



The Nova Scotia Post

The Newsletter of the Nova Scotia Stamp Club

September 2019
Volume 49, Issue 480

UP and COMING

September 7 BRUNPEX
RC Legion, 100 War Veterans
Ave, Moncton NB 10 am - 4 pm

September 10 Club Meeting
Annual Meeting

Sept. 20-21 NOVApex 2019
E. Dartmouth Community Centre

Sept 19 Friends of Philately

October 12 Moncton Stamp Fair
RC Legion, 100 War Veterans
Ave, Moncton NB 10 am - 4 pm.

Travelling? Check out the time
and place of other shows at
www.rpsc.org/shows.html or
www.csdaonline.com/shows

SS NERISSA—THE DAY HER LUCK RAN OUT

by Glenna Metchette

(Editor's note: September 3rd is the day designated by the Government of Canada to acknowledge the wartime contributions of Merchant Navy veterans)

The *SS Nerissa* (Figure 1), launched in Port Glasgow, Scotland in 1926, was a passenger and cargo steamer associated with the maritime history of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. She carried passengers on the New York-Halifax-St. John's route until 1931 and then New York-Bermuda/West Indies route before she was modified as a troop transport in July 1940.

In 1940, she was considered the "lucky ship" after one of a group of 28 children being evacuated from Britain to Canada on the *SS City of Benares* was suspected of having chicken pox. The group was detained for 24 hours, another group left in its place, and they left aboard the *SS Nerissa* instead. Four days later, the *City of Benares* was torpedoed with the loss of 255 passengers, including 84 children.

The *Nerissa* continued to make 39 wartime voyages between the Maritimes and Great Britain without mishap; however, her luck ran out on the 30 April 1941 when she was torpedoed and sunk by German submarine U-552. She began her 40th war-time crossing on 21 April 1941 from the port of Halifax, NS, with 306 crew and passengers aboard - carrying 145 Canadian servicemen along with RAF and Norwegian Army Air Service personnel, Northern Electric technicians, members of the press, and a dozen civilians that included a couple and their three young children. She sailed as part of a Britain-bound convoy HX 122 but after 12 hours continued on alone for a stopover in St. John's. A convoy's speed, as it zigzagged its way along, was restricted to that of the slowest ship and this convoy slogged its way at 5-6 knots. As a troopship, *Nerissa* made all her voyages unaccompanied (although this seems controversial) because her maximum speed of 14 knots under loaded conditions was considered capable of out running enemy U-boats. Arriving at St. John's Newfoundland on April 23rd, Captain Gilbert Watson received orders to sail for Liverpool, Britain.

Approaching the Irish coast on the night of April 30th, a Hudson patrol aircraft of Royal Navy Coastal Command signaled that the area was clear of U-boats. At 11:30 p.m., 200 miles from her destination, a torpedo struck her amidships. All activity ceased. Power was off. Escaping steam hissed. She listed badly to starboard. As lifeboats were being lowered in the dark, two additional torpedoes split the ship in half and the ship went to the bottom in less than four minutes from the first attack, carrying 207 souls, including the Captain who stood on the bow and yelled to his men in the water, "Good luck boys." In that short time the radio operator, unknown to history, sent an S.O.S. with the ship's position. The survivors spent a harrowing night in the near-freezing Atlantic and were first hand witnesses to the effects of shock and hypothermia as man after man slipped beneath the surface. Following a circling of a British Blenheim aircraft, *HMS Veteran* and *HMS Hunter* were first on the scene at 7:50 a.m. While *Hunter* circled the area *Veteran* picked up the survivors. The number of survivors from reports varies from 76 to 91, however, it was great loss of Canadian Service men. The survivors were spared no effort in hospitality - provided with food, cigarettes and rum. They were transferred to the corvette *HMS Kingcup* at Lough Foyle



Figure 1



Figure 2

SS NERISSA CONTINUED

and taken upriver to Londonderry, Ireland to hospitals.

Lt. Erich Topp (Figure 2), Captain of U-552, survived the war, and is acknowledged as the third top scoring U-boat commander having sunk 34 Allied merchant ships with a gross displacement of 193,684 tons. Because he served honourably as a naval military commander and never had any affiliation with the Nazi Party, he rejoined the West German Navy in 1958 and retired as a Rear Admiral. He later served in the Pentagon as a naval representative for the West German government. To help document the sinking of the *Nerissa*, he related that his submarine had been heavily damaged during an earlier depth charge attack. He was nursing his U-boat back to their base in occupied France when they came upon the *Nerissa*. He was surprised to find her with her lights on and not running a zigzag course. Concerned for the safety of his own crew, he continued their journey to France because his U-boat was too damaged to take on survivors.

The Halifax Memorial in Point Pleasant Park (Figure 3) is one of the few tangible reminders of the men who died at sea. It was erected by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and was unveiled on 11 November 1967. The large granite monument presents a 12 m high "Cross of Sacrifice", clearly visible to all ships approaching Halifax. The large podium bears 23 bronze panels inscribed with the names of over 3,000 Canadian men and women who were buried at sea. On 19



Figure 3

June 2003, the Government of Canada designated September 3rd of each year as a day to acknowledge the contribution of Merchant Navy Veterans.

James J. Brown and Brian G. Redding wrote a poem in honour and remembrance of the men and women who lost their lives on the *SS Nerissa* on April 30, 1941. It begins:

*No poppies wave above our heads
Or mark the place where we must sleep
Below the oceans wild and wide
Our resting place is in the deep.*

Two 1930's Paquebot Covers "Posted On The High Seas" aboard S.S. Nerissa (Figures 4 and 5)

Mail posted at sea is generally held by the ship's purser or postal officer (if it has one) until the next port with postal facilities is reached. All mail received during the voyage is delivered to the post office serving the port where it is then marked "Paquebot," French for "Packet Boat," or the equivalent and is postmarked by the post office and entered into the mainstream for delivery. Over time paquebot mail came to mean any mail received at sea. Under UPU regulations, mail posted at sea should be franked with postage stamps of the country under which the vessel is flagged. If the vessel is in port when the mail is turned in, it should be franked with the stamps of the country in whose waters the vessel is located. Mail posted aboard often receives a ship's hand-stamp on the envelope.

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Nova Scotia Stamp Club meets at 7:30 p.m. on every second Tuesday of the month (except July and August) at the Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, N.S. The club publishes a monthly newsletter (except summer) which is released on the first week of the month.

Membership is C\$15 per person (C\$20 US, C\$25 International) or C\$22.50 per couple.

Send **new membership applications** to...

NS Stamp Club c/o Jeff Parks
102 Birch Bear Run, Lewis Lake, NS B3Z 4B8

Membership renewals are sent to...

NS Stamp Club c/o John Harvey
46 Farquharson St, Dartmouth, NS B2W 4A8



Figure 4



Figure 5

DLO HANDSTAMPS #43

by Gary Steele

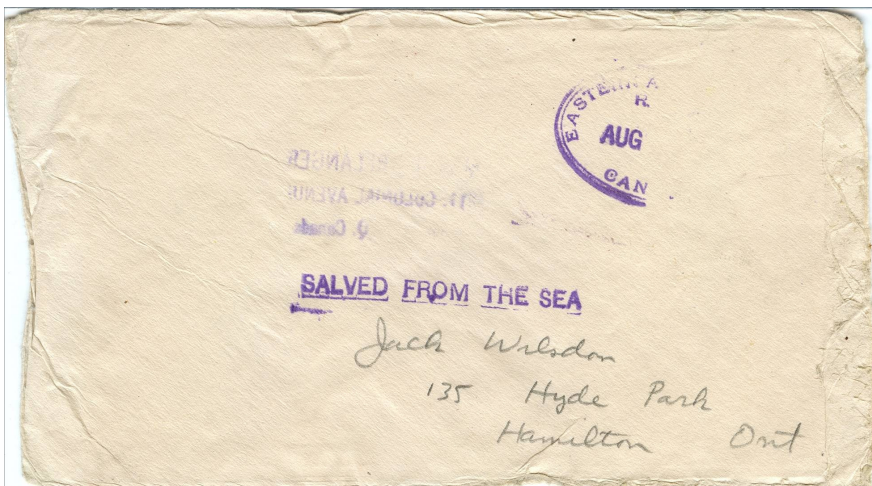


On July 22, 1947 the Nascopie, a Hudson's Bay Co. supply ship that made annual trips into the Hudson Strait and the Eastern Arctic struck an uncharted reef at the entrance of Cape Dorset harbor. When the ship became

the R. M. S. Nascopie it had a designated travelling post office with an official postmaster. Much of the mail contents were recovered including submerged mail.

Envelopes recovered were dried out with an imprint placed on each cover **SALVED FROM THE SEA** and processed by the Dead Letter Office in Winnipeg. For this particular item two 'Found damaged, torn or open and officially repaired' labels were attached on the back with a Winnipeg DLO handstamp #5 tying them to cover.

Of particular note; all the Winnipeg **DLO #5** handstamps reported have the same date of Aug 8 1947, very few of these have been reported to Brian Plain unfortunately so it is hard to tell how many exist. The info on this handstamp is 37mm in diameter, sans-serif except for 'D. L. O.' letters, 1st line mixed, 2nd line caps, with the '5' quite large at 5mm. A similar handstamp exists with the number '2' clerk handstamp.



Thanks to Ian Mowat, Eastern Arctic Mails 1876 to 1963, BNAPS Exhibit Series No. 5, April 1997 and Andrew Liptak's Postal History Corner Blog for info on the Eastern Arctic mails.

CENSORED NAVAL COVER - WORLD WAR I

by Michael Peach

Herbert Edgar Weston was one of the leading figures in philately in Great Britain in the first few decades of the last century. He traded using the name Victor Marsh. Among other things he was a major dealer in covers with cut-outs to pay the postage. Unused stamps on postal stationery could be cut out and used for postage. During the first World War efforts were made to conceal the date of mailing and the location of the fleet, and the Post Office used seven- or eight-line barred cancellations on mail from the fleet.

The cover shown was self-addressed to Edgar Weston in London, and has two Edward VII green half penny stamps cut put from postcards for the inland postage. He prepared bundles of such covers and sent them to Lt. Commander R.L. Clayton, an officer on aboard the H.M.S. Queen Mary for mailing. The cover, still sealed with no content, was passed by a naval censor. On the back there is a date stamp 8 May 1916. This is probably one of the last covers mailed from H.M.S. Queen Mary, as it was sunk at the battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916, and Lt. Commander Clayton lost his life.



CLUB NEWS

The first meeting of the new season will be on 10 September, 7:30, at the Museum on Summer Street. In addition to being the Annual General Meeting and election of new officers (volunteers always welcome), we will also be hearing about the new Royal awards from John Hall. This year, we will try an experiment and have “themed” Show and Tell sessions. The theme for September is “My Summer Find.” Bring in and share your most notable philatelic find of the summer. For this inaugural themed Show and Tell, the out-going President will pass judgement and announce the President’s Choice award (a bottle of wine he is donating). His word is final, and he can’t choose himself! Other themes Show and Tell sessions planned include “Spooky Philately and Weird Collecting Coincidences” (October), and “Military Philately” (November).

Novapex 2019 is right around the corner. It will be held 20 & 21 September at the East Dartmouth Community Centre on Caledonia Road. We are experimenting this year with having a Friday/Saturday two day regional show, rather than Saturday/Sunday. We’ll see how it works out. Also, no awards banquet this year: munchies will be available at the awards presentation immediately following the show. Thanks to Joanne Hodder and her crew of volunteers for their work on the show.

Club members did us proud at the Royal, held in Mississauga in late June (see photo). Large Golds were awarded to Brainard Fitzgerald and to J.J. Tillard. Brainard’s exhibit, *Royal Visit to Canada 1951*, also received the American Philatelic Society Award of Excellence, 1940 to 1980; the American Topical Association Second Award; and the Best BNA Exhibit Award. J.J.’s exhibit *St. Pierre et Miquelon, le*

20F ‘Montagne et arbres’ de 1947 also took home the Best Single Frame Award sponsored by Canadian Stamp News. John Hall’s *The Canadian Fiscal War Tax Stamps of World War One* received a Gold Award, and Philatelic Specialists Society of Canada Specialization Medal. Doreen Fitzgerald also brought home a Gold Award, and the New Zealand Award, for *The Story of Kaulbach Island Local Carriage Service*. Garnering a Large Vermeil was Michael Mather’s *London Cancells – Development During the Victorian Period*. Congratulations to all on a job well done!

The following new membership applications have been received and approved: 1084 Rodney Caley, 1085 Kerry DeLorey, 1086 Anne Marie Brown, 1087 Jim Stewart.



NOVA SCOTIA STAMP CLUB CENTENARY

by Marty Zelenietz

For the Club’s 75th anniversary in 1997, J. Doug Allen and I designed a souvenir pin to mark the occasion. It was also a fundraiser for the Club, and the pins sold out (except for a few that we kept as gifts for visitors and speakers). Based on the 1860 Nova Scotia issue, the pin later served as the model for our current Club award pins.



NOVAPEX 2019

The NS Stamp Club will be hosting a Regional Stamp Exhibition and Bourse at the East Dartmouth Community Centre, 50 Caledonia Road, Dartmouth on Friday and Saturday September 20 and 21, 2019. Details will follow as they are made available. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Joanne Hodder, Novapex 2019 Chair at jh@postalhistory.ca

www.nsstampclub.ca/novapex19.htm

!!!! DUES !!!

Yes folks, it is that time of year again. Pay now and avoid the rush. Pay for several years...! John Harvey will collect dues at the June meeting for 2019-2020 or you can send a cheque to NS Stamp Club, c/o John Harvey, 46 Farquharson St., Dartmouth, NS, B2W 4A8.