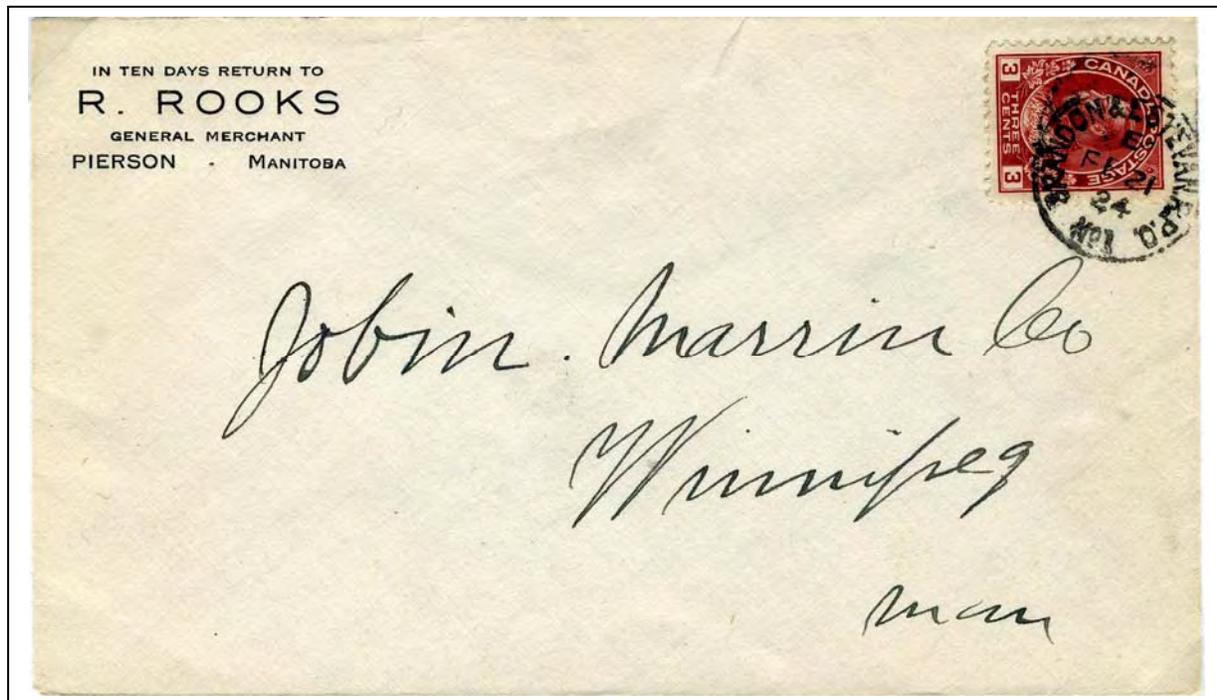
W-8: BRANDON & ESTEVAN R.P.O. / No.

The RPO route returned to a Brandon base in 1909, with the listing W-8, issued in five hammers. Hammer 1a was replaced by hammer 1b, as shown in the table. Likewise, hammer 2a was replaced by hammer 2b, then by hammer 2c. Strangely, there was also a hammer 3, proofed in the mid-1930s but it was given a shortened version of the name, so is listed separately (later).

	PROOF	ERD	LRD
W-8 (1a)	Oct 13, 1909	Nov 8, 1909	Oct 13, 1925
W-8 (1b)	May 5, 1927	Oct 4, 1927	Oct 13, 1957
W-8 (2a)	Oct 13, 1909	Mar 24, 1910	Dec 18, 1924
W-8 (2b)	Jan 2, 1925	Jan 28, 1925	Mar 7, 1928
W-8 (2c)	Mar 9, 1928	July 23, 1928	May 21, 1957



Scan @full-size, to enable view of detail, of the proof images for W-8, hammers 1a and 1b. The size of the ampersand is a good clue for hammer determination.

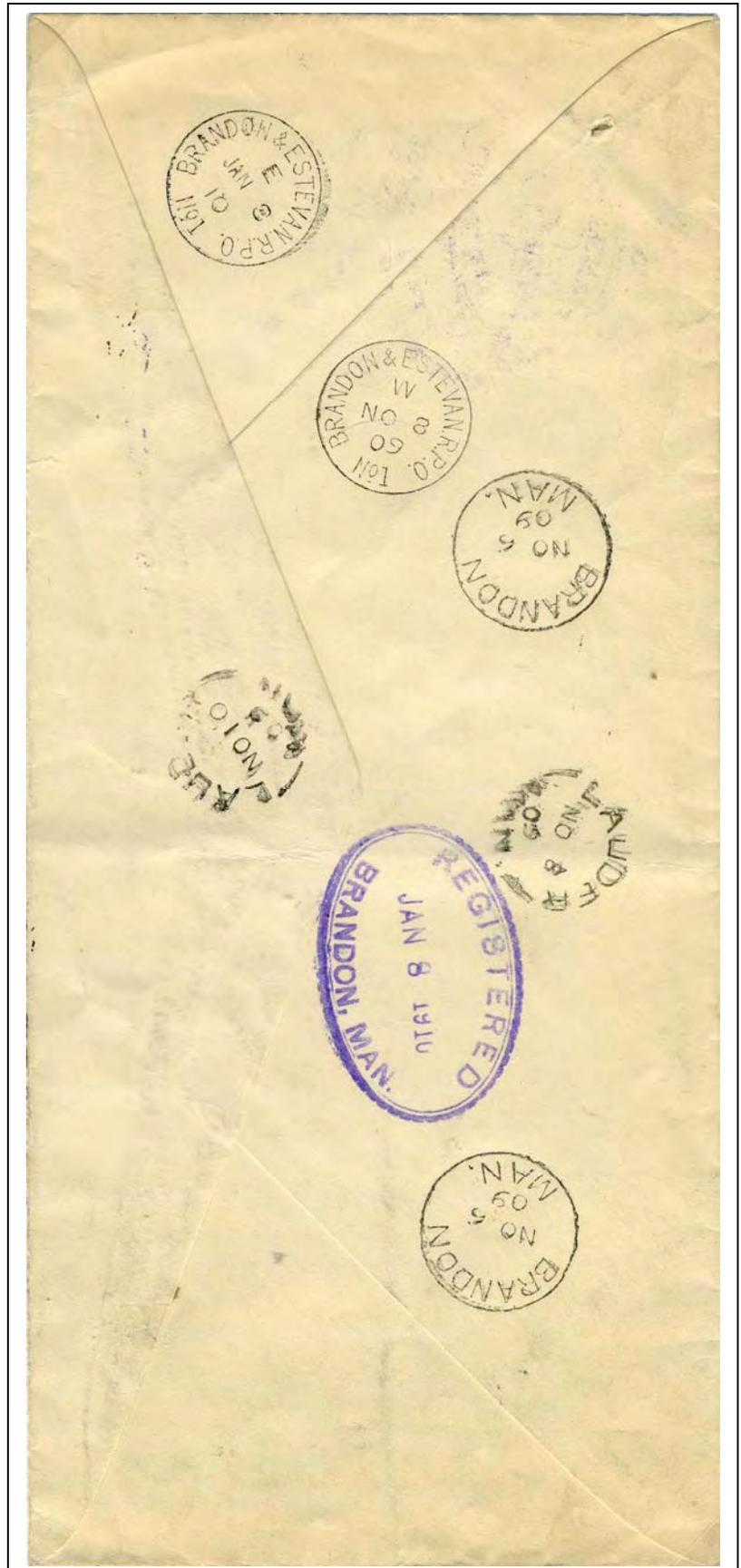


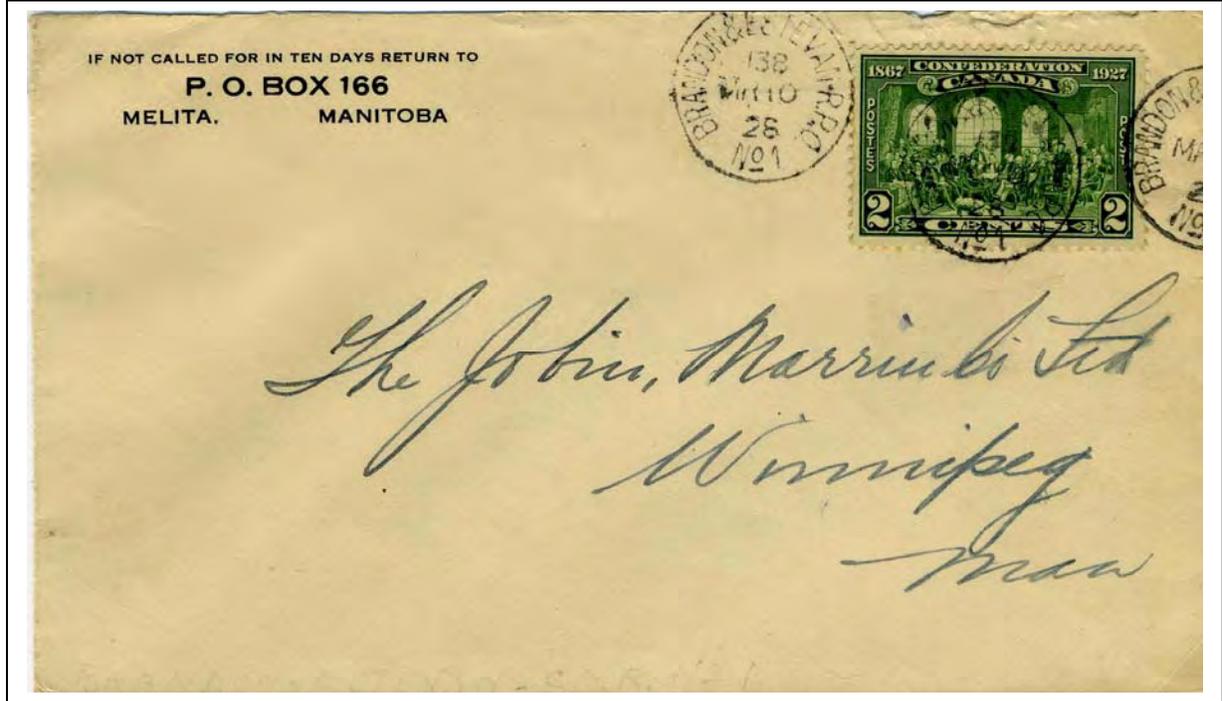
W-8, hammer 1a, FE 21 24, E, showing small ampersand

W-8, hammer 1a,
both directions:

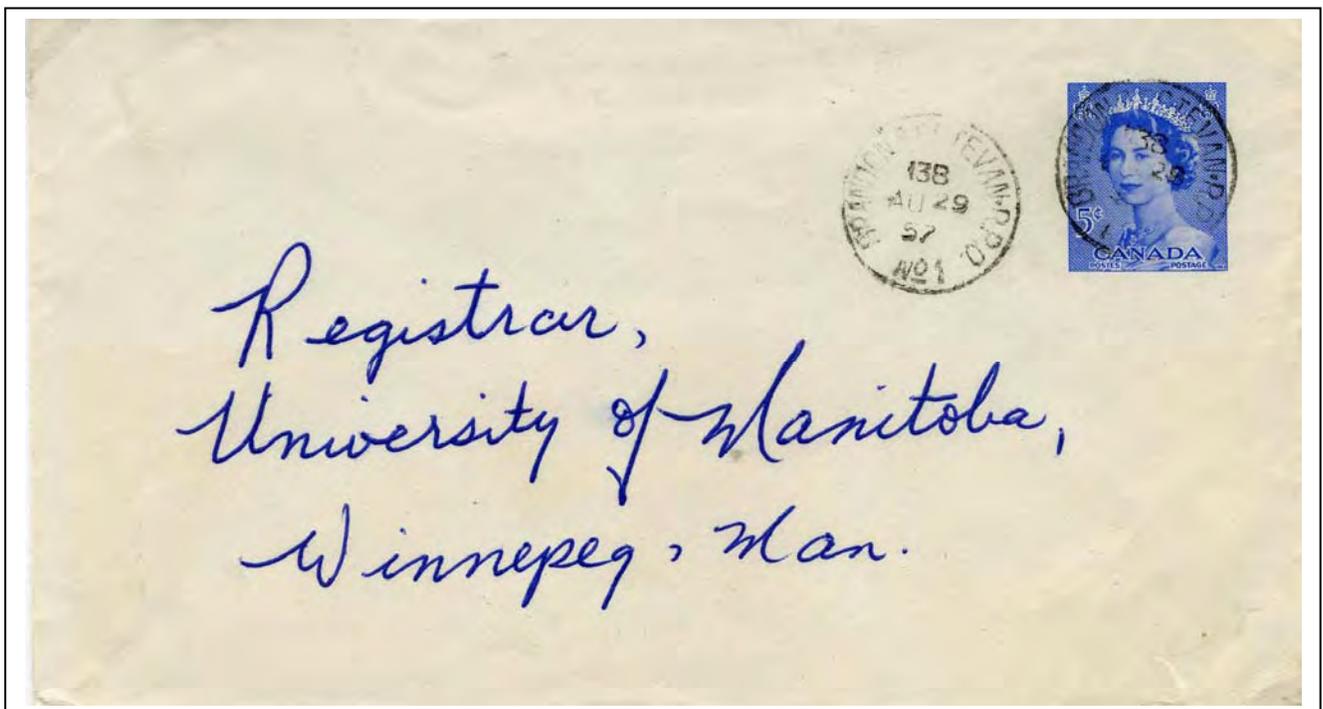
NO 8 09, W, ERD for
hammer and listing;

JAN 8 10, E, on registered
cover Brandon to
Lauder, Man.
and returned.





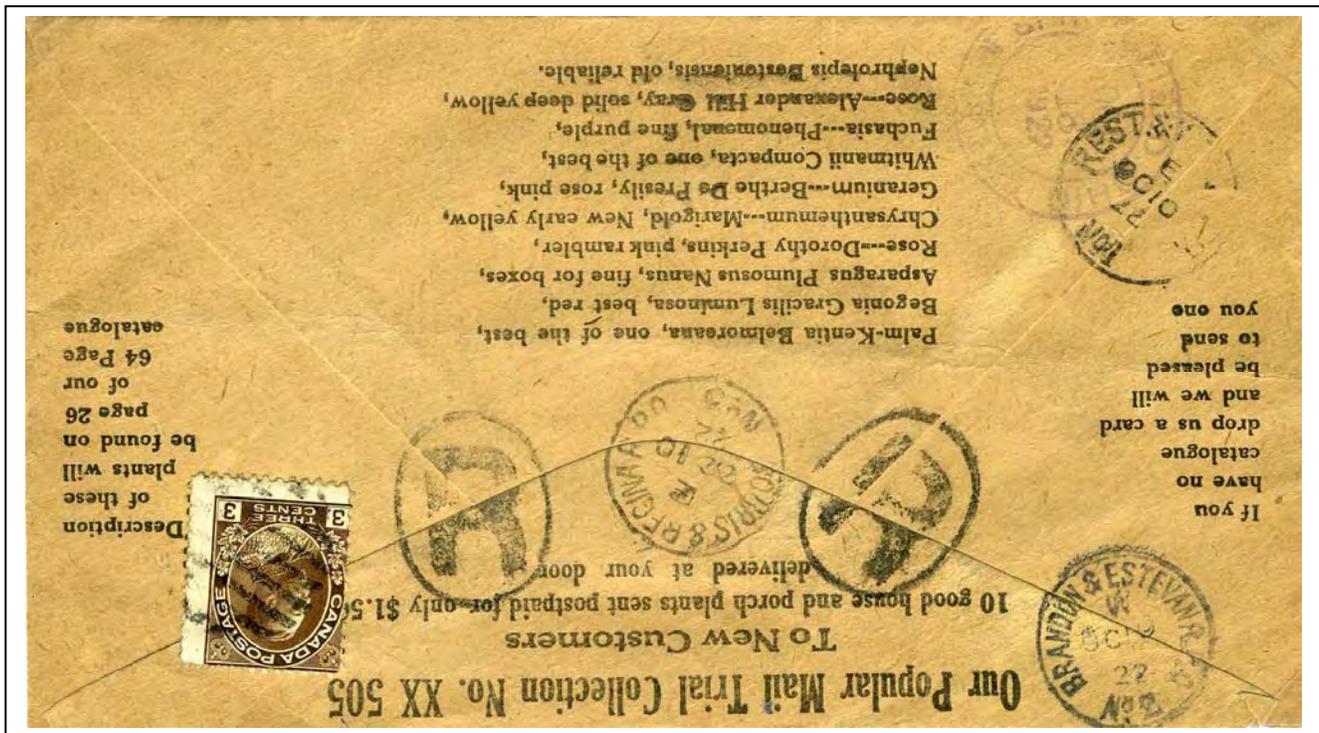
W-8, hammer 1b, MR 10 28, Train 138, showing large ampersand.



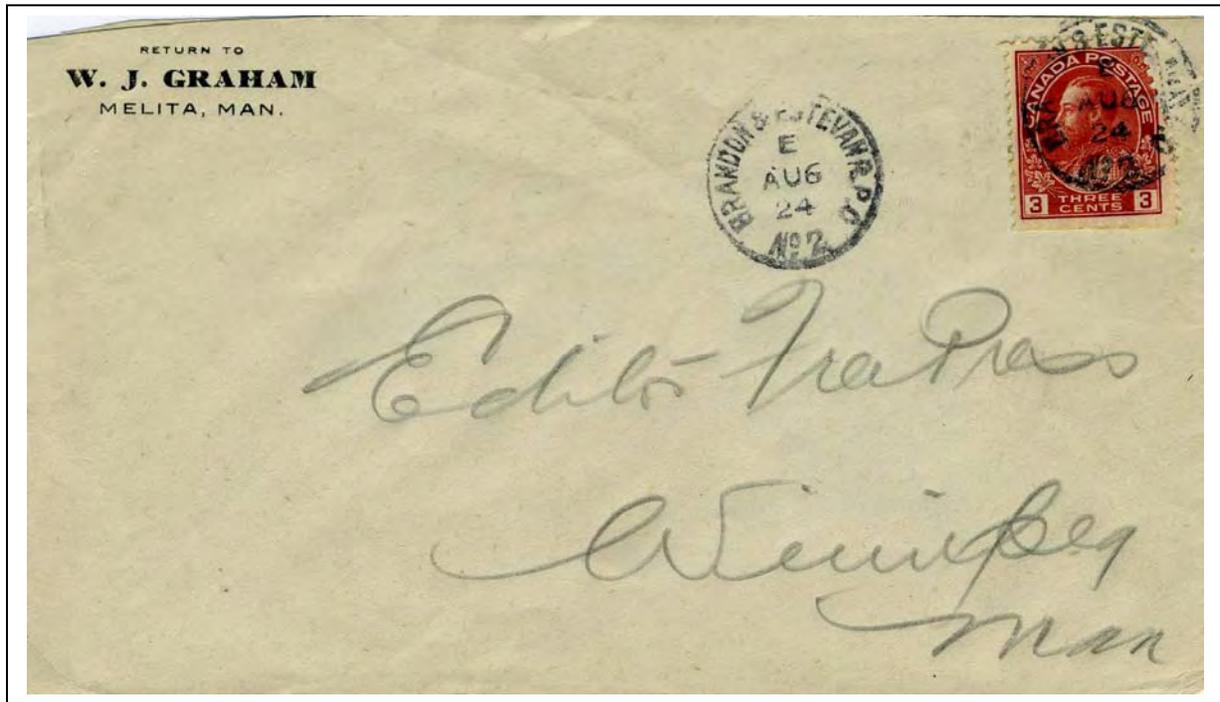
W-8, hammer 1b, AU 29 57, Train 138, from the last year of reported use.



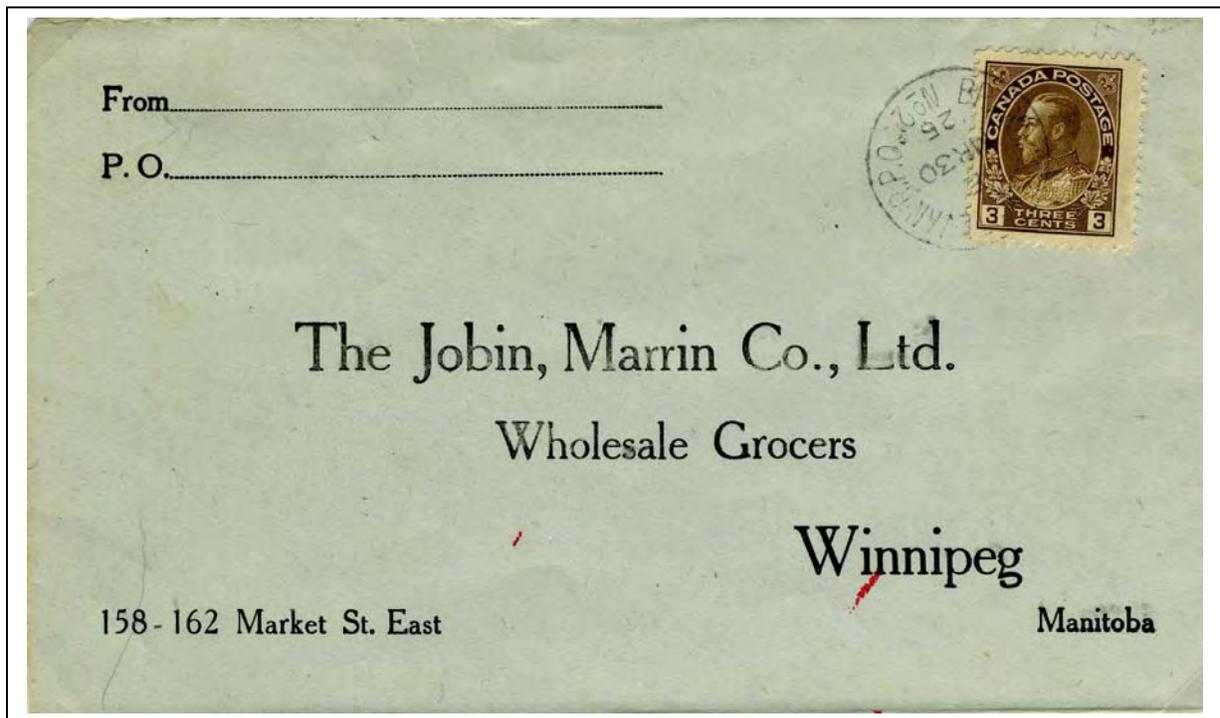
W-8, hammers 2 a,b,c. Hammer 2a shows a smaller ampersand; hammer 2b shows a larger ampersand and the peripheral lettering is close to the hammer number on both sides; hammer 2c also has the larger ampersand but the lettering is distant from the hammer number. Scan of proofs @ full-size.



W-8, hammer 2a, AU 21 11, W (the west direction is scarce). Registered cover Baring, Sask. to Ohio. Baring is on the line between Reston, Man. and Wolseley, Sask.
 This cover has transit marks from REST & WOL RPO, OC 10, E;
 SOURIS & REGINA RPO, OC 10, E; and W-8.
 [NOTE: the 3-cents "postage" was placed on the back, while the 10-cents registration fee was on the front.]



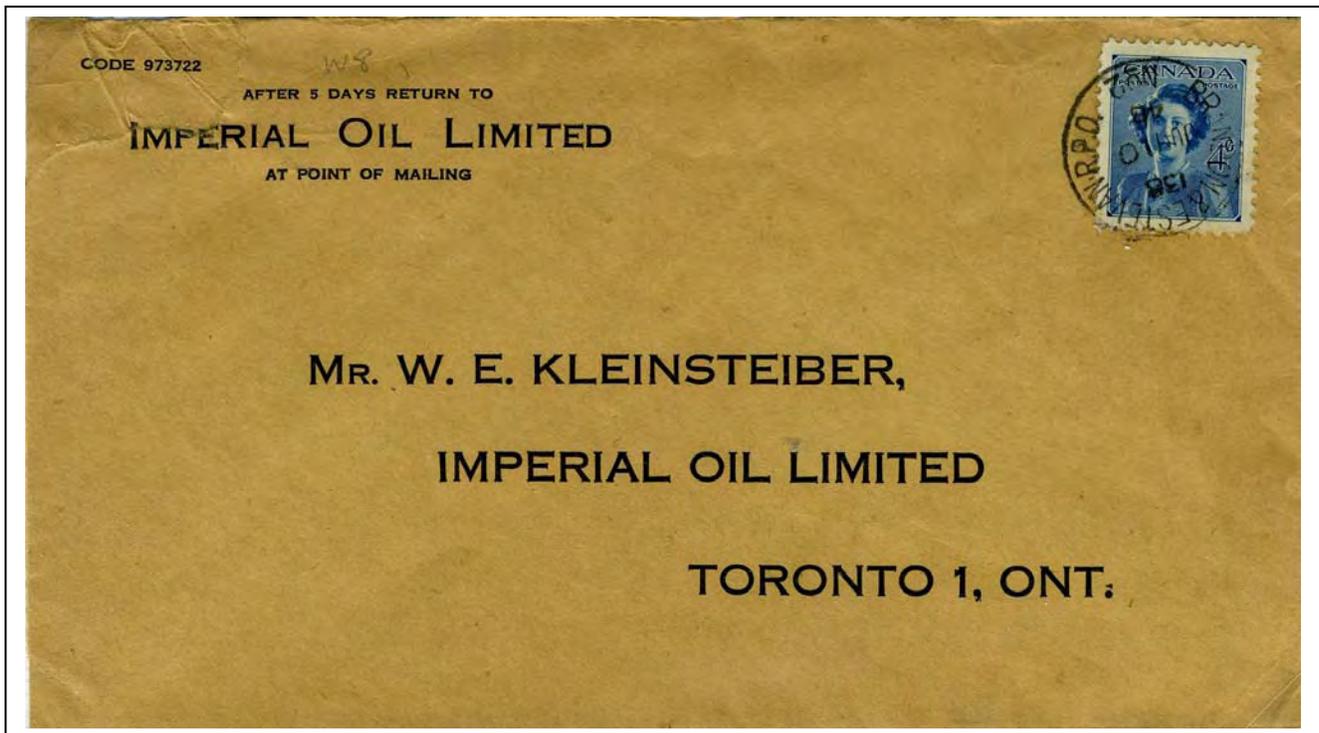
W-8, hammer 2a, AU 6 24, E, late date for this hammer.



W-8, hammer 2b, MR 30 25, E, early date for this hammer.



W-8, hammer 2c, NO 28 28, Train 138, early date for this long-running hammer on business cover from Estevan



W-8, hammer 2c, JUN 10 48, Train 138, late example of this long-running hammer.

W-9: BR. & EST. R.P.O. / No. 3

PROOF: May 2, 1930

ERD: MY 27 31

LRD: SP 26 57

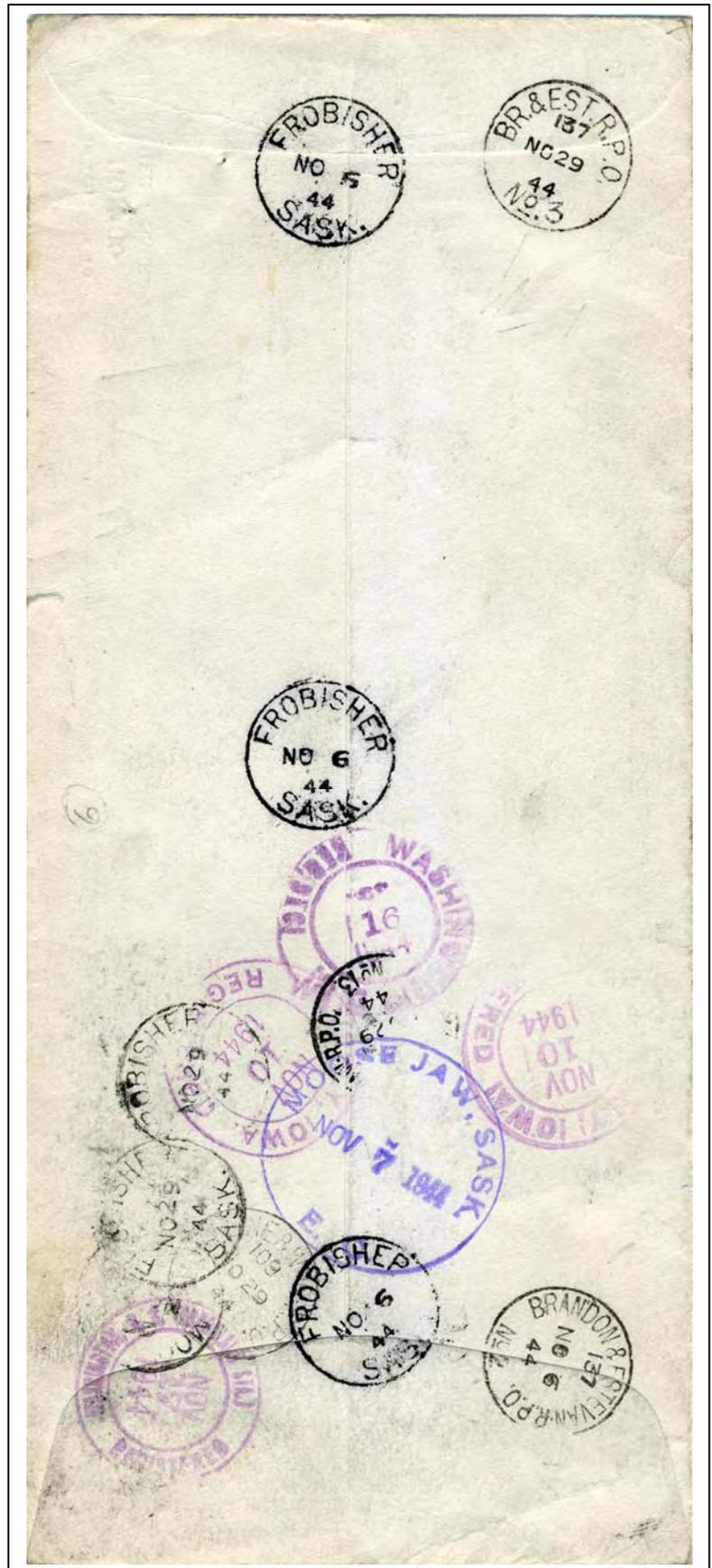
W-9 was added, in one hammer, to the W-8 series, as a third hammer but, strangely, with a new name (and listing). The abbreviated version was in fashion at the time. This hammer is often found on covers that also carry examples of W-8;

W-9 was also a long-lived hammer, spanning 25+ years.

Registered cover Frobisher, Sask. to Iowa, sent to Washington DC, returned to Frobisher;

W-8, hammer 2c, NO 6 44, Train 137

W-9, hammer 3, NO 29 44, Train 137 (return trip)



W-9, BR. & EST. R.P.O. / No. 3,
 SP 26 57, Train 138, **latest**
reported date, on registered
 cover from Gravelbourg, Sask.
 to Midale, Sask., forwarded several
 times, then returned.

Cover accompanied by pink AR
 form.

Transit post offices at Midale,
 Glen Ewen, Oxbow, Brandon and
 Moose Jaw.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT **CANADA** **ADMINISTRATION DES POSTES**

ON POSTAL SERVICE (1)
 Service des Postes

Date Stamp
 of Office of Origin
 10c CANADA 10c

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT
AVIS DE RÉCEPTION

(2) **RETURN TO**
Retournez à

Messrs. Gravel, MacLean & Sirois,
 Barristers, etc.,
 STREET AND NUMBER Rue et numéro
GRAVELBOURG Sask. **CANADA**
Local d'origine de l'envoi recommandé

(3) **PLACE OF ORIGIN OF REGISTERED ARTICLE**
Local d'origine de l'envoi recommandé

(1) If this advice is to be returned by air, it should bear very conspicuously the indication "Return by Air Mail" and the label "By Air Mail".
Si le présent avis doit être renvoyé par avion, il doit porter très saillantement l'indication "Retour par Avion" et de l'étiquette "Par Avion".

(2) To be filled in by sender, who will indicate his complete address for return of this advice.
A remplir par l'expéditeur, qui doit mentionner son adresse complète pour le renvoi du présent avis.

(3) In printed characters.
En lettres moulées.

39B—600,000

