

170rdcauf, Rue du Pavé des Charronniers

May 20th 1844

Postal History

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MR. WILSON is requested to RETURN to his UNION BANK of LONDON.—The Directors REPEAL of the CORN LAWS. AGAINST the REPEAL of the CORN LAWS.

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No 389

March 2024

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NEWSPAPERS AND PRICES CURRENT BETWEEN USA AND GB 1840 – 1875

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This article discusses examples of rates and the treatment of newspapers and registered and unregistered prices current (circulars / printed matter) between Great Britain and the USA in the 1848 Anglo-US Treaty period 1849 to 1875, before GPU. It is extracted from a display presented at the PHS Annual Conference, November 2023.

From 1840 until the agreement of the Anglo-US Postal Treaty mail was increasingly carried to the USA on ships of the Cunard Line under contract to the British Admiralty for the UK Post Office. Letters were carried at 1 shilling per ½ oz from anywhere in the UK to the ports of Boston and New York. The recipient in the USA paid a ship letter fee and mileage-based postage charge to receive the letter. However, the GB packet ship rate to the USA per newspaper or printed matter item registered as a newspaper was 2d. On arrival in the USA newspapers were charged 1¢ for less than 100 miles, 1½¢ for more. Newspapers and circulars incoming to GB were also charged 2d. [Endnotes 1, 2]



Figure 1: *Pair of Times newspapers sent to the USA on board Cunard Line's 'Britannia' which departed Liverpool 19th June, arrived Boston 3rd July 1844. Endorsed "Two Papers".*

Figure 1 shows the addressed panel for a pair of copies of The Times newspaper of Friday, June 7, 1844 sent to Providence, Rhode Island, and paid a total of 4d. Sailing schedules are found in Winter & Hubbard [3].

The 1848 Anglo-US Postal Treaty, which became effective February 1849, set rates for newspapers but was silent on circulars: outgoing GB registered circulars were charged as newspapers at 1d under the Treaty but incoming circulars were charged 2d postage due until the GB rate was changed to 1d in 1865. Outgoing US newspapers were to be charged 2¢. Treaty revisions between 1867 and 1875 regularised the treatment and also changed the rates to include delivery through to destination. The typical content of mail referred to as circulars contained prices current, i.e. commodity prices for such items as wheat, barley, malt, tobacco, wool, hemp, hide, horns, etc. It was important for businesses on both sides of the North Atlantic to exchange these as expeditiously and as cheaply as possible without delay. Many UK examples were printed to include the name of the ship by which they were to be sent. As such they were registered at the British Post Office to ensure they were treated for foreign despatch as if they were newspapers. In the USA, while equally important, they were not formally recognised as such. **Figure 2** illustrates the relevant 1848 Treaty text.

English newspapers to the United States.

ARTICLE XV. The rates to be taken on newspapers published in the United Kingdom, when conveyed between the United Kingdom and the United States, either by British or by United States packets, shall be one penny for each newspaper in the United Kingdom, and two cents in the United States. Conversely, no higher charges than those above stated shall be made by the British or by the United States Post-Office, on newspapers published in the United States, either when despatched from that country, or when delivered in the United Kingdom.

No accounts for newspapers.

There shall be no accounts between the two offices for the transmission of newspapers; each office shall retain the postage it shall have charged, according to the preceding stipulations.

Figure 2: Article XV of the Anglo-US Treaty relating to Newspapers. Circulars were not explicitly addressed until the Treaty updates of 1867.

An example of the Charleston Courier – Letter sheet Review of the Market and Prices Current – sent via New York and Liverpool to Greenock in October 1850 is shown in **Figure 3**. It has been paid 2¢ with a large red ‘2’ overlaying the letter rate 24¢ mark (equivalent of 1 shilling). On arrival in Liverpool it has been struck with a black ‘2’ denoting 2d postage due.

Figure 3: ‘Charleston S.C. 24 Oct 4’ integral rate cds re-rated with large red ‘2’ and matching ‘PAID’ hand-stamp. Cunard’s ‘Niagara’ departed New York 9th October, arriving Liverpool 20th October where a black ‘2’ was applied along with ‘AMERICA / LIVERPOOL OC 20 □ 50’ [Rob. P5]. At destination ‘GREENOCK OC 21 1850 A’ was struck.



In contrast, a single copy of the Sunderland Times sent to Greenville, Va., via Liverpool and New York in September 1852 appears in **Figure 4**, paid by a single 1d penny red adhesive. In this case the US Post Office has not applied a charge mark at either the New York foreign exchange office nor at the receiving post office. This is not unusual.

Figure 4: Sunderland Times carried on Collins Line’s ‘Atlantic’ from Liverpool on 22nd September reaching New York on 2nd October. The docketing indicates arrival at Greenville on 7th October.

An example showing the US 2¢ charge may be seen in **Figure 5** illustrating a printed circular sent from Liverpool to Richmond, Va., via New York in 1858. It shows a UK payment of 1d and US postage due of '2' cents marked in crayon. This charge was applied at the Richmond post office (rather than New York) as found on a similarly charged item sent to Richmond via Boston in 1859, also part of the author's collection.



Figure 5: GB postage paid by 1d adhesive cancelled by '466' of Liverpool. The US 2¢ charge was applied at the Richmond, Virginia, office in crayon. The 'printed sheet' also bears a UK newspaper tax mark 'ONE PENNY / PERIODICAL PUBLICATION / PRICE CURRENT' and is endorsed to go by the Arabia which left Liverpool on 6th March 1858 and arrived in New York on 20th March.

An anomaly in the US and UK handling may be seen in **Figure 6**. The unsealed envelope sent from Chicago, Ill, via Boston and Liverpool to Bakewell in May 1852 is endorsed as a 'Circular' and paid 2¢ as such. But on arrival at Liverpool it is charged 9½d postage due as a letter. This is the treaty letter rate due for 16¢ ocean crossing by British packet and 3¢ UK inland postage (19¢ = 9½d). Evidently an envelope which may have contained writing rather than printed material did not cut the mustard at Liverpool!

Figure 6: 'CHICAGO ILL. 18 MAY' 'Circular' rate 'PAID / 2'; Cunard's 'Canada', departed Boston 26th May, arrived Liverpool 6th June; 'AMERICA / LIVERPOOL JU 6 52' [Rob. P5], and postage due '9½d' [TabcartM29], with 'BAKEWELL JU 7 1852' receiver.



Four copies of the London Daily News sent from Liverpool to New York in October 1863, paid 4d, (**Figure 7**), illustrate the cost improvement over sending two copies of the Times back in 1844, even though transatlantic travel was still a potentially dangerous venture. Yet cost was still a consideration and bundles of prices current were carried on board ship and posted on arrival in the USA at Boston or New York. Examples of such 'bootlegged' prices current are shown in **Figures 8a and 8b**. The first is printed in London as being expected to be carried on the "Asia" leaving Liverpool the next day. It is not possible

to tell if it was carried in a bundle by an agent on board, or sent bundled in a package addressed to an agent in Boston. It is clear that it was mailed in Boston with a US adhesive on the day after arrival. It is printed on very flimsy paper and addressed to Salem, Mass.



Figure 7: London Daily News annotated "4 papers" with '466' Liverpool cancellation over GB 4d adhesive. Cunard Line's 'Africa' departed Liverpool 3rd October but was disabled off Cape Race and arrived at St John's, Newfoundland, on 13th October. The Royal Navy 'HMS Vesuvius' left St John's, Newfoundland, the same day to arrive Boston 21st October carrying the mails.



Figure 8a: The headline of this prices current letter is 'Per "ASIA" Steamer. LONDON, FRIDAY 8th JUNE 1855.-FIVE o'clock, p.m.' It was put into the mails (by an agent) at Boston for Salem, Mass. The US 1¢ adhesive pays the US domestic rate for unsealed circulars of 3oz. or less anywhere in the U.S. [effective 1st October 1852]. Cancel: 'BOSTON 22 JUN PAID'. Cunard's 'Asia' departed Liverpool 9th June, arrived Boston 21st June 1855.

Figure 8b: The header of this printed sheet reads 'Per PERSIA. LIVERPOOL, JULY 12, 1856.' Put into the local New York mails by the agent who paid the 1¢ City Carrier delivery fee receipted by the 1¢ adhesive which is cancelled by the New York City Delivery cancel. Marks applied in New York: 'PAID U.S.MAIL CITY DELIVERY 1 [JUL 23]' and 'U.S.MAIL 4 P.M. DELIVERY'. Cunard's 'Persia' departed Liverpool 12th July, arrived New York 23rd July 1856.



The second 'bootlegged' example was handled in a similar manner and landed in New York. Its contents confidently printed the date as 12th July and that it was being carried on the 'Persia' leaving on that date. The agent mailed it via the local US Post Office City delivery service for 1¢. (Without this service recipients were expected to call at the Post Office for their mail. The arrival of the mail packet was well advertised in local newspapers).

The change of incoming printed circular rates in GB, announced in GPO Instruction No 1 dated 1865, is illustrated by the before and after examples in **Figures 9a and 9b**. The first is a prepaid printed circular sent from New York to Liverpool on board Collins Line's 'Quaker City' in February 1856. It is paid by two 1¢ adhesives in New York and charged 2d on arrival in Britain. The second also sent from New York to Liverpool, some ten years later, is still paid with a 2¢ US adhesive but charged 1d on arrival in Liverpool.



Figure 9a: Paid 2¢ by sender; 'AMERICA / LIVERPOOL / MR 2 1856' Liverpool packet mark [Rob. P5] and 'd2' Liverpool postage due mark [Tabcart M57]. Collins Line's 'Quaker City' departing New York 16th February 1856, arrived at Liverpool 1st March.

Figure 9b: Prepaid printed Circular sent from New York to Liverpool on board Havre Line's 'Fulton' departing New York 4th August 1866, arriving off Falmouth 15th August before proceeding to Le Havre. Contained in bagged mail for Liverpool where the '1d' charge mark [Tabcart M75] was applied on August 16th. Mail bag carried by rail via Truro, Plymouth, Exeter, Bristol, Birmingham and on to Liverpool



The relative value of the low newspaper rates is illustrated by the example of the New York Herald in **Figure 10** which cost 4¢ to purchase but only a further 4¢ to mail to Britain: 2¢ paid in the US and 1d (2¢) charged in Britain. This may be contrasted with the wrapper shown in **Figure 11** sent from Liverpool to San Francisco in 1862. Under the Anglo-American treaty articles finalised in June 1849, California was a 'foreign country'. Thus the newspaper rate was 2¢ (1d) plus US transit charge of 2¢. The British Post Office Instructions issued between April 1850 and July 1863 maintained the rate at 2d prepaid.

Major changes were negotiated to the Treaty coming into effect in 1868, with further changes in 1869, effective January 1870. These were simple in regards to letters, bringing down the rate to 6d (12¢) in 1868 and to 3d (6¢) in 1870. However, on the British side the rates for printed letters changed more frequently. But the major effect of the changes was that either country could now send prepaid prices current and newspapers to their destination with-

out further charges incurred by the receiver. 'Book Post' rates were also added into the reckoning which possibly contributed to the churn.



Figure 10: New York Herald sent to Dartford in April 1865. Paid 2¢ and charged 1d.



Figure 11: Newspaper wrapper sent from Liverpool to San Francisco on board Cunard's 'Arabia' in July 1862. Prepaid 1d to America and paid a further 1d to transit America. Adhesives cancelled with '466' of Liverpool.

Effective 1st October 1867 to 31st December 1868 the GB rate became 2d for newspapers up to 4 oz. Prepayment was required and covered all fees to destination. The British Post Office considered circulars as being under the newspaper category. Effective 1st January 1869 the rates changed to 1d for 1st oz., 2d for second oz. Examples are shown in **Figures 12a, 12b and 12c.**



Figure 12a: Printed circular front dated 9th May 68 sent from Liverpool to Charleston via New York in May 1868. The GB rate of 2d for newspapers up to 4 oz. with prepayment required was effective 1st October 1867 to 31st December 1868. Cunard line's 'Russia' departed Liverpool 9th May, left Queenstown 10th May and arrived at New York 19th May 1868.

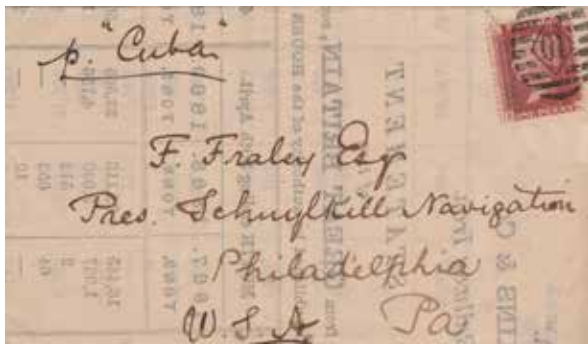


Figure 12b: Railway Iron exports circular, dated London 5th June 1869 sent to Philadelphia via New York paid 1d for 1st oz., effective 1st January 1869. Cunard Line's 'Cuba' departed Liverpool 5th June, called at Queenstown 6th June and arrived at Boston 15th June 1869.

Figure 12c: Tobacco prices circular dated 2nd October 1871 sent from London via Queenstown and New York to Richmond, Va., also paid 1d for 1st oz. Endorsed "PER BOOK POST". Cunard Line's 'Parthia' sailed from Liverpool 3rd October, called at Queenstown 4th October and arrived at Boston 15th October 1871.



In the USA effective October 1, 1867, US circulars to Britain were included in the book rate of 6¢ per 4 oz. The circular rate to Britain was reduced from 6¢ to 2¢ effective January 1, 1869. The US newspaper rate of 2¢ remained unchanged during this period. Examples are shown in **Figures 13a and 13b.**



Figure 13a: Folded Cotton Prices Current sent from New Orleans to Liverpool in October 1868 paid 3 x 2¢ at the book rate of 6¢ per 4 oz., effective October 1, 1867, prepaid to destination, i.e. no further postage due in GB. Absence of dated postmarks makes assignment to sailings difficult.

figure 13b: New York Merchants' Circular dated December 4, 1872 sent from New York via Queenstown to Poole, paid at the reduced book rate of 2¢ effective January 1, 1869. Agent cachet: H. L. Routh & Sons New York. The printed flyer's heading includes the date and 'Per "Wyoming"'. Guion Line's 'Wyoming' left New York 4th December and dropped mail at Queenstown on 15th December 1872.



None of these changes were further affected by the fall in letter rates in 1870 and remained in force until June 1875 when the GPU postal arrangements superseded the Treaty. On 1st July 1875 the GB newspaper rate fell to ½d and the US rate to 1¢.

Reference notes

1. 'Private British Newspapers sent from the United Kingdom to any foreign port by packet or ship, 2d each' [Act 3/4 Vic c96, effective 1st Sep 1840] – personal correspondence with Colin Tabeart. The US delivery charge of 1¢ (1½¢ □ 100 miles) was not normally recorded on the item: Linn's World Stamp Almanac, 5th Edition, Amos Press, 1989, pages 374-5. Rate effective 1st June 1792.
2. The most coherent account of rates of postage between Great Britain and the USA for newspapers and prices current between 1840 and 1875 is in: Winter, R.F: 'Understanding Transatlantic Mail Volume 1', American Philatelic Society, 2006, pages 146 to 156.
3. Sailing dates: Hubbard, W. & Winter, R.F: 'North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75', US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc. 1988.
4. Liverpool handstamps marked Rob. or Tabeart are found in: Tabeart, C: 'Robertson Revisited', James Bendon, Ltd., Limassol, 1997.

STEVE ELLIS

19TH AUGUST 1951 - 17TH NOVEMBER 2023



It was with great shock that we learnt of the sudden and unexpected death of our Secretary Steve Ellis. Those of us who were at Conference will remember his wonderful opening display of his much loved French transatlantic mail.

Steve was a passionate jazz enthusiast, travelling to many countries to attend festivals. He was a very keen gardener, and again being an inveterate traveller would visit towns who opened their gardens to the public. Many of you will have enjoyed a pint with him and will know of his love for real ale.

He was very involved with the Five Talents charity, supporting people in Africa to start their own businesses and he was a lay preacher at his Church, St Andrew's, where he helped to set up a coffee support group. He will be missed by a lot of people but mostly by Tim, Lianne and his two grand-daughters.