

Postal Beginnings at Vaudreuil, Québec

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Vaudreuil is located about 30 km west of Montreal on the banks of the Lake of Two Mountains (including Vaudreuil Creek) and Vaudreuil Bay, which form a section of the Ottawa River.

At the end of the 17th century, the region to the west of Montreal Island was an important centre in the fur trade. Around 1742 the population migration had reached Vaudreuil; the region experienced a modest demographic rise to about 90 families. By 1765, agriculture had gradually replaced the fur trade as the main economic activity. Some years later, on July 14, 1845, the municipal council of the Vaudreuil Parish met for the first time. The Vaudreuil quay, built by the government in the middle of the 19th century, served in the transportation of merchandise¹. The population of Vaudreuil in 1851 was 450.

On October 6, 1835, Thomas A. Stayner (1788-1868), Deputy Postmaster General of Canada (1827-1851), established a new postal

route from Lachine to Chatham (which became Carillon in 1841). Four new post offices were opened along this route: Ste-Anne-du-Bout-de-l'Isle, Pointe-Claire, Vaudreuil, and Rigaud. Stayner explained to his boss, the British Postmaster General, that this territory was home to a large French-speaking population who had long wished for a post office. However, he added that this route would not be capable of supporting itself financially for some time to come. The mails were carried once a week at a cost of £52 per year².

Joseph-Marie Rassette (or Racette), 1805-1864

Joseph Rassette³, businessman, operated a general store at Vaudreuil. Born at St-Laurent in 1807, son of René Rassette and Geneviève Larocque⁴. He was appointed postmaster from October 6, 1835, recommended by the last seigneur of Vaudreuil, The Honourable Robert Unwin Harwood

Postmasters employed at Vaudreuil

Postmaster	Period
Joseph Rassette	October 6, 1835 – November 1837
Henry Ahearn	January 6, 1838 – July 5, 1838
Joseph Octave Bastien	July 6, 1838 – April 5, 1845
[office closed]	April 6, 1845 – July 5, 1845
Joseph Octave Bastien	July 6, 1845 – April 10, 1846
François Hyacinthe Prévost	April 11, 1846 – March 9, 1847
Emery Lalonde	March 10, 1847 – July 5, 1849
Hyacinthe Fabien Charlebois	July 6, 1849 – March 4, 1857

(1798-1863) as well as by the parish priest and influential people of the region. He was described as “a respectable and capable person, duly qualified for such a position.” On August 7, 1837 Rasette attended a patriotic meeting of some 600 people. It was stated that his business was a meeting place for patriots of the region; he abandoned the post office and joined the patriots. Stayner had no other choice than to dismiss him as postmaster; the month of November 1837 seems a plausible time. Joseph Rasette was banished by the Durham report and took refuge at New York.

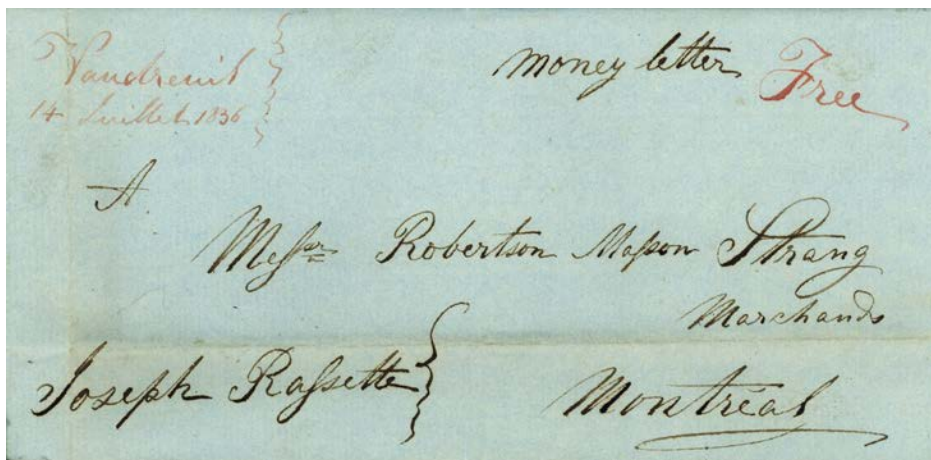


Figure 1 Home and business of Joseph Rasette, postmaster at Vaudreuil [Report of the patriots⁵]

ACCIDENT – On Thursday May 15 Mr. Joseph Racette, Vaudreuil merchant, was struck by lightning. He was sitting near a chimney in conversation with his family and several others. His shirt as well as his skin was burned on the right side in an area the size of two hands. The current then travelled inside his clothing, cutting his watch chain and melting and burning the watch case in three places so that it could not be opened, and finally escaping through the heel of his shoe. It is presumed that it was his steel watch chain that prevented more serious consequences by attracting the current. He remained unconscious for a quarter of an hour after the fact; he was thereafter obliged to stay in bed, although his condition was not considered dangerous.

Published in Le Canadien, July 27, 1831⁶

Figure 2 Letter sent under “Free” franking by Mme Joseph Rasette with manuscript marking “Vaudreuil 14 Juillet 1836”. Mme Rasette used her husband’s signature and free frank. In the absence of her husband, Mme Rasette sent 15 pounds to the recipient “in order to avoid wronging her husband and hurt his credit” [LAC, Anatole Walker collection, 1992-31]



Henry Ahern (1795-1877)

Following Joseph Rasette's dismissal, Stayner quickly reorganized the Vaudreuil post office, and named Henry Ahern as postmaster following the recommendation of Harwood. According to the census of 1851, Ahern was a native of Holland, born in 1795. He married Eleanor McDonald in 1827 in Montreal. He was attached to the first military regiment of Prescott as a captain⁷ in 1824. He was named Justice of the Peace in 1837. He died in 1877 and is buried in the cemetery at Coteau-du-Lac, Qc. ⁸.

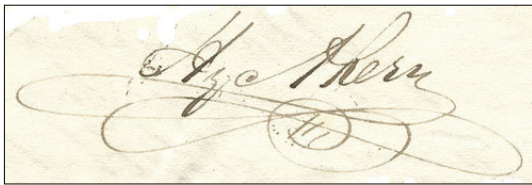


Figure 3 Signature of postmaster Henry Ahern [source not known]

On February 7, 1838 Stayner wrote to the Governor following a petition by the residents of Vaudreuil criticizing the change of location of the post office and the removal of Joseph Rasette⁹. It seems that Ahern was not living in the centre of the village, which the populace resented. He resigned as postmaster between April and June but had to stay in office until his replacement arrived on July 6, 1838¹⁰.

Joseph Octave Bastien (1809-1864)

Joseph Octave Bastien Junior was a notary at Vaudreuil. He was probably named as notary in 1832; his father, of the same name, was also a notary. He married Marie Charlotte Lefebvre. He was captain of the militia and fought the patriots in rebellions of 1837-38¹¹. He was named clerk of the Vaudreuil divisional court. In 1851 he turned up as mayor of the village of Vaudreuil¹². Bastien was named postmaster of Vaudreuil beginning July 6, 1838, and his £200

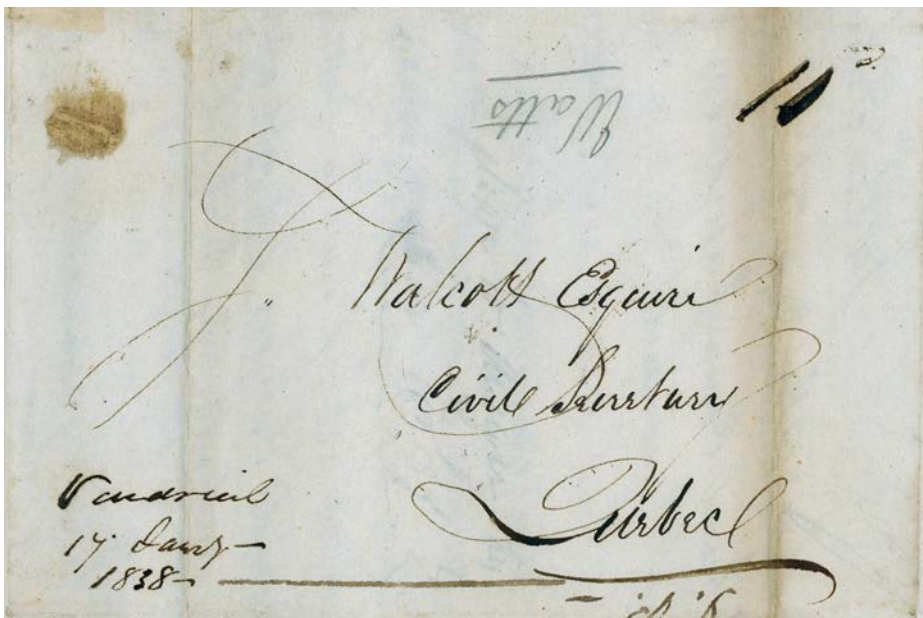


Figure 4 Letter with manuscript marking "Vaudreuil 17 Janv 1838" sent during the term of office of postmaster Henry Ahern [LAC, RG4-A1, vol. 530, no. 1975]

Vaudreuil	1838	1839	1840
Post office revenues	£4 12s 1d	£16 15s 6d	£32 12s 11d
Postmaster's salary	[20%]	[20%]	£6 6s 6½d

security was provided by the former postmaster Henry Ahern and Jean-Baptiste Le-faivre¹³. Bastien was primarily a notary and was very active in his community. He had a clerk who took care of the mails – probably the clerk who assisted him in his office¹⁴.

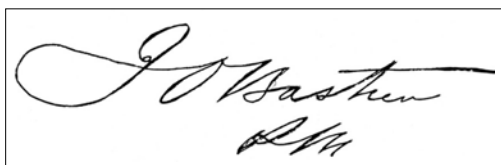


Figure 5. Signature of postmaster J. O. Bastien [LAC, RG4-B52, vol. 33, pt 1, no. 56]

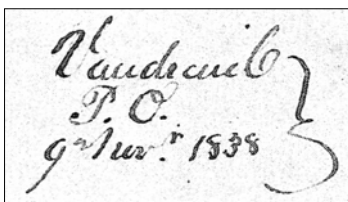


Figure 6. Manuscript marking from the Vaudreuil post office from the beginning of the mandate of J. O. Bastien, probably used by his assistant [LAC, RG4-A1, vol. 554, no. 2170]

In January 1841 Bastien notified Stayner of his wish to resign from his responsibilities as postmaster. Stayner then requested that the Governor send him the name of a reliable person who could replace Bastien, but the Governor did not have any potential candidates, and suggested that Stayner was free to choose whomever he wished. There was a J. A. Trestler as a possible candidate, whom Stayner wished to name from July 1844, but he did not accept the responsibility. Harwood then recommended Joseph Fournier, his verger, but Stayner refused him, as he did

not have the necessary competence to run a post office. It was necessary to find a responsible candidate, and under pressure from Bastien, the post office was closed on April 5, 1845¹⁶.

In a letter of June 17, 1845 sent to the Governor, Stayner wrote that the fellow-citizens of Vaudreuil persuaded Bastien once again to take on the postmastership, and in the public interest he would assume this office from July 6¹⁷. Bastien remained postmaster of Vaudreuil until about April 10, 1846, when his replacement arrived. At that time the postmaster's salary was around £4 per year.

François-Hyacinthe Prévost (1801-1851)

François Hyacinthe Prévost was the son of Hyacinthe Prévost (1779-1819) and Marie-Angélique Séguin (1782-1840). He was born on April 6, 1801 and died at Vaudreuil on April 3, 1851. He married Marie-Angélique Turgeon at Terrebonne in 1821 and became a merchant, as was his father. He was admitted as a notary around 1831¹⁸.

Upon the Bastien's resignation, it was the latter who recommended the notary Prévost to Stayner. When Stayner wrote to the Governor requesting names of possible candidates for this position, he mentioned this reference. Jacques-Philippe Lantier (1814-1882), a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, recommended him as well, and on April 11, 1846 the Governor recommended that Stayner appoint Prévost as Vaudreuil postmaster¹⁹. Nevertheless, it was not until January 25, 1847 that the British Postmaster General approved this nomination²⁰.

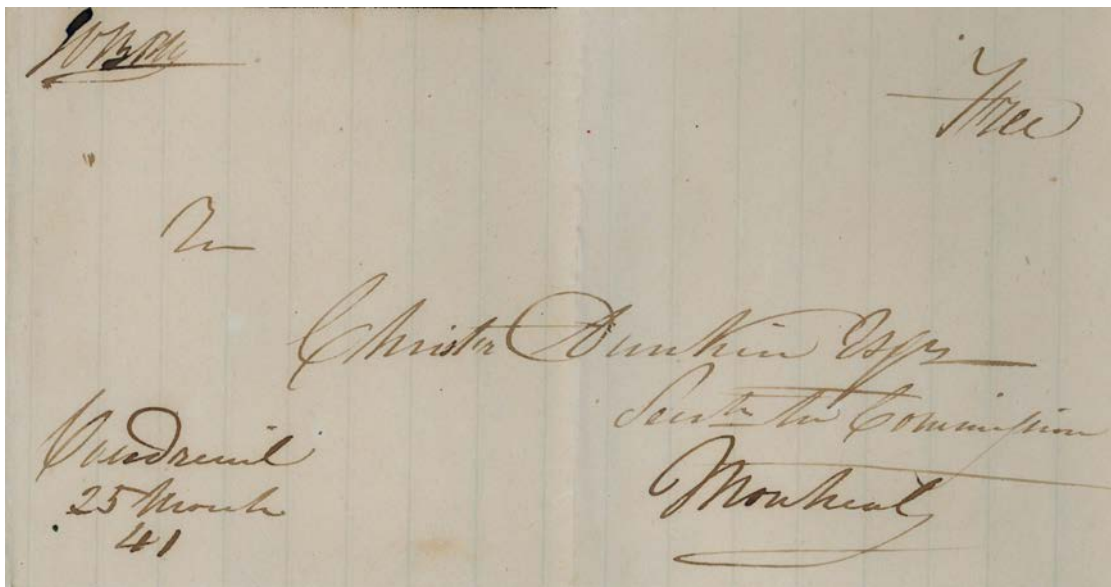


Figure 7. Letter with "Free" franking from postmaster Bastien "J.O.B.-P.M." with manuscript marking "Vaudreuil 25 March 41" [LAC, RG4-B52, vol. 3, pt 1, no. 56]

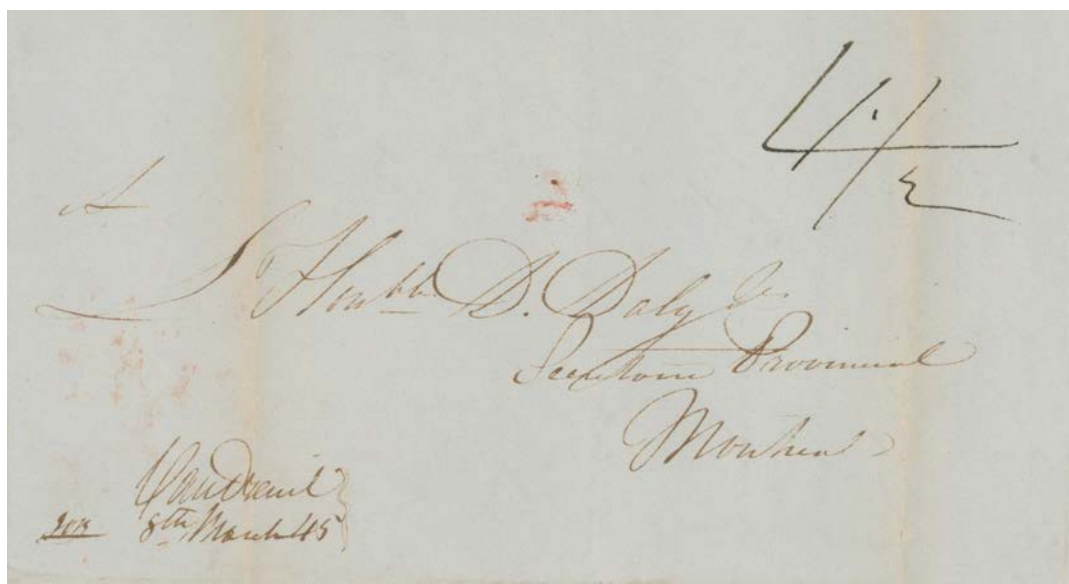


Figure 8. Letter from J. O. Bastien "JOB" (lower left corner) dated on March 8, 1845; Bastien was still Vaudreuil postmaster. The post office closed on April 6, 1845 [LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 124, no. 1354]

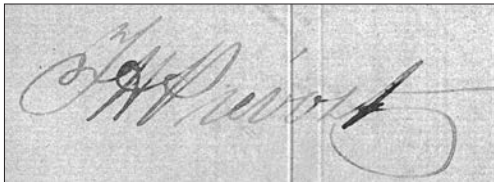


Figure 9. Signature of postmaster F. H. Prévost [LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 175, p. 17965]

Appointing notary Prévost led to difficulties for Stayner. The postmaster did not submit his quarterly statements of account and did not discharge his duties correctly. On October 17, 1846 William Henry Griffin, CMG (1812-1900), Post Office Inspector for Canada East – and later Secretary to the Post Office (1851-1857), in replacement of Stayner – paid a visit to the postmaster in order to compel him to submit his accounts, and to advise him of the requirements of his position²¹. Finally, after the Assistant Post Office Inspector met him again on March 9, 1847, he dismissed postmaster Prévost from

his position²². Stayner had no choice but to replace him temporarily by Emery Lalonde on a provisional basis, awaiting confirmation by the Governor²³.

Emery Lalonde (1821-1888)

Born at Rigaud on April 29, 1821, Emery Lalonde Senior was the son of Antoine Lalonde and Véronique Gémus. Although he was living in Vaudreuil in 1847 where he was probably a merchant, he left several years later to establish himself in Sainte-Marthe, where he was mayor (1858-1862), and was also Member for Vaudreuil in the Legislative Assembly of Quebec under the Conservative banner from 1871 to 1882. He married Marie-Claire-Louise Prévost on August 27, 1849, daughter of Prévost, the previous postmaster. They had eleven children. He died in Montreal on April 25, 1888²⁵.

Lalonde was named interim postmaster on March 10, 1847. The Governor accepted this appointment on March 26, and Stayner probably

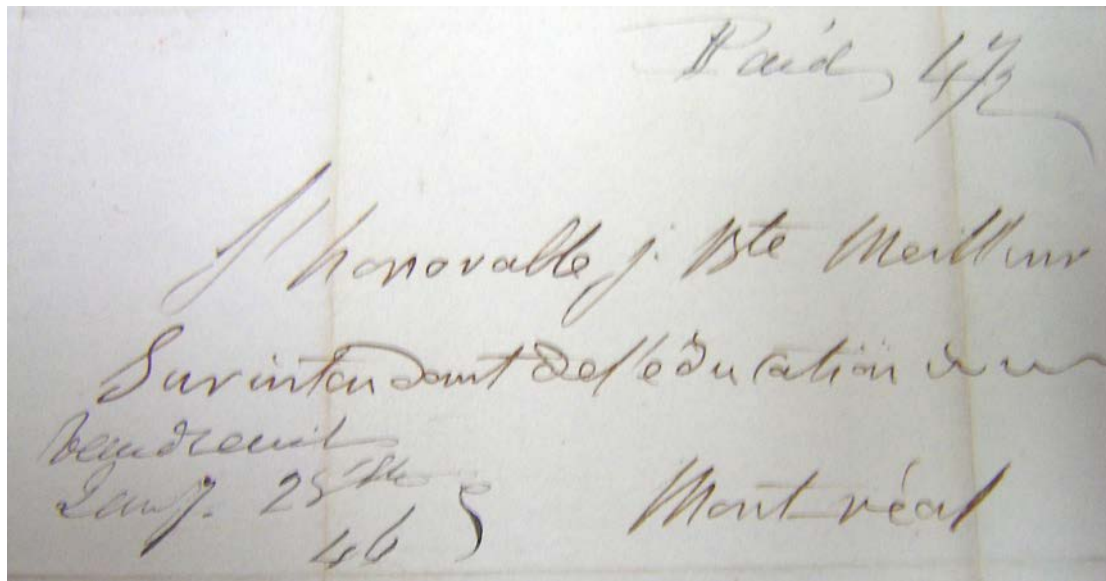


Figure 10. Letter showing the manuscript postal marking “Vaudreuil Janv. 28th 46” written by postmaster Prévost [BAnQ, Fonds E13, vol. 292, no. 1117]

named him immediately. This appointment was ratified by the British Postmaster General only on March 17, 1848²⁶. The postmaster's salary was around £1 10s per annum!

Postmaster Lalonde continued to use a manuscript marking instead of a date stamp, just as did his predecessors. Surprise! He seems to have refound the double broken circle with serifs, ordered by Stayner on February 14, 1842. We have reported the earliest strike of this device dated only June 26, 1847; its use became regular from 1849.

When Emory Lalonde tendered his resignation on June 16, 1849, his commission, or salary, was £7 15s per year. His mandate probably terminated at the end of the second quarter, which was July 5, 1849.

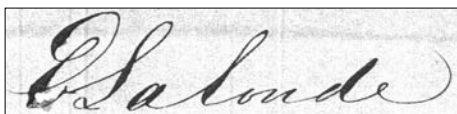
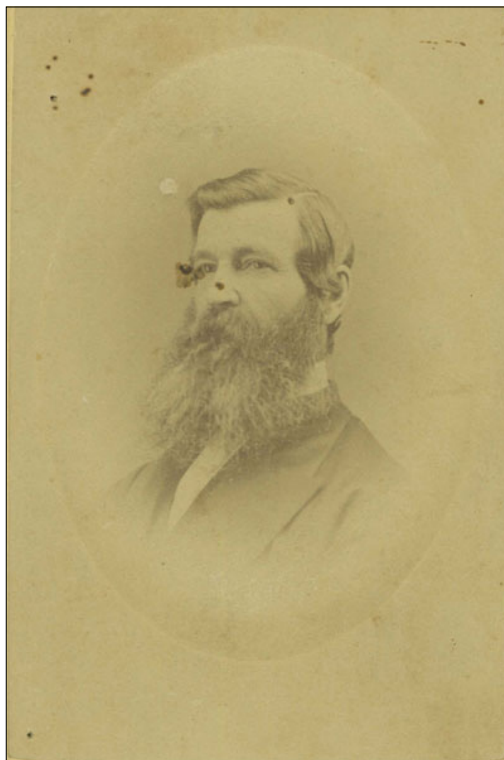


Figure 11. Emory Lalonde, Vaudreuil postmaster [Centre d'histoire La Presqu'île, P29/J]-1]²⁴



Figure 12. Use of the Vaudreuil's serif double broken circle (1839-type or B2sx) dated on June 26, 1847 [BANQ, Fonds E13, vol. 294, no. 644]

Hyacinthe Fabien Charlebois (1806-1868)

Hyacinthe Fabien Charlebois was born at Vaudreuil in 1806. He was the son of Joseph Charlebois and Marie-Amable Cholet of Saint-Michel-de-Vaudreuil, and the brother of Antoine-Guillaume Charlebois, who became postmaster of Rigaud in 1848. He became a notary on October 18, 1831 and practised in Vaudreuil and later in Saint-Polycarpe. On February 18, 1833 he married Marie-Cléopée Ranger in Saint-Polycarpe.

He was a member of the Permanent Committee of Vaudreuil County in 1834 and joined the communications committee on July 26, 1836; he was systematically secretary of the later assemblies, reflecting the major growth of the patriot movement in Vaudreuil. He was arrested on December 20, 1837 and released without trial on the following July 7 subject to a bail of a thousand pounds. In 1844 he was named registrar of the Vaudreuil committee, and then in the following year elected mayor of the municipality of the parish of Vaudreuil²⁷. He died in Vaudreuil on January 1, 1868.

In a letter of June 25, 1849 Jean-Baptiste Mongenais (1803-1887) – later Member of Parliament for Vaudreuil (1879-1882) – recommended Charlebois to the Governor. The latter forwarded this nomination to Stayner²⁸, who accepted it. It is believed that Charlebois was appointed postmaster of Vaudreuil at the beginning of the third quarter, from July 6, 1849.

On December 7, 1850 Stayner advised the Governor that he had dismissed Charlebois from his postmaster's position. It seems that there had been some differences of opinion concerning the interpretation of the state of his accounts. J.-B. Mongenais interceded

with the Governor on January 7, 1851 (see letter extract). After payment of his arrears, Charlebois continued as postmaster up to 1857. As of his first year with the Post Office Department, 1851-1852, his salary was £9 3s 9½d²⁹.

Extract of a letter dated at Rigaud on January 7, 1851 addressed to the Honourable James Leslie, Provincial Secretary

I wish to inform you that changes taking place so frequently in the last few years in the employment of a postmaster in this location, I cannot put forward others who would be more suitable to fulfill faithfully this job than the one who now occupies it, his residence could not be more convenient for the public. I have reason to believe that a pardon he received for his error will be enough to induce him to do better in future and I am well informed that he has already paid the amount of his receipts that he said he was late in discharging because he now recognizes that some error had slipped past him. If, however you wish to have more complete information, I shall make sure to make you aware of it.

(signed) J. Bte Mongenais

[LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 288, report 2552]

On March 4, 1857 the Governor General requested that the Postmaster General, Robert Spence (1811-1868), dismiss H. F. Charlebois of all federal government positions. Griffin, Secretary of the Post Office Department, wrote to Charlebois on that date to inform him of this decision³⁰.

Figure 13. Hyacinthe Fabien Charlebois, notary and Vaudreuil postmaster [LAC, e010947091-v8]

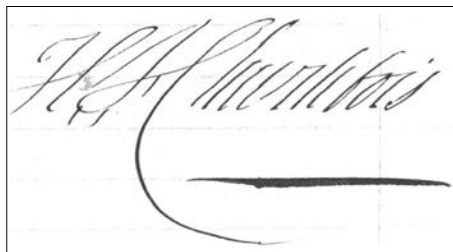
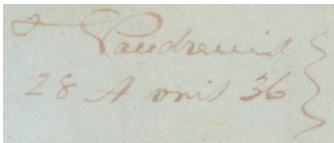
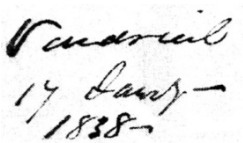
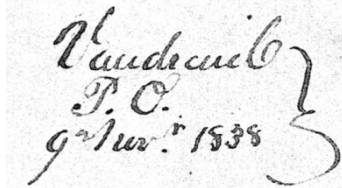
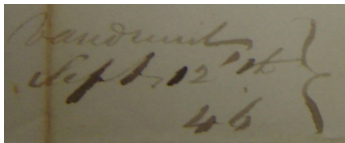
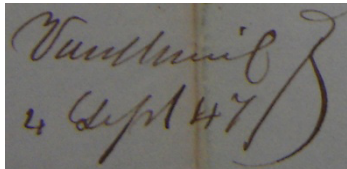





Figure 14. Signature of postmaster H. F. Charlebois [LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 97, report 635]



Figure 15. Letter mailed at Vaudreuil on September 27, 1849 and prepaid 4½d, even though the sender had previously been identified as having a "Free" frank [LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 266, no. 3231]

Early Vaudreuil Postal Markings		
		
1835-1837 (Rassette)	1838 (Ahern)	1838-1846 (Bastien)
<i>LAC, RG4-A1, vol. 619, n° 2800</i>	<i>LAC, RG4-A1, vol. 530, n° 1975</i>	<i>LAC, RG4-A1, vol. 554, n° 2170</i>
		
1846-1847 (Prévost)	1847-1849 (Lalonde)	1847-1869
<i>BAnQ, E-13, vol. 292, n° 1117</i>	<i>BAnQ, E-13, vol. 294, n° 1126</i>	<i>Proof</i>
		
1847	1849	
<i>BAnQ, E-13, vol. 294, n° 644</i>	<i>LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 266, n° 3231</i>	

Vaudreuil – Average number of letters received per week ³¹							
1842	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	Moyenne
19	18	10	13	11	13	31	16

References

- ¹ <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaudreuil-Dorion>
- ² BAC, MG44B, vol. 5, p. 15.
- ³ See also article by Anatole Walker, «Vaudreuil – Joseph Racette», *Philatélie au Québec*, vol. 6, n° 4, 1979, p. 16.
- ⁴ Gilles Laporte, *Patriotes et loyaux, [Leadership régional et mobilisation politique en 1837 et 1838]*, Septentrion, Sillery, 2004, p. 299.
- ⁵ <http://www.1837.qc.ca/1837.pl?out=article&pno=monument03>
- ⁶ <http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/1907779>
- ⁷ Shirley M. Kraft [smtkraft@worldnet.att.net]
- ⁸ Ancestry.ca
- ⁹ LAC, RG4-A1, vol. 531. Letter from T.A. Stayner to Civil Secretary Samuel Walcott.
- ¹⁰ LAC, MG44B, vol. 8, p. 249.
- ¹¹ LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 57, report 376.
- ¹² Information taken from *Canada Directory of 1851*.
- ¹³ Province of Canada Legislative Assembly, *Journals*, 1846. *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Affairs of the Post Office in British North America*, Appendix F Section 16. Montréal: L. Perrault, 1846, Section D-16.
- ¹⁴ LAC, RG4-B52, vol. 3, pt 1, n° 134.
- ¹⁵ Province of Canada Legislative Assembly, *Journals*, 1846. *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Affairs of the Post Office in British North America*, Appendix F Section 16. Montréal: L. Perrault, 1846, Section D-20-23.
- ¹⁶ LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 130, report 1816; LAC, RG3, vol. 912, p.7.
- ¹⁷ LAC, MG44B, vol. 34, p. 178-179; LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 130, report 1816, p. 8841-8842.
- ¹⁸ See François Hyacinthe Prévost, notary at BAnQ. Documents from 1831 to 1851 are listed.
- ¹⁹ LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 150, report 992.
- ²⁰ LAC, MG44B, vol. 47, p. 137-138.
- ²¹ LAC, MG44B-vol. 46, p. 321-322.
- ²² LAC, MG44B, vol. 49, p. 92-94.
- ²³ LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 181, report 555.
- ²⁴ LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 147, p. 2991.
- ²⁵ <http://www.chlapresquile.qc.ca/histo/emery-lalonde/famille.html> et [http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/deputes/lalonde-\(pere\)-emery-3921/biographie.html](http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/deputes/lalonde-(pere)-emery-3921/biographie.html)
- ²⁶ LAC, MG44B, vol. 54, p. 273-274.
- ²⁷ Gilles Laporte, *Patriotes et loyaux, [Leadership régional et mobilisation politique en 1837 et 1838]*, Éditions du Septentrion, Sillery, 2004, p. 298.
- ²⁸ LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 261, report 2023; RG3, vol. 912, p. 140.
- ²⁹ Annual Report of the Postmaster General – Year ending 5th April 1852, John Lovell, Québec, 1852, p. 41.
- ³⁰ LAC, RG3, microfilm T3831, image 387.
- ³¹ LAC, MG44B. Various statistical reports found in volumes 14 (1842) to 58 (1848).

