TARA

POST OFFICE BUILDINGS ON POST CARDS
#9 in a Series

Robert C. Smith   [REF. 118]

The post card to the right, labelled *Yonge Street, Tara, 1896,* shows a ribbon sign prominently displayed at the right which reads POST OFFICE STORE, and under it another sign reading W. YOUNG in fancy lettering. This Valentine card is unused, but appears to be from the 1910 era, at which time the postmaster would have been William Young, in office from 1878 until 1923 as the third postmaster.


Yonge Street, Tara, 1896

Thirty-four years after the opening of its first post office, Tara had grown to be a bustling community. Here we have Yonge Street, Tara, in 1896.

The second card, a J. E. Evans real photo, shows the post office of a much later era, probably in the 1940s, judging from the car in the background.

This post office was established in Arran Township, Bruce County on March 1, 1862 under the name, **Eblana.** On January 1, 1863, its name was changed to Tara. (On the same date, the post office which had up to then been called Tara, in Monteagle Township, Hastings County, had its name changed to **Oxenden.**) The Bruce County **Tara** is still in operation.


Mrs. George Baker
Bay View P.O.
(Ont.)
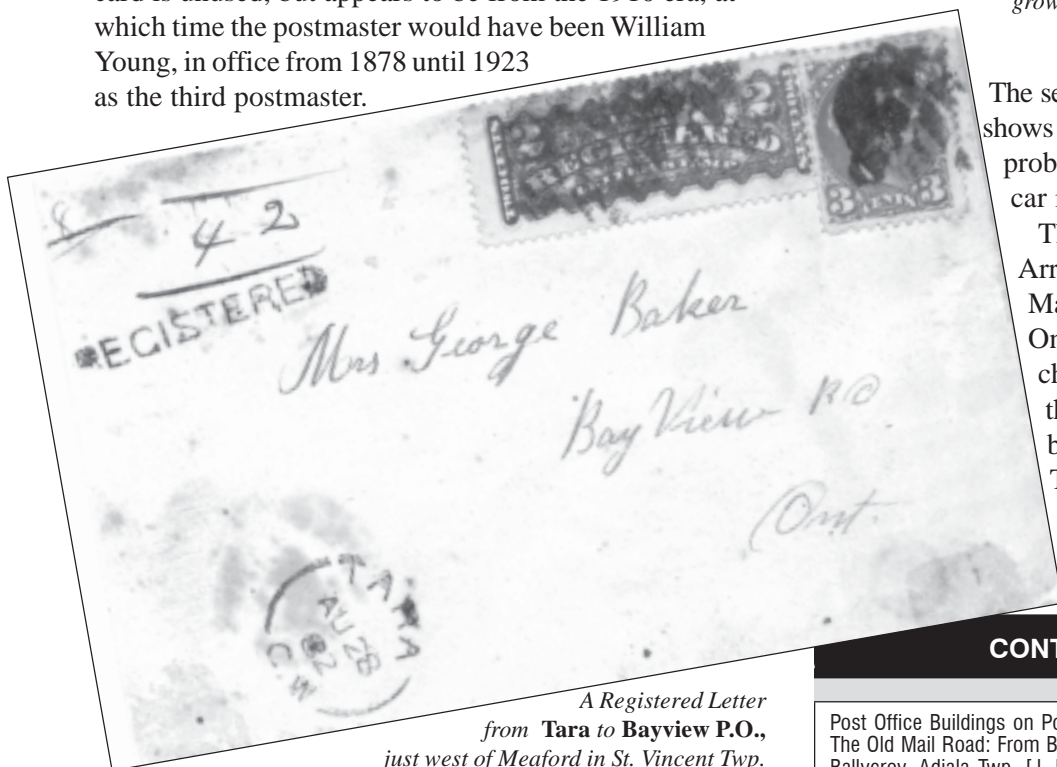
A Registered Letter from **Tara** *to* **Bayview P.O.,** *just west of Meaford in St. Vincent Twp. The Tara 20.5-mm A2 hammer was Tara's first and is used here just 4 years before its replacement of 1886.*

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The J.E. Evans (Walsingham, Ont.) real photo post card depicting the Tara post office was later printed in black and white using the letterpress process. The only difference appears to be the reversed caption on the typographed card.

Post Office, Tara, Ont., Can. (81)
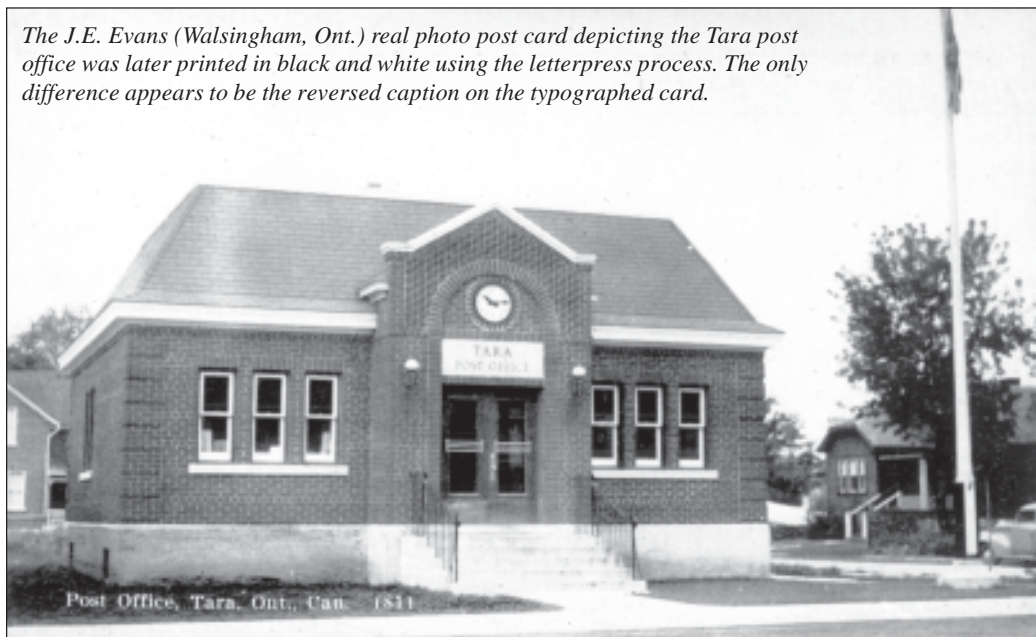
on October 5, 1934, and a circular date-stamp on October 17, 1960. A modern 23-mm circular datestamp with postal code has been seen in 1990s.
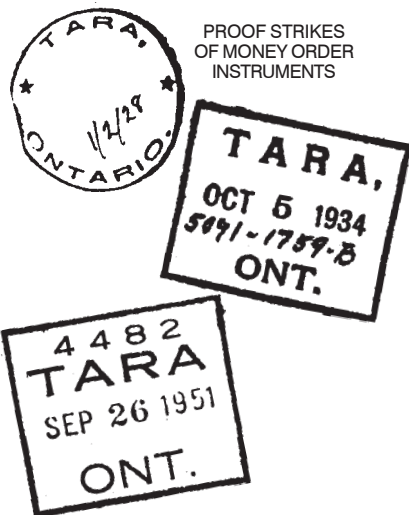
PROOF STRIKES
OF MONEY ORDER
INSTRUMENTS

Not surprisingly, given its short lifetime, no postmark has been found from Eblana, according to Bruce Graham. He lists three different single broken circles for Tara. The first two read TARA C.W, and only one of these has been recorded in use, from December 9, 1871 until November 6, 1883. The Berri device ordered on November 21, 1862 (just before the name change from Eblana) is listed as having no strikes recorded, but it is possible that these two devices were in fact one and the same. A TARA ONT. broken circle was proofed on December 9, 1886, and has been observed in use from September 2, 1889 to March 2, 1893 (surely one of the readers can improve on these dates).

Proof strike and earliest known recorded usage of the 20-mm 1886 A1 hammer.

The above 23-mm CDS was in use between 1902 and 1923.

The date on Tara squared circle post card is April 17, 1894.

The B-11 duplex hammer was used for many years. The earliest seen date is August 18, 1916, the latest December 14, 1946

The 23-mm cds, which included the postal code, is seen here used April 27, 1994.

Tara was known to have used a squared circle hammer in the 1890s as well as a 23-mm circular datestamp between August 23, 1902 and April 18, 1923. A duplex (Lee type B-11) was proofed on January 6, 1914, a MOTO
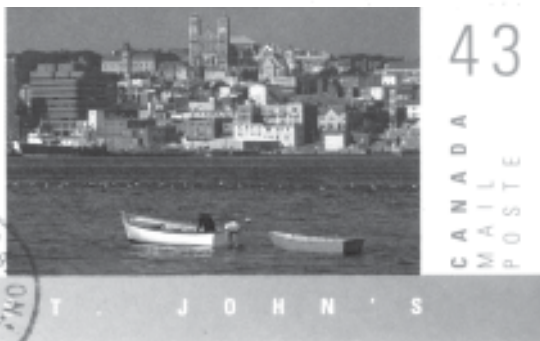
FROM BARRIE
The Old Mail Road
TO OWENS SOUND

James E. Kraemer [REF. 119]

There is a road in Grey County that runs between Griersville and Heathcote known as the *Old Mail Road.* This remnant of bygone days meanders around farmers fields along a high ridge of land. Griersville is located on Grey Road 7 in St. Vincent Township. Heathcote is on Grey Road 13 that runs between Euphrasia and Collingwood Townships. The road is all that remains of the old post road between Owen Sound and Barrie.

A by-law established the road as a public road in 1846. It was not until 1851 that the Old Mail Road was blazed through the bush from Barrie to Owen Sound as part of the Government Road. The road went from Barrie through Sunnidale, Duntroon, Singhampton, Ravenna, Heathcote and Griersville where it took a sharp right turn to Meaford and on to Owen Sound. Just east of Heathcote the road forded the Beaver River making the location an ideal place for a settlement.

On August 8, 1964 the *Ontario Archaeological & Historical Sites Board* erected a bronze plaque near Heathcote to commemorate the Old Mail Road as the first road to enter Euphrasia Township. The plaque reads as follows:

"For some years prior to the by-law which established it as a public road in 1846 this route has been travelled by settlers destined for the newly opened townships of Osprey, Collingwood, Euphrasia and St. Vincent. From its junction near Duntroon with an extension of the Sunnidale Road it ran some 21 miles northwesterly to Griersville. Though it was entitled to maintenance by statute labour the road was chronically in poor repair. Nevertheless it remained an official road until its usefulness ended when the Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railway reached Collingwood in 1855. Save for this five-mile section between Griersville and Heathcote, little evidence remains of the pioneer road."

Next time that you are in the area take a drive along this picturesque, historical road and imagine stage coaches and mail, couriers travelling along its length in pioneer days. A brief history of events leading up to the

The need for postal communication to serve the need of the British Military in the first half of the 1800s. Penetanguishene and Drummond Island were British bases whose purpose was to control the Upper Great Lakes.

building of the old mail road will be of pertinence to postal historians.

In 1814 the British built a military base at Penetanguishene to accommodate the military force and inhabitants on Drummond Island located next to Manitoulin Island. They had been transferred there when the fort at Michillimackinac was abandoned to the Americans. The Treaty that followed the withdrawal from Michillimackinac awarded Drummond Island to the United States of America. It became necessary for the British militia to maintain a Custom House at Sault Ste. Marie known then as Sault de Ste. Marie. Mail was carried from the "mouth of the Humber" river by Military Express, by Indian Express and by government postal contract to Penetanguishene and then transferred westward. Roads were built and extended as settlers moved into the northern areas of Ontario. A post office was established at Penetanguishene in 1829. Two years later (1831), a post office opened at Holland Landing. Barrie which would become the eastern anchor of the Owen Sound-Barrie post road was given its post office in 1835. Many settlers moved into Grey County during the 1830s. The need to communicate with established centres in the south in order to secure supplies and to keep in touch with relatives and friends resulted in petitions to the government for better roads and the establishment of post offices.

The first post office in Grey County opened on July 6, 1841 at St. Vincent, now Meaford. Meaford was known in 1839 as Peggy's Landing after Mrs. David Miller, wife of the first settler. The name was changed to Stephenson's Landing in 1841 by William Stephenson who promptly applied for a post office under that name. The name did not meet post office official's approval. As a result when the post office opened it was named St. Vincent by post office authorities, the same name as the township. Both the township and the post office were so named in honour of the British admiral, Sir John Jervis, Earl of St. Vincent, (1734-1823). The

hamlet changed its name to Meaford in 1845 after Meaford Hall in Staffordshire, England, the estate of the Earl of St. Vincent. Although the hamlet changed its name the post office continued with the name, St. Vincent for 13 years until 1858 when it finally changed the name to Meaford.

In 1842 Charles Rankin, O.L.S., named the village that was to become Owen Sound, Sydenham in honour of Lord Sydenham whose name was, Charles Poulett Thomson, and who was Governor General of Canada from 1839 to 1841. A post office was badly needed but there were other places in Canada already established using the name Sydenham. A new name was required. At this time there were two famous British admirals who were brothers. One was Sir Edward William Campbell Rich Owen, (1771-1849). He entered the navy in 1786 and became Acting Captain of the *"Impregnable"*, under Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Rich, his godfather. He along with Sir John Colpoys surveyed the Queen Charlotte Islands off the coast of British Columbia in 1815. He was Commander in Chief of the West Indies from 1822 until 1825 when he was appointed a Rear Admiral. He became a Vice Admiral in 1837 and a full Admiral in 1845. Owen Channel leading into Owen Sound is named after him. His younger brother, Vice Admiral William Fitzwilliam Owen, (1774-1837), entered the navy in 1788 becoming a Vice Admiral in 1854. He was in charge of the survey of Lake Ontario in 1815-1816. His assistant was Lieutenant Henry David Bayfield. Owen died in St. John, N.B. in 1857. It was Bayfield who renamed Sydenham, "Owen's Sound", in honour of Vice Admiral Owen. William Scott of Owens Sound wrote

North-east Grey County showing the part of **The Old Mail Road** *between Heathcote and Griersville that is presently still in use.*

a letter on behalf of the citizens on September 19, 1842 to Thomas Allen Stayner, Deputy Postmaster General requesting that a post office be established in Owen's Sound. A reply from Mr. Stayner dated October 10, 1842 was addressed to, "William Scott, Esq., Owen's Sound, St. Vincent Post Office". (This was necessary
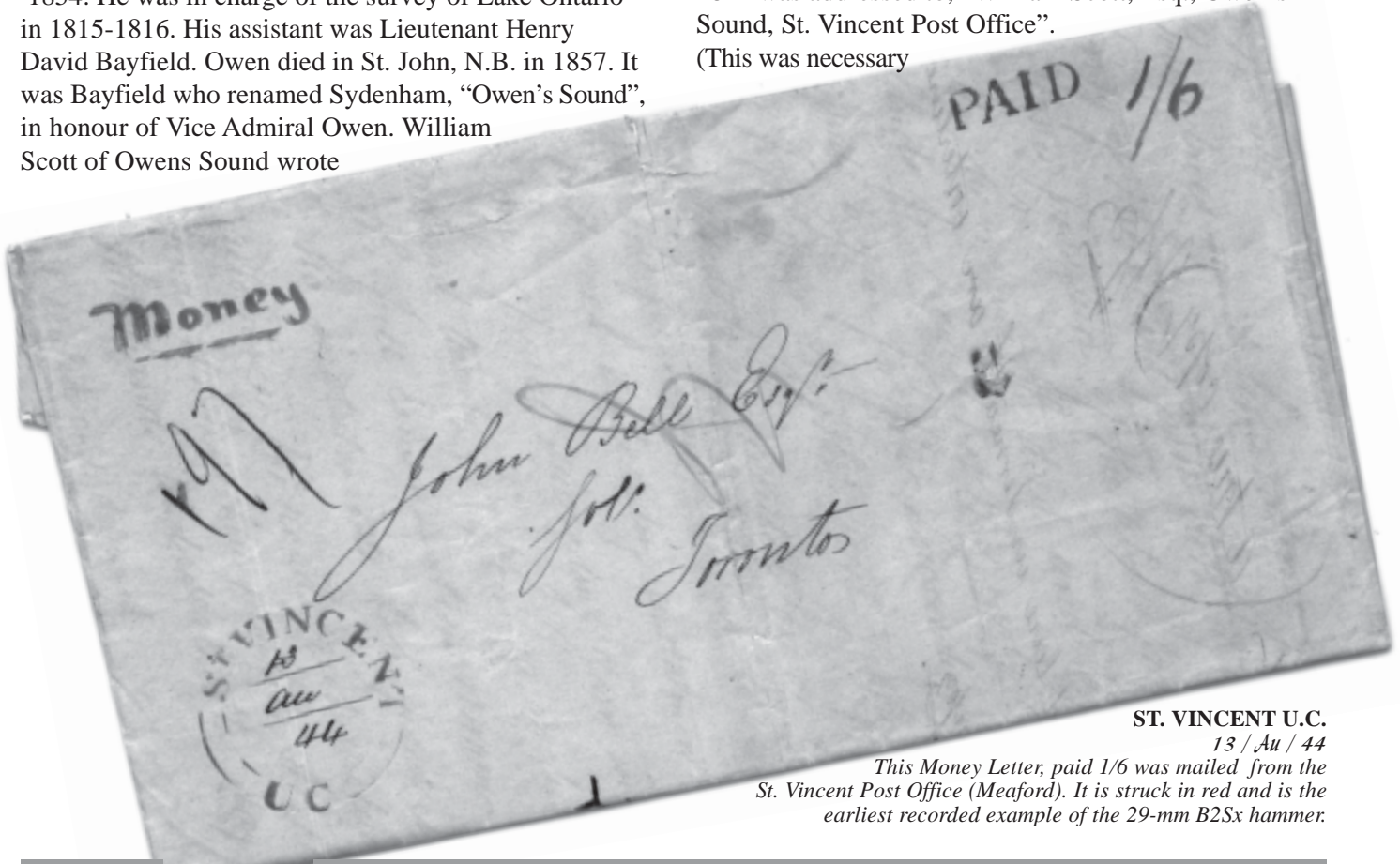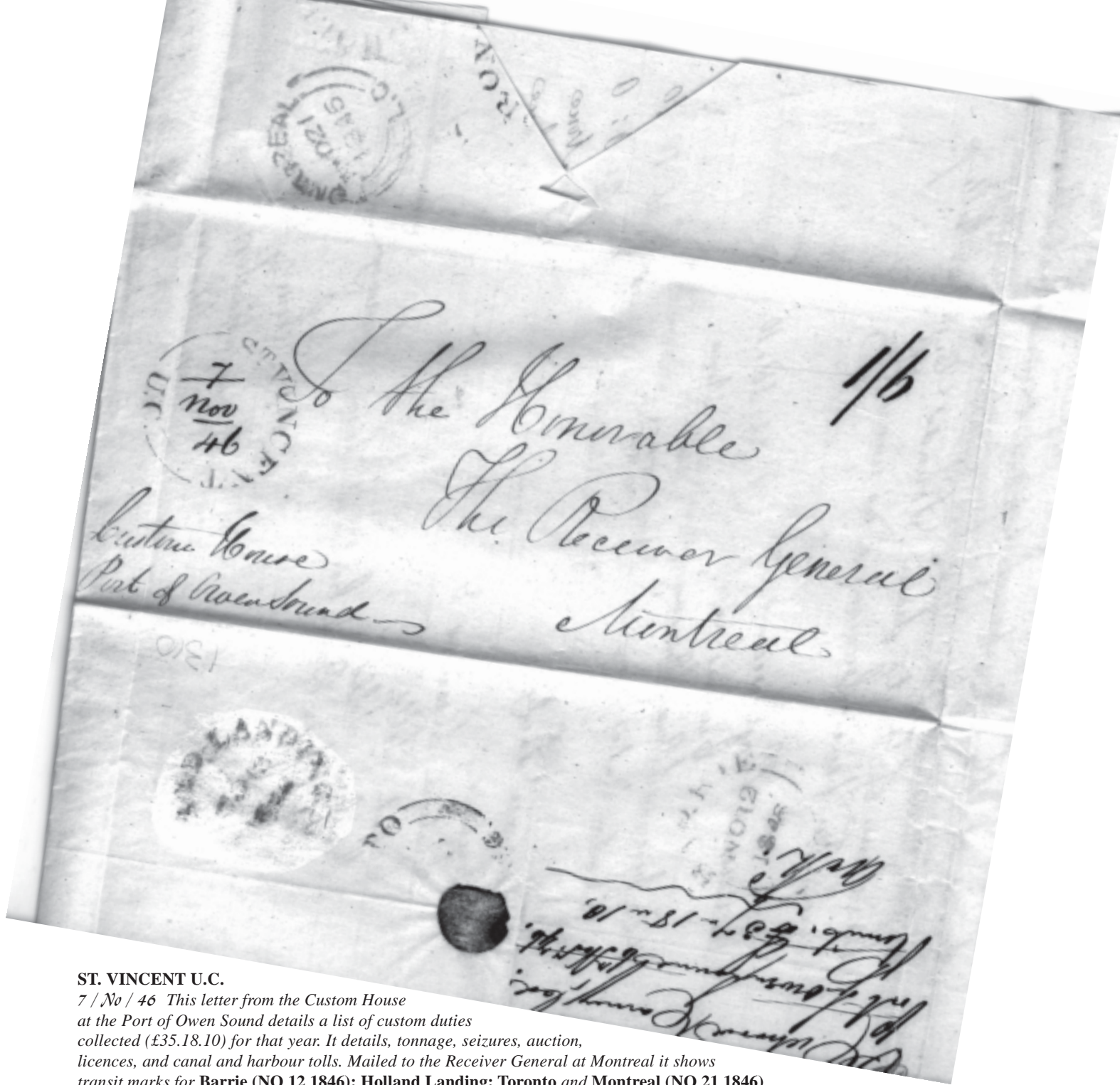

ST. VINCENT U.C.
13 / Au / 44
This Money Letter, paid 1/6 was mailed from the St. Vincent Post Office (Meaford). It is struck in red and is the earliest recorded example of the 29-mm B2Sx hammer.

ST. VINCENT U.C.

*7 / No / 46 This letter from the Custom House
at the Port of Owen Sound details a list of custom duties
collected (£35.18.10) for that year. It details, tonnage, seizures, auction,
licences, and canal and harbour tolls. Mailed to the Receiver General at Montreal it shows
transit marks for* **Barrie (NO 12 1846); Holland Landing; Toronto** *and* **Montreal (NO 21 1846)**.
This letter, without a doubt, traversed The Old Mail Road. Even though **Owen's Sound** *post office had opened
July 6, 1846, here is an example of a letter still being carried to Meaford and onwards by the Government Road.*

since Owen's Sound did not have a post office.) The
letter reads as follows:

> "Sir: I acknowledge receipt of your letter of 19ᵗʰ
> ultimo conveying the substance of a resolution
> unanimously agreed to at a public meeting of the
> inhabitants of your village and settlement that there
> should be a post office established at Owen's Sound.
>
> In answer I have to request of you to convey to
> the inhabitants by whom you have been deputized, my

> assurance that I shall cause the necessary steps to be
> taken to ascertain the merits of their application with
> a view, (should it be found expedient under the
> principle of extending this Department; by which I
> am governed) to meeting their wishes. I am Sir your
> obedient servant.
>
> T. A. Stayner

The *Western Globe* under date of April 3, 1846, page 3, column 4, printed the following,

> *"A report on Owen's Sound settlement, —— About 1500 newspapers and letters have been received and sent in the course of a year. No post office is yet established in the settlement although the inhabitants have for three years been reiterating their representations to the Head of the Department and the government, the necessity for one."*

Grey Counties second post office was established three months later, on July 6, 1846. The post office name was Owen's Sound with an apostrophe and an "S" after the word Owen.

For the first six years the post office used a cancellation device reading, OWEN - SOUND. In 1853 it changed to, OWEN'S SOUND and

Owen Sound's first post office. COURTESY *Grey Owen Sound Museum*

in 1856 the "S" was dropped and it read, Owen Sound, although the old cancelling device was later pressed into service on several occasions. While many different cancelling devices were used over the years, the following are the variations and the approximate years of use.

OWENS - SOUND (1846-1863)
OWEN'S SOUND (1853-)
OWEN • SOUND (1863-1900)
OWEN SOUND (1900 on)

Note: Both the author and editor would be pleased to receive confirmation or corrections to the above.

It is of interest that an Owens Sound double broken circle cancelling device for manuscript dates was proofed on May 18, 1847 and a double broken circle with type set dates was proofed on May 2, 1849. Both cancelling devices read "OWENS SOUND".

With the establishment of the post office at Owen Sound a new 80 mile postal route was established between Barrie and Owen Sound. The contract was awarded by tender to William Stephenson, the postmaster at St. Vincent. Mr. Stephenson found the postal route very arduous and gave up the contract after one year. John Hunter of Owen Sound became the new courier in 1847. Riding a white horse with mail bags strapped to his back he became a familiar, readily identifiable figure. Hunter left Barrie on Thursday mornings, returned the following Tuesday evening. A post office was established at Euphrasia (later Heathcote), in 1848 and was serviced by Hunter as he passed through the hamlet. Collingwood did not exist as a community. When a post office opened there in 1853, John Hunter serviced the new office on his regular

route. Mr. Hunter wrote a book, *Reminiscences* and in it noted that, "the Craighurst postmaster kept a strict surveillance on him and if he was a minute late he had to account for it". The postmaster at Craighurst, which opened in 1858, was John Craig, "who kept the post office three-quarters of a mile north of the Corners." By 1854 Mr. Hunter's contract called for two round trips per week between Owen Sound and Barrie. For the last six months of 1854 Mr. Hunter received £66.5.0 for his services. The *Ontario, Simcoe and Huron Railway* opened a rail line to Collingwood on January 1, 1855. The completion of the railway made Collingwood the shortest route for traffic from Lake Ontario and the country east of Toronto to the Western United States. With the coming of the railway to Collingwood the Old Mail Road lost its importance and government maintenance through statute labour was no longer justifiable.

Postal routes were altered immediately. John Hunter who had changed his name from Moore Corunna Gibbie when he came to Canada from England, was given a new courier route which he retained until his retirement. He died on March 15, 1894 at 84 years of age and is buried in Owen Sound. A new contract to carry the mail on a stage route between Collingwood and Owen Sound was awarded to Isaac May of Barrie in 1855. The contract called for six trips per week during the winter months over this 50-mile route. The contract further called for three trips per week during the navigational season, usually from May 7 until the end of November. In the summer months the courier left Collingwood at 4:00 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday arriving in Owen Sound in the afternoon at 4:00 p.m. Steamers carried most of the mail between Collingwood and Owen Sound during the summer months. They provided a six day per week service. Captain William H. Smith of Owen Sound, owner of the steamers, *Canadian* and *Mazeppa* transported most of the mail over this route from 1855 until 1875. Mail for Sault St. Marie, Fort William, Duluth and the Red River Settlement in Manitoba went by steamer from Collingwood on a weekly basis.

Settlements grew, new communities were established, roads were improved and rebuilt. The automobile replaced the stage coach and with the advent of railways the Old Mail Road became less important. Parts of the road were abandoned and replaced with modern roads and highways. The Old Mail Road between Heathcote
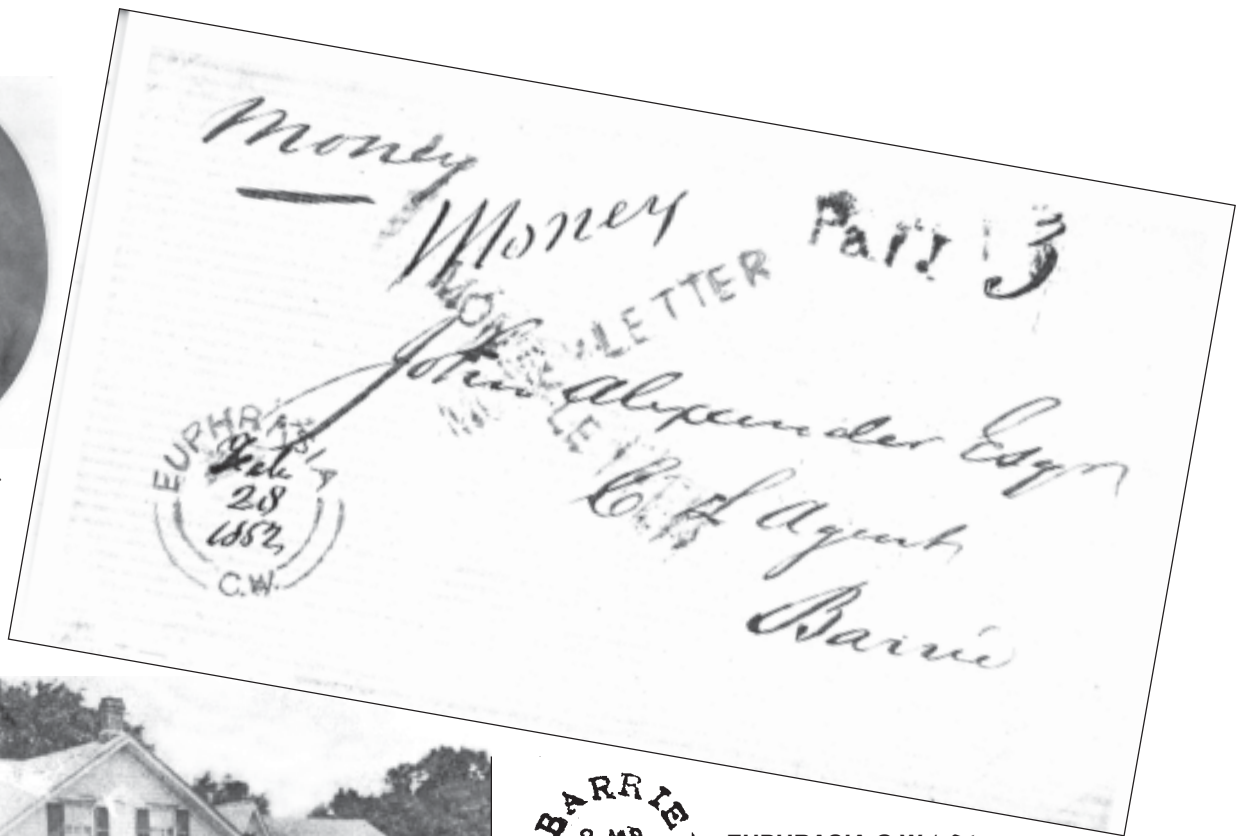
*Thos. J. Rorke,
first postmaster
of Euphrasia
1851-1900*

EUPHRASIA C.W | *Feb 28 1852*
Earliest recorded letter from this settlement on
The Old Mail Road *to Barrie. Arrival date-
stamped at* **BARRIE U.C / 8 MR 1852.**

*The first Euphrasia post office was opened on April 6,
1848 and was located the Rorke loghouse on Lot 24,
Concession 12. In 1853 this fine new residence became
the home of the Euphrasia (later Heathcote) post office
where it remained until the death of Thos. Rorke in 1900.*

   *Access to the Post Office was through the door on the
front verandah. Arrivals by buggy could step on to the
horse block in the picket fence.*

and Griersville probably exists because it shortens the
distance between two communities. In addition its
history and its location on a high ridge perpetuates the
romance of days gone by.

   The story of the Old Mail Road will continue in
future issues of this Newsletter with articles on the key
post offices.

A 1959 Report to the North Grey Region Con-
servation Authority looking at the historical back-
ground had this to say about travel on the early roads:

   *"Settlers bound for St. Vincent now had their
choice of two routes for the part of their journey that
lay between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. It was a
choice between two evils; both roads were all but
impassable, and those settlers who undertook the
journey, some via the Orillia-Coldwater portage,
some via Sunnidale, when they met at their journey's
end, found that they all shared, at least a common
interest in the hazards of the execrable roads."*

   There also appears to have been some competition

between the Old Mail Road (Mountain Road) and
Rankin's Lakeshore Road which had been established
in 1835. The report further goes on to state that in
1852 *"the Council [most likely the Provisional
County Council] forbade the inhabitants along
Rankin's Road to put their statute labour on that
road, requiring that it be applied to the Mountain
Road, on the plea that Rankin's Road is not an
established line. However, William Gibbard, the
Commissioner of Crown Lands, stated that in his
opinion it was an established line as Government
money had been expended on it."*

BALLYCROY
ADJALA TWP.

Jim Blacklaws [REF. 120]

The name Ballycroy comes from a town in County Mayo, Ireland, and is translated as a *"town of the cross"*. In Adjala, a village by this name arose early in the southern part of the township, on the county line between Peel and Simcoe. The headwaters of the Humber River were the main draw here. The earliest industry, a sawmill, was set up by Samuel Beatty in the 1840s.

As the village flourished it became necessary to establish a post office. On January 1, 1856, a post office was opened, pre-sided over by Peter Small from March of that year until November 1861, at which time he was dismissed. In 1862 John McClelland took over as post-master, a position he held until his death some ten years later in 1872.

Competition for business in Ballycroy in the early days was notoriously fierce, from the lucrative hotel trade even to the more sublime postal duties. By 1864 both Small and McClelland were prosperous business men, and their establishments were no backwater shacks. Small's inn was a massive building dominating the heart of the village. It housed the hotel, post office, a tailor, telegraph office, grocer, and a large ballroom, where dances lasted all night and frequently into the next day. Though these affairs started out decorous enough they rapidly degenerated, as the liquor circulated, into wild free-for-alls. Add to these events Small's racetrack, where gambling and drinking prevailed, the fact that Ballycroy was the recognized Orange and Green battle-ground for religious and political debate, and frequent visitations of Biddulph Township's infamous Donnelly family, and it is small wonder Ballycroy became known as "that tough little Irish hell-hole on the county line".

It was however, after a short duration as postmaster by Henry Beatty (1872-1873), when Peter Small took up his second attempt at the position, starting in 1873, that literally all hell broke loose in the village. Lawlessness had finally reached its climax. On the night of April 29, 1875,

tragedy struck. A fire started at and destroyed Small's inn, including the post office, as well as many neighbouring dwellings and businesses. It rapidly consumed the predominately wooden structures. Tragically three young women milliners perished in the conflagration. The *Cardwell Sentinel* newspaper, in nearby Keenansville, reported that $23,000 worth of goods vanished in an hour. None, to this day, would ever refute that the cause of the blaze was arson. Small finally had enough of the rivalry, when in June of that same year, his temporary residence went up in flames. He left the place in 1876, moving to Toronto.

With the destruction of Small's inn, the coming of the railway to Palgrave instead of Ballycroy, and the arrival of the much admired Father Francis McSpiritt to South Adjala in 1975, with his fire and brimstone temperance campaign-ing, Ballycroy became near to being deserted. People simply left and took their business
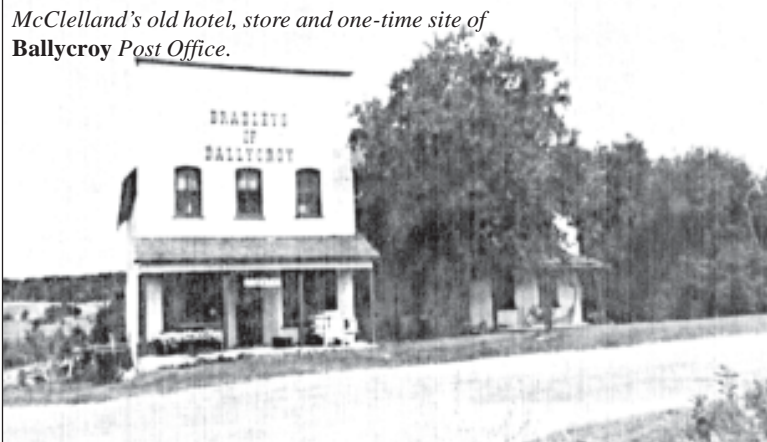
McClelland's old hotel, store and one-time site of **Ballycroy** *Post Office.*
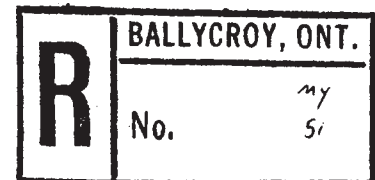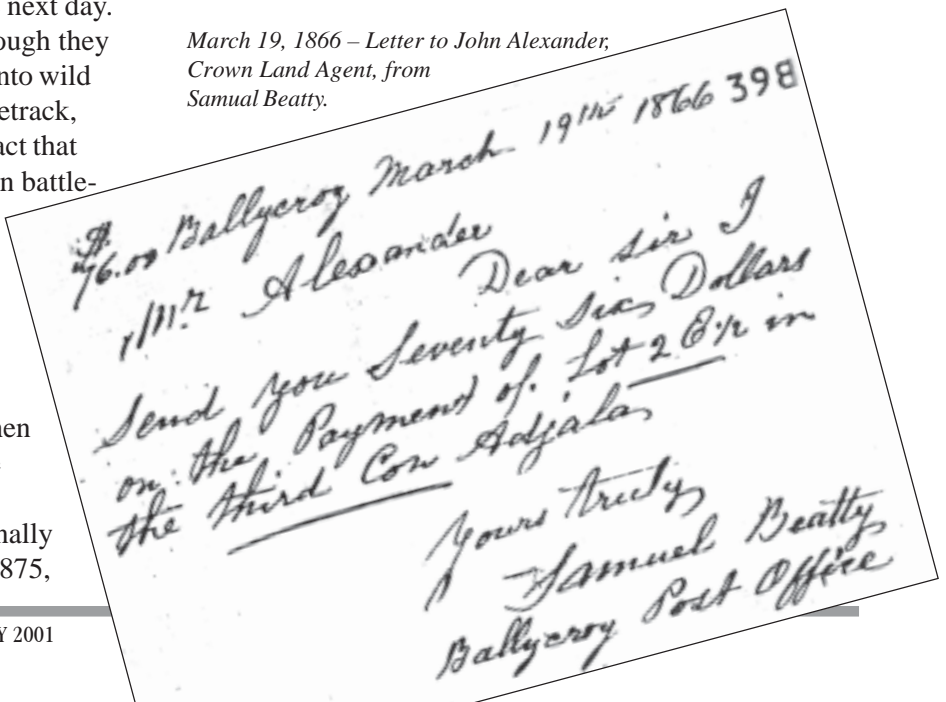
PROOF STRIKES

20.5-mm
A1 Hammer

21.0-mm
A1 Hammer

47 x 23 mm
Reg. Box [proofed May 1951]

March 19, 1866 – Letter to John Alexander, Crown Land Agent, from Samual Beatty.

elsewhere, mostly to the flourishing railway towns.

The post office however, would remain in operation at various sites within the village well into the next century. It would see a succession of postmasters some staying for very short periods of time until the final closure of the office March 31, 1952.

Old Feheley Hotel, Ballycroy, Ontario.

*The Steele Bros. Co. Ltd., Seed Merchants, Toronto. A receipt issued to John McClelland, Merchant and Postmaster at Ballycroy – May 14, 1890.*
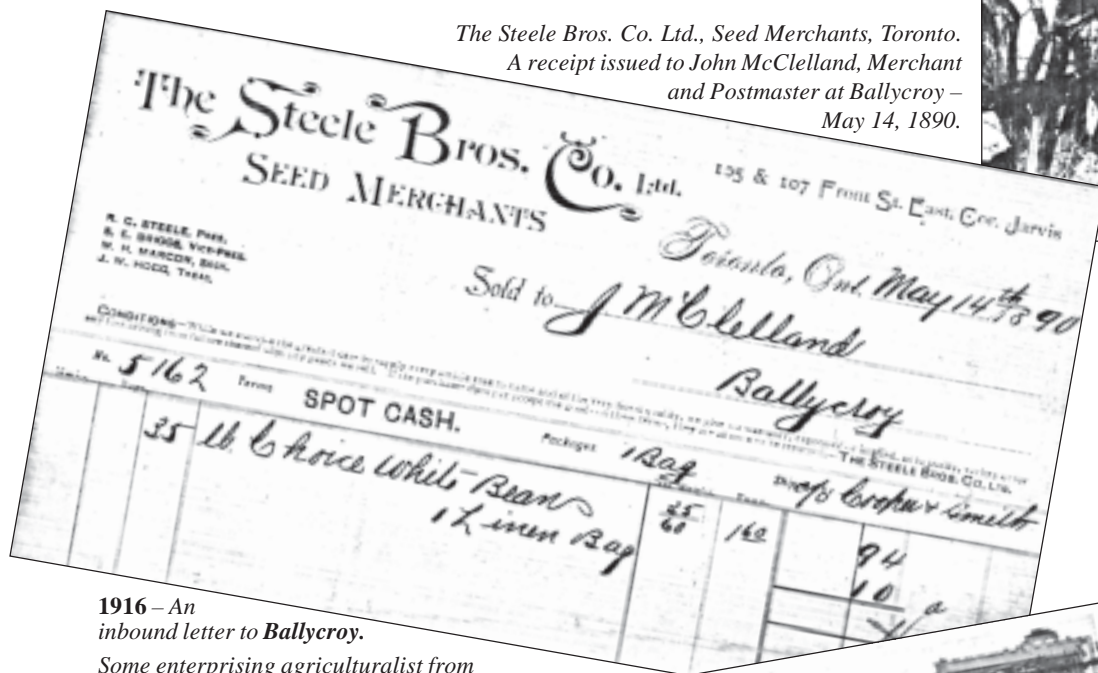
1916 *– An inbound letter to* **Ballycroy.**

Some enterprising agriculturalist from Ballycroy mailed a seed order to John Bruce & Co. – **OC 21 1909**

The **Simcoe County Directory,** 1872, lists the following people living in the Ballycroy area:
Henry Beatty, P.M., General Merchant
Beatty Bros., Flouring Mills
Samuel Beatty, Shingle Factory
William Beatty, Sawmill
Francis Brawley, Distiller
Wm. Brawley, Steam Sawmill
Charles Caldwell, Farmer
David Carson, Saloon Keeper
Joseph Coolahan, Butcher
Robt. Cox, Farmer
John Crisp, Farmer
John Dunham, M.D.
Robt. Evans, Veterinary
Michael Fehely, Farmer
John Hamilton, Baker
George Hanna, Sawyer
Joseph Harrison, Pump-maker
James Hurse, Shoemaker
Patrick Keenan, Hotel Keeper
Wm. Livingston, J.P.
Manning Bros., Harness Maker
Edwin Manning, Plasterer
James Mullin, Contractor
Denis Noonan, Solicitor
Thos. Robb, Hotel Keeper
James Shinnaman, Watchmaker
Peter Small, General Merchant
James Thurston, Miller
J. J. Walsh, Teacher
John Wilson, Blacksmith
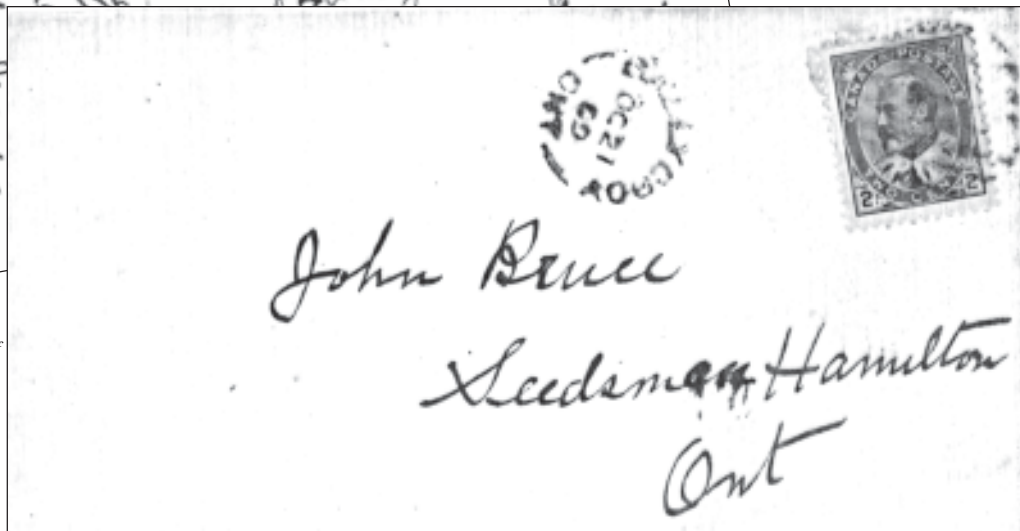
SOURCES

• David Williams, *The Origin of the Names of the Post Offices of Simcoe County.*
• Ron Brown, *Ghost Towns of Ontario.*
• William Perkins Bull, *From Macdonel to McGuigan.*
• William Perkins Bull, *From the Boyne to Brampton.*
• National Archives, Post Office History Cards.
• Various local sources.

DUFFERIN Notes

ROSEMONT C.W. DISCOVERY

This ROSEMONT cover was discovered in the Archives of the Dufferin County Museum and is the earliest recorded cover for this Dufferin/Simcoe village. It is struck with an A2 split ring (manuscript dated) hammer. Dated **Decr 25 / 1863** it was mailed to George P. M. Ball Esq., Jordon P.O., C.W. and is backstamped with a B2 hammer, DE 28 1863. This significant find fills a major gap in Bruce Graham's, *Ontario Broken Circles* book.

ROSEMONT
Decr
25 / 63
C.W
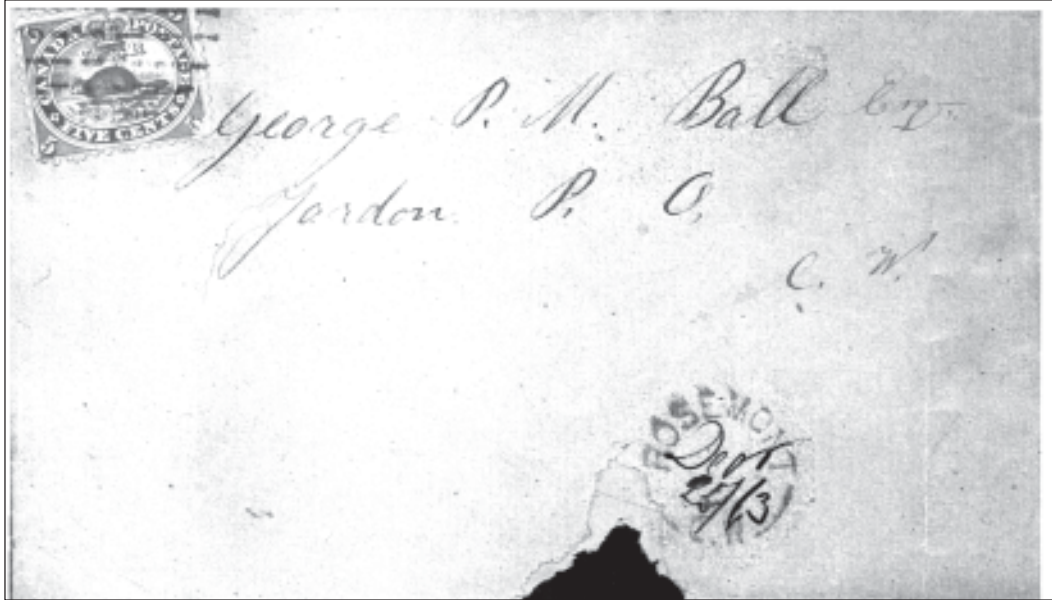
County POSTAL ATLAS

BRUCE • GREY DUFFERIN & SIMCOE COUNTIES

[REF. 122]

Member Eric Manchee has worked very diligently over the past number of years to bring together an atlas showing all the post offices that have existed at one time or another in Southern Ontario and reaching as far north as Hwy. 17 (North Bay / Sudbury). Our study group has benefited greatly in that many articles have been enhanced with the addition of pertinent parts of the maps. We thank Eric for allowing us that usage.

In a new twist we are exploring putting together in a monogram format all 15 maps for Grey, Bruce, Dufferin and Simcoe Counties. We propose to laser print these maps on 8½ x 11" 80 lb. (heavy weight) text paper, punched for a three-ring binder. The maps would be printed on 1 side of the sheet only. The cost of printing and shipping (flat in 9 x 12" env.) all 15 maps would be $3.00. Publication time would be this spring.

We need to know how many people are interested in this monogram. Please contact the editor by mail, email or telephone ASAP.

BALLYCROY POSTMASTERS   *[cont'd from page 173]*

Peter Small	Mar. 1, 1856-03-01 until Nov. 16,1861
John McClelland	Feb. 1, 1862 until May, 1872 [DEATH]
Henry Beatty	July 1, 1872 until June, 1873
Peter Small	July 1, 1873 until 1876 [LEFT THE PLACE]
E.J. Cobean	Sept. 1, 1876 until Nov. 28, 1878 [RESIGNED]
B.J. McClelland	Jan. 1, 1879 until Mar. 5, 1885 [RESIGNED]Jno.
McClelland	May 1, 1885 until Mar. 6, 1896-03-06 [RESIGNED]
George Irwin	May 1, 1896 until Jan. 16, 1902 [RESIGNED]
John G. Reid	Apr. 20, 1903 until Dec. 5, 1904 [RESIGNED]
Angus McLean	Aug. 5, 1905 until Mar. 3, 1906 [RESIGNED]
W.H. Robinson	May 17, 1906 until Nov. 28, 1906 [RESIGNED]
Miller A. Hamilton	Dec. 22, 1906 until May 25,1936
Geo. McConnell Hamilton	Mar. 8, 1936 until June 10, 1951 [DEATH]
Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton	June 20, 1951 until Mar. 31, 1952 [ACTING]