

# **The WEST OF WINNIPEG RPO Hammers**

**an exhibit prepared by**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

### **The WEST OF WINNIPEG RPO Hammers**

When Canada's first transcontinental railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was completed in 1885, it marked a major step in the evolution of mail transport in western Canada. Even while the CPR was still being constructed in western Canada, railway post office (RPO) services were almost immediately made available. The first RPO postmarks used on the CPR main line in western Canada were the WEST OF WINNIPEGs.

The Ludlow catalogue of Canadian RPOs contains the following listings:

**RR-27 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG / .**  
**RR-28 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG / # (number, letter)**  
**RR-29 C.P.R. WEST OF WINNIPEG / LOCAL #**  
**RR-30 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG - C. /**

These RPOs include 17 different hammers, a set that lends itself well to a one-frame exhibit. Research by the author leading to this exhibit was instrumental in:

- ❖ eliminating several hammers previously thought to exist,
- ❖ demonstrating that one RPO, RR-27, is in fact an evolution from RR-28b, hammer D, and
- ❖ producing for the first time reference images of three of the hammers.

This research has resulted in several publications in recognized journals of philately.

Each hammer is presented with basic data of proof date, earliest reported date (ERD) and last reported date (LRD). Examples of usage are included. Because some findings of the research will encourage collectors to review their data, a few ERD and LRD data are left out.

Some examples are quite scarce and that is noted. RF factors are irrelevant in some instances because published RF factors pertain to single listings. Within a single listing there can be specific hammers that are rarely seen.

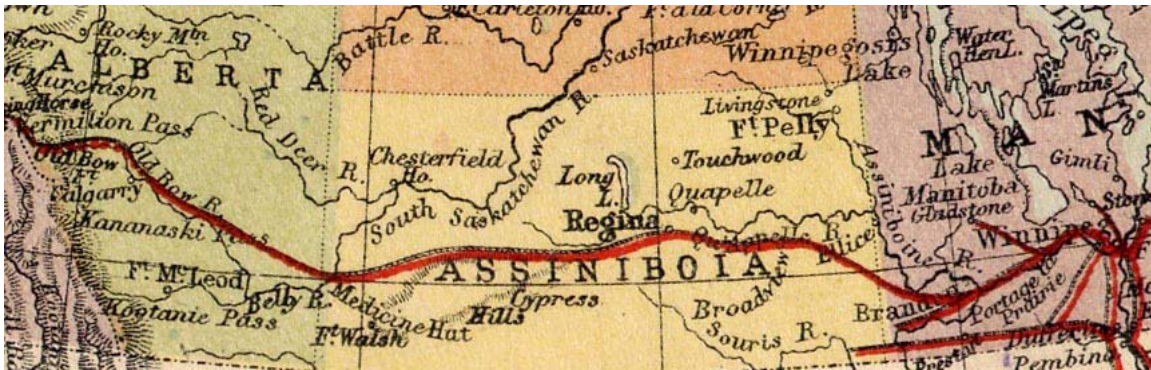
The WEST OF WINNIPEG RPOs were "open ended", in the sense that the designation did not indicate two end points of a run. However, it is believed that they were not used west of Calgary. It is also thought they could have been used on CPR branch lines before those lines were assigned their own RPOs, but that has yet to be demonstrated by anyone.

The author is indebted to a number of philatelists for their assistance, advice and use of records. In particular, Ross Gray, whose earlier review of these hammers,

based on much earlier studies within the BNAPS RPO Study Group, has been inspirational and constructive in his comments. Bill Robinson is another inspirational RPO advisor from whom this exhibit has benefited greatly. Advice from Chris Anstead and Gray Scrimgeour is also recognized and has been appreciated.

## The WEST OF WINNIPEG RPO Hammers

When Canada's first transcontinental railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was completed in 1885, it marked a major step in the evolution of mail transport in western Canada. Even while the CPR was still being constructed in western Canada, railway post office (RPO) services were almost immediately made available. The first RPO postmarks used on the CPR main line in western Canada were the WEST OF WINNIPEGs.



Scan from an 1885 Dominion of Canada map showing the route of the Canadian Pacific Railway ["Calgary" on the west and Winnipeg on the east]. This was the route on which the WEST OF WINNIPEG RPOs were used.

This exhibit summarizes recent research findings for the following RPO listings:

- RR-28 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG / # (number, letter)
- RR-27 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG / .
- RR-29 C.P.R. WEST OF WINNIPEG / LOCAL #
- RR-30 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG - C. /

The exhibit is presented in the order shown above. All of the 17 unique hammers are described, with examples.



For all of the WEST OF WINNIPEG postmarks, the W and WEST directions are the least common.

RR-28a  
Hammer 1.

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / No.  
proof: JAN 2 82      ERD: JY 10 82

LRD: JUN 30 00



[ Example of RR-28a, hammer 1, dated SP 25 82, direction: EAST ]

This is a very early date for this hammer.  
Cover addressed to a town in Illinois, USA

[ ex-Steinhart, ex-Robinson ]



28 mm diameter



23 mm diameter

Hammers 1. and 2. were issued in 28 mm diameter, larger  
than any of the hammers that followed in this series ( e.g. No. 3 ).

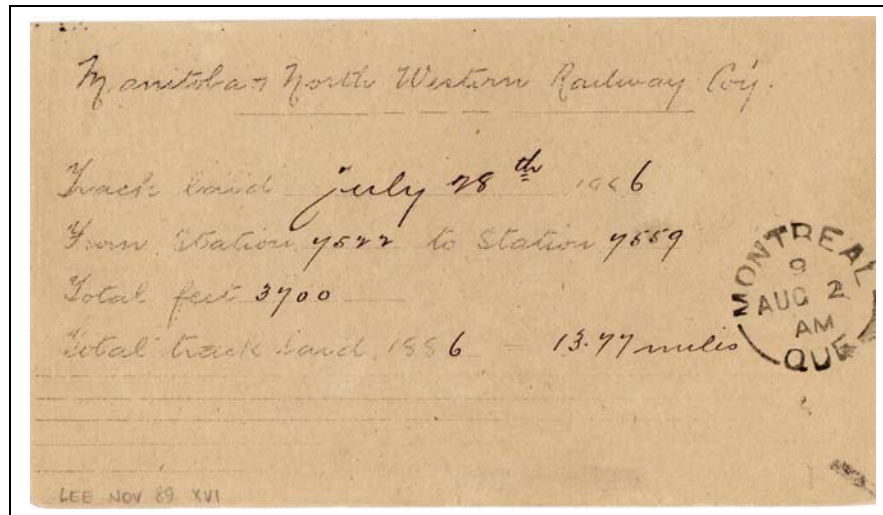
WEST OF WINNIPEG

RR-28a  
Hammer 2.

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / No.  
proof: JAN 2 82

ERD: AU 24 82

LRD: MY 11 00



Back of postcard shown below – with primitive documentation of mileage laid on the Manitoba and North Western Railway, a CPR competitor. Date indicates July 28, 1886. In 1886, records show that the line had been laid from Portage to Birtle, via Minnedosa.  
Scan = 75%



[ Example of RR-28a, hammer 2, dated JY 30 86, direction: EAST ]

Postcard containing track data for the Manitoba and North Western Railway

WEST OF WINNIPEG



both on the main line of the CPR.

RR-28b  
Hammer No. 3

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / No.

proof: JUL 20 82

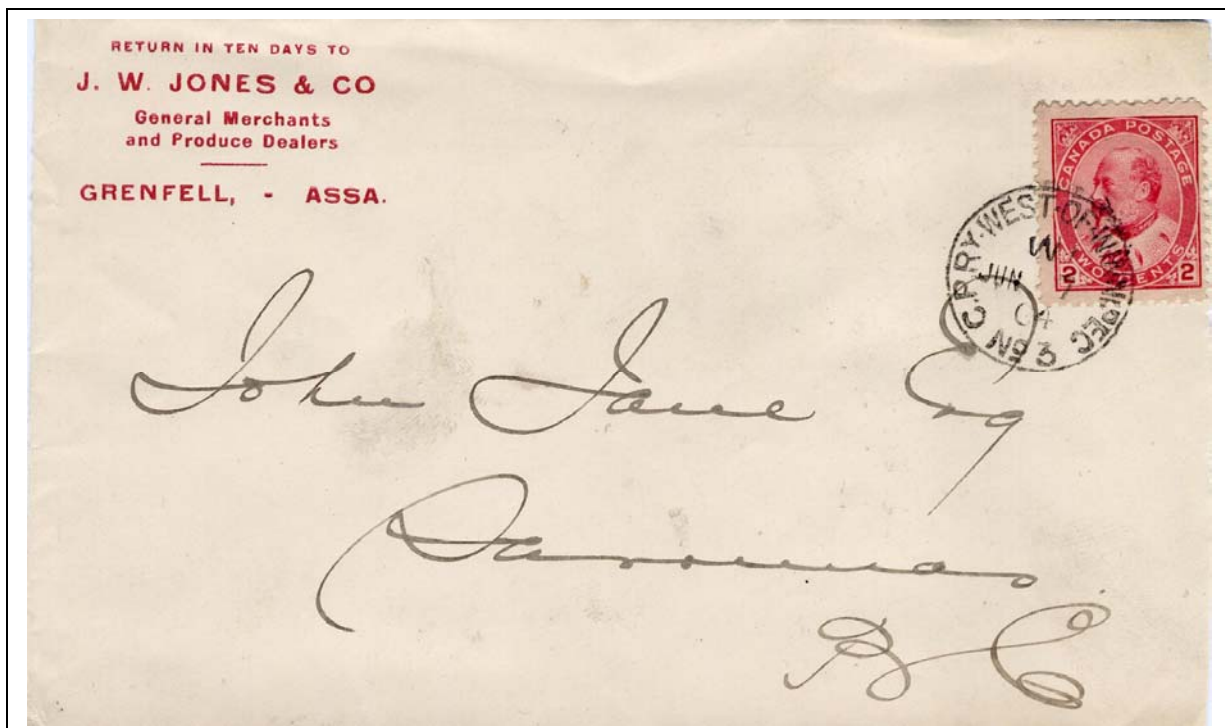
ERD: AU 12 82

LRD: OC 1 04



[RR-28b-I, was presented as "No. 3", rather than just "3". It was one of the first hammers issued and it was used for one of the longest periods of time.

This is an early example: MY 26 1883, EAST]



[ RR-28b-I, No. 3, late example: JUN 7, 1904, W on corner cover from Grenfell to BC ]

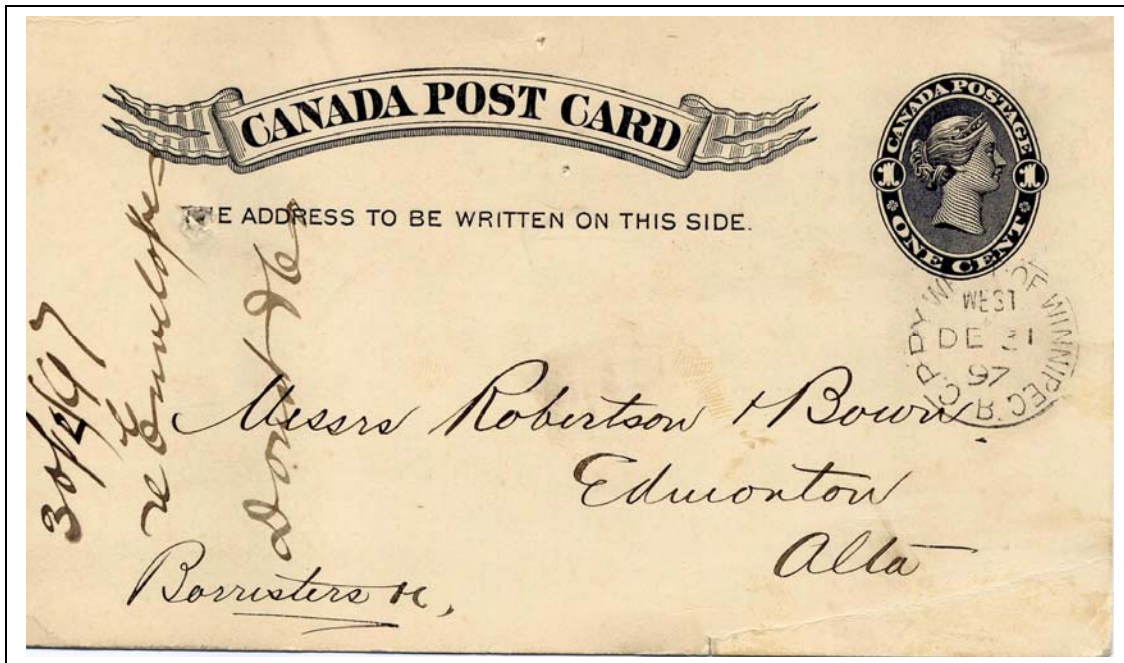
WEST OF WINNIPEG

RR-28b  
Hammer B. (II)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter  
proof: AU 2 83

ERD: AU 13 84

LRD: AU 24 00



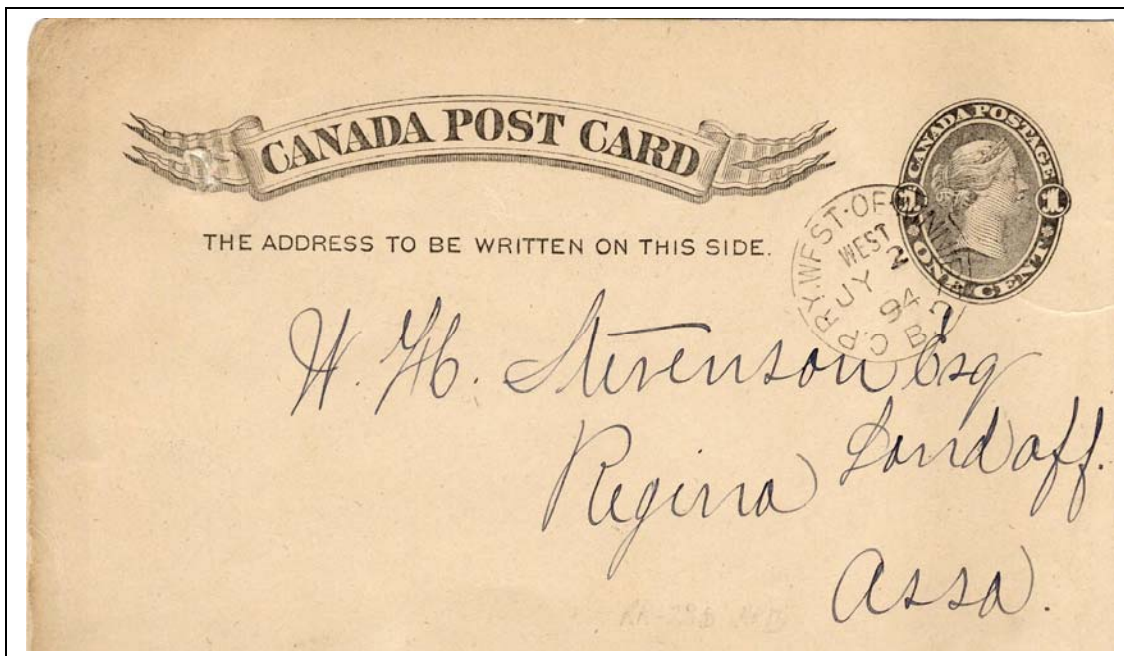
[RR-28b-II, hammer B., DE 31 97, direction: WEST, legal notice, Regina NWT to Edmonton ]

RR-28b  
Hammer B. (III)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter  
proof: AU 2 83

ERD: MY 26 84

LRD: JU 22 05



[RR-28b-III, hammer B., JY 2 94, direction: WEST, land title request from Qu'Appelle Stn.]

WEST OF WINNIPEG



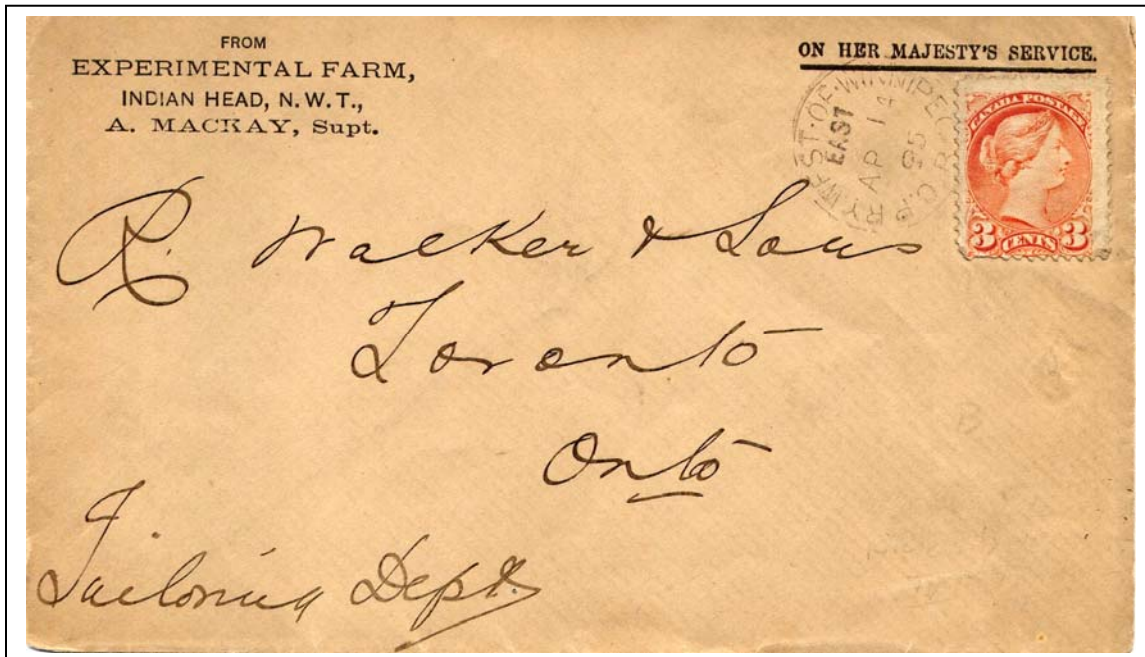
RR-28b  
Hammer B. (IV)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter  
proof: NIPB ERD: not determined LRD: not determined

The two previous RR-28b hammers using the letter "B" were proofed in 1883. A third hammer, not in the proof book, was issued also. This is RR-28b-IV. The reference image shown below was recently prepared and replaces the earlier reference image, which was the same as hammer II. Until collectors have had a chance to review their hammer IV holdings, ERD and LRD are uncertain. All B hammers were issued with a dot after the B.



Reference image recently prepared for hammer RR-28b-IV.  
There is no period after the "P" in C.P.R. This is unique to this hammer.



[RR-28b-IV, hammer B., AP 14 95, direction: EAST, territorial OHMS cover,  
ex-Steinhart, ex-Robinson]

WEST OF WINNIPEG

RR-28b  
Hammer C. (V)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter

proof: SP 9 83

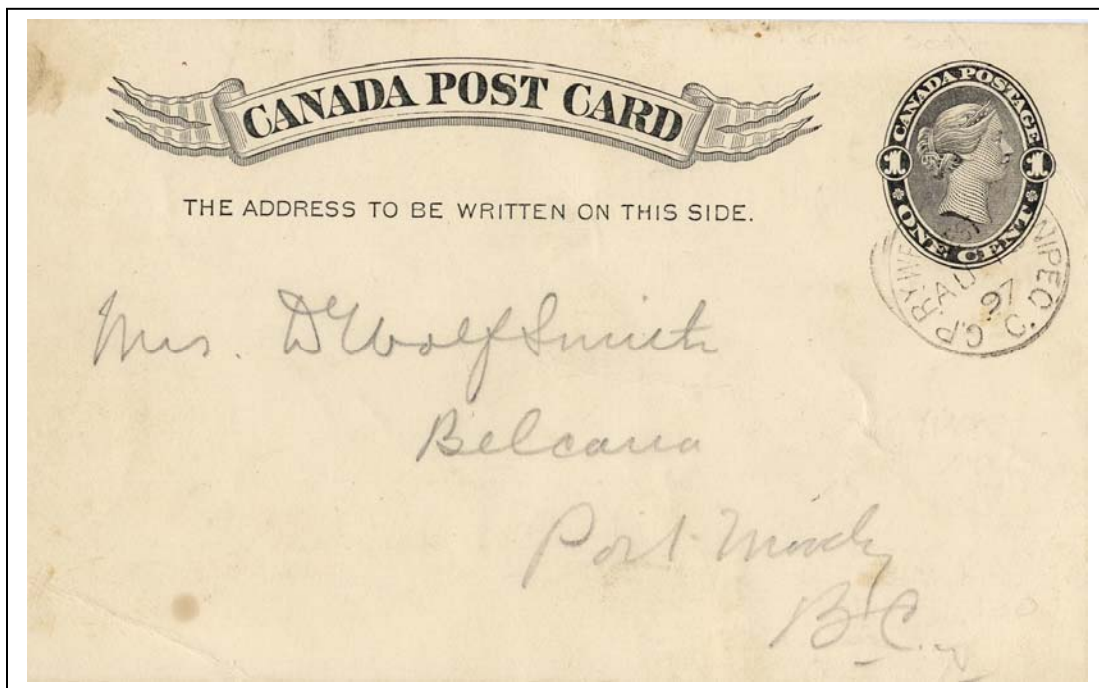
ERD: JUL 31 86

LRD: FE 23 99

The "C" hammers have recently been revised. Hammer VII has been de-listed and hammer X has now been described in a reference image. There are now hammers V, VI, VIII, IX and X. All C hammers show dots beside the letter.



C hammers, left to right: 28b-V, 28b-VI, 28b-VIII, 28b-IX, and 28b-X



[ RR-28b Hammer C. (V), AU 15 97, direction: WEST;  
card from train traveler at Swift Current ]

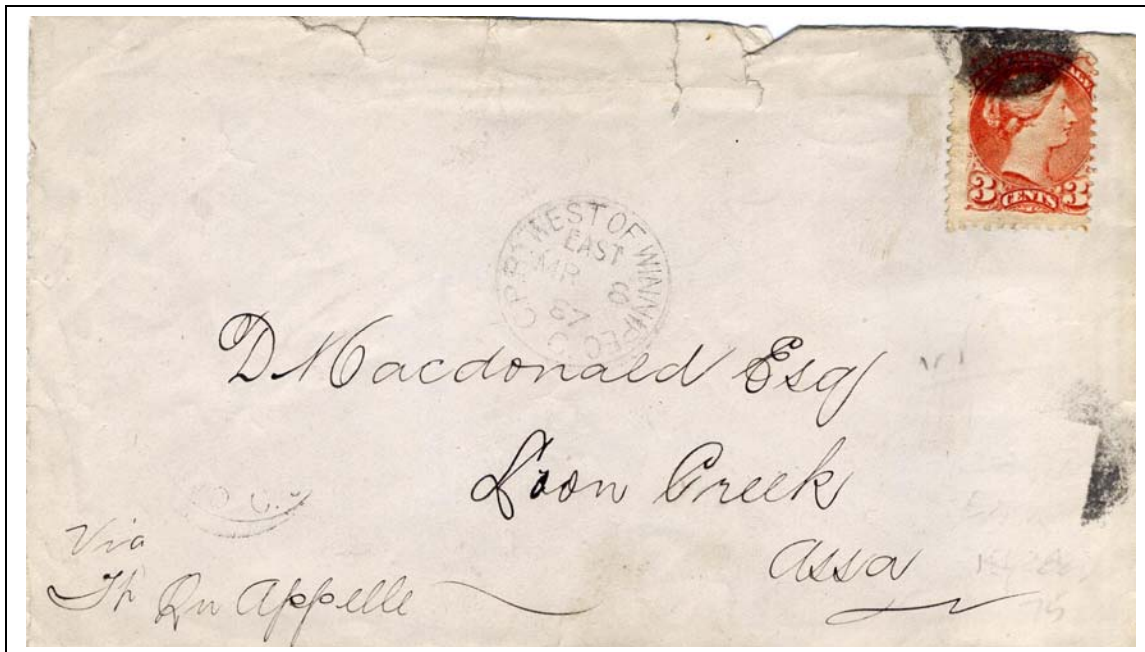
WEST OF WINNIPEG

RR-28b  
Hammer C (VI)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter  
proof: SP 9 83

ERD: MR 8 87

LRD: MY 27 99



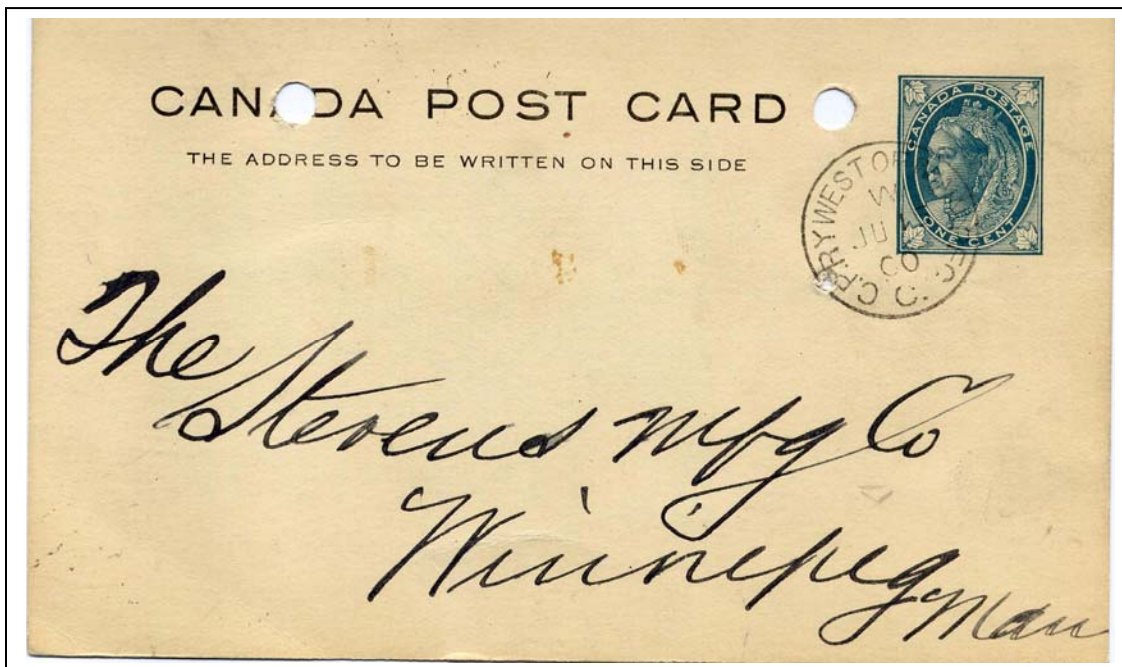
[RR-28b-VI, hammer C., MR 8 87 **EARLIEST DATE**, EAST, to Loon Creek, ASSA.]

RR-28b  
Hammer C (VIII)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter  
proof: JY 16 86

ERD: JU 22 87

LRD: JU 13 00



[RR-28b-VIII, hammer C., JU 13 00 **LATEST DATE**, direction: W, Weyburn hardware card]

WEST OF WINNIPEG

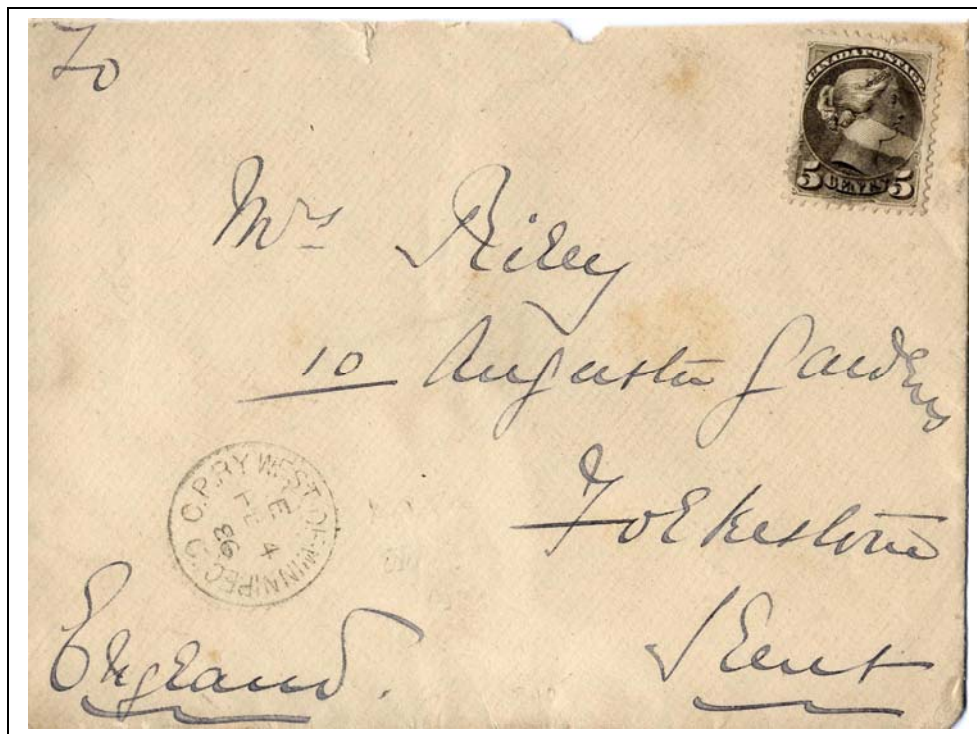


RR-28b  
Hammer C (IX)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter  
proof: JY 16 86

ERD: MY 20 87

LRD: MR ? 9?



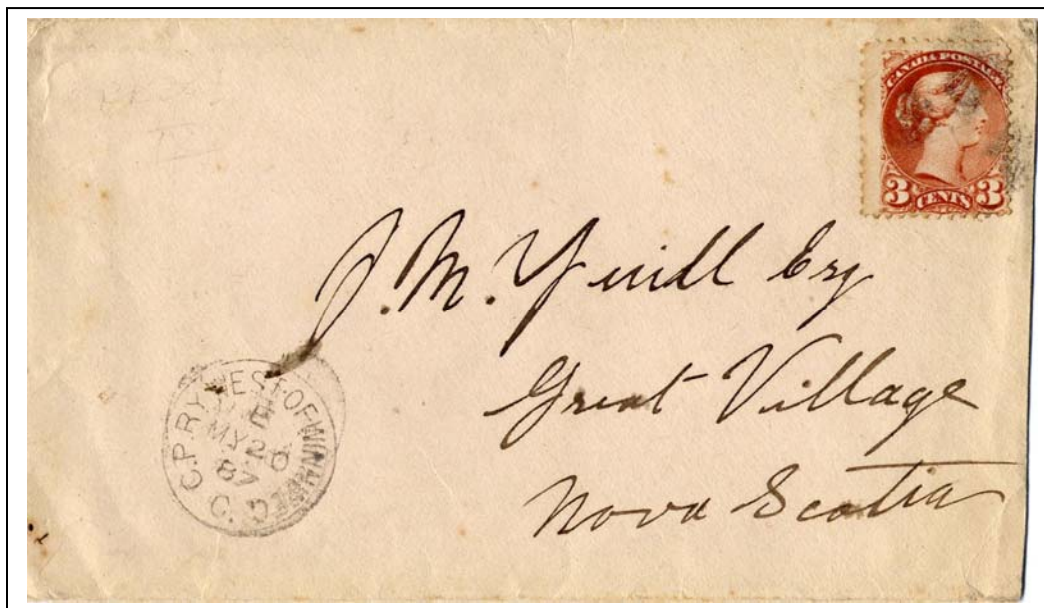
[RR-28b-IX, hammer C., FE 4 86, E; letter to England – date error, should be 1889]

RR-28b  
Hammer C (X)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter  
proof: NIPB

ERD: JA 8 87

LRD: JU 15 00



[RR-28b-X, hammer C., MY 20 87, direction: E, to Great Village, NS]

WEST OF WINNIPEG

RR-28b  
Hammer D. (XII)

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / letter  
proof: NIPB

ERD: FE 17 91

LRD: FE 16 05

RR-27

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG / .

Although historically there has been a listing for RR-27 - a hammer showing a dot off-centre at the bottom, and no letter or number, this has recently been shown to have evolved from RR-28b Hammer D. (XII). The "D" has been removed or eroded, leaving the dot. The examples that demonstrated this are:



From L to R: proof of 28b-XII, 1891 partial "D", 1896 remnant left, 1897 small pin point left, 1898 the RR-27 configuration, 1900 the dot also has gone

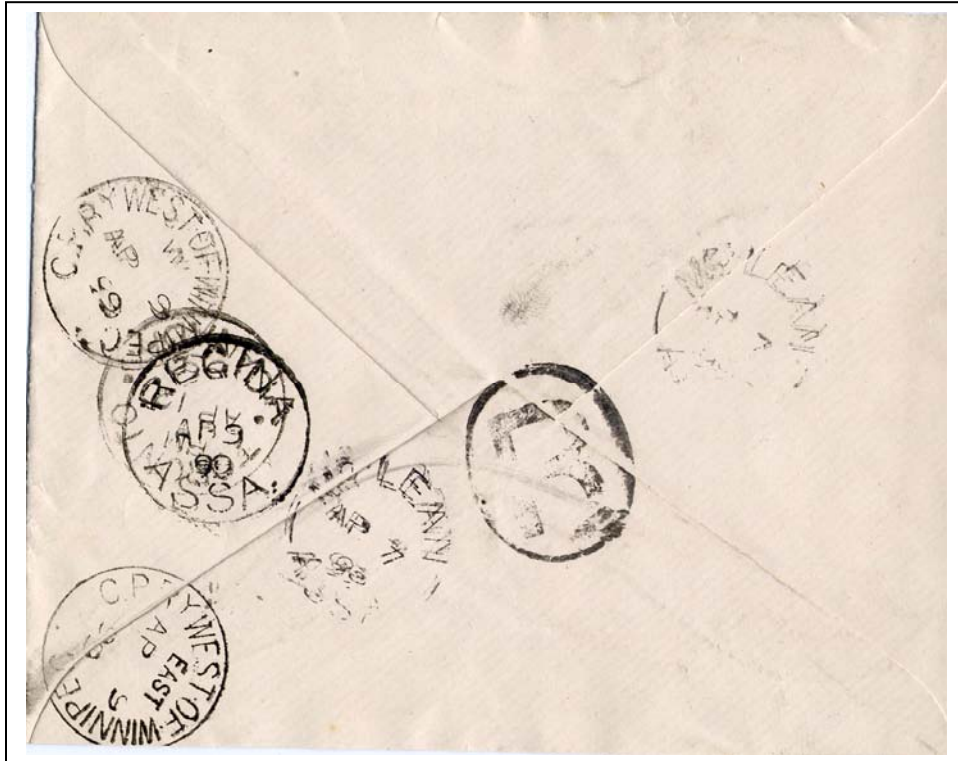


[RR-28b-XII, hammer D., JY 10 91, WEST; business cover from Rochester (NY) to Minnedosa barrister. Ex-Robinson]

WEST OF WINNIPEG



The evolution of 28b-XII, hammer D, gradually to what was termed RR-27, eventually produced a dot at the base, then a blank base.



[RR-28b-X hammer D. (previously RR-27), AP 9 99, W and EAST]

The front of this cover appears in the book: "Territorial Assiniboia and Saskatchewan", by Rosemary Gray, as a scarce example of the McLean, ASSA, postmark. Subsequent examination revealed that there are two uses of the "RR-27", one W dated AP 9 99 and one EAST with the same date. The cover was registered, destined for Toronto. A current CPR timetable was used to demonstrate that this hammer was "turned around" at Moose Jaw. This had not been known for certain, although in 1900 the run was definitely divided to produce a Winnipeg to Moose Jaw run.

WEST OF WINNIPEG

**RR-29**

**C. P. R. WEST OF WINNIPEG / LOCAL #**

**Hammer Local 1**

**proof: JUN 2 93**

**ERD: JUN 27 93**

**LRD: OC 13 99**

In 1893, three hammers were issued for use on local trains operating on this part of the CPR main line.



**Proofs of the three LOCAL hammers**

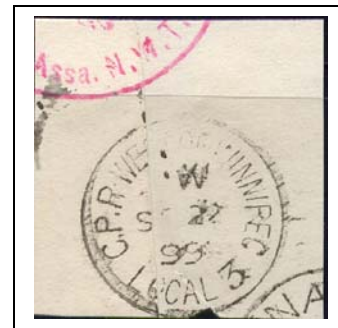
**Examples of the LOCAL postmarks:**



**LOCAL 1, OC 13 99  
E**



**LOCAL 2, NO 11 03  
E**



**LOCAL 3, SP 22 99  
W**

Local trains had two or three digit numbers. In later years, these train numbers appeared as indicia. Whereas all the RR-28 hammers seemed to use exclusively the directional indices: E, W, EAST, WEST, there is one reported example of a train number (# 69). This example has proven to be from hammer RR-28b-III, rather than one of the three LOCAL hammers. This has never been explained.



**WEST OF WINNIPEG**

RR-29

C. P. R. WEST OF WINNIPEG / LOCAL #

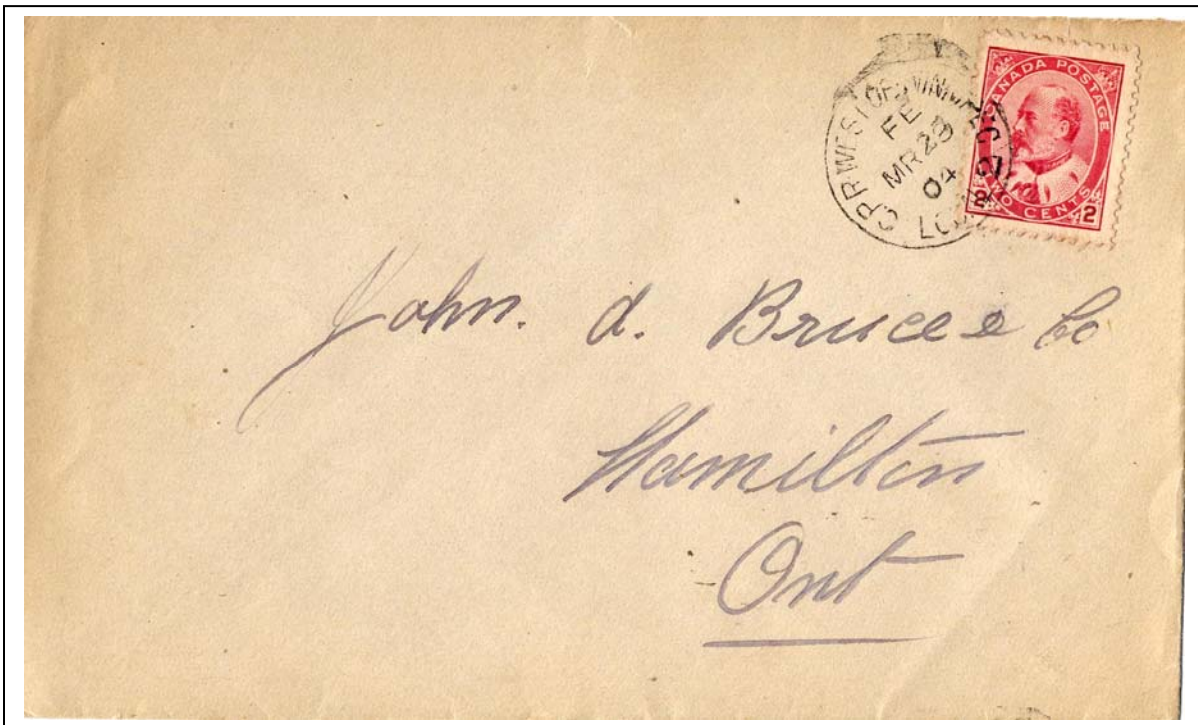
Hammer Local 2

proof: JUN 2 93

ERD: JUN 29 99

LRD: JUN 20 07

Hammers 2 and 3 are more commonly found than is hammer 1. The WEST OF WINNIPEG LOCAL hammers were used to a later date than were the others, and were replaced by "divisional" local hammers, such as the W'PEG. & M. JAW (LOCAL) R.P.O. / No. at a later date than the replacement of the other WEST OF WINNIPEGs



[ RR-29-II LOCAL 2, MR 28, 04, FE (note that the clerk needed a missing "E" direction and had to substitute the closest month available "FE") ; cover to Hamilton, Ont.]

WEST OF WINNIPEG

RR-29

Hammer Local 3

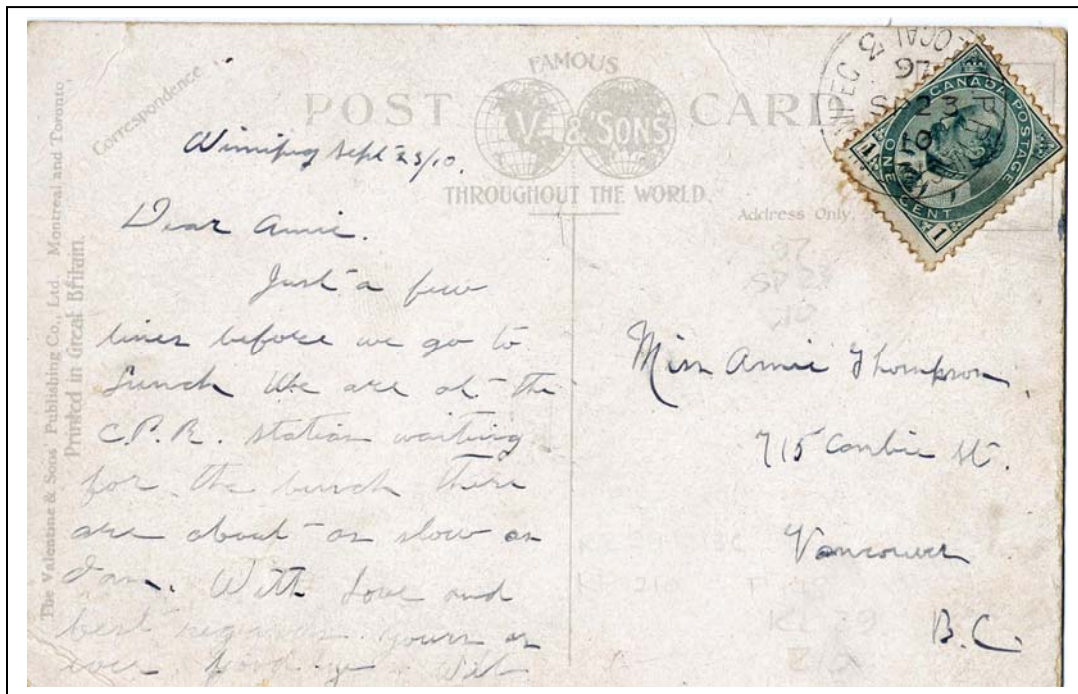
C. P. R. WEST OF WINNIPEG / LOCAL #

proof: JUN 2 93

ERD: JUL 26 99

LRD: SP 23 10

The example of hammer 3 below contains another notable indicia error. The entire indicia section is inverted.



[ RR-29-III, LOCAL 3, SP 23 10, **last reported date**; inverted indicia, Train # 97, post card to Vancouver from Winnipeg]

WEST OF WINNIPEG



RR-30  
Hammer I

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG . C / .

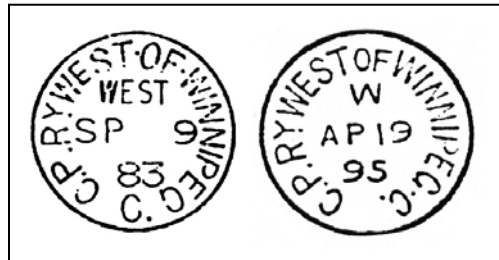
proof: AP 19 95

ERD: NO 22 97

LRD: JY 9 00

This is easily the most unusual hammer in the WEST OF WINNIPEGs. It carries the letter "C", but not centered upright at the bottom. The "C" is found immediately following the lettering around the circumference. This is the only listing with this layout. The design has a unique presentation of the word "OF", which is shorter than the other lettering. RR-30 came in two hammers.

There are 5 reported examples of RR-30-I (RF = 475). Three are exhibited below, including the Last Reported Date.



Comparison of: on left, RR-28b (hammer C) proof with, on right, RR-30 (hammer C) proof.



RR-30-I : 23 JA 99 E



30 MR 00 E



9 JY 00 (LRD) E

Both of the RR-30 hammers were used late in the period of the WEST OF WINNIPEGs. From the few reports, it appears as though hammer I was generally used later but this does not seem plausible.



RR-30  
Hammer II

C. P. Ry. WEST OF WINNIPEG . C / .  
proof: NIPB

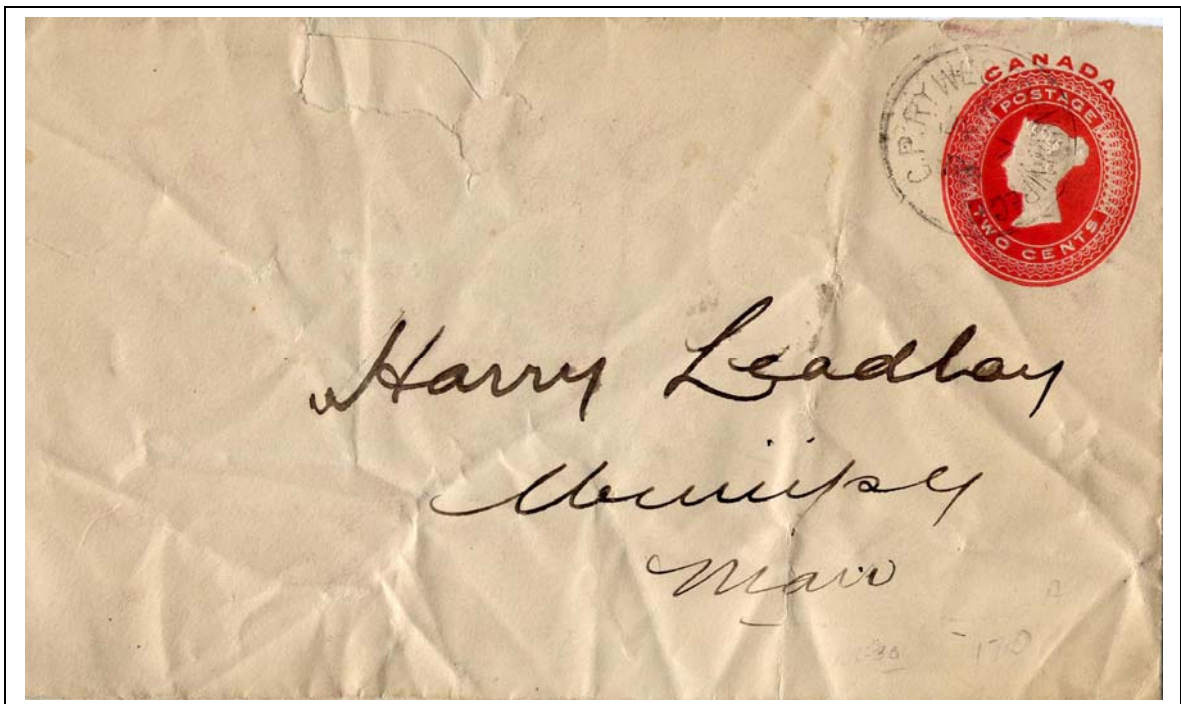
ERD: MY 5 95

LRD: JY 7 99

The hammer RR-30-II has no proof image and has not had a reference image. This study has produced a reference image from an examination of available examples. These are very few in number (fewer than a dozen examples for all the RR-30 RPO).



Reference image for RR-30-II developed recently from the available examples.



[Scarce (RF = 475) example of RR-30-II on cover, 7 JY 99, (LRD) E.]

WEST OF WINNIPEG