Mail from Ukraine to Canada

Synopsis

Mail from Ukraine to the Canadian diaspora, 1888–1946.

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to Canada

UKRAINE here means the country whose borders were those just prior to the 2014 Russian land-grab. Historically, there has been emigration from Ukraine to almost everywhere in the world, especially to North America and western Europe. The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada was the second largest in the world (largest is the one in Russia), but after the 2022 invasion, the diaspora in Poland was enlarged by refugees, pushing Canada's to third place. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ukrainian territories were divided among Russia/Soviet Union, Poland (briefly), and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

There have been various waves of Ukrainian emigration. In the 1880s, tens of thousands of Mennonite settlers in and around Zaporizhzha left, about 8000 to settlements in Manitoba, and offshoots to Saskatchewan. This was a result of increasing official hostility to their presence.

In the 1890s, agricultural resettlement in Austria-Hungary caused a massive emigration of Ukrainians (around 175,000 over 1891–1914). At about the same time, many Ukrainians in the Russian portion (including a significant Jewish population) emigrated, owing to the usual Czarist mistreatment. About 100,000 (in total) came to Canada prior to the first World War. Unfortunately, Ukrainian immigrants to Canada suffered throughout WW I, because they were treated as *enemy aliens,* and thousands were interned.

From about 1920 to the mid-1930s, about 70,000 western Ukrainians settled in Canada. This was in part due to economic crises, but also due to Soviet farm collectivization and the Holodomyr (in the 1930s).

The vast majority of the emigrants were agrarian and settled in the prairie provinces. However, communities also developed in larger centres, such as Toronto, Montreal, and Hamilton. From about 1923, those who opposed or fought against Russian hegemony (during the Russian civil war) also escaped. This included professionals, but the majority became workers in industrial plants and mines in central and western Canada.

Jewish Ukrainians had another reason to emigrate: increasing antisemitism (fomented by Russia from the 1880s on) and frequent pogroms. Within the Russian Empire, Jews were almost completely restricted to the Pale of Settlement (including Ukraine and Poland), with increasing restrictions on mobility and profession. Pogroms in Ukraine (with the connivance or participation of both the Red and White armies) resulted in the deaths of at least 60,000, just in the period 1919–21. Thousands were killed in (Nazi-inspired) pogroms in Lviv, Ternópil, and Zolochiv in 1941.

The vast majority of Jewish-Ukrainian immigrants settled in cities in Quebec, later Ontario, and smaller groups in the west, especially Winnipeg. They tended to be working class. Jewish immigration to Canada was severely limited from the mid-1920s to the end of World War II, and very few were admitted in this period.

We show chronologically covers from Ukraine to Canada, beginning with two to the Mennonite settlements in southern Manitoba (1888, 1891). All of the remaining covers are registered. One (1912) from Ukrainian territory in Austria-Hungary, and then mostly from Russian Ukraine. A number of the covers were mailed during an inflationary period (1922–3) and this is reflected in the postage applied.

Towns of origin and their Oblasts include Khortitzia (Zaporizhzhia), Loysach (Ternópil), Staraya Oshytsia (Khmelnytskyi), Zalishchyky (Ternópil), Perehinski (Ivano-Frankivsk), Koriukivka (Tchernihiv), Federivka (Kirovhrad), Pavlohrad (Dnipropetrovsk), Kharkhiv, Terlitsia (Cherkassy), Ulashkivtsi (Ternópil), Ternópil, and Lysychansk (Luhansk).

Khortitsia Island, 1888

Within the city of Zaporizhzhia, then known as Alexandrovsk (Russia). Now in Zaporizhzhia Oblast. Between 1874 and 1880, eight thousand of the approximately 45,000 Mennonites in Ukraine and neighbourhood (many of whom had settled in Zaporizhzhia) migrated to Manitoba; some subsequently went to Saskatchewan. The Manitoba settlers largely farmed in an area around Morden in the far south of Manitoba, near the U S border. See next page for location of Zaporizhzhia.
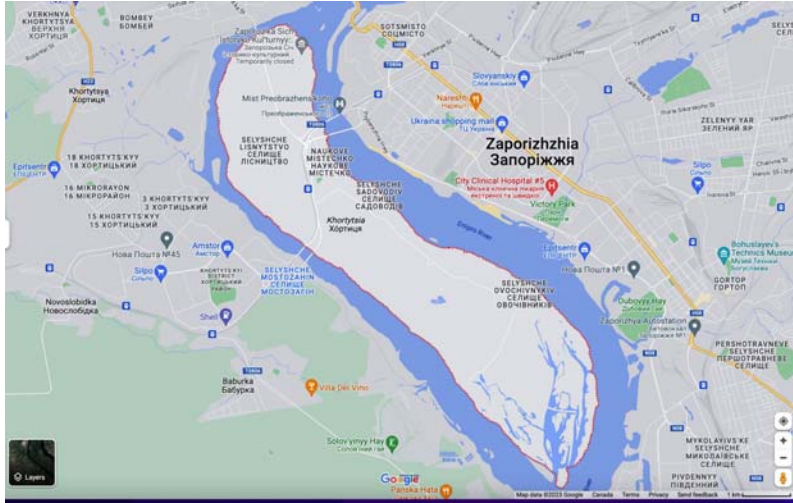
Khortitsia Island, Zaporizhzhia

Morden, Manitoba

Khortitsa to Blumenort (MB), *forwarded to Schanzenfeld*, 11 March 1888 (Julian). Postage of 7 kopeks, U P U letter rate. Originally addressed to Wilhelm Peters (of whom I could find no information) in Blumenort, to the care of an early leader of the settlers, Peter Höppner, Waldheim, with *Insel Chortitz* in parenthesis.

Reverse. The Reinland postmark (of which there are two strikes) is misspelled *Rienland*. Received at Winnipeg 10 April, at Gretna 11, Reinland 13 & 14, back to Gretna 14, Blumenort 17, and Schanzenfeld 18. All these offices are close by, as is Waldheim, which had no post office.
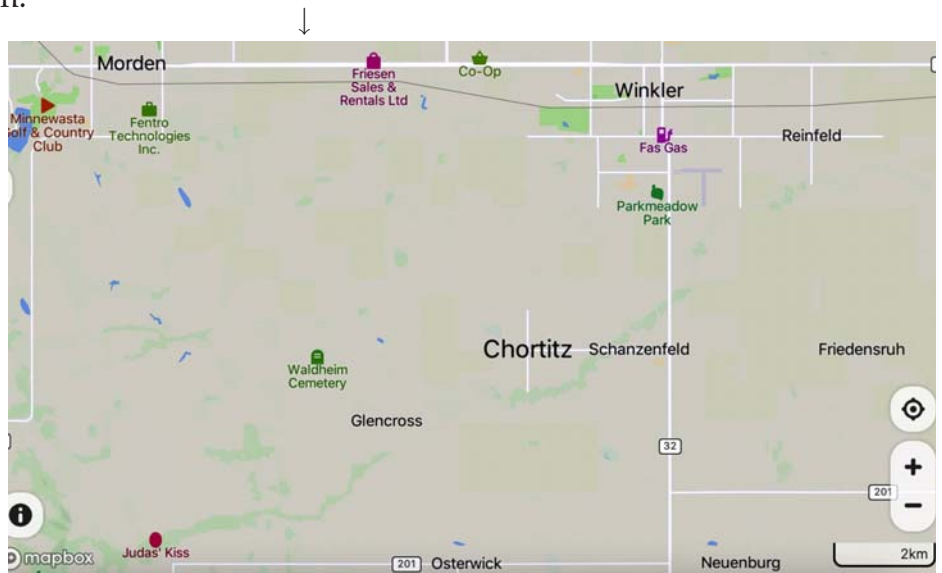
Alexandrovsk, 1891

City in southern unoccupied Ukraine; name changed to Zaporizhzhia in 1921. Then part of Russia. Now administrative centre for the Oblast of the same name. Southern part of the oblast is currently (September 2023) occupied.
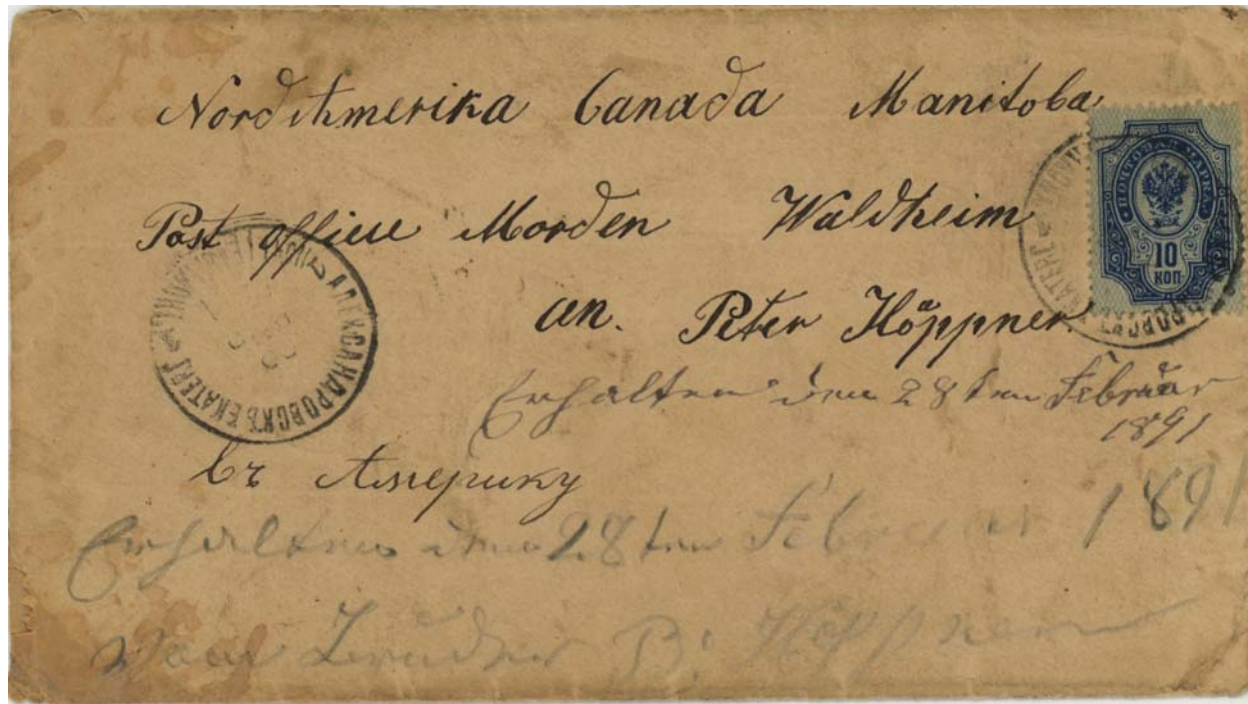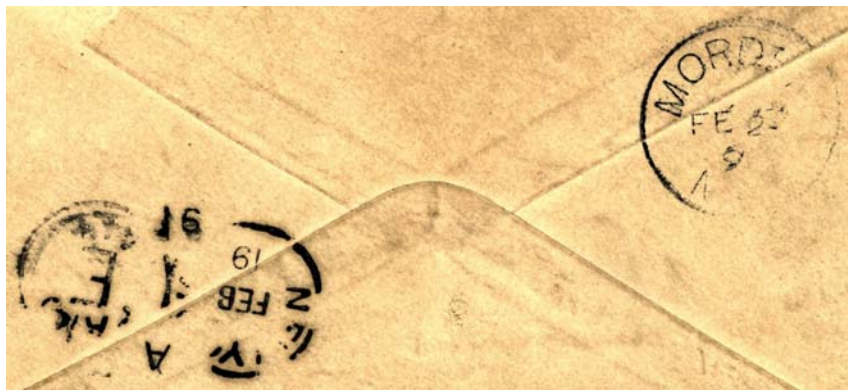
Letter to Mennonite settlers near Morden.

Zaporizhzhia within its oblast

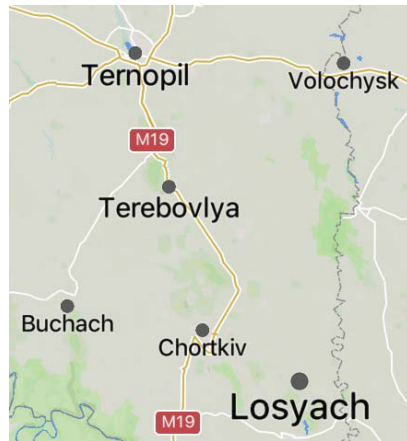Current location of Waldheim cemetary, near Morden

Aleksandrovsk to PO Morden/Waldheim (MB), January 1891 (Julian calender). Properly paid 10 kopeks (U P U rate). Via New York and Morden.

Losyach, 1912

Then part of Austro-Hungarian Empire. Now in Ternópil Oblast, western Ukraine.

Ternópil Oblast and Losyach

Arnprior, in Renfrew County

Losiacz (now Losyach in Ukraine)–Arnprior (Ont), 12 March 1912.
   Postage 50 Heller, made up of 25 H for each of UPU letter rate and registration. Purple experimental Montreal registration handstamp, and dotted Montreal dater.
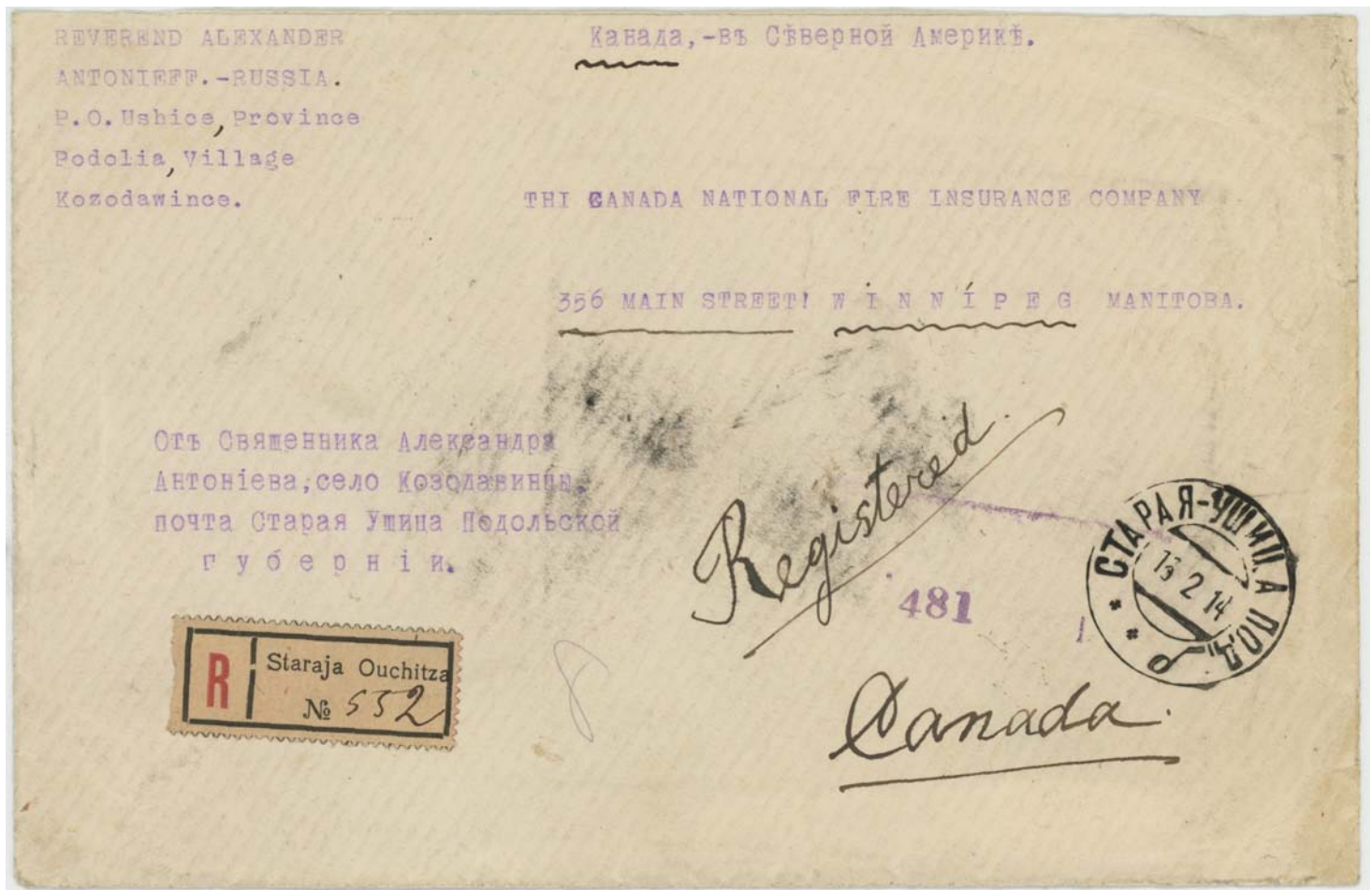
Staraya Ushytsia, 1914
Then in Russia. Now in Khmelnytskyi Oblast (western Ukraine).

Staraya Ushytsia, Khmelnytskyi Oblast.

Kozodawince (*Podolia, now in Ukraine*)–*Winnipeg*, 1914. Postmarked Staraya Ouchitza (now Staraya Ushytsia, Khmelnytskyi Oblast). Rated 10 kopeks for each of UPU letter and registration. Via Montreal. There was mass emigration to western Canada from Podolia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Zalishchyky, 1922

Zalishchyky was the site of numerous pogroms in the late nineteenth century, which resulted in considerable emigration to Canada. It was captured by the Russians in 1914, who expelled and murdered the Jewish population. Following the Polish-Ukrainian war, it became part of Poland. Ternópil Oblast, western Ukraine.

Zalishchyky within Ternópil Oblast

Zaleszczyki (*now Zalishchyky in Ukraine*)–*Montreal*, September 1922.
  Rated 50 Marks for each of registration and first UPU letter rates (early inflationary period).
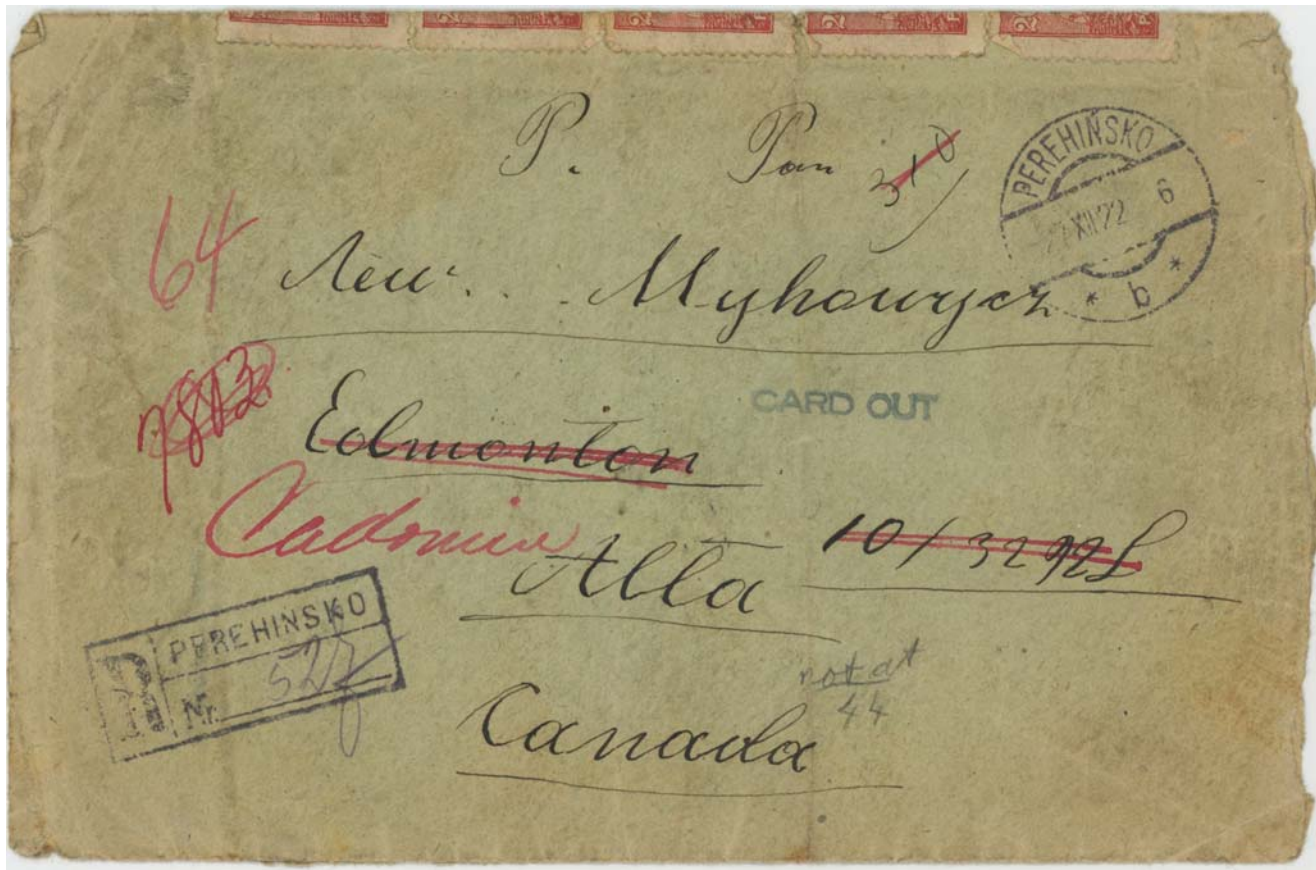
Perehinske, 1922

Then in Poland. Now in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast (western Ukraine).

Perehinske, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast; Cadomin, Alberta

Perehinsko (now Perehinske in Ukraine)–Edmonton, forwarded to Cadomin, 27 December 1922. Inflationary postage of 20 × 50 Marks; 200 Mk registration and quadruple U P U letter, 4 × 200 Mk.

CARD OUT refers to notice left at addressee's residence, or postal box; likely at Edmonton.

Cadomin was a coal-mining hamlet in midwestern Alberta named after the Canadian Dominion Mining Company, not far from the B C border.
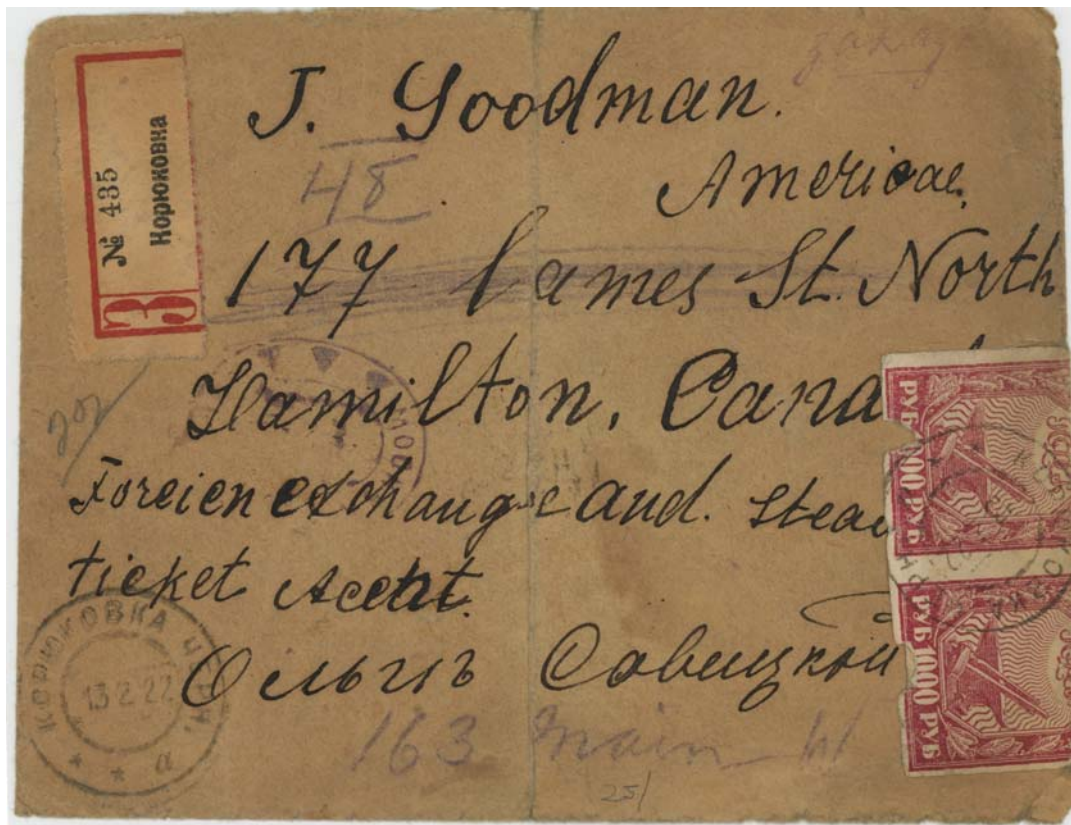
Koriukivka, 1922

Then in the Soviet Union. Now in Tchernihiv Oblast (northern Ukraine). Under siege by Russia, March–April 2022, but not captured.


Koriukivka, Tchernihiv Oblast.

Koryukovka (now Koriukivka, Tchernihiv Oblast—I had trouble determining this)–Hamilton (Ont), 13 February 1922. Combined (inflationary) rate single U P U letter with registration, 10 000 Rubles (in effect, 21 November 1921–22 (?) March 1922; a block of ten 1 000 R stamps going around the front.

   In March 1943, Koriukivka was totally destroyed in an act of mass murder by the Nazis (all but a handful of the town's 6 700 people were killed). It was rebuilt after the war.

Federivka, 1922

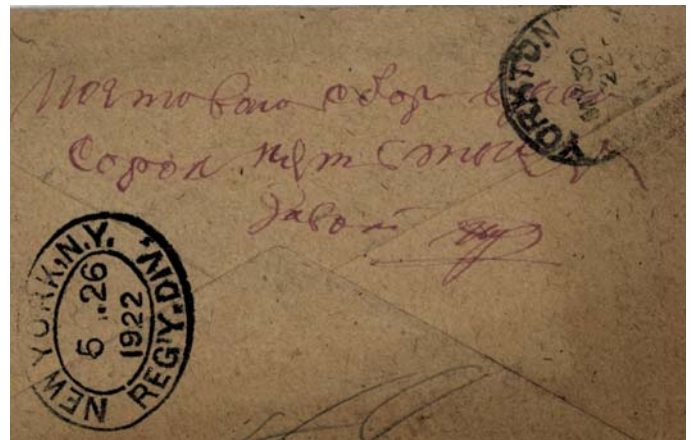Then in the Soviet Union, now in Kirovhrad Oblast. A very small village northeast of Zaporizhzhia.
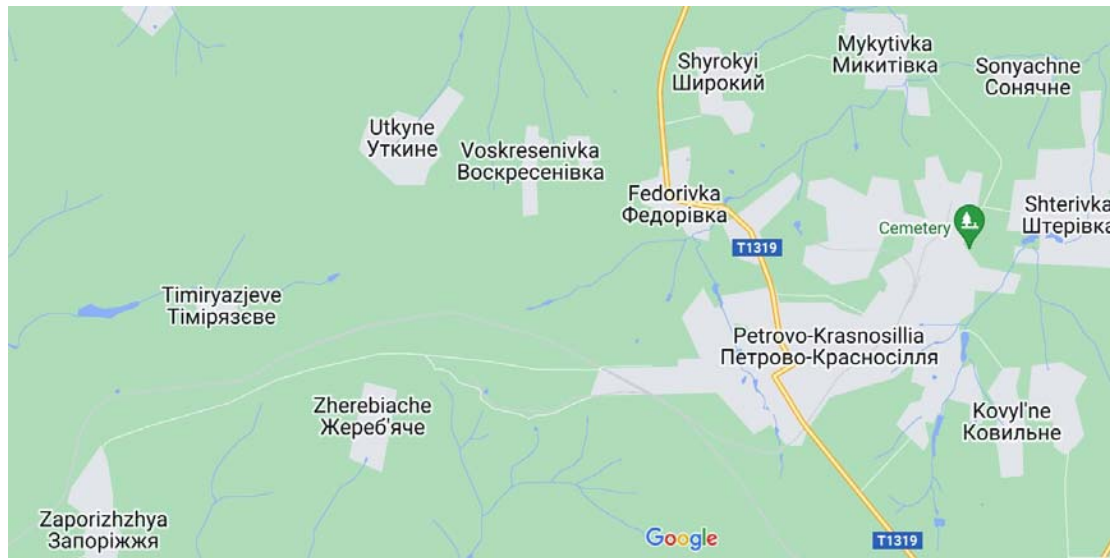
Fedorivka with Zaporizhzhia at lower left

Yorkton, Sask

Fedorovka (*now Fedorivka*)–*Yorkton* (*Sask*), 20 April 1922. No stamps (nor does it appear that it ever had any)! Combined ᴜ ᴘ ᴜ letter and registration 60 000 Rubles (1 April–25 May 1922). Paid in cash (because of the lack of high denomination stamps?).

Khortitsia, 1922

Then in the Soviet Union. Now in Zaporizhzhia Oblast; includes an island.
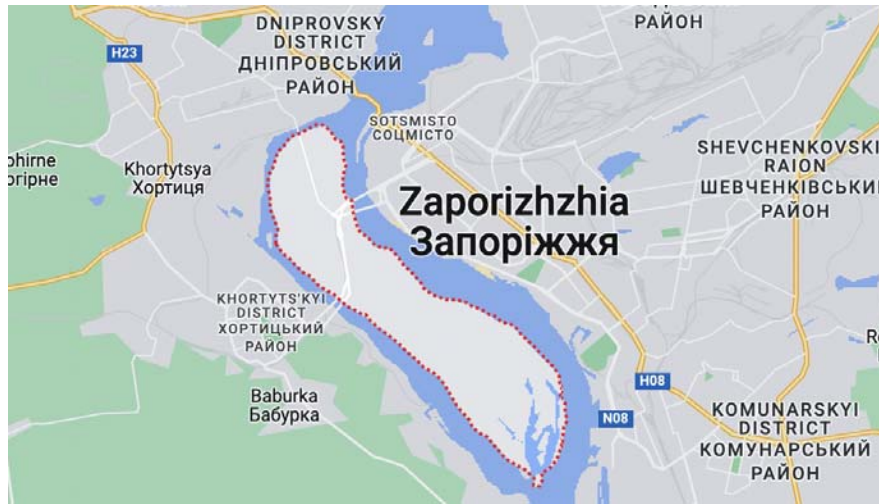
Khortitsia in the city of Zaporizhzhia, including the island

Wymark, Saskatchewan

Khortitsia (*Ukraine*)–*Wymark* (s k), 10 June 1922 (*see next page for franking*). З[аказное] Хортиця./Екатер. губ.
Below, the gummed side of the stamps was postmarked in New York and Wymark.

Khortitsia, continued

Inflationary franking

Two complete panes of 25 stamps overprinted 7 500 R, six unoverprinted 250 R, and one each of 22 500 and 1 000 R stamps, totalling 400 000 R. This was combined registration and first weight UPU letter rate 1–30 June 1922.

Khortitsia was a Mennonite community largely destroyed in the aftermath of the Revolution; much of the remaining population emigrated to the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Image is about 75%.

Pavlohrad, 1923

Then in the Soviet Union. Now in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, central eastern Ukraine.

Pavlohrad in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast

Pavlograd (now Pavlohrad, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine)–Montreal, 14 March 1923. Combined U P U letter & registration, 10 Rubles (the starting date for this rate is given as 25 March 1923, but either this is inaccurate, or is the Gregorian date and the postmark uses the Julian calendar; Russia had switched to Gregorian in 1918). In effect until 5 April 1924. Applied 10 × 100 R, which had been devalued at the rate of 1:100.
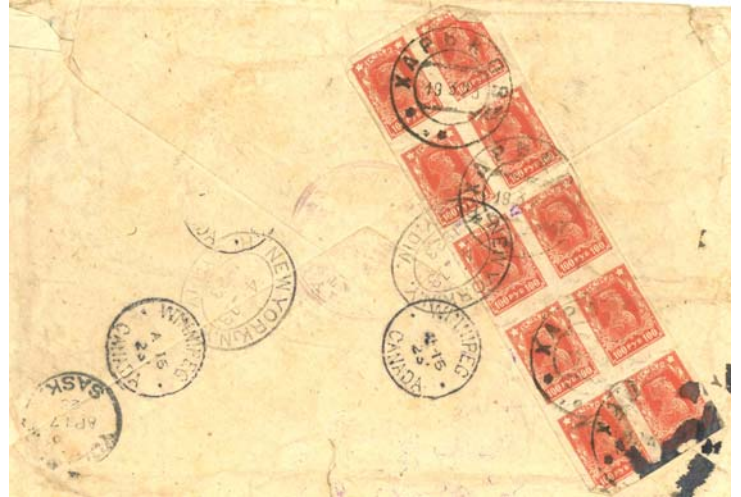
Kharkhiv, 1923
Then in the Soviet Union. Now the administrative centre of Kharkhiv Oblast (northeastern Ukraine)


Kharkhiv in Ukraine

Kharkov (now Kharkhiv)–Yorkton (SK), 19 March 1923. Combined UPU letter & registration, 10 Rubles. The starting date in Karlinsky is given as 25 March 1923; this and the Pavlohrad cover show it began somewhat earlier. In effect until 5 April 1924. 10 × 100 R, devalued at 1:100.
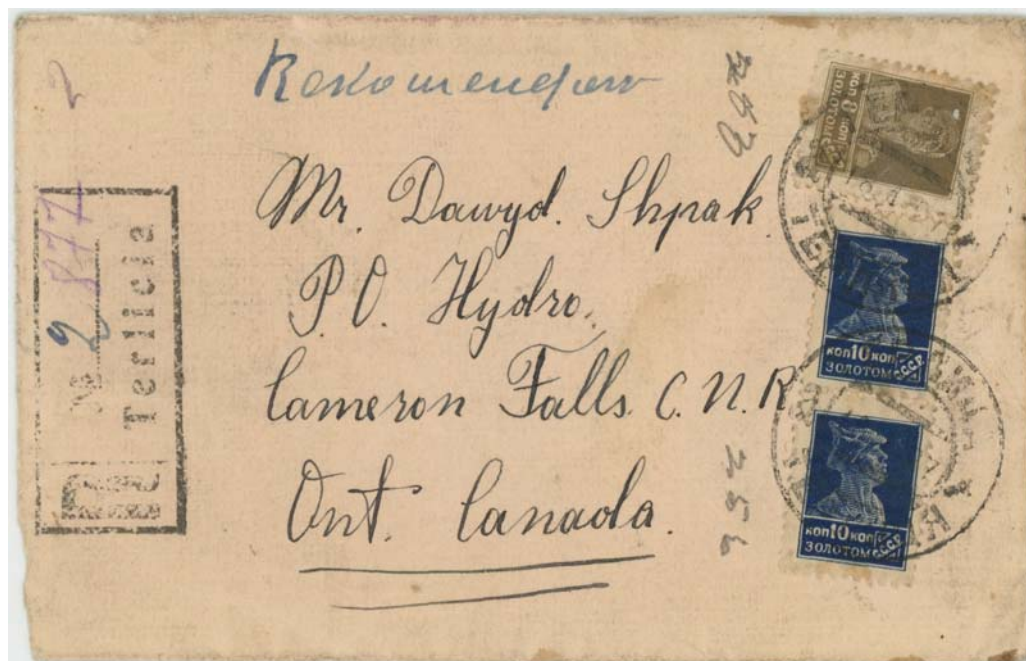 The 12 k Lenin stamp seemingly does not belong.

Terlitsia, 1923

A tiny settlement, then in the Soviet Union. Now in Cherkassy Oblast (central Ukraine).
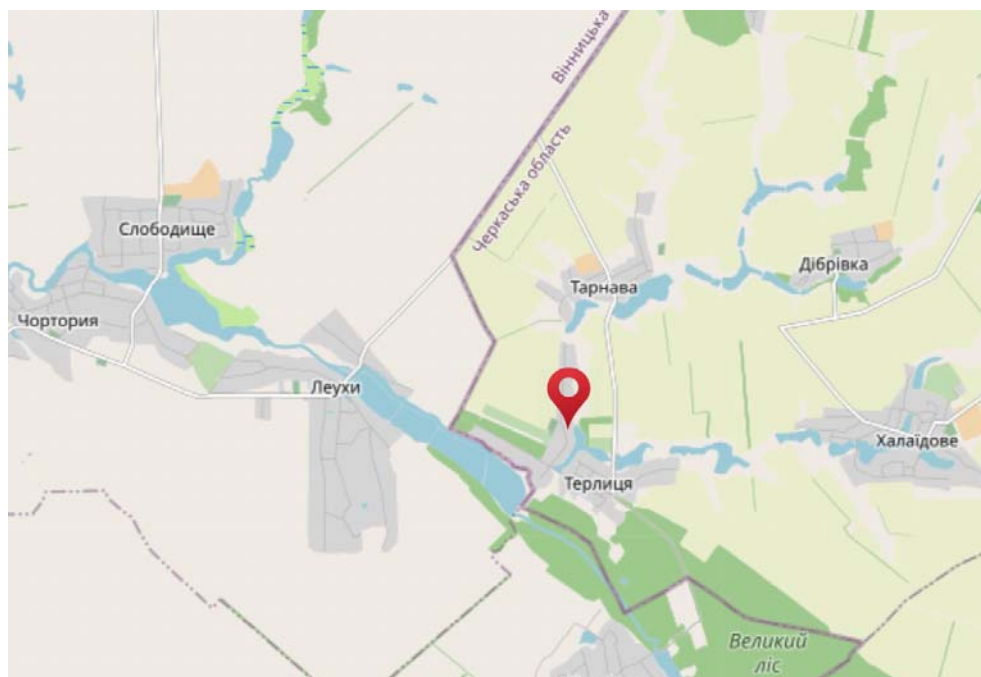
Terlitsia in Cherkassy Oblast, near Vinnitzka

Hydro, Nipissing District, O N

Terlicia (Terlitsia, Ukraine)–Hydro (Ont; yes, this is a post office, open 1922–39) via Kyiv, 18 January 1927. U P U letter rate and registration, each 14 kopeks (rates in effect 1 October 1925 to 30 June 1930).

Ulashkivtsi, 1925

Then in Poland. Now in Ternópil Oblast, near Chortkiv (on a preceding map)

Mundare, Alberta. Home of the world's largest *kovbasa* (*kielbasa* in Polish), a type of garlic sausage

Ulaszkowce (now Ulashkivtsi in Ternópil Oblast, Ukraine)–Mundare (Alta), April 1925. 30 Groczy for each of registration and UPU letter. Mundare (2021 population: 679) founded 1907, rather surprisingly had a post office at this time.
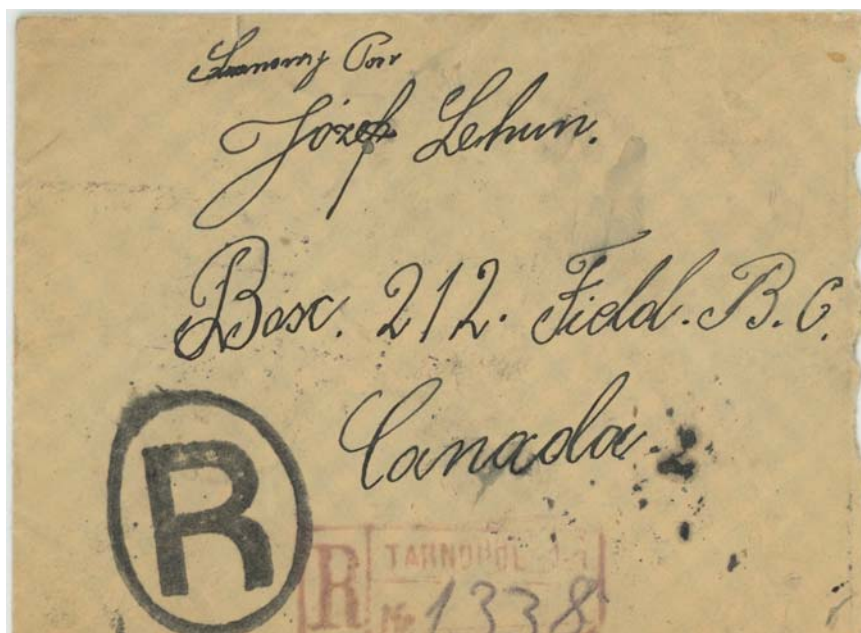
Ternópil, 1925

Then in Poland. Now administrative centre of Ternópil Oblast.

Ternópil in Ternópil.

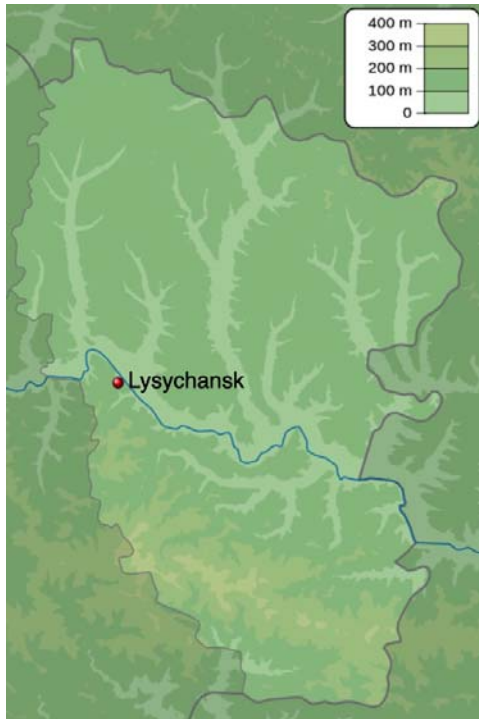Field, BC (unincorporated); Burgess shale discovery ca 1909.

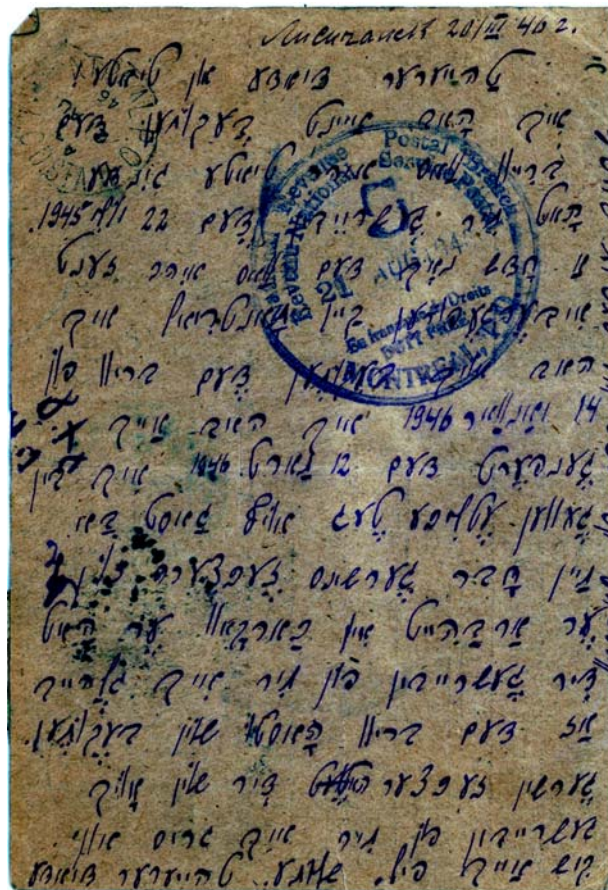*Tarnopol* (*now Ternópil in Ukraine*)–*Field* (*BC*), 1925. 30 Groczy for each of registration and U P U letter.

Lysychansk, 1946

Then in the Soviet Union. Now in Luhansk Oblast (western Ukraine); currently (September 2023) Russian-occupied, but close to the front.

Lysychansk in Luhansk Oblast

Message in Yiddish

Lysychansk–Montreal, via Riga, 24 July 1946. Registered postcard. Rates given in literature as U P U postcard 30 kopeks and registration 80 k; but 130 k applied. Canadian customs.