

SYNOPSIS

RPOs On The Mysterious Estevan Line

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:

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