

# *British North America & United States' Packets*

## *(Canadian Mails Carried by United States Packets)*

Following the 'postal war' between the United States and the United Kingdom, a convention resolved regulations and rates of postage for letter mail carried across the Atlantic by their contract packets.<sup>1</sup> The rate agreed was one shilling Sterling/twenty-four cents for a half-ounce letter; twopence Sterling was added for letters to the British North American Provinces via the United States.

<i>United Kingdom To/From</i>	<i>United States Packet</i>	<i>British Packet (via Halifax)</i>	<i>British Packet (via U.S.)</i>	<i>Canadian Packet (from 1853)</i>
<i>Canada</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 4<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 1½<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 4<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 1½<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>
<i>Newfoundland</i>	<i>None recorded</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> Stg</i>	<i>None recorded</i>	<i>No Direct Service</i>
<i>N.B. &amp; N.S.</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 5½<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 3<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 5½<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>No Service</i>
<i>P.E.I.</i>	<i>None recorded</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 6<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>None recorded</i>	<i>No Service</i>

The first United States steam packet service carrying contract mail in this period, the Ocean Line, operated with only two ships and was considered slow and irregular alongside the Cunard Line; its successor, the Collins Line, provided a better service, but letters for British North America were rarely directed to these packets. In 1854 the rates for letters carried by British and Canadian packets were substantially reduced but the rates for United States packets remained unchanged, further reducing the desirability of this option.

<i>United Kingdom To/From</i>	<i>United States Packet</i>	<i>British Packet (via Halifax)</i>	<i>British Packet (via U.S.)</i>	<i>Canadian Packet</i>
<i>Canada</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 4<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>6<sup>d</sup> Stg / 7½<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>8<sup>d</sup> Stg / 10<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>6<sup>d</sup> Stg / 7½<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>
<i>Newfoundland</i>	<i>No Service</i>	<i>6<sup>d</sup> Stg</i>	<i>8<sup>d</sup> Stg</i>	<i>No Service</i>
<i>N.B. &amp; N.S.</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 5½<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>6<sup>d</sup> Stg / 7½<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>8<sup>d</sup> Stg / 10<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>No Service</i>
<i>P.E.I.</i>	<i>1<sup>s</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> 9<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>6<sup>d</sup> Stg / 9<sup>d</sup> Cy</i>	<i>8<sup>d</sup> Stg / 1<sup>s</sup> Cy</i>	<i>No Service</i>

In March 1854, after Russia had invaded Turkey and France and the United Kingdom declared war on Russia,<sup>2</sup> the Cunard Line was required to make available ships for British troop movements, and in December 1854 the British packet service to New York was suspended for the entirety of 1855.<sup>3</sup> This favoured the Collins Line and there followed an increase in the quantity of mail carried by United States packets at the higher rate sometimes called, erroneously, the 'Crimean War Rate'. This display demonstrates that the 'United States Packet' rate, although rarely seen, predated the Crimean War and remained in force after the British packet New York service resumed.<sup>4</sup> A secondary objective of the display is the examination of anomalies in currency conversion, illustrated by the many rate handstamps used on letters carried by United States packets, particularly in British North America, several of which are unrecorded or have been misrepresented in the past.

Contributors: Malcolm Montgomery, Greg Spring.

<sup>1</sup> Anglo/United States Postal Convention, 1848-1849.

<sup>2</sup> [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/battles/crimea/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/battles/crimea/)

<sup>3</sup> N.R.W.P. Bonsor, 'North Atlantic Seaway', Stephenson, 1955; [www.oceanlinermuseum.co.uk/cunard/](http://www.oceanlinermuseum.co.uk/cunard/); in all ten ships were involved: Alps, Andes, Arabia, Cambria, Etna, Europa, Jura, Niagara, Taurus, Teneriffe.

<sup>4</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings, 1840-1875', U.S. Philatelic Classics Society Inc., 1988: 18<sup>th</sup> November 1854 Africa last Cunard Line sailing for New York until 9<sup>th</sup> January 1856. 13<sup>th</sup> December 1854 Africa last Cunard Line sailing out of New York until 6<sup>th</sup> February 1856.

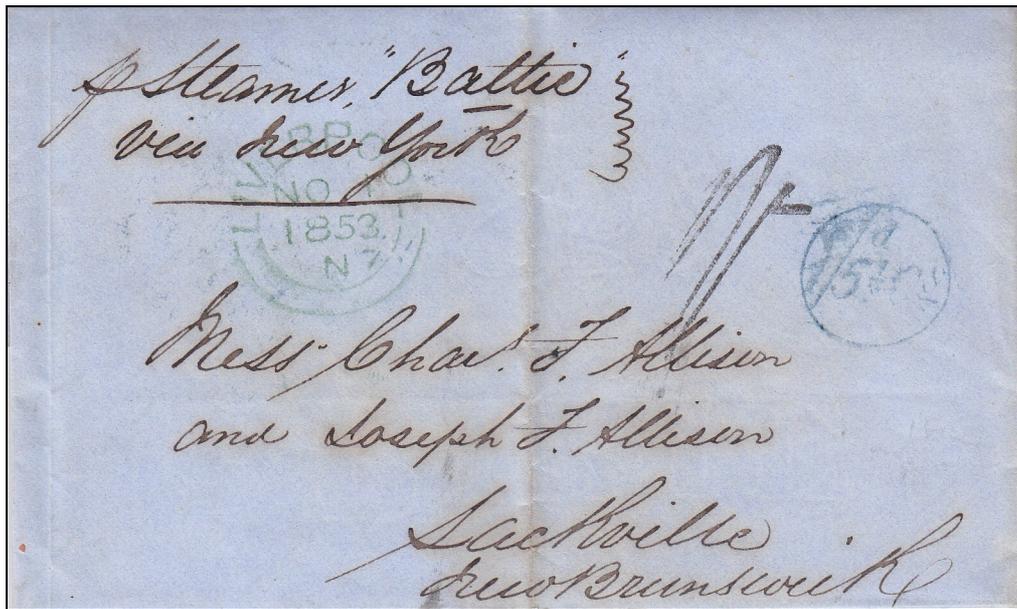
# British North America & United States' Packets

## England to New Brunswick

$\frac{s}{d}$   
1/5½C<sup>y</sup>

The default route for Maritime Provinces' mail was by British packet via Halifax; letters could be directed via the United States, for which the rate was one shilling and twopence Sterling, since devolution of postal control exchanged at one shilling and fivepence halfpenny Currency. Only St. Andrew, was supplied with a handstamp for this amount.<sup>1</sup>

Liverpool, England to Sackville, New Brunswick, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1853.



An unpaid letter directed 'p Steamer "Baltic" via New York',<sup>2</sup> on which the British Post Office has claimed a shilling Sterling. It was exchanged at St. Andrews, where the one shilling and fivepence halfpenny charged was raised, the handstamp in the distinctive blue ink used at that office (the datestamp on the reverse is the same colour).<sup>3</sup>



Collins Line 'Baltic'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Treasury Warrant, effective 15<sup>th</sup> April 1849. Post 456/457, 452/453. The breakdown of the rate was: United Kingdom inland, 2d; ocean, 8d; United States transit, 2d; Colonial inland 2d (Sterling). The exchange rate in this instance is 1s Sterling : 1s 3d Currency, 1 : 1.25.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic mail Sailings', p. 102: Collins Line 'Baltic' out of Liverpool 2<sup>nd</sup> November for New York 14<sup>th</sup> November 1853. The letter reached St. Andrewson 17<sup>th</sup>, St. John on 18<sup>th</sup> and Sackville on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1853.

<sup>3</sup> J.C. Arnell (Editor), 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail': this handstamp is not listed.

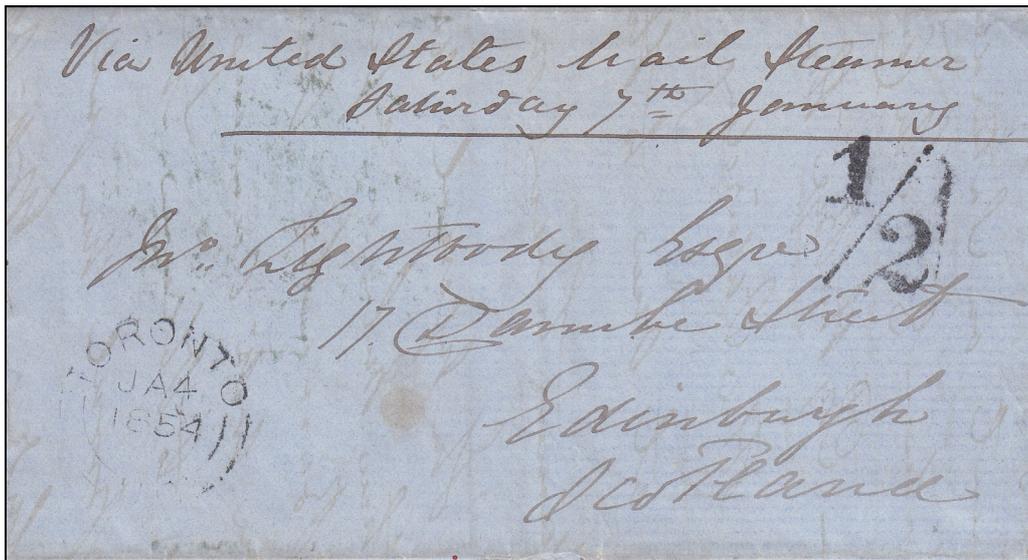
<sup>4</sup> Illustration from a print in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

# British North America & United States Packets Canada West to Scotland

1/2

At the beginning of 1854 the charge for a letter weighing less than half an ounce between Canada and the United Kingdom via the United States by British or United States packet was one shilling and twopence Sterling, one shilling and fourpence Currency.<sup>1</sup> The Toronto office used a '1/2' handstamp to show the postage due in Sterling.<sup>2</sup>

Toronto, Canada West to Edinburgh, Scotland, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1854.



A letter posted unpaid and carried by United States packet, the Collins Line 'Pacific', from New York to Liverpool.<sup>3</sup> It shows the Toronto handstamp for the United Kingdom postage due, one shilling and twopence (Sterling). This pre-dates any changes to the Cunard Line service caused by the Crimean War.



Collins Line 'Pacific'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Treasury Warrants 1840 and 1841; Anglo-United States Convention, effective January 1849; Treasury Warrant, March 1854, effective 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854.

<sup>2</sup> J.C. Arnell, 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', p. 59: A.10, attributed to Toronto, 1852-1855.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 102: 'Pacific' departed New York 7<sup>th</sup> January and made Liverpool 18<sup>th</sup> January 1854; the letter bears a Liverpool transit of that date; if the letter had been sent by British packet it would have been delayed a week.

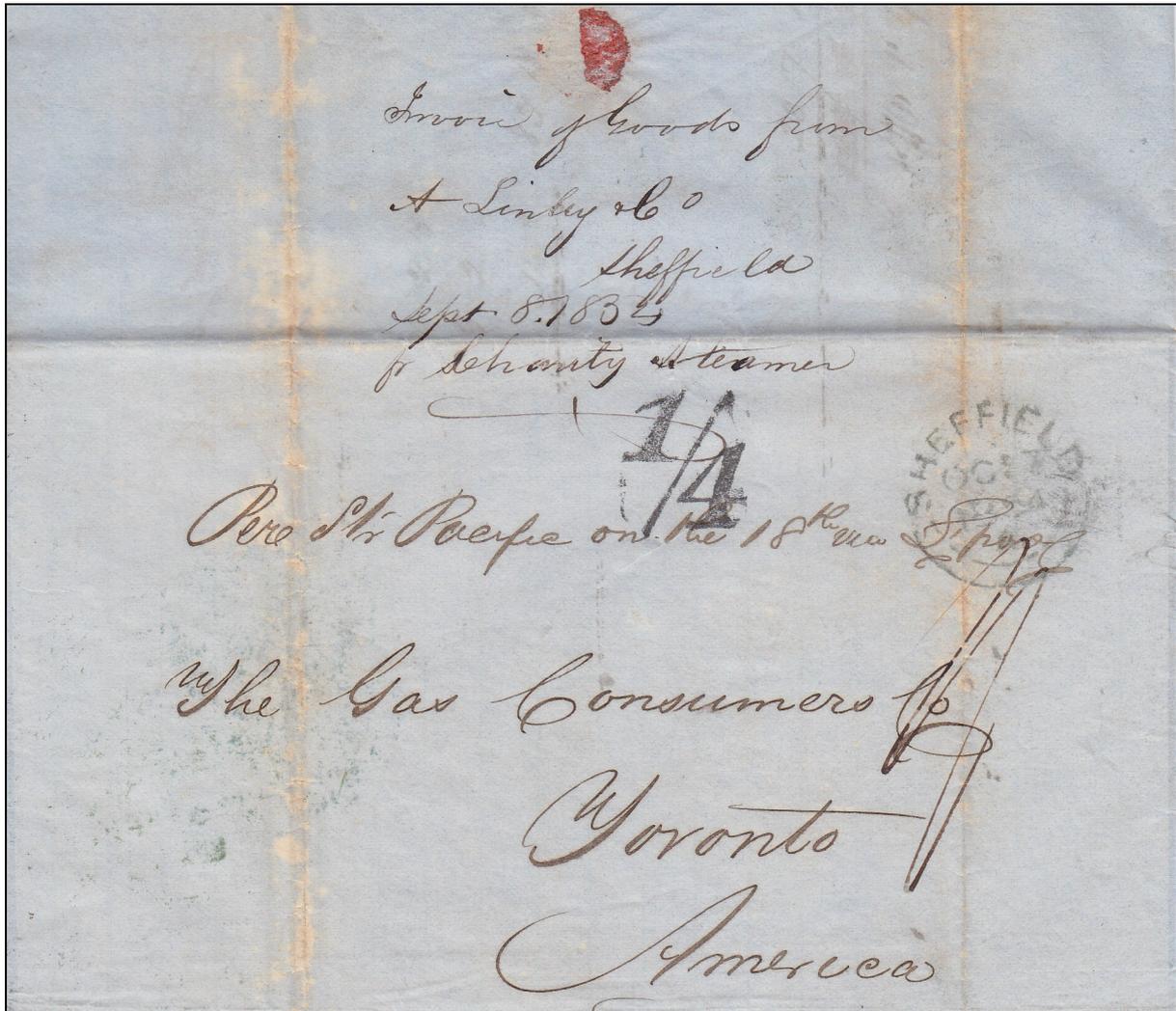
<sup>4</sup> Illustration from a painting by Samuel Walters, 'p.s. Pacific rescuing the crew of the barque Jessie Stevens', 1853, Mariner's Museum, Newport News.

# British North America & United States Packets

## England to Canada West

Unpaid letters for Canada by United States packets show a one shilling Sterling (1/-) claim by the British Post Office against Canada, of which twenty-one cents would be credited to the United States. The one shilling and twopence Sterling postage due (not shown) was charged at one shilling and fourpence Currency in Canada.

Sheffield, England to Toronto, Canada West, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1854.



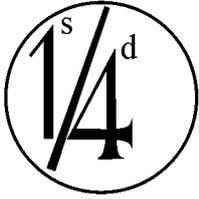
An invoice for goods carried by the Canadian Steam Navigation Company's ship 'Charity' directed to the Collins Line 'Pacific'.<sup>1</sup> It was charged one shilling and fourpence Currency at Toronto.<sup>2</sup>

1/4

<sup>1</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p.124: 'Charity' out of Liverpool 15<sup>th</sup> September 1854; p. 102: 'Pacific' out of Liverpool 18<sup>th</sup> October 1854.

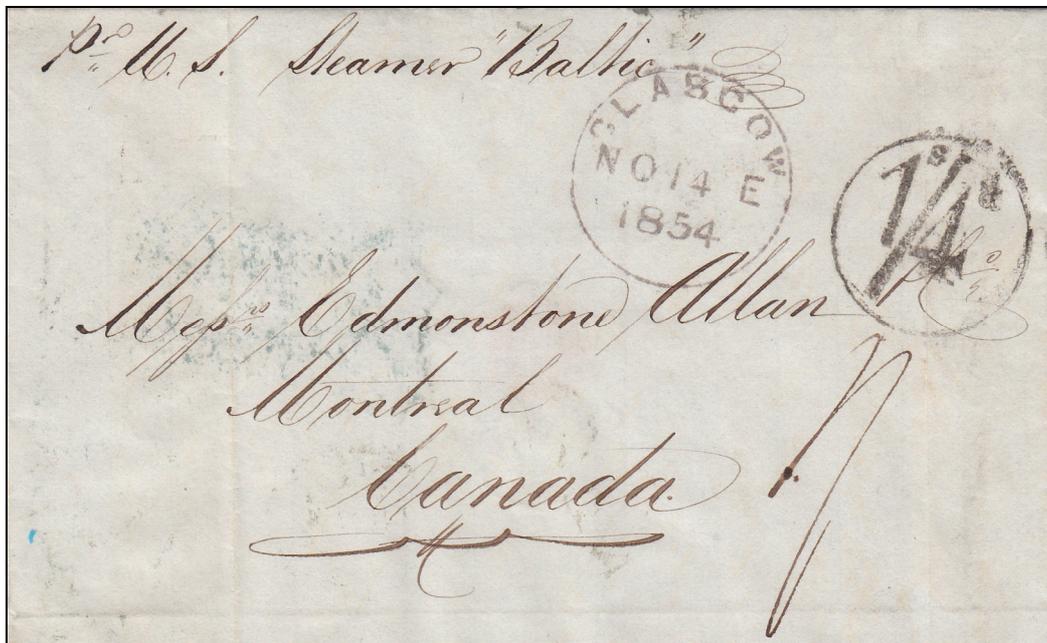
<sup>2</sup> J.C. Arnell (Editor), 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', 1987: A.7, attributed to Toronto, 1853-1854.

# British North America & United States Packets Scotland to Canada East



British and Canadian packet rates were reduced on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854; the rate for United States packets remained unchanged.<sup>1</sup> Provincial currency had been devalued against Sterling in 1851; this is observed in the Maritime Provinces' but was not imposed in Canada until 1854. The old exchange rate continued in force on letters carried by United States packets, and some 'Cy:' handstamps appear to have been modified.

Glasgow, Scotland to Montreal, Canada East, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1854.



A letter to Messrs. Edmonstone Allan, the company that was awarded the Canadian packet contract after the failure of the Canadian Steam Navigation Company. It was directed to the Collins Line 'Baltic'<sup>2</sup> and charged one shilling and fourpence Currency at Montreal;<sup>3</sup> the British claim, one shilling, is shown in manuscript.

<sup>1</sup> Rates established under the Anglo-United States Convention, January 1849; GPO Notice effective 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 102: 'Baltic' out of Liverpool 15<sup>th</sup>, made New York 26<sup>th</sup> November 1854.

<sup>3</sup> J.C. Arnell (Editor), 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail': not recorded but similar to A.5, attributed to Montreal from 1846, but missing 'Cy:' - previously thought to have been occasioned by wear and tear.

# British North America & United States Packets England to Canada West

The rate for a letter weighing less than half an ounce between the United Kingdom and Canada carried via the United States was one shilling and twopence Sterling, one shilling and fourpence Currency.<sup>1</sup> In 1852 a number of new '1/4' handstamps, without the 'Currency' designation, were introduced for unpaid incoming letters.<sup>2</sup> When the rate by British packet was reduced these handstamps continued in use for letters carried by United States packets, notably in 1855 when the Cunard service was reduced to meet Crimean War commitments.

London, England to Toronto, Canada West, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1855.



A letter posted unpaid and carried by United States packet, the Collins Line 'Baltic', from Liverpool to New York.<sup>3</sup> It shows handstamps for the United Kingdom claim, one shilling Sterling, and the Currency postage due, one shilling and fourpence, the latter applied at Toronto.

1/4

<sup>1</sup> Treasury Warrants 1840 and 1841; Anglo-United States Convention, effective January 1849; Treasury Warrant, March 1854, effective 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854.

<sup>2</sup> J.C. Arnell, 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', p. 59: four variants are identified, A.6, A.7, A.8 and A.15, attributed to Montreal, Toronto, Toronto/Hamilton and Montreal respectively. This attribution is suspect; the example above is similar, but not identical to A.7.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 104: 'Baltic' departed Liverpool 10th and made New York on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1855.

# British North America & United States Packets Canada West to England

*Very few letters sent by United States packets were prepaid at the time of posting; those to the United Kingdom that were prepaid were required to have the prepayment shown in red and in Sterling to reduce the likelihood of confusion on arrival.*

*Bytown, Canada West to London, England, 15<sup>h</sup> March 1855.*



*A letter prepaid for a United States packet, although not so directed, and passed to Montreal, thence to New York. The letter was carried to Liverpool by the Collins Line 'Nashville' on her only sailing for the line.<sup>1</sup> 'Nashville' was better known for a later role as a confederate cruiser in the American Civil War; she was destroyed by Federal forces in 1864.*



*s.s. 'Nashville'.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 103; 'Nashville' was chartered for one round voyage when 'Pacific' was unable to make the voyage.

<sup>2</sup> N.R.P. Bonsor, 'North Atlantic Seaway', p. 57. Illustration: Peabody-Essex Museum, 'C.S.S. 'Nashville' burning the ship 'Harvey Birch'', D. McFarlane, 1864.

# *British North America & United States Packets*

## *England to Canada East*

*Letters directed to a particular shipping line were generally so routed even though underpaid, provided that the 'first vessel' principle applied. Letters directed 'Per U.S. Mail' but paid only eightpence Sterling for the British packet via the United States, were charged the difference although the actual deficiency was not shown on the letter, only the British claim.<sup>1</sup>*

*London, England to Sherbrooke, Canada East, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1855.*



*A letter prepaid eightpence Sterling but directed 'Per U.S. Mail Steamer' with a manuscript '8' in red and '4' in black; the latter being the British claim necessary to make up the sum (one shilling) required for British inland postage and the twenty-one cents due to the United States. It was carried by the Collins Line 'Baltic' from Liverpool to New York.<sup>2</sup> In Canada the letter was charged sevenpence Currency, fourpence halfpenny for the British claim and twopence halfpenny for the Canadian inland postage; effectively a total of one shilling and fivepence Currency, much closer to the actual exchange rate than that normally applied to trans-Atlantic letters carried by United States packets.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Anglo-United States Convention, effective January 1849; Post Office Notice following Treasury Warrant, March 1854, effective 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 36: the earliest British packet departure was the Cunard Line 'America' on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1855; Collins Line 'Baltic' sailed on 24<sup>th</sup> March for New York on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1855.

<sup>3</sup> The majority of letters were charged at one shilling and fourpence Currency.

# British North America & United States Packets

## Canada West to England

Postmasters were instructed to send mail by way of the United States packets only when so directed or, for unpaid letters, when a United States packet was next to leave.<sup>1</sup> The United States packet rate was not reduced in 1854, and remained at one shilling and twopence Sterling - there was no 'Crimean War Rate.'<sup>2</sup>

Holland Landing, Canada West to London, England, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1855.



A letter paid eightpence Sterling (tenpence Currency) on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1855 and directed 'Via Boston' for the British Packet. However, it was too late for the 'Africa' sailing on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the Cunard Line New York sailings had been suspended.<sup>3</sup> A further sixpence Sterling was paid<sup>4</sup> and the letter was sent by United States packet, the Collins Line 'Atlantic'.

Collins Line 'Atlantic'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Various letters Post 48/133 in November 1854.

<sup>2</sup> Treasury Warrant effective 23rd March 1854: by United States Packet (Collins Line) one shilling and twopence; by British Packet (Cunard Line via United States), eightpence.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', pp. 36, 103: 'Atlantic' left New York on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1855, arrived Liverpool 18<sup>th</sup>.

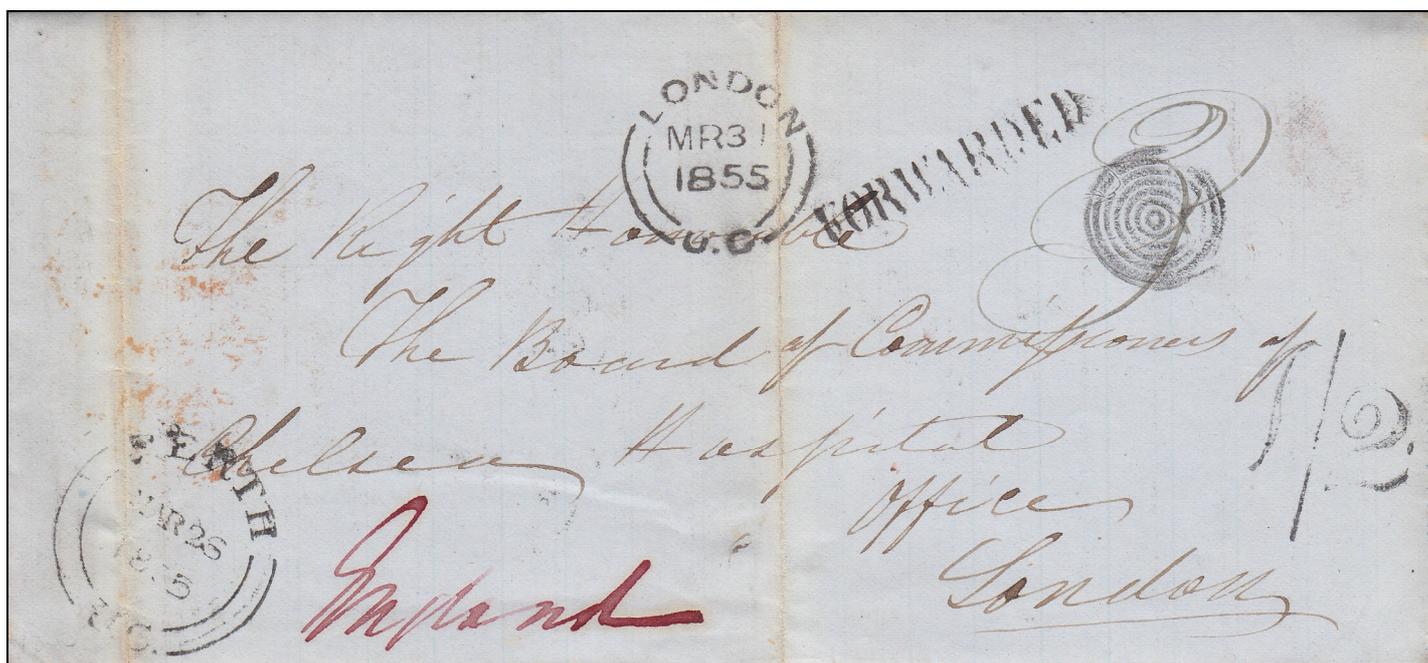
<sup>4</sup> Holland Landing is south of Lake Simcoe, north of Toronto where the '6<sup>d</sup> S<sup>g</sup>' handstamp was probably applied; this strike two years earlier than previously reported (vide JC Arnell 'Handbook on Trans-Atlantic Mail', E.6, p. 64).

<sup>5</sup> Illustration from a painting 'Jenny Lind embarking on board the Atlantic', by Samuel Walters.

# British North America & United States Packets Canada West to England

The post office generally directed letters to the first packet to sail, notwithstanding any extra cost.<sup>1</sup> In 1855 the Hamilton office resurrected a '1/2' (one shilling and twopence Sterling) handstamp for postage due in the United Kingdom; previously attributed to London, Canada West, it is more likely to have been used at the exchange office with the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Perth, Canada West to London, England, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1855.



'That Michael Gratesby is a Discharged Soldier from the late De Watteville and Glengary Regiments, that he served in the former for the space of six years a hundred and nine days and in the latter two years two hundred and thirty five days, served in Canada during the late war with the United States was wounded in the leg whilst with the Glengary Reg<sup>t</sup>. at the Battle of Chippawa.'

A memorial and application for a pension addressed to the Chelsea Hospital. It was posted unpaid and carried by United States packet, the Collins Line 'Atlantic', from New York to Liverpool.<sup>3</sup> It shows the Toronto handstamp for the United Kingdom postage due, one shilling and twopence (Sterling).

<sup>1</sup> Treasury Warrants 1840 and 1841; Anglo-United States Convention, effective January 1849; Treasury Warrant, March 1854, effective 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854.

<sup>2</sup> J.C. Arnell, 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', p. 59: A.12, attributed to London, C.W.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 103: 'Atlantic' departed New York 4<sup>th</sup> April and made Liverpool 18<sup>th</sup> April 1855.

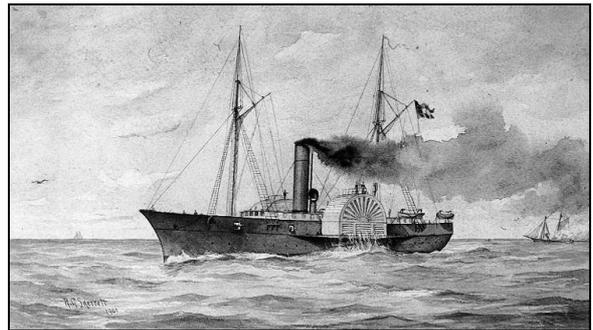
# British North America & United States Packets England to Nova Scotia

Very few letters to the Maritime Provinces were carried by United States packets - they were an expensive option, charged at the one shilling rate to the United States,<sup>1</sup> one shilling and threepence Currency with a further twopence halfpenny Currency for Colonial inland postage.<sup>2</sup> This rate did not compare well with the sevenpence halfpenny Currency rate by British packet via Halifax.

Peckham, England to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1855.



A cover carried by 'Nashville'<sup>3</sup> to New York, thence to St. Andrews and Halifax. The British Post Office claimed three cents for inland postage; the trans-Atlantic rate of twenty-four cents also included five cents for inland postage to cover the rate to the border, but leaving five cents, twopence halfpenny Currency, to be added for provincial postage.



Collins Line 'Nashville'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Anglo-United States Convention, effective January 1849..

<sup>2</sup> The Colonial rate on British mails was 2d Stg per ½ ounce (2½ Cy), Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1851, paragraph 6.

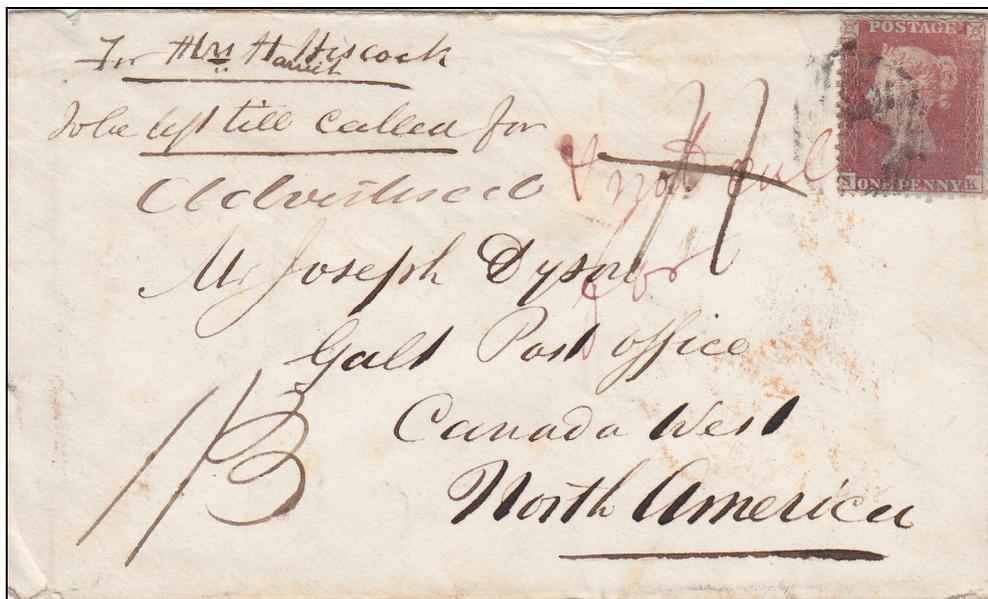
<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p.103: 'Nashville' departed Liverpool 7<sup>th</sup>, made New York on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1855; *ibid* p.103, f. #22.

<sup>4</sup> Illustration, source not known.

# British North America & United States Packets England to Canada West

Later a Confederate corsair and lightly-armed man-of-war responsible for sinking the 'Harvey Birch', 'Nashville' had been built for passenger service between New York and Charleston. In 1854 she was chartered by the New York and Havre Steam Navigation Company for two Atlantic voyages and in 1855 by the Collins Line to replace the 'Pacific' for one voyage.<sup>1</sup>

Shaftesbury, England to Galt, Canada West, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1855.



A letter prepaid only a penny; the British Post Office has claimed elevenpence and passed it to the first ship to sail, 'Nashville', a ship on charter to the Collins Line and thus considered an United States packet.<sup>2</sup> It was eventually charged one shilling and threepence Currency,<sup>3</sup> the prepayment having been taken into account. Marked in manuscript 'To be left till called for', there are two further endorsements 'Advertised' and 'Not called for'.

<sup>1</sup> Parker & Bowen, p. 204.

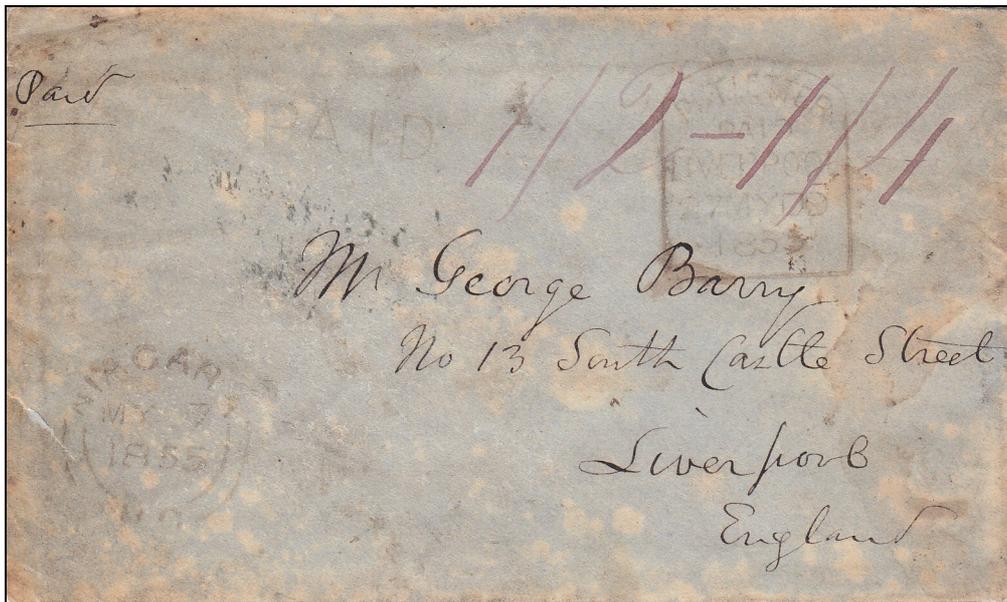
<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p.105: out of Liverpool on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1855 for New York on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1855

<sup>3</sup> The rate to Canada by United States packet was 1s 2d, but the British Post Office has claimed only the British and United States share of the postage, leaving the 2d Canadian inland postage to be resolved on arrival. The Canadian Post Office has charged the normal 1s 4d Cy, less the 1d (Stg) prepayment.

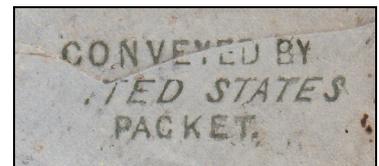
# *British North America & United States Packets Canada West to England*

*The 'Atlantic', a screw steamer of 2,860 tons, was one of four ships - Pacific, Arctic and Baltic were the other three - built for the Collins Line to run between New York and Liverpool when the Line was awarded a contract to carry United States mails. Her first sailing was in April 1850 and she remained with the Line until 1860.<sup>1</sup>*

*Niagara, Canada West to Liverpool, England, 7<sup>th</sup> May 1855.*



*A letter prepaid one shilling and fourpence Currency for the United States packet out of New York.<sup>2</sup> Carried to Liverpool by the Collins Line 'Atlantic' it bears the handstamp 'CONVEYED BY / UNITED STATES / PACKET' to explain the higher charge.<sup>3</sup>*



*(Reverse.)*

<sup>1</sup> Parker & Bowen, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> The rate to and from Canada by United States packet via the United States under the Anglo/United States Convention of 1849.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 105: out of New York on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1855 for Liverpool on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1855.

# British North America & United States Packets Canada West to England

CONVEYED BY  
UNITED STATES  
PACKET

Letters addressed to provincial offices in England were generally marked at Liverpool with the handstamp (reverse) explaining the higher charge - in retrospect this would seem to have been unnecessary on prepaid letters. For a brief period, principally in June 1855, red ink was used.

Toronto, Canada West to Plymouth, England, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1855.



A letter prepaid one shilling and twopence Sterling, one shilling and fourpence Currency. Though not specifically so directed the prepayment clearly indicated the intention that the letter should be carried by United States packet out of New York;<sup>1</sup> it was carried by the Collins Line 'Pacific'.<sup>2</sup> The letter mourns the loss of the writer's father on the sailing ship 'John' and includes:<sup>3</sup>

*'To pay for his headstone in Bere, if you do not get the money that he had on him, the owners of the ship can be made to pay his passage money back. The Captain will get what he deserves for his negligence.'*

<sup>1</sup> Anglo/United States Postal Convention, 1849-1849; various General Post Office Instructions, late 1854.

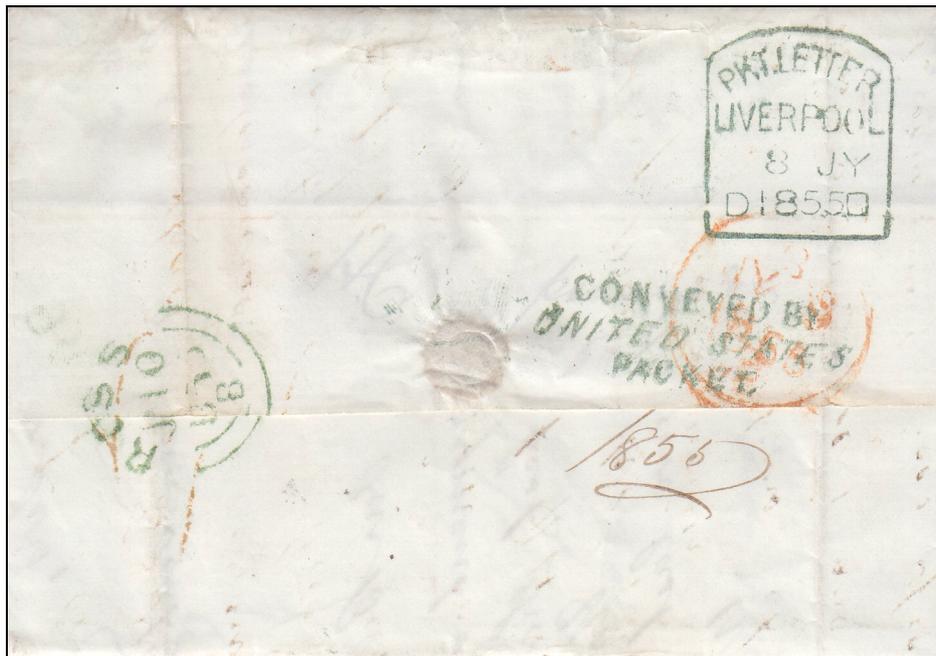
<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 105: 'Pacific' out of New York on 13<sup>th</sup>, made Liverpool 24<sup>th</sup> June 1855.

<sup>3</sup> Richard & Bridget Larn 'Shipwrecks of the British Isles', Vol. I, Sect. 4: The barque 'John', with emigrants out of Plymouth for Quebec, was wrecked on the Manacles, Cornwall, on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1855. She was said to be un-seaworthy when she sailed, although the owners claimed she had undergone a complete overhaul - in fact only £200 had been spent. Captain Rawle had retired to his bunk, leaving the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate on watch, despite not being able to see the Lizard light. Minutes later she struck the Manacles. The vessel was carried over the inner rocks into shallow water; here they anchored and the captain, four crew and one wealthy passenger left in a boat for help, but never returned. A total of 193 crew and passengers died as the ship broke up. Captain Rawle was sent to prison.

# *British North America & United States Packets Canada East to Ireland*

*The Liverpool handstamp indicating the application of the United States packet rate is recorded between May and November 1855, but its use is inconsistent. A study<sup>1</sup> of its occurrence on letters from Canada concluded that it was used only on letters to provincial offices, but exceptions are known. In July 1855 green ink was used.*

*Quebec, Canada East to New Ross, Ireland, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1855.*



*A letter posted unpaid and directed 'By first Steamer'. Charged one shilling and twopence, manuscript '1/2', it was carried by United States packet, the Collins Line 'Atlantic', from New York to Liverpool.<sup>2</sup> It was marked with the Liverpool 'tombstone' packet letter datestamp and the three line United States packet handstamp, both in green. The letter arrived in New Ross on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1855.*



*Collins Line 'Atlantic'.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> *British North American Philatelic Society, Trans-Atlantic Study Group (23 examples found) and subsequent discussions with C. Tabcart.*

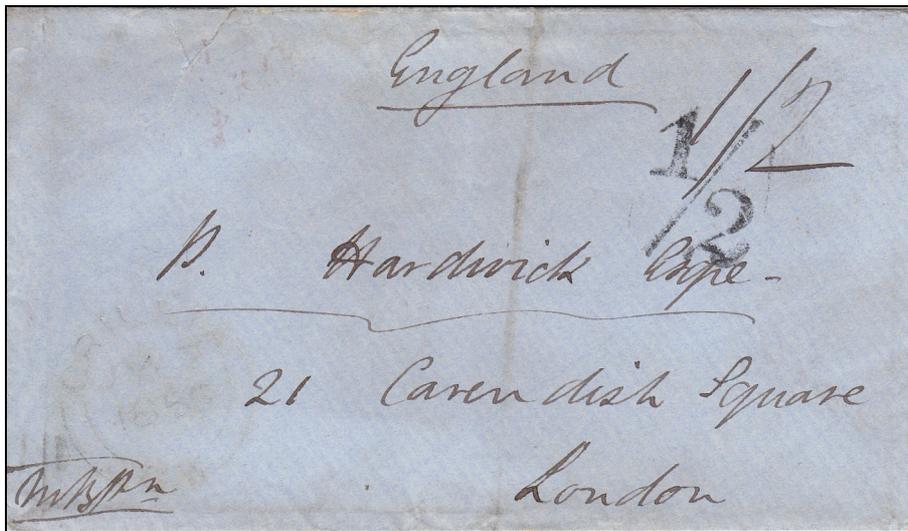
<sup>2</sup> *W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 105: 'Atlantic' departed New York 27<sup>th</sup> June for Liverpool on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1855.*

<sup>3</sup> *Illustration Parker & Bowen.*

# *British North America & United States Packets Canada West to England*

*The rate for a letter weighing less than half an ounce between Canada and the United Kingdom carried via the United States had been one shilling and twopence Sterling; <sup>1</sup> from 1854 the Toronto office continued to use the '1/2' handstamp to show the postage due in Sterling on letters carried to the United Kingdom by United States packets. <sup>2</sup>*

*Orilla, Canada West to London, England, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1855.*



*A letter posted unpaid and carried by United States packet, the Collins Line 'Atlantic', from New York to Liverpool. <sup>3</sup> It shows the Toronto handstamp for the United Kingdom postage due, one shilling and twopence (Sterling).*

**1/2**

<sup>1</sup> Treasury Warrants 1840 and 1841; Anglo-United States Convention, effective January 1849; Treasury Warrant, March 1854, effective 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854.

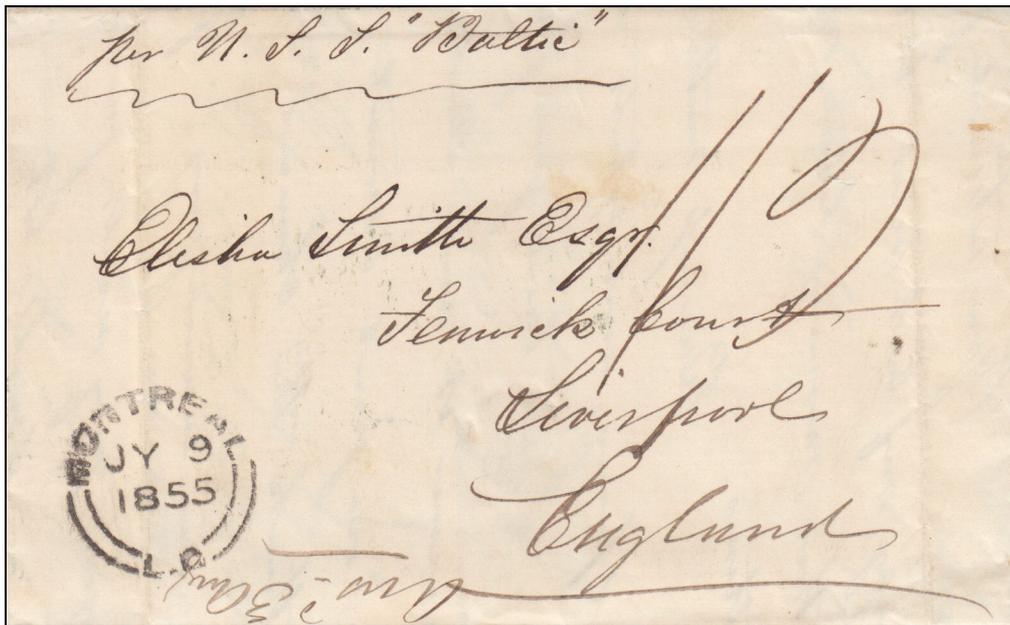
<sup>2</sup> J.C. Arnell, 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', p. 59: A.10, used at Toronto, 1852-1855.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p.107: 'Atlantic' departed New York 11<sup>th</sup> July and made Liverpool 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1855.

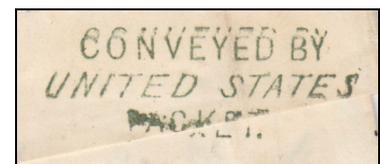
# British North America & United States Packets England to New Brunswick

Troop movements to the Crimea required the requisition of some of the Cunard Line vessels, and the Collins Line took over the New York route in 1855; the rate by United States Packet was one shilling and twopence Sterling.<sup>1</sup>

Montreal, Canada East, to Liverpool, England, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1855.



A letter posted unpaid and sent to New York for the United States Packet, the Collins Line 'Baltic'.<sup>2</sup> To explain the higher charge at Liverpool some, but not all, letters were stamped 'CONVEYED BY UNITED STATES PACKET' at Liverpool.<sup>3</sup>



(Reverse.)

<sup>1</sup> General Post Office Instruction No.71, effective 29<sup>th</sup> November 1854.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 105: 'Baltic' out of New York on 11<sup>th</sup> July for Liverpool on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1855.

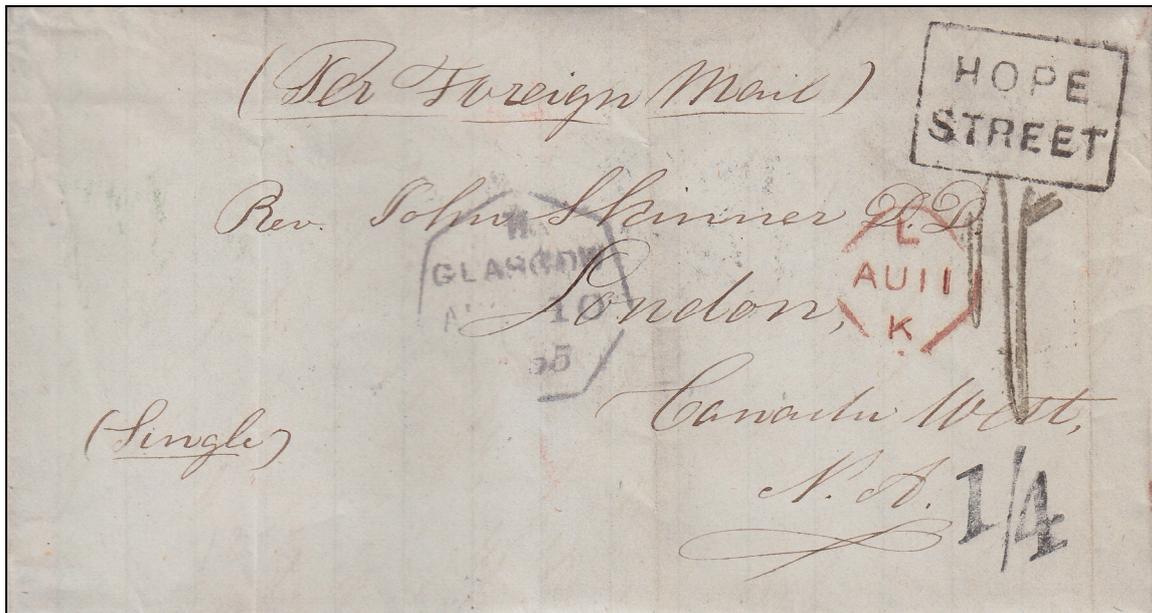
<sup>3</sup> Discussion Tabcart/Montgomery: it is likely that letters to London were not so marked, mainly those to the 'country' where the higher rate was more likely to raise an enquiry.

# British North America & United States Packets England to New Brunswick

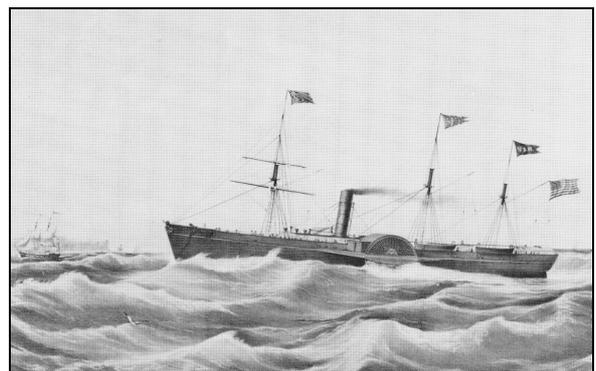
1/4

In 1852 a number of new '1/4' handstamps, without the 'Currency' designation, were introduced for unpaid incoming letters.<sup>1</sup> When the rate by British packet was reduced these handstamps continued in use for letters carried by United States packets, notably in 1855 when the Cunard service was reduced to meet Crimean War commitments.

Glasgow, Scotland to London, Canada West, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1855.



A letter posted unpaid and carried by United States packet, the Collins Line 'Pacific', from Liverpool to New York.<sup>2</sup> It shows handstamps for the United Kingdom claim, one shilling Sterling, and the Currency postage due, one shilling and fourpence, the latter most likely applied at Hamilton, the exchange office for London, Canada West.



Collins Line 'Pacific'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J.C. Arnell, 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', p. 59: four variants are identified, A.6, A.7, A.8 and A.15, attributed to Montreal, Toronto, Toronto/Hamilton and Montreal respectively. This attribution is suspect; the example above is A.15, but is unlikely to have passed through Montreal.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 105: 'Pacific' out of Liverpool 11<sup>th</sup> for New York 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1855.

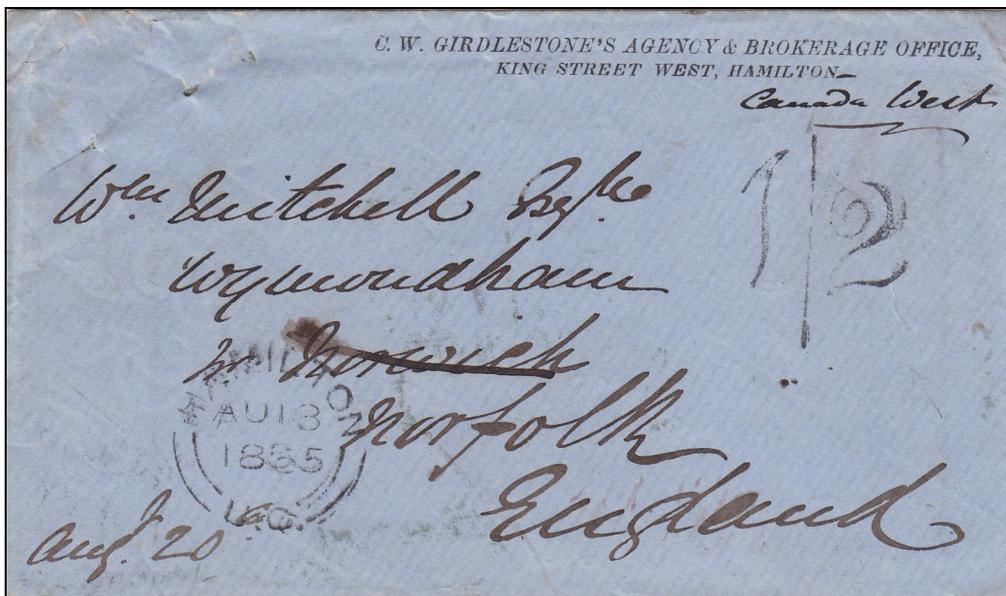
<sup>3</sup> Illustration Mariner's Museum, Newport News.

# British North America & United States Packets Canada West to England

1/2

A distinctive '1/2' handstamp, showing the postage due in Sterling on letters carried by United States packets to the United Kingdom, previously attributed to London, Canada West,<sup>1</sup> should now be attributed to Hamilton, Canada West. Although the original 'reporting' copy was on a letter mis-sent to London, all copies seen have been handled by local exchange office for United States and United Kingdom mails and most had no reason to pass through London.

Hamilton, Canada West to Wymondham, England, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1855.



CONVEYED BY  
UNITED STATES  
PACKET

A letter with a Hamilton company's imprint and no indication that it passed through London, Canada West, showing the distinctive '1/2' (Sterling) handstamp, the rate in Sterling for a letter weighing less than half an ounce intended for a United States packet to England. It was carried by the Collins Line Baltic out of New York for Liverpool where it was marked with the handstamp explaining the higher charge (reverse).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J.C. Arnell, 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', p. 59: A.12, attributed to London, Canada West, this handstamp can now be confidently attributed to the Hamilton, Canada West exchange office.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings' p. 105 Collins Line 'Baltic' out of New York 22<sup>nd</sup> August for Liverpool 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1855.

# British North America & United States Packets England to Canada East

The '1s/4d Cy:' in circle handstamps were introduced in 1846 and continued in use until 1857.<sup>1</sup> At least one of the handstamps was damaged, losing the colon and later, the 'Cy'. The suggestion that this was deliberate, enabling the handstamp to continue in use after Currency conversion rates against Sterling were changed, is not yet substantiated.<sup>2</sup>



Bromyard, England to Stanstead, Canada East, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1855.



A letter posted unpaid and without direction, thus sent to the first ship to sail, the Collins Line 'Atlantic', a United States packet.<sup>3</sup> At Liverpool the British Post Office has raised a shilling claim for British inland, ocean and United States transit postage; the Canadian Post Office has charged the addressee one shilling and fourpence Currency, the same as the exchange at the time of the Anglo/United States Postal Convention in 1849, but rather less than the one shilling and fivepence halfpenny exchange in force from 6<sup>th</sup> June 1851.

<sup>1</sup> J.C. Arnell (Ed.), 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', states that six handstamps were sent to Montreal. There appears to be no record of this in the G.P.O. Proof Books.

<sup>2</sup> Currency conversion rates changed by 1854, but United States packet rate remained unchanged.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 105: Collins Line 'Atlantic', out of Liverpool, 25<sup>th</sup> August for New York 6<sup>th</sup> September 1855.



# British North America & United States Packets London/Hamilton, Canada West

1/2

A distinctive '1/2' handstamp, showing the postage due in Sterling on letters carried by United States packets to the United Kingdom, has been attributed to London, Canada West.<sup>1</sup> At that time Hamilton, Canada West was the local exchange office for United States and United Kingdom mails and may be that the handstamp has been incorrectly attributed.

Hamilton, Canada West to Norwich, England, 24<sup>th</sup> December 1855.



A letter with a Hamilton imprint and no indication that it has passed through London, Canada West, initially rated for the United States packet, showing the distinctive '1/2' (Sterling) handstamp. Postmasters had been instructed to send letters by the more expensive service only when instructed to do so and the letter was directed to a British packet out of Boston, even though this incurred a delay of a week.<sup>2</sup> On arrival in England the letter was re-rated to eightpence Sterling.

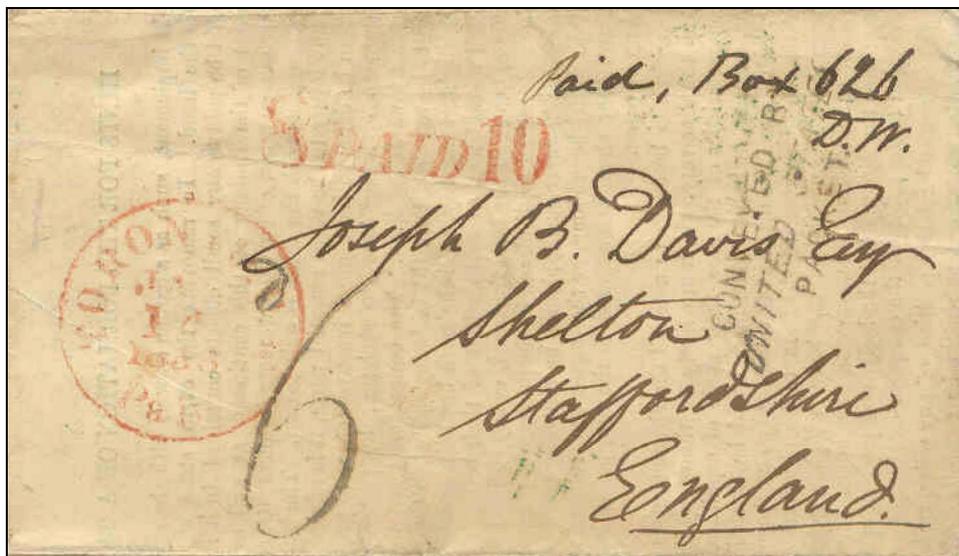
<sup>1</sup> J.C. Arnell, 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mail', p. 59: A.12, attributed to London, Canada West, this handstamp is more likely to have been used by the Hamilton, Canada West exchange office.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', pp. 105 and 36: Collins Line 'Baltic' out of New York on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1855, Cunard Line 'Asia' out of Boston on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1856.

# *British North America & United States Packets Canada West to England*

*The full service by the Cunard Line ships was restored at the end of 1855; the rate for these British packets, if carried via the United States was eightpence Sterling, tenpence Currency. The rate for letters carried by the United States' packets remained unchanged at one shilling and twopence Sterling one shilling and fourpence Currency.*

*Toronto, Canada West to Shelton, England, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1856.*



*(Courtesy Greg Spring.)*

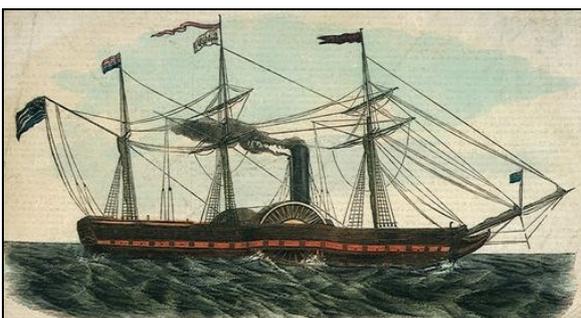
*A prepaid in Toronto as if for a British packet ... unfortunately, although not so directed it was forwarded for the first packet to sail (as had been the practice in 1855 when the British packet service had been much reduced), the Collins Line 'Atlantic', a United States packet.<sup>1</sup> The letter was thus underpaid and was charged sixpence Sterling, the deficiency. To explain the higher charged it was marked at Liverpool with the 'CONVEYED BY / UNITED STATES / PACKET', the last-known use of this handstamp.*

<sup>1</sup> *W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', pp. 38 and 36: Cunard Line 'Niagara' sailed 14<sup>th</sup> January 1856; Collins Line 'Atlantic' out of New York on 19<sup>th</sup> January for Liverpool on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1856. The letter arrived in Stoke on Trent on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1856 (reverse).*

# British North America & United States Packets Scotland to Canada West

The Ocean Steam Navigation Company was granted a contract to convey United States mails to and from Europe in 1847; the company operated two ships s.s. 'Washington' and 'Hermann', providing a monthly service between New York and Bremerhaven, calling at Cowes, Isle of Wight. The company failed to compete effectively with the Cunard Line and the service was suspended in 1857 when the second five-year contract was not renewed.

Glasgow, Scotland to Dundas, Canada West, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1856.



A letter carried to New York by the Ocean Line 'Washington'.<sup>1</sup> The addressee was charged one shilling and fourpence Currency, but this was no longer an accurate conversion of one shilling and twopence Sterling.<sup>2</sup> The United States packet rate remained unchanged.

Ocean Line 'Washington'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 89: 'Washington' called at Southampton (in fact, Ryde Pier, Isle of Wight) on 16<sup>th</sup> July and made New York on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1856. The letter reached Dundas on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1856.

<sup>2</sup> The rate established under the Anglo/U.S. Convention of 1849, in force until 1866.

<sup>3</sup> Illustration from a print in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

# *British North America & United States Packets Canada East to England*

*Although frequently and erroneously referred to as 'the Crimean War Rate', the one and twopence Sterling rate for trans-Atlantic letters, introduced for all packets under the Anglo/United States Postal Convention of 1848/1849, remained in force for United States packets until 1866.*

*Montreal, Canada East to Plymouth, England, 29<sup>th</sup> September 1856.*



*A letter mistakenly sent to Plymouth, New Hampshire (the '10d' (Currency, eightpence Sterling) prepayment may well have been mistaken for the cross-border through rate) and then re-directed to New York. It was carried across the Atlantic by the first steamship to depart, the Ocean Line 'Washington', a United States packet, and was charged an additional sixpence Sterling.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', pp. 89: 'Washington' out of New York on 4<sup>th</sup> October, for Southampton on 18<sup>th</sup> October; London transit 18<sup>th</sup> October, and Plymouth (England) arrival 19<sup>th</sup> October 1856 on reverse.

# British North America & United States Packets

## Scotland to Canada East

Under the terms of the 1849 British-United States Postal Convention,<sup>1</sup> letters carried by United States packets were to be carried at the same rates as those carried by British packets to United States ports: one shilling and twopence Sterling the equivalent at that time of one shilling and fourpence Currency. This rate was maintained after British rates were reduced in 1854 and continued until 1866.



Glasgow, Scotland to Montreal, Canada East, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1857.



A letter posted unpaid and directed to a United States packet, the Collins Line 'Baltic', via the United States.<sup>2</sup> It has been charged one shilling and fourpence Currency using a rate handstamp now with its original 'Cy:' designation either missing, or removed.<sup>3</sup>



Collins Line ss 'Baltic'.

<sup>1</sup> Anglo/United States Postal Convention, 1848-1849. British and Canadian packet rates reduced in 1854.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p.108: 'Baltic' out of Liverpool 21<sup>st</sup> January for New York 5<sup>th</sup> February 1857.

<sup>3</sup> J.C. Arnell, 'Handbook on Transatlantic Mails', p. 59: A.5, but with 'Cy:' removed.

# *British North America & United States Packets*

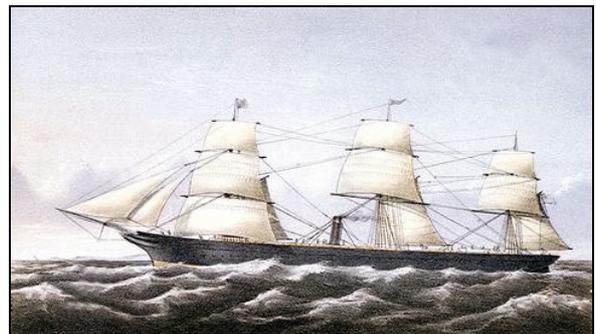
## *England to Canada East*

*The Liverpool, New York and Philadelphia Steam Ship Company, the Inman Line, was a British company but denied a regular post office subsidy and the few early letters carried were handled as ship letters. With the expiration of the Ocean and Havre Lines' contracts and the cessation of the Collins Line service, the Inman Line acted as United States packets.*

*Liverpool, England to Montreal, Canada East, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1858.*



*A letter placed directly aboard the Inman Line 'City of Washington' with no British markings.<sup>1</sup> At New York it was treated as a ship letter and charged two cents ship letter fee plus ten cents, the through rate for letters to Canada.<sup>2</sup> In Canada the twelve cents due has been converted to sevenpence halfpenny Currency.*



*Inman Line 'City of Washington'.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 198: Inman Line 'City of Washington' out of Liverpool 31<sup>st</sup> March for New York 13<sup>th</sup> April 1858; the letter arrived in Montreal on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> If carried by post to any place beyond the port of arrival, 2 cents ship fee plus inland postage; United States/Canada Postal Treaty, effective 6<sup>th</sup> April 1851: through rate ten cents, sixpence Currency.

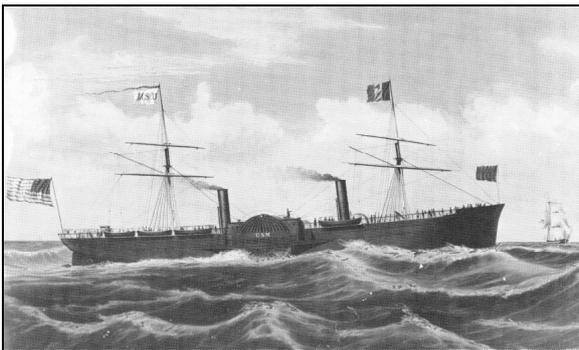
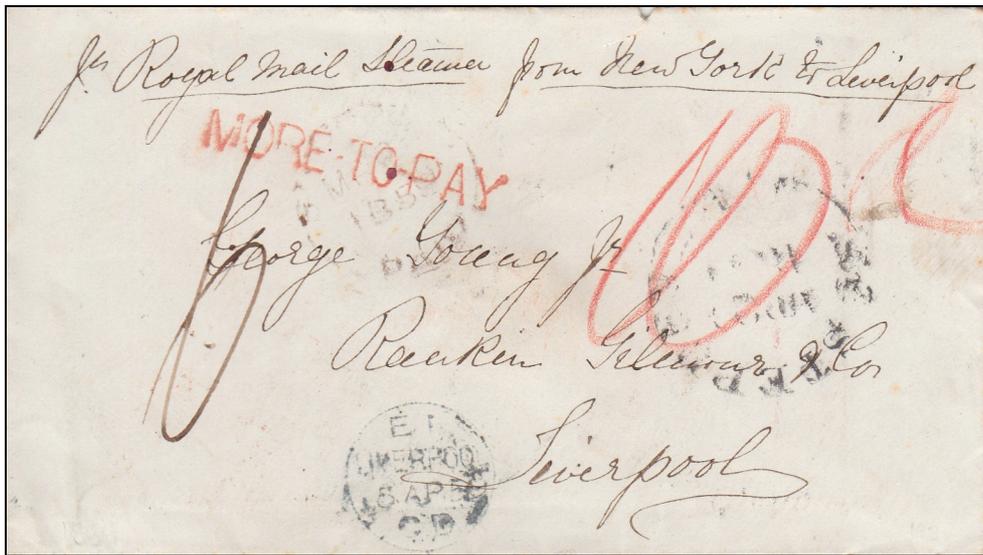
<sup>3</sup> Illustration source unknown.

# *British North America & United States Packets*

## *New Brunswick to England*

*The New York and Havre Steam Navigation Company, known as the Havre Line, made monthly voyages between New York and Havre, calling at the Isle of Wight. The line, which operated from 1850-1867, was under contract to the United States Government and very little British mail was carried by its ships.*

*St. Stephen, New Brunswick to Liverpool, England, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1859.*



*Havre Line 'Arago'.<sup>2</sup>*

*Letters from New Brunswick could be sent by British packets out of United States ports; the rate was eightpence Sterling, tenpence Currency.<sup>1</sup> Letters could be dispatched by the next ship to sail and charged the deficient postage, a further sixpence Sterling by a United States packet.*

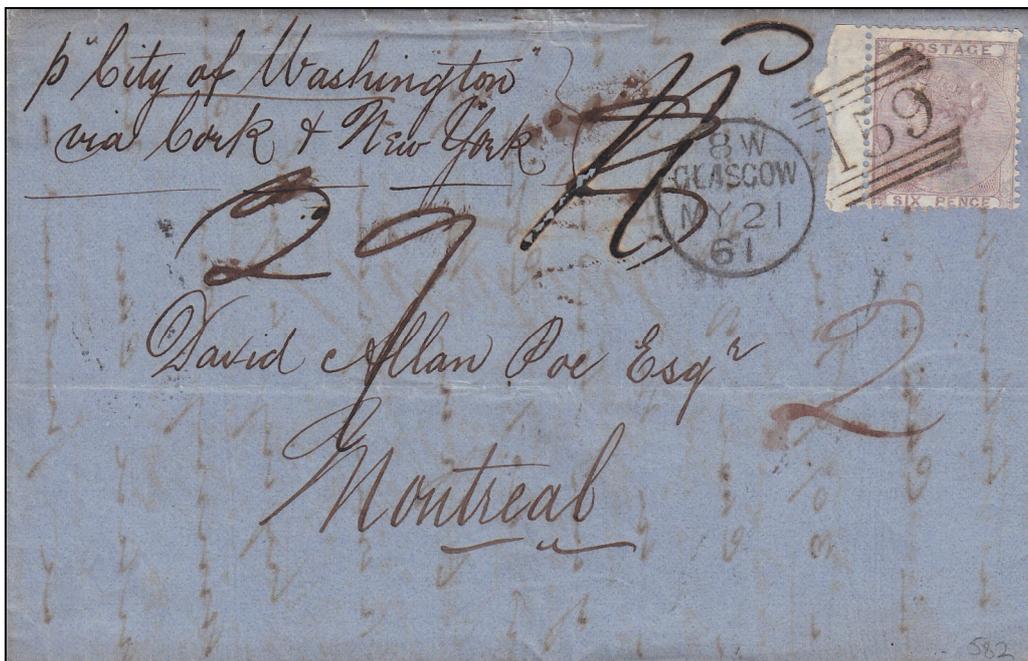
<sup>1</sup> Anglo/United States Postal Convention 15<sup>th</sup> December 1848, reduced to 8d Sterling on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854; fines for underpaid letters were not imposed on New Brunswick correspondence until 1<sup>st</sup> August 1859.

<sup>2</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', pp. 42 & 117: Cunard Line 'Persia' out of New York on 30<sup>th</sup> March for Liverpool 10<sup>th</sup> April 1859; Havre Line 'Arago' out of New York 2<sup>nd</sup> April for Southampton 14<sup>th</sup> April, the only ship that could have delivered a mail to England by 15<sup>th</sup> April 1859 (Liverpool mails were passed to London only if carried into South Coast ports). The Liverpool datestamp should be 15<sup>th</sup>, not 5<sup>th</sup> April 1859 - 'Arago' arrived off the Isle of Wight on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1859 and the mails were opened in London on the following day (London transit, reverse). Illustration from Mariner's Museum, Newport News.

# British North America & United States Packets Scotland to Canada East

*Fines were introduced for unpaid or underpaid mail exchanged between Canada and the United Kingdom in 1859. Letters directed to a more expensive, but prepaid only for the cheaper, route were charged deficient postage: twopence for the British Packets viâ the United States, and eightpence for United States packets.<sup>1</sup> Until 1863, such letters were not normally fined.<sup>2</sup>*

*Glasgow, Scotland to Montreal, Lower Canada, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1861.*



*A letter prepaid sixpence, but directed 'p City of Washington via Cork and New York', an Inman Line, United States Packet,<sup>3</sup> thus the letter was underpaid eightpence. The British Post Office has claimed elevenpence, the deficiency and, exceptionally at this time, the half fine, threepence. In Canada the letter has been charged twenty-nine cents, the Canadian equivalent of one shilling and twopence, including the entire fine of sixpence.*

<sup>1</sup> Anglo/United States Postal Convention, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1848, and various General Post Office Instructions, thereafter; rate by United States Packet remained 1s 2d Sterling after British Packet rate reduced to 8d Sterling on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854.

<sup>2</sup> Packet Book Minute #195-0, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1863, introduced fines for letters incorrectly directed to a more expensive route.

<sup>3</sup> W. Hubbard and R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 202: 'City of Washington' departed Cork 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1861.

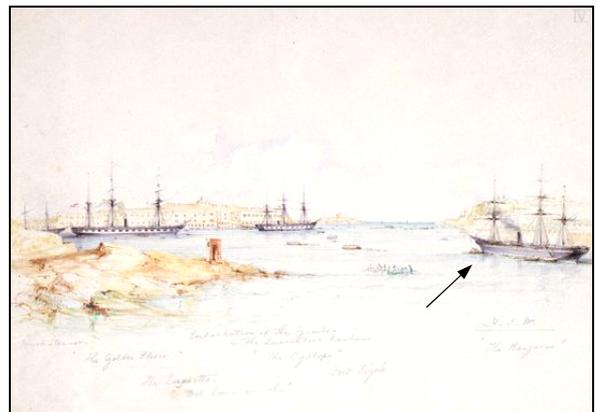
# British North America & United States Packets Ireland to Canada West

Letters not directed to a particular line could be sent to the first packet to sail, even when paid the correct postage for another. The rate to the United States from the United Kingdom remained one shilling;<sup>1</sup> on a pre-paid letter carried by a United States packet twenty-one cents was credited to the United States Post Office for ocean and inland postage.<sup>2</sup>

*Ballymoney, Ireland to the Ottawa River, Canada West, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1861.*



A letter prepaid sixpence as though for the Canadian packet,<sup>3</sup> but mistakenly sent to Cork for the Inman Line 'Kangaroo', under contract to the United States Government.<sup>4</sup> Twenty-one cents was credited to the United States (more than had been collected for the postage). On arrival at New York the letter was handled like any other prepaid letter to Canada and bears red New York and Ogdensburgh exchange office marks.



*Inman Line 'Kangaroo'.<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Anglo-United States Convention, December 1848.

<sup>2</sup> The rate was split as follows: 3c U.K. and 5c U.S. inland postage, 16c ocean postage to the nation owning the vessel. The '21' is a handstamp issued to some vessels for use on board.

<sup>3</sup> Treasury Warrant, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1854.

<sup>4</sup> W. Hubbard & R.F. Winter, 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings', p. 202: Inman Line 'Kangaroo' sailed from Queenstown on 25<sup>th</sup> July and made New York on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1861; the Allan Line 'Anglo-Saxon', was not scheduled to call at Londonderry until 26<sup>th</sup> July 1861.

<sup>5</sup> Illustration from a water-colour in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.