



Doug Lingard, on the right, presents the J.S. Siverts Award for 2001 to Ross Gray for the R.P.O. Newsletter, with Dan McInnis and John Beddows looking on, at COPEX 2002 in Cobourg, Ontario.

**Brian Stalker** has published the third instalment of his **Newfie Hammer Analysis**, which includes listings **N-38T** to **N-50**. He welcomes Colin Lewis to the group and thanks Jim Felton and Albert Govier for providing additional data and/or better strikes for instalment two.

A few typographical errors have been found in instalment one and Brian expects that others will turn up in two and three. Therefore he will be including a corrigenda and updates in the next instalment anticipated in October.

**Colin Campbell** wrote that Robert F. Marriage, a retired R.P.O. clerk, was willing to write more about his experiences with the railway mail service. Mr. Marriage kindly provided us with the background for the interior B.C. travelling post office article, which appeared in the January-February newsletter.

Your editor provided a series of questions about R.P.O. service and requested a brief biography to provide additional perspective to the answers.

**Lionel F. Gillam**, a pioneer in the study of Canadian R.P.O.s, author of "A History of Canadian R.P.O.s", "Canadian Mail by Rail" and "Just a Few Lines, The Story of Canada's First Railway, The Champlain & St. Lawrence Railroad" as well as many articles in various philatelic journals, has sent a copy of a railway wreck marking for discussion.

### Secretary's Report from Chris Anstead

It is with sadness that I have learned that **Carleton Smith** passed away in May. He was a long time resident of Hamilton, Ontario and a study group member since 1978. I have passed on our condolences to Anne Smith.

**Jim Felton** has changed his address to Box 128, Tiffin, Ohio, 44883.

#### Secretary / Treasurer's Notice from Chris Anstead

**Annual Membership Dues for the Study Group year 2002-2003** are now overdue from those members who have not already paid. Cheques or money orders should be payable to Chris Anstead, RR# 1 McDonald's Corners, ON, K0G 1M0, for CAD\$10.00 in Canada, US\$9.00 for members in the U.S.A. or 7 pounds sterling for members in the U.K..

If the box is checked, your dues are in arrears and this will be the last newsletter sent.



## Railway Mail Service Recollections from R. F. Marriage

I was discharged from the army April 1st, 1946 and worked as a carpenter's helper, gas jockey, grease monkey, etc. that year. Letter carrier service was to be established in Kelowna that year or the next but first, the town had to be re-numbered, 100 to a block.

I was lucky to be hired as one of the first eight and started work Feb 1st, 1947. I was on the walks until April, 1949 and then went "inside" to sort city and forward mail until August, when I applied for transfer to the road. With a staff scattered around seven terminals, the R.M.S. was not a popular assignment in the Vancouver District and I was accepted right away, having not yet taken the qualifying exam. I moved to Calgary, the eastern limit of our seniority district. The runs north, south and east were staffed by Calgary District and we had the west end on the C.P.R. main line to Field and Revelstoke. The clerks in charge made the run through from Vancouver and return. For the next two years, I was employed on night runs on the old No.s 1 & 2, the transcontinental local, except for about three months in 1950, on the Kelowna & Sicamous and Robson & Arrowhead routes. In the fall of 1950, I secured a permanent appointment and bid in the position of Calgary-Revelstoke part-way assistant, trains 1 & 2. About a year later, I bid in the same job on trains 3 & 8 (The Dominion), a daytime job. I thought I was in heaven! In January 1952, I moved to Nelson, to work the Nelson & Midway R.P.O. but a drastic change of time card in the spring of that year chased me back to Calgary, where I bid in my old job again. In January 1953, I moved to Sicamous to work as an assistant on the Kelowna & Sicamous, until September 1954, when the Department abolished the run in favour of trucks out of Kamloops. I was left surplus and assigned to the relief staff.



W-64B

Since 1950, we had lost the Blaine & Vancouver run (2 jobs), Robson & Arrowhead run (1 job), Victoria & Courtenay run (5 jobs), Squamish & Quesnel run (4 jobs), Hope & Vancouver run (2 jobs), and relief staff was reduced (2 jobs). Also the Nelson & Midway run was reduced from 5 to 3 jobs, to make a one man operation. Reorganization of the Edmonton-Prince Rupert route by the C.N.R. eventually led to the loss of 6 positions at Prince Rupert. The R.P.O.s were later established as Jasper & Prince George, Prince George & Smithers and Smithers & Prince Rupert. The relief staff was kept busy covering 6 unfilled positions, so when I went to Nelson in 1955, I requested District Office to leave me there until permanent assignments were made. They were happy with that and so was I. In 1956, the C.P.R. abolished trains 17 & 18 (the old 1 & 2), which cost us about 14 jobs on the Calgary & Vancouver route but I managed to bid in the Nelson assignment and stayed there until the run was abolished. I made the last run on Sept 30th 1957. The Medicine Hat & Nelson (Calgary District) finished the same day. Once again, I was surplus and found myself based at Vancouver, doing relief runs to Revelstoke and covering unfilled assignments at Prince George and Prince Rupert. I lost track of the number of times I flew to Prince Rupert or went by train to Prince George via Jasper.

I was single (still am) but if I had been married, I think I would have found myself in divorce court. And I developed an intense dislike of moving, even with just suitcases! However, by early 1959, I managed to secure an assignment (Kamloops - Vancouver, part way assistant trains 8 & 7) and by 1962 a similar job running to Revelstoke. In June 1965, the C.P.R. withdrew all head-end traffic from the Dominion trains. Already day coach only, those trains were soon abolished. R.P.O. service on the C.N.R. east of Winnipeg lasted until 1971. I chose not to enter the Vancouver post office as a supernumerary and reverted to postal clerk at Penticton. By that time seniority had become portable within a class and in 1970, I moved back to Kelowna, where I owned the house bequeathed to me by my late parents. I worked as a city and forward sorter and did my last eight years on the front counter. I retired Sept 1st, 1980, just two months past my 60th birthday. I always enjoyed post office work but was glad to be out. As in so many other occupations, the physical conditions have improved in recent decades but the social/political ones have deteriorated. I did miss the people coming and going, for a while.

**Q.** Did railway mail clerks have to source and pay for their **private handstamps** or were they provided by the P.O. Dept?

**A.** R.M.C.s bought personal daters for their own convenience to be used on bag labels and facing or back slips for letter packets (bundles). Labels and slips could be prepared at leisure, even at home, for a two-way trip.

## Railway Mail Service Recollections from R. F. Marriage

**Q.** Were there restrictions on the use of their **private handstamps** and were they strictly observed?

**A.** These impressions were not accepted as legal evidence and might even be viewed with some skepticism in an internal investigation! Personal daters could be used on registered items of awkward shape, not able to take the impression of a steel hammer. Cancellation of stamps always required use of black oil-base ink. That requirement seems to have been abandoned for many years.

**Q.** Did you receive many requests for “**favour**” **cancellations** by collectors and what was the official view on satisfying such requests?

**A.** “Favour” cancellations requested by collectors never posed any problem for me and I always tried to make a neat job of them. There didn’t seem to be any official policy and as various runs were being eliminated the requests became more numerous. I must say that a few surly colleagues were embarrassing at times; you know the type that never learns that it doesn’t cost anything to be nice to people!

**Q.** Were steel cancellation hammers assigned specifically to one clerk or were they simply available on the car for any clerk to use?

**A.** One hammer was included in every R.M.C. supply box and was available to all the crew. Steel daters with numbers and other identifiers allocated to individual clerks were not replaced as they wore out (many years ago).

**Q.** If a clerk received mail which was underpaid or without postage, did he mark it for postage due? Were “**Postage Due**” handstamps available on the R.P.O.?

**A.** Any mail noticed short paid was supposed to be endorsed “Postage Due” or “TAX\_\_\_” and dealt with at the office of destination. We had no scales available. We hardly ever used the “Postage Due” rubber stamps with the blank space to enter the amount (double deficiency); we just wrote “Tax \_\_\_”. The procedure was rarely required and was mostly left to the office of destination.

**Q.** How did loose mail, which received an R.P.O. cancellation arrive? Was it accepted by hand by the clerks? Was there a mail slot on the side of the car? Did most stations have two mail boxes with direction signs. Who cleared these boxes, the local postal employee or the R.P.O. clerks at each stop?

**A.** Loose mail was accepted at the working door in station time and through the slot in the side of the car. Apart from the catch arm, the most noticeable feature of the mail car (to the layman) to distinguish it from other cars in the head-end consist, was a barrier or flap inscribed “LETTERS”. An inside barrier could be secured to block outside access when the car was running deadhead or otherwise out of service. Most stations had only one letter box, cleared by the side service contractor. In smaller communities, these boxes were established after petition by the local residents to the P.O. Department. Travelling letter boxes were carried on many baggage car routes, being unlocked and cleared by connecting R.P.O.s or terminal offices.

An interesting exception existed with the **Newfoundland Railway** and the St. John’s & Port-Aux-Basques R.P.O., which we inherited in 1949. The late running of the Newfie Bullet was often accounted for in days rather than hours and at many of the smaller stations, the mail was placed in storage boxes serviced by the R.M.C.s, who had to get off the train and wade through the snow to do the chore. They were the only R.M.C.s in Canada to be supplied with special clothing.

**Q.** What procedures were followed for **registered mail** which appeared to have been tampered with or was unsealed?

**A.** Registered mail (or any other class) noticed to be damaged was endorsed, “Received Damaged”, dated and initialed. At the discretion of the clerk-in-charge, a written memo might be submitted to District Office.

## Railway Mail Service Recollections from R. F. Marriage

**Q.** How were **money bags** from banks handled?

**A.** Money packets or other items (jewelry etc.) prepaid at the money packet rate were billed “hand to hand”. They were not to be included in convenience packages or pouched with other registered matter. Gold bricks for the mint at Ottawa were treated the same way and did not require prepayment.

**Q.** If uncanceled mail was received with sufficient postage to pay for **registration**, was it registered by the R.P.O. clerk?

**A.** Any mail prepaid sufficiently for registration was taken into account with the other registered mail, given an “R” number and endorsed with the R.P.O. title as office of origin. R.P.O.s were not allotted any series of numbers and the usual practice was to use **train number and date**. For example, Calgary & Vancouver Tr. 8, on July 29, 1964 would use 829 and, if necessary follow it with 830. I cannot recall such numbers ever being the subject of inquiry.

**Q.** Were there ever attempts at **robbery** and how were clerks instructed to deal with such attempts?

**A.** Our instructions about security simply referred to doors being secured at all times, etc. Often ignored in hot weather! We were not supplied with arms as R.M.C.s in the U.S.A. and Canadian express messengers were. It should also be emphasized that the messenger and his strong box were most often the target of train robbers, rather than the R.P.O. He was accommodated in a separate car or compartment.

The last “stickups” in B.C. involved the famous Bill Miner in 1904 - 07. About 1950, a clerk nearing retirement regaled us with a story from 1908. Near the spot where Bill Miner had done his second BC job, the train made a fast stop between stations. A shot was fired in the air and a shout demanded that the clerks open the door, which they did reluctantly. The engineer and fireman were standing on the ground, hands up and several men with guns and two spare saddled horses were also present. When they heard the whistle of the second section, their plans seemed to fall apart. The express car, which they wanted, was moving in that second section. It was supposed to be carrying silver bars en route to the San Francisco mint, from the Lardeau country. The holdup was attributed to the Haney brothers, an outlaw gang known to be in the area. They were thought to have drowned off a raft in the Thompson River, a few days later but about a quarter of a century in the future in the 1930s, a news story reported the death of an old con in the infirmary of the pen at Deer Lodge, Montana. The man’s deathbed confession included a statement that he was the William Haney wanted by the law in British Columbia.

Also, in the 1950s, the stickup of a train in the London District and the theft of gold bars being transferred at the platform in Sudbury are on record somewhere.

**Q.** If more than one clerk was operating on a car, was there a **postmaster** in charge?

**A.** Any R.M.C., acting or classified, could be designated the Clerk-in-Charge, working alone or in charge of a crew. Seniority, alone with other factors established the position.

**Q.** How did transfer facilities at major terminals operate? (Many of these transfer offices had their own cancellations, for example Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Moose Jaw, Hamilton, Kitchener and London.

**A.** The Calgary transfer facility was in rented premises at the C.P.R. station and included the District empty bag depot. It had its own steel dater “Calgary Stn A” but all letter sorting was done at the main P.O. about two blocks away. The staff were uniformed postal employees and were assisted at busy times by casuals. Regular staff were classified as “Despatcher”, with salary a notch higher than postal clerk. During the Xmas rush period, bag racks were set up for parcel sorting by the Cal. & Van. R.M.C.s (part-way assistants) based at Calgary. Casuals were also used in that operation. Parcel sorting on the Calgary branch line trains stayed on the rails in the rush period. At Jasper, Alberta; Nelson, B.C. and Sicamous, B.C., transfer was done by the railway company baggage departments with R.M.C. supervision when necessary. I was never familiar with arrangements at Victoria and Nanaimo, where the steamer wharves and rail stations were some distance apart; it was probably handled by a side service contractor. At the C.P.R. station in Vancouver, uniformed postal despatchers worked the trains and did other work “inside”. The basement of the old main post office was located not far from the west end of the passenger platform, so storage problems were comparatively simple.

## Railway Mail Service Recollections from R. F. Marriage

**Q.** How many hours were there in a typical work week? Did the clerk arrive well before departure of the train and stay on the car long after arrival at the terminal?

**A.** The standard work week in the Civil Service (40 hours) would call for 2080 hours a year less 40 hours for each week of vacation time. Overtime was compensated by equivalent time off, granted when District Office could arrange it. The total yearly hours allowed (or less) were computed on March 31st. The December requirement was calculated separately. There were no fixed days off, duty being required any day of train operation. In the latter years of my experience, much of the advance duty time before departure was reduced and replaced by preparation time. At the same time, check-in time for the clerk-in-charge registers after arrival was eliminated. These time credits varied with local conditions.

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## O-350 Hammer Study from Brian Stalker

The TOR. HAM. & LON. R. P. O. / . postmarks span over fifty years, circa 1908-62, during which time at least five different hammers were used.

TOR. HAM. & LON. R. P. O. / .  
|-----a-----| |-----b-----| |-----c-----| |-----d-----|

Hammer	I	II	III	IV	V
Letter Height	3	2 1/2	3 1/2	3	3
Ampersand	sharp	sharp	rounded	rounded	rounded
Chord "a"	5 1/2	5 -	5 +	5 +	5 +
Chord "b"	6 1/2	6 +	6 1/2	6 1/2	7
Chord "c"	4 1/2	5 1/2	4 1/2	4 +	5 -
Chord "d"	5	5	4	4 +	5
Proof Date	unknown	1909/12/13	1924/03/22	1927/07/30	1949/08/31
Earliest Report	1908/03/27	1910/03/03	1924/04/02	1930/11/22	1952/09/17
Latest Report	1941/11/10	1923/01/03	1949/01/31	1939/12/21	1962/11/02
Indicia	E, W, 11 12, 17, 77	E, W 78	5, 78, 80, 87	11, 16, 18	5, 77, 80

Trains 8, 9, 50, 76 and 94 are listed in the catalogue but hammer or period are unknown. Anyone having examples of these train numbers are asked to report them.



Hammer I



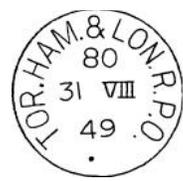
Hammer II



Hammer III



Hammer IV

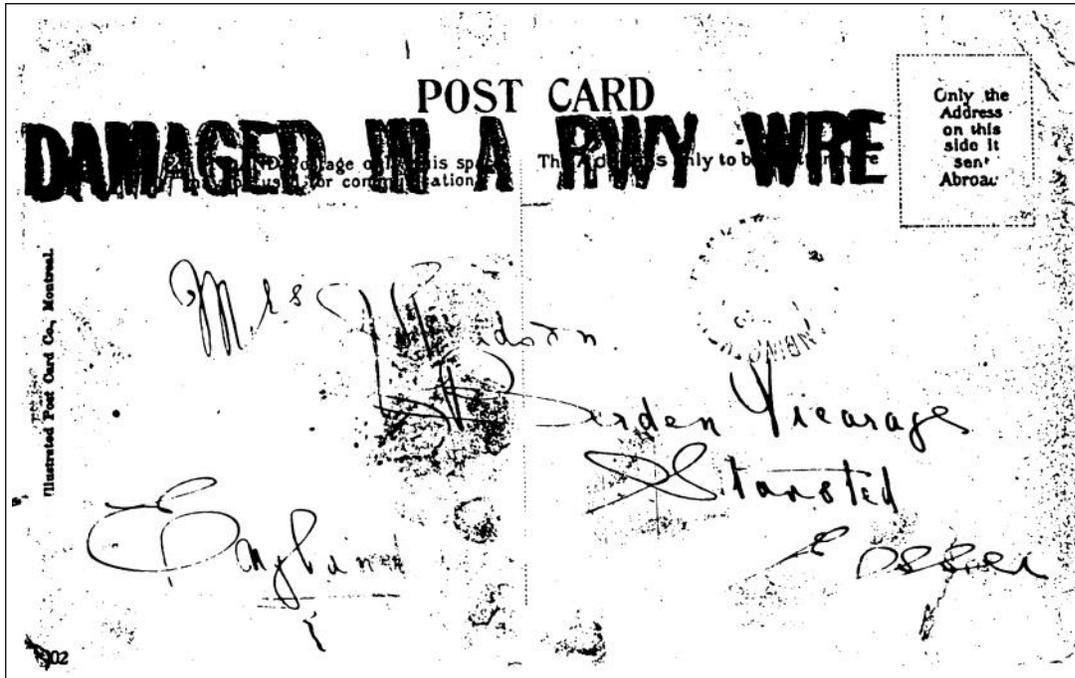


Hammer V

## Where was the Wreck?

Lionel Gillam has sent this illustration of a post card with a prominent straight line marking which reads, "**DAMAGED IN A RWY WRE...**". This postmark, almost certainly applied by the Canadian post office, is railway related, although probably not applied on an R.P.O.

Over the years, I have seen other straight line marks which relate to various railway accidents and fires. Perhaps we should consider a separate section in the new catalogue and list them. What do members think?



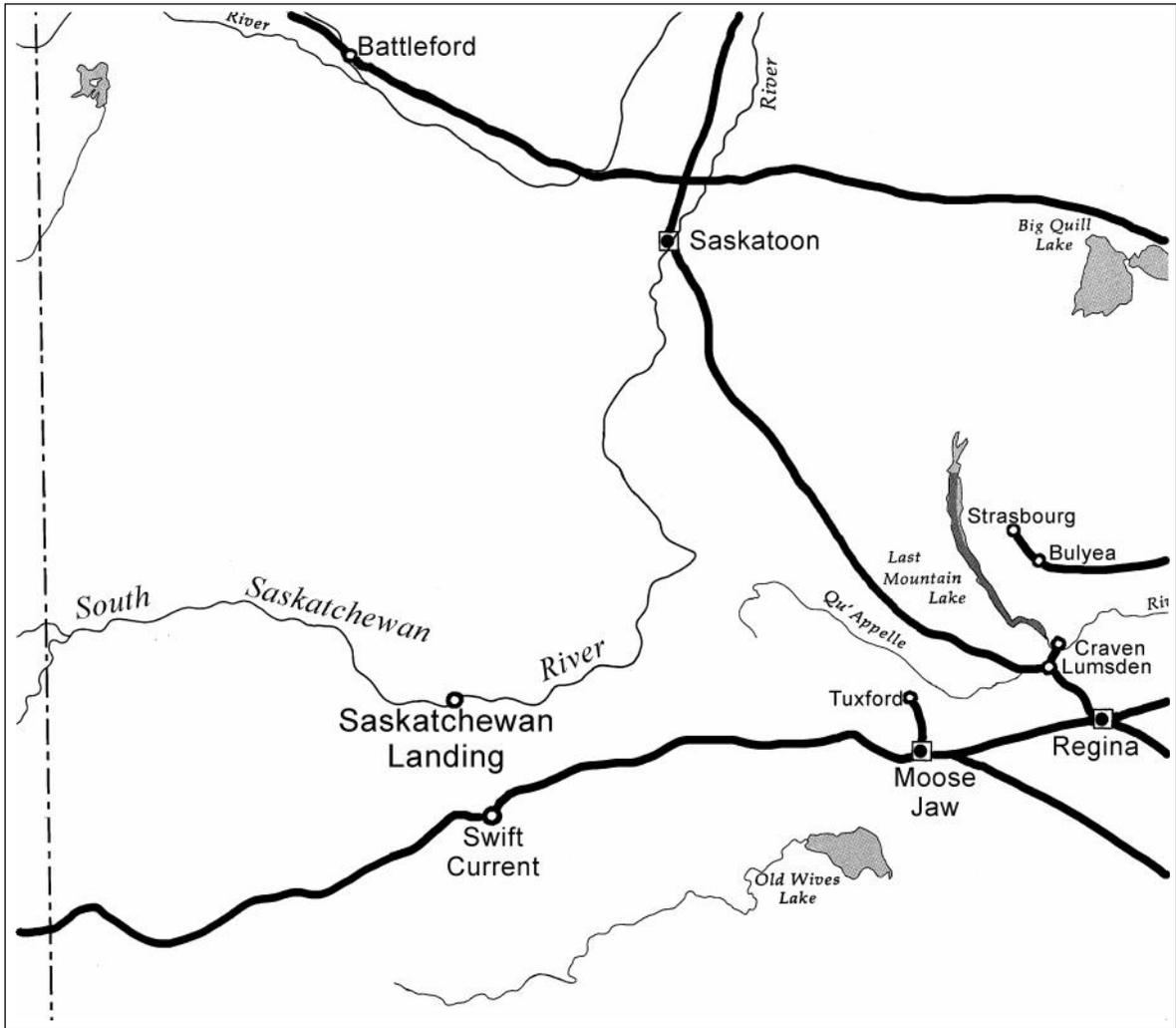
Lionel writes, "The enclosed train wreck postcard has been sent to me for my comments. As you will see, it originated in 1903, at Saskatchewan Landing, a small settlement presumably on the North or South Saskatchewan Rivers. I have looked in vain for its exact location on an official C.P.R. construction map, a huge affair taking in the whole of Manitoba to Vancouver. This gives the dates when the main line and numerous subsequent branches were constructed. It may, therefore have been a wreck on the Canadian Northern, although the early date suggests otherwise. As you know Mackenzie and Mann opened branch lines in the west at a furious pace, often before they had been officially inspected, hence, in this case, the wreck! Quite obviously Saskatchewan Landing could not have been on the Grand Trunk Pacific, as in 1903 it had only just been incorporated. For that matter, Saskatchewan Province had yet to be formed and I guess the postmark reads "Assa" at the base. Addressed to Stanstead, Essex, England, the scene overleaf is a Montreal winter one. If you can enlighten me, or if you feel it is worth publishing in the newsletter please go ahead. Forgive the poor type; the ribbon is worn out, like me."

Your editor loves a mystery and so pursued this one by searching the web and digging through my library. Bill Robinson's book, "Saskatchewan Post Offices", tells us that Saskatchewan Landing had a post office from 1888/03/01 until 1949/10/29.

The Saskatchewan Government website reveals that there is now a provincial park of the same name, near the site, which was flooded by Lake Diefenbaker in 1964. The location is a historic river crossing, where generations of Indian and Metis buffalo hunters forded the river. The site later became a stage-coach station and ferry landing, to service traffic over the Swift Current-Battleford Trail. A North West Mounted Police patrol station was established in 1885. Colonel Otter and his men crossed the South Saskatchewan River there, on the way to Battleford, during the Northwest Rebellion.

I constructed a map of the area showing the railways as they existed in 1906, well after the date of the marking, in order to consider possible routings. My conclusion is that the post card travelled south by road, to Swift Current and the Canadian Pacific Railway main line. Placed in a sealed bag, it then travelled by train to Winnipeg, Port Arthur, Ottawa and Montreal. Perhaps someone familiar with trans Atlantic routings can tell us if the card would have been put on board ship in Montreal or continued its journey by rail to Quebec, St. John or Halifax.

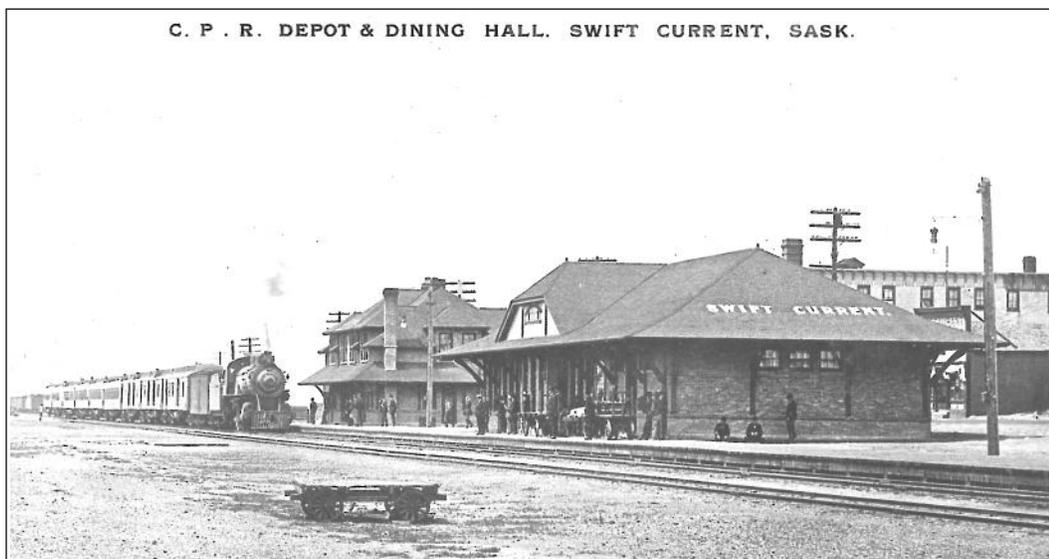
## Where was the Wreck?



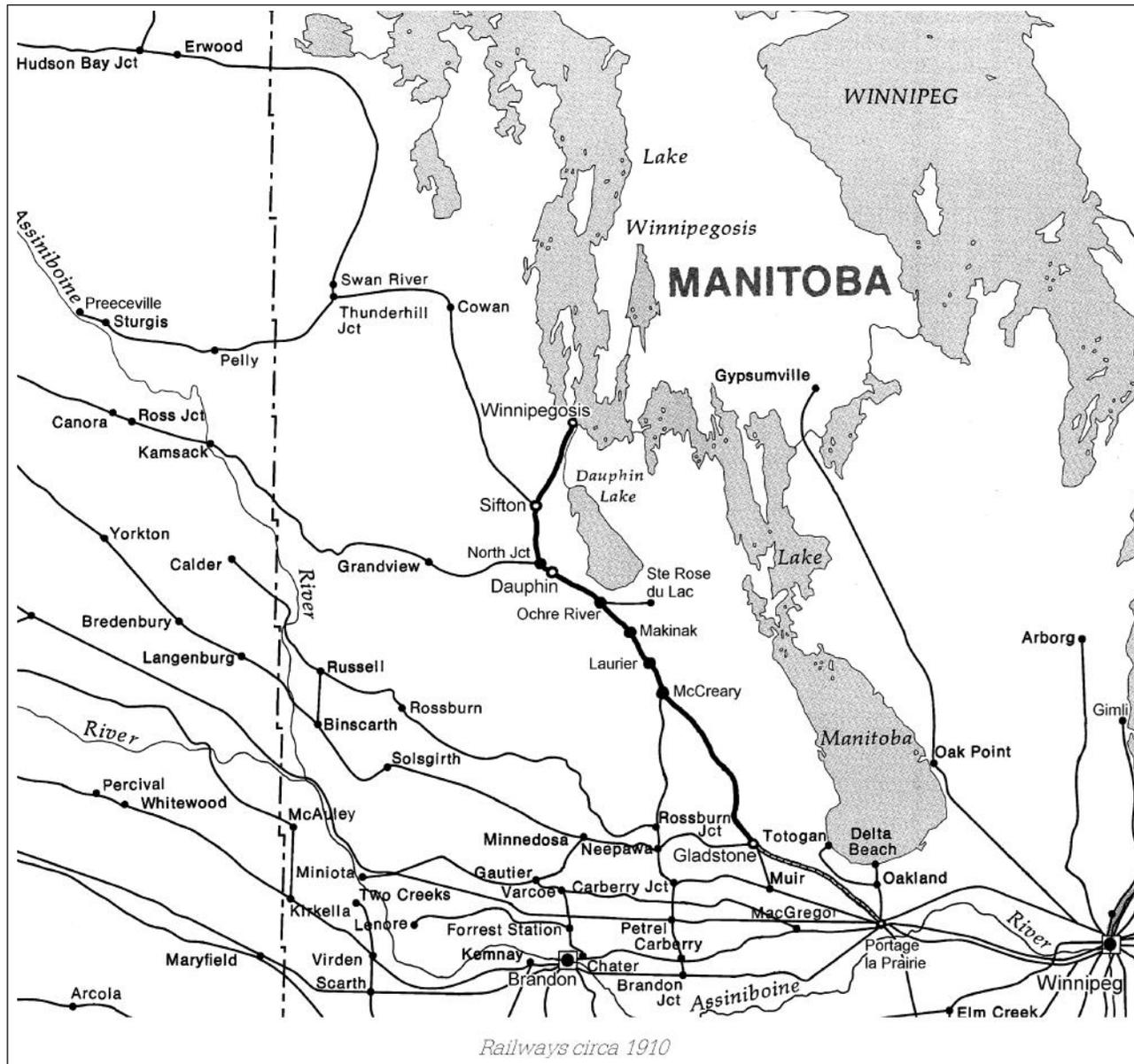
Railways circa 1906

Where was the card involved in a train wreck? Likely somewhere on the C.P.Ry main line, east of Swift Current. My efforts to find information about wrecks in August, 1903 have not been successful. Perhaps one of our study group members would like to take on this challenge and do some digging.

If we can determine the location of the wreck, it may lead us to speculate where the straight line post-mark was applied.



## Lake Manitoba Railway & Canal Company



In December, 1896, the **Lake Manitoba Railway and Canal Company** finished construction of 85 miles of track, from Gladstone to Dauphin. The following month, the line was completed a further 38 miles north, to Winnipegosis. Running rights were then obtained between Gladstone and Portage la Prairie, over the **Manitoba & Northwestern Railway**.

The first cancellation used on the railway is reported used from October 18, 1897, until September 5, 1901, with either a N or S direction indicator. No proof date is recorded. In 1901, two hammers of a second postmark reading, C.N.R. W'PEG. & DAUPHIN / N<sup>o</sup> 1 and C.N.R. W'PEG. & DAUPHIN / N<sup>o</sup> 2, replaced the first, for the extended run between Winnipeg and Dauphin.

In 1899, this railway, along with the **Manitoba & South Eastern Railway**, the **Winnipeg Great Northern Railway** and other lines had been consolidated as the **Canadian Northern Railway**.

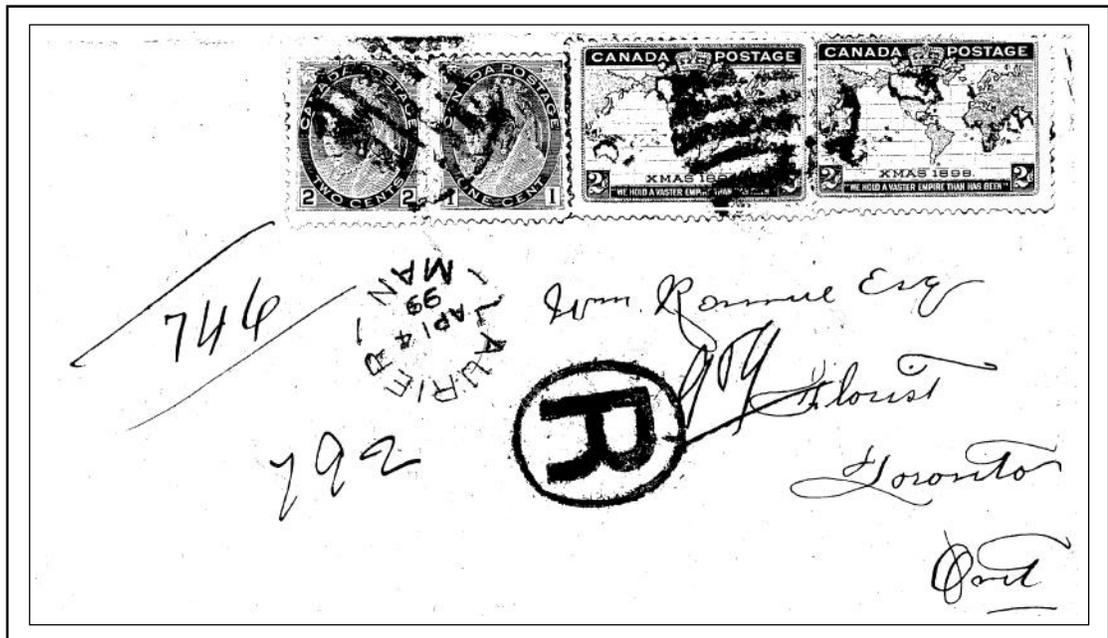
By 1902, the Canadian Northern Railway reached east to Port Arthur, Ontario. By 1905, it had been completed between Winnipeg and Edmonton.

## Lake Manitoba Railway & Canal Company

This cover apparently originated at WINNIPEGOSIS / MAN., FE 3, 99, as indicated by a single c.d.s. backstamp but it was not registered until it was transferred aboard the southbound R.P.O., 8 days later. The R.P.O. clerk cancelled the stamps and used a china marker to mark it, *Reg*. It then travelled in a sealed bag to Winnipeg, where it was transferred to a train for Port Arthur. At Port Arthur, it was placed aboard the eastbound Port Arthur & Ottawa mail car and received the last transit backstamp. The date of the London receiving backstamp is illegible.



RR-97 LAKE - MAN. RY & C. CO - M. C. / N<sup>o</sup> 1 S, FE 11, 99



RR-97 LAKE - MAN. RY & C. CO - M. C. / N<sup>o</sup> 1 N, AP 14, 99

This cover originated at LAURIER / MAN, AP 14, 99. It was transferred aboard the northbound train and taken off at DAUPHIN / MAN., AP 14, 99, where it was placed in a sealed bag for Toronto. It arrived at TORONTO / CANADA, PM, AP 18, 99.

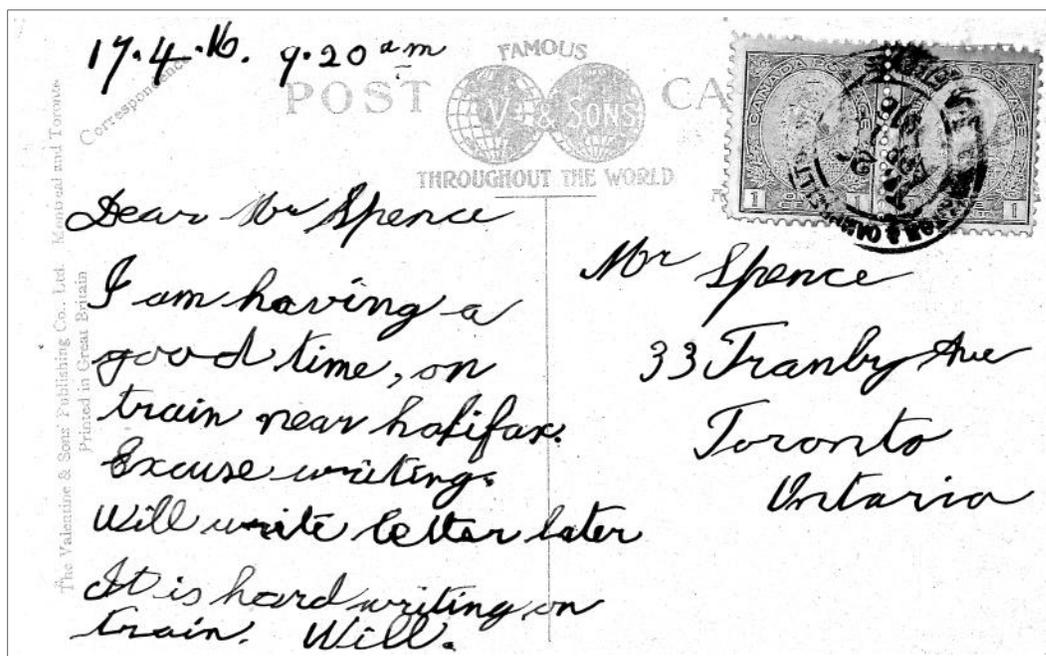


## The Caboose



Ross Gray reports this new **Latest Reported Date** for **hammer III** of **MA-152**, INVERNESS & PT. TUPPER / R. P. O. , 156, NO 3, 47 , found on a 7 cent air mail cover addressed to Toronto. The previous LRD was 1947/08/12.

Ross also found a new early date for **MA-169**, a private clerk handstamp used as a cancellation (black) on an Amherst, Nova Scotia picture post card addressed to Toronto. The previous ERD was 1916/07/02.



MA-169 MONCTON & CAMPBELLTON R. P. O. / T. B. STEEVES, Tr. 25, APR 17, 1916



This transit backstamp on a registered cover from Doaktown, N.B. to Toronto is a new late date for the listing.

MA-181

Another transit backstamp on a registered cover from Hampton Station, N.B. to Toronto is a new late date for the hammer



MA-210 Hmr XIX

**Peter McCarthy** reports a new early date, 1877/09/01 for **RR-182**, WELLAND RAILWAY P. O. / -. Peter's find is found as a transit backstamp, accompanied by RG-12, RG-39 and RR-66, on a cover from Clinton, U.C. to Welland.

Reflecting on the article in the previous newsletter (*page 1709*), **Chris Anstead** contacted Ian Mason, Manager of the Wallaceburg Museum, regarding the date of arrival of the **Erie & Huron Railway** in Wallaceburg. Mr Mason states that the line reached Wallaceburg in October, 1883 and Sarnia in 1886.

This information means that railway post office service south of Wallaceburg began before completion of the entire railway, since **RR-87** is reported used as early as March, 1884.

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