

TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

of the
British North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 27

Jack Arnell, Chairman

March 1992

STEINHART CONFIRMS THAT IT WAS '1/5¹/₂'

Allan Steinhart has written to say that he has taken another look at the Montgomery cover and has the following conclusions to offer.

The cover went by Cunard and was Unpaid and, as it was after 1 April 1859, was subject to a fine. Therefore the collect postage was 8d Stg. + 6d Stg. fine, or the Canadian equivalent of 10d Cy. + 7¹/₂d Cy. Rather than converting the sterling total of 1/2 Stg. to 1/4 Cy., the two charges were converted separately to give 1/5¹/₂ Cy. He noted that this was a very scarce rating, as it only existed for three months, until decimal currency came into

use in July 1859. He believes that there was only one 1/5 Cy. handstamp, which he exhibited at CAPEX and I recorded as G.18 used at Hamilton. This rounding down value is also shown on the cover of mine which I included below Malcolm's on page No. 26-2. Allan's cover is shown below.

Allan also pointed out that when the two charges were converted to cents, the values were: 17 cents and 12¹/₂ cents or 29¹/₂ cents, which was normally rounded down to 29 cents, except in Quebec, where it was rounded up to 30 cents.



GALWAY LINE FROM NEWFOUNDLAND

Newfoundland has become a popular subject with respect to transatlantic letters, which should please Clarence Stillions. Bill Lea has sent along photocopies of three covers from St. John's to England, via Galway. These are very important Newfoundland items.

The first two were carried by the Galway *Pacific* from St. John's on 14 January 1859 and arrived at Galway on 23 January. That mailed on 4 January has the only known combination of a 2d and 4d scarlet imperforate adhesive, while the other mailed on 10 January has a single and a pair of 2d adhesives. The third is the famous Caspary cover with a strip of three 2d stamps. It was mailed on 13 December 1859 and carried by the Galway *Circassian* from St. John's on the next day and arrived at Galway on 22 December.

Mrs E Alderidge,
H Woodfalls Esq
Lower Bebbington
N. Berkshead
Cheshire
England



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H Woodfalls Esq
Lower Bebbington
N. Berkshead
Cheshire
England



"Percussion"
via Galway



Mr Henry Adams,
Shaldon,
Devon.

I am guilty of carelessness with respect to the 1871 letter shown on page No. 26 - 3 of the last newsletter. J.J. MacDonald of Antigonish, N.S., known for his book *The Nova Scotia Post*, has written to straighten me out.

When I originally answered Jim Lehr's query, I was mainly concerned in explaining to him about the Queenstown stop by the steamers out of Liverpool. If the letter had been of a date before 1859, the steamer would have been a Cunarder. So when I found that the *Palmyra* had sailed from Liverpool earlier on the day that the letter was mailed and, as it was marked to go via Queenstown, I did not stop to consider the contradictory evidence at the other end of the voyage.

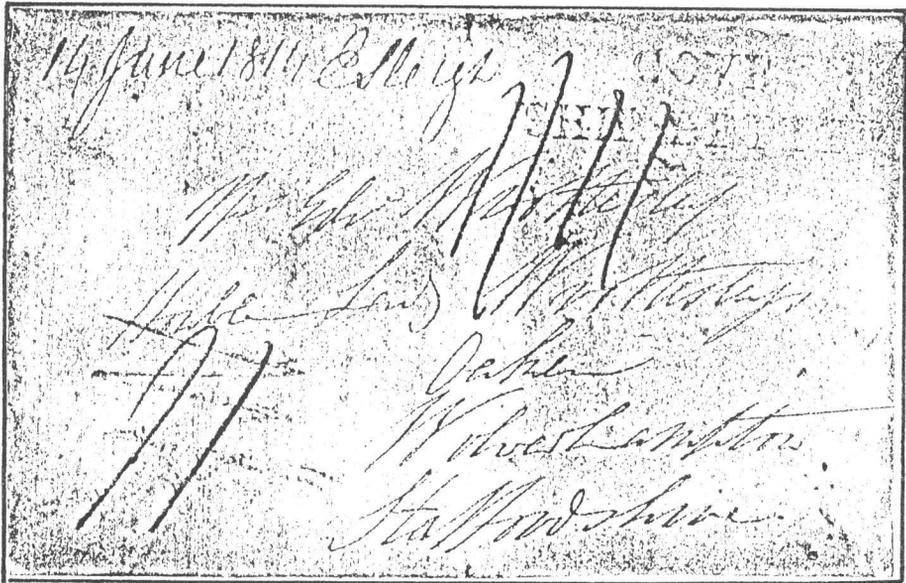
As J.J. MacDonald pointed out, there was only twenty-four hours between the *Palmyra's* arrival at Boston and the letter reaching Charlottetown—a virtual impossibility in 1871, even by railroad, as there was no direct service from Boston to Shediac on the mainland opposite P.E.I. He called my attention to the fact that the Inman *North American* left Liverpool on 8 November, a day after the letter was mailed, and arrived at Halifax on 19 November, in adequate time for the letter to have been transported to Charlottetown by the next day.

Please accept my apology for this error.

A MOST UNUSUAL COVER

This cover from Malcolm Montgomery may well be unique, as it would appear that it was intended to go by the Allan Line, when it was getting ready to begin a regular service as the Canadian contract packet in 1856. The letter was mailed at Glenluce in Scotland on 23 January with 6d Stg. postage prepaid with an adhesive. It was backstamped at Liverpool packet office on the next day, and struck with a 1d accounting credit to Canada. This indicated that it being accepted to go either by a Cunarder to Halifax or by Canadian packet. The Halifax-bound Cunard *Arabia* sailed from Liverpool on 19 January and the next was not scheduled until 2 February. On the other hand, the Allan *Canadian* was sailing from Liverpool on 24 January, but it was going to New York, so that the postage would have been 1/2 Stg.—it was only 6d Stg., if the steamer was going to Quebec. This rate was not extended to the winter runs via Portland until June 1856. So, without changing the markings, the letter was sent in a closed bag, probably for Hamilton, by the Cunard *Persia* on 26 January, which arrived at New York on 9 February. On reaching Hamilton (?), the letter was charged an additional 2¹/₂d Cy. to make up the difference between the rate via Halifax and via the United States (Handstamp B.4).





At first glance the above letter appears to be a rather nice 'COVE/SHIP LETTER' from Newfoundland. It was written from St. John's and dated 21 May 1814 by Captain Edward Wrottesley, Commander of H.M. Brig *Sabine*, to his wife. He was the fifth son of Sir John Wrottesley, present incumbent of an ancient line of baronets in Shropshire, England. The family seat was Wrottesley Park, five miles from Wolverhampton on the Shrewsbury Road. The letter is a fairly straightforward narrative of events of the time, although it begins 'My dearest Love'. As this should be of interest to the group, I have transcribed it below.

The letter was carried by a private trader or fishing vessel from St. John's to Cove, Ireland, where it was struck with 'COVE/SHIP LETTER' and rated 11d to

Dublin. Carried across the Irish Sea by packet to Holyhead and on to Wolverhampton, where an additional 2d packet and 10d inland postage was added for a total postage due of 1/11 Stg.

The *Sabine* was a small two-masted brig-sloop of eighteen guns—96 feet long and 28¹/₂ feet beam. It was originally a French vessel, the *Requin*, which had been captured in the Mediterranean by H.M.S. *Volage* on 28 July 1808 and taken into the Royal Navy, where she served until 1818, when she was sold to be broken up. With square sails, she would have been difficult to handle in a storm or when traversing a field of floating sea-ice, which explains the writer's comments about the voyage to Newfoundland. The text follows:

After a most tedious Passage I have at length arrived, but not without experiencing more difficulties than you can imagine upon this dreary Coast. a very short time after sailing we encountered the heaviest Gale of Wind I ever remember, and lasted without abating for five days, when my faithfull Chronometer deemed us near the Banks. We met with islands and fields of ice for near 300 miles, and it was not without considerable difficulty we extricated ourselves. I chased a Privateer three days ago with one hundred and ten Men on board, she had committed considerable damage on the Coast, and had the impudence to tell the General by a Master of a Vessel which he had captured that he intended to blockade the Port. Do not be sanguine but I think Money is to be made here. [He was referring to the possibility of getting prize money for enemy vessels captured and sent into port for condemnation.] The Admiral has not arrived, and I am Major Domo but I am trying to get to Sea. The News of Peace has just arrived, and I am highly pleased with . . . ? . . . 's Conduct, but shall never think it worth the Pen of the Historian to trouble himself about Bonaparte – The Americans my Friends begin

to speak *en bas* they have requested a cessation of hostilities in Canada which has been refused by Sir J Provost and referred to the Admiral on the American Station, the Embargo is taken off and our Prisoners released, but we have declared the whole Coast in a state of Blockade the Americans are in a miserable state, and their Men of War laid up it is supposed the Men are destined for the Lakes. The Boston Papers insist upon Maddison making Peace on any terms. In this place it is impossible to procure provisions of any description your amiable Sex during the Winter are obliged to live upon Salt Fish We are to have a grand Fete in honour of the Peace on the 21st of June next. If I am in Port, I intend to exert all my hilarity not forgetting Polly mine, how often has that expression recurred to my Mind. The *Sabine* behaves remarkably well in bad Weather but she does not Sail. I am grown a great admirer of Doctor Portens Works and have experienced a great re. . . . in my Books. tell Sir John [his father] that Mr Hatchard has behaved very . . . in his sale of Burks Works and that a great part of the Volume relating to the French revolution has never been bound up, and upwards of twenty pages missing, a good lesson not to employ him in future. The Soda Water Polly has been of (torn out) and I assure you I am remarkably (torn out) the severity of the Weather has far exceeded what we experienced that dreary Night at Liphook. I wont say much about my Move as you you little Wretch will be so proud. I have been in Company with none of the Fair Sex therefore . . . ? . . . contests. The opportunity of writing Love is the only one I have had, and the Merchants are looking anxiously for the *Sabine* to get to Sea. Does ones dear Pledge of affection begin to trouble you Keep in good Spirits Polly we shall soon meet Adieu Dear Love and believe me your truly affectionate Husband
Edw Wrottesley'

The sad part of this letter is what was still folded inside it. This was a slightly tattered piece of paper on which was written:

'Here
Lies the Body of
Captain
Edward Wrottesley
fifth son of Sir John
Wrottesley Bar^t
& Commander of H.M. Brig
Sabine
who died July 29th 1814
Aged 29 Years.

N.B. The above is the true copy of the Tombstone

William Earle
Clerk of St. Johns
Church'

This left me wondering what Edward Wrottesley had been doing during the ten weeks between the writing of the above letter and his death. Did he die as the result of a naval engagement and the body brought back to St. John's or did he die at St. John's? Perhaps Don Wilson would like to see if he can find anything about this unfortunate death in a contemporary issue of the St. John's newspaper, in the local church records or elsewhere to fill in the ten-week period or answer the above question.

Presumably the above letter was the last that Polly Wrottesley received from her husband and when the copy of the inscription arrived, she placed it inside the letter, where it has been for over one hundred and seventy-five years. Like the photograph of the Glengarry church, which I reproduced in the September 1991 newsletter, I shall ensure that this obit passes on to the future owner of this letter.

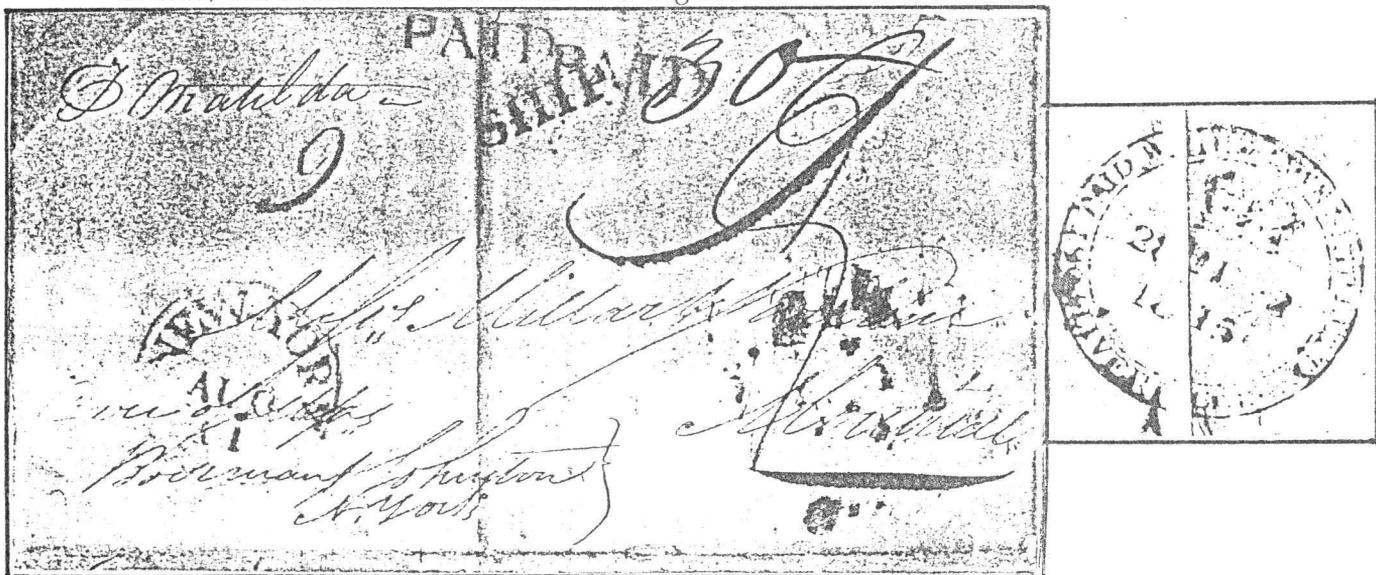
Allan Steinhart sent along two of his 'Post Paid Withdrawn Ship Letters' and, as this is a subject not yet touched in these newsletters, I decided to add a couple of my own to round out the story. These letters mark one of the aberrations in thinking by the British Post Office and makes an interesting story.

Soon after the establishment of the first mail packets, the British Post Office Act of 1711 established the packet postage at 1/- Stg. and made it illegal to send a letter by private ship over any route where there was a packet service. To any other destination, ships' masters were free to carry letters at whatever fee they chose. Apart from the early Dummer packets to Jamaica, the North Atlantic packet service dates from 1755 and until the coming of steam were never more frequent than monthly. Also, the postage was more expensive than the trading captains' fee for carriage, so most letters went by the latter and enforcement of the law was difficult at best, and often non-existent.

Appreciating that it was losing a lot of revenue, the Post Office in 1799 raised the ship letter postage on incoming letters from 1d Stg. to 4d Stg., and, in addition, introduced a fee of half the packet postage on all outgoing letters, irrespective of whether there was a packet service on the anticipated route to destination or not. Attempts were made to persuade shipping agents and coffee house keepers, who handled most of the letters, to collect this fee on behalf of the Post Office, without avail.

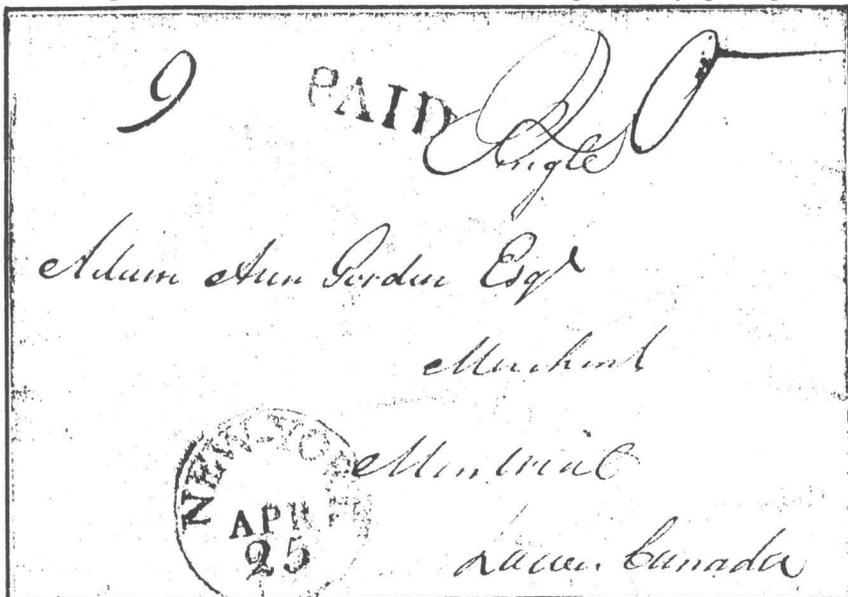
Finally, the September 1814 Post Office Act made it compulsory to take all outgoing letters to a post office to be charged a fee equal to one-third the packet postage, plus inland postage to Falmouth. The public reaction to this unfair charge, for which no service was offered nor given, was such that it was discontinued within a year. A subsequent act in July 1815 continued the charge at half the packet postage, but with the Post Office undertaking to forward all out going letters by the best means and paying the ship owners and captains for the service. This remained in effect until 1835, when the fee was lowered to 8d Stg. from the port and 1/- Stg. from elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

It was during this ten-month period that the circular 'POST PAID WITHDRAWN SHIP LETTER', with port name below, were in use. Alan Robertson listed Bristol, Dartmouth, Greenock, Liverpool, London, Margate, Poole, Queensborough and St. Ives as having these handstamps. I only have examples of Greenock, Liverpool and London. These handstamps were supposed to have been struck across the fold at the back of folded letter sheets, on the principle of preventing them being subsequently reopened and additional sheets inserted after the fee had been paid. I have two such letters with Liverpool strikes to the United States, which, although they were struck on the back, the strike did not touch the edge of the fold; as a result, these letters can be exhibited showing both the front and the strike.

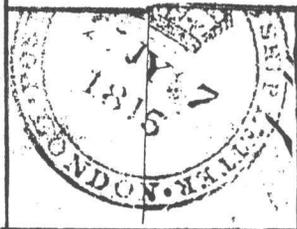
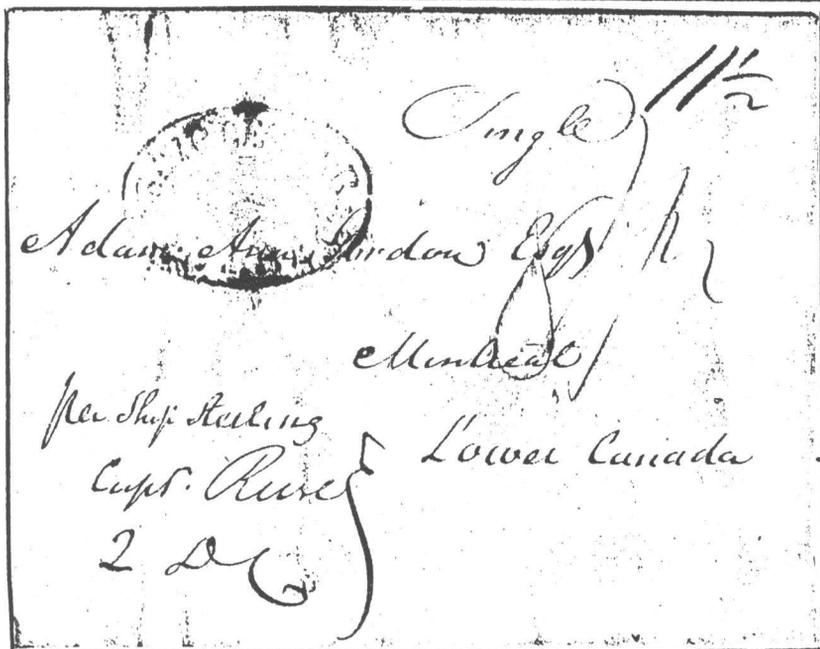


The previous letter had the fee paid and was backstamped with 'POST PAID WITHDRAWN SHIP LETTER/28 MY 28/1815/LIVERPOOL' and marked 'PAID 9', representing one-third of the packet rate of 2/4 Stg. from Liverpool. Endorsed 'P Matilda' and 'Care of Messrs. Boorman & Johnston/N. York'. Endorsed on the back by the New York firm on 11 August and 30 cents postage prepaid to the Canadian border (20 cents postage, plus the 50 percent War of 1812 surcharge in effect from 1 February 1815 to 1 April 1816). It was rated 9d Cy. postage due at Montreal, also showing a 50 percent surcharge in effect from May 1813 to April 1819.

It seemed worthwhile including the following cover from London dated 22 January 1816 and carried privately to New York, where, like the previous one, it was forwarded from there on 25 April with 20 cents postage prepaid. This was shortly after the removal of the war surcharge. On the other hand, it was still charged 9d Cy. postage due at Montreal.



Forwards of H.C. Wickar & Co.
 New York 25 April 1816



The previous cover is one of my London letters to illustrate another of the handstamps. This letter was dated 27 July 1815. It is endorsed 'per Ship Sterling/Capt. Reese/Q D C'. The outgoing ship letter fee of 8¹/₂d Stg. (one-third of the 2/2 Stg. packet postage from London), and backstamped 'POST PAID WITHDRAWN SHIP LETTER/27 JY 27/1815/LONDON'. It was carried to Quebec, where it was struck with a small oval crown 'SHIP LETTER QUEBEC' (very poor) and rated 11¹/₂d Cy. postage due (2¹/₂d ship letter fee + 9d inland postage to Montreal).

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Most of the group members have responded to the call for a second payment, with some sending in a little extra, for which I thank them. One member wrote to resign and half a dozen have not been heard from, so are assumed to have left the group. I shall print the usual number of newsletters, in case some are just more delinquent than most.

I am encouraged by the increase in material coming in from members, but must ask for all of you to take a look and see if you have not got something that would interest the rest of us.

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