

# TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

of the  
Bristish North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 21

March 1991

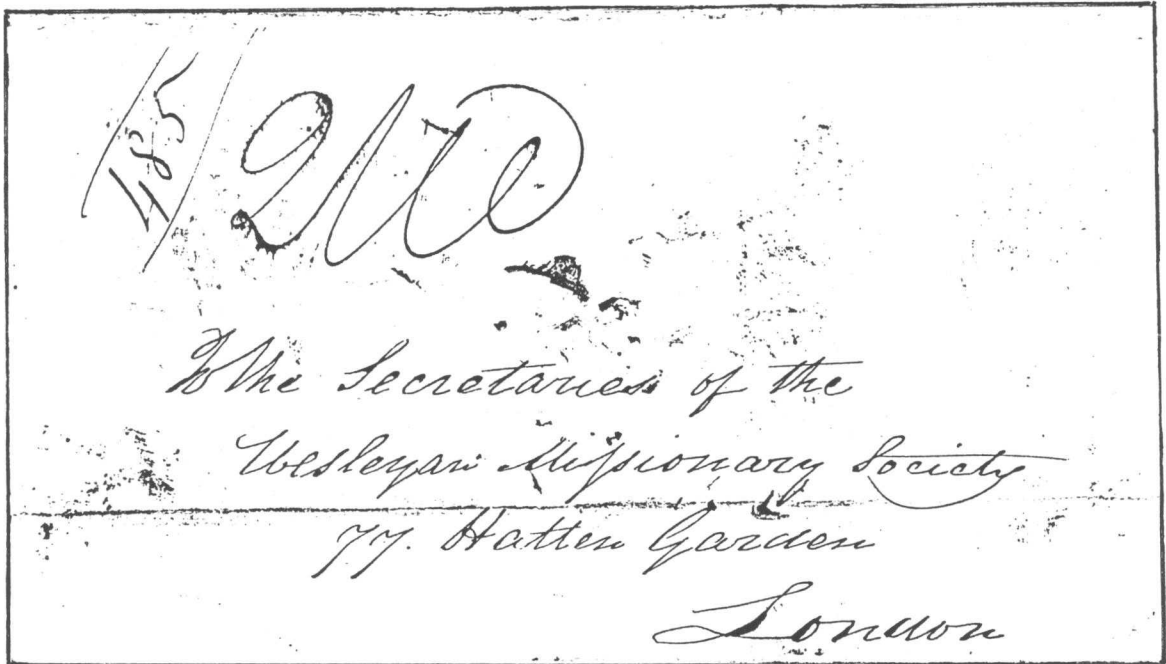
## TRANSATLANTIC LETTERS TO AND FROM NEWFOUNDLAND

As I had very little contributed material on hand, I was wondering what I might put in this newsletter, when a letter arrived from Clarence Stillions, who many of you will know as the chairman of the Newfoundland Study Group. He enclosed photovopies of two of his transatlantic covers to Newfoundland, commenting that 19th century letters to the Island are not common because of the many fires that swept St. John's and other towns during this period.

Having over a dozen transatlantic covers, equally divided to and from New-

foundland, I decided to make this topic the mainstay of this newsletter. While this may be a subject outside the interest of many of our group members, I know that it will please a few, and hope it will inspire others to learn more about Canada's recent province. My earlier letters are all from the Island, which may reflect Clarence's comment about the fires. However, they are interesting because they were probably carried by fishing boats returning with an early summer catch—and being landed at different British ports show a variety of routes and ship letter handstamps.

My first letter was written in Carbonear on 2 July 1838. It was from a missionary and had several enclosures, with the result that when it was landed at Poole, it was rated 2/10 Stg. postage due as a double ship letter (2 x 8d ship letter fee + 2 x 9d inland postage to London).



I have two similar letters of particular interest. They are in Spanish or Portuguese and are datelined San Juan de Terranova—14 August 1839 from Juan de Sandelin and 5 September 1849 from Captain Leandro Fernandez Valdez. The second letter is shown on the next page and reported his arrival in 'la Corveta nombrada *Estanislav*', and that he was doing business with 'el Senor Don Frutos Garcia Rendueles de Gijon à V<sup>s</sup>'. Both have the same markings, viz.:

'COVE/SHIP LETTER', and Cove, Dublin and London datestamps on the back. Each was addressed to Frederick Huth & Co., a leading London forwarding agent, etc., in unusual styles, viz.: 'S.S. Federico hutch y C<sup>a</sup>' and 'S<sup>r</sup> D<sup>n</sup> Federico Hut & Comp<sup>y</sup>'.

*S<sup>r</sup> D<sup>n</sup> Federico Hut  
Comp<sup>y</sup>  
London*

COVE  
1844  
1844  
1844  
1844

COVE  
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COVE  
1844  
1844  
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COVE  
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1844

*Captain John Bowker  
Royal Navy  
Laura Green  
Plymouth  
American Laff  
St. Peter*

COVE  
1844  
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COVE  
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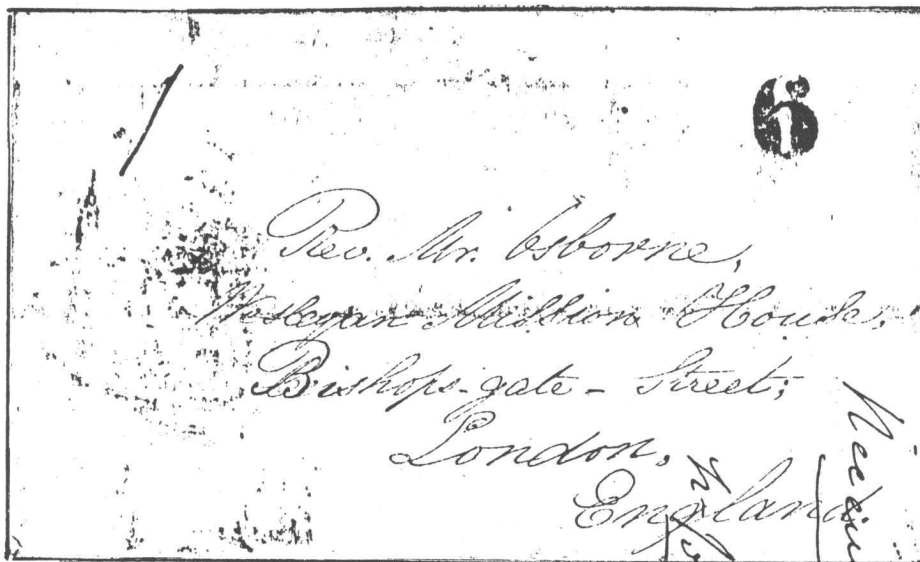
COVE  
1844  
1844  
1844  
1844

COVE  
1844  
1844  
1844  
1844

The third letter (shown on previous page) was begun on the Brig *Convivial* on 25 July 1841, when at 15° 30' west longitude and completed on arrival at St. John's on 20 August. It was carried by the *American Lass*, which sailed that same day and was landed at Gravesend, where it was backstamped with a boxed 'Gravesend/Ship letter' and rated 8d Stg. postage due as a ship letter.

I have two Liverpool Ship Letters—one from St. John's dated 23 June 1838 (with enclosures) and the other from Harbour Grace dated 26 June 1845. Both were addressed to London and were charged 3/2 Stg. and 8d Stg. respectively. They look like so many similar ship letters, that they are not shown.

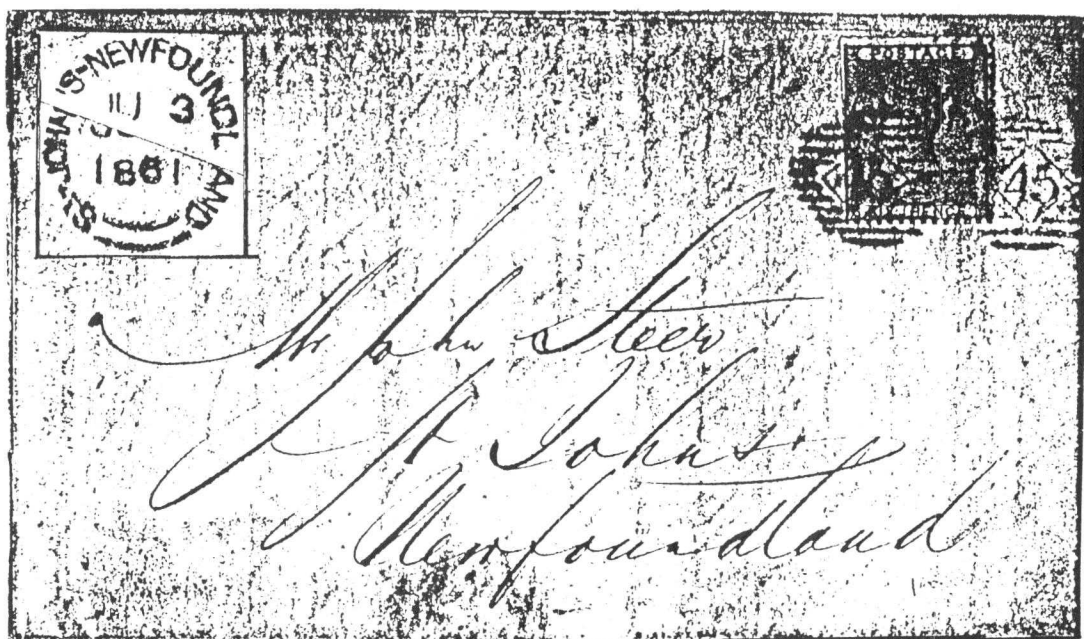
As far as I am aware, the next letter has a very uncommon, if not unique, mark. It was mailed at St. John's on 29 December 1854, just five months after the 6d Stg. packet postage by Cunard was extended to Newfoundland. At the time of mailing, the letter was struck with a small '6' handstamp and marked with a manuscript '1' to show the Newfoundland debit. This appears to be the only recorded example of this handstamp, which I showed in the group handbook as 'E.10'.



My last letter from Newfoundland (previous page) was mailed at Harbour Grace on 15 September 1856. It is of interest because it has a '2' in manuscript to show the Newfoundland debit for its share of the 1/- Stg. postage to be collected in Edinburgh. It was taken to Halifax by a Cunard mailboat in a closed bag for Liverpool. It was carried from there by the *Arabia* on 25 September, arriving at Liverpool on 4 October, where it was backstamped with a tombstone 'PKT LETTER/LIVERPOOL' and rated 1/- Stg. postage due.

Turning now to the letters coming to Newfoundland. The first one was illustrated in Newsletter No. 19—a letter recovered from the wreck of the Cunard mail steamer *Kestrel* on 23 July 1849. It is not reproduced again.

The two letters of *Clarence Stillions*' are similar, in that they had the postage prepaid with a 6d adhesive, cancelled with a London duplex and were mailed on 17 May and 5 October 1861 respectively. The earlier one is shown below, with the very nice St. John's arrival backstamp overlaid.



My remaining seven letters were business correspondence to Punter & Munn, Harbour Grace. All but one originated in South America and travelled from there to Southampton via the Royal mail Steam Packet Company and thence from Liverpool to Halifax and on to St. John's by mail steamer. I have difficulty with the conversion of the postage due from sterling to cents, as in every case there is 4-6 cents more than the standard conversion of two-to-one. Bob Pratt's book makes no mention of any devaluation of the Newfoundland dollar, but was this a local currency charge? The rates on the letters are listed below and, hopefully, one of the Newfoundland experts can explain them for us:

Pernambuco, 16 March 1867	2/8	68 cents	} All in blue crayon.
Liverpool, 18 January 1868	8d	21 cents	
Pernambuco, 13 February 1869	2/8	68 to 64 cents	
Bahia, 11 May 1869	1/4	36 cents	
Pernambuco, 27 January 1871	2/1	56 cents	
Bahia, 25 February 1871	1/4	38 cents	
Pernambuco, 27 September 1873	1/-	30 cents	

Several of these letters are shown overleaf.

*[Faded handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]*

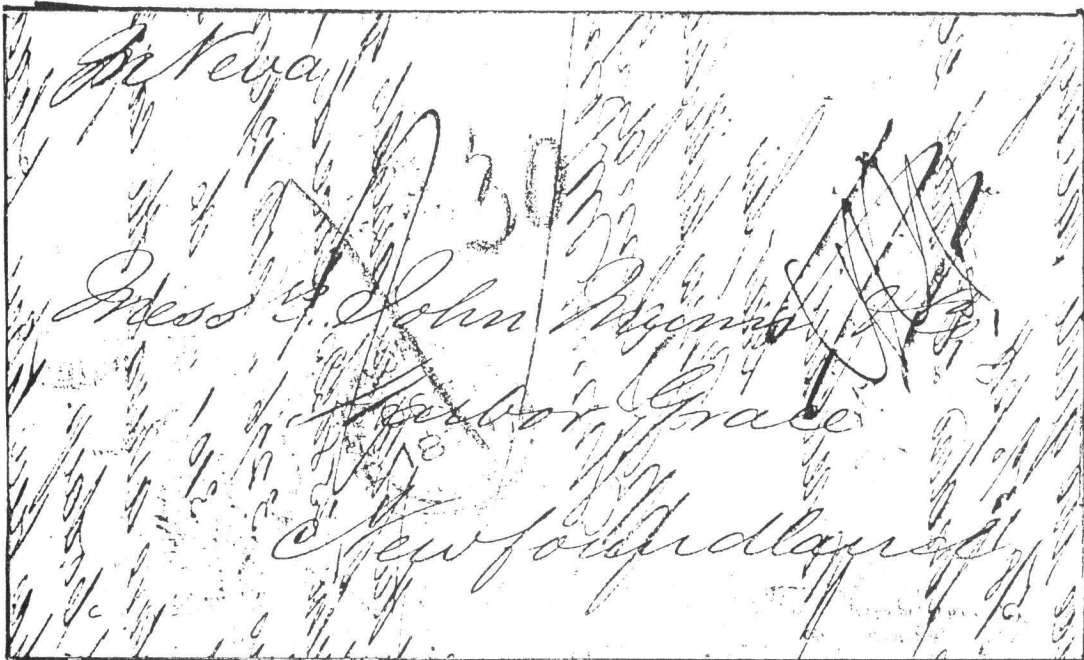
Pernambuco  
13 February 1869

P.<sup>a</sup> Dawood 1881  
26  
Messrs. P. & O. & Co.  
Harbor Grace

Bahia  
11 May 1869

*[Faded handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]*

Pernambuco  
27 January 1871

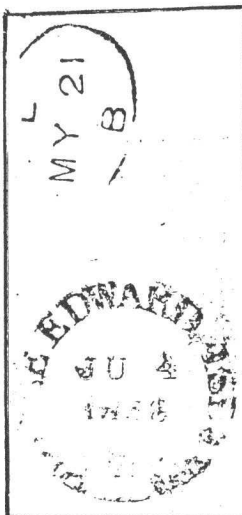
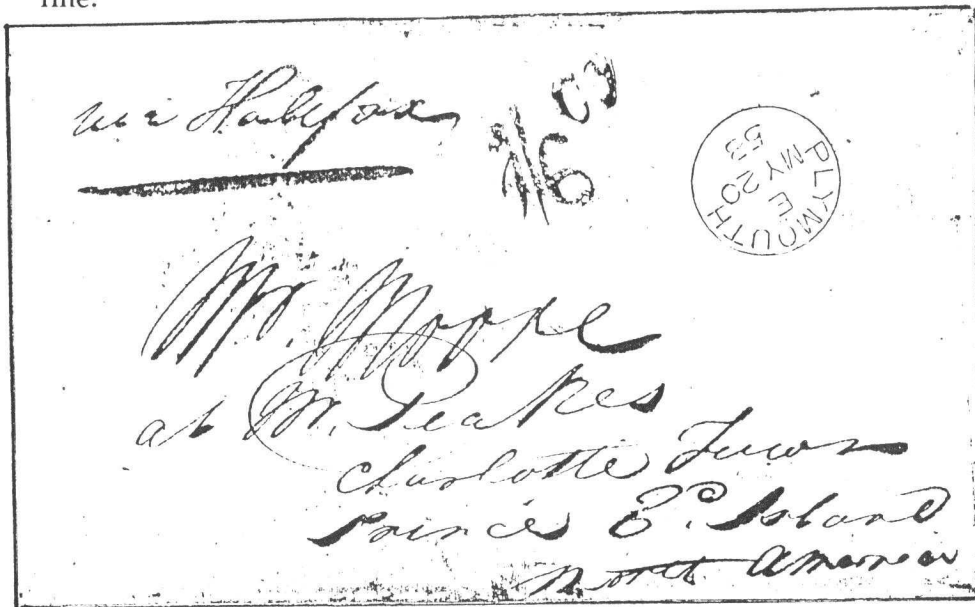


Pernambuco  
27 September 1873

AN UNUSUAL USAGE

In his book *The Postage Stamps and Cancellations of Prince Edward Island 1814-1873*, Jim Lehr reproduced the 1/6 Cy. handstamp (p. 104) shown on the letter below and stated that it was used in 1851-52 to show postage due on incoming letters from Britain (1/3 packet postage + 3d intercolonial postage). He told me a couple of years ago that six letters showing this usage have been recorded. In the book, he also records its use in 1864 on a double weight letter with a 6d GB adhesive and 'insufficiently prepaid' to Charlottetown, where this handstamp was used to show the postage due, plus the unpaid fine.

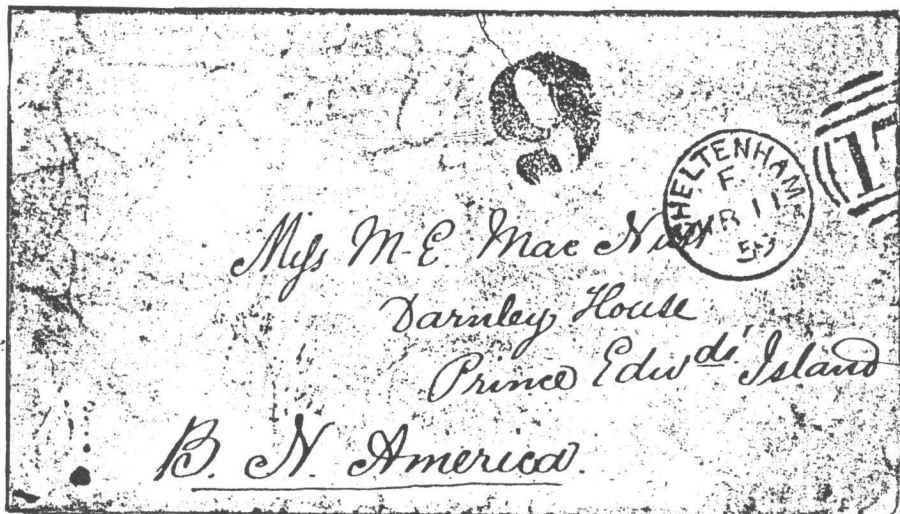
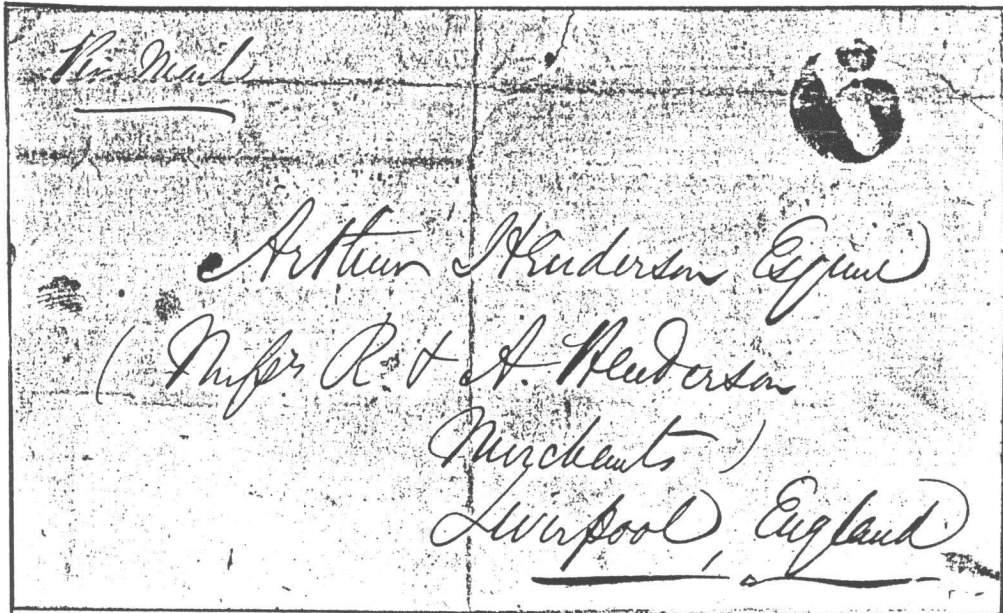
In March 1854, the packet postage through Halifax was reduced to 6d Stg. or 9d P.E.I. Cy. This letter was mailed at Plymouth on 18 May 1858 with the postage unpaid. It was carried by the *America* from Liverpool on 22 May and arrived at Halifax on 2 June. On arrival at Charlottetown, it was backstamped with a circular 'PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND' datestamp on 4 June and, being double weight, was rated 1/6 Cy. postage due using this handstamp, which Jim catalogued as P105 and I listed as E.24. This is the only known letter showing this use.



## COMING & GOING - A DOUBLE USE HANDSTAMP

On the same page in his book, Jim Lehr reproduced a 'heavy 6' (P106), and described it as used upright to show 6d Stg. and inverted to show 9d Cy. Examples of these usages are shown below.

The first letter was mailed at Charlottetown on 6 November 1855 and, being unpaid, was struck with the '6' position to show the postage due in sterling at Liverpool. The second was mailed at Cheltenham on 11 March 1859 and, also being unpaid, on arrival at Charlottetown was datestamped on the back on 4 April and struck with the '9' position to show the postage due in P.E.I. currency. Because I had the second letter earlier than the other, I classed the marking as a '9' and listed it as E.23.



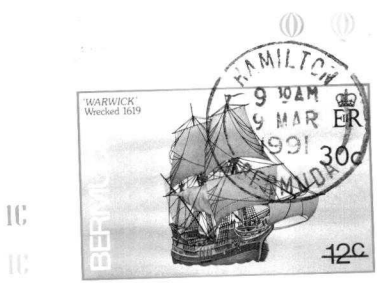
ORAPEX 91

Many years ago when I was working in Ottawa, I exhibited for the first time at an early ORAPEX. At that time, I was a Bermuda stamp collector. This year ORAPEX is marking the 50th anniversary and Paul Burega persuaded me to enter our newsletter and the second

handbook in the Literature Section—we shall see what others think of our efforts. As I write this, you might be interested in how the transition came to my collecting interests.

On a trip to London, England about thirty years ago, I bought two Portsmouth Ship Letters, which had originated at Bermuda, from a dealer in an arcade at Trafalgar Square. One of these reported the arrival of HMS *Malabar* at Bermuda on her way to England for repairs, after being severely damaged on the rocks off Cape Bear, P.E.I. Searching for an explanation of why a British 74-gun ship-of-the-line should be in those waters, I was introduced to the Public Archives of Canada. From then until I returned to Bermuda in 1973, I was a regular at the Archives and many historical articles and *The Atlantic Mails* are some of the results. But along with this, at one of the early ORAPEX shows I bought several transatlantic letters from George Wegg, which had come from C.M. Jephcott—and so my collecting interest was changed! I am looking forward to exhibiting once again at Ottawa and seeing some old friends.

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Bermuda



**AIRMAIL**

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