

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA PHILATELIC SOCIETY

TRANSATLANTIC STUDY GROUP

Newsletter No. 1

June 1986

Membership

In this, the first newsletter of the BNAPS Transatlantic Study Group, I am delighted to report on the excellent response to the invitation sent out at the beginning of the year to a selected list of interested members. The Founding Members, who have each contributed \$10.00 to support the newsletter and other expenses, number twenty-five, and are listed below.

I must note however that many of the members, who gave me their names when the Group was established at Calgary last September, have not responded to my January letter. While they will receive a copy of this to let them see where we are going, if they still do not respond, it will be assumed that they have no interest and I shall not waste postage on them. On the other hand, anyone else interested in transatlantic mail will be welcomed, so please give my name and address to such of your collector friends and, if they are not BNAPS members, propose them for membership; the Society needs recruits.

Objective of the Study Group

From comments received in letters and in discussions held in Toronto at Easter and at AMERIPEX in May, it appears quite feasible to devote the efforts of the Study Group to pull together the great mass of information that already exists, fill in the gaps, and ultimately publish a handbook covering all aspects of the carriage of the North Atlantic Mails. The southern packet routes are excluded because they served the West Indies and had no impact on BNA Mails, and were entirely independent of the northern routes.

Concept of the Handbook

The Handbook would consist of sections (chapters), each covering a specific topic. The basic work on each would be assigned to one or more members of the Study Group, who would be given the pride of editorship/authorship of the section when it is published. As each section is completed in draft, it will be distributed solely to the Study Group members for additions, corrections and/or comments. A publisher has expressed an interest in printing the completed sections on punched 6" x 9" pages for sale, together with a suitably titled looseleaf binder. In this way, the Handbook can be made available to all interested collectors once a few sections are completed, with successive sections and additions or corrections issued as they are completed.

Scope

Although the original concept set out last year was that of a BNA-oriented transatlantic and cross-border study group, subsequent considerations have produced a broadening in one sense and a narrowing of the concept in another.

The majority of letters to and from the Canadas were routed through the United States during the whole of the study period. In addition, between 1820 and 1840, these were carried on American sailing packets, and in the 1860s, in a

reversal, a sizeable proportion of the U.S. Mail was carried by the Allan Line steamers from Quebec and Portland, Maine. This points to the necessity of including sections on the American sailing packet lines, freight money for the pioneer steamers, ferriage, and others which will undoubtedly be suggested by members.

On the other hand, the cross-border considerations can be only those directly associated with the carriage of transatlantic letters, since Mrs. Susan McDonald has agreed to form a BNAPS Cross-border Study Group. I discussed our respective tasks with Susan at AMERIPEX and we agreed that for the most part the purely Canadian-United States aspect of cross-border letters is quite separate, particularly after 1845 when most transatlantic letters went in "closed mails". As a member of our Study Group, Susan will be helping shape its course in any event.

Programme

Having been in touch with a number of the active research members, it has been possible to set out the following programme to assemble the material for the sections described below. I am open to suggestions for additional sections. Any member who wants to assist the designated leader of a section or wants to take on one should let me know as soon as possible.

HANDBOOK ON TRANSATLANTIC MAILS

Section I. Historical Summary

This will be a brief review of the more important aspects of the development of the carriage of transatlantic letters, identifying the relevant reference books for those who want to delve more deeply into the background of the subject.

Section II. Postal Rates

The subject of rates of postage may seem too mundane to be included. However, having collected transatlantic letters for some twenty years and with a sizeable reference library in support, I still have occasional difficulty in trying to establish when a specific rate change occurred. I therefore intend to prepare a table of postal rates for ship and packet letters, together with the B.N.A., U.S. and British inland postages from my own records. I shall welcome any corrections and additions. In addition, if anyone can provide the corresponding information for France, Germany or other European countries, it will be incorporated.

Section III. Falmouth Sailing Packets

Prior to about 1800, the data on the Falmouth packet sailing dates is very incomplete. Kil Bump has a very poor photocopy of the sailings from Falmouth from 1755 and has undertaken to transcribe this so that copies can be used to fill in the New York dates; a task that Dick Winter has offered to undertake.

I have been able to fill in many of the missing dates in Appendix Two of my Atlantic Mails for the years 1795-1840. A copy has been sent to Dick Winter in the hope that he can find the missing New York dates. If anyone has a significant number of these sailing dates between 1755 and 1816, please let me know.

Section IV. American Sailing Packets

With the advent of the American sailing packet lines after the War of 1812, there was soon a weekly transatlantic service between **New York** and Liverpool, with additional services between other ports on both sides of the Atlantic. This service was so superior to that of the monthly Falmouth packet, that virtually all Canadian letters went by this route. Apart from their scheduled sailing dates and the ship lists, I am not aware of any compilation of actual voyages. Such would be extremely useful information, even though a monumental task. I am looking for a volunteer or volunteers to tackle the job piecemeal. It should begin with the Black Ball Line (1817) between New York and Liverpool, to be followed by the Red Star Line (1821), the Blue Swallowtail Line (1822) and so on. In parallel are the Black X Line (1822) between New York and London and the Red Swallowtail Line (1827). Although the list is endless, these lines carried most of the letters.

Section V. Ferriage

This is a subject that has been written up in various places over the years, but as it is reflected on most Canadian transatlantic letters via the United States in the 1829-1837 period, it deserves a place in the Handbook. Allan Steinhart and I shall prepare a draft text for the consideration of the other members.

Section VI. Freight Money

This, like the previous section, has been well covered (cf. articles by Charles Hahn and Allan Steinhart in the American Philatelist), but additional information and unrecorded covers showing "Freight Money" continue to come to light. As a result, Allan Steinhart has agreed to collate any new data which any members sends to me (preferably in the form of a photocopy, with supporting comments, if a cover) and to write a revised article.

Section VII. Pioneer Steamers

While the Cunard and Allan Line sailings are recorded in the Atlantic Mails and the Collins Line and subsequent lines will be available in the forthcoming publication of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc. North Atlantic Mail Sailings, 1840-75 by Walter Hubbard and Richard F. Winter, there will still be a gap with respect to the pioneer steamers. This information has been painstakingly compiled by Michael Jackson and Vivien Sussex on the British side, and by Dick Winter on the American. After discussions with the three of them at AMERIPEX, I am hopeful that their efforts can be combined into a complete table of sailings of all these steamers, most of which only completed a few round trips during the decade of their existence.

Section VIII. B.N.A. Rate Marking Handstamps

As the first person to attempt to classify the rate marking handstamps introduced in British North America concurrently with the introduction of uniform inland postage of transatlantic letters in the Atlantic Mails, with an update in several journals a few years ago, I intend to produce new drawings of every mark of which I am aware for circulation to members in a search for anymore, before they become part of the Handbook.

I shall look forward with anticipation to your responses and hope that most will contain contributions for the handbook or offers to undertake some research on voyages, sailing dates or the like. If criticism is to be forthcoming, please make it constructive.

I hope to see many of you at the Dearborn Inn on the last weekend in August.

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List of Founding Members

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