

TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

of the
British North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 29

Jack Arnell, Chairman

July 1992

SUSAN M. MCDONALD

While attending WESTPEX 92 in San Francisco in May, I learned with great sadness of the passing of Susan McDonald on 17 March. She was a longtime friend and, in some ways, my postal history mentor. About 1965, when I was essentially a collector of Bermuda stamps, I became attracted to transatlantic stampless letters and began accumulating them. Before long I was writing articles about them. Somewhere along the way, Susan, who had already written a major article on the transatlantic mail between Canada and Great Britain, wrote to me either with a question or to correct something I had written—I have forgotten the details. Thus began a correspondence which has continued ever since.

She was responsible for focusing my interest on the area for which I have become known—the B.N.A. handstruck rate markings. This occurred at the 1971 or 1972 NOJEX meeting in New Jersey, when I was the president of the British Caribbean Philatelic Study Group. This was the first time I actually met her, so we spent some time getting properly acquainted. One morning during the show, she took me to look at some covers which the late Bill Bogg had in stock in the hope that I could explain the markings. These were new to me, so we discussed the various possibilities, including Bill and Henry Spellman, who had the adjoining stand, in our deliberations.

The covers involved were transatlantic letters to and from British North America. I was intrigued by them and bought only three or four, as I had little spare cash at the time. When I got home to Ottawa and thought a bit more about the markings, I concluded that they must be some kind of rate marking and decided to explore this possibility. As Bill Bogg had quite a few in his stock, I wrote to him and arranged for him to send me lots of fifteen or twenty, until I had viewed all he had. I was able to buy enough to start to categorize them. This led to a period of regular correspondence between Susan and me, for she was as interested in the subject as I was and would send me any new markings she came across.

I seldom saw her for the next decade until we both attended ESPAMER in San Juan, Puerto Rico in October 1982 with our spouses. The highlight of this trip was a day the four of us spent together driving through the rain forest and touring part of the east and south coast of the island. While there, we arranged that she and Clark would visit us in Bermuda before they returned to Canton. They arrived a few days after we got home and we had a very happy holiday. This was our last real get-together.

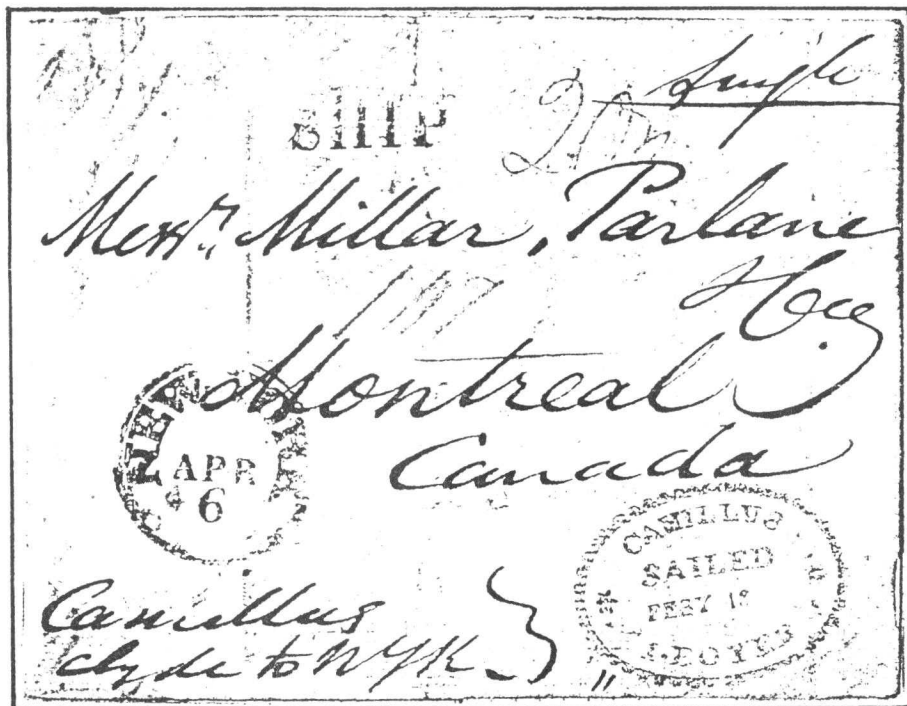
Her contributions to postal history are well known through her editorial work with the *American Postal History Journal* and the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society *Chronicle*, and many have benefited, as I did, from her extensive knowledge of cross-border and other aspects of B.N.A. postal history. To have this contribution recognized in Canada, I nominated her for fellowship in the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada and was delighted when she was elected a Fellow at CAPEX 87.

Postal history has lost a leading expert and a great friend of many postal historians.

PRIVATE SHIP HANDSTAMPS

Following the establishment of the American packet companies shortly after the War of 1812, some of the captains of the early packets, as well as a few private traders, marked the letters they carried with decorative handstamps. While these are not uncommon on U.S. transatlantic letters, they are few and far between on those to B.N.A. Allan Steinhart has sent in a very nice

strike of the *Camillus* on a letter from Glasgow dated 5 February 1821. At this time, I believe that she was a private trader, although in 1824 she made the first sailing of the newly-organized New York–Greenock Line, which was the first New York emigrant line. I had an 1820 cover to New York with the same handstamp. I also have a rather poor strike of a double oval handstamp of the *Courier*, one of the original four vessels of the Black Ball Line of sailing packets, on a similar letter to Millar, Parlane & Co. If anyone has any other such strikes on B.N.A. covers, please send me a photocopy, so that it can be shared.



EXCHANGE RATES BETWEEN STERLING AND B.N.A. STERLING

Early last year I read a review of *Money and Exchange in Canada to 1900* by A.B. McCullough, which was published by the Dundurn Press, Toronto, in cooperation with Parks Canada and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre. This review suggested that the book might contain information I had often sought on the official exchange rates used by the Post Office between sterling and the different provincial currencies in calculating postage. I was very aware of this need when I used the late Charles de Volpi's study of postage rates, based on actual covers, which appeared in 1978-79 *B.N.A. Topics*, in compiling the table on page 15 of the Study Group's Handbook No. 1.

When in Toronto in May 1991, I managed to track down a copy at the Dundurn Press distribution office in east Toronto. It is a scholarly treatise on the whole subject of the

medium of exchange in British North America from the days of New France, and is organized by regions which makes it easy to use. As so often happens, having found what I had sought for so long, other immediate matters resulted in the book being put on a shelf unread.

Now Malcolm Montgomery has written asking for help in assisting him in sorting out the exchange rates used for postage during the 1849-54 period. He wrote in part:

I have been unable to find any primary source to substantiate our generally agreed views of how 1s 2d Sterling was converted to 1s 4d Currency, and 2s 4d Sterling became variously 2s 8d or 2s 7¹/₂d Currency. The actual charges on trans-Atlantic letters after 1849 were 1s ≡ 1s 1¹/₂d (1:1.125), 1s 2d ≡ 1s 4d (1:1.15). After 1851, in Canada these were unchanged, but in the Maritime Provinces they

changed to 1s \equiv 1s 3d (1:1.25) and 1s 2d \equiv 1s 5¹/₂d (1:1.25). After the 1854 general reductions the Canadian Currency followed the Maritime Provinces (Prince Edward island was an exception at 1s \equiv 1s 6d (1:1.5)); the Canadian devaluation is usually dated from the Currencies Act, 1 Vict, Cap CLVIII, which established (or possibly reaffirmed), *inter alia*, an exchange of 20s Sterling \equiv 24s 4d Currency (1:1,218).

There are exceptions, however, I suggest that there may have been a special arrangement operating on Canada/United Kingdom letter mails from 1849. First, and probably least significant, the calculation that 2d Sterling \equiv 2¹/₂d Currency (1:1.125) and the commonly quoted inland rate 2¹/₂d \equiv 3d Currency (1:1.2); second the book rate quoted both by the 6 April 1851 Regulations, paragraph 103 (from the Post Office Act, 13 & 14

Vict, Cap XVII), and in the Post Office Guide 1852, Part IX, page 32, 6d Sterling \equiv 7¹/₂d Currency (1:1.125); lastly, and conversely, the rate for letters by United States Packets to Canadas after 1854 continued to be calculated at 1s 2d Sterling \equiv 1s 4d Currency, indeed, until late in the 1850s (I have one for 1857).

His letter prompted me to see what McCullough had to offer on this matter in his book. He gives a number of tables for the value of Currency in the several provinces based on successive British Acts, together with some customary and legal rates. I have compiled the following table from these to show the official exchange rates over the years.

Exchange Rates Between Sterling and Currency in British North America

<u>Year</u>	<u>Shilling</u>	<u>Crown</u>	<u>Sovereign</u>	<u>Dollar</u>
<u>The Canadas</u>				
17 Geo. III (1777)	1s 1d	5s 6d	£1 3s 4d*	5s 0d (Spanish)
36 Geo. III c.1 & c.5 (1796)	1s 1d	5s 6d	£1 3s 4d*	5s 0d (Sp. & US)
7 Geo. IV c.4 (1826)	1s 2d	5s 9d		(Upper Canada)
4 & 5 Vic. c.93 (1841)	1s 2 ¹ / ₂ d	6s 1d	£1 4s 4d	5s 1d (Sp. & US)
16 Vic. c.156 (1853)	1s 2 ¹ / ₂ d	6s 1d	£1 4s 4d	
<u>Nova Scotia</u>				
28 Geo. III c.9 (1787)	1s 1d	5s 6d		
Customary/legal (1822)	1s 1d	5s 6d	£1 2s 2 ¹ / ₂ d	5s 0d
do. (1836-42)	1s 3d	6s 3d	£1 5s 0d	5s 0d
23 Vic. c.3 (1860)	\$0.25	\$1.25	\$5.00	
<u>New Brunswick</u>				
26 Geo. III c.16 (1786)	1s 1d	5s 6d	£1 3s 4d*	5s 0d (Spanish)
Various Acts (1821)	1s 1d	5s 6d	£1 2s 3d	5s 4d (Sp.) 5s 0d (US)
do. (1844)	1s 2 ¹ / ₂ d	6s 0d	£1 4s 0d	5s 0d (Sp. & US)
15 Vic. c.85 (1852)	1s 2 ¹ / ₂ d	6s 1d	£1 4s 4d	
<u>Prince Edward Island</u>				
Order in Coun. Sep. 1813	1s 8d**	6s 0d	£1 3s 4d*	5s 0d
12 Vic. c.24 (1849)	1s 6d	7s 6d	£1 10s 0d	6s 3d
34 Vic. c.5 (1871)	\$0.24	\$1.20	\$4.86	\$1.00 (Spanish)
<u>Newfoundland</u>				
Proposed 1845	1s 2.4d	6s 0d	£1 4s 0d	5s 0d
19 Vic. c.11 (1856)	1s 2 ¹ / ₂ d	6s 0d	£1 4s 0d	5s 0d
26 Vic. c.18 (1863)	\$0,24	\$1.20	\$4.80	\$1.00

In an appendix, McCullough discusses currency conversion, noting that 'because of the differences between nominal and real pars, differences among colonies, and differences from one time to another, one must take care in making conversions from one currency to another'. He gives a conversion table for nominal rates of exchange, not actual foreign exchange, which is adequate from 1760 to 1825. He then explained the subsequent changes. In 1825, the British government began to value the dollar at 4s 4d sterling instead of 4s 6d, which of course depreciated

The colonial governments and merchants generally ignored the inflationary effect of the decline in the sterling rating of the silver dollar and continued to convert currency to sterling on the basis of the old standard for another decade. In 1836-37 Nova Scotia adjusted its nominal par to £ 125 currency to £100 and in 1848 Prince Edward Island adopted a nominal par of £150 currency per £100 sterling except in the case of rents which were expressed in sterling; they continued to be converted and paid in currency at the old rate. The currency law passed by the Province of Canada in 1841, which came into effect in May 1842, suggested a revision of the nominal rate of exchange. On the basis of the sovereign which was valued at £1 4s. 4d. currency the new exchange rate should have been £121.67 currency per £100 sterling and indeed there was a move on the part of bankers, merchants, exchange dealers and the British army to adopt the new rate. The colonial government also adopted the new rate in its accounts when actual foreign exchange transactions were involved but in simple bookkeeping matters, it generally used the old rate of £111.11 per £100. As a result most of the private sector reverted to the old system and continued to use it until decimal currency was adopted in 1858.

I hope that you will find this information of some use in understanding some of the peculiarities which we all find in the postal conversions of sterling to or from currency on our transatlantic letters. I shall look forward to hearing from some of you with further information to add to this or to offer other observations which can be passed on to the rest of the group members.

A RARE SHIP LETTER MARK

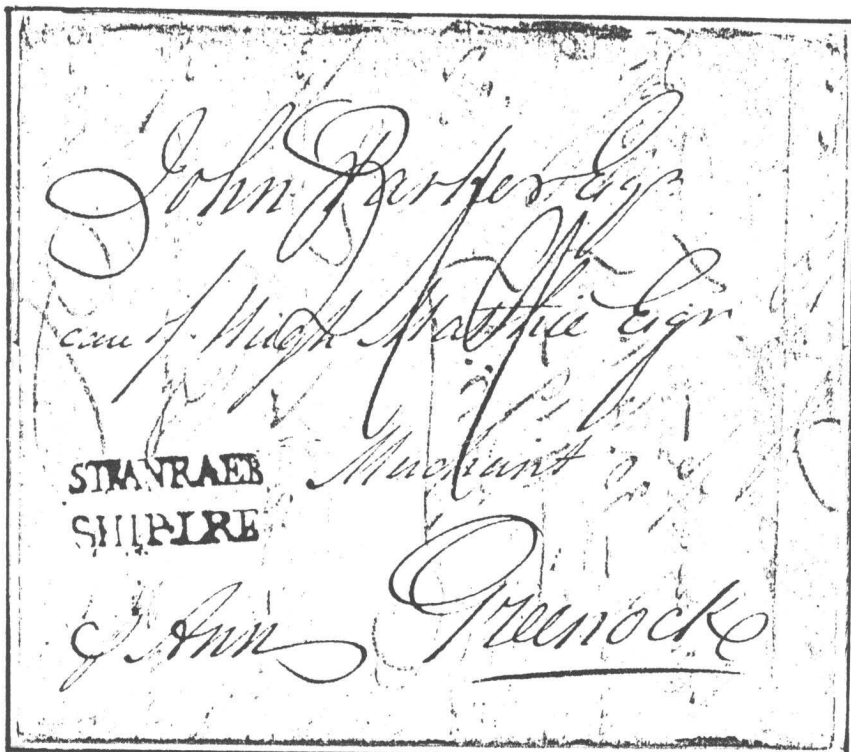
In recent years, I have been on the look-out for additional ship letter strikes to add to my collection on transatlantic letters. At WESTPEX 92 in San Francisco at the beginning of May, I was delighted to be able to add to my holdings. As one of them is rare—it is not recorded by Alan Robertson—it seems worthwhile to show it to you.

The letter was written by John Shaw in Quebec on 29 October 1801 and was a duplicate of an original letter with orders and remittances to the addressee in Greenock, which had been sent by a returning Royal Navy vessel, HMS *Resistance* and a further duplicate was to follow a few days later on the *Juno*. The fact that the letter was being sent in triplicate implies the importance the sender put on having the information reach Greenock, recognizing from the date that it was getting close to the closure of the St. Lawrence River shipping season, and there was no guarantee that any of those early sailing vessels would get out of the Gulf safely.

As shown on the front, it was sent by the *Ann*, which presumably was headed for Greenock, but made port at Stranraer instead, where it was struck with a two-line 'STRANRAER/SHIP-LRE' and dated 2/9 Stg. postage due as a triple letter to Greenock (3 x 4d S.L. fee + 3 x 7d inland postage).

On looking at the map, it would appear that the *Ann*, after coming around the NE corner of Ireland was either in need of succour or found the winds so unfavourable that it was not possible to make the long run up the Firth of Clyde to Greenock. The latter seems likely because

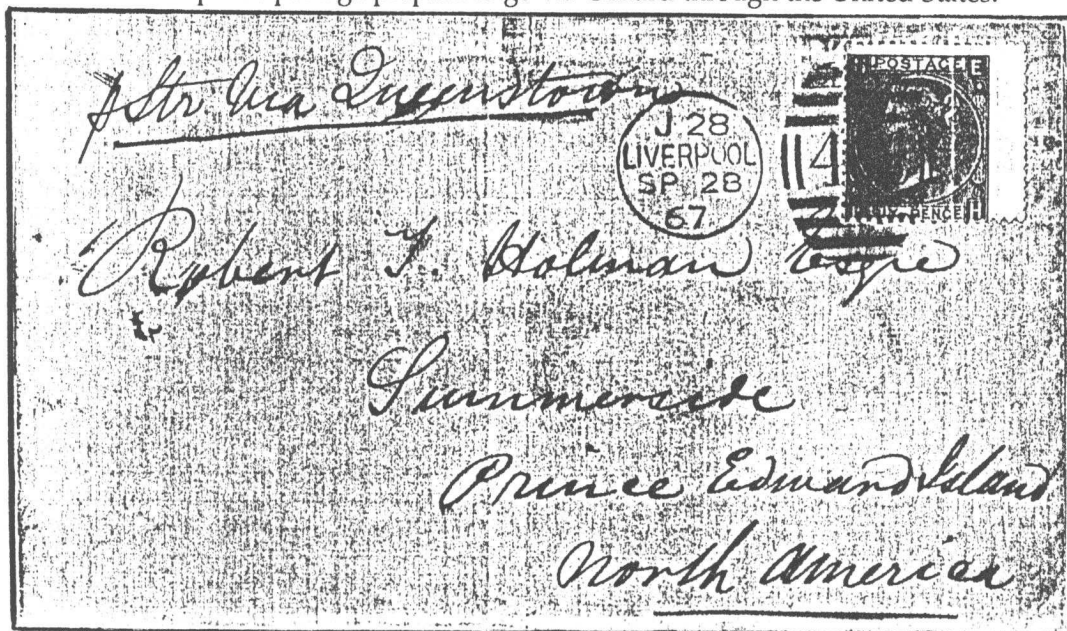
it would have needed a northerly wind—adverse for Greenock—to have carried the vessel down the narrow channel to Stranraer.

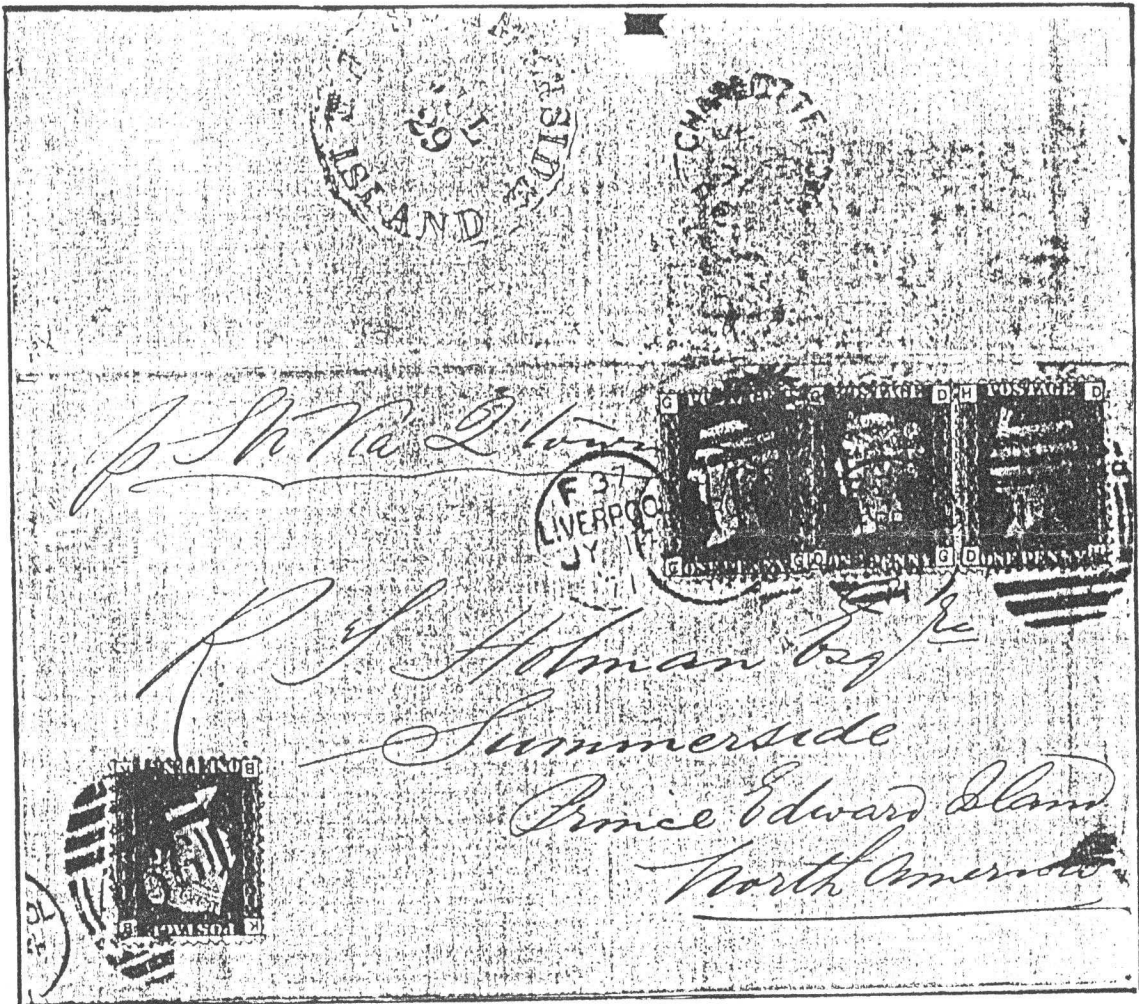


MORE ON 'VIA QUEENSTOWN'

In Newsletter No. 26, a cover of Jim Lehr's was shown to clarify that it had been routed through Queenstown, rather than by a coastal steamer. This letter had three 1d red adhesives to pay the postage. After an error on my part in explaining this cover, J.J. MacDonald corrected me and pointed out that it had actually gone by an Inman Line steamer direct to Halifax and therefore had the correct postage. It should also be noted that, as the letter was mailed in Liverpool, the writer might have not known that there was the Inman sailing until he went to the Post Office, hence the routing direction and the threepence postage.

Since then, I received photocopies of two more covers to the same address—one with 'Queenstown' in full and the other with the same abbreviation as the earlier cover. However, both these had fourpence postage prepaid to go via Cunard through the United States.





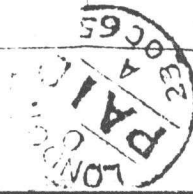
The first cover was mailed on 28 September 1867, too late to be included in the mail being made up for the Cunard *Cuba* before she sailed, so it was sent to Queenstown to connect with her the following day. The *Cuba* called at Halifax on 7 October, before proceeding on to Boston to arrive on 8 October. Unfortunately, there are no other markings, so it is not possible to judge whether the letter was actually put in the Halifax bag, which would have only required threepence postage, or went on to Boston. The second one was mailed on 14 July 1871 under the same circumstances and connected with the *Cuba* at Queenstown on the following day and reached New York on 26 July. It was backstamped at Charlottetown on 28 July and Summerside on the next day.

NEWFOUNDLAND TO OPORTO

Paul Burega sent along a photocopy of a cover seeking information on its routing and rating. It is illustrated below and, while I can offer some answers, perhaps others can add to them or offer alternatives. This was mailed at St. John's, Newfoundland on 9 October 1865 and struck with a 'PAID' datestamp and a '20', which I take to be the required postage to Portugal via England, although I have no information on such postage rates. There is also a red manuscript '2', which I assume to be the accountancy mark to show that Newfoundland was withholding two cents of the twenty cents postage paid.

Prices Current

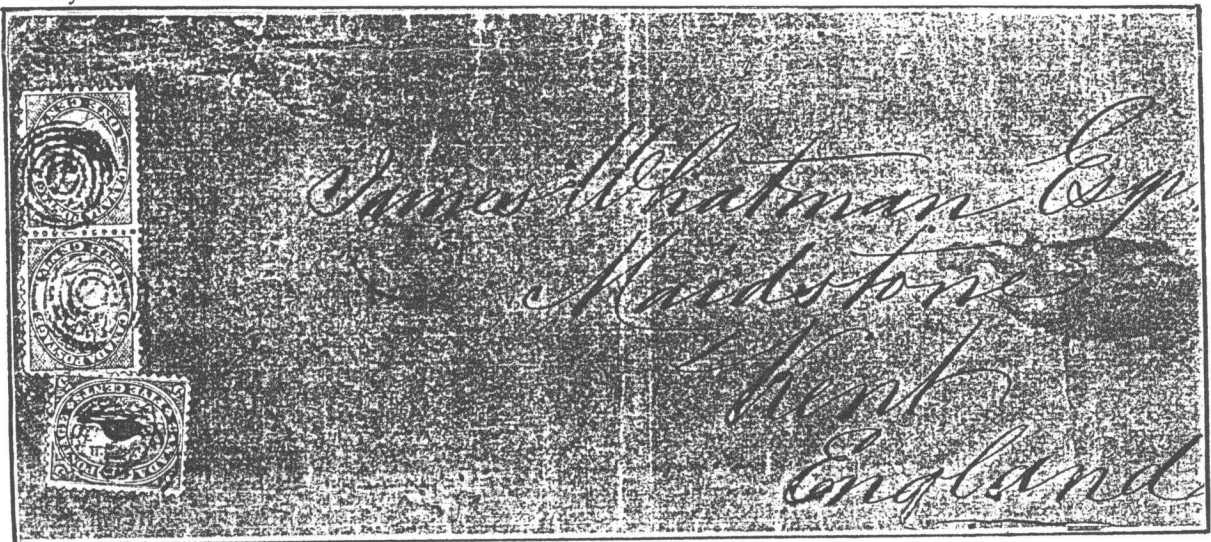
20
2 Mys Hunt Roope Lease
Oporto



It would have been carried to Halifax on a Cunard mail steamer, but again I do not have the sailing dates for this service, where it connected with the Cunard *Cuba* from there on 13 October and reached Queenstown on 20 October. It was datestamped 'PAID' at London on 23 October and backstamped at both Lisbon and Oporto on 28 October.

THREEPENCE/SEVEN CENTS BOOK RATE

Malcolm Montgomery when commenting on the 'PAID 3' shown in No. 26 sent along the front of a cover showing the Canadian 'book rate' paid with a five and two one-cent stamps or the equivalent of the threepence British rate for four ounces—here reduced to three quarters' size. He would very much like to have an example of a British threepence rate cover to B.N.A. Anyone have one on offer?



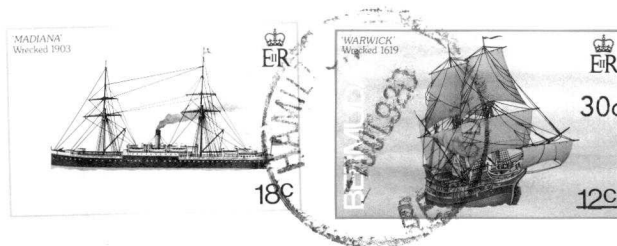
MEMORABILIA

First of all, I must apologize for printing pages four and six of the last newsletter upside down. I had put the stack of pages into the copier the wrong way around in setting up to print the second sides. I did not find the error until after I had assembled the letters at home and by then it was too late to redo them.

I hope that some of you will be at BNAPEX in St. Charles in September. After finding that there were so few turning up at planned study group meetings in successive years, I skipped scheduling one last year. This year there is one scheduled and I hope that enough will turn up to make it worthwhile. I intend to give a short talk on 'The History of Montreal-the Lines Postage Rates'.

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Bermuda

AIRMAIL



PRINTED MATTER

STILO10 200163009 IN 07/10/92
RETURN TO SENDER
NO FORWARD ORDER ON FILE
UNABLE TO FORWARD
RETURN TO SENDER

