



TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

OF THE

British North America Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 47

Jack Arnell

July 1995

ROYALE 95

I exhibited my small collection of Franco-North American Transatlantic Letters at Royale 95 in Quebec City. This generated considerable interest among those who took an interest in the exhibits. In particular, J.J. Macdonald of our Group expressed interest in my introductory page and, as a result of our conversation, I agreed to reproduce in the Newsletter for anyone else interested in reading it. It follows.

A CENTURY OF FRENCH TRANSATLANTIC MAIL

Before the days of postal treaties, postage on letters between countries could only be paid to frontiers, because there was no arrangement for the exchange of prepaid postage or of unpaid postage collected on delivery between the originating and receiving post offices. As a result, in the case of transatlantic mails, postage had to be paid to the port of departure, together with an outgoing gratuity for the captain who would take the mail. On arrival at destination, the captain would deliver his letters to the post office and receive a second gratuity. The post office would charge each letter with a ship letter fee (to cover the gratuity), together with inland postage to the final address, at the same time marking it by means of a handstamp or in manuscript as a ship letter to support the charging of the fee.

As long as people were dependent on private vessels to carry their letters, there was no assurance when a vessel would sail or what its ultimate destination might be, for captains waited for full cargoes and took them to the required destinations. In 1755, Great Britain established a monthly packet service between Falmouth in Cornwall and New York with an ocean postage of One Shilling—inland postage was extra. This service and charge, with minor modifications, until the introduction of the Cunard steam packets between Liverpool and Halifax/Boston in 1840. Halifax had been added as a port of call for the Falmouth packets in 1797.

Following the American Revolution, the French Government introduced a similar packet service between L'Orient [Lorient] and New York in 1783—changed to a Le Havre-New York service in 1786. The ocean postage was Twenty Sous or Twenty Cents. The American reaction to the extremes of the French Revolution caused the French to abandon the service in 1788.

Following the War of 1812, a number of private American packet lines began operating, mainly between New York and Liverpool or London, where a weekly service soon was developed. Similar service was developed between New York and Le Havre beginning in 1822.

Postal Treaties. The first relevant postal treaty was the 1836 Anglo-French Treaty, which established a cross-channel mail service for a postage of Ten Décimes or Ten Pence. Transatlantic letters sent via Great Britain received this extra charge. With the Cunard service well established, a new treaty was signed in 1843 which included a transatlantic postage by Cunard steamer and transit through England for Ten Pence—French charges were additional.

The first postal treaty between the United States and France was signed in 1847, following the granting of contracts by the two governments for packet services—the first between New York and Southampton, England/Bremen and the second between Cherbourg/Le Havre and New York. The latter had been started with steamers totally inadequate for transatlantic use and only lasted six months.

In 1850, two more American contract packet companies began operating out of New York—the Collins Line to Liverpool and the Havre Line to Southampton/Le Havre. Other contract lines followed, so that by the late 1850s the transatlantic services and international postal arrangements were such, that letters travelled by the first available steamer irrespective of the routing to the final destination.

This exhibit contains letters or envelopes from 1784 to 1884 reflecting the various developments outlined above.

I was also asked about the rarity of Franco-Canadian letters and apart for saying that I had not seeing all that many, I decided to ask the expert. Allan Steinhart told me in answer to this question, that he thought there were a few thousand pre-U.P.U. extant, of which not more than a few hundred were stampless. Having seen the extent of his collection of these covers in the limited edition of spiral-bound photocopies of them, I assume that he must have the *major* stampless collection of them.

THE 2½ PROVINCIAL POSTAGE ON PACKET LETTERS

As a result of the various individual items on this subject which I have included from time to time, Allan Steinhart has sent me his notes on the official notices regarding this charge, together with a number of covers from his collection showing the application. This seems worthy of being kept together for ready reference. His notes follow.

T.A. Stainer's General Post Office Circular, Quebec dated 19 August 1840 read in part:

An essential charge is also made by this order in regard to Ship Letters, meaning letters conveyed between Ports in the United Kingdom and Ports in these Colonies by private merchant vessels. Such Letters if posted or delivered at the Port of the Ships arrival or departure in this Country will be liable to a postage on each Letter not exceeding ½ oz. in weight, of 8d. Sterling, equal to 9d. Cy.—but if posted or delivered to an Office in the interior—the Postage will be 10d. Sterling, equal to 11½ currency.

This information was repeated in a 'Post Office Notice' dated 19 August 1840 sent out by Stayner to the newspapers and was printed on 26 August in the *Kingston Chronicle*. Although worded differently, the information was the same. This also noted 'that on Letters sent by private ship from the Provinces the postage must be pre-paid'.

It was repeated again in the 'Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Affairs of the Post Office in North America', which was dated 31 December 1841, and signed by Stayner and others.

The 11 October 1843 Treasury Warrant, effective 5 January 1844, stated in relation to Letters sent between the United Kingdom and B.N.A.

that on all Letters, not exceeding half an ounce in weight, transmitted by the Post (whether by packet boat or private ship) between any place in the United Kingdom and any place in British North America...(Letters posted or delivered at the port in British North America,...at which the Letter may be landed, or from which they may be despatched excepted, and which Letters are to be charged the rates of British Postage only), these shall be paid, in addition to the rates of British postage payable on such Letters,...an uniform colonial rate of two pence, whether such Letters shall pass between British North America,...and the United Kingdom direct, or *via* the United States; provided always, that if such Letters passing through the United States shall be charged with any foreign postage, such foreign postage shall be charged on such Letters in addition to the British postage and the said colonial rate.

Again as a result of the above Treasury Warrant, a Circular of Instructions, dated 1 December 1843, was issued by Stayner to Postmasters in Canada from the G.P.O., Quebec. Section 4 read in part:

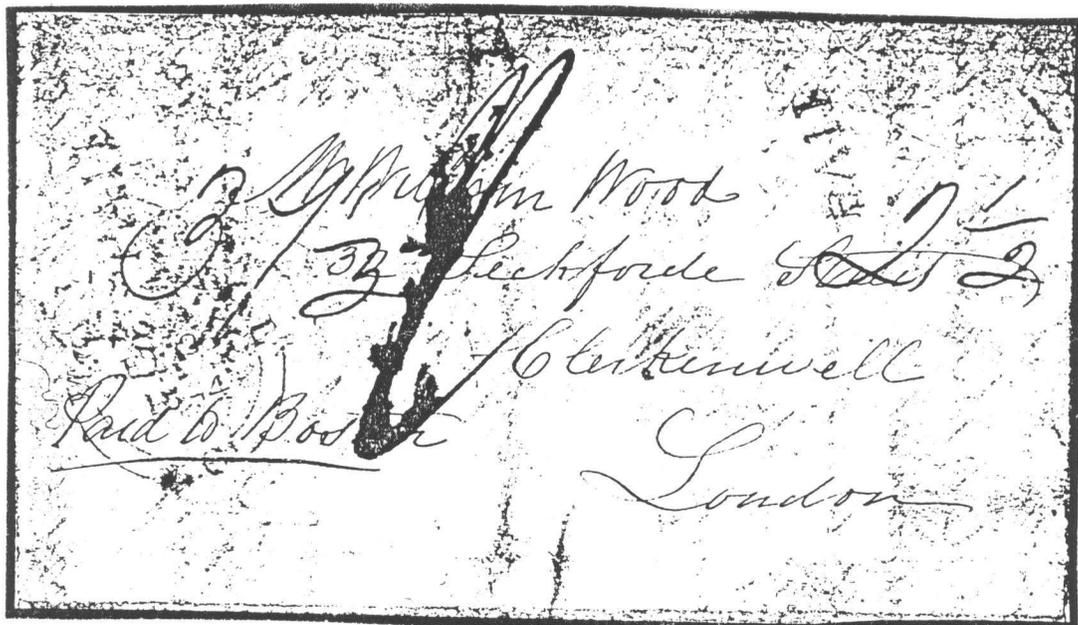
but on Letters between the United Kingdom and this Country, *via* the United States, the Provincial Charge is reduced to a uniform rate on a Letter not exceeding ½ oz. of Two Pence sterling or Two Pence Half Penny currency, from any part of Canada to the Frontier line between Canada and the United States or *vice versa*....[This] must invariably be prepaid.

An April 1855 G.P.O. Directory from London stated:

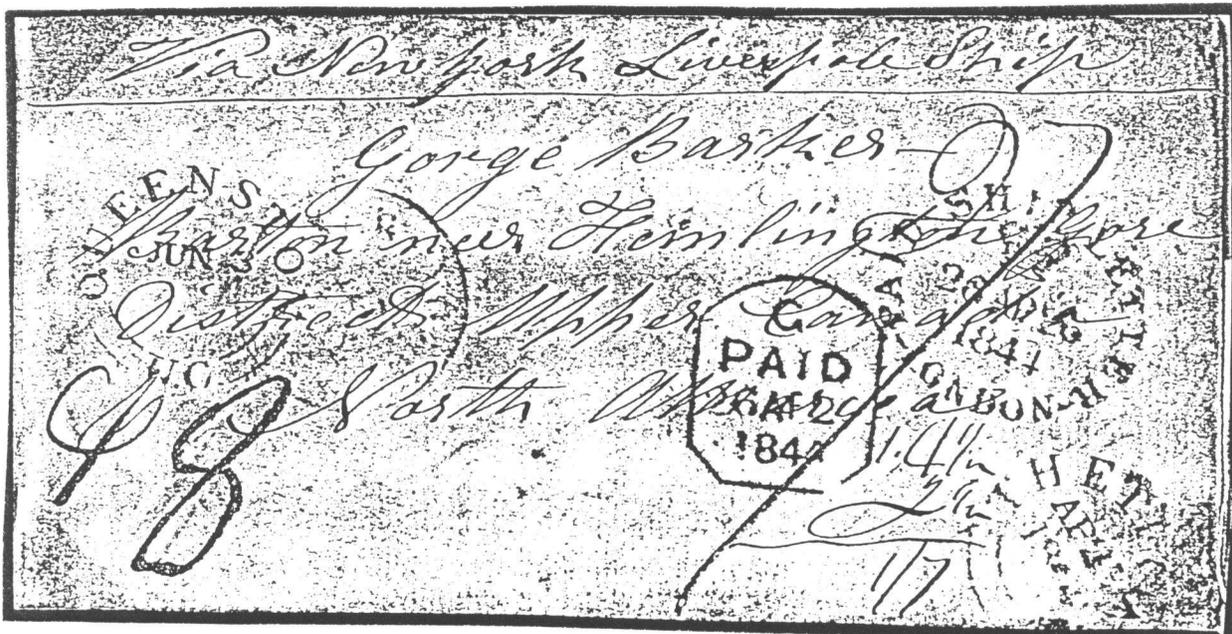
Letters forwarded to or from British North America by the Liverpool Packets or by Private Ships, passing direct between the United Kingdom and British America, are charged with an Uniform Colonial rate of Two Pence the half ounce when posted or delivered at any other towns than the Ports of Halifax (Nova Scotia), or St. John's (Newfoundland).

The British inwards or outwards Ship Letter rate at this time was 8d. Stg. single.

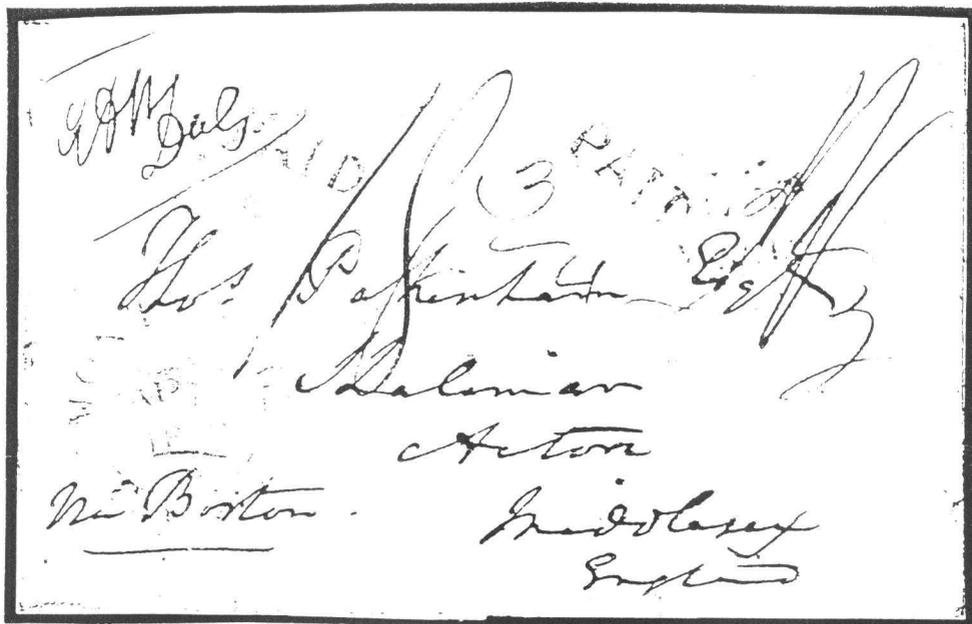
Allan's first letter was mailed at Montreal on 16 February 1844, six weeks after the new rate came into effect. It was endorsed 'Paid to Boston' and shows 2¹/₂d. Cy. and 37¹/₂ U.S. cents prepaid—it must have had an extra sheet, requiring the double U.S. postage. Carried by the *Hibernia* from Boston on 1 March and landed at Liverpool on 13 March, where rated 1s. 0d. Stg. postage due.



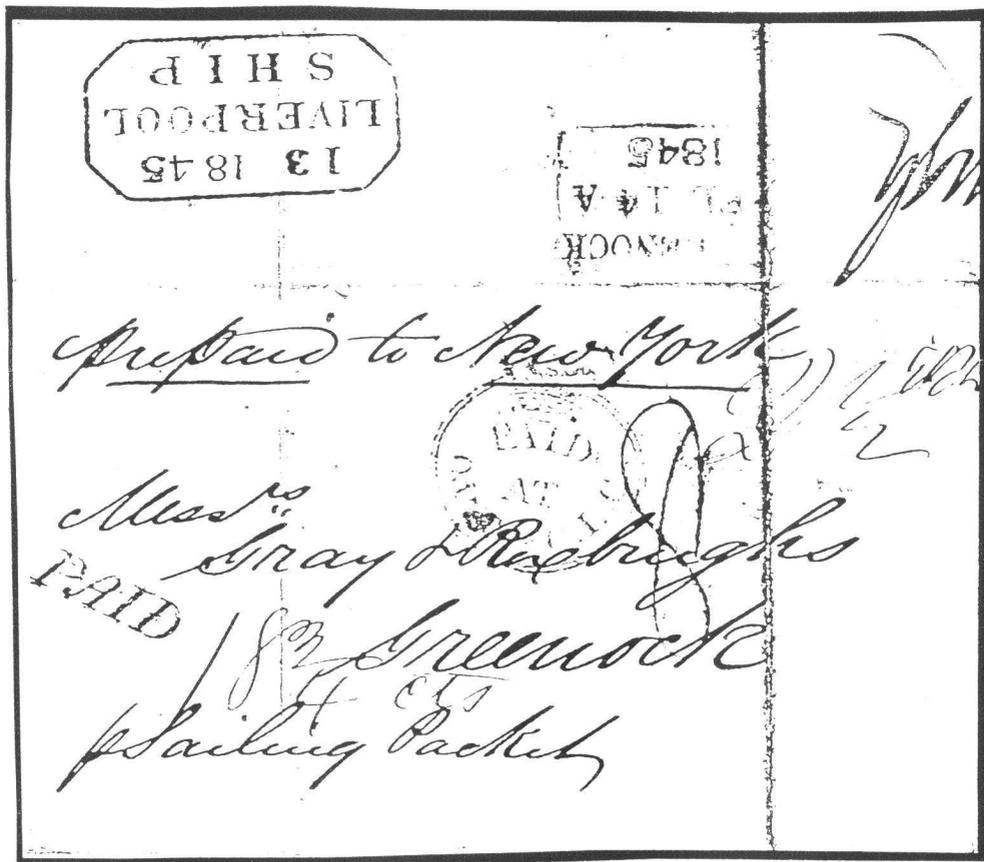
The second letter was mailed at Thetford, England on 25 April 1844 with 8d. Stg. prepaid as an outgoing Ship Letter and endorsed 'Via New York Liverpool Ship', viz. U.S. sailing packet. Datestamped at London on the next day and struck with an oval 'PAID SHIP LETTER - LONDON'. Datestamped 'SHIP' at New York (date illegible) and rated 27 cents to the border. Datestamped at Queenston on 3 December, where U.S. charge was converted to 1s. 4¹/₂d. and the 2¹/₂d. provincial charge added for a total postage due of 1s. 7d. Cy.



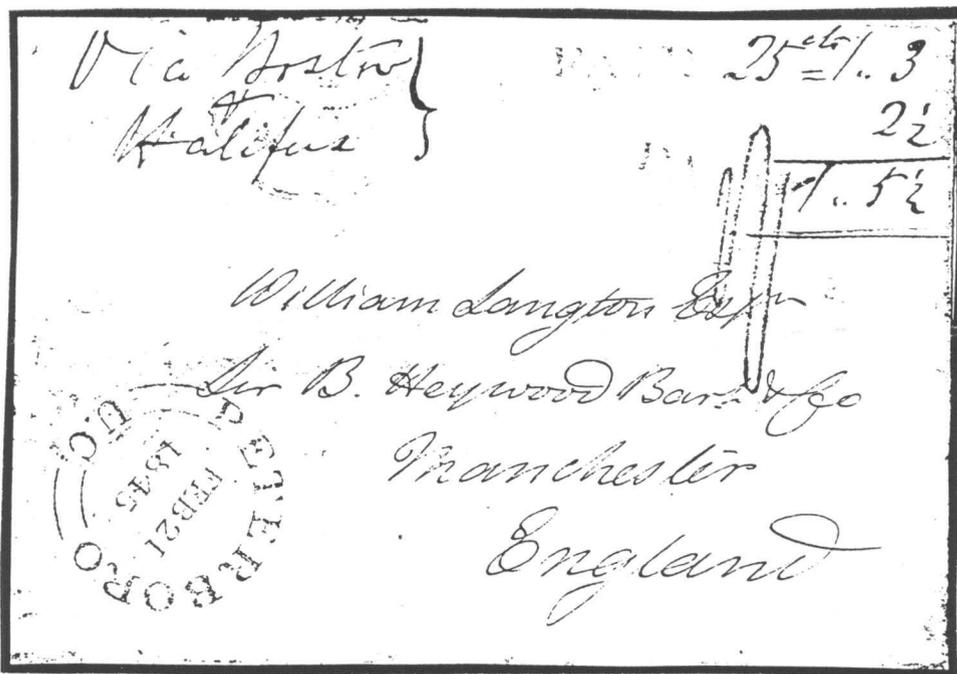
The next letter was similar to the first one. It was mailed at Montreal on 25 April 1844, but has only 18³/₄ U.S. cents prepaid as a single letter. It was carried by the *Acadia* from Boston.



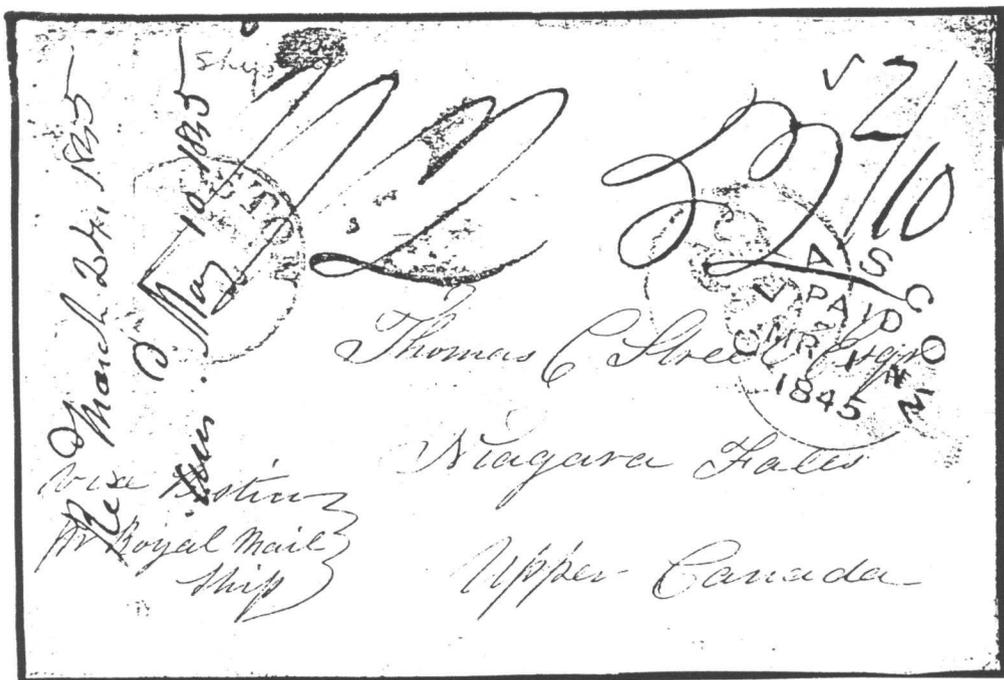
The fourth letter was from Quebec City on 11 January 1845, endorsed 'p Sailing Packet', with 2¹/₂d. Cy. and 18³/₄ U.S. cents prepaid, so struck with a crown circle 'PAID AT QUEBEC, L.C.' Carried by an American sailing packet from New York to Liverpool, where backstamped with a boxed 'LIVERPOOL SHIP on 13 February and rated 8d. Stg. as an incoming ship letter.



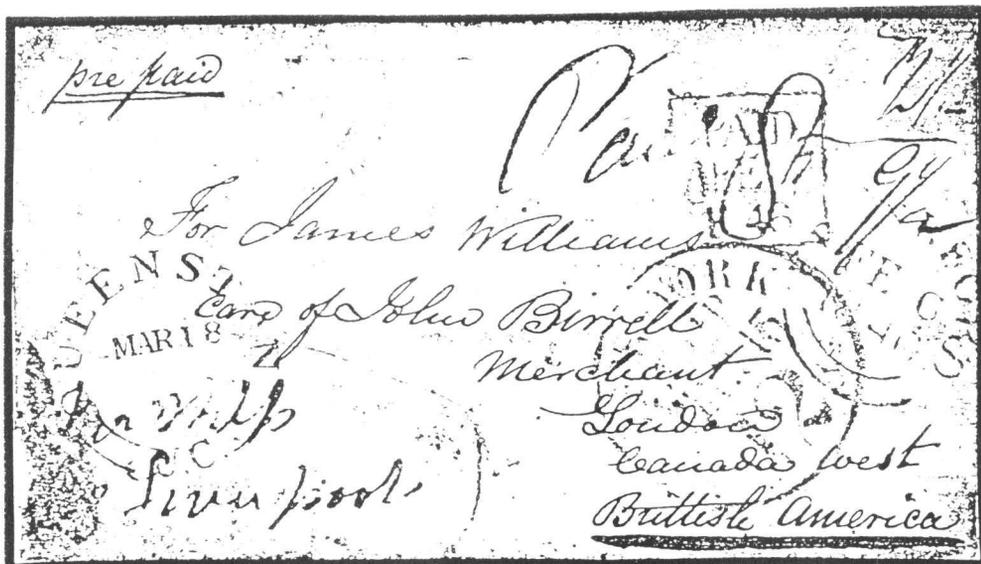
The next letter used a more complete way of showing the prepaid postage to Boston. It was mailed at Peterborough, U.C. on 21 February 1845, and shows the U.S. postage in both currencies, viz. '25^{cts} = 1 .. 3', which with the Provincial Charge gave a total paid of 1s. 5¹/₂d. Cy. The *Hibernia* carried it from Boston on 1 March to Liverpool on 17 March, where struck with the British '1/-' Stg. postage due.



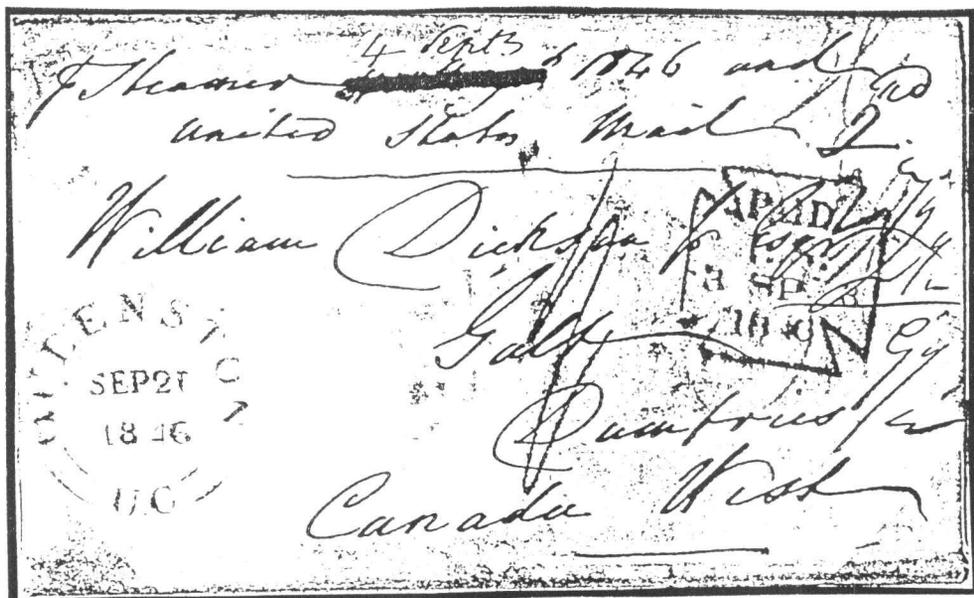
The sixth letter was prepaid at Glasgow on 1 March 1845, with 1s. 2d. Stg. to include the Provincial Charge and endorsed 'Via Boston pr Royal Mail Ship'. Carried from Liverpool on 4 March on the *Cambria* and arrived at Boston on 17 March, where datestamped with 'SHIP' and rated 20³/₄ cents postage due with handstamp, as a ship letter (2 cents), plus U.S. postage to the border; this was rerated as a double letter at 52¹/₂ cents. At Queenston, this was converted to currency and the Provincial Charge added for a total postage due of 2s. 10d. Cy.



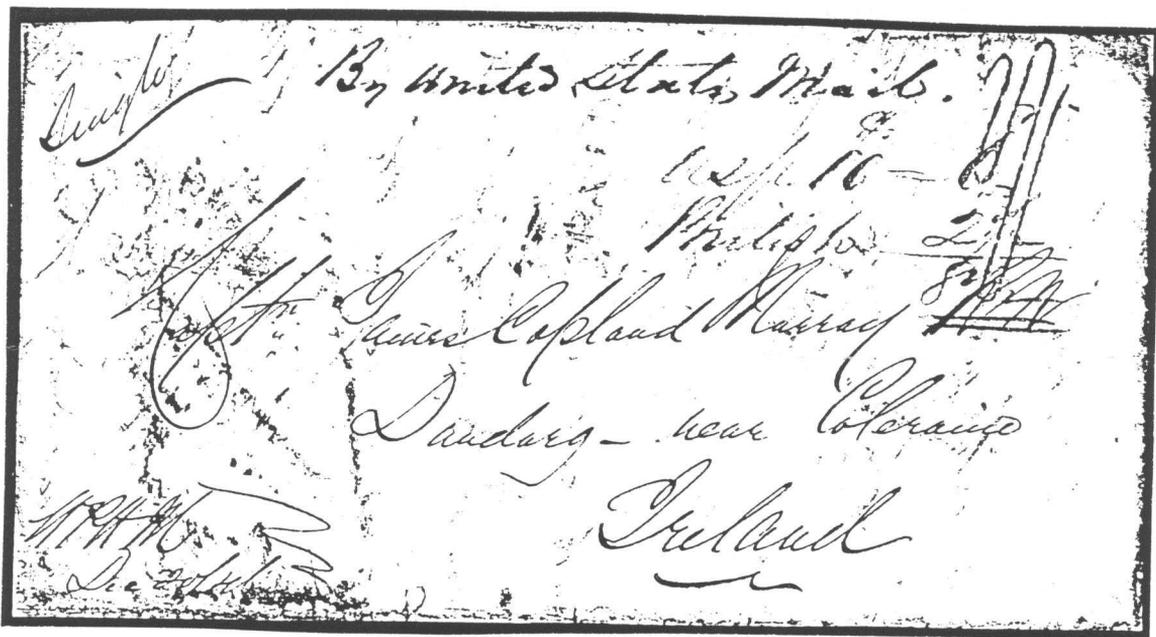
The next letter was mailed at Frankford, G.B. on 6 February 1846, with 8d. Stg, prepaid as an outgoing ship letter. Datestamped 'PAID' at London on the next day. Carried from Liverpool on an American sailing packet to New York, where datestamped with 'SHIP - 12' to show 12 cents postage due as a ship letter—2 cents ship letter fee and 10 cents U.S. postage to the border. Datestamped at Queenston on 18 March, where U.S. charge was converted to 7d. and 2 1/2 added for a total postage due of 9 1/2d. Cy. This reflects the U.K. Canada ship letter rate of 10d. Stg. or 11 1/2d. Cy., combining the British outgoing ship letter fee and the Provincial Charge.



The eighth letter reflects the U.K.-U.S. 'Closed Mail' agreement which became effective for the 4 April 1845 Mail from Liverpool, Mailed at London on 3 September 1846 with 1s. 0d. Stg. packet postage prepaid and put in a closed bag for Canada. Carried by the Cambria to Boston. The bag was opened at Queenston on 21 September and rated 9 1/2d. Cy. postage due as the total of 7d. (U.S. 12 cents converted) and 2 1/2d. Provincial—both shown. Backstamped at Hamilton and Galt on the next day.



The next letter shows a contemporary letter in the opposite direction. Mailed at London, U.C. on 22 December 1846 with 8¹/₂d. Cy. postage prepaid (2¹/₂d. prov. + 6d. {10 cents U.S.}). Backstamped at Hamilton on 23rd and Queenston on 24th, where put in a closed bag for Ireland, where it was rated with 1s. 0d. Stg. packet postage due.



The final letter was mailed at Coldstream, England with 8d. Stg. prepaid as an outgoing ship letter. Backstamped with a crown 'SHIP LETTER LIVERPOOL'. Carried by a private trader to Montreal, where struck with a crown 'SHIP LETTER MONTREAL' and with '2^D 1/2 Currency' to show the provincial component of the 10d. Stg. ship letter rate from anywhere in Great Britain to anywhere in B.N.A.



AN EDITORIAL APOLOGY

I cannot explain how I managed to introduce a very strange error in the masthead of the last five newsletters. Some of you must have noticed it and wondered what had come over me. When I added the BNAPS logo to the masthead, I changed 'British North America Philatelic Society' to 'BRITISH NORTH AMERICA STUDY GROUP'; I must have been thinking of what was going into the body of the newsletter. I only noticed this as I finished the printing of the last newsletter, so have corrected it for this one.

Dr. J.C. Arnell
P.O. Box HM 1263
Hamilton HMF
Bermuda

AIRMAIL

PRINTED MATTER



Clarence A. Stillions
2010 48th Street NW
Washington, DC 20007-1552
U.S.A.

