

The Path to a Philadelphia Exchange Office for United States-British Mails

Purpose and Scope

This exhibit illustrates the evolving treatment of letter mails between Great Britain and Philadelphia from colonial times until the General Postal Union took effect in 1875. The exhibit is not a treatise on transatlantic rates or Philadelphia postal markings *per se*, although these elements are discussed.

The intent is to highlight improvements in the mode and efficiency of mail handling, and how these changes related to Philadelphia's waning importance, compared to New York, as a port of entry and departure for mails. Shown are covers which document the evolution of transatlantic services, culminating in the 1854-1875 operation of Philadelphia's Exchange Office. Included are attempts by the Cope and Inman lines to sustain direct, scheduled shipping service to Great Britain, both of which ultimately failed.

Great Britain-Philadelphia transit times are given to show improvements in the speed of transatlantic communication.

Historical Background

Granted a City Charter by William Penn in 1702, Philadelphia's subsequent growth was rapid—in 1776 its population was second in the Americas only to Mexico City's. But by the 1840s Philadelphia had fallen behind New York both in population and international commerce, because:

New York had a natural harbor 200 miles closer to Great Britain than Philadelphia's narrow, shoal-water harbor. In 1755 the advent of scheduled British packets between Falmouth and New York provided a faster option than most private ships sailing directly to Philadelphia.

The Cope Line ran scheduled sailings between Philadelphia and Liverpool from 1822 to 1872, but competed with lines based in New York.

The 1825 opening of the Erie Canal made New York City effectively the commercial terminus for transport of people and goods to the Great Lakes and Midwest.

One-day stage service between Philadelphia and New York started in 1785, and by 1839 through train service was available from Camden and Trenton. It thus became more efficient for passengers and mail to travel to Great Britain via New York.

A brief period of direct steamship service in the early 1850s succumbed to contract steamship lines serving the routes to Boston and New York.

Postal Effects of Political Pressure

When British contract-steamship service to Boston began in 1840, incoming British packet letters had to be sorted at the Boston post office. Politicians and businessmen in Philadelphia and other eastern cities lobbied the Postmaster General to address resultant delays. Consequently the Postmaster General convinced the Liverpool Postmaster to separately bundle mail for these cities, and to ship the bundles in a bag containing the New York mails which Boston would

Liverpool began no later than October 1844. The Liverpool Postmaster's cooperation hastened Philadelphia's mail arrivals by about a day.

Because service via Boston and New York was adequate, no role for Philadelphia was included in the 1848 U.S.-British Treaty. Nevertheless, when James Campbell, a Philadelphia politician, became Postmaster General in March 1853 he quickly began renegotiating the treaty. Additional articles agreed in November 1853 named Philadelphia an Exchange Office effective January 1, 1854. Covers indicate little or no subsequent improvement in total transit times compared to the special arrangement that had already been in place.

Generating commerce, not expediting mail, was probably PMG Campbell's intention all along. Immediately after achieving exchange-office status, Philadelphia's businessmen lobbied unsuccessfully for the Post Office Department to establish Philadelphia as a contract-mail terminus.

The Liverpool & Philadelphia Steamship Company, also called the "Inman Line" began a monthly schedule in late 1850. After six years they moved their western terminus to New York due to insufficient cargoes and the unavailability of the mail subsidies enjoyed by their New York competitors.

Relative Rarity

Under terms of the amended 1848 U.S.-British treaty, the Philadelphia Exchange Office was only permitted to receive mail sent to addresses within the city. The exchange office could process outgoing mail from any origin, but handled very few letters posted outside Philadelphia. Thus U.S.-British mails postmarked by the Philadelphia Exchange Office are far less common than letters accounted for in Boston or New York—by well more than an order of magnitude.

In 1865 the Exchange Office began using special cancellation devices on all outgoing foreign mail, a practice which continued until well after the office became the Foreign Branch during GPU/UPU. Most of these devices were in use for only a few months—some for only a few weeks. These cancellations were first noted and published by the exhibitor.

Especially noteworthy items are framed in **red**.

Exhibit Plan

Chapters are arranged chronologically into five periods.

Pre 1775	Colonial Posts
1775-1792	Congressional & Confederation Posts
1792-1849	Pre U.S.-British Treaty of 1848
1849-1853	1848 Treaty, Pre Phila. Exchange Office
1854-1875	1848 Treaty, Phila. Exchange Office

Within chapters, covers are arranged by usage, not always chronologically. Modes of transport, *Falmouth Packets*, for example, may thus appear in more than one chapter.

Previously unpublished sailing dates are given for many covers, based on departures and arrivals published in newspapers from Liverpool, New York and Philadelphia.

Private Sailing Ships



Bristol, 15 April 1739

Ship letter rate, prepaid 4 pence
 1^d inland, Bristol to Dover
 3^d ship

Elizabeth, to Philadelphia
 Arr. 2 November 1739

Transit 201 days

Philadelphia, 6 June 1766

Unpaid ship letter

Jamaica, to Dover
 Arr. date unknown

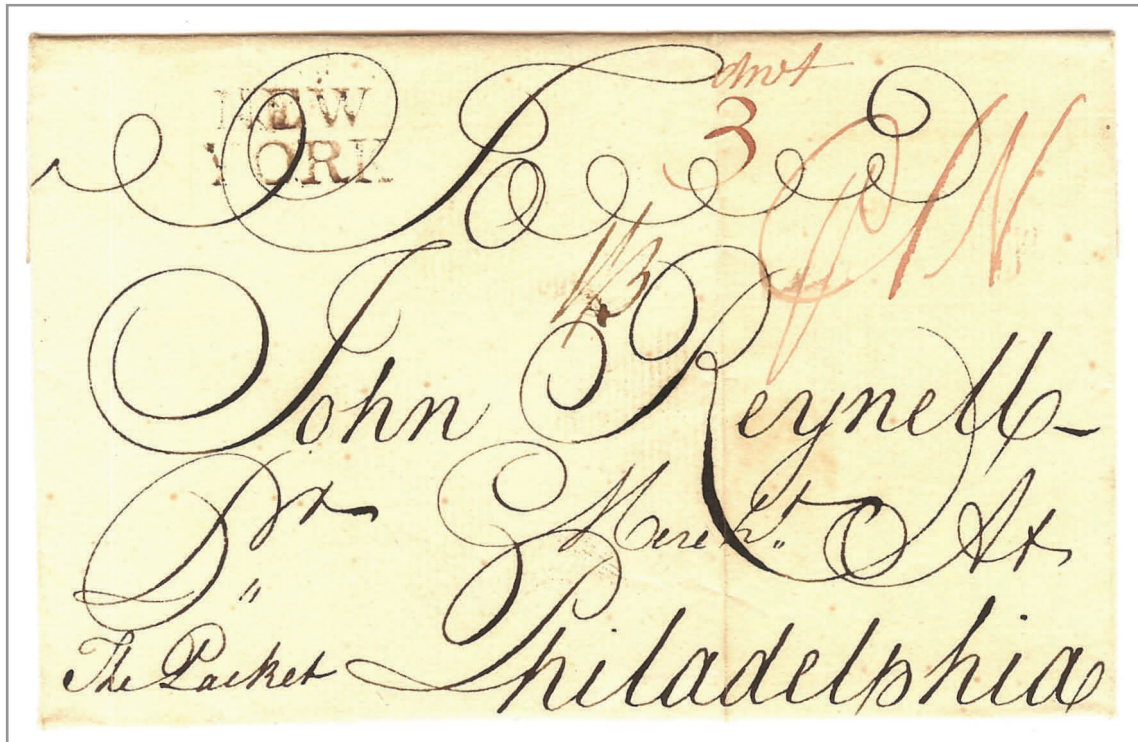
Dover rated 4 pence due
 1^d inland, Dover to London
 3^d ship

Arrival date unknown

DOVER
 SHIP LRE



Although in the mid 1700s Philadelphia was the largest city in North America, ship arrivals and departures were infrequent. Scheduled service was available only to New York, and then only from late 1755 onward. Ship letters could arrive at any port, having taken circuitous routes often lasting many months. Philadelphia merchants expressed the need for direct, regular transatlantic service, and would continue to do so for the next 100 years.



Falmouth, 11 September 1756

Single packet rate, prepaid 1 shilling

Packet *General Wall* : Falmouth 11 September, New York 8 November

New York rated 3^{dwt} due for inland postage

Received 10 November, *transit* 61 days

Philadelphia rated 1/3 due in local currency: 3^{dwt} = 9^d sterling; 9^d x 1.66666 = 15^d local = 1/3



London, 29 February 1764

Double packet rate:
prepaid 2 shillings

Packet *Harriet*
Falmouth 17 March
New York 2 May

New York rated 6^{dwt} due
for double inland

Received 4 May 1764

Philadelphia rated 2/8 due
in local currency
(30^d inland + 2^d carrier)

Transit 65 days

Monthly packet service between Falmouth and New York began in November 1755, with inland postage to Philadelphia due in pennyweights of silver. **One pennyweight = three pence sterling. Sterling x 1.66666 = local Pennsylvania currency.**

Westbound trips were usually two months or longer, plus an overland trip to Philadelphia of at least two days. Scheduled, one-day stage service between New York and Philadelphia was unavailable until 1785.



Falmouth, 8 August 1767 Single packet rate, unpaid
Packet *Earl of Halifax* : Falmouth 29 August, New York 8 October
New York rated 6^{dwt} due: 4^{dwt} packet + 2^{dwt} inland



Falmouth, 11 April 1767 Triple packet rate, unpaid
Packet *Lord Hyde* : Falmouth 16 April, New York 28 May
New York rated 18^{dwt} due: (4^{dwt} packet + 2^{dwt} inland) x 3
Received at Philadelphia 29 May 1767 Transit 49 days
Philadelphia collected 7s8^d in local currency (not marked): 7/6 postage + 2^d carrier fee

Mandatory prepayment of packet postage to New York was required by GPO notice on October 1755, published just prior to departure of the first Falmouth packet. Per the Act of 1765 (5 Geo III c 25) inland postage in the American colonies was six pence for less than 100 miles. Amounts due were more commonly indicated in pennyweights of silver, at 6^d = 2^{dwt}.

British Inland and Packet Prepaid



Exeter, [unknown date] 1772

Single packet rate, prepaid

Prepaid **1N4**: 1s packet + 4^d inland from Exeter to Falmouth

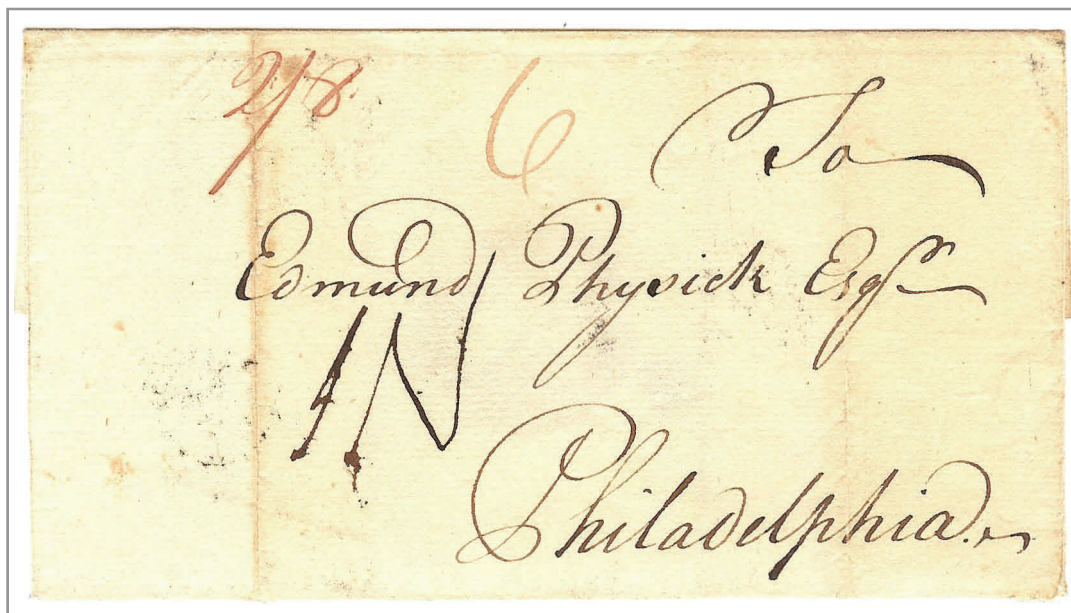
Packet *Lord Hyde* : Falmouth 11 June, New York 6 August
New York rated 2^{dwt} due for inland postage

Received at Philadelphia 8 August 1772, transit 59+ days

Philadelphia collected 1s in local currency (*not marked*): 10d postage + 2d carrier fee

Falmouth packets were commercial sailing vessels under contract with the British Postmaster General. They were not forbidden from carrying freight or passengers, nor from making intermediate stops. Some captains even engaged in privateering. Such non-postal activities of course delayed the mails, and eventually led to their being turned over to the Admiralty.

Packet Postage Unpaid



London, 6 January 1773

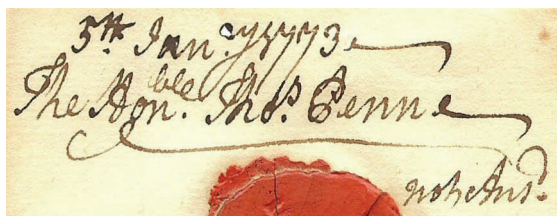
Single packet rate, unpaid

Packet *Harriot* : Falmouth 30 January, New York 14 March

New York rated 1s packet (4^{dwt}), + 6^d inland (2^{dwt}) = 6^{dwt} due

Received on 16 March, transit 70 days
Philadelphia rated 2/8 in local currency: 2/6 + 2^d carrier

From Thomas Penn, son and successor to William Penn



reverse

Because the values of local currencies differed, and because each 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. The currency used for rating of incoming letters was not always consistent, and in this case caused confusion, probably since New York had previously begun rating in pennyweights of silver.

Sent Unpaid via New York



Philadelphia, 5 April 1774

Single packet rate

New York rated **1N6** : 6^d inland from Philadelphia + 1s packet, and indicated the unpaid amount with **IN^D AND PAC^T/POSTAGE**. This postmark was only applied on packet letters from towns other than New York.

Packet *British Mercury* : New York 7 April, Falmouth 26 May, *transit 50 days*

London rated **2/4** on 28 May, and sent the letter to Dublin, where uprated to **2/8** for colonial, packet, and British inland postage.

PHILA
DELPHIA

NEW-YORK

Reverse, at 70%

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) for packet and inland, respectively. This edict was not regularly followed, and GPO London did not demand prepayment of incoming packet letters from America until 1784.

Sent Unpaid, Direct



Philadelphia, 1 August 1772

unpaid ship letter

Ship *Snow Charlotte* : Philadelphia 12 AugustWaterford 21 September, London 25 September, *transit 45 days*London rated **1/9** : 2^d ship, 9^d inland to Dublin, 2^d packet to Holyhead, 8^d to London

Outer sheet of letter to Thomas Penn from Richard Hockley, co-executor of the Penn estates in America. Thomas Penn succeeded his father William on his death in 1718, and chose to rule his provincial lands in North America from his homes in Great Britain.

Because departures for Great Britain were so infrequent, letters would usually be sent on the next ship leaving for any port in the British Isles, from where an efficient postal service connected to any destination. In this case the sender would have gained a week by sending the letter to New York for the packet to Falmouth.

Irregular Packet During Blockade of New York Harbor



Bristol, 20 December 1775
 London, 23 December

single packet rate, unpaid

British packet *Swallow* : Falmouth 9 January 1776, New York 9 March 1776
Transatlantic transit to New York 60 days

On shipboard, New York postal authorities rate $\frac{1}{4}$ due for British inland and packet, then rerated $\frac{2}{6}$ due in New York currency, charging no colonial postage:
 $16^d \times 180\%$ inflation + 2^d transaction fee = $30^d = \frac{2}{6}$

Postage paid in New York. Carried privately to Philadelphia, arrival date unknown.

American attacks on British ships resulted in the withdrawal of scheduled packet service to New York, with the last advertised mail from Falmouth departing on 5 October 1775. **Published literature holds that packet ships continued to carry mail, but only to Halifax, with departures unannounced, and that letters for the American colonies were then trans-shipped to Boston or New York.** Research shows that this is not entirely correct.

On this voyage, the unannounced packet ship "Swallow" sailed directly to New York.

March 11: the New York Provisional Congress passed a resolution allowing John Foxcroft (Deputy PMG) to board the "Asia" along with Elias Nixon (Port Master and Post Master of the Province of New York) to receive the packet mails and bring them ashore for delivery. "Asia" was a 64-gun British warship, and part of the blockade of New York Harbor.

March 12: the resolution was changed to make it not obligatory to bring the mail ashore if he thought it not proper.

March 13: Foxcroft wrote a letter from the "Swallow" to Francis Dashwood (P.O. Secretary) to come aboard with P.O. clerks to process the mail.

March 19: The New York Committee of Safety permitted Elias Nixon to bring ashore lists of all the letters on board. These were advertised in eastern newspapers as available from Nixon and Henricus Boel (P.O. First Clerk).

Private agents traveled to New York and to claim mails for their towns, paying Nixon and Boel for postage due, as well as

Philadelphia to London Direct



Philadelphia, 21 March 1785

Unpaid ship letter

Ship *Hendrick* : Philadelphia 26 March, London 20 May

London rated 6 due: 1^d ship, 5^d inland

Received at Poole 21 May, transit 56 days

LONDON
SHIP-LRE

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.



London, 6 December 1786

single packet rate, prepaid 1 shilling

Packet *Lord Hyde* : Falmouth 17 December, New York 8 February
New York rated 2^{dwt} due for inland postage

Received at Philadelphia 9 February 1787, transit 66 days



Ostende, Belgium, 30 June 1787

Privately to London, posted 4 July

Double packet rate, prepaid 2 shillings

Packet *Dashwood* :
Falmouth 8 July
New York 31 August

New York rated 4^{dwt} for double inland

Received at Philadelphia 1 September

No Ship-Letter Fee on British Packet Letters



Rotterdam, 2 November 1792

Carried privately to London,
posted 6 December

Packet rate, prepaid **1s4d**
4^d inland to Falmouth
1s packet to New York

Packet *Queen Charlotte*
Falmouth 24 December
New York 7 February

Over-rated in New York at **12 cents**
no ship fee

Rec'd at Philadelphia 9 February 1793

Transit from London 66 days

London, 7 September 1796

Packet rate, prepaid **1 shilling**

Packet *Princess of Wales* :
Falmouth 24 September
Halifax 15-19 October
New York 26 October

New York rated **10 cents** due
60-100 miles; *no ship fee*

Received at Philadelphia
27 October

Transit 51 days



Statehood Period: On June 1, 1792 the rate between New York and Philadelphia changed from 6d to 10¢ (60-100 mi.).

The New York post office continued their practice of charging only inland postage on incoming British packet letters. Although the above letters were rated differently, neither was charged the 4 cent ship-letter fee.

Berne, Switzerland, 3 August 1793

Carried privately to London

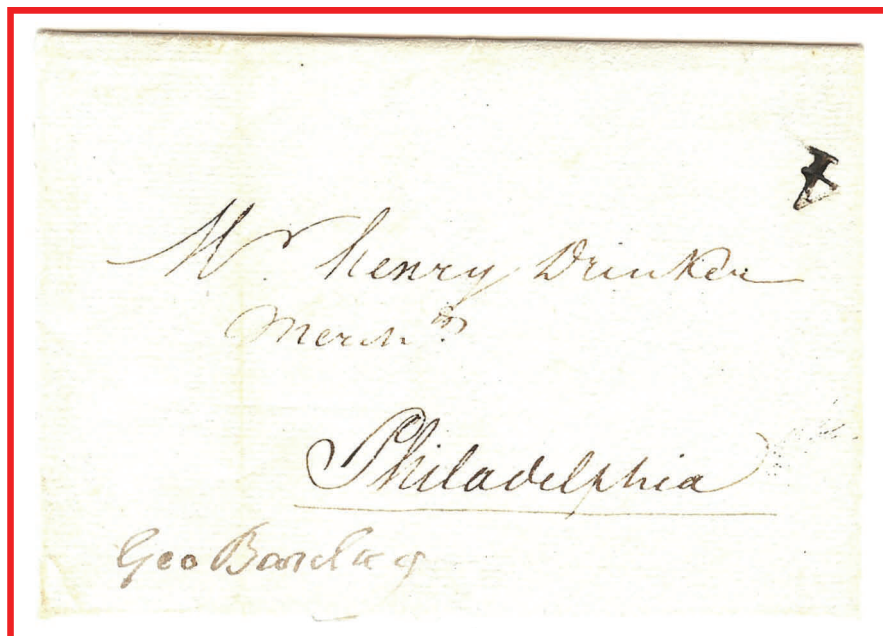
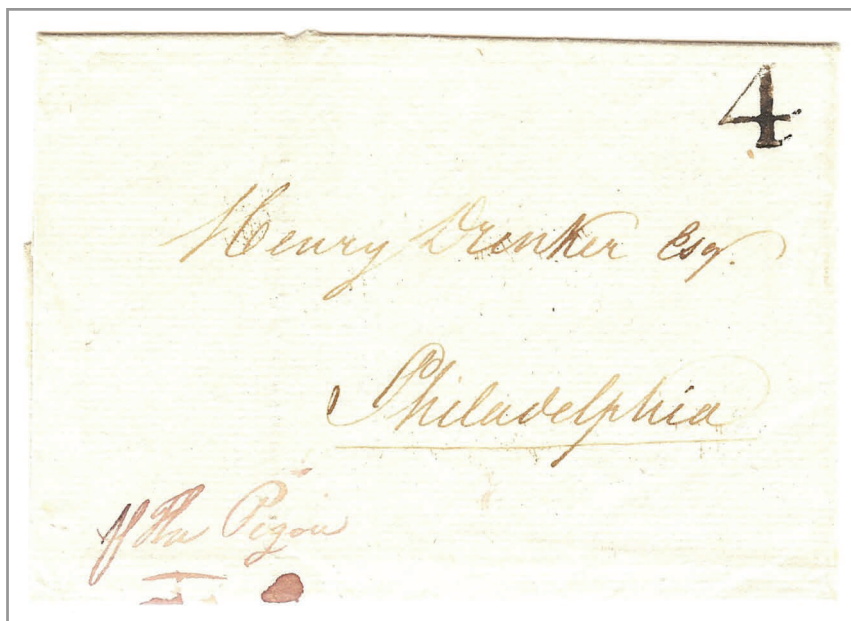
Ship *Pigou* : London 2 September
Philadelphia 31 October

Transit from London 60 days

Philadelphia rated 4 cents due
for delivery at the port

12mm 4 used 1792 to 1799

15 examples recorded



London, 1 March 1794

Ship *George Barclay* :
London 1 March
Philadelphia 1 May

Transit 62 days

Philadelphia rated 4 cents due
for delivery at the port

8mm 4 used 1793 to 1794

5 examples recorded

The Act of February 1792 required a four-cent ship-letter fee whether a letter was to be delivered at the port or sent inland. **Philadelphia was the only city to use a handstamp 4 rate marker.** Four sizes of postmarks were used for this rate; a census records that all four comprise only 26 examples.

Private Ships: Often a Cheaper and Faster Alternative

London, 19 September 1796

Unpaid ship letter

Brig *Diana* : London 1 October, Philadelphia 28 October*Transit 40 days ~two weeks faster than the average packet sailing*Philadelphia rated **26** cents due: 22 cents inland 350-450 miles, 4 cents ship

Postal historians frequently consider "transit time" as a voyage duration. But to the sender or recipient of a letter, it is the total time between posting and receipt, including the dead time while a letter awaits a ship departure. This letter waited almost two weeks before departure of the Brig *Diana*, yet was still faster than had it gone by packet.

Perhaps the sender wished to avoid the 1s8d cost of using the Falmouth packet, for which prepayment was mandatory. Had he done so, the addressee would have paid only 20 cents, the postage from New York to Portsmouth. Using a private ship thus lowered the total cost of this communication by 34 cents.

No Ship-Letter Fee Charged on British Packet Letters

London, 7 January 1801

Single packet rate, prepaid **1s8d**
8^d to Falmouth, 1s packetPacket *Duke of Cumberland*
Falmouth 24 January
New York 1 MarchNew York Rated **12½ ¢** for inland
no ship fee

Rec'd 2 March 1801

Transit 55 days



Lewes, 15 January 1804

LEWES/50 : 50 miles from GPODouble packet rate, prepaid **3/10**
11^d inland x 2
1s packet x 2Packet *Prince Adolphus*
Falmouth 12 February
New York 7 AprilNew York rated **25 ¢** for inland
no ship fee

Rec'd 9 April 1804

Transit 86 days

Effective March 2, 1799, the rate between New York and Philadelphia was changed to 12 ½ ¢ (90-150 mi.).

New York continued to omit the ship-letter fee on British packet letters. Regulations specified a 2¢ fee for letters brought by "private ship" for delivery beyond the port. The New York post office assumed this did not apply to foreign packets.



London, 15 December 1800

Ship Katy : London 31 March
New York 14 May

New York rated **37½** cents due
2 x 18¾¢ inland
2¢ ship

Received 16 May

Transit 45 days from London

Total elapsed time was actually
150 days; see footnote.

Hull, 23 July 1803

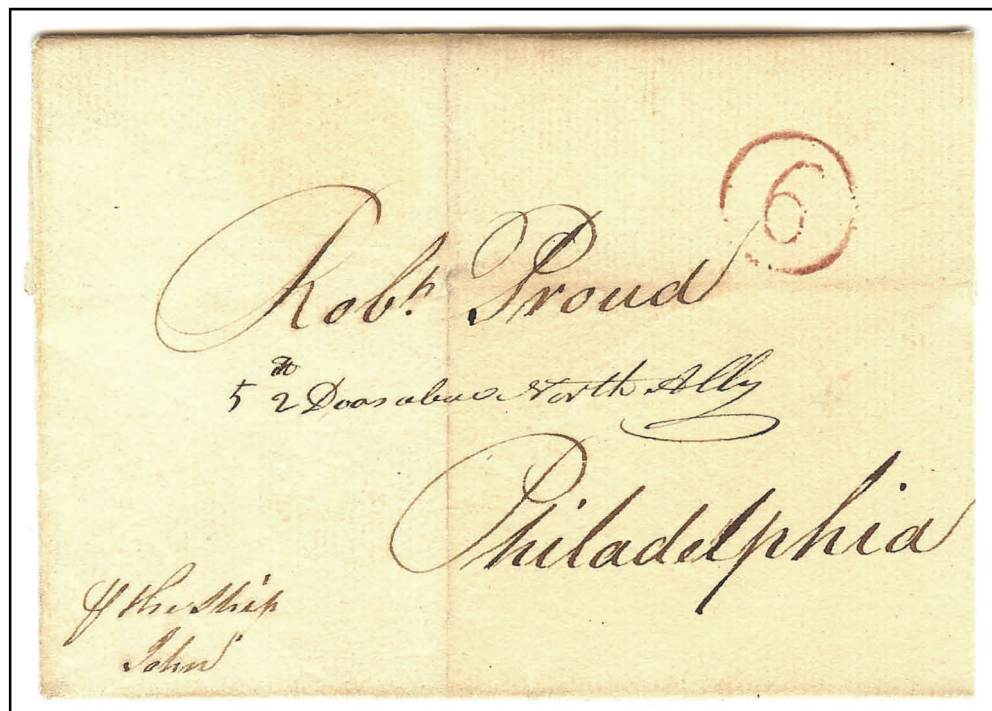
Ship John

Hull 23 July

Philadelphia 30 October

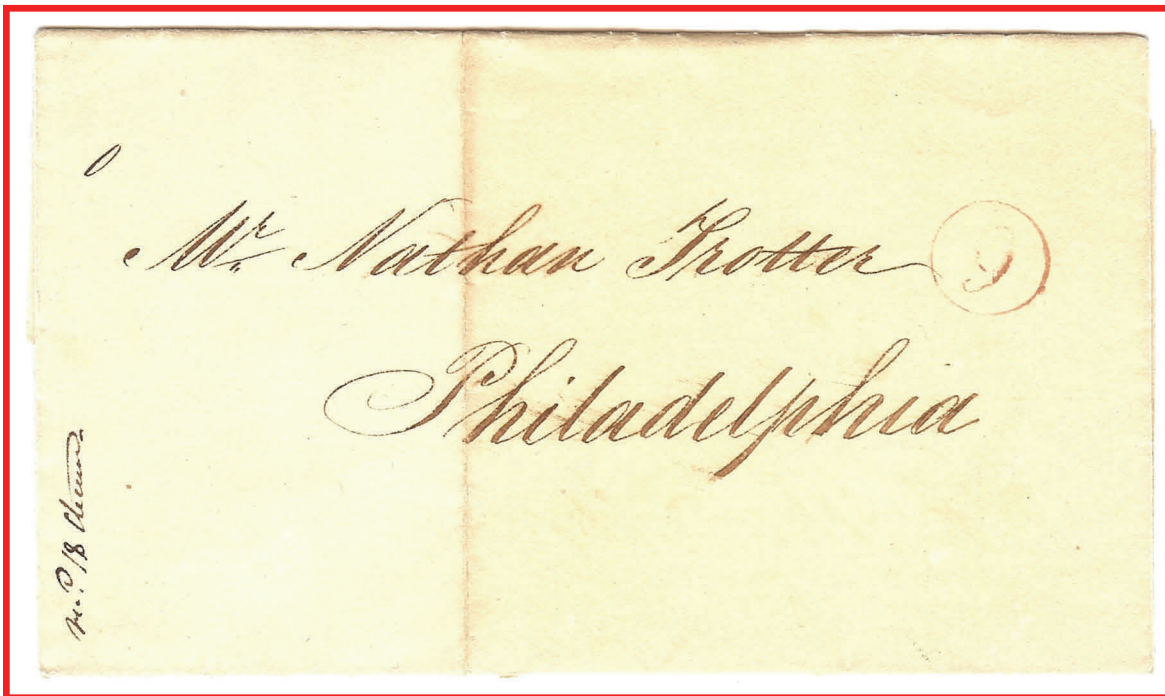
Via Cadiz and Havana
Transit 69 days

Philadelphia rated **6¢** due
Delivery at port



Senders usually risked delay when endorsing a letter to a specific ship, as planned departures were often not met due to mechanical problems, lack of freight, insufficient crew, or any number of other problems. In the case of the letter from London, the ship's captain evidently held the letter for more than three months before sailing.

War of 1812-1815



PFC

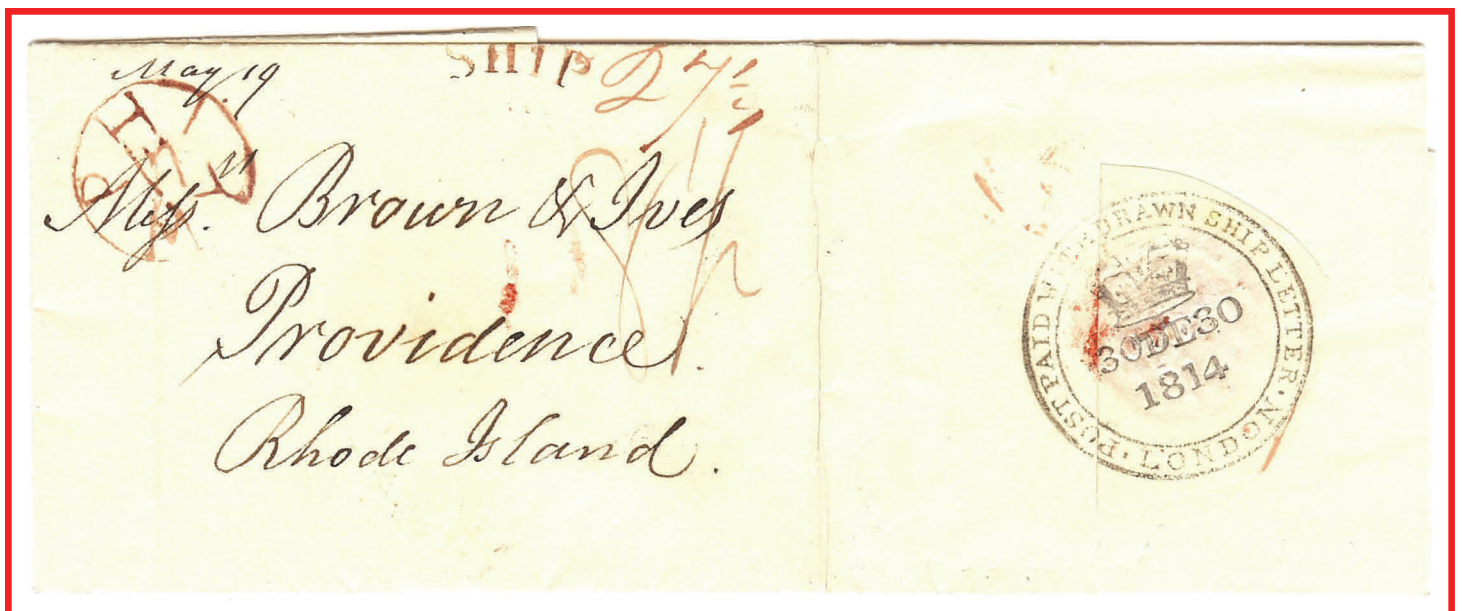
London, 3 October 1815

Unpaid ship letter

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

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

~8 examples of this postmark recorded



London, 30 December 1814

Withdrawn Ship Letter, prepaid 8 1/2 d

Ship *Pacific* : London departure unknown, Philadelphia 17 May 1815

Transit 45 days from Cork, where delayed many weeks by gales; total transit time 139 days

Philadelphia rated 27 1/2 cents due: 2 cents ship + 17 cents inland + 8 1/2 cents surcharge (50% of inland rate)

7 Withdrawn Ship Letters into Philadelphia recorded

Under Britain's 1814 Act Geo III c. 169, senders could use any private ship of their choosing if they prepaid one third of the packet-letter rate of 2s2d (26d x .33 = 8.58d, rounded down = 8.5d). Such letters were thus "withdrawn" from the mails.

Post-War Resumption of Falmouth Packets



Richmond, 2 June 1824

Single packet rate
Prepaid 2/2Packet *Duke of York*
Falmouth 16 June
New York 7 August**Not rated in N.Y. or Phila.**

Received 9 August

Transit 69 days

General Cadwalader was manager of the Penn family's estates.

Philadelphia, 3 April 1836

Paid 12½ cents inland to New York

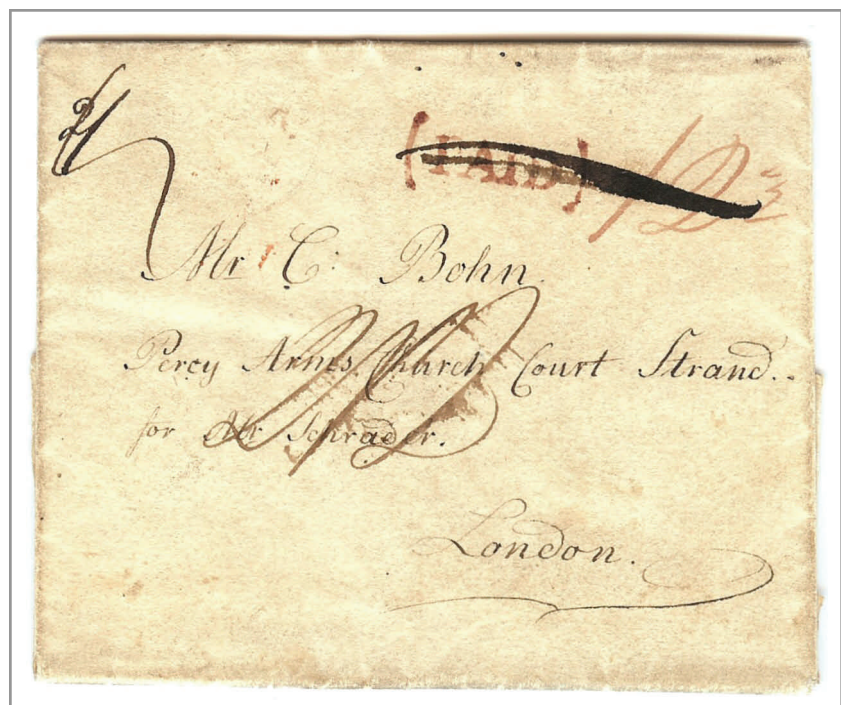
Packet

New York [sailing date unknown]
Falmouth 13 May

Received at London, 14 May

London initially rated 2/- due
corrected to 2/2

Transit 42 days



The British packet rate between London and America was increased to 2s2d by GPO Notice of July 1812, and remained in place until April 1839, when the rate was reduced to 1 shilling, inclusive of inland postage. Falmouth packet service to New York resumed shortly after the United States ratified the Treaty of Ghent in January 1815.

By 1828 the ascendancy of American shipping had greatly reduced the importance of Falmouth packets on the North Atlantic, an influence not regained until Cunard steamers began scheduled service in 1840.

Private Sailing Ships

Philadelphia, 10 July 1824

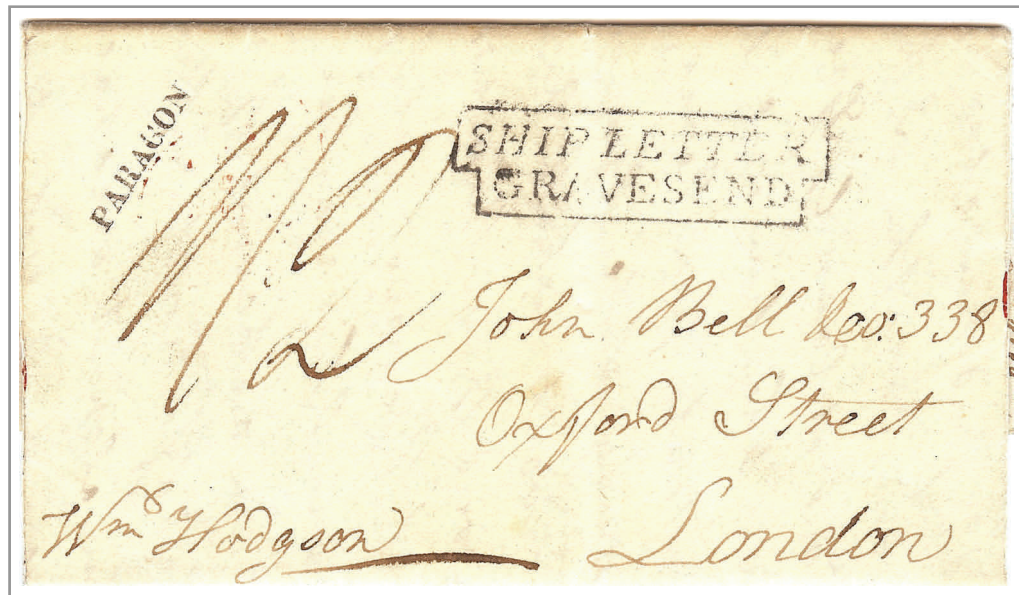
Unpaid ship letter, carried
privately to Baltimore

Brig *Paragon* :
Baltimore, 20 July
Gravesend 16 August

Rec'd at London 16 August

Transit 27 days

London rated $1\frac{1}{2}$ due
8^d ship + 6^d inland



PARAGON applied by ship's purser



JULIUS CAESAR applied by ship's purser
three examples known

Philadelphia, 22 June 1824

Unpaid ship letter

Ship *Julius Caesar* :
Philadelphia 22 June
Liverpool 18 July

Received at London 19 July

Transit 25 days

London rated $1\frac{1}{7}$ due
8^d ship + 11^d inland

Although inland rates were altered slightly in 1816, these changes had no effect on Philadelphia's British mails, because the rate to New York remained at 12 1/2 cents, and the ship-letter fee for delivery at the port remained at 6 cents.

Private Sailing Ships



Liverpool, 13 September 1835

Unpaid ship letter

Cope Line *Pocahontas* : Liverpool 8 October, Philadelphia 9 November Transit 35 days

Philadelphia rated 27 due: 2¢ ship, 25¢ inland, > 400 miles



Liverpool, 19 August 1834

Unpaid ship letter

Brig *Morgan* : Liverpool 20 August, Philadelphia 8 October Transit 59 days

Philadelphia rated 6¢ due for delivery at the port

Earliest recorded use of this postmark in red

As with the 1816 rate change, the 1825 rates left intact the 12½ cent rate to New York, and the 6 cent ship fee for letters delivered at the port of arrival.

Black Ball Line 1818-1840



Philadelphia, 9 June 1820

ship letter

Sender paid **12½** cents postage to New York
 Ship *Amity* : New York 10 June, Liverpool 3 July *Transit 24 days*
 Liverpool rate **8^d** due for incoming ship letter



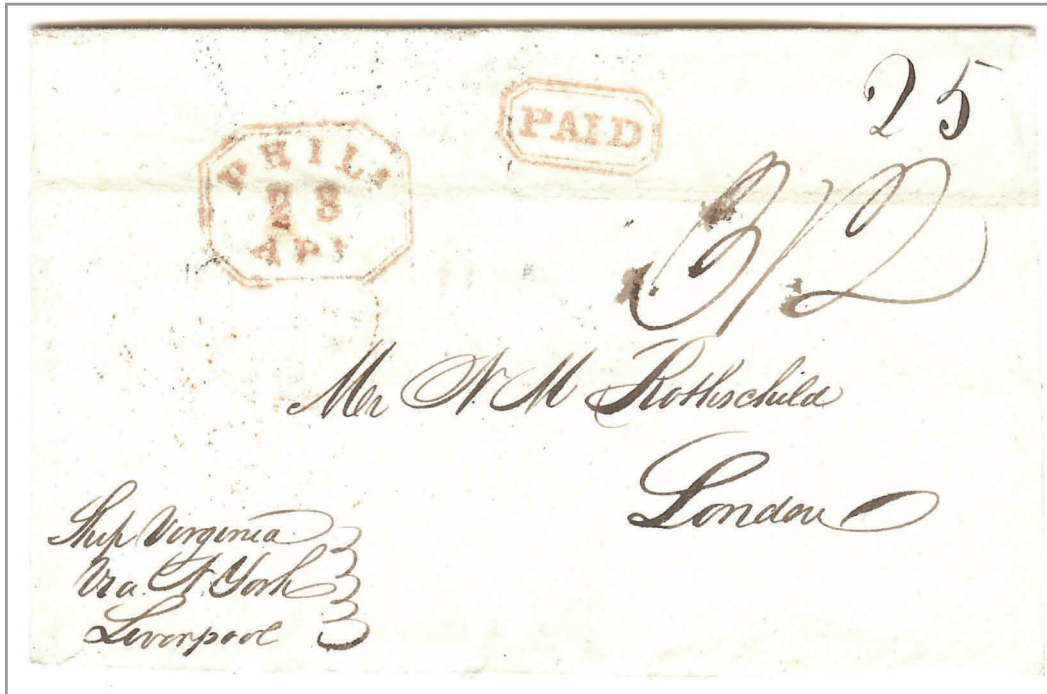
London, 12 May 1834

unpaid ship letter

Ship *Orpheus* : Liverpool 16 May, New York 17 June
 New York rated **14½** cents due: 2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland
 ORPHEUS added by ship's purser
Two examples recorded

The Black Ball and other New York lines were a game-changer for the Philadelphia shipping industry—even the owners of the Cope Line sent most of their mail via New York. By 1830, 36 American packets sailed from New York; 48 by 1840.

Red Star Line 1822-1840



Philadelphia, 28 April 1835

ship letter, double rate

Sender paid 25 cents postage to New York

Ship *Virginian* : New York 29 April, Liverpool 16 May Transit 19 daysLiverpool rated 3/2 due: (8^d ship + 11^d inland) x 2

Black X Line 1824-1840



London, 19 April 1838

prepaid ship letter

Sender paid 1/- ship-letter fee for posting outside the port

Ship *Philadelphia* : Portsmouth, 20 April, New York 14 May Transit 25 days

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

Blue Swallowtail Line 1822-1840



Philadelphia, 7 October 1835

ship letter

Sender paid 12½ cents postage to New York
 Ship *George Washington* : New York 7 October, Liverpool 2 November *Transit 27 days*
 Liverpool rated 1/6 due: 8^d ship +10^d inland

Dramatic Line 1836-1840



Glasgow, 12 March 1840

prepaid ship letter

Sender paid 8^d ship-letter fee for posting at the port
 Ship *Sheridan* : Liverpool 16 March, New York 13 April *Transit 29 days*
 New York rated 14½ cents due for postage to Philadelphia

Freight Money Letter - Red Star Line



Philadelphia, 12 February 1839

prepaid ship letter, double rate

Sender paid **50** cents: ($12\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$ to New York + $12\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$ freight money) x 2Ship *United States* : New York 14 February, Liverpool 15 March *Transit 32 days*

Liverpool rated as a triple ship letter.

3 x 8d	= 2/-	ship fee
3 x 11d	= $\frac{2}{9}$	inland to London
	4/9	due

After the advent of transatlantic steamships, American sailing packets were disadvantaged. The freight-money concept was introduced to retain revenue on outgoing mails. The charge, which was paid to the shipping company, was $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents per sheet cents by sail, 25 cents per sheet by steam. In most cities that offered this service, the freight-money fee was accounted separately. Only in Philadelphia did the post office add the two charges and show them as a single number.

Maiden Voyage of the *Algonquin*

Philadelphia, 13 July 1824

unpaid ship letter

Cope Line *Algonquin* : Philadelphia 20 July, Liverpool 16 August *Transit 28 days*Received at London 16 August & forwarded to Worthing, Sussex the same day
London rated 8^d ship letter + 11^d to London = 1/7, then 8^d to Worthing***Fewer than four examples known of Algonquin name-of-ship hand stamp***

In 1806 Thomas P. Cope, a Philadelphia merchant, began an import-export business using his own ships. In 1822 he opened the Cope Line, which operated a monthly schedule between Philadelphia and Liverpool until 1872. Although letters are sometimes endorsed Philadelphia Packet or Liverpool Packet, Cope never held a mail contract. Nevertheless the Cope Line played an important role in the ascendancy of American shipping on the North Atlantic during the early 189th Century. Cope failed to take advantage of steamship technology, so in the end the company became non-competitive.

Paid to the Port of Philadelphia



Doylestown, 17 July 1834

double rate

Sender paid **12** cents to Philadelphia, double rate for < 30 milesCope Line *Monongahela* : Philadelphia 20 July, Liverpool 22 August Transit 34 daysLiverpool rated **2/10** due: (8^d ship + 9^d inland) x 2**Ship letters posted outside Philadelphia are far rarer than letters sent from within the city**

Before extensive development of the railroads, people living in most of Pennsylvania—even as far south as Bucks County—found it faster to send transatlantic mail via New York. The reason was that most roads followed the SW-NE grain of the Valley & Ridge province; traveling southeast to Philadelphia from central Pennsylvania was a major inconvenience.

Delaware Estuary Blocked by Ice, Winter of 1834-35



Liverpool, 8 December 1834

Unpaid ship letter

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

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

Transit 83 days

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

London, 12 December 1834

Unpaid ship letter

Private ship *Aid de Camp*
Liverpool 17 Dec
Cape Is., N.J. 15 Jan

Mails sent overland
Arr. Phila 17 Jan 35

Transit 37 days

Cape Is. rated **14½** due
2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland



From Liverpool the route to Philadelphia was 200 miles longer than to New York, and required navigating a shoaling estuary. Even in fair weather with favorable tides and winds, the trip to Philadelphia could easily consume an additional one to two weeks. The covers shown above represent the extreme case of Philadelphia's disadvantage. From the 1830s onward, rapid growth in the eastern seaboard's rail system further decreased the need for sailing direct to Philadelphia.

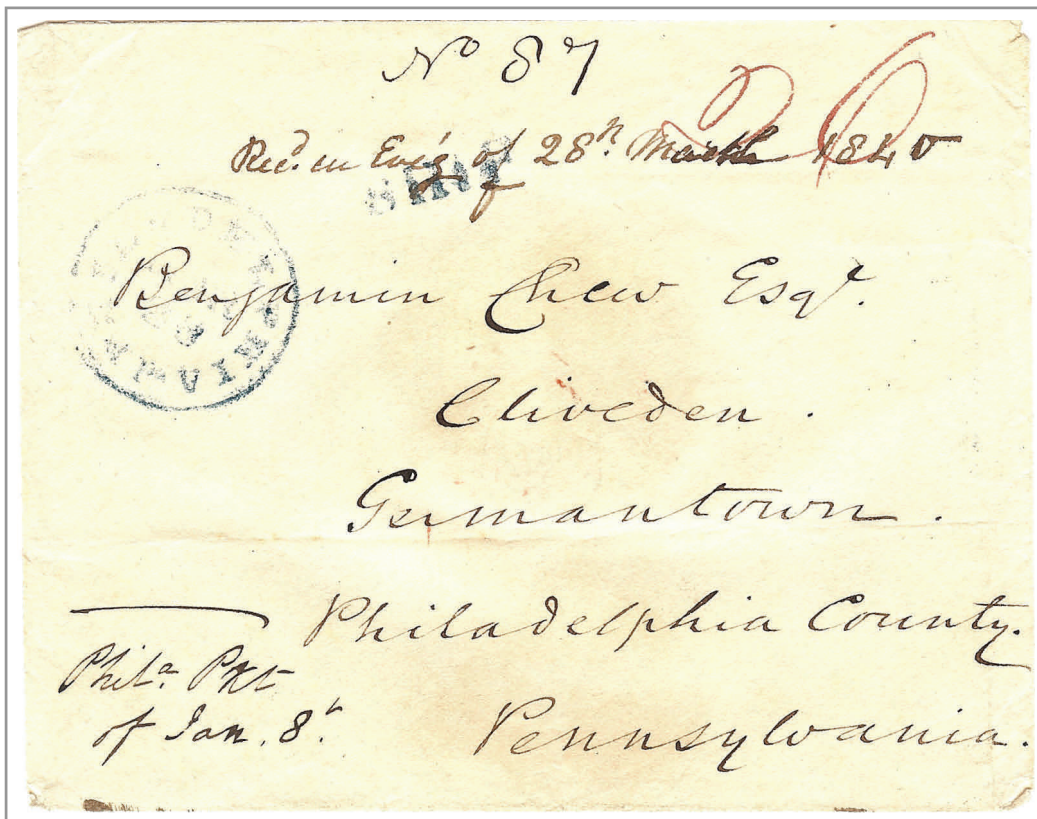
Lougham, 6 February 1837

Unpaid ship letter

Cope Line *Pocahontas*
Liverpool 17 February
Philadelphia 27 March

Transit 39 days

Philadelphia rated 6 cents due
for delivery at the port



Liverpool, 8 January 1840

Unpaid ship letter

Cope Line *Algonquin*:
Liverpool 8 January
Philadelphia 28 March

Transit 80 days

Philadelphia rated 20 cents due
Triple rate, 1-1½ oz.
2¢ ship, 3 x 6¢ inland

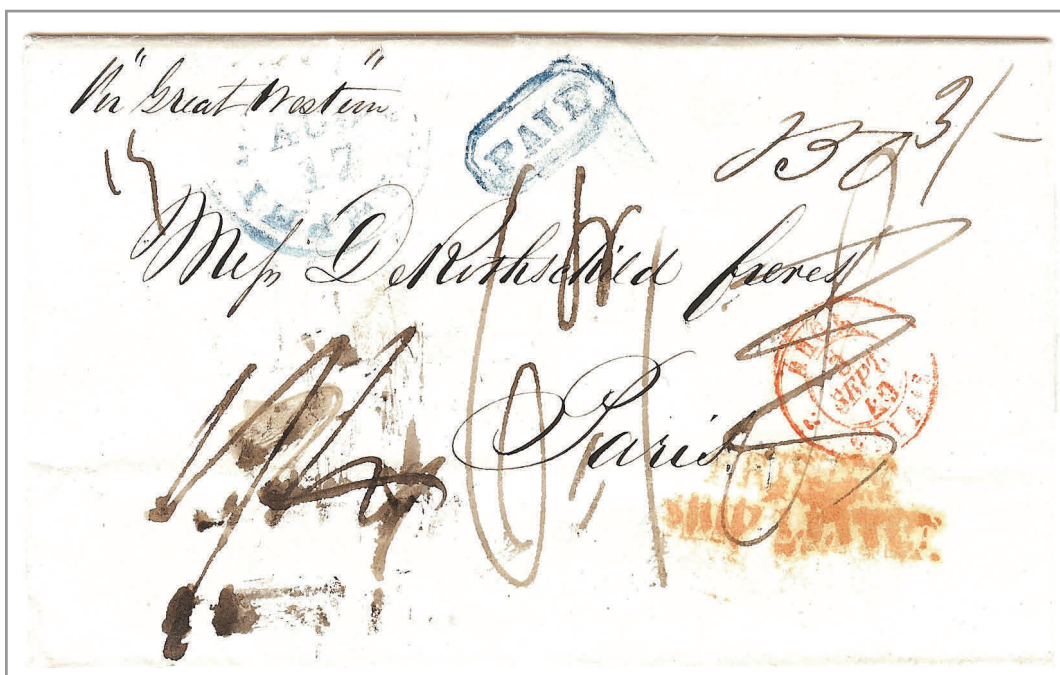
Mr. Consulate
Liverpool Jan. 31/40

reverse

Germantown was not part of Philadelphia until its annexation in 1854, so incoming ship letters to Germantown were subject to inland postage at 6¢ per ½ ounce (<30 miles).

The Great Western Steamship Company

Freight-Money Letter to Paris



Philadelphia, 17 August 1840

Freight money letter, quadruple rate

Letter regarding bills of exchange from Bank of the United States to the Rothschilds

Sender paid **\$1.50** : 4 x 12½¢ inland, plus 4 x 25¢ freight money

Great Western: New York 18 August, Bristol 1 September

London rated **3/-** : 1s4^d ship-letter rate, 1s8^d to FranceParis rated **6fr=1** : 36 dec. (3/- converted) plus 25 dec. inland <20g*Philadelphia to Paris transit 18 days*

The Great Western Steamship Company provided the first scheduled transatlantic steam service. None of the sailings were under mail contracts so they were eligible to collect freight money of 25 cents for each single sheet carried. 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.

The Great Western Steamship Company

Halifax, 28 March 1845

Sender paid 8^d ship-letter feeSteamship *Great Western*
Liverpool 29 March
New York 16 AprilNew York rated 14½ cents due
1825 rates, 80-150 mi.
2¢ ship, 12½¢ inland

Received 17 April

Transit 21 days

Private steamship *Unicorn*

Liverpool, 17 March 1846

Sender paid 8^d ship-letter feeSteamship *Unicorn*
Liverpool 19 March
Boston 17 AprilNew York rated 12 cents due
1845 rates, >300 mi.
2¢ ship, 10¢ inland

Received 18 April

Transit 33 days



Last transatlantic voyage - seven covers recorded

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. Other non-contract steamships continued to carry both east- and west-bound ship letters throughout the U.S.-British Treaty period and beyond.

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



Canton, 17 February 1840

Forwarded to London, via
Manila, by Russell & Co.
Arr. London, 17 Sep 1840

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard Caledonia
Liverpool 19 Sep
Boston 3 Oct

Boston rated 20¾ due
1825 rates, 150-400 mi.
2¢ ship, 18¾¢ inland

Rec'd 5 October 1840

Transit from GB 19 days,
from China 226 days

Mis-rated in Philadelphia

Philadelphia 29 September 1840

Sender paid 56¼¢, triple rate
1825 rates, 150-400 mi.

Cunard Britannia
Boston 1 October
Liverpool 15 October

Liverpool rated 1/- due
single packet rate

Rec'd 16 October

Transit 16 days



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. Even if transatlantic steamers had sailed direct to Philadelphia, mails would have taken longer than the service already being provided via Boston.

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

Philadelphia, 12 July 1841

Forwarded to Boston by
Harden & Cos.

Cunard *Britannia*
Boston 17 July
Liverpool 29 July

Liverpool rated 1/- due
single packet rate

Transit 18 days



Newport, Wales ,16 September 1841

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Acadia*
Liverpool 19 September
Boston 6 October

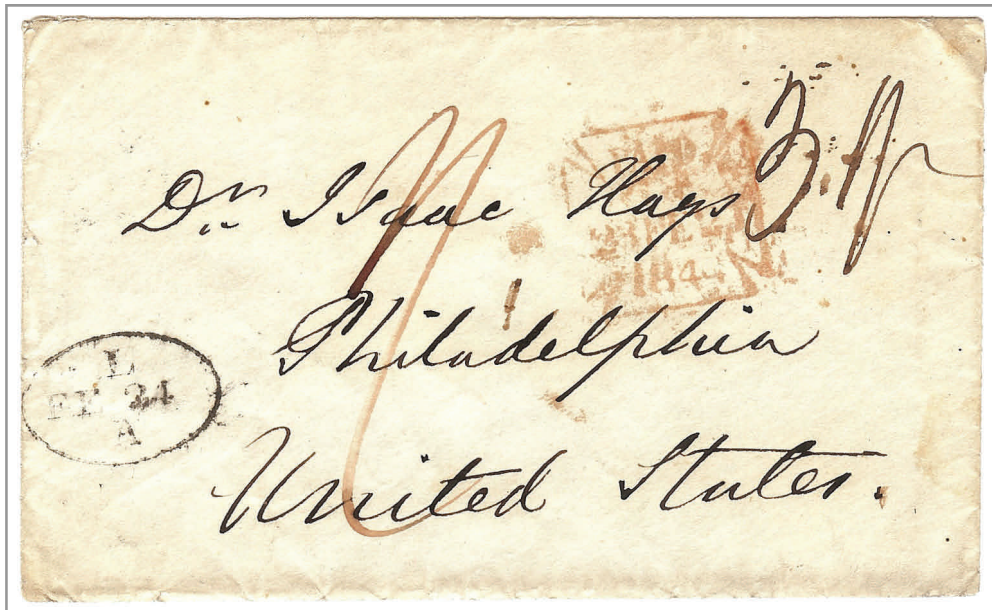
Boston rated 20¾ due
2¢ ship
18¾¢ inland (150-400 mi)

Received 8 October 1841

Transit 23 days

The bottom letter was sent to Alfred Cope, co-owner of the Cope Line, which provided monthly service between Philadelphia and Liverpool. Cope ships did carry mails, but primarily conveyed passengers and freight. Much of the Cope correspondence preserved in archives was sent via New York, then via Boston once steam service became available.

Packet letters for Philadelphia Bundled Separately



Rated in Boston

London, 23 February 1844

Packet letter, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Caledonia*
Liverpool 5 March
Boston 22 March

Boston rated 39½ due
2¢ ship
37½¢ inland

Rec'd 24 March

Transit 31 days

Rated in Philadelphia

Birmingham
4 November 1844

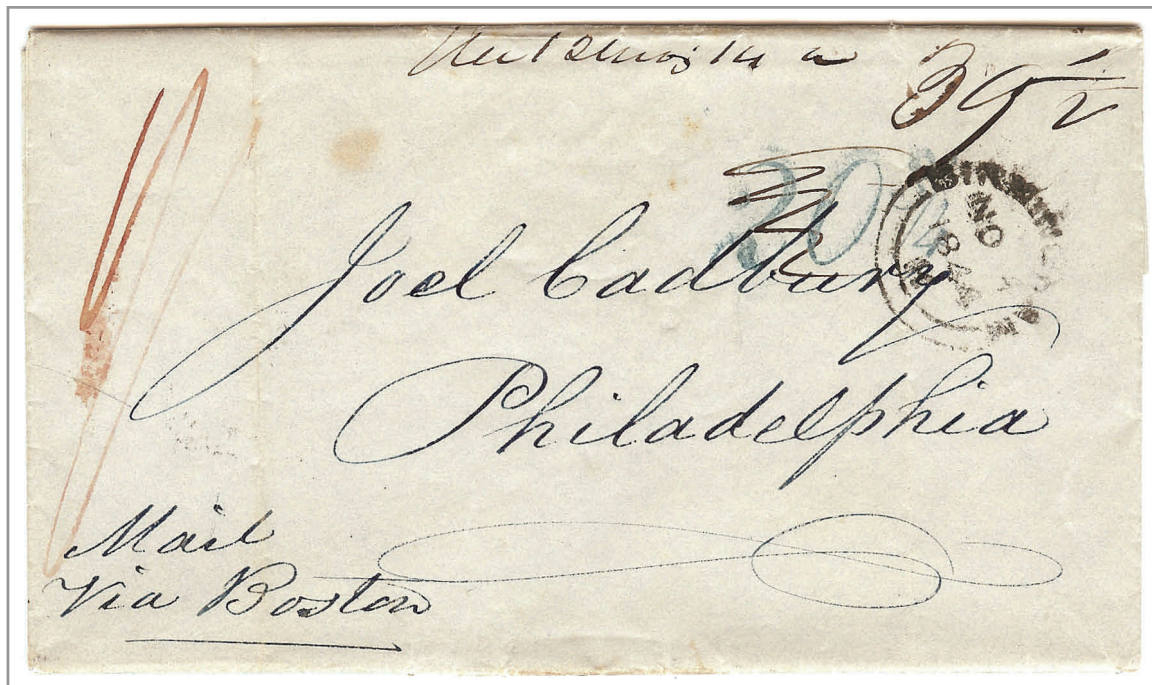
Packet letter, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Britannia*
Liverpool 5 November
Boston 22 November

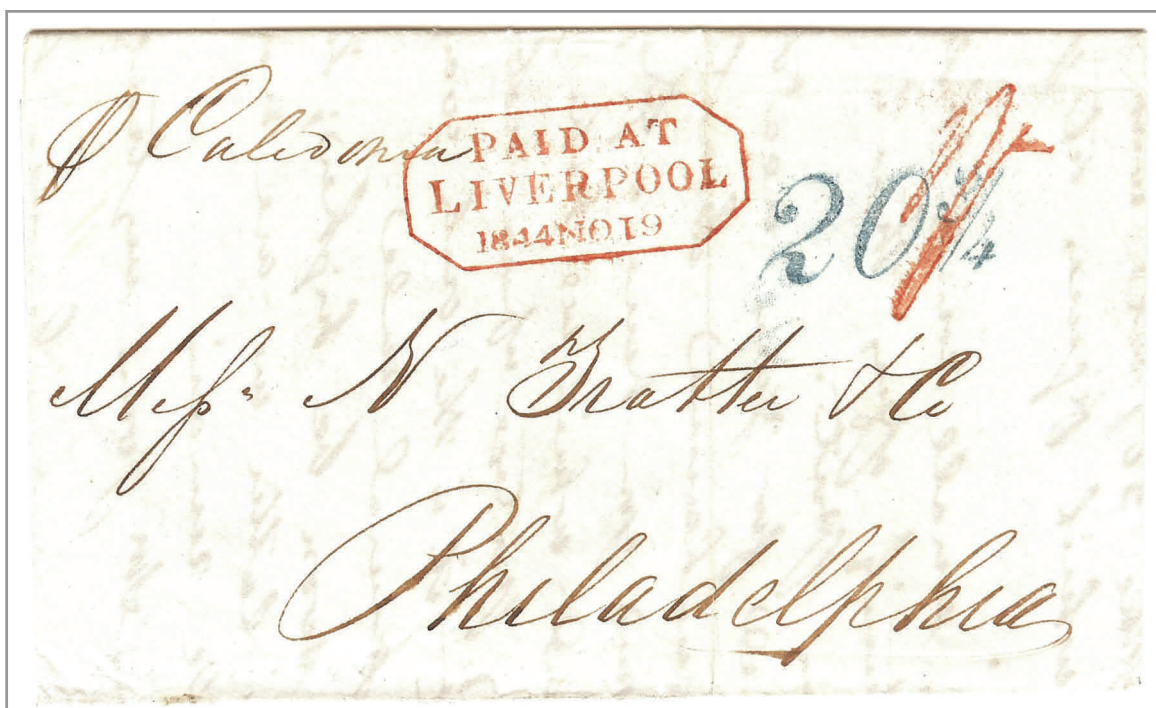
Philadelphia rated 39½
37½ ¢ inland
2¢ ship

Received 24 November

Transit 21 days



Businessmen and politicians in Philadelphia and other eastern cities had complained about delays in mail arriving via Boston, due to sorting and rating required there. After a November 1843 request to the Liverpool Postmaster by the U.S. Postmaster General, **from October 1844 mails to Philadelphia and nine other cities were made up in separate parcels in Liverpool.** These bundles were included in the bag for New York, where they were sent onward un-postmarked.



Liverpool, 19 November 1844

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Caledonia* : Liverpool 19 Nov, Boston 7 Dec

Received 8 December 1844

Philadelphia rated $20\frac{3}{4}$ due : 2¢ ship, $18\frac{3}{4}$ ¢ inland (150-400 mi)

Transit 19 days

St. Petersburg, Russia
12 May 1845

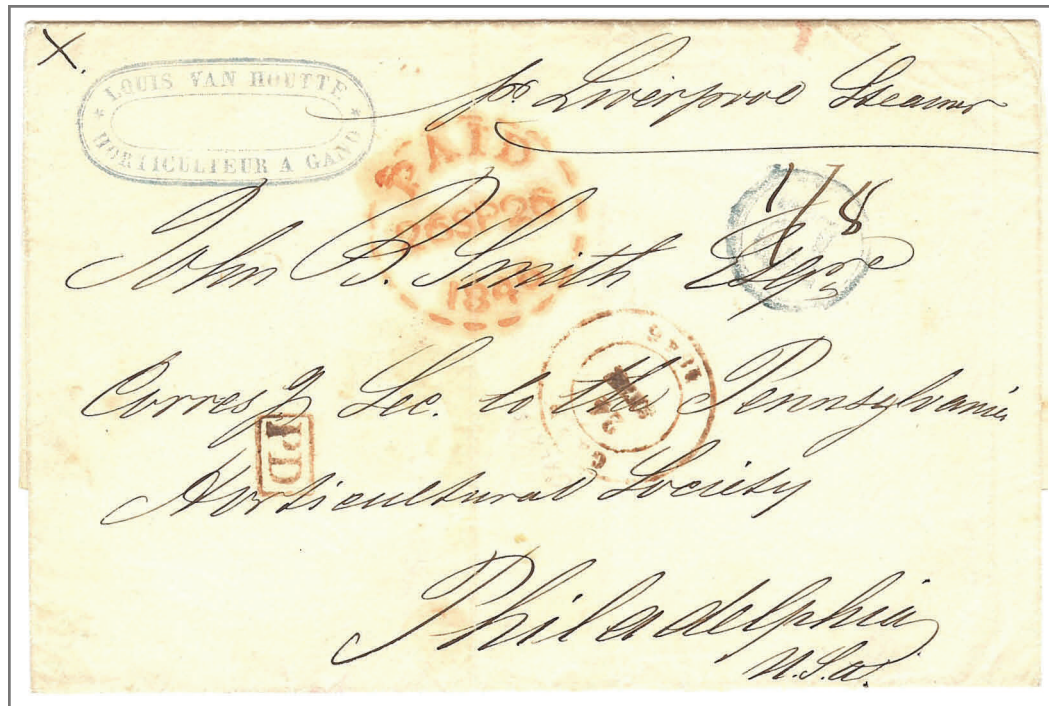
Prepaid **63** Kopeks
at Prussian P.O. in St. Petersburg
44 Kopeks credit to Hamburg
(12½ Sgr), for Prussian transit
and city post.

Arr. London 2 June

Cunard *Caledonia*
Liverpool 4 Jun
Boston 19 Jun

Philadelphia rated **39** due
double-rate ship-letter, 150-400 mi.
under-rated ½¢

Transit from London 20 days



Ghent, Belgium
24 September 1846

Prepaid in Ghent **1/8**
8^d packet to London
1s packet to Boston

London 26 September

Cunard *Caledonia*
Liverpool 4 Oct
Boston 20 Oct

Philadelphia rated **12** due
2¢ ship
10¢ inland (>300 mi)

Transit from GB 25 days

Prior to the 1848 treaty, letters could not be paid to destinations either within or beyond Great Britain, and incoming British mails were paid only to the U.S. port. Americans could nevertheless avail themselves of the British mail system to correspond with countries with which Great Britain had postal conventions. Incoming mails from such countries were accounted for entirely outside the United States, and arrived at American ports in British mail bags as unpaid ship letters.



Leeds, 3 January 1847

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Hibernia*
Liverpool 5 Jan
Boston 25 Jan

Philadelphia rated 12 due
2¢ ship
10¢ inland, >30 mi.

Transit 21 days

Liverpool
11 March 1848

Packet rate,
prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Caledonia*
Liverpool 12 Mar
Boston 27 Mar

Phila. rated 12 due
2¢ ship
10¢ inland, >300 mi.

Transit 17 days



The Special Arrangement was convenient, and on average hastened Philadelphia's incoming mails by a day. However, the process violated Article 122 of the 1847 U.S. postal regulations, which required that all incoming ship letters be postmarked at the port of entry.

Costlier via Boston



PFC

Philadelphia, 28 October 1847
 Paid **10** cents to Boston
 London rated **1/-** due

Single packet rate, unpaid
 Cunard *Cambria* : Boston 1 Nov, Liverpool 15 Nov
 Transit 18 days

Cheaper via New York



Philadelphia, 23 May 1848
 Paid **5** cents to N.Y.
 Liverpool rated **1/-** due

Single packet rate, unpaid
 Cunard *Cambria* : New York 24 May, Liverpool 6 Jun
 Transit 15 days

Cunard's addition of a New York terminus in January 1848 meant Philadelphia senders could pay five cents less for their outgoing letters by specifying a ship departing from New York. Inland transit times were shorter via New York, but this gain was sometimes offset by the longer transatlantic journey compared to Boston departures.

Insufficiently Paid for American Packet



Philadelphia, 19 June 1848

unpaid ship letter

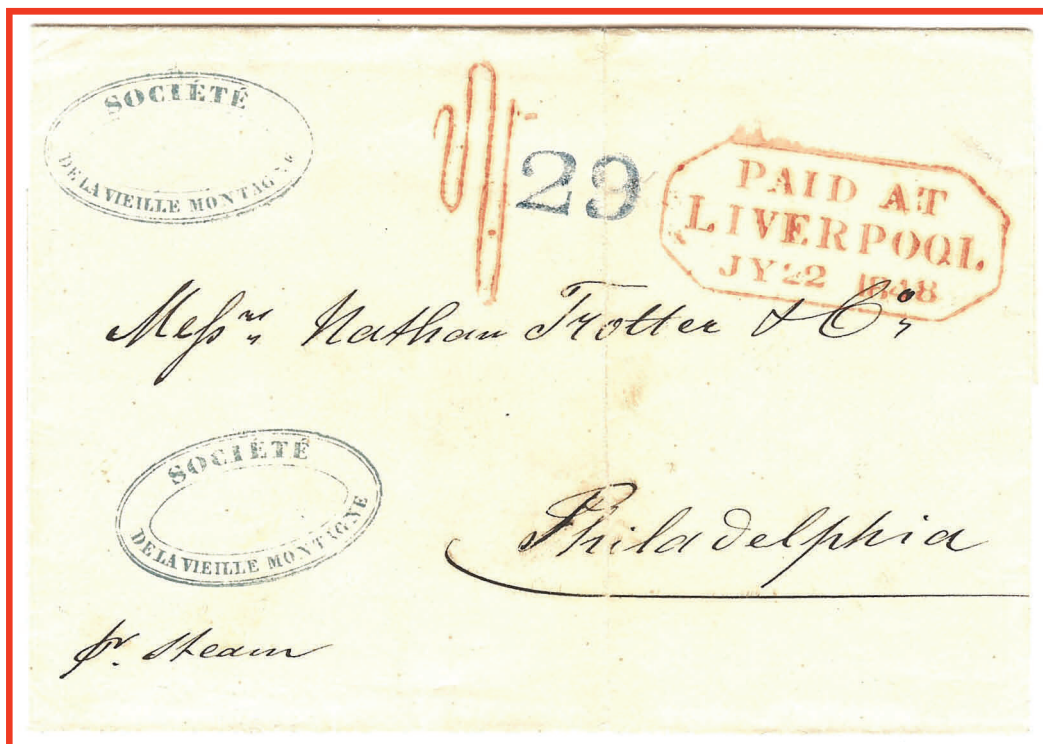
Sender endorsed for American packet *Hermann* via Southampton, but paid only 5 cents inland, so the New York post office sent via Cunard steamer as an unpaid ship letter.

Cunard *Acadia* : New York 21 June, Liverpool 5 July
 Postmarked in London 6 July (back stamp), and charged 1/- for British packet

Transit 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 more than two years later 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.***

Rated in Philadelphia



Liege, Belgium, 19 July 1848

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Carried privately from Belgium, posted in Liverpool on 22 July

Cunard *America* : Liverpool 22 July, New York 4 August

Received at Philadelphia on 5 August, and rated **29** due: 24¢ retaliatory fee, 5¢ inland

Transit 15 days

Seven retaliatory covers rated in Philadelphia are recorded

After a year of inaction on British discriminatory rates, in July 1848 the United States responded with a 24¢ per-letter reprisal tax on incoming mails conveyed by British packets. All seven recorded retaliatory covers postmarked in Philadelphia entered via New York.

Rated in Boston



Liverpool, 30 June 1848

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Niagara* :
Liverpool 1 Jul
Boston 12 Jul

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

Received 14 Jul

Transit 15 days



Manchester, 1 December 1848

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Niagara* : Liverpool 2 December, Boston 16 December
Boston rated **34** due : 24¢ retaliatory, 10¢ inland, >300 mi.

Received 17 December - Transit 17 days

Most retaliatory-rate letters to Philadelphia were postmarked at the port of arrival. Boston's rating of these letters for Philadelphia demonstrates that Liverpool had already ceased bundling Philadelphia's mails and including them in the New York bag.

Rated in New York

Liverpool, 30 September 1848

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Britannia* :
Liverpool 30 September
New York 17 October

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

Rec'd 18 Oct

Transit 19 days



Liverpool, 29 August 1848

Double packet rate, prepaid 2/3

Sender paid 2/- packet plus 3^d late fee at Liverpool post office

Cunard *Europa* : Liverpool 2 September, New York 15 September
New York rated **58** cents due: (24¢ retaliatory + 5¢ inland) x 2

Received 15 September, transit 18 days

Single Rate



Birmingham
29 December 1848

Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *America*
Liverpool 30 December
Boston 12 January

Boston rated 12 due
2¢ ship
10¢ inland, >300 mi.

Received 13 January

Transit 16 days

Falmouth, 7 February 1848

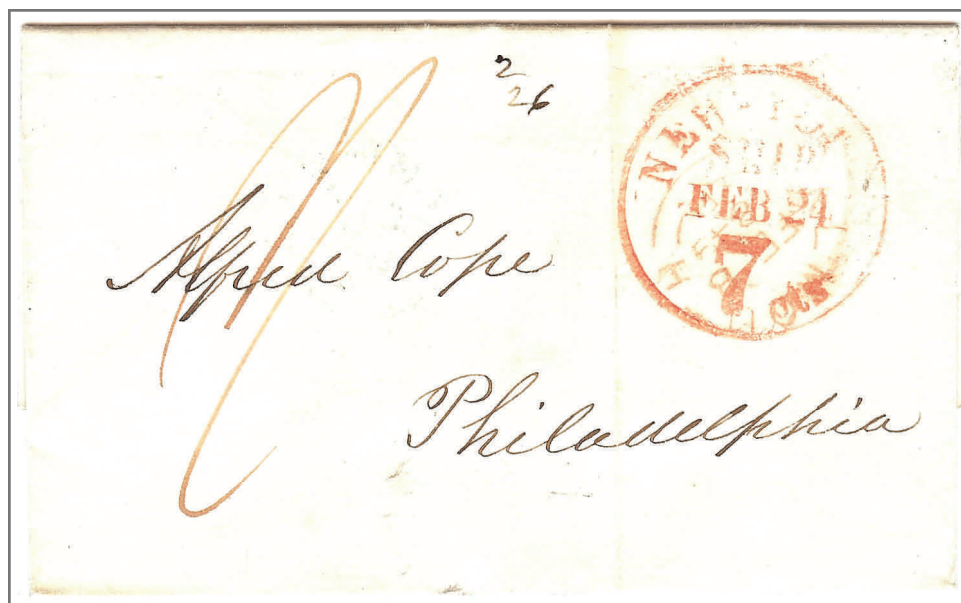
Packet rate, prepaid 1/-

Cunard *Europa*
Liverpool 10 February
New York 24 February

New York rated 7 cents due
2¢ ship
5¢ inland, <300 mi.

Received 26 February

Transit 18 days



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.

Only four westbound Cunard sailings arrived at American ports during this period.

Double Rate



Birmingham, 12 January 1849

Double packet rate, prepaid 2/-

Cunard *Canada* : Liverpool 13 January, New York 29 January

New York rated **12** cents due: 2¢ ship , 10¢ inland (2 x 5¢ <300mi)

Received 30 January - *transit 19 days*

London, 20 April 1849

24¢ treaty rate, unpaid

19/CENTS debit to U.S.

16¢ British packet

3¢ British inland

Cunard America
 Liverpool 21 April
 New York 5 May

New York rated **24** due

Received 6 May

Transit 17 days



London, 9 Nov 1849

24¢ treaty rate, unpaid

19/CENTS debit to U.S.

16¢ British packet

3¢ British inland

Cunard Caledonia
 Liverpool 21 Nov
 Boston 24 Nov

Received 25 November

Transit 17 days

The treaty became effective on 15 February 1849, before implementation details were agreed. Instructions issued to U.S. postmasters by the PMG on 19 June 1849 specified that the exchange offices in Boston and New York were:

to mark incoming unpaid letters with the amount due in black;

to mark incoming prepaid letters with PAID in red.

Date stamping incoming mail was not required before 19 June, but Boston began doing so early on, New York later in 1849.

Thetford, 29 June 1849

24¢ treaty rate
Prepaid 1/-

5/CENTS credit to U.S.
U.S. inland

Cunard *Niagara*
Liverpool 30 June
New York 14 July

New York **PAID/SHIP, 24**

Received 14 July

Transit 16 days



**Not a ship letter, so PAID/SHIP struck in error
24 unnecessary—restating prepayment not required for incoming mail
New York omitted post office date stamp**



Liverpool
21 August 1849

24¢ treaty rate
Prepaid 1/-

5/CENTS credit to U.S.
U.S. inland

Cunard *Niagara*
Liverpool 25 August
New York 7 September

Phila. arrival unknown

New York omitted PAID and post office date stamp

Despite clear procedures from the PMG, postmarking at the New York Exchange Office was often irregular for the first five years of the treaty. Letters to Philadelphia were sometimes postmarked inconsistently or not at all.



Birmingham, 31 January 1851

24¢ treaty rate, unpaid

19/CENTS debit to U.S., British inland and packet

Africa : Liverpool 1 February, New York 15 February

New York omitted date stamp and amount due; Philadelphia rated 24 cents due

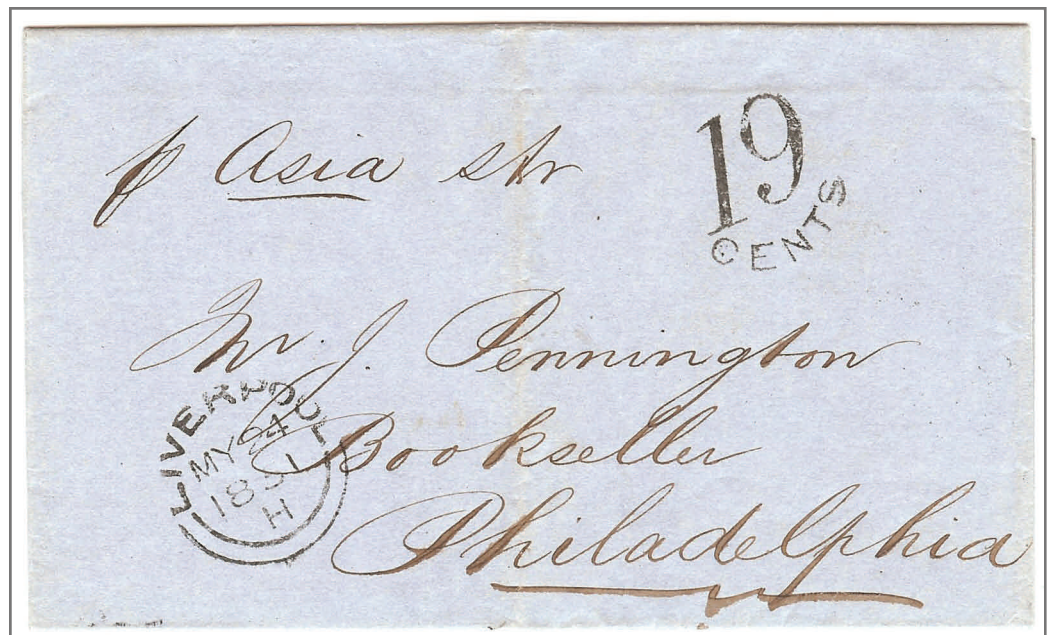
Liverpool, 25 May 1851

24¢ treaty rate, unpaid

19/CENTS debit to U.S.
British inland and packet

Cunard Asia
Liverpool 25 May
New York 6 June

Phila. arrival date unknown



New York omitted post office date stamp and amount due

In early 1851 the New York Exchange Office increased the frequency with which they sent incoming letters onward to Philadelphia without postmarking them. This could be justified for prepaid letters, but for unpaid letters it was evidently assumed that the Philadelphia Post Office—which had no authority under the treaty—would correctly rate each letter and collect the amount due. It is unknown whether this represented an agreement with the Philadelphia Postmaster.

Liverpool, 12 March 1852

24¢ treaty rate, unpaid

19/CENTS debit to U.S.
British inland and packet

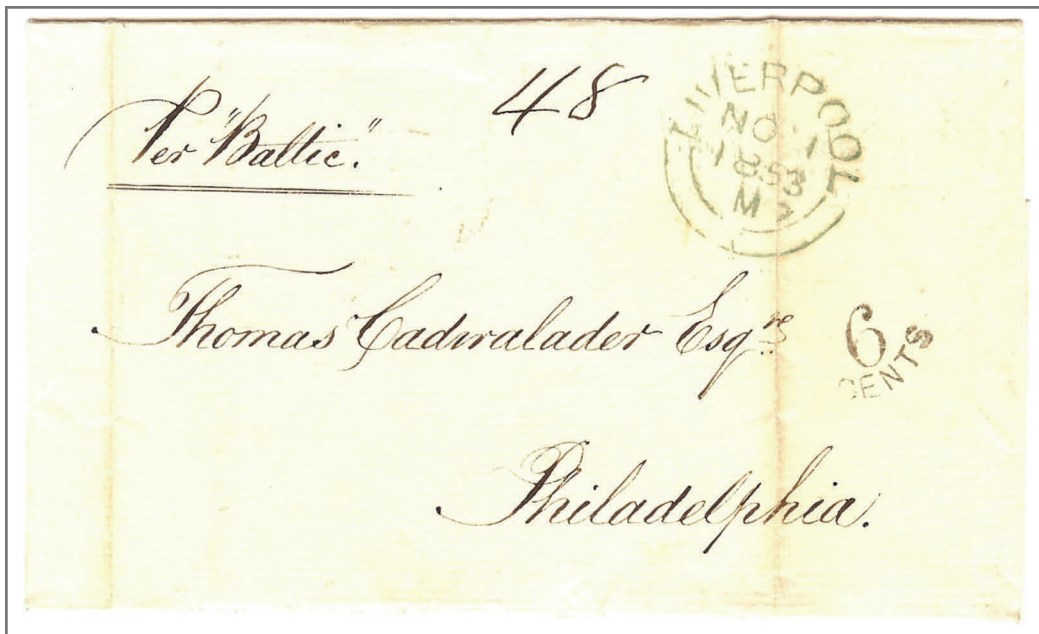
Cunard *Europa*
Liverpool 13 March
New York 25 March

Received 25 March

Philadelphia rated **24** due



New York omitted post office date stamp and amount due



New York omitted post office date stamp and amount due

Liverpool
1 November 1853

Double 24¢ treaty rate
Am. Packet, unpaid

6/CENTS debit to U.S.
British inland

Collins *Baltic*
Liverpool 2 November
New York 14 November

Received 24 November

Philadelphia rated **48** due

Until August 1851, Philadelphia had no die-cast hand-stamp **24**, and instead relied on the versions of the hand-carved device shown on the previous page. No hand-stamp **48** was available until after Exchange Office status was achieved in 1854, so amounts paid or due from double or higher multiple rates were noted in manuscript.



Philadelphia, 1 April 1850

24¢ treaty rate, unpaid

Boston 5¢ debit to U.K.
U.S. inland

Cunard Niagara
Boston 3 April
Liverpool 16 April

Received 16 April

London rated 1/- due

Transit 16 days

**Philadelphia omitted date stamp, and should not have applied rate marking
Boston omitted date stamp**



Philadelphia, 1 May 1851

Double 24¢ treaty rate
unpaid

Philadelphia assumed
under ½ oz.

New York 42 cents debit
to the U.K., double rate
by American Packet

Collins Pacific
New York 10 May
Liverpool 20 May

Liverpool rated 2/- due

**Philadelphia should not have applied rate marking
This 24 rate is an incorrect amount and in the wrong color .**

Philadelphia's postal clerks were not required to use red to denote prepayment or black for amounts due, since the Postmaster General's instructions to that effect applied to Exchange Offices. Instead, blue 24 hand stamps were used as late as September 1853 to denote both an unpaid rate on outgoing letters and an amount due on incoming letters.

Philadelphia, 27 May 1852

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

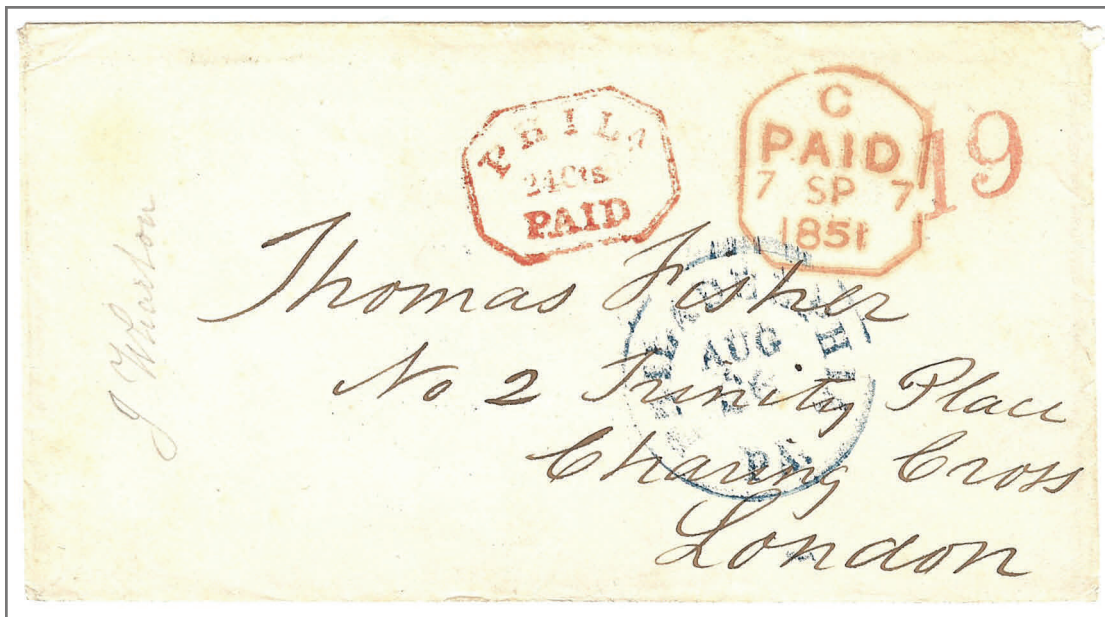
New York 3¢ credit to U.K.
British inland
by American packet

Collins Atlantic
New York 29 May
Liverpool 9 June

Transit 14 days



New York did not mark paid, since Philadelphia had already done so



Philadelphia, 26 August 1851

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

New York 19¢ credit to U.K., British packet & inland

Cunard Africa : New York 27 August, Liverpool 6 September
Transit 12 days

By mid 1851, Philadelphia generally followed the PMG's instructions to Exchange Offices, despite lack of official status in that regard. PAID was usually marked in red, along with the relevant amounts, and clerks largely (but not always) refrained from noting debits and credits. Philadelphia's red octagons indicating prepayment of domestic mail had been in disuse since 1836, but were subsequently put back into service for foreign mail. The above PHIL^A / 24 Cts. / PAID stamp was used until mid 1853.

British Open Mail via Southampton



Philadelphia, 11 June 1852

Quadruple treaty rate to China, prepaid **\$1.80**

PHILA/5 Cts./PAID octagonal stamp up-rated to \$1.80, four times the 45¢ treaty rate to China by British Mail via Southampton.

New York credited **96** cents to Great Britain; 84 cents retained for U.S. inland and transatlantic conveyance by American packet: $4 \times (16+5) = 84$.

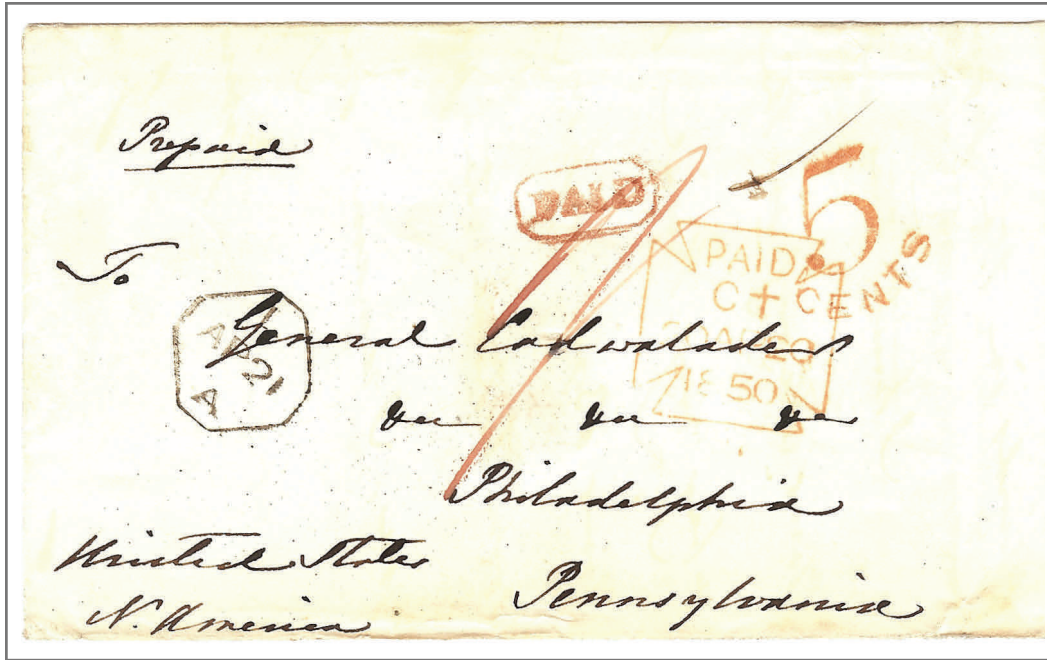
Collins Arctic : New York 12 June, Liverpool 23 June
 P&O Sultan : Southampton 29 June, Malta 9 July
 HMS Medina : Malta 13 July, Alexandria 17 July
 P&O Oriental : Suez 5 August, Galle 20 August
 P&O Ganges : Galle 21 August, Hong Kong 2 September, via Penang & Singapore

Received at Hong Kong 3 September 1852

Transit to GB 13 days, total transit 86 days

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.

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



London, 20 April 1850
 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid
 London **5/CENTS** credit to U.S. for inland
 Cunard Canada :
 Liverpool 21 April
 Boston 3 May
 Received 4 May
 Philadelphia marked **PAID**
 Transit 15 days

Philadelphia, 29 December 1851

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

New York **19** cents credit to U.K.
British packet & inland

Cunard *Europa*
New York 1 January
Liverpool 13 January

Forwarded to Italy via France,
where rated double (¼-½ oz.)

Arr. Florence 21 January 1852

Total transit 31 days



Under terms of the U.S-British Treaty, both countries could send open mails to countries beyond the treaty partner, provided that postal agreements were already in place with those countries, and that the transiting letter arrived without postage due. The same principle applied to forwarded mails, which were simply sent onward as unpaid letters to the final destination.



Philadelphia, 28 March 1853

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Philadelphia postmarked **PAID, 24**

Boston **19** cents credit to U.K., British packet & inland

Cunard Canada : Boston 30 March, Liverpool 10 April Transit 14 days



Philadelphia, 31 May 1853

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Philadelphia postmarked **PAID, 24**

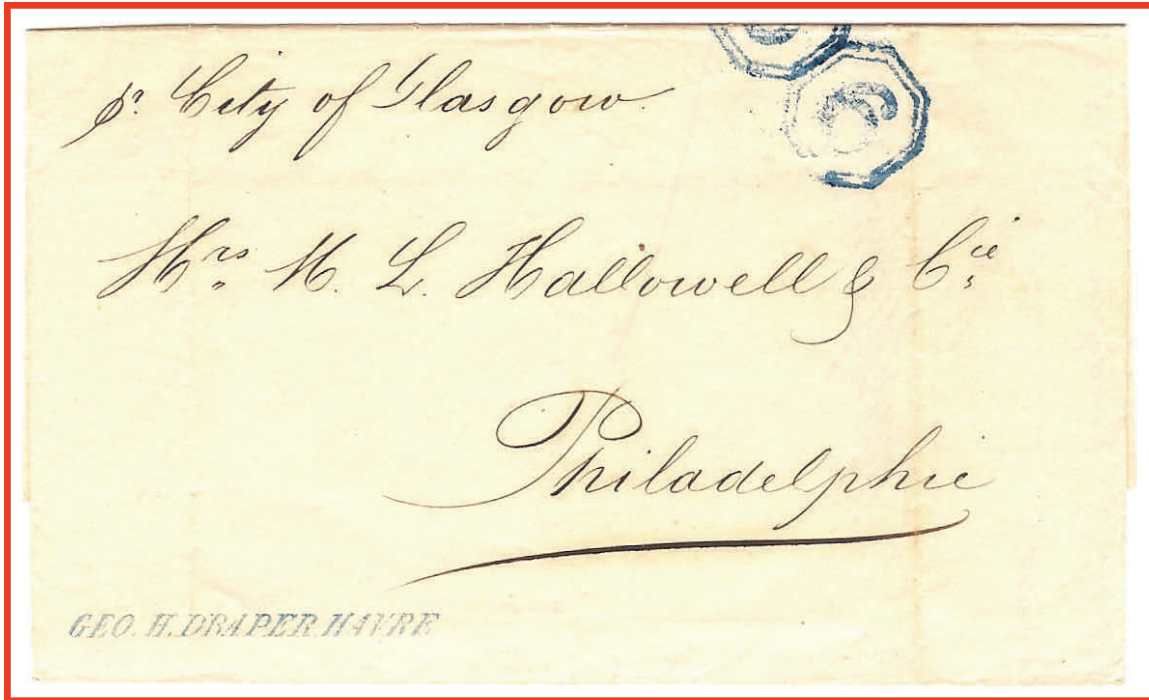
New York **19** cents credit to U.K., British packet & inland

Cunard Africa : New York 1 June, Liverpool 12 June Transit 13 days

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.

The Liverpool & Philadelphia Steamship Company - Inman Line

Inaugural Voyage



Lyon, France, 28 November 1850

unpaid ship letter

Privately forwarded from Havre to Inman headquarters in Liverpool by Geo. H. Draper
Inman City of Glasgow : Liverpool 11 December 1850, Philadelphia 3 January 1851

Philadelphia rated 6¢ due for delivery at the port

Transit from Liverpool 24 days, total transit 38 days

Despite direct service, time from Liverpool was 10 days longer than Cunarders to New York

Founded in 1850 by William Inman and two Quaker partners for passenger and cargo service to Philadelphia. The line offered monthly departures with a fleet of three new steamships, the largest and most modern ever built on the Clyde. Philadelphia celebrated the inaugural voyage with two brass bands, artillery salutes, and an escort vessel bearing of 300-400 of the city's "leading citizens". A celebratory dinner for the Captain, attended by James Buchanan, Governor Johnston and members of both legislatures, was reported as the "most sumptuous ever held in this country".

The reason for the city's elation was that **Philadelphia was finally to have the fast, scheduled, direct steam service** enjoyed by Boston and New York. Within a few weeks of attaining Exchange Office status, city politicians and businessmen unsuccessfully petitioned the U.S. government for the Liverpool-Philadelphia route to be supported by a mail contract. Inman carried ship letters, but these are uncommon. After six years of losing freight and passenger business to the New York Lines, Inman moved its headquarters to New York in January 1857, and began carrying mail under temporary U.S. contracts.



Glasgow, 31 October 1851

unpaid ship letter

Inman City of Manchester : Liverpool 5 November, Philadelphia 20 November

Philadelphia rated 6¢ due for delivery at the port

Transit 16 days



Sheffield, 24 November 1853

unpaid ship letter

Inman City of Manchester : Liverpool 7 December, Philadelphia 23 December

Philadelphia rated 7¢ due: 2¢ ship, 5¢ inland, <300 mi.

Transit 17 days

British Contract Steamships - Accounting

First westbound mails for the Philadelphia Exchange Office

Manchester, 6 January 1854

24¢ treaty rate, unpaid

Liverpool 19/CENTS debit to U.S.

Cunard Niagara
Liverpool 7 January
Boston 25 January

Philadelphia rated 24¢ due:

24/PHILADELPHIA/B^R PK^T
earliest recorded use

Transit 21 days



London, 31 January 1854

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Liverpool 5/CENTS credit to U.S.

Cunard Canada : Liverpool 4 February, Boston 18 February

Philadelphia rated paid: **PHILA/B^R PK^T/24/PAID** earliest recorded use

Transit 19 days

Philadelphia became an Exchange Office on 1 January 1854, following a long campaign to speed the arrival of transatlantic mail. Little to no improvement in speed was actually seen, since contract mails still arrived via Boston or New York.

British Contract Steamships - Accounting



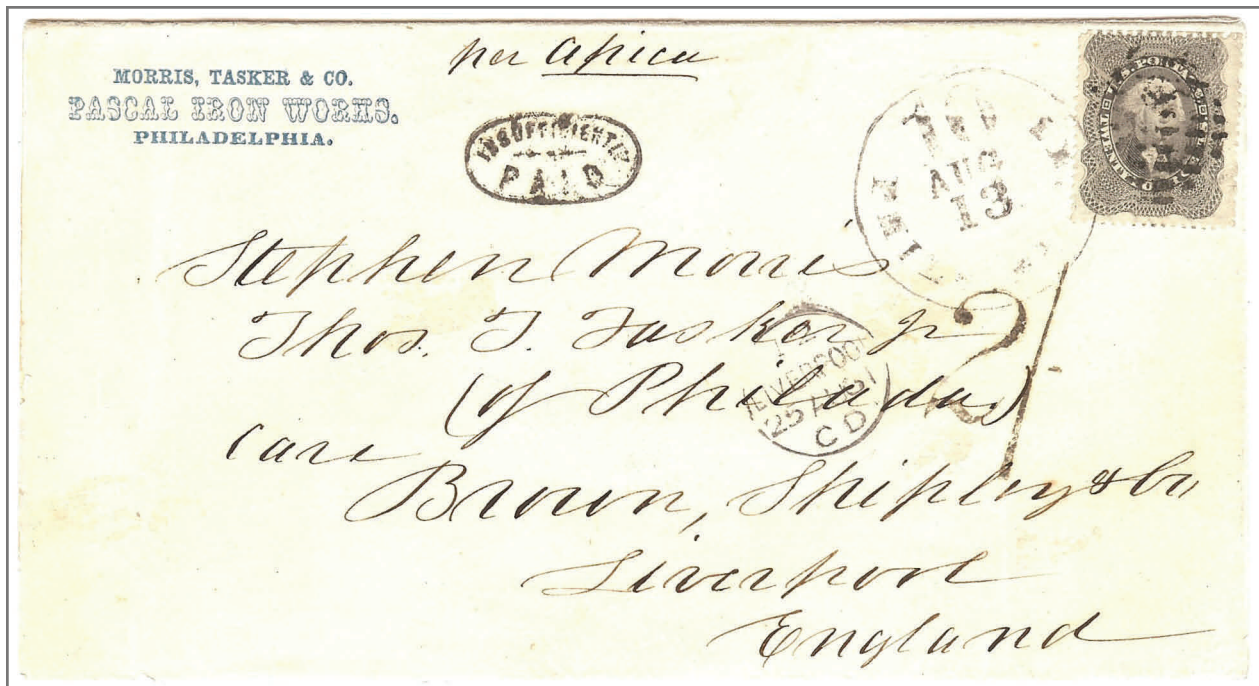
Philadelphia, 29 September 1857

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Philadelphia 19 cents credit to U.K.: 19 / PHIL^A B^R PK^T

Cunard Persia : New York 30 September, Liverpool 10 October

Transit 12 days



Philadelphia, 13 August 1861

Double 24¢ treaty rate, underpaid

Treated as unpaid: **INSUFFICIENTLY/PAID** earliest recorded use

10 cents debit to U.K. for U.S. inland: 10/PHIL^A B^R PK^T earliest recorded use

Cunard Africa : New York 14 August, Liverpool 25 August Liverpool rated 2/- due

Transit 12 days

British Contract Steamships - Accounting



Manchester, 3 November 1865 Double 24¢ treaty rate, underpaid
 Treated as unpaid: Liverpool **38** cents debit to U.S., British inland & packet, 2 x (16 + 3)
 Cunard Persia : Liverpool 4 November, New York 15 November
 Philadelphia rated **48** cents due
 Transit 13 days



Liverpool, 12 May 1854 Quadruple 24¢ treaty rate, unpaid
 Liverpool **76 CENTS** debit to U.S., British inland & packet, 4 x (16 + 3)
 Cunard America : Liverpool 13 May, New York 25 May
 Philadelphia rated **96** cents due
 Transit 14 days

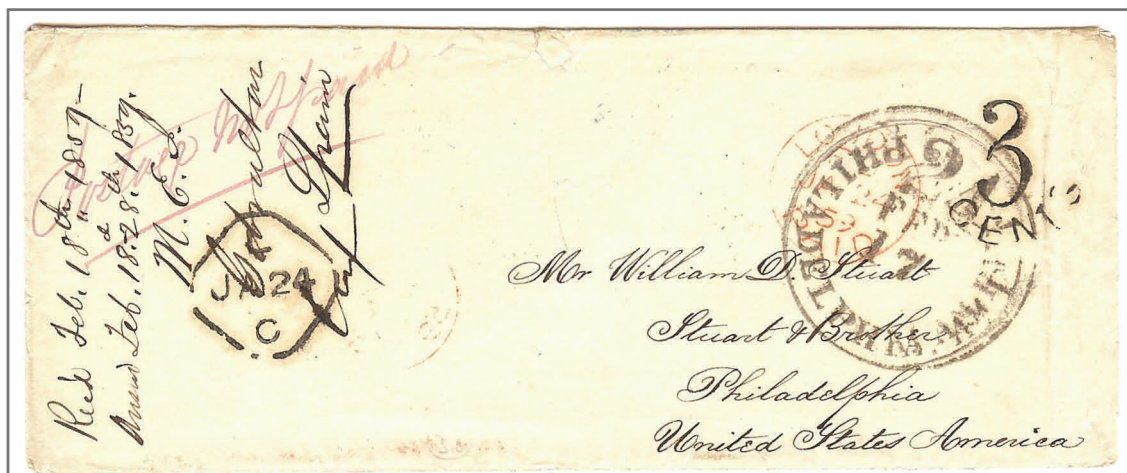
American Contract Steamships - Accounting

Second sailing with mail for the Philadelphia Exchange Office



London, 27 March 1854 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid 1/-
 London **21/CENTS** credit to U.S., Am. Packet & U.S. inland
 Ocean Line *Hermann* : Southampton 29 March, New York 14 April
 Philadelphia marked paid: **PHIL^A 24 A^M PK^T /PAID**
 Transit 19 Days

Carried privately from Gibraltar to London



Gibraltar, 17 January 1859 24¢ treaty rate, unpaid
 London **3/CENTS** debit to U.S., British inland
 Inman *Lebanon* : Liverpool 29 January, New York 17 February
 Philadelphia rated 24¢ due: **24 / PHILADELPHIA A^M PK^T**
 Transit 20 days from London, total transit 32 days

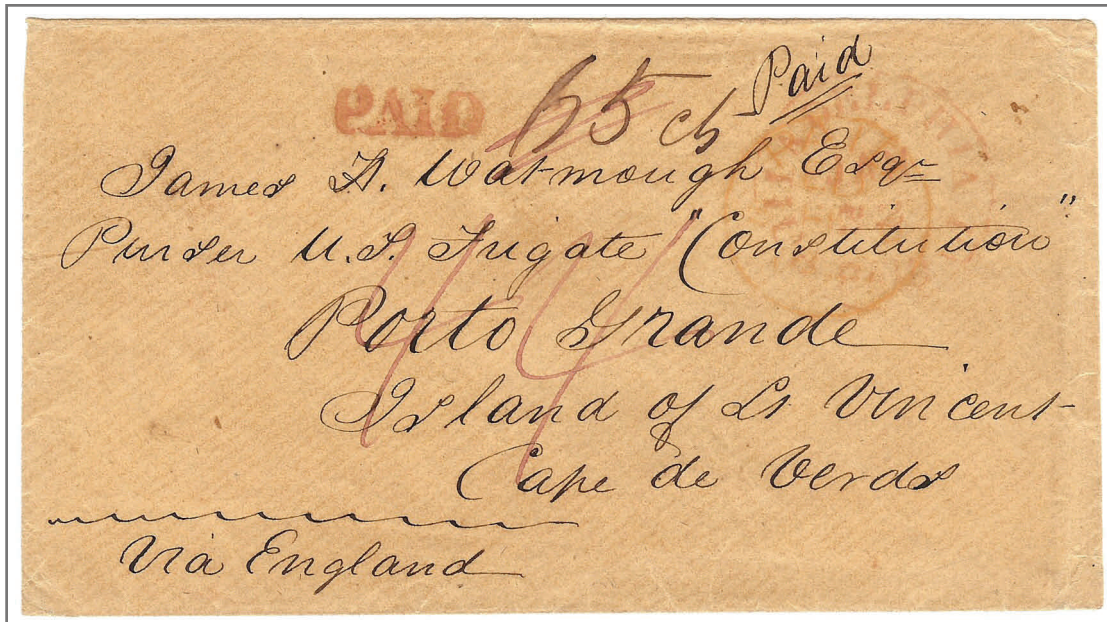


Cape May, N.J., 15 July 1858 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid
 Philadelphia 3 cents credit to U.K., British inland
 Inman Line *City of Washington* : New York 17 July, Liverpool 29 July
 Transit 15 days



Philadelphia, 6 December 1862 Double 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid
 5¢ registration paid in cash; Philadelphia 6¢ credit to U.K., British inland
 Inman Line *City of Washington* : New York 6 December, 16 December
REGISTERED earliest recorded use on foreign mail
 Transit 11 days

To the Cape Verde Islands



Philadelphia, 22 January 1855

65¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Philadelphia retained 21 cents for inland and sea, 44 cents credit to GB

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

Received 26 February 1855 Transit to Liverpool 15 days, total transit 36 days

To Chile



Philadelphia, 4 February 1858

34¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Philadelphia 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

Arrival date unknown

Forwarding

Philadelphia, 20 February 1855

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Phila. 3¢ credit to U.K., inland

Collins Line *Atlantic*
New York 21 February
Liverpool 4 March

Forwarded to Paris unpaid
Arr. 7 March
8 decimes due

Total transit 16 days



Philadelphia, 17 May 1858

24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Philadelphia 19¢ credit to U.K.: British packet and inland

Returned unpaid by American packet: London 3/CENTS debit to U.S., British inland
Philadelphia rated 24¢ due

Cunard *Europa* : Boston 19 May, Liverpool 30 May transit 12 days

Havre Line *Arago* : Southampton 2 June, New York 15 June transit 14 days

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

Registered

1856 Onward

London, 8 June 1860

Treaty rate, prepaid 1/-
Registered, prepaid 6^d

London 6¢ credit to U.S.,
half of Reg. fee

Cunard Asia
Liverpool 9 June
New York 21 June

Philadelphia marked paid

PHIL^A/24/B^RPK^T/PAID

Transit 13 days



London, 16 March 1860

quadruple treaty rate, prepaid 4/6

Sender prepaid 4/- for quadruple packet (1-2 oz.), plus 6^d registration

London 6¢ credit to U.S., half of registration fee

Cunard Arabia : Liverpool 17 March, New York 30 March transit 15 days

Philadelphia marked paid: **PHIL^A/24/B^RPK^T/PAID**

The 1848 Treaty had no provision for registered mail. Additional articles effective 1 May 1856 allowed exchange of registered letters, provided that the registration fee 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.

The Best Intentions, But...

Incorrectly Handled



Philadelphia, 15 September 1857

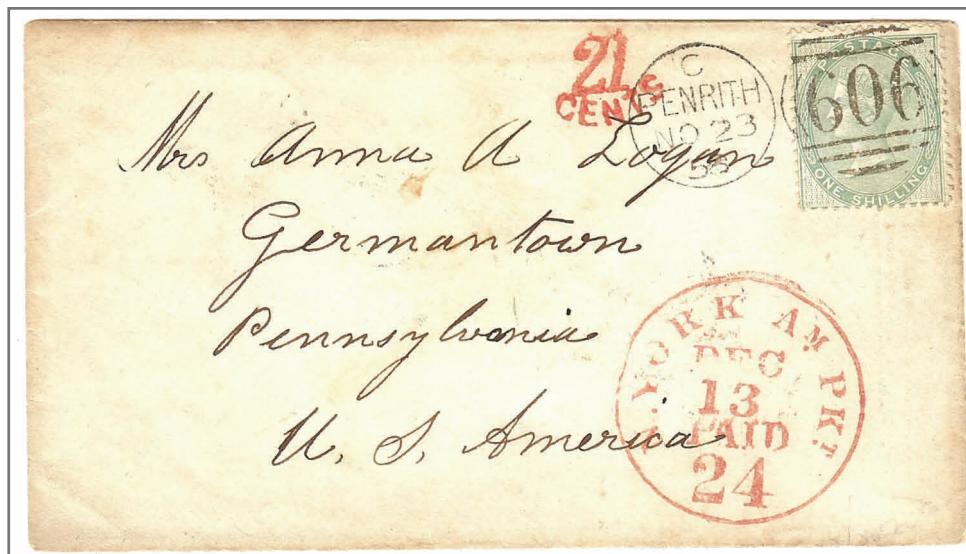
24¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Philadelphia 19¢ credit to U.K., British packet & inland

Cunard Asia : New York 16 September, Liverpool 27 September

Local post offices were instructed by the Philadelphia Postmaster not to postmark letters for the British mails but to send them directly to the exchange office. This directive also applied to the domestic mail section of the central post office, which nevertheless date-stamped this letter in error.

Treaty Restriction on Inbound Mail



Penrith, 23 November 1858

treaty rate, prepaid 1/-

Liverpool 21/CENTS credit to U.S., Am. Packet and inland

Inman City of Washington : Liverpool 26 November, New York 13 December

The Philadelphia Exchange Office could correspond with all three British offices, and account for letters to any destination served by the British mail system. **Inbound mail was restricted solely to letters for the city of Philadelphia.** This sender may not have realized that Germantown was annexed by Philadelphia in 1854. Hence Liverpool sent it in the New York bag.

The Best Intentions, But...

Credit for Missing Adhesive



Philadelphia, 24 March 1860 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid
 Philadelphia **19¢** credit to U.K., British packet & inland
 Cunard Asia : New York 28 March, Liverpool 8 April transit 16 days

PAID 24 postmark previously unrecorded

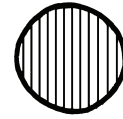
Stain on envelope is the same size as the 1857 24-cent issue. A charitable postal clerk accepted as paid.

Wrong Ink for Debit Marking



London, 23 June 1854 treaty rate, unpaid
 London credited U.S. **19/CENTS** for American packet and U.S. inland
 Cunard America : Liverpool 24 June, Boston 7 July Rec'd the same day

London should have used black ink to indicate a debit, since letter was unpaid and went by British packet.



12 bars
19 mm
2/58

Philadelphia, 2 February 1858 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid
 Philadelphia **19¢** credit to U.K., British packet & inland
 Cunard *Europa* : New York 3 February, Liverpool 15 February *transit 14 days*



11 bars
18 mm
2/58-7/68

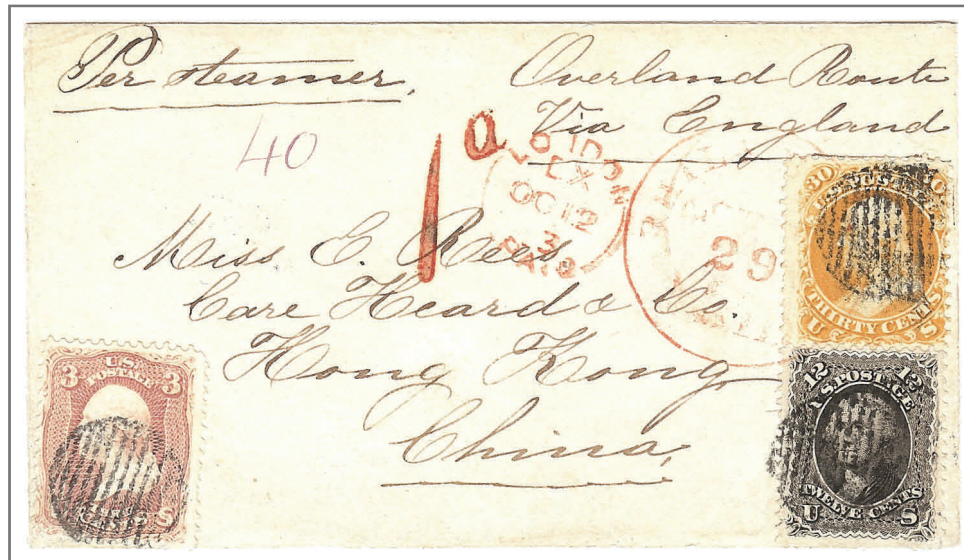
Philadelphia, 21 May 1858 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid
 Philadelphia **19¢** credit to U.K., British packet & inland
 Cunard *Persia* : Boston 2 June, Liverpool 13 June *transit 23 days*

The Philadelphia Exchange Office stopped using circular date stamps to cancel adhesives in early 1858, and instead began using commercially available grid devices, probably of brass. These stock devices were also used on domestic mail.

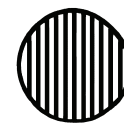
To China via British Open Mail



12 bars
18 mm
8/63-9/63



Philadelphia, 29 September 1863
Philadelphia 40¢ credit to U.K., British packet, inland & Far East packets
London credited 1^d to Hong Kong for delivery
Cunard *Arabia* : Boston 30 September, Queenstown 10 October



11 bars
18 mm
2/58-7/68

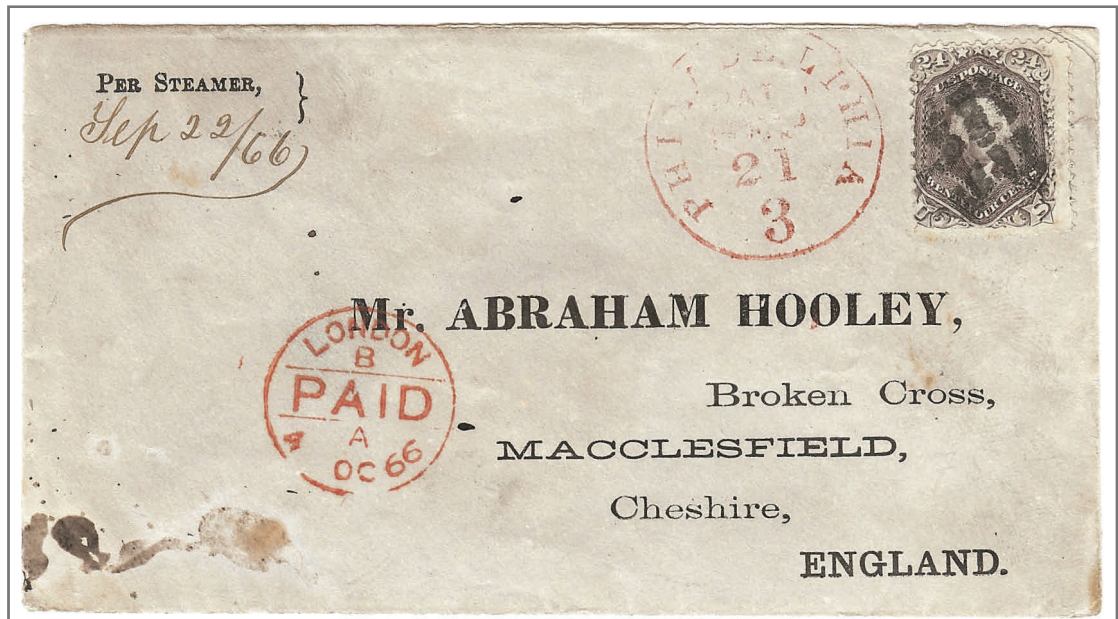
Philadelphia, 23 August 1867
Philadelphia 3¢ credit to U.K., American packet
HAPAG *Hammonia II* : New York 24 August, Southampton 3 September

Black ink was usually employed for canceling adhesives—red ink far less often. Unlike the uses of these colors for accounting purposes, cancellation color had no postal significance, and simply records whatever inkpad the clerk had at hand.



7 (8?) bars
20 mm
4/66

Philadelphia, 14 April 1866 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid
Philadelphia 3¢ credit to U.K., American packet
Allan Damascus : Portland 14 April, Liverpool 28 April



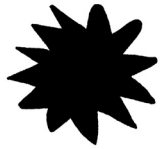
20x20 mm
9/68

worn state

Philadelphia, 21 September 1866 24¢ treaty rate, prepaid
Philadelphia 3¢ credit to U.K., American packet
NGL Hermann : New York 22 September, Southampton 3 October

Hand-carved cancellation devices for exclusive use on foreign mail were introduced by the Philadelphia Exchange Office in 1866. Crude at first, designs gradually became more elaborate. It is not known what material used or where the devices were obtained. Rapid deterioration is evident from the fact that most devices were in use for a week to a month or two.

1868 Treaty- Rate Reduction



12-point starburst
24 mm
12/68

One recorded



Philadelphia, 23 December 1868

12¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Forwarded to Rome by Brown & Shipley
NGL Main : New York 24 December, Southampton 3 January



carets
19 mm
9/68-10/68

Philadelphia, 9 September 1868

12¢ treaty rate, prepaid

NGL Hansa : New York 10 September, Southampton 21 September

In June 1867 the U.S. and Great Britain signed a new postal convention, effective on 1 January 1868. The rate was reduced to 12 cents. Each country was required to make their own arrangements for transatlantic conveyance of mails. This obviated the need to mutually report shipping costs. For letters to beyond Great Britain, the rate breakdown was: 2¢ U.S. inland, 8¢ sea, and 2¢ U.K. inland. Due to an error, the U.S. was entitled to 3¢ credit for incoming letters transiting the U.K.



22 mm
6/69

One recorded

Philadelphia, 8 June 1869
 Forwarded to Denmark by Brown & Shipley
 NGL Weser II : New York 10 June, Southampton 20 June



20x15 mm
1/69-4/69

Recorded only
in blue

Philadelphia, 15 March 1869
 HAPAG Cimbria : New York 16 March, Southampton 27 March

PFC

It has been suggested that the "hedgehog"-shaped cancel on the bottom cover might be a broken version of the starburst shown on the previous page. Digitally overlaying scans of tracings shows this not to be true.



21x24 mm
8/69-12/69

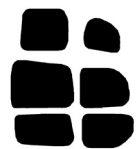


Philadelphia, 27 August 1869

12¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Forwarded to naval vessel by B.F. Stevens

Inman City of Paris : New York 28 August, Queenstown 6 September



21x24 mm
8/69-12/69

Worn state

Philadelphia, 26 October 1869

12¢ treaty rate, prepaid

HAPAG *Holsatia* : New York 26 October, Plymouth 4 November

This cancellation device was used for four months—one of the longest service periods of any Philadelphia foreign mail cancel.



Philadelphia
11 May 1869

12¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Cunard Scotia
New York 12 May
Queenstown 21 May



26x24 mm
4/30/69-5/11/69

Two recorded

PFC

Philadelphia
25 June 1869

12¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Inman City of Brooklyn
New York 26 June
Queenstown 6 July



25x22 mm
6/8/69-7/16/69



PFC

Of the 50+ Philadelphia foreign-mail cancellations documented, 21 were used for less than a month. These numbers are undoubtedly skewed to the low side, since outgoing mails handled by the Philadelphia Exchange Office are scarcer than letters postmarked in Boston or New York. Nevertheless, the majority of Philadelphia foreign mail cancellations are rare indeed.

1870 Treaty- Rate Reduction



28x22 mm
1/70

Three recorded



Philadelphia, 20 January 1870

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Care of Brown & Shipley

Inman City of Brooklyn : New York 22 January, Queenstown 3 February



22x22 mm
1/70

Four recorded

Philadelphia, 28 January 1870

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Forwarded to France by Brown & Shipley

NGL Weser II : New York 29 January, Southampton 8 February

In December 1869 the U.S. and Great Britain signed a new postal convention, effective on 1 January 1870. The rate was reduced to 6 cents, broken down as 2¢ inland in each country and 2¢ sea. The rate to countries beyond the U.K. was thus 4¢ (U.S. inland + sea) plus the British rate to the final destination, as defined by the various British postal treaties.



22x22 mm
3/70-5/70



Philadelphia, 23 March 1870

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Care of Brown & Shipley
Cunard China : New York 30 March, Queenstown 9 April



22x22 mm
3/70-5/70

Weak Strike

Philadelphia, 16 April 1870

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Care of Brown & Shipley
HAPAG Holsatia : New York 19 April, Plymouth 29 April



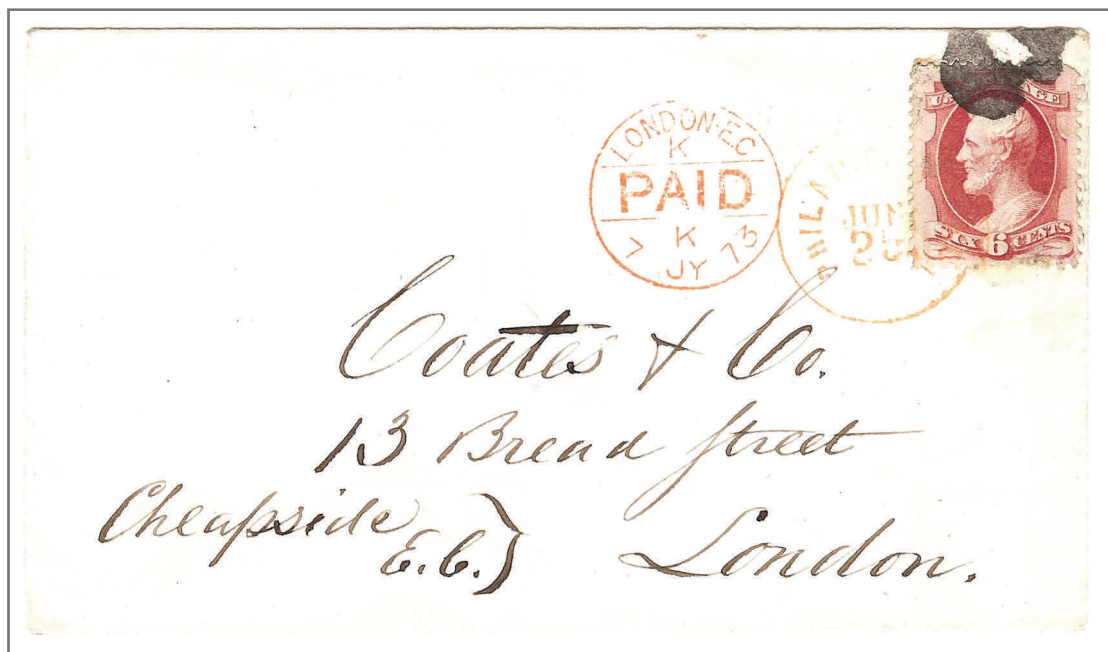
22 mm
3/72-8/72

Recorded only
in blue

Philadelphia, 29 March 1872

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Inman City of London : New York 30 March, Queenstown 9 April



20x16
4/73-6/73

Philadelphia, 25 June 1873

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

HAPAG Cimbria : New York 26 June, Plymouth 7 July



20x19 mm
1/73



Philadelphia, 21 January 1873

Registered + double 6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

International registration fee was 8 cents

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

Back stamped Dublin 4 February



30x27 mm
7/73-9/73

Philadelphia, 18 July 1873

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

NGL *Deutschland*: New York 19 July, Southampton 30 July

Prepaid to France via British Mail



Philadelphia, 30 July 1873

16¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Weight progression for 1/3 to 1/2 oz (10-15 grams)

Philadelphia credited **12¢** to Great Britain for British transit and French inlandHAPAG *Westphalia*: New York 31 July, Plymouth 10 August

Back stamped Paris and Lyon-a-Marseilles, 13 August

30x27 mm
7/73-9/73

Struck twice

Letters from Philadelphia to France during the 1870-74 period, when no U.S.-French treaty was in force, are uncommon. Those usually seen were paid only to England or paid direct to the French port. Fully prepaid letters via England are seldom encountered. Fully prepaid multiple-rate examples are rare: the exhibitor has seen fewer than 10 in more than 20 years of searching.

Prepaid to France via British Mail



30x30 mm
1/74-4/74

Earliest
recorded use



Reverse, 70%



Earliest
recorded use

Philadelphia, 16 January 1874
10¢ treaty rate, prepaid
Philadelphia credited 6¢ to U.K., British transit & French inland
White Star Republic : New York 17 January, Queenstown 27 January
Calais-to-Paris traveling P.O., 29 January



26x27 mm
4/74-7/74

Earliest
recorded use

Philadelphia, 28 April 1874
10¢ treaty rate, prepaid
Philadelphia credited 6¢ to U.K., British transit & French inland
Cunard Calabria : New York 29 April, Queenstown 9 May
Paris 12 May

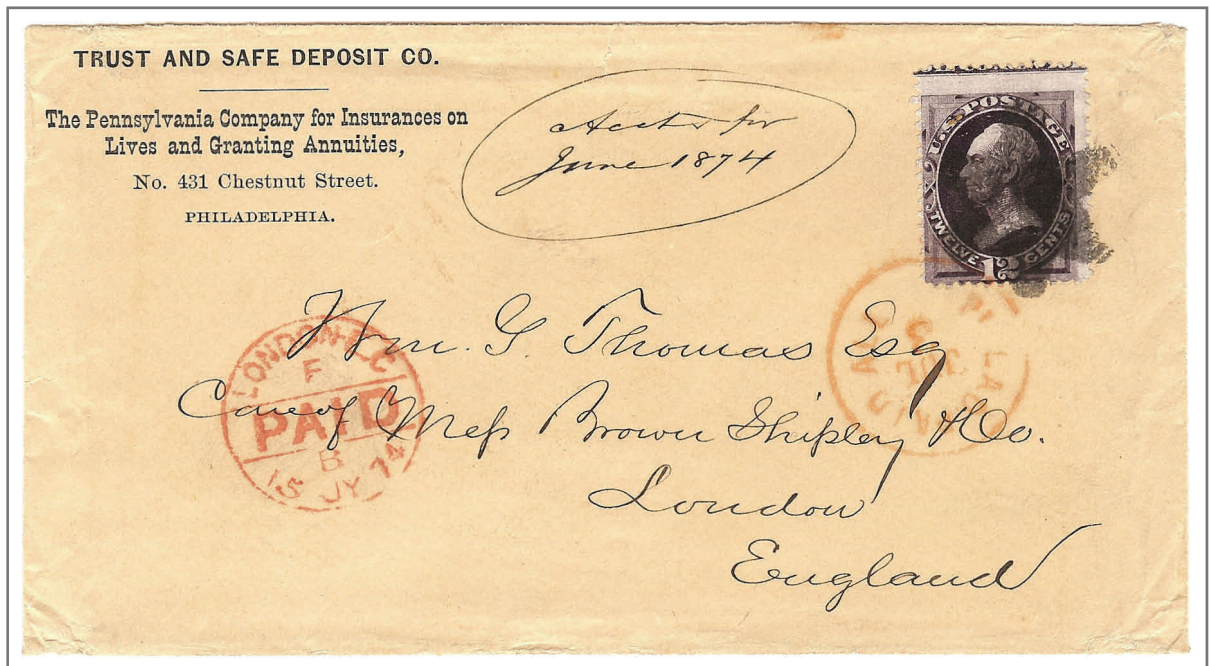


26x27 mm
4/74-7/74

Philadelphia, 15 May 1874

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Cunard Java : New York 16 May, Queenstown 26 May



26x27 mm
4/74-7/74

Philadelphia, 3 July 1874

double 6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Cunard China : New York 4 July, Queenstown 14 July



25 mm
3/75-10/75



Philadelphia, 24 May 1874

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

Cunard Russia : New York 26 May, Queenstown 4 June
London 5 June



25 mm
3/75-10/75

Philadelphia, 3 March 1875

6¢ treaty rate, prepaid

HAPAG Hammonia II : New York 5 March, Plymouth 16 March
London 17 March



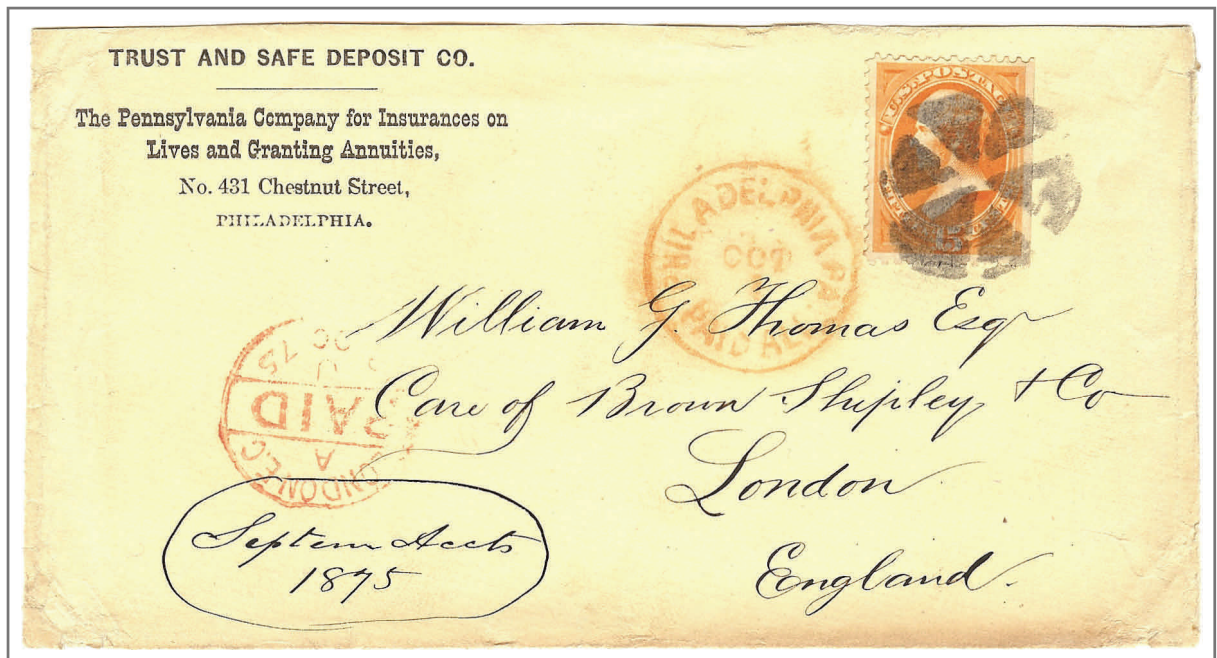
London, 16 October 1875

5¢ GPU rate, prepaid

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

The GPU required that from 8 November 1875 all letters were to be prepaid with adhesives.

Latest recorded use of a stampless letter carried from Great Britain to Philadelphia by contract vessel.



Philadelphia, 1 October 1875

triple 5¢ GPU rate, prepaid

Cunard *Marathon*: Boston 2 October, Queenstown 12 October

Canceled by the new Foreign Branch—old cancellation devices were retained



25 mm
3/75-10/75

**Latest
recorded
use**

When the GPU standardized international rates, accounting by exchange offices became unnecessary. **Philadelphia's exchange office became the Foreign Division, which used hand-made killers on foreign mails well into the 1880s.**