

SOVEREIGNTY, SUBSTANCES, SMALL CENTRES AND SUBS:

Closed Post Offices of the Northwest Territories

Purpose

This is meant to be an exhibit to display some of the exhibitor's collection of Northwest Territories (NWT) postal history. Themes are used to present categories of closed post offices in the NWT.

Scope and Presentation

The exhibit shows all of the closed post offices in the NWT as defined by the boundary set from 1912 to 1999. Post offices operated by Canada, the US and Great Britain are shown. This is not a comprehensive presentation of every postal marking from these offices, but representative or unusual pieces are shown. It is divided into four parts:

1. **Sovereignty**—Occupation of the High Arctic through RCMP detachments, weather stations a military base. Post offices were expressions of Canadian sovereignty. US military post offices during WW II and the Cold War are also shown.
2. **Substances**—Non-renewable resource extraction using company towns were common, including US military post offices.
3. **Small Centres**—Small communities where the populations declined or an entire community was relocated.
4. **Subs**—Special post offices for visits of Canada's Governor General and the branch post offices that operated in the larger urban or regional centres of the NWT.

Only scarcer post offices or markings are presented using philatelically inspired material if commercial mail has not been located. Rates and unusual usages are shown where possible including registered, redirected mail and tags.

Philatelic Importance

Although this exhibit covers a large geographic area, the population served was very small. This region is of tremendous strategic importance to Canada. This exhibit presents an important aspect of Canadian postal history that is often overlooked.

Condition, Rarity and Difficulty of Acquisition

The condition of mail through the NWT is generally good considering the tremendous distances covered, climatic extremes and difficult traveling conditions at times by small ship, planes and even dog sled.

Commercial mail is difficult to find, particularly before 1929. Non-first flight covers for many of the closed post offices in the western NWT are very scarce. Several examples are shown in this exhibit

The material assembled for this exhibit has been acquired over more than 40 years of active pursuit. Reports of new findings amongst the Study Group members, auction catalogues and philatelic literature have been monitored carefully to ensure the accuracy of scarcity and usage qualifiers used to describe material in this exhibit.

Many early and late dates of markings are shown in this exhibit. Highlights include:

- Only reported items from Cameron Hills, Camlaren, Winter Harbour. Only registered covers from Cape Herschel, Discovery, one of two known from Rocher River.
- Many scarce US APO postal markings including the very difficult to find double circle date stamps.

Research

The standard reference for this area of philately was published by the exhibitor in 1987. This work and subsequent research, is largely based on primary source records of the Library and Archives Canada RG 3 (Post Office Department) and personal communications with Canada Post Corporation staff. The exhibitor has published articles on the contribution of NWT postal history in *The Northerner* (newsletter of the Northern Canada Study Group, Postal History Society of Canada), and in the *Postal History Society of Canada Journal*.

O'Reilly, K. 1987. *Northwest Territories Postal Cancellations 1908-1986*. Toronto: Unitrade Press.

Exhibit Record

This exhibit was shown at *Royal 2011* (National Gold) and *Edmonton Spring Show 2011* (National Gold). A fourth frame was added to include US and UK military post offices. It was then shown at *Edmonton Spring Show 2013* (National Gold).