

STEANSHIP POSTAL ROUTES IN THE EARLY DECIMAL PERIOD OF NEWFOUNDLAND 1865-1910

SYNOPSIS OF THE EXHIBIT

PURPOSE

This is a postal history exhibit organized by maritime postal routes, either within the island for domestic communication, or off the island for communication with the rest of North America or with Great Britain to the rest of the world. Secondary emphases are placed on postal rates; on postmarks or other postal markings contemporary with the period; and on usages of the postal issues of this period.

SCOPE

This exhibit begins at the start of the decimal period (i.e., with the "Cents" issue of postage stamps begun in 1865), and with the early contracted steamship services for domestic and foreign mails. I continue with the development and refinement of postal routes over the next four decades, and into the period of the Reid monopoly of mail conveyance on most maritime postal routes. I end during the period when the postal routes were functionally integrated between the various means set up to convey the domestic and foreign mails, and otherwise *at the end of the natural period of use* of the last printings of the "Royal Family" and "Map" issues (1908-1910).

ORGANIZATION AND TREATMENT

The development of postal communication on the various domestic and foreign routes is treated in a chronological fashion within each chapter. Successive mail contracts and their routes are tabulated and shown and (if and when introduced) the various domestic maritime T.P.O. markings are included.

On coastal mail routes, I also indicate the name of the specific vessel(s) that conveyed each cover.

Within each route I show, when appropriate, a variety of postal issues that were used during the period of the route. I also illustrate a variety of rates that occurred during the period of the route. Although not exhaustive of all postal issues or all postal rates (*this is neither a usage or rate exhibit*), they are included to enrich the challenge and variety of covers shown, and to give a more comprehensive treatment of each route.

CHALLENGE

Early Newfoundland postal history is eagerly sought after, and only occasionally comes on the market in any quality. This collection has been formed over the course of more than 25 years, and was infused by early "Cents" material from the Siverts collection (Maresch 1989), and later "Royal Family" material from the Walsh collection (Jamieson, 2006), among others.

All early "Cents" covers of the ABNC issues (with the exception of the 12-cents rate Waterman correspondence to England) are scarce to rare, with few surviving examples of each usage recorded. I use Whaley's 2004 *Census* to annotate rarity for the 35 or so of these covers shown in this exhibit.

The challenge for the BABNC issues is primarily in the period 1880-1892, as the great St. John's fire of 1892 destroyed so much of the archived business correspondence from that period. Domestic covers from the outports in this period are uncommon. This exhibit shows a significant number of cancellations from smaller outport towns in this period.

As well, covers to outport towns are correspondingly more difficult to acquire than covers to St. John's. This exhibit also includes a significant number of outport destinations.

The greatest traditional challenges in Newfoundland postal history are in the rates charged for non first-class letters (e.g., circulars) and special concessionary rates (e.g., soldier's and seamen's mail). Although this is not a rate exhibit, some of these rates are nevertheless included to enhance the story line, and are highlighted accordingly. When known, the provenance of such covers have been indicated.

The greatest challenges have also been to determine and illustrate some of the lesser-known mail routes by which mail was occasionally conveyed off-island, as some routes were of only temporary expedience or shorter contracted duration. As well, mail to St. Pierre and Miquelon is particularly difficult to find as the market for it extends well beyond those interested in only BNA material. Both of these topics receive coverage in this exhibit.

SIGNIFICANT ITEMS

This exhibit contains the following philatelically significant and challenging items:

Routes:

- St. John's to Fogo, 1875. Only reported *northbound* Great Northern Mail Route cover (Coastal Mails/Winter Mails/ Great Northern Mail Route)
- Bay Roberts to Labrador, 1878. Only reported cover to Labrador in period 1865-1880. (Labrador Mails/Bowring Bros. Contract)
- Rose Blanche to Burgeo 1879. Only reported strike of Rose Blanche "Fleurion" date stamp on cover. (Coastal Mails/Coastal West/The Bowring Bros. Contract)
- "Western Mail Boat" SS *Harlaw* covers, 1893 and 1900. (Foreign Mails/Cross Gulf Routes/Pickford and Black Contract)

- SS *St. Pierre* cover, 1895 (Foreign Mails/Cross Gulf Routes/FD Corbett Contract)
- Bay Islands to Transvaal 1899. *Returned Boer War cover involving two trans-Atlantic sailings.* (Foreign Mails/Great Britain/Allan Line Steamers/ Returned Mail)

Rates:

- Harbor Grace to Nova Scotia 1865. *Stampless, paying 13-cents rate.* (Foreign Mails/BNA and Canada/The Cunard Line Contract)
- St. John's to PEI 1867. *Two-cents circular rate, one of two known to BNA.* (Foreign Mails/ BNA and Canada/ The Cunard Line Contract)
- St. John's to New York 1901. *Half-cent manuscript rate, previously unreported.* (Foreign Mails/United States/The Reid Contract: Winter Mails via Halifax 1900-1901)
- Bay Islands to England 1898. *One of five known two-cents soldiers' and seamen's rate covers.* (Foreign Mails/Great Britain/Allan Line Steamers/Soldiers' and Seamen's Rate)

In addition, other significant items are highlighted in the exhibit.

KNOWLEDGE, PERSONAL STUDY AND RESEARCH

For primary sources I have relied extensively on:

- *The Year Book and Almanac of Newfoundland*, (issued annually 1865 through 1915). St. John's NF: Queen's Printer, **for postal routes, stopping places, and certain named vessels;** and,
- *The Evening Telegram*, (1879 through 1915). Daily newspaper, St. John's NF, **for names and sailing dates of mail ships, and for train arrivals and departures.**

(Both are found at: Memorial University of Newfoundland's Digital Archives Initiative: <http://collections.mun.ca/>)

My comprehensive primary source research here has proved invaluable for the correct identification of certain routes, vessels and sailing dates and extends, **in significant measure, the philatelic knowledge now available on this topic.**

In addition, the years of study of the postal issues and postal history of this period has contributed to an appreciation of the relative scarcity of each of the postal markings surviving on cover, allowing for any authoritative comments made to be founded on a reasonable amount of sufficient knowledge of the apparent availability of each marking.

CONDITION

The condition of the early "Cents" ABNC covers included in this exhibit is generally of the finest known, and was commented on in personal communication to me by Whaley during my contribution to his 2004 *Cover Study* census.

For the post-1880 covers, I have otherwise attempted to select only better condition covers and with complete strikes of postal markings. Material of marginally weaker condition, more the norm when encountering postal history from this period, has usually been excluded from the exhibit.

PRESENTATION

As a finding aid, running headings, for chapters and sub-chapters, are at 100% black when first introduced, and at 90% black on subsequent pages.

The technical information included underneath each cover, *the route or other routing information is given in bold italics, and has often been determined from the exhibitor's personal study and research of the aforementioned primary documents.* This is followed by information about the postmarks and any directional markings. Here, the names of the towns, and any maritime T.P.O. postmarks, are given in **BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS**, and in approximation to the type face used in the postmark. A description of the postal rate and the postage stamps used ends each cover's technical information.

Rarity and philatelic importance (not always the same thing) is indicated separately by a both a rose-coloured matte behind the cover, and by **bolded italic text** underneath the cover's technical information.

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT TO SEE

As this is a postal history exhibit, *focussing on postal routes, a large number of maps*, simple line drawings highlighting these routes, are found throughout the exhibit and are used as a pictorial complement to assist with an understanding of the routings of the covers. Also, as Newfoundland geography and place names are not often well known, this is a succinct and visually accessible way to communicate such necessary information to the viewer.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT EXPECT TO SEE

Directional markings were not applied by the Post Office. Unless the correspondent placed their preferred routing or vessel on the cover, no directional markings otherwise exist.

Mail not required to be post-marked (e.g., newspapers, printed matter) is not included, as without a postmark routing cannot be accurately determined to a high confidence level.

NOTES ON THE EXHIBIT

As a long-time exhibitor and judge, I am not aware of a similar Newfoundland postal history exhibit of this period using a postal route treatment and development. The postal history exhibit by Colin Lewis in Great Britain, although it overlaps within the timelines of my exhibit, is a rate exhibit. The postal history exhibits by Brian Stalker, also in Great Britain, are specialized exhibits of individual TPO's and their marcophily.

This exhibit has been shown only once previously, at BNAPEX 2107 in Calgary. It has subsequently been reworked to include additional material.