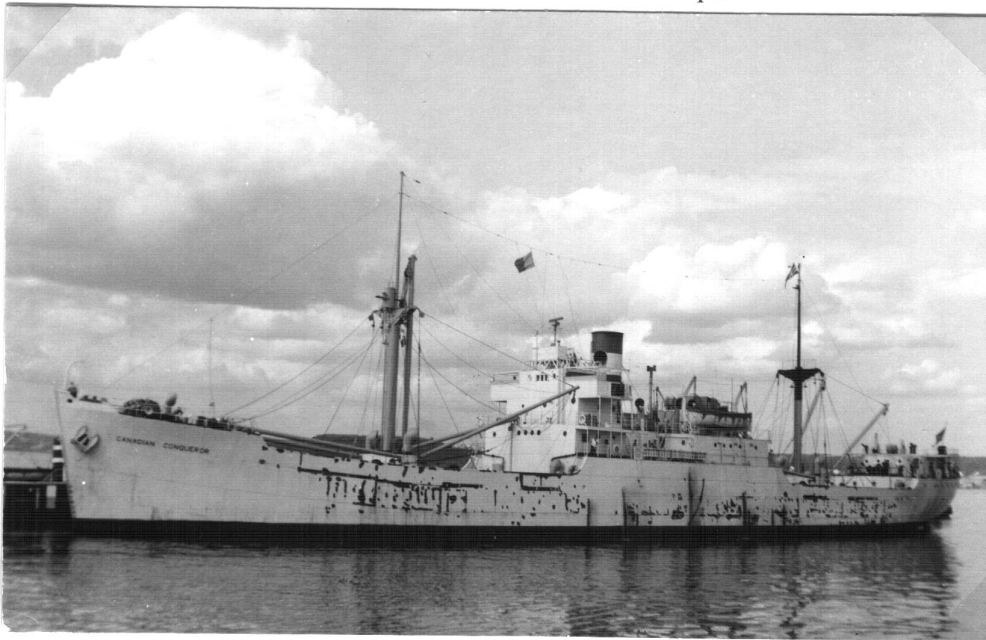


CANADIAN MERCHANT NAVY

July 1943 to Sept. 1945

Presented is Canadian Merchant Navy postal history during the two-year period that the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) maintained a merchant mariner mail forwarding program. This program was exclusively for Canadian merchant mariners and RCN gunners serving on merchant navy ships.

This exhibit begins when the merchant navy mail forwarding program called "c/o P.O. Box 9000 Montreal" opened at Canadian naval base HMCS Hochelaga, Montreal, mid July 1943. For the next two years c/o P.O. Box 9000 could be used as a mariner's return address instead of the steamship company's address as for security reasons the British Admiralty would not tell civilians where or when their ships were going. Upon arrival at c/o P.O. Box 9000 Montreal a letter was censored by Box 9000 staff, resealed, then forwarded by air to the freighter's next port of call. In the fall of 1943 "c/o P.O. Box 9000 Vancouver" was created for merchant mariners in the Pacific. Both PO Box 9000 offices were totally staffed by Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS) who had appropriate security clearance for working with secret shipping movement and staffing files. The exhibit concludes 30 SEP 1945 when both Box 9000 offices ceased operating. At this point each steamship company resumed handling all mail addressed to their own ships.



SS Canadian Conqueror ex SS Sutherland Park

In addition to mail to and from merchant navy ships, on a non-scheduled basis merchant navy vessels carried surface mail as freight in sealed bags. Being in sealed bags, no ship transit marking will be found on the covers. Upon occasion the Captain accepted hand delivered mail with prepaid postage while loading in England. He then posted this freighter paquetbot mail upon docking in Canada.

Canadian merchant navy mail is difficult to find and requires experience to identify. Three rare items are highlighted with a black border and important text is underlined>.

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Overseas, Canadian merchant mariners usually paid regular civilian postage rates. In the spring of 1945 a few merchant mariners sent their surface letters postage free or used foreign military concession rates. Only for four weeks, 7 Aug, 1945, (Order-in-Council P.C.4157) to 2 Sep 1945, (Japan surrender) could merchant navy surface mail be posted free at naval or army post offices.