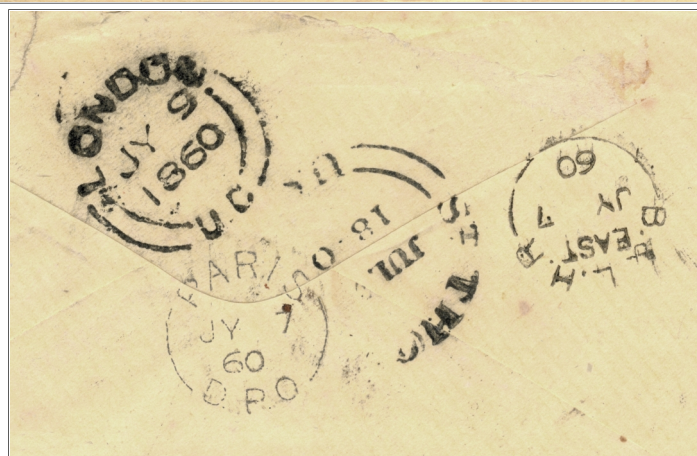
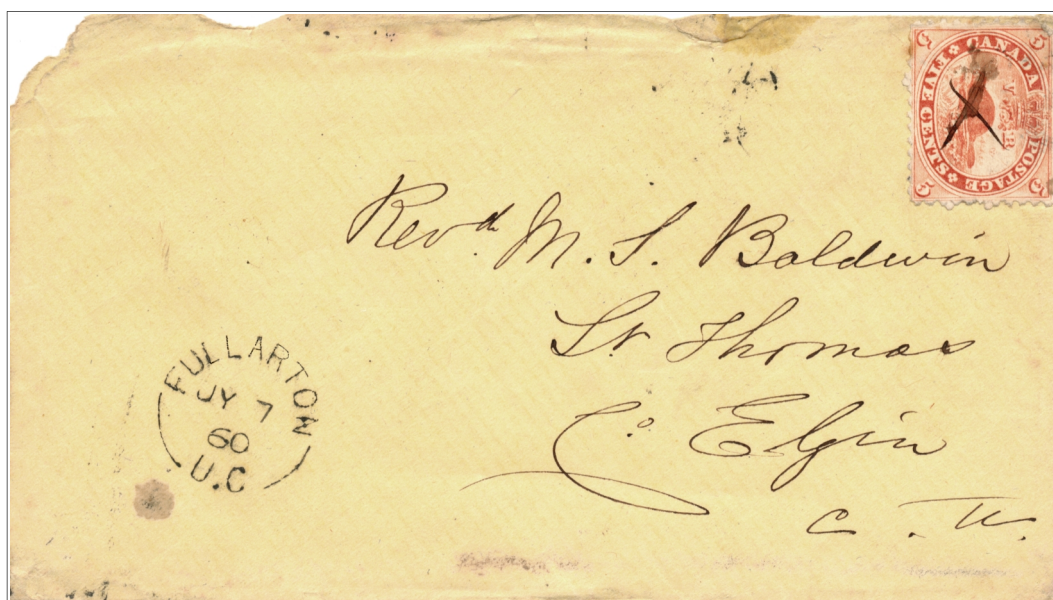


In this issue, **Brian Stalker** presents a remarkable examination of a very early important railway related exchange office which has long been overlooked but will now take its deserved place as the **earliest** listing in the Railway Station Offices section of the catalogue.

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Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker



Ross Gray Collection

This cover which originated at FULLARTON, U.C. (Perth County) on Saturday, July 7, travelled about 10 miles northward by road to Mitchell, where it was put on board the eastbound Buffalo & Lake Huron Railway mail car from Goderich and postmarked, B. & L. H. R , EAST, JY 7, 60 (RY-5).

It continued its journey through Stratford to Paris Junction, where it was transferred to the Paris Distributing Post Office, postmarked PARIS / D.P.O , JY 7, 60 (new SN-44.5) and sorted into closed bag mail for London to be sent on the next westbound Great Western Railway train.

It arrived in London on Monday, July 9, where it was directed south to St. Thomas, probably travelling there via the London & Port Stanley Railway.

Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker

Introduction:- Newsletter #7-4 of August 1979 included a note by Graham Noble on Paris D.P.O. in which he commented “Paris Station post office opened on 1 February 1863 and from that date on nothing has come to light to suggest that office was ever located in the Railway Station. However the D.P.O. split circle hammers used from 1858 – 1863 may have some validity in the Depot section. The problem of course is that we are dealing with the period of provincial administration and the records are poor to non-existent.”

While at London BNAPEX, I visited Paris and the location of the early G.W.Ry. station. I also purchased “Paris Junction – Paris Station (1848 – 1900)” a softback book by Robert Hasler¹ containing about 200 pages of historic data plus another 100 pages of genealogical narrative. That book, supplemented by information from the Postal Records (RG3/1008)², suggests that Paris D.P.O. probably qualifies listing as a Railway Station Office, possibly the earliest in Canada.

Pre-Railway Paris :- The 1846 Gazetteer³ described Paris as “ a considerable village in the south of the township of Dumfries, and partly in Brantford, situated on the Grand River, at the entrance of Smith’s Creek. It is 22 miles west from Dundas, 21 miles east from Woodstock, six miles above Brantford and 13 miles below Galt ... It was laid out in 1830, and was called Paris from the large quantities of gypsum or Plaster of Paris found in the immediate neighbourhood. It is divided into the upper town and the lower town; the lower town being within the forks of the river. Paris has about 1000 inhabitants ... Post about three times a week.

The Railways Arrive:- In December 1853 the Hamilton to London section of the Great Western Railway opened, crossing the Grand River north of Paris lower town, and some 30 metres higher in elevation. By January 1854, its entire main line between Suspension Bridge (Niagara Falls) and Windsor was in operation. In March 1854 the Buffalo, Brantford & Goderich Railway opened as far as Paris, intersecting the G.W.Ry.’s tracks at Paris Junction, before heading north-west to Stratford.

Figure 1 shows the location of the station relative to ‘downtown’ lower Paris and the rivers.

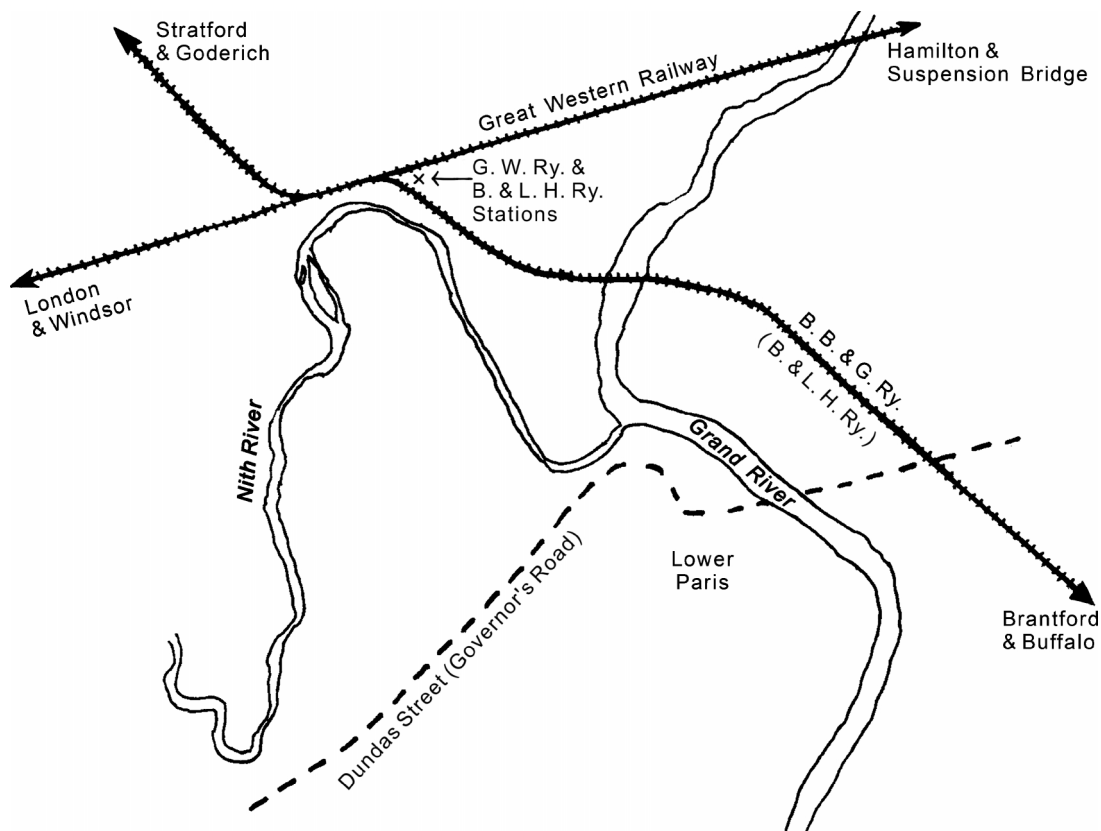


Figure 1 Paris Railway Junction, general topography.

The Newsletter of the Canadian R.P.O. Study Group (B.N.A.P.S.)

Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker

The G.W.Ry. / B.B.&G.Ry. Junction, slightly west of the station, is seen in Figure 2.

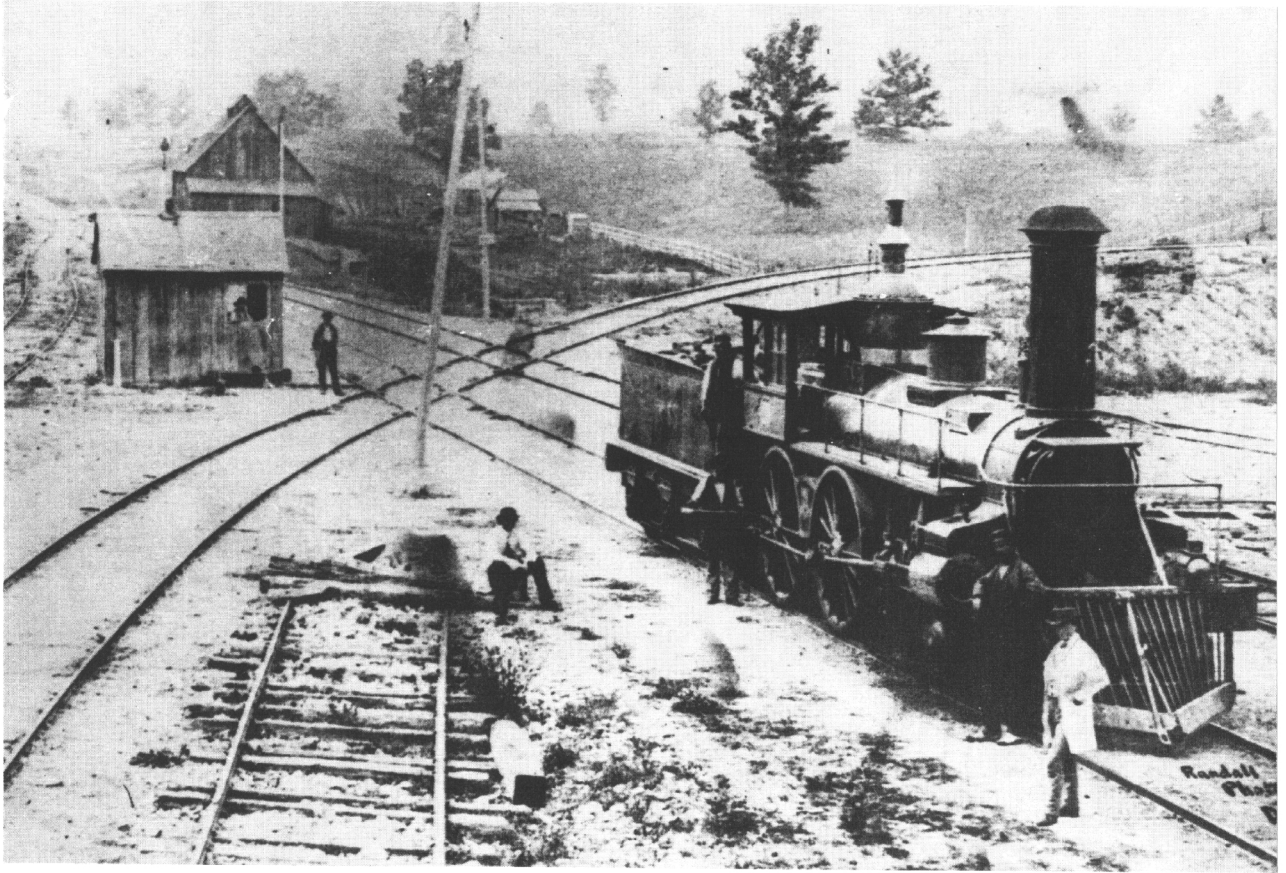


Figure 2 Paris Junction, circa 1862

(Photo courtesy of Paris Historical Society)

Correspondence between Archibald Gilkison (B.B.&G.Ry. Secretary) and the postal authorities indicates that the company was seeking £2000 per annum effective from 6th March 1854 for the conveyance of mails between Buffalo and Paris (84½ miles) – *carried over the line once each way daily, Sundays excepted, in travelling Post Offices, occupying about one third of a Baggage Car and fitted up expressly for the accommodation of the Post Office Department.*

B.B.&G.Ry. services were suspended in January 1856 when the company went bankrupt. A new company, the Buffalo & Lake Huron Railway, was formed in March 1856 and the first train under new ownership arrived at Paris Junction on November 1st 1856. A few weeks later the line was extended to Stratford but Goderich, the northern terminus on Lake Huron, was not reached until June 28th 1858.

The Postmaster General's Report for the year ended 30th September 1857⁴ included details of two new Travelling Post Office contracts for the Buffalo & Lake Huron Rwy:-

From	To	Distance	Departure	Arrival	Commencement
Buffalo	Paris	84¾ miles	3pm daily*	7pm	Nov 12 th 1856
Paris	Buffalo		8am daily*	noon	
Paris	Stratford	31½ miles	daily*		Jan 1 st 1857

* Daily except Sunday

The PMG also reported:-

£600-8-0 disbursed through P.O. Inspector for maintenance of **Distributing Office at the Paris Railroad Station** for the Great Western and Buffalo & Lake Huron lines of Railway for 1¾ years.

Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker

Similarly, £380-18-3 and \$1589.25 were disbursed for the years ending Sept 30, 1858 and 1859 respectively. Amounts of £208-6-7 and \$174.2 were also paid to C. J. Brydges (G.W.Ry.) for “*Additional expense incurred in consequence of exchanging the mails at night, at the Stations on the Great Western line of road for 9 months & 18 days in 1857/58 and 2 months in 1858/59*”.

It therefore seems that the Paris Railroad Distributing Office opened on January 1st 1856 - coinciding with the B.B.&G.Ry. services being suspended owing to the company having gone bust.

The term ‘Distributing Office’ identifies it as being different to a ‘public’ post office – a similar term was used by C. J. Brydges (G.W.Ry.’s Managing Director) when he wrote to the Postmaster General, on 20th May 1856, stated that:- *At the urgent request of the Post Office Department, the Company run the distributing mail car on our night express trains, and that causes a very heavy additional expense ... we are now compelled to stop this train at every station for the purpose of changing mailbags – men have thus to be employed at those stations for no other purpose than to attend to the Post Office service, in the same way lights have to be kept burning at these stations all night ... were it not for the Post Office service, this train at the outside would only require to stop eight times between Suspension Bridge and Windsor, it now has to stop twenty-six times.*

Paris Railroad Station:- Figure 3, based on Hasler’s¹ layout sketches of Paris Station and its environs for 1861, shows both railway companies sharing a two platform station but each having their own buildings. Note the post office between the saloon and hotel to the south of the station.

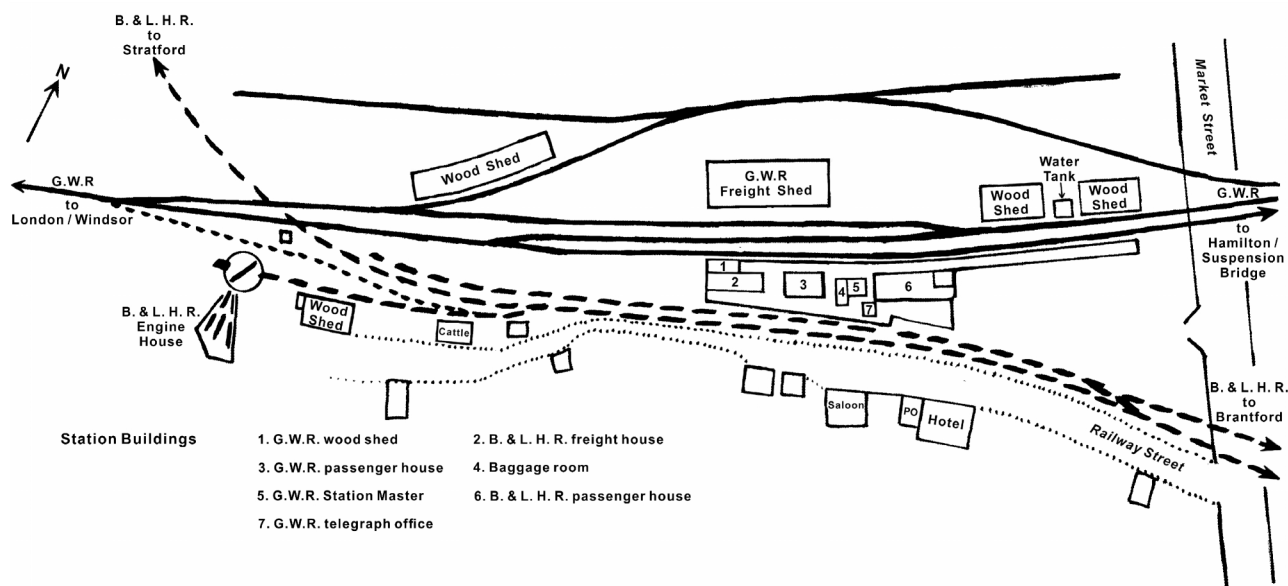


Figure 3 Paris Railway Station and Environs, 1861

The G.W.Ry. used the upper straight platform and the lower curved one was used by the B.&L.H.Ry. ; situated between the two was a collection of buildings including ‘passenger houses’ for each company, a G.W.Ry. telegraph office and station master’s house and a B.&L.H.Ry. freight house.

Paris Distributing Post Office: the location of the D.P.O. is uncertain but bearing in mind that the office was funded through the London District P.O. Inspector rather than being paid directly to either of the railway companies, it may be that it was the office to the south of the tracks between the saloon and the hotel, subsequently to be the Paris Station Post Office which opened in 1863.

Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker

The D.P.O. date-stamps :- two split-ring datestamps are illustrated in Figure 4:-



Figure 4 Paris DPO Date-stamps

I know of 10 strikes of the **PARIS / D.P.O.** date-stamp used between May 19 1859 and May 19 1861, and 13 of the **PARIS · D.P.O / C.W** hammer used between June 20 1861 and March 11 1863. Examination of 12 covers carrying D.P.O. transit date-stamps can be summarised as follows:-

- 3 involved transfer from the G.W.Ry. to the B.&L.H.Ry. ;
- 4 involved transfer from the B.&L.H.Ry. to the G.W.Ry. ;
- 3 involved transfer between G.W.Ry. services;
- 2 involved transfer via Paris to the D.P.O. and then to the G.W.Ry.
- 2 involved transfer from the G.W.Ry. to the D.P.O. and then to Paris and / or courier from Paris.

Someone was evidently employed at the D.P.O. to exchange and sort bags of mail from the trains and from Paris Post Office, located in the lower town, applying a D.P.O. transit date-stamp and bundling the letters by destination. Only one of the twelve covers carries both G.W.Ry. and B.&L.H.Ry. marks, suggesting that the D.P.O. saved the railway mail clerks from undertaking further sortation.

Of the 14 covers, one is without any R.P.O. transit mark and three only have 'remote' R.P.O.s such as O.S.H.R.R. and Montreal & Kingston G.T.Ry. which would have connected with the G.W.Ry. at Toronto. During the period under consideration the G.W.Ry. was carrying bagged mail on at least three main line trains, both east and west bound, other than the daily 'Mail' trains. It thus seems likely that the Paris D.P.O. would also have transferred and sorted that bagged mail, suggesting more than an overnight operation. Both the G.W.Ry. and B.&L.H.Ry. employed day and night telegraph operators at Paris Station and it may be that they sorted the mail but there is no evidence to that effect.

Paris Station Post Office :- with the opening of the 'public' post office at Paris Station in 1863, Hiram Capron was appointed Postmaster and a split-ring **PARIS STATION / C.W** date-stamp came into use. At least two hammers are known; the first has a 'dot' **PARIS · STATION** (July 24 1863 to July 20 1864), a later hammer has a short 'dash' **PARIS - STATION** (January 28 1865 to March 22 1871) ... as shown in Figure 5. A variety of **PARIS STATION / ONT** hammers followed.



Figure 5 Paris Station Date-stamps

Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker

Opening of this office and use of the new date-stamp appears to coincide with withdrawal of the D.P.O. date-stamp, suggesting that the new office might have taken over the D.P.O. duties. On March 1st 1863 a two year contract was awarded to Ephraim Shannon, a shoe-maker living and working on the south side of Railway Street, to go 1/54th of a mile (about 30 metres) daily, using a hand cart to deliver mail between Paris Station Post Office and the G.W.Ry. and B.&L.H.Ry. Station ... the payment of \$240 per annum suggests more than one delivery a day. Amongst Hasler's genealogical data is an entry for Thomas H. Tate, **distributing clerk** at Paris Station Post Office, 1865 to 1880.

The Great Fire and Rebuild: on July 18th 1865 a fire started in the Commercial Hotel on the south side of Railway Street and spread to destroy the Post Office and the International Hotel, before engulfing the station buildings, the G.W.Ry. freight house and the track. Matthew X. Carr, the Postmaster, had great difficulty escaping from his burning building. The west bound Night Mail arrived at 3.45am but had to stop some distance away because the rails were warped and buckled. Temporary accommodation included a 'ticket-office' brought from Hamilton and by May 1866 the G.W.Ry. completed a new brick-built station, leasing part of it to the B.&L.H.Ry. so that both companies shared the same building for the first time. In addition to the usual facilities, three rooms at the western end of the building are marked on the plans as being Customs Office (Paris Station had become 'Paris Port' in 1857, a port of exit from Canada into the U.S.A.), American Express, and at the far end Post Office, each having a space of about 22 x 12 feet. It seems unlikely that that was the location of Matthew Carr's new post office ... the next confirmed location of the 'public' post office was in 1874 when it was part of Bernard Travers and George Taylor's grocery store on the east side of Market Street. Figure 6 shows the new station viewed from the Market Street end.



Figure 6 Paris Station, built 1866.

(Photo courtesy of Paris Historical Society)

Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker

Should Paris Distributing Post Office be classified as a Railway Station Office? Lewis Ludlow's two main criteria for establishing whether or not railway station date-stamps should be included in the Depot section of his catalogue ⁵ were:-

(i) it should not be a regular post office or found in any official postal guide ... Paris Distributing Post Office appears to have commenced operating on January 1st 1856 but does not appear in the Post Office list as at September 30th 1857⁴ so it qualifies on that score;

(ii) the postal facility should be administered by the Railway Mail Service ... the PMG's Report for 1857 lists personnel employed in the Railway Mail Service ... mail clerks are named, also wages for men to take charge of mail bags etc. but there is no specific mention of anyone associated with Paris D.P.O. ... thus raising a question mark over its legitimacy as a 'Depot'.

Paris Station date-stamps were clearly used at 'public' post offices in the vicinity of the Junction Station and fall out-with the Depot / Railway Station Office criteria.

Concluding comment: Several aspects of the operation of the Paris Distributing Post Office remain to be clarified. It appears to have operated from January 1st 1856 to around March 1st 1863 but its exact location and role remain unclear. Perhaps one of our members might have a contemporary Distribution List or have found additional information in the Postal Records or Railway Company Records that will clarify the position? If so, it would be good to hear from you.

Footnote: Paris Junction station closed in 1907 and a new station was opened on Helen Street.

Acknowledgements: I am indebted to Lana Jobe, former curator of the Paris Historical Society for providing the photographs and giving permission to use them in this article, also to Robert Hasler for giving permission to quote extensively from his book.

References:

¹ "Paris Junction – Paris Station (1848 – 1900) – the Hey Day of the Steam Era" by Robert Lewis Rashleigh Hasler, published by Somerset House Publications, Canada 2000.

² Library & Archives Canada, Ottawa (Postal Records RG3 / 1008)

³ Smith's Canadian Gazetteer, Wm H Smith, published by H & W Rowsell, 1846.

⁴ Report of the Postmaster General for the Year ended 30th September 1857.

⁵ Catalogue of Canadian Railway Cancellations, Lewis M Ludlow, 1982.

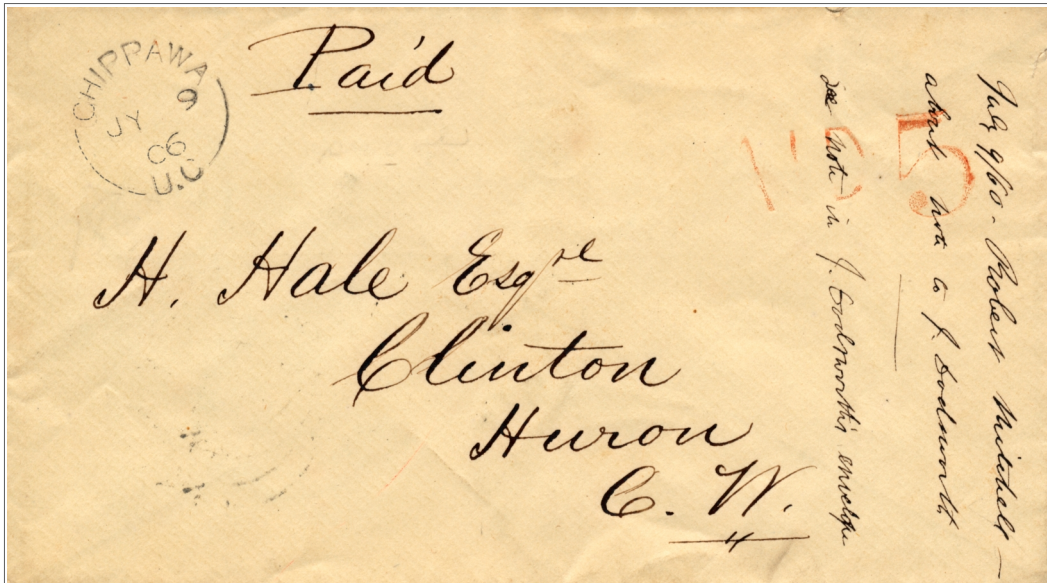
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Paris Distributing P.O. added to the Railway Station Offices Section

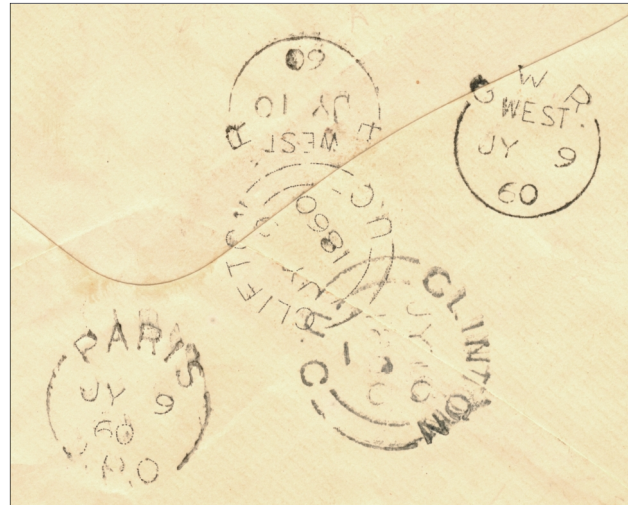
Brian's thorough study of these important railway related postmarks has easily convinced the editor that they should be included in the Station section of the new catalogue. The new listings are as follows;

Listing #	Postmark	Type	Indicia	Period	R.F.	Former #
SN-44.5	PARIS / _ D.P.O _	OC1	blank	1859/05/19-1861/05/19	F	NEW
SN-44.6	PARIS · D.P.O / _ C.W _	OC1	blank	1861/06/20-1863/03/11	F	NEW

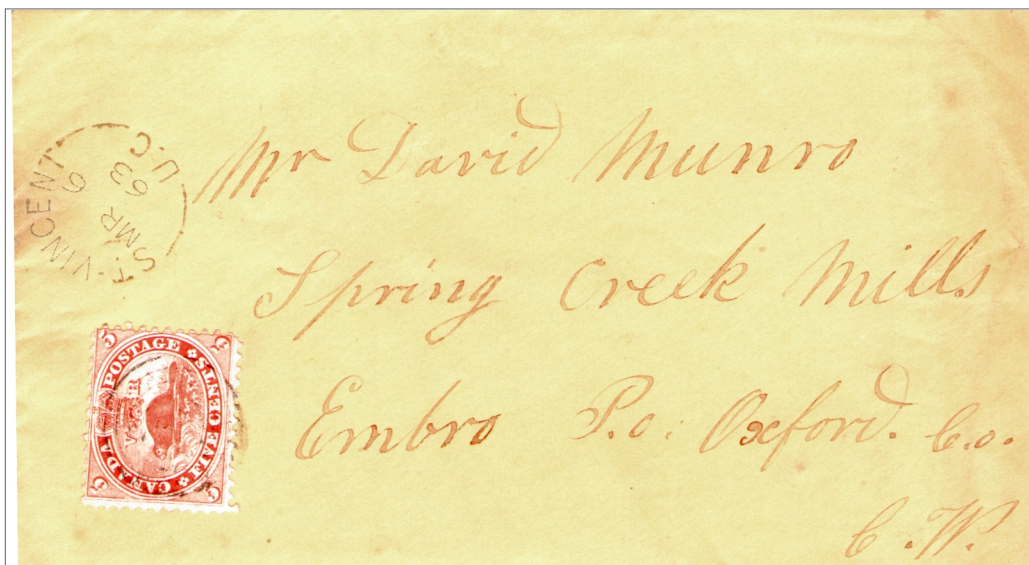
Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker



This cover originated at CHIPPAWA / U.C. on July 9, 1860 and travelled about 5 miles north to CLIFTON / U.C. (formerly Suspension Bridge, later Niagara Falls), possibly on the Erie & Ontario Railroad. At Clifton, it was transferred to the westbound Great Western Railway mail car and postmarked G.W.R. , WEST, JY 9, 60 (RY-68). On arrival at Paris Junction it was transferred to the Paris Distributing post office, postmarked, PARIS / D.P.O , JY 9, 60 (new SN-44.5) and transferred the next day to the westbound Buffalo & Lake Huron Railway mail car, receiving a B. & L. H. R , WEST, JY 10, 60 (RY-5) transit backstamp. Arrival in Clinton was the same day.



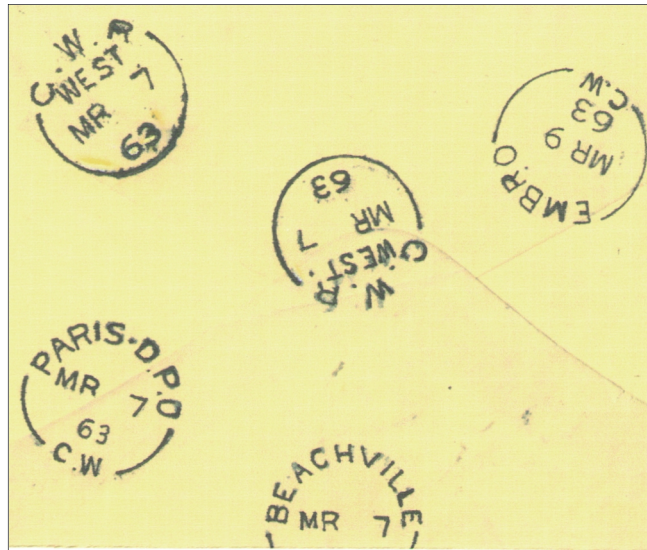
Ross Gray Collection



Brian Stalker Collection

This cover originated at ST - VINCENT, U.C (Grey County, near Meaford) on Friday, March 6, 1863. It probably travelled east by road in closed bag mail to Collingwood where it would have been put on board the next Northern Railway train for transportation south to Toronto.

Paris Distributing Post Office - an overview by Brian Stalker



On March 7, it was put on board a westbound G.W.Ry. mail car to Paris Junction, where the Paris D.P.O. transferred it to another westbound G.W.Ry. mail car stopping at Beachville. The letter then travelled about 5 miles north by road to Embro.



Brian Stalker Collection

This cover originated at CAYUGA / U.C post office on Wednesday, July 16, 1862 and was transferred to the station and the westbound B. & L. H. Ry. mail car the following day. When it arrived at Paris Junction, it was transferred to the Paris D.P.O. and then put in closed bag mail for the next eastbound G.W.Ry. train for Harrisburg and forwarding from there to the connecting northbound G.W.Ry. train to Guelph. There, it was probably transferred to the next westbound G.T.Ry. train for Berlin.

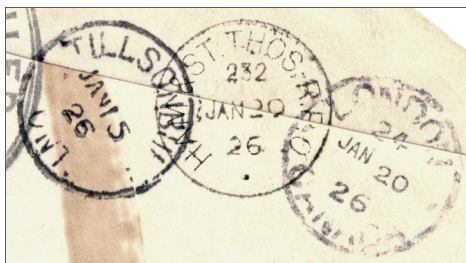
New Reports



Peter McCarthy shares a second and new **late date** as well as a **new train** number for **QC-177**, MONT. & ISL. POND R.P.O. / - M. J. E. BLAIS - , Tr. 11, FEB 7, 1924 .



Ross Gray reports a new **early date** for **QC-553**, VICT. & MONT. R.P.O. / . , 137, DE 22, 44. It was proof struck on December 2, 1944.



Ross reports this new **early date** for **ON-201**, HAM. & ST. THOS. · R.P.O. / . , 232, JAN 20, 26 , as a transit stamp on a registered cover from Tillsonburg to Ostrander which was then redirected to London. The hammer was proof struck only 11 days earlier, on January 9. Train **232** is a **new train** for the run.



Ross found the first reported example of **train 7** for **ON-345**, N. B. & SOO · R.P.O. / . , 7, OC 8, 62 .



Ross also found a new **early date** for **ON-469**, PI · DOVER & STRATFORD / R.P.O. , N, AP 29, 98 . The proof date is unknown.

Study Group Chairman

It has been an honour and a pleasure to have served as chairman and I am indebted to Chris Anstead (secretary / treasurer), Ross Gray (Newsletter and Catalogue Editor) and Peter McCarthy (vice-chairman) for all the help and support they have given me personally and to the group generally over many years. I was diagnosed with myeloid leukaemia three years ago and whilst drugs have stabilized my condition they also have some side effects that have prevented my attendance at the last three BNAPEX conventions. Because of the transatlantic flights necessary for my attendance it is uncertain whether I will get to future events. I believe the chairman should have a physical presence at BNAPEX so I have decided to stand down and asked Peter McCarthy to step up from vice-chairman to chairman. I wish Peter every success and I am sure he will lead the group to greater things in the future. I will continue to take an active part in the RPO Study Group and I wish everyone a Happy & Healthy 2014.

Brian Stalker

Newsletter Editor, Catalogue Editor

Ross Gray, 33 George Street East, Lindsay, ON, K9V 1W6

Phone 705 324-6020 e-mail oshrr@sympatico.ca

Secretary-Treasurer, Newsletter Mailer

Chris Anstead, 3258 Elphin Maberly Road,

McDonald's Corners, ON, K0G 1M0

Phone 613 278-1428 e-mail acropolis@superaje.com