

In many ways, British Columbia remained an isolated colony until the making of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, though, of course, she had joined the Canadian Confederation fourteen years previously. Her three short stamp issues are another instance of a philatelic signpost to a great historical, not only one, but series of events that might have resulted in a world war between the United States and Great Britain against the Latin and Eastern Powers of Europe. It is of further interest to note that while the stamps were expressed in both sterling and dollar currency, almost all the coins circulating in the colony were those of the United States. Prior to 1885, the mails were mostly handled by the Wells Fargo Company and conveyed for transit through the United States, often as far away round by Frisco.

The stamps themselves are among the classics of philately. The first stamp, 2½d, inscribed for joint use in British Columbia and Vancouver Island, is unique among provisionals that have never been overprinted. From its issue in 1860 until June 20th, 1864, it served its face value, 2½d, but on and after that latter date until November 1st, 1865, its value was increased to 3d. Curiously also, there was a 1d rate

for newspapers, but no 1d stamps were ever issued. Another apparent anomaly was the postal rate from Vancouver Island to certain parts at 12½c. the ½ ounce, when only 5c. and 10c. stamps were issued. This is explained in the fact that the postal rate was given for Colonial currency based on a sterling rate, while the stamps were actually sold for currency obtaining in the Colony, which was mostly U. S., .15c. of which was reckoned as equal to 12½, on account of exchanges and book-keeping transfers.

Towards the later days, before the hitching up of the C. P. Railroad, a British postal service was run from Vancouver and Victoria to the British Post Offices at Panama, by sea, across the Isthmus to Colon (Aspinwall) and then via ship again to Europe, calling at certain U. S. Ports. Those handled by the Wells Fargo Company bore the inland 5c per single rate stamp, and were subjected to the Company's extra dues, plus a U. S. stamp, if for delivery within the United States, which latter were sold at the Wells Fargo offices in the Colony. An inter-Canadian postal service existed also, the Dietz & Nelson, the British Columbia and Victoria Express Co. and Barnard & Co.'s Cariboo Express.