

CALGARY PHILATELIST

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(see page 13 for list of committee chairpersons)

PREPAID POSTAGE: WHY?

by Hugh Delaney

In his masterpiece SIXTY YEARS A QUEEN, published for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart., M.P., of Great Britain, told the fascinating sidebar story of the Post Office changed from charging recipients to charging the sender of mail. It should be repeated, and so this article will quote from that historical record. It will also go further to tell the story of postage in Canada with reference to the work of John. S. Ewart in his book THE KINGDOM OF CANADA, IMPERIAL FEDERATION, THE COLONIAL CONFERENCES, THE ALASKA BOUNDARY, AND OTHER ESSAYS. Now there's a mouthful title to remember!

According to Sir Herbert, with probable political tongue in cheek, the crowning achievement of Lord Melbourne's administration originated not with a Minister, or one of the bureaucracy, but with a humble school teacher. This was Sir Rowland Hill, the son of a school master. He loved arithmetic and became mathematical master in his father's school.

Rowland, with his bent for figures, studied Post Office statistics after he heard an anecdote told of the writer Coleridge, circa 1836. According to the story related, Coleridge was in the Lake District of England when he happened to see a poor woman refuse to accept delivery of a letter from a postman because she could not afford to pay the postage of one shilling. He learned that the letter was from the lady's brother and so he offered to pay the fee, even though the lady demurred. When the postman turned away, the woman showed Coleridge the letter which consisted of a blank sheet. She explained that her brother agreed to send her a blank sheet once a quarter as long as everything was going well with him, marking the cover so that she would not have to accept delivery and therefore wouldn't have to pay postage. Rowland Hill ascertained from this that the system held to an economic fallacy, and determined to devise a means to remedy it.

In 1837 he published his design in pamphlet form, proposing that a smaller fee charged for carrying letters would bring about a greater use and therefore a larger profit to the Post Office. His recommendation called for a uniform rate of one penny per half ounce, regardless of how far the letter would have to travel in England.

This proposal to the public service of a commercial principle by which fortunes had been repeatedly achieved by private business was condemned out of hand by the Post Office authorities. Lord Lichfield, the Postmaster General, declared in the House of Lords that the idea was "*the wildest and most extravagant scheme he*

had ever listened to". The Secretary to the Post Office, Colonel Maberly, predicted the concept was doomed to fail, although it was his opinion that it should not be impeded, because to do so would result in the government being blamed for not giving it a trial. Sydney Smith, who was quoted as representing public opinion, opined thus: *"A million of revenue is given up to the nonsensical Penny Post Scheme, to please my old, excellent and universally dissentient friend, Noah Warburton. I admire the Whig Ministry, and think they have done more good things than all the ministries since the Revolution; but these concessions are sad and unworthy marks of weakness, and fill reasonable men with alarm."* The Noah Warburton referred to was, along with Mr. Wallace, of the two members of Parliament who supported the project of Rowland Hill.

Ultimately it fell to Mr. Spring Rice, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to have the courage to get the bill through, even though he faced the prospect of a £750,000 deficit. The motion, however, passed with a majority of 102. As Sir Herbert chronicled nearly sixty years later, this *"offspring of the genius of an obscure mathematical teacher, and so modestly brought to light, has since been adopted by every civilized community in the world"*.

Looking back to 1839, letters could not be prepaid; distance, weight, shape, and size of letters provided for various charges. A letter posted in London to go to Brighton would cost the recipient 8 pence, London to Aberdeen cost 1 shilling and ½ pence, and to Belfast 1 shilling and 4 pence.

There was at that time a great deal of pressure from commercial centres to find cheaper postage. On top of all these pressures, there was a hue and cry against the system of Official Franks. A privilege of free postage for members of the government and Parliament was well abused, and was passed on to their friends and relatives by the various members who wrote their names on covers and handed them out. Revenue was thus defrauded and those least able to bear the cost paid higher fees in order that the Post Office Department could make up the losses generated by the free service.

Because of the high rates of the Post Office, people has been driven to various means of infringing the monopoly. All kinds of illegal and clandestine enterprises abounded to carry letters at cheaper rates. When Rowland Hill brought forward his plan, it was proven that 5/6 of correspondence had been smuggled for many years. In the years between 1815 and 1835, the population had grown by 30% and the stage coach duty by 128%, yet the Post Office revenue had remained stationary.

Needless to say, reducing the rate from sixpence farthing to one pence was startling. Originally the Commons Committee had proposed a uniform two-pence rate, but Mr. Spring Rice was convinced that the loss (as most were sure there must be a loss for the Department) would be less from a one-pence rate. He estimated the loss at about £700,000.

No one could have foreseen the actual results. In 1837 there were 80,000 letters and 44,000 newspapers delivered by the Post Office in the British Isles. In the fiscal year 1895-96, exclusive of telegrams which now came under the Post Office, the figure was 2,248 times the volume of 1837, or 3,031,553,196 items with a net profit of £3,632,122. (As an aside, the value of property found in letters opened in the Returned Letter Offices in 1896 amounted to £580,000.) On August 1, 1883, Parcel Postage was introduced in Great Britain, and 25,000,000 were delivered the first year. By 1895-96, the number of inland parcels delivered was 60,500,000. So the Penny Postage became a fact early in the reign of Queen Victoria in the 1840.

In Canada in 1908, John S. Ewart discussed Imperial Postage as one of the methods of "Consolidating the Empire" as a Canadian success story. He said: *"Even the originators of the postal system must have had some conception of its tremendous educational as well as commercial advantages, and no one doubts that cheap postage is a powerful aid in the dissemination of culture as well as in the advancement of the world's welfare."*

Referring to Great Britain with its short distances, a dense population, and good transportation, letters were charged a minimum rate of one penny. In 1905, the surplus revenue was \$18,000,000. However, Canada's approach had to be different, with immense distances, a thinly-scattered population, and in many cases, primitive transportation in the 1800s. The minimum letter rate used in 1908 was the same as in Great Britain, which meant that the Canadian postal system was not designed to be profitable.

When Britain managed affairs in the Canadian colonies between 1763 and 1851, its idea was that the postal system should make money, and thousands of dollars were sent to London as profits on the Canadian operations. When Canada took over management of the colonial system in 1851, the average rate for a letter dropped from 18 cents per half ounce to 6 cents. During the next four years the revenue climbed from \$230,629 in 1852 to \$368,166 in 1855.

In 1868, a year after Confederation, the letter rate was fixed at 3 cents per ounce. In 1899 it dropped to 2 cents per ounce. Canada's mail system delivered letters from Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Dawson, Yukon, at 5,495 miles for the 2 cent rate,

while Britain's Penny Postage had only to travel a maximum of 900 miles. Also in 1868, the rate from Canada to Britain was 12.5 cents per ounce; two years later it dropped to 6 cents, and to 5 cents in 1875.

In 1897 the Canadian Postmaster General took unilateral action over the objections of Britain and issued a notice that after January 1, 1898, letters to Great Britain would be 3 cents per ounce. Britain declared it would not accept letters with that charge. However, Canada persisted and Britain re-considered. Sir William Mulock, the Postmaster General for Canada, took the suggestion of his opposite number in England. He withdrew notice of his proposed motion and paid \$91.95 upon letters sent on the rate he had proposed. By the end of the year, on December 21, 1898, following discussions, he declared the rate from Canada, not only to Britain but also to 36 other parts of the British Empire, would be 2 cents per ounce. On October 1, 1907, it was reduced to every part of the Empire, even though some places like Australia and Rhodesia still charged more than 2 cents on letters to Canada. Due to Canada's persistence, the Penny rate took over in 1908.

The ramifications of postage rates on newspapers, magazines, and periodicals between Great Britain and Canada, and between Canada and the USA, is another study entirely. It is a further portent of the ongoing battle between Canadian and American publishers and the Canadian and American governments.

Meanwhile, the Penny Postage went the route of the Dodo bird. Nearly every year sees postal rate increases. The structure of the postal system continued to evolve, with the Canadian system trying to become a profitable Crown Corporation. I suppose the next question is: Where to now?

MEANWHILE, THERE IS INDEED NO NEW THING UNDER THE SUN

[The following extract is from PUNCH magazine, Volume 10, page 164. The year this comment was published was 1846.]

"Post Office arrangements are getting slower and slower every day, while everything else is getting on at railroad pace. ... Where is the Postmaster General? we again ask; for if he does not manifest himself very speedily, we will take out a search warrant and search the Post Office to see what has become of him? Have they smothered him in the day mail, or pelted him to death with morning newspapers?"

HE WAS THIS CLOSE!

by Dale Speirs

I stopped off at the downtown post office on 9 Avenue SW at noon on April 5 to pick up my mail from Box 6830. There are several thousand box numbers in the lobby of the building, and mine is at the back. As I walked in, I saw people milling about inside and some kind of postal display. I thought perhaps it might be a first day of issue for a stamp, but was puzzled because I'm sure I would have known about it for a Calgary event. What it was, however, was hockey superstar Gordie Howe signing autographs as publicity for Canada Post's stamps issued on February 5 for the 50th NHL All-Star Game.

The lineup for autographs ran all the way back along the windows of the lobby, and I had to squeeze past a number of people to get to my box number. The table where Gordie Howe was sitting was not two metres from my box. He is one of the players depicted on the stamp sheet. He was genially chatting with his fans, none of whom could have been younger than 40.

Having picked up my mail, I squeezed my way back out, and at the door bumped into Hugh Delaney. I'm sure there were a few other CPS members there as well. I didn't have time to wait in the lineup to get an autographed cover, since my car was in the no-parking out front. On my way out one of the posties gave me a souvenir poster of the hockey stamps.

The event received a writeup in the next day's newspaper, and I'm sure was good publicity for the hobby to non-collectors.

PHILATELIC LITERATURE REVIEWS

by Leanteri Polvikoski

Artistamp News #11 (\$4 from Ed Varney, Box 3655, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 3Y8) Nicely printed journal devoted to artistamps, what philatelists call cinderellas. Artistamps are faux postage stamps created by mail art enthusiasts, and each issue of this periodical not only reviews them but includes actual samples in a glassine envelope. Additionally, there are essays on mail art, letters of comment, and news of the mail art field.

[continued next page]

“The pace of life in 31 countries.” by R.V. Levine and A. Norenzayan (1999), published in JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY 30:178-205. This is a study of how fast a life people live in various countries, as measured by such things as walking pace and the time to buy a stamp. The overall study showed that life goes faster in colder countries, economically developed nations, and individualistic cultures, and was fastest in Japan and western Europe. Those countries also had a higher death rate from heart disease.

In one experiment, researchers asked postal clerks for a common-denomination stamp and paid it with a banknote that required the postie to make change. The transaction was timed and multiple runs in different cities were done to get an average. The results are as in Table 1. Canada ranked 21st, just slightly ahead of the USA. That the Germans were most efficient was not too surprising but I was surprised to see unlikely Top Ten winners Ireland and Costa Rica, both of which I would have presumed would be more laid back.

Country	Time to complete purchase of a stamp (seconds)
Germany	13.46
Switzerland	16.91
Ireland	17.49
Japan	18.61
Sweden	19.1
Hong Kong	20.1
Taiwan	20.22
Austria	20.6
England	20.78
Costa Rica	21.13
Singapore	22.42
Italy	23

Country	Time to complete purchase of a stamp (seconds)
Greece	24.33
Netherlands	24.42
Poland	25.83
El Salvador	25.88
Czech Republic	27.73
France	27.84
Hungary	28.45
South Korea	29.75
Canada	30.5
Bulgaria	33.67
USA	36.99
Brazil	38.17
China	39.63
Indonesia	39.64
Jordan	39.92
Syria	40.02
Romania	42.25
Kenya	42.5
Mexico	70

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compiled by Dale Speirs

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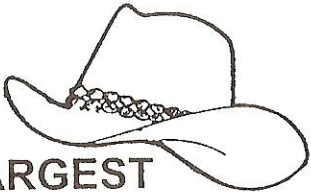
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NOTE TO INTERNET VIEWERS: Unless stated otherwise, telephone numbers are area code 403. Alberta is on Mountain Daylight Time.

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WANTED: Any Small Queen issue stamps, 1870-1897, any denomination, any quantity. I prefer the 3-cent issue but will take all. Also wanted covers of the same era, as well as Registration stamps (F1-F3) of same period. I will pay cash, trade for other stamps, or trade for automotive work (I'm a licenced mechanic). See me at club meetings or call Doug Kollar at 547-3838.

TRADE: Need automotive work done on your car? Let's trade my labour for your stamps that I need. I am a licenced mechanic with 20+ years experience (just ask Penny). Phone Doug Kollar at 547-3838.

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FOR SALE: Mint and used Canadian, also used New Zealand and Australia stamps, Calgary Olympics first-day covers. Call Craig Allison at 281-3852.

FOR SALE: Anybody interested in perpins, contact Robert Perry at 282-4520.

FOR SALE: Dutch stamps MNH complete yearly issues including all souvenir sheets, 1979 to 1992 inclusive. Contact Hank Van Wyngaarden at 246-5316 or see at meetings.

MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

2000

June	7	Election meeting
	21	Auction
July	28	Deadline for August bulletin
September	6	General meeting
	6	Deadline for October bulletin
	20	Auction
October	4	General meeting
	18	Auction
November	1	General meeting
	1	Deadline for November bulletin
	15	Auction
December	6	Christmas social

MEETINGS and AUCTIONS are at the Kerby Centre, 2nd floor, 1133 - 7 Avenue SW, at 19h30. Auction lots should be in before 19h30 to allow bidder viewing

CALGARY REGIONAL GROUP OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA PHILATELIC SOCIETY meets on the second Wednesday of the month except July and August. For details about meeting places and times, contact Ed Harris at 274-0021.

CALTAPEX is at the Coast Plaza Hotel (formerly Marlborough Inn). Details from Minaz Ramji at 280-0770.

SUNDAY BOURSE is at a new location. For details and table rentals, call Bill Szaroz at 337-3260 or Phil Wolf at 259-8750.