

JOURNAL OF ALBERTA POSTAL HISTORY

Issue #38

Edited by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7, or opuntia57@yahoo.ca
Published May 2025.

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE CHAMPION-MONARCH DISTRICT

by Dale Speirs

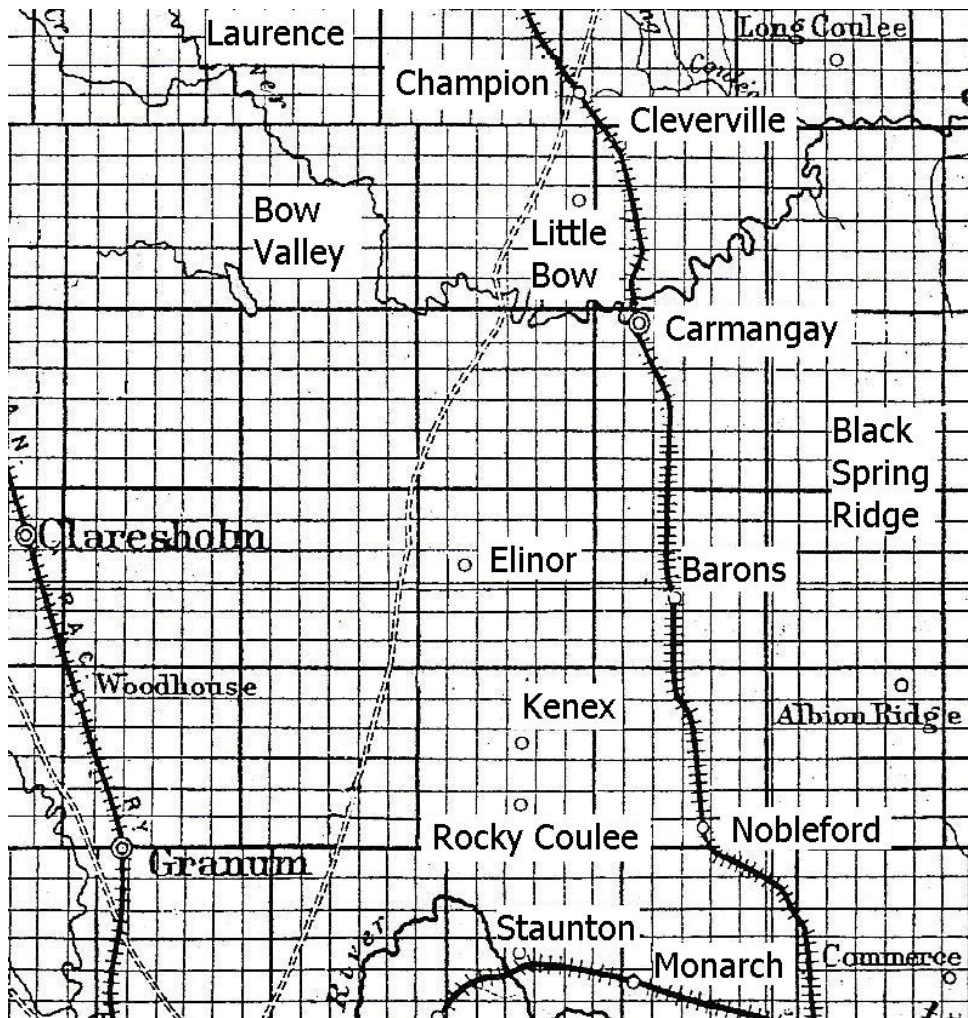
Settlement of this district began in the first decade of the 1900s but accelerated after a north-south railroad was built through it by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1910. Today the main transportation route is Highway 23, which roughly parallels the railroad tracks. Originally the homesteads were dryland wheat and rangeland but now a substantial proportion is irrigation. This prevented the depopulation seen further east in the drylands, enough to keep five post offices open along the highway as of 2025.

Land speculation ahead of the railroad was the major industry between 1905 and 1910. Townsite lots in villages were traded as far away as Toronto and Chicago by speculators. The boom collapsed in 1913. Once all the surrounding land was homesteaded, the population leveled off. Only a few general stores were needed or could be supported, so the village populations stagnated or even declined [5].

Unless stated otherwise, post office dates and postmaster names are from the National Library and Archives website [1].

Index Of Post Offices

Barons	17
Black Spring Ridge	22
Blayney	16
Bow Valley	23
Carmangay	11
Champion	6
Cleverville	5
Elinor	20
Kenex	24
Laurence	23
Little Bow	24
Monarch	32
Noble / Nobleford	27
Rocky Coulee	25
Staunton	26



This map shows the pioneer post offices, based on a 1922 map. The small squares are sections, one mile on a side. Homesteaders were entitled to a quarter-section.

The double-dash line angling up the centre of the map was the pioneer trail before the railroad came through in 1910. The trail was quickly abandoned once train service began.

Clevertville.



The hamlet of Clevertville was founded out on the lone prairie and named after Martin G. Clever, who platted the site and donated free lots to anyone who would open a business there [2]. The post office opened on 1907-09-01 in the general store of George H. Mark, who was the first postmaster. His name was generally mis-spelled Marks in local histories [3]. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

The hamlet prospered for a few years until the railroad bypassed the place. The CPR built the railroad a few kilometres to the northwest of Clevertville. At the time the hamlet was founded, the end-of-track was Carmangay, from where the Clevertville mail was couriered. The expectation was that the track would be built through Clevertville in due time. The CPR had a long history of bypassing hamlets and villages so that they could sell their own lots elsewhere, which is what happened with Clevertville.

Once the track bypassed the hamlet, a nearby siding was named Champion and the existing hamlet was abandoned. All the buildings were moved to the new siding, including the Mark store and post office [3]. On 1910-10-01 the post office name was changed to Champion. Mark continued as postmaster until 1914-08-19.

Champion.



This post office was named after the siding it was located on. The CPR named it after H.T. Champion, one of their foremen in their Winnipeg shops. George Mark carried on as postmaster for a few years.

After Mark gave up the job, the post office was moved into a standalone building with living quarters in the back. The new postmaster was George A. Orr, who was a long-server until 1949-10-18. His wife Aida was the postal clerk [3]. At left is a proof strike of a postmark from Orr's tenure. Below is a photo of George and Aida Orr taken in 1932.



Mail service was twice per day from the railway station. Orr used a hand cart to carry the mails back and forth. Customers often mailed their late letters through a slot on the side of the train's postal car [3].

Kenneth Hirst Bloxham was the next postmaster and also a long-server, staying until 1967-09-30 when he was promoted. During his tenure a new post office building was completed in 1954. The lobby was minuscule and frequently the customers had to line up outside the building during peak periods such as Christmas parcels [3].

Bloxham's promotion was to postmaster of Sylvan Lake, Alberta. He was succeeded in Champion by Mrs Iola E. Jones. At this point, Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws.

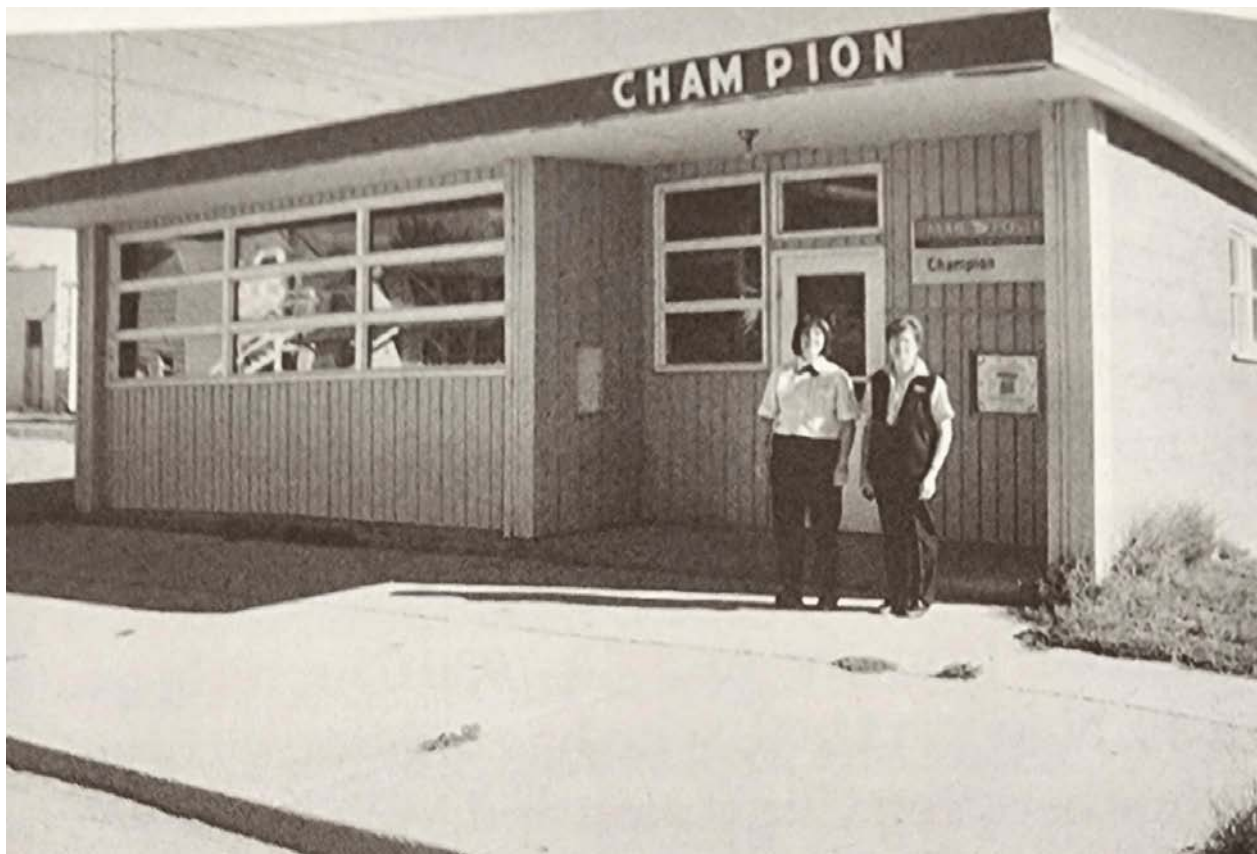


However, a local history book recorded that in 1985 Jones retired. Iona Eamer Rutberg took over as postmaster. She previously had been the postal clerk. She left in 1989 to raise a family in Vulcan. She is shown in 1983 by the photo at left [4].

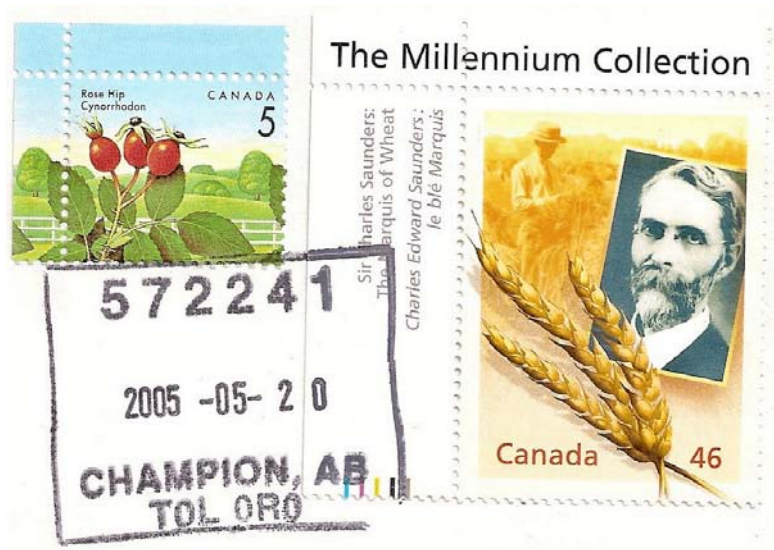
The author's mother Betty Speirs is shown in front of the post office in 1988.



Raema Nelson became postmaster in June 1989 and was still postmaster in 1999. The photo below shows her standing in front of the post office (at right) with her postal clerk Donna Mueller [4].



Pictorial and regular postmarks of Champion.



Carmangay.

Cattle ranchers began running free-range herds in the district in the 1880s. The townsite of Carmangay was originally the wheat farm of Charles Whitney Carman and his wife Gertrude Gay. Their son was named Gay Carman. Hughes wrote that the village was named after the parents [6] and Karamitsamis wrote that the name was in honour of the son [2]. Take your pick.

The railroad came through Carmangay in 1909 at which point construction was temporarily halted. This gave a burst of prosperity to Carmangay as an end-of-track business centre. When track-laying recommenced and continued north, Champion and other points north siphoned off much of the commerce.

The post office opened on 1907-03-01 with Jeremiah H. Rosenberger as the first postmaster. He opened the operation in his country general store but guessed wrongly about where the railroad would come through. The tracks went several kilometres east of his place. Rosenberger and his son-in-law Charles Summer built a new store at the railroad siding, into which the post office was moved. Rosenberger continued as postmaster until his resignation on 1912-05-31 due to ill health [7].

Shown below are proof strikes of duplex postmarks, the 1910 cancel from the move to the railroad track and the 1937 cancel as a later replacement.

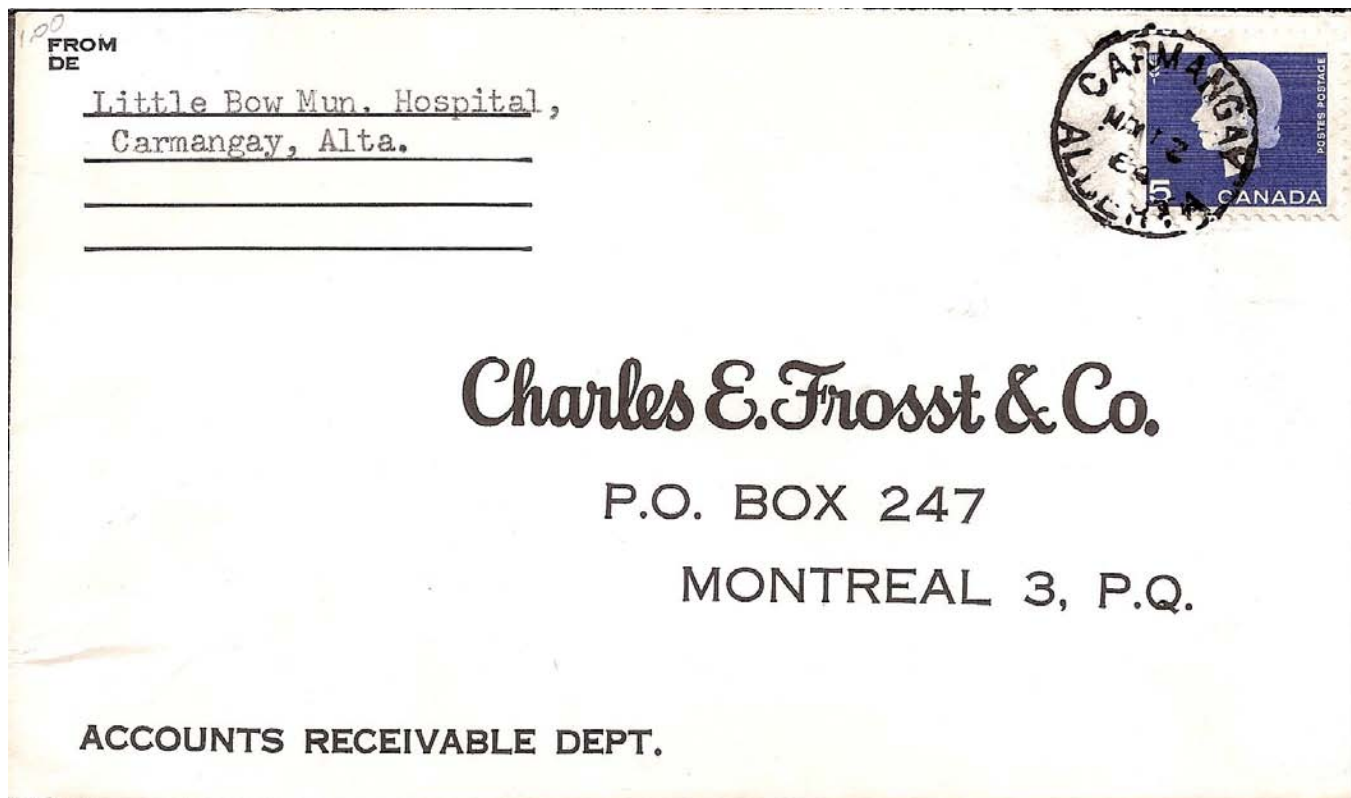


Thomas G. Parkinson took over the postmastership and served until 1920-09-22. He kept the post office in his farm machinery shop. During his tenure a Rural Route was established on 1917-06-01. The next postmaster was Edward George Howell until 1927-02-01, who operated the post office in the Grand Hotel.

Andrew Lawrence succeeded as postmaster and served until 1947-09-16, when ill health forced his retirement. In 1930, the Lawrence family built a new house with the post office along one side. The photograph shows the house/post office during this time. The handcart parked in front was used to carry the mails to and from the train [7].



After Lawrence retired, Eric Charles Collier bought the house and post office. In 1955, railway mail was discontinued and thereafter was delivered by truck. At this point, Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws. A local history book reported that Eric served until 1976 before retiring [7]. Below is a period cover. The Little Bow River wends its way through the district, hence the name of the Carmangay hospital, which served the entire district.



During the 1980s, the post office moved into the village administration building [7]. The Carmangay post office is shown here in 1988, with Betty Speirs standing next to it. The building looks much the same in 2025, shared between the post office, the village administration, and a bank.



Hughes listed five subsequent postmasters until 1998. One of them was W. Howell, a probable descendant of the previous Howell postmaster [6]. Below is a pictorial postmark.



Blayney.



The post office of Blayney opened on 1907-07-15 in the general store of John Kingdom Warnock. He was a Canadian-born son of Irish immigrants. When he opened the post office, his father suggested the name after an Irish castle [2]. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

The railroad bypassed the hamlet a short distance and established a nearby siding called Baron. Everyone moved across the tracks to the siding, including the post office [8].

Barons.



The railroad siding on the opposite side of the tracks was initially called Baron after a CPR executive [2]. Several businesses used the possessive form Baron's in their company name and the settlement quickly became known as Barons. When the post office was moved across the track from Blayney, it took on this name as of 1909-11-01. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

John Warnock gave up the postmastership on 1909-06-15 and handed it over to Hugh Gray Murray. Murray didn't stay long and resigned on 1910-04-05. Peter Wendelboe became the next postmaster. He had previously been postmaster of nearby Elinor, about which more later, before moving to Barons.

Wendelboe gave up the post office on 1918-01-02 and Alexander Andrew took over. He was a Scottish veteran who had lost a leg in World War One. Andrew was a long-server and stayed until 1951-06-30, when ill health forced his retirement [8].

Francis William Kealy, a local preacher, then served until 1957-07-24. Michael Liptick was the next postmaster until 1972-08-22, when he transferred to the Stavely post office. On the next page are two covers postmarked during his tenure.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION
COMMISSION D'ASSURANCE-CHÔMAGE

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
COURRIER OFFICIEL



UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION
NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT OFFICE,
AT

Federal Bldg.,
7th Street South,
LETHBRIDGE, Alta.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION
COMMISSION D'ASSURANCE-CHÔMAGE

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
COURRIER OFFICIEL



UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION
NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT OFFICE,
AT

July Lethbridge

Iris June Carrie took over but at this point Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws. Hughes recorded that as of 1998 the next postmaster was Virginia Rempel [6]. Below is a 1988 photo of the post office building with Betty Speirs standing in front.



Elinor.

Peter and Sine Wendelboe were Danish immigrants who homesteaded in 1903 west of Barons. Before the railroad came through, the pioneer trail passed near the Wendelboe homestead, which became a stopping house. An addition was built onto the house for a country store. On 1905-06-01, when Alberta was still part of the Northwest Territories, a post office was opened in the store. The photo below shows the building. The sign is barely legible but reads “Elinor / Post Office / & Store” [8].



Hughes wrote that the name of this post office was after Peter's wife but this was incorrect [6]. Her name was Sine. Karamitsamis does not list the name at all [2]. A local history had a roll call of pioneers in the district, none of whom were named Elinor [8]. Who she was remains a mystery.

Peter was the first postmaster. His daughter Dagmar couriered the mail three times weekly from Claresholm and also helped out as postal clerk. Her service was unusual for the time and commented upon by fellow pioneers. There were no roads, only trails, and the weather was brutal at times. Even for strong men the job of courier was not a sinecure because the work was hard [8].

On 1909-09-10, Peter resigned as postmaster after the railroad came through Barons and moved to the new townsite. Alfred Roy Moore took over as postmaster until 1910-03-15 when the post office permanently closed. By then the pioneer trail was abandoned.

Black Spring Ridge.



This locality was east of Barons. The name is a translation from the Blackfoot language and is descriptive. There was a spring at the base of a ridge formed from black shale [2]. This was a farmhouse post office established on 1908-04-15 with Osborne Ostbo as the first postmaster. Mail was couriered by wagon from Claresholm. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

Osborne gave up the postmastership on 1909-07-13 after his wife suddenly died of typhoid fever [8]. The post office moved to the farm of Jonas Untinen. He managed to carry on until 1916-04-30, when competition from Barons and good roads forced the closure of the post office. Below is a postmark from Osborne's tenure. Note the inverted date.



Laurence.

This farmhouse post office was frequently mis-spelled as Lawrence in local histories and on maps. The first postmaster was James Laurence Wannop from 1906-09-01 until 1911-11-10. His relative Noble Laurence became the second postmaster. Mail service was twice weekly from Stavely.

Noble resigned on 1916-07-03 and G.H. Jorgens took over. Good roads and railway towns made it easier for farmers to get their mail from either Stavely or Champion [3]. Accordingly on 1918-12-31 the post office permanently closed.

Bow Valley.



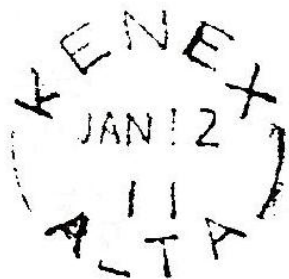
The post office name was descriptive and opened on 1910-10-01 in the farmhouse of M. Frogge. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark.

Frogge only stayed a short while until the post office closed temporarily on 1911-11-18. After two years Frank Deverall re-opened the post office on 1915-04-10. He kept the postmastership until 1919-01-10 when the post office closed again, this time permanently.

Little Bow.

The post office name referred to the nearby Little Bow River. The only postmaster was Malcolm McLeod, who kept the post office in his farmhouse. The post office was halfway between Carmangay and Champion, west of the railroad track. It opened on 1907-03-01 and closed on 1909-03-22 after the railroad came by.

Kenex.



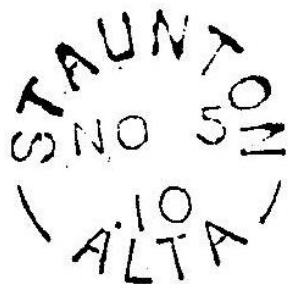
The first postmaster was Thomas Leonard Askew, who only served a short time from 1911-01-01 until 1911-12-26. The Askew family and other homesteaders in the district came from Ontario. The post office was named by the son Grey Askew after the counties of Kent and Essex in that province [9]. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.

The second postmaster was James Watkins, who rented the Askew land after they left and continued the post office in the farmhouse. He didn't stay long either and left the job on 1912-08-19. The third postmaster was Andrew Russell, who had been postmaster at nearby Rocky Coulee, about which more later. He gave up the post office on 1914-11-23 and Arthur Hurschman became the final postmaster. The post office closed permanently on 1920-10-29.

Rocky Coulee.

The post office name was descriptive of the surrounding terrain. The first postmaster was Andrew Russell from 1906-06-15 until 1909-02-15. Josiah McClughan was the next and final postmaster until the post office closed permanently on 1910-12-31. The nearby railroad killed the post office [9].

Staunton.



Staunton consisted of a sandstone quarry, general store and post office, and a hotel. The McLean family basically owned everything. About 80 men worked in the quarry and lived at either the hotel or in Monarch a few kilometres away. The CPR built a short spur line from the nearby main track. Supplies and mail were delivered by rail and the sandstone blocks hauled out [9].

The post office was named after Staunton McLean and opened on 1910-11-01. The proof strike of the postmark is shown at left.

The only postmaster was Robert McLean. His sister Annie carried the mail bag on her back to and from a catchpost. She would climb up and hang the bag where the next train would snatch it on the fly and leave the incoming bag [9].

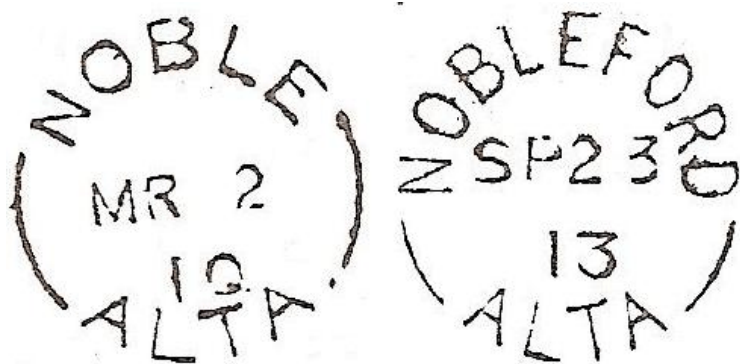
World War One killed the entire settlement and quarry, though not immediately. The problem was that the able-bodied men went off to war. Unlike other businesses, women and old men could not be substituted in the quarry. The post office closed permanently on 1917-11-14 after the quarry shut down. Mining never resumed.

Noble / Nobleford.

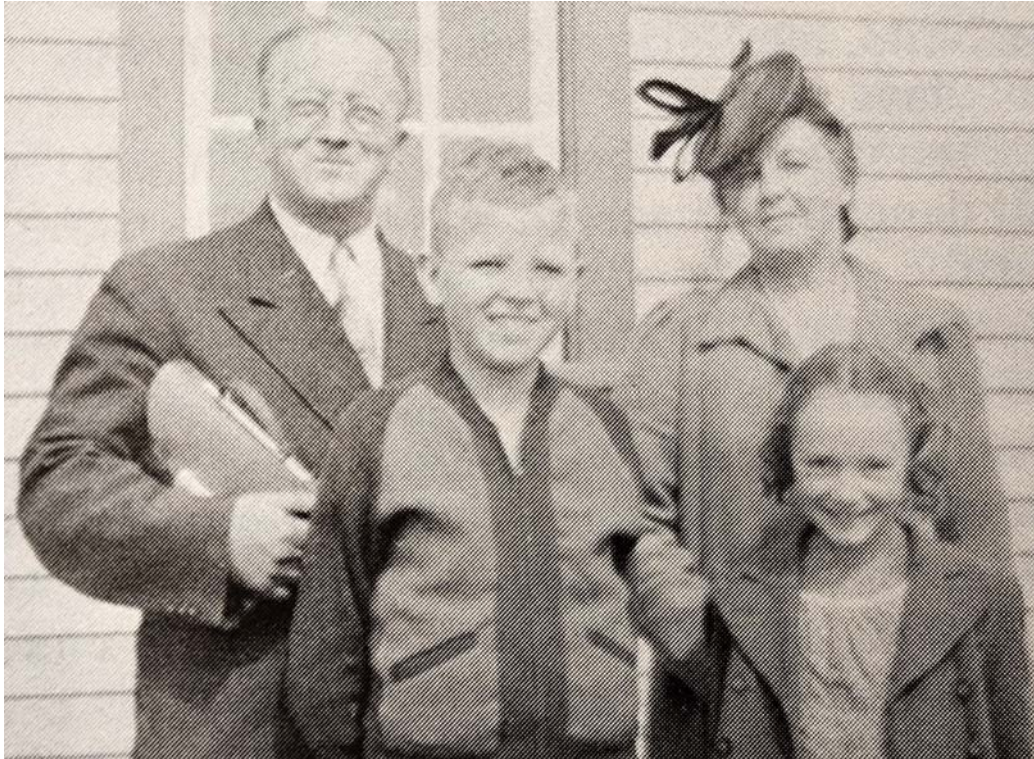
Settlement of the district began in 1904. Charles S. Noble arrived in 1909. He was a mover and a shaker with a huge wheat farm and later a factory that specialized in dryland cultivating equipment [9]. The village was founded at a railroad siding adjacent to the Noble lands.

The post office opened on 1910-03-01 with Matt McGregor as the first postmaster. He kept the post office in his general store. He only stayed a short while and resigned on 1911-05-08, after which Frederick W. Hunt took over. Hunt had a livery and feed store but built a standalone building for the post office and a telephone exchange [9].

Hunt sold his store but kept the post office and became a long-server, remaining as postmaster until his death on 1949-06-11. During his tenure the post office name was changed from Noble to Nobleford on 1913-10-01 to avoid confusion with the post office at Noble, Ontario. Shown below are the proof strikes of the two postmarks.



Hunt's son-in-law Wilbert Franklin Cross took over as postmaster. Wilbert's wife Edith had been postal clerk for her father and continued as same for her husband. Wilbert had been the rural route courier before becoming postmaster. The photo below shows Wilbert and Edith with their two children [9].

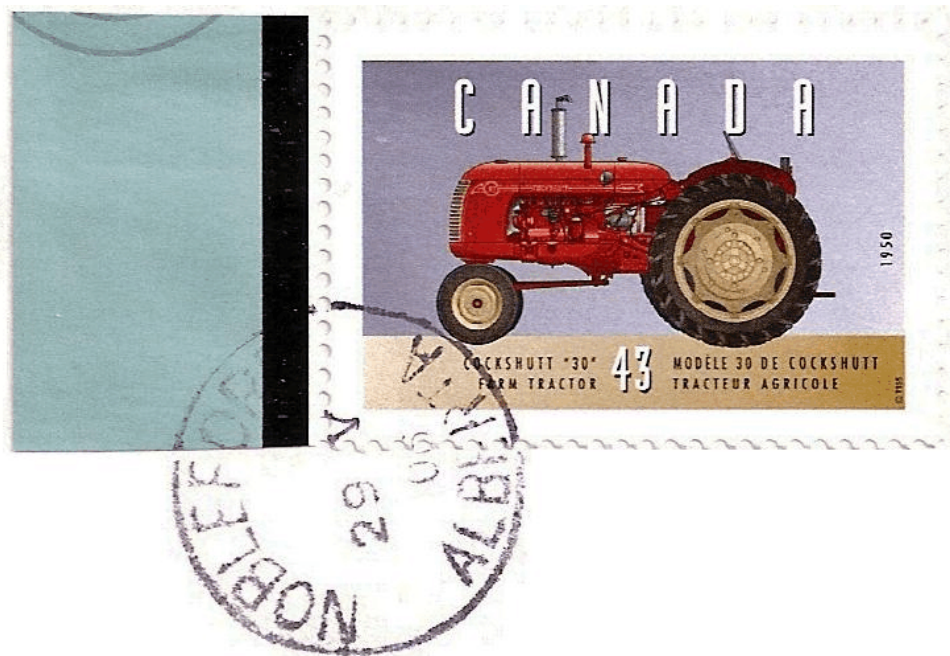


In 1954 a new and larger post office building was constructed. Wilbert retired on 1963-06-30 and Karl Vincent Lang became postmaster. At that point the Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws, but a local history book indicated that Lang was still in the job as of 1976. The post office became Semi-Staff in 1967, which gave the personnel certain benefits. The photo below shows the post office building as it was in 1975 [9].



John Keay was listed by Hughes as postmaster in 1998 after Wilbert but the transition date is unknown [6]. The photo below shows Betty Speirs standing in front of the post office in 1988, which appears to be a different building. A 2025 Google Street View shows the same building, with a different sign and the mail drop replaced by a street letter box.





Monarch.



The earliest settlers were English, who named the district after royalty [6]. The village was on the east-west CPR line of the Crowsnest subdivision a short distance from the junction of the north-south line running up to Champion.

When the railroad abandoned passenger service and the highways bypassed Monarch the village might have died completely but for Highway 3A, which was a short cut for traffic between Crowsnest and Highway 23.

The Google map at left shows the modern townsite. Notice the irrigation crop circles. Irrigation farming supports a higher population than dryland wheat or ranching, which was a partial reason for the survival of the post office into 2025.



The post office opened on 1908-10-15 with D.M. Ross as the first postmaster. He built a standalone building near the railway station for the post office and telephone exchange [9]. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left.

Ross also had an insurance agency which took most of his time, so he sold the post office and building and on 1910-05-30 resigned as postmaster. S.E. Mayhood bought the works. His postal clerk was Miss Mayme L. Imeson. On 1912-02-02, Mayhood resigned as postmaster and sold out to W.J. Beaton. The new postmaster was Imeson, who served until 1919-01-27, when she left for marriage.

James Johnston was the next owner and postmaster, serving until his death on 1924-08-06. His widow Jane briefly operated the post office until 1926-08-12. Her successor was Thomas H. Kenna until 1937-06-04. During his tenure the post office burned down on 1930-02-02 and was replaced by a new building.

Harold Leslie Mulligan, who farmed with his brothers and parents, then became a long-serving postmaster until 1964-12-15. His postal clerk from 1939 until 1946 was Tiemen Stotyn, who became postmaster after Mulligan's retirement. Tiemen's wife Anna had served as postal clerk since 1946 for both Mulligan and her husband.

At this point Canada Post records cut off due to privacy laws but a local history book indicated that as of 1976 the Stotyns were still serving in office [9]. Hughes indicates that Anna became postmaster in her own right, date unknown, and was succeeded first by Garry Beatty and then, as of 1998, Barbara Beatty [6].

This photograph shows Betty Speirs at the Monarch post office in 1988.



The post office subsequently moved, date unknown, into a house, shown here in a 2013 Google Street View photo.



A selection of modern postmarks.



References.

1] National Library and Archives of Canada (downloaded 2025-03-05) Post offices and post masters.
<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.)

2] Karamitsamis, Aphrodite (1992) PLACE NAMES OF ALBERTA. VOLUME 2: SOUTHERN ALBERTA Published by University of Calgary Press. Pages 6, 13, 23 to 25, 71, 84, 87 to 88, 104

3] various authors (1970) CLEVERVILLE CHAMPION 1905 TO 1970. Published by Champion History Committee, Alberta. Pages 1 to 13, 57, 85 to 86, 180

4] various authors (1999) CHAMPION AND DISTRICT Published by Champion History Society, Alberta. Pages 42 to 45, 195 to 196, 383 to 384, 425

5] Voisey, Paul (1988) VULCAN: THE MAKING OF A PRAIRIE COMMUNITY Published by University of Toronto Press. Pages 54 to 74

6] Hughes, Neil (1998) ALBERTA POST OFFICES 1876-1998. Privately published by the author, Edmonton, Alberta

7] various authors (2010) BRIDGING THE YEARS Published by Carmangay and District History Book Committee, Alberta. Pages 1 to 7, 43, 66 to 67, 273, 356 to 360, 365

8] various authors (1972) WHEAT HEART OF THE WEST Published by Barons History Book Club, Alberta. Pages 17 to 20, 167, 311 to 312, 346, 387 to 388, 508 to 512, 517 to 519

9] various authors (1976) SONS OF WIND AND SOIL Published by Nobleford, Monarch History Book Club. Pages 10 to 30, 33 to 35, 146, 175, 235 to 236, 262 to 263, 279, 288 to 289, 343 to 344, 359, 387