TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

of the

British North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 31 Jack Arnell, Chairman November 1992

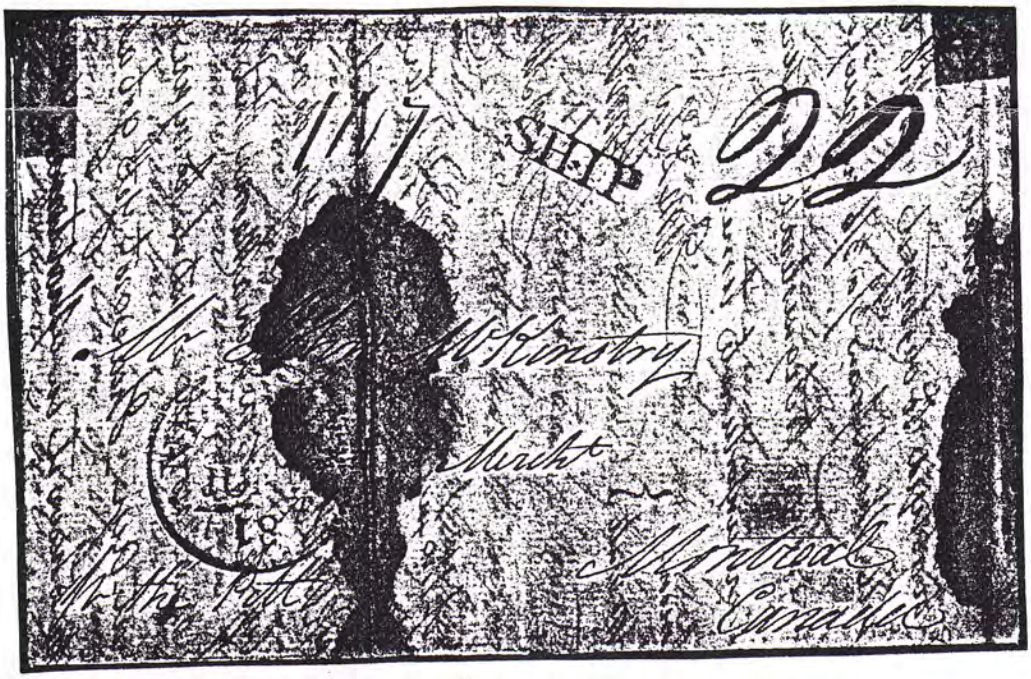
POSTAGE TO THE LINES IN LOWER CANADA

As a part of the meeting of our Study Group at BNAPEX 92 in St. Charles, I gave a short slide/talk on the changes in the postage charged between Montreal and the Lines (exchange office with the U.S.P.O.) from the late 18th century to 1840. Although this has been covered in various articles and in our Handbook No. 1, those present at the talk suggested that it would be helpful to have the subject included in a subsequent newsletter with illustrations. To this end, I am including it here.

Over the years, the articles outlining these rates of postage were based on that shown on letters dating from the Treaty of Peace following the American Revolution to the mid-19th century in various collections. Hopefully in time, we shall find some documentation to support the generally accepted rates, but in its absence, I shall describe what appear to be the facts. If anyone can add any new information, I shall be delighted to receive it.

The first official exchange of Mails between the newly-created U.S. Post Office and the British Post Office In North America resulted from the 1792 U.S.-Canada Postal Convention. In this, the USPO only undertook to convey Canadian letters between New York and Burlington, Vermont, as this was as far as its Hudson River mail route went, so that the latter became the exchange office. This meant that the Canadian postal courier would deliver the outgoing Mail for the United States and the packets sailing from New York to the Burlington post office and collect the incoming Canadian Mails before returning to Montreal.

As Burlington was in the 60–100 mile zone from Montreal, the postage between the two points was 6*d*. sterling (Stg.) or 7*d*. currency (Cy.), while to Quebec, it was 10*d*. Stg. or $11\frac{1}{2}d$. Cy. There was no change in the U.S. postal service north of Burlington until it was disrupted by the War of 1812, so that the above rates will be found on letters throughout this period, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. There was no exchange of Mails between the two countries during the war years, until peace was restored in the spring of 1815.



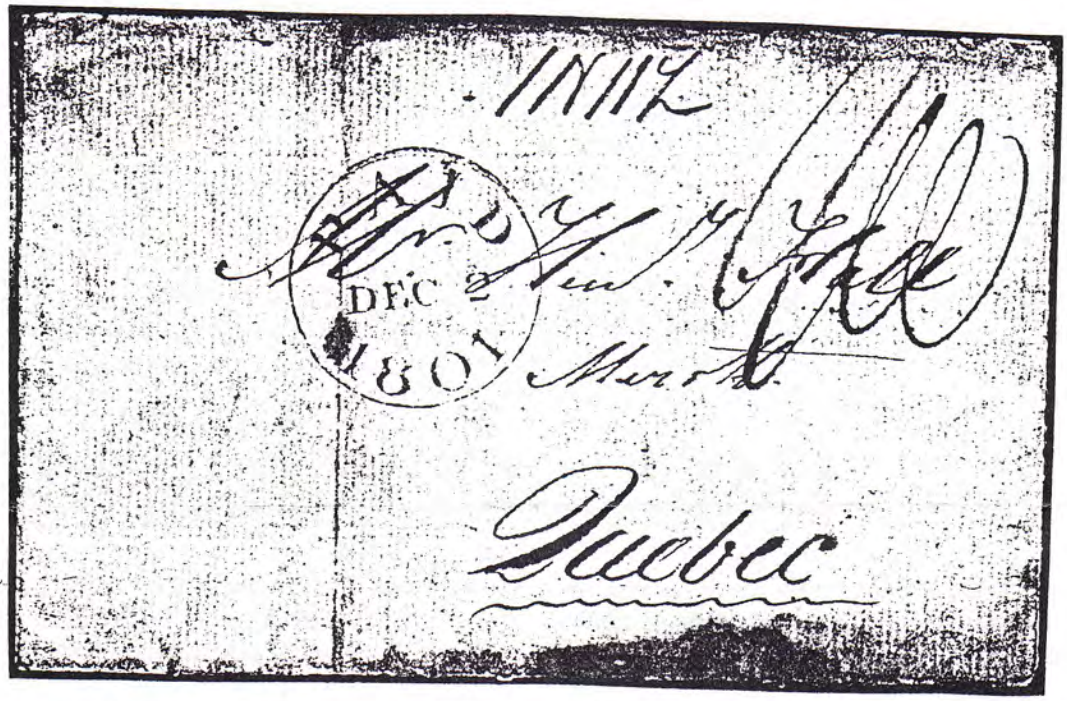


Figure 1. *Letter from Glasgow dated 25 February 1804, which reached New York as a ship letter, where it was rated 22 cents postage due to Burlington. At Montreal, the 22 cents were converted to 1s. 0d. Cy. and 7d. Cy. inland postage from Burlington added for a total postage due of 1s. 7d. Cy.*

Figure 2. *Letter from London dated 3 December 1801, with 1s. 10d. Stg. postage to New York prepaid. Carried by the Townsend packet from Falmouth to New York in a closed bag for Quebec, where it was rated 1s. 11½d. Cy. postage due (20 cents = 1s. 0d. Cy. U.S. inland postage + 11½d. Cy. B.N.A. inland postage).*

With the resumption of the Montreal–New York mail route, the U.S. postal service was extended to Swanton, Vermont, close to the Canadian border. Moving the exchange office north gave the USPO more revenue for handling the Canadian mails, and should have reduced the Canadian postage at the same time to 4*d*. Stg./4½*d*. Cy. for less than 60 miles. However the Montreal and Quebec postmasters, either with or without official approval, took the opportunity to extract extra revenue from a public only to pleased to be able to speed their overseas correspondence through New York once again.

As no record is known relating to what actually transpired at this time, the following interpretation of the resultant postal charges is an educated guess, based on many contemporary letters and the consideration of parallel developments elsewhere. First of all, at about this time, several Upper Canadian exchange offices on rivers marking the border began adding a 2d Cy. local ferry charge, presumably to make it worthwhile for someone to take the mails across the river to the American post office of the other side. Although there was no river to be crossed at the border in Lower Canada, the Richelieu River lay between St. John's, L.C. and Montreal, so perhaps this was the excuse for charging an extra 1½*d*. Cy. as 'ferriage' or 'border transfer' to bring the postage to Montreal to 6*d*. Cy. At the same time, the postage from Quebec to the border was raised from 11½*d*. Cy. to 1*s*. 0*d*. Cy.

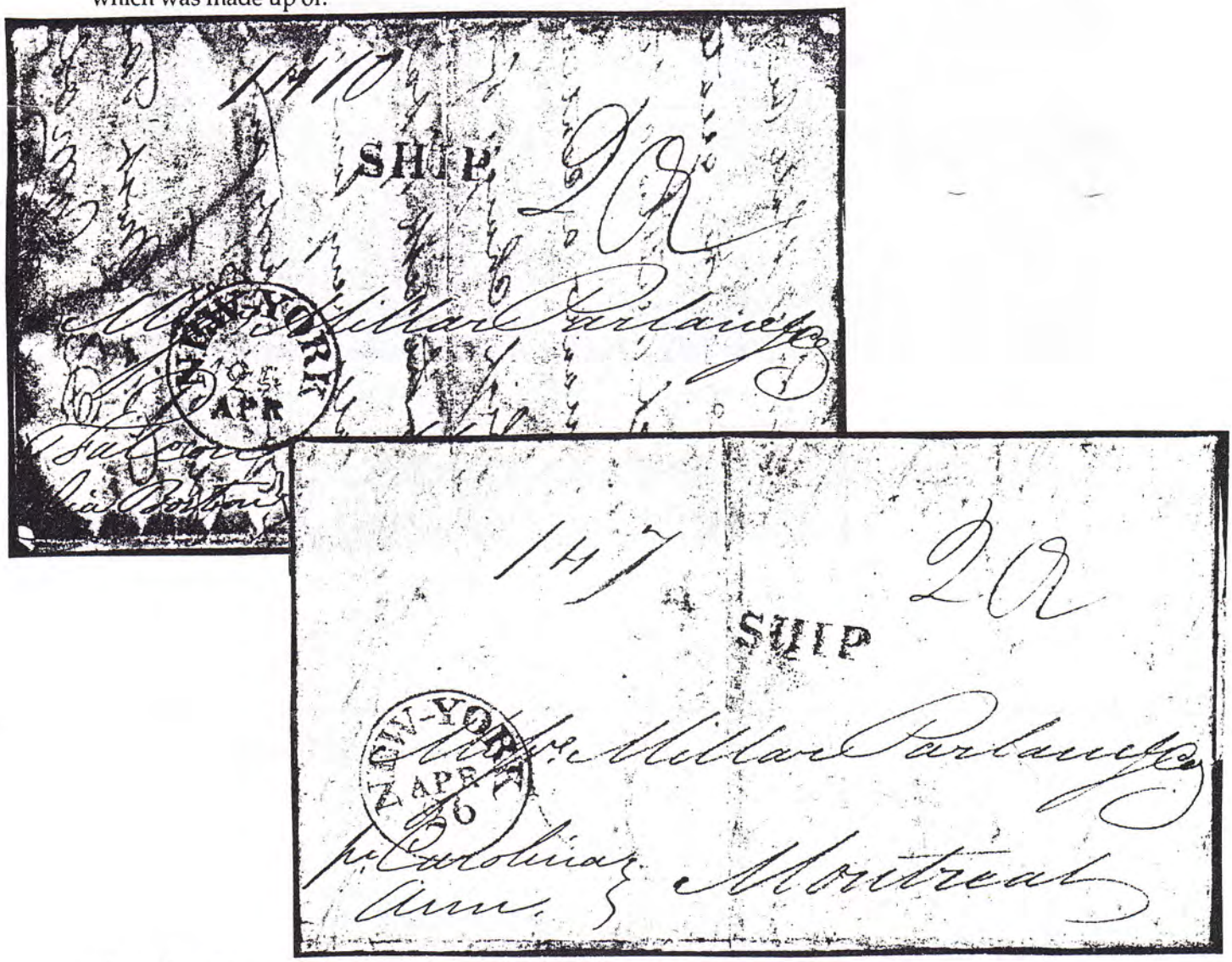
Almost concurrently, the USPO introduced a surcharge of all inland postage to help pay off the American war debt. By an Act of Congress dated 23 December 1814, all postage rates were increased by fifty percent from 1 February 1815. Thus the less-than-40 mile postage was raised from 8 cents to 12 cents, and so on until the over-500 mile postage increased from 25 cents to 37½ cents. This surcharge was removed on 1 April 1816, and the

rates returned to those established by the Act of 2 March 1799.

While there does not appear to have been any official sanction given for a similar increase in British North America, the Montreal postmaster added fifty percent to the combined postage on letters between the city and the border exchange office, when the postal service to New York was reestablished after the war. From 17 May 1815, the Canadian postage between the Lines and Montreal was 9*d*. Cy., which was made up of:

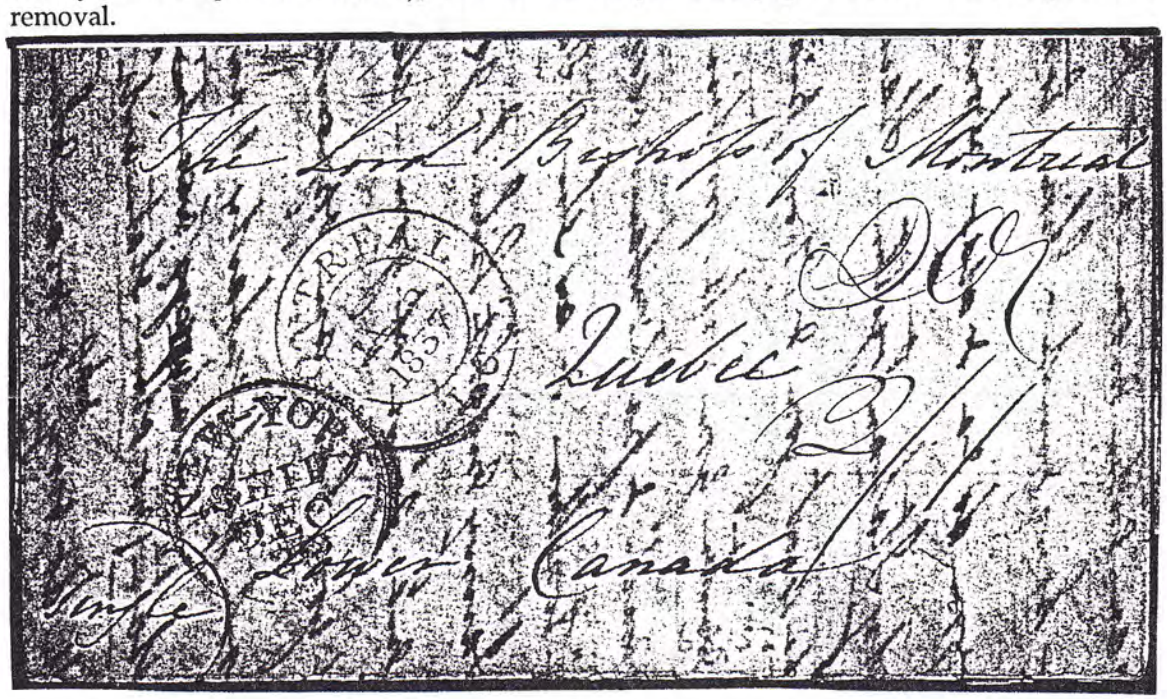
border transfer or ferry	$1\frac{1}{2}d.$
inland postage	$4\frac{1}{2}d.$
total postage	6*d*.
50% surcharge	3*d*.
total charge	9*d*.

There was no similar increase in the Quebec-Lines postage.

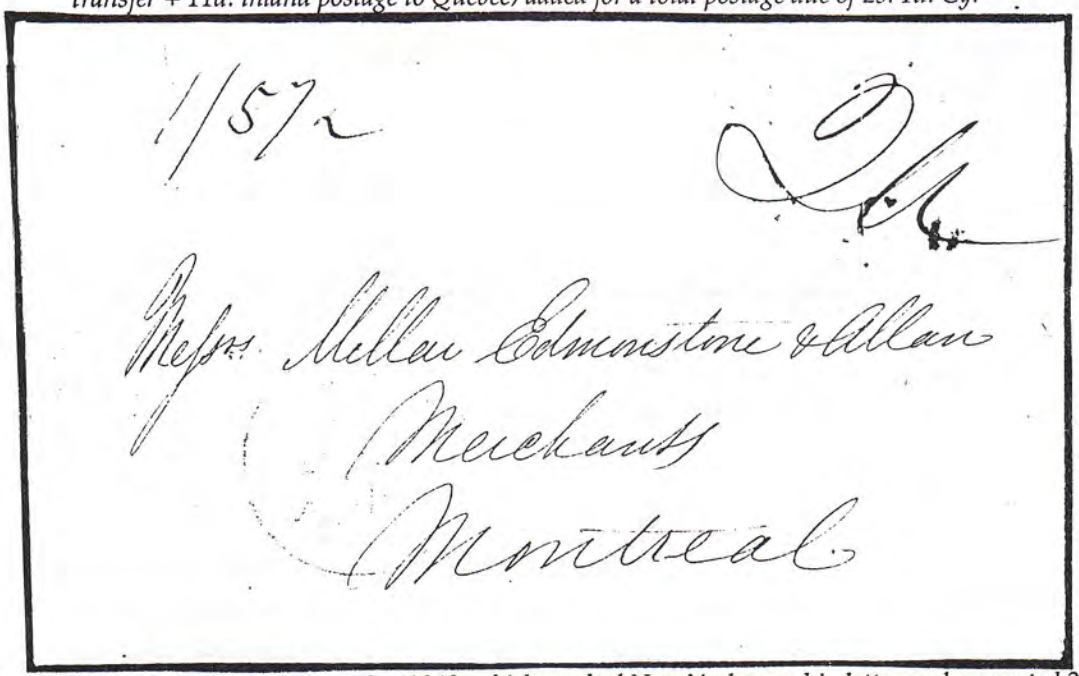


Letter from Liverpool dated 7 March 1819, which was sent in duplicate on different trading vessels. They arrived at New York on 25 and 26 April, where they were stamped 'SHIP' and rated $20\frac{1}{2}$ cents postage due to the Lines (2 cents ship letter fee + $18\frac{1}{2}$ cents inland postage). The duplicate letter arrived first before the postage changed and was rated 1s. 10d. Cy. postage due (1s. 1d. Cy. U.S. postage + 9d. Cy. B.N.A. inland postage). The original arriving after 1 May, when the rate changed, was only charged 1s. 7d. Cy.

The Montreal surcharge was continued until 30 April 1819, more than three years after the Americans had removed their War Surcharge. The Lines–Montreal postage was then reduced to 6*d*. Cy. The duplicate letters reproduced on the previous page show the surcharge and its removal.



Letter from Liverpool dated 24 October 1836, which reached New York as a ship letter and was rated $20\frac{3}{4}$ cents postage due to the border. At Montreal, this was converted to 1s. 1d. Cy. and 1s. 0d. Cy. (1d. border transfer + 11d. inland postage to Quebec) added for a total postage due of 2s. 1d. Cy.



Letter from Liverpool dated 24 December 1840, which reached New York as a ship letter and was rated $20\frac{3}{4}$ cents postage due to the border. At Montreal, this was converted to 1/s. 1d. Cy. and $4\frac{1}{2}$d. Cy. added for a total postage due of 1s. $5\frac{1}{2}$d. Cy.

The 6*d*. Cy. and 1*s*. 0*d*. Cy. rates were maintained until 28 February 1837, when the unofficial border transfer or ferry charge was dropped. This was the date on which Ferriage, which had been introduced officially in Upper Canada in 1829, was discontinued. The postage remained at $4\frac{1}{2}d$. Cy. from that date until 5 April 1851 (see illustration on page 4).

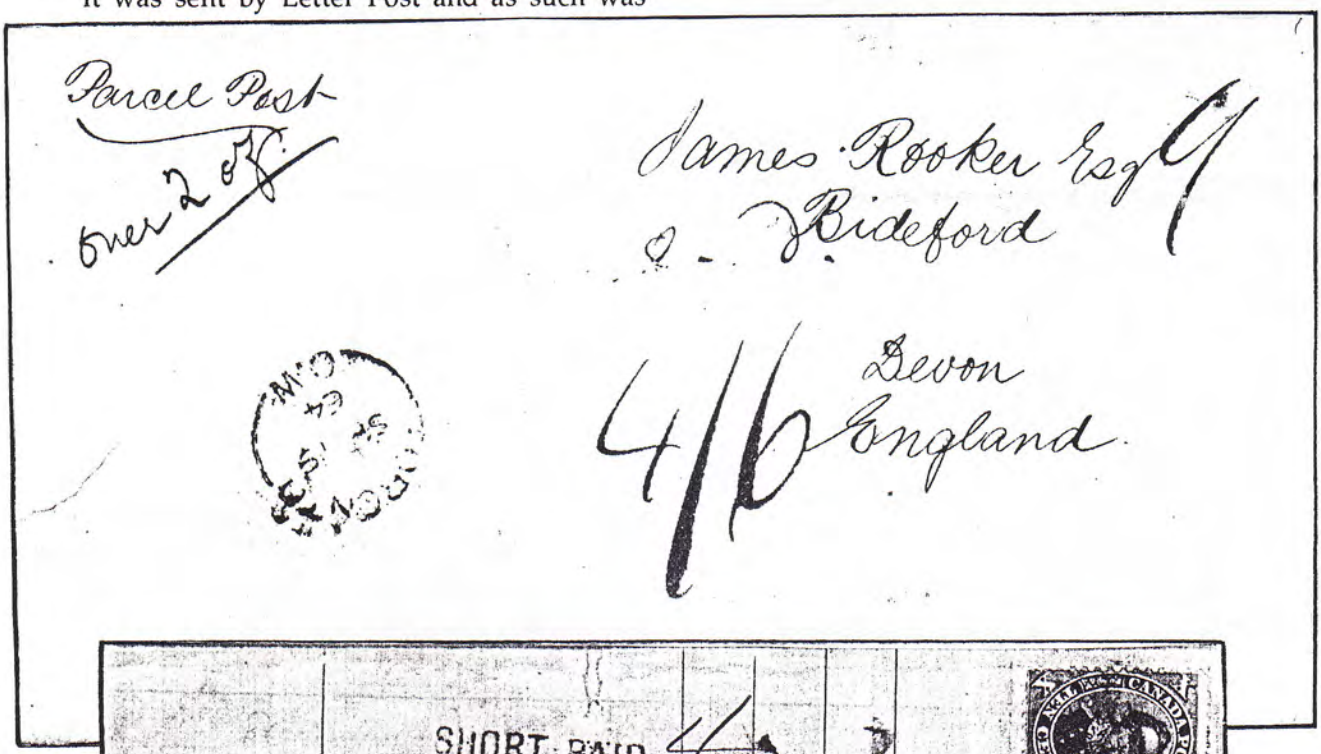
The Quebec-Lines postage was reduced to 11*d*. Cy.. at the same time. Figures 5 and 6 show examples with and without the border transfer charge. In October 1843, the Quebec-Lines postage was increased to $11\frac{1}{2}d$. Cy. as being a more correct conversion of 10*d*. Stg. at the official exchange rate of 1.1111.

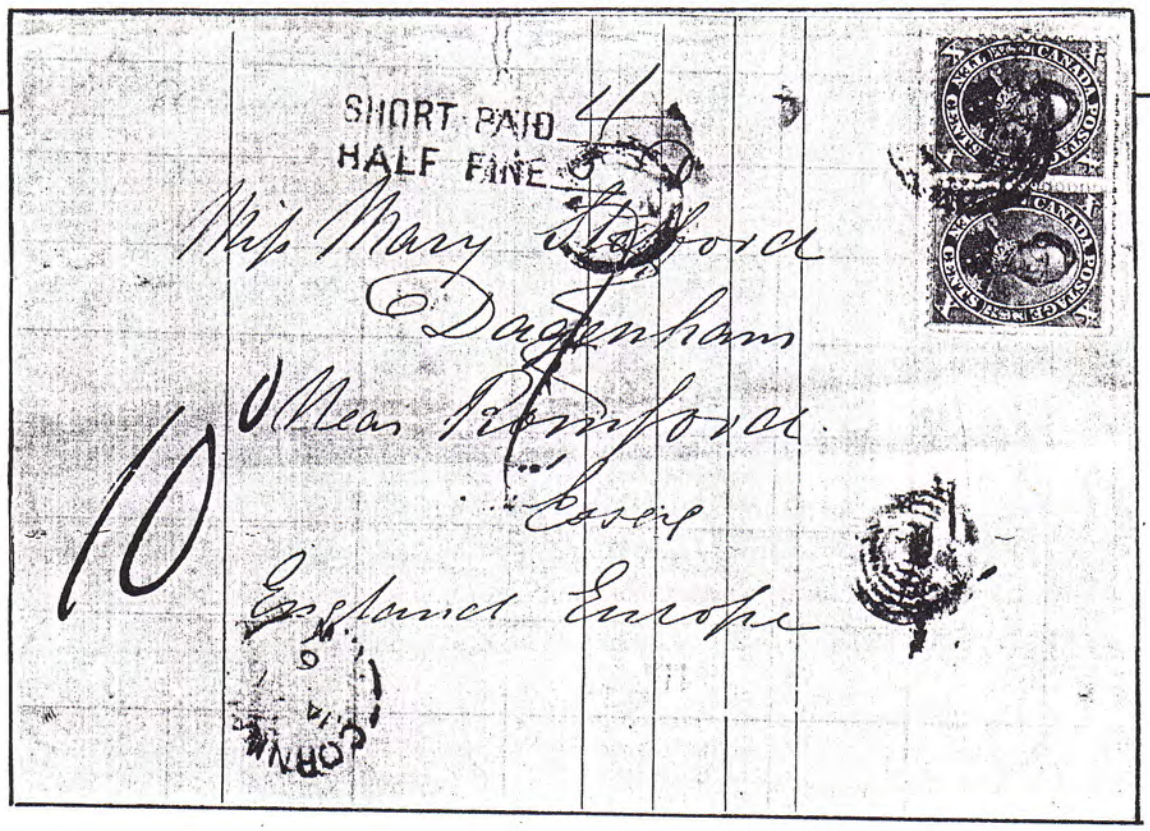
Letters from Dublin dated September 1837 and London dated 24 December 1838. The first was carried privately to New York , mailed and rated $18\frac{3}{4}$ cents, while the other, as a ship letter, was rated $20^3/_4$ cents postage due to the border. At Montreal, these were converted to 1s. $10\frac{1}{2}d$. Cy. and 1s. 1d. Cy. respectively, and 11d. Cy. inland postage to Quebec added for total postage dues of 1s. $10\frac{1}{2}s$. Cy. and 2s. 0d. Cy.

The remarkable aspect of these extra charges was that they were only applied on letters to and from the American border and Montreal and Quebec City. There was never a similar surcharge as Montreal's in the aftermath of the War of 1812 anywhere else in B.N.A.

FINES ON NON-EXISTENT 'PARCEL POST' AND UNDERPAID LETTERS

Malcolm Montgomery has sent along several interesting covers, which are reproduced below. The first was marked 'Parcel Post' and mailed at Toronto on 19 September 1964 with the postage unpaid. He noted that there was no parcel post to overseas destinations, and book post only applied, if prepaid. As a result, it was sent by Letter Post and as such was marked 'over 2 oz.' and with 9*d*. as the Canadian accountancy charge—6 x 1*d*. inland postage + 3*d*. half fine. It probably travelled by the Cunard *Scotia* from New York on 21 September and arrived at Queenstown on 30 September. It was rated 4*s*. 6*d*. Stg. postage due—6 x 8*d*. packet postage + 6*d*. fine.





The second cover is a bit of an enigma and its interpretation is open to suggestions from group members. Malcolm stated that the date of mailing could be either 21 or 31 January 1865 or 1866 and its date of arrival at Romford was 12 February. The only voyage which fits the latter date was that of the Cunard *Asia* from Boston on 31 January 1866, arriving at Queenstown on 11 February.

The letter was mailed at Cornwall, C.W. with twenty cents postage paid with two adhesives, and something struck below the adhesives. Probably at Toronto, it was decided that the letter was double weight, so it was struck with the two-line 'SHORT PAID/HALF FINE' handstamp and rated an additional 4*d*. Stg. postage due and 3*d*. Stg. half fine, totalling 7*d*. Stg. In England, both markings were deleted and 10*d*. Stg. postage due added, representing the 4*d*., plus the full 6*d*. fine.

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LAST COMMENTS

You will note that this newsletter is dated November 1992, while the last was 'August', which was in error, because I try to send one out every two months, beginning in January each year. The confusion resulted with me trying to get No. 30 in the mail before going away for a cataract operation, which was successful. It is a minor matter, but some observant reader might wonder.

Quite some time ago, I reported the suggestion that there should be longer articles in future newsletters. The last two have had such, and I am quite prepared to continue, if son eone would like to prepare one or, alternatively, make some suggestions of useful subjects that I could develop. I leave it up all of you.

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