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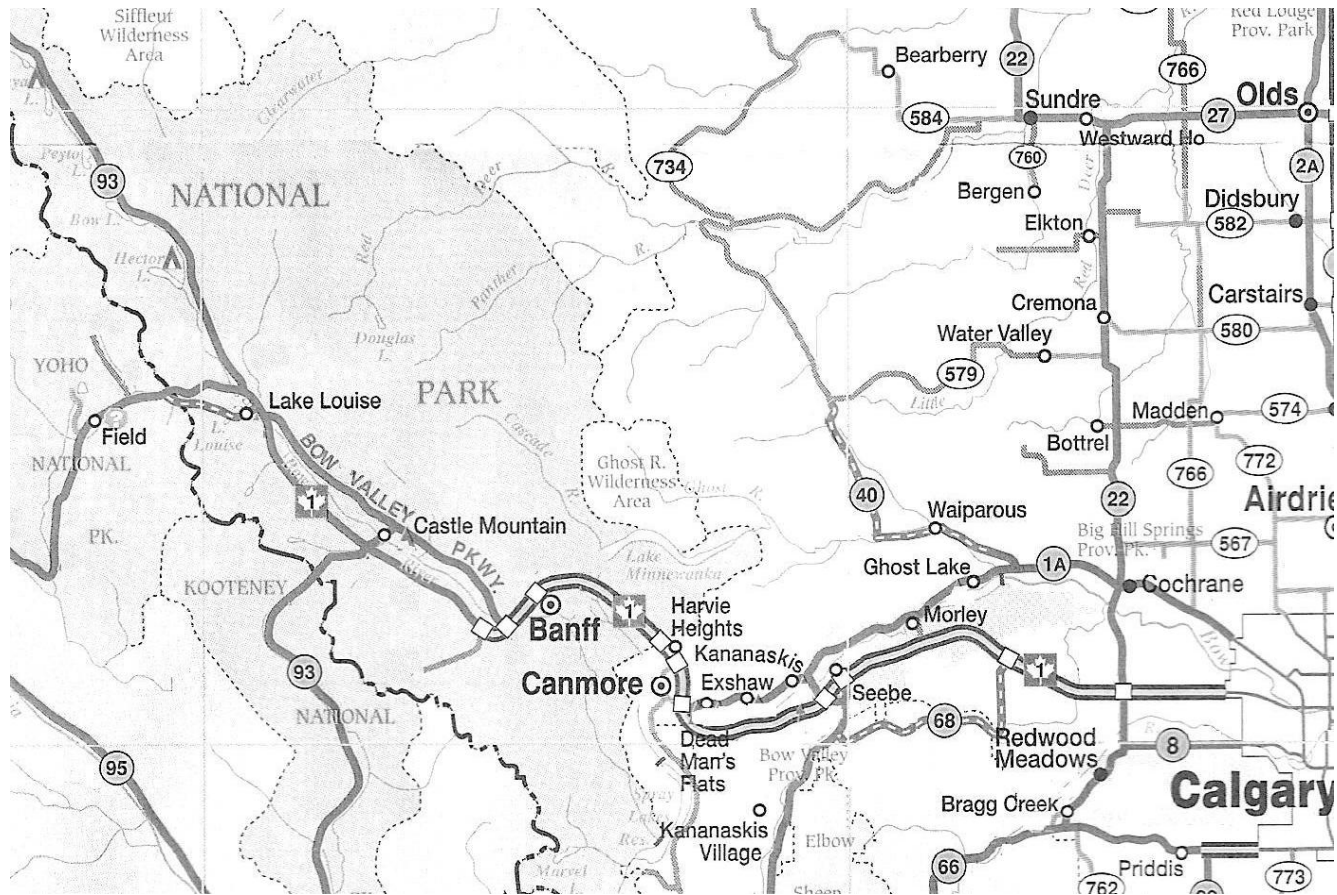
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POSTAL HISTORY OF ALBERTA: THE MOUNTAINS OF THE BOW RIVER VALLEY

by Dale Speirs

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BANFF NATIONAL PARK

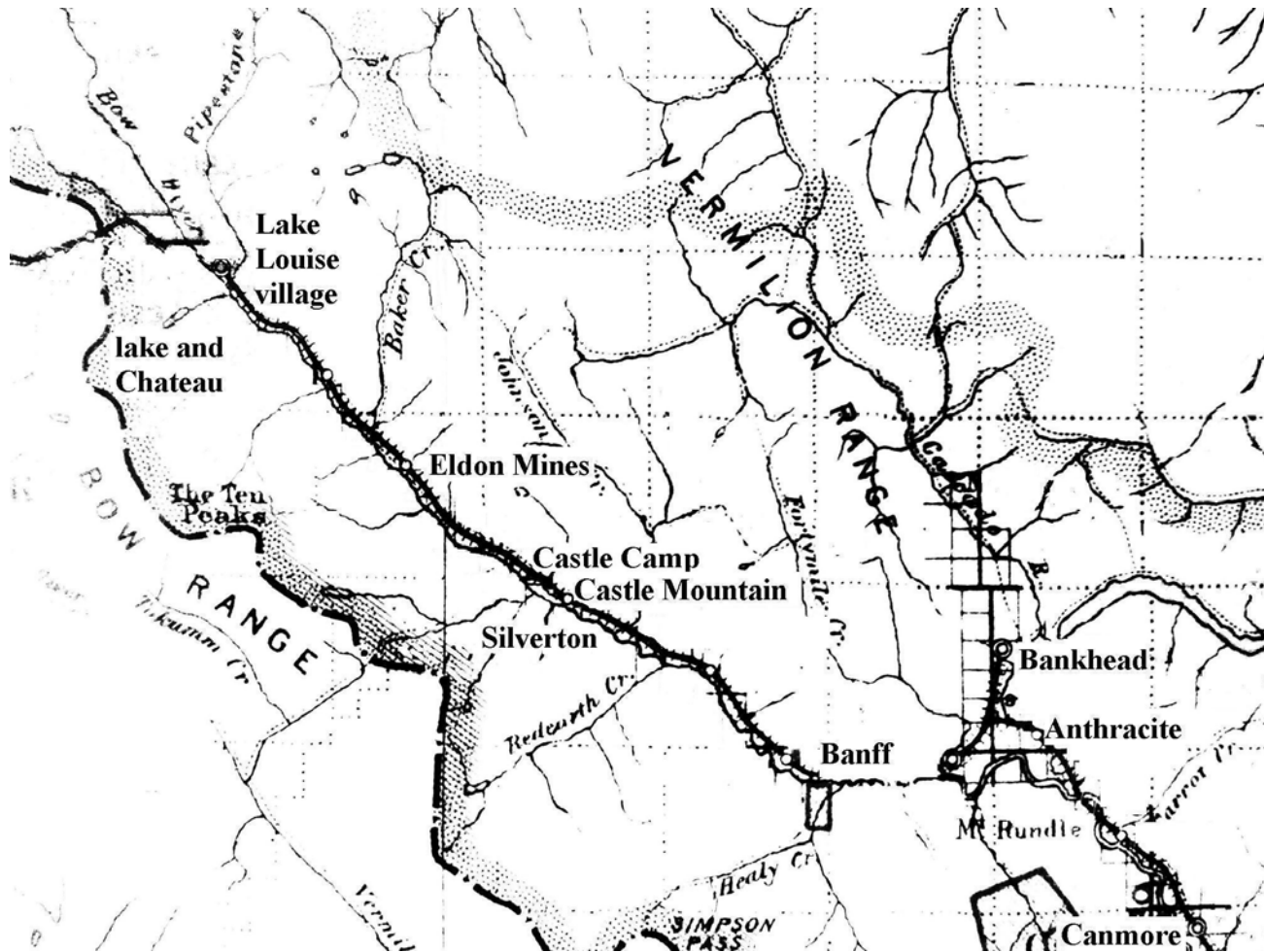
Banff National Park was the result of the Canadian Pacific Railway extending through the Rocky Mountains from the Alberta side when track laying reached the area in 1883. The Rockies are not a single range of mountains but many, and the park is roughly the Bow River valley along a major trench in the mountains, plus some side valleys. The Bow River arises at the north end of the park and flows to the southeast until it reached the townsite of Banff, then turns east out through a gap and onward to Calgary. The valley floor is broad and level and was a natural travel route for wildlife, pre-contact aboriginals, and Europeans building railroads and highways. This route is today the Trans-Canada Highway and the transcontinental railroad.

The earliest explorers and railroad surveyors found a multitude of natural wonders, and the railroad barons were among the first to advocate establishing the land as a wilderness preserve. The Banff Hot Springs were set aside in 1885 as a park reserve, which was the origin of today's park. The boundary lines fluctuated considerably, sometimes as patches here and there, then a strip along the railroad and highway, then a massive reserve that ballooned out to include the Kananaskis River valley and Canmore, both of which are now outside the park. Before finally settling into its present form, the park was a combination of tourist viewpoints, two manorial hotels, mountain climbing for fanatics, and mining operations. Four of the mines had post offices. Lake Louise produced two post offices and Banff had three or four depending on how you count them. Today only the villages of Banff and Lake Louise have post offices. No mines operate inside the park now, although limestone quarries still exist just outside the eastern park gates.

Because the Bow River valley is broad and flat, the CPR was able to build its track at the same rapid pace as on the flatlands of the prairies. The railroad went west to Banff and then turned northwest and followed along the east bank of the river. Just past Lake Louise it turned west again and at this point came to a near stop at times as the contractors encountered jagged mountains and deep canyons in the Kicking Horse Pass. Progress slowed to a crawl on the British Columbia side of the border.

Mail for the thousands of gandydancers and navvies labouring on the track was of obvious vital importance to them. Because their camps moved every few months or so, the railway workers seldom had a fixed address to give to the folks back home. “End Of Track” was a popular designation for mail. There is an “End Of Track” postmark but this was for the British Columbia side where camps did not move as much and formed semi-permanent settlements while the crews slowly blasted their way through the pass and built bridges. The postmark was not used for Alberta.

On the next page is a 1911 map adapted by me to show the post offices that operated over the years within today’s park boundaries. Starting from the bottom of the valley (lower right corner of map), Canmore is just outside the eastern gates of Banff National Park and is not covered here. Going up the Bow River valley, next is Anthracite (extinct coal mining village), then Bankhead (extinct coal mining village), Banff (two locations and two names), Banff Springs Hotel (seasonal), Silverton (mine camp of which no trace remains), Castle Mountain (seasonal resort at the base of its namesake), Castle Camp (Ukrainian internment camp in World War One), Eldon Mines (extinct 1917, now the Protection Mountain campground), Lake Louise village (originally called Laggan and still today on the valley floor), and Chateau Lake Louise (on the east shore of the lake high up in the mountains about 5 km from the village).



Banff.



The CPR management and the Mounties had a large proportion of Scots, which is why so many place names in southern Alberta are of Scottish origin. Banff was no exception, and is named after the shire in Scotland. The CPR established a siding 3 km east of the present townsite in 1883, briefly known as Siding 29 before being named Banff. In 1888, they began construction of the Banff Springs Hotel as part of their tourist division. It has been rebuilt several times and is now a manorial hotel for the better class of tourists. The park as a whole was established as Rocky Mountains Park in 1887, and was not renamed Banff National Park until 1930.

Siding 29 was where the railway station was originally located, in a log cabin of the Woodworth brothers. A post office opened under this name on 1886-06-01 with Frederick Woodworth as postmaster. He later moved the post office into a two-story house, seen in the photo, where he is posing with his family. A short distance to the west of the original Banff, another post office opened on 1887-08-01 called National Park, with R.B.C. O'Donoghue as postmaster.

Here is where it gets complicated and has tripped up many postmark and cover collectors. The settlement of National Park was in a better location. In 1888 the CPR built a new siding at National Park and moved its station to that location, which was closer to the hotel they were building. When the move was made, the relocated station kept the name Banff and the village of National Park was thus renamed [1]. Woodworth gave up the postmastership of the original Banff on 1888-03-20. Richard Frank then became postmaster pro tem until 1888-06-08. On that date, the post office at Frank's location closed, and the same day the National Park post office changed its name to Banff, with O'Donoghue continuing until 1889-12-11 as postmaster.

Fred Woodworth ran the original Banff post office out of his house. He and his brother Ben were the sons of federal M.P. Douglas B. Woodworth, all three from Nova Scotia. The father had visited Banff Hot Springs in 1883, and undoubtedly his description of the area inspired his sons to go west. When everyone moved to the new location of Banff, so did the house, which is still extant as a private residence although heavily modified by subsequent owners. When the move was made to the new townsite, the Woodworth brothers opened a general store but since there was a postmaster already in place Woodworth had no further connection with the post office.

Richard (Dick) O'Donoghue was the first postmaster of National Park when the post office opened on 1887-08-01, and ended his tenure as postmaster of Banff on 1889-12-11 after the name change. He was a Justice of the Peace on the side. At right is the proof strike of the first National Park postmark. Thomas K. MacQueen took over briefly as postmaster until 1891-11-13. Leonard Crane Fulmer succeeded as postmaster until 1897-04-29. He was a Nova Scotian who came out to the mountains with the railway in 1883. The post office was located in a combination store and residence. The store assistant was Arthur Nathaniel Saddington, who stayed on when the Fear brothers bought the store. George Mitchell Fear, a fur trader, became the official postmaster until 1905-08-16 but Saddington actually ran the post office. George and his brother William were Englishmen who had come to Banff in 1885 and operated the fur store for decades. Banff was becoming quite prosperous from the tourist trade and the post office grew to the point where it was moved into a standalone operation next door to the store [2]. Arthur Saddington then became Banff's postmaster de jure as well as de facto, holding the position until 1936-07-01 as the village's longest-serving postmaster.



The postmastership turned over three times in the next couple of years before Duncan McCowan was confirmed as postmaster on 1938-02-28, serving until 1950-02-28. Below is a cover from his tenure which was machine cancelled at Banff. It was sent airmail, but would have gone by train to Calgary where the nearest airport was.



In 1948 the post office became a civil service position. After McCowan there followed a lengthy string of short-term postmasters in training. What was unusual was that the post office was used as a training facility for new postmasters elsewhere in Alberta, such as Grand Prairie, Medicine Hat, and Camrose [3].

Banff has had some short-lived post offices and retail outlets, though today there is only the main post office left [10, 11]. Sub-office #1 opened in 1978 and Sub-office #2 in 1980. Their closing dates are unknown but probably in 1991 during the mass conversion of Canadian sub-offices into retail outlets. There was a retail outlet in the Convention Centre from 1991 to 1992, followed by another outlet in the Cascade Plaza opening in 1993, and closed sometime after 1998.

Because of tourists mailing postcards and seasonal workers getting care packages from home, the post office today is considerably busier than a similar-sized town out on the prairies. Shown below is a commemorative postmark featuring an elk, which in Banff is considered a pest animal. On the next page is the Banff post office in July 2012. The tree-covered mountain in the middle distance is Stoney Squaw, and the bigger mountain in the far distance is Cascade. After I took the photograph and drove off, a couple of blocks away I had to brake hard for a jaywalking elk in the town centre.





Banff Springs Hotel.

The initial Banff Springs Hotel construction began in 1888 and over the years it was constantly renovated, burned down, rebuilt, and added to until it reached huge proportions. Shown below is the hotel on a 1993 stamp (righthand stamp of the pair) and the golf course adjacent to the hotel on a 1995 stamp (lefthand). Golf course hazards include grizzly bears and elk. Both the Banff Springs Hotel and Chateau Lake Louise were owned by the CPR, hence the freight train shown on the hotel stamp. The CPR sold off its hotels several years ago. Staff frequently moved between the two, not just for seasonal assignments but for a few days or to attend business meetings. Since both hotels were on the same railroad mainline at adjacent stations, with multiple train stops per day, it was easy to commute between the two villages. This also applied to the two hotel post offices, as the same names often appear on both postmaster lists.



On 1947-05-26, a summer post office opened in Banff Springs Hotel. Each summer it operated from late May to middle September to cover the tourist season. The postmaster for the first season was Robert Arthur Mackie. He had been postmaster during the 1946 summer season at Chateau Lake Louise. Hilliard Lyle was postmaster at Banff Springs Hotel for the 1948 season, and had been postmaster at Chateau Lake Louise the previous summer. He was a manager by this time and undoubtedly delegated his duties as postmaster to one of his staff. The 1949 season postmaster was Charles Colin McCartney, after which the lists no longer name any postmasters [3]. Probably the postal inspectors didn't see the point of changing the names every few months as long as the hotel management took overall responsibility.

1974 was the final season for the post office and it officially closed on 1975-04-03. The hotel was originally a couple of kilometres from the village on a forestry road but as Banff grew, the road was paved and a pathway built along the south bank of the Bow River. It is now an easy scenic walk from the hotel past the Bow Falls to the main post office. More commonly, tourists just drop their postcards in a letterbox at the hotel. On the next page is the reverse side of an envelope provided to hotel guests as a courtesy; the front side is completely blank. The envelope is undated but judging from the toning of the paper it appears to be circa the 1960s.



**BANFF SPRINGS HOTEL
BANFF, ALTA.**

NOTICE

" LETTERS MAILED IN HOTEL ENVELOPES
IF NOT DELIVERED, ARE SENT TO THE DEAD
LETTER OFFICE, UNLESS THE WRITER GIVES A RETURN
ADDRESS. IF NOT DELIVERED IN _____ DAYS RETURN

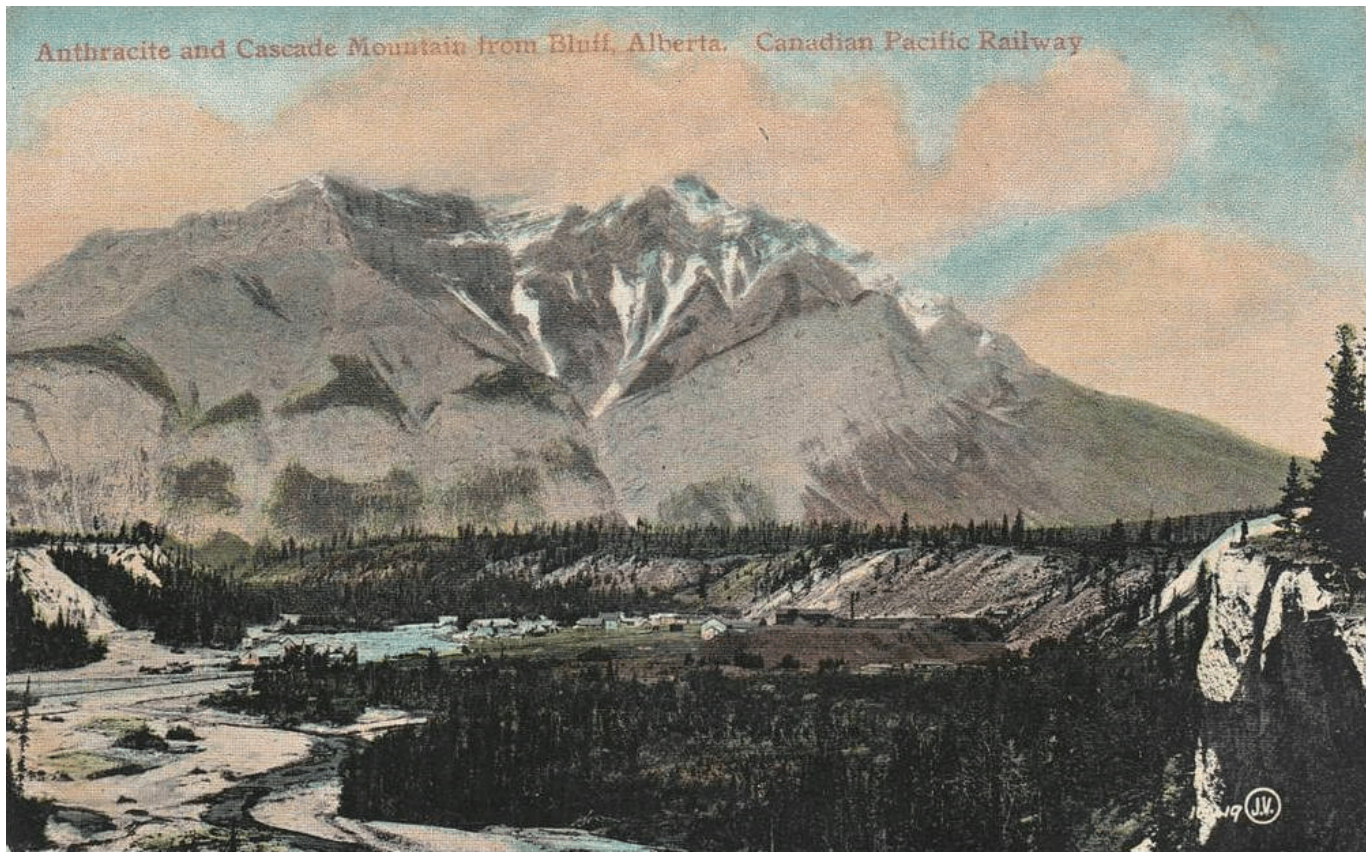
TO _____ "

Anthracite.

This was a coal mining village on the Cascade River not far from where it empties into the Bow River downstream of Banff. It existed from 1886 to 1904, when the good coal ran out and the mine closed. Most of the buildings were removed and the rest were reclaimed by nature. Little or no trace remains today. The north part of the village is now the Trans-Canada Highway, a four-lane divided highway with wide shoulders (for tourists to pull over and take photos of the mountains) and a very wide median, all of which chew up an inordinate amount of space. The south half of the old townsite has reverted to spruce forest, and the Cascade River itself disappears underground for about a kilometre as a result of a hydroelectric project on the north edge of the highway.

On the next page is a real-photo postcard of Anthracite in its prime. The postcard has a misleading text that has caused some dealers to list it under “Bluff, Alberta” because the printer mistakenly capitalized the word and created the impression that the photograph was taken from a nearby village of that name rather than standing on a nearby hill. In Alberta, tree-covered hills are referred to as bluffs. There has never been a post office or settlement in Alberta called Bluff.

Anthracite and Cascade Mountain from Bluff, Alberta. Canadian Pacific Railway



Below is a photograph I took from approximately the same location, showing the site today, with Cascade Mountain in the background. The spruce forest and highway are where the village once was. The small building beside the highway is the generating plant for the Cascade River hydroelectricity project.



The Anthracite post office opened on 1887-06-01 with Arthur Morgan as the first postmaster. At right is the proof strike of the first postmark. Morgan served until 1890-12-10 after which Mrs. Sarah Carrack took over. She resigned on 1892-03-12 and Joseph Lake became the postmaster until 1893-11-24. R.A. Phillips was the next postmaster until James Carroll became the final postmaster on 1894-05-01.



The mine closed in 1904 but the village struggled briefly. Since it was a one-industry town there was nothing to sustain it and on 1905-03-07 the post office closed for good [3]. The population moved to either Canmore or Bankhead, both of which still had coal mines. Most of the buildings were moved to Banff.

Although the Anthracite post office was on the main transcontinental railway, the mail trains did not ordinarily stop. Mail exchanges were done via a catch post system. The fact that it was on the mainline meant that the post office had very good service, with twelve deliveries/dispatches per week [4].

Bankhead.

This was a coal mining village on the west bank of the Cascade River further upstream from Anthracite. On the next page is a real-photo postcard showing the village in its prime, looking northeast from Cascade Mountain. At its peak, it was larger than Banff. It was begun in 1903 to supply coal for the CPR but they were digging into the same type of deposits as Anthracite, and had the same quality problems. The post office name is a reference to the minehead buildings where the coal was tipped out.

The Bankhead post office opened on 1904-08-01 with David Calvin Bayne as the first postmaster. He was a storekeeper and also looked after jobs such as notary public and licence commissioner. The White & Bayne store was sold and he ceased being postmaster on 1907-07-23, moving to Banff where he became a prominent citizen [6]. He was succeeded by David Mowbray Soole. He had been a Mountie whose final posting was in Banff before he demobbed. Soole served until 1913-02-14 before moving back to the bright lights of Banff, where he converted a temperance hotel into a major drinking establishment. Below is the proof strike of a duplex cancel used during his tenure. Joseph Alex Sear then took over as postmaster until 1921-08-23, when he was succeeded by George Charles Somerville. The final postmaster was Charles Russell Murdock, from 1922-07-01 to 1924-04-15 when the post office permanently closed and all the buildings were moved.



1295

Bankhead Coal Mines, showing Lake Minnewanka, Banff, Alta.



The mines closed in 1922 and the buildings were moved into Banff or dismantled [5]. The concrete foundations were left as is and can still be seen, as shown below in a photo I took in 2012 looking southeast towards Mount Rundle. Anthracite is on the other side of the spruce-covered ridge in the middle distance.



Castle Mountain.

This mountain looms over the Trans-Canada Highway northwest of Banff about halfway to Lake Louise, and is one of the most conspicuous sights in the park. The mountain is U-shaped and looks exactly like the massive ramparts of some medieval castle. The current Trans-Canada Highway runs along the west bank of the Bow River, and the old two-lane highway (Highway 1A or alternatively called the Bow Valley Parkway) and railroad along the east bank. On the old highway of the east bank is a small resort at the base of the mountain, where a summer post office was located between 1922 and 1927.



The only postmaster of Castle Mountain was J.M. Wardle, who served from 1922-08-26 until 1927-10-15. At left is a proof strike of its postmark. The post office opened each year sometime in June and closed for the season in October. Wardle was a road engineer and after his post office closed he remained in the area. During the Great Depression he was in charge of labour camps established in the park as part of relief work for unemployed men [7]. The resort still exists and is the base for tourists making back-country hikes up the mountain. There is an easy hiking trail from the resort up into the centre of the U, and climbers enjoy scaling the vertical ramparts from the outside. There is a small general store as of 2012 but no postal services, shown on the next page with Castle Mountain in the background.



Silverton.

Although the post office was named Silverton, the inhabitants of this short-lived mining camp called it Silver City. It was located near Copper Mountain across the river from Castle Mountain. In 1881, copper ore was found in the area but nothing could be done until the railroad came up the valley in 1883. The CPR was not above indulging in a bit of sharp practice, and spread the word of metallic riches to be had in the valley. No silver was present but the CPR decided it made for a better name than copper. By 1885, Silver City had 3,000 inhabitants, only a dozen of which were women. That year some promoters who had salted a mine with gold dust were found out. By then, miners were beginning to realize that while minerals were present, they were not in profitable quantities. The fraud was the final straw and the town collapsed. The photo below shows Silver City shortly after its collapse. Within a year it was down to one inhabitant, Joe Smith, who stayed there as a hunter/trapper until 1935. He was old, infirm, and nearly blind by then, so park employees convinced him to go into a nursing home, where he died in 1937.



The Silverton post office had a brief life from 1885-01-01 to 1886-06-07, with Lewis Lapage as its only postmaster. Because it was a short distance from the transcontinental railroad siding, it had excellent mail service, with twelve deliveries per week [4]. Today Silverton is pure spruce forest [5]. Below is a photo of Silver City today with Castle Mountain in the background, as close as I could get to the original view.



Castle Camp.

In one of the most shameful episodes of Canadian history, at the start of World War One the Canadian government interned honest Ukrainian immigrants because they had technically been citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and were thus considered enemy aliens. Many had homesteaded in Canada and become citizens but that made no difference. An internment camp was set up at the base of Castle Mountain with about 200 prisoners, and the Ukrainians were used as slave labour to build roads and other park facilities. The camp operated from July 1915 to July 1917. The section of the highway between Castle Mountain and Lake Louise was built by the prisoners with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow. The camp was poorly provisioned by Ottawa and hobbled by lack of staff, as a result of which prisoner escapes into the bush were common. The old log cabins at nearby Silver City, a ghost town for two decades by that time, were pressed into service as a supply depot [9].



Castle Camp post office was opened on 1915-09-01 and operated until 1916-11-13, not long before the camp began winding down to final closure in 1917. The post office only operated in the summer and autumn [3]. During the winter the prisoners were relocated to the Cave and Basin Hot Springs near the townsite of Banff, where they built facilities for the village. The official postmaster at Castle Camp was the commanding officer Major Duncan Stuart (photo at left), but he delegated his postal duties to the Orderly Officer, usually a young lieutenant. Since the camp was on the railroad, mail service was four times daily. The only year Castle Camp appeared in the Postmaster-General's annual reports, there was \$91.15 in gross revenue for Fiscal 1916. For comparison, nearby Lake Louise did \$867.98, Banff had \$11,978.35, and Bankhead had \$1,164.47 in gross revenues for that same time [4].

Major Stuart used civilian staff to censor the outgoing mails. The first censor was a Hungarian who spoke Ukrainian and other Slavic languages but couldn't read them. (Hungarian is not a Slavic language itself.) As a result, many letters were refused or destroyed, leading to protests from the prisoners. A new censor was brought in who could read Ukrainian [9].

During winter quarters near Banff, prisoner and official mail would have gone through the village post office.

The internment camp is marked today by a roadside statue along the old Trans-Canada Highway, shown below. There is a footpath that meanders through the area, but little if anything remains, and the camp is overgrown by spruce forest.



Eldon Mines.

The next mountain north of Castle Mountain is Protection Mountain, at the base of which is a railroad siding called Eldon, still extant. Local histories are completely unaware of the existence of this mine and so don't offer an explanation of the name, but a major geological formation throughout the park is the Eldon Formation, hundreds of metres thick [12]. Much of Protection Mountain and Castle Mountain are comprised of the Eldon carbonates. During World War One, mining operations opened up which were a triumph of optimism over reality. A switchback trail was carved up the side of the mountain and numerous shafts cut into the mountain top. Like Silver City, metallic ores were present and visible but not in paying quantities. The mine shut down in 1917.

There was only one postmaster, P.C.A. Anderson, who served a few months from 1917-05-01 to 1917-10-16. Shown below is the proof strike of its postmark. Being directly on the main line, the post office had frequent mail service. By this time the internment camp had been relocated, so there was no connection between the mine and the camp. Today the area is the Protection Mountain Campground. Hikers exploring the mountain top often come across the abandoned horizontal mine shafts [8]. The railroad siding still exists and is occasionally used by the CPR to make up trains. On the next page is a 2012 photo I took of the siding, looking southeast towards the backside of Castle Mountain.





Mount Laggan.

The village of Lake Louise, now inside Banff National Park, was originally called Holt City, then The Summit, then Laggan, then Lake Louise. Prior to its founding, there was a post office called Mount Laggan which lasted one year from July 1884 to July 1885, about where the village is today. There are two questions about this post office. Was it an end-of-track post office for the CPR navvies labouring in 1884 to get through the Kicking Horse Pass just around the corner from Lake Louise? And where was Mount Laggan?



Mount Laggan does not appear on any modern map nor any I have consulted for the 1880s era. It is not found in the Atlas of Canada [3]. The name Mount Laggan seems to have been an informal one for what is now Mount Fairview, the closest mountain to the village of Lake Louise and which is on the southeast corner of the lake. The only description of Mount Laggan I have found is an 1885 magazine article whose description of the mountain matches Mount Fairview [2]. The photo at left shows Mount Fairview in 2012, as seen with a telephoto lens from the village.

Today, Lake Louise is a world-class tourist attraction, with the Chateau Lake Louise looming over the valley. But construction on it did not begin until 1890, when it started life as a small wooden chalet and later grew by stages into the stately pile it is today. The Mount Laggan post office therefore was not established for the tourist trade. Banff post office did not exist yet, although there was a mining camp with a post office called Silverton near to Laggan. Silverton inhabitants actually referred to their camp as Silver City, which at its peak had 3,000 inhabitants, of whom about a dozen were women [6].

Both the CPR navvies and the Silver City miners were using Mount Laggan as a supply point. Since the bulk of freight in the valley would have been for the CPR, contractors would have been reluctant to trans-ship goods at nearby Silver City. The miners might have grumbled, but in any event it wasn't a hardship to go the short distance to Laggan, which was only two stops down the line. Mount Laggan was therefore an end-of-track post office. There was a post office established a few months after Mount Laggan opened which was actually called End-of-Track, although it was located in British Columbia, where the railway work was very slow because of the time it took to blast through the mountains. No proof strikes of Mount Laggan postmarks exist but working strikes are known.

The only postmaster of Mount Laggan was Thomas A.W. Gordon, from 1884-07-01 until 1885-07-31 when the post office closed [1]. T.J.S. Skinner was a private mail contractor who carried the mails on pack horses forward along the track from Mount Laggan post office [5]. The gross revenues of Mount Laggan for Fiscal 1885 were \$1,275.55, compared to Silverton at \$29.65, based on the annual Postmaster-General reports [4]. Silverton had a population of 3,000 at the beginning of the year although it collapsed and died by the end of the year when the copper rush that created it failed. These figures are difficult to reconcile. Silverton's gross revenues were about what a ranch house post office out on the empty prairies would earn, and don't fit with 3,000 outlanders who would be writing home frequently. Mount Laggan's revenue was very good, about what a well-established town would earn.

Railroad construction basically stopped at Lake Louise when winter set in at the end of 1883. Some minor construction struggled on at the Kicking Horse Pass but Laggan was essentially the end of the line for trains. Mail couriers were hired to carry the mail to the various work camps and often along the line itself in the mountain valley section [7]. There was a late spring in 1884, and it wasn't until about May that construction began to gear up. Track laying was at a crawl as the navvies blasted their way through the Kicking Horse Pass, built bridges, tunnels, and avalanche sheds, and struggled their way over the pass. It was this time period when the Mount Laggan post office came into

action, serving as an end-of-track post office at Lake Louise. It wasn't until the track laying finally began to move past Field, British Columbia, that the post office was closed in favour of a new one called End-Of-Track.

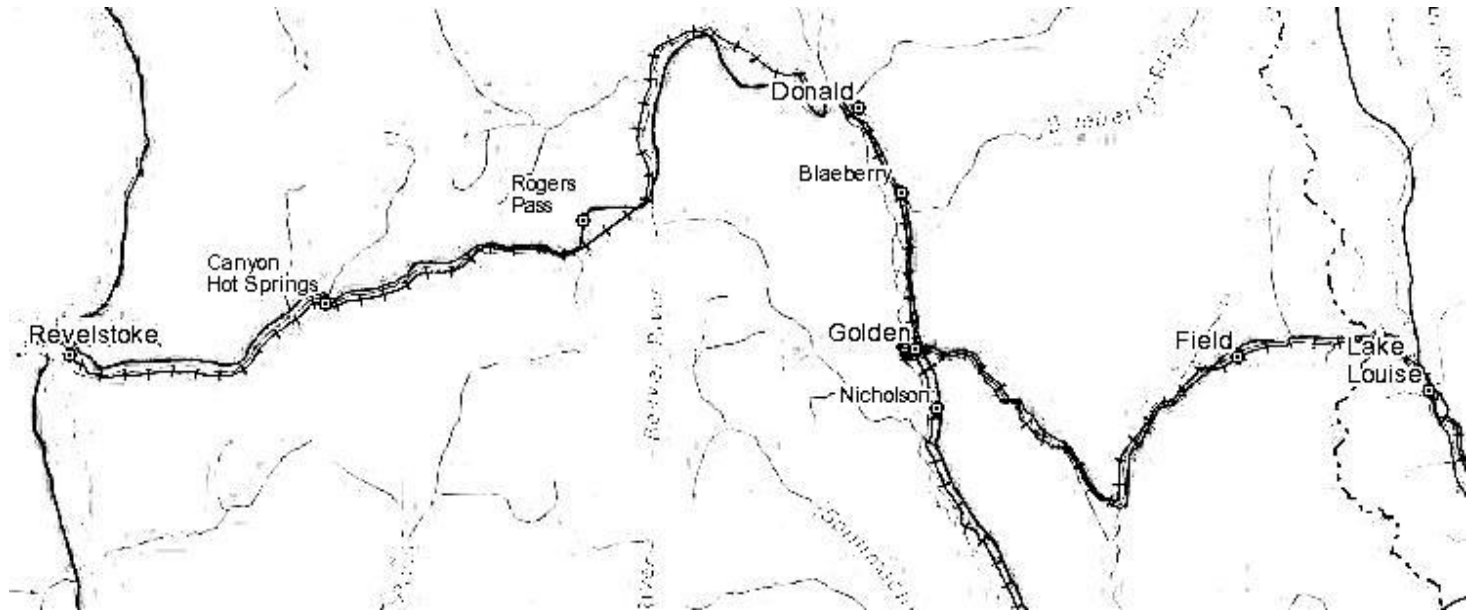
End-Of-Track, British Columbia.

This traveling post office only existed on the British Columbian side of the border, but it was quite close to Mount Laggan and Lake Louise. It opened on 1884-10-01 in a railway car fitted out as a post office and accommodation for the postmaster. As the transcontinental railroad slowly progressed through the mountains of Kicking Horse Pass, this post office was shuffled forward with the crews. It closed on 1886-01-31 when the major part of the railroad work was completed. After the final spike was driven, most of the workers dispersed and the need for the post office concluded.

Thomas A.W. Gordon was the only postmaster, as he was for Mount Laggan. That wasn't the end of him, however. On 1886-02-01, he opened a post office further down the line under the name Farwell, which four months later, on June 1, was changed to Revelstoke. Gordon served as postmaster until the end of 1888. At that same time, End-Of-Track post office reported \$902.28 in gross revenues for Fiscal 1885, and \$1,758.23 for Fiscal 1886. The fact that End-Of-Track and Mount Laggan were reported as separate line items in the annual PMG reports indicate that they must have had separate existence, even if the postmaster was the same man. Gordon could have and probably did delegate some of the work to a postal clerk.

Mount Laggan and End-Of-Track post offices were very heavily used by the navvies, to the point that the Postmaster-General made special mention of it in his Fiscal 1886 report. The navvies appreciated the service as a safe way to send money back home. The PMG reported that End-Of-Track sold \$65,304 worth of money orders in its brief existence, which was equivalent to a large city in Ontario or Quebec [4]. The gross revenues reported above are postage stamp sales and postal fees such as registration. While the post office got a fee for money orders, the bulk of that money was, of course, not theirs and was for onward transmission to the recipients, thus not actual revenue.

Once the railroad was completed, a number of other small post offices arose along the track in the British Columbia section between Lake Louise and Revelstoke. These were regular stationary post offices, not track post offices, and are beyond the scope of this article. For the record, and going west from the Alberta border, they included Field, Golden, Blaeberry (not a spelling error), Donald, Glacier/Rogers Pass, and Revelstoke. My remit is Alberta postal history so I leave it to someone else to cover the British Columbia side of the line.



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Lake Louise Village.

The geography of this area requires a little explaining. The railroad came north along the wide flat bottom of the Bow River valley and turned west at Kicking Horse Pass. Just before the pass there are two hanging valleys on the west side of the Bow valley, one containing Lake Louise and the other Moraine Lake. A hanging valley is a high mountain valley whose mouth opens up far above the valley it empties into. Both lakes are turquoise lakes, not a normal blue like ordinary lakes, but an opaque turquoise colour. From a distance it seems one could walk across the water, but on the shoreline it can be seen that the colour is due to refraction by very finely-ground clay sediment from the glacial meltwater that supplies the lakes. It was obvious to the railway barons that here was a site to build a world-class resort. The Chateau Lake Louise still operates today on the shore of the lake, a stately pile serving the upper end of the tourist trade.

The village is not up in the hanging valley where the lake is, but down on the bottomlands where the Pipestone River flows into the Bow River. When a railroad siding was established at this junction, it was briefly known as Holt City, after the contractor who had the job for that section of the line. The CPR executives quickly renamed it Laggan for a Scottish village. This caused some problems in the tourist trade, because many visitors did not realize Laggan was the station for Lake Louise and missed their stop. In 1914 the village and post office were renamed Lake Louise, even though they are not within sight of the lake, which is high above them in the hanging valley and screened by the spruce forest [5]. On the next page is a 2012 photo I took from the village looking west up to the mountains. The lake is screened by the spruce-covered terrace behind the shopping plaza, and the central mountain at the back of the lake is blanked out by a July snowstorm high up in the mountains.

The Lake Louise village post office opened under the name of Laggan on 1901-03-01, with Mrs. Elizabeth Evans as postmaster. At right is a sample Laggan postmark. Evans held the position until 1916-04-18, during which time the name changed on 1914-03-01 to Lake Louise.





Below is a pre-World War One real-photo postcard titled “Lake Louise, Laggan”. On the reverse is a message that reads in part: *“We are just at this place now and the scenery is grand around here. But it is an awful name they have given the place.”* Unfortunately the postmark is illegible and the message undated but it is definitely pre-war.



After Evans, two postmasters came and went before Mrs. A.S. Asling became the longest serving postmaster from 1921-11-30 to 1951-11-16. Mary Elizabeth Charyk then served until 1957-01-25. Her successor was Marie Routledge who was briefly acting postmaster until her husband Joseph Douglas Routledge stepped in as a full-time postmaster from 1957-12-06 to 1965-05-31. Both Marie and Joseph held the job as civil servants, the first to do so. Thereafter followed a steady turnover of postmasters, and like Banff this post office also appears to have been used for training new postmasters to serve elsewhere in Alberta [3]. In 1991, the post office closed and was replaced by a retail outlet [10].

The modern post office in Lake Louise village is in a cul-de-sac of a shopping plaza directly beside the Pipestone River. It is a retail outlet called The Depot and includes financial services, wire transfers of money, a bank kiosk, and Internet terminals, all aimed at the tourist trade and seasonal staff, most of whom are outlanders. In the photo of the village on page 36, at the centre-right of the photo, there is a tiny Canada Post sign tucked under the building's eaves with an arrow pointing to the retail outlet. On the next page is a photo of the outlet that I took in 2007. Just outside the left of the photo, screened by trees, is the Pipestone River. The postal outlet and mall are on built-up ground about one metre above the spring flood zone, and not a centimetre too high at that, as I have seen the Pipestone River wash up debris to the edge of the berm when it overflows.



Today mail dropped in the street letter box at Lake Louise receives a spray-on cancel at Calgary. If handed over the counter, the staff use their pictorial cancel without being asked, presumably because there are so many tourists asking for the postmark. Below left is the pictorial postmark. Below right is an unofficial cachet that staff often used although it is undated. The personalized stamp, by the way, is a photo of myself taken at Bow Lake, a half-hour's drive north of Lake Louise, with Crowfoot Glacier behind me.



The continental divide is a fifteen-minute drive from Lake Louise and constitutes the Alberta-British Columbia border along the Rockies. On the next page is a 1922 postcard with a purple Lake Louise cachet indicating that there must have been a letterbox on the divide back when. It was not an official postmark but it seems that other posties down the line to the addressee decided to let it go through.

PUBLISHED BY THE GOWEN SUTTON CO. LTD. VANCOUVER B.C.

POSTCARD



CORRESPONDENCE

ADDRESS

19th Oct / 22

Here I am up in
the mountains oh
so high.

Weather misty & wet
so my snapshots are
a failure

H. Baddie

Johnny
Bank of Hamilton Bdg

Hamilton

Ont

Chateau Lake Louise.

Initial construction of the hotel began in 1890, and like the Banff Springs Hotel, the Chateau grew in steps with the usual fires and rebuilds along the way, most recently with a large addition in the early 2000s. Below is a 1929 real-photo postcard of the Chateau as seen from across the front (east end) of the lake.





The Chateau post office opened on 1914-05-15 with H.F. Ritchey as postmaster. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark. This was a summer post office, although the postmasters kept their positions over the winter. Many were managers and they would have used postal clerks for the day-to-day running of the post office. There were regular turnovers of postmasters as staff came and went, before John Joseph Meredith took on the position on 1928-08-24 and stayed until World War Two shut the hotel down.

The Chateau closed for the duration on 1941-09-11 and did not re-open until 1946-06-08. Robert Arthur Mackie was the first post-war postmaster for the 1946 summer season before moving to the Banff Springs Hotel the following year. Hilliard Lyle followed the same route for the succeeding season. Thereafter the postmastership turned over every couple of years on average as hotel staff changed. The Chateau post office was permanently closed in February 1976. Today there is only a mail drop in the lobby (below), and the mail receives a Calgary spray-on cancel rather than going through the village post office.





Moraine Lake is in the valley adjacent to Lake Louise and shares the same access road from the village. It has never had a post office or manorial hotel since it is so close to both Lake Louise village and hotel. It was, however, depicted on a 1985 stamp issued for the centennial of Canada's national park system, of which Banff was the first. The stamp is confusingly titled just "Banff" rather than "Banff National Park" but the scene is actually 30 km north of Banff village.

Bow Lake.

Just north of Lake Louise both the railroad and the Trans-Canada Highway turn west through the Kicking Horse Pass. Highway 93 begins at that bend and goes straight north into Jasper National Park. Lake Louise is only about halfway along the length of Banff National Park, and there is still a large section of the park before

Highway 93 reaches the Jasper National Park boundary. This area never had any settlements since there never was a railroad through it, and the road was not improved to suitability for the average tourist automobile until after World War Two.

There were, however, some lakeside resorts and mountain-men camps along the route, of which the Num-Ti-Jah Lodge is the only one today. This resort is located on the northeast shore of Bow Lake, which is fed by meltwater from the Bow Glacier at its west end and Crowfoot Glacier at its south end. Bow Glacier is the source of the Bow River. The resort is a popular one, a sort of mini-manorial hotel nowhere near the size of Banff Springs or Chateau Lake Louise but still attracting significant tourist traffic and large numbers of day trippers who hike up to Bow Glacier. Mail service to the resident staff and from guests at the hotel is via Lake Louise. On the next page is a post-war cover whose return address clearly indicates this. The cover is postmarked Banff though, and I suspect that it was simply deposited directly on the train, just as modern-day letterbox mail in Lake Louise gets only a Calgary spray-on cancel.



80W LAKE, ALBERTA

Via LAKE LOUISE POST OFFICE



Miss Masey Simpson
% Art - Ben - Ben Robinson
Inuk

Feb
M.S.D.

Acknowledgments.

I thank Bill Pawluk (Calgary) for useful advice on the Ukrainian internment camp.

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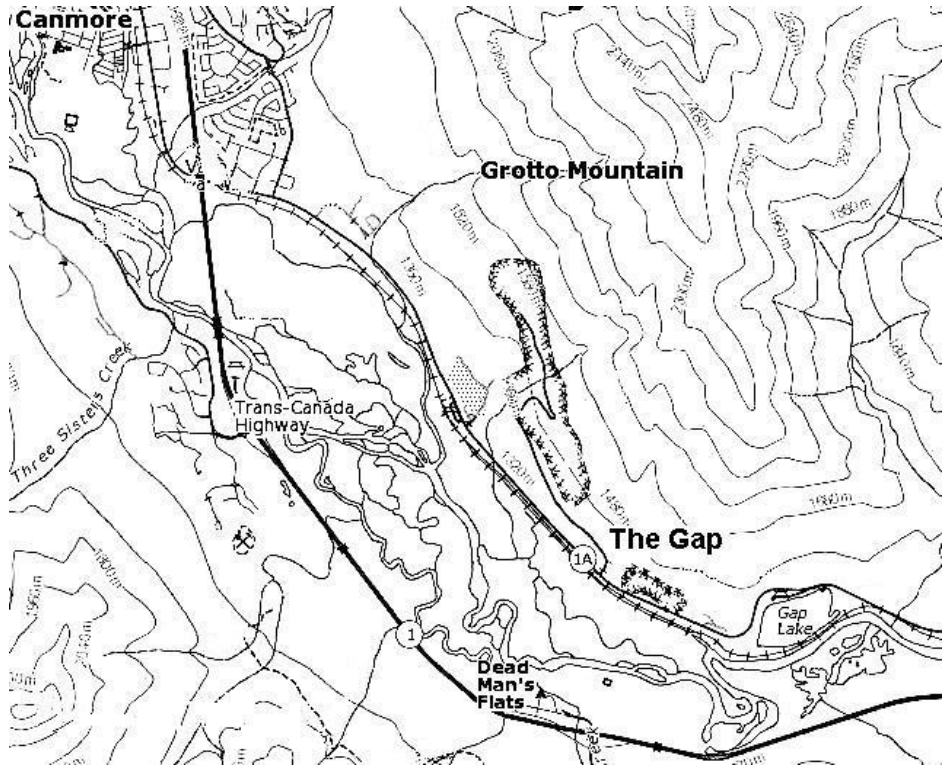
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www.ag.gov.ab.ca/publications/wcsb_atlas/a_ch08/ch_08.html#eldon

LOWER BOW VALLEY

Canmore.

Canmore is located on the Bow River just inside a gap in the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains. The gap itself has two hamlets, Dead Man's Flats and The Gap. The gates of Banff National Park are on Canmore's western boundary. It is today a major tourist town with about 12,000 permanent residents and numerous overnight tourists or seasonal residents. It is the home of the Olympic Nordic Centre, which trains athletes for cross-country skiing.

The photo on the next page shows the view from Mount Lady Macdonald, looking southeast across the Bow River valley towards Three Sisters Mountain. Canmore can be seen on the valley floor. The cleared area at lower right is the Olympic Nordic Centre.





In August 1883, the Canadian Pacific Railway trans-continental line reached Calgary, and by October it was at the townsite, briefly known as Siding 27. As with so many place names in southern Alberta, there was a Scotsman involved in the naming of the town. In 1884, a post office opened with the present-day name, given after King Malcolm III of Canmore, who vanquished the usurper MacBeth. The town was first a railroad division point with a roundhouse and maintenance shops, but as locomotives became able to travel further and with fewer repairs, that faded away.

This didn't affect the local economy too much because coal mining began in 1887 to supply locomotives with fuel and for export, and boomed after the nearby village of Anthracite was abandoned in 1904 because its marketable coal ran out. Diesel trains crippled Canmore's economy in the early 1950s and the mines began shutting down. Some were able to survive exporting coal to the Japanese, but they faded slowly and in 1979 the last coal mine shut down. Limestone quarries still continue downstream from the town but they don't employ staff the way that underground mines did. Canmore stagnated until the middle 1980s when the 1988 Calgary Olympics helped revive it, and afterward when the tourist industry began to develop in a big way [1].

The town was built on the Bow River floodplain and across various islands in the river where they form a braided gravel delta. Canmore was dissected by many small creeks which were actually channels of the Bow River. Not surprisingly, the town was flooded about 25 times since 1883 according to one account. Eventually the residents got the idea, filled in some of the creeks, and built some levees. Even so, buildings in the townsite do not have basements because of flowing water a short distance underground. The newer suburbs are located on glacial terraces and so are immune to rising rivers.

The historical townsite was divided into two areas. Mineside was on the south bank of the river where the coal mines tunneled into adjacent mountains and most of the miners lived. Townside, on the north bank, was where the business community developed, the railroad siding was, and where respectable folk lived. Pioneer commentaries often wrote of the two sites as separate towns whose populations mixed very little. Mineside has today vanished or been built over as luxury townhouse complexes, and Townside is the present downtown core [2]. There was also a short-lived settlement in the early 1900s called Georgetown, just above the Nordic Centre a few kilometres west of Townside. It only lasted a few years during the life of its coal mine and has now reverted to wilderness or is part of the Nordic Centre trails. Suburbs are now sprawling across the valley floor and up the glacial terraces on the far side of the river.

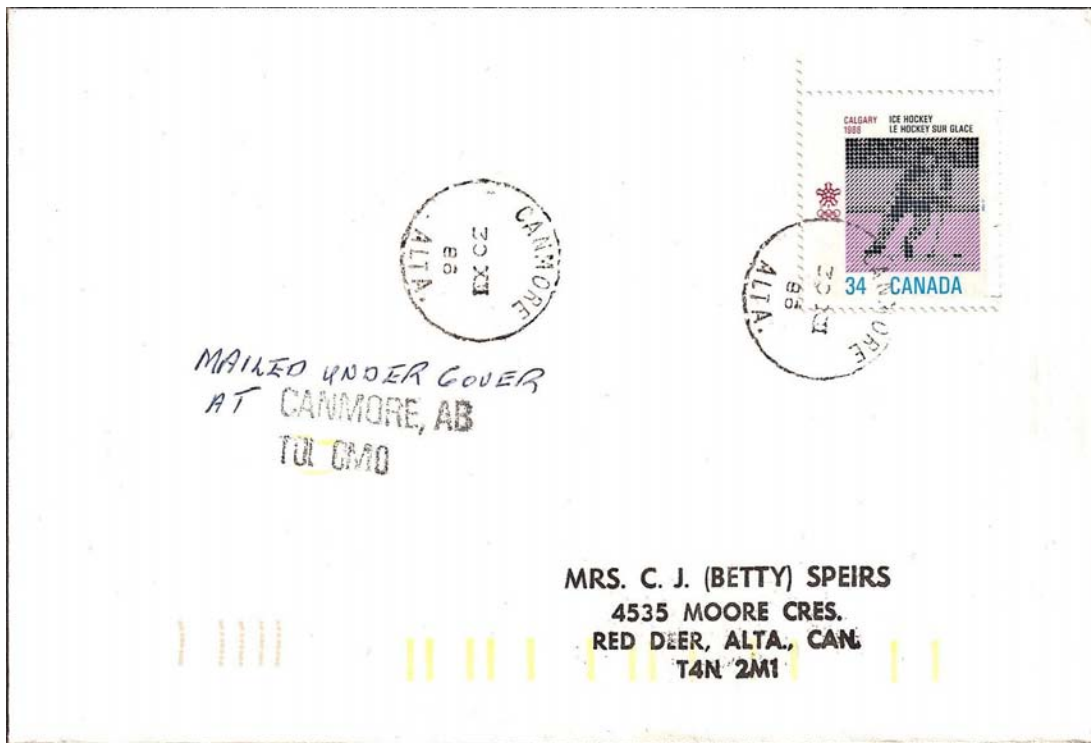
Mineside, Townside, and Georgetown all shared the same post office, which moved back and forth between the first two. There followed a string of short-duration postmasters who held the position for a few years and in some cases a few months. At one time it was in a small hut near Policeman Creek (a channel of the Bow River so named because the North West Mounted Police had quarters there), but for some of its early history it was in a coal mine company store [3]. The first postmaster was William Jenkins from 1884-10-01 to 1885-10-14, who was the CPR stationmaster. The post office then moved from the CPR station on the north side of the Bow River to a house on the south side when William Whittet became postmaster.

In June 1894, the post office was upgraded to a money order office. The postal inspector James Macleod in 1884 had declined this upgrade on the grounds that Canmore was not then a business centre or likely to become one because of it “*being just at the entrance to the mountains and the country in that vicinity being mountainous and sterile.*” [8]. Notwithstanding the sterility of the mountains, Canmore began to prosper and soon there was no doubting that it could use a full-scale post office.

James Carroll was postmaster from 1905-02-01 to his death on 1916-12-16. During his tenure, the post office moved into a separate building with living quarters attached. His daughter Daisy assisted him, transporting the mail to and from the train by buggy. She was the first person in Canmore to own a bicycle and did the route with it as well. She habitually wore buckskin clothing and was reportedly a blonde bombshell. Daisy took over as postmistress after her father’s death until 1921-04-30, when she married and moved to Pasadena, California [3, 4]. The litany of subsequent postmasters is as follows: Elvan L. Walters from 1921 to 1923-05-05, Stewart Lynch from 1923 to 1931-04-20, and Arthur Kenlie Colebrook from then until 1946-06-23.

In the post-WW2 era, the Dalglish family took over. Wilma Dalglish was postmistress after Colebrook, and then Andrew James Dalglish from 1947-02-01 to 1961-08-10. George Measor was postmaster 1961-08-11 until his death on 1974-12-28. The following postmasters were Steve Trofimuk, John Keay, Alana Laupel, and Bob Campbell [5]. I don’t have an exact list after them because of Canada Post privacy rules, but Daniel L. Maheux became postmaster in 2004. He subsequently became involved with the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, and served on their national executive. Linden Wentzloff later became postmaster. She has written several children’s books.

The main post office, run directly by Canada Post, is now in a downtown building. Below is a 1986 cover with a Canmore CDS handstamp. It had been sent with a request for return under separate cover, but apparently the postie was suspicious and used a marking and manuscript notation normally reserved for suspected fraud covers.



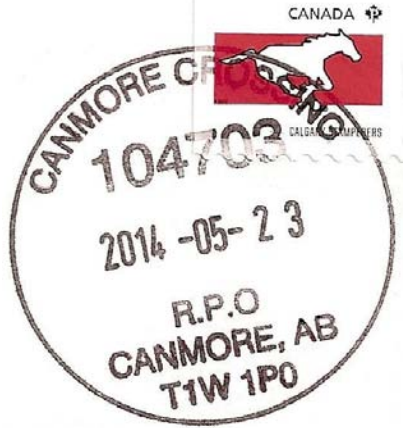
Postmarks of the Canmore office are shown here. At right are two POCAN postmarks of the 1990-2000 decades. The pictorial postmark was issued to commemorate coal mining in Canmore. It shows one of the mini-locomotives used in the mines, which ran on compressed air, hence the strange shape of the vehicle.

The photo is a view of the main post office in 2011, looking southwest with Ha Ling Peak in the background.



The town also supports a retail postal outlet (RePO). Plus Foods had an outlet from 1990-01-16 to 1994-09-01. The current RePO began as a Sobeys supermarket on Railway Avenue just off the Trans-Canada Highway, more convenient to tourists who don't want to fight their way through traffic into the downtown. Below is a view of the Sobeys RePO, looking north with Mount Lady Macdonald in the background on the far side of the valley, along with its postmark.





In early 2014, Sobeys bought out Canada Safeway. As part of the approval process, the federal government mandated that Sobeys had to sell some of its existing stores. The Canmore store was one of them, and became a Save-On Foods store. The new owners kept the RePO operating but since it was a change in ownership, a new number, 104703, was assigned to the outlet. The building was left much the same except for new signs over the front facade.



The Gap.

Along much of the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains of Alberta, there is no sudden arrival at the mountains. One travels west across rolling hills that become foothills which in turn are supplanted by the front range mountains. There are some areas where there is a dramatic and abrupt entrance into the Rockies, one of which is The Gap. This is a narrow cut through the front ranges through which the Bow River flows out of the mountains into the prairies. On the south side of the river is the “new” Trans-Canada Highway, a four-lane divided highway built in the late 1950s/early 1960s. On



the north side of the river is the old Trans-Canada, a narrow two-lane road now called Highway 1A, and the CPR transcontinental railroad. They all squeeze together through the gap, with Pigeon Mountain on the south side and Grotto Mountain on the north.

This photo, looking west up the valley, shows The Gap as it is today, with Highway 1A, the railway, and the Bow River. The Trans-Canada Highway is hidden by the spruce trees at left. The toe of Grotto Mountain can be seen at middle right, where Highway 1A chopped it off. The railroad siding in the middle distance is all that remains of the hamlet called The Gap, and its post office was somewhere along the siding.



Just into the mountains a few kilometres upstream of The Gap is Canmore, where the valley widens out again. On the upstream north bank of The Gap was and still is a limestone quarry, a major supplier to the cement industry. Banff National Park began as a tiny enclave in the Rockies in 1885 but expanded dramatically in 1902, swallowing up Canmore, The Gap, and the Kananaskis valley beyond. This created problems because the coal mines and quarries conflicted with the idea of preserving wilderness.

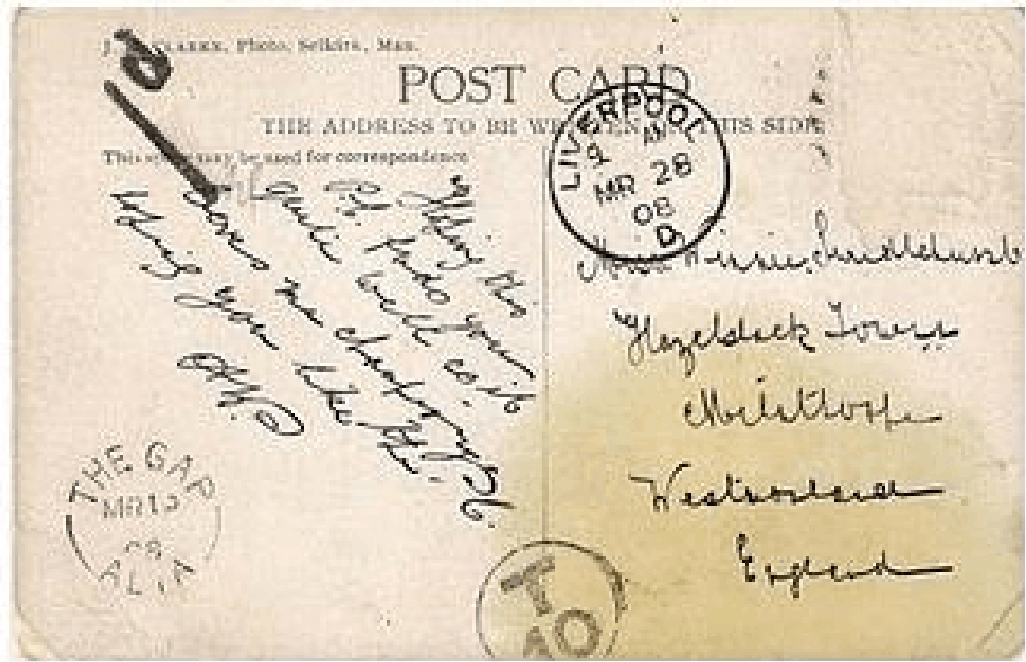
In 1950, the federal government gave the Canmore to Kananaskis area to the provincial government. Today the area is a mixture of commercial uses and provincial parks. The Gap and another quarry just downstream at Exshaw are the only parts of the mining industry left in the valley. The photo on this

page shows the valley from the opposite end of the photo on the previous page, looking east from Canmore down the river, with Grotto Mountain on the far side. The slash across the base of Grotto Mountain is the quarry, and where it narrows down to a point to the right is where The Gap is located. At middle left is a new suburb of Canmore. Exshaw is out of view past the end of Grotto Mountain.

Directly across the river from the now-extinct hamlet of The Gap is the still-extant hamlet of Dead Man's Flats, which survives as a service station, small hotel, and campground on the Trans-Canada Highway. There was never any direct communication between the two of them even though they both were on the gap between the mountains a couple of kilometres apart. Then and now, to go from one side of the gap to the other means traveling first to west to Canmore or east to Kananaskis, crossing the bridge, and then doubling back on the opposite side of the valley. The two settlements basically bookended the mountain gap. Anyone wanting mail service in Dead Man's Flats had to and still has to go to Canmore, but there is talk of developing a resort centre there. It may be that some years from now there will be a very interesting postmark from Dead Man's Flats to revive the postal history of the area. The Flats gets its name from a sensational murder in 1904 when two white men got into a dispute that ended fatally for one of them. It is not, as hack writers preparing tourist brochures claim, the result of some ancient aboriginal fight.

The CPR railroad reached The Gap in early October 1883. This section of the Bow River is an easy incline slowly slanting up from Calgary, and the gandy-dancers made good time building the railroad. The track-laying crews set a short-distance record at The Gap when they built 600 feet of track in 6.5 minutes [1]. There was no post office near The Gap at this time, and Canmore's post office didn't open until the following year. Any mail to the railway workers would have been addressed in care of the CPR, at End of Track. Thus to identify a cover as being received at The Gap, one would look for an End of Track notation with some other postmark, such as Calgary, dated in early October. One should be careful not to be confused by a British Columbia postmark called End of Track. On the flatlands the tracks were laid in miles per day, but once the railway reached into the mountains past Lake Louise, progress slowed to a crawl, and End of Track became a fixed location rather than an ephemeral milepost. The End of Track postmark had nothing to do with The Gap.

The Gap, as a settlement, owed its existence to a limestone quarry started by Robert Butchart. He had diversified interests and in 1904 left for Vancouver Island where he started a quarry that his widow later converted into the famous Butchart Gardens. The quarry at The Gap was taken over by the Robertson family and later by large-scale commercial interests. It is still operating and has the advantage that it is immediately adjacent to the railroad siding [3]. There was never any real settlement beyond a few houses and buildings, and The Gap was essentially a railroad siding camp.



The post office opened on 1906-12-01 with J.W. Fullbrook as the first postmaster [4]. Fullbrook vacated the post office when he left the area in June 1909. After being vacant for a few months, post office operations resumed when William Walker took over as postmaster in November of that year. He operated a drug store in Canmore, and managed this as a sideline. In October 1911, he resigned the position and the post office was officially closed. It reopened again on 1913-07-15 with John Hooks as postmaster before closing once and for all on 1916-05-08. Shown here is a postcard from The Gap to England with a 1908 split-circle cancel. Unfortunately the stamp was removed by a stamp collector back

in the days when “the stamp is the thing” was the law, so it is not possible to determine why the postcard was assessed postage due. There is a trace of a postmark barred killer where the stamp used to be, so the postage due couldn’t have been because the sender forgot to put a stamp on [6]. Probably the postcard was underpaid to an international destination and was mailed at the domestic rate.

Since The Gap was only a short distance from Canmore, it does not seem to have been a necessary post office save that it would be convenient for the company business at quarry. The financial returns of the post office showed little improvement or need for it [7]. In its first fiscal year ending March 1907, there was \$43.50 in gross revenue for four months takings. Fiscal 1908 was The Gap's all-time high, with \$139.50 in gross revenue. In fiscal 1912, when it first closed, The Gap had done \$112.25 in postal business, compared to Exshaw's \$834.08. By fiscal year end 1915, The Gap had only done \$42.50 in business over the course of a year. Even in those days, when postage was paid with pennies and 25 cents could feed a family of four, that wasn't much. For comparison, Canmore had a gross income of \$1,565.79 for fiscal 1915 and the big city of Calgary did \$300,101.04 of postal business. Exshaw, a company village like The Gap that was also dependent on one limestone quarry and only a few minutes further downstream, did \$553.93 that year [9]. Exshaw's excuse was that it was not in convenient walking distance of a bigger town, so the higher revenue can be explained that way.

During the Great Depression, the federal government opened a relief work camp for unemployed men at The Gap. Officially known as Camp 5 - Canmore East, the men worked at repairing and upgrading what is today Highway 1A but was then the Trans-Canada Highway. Despite the surge in population, the post office was not re-opened, and the men would have got their mail via Canmore or possibly Exshaw. Today there is no trace of any settlement from either the time of the post office or the work camp, only the railroad siding.

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Exshaw.

The village of Exshaw, Alberta, is on the north slope of the Bow River valley, downstream from The Gap just before the river exits the Rocky Mountains, about an hour's drive west of Calgary. It was named after William Exshaw (1866-1927) by his father-in-law Sir Sandford Fleming, the railroad magnate who established a limestone quarry near the village a century ago [1]. The townsite is on the main line of the CPR trans-continental railroad, and the quarry is still very active today supplying cement manufacturers. The railroad sidings are constantly busy, and pup-trailer dump trucks haul limestone all day long to a cement kiln just down the highway. Exshaw also does a small amount of business from tourists, but nearby Canmore has soaked up most of that trade. Exshaw was and still is a company town. The old Trans-Canada Highway, a narrow two-lane paved road, runs through the village, but the "new" highway, a four-lane divided highway built in the 1950s, runs on the opposite side of the valley through Canmore, so Exshaw has mostly been bypassed by history.

The Exshaw post office opened on December 15, 1906, and went through regular changes of postmasters, almost on an annual basis at times [2]. The first postmaster was N.K. Luxton, who lasted only four months before resigning on April 14, 1907. H.E. Sibbald, after whom the nearby uninhabited Sibbald Flats are named, was postmaster until February 20, 1909. E.W. Aikins was postmaster until October 11, 1912, when he was dismissed from office as a result of political partisanship. In those days, postmasters were political appointees. Thereafter there was a revolving door for postmasters until Joseph Norman Baptie was appointed in 1933 and lasted until 1954.

The first two postmasters, Luxton and Sibbald, were partners in the Exshaw Trading Co. Store where the post office was located. Although Luxton was officially the postmaster, he was a back-office man, while Sibbald looked after the front counter. Luxton was a restless soul, and left Exshaw after four months to try his luck upstream at Banff. Sibbald then became postmaster de jure as well as de facto. Aikins, who succeeded Sibbald, was a later owner of the store [3]. After him though, the list of store owners diverged from the list of postmasters sometime after 1924, so the post office must have been moved elsewhere. During the pioneer phase of Exshaw, the cement plant ran into financial difficulties, and since the village was a one-industry town, this meant economic hardship for the rest.

During Exshaw's first fiscal year of business, from its opening until March 31, 1907 (federal government fiscal year), it had \$315 revenue. Exshaw became an accounting office on February 1, 1908. By the conclusion of the fiscal year ending on March 31, 1909, its gross annual

revenue was up to \$1,077.29. For comparison, the Canmore post office during this time did \$1,261.97 and Calgary did \$99,070.84 for the fiscal year [4]. Undoubtedly much of Exshaw's volume was due to business from the quarries.

The post office is now in its own purpose-built building, albeit very small. Besides its regular handstamp, it has a pictorial postmark showing Heart Mountain. Heart Mountain is actually several kilometres away on the far side of the Bow River valley, with the river in between. The new Trans-Canada Highway winds around its base. The mountain gets its name from a tilted layer of limestone on the top that collapsed into the shape of a valentine heart. The photo below shows the Exshaw post office with Heart Mountain in the distance; compare this with the pictorial postmark.



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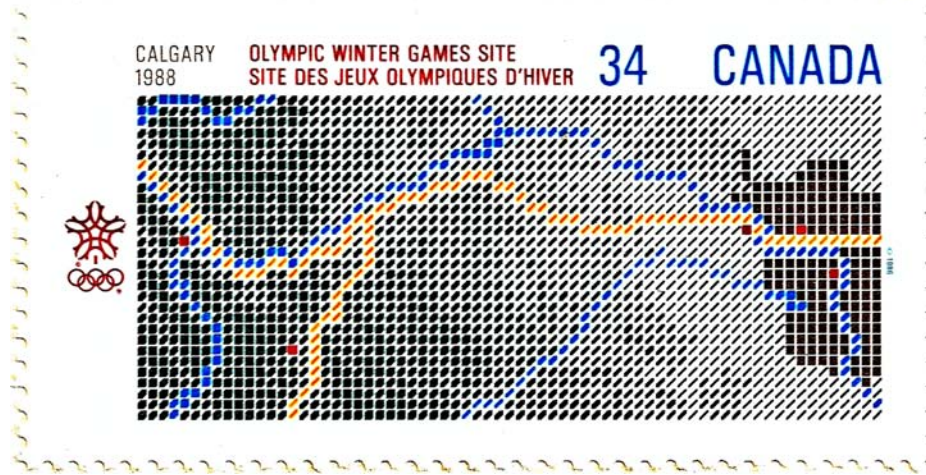
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KANANASKIS PROVINCIAL PARKS

The Kananaskis River valley and mountain range separate Banff National Park to the west from Calgary to the east. The river flows northeast and empties into the Bow River just where it comes out of the mountains and heads east to Calgary. The Nakoda tribal lands are at this junction and eastward, but the name is Cree, who call the area Ozada-imne (“where the rivers meet”). The name was given by Capt. John Palliser in his pioneer expedition after a Cree man known as Kin-e-ah-kis (“one who is grateful”), whose claim to fame is that while he was in that neighbourhood, he got into a fight over a woman and survived a blow to the head with an axe. A major ski resort in Kananaskis is named Nakiska, a Cree word meaning “meeting place”.

The proximity of Kananaskis to Calgary has always attracted attention of settlers, miners, ranchers, and foresters since the late 1800s. Despite its resources and easy access to the CPR trans-continental railroad, which crosses the mouth of the Kananaskis valley, most investors were frustrated in trying to make money. From 1902 to 1930, the valley was subsumed into Banff National Park, then became a federal Crown Forest to permit development of hydroelectric projects which supply Calgary with electricity to this day. In 1950 the valley was transferred to the Province of Alberta, which did little with it until the early 1970s. A forestry road was then upgraded from narrow gravel to Highway 40, a wide two-lane paved road with broad shoulders for tourists to pull over and rubberneck at the mountains and wildlife. By the late 1970s, tourist facilities were being constructed.

Today the valley is a melange of provincial parks, commercial rangeland for cattle grazing, hydroelectric projects, tourist lodges, and golf courses, but is still largely wilderness. It is made up of several provincial parks and private-use property, collectively known as Kananaskis Country. Hiking, whitewater kayaking, and mountain climbing are the main tourist activities. The permanent population of the entire valley is now about 420 people, mostly in the tourist and hydroelectric industry or government services such as the RCMP or provincial park rangers [1].



At left is a map stamp issued in 1986 for the Calgary Olympics. Highway 40 is the second vertical descending line from the left, the Trans-Canada Highway is the yellow horizontal line, and Calgary is the blob at right.

The postal history can be divided into two distinct phases. The Kananaskis post office first existed from 1888 to 1940 near the confluence with the Bow River, and was used by early settlers and businesses. It then closed, and any mail would have been handled in the nearby villages of Seebe and Exshaw. In 1987 a completely unrelated post office of the same name opened deep inside the valley as part of a newborn

Kananaskis Village, built from scratch for the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics, some events of which were held at the Nakiska ski resort adjacent to the village. The Seebe post office closed in 2004 but the Exshaw office is still operating [2].

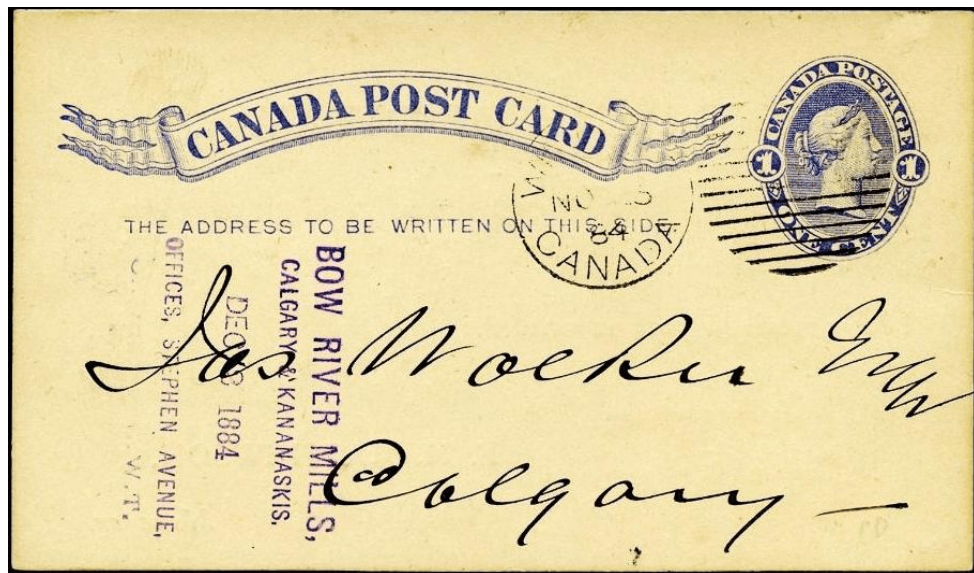
Old Kananaskis Post Office.

The first Kananaskis post office moved around a bit but generally stayed in the vicinity of Section 25 or 30, Township 24, Range 8, West of 5th Meridian, which put it in the Bow River valley area [3]. Today there is still a ranch of that name in that location sans post office, which can be confusing because of the other village with a post office and the same name, 30 km south, up the Kananaskis River. The Kananaskis post office opened on 1888-04-01 on a cattle ranch, with John A. Walker as postmaster. He died on 1891-05-29 and his older brother Major

James Walker took over the post office until 1899-10-12. James has had entire books written about him [4] and was one of those pioneers who did everything and went everywhere. A mountain in the Kananaskis range is named after him. Walker probably assigned his postal duties to some unknown assistant, possibly his wife, since during his tenure he was engaged in a multitude of business ventures throughout southern Alberta. He had come out west with the Mounties in 1874. He resigned his commission in 1881 at the request of Senator Matthew Cochrane and none other than Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald himself. Both of them wanted him in civilian life so he could take charge of introducing ranching into the Bow River valley in the area adjacent to Kananaskis. Due to incompetent micro-managing by city slickers, he quit the Cochrane ranch two years later, bought a sawmill, and homesteaded in the area. He became active in Calgary civic affairs and businesses, and was on the committee that applied to incorporate the town in 1884, although he did not stand for election. A checklist of his

public service activities would take up a full page; suffice it to say that in 1975, the centennial year of Calgary, the Cowtowners voted him as Citizen of the Century.

At left is an 1884 cover sent to his operations in old Kananaskis (courtesy of Bill Pawluk collection).



The longest serving postmaster of Kananaskis was Edwin Loder, who held the position from 1900-05-01 until his death on 1935-05-31. The post office was located on his ranch, as seen below in 1900 (from reference 9). A nearby mountain across from the mouth of the Kananaskis valley is named after him. Miss Eleanor Walker then temporarily held the position. I have not been able to find out if she was John's or James's daughter. Walter Loder took over on 1935-07-31 and served until 1939-03-14. Below right is the proof strike of the postmark used during his tenure.



The last postmaster was Thomas Arthur Barton, from 1939-07-15 to 1940-04-30. The post office was discontinued for lack of sufficient business. A few kilometres to the west was the Exshaw post office, and a few kilometres east was the Seebe post office, so there was no real need for it. The original Kananaskis hamlet is now part of the Brewster dude ranch, which caters to high-end tourists and business conferences.

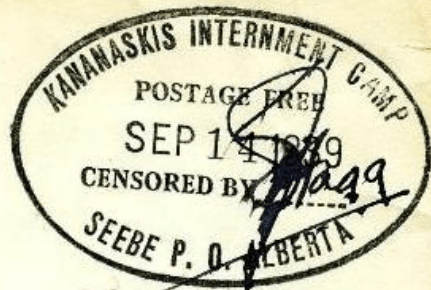
Seebe.

The village of Seebe, on the Bow River at the Kananaskis hydroelectric dam, was a company town owned by Calgary Power (today Transalta). The company has a network of dams up and down the Bow and Kananaskis rivers, and Seebe was the central control point directly on the junction of the two rivers. The name Seebe comes from the Cree word for river, and the village sat right on the western boundary of the Nakoda lands. A post office was opened on 1913-10-27 with C.S. Dammann as postmaster, but he only stayed a couple of months. Shown on this page is a proof strike of the first Seebe postmark. There was a steady turnover of postmasters every two or three years until Claude Bagley Brewster took over on 1936-07-20 and lasted until 1947-11-06. He was from the Brewster ranching family and descended from the Bagleys, one of whom had been Major James Walker's company bugle boy, and who later settled in the area as well. The Brewsters went into the tour guide business and their company is still one of the major bus tour lines in the Rockies today.

During the Great Depression, a relief work camp was opened up near Seebe where unemployed men could be put to useful work. After World War Two began, the camp was first converted into an internment camp for ethnic Japanese and Germans, then a POW camp for German soldiers, mostly from the Afrika Korp, but later some SS officers. It operated from 1939 to 1946, and was referred to as Kan-a-Nazi by local citizens. On the next page is a cover from this camp (courtesy of Bill Pawluk).



O. H. M. S.



Hudsons Bay Company

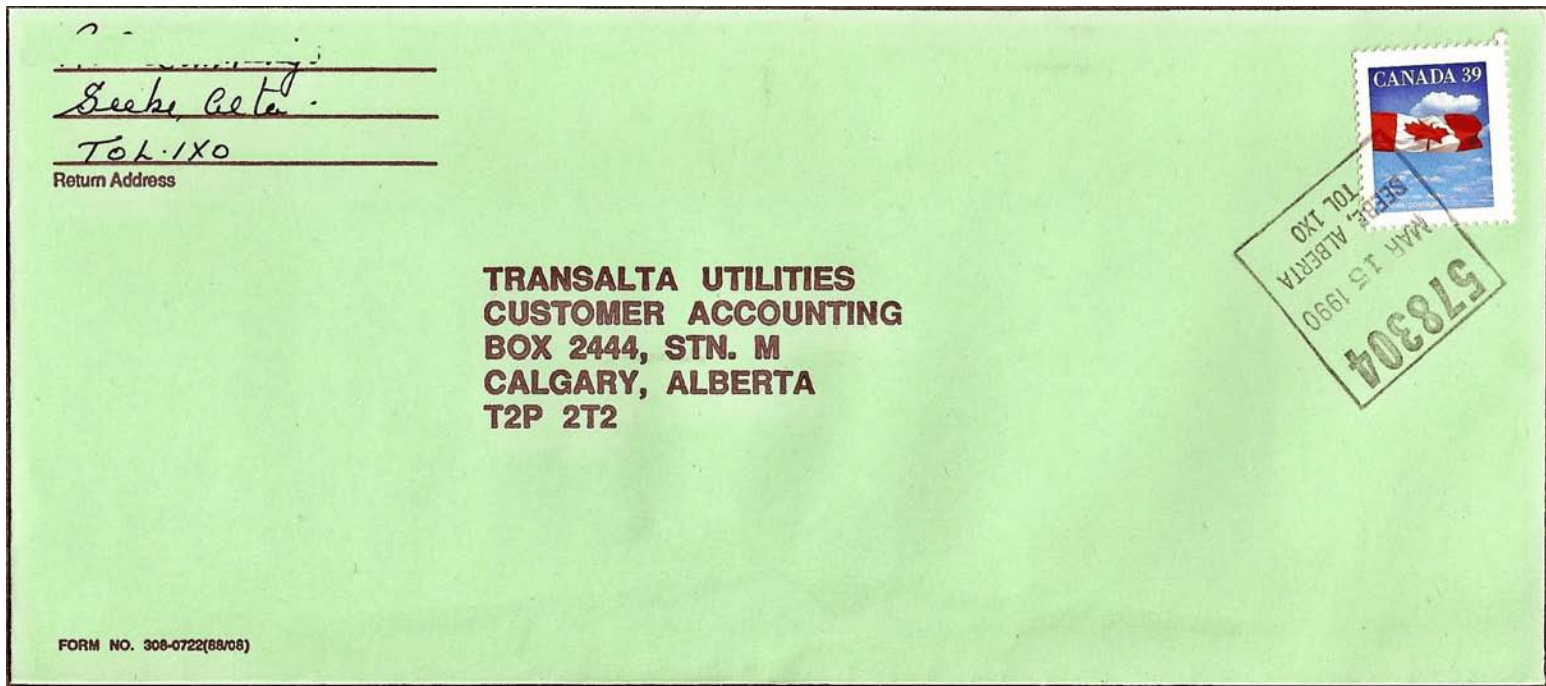
Lnad Dept.

Winnipeg Man



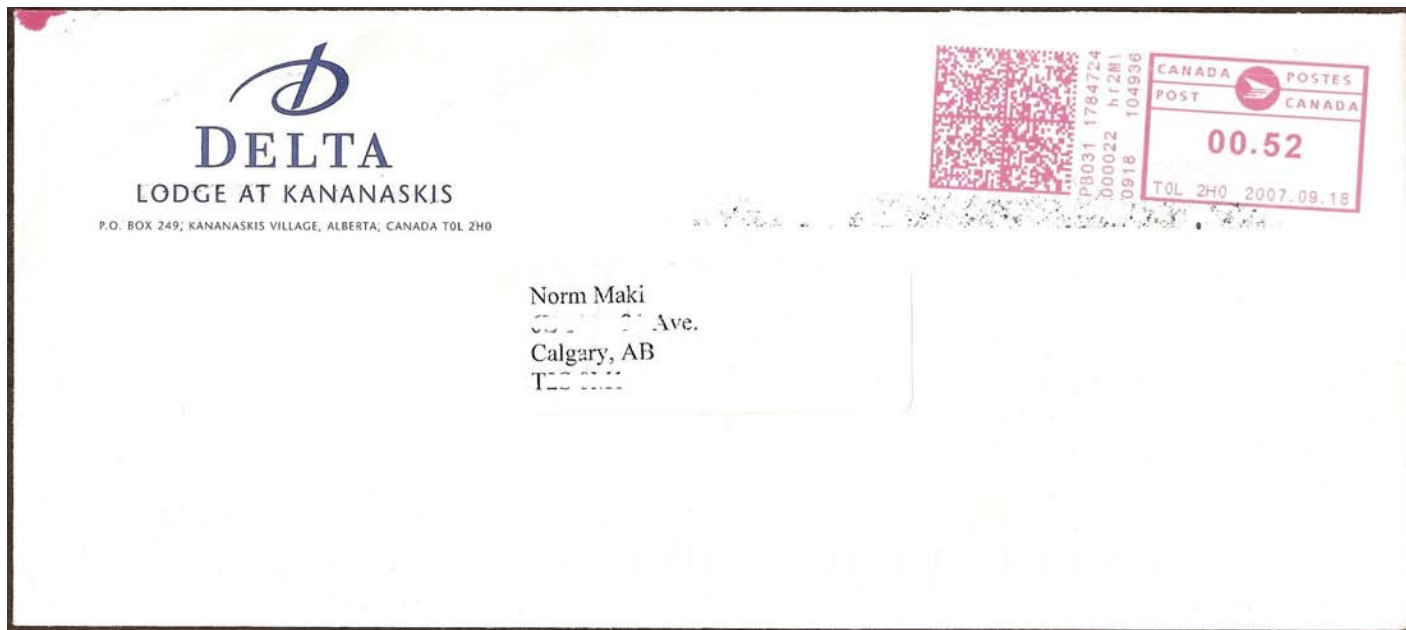
M. F. B. 299
300M-4-38
H.Q. 1772-39-278

After the war, the Seebe post office, located in a grocery store, operated mostly for Transalta company personnel, Nakoda from the nearby hamlet of Ozada, and tourists. Below is a nice association cover, postmarked Seebe and used to pay an electricity bill from someone who probably worked for Transalta. The Seebe post office was closed on August 31, 2004, when the entire village was removed by Trans-Alta as superfluous to requirements. There are attempts to re-develop the site as a tourist hotel but the original settlement is no more.



New Kananaskis.

When Calgary was awarded the 1988 Winter Olympics, a number of events were held outside the city at Canmore (on the Bow River upstream from the junction with the Kananaskis River) and at Nakiska in the Kananaskis valley. The valley was uninhabited at the time, so a village was built at the foot of Mount Kidd, on a glacial terrace overlooking the Kananaskis River, just south of Nakiska. The first hotels opened in late 1987. Below is a cover with a Kananaskis meter mark from the largest hotel in the village.





After the Games were over, the village became a permanent tourist site and its post office still operates year-round.

The post office was an open-plan kiosk inside the village centre, much like a mall, if a mall can only have three stores including the post office. Despite the tiny size of the village and post office, it does major business in the summer because of tourists mailing out countless postcards, and seasonal staff, mostly students, getting care packages from home. The view below is what the post office looked like until 2013.

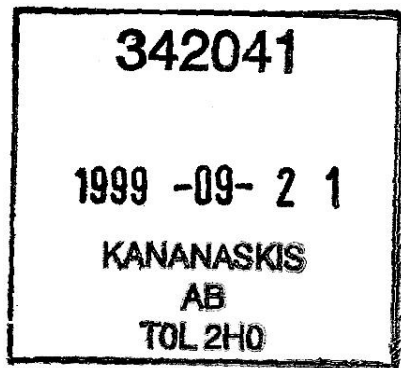


In late 2013, the mall was gutted and renovated to a different plan. In the photo above, notice the souvenir shop on the right side of the photo. The post office was moved to that location, as seen below, and the souvenir shop was relocated behind the camera.



The colourful postal cards issued by Canada Post, depicting local mountains and lakes, are particularly popular with tourists because no stamp is required. I have seen coach parties of Japanese or German tourists come in to the souvenir shop, vacuum up hundreds of postal cards per busload, put pre-addressed labels on them to all their friends at home, add a brief message, and mail them in the adjacent post office [7].

The Kananaskis post office has two regular cancels, one a rectangular business strike and the other a pictorial postmark heavily used because of its popularity with visitors. The pictorial postmark shows a Rocky Mountain goat peering quizzically from its perch on a cliff. Wildlife is abundant in the area and habituated to humans. I've never seen any Rocky Mountain goats near the village, but it is not unusual to see white-tailed deer and Rocky Mountain sheep browsing the shrubbery in the village landscape.



The Kananaskis valley is a popular site for athletic and other events, although few have any postal connection. The Scouts have hosted several national and world jamborees in the valley. There were national jamborees in 1981 and 1993, and a world jamboree in 1983, all of which had their own temporary post offices and postmarks [10]. At right is an example from the 1993 event.

Prime Minister Jean Chretien announced in 2001 that Kananaskis Village would be the site of the G-8 Summit on June 26 and 27, 2002. It is easy to see why he chose the site. Firstly, there were no Liberals sitting in southern Alberta ridings, so if protestors trashed the place then he would be no worse off for votes than before. Secondly, the only access into the Kananaskis River valley is still only via Highway 40, so a better choke point couldn't exist. Thirdly, if protestors tried to go into the valley by going overland across the mountains from an adjacent valley, they would not only anger their environmentalist friends, but run the risk of tangling with bears, cougars, and elk, none of which are particularly well tempered animals at the best of times much less during the May-June breeding season when they are protecting their young.

A busload of 50 postal workers tried to reach Kananaskis Village on June 26, to deliver several hundred letters to the G-8 leaders. They were stopped at the RCMP blockade on Highway 40. Two posties went on foot to try to get around the police lines. One was arrested for obstruction of a police officer when he refused to turn back and got into a scuffle with a Mountie [8]. The Kananaskis Village post office is a contracted retail outlet, so the postal union had no sway with its operators, who continued normal operations.



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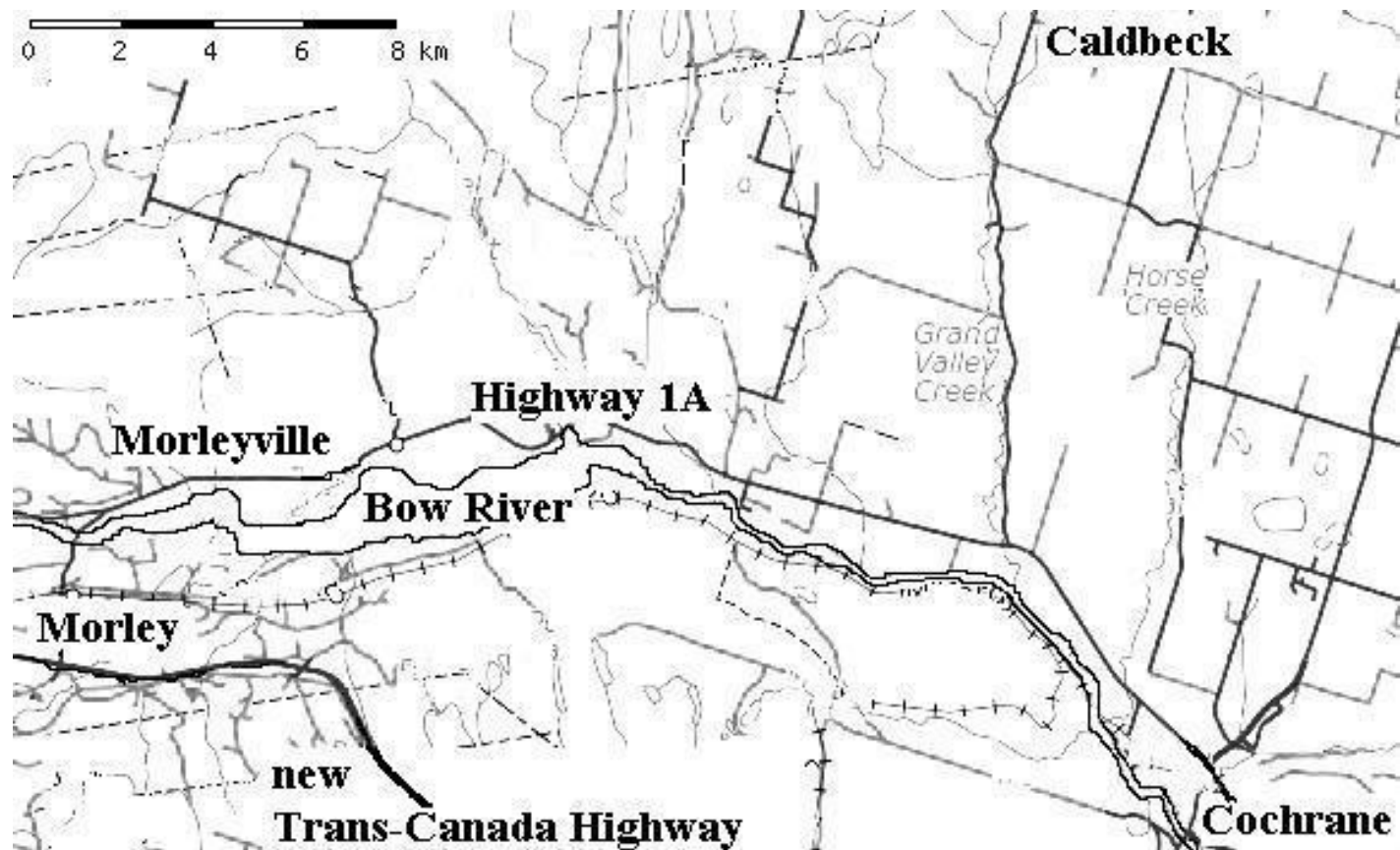
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THE NAKODA LANDS

Straddling the Bow River where it exits the Rocky Mountains is the Stoney Nakoda Reserve. The bands that make up the Nakoda are part of the northern branch of the Sioux nation, and settled in the Bow Valley sometime in the late 1700s as a result of migration from smallpox-infested homelands. In the late 1800s the first missionaries arrived in the area to convert the tribes to Christianity and try to settle them into Reserves. The three bands of the Nakoda continued to roam along the foothills until they signed Treaty #7 in 1877, which established several reserves for them. None of the other Nakoda Reserves had post offices and thus will not be mentioned further.

The Rev. George McDougall and his son John, also a minister, established a settlement called Morleyville in 1873. It was named after the Rev. Morley Punshon [1]. Morleyville was not a compact settlement with grid streets but rather it was various businesses and homes scattered over several kilometres of the north bank of the Bow River. The church mission was relocated a few kilometres westward in 1875 into a regular hamlet on the south bank, about which time the name was simplified to Morley, although the original name continued to show up on maps for decades. The location chosen for Morleyville/Morley was on the bottomlands of the Bow River valley just downstream from the entrance into the Rockies. This had been a traditional camping area for seasonal hunting and gathering, so McDougall felt there would be less resistance from the Nakoda if they were settled on an area they already knew as a camp [2]. The Stoney branch of the Nakoda along the Bow River had their Reserve surveyed in 1879 around the Morley mission.

The transcontinental railroad came through Morley in September 1883. The Nakoda Reserve was later penetrated by the original Trans-Canada Highway along the north bank of the Bow River, a two-lane paved road today called Highway 1A. In the late 1950s a new four-lane divided Trans-Canada Highway was constructed which short-cuts across the prairie steppe from Calgary instead of taking the scenic route along the river, and briefly cuts through the southwest corner of the Reserve as it drops down into the river valley along the south bank before entering the Rockies. Both roads bypassed Morley and its population circa 2012 is about 50 people. A map of the area is shown on the next page.

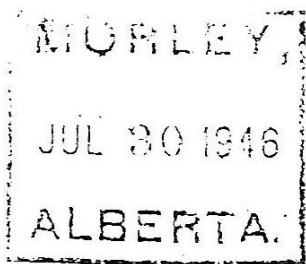




The photo looks west along the new Trans-Canada Highway as it cuts through the Reserve and descends into the Bow River valley. In the distance can be seen the bottomlands which are part of the Reserve. Morley is hidden from view by the spruces at centre right of photo.

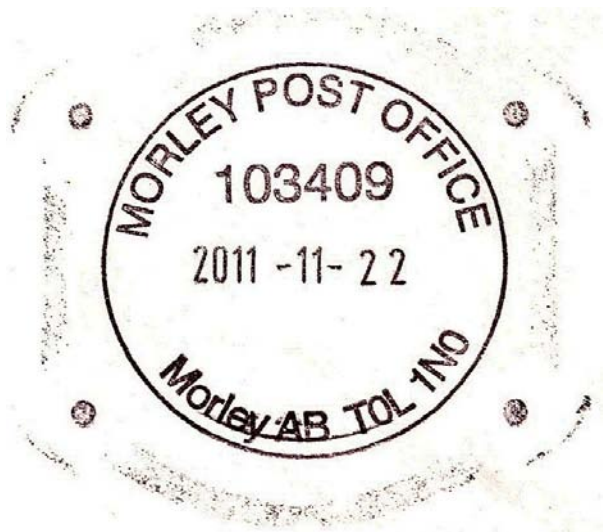
Morley.

The first postmaster of the Morley office was Robert Scott when it opened on 1888-10-15 in a general store [3]. He was married to George McDougall's granddaughter and was in partnership with George Kidd Leeson. Leeson and Scott had several trading posts along the foothills, of which the Morley store was one. Leeson had originally come out west in 1880 and was a mail courier whose company hauled mail in the area from Saskatchewan to the Rocky Mountains. When the railroad came through Calgary in 1883 and made oxen freighters redundant, Leeson settled on a ranch near Morley and took over the store/post office from Scott on 1891-01-01. Like Scott, Leeson was a restless entrepreneur and left the post office on 1909-09-02, off in search of new real estate and other investments.



Fred M. Graham was the longest serving postmaster of Morley, serving from 1909-10-25 until 1942-12-13, when James Rodger took over. Graham, like Scott, was also married to a McDougall granddaughter, and they were therefore brothers-in-law. Rodger died in office on 1945-10-13 and his widow Janet briefly managed as postmaster. On 1946-02-20 Lloyd Wyburn Kidd took over the store and post office and stayed until 1964-09-30. The Kidd family were prominent in the area since pioneer days and had operated the Leeson and Scott store in earlier times. Leeson himself was a distant relative of the Kidds. The present-day post office in nearby Kananaskis Village is on the foot of Mount Kidd. At left is a proof strike of the MOON cancel, dated shortly after Kidd took over. Although no Kidds had been postmasters before Lloyd, their various daughters had served as postal clerks for previous postmasters [2].

Since the trans-continental railroad predated the Morley post office, the mail was always received by train. In the 1950s trucks began to take over mail carriage, traveling along the Trans-Canada Highway both old and new. Two short-term postmasters came and went in the middle 1960s after Kidd retired. Then control of the post office passed for the first time to the Nakoda, when S.F. Powderface took office on 1969-09-02. He was succeeded by Lou Crawler, who served from 1970-08-19 until 1974-08-31. After that date the post office became a function of the Stoney Nakoda Administration and still is today.



At left is a well-inked strike of the current postmark. The four screws that hold the cancel in place are visible around the edge of the postmark.



Caldbeck.

Caldbeck was a ranch house post office in the foothills northeast of the Nakoda Reserve. It was named after a manor house in Cumberland, England, where John Peel of the famous hunting song lived. Although located in traditional Nakoda hunting grounds, the Caldbeck area was not part of the Reserve but was opened up to homesteaders. The post office existed from 1913-06-01 to 1928-07-31, and its only postmaster was Mrs. Georgina Patterson. A proof strike of its postmark is shown above right. Georgina and her husband James were Scottish immigrants who married in Calgary in 1902 and then homesteaded in the foothills. They had three sons but hosted numerous relatives and friends who lived with them for various intervals. The ranch house/post office had 23 children born in it as of 1936, of which the first 22 were boys [4].

The cover below was sent by Walther K. Hesse, who emigrated from Germany in the 1920s and took up a homestead at Caldbeck with a friend, also German. They did not work to improve the homestead but instead made long walks through the foothills for no apparent reason and showed an unusual interest in obtaining maps of the area. The local ranchers were convinced they were spies since the Caldbeck and Cochrane area was on a vital east-west transportation line. Hesse's friend returned to Germany after a few years but Hesse stayed on. When World War Two broke out, Hesse was interned at the Seebe camp just west of Morley. He never returned to his ranch at Caldbeck.



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