

Canadian Militia Camps and their postmarks 1909 to 1919

Scope of the exhibit: The exhibit shows the Camp locations, their types and the Canadian Militia Field Post Office (CMFPO) cancellers in use from 1909 to the end of World War One.

Historical background: Following their successful Boer War involvement the Canadian Militia was reorganized and expanded. In 1901 Lord Dundonald commander of the Canadian Forces initiated a plan to have a small highly trained Regular Force whose main task was to train a larger civilian Militia should an emergency arise. This core training was to be provided during a two week summer camp at bases across the country. The logistics required a military postal service to provide postal facilities to the thousands of training militiamen. By 1905 the four early camps were, during the summer camp period, employing on site the local civilian PO to provide postal services and their spilt ring postmark.

In June 1909 Major George Ross, Chief Post Office Superintendent, appointed Captain Ecclestone as officer in charge of "Field Post Office N° 1" at the Niagara Militia Encampment, Ontario. On the 16 June the Postmaster General, R Lemieux, inaugurated the first official Camp FPO and established a field post office corps to service the other camps across Canada. In total seventeen Military camps were issued with CMFPO cancellers.

Rarity and research: Canadian Military records detail when and for what period cancellers were in use. However rarity of material is a product of a number of different factors and are different for each camp. Some camps were very active in terms of troop throughput but whose rarity is high as they used the local civilian PO to sort and cancel the mail, others had a far lesser troop throughput but handled all their mail and copies are more readily obtainable. Whilst some smaller camps, such as those for aircrew training, are rare because the amount of mail was minimal.

Bailey & Toop (B&T) used a valuation point system where 1 point = 10p 1984 (about 35p in 2022) and these grade points are used in the text. It will be seen that a very few marks are relatively common but the majority are rare to very scarce. B&T also records those CMFPOs that have a proof date in the military records but no example has ever been found. So this exhibit does use the B&T type numbers but does not show unissued CMFPO marks.

A red line around an item denotes either a particularly rare mark or earliest known date, etc.

Plan: Sheet 1-Introduction and the earliest mark

Sheet 2: Camps Aldershot and Barriefield

Sheet 3: Camps Beamsville, Calgary and Goderich

Sheet 4: Camps Borden, Sewell and Hughes

Sheet 5: Camps Levis and London

Sheet 6: Camps Niagara and Petawawa

Sheet 7: Camps St Jean, Sussex and national Exhibition Centre

Sheet 8: Camps Leaside, Valcartier and Vernon

References:

The Canadian Military Posts Vol 1 by W J Bailey & E R Toop Edited by Edward B Proud 1984

List of Camps(used in the Great War) 1914-1919, P E Raynor, Garratt-Adams & Co, 1969



The opening of the first Field Post Office at Niagara Camp 16 June 1909 To mark the occasion George Ross, Chief PO Superintendent, presented officially produced cards to the dignitaries as a souvenir. Oddly the example presented to the Canadian Postal Museum was unsigned. In 1914 he was appointed Director of Postal Services Canadian Division with the rank of Colonel. It was the only militia FPO in Canada to be allocated a number.

Camps Aldershot & Barriefield

Aldershot Camp, Nova Scotia

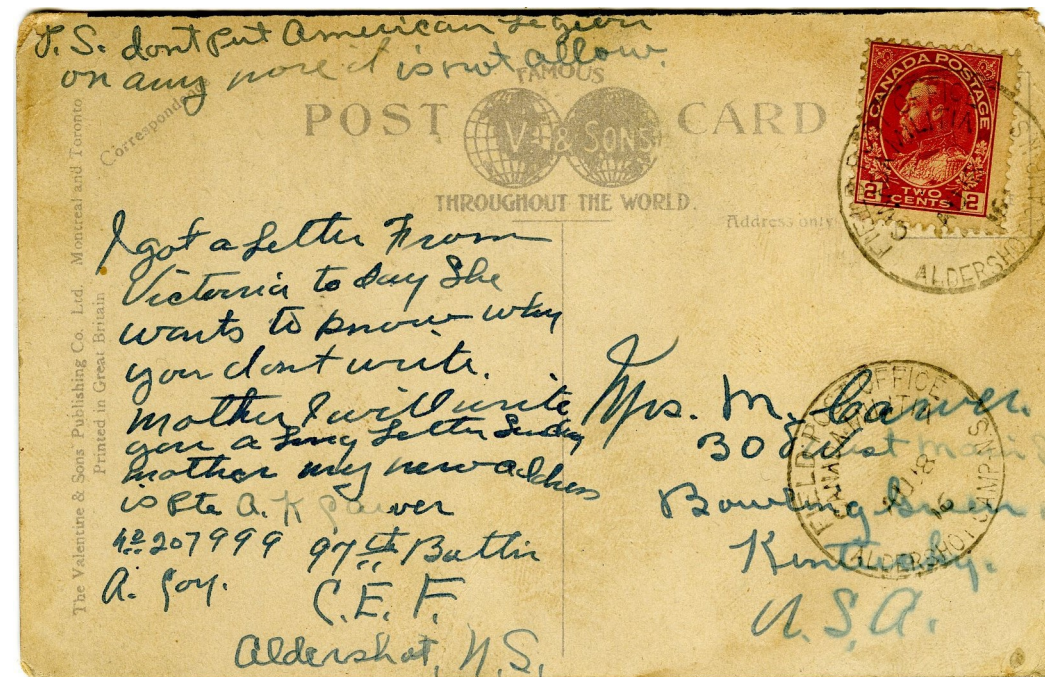
Established at its present location in 1904



Militia FPO
10.09.1910 –
12.07.1939



Camp single ring
26.06.1915 -
unknown



18 August 1916 - Postcard sent by Private A K Cawer asking for his mother to not use the words “American Legion”.

The 97th Infantry Battalion (American Legion) embarked for France on the 19 Sept 1916 and joined the Royal Canadian Regiment.



Barriefield Camp, Ontario

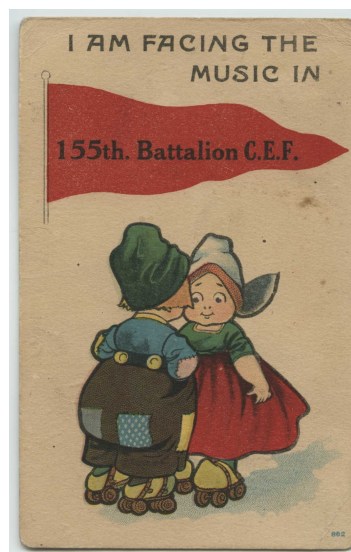
Established on mobilisation August 1914



Barriefield Militia FPO used
05.06.1916 – 02.08.1939



Barriefield Camp
single ring used
26.06.1915 -
unknown



Barriefield was the home base for the 38th (Ottawa), 59th (Ontario), 80th and the 155th (Quinte) Infantry Battalions, they all recruited within the confines of Ontario each concentrating on a particular County. As each Battalion reached it's full strength it embarked for England, the first being the 38th Btn June 1915 and last the 155th Btn October 1916.



Camps Beamsville, Calgary and Goderich

Beamsville Camp, Ontario



Beamsville Militia FPO
01.06.1918 – 18.12.1918

Beamsville Camp was the last Aerodrome to be built for the Royal Flying Corps in Canada. Opened in early 1918 on a 282 acre site it served as the home of the School of Aerial Fighting and Gunnery, both closed in Mar 1919.



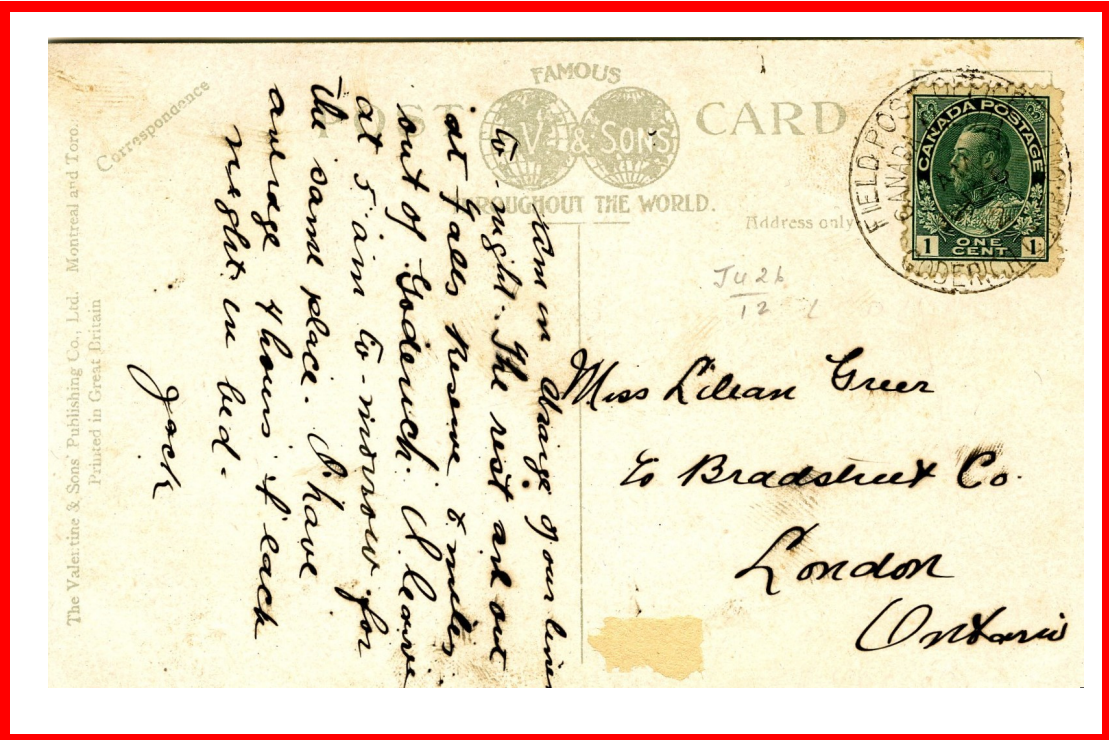
to England charged at 1c + 1c War Tax

Goderich Camp, Ontario



Goderich Militia FPO
2.3.06.1911 – 25.06.1912

Goderich Camp was very short lived and only used for one season for training.



25 June 1912 Local postcard on last day of use

Calgary Camp, Alberta



Calgary Militia FPO used
25.06.1912 – 20.10.1916

Calgary Camp was constructed on land leased from the Sarcee Indian Reserve and became known as Sarcee Camp. It was the largest camp in Western Canada and processed 45,000 troops comprising of thirty various military units.

Time Indicators Most of the Militia FPO and camp cancellers were supplied with interchangeable AM and PM indicators, however they were not always altered and in some camps they were not used.



1 August 1915 Postcard to Scotland showing PM indicator



26 May 1915 Postcard to England showing AM indicator

Camps Borden, Sewell and Hughes

Camp Borden, Ontario

27 April 1917 So called "pie" FPO with receiving Borden Militia FPO on rear dated 4 April 1917



Borden Militia FPO
07.07.1916 –
07.09.1938

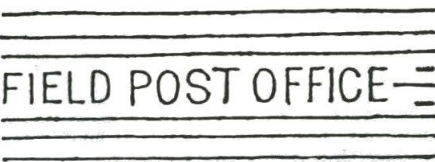


Borden "Pie" FPO
29.08.1917 -
unknown



Camp Borden was named after Sir Frederick Borden Minister of the Militia. Constructed by the 157th Battalion in May 1916 it became, in 1917, the first military aerodrome for the RFC.

9 August 1916 machine cancel



Machine FPO 03.07.1916 – 07.10.1917

Camp Hughes, Manitoba

Camp Hughes formerly known as Camp Sewell, founded 1909, was renamed after Major General Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia and Defence.



Sewell Militia FPO in use
between 21 June 1911 - 29
Oct 1915



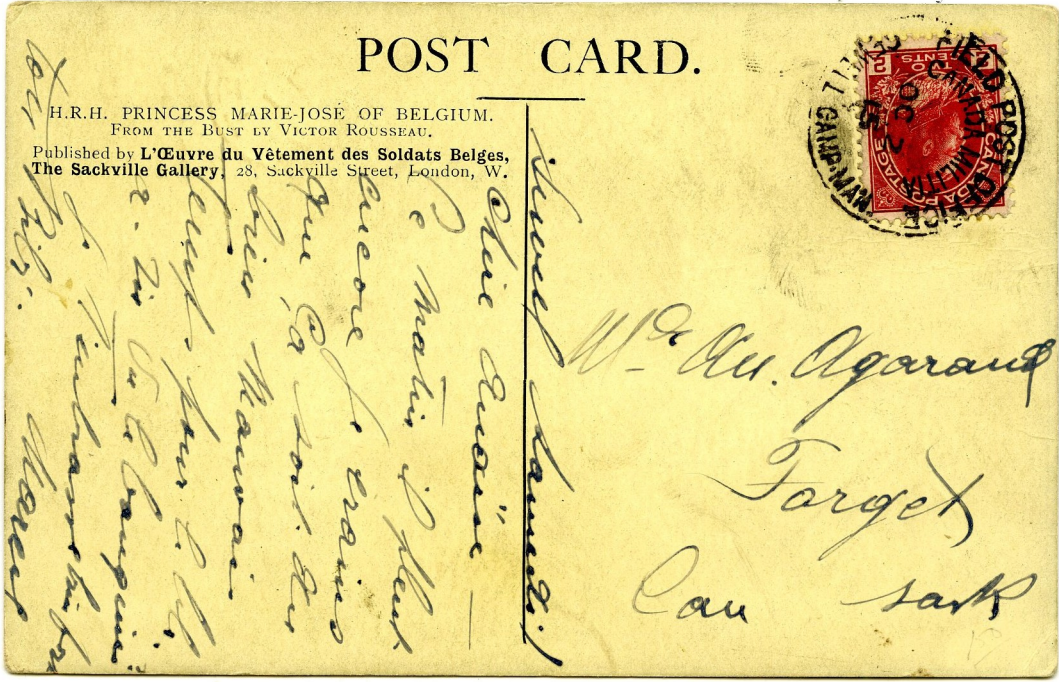
Type A in use
21 June - 10 Oct 1916



Type B in use
23 June - 03 Nov 1916



2 July 1916 type A Manitoba spelt in full



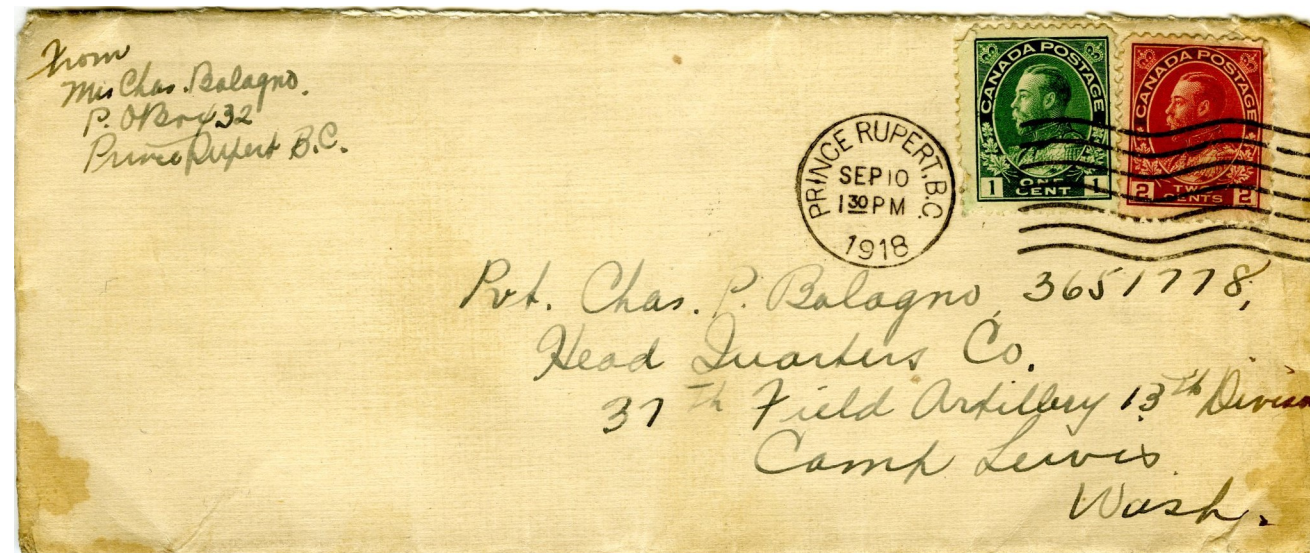
2 October 1915 Camp Sewell

Camps Levis and London

Camp Levis, Quebec



Levis Militia FPO in use
between 9 June 1913 - 16
Jul 1921



10 Sept 1918 incoming registered mail would be backstamped with a receiving cancel however this camp received mail through the local post office. Examples of incoming mail are very rare.



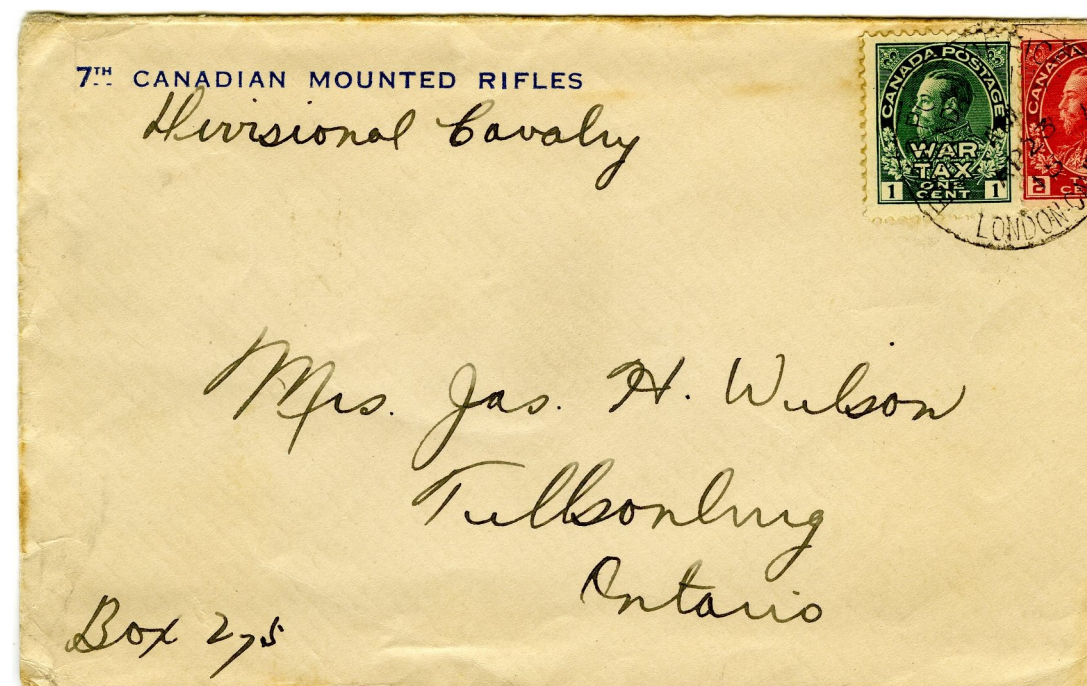
14 June 1914
back stamped Levis Quebec as this FPO transferred the mail directly into the local post office.

Camp London, Ontario

Created on mobilisation and disbanded at the end of the war.



**London Militia FPO in
use between 9 June 1913
– 9 Aug 1918**



23 April 1915 back stamped Levis, Quebec as this FPO transferred the mail directly into the local post office.



Camps Niagara and Petawawa

Niagara Camp, Ontario



Type B - 18 July 1916 postcard to England.
Note: 3 cents postage has been paid, there was confusion on the foreign postcard rate of 2 cents as the regulations appeared to exclude the War Tax on foreign destination postcard mail.

B & T record that 5 different cancellers are found in the military records but only three have been postally used.



Type B
16.06.1909 –
01.02.1919



Type C
03.10.1915 –
08.05 1941



Type D
23.08.1915 –
17 07.1937



Type D proof date 10 August 1915. 14 Aug 1915 letter at the 2 cent +1 Cent internal letter rate. Earliest known date of use date.

Petawawa Camp, Ontario



Type A - 12 June 1915 Special Delivery letter from Camp Petawawa Camp to Ottawa franked at the 14c rate of 2c postage + War Tax + Special Delivery.



Type A
28.06.1910 –
02.09.1937



Type B
10.08.1916 –
03.07 1941

B & T record 2 different cancellers both postally used. Type B has a hyphen between "CAMP - ONT"



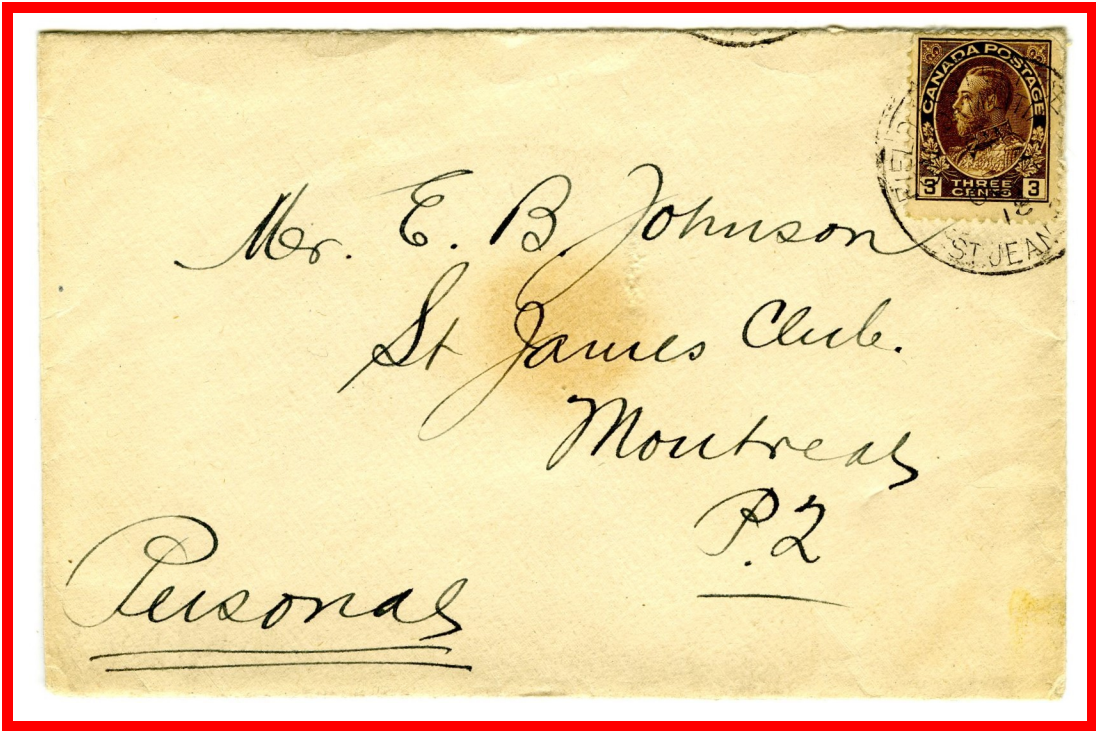
Type B - 23 June 1917 Letter to England with the 2c value inclusive of War Tax.

Camps St Jean, Sussex and National Exhibition Centre

St Jean, Quebec



St Jean Militia FPO
24 Sept – 8 Nov 1918



Saint-Jean, Quebec, was chosen as the training site for the 22nd Battalion, the French speaking battalion known as the Van Doos. It was later used as a sub-camp of Camp Borden for the training of the Polish Army, made up of 22,000 North Americans of Polish descent, during 1917.

Sussex Camp, New Brunswick



Sussex Militia FPO
22 June 1911 – 13 July 1939



17 June 1915 Postcard to Medicine Hat Alberta note time indicator not used .

Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, Ontario

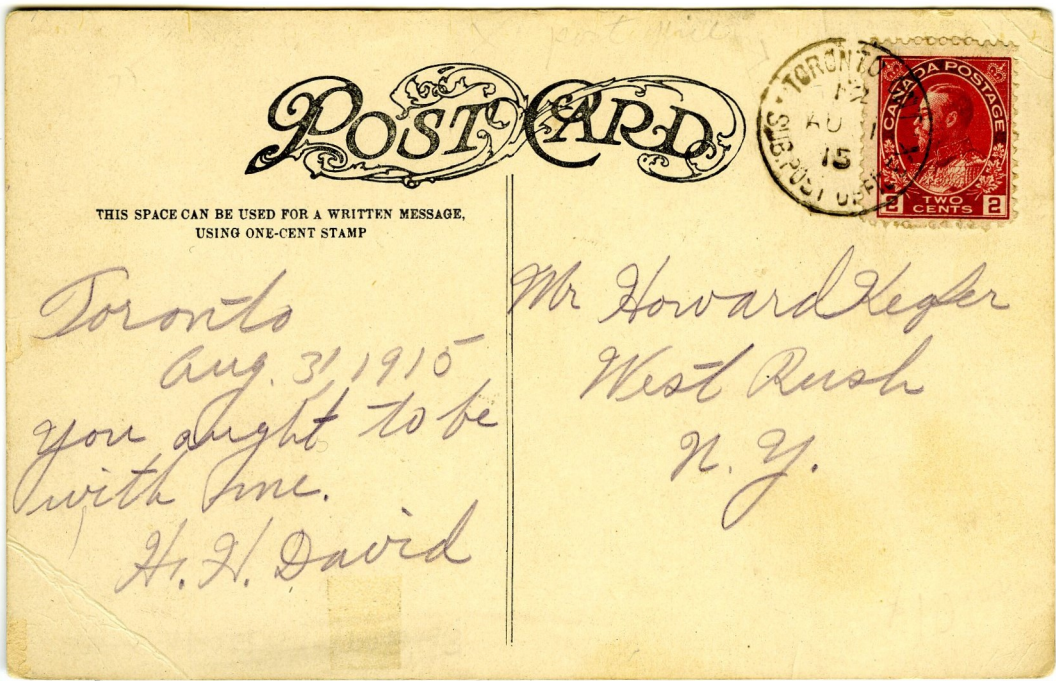


Sub Post Office X
25 Aug 1910 – unknown



Toronto FPO machine canceller
17 Jan – 28 April 1918

The Canadian Militia turned the Toronto National Exhibition into a large training camp and during the annual fair manned a recruiting office. The company were housed at the nearby Stanley Barracks where they had their own Sub Post Office.



31 August 1915 Postcard to small town in New York State, USA .



24 April 1918 Local postcard

Valcartier Camp, British Columbia

99, B. E. Valcartier Camp Quebec
The Valentine & Sons Publishing Co., Ltd.
Montreal and Toronto
Printed in Great Britain

Correspondence

Dear Jan. Got her all right
this morn'g. I was very glad
to see you before I left. I was
nearly very late that morning
Dick was late he didn't come
until the next train. I
haven't seen Bert here yet
I hope this place here all
right. There are very few
in the 1st or 2nd
I will write you later
on. I will write to you, I will
when you go down there.

FAMOUS
POST CARD
V. & SONS
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

Address only

1 CANADA POSTAGE
ONE CENT

Valcartier

Mr. S. McEnery
16 Cambridge St
Toronto
Ont.

Special
3831

Col' J. B. Miller,
Polson Iron Works,
Toronto,
Ontario.

In haste



CAMP LEASIDE
-ONTARIO-

Leaside
Mar 11/18.

39

Mr. Ernest Jeffer,
Nelsley,
Sask.

Box 444.

CANADA POSTAGE
2 CENTS

Vernon Photo Co., Vernon, B.C.
One to all
[Signature]

POST CARD

MADE IN CANADA
CORRESPONDENCE HERE

Canada postage
ONE CENT

Canada postage
ONE CENT

VERNON CAMP JUL 15
VERNON CAMP
Mr. Wm. D. [unclear]
1487-11th Ave. W.
Vancouver
B.C.

What do you think of the
meat? This came in one
fine country though the
best no fence. Am doing
fine getting fat already
Had a blackbird in the
in the lake tonight. The
water was so clear as
crystal.

JULY 2nd 1915