

# Early Postal Service in Sainte-Scholastique, Québec

BY: CIMON MORIN

The post office in Sainte-Scholastique opened on July 6, 1837. Sainte-Scholastique is just northwest of Montreal, where Mirabel airport is now. During the summer of 1837, the mail was carried once a week between Sainte-Scholastique and Saint-Eustache, a distance of 13 miles. This included a stop in Sainte-Thérèse de Blainville where a post office had been opened on January 6, 1837.

That was the year of the Patriote, or Papineau Rebellion, led by Louis-Joseph Papineau, with reformers looking for political reform and responsible government, while the radicals wanted to replace the government with republics. The rebels were defeated, but the government listened somewhat to their complaints. It led to the unification of Upper and Lower Canada into the Province of Canada. In the process, though, the post office was closed in December, 1837, after it was burned down by the army.

The post office reopened in 1841 to accommodate the army and police that were stationed in Sainte-Scholastique, but closed again for a few months in the autumn of 1844. Beginning in November, 1844, Joseph Cobourg was in charge of moving the mail twice weekly between Sainte-Scholastique and Saint-Eustache. David Mitchell, postmaster in Saint-Eustache between 1836 and 1869, was in charge of carrying the mail, starting on February 6, 1848. From May 1, 1850, until the end of shipping, the carrier had to go to Sainte-Scholastique by way of Saint-Benoît, which made the trip longer. As a result, the contract was set at £33-15s in the summer. In winter, the carrier could go directly from Saint-Eustache to Sainte-Scholastique.

Postmaster	Duration
Jean-Stanislas Vallée	July 6, 1837 – December 1837
Augustus Mackay	October 6, 1841 – July 5, 1842
Oscar Barcelo	July 6, 1842 – July 5, 1844
William Snowdon	November 20, 1844 – March 31, 1854

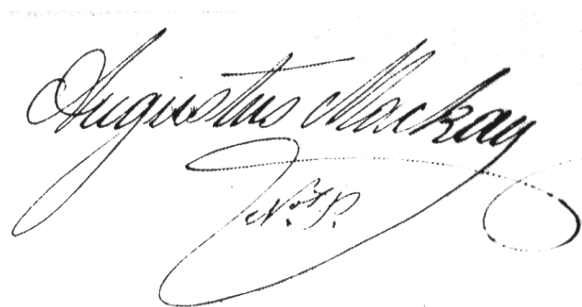
## JEAN-STANISLAS VALLÉE

When the post office opened on July 6th, 1837, T.A. Stayner named Jean-Stanislas Vallée as postmaster. However, Vallée took part in two patriote meetings (on June 5 and July 20, 1837), and his name appeared on a list of patriotes who went into hiding, or left the country at the end of 1837.<sup>1</sup> Vallée was then 28. Later, he claimed £183-2s-6d<sup>2</sup> as compensation for the disturbances of 1837-38.

In his report, on the 1837-1838 rebellion to the British minister in charge of the postal system, T. A. Stayner mentioned that the post office had been destroyed by the army, and that he had been informed by the postmaster that it was impossible to balance the accounts.<sup>3</sup>

## AUGUSTUS MACKAY

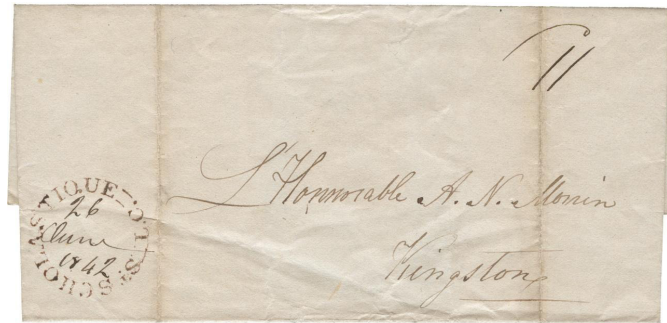
Since the forced closure of the post office in December, 1837, the inhabitants and gentry of Sainte-Scholastique asked for a new post office to be opened in the area. As well, the Governor General wanted to create a police force in Sainte-Scholastique. In a letter addressed to the government, T.A. Stayner mentioned that he would prefer to have the post office in Belle-Rivière, over a mile from Sainte-Scholastique.<sup>4</sup> However, it was only on October 6, 1841, that Augustus Mackay was named postmaster.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Augustus Mackay". Below the main signature, there is a smaller, less legible signature that appears to be "J. S. P."

Signature of Augustus Mackay, Sainte-Scholastique postmaster. [BAC, RG4-A1, vol. 619, p. 13]

Augustus Mackay, sometimes spelled McKay, was a notary in Sainte-Scholastique from July 24, 1827 to 1872. Born in Saint-Eustache on December 22, 1805, he was a Loyalist, son of Stephen Mackay, himself a notary in Saint-Eustache, and also postmaster of the place from 1823 to 1825. On January 22, 1827, he married Marie-Louise Robillard. He died in Sainte-Scholastique on August 30, 1872.<sup>5</sup> In these difficult times, T.A. Stayner was confident that he had made a good choice when he originally selected Mackay as postmaster. However, in a later report he mentioned that his choice had not turned out as well as he had expected. Stayner was unable to get quarterly statements of accounts from Mackay, who refused to renew his guarantees when he was selected.<sup>6</sup> Stayner had no other choice but to lay off Mackay. Under Mackay, the post office was four and a half miles from Saint-Benoît.<sup>7</sup>

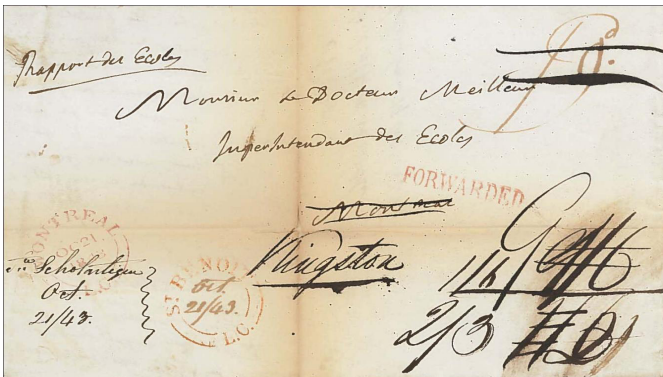
During this short period, Mackay was given a double split circle date stamp.



Letter bearing the Sainte-Scholastique date stamp with a serif double split circle handstamp dated June 26, 1842. [Collection Michael Rixon]

OSCAR BARCELO

A new postmaster had to be named. Oscar Barcelo, captain and merchant, was chosen by T.A. Stayner. Born around 1820, he was 22 when he became postmaster. He was no doubt working for his father, Jacob Barcelo, a merchant and justice of the peace in Sainte-Scholastique. The postmaster salary was about £1 a year, not a very lucrative sum. Appointed on July 6, 1842, Barcelo handed in his resignation on April 6, 1844, although the post office remained open until July 5, 1844.<sup>8</sup> Because a replacement was difficult to find, the post office remained closed until November, 1844.

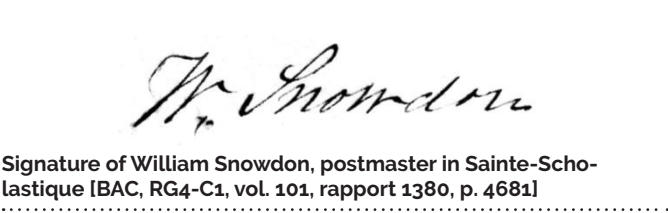


Letter originating in Sainte-Scholastique, sent to Montréal and then forwarded to Kingston. "Ste Scholastique, Oct 21/43" is handwritten. [BAnQ, Fonds du ministère de l'Éducation, E-13, vol. 287, no 16]

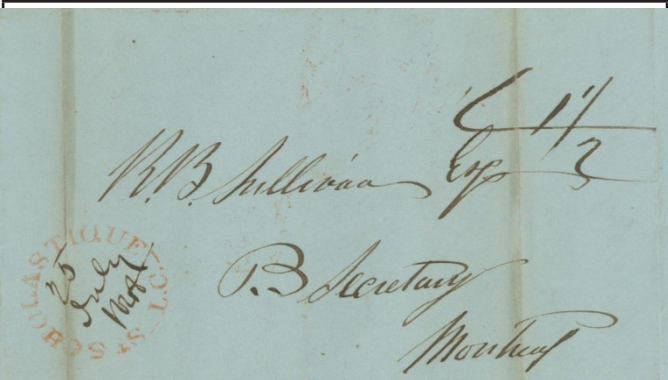
WILLIAM SNOWDON

Charles John Forbes, a magistrate living in Carillon, a member of the Legislative Assembly for Deux-Montagnes, recommended the name of J.M.C. Leclaire<sup>9, 10</sup> to the Governor General. Leclaire was small claims commissioner in Sainte-Scholastique. When T.A. Stayner met

with him, Leclaire indicated that he was not interested in the position because he had just accepted another job in Saint-Polycarpe.<sup>11</sup>



Meanwhile, William Snowdon, merchant and justice of the peace in Sainte-Scholastique, wrote to T.A. Stayner to offer his services, mentioning that J.M.C. Leclaire, whom he had sworn in as postmaster, had decided at the last minute to settle in Saint-Polycarpe. His offer was supported by the Saint-Martin postmaster, Charles Smallwood.<sup>12</sup> It is to be noted, however, that Snowdon was a merchant in Belle-Rivière, over a mile from Sainte-Scholastique. He remained postmaster in Sainte-Scholastique until March 31, 1854. On that date, a new postmaster was named in Sainte-Scholastique, and William Snowdon became postmaster at the new post office in Belle-Rivière.<sup>13</sup> He remained postmaster of Belle-Rivière until August 23, 1856.



Cover originating from Sainte-Scholastique using the serif lettering double split circle date stamp, dated July 25, 1848. [BAC, RG4-C1, vol. 233, no 2721]

Sainte-Scholastique postmarks		
1843-1854	1839	1842-1855
[Collection Michael Rixon]	Unused proof	Proof

Sainte-Scholastique - Average number of letters received in a week <sup>15</sup>						
1842	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848
16	10	8	10	12	16	-

- 1 <https://www.erudit.org/revue/haf/1967/v21/n2/302673ar.pdf>
- 2 <http://www.sgse.org/banques/reclam.html#v>
- 3 LAC, MG44B, v. 34, p. 299.
- 4 LAC, RG4-A1, vol. 588.
- 5 Julien S. Mackay, *Notaires et patriotes 1837-1838*, Septentrion, Sillery, 2006, p. 201.
- 6 In November 1841, a fire destroyed the post office headquarters at Québec City.
- 7 LAC, RG3, vol. 1171.
- 8 LAC, MG44B, vol. 31, p. 164 and RG4-C1, vol. 101, 1844, report 1380.
- 9 LAC, MG44B, vol. 31, p. 164.
- 10 LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 755, Index.
- 11 LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 101, 1844, report 1380.
- 12 LAC, RG4-C1, vol. 101, 1844, report 1380 et MG44B, vol. 31, p. 129.
- 13 LAC, RG3, vol. 367, p. 352, 441; vol. 298, p. 176 (Microfilm: T-3851, T-1709).