

# Mirror Lake, BC Post Office circa 1950s

*By Charles J. G. Verge, FRPSC, FRPSL*



Figure 1 Mirror Lake PO in the early 1950s.



Figure 2 A cropped version of the photo in Figure 1 clearly showing the Mirror Lake name on the building with John Edmiston on the left.

I recently saw the attached photograph (Fig. 1) and thought I would share it with you. It belonged to a young Toronto man named John Edmiston (1931-2005) who went out to the Rockies for summer employment in the early 1950s. On one of his treks he found the post office at Mirror Lake, British Columbia (BC), in the electoral district of Kootenay West. Mirror Lake is on Highway 31, on the Western shore of Kootenay Lake, four kilometres South of Kaslo and 16 kilometres North of Ainsworth Hot Springs. Nelson, BC is 51 kilometres Southwest of Mirror Lake.

The post office was opened November 1, 1909 and closed January 14, 1970. On his visit he met the postmistress, Miss Olive Elizabeth Link. She

was born in Medicine Hat, AB on January 9, 1888 and died in Mirror Lake on April 5, 1970. In the 1911 census of Medicine Hat, the 23-year-old Miss Link is listed as the daughter of Adam J. (50 years of age) and Mary Ann (53) Link with four siblings: William (26), Norman (18), Ruth (15) and Marion (9). Miss Link was postmistress of Mirror Lake from January 26, 1934 to December 30, 1957, when she retired from the Canadian Postal Service.

She, or one of John's friends, may have taken the picture of the post office found in Figures 1 and 2. She told John that the Mirror Lake PO was the smallest post office in the British Empire. John dutifully wrote that notation on the back of the photograph. Figure 3 shows the Mirror Lake post office as it was in 2008.

In fact, Mirror Lake was not the smallest post office in the British Empire. That honour apparently belongs to the post office at Alvaston, BC (Opened October 1, 1909 – Closed April 1, 1919). Arthur Chatterton named that post office for the birthplace of his father George: Alvaston in Derbyshire, England). It was opened for a little less than ten years and had two other postmasters in addition to Mr. Chatterton: H. Horsnell and Charles Lodge. It was severely underutilised as most patrons preferred depositing and picking up their mail in a packing case, called The Alvaston Courier Box, a half-mile away on the Vernon-Kelowna stagecoach road. In the packing



Figure 3 The Mirror Lake PO as it looked in 2008.

case was a jam tin containing stamps that patrons could purchase by leaving coins in the tin.

I am grateful to Nevil Pike and Tony Shaman for the 1950s Mirror Lake photographs and to Gray Scrimgeour, Peter Jacobi and Tracy Cooper for their research help. ✉



The Mirror Lake PO as it appeared in 1994. Note letter slot at extreme right of building.