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# POSTAL HISTORY OF THE CPR SUFFIELD SUBDIVISION:   LOMOND TO SUFFIELD
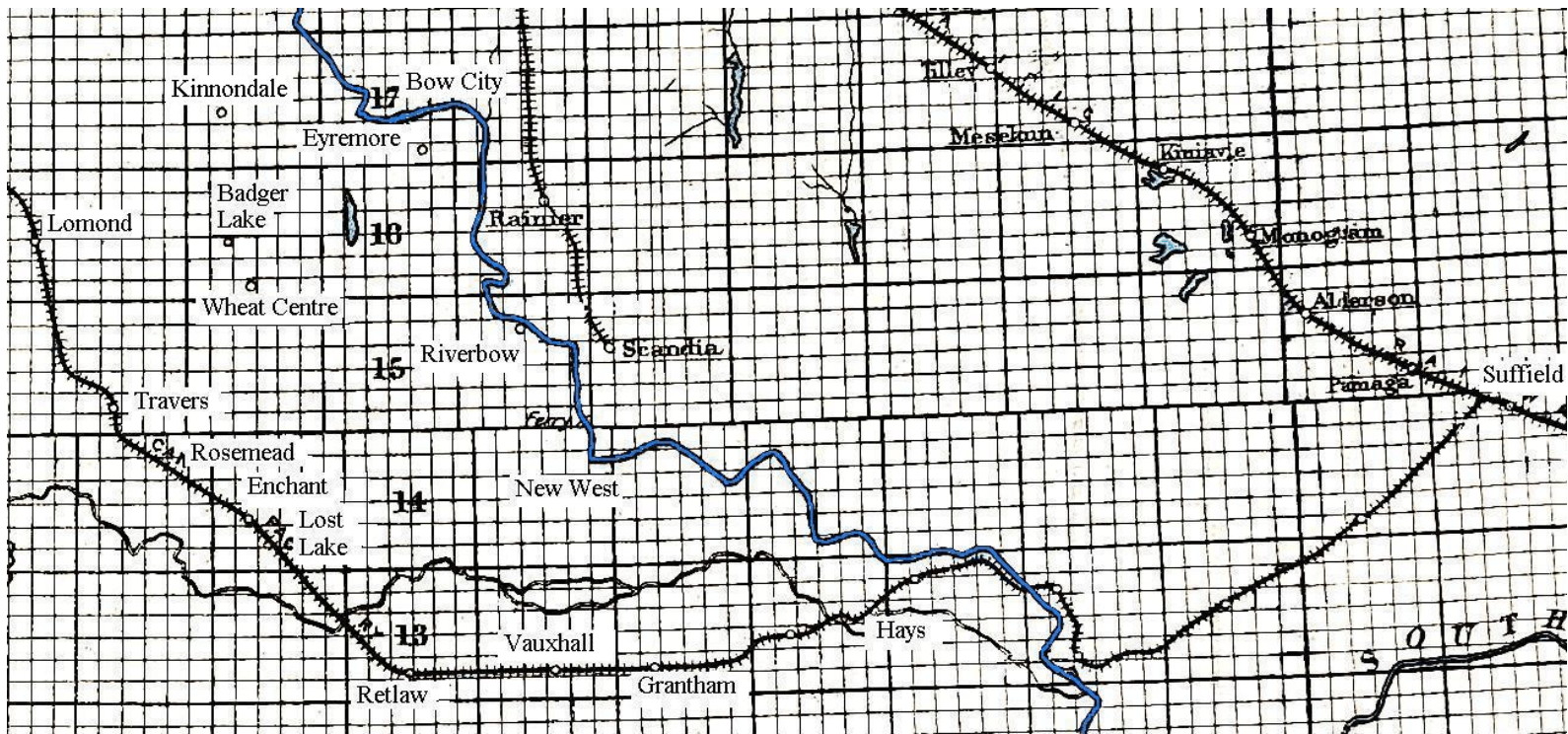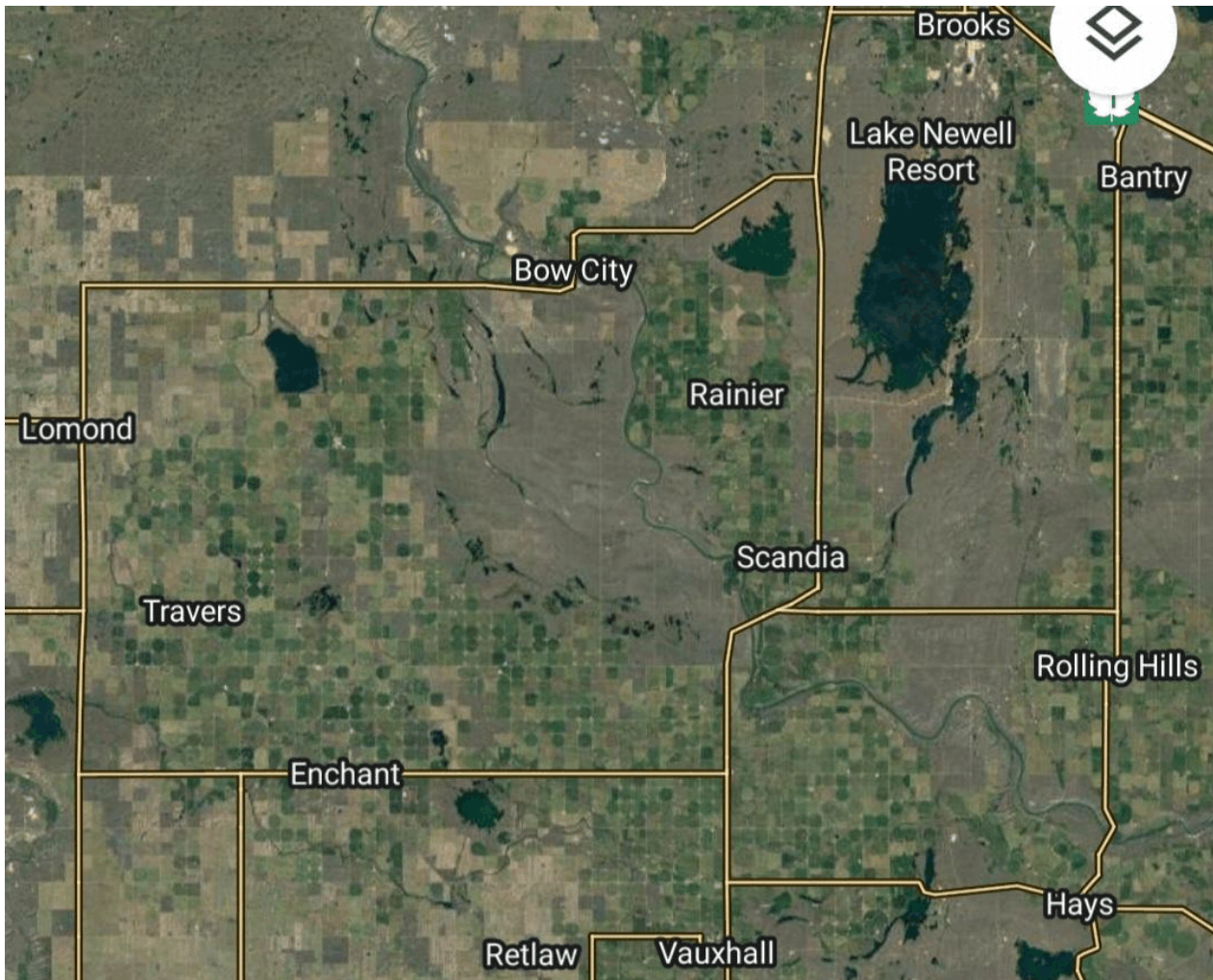
by  Dale Speirs

The Canadian Pacific Railway transcontinental line crossed southern Alberta in 1883.  Branch lines were soon built, one of which angled out from the main line at Suffield in a southwesterly direction, then turned sharply northwest, then back southwest.  Numerous sidings were established, some of which developed into villages.  This CPR line was called the Suffield Subdivision.

This part covers the section from Suffield to Lomond, from the railroad north to the Bow River.  Suffield will be discussed in a future installment as part of the transcontinental line post offices.  Unless otherwise mentioned, dates and postmaster names are from the Post Offices and Postmasters website [1].

The map on the next page is modified from a 1919 map and shows all the pioneer post offices for the district between the railroad and the Bow River..  The blue line is the Bow River.  There were no post offices on the railway between Suffield and Hays.  The small squares are sections, which were one mile on a side.  Homesteaders were entitled to a quarter-section.  The vertical line of numbers from 13 to 17 indicate the township number.

Settlement of the area was much later than surrounding districts.  While there were ranchers early on, mass homesteading waited until the 1920s.  Irrigation projections developed after World War Two and insured the land did not depopulate.  Post offices in this area generally opened between the 1920s and as late as the 1950s.

Kinnondale  17 Bow City

Eyremore

Badger
Lake  16

Lomond

Wheat Centre

Rainier

Scandia

15  Riverbow

Ferry

Travers

Rosemead

Enchant

Lost
Lake  14  New West

13  Vauxhall  Hays

Retlaw  Grantham

Tilley

Meselun

Kiniavie

Monogram

Alderson

Pinaga  Suffield

S O U T H

This is a 2023 Google satellite view showing the area today.

The irrigation farms are the ones with green circles in each quarter-section, while the rangeland and dryland wheat are the blank rectangles.

One can easily see how irrigation saved the district from near total depopulation.

## Index Of Post Offices

**Hays.**

The village of Hays was named after Charles Melville Hays, a railway executive who died in 1912 on the Titanic [2]. It was located at a railroad siding predating World War One but the townsite wasn't established until 1952. The reason was that the Bow River Irrigation Project wasn't completed until that time. The land is in the driest part of southeastern Alberta, barely able to support a few ranchers or dryland wheat growers. Irrigation farming supports a much higher population.

The first post office in Hays opened on 1954-02-17 with Rudolph George Enns as the first postmaster. He operated a farm supply business. As a courtesy, mail was brought from Vauxhall and dumped into a large bin in the Enns shop, where residents paged through the letters for their own mail. The Vauxhall postmaster was a grocer who sorted Hays mail into an empty cardboard box. If someone from Hays came into the store, he would take the mail as a favour and give it to Enns. When the post office opened, Enns operated it in a corner of his garage, shown below [3].

Once the official post office started up, mail was properly couriered from Vauxhall three times per week. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left. In 1967, the mail began coming from Lethbridge. The Enns family sold out and moved to Lethbridge [3].

The next postmaster was Allen Harvey Wolfer from 1956-08-01 until 1960-04-06. He had a farm equipment and fuel depot store nearby and kept the post office in a garage, shown below [3]. He and his wife had a growing family and business and found the post office was too much to handle.
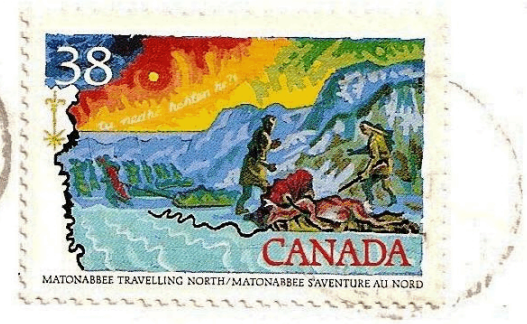


Mrs Edith Margaret Ennis took over as postmaster on 1960-04-15. The spelling of her surname should not be confused with Enns. They were separate and distinct unrelated families.

Edith and her husband Angus farmed nearby. In 1964 they moved a small farmhouse into the village as the post office, shown on the next page.

Edith retired on 1975-10-02 and handed over to Mrs Daisy Wickenheiser. Daisy and her husband farmed nearby but kept the post office in the village. At this point, Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws.

The photos below were taken in 1976 (left, from reference 3) and 1989 (right, with the author's mother Betty Speirs mailing a letter). The postmark was obtained by Betty at the time and appears to be the original device.
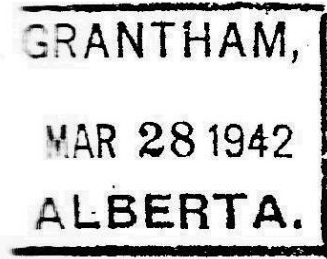
According to Hughes, the post office closed on 1991-01-05 and immediately replaced by a retail postal outlet (RePO) operated by F. and Theresa Stober [4]. The photo below is a 2013 Google Street View. The same address was listed as the post office on the Canada Post website at www.canadpost.ca but the store had changed its name to Hays Café and Country Store.

**Grantham.**

The next post office westward on the railroad was Grantham, named after a town in Lincolnshire, England [2]. The village was established in 1928 with the advent of irrigation farming. A general store operated by Colin Dewhurst and Arthur William Ross held the post office when it opened on 1928-01-01 with Ross as the first postmaster until 1928-10-27. Railway mail service was twice a week. The store did good business on mail days [5].



James Rose, a nephew-in-law of Dewhurst, bought the store and post office, combining it with a fuel depot. At left is a postmark proof strike from his tenure during the era of MOON postmarks, that is Money Order Office Numbers.

Rose served as postmaster until 1945-04-20, when he sold out to Claude Hawley Sutton, who was postmaster until 1948-03-02. The Suttons sold the store to Joseph Orivill Terriff and his wife Lilian Leona. Joseph briefly served as postmaster before Lillian took over, serving from 1948-08-01 until 1956-07-18.

By this time, Grantham was in terminal decline, failing to competition from Vauxhall about 10 km away. The store building was bought by an insurance agent whose wife Mrs Erma A.V. Unser was the final postmaster. She resigned on 1957-07-22 but the post office was not officially closed until 1961-11-18. The Canadian Post Office tried to fill the position but finally declared "Vacancy cancelled". Thereafter mail service was through Vauxhall.

**Vauxhall.**



This village was late getting started, dependent upon the arrival of the railroad and the establishment of the irrigation district. Townsite development began in 1919. The irrigation developers were British, who named the village after a suburb of London, England [2].

The post office opened in a free-standing building on 1921-02-01, with Harry V. Rounds as the first postmaster. He actually farmed near Travers and commuted to the post office. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.

On 1924-07-31, Carl F. Heck took over as postmaster and moved the post office into his general store. He was in his 30s at the time and had drifted in and out of dozens of jobs throughout southern Alberta, seldom staying more than a year or two in one place [5].
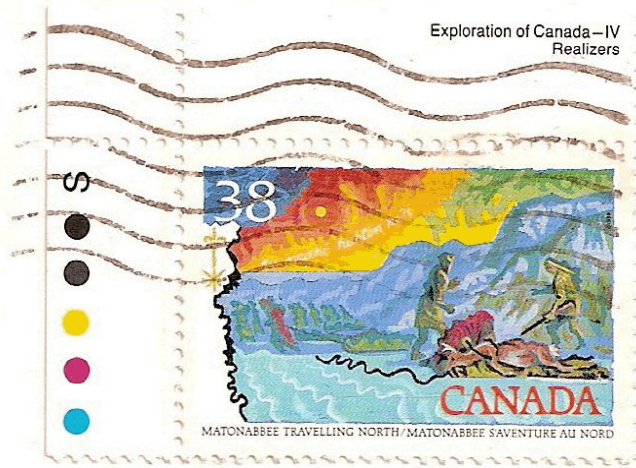
Heck finally planted roots in Vauxhall and stayed three decades as postmaster until 1958-08-04 when he retired. During his tenure the post office was reclassified in 1948 as Semi-Staff, which gave him and his staff certain benefits such as a pension. The photo at right shows Heck in his middle-age years [5].

Heck's successor was Jack Henry Urdal, also a long server, who stayed until 1974-11-27, when he transferred to the Redcliff post office nearby as its postmaster. (See JAPH #31 for the postal history of Medicine Hat and Redcliff.) He was replaced by Marion F. O'Connell, at which point Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws. The photo below shows Betty Speirs at the post office in 1989. The building looked much the same in 2023, although the sign was updated.

Vauxhall became the de facto capital of the irrigation district and remained prosperous, with a population of about 1,300 as of 2024. The post office had enough business to justify a machine cancel (below left, obtained by Betty Speirs) and a pictorial cancel (at right). The town has crop processing facilities, of which potatoes are the main crop.

**Barney.**

The origin of the name for this farmhouse post office is unknown [2]. The post office opened on 1910-10-15 with O.K. Nelson as the first postmaster. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown below. Nelson only stayed briefly until 1911-01-30, after which there was an interregnum. The post office re-opened on 1911-06-10 in a country store. Mrs Barbara Enright was postmaster until 1913-08-09.

**Retlaw.**

The Barney post office was moved to the nearby farm of Daniel G. Vaughn, at which time it changed its name to Retlaw. The name is Walter spelled backwards, in honour of CPR executive Walter R. Baker [2]. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.

Vaughn served as postmaster from 1913-08-10 until 1917-01-03. The post office then moved from farmhouse to farmhouse. W. Deresford was briefly postmaster, followed by Mulroy Donald, who served from 1918-03-15 until 1920-09-21. George T. Gopsill then took over until 1926-11-23.

The Retlaw post office finally got a long-service postmaster with Miss Eva R. Cassel who served until 1941-07-18. Mail service was three times weekly by rail. There was big excitement on 1935-10-08 when burglars blew the post office safe and got away with $2,200 in cash [6]. Call the amount $30,000 in today's depreciated currency, so this was indeed a big score.

Loren Obert Merriman was the next postmaster until 1943-11-25 when he moved to California. His father Elmer had homesteaded the land in 1913. For a few years before the railroad arrived, Elmer operated a mail and stagecoach line between Retlaw and Taber. The 40-km route took two days to travel back then [6]. For comparison, the drive on paved roads today would be about a half hour.

Mrs Margaret Middleton McCormik then served until 1951-04-27, followed by Mrs Lillian Pearson. William "Manny" Parks took over from 1952-03-18 until 1956-09-07. He operated a gas station which held the post office in one corner. The final postmaster was Mrs Jean Larson until the post office permanently closed on 1960-07-04.

Area residents thereafter got their mail at other post offices such as Vauxhall, Enchant, Turin, or Taber [6]. Good roads obviated the need for the Retlaw post office. Additionally the village was in dryland country just outside the irrigation district and could not compete against Vauxhall. Nothing remains as of 2023 but three houses and a country church.

**Lost Lake.**



No one knows how the Lost Lake post office got its name. My suspicion is that the district had numerous intermittent sloughs which filled with water in wet years and dried out into alkali flats during drought. This was a farmhouse post office which opened on 1909-08-01 with Alfred Charles Jaycock as the first postmaster [1, 7]. At left is the proof strike of its first postmark.

Mail service was from Lethbridge about 80 km away, whenever the courier Nels Batalden went into town. In those days the roads were muddy tracks, not graveled, and a very tiring trip. When Batalden's horses were tired, he would give them a shot of whiskey, as well as one for himself [6].

Alfred Charles Jaycock died in office on 1911-01-14 and was succeeded by Alfred David Jaycock, relationship unknown but probably his son.

The railroad came through a few kilometres away in 1914, so the post office moved to a siding named Enchant. The name was changed to Enchant on 1915-02-01. As a local history commented [6]: *... the reason for the change was because looking for the lake became pretty well a lost cause.* Alfred David served until 1917-02-16. He left the district and eventually died in Calgary in 1937 [8, 9].

**Enchant.**



The village of Enchant was founded when the railroad came through in 1914.  The name is indicative of the settlers' feelings for their new lands [2].  When the Lost Lake post office moved to the railroad siding the name was changed on 1915-02-01 to Enchant.  The proof strike of the new postmark is shown at left.  Mail service was several times weekly by train.

William A. Freeburger served as postmaster from 1917-08-25 until 1919-12-04, when Henry Thomas Jaycock took over.  Henry was 25 years old at the time and was probably the son or nephew of Alfred David Jaycock.  Henry served until 1941-12-29 as postmaster.  Jens Orsten Jr then held the position briefly until 1942-12-11.

The post office then moved to the farm dealership of Arthur Lawrence Howg, where he was postmaster until 1947-09-09.  The next postmaster was Harold Stein Tonneson, a returned veteran, who held the postmastership until 1951-06-15.  He had other jobs and volunteered in the Enchant-Vauxhall district, so his wife Winifred actually operated the post office [6].

Hiram Edward Prouty became the next postmaster, at which point the Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws.  He owned a dealership and until 1976 his wife Ermina was the actual operator of the post office [6].

From then until 1989-10-02 the postmaster was A. Dichout. That date marked the conversion of the post office into a retail postal outlet in the Enchant Community Store operated by C. Severton [4].  The postmark of that outlet was obtained by Betty Speirs just a few days after the RePO opened, shown at right. On the next page is a photo of Betty at the outlet.  The Enchant Community Store was still open in 2023 but the RePO closed on 2018-05-23 for lack of volunteers to manage the outlet [10].
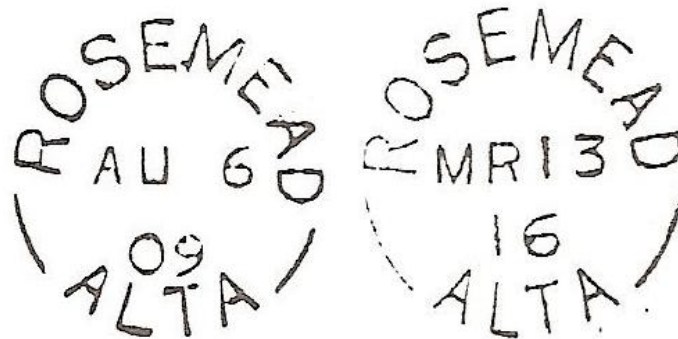
**Rosemead.**

Prior to the Rosemead post office, settlers got their mail via the now-extinct settlement of Sundial to the southwest [6]. Henry D. Charter opened a store at Rosemead which incorporated a post office. The origin of the name is unknown. Charter became postmaster on 1909-08-01, the same day that the nearby Sweet Valley post office opened.

The railroad bypassed Rosemead by a few kilometres in 1914, which doomed the hamlet. Charter resigned on 1914-11-23 and was succeeded by W.E. Tate. The store was moved to Travers, so Tate had the post office in his farmhouse. He resigned on 1917-08-07 and the post office was officially closed on 1918-02-15.

Shown below are proof strikes of postmarks from both the postmasters tenures.

**Sweet Valley.**



The Sweet Valley post office opened on 1909-08-01 with T. George Shirley as the first postmaster. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.

Shirley resigned on 1913-12-02, after which there was an interregnum until 1914-07-20 when C.M. Stanley Hay took over as postmaster. During his tenure, the post office changed its name to Travers after the railroad came through and Hay relocated to the new siding [4]. He resigned on 1916-04-21.

**Travers.**



After the Sweet Valley post office moved to the railroad, the name was changed to Travers in honour of a railroad surveyor [4].  The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.
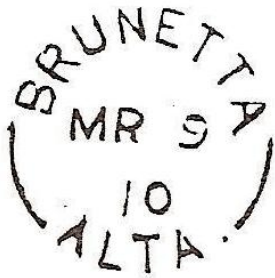
Mail service improved to several times weekly by rail.  The existing postmaster Stanley Hay was briefly succeeded by a placeholder, then Mrs E.B. Holebrook, who served as postmaster from 1916-12-14 until 1917-06-30.

Another interregnum followed until Miss Mary J. Childs served from 1918-08-24 until 1919-08-15.  William Henry Adair took over and served until 1924-09-23.  He kept the post office in his store along with a telephone exchange.  At the back and upstairs were living quarters.  Stanley Clarke bought out Adair and moved his family into the building [6].  He was a long-server as postmaster until 1946-05-01.

Douglas Webster Townsend bought the store and post office from Clarke but served as postmaster only until 1947-07-29.  He started a trucking business and sold the store to William Charles Moore, another short-timer [11].  Moore was postmaster to 1948-07-30.

Travers began declining in the postwar years.  As a result, there was a steady turnover of postmasters every few years.  Between 1948 and 1961 there were three postmasters.  The final postmaster was Ivan Leigh Steeves, who served from 1961-11-11 until 1966-10-03 when the post office closed permanently.  After the end of rail service, both passenger and freight, Travers found itself on a back road and declined into a ghost town.

**Brunetta.**



The post office of Brunetta opened on 1910-02-14 on the homestead of the first postmaster George Robert Plumb.  He named the post office after his daughter [11].  The proof strike of the postmark is shown at left.  The post office was kept in a small crossroads store on his land.  When the railroad came through, he resigned on 1915-04-13.

The succeeding postmaster was Frank W. Wilson. The post office moved to a railroad siding nearby and was renamed Lomond on 1915-06-01.

**Lomond.**



The Lomond post office was named after the Scottish lake. For some reason two postmarks were proofed, shown at left.

Frank Wilson served as postmaster at the new location until 1916-04-25, when he handed over to A. Parker. Yet two more postmarks were proofed just before Wilson left, shown at lower left and below.

Parker resigned on 1917-11-06, after which there was an interregnum. On 1919-05-08 the next postmaster became James MacQueen. Following on was Benjamin King from 1921-01-14 until 1929-08-17.

George Hedges was the next postmaster until 1950-06-16.  During his tenure, on 1940-01-21, the post office burned down.  Strangely, I haven't found any postmark proofs dated after the fire, so some of the contents of the building must have been saved.

After Hedges there was a brief placeholder until Leonard Mansfield Chase became postmaster on 1950-11-16.  Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws but a local history said that Chase served until June 1982.  His wife Jean was his assistant clerk.  After he retired, he later got back on as a maintenance man for the post office, which had moved into a purpose-built building during his tenure [11].  On 1966-07-01, the Lomond  post office was made a Semi-Staff operation, which gave postal personnel certain benefits.

Between 1982 and 1992 there were five postmasters, one of whom served two separate terms.  In 1991, Canada Post proposed to shut down the post office but a local outcry kept postal service in the village.  The Lomond post office was converted into a retail postal outlet on 1992-01-08 run by the Grainland Hardware store.



The store was owned by Robert Jones who looked after it while former postmaster Margaret Schlaht operated the outlet from the standalone building [12].  On the next page is a photo of the post office in 1989 with Betty Speirs standing in front.  At left is a postmark she obtained at the time.

Jones sold the store in September 2005 to Erich and Carol Ruppert. Schlaht continued to run the outlet until she retired in 2008. At that point Carol took over as postal manager. The Rupperts sold out in 2012 to Steve and Sandy Kam, after which Sandy became manager until at least 2016, again in the separate building [12]. Below is a Google Street View photo of the building in 2019, showing little change other than signage and paint.

**Badger Lake.**



The name of this post office was descriptive of a common animal on the prairies. At left is the proof strike of its postmark. This was a farmhouse post office out on the land about halfway between Lomond and the Bow River. Mail service was via Eyremore further east on the river.

The first postmaster was A.D. McDonald, who served from 1913-02-01 until 1914-10-10. After an interregnum, the post office re-opened on 1915-02-16 with Grant Hayes as the next postmaster.

From there the post office went to the farm of Solomon A. Trew, who was postmaster until his death on 1941-02-19. His wife Martha actually operated the post office during those years [11]. After her husband's death, Martha became postmaster de jure as well as de facto. The post office closed permanently on 1946-02-28 when she retired.

**Eyremore.**



The Eyremore post office opened on 1908-12-15 in the farmhouse of W.T.P. (Jack) Eyres, who was the first postmaster. He served until 1920-09-13 when Mrs M.J. Armstrong took over until 1926-04-27. Mail service was from Brooks. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

The post office moved to the general store of Eleanor Jane and Daniel Alexander Scroggie [11]. She was the postmaster initially but died in office in November 1926. Daniel succeeded her but also died in office on 1929-01-28.

David Bowie Campbell took over in his hardware store and was a long-serving postmaster until 1965-04-14. The post office changed it name on 1958-08-23 to Bow City when it moved across the river to the north bank. The photograph on the next page shows the store/post office as it was in 1944 [13].

**Bow City.**



This post office had a complicated history. When Jack Eyres proposed the name Bow City for his post office, the Canadian Post Office rejected it, so the name became Eyremore.

During Dave Campbell's tenure as postmaster, agitation continued for the name Bow City [13]. The CPO relented and the change was granted on 1958-08-23.

At the same time the villagers went all in and moved the settlement to the north bank of the Bow River, thus avoiding the problem with ferries. The move put the village on the same side as the CPR transcontinental railroad and the town of Brooks, making freighting much easier.

Unfortunately the move eventually doomed the village because when good roads developed, Brooks was only a half-hour drive away [13]. Bow City (north bank) dwindled to a hamlet and finally a ghost town.

The photograph at left shows Dave Campbell in 1964 just before his retirement [13].

After Campbell retired as postmaster, Mrs Grace Mary Nixon took over from 1965-04-15 until 1965-08-31, at which time the post office temporarily closed.  It re-opened with Mrs Mary Virginia Green as postmaster from 1965-10-01 but she only stayed until 1966-10-19.  The Bow City post office was permanently closed on 1966-11-04 after which mail service was a rural route out of Brooks.

**Wheat Centre.**



The name of this farmhouse post office was descriptive. At the time the post office opened there was no irrigation, so all the homesteads were dryland wheat and ranching. The mail route was Travers-Wheat Centre-Eyremore and back again. John Mott was the first postmaster from 1910-05-01 until his death on 1912-03-25. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

His son John L. Mott succeeded him until resigning on 1914-03-13. There was an interregnum until William Paterson became postmaster. The post office was in his house until 1924-02-16 when he resigned due to ill health and moved to California [6]. The post office then moved to the farm of Edward Brown, who was postmaster until 1947-10-20. His wife Heleb and son William actually operated the post office.

In the end, a combination of good roads and depopulation finished off the post office, which was officially closed on 1947-11-30. Mail service thereafter was from Brooks.

**Riverbow.**

The farmhouse post office of Riverbow got its name from its position on the banks of the Bow River. C.A. Pray was the first postmaster from 1909-10-15 until 1919-09-09. The proof strike of the postmark is at left.

After an interregnum, Colin G. Dick took over from 1920-04-01 to 1928-09-28 as postmaster at his farm. Immediately succeeding him was William Arthur Levett, the final postmaster. The post office officially closed on 1937-10-31.

During the lifetime of this post office the mail route varied from Vauxhall due south, Scandia due east, or Brooks to the northeast. Depopulation and good roads killed the post office.

**New West.**

The New West post office was a short-lived farmhouse post office out in the middle of nowhere. The only postmaster was A.C. Getty. The post office opened on 1910-04-15 and closed on 1912-11-20. At left is the proof strike of the postmark.

**Kinnondale.**

This was a farmhouse post office out on the land.  The post office was opened on 1909-05-01, with J.C. McKinnon as the first postmaster. He gave up the position on 1921-09-13, after which his neighbour John A. Tibbets took over briefly.  He didn't last long and the post office closed permanently on 1922-10-31.  By that time the nearby Badger Lake post office was operating, so there couldn't have been much of a disruption to local service.

There were two postmarks proofed.  Below left was the postmark for McKinnon and at right was the one ordered for Tibbets.  The latter postmark was proofed just before the post office closed, so one wonders if it ever saw use.

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receive a large number of citations unrelated to post offices.)

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