

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA PHILATELIC SOCIETY

TRANSATLANTIC STUDY GROUP

Newsletter No. 3

February 1987

CAPEX

I have been asked whether there will be a meeting of the Study Group in Toronto during CAPEX. I asked Allan Steinhart to find out whether meeting rooms were available and he replied that they were at \$25.00/hour. Not knowing whether there would be enough group members at CAPEX interested in a meeting, and learning from him that BNAPS is planning an evening reception (with a cash bar), which will include members of the CPS of GB and PHSC and guests, it seems sensible to plan to use this as a contact point (if we have not done so earlier), after which an informal meeting can be arranged, if desirable.

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Transatlantic Handbook

In the last newsletter, I indicated what sections of the handbook were being actively worked on. Since then, there have been some very valuable contributions from various group members and some more are anticipated before going to press. I am hoping to have enough material assembled by the time that I fly to Toronto for CAPEX that I can discuss getting production underway with the publisher. Only time will tell!

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The Importance of Sailing Dates and Routes

Ever since I first became interested in early transatlantic letters, I was more concerned about the vessels carrying them than in the various markings, which generally could be worked out from existing handbooks, postal tables, etc. This was because I found that some of the instructions on letters regarding the desired routing and carrier were not followed, for a variety of reasons, and the letters went by quite different means. Too often these instructions are accepted by collectors writing up such letters, thus compounding errors from the past.

It was for this reason that my Atlantic Mails devoted nearly 150 pages to the sailing dates of the Falmouth packets and the early contract steamers serving Halifax, and that the forthcoming Hubbard and Winter book, North Atlantic Mail Sailings, 1840-75, will be so important to postal historians. Hopefully the gaps in my Falmouth packet dates, those of the American and other sailing packets, and of the pioneer steamers will be collected in the course of time and appear as sections of our handbook.

Two examples have recently come to my attention which illustrate the above problem and they seem worth being described here for information.

1. I was recently offered at a very high price a stampless letter from Montreal dated 27 June 1838 to London, England, which was mailed on 29 June. The letter was prepaid to New York and carried the instruction: "P Steam Ship Sirius from New York or P first Packet for Lpool". It was date stamped at New York on 2 July, and backstamped with a boxed "LIVERPOOL/SHIP LETTER" and a London arrival stamp of 23 July.

The accompanying text stated that the letter was "from the eastbound leg of the second voyage and is possibly the only surviving letter from this historic vessel" - hence the price! This unfortunately was not true, as I informed the dealer, because the Sirius sailed from New York on 1 July, the day before the letter was datestamped there, for London. She called in at Plymouth, where the Mails were landed on 16 July and stamped as Plymouth Ship Letters, reaching London on 18 July, the same day as the Sirius arrived there.

I have an almost identical 22 June 1838 letter from Montreal (without any instructions on it), which was datestamped at New York on 29 June, which went on the Sirius and is backstamped as a Plymouth Ship Letter, with an 18 July London arrival datestamp. This is illustrated on page 90 of Hennok's publication of my B.N.A. transatlantic stampless letters.

2. The second example shows some creative imagination, when logic should have prevailed. This was a stampless cover from Salem dated 1 June 1840 to Lincoln, England and marked "Per Steam Ship Unicorn". It was datestamped at Halifax on 15 June and rated 1/- Stg. postage due (the newly established British packet rate from either Boston or Halifax). The write-up recognized that the Unicorn was sailing from Boston to Halifax on this occasion, but rather than treating the letter as coming from Salem, Massachusetts, it was treated as having come from one of the three Nova Scotian villages of that name, with the suggestion that the Unicorn had called at one of them on the way to Halifax (10-12 June), although only that near Yarmouth could even conceivably have been a port of call. Not only that, but the record shows that the Unicorn sailed directly to Halifax from Boston.

On the other hand, Salem, Mass. is only about 15 miles from Boston and the letter was written on the day that the Unicorn arrived at Halifax on her maiden voyage on the way to Boston. There was much publicity about this and the arrival two days later at Boston, with banquets and much speech-making with toasts in Boston. What more likely course for a letter-writer in that area but to decide to send the letter by the first direct mail service to England, which meant taking it to Boston and delivering it to the Unicorn.

This is shown by the fact that the letter was carried outside the Mails to Halifax and handed in at the post office there, probably along with other similar letters put aboard the vessel at Boston. At Halifax, it was put with the rest of the outgoing packet mail to be datestamped on the day that the Falmouth packet Peterel was due to sail from there. This habit of withholding the stamping until the sailing date seems to have been the general practice at the time and may have been related to the uncertainty of the arrivals and departures of sailing vessels.

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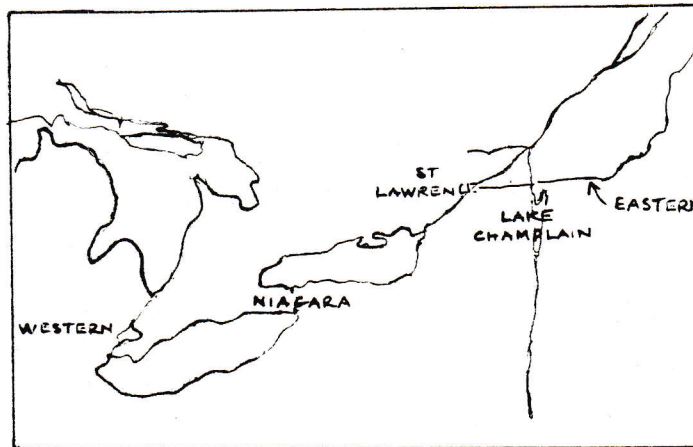
New Group Member

Since my last, Paul Burega sent along his \$10.00 to become our 33rd member.

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I hope to see many of you at CAPEX.

Jack Arnell,
P.O. Box HM 1263,
Hamilton HMFx,
Bermuda.



UPPER AND LOWER CANADA CROSS-BORDER MAIL UP TO 1851

The exceptional collection of covers across the Canada-U.S. border formed by Earl Palmer is divided in to 5 general geographical areas where the cross-border transfer offices were located:

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|-------------------------|--------------------|
| ■ Lake Champlain Route | ■ Niagara Frontier |
| ■ Eastern Route | ■ Western Reaches |
| ■ St. Lawrence Exchange | |

These letters and covers are characterized by postal markings that indicate payment in Canada to the lines and also the required U.S. postage to complete the trip from the border to the final U.S. destination.

Some characteristics of each route are:

Lake Champlain Route: Montreal was the busiest of all Canadian border offices and had contact through Lake Champlain with such U.S. offices as -- Burlington, St. Albans, Swanton, Albany, Highgate and Ft. Corington. Steamboat markings exist on mail carried on Lake Champlain. Earl has an interesting letter mailed from Great Britain in 1812 to Quebec City via New York where it was detained for 3 years by the War of 1812 and then forwarded through Lake Champlain.

Eastern Route: The route through Stanstead to Derby Line, Vermont was the least used of the border crossing points and generally served only local cross-border correspondence. Earl has a lovely clear Stanstead straightline on a letter to London which passed free of charge into the U.S. where the U.S. postage was marked and then the British Ship letter and internal postage was added.

St. Lawrence Exchanges: The strip of the St. Lawrence from Montreal to Kingston used Canadian towns - Cornwall, Prescott, Brockville and Kingston as the exchange offices. Earl showed one of the few known straightline handstamps to record British and U.S. postage paid -- from Hallowell (later Picton).

Niagara Frontier: This route features Niagara, Queenston and occasionally Fort Erie as the Canadian Transfer points to serve Ft. Niagara, N.Y., Lewiston, Youngstown and Buffalo. This was the largest section of Earl's collection and displays the most attractive markings and interesting variety of rates. He has a cover showing the 2 pence ferriage rate between Niagara and Youngstown with a 3 line straightline marking to record the various items of postage. The large double ring cancels of Niagara and Queenston create attractive covers.

Western Reaches: The Windsor to Detroit crossing was essentially the only western exchange office and covers before 1830 are extremely rare. Earl had one example of a crossing at the two Sault Ste. Maries in 1844.