

The Salmon Bay Post Office of Newfoundland and Canada

Ferdinand Bélanger

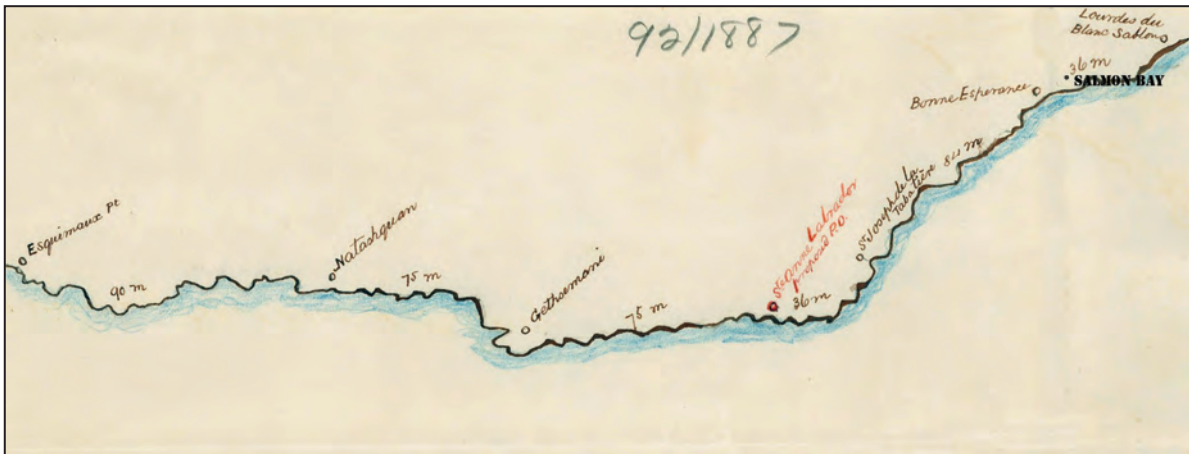
The small fishing village of Salmon Bay is located in Quebec, close to Labrador, on the Strait of Belle Isle. It is in fact situated four miles east of the village of Bonne-Espérance and about fifteen miles west of the village of Lourdes-du-Blanc-Sablon, as mentioned in an 1890 report of the Postal Inspector (Fig. 1).

According to the Post Office Department's postmastership card, the post office was opened some time before 1893 (Fig. 2). This incomplete information aroused our interest in pushing the research further to determine the exact date of the opening.

By a fortunate bit of luck we were able to find an answer right at the outset in a document in the Post Office Archives, preserved at Library and Archives Canada. This information is contained in a report edited by Archélas Bolduc, Post Office Inspector (1887-

1908) for the Quebec District¹. On August 13, 1890, Inspector Bolduc sent a letter to Postmaster General (1888-1892) John Graham Haggart (1836-1913) (Fig. 3) to inform him of

Figure 1. Map showing the location of Salmon Bay in 1887. – Source: LAC²



- This article first appeared in French as “Salmon Bay, bureau de poste terre-neuvien et canadien” in the *Bulletin d'histoire postale et de marcophilie* no. 122, pp. 5-10, octobre-décembre 2013; translation by Robert C. Smith.

Name of Office:	SALMON BAY		Federal Electoral District: Saguenay (Quebec)	
Dates:	Establishment	Closings	Re-openings	
	Prior to 1893	1927-10-24	1930-08-01	
Summer-Winter:	Date Opened	Date Closed	Date Opened	Date Closed
	1956-05-10	1956-10-31	1964-05-20	1964-10-31
	1957-05-10	1957-10-31	1965-05-17	1965-09-30
	1958-05-09	1958-10-31	1966-05-20	1966-10-15
	1959-05-20	1959-10-31	1967-05-22	1967-10-14
	1960-05-20	1960-10-29	1968-05-21	1968-10-15
	1961-05-15	1961-10-31	1969-05-15	1969-10-11
	1962-05-15	1962-10-31	1970-05-15	1970-10-10
	1963-05-15	1963-10-30	1971-05-17	1971-10-01

Postmaster Information:

Name of Postmaster	Date of Appointment	Date of Vacancy	Cause of Vacancy
James Browne (PM in 1893)	1897-05-01		Resignation
Jeremiah Dunn	1898-08-01	1827	Resignation
William Keats	1927-10-18	1927-10-24	Closed
Thomas Keats (re-opened)	1930-08-01	1945-10-06	Resignation
Hollis Keats	1946-08-26		

In compliance with the Privacy Act (1983), certain personal information has been deleted from this file.

Additional Information: Status - From regular to summer office - 1924-11-01

Source: PSFDS03-28474

Figure 2. Postmastership card for the Salmon Bay post office. – Source: LAC³

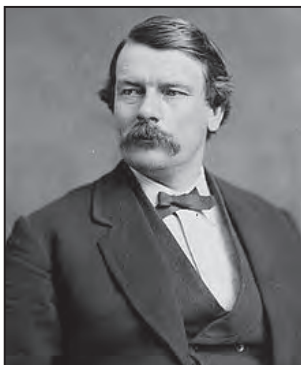


Figure 3. Photograph of John Graham Haggart, Postmaster General of Canada from 1888 to 1892.

– Source: LAC, PA-026381

his recent visit to the North Shore. He mentioned having learned at Bonne-Espérance that two years earlier the Newfoundland government had opened a summer office at Salmon Bay, and that a steamboat carried the mails twice monthly to St. John's, Newfoundland. Furthermore, he added that he had intended going to the site in order to verify these rumours, but had to turn back because of bad weather. Finally, he called the Postmaster General's attention to the fact that the village of Salmon Bay was really located on Canadian territory, and that it seemed likely to him that the Newfound-

Name of Way Office.	Direction.	Name of Officer.
Little Harbor	Labrador, North	Joseph Pike.
Long Island	“ “	Peter Dwyer.
Long Tickle	“ “	Samuel Dawe.
Mannox Island	“ “	Benjamin Smith.
Murray's Harbor	“ “	Mrs. Riley.
Pack's Harbor	“ “	Stephen Bradbury.
Punch Bowl	“ “	Michael Brien.
Ragged Islands	“ “	Isaac Pumphrey.
Red Bay	“ West	James Brown.
Salmon River	“ “	Samuel Bartlett.
Scrammy	“ North	Thomas Alcock.
Seal Islands	“ “	Nicholas Kennedy.
Sloop Cove	“ “	George C. Jerrett.
Smoky Run	“ “	John Coady.
Snug Harbor	“ “	Mrs. Jane Elson.
Spears Harbor	“ “	George Luther.
Square Islands	“ “	Miss Elmira Jeffers.
Triangle	“ “	Thomas Green.
Tub Harbor	“ “	William Hennessey.
Turnavick, East	“ “	William Bartlett.
Turnavick, West	“ “	William Hawker.
Venison Tickle	“ “	Timothy Hayden.
White Bear Islands	“ “	John Hennessey.
Winser's Harbor	“ “	William Fowler.
West St. Modiste	“ West	

POSTAL RATES.

Inland Postage, Prepaid by Stamps.

Letters, per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. or fraction thereof	3 cents.
“ City delivery, per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. or fraction thereof	1 cent.
Local and Foreign Newspapers, if under 4 ounces	Free.
Book Packets, Pamphlets, Magazines and Periodicals, (package not to exceed 3 lbs. in weight), for every 2 ounces	1 cent.
All Circulars, 1 cent. Postal Cards, 1 cent. Registration 3 cents.	

FOREIGN RATES OF POSTAGE.

	Letter Rate, per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	Post Cards.	Newspaper Rates, per 2 ozs.	Book Pack- ages, per $\frac{1}{2}$ ozs.	Registration.
Great Britain and Ireland (a)	5	2	1	1	4
Canada, Dominion of (a); United States (a); St. Pierre, Miquelon	5	2	1	1	5

Figure 4. List on which the name of the Salmon River office appears.

— Source: A Year Book and Almanac of Newfoundland for 1899⁷.

land government had acted assuming that this location was in its territory.

On August 15, 1890, the secretary to the Postmaster General arranged to send a letter to James Oliphant Fraser⁴ (1826-1904), Postmaster General of Newfoundland (1885-1902), confirming that the village of Salmon Bay was located in Canadian territory. The legal dispute was settled after several weeks of correspondence. Was this a result of the fact that the Minister of Marine and Fisheries had completed surveys near the Labrador coast during the course of that same summer, and that they had allowed him to establish beyond the shadow of a doubt that Salmon Bay was in fact located in Quebec⁵?

On September 27, following this resolution, Inspector Bolduc received authorization from the Postmaster General to open the Salmon Bay post office and to appoint James Brown as postmaster. Thanks to this inspector's report we can establish with certainty the date this North Shore office began operations in the Canadian postal service. It is well to note that on first opening it was a regular office, and that it changed status to become a summer office beginning in 1924.

As far as the postal service at this office under Newfoundland administration is concerned, the results we have obtained from consulting different editions of the *Year Book and Almanac of Newfoundland* are as follows. The first mention of this office appears in the volume from the year 1887⁶. It is indicated there that the steamboat *Plover* was to operate twice a month from July 10 along the Labrador coast, between the offices at Salmon River and Battle Harbour. In 1889 the way office of Salmon River was mentioned, located in the Labrador West district and accountable to James Brown (Fig. 4). This time the steamboat *Conscript* was to

leave St. John's, Newfoundland and would sail along the coast twice monthly in order to serve the different way offices⁷. The same situation held in 1890. Finally, in 1891 the way office of Salmon River no longer appeared on the list.

In the course of our research we noted a difference in the name of the office. Under the Newfoundland administration we have an office called Salmon River, while the name shown on the postmastership card for the Canadian office is Salmon Bay. It was thus important to verify that these two names referred to the same location. All is brought together thanks to a letter incorporated in the report of Inspector Bolduc (Fig. 5). It had been sent from Salmon River, in the Strait of Belle Isle, and bore the signature of James Brown, in charge of the way office. Because of the imminent change in the postal administration, Brown was applying to hold the same position for the new Canadian office of Salmon Bay. Thanks to this essential document we have irrefutable proof that the post office names Salmon River and Salmon Bay refer to the same location. James Brown was an important personage in the village, since he was the agent in Salmon River of the Job Brothers Company of St. John's, Newfoundland. This important Newfoundland enterprise, founded in 1750, was primarily involved in the production and development of the fisheries⁸.

As far as a Newfoundland cancelling device is concerned, it seems that datestamps for certain way offices in Labrador were only produced from 1889⁹. They were first produced for the offices of Battle Harbour, Blanc-Sablon, and l'Anse-au-Loup. It seems that no instrument was used at the summer office of Salmon River. Upon the opening of the Canadian office a first datestamp

128/1890

W. H. H. of Belle Isle

Salmon River

Aug 22nd 90

undelivered to
 and
 to

I have occupied the
 position of Post Master at
 Salmon Bay for several years
 I now learn that your Government
 contemplates a change of
 Post office in Canada
 monthly. and I respectfully
 make application for office
 at Salmon Bay and shall
 be pleased to hear from you
 on this subject

I have the honor to
 remain your
 Obedient Servant

James Brown
 Agent for Job Press & Co.

Figure 5. Letter of August 22, 1890 from James Brown applying for the position of postmaster at the new office of Salmon Bay, Quebec. – Source: LAC¹

was ordered from the Pritchard & Andrews Company of Ottawa. Strikes of two daters are found in the proof impression books, the first has a date of October 31, 1892, while the

second is dated July 19, 1930 (Fig. 6). Oddly, the first instrument was not produced for almost two years after the office had passed under Canadian control. It is very probable



Figure 6. Proof impressions of the datestamps used at the Salmon Bay office.

– Source: J. Paul Hughes¹⁰

that the second handstamp was used right up to the time the office was closed around September of 1982, since a strike of August 1, 1975 has been recorded (Fig. 7).

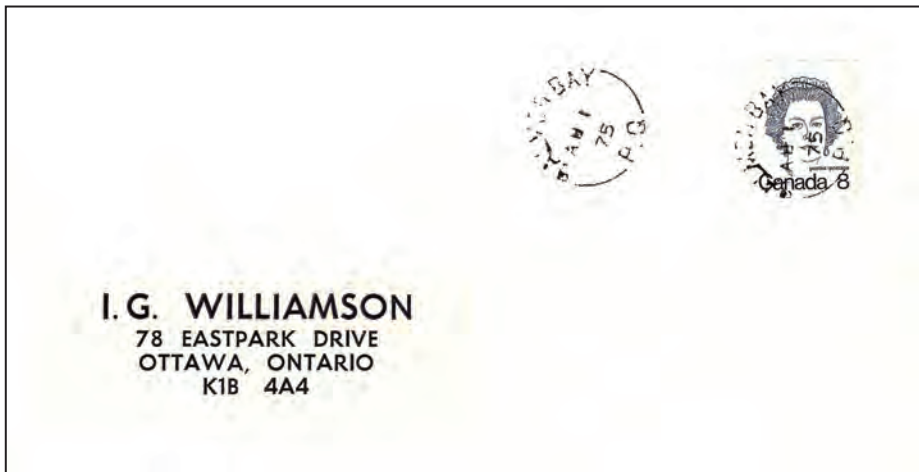
The summer mails picked up from the different Labrador offices were carried by Newfoundland boats to St. John’s, and vice versa. In winter, however, it was quite different: the mail had to transit through Canadian territory (Fig. 8). This meant that the mail bags sent from Labrador and destined for New-

foundland had to be added to the Canadian mail bags leaving from the Lower North Shore. Transported by dog-sled, the mail left over a long land route which was destined for Bersimis. From there it arrived by other modes of transport at the main post office in Quebec City. After that the bags were put on board the train leaving for Halifax, and finally they arrived in St. John’s, Newfoundland by boat (Fig. 10). The return mail travelled by the same route.

As far as the Canadian office of Salmon Bay is concerned, transportation of the summer mails was assured by sailing vessels which visited the post offices situated between Lourdes-du-Blanc-Sablou and Natashquan¹². However, Newfoundland boats continued to coast along the Canadian shore. In fact they visited the Canadian offices located to the north of Harrington Harbour and followed a course which saw them stop at the different offices established along the Labrador coast in order to gather correspondence addressed to Newfoundland. This service was in effect right up to

Figure 7. Cover showing a 1975 impression of the datestamp used at the Salmon Bay summer office.

– Source: Kevin O’Reilly collection



The Coastal Steamer will leave St. John's on or about 21st July, and will connect with Labrador Steamer at Battle Harbor.

After 1st January and until the departure—North—of the Coastal Steamer in Spring, mails for Englee, Conche, St. Anthony, Griguet and Flower's Cove, will be forwarded by Coastal Steamer West to Channel, and thence by Courier *via* Bay of Islands and Flower's Cove. Mails for Caachman's Cove are forwarded overland per Northern Mail Route in winter.

Winter Mails.

Winter Mails, commencing 1st January, will be despatched by Railway and Couriers every Tuesday and Friday to Collier's Bay, Rantem, Northern Bight, Shoal Harbor, Random and Smith's Sounds, Trinity, Catalina, Bonavista, King's Cove, Gambo and Botwoodville; and on every Tuesday morning for Goose Bay, Indian Arm, Alexander Bay, Salvage, Greenspond, Change Islands, Fogo, Herring Neck, Twillingate, Exploits, Leading Tickles, Little Bay, Little Bay Islands, Nipper's Harbor, Tilt Cove, Coachman's Cove and Western Cove.

Two Mails will be forwarded *via* Quebec to Blanc Sablon, and thence to Battle Harbor, calling at places between, early in January and February. The January Mail will be forwarded from Battle Harbor to Rigoulette.

South and West.

Mails will be despatched from St. John's, South and West, to the following Ports, by Coastal Mail Steamer, which leaves St. John's fortnightly, on alternate Saturdays throughout the year.

Ferryland and Renewes, *alternately*; Trepassey, St. Mary's, Placentia, Burin, St. Lawrence and Lamaline; Fortune, Grand Bank, Saint Jacques and Belloram, *alternately*; Harbor Briton, Gaultois, Hermitage Cove and Pushthrough, *alternately*; Burgeo, Rameo (during winter), La Poile, Rose Blanche, Channel, St. George, Bay of Islands and Bonne Bay.

PACKET ROUTES ON BAYS.

West.

The str. *Alert* will leave Placentia every Wednesday morning for Presque, Paradise, Oderin, Baine Harbor (where the mail for Fortune Bay will be landed), Flat Islands, Burin, St. Lawrence, Lamaline, (Fortune and Grand Bank). And the same Steamer will leave Placentia every Monday morning for Red Island, Ram's Island, Harbor Buffett, Haystack, Black River, Sound Island, Baron's Island, Burgeo, Isle Valen and Merasheen.

Fortnightly Sailing Packet will leave Harbor Briton immediately after arrival of Western Mail Steamer for English Harbor, Sagona, Brunette and Garnish.

Sailing Packet will leave Bay L'Argent weekly, immediately after arrival of Mails from St. John's, *via* Baine Harbor, for Pool's Cove, Lally Cove, Rencontre, Anderson's Cove, Long Harbor, English Harbor East, Fox Cove and Harbor Mille.

Figure 8. Information on the winter mail transport of Labrador
— Source: A Year Book and Almanac of Newfoundland for 1895¹¹.



Figure 9.
 Photograph of a dog sled of the
 North Shore.
 – Source: Michel Gagné collection

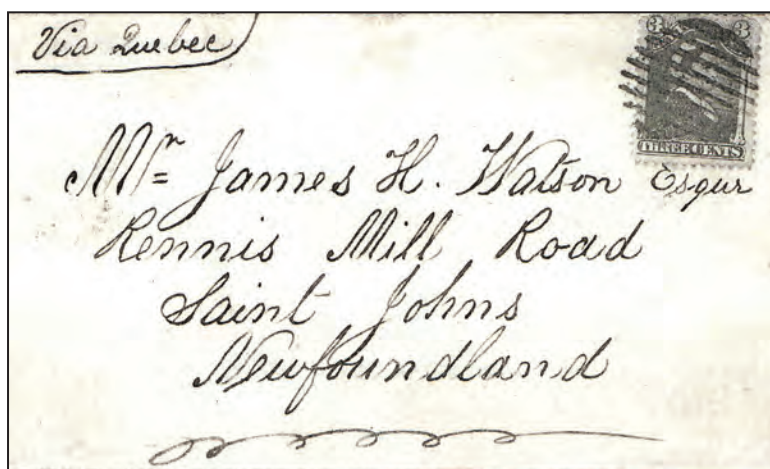
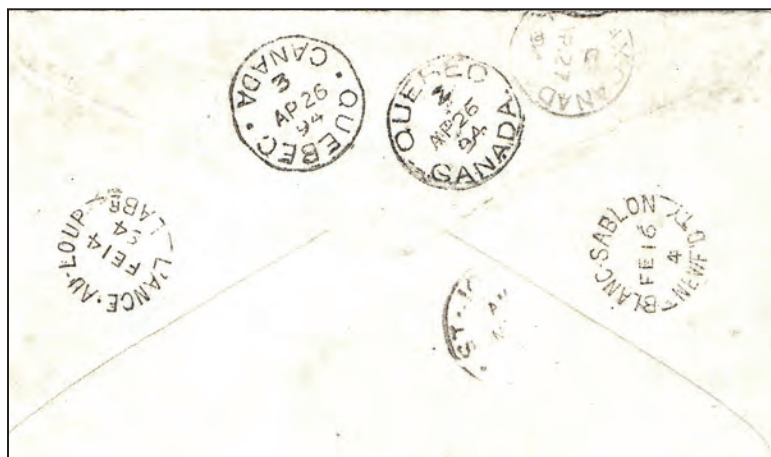


Figure 10.
 Cover mailed from Labrador to
 Newfoundland in the winter of 1895.
 Source: Kevin O'Reilly collection



1937¹³. Nothing had changed for the winter mails; dog sleds continued in use. A bit later icebreakers were used, and later still air transport took over the task. ☒

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