



The Young Collector

By
Joseph Perrone

COLLECTING LOCALLY

A fun challenge for young collectors may be to search for the covers and cancellations of their own county, town, or city. I am acquiring postmarks of Grey Bruce County, the city of Owen Sound, and even the small hamlet of Massie, where I live, in south-central Ontario. Trying to find the cancellations of smaller rural post offices may require patience since they do not exist in large quantities and many post offices have been closed or relocated. That being said, they should be inexpensive unless they are known to be rare.

It is rewarding to find an example of your own rural postmark on cover. Through research, I discovered that there was a post office operating from April 1, 1864 to August 1, 1914, on Massie Road. After two years of intently looking for the Massie, Ontario cancellation, I have only been able to purchase two covers bearing that postmark.



cherished communications from loved ones or recorded business transactions.

As an early Christmas present, I was given an old, stampless folded letter sent from Monaghan, Ireland to Chatsworth, Canada in 1857. It contained terrible family news. Shortly after the Irish potato famine, the letter -- written by John McClelland -- begins with the news of the death of his son.

McClelland goes on to say that he took so long in responding because this was the third of his children to die within 12 months. He says that he is lonely. Now, he only has his wife and one last son left at home. The grieving father politely asks the receiver -- his nephew in Canada -- for money, and tells him to forward it to a specific branch of the Bank of Ireland. He signs off with a crudely drawn picture of a hand: the McClelland family crest. As a sort of post script, he again implores his nephew to write as soon as possible, and finishes the letter with: "May we all meet in Heaven." Interestingly, the father, son, and nephew all bore the same name, which was John McClelland. It was a popular tradition.

The best way to collect crisp cancellations of your local post office is on postcards. They generally pick up the ink from the hammer with much more clarity than the softer paper used to make envelopes. My favourite local post-



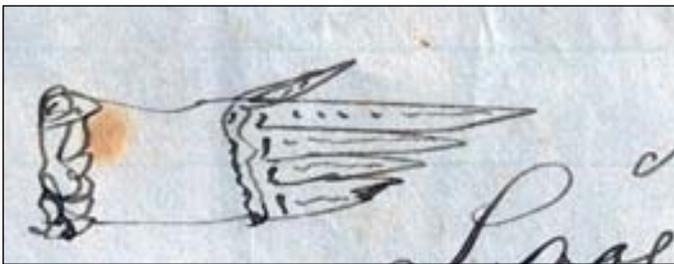
It is much easier to find examples of larger cities in your county. Since Owen Sound was a major Great Lakes shipping port in bygone days, I have been able to find this cancel much more readily.

In addition, larger cities also have the advantage of providing attractive covers with registered frankings, or former business' advertisements.

Receiving cancels, sometimes found on the back of covers, are postmarks that are often passed over in philately but can provide valuable information to a local collector. For example, the original letters may have been tucked back into the envelopes since families found it convenient to store letters that way. Families kept them because they were

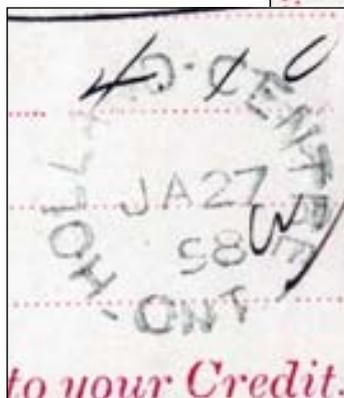


card is a receipt to a customer in Holland Centre from the Owen Sound Biscuit & Confectionary Works owned by J. McLauchlan. Located 25 kilometers away, which was quite a distance to travel in 1898, the mail remarkably arrived on the same day.



Seeking local postmarks and covers can serve as more than just a collection. It can become a multi-faceted study; and, if documented properly, may even one day be considered important to philately. Recording early and late cancellations can provide a fertile ground for research.

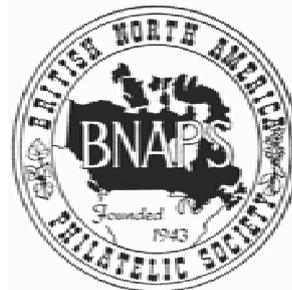
A friend of mine put together an exceptional collection and exhibit of the history of the Toronto post offices during the 19th Century, including some recently discovered earliest-known dates. Most people can find postmarks with



early usage dates, if they know their facts and make the effort to sniff through enough dealer boxes. Published by The Unitrade Press in Toronto in 1988, *Ontario Post Offices* by Robert C. Smith is an excellent resource. It's invaluable since there are many rural post offices of which little is known.

Sometimes senior neighbours can tell you about their post office as they remember it, and possibly even show you some of the family mail that came through there. Details such as the identification of local postmasters, or how much mail went through the post office could be important missing links in postal history, as well as being of personal interest. ☒

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