

Harnden's Foreign Letter Express

Purpose and Scope

This exhibit illustrates the cachets used by Harnden & C^o on mails sent between the USA and UK between 1839 and 1853 showing the evolving facets of the Harndens' Express mail business.

Shown are cachets used by the main Harnden offices of Philadelphia, New York, Boston and Liverpool. Where relevant, the rarity of items is noted with reference to Rowe, with those cachets not listed in Rowe also noted.

Significant items are shown by a red border.

William Harnden is considered to be the "father" of the express business in the United States. His first advertisement appeared on February 23, 1839 and announced express car service four times a week between Boston and New York. The primary function was the handling of small packages, money, and orders for goods. In November, 1840 Dexter Brigham Jr. set up an office in Liverpool to establish a trans-Atlantic express and foreign exchange business. This business thrived when Harndens became the exclusive agent for light freight shipped to England by the Cunard Line steamers.



Prior to 1848, prepaid mails to foreign destinations was possible only by using agents such as Harnden. A letter prepaid to Harnden in Boston could be sent by steamer to the Liverpool office and mailed by the Harnden agent there, using the British postal system, to any destination linked from England.

Label "FORWARDED BY / HARNDEN'S / EXPRESS" on reverse of 17th July 1849 entire sent from Boston to New York

Harnden operated simultaneously as a contract mail carrier and as a private express enabling him to have a virtual monopoly on legal mail destined to be carried on Cunard Line steamers.

Harnden received a contract as a post office mail carrier on July 1, 1839 allowing him to legally carry mails, in locked bags, between Boston and New York City.

Harnden as a private mail express (July 1, 1841 to February 21, 1842) continued his foreign letter office business without a mail contract.

Harnden as a regulated contract mail agent (February 22, 1842 to January 31, 1844) was forced to pay postage on letters handled on an individual basis rather than getting benefit of slightly lower bulk packet postage.

Harnden as a private mail express without a mail contract (February 1, 1844 to 1851) again continued his foreign letter office business delivering mails to the Cunard steamers leaving both Boston and New York.

References:

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Hubbard, W & Winter, RF: North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75, US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc 1988

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Plan

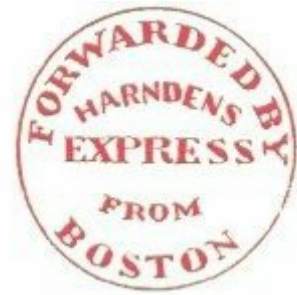
Introduction: Page 1

Initial Office Marks –
Boston & New York, Philadelphia & Liverpool:
Pages 2-3

New York Cachets Pages 4-6,
Boston Cachets Pages 7-13,
Liverpool Cachets: Pages 10-14

End of an Era -
New York & Boston, Liverpool: Pages 15-16

Double letter sent from Boston via New York and Bristol by Harnden's forwarding agents to Llanelly on board GWSSC's 'Great Western' in September 1839



Annotated 'Boston 19 Sep' 1839', the letter was carried to New York by Harnden's forwarding agency who paid the shipping agent 2x 25¢ steamship freight money at double rate.

Great Western Steam Ship Company
'Great Western'
dep New York 21 September 1839
arr Bristol 4 October

2x (8d ship fee + 9d postage) = '2/10'

Double rate letter forwarded by Harnden of New York via Boston and Liverpool to London on board Cunard's 'Acadia' in November 1840



Cunard 'Acadia'
dep Boston 1 Nov 1840
arr Liverpool 15 Nov

'X 16NO16 1840'
London red receiver on reverse.

'2/-' m/s for 2/- postage due applied at London.

UK packet fee less than 1oz:
2/-, from 10th January 1840



Cunard commenced regular mail sailings from Liverpool to Boston on 1st July 1840.
In January 1848 New York was added as a terminus, alternating with Boston.

On arrival at Liverpool the mails from 'Acadia' filled nearly a dozen large bags [H&W p17 note 2]

Letter to Worcestershire forwarded from Philadelphia via Boston and Liverpool
on board Cunard's 'Columbia' in September 1841



"Paid to Boston"



On reverse:
'AMERICA / L' [Tab P2]
'BROMSGROVE SP14 1841 C'

'1/-' GB packet rate due

Cunard 'Columbia'
dep Boston 1 Sep
arr Liverpool 14 Sep

Letter forwarded from Sheffield via Liverpool and Boston to Philadelphia, entering the mails at
New York, carried by Cunard's 'Hibernia' March 1846

Letter datelined
"Sheffield Feb' 10 1846"



Cunard 'Hibernia'
dep Liverpool 4 Mar
arr Boston 19 Mar

'NEW-YORK 20 MAR 5 cts'

US postage due from
New York to Philadelphia



Liverpool Shield 'PAID TO BOSTON / --- by --- / HARNDEN & C° / Liverpool' not listed in Rowe

Harnden operated as a private mail express carrying letters in packages between their offices
in the US, sometimes outside the US Post Office mail.

Letter sent from New York via Boston to London on board 'Acadia' in August 1840



Letter from Henry Huth to his father Fredrk Huth who established the London merchant bank "Frederick Huth & Co".

'FORWARDED FROM HARNDEN'S PACKAGE EXPRESS & FOREIGN LETTER OFFICE N° 2 WALL ST NEW YORK'



Harnden's New York cachet.

Cunard 'Acadia'
dep Boston 1st Sep 1840
arr Liverpool 14th Sep

'PACKET LETTER' [Tab. London P4]
London: '* 15 SP 15 1840' receiver

'1N' manuscript rating for 1/-
packet postage due

Return maiden voyage of *Acadia*.

Harnden acted as a contract mail agent receiving a contract as a post office mail carrier on July 1, 1839. This contract allowed Harnden to legally carry mails, in locked bags, between Boston and New York City. He carried mail made up in packets, addressed to himself, upon which he paid postage by total weight. The contract expired on June 30, 1841.

Wrapper forwarded from New York by Harnden Co via Boston and Liverpool to Feckenham on board Cunard's 'Acadia' in December 1841



Cunard 'Acadia'
dep Boston 16 Dec
arr Liverpool 30 Dec 1841

On reverse Liverpool
packet mark [Rob P2]



1/- postage due
hand stamp of Liverpool
[Tab M67]

Undated wrapper forwarded by Harnden & Co from New York via Boston and Liverpool to London in 1841



At lower left a red London receiver.

On the address panel '1/-' GB postage due in manuscript.

Closed bag from New York to London.



Harnden operated as a private mail express from July 1st 1841 to February 21st 1842 without a mail contract and typical covers bear only Harnden's hand stamps and were probably carried outside of US PO mails between New York and Boston.

Unpaid 4 rates letter sent from New York via Boston, Halifax NS and Liverpool to Halifax in Yorkshire on board Cunard's 'Unicorn' and 'Acadia' February 1842



Carried from New York to Boston by Harnden

'HARDEN & Co's EXPRESS NEW YORK'

Cunard Line's 'Unicorn'
dep Boston 1st Mar 1842
arr Halifax NS 7th Mar

Cunard Line's 'Acadia'
dep Halifax NS 12th Mar
arr Liverpool 25th Mar

'4/-' postage due for 1 to 2 oz (4 rates)

On reverse: oval 'AMERICA / L' [Rob. P2]



Although annotated "Per Caledonia Steamer 1st March" that ship was damaged by storms and returned to Liverpool on 17th February 1842. 'Acadia' was despatched from Liverpool on 19th February carrying Caledonia's mails for Boston. She arrived at Halifax on 7th March. 'Unicorn' was despatched from Halifax, NS, on 25th February for Boston, where she arrived on 27th. She left Boston on 1st March with Caledonia's mails for Halifax, arriving on 7th March.¹

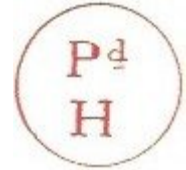
Progression: 1 to 2oz = 4 rates effective 10th January 1840
Single ½oz packet rate of 1/- from/to USA effective 21st March 1839

Ex Fuller

Letter sent from Boston to Hereford via Liverpool by Harnden & Co on board Cunard Line's 'Caledonia' in December 1841



Charges paid for delivery to Cunard, with partial PO Liverpool receiver on reverse.



Cunard 'Caledonia' dep Boston 1 Dec arr Liverpool 16 Dec

Letter forwarded from Boston to Liverpool for mailing to London by Harnden & Co on board Cunard's 'Acadia' in November 1844

Letter dated "Boston Oct 29 1844"



ex Arnell

Cunard 'Acadia' dep Boston 1 Nov arr Liverpool 14 Nov

Harnden re-mailed the letter at Liverpool at a charge of '1' penny marked in red crayon.

'LIVERPOOL PAID 15NO15 1844'

William Harnden's first advertisement appeared on February 23, 1839 and announced express car service four times a week between Boston and New York. In November, 1840 Dexter Brigham Jr. set up an office in Liverpool to establish a transatlantic express and foreign exchange business. This business thrived when Harnden became the exclusive agent for light freight shipped to England by the Cunard Line steamers.

Single letter from New York forwarded via Boston and Liverpool to London on board Cunard Line's 'Britannia' in November 1842



Docketed "New York 25 Oct". Charges paid for delivery to Cunard with mails bagged for London



Cunard Line 'Britannia' dep Boston 1st Nov arr Liverpool 16th Nov



London receiver on reverse 'K 17NO17 1842'

Single cover forwarded by Harnden from Boston via Liverpool to London on board Cunard Line's 'Hibernia' in February 1846

Local charges paid to Harnden and mail bagged for London and delivered to the Cunard purser.



Cunard 'Hibernia' dep Boston 1st Feb arr Liverpool 14th Feb

London receiver on reverse

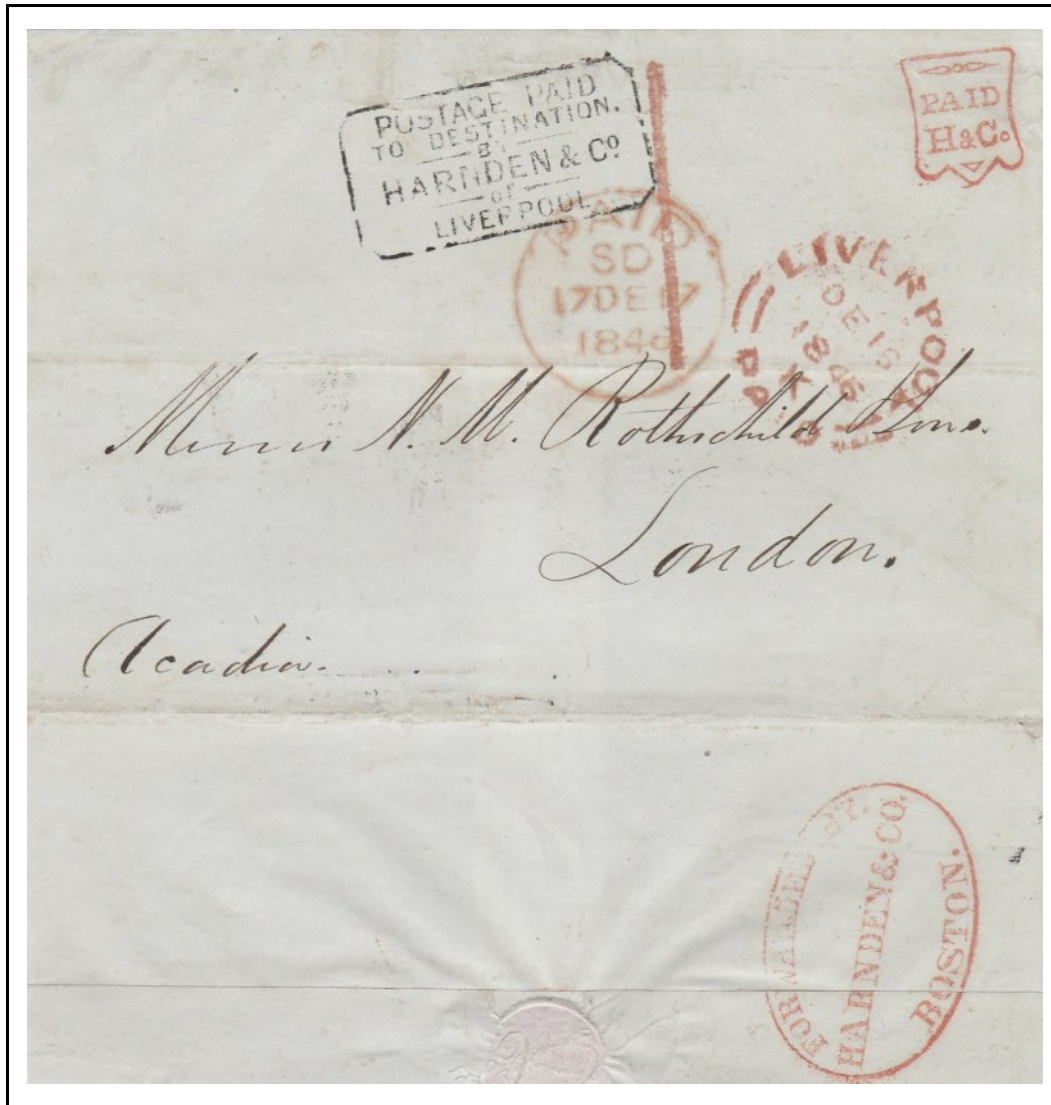


'VR 15FE15 1846'



Harnden as a regulated contract mail agent (February 22, 1842 to January 31, 1844) was forced to pay postage on letters handled on an individual basis rather than getting benefit of slightly lower bulk packet postage.

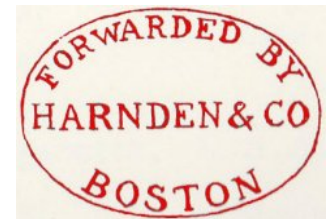
Wrapper sent from Boston via Liverpool to London
on board Cunard Line's 'Acadia' in December 1846



Listed in
Rowe as
known in
1849

Dated 1st December 1846.

'PAID H&Co' shield
'FORWARDED BY. / HARNDEN & CO / BOSTON.' oval



Cunard 'Acadia'
dep Boston 1st Dec 1846
arr Liverpool 16th Dec

'POSTAGE PAID / TO DESTINATION. / HARNDEN & Co / LIVERPOOL '
'LIVERPOOL PAID / DE 16 1846 K'

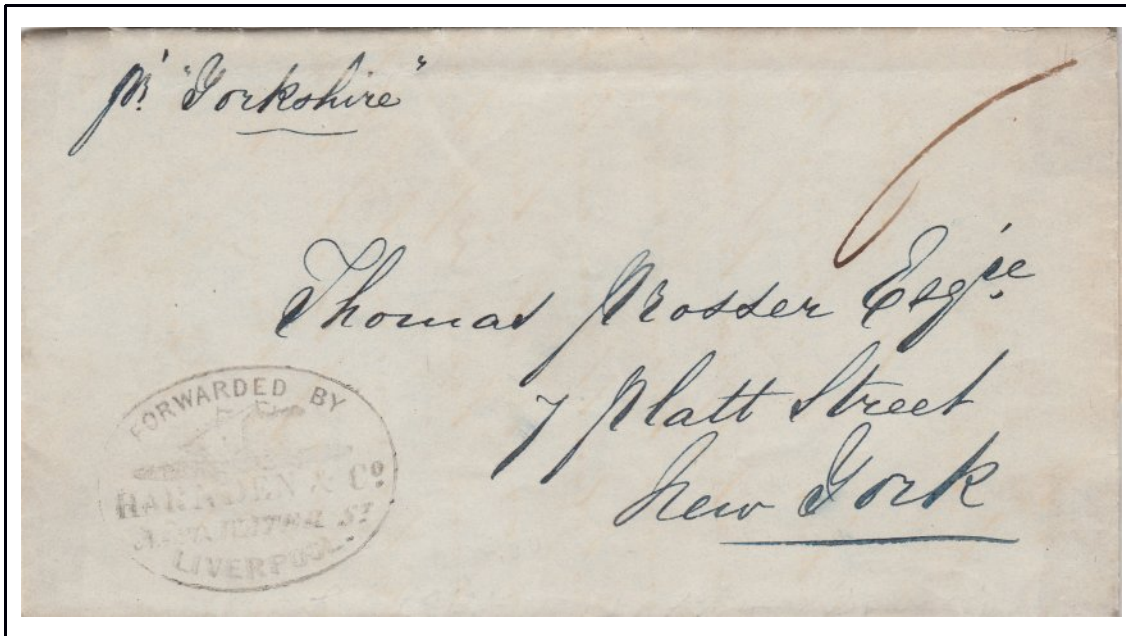
Red '1' for 1^D inland postage paid.

[Illustrated by Robertson]



This letter was sent under cover from the Boston Office to the Liverpool Office then forwarded, paid 1^D, to London
Prior to the 1848/1849 US – British Postal Treaty using a forwarder was the only way a letter could be pre-paid to destination.

Letter forwarded from Liverpool to New York by Harnden & Co on board
Black Ball Line's sailing vessel 'Yorkshire' in November 1844



Dated
"Liverpool 31 Oct 1844"

Harnden "Ship" cachet in black



'6' for 6¢ due as a ship letter addressed to the port.

Cover (consignee's letter) forwarded from Liverpool to Boston by Harnden & Co

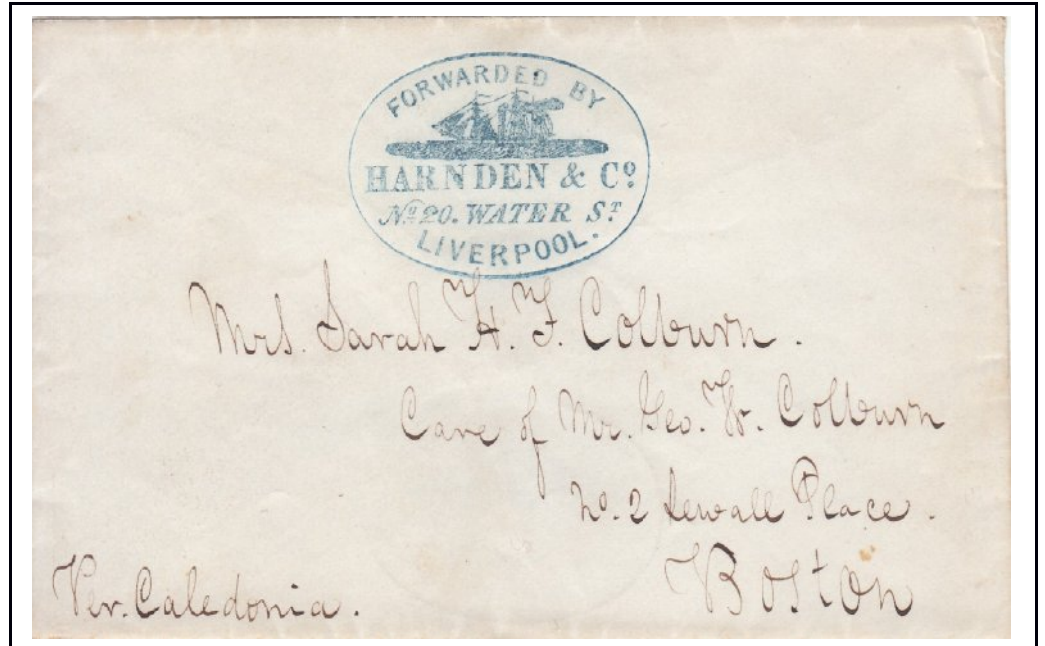
Harnden cachet in blue on front and back



No date annotation extant.

Rowe records the cachet from 1844 to 1848 in black and blue.

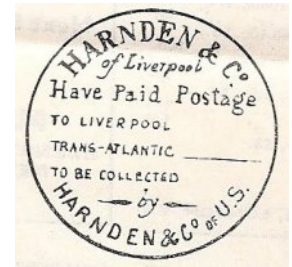
Rowe Rarity factor = 4
Scale: 1 low to 10 scarcest



Cover carried on board Cunard's 'Caledonia' and delivered by Harnden's to Boston for the agent of the addressee. Prior to 1848 Cunard operated only between Liverpool and Boston.

Most of the Harnden cachets listed by Rowe are rarity factor 2 or 3. Those at 4 and above are noted

Wrapper docketed "Jany 25, 1847" forwarded from Liverpool to Providence by Harnden & Co, probably via Cunard's 'Hibernia', January 1847



"...
Have Paid Postage
To Liverpool
Transatlantic 1/-
To be collected 1/-
..."
Noted (by recipient)
"33 cts paid out"
for 1/- equivalent plus
forwarding & handling

Cunard's 'Hibernia' dep Liverpool 5 Jan, arr Boston 25 Jan 1847

If the wrapper had been sent in the mail system the total charges would be 24¢ + 2¢ + 5¢ = 31¢

Wrapper forwarded from Liverpool via Boston to New York by Harnden & Co

"...
Have Paid Postage
To Liverpool 1/6
Transatlantic 1/-
To be collected 2/6"



On reverse



Wrapper probably carried by Cunard packet as rate of '1/-' has been paid by the forwarder and additional forwarding provided at Boston. The origin is probably beyond the UK.

"Have Paid Postage" cachet rated by Rowe as rarity = 6

Entire sent from Liverpool to Boston
on board Cunard Line's 'Niagara' in July 1848



Dated Liverpool 30th June 1848
Prepaid at Harnden's Liverpool office

Annotated "Niagara to Boston"
'PAID TO BOSTON by HARNDEN & C^o Liverpool' shield



carried privately on board the Cunard steamer to Boston

Cunard 'Niagara'
dep Liverpool 1st July 1848
arr Boston 12th July

Cover likely carried as part of a bundle or package.

This *Niagara* sailing was the 2nd westbound Cunard voyage to be subject to the US Post Office Retaliatory rates.

A single letter prepaid 1sh from UK to Boston on the same voyage would have been charged 24¢ by the Boston Post Office.

Harnden was operating as a private mail express company.

The shield is not listed in Rowe

Invoice raised by Harden's at Liverpool for handling goods shipped from the USA



Dated Liverpool,
16th December 1848

Paid 1d inland postage

'FORWARDED BY HARNDEN & C^o
N° 6 COOK S^t LIVERPOOL'
oval cachet



[Rarity 6 in Rowe]

'LIVERPOOL NO 16 1848 M'

London red 'FC 17 NO 17 1848'

The goods were carried by the merchant sailing ship 'Washington Irving' which arrived at Liverpool from Boston on 28th October 1848.

[Lloyd's List 30th October 1848]

[ex Booth]

Extracts from the letter:

"Dear Sir,

We have only today got through with the clearance of the 7 cases of Books ex 'Washington Irving' and ... we have this day forwarded them to the British Museum.

... our accounts of disbursements amounting in the aggregate to £41.14.0 towards a speedy settlement of which we will thank you to extend your influence. "

Letter from Boston addressed to Paris forwarded by Harnden to Liverpool and carried by Cunard's 'Canada' in January 1850



Dated
"Boston Jan 20 1850"



Smeared Liverpool, London and Calais transit marks

Cunard 'Canada'
dep New York 23 Jan
arr Liverpool 4 Feb

Letter forwarded by Harnden from Chelsea, Mass, to East Yell, Shetland Is, via Boston and Liverpool on board Cunard's 'America', March 1849

Dated:
"Chelsea, Mass, 20th
March 1849"



On reverse



and boxed receiver
'LERWICK AP 11 1849'

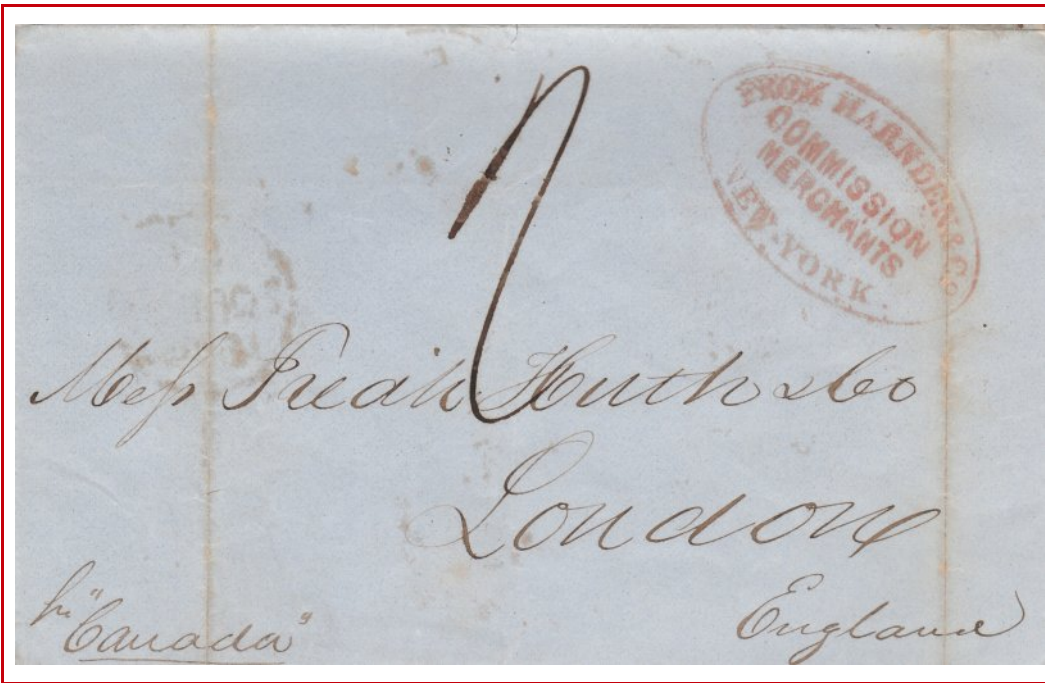
Cunard 'America'
dep Boston 21 Mar
arr Liverpool 3 Apr



Letter re-mailed in Liverpool on 4th April for 1 penny charge in red crayon.

Third eastbound Cunard voyage under the US-GB Postal Treaty of 15th December 1848.

Wrapper sent from New York via Liverpool to London
on board Cunard's 'Canada' in February 1849



"Dated 5th Feb 1849"

'FROM HARNDEN'S & CO /
COMMISSION MERCHANTS /
NEW - YORK'

not listed in Rowe

Cunard 'Canada'
dep New York 7 Feb
arr Liverpool 19 Feb

Carried on last eastbound
'Restored Rates' voyage

'1/-' postage due

on reverse:
'EJ 20FE20 1849'

ex Boettger

Paid undated piece sent from New York via Boston to Liverpool

circular 'PAID H & Co'
not listed in Rowe



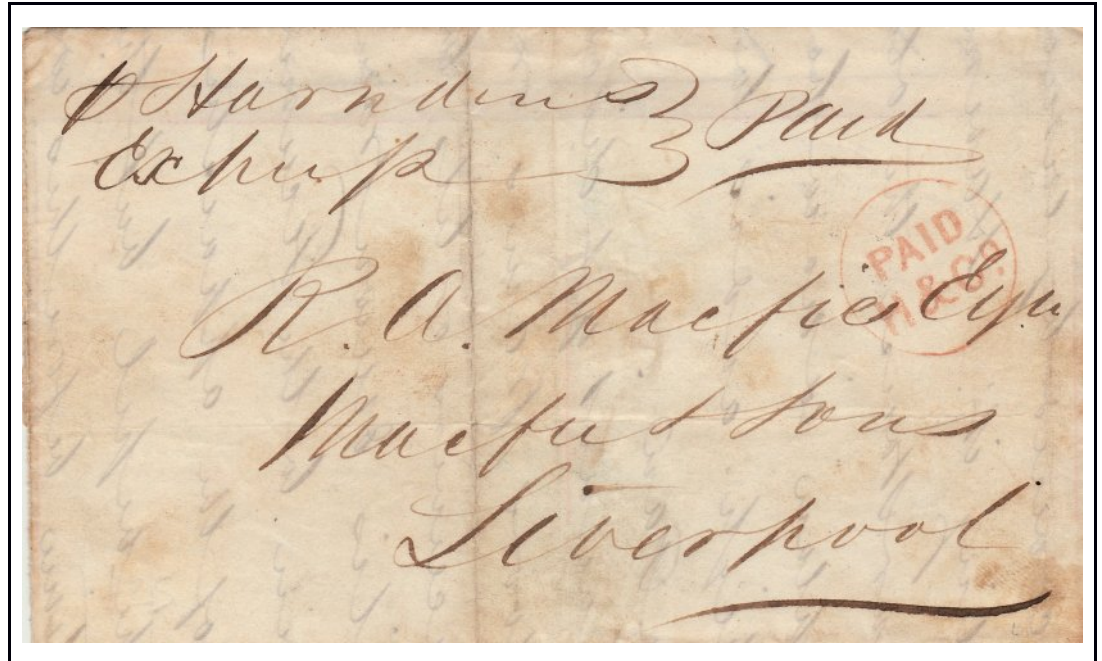
on reverse:
cachet of New York
forwarder HL & A Stuart

and red

'FORWARDED BY. /
HARNDEN & CO /
BOSTON'

listed by Rowe for 1848

no postal markings



The Anglo-US postal treaty of 1848 came into effect in February 1849. This allowed end to end payment from post office in one country to delivery office in the other. The packet rate remained at 1 shilling or 24¢ for the 1st half ounce. The 'Restored Rates' period extended from the signing until the enactment of the treaty.

Letter sent from Liverpool via Southampton and New York to Boston
on board Ocean Line's 'Hermann' in March 1849



'PAID TO NEW YORK --- by --- HARNDEN & C° LIVERPOOL.'

Liverpool accountancy
'3 CENTS' debit [Tab M31]

On reverse:
'LIVERPOOL MR24 1849 C'
'LONDON MR 26'

Ocean Line 'Hermann'
dep Southampton 26 Mar
arr New York 13 Apr

Closed bag to ...
Boston '24'
24¢ due [B&D 714]

Oval not listed in Rowe, ex Ellis, one other Oval known

Letter sent from Gateshead to New York on board Collins' Line 'Arctic' in November 1853

'Postage Paid /
To destination
/ -by- /
HARNDEN C°
/ of /
Liverpool'

Label **rated 10** in Rowe

'LIVERPOOL NO29 1853 E4'
'L NO29 B'

'21 CENTS'
accountancy credit [M46]

Collins 'Arctic'
dep Liverpool 30 Nov
arr New York 11 Dec

'... AM PKT PAID 24 '

Both letters were sent via the
regular mails incurring postal
charges.

The Harnden foreign mail offices
were closed in 1851.

ex Ellis

