

Early Postal System of Richmond County

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Written communication in Lower Canada in the early years was very limited due to lack of transportation and very few postal outlets. In 1763 Canada was ceded to the British. The Postmaster General of the American Colonies, Ben Franklin, was instructed to survey a route between New York and Quebec for mail delivery between Britain and Canada via Lake Champlain. Early letters were simply folded in such a way as to form a cover to show the destination and postage to be collected or prepaid. Rates were governed by distances. On April 23, 1851 Canada issued its first adhesive postage stamp. In 1858 Canada the old sterling monetary system. Stamps were then issued in the decimal system. Around this time envelopes were being manufactured.

Richmond County had 69 or so post offices from 1817 to present day. Many were very small rural offices located in a farm house, railway station, a store, or even a small area set aside in someone's house, where neighbours could pick up their mail or post a letter and buy postage.

By 1917 a mail route was established extending from Stanstead via Sherbrooke, Richmond and Drummondville, to Three Rivers (Trois Rivières). Mail was carried both ways by horseback (via Craig's Road) and/or boat (St Lawrence River) once a week. For several years, Mr. P.V. Hibbard had the contract.

The **Township of Shipton** as it was originally constituted, was bounded northeast by Tingwick, southeast by Wotton and Windsor, southwest by Melbourne, and northwest by Kingsey. In 1855 Shipton was divided into **Cleveland** with Richmond as the principal village and **Shipton** with Danville as its principal village. Around this time Richmond became the junction of the **St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railway** (connecting Montreal and Portland, Maine) and the **Quebec & Richmond Railway**. Once rail service was established, mail service improved greatly.

Before Confederation, Richmond County was located in what was known as Canada East or Lower Canada. Both C.E and L.C were used by early post offices. QUE or P.Q. were not used until just before Confederation and afterwards. Now QC has replaced all other forms for Quebec.

Once rural mail service was established by Canada Post, many of the small post offices such as Castlebar, Corris, Fontenoy, Gallup Hill, Golden Bay, McCourts Corner, Melboro, Nicolet Falls, Perkins Corner, and Titus were closed.

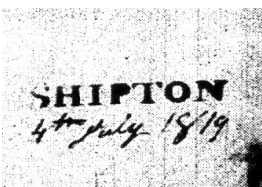
Richmond / Shipton - The first post office in Shipton/ Richmond County was named **Shipton**, and opened April 12, 1817 with Issac Bernard becoming the first Post Master (1817-1819).

The post office served Tingwick, Durham, Melbourne, Brompton, and Windsor. According to the Richmond County Historical Society the post office (basically a desk) was located in a small building behind what is known as “the McIver Apartments”.

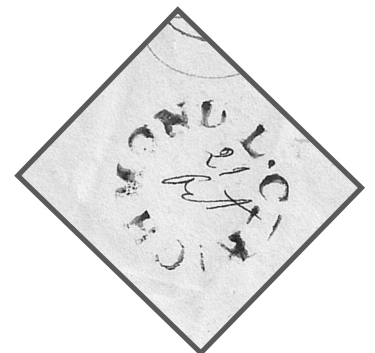
Stephen Bernard became Post Master (1820-1828), the year the post office was renamed **Richmond, L.C (Lower Canada)**. The first postal hammer of Richmond issued from 1830-1848 was smaller than the proof hammer and didn't have a dater, so the postmaster would pen it in.

Once a roadway (trail) was built between Danville and Richmond, Leonard Thomas of Melbourne became the first contractor to deliver mail between the two villages on horseback.

Note: I am always looking for old postmarks and post offices of Richmond County. If you have any postcards, covers or envelopes pre 1930, please let me know through the RCHS.



The first desk of the Shipton post office (RCHS)



Danville - The post office opened in January 1832 with **Thomas Cutler Allis** as postmaster. He was not provided with a cancel hammer so at first he had to use a handwritten date (manuscript)



The first hammer arrived in 1834 and was a 30 mm double circle with room for the PM to handwrite a date. The problem though was Danville was misspelled with “NN”. This was not corrected until a new hammer arrived in 1849.



Thomas Cutler Allis was a merchant and lumber dealer in Danville. He owned a store in 1830 where he located the post office. He later sold the store and bought another in the Square with the PO moving with him.



The PO circa 1910 in the Square

The *Canada Postal Archives* are often missing early info on post offices. The *Sherbrooke Daily Record* of March 30, 1909 mentions in an Obit for Wm Frost of Danville, that in 1847 that the post office was located in the private home of Milo Barnum. Later the post office moved into the Square.

Soon other post offices were opened, such as Melbourne and Kingsey, followed by many others once side roads were built such as Castlebar, Slatington, Denisons Mills, Nicolet Falls and Trenholm.

Asbestos - in 1884 a post office opened at the home of William Church, with “Asbestos” being the designated name of the locality and named after the mineral asbestos. Mr Church became the first Post Master 1884- 1919.

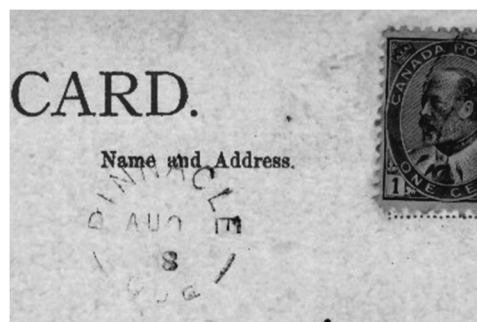
Gore - Until 1898, residents surrounding Gore received their mail through post offices at Lisgar and Melbourne. With the construction of a railway station, a post office soon followed. It was installed in the store of Herbert Smith and Mr. Smith became Post Master (July 1, 1898).

In October of 1900 the **Gore** post office moved to the home of Alfred Burrill, then returned back to new owners of H. Smith's store. The PO closed in favour of rural delivery from Melbourne July 31, 1958.

Fontenoy - In 1864, Robert Frazer requested that the Federal Government establish a post office at Frazer's Mills. The name Frazer's Mills was already used as a PO and it was decided to open a post office in Robert Frazer's farmhouse with the name Fontenoy on October 1, 1864, with Mr. Frazer appointed Post Master.

Upper Melbourne - The post office was established on December 1, 1883, with Newlands Coburn as Post Master. The postmaster/ mail carrier would take out-going mail to Melbourne and pick up in-coming mail.

Pinnacle -The Canada Post Archives states that there was a rural post office in Shipton, Quebec, called Pinnacle. The archives show that it opened on 10 October 1904, with Mederic Beuchesne as postmaster & cheese maker. Research shows that it may have been located in a cheese factory on Lot 4 Range 6. The lot is located along the present Chemin des Canadien and includes a short secondary road called Chemin Mayette. The intersection also included a small school (now a home).



Melbourne - A very early post office was established in 1835 to serve communities on the opposite side of St Francis River from Richmond. Early records do not seem to be available but the RCHS states that the 1st postmaster was likely a Mr. Desaulnier. Canada Post Archives states Thomas Tait as PM in 1843, (as noted on cover)



Castlebar - this post office opened in January 1, 1857 with John Murphy the first Postmaster (1857-1862). When William McKeage became Postmaster (1883-1899) the post office was located kitty corner to the large MacLeay home in the blacksmith shop owned by Wm McKeage. The post office later moved to the home of George Adams nearer the town of Tingwick. Mr Adams was Postmaster from 1899-1909. On February 16, 1914 the post office closed.

St Cyr -a post office was established in 1882 and according to the postal archives the first Postmaster was Seth Taylor. He only lasted a few months before Robert E. Dyson took over in 1882-1903. The picture shows him sitting on his veranda with a sign saying Post Office. The PO closed in 1957 due to rural mail delivery.



Denison's Mills —Joseph R.

Denison opened a post office September 1, 1861, the third PO in Shipton. It served 150 residents, including a school, cheese factory, blacksmith, general store, and a grist and saw mill. The PO closed February 1, 1916.

Trenholm -Simond Stevens opened the first store and post office in 1852 located in the front of his house. As his family grew, the store and post office were shifted around from room to room. Eventually he had to relocate to a brick building next to his home. The post office closed in 1955.

New Rockland —a slate mining community was built around a quality slate quarry about 1868. Production grew rapidly and a narrow gauge railway was built to carry slate to market via a bridge built across the St Francis River to a depot called **Corris** on the Grand Trunk rail line from Montreal to Maine. A post office was opened in 1877 at the mine village under the name **Rockland**, changing to New Rockland in 1883. Demand for slate slowed by 1920 and the post office closed in 1926.

Corris depot operated a post office from 1892-1915, as did **Titus** depot (1892-1915), **Richmond Station** (1863-1898), **Melboro** (1877-1914), and **Gallup Hill** (1910-1915).

Sources: 1. Richmond County Historical Society

2. Catalogues des Marques Postales du Quebec 1763-1867 (Morin & Poitras)

3. Postal Archives of Canada

4. Pioneer's of the Eastern Townships (Ammi Parker)

5. Collections and files of Robert Carr (RCHS member)