

Cross-Border Mail via the Cunard Line:

Mail Between the United States and Nova Scotia, 1840-1867

Between 1840 and 1867, mail to, from, and through the United States and Nova Scotia was transported by the British & North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, better known as the Cunard Line. From its inception in July 1840, Cunard Line steamers stopped in Halifax, Nova Scotia *en route* between Boston, Massachusetts, and Liverpool, England. Steamers between New York City and Liverpool also served Halifax between January 1848 and September 1850. The Cunard line stopped calling in Halifax at the end of 1867. During the 28-year existence of this route there were many changes, including transfer of control of the Nova Scotia postal system to the province from London, rate reforms, the introduction of postage stamps in the United States and Nova Scotia, the execution of a postal treaty between the United States and Great Britain, Nova Scotia's conversion to decimal currency, and the confederation of Nova Scotia with New Brunswick, Canada East, and Canada West to form the Dominion of Canada. While most of the mail carried on this route was exchanged between the United States and Nova Scotia, the Cunard Line service via Halifax was also used for mails to other parts of British North America, and the rest of the western hemisphere. At all times, the packet postage and the British North American postage, if any, was paid by the correspondent in British North America. United States postage was always paid by the correspondent in the United States.



Postage: US inland - 5¢ GB packet - 1/ stg.

New York, June 29, 1846, 5¢ black 1845 New York postmaster provisional (Position 11) pays the 5 cent rate for distance less than 300 miles to Boston, 1 shilling sterling packet postage due per *Caledonia* to Halifax.

Only reported use of a Postmaster Provisional on packet cover via Halifax

Pre-Treaty Period

Packet Postage Rate 1 Shilling Effective December 5, 1842

Halifax, February 17, 1843, paid 1 shilling sterling packet postage per *Acadia* to Boston. Rated 20³ [20³/₄¢] due from Boston to New York. 18³/₄¢ for distance of 150 to 400 miles, plus 2¢ ship letter fee.



Postage:
GB packet - 1/ stg.
US inland - 18³/₄¢
US ship letter - 2¢

Single Rate / Double Rate Cover

Halifax, June 16, 1845, paid 1 shilling sterling single rate packet postage for letter up to ½ ounce per *Caledonia* to Boston. Rated 39¹/₂¢ due to New York. Double rate of 18³/₄¢ per sheet for distance of 150 to 400 miles plus 2¢ ship letter fee (ship letter fee not doubled).



Postage:
GB packet - 1/ stg.
US inland - 37¹/₂¢
US ship letter - 2¢

Pre-Treaty Period, U.S. Rates Of 1845

U.S. Rate Reduction Effective July 1, 1845

Halifax, September 15, 1846, paid 1 shilling sterling packet postage per *Cambria* to Boston. Rated 7¢ due to New York. 5¢ for distance under 300 miles, plus 2¢ ship letter fee.

Postage:
GB packet - 1/ stg.
US inland - 5¢
US ship letter - 2¢



Baltimore, Md, March 8, 1848, 10¢ black 1847 pays 10¢ rate to Boston for distance over 300 miles. Rated 1 shilling sterling packet postage due per *Brittania* to Halifax. 22 covers are reported to Nova Scotia bearing 10¢ black 1847 stamps (overland and packet).

Postage:
US inland - 10¢
GB packet - 1/ stg.



Pre-Treaty Period, Retaliatory Rates

June 27, 1848 to January 3, 1849, Retaliatory Rate Period

Halifax, September 5, 1848, paid 1 shilling sterling packet postage per *Hibernia* to Boston. Rated 29¢ due comprised of 5¢ for distance under 300 miles plus 24¢ American packet postage. Although British packet postage was prepaid in Halifax, United States assessed American packet postage on letters arriving by British packet in retaliation for British treatment of letters arriving in Great Britain on American packets.

Postage:

GB packet - 1/ stg.

US inland - 5¢

US packet - 24¢
(retaliatory charge)



Halifax, November 8, 1848, paid 1 shilling 1½ pence currency (1 shilling sterling) for distance of 301 to 400 miles to St. Andrews, New Brunswick, exchange office. Rated 10¢ due for distance over 300 miles from corresponding exchange office, Robbinston, Maine, to New York. Initially endorsed “Per Steamer,” routing was crossed out and redirected “Via N. Brunswick” to avoid the retaliatory charge.

Postage:

NS land - 1/1½d cy
(1/ stg.)

US land - 10¢



Treaty Period, Initial Rates

Postal Treaty With Great Britain Effective February 16, 1849

Postal treaty does not apply to mails to and from Halifax. Although there is no change in rates for packet service between Halifax and the United States, the United States no longer collects ship letter fees on incoming letters.

Liverpool to New York City Packets Call in Halifax January 1848 to September 1850

Postage:
GB packet - 1/ stg.
US inland - 5¢

Halifax, September 3, 1849, paid 1 shilling sterling packet postage per *Niagara* to New York. Rated 5¢ due for distance under 300 miles.



Packet Postage Rate Reduced to 4d Effective September 20, 1849

Postage:
US inland - 10¢
GB packet - 4½d cy
(4d stg.)

Baltimore, Md, February 3, 1850, horizontal pair of 5¢ red brown 1847s pay 10¢ rate for distance over 300 miles to Boston. Rated 4½d currency (4d sterling) packet postage due per *Niagara* to Halifax. 14 covers to Nova Scotia are reported bearing 5¢ 1847 red browns (overland and packet). PFC #0351094



Treaty Period, 1851 - 1859, Pence Rates

United States Rate Reduction Effective July 1, 1851

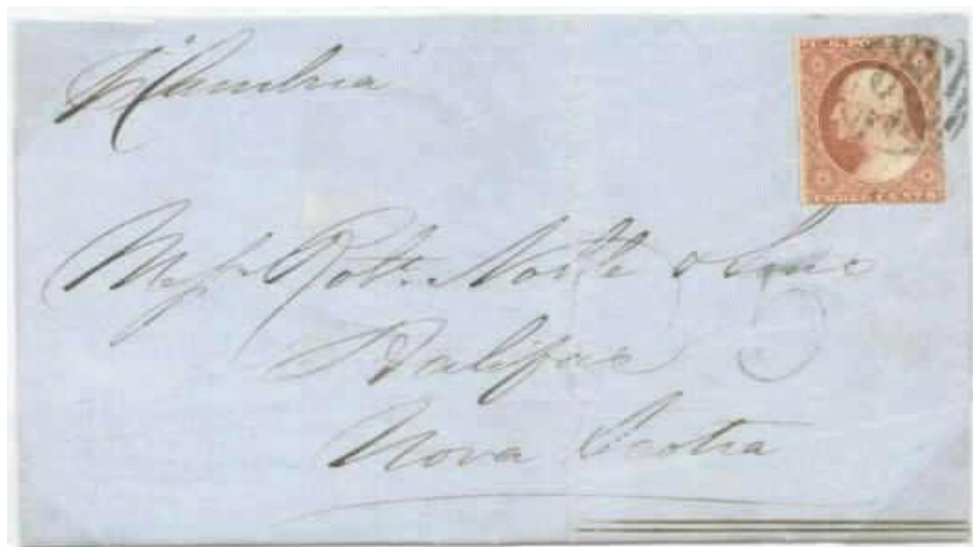
Nova Scotia Rate Change Effective July 6, 1851

Packet Rate Increases to 5d Currency

Postage:

US inland - 3¢

GB packet - 5d cy
(4d stg.)



New York grid, November 1851, 3¢ orange brown 1851 pays 3¢ rate for distance less than 3,000 miles. Rated 5d currency (4d sterling) packet postage due per *Cambria* to Halifax.



Postage:

GB packet - 5d cy
(4d stg.)

US inland - 5¢

Halifax, February 1, 1854, 3d dark blue 1851 and pair 1d red brown 1853 pay 5d currency (4d sterling) packet postage per *America* to Boston. Rated 5¢ due as an unpaid letter for distance under 3,000 miles. 16 single rate packet covers are reported paying the packet rate with a combination of 1d and 3d pence issue stamps.

Treaty Period, 1851 - 1859, Pence Rates

United States Rate For Outgoing Letters Increased to 5¢, 1854 (Exact Date Unknown)

Rate for letters to the United States is unchanged. Although the rate is equal to the British Open Mail rate, mail between Boston and Halifax was not carried pursuant to the treaty between the United States and Great Britain.

Postage:

US inland - 5¢

GB packet - 5d cy
(4d stg.)



Philadelphia, August 11, 1856, 5¢ red brown 1856 pays 5¢ rate to port. Rated 5d currency (4d sterling) packet postage due per *Arabia* to Halifax. 22 5¢ 1856 red brown covers are reported to Nova Scotia (overland and packet).

Postage:

GB packet - 5d cy
(4d stg.)

US inland - 5¢



Halifax, February 13, 1855, paid 5d currency (4d sterling) packet postage per *Asia* to Boston. Rated 5¢ due as an unpaid letter for distance under 3,000 miles to New York. Forwarded (likely under separate cover) by Richard Irvin & Co. New York, forwarding agent marking on back.

Treaty Period, 1851 - 1859, Pence Rates

Postage:

US inland - 5¢

(overpaid)

GB packet - 5d cy
(4d stg.)

NS inland - 3d cy



Richmond, VA, December 14, 1859, 10¢ green 1857 Type V overpays the 5¢ rate to port. Rated 8d currency due comprised of 5d currency (4d sterling) packet postage per *America* to Halifax plus 3d currency inland postage to Liverpool, Nova Scotia.



Postage:

NS inland - 3d cy

GB packet - 5d cy
(4d stg.)

US inland - 5¢

Unknown origin beyond Halifax, October 1860, 6d yellow green 1851 and pair 1d red brown 1853 pay 8d currency rate comprised of 3d currency inland postage to Halifax, plus 5d currency (4d sterling) packet postage per *Arabia* to Boston. Rated 5¢ due as an unpaid letter for distance under 3,000 miles. Cover posted during the 30-day “use-up” period for pence issue stamps, following release of the cents issue stamps. 6 single rate packet covers are reported paying the 8d rate with a combination of 1d and 6d pence issue stamps.

Treaty Period, Decimal Rates

Nova Scotia Converts to Decimal Currency January 1, 1860 Packet Postage Rate 8½¢

Postage:
GB packet - 8½¢ cy
(4d stg.)
US inland - 5¢



RPSL #105041

Halifax, February 18, 1861, 8½¢ green 1860 pays 8½¢ (4d sterling) packet postage per *America*. Rated 5¢ due as unpaid letter for delivery to Baltimore. The 8½¢ stamp is rare on cover as the packet rate increased to 10¢ only nineteen months after the stamp was issued.



Postage:
US inland - 5¢
GB packet - 8½¢ cy
(5d cy/4d stg.)



Kingston, Jamaica, October 5 1861 docketing, Tucker & Lightbourne forwarding agent marking on back. New York October 15, 1861, 5¢ buff 1861 pays 5¢ rate to port. Rated 5d currency (8½¢ [4d sterling]) due packet postage per *Niagara* to Halifax. Halifax continued to use the 5d rate marking during the 8½¢ rate period.

Treaty Period, Decimal Rates

Packet Postage Between Halifax And United States Increases to 10¢ Effective May 1, 1862

Additional 1½¢ Postage Accrues to the Halifax Post Office



Postage:
NS inland - 1½¢
GB packet - 8½¢ cy
(4d stg.)
US inland - 5¢

Halifax, March 16, 1864, pair 5¢ blue 1860s pay 10¢ rate comprised of 1½ inland charge and 8½¢ (4d sterling) packet postage per *Canada* to Boston. Rated 5¢ due as unpaid letter.



Postage:
US inland - 5¢
GB packet - 8½¢ cy
(4d stg.)
NS inland - 1½¢

Boston, September 28, 1864, 5¢ brown 1863 pays 5¢ rate to port. Rated 10¢ due comprised of 8½¢ (4d sterling) packet postage per *Arabia* to Halifax and 1½¢ inland charge.

Treaty Period, Decimal Rates

The 13½¢ Rate Beyond Halifax

The 13½¢ Rate (8½¢ packet + 5¢ inland) Did Not Change When Packet Rate to Halifax Increased to 10¢



Postage:
NS inland - 5¢
GB packet - 8½¢ cy
(4d stg.)
US inland - 5¢



Postage:
NS treaty rate - 15¢
(no division of
postage)

Pair of covers from Windsor, Nova Scotia January 15, 1867, and November 23, 1866, each franked with 10¢ orange 1860 and 5¢ blue 1860. Top cover, directional endorsement for transcontinental carriage “by steamer from New York” apparently misinterpreted as request for packet service to Boston. Nova Scotia 15¢ postage overpays 13½¢ packet rate comprised of 5¢ inland postage to Halifax, plus 8½¢ (4d sterling) packet postage per *Asia* to Boston. Rated 5¢ due as unpaid letter to San Francisco. Payment of the 13½¢ rate by stamps is rare. Bottom cover correctly sent prepaid at the 15¢ overland treaty rate for distances over 3,000 miles from the exchange office. Pursuant to treaty, Nova Scotia kept all postage collected on prepaid letters to the United States.

Treaty Period, Post Confederation Usage

**On July 1, 1867, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Canada East, and Canada West
Confederated to form the Dominion of Canada
Postal Rates Remained Unchanged Until Cunard Line Service Ended in December 1867**



Postage:
US inland - 5¢
GB packet - 8½¢ cy
(4d stg.)
Canada inland - 1½¢

Boston, August 29, 1867, 5¢ brown 1863 pays the 5¢ rate to port. Erroneously rated 13½¢ due for letter addressed beyond Halifax, overstruck with correct 10¢ due rate comprised of 8½¢ (4d sterling) packet postage per *Java* to Halifax and 1½¢ inland charge.

Packet Mail to Prince Edward Island



Postage:
US inland - 5¢
(underpaid)
GB packet - 6d cy (PEI)
(4d stg.)
PEI inland - 3d cy

Boston, August 12, 1857, 3¢ rose type 1 1857 underpays the 5¢ rate to port. Rated 9d currency due comprised of 6d Prince Edward Island currency (4d sterling) packet postage per *Europa* to Halifax plus 3d currency interprovincial postage from Halifax. Due to differing depreciation against the pound sterling, the 4d sterling packet charge was equal to 6d in Prince Edward Island's currency, but only 5d in Nova Scotia's currency.

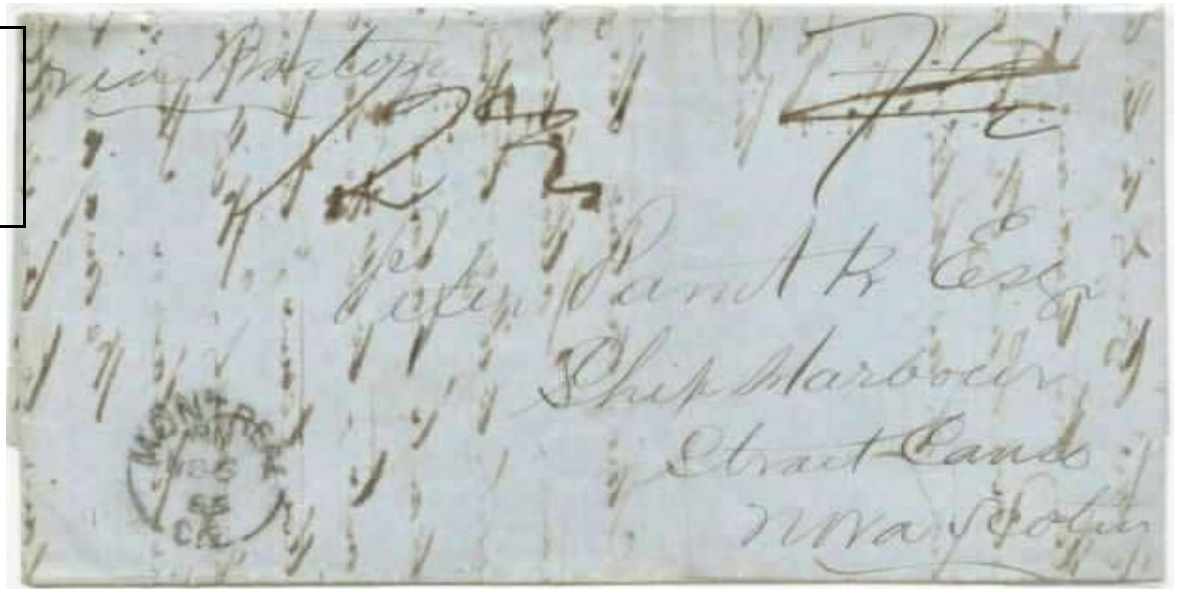
Interprovincial Closed-Bag Mail via Cunard Line

Postage:
GB packet - 5d cy
(4d stg.)
CW inland - 2½d cy



Halifax, September 12, 1853, rated 7½d due comprised of 2½d currency inland postage to be collected by Canada West, plus 5d currency (4d sterling) packet postage via closed bag per *Niagara* to Boston, followed by rail transit to Canada East and overland transport to Toronto, Canada West. The United States did not collect transit postage.

Postage:
GB packet - 8½ cy
(4d stg.)
NS inland - 4¢ cy



Montreal, Canada East, November 6, 1865, via closed bag from Montreal by rail to Boston. Cunard packet *Africa* from Boston to Halifax, followed by overland transit to Ship Harbour NS. Rare (5 or fewer markings reported) Ship Harbour November 13, 1865 receiver. Rated 12½¢ due per closed mail comprised of 8½¢ (4d sterling) packet postage and 4¢ inland charge.

Packet Mail to and from Newfoundland

Great Britain operated a feeder route between Halifax and St. Johns Newfoundland. Nearly all mail to and from the United States was carried by Cunard line packet via Halifax.



St. Johns, Newfoundland, November 1846, Crowned Circle Paid 1 shilling per packet *Unicorn* to Halifax and packet *Acadia* from Halifax to Boston. Pre-treaty usage rated 12¢ due from Boston via closed bag to Philadelphia. 10¢ due for distance over 300 miles plus 2¢ ship letter fee.

Postage:

GB packet - 1 shilling
US inland - 10¢
US ship letter - 2¢

Packet Postage From Halifax to St. Johns Charged In Addition To Boston to Halifax Packet



Postage:

GB packet - 8d stg.
US inland - 5¢

St. Johns Newfoundland, September 6, 1854, paid 8d sterling combined rate comprised of 4d sterling packet postage from St. Johns to Halifax, and 4d sterling packet postage per *Niagara* Halifax to Boston. Rated 5¢ due as an unpaid letter for distance under 3,000 miles.

Packet Mail to and from Newfoundland

Packet Rate from St. Johns to Boston Reduced to 4d stg. January 1, 1856



St. Johns, Newfoundland, May 9, 1860, 8d Scarlet Vermillion 1857 bisect pays 4d sterling packet postage via Halifax per *Europa* to Boston. Rated 5¢ due as unpaid letter. Packet rate to US was reduced after Newfoundland ordered its pence issue stamps. This resulted in a surplus of 8d stamps which were bisected for use as 4d.

Postage:
GB packet - 4d stg.
US inland - 5¢

New York, October 28, 1863, 10¢ yellow-green 1861 overpays 5¢ rate to port. Rated 6½d sterling due comprised of 4d sterling packet postage per *Olympus* to Halifax and then packet to St. Johns, plus 2½d sterling (3d currency) internal postage from St. Johns to Harbor Grace.



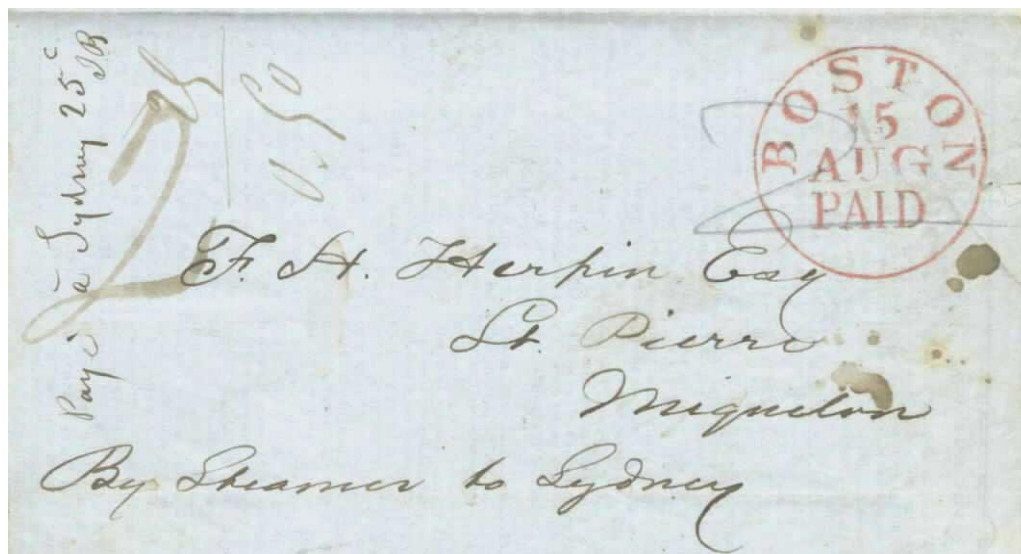
Postage:
US inland - 5¢
(overpaid)
GB packet - 4d stg.
NF inland - 3d cy
(2½d stg.)

Packet Mail to and from St. Pierre et Miquelon

The minuscule amount of mail between the United States and the French territory of St. Pierre et Miquelon was generally carried by Cunard line packets via Halifax.

Postage:
GB packet - 5d cy.
(4d stg.)
US inland - 5¢

Saint Pierre May 23, 1857
privately carried to Halifax
where letter entered the
mails June 1, 1859 paid 5d
cy (4d sterling) per
America to Boston. Rated
5¢ due as unpaid letter for
distance under 3,000
miles.



Boston, August 15, 1855,
printed circular paid 2¢
circular rate to port. Rated
50 centimes due comprised
of 2d sterling (25
centimes) circular rate
postage per *Asia* to
Halifax, Nova Scotia then
per Cunard feeder line to
North Sydney, Cape
Breton, plus 25 centimes
St. Pierre postage from
North Sydney to St. Pierre
et Miquelon.

Postage:
US inland - 2¢
GB packet - 2d stg.
St. Pierre - 25c