

Stories Behind My Covers

Jack Arnell

29. B.N.A. - France Letters (II)

There were major changes in the postage rates between Great Britain and France, which affected all letters from overseas transiting the former in the second half of the 1850s. In 1854, the French inland rate was reduced to 2 décimes for a single letter and further revision of the Anglo-French Postal Convention from 1 January 1857, by Article 34 reduced the bulk rate on unpaid letters from British Colonies, the United States and other overseas countries by British packets to 1 franc 60 centimes (1s. 4d. Stg.) per 30 grammes or one ounce, making the British charge 4d. Stg. for a single letter. At the same time, Article 35, reduced the bulk rate for letters from Canada *via* Halifax to 2 francs 40 centimes – this rate was only in effect for a year and examples are rare.

Figure 1 is an unpaid letter from St. John's, Newfoundland dated 10 August 1864, which was sent to Halifax in a closed bag for London, whence it was carried by the *Cunard Africa* on 19 August and landed at Queenston, Ireland on 28 August. It was backstamped at London on the next day and struck with a boxed 'GB/1^r 60^c' to confirm the British debit on a ½ oz. letter, then sent on to Calais, where it was datestamped with 'ANGL. AMB. CALAIS' on the following day and rated 8 décimes as a 15 gm. letter.

Figure 1: St. John's Newfoundland to France, 1864.



Further modifications to the Convention on 1 January 1858 added more articles. Article 42 replaced the bulk rate of 2 Fr. 40 c. with 2 Fr. for letters direct from British colonies and Canada *via* Great Britain, and Article 44 established a bulk rate of 2 Fr. 62 c. for letters from Canada, the Maritime provinces and Newfoundland *via* the United States.

Figure 2: Newfoundland to France July 1866.

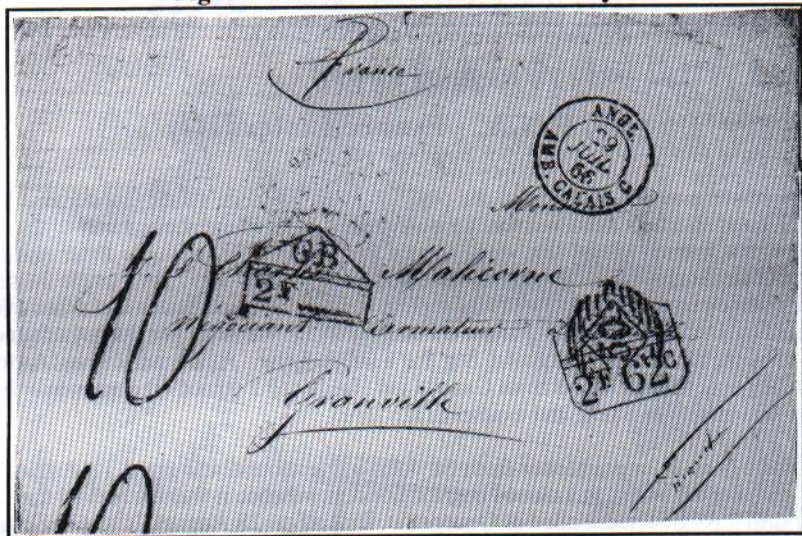


Figure 2 shows another unpaid letter from the French coast of Newfoundland of early July 1866, which was sent to Halifax in a closed bag for London. It was carried by the Cunard *Cuba* from Halifax on 19 July to Queenston on 26 July, and was backstamped at London and incorrectly struck with a framed 'GB/2^F 62^C' on the presumption that it had come through the United States. This error was corrected by cancelling the strike with a barred '50' and replacing it with a framed 'GB/2^F', the correct rate under Article 42. The letter was datestamped at Calais as above and rated 10 décimes postage due.

Figure 3 is an unpaid letter mailed at Paris on 11 February 1867, which was struck with an oval 'FR/2^F' to show the French debit against the bulk rate direct to Canada from Great Britain, then backstamped at London and marked with '1/6' postage due in manuscript. It was carried by the Allan *Peruvian* from Liverpool on 14 February and arrived at Portland, Maine on 27 February, backstamped at Toronto on 1 March, and rated 46 cents postage due.

Figure 4 is a similar unpaid letter from La Rochelle dated 26 August 1867 with the same French rate marking. Backstamped at London on the next day and marked with the '1/-' postage due in manuscript, and put in a closed bag for Montreal, it was carried by the Allan *Austrian* from Liverpool on 29 August direct to Quebec, arriving on 9 September. The letter was backstamped at Montreal later that day and rated 42 cents postage due.

I must admit I cannot explain the British and Canadian charges on these last two letters to my satisfaction, as they do not fit into any of the standard rates of which I am aware.

With the coming of the Universal Postal Union, the special rate markings on unpaid letters were replaced with 'T' in some form of handstamp. An example is shown in Figure 5, which was an unpaid letter mailed at Paris on 31 May 1877 and struck with 'T' in an inverted triangle and rated 10 décimes postage due. It was backstamped at London on the following day, and sent to Quebec in a closed bag, where it was marked with '16' in blue crayon to show 16 cents postage due.

Figure 3: (see text)

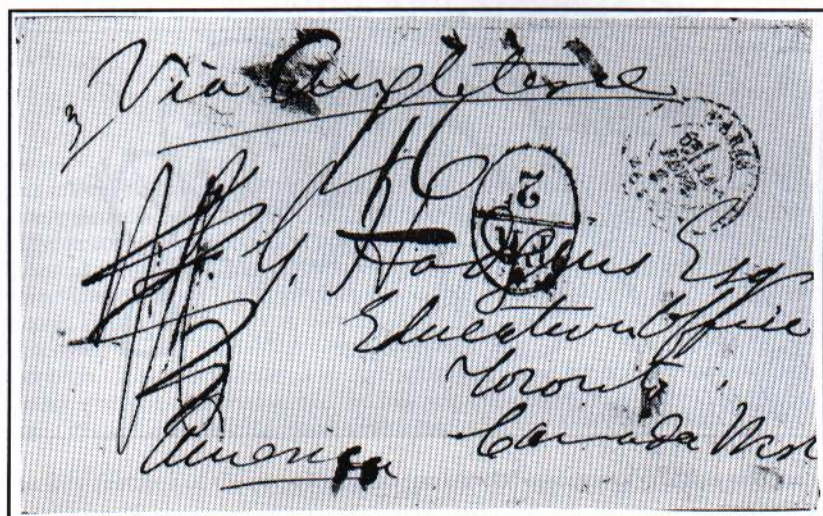


Figure 4: (see text)



Figure 5: Paris to Quebec in 1877 with 'T' postage due marking.



CANADIAN PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Why do canny BNAPSers join the
Canadian Philatelic Society of Great Britain?
They cannae a' be daft!!

To find out,
write to our secretary, Tom Almond.
2 Filbert Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, UK RG31 5DZ

P.S. Our next friendly Convention is in
Harrogate, Yorkshire 10-13 September 1997.
Join us and spoil yourself!

Subs payable in Canada - WRITE NOW!