

# The Railway Post Office on the Short Line

This exhibit will show on covers examples of all five Railway Post Office cancellations that were used on the railway line between Oxford and Pictou, Nova Scotia, spanning the years from 1892 to 1960.

The exhibit is presented in the chronological order in which the various cancelling devices came into use.

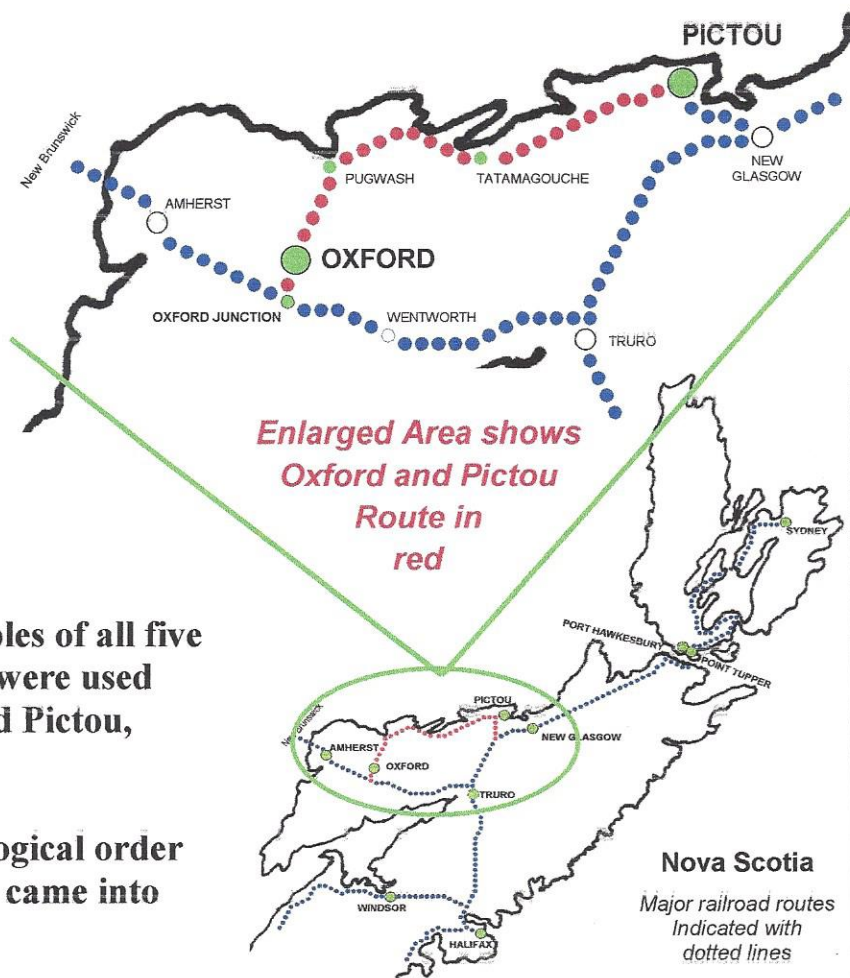
## A brief history of The Short Line Railroad

A railroad along this route was desirable for many factors. It would provide an alternative route when winter conditions held up trains through the Wentworth Valley. The mining town of Pugwash would be a major benefactor of this route. It would also connect at Oxford Junction with the Cumberland Railroad which carried coal bound for steel mills in the New Glasgow area. As well, the port of Pictou handled transatlantic and other mails and this would provide a direct route to the main line heading to Quebec, especially when the St Lawrence was closed during the winter.

**1875:** The Dominion Government incorporates **The European and North American Railway Company**. E & NA obtain rights to build 120 km of railway.

**1882:** Nova Scotia Legislature passes an act to incorporate **The Great American and European Short Line Railway Company**, who take over the rights of the E & N A. The same year the Dominion Government incorporates **The Montreal and European Short Line Railway Company**.

These two companies were connected. Under the M & E Short Line, the Oxford and Pictou line was promoted, the routes surveyed and initial contracts tendered. The president of the M & E Short Line was Norvin Green, who was also president of both The Western Union Telegraph Company and the American Institute of Electrical Engineers. Vice presidents of the M & E included Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Alva Edison.



**1883:** The work on the Oxford and Pictou line began in 1882 but came to an abrupt halt in 1883 when the labourers and contractors were being left unpaid (and remained so for years). After continued buck passing and excuses, from the owners of the M & E Short Line, things finally came to a head.

**1885:** The Dominion Government gave the Nova Scotian Government the go ahead to deal with Mr. Green. Fearing expensive lawsuits the province in turn asked the Dominion Government to support and protect them from such law suits.

**1887:** The Dominion Government assumes the railway's debts and takes over the holdings of the Oxford and Pictou portion of the M & E Short Line. The line is then given over to **The Intercolonial Railway**.

**1889:** The Intercolonial Railway had finished building track and supporting stations from Pictou to Oxford Junction, where it would connect with the ICR branch from Truro to Amherst.

**1892:** The Railway Post Office begins processing mail along the Oxford and Pictou route. Mail would continue to be processed until 1960.

With the demise of the ICR, the tracks were eventually taken over by **Canadian National Railroads**.

Despite its troubled beginnings the Oxford and Pictou line operated until 1994 and in spite of the various operators, this line was always known as "**The Short Line**".