

TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

of the
British North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 25

Jack Arnell, Chairman

November 1991

SUBSCRIPTION CALL!

As the founding members of the Study Group know, I solicited \$10.00 or £5.00 from each at the beginning to cover postage and incidental expenses. It being a non-profit operation, and doing all the work on the newsletter myself, I explained that the initial contribution should be adequate for several years. As anticipated, the expenses have been low, as I have been able to obtain the paper and photocopying for out-of-pocket expenses.

However, after twenty-five newsletters, the time has come for a second contribution of \$10.00 or £5.00 from all the group members, except those who have joined in 1990 and 1991—they will be tapped later. I collected from three members at the BNAPEX 91 banquet in Vancouver in August, so they are exempt. Personal cheques on your local bank (Cdn., US & UK) are satisfactory, and probably most convenient to you, as my Bermudian bank accepts all such cheques at par, with no exchange charge.

Anyone who does not contribute within a reasonable period will be assumed to have lost interest in Transatlantic Mail, and will be dropped from the Mailing List.

A NEAR TRAGEDY FOR A CUNARDER

Allan Steinhart sent a photocopy of a prepaid letter from Rev. D.D. Evans, St. John's, Newfoundland dated 6 November 1845. It was actually carried from there by the Cunard *Hibernia* on 9 November under very unusual circumstances. The *Hibernia* had left Boston on 1 November and called at Halifax on 3 November, before proceeding for Liverpool. However, two days later, when in a thick fog, the steamer struck on Cape Race, but got off safely and was able to make her way into St. John's in a leaky condition, where temporary repairs were effected and she was able to continue her voyage.

The St. John's *Public Ledger* gave the following account of subsequent events:

A steamer of very unusual dimensions entered the narrows of this Port last evening, and steamed into the harbour, somewhat to the surprise of many inhabitants. Upon inquiry, she turned out to be the Royal mail-steamer *Hibernia*, Capt. Ryrie, which vessel left Halifax at 10¹/₂ o'clock on Monday morning last, on her homeward passage. It appears that the weather continued extremely moderate,

with dense fog, until Wednesday evening, when, as Captain Ryrie was walking the deck, about seven o'clock, he heard an alarm given forward, and at the same moment saw the land ahead; he instantly ran into the wheel-room and ordered the helm to be put hard to larboard, and hastening to the engine room directed the engines to be backed. Simultaneously with his doing so the vessel struck on her larboard bow on a point since discovered to be Cape Race. The vessel then lay off and on until the morning, making a great deal of water. Having discovered his position, Capt. R. shaped his course for St. John's, where he arrived about five o'clock, having with much difficulty made the port through the fog, which had continued equally dense.

The vessel continuing to make more water than the engines, aided by manual labour, could discharge, it was deemed desirable to put her forefoot on shore until this morning, which having been done at the instance of Messrs. C.F. Bennett & Co. (the agents for Mr.

Cunard,) and Captain Scott, of HMS *Hyacinth*, having promptly and in person tendered the services of his crew, of which Capt. R. availed himself, the vessel made less water, and is now in a position of safety near the old dockyard.

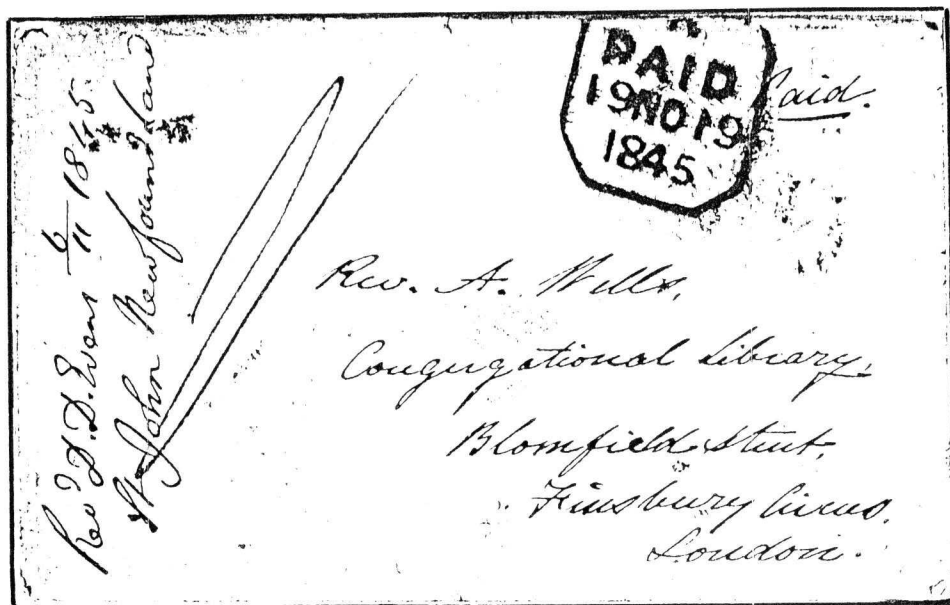
Captain Ryrie ascribes the occurrence which we have narrated, to the uncertain currents prevalent upon this coast, which have upon frequent occasions been so disastrous in their effects, and to the circumstances of his having had no sight of the sun since he left Halifax, owing to the density of the fog. He supposed himself to be about 20 miles south of the Cape when he struck.

Had it not been for the exceeding promptitude and coolness which Capt. Ryrie displayed on the occasion, it is stated that the ship would in all pro-

bability have become a total wreck, attended with a serious loss of life, there being between 60 and 70 passengers on board, besides the crew.

It must have been quite a sight for the locals to have a 1400-ton, 220-foot steamer nosed up on the shore, being repaired by a crew of Royal Navy sailors. In this day of metal ships, one tends to forget that these early Cunarders had wooden hulls, so could be repaired anywhere where the damage could be raised above the water-line. In this case, it was probably necessary to work at low tide.

The repairs were completed within a couple of days and the steamer was on her way again, reaching Liverpool on 18 November, five or six days behind schedule. The letter was backstamped 'PAID' the following day.

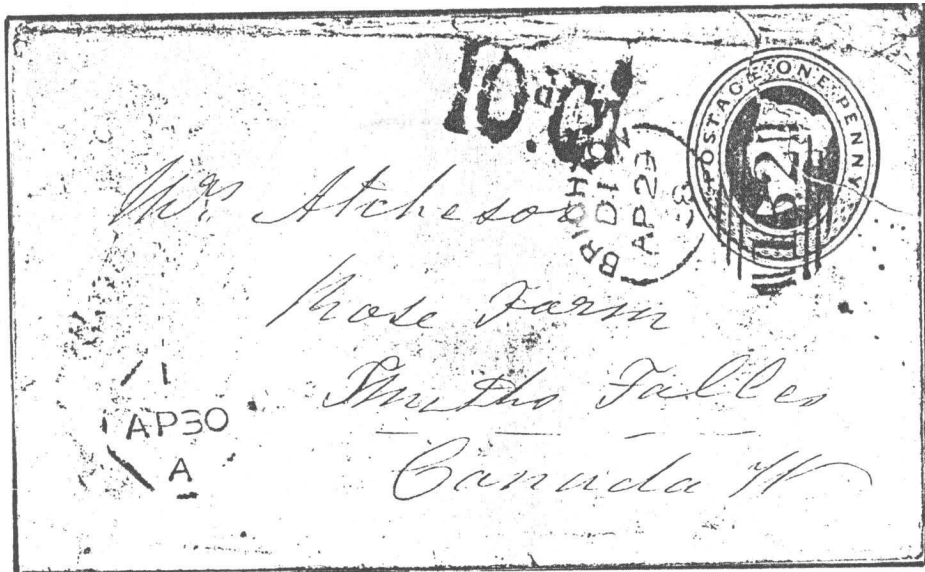


WAS A LATE FEE PAID ON THIS LETTER?

Illustrated is an envelope with a 1d embossed stamp, which was mailed at Brighton on 29 April 1858, with the packet postage unpaid. It was backstamped at Bedford on the same day and received a Liverpool packet office lozenge on the next day, whence it went into the Montreal mail bag. It was carried by the Cunard *Persia* from Liverpool on 1 May and arrived at New York on 11 May. At Montreal, it was backstamped on 12 May and struck with a '10d Cy.' handstamp (D.20) to show the

postage due in currency. It reached Smith Falls two days later (backstamp).

There are two possible interpretations of this envelope. The one I favour is that advantage was taken of the embossed 1d stamp to pay a late fee in order to ensure that it reached Liverpool in time for the *Persia*. The other, of course, is that the sender did not have an ordinary envelope and used this one, in spite of its having the 1d stamp on it—I think this highly unlikely. Any comments?



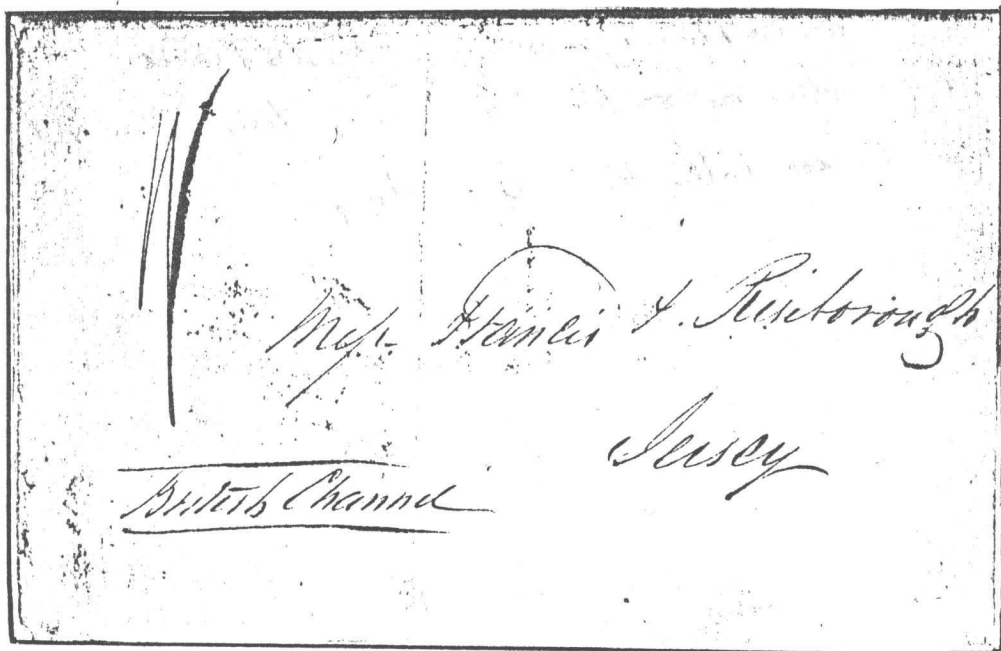
AN UNUSUAL DESTINATION

Ron Saint has sent along an unpaid letter from Arichat, N.S., which presumably was mailed there, although there is no postmark, because the Halifax datestamp of 5 March 1842 was struck on the back, indicating that it was a transit mark, rather than an originating office.

Apart from the unusual destination, this cover reflects another interesting story, which I included in *Stories Behind My Covers* in the March-April 1987 issue of *Topics*. The *Cunard Caledonia* had sailed from Liverpool

on 4 February, but encountering a hurricane was so badly damaged that she put back into Liverpool on 17 February. As a result, the *Acadia* made an unscheduled voyage from Liverpool on 18 March with all the Mails and arrived at Halifax on 7 March. Instead of continuing on to Boston, the *Acadia* left for Liverpool on 12 March and arrived there on 25 March.

This letter was backstamped at London on 26 March and at Jersey in the Channel Islands later the same day.



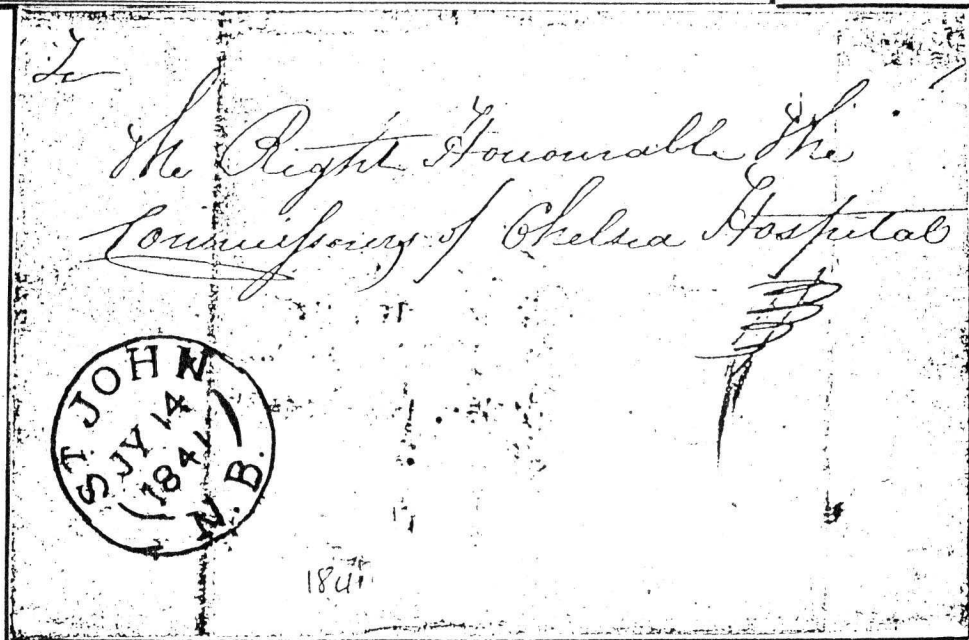
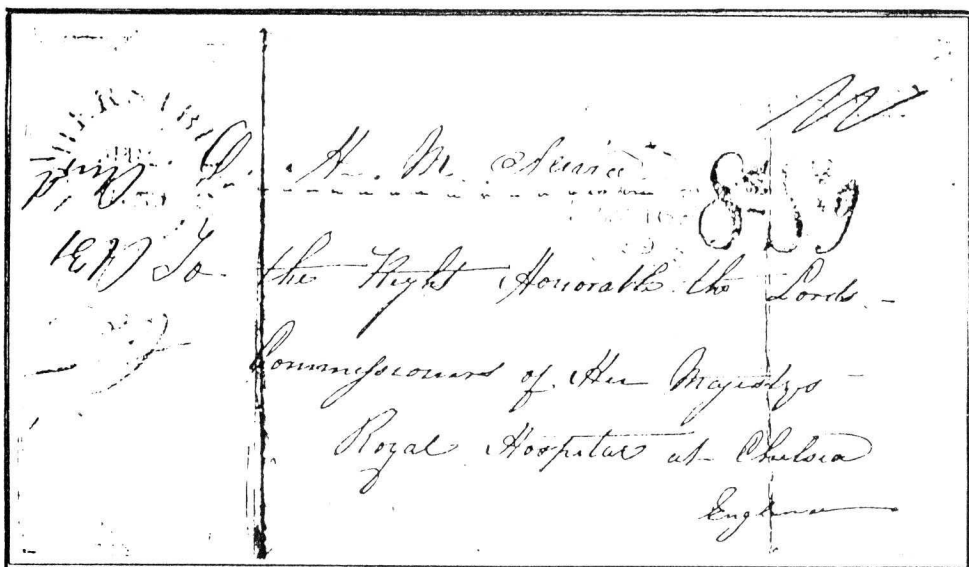
DIFFERENT HANDLING OF OFFICIAL LETTERS

Malcolm Montgomery and Ron Saint each sent me a cover addressed to the Commissioners of the Chelsea Hospital. While Ron included the text to show that it was from a St. John, N.B. pensioner, who, having lost the validation papers which authorized him to draw a pension in the great St. John fire, is requesting new ones. The other letter from Amherstburg, U.C. would also have been about the writer's pension.

The Amherstburg writer had included 'O.H.M. Service' above the address, so that when the letter was mailed on 29? April 1859, it was struck with 'FREE' at the upper right. However, because there was no authorizing signature, the Hamilton office struck a '8d

Stg' (D.4) on black to show postage due, before putting it in the London bag.. This was sent to Boston and was carried by the Cunard *Acadia* on 4 May and arrived at Liverpool on 14 May. At London, in view of the addressee, the letter was struck with a 'PAID' datestamp on 16 May.

On the other hand, the other letter had no special marking and was treated as a normal unpaid one and marked with '1/-' to show the postage due in sterling, when it was mailed on 14 July 1841. It was carried by the *Britannia* from Halifax on 16 July and arrived at Liverpool on 30 July. It was backstamped at London on the same day, where the '1/-' was cancelled and the letter treated as Free.



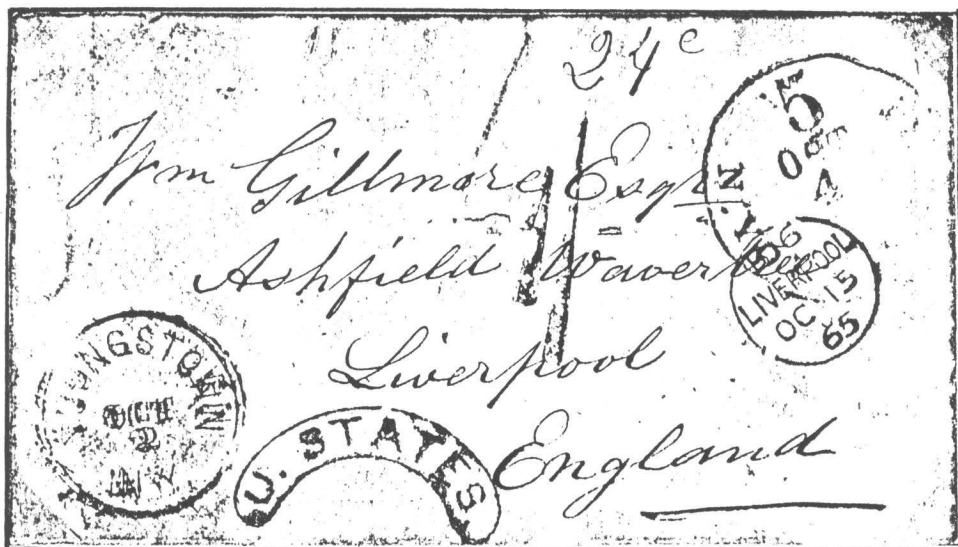
EXCHANGE OFFICE MAILING - NO CANADIAN POSTAGE

This unpaid letter from Allan Steinhart was mailed at Niagara, C.W. on 2 October 1865. being a border exchange office with Youngstown, N.Y., no Canadian postage was charged, but it was struck with the framed, curved 'U. STATES' cross-border handstamp to indicate its Canadian origin.

Datestamped the same day at Youngstown, it was rated 24 cents postage due in black manuscript. At New York, it was

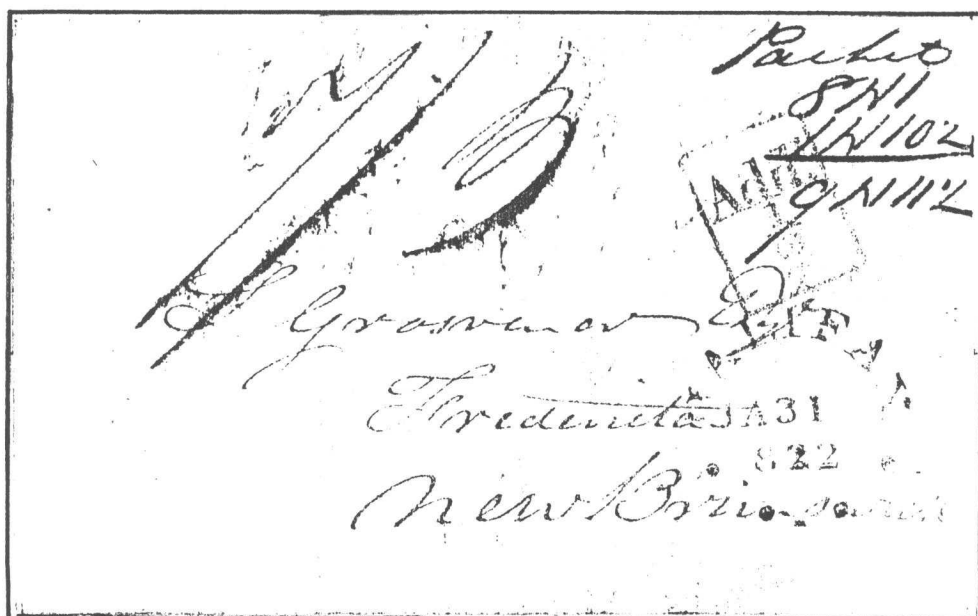
struck with with a dated accountancy '5' to show the U.S. debit on 4 October, and put on board the Cunard *Australasian*, which sailed the same day..

During the crossing, the mail was sorted by the accompanying ocean mail clerk, who struck the letter with '1/-', using his personal handstamp, to show the postage due in sterling.



TRIPLE AND DOUBLE CHARGES

This letter from Glasgow dated 3 November 1821 contained a copy of a previous letter and a protest of a Bill of Account with the Bill.

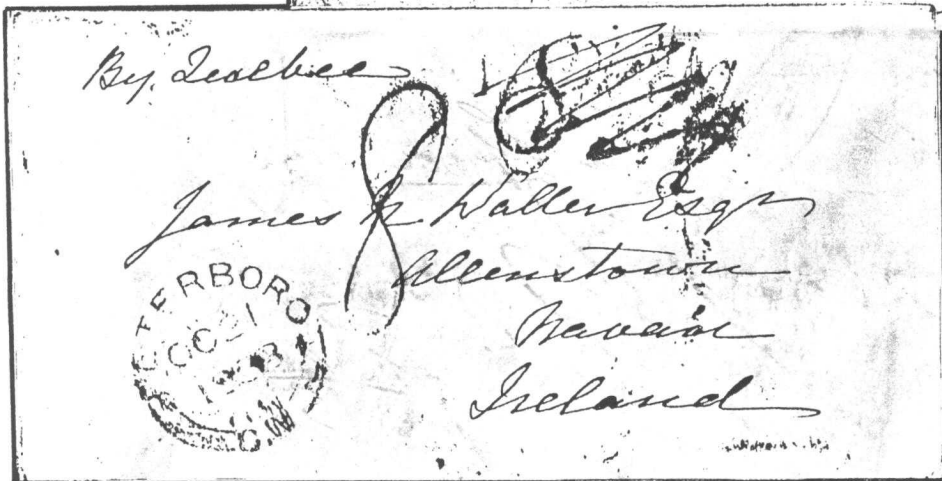
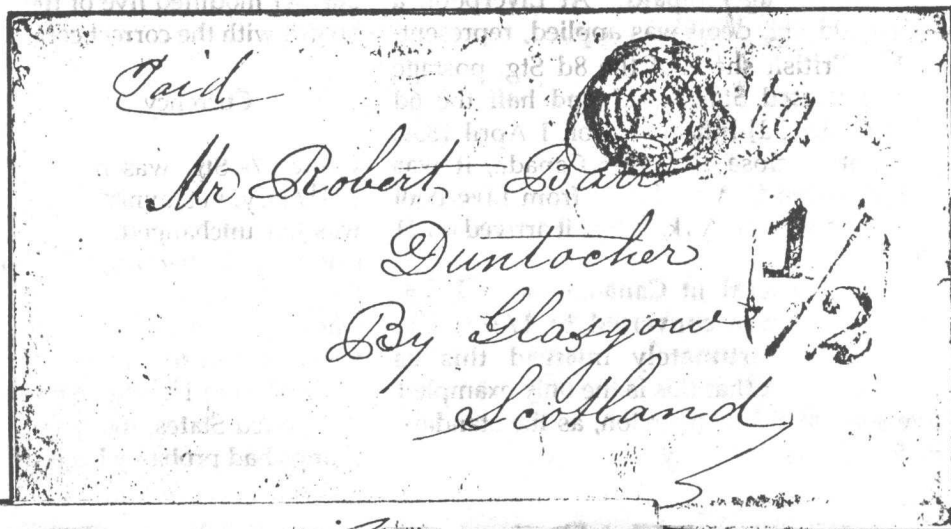


CHANGED ROUTES - REVISED CHARGES

Allan Steinhart has contributed two covers which are complementary. The first was mailed at Collingwood Harbour, C.W. on 6 July 1855. Allan suggests that the 'Paid' in manuscript above the address may represent the fee for carrying the letter from the harbour to the nearest post office. At Toronto, it was struck with '6d Stg.' [E.6], the postage due, if sent by Cunard via Halifax. It must be presumed that this was intended to be a cost-saving ploy, as the closed bags through the U.S. that week would have been carried by a

Collins steamer from New York, because of the discontinuance of the Cunard service from there due to the Crimean War.

Perhaps because there would not be another mail from Halifax until 20 July, the Toronto postmaster decided to send the letter via New York and Collins anyway, so he cancelled the 6d Stg. and substituted a '1/2' to show the postage due in sterling by U.S. contract packet. It was carried by the Collins *Baltic* from New York on 11 July and arrived at Liverpool on 22 July.



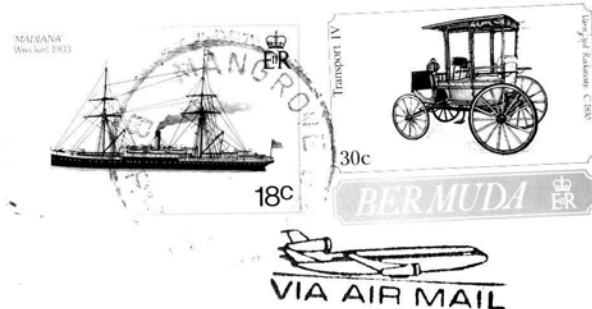
The second letter was mailed at Peterboro, C.W. on 21 October 1858 and was intended for the *Allan Nova Scotian* from Quebec on 23 October, as it was struck with 6d Stg. [e.6] to show the postage due. Realizing that it was too late for this Mail, it routeing was changed to Cunard from New York, and the marking was overstruck with 8d Stg. [D.3].

It was carried by the Cunard *Africa* from New York on 27 October and arrived at Liverpool on 7 November, where the confusing Canadian double strike was crossed out and a stylized '8' struck to show the postage due.

As this will be the final newsletter for 1991, I would like to thank those members who have sent in material. It does not need to be properly written up, because often I can fit it in with another cover to make a more interesting story, as I did here with the two letters to the Chelsea Hospital commissioners from Malcolm Montgomery and Ron Saint. The main point is take a look at your covers and see if you can find at least one, which is a bit different from the run-of-the mill—it might have an interesting story inside, if not outside. To all of you, I send:

Seasons Greetings and My Best Wishes for 1992.

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