

TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

of the
British North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 33

Jack Arnell, Chairman

March 1993

PHILITEX 92

In the August 1992 Newsletter (No. 30), I mentioned that I would be exhibiting in PHILITEX 92 in New York at the beginning of October. Not having heard anything about the exhibition by mid-December and being in New York for the day on the way to England for Christmas, my wife and I found our way to the Philatelic Foundation on 40th Street. There we had a pleasant visit with Harlan Stone, whom I had never met before. He very kindly gave me copies of the catalogue and the palmers. You will be interested to know that our Handbook No. 1 was awarded a Silver Bronze and the 1992 Newsletters a Bronze medal. I am quite happy with these results—I have yet to receive the official letter and the medals. If nothing

else results, it has served to call our society and study group to the attention of a large number of people. Hopefully, there will be some tangible results.

In going through the catalogue, I noted that the one other publication identified as from BNAPS was *Bradley Canadian Map Stamp of 1898 – A Plating Study*, (Silver). Other publications from BNAPS members, which I identified, were; *Arfken Canada's Small Queen Era* (Gold); *Arnell & Ludington Bermuda Packet Mails and the Halifax-Bermuda Mail Service 1806 to 1886* (Large Silver); *Bailey & Toop Canadian Military Posts, Vol. 3* (Large Silver); and *Topping & Robinson British Columbia Post Offices* (Silver Bronze).

BRITISH LETTER MAIL TO OVERSEAS DESTINATIONS 1840-1875

I have just received a copy of the book with the above title published by the Royal Philatelic Society, London, which was written by Jane and Michael Moubray. They were the couple who at a Postal Society meeting at Huntingdon showed several Late Fee covers, which were the subject of items in the August 1988 (No. 8) and the August 1990 (No. 18) newsletters.

This is a most comprehensive study of the subject and covers virtually the whole world. The first chapter of forty pages gives many little details not found elsewhere and to give one example which caught my attention relates to the British outgoing ship letter fee. I had always assumed that this remained at 8d, Stg, after 1840, but I learn that it was dropped to 6d. Stg. in March 1854 to Bermuda, BWI, Canada,

Malta and Gibraltar, when the direct packet rate of 6d. Stg. came into effect. There are fifteen chapters (264 pages) discussing all aspects of the handling of letters to the various regions, with twelve pages on BNA. These are followed with 154 pages of rate tables, six of which relate to BNA. The book has 512 + xxxii pages and the pre-publication price was £69.00. For anyone likely to need information about other parts of the world services from Great Britain, it is a must.

There is a list of pre-publication subscribers and I note that two of the English group members, in addition to myself, subscribed. I was slightly amused to find that I am listed as a 'FRPS.L', instead of FRPSC'.

RUSSIA TO PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND — COMMENT ON POSTAGE

Dick Winter has sent in a correct interpretation of the postage charged on the letter shown on page 6 of the last newsletter. After commenting on what 'a marvelous item' it is, he wrote the following:

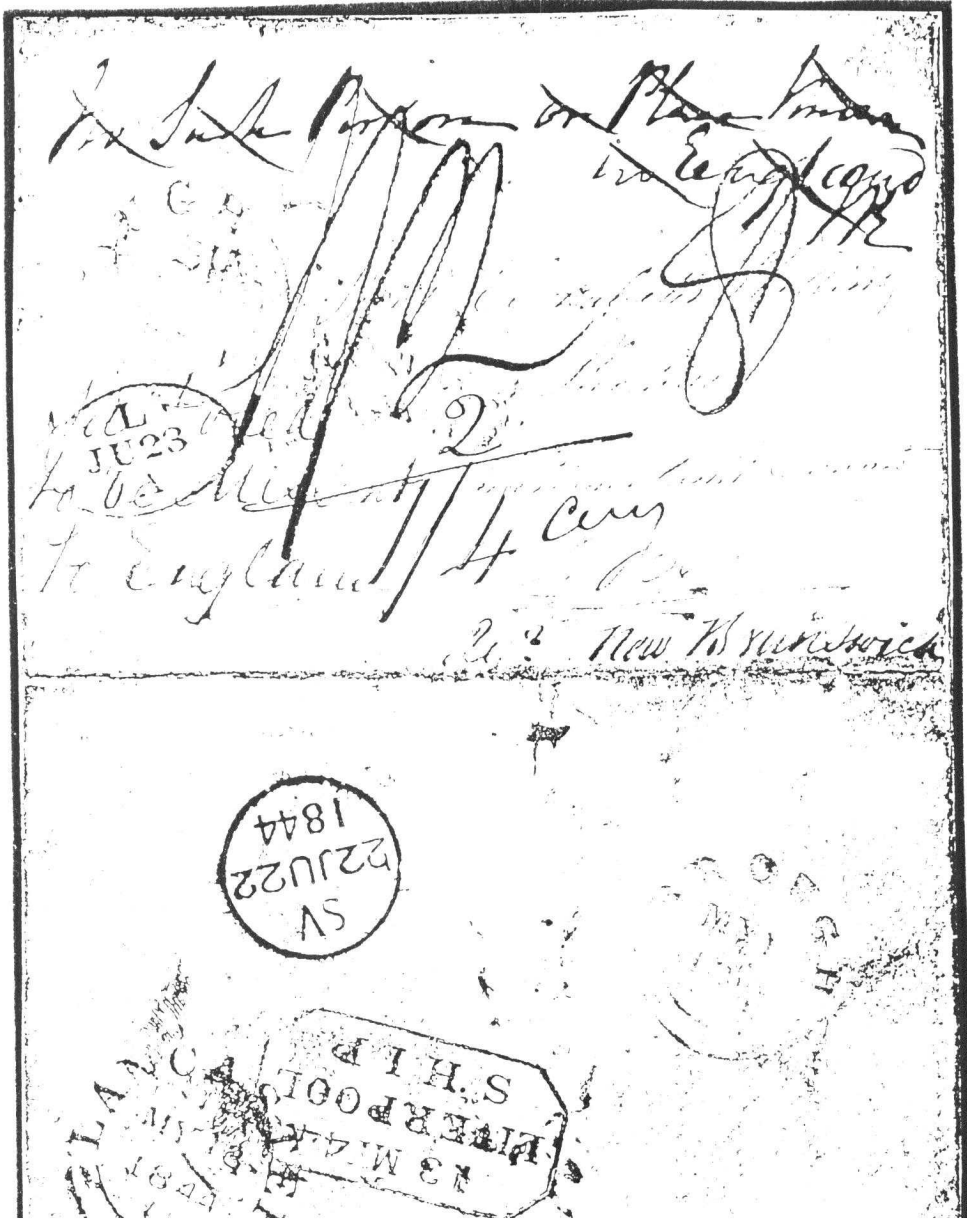
The letter was not prepaid 10 roubles, which would have been about \$7.80 using the currency conversion in Charles Starnes' book. The prepayment isn't shown, as far as I can see, but it should have been about 49

kopecks (10 kopecks Russian internal plus approximately 39 kopecks to Prussia for onward transit). On letters sent to Russia requiring postage due, the amount is usually written on the reverse. The reverse of this cover does contain accounting markings, however. The '9/3' is the Prussian accounting of the fees paid to Prussia of which Prussia kept 3 silbergroschen for German transit and credited 9 silbergroschen to 'foreign' postage, G.B. and Belgian transit. At this time about 3.24 kopecks were worth one silbergroschen. The '10' on the front of the cover is the credit to G.B., probably applied at Cologne. This paid the British for transit to G.B. and sea postage to Halifax. The red '1' in manuscript, as you indicated, was a British credit to B.N.A. The total postage from B.N.A. to Russia was 6d transatlantic plus 11¹/₂d Britain to Russia postage for a total of 17¹/₂d or 1/5¹/₂. This checks out well with the expected prepayment stated above.

He concluded that 'covers to and from Russia are always difficult to interpret. The more examples, the better; so, thanks [to Allan Steinhart] for showing this one'. If any member has one or more covers to or from Russia to B.N.A., please send along a photocopy and we shall let Dick tell us what the charges represent. You may recall that Dick clarified the rating of several French covers, which appeared in No. 23 (July 1991). With your help, I shall try to keep him occupied with European covers needing interpretation—a subject I find difficult.

CROSS BORDER VIA GREAT BRITAIN

Illustrated below is a two-way transatlantic letter being taken as North Britain, instead of New Brunswick. The letter was sent in by Allan Steinhart, which was missent to England, 'N.B.'



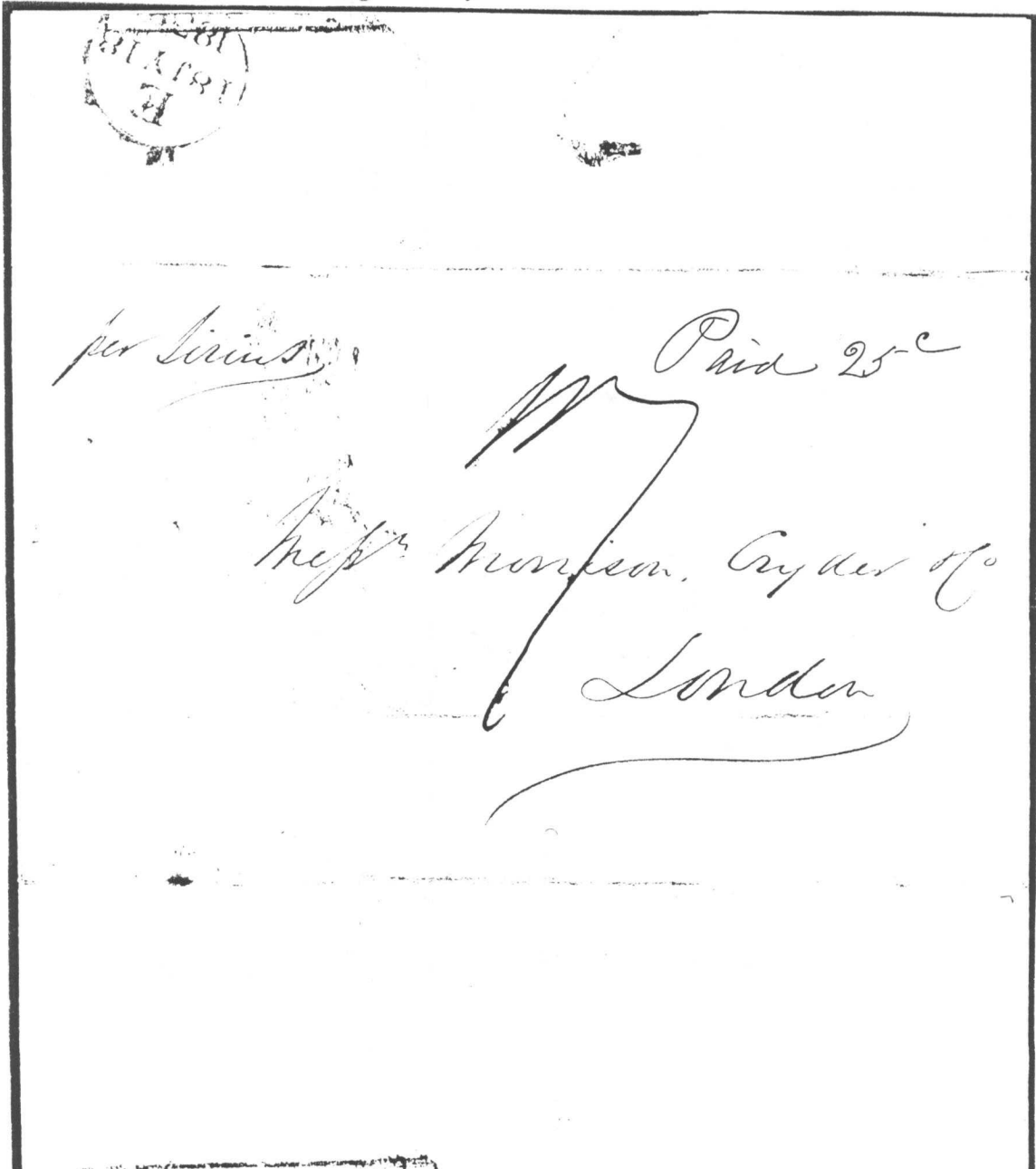
Dated 13 March 1844, it was sent to Liverpool in error, where it was entered as a ship letter on 13 May, rated 8d. Stg. and sent to Lancaster. After a futile search, it was backstamped at London on 22 June and marked 'No Such Person or Place Known in England' and

'Qu? New Brunswick'. The '8' was deleted and '1/2' substituted. Carried by the *Hibernia* from Liverpool on 4 July to Halifax on 15 July, where a '2' was added to give 1s. 4d. Cy. postage due at Shediac

EARLIEST FREIGHT MONEY CONFIRMED

In Newsletter No. 17 (June 1990), I showed the second cover I had with Freight Money charged for the second return voyage of the *Great Western* from New York on 25 June 1838. I now have another cover, which was carried by the *Sirius* on her second return voyage from New York on 1 July. It had been written in New York on 28 June and Freight Money of

twenty-five cents paid to the agent, as shown at upper right. It was landed at Plymouth and backstamped with a boxed 'SHIP LETTER/PLYMOUTH' and rated 1/7 Stg. postage due to London. These covers confirm that the two steamers agents had decided on charging Freight Money before the newspaper notice.



There is another aspect of this voyage to be included here. As was described in our Handbook No. 1 in Section VII, page 56, the Deputy Postmaster General of Canada did not contact his American counterpart until 9 August 1838 to determine how arrangements might be made so that Canadian correspondents could pay the Freight Money and get their letters on the same steamers.

As a result, the first evidence of Freight Money being collected is not found until later in the year. Notwithstanding this, the letter

shown below was mailed in good faith in Montreal on 23 June with the inland postage paid to New York. Reaching there on 29 June, it was accepted by the agent for the *Sirius* and reached Plymouth at the same time as the New York letter, but without payment of Freight Money. I suspect that only Canadian letters to be carried on the pioneer steamers without the payment of Freight Money were those on this voyage, and possibly that of the *Great Western* the previous week.

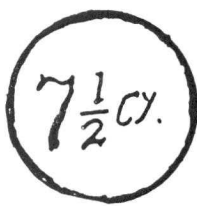
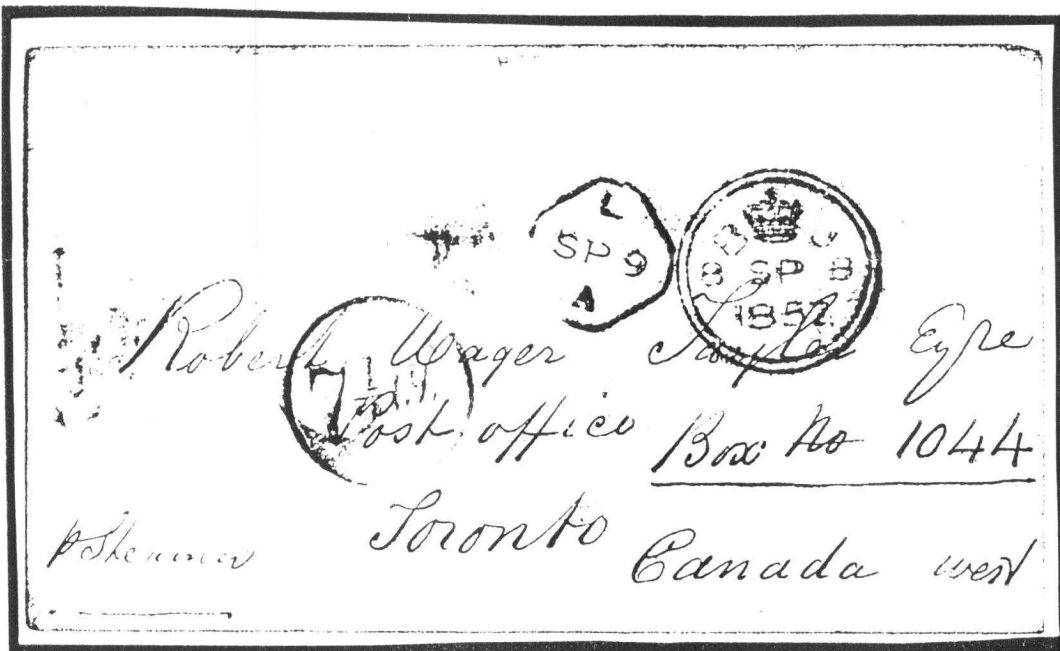
UNRECORDED RATE MARKING [E.25]

Malcolm Montgomery has sent along a very interesting cover, not only because it has a new handstruck rate marking, but also because of the route it took to get to its destination.

The letter was mailed in London on 8 September 1857 and struck with a Liverpool packet office lozenge on the next day. Here the question arises! On that day, the Allan *Indian* left there for Quebec, arriving on 19 September. However, if it were in a Toronto bag, it would have been struck with an E.10 handstamp there to show the 7¹/₂ d. Cy. postage due. Instead, it was struck with a previously unrecorded en-

circled '7¹/₂ Cy.', which is similar in design to A.21, A.27, B.10, B.11, C.2 and C.3 used at Halifax.

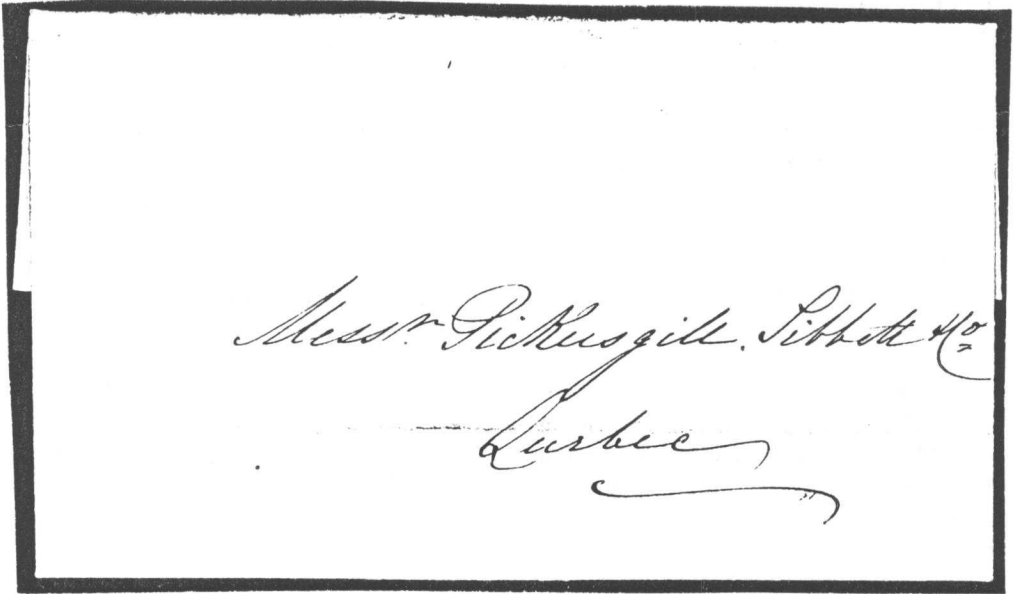
I offer two possibilities. One, the letter was incorrectly placed in the Halifax bag, instead of Toronto, and went on the *Indian*; or, the Halifax bag was held at Liverpool for the *Cunard Canada*, which left on 12 September and arrived at Halifax on 23 September. In either case, the handstamp was applied at Halifax. I have traced the strike to enhance it and include it as well.



QUARANTINED/ DISINFECTED LETTERS

I am sure that most of you will have seen, or have, a letter which had been disinfected by having slots cut through it and exposed to some sterilizing medium. This probably discoloured the paper or left some other obvious aftermath.

The letters that I have or have seen originated in the Mediterranean region and were treated in some port such as Marseilles. I have not seen a letter which was disinfected in B.N.A., and wonder whether it was ever done in the European way. What prompts this remark is the following letter.



Messrs. Dickson & Co. Pitt St 40
Cresser

This letter was written by Capt. Cresser of the barque *Clarendon* on 25 May 1847 to report that his vessel had been quarantined at Grosse Isle on arrival from Liverpool three days before. In it, he wrote:

I beg to acquaint you of my arrival on 22nd Inst. and regret much been detained through the Passengers being on board. I cannot say when I shall be able to proceed as we do not know how long we remain. I shall feel much obliged if you have any letters for me if you will send them down as I am expecting some to your address from Liverpool also if you will forward the enclosed for me. Hoping to be soon released and to be able to wait on you.

Grosse Isle is an island in the St. Lawrence River thirty-three miles below Quebec City, on which a quarantine station was established in 1831 and all vessels were required to stop for medical examination

before proceeding up-river to Quebec City or Montreal. During the first decade or so of its operation, the obviously sick were removed to a hospital on the island, while the remaining passengers and crew did a self-cleansing and purified the vessel. The latter involved scrubbing everything and then whitewashing the vessel's interior.

Everything about the operation was worse than inadequate. There was very little accommodation for the sick and dying on the island, and the steamer from Quebec City, which was supposed to take the healthy passengers on to the city often failed to arrive. The newspaper accounts through the 1830s and early 1840s repeatedly tell of the horrors of being quarantined on Grosse Isle, which for many was nothing less than a death sentence, as there were no proper facilities for dealing with diseases of any kind. It was only after successive cholera epidemics among the immi-

grants, mainly Irish, that improvements were made. I do not know just when this happened, but I think that they would have been in place by 1847.

When this letter was sent to me last year in the hope that it would be of interest, I wrote to thank the donor and told him that it awakened an old memory of a visit to the island nearly forty years ago. The Quarantine Station was closed sometime in the first half of this century and, having many buildings in good condition, was used as a small research laboratory in isolated surroundings. It was in this connection that I attended a conference on the island and had an opportunity to see at first hand how the station operated at its prime.

Extending from the south side of the island was a very long pier on which was a long shed with doors at either end. There were two small doors with a 'barn' door in between on both the water and land sides. A vessel would tie up at the outer end of the pier and all the passengers and crew would be disembarked and separated so that the men went in one small door and the women and children through the other. Once inside, they were required to strip, place all their clothes in a bag and pass into showers to get thoroughly cleansed. At the same time, the clothes bags were passed through a steam autoclave in the centre of the building to be sterilized, and

when dried were returned and put on again. Concurrently, the baggage and presumably the Mail bags were unloaded on to trolleys and pushed through the large centre door into another autoclave.

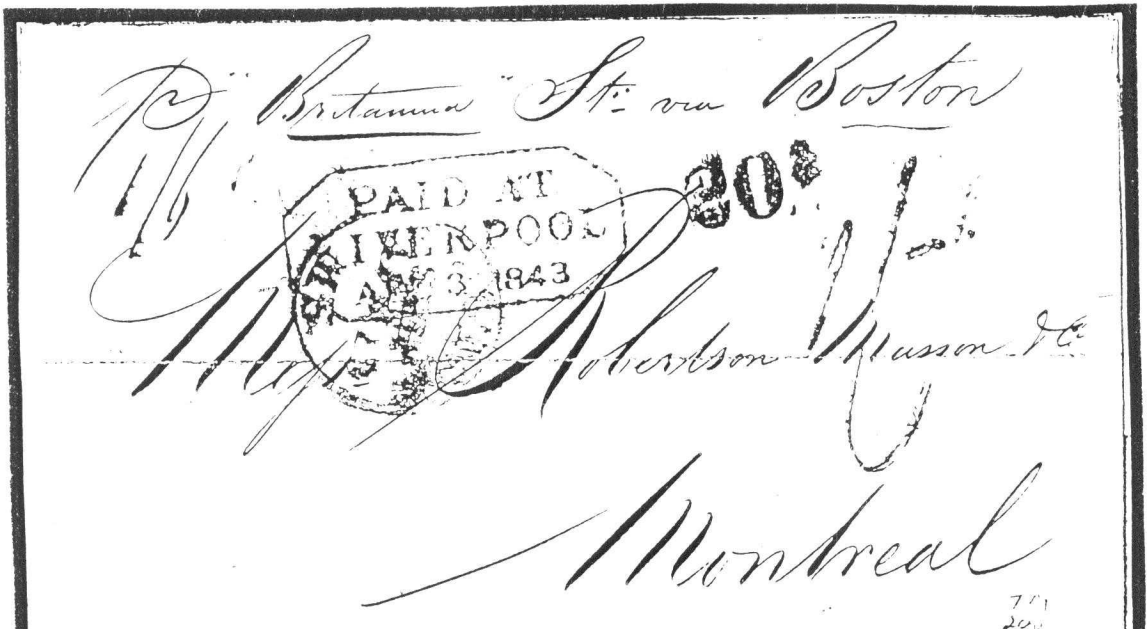
Once cleansed the people had to be accommodated until their vessel was cleared to proceed or other transport was provided. There were three classes on accommodation going up the sloop from the pier. At the bottom, near the water, was the Third Class Hotel, consisting of two large dormitories—one for men and the other for women and children. halfway up was the Second Class Hotel, which had a number of much smaller rooms, but families would still have had to double up. On the brow of the hill was the First Class Hotel, which had individual accommodation. There were buildings for dining, etc. and a separate hospital. It seemed to be well planned, until one stopped to think of the numbers that would have been handled with each arrival, which would have increased dramatically during one of the epidemics. A cemetery and a monuments to Irish immigrants who died on Grosse Isle told their own grisly stories.

I wonder how many Quebec ship letters brought by immigrant vessels during the late 1840s and later may have been autoclaved to sterilize them.

UNRECORDED LIVERPOOL RATE MARKING SENT IN THE WRONG BAG

Allan Steinhart has sent along the following as an example of a previously unrecorded Liverpool rate marking. While we have not kept track of the British handstamps, this one is

not only unusual, but also bears a resemblance to the Halifax C.9, illustrated on page 3 of Newsletter No. 10. Also, seldom does one see a B.N.A. letter incorrectly put in a U.S. bag.



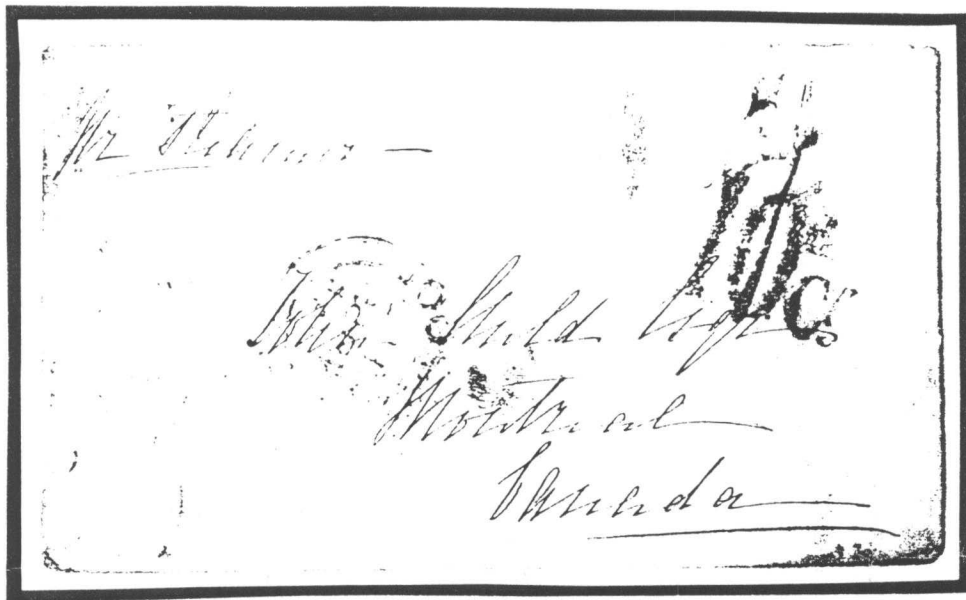
This letter was mailed at Liverpool on 3 April 1843 with 1s. Stg. packet postage prepaid, shown by the datestamp and the '1/-' in red. It was carried by the *Britannia* from Liverpool on 4 April and arrived at Boston on 19 April. It should have been in the Montreal bag, where it would have been charged 2¹/₂d. Cy. inland postage; however, having been incorrectly put in the Boston bag, it was datestamped with a Boston 'SHIP' handstamp and rated 20³/₄ cents

postage due (2 cents ship letter fee + 18³/₄ cents inland postage to the Canadian border). At Montreal, this was converted to 1s. 1d. Cy., plus 1¹/₂d. Cy., representing the 2¹/₂% surcharge on U.S. postage collected in Canada from 17 May 1842 to 27 December 1847, and charged an additional 4¹/₂d. Cy., the regular inland postage from the border to Montreal, for a total postage due of 1s. 6d. Cy.

IS IT A 'T' OR A 'y'?

Here is another cover from Malcolm Montgomery with a question for all of you. This looks like a normal letter of 1855 vintage, in that it was mailed at Liverpool with the postage unpaid and, as a result, was struck with a black '7' to show the British debit and on arrival at Montreal, was struck with what ap-

pears at first sight to be a D.21 '!0^d Cy', except that instead of a 'y' there is a capital 'T'. Malcolm notes that Volpi thought such a mark was an aberration. Was it a valid handstamp, which was damaged and the wrong letter used to replace the 'y'? Can anyone throw any light on this?

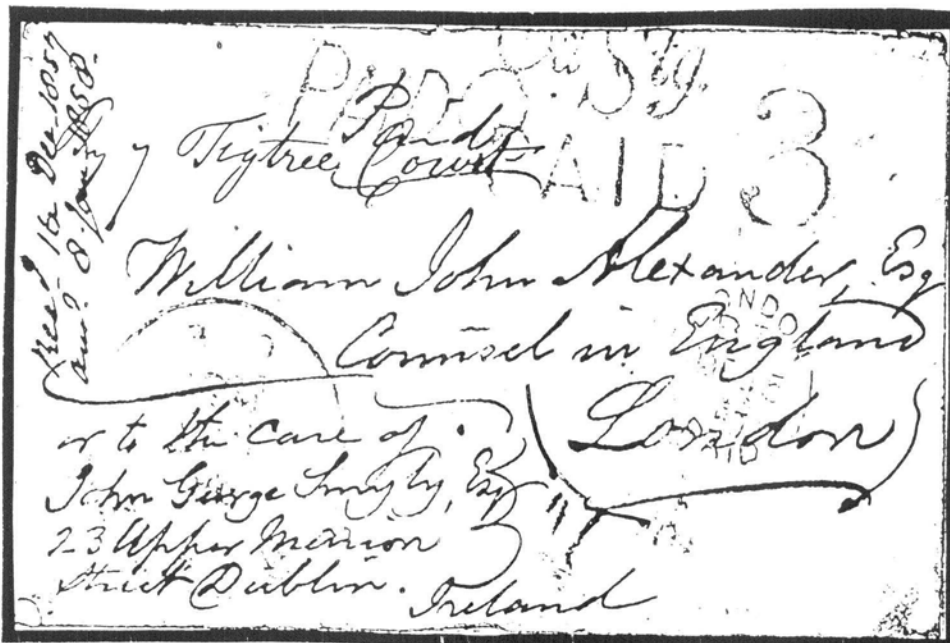


'PAID 3' STRUCK IN ERROR

The cover on the next page is from Allan Steinhart. It was mailed in Quebec City on 25 November 1857 with the packet postage via the United States and Cunard (8d. Stg. or 10d. Cy.) prepaid. On stamping this letter, the wrong handstamp was picked up, so that 'PAID 3', the inland postage, was struck in error; this was

immediately corrected and 'PAID 8^d Stg.' added, without the first strike being crossed out, and put in the London bag.

It was carried by the *Niagara* from Boston on 2 December and arrived at Liverpool on 14 December. Datestamped 'PAID' at London on the following day.



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AIRMAIL

PRINTED MATTER



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