

STEAMSHIP MAIL IN THE EARLY DECIMAL PERIOD OF NEWFOUNDLAND 1865-1910

Newfoundland is “Britain’s oldest colony”, and St. John’s, its capital city, is “North America’s oldest city”. The story of the development of its steamship routes, **the purpose of this postal history exhibit**, is the story of the growth and maturation of its maritime postal arrangements, not only for transport of the mails for its residents around the island, but also to the rest of North America as well as for the trans-Atlantic mails to Great Britain.

My story begins almost from the start of steamship communication around the island, and also from the early days of reliable steamship communication to the rest of North America and to Great Britain. It traces the development of coastal, North American, and trans-Atlantic mail routes originating from on the island.

Also shown are special routing accommodations; i.e., the winter mails when icebound northern harbors necessitated overland domestic courier routes, and winter mails to Halifax when North Atlantic sailings were instead routed through that Canadian port.

I begin my story at the start of the decimal period in 1865 when the adoption of steamships for Newfoundland’s mail conveyance was in its earliest stages, showing relevant postal history from the first “Cents” issue of 1865 and, following with postal history from the next four decades of postal issues, through to the end of the normal period of use of the last printings (1908-1910) of the “Royal Family” and “Map” issues, and otherwise to when the steamship routes were well and fully established for the domestic and foreign mails. I thus end before the great disruptions resulting from WWI and the slow eventual insolvency of the island’s economy.

Items of particular philatelic significance (i.e., rarity or importance) are shown on rose colored matting, and are also described using rarity statements in **red bold italics**.

Abbreviations: ABNC - American Bank Note Company
BABNC - British American Bank Note Company



In researching the routing of my covers, the *analysis* of their *postal history*, I have used archival documents (e.g., the *Almanacs* and daily newspapers of the period) to determine the names, and sailing dates, of most all the vessels identified within my descriptions. **This extends, in significant measure, what is otherwise only briefly reported in the standard philatelic references for this period. Such personal study and research is shown in bold italicized text within the write up under each cover.** The viewer may thus assume all such vessel identification as is indicated has been established and verified through personal research in archival documents.

Although my *primary* emphasis is on the development of the steamship routes, my *secondary* emphases, to increase the *depth* of the exhibit, are to show usages of the stamps and postal stationery from this period, to utilize a wide variety of town and travelling post offices (T.P.O.) postmarks, and to include both common and less common rates. *Not only are a variety of uncommon routes shown, a variety of uncommon or unique covers and postmarks are included, as well as some particularly scarce postal rates.*

Plan of the Exhibit

- I. Coastal Mails
- II. Labrador Mails
- III. Foreign Mails
 - The Cross Gulf Routes
 - BNA and Canada
 - United States
 - St. Pierre and Miquelon
 - Great Britain

References:

- Pratt, R.J., *The Nineteenth Century Postal History of Newfoundland* (1985). Chicago, IL: Collectors Club.
- Stalker, B.S., *Travelling Post Office Postmarks of Newfoundland and Labrador* (2004). Calgary, AB: Auxano Philatelic Services/ British North America Philatelic Society.
- Whaley, S., *Newfoundland: 1865-1879 The New York Printings - a Cover Study* (2004). Opp, AL: privately printed by the author.