

TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

of the

British North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 35

Jack Arnell, Chairman

July 1993

COLLECTING TRANSATLANTIC MAIL

The longer I collect North Atlantic mail, the more aware I become of how the inextricably entwined Canadian and United States' postal services were in the handling of letters and many other aspects of the operation.

The only aspect that was uniquely British North American was the use of rate marking handstamps on packet letters after 1840. This became possible when the G.P.O. established the colonial inland postage on packet letters at 2d. Stg. or 2¹/₂d. Cy.—all other B.N.A. inland postage continued to be calculated on a mileage basis until 1851. The handstamps combining this inland rate with the current packet rates direct and via the U.S. number well over a hundred, and in themselves are a most interesting collecting speciality. This kept me busy for quite a few years.

However, as I expanded my interests, it became evident that virtually every aspect of the subject had an American component, which often needed corresponding U.S. letters for proper understanding. The collection of Freight Money by the USPO on behalf of the pioneer steamships and American sailing packets, and the Canadians being able to do

the same is a good example. Hence it is often desirable to interleaf U.S. and B.N.A. covers in an exhibit.

At the recent ROYAL 93 at Ottawa, I had an exhibit showing the transition from sail to steam on the North Atlantic, starting in the mid-1830s in the days of Ferriage, showing Freight Money from its first collection on the second return voyages of the *Great Western* and the *Sirius*, with examples of its collections in a number of American and Canadian towns and cities, ending with the Retaliatory Act of 1848 and the final normalization of the mails thereafter. This was the only way the whole story could be told—and I was honoured by being given the Grand Award for the exhibit.

With the BNAPS rules of only B.N.A. material, excluding pre-1783 British colonial, but including early New France—the rationale of which I cannot understand—I have virtually exhausted possible exhibits for a future BNAPEX, without just repeating—something I will not do. I accept the BNAPS limitations, but they sorely restrict a discussion of transatlantic mail.

POSTAGE ON REGISTERED LETTERS TO FRANCE

Maggie Toms has sent along a copy of a 19 July 1955 circular from the GPO to the Newfoundland PMG regarding the prepayment of postage on Registered letters to or

through France. She commented that, as similar circulars would have been received in B.N.A., it was worth reproducing here for group members information.

General Post Office,
19th July 1855.

Sir,

I am directed by the Postmaster general to acquaint you that the Director general of the French Post Office has complained to His Lordship that registered Letters which have originated in British Colonies and are addressed to France, or to Countries beyond France, are frequently sent to his Office in the Mails from England, unpaid, although the Postal Convention between England and France provides that upon registered letters the combined postage to destination shall in all cases be paid in advance, and he has requested that in future all Letters not so pre-paid may be treated as ordinary correspondence.

The Postmaster General has accordingly given directions that this request may be complied with, and no Letter received from the Colonies will hereafter be forwarded to France as a Registered Letter unless the whole postage to destination be paid in advance.

The annexed Table shews the Rates of Postage (including the British and Foreign Charges) which must be accounted for to this Office upon Registered Letters sent to the United Kingdom for transmission to France, or to those Countries the correspondence of which is sent for the most part through France.

I am,
Sir,

Postmaster General
Newfoundland

Your obedient Servant.
Sg^d F. Hill

DESTINATION	Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. in weight		$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ oz.	$\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 oz.	1 - $\frac{1}{4}$ oz.
FRANCE	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>0 5</u>	<u>0 10</u>	<u>1 3</u>	<u>1 8</u>	<u>2 1</u>
	TOTAL..	1 9	3 0	4 3	5 6	6 9
SARDINIA	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 4</u>	<u>2 8</u>	<u>4 0</u>	<u>5 4</u>	<u>6 8</u>
	TOTAL..	2 8	4 10	7 0	9 2	11 4
TUSCANY	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 10</u>	<u>3 8</u>	<u>5 6</u>	<u>7 4</u>	<u>9 2</u>
	TOTAL..	3 2	5 10	8 6	11 2	13 10
BAVARIA	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 0</u>	<u>2 0</u>	<u>3 0</u>	<u>4 0</u>	<u>5 0</u>
	TOTAL..	2 4	4 2	6 0	7 10	9 8
BREMEN	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 0</u>	<u>2 0</u>	<u>3 0</u>	<u>4 0</u>	<u>5 0</u>
	TOTAL..	2 4	4 2	6 0	7 10	9 8
PARMA	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 10</u>	<u>3 8</u>	<u>5 6</u>	<u>7 4</u>	<u>9 2</u>
	TOTAL..	3 2	5 10	8 6	11 2	13 10
MODENA	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 10</u>	<u>3 8</u>	<u>5 6</u>	<u>7 4</u>	<u>9 2</u>
	TOTAL..	3 2	5 10	8 6	11 2	13 10
PAPAL STATES	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 10</u>	<u>3 8</u>	<u>5 6</u>	<u>7 4</u>	<u>9 2</u>
	TOTAL..	3 2	5 10	8 6	11 2	13 10
GREECE	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 10</u>	<u>3 8</u>	<u>5 6</u>	<u>7 4</u>	<u>9 2</u>
	TOTAL..	3 2	5 10	8 6	11 2	13 10
TWO SICILIES	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 10</u>	<u>3 8</u>	<u>5 6</u>	<u>7 4</u>	<u>9 2</u>
	TOTAL..	3 2	5 10	8 6	11 2	13 10
SWITZERLAND	British.....	1 4	2 2	3 0	3 10	4 8
	Foreign.....	<u>1 0</u>	<u>2 0</u>	<u>3 0</u>	<u>4 0</u>	<u>5 0</u>
	TOTAL..	2 4	4 2	6 0	7 10	9 8

Maggie added the following observation:

When I was writing about letters exchanged between B.N.A. and France during this period, I thought that 6d plus 10d plus 5d represented British sea postage to England (6d) plus the convention rate to France (10d) plus French internal rate (5 decimes) but you can see from this table that the 6d is constant throughout the rate increases, and probably represents the registration charge. Why I didn't realize this at the time I don't know. However I hope the table is of interest to the study group.

I have no reference number for this circular, but it is probably contained somewhere in Post 48 America.

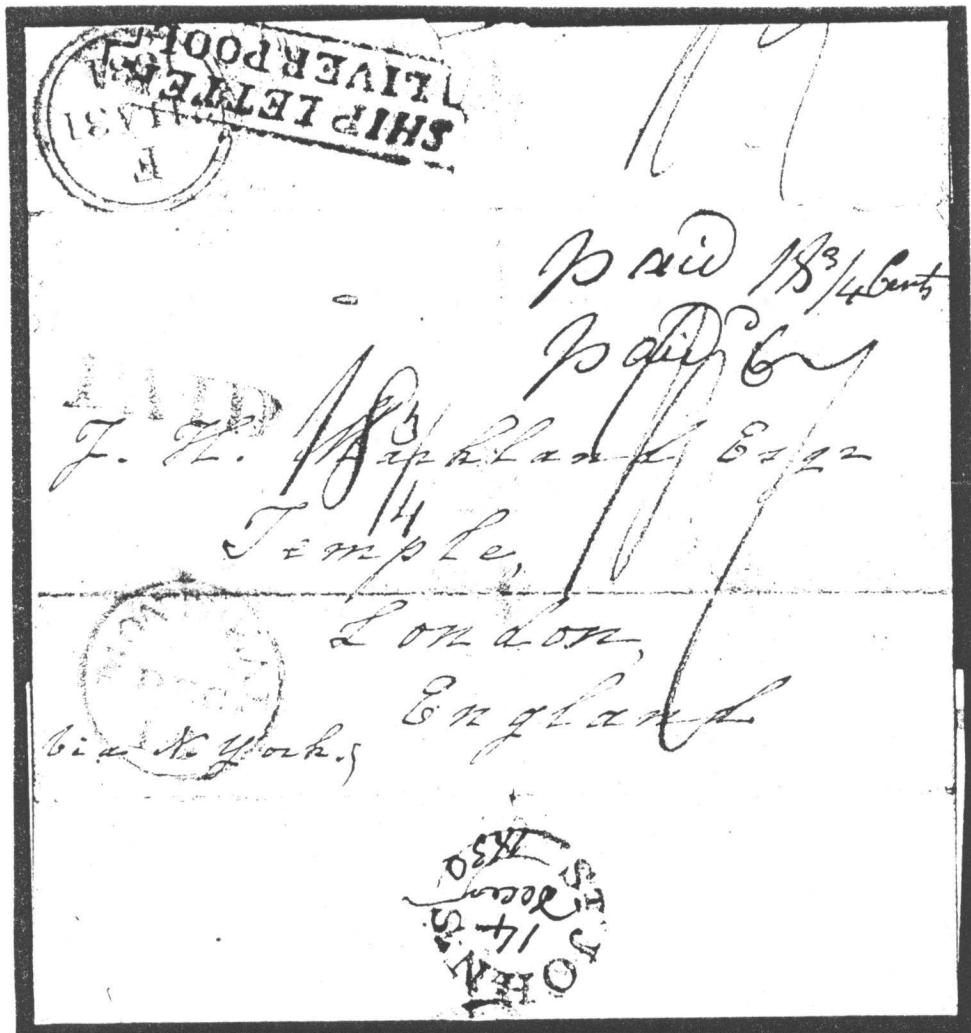
ANOTHER ST. JOHN'S, L.C. LETTER

Since I prepared the last newsletter, I have obtained another St. John', L.C. cross-border transatlantic cover, which confirms my view expressed then as to the route such letters would have followed.

This was from W.D. Baldwin and dated 2 November 1830. However, it was not mailed at St. John's until 14 December, when it was backstamped and marked:

'paid 18³/₄ Cents
paid d6'.

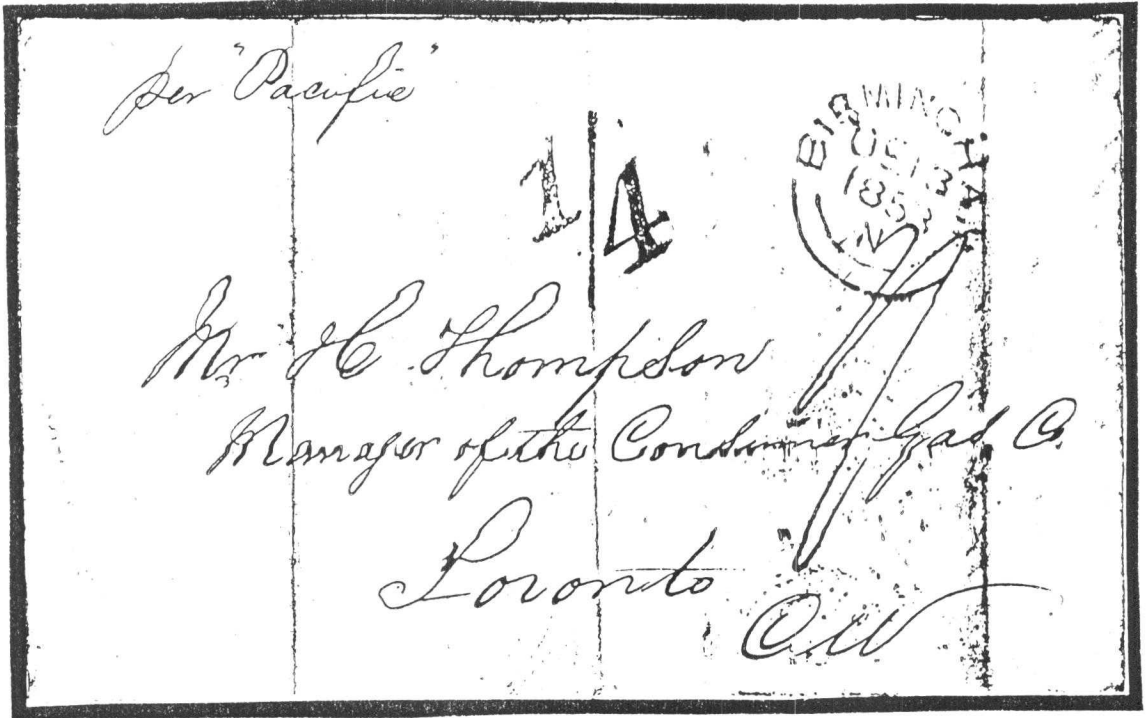
It was forwarded to Montreal, where it was datestamped on 16 December, struck with a large 'PAID' and an very large '18³/₄' written beside it. All these markings are in red. It was probably carried from New York on the Black Ball packet scheduled to sail on 1 January and reached Liverpool before the end of the month, where it was backstamped with a boxed 'SHIP LETTER/LIVERPOOL' and rated 1s. 7d. postage due (8d. ship letter fee and 11d. inland postage to London). Backstamped at London on 31 January.



NO RATE DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN CUNARD AND COLLINS

Allan Steinhart has sent along a cover which is a reminder that for the first three years or so of the operation of the Collins steamers, there was no difference in the postage charged on letters carried by them and Cunard steamers through New York or Boston. As a result, the Collins ships were often used as a matter of expediency, when the sailing preceded Cunard by a few days.

The cover shown here was mailed on 13 December 1853 at Birmingham with the postage unpaid. As a result, it was marked with '1/' to show the British credit. As the Collins *Pacific* was due to sail the next day, while the Cunard *Africa* was not leaving until the 17th, it was marked to go by the former. As a result, it reached New York on 26 December, four days before the *Africa*. It was rated with 1s. 4d. postage due At Toronto.



VIA NEW YORK AND MONTREAL TO STANSTEAD, L.C.

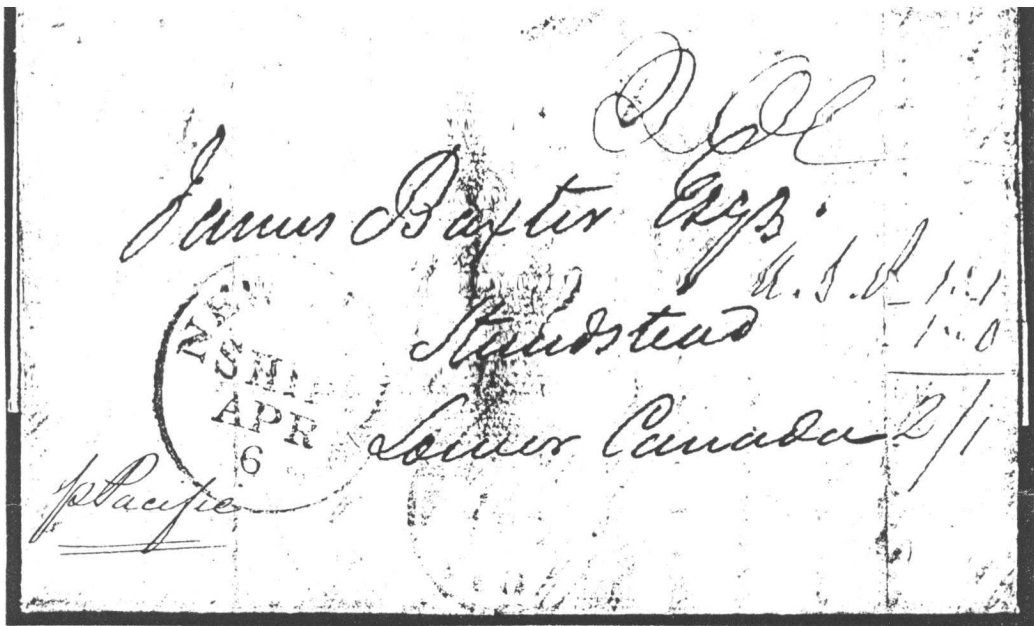
I recently bought this cover for two reasons. The first was that there are surprisingly few transatlantic American sailing packet letters addressed to anywhere other than Montreal or Quebec in Lower Canada before the days of steam; the second was the B.N.A. postage charged.

Otherwise, it looks like any one of thousands of letters from Great Britain to the Canadas from soon after the War of 1812 until the introduction of Freight Money in 1838. It was a business letter from Liverpool dated 28 February 1834, with a duplicate of a previous one dated 31 January. It was marked to travel by the *Pacific* of the Black Ball Line, which would have been scheduled to sail on the following day.

On reaching New York, it was date-stamped with 'SHIP' on 6 April and rated

20³/₄ cents U.S. postage due to the Canadian border. At Montreal, it was date-stamped on 10 April, where the U.S. postage due conversion was shown as 'U.S.P. 1..1' and an additional 1s. 0d. added for Canadian postage, making a total due of 2s. 0d. Cy.

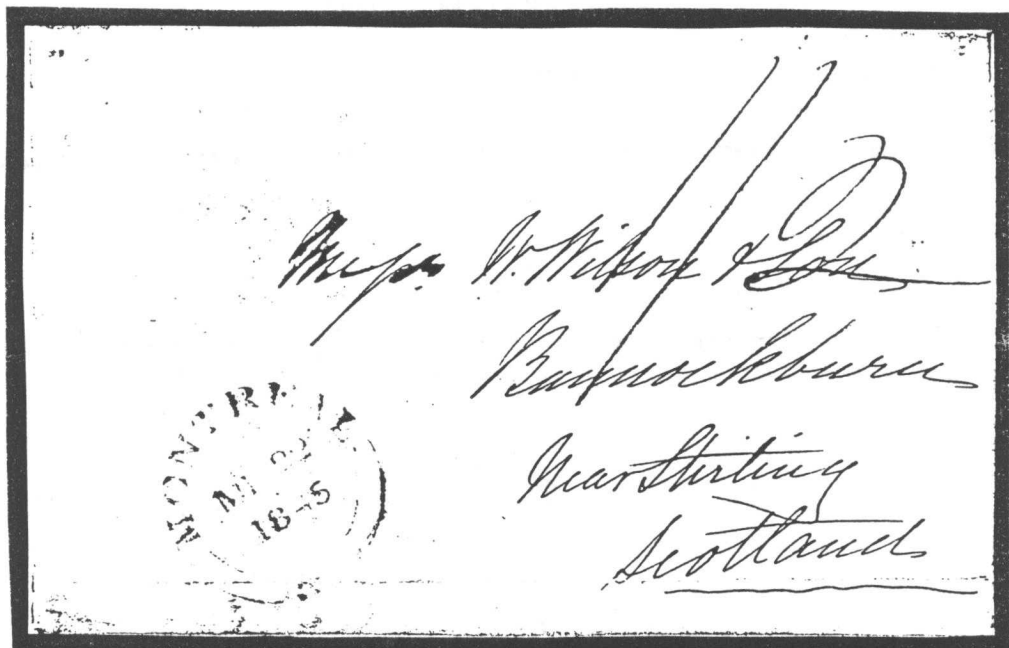
The question is: How was the Canadian postage determined? The total distance from the border exchange at Swanton/Highgate to Stanstead, via Montreal was of the order of 150 miles, requiring 9d. Cy.; adding a border transfer fee of 1d. or 1¹/₂d. is not enough to account for that charged. On the other hand, if the current Montreal to the Lines postage of 6d. Cy. was charged and an additional 6d. Cy. added as a separate charge for the roughly 100 miles to Stanstead, the right amount results. What do you think?



LAST VOYAGES BEFORE MAJOR CHANGES IN THE MAILS

It seems to be worth reminding collectors of transatlantic letters how important it is to check the vessels on which they were carried and the sailing dates. Often an uninteresting

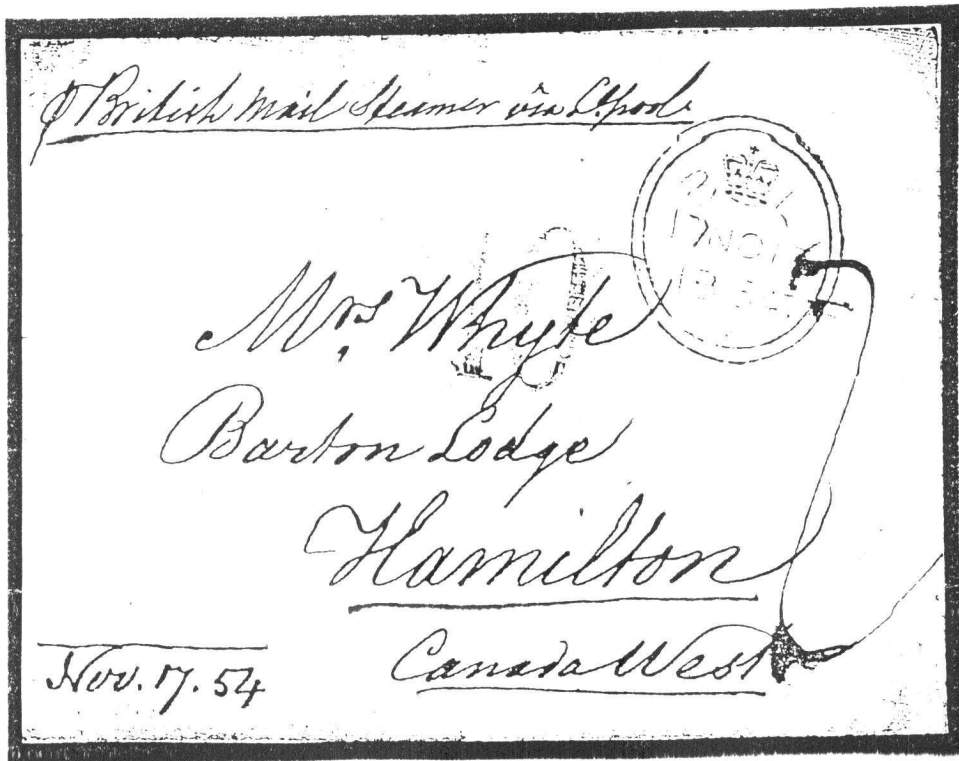
letter proves to have an interesting story. Two of Allan Steinhart's contributions serve this purpose, so here they are.



This cover was mailed at Montreal on 22 March 1845 and marked with 1s. 2d. Stg. postage due. It was put in a closed bag for Scotland and sent overland to Halifax in what was to be the Canadian Mail via this route, as the 'Closed Mail' agreement with

the United States through Boston went into effect on 1 April.

It was carried by the *Cambria* from Halifax on 3 April and arrived at Liverpool on 13 April. backstamped at Stirling on 14 April.

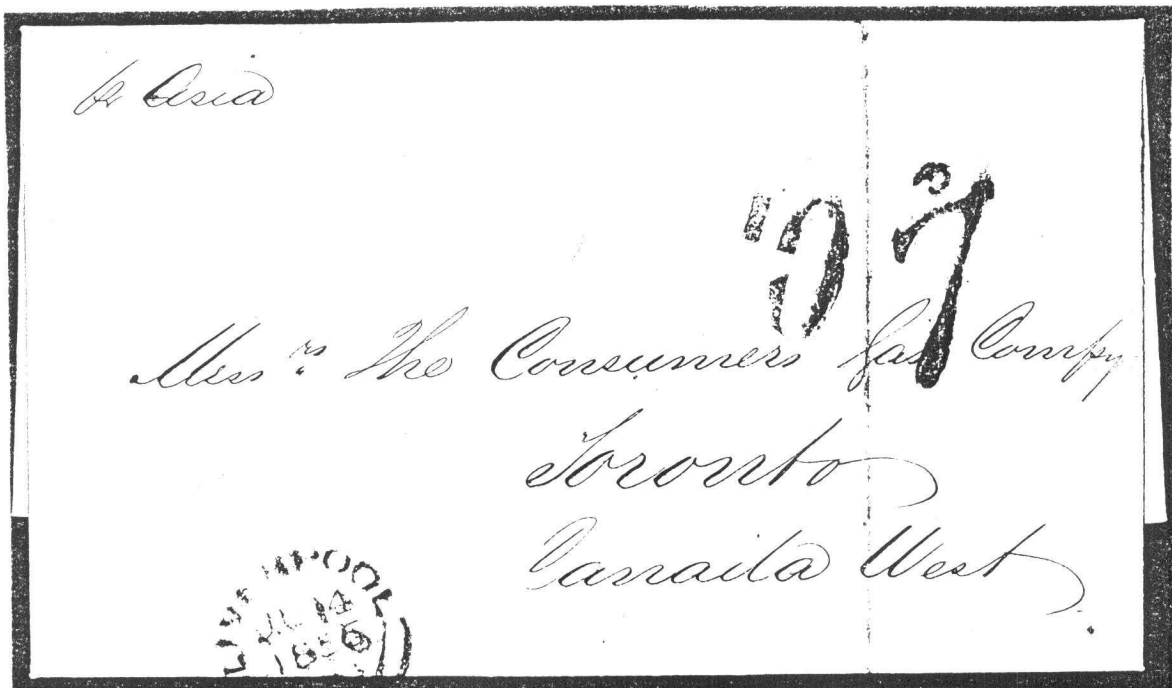


This cover was mailed at London on 17 November 1854 and, being unpaid, was marked with a manuscript '7' to show the British credit of 7d. Stg and put in a closed bag for Hamilton, U.C. It was directed to go 'p

British Mail Steamer via Lpool.' It was carried by the Cunard *Africa* from Liverpool on 15 November and arrived at New York on 29 November. At Hamilton, it was struck with a '10' to show the postage due in Currency.

FAULTY RATE MARKING

It is always interesting to find an aberration on what would otherwise be a common cover hardly worthy of notice. Here is just such an example.



This was an invoice from W^m Donald Ryrrie & Co., Liverpool dated 7 June 1856 and was not mailed until a week later, when it was stamped with '7d' to show the British debit and put in the closed Toronto bag. Carried by the *Asia* from Liverpool on the same day (14th), it reached New York on 27 June. At Toronto, it was partially struck with a D.22 10d. Cy. handstamp to show the postage due. The shape of the missing portion of the strike is what caught my attention and prompted me

to buy the letter. I presume that a small piece of paper got in between the handstamp and the letter to produce the missing V-shape in the side of the '0' and block out the bottom part of the '1'. It must have only occurred this once, for the next strike would have had the piece of paper inked on the letter side.

As it turns out, there is another interesting aspect of this letter. The invoice was for £11..5..0, and was shown as:

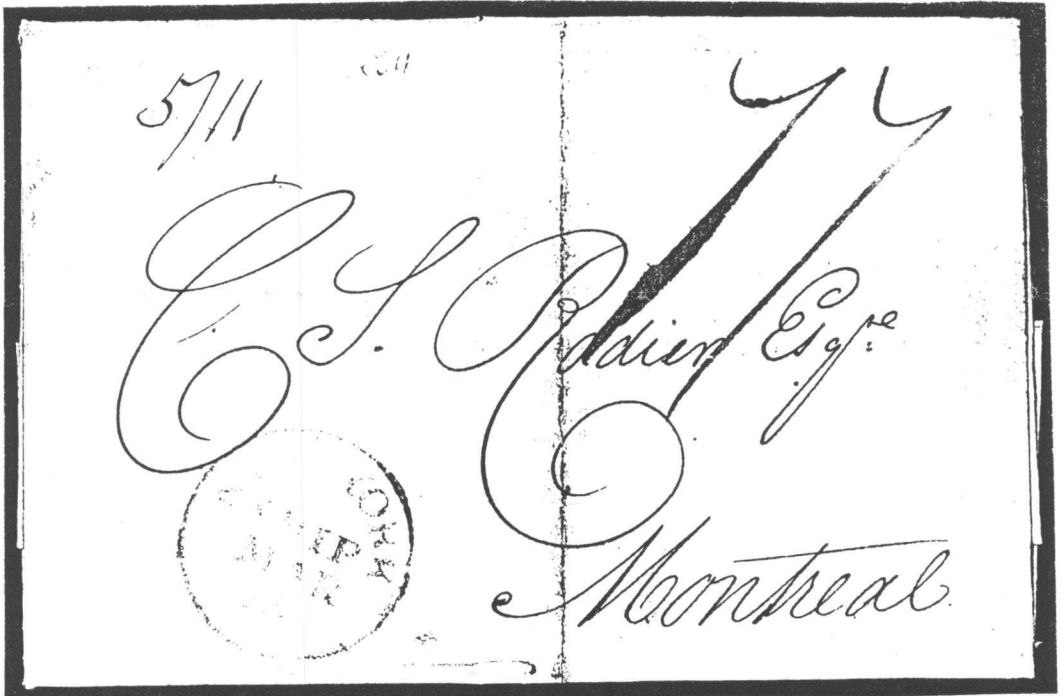
Charges on Shipment pr *Britannia* [cases markings] = 10 cases

Bills of Lading	£ - .. 2 .. 6
Cartage, Dues & Commission	1 .. - .. -
Insurance on £475 @ 40/- °/c & duty	10 .. 2 .. 6
	£11 .. 5 .. -

It was the reference to the *Britannia* here that intrigued me; what vessel had carried the freight? The Cunard *Britannia* was the only steamer of this name until the 1860s, as she was sold to the German Navy in 1849, so it had to be a sailing vessel. Checking *Queens of the Western Ocean*, which lists all the American sailing packets, it post-dates the

last American of that name. Hence, it must have been the sailing equivalent of in this century was the 'ocean tramp'. As the voyage would have taken a month to six weeks to reach Montreal, the insurance provided 'particular Coverage in Case of damage by Salt Water'—a likely event in the old sailing vessels!

A QUADRUPLE NEW YORK SHIP LETTER



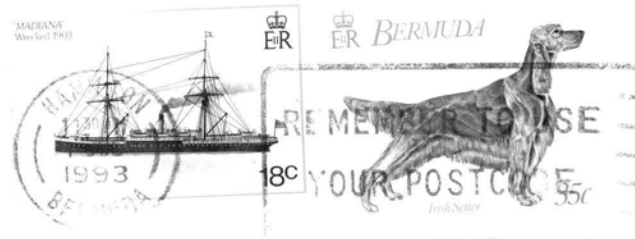
A letter enclosing a statement of accounts from London dated 17 January 1834, which was probably carried by the Red Swallowtail packet scheduled to sail that day from London or, alternately by a Blue Swallowtail or Dramatic packet from Liverpool, both of which were scheduled to sail a week later. I have seen no reference to the average length

of westbound voyages from those two ports to New York, nor to any preference in the route used from London. In any case, being a multiple letter, on arrival at New York, it was rated 77 cents postage due (2 cents ship letter fee + 4 x 18³/₄ cents inland postage to the Canadian exchange office). At Montreal, this was converted to 5s. 11d. Cy.

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