

# Philadelphia-Great Britain Mails

## Purpose and Scope

This exhibit illustrates the evolution of Philadelphia's letter mails to, from, or through Great Britain from colonial times until the General Postal Union. Highlighted are changes in the mode, efficiency and cost to senders and recipients of transatlantic mails. Because Philadelphia was America's largest city for 140 years, its early postal history provides a good summary of the history of Anglo-American postal communication. Some of the key postal events documented are:

- Increased reliability as scheduled sailing packet service became available in 1755.
- Postal impacts of the War of Independence 1775-1783, and the War of 1812-1815.
- Onset of scheduled non-contract service via sailing-ship between Philadelphia and Liverpool in 1822.
- The advent of transatlantic steamship service in the 1830s.
- A "special arrangement" for expediting the inland leg of incoming British packet mails in the 1840s.
- The Inman Line's short-lived scheduled steamship service between Philadelphia and Liverpool in the 1850s.
- The 1854 opening of the Philadelphia Exchange Office for British mails under the 1848 postal convention.
- Rate reductions mandated by the subsequent postal conventions of 1867-1868 and 1869.
- Efficiency and cost advantages of Americans using British open mails for worldwide communication.

Both incoming and outgoing mail is shown, as well as letters for Philadelphia that arrived or departed via other American ports, and those that arrived at Philadelphia for transport to other cities.

## Treatment

- Chapters are based on the governmental acts that set postage rates, beginning with the 1710 Act of Queen Anne and ending in 1875 when the General Postal Union treaty took effect.
- Early covers reflect British postal rates until the American revolution began in 1775.
- In the 74 years between the onset of revolution and the 1849 United States-Great Britain postal convention, covers are explained in terms of the changing postal regulations of both countries.
- Within each rate period are shown covers illustrating key events that influenced mail transport and processing.



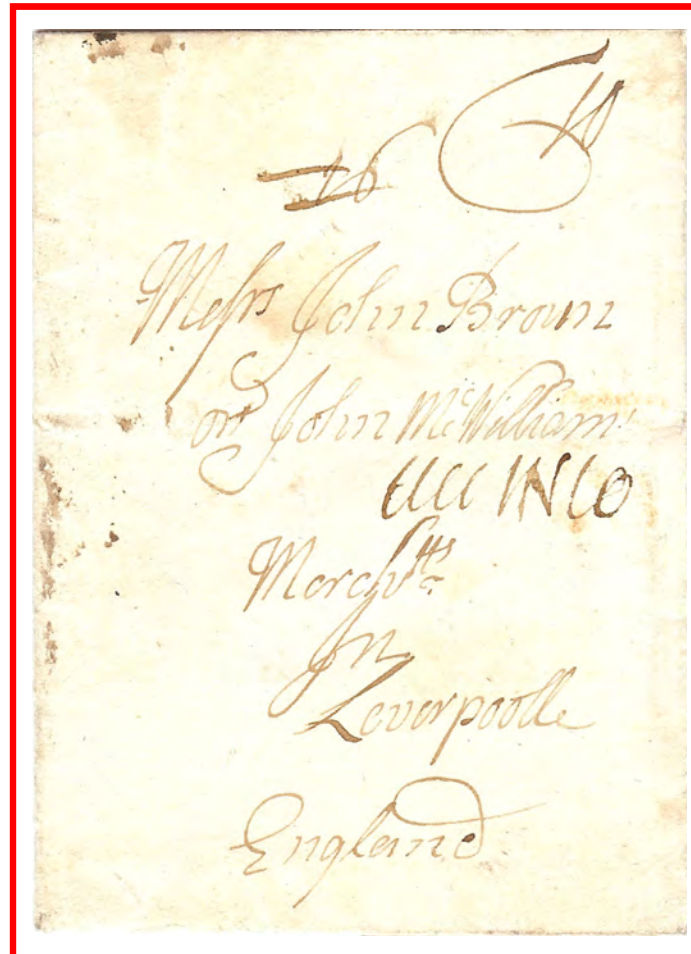
London to Philadelphia, ca. 1764-1774

Undated cover front of a letter from Benjamin Franklin to his wife; London GPO postmarked *FREE*  
**B Free Franklin** : free frank as Deputy Postmaster General for the North American colonies

*Dr. Franklin was appointed Deputy PMG for North America in 1753. He moved to London in 1764, where he lobbied Parliament on behalf of the colonies. He returned to Philadelphia in 1775 after having been removed from his position for insubordination.*

Private Sailing Ship  
British Contract Sailing Ship

## Via Lisbon



reverse

1/6

ALL IN LO

All 1N10

Philadelphia, 22 August 1712

Sent unpaid. Private ship *Andrews* (25 August) to Lisbon, where rated **1/6** due by British Post Office Packet *Queen* : Lisbon 1 November, Falmouth 18 November, London 21 November

London rated **1/10** due: 1s6d packet, 4d inland to Liverpool

Liverpool 24 November      96 days

**Act of 1710, 9 Anne c 10**  
effective 1 June 1711

Distance from London  
to 80 miles      3<sup>d</sup>  
over 80 miles    4<sup>d</sup>

Ship letters  
1<sup>d</sup> plus inland postage

Packet letters, to/from London  
Portugal      1s6<sup>d</sup>  
New York      1s

Distance from New York  
under 60 miles    4<sup>d</sup>  
60-100 miles      6<sup>d</sup>

Philadelphia to:  
New York      9<sup>d</sup>  
Boston          1s9<sup>d</sup>

*This letter was probably intended for the packet to Bristol, advertised as the Edgley. Edgley never reached New York, but sailed into Philadelphia on 3 May 1712 for repairs. She did not return to Bristol, but left Philadelphia for Nevis on 5 June. The Edgley was the last advertised Bristol Packet.*

*In 1712 only a letter via packet from Lisbon would have been charged 1s6d in London.*

## Private Sailing Ship

Sent unpaid by private ship to London,  
mails ashore at Deal

London 28 November

London rated **In All 7** due:  
3d Deal to London  
4d London to Liverpool

Received 1 December

61 days



reverse



Philadelphia 30 September 1715

### The Coffee House as Letter Receiver



Philadelphia, 5 March 1734

Sent unpaid by  
private ship to Bristol

Bristol rated **5** due:  
1<sup>d</sup> ship  
4<sup>d</sup> inland to London

London 21 April

Received 1 May

58 days

The **Pennsylvania Coffee House** provided a place for businessmen and politicians with an interest in the colony to meet for socializing and deal-making. Letters could be delivered there, and a ship's bag was available for patrons to deposit their letters for Philadelphia, paying the ship captain 1<sup>d</sup>. The house was in Birchin Lane near the Lombard Street post office.

## Private Sailing Ship



London, 8 November 1745

Sent unpaid by private ship  
Bristol 10 November  
Boston 23 January

Boston marked **BoSh 7.16** due  
7<sup>dwt</sup>16<sup>gr</sup> = 1s11<sup>d</sup>  
= 1s9<sup>d</sup> inland, 2<sup>d</sup> delivery

Received 26 January

75 days

## Prepaid Ship Letter

Prepaid **3:8**

3<sup>dwt</sup> = 9<sup>d</sup> inland to New York  
8<sup>gr</sup> = 1<sup>d</sup> outgoing ship fee

Philadelphia marked **Phi. paid dwt / 3:8**

Private ship *Friendship*  
New York 2 January  
Dover 15 April

Dover rated 4<sup>d</sup> due:  
1<sup>d</sup> ship  
3<sup>d</sup> inland to London

Received 17 April

106 days (voyage only)

**Rated by Benjamin Franklin**  
Philadelphia Postmaster 1737-1753

**Two prepaid ship letters recorded  
from Philadelphia in the colonial period**

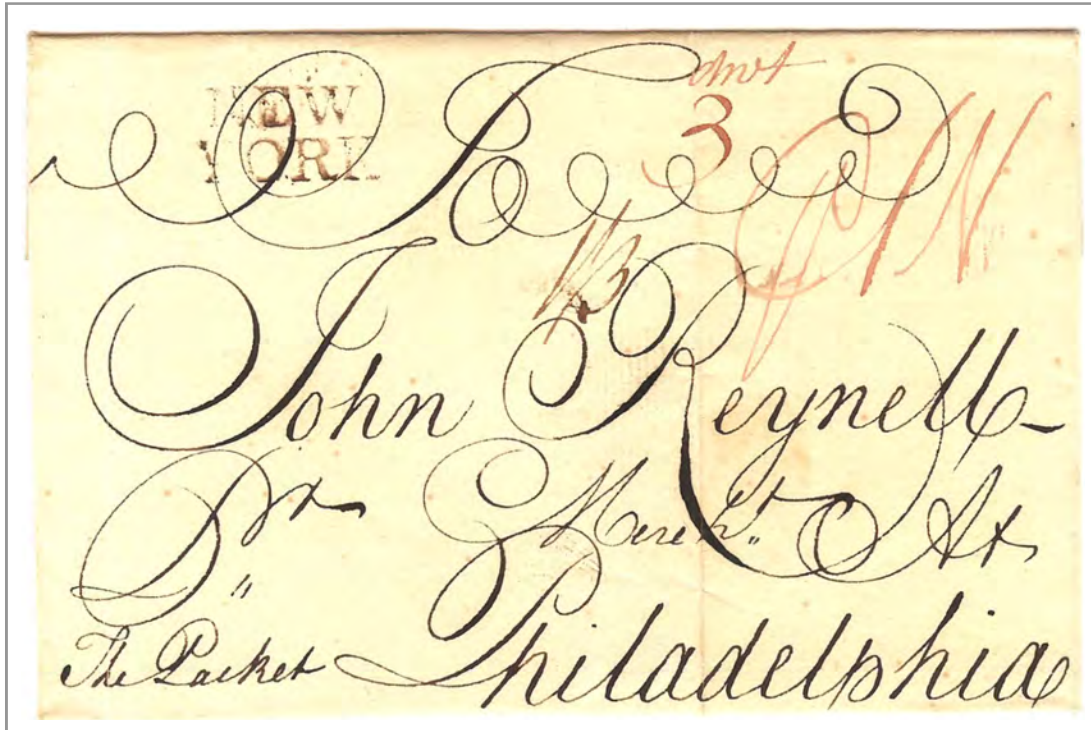


Philadelphia, 30 October 1748

## British Contract Sailing Ship

**Introduction of Monthly Contract Service: The Falmouth-New York Packets**

Monthly sailings started in November 1755, with New York - Philadelphia postage due in pennyweights of silver. One pennyweight = three pence sterling. Sterling x 1.66 = local Pennsylvania currency.

**Falmouth Packet, Single Rate**

London, 11 September 1756

Prepaid one shilling: **P1N**, the packet rate from London to New York

Packet *General Wall* : Falmouth 11 September, New York 8 November  
New York rated  $3^{dwt}$  due for inland postage

Philadelphia rated  $1/3$  due in local currency:  $3^{dwt} = 9^d$ ;  $9d \times 1.66 = 15^d = 1/3$

Received 10 November 61 days

The distance from New York to Philadelphia was known to be less than 100 miles, but the rate was nevertheless set at  $3^{dwt}$ , or  $9^d$ . This rate was determined by subtracting the Boston-New York rate (1s) from the Boston-Philadelphia rate (1s9d).

## Falmouth Packet, Double Rate



London, 29 February 1764

Prepaid 2 shillings

Packet *Harriet* : Falmouth 17 March, New York 2 May  
New York rated 6<sup>dwt</sup> due for double inland

Philadelphia rated 2/8 due in local currency: 30<sup>d</sup> inland, 2<sup>d</sup> carrier

Received 4 May 1764 65 days

## British Contract Sailing Ship

## Falmouth Packet, Triple Rate



London, 11 April 1767

Sent unpaid, London rated **3N**: 3 shillings due for letter of three sheets via packet to New York

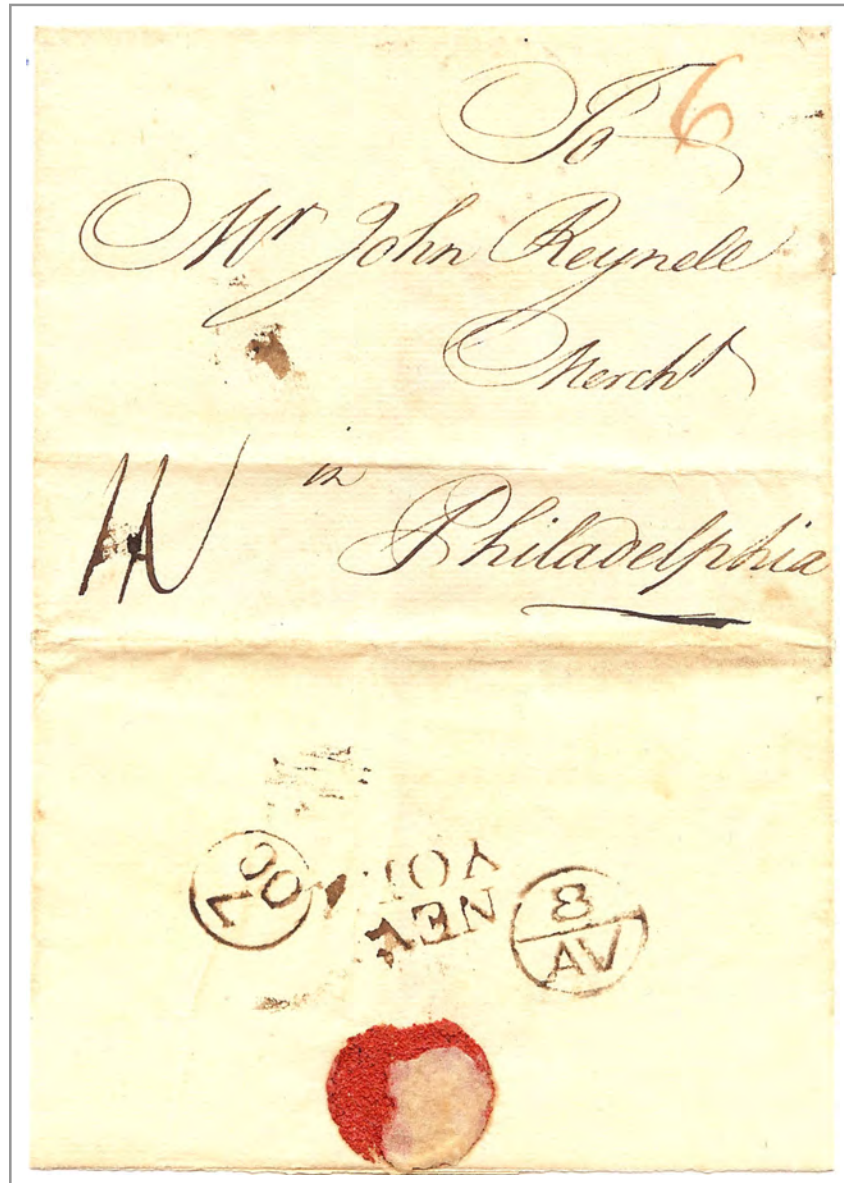
Packet *Lord Hyde*: Falmouth 16 April, New York 28 May  
 New York rated **18<sup>dwt</sup>** due: (4<sup>dwt</sup> packet + 2<sup>dwt</sup> inland) x 3

Received 29 May 1767 49 days

Act of 1765, 5 Geo III c 25 effective 10 October 1765			
<u>United Kingdom</u>	<u>American Colonies</u>		
To one post stage	1 <sup>d</sup>	Under 60 miles	4 <sup>d</sup>
One to two post stages	2 <sup>d</sup>	Under 100 miles	6 <sup>d</sup>
Distance from London		Under 200 miles	8 <sup>d</sup>
to 80 miles	3 <sup>d</sup>	Each add'l. 100 miles	2 <sup>d</sup>
over 80 miles	4 <sup>d</sup>	Port to Port	4 <sup>d</sup>
Ship letters			
Inland postage plus	1 <sup>d</sup>		
Packet letters to New York	1s		
		<b>Postage from New York to Philadelphia reduced to 6<sup>d</sup></b>	

A GPO London notice of 24 October 1755 required prepayment of the packet letter rate, but this rule was not strictly enforced until it was reiterated in a GPO notice of 22 May 1784.

## Falmouth Packet, Single Rate



London, 8 August 1767

Sent unpaid, London rated **1N** : one shilling due for packet postage to New York

Packet *Earl of Halifax* : Falmouth 29 August, New York 7 October

New York rated **6<sup>dwt</sup>** due: 4<sup>dwt</sup> packet + 2<sup>dwt</sup> inland

Received 10 October 64 days



## Private Sailing Ship

## Bound for London - Mails Ashore by Pilot Boat

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Jamaica* :  
Philadelphia 6 June  
Dover 10 August

Dover rated 4 pence due  
1<sup>d</sup> ship  
3<sup>d</sup> inland to London

Received 11 August 67 days

DOVER  
SHIP LRE



Philadelphia, 26 May 1766



Philadelphia, 7 November 1768

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Pennsylvania Packet* :  
Philadelphia 7 November  
Mail at Plymouth 11 December

Plymouth rated 5 pence due:  
1<sup>d</sup> ship  
4<sup>d</sup> inland to London

Received 12 December 36 days

PLYMOUTH  
SHIP LRE

Eastbound ships to London often handed their mail bags to a pilot boat from a port along the southern or southeastern coasts for inland conveyance. Mails could thus arrive at London two or more days before the ship's arrival there.

## Private Sailing Ship

## To The Son of William Penn—Double Rate Via Ireland



Philadelphia, 1 August 1772

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Snow Charlotte* :  
Philadelphia 12 August  
Waterford 21 September

London rated **1/9 due**:  
1<sup>d</sup> ship  
8<sup>d</sup> inland to Dublin (2 x 4<sup>d</sup>)  
1/- packet to London (2 x 6<sup>d</sup>)

Received 25 September

45 days

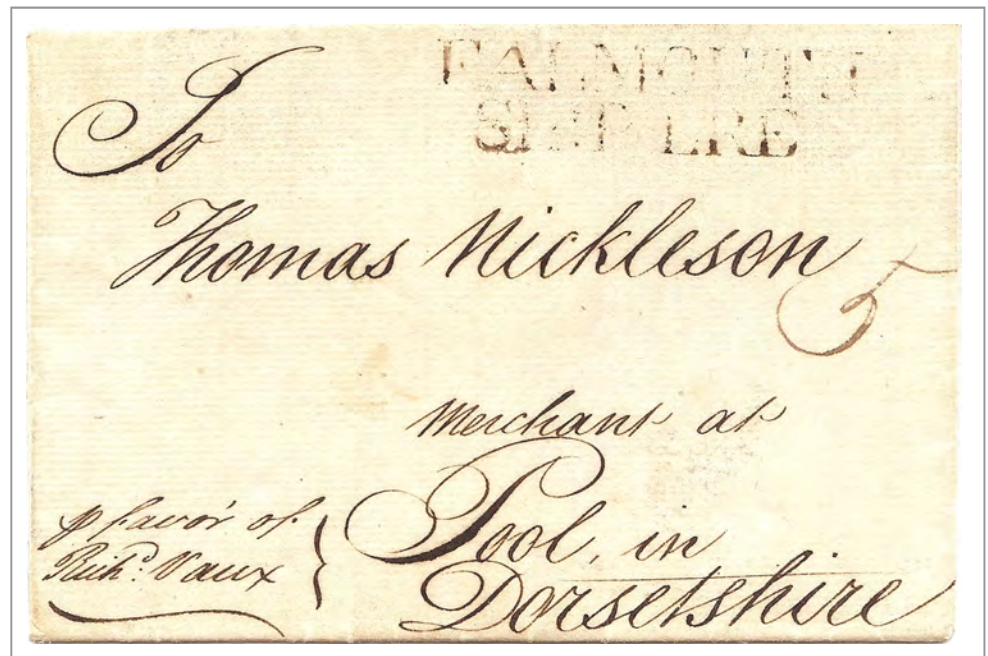
WATERFORD

not recorded by Robertson

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Mary & Elizabeth* :  
Philadelphia 13 September  
Falmouth arrival unknown

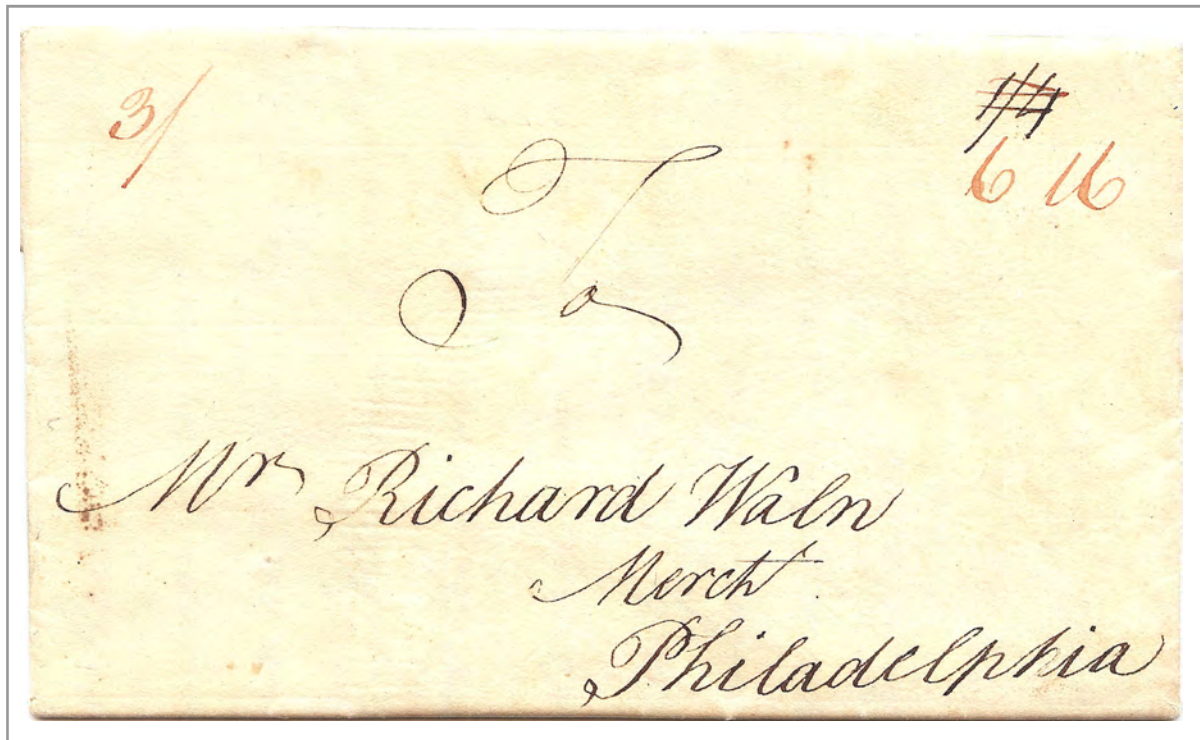
Falmouth rated **5 due**:  
1<sup>d</sup> ship  
4<sup>d</sup> inland to Pool

FALMOUTH  
SHIP-LRE

Philadelphia, 11 September 1773

## Private Sailing Ship

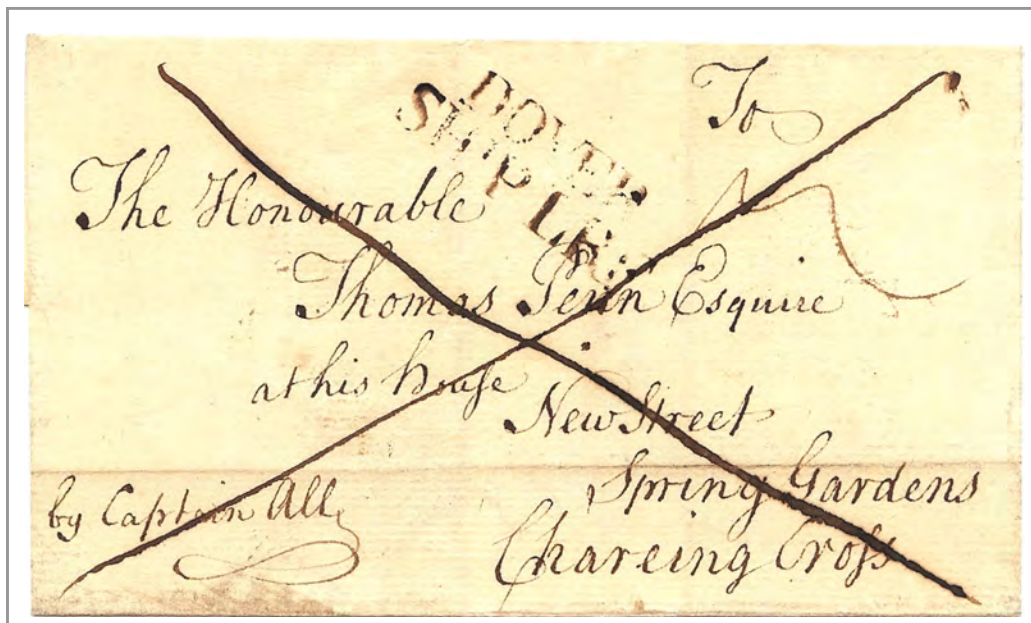
## From Jamaica Via Wilmington, N.C.



Kingston, 24 December 1771

Sent unpaid by private ship, departure & arrival dates unknown  
 Wilmington rated  $1/4$  due; Philadelphia converted to  $6^{dwt} 16^{gr}$  for ship and inland =  $20^d$   
 Philadelphia rated  $3/-$  due in local currency:  $(20^d + 2^d \text{ delivery}) \times 1.6667 = 36^d = 3/-$

## Forwarded in England



Philadelphia, 12 October 1772

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Richard Penn*:  
 Philadelphia 19 October  
 Dover 23 November

Dover rated  $2^d$  to London  
 London rated  $2^d$  for  
 forwarding to Windsor

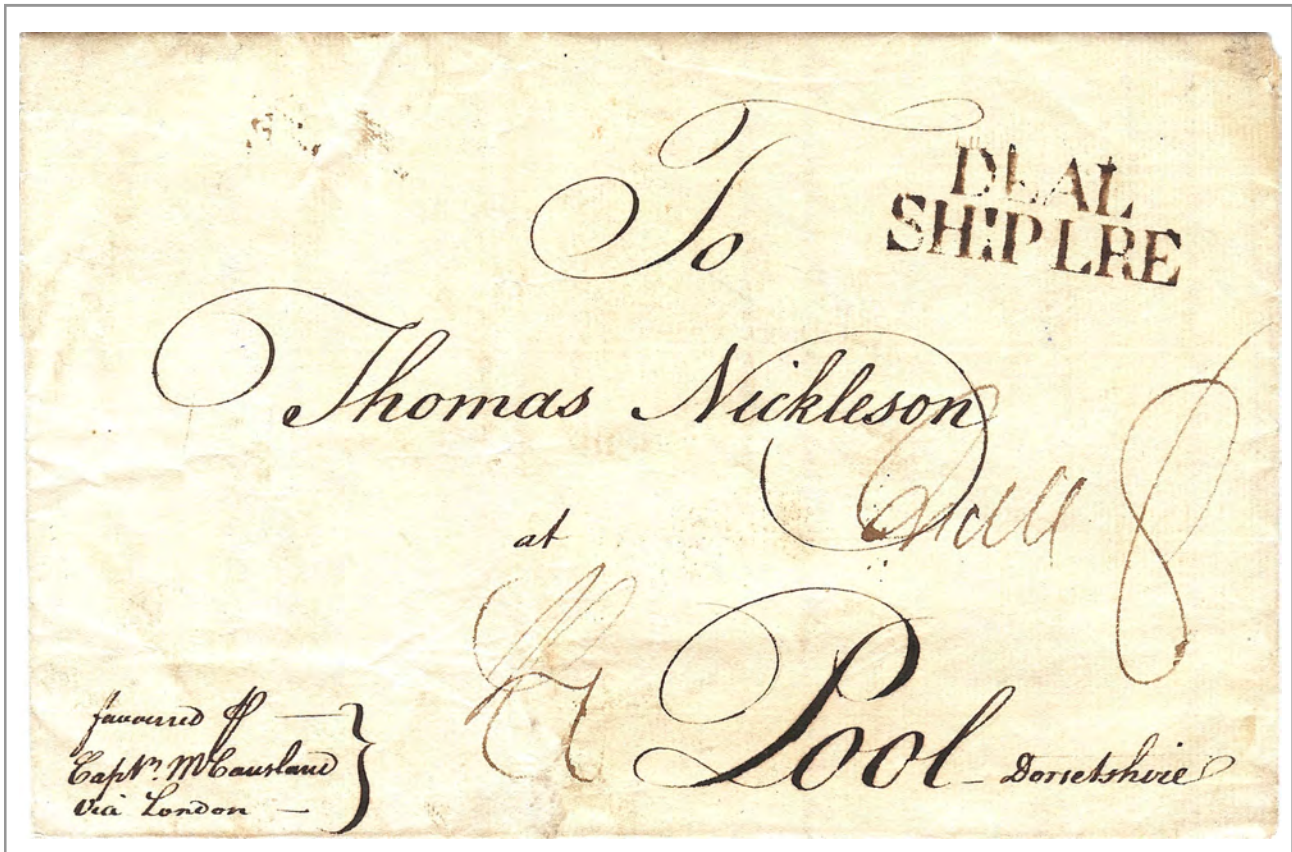
Rec'd 24 November 47 days



reverse

## Private Sailing Ship

## Bound for London, Mails Landed at Deal



Philadelphia, 15 July 1774

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Jane* : Philadelphia 18 July, Deal 20 August  
 London rated **In All 8<sup>d</sup>** due: 1d ship, 3d inland to London, 4d inland to Poole

Received 23 August 40 days

*Deal is on the southeast coast, about 70 miles by sea from London. Putting the London mails ashore at Deal saved at least a day, more if wind and tides were adverse. The time saved was partly offset by the addressee having to pay an additional three pence inland postage to London.*

## Falmouth Packet, Single Rate



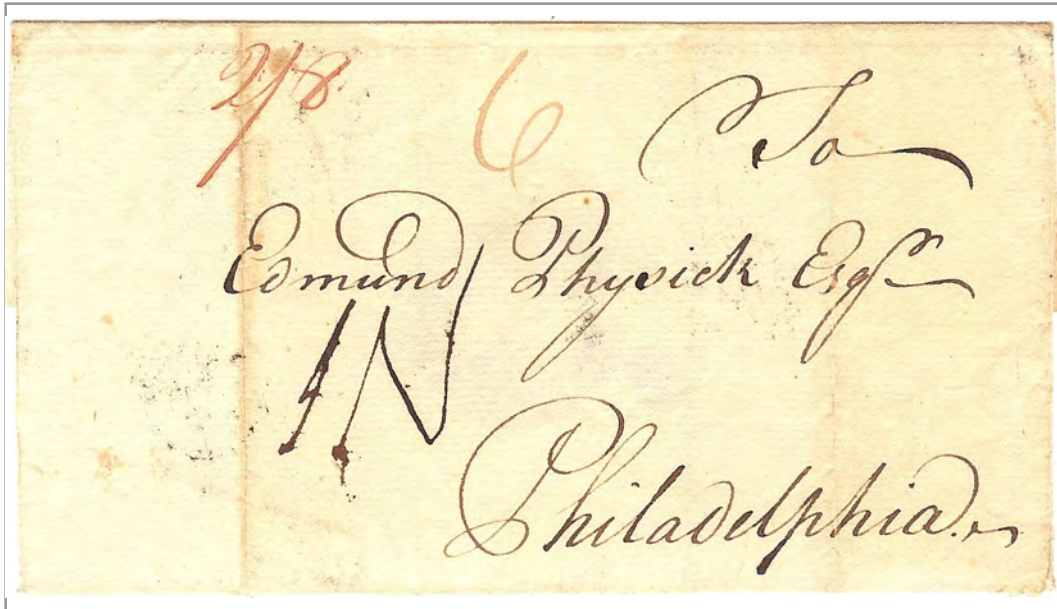
Exeter, June 1772

Prepaid **1N4**: 1s packet + 4<sup>d</sup> inland from Exeter to FalmouthPacket *Lord Hyde* : Falmouth 11 June, New York 6 August  
New York rated 2<sup>dwt</sup> due for inland postage

Received 8 August 59+ days

## British Contract Sailing Ship

## Falmouth Packet, Single Rate

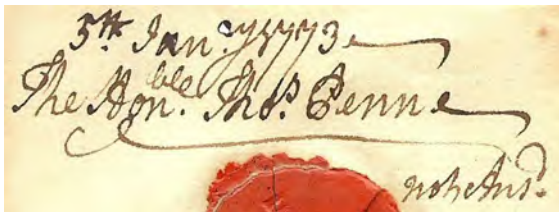


London, 6 January 1773

Sent unpaid by packet *Harriot*: Falmouth 30 January, New York 14 March  
 New York rated 1s packet (4<sup>dwt</sup>), + 6<sup>d</sup> inland (2<sup>dwt</sup>) = 6<sup>dwt</sup> due

Philadelphia rated 2/8 in local currency: 6<sup>dwt</sup> x3 = 18<sup>d</sup>; 2s6<sup>d</sup> + 2<sup>d</sup> carrier = 2/8

Received 16 March 70 days



reverse

From Thomas Penn, Proprietor of the Province of Pennsylvania from 1718 to 1775, following the death of his father, William Penn.

Because the values of local currencies fluctuated at different rates, the Act of 1765 required that payment of postage in the colonies be made in relation to rates defined in sterling. Inflation in Pennsylvania by early 1773 was high—local currency had lost 16.5 percent of its value.

## British Contract Sailing Ship

## Falmouth Packet, Single rate



Philadelphia, 5 April 1774

Sent unpaid. New York marked **IN<sup>D</sup> AND PAC<sup>T</sup>/POSTAGE**, indicating fully unpaid letter  
 New York rated **1N6** due: 6<sup>d</sup> inland from Philadelphia + 1s packet

Packet *British Mercury* : New York 7 April, Falmouth 26 May  
 London 28 May, rated **2/4** due, and sent to Dublin

Dublin rated **2/8** due: 6d colonial inland, 1s packet, 4d British inland

50 days

PHILA  
DELPHIA

Reverse, in red

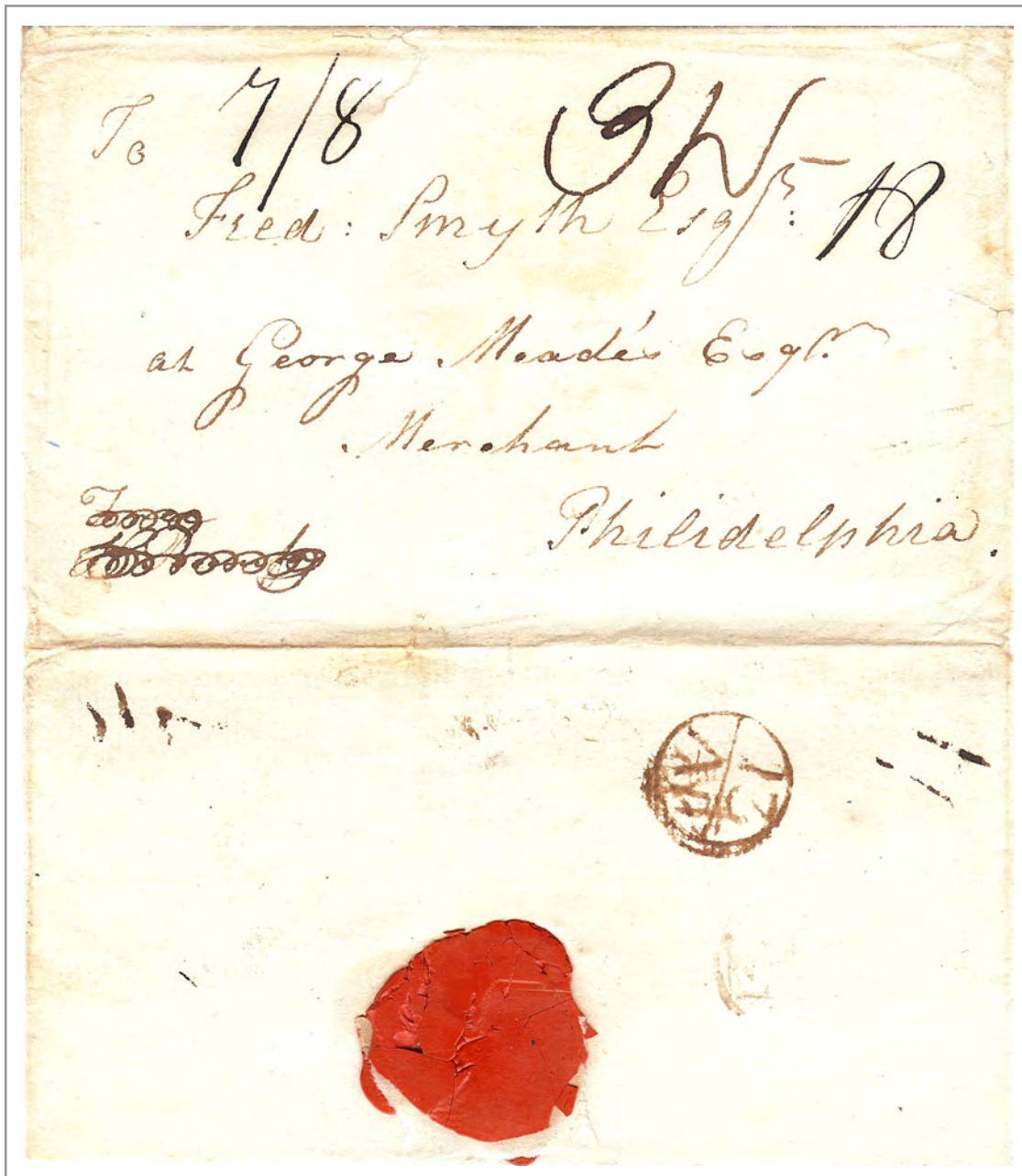
NEW-YORK

Reverse

In February 1756 William Franklin, Comptroller of the General Post Office in Philadelphia, issued a public notice that all letters sent via packet from New York to London must be fully prepaid for both packet postage and inland postage to New York. In silver these rates were 4 pennyweights (1 shilling) and 2 pennyweights (6 pence), respectively. This edict was not regularly followed, and the GPO London did not demand prepayment of incoming packet letters from America until 1784.

## British Contract Sailing Ship

## Falmouth Packet, Triple Rate



London to Philadelphia, 13 April 1774

Sent unpaid by packet *Harriot*: Falmouth 15 April, New York 14 May  
 New York rated  $18^{\text{dwt}}$  due =  $(4^{\text{dwt}} \text{ packet} + 2^{\text{dwt}} \text{ inland}) \times 3 = 54^{\text{d}}$

Philadelphia rated  $7/8$  due in local currency:  $(54^{\text{d}} \times 1.67) + 2^{\text{d}}$  delivery

Received 16 May 32 days

Addressed to the business of George Meade, grandfather of Civil War General George Meade.



British Contract Sailing Ship

**Revolutionary Hostilities Begin: Withdrawal of British Packet Service**

War broke out in April 1775 with the battles of Lexington and Concord. American attacks on British ships soon followed, and led to withdrawal of scheduled packet service to New York. The last advertised mail from Falmouth departed on 15 September 1775 and arrived at New York on 10 November.

**Irregular Falmouth Packet During Blockade of New York Harbor**



**Bristol, 20 December 1775**

Sent unpaid: Bristol assumed private ship, so rated only 4<sup>d</sup> inland postage to London  
 London GPO rerated 1/4, the unpaid packet rate

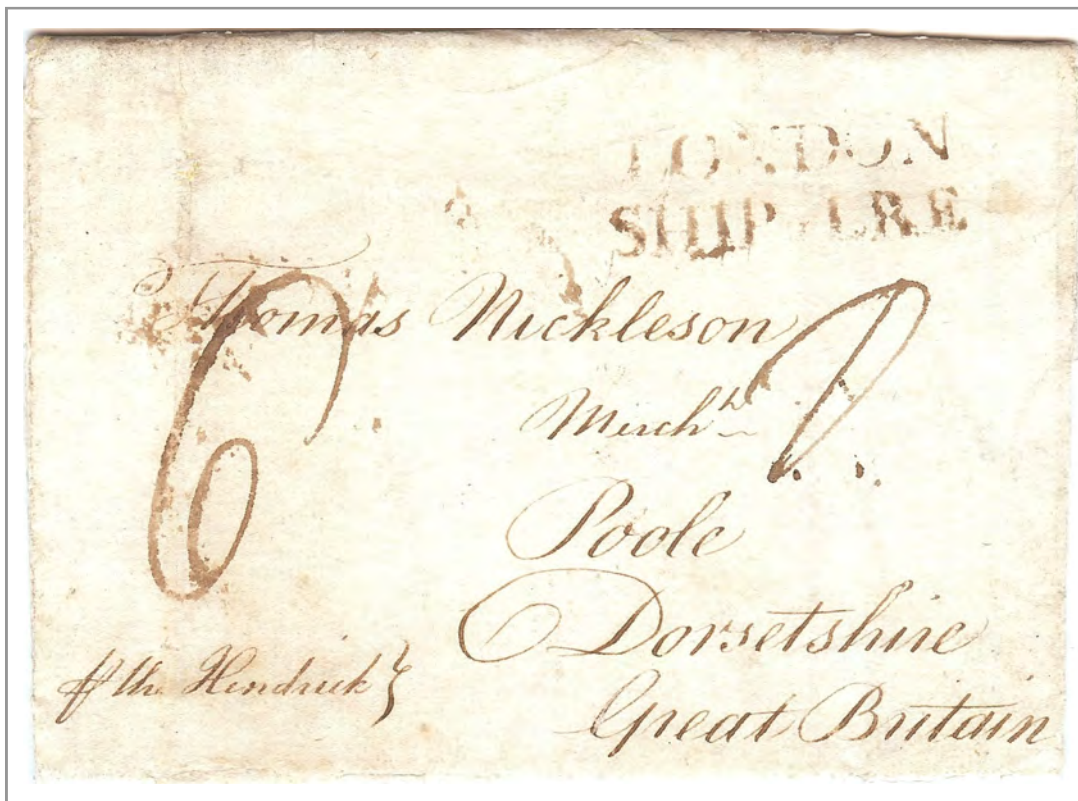
Packet *Swallow* : Falmouth 9 January 1776, New York 9 March 1776      60 days

Carried privately to Philadelphia, where rated 2/6 due in local currency  
 16<sup>d</sup> x 180% inflation + 2<sup>d</sup> carrier fee = 30<sup>d</sup> = 2/6

***Swallow* carried a larger volume of mail than any previous transatlantic voyage**

*Swallow* offloaded mails to HMS *Asia*, a 64-gun blockade ship in New York Harbor. On 11 March, Deputy PMG Foxcroft was given permission to board *Asia* with clerks to sort the mails. On 19 March, Francis Dashwood (PO Secretary) and Elias Nixon were given permission by the New York Committee of Safety to bring mails ashore. Agents traveled to New York to collect their town's letters from Nixon and Henricus Boel (First Clerk). The 1765 British postal rates were retained.

## Philadelphia to London Direct



Philadelphia, 21 March 1785

Sent unpaid by private ship ; no Confederation postage paid

Ship *Hendrick* : Philadelphia 26 March, London 20 May  
 London rated 6<sup>d</sup> : 1<sup>d</sup> ship, 5<sup>d</sup> inland, under the British Act of 1784

Received at Poole 21 May 56 days

**Act of 1784, 24 Geo III**  
 effective 31 August 1784

Under one post stage	2 <sup>d</sup>
1-2 post stages	3 <sup>d</sup>
Over 2 post stages:	
under 80 miles	4 <sup>d</sup>
80-150 miles	5 <sup>d</sup>
above 150 miles	6 <sup>d</sup>
Ship letters	
Inland postage plus	1 <sup>d</sup>

LONDON  
SHIP-LRE

*earliest recorded use*

Direct shipping from Philadelphia to any British Port was irregular at best. The next departure for London after the *Hendrick* was not until the *Pigou* sailed on 2 May 1785, almost six weeks later.

British Contract Sailing Ship

**Post-War Reinstatement of British Packet Service**

After the American Revolution, British authorities asked Benjamin Franklin to reinstate the New York packets under the old terms, including that no U.S. ship fees were to be charged on incoming packet letters. Anxious to restart commercial relations, the American government agreed.

Single rate, prepaid 1/6 :  
 6<sup>d</sup> inland  
 1s packet  
 London marked **POST/PAID**

Packet *Shelburn* :  
 Falmouth 16 December  
 New York 4 February 1786  
 New York rated 2<sup>dwt</sup> due

Received 6 February

53 days

Boxed **204** :  
 204 miles to London



Liverpool, 3 December 1785



Ostende Belgium, 30 June 1787

Privately to London, posted 4 July

Prepaid 2/- for double packet rate

Packet *Dashwood* :

Falmouth 8 July

New York 31 August

New York rated 4<sup>dwt</sup> for double inland

Philadelphia rated 1s due (sterling)

Received 1 September 60 days

**Weight Progression  
 for Packet Letters**

Up to 1/2 oz.	1/-
1/2 oz., up to 1 oz.	2/-
1 oz., up to 2 oz.	4/-
2 oz., up to 3 oz.	6/-

Falmouth Packet, Quadruple Rate



London, 2 February 1786

Prepaid 4/- for a letter weighing over 1 oz.

Packet *Speedy*: Falmouth 14 February, New York 18 April  
 New York rated 8<sup>dwt</sup> due for inland postage

Philadelphia rated 3/6 due in local currency: 8<sup>dwt</sup> = 24<sup>d</sup> sterling, so: 24<sup>d</sup> x 1.67 = 40<sup>d</sup> local + 2<sup>d</sup> delivery = 3s6<sup>d</sup>

Received 20 April 1786 66 days



St. Ubes, Portugal, 30 June 1788

Privately to London, received 11 October

Prepaid 1/- packet rate on 7 January 1789  
 By forwarder *Duveluz & Co.*

Packet *Duke of Cumberland* :  
 Falmouth 11 February  
 New York 2 April

New York rated 1<sup>dwt</sup> 8<sup>gr</sup> due in Philadelphia  
 (60-100 miles; 1788 Congr. Resolution)

Received 5 April 1789 279 days

Private Sailing Ship

Rate Reduction of 1787



Liverpool, 19 January 1790

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Nereus* : Liverpool 20 January, New York 20 March

New York rated **Sh 2**: 2d ship fee; 16 grains of silver per Congressional resolution of 1788

Philadelphia rated **11** pence due in local currency: [2d ship + 4d inland + 1d delivery] x 1.6 inflation = 11d

Received 23 March

64 days

1787 Rate Reduction effective 5 April 1788			
Mileage	Sterling	GB Pence	PA Pence
Not over 60	1 dwt	3d	5d
60-100	1 dwt, 8 gr	4d	7d
100-200	2 dwt	6d	10d
200-300	2 dwt, 16 gr	8d	1s1d
300-400	3 dwt	9d	1s3d
400-500	3 dwt, 8 gr	10d	1s5d
Ship letters	16 gr	2	3d
<i>Inland postage added to ship fee</i>			

These new rates ended a period of 11 rate changes in 14 years, at one point having been inflated to 40 times the 1775 rates.  
**This was the last period with rates denominated in sterling.**

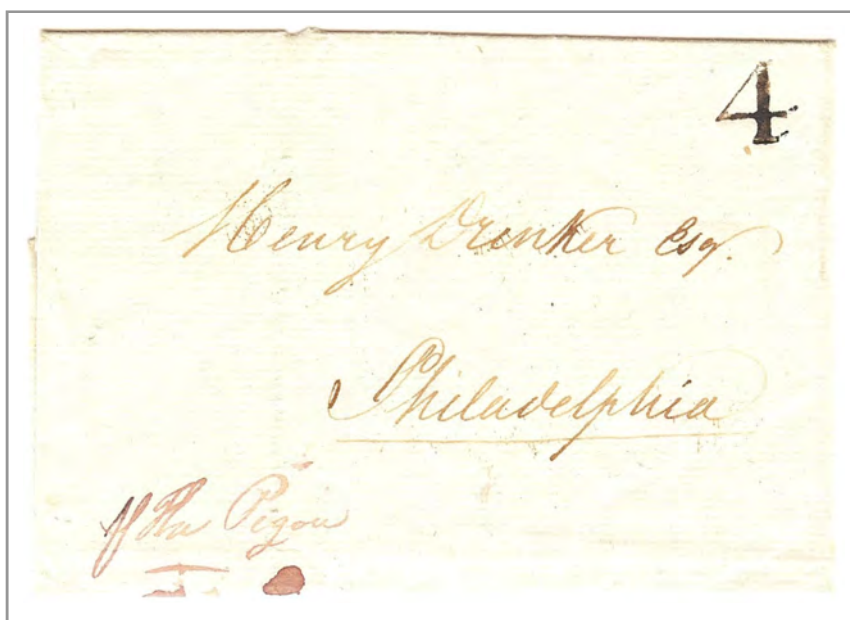
Private Sailing Ship

**1792 Increase in Ship-Letter Fee: America's First Handstamped Numerals**

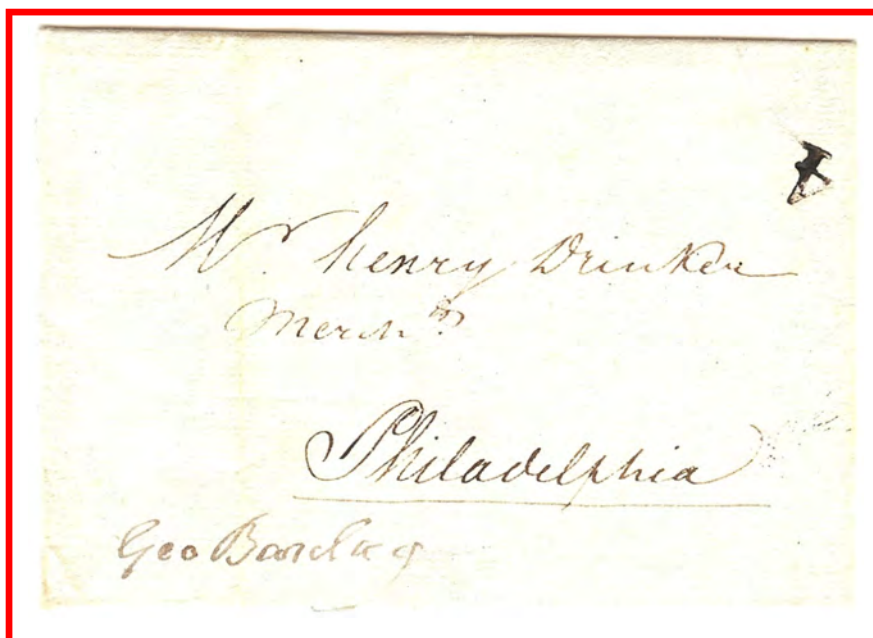
Carried privately to London

Ship *Pigou* : London 2 September  
Philadelphia 31 October

60 days

Philadelphia rated **4** cents due12mm **4** used 1792 to 1799  
**15 examples recorded**

Berne, Switzerland, 3 August 1793



London, 28 March 1794

Sent unpaid

Ship *George Barclay* :  
London 1 March  
Philadelphia 1 May 62 daysPhiladelphia rated **4** cents due8mm **4** used 1793 to 1794  
**5 examples recorded****U.S. Act of 1792**  
effective 1 June 1792

Mileage	Cents
Not over 30	6
30-60	8
60-100	10
100-150	12½
150-200	15
200-250	17
250-350	20
350-450	22
Over 450	25
Ship letters	4

Philadelphia was the only city to use a handstamp 4 device. Four sizes of typeface were used to indicate this rate; a census records that all four comprise only 26 examples.

Private Sailing Ship  
British Contract Sailing Ship



Philadelphia, 8 November 1794

Sent unpaid by private ship *Adriana* :  
Philadelphia 8 November  
Falmouth 9 December

London rated **11<sup>d</sup>** due:  
1<sup>d</sup> ship, 10<sup>d</sup> inland

Received 9 December

31 days

**FALMOUTH  
SHIP-LRE**

Carried privately to New York,  
where sent unpaid

Packet *Harlequin* :  
New York 1 May  
Falmouth 7 June

London rated **1/8** due:  
1s packet, 8<sup>d</sup> inland to Whitby

Received 8 June

70 days



Philadelphia, 29 March 1798

**Letters from Philadelphia by Falmouth packet are uncommon**

Letters from Philadelphia were seldom sent to New York for the packet to Falmouth, because private ship departures from Philadelphia for England were relatively frequent. However from the date this letter was written until 30 April, not a single ship cleared Philadelphia for Great Britain. The sender evidently grew tired of waiting, so the letter went by favor to New York.

## British Contract Sailing Ship

## British Packet Mail Arriving at U.S. Ports not Liable for Ship Fees

## Packet to New York



Rotterdam, 2 November 1792

Carried privately to SE England port,  
where prepaid 1/11 :

1<sup>d</sup> incoming ship  
4<sup>d</sup> to London  
6<sup>d</sup> to Falmouth  
1s packet

Packet *Queen Charlotte*  
Falmouth 24 December  
New York 7 February  
Mis-rated in New York at **12 cents**

Received 9 February 1793

89 days

*U.S. inland postage due should have been  
only 10 cents (60-100 miles).*

## Packet to Halifax, Private Ship to Boston

Prepaid 1/1 : 1s packet, 1d to London

Packet *Sandwich*:  
Falmouth 27 February  
Halifax 3 April

Private schooner *Lively* :  
Halifax ~20 April  
Boston 27 April

Boston rated **24 cents** due  
4¢ ship, 20¢ inland (300-350 miles)

May arrival date unknown

~90 days

*Boston charged a ship fee because the  
letter did not arrive by packet*



Richmond, 4 February 1795

*French naval vessels and privateers used New York harbor as a base for launching attacks against British ships, which resulted in the withdrawal of monthly packet service to New York from January 1794 until November 1795. Packet letters were instead landed at Halifax, Nova Scotia, from where they were taken to Boston by private vessels.*



## British Contract Sailing Ship

## From Italy Via London, Double Rate



Livorno, 13 October 1797

Carried privately to Geneva

Forwarded by Merle d'Aubigné's courier service: Geneva 19 November, London 27 December  
 Forwarder paid  $3/4$  : 2 x (8<sup>d</sup> London to Falmouth, 1s packet)

Packet *Halifax* : Falmouth 25 January, New York 10 March  
 New York rated **20** cents due, double rate for 60-100 miles

Received 12 March 150 days

**Act of 1797, 37 Geo III**  
 effective 5 January 1797

Packet rate remained 1s, but must include:

8<sup>d</sup> inland postage from London, and  
 inland postage to London if posted elsewhere

## From Hamburg Via London



Hamburg, 6 December 1799

Carried privately to London, where paid  $1/8$  on December 14: 8<sup>d</sup> to Falmouth, 1s packet

Packet *Earl Gower* : Falmouth 12 February 1800, New York 10 April  
New York mis-rated at **12** cents, ignoring the 1799 rate change

Received 11 April 1800, *transit 127 days*

U.S. Act of 2 March 1799	
effective 1 May 1799	
Mileage	Cents
Not over 40	8
40-90	10
90-150	12½
150-300	17
300-500	20
Over 500	25
Ship letters	
Delivered at port	6
Elsewhere, plus postage	2

Although Hamburg was an important trading center in 1799, direct sailings for Philadelphia were infrequent. The sender no doubt counted on the regularity of Falmouth packets. In this case the results must have disappointed.

## British Contract Sailing Ship

## Falmouth Packet Single Rate

Prepaid  $1/8$  : 8<sup>d</sup> to Falmouth, 1s packet

Packet *Duke of Cumberland*

Falmouth 24 January

New York 1 March

New York Rated  $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents for inland

Received 2 March 55 days



London, 7 January 1801

## Falmouth Packet Double Rate



Lewes, 15 January 1804

Prepaid  $3/10$  :  
2x (11<sup>d</sup> to London + 1s packet)

Packet *Prince Adolphus* :

Falmouth 12 February

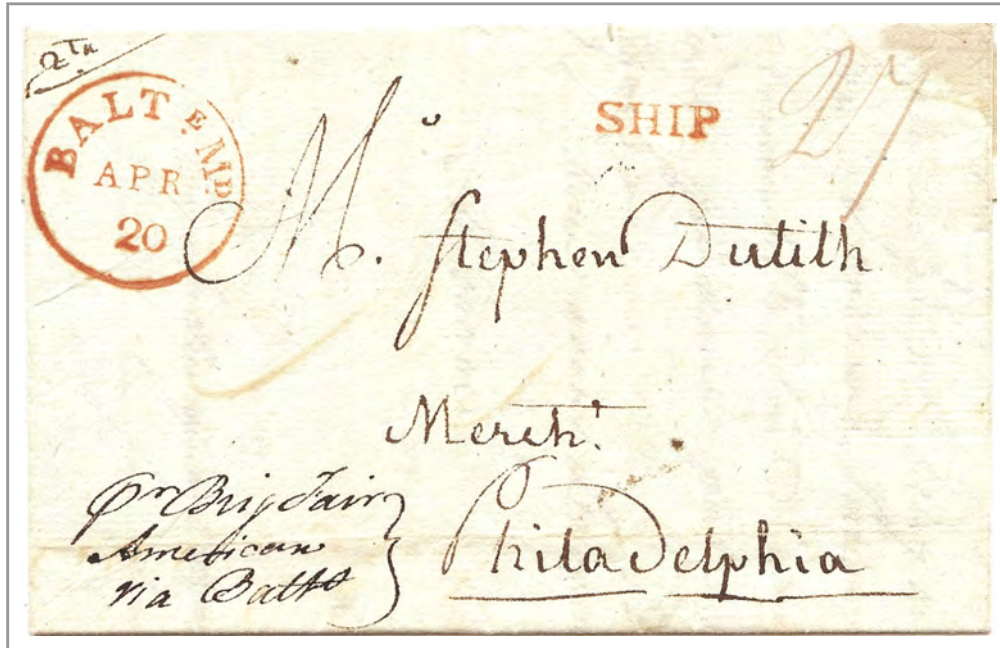
New York 7 April

New York rated **25** cents for  
double inland

Received 9 April 1804 86 days

Private Sailing Ship

**From Jamaica Via Baltimore**



Sent unpaid by private ship

*Fair American*

Kingston 24 February

Baltimore 20 April

Baltimore rated **27** cents due:

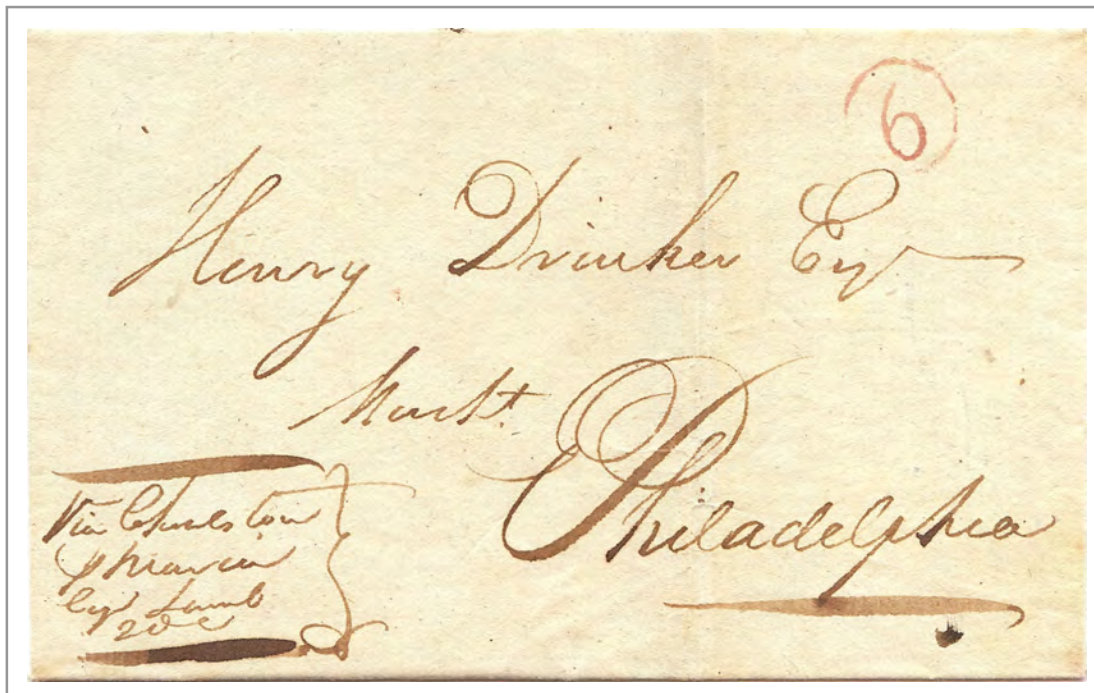
2¢ ship, 2 x 12½¢ inland

Received 23 April

55 days

Kingston, 24 February 1804

**From The Bahamas Via Charleston**



Nassau, 26 April 1801

Sent unpaid via private sloop *Maria* : Nassau 26 April, Charleston 5-30 May, Philadelphia 10 June

Philadelphia rated **6** cents due for delivery at the port

Received 10 June 46 days

## Private Sailing Ship

## Prepaid Ship Letter



London, 21 July 1803

Prepaid 11<sup>d</sup>, one half the packet rate of 1/10

Ship *Pigou* : London 22 July, Philadelphia 7 September 47 days  
 Philadelphia rated 6 cents due for delivery within the city



1802-1805

**Prepaid Ship-Letter Rates From London**

1799 (39 Geo III c 76)	≥ ½ packet rate
1803 (POD)	11 <sup>d</sup> to N. America
1814 (POD)	¼ packet rate
1815 (POD)	½ packet rate
1835 (5/6 William IV 25)	8 <sup>d</sup>

Prepayment of ship letters was not permissible until 1799. **Act 39 Geo III c 76** allowed private ships to carry mail for the post office at "not less than half the packet rate". This was amended by GPO notice in 1803 to be exactly half the packet rate, and required letters to be held in sealed bags.

## Private Sailing Ship

## Via Cadiz and Havana



Hull, 23 July 1803

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *John* :  
 Hull 23 July  
 Philadelphia 30 October

Philadelphia rated **6** cents due  
 for delivery within the city

69 days



Aug 1802 – Jul 1805

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Union* :  
 Plymouth 8 February 1809  
 Philadelphia 9 March

Philadelphia rated **22** cents due:  
 2¢ ship, 20¢ inland to Boston

Received 12 March

81 days



London, 22 December 1808

*It was not uncommon for private ships to sail the southern route to Philadelphia, since it provided additional port calls for trade purposes, and avoided sailing against the Gulf Stream. Stops were often made at Cadiz, Madeira, or Caribbean ports.*

Private Sailing Ship

From Cape Colony

unpaid by private ship

Ship *Perseverance* :  
Cape Town 8 March  
Philadelphia 3 May

Philadelphia rated **22**  
cents due:

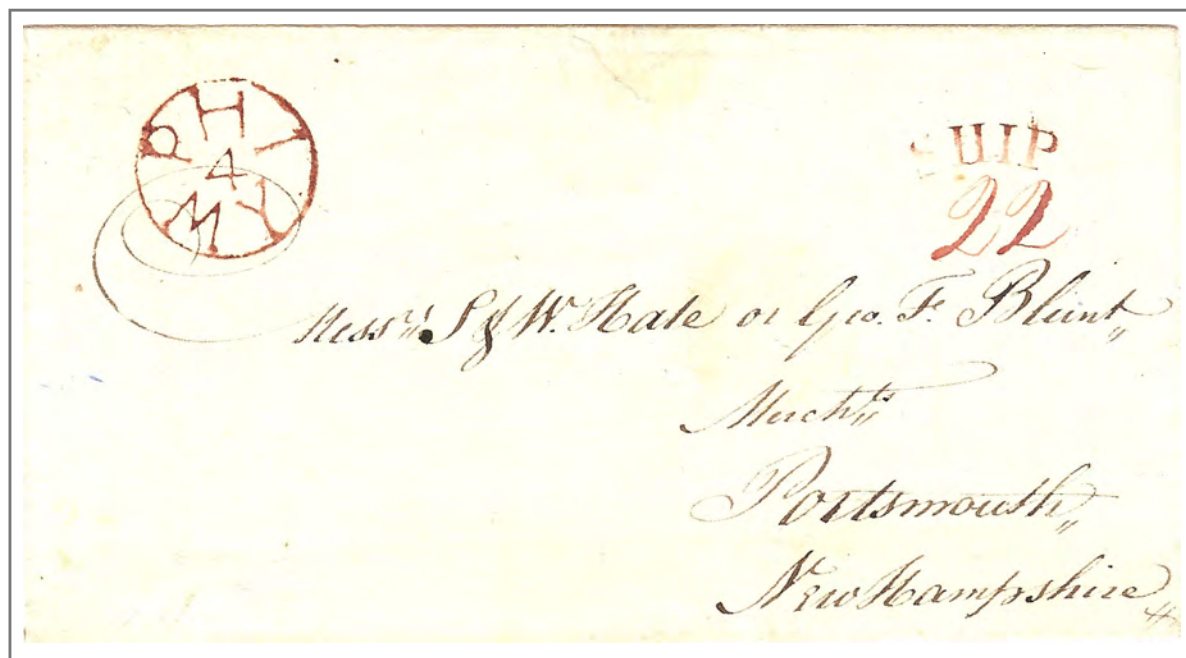
2¢ ship, 20¢ inland  
to Portsmouth  
(300-500-Miles)

58 days

SHIP

1804-1817

earliest recorded use



Cape Town, 8 March 1804

Triple Rate



Philadelphia, 13 February 1807

Unpaid by private ship

Endorsed for *Latona*, but sent  
on Ship *Abigail*.  
Philadelphia 14 February  
arrival unknown

Hull rated **1/10** due, triple rate :  
4<sup>d</sup> ship + (3 x 6<sup>d</sup> inland)

Illustrated in Robertson

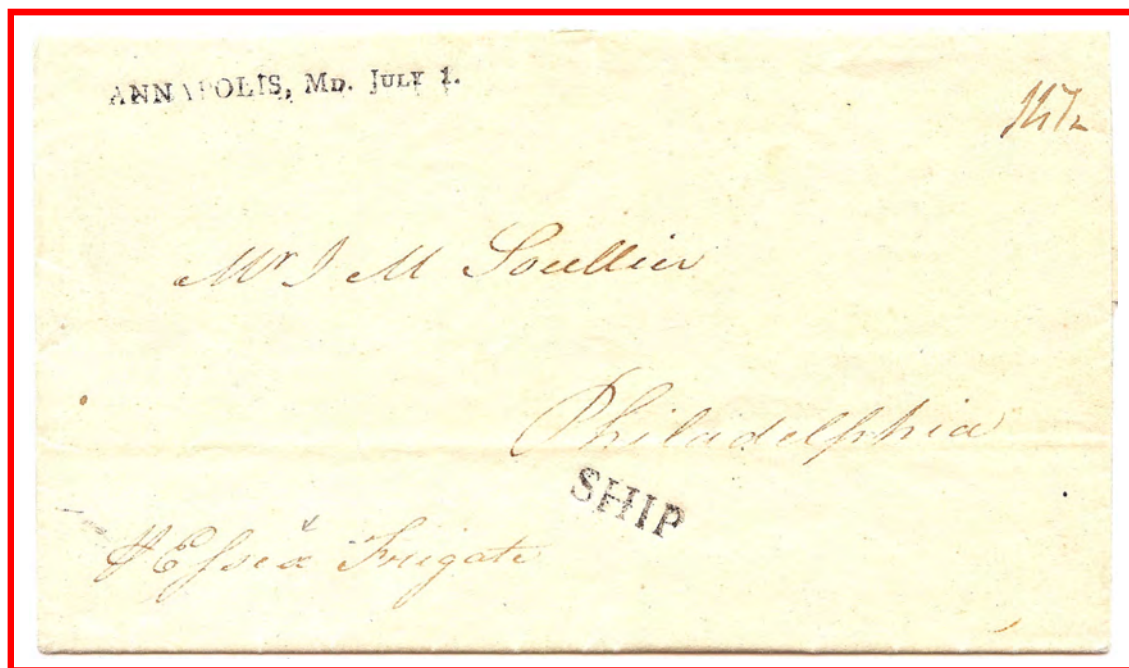


two recorded

Private ships were often the wiser choice for senders in British colonies, as they could offer a more direct route—and very possibly a faster one—than sending a letter via the GPO in London.

## American Naval Warship

## Diplomatic Mission of U.S. Frigate



London, 8 April 1811

Sent unpaid by U.S. Naval vessel  
Frigate *Essex*: Cowes 6 May, Annapolis 1 July

Annapolis rated **14½**cents due: 2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland (80-150 miles)

Received 4 July 1811      78 days

ANNAPOLIS, MD. JULY 1.

**2 recorded in black**

#### Prelude to the War of 1812

Anglo-American relations had been worsening since the 1790s, due to harassment of American merchant vessels engaged in "neutral trade" with France during Britain's war with France.

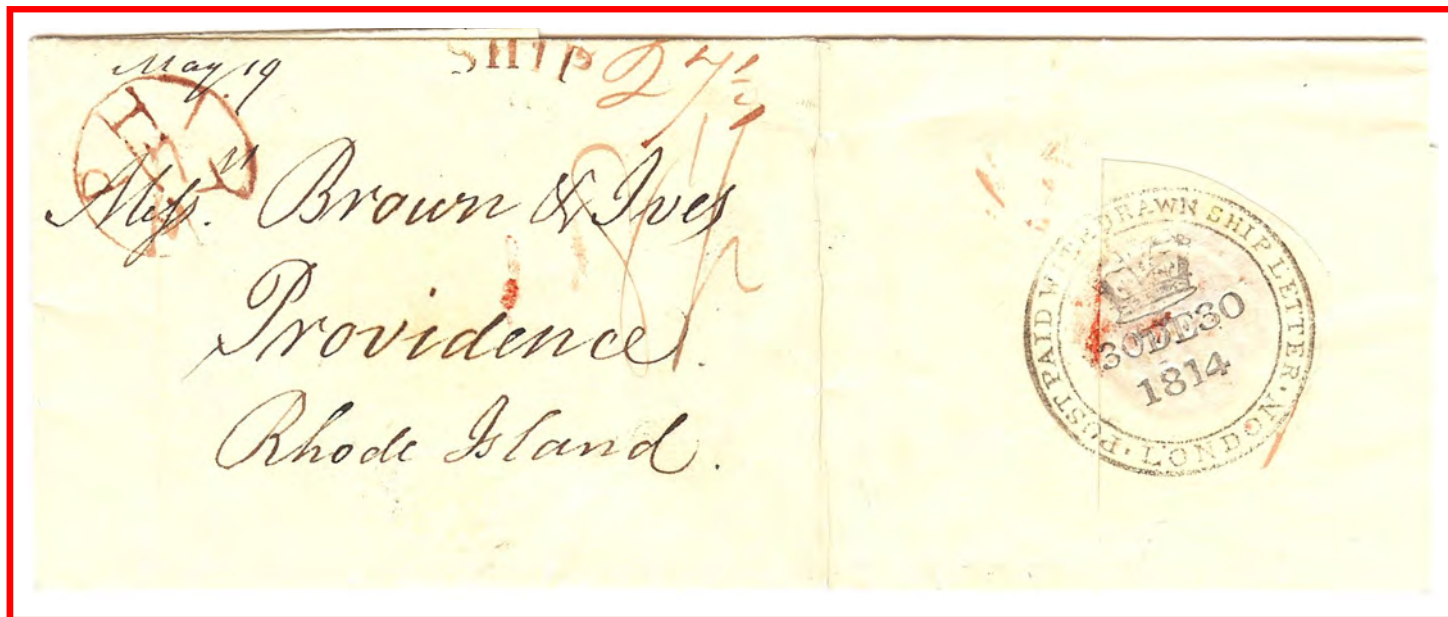
In 1811 President Madison recalled the U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, Thomas Pinckney, and replaced him with a *Charges des Affairs*—a position of lower rank. The 46-gun U.S. Frigate *Essex* was sent to England to transport Pinckney home to Annapolis. She put into Cowes on the Isle of Wight, just offshore from the entrance to Portsmouth Harbor, to where Pinckney is reported to have traveled from London.



## Private Sailing Ship

**The War of 1812-1816**

Privateering had placed British Packets to New York at risk, so service was discontinued in March 1813. The GPO London issued the following notice on 11 March 1814: "HM pkts having ceased to go to NY you are to cease receiving letters with pkt postage to the USA. Only ship letter bags may occasionally be sent."

**Withdrawn Ship Letter**

**London, 30 December 1814**

Prepaid  $8\frac{1}{2}$ , one third the packet rate of 2/2

Ship *Pacific* : London departure unknown, Philadelphia 17 May 1815      139 days  
Transit 45 days from Cork, where delayed several weeks by gales

Philadelphia rated  $27\frac{1}{2}$ cents due: 2¢ ship, 17¢ inland,  $8\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ surcharge

**7 withdrawn ship letters landed at Philadelphia are recorded**

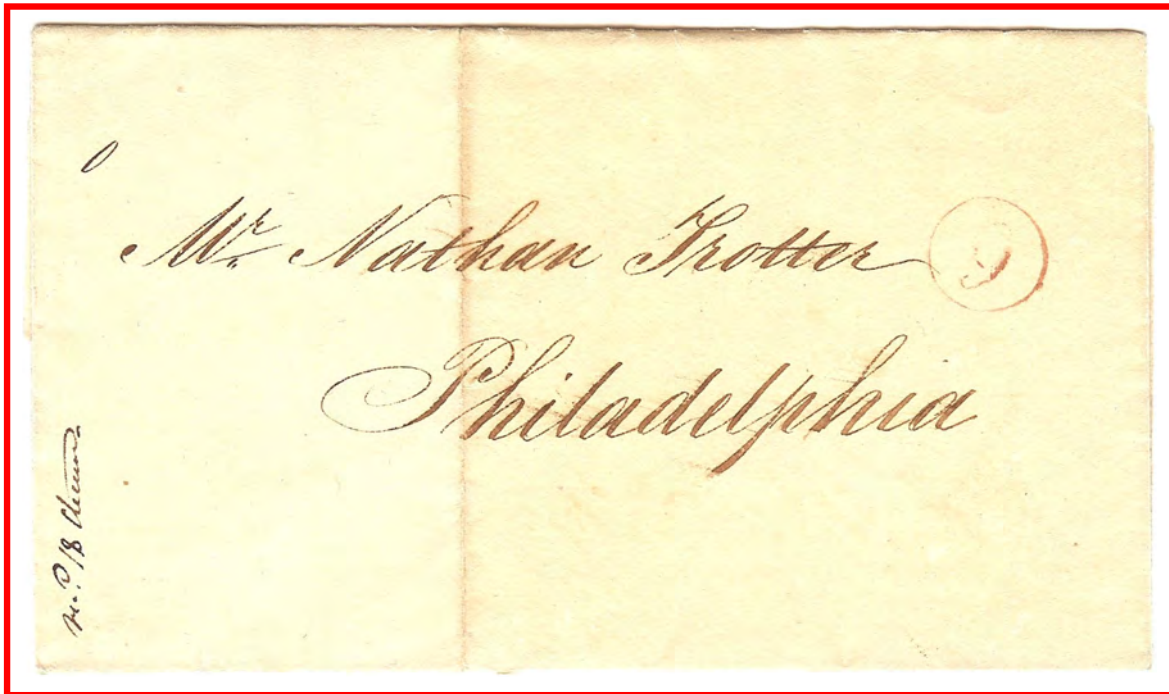


**Act of 1814, Geo III c. 169**  
effective 10 Oct 1814

Senders could use any private ship of their choosing if they prepaid one third of the 2s2d packet-letter rate (26<sup>d</sup> x .33 = 8.58<sup>d</sup>, rounded to 8.5<sup>d</sup>). Such letters were thus "withdrawn" from the mails.

The Post Paid Withdrawn-Ship-Letter option was terminated on 11 July 1815.

**War Rate: The Nine-Cents Ship Fee**



**London, 3 October 1815**

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Catharine & Edward* : The Downs 27 October, Philadelphia 18 December 53 days

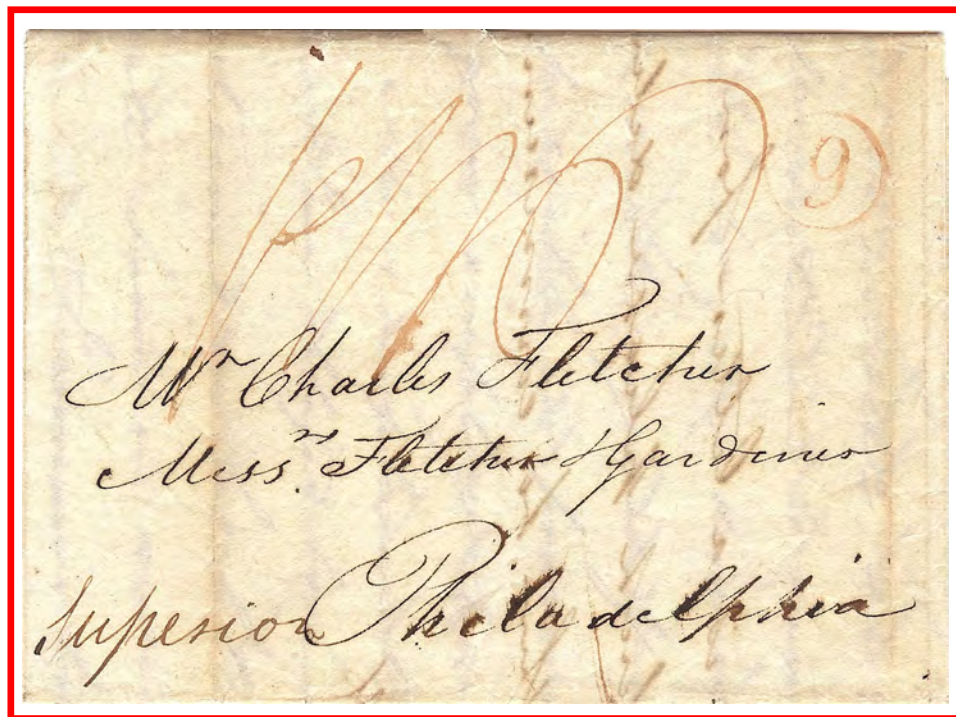
Philadelphia rated 9 cents due: 50% surcharge to 6¢ ship-letter fee for delivery at port

**8 Philadelphia covers paying this rate are recorded**

<b>U.S. Act of 1814</b>	
effective 1 Feb 1815	
<b>Mileage</b>	<b>Cents</b>
Not over 40	12
40-90	15
90-150	18 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>
150-300	25 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>
300-500	30
Over 500	37 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>
<b>Ship letters</b>	
Delivered at port	9
Elsewhere, plus postage	2

On 1 February 1815, all inland rates and the six-cent ship letter rate were increased by 50%. The 1799 rates were restored on 1 February 1816.

## Withdrawn Ship Letter, Double Rate



Liverpool, 19 May 1815

Prepaid one third of the 2/2 packet rate, doubled:  $0.33 \times 52d = 17.3^d$ , rounded up to  $18^d = 1/6$

Ship *Superior*: Liverpool 2 June, Philadelphia 21 July 49 days  
 Philadelphia rated 9 cents due: 50% surcharge to 6¢ ship-letter fee

8 covers to Philadelphia at this rate are recorded, of which this is the only withdrawn ship letter



reverse

## Private Sailing Ship

**Post-War Growth of the American Merchant Fleet**

The United States became a naval power in the War of 1812-1816. Improvements gained in ship design and speed were transferred to American commercial shipping, which then saw explosive growth in the North Atlantic. Many new shipping lines were started, and single-ship operators increased the competition.



**London, 14 December 1820**

Sent unpaid on private ship

Ship *Atlantic* : London 17 December, New York 19 February 1821 65 days

New York rated **14½**cents due: 2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland



applied by ship's purser  
used in olive green only on 17 Dec.

**three examples known**

By the 1820s American lines sailing regular schedules sprung up in many eastern U.S. ports. Intense competition for cargo and passengers was evident in newspaper advertisements.

**Name-of-ship markings provided additional advertising.**

Letter to the publisher and bookseller Matthew Carey, a revolutionary, close friend of Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, and early advocate of strong naval power as a necessary role of federalism.

Private Sailing Ship

Philadelphia Shipping Lines

Cope Line, 1821-1872



Broomfield, 14 July 1819

Posted at Chelmsford, prepaid 1/- for inland postage to Liverpool

Sent unpaid by private ship

Cope Line Ship *Lancaster*: Liverpool 21 July, Philadelphia 13 September 55 days

Philadelphia rated 8 cents due: 2¢ ship, 6¢ inland

LANCASTER

applied by ship's purser

two known  
the only example in black

U.S. Act of 1816 effective 1 May 1816	
Mileage	Cents
Not over 30	6
30-80	10
80-150	12½
150-400	18½
Over 400	25
Ship letters	
Delivered at port	6
Elsewhere, plus postage	2

Thomas P. Cope's line of sailing ships operated intermittently from 1806, and on a monthly schedule from 1822 to 1872. Although often termed the "Philadelphia Packet" or "Liverpool Packet", none of Cope's voyages were under mail contracts.

Private Sailing Ship

## Philadelphia Shipping Lines

Cope Line, 1821-1872



Philadelphia, 13 July 1824

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Algonquin* :  
 Philadelphia 20 July  
 Liverpool 16 August

London rated 1/7 due :  
 8<sup>d</sup> ship  
 11<sup>d</sup> inland,  
 8<sup>d</sup> forwarding

Received 17 August 36 days

**Maiden voyage of Algonquin**

ALGONQUIN

**three recorded**

Philadelphia, 6 May 1820

Sent unpaid by private ship *Tuscarora* : Philadelphia 9 May, Liverpool 8 June 30 daysLiverpool rated 8<sup>d</sup> due for ship

## Private Sailing Ship

## Philadelphia Shipping Lines

## Hutchinson Line

Carried privately to Baltimore;  
then unpaid on private ship

Brig *Paragon* :  
Baltimore 20 July  
Gravesend 16 August

Received 16 August

London rated  $1/2$  due  
 $8^d$  ship,  $6^d$  inland

27 days

**PARAGON**

applied by ship's purser

**the only reported example**



Philadelphia, 10 July 1824

## Walker Line



Philadelphia, 22 June 1824

Sent unpaid by private ship  
Ship *Julius Caesar*:  
Philadelphia 22 June  
Liverpool 18 July

Received at London 19 July

London rated  $1/7$  due  
 $8^d$  ship,  $11^d$  inland

25 days

**JULIUS CAESAR**

applied by ship's purser

**three reported**

## Private Sailing Ship

## Bevans &amp; Humphreys Line of Philadelphia



Sent unpaid

Ship *Telegraph* :  
 Philadelphia 18 October  
 Liverpool 14 November

Liverpool rated 8<sup>d</sup> due for ship

28 days



two recorded

Philadelphia, 14 October 1819

## Carrington Line of Providence, R.I.

Privately to Philadelphia, where  
sent unpaid

Endorsed for *Bainbridge*,  
 but sent on ship *Superior* :  
 Philadelphia 29 April  
 Liverpool 10 June 43 days

Liverpool rated 8<sup>d</sup> due for ship

Returned via Philadelphia  
 Ship *Stranger* :  
 Liverpool 24 June  
 Philadelphia 23 August 60 days

Philadelphia rated 14½¢ due:  
 12½¢ inland, 2¢ ship



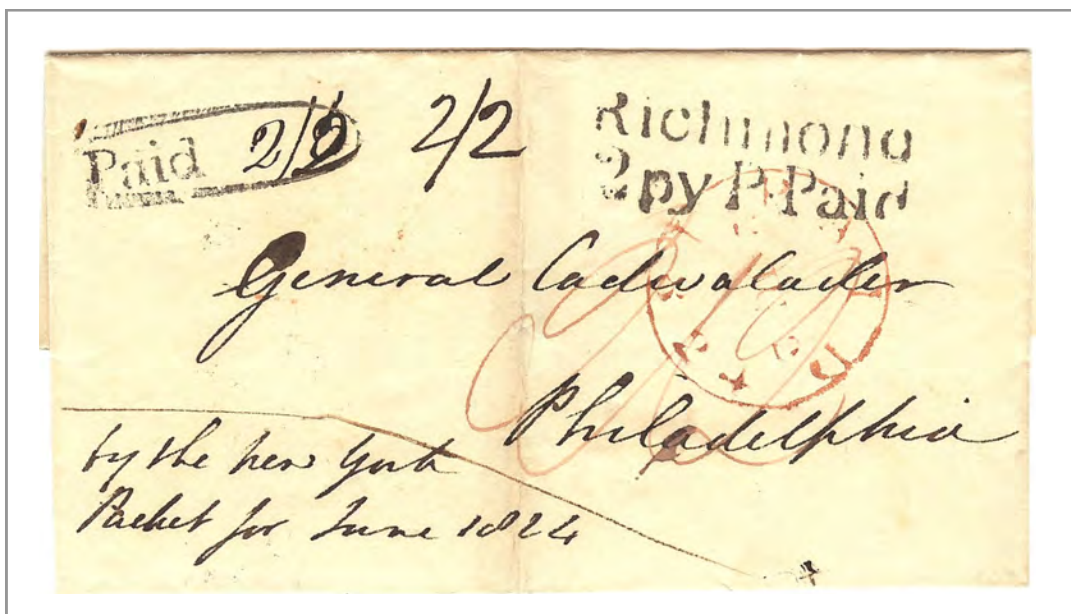
Baltimore, 14 April 1820



## British Contract Sailing Ship

**Post-War Resumption of Falmouth-New York Packet Service**

Packet service to New York resumed shortly after the United States ratified the Treaty of Ghent in February 1815. By the mid 1820s American ships provided weekly service between New York and Liverpool. The packets, which were more expensive and slower, were left with only government dispatches for Canada, Nova Scotia and Bermuda. Packet service to New York was therefore discontinued in late 1826.

**Falmouth Packet, Single Rate**

Richmond, 2 June 1824

Prepaid 2/2, the packet rate to New York

Packet *Duke of York* : Falmouth 16 June, New York 7 August 69 days

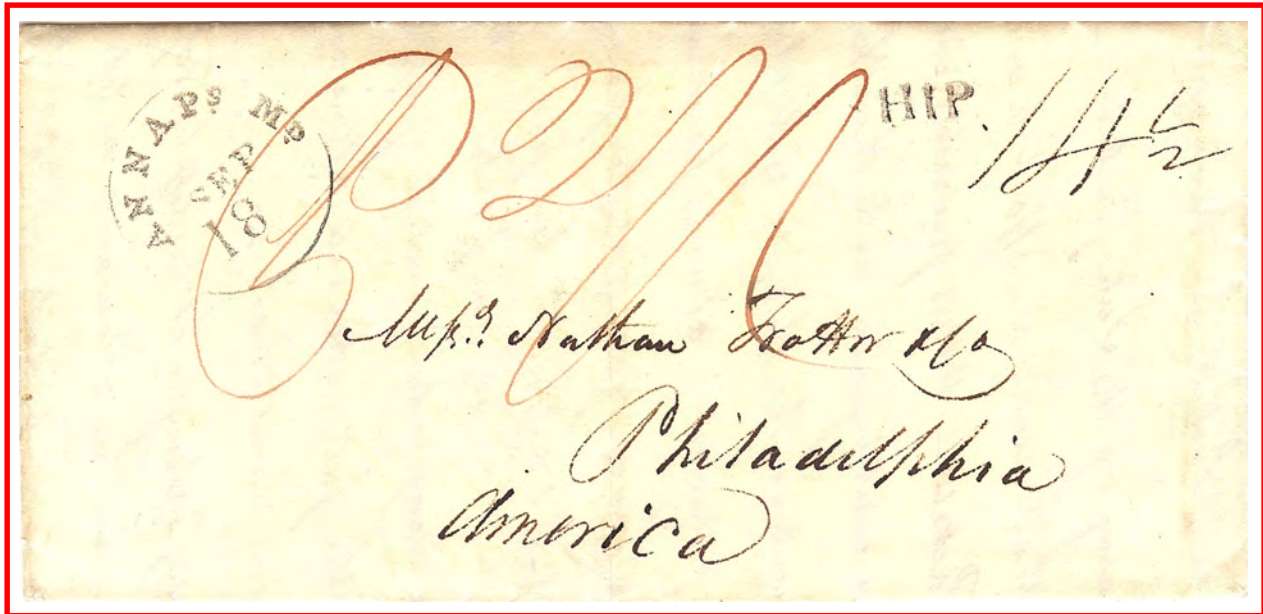
Free of ship fee, but New York erred in not charging inland postage to Philadelphia

*Senders in English ports had no incentive to use British packets. A private ship saved 2s2d, since letters could be sent unpaid by depositing them in the ship's bag dockside. Letters sent by private ship would likely arrive weeks ahead of the packet mail.*

## British Contract Sailing Ship

**Introduction of Packet Service Via Bermuda**

When Falmouth-New York packet service was terminated in late 1826, letters for America were sent on the Falmouth-Bermuda packet. From Bermuda a Cunard sailing ship was contracted to take them to Annapolis. Only nine such voyages were made before the service ended in October 1827.



**Monmouth, Wales, 27 June 1827**

Prepaid *2/1*, the single packet rate

Packet *Eclipse*, Falmouth 4 August, Bermuda arrival unknown  
 Packet *Emily* from Bermuda, Annapolis 18 September 85 days

Annapolis rated **14½**cents due: 2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland

**10 letters recorded via Annapolis packet, only 2 to Philadelphia**

**U.S. Act of 1825**

effective 1 May 1825

Mileage	Cents
Not over 30	6
30-80	10
80-150	12½
150-400	18¾
Over 400	25
<b>Ship letters</b>	
Delivered at port	6
Elsewhere, plus postage	2

Letters arriving by Bermuda packet entered the mail in Annapolis, not—as reported in the literature— taken to Washington by special courier. The trip to Philadelphia by mail coach took an entire day.

## Private Sailing Ship

## Philadelphia Ship-Letter Postmarks

## Brown's Line of Baltimore

Sent unpaid

Ship *Pocahontas* :  
 Liverpool 8 October  
 Philadelphia 9 November

35 days

Phila. rated **27** cents due:  
 2¢ ship, 25¢ inland to Maine

*Postmark used only on  
 incoming mail for addresses  
 beyond the port :*

*May 1834 - 9 Nov 1835*

**latest recorded use**



Liverpool, 13 September 1835



Liverpool, 19 August 1834

Sent unpaid

Brig *Morgan* :  
 Liverpool 20 August  
 Philadelphia 8 October

59 days

Phila. rated **6** cents due  
 for delivery at the port

*Postmark used only on  
 incoming mail for ad-  
 dresses within the city :*  
*Oct 1834 - Oct 1836*

**earliest recorded use  
 in red**

## Private Sailing Ship

## Delaware Estuary Blocked by Ice, Winter of 1834-35

## Delayed Seven Weeks by Ice



Liverpool, 8 December 1834

Sent unpaid by private ship

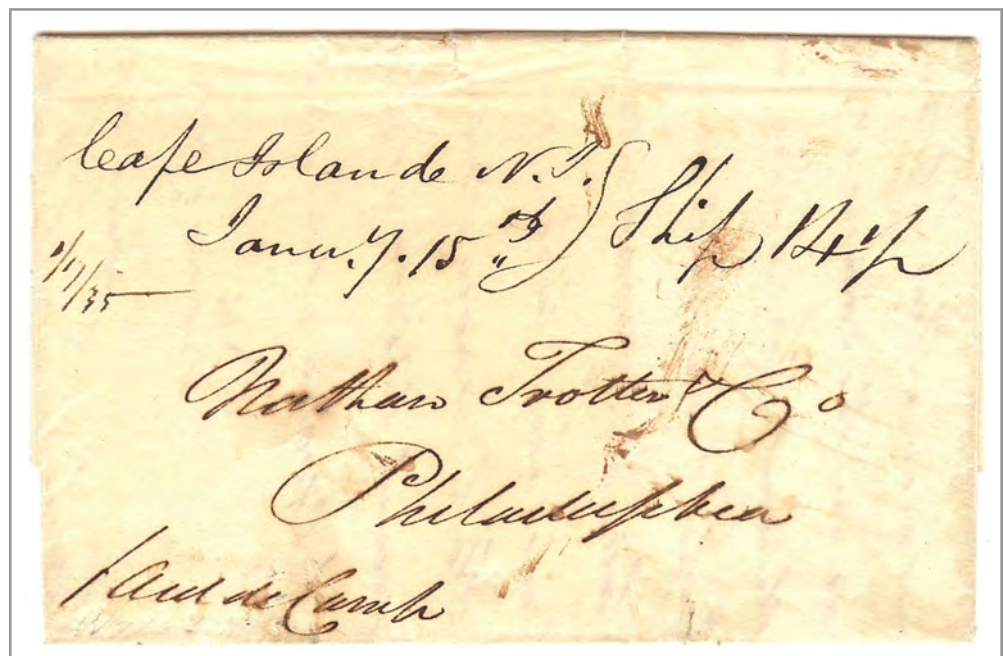
Cope Line *Algonquin* :  
 Liverpool 11 Dec  
 Cape Island, N.J. 6 Jan

Delayed by storms and ice  
 Arr. at Lazaretto 26 Jan 1835  
 Postmarked February in error

Philadelphia rated **14** cents due  
 2¢ ship, 6¢ inland double

83 days

## Overland Through New Jersey to Avoid Ice



London, 12 December 1834

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Aid de Camp* :  
 Liverpool 17 Dec  
 Cape Island, N.J. 15 Jan

Delaware River ice-jammed,  
 so mails sent ashore in New  
 Jersey

Cape Island rated **14½** due  
 2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland

Received 17 Jan 35

37 days

*Liverpool to Philadelphia was 200 miles longer than to New York, and required navigating a shoaling estuary. Even with favorable tides and winds, the trip to Philadelphia could take an additional one to two weeks.*

## Private Sailing Ship

**New York Sailing "Packet" Companies**

From 1818 to 1840 an increasing proportion of transatlantic mail went by non-contract sailing via weekly service from New York. Their importance waned with the increase of steamship traffic late in the 1830s.

**Black Ball Line, 1818-1840**

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Orpheus* :  
 Liverpool 16 May  
 New York 15 June

New York rated **14½**cents due:  
 2¢ ship  
 12½¢ inland

Received 16 June 32 days

**ORPHEUS**

Applied by ship's purser

**two recorded**

London, 12 May 1834

Prepaid 25 cents, double  
 rate to New York:  
 12½¢ x 2

Ship *England* :  
 New York 16 March  
 Liverpool 5 April

Liverpool treated as single  
 rate, **1/7** due:  
 8<sup>d</sup> ship  
 11<sup>d</sup> to London

21 days



Philadelphia, 5 March 1836

Private Sailing Ship

Blue Swallowtail Line, New York 1822-1840

Prepaid 37½ cents to New York  
(2 x 18¾¢ rate)

Ship *Cortes* :  
New York 8 May  
Liverpool 5 June

London first rated **3/2** due for  
2 sheets. Inspector canceled  
rate with crown handstamp  
and re-rated **4/9** due  
3 x (8d ship + 11d inland)

30 days

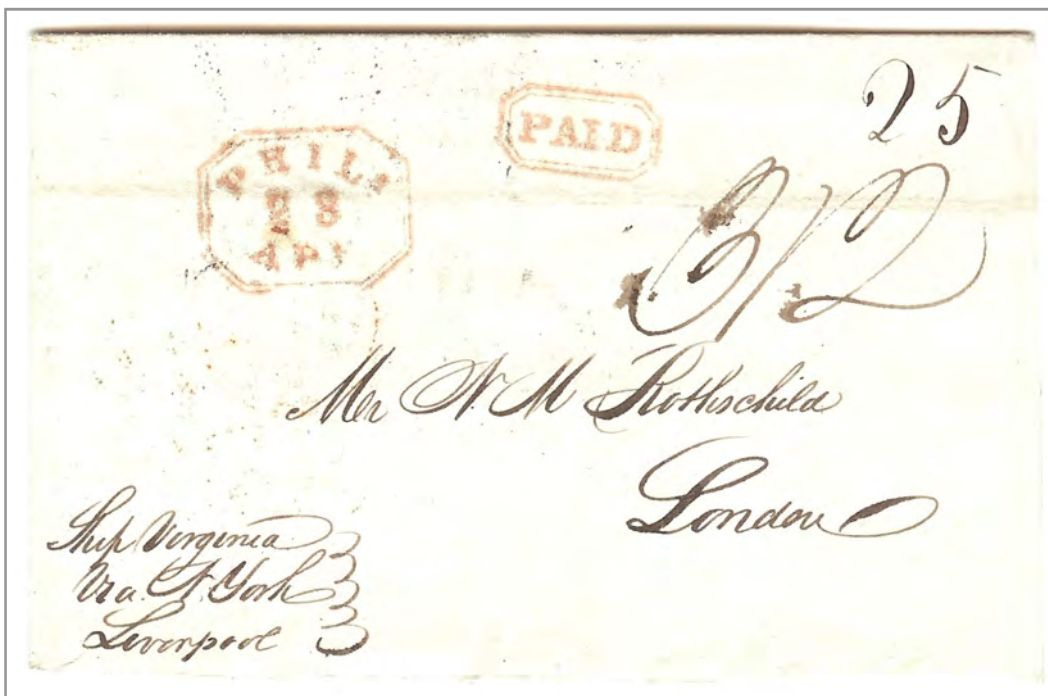
SHIP LETTER  
LIVERPOOL

reverse



Philadelphia, 7 May 1825

Red Star Line, New York 1822-1840



Prepaid **25** cents to New York  
(2 x 12½¢ rate)

Ship *Virginian* :  
New York 29 April  
Liverpool 16 May

19 days

Liverpool rated **3/2** due:  
2x (8<sup>d</sup> ship + 11<sup>d</sup> inland)

LIVERPOOL  
SHIP LETTER

reverse, 80%

Philadelphia, 28 April 1835

## Private Sailing Ship

## Red Swallowtail Line, New York 1827-1840



Philadelphia, 20 January 1836

Carried privately to London, where posted at the Coleman Street two-penny post office.

Ship *Gladiator* :  
New York 10 February  
London 19 March

Coleman St. office rated 2<sup>d</sup> due for delivery, and **NE** to signify the carrier route.

40 days



## Dramatic Line, New York 1836-1840

Prepaid 8<sup>d</sup> ship fee

Ship *Sheridan* :  
Liverpool 16 March  
New York 13 April

New York rated 14½¢ due  
2¢ ship  
12½¢ inland

Received 14 April

30 days



Glasgow, 12 March 1840

## Private Sailing Ship

## Black X Line, New York 1824-1840

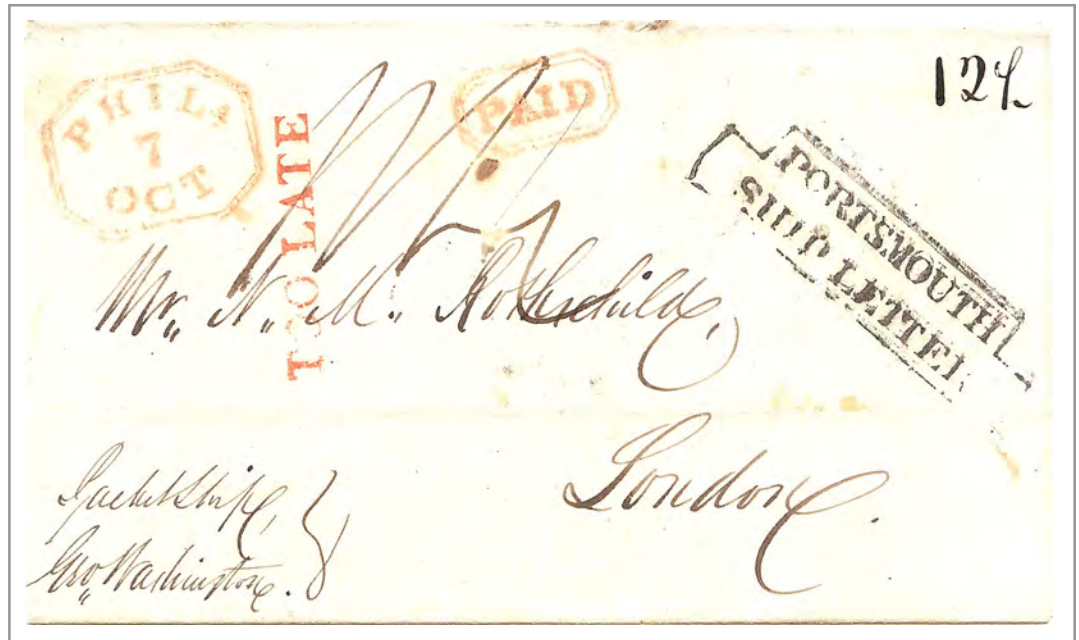
Prepaid **12½cents**  
To New York

**TOO LATE** for ship  
George Washington

Ship *Montreal* :  
New York 10 October  
Portsmouth 8 November

London rate **1/4** due:  
8d ship  
8d inland to London

Received 9 November  
30 days



Philadelphia, 30 September 1835



London, 19 April 1838

Prepaid **1/-** ship-letter fee  
for posting outside the port

Ship *Philadelphia* :  
Portsmouth, 20 April  
New York 14 May

New York rated **14½cents**  
due: 2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland

Received 15 May

35 days



## Non-Contract Steamship

**Freight-Money Letters**

Freight money was a fee charged by shipping companies for carrying letters from New York to Great Britain. In May 1838, private steamships began charging 25 cents per sheet; sailing ships responded by charging only 12½ cents. The Postmaster General allowed postmasters to collect these fees and forward them to the New York Postmaster for delivery to the appropriate shipping companies.

**The Great Western Steamship Co.**

**Philadelphia, 23 February 1839**

Prepaid **37½cents**: 12½¢ to New York, 25¢ freight money  
 Steamship *Great Western* : New York 25 February, Bristol 13 March    17 days

Bristol rated **1/5** due: 8<sup>d</sup> ship fee, 9<sup>d</sup> inland to London



Bristol was *Great Western's* home port from 1838 until 1843, when it was abandoned in favor of Liverpool.

*The revenue for this letter was collected by the Philadelphia post office on behalf of the company, and the amount added to postage to denote the total prepayment.*

## Non-Contract Sailing, Steamship

## Freight Money Letters

## Red Star Line

Double rate: two sheets

Prepaid **50** cents

2x 12½¢ to New York

2x 12½¢ freight money by sail

Steamship *United States*

New York 14 February

Liverpool 15 March 32 days

Liverpool rated **4/9** due (3 sheets)

3x 8<sup>d</sup> ship fee

3x 11<sup>d</sup> inland

LIVERPOOL  
SHIP LETTER

reverse



Philadelphia, 12 February 1839

## British &amp; American Steam Navigation Co.



Philadelphia, 30 November 1839

Single weight: one sheet

Prepaid **37½** cents

12½¢ to New York

25¢ freight money by steam

Steamship *British Queen*

New York 2 December

Gravesend 25 December

24 days

Gravesend rated **1/-** due

8<sup>d</sup> ship, 4<sup>d</sup> uniform inland rate

SHIP LETTER  
GRAVESEND

reverse, in red

*British Queen* was the only steamship to arrive in the U.K during the 35-days (5 Dec 1839 to 9 Jan 1840) when the uniform 4<sup>d</sup> inland rate was in effect.

## Non-Contract Sailing Ship

## Freight Money Letters

## Kermit Line



Philadelphia, 9 March 1840

Double rate: two sheets

Prepaid **50** cents  
 2x 12½¢ to New York  
 2x 12½¢ freight money

Ship *Virginian* :  
 New York 13 March  
 Liverpool 15 April

34 days

Liverpool rated **8<sup>d</sup>** due  
 uniform ship fee

LIVERPOOL  
 SHIP LETTER

reverse

## Blue Swallowtail Line

Single rate: one sheet

Prepaid **25** cents  
 12½¢ to New York  
 12½¢ freight money

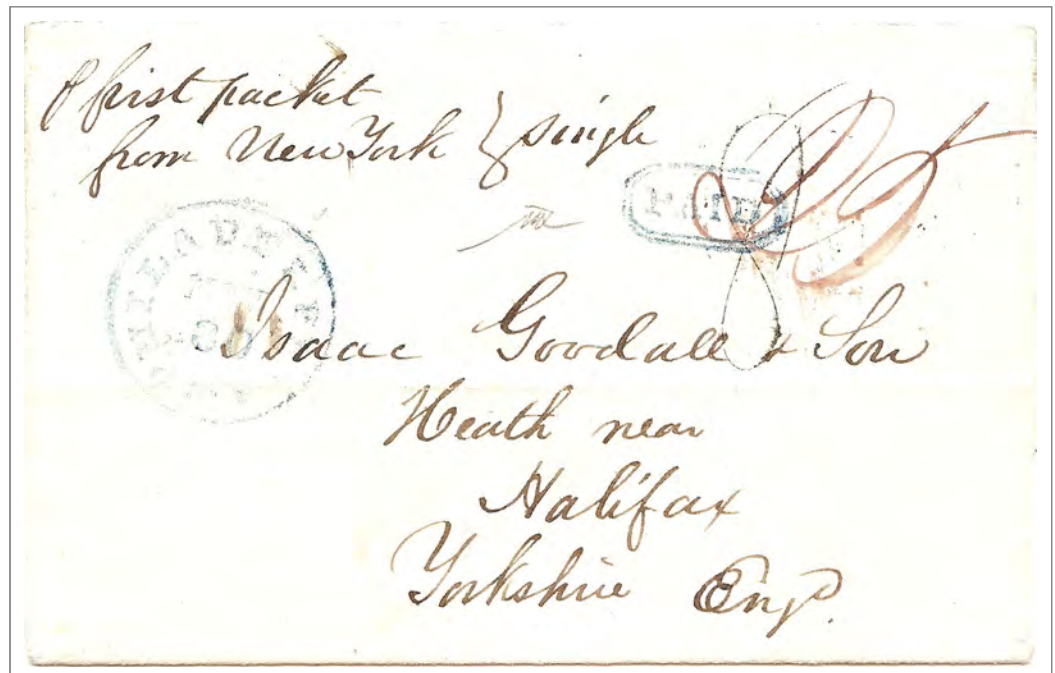
Ship *Independence* :  
 New York 12 December  
 Liverpool 31 December

20 days

Liverpool rated **8<sup>d</sup>** due  
 Uniform ship fee

LIVERPOOL  
 SHIP LETTER

reverse



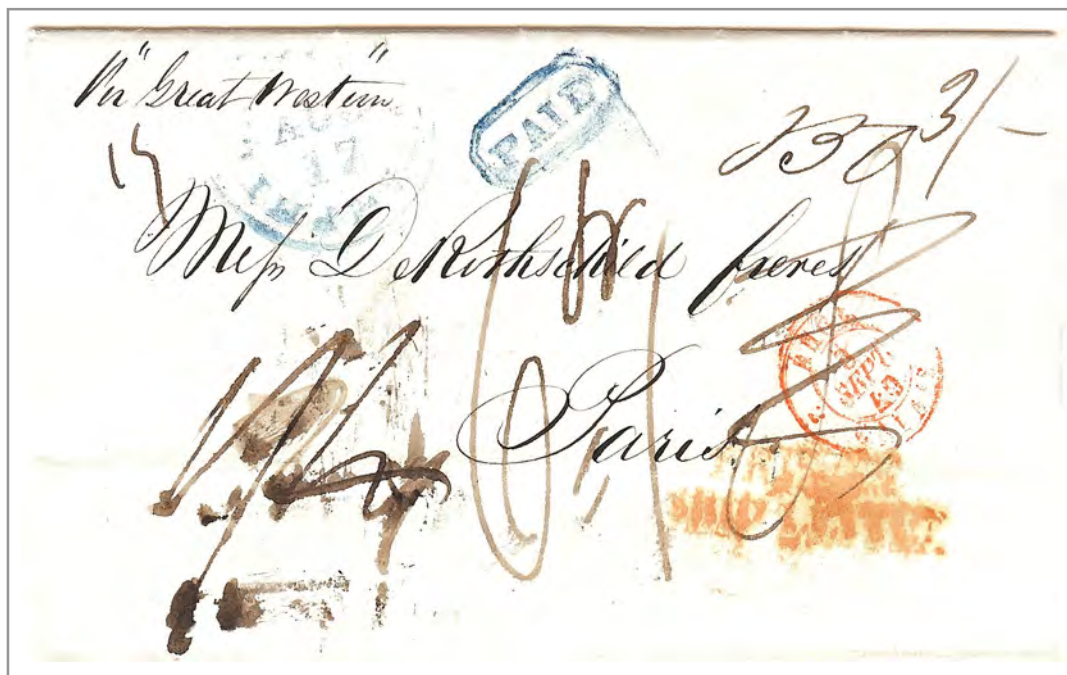
Philadelphia, 30 November 1840

On 10 January 1840 the United Kingdom inland rate was changed to 1d per ½ oz. At the same time the incoming ship-letter fee was considered to include inland postage to destination.

Non-Contract Steamship

## Freight Money Letters

## The Great Western Steamship Co. - Quadruple Rate



Philadelphia, 17 August 1840

Prepaid **\$1.50** : 4 x (12½¢ inland + 25¢ freight money), for four sheetsSteamship *Great Western*: New York 18 August, Bristol 1 SeptemberLondon rated **3/-**, double rate for ½ - 1 oz.: 2 x (8<sup>d</sup> ship, + 10<sup>d</sup> to France)Paris rated **6fr=1** : 36 dec. (3/- converted) plus 25 dec. inland <20g*Philadelphia to Paris 18 days*BRISTOL  
SHIP LETTEROutport postmark, applied  
in red in London

*In most cities that collected the freight-money charge, the freight-money fee was accounted for separately. Only in Philadelphia did the post office add the two charges and show them as a single number.*

## Non-Contract Steamship

## Pioneer Steamship Companies

## British &amp; American Steam Navigation Company, 1838-1841



London, 31 August 1840

Prepaid 9<sup>d</sup>  
8<sup>d</sup> ship letter  
1<sup>d</sup> late fee

Steamship *British Queen* :  
Portsmouth 1 September  
New York 16 September

New York rated 14½ cents due

Transit 17 days

**Seventh of nine voyages**

The company had only two ships, and was dissolved after one was lost in 1841.

## The Great Western Steamship Co., 1838-1846

Prepaid 25¢ freight money to England (not shown), carried privately to New York

Steamship *Great Western* :  
New York 9 May  
Bristol 23 May

London debited 2/- to Holland:  
8<sup>d</sup> ship, 1s4<sup>d</sup> to Rotterdam

Rotterdam rated 170 Dutch cents due:  
120c to Great Britain, 50c inland

Received on 29 May 22 days

*Engeland  
over Rotterdam*

reverse, in red



Philadelphia, 8 May 1840

Mail could not be fully prepaid to The Netherlands until 1868. In April 1835 the British and Dutch governments agreed to allow letters to transit Great Britain without prepayment. Mail was exchanged between London and Rotterdam, where the Dutch inland rate of 50c per 15 grams was charged.

## Non-Contract Steamship

## The Transatlantic Steamship Company, 1838-1840

Sent unpaid

Privately to New York

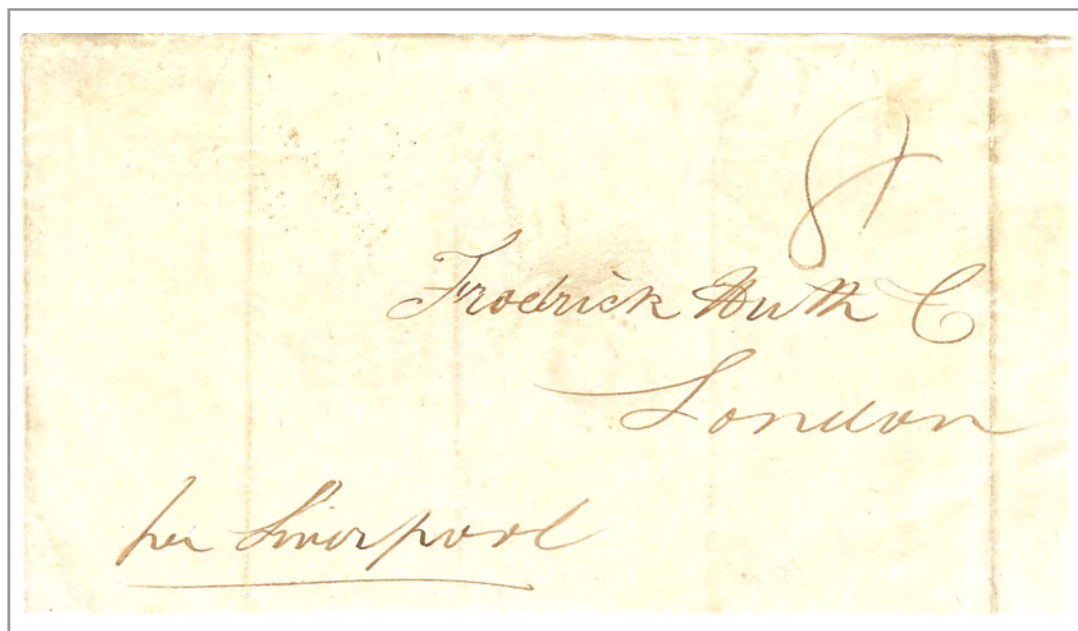
Steamship *Liverpool* :  
New York 14 December  
Liverpool 13 January

Liverpool rated 8<sup>d</sup> due

*Transit 31 days*

**Last of seven voyages**

The company had only two ships, which together made ten voyages.



Philadelphia, 13 December 1839



Birmingham, 15 September 1838

Consignee's letter & invoice, carried privately to Liverpool by W&I Brown Co.

Steamship *Royal William* : Liverpool 20 September, New York 10 October  
New York rated 14½¢ due: 2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland

Received 11 October 27 days

**Second of three voyages**

## British Contract Steamship

**Advent of British Contract Steamship Service**

Cunard was awarded a seven year contract to convey mails by steamship between Liverpool, Halifax and Boston, beginning on 1 July 1840. Twice-monthly sailings were required. This contract drove the Great Western Steamship Company out of business, and ensured British dominance of scheduled transatlantic mail service by steamship for most of the decade.

**British & North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company-The Cunard Line**

**Canton, 17 February 1840**

Carried by to London forwarders Russell & Sturgis from Canton, via Manila

Private ship to London, arrived 17 Sep 1840, where 1/- packet rate prepaid

Steamship *Caledonia* : Liverpool 19 September, Boston 3 October

Boston rated **20¾ cents** due: 2¢ ship, 18¾¢ inland

Received 5 October 1840      226 days

**The maiden voyage of Cunard's Caledonia**

Reverse, in red

When the Cunard Line began steam service to Boston in 1840, delays in Philadelphia's British mails had shrunk dramatically. New York was less than a day away, Boston only two days.

British Contract Steamship



Philadelphia, 12 July 1841

Sent unpaid; carried to Boston by Harnden & Co.

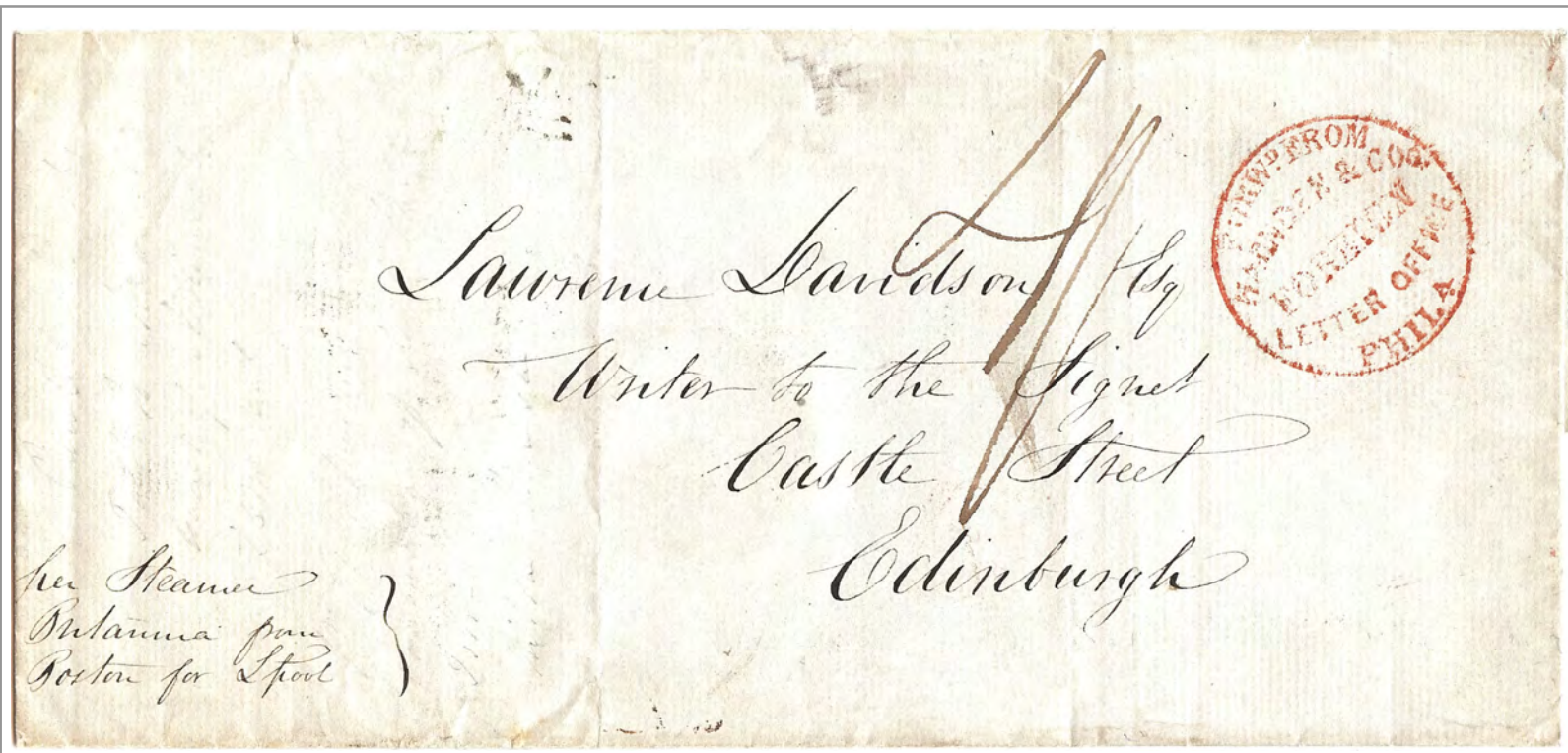
Cunard *Britannia*  
Boston 17 July  
Liverpool 29 July

Liverpool rated 1/- due single packet rate

18 days



Used only on transatlantic mail



Philadelphia, 14 September 1841

Sent unpaid; carried to Boston by Harnden & Company's Foreign Letter Office  
Cunard *Britannia* : Boston 16 September, Liverpool 30 September  
Liverpool rated 4/- due, for letter weighing 1-2 oz., **quadruple packet rate**

Received 2 October 1841

19 days



British Contract Steamship

To France - Paid Only to the U.S. Port

Harnden prepaid  $18\frac{3}{4}$ cents,  
then carried out of the mails  
to Boston

Cunard *Columbia* :  
Boston 16 October  
Liverpool 30 October

London debited 1/- to France  
for transatlantic packet

Paris rated 33 decimes due:  
12 dec. to U.K.  
21 dec. Calais to Lyon

Received 4 November

26 days

Packet Letter.

London



Philadelphia, 10 October 1842

From Wales - Double Rate Paid Only to the U.S. Port



Taibach, 18 May 1845

Prepaid 2/- to Boston

Cunard *Cambria* :  
Liverpool 20 May  
Boston 1 June

Boston rated  $39\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ due  
2¢ ship  
 $18\frac{3}{4}$ ¢ x 2 inland

Received 4 June

16 days

**Finest reported strike  
of Boston's  $39\frac{1}{2}$   
ship-letter postmark**

British Contract Steamship

**“Special Arrangement” with the Liverpool Postmaster**

Businessmen in Philadelphia and other eastern cities complained about delays in mail arriving via Boston, due to sorting and rating. After an 1843 request to the Liverpool Postmaster by the U.S. Postmaster General, from June 1844 to late 1848 mails to Philadelphia and ten other cities were made up in separate parcels in Liverpool. These were included in the New York bag, from where they were forwarded un-postmarked.

**From The Two Sicilies, British Open Mail via France**



**Naples, 9 August 1844**

Sent unpaid via ship to Marseilles, where letter entered the French mail system  
In London, forwarding agent Heath, Furse & Co. paid  $1/3$  due, plus  $1/-$  packet postage

Cunard *Hibernia* : Liverpool 21 August, Boston 1 September  
Philadelphia rated  $20\frac{3}{4}$  due: 2¢ ship,  $18\frac{3}{4}$ ¢ inland

Received 2 September                      Transit 25 days

**Nine  $20\frac{3}{4}$  postmarks recorded in red**

Red:  
June 1844  
to  
October 1844

$20\frac{3}{4}$

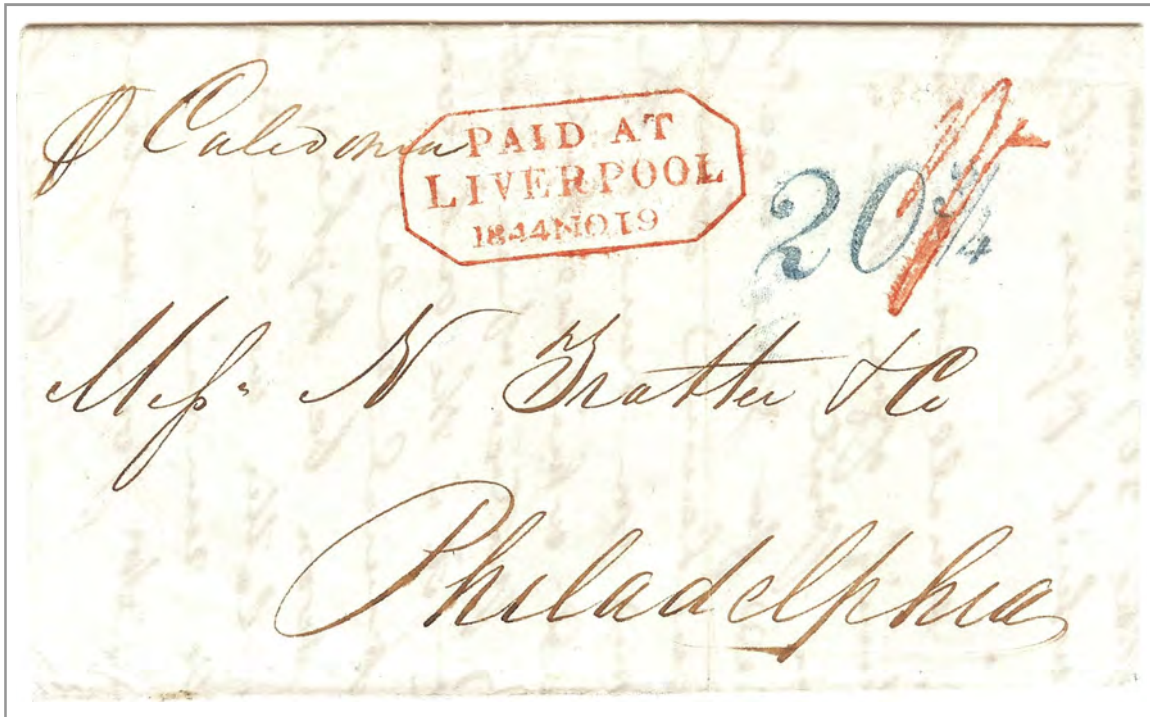


reverse

Philadelphia's  $20\frac{3}{4}$  and circled 12 postmarks were obtained specifically for incoming British mails arriving via Boston under the Postmaster General's special arrangement with the Liverpool Postmaster.

British Contract Steamship

Special Arrangement with the Liverpool Postmaster



Prepaid 1/- packet rate  
 Cunard *Caledonia* :  
 Liverpool 19 November  
 Boston 7 Dec  
 Philadelphia **20<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>** due :  
 2¢ ship, 18<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>¢ inland  
 (150-400 mi)  
 Received 8 December  
 19 days

**20<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>**  
 Blue  
 Oct 1844 - Jun 1845

Liverpool, 19 November 1844

Prepaid 1/- packet rate

Cunard *Hibernia* :  
 Liverpool 4 January  
 Boston 23 January

Philadelphia **12** cents due:  
 2¢ ship  
 10¢ inland, effective 1 July 1845

Received 24 January 26 days



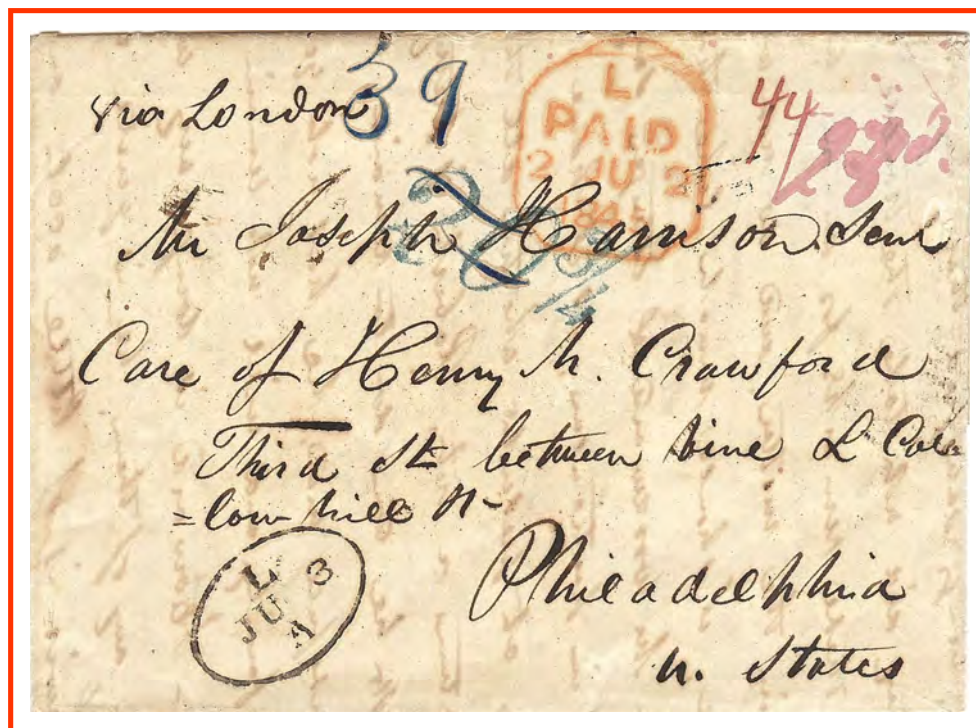
Blue  
 Jul 1845-Nov 1850



Ipswich, 30 December 1845

## Special Arrangement with the Liverpool Postmaster

From Russia Via Hamburg &amp; London, Prepaid to U.S. Port

44 kop. Russian  
credit to Prussia2/8<sup>d</sup> Prussian  
credit to U.K.

St. Petersburg, 12 May 1845

Prepaid 240 kopeks at Prussian P.O. in St. Petersburg:  
15 kop. Russian inland, 44 kop. Prussian transit, 180½ kop. British transit & transatlantic

London arrival 2 June, rated **PAID** to U.S. frontier  
Cunard *Caledonia* : Liverpool 4 June, Boston 19 June

Philadelphia rated 20¾ due, then corrected to 39 due, a ½¢ under-charge

Received 20 June      40 days

**The only recorded letter from Russia to the United States for this route and rate**



reverse

This letter was handled under the 1843 Russia-Prussia convention and the 1841 Prussia-Great Britain convention, then traveled in British open mail, arriving in the United States as an unpaired ship letter.

### Last Transatlantic Voyage of the Pioneer Steamship *Unicorn*



Liverpool, 17 March 1846

Prepaid 8<sup>d</sup> ship-letter fee

Steamship *Unicorn* : Liverpool 19 March, Boston 17 April  
New York rated 12 due : 2¢ ship, 10¢ inland, >300 miles

Received 18 April      Transit 33 days

**Seven covers recorded**

U.S. Act of 1845 effective 1 July 1845	
<b>Mileage</b>	<b>Cents</b>
Up to 300	5
Over 300	10
<b>Ship letters</b>	
Delivered at port	6
Elsewhere, plus postage	2



reverse

*Unicorn* carried Cunard's first transatlantic mail in 1840, then operated on the St. Lawrence River between Quebec and Pictou, Nova Scotia, a feeder line for Cunard packets calling at Halifax. *Unicorn* returned to private service when the line was discontinued in 1845, and made her last transatlantic voyage in March 1846.

## Non Contract Steamship

## The Saint George Line of Sailing Packets (The Red Cross Line)

Prepaid **30** cents  
 5¢ to New York  
 25¢ freight money

Steamship *Sarah Sands* :  
 New York 24 February  
 Liverpool 17 March

Liverpool rated **8<sup>d</sup>** due,  
 ship letter rate

Received 18 March

23 days



Philadelphia, 23 February 1847

*Late use of freight money; the only one recorded carried by Sarah Sands.*



Liverpool, 1 April 1848

Prepaid **8<sup>d</sup>** ship-letter rate

Steamship *Sarah Sands* :  
 Liverpool 3 April  
 New York 21 April

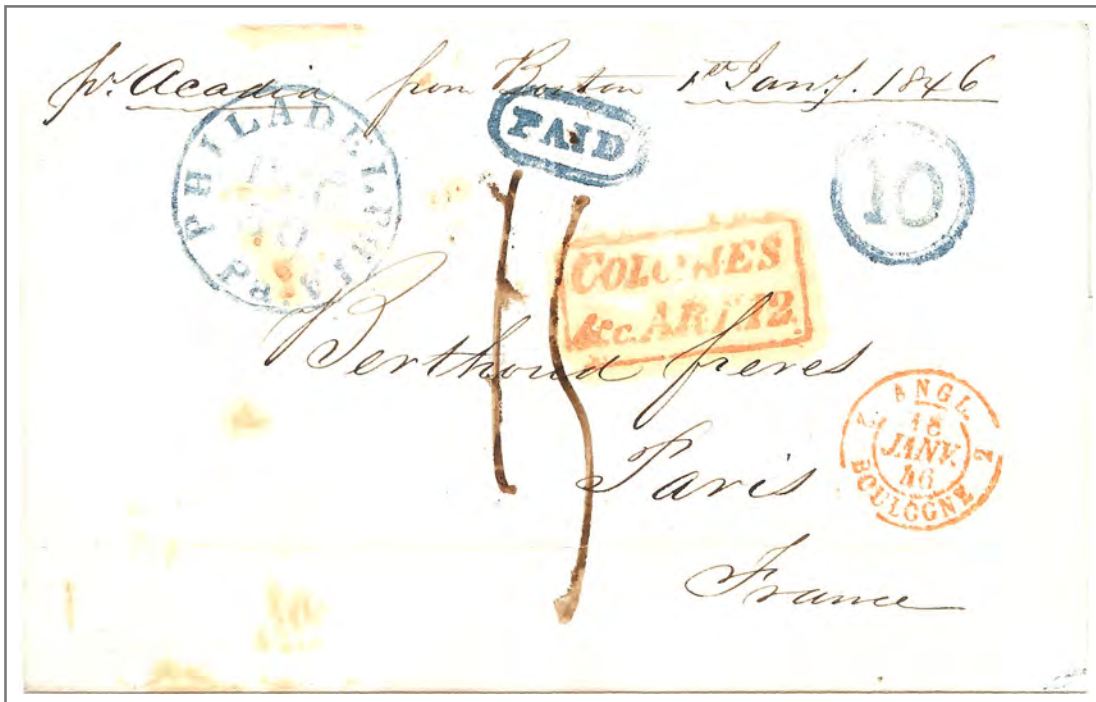
New York rated **7** cents due  
 2¢ ship, 5¢ inland

Received 22 April

22 days

## British Contract Steamship

## Pre U.S.-French Treaty: Use of British Open Mail to France



Philadelphia, 28 December 1845

**Latest recorded use of COLONIES &c. ART. 12 on mail from the United States**Prepaid **5** cents to New YorkCunard *Hibernia* :  
New York 26 February  
Liverpool 11 MarchLondon applied  
**COLONIES &c. ART. 13**Paris rated **15** decimes due:  
8 dec. transatlantic  
2 dec. Br. transit  
5 dec. French inland

Received 12 March

17 days



Philadelphia, 24 February 1848

Prepaid **10** cents to BostonCunard *Acadia* :  
Boston 1 January  
Liverpool 15 JanuaryLondon applied  
**COLONIES &c. ART. 12**Paris rated **15** decimes due:  
8 dec. transatlantic  
2 dec. British transit  
5 dec. French inland

Received 18 January

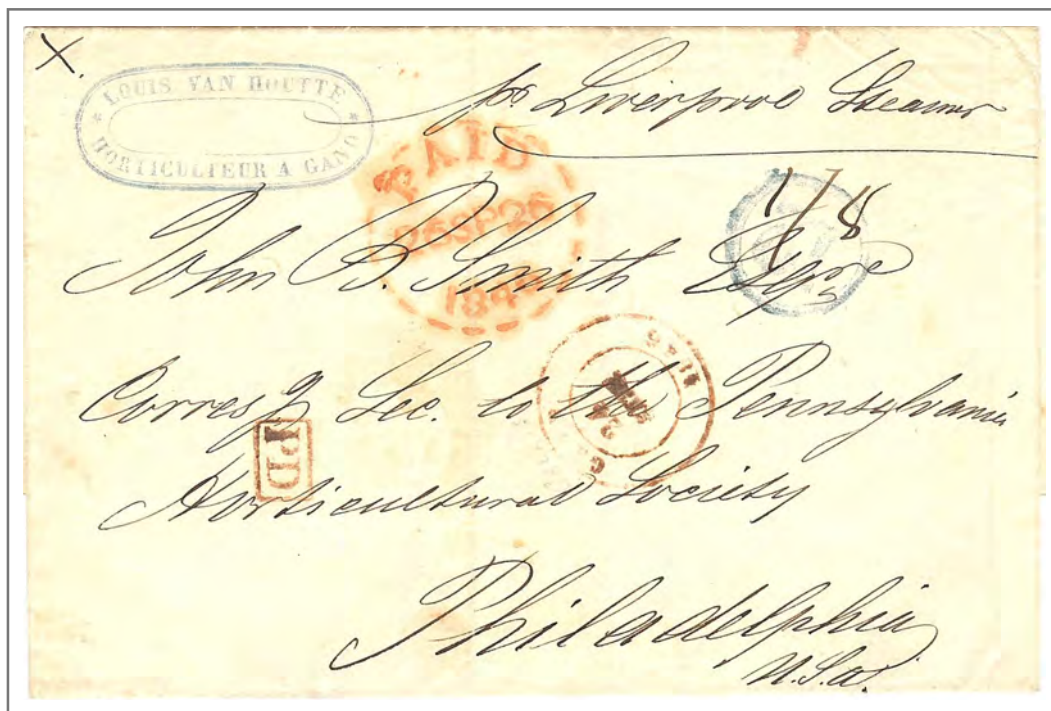
21 days

**COLONIES &c. ART. 12, 13** markings noted that the U.K. was entitled to a French payment of 3s<sup>4</sup> per 30 grams of bulk weight, under the 1843 Anglo-French convention. This was equivalent to 10 dec. per single-weight letter.

## British Contract Steamship

## Pre U.S.-Belgium Treaty: Use of British Open Mail to The United States

## From Belgium Via London, Prepaid to U.S. Port



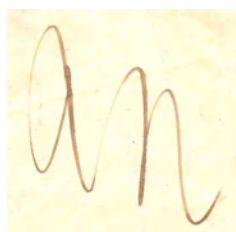
Ghent, 24 September 1846

Prepaid **24** decimes: 4 dec. inland, 8 dec. British transit, 12 dec. transatlantic  
Ghent marked **PD** and credited **1/8** to Great Britain

London arrival 26 September, marked **PAID** to U.S. frontier  
Cunard *Caledonia* : Liverpool 4 October, Boston 20 October

Philadelphia arrival 5 October, rated **12** due : 2¢ ship, 10¢ inland (>300 mi)

Received 21 October      28 days



reverse

24 decimes

The United States had no postal convention with Belgium until 1859, so this letter went via British open mail under terms of the Anglo-Belgian convention of 1844. Letters could be paid only to the U.S. port, since no U.S.-British postal treaty was in place.



## British Contract Steamship

**Cunard Adds New York As a British Packet Port**

In January 1848 Cunard added New York as a second American terminus, after which sailings alternated between Boston and New York. Both west- and eastbound sailings called at Halifax for Canadian mails. By April 1848, sailing frequency had increased to weekly. By the winter of 1852-1852 service was year-round.

**Inaugural Cunard Voyage to New York**

**Manchester, 31 December 1847**

Prepaid 2/- for a letter weighing ½ to 1 oz.

Cunard *Cambria* : Liverpool 1 January, New York 18 January  
 New York rated 7 cents due as single-weight ship letter: 2¢ ship, 5¢ to Philadelphia

19 days

*New York ship markings appear on Cunard covers for only six months in 1848 and six weeks in 1849, prior to the U.S.-Great Britain postal convention taking effect.*

## British Contract Steamship

## Cunard's Two Western Termini

## Costlier via Boston

Prepaid **10** cents to Boston  
single rate, >300 miles

Cunard *Cambria* :  
Boston 1 November  
Liverpool 15 November

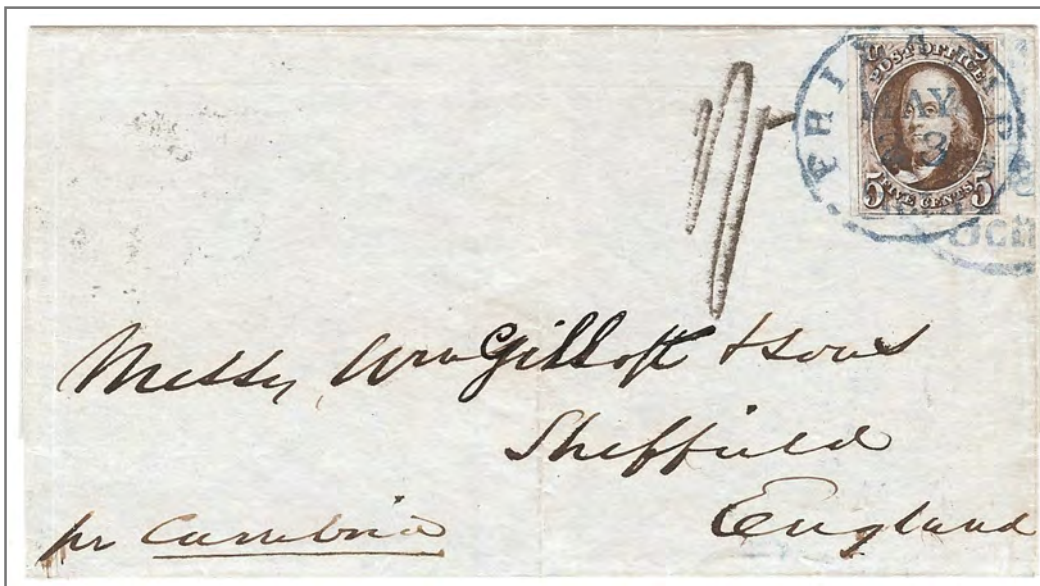
London rated **1/-** due  
packet rate

18 days



Philadelphia, 28 October 1847

## Cheaper via New York



Philadelphia, 23 May 1848

Prepaid **5** cents to New York  
single rate, <300 miles

Cunard *Cambria* :  
New York 24 May  
Liverpool 6 June

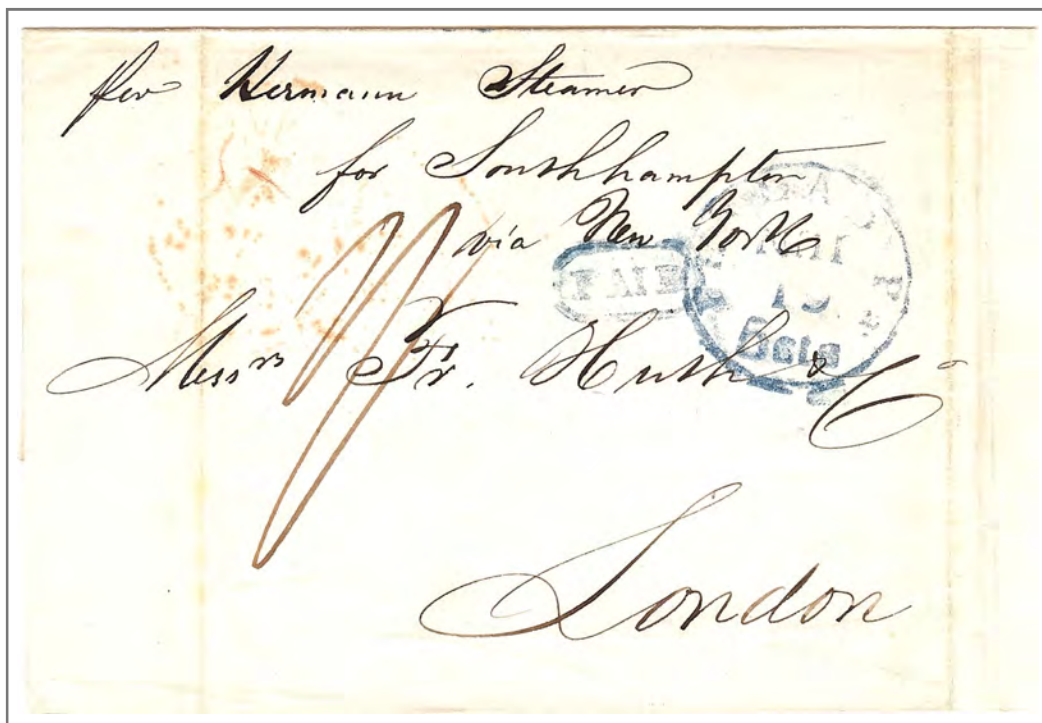
Liverpool rated **1/-** due  
packet rate

15 days

Philadelphians could now pay five cents less for their letters to Great Britain by specifying a ship departing from New York.

## Advent of American Packets

## Insufficiently Paid for American Packet



Philadelphia, 19 June 1848

Prepaid 5 cents to New York

Sender endorsed for American packet *Hermann* via Southampton, but paid only inland postage, so the New York post office sent via Cunard steamer as an unpaid ship letter.

Cunard *Acadia* : New York 21 June, Liverpool 5 July  
London rated 1/- for British packet

17 days

In March 1845 Congress authorized a 24-cent sea-postage rate for letters carried on American contract vessels, a charge to be added to inland postage. The first contract, awarded in June 1847, was with the Ocean Line. Great Britain immediately began charging their one-shilling packet rate on incoming American packet letters, rather than treating them as unpaid ship letters. Because eastbound letters sent during this period were effectively charged double, most letters were sent on Cunard sailings.

**No American packet letters from Philadelphia during this period are recorded.**

British Contract Steamship

**Retaliatory Rate Period**

The U.S. responded to the British one-shilling discriminatory rate against American packets with a 24 cent charge on both incoming and outgoing British packet letters, added to inland postage.



Liverpool, 30 June 1848

Prepaid 1/-  
packet rate

Cunard *Niagara* :  
Liverpool 1 Jul  
Boston 12 Jul

Boston rated **34** due  
24¢ retaliatory fee  
10¢ inland, >300 mi.

Received 14 Jul

15 days

Prepaid 1/-  
packet rate

Cunard *Niagara* :  
Liverpool 2 December  
Boston 16 December

Boston rated **34** due  
24¢ retaliatory  
10¢ inland, >300 mi.

Received 17 December

17 days



Manchester, 1 December 1848

## British Contract Steamship

## Retaliatory Rate Period

Prepaid 1/- packet rate

Cunard *Caledonia* :  
 Liverpool 24 June  
 New York 8 July

New York rated **29** due  
 24¢ retaliatory fee  
 5¢ inland, <300 mi.

Received 9 July

16 days

**First westbound sailing in  
 the rate period; earliest  
 recorded retaliatory cover  
 to Philadelphia**



London, 23 June 1848



Liverpool, 29 August 1848

Double rate

Prepaid **2s3<sup>d</sup>** :  
 2 x 1/- packet, 1/2-1 oz.  
 3<sup>d</sup> late fee

Cunard *Europa* :  
 Liverpool 2 September  
 New York 15 September

New York rated **58** due  
 48¢ retaliatory  
 10¢ inland

Received 15 September

18 days

British Contract Steamship

Retaliatory Rate Period



Privately to Liverpool  
 Prepaid 1/- packet rate  
 Cunard America  
 Liverpool 22 July  
 New York 4 August  
 Phila. Rated 29 due  
 24¢ retaliatory rate  
 5¢ inland  
 Received 5 August  
 15 days

**Finest of 12  
 retaliatory covers  
 rated 29 cents  
 in Philadelphia**

Liege, Belgium, 19 July 1848

Prepaid 29 cents  
 24¢ retaliatory rate  
 5¢ inland  
 Cunard Britannia  
 New York 25 October  
 Liverpool 11 November  
 London postmarked  
**COLONIES &c. ART. 13**  
 Paris 14 November  
 via Boulogne  
 22 days

29

**Finest recorded strike**



Philadelphia, 24 October 1848

## British Contract Steamship

**Restored Rate Period**

After the U.S. British Postal Convention was signed in December 1848, the retaliatory rate was rescinded by the Postmaster General on 3 January 1849. Rates reverted to those in force pre-June 1848, so incoming British packet letters were again treated as unpaid ship letters.

Prepaid 2/-, double packet rate

Cunard *Canada* :

Liverpool 13 January

New York 29 January

New York rated **12** cents due

2¢ ship

10¢ inland, <300mi.

Received 30 January

19 days



Birmingham, 12 January 1849



Falmouth, 7 February 1849

Prepaid 1/-, packet rate

Cunard *Europa* :

Liverpool 10 February

New York 24 February

New York rated **7** cents due

2¢ ship

5¢ inland, <300 mi.

Received 26 February

18 days

**Only four Cunard packets arrived at American ports during this period.**

## British Contract Steamship

## Restored Rate Period



Philadelphia, 8 January 1849

Prepaid 5 cents to U.S. port

Cunard *Europa* :  
New York 10 January  
Liverpool 22 January

London marked  
**COLONIES &c. ART. 13**

Paris rated 15 decimes due  
10 dec. to G.B.  
5 dec. French inland

16 days

Prepaid 5 cents to Boston  
underpaid 5 cents

Cunard *America* :  
Boston 24 January,  
Liverpool 4 February

G.B. debited 1/8 to Holland

120c due in Schiedam  
for debit and inland

Received 8 February

18 days



Philadelphia, 22 January 1849

**Three Cunard packets sailed from American ports during this period. Few covers to Europe are recorded.**



British Contract Steamship

**The 1848 Postal Treaty**

The 1848 treaty set sea and inland rates between the two countries. Offices were established in Boston, New York, Liverpool, London and Southampton to exchange mails and account for respective shares of postage.

**U.S. Accounting: Unpaid Incoming**

Sent unpaid, **24¢** treaty rate

London debited **19/CENTS** to the U.S.:

16¢ British packet  
3¢ British inland

Cunard *Caledonia* :  
Liverpool 10 November  
Boston 24 November

Boston rated **24 cents** due

Received 25 November

17 days



London, 9 November 1849



Calcutta, 7 September 1849

Sent unpaid to London;  
forwarder paid **1/10**, the  
India rate via Marseilles

London debited **19/CENTS** to the U.S.:

16¢ British packet  
3¢ British inland

Cunard *America*:  
Liverpool 3 November  
New York 17 November

New York rated **24 cents** due

Received 19 November

73 days

**1848 Treaty Rates**

effective 15 February 1849

U.S. inland	5¢
Transatlantic	16¢
British inland	3¢

**Prepaid letters:** amount prepaid and credit to receiving country to be marked in red

**Unpaid letters:** amount unpaid and debit to receiving country to be marked in black

*Ship-letter fees were unaffected by the treaty*

British Contract Steamship

**Accounting: Prepaid via British Packet**



Thetford, 29 June 1849

Prepaid 1/- treaty rate  
 London **5/CENTS**  
 credit to U.S. for inland  
 Cunard Niagara :  
 Liverpool 30 June  
 New York 14 July  
 New York **PAID/SHIP, 24**  
 Received 14 July  
 16 days  
 New York marked PAID/  
 SHIP in error, and omitted  
 post office datestamp.

Prepaid 1/- treaty rate

Liverpool **5/CENTS** credit  
 to U.S. for inland

Cunard Niagara :  
 Liverpool 25 August  
 New York 7 September

Received 7 September

14 days

New York omitted PAID  
 and post office date  
 stamp.



Liverpool, 21 August 1849

During its first five years, the New York exchange office often ignored the June 1849 instructions of the Postmaster General:  
 "But before the exchange office receiving such letter delivers it, or mails it to the interior, it is to re-stamp the letter with its own office stamp, in all cases, and with the 'paid' stamp in red ink, if paid; if unpaid, with the amount, in black, of the entire postage to be collected."

British Contract Steamship

Accounting: Prepaid via British Packet

Prepaid **24c** treaty rate  
 New York **19** credit to G.B.  
 Cunard *Cambria* :  
 New York 27 June  
 Liverpool 10 July  
 London **PAID**, 11 July  
 17 days

**24**

16 Mar-27 Oct 1849  
 earliest recorded use



Philadelphia, 25 June 1849



Philadelphia, 18 February 1850

Prepaid **24c** treaty rate  
 New York credit **19** to G.B.  
 Cunard *Europa* :  
 New York 20 Feb  
 Liverpool 4 Mar  
 Liverpool marked **PAID**  
 13 days



2/18/50-3/23/53  
 earliest recorded use

Philadelphia's red octagonal rate postmarks were used only on domestic mail prior to 1836. In late 1849 they were reintroduced for use on foreign mail, often up-rated in manuscript. Although Philadelphia was not an exchange office, these postmarks adhered to the treaty requirement that prepaid amounts be shown in red.

British Contract Steamship

**Accounting: Unpaid via British Packet****Rejected Printed Circular Rate, Treated as Unpaid**

Liverpool, 6 April 1849

*Liverpool Metal Review* prepaid the 1<sup>d</sup> treaty rate for a printed circular

Inspected at the Liverpool exchange office where treated as an unpaid letter, so U.S debited **19¢** for inland and sea

Cunard *Europa* : Liverpool 7 April, New York 19 April

New York rated **24¢** due: 19¢ debit, 5¢ inland

**Very early circular under the treaty, sent on the fourth westbound sailing under the treaty**

Articles XV and XVI of the 1848 treaty specified that newspapers and circulars could be sent for 1d from Great Britain, or 2¢ from the United States. No accounting was required. Written matter was not permitted, and if found resulted in the full letter rate being charged. Each item had to be unsealed to allow easy inspection.

American Contract Steamship

**Accounting: American Packet**

Prepaid, **24¢** treaty rate  
 New York **3¢** credit to U.K.  
 British inland  
 by American packet  
 Collins Line *Atlantic* :  
 New York 29 May  
 Liverpool 9 June  
 14 days



Philadelphia, 27 May 1852



Philadelphia, 19 April 1850

Sent unpaid, Philadelphia noted **24** cents packet rate

New York debited **21** cents to Great Britain: 5¢ inland, 16¢ American packet  
 Ocean Line *Hermann* : New York 20 April, Southampton 7 May

Southampton exchange office rated 1/- due for an unpaid packet letter  
 Received 8 May 20 days

**Finest of five recorded examples of New York's 21 cent debit marking**

*Under terms of the Treaty, the Southampton exchange office was charged with exchanging mails only with New York.*

American Contract Steamship

Adoption of Accounting Procedures



Prepaid, 24¢ treaty rate

Philadelphia **PAID, 24**

Boston 19¢ credit to G.B.  
British packet & inland

Cunard Canada :  
Boston 30 March  
Liverpool 10 April

14 days

Philadelphia, 28 March 1853

Prepaid 24¢ treaty rate

Philadelphia **PAID, 24**

New York 19¢ credit for  
British packet & inland

Cunard Africa :  
New York 1 June  
Liverpool 12 June

13 days



Philadelphia, 31 May 1853

Philadelphia's red 24 hand stamps appeared in March 1853 shortly after James Campbell, a Philadelphian, was appointed Postmaster General. His renegotiation of the 1848 Treaty yielded Exchange-Office status for Philadelphia on 1 January 1854.

Non Contract Steamship

**Liverpool-Philadelphia Scheduled Steamship Service: The Inman Line**

**Inaugural Voyage**

Forwarded to Liverpool by  
Geo. H. Draper

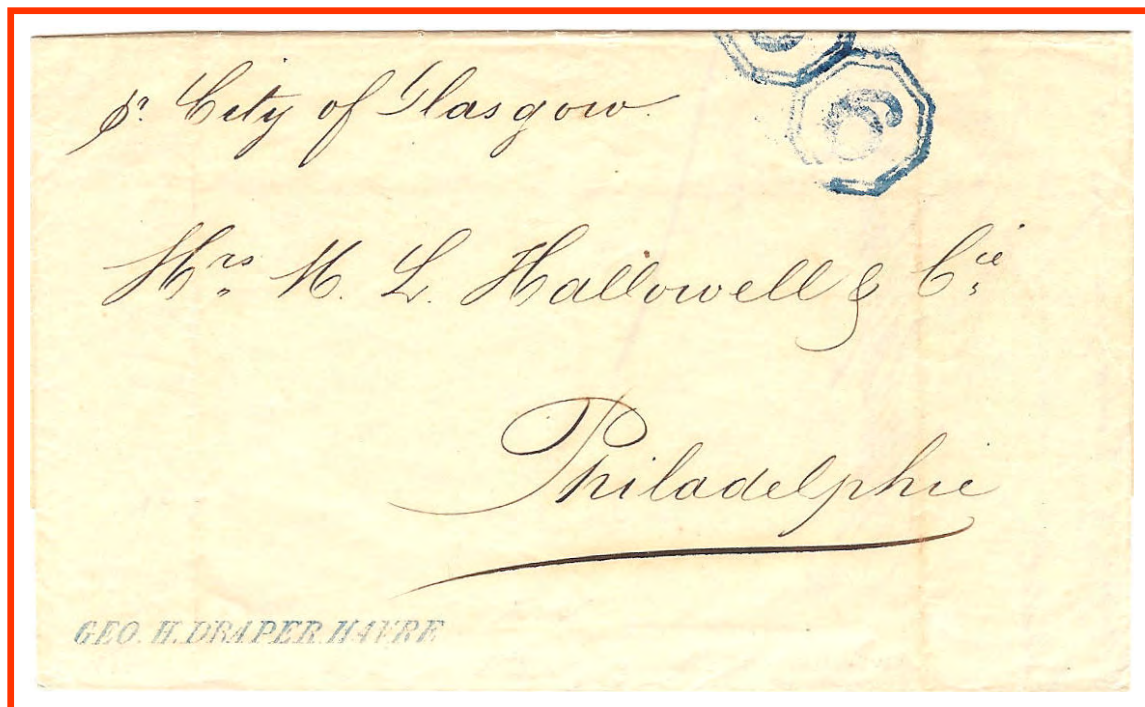
Unpaid by private ship

Inman *City of Glasgow* :  
Liverpool 11 December  
Philadelphia 3 January

Philadelphia rated 6¢ due  
for delivery at the port

38 days

**10 days longer than via  
Cunard to New York.**



Lyon, 28 November 1850

**Inaugural Voyage**



Philadelphia, 15 January 1851

Sent unpaid by private ship

Inman *City of Glasgow*  
Philadelphia 16 January  
Liverpool 30 January

London forwarded to France  
Under 1843 Anglo-French  
Treaty as an unpaid letter

**15** decimes due in Cognac

Received 3 February  
19 days



reverse

*Inman offered monthly service with three new steamships, the largest and most modern ever built on the Clyde. Philadelphia lobbied the government for a Liverpool-Philadelphia mail contract, but after years of losing freight and passenger business to the New York lines, Inman moved its western terminus there in 1857 and began carrying mail under temporary U.S. contracts.*

Non Contract Steamship

Liverpool-Philadelphia Scheduled Steamship Service



Prepaid 8<sup>d</sup> ship-letter rate

Inman Line *City of Manchester* :  
Liverpool 17 September  
Philadelphia 3 October

Philadelphia rated 7 cents  
due in Buffalo:  
2¢ ship, 5¢ inland

17 days

Liverpool, 17 September 1851

Unpaid ship letter

Inman Line  
*City of Manchester* :  
Liverpool 7 December  
Phila. 23 December

Phila. 7¢ due:  
2¢ ship  
5¢ inland

17 days



Sheffield, 24 November 1853



British Contract Steamship

Use of British Open Mail

Prepaid 5 cents to New York

Cunard *Canada* :  
New York 17 October  
Liverpool 28 October

London applied  
**COLONIES & C. ART. 13**

Paris rated 15 dec. due:  
10 dec to G.B.  
5 dec inland

14 days

PAID  
5

used for eight days  
4 recorded



Philadelphia, 16 October 1849



Philadelphia, 17 December 1849

Prepaid 5 cents to Boston

Cunard *Europa* :  
Boston 19 December  
Liverpool 30 December

London applied  
**COLONIES & C. ART. 13**

Paris rated 15 dec. due:  
10 dec to G.B.  
5 dec inland

16 days

PHILA  
5  
PAID

used for six weeks  
8 recorded

The treaty permitted both countries the use of open mails to other countries with which they had postal agreements, and would allow transmission of each others' letters if they arrived free of charges.

American Contract Steamship

Use of British Open Mail

From Barbados via St. Thomas



Prepaid 1/- for British packet to New York

RMSPC *Derwent*  
Barbados 14 July  
St. Thomas 17 July

Cunard *Merlin*  
St. Thomas 21 July  
New York 30 July

New York rated 5 cents due for inland

Received 1 August

27 days

St. Nicholas Abbey, 5 July 1851

From The Netherlands Via London



16 CENTS  
credit  
markings  
uncommon

Rotterdam, 24 December 1850

Prepaid 110 Dutch cents (reverse) to the U.S. port; 1/4 credit to Great Britain for all transit fees

London marked PAID, 16/CENTS credit to the U.S. for American packet

Collins Line *Atlantic* : Liverpool 19 Dec, returned with broken shaft; Cunard *Africa* : Liverpool 1 Feb, New York 15 Feb

New York rated 5 cents due for inland postage

Received 15 February 54 days

American Contract Steamship

## Use of British Open Mail

## From The Philippines Via Singapore &amp; Marseilles



Manila, 22 January 1851

Carried to Singapore by forwarder A.L. Johnston, where sent unpaid in British mail on 7 February  
 P&O *Pekin* to Galle (15 February), *Hindustan* to Suez (4 March), *Ripon* to Malta (14 March)  
 Admiralty packet *HMS Medusa* to Marseilles (17 March)

London arrival 21 March, where rated  $2/3$  due:  $1/5$  packet rate,  $10^d$  French transit for  $1/4$  to  $1/2$  oz.  
 London converted  $2/3$  to a **54** cents debit to the U.S.

Collins Line *Baltic* : Liverpool 22 March, New York 3 April  
 New York rated **75** cents due: 54¢ debit, 16¢ American packet, 5¢ inland

Received 5 April 74 days



reverse

British Contract Steamship

Use of British Open Mail

To Schleswig-Holstein



Philadelphia, 8 December 1851

Prepaid 5 cents to Boston  
 Cunard Asia : Boston 10 December  
 Liverpool 20 December

London debited Prussia 1/4 :  
 8d transatlantic  
 6d British transit  
 2d Belgian transit

Sent via Belgium: closed bag under the  
 Anglo-Prussian Convention of 1846

Aachen exchange office, 25 December

Marienstadt arrival unknown

Letter initially misrouted to St. Mary's  
 in Elk County Pennsylvania

To Württemberg

Prepaid 5 cents to New York

Cunard America :  
 New York 17 March  
 Liverpool 29 March

Sent via France under terms of the 1852  
 Amendment to the Anglo-French Con-  
 vention of 1843

Paris applied American Packet postmark  
 in error

Württemberg rated 40 kreuzers due:  
 34 Kr to France for transit  
 6 Kr to Thurn & Taxis Post for inland



Philadelphia, 3 March 1852

American Contract Steamship

Use of British Open Mail

To France

Prepaid **21¢** treaty rate:  
 5¢ inland  
 16¢ American packet

Collins Line *Atlantic* :  
 New York 8 January  
 Liverpool 20 January

Sent unpaid from London

Paris rated **16** decimes due  
 7½ to 15 grams

*New York credited 3 in error;  
 no transit fee was due  
 to Great Britain.*

**Charles Toppan, was part  
 owner of the company that  
 printed these stamps.**



Philadelphia, 6 January 1853

To Switzerland via France



Philadelphia, 21 April 1852

21¢ treaty rate, prepaid  
 5¢ inland  
 16¢ American Packet

Ocean Line *Hermann* :  
 New York 24 April  
 Southampton 7 May

Sent unpaid from London

Basel rated **60** rappen  
 due in Neuchatel:  
 inland & French transit

British Contract Steamship

## Use of British Open Mail

## Retaliatory Rate Against France



Philadelphia, 8 February 1853

Prepaid **21¢** retaliatory rate: 5¢ inland, 16¢ British packet  
 Cunard Africa : New York 9 February, Liverpool 23 February

Sent unpaid from London on 23 February  
 Paris rated **13** decimes due, 7½ to 15 grams

Received 25 February      17 days

***The only recorded cover from Philadelphia during this retaliatory period***

### The Retaliatory Rate Period of 24 January to 10 February, 1853

Due to miscommunication, U.S. Postmaster General Hubbard thought that double sea postage was being charged on letters to France carried via American packets in the British open mail. This had been the case, but Hubbard was unaware that the French had already corrected the inequity by lowering their rate to the U.S. from 15 decimes to 13 decimes. Hubbard's new rate was 21 cents regardless of whether a letter was carried by British or American packet. Hubbard's misapprehension was corrected, and the retaliation was suspended after only 17 days.

American Contract Steamship  
British Contract Steamships

### Use of British Open Mail

#### Quadruple Treaty Rate to China



Philadelphia, 11 June 1852

Quadruple treaty rate to China, prepaid **\$1.80**, four times the 45¢ treaty rate to China.

New York credited **96** cents to U.K.: four times the 1/- British packet rate from Southampton

Collins Arctic	: New York 12 June, Liverpool 23 June
P&O Sultan	: Southampton 29 June, Malta 9 July
HMS Medina	: Malta 13 July, Alexandria 17 July (Admiralty Packet)
P&O Oriental	: Suez 5 August, Galle 20 August
P&O Ganges	: Galle 21 August, Hong Kong 2 September, via Singapore

Received 3 September      86 days

**The only recorded example of up-rating to \$1.80**

Philadelphia's red octagonal postmarks, taken out of service in 1836 and then re-introduced in 1849, were up-rated in manuscript to a wide range of values to cover various prepayments encountered under the U.S.-British Treaty of 1848.

British Contract Steamship

**The Philadelphia Exchange Office**

Under additional articles to the 1848 treaty, Philadelphia became an Exchange Office on 1 January 1854. Philadelphia exchanged mail with Liverpool, London and Southampton, which would make up bags containing mail only to addresses within the Philadelphia city limits.

**Accounting: Unpaid via British Packet**

**First westbound mails for the Philadelphia Exchange Office**

Sent unpaid

Liverpool **19/CENTS** debit to U.S.

3¢ British inland  
16¢ British packet

Cunard *Niagara*

Liverpool 7 January  
Boston 25 January

Philadelphia rated **24¢** due:

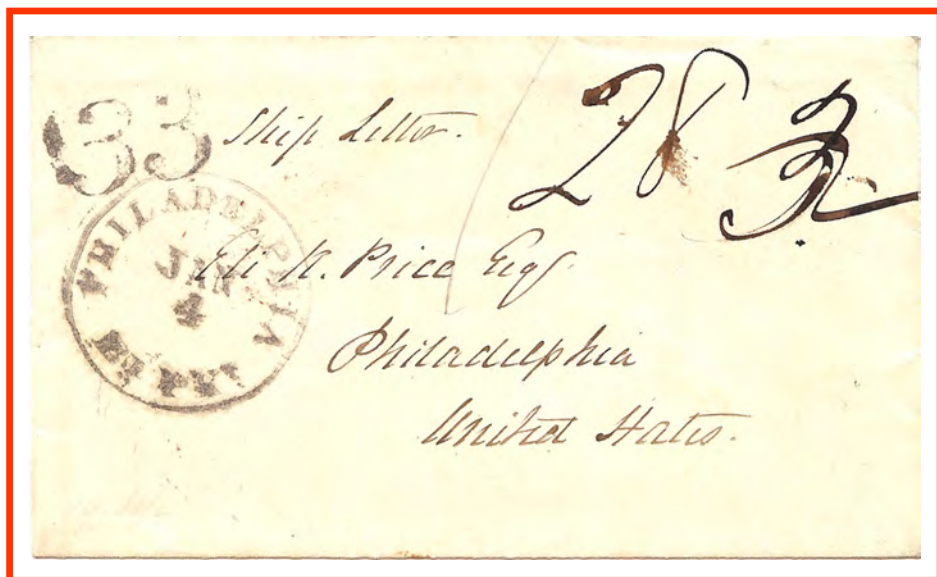
21 days

**24/PHILADELPHIA / B<sup>R</sup> PK<sup>T</sup>**  
**earliest recorded use**



Manchester, 6 January 1854

**From St. Helena, via London**



St Helena, 24 October 1857

Sent unpaid

Sir Edward Paget from St. Helena  
arr. London 18 December

London debited **3¢** to U.S. in error,  
then corrected to a **28¢** debit:  
12¢ (6d) uniform rate to London  
16¢ transatlantic

Cunard *Niagara*

Liverpool 19 December  
Boston 3 January

Philadelphia added 5¢ inland, and  
rated **33¢** due 91 days



reverse

**33**

only recorded use



British Contract Steamship

Accounting: Unpaid via British Packet



Liverpool, 16 March 1855

Sent unpaid, double rate, 1/2 to 1 oz., Liverpool **38** cents debit to U.S.: 2 x (3<sup>d</sup> inland + 16<sup>d</sup> sea)  
 Cunard Asia : Liverpool 17 March, Boston 31 March  
 Philadelphia rated **48** cents due 15 days

38<sup>cs</sup>  
CENT



Liverpool, 21 January 1855

Sent unpaid, quadruple rate  
1 to 2 oz.

Liverpool **76** cents  
 debit to U.S.:  
 4 x (3<sup>d</sup> inland + 16<sup>d</sup> sea)

Cunard Asia :  
 Liverpool 22 January  
 New York 7 February

Philadelphia rated **96c** due  
 18 days

96

British Contract Steamship

**Accounting: Prepaid via British Packet**

**Single Rate**

Prepaid 1 shilling  
up to ½ oz.

5 cents credit to U.S.  
for inland

Cunard Asia :  
Liverpool 21 March  
New York 4 April

Philadelphia 24  
confirmed prepayment

Received 4 April

20 days



Jersey, 17 March 1857

**Double Rate**



Prepaid 2 shillings,  
½ to 1 oz.

Liverpool credited 10  
cents to U.S. for double  
inland

Cunard Canada :  
Liverpool 13 Sep  
Boston 26 Sep

Philadelphia 48  
confirmed prepayment

Received 27 Sep

16 days

Liverpool, 12 September 1856

British Contract Steamship

Accounting: Prepaid via British Packet

Quadruple Rate + Late Fee



Liverpool, 23 May 1855

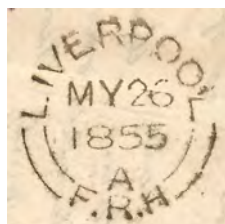
Prepaid 5 shillings: 4 x 1/- rate for 1 to 2 oz., 1/- late fee

Liverpool credited 20 cents to U.S., 4 x 5¢ inland

Cunard Africa : Liverpool 26 May, Boston 7 June  
Philadelphia 96 confirmed prepayment of treaty rate

Received 7 June 16 days

Posted at the  
**Floating Receiving House**  
on the landing stage  
in Liverpool harbor



reverse

96

earliest recorded use in red

The 1848 U.S. G.B Treaty did not permit a triple rate. Late fees were not addressed by the treaty, but were established by GPO London in 1849 at 1/- per letter regardless of weight, reduced to 6d in 1859.

American Contract Steamship

**Accounting: Unpaid via American Packet**

**One-Month Round Trip**



Philadelphia, 17 May 1858

Prepaid **24** cents  
 Philadelphia **19c** credit to U.K.  
 for British packet and inland  
 Returned unpaid by American  
 Packet; London **3** cents debit  
 to U.S. for British inland  
 Philadelphia rated **24c** due  
 Cunard *Europa* :  
 Boston 19 May  
 Liverpool 30 May  
 Havre Line *Arago* :  
 Southampton 2 June  
 New York 15 June  
 Round trip 30 days

**From Gibraltar**



Gibraltar, 17 January 1859

Carried privately to London, where sent unpaid  
 London **3** cents debit to U.S. for British inland  
 Inman Line *Lebanon* : Liverpool 29 January, New York 17 February  
 Philadelphia rated **24** cents due  
 32 days

American Contract Steamship

**Accounting: Prepaid via American Packet**

Prepaid 1 shilling

London 21 cents credit to  
U.S.: 5¢ packet, 3¢ inland

Ocean Line *Hermann* :  
Southampton 29 March  
New York 14 April

Philadelphia restated  
payment

19 Days



London, 27 March 1854



Cape May, New Jersey, 15 July 1858

Prepaid 24 cents

Philadelphia 3 cents credit to  
U.K. for British inland

Inman *City of Washington* :  
New York 17 July  
Liverpool 29 July

London restated payment

15 days

## Contract Steamships

## Handling Anomalies

## Incorrectly Postmarked



Philadelphia, 14 September 1857

Prepaid **24** centsPhiladelphia **19c** credit to U.K.  
for British packet & inlandCunard Asia :  
New York 16 September  
Liverpool 27 SeptemberLiverpool restated payment  
14 days*Branch offices in Philadelphia  
were instructed not to postmark  
treaty mail, but to pass it to the  
foreign desk. The black date  
stamp was applied in error.*

## Address Misunderstood



Penrith, 23 November 1858

Prepaid **1** shillingLiverpool **21c** credit to U.S.  
For Am. packet and inlandInman City of Washington :  
Liverpool 26 November  
New York 13 DecemberNew York restated payment  
22 days*Germantown was part of  
Philadelphia, so letter should  
not have gone in the bag for  
New York.*

British Contract Steamships

Handling Anomalies

Credit for Missing Adhesive

Prepaid 24 cents

Philadelphia 19c credit to U.K.  
For British packet & inland

Cunard Asia :  
New York 28 March  
Liverpool 8 April

16 days

Stain on envelope is the same  
size as the 1857 24-cent issue.  
Postal clerk accepted as paid.



previously unrecorded



Philadelphia, 24 March 1860

Sorted Aboard Ship; Not Postmarked in Philadelphia



Liverpool, ca. 1859-66

Prepaid 1 shilling

Liverpool 5c credit to U.S.  
for inland

**A92:** mail-boat cancel issued  
in June 1859 to Mr. Nash,  
Marine Packet Service  
Atlantic Line, for use aboard  
Cunard packets Asia and  
Arabia.

Philadelphia neglected to apply  
a datestamp, as required by  
Treaty.



e

rare on cover

The British post office pioneered the establishment of shipboard mail sorting offices. In the Atlantic, numeral handstamps were issued to clerks aboard Cunard and Allan Line steam packets from 1859-1870. Few examples have survived on cover.

**Undeliverable, Returned**



**London, 9 December 1859**

Sent unpaid, London **19** cents debit to U.S. for British inland and packet

Cunard *Asia* : Liverpool 10 December, New York 22 December 12 days

Cunard *America* : Boston 8 February, Queenstown 20 February 13 days

*Received at Philadelphia on 22 December, but insufficiently addressed, so passed to the Directory Section: REC'D/DEC 23 and advertised the same day. Addressee did not respond so marked DEAD on 1 February and forwarded to the Dead Letter Office in Washington. Returned to the U.K.; no net charges to either country.*

ADV<sub>D</sub>  
1Ct.



reverse

SENT BACK TO ENGLAND  
WITHOUT A REASON  
FOR NON-DELIVERY

London Exchange Office  
**latest recorded use**



British & American Contract Steamships

**Insufficiently Prepaid**

Treaty rate underpaid by 4 pence

Treated as unpaid: London **3¢**  
debit to U.S. for U.K. inland

NGL Bremen :  
Southampton 19 April  
New York 1 May

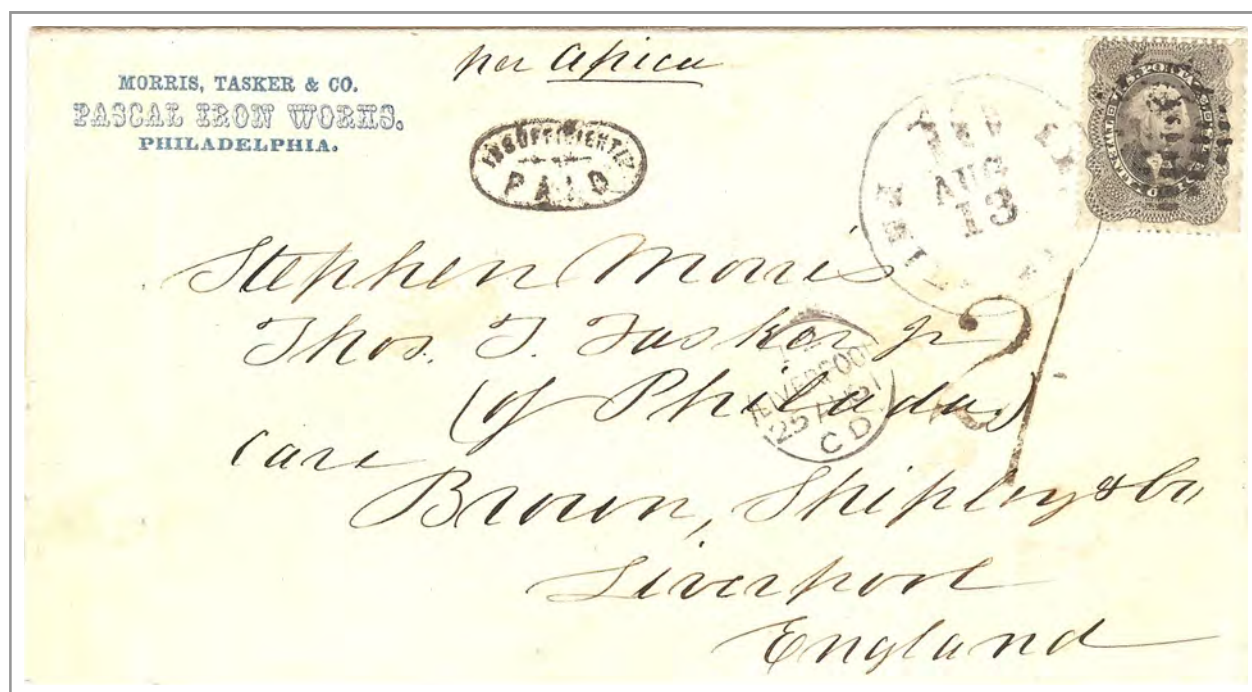
Philadelphia rated **24** cents due

13 days

**Philadelphia rating postmark  
previously unrecorded**



Ashford, 18 April 1859



Philadelphia, 13 August 1861

Double 24¢ treaty rate, underpaid by 24 cents; treated as unpaid  
Philadelphia **10** cents debit to U.K. for double U.S. inland: **10/PHIL<sup>A</sup> B<sup>R</sup> PK<sup>T</sup>**  
Cunard Africa : New York 14 August, Liverpool 25 August 12 days  
Liverpool rated **2/-** due

**INSUFFICIENTLY / PAID : earliest recorded use**

Under the treaty, partially paid letters were treated as wholly unpaid, with the full rate due on arrival. No fines were applied.

British & American Contract Steamships

Registered Mail

Prepaid 53 cents  
 2 x 24¢ in adhesives  
 5¢ registration in cash

Philadelphia credits to U.K.:  
 6¢ double inland  
 2 1/4¢ registered (manuscript)

Inman City of Washington :  
 New York 6 December  
 Liverpool 16 December

12 days

**REGISTERED**  
 earliest recorded use  
 on foreign mail



Philadelphia, 6 December 1862



London, 8 June 1860

1s6<sup>d</sup> prepaid  
 1s packet. 6<sup>d</sup> registered

London 5/6 credit to U.S.:  
 5¢ inland, 6¢ registered

Cunard Asia :  
 Liverpool 9 June  
 New York 21 June

Philadelphia overstruck  
 London registered oval:  
**PHIL<sup>A</sup>/24/B<sup>R</sup> PK<sup>T</sup>/PAID**

13 days

Additional articles effective 1 May 1856 allowed exchange of registered letters, provided that registration was fully prepaid, and that the receiving country would bear no liability for loss. Each country was to credit the other with half of their registration fee.

British Contract Steamship

**Registered Mail**

**Quadruple Rate**



London, 16 March 1860

Prepaid **4s6d** : 4/- quadruple treaty rate (1-2 oz.), 6<sup>d</sup> registration

London **20 / 6** credit to U.S.: 4 x 5¢ inland / 6¢ registered  
 Cunard *Arabia* : Liverpool 17 March, New York 30 March

Philadelphia marked **PHIL<sup>A</sup>/B<sup>R</sup> PK<sup>T</sup>/PAID**, and restated the rate in manuscript

15 days

2

2 oz.

20/6

**20/6**  
credits to U.S.

96

**96**  
quadruple rate

Under the 1848 treaty, the registration fee was fixed by the sending country, at this time 6<sup>d</sup> in Great Britain and 5¢ in the United States. The fee was independent of the letter weight, so was the same for single- and multiple-weight letters.

American Contract Steamship

## Forwarding

## Domestic



Philadelphia, 24 August 1858

Prepaid 24¢

Philadelphia 3¢ credit to U.K.  
for British inlandInman City of Washington :  
New York 28 August  
Liverpool 10 SeptemberForwarded to London,  
then to Clifton, where 1<sup>d</sup> due

25 days

POSTAGE NOT PAID  
TO LONDON

## International

Prepaid 24¢

Phila. 3¢ credit to U.K.  
for British inlandCollins Line Atlantic :  
New York 21 February  
Liverpool 4 MarchForwarded to Paris unpaid  
Arr. 7 March  
8 decimes due

16 days



Philadelphia, 20 February 1855

All prepaid mail could be forwarded unpaid by the receiving country to any of their treaty partners. Internal forwarding was at the expense of the addressee. Returned letters were treated the same way—sent unpaid to the original sender.

American Contract Steamship

## Forwarding

## The Three Month Period



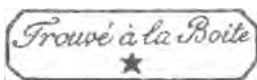
Philadelphia, 20 January, 1857

Prepaid **21** cents: 5¢ U.S. inland, 16¢ American packet  
 Ocean Line *Constitution* : New York 24 January, Southampton 7 February

London debited **40** centimes/oz. to France; Paris rated **5** decimes due (canceled)  
 Deposited in a postbox for unpaid forwarding to Rome : ***Trouvé à la boîte***

Routed Paris-Marseilles-Civitavecchia-Roma, arrived 14 February  
 Rome rated Rome rated **20** bajocchi due: inland plus British & French transit

25 days



"Found in the Box"  
 Paris

VIA DI MARE

"By Sea"  
 Marseilles to Civitavecchia

Under the 1856 Anglo-French treaty, effective 1 January 1857 the fee charged to France by Great Britain for unpaid letters transiting the U.K. was reduced from 40 decimes to only 40 centimes per ounce. Senders in America paid the same amount, but recipients in France saw a steep reduction in postage due. Because the U.S-French treaty was not effective until April 1, the first quarter of 1857 is often called the **Three Month Period** by collectors. Covers from this period are uncommon.

American Contract Steamship

To Tuscany via London, Marseilles & Livorno

Prepaid 5 cents

Cunard Canada :  
Boston 16 August  
Liverpool 27 August

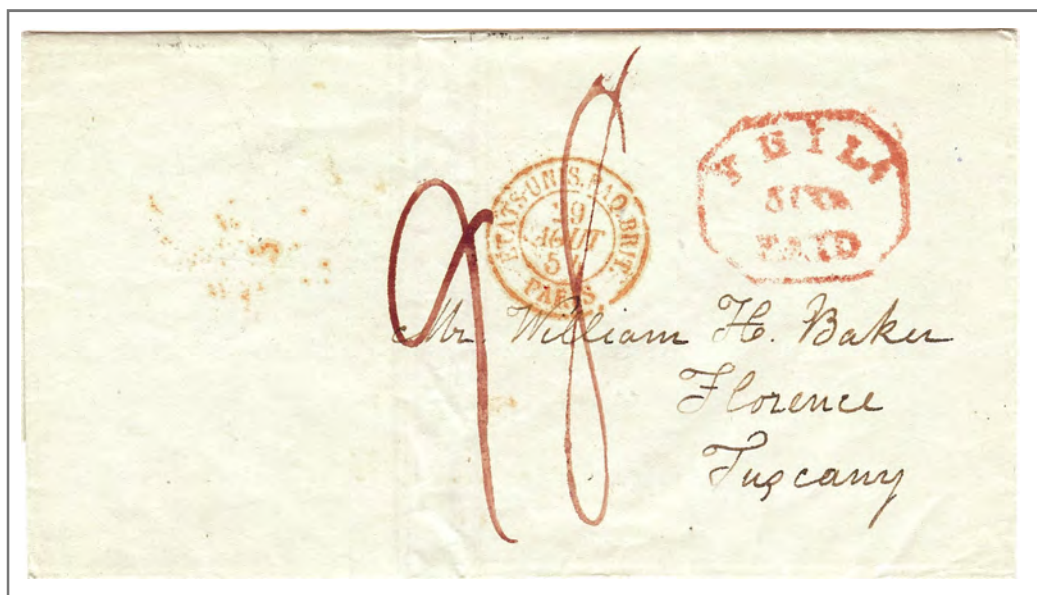
London 28 August  
Paris 29 August

Paris to Firenze via  
Marseilles & Livorno

28 grazie (19 decimes) due  
in Firenze:  
13 dec. U.S. to France  
6 dec. France to Tuscany

Received 3 September

24 days



Philadelphia, 9 August 1854

Treated under the Anglo-French treaty of 1843, and Franco-Sardinian treaty of 1838

From The Netherlands, British Packet



Rotterdam, 17 July 1855

Treated under the Anglo-Dutch postal convention of 1854.

Prepaid 80 Dutch cents:  
10¢ inland  
10¢ Belgian transit  
20¢ U.K. transit  
40¢ transatlantic

Rotterdam 1/- credit to  
U.K. for British packet

Cunard Asia :  
Liverpool 21 July  
Boston 2 August

Philadelphia rated 5¢  
due for inland

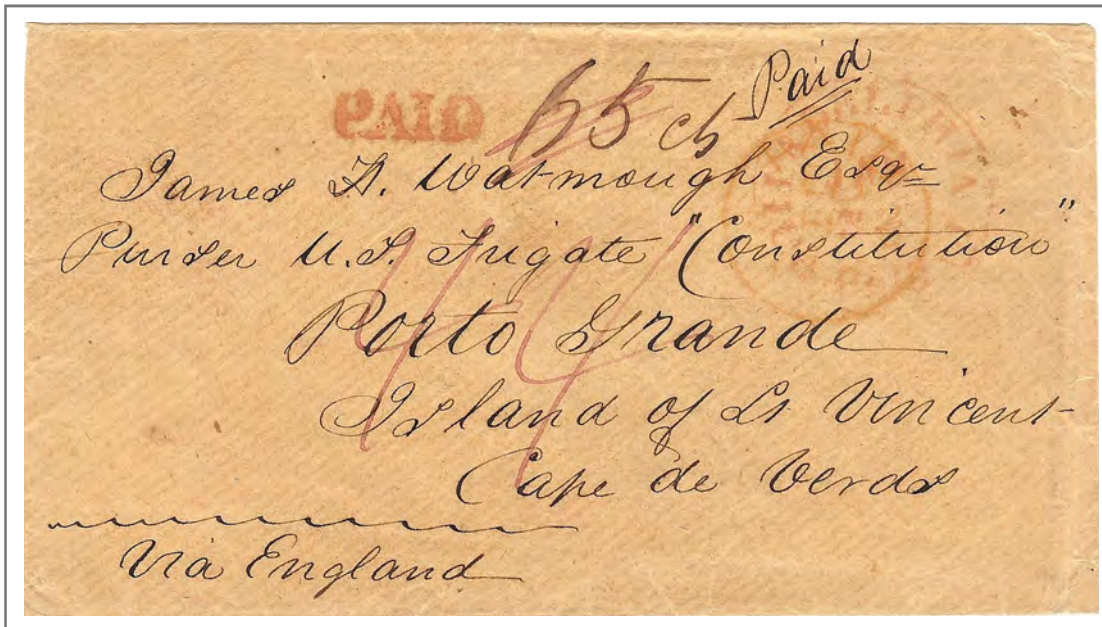
18 days

5

earliest recorded use

American & British Contract Steamships

To the Cape Verde Islands, American & British Packets



Prepaid **65** cents

Phila. retained 21¢ for inland & Am. Pkt.

Phila. **44¢** credit to G.B., for British packet to the Cape Verdes (1s10<sup>d</sup>)

Collins Line *Baltic* :  
New York 25 January  
Liverpool 5 February

Received 26 February

36 days

Philadelphia, 22 January 1855

To the Cape Verde Islands, British Packets

Prepaid **65** cents

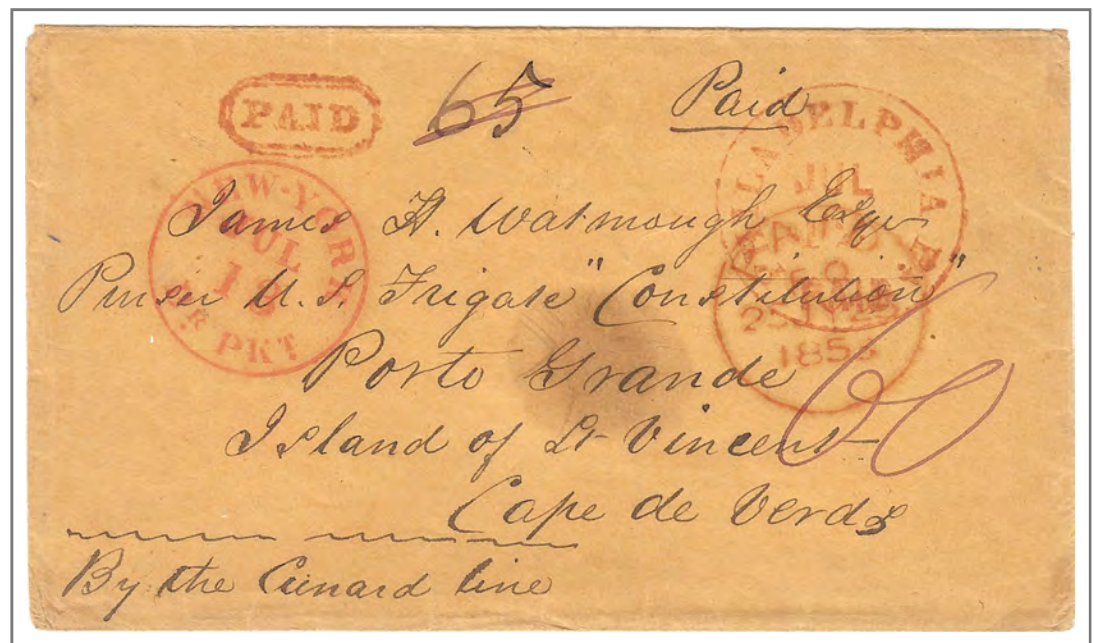
Phila. retained **5¢** for inland

Phila. **60¢** credit to G.B. for transatlantic and packet Porto Grande.

Cunard *Arabia* :  
Boston 14 July  
Liverpool 24 July

Received 18 December

160 days



Philadelphia, 12 July 1853

## American &amp; British Contract Steamships

## To Chile via Panama



Philadelphia, 4 February 1858

Prepaid **34** cents, the treaty rate: 10¢ to Aspinwall, 24¢ British packet  
 New York **24** cents credit to U.K. for British packet from Panama

U.S. Mail Steamship Co. *Moses Taylor* : New York 5 February, Aspinwall 19 February  
 Pacific Steam Navigation Co. *Valparaiso* : Panama 22 February, Valparaiso ~16 March

Consular mail in closed bag, so no transit or arrival markings

~41 days



American Contract Steamship

To Norway—Misrouted in Philadelphia

Prepaid **33** cents via French mail;  
bagged for Southampton in error

Havre Line *Arago*  
New York 23 July  
Southampton 4 August

London **1/-** credit to Prussia, per  
U.K.-Prussian convention

Hamburg marked **Franca 6** Sgr,  
indicating transit fee prepaid

Hamburg backstamp 8 August;  
Grimstad arrival unknown

19+ days

*Franca 6*



Philadelphia, 22 July 1859

To Belgium, Paid Only to England



reverse



reverse

Doylestown, Pa., 13 December 1859

Prepaid **24** cents to Great Britain  
Havre Line *Fulton* : New York 17 December, Southampton 31 December  
London debited Belgium **2<sup>d</sup>** per 1857 postal convention; Brussels rated **4<sup>d</sup>** due

Received 31 December

19 days

Havre Line steamships sailed the New York-Southampton-Havre route on a monthly schedule. British mails were dropped at Southampton. The clerk in Philadelphia may have been misled by the **via Southampton** endorsement on the letter to Norway.

British Contract Steamship

**From South Yemen, via Southampton**



Privately to London by Baring Brothers  
on P&O steamers via Suez

Baring Brothers paid **2/-** in London  
for ½ to 1 oz.

London credited **10** cents to U.S.  
for double inland

Cunard *Africa* :  
Liverpool 23 February  
New York 8 March

Philadelphia confirmed **48** cents *PAID*

Received 9 March 1856      70 days



Aden, 30 December 1855

**To Liberia by British West African Packet from Southampton**



Philadelphia, 1 February 1859

Prepaid **33** cents: 5¢ inland, 16¢ transatlantic, 12¢ Br. packet to Liberia

Cunard *Europa* : New York 2 February, Liverpool 14 February  
African Steam Ship Co. *Armenian* : Liverpool 24 February, Cape Palmas 12 March

Received 13 March      41 days

## British Contract Steamships

## To Hong Kong via Southampton &amp; Suez



Philadelphia, 29 September 1863

Prepaid **45** cents: 5¢ inland, 16¢ transatlantic, 24¢ Far East packetPhiladelphia **40**¢ credit to U.K., retaining 5¢ postage to BostonCunard *Arabia* : Boston 30 September, Queenstown 10 OctoberLondon credited **1<sup>d</sup>** to Hong Kong for delivery

P&amp;O contract steamships:

*Ripon* : Southampton 20 October, Alexandria 2 November  
*Mooltan* : Suez 11 November, Galle 24 November  
*Norna* : Galle 24 November, Hong Kong 13 December

87 days

British Contract Steamship

## From India via Marseilles



Calcutta, 7 April 1855

Sent unpaid via British packet

P&O *Oriental* : Calcutta to Suez, via Madras and GalleP&O *Vectis* : Alexandria to Marseilles, via MaltaRated at London on 18 May: **54** cents debit to U.S.: 34¢ packet from India, 20¢ French transitCollins Line *Pacific* : Liverpool 19 May, New York 30 MayPhiladelphia rated **75** cents due: 54¢ debit from U.K., 16¢ transatlantic, 5¢ inlandRe-rated **77** cents due, to include a 2¢ carrier fee

Received 30 May      54 days

INDIA
-------

77

postage due

The Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company provided biweekly Packet service from Southampton to Hong Kong and Shanghai, with port calls at Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria, Suez, Galle, Penang and Singapore.

Non Contact Sailing Ship, Contract Steamship

## From Victoria via Cape Horn &amp; Liverpool



Melbourne, 1 August 1854

Prepaid 1/- Victoria ship fee

Clipper ship *Red Jacket* :  
Melbourne 2 August  
Liverpool 16 OctoberLiverpool **16** cents debit  
to U.S. for unpaid ship letterCollins Line *Pacific* :  
Liverpool 18 October  
New York 30 OctoberPhiladelphia rated 37¢ due:  
16¢ debit from U.K.,  
16¢ American packet.  
5¢ U.S. inland

91 days

## From Victoria via Cape Horn &amp; Liverpool

Prepaid 1/- Victoria ship fee

Private ship *Orwell* :  
Melbourne 28 February  
Plymouth 25 MayLiverpool **28** cents debit  
to U.S.:12¢ ship letter (6<sup>d</sup>)  
16¢ transatlantic (8<sup>d</sup>)Cunard *Africa* :  
Liverpool 26 May  
Boston 7 JunePhiladelphia rated **33**¢ due  
28¢ debit from U.K.  
5¢ inland

100 days



Melbourne, 28 February 1855

The U.K. lowered its 8<sup>d</sup> ship fee to 6<sup>d</sup> in October 1854. Victoria's ship-letter fee was paid on all incoming and outgoing mail. The fee paid for no part of a journey, but amounted to a tax to generate revenue for the colonial post office. Letters arriving in England were then charged the British ship-letter fee.

Non Contact Sailing Ships, Contract Steamship

## From Tasmania via Melbourne, Suez &amp; Southampton



Torquay, 13 March 1858

Prepaid **14** pence: 6<sup>d</sup> uniform rate to Great Britain (stamps), 8<sup>d</sup> transatlantic (cash)  
 Barque *Swordfish* : Hobart 16 March, Melbourne 22 March

European & Australian Royal Mail contract steamships to the U.K.:

*Victoria* : Melbourne 16 April, Suez 6 June

*Cambria* : Alexandria 8 June, Southampton 20 June

London canceled the 8<sup>d</sup> credit from Tasmania, and credited **16** cents to the U.S. for American packet  
 Inman Line *City of Washington* : Liverpool 23 June, New York 6 July

Philadelphia rated **5** cents due for inland postage from New York

Received 6 July      116 days



reverse



8d credit to U.K.

The U.K. lowered its 8<sup>d</sup> ship fee to a **6<sup>d</sup> uniform rate** in October 1854. Victoria's ship-letter fee was paid on all incoming and outgoing mail. The fee paid for no part of a journey, but amounted to a tax to generate revenue for the colonial post office. Letters arriving in England were then charged the 6<sup>d</sup> uniform rate.

American Contract Steamship

### Outbreak of Civil War



Philadelphia, 31 May 1861

Prepaid 24 cents, Philadelphia 3¢ credit to U.K. for inland postage  
HAPAG Saxonia : New York 1 June, Southampton 12 June

London marked PAID  
Received at Liverpool 13 June

14 days

**Six Civil War patriotic covers from Philadelphia to a foreign destination are recorded**

The stamp paying the treaty rate on this cover, issued in 1857, continued in use after hostilities began between the northern and southern states in April 1861. The issue was demonetized in August 1861 to prevent use by the southern states.

American Contract Steamship

Civil War's Impact on American Packet Service

Vanderbilt European Line's Short-Lived Packet Service

Prepaid 1 shilling treaty rate

London 21 cents credit for American packet

Vanderbilt *Illinois*  
Southampton 1 May  
New York 13 May

New York marked 24 in red, confirming prepayment

Philadelphia **PAID**

Received 14 May

15 days



Manchester, 30 April 1860

British-Flagged Inman Line Under American Contract



Paris, 24 October 1863

Prepaid 80 centimes for French-U.S. treaty rate, but sent via British open mail

Inman Line *Edinburgh*  
Liverpool 28 October  
New York 15 November

Philadelphia 21¢ due  
16¢ American Packet  
5¢ inland

24 days

Vanderbilt ships were American-flagged vessels. When the Civil War began in April 1861, all of Vanderbilt's ships were chartered to the government, which put a permanent end to their mail service.

U.S.-British treaty mails carried by other lines were unaffected. In 1860 the Inman Line expanded their New York—Liverpool schedule from bi-weekly to weekly service.



British Contract Steamship

**1867 Treaty, Effective 1 January 1868**

Each country was responsible for its own packet contracts and would retain all postage, eliminating the distinction between British and American packets. The letter rate per 1/2 oz. was reduced to 12 cents in the U.S., 6<sup>d</sup> in the U.K. The rate breakdown was 8 cents sea, 2 cents to each country for inland. The U.S. was entitled to 3 cents for each letter transiting the U.K. from another country. Philadelphia remained an exchange office.

Prepaid 6 pence

Cunard *Scotia* :  
 Liverpool 20 June  
 New York 30 June

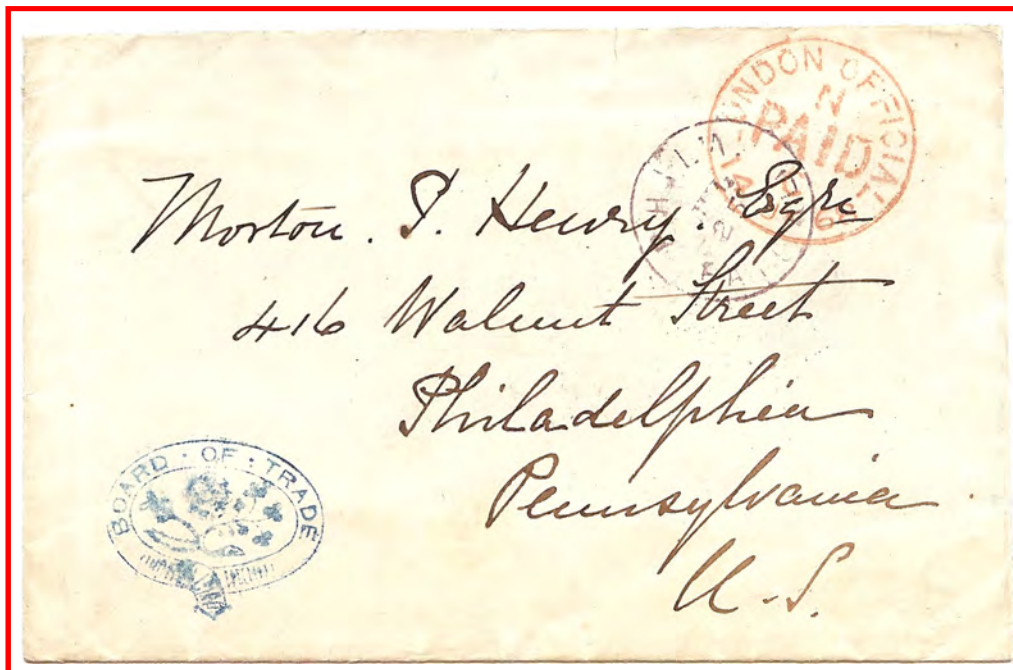
Phila. marked **PAID ALL**

12 days



Glasgow, 19 June 1868

**Official Mail**



London, 14 July 1868

London marked  
**LONDON OFFICIAL PAID**

Inman *City of Paris* :  
 Liverpool 15 July  
 New York 25 July

Philadelphia marked **PAID ALL**

12 days

Actual payment was probably not made, but the letter would have been accounted for.

**Two incoming official mail letters are reported**

American Contract Steamship



Prepaid **12** cents  
 Cunard *Scotia*  
 New York 12 May  
 Queenstown 21 May  
 London 22 May  
 11 days



4/30/69-5/11/69

**two recorded**

Philadelphia, 11 May 1869

Prepaid **12** cents  
 HAPAG *Holsatia* :  
 New York 26 October  
 Plymouth 4 November  
 London 5 November  
 11 days



8/69-12/69

Worn state



Philadelphia, 26 October 1869

American Contract Steamship

Prepaid **12 cents**

Cunard Java :  
New York 18 November  
Queenstown 27 November

London 28 November

13 days



3-27 Nov 68

**five recorded**



Philadelphia, 16 November 1868



Philadelphia, 23 December 1868

Prepaid **12 cents**

NGL Main :  
New York 24 December  
Southampton 3 January

Forwarded to Rome by  
Brown & Shipley

Received 8 January

17 days



**one recorded**

In February 1868 Philadelphia began using hand-made fancy cancellation devices on letters outgoing from their Exchange Office. Most designs lasted only a month or two. In the ensuing years the Exchange office used a succession of purple, red and orange inks for their date stamps. Although these colors made covers more attractive, they have no postal significance.

American Contract Steamship

1869 Treaty, Effective 1 January 1870

The treaty signed in December 1869 reduced the single-letter rate to 6 cents. The fine for unpaid or insufficiently paid letters, which was 5¢ under the 1867 treaty, was increased to 6¢ plus the deficiency. The rate breakdown was 2¢ for sea postage and 2¢ for each country's inland postage. Other terms remained as before.



Prepaid 6 cents

White Star Adriatic :  
New York 16 May  
Liverpool 26 May

Received 26 May

12 days



4/74-7/74

Philadelphia, 15 May 1874



Philadelphia, 3 April 1874

Prepaid 12 cents, double rate, 1/2 to 1 oz..

White Star Line Celtic : New York 4 April, London 15 April

12 days

American Contract Steamship

**Double Rate, Registered**



Philadelphia, 21 January 1873

Prepaid **14 cents**:  
 6¢ x 2, ½ to 1 oz.  
 8¢ Registered

Cunard *Calabria* :  
 New York 22 January  
 Queenstown 2 February

Dublin 4 February

15 days

**Consignee's Letter**

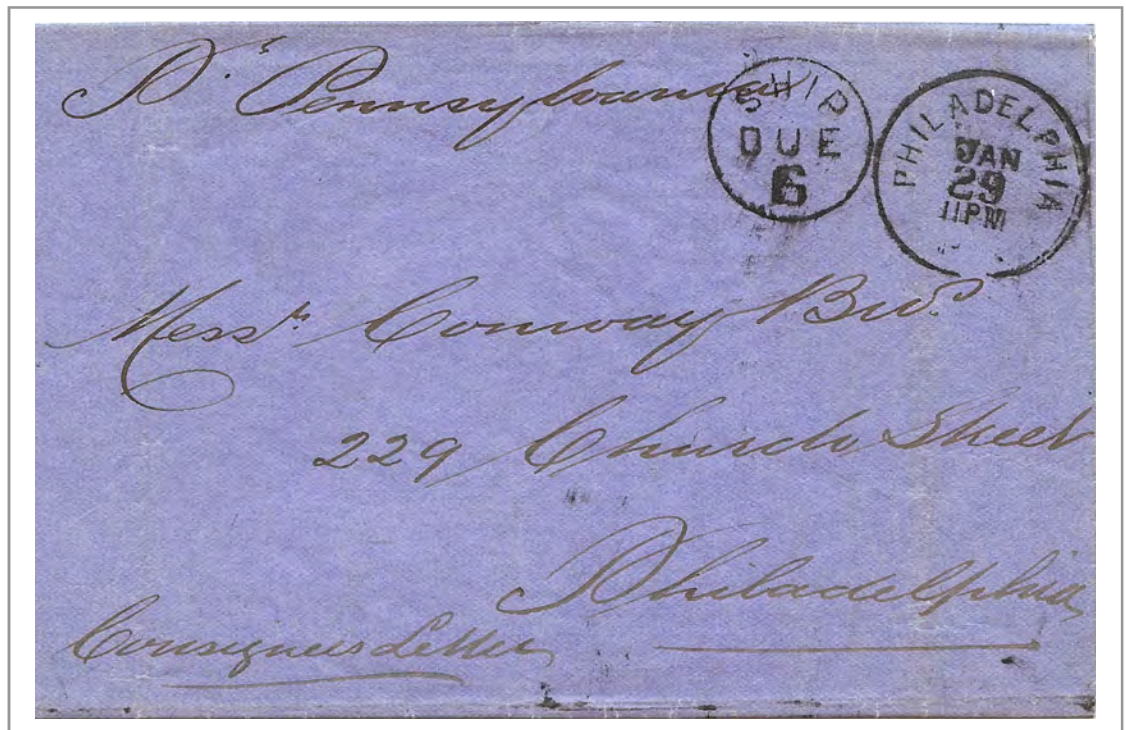
Placed onboard ship, not  
 in the British mail

American Line  
*Pennsylvania* :  
 Liverpool 16 January  
 Philadelphia 29 January

Philadelphia rated **6 cents**  
 due, in error: the fee was  
**4c**, effective 1 July 1863.

15 days

The *Pennsylvania* carried  
 contract mails on this trip,  
 but this letter accompa-  
 nied a shipment of goods,  
 so did not enter the mail  
 until Philadelphia.



Liverpool, 15 January 1874

American Contract Steamship

**To Burma via Southampton, Suez, Bombay and Calcutta****Philadelphia, 3 May 1870**

Prepaid **22** cents, retaining 2¢ for inland and 2¢ transatlantic  
 Philadelphia credited **18**¢ to the U.K. (9<sup>d</sup>): 6<sup>d</sup> to India, 3<sup>d</sup> onward to Burma  
 London credited **1<sup>d</sup>** to Burma for delivery

HAPAG *Cimbria* : New York 3 May, Plymouth 13 May

P&O *Pera* : Southampton 14 May, Alexandria 27 May

P&O *Columbia* : Suez 29 May, Aden 3 June, Bombay 10 June

Overland to Calcutta, received 19 June

British India Steam Navigation Company to Rangoon, *ship and date unknown*

Received at Bassein (now Pathein) on 30 June 59 days

**The only recorded pre-GPU cover from Philadelphia to Burma**



reverse



The Kewriga census of the U.S. bank note company issues used to foreign destinations records only three covers to Burma.

British Contract Steamship

## From Spain via Paris &amp; London



Cadiz, 26 October 1871

Prepaid **800** milesimas (40¢) for double rate,  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.  
 Madrid marked **P.D.** : paid to the U.S. port, not to destination

Endorsed *via Francia* : routed Madrid-Paris-Calais in closed bag

Inman City of New York : Queenstown 3 November, New York 14 November

Philadelphia rated **3¢** due, single rate,  $< \frac{1}{2}$  oz.

21 days

*This marginal weight letter was rated double in Spain ( $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.) but only single in the U.K. and U.S. ( $< \frac{1}{2}$  oz.).*

## British Contract Steamship

## From Egypt via Brindisi, London and Liverpool



**Cairo, 28 January 1873**

Prepaid **10** pence: 8<sup>d</sup> inland and British packet via Brindisi; 2<sup>d</sup> transatlantic and U.S. inland

P&O *Pera* : Alexandria 1 February, Brindisi 5 February; mails at London 10 February  
London credited **2**¢ to U.S. for inland postage

Cunard *Batavia* : Liverpool 11 February, New York 25 February

Received 25 February

*29 days*

By the 1870s, better rail service meant that most of Philadelphia's foreign mail incoming via New York was received on the same day as a ship's arrival. That improvement, combined with the elimination of single-letter accounting, greatly reduced the need for an exchange office for U.S.-British mails.

*Senders could stipulate that letters from Alexandria to Great Britain could go via Southampton, but letters not so-endorsed would default to the steamship route via Brindisi, then overland by rail, a saving of five to seven days.*



American Contract Steamship

## Use of British Mail in the U.S-France Non-Treaty Period

## Unpaid via England



Philadelphia, 12 May 1871

Sent unpaid, New York debited **4** cents to U.K.: 2¢ U.S. inland, 2¢ American packetInman *City of Brooklyn* : New York 13 May, Queenstown 22 May, London 23 May  
London debited **2F** per 30 grams bulk rate to FranceCalais-to-Paris R.P.O. 24 May, rated **8** decimes due

Received in Cognac 25 May            14 days

The United States-France postal treaty expired in January 1870. Senders in both the U.S. and France had the option of using British open mails to pay letters to destination, or only to England. The rate breakdown for the leg between the U.S. and U.K. was the same as under the 1869 U.S.-G.B. treaty: 2¢ inland on both ends, and 2¢ transatlantic.

American Contract Steamship

**Use of British Mail in the U.S-France Non-Treaty Period**

**Paid Only to England - Single Rate**



Philadelphia, 24 October 1871

Prepaid **4 cents**

HAPAG *Westphalia*  
New York 25 October  
Plymouth 6 November

London debited **40c/oz.**  
to France, bulk rate

Calais-to-Paris R.P.O.  
8 November

Paris rated **5 dec.** due

Toulouse 10 November

18 days

**Paid Only to England - Marginal Weight**

Prepaid **4 cents**, < 1/2oz.

Inman *City of Antwerp* :  
New York 6 May  
Queenstown 16 May

London debited **40**  
centimes per oz., bulk rate

Calais-Paris R.P.O. 18 May

Paris rated **10** decimes due  
for 10 to 15 grams

Received 21 May

20 days



Philadelphia, 2 May 1871

British Contract Steamship

Use of British Mail in the U.S-France Non-Treaty Period

Paid to Destination



Prepaid **70** centimes (14¢)  
8¢ inland & transit to U.K.  
6¢ transatlantic

London credited **2¢** to U.S. for inland

Guion Line *Colorado* :  
Queenstown 7 April,  
New York 18 April

14 days

Aignay-le-Duc, 5 April 1870

Paid to Destination—War Rate



Nice, 25 February 1872

Prepaid **120** centimes (24¢): 18¢ inland & transit to U.K., 6¢ transatlantic  
London credited **2¢** to U.S. for inland

Guion Line *Wyoming* : Liverpool 28 February, New York 13 March 17 days

**In 1871 France raised the rate from 70c to 120c to help pay for war against Germany.**

American Contract Steamship

**Use of British Mail in the U.S-France Non-Treaty Period**

**Paid to Destination**

Prepaid **10 cents**

Philadelphia credited **6¢** to U.K.,  
British transit & French inland

White Star *Republic* :  
New York 17 January  
Queenstown 27 January

Calais-to-Paris R.P.O., 29 Jan.

14 days



*Philadelphia,  
earliest  
recorded use*



Philadelphia, 16 January 1874

**Paid to Destination**



Philadelphia, 30 July 1873

Prepaid **16 cents**, 1/3 to 1/2 oz.

Philadelphia **12¢** credit to U.K.  
for British and French inland

HAPAG *Westphalia* :  
New York 31 July  
Plymouth 10 August

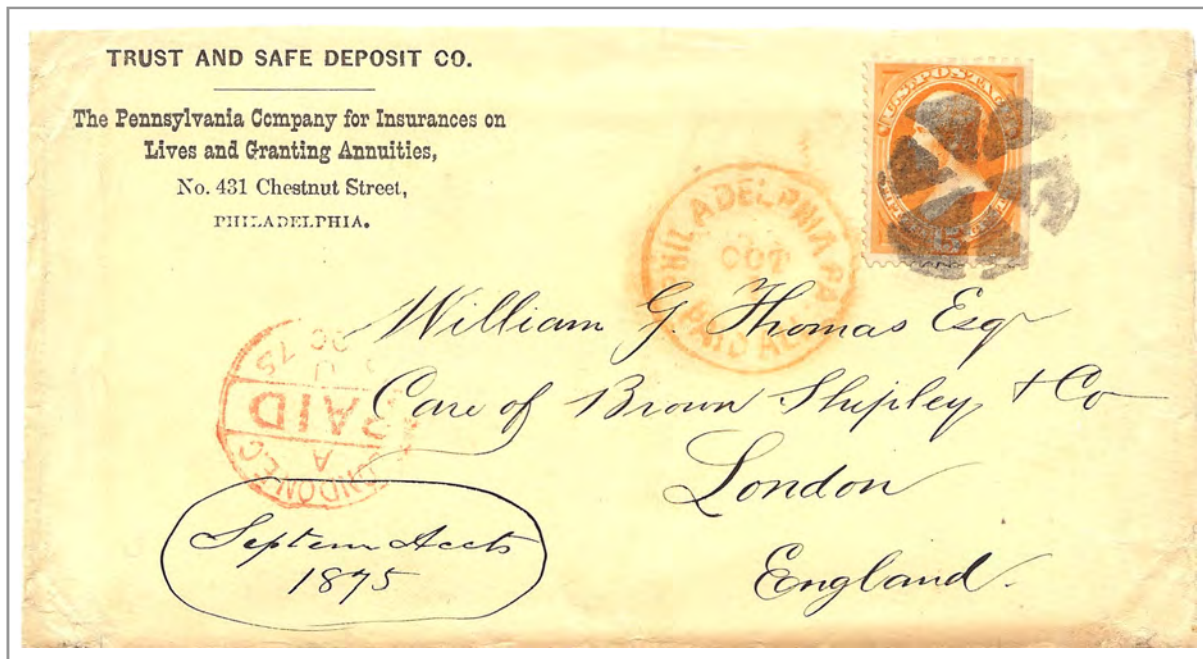
Vaucluse 13 August

15 days

**Six examples at this rate  
reported from Philadelphia**

**General Postal Union, Effective 1 July 1875**

The GPU pact among 51 countries reduced the U.S.-British mail rate to 5 cents. An additional 86 countries, colonies and protectorates had joined the Universal Postal Union by 1 April 1879.



**Philadelphia, 2 October 1875**

Prepaid **15** cents, triple rate, 1 to 1½ oz.  
 Cunard *Marathon* : Boston 2 October, Queenstown 12 October  
 London 2 October 11 days



**London, 16 October 1875**

Prepaid **2½<sup>d</sup>**, < ½ oz.

Cunard *Algeria* :  
 Liverpool 16 October  
 New York 29 October

Philadelphia **5** restated  
 the rate

15 days

From 8 November, GPU  
 required that all letters be  
 prepaid with adhesives.

**Latest recorded  
 stampless cover  
 from the U.K. to  
 Philadelphia**

American and British Contract Steamships

**Paid at the Expired Rate**

**To The Argentine Republic via British Open Mail**



**Philadelphia, 16 September 1878**

Prepaid **15** cents for British mail, overpaid for the 10¢ GPU rate

Guion Line *Wisconsin* : New York 16 September, Queenstown 27 September  
Royal Mail Steam Packet *Neva* : Southampton 9 October, Buenos Aires 31 October

46 days

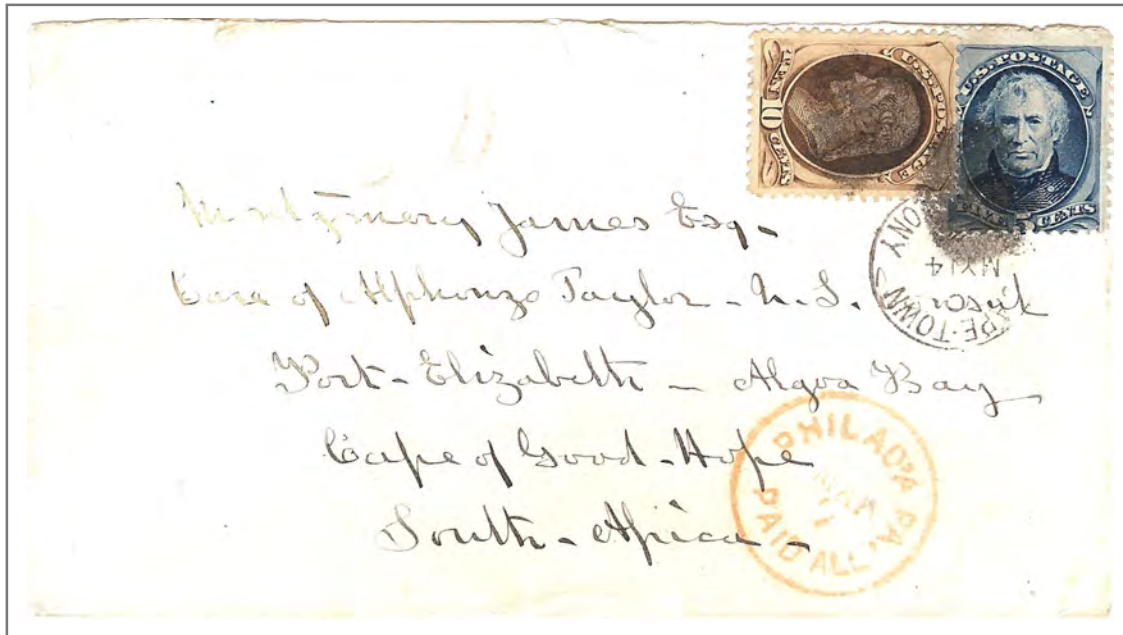
***The Argentine Republic became a GPU member on 1 April 1878***

*The Post Office in Philadelphia would have been able to tell the sender of this letter that the 15 cent rate to Argentina had expired on 1 April. This suggests that the letter may have been deposited in a postbox rather than paid at a P.O. window.*

American and British Contract Steamships

Mail to Non Members

To The Cape of Good Hope via British Open Mail



Philadelphia, 7 March 1877

Prepaid **15** cents for British mail via Southampton

Philadelphia credited 50 centimes (10 cents) to the U.K. for British pack to Cape own

Cunard *Algeria* : New York 10 March, Queenstown 23 March

British packet to Cape Town, arrived 4 May

59 days

**The Cape of Good Hope joined the UPU in February 1895**

American and British Contract Steamships

Mail to Non Members

To Brazil via British Open Mail



Philadelphia, 2 March 1877

Prepaid **42** cents, double 21¢ rate, ½ to 1 oz.: 5¢ GPU rate, 16¢ British packet  
Philadelphia **160** centimes credit to U.K. : 2 x 8<sup>d</sup> British packet rate to Brazil

Inman *City of Richmond* : New York 2 March, Queenstown 12 March

Pacific Steam Navigation Co. *John Elder* : Liverpool 21 March, Rio de Janeiro 12 April

Rio de Janeiro rated **3** reis due

42 days



Philadelphia foreign mail cancel  
**the only recorded example**



reverse

**Brazil became a GPU member on 1 July 1877.**