

Paris Distributing Post Office: An update

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IN *BNA Topics*, Vol 72, No 1, January–March 2016, Brian Stalker outlined the extensive research he conducted, seeking to prove that the Paris Distributing Post Office (Paris DPO) was a Railway Post Office (RPO), not just a sub-office of the Paris Post Office. The question was clouded by the existence in the same era of the “Paris Station” Post Office. Thanks to research undertaken by Ferdinand Belanger at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, this article presents findings that supplement Brian’s earlier article.

New Information

(1) On 18 April 1855, William H Griffin, secretary to the Postmaster General, authorised a claim from George Macartney, Postmaster at Paris, that from 1 October 1854 forward, he could charge an additional £100 pa (Forward allowance, £50; rent, £40; stationery, £10)

in compensation for the extra labor thrown upon the Paris PO upon being made the point of distribution to several important lines of Post Route in connexion with its position at the junction of the Brantford & Great Western Railroads ... [1]

(2) For the fiscal year ended 31 March 1856, Report No 6-A of the Postmaster General’s Annual Report included a “Curtailement of Expenses,” amounting to £8 -7 -6 per annum, effective from 1 January 1856 to the original amount of £217-15-0 due to contractor **George Macartney**, who operated the daily mail service between Haysville and Paris via Canning, Richwood, Drumbo, Washington, Plattsville, and Chesterfield owing to

reduced travel of one mile per trip, by removal of forwarding duty, from Post Office in the village of Paris to a distributing Post Office at the Paris Railway Station.

(3) Post Office Department correspondence item 692, dated 18 April 1857 [2], relating to the cost of maintaining the Distribution Office at the Paris Station for the GWR and Buffalo and Lake Huron (B & LH) railway lines, shows that included within the charge of £600-8-0 for the period 1 January 1856 to 30 September 1857 was a £87-10-0 Supervision Allowance to Mr Macartney, charged at £50 per annum.

Furthermore, the same correspondence indicates that the Distribution Office expenses were part of the account relating to the Paris Post Office, implying that—at this time—the Paris DPO was a sub-office of the Paris Post Office.

(4) Post Office Department internal correspondence dated 15 May 1858 (3) states:

I have to convey to you the Postmaster General’s Authority to enter into a lease with Miss Allchin for a period of 3 years for the building at present tenanted by this Department at the Paris Railway Station for the exchange of mails...

(5) Data in Robert Hasler’s *Paris Junction—Paris Station (1848-1900)* [4] identifies that Lot 13 on the south side of Railway Street (across the road from the railway station) was sold by Hiram Capron to George Macartney on 30 January 1857; Macartney then sold Lot 13 to

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Figure 1. An 'UNPAID 7' cover from Goderich to Chatham transferred from the B&LHR to the GWR at PARIS / DPO on 6 March 1861. (Postmarks enhanced.)



Figure 2. A prepaid letter from Rimouski, CE to Thamesford, CW via Montreal, Montreal & Kingston Grand Trunk Railway PO, apparently sorted into a closed-bag for PARIS DPO, where it was placed on the westbound GWR train for Ingersoll, and finally transported by road to Thamesford. (Postmarks enhanced.)

Miss Mary Allchin on 6 April 1858. This positively confirms that the **Paris DPO was located at Lot 13 Railway Street**. The “Post Offices and Postmasters” database [5] records that Fred C Macartney was appointed Postmaster at Paris Post Office on 1 April 1858 and that he was replaced by George Stanton in February 1860. Interestingly, there is no record in that database of George Macartney ever being Postmaster.

(6) The next mention of note in the Post Office Department internal correspondence is dated 16 July 1862 [6]:

Referring to the difficulties which have arisen at the Paris and Paris Distributing Office in connexion with the recent loss of the Registered letter from Montreal, I beg to inform you that, in view of the declaration of the PM at Paris that he does not consider himself to be responsible for the duties at the Station Office, and of the evident necessity that there should be some responsible person in charge there who will be answerable for the transaction the PMG has decided upon constituting an independent Office at the Station and appointing a PM to the charge of it – withdrawing the allowance granted to the PM of Paris.

The amount lost in the Registered letter is to be deducted from the next payment of salary to the Clerks in the Paris Distributing Office to whose negligence the loss of the letter is attributable – and you will please report how far it may be advisable, under the altered provision for the management of the Station Office to recommend the continuance of the Assistants now employed. The change is to be carried into effect as soon as an appointment can be made to the Station Office. Signed W H Griffin

(7) Correspondence item 1062 dated 5 November 1862 [7], from William White to GE Griffin, the Postal Inspector for London District, reads:

Sir – The PMG directs me to request that you will, with the least possible delay, furnish him with a statement of the expense which would be incurred by the establishment of a separate office at the Paris Station.

Finally, item 21 dated 4 February 1863 [8], again from White to GE Griffin, reads:

With reference to the letter from the Department of the 27th December last, instructing you to arrange for the establishment of a separate PO at Paris Station, I am now to inform you that Mr Hiram Capron has been appointed to the Postmastership of the office in question. Mr Capron is to have an allowance of \$800 per annum, which is to cover rent, taxes, stationery, the payment of his assistants and all other expenses. He is also to have the usual commission on Postage and Stamps in common with other Postmasters.



Figure 3. New Paris Station built in 1866; view of the GWR platform.

(8) The Post Office at Lot 13 Railway Street burned down in the fire of 18 July 1865, which also destroyed the railway station. Lot 13 remained the property of Mary Allchin and was part of her estate when she died, at the age of 63, in March 1881 [9].

Commentary

Since George Macartney was authorised to claim rent and labour associated with the distribution of mail from 1 October 1854 it seems likely that the Paris Distributing Post Office was a sub-office of Paris Post Office between 1 October 1854 and 31 December 1862. Its primary purpose appears to have been that of an exchange office for mails being transferred between the Great Western and London, Huron & Bruce Railways, Paris Post Office and one or more mail services to outlying districts. As such, it justifies being listed as a “Railway Station Office” – possibly one of several similar arrangements that existed before the Railway Mail Service Branch of the Post Office was formally instituted in 1897.

George Macartney appears to have been the focal character during the period October 1854 to April 1858, at various times being Mail Contractor, owner of Lot 13 Railway Street

(location of the Paris Distributing Post Office (also the location of the Paris Station Post Office from 1863), supervisor at the DPO, and probably Postmaster at the Paris Post Office. Miss Mary Allchin bought Lot 13 Railway Street from him in April 1858 and leased it to the Post Office for three years, but whether she was involved in DPO activity is unknown.

The correspondence of 16 July 1862 (see above) regarding the loss of a registered letter states that Postmaster George Stanton of the Paris Post Office did "*not consider himself to be responsible for the duties at the Station Office,*" suggesting that, although the Paris DPO might have been a sub-office for accounting purposes, its day-to-day operation was entirely separate.

The Paris Station Post Office, located at Lot 13 Station Street, opened on 1 January 1863. It probably provided the full range of postal services to the general public, in addition to distributing/exchange facilities between the Buffalo & Lake Huron and Great Western Railways. It remained at Station Street until 18 July 1865 when the post office, the railway station, and adjacent buildings were destroyed by fire.

In May 1866 a new railway station building was opened. It incorporated a room for post office use, and it seems probable that the distributing/exchange office functions were transferred to it at that time. The physical location of a replacement Paris Station Post Office after the fire has yet to be determined.

References

- [1] Library and Archives Canada, Record Group 3 (RG3), Correspondence, Vol 366, p 517.
- [2] Library and Archives, Canada, Record Group 3 (RG3), Post Office Department letter to GE Griffin, Item 692, Vol 224, p 368.
- [3] *Ibid.* Item A-90(3), Vol 224, p 412.
- [4] Robert Lewis Rashleigh Hasler, *Paris Junction—Paris Station (1848–1900)*, Somerset House Publications, Canada, 2000.
- [5] Library and Archives Canada, Post Offices and Postmasters, Postal Heritage—Philately, item 15478. <<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/postal-heritage-philately/post-offices-postmasters/Pages/post-offices-postmasters.aspx>>
- [6] Library and Archives, Canada, Record Group 3 (RG3), Post Office Department letter to GE Griffin, Item 968, Vol 225, pp 300-301.
- [7] *Ibid.*, Item 1062, Vol 225, p 331.
- [8] *Ibid.*, Item B-21, Vol 225, p 354.
- [9] Hasler, *op. cit.*, p 192.



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