



TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

OF THE

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA STUDY GROUP

Newsletter No. 44

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January 1995

B.N.A. – FRANCE TRANSATLANTIC MAIL

A few years ago I decided to expand my transatlantic interest to include mail to and from France, and since then have accumulated an interesting small collection. Needless to say, most of the letters have a U.S. origin or destination; however, the dozen or so B.N.A. covers bring out the main points covering rates.

The first problem I encountered was that of postage rates, as little has been written on the subject in English. About fifteen years ago, Maggie Toms published her studies on letters to France in *Topics*, and later Guy des Rivières covered the postage from France to Canada in *La Philatélie au Québec*; the first from 1843 and the other from 1849—the first was related to letters from B.N.A. and the latter from France..

Until the coming of the Cunard service in 1840, most letters between the two countries were carried by private traders in the earliest days, and then mainly by the American sailing packets after the War of 1812; hence they are usually New York ship letters coming from France, and French port ship letters on those going to France. Mine of this period are all American and show this pattern. The Steinhart collection has many examples of this period; it is available in bound photocopy form from the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society.

In 1836, Great Britain established the first postal agreement with France, which set the postage between London and a French port at 10*d.* Stg. or 10 décimes. [The exchange rate was 9¹/₂*d.* Stg. = 10 décimes, but was set at one-for-one for postal purposes, including multiple rate letters]. Regular postal charges were levied by distance before and after the London-France transit.

The Cunard service resulted in most transatlantic letters to and from France passing through England. For the first few years, the 1*s.* 2*d.* Stg. per 1/2 oz. postage established for

letters to England also paid for a letter to a French port.

In 1843, a new Anglo-French Postal Agreement was signed, which set a bulk rate for transit and sea conveyance of 3*s.* 4*d.* Stg. per ounce either paid or unpaid to a French port to or from colonies and countries beyond the seas, wherever situated, or 10*d.* Stg. per 7.5 grammes; French inland postage was additional. A Treasury Warrant of 9 May 1843 set the British postage from Canada to France at 2*s.* Stg. per 1/2 oz. [4*d.* colonial postage + 2 x 10*d.* sea conveyance and British transit]. This agreement also set the French inland postage at 5 décimes [5*d.* Stg.] per 7.5 grammes or quarter-ounce, making the prepaid rate from B.N.A. 2*s.* 5*d.* Stg. per 1/4 oz. or 2*s.* 10*d.* Stg. per 1/2 oz. Essentially this standardized the French inland postage rates at the previous basic rate to Paris; Steinhart has a 28 February 1843 letter from Toronto to Paris with 1*s.* 2*d.* Stg. prepaid, which was charged 20 décimes inland postage to Paris, or 14*d.* + 20*d.* = 34*d.*, viz. 2*s.* 10*d.* Stg. per 1/2 oz.

On 1 January 1855, the postage for the first 1/4 oz. was lowered to 1*s.* 2¹/₂*d.* Stg. [2*d.* colonial, 10*d.* British, and 2¹/₂*d.* (25 centimes) French] via Halifax, in effect half the previous rate for 1/4 oz.; and 1*s.* 4¹/₂*d.* Stg. via the U.S.

This was lowered further on 1 January 1857 to 8*d.* Stg. per 1/4 oz. via Quebec or Halifax, and 10*d.* Stg. per 1/4 oz. or 1*s.* 6*d.* Stg. per 1/2 oz. via Portland, Boston or New York. It is to be noted that the second increment of the latter was only 8*d.* Stg.; this was because the 2*d.* Stg. U.S. transit charge was based on half ounce increments. Successive higher increments alternated between 10*d.* and 8*d.* Stg. On 1 January 1866, the single letter rate was raised to 10 grammes.

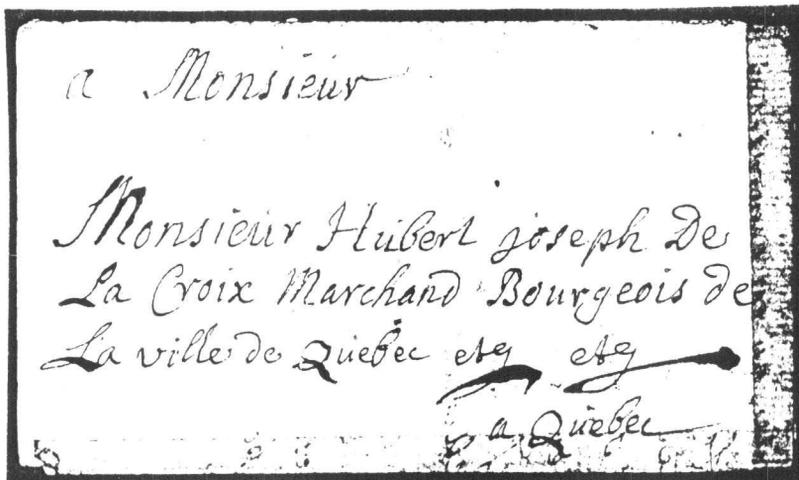
There were subsequent changes during the 1870s, but I am not certain just what they were

and, as they are beyond our period, I leave them to another. If anyone would like to add, come it and publish any additional information gained thereby.

correct or comment on the above, I shall wel-

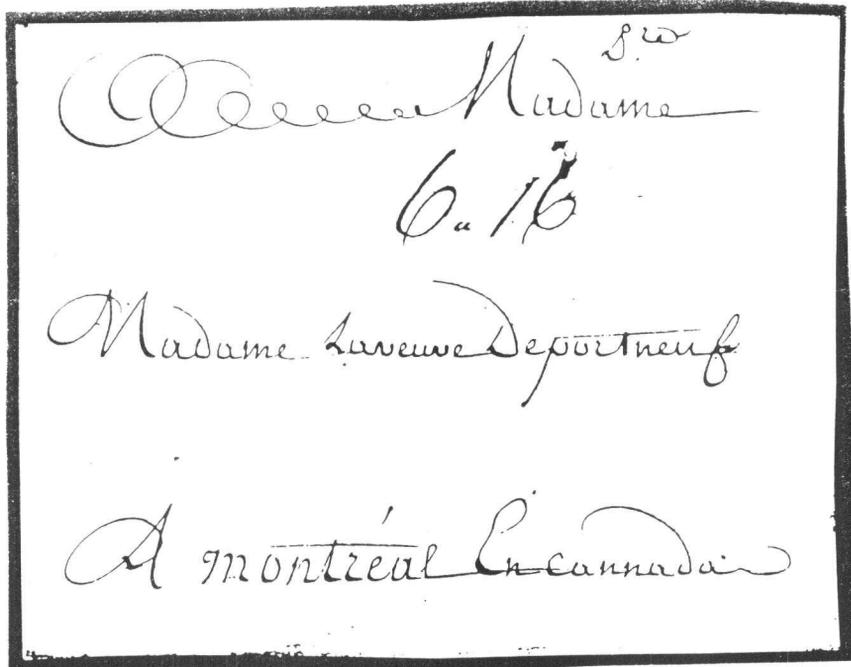
The following illustrations show the various rates given above and are drawn from the Steinhart collection and my own.

The first is a letter during the French regime in Canada and is from Crèvecoeur dated 19 January 1752. It was carried privately to Quebec City, which was typical of the period.



a Monsieur
Monsieur Hubert Joseph de
La Croix Marchand Bourgeois de
La ville de Québec etc etc
à Québec

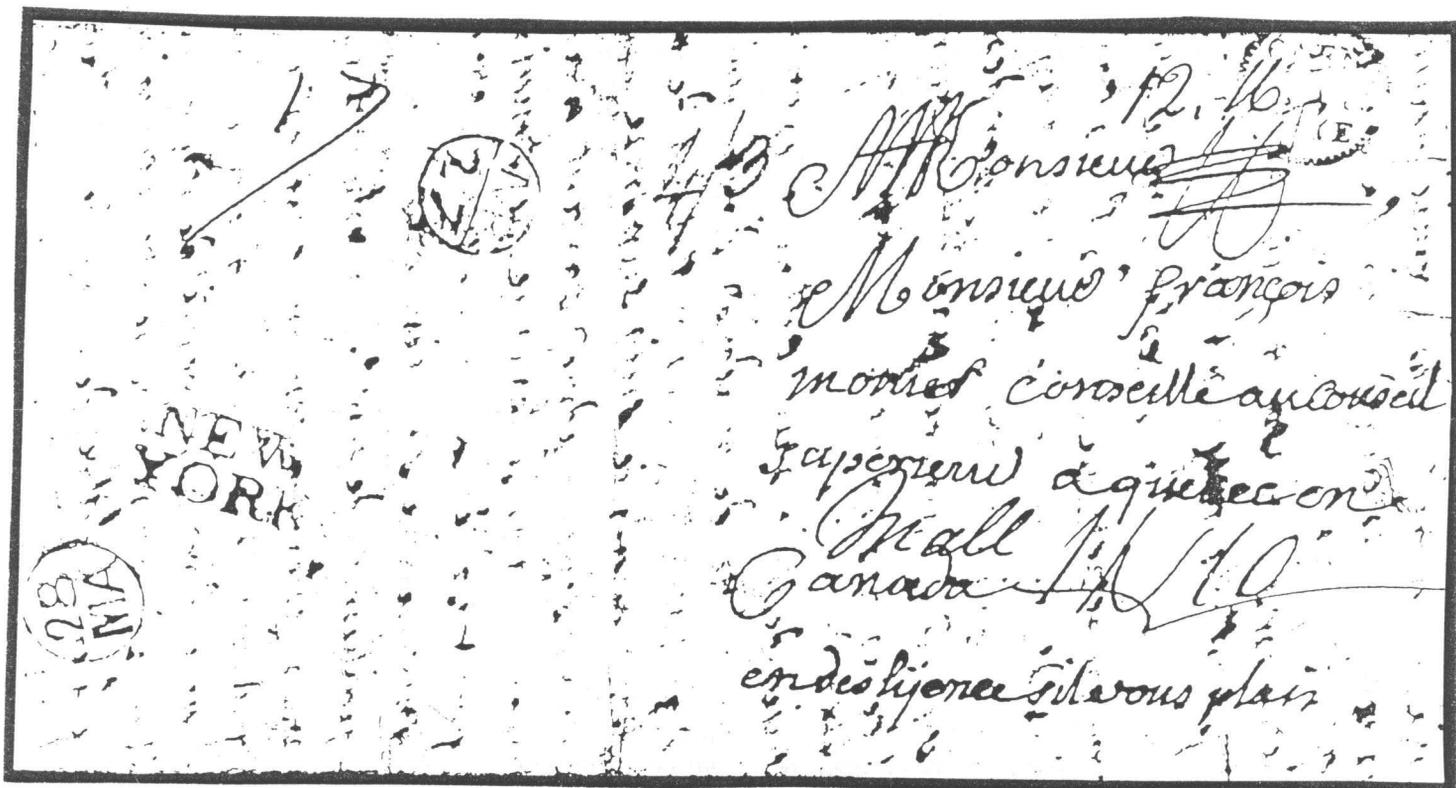
The next is a Steinhart letter from France dated 2 April 1765, two years after the Treaty of Paris creating British Canada. It was also carried privately to Quebec, where it was rated 6 pennyweights (dwt.) 16 grains (gr.), representing 16 gr. ship letter fee, plus 6 dwt. inland postage to Montreal as a double letter.



Madame ^{S^o}
6^o 16^o
Madame Laveuve Depoitneuf
A Montréal en Canada

Steinhart also has an early Falmouth packet letter from Caen, France dated 20 March 1767, which had 17 sols postage prepaid. It reached London on 27 March, was rated 10d. Stg. postage to Falmouth, where in turn it was marked with 'In all 1N10', showing the total postage due, including the 1s. 0d. Stg. packet postage to New York. Carried by the *Lord Hyde* packet from

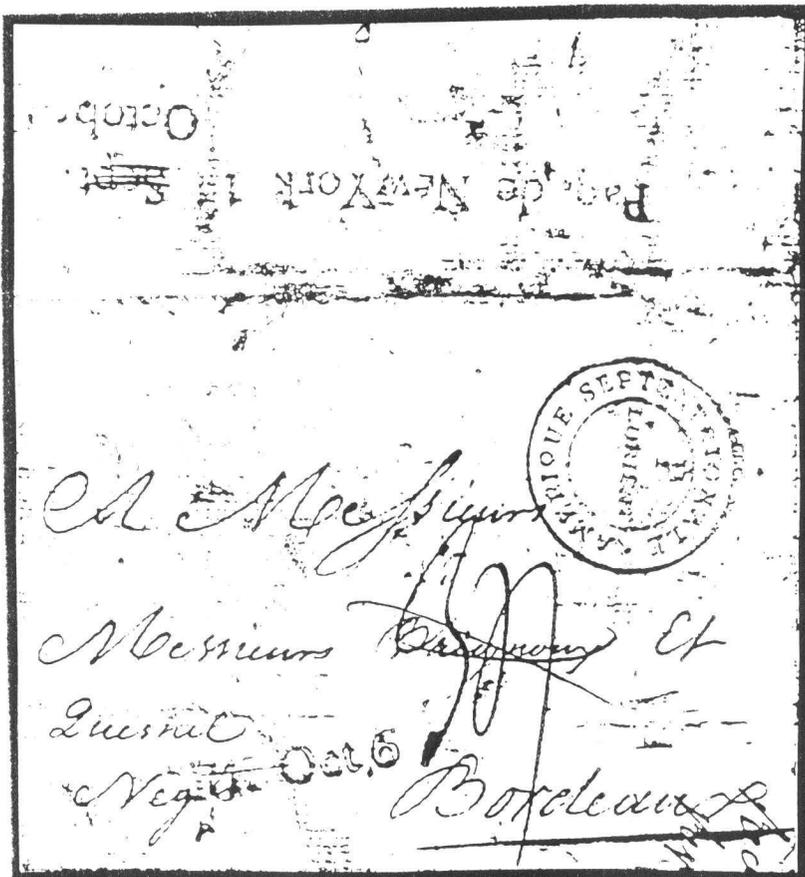
Falmouth on 16 April and arrived at New York on 28 May (confirmed by the Bishop mark). At New York, it was rated 12 dwt. 16 gr. total postage due at Quebec or 4s. 3d. Cy.



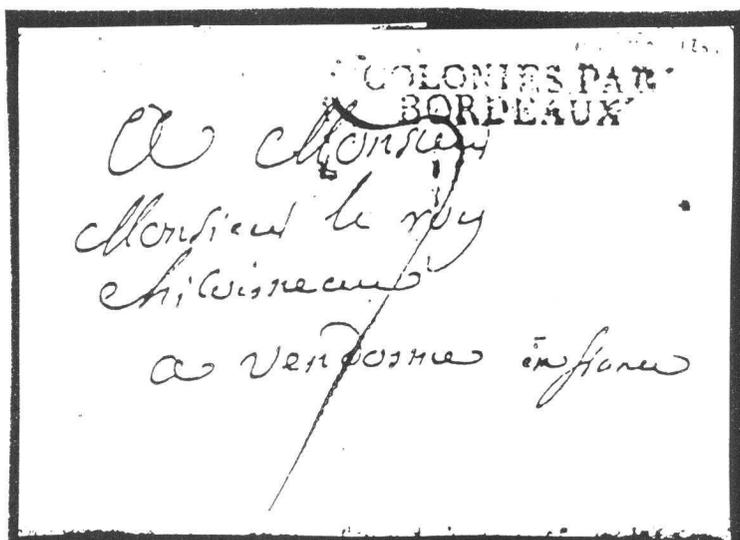
Another Steinhart gem. From Fleur de Lis, Newfoundland dated 1 May 1786 and carried by private vessel to Poole, England, where it was struck with 'POOL/SHIP LRE' and rated 2d. Stg. as a ship letter and forwarded to London, where it was backstamped on 28 July and 6d. Stg. added. In France, presumably Paris, it was rated 30 sols, explained as 20 sols special Britain to Paris rate, 9 sols inland postage to St. Brioux, and 1 sol 'voie de mer' tax.



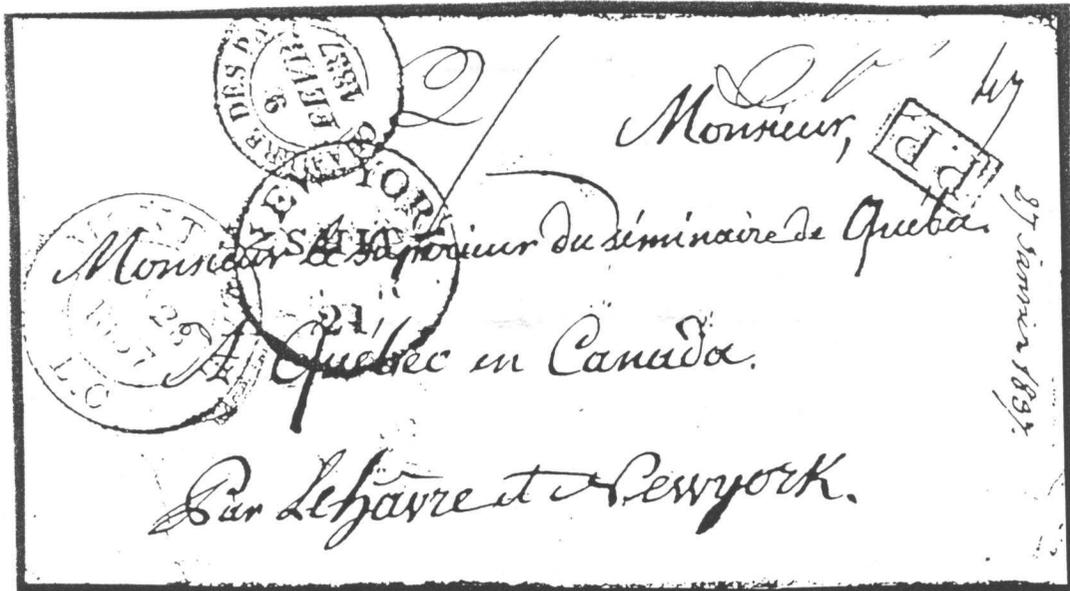
The next letter is the prize of the collection—I have three from the United States, but the Canadian origin makes it unique. It is from Montreal dated 22 September 1791 and was mailed at New York on 6 October. It was carried by a French packet to Le Havre and back stamped with 'Paq. de New York 17 Sept.', corrected to 'Octob.' and struck with a double circle 'AMERIQUE SEPTENTRIONALE' with 'P. L'ORIENT', the packet's name in the centre. Perhaps a French scholar among us can translate 'Septentrionale'.



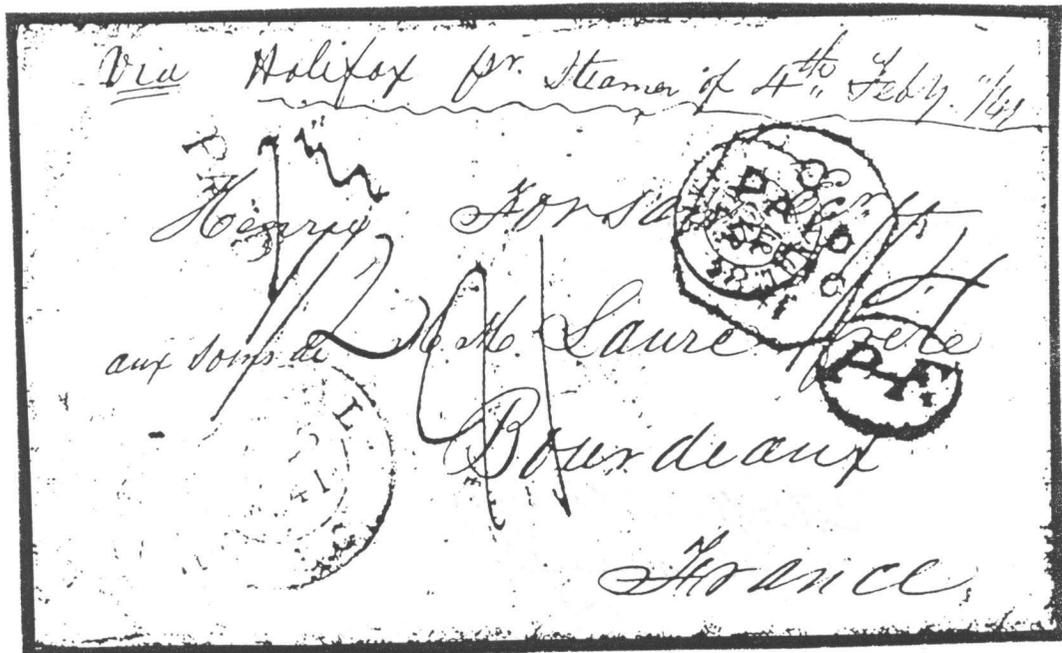
Here is a typical ship letter to France. Written in Montreal on 14 June 1802, it was carried by private vessel to Bordeaux, where it was struck with 'COLONIES PAR/BORDEAUX' and rated 7 décimes postage due [1 déc. ship letter fee + 6 déc. inland postage]. Other ports had similar strikes.



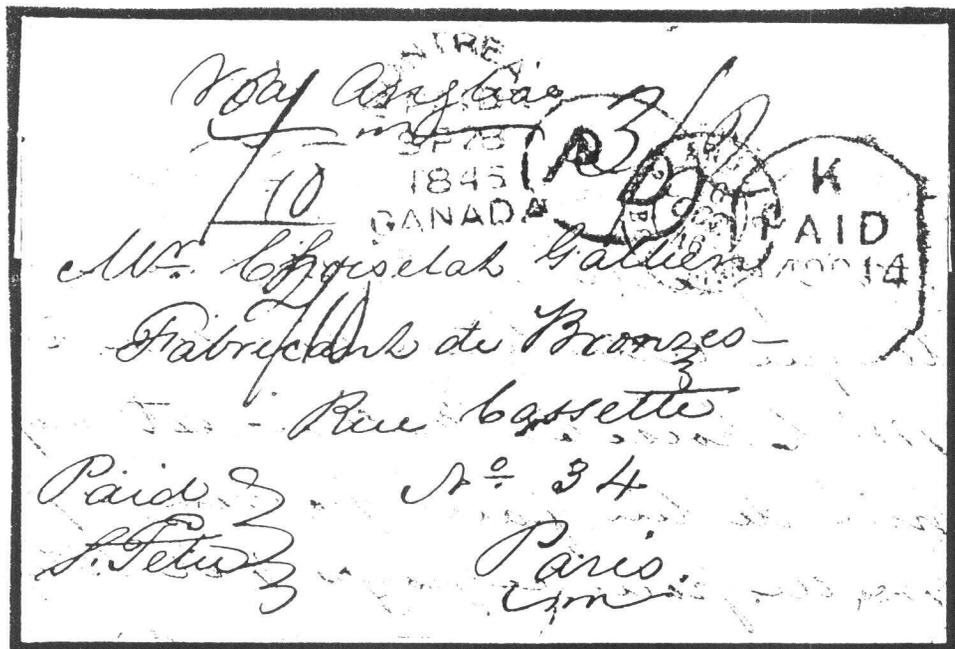
In the other direction is a 27 January 1837 letter from Paris, which had 6 décimes postage prepaid [5 déc. inland postage to Le Havre + 1 déc. outgoing letter fee]. It was probably carried by one of the American Union Line sailing packets from Le Havre to New York, where it was datestamped with 'SHIP' on 21 March and rated 20³/₄ cents U.S. postage due. Datestamped at Montreal on 28 March and rated 2s. 0d. Cy. total postage due at Quebec.



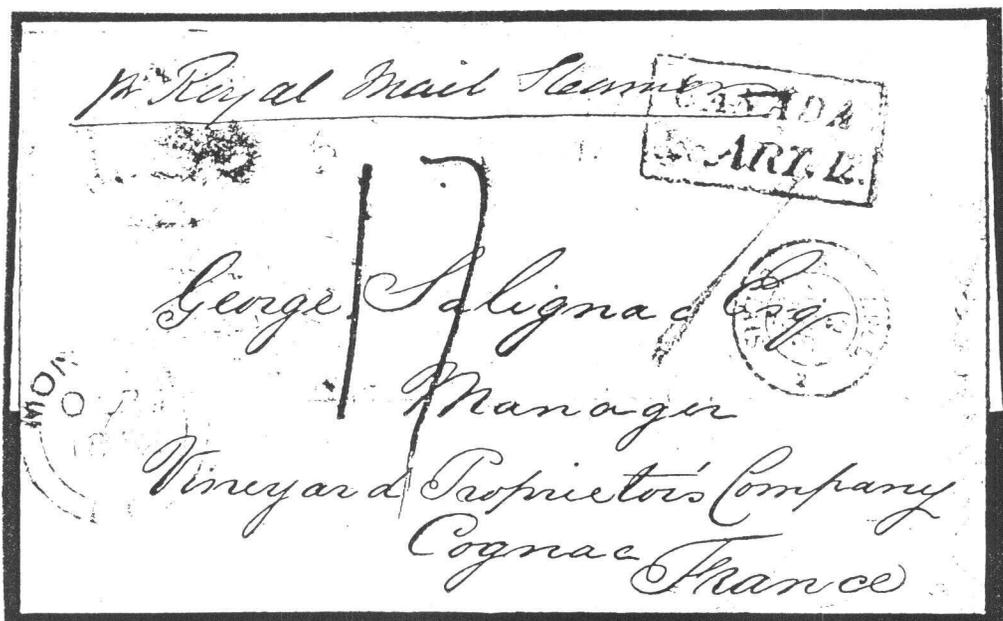
This is the last of the Steinhart covers for the moment and represents the first years of Cunard. It was from Montreal dated 23 January 1841 and was mailed with 1s. 2d. Stg./1s. 4d. Cy. prepaid. Carried by the *Acadia* (3rd voyage) from Halifax on 3 February and arrived at Liverpool on 15 February. Struck 'PAID' at London and with an oval 'P-F.' [Paid to frontier]. Sent to Calais, where rated 21 décimes postage due.



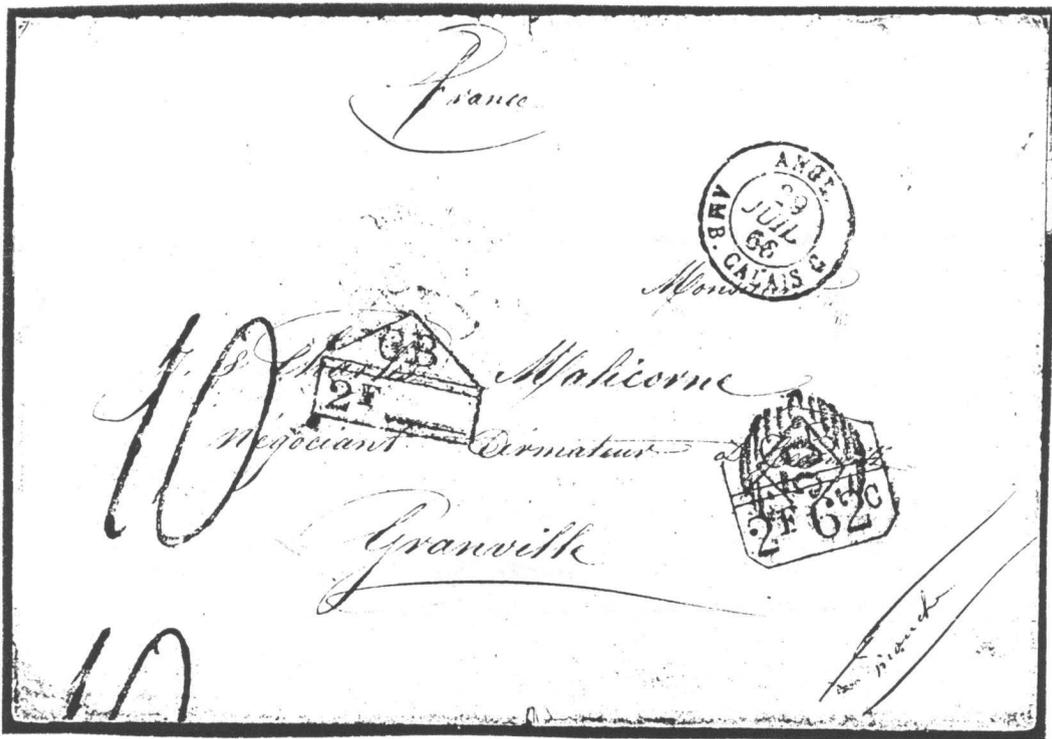
The next letter is from the 1843 Postal Agreement period. It is also from Montreal dated 28 September 1845 and was mailed with 3s. 2d. Cy. postage prepaid, representing 2s. 0d. Stg. per 1/2 oz. British postage from Canada to France and 2 x 5 décimes French inland postage or 2s. 10d. Stg. It was carried by the *Britannia* to Liverpool in a bag for London, where it was struck 'PAID' and with an oval 'PD' [Paid to Destination]. Datestamped 'ANGL. BOULOGNE' and forwarded to Paris.



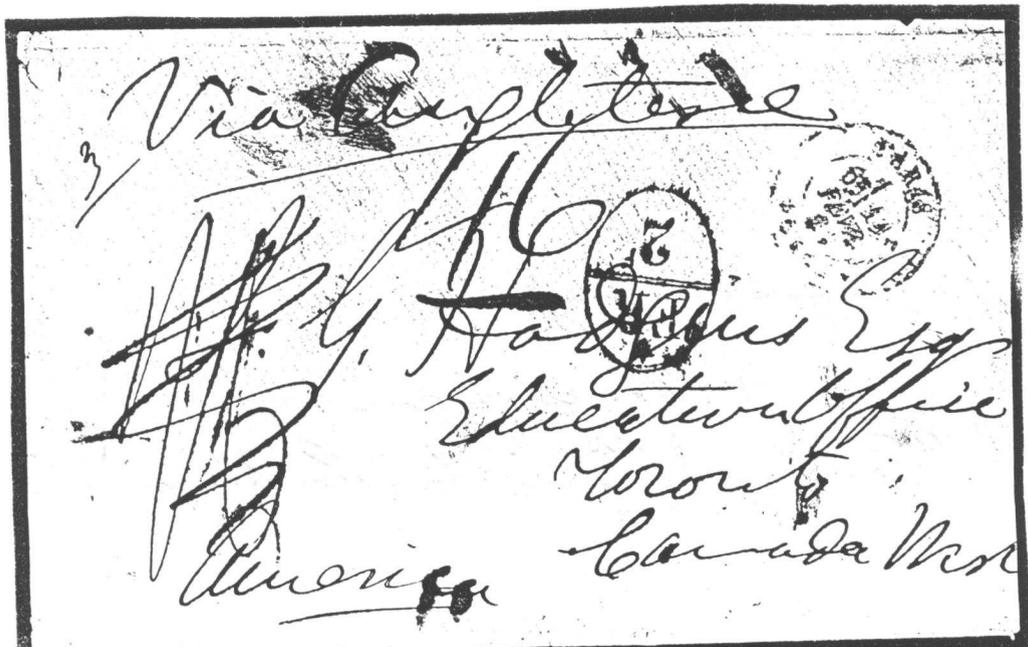
In an amendment under the 1843 Anglo-French Postal Agreement in November 1845, letters from Canada were still charged at the bulk rate of 4s. 0d. Stg. to France via Britain, but the rate for a single letter was lowered to 1s. 0d. Stg., with the French postage continuing at 5 décimes. This rate was identified by a framed handstamp 'CANADA &c. ART. 12.' as the British debit. The following letter from Quebec dated 23 October 1852, mailed at Montreal, shows this. It also had a *black* manuscript '1' to show the Canadian debit, and the French postage due of 17 décimes [12 déc. British debit + 5 déc. French postage].



As noted earlier, in 1857 the postage from Canada was lowered to the bulk rate of two francs [2F or 1s. 10d. Stg.] via Halifax or Quebec and 2F 62c [26.2 déc.] via the United States. This resulted in a total postage of 10d. Stg. [10 déc.]. The July 1866 letter from the French Coast of Newfoundland went by Cunard from Halifax in a closed bag for London, where it was initially struck with a boxed 'GB/2^F 62c'—the U.S. route. This was cancelled with a barred '50' and replaced with a correct boxed 'GB/2^F _'. At Calais, it was struck with '10' to show the 10 décimes French postage.



The French post office had the same debit, shown with a different design of handstamp. The 11 February 1867 letter from Paris was struck with an oval 'FR/2^F' to show the bulk rate. London marked 1s. 6d. Stg. in manuscript as the British debit for a double rate letter, thus allowing two pence for Canada. At Toronto, this was converted to a postage due of 46 cents.



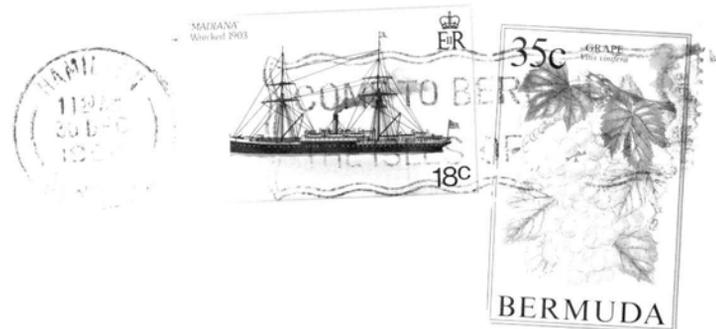
As this is all the space available in this newsletter, I hope that it gives an idea of the scope of collecting B.N.A.-French transatlantic mail. There are other aspects of the rates which could be illustrated in a future newsletter, if group members would like to have this expanded.

*My Best Wishes To All Who May Read This Newsletter
and
May We All Have A Successful 1995.*

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