

TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

of the

British North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 23

July 1991

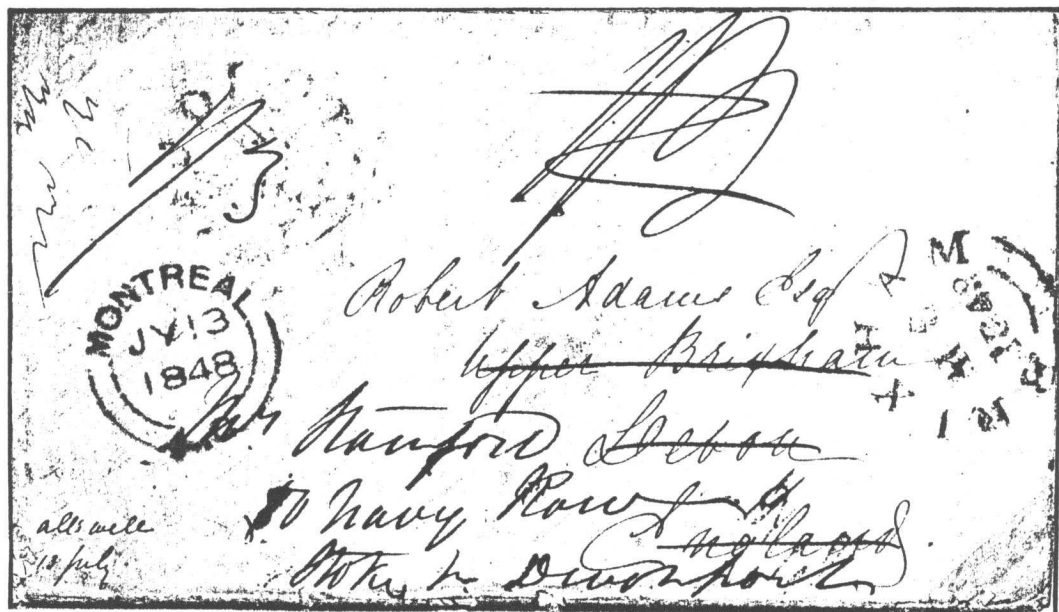
TWO EXAMPLES OF MISINTERPRETATION

A friend periodically sends me photocopies of his latest acquisitions of transatlantic letters with write-ups for comments, as he only has a rather basic understanding of the subject. In the latest group from him was a nice example of a letter, which was forwarded after delivery in England. However, an incorrect routing had been assigned to it as a result of not appreciating the significance of its date of despatch.

The letter is typical of the period, having been mailed at Montreal with the postage unpaid. Datestamped on 13 July 1848, it was marked with 1/2 Stg. postage due in *black* manuscript. As all such letters had been sent in closed bags through Boston since April 1845 until November 1847, it was assumed that this one went via the U.S. as well. However, the U.S.P.O. had cancelled the closed bag agreement in November 1847 as part of the retaliation

against Great Britain over the double-charging of letters carried by the newly-established U.S. contract steam packets, forcing the Canadian P.O. to send all the Mails through Halifax. As a result, this letter was sent in a closed bag to Halifax, instead of New York, to connect with the *Cunard Caledonia*, which left the latter on 19 July and called at Halifax on 22 July. It arrived at Liverpool on 1 August. There is no arrival datestamp, which is unusual.

The letter reached Brixham on 3 August and was readdressed to Devonport, resulting in the postage due being increased to 1/3 Stg. It was backstamped at Torquay on 3 August, which may have occurred on the way to Brixham and was datestamped both front and back at Devonport on the following day. There is an interesting little P.S. on the lower left corner: 'all^s well 13 July'.

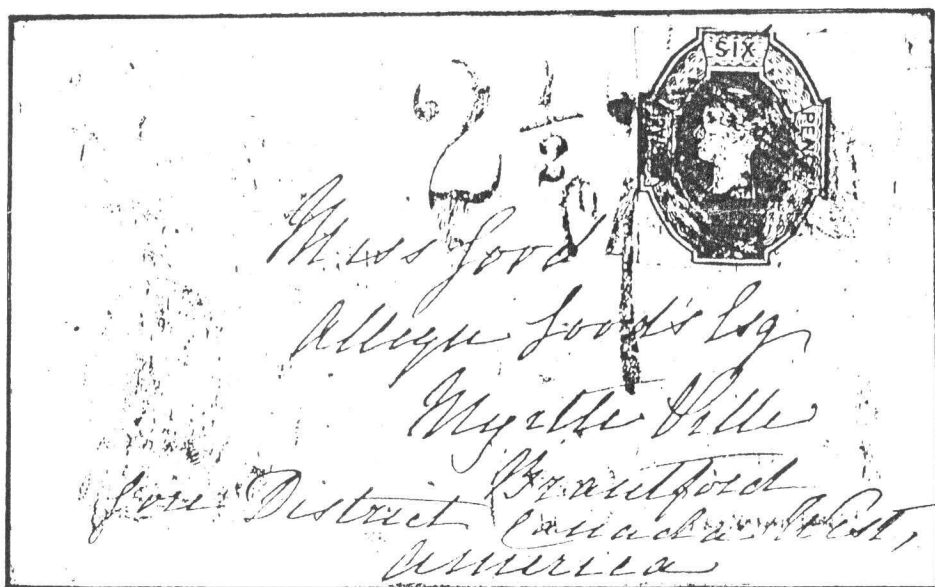


The next cover is a different type of example of how overlooking one aspect of the postal regulations can lead to a wrong conclusion. It was mailed at Skibbereen, Ireland on 25 June

1855 with postage prepaid with a 6d Stg. adhesive—the rate by Cunard via Halifax. Since September 1850, only the Liverpool-Boston Cunard service called at Halifax, the

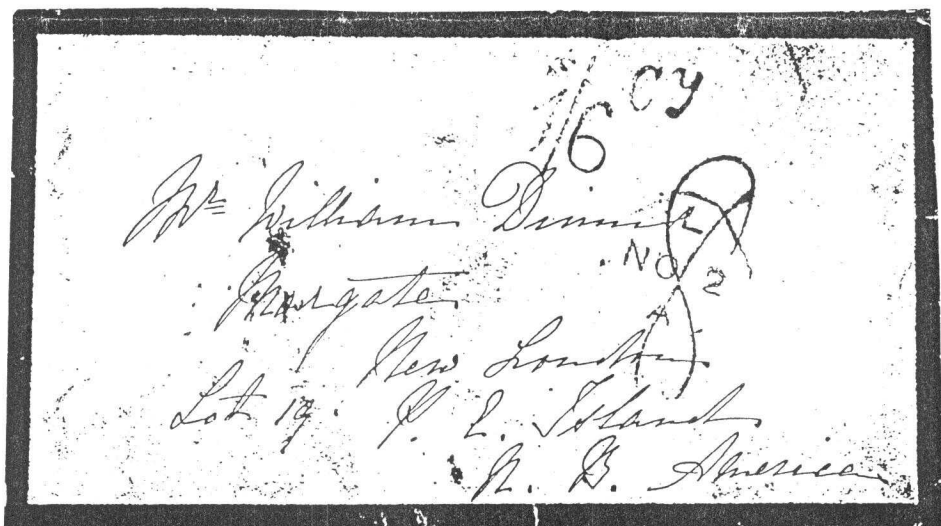
New York steamers sailing direct. If things had been normal, the letter might have been sent to New York, but because of the Crimean War, the Cunard Liverpool-New York service had been suspended and the American Collins Line was filled in during 1855. Although the Collins *Pacific* was the next scheduled sailing from Liverpool on 30 June, the postage via a U.S. contract packet was 1/2 Stg. to Canada or 8d Stg. more than had been prepaid. Instead

of adding such a large postage due, the letter was held at Liverpool for a week and sent by the Cunard *Canada* on 7 July and arrived at Boston on 20 July in a closed bag for Hamilton, C.W. As the postage via Boston was 8d Stg., of which the British P.O. was entitled to 7d, a '1d' was struck to show the additional British debit. On arrival at Hamilton, it was struck with '2¹/₂' to show the currency equivalent of 2d Stg. postage due.



A SECOND DOUBLE RATE P.E.I. HANDSTAMP

In Newsletter No. 21 (March 1991), I reproduced a cover with a Prince Edward Island 1/6 Cy. handstamp used to show double weight postage due; stating that it was the only known example of this use. Jim Lehr has now found a second one (see below), but with a difference! It was mailed at Appledore, Devon on 31 October 1860 with the postage unpaid and was carried by the Cunard *Canada* from Liverpool on 3 November to Halifax on 13 November in a closed bag for P.E.I. Unlike the one shown in No. 21, this was a single weight letter, which being unpaid, was subject to a 6d Stg. fine, in addition to the 6d Stg. postage due or the equivalent in P.E.I. currency of 1/6 Cy.



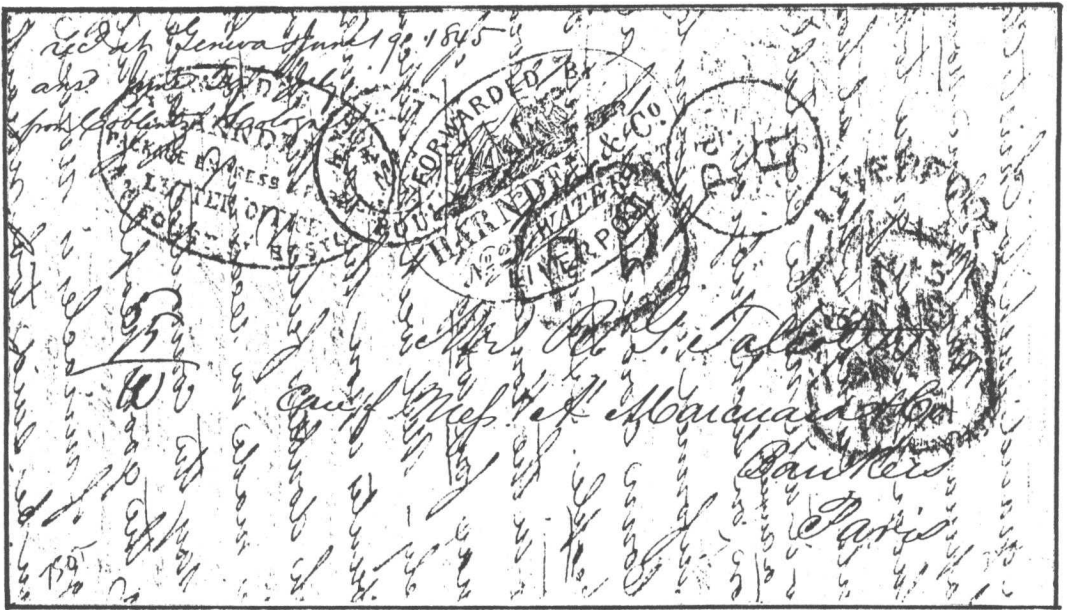
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE 'P.F.'/'PD' HANDSTAMPS

Dick Winter has sent some helpful information on the markings on the covers, which were shown on pages 2-5 of the May newsletter (No. 22). Because I omitted some detail that should have been included for clarity in the earlier item, I have fitted it into this discussion.

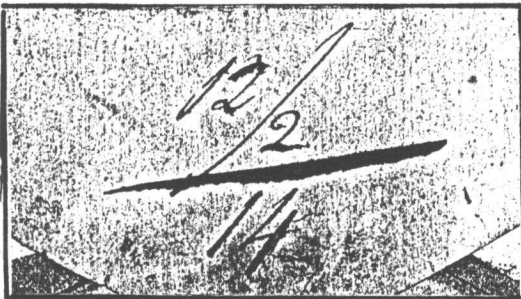
On the 20 February 1841 letter mailed from the Harnden Liverpool office, the prepaid 10d Stg. postage to Calais (upper left) was in *red* in accord with the regulations, while the 10 décimes French inland postage (at centre) was in *black*. I had incorrectly attributed the 'P•F', as well as the 'PD' on the

next cover, to French offices, as Dick and Charles Hahn pointed out that they were London handstamps.

The 30 January 1845 letter had 1/3 Stg. prepaid, which was shown at the top centre beside the 'PD' as a '5' over '10' totalling '1/3' in *red*. The Anglo-French Treaty reduced the rates to France, with the British postage to 5d per 1/2 oz. and the French inland rate to 5 décimes (5d) per 1/4 oz., so that this was a half ounce letter. For comparison, here is a similar quarter-ounce letter, which has a '5' over '5' totalling '10' at centre left in *red*.



With respect to the 8 May 1852 letter from Dixmude, Belgium, Dick quoted the 1850 Anglo-Belgian Treaty as requiring 14 décimes for a 1/4 oz. letter and 16 décimes for 1/2 oz. He also pointed out that the marking at upper right was '1/-' to show the British credit, which included the packet postage. On the



back of this envelope, there is '12/2 = 14' to show that it was a 1/4 oz. letter, with the '12' representing the British credit to cover the British transit charge (4d) and packet postage (8d) to a U.S. port, and the '2' being the Belgian inland postage. This explains why, on arrival at Boston, the 'B^R PACKET 5' datestamp was struck in *black* to show 5 cents inland postage due. (Charles Hahn concluded that this letter came under the 1848 U.S./U.K. Postal Convention and argued that the U.S. inland postage had been included and that the Boston '5' was a credit marking).

As a result of receiving these comments, in looking through my covers, I found that I have a second one from the same correspon-

dence, which was mailed at Dixmude on 20 November 1851 with the same small boxed 'PD' and a '14' on the back. It was date-stamped 'PAID' at London on 1 December and

was carried by the Cunard *Europa* from Liverpool on 8 December and arrived at New York on 23 December, where it was also rated 5 cents postage due with a *black* datestamp.



Dick also explained that the August 1853 cover to Quebec must have originated in Belgium and probably weighed $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Had it been from France, the postage would have been 17 décimes. Instead, it was 20 décimes, broken down on the back as 2 décimes to Belgium and 18 décimes British credit, representing 6 décimes British transit charge, 8 décimes packet postage, 2 décimes U.S. transit charge and 2 décimes ($2\frac{1}{2}$ d Cy.) B.N.A. inland postage on a packet letter.

In commenting on the 25 September 1858 cover to Hamburg, Dick pointed out that the prepaid 30 cents covered the postage to destination. I had assumed that the *blue* '3' under the '6' was an additional German transit charge—perhaps James Van Der Linden will explain this. The circular Hamburg 31 October backstamp was of the Thurn & Taxis Post Office and as the '6' was *black*, it represents 6 décimes due at Antwerp.

I trust that we shall all learn something from Dick's contribution.

FRANCE-CANADA POSTAGE RATES

Further to the above additional comments on the 'PD', etc. markings, Maggie Toms has sent me a copy of a 1982 article by Guy des Rivières from *La Philatélie au Québec*, which lists the postage rates for single letters from France to Canada from 1849 to 1879. As these might be helpful to some group members, they are reproduced here.

1849-1857 1.70 f. (17 décimes) per $7\frac{1}{2}$ gm.

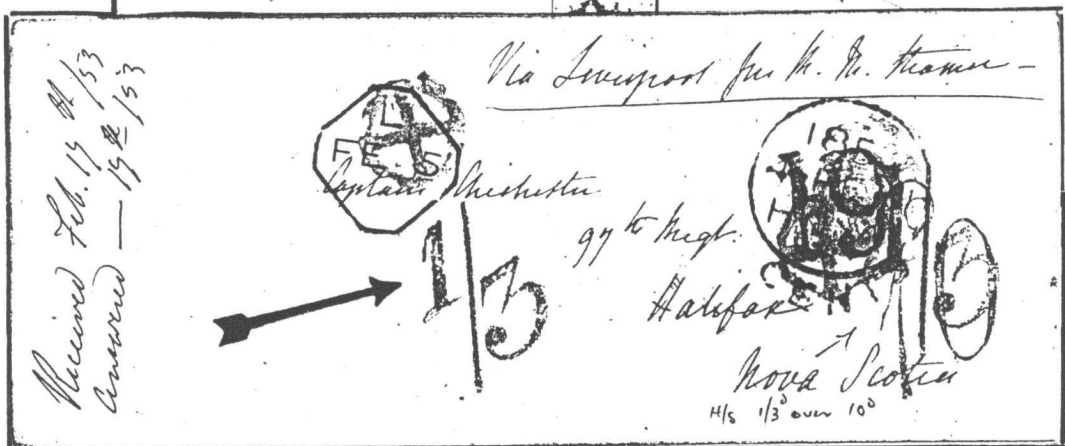
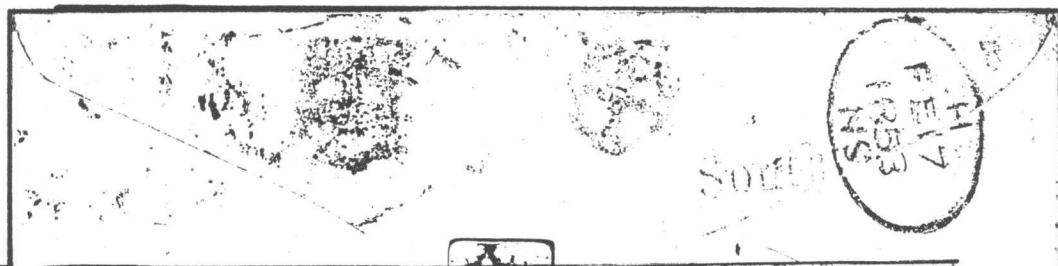
1857-1871 80 ¢ (8 décimes) via England to Halifax or Quebec.
 1 f. (10 décimes) via U.S. – Portland, Boston or New York.
 N.B. On 1 January 1866 a single letter was raised from $7\frac{1}{2}$ gm to 10 gm.

- 1 July 1871 Postage increased to 1 f. (10 décimes) via England
and to 1.30 f. (13 décimes) via U.S.
- 1 April 1874 Postage reduced to 1 f. (10 décimes) via U.S.
- 1 January 1876 Postage by all routes reduced to 45 ¢ (4.5 décimes) and
weight of a single letter raised to 15 gm.
- 1 May 1878 Postage by all routes reduced to 40 ¢ (4 décimes).
- 1 July 1878 With Canada's entry into U.P.U., postage reduced to 35 ¢ (3.5
décimes).
- 1 February 1879 Further reduction to 25 ¢ (2.5 décimes).

HOW CONFUSED CAN YOU GET?

This unpaid letter was mailed at Southall, London (backstamp). It was datestamped at London main office on 4 February 1853 and incorrectly struck with '19 CENTS' as a British debit on U.S. mail, and then, instead of putting it in the closed Boston bag, it was sent in the inland post to the Liverpool packet office, where it was struck with a lozenge datestamp on the next day and with a red encircled cross ('hot cross bun') to show that it had been sent 'out of course'. Apparently only

later did a postal inspector notice the error and cancel the '19 CENTS' with another 'hot cross bun', replacing it with a '10d' to show the correct British debit on a B.N.A. letter. Carried by the *Cunard America* from Liverpool on 5 February, it arrived at Halifax on 17 February, where it was backstamped with the packet office oval 'H FE 17 1853 NS' and struck twice with a '1/3' handstamp (c.10) to show the postage due in currency.



AN INTERESTING 7d COVER

Gene Labuik sent along this interesting cover from the two-year period when the postage to Canada by Cunard closed bag through New York was 7d Stg. or 15 cents. While everything looks perfectly straightforward, I am left with a query about which route and steamer took it across the Atlantic..

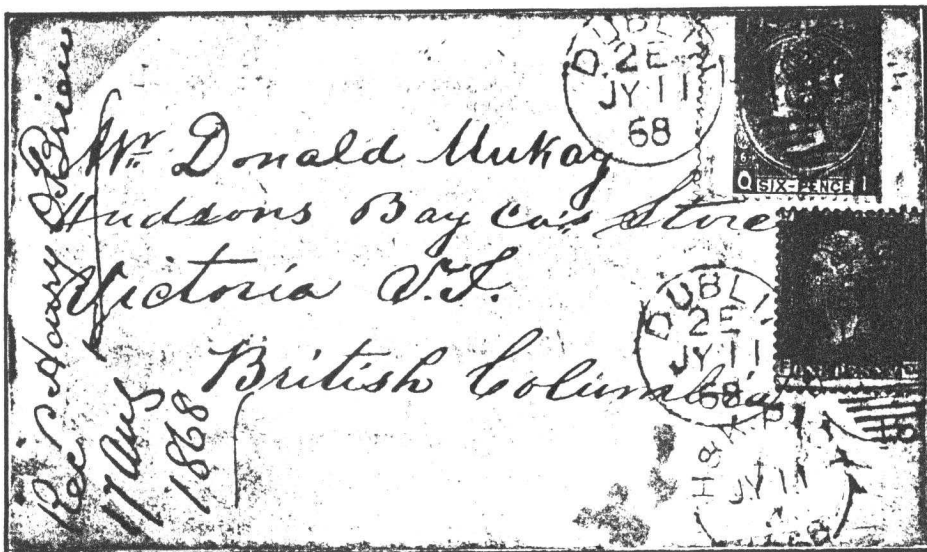
The datestamps show that it was mailed at Dublin on 11 July 1868 and was stamped the same day on the Holyhead & Kingstown packet—the normal route to Liverpool. However, that was also the day that the Cunard *Java* left Liverpool for New York, with a call at Queenstown (Cork) on the next day and a New York arrival of 21 July.

It had been standard practice for the eight years that the Cunard steamers had been calling at Queenstown for late English Mails to be sent by night train from London,

etc. and on by Irish Sea packet to Dublin and then to Cork to catch up with the steamer.

Did the H & K packet arrive in time for the Irish Mail to get to Liverpool and be transferred to the *Java* on 11 July? Could it have been returned by the overnight packet and catch the *Java* at Queenstown? or did it miss this sailing and go either by the Allan *Prussian* from Liverpool on 15 July to reach Quebec on 25 July, or by the Cunard *Australasian* on 18 July to arrive at New York on 28 July?

While the notation on the envelope shows that it was received on 17 August, I have no idea how long or by what route a letter took to get across North America in 1868, so this can be a subject for group members to offer their thoughts.



LATE SHIP LETTER BY NON-CONTRACT STEAMER

Although the letter illustrated here is addressed to New York, it reflects several interesting aspects of transatlantic mail. Allan Steinhart originally wrote it up for the newsletter, and then sold it to me, which allows me to expand on his comments.

First of all, it is a 'consignees letter', intended to accompany the shipment to which it relates and to enclose the relevant bills of lading and invoices. On this occasion, the shipment comprised five cases—two from

Richard Hall & Co., Birmingham, forwarded to Liverpool on 29 December 1853 and marked 'TD & Co. - 75 & 76'; and three from Wm. Hargreaves & Co., Sheffield, sent to Liverpool on 5 January 1854 and marked ' - 27, 28 & 29'. These two lots were consolidated by T.D. & Co., Liverpool for shipment to New York, and the documentation completed on 16 January.

The letter, with the enclosed bill of lading and two invoices, was taken to the

Liverpool post office on 17 January, where it was charged 1/4 Stg. as a double weight outgoing ship letter, as it was marked 'per *Andes*', a Cunard cargo steamer not included in the Admiralty mail contract with Cunard,

and passed on to the packet letter office the same day (backstamps). The shipment and the letter were then held until the sailing of the *Andes*.



In 1850, it had been announced that 'it is the intention of the owners of the British & North American Royal mail [Cunard] steam ships to commence a line of screw steam ships of great size and power for the conveyance of goods and passengers to and from New York and Liverpool, independently of the splendid ships now employed under contract with Her Majesty's Government'; however, it was not until December 1852 that the 1,440-ton iron screw *Andes* made her maiden voyage to New York. The sister ship *Alps* followed on 2 February 1853. They were able to carry 1,000 tons of cargo, 62 cabin and 122 second cabin passengers. With the low running costs, these steamers competed successfully with the

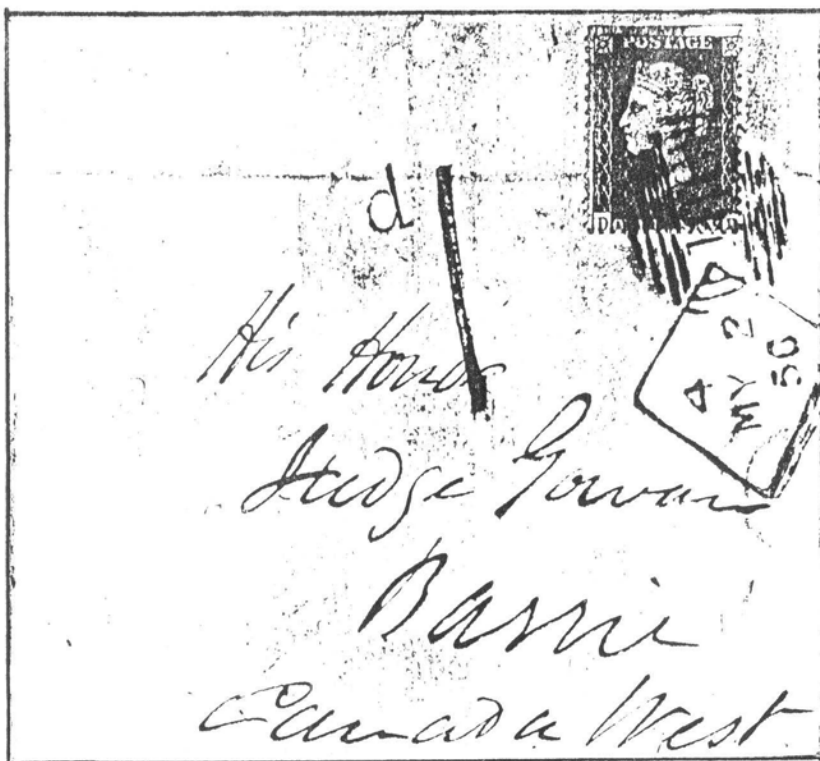
American sailing packets, and probably had some influence on the gradual demise of the letter.

The *Andes* left Liverpool with our letter and cargo on 14 February and arrived at Boston on 28 February. As it was carried in a contract mail, the letter was treated as an incoming ship letter and struck with a 'SHIP' and rated 17 cents postage due as being triple weight (2 cents ship letter fee + 3 x 5 cents inland postage to Philadelphia).

Mr. Edward Frith noted receipt of the shipment inside the letter on 6 month, and put the notation 'overboard' beside cask 29, which was valued at £148 . 17 . 0.

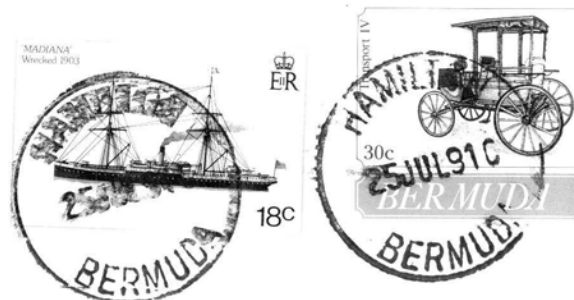
ONE PENNY PRINTED CIRCULAR RATE

In Newsletter No. 18 (August 1990), I raised the question of prepaid circulars with a 1d British adhesive and a '1d' black handstamp to show additional postage due—and I asked for an explanation, which was not forthcoming. I have since been sent similar circulars and asked to explain the difference. I now realize that all such items with the extra 1d postage due went in closed bags by Cunard via Boston or New York, and were therefore liable to the additional transit fee. The one shown here comes from Gene Labuik correctly interpreted.



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