



TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP  
OF THE  
British North American Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 67

February 1999

GENERAL MATTERS

In this Newsletter I intend to introduce the plan for the coming year, cover the correspondence that I have received in the last couple of months and, in the accompanying letter, raise the touchy subject of finance and membership. There is no

single theme to this letter; #68 will deal with the adhesive period of Prince Edward Island, then I propose to look at New Brunswick, interspersed with more general matters. Your views would, as always, be appreciated.

LATE FEES



Figure 1: Late fee on a letter from Liverpool to New Brunswick, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1851.

The front cover illustration, for no particular reason, shows one of the more famous 'late fees' and opens the question of where and when late fees were collected on trans-Atlantic letters. Jack Arnell introduced this subject some years ago, since when it has more-or-less lain dormant. I would be grateful for examples of late fees, particularly on letters to and from British North America, and will use the photocopies that you send me. I do not know whether the United States Post Office authorised the practice, please

The letter above was posted in Liverpool at the 'Floating Receiving House' (FRH). This had been established at the South Landing Stage in 1849, specifically to handle late letters. An extra shilling was charged until 1859, when it was reduced to sixpence (Colin Tabart 'Robertson Revisited' (after Post Office Archives, Post 48/138, page 636)). The letter was carried by the British Packet 'Africa' departing from Liverpool that day (Hubbard and Winter, page 29) to New York, thence overland to the Exchange Office at St.

## LATE FEES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The information which follows is drawn principally from a handbook *'Late Fee and Too Late Stamps'* compiled by the late WG Stitt Dibden and published by the Great Britain Philatelic Society in 1966. I have been unable to identify the present owner of the copyright and hope that I will be forgiven for using the information. The book quotes the following references to late fees:

**Oldham (1824):** *'Between 4 and 4.15 pm 1d each letter is required ...'*

**Birmingham (1825):** *'All letters intended to be forwarded by the same day's post to Sheffield should be put in to the post office before 6 o'clock, and by the other mails half an hour before they set out (except for London which is one hour) or 1d must be paid with each letter between these times and the departure of the mail.'*

**Halifax (1830):** *'The box closes at 9 pm. Letters are received at 1d each till 10 and afterwards at 6d each.'*

**Huddersfield (1830):** *'The office closes at 10 pm but letters are received till 10.30 by payment of 6d.'*

**Leeds (1830):** *'Letter box formally closes for all packets at 10 pm. After that a penny a letter is charged until 11 and after that 6d each. Foreign letters if brought to this office after 8.20 on foreign post nights are charged with the usual fee of 1d until 8.50 and 6d the last 15 minutes.'*

**Coventry (1839):** *'Box closed half an hour before the departure of each mail - London letters are received at the Post Office without extra charge until 9 pm and by the payment of 1d from 9 to 10, at which hour the office is closed.'*

**Dublin (1839):** *'After the letter box is closed in the evening Irish Letters are received up to 6.30 for threepence each and to 6.45 for sixpence each, in addition to the postage. English letters also for sixpence each, for Liverpool at 4.45 and London 7.45.'* (In 1838, London was 6.15 pm.) (FJ Melville stated in his *'Complete Philatelist'* that the posting box in Dublin also carried the legend *'This box intended for letters too late for the next mail.'*)

**Rotherham (1839):** *'Post Office closes at 9 pm. London Mail leaves 9.30 am. Letters for London received until 9 am and afterwards till 9.15 on payment of 1d each.'*

**Sheffield (1839):** *'The Box closes at 10 pm. Letters will not be taken in after that hour. When the boxes are closed letters will be taken in at the newspaper window in the lower passage on payment of 1d until within 15 minutes of the departure of each mail and after that time until the departure of the mail on payment of 6d.'*

During the period 1834 to 1838 when the Post Office's working and revenue was under considerable investigation both by the Treasury and by the Select Committees appointed by the House of Commons, it was disclosed that most of the late fee charges were regarded as perquisites ('perks' to those of a military background) by local postmasters. The London Inland Office letter fees had in fact been paid into the Revenue from the inception of the system in 1797, but it was not until 1822 that the same occurred in Edinburgh. The London fees, the produce from which amounted to £1175 in 1835, were paid into a consolidated fund from which staff were in part paid.

The *'Instructions for the guidance of Letter Receivers in the United Kingdom, 1846'* at para 22, stated: *'At Head Offices, and at such Sub-offices as may be indicated by the Surveyor 'Late letters' etc must in all cases be received at the window or moveable panel, either by the person on duty at the window, or in a box to be temporarily put in the place of the moveable panel or through a slit in the panel itself to be used exclusively for this purpose; the mode in each particular case being determined by the Surveyor with reference to the circumstances of the office. During receipt of late letters at these offices a placard must be exhibited at the window as follows 'Post here for this mail - one additional stamp', the latter clause to be exchanged when the fee is advanced for the following 'Three additional stamps' or such other number as may be directed. During the interval of five or ten minutes (as the case may be) which elapses between the termination of the receipt of late letters and the dispatch of the mails, all attendance at the window must be suspended except in those larger offices, at which in the opinion of the Surveyor, it is unnecessary to withdraw the window clerk to assist in the making up the bags. To apprise the public of such a suspension a placard must be exhibited at the window throughout the interval. Late letters must be received till within five minutes of the dispatch of the mails, except in those large towns where the Surveyor may deem an interval of ten minutes necessary, and excepting that no office is to be kept open merely for this purpose after ten o'clock at night.'*

Paragraph 23 of the instruction is significant, for it may help to interpret some supposed 'late fee' letters that have been recorded to the Americas: 'No letters, etc, must be forwarded by the mail preparing for dispatch unless prepaid, and that in stamps, so as to include both the ordinary postage and the late fee'. However, having quoted that extract, it did not appear to have applied to those overseas letters which did not have to be prepaid, or if prepaid could be prepaid in cash. A significant notice had been issued by the Post Office on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1841:

'On and after 10<sup>th</sup> August 1841, Offices at Charing Cross, Old Cavendish Street and the Borough will receive Inland Letters, the postage on which is paid by stamps affixed to them, also Foreign, Colonial, and Ship Letters on which the postage is paid until 6.15 pm instead of the present hour of 5.45.' later times were introduced at other offices: at the Lombard Street Office the time was extended from 6.00 pm to 6.30 pm; at St. Martins le Grand, the Chief Office, until 7.00 pm, all for a

further fee of 1d. Thereafter, last posting times were changed from time to time.

A further change occurred following Rowland Hill's evidence to the Select Committee with the issue of a 'General Notice to the Public' in April 1847:

'On and after Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> May, the Receiving Houses in London will be kept open from half past five to six o'clock pm for the receipt of late letters intended for the General Post Office, whether Inland, Foreign, Colonial or Ship Letters on payment of the Late Fee of one Penny provided the postage as well as the Late Letter Fee on such letters be paid by attaching the requisite number of stamps. Any letter not bearing the requisite number of stamps will be detained till the next despatch.'

The letter from Glasgow illustrated below (Figure 2), was prepaid in cash, yet appears to have been accepted as a Late Fee Letter; perhaps early overseas letters were exceptions.

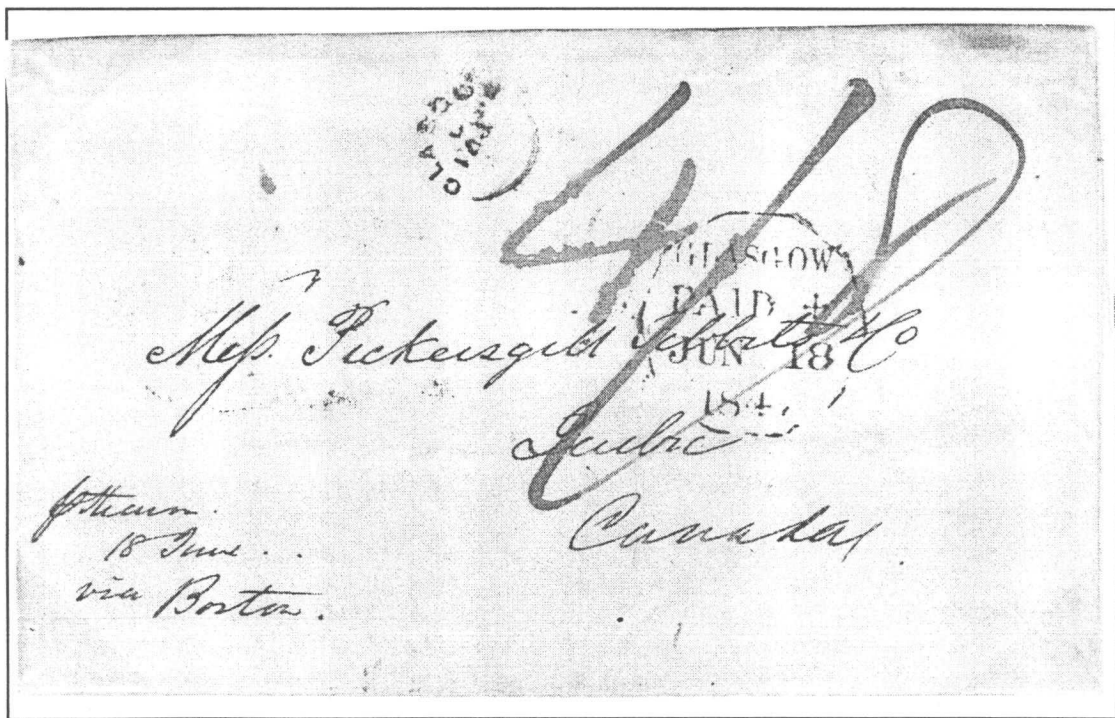


Figure 2: Glasgow to Quebec, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1847.

The letter at Figure 2 was posted prepaid the quadruple letter rate (up to two ounces), four shillings and eightpence, for the British Packet to Canada. The Cunard Line 'Caledonia' was due to sail from Liverpool the following day for Boston. The letter bears the small Glasgow 'GLASGOW L PAID' handstamp and, on the reverse, a Liverpool transit for 19<sup>th</sup> June. There is no record of arrival

in Canada, but 'Caledonia' made Boston on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1847. Unfortunately, the amount of late fee paid is not shown and I have no record of the practices at Glasgow. In fact, there is a great shortage of information, apart from London, and I would appreciate any contribution from the Provincial, and Colonial Offices pertaining to late fees on trans-Atlantic letters.

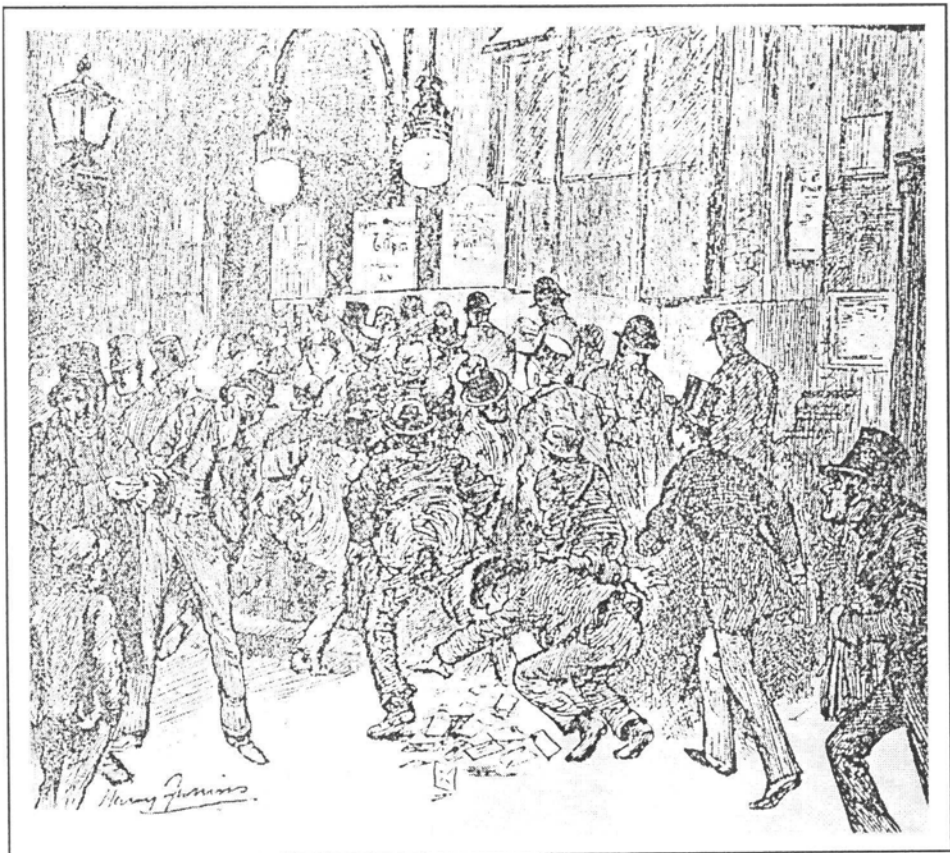


Figure 3: 'Six o'clock at the General Post Office - Outside'  
(from a drawing by Harry Furniss).



Figure 4: 'Six o'clock at the General Post Office - Inside'  
(from a drawing by Harry Furniss).

## ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE AMERICAN MAILS

In conjunction with the arrangements for Packets sailing to and from America to call at Irish ports to collect and deliver mails, notice was given to the public, in 1<sup>st</sup> November 1859, that:

*'Arrangements have been made for the British Packets conveying the Mails between this Country and North America to call at Queenstown (Cork) for the purpose of embarking and landing Mails, on each of their voyages between Liverpool and Boston, viâ Halifax; that is on every alternate voyage by British Packet to and from America.'*

*For the future, therefore, the outward Mails, will include such correspondence as may be posted or may arrive in London up to the usual post hour on Saturday Evening, or may reach Cork up to Sunday Morning; so that a considerable additional time will be allowed throughout the United Kingdom for posting letters, etc, sent by these British Packets to the United States, and to British North America.'*

The arrangement first commenced with the Packet due to leave Liverpool on Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1859. In March 1860 the system of calling at Queenstown was extended to all Packets plying between Liverpool and North America. Various late posting arrangements were brought into being to provide this facility in both London and Liverpool. From about October 1860 various improvements to rail and Packet services between London and Dublin resulted in a reduction of the transit time to 11½ hours.

Meanwhile, on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1860, the Allan Line suddenly switched its vessels to sail, not viâ Queenstown, but northwards up the Irish Sea to call at Londonderry/Derry. The Post Office Guide of 1858 announced Late Fee arrangements were commenced as follows:

*'Euston Station Late Fee for Canadian Mail: Letters posted in the Pillar Boxes and in the Letter-box at the North Western Railway station between 5.0 and 6.0 pm for the Evening Mails must bear an additional penny stamp. Letters only can be posted in the Pillar Boxes.'*

*Letters and Newspapers are received at the Railway Station, Euston Square, to be despatched by the day and night mail trains to all towns the correspondence of which is conveyed by the London and North Western Railway. A fee of sixpence in addition to the postage is charged upon each letter or newspaper: this fee as well as the postage must in all cases be paid in stamps. A bag for the receipt of letters and newspapers is suspended at the station for every day (except Sunday) from 7.30 am to 9.5 am for the Day Mail; and from 7.30 pm to 8.35 pm for the Night Mail.'*

The adhesive stamps were cancelled with a single horizontal stamp (1848), but this was followed in the late 1860's by a vertical 'killer' type. A considerable variety of backstamps was used. Mail wrongly sent in the Irish Mail, or dropped into the box without additional adhesives for the late fee, was sent to the London Returned Letter Office. (To be continued.)

## CORRESPONDENCE

I have received a number of letters and contributions. One, from John Forbes-Nixon, a splendid US Packet letter written in Glasgow and 'Missent to Kingston' (Upon-Thames) has been deferred to a future edition on grounds of space (in fact, I keep making mistakes with the explanation).

Jack Arnell has provided comments and additions to TANEWS #65/#66 (and a copy of a fine letter from India, for a future Newsletter):

Packet Letter (Figure 1): *'The Packet Letter has a rate marking you missed. Just below the 'PAID 9' in red, there is a '2N' in black. As this is the B.N.A.. method of showing shillings, I presume that it was applied at Halifax, but cannot explain it.'*

I cannot explain it either. Anyone else?

*'As far as I know, the 'PACKET LETTER' marking was only applied on loose letters carried on British Packets - both sail and steam - which were handed in on board or confiscated from passengers and struck to justify the higher charge than that of a Ship Letter. The 'AMERICA/F', 'LISBON/F' and the other similar markings were used by Saverland, the Falmouth Packet Agent for the same purpose - cf Fig. 12 #65 and my comments below.'*

I wasn't aware of that and invite further comment.

Freight Money Covers: *'I checked the photocopies of my former collection and found several covers, which were sold by Firby, to add to your list: 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1839: Seymour East UC, Pd 1s 2d, 18¾c, 12½c, probably Black Ball Line.'*

7<sup>th</sup> March 1839: Quebec LC, Pd 11d, 18<sup>3/4</sup>c, 12<sup>1/2</sup>c, probably Black Ball Line.

20<sup>th</sup> May 39: Quebec LC, Pd 11d, 18<sup>3/4</sup>c, 12<sup>1/2</sup>c, probably Dramatic Line.

You have listed the eight other covers I had, although I can add to the date of your #41 as 4<sup>th</sup> May 1840, as I bought this cover from Stanley Gibbons in March 1986.'

I have amended the list, and will reprint it.

Robinson LC: 'I cannot place Robinson precisely, but Compton County in Quebec lies just east and northeast of Sherbrooke, straddling the St. Françoise River. The present Route 1 runs northeast from Sherbrooke towards Quebec City through East Agnus in Compton County. The obvious route for your letter would have been down this road to Sherbrooke and on to Stanstead.'

See also the comment from Bernard Biales below.

'In your discussion of the Loughboro cover you raise the question of where markings were applied to letters. As I had recorded in various TA Newsletters, Toronto and Montreal never showed the Freight Money, as apparently the two postmasters sent the money directly to Abraham Bell & Co., the New York agent for the steamers, as did the Niagara postmaster (cf TANEWS #9, p.5-6). As an aside, the only Freight Money I ever saw on a New York letter was on the two I had which were carried by the Great Western on her second return trip - that shown on TANEWS #17, p.1, I still have in my French collection.

With respect to the actual markings, you note the boxed reverse italic 'PAID' of Kingston. The 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1839 Seymour East cover listed above is illustrated on TASG Handbook #2, p.94, where you will see that it was marked 'p<sup>d</sup> 1/2' and '12<sup>1/2</sup>' at East Seymour - and at Kingston 'PAID' was struck before the '12<sup>1/2</sup>' and a second 'PAID' with '18<sup>3/4</sup>' added to clarify the postage for the U.S. authorities.'

Viã Lisbon (#65, Figure 2): 'I found the 'LISBON F' cover very interesting, as I have two from the same correspondence, which also went by the Pacific. The first of them refers to sending the letter by a cartel, which was sailing in 8-10 days, while the other was marked 'p. Pacific'. As they travelled together, it is obvious that the Pacific was a cartel during the War of 1812. You will find these covers discussed in my article on Cartel Covers in Postal History #264, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 1992, pp. 120-121, and also in my article on Transatlantic Correspondence During the War of

1812 in the 59<sup>th</sup> American Philatelic Congress Book - 1993; the illustrations in the latter are much superior.'

Charlottetown Rate Markings (TANEWS #66): 'You can add a '1/4 C' mailed at Stratford C.O., London on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1846 to Charlottetown - m/s '1/2'. Sold as #541 by Firby. Your number #13 ('1/6C') was #576 in the Firby Sale. I presume that your #24 ('9') was my 11<sup>th</sup> March 1859 Cheltenham (Firby #577) as it had a 4<sup>th</sup> April 1859 Charlottetown backstamp.

Many thanks; I have amended the listing. Though rare, I am sure there are more of these markings in existence and would appreciate your input.

Bernard Biales has also provided comments, for which I am grateful:

Robinson, Quebec: 'There was a Robinson, Quebec on a 1902 map - 19 miles (as the crow flies) ENE of Sherbrooke and 8 miles SE of Dudswell Centre (there was also a Port Robinson elsewhere). I am inclined to agree that the 'SHIP PAID' is probably not a U.S. Post Office marking.'

I would like (and recognise that the justification is pretty thin) to attribute the 'SHIP PAID' handstamp to Sherbrooke, for the time being.

Viã Lisbon: 'The James Brown cover to Kirkcudbright is one of three (at least) with the same 'LISBON/F' marking. Jack Arnell illustrates two and suggests they may have gone by cartel (although why would a cartel go US/Lisbon?). There was a blockade at the time affecting mainly the middle states. Two earlier covers from this correspondence (not via Lisbon) do not show the 'DB&C' (?) number, perhaps they are significant (1064, 1074, 1076). I believe 1074 may have been a cover auctioned recently.

I am sorry, but these numbers do not mean anything to me and I have not had a chance to talk to Bernard ... one of the problems of having an editor on the wrong side of the pond, too mean to use the telephone. However, please note:

**malcolmmontgomery @ compuserve.com**

for those of you prepared to drag yourselves into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century! (you do not have to use bold type).

Packet Letter: 'Why the '2N on the Packet Letter?'

Ummm ... who volunteered me for this job?

Horace Harrison sent the table 're-created' below, which you may find useful (although I do not recall ever seeing a letter from Canada to the Crimea or Baltic). Please send copies of any examples you may have!

Following the table is a transcript of his accompanying letter, which I cannot answer - if I have an opportunity of visiting the archives I will rummage, but perhaps one of you could do it more quickly?

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

QUEBEC, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1855

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR,  
No. 24.

1. *Letters for Her Majesty's Forces in Turkey, the Crimea, the Baltic, &c.*

By a communication from the General Post Office, London, dated 31<sup>st</sup> August 1855, the Postmaster General is informed that under an authority recently issued by the Imperial Government, letters forwarded through the United Kingdom, between Canada and Her Majesty's Forces in Turkey, Greece, the Black Sea (including the Crimea) the Baltic and the White Sea, will in future be liable to the following reduced rates of Postage, to be in all cases paid in advance:-

*Greece, Turkey, and Black Sea, including the Crimea.*

Letters for or from Commissioned or non-Commissioned Officers, Soldiers, Seamen, or any other person belonging to the Army, Navy, Ordnance, Commissariat, Medical Department, Land Transport Corps, Army Works Corps, or Turkish Contingent.	Weighing under ¼ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding ¼ oz and not exceeding ½ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding ½ oz and not exceeding 1 oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 1 oz and not exceeding 2 oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 2 oz and not exceeding 3 oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 3 oz and not exceeding 3½ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 3½ oz and not exceeding 4 oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 4 oz and not exceeding 5 oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 5 oz and not exceeding 6 oz . . . . .

When sent in Mails carried by British Packets <i>via</i> Boston.		When sent in Mails carried by U. States Packets <i>via</i> New York.	
Sterling.	Equal to Currency.	Sterling.	Equal to Currency.
11d	1s 2d	1s 5d	1s 9d
1s 2d	2s 6d	1s 8d	2s 1d
2s 4d	2s 11d	3s 4d	4s 2d
3s 10d	4s 10d	5s 10d	7s 4d
5s 4d	6s 8d	8s 4d	10s 5d
6s 10d	8s 7d	10s 10d	13s 6d
7s 8d	9s 7d	11s 8d	14s 7d
9s 2d	11s 6d	14s 2d	17s 9d
10s 8d	13s 4d	16s 8d	20s 10d

*Baltic, White Sea, and Heligoland.*

Letters for or from Commissioned or Warrant Officers or any other person serving on board Her Majesty's Fleets in the Baltic, White Sea, and to or from Commissioned or non-Commissioned Officers, Soldiers, or any other person serving in the Foreign Legion at Heligoland.	Weighing under ¼ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding ¼ oz and not exceeding ½ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding ½ oz and not exceeding ¾ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding ¾ oz and not exceeding 1 oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 1 oz and not exceeding 1¼ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 1¼ oz and not exceeding 1½ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 1½ oz and not exceeding 1¾ oz . . . . .
	Exceeding 1¾ oz and not exceeding 2 oz . . . . .

When sent in Mails carried by British Packets <i>via</i> Boston.		When sent in Mails carried by U. States Packets <i>via</i> New York.	
Sterling.	Equal to Currency.	Sterling.	Equal to Currency.
11d	1s 2d	1s 5d	1s 9d
1s 2d	1s 6d	1s 8d	2s 1d
2s 1d	2s 7d	3s 1d	3s 10d
2s 4d	2s 11d	3s 4d	4s 2d
3s 11d	4s 10d	5s 11d	7s 4d
4s 2d	5s 2d	6s 2d	7s 8d
4s 5d	5s 6d	6s 5d	8s 0d
4s 8d	5s 10d	6s 8d	8s 4d

Unless these rates are pre-paid, the letters cannot be forwarded.

Letters addressed to *Non-Commissioned Officers, Soldiers, or Seamen*, serving in Her Majesty's Forces at the Seat of War, may be forwarded from Canada *via Quebec and Halifax* on payment of *one penny* at the time of posting - provided that the letter does not exceed the weight of half an ounce, for if above that weight letters so addressed are liable to the ordinary Postage rates as laid down in the foregoing tables.

2. *Postage Rate on Letters to and from the United Kingdom.*

It appears to be necessary to explain that, in consequence of the withdrawal of many of the Atlantic Steamers belonging to the Cunard line, to meet the exigencies of the war, the Mails between America and England have, since last autumn, been carried in alternate weeks by British and United States Government Packets - the former plying once a fortnight to Boston and the latter to New York - and that the Postage rate upon letters between Canada and the United Kingdom, when sent in the weeks supplied by the British Packets, is 8d Sterling, (10d Currency) per ½ oz.; but when transmitted by the Mails sent in the weeks served by the United States Government Steamers the rate is 1s 2d Sterling (1s 4d Currency) per ½ oz.

3. *Removal of the Post Office Department to Toronto.*

As this Department will remove to Toronto with the Government about the middle of October, Postmasters are requested to withhold the dispatch of their Quarterly Accounts and Remittances and of their Monthly Sheets for the period ending 30th September, 1855, until the 20th October, and then to address them to the Postmaster General at Toronto.

ROBERT SPENCE  
Postmaster General.

### REGISTRATION

From Horace Harrison: *'Enclosed please find a letter from the Deputy Postmaster General Canada in 1855, taken from microfilm in the Archives in Ottawa. I will transcribe it for you to save you the trouble of deciphering it:*

*'P.O.D. 6<sup>th</sup> Augt. '55*

*Joseph Leslie Esq  
etc. etc. Sir*

*I am desired by the Postmaster General to enclose herewith for your information and guidance a copy of a letter from the Secretary, G.P.O. London notifying this Dept. that upon Registered letters mailed in Canada for France and Countries beyond France., the combined postage to destination must in all cases be paid in advance. and that in the future all "Registered" letters not so prepaid will on their arrival in England be treated as ordinary correspondence.*

*I am etc, etc,  
H Griffin*

*Similar letters to Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Hamilton & London.'*

*'Joseph Leslie was the Postmaster at Toronto, so this was a round robin letter to all the Postmasters where mails for the U.K. were made up in 1855. I would like to have a photocopy, (or a transcription, if no photocopy is available), of the letter from the U.K. referred to above. Diligent search of the archives at Ottawa have failed to reveal it and I am forced to seek it in the U.K. Can you help? If you are unable to research it yourself, as I suppose you are not, could you forward it to the proper Archivist in the U.K. or ask Dorothy if she could do it, if you cannot.*

*I have just finished up the finishing touches of a book on Canada's Registry System authored by George Arfken, Harry Lussey and myself; a long overdue revision of the atrocity which I wrote and A.P.S. published in 1971. With the assistance of these two, I may do a better job this time.*

*HH*

*I shall be in London next week, but with two concurrent stamp shows will probably not have time to visit the archives ... anybody else?*

### ASPECTS OF THE ALLAN LINE

The draft article which follows was sent to me by Cliff Wheatley who agreed that it be circulated for comment and amendment necessary for publication. Your comments and additions would be welcome.

An 'Allan Line' Letter of 1859: One of the attractions of early postal history items is that they often comprise of entires with interesting contents. As it is impractical, not to say unpopular, to read through all the letters in a dealer's stock before buying, it is often a matter of chance if the contents are of interest. A knowledge of the history of the country in

question does however help. A recent case in point was a letter I came across addressed to one Hugh Allan in Montreal and postmarked 'PORTLAND Ma. 16 Mar 1859'. Hugh Allan was from a Glasgow shipping family. In the early 1850's (?) he joined Miller, Edmondstone and Company in Montreal. The company later became Edmondstone, Allan and Company and, after his brother had also joined, Hugh & Andrew Allan & Co. This company owned the Montreal Ocean Steam Ship Company, usually known as the Allan Line.

The Letter: The letter was sent from Portland to Montreal by William Grange, captain (?) of the



'North Briton', an Allan Line steamship. In the winter months when the St. Lawrence was frozen, the Allan Line ships sailed to Portland, Maine whence mail was carried via the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway to Montreal. This letter undoubtedly went by that route.

Postmarked 'PORTLAND Ma. 16 MA 10' (the '10' being a 10 cent rate mark) and backstamped 'MONTREAL 17 MA 1859', it also bears the curved cross-border exchange mark 'U STATES'. The Canadian rate is shown in manuscript: '6' for 6d, to pay (in Canadian currency).

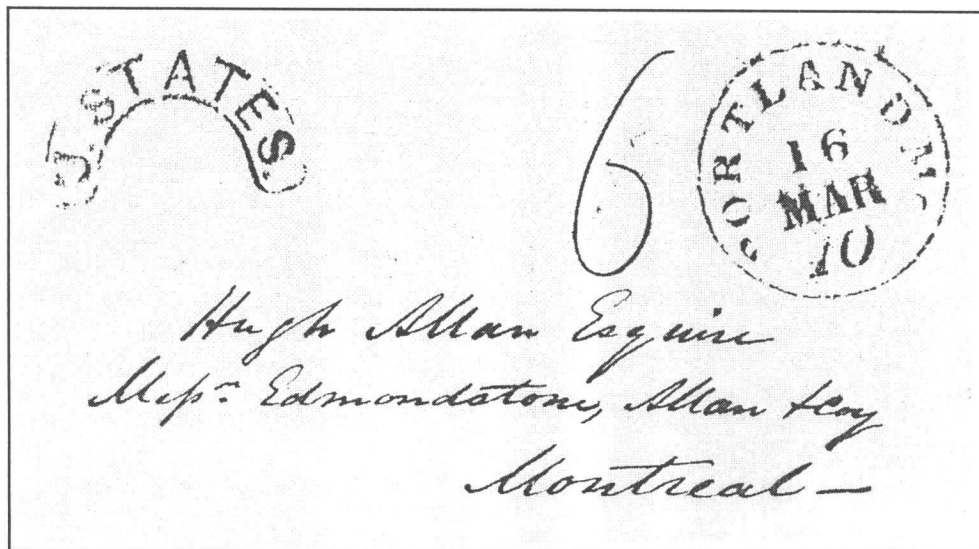


Figure 5: A letter from Captain William Grange of the 'North Briton'.

Hugh Allan Esquire  
Messrs. Edmondstone, Allan & Coy,  
Montreal

Portland 15<sup>th</sup> March

Dear Sir,

In reply to yours of the 12<sup>th</sup> inst., I can only again express my regret that our arrival was anticipated. Before leaving Liverpool I had traced out our course on the chart, to be in Lat 44 when in Long 45 and thence to pass just south of Sable Island. During the months of Feby and March I am convinced that this is the proper course. In my previous Portland voyages before these months I have always made Cape Race. I enclose the increase of distance but I consider we lost very little this passage, till we got into the Forty's it was almost a continuous gale with very high seas, rendering it necessary to have the Fore and After's set the most of the time, and to enable us to do so we kept off our course to the north 2 to 3 pts. and off to the south 1 pt. when necessary. In 48 Lat had some hours of a very dense fog, with the water about the freezing point, had I been farther north I would most likely have slowed. I am very proud of the 'North Briton' and have no doubt but on further acquaintance will be able to report most favourably. We steamed 11 knots on the day of our arrival and on leaving Liverpool steamed fully equal to the 'North American', though we were drawing 20 ft. and we were seldom over 18 in the 'North'. She seems less buoyant forward than the old Boats we took some very heavy dips, I would advise their not being loaded by the head. We have cleared the Custom House, but must await weather clearing up before starting, it has been blowing all day from the SE with very heavy rain and fog. I allowed Mr. Dutton to go to Montreal as his father was dangerously ill, he will call upon you.

Hoping to set you on our return.

I am, Your most obd, servant

Wm. Grange

Liverpool to Long Island	228	Liverpool to Long Island	228
Long Island to Cape Race	1739	Long Island to Lat 44, Long	1556
Cape Race to Cape Sable	564	Lat 44, Long 45 to Cape Sable	889
Cape Sable to Portland	207	Cape Sable to Portland	207
	-----		-----
	2738		2880
			2738
			-----
		Difference	142

Comment: This letter, from the master of the 'North Briton', indicates some of the problems of a typical winter voyage and implies that Hugh Allan pushed his captains to go as fast as possible. The letter refers to the third westerly crossing of the Atlantic by the 'North Briton'. She sailed from Liverpool on 23<sup>rd</sup> February and arrived at Portland on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 16 days later, one of her slowest crossings. These averaged 12.8 days in the summer and 13.7 days in winter for westerly crossings and 11.7 days both summer and winter in an easterly direction. Her previous crossing from Liverpool to Portland, in December, had taken only 11 days, so it is not surprising that Hugh Allan was asking why this one had taken 16. The next easterly crossing was from Portland on 26<sup>th</sup> March to Liverpool, arriving there on 7<sup>th</sup> April (12 days) which is surprising, as Mr. Grange states that he has cleared the Custom House on 15<sup>th</sup> March. The 'North American' referred to in the letter was another Allan Line ship.

In order to appreciate the significance of the contents of this letter it is necessary to know a little more of the history of the founding and early years of the Allan Line. Although this line ran until it was merged with the Canadian Pacific in 1917, the first ten years of its existence were full of difficulties and tragedies, almost causing it to cease operations.

History of Allan and Previous Canadian Lines: After the British Post Office relinquished control of the Canadian Post Office in 1851, one of the first actions of the Canadian Post Office was to establish its own line of trans-Atlantic mail steamers. The first attempt resulted in a contract being given to the Canadian Steam Navigation Company. This Company inaugurated its service with the steamship 'Genoa' which arrived at Quebec on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1853. However, the service proved unsatisfactory and the Company had great difficulty in keeping to the schedule set. Possibly the initial difficulties might have been overcome had it not been for the outbreak of the Crimean War. The Company's ships were British owned and one by one were requisitioned as troop ships. As a result there was no Canadian trans-Atlantic mail service at all in 1855 and the Canadian Post Office requested tenders for a second contract in March of that year.

There were two tenders for this contract but the only one meeting the requirements was that of the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company, usually known as the Allan Line. Their tender was accepted on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1855, thus beginning a service which was to last until 1917 when the Allan Line was absorbed by the Canadian Pacific.

The first contract was for 14 fortnightly round trips from Liverpool to Canada each summer and 5 monthly trips from Liverpool to Portland, Maine each winter. Steamships of at least 1750 tons burthen and 350 horsepower were to be used and there were penalty clauses for failing to meet the schedules or other conditions. In payment the Allan Line received a yearly subsidy of £24,000. The inaugural run was made by the 'North American' which left Liverpool on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1856 and arrived at Quebec on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 11 days later.

It is worth noting that at that time the port of Halifax, which was served by the Cunard Line, was many days journey from the main Canadian towns. Also, it was in the separate province of Nova Scotia, which did not become part of the Dominion of Canada until 1868, and there were some difficulties between the two administrations.

The average westerly crossing time for the first season was 12 days, 1 hour and established the Allan Line as a worthy competitor to the Cunard Line. After considerable pressure from the Canadian authorities the British Post Office agreed to treat the Allan Line in a similar way to Cunard. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1856 the British Post Office issued a circular stating that, unless specially endorsed, it would forward letters to Canada by the first Mail Packet, whether Canadian or British, rather than give priority to Cunard.

In 1857 Hugh Allan negotiated a new contract with the Canadian authorities which increased the frequency of sailings to one a week but this was not implemented until 14<sup>th</sup> May 1859, following a Post Office circular of 20<sup>th</sup> April. For this service, the subsidy was increased to £48,000 p.a.

One of the reasons for the weekly service was so as to be able to offer a truly competitive alternative to Cunard. During 1857 and 1858 every effort was made by the Canadian Government to increase the postal revenue by offering increased speed. Thus in May 1857 it agreed to having ships boarded at Riviere du Loup on the upriver trip so that the European telegraphic despatches could be landed 6 hours ahead of the ship's arrival at Quebec.

At that time, before the trans-Atlantic cable was laid, the mail ships provided the first news from Europe, which made their rapid arrival so important that even the saving of a hours was considered worthwhile. In 1860, for instance, the Grand Trunk Railway was extended to Riviere du Loup and the port served by a special express from Quebec to connect with mail ships, all to give a saving of 4 hours.

The pressure of the competition put considerable strains on the Allan Line. In February 1859, before the service had even started, Hugh Allan requested an increase in the subsidy pointing out that the Portland service had lost heavily the previous winter. He said that he would be satisfied if the cost of the winter service alone could be covered by the subsidy.

This claim for an increase in subsidy was made in the month previous to the letter quoted at the start of this article. Clearly at that time he would have been anxious to impress the government with the speed and efficiency of his service and have been exhorting his captains to do their utmost. It must have therefore come as a disappointment that the 'North Briton' had just taken 16 days over a crossing that averaged 14 days even in winter. The first sentence of the letter: '*I can only AGAIN express my regret that our arrival was anticipated...*' makes it clear that Allan was not satisfied with an earlier explanation and that Mr. Grange was still not actually admitting to being unduly late.

By June 1859 Allan had written again to the Postmaster General saying that unless increased assistance was provided rapidly he would have to bring the service to a close. After discussions the Postmaster general recommended that Allan be paid an amount equal to the postage raised on the mail his ships carried. Despite this offer, in October 1859 Allan said that he would have to cut the winter service unless he received £2000 per voyage above the new subsidy. The Canadian Postmaster General recommended to his Government an additional sum of £25,000 to tide the Allan Line over the difficult period, and this was agreed on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1859. It was agreed that the USA mail from Detroit to Liverpool should be carried by the Allan Line from Portland at the existing sea rates only provided that Canadian mail between Portland and the Canadian/US Border was carried free.

In 1860 further improvements were made to the trans-Atlantic services. Because of the rapid rail and sea links to Ireland it became possible to speed the delivery of trans-Atlantic mail by up to 24 hours by having the mail steamers call in Ireland to pick up mail sent from London.

Initially Cunard and the Allan Line called at Cork but during 1860 the Allan Line policy of using the

shorter route via the straits of Belle Isle whenever possible was regularised and they substituted Londonderry for Cork.

The years 1860-1863 were particularly difficult for the Allan Line. From the signing of the weekly contract on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1860 until mid-August 1863 there were 39 violations of the contract terms, mostly due to problems with the weather or ships. Although most of these 'defaults' were covered by exception clauses in the contract there was continuous pressure from the Canadian Government for Allan to keep to the schedules. In August 1861 the contract payment included a rider that the payment '*made under protest and subject to the decision of the PMG in reference to the propriety of terminating the contract.*' Allan denied breach of contract but the Post Office continued to add the rider to all payments under the contract for the next two years. During this period the Company lost four ships, including the 'North Briton' which was wrecked on Mingan Island in the St. Lawrence on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1861, three days after leaving Quebec for Liverpool, on what would have been her 23<sup>rd</sup> easterly crossing. The losses were accompanied by considerable loss of life and all occurred on the Canadian side of the Atlantic.

Public opinion in Canada was appalled by the losses and the future of the Allan Line was in doubt. A public enquiry was set up and this found that the absence of coastlights along the St. Lawrence river and the absence of lighthouses or guides on Sable island and Cape Sable constituted a great danger to navigation. The enquiry also found that the Allan Line captains were not always sufficiently prudent and took risks in order to increase speed. There can be little doubt that these risks were taken in response to pressure from Hugh Allan, as implied by the contents of the above letter. The letter also gives an idea of typical conditions during a winter crossing: '*almost continuous gale, followed by several hours of very dense fog with the water near freezing point*', even when the most northerly route was avoided.

Following a change of Government in 1861, a new contract was negotiated between Allan and the Canadian Post Office which emphasised safety. This new contract took effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1864 and provided the basis for the excellent and safe service of the next half century, although two further ships were lost in 1864, no doubt because old habits die hard.

Related Valentine cards, comments, further inputs and contradictions to:

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## HELP!

I have prepared the following *preliminary* tables to help me clear my mind about the values and purposes of Newfoundland stamps in the 1857-1875 period. I am not a stamp collector and would be grateful for assistance from those of you who know something about these stamps.

I have consulted a number of the established works, but these tend to focus on the nature of the stamps (colours, papers, etc), rather than their actual use, so many of the comments below are drawn from tables of rates and observation of actual covers.

NEWFOUNDLAND - PENCE ISSUES			
Serial	Value	Date of Issue	Purpose/Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
1.	1d Stg	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1857	Printed circular. Stg assumed (GPO London accepted equivalence of single 1d Stg/Cy) and stamp used to make up port-to-port rate to US.
2.	2d Stg	15 <sup>th</sup> February 1857	Purpose not known.
3.	3d Cy	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1857	Assumed Cy as shown '2½d' in GPO NF abstracts of account for 1857 and 1858.
4.	4d Stg	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1857	Port-to-port in North America. Stg assumed.
5.	5d Stg	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1857	Purpose not known. Stg assumed as used to make up rate to UK.
6.	6d Stg	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1857	Rate to UK via Halifax, NS or direct.
7.	6½d Stg	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1857	Rate covering domestic letter plus port-to-port, or St. John's port-to-port plus Colonial domestic letter. Also seen paying 13c rate (1865).
8.	8d Stg	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1857	Purpose not known. Assumed Stg, used for double port-to-port and, from 1860, bisected for port-to-port.
9.	1s Cy 1s Stg	1 <sup>st</sup> January 1857	Stated use for rate to Canada (Robson Lowe), but breakdown of rate not known. Value originally 1s Cy (10d Stg), value upgraded to 1s Stg in January 1860 to compensate for shortage of 6d stamps. Seen bisected for rate to UK (1860-on); shown as 1s in GPO NF abstract of account 1 <sup>st</sup> January to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 1857, referred to as '10d' in abstract for 1858.

NEWFOUNDLAND - FIRST DECIMAL ISSUES			
Serial	Value	Date of Issue	Purpose/Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
1.	1c	Late November 1868	Transient newspapers and circular.
2.	2c	15 <sup>th</sup> November 1865	Drop letters.
3.	3c	July 1870	Domestic letters from 9 <sup>th</sup> May 1870.
4.	5c	15 <sup>th</sup> November 1865	Domestic letters until 8 <sup>th</sup> May 1870.
5.	6c	July 1870	Double weight domestic letters from 9 <sup>th</sup> May 1870.
6.	10c	15 <sup>th</sup> November 1865	Double weight domestic letters. Letters to US after ...?
7.	12c	15 <sup>th</sup> November 1865	Letters to United Kingdom.
8.	13c	15 <sup>th</sup> November 1865	Domestic letters plus port-to-port.
9.	24c	15 <sup>th</sup> November 1865	Double weight letters to United Kingdom.