

# The Story of Hugh Peck

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Fig.1

It's funny how specializing in one area of philately will sometimes lead you to another. Several years ago I purchased the cover shown in figure 1 for one reason only; the Railway Post Office marking shown in figure 2. It was a double ring rubber stamp reading **QUEBEC & MONTREAL R.P.O. / J.O.B. ROY** in purple ink. It was a marking I didn't have and it was also the earliest period of use. At the time that marking was all my

eyes saw. However when it arrived and I began looking it over, I started to realize I had a lovely piece of postal history.

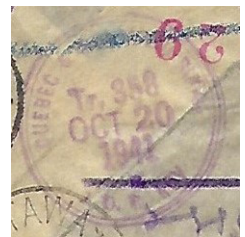


Fig.2



Fig. 3

So let's start by looking at Figure 3 – the front of the cover. It is registered, posted from Switzerland on October 2, 1941, addressed to Hugh Peck, 952 Ste. Genevieve, Trois Rivières, (Three Rivers) P. Que., Canada. The cover arrived in New York October 17 (fig. 1).

It was then forwarded to Ottawa arriving October 20, and on to Montreal the same day. The cover was then put aboard train 358 arriving in Trois Rivières October 21 (fig. 1). Meanwhile Hugh Peck had gone into the army and no doubt the recipients were inquiring how the letter should be dealt with. Finally, the title of Lieutenant was inscribed preceding

the name with a boxed PLEASE FORWARD with the address, 8<sup>th</sup> Recce. Bn, 14<sup>th</sup> Can. Hussars, Can. Army, Overseas (fig. 3).

Now back to figure 1. The cover re-entered the mail system at Trois Rivières on November 6, Montreal the same day and put aboard train 1, Montreal & North Bay R.P.O., arriving in Ottawa and Base – APO November 7. The letter was then forwarded to Base Post Office overseas December 1 where it is presumed Lieutenant Peck received his letter on December 2, 1941 two months to the day after being posted in Switzerland.



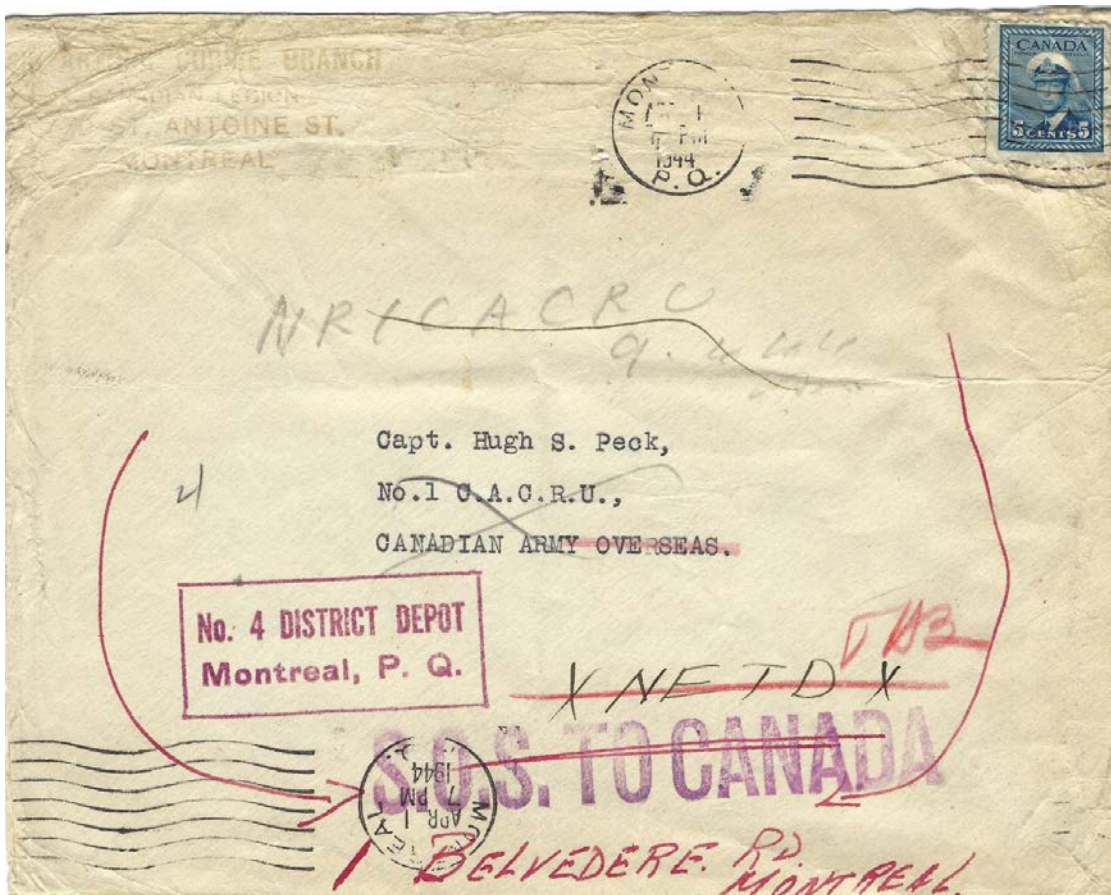


Fig. 4 – (ex: Colin Pomfret)

The story doesn't end there however. In the January 2016 issue of *Canadian Military Mail*, the newsletter of the study group by the same name of the British North America Philatelic Society, an article by Colin Pomfret appeared that pertained to a cover addressed to Captain Hugh Peck. (fig. 4) At some point in the intervening three years, Hugh Peck had been given a promotion. This is the explanation of the cover as given by Colin Pomfret.

This letter from the Purdie Branch of the Canadian Legion on St. Antoine Street

in Montreal addressed to Captain Hugh Peck, No 1 C.A.C.R.U. (*Canadian Armoured Corps Reinforcement Unit*) Canadian Army Overseas was postmarked at Montreal on April 1, 1944. After passing through the army post office SC 11 (fig. 5) on April 10, 1944 it reached the CPC HO Directory Service the next day per the faint mark at right on the reverse of the cover. (fig. 5). After receiving endorsements saying Captain Peck was neither at No. 1 CACRU nor the Non Effective Transit Depot (NETD) (fig. 4) on May 4<sup>th</sup>, it arrived at the General Delivery

officer at the Headquarters of the Canadian Postal Corps Overseas where the Poste Restante handstamp was applied on the reverse (fig. 5). Somewhere in the process the large S.O.S. TO CANADA (*Struck Off Strength*) in red was applied to the front (fig.4).

On May 18<sup>th</sup> the letter passed through MPO 318 (fig. 5) in Ottawa and then was apparently sent to the No. 4 District Depot in Montreal where the boxed unit handstamp also in red was applied and Captain Peck's home address, 1 Belvedere Rd., Westmount was added.

It was on reading this part of the story that I learned of the passing away of Colin and I was able to purchase this cover from his estate.

Again, the story continues. In 2018 Brian Hargreaves wrote a story for the British North America Philatelic Society convention program booklet of that year on the first air mail flight in eastern Canada between Montreal and Toronto in 1918. The plane was flown by Captain Brian Peck. So the question was; are these two Pecks related

Was Hugh, who was in the second world war a son, a nephew or even a cousin of Brian Peck who was in the first world war. Well, it turns out they were brothers. Not only were they brothers but Hugh Peck was actually two years older than Brian having been born in 1890. It means that at the time the letter from Switzerland was written, Hugh Peck was fifty-one years old.

S.O.S. (*Struck Off Strength*) is an acronym used in the armed forces when personnel are moved from one unit to another or if hospitalized. The fact that Hugh Peck ended up back in Montreal a month prior to the invasion of Normandy can only mean to me that he was ill and hospitalized because he died in 1945 at the age of fifty- five.

Applying to Library and Archives Canada (LAC) for service records in 2018 I was informed that they were two years behind and now this being 2021, in the midst of a pandemic, LAC is all but shut down, so no records are available for the time being. Hopefully the story of Hugh Peck will be completed in the near future.



Figure 5



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