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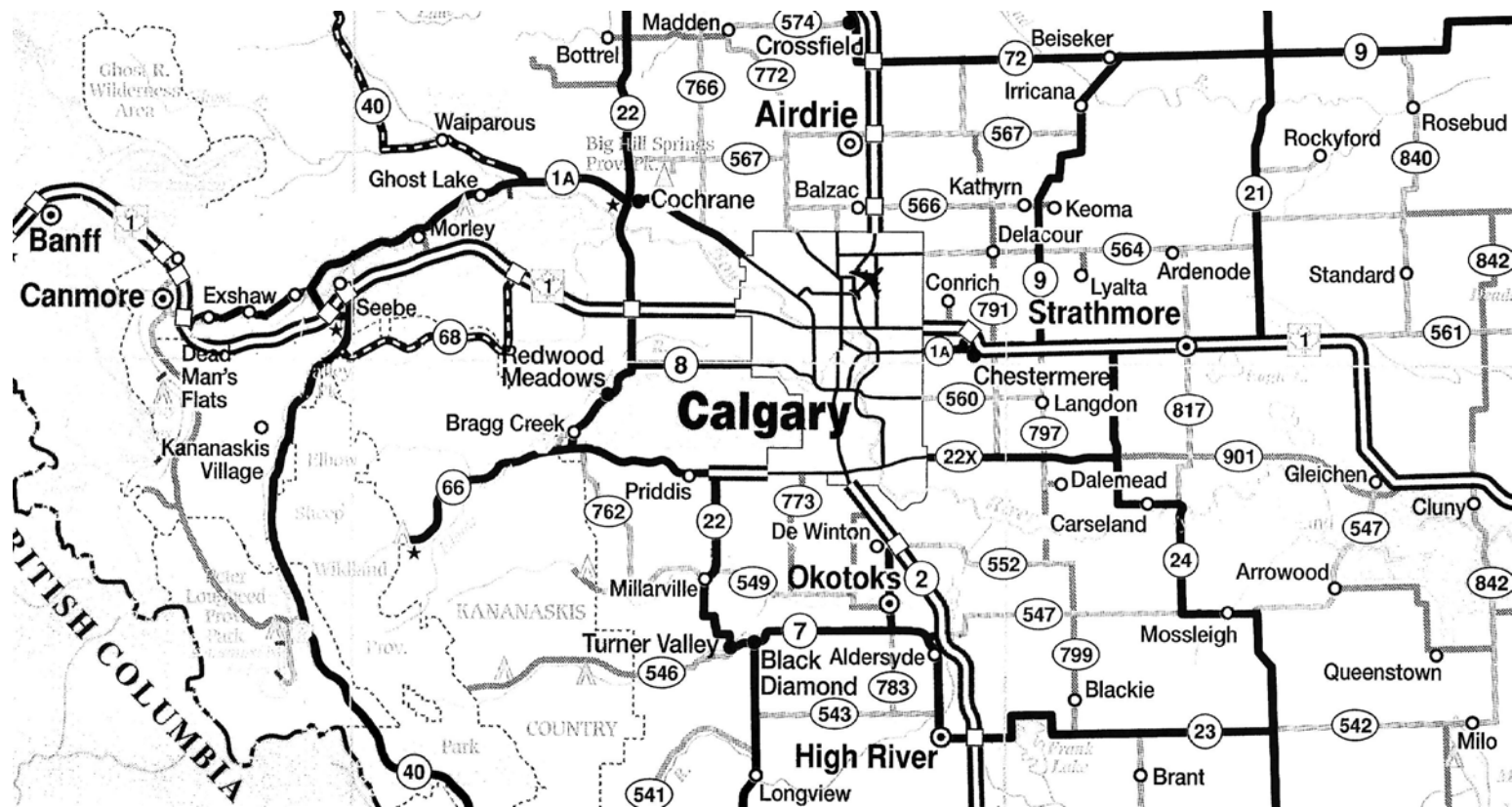
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POSTAL HISTORY OF ALBERTA: DISTRICTS SURROUNDING CALGARY TO THE SOUTH AND WEST

by Dale Speirs

Index Of Post Offices

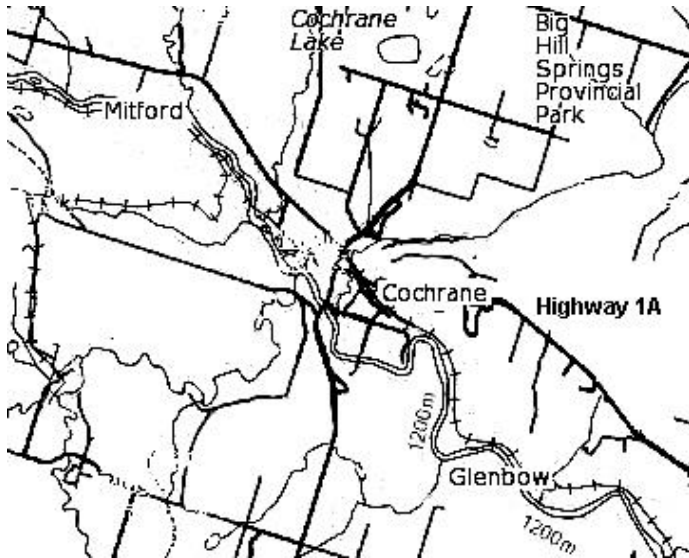
Aldersyde	76	Lineham	41
Black Diamond	43	Mazeppa	83
Blackie	85	Millarville	32
Bragg Creek	20	Mitford	11
Cochrane	4	Okotoks	52
Davisburg	67	Panima	69
De Winton	63	Pine Creek	68
Dinton	80	Priddis	28
Dunbow	65	Sandstone	69
Farrow	81	Turner Valley	47
Gladys	78		
Glenbow	12		
Glenview	80		
Grierson	68		
Harrisboro	67		
Hartell	50		
Herronton	84		
Jumping Pound	15		
Kew	37		



BOW VALLEY

Cochrane.

Cochrane, west of Calgary, is a town of 17,000 people circa 2015. It is located on the old Trans-Canada Highway, now called Highway 1A, about 25 km northwest of Calgary. It has a thriving lumber industry, but the main impetus in its growth is its proximity to the big city, a half-hour drive from Calgary. It is located on the north bank of the Bow River on a medium-sized piece of bottomlands, the only wide opening of the valley for several kilometres in either direction. Access to the flats is via a steep descent on Highway 1A from the plateau, known as Big Hill, although technically it is an escarpment, not a hill. Every other business in the town seems to be named Big Hill something-or-other.



Winter driving up or down the Big Hill can be a stomach-churning experience. Upstream and downstream of Cochrane, the valley narrows, with few bottomlands, and mostly narrow strips at the foot of cliffs that barely had room for the Canadian Pacific Railway trans-continental railroad to squeeze through. This is an important point because the narrow access was to cripple the growth of two hamlets, Mitford and Glenbow, that might have competed with Cochrane. Glenbow was located on the north bank of the Bow River downstream of Cochrane a few kilometres and existed only to quarry the sandstone cliffs. Mitford was on the south bank a few kilometres upstream of Cochrane and was a forlorn attempt at lumbering and brickworks. Mitford has vanished and only a small cemetery with a few graves remains on private land [1]. Glenbow has also vanished but the land was opened as a new provincial park in 2011.

The Sessional Papers of the House of Commons contain the Postmaster General's annual reports, which included detailed information on expenses and income of individual post offices, although some years only include major post offices [6]. Using the gross revenue of post offices as a proxy for the economic health of a town, one can make some interesting analyses. From figures for years in which all the Cochrane area post offices are represented (not that many of them unfortunately), plus Calgary for comparison, the following data are presented. These amounts are for the federal government's fiscal year, which ended in June or March depending on the year. What matters is not the absolute amount of gross revenue but the relative comparison.

Cochrane's post office opened only four years after Calgary's. Both were on the transcontinental railroad and the same river, but Calgary had the advantage that shortly after the CPR arrived in 1883, north and south railroad lines were built that made the city a railroad hub whereas Cochrane never had north-south lines. Thus, although starting conditions were the same, Calgary had the head start. For fiscal 1888, the first year that the two post offices can be compared, Calgary post office had gross revenues of \$6,777.38 and Cochrane had \$251.65. Cochrane's income is not listed again until 1895, by which time it had \$239.65 while Calgary was definitely a big city at \$10,893.04 in gross revenue. That year is the first time Mitford's post office income was listed, as \$236.00, indicating that it was a strong competitor with Cochrane. The next available listing is 1899, when Cochrane was up to \$385 but Mitford only did \$48 of postal business in its closing year.

1914 was the first year when all four of the post offices in the area are listed. Calgary was booming at \$308,874.22, while Cochrane was at \$1,604.65. Glenbow took in \$226.36, which indicated at least a viable post office, but the temporarily-revived Mitford only managed \$69.10 from the few remaining railroad and mine workers. For fiscal 1921, the final year of Glenbow, it was down to \$73.31, while Cochrane had slowly grown to \$2,549.11, and Mitford was long gone. Calgary was then at \$558,569.38.

Before proceeding further, one confusing aspect of the postal history of the Cochrane area must be clarified. There were two men named Cochrane actively involved in the history of the district, but they were not related to each other. One was a Quebecois and the other was an Englishman. The town of Cochrane was once part of the Cochrane ranch, one of the largest ranches in the British Empire, and which stretched up the Bow River valley into the Rocky Mountains. It was owned by Quebec Senator Matthew Cochrane (1823-1903). The townsite is named after the ranch, and thus indirectly after the Senator.

Mitford was founded by Tom Cochrane, son of a British admiral, and married to Lady Adela, daughter of the Earl of Stadbroke. The couple emigrated to Canada from England and first settled near High River before moving north to Mitford in 1885. They eventually returned to England in 1898, after the failure of Mitford.



The present-day town of Cochrane began as a settlement in 1881 at the east end of the Cochrane ranch. The village grew up around the ranch house headquarters. After the ranch was broken up and sold by Senator Cochrane, the village became independent. Cochrane was incorporated in 1903 and became a town in 1971. It is located at the intersection of Highway 1A, which runs west up the Bow River valley into the mountains, and Highway 22, which runs north-south through the foothills. The dominant features of the town are the large sawmills and lumber yards along the riverbank. New suburbs are sprawling outward as dormitory communities for people working in Calgary.

The Cochrane post office opened on 1887-07-01 with James Johnson as postmaster in his general store until he resigned on 1899-04-27. The CPR trans-continental railroad came through in 1883, so the post office always would have had good mail delivery service. The proof strike of its first postmark is shown at right. This was a territorial postmark since Alberta did not become a province until 1905. From 1899-06-01 to 1905-10-23, C.W. Fisher was postmaster and operated the general store. From 1909 to 1921 he was the riding member for the Alberta legislature, as a Liberal. He was succeeded as postmaster in 1905 by T.S. Fisher, who lasted until 1912-04-15, when he was dismissed for political partisanship. I haven't found anything about the dismissal in the local newspapers because that also happened to be the day that the Titanic sank, and much local news was spiked to make room for the bigger story. However, in the September 1911 election the federal government changed over from Liberal to Conservative, so presumably the family interest in politics cost them the postmaster job.



Andrew Chapman then took over as postmaster until 1949-08-31, when his wife Margaret briefly took over. He was a business associate of the Fishers and built their store for them, but somehow evaded the wrath of the Tories. He and his twin brother Robert built most of the early buildings in Cochrane. He was the first mayor of Cochrane and later served as a police magistrate [5]. On 1950-01-02 Cyril Camden took over and served until 1960-04-30. The Camden family were originally stonemasons from Scotland and helped build the Fisher store. Evelyn Isabelle Lambert then served briefly until Gordon Hall took over on 1960-09-01. Canada Post records are not available after this date but two subsequent postmasters were Cecile Tempany and Neana Walker [2]. The main post office is now in a separate building. The photo at left shows the post office as it was in 1989.

The photo on this page shows the current post office in 2011. Also shown are its pictorial postmarks, one of a pioneer woman feeding chickens and the other issued in 2003 for the centennial of the town's incorporation. Despite being past its due date, the centennial postmark is still being used as a regular business postmark. Shown on the next page is its use on a non-philatelic item by a postal clerk as part of ordinary business, not as a favour cancel.



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Sender must complete all non-shaded areas of this form fully, accurately and legibly, including the name and address of sender and addressee. Content details must be written in English or French. Failure to do so may result in delay, return or even seizure of the item.

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Pour faire une réclamation, veuillez communiquer avec le Service à la clientèle au 1 800 267-1177 ou au 1 888 550-6333. Pour plus d'information, consulter notre site Web à www.postescanada.ca

A retail postal outlet opened in Goulet's Pharmacy on 1990-01-09, located in central Cochrane at 305 - 1 St West. It changed hands and became a Super Drug Mart, which in turn was bought out by Rexall Drugs in 2009. The photo below, taken 2011, shows its latest incarnation as a retail outlet, with only the signage changed.





Goulart's Pharmacy



Rexall Drugs

Mitford.

When Thomas and Adela Cochrane moved in 1885 to what became Mitford, they set up a saw mill financed by her (Tom married into money), and the settlement was prosaically named Saw Mill. Lady Adela objected to this and re-named it Mitford after her niece's married surname. William Van Horne, the railroad baron who was vice-president of the CPR and thus held sway over the naming of railroad sidings, was a close friend of hers. Lady Adela wrote to him: “ ... *Saw Mill is not a pretty name. I think that if this place were called Mitford it would be much better.*” Van Horne agreed and thus the new name went through [3].

The location was squeezed between the Bow River and a cliff, and separated from the timber lands by Horse Creek Canyon. A spur line from the trans-continental railroad had to be built. The Cochranes decided to save money by using wooden rails instead of steel. The fatal mistake was that by the time they cut enough lumber for railroad ties, wooden rails, the sawmill building, a bridge across the Bow River, and all the other buildings and houses, there was little or no good-quality timber left to actually run the sawmill. A further problem was that the grade was so steep in and out of Mitford that the CPR was very unhappy about making stops in the hamlet to load cargo or pick up passengers. After stopping, the trains had to back up about a kilometre in order to gather enough speed to make it up the grades. The sawmill soon failed, so the Cochranes started up a brickworks, using clay brought in from 3 km north of the hamlet on the far side of the river. The village of Cochrane was starting to grow about this time, so there was a demand for bricks. The quality of the bricks was so poor that this industry went under after two summers of operation. Mitford began to fade and by 1898, the Cochranes gave up and returned to England [1].

The post office opened on 1889-05-01 with James Carstairs as the first postmaster, staying until 1890-05-16. He was succeeded by D.W. Crowley who resigned in 1891-12-30. By this time the hamlet was starting to die, so Tom Cochrane himself became postmaster. On 1895-04-01, Lady Adela took over until the Cochranes left town, and the post office was officially closed in 1899. It would be interesting to know if any other Canadian post office had titled nobility as a village postmaster.



Mitford took a long time dying. It struggled onward with a handful of families. A coal mine had opened up nearby and used the sawmill rail spur, but its product was inferior and difficult to dig out. It never really prospered. The CPR also maintained a section crew at Mitford for several years. The post office actually managed to re-open on 1913-06-15 with Margaret Ewing as postmistress. The proof strike of the postmark is shown at left. She didn't last long, giving up the position on 1913-11-15. Thomas Lumsden then took over until 1914-09-01, when he handed off to John Russell. The post office closed during his tenure on 1915-08-10, by which time Mitford was well and truly dead [2]. The church was moved to Cochrane, and all the other buildings salvaged for lumber or left to rot or burn. The only sign today that a settlement ever existed is a small cemetery with a few graves overgrown by vegetation.

Glenbow.

Glenbow was 8 km downstream of Cochrane on the north bank of the Bow River. It was so named because the only open area was a steep coulee or glen going down to the river. The mouth of this coulee was blocked by cliffs, so practical access to the hamlet was via the railroad on the riverbank. Its sole reason for existence was a sandstone quarry used to supply building material to nearby Calgary. An American millionaire named Chester de la Vergne saw the potential for sandstone blocks and in 1908 started up a one-industry village that at its brief peak had as many as 500 people, of whom 180 were single men living in a dormitory. The quarry operated around the clock. In 1913 the Calgary housing boom collapsed, and the quarry shut down for good just before World War One began. De la Vergne attempted to start a brickworks to compensate, but the market for bricks was equally depressed. There was also an attempt at raising sheep and purebred horses. The village slowly sank into oblivion and by 1920 was dead [1].

John Charyk, a section foreman with the CPR, was the first postmaster of Glenbow when the post office opened on 1908-09-01. The first postmark is shown at right as a proof strike. He resigned on 1909-03-28 to take up a business investment in Portage la Prairie.



Charyk's place was taken by L.H. Kennerly, who was a business partner of de la Vergne and an in-law. Kennerly gave up the position in 1911 when he moved to Calgary [4]. Cecil Edwards was postmaster from 1911-05-26 to 1918-03-11 and operated it out of his general store.



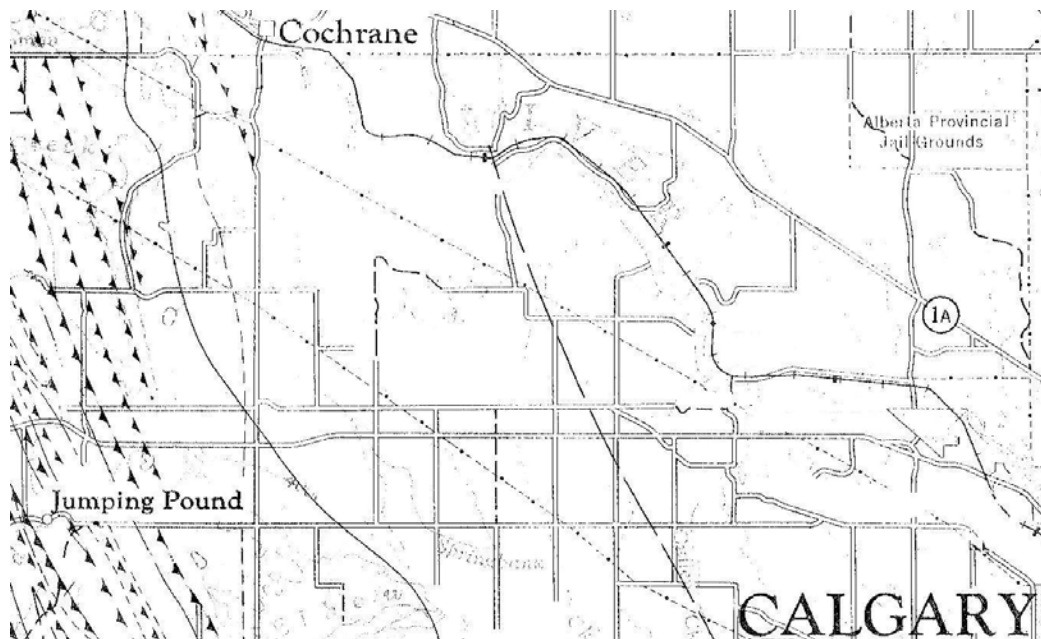
W.F. Potter was the final postmaster from 1918-06-16 to 1920-10-15, when the post office permanently closed [2]. The ruins of the general store/post office, seen at left, are in what is now Glenbow Provincial Park. Urban sprawl from both Cochrane and Calgary is headed towards the area, and one can anticipate that within the next couple of decades the park will be surrounded by suburbs on the glacial terraces overlooking the Bow River where the village once was.

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- 3] Klassen, H.K. (2002) EYE ON THE FUTURE: BUSINESS PEOPLE IN CALGARY AND THE BOW VALLEY, 1870 - 1900. Published by the University of Calgary Press. Pages 311 to 312.
- 4] CALGARY HERALD, various issues of this newspaper between 1909-01-20 and 1909-05-28
- 5] Russell, Karen, and Donald Luxton (2002) TOWN OF COCHRANE HERITAGE REGISTER. 125 pages.
- 6] Canadian Post Office (1889 to 1921) Report of the Postmaster General. SESSIONAL PAPERS OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA, Appendices C and D

Jumping Pound.

Jumpingpound Creek rises in the Rocky Mountain foothills about 50 km west of Calgary, and flows northeast until it empties into the Bow River at the town of Cochrane, about 30 km upstream from Calgary. The name translates the same from both the Nakoda (who live upstream of Cochrane) and the Siksika (who live downstream of Calgary) tribal names for the area, both of which refer to a bison pound at the junction of the creek and the river. This is a steep slope off which bison were stampeded by the tribes and butchered for food [1]. The post office named after the creek was not near the actual pound but upstream in the foothills. Shown below is a map of the area circa the 1940s.



JUMPING POND
AU 2
92
ALTA.

The area was settled by ranchers in the late 1800s and the first post office opened on 1892-07-01 by William W. Stuart [2]. This was a ranch house post office on the banks of the creek, and there was never any village by that name. Even though the creek was marked as Jumpingpond on the maps of the day, postal records such as the Postmaster-General's annual reports listed it as Jumping Pond, without the

"u". Other directories such as Henderson's also listed the name as Pond, not Pound [3].

The first postmark was Jumping Pond, as seen above left, which shows the proof strike. This does not appear to have been the fault of the Canadian Post Office, for the petition to establish a post office, written and signed by the ranchers, clearly shows the mis-spelling of Pond instead of Pound. Various contracts and documents also show the deliberate use of the Pond spelling. At right is an example, a petition to the PMG from the residents of Jumping Pound regarding the postmaster [4].

Stuart was an Englishman who came out west for his health, first travelling to Colorado, and then arriving in the Jumping Pound area in 1886 where his brother Duncan had established a ranch. They bought a herd of cattle in Manitoba and drove it 1,500 km to Jumping Pound, said to be the longest

Petition.

To the Hon Rodolphe Lemieux K.C.
Postmaster-General Ottawa

We, the undersigned residents of the
Jumping Pond, Springbank and Elbow
River Postal districts, respectfully ask
your official aid in the re-institution
for another term of year of our Valley
Stage service and Postmaster of
Jumping Pond, Mr. John Bateman.
He has carried out his mail contract
which expires next July, with every satis-
faction to us all. For civility, punctuality
and reliability he leaves nothing to be
desired.
Our wish for renewal of his service
for another term of year is sufficient
guarantee of our high appreciation
of his good qualities, we ask of
you to recognize these facts and
again give Mr. John Bateman the
mail contract between Calgary and
Jumping Pond -
Your valuable influence to gain our
desire in this matter will be greatly
appreciated by the entire district.

cattle drive in North American history. Duncan left for Ontario the next year, and William carried on at the ranch with hired help. He married in 1900 and later became a Homesteads Inspector for the federal government. Among other things, he successfully mediated a potential range war in southwestern Alberta between cattle ranchers and sheep herders, and settled their disputes without violence erupting as it did south of the border. Late in life he sold the ranch and returned to England, where in 1907 he died [4].



During his tenure, the post office kept the name of Jumping Pond but the postmark changed to Jumping Pound in 1903, seen at right. There don't seem to be any pioneer commentaries about this incorrect name, and presumably no one in the area felt it important enough to fuss about. Notwithstanding the new postmark, it wasn't until 1911 that the name was corrected in the Postmaster-General's annual reports [5]. My speculation is that because most of the homesteaders in the area were English or Irish, they may have twisted the name with their accents.

The Bateman Family.

On 1905-08-18, John Bateman bought the Jumping Pound ranch from Stuart. The title of postmaster came with it, and Bateman held that position for nearly four decades until 1942-01-01 when his death ended it. The post office was finally called Jumping Pound in both the official records and the postmark. Bateman was an Irishman who had come out west in 1887 and worked on various ranches in the foothills before getting his own homestead. When Stuart decided to go back to England, Bateman bought his ranch. The post office was in a corner of the house but in 1913 Bateman built a standalone post office and general store. The photo on the next page shows Bateman circa 1928, standing at the door of the post office [4].

John or his sons also carried the mails between Jumping Pound and Calgary, as well as private freight and passengers. Bachelor cowboys were the main passengers. They would go into town for a good time and would be falling-down drunk on the return trip, so Bateman had to keep an eye on them as well as the mail. In the early days, transportation was by horse and buggy but by World War One trucks were being used. The dirt roads were notorious mudholes in wet weather, and because they were below grade they drifted in with snow in winter. It was a common practice for mail couriers to avoid the roads altogether and short-cut through the pastures.



After John's death, his widow Jesse was briefly postmaster, but her daughter-in-law Margaret took over on 1942-03-07 until the post office closed on 1949-05-13. It was replaced by Calgary Rural Route #2. Margaret's husband Tom, son of Jesse and John, had been the mail courier during the days of the post office and after it closed he took over the rural route. The photo below shows the modern Jumping Pound ranch farmstead where the post office once was, seen in November 2011 (photo by the author).

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3] Henderson Directories Ltd. (1896) HENDERSON'S NORTHWEST TERRITORIES GAZETTEER AND DIRECTORY, page 41

4] various authors (1976) CHAPS AND CHINOOKS: A HISTORY WEST OF CALGARY. Published by Foothills Historical Society, Alberta. Volume 1, pages 127 to 137, 242 to 243, 256 to 259

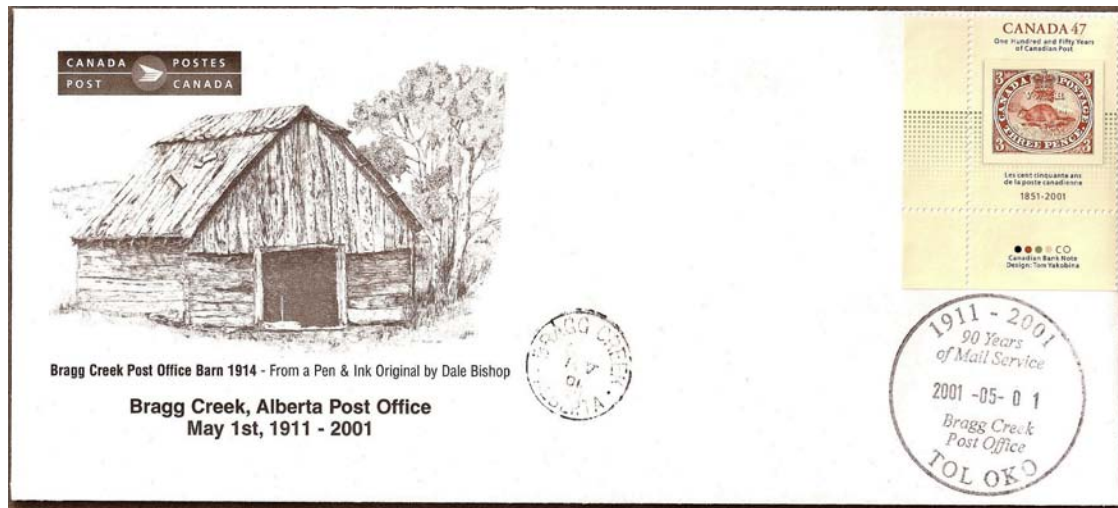
5] Canadian Post Office (1893 to 1923) Report of the Postmaster General. SESSIONAL PAPERS OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA, Appendices C and D



ELBOW RIVER VALLEY

Bragg Creek.

Bragg Creek is 50 km west of Calgary on the western edge of the Tsuu T'ina Reserve. Calgary grew up against the eastern side of the Reserve about the 1980s and is now growing along its north side towards Bragg Creek. Highway 8 goes along the north side of the Reserve in a straight run, and it is an easy half-hour drive out to Bragg Creek. As a consequence, the village has started to grow in recent years as a bedroom suburb of Calgary. It is nestled at the beginning of the Rocky Mountain foothills, immediately adjacent to the Kananaskis park system, and thus also gets a considerable amount of tourist traffic.



The Bragg Creek post office was established May 1, 1911, on the banks of the Elbow River and was named after an early settler, George Bragg [1]. In the early days it was located in a house but has since moved up in the world into better quarters. A drawing of that early post office is depicted on an event cover issued for the 90th anniversary in 2001, shown here.



For most of its history the mail was received via Jumping Pound. The post office has had the usual variety of postmarks but still uses one of the original CDS wands. (Note: posties call them wands, not hammers.) A split-circle postmark was proofed May 6, 1911, seen at left [2].

Allan Steinhart illustrated a June 21, 1932, cover from Bragg Creek which was cancelled with a Calgary emergency postmark [3]. He had no knowledge as to why this usage was so. I checked the Calgary newspapers of that month [4 to 6] and discovered that the post office had been washed away in a flood on June 2. The southern half of Alberta had received a record rainfall of 7.5 cm in a 24-hour period on June 1 and 2. The post office was directly on the bank of Bragg Creek and was evacuated at 10h00 the morning of June 2 as the waters rose. Eventually the entire townsite was under one metre of water and three bridges were washed out, one of which was just upstream from the post office.

A replacement bridge was not built for several weeks. As the townsite is on the far side of the creek from Calgary, the distribution point for the mails, there were considerable difficulties in maintaining service over an impassable waterway and muddy roads. Hence the Calgary post office would have taken over control. The photo at right shows the post office (in the left in the trees) in 1929; both buildings were washed away by the 1932 flood.



The list of postmasters is as below. There were two main families that had this position for much of Bragg Creek's history. The White family were Tories and had the post office whenever that party was in power. The Wilson-Fullerton clan were Grits and had first refusal when the Liberals were in office [7 and 8]. The community was small enough that this interchange led to hard feelings between families, especially during the Depression years when the postmastership meant a good cash income. By World War Two, this had died out and became just another civil service job.

Postmaster	Tenure	Postmaster	Tenure
Bill Graham	1911-05-01 to 1918-02-02	Eva Fullerton	1980 to 1984
John Wesley Glen	1918 limited term	Brenda Masse	1984-12 to 1985-03 acting
Harry (Hal) White	1918-04-06 to 1925 (deceased)	Jackie Cunningham	1985-03 to 1986-06 acting
Ida May White (wife)	1926 limited term	Bill Stabler	1985-06 to 1993-06
Mary Wilson	1927-01-20 to 1929-08-12	Jacquie Bishop	1993-06 et seq
Anne Fullerton (daughter of Mary Wilson)	1929-09-15 to 1931-03-06		
Ida May White	1932-06-30 to 1942-07-10		
various	1942 to 1947		
Ida May Sherman (remarried)	1947-10-09 to 1953-08-12		
Gerald McWilliam	1953-08-15 to 1955-04-01		
Gene Fullerton	1955-05-01 to 1961-11-17		
Jackie McLennan	1962-01-11 to 1980		

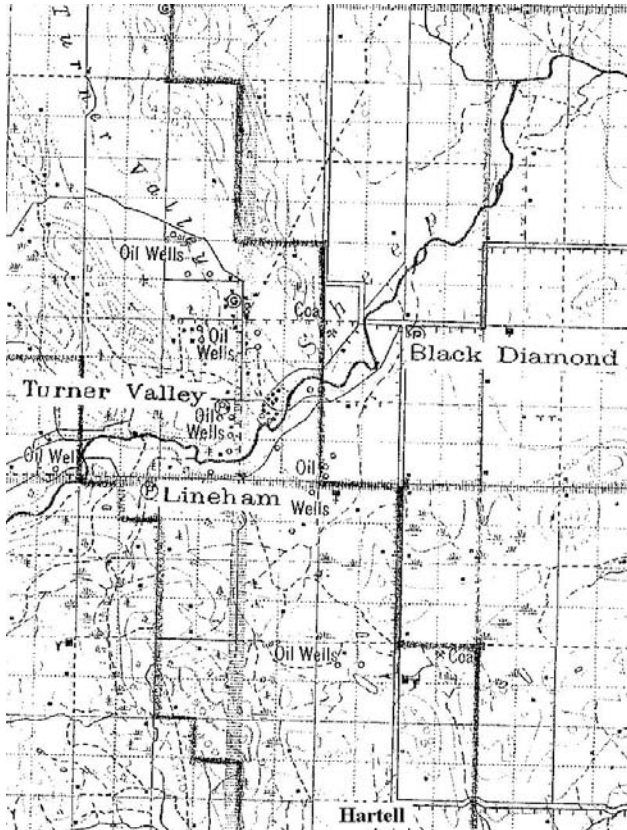
The photo at right shows the modern post office in 2007. During the great flood of June 2013 that devastated Calgary and southwestern Alberta, the waters of the Elbow River filled the parking lot that separates this building from the river. It just barely escaped being destroyed again.



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- 1] Hughes, Neil (1998) Alberta post offices 1876 - 1998. Published by the author, Edmonton, Alberta. Page 19.
- 2] Hughes, J. Paul (1989) Proof strikes of Canada. Volume 1: Split circle proof strikes of western Canada. Published by Robert A. Lee Philatelist, Kelowna, British Columbia. Page 7.
- 3] Steinhart, Allan (1978-08-21) What happened to Bragg Creek's handstamp? CANADIAN STAMP NEWS 3(5):20
- 4] Anonymous (1932-06-02) Bragg Creek residents forced to flee homes, much damage caused. CALGARY ALBERTAN, page 1
- 5] Anonymous (1932-06-02) Flood waters take bridges, Bragg Creek. CALGARY HERALD, page 11
- 6] Anonymous (1932-06-21) Decide on span at Bragg Creek. CALGARY ALBERTAN, page 3
- 7] National Archives of Canada (downloaded 2002-02-21) Post offices and postmasters. ARCHIVIANET, www.archives.ca
- 8] Sephton, Doug (2001-05-01) Bragg Creek Post Office 1911- 2001. Privately published brochure inserted into commemorative cover issued by the Bragg Creek post office.

SHEEP RIVER DRAINAGE

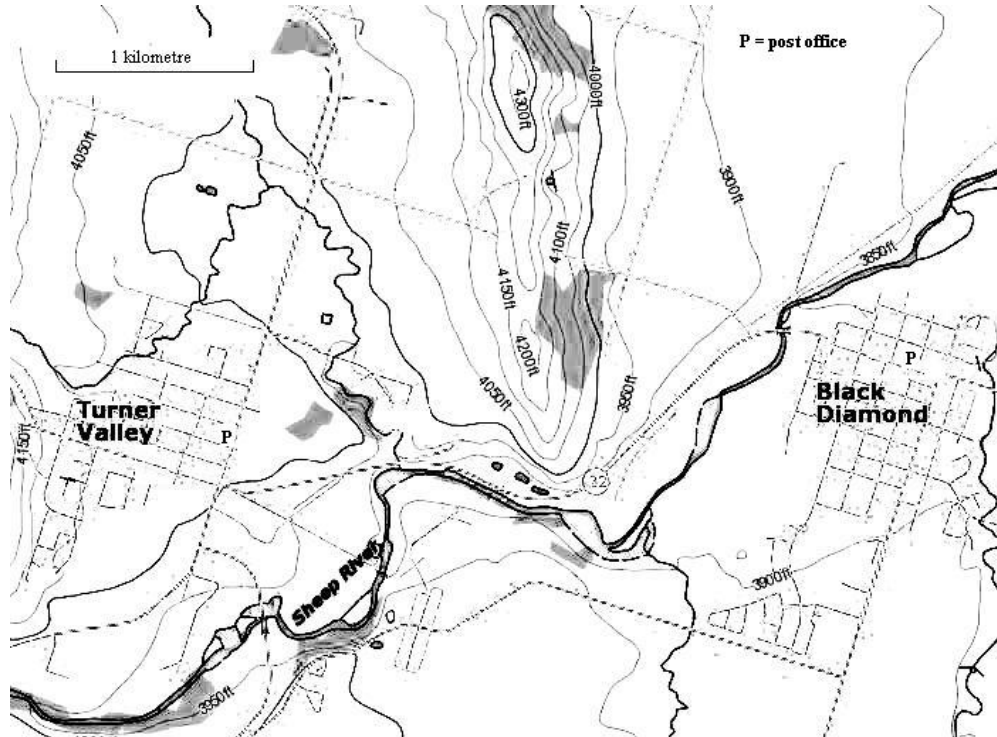


The Sheep River rises in the eastern Rockies and foothills southwest of Calgary, and flows east through Okotoks before eventually emptying into the Highwood River southeast of Calgary. The river's name refers to the Rocky Mountain sheep native to the area, not the domestic species.

The area between Okotoks and the mountains was colonized by homesteaders in the last two decades of the 1800s. At left is a 1914 topographical map of the area, with one modification by me, the addition of the hamlet of Hartell, which wasn't founded until 1930. Postal service was relatively late coming to the area, and with the exception of Lineham, the homesteaders had to rely on mail couriers for service from Okotoks, a day's ride to the east.

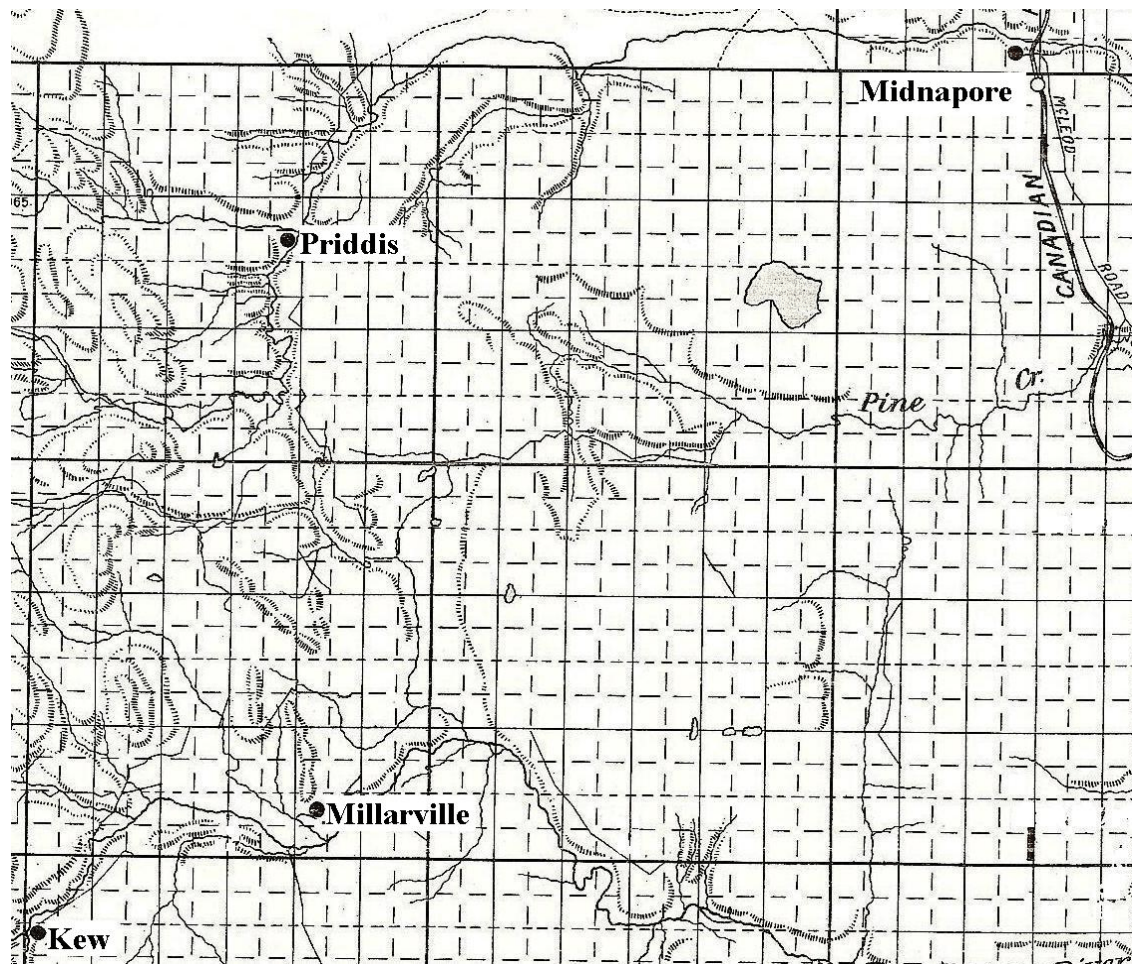
The aboriginal tribes and homesteaders were aware of numerous oil and natural gas seeps in the area, but it wasn't until early 1914 that the first wells were drilled. That oil boom was cut off a few months later by World War One, but revived between the two wars. The fields declined quickly and by 1947 the industry in that area was moribund. Some oil and gas production still exists and pumpjacks are a common sight, but the Sheep River district now depends on farming and tourism.

The major settlements are the twin municipalities of Turner Valley and Black Diamond, both on the banks of the Sheep River only three kilometres apart but kept geographically distinct by a ridge that extends down from the north to the river and separates them, shown on the map below. Both are within an hour's commute of Calgary, and many residents live here and commute to the big city. Acreages have spread throughout the area, dissecting the original cattle ranches.



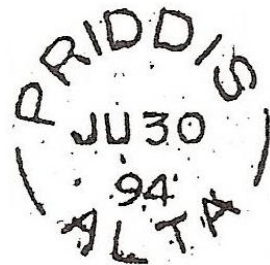
Millarville is at the north end of Turner Valley (the actual valley), and the town called Turner Valley is at the south end. North of Millarville is the village of Priddis, and just west of Millarville is the now-extinct post office of Kew. The mail route was from Midnapore, today a southern suburb of Calgary but at that time a hamlet far out into the country. Midnapore was on a railroad siding of the north-south main line in Alberta and was a mail distribution point for the surrounding villages and homesteads [1]. The map on the next page shows the district in 1914. Calgary in that year is off the map about 20 km due north of Midnapore but now the city limits are halfway to Pine Creek to the south and about one-quarter of the way west to Priddis.

Mail to Priddis and Millarville was a semi-weekly delivery on Wednesday and Saturday, via horse and wagon or sleigh. No railroad ever came out that way, so delivery was always dependent on the state of the roads [2]. Today the main and secondary roads are paved. The ranches are cut up into acreages for Calgary commuters and it is a quick 20-minute drive into the city. (What happens after one enters Calgary and is stuck in traffic jams is, of course, an entirely different matter.)



Priddis.

Charles Priddis opened the first post office on 1894-06-01 and was postmaster until 1897-08-27. At right is the proof strike of the first postmark. Priddis was born in England but his family emigrated to Ontario when he was a child. As a young man he went to Texas and worked as a cowboy, often driving cattle on the Chisholm Trail. He then drifted north where he worked as a wrangler for a CPR survey crew and first saw the foothills. After service with the Canadian Army in the Second Riel Rebellion of 1885, he returned to the foothills and put in a claim for a homestead. He settled near Whiskey Creek where the hamlet is today.



His neighbours evidently considered him a responsible man because they began leaving mail at his ranch house for distribution. Anyone going to Calgary or Midnapore would take outbound mail collected from the Priddis residence and on their return drop off any incoming mail. When Priddis formally began as postmaster a few years later, he would spread out the mail on a table in his kitchen where visitors could pick out their letters. The photo shows his ranch house in 1904, a log structure built in three stages [3].



Much of the townsite of the present-day village was land from his homestead; he donated building lots for a school, church, and community hall. He died in 1921 of skin cancer, a life-long bachelor [3].

Robert Gillespie took over from Priddis and moved the post office to his store, remaining as postmaster until 1900-03-12. Before and after his postmastership he was a mail courier for the district on various routes. After Gillespie, there were thirteen postmasters who came and went every two or three years until Vivian Shaw took over and put in a decade as postmaster. Shaw was an English immigrant who arrived as a young man and worked on local farms before establishing his own homestead. He bought the Priddis Trading Store in 1929 after his children were gone from home, making it difficult to farm by himself, and became postmaster on 1929-05-04. The post office was busy because of passing traffic, but this ended in 1932 when Highway 22 was completed, bypassing Priddis. The loss of business traffic, combined with the Great Depression, discouraged him and he retired on 1940-10-23.

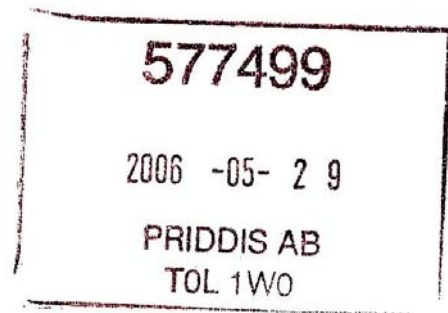
Shaw's newly-married daughter Frances Park and her husband took over the store and post office, although Shaw continued to live with them. Park served as postmaster until 1944-11-09. At the start of the war she was paid \$10.50 per month for handling the post office, with three mails a week. At the end of the war she was getting \$26 per month. As a representative of the federal government and as a store owner, she also handled ration coupons, especially for fuel. The latter did so well that the Parks changed their business into a fuel supply depot and operated it as such until 1964.

Park's successor was Leona Scholefield, who stayed as postmaster only until 1945-04-10, when the post office closed. It re-opened on 1946-07-02 with Maurice Weegar as postmaster. He set up his own general store and operated it until he sold it and ended his tenure as postmaster on 1950-08-03. The store began changing hands at regular intervals and there were five postmasters until Dorothy Swan took over on 1959-04-14 and stayed in the job until 1975-01-14. Janet Brogden then took over. Sometime during subsequent years the post office moved into a separate building and by 2011 was in an old schoolhouse, seen on the next page.



One unusual aspect was that instead of a red letter box for after-hours posting, there is a mail slot cut through the wall adjacent to the door. The photo below shows a close-up; it is very inconspicuous from even a few metres away. Below right is a current postmark of Priddis.

Priddis might have faded away into another ghost hamlet but for the growth of Calgary (population of 1.2 million in 2016). It is a reasonable drive from the city for commuters, so within the past couple of decades the population has stabilized with acreage owners. This has enabled the post office to hang on longer than one might expect.



Millarville.



The original settlers of Millarville were the Turner brothers, after whom the valley is named, but they had moved on by the time serious settlement began. Open-range ranching such as they did could not be carried on after homesteaders arrived and began fencing the land. Malcolm Millar was the first postmaster of the village that now bears his name when it opened in April 1892 in his general store. At left is the proof strike of the first postmark. Millar had previously been with the post office at Fort Walsh, Saskatchewan, while serving with the North West Mounted Police. He was not among the first homesteaders, but by virtue of his position he played a more conspicuous part in the area than a true history might otherwise allow.

Millar failed an audit by the postal inspectors, and in 1911 was successfully prosecuted by the Canadian Post Office in court for creative accounting in his post office [4]. As a postmaster, he received his stamps at a discount. Many companies in those days accepted sheets of stamps as payment because they had so much mail. Millar the postmaster paid the Canadian Post Office for the stamps at a discount, and then Millar the storekeeper used those stamps at full face value to pay his debts. His out-of-the way rural post office had gross revenues greater than many small towns elsewhere. After Millar was evicted as postmaster, the post office revenues suddenly dropped far down to a number more in keeping with the tiny size of the business.

In the first decade of the 1900s, the Canadian Post Office noticed some strange anomalies in the revenue of the Millarville post office. Gross revenues are shown in the table below, with the larger village of Midnapore for comparison [6].

Gross post office revenues of Millarville and Midnapore

Year	Millarville	Midnapore
1908	\$ 951.68	\$ 292.12
1909	1766.82	624.82
1910	2029.44	1122.82
1911	1367.27	1393.78
1912	685.25	1050.51
1913	482.40	1062.34

These figures were highly suspicious to the Post Office auditors. Millarville is off the beaten track in the Rocky Mountain foothills, while Midnapore straddles the main highway (Highway 2, also known as Macleod Trail) running south from Calgary to Fort Macleod and Lethbridge, thence to the American border. Highway 2 was and still is the major north-south trade route in Alberta. Although the first decade of the 1900s was a prosperous time as settlers poured in and land was taken up by homesteaders, it was not believable that Millarville was doing so much better than Midnapore.

The auditors quickly narrowed down the excess revenue to the sale of postage stamps. Rural postmasters were paid a commission on stamp sales, but Post Office regulations prohibited the use of stamps in bulk for payment of trade debts. This regulation came about because the majority of rural post offices were located in general stores. Wholesalers often accepted sheets of stamps as payment (they used them for their substantial mailing volumes), and individual stamps were used as small change with retail customers. By paying his debts in stamps purchased at face value from his post office, the storekeeper would pay the same dollars and cents whether in cash or as stamps. But, wearing his postmaster's hat, he would gain a commission on the sale of those stamps. The temptation was obvious. For small accounts paid in

stamps, where the volume did not distort the gross returns, the storekeeper/postmaster would usually get away with it. For large volumes that suddenly turned a village post office into a major stamp seller, this was waving a red flag at the auditors.

The auditors determined that the volume of mail going through Millarville did not match the sales in stamps. Millar countered that many settlers bought stamps at his store but mailed their letters when they went into market towns such as Midnapore or Calgary, because this gave faster service than the semi-weekly service at Millarville. The case went to court. The Post Office was able to show that \$200 to \$400 per year of the suspicious sales were bulk stamps paid to GF and J Galt Ltd, a Winnipeg wholesaler who supplied general stores such as Millar's. Unfortunately the Post Office was not able to prove the other bulk stamp payments. Consequently, they were only able to retrieve commissions paid out on the Galt account. In his summation, Justice Walsh remarked of Millar: *"The defendant on his examination for discovery said that he "could pretty near figure it out at home". I think that he not only could, but that he should have done so. And yet he came to trial with his mind a perfect blank on the subject."* [7].

As can be seen from the table above, after Millar left his postmastership, the gross revenue suddenly dropped. Presumably his replacement was a more honest man. It was not the general economic conditions that caused the drop, since the Midnapore postal revenues held steady.

Millar was replaced that year by W.H. King, who moved the post office into his store. King lived above the store and the post office was attached in the back. Unfortunately the Post Offices and Postmasters Website [1] does not have a listing for Millarville, and the local histories are vague because they relied on memory [2, 3]. The post office later changed hands to A.J. Twist, who had been postmaster elsewhere in the Turner Valley district, and then to Enoch Walton, who was also postmaster at nearby Kew. After Walton there was a steady turnover of postmasters every few years as five successive store owners came and went. Vera Laycraft became postmaster in March 1959 and stayed fifteen years. By this time there was daily mail dispatch. They sold the store in 1974 to Nick Cooke but continued as rural mail couriers. After Cooke left in 1978 for Vancouver, the post office has since gone through at least four more postmasters [5].

Millarville has also benefitted from Calgary's sprawl and has managed to hang on to its post office. The photo below, taken in 2011, looks to the southwest overtop Millarville. Out of sight on the far side of the foothill at middle left is where Kew once was.

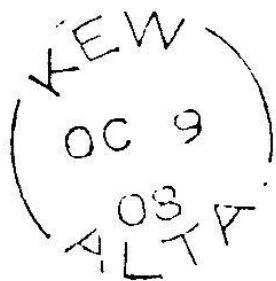


Below are shown the Millarville post office in 2011, and its postmark.



Kew.

Kew is not named after the famous botanical gardens in England but is a phonetic spelling of the letter Q, which was the cattle brand of local ranchers John and Katie Quirk. They were the founders of the city of High River, and later relocated to Kew. It was located in the foothills west of Millarville and barely qualified as a hamlet. Its reason for existence was simply that roads were terrible, there was never a railroad, and Three Point Creek, on whose banks it was located, was not navigable.



The first postmaster was George Bell who opened the post office in his ranch house on 1908-10-01. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at left. Bell sold the ranch and his tenure ended on 1912-02-16. The post office then moved into a general store owned by Harry Nadin, who was postmaster until 1916-04-11. The store changed hands at regular intervals and there were two postmasters in quick succession until Enoch Harold Walton took over on 1920-12-06 and stayed until his death on 1944-05-31. He also owned the Millarville store in a partnership.

After Walton the postmastership changed five times in six years as Kew went into terminal decline. The final postmaster was Lawrence H. Lockhead from 1951-11-13 until 1955-07-28 when the post office was permanently closed and became a rural route out of Millarville [1]. Lockhead moved the store and post office to his ranch east of Kew townsite when he bought the business. What with children coming along, a trucking business on the side, and operating a school bus, the Lockheads gave up the store and post office four years later.

Kew is now a small group of acreages with cluster box service (photo next page). Nothing remains of the original settlement and there is no signage to indicate the district. A local rancher told me that the old general store/post office was torn down in 2009. Millarville is only a few minute's drive away on a paved road so there is no further need for a post office at Kew.



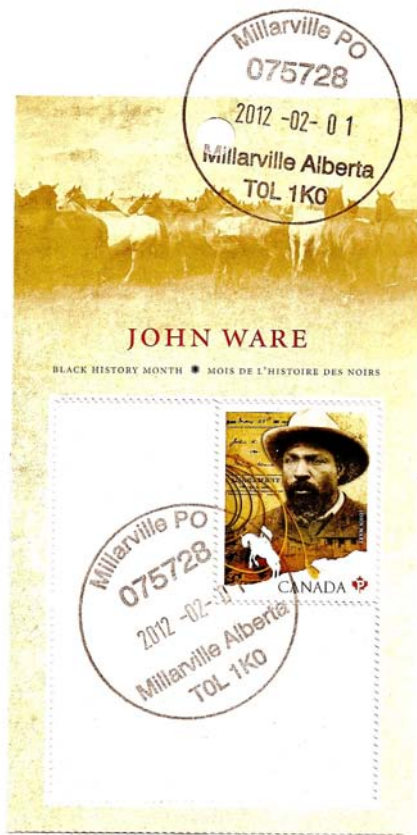
This is all that remains of Kew.

John Ware.

Just to the west of Kew was the cattle ranch of John Ware. He was an American ex-slave born in South Carolina. After the Civil War he moved to Texas and became a cowboy. He came to southern Alberta in 1882 with a cattle drive, and worked as a hired hand on ranches in the Calgary vicinity. In 1890, he took up a homestead west of Kew. Ware Creek drains into Three Point Creek just upstream. In 1900 he moved to a new ranch near Dinosaur Provincial Park out on the flatlands of southern Alberta, where he died in 1905 when his horse tripped and fell on top of him.

On 2012-02-01, Canada Post issued a stamp in his honour. The official Canada Post first-day cover shows him riding a bronco, as seen below. It was postmarked at Calgary for the reason that he competed a few times there in local rodeos (the Calgary Stampede did not exist in his day; it originated in 1912).





I drove out to Millarville on the day of issue and had a booklet pane cancelled with the Millarville postmark, shown at left. The postmaster said that the only celebration of the stamp there was an event for local schoolchildren. He only had a few booklets of the stamps and no FDCs had been sent to him. It seems obvious that Canada Post officials only thought of Ware in terms of Black History Month and as a rodeo contestant and completely ignored his importance to the history of ranching per se. As far as I know, the five FDCs I created are the only ones from Millarville.

References.

- 1] Library and Archives Canada (downloaded 2011-11-26) Post offices and postmasters. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/post-offices>
- 2] various authors (1979) FOOTHILLS ECHOES. Published by Millarville Historical Society. Pages 29, 33 to 35, 383
- 3] various authors (1975) OUR FOOTHILLS. Published by Millarville, Kew, Priddis, and Bragg Creek Historical Society, Alberta. Pages 39 to 40, 123, 151, 258 to 259, 342 to 343, 354 to 356, 383 to 384
- 4] Speirs, Dale (2006) Sharp practice in Millarville, Alberta. PHSC JOURNAL 127:42-44
- 5] Hughes, Neil (1998) ALBERTA POST OFFICES 1876 - 1998. Privately published by the author, Edmonton, Alberta. Page 110
- 6] Canada Post Office (1909 to 1913) Report of the Postmaster General for the year ended March 31, 19xx. SESSIONAL PAPERS #24, Appendix C
- 7] Walsh, J. (1914-12-19) Postmaster General v. Millar. ALBERTA SUPREME COURT, Docket #19 DLR 184

Lineham.

Lineham was the first post office in the area south of where the town of Turner Valley is now. It was named after prominent local citizen John Lineham, who came from one of the founding families of the Okotoks area and who owned properties in the foothills. He was the first legislator from the area, sitting in the Northwest Territories legislature at Regina, and was one of those pioneers who went everywhere and did everything [1]. Ironically, Lineham was never a postmaster in the village named after him, but he was the only postmaster of Oil City, Waterton National Park, which he founded in 1905 and which died a couple of years later when the oil wells ran dry.



The first postmaster of Lineham was Harold Grunner, who opened the post office on 1895-02-01 but only stayed a couple of months. Shown at left is the proof strike of its postmark.

His place was taken over by Harry Denning Sr on 1895-07-01, who was postmaster until his death on 1924-04-03. Denning operated the post office out of his ranch house [2]. Harry Bescoby was the mail courier who operated a stage coach between Okotoks and various points in the Sheep River drainage area, and brought the mail to Lineham. He was occasionally relieved by a third Harry, Denning's son, known as Young Harry, who operated pack horse trains. Bescoby didn't have an easy time of it, especially in an era when bridges were rare. On one occasion as he was crossing the Sheep River in flood, the wagon box floated loose from its chassis and he and the mail parted company with the horse team. The horses, habituated to the usual route, kept going, scrambled up on to riverbank, and trotted off on their way while Bescoby floated downstream. He eventually managed to catch some branches overhanging into the river and pulled himself ashore. It was a long walk back upriver to civilization.

The senior Denning's widow Emily became postmaster after his death until she resigned a couple of years later on 1926-06-13. The post office was temporarily closed and since nearby Turner Valley opened its post office the same year, the Canadian Post Office was not inclined to keep it going. The Lineham residents got up a petition and managed to get the Lineham post office re-opened on 1927-04-15, with Harry M. Taylor as postmaster. (Harry #4 if you're keeping track.)



He was a retired forest ranger who had been picking up the mail from Black Diamond and bringing it to Lineham. The revived post office was in his house a few kilometres further south than the old one. He would stop along the way at Young Harry's house, sort the mail with him, and leave a batch for the residents there.

What killed the Lineham post office was the construction of a bridge across the Sheep River, making Lineham a suburb of Turner Valley. It closed for good on 1931-04-30, helped off by the Great Depression. Today the area is rural acreages and small farms. The photo at left was taken in 2011, looking across from where Lineham used to be towards Turner Valley, seen spread out at the mouth of the valley. The Sheep River is hidden from view at this angle.

Black Diamond.

The town of Black Diamond got its name from the abundance of coal in the area. It was settled by homesteaders in the late 1800s and in 1907 opened its post office in the Arnold Brothers general store. Black Diamond is on the east side of a ridge, the west side of which is Turner Valley, and is slightly larger than its twin, with about 2,400 people circa 2011. In 1949, the town site was almost completely destroyed by fire. Because of the collapse of the oil boom earlier, there were numerous abandoned buildings in the surrounding countryside, which were moved into town to speed up re-building.



Above is a 2011 view looking northwest towards Black Diamond from Highway 22. Turner Valley is on the far side of the ridge.

Prior to the opening of the post office, mail was brought out from Okotoks to the Lineham post office, but along the way some of it was dropped off at an unofficial ranch house post office at the home of Steve and Frank Kaiser. The Black Diamond post office officially opened in the general store of the Arnold brothers, with Herbert as postmaster, on 1907-07-01. He held the position until 1914-07-15. In 1912, the Arnold brothers bought the Kaiser house and attached it to their store, using it exclusively as the post office. A.J. (Jack) Twist bought the store and post office in 1914, taking over where Herbert Arnold left off, but only stayed six months. He sold out to Frank Starley, who assumed the postmastership on 1915-07-31 and stayed until 1920-02-19.

The store then went through a series of owners and postmasters after that, changing hands every year or two. It wasn't until Eva Marie Ross took over on 1929-07-25 that there was any semblance of continuity. She stayed until her retirement on 1942-08-27. After her, there again was a regular turnover of postmasters, during which time the post office was separated from the store and moved into its own building. Below are two postmarks, which are still in use as of 2011.



The photo below shows the late Betty Speirs (the author's mother) standing in front of the old post office in 1989. Note the white sign hanging from the eaves; at bottom right is a close-up. This appears to be the original post office sign from back when. The words "Post Office" have almost completely worn away but the black diamond is still there.



The town has prospered with Calgary commuters and tourism, and the post office later moved into a strip mall on the main drag, where it occupies a large space as of 2011. This post office was flooded knee-deep during the great flood of June 2013 but managed to re-open after a week or so, although the interior required considerable repair.



Turner Valley.

The Scottish brothers James and Robert Turner were not the first homesteaders in a valley running south from the foothills to the Sheep River, but they had cattle grazing over so much of it that locals began referring to it as Turner's Valley. When the oil boom began, a town grew up at a convenient river ford, known today as Turner Valley, with a population of about 2,100 people circa 2011. It was unusual in one respect in that its main street only had buildings on one side because the other side was taken up by active oil wells.

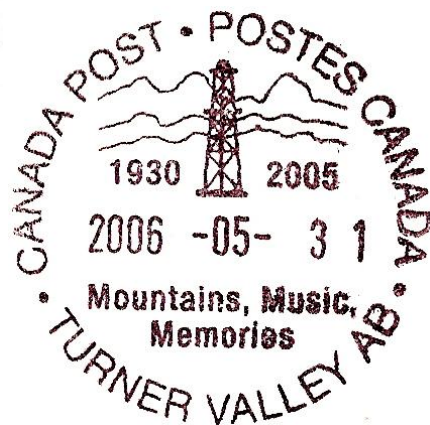
The post office was quite late in opening, not until 1926-06-01, when Thomas Fowler became the first postmaster. He and his wife Mabel had emigrated from England in 1911 and initially settled in Calgary, where he worked as a clerk in the post office. They eventually went into business for themselves with a general store in Turner Valley and would pick up the mail for others from nearby Black Diamond, which led to them adding the post office.

Prior to the Fowlers, residents got their mail from a courier, Amos Cameron, at the Lineham post office [1]. When the Turner Valley post office opened, the Canadian Post Office wanted Cameron to add the extra mileage onto his route with no increase in pay. Because there was no bridge between the two post offices at the time, this meant that Cameron would have to double back to Black Diamond and cross the river there. This he refused to do and he quit the job in a huff. The routes were then re-arranged with a new courier, but it meant that Lineham's time was coming soon.

Fowler was postmaster from 1926 until 1942-06-03 when he sold the store. Miss Dorothy Hill took over as acting postmaster until William Whilton Lowery became permanent postmaster on 1943-03-18. He died on 1954-07-18, and was succeeded by Mrs. Elizabeth Irene Mason, who stayed until her retirement on 1968-03-31. William Roderick Cameron, no relation to Amos, took over on 1968-04-01. He was followed by Allan Armstrong who took over on 1977-08-23.

I don't have dates for the subsequent succession of postmasters, but some of them were Isabel Lariviere, Elizabeth Gordon, and Brenda Gordon. Sometime during this succession the post office moved into its own building.

It is still using the old CDS hammer as of 2011, but also has some other postmarks, as seen below.



The Turner Valley post office has been in the same building since at least the 1980s. A 2011 view is shown below. Like Black Diamond, the town is prospering, and good paved roads everywhere have attracted Calgary commuters. Turner Valley has the only road entrance into Sheep River Provincial Park, and is crowded on summer weekends with tourists.



Hartell.

Hartell is exactly six sections south of Black Diamond, that is, six miles. Prior to the post office opening, residents had to go to Black Diamond to pick up their mail. It is named after the original homesteader F.J. Hartell, who, during the 1920s oil boom, offered a free lot to anyone who would establish a general store and post office on it. Edward Alexander Thompson agreed to do so, opening the post office on 1930-01-14 and running it until 1933-07-12. At right is the proof strike of the CDS postmark. The store was a one-room building at the time. Thompson was a bachelor who had his bed in one corner of the store. All the mail was general delivery, so he used to dump it in a pile and residents would sort through it for their letters. John Leslie Ancock took over until 1938-02-22, then Edward William Caspell until 1946-09-06.



At its peak, Hartell had about twenty houses, a refinery, and a half-dozen businesses, plus a nearby oil field camp. With the oil and natural gas dwindling rapidly in the post-WW2 period, it began its terminal decline.

In January 1944, during a winter without snow, a fire got started from the refinery and burned through half the hamlet. The general store/post office was spared but those who were burned out didn't bother rebuilding and moved away. There were five store owners/postmasters in the next few years until Harold Bevis Moon bought the store and became postmaster on 1951-04-01, presiding until his death on 1966-05-28. On 1958-12-18, a gasoline tanker semi-trailer that had just picked up a load from the refinery spun out on the icy road and plowed into the store/post office. The truck crashed through the wall hard enough that the truck driver was severely injured. The front wall was smashed in and considerable fuel leaked into the building. Nearby construction workers were brought in and the building quickly repaired. In 1960, the refinery closed and thus removed the last major employer in the area. The post office then only served local farmers and it was amazing that it still managed to survive another decade as Hartell faded away.

Moon's widow Mildred was the last postmaster and store operator, staying until the post office was closed on 1970-03-16, when it was replaced by cluster boxes as part of rural mail delivery [1]. Hartell today is but a five-minute drive on a paved highway from Black Diamond. The general store/post office is now a private residence with green cluster boxes in front of it, seen on the next page. There are no traffic signs out on the highway indicating Hartell's existence but there is a small inconspicuous sign on the building itself.



References.

1] Harris, J.M. (editor) (1979) IN THE LIGHT OF THE FLARES. Published by Sheep River Historical Society. Pages 4, 9, 78-79, 103, 111-112, 114, 201-202, 418-419

2] Library and Archives Canada (downloaded 2011-08-06) Post offices and postmasters. www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/post-offices

Okotoks.

Okotoks straddles the Sheep River, a half-hour's drive south of Calgary on Highway 2, the main north-south highway in Alberta. It is on the flatlands of the first steppe of the prairies descending from the Rockies. Whereas many villages in southern Alberta are slowly withering away, Okotoks has grown steadily. Not only is it on the main highway, but its ease of access to Calgary has made it popular with commuters who want to raise their families in a small town but still keep their jobs in the big city. In 1911 the population of Okotoks was 511, and remained stagnant for decades, slowly creeping up to 767 people by 1951. The oil boom of the late 1970s pushed the population to 3,847 by 1981, but it wasn't until the more recent oil boom that town growth took off. Okotoks in 2015 had about 25,000 inhabitants. The original post office is now supplemented by retail postal outlets, and the town's suburbs are sprawling across the prairie. Okotoks is trying to hold on to its pioneer character in the central old town, but by and large it resembles any suburb of any large Canadian city, with the same strip malls and big-box stores.

The name of Okotoks comes from the Siksika language and means "big rock". This refers to a giant monolith which was carried down from Jasper National Park on the continental ice sheet that covered Canada during the Pleistocene. The photo on the next page shows the Big Rock. For scale, note the pedestrian in the lower right corner of the photo. When the ice sheet withdrew, the rock was deposited on what is now the prairie, just west of the present-day town. As it settled, it cracked into two pieces. The town is located at an easy ford across the Sheep River. Native tribes traveling across the flatlands used the Okotoks glacial erratic as a navigational landmark on the featureless prairie. They would spot it from a distance and go east of the big rock and down to the river ford. The Big Rock is now a protected historical site on the western fringe of Okotoks.



The first trading post opened in 1874 at the river ford under the name of Sheep Creek. This stream later had its name upgraded to a river, probably because it flooded the townsite several times, since humans then and now refuse to understand why you should not build on a floodplain. The post office opened in 1884 with the name of Okotoks but had its name changed to Dewdney in 1891 after Sir Edgar Dewdney, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Northwest Territories. In 1897 the name reverted back to Okotoks [1], ostensibly because there was already a town of that name in British Columbia, but unofficially because the name change was not popular. The pioneer Lineham family, who homesteaded in the area, kept attempting to change the town name to their surname, but were never successful despite their important contributions to the town's history. They finally got a post office called Lineham elsewhere, unrelated to Okotoks



Prior to the arrival of the CPR transcontinental railroad at Calgary in August 1883, any mail not favour-carried would have arrived via Fort Benton, Montana, which was the main supply depot for what is now southern Alberta. The Mounties brought the mail up from Montana on their re-supply trips and distributed it along the way as a courtesy. Okotoks residents expecting mail from Back East would have therefore gotten it from the south. After the arrival of the CPR, supply lines in southern Alberta changed and mail began flowing in the opposite direction. There was no complete route between Calgary and Fort Macleod until July 1889, when mail contractors were hired. Mail service to the towns in between was poor until then [2].

J.A. McMillan opened up the Okotoks post office on 1884-02-01 in his general store [3]. Ill health forced his resignation in 1891 and Herbert Bowen took over, about the same time that the town name changed to Dewdney. The railroad, however, kept the name Okotoks, and it must have been confusing for travelers.



John Paterson took over the post office on 1892-06-01 and ran it until his death on 1909-05-02. He was succeeded by his son George, who held the post until his death on 1942-04-16. The photo shows the post office during his time. It seems to have been a busy place, as it had no fewer than three duplex cancels proofed, seen at right.





George Paterson was Okotok's second mayor, elected in 1906. He helped organize the Alberta chapter of the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, and served on its national executive.

During the 1918 influenza epidemic, the Okotoks Board of Health banned children under the age of sixteen from entering the post office, and ruled that not more than ten people at a time could be in the building [4].

After George Paterson's death, Miss Kathleen Marie Holmes was a placeholder for a few months until Charles Wellington Stagg took over on 1943-01-31 and lasted fifteen years to his retirement on 1958-01-05.



Herbert Stephenson took over until 1979. In 1969, the post office moved into a new purpose-built building. The main reason for expansion was the need for more and more box numbers, since Okotoks did not have letter carrier service. The photo at left shows that building, photographed in 1988.

The standard machine cancel it used and a cash receipt with the main post office's POCON cancel are shown below.



94.6.6.
#61

MAIL POSTE
Canada Post Corporation/Société canadienne des postes

Receipt Reçu

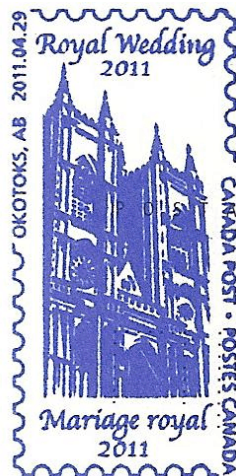
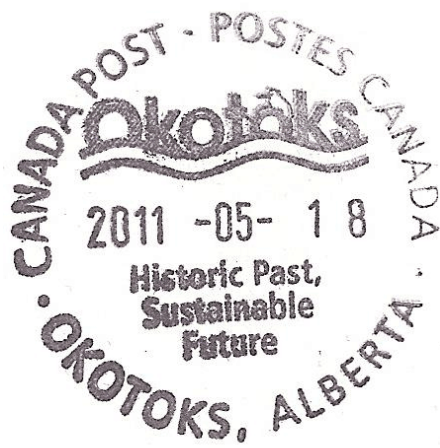
Customer Name _____ Nom du client _____

Date Stamp	Timbre à date	Received in payment for Postage Supplies	Reçu en paiement d'articles d'affranchissement
<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px; transform: rotate(-2deg);"> 577030 JUN 4 1994 OKOTOKS, AB TOL 170 </div>	Sub Total	Sous-total	\$ 10.75
	GST	TPS	\$ 25
	PST	TVP	\$
	Total Amount	Montant Total	\$ 11.50
	Signature _____		

41-016-020 (92-02)

By the end of Stephenson's tenure, Okotoks was starting to grow as a dormitory community of Calgary. The main post office relocated and expanded into bigger quarters in 1999. This photo shows the new facility seen in 2011, located in a strip mall across the street from the previous building.



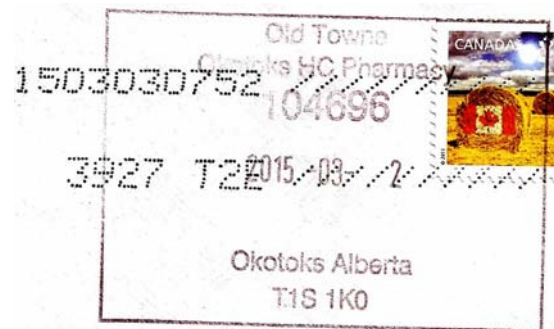


At left are two pictorial postmarks in use at the main post office in May 2011.



As with many larger towns and cities, retail postal outlets (RePOs) have been established. There was a RePO in a Neighbours convenience store that opened in 1990 but closed several years later; the postmark is shown at right.

As of 2011, two retail outlets share the workload with the main post office, one in a Rexall drug store and the other in a Sobeys supermarket. In 2015, a third RePO opened in an HC Pharmacy; the postmark is at lower right.

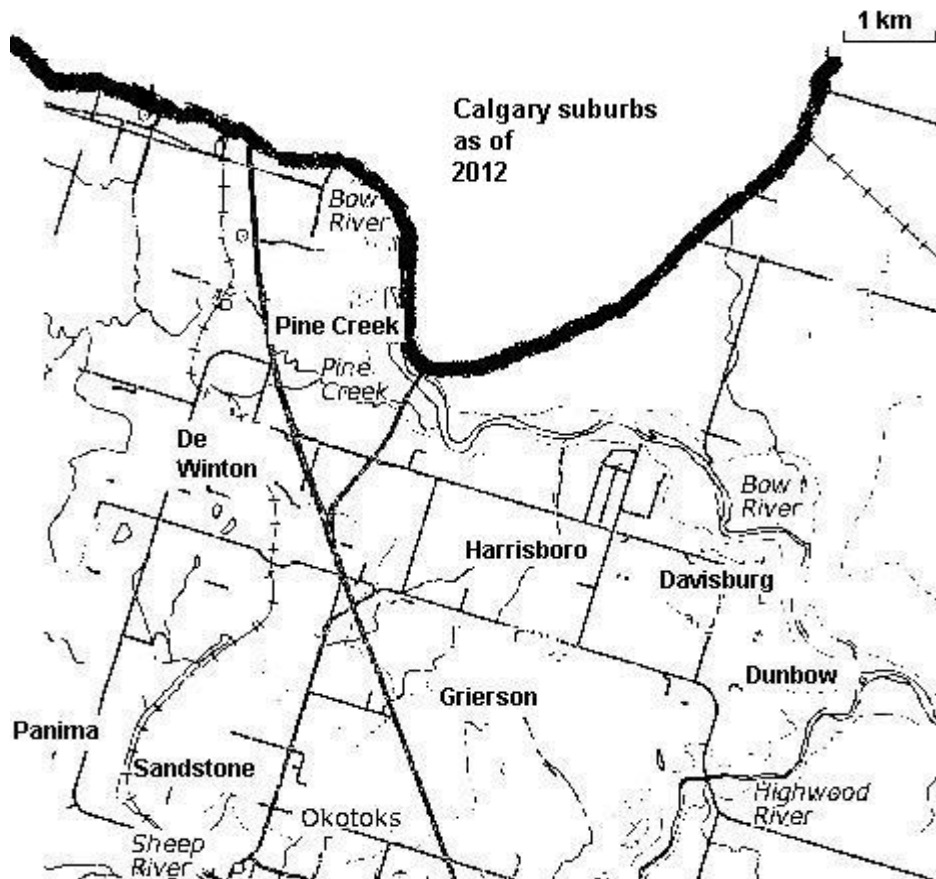


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- 2] House of Commons (1891-08-03) Mails From Calgary To Fort Macleod. CANADA DEBATES OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, pages 3255 to 3257
- 3] Library and Archives Canada (downloaded 2011-05-17) Post offices and postmasters. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/post-offices>
- 4] no author (1983) A CENTURY OF MEMORIES. Published by the Okotoks and District Historical Society, Alberta. Pages 6 and 8

De Winton And Area.

The De Winton area of Alberta is just south of Calgary, between the big city and the town of Okotoks. The area is low rolling hills, with treed areas along the many streams, coulees, and sloughs, and is a transitional zone between the Rocky Mountain foothills and the prairie steppes. The north and east sides of the district are bounded by the Bow River, and the south side by the Sheep and Highwood Rivers. Today it is dissected into acreages and gated rural communities for those who want to live in the country but commute to work in Calgary a short drive north up Highway 2.



The southernmost suburbs of Calgary are now within sight of what used to be isolated ranch house post offices back when. It is probable that within the next couple of decades the De Winton area will be swallowed up by the city. Many post offices were established in the area but all failed. De Winton was the most promising of these settlements but it peaked before World War One and dwindled away. Another location was Sandstone, a single-industry village depending on a quarry and which died when the industry did [1]. The rest were ranch house post offices, established in the corner of someone's kitchen or living room as a convenience in the days when roads were muddy tracks and transportation was difficult [2]. The map on the previous page shows the distribution of the ranch house post offices. Today, good gravel roads crisscross the area, rural free delivery serves the residents, and a post office is within twenty minutes drive in either Okotoks to the south or Calgary to the north.

De Winton.

De Winton was founded in 1892 as a railroad siding when the CPR extended itself south from Calgary. It was named after Col. Francis De Winton, who was secretary to the Governor-General of Canada at the time. The village initially grew quite well, with several businesses, a church, a stopping place for travelers, and rail-related supply companies. The growth peaked just before World War One, and the advent of good gravel roads finished it off. Today it is a hamlet with a dozen houses and a small general store, surrounded by acreages whose owners work in Calgary or Okotoks.

The post office opened on 1894-04-01 with William Somerville as the first postmaster. A proof strike of the postmark is shown here. Pioneer reports say that he left for the gold rush and mysteriously vanished in Yukon in 1898, never to be seen again. Since he resigned his position in 1895, the year before gold was discovered in Yukon, it must have been the British Columbia gold fields that he initially went to, and from there to Yukon. His place as De Winton postmaster was taken over by Hugh McNeill on 1895-08-01, a Scotsman who had arrived in the district with his family in 1891 to homestead.

McNeill also carried the mails to the ranch house post offices to the east and south. This was an extensive and time-consuming task, so his young daughter Lena actually ran the post office even though he was postmaster in name. His other children John, Jim, and Mary helped with



the mail route, either accompanying him or taking his place completely when he was busy elsewhere. The family operated the post office until 1911-07-03, when they sold out and moved to Vancouver.

Alonzo De Mings then took over as postmaster and stayed in the position until 1926-03-03. The family operated a stopping place called Minto House. De Mings was a Portugese fisherman, and how he wound up on the prairies is a mystery. His daughter Myrtle was the actual postmaster, while he held the title in name only. Danial McNab carried the mails from De Winton to the ranch house post offices to the east and southeast, and had this route from 1912 to 1915. In January 1915, after an especially harrowing mail route trip through a blizzard during which he suffered frostbite, he arrived home to find that his pregnant wife Margaret had gone into labour and died during childbirth, leaving him with six orphaned children. He had to adopt them out and a few months later enlisted in the army. Alonzo De Mings took over the route, which was a round trip of 70 km. He was not always able to finish the trip in one day, and often had to camp out in some farmhouse. His horse-drawn mail van used wheels in the summer and skis in the winter. It was fully enclosed, a rarity in those days, and had a coal-burning stove to keep warm. The mail route was done three times per week. In the 1920s, his son-in-law Steve Williams took over the mail route. De Mings finally retired on 1926-03-03.

Robert Voss Smith then took over the position and held it until his retirement on 1957-04-30. He was a bachelor Scotsman who had come over to Canada in the early 1900s, served in World War One, and then settled down in the De Winton area. "Postie Smith" was his nickname, and he was notorious as a fast but not necessarily safe driver. An anecdote about him is that one day he was late getting to the De Winton station to pick up the mail bags. The train was pulling out of the station just as he arrived, so Smith didn't stop but tried to race the train to Okotoks in order to retrieve the mails. Unfortunately he tangled with a Greyhound bus and demolished his car. To add insult to injury, he subsequently learned that the stationmaster had taken the mail bags off for him.

Next up was Barsby Martin who was postmaster until 1965-08-09. He was Manitoba-born and when a small boy, his family came to Alberta and homesteaded where the Calgary International Airport is today. He and his wife Agnes later got their own homestead in the Davisburg area, but in 1921 bought the general store in De Winton. They didn't take over the post office until Smith retired in 1957. Being a bachelor, Smith could live on only the post office proceeds, but the Martins had to run it with their store. The Martin family, with six children, lived above the store [1]. Mrs. Cornelia Irvine was postmaster from 1965 until the De Winton post office closed on 1991-02-13.

Dunbow.

The first ranch house post office to open in the area was located on the Dunbow Ranch, east of De Winton and Okotoks. The ranch straddles the Highwood River where it flows into the Bow River, as seen in 2011 on the next page. The first and only postmaster was the ranch owner, a Scotsman named Robert A. Begg. Adjacent to the farmstead was an Indian residential school and a North West Mounted Police detachment. The latter was established to keep the native tribes from trying to take back their children, who had been forcibly removed from several different Reserves by the missionaries in order to assimilate them. The Dunbow post office was occasionally subject to tense situations by gathering tribesmen. Corporal Todd (first name unknown) initially lived with the Begg family until 1895 and rode out on patrol each day [3].

The post office operated from 1885-07-01 to 1898-06-30. The mail came directly from Calgary, not Okotoks or other nearer points on the rail line that might be more logical. This was because Begg would take butter and cream from the ranch into the city once a week and bring the mail back with him. This post office was at the extreme east end of the De Winton area, and was eventually displaced by the Davisburg post office. The Beggs later left the ranch and moved into the city. Today the area is cut up into acreages, and the river junction is a popular swimming hole with Calgarians and Okotokians. The farmstead is still occupied but newer buildings have replaced the tumbledown shacks of the old ranch.



Davisburg.



Davisburg was a couple of kilometres north of Dunbow. It was settled in 1888 and was first named Glenbeg because it was in a coulee or glen originally settled by the Begg family. The name was changed to Davisburg before the post office opened, after D. W. Davis, the first member of the House of Commons from Alberta [4]. Thomas H. Andrews was the first postmaster from 1888-07-01 to his resignation on 1894-11-13. Even though it was closer to Calgary than Dunbow, the mail for it came from Okotoks. Its proof strike postmark is shown at left.

John Nash was the next postmaster. He was an Englishman who arrived in Alberta in 1893 and settled in the area. He stayed as postmaster until 1896-06-12. His brother Tom was a mail courier for the district. Mrs. Mary Stewart took over until 1905-12-30. The final postmaster was C.K.K. Patterson until 1916-09-30, at which point rural mail delivery routes took over.

Harrisboro.

This ranch house post office was halfway between De Winton and Davisburg. Thomas Harris was the only postmaster, and it operated from 1890-06-01 to 1895-05-31. I have not found anything about him in local histories, and because he has a common name an Internet search is useless. The postmark proof strike is shown at right.



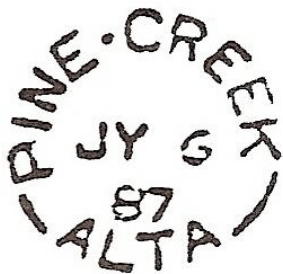
Grierson.

The first postmaster was James Grierson, and it was located in his ranch house a few kilometres south of Harrisboro. Grierson held his position from 1890-07-01 to 1892-11-29, when John Currie took over and moved the post office to his house. The proof strike postmark is shown at right. Currie renamed the post office as Rosebud on 1896-04-01, which should not be confused with an existing Alberta village of that name today about 100 km to the northeast. He lasted until 1898-03-12. James resumed the job until the post office closed on 1908-10-08. He reversed the post office name back to his, the change becoming official on 1898-12-01.



Pine Creek.

Pine Creek is right on the southern edge of Calgary. The ranch house post office on the creek opened on 1887-04-01 with Saunders Watson as postmaster. He set up a stopping place for travelers on what is now Highway 2 (also known as Macleod Trail) and went into partnership with John Owens. On 1889-06-01, Owens took over the postmastership and included it within his general store. The post office closed on 1896-05-13. The original ranch house property is now obscured by new suburbs, acreages, and gated communities. It has already been partially annexed by the city, which is building a massive sewer treatment plant just upstream from where the creek flows into the Bow River.



Postmark collectors should not confuse this post office with a subsequent Pine Creek in northern Alberta that operated from 1907 to 1920. The proof strike postmark at left is that of the southern Pine Creek.

Panima.



Panima was west of Highway 2 and the CPR railroad, and southwest of De Winton. The name is said to be a native word for the area, but I have not been able to determine what it meant or what the language was. The post office opened on 1894-03-01 and closed on 1903-03-28. The proof strike postmark is shown at left. It only had one postmaster, Donald Gray, who operated it out of his house. One of Gray's children remarked that the post office served a lot of English remittance men who were usually drunk when they came to get their mail [3]. Remittance men were dissolute sons of British nobility who left their country for their country's sake and were paid to stay away. They lived on money orders mailed to them by their fathers, who had futile hopes that the new lands would make proper men out of them. The Panima post office also regularly received shipments of plum puddings sent to the remittance men by family back home who knew such delicacies were not readily available in the wilds of the colonies.

Sandstone.

Sandstone was a one-industry railroad siding halfway between De Winton and Okotoks. Despite its name, it lived off a clay quarry and brickworks. Its most successful year was 1912, at the height of Calgary's building boom. This is correlated by the post office's gross revenues, which reached its lifetime high of \$329.81 in the fiscal year 1911. Because Sandstone was on the CPR main line, it had good service, with four passenger trains daily, plus freight trains. World War One shut the brickworks but they revived in 1919. The village had numerous homes, a general store, and the railroad station. Children went to school in nearby Panima, which was only a few kilometres away. In the early 1920s, the brickworks began to suffer from competition and high coal costs. In 1923, the workers went on strike for higher wages. The investors who owned the brickworks decided to cut their losses, shut down the kilns, and the striking workers found themselves unemployed [5]. The village died quickly and the post office closed in July 1924. Today it is a farmstead at the end of a long single-lane gravel road, with only the overgrown quarry and one isolated chimney to prove the village was ever there. Even the railroad siding was taken out. The photo on the next page, taken by the author in 2011, shows what is left of Sandstone. Okotoks is expanding towards Sandstone and there are a number of acreages in the area already.



The postmasters were company employees from the brickworks or the general store owner, and the post office moved back and forth between the two. George W. Dellar was the first postmaster, from 1907-03-01 to 1908-08-04. Miss Alice Prendergast took over on 1909-09-29, then Frank C. Tuffin from 1910-10-01, Robert Eccles as of 1912-04-01, Mrs. A.E. Hamlin from 1913-03-11, and Henry Bishop as of 1914-07-01. The final postmaster was Ervin Hirst from 1917-03-31 to 1924-07-09. He was the brickworks supervisor who had to deal with the strikers, and the unpleasant consequences.

Comparison Of Post Offices.

Taking 1895 as a year when most of the De Winton area post offices were functioning, statistics on the gross revenue of these post offices allow one to obtain an idea of how much business they handled and their relative importance [6]. Davisburg, Grierson, and Pine Creek had gross revenues for the fiscal year 1895 of \$26.58, \$33.43, and \$35.50 respectively, indicating they were all roughly equal and doing reasonably well for ranch house post offices. De Winton had \$13.54 in business in its partial first year of business, a low amount considering that it was a railroad siding on a main line. Harrisboro, which closed that year, did only about \$10 worth of business, while Dunbow, at the extreme eastern end of settlement in the area, had \$3 to report. For comparison, Okotoks did \$234 business on the main line two stops south of De Winton. The first stop south of De Winton was Sandstone but which didn't yet have a post office. Nearby Panima, off the railroad but only a short buggy ride west of Sandstone, grossed \$18.79. The Calgary post office grossed \$10,749.64 that year.

In 1908, De Winton, Davisburg, Grierson, and Sandstone were the only open post offices. Sandstone took over Panima's business, and did \$134.96, most of which was undoubtedly because of the brickworks. Davisburg did \$100 of business that year compared to Grierson at \$32.25, which suggests that the former had a larger catchment area for customers. De Winton did \$243.86 of business, which seems low considering that it was a village, not a ranch house. Looking at the map in of the area shows that its only catchment area would be Pine Creek, since anyone to the east would be just as likely to travel to the Davisburg or Grierson post offices. The construction of good roads slowly finished off all the post offices one by one. Today the area is an easy drive from post offices in Calgary and Okotoks.

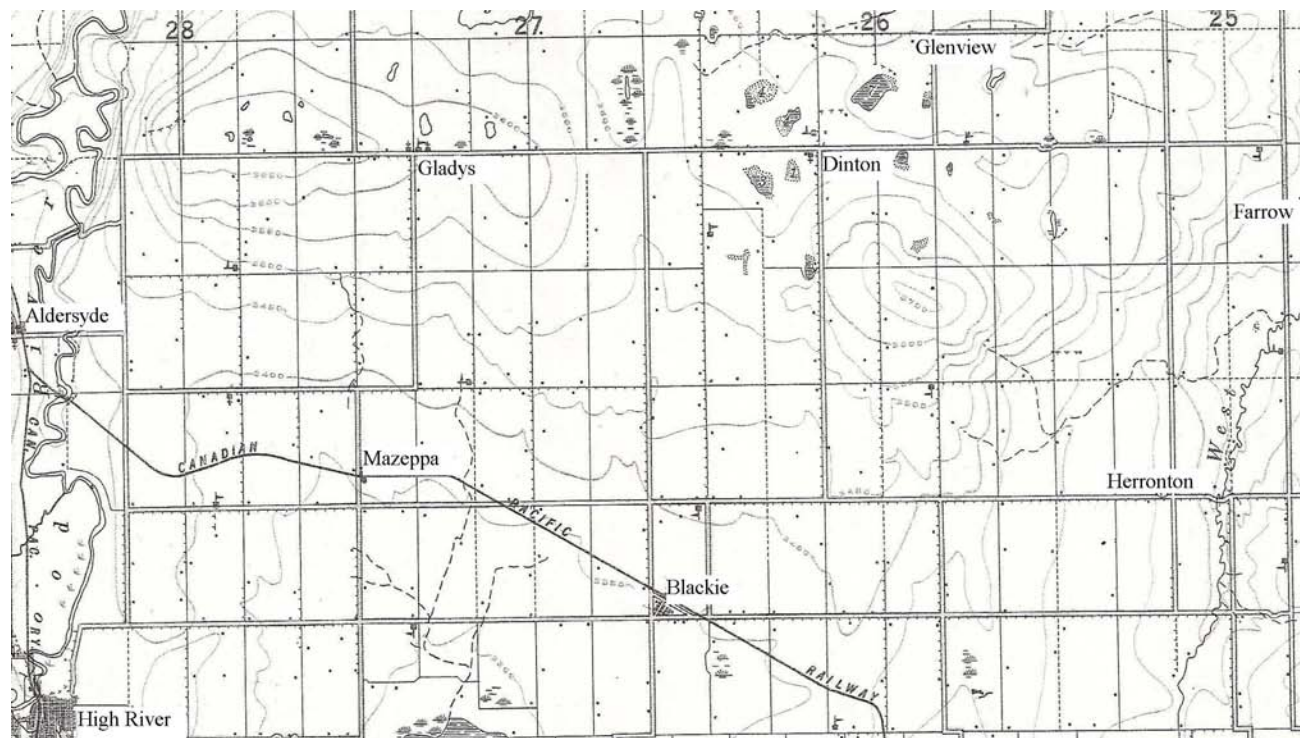
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- 2] Library and Archives Canada (downloaded 2011-05-31) Post offices and postmasters. www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/post-offices
- 3] various authors (1960) LEAVES FROM THE MEDICINE TREE. Published by High River Pioneers and Old Timers Association. Pages 230-231, 316-317, 380.
- 4] Groeneveld, M. (1984-05-02) Community spirit builds Davisburg. THE WESTERN WHEEL (community newspaper of Okotoks)
- 5] various authors (1983) A CENTURY OF MEMORIES. Published by Okotoks and District Historical Society. Pages 17 and 18
- 6] Canadian Post Office (1885 to 1923) Report of the Postmaster General. SESSIONAL PAPERS OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA, Appendices C and D

Gladys Ridge.

Approximately 50 km southeast of Calgary is the Gladys Ridge district. This area is the height of the land between two drainage basins and is a long hill trending east-west, with a very wide plateau on top. The ridge is high enough that on a clear day it is possible to see the skyscrapers of downtown Calgary from its northwestern corner. There are no streams draining the plateau, so the area has numerous sloughs and bogs. It is good farmland and was settled early. The district is just far enough away from Calgary that there are few acreages, and the land is still mostly working ranches and farms.

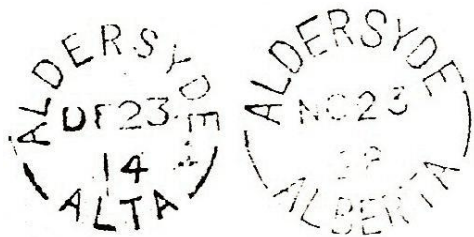
Several village and ranch house post offices prospered in the era before good gravel roads, but nowadays it is a quick drive to Okotoks or High River. Today the plateau is criss-crossed with grid roads and a framework of paved secondary highways. Combined with rural mail delivery and shrinking populations, the post offices all died out save for one at Blackie. The map on the next page depicts the area in 1921, modified to show the addition of one post office (Farrow) opened in 1930.



The photo on the next page shows a long-distance view of the western end of Gladys Ridge, seen in the background rising up from the prairie steppe.



Aldersyde.



Aldersyde was initially settled by Scottish emigrants. The name was given by the village founder J.D. O'Neal because numerous alders grew in the coulees of the area. The post office opened in a general store on 1907-05-01 with E.W. Bricker as postmaster. Shown at left are the proof strikes of some of its early postmarks. The store/post office was actually located in a hamlet called Norma, at the north end of what is now Aldersyde. The store was owned by A.Z. Hicks, who employed Bricker to look after postal duties, including meeting the mail trains at the Aldersyde siding and bringing the mail back to Norma. Eventually everyone relocated to the siding after a Great Fire (it seems that every town and village in Canada has had at least one Great Fire) that wiped out the hamlet of Norma [1].

Postmark collectors should note that the only Norma, Alberta, postmarks are from a post office in the Vegreville district of northern Alberta that existed from 1926 to 1966 and was not related to the southern one [2].

Bricker resigned on 1914-12-02 and his place was taken by R.N. Brooks until 1917-07-26. From then until 1936, there were seven postmasters who came and went. The longest serving postmaster was Alphonsus Louis Joseph Lambert, who held the position from 1936-05-01 to his death on 1960-11-18. His widow Freda then briefly occupied the position until Daisy Hadden took over on 1961-01-04 and retired in 1983. The final postmaster was M. Freeman when the post office closed on 1989-01-22 for good [1, 2]. At right is its final postmark style. By then it was located in a house, as seen on the next page (the woman mailing a letter is the author's mother, the late Betty Speirs). Aldersyde is only 10 km south of Okotoks and 15 km north of High River, both on paved highways, so there is no need for a post office in it today. The hamlet has a fair number of houses plus some industrial sites.





Gladys.

Gladys began as a ranch house post office. Charles and Gladys Harkness would do their shopping in High River and bring back the mail for local residents. Charles Harkness was the first postmaster when the Gladys post office opened on 1890-01-01 and stayed until 1895-11-01. The proof strike of the first postmark is shown at right. Once the post office was formalized, mail pickup switched to Okotoks. Gladys was an attractive woman and the bachelor cowboys of the district would gather at the Harkness residence on Sundays, ostensibly to pick up their mail but really so they could visit for a while in pleasant company [6]. The Harknesses sold their farm in 1895 and moved away.



The post office was in various ranch houses until a general store was built. Mail was picked up from just about every post office within a day's ride of Gladys, whether various ranch house post offices in the De Winton district to the north, Blackie to the due south, Okotoks to the due west, or High River to the southwest. It just depended on which way the postmaster at the time preferred to ride for supplies. Later there were paid mail couriers, some of whom were on official contract with the Canadian Post Office and others who were hired by families that chipped in together to pay him. One courier, Steve Williams out of De Winton, was notorious for poor delivery, as he would stop off along the way at the many sloughs in the Gladys Ridge area and spend several hours duck hunting for his family larder while the mail waited in the wagon and the horses grazed [3].

There was a steady turnover of postmasters after the Harknesses left, with four of them until Hubert H. Wilson, a storekeeper, took over on 1909-08-20 and lasted a decade until 1919-04-28. From then on the post office was in the general store, not a ranch house. Wilson's brother-in-law Tom Nash was the mail courier. The final postmaster from 1919 was Roy Max Peckham who bought the store. There was a Great Fire in January 1920, but the store and post office quickly found a new home, although any mail in the building would have been lost. Peckham stayed until 1938-06-15, when the post office fell prey to rural mail delivery. The mail route was from De Winton until that post office closed in 1991. Mail service then shifted to Okotoks, as by then the roads in the Gladys Ridge area were mostly paved and cluster boxes sped up service. The photo on the next page shows the boxes in 2011. There is a small arts-and-crafts store (open only on weekends) and a United church still on site, all that remains today.



Dinton.



This area was named by one of the first homesteaders after his home town in Wiltshire, England. The post office opened on 1904-08-01 with storekeeper Isaac Laycraft as postmaster, then taken over by his brother John on 1905-11-01. At left is the proof strike of the postmark. Isaac donated the land for a church and town hall. The Laycraft family intermarried into the Bricker family at Aldersyde. John resigned on 1907-06-18 and there was a steady turnover of postmasters every few years until the post office closed on 1924-07-29. When the railroad went through nearby Blackie, the hamlet of Dinton began to fade as a settlement since it was easier to get supplies in Blackie [3]. All that is left today is the tiny Anglican church and a town hall built in 1917.

Glenview.

This place began as a ranch house post office on the northeast slope of Gladys Ridge, on 1906-10-01, with Elmer Crawford as first postmaster. It was called Glenview because it had a scenic view down into the adjacent valley. On 1908-06-06, William F. Baker became the second postmaster and stayed until 1927-02-28, when the post office closed. Nothing remains of the site today and the area is pasture or canola fields. Most of the inhabitants moved to Farrow. It should be noted that the Post Offices and Postmasters Web site [2] erroneously lists Glenview and Farrow as a name change within the same post office but this was not so. There was a complete gap of three years between closure of Glenview and opening of Farrow, a noticeable distance between the two, and different postmasters.

Farrow.

A railroad line came through fifteen kilometres southeast of Glenview in 1930. A hamlet quickly grew up with several stores and the siding was named Farrow, after the maiden name of the CPR superintendent's wife [4]. William Thompson was the first postmaster beginning 1930-07-15 and operated it out of his general store. At right is the proof strike of the postmark, by which time the post office had switched to the CDS style. Thompson himself only stayed one month, and on 1930-08-26 was replaced by William Julius Schultz. He stayed until 1934-04-03 and was followed briefly by Mrs. Leva May Weber, who stayed until 1936-07-28.



The final postmaster was Mrs. Marie Despas, in the position until the post office closed on 1959-11-15 and became a rural delivery route out of Blackie. The Despas family emigrated from France in 1909 and homesteaded nearby. They purchased the general store in 1936 and ran it until their retirement.

What finally killed the hamlet was the construction of a main highway that bypassed it to the north, making it easier for locals to shop elsewhere instead of coming into Farrow. All that remains of Farrow today is a derelict grain elevator and the abandoned railway tracks, as seen on the next page. No road exists and to get to the site requires driving through a grain field, which is posted property. The townsite is now private farmland. A huge Hutterite colony exists southwest of the old townsite, but since they are self-sufficient and buy supplies in bulk from Calgary there is no demand for services that might have kept Farrow going.



Mazeppa.



Mazeppa was named after a Ukrainian hetman, and came into existence as a railroad siding in 1912. A station was built, a grain elevator put up and a general store constructed. The following year, on 1913-11-01, the post office opened in the store, with Mrs. E.H. Gaunce as postmaster. The postmark proof strike is shown at left. Mary Reed took over on 1915-07-15 and stayed until 1925-09-14. She was replaced by U.B. Gingrich until he resigned on 1930-04-15. The final postmaster was Ilbury Edward Humfrey, who stayed in that job until the post office closed on 1955-11-30. When the railway station was built, the train was the major means of transportation, but by the middle 1950s, the automobile had taken over and it was easier to drive to Blackie or High River.

Mazeppa is today a stable hamlet because of a natural gas processing plant adjacent to it, with about a dozen houses but no services of any kind. It is a quick ten-minute drive to Blackie to the east or High River to the west on paved roads, so no postal facilities are needed anymore. Mail is delivered in the hamlet to individual boxes across the street (the only street) from the entrance to each house. I visited the hamlet in late August 2011, evidently just moments after the mail courier had come through. I had to dodge jaywalkers going to get their mail and not looking for traffic because there was so little of it they were out of the habit. Nothing like the big city where I live!

Herronton.

John Herron was one of the original Mounties who came out west in 1874. He helped established both Fort Macleod and Calgary, and later became an M.P. for the Macleod riding in southern Alberta. The hamlet was named in his honour when it was founded in 1912. George Malmberg was the first postmaster when the ranch house post office opened on 1912-08-01 at his homestead, until it was closed on 1927-05-31. At right is the postmark proof strike. The ranch house was just north of the hamlet. In 1930, the railroad that came through Farrow continued southwest to Herronton. The post office re-opened on 1931-02-16 in a general store with Eric Thurlow as postmaster, who stayed in the position until his death on 1953-05-19. Eric's widow Viola took over for a short while until 1954-09-16. Cecil Green then ran it until 1961-08-09, followed by Edmond McKeage until 1966-07-16. The McKeage family was connected to the Bricker family by intermarriage.

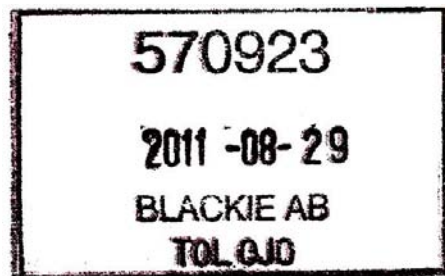


The final postmaster was Sharon Southgate, who served until the post office permanently closed on 1968-02-14. There is a working grain elevator that keeps the hamlet alive. The Southgate family owns about half the lots in the hamlet, and Main Street is a vehicle track through their yard. They told me that none of the original buildings remain. They still had the original weigh scale from the post office, with a chart on it that measured out one ounce of letter weight at 4 cents postage.

Blackie.

Blackie has the only surviving post office because it is at the intersection of a railroad and a secondary highway, and is far enough away from High River and Okotoks that it can draw business in from the Gladys Ridge district other than Aldersyde. Its major industry is a series of huge grain elevators and silos, which service grain and canola farmers within a wide range. It was named after John Stuart Blackie (1809-1895), a Scottish man of letters. The first settlers arrived in 1903 and the village was incorporated in 1911.

The first postmaster was Miss Mabel Bateman when the post office opened on 1911-04-15. L.L. McDonald, who operated a drug store, took over on 1912-06-05 and was succeeded by Stanley Harrow on 1918-01-16. He was the longest serving postmaster, and died in office on 1945-09-23. His widow Dorothy took over briefly until 1946-04-01. On 1948-04-01 the position became a civil service job. Several other postmasters have followed but Canada Post privacy regulations do not disclose the details. Below are the pictorial postmark for the present-day post office, and the regular business strike. The next page shows the main street during the morning rush hour, with the post office at left of photo.





References.

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