

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.

When WWII began, mail to merchant mariners was addressed "c/o the steamship company" managing the freighter. Within weeks the British Admiralty implemented convoys and refused to provide secret shipping information to civilians. Of the original 37 ocean going merchant navy ships only 12 survived.

<u>Canadian</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Killed</u>	<u>%</u>
Army	709,000	68.1%	25,000	3.5%
Air Force	222,000	21.3%	18,000	8.1%
Navy	98,000	9.4%	4,000	4.1%
M. Navy	12,000	0.2%	1,600	13.3%
Total	1,041,000	100.0%	52,600	5.1%

More than replacing the losses the Canadian government through Park Steamship Co. had 175 ships built. Accordingly manpower grew from 1,400 men to 12,000, of which 13.3% were killed.

This exhibit begins when the mail forwarding program called "c/o P.O. Box 9000 Montreal" opened at Canadian naval base HMCS Hochelaga, Montreal, mid July 1943. Box 9000 could be used as a mariner's return address instead of the steamship company's address. Upon arrival at Box 9000 Montreal a letter was censored by Box 9000 staff then the letter was 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. Each steamship company resumed handling all mail addressed to their own ships.



SS Canadian Conqueror ex SS Sutherland Park

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 military airmail concession rate. 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.

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

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