

The WEST OF WINNIPEG RPO Hammers

When Canada's first transcontinental railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was completed in 1885, it marked a major step in the evolution of mail transport in western Canada. Even while the CPR was still being constructed in western Canada, railway post office (RPO) services were almost immediately made available. The first RPO postmarks used on the CPR main line in western Canada were the WEST OF WINNIPEGs.

The Ludlow catalogue of Canadian RPOs contains the following listings:

RR-27 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG / .
RR-28 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG / # (number, letter)
RR-29 C.P.R. WEST OF WINNIPEG / LOCAL #
RR-30 C.P.Ry WEST OF WINNIPEG - C. /

These RPOs include 17 different hammers, a set that lends itself well to a one-frame exhibit. Research by the author leading to this exhibit was instrumental in:

- ❖ eliminating several hammers previously thought to exist,
- ❖ demonstrating that one RPO, RR-27, is in fact an evolution from RR-28b, hammer D, and
- ❖ producing for the first time reference images of three of the hammers.

This research has resulted in several publications in recognized journals of philately.

Each hammer is presented with basic data of proof date, earliest reported date (ERD) and last reported date (LRD). Examples of usage are included. Because some findings of the research will encourage collectors to review their data, a few ERD and LRD data are left out.

Some examples are quite scarce and that is noted. RF factors are irrelevant in some instances because published RF factors pertain to single listings. Within a single listing there can be specific hammers that are rarely seen.

The WEST OF WINNIPEG RPOs were "open ended", in the sense that the designation did not indicate two end points of a run. However, it is believed that they were not used west of Calgary. It is also thought they could have been used on CPR branch lines before those lines were assigned their own RPOs, but that has yet to be demonstrated by anyone.

The author is indebted to a number of philatelists for their assistance, advice and use of records. In particular, Ross Gray, whose earlier review of these hammers,

based on much earlier studies within the BNAPS RPO Study Group, has been inspirational and constructive in his comments. Bill Robinson is another inspirational RPO advisor from whom this exhibit has benefited greatly. Advice from Chris Anstead and Gray Scrimgeour is also recognized and has been appreciated.