

Big Twenty Township Postal History

Aroostook County, Maine

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This page is part of the Maine Postal History website, project of members of the Maine Philatelic Society. For more information, see <http://www.mainephilatelic.org>.

Big Twenty Township, which combines T20 R11 and T20 R12 W.E.L.S., is one of Maine's largest townships and the northernmost. In addition, it contains Estcourt Station, a hamlet that is the northernmost point in New England. Estcourt Station is located on the Canadian border near the southern end of Lake Pohénégamook, and shares the name with the adjacent neighborhood of Estcourt in the Québec municipality of Pohénégamook. The only direct connection between Estcourt Station and the rest of the U. S. is via a private, gated logging road administered by the North Maine Woods organization. Otherwise, the nearest access is via 45 miles of public highways from Fort Kent, Maine, through New Brunswick and Québec.

Estcourt Station, Maine, consists of about a dozen houses and other buildings directly on or just over the border, on the south side of Rue de la Frontière, a street on the edge of Estcourt, Québec. There are various stories that explain how the houses got there -- but it seems probable that at that time, the exact location of the border was inadequately marked and that there was no presence of U. S. border officers.

The border through this area was initially surveyed by teams of cooperating British and American military in 1843-45, after the signing of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. Lt. Col. James Estcourt, an experienced surveyor, led the British team.

Although the area was frequented by Malecite First Nation people who used it for a winter encampment, the first European settlers did not arrive until 1880. However, the construction of the Transcontinental Railway in the early 1900s helped attract settlers and accelerate the growth rate. This was reflected by the opening of Canadian post offices at Estcourt (1909) and Village Blier (1911), both within a half-mile of what became known as Estcourt Station.

The economy of the area was initially based on farming and forest products. For many years there was a large Irving sawmill – supplied by logs from Maine -- on the Canadian side of the border, just outside the gate of the U. S. Customs Station. The sawmill is gone, but recreational activities around Lake Pohénégamook have become an important part of the local economy in recent years.

During the 1950s, when the Estcourt Station U. S. Post Office first opened, Estcourt Station had a peak population of 55, but by 2022 there were only three residents, one full-time and two part-time.



Map showing the relationship of Estcourt Station to the nearby Québec neighborhoods of Village Blier and Estcourt. The location of the Estcourt Station U. S. Post Office is indicated by the asterisk that appears right over the caption “Estcourt Station.” The international boundary is shown as a light purple line. Map from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=16/47.4584/-69.2243>

During the history of Big Twenty Township, there has been only one post office.

Briefly, the history of this post office is as follows:

Estcourt Station post office operated from 1 January 1953 to 24 September 1995.

Estcourt Station

11 December 1952

Notice first appeared in the *U. S. Postal Bulletin* that the Estcourt Station Post Office would open on 1 January 1953. The first notice misspelled Estcourt as Escourt.

16 December 1952

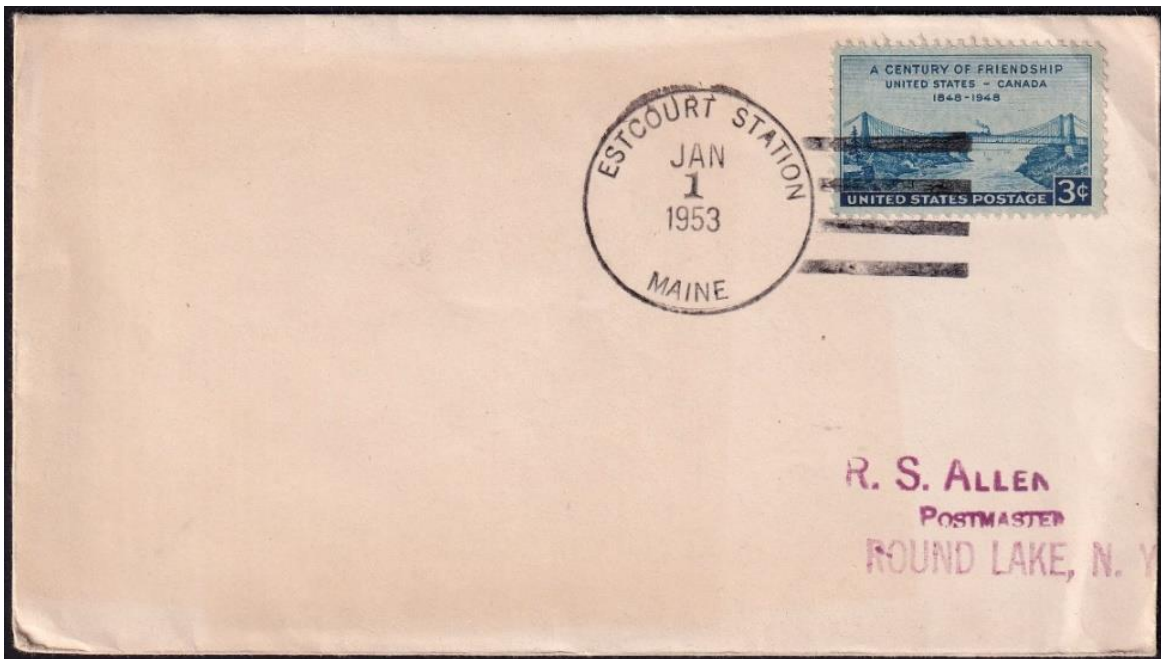
A notice appeared in the *U. S. Postal Bulletin* correcting the spelling. (No postmarks are known with incorrect spelling.)

1 January 1953

Estcourt Station Post Office opened.

1 January 1953:

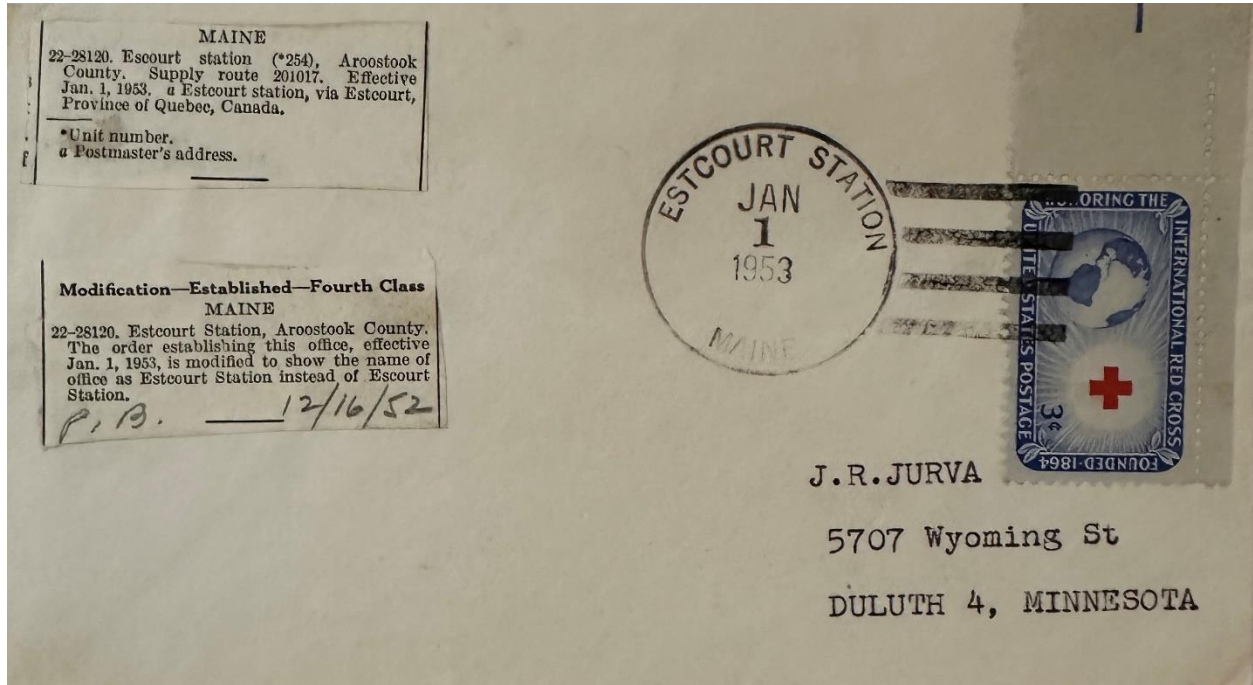
Joseph L. Ouellet became Acting Postmaster for Estcourt Station Post Office.



1 January 1953:

The circular postmark is 32 mm in diameter with a four-bar (B) killer—First Day of Operation cover.

A similar postmark dated 20 August 1957 is known.

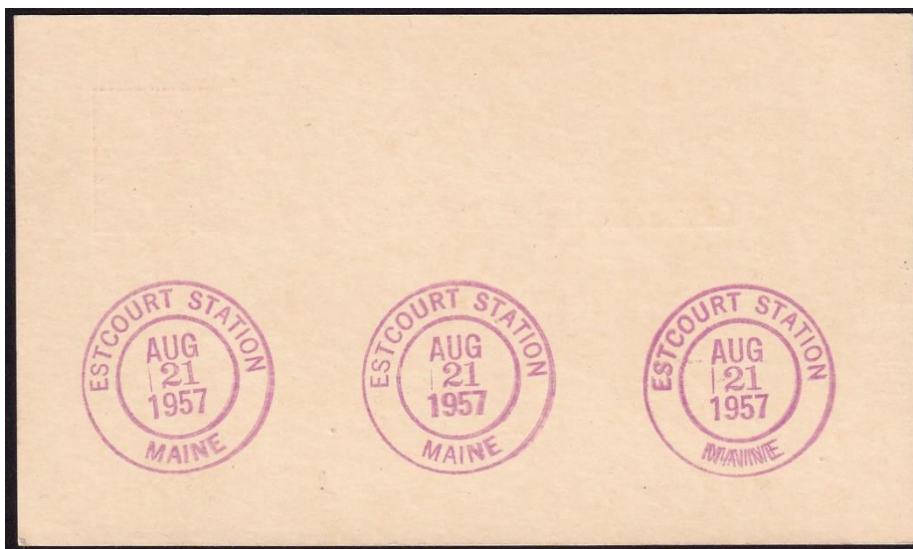


1 January 1953:

First Day of Operation. The circular postmark is 32 mm in diameter with a four-bar (B) killer. The glued-on cutouts from the *Postal Bulletin* explain the first day of operation plus the error initially made in spelling.

3 February 1954:

Joseph L. Ouellet became Postmaster for Estcourt Station Post Office.



21 August 1957:

The outer ring of the double-ring postmark is 32mm in diameter.

18 October 1957:

Mrs. Regina Ouellette became Acting Postmaster for Estcourt Station Post Office.

4 May 1959:

Mrs. Regina Ouellette became Postmaster for Estcourt Station Post Office.

1 March 1963:

Mr. Alcime Gagne became Acting Postmaster for Estcourt Station Post Office.

10 March 1964:

Mr. Alcime Gagne became Postmaster for Estcourt Station Post Office.

17 October 1980:

Yvette B. Gagne became Officer-In-Charge for Estcourt Station Post Office.

7 February 1981:

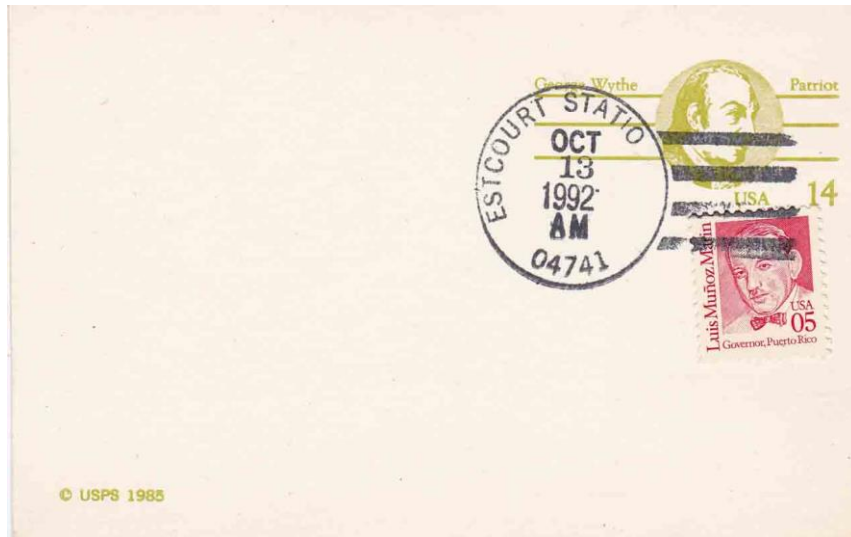
Yvette B. Gagne became Postmaster for Estcourt Station Post Office.



The U. S. Post Office for Estcourt Station, Maine, was in the building on the left in this photo from August 1990. The Canada Customs post, on the right, is less than 15 feet away. The border was marked only by a short length of chain link fence. (photo by Glenda Derbyshire)

1992 July

The general store in Estcourt Station, Maine, was a significant postal customer, receiving its supplies of tobacco products via parcel post. The arrangement was legal in the U.S., but the store owners ran amuck with Québec tax police one day when they drove a few feet into Canada in the process of transporting their incoming mail from the U. S. Post Office to their store. There was much news coverage in both countries at the time.



13 October 1992: The circular postmark is 32 mm in diameter with a four-bar (B) killer.

2 October 1995:

Service at Estcourt Station Post Office was suspended on October 2, 1995, with a Zip Code of 04741. However, service was continued via deliveries from Fort Kent to a cluster mailbox near the side of the former Post Office, only a few feet from the international border and the Canada Customs station.

15 September 1998:

Estcourt Station Post Office was officially discontinued; however, service to the cluster mailbox continued.

2020-22:

Border restrictions disrupted service to the cluster mailbox in place due to the COVID pandemic. U. S. Postal Service ultimately discontinued all service to Estcourt Station in 2022, when it was reported that only one full-time resident was remaining.

Credits:

This document is based on the original web page compiled by the V. F. Thomas Co. (2021), with revisions and additions by James Husson and Brian Damien (2024).

Thank you for the contributions to this page by James Husson, the Strout family, and Max Lynds.

Thank you to the Waterville Stamp Club (<https://www.thewatervillestampclub.com>) for working to ensure the continuity of this project.

Sources:

The Post Offices of Maine 2022, Maine Philatelic Society:

<http://www.mainephilatelic.org/books/TPOOM>

Map of Aroostook County, Maine 1877 https://digitalmaine.com/atlas_aroostook_1877/30/
Big Twenty Township is at the top of the map, designated with Roman numerals XX. (Estcourt Station not shown.)

Links to 1955 U. S. Geological Survey topographic maps, including Big Twenty Township:

https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/ht-bin/tv_browse.pl?id=504ae3b6f47c0f7df196865eddefb01c

https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/ht-bin/tv_browse.pl?id=1bbe2a786c5c3fce427ee481fc2fbd20

(No detail is shown for Estcourt Station, and the location of the label "Estcourt Station" is incorrect.)

Link to 1987 U. S. Geological Survey topographic map for Estcourt:

<https://prd->

[tnm.s3.amazonaws.com/StagedProducts/Maps/HistoricalTopo/PDF/ME/24000/ME_Estcourt_807905_1987_24000_geo.pdf](https://prd-tnm.s3.amazonaws.com/StagedProducts/Maps/HistoricalTopo/PDF/ME/24000/ME_Estcourt_807905_1987_24000_geo.pdf)

(Shows detail removed from later maps.)

The most helpful map of Estcourt Station and adjacent Canadian neighborhoods is at OpenStreetMap.org: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=16/47.4584/-69.2243>.

Additional material, including links to official records of postmaster appointments, can be found at Sources for Researching Maine Post Offices, Postmasters, and Postal History:

<http://www.mainephilatelic.org/books/post-office-sources.pdf>.