

Postal usages in the Province of Quebec and Lower Canada until 1831

Organization and development:

The purpose of this exhibit is to present the early development of the postal routes and means of transportation in the Province of Quebec and later Lower Canada from the beginnings to February 1831. It is divided in seven parts:

Letters from the French Regime

Letters carried by 'voyageurs' or 'coureur des bois'

The first postal route

The way to Halifax and Gaspé Peninsula

The route from Montreal to the U.S.

Development of new routes after the Napoleonic wars

Populated areas left untouched by the postal system in 1831

Maritime and transatlantic mail

Scope:

The first part of our study is dedicated to the beginnings of the postal system in Canada as a whole. From its infancy in New France, to the creation of a British North American postal system which was coordinated from 1775 from Quebec City (nomination of Hugh Finlay as Deputy Postmaster General for North America). After the Constitutional Act of 1791 which divided the Province of Quebec in two parts (Lower and Upper Canada), we concentrate on the evolution of the postal system in Lower Canada.

This exhibit covers the whole spectrum of postal usages and means of transportation of the time: rated letters, favored letters from distant locations, "way" letters, ship and steamboats letters. Overland they were carried either by foot, snowshoes in winter or diverse horse-drawn carriages or even on board canoes through the lakes and rivers.

Limit:

With the American Independence, the Canadian postal system was truncated and very little progress can be observed until the end of the Napoleonic wars (1815). In the subsequent years, dissatisfaction was at its peak.

In February 11 1831, the Houses of Assembly of Lower and Upper Canada both passed a similar resolution requiring full access to the information on the management of the Post Office Department. This resolution was due to the many complaints in both provinces about the administration of the postal system by the British authorities including: high rates and poor development of the system.

Presentation:

The covers are shown in chronological order within their proper division or subdivision of the exhibit. In a few cases two covers might have been regrouped on the same page by affinities without strictly following the chronology. Photocopies are presented within a blue frame.

For most parts of this exhibit, one or a few straight hashed rectangles present the general information on that chapter. These rectangles are distributed as conveniently as possible.