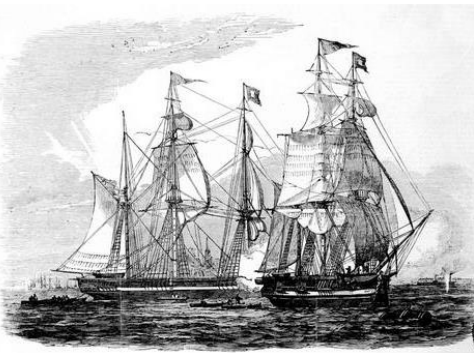


Special Mail Routes of Rupert’s Land and The Red River Valley



Hudson’s Bay Company ships
Prince Albert and *Prince Rupert*.

By 1835, settlers could send and receive mail through the Hudson’s Bay Company supply ships. The ships arrived at York Factory in the Spring with supplies, and departed for England in the Fall with the season’s furs. Additionally, an overland and water route through Fort William and Sault Ste. Marie on Lake Superior was used, though it proved difficult to maintain.

The opening of Pembina 68 miles to the south provided the most reliable communication route. By 1853, monthly ox cart trains traveled between the Red River Settlement and Pembina. From Pembina, these ox carts brought furs, supplies, and mail to and from St. Paul and connected with Eastern rail lines.

In 1868, the British Parliament authorized the sale of Rupert’s Land to Canada, ending the Hudson’s Bay Company control of the area and leading to the establishment of the Province of Manitoba in 1870.

Four special mail routes to and from the Red River Colony area were employed:

- **To and from Montreal by the Ottawa River – Canoe relays to Rupert’s Land and beyond.**
- **Through York Factory and Norway House – Canoe and York boat relays connected the south and west with Hudson’s Bay Company ships at Hudson’s Bay.**
- **Via Sault Ste. Marie – Ox carts, canoes, and toboggans carried mail to and from Fort William on Lake Superior to Sault Ste. Marie and Ontario.**
- **Via Pembina – Ox cart trains through Pembina in the Minnesota (and later Dakota) Territory to St. Paul connected with rail lines in La Crosse to Chicago and the East.**

This exhibit shows examples from each of the routes in use highlighting the rates, routes, and markings employed from the opening of regular communications in the 1830s, through the establishment of the Province of Manitoba in 1870.

Noteworthy items are displayed within red borders.



York boat

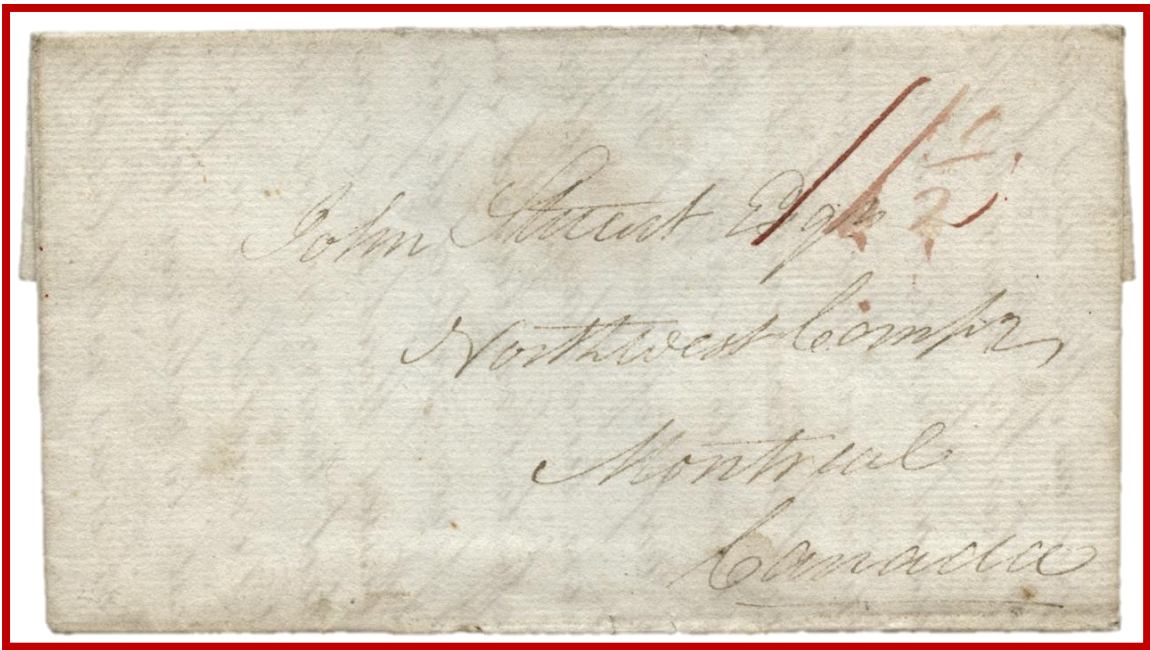
The Hudson’s Bay Company, under the governorship of the King’s cousin, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, was granted a charter in 1670 over much of the central and western wilderness that would eventually become the nation of Canada. Operating its fur trade out of their headquarters at York Factory on Hudson’s Bay, the Company acted as the de facto government of this vast territory, dubbed “Rupert’s Land.”

An 1811 grant of 116,000 square miles of land to Lord Selkirk by the Hudson’s Bay Company opened the land south of Lake Winnipeg along the Red River to settlement to non-fur traders. However, communications to and from the colony were sketchy at best.



Red River ox cart

From Montreal to the Pacific Coast by Canoe Brigade



21st April 1822

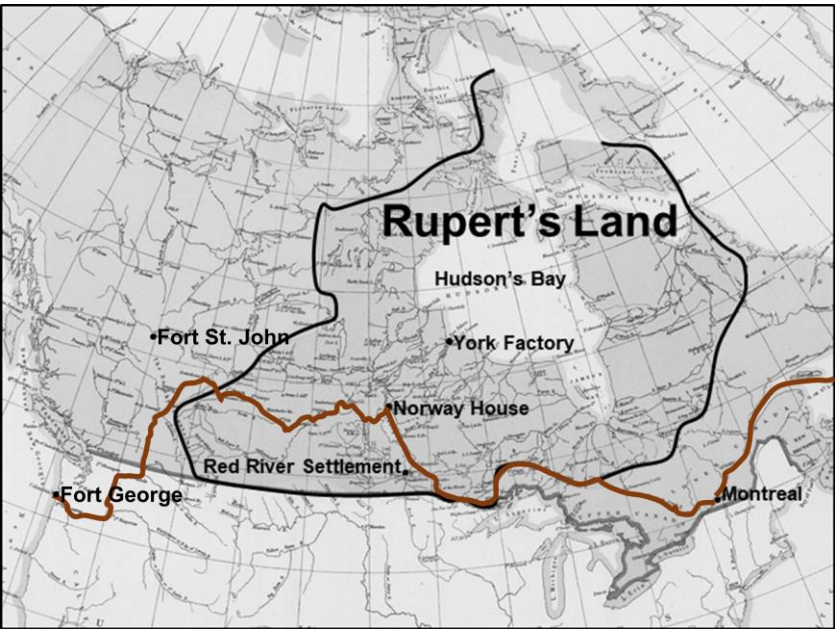
Dated “Laggan Vale [Scotland], April 21st 1822.”

Private ship transport to Montreal. There rated 11½d due (2½d incoming ship letter plus 9d local postage). Sent across the continent by Hudson’s Bay Company annual canoe brigade courier. The transcontinental journey took close to a year to complete.

John Stuart joined the North West Company in 1796 and was one of the key figures in the establishment of fur trade outpost in the West over the follow three decades.

Following the consolidation of the North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1821, Stuart was made a chief factor and remained in charge of New Caledonia (present day British Columbia) at Fort St. John, the administrative center. At the time he was located at Fort George (in present day Astoria, Oregon). He retired from the HBCo in 1835 and moved back to Scotland.

Lake Stuart in British Columbia is named for him.

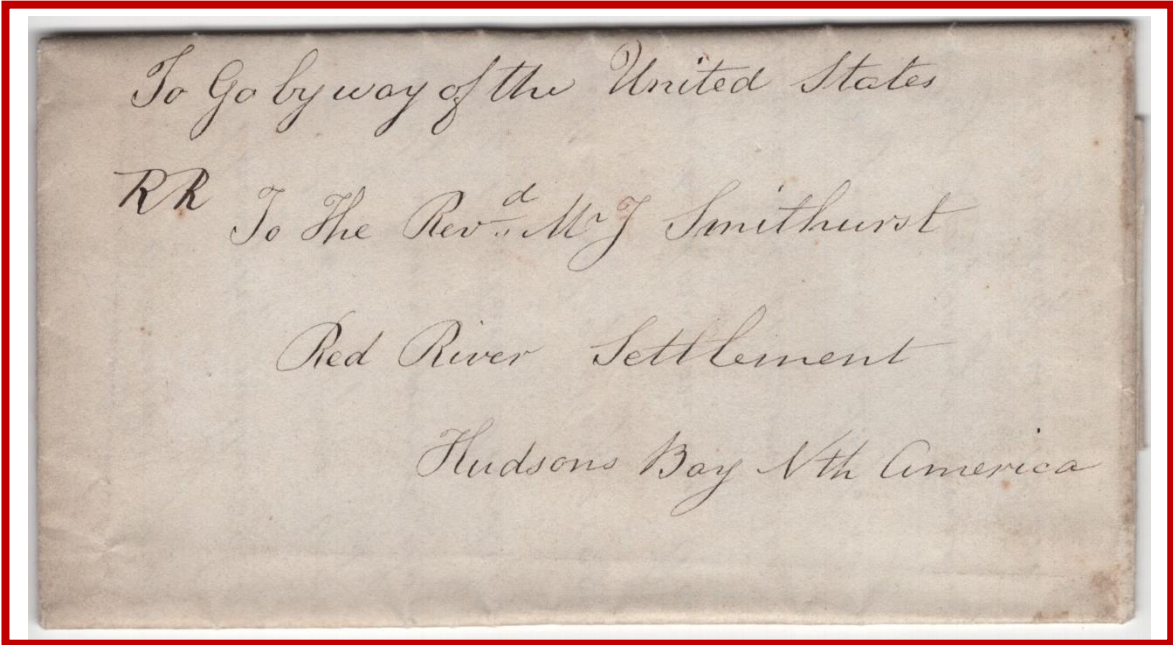


Key to map markings:

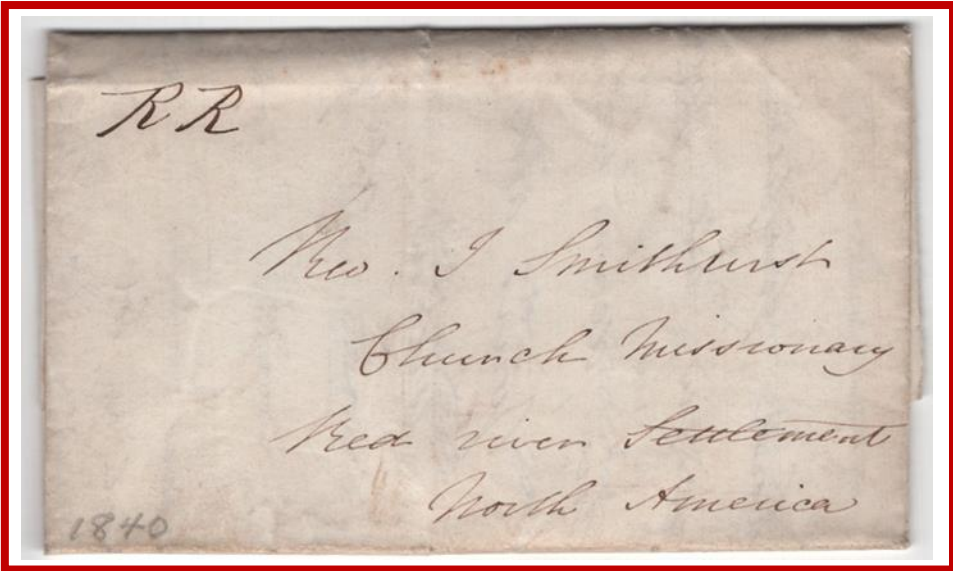
- British/Canadian mails
- United States mails
- Carriage outside of government mails

Through York Factory and Norway House

Hudson’s Bay Company Supply Ships From England



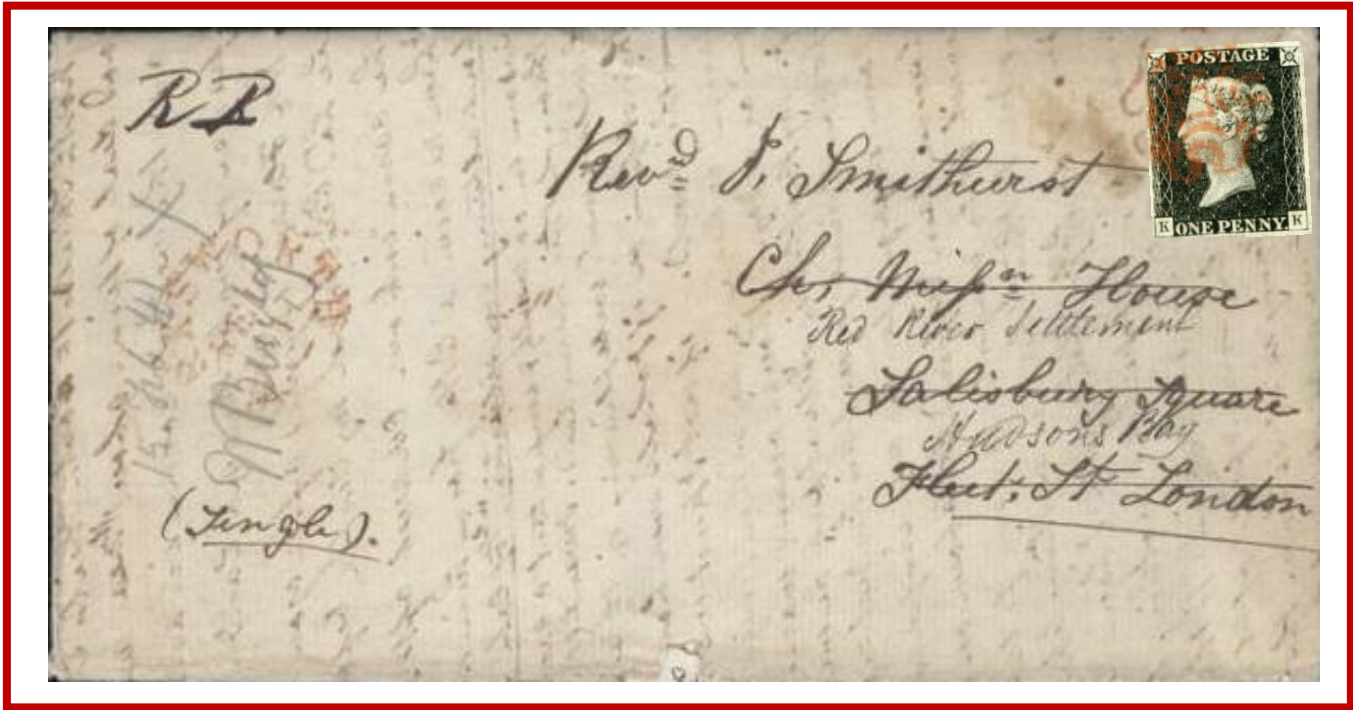
4th February 1840
Endorsed “To Go by way of the United States”, which was not followed.
Private carriage by Hudson's Bay Company on ship *Prince of Wales*.
Spring 1840 supply trip to York Factory.
Then by Hudson's Bay Company York boat and canoe to Red River Settlement.



6th July 1840
Private carriage from London on Hudson's Bay Company ship *Prince Rupert*
Fall 1840 supply trip to York Factory.
Then by York boat and canoe to Red River Settlement.

Hudson’s Bay Company supply ships made twice-a-year round trips between London and York Factory delivering supplies for the trappers and traders, returning with furs and other collected materials. Writers friendly to the Hudson's Bay Company were allowed to send letters to the North American settlements. Letters were sent to Fleet Street, London, sorted by HBCo., bundled, and the top letter marked “RR” or “RRS” (Red River Settlement), “YF” (York Factory), or “NR” (Norway House), depending upon destination.

Fewer than a dozen letters with HBCo. routing markings have been recorded.



17th February 1841
Wirksworth, FE 17 1841 datestamp.
Penny black adhesive paying postage from Wirksworth to London.
London 18 FE 1841 transit datestamp on verso.
Re-addressed by Hudson’s Bay Company to Red River Settlement and endorsed “RR”.
Private carriage from London on Hudson's Bay Company Spring 1841 supply trip to York Factory.
Then by York boat and canoe to Red River Settlement.

As originally mailed from Wirksworth–adhesive is a replacement.



23rd February 1843
Wirksworth, FE 23 1843 datestamp.
Manuscript “P1” denoting cash prepayment of postage to London.
London “tombstone” FE 24 1843 transit datestamp.
Private carriage from London on Hudson's Bay Company ship *Prince Rupert*
Spring 1843 supply trip to York Factory.
Then by York boat and canoe to Red River Settlement.

Through York Factory and Norway House

Fort Chipewyan to London

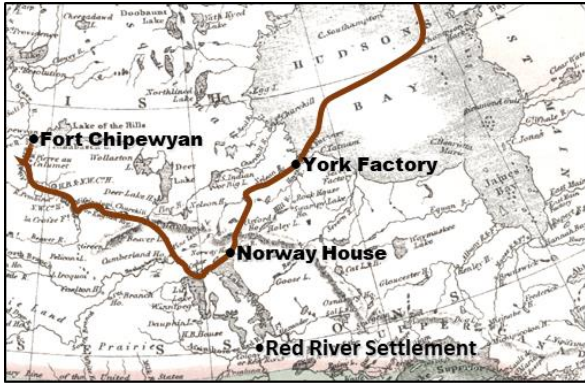


7th August 1838

Dated, “En Route, August 7, 1838.” To Chief Factor John Stuart in London, written while with the Hudson's Bay Company canoe brigade express traveling from Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca via Norway House to York Factory. Carried by the Hudson's Bay Company ship to England and placed in the British mail at Deal.

Contents relate that "...there is still a much greater evil lurking about, i.e. the small Pox, it has (caused) awful ravages among the Plains Tribes in the Saskatchewan...vaccination has been resorted to, as the most effectual means of avoiding the Contagion...it is considered expedient that I should see most of the Post fall & spring, which I admit is very proper, but it is attended with inconveniences, arising from my being so much out of the way, when the Expresses pass and repass..."

DEAL / SHIP LETTER handstamp	British ship letter fee (collect):	8d GB
Manuscript 1/4 rating	British inland postage (collect)	
Red London 18 OC 1838 backstamp	Deal to London (74 miles):	8d GB
	Total postage collect:	1s 4d GB



York Factory to London



16th September 1837

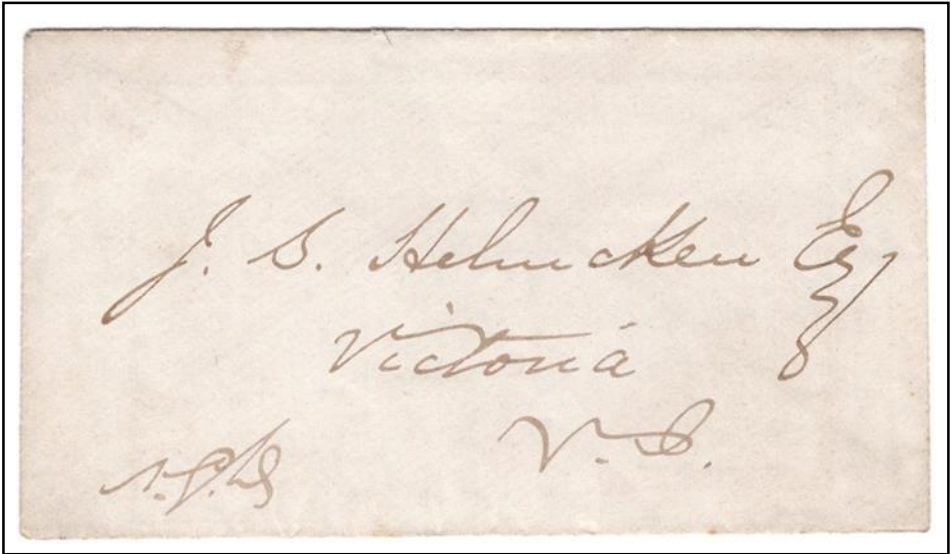
Letter from John Ballenden, Hudson's Bay Company's Chief Factor at York Factory to John Stuart (former fur trader, explorer, and Chief Factor). Carried by H.B.Co. supply ship to England where it entered the mail as a Deal ship letter and rated as 1/4 Stg. collect to London. Docketed as arrived 25 October 1837 (39 day transit).



23rd August 1844

Letter from James Hargrave, Hudson's Bay Company's Chief Factor at York Factory to John Stuart at H.B.Co. headquarters in London. Carried by H.B.Co. supply ship *Prince Rupert* to England where it entered the mail as a Ramsgate ship letter and rated as 8d Stg. collect to London. Docketed as arrived 16 October 1844 (54 day transit).

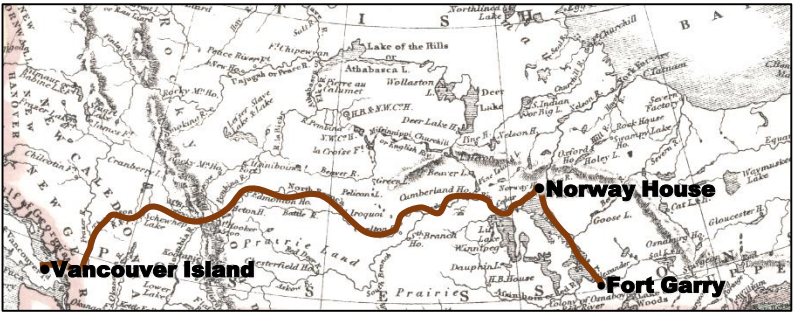
Fort Garry to Vancouver Island



Circa 1862-64

Ft. Garry (now at Winnipeg) to Victoria, Vancouver Island
Private carriage by Hudson's Bay Company Canoe Relay

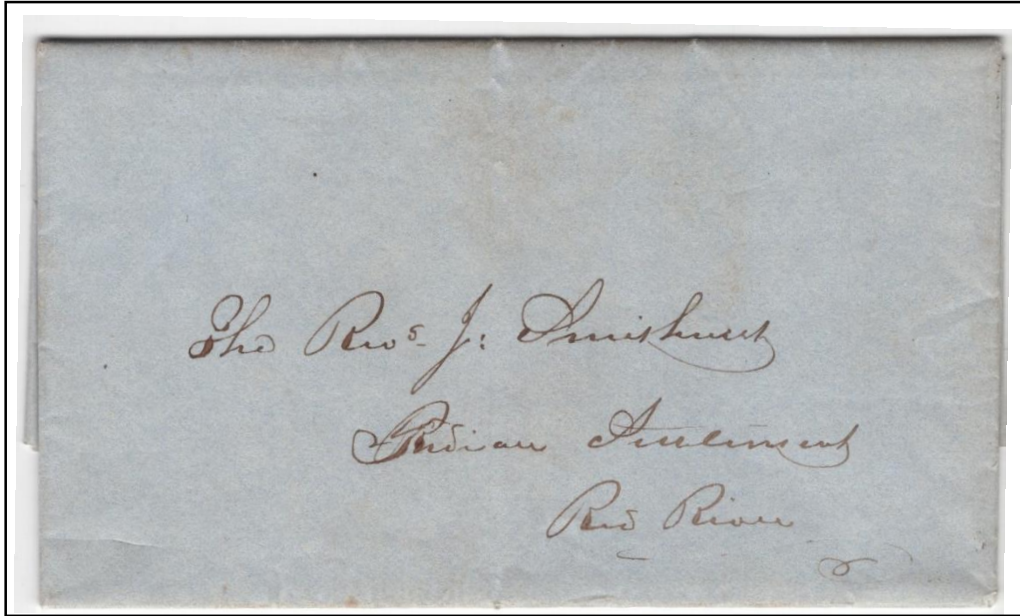
Countersigned at lower left by A. G. Dallas, then Governor of Rupert's Land at York Factory and addressed to J. S. Helmcken, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Vancouver Island. Dallas was chief factor of Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Victoria, Vancouver Island around 1850



Sender's imprint
on backflap:
PRO PELLE CUTEM
(HBCo official motto)

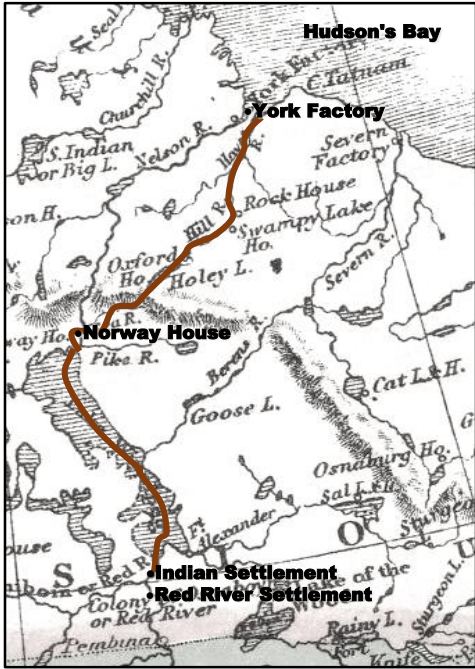
Through York Factory and Norway House

York Factory to Red River Settlement



25th August 1849

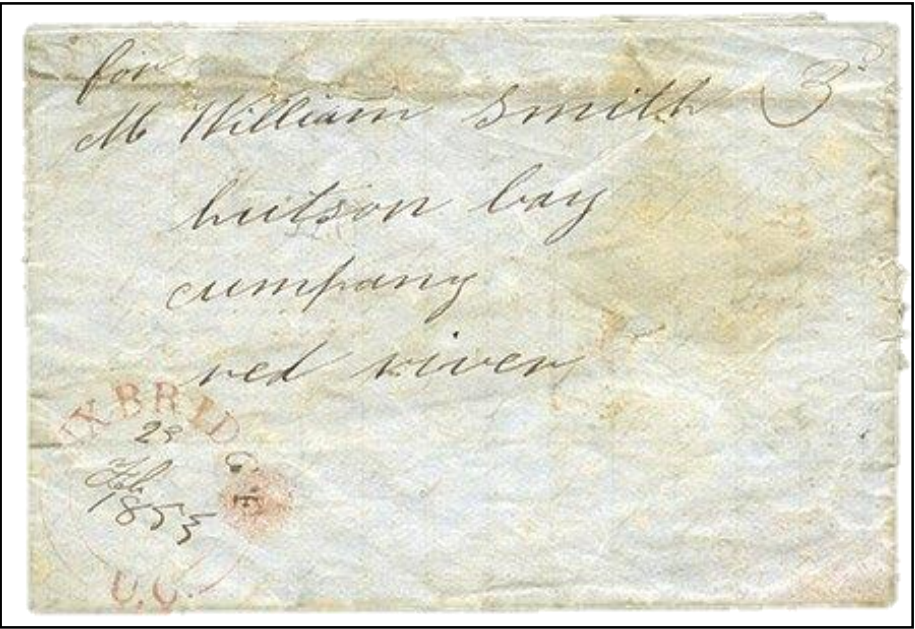
Datelined inside “York Factory 25th Augt. 1849.” Letter from James Hargrave to Reverend Smithurst at Indian Settlement, Red River. Carried privately by Hudson Bay Company York boat and canoe relay with supplies delivered to York Factory by the Hudson's Bay Company's *Prince Rupert*.



James Hargrave (1798-1865) was appointed Chief Trader at York Factory in 1833 and Chief Factor in 1844, retiring in 1859. Reverend J. Smithurst was Minister-in-charge of Indian Settlement until 1851.

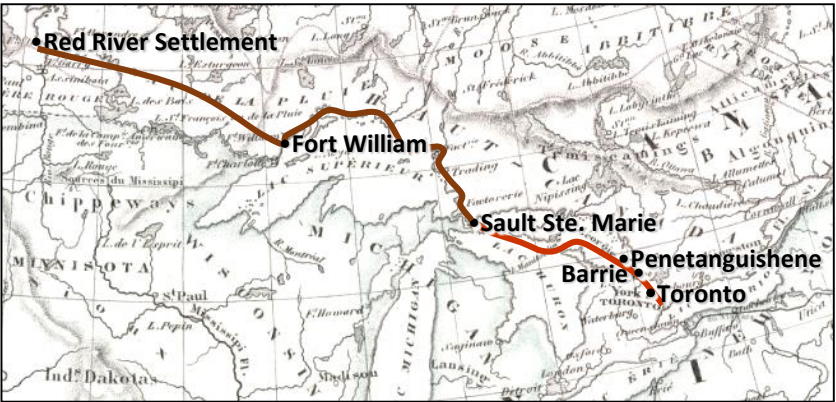
Through Sault Ste. Marie

Westbound



23th February 1853

UXBRIDGE, U.C. 23 Feb 1853 datestamp
Black manuscript “3d” rate mark
WHITBY U.C. FEB 25 1853 datestamp verso
KINGSTON U.C. FE 27 1853 datestamp verso
TORONTO-CANADA FEB 28 1853 datestamp verso
BARRIE U.C. MR 1 1853 datestamp verso
PENETANGUISHENE MR 3 1854 datestamp verso
Canadian domestic postage rate, Uxbridge to SSM (collect): 3d Cy



Westbound:
Overland from Uxbridge to Penetanguishene by way of Whitby, Kingston, Toronto, and Barrie.
Likely around frozen Lake Huron to Sault Ste. Marie.
Likely around frozen Lake Superior to Fort William.
Hudson's Bay Company sled/ox cart/canoe relay from Fort William to Red River Settlement.

Eastbound



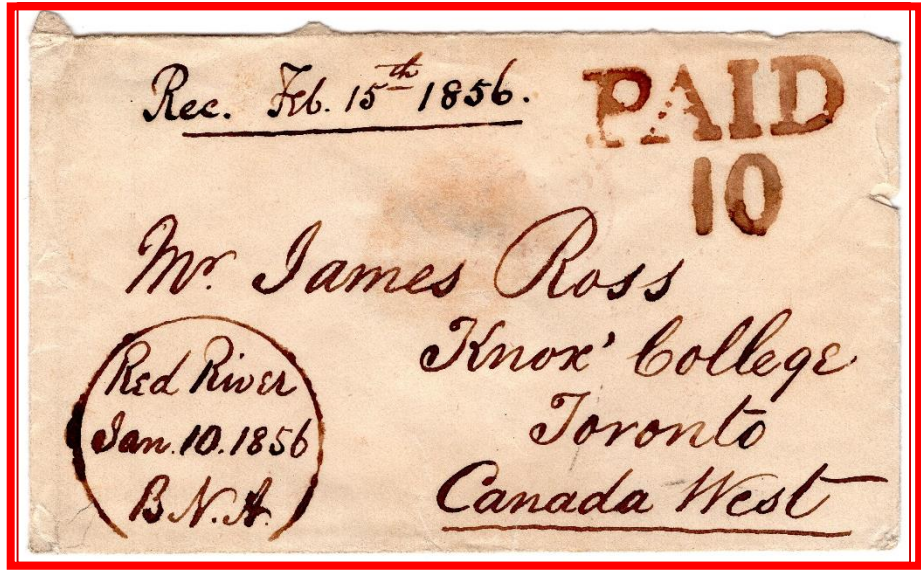
13th February 1854

SAULT S^{TE} MARIE, C.W., FE 13, 1854 datestamp
Red 3 ratestamp
Manuscript docketing “Rec^d March 2^d 1854”
Canadian domestic postage rate, SSM to Toronto (collect): 3d Cy

Eastbound:
Hudson's Bay Company sled/ox cart/canoe relay from Red River Settlement to Fort William on the shore of Lake Superior.
Likely around frozen across Lake Superior to Sault Ste. Marie.
Likely around frozen Lake Huron to Barrie.
Overland to Toronto.

Through Pembina

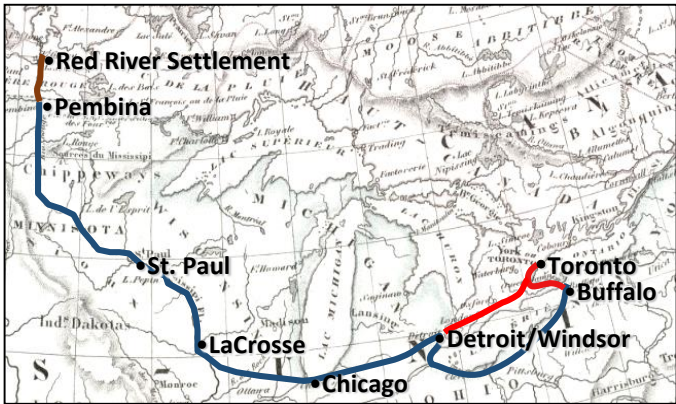
Eastbound



10th January 1856

Red River, Jan. 10. 1856 B.N.A. manuscript datestamp
Red PAID 10 handstamp (Red River)
“Rec. Feb. 15th 1856” manuscript arrival docketing

Courier from Red River Settlement to Pembina (paid): 3d Cy
United States treaty rate postage to British North America: 10¢ U.S.



By 1853, settlers established a monthly courier service to Pembina, Minnesota Territory, 68 miles to the south. Contemporary newspaper reports indicate a 3d fee for each single sheet letter. From Pembina, it traveled by ox cart to St. Paul; river steamer to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and then by rail through Chicago to the East.

In 1855, the Council of Assiniboia established a post office in Red River Settlement with William Ross as the first Postmaster. It is believed that Ross developed this manuscript postmark, as its use ceased after Ross’ death in May 1856.

Fewer than 10 examples of this Red River manuscript postmark are recorded

Prepaid and Collect Arriving Toronto the Same Day



March/April 1857

Endorsed “Via St. Paul / Minn. Territory”
Manuscript “prepaid 10 Cents”
Red (paid) UNITED STATES 6^D exchange office ratestamp

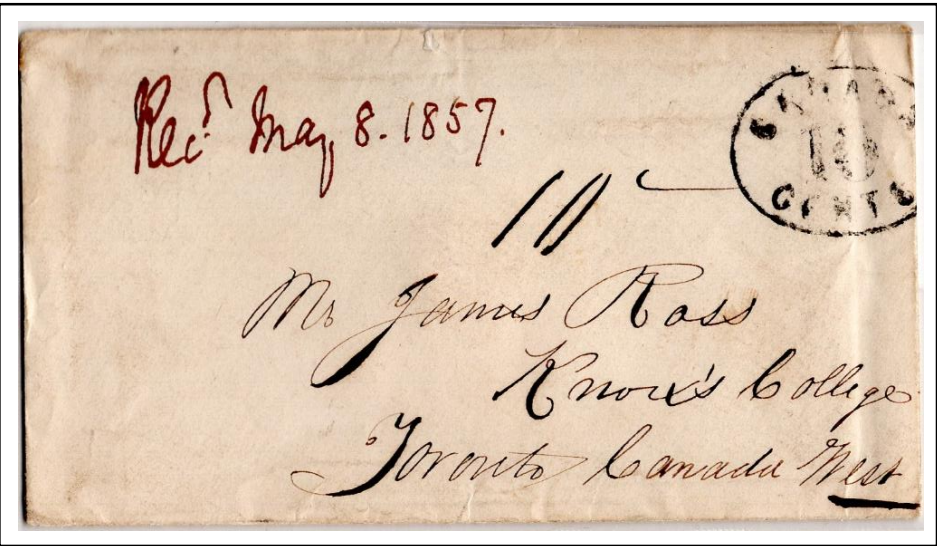


March/April 1857

Black (collect) 10 [cents] U.S. rate marking
Black (collect) UNITED STATES 6^D exchange office ratestamp



Detroit exchange office handstamp



April/May 1857

Black (collect) 10 [cents] U.S. rate marking
Black (collect) CANADA 10 CENTS exchange office ratestamp

Courier from Red River Settlement to Pembina (paid): 3d Cy
Canadian treaty rate postage from Pembina to Toronto (collect): 10¢ U.S.



Windsor U.C. exchange office handstamp

Postmaster William Ross reported on 26th May 1856 that 2821 letters, 2437 newspapers, and 580 packets were sent through the Red River Settlement post office in the prior year. Following Ross’ death in May 1856, William Drever was appointed postmaster. Two month later, Nathaniel Logan took over the position.

The courier fee to Pembina was reduced 1d for letters not exceeding ½ oz. and an additional 2d for letters exceeding ½ oz. at the 25 June 1857 Meeting of the Council of Assiniboia.

Through Pembina

Westbound

Stornoway, (MAR) 11, 1853 boxed datestamp
Liverpool, MR 19, 1853 transit datestamp (reverse)
Exchange office 19 cents debit to U.S. handstamp
Boston Br. Packet 1 APR 24 (due) Exchange Office handstamp
SAINT PAUL, Min.Ter, APR 30(?), 1853 datestamp (reverse)
Black 5 handstamp (St. Paul) due for forwarding to Pembina
Manuscript 29 due for postage and forwarding

British treaty rate postage from Scotland to St. Paul (collect): 24¢ U.S.
U.S. Postage rate for unpaid forwarding to Pembina (collect): 5¢ U.S.
Courier from Pembina to Red River Settlement (collect): 3d Cy



11th March 1853

Traveled on the Cunard Line *Niagara*, which departed Liverpool March 19, 1853, arriving Boston on April 1. Rail to LaCrosse, Wis.; Steamer to St. Paul; ox cart or stage to Pembina; monthly courier to Red River Settlement.

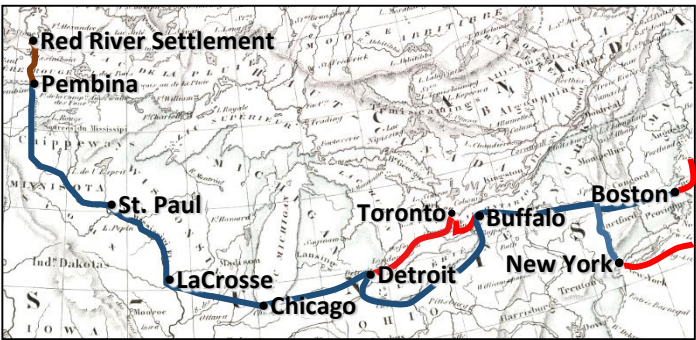


24th March 1860

Toronto to Red River Settlement via St. Paul, Minnesota and Pembina, Dakota Territory.

Toronto, U.C., MR 24, 1860 datestamp
Red PAID handstamp (Toronto)
SAINT PAUL, Min., APR 14, 1860 datestamp
Black MISSENT handstamp (St. Paul)

Canadian treaty rate postage to Pembina: 10¢ Cy
Courier from Pembina to Red River Settlement (collect on delivery): 1d Cy
*Note – Red River Settlement did not convert to the Canadian dollar until Manitoba became a province in 1870.



The “St Paul” in the address on this letter likely caused the letter to be routed to that post office where the proper destination was determined, the datestamp and “MISSENT” markings were applied, and it was sent by ox cart or stage to Pembina.

This is the earliest of the four decimal-period stamped covers to the Red River Settlement.

London, England, to Red River Settlement, by way of New York and Pembina.

London, November 21, 1868 duplex datestamp
NEW YORK PAID ALL / DEC 3 exchange office datestamp

British postage (New York to London) prepaid: 1s GB
Courier from Pembina to Red River Settlement(collect): 1d Cy

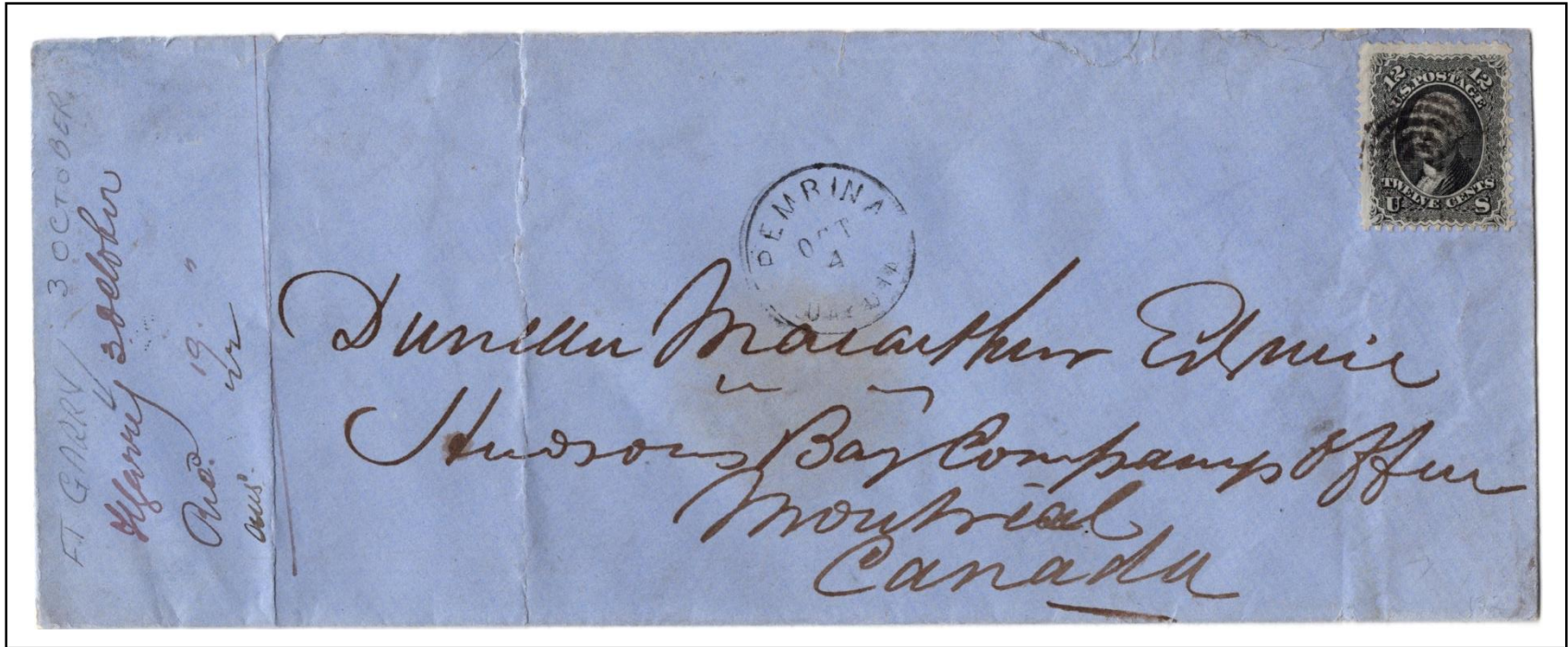


21st November 1868

Traveled on the Cunard Line *China*, which departed Queenstown November 22, 1868, arriving New York on December 3. Likely rail to St. Paul; ox cart or stage to Pembina; courier to Red River Settlement.

Through Pembina

Prepaid with U.S. Postage



3rd October 1870

Fort Garry, 3 October manuscript
PEMBINA, DAKOTA OCT 4 datestamp
MONTREAL, Q. OC 19, 1870 datestamp verso

Courier from Ft. Garry to Pembina (paid): 1¢ Cy
2x U.S. 6¢ per ½ oz. treaty rate to BNA: 12¢ U.S.



18^h February, circa 1865

FORT ABERCROMBIE, D.T., FEB 18 datestamp

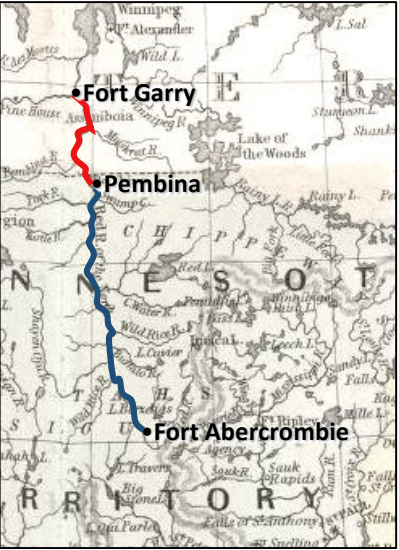
U.S. domestic rate postage to Pembina: 3¢ U.S.
Courier from Pembina to Red River Settlement (collect): 1¢ Cy



PEMBINA, DAKOTA MAR 2 datestamp
MONTREAL, NR 19 69 datestamp verso
QUEBEC C.E. MR 21 69 datestamp verso

Courier from
Ft. Garry to Pembina (paid): 1¢ Cy
United States treaty rate to BNA
6¢ per ½ oz. (paid): 6¢ U.S.

U.S. postage stamps were available for sale in Fort Garry to facilitate the prepayment of postage through the United States.



3¢ Pink 1864-65 stamped envelope mailed from Fort Abercrombie, ≈180 miles south of Pembina to Fort Garry, in what is now downtown Winnipeg. Embossed corner advertisement reads: “GREAT NORTH WESTERN DEPOT / H McKENNEY / IMPORTER / TRADER / ASSINIBOIA / B.A.”

Fort Abercrombie was established by authority of an act of the U.S. Congress on March 3, 1857. The post office there opened in 1860.

2nd March 1869

The Manitoba Act of 1870 established Manitoba as a province of Canada. At this time, a closed mail service via the United States was established.

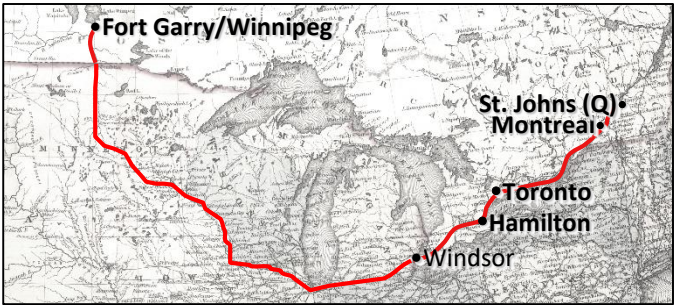
Westbound



HAMILTON, C.W., SE 23, 70 datestamp
23rd September 1870
Canadian domestic mail rate postage to Manitoba – 6¢ per ½ oz.: 6¢ Cy



Sender's imprint
on backflap



The addressee, E.L. Barber, was a businessman and agent for furs, hides, and firewood.

Canadian domestic mail rate postage to Manitoba: 6¢ Cy

Letter rates between Canada and Manitoba from 1870:

- July 15, 1870 (province established) – October 31, 1870 6¢ Cy per ½ ounce
- From November 1, 1870 - regular Canadian letter rates apply 3¢ Cy per ½ ounce

*This is the only recorded Small Queens cover
to or from Manitoba during the 6¢ rate period.*

Eastbound



28th February 1872
FORT GARRY, MANITOBA, FE 28, 72 datestamp
MONTREAL C.E. MR 14, 72 transit datestamp verso
ST JOHNS, C.E., MR 15, 72 receiving datestamp verso



Sender's imprint
on backflap



5th June 1872
FORT GARRY, MANITOBA, JU 5, 72 datestamp
WINDSOR, ONT, JU 12, 72 transit datestamp verso
TORONTO, ONT, JU 13, 72 receiving datestamp verso
Canadian domestic mail rate postage to Manitoba.: 3¢ Cy