

# **JOURNAL OF ALBERTA POSTAL HISTORY**

## **Issue 29**

Edited by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7, or [opuntia57@yahoo.ca](mailto:opuntia57@yahoo.ca)  
Published August 2023.

# POSTAL HISTORY OF THE CYPRESS HILLS DISTRICT OF ALBERTA

by Dale Speirs

## Index Of Post Offices

Albeck	24	Pashley	16
Eagle Butte	33	Peigan	36
Elkwater	17	Ranchville	36
Fox	43	Robinson	21
Glen Banner	35	Rosebeg	29
Gros Ventre	22	Strathmartine	42
Irvine	12	Thelma	45
Josephsburg	19	Thompson	32
Little Plume	25	Tothill	27
Minda	40	Walsh	6
Newburg	20	Wisdom	30
Norton	23	Woolchester	28

## **The Cypress Hills.**

Straddling the southern border of Alberta and Saskatchewan are the Cypress Hills, the highest point in southern Canada between the Rocky Mountains and Labrador. The tall hills or small mountains, whichever term you like, are a tree-covered oasis in the midst of semi-desert flatlands. The dark green hills are a prominent landmark from a great distance, and consequently attracted much interest from aboriginal tribes and European settlers.

The hills survived the continental ice sheets due to a caprock of extremely hard riverine conglomerates. Their altitude ensures moisture in a land of drought. The social history is replete with battles between and among aboriginals and settlers, and was responsible for the formation of the North West Mounted Police, today the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This type of history is outside the scope of a postal history but there are numerous books on the subject, an example listed below in the References section [1].

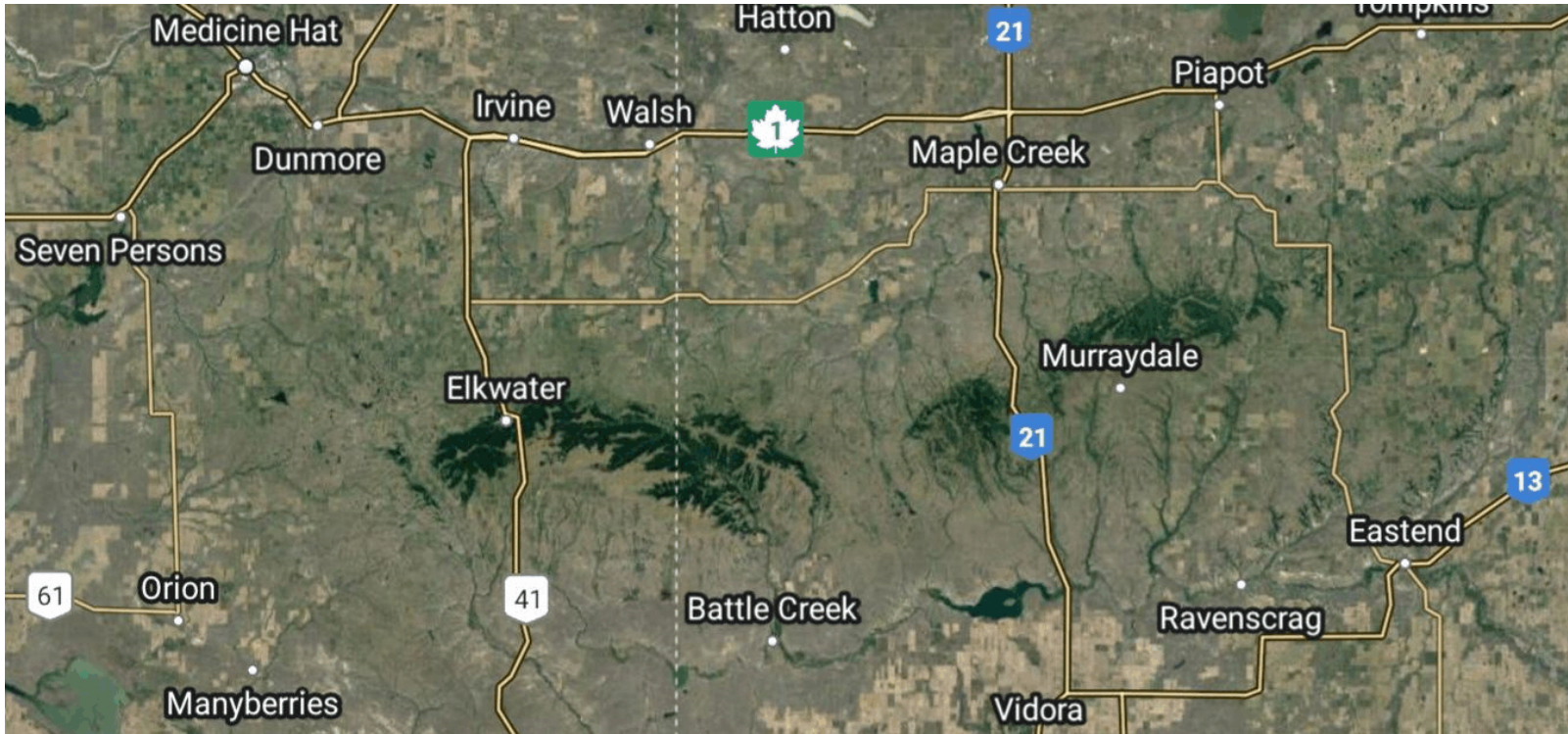
The hills are linear, stretching west to east, and extend well into Saskatchewan. They are now part of an inter-provincial park and a popular tourist attraction a short drive south of the Trans-Canada Highway, particularly from the nearby city of Medicine Hat.

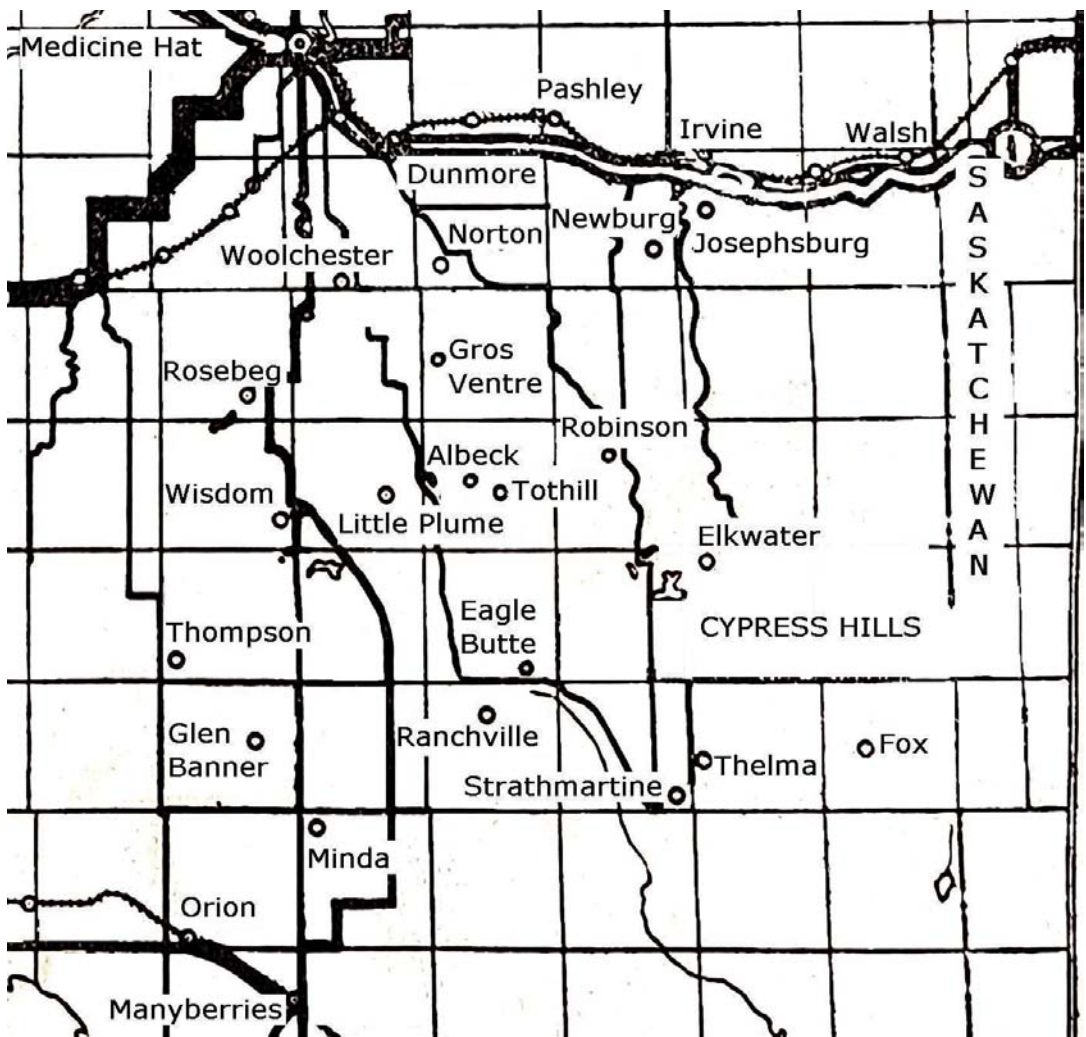
On the next page is a 2022 Google Earth satellite view of the Cypress Hills, their dark green forests conspicuous against the surrounding drylands. The vertical dashed line from Walsh down to Battle Creek is the Alberta-Saskatchewan border.

## **Postal Beginnings.**

This postal history will only discuss the post offices on the Alberta side of the border. I leave it to someone else to write up the Saskatchewan post offices. Unless otherwise stated, the dates of postmasters and post offices are from Canadian Post Office records [2].

The North West Mounted Police arrived at the Cypress Hills in 1874 and from there spread into southern Alberta. They often delivered mail to settlers as a courtesy, which gave them an excuse to visit homesteads under friendly circumstances. The mail came from Fort Benton, Montana, via oxen teams, was rare and very slow, measured in months of transit.





This map shows the post offices of the Cypress Hills district. The squares are townships, six miles on a side.

As of 2023, the only remaining post offices were in Medicine Hat, Irvine, and Orion.

## **The Transcontinental Railroad.**

In 1883, the transcontinental railroad passed a short distance north of the Cypress Hills. The Canadian Pacific Railway established sidings every 15 km or so. Going west from the Saskatchewan border, the sidings closest to the Cypress Hills that had post offices were Walsh, Irvine, and Pashley. West of Pashley is Dunmore, whose postal history was covered in JAPH #15.

Once the CPR tracks came through, mail service to the Cypress Hills district then came from those sidings. Instead of months, mail service to outlying areas was then measured in days or a week at most. The Trans-Canada Highway followed the general route of the railroad but bypassed most of the villages along the tracks. The settlements went into decline, not helped by continual droughts, and as of 2023, the only post office remaining north of the Cypress Hills was Irvine.

### **Railroad Post Offices: Walsh.**

This post office should not be confused with Fort Walsh, Saskatchewan, which was on the southeast corner of the Cypress Hills. Both were named after NWMP Superintendent James Morrow Walsh [3]. The Alberta railroad siding of Walsh was situated northwest of the Cypress Hills. The townsite was on an intermittent lake bed that was normally dry but flooded very deep at intervals during wet springs, sometimes as much as 5 metres. The years 1902, 1906, and 1916 were especially severe floods [4].

The Walsh post office opened on 1891-08-01 in the CPR station, with station master O.F. Harvey as postmaster. The post office closed a year later on 1892-07-26 and an interregnum followed. John A. Palmer re-opened the post office on 1897-10-01 but stayed only a month. The next postmaster was Charles D. Strong, also a CPR station agent. He held the position until June 1902 when he resigned and moved to Red Deer. That was about the time the first big flood occurred and the two events may not have been just coincidental [5].

Miss Martha Nesbitt, daughter of Emily and John, became the next postmaster on 1903-02-01. The family had homesteaded near Walsh at Box Elder, where John had operated a farmhouse post office, so she was not a total stranger to postal affairs. Martha married Walsh CPR agent Elmo Marshall but she died young on 1910-02-17.

The post office then moved to the general store of Malcombe Sterling Schroder, who served until 1936-03-16. The proof strikes shown below are the earliest I could find for the Walsh post office. The proof strike books do not have postmarks for the territorial period (Alberta became a province in 1905) or the earliest days of this post office.



During Schroder's tenure, the store/post office was hit by safecrackers who blew open the safe and got about \$5,000, some of it post office money. One of the thieves was later caught in Edmonton and part of the money recovered [5].

Thomas Alexander Flood took over as postmaster until 1939-05-03, when he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. He built a small standalone post office with living quarters at the back. After a brief placeholder came and went, Ernest Alfred McKay became postmaster on 1939-10-12. The post office was moved into the living room of the McKay house. Ernest served until 1968-03-31, at which time his wife Laura took over as postmaster until 1971-02-26. Except for the post office portion, the rest of the house was then demolished. The remainder of the building continued to serve as the post office for many years. The photo below shows Laura and Ernest in front of their post office, year unknown.





The next postmaster was Edwin W. Nitikke. At this point, Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws, but a local history book reported he was postmaster until 1978. He was ill during the later part of his tenure, and his wife Margaret operated the post office from their house [5].

From then until September 1989, the post office was in the house of Mrs Karen Reesor. The photo below show Betty Speirs at the post office in 1988.



After Reesor, Mrs Edna Wunsch took over in her house until December 1986. Lori Jones became the next postmaster and moved the post office into a Shell service station [5]. Because she was raising young children, she passed the postmastership to the service station operators Tom and Belle Magilton. Canada Post converted the operation from a post office to a retail postal outlet (RePO) on 1990-02-20 with Belle as the postmaster.

The Magiltons sold out to Wa Cheung on 1993-06-16, who operated the RePO until 1998-04-26. From there the post office went to Simon Song [6]. The last reference I have for the post office is a 2015 photograph from Google Street View (below) showing the RePO in an Esso station along the Trans-Canada Highway. Sometime between then and 2022 the RePO closed.



Canada

8

Very intricate  
for whoop-up

oppress hills

fort differin



RCMP/GRC 1873-1973

NWMP - March West  
Commissioner G.A. French  
PCNO - La marche vers l'Ouest  
Le Commissaire G. A. French



CANADA

102072



2007 -01- 03

WALSH POST OFFICE

58 4TH AVENUE

WALSH, AB T0J 0L0



DOMESTIC  
LETTERMAIL  
POSTE-LETTRES  
DU RÉGIME INTÉRIEUR



POSTAL CODE / CODE POSTAL

## Railroad Post Offices: Irvine.

This siding and subsequent post office were named for RNWMP Commissioner Acheson Gosford Irvine [3]. The post office opened on 1900-08-01 with William John Harris as the first postmaster. The original name of the settlement was 20 Mile Post because of its position on a trading trail. Harris resigned on 1907-02-05 as postmaster [7].



After a brief placeholder came and went, Hill Price became postmaster on 1908-07-21 until 1915-11-17. At left is the earliest proof strike I have found.

Frederick John Crewe was the next postmaster. He had been a cattle rancher but was seriously injured when a horse threw him. After working briefly for his father-in-law in the village butcher shop, he became postmaster and mail courier to the rural post offices south of the tracks in the Cypress Hills district [7].

Two of Frederick's daughters, Elizabeth and Florence, worked in the post office as clerks. He retired on 1935-11-19, after which his son Albert Bromley Crewe briefly held the postmastership.

After a brief stay as postmaster by George Henry Sullivan, the post office moved into the general store of Frederick Schneider. He was postmaster from 1938-10-17 until he retired on 1949-07-21 and sold the store. During his tenure, his daughters Rosie, Esther, and Irene took turns actually running the post office. After his retirement, his daughter-in-law Mrs Blanche Pauline Schneider was briefly postmaster [7].

George Russell Ambrose took over as postmaster on 1950-04-01 until his death on 1956-08-15 in a construction accident. His widow Mary Eva, with five young children to support, took over until her retirement on 1975-09-28. A placeholder came and went, then Mrs Eve J. Woodward was appointed on 1975-10-16. At this point Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws but in 1998 she was still postmaster according to Hughes [6]. The photo on the next page shows Betty Speirs at the post office in 1988.





ASHTON-POTTER LIMITED  
 Design: Roger Hill



The next reference I have is a 2012 Google Street View photo (below) showing the post office had become a RePO in the Redneck Automotive shop. The Canada Post website listed it as an open RePO at the same site in 2023.



## Railroad Post Offices: Pashley.

This railroad siding was named after Emily Pashley, wife of CPR executive David McNicoll [3]. A hamlet grew up after John A. Crane Jr opened a general store at the siding in 1909. On 1910-10-01 he became postmaster. The siding was not a train stop and the mails were exchanged with a catch post. John's brother Arne was the mail courier for the surrounding district [8]. The two men lived above the store/post office. John resigned on 1917-02-08 as postmaster.

Three placeholders came and went until the post office closed on 1921-03-23. As with Irvine and Walsh, the earliest proof strikes are missing from the books. Two later strikes are shown below. After an interregnum, the post office re-opened on 1924-12-06 with Henry Read as the new postmaster. He was a butcher by trade and the post office was on his nearby farm. On 1930-10-11, John Randolph Jenkins took over and moved the post office to his farm. He resigned on 1936-10-31 to move to Dunmore, just down the tracks to the west, where he served for a time as postmaster there.

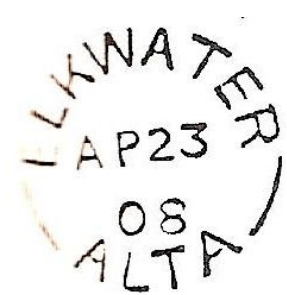
Hugh Robert Moore was the next postmaster but went off to war in 1941. His wife Mimmie Elizabeth took his place as postmaster until 1946-04-30. Thereafter the settlement dwindled and traffic shifted to the highway. Two postmasters rotated through the job. The final postmaster was Alexander Diell from 1954-02-12 until 1956-04-09. The post office then closed permanently.





## **Within Cypress Hills: Elkwater.**

This was the only post office within the Cypress Hills proper on the Alberta side of the border. A resort hamlet sprang up on the banks of Elkwater Lake. The name is a translation of the Blackfoot name for the lake [3]. Although the post office has since closed, the resort is still active and popular with residents of the nearby city of Medicine Hat.



The post office opened on 1901-04-01 with George Henry Smibert as the first postmaster. At left is a proof strike of an early postmark.

George was one of three Scottish brothers who settled in the district in the early 1880s. They operated a sawmill and a general store [9]. Tourism began in the 1910s and the economy of the hills developed as a resort.

George served as postmaster until 1934-07-20 when the post office moved into a store and restaurant owned by Percy Kennard, who became the next postmaster. Kennard had been a rancher in the district since the 1890s. They built the store in 1930 and when Smibert retired, Kennard took over.

Kennard experienced ill health and had to sell out on 1944-01-26, later dying in 1946 as his condition deteriorated. The post office then moved to a store owned by Henry Peter, whose wife Hilda Marguerite became the postmaster. Harry worked mainly as a park warden, so the store and post office were looked after by Hilda. She served until 1951-08-03 when the store was sold to Alex and Pauline Predy [10].

Alex served as postmaster from 1951 until 1953-10-16 when Pauline took over until 1957-03-11. Alex's day job was teaching in the local county schools. That and the store proved too much work, so the Predys sold the store to Elmer and Ruth Tetz [10]. From 1957-03-12 until 1963-04-29, Ruth was the postmaster. Frank Nobel served as the next postmaster until 1967-12-04.

After a brief placeholder, Mrs Edna Lorraine Wunsch (mis-spelled as Wunseh in the Canada Post records) took over on 1968-03-29. AT this point, the Canada Post records cut off because of privacy laws but Wunsch served until September 1979 according to a local history [10]. Paula Little was then postmaster until at least 1991, followed by Linda Weise. During this time the post office moved into a community centre.

On 1991-06-07 the post office closed and was converted into a retail postal outlet [6]. Horst Hagge was the next manager, not exactly a postmaster since RePOs are not post offices. From there the records fade. It is a truism that historical information for local events since 2000 is more difficult to find than for a century ago because the Internet has destroyed local news media.

I do have a postmark from 2006 indicating the Elkwater RePO was still open. Sometime between then and 2022 the RePO closed. The nearest post office is now Irvine, not a long drive away, so good roads probably killed the Elkwater RePO.



## North-Northwest of Cypress Hills: Josephsburg.

This was a colony of Austrians who settled a few kilometres south of what later became Irvine. Because that post office didn't open until 1900, the settlers had to get their mail from Dunmore, 40 kilometres west-northwest [7]. They petitioned for their own post office, which opened in 1890.

Ostensibly the post office was named after a town in Austria, but since the first postmaster was Joseph Edinger, there is a small element of doubt. Edinger only served one month in 1890 from June 1 until July 7. The post office was in his crossroads general store, where he also acted as a land agent and for various government services. His brief tenure was due to the discovery that he was pocketing all the government fees and postal income for his own account. He then borrowed sums of money from fellow homesteaders, stiffed his store creditors, and fled the territory [10]. He was last heard of in Winnipeg in 1893.

The post office then moved to the farm of John Henry Kern, who served as postmaster until 1893-04-18. C.H. Fox was the next postmaster but died in office in 1894. Walter Blackburn took over as postmaster on 1894-06-01 but only lasted until 1895-01-12. He was succeeded by Joseph Dunn, who served until his death on 1899-03-20.



The post office then closed and in 1900 the Irvine post office opened. Strangely though, the Josephsburg post office re-opened on 1901-03-01 with James Robinson as postmaster. He was, in later years, to have a post office further south named after him, as will be discussed further on in this history. A proof strike of a Josephsburg postmark from his tenure is shown at left.

On 1911-07-29, August Boschee took over, serving until 1916-05-10. The final postmaster was John Lust until 1917-11-14 when the post office permanently closed. These were all farmhouse post offices. Mail service thereafter came from Elkwater. There were objections and after a petition a new post office named Robinson was established further south, which see further on [10].

### **North-Northwest of Cypress Hills: Newburg.**

The Newburg post office opened on 1904-09-01 in the farmhouse of W.E. Martin. He was postmaster for less than a year, then handed over to Miss Lydia Stelter. She was postmaster from 1905-10-01 until 1906-01-27, at which point the post office went back to Martin until September 1907. When he resigned again, the post office temporarily closed.



Lydia's mother Amalia re-opened the post office on 1909-01-23 and kept it going on the Stelter farm until 1918-01-25. A proof strike of the postmark, shown at left, is dated 1908, indicating that either the Canadian Post Office was late in supplying a canceller to the old post office or that discussions had been ongoing prior to the re-opening with the Stelters.

The final postmaster was Fred W. Weiss until 1918-03-16, when the post office closed permanently. As an interesting side note, the Weiss family had emigrated from Postal, Bessarabia, which is today in Moldavia [7].

## North-Northwest of Cypress Hills: Robinson.

One reference [3], repeated by Hughes [6], says this post office was named after John Lyle Robinson, a member of the Alberta legislature. However, this post office long predated his career in politics. Local histories are emphatic that the name was in honour of pioneer homesteader James Robinson, who had previously been postmaster at Josephsburg [10].



The closure of the Josephsburg and Newburg post offices meant that mail for the Robinson district had to be picked up at Elkwater. The residents objected because the trip into the hills was not an easy one, particularly in winter. On 1923-05-01, the Robinson post office opened on the farm of A.C. Aman with himself as postmaster. The mails then came direct from Irvine [10]. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

The post office then moved to the farm of Fred Bosche, who became postmaster on 1925-03-16. Mrs Martha Seitz took over the postmastership on 1932-04-01 and held on to it until her retirement on 1944-03-24. As per usual, the post office was in a farmhouse. Most of her tenure was during the worst of the drought and the Great Depression. Family accounts indicate that the small quarterly stipend for the post office was for long periods of time the only cash income the family had [10].

Jacob Ziegenhagel was the next postmaster, relocating the post office to his farm. He served until 1954-07-27, when the farm and the post office passed to his son Arthur. Good roads eliminated the need for farmhouse post offices, and on 1964-01-06 the Robinson post office permanently closed.

## **Northwest of Cypress Hills: Gros Ventre.**

The Gros Ventre post office was named after a creek, which in turn was the French name for the Atsina tribe of Montana, who lost a battle with the Blackfoot Confederacy in the Cypress Hills [3]. The post office opened on 1907-02-01 with William Putnam as the first postmaster. He was initially a very successful farmer and rancher, and expanded his farm to a large operation [8]. Keeping the post office was too much extra work so on 1909-08-13 he resigned as postmaster.

The post office then moved to the farm of L.C. Flemming, who died in office in 1917. After a pause, the postmastership went to Miss Pearl Wright on 1918-03-29. She left the farm to be married, so her mother Annie became postmaster on 1920-04-27 until 1922-08-09. Most of the Wright children had married, and the remaining family moved in 1922 to Ontario [8]. The final postmaster was Luke James Craig, who had bought the Norton farm, which see below. The post office closed permanently on 1923-03-01.

The Canada Post records are garbled, with duplicate and tangled listings with Norton. A different set of initial postmasters conflated the Gros Ventre and Norton listings. I have taken screenshots of the Canadian Post Office records and show them in Appendix A. Please view them before reading the next section on the Norton post office.

### Northwest of Cypress Hills: Norton.

The Norton post office was established on 1907-02-01, the same day as the Gros Ventre post office. It was not, as commonly quoted in local histories [8] or Hughes [6] a continuation of Gros Ventre. The first postmaster was H.A. Norton, who kept the post office in his farmhouse. He resigned on 1913-07-18. The next postmaster was Mrs Mary Abbis. She resigned on 1916-08-26 and the post office closed permanently.



The garbling began with Luke James Craig, who was back-listed as Norton postmaster from 1922-12-22 until 1925-03-31. A proof strike of the postmark during his tenure is shown at left. After him, W.R. Abbis, probably the husband of Mary, served as a placeholder a couple of months from 1925-07-08 until 1925-09-20.

Mrs Alice Schneider then served as postmaster until her death on 1929-01-07. After another placeholder came and went, Rudolph Deering served from 1929-02-01 until his death on 1945-07-20. Again a placeholder briefly held the postmastership before Albert Doering became the final postmaster from 1945-11-19 until the post office closed permanently on 1951-05-25.

**Northwest of Cypress Hills: Albeck.**

The origin of this name is unknown. The post office was open from 1913-03-01 until 1917-03-19. The sole postmaster was Charles Kienzle, who kept the post office in his farmhouse. Local histories are silent about Albeck. Shown below is a proof strike of the postmark.





## Northwest of Cypress Hills: Little Plume.

This post office was named for a Piikani chief of the Blackfoot Confederacy [3]. The post office opened on 1903-10-15 in the farmhouse of William H. Gobbett. He resigned on 1906-03-09, after which the post office moved to the farm of Edward Clark. He had extensive farming and ranching properties.



As was common with other farmhouse post offices, the Clark family had extra rooms in case the mail courier or other visitors were stranded by bad weather [8]. Mail service was twice a week from Medicine Hat. Edward died of pneumonia in 1922. A proof strike of a postmark from his tenure is shown at left.

Succeeding him was Andrew Klaiber Jr on 1923-04-01. He and his family had struggled on their homestead since 1914. The Klaibers bought a larger, better ranch nearby that demanded their time, so Andrew resigned on 1924-02-15 as postmaster.

Jacob Seitz then took over at his farmhouse until 1945-10-24, when he handed the post office to his son Christian, who had his own farm nearby. Christian was the official postmaster but his wife Hannah helped considerably [8]. In their retiring years, they moved to Medicine Hat. The photo on the next page shows the post office entrance at the Seitz house.

The Little Plume post office closed permanently on 1963-07-15. Mail service thereafter was from Medicine Hat.



## Northwest of Cypress Hills: Tothill.



The Tothill post office opened on 1924-01-01 in the farmhouse of Alfred Tothill, a short distance west of Little Plume. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.

Why this post office was needed was a puzzle since Little Plume, only a few kilometres away, could have handled any mail service during the life of Tothill. Alfred resigned as postmaster on 1932-02-29 and the post office closed, but a few months later it re-opened on August 1 at Alfred's new farmhouse. The closure appeared to have been simply so that he could relocate [10].

Alfred was a market gardener who supplied Medicine Hat. Since he hauled produce anyway, adding the mails was no extra work and gave him a bit of cash income. Alfred resigned for good on 1951-01-20.

Fred Geigle bought Alfred's farm and took over as the new postmaster, serving until 1955-11-10. He was replaced by William Eugene Flaig, who had been the mail courier prior to this and continued to haul the mail from Little Plume [10]. Flaig was the last postmaster. The Tothill post office closed permanently on 1959-10-30.

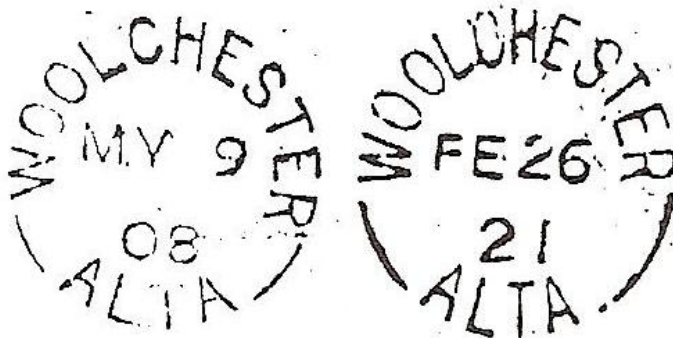
### Northwest of Cypress Hills: Woolchester.

The Woolchester post office was so-named because the district was mainly sheep herding country [3]. The first postmaster was Mrs Helen Johnston, appointed on 1900-05-01 when the post office opened in the family farmhouse. Helen died in office on 1918-08-07 and the post office temporarily closed.

On 1920-09-17, the post office re-opened on the Armstrong farm with a daughter of the household, Mary Catherine, as postmaster. She served until 1926-11-15 when she married a Johnston son. Again the post office temporarily closed until it opened again on 1927-05-02 on the farm of Michael Klaiber. Although he was postmaster in name, the post office was actually operated by his wife Fredricka and their daughter Anna. The droughts were too much for the family and on 1928-12-30 the post office closed when the Klaibers moved to Medicine Hat [8].

Ludwig Schorr became postmaster on 1929-01-09 at his farm and served until 1944-05-11. His daughter Rosie took over and was the final postmaster until the post office closed permanently on 1963-07-15. Good roads killed the post office since Medicine Hat was now only a short drive.

Below are proof strikes of two postmarks, one from the Helen Johnston tenure and the other from Mary Armstrong's term.



## Northwest of Cypress Hills: Rosebeg.



The origin of this name is unknown [3]. The post office opened on the sheep farm of Donald Cameron on 1911-02-14. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.

Cameron served as postmaster until 1915-10-12, when the post office moved to the farm of Mrs R. Morris. She resigned on 1919-08-04 and the post office then went to the farm of Mrs Jessie Matheson.

She stayed until 1927-12-08, after which the post office moved to the farm of Jacob Weiss. When he resigned on 1932-02-29 the post office temporarily closed. Jesse Matheson took back the postmastership on 1933-03-01 until her death on 1935-10-29. Peter Matheson, probably her son (local histories do not specify) was the final postmaster [8].

The post office was permanently closed on 1940-09-24 due to limited usefulness. This was undoubtedly due to a combination of good roads and depopulation due to continuing drought.

## Northwest of Cypress Hills: Wisdom.

The Wisdom post office was named after a settlement in southwestern Montana [8]. Some references say the settlers chose the name because they thought they were wise to settle there [3, 6]. I find that difficult to believe given the poor quality soil and semi-desert climate.

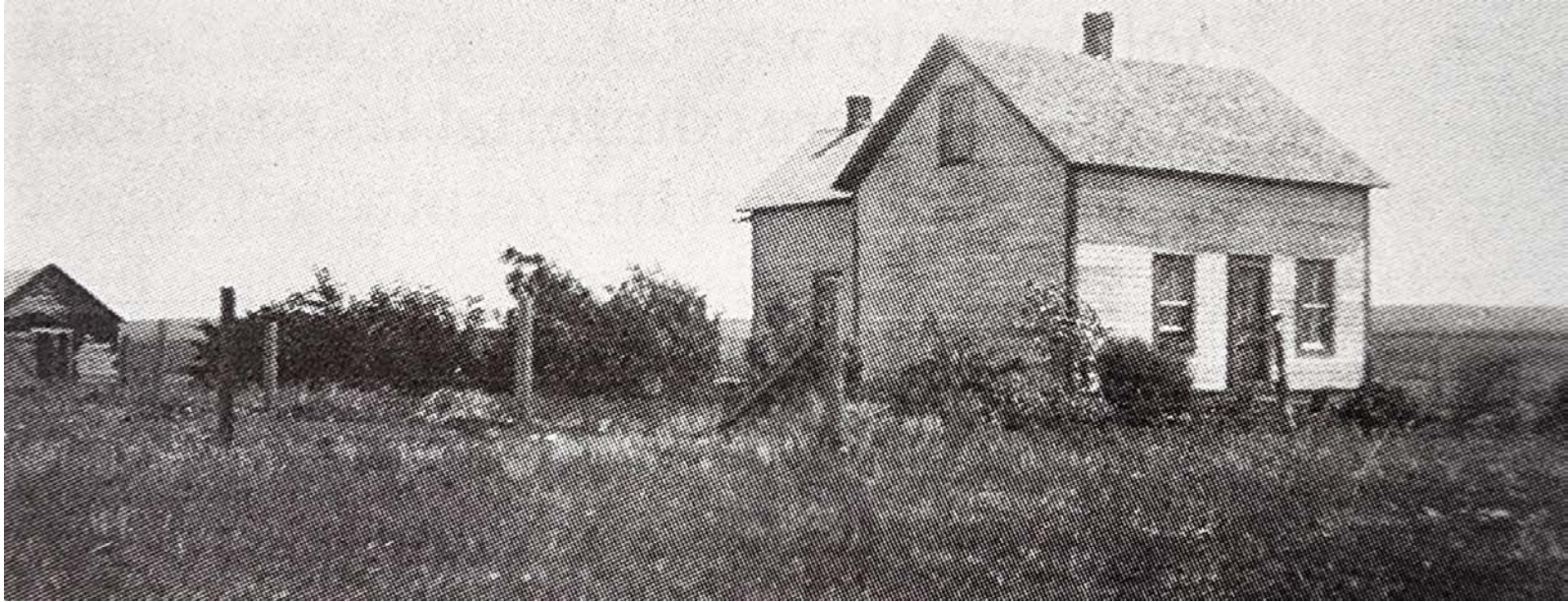


In any event, the first postmaster was James Frederick Morrison when the post office opened on 1913-06-01 in his farmhouse. His place was also a stopping house for weary travelers crossing the drylands between Montana and Medicine Hat [8]. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown on the left.

The Morrisons sold out and moved to Medicine Hat. Their next-door neighbour Martin Schlinker took over the post office on 1923-08-01 until 1928-04-01 when Gottfried Yanke succeeded. At this point the Canada Post records cut off but a local history reported that Yanke was postmaster until April 1942, when Adam and Elsie Schlinker took over [8].

Adam was the son of Martin and had purchased the Morrison homestead, combining it with the Schlinker farm. Elsie operated the post office until it closed on 1963-07-15 permanently [8]. Thereafter mail service was from Medicine Hat.

The Morrison homestead at the time it contained the Wisdom post office [8].



**Due West of Cypress Hills: Thompson.**

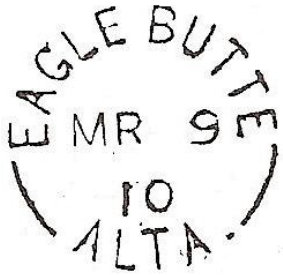


The Thompson post office opened on 1911-06-15 in the crossroads general store and stopping house of Alfred R. Thompson [11]. Mail service was originally from Seven Persons to the north until the railroad came through Orion to the south, much closer to the Thompson farm. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

Alfred resigned on 1918-01-21 and the post office moved to the farm of C.E. Webber. He kept the postmastership only a short time until 1919-10-09 before handing over to Gabriel Olson. On 1925-12-24, the post office returned to the Webbers with Benjamin D. Webber as postmaster, relationship unknown. The post office closed permanently on 1927-03-26.



## Due West of Cypress Hills: Eagle Butte.



The name of this post office referred to eagles which nested on the butte [3]. Mail service was from Medicine Hat. The first postmaster of Eagle Butte was cattle rancher Robert Scott, as of 1900-05-01. He died in office in 1904. After a brief placeholder came and went, the post office re-opened in the farmhouse of Hezekiah Garlough on 1905-05-01. He kept the post office until 1907-05-25.

From there, the post office moved into the crossroads general store of Ford Roger Kettlewell, who served as postmaster until 1916-03-21. At left is a proof strike of a postmark from his time. The Kettlewell family then moved to Washington State. Below is a photograph of the store/post office as it looked in 1914 during the Kettlewell tenure [10]



James Anderson bought the Kettlewell farm and store, becoming the next postmaster until 1918-04-01. He sold out to the Nicoll family and the Andersons moved to Medicine Hat, working in the hotel business [10].

Mrs Gertrude Nicoll served as postmaster until her death on 1931-09-01. Her daughter Edith was the postal clerk. They moved the post office out of the store and into their house. After Gerturde's death, her son Thomas Andrew took over as postmaster. The house burned down in February 1933 but Edith was able to save the post office materials. The Nicolls had another house nearby on their original homestead, so the post office moved there [10].

Thomas was the final postmaster of Eagle Butte until the post office closed permanently on 1963-07-15, the same day as the Wisdom post office. Mail service thereafter was a route from Medicine Hat.

## Southwest of Cypress Hills: Glen Banner.



The name origin of this post office is unknown. No Scottish place name could be located on Google, and the local histories say nothing about any pioneer named Banner. The post office opened on 1910-04-01 in the farmhouse of O.S. Barby. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

The mail courier Pete Blair brought the mails from Medicine Hat. Barby resigned in 1911, exact date not recorded in the archives. The post office became dormant but was never officially closed.

Nels J. Nelson was the next and final postmaster from 1912-08-10 until 1916-01-10. During his term, the mail courier was Mrs Ruth Stevens, who at the time was postmaster of the Ranchville post office further east. (More about that post office further on in this history.)

Stevens couriered the mail from Manyberries, which was on the CPR railroad. After Nelson resigned there was a lapse until the Glen Banner post office was permanently closed on 1918-02-21.

## Southwest of Cypress Hills: Peigan / Ranchville

The first postmaster was Mrs Ruth Stevens from 1913-03-01 until 1918-05-25. She was originally from New Brunswick and had worked in a post office there. Originally her post office opened under the name of Peigan, a tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy today known as the Piikani. The name was not directly after them but because her ranch was on the banks of Peigan Creek [3].



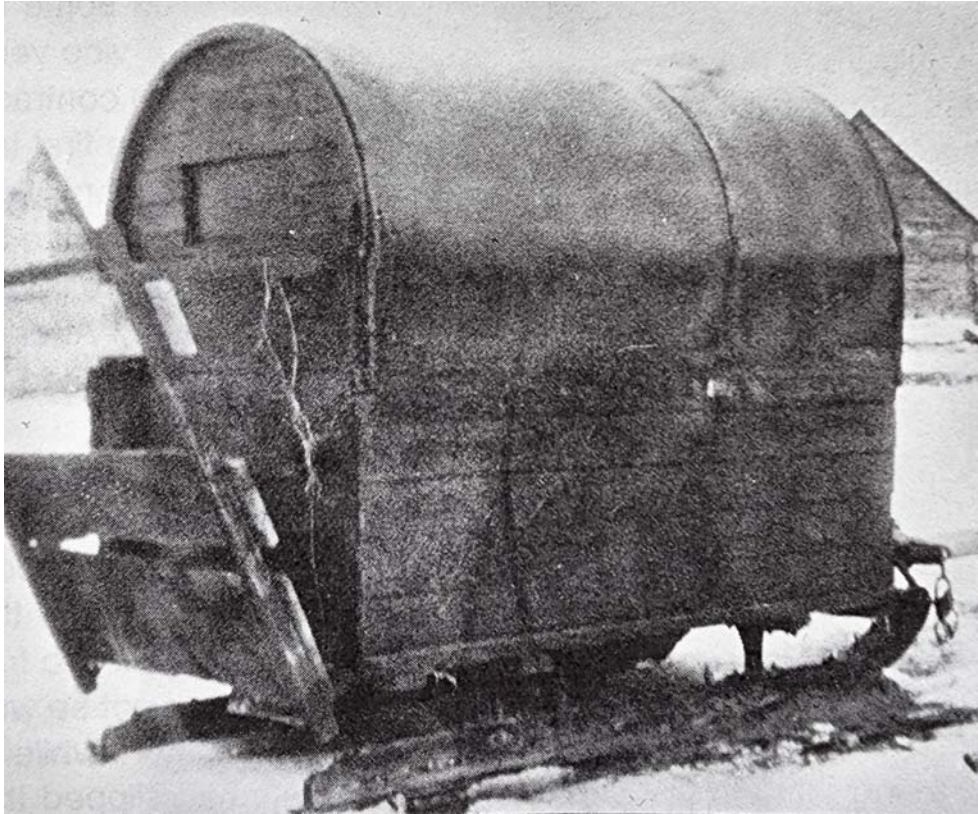
Stevens campaigned for a different name and on 1913-04-01, one month after she took on the job, the post office became Ranchville [11]. At left is the proof strike of the first Ranchville postmark. There does not appear to be any strike for Peigan. She couriered the mail from Manyberries.

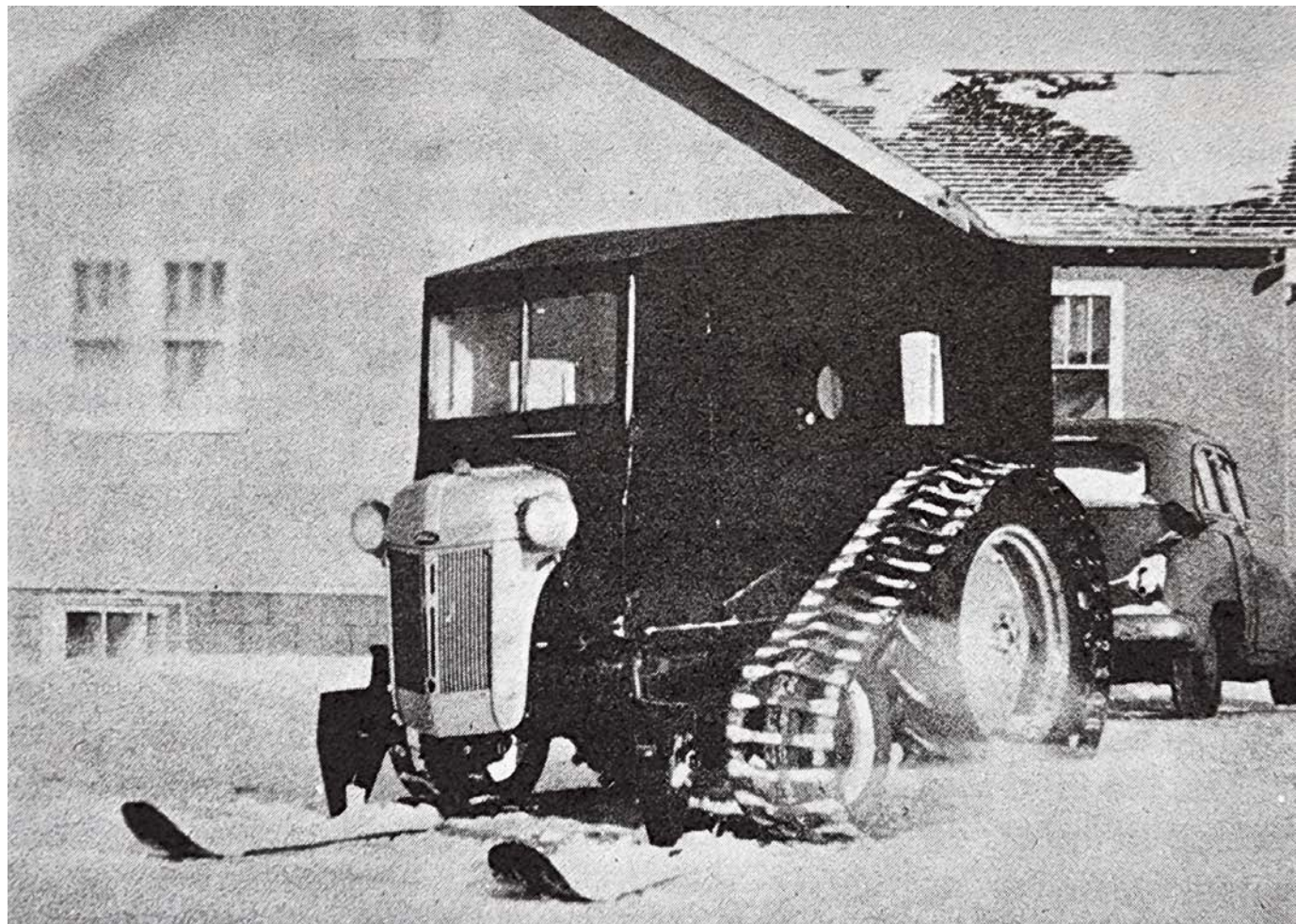
After Stevens retired and moved to Toronto, her son-in-law Arthur Bright took over. He resigned on 1925-07-31 due to what a local history called “chest complications”, probably tuberculosis, and died a short time later in a Calgary hospital [11].

After a brief placeholder came and went, Martin Boman took over as postmaster on 1926-04-01 and moved the post office into his farmhouse. He served as official postmaster until 1938-08-05 but his daughter Wilma ran the post office until her marriage in 1936.

The next postmaster was Fred WIng until his death on 1942-02-08. His widow Christine carried on as postmaster until 1943-11-08. As the land depopulated, the ranches consolidated. John and Eda Rath bought both the Wing and Boman ranches and combined them with theirs. The post office moved into the Rath farmhouse where Eda became the final postmaster. The post office closed permanently on 1963-07-15. Mail service thereafter was a rural route from Manyberries and later Orion.

John Schorr was the mail courier from 1942 until the post office closed. During his time the mail came from Medicine Hat rather than the nearer Manyberries because he also hauled produce and milk from local farmers and occasional passengers. A local history showed three remarkable vehicles he used in winter when roads were impassable with snow [11]. He began with a horse-drawn sleigh in 1942, then a treaded tractor with home-built cab in the early 1950s, and thence to a Bombardier ski bus. These three vehicles are shown below.







## Southwest of Cypress Hills: Minda



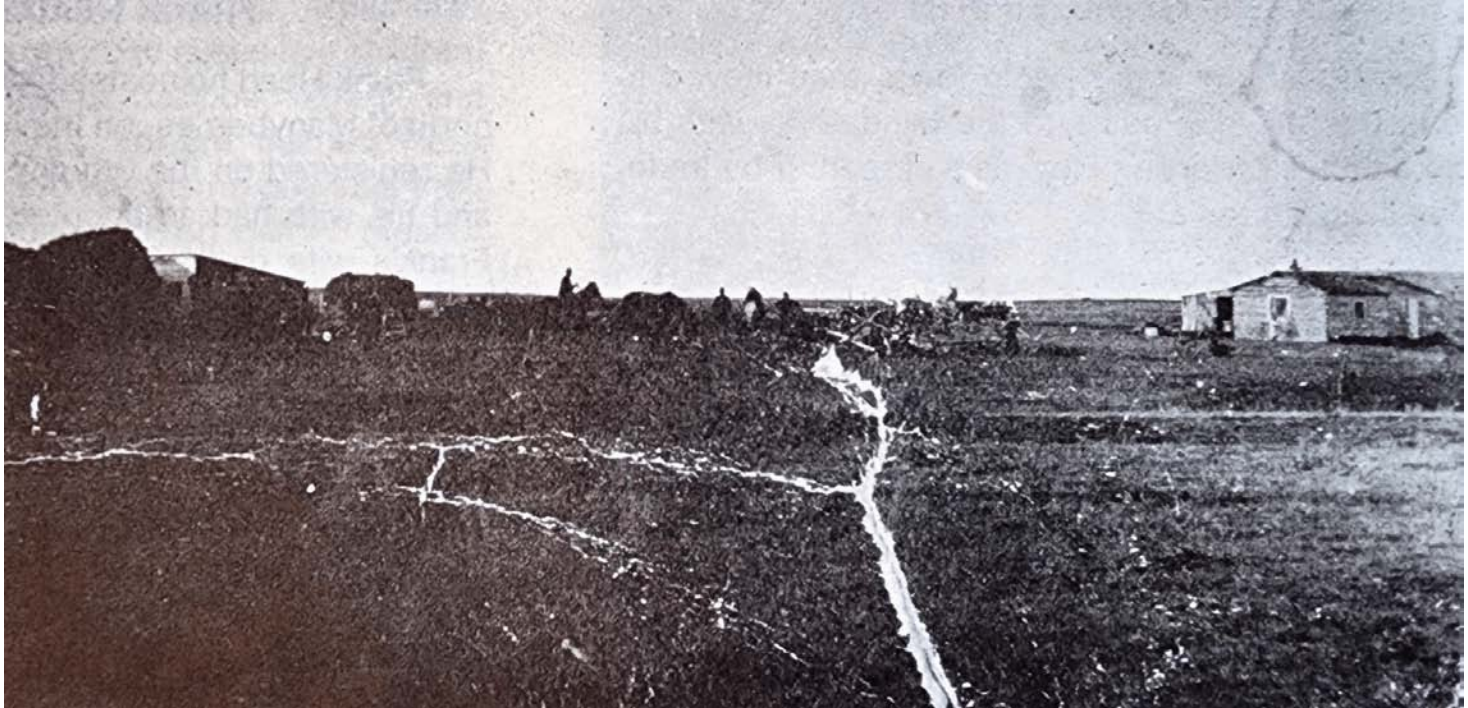
The Minda post office was named after the wife of the first postmaster Zachary H. Star [11]. He served from 1910-02-01 until 1912-09-25. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark. The mail was hauled from Seven Persons by John Maki, a three-day round trip.

The post office then moved to the farmhouse of Victor Dahl, who served as postmaster until 1915-10-01. The photograph below shows a family gathering at the Dahl house [11]. Notice the Post Office sign at upper right.





From there the post office moved to a crossroads general store on the homestead of John Heikkila. He hauled mail and groceries from Seven Persons. The post office closed on 1917-04-30 after the railroad came through Manyberries. Thereafter mail service was from there, about the same convenience for most ranchers as Minda. The photo below shows the Heikkila farm buildings [11]. Which one held the post office is unknown.

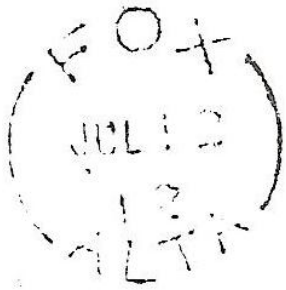


## **Due South of Cypress Hills: Strathmartine**

The origin of the Strathmartine name is unknown. There was a village by that name in Scotland when I used Google Maps but none of the settlers were Scottish. The name may have been supplied by an official from the Canadian Post Office.

The post office was a short-lived operation, with Harry A. Mudie as the only postmaster from 1906-01-12 until 1907-01-12. His brother Charles settled at Elkwater and couriered the mails between Irvine and Strathmartine [9]. Because Harry was away from his ranch much of the time, there were complaints from residents, which explained the brevity of his postmastership [10]. The three Mudie brothers concentrated their activities in the Cypress Hills.

## Due South of Cypress Hills: Fox



This post office was opened on 1912-07-01 in the farmhouse of James H. Fox. Mail service was from Walsh. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

The post office moved around the Fox farm several times into different buildings. He resigned as postmaster on 1916-01-28 and the post office moved to the farm of Mrs Ann Amelia Flowerday. Her husband Harry was the mail courier for most of her tenure. She remained as postmaster until January 1943.

Harry was her second husband, she having been widowed when her first husband William Cook became ill and died, leaving her with three small children. In later years, after Harry suffered a stroke, her 16-year-old daughter Hilda Elizabeth Cook took over the mail route, later on sharing duties with her brother George.

Hilda married a Schlenker. She was listed as Schlinker in post office records, but Schlenker in local histories written by relatives of the latter spelling. She gave up the mail route for a time when her first child was born in 1934 but later resumed the route from 1948 to 1964 [10].

After her mother Ann retired, Hilda then became postmaster from 1943-02-08 until 1964-03-07, when the Fox post office was permanently closed. On the next page is a photograph of the Fox post office taken sometime late in her tenure, date unknown. She is on the right, and the man was probably her husband [10].

By this time the land was almost completely depopulated. Acting as both courier and postmaster during most of her time with the post office probably wasn't an onerous job, given how few people were left. During Hilda's later years, the mail route changed from Walsh, across the far side of the Cypress Hills, to Thelma, on the flatlands not far west from Fox.



## Due South of Cypress Hills: Thelma



This post office was supposedly named after a town in Georgia, although I have not found any connection among the settlers [6]. The first postmaster was A.J. Achenbach from 1911-03-15 until 1920-05-11. Mail service was from Irvine, a two-day trip by horse and buggy. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.

Achenbach was succeeded by Henry C. Delmas, who moved the post office into his crossroads general store. The photo, circa 1930, shows the Delmas house/store/post office [10].



Delmas resigned on 1930-06-16. After a brief placeholder came and went, Walter Hanschar was postmaster at his farmhouse from 1931-08-10 until 1937-03-23. He was succeeded by Mrs Pauline Shock who kept the post office at her farm until 1946-10-28. Mrs Ruth Bischke then served as postmaster until 1951-11-22.

The post office then went back to the Hanschar farm, where Walter's wife Sarah kept it until 1953-10-02. Frank Nobel took over until 1962-03-19, after which he became the Elkwater postmaster further north into the hills. Mrs Alice Ulrich was then postmaster until 1968-02-22. The final postmaster was Mrs Carol J. Shock, probably a daughter-in-law, who served until the post office closed permanently on 1968-01-12. Thereafter mail service was a rural route. The land had emptied considerably due to climatic conditions unfavourable for farming.

## References.

- 1] Hildebrandt, W., and B. Hubner (2007) THE CYPRESS HILLS: AN ISLAND BY ITSELF. Published by Purich Publishing, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. 184 pages
- 2] National Library and Archives of Canada (downloaded 2023-05-27) Post offices and postmasters. <https://library-archives.canada.ca/eng/collection/research-help/postalheritage/pages/post-offices-postmasters-canada.aspx> (In the search field, type RG3, then the name of the post office. RG3 is the database of post offices and postmasters. Without it, you will receive a large number of citations unrelated to post offices.)
- 3] Karamitsamis, Aphrodite (1992) PLACE NAMES OF ALBERTA. VOLUME 2: SOUTHERN ALBERTA Published by University of Calgary Press. Pages 39 to 41, 54, 62, 69, 72, 83, 88, 94 to 95, 100 to 101, 103, 105, 121, 127, 131 to 132
- 4] Morrow, J.W. (1923) EARLY HISTORY OF THE MEDICINE HAT COUNTRY. Published by Medicine Hat Historical Society, Alberta. Pages 48 to 49
- 5] various authors (1997) WALSH AND DISTRICT PIONEERS Published by Walsh and District History Book Committee, Alberta. Pages 124 to 125, 135 to 144, 151 to 152, 171 to 174, 195 to 196, 220 to 225, 263
- 6] Hughes, Neil (1998) ALBERTA POST OFFICES 1876-1998. Privately published by the author, Edmonton, Alberta
- 7] Lust, Marie (editor) (1989) A NEW BEGINNING: IRVINE AND DISTRICT. Published by 20 Mile Post Historical Society, Irvine, Alberta. Pages 7 to 8, 73 to 82, 102, 151 to 153, 186 to 188, 402 to 404, 422, 477 to 483
- 8] Roth, Grace (editor) (1994) PLAINS, TRAINS, AND WAGON WHEELS Published by Dunmore South History Book Society, Alberta. Pages 5, 36, 61 to 62, 65, 87 to 89, 170 to 174, 237 to 238, 251 to 253, 268 to 271, 399, 406 to 407, 416 to 418, 506 to 508, 543 to 544, 592 to 594, 605 to 607, 609 to 691, 711 to 713, 802, 828 to 829, 839 to 841
- 9] Michael, Hope Hargrave (1948) NINETY YEARS AT ELKWATER LAKE, CYPRESS HILLS, ALBERTA Published by Historical Society of Medicine Hat, Alberta. Pages 8, 10 to 11, 17, 20
- 10] various authors (1991) CYPRESS HILLS COUNTRY Published by Cypress Hills Historical Society, Elkwater, Alberta. Pages 47 to 48, 58 to 59, 97 to 99, 108 to 110, 141 to 142, 157 to 159, 170 to 173, 176 to 177, 268 to 270, 276 to 278, 283 to 284, 312 to 314, 446 to 449, 506 to 507, 520 to 521, 540 to 541, 549, 561, 637 to 638, 645 to 646, 663, 696

11] Mayer, Alice (editor) (198?) MANYBERRIES CHINOOK Published by Manyberries Historical Society, Alberta. Pages 4 to 8, 338, 359 to 360, 363 to 366, 382, 690 to 694, 739 to 741, 746, 796 to 797, 811 to 812, 820, 829 to 830



# Gros Ventre

[Back to Search Results](#)

## Record Information - Brief

**Hierarchical level:** Item  
**Electoral district:** Medicine Hat  
**Date(s):** *Established* 1907-02-01 *Closing*  
**Reference:** RG3-D-3  
**Type of material:** Textual material  
**Found in:** Archives / Post Offices and Postmasters  
**Item ID number:** 21962  
**Help page:** [Post Offices and Postmasters](#)



## Record Information - Details

**Additional information:** Sec. 20, Twp. 10, R. 4, W4M  
Sec. 4, Twp. 10, R. 4, W4M - 1907-02-01  
**Source:** PSFDS03-(13240)

Name of Postmaster	Military status	Date of birth	Date of appointment	Date of vacancy	Cause of vacancy
William Putnam			1907-02-01	1909-08-13	Resignation
L.C. Flemming			1909-12-01	1917	Death
Miss Pearl Wright			1918-03-29	1920-01-10	Resignation
Mrs. Annie Wright			1920-04-27	1922-08-19	Resignation
L.J. Craig			1922-12-22		-

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

## Appendix A: Canadian Post Office records of Norton and Gros Ventre post offices.

Here are three separate records that overlap and contradict.

## Norton

[Back to Search Results](#)
[Previous](#) 2 of 25 [Next](#)

### Record Information – Brief

**Hierarchical level:** Item

**Electoral district:** Medicine Hat

**Date(s):** *Established*      *Closing*  
1907-02-01      1916-08-31

**Reference:** RG3-D-3

**Type of material:** Textual material

**Found in:** Archives / Post Offices and Postmasters

**Item ID number:** 22783

**Help page:** [Post Offices and Postmasters](#)



Link to this record



Add to My Research

### Record Information – Details

**Additional information:** Sec. 9, Twp. 11, R. 4, W4M - 1907-02-01

**Source:** PSFDS03-(13891)

Name of Postmaster	Military status	Date of birth	Date of appointment	Date of vacancy	Cause of vacancy
H.A. Norton			1907-02-01	1913-07-18	Resignation
Mrs. Mary Abbis			1913-10-03	1916-08-26	Resignation

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

[Back to Search Results](#)[Previous](#) 6 of 25 [Next](#)

#### Record Information – Brief

**Hierarchical level:** Item**Electoral district:** Medicine Hat

**Date(s):** *Established*      *Closing*  
 1907-02-01      1951-05-25

**Reference:** RG3-D-3**Type of material:** Textual material**Found in:** Archives / Post Offices and Postmasters**Item ID number:** 22784**Help page:** [Post Offices and Postmasters](#)

#### Record Information – Details

**Additional information:** Distributing point - Coleridge

Dwelling

Mail route - Norton-Tothill; Coleridge-Norton

NE Sec. 27, Twp. 10, R. 4, W4M - 1945-11-19

NE Sec. 4, Twp. 11, R. 4, W4M

NW Sec. 35, Twp. 10, R. 4, W4M - 1929-02-01

Private

S 1/2 Sec. 8, Twp. 11, R. 4, W4M - 1926-02-20

SE Sec. 8, Twp. 11, R. 4, W4M - 1925-07-08, 1945-07-30

Sec. 4, Twp. 10, R. 4, W4M - 1907-02-01

**Source:** PSFDS03-(13892)

Name of Postmaster	Military status	Date of birth	Date of appointment	Date of vacancy	Cause of vacancy
William Putnam			1907-02-01	1909-08-13	Resignation
L.C. Flemming			1909-12-01	1917	Death
Miss Pearl Wright			1918-03-29	1920-01-10	Resignation
Mrs. Annie Wright			1920-04-27	1922-08-19	Resignation
L.J. Craig			1922-12-22	1925-03-31	Resignation
W.R. Abbs			1925-07-08	1925-09-20	Resignation
Mrs. Alice Schneider			1925-12-28	1929-01-07	Death
C.G. Craig			1929-01-07	Acting	-
Rudolph Deering		1885	1929-02-01	1945-07-20	Death
Mrs. Annie Reiger		*	1945-07-31	Acting	-
Albert Doering		*	1945-11-19	1951-05-25	Closed

\*In compliance with the Privacy Act (1983), certain personal information has been deleted