



TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP
OF THE
British North American Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 61

February 1998

ODDS AND ENDS

The last few Newsletters have been a little heavy on postal history and a little light on entertainment, so I thought that it might be a good idea to prepare a quick Newsletter (the last was delayed, as is this one) and distribute some of the photocopies and information that you have sent to me over the last few months.

There is no structure or theme to this issue, it is just a series of brief articles, with illustrations. It will be followed by a further look at registration, and then close-ups of the Provinces. My other reason for writing is to draw to your attention a new publication 'Robertson Revisited', by Colin Tabart, but more of that later.

ANOTHER FREIGHT LETTER



Figure 1: A sailing ship freight letter from Dundas, Upper Canada to Glasgow, Scotland, 22nd April 1839.

Freight letters from Canada are not common and, on balance, it seems that those showing the sailing ship charge of twelve and a half cents are scarcer than those with the twenty five cents steamship freight charge. The one above is from Perth, Upper Canada, and was passed to Hamilton. In addition to the freight charge, fourpence halfpenny Currency was prepaid for Canadian postage, and twenty-five cents, the rate from the border to New York (over 400 miles).

It bears the Hamilton 'U.S. POST PAID' in black. On arrival at Liverpool there was a further charge of one shilling and sevenpence Sterling: eightpence ship-letter and elevenpence inland postage (170-230 miles). The letter also shows the halfpenny Scottish Road Tax, and on redirection from Glasgow to Kinross, has been charged a further sevenpence (30-50 miles), the earlier charges having apparently been cleared on first delivery at Glasgow.

FURTHER NOTES ON SOLDIERS' LETTERS

Well, just a little more history ... Maggie Toms has sent me a couple of transcripts from the Canadian Archives. I am most grateful, since the majority of information available to me tends to reflect the British view, and I have little access to Canadian documents and records. Both letters are from the Canadian Archives, RG3, Series 2, Vol. 31.

'P.O. Dept. 31 October 1853

Lieut. Col. Maberly

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th inst observing that the penny prepaid rates on the soldiers letters sent to England by the Canadian Contract Packet 'Lady Eglinton' were not credited to the Imperial Post Office, suggesting that the omission might have arisen from misapprehension on the part of the Postmaster of Quebec, and stating that unless the penny rate in question is accounted for to your office such letters will be liable on delivery in the United Kingdom to a charge of 2d each.

The Postmaster General directs me to explain that as the whole of the penny taken upon a soldier's letter has been credited to the Imperial Post Office when the transmission has been made by the Imperial Packets, it appeared but reasonable that the Province should retain the penny when the letters were sent by Colonial Packet - and the Postmaster of Quebec was instructed accordingly. No claim has hitherto been made upon the postage charged on this class of letters for mail transport within the Province, but when to this is added the transit by this country across the Atlantic, His

Lordship the Postmaster General will, it is hoped, concur in the equity of the course adopted.

*I have ...
(sd) W.H. Griffin'*

And the second ...

'P/O. Dept. 4th Jan'y 1854

Lt. Col Maberly

Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 16th ulto, I am directed by the Postmaster General to state, that although it appears but equitable that the Province should receive some equivalent for the service performed when forwarding Soldiers and Seamens letters by Canadian Packets to the United Kingdom, the Canadian Government does not desire to obtain this compensation by levying any additional charges upon this class of letters - and the prepaid penny Imperial rate will therefore for the future in all cases be placed to the credit of the British Post Office.

*I am
(sd) W.H. Griffin*

It is a slightly depressing thought that the attitudes of the British bureaucracy seem to have survived the intervening 150 years ...

The first letter reminded me that I have yet to see (and would much like to acquire) an example of a letter carried by one of the early Canadian Packets carried at the shilling rate (*presumably between April 1853 and March 1854*). Does anybody have one?

SEAMENS' LETTERS VIA PANAMA

On page three I have included a cover from HMS 'Phoebe' in 1870. It is unusual in that it appears to have been handed in to the British Post Office at St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies.

The stamp has been cancelled with the 'C51' handstamp of the office, and the 'INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID' handstamp is also distinctive. The letter was correctly prepaid and countersigned, and has most likely been carried in a closed bag to St. Thomas.

Various alternatives have been suggested (including the possibility that the letter crossed the United States and the penny charge raised is for Unites States transit - I have discounted that theory, for if the letter had indeed been handled by the United States Post Office, I would have expected it to have been passed to New York).

My requests are twofold: does anybody have a reference for the 'Panama Transit' charge of a penny, or another example of such a charge being raised at St. Thomas? (The 1859 Post Office Instruction which gives transit charges of sixpence and fivepence for letters from the Pacific Coast appears to have been superseded at some time.)

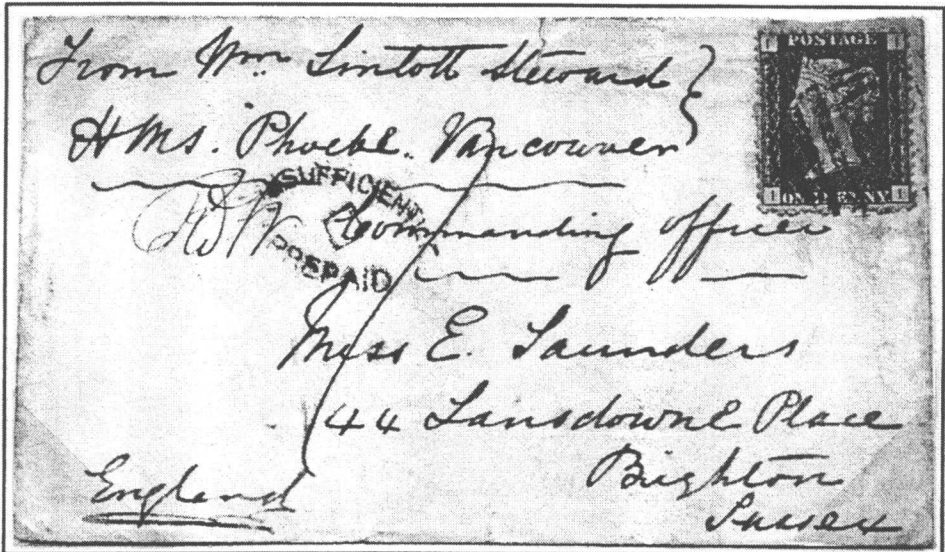
Second, can anybody explain how the letter would have travelled from Vancouver to St. Thomas? I have seen other, earlier, correspondence which has been handled by the British Consul at San Francisco, including a letter of about the same period from England which has been addressed to the Consul, for him to forward to a Royal Navy ship in the Pacific. The illustration opposite is from the page in my collection - I would be most grateful if someone could correct any errors that I have made ... I am not sensitive!

Soldiers' and Sailors' Letters

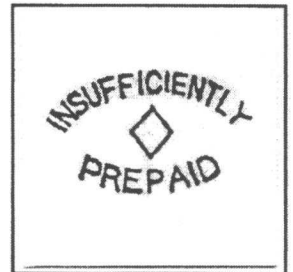
Panama Transit

The requirement that transit rates due to foreign countries would have to be paid on delivery, in addition to the British rate concessionary rate of one penny, was re-affirmed in a number of Post Office Notices^[1] from 1859. The additional charge on letters from the Pacific Coast was a penny for Panama transit.

*H.M.S. Phoebe at Vancouver, to Brighton, England, via St. Thomas,
arrived 27th July 1870.*



A letter from a sailor, prepaid a penny, counter-signed by the Commanding Officer and sent by closed bag to St. Thomas, in the Danish West Indies. There the British Post Office Agent (in St. Thomas, distinct from the Consul) has cancelled the stamp with his 'C 51' handstamp. Panama transit postage was due and the cover has also been marked 'INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID' (also at St. Thomas)^[2], and charged a penny. The handstamps were sent to St. Thomas on 16th June 1865.



Notes and Sources:

- [1] 35 George III, Cap. 53; subsequently Post Office Notice, 4th June 1859.
- [2] John Parmenter 'G.B. Used Abroad', pages 241-242.

UNITED STATES PACKETS

The photocopies below have been sent to me by Eric Needs - the cover apparently was a trophy of London '90. I include it because the 'CONVEYED BY UNITED STATES PACKET' is by no means common (especially in conjunction with such a nice strike of the '1/2' (Arnell A.12). The charge was one shilling and twopence for the

United States Packet (not a 'Crimean War' rate as it is sometimes called, but the rate established by the Anglo-United States Convention introduced in 1849 that remained in force after the 1854 changes to the British and Canadian Packet rates). Eric's cover was carried by the Collins Line 'Baltic'.

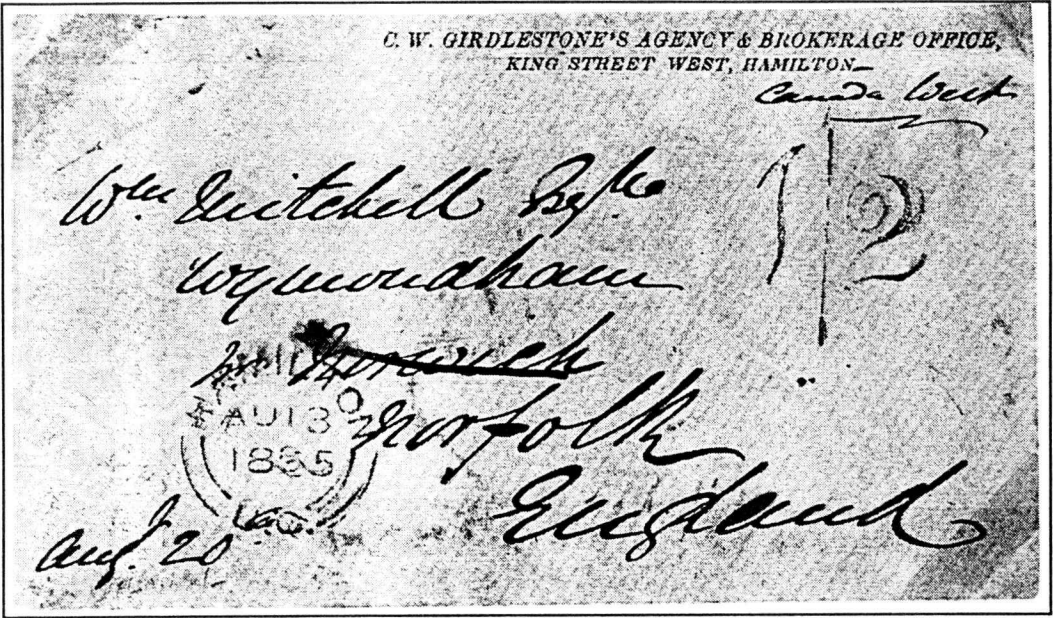


Figure 2: Hamilton, Upper Canada to Norwich, England, 13th August 1855.

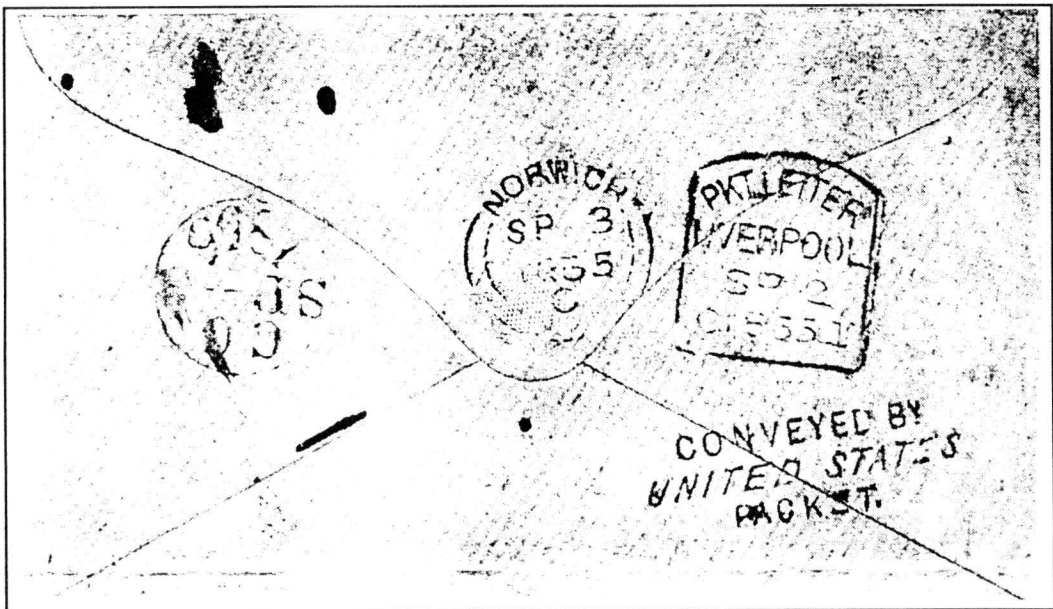


Figure 3: Reverse.

I will keep a record of such covers to see if a pattern emerges about the use of the 'US PACKET' handstamp, for it is very scarce, yet covers carried by US Packets are relatively common in 1855. If you have any examples of the handstamp, please send me details.

Next the 'A.12' strike ... *'Handbook of Trans-Atlantic Mails'* shows it as a London (Canada) mark, and I have no record of any amendment to that attribution. The illustrated cover does not appear to have passed through London, and this suggests that an amendment to the record is necessary.

I have two examples of A.12:

a. 27th March 1855, from Brockville with Perth (28th, front) and London (31st, twice front and back); originally shown as unpaid '3', obliterated and '1/2' substituted, with 'FORWARDED' and red manuscript 'England'. Carried by 'Atlantic'.

b. 24th December 1855, used at Hamilton carried by 'Baltic', from the same correspondence as Eric's cover.

And from Allan Steinhart's collection:

7th July 1855, Hamilton Canada West to Norfolk, England, carried by 'Baltic'.

I defer to Canadians on points of Canadian geography, but looking at my W.H. Smith 'World Atlas (for Schools)', I can see no reason why the Hamilton correspondence should have travelled to London; however, I have no reason to argue that London letters were always rated in Hamilton although I believe that Hamilton was an Exchange Office for British mails at that time... so, A.12 either needs to be amended to

show use in London and Hamilton, or changed altogether. I await reactions and photocopies. It would be helpful if the original reason for the attribution of A.12 to London could be included to help future discussion, and I may have missed some intermediate re-classification. If I have, I apologise, and will publish any supplements to the *'Trans-Atlantic Handbook'* when they are provided.

Which leads me to my next point (and my excuse for the delay in distributing this Newsletter). Jack Arnell's original listings of the various markings are excellent (first in *'Atlantic Mails'*, then in a supplement and finally in the *'Trans-Atlantic Handbook'*), but there have been additions since publication, and the details of the 'reporting strike' (to use Allan Steinhart's expression) are not recorded. I would like to see some augmentation of the dates of first and last strikes, and notes added (for instance, routes and transit markings) that might leave open the possibility of further discussion on which office used the mark. I would advocate strongly the retention of the 'Arnell Numbers' as they have come to be known, and am tempted to include a rarity guide (mainly as a sop to the dealers and other tyros). For this last I would favour something similar to that approach used by J.J. MacDonald in *'The Nova Scotia'* post, although the method used by Colin Tabear in *'Robertson Revisited'* for London (England) is simpler in some ways (see the end of this Newsletter for comments on Colin Tabear's book). I offer, in tabular format, a possible approach for you to consider; please note, the intention would be to augment, not to replace, existing work.



Figure 5: Brockville, Upper Canada to London (England), 27th March 1855.

TABLE OF TRANS-ATLANTIC HANDSTAMPS

Serial	Marking	Number	Used	First Use	Last use	Scarcity	Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							

LETTERS TO NEWFOUNDLAND

Packets	Date of departure, and whether from				Destination	Mail by which Letters for the Packet will be forwarded from London		
	Liverpool or Southampton							
United States	Liverpool	Wednesday	October	1st	New York	Night Mail	September	30th.
British	"	Saturday	"	4th	Boston	"	October	3rd.
United States	Southampton	Wednesday	"	8th	New York	Day Mail	"	8th.
British	Liverpool	Saturday	"	11th	"	Night Mail	"	10th.
United States	"	Wednesday	"	15th	"	"	"	14th.
British	"	Saturday	"	18th	Boston	"	"	17th.
United States	Southampton	Wednesday	"	22nd	New York	Day Mail	"	22nd.
British	Liverpool	Saturday	"	25th	"	Night Mail	"	24th.
United States	"	Wednesday	"	29th	"	"	"	28th.
British	"	Saturday	November	1st	Boston	"	"	31st.
United States	Southampton	Wednesday	"	5th	New York	Day Mail	November	5th.
British	Liverpool	Saturday	"	8th	"	Night Mail	"	7th.
United States	"	Wednesday	"	12th	"	"	"	11th.
British	"	Saturday	"	15th	Boston	"	"	14th.
United States	Southampton	Thursday	"	20th	New York	Day Mail	"	20th.
British	Liverpool	Saturday	"	22nd	"	Night Mail	"	21st.
"	"	"	"	29th	Boston	"	"	28th.
United States	Southampton	Wednesday	December	3rd	New York	Day Mail	December	3rd.
British	Liverpool	Saturday	"	6th	"	Night Mail	"	5th.
"	"	"	"	13th	Boston	"	"	12th.
United States	Southampton	Friday	"	19th	New York	Day Mail	"	19th.
British	Liverpool	Saturday	"	20th	"	Night Mail	"	19th.
"	"	"	"	27th	Boston	"	"	26th.

All Letters addressed to the United States, *and not directed to be otherwise sent* will be transmitted by the *First Packet* whether British or United States, which is despatched after they are posted; But Letters specially directed "by British Packet," "by United States' Packet," or by any particular Vessel named, will be forwarded in accordance with the desire thus expressed by the Writers.

The British Mail Packets *on the New York Line*, will proceed *direct* from Liverpool to New York, and from New York to Liverpool, without calling at Halifax. Letters and Newspapers, however, for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, may still be forwarded in "*closed Mails*" by these Packets, *if specially addressed "viâ New York," or "viâ the United States,"* but Letters and Newspapers not so addressed will be sent in the regular Mails to Halifax, by the Packets proceeding from Liverpool viâ Halifax to Boston.

The United States Mail Packets as well as the British Packets, will convey closed Mails for Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, and Letters and Newspapers will be forwarded in such closed Mails, if specially addressed "*viâ New York,*" or "*viâ the United States.*" Letters for Canada however must, in addition, bear the words "*by United States' Packet.*"

The postage upon Letters and Newspapers is precisely the same, whether they are conveyed by British or United States' Packets.

Letters, &c., for Bermuda and Newfoundland will be forwarded only by the Packets proceeding to Boston; the Mails for Bermuda will be despatched from Halifax immediately after the arrival of the Packet at that Port, and those for Newfoundland will be despatched on the arrival at Halifax of the Homeward Packet from Boston.

Postmasters will bear in mind that all Letters to be transmitted by the Packets which start from Southampton, must be forwarded to London and not to Liverpool.

The table above is a transcript of a General Post Office Instruction, No.35 of 1851, dated September 1851. My thanks to Brian Cropp and to Harry Parsons who provided it in part answer to a query raised about the length of time that a letter from Guernsey to Newfoundland was detained, apparently at Halifax. The penultimate paragraph is interesting: '*Letters, &c, for Bermuda and Newfoundland will be forwarded only by the Packets proceeding to Boston; the Mails for*

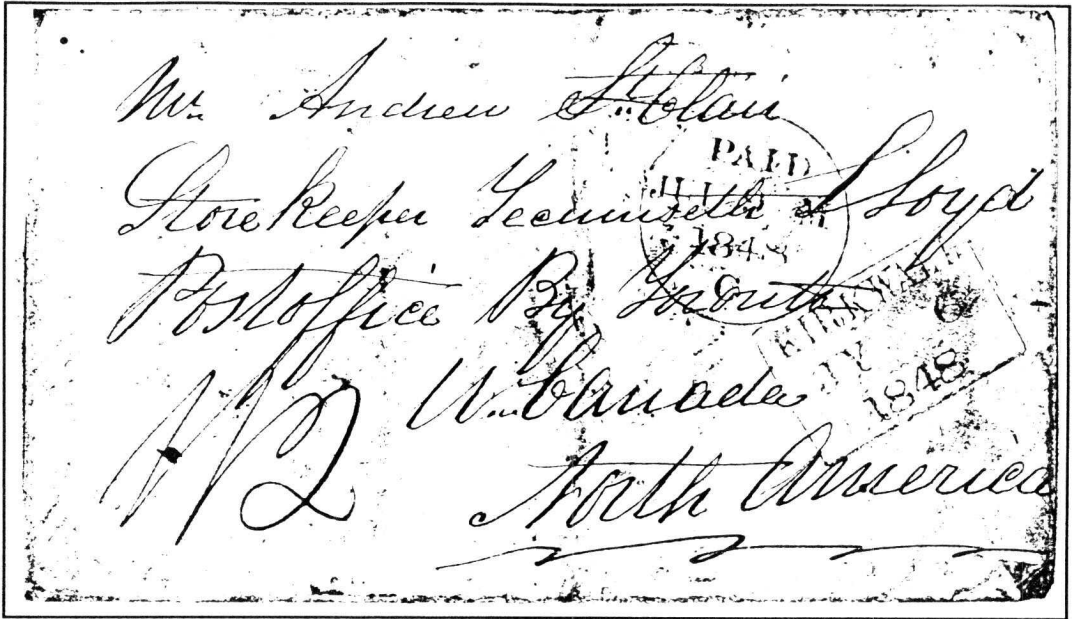
Bermuda will be despatched from Halifax immediately after the arrival of the Packet at that Port, and those for Newfoundland will be despatched on the arrival at Halifax of the Homeward Packet from Boston.'

One piece of information uncovered serves to expose a greater deficiency - there appears to be very little information about the service between Halifax and St. Johns - can anyone help?

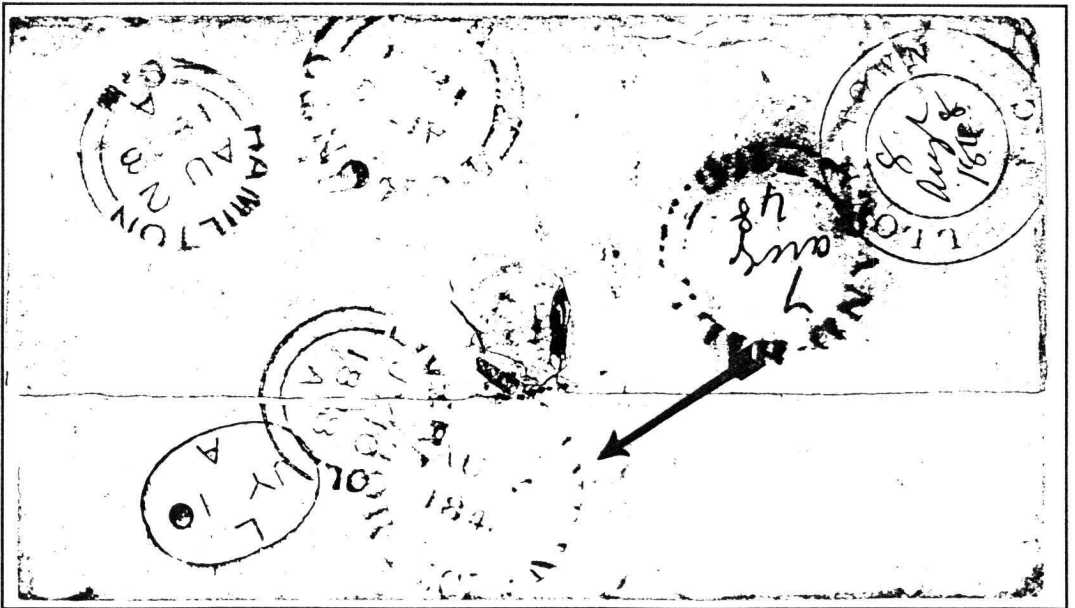
HANDLING THE MAILS IN CANADA

The cover illustrated below was sent to me by Bob Anderson of Brantford, Ontario, seeking the Study Group's advice. I am able to provide the Trans-Atlantic element of the response, but can only guess at the answers to two questions about the North American end of the cover's journey:

what was the port of entry (I assume that he means the location that the mail bag was opened), and an explanation of a red faint strike on the reverse of the cover; unfortunately, a copy of a copy will not help you very much. I shall look forward to your alternative suggestions!



Figures 6 and 7: From Kirkwall, 6th July 1848 (front and back).



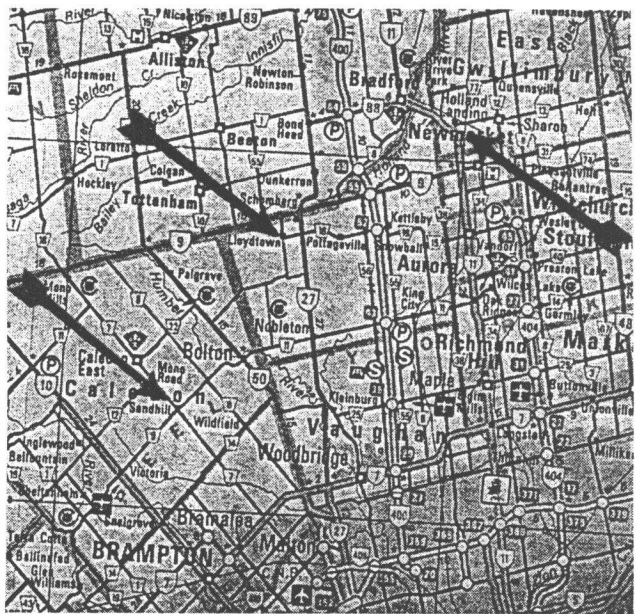
The letter left Kirkwall on 6th July 1848, and was passed to Edinburgh (paid marking on the front) thence to Liverpool, where it received the cds and oval transit (reverse). The rate was one shilling and twopence Sterling, prepaid to destination in Canada. It was carried by the

Cunard Line 'Europa' arriving at Halifax, Nova Scotia on 25th July 1848 (JC Arnell, 'Atlantic Mails' page 292). I assume that the mails for Canada were taken off at Halifax, since I believe that this falls into the period that the United States had abrogated the closed mail arrange-

ments. I assume that the mails passed through Halifax for the feeder service to Quebec in closed bags, but am afraid that I do not know whether there would have been a bag for Hamilton at this stage. Given that the cover's first postmark in North America is Hamilton U.C. 2nd August 1848, this seems likely.

The next part will be answered with greater conviction by the Canadian element of the Study Group (but I will offer a hypothesis anyway!). From Hamilton the letter was passed to Toronto (3rd August) then to the indecipherable office (4th August); it reached Sand Hill on 7th August and Lloyd Town on 8th August.

I have been unable to guess the postmark from the photocopy, but have looked in the British Proof Books (which contain proofs of the majority of the large split-ring Canadian marks). Based on nothing stronger than the length of the name, my first guess was Holland Landing; but that would mean that the letter followed a rather circuitous route from Toronto to Lloyd Town. However, such an error would account for the missing three days. The contemporary maps that I have (1832, 1860, 1870s) do not show the pertinent towns, and I had to resort to an Ontario road map from the local library ... it has not reproduced very well. Some options for the postmark are copied from the proof books opposite - hopefully someone may be able to provide a more sustainable suggestion!



AROUND THE HORN BOTH WAYS

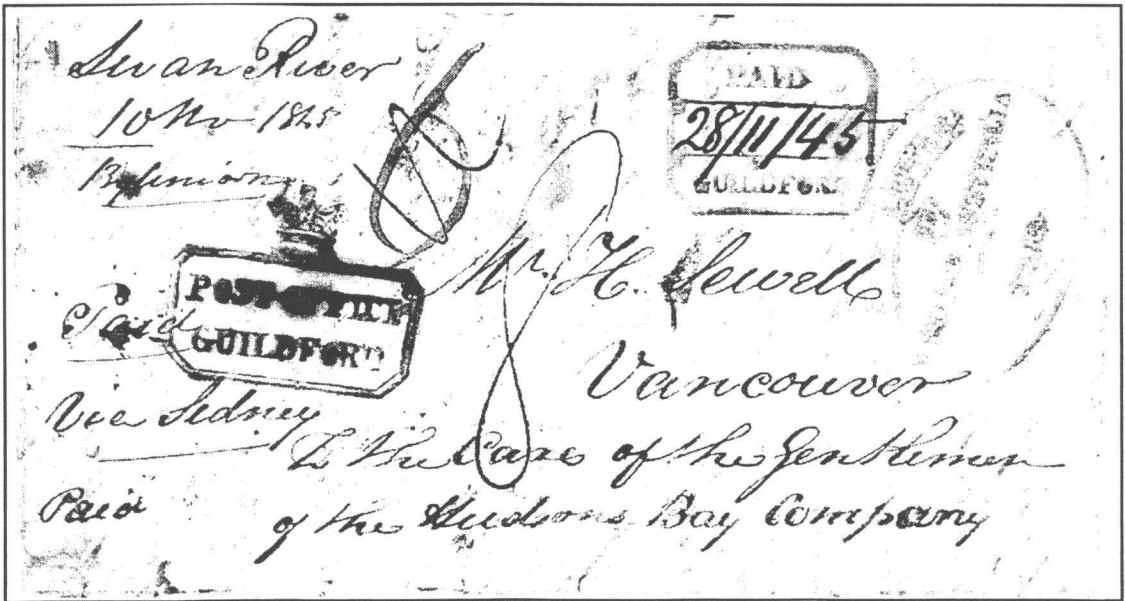


Figure 8: Western Australia to Fort Vancouver, 1845
(see next page).

A DOUBLE ATLANTIC CROSSING

Dale Forster has sent me a photocopy of a remarkable letter from Western Australia to Fort Vancouver, via England - it thus crossed the Pacific, the Atlantic twice, rounded Cape Horn twice and traversed the Eastern Pacific more-or-less from South to North. Dale has also provided the description of the letter, which I have copied without change. My thanks.

Henry Sewell was one of the first settlers in the Tuality Plains area west of Portland. There being no government post offices, Sewell arranged with his father in Australia to send mail via London to Fort Vancouver: *'To the care of the Gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company'*.

Rate: Sixpence Western Australia postage paid in cash for outgoing ship letter. Eightpence British postage due paid by Hudson's Bay House for incoming ship letter. Company records show that in 1846 Hudson's Bay Company began charging one dollar for mail to non-employees. No indication that Sewell paid a fee.

Route: Swan River, via Guildford, to Perth, then by coastal ship *'Union'* to Sydney; by private ship to London around Cape Horn to take advantage of the prevailing winds. Then by Hudson's Bay Company ship back around the Horn to Fort Vancouver.

The letter began its long journey from Swan River, Western Australia on 10th November 1845. It was prepaid sixpence in cash as indicated by the red manuscript '6', then received two handstamps from Guildford, and a 'SHIP LETTER (crown) PAID', marking at Perth. It is endorsed in manuscript, *'By Union'* and *'Via Sydney'*. The *'Union'* was a coastal ship plying between Western Australia, Melbourne, and Sydney. The letter is addressed to Mr. H. Sewell, Vancouver, To the Care of the Gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company.

It is important to realize that most sailing ships leaving Australia for England in the 1830s and 1840s took advantage of the prevailing westerly winds in the southern latitudes by sailing east around Cape Horn. Only with the introduction of steamers in the 1850s, did the route from Australia via Suez and the Mediterranean become a viable alternative. All mail from Australia to the UK was carried by private ships until the Toulmin Packet contract sailings began in January 1846. The manuscript '8' in black,

applied in England, is the private ship charge paid in London by Hudson's Bay House, headquarters for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Had the letter waited in Sydney for the January 1846 Toulmin voyage of the *'Hooghley'*, there would be a '1/-' manuscript marking for the packet charge due from addressee. There is an indistinct London receiving cds on reverse with indecipherable date. There is no listing of private ship sailings between Australia and the United Kingdom, and newspaper records are the best source of sailings. So far I have been unable to determine what ship took this letter from Sydney to London, but microfilm of Sydney newspapers may hold the answer.

At Hudson's Bay House, the letter had to be routed to Vancouver. Fort Vancouver was headquarters for the Columbia District of the Hudson's Bay Company, and was located in what is now Washington State, across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon. Vancouver, British Columbia, was not established until the 1860s. The annual supply ship from England to Fort Vancouver left in the early spring of 1845, sailing back across the Atlantic and around the Horn, up the west coasts of South and North America, and into the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver.

Henry Sewell was not an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, but a settler in the Tuality Plains area west of Portland. There were no government post offices west of the Rocky Mountains until 1847 when the Astoria Post Office was established at the mouth of the Columbia River. This letter shows that, before post offices were established, the Hudson's Bay Company provided a mail service for settlers as well as Hudson's Bay Company employees.

Hudson's Bay Company records show that in 1846 the Company began charging one dollar for mail to non-employees. There is no evidence Sewell paid a fee for this letter. The contents of the letter from Henry Sewell's father are interesting: the Sewell family except Henry had emigrated from England to Western Australia, and his father urges him to reconsider and join the rest of the family in Australia where he could have all the land and sheep he could want. The long journey of the letter around Cape Horn in both directions, and the double trans-Atlantic crossing gives, the letter a great deal of interest.

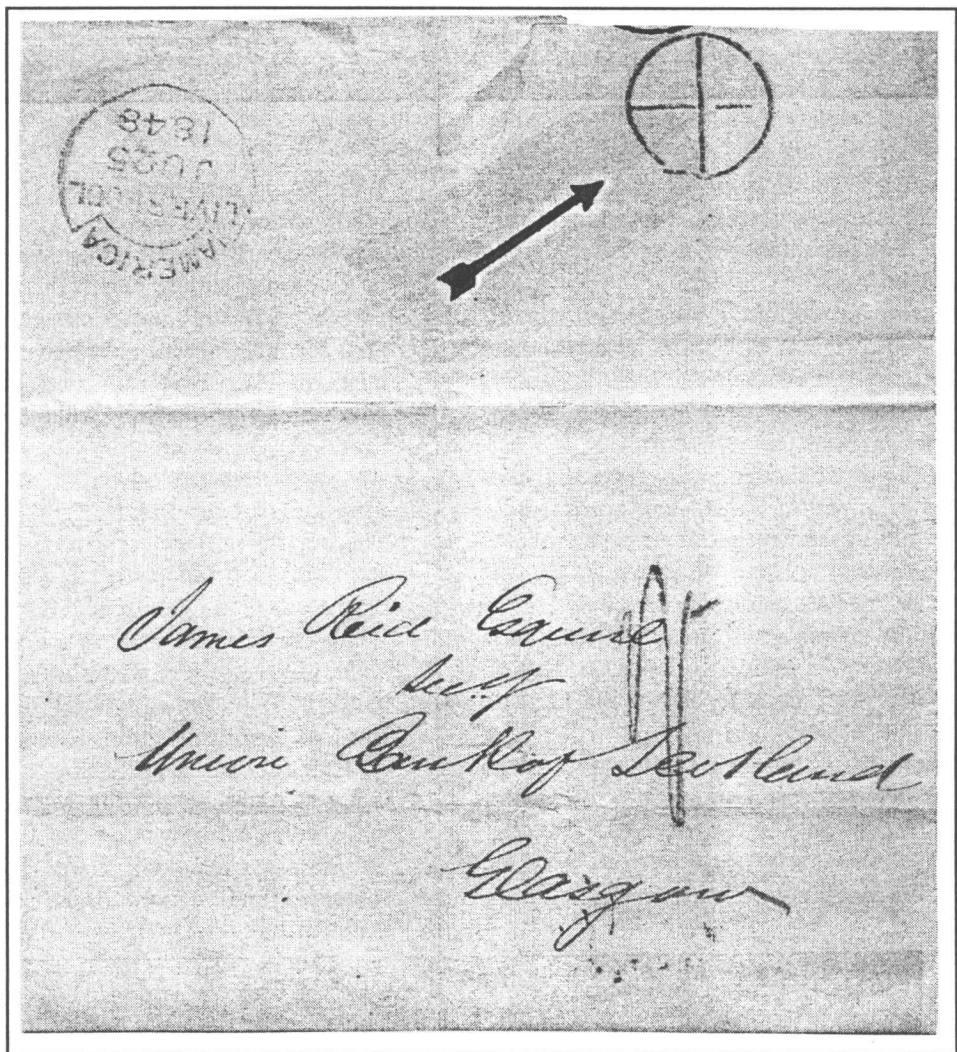
Can anyone throw any light on the mark illustrated below? It appears to be an examiner's mark applied at Liverpool, similar but smaller to one illustrated (but not explained) on *'Robertson Revisited'*, page 173.

British Postal Markings

Liverpool

After the United States abrogated the closed mail agreement (October 1847 to January 1849), letters to and from Canada were passed through Halifax and Quebec. In this period, Liverpool used a number of handstamps, the one below is normally seen only on letters carried by British Packets from the United States.

Montreal, Canada to Glasgow, Scotland, 9th June 1848.



A letter carried by the Cunard Line 'Niagara' on the return leg of her first trans-Atlantic voyage^[1]. The Liverpool transit and unusual examiner's mark^[2] suggest that the letter may have been carried privately and intercepted. It has been charged a shilling as though from the United States or Halifax, Nova Scotia; the charge from Montreal would have been one shilling and twopence.

Review - 'Robertson Revisited', Colin Tabcart, published by James Bendon Ltd. ISBN 9963 579 77 9.

Some thirty years ago, Alan Robertson produced what was the most comprehensive and detailed, and which remains one of the most interesting books (in three volumes) on British maritime postal history. I have been told that there were supplements and additions, but do not have details, only a photocopy of the Postal Museum copy of the book. Since the original work, other authors have provided extra detail of various aspects, and a reduced-sized reprint was published in the last couple of years; but nobody has attempted a comprehensive revision.

I have just bought a book by Colin Tabcart (who should be known to many of you) which provides a significant review of the core of Allan Robertson's work, the ship and packet markings of the British ports. It is an excellent work and I commend it to you, but with the reminder that Colin has concentrated on a revision of the knowledge base of the markings at the ports, and the original work was much broader in scope; a copy of the original will remain a valuable element of any trans-Atlantic library.

This is not a book review, however, more a comment and challenge. Any good book stimulates the mind, and an honest one highlights questions which remain unanswered. There are several points and issues which you may wish to consider, and it is very likely that in the sum of the collections formed by members of the Study Group, some of the answers may be found. I offer a preliminary list of the kind of questions that have caught my eye on the first pass, and which may be worth further discussion. If there is a response, I undertake to collate, publish and pass on any contributions that you may be able to make. We may wish to consider a similar, BNA-orientated work, in the future.

Falmouth Packet Letter Markings (page 82, M7 and others). This is quite a rare mark - in a future issue, I will illustrate of the 'FALM^o' handstamp (the one I have is on a letter from Exeter to Canada, prepaid sixpence for the journey to Falmouth. Do you know of other examples which might help to narrow down its use? There are a number of other Falmouth markings which appear on British North American letters, but they are all scarce (or rare!). Since Falmouth is pretty fundamental to our subject, they the markings (and the

explanation for their infrequent appearance deserves attention.

Accountancy Markings (pages 166-176 and 212-219). Colin states that the markings normally associated with mail handled under the terms of the 1848 convention (and later amendments) were used only at London and Liverpool. This opens three possible discussions:

a. It suggests that, for instance, all Irish/Scottish mail for America (under this convention), was passed to one of these two cities rather than being sent to Cork directly.

b. That mail carried by ships of other lines, for instance through the South Coast ports, could not bear accountancy markings unless passed through London or Liverpool.

c. That the accountancy markings used on the ships may be more common than one might expect.

I would be interested to publish examples of accountancy markings that you may have that can be clearly identified as specifically London or Liverpool, and especially those are unlikely to have been through those two cities. This is a new area for me and you may have to bear with my mistakes. The more unusual handstruck rate handstamps on British North American material would also be interesting.

Handling of Canadian Packets' Mail in the UK.

The arrival and departure of the Allan Line ships is mentioned in a number of other references, Colin mentions it on page 97, Note 1. I have no dispute with the comment that the Allan Line service relationship with Glasgow was concerned with the emigrant trade, not the mails. But that is not the whole story, and I would like to examine the relationship of Londonderry, Glasgow and Liverpool in respect of Canadian mails, and how they were handled by the GPO. The Duckworths' book '*Large Queens*' provides some information, but is limited to its period and is not widely read by trans-Atlantic collectors.

Ship Letter Markings. Colin has spent considerable effort in collecting further information and providing updates to the Robertson listings, but I am sure that you will have examples that do not conform to existing knowledge. Your contributions will be passed on to Colin for supplements. Which brings me back, for my closing comment, on the need for similar consolidated listings for the British North American markings, and what we should do about to correct the deficiency.