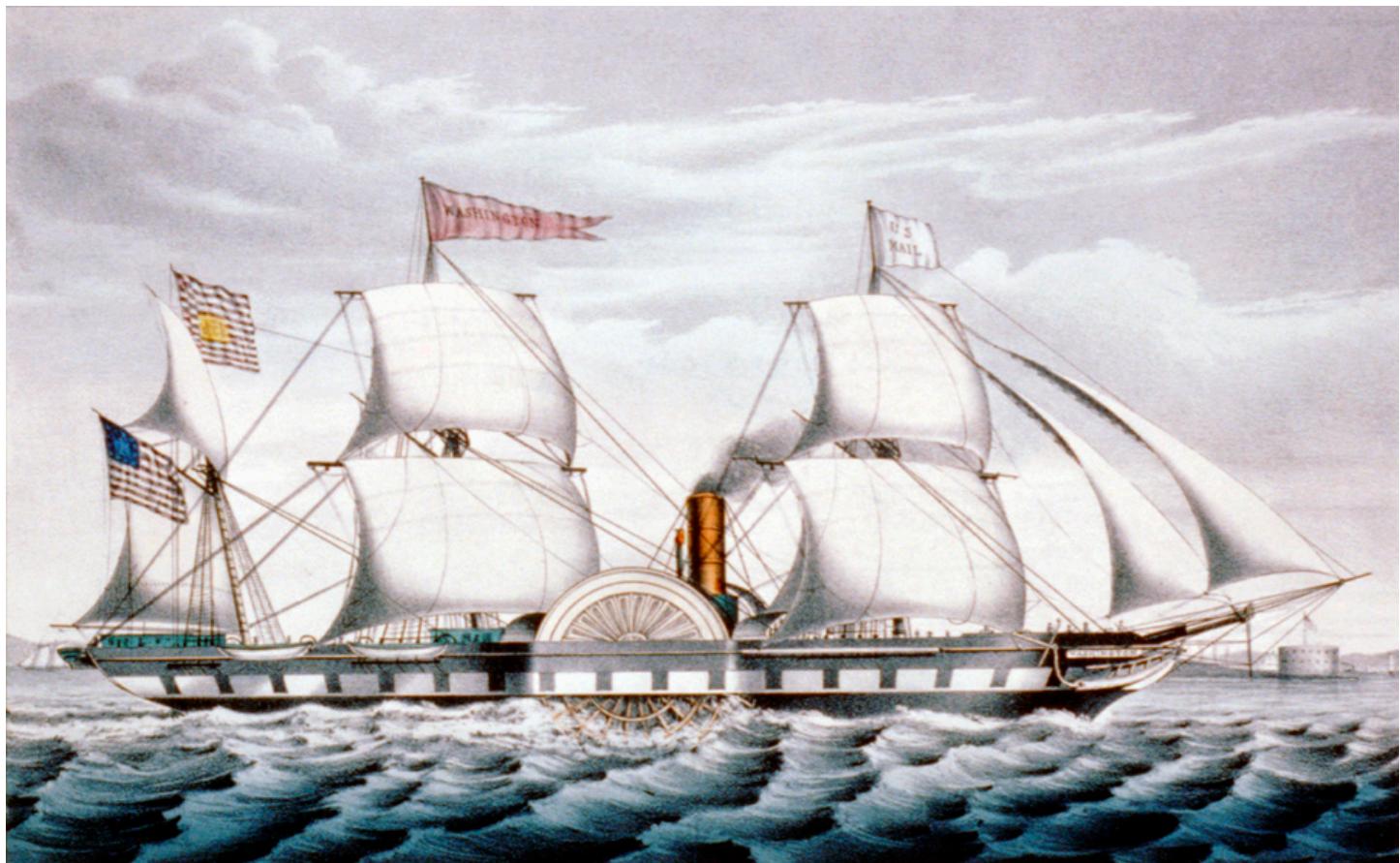
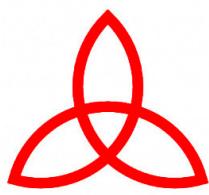


Quaker

Irish Famine Relief

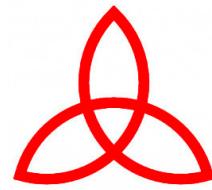


USMS Washington of the Ocean Steam Navigation Company



Quaker Charity

During Black '47

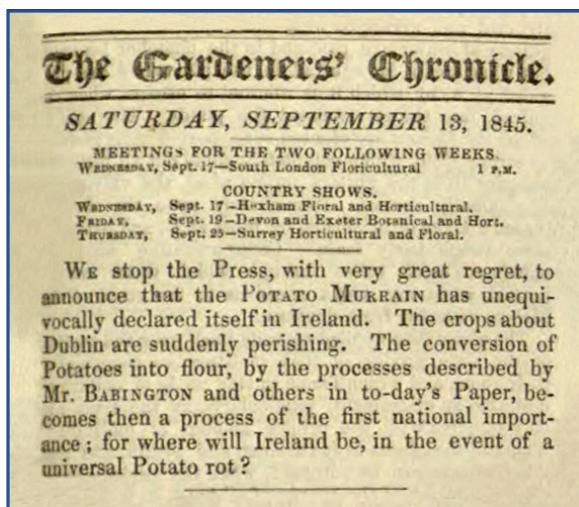


The infamous potato blight first appeared in Ireland in 1845 causing a partial failure of the crop. There was no major loss of life at that time. The majority of the population had been reduced to living on as small as a quarter of an acre of land, and the potato was their only sustenance. They knew what to do for there had been several periods of food shortages previously in the century. The strategy was to pawn all possessions and use the money to help their families survive until the next harvest. The expected new crop of 1846 was a total failure. The Irish were faced with the horror of inescapable starvation.

One of the religious tenets of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, is the performance of humanitarian deeds for the greater good. Once the situation became obviously harrowing, Dublin Irish Quakers led by Joseph Bewley and Jonathan Pim established the Central Relief Committee (hereafter CRC) to organize and disseminate the donations that began to pour in. They had no idea of the magnitude or duration of the calamity before them. The CRC worked closely in tandem with the Quakers of the London Relief Committee (LRC) and the Quakers of the General Relief Committee (hereafter GRC) in New York City, many of whom were relatives.

The first full year of operation of the CRC was 1847, often referred to as Black '47. Early on the overwhelming volume of mail caused them to move their headquarters from 57 William Street to a larger venue at 43 Fleet Street. Several interesting philatelic situations occurred during the course of the correspondence. This non-competitive exhibit presents an overview of the Quaker effort during that year. All of the following items, arranged chronologically, are of historical importance; philatelically significant items are framed in red.

... where will Ireland be in the event of a universal Potato rot?



One of the first reports of the potato blight from the Gardeners' Chronicle of 13 September 1845.

Early Fear

... present alarming accounts as to the potatoe rot...

The first reports of a potato blight appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* of 11 September 1845, and the *Gardeners' Chronicle* of 13 September. This comment in a commercial letter, just a month later, attests to the growing concern.



18 October 1845 — datelined Liverpool and addressed to the Quaker shipping firm of Abraham Bell; Orange-red (color indicating pre-payment) PAID AT/LIVERPOOL/OC 18 truncated box and one shilling '1/-' handstamps applied; docketed 'P Paid' and endorsed 'per Caledonia.'

19 October 1845 — after a one day delay the *RMS Caledonia*, E.G. Lott Commander, set sail for Boston and New York, carrying British newspapers of that date.

The blue manuscript 7 is the 5¢ postage Boston to New York plus 2¢ Captain's fee, as per U.S. Domestic Rates change of March 3, 1845, effective July 1st.

The Gardeners' Chronicle.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1845.

MEETINGS FOR THE TWO FOLLOWING WEEKS

WEDNESDAY, Sept. 17—South London Floricultural 1 P.M.

COUNTRY SHOWS.

WEDNESDAY, Sept. 17—Harrow Floricultural and Horticultural.
FRIDAY, Sept. 19—Devon and Exeter Botanical and Hort.
THURSDAY, Sept. 25—Surrey Horticultural and Flor.

We stop the Press, with very great regret, to announce that the POTATO MURKAIN has unequivocally declared itself in Ireland. The crops about Dublin are suddenly perishing. The conversion of Potatoes into flour, by the processes described by Mr. BABINGTON and others in to-day's Paper, becomes then a process of the first national importance; for where will Ireland be, in the event of a universal Potato rot?

Snide Remark

Old England is proving herself a nursing mother to Ould Ireland.



7 September 1846 — datelined Liverpool to Dublin; Dublin '466' handstamp ties Penny Red; Black LIVER-POOL/SP 7/1846/C double arc circle and Red Dublin 8D/SE 8/46 diamond frame backstamps.

This otherwise routine business letter ends with a very derogatory remark during this great calamity.



Philadelphia Response

Quakers Jacob Harvey and Abraham Bell were partners in New York in one of the largest American shipping firms of the time. Harvey received a letter from Joseph Bewley and Jonathan Pim in Dublin describing the conditions in their country and announcing that the Central Relief Committee had been organized and ready to receive charitable contributions for the destitute Irish. Harvey played a pivotal role raising funds and public awareness of the tragedy when he had the Quaker newspaper *The Friend* reprint the very descriptive letter. He also had copies decimated to other acquaintances such as Thomas Pim Cope, a leading Quaker entrepreneur of Philadelphia with kin on the Dublin CRC.

With the letter below Thomas Cope forwards £400 from a group headed by the Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court John B. Gibson. They had already collected funds for Ireland, but were hesitating as they looked for a trustworthy conduit. Cope recommended the CRC and the enclosed draft was the result.



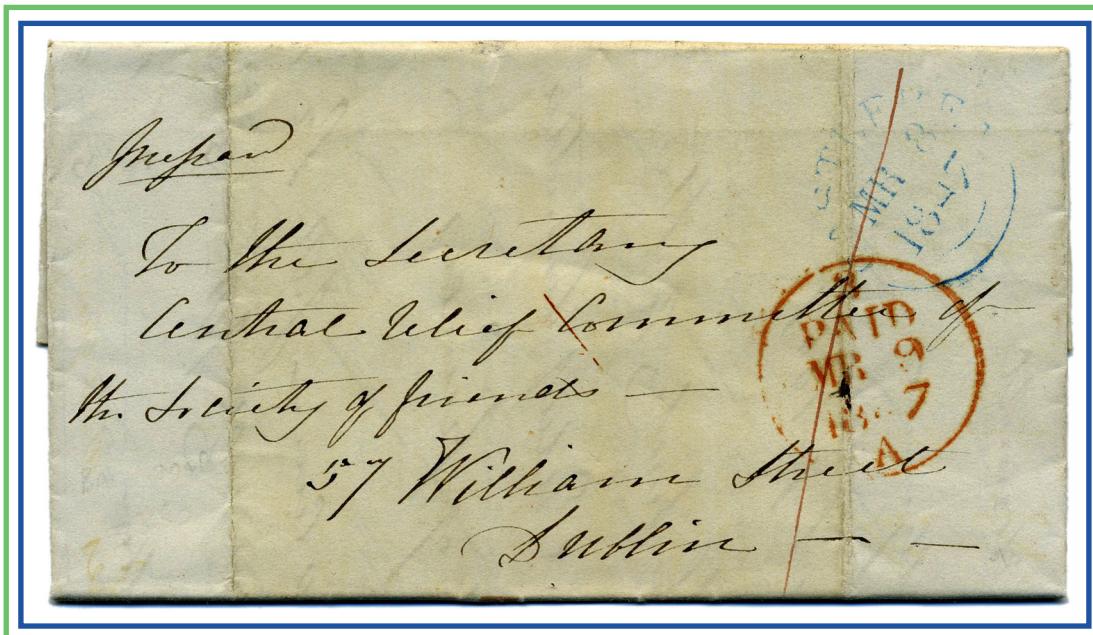
29 January 1847 — PHILADELPHIA/Pa./10 Blue 30mm JAN/29 pmk with PAID within DL truncated box, paying the over 300 mile rate to Boston.

15 February 1847 — rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black handstamp '1/-'; an indistinct black Liverpool transit marking applied to backside.

17 February 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 28mm 1/FE 17/1847/C arrival backstamp was applied.

Ballintober & Drumtemple Committee

This letter written by Relief Committee Chairman of both Ballintober & Drumtemple, Co Roscommon, Patrick O'Connor reports on the establishment of soup kitchens in both parishes and thanks the Central Relief Committee for the support. It also lists the sums several locals have contributed to the relief effort, including himself.



7 March 1847 — datelined in Co Roscommon from Committee Chairman Patrick O'Connor; endorsed 'prepaid'; ms '/' indicating universal rate.

8 March 1847 — Blue CASTLERA/MR 8/1847 double arc circle hs; BALLYMOE (Co Galway) SL transit backstamp.

9 March 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 28mm 3/PAID/ MR 9/1847/A handstamp was applied to address panel.

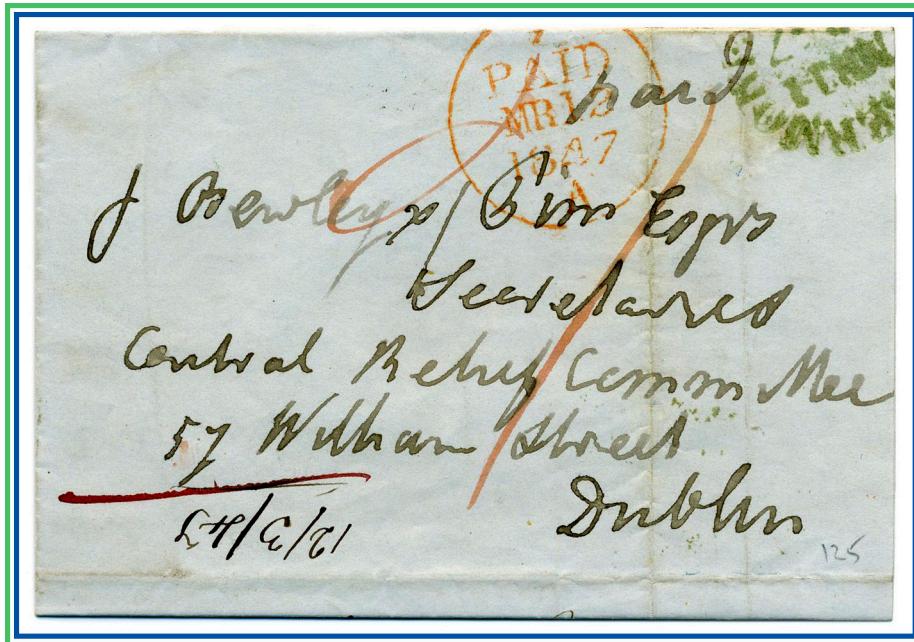
BALLYMOE

Mail Handling

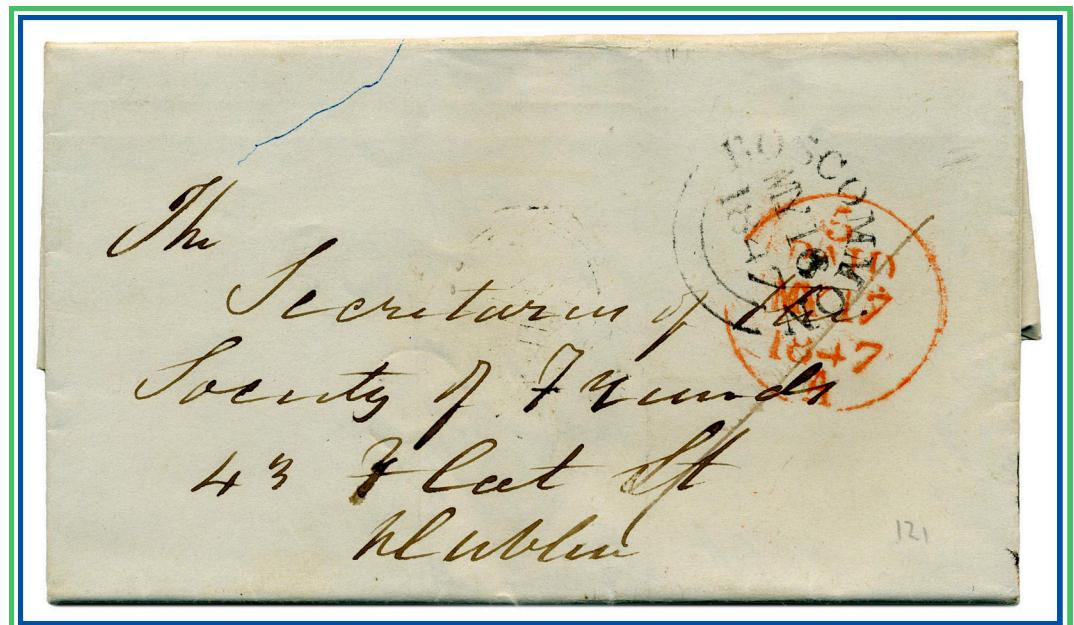
The Society of Friends set up their Central Relief Committee (CRC) in the Temple Bar area of Dublin at 57 William Street towards the end of 1846. It was essential to have an established address which could be publicized to receive donations and requests for aid. During 1846-47 they received or wrote over 4,000 pieces of mail. The tiny office was overwhelmed from the start. The Quakers described the work involved in print:

The numerous letters which daily arrived were opened and arranged by a member of the Committee, who kindly volunteered his services for this important duty, and whose whole time was devoted to this and other office arrangements. He was assisted by a paid secretary and the necessary staff of clerks.

Better accommodation was secured in the top floor and attic at 43 Fleet Street near today's Oliver St. John Gogarty Restaurant and Pub. The change of address took place between March and May of 1847.



11 March 1847 — datelined and postmarked TOBERMORE/MR 11/1847 and a 28mm orange-red Dublin (?)/PAID/MR 13/1847 hs; ms ' /' Uniform Penny Postage Rate.



16 May 1847 — datelined Runcimede and postmarked with a 26mm double arc ROSCOM-MON/MY 18/1847 and a 28mm orange-red Dublin 5/PAID/MY 17/1847/A hs; ms ' /' Uniform Penny Postage Rate.

First Quaker Excursion ~ Soup Kitchens Established

Many British that felt that the published newspaper accounts of the early days of the Irish famine were greatly overstated. Just prior to the establishment of the Dublin CRC, William Forster, a leading English Quaker, took it upon himself to begin an excursion into Ireland. The object of the journey was to distribute aid already collected and accurately report back to the Dublin and London Quakers on the conditions encountered. He served a major function by recruiting correspondents for the Dublin CRC. Traveling by mail car Forster found that the newspaper accounts were "...by no means exaggerated."

This letter was written by one of Forster's traveling activist companions, Joshua Harvey, M.D., a member of the CRC. It gives an accounting of aid distributed by Forster, in particular several 'boilers' (iron caldrons) for local soup kitchens. A historically significant enclosure gives a specific outline for the standard operation of a Quaker soup kitchen. Harvey mentions that he has written in advance to the Postmaster of Sligo asking him to hold any mail directed to Forster until the group gets there.



16 March 1847 — datelined Ballina and directed to William Todhunter, who was the head of the CRC Seed Distribution Sub-Committee; stamped with a serifed 27.5mm BALLINA/MR16/1847 double arc postal marking.

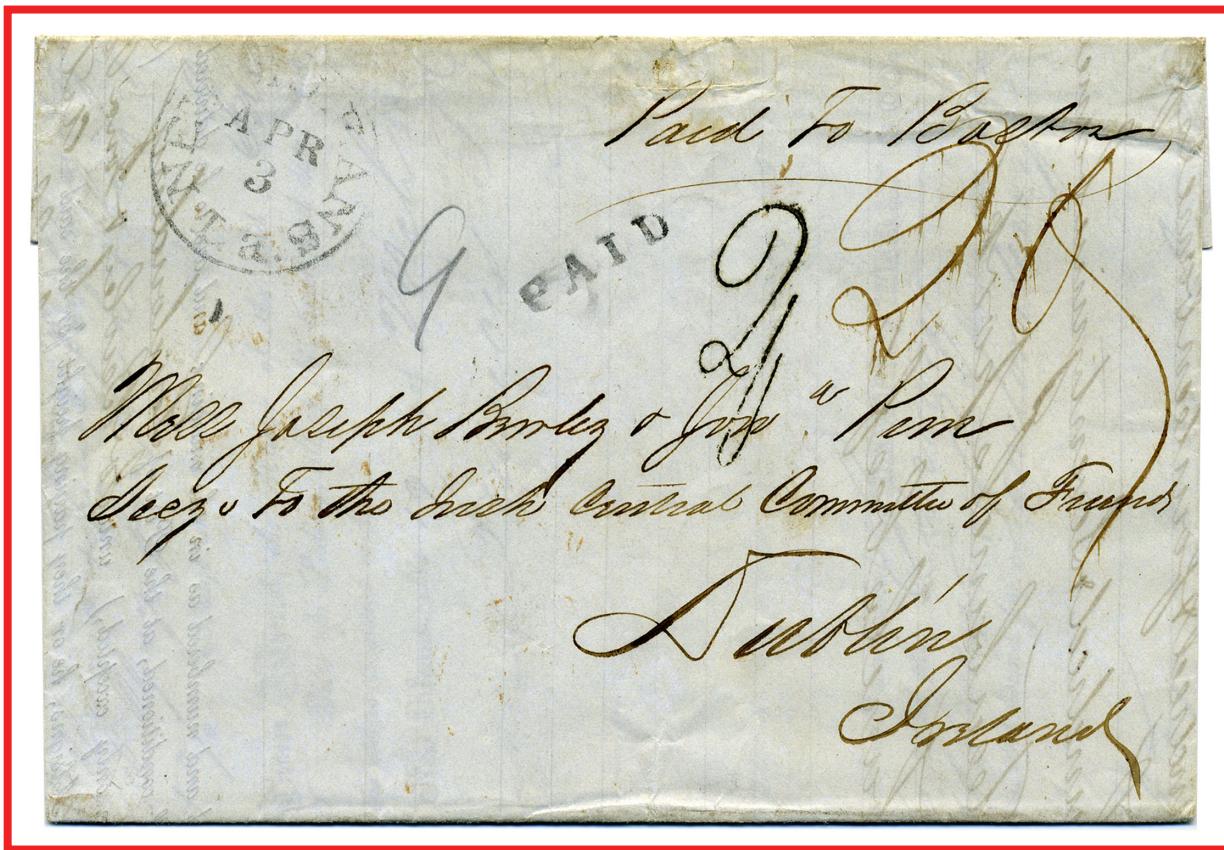
17 March 1847 — an orange-red 29mm 1/PAID/MR17/1847/A arrival handstamp applied in Dublin; ms '/' pen slash indicating Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840, ms 'J.P.' apparently refers the letter to Jonathan Pim, CRC Co-Secretary.

NB — As the head of the CRC Seed Distribution Sub-Committee, the above addressee William Todhunter initiated the scheme of utilizing the British mail system for dispersal. Some 40,903 small landholders received grants of agricultural seeds resulting in an estimated 9,652 acres of crops producing 193,040 tons of food in 1847. He also served on the Clothing Committee, and even spent three months on the CRC leased trawler *Erne* in search of suitable locations for Irish fisheries on the Western coast.

William Forster acting on behalf of his friends places in the hands of Liam Bourne, Jas O'Donel & Frederic Carey - Rosspost -
 30 Bars of Rice
 45 Bars of Biscuit
 15 Barrels of Indian Meal
 15 Bars of Peas -
 To be distributed amongst 30 families of the most destitute of the poor in their neighbourhood, under the following regulation, & in the following proportions -
 L. Bourne, J. O'Donel & F. Carey each to nominate 10 families & the whole 30 so nominated to be approved by the whole Comm^{ee} & the list so approved to be signed by all three members of the Comm^{ee}.
 The distribution to take place three times a week - one Meal, one Rice & one Biscuit.
 Of the Meal. Father & Mother each one quart - all above 15 years each one pint & all under 15 years half a pint -
 Of the Rice - half the above quantity
 Of the Biscuit - Father & Mother each 3 - all above 15. Each all under 15 - 1
 The Peas to be divided - 5 Bars to each of the members for soup kitchens in their respective localities - but not to be used for any other purpose -

The American Response

U.S. Vice President George Mifflin Dallas called the largest national mass meeting to date on February 9, 1847, to establish a National Relief Committee for the coordination of aid to Ireland. Senators, Congressmen, and members of the Supreme Court joined to hear Daniel Webster deliver the keynote address. It was resolved that mayors of major seaports from Boston to New Orleans, lead by New York and Philadelphia, were to set up local committees as hubs to accept and organize the shipping of contributions. Every American city, town, and village was encouraged to form its own local relief committee — and this spider-webbed organization actually worked. As a result of the meeting, the Society of Friends (Quakers) were selected as major participants in the delivery of aid to Ireland.



19 March 1847 — Dated Bill of Lading from Cincinnati of contributions of foodstuffs for the poor of Ireland to be shipped on the Barque *Envoy* sailing from New Orleans to Londonderry.

20

3 April 1847 — Posted with NEW ORLEANS/La/APR 3 cds and PAID handstamp struck; manuscript '20' indicating the U.S. internal rate for a double weight letter traveling over 300 miles; manuscript 'Paid to Boston'.

1 May 1847 — RMS *Cambria* departed Boston.

14 May 1847 — RMS *Cambria* arrived in Liverpool where it received a black '2/-' (Tabeart M72) double rate handstamp and a 25mm transit AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/MY 14/1847 backstamp.

15 May 1847 — Orange-Red 28mm 2/MY 15/1847/C received backstamp applied in Dublin.

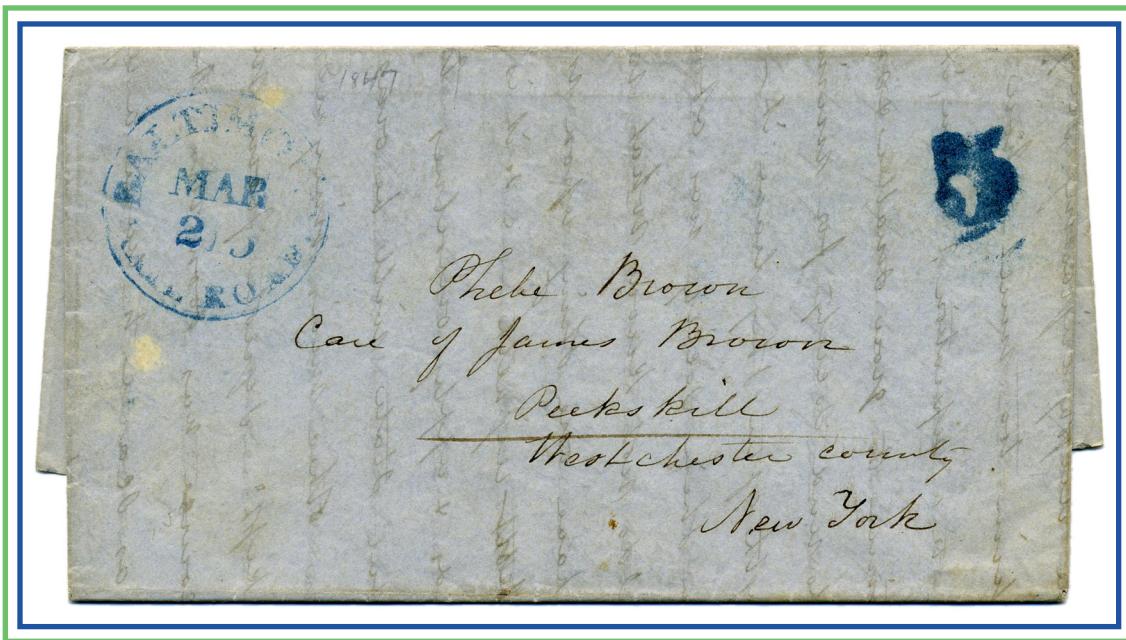


V.P. George Mifflin Dallas

Baltimore Contributions

This letter between two Quaker women mentions the local famine relief effort:

Dr has entered into the subject of the sufferings in Ireland with all the warmth of his sanguine disposition. He wrote & talked about it & circulated very extensively the friends' appeal & plan for their relief. All the funds raised here by the public have been sent to Friends Central Committee. Our little meeting of 200 men women, & children & most of them in very modest circumstances, raised a thousand & 75 dollars. About as much more was handed in by others. One poor oysterman gave Dr \$30.



24 March 1847 — datelined Baltimore

25 March 1847 — Blue 30mm BALTIMORE/RAIL ROAD/MAR/25 handstamp and matching '5' rate stamp; no backstamps; letter addressed to Phebe Brown, Peekskill, New York.

William Todhunter

The addressee of this letter was a very active principal member of the Dublin CRC. As the head of the Seed Distribution Sub-Committee, William Todhunter initiated the scheme of utilizing the British mail system for dispersal. Some 40,903 small landholders received grants of agricultural seeds resulting in an estimated 9,652 acres of crops producing 193,040 tons of food in 1847. He also served on the Clothing Committee and even spent three months on the CRC leased trawler *Erne* in search of potential locations for Irish fisheries on the Western coast. In all likelihood this letter was mailed during an early CRC excursion into Mayo.



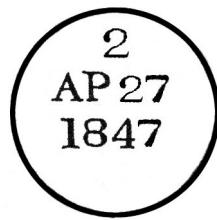
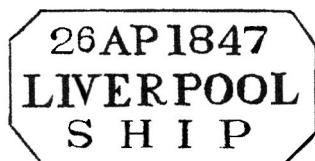
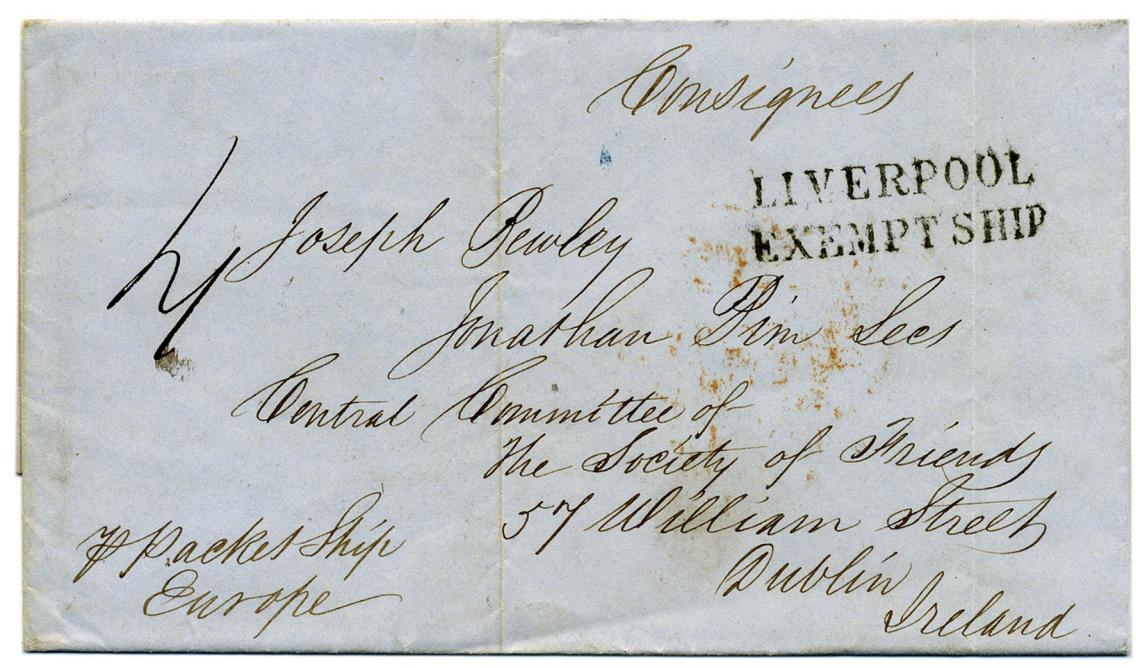
29 March 1847 — Blue BALLINA/MR29/1847 double arc circle with appropriate diamond shaped barred numeral obliterator '29' handstamp tying 1D Red (GC).

30 March 1847 — Orange-Red Dublin 4/MR30/1847/A backstamp applied.



Exempt Consignees

Under 3/4 Victoria C96 para 35, 'consignees' letters paid no Ship Letter rate, and no Inland Rate if addressed to the port of entry. In this case the manuscript 4 postage due indicates the reduced rate of 2d for the Master's gratuity plus 2d for double rate postage from Liverpool to Dublin. The fine for fraudulently endorsing a letter as 'Consignees' was a then hefty £10.



Backstamps

30 March 1847 — The *Packet Ship Europe* cleared from New York on this date. This letter, from the Office of the Quaker Irish Relief Standing Committee to the Dublin CRC was endorsed *Consignees* and *Packet Ship Europe*, then was handed directly to the ship purser.

26 April 1847 — stamped on arrival at Liverpool with the scarce/rare LIVERPOOL/EXEMPT ship (Tabeart Type EXSL1, in use 1840-1864) marking. The manuscript 4 postage due is the reduced rate of 2d for the Master's gratuity plus 2d for double rate postage from Liverpool to Dublin. Under 3/4 Victoria C96 para 35, 'consignees' letters paid no Ship Letter rate, and no Inland Rate if addressed to the port of entry. The Post Office was allowed to recover the cost of the Master's gratuity and could charge Inland Postage at the prepaid rate if addressed elsewhere. On the reverse is a Type S16 truncated box 26 AP 1847/LIVERPOOL/SHIP handstamp.

27 April 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel, an orange-red 27mm 2/AP 27/F(?) Dublin backstamp was added.



Packet Ship Europe

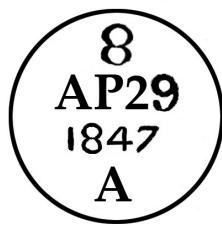
New York—Liverpool—Dublin

The Irish Quaker merchant banking firm of Brown, Shipley & Co. was used to convert and funnel cash donations to the Central Relief Committee in Ireland. Here it is transferring a check for Nashville, Tennessee, in the amount of £535.14.3 This letter was sent on the packet ship *Ashburton* which was owned by the Quaker transatlantic shipping firm of Grinnell, Minturn & Co. Robert Bowne Minturn was in charge of organizing shipping for the G.R.C. The original letter was sent on the British owned packet ship *Margaret Evans*. A daily journal was written during this voyage and published as *Diary, Sketches and Reviews: During an European Tour, in the Year 1847*, by Robert Dodge, New York: 1850.



6 April 1847 — Datelined New York and handed to the ship purser, not U.S. markings; endorsed 'pr Ashburton via Lpool'; the ship sets sail.

27 April 1847 — Packet Ship *Ashburton* arrives in Liverpool; Hook '8' Ship Letter Rate of 1840 handstamp applied; backstamped with a Black transit truncated box 27AP1847/LIVERPOOL/SHIP handstamp.



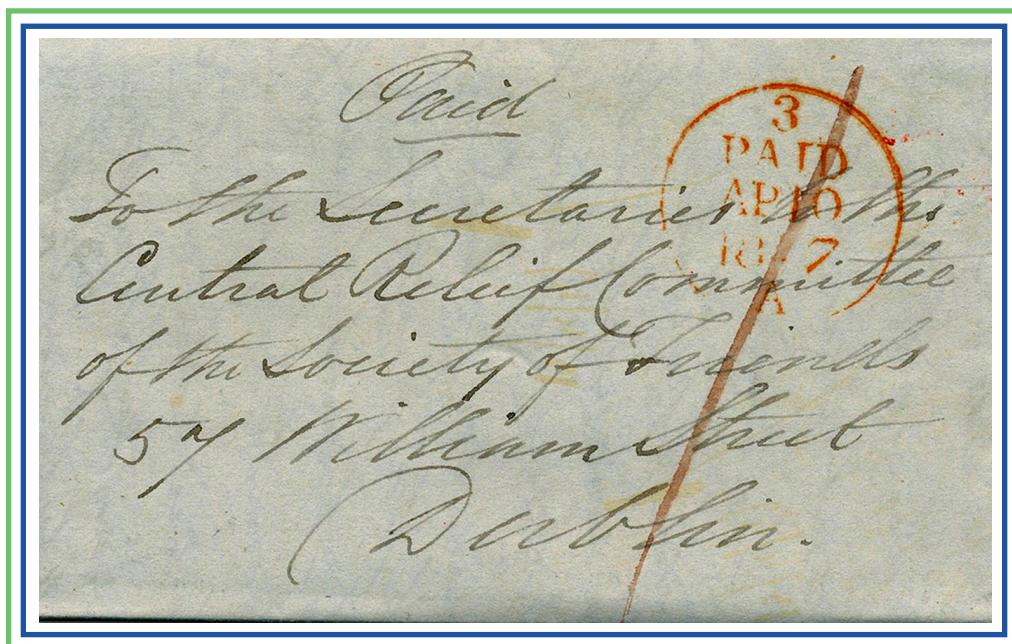
29 April 1847 — Orange-Red 28mm 8/AP 29/1847/A received backstamp applied in Dublin.

Backstamps

Domestic Correspondents

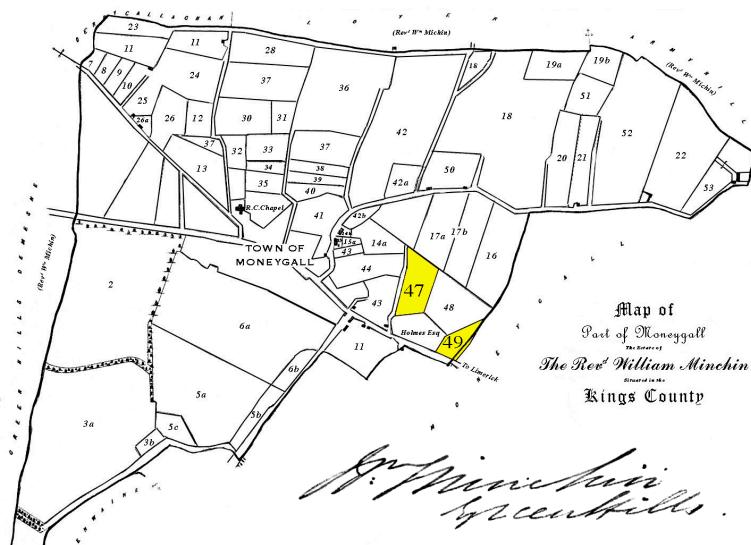
Local relief committees were organized throughout all of Ireland. To assist in the orderly distribution and the assessment of the effectiveness of relief aid, the Dublin CRC relied on correspondence from the local chairmen. They were large landowners or clergy, without regard to religious denomination. The sender of this letter, Chairman of the Moneygall Relief Committee (County Offaly) Rev. William Minchin, was both landowner and clergyman. Notably, he was the landlord for the **Kearney family, who are the direct ancestors of U.S. President Barack Obama.**

Rev. Minchin writes about an 80 gallon 'boiler' (iron caldron) which was used in the local 'soup kitchen' that was proving insufficient to serve his district population of 163 families with 1,021 people. Here he asks that the Quakers donate another larger capacity boiler as they were doing throughout the country.



9 April 1847 — dated Moneygall Relief Committee; ms *Paid* indicating prepayment; backstamped with a black serifed 27.5mm MONEYGALL/AP9/1847 double arc postal marking.

10 April 1847 — an orange-red 29mm 3/PAID/AP10/1847/A arrival handstamp applied in Dublin; '/' pen slash indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840.



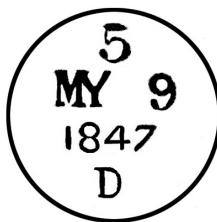
The letter signature of the Reverend Minchin superimposed on an 1851 map of part of his estate in Moneygall with the Kearney family parcels highlighted.

The Baltimore IRC

Vice President George Mifflin Dallas called the largest mass meeting in U.S. history to that time. It began on February 9, 1847, at the Odd Fellows Hall in Washington, D.C., with the view to develop a National Relief Committee to organize a countrywide charitable response to the Great Irish Famine. Many Senators (15) and Congressmen (10) volunteered to serve on its board.

A series of resolutions was adopted asking mayors of the major seaboard cities to set up local committees as hubs to accept and facilitate the shipping of donations. Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston were chosen, with New York and New Orleans being named the major conduits. As a result of this national meeting, the Society of Friends (Quakers) was selected as a major agent.

Hugh Jenkins, the Irish Protestant treasurer of the Baltimore IRC, asks in this letter that the soon to arrive contributions from his locale be distributed to Waterford, Sligo, and Galway. This item went via New York and was rated as a Freight Money letter.



Backstamps

9 April 1847 — Datelined Baltimore; Blue 31mm BALTIMORE/M^D APR 9 postmark with matching PAID handstamp (U.S. inland fee paid to NYC).

11 April 1847 — ms '5' (credit to U.S.) above '12½' in upper right (Sailing Ship Freight Money Fee which was paid to the sailing packet company by the New York postmaster); Ship *John R. Skiddy*, built by McKay & Pickett in 1844, sails from New York.

8 May 1847 — *John R. Skiddy* arrives in Liverpool; Hook '8' Ship Letter Rate of 1840 handstamp applied; backstamped 8 MY 1847/LIVERPOOL/SHIP within truncated box frame.

5 May 1847 — Orange-Red 28mm 5/MY 9/1847/D received backstamp applied in Dublin.

NB — Early non-contract packets companies imposed 'Freight Money' fees on letters that they carried privately. Single letter rates were 25¢ for steamships and 12½¢ for sailing ships, as in this case. The fees were paid to the packet companies by the postmaster. This practice was in effect from approximately 1838 through 1848. However, very few examples are recorded after 1845 because most mail was by then carried on faster Cunard steamships, not the slower sailing packets.

"This is one of only five freight money covers that I have in my records for Baltimore after 1 July 1845. It is a very late use." — Richard F. Winter

Baltimore Contributions

The Irish Protestant treasurer of the Baltimore IRC Hugh Jenkins, continues to ask in this letter that contributions from his locale be distributed to Waterford, Sligo, and Galway.



9 April 1847 — datelined Baltimore.

28 April 1847 — BALTIMORE/Md. Blue 30mm APR/28 pmk with matching PAID and '10' in circle handstamps, paying the over 300 mile rate to Boston; ms 'Cambria Boston Liverpool'.

1 May 1847 — *Cambria* departs Boston.

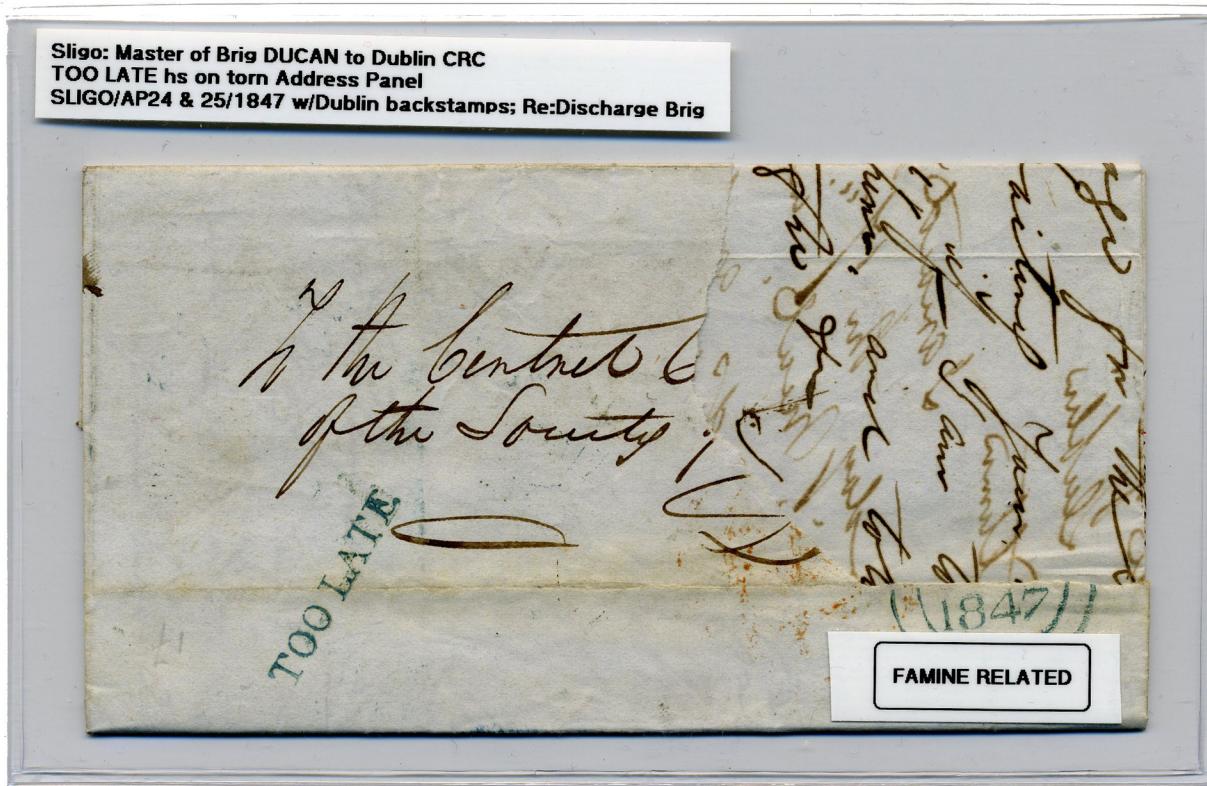
14 May 1847 — *Cambria* arrives; rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black '1/-' handstamp; a 25mm transit AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/MY 14/1847 backstamp.

15 May 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 28mm 2/MY15/1847/C arrival backstamp was applied.

17 May 1847 — interior side docket: 'Ans'd 17/5/1847'

Chaff

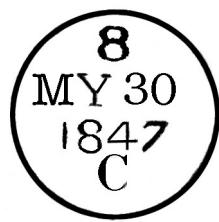
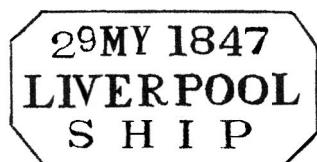
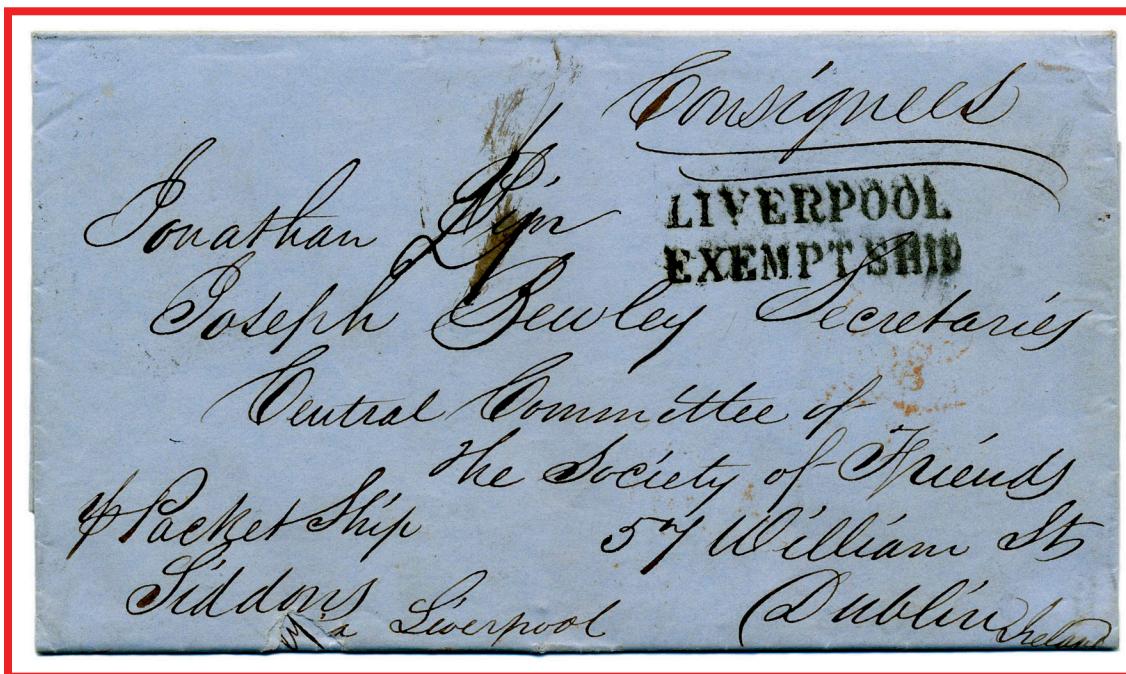
Sligo: Master of Brig DUCAN to Dublin CRC
TOO LATE hs on torn Address Panel
SLIGO/AP24 & 25/1847 w/Dublin backstamps; Re:Discharge Brig



Diaspora Aid Homeland

Often quoted in Irish history books, this letter from New York's General Relief Committee Charirman Myndert van Schaick speaks for itself:

...I have promised two old Irish gentlemen who came to this room abounding in sympathy and thankfulness, that I would say to you that a letter has been received from Thomas Swanton of Cranlieth, Co. Cork, representing the extreme destitution and misery of the large Parish of Skull. East Skull, a half parish, 6 miles long and 8 broad, containing 8,000 inhabitants is particularly recommended to your attention. Though we clearly see the danger and the impropriety of interfering with your system by giving special instructions, yet less than this I could not promise to two gray haired old men...



29 April 1847 — datelined New York from the Office of the Quaker Irish Relief Standing Committee to the Dublin CRC. This letter was endorsed *Consignees* and *Packet Ship Siddons via Liverpool* and was handed directly to the ship purser.

30 April 1847 — The *Siddons* embarked from New York on this date.

29 May 1847 — stamped on arrival at Liverpool with **LIVERPOOL/EXEMPT SHIP** (Tabart Type EXSL1, in use 1840-1864) marking. The manuscript **4** postage due is the reduced rate of 2d for the Master's gratuity plus 2d for double rate postage from Liverpool to Dublin. Under 3/4 Victoria C96 para 35, 'Consignees' letters paid no Ship Letter rate, and no Inland Rate if addressed to the port of entry. The Post Office was allowed to recover the cost of the Master's gratuity and could charge Inland Postage at the prepaid rate if addressed elsewhere. On the reverse is a Type S16 truncated box 29 MY 1847/LIVERPOOL/SHIP handstamp.

Backstamps

30 May 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel, an orange-red 27mm 8/MY 30/C Dublin backstamp was added.

Aboard The Siddons October, 1847

from the book *The Story of an Earnest Life*
by Mrs. Eliza Davies

This account was written just months after the previous letter was posted. The Siddons was to sail from Liverpool, England to the United States. Mrs. Davies, a wealthy passenger, wrote, "On October 12, 1847, a fair wind took us out into the Irish sea; but we had to "tack ship" very often in St. George's Channel, ere we were fairly out on the Atlantic."

...Once out upon the ocean, our ship like a war-horse bounded over the waves. On the second night out, our little party was sitting in the fore saloon, when suddenly the ship was lit up with a blue, lambent flame, terrific to behold. Mrs. C--- was very much alarmed, and retired to her cabin, from which she did not emerge while the voyage lasted.

Our ship was freighted with over 400 living souls from Erin's green isle. She was large, and had a large leak in her, through which the water rushed to an alarming extent. The Captain would not turn back to ascertain the extent of this danger, because he would have to lose a few days. So the lives of hundreds were risked for a few greedy men grasping for gain! The crew were discontented and quarrelsome, we were surrounded by perils. The wind was blowing stiffly, and the ship was rolling heavily, and to quiet Mrs. C---'s fears, I went on deck to see what was going on.

I was near the top of the poop stair, when Captain ran toward me, caught me in his arms, and carried me almost breathless right back toward the stern of the ship. I thought the man had lost his senses; but before I could speak, I knew his reason for acting so strangely. The captain saw a great foam-capped billow rolling toward the ship with furious speed, and it washed clean over the vessel, carrying the ladder away on which I stood but a moment before. He saw my danger, ran to the rescue, and saved my life. He laughingly asked if he should beg pardon for so rudely taking me in his arms. I shook my head, and thanked him for his unceremonious embrace, or hug, for it was more like the hug of a bear; but my life was preserved, for which I was thankful. The wind blew louder, and the storm grew greater, till it rose to a gale. We lost our foretop mast-stay sail, or jib, and our main top-gallant sail, all in a short time. The leak kept all hands at the pump. The foul winds continued, and we lost our mainsail. Shortly after, our foresail blew to ribbons...

Our ship dipped her bows into the surging sea, while her stern was tilted high in air. I enjoyed the sight and feeling of riding the waves so gloriously. We had a very narrow escape from being run into by a very large ship. The two ships met on top of a huge wave, and the stranger's bow grazed our ship's side. We lost another sail. We were fast losing our sails ere we reached mid-ocean. Everything broke loose from its moorings, that was not properly secured. In the steerage all was confusion; boxes and benches and chests dashing and smashing, and the poor creatures knocked about terribly. The wind was still high, but it had veered round in our favor. I was enjoying a lively scene on the deck, when the steward came to me, and asked me to give him a needle and white silk thread. I asked, "For what purpose?"

"To sew up a woman's leg," was the rough answer.

I went down to my cabin, found a needle and thread, a salts bottle and some rags. I told Aunt Ellen, as I left the cabin, to hold to her bed tight or she would tumble out. "Och! Och! But this is terrible," said the poor old lady.

I went to the steerage with the steward to see the poor woman. On going down the ladder, I had to press through a cloud of impurity. The stench from 350 human beings, lying in filth, and eating filthy food, was very sickening. At the foot of the ladder lay a poor, pale-faced woman, with half a dozen women screaming around her, "Och, she will die, she will."

A child was crying his lungs at the utmost pitch. I told a woman to take the little fellow out of sight and hearing. We lifted the woman up, and stretched her on a bench, and I held her with great difficulty till the steward sewed the flesh from the ankle to the knee of the poor woman's leg, which had been laid open, and the bones laid bare, by a great chest that had broken away from its moorings, and pinned her to the stair. The poor little creature stood the operation well; but seeing the needle pushed through the quivering flesh made me very faint. I held her tight till the last bandage was put on; then she called for her lusty boy, but she could not nurse him. She smiled at him, and he crowed at her. The steward performed the painful operation very skillfully. I helped nurse the poor woman, and took her better food than her own, till she recovered.

I told the captain that if the steerage was not thoroughly cleansed the cholera or some other plague would break out among the people. He ordered the sailors to "drive every one of the dirty devils on deck, and make everything clean, and make them clean after themselves in the future." In this den of dirt a woman died, and when the sailors were sewing the canvas about the body of the corpse, and fastening the ballast to sink it, the young husband was nearly frantic.

"Och, let her lie azy in her own feather-bed," he cried. And he would and did have her sewed up in her feather bed, not to sink, but to float away.

When in mid-ocean we had a sublime storm. I had gone on deck. The air was oppressive, but the sea looked like itself, deep, dark-blue, fresh, free, and boundless, without a landmark. It seemed to play with the sky, which was almost cloudless. The sun shone clear and bright, at the same time a sad sough was wailing through the shrouds. Groups of men and women were standing and sitting on the deck listlessly. Everything seemed unnaturally quiet and calm. The groups on deck one after the other went below. When the last disappeared, "batten down the hatches," rang out on the stillness. The Captain came to me and said, "You had better go to your cabin."

"I prefer to stay on deck, and see what is to be seen," I said.

"What do you expect to see?" queried he.

"A storm," I answered, pointing to a cloud that had been no bigger than a man's hand when near the horizon.

It was rising and spreading and deepening and becoming more dense. And suddenly from the midst of the ocean, up rose the liquid element in one long, high mountain chain, or ground-swell, that seemed to stretch from horizon to horizon. The whole ocean seemed to present a long, unbroken wall moving toward us, nearer and nearer. I expected every moment to be engulfed. Every man was at his post. Some had swabs in her hands: all seemed expectant.

I had taken my post by the mizzen-mast, holding on to a rope. The wind now began to blow with fury, and just as the bow of our ship went down, apparently to rise no more, the great mountain wall broke into thousands of billows, washing over us from stem to stern. The scuppers were all open, and the men with their swabs soon cleared the deck of the great body of water that was shipped. Had the hatches been open, the ship would have filled and sunk. At that moment we had a narrow escape. The ship gave a leap and a plunge, and rolled frightfully, so much so that I was driven from my moorings, and swung in mid-air, away from the mast, then down bump against the bulwarks with a bang.

"Hold on for God's sake; hold on, or you are gone," shouted the captain as he saw me swing.

When I touched the deck again with my feet, I nodded to him. The wind was now blowing a gale, and the lashing, tossing, heaving and foaming of the surging billows were terrific, but magnificent. The whole ocean from the central speck on which I stood to the vanishing circle of the horizon, seemed one boundless, boiling caldron; millions of waves, leaping from the abyss below, and rearing themselves into blue mountain peaks, capped with snowy foam, sparkled in the light for a moment, and then sank in the dark and roaring deep. My whole soul was lifted up in reverence and awe to the great Ruler of the tempest. All this while I stood gazing forth upon the stormy surface of the sea, and as I looked the wind went down as suddenly as it had risen; but not so the angry waters. The captain came to me and said:

"You are very brave; you would make a good sailor's wife."

I thanked him for his compliment, and asked him to assist me to go below. I thought Aunt Ellen would be anxious about my long absence. I was well satisfied with the grand spectacle I had seen.

A worse gale burst upon us one night than any that we had met. Everything in the steerage gave way, and the smashing up of everything frightened the people nearly out of their wits. Such screaming, and shouting, and praying were going on as made the confusion worse confounded. In the tumult, a woman gave birth to a child before her time. It died and was thrown out in the deep without ceremony. A few hours afterward a woman died, and she was also thrown out, and ere another day passed another child died, and was tossed into the deep. It is a solemn thing to die at any time and place; but how much more so to die at sea, when the friends have to toss their beloved ones, without ceremony, to the sharks, without even a canvas coffin.

A fine day after a gale would give us a little rest before another outburst. I hardly ever slept on board the Siddons - first, because the leak in the ship was gaining; the pumps were going all the time, and I thought at any hour we might fill and sink, and I did not wish to go down in my sleep.

Gale after gale followed in quick succession, till we were worn out with the pitching and tossing. The poor sailors had to climb the shrouds and reef the top sails when the tall masts were swaying every way, resting their feet on a slack rope, and, as they say, "holding on by their eyelashes" while their hands were reefing. One poor fellow lost his foothold, and fell headlong down on top the cook's galley, and was greatly injured.

Many a prayer was sent up from that distressed ship for rest from the storms. We were all very much subdued and worn out. One day an Irishman came staggering upon deck, in the midst of a severe storm calling out, "Mister Mate, Mister Mate, the ship is sinking: come and see the big hole in her."

Poor Pat was in mortal terror, but the Mate did not laugh at him, but at once went with him to see the hole. He was alarmed himself, fearing another leak. However, all fears were soon quieted. A porthole that had been caulked had burst open, and in rushed the water. Pat was told that there was no danger. The real danger we were in was kept from these poor, ignorant creatures.

Our ship was drifting under bare poles, all her sails furled. We sometimes thought we were buried under the water: we shipped such tremendous seas, and the ship did not ride the waves like she was wont. The captain, Mate and crew were all on deck all night. The storm-sail was set. The poor sailors were pitched out of the rigging, and some almost overboard. The ship gave one tremendous lurch, and lifted me clean out of bed, and threw me with violence against the opposite side of my cabin. I thought the side of the ship was gone and I with it. The turnout was so sudden that I gave a scream, the first since I came on board. Our storm-sail and part of the bulwarks went overboard with this dash of the ugly waves.

October 30th, we were on the great bank of Newfoundland, with a fair wind, fine weather, and all in good spirits. A little stranger who came to the ship in a storm left it in a calm. It died and was buried on the banks. We passed the banks without accident. The sea looked like a sheet of burnished silver. We had a good tossing in the Gulf stream, and another thunder and lightening storm. Our lights were all put out and we were all left in darkness that might be felt, while the blue glare of the lightening made the scene more terrible. The next day the wind changed in our favor, but blew a perfect hurricane. We were sitting about on our cabin floors, holding on to any and everything we could find to keep from being dashed to pieces against the walls. The cold was intense, but we had no fires. Another short respite brought us to the deck once again. The Captain was taking the sun's altitude; his smiling face had not been seen for several days. The Mate was throwing the log, to see how many knots an hour she was sailing, when one of the son's of Erin called out:

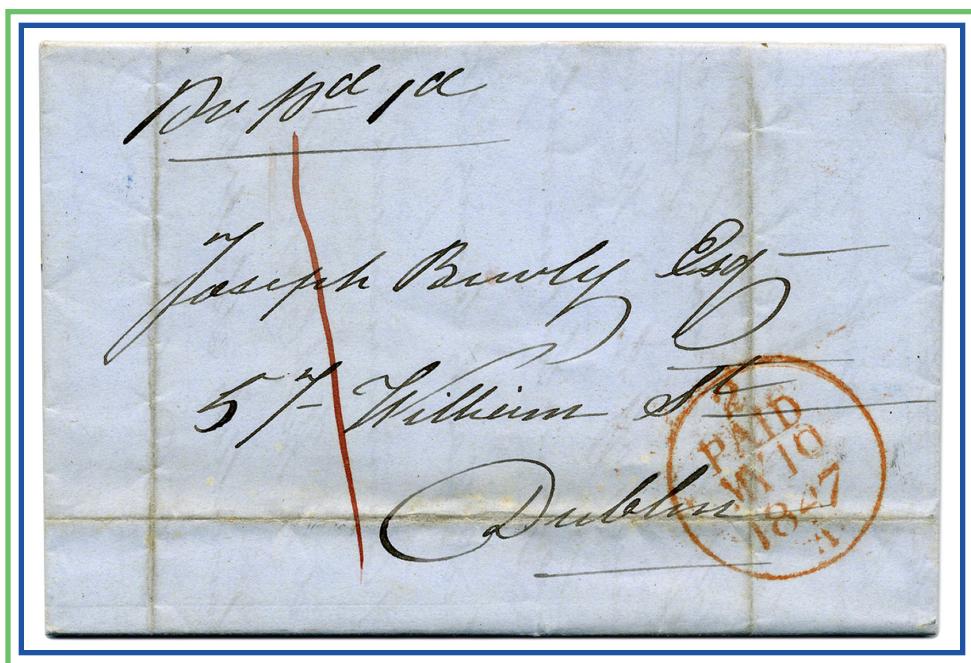
"Mike, Mike, come and see the mate measuring the sea, and the captain is looking for New York somewhere hereabouts."

"Land Ho!" The joyful sound rang through the ship. What preparations for going ashore! All was bustle. We let go anchor between Staten and Long Islands... just one month from England, a long and stormy one. A rougher, more disagreeable, stormier voyage could not be imagined.

A Daily Eyewitness

An added script:

It may be proper to mention that the writer of this is a near relative of the _____ on whose property the wretched people live — or rather yet breathe for whom he solicits relief. He lives in the village of Dooyork from which he writes, and is daily eyewitness of the desolation and misery around him but being himself dependent for existence on a small annuity of land — only heaven knows how sad he can only look on and feel without being able to assist.



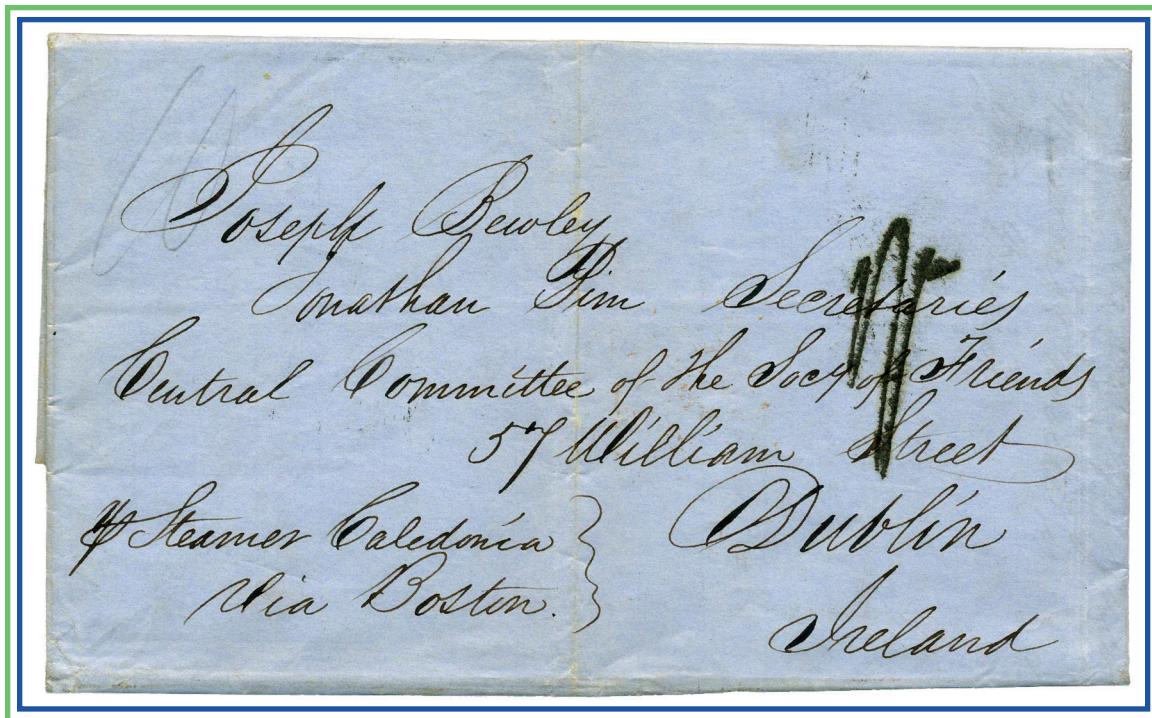
9 May 1847 — datelined 'Dooyork nr Belmullet'; Blue Belmullet double arc MY 9/1847 backstamp; ms endorsed 'Pre Pd 1d'; ms '/' pen slash indicating Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840.

10 May 1847 — an orange-red 29mm 2/PAID/MY 10/1847/A arrival handstamp applied in Dublin; interal docketing 'Send Queries' — 'queries forwd 10/5/47'.

The First New York Chairman

He was not a Quaker or a Catholic — or Irish, for that matter. Myndert van Schaick was a powerful New York politician of Dutch lineage who was founder of New York University. It was his leadership that led to the establishment of the New York Irish Relief Standing Committee, which chose him as its first chairman.

Below van Schaick writes requesting insurance for various vessels bound for Ireland and detailing the food stuffs (bread stuffs, and corn meal) being shipped via the British Ship *Malabar*, the British brig *Minerva* (or '*Albany Ship*'), and the British brig *Ann Maria* (or '*Brooklyn Ship*'). The letter is endorsed *p steamer Caledonia / Via Boston*. This is a duplicate copy intended for the Dublin Quaker's reference files, the original of which was sent to Brown, Shipley & Co., shipping agents and brokers in Liverpool.

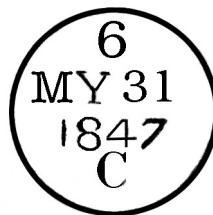


15 May 1847 — datelined New York; endorsed *Pr Steamer Caledonia via Boston*.

16 May 1847 — This letter was handed directly to the purser of the *RMS Caledonia*, which departed Boston on this date for Liverpool.

29 May 1847 — The letter arrived in Liverpool where it received a black 25mm transit AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/MY 30/1847 backstamp. The letter was rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black '1/-' handstamp.

31 May 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where a red 28mm 6/MY 31/1847/C arrival backstamp was applied.



Backstamps

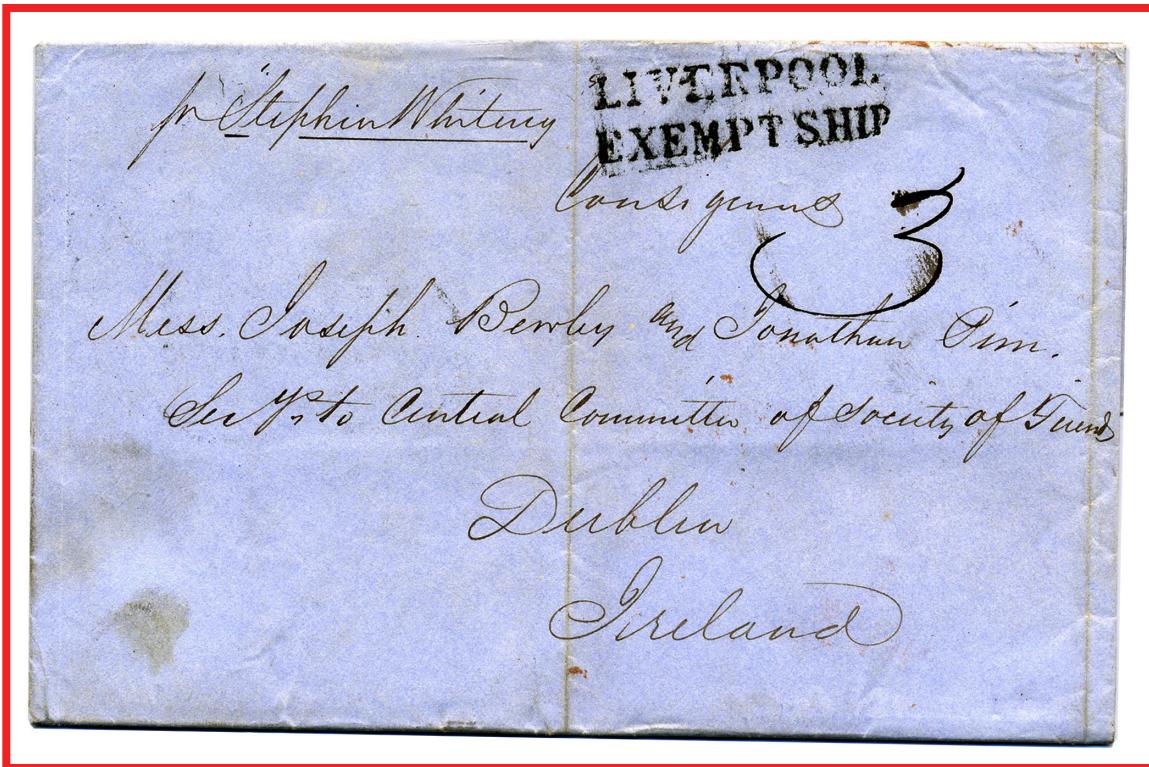
M. van Schaick
Chairman Standing Committee

Myndert van Schaick letter signature

\$4,000

The New York Tribune reported that the Relief Committee of Louisville Kentucky had forwarded \$4,000, a large sum for the time, to Newbold & Cruft for the purchase “provisions for the Irish poor.” The contents of this letter below to the CRC refer to the goods procured:

508 barrels Corn Meal... an additional offering on the part of the inhabitants of Louisville Kentucky and its vicinity, and is intended for gratuitous distribution under your good care & direction, among the suffering poor of Ireland...



15 May 1847 — datelined New York from Newbold & Cruft; endorsed *Consignees* and *pr Stephen Whiting* and was handed directly to the ship purser, therefore no US markings; this packet ship set sail on this date with Charles W. Popham, master. (The ship was later wrecked off the southern coast of Ireland on 10 November 1847 with the loss of 92 of the 110 passengers and crew.)

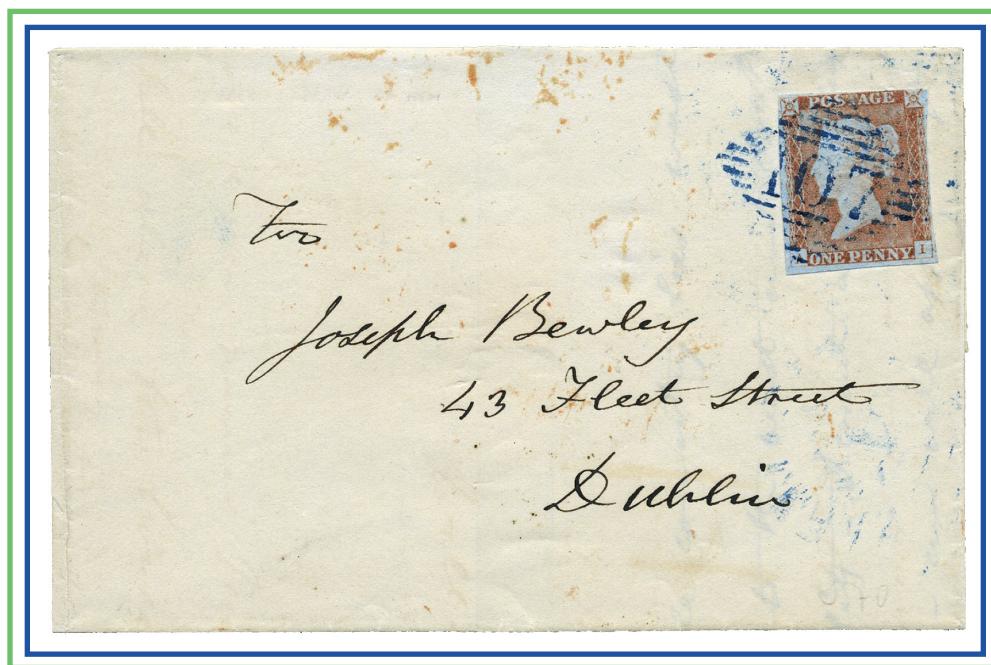
17 June 1847 — backstamped LIVERPOOL/SHIP/17JUN47 truncated box hs; rare LIVERPOOL/EXEMPT SHIP hs on address panel along with ms 3 which represents the reduced rate of 2d for the Master's gratuity plus 1d for postage from Liverpool to Dublin. Under 3/4Victoria C96 para 35, consignees letters paid no Ship Letter rate, and no Inland Rate if addressed to the port of entry. The Post Office was allowed to recover the cost of the master's gratuity and could charge Inland Postage at the prepaid rate if addressed elsewhere.

18 June 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel, an orange-red 27mm 4/JU18/1847? Dublin backstamp was added; internal ms 'duplicate'.

From Castlebar, County Mayo

Nearly the whole country lies waste and unsown

Also mentions the need for turnip seed which was part of a failed attempt at replacing the potato as the main source of sustenance.

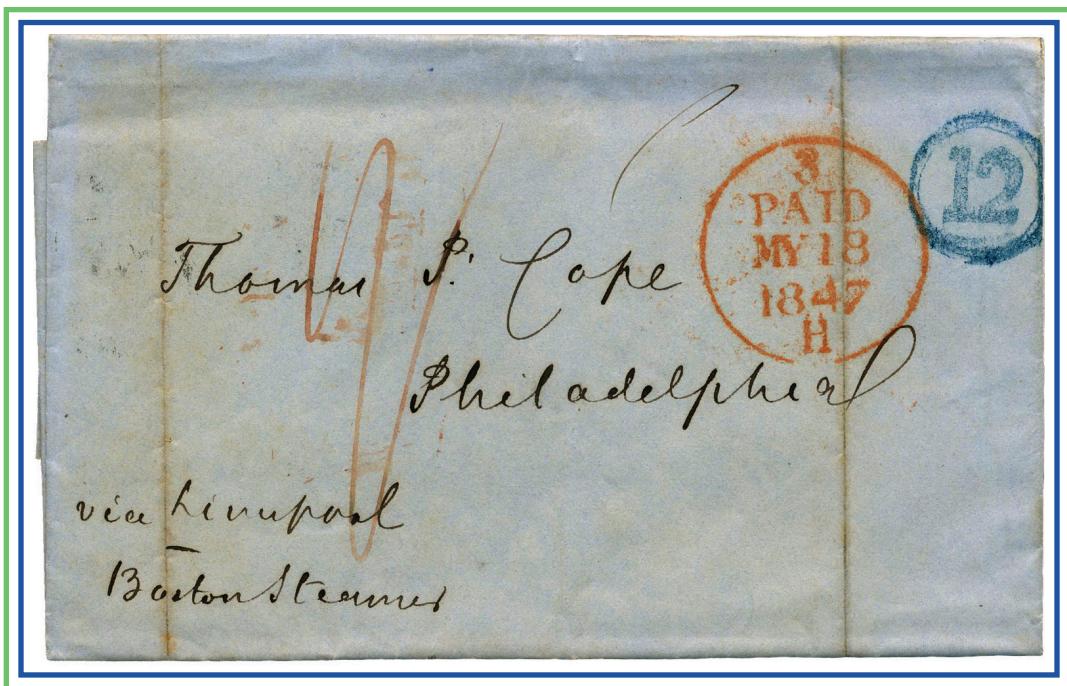


16 May 1847 — Bright Blue CASTLEBAR/MY16/1847 double arc circle struck on back; appropriate Bright Blue diamond shaped barred numeral obliterator '107' hsndstamp tying 1D Red (PL. 71 A).

17 May 1847 — Orange-Red 27mm Dublin 2/MY17/1847/A backstamp applied upon arrival.

The Cunard Line
 Dublin—Liverpool—Halifax—Boston—Philadelphia
RMS Hibernia

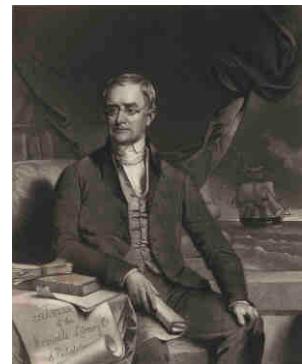
This letter is addressed to Thomas Pim (Pym) Cope, financier/philanthropist and founder of the Cope Ship Line, and is dated in Dublin from the Central Relief Committee thanking him for his generous contribution. In his diary Cope often refers to Jonathan Pim of the CRC as his 'kinsman' because he was actually his distant cousin. This wealthy man practiced the Quaker tenet of benevolence by leading the earliest efforts of the Philadelphia Friends Relief Committee, which sat at Independence Hall, on behalf of the Irish 'sufferers'. Cope's diary states that he ended his involvement in October, 1847, perhaps because of age and declining health. It is also clear from his writings that he held common bigoted opinions of the 'low-bred Irish' Catholic peasants. He felt that the Irish could be habilitated only after living an entire generation outside of Ireland. This letter from Dublin closes with: *We are concerned to state that great distress from the continued scarcity of food accompanied by sickness & mortality to an awful extent is still present on this afflicted land.*



18 May 1847 — dated Dublin and struck with a red 28mm 3/PAID/MY 18/1847/H [c] handstamp; ms '1/-' rate added and endorsed *via Liverpool/Boston Steamer*; crossed the Irish Sea via small vessel.

19 May 1847 — Liverpool transit marking applied to reverse side, letter sorted and placed in a closed 'favor' mail bag directed to Philadelphia; RMS Hibernia departed from Liverpool.

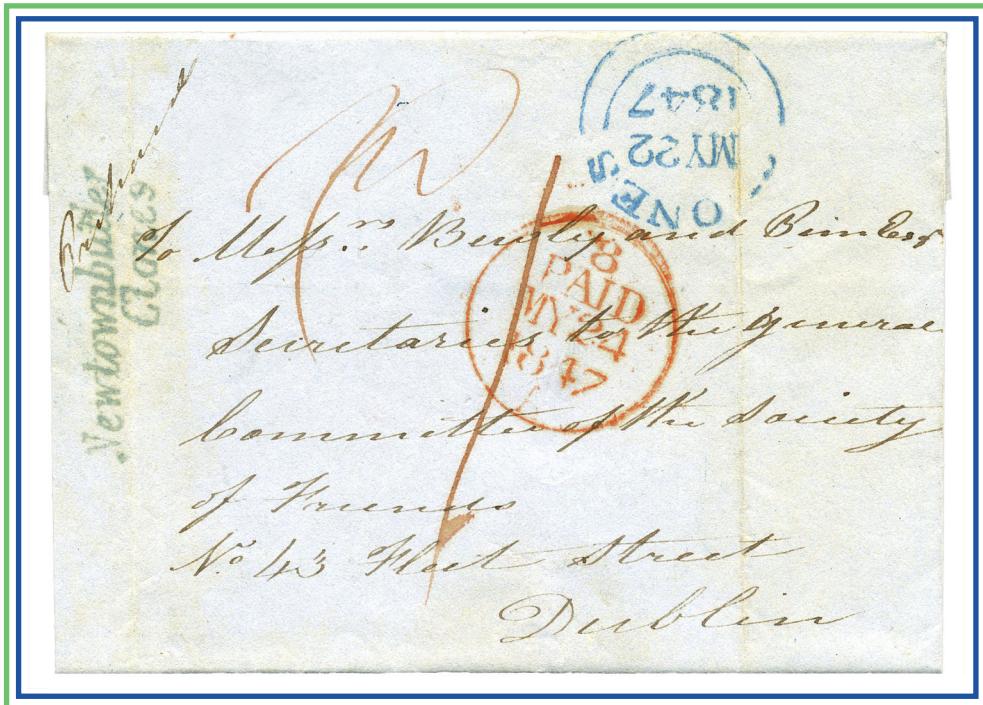
3 June 1847 — RMS *Hibernia* arrived in Boston; mail bag passed on without US processing through New York, letter probably traveled by the Pennsylvania Railroad to Philadelphia; upon receipt a blue 19mm double line circle 12 rate due handstamp as per Act of 1845 for single letter conveyed inland over 300 miles (10¢ + 2¢ Ship Letter fee = 12¢) struck in upper right corner.



Thos. P. Cope

Local Correspondent

...the distress which at present prevails throughout the length and breath of this Parish is such as no tongue can describe.



19 May 1847 — datelined Newtownbutler (Co. Fermanagh) and placed in mail there by James Clark, P.P. of nearby Galloon, describing the dire conditions of his district and requesting aid. An undated italic blue two line *Newtownbutler/Clones* handstamp was struck.

22 May 1847 — blue serifed 27mm CLONES/MY22/1847 double arc postal marking applied to the address panel.

23 May 1847 — matching blue serifed 27mm CLONES/MY23/1847 double arc postal marking applied to the back.

24 May 1847 — an orange-red 28mm 8/PAID/MY24/1847/A arrival handstamp applied in Dublin; '/' pen slash indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840.

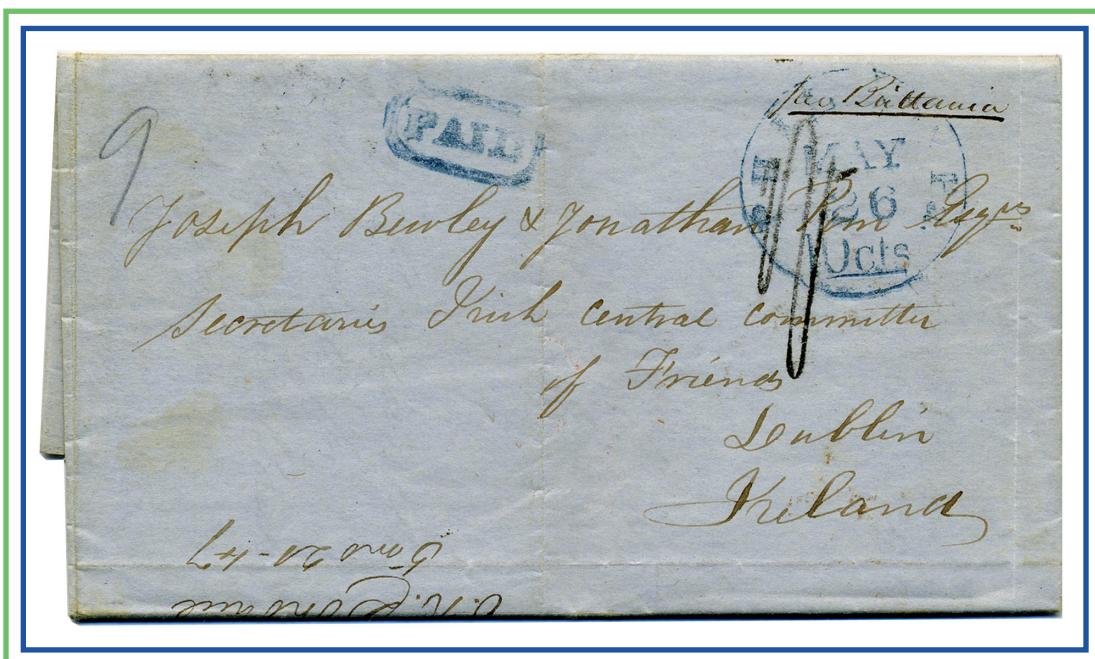
last few months. the labourers are dismissed from the public works: husbands are flying from the famine to England, and elsewhere, leaving behind the helpless wives, and families. Fever, dysenteries,

...labourers are dismissed from the public works. Husbands are flying from the famine to England, and elsewhere, leaving behind the helpless wives and families.

Vernon, Indiana Contribution

This letter was written by O.K. Donohue of the local Madison, Indiana, Executive Committee of Irish Relief. It included a draft from the vicinity of Vernon. He also notes that they have sent corn, flour, and pork via New Orleans, and has, "considerable bread stuff from the interior of this state," to forward.

Seeing by the public prints that you have taken charge of and distributed all that was sent to your care for the poor of Ireland, we take the liberty of sending the above amount...



21 May 1847 — datelined Madison, Indiana by O.K. Donohue, local Executive Committee of Irish Relief; endorsed *per Britannia*.

26 May 1847 — Blue 30mm PHILADELPHIA/10cts/MAY/26 postmark with matching PAID within DL truncated box, paying the over 300 miles rate to Boston.

1 June 1847 — *RMS Britannia* departed Boston for Liverpool

13 June 1847 — The letter arrived in Liverpool where it received a black 25mm transit AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/JU 13/1847 backstamp. The letter was rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black '1/-' handstamp.

15 June 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 28mm 3/JU 15/1847/C backstamp was applied.

The Macedonian Affair

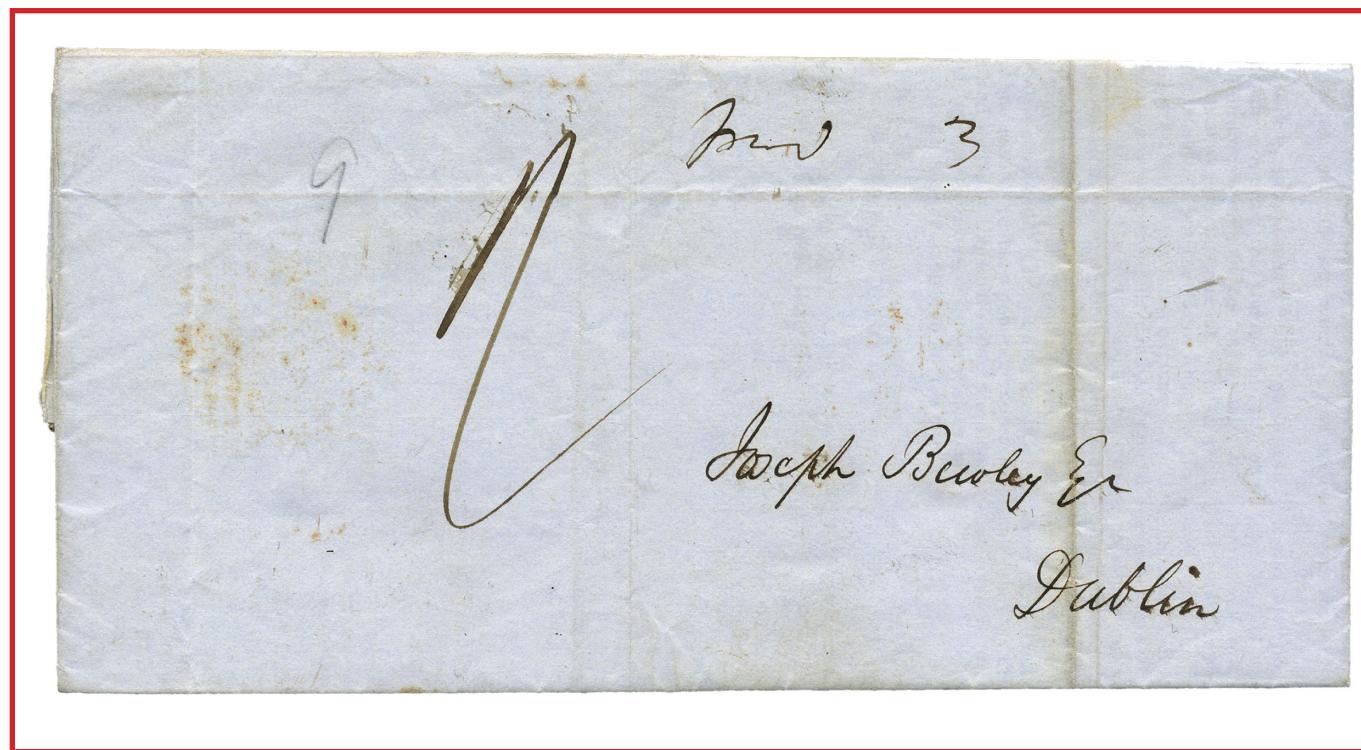
As the public consciousness was being raised about the plight of the Irish, the retired ship captain Commodore George C. De Kay volunteered to make a charitable voyage without pay. He became the first and only man in history to receive Congressional approval of the loan of a U.S. ship, two actually. He was to command the *USS Macedonian* from New York, while the *USS Jamestown* would be commanded by Robert P. Forbes from Boston. The voyage of the *Jamestown* was completed in a flawless forty-seven days; the *Macedonian* had a different fate.

At first members of the GRC were verbally supportive of the De Kay effort, but after numerous delays and complications, none of which were De Kay's fault, their support for the plan was withheld. The GRC turned over the booking of relief ships to Quaker Robert Minturn, who tried to avoid delaying the time-sensitive cargo and seems to have preferred to use Quaker owned shipping.

The Committee published a circular explaining that they had never actually formalized a relationship with De Kay. A man of integrity and considerable pride, De Kay defended his besmirched honor by persevering with his plans for the *Macedonian*. He announced in the press that he would continue to accept donations and proceed despite any difficulties. He in truth pledged most of his family fortune to do it.

True to his word on July 16, 1847, with some help from the Boston committee, the *Macedonian* arrived in Cork where De Kay was greeted as a hero. A twenty-one gun salute was sounded and the Commodore was treated to a grand celebratory banquet in his honor.

Ironically, both of these Discriminatory Rate items traveled on the maiden voyage of the *USMS Washington*: the GRC printed circular (left); Bill of Lading signed by George C. De Kay one month in advance of his humanitarian *Macedonian* relief voyage (right).



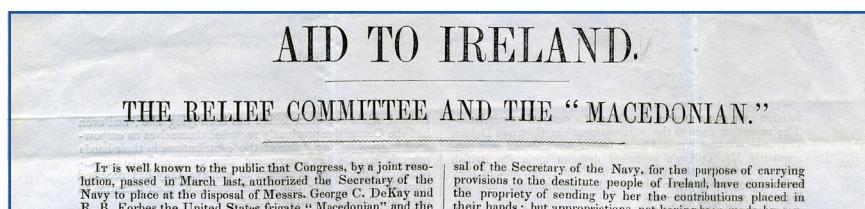
Left Backstamp



Right Backstamp



Both Backstamped



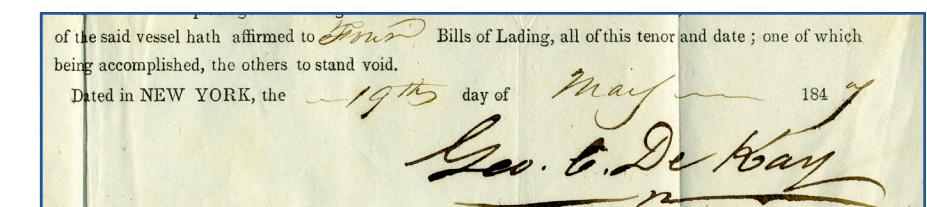
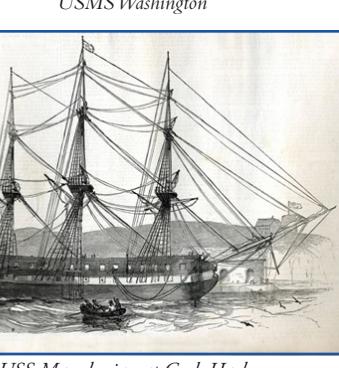
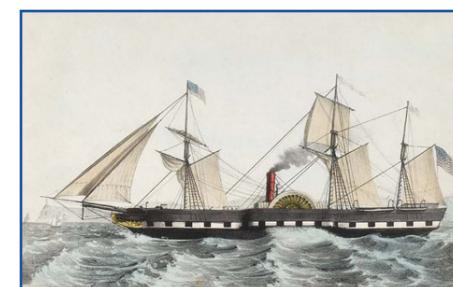
31 May 1847 — General Relief Committee of New York printed circular to Joseph Bewley, Secretary of the Irish CRC in Dublin, disavowing ties with George De Kay and the *Macedonian*, print dated.

1 June 1847 — manuscript 'paid 3' indicating the mandated prepayment of the short-lived March 1847-1848 paid-to-port circular rate had been met; Washington embarks, Frederick Hewitt Commander.

15 June 1847 — USMS Washington arrives at Cowes (Southampton), all mailbags ordered to London unopened.

16 June 1847 — U.S. prepayment refused, Discriminatory Rate of 1/- (24¢) applied, not the Ship Letter Rate of 8d (16¢), an orange-red 24mm NC/16 JU 16/1847 unpaid morning processing mark placed on reverse; the Washington leaves for Bremen.

17 June 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 27mm 2/JU 17/1847/D backstamp was added.



19 May 1847 — Bill of Lading signed by George C. De Kay, dated in New York, letter front endorsed *pr Washington Str.*

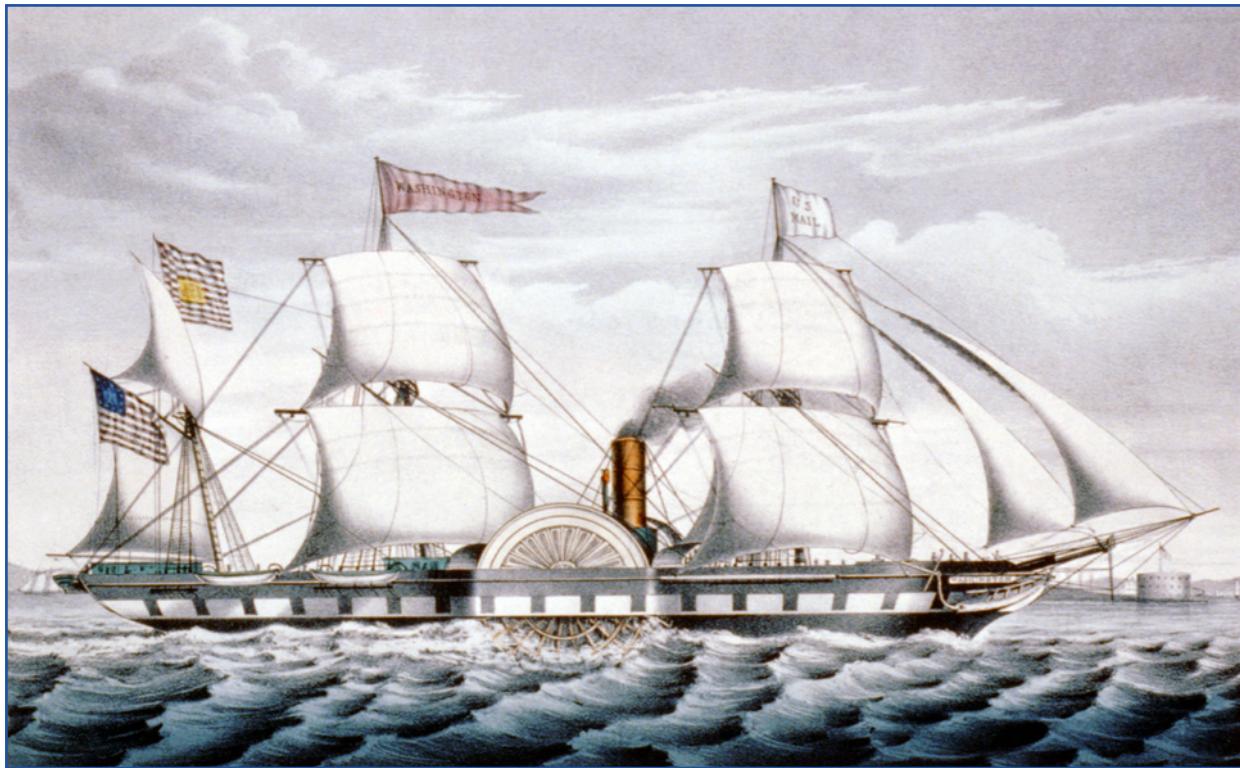
1 June 1847 — red 30mm NEW-YORK JUN 1 circular datestamp with matching PAID [arc] struck, Washington embarks, Frederick Hewitt Commander.

15 June 1847 — USMS Washington arrives at Cowes (Southampton), all mailbags ordered to London unopened.

16 June 1847 — U.S. prepayment refused, Discriminatory Rate of 1/- (24¢) applied, not the Ship Letter Rate of 8d (16¢), an orange-red 24mm XC/16 JU 16/1847 unpaid morning processing mark placed on reverse; the Washington leaves for Bremen.

17 June 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 27mm 2/JU 17/1847/D backstamp was added.

The berth of the *USMS Washington* and *Herman*
within walking distance from the New York GRC on South William Street



USMS Washington of the Ocean Steam Navigation Company



The Rate War

1839 —

Late in the year the Cunard Line wins 7-year contract to run regular mail packets on steam-powered vessels between the US and Great Britain, thereby creating a virtual monopoly. The rate was 24¢ or one shilling paid in the U.K.

June 1, 1847 — The inaugural sailing of the Ocean Steam Navigation Company, the first transatlantic mail packet firm subsidized by the United States government, began with the maiden voyage of the *USMS Washington*.

June 9, 1847 —

While the *Washington* was en route the British Post Office ordered that all mail carried by their new American competitor would be subject to the usual British Packet one shilling rate, ignoring any U.S. prepayments. The Ocean Steam Navigation Company had only two ships, the *Washington* and the *Hermann*.

June 15, 1847 —

The Discriminatory Rate Period was initiated by the British when the *Washington* arrived at Cowes (Southampton). The British treated paid mail carried on the American liner as though it was unpaid. In effect the letters were to be charged twice. Adding insult to injury, Assistant PMG Major Selah Reeve Hobbie was a VIP passenger onboard the *Washington*. He was sent by Postmaster General Cave Johnson to negotiate a postal arrangement with British postal authorities. The twelve months that followed has become known as the Discriminatory Rate Period.

June 27, 1848 —

The U.S. Congress authorized the U.S. Post Office to charge paid mail carried by Cunard, which began the Retaliatory Rate Period.

July 5, 1848 — U.S. Retaliatory Rates went into effect charging all British Packet letters 24¢, plus inland postage.

December 15, 1848 —

The first U.S.-U.K. Postal Convention Treaty was signed. It could not be implemented until ratified. The parties therefore agreed that until this could be done the original rates would apply.

January 4-February 14, 1849 —

This is referred to as the Restored Rate Period.

February 15, 1849 —

The New Treaty Rates came into effect. Uniform rates for unpaid and paid-to-destination mail in both directions, together with detailed accounting marks in cents allocating the revenue between the two countries were put into practice.

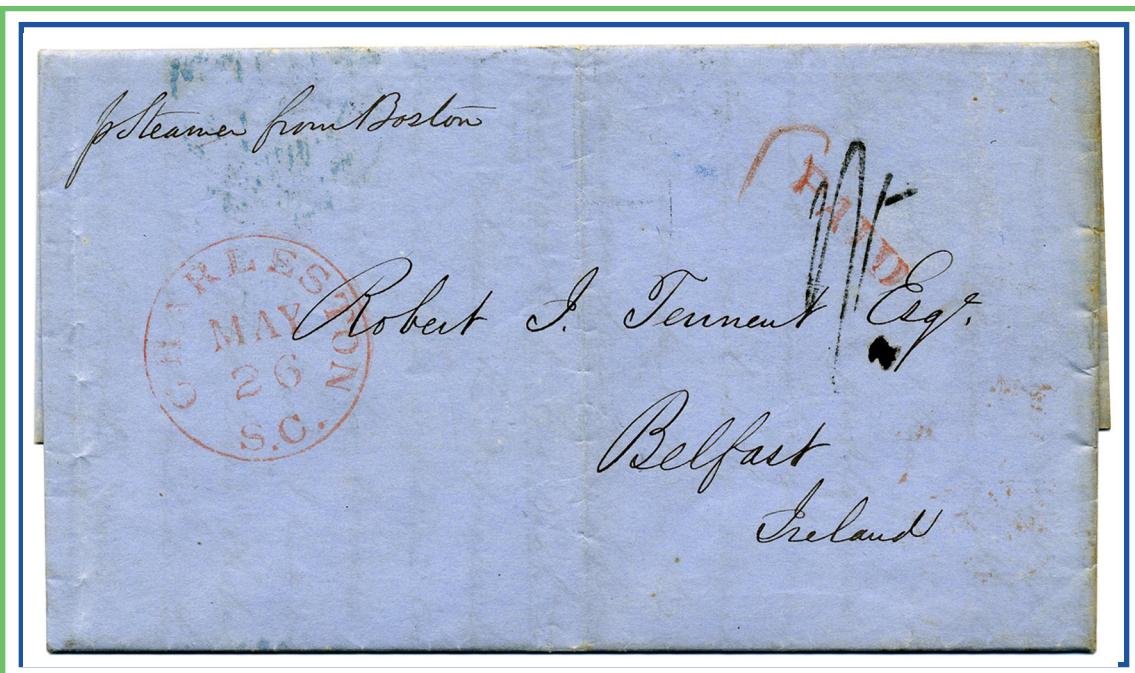
Concurrent with Mexican War

The writer Edward Patrick Millihan states:

I regret to observe by the last accounts from Ireland that the “snake has been scotch’d, not killed” & that distress continues. We have done nearly as much as we can already for that country & hope we may be able to do more, but we may not have it in our power... (jokingly) It may not be difficult hereafter to annex Ireland to our dominion.

And, during lengthy comments on the Mexican War:

To us the country is not worth the cost & I trust we shall not be bothered with it. Should our people go there it would become a scene for a war of race & the Mexicans like the Indians must go to the water.



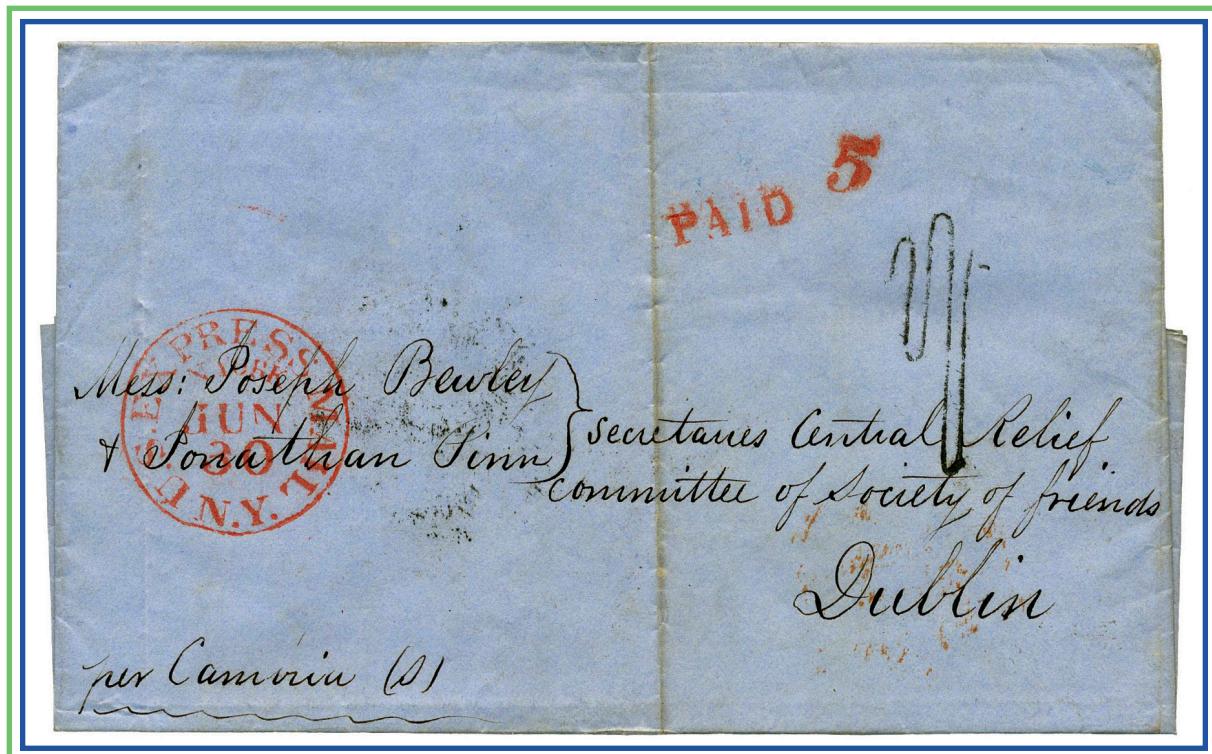
26 May 1847 — datelined and struck with Red 30mm CHARLESTON/S.C./MAY/26 cds and PAID handstamp; endorsed *per Steamer from Boston*; transatlantic to Belfast.

13 June 1847 — Records show that the *Britannia* arrived in Liverpool on the 13th where this letter was backstamped with a black 25mm AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/JU 13/1847, then traveled by Irish Sea steam packet to Howth, the port of Dublin. The letter was rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black '1/-' handstamp.

15 June 1847 — partial Dublin orange-red backstamp struck.

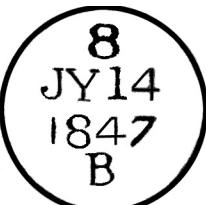
New York to Boston Express

This letter traveled the usual route at that time from New York via the Long Island Rail Road to Greenport, then by steamboat to Stonington (or Norwich), and finally by rail to Boston. It is addressed to Messieurs Bewley and Pim, Secretaries of the Quaker's CRC in Dublin informing them that 138 lbs. of corn meal would soon be shipped to Liverpool on the *Wenham* for the *suffering poor of Ireland*.



30 June 1847 — datelined New York, endorsed *per Cambria (S)*, matching red straightline 'PAID' and '5' handstamps, plus a red 30mm U.S. EXPRESS MAIL/JUN 30/N.Y. marking was applied on route.

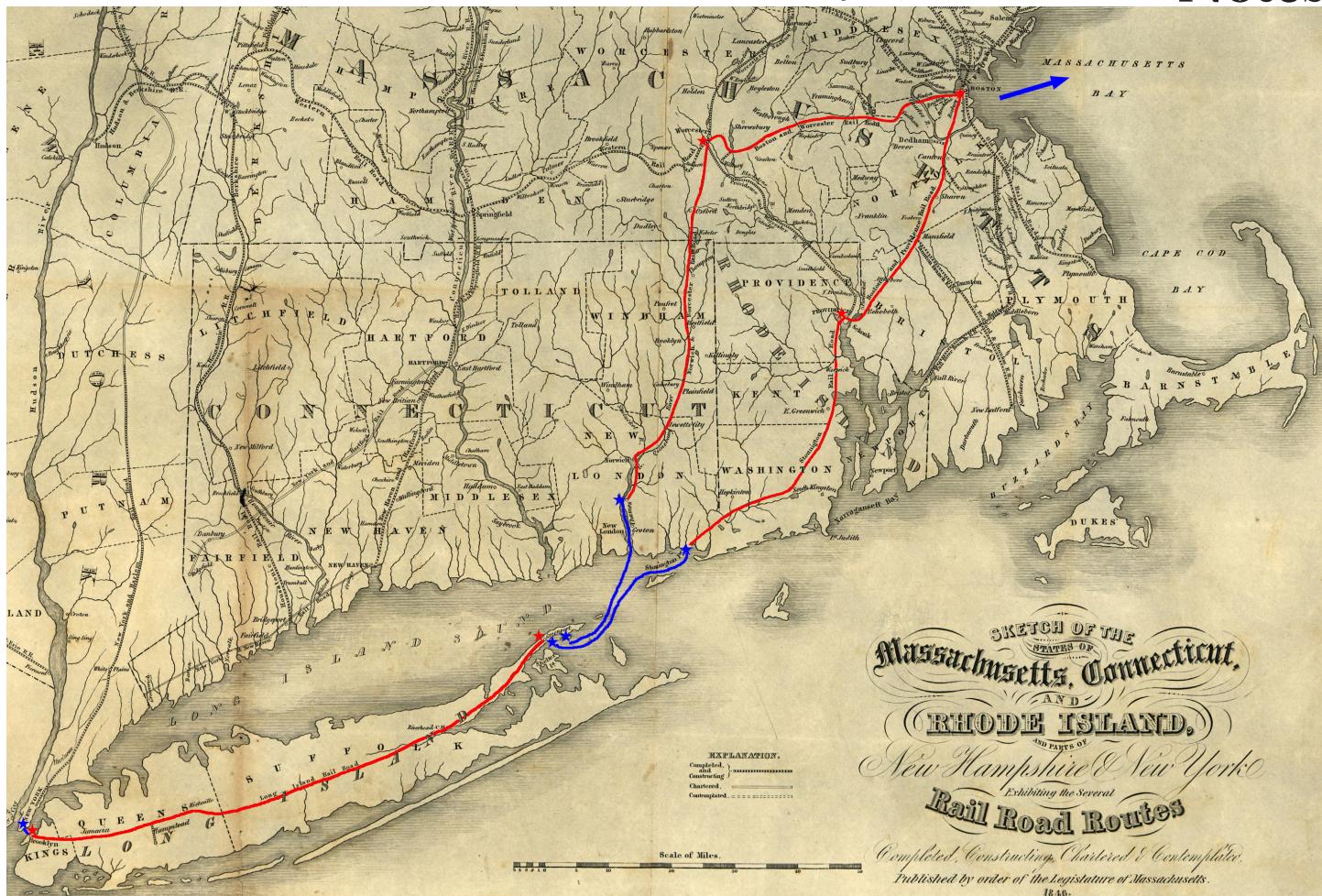
1 July 1847 — The Royal Mail Steamship *Cambria* sailed for Liverpool from Boston.



Backstamps

13 July 1847 — backstamped with a black 25mm AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/JY 13/1847 upon its arrival at Liverpool, then probably traveled by Irish Sea steam packet to Howth, the port of Dublin. The letter was rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black '1/-' hs.

14 July 1847 — arrived at Dublin and received an orange-red 27mm 8/JY 14/1847/B backstamp.



The New York to Boston preferred mail route of 1847.

New York-Boston Mail Route

Handling mail destined for ships embarking from New York was a relatively simple chore because the ships were visible and moored within walking distance of the NY General Relief Committee Office. However, some of the letters presented here were endorsed to leave on Cunard Line ships from Boston. Whether they were placed into the US mail system or went by private carrier, they had to use the standard route of the day which was a combination of trains and steamboats of the Long Island Railroad to get to Boston. This might appear unusual from today's perspective, but it took a long time to build a railroad through the difficult Connecticut terrain. The LIRR's main rival, the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad, was not fully operational until 1848.

The start of the LIRR was at the 2,517 foot long Cobble Hill Tunnel, now recognized by Guinness as the world's first subway, in Brooklyn. To get there from NYC you had to take The South Ferry from the Southern tip of Manhattan. The trains ran underground from Brooklyn through the short tunnel as they continued on their way to Greenport, in Suffolk County, a distance of 96 miles. The trip took about four hours.

At Greenport a connection was made with steamboats to either Stonington or Allyn's Point in Norwich on alternate days, excluding Sundays. This leg of the trip took about two hours to reach Connecticut.

If taken by boat to Stonington, there was a connection to be made with the Providence & Stonington Railroad and then with the Boston & Providence Railroad to get to the final destination. This section took an additional four hours.

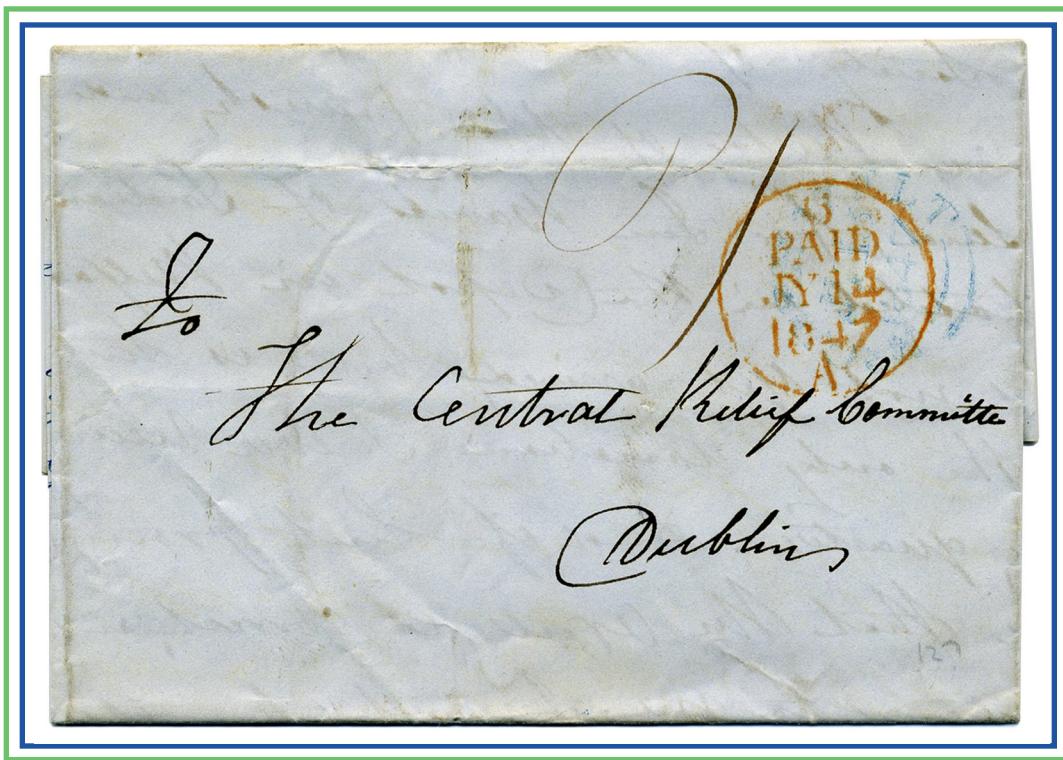
Going by boat through Norwich meant meeting the Norwich & Worcester Railroad at Allyn's Point. That went to Massachusetts where it connected with the Boston & Worcester Railroad, ending at its terminus. This took the same additional four hours.

The fare for the entire trek was \$4.50, and took a total of about ten hours to complete the American portion of the full route. If sent by private carrier, the letters were brought directly to the pursers of the intended ships just as they were preparing to embark for Liverpool. The Atlantic crossing took about 13 days on steamships, which was less than half the time of sailing ships.

There was little difference in total travel time between the eastern and western sailings of steamships because of their consistent mode of power. This gave them a distinct advantage over sailing ships and were preferred for the fastest correspondence; the slower sailing vessels were used because they had the greatest capacity to carry the largest cargos.

Missing Cargo

Rev. John Quinn (sometimes Qu’inn), parish priest serving Magherafelt (Co Londonderry) and Artrea (Co Tyrone), sent this letter to inform the CRC that a shipment of ten barrels of Indian corn from Philadelphia had not arrived at the Belfast depot. This is unusual situation in that the Quakers are known *not* to have lost a single relief cargo during the Great Hunger. We assume that this was resolved.



13 July 1847 — datelined by Father John Quinn; indistinct Blue MAGHERAFELT double arc circle postmark struck with ‘P/’ pen slash indicating the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840.

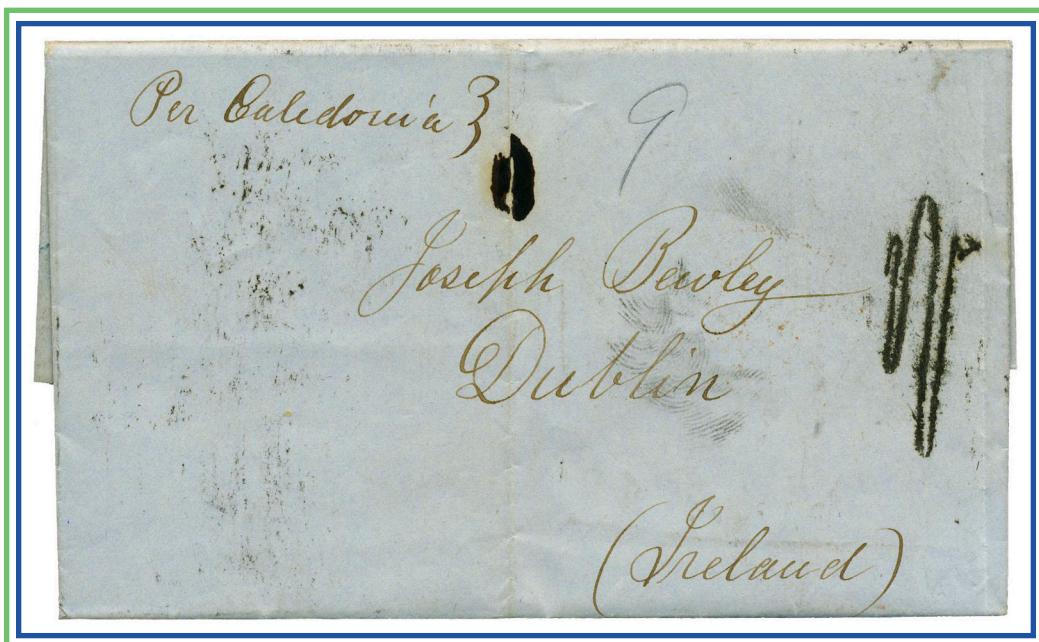
14 July 1847 — orange-red 28mm Dublin 6/PAID/JY 14/1847/A circle arrival handstamp applied; docketed “Recd 14 July 1847.”

16 July 1847 — docketed “Referred to Central Committee of Friends.”

NB — This letter mentions a Father Quinn who exorcised a ghost. “Father Quinn came to the parish about the year 1822, and died in 1852 having ministered for at least forty years. He lodged in Protestant houses in Magherafelt, the principal Catholics not being in a position to offer him suitable apartments. It was during his ministry that the present site on which the Parochial House stands was secured. It is told that the house, the property of a Protestant, was said to be haunted, and as frequent attempts at letting it were unavailing, Father Quinn was approached by the owner, who stated that if the offending spirit was banished he would give the ground for a Parochial House. Father Quinn exorcised the house; the ghost disappeared, and the site was secured.”

Small Town Contributions

Dated 7 mo. 15th 1847 (Quaker style) at Lynn, Massachusetts, and directed to Joseph Bewley in Dublin, this letter demonstrates the generosity even from smaller U.S. towns by the forwarding of a contribution of £34.10.5 for the relief of those who are suffering from famine and want in your land. The letter mentions that an Irish paper had reported encouraging and comfortable accounts respecting the prospect for crops among you the present year. Unfortunately, this proved not to be the case, and the famine tragically worsened.

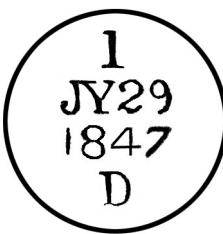


15 July 1847 — datelined 7 mo. 15th 1847 (Quaker style) at Lynn, Massachusetts.

16 July 1847 — handed directly to the purser of the *Caledonia* as endorsed, thus bears no US markings. The *RMS Caledonia* sailed from Boston on this date.

28 July 1847 — arrived on the *Caledonia* at Liverpool and received a black 25mm AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/JY 28/1847 backstamp indicating that fact. The letter was rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black '1/-' handstamp.

29 July 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 28mm 1/JY 29/1847/D backstamp was struck.



Backstamps

Loans to Fishermen

The Society of Friends took a serious review of their relief efforts. They determined that granting loans to 'industry', such as in manufacturing, agriculture, and fisheries, would result in more effective long range benefits for the population than the short term soup kitchens, which were serving the immediate needs.

Starting in January 1847 loans were given to the destitute Claddagh district fisherman in Galway. To survive the famine the fisherman nationwide had pawned their equipment, which they had traditionally done during previous food shortages (1816, 1817, 1822, 1831, and in 1842). This current situation, however, persisted much longer than anyone expected. The Quaker loans proved successful in some locales.

This letter was written by Thomas Bunbury from Spiddal House, about ten miles west of the Claddagh, and acknowledges the receipt of a letter of credit for £20 from the CRC to be loaned to local fishermen in want of a larger boat.



26 July 1847 — datelined by Thomas Bunbury; Blue GALWAY/JY26/1847 double arc circle postmark struck with appropriate diamond shaped barred numeral obliterator '232' handstamp tying 1D Red (HG).

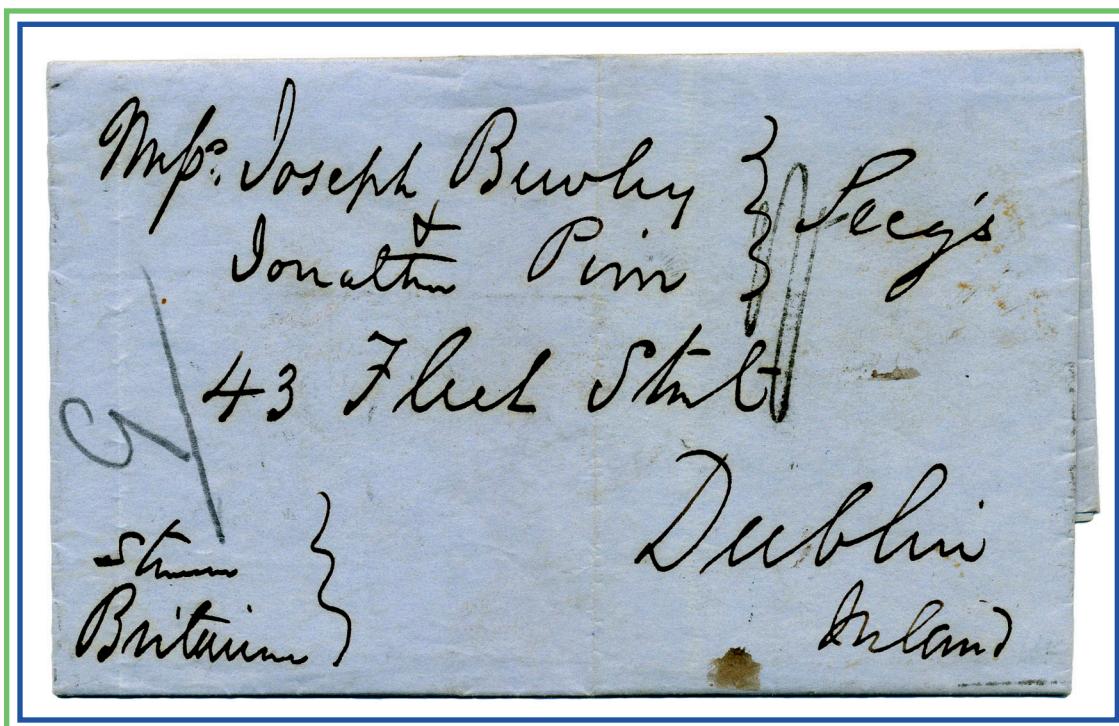
27 July 1847 — orange-red 28mm Dublin 1/JY 27/1847/A circle arrival handstamp applied.



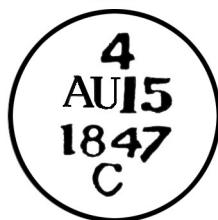
Spiddal House

Expression of Gratitude

James Reyburn, who succeeded van Schaick in leading the NY General Relief Committee, wrote this letter to inform the Quakers in Dublin that the barque *Channing* with Captain (Calvin) Adams had been chartered to carry a large cargo of provisions to a then undetermined port in Ireland. The ship actually sailed for Dublin laden with a cargo valued at \$10,786.37, a significant sum for the period, on August 9, 1847 — flour, Indian corn, wheat, rye, barley, beans, beef, and clothing. The entire allotment was donated by the people of Michigan and Zanesville, Ohio. In responding to this from Dublin, Joseph Bewley wrote, “Your bounty will enable us in no inconsiderable degree to contribute to the amelioration of sufferings, which no system of legislative relief, however well devised, can effectually reach...”



31 July 1847 — dated New York to the Central Relief Committee in Dublin.



1 August 1847 — Records show the *RMS Britannia* left Boston for Liverpool.

13 August 1847 — The *Britannia* arrived at Liverpool where a black 25mm AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/AU 14/8147 (year error) transit backstamp was struck a day later. The letter was rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black '1/-' handstamp.

Backstamps

15 August 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea to Dublin via smaller vessel where an orange-red 27mm 4/AU 15/1847/C arrival backstamp was applied.

Anonymous Warning

An anonymous writer penned this note in Ardara, Co Donegal, and posted it to the Dublin CRC from Convoy. He or she addresses comments to:

Esteemed Friends:

Pray give not any grants to the Rev^d M. Barrett or the Rev^d M'Glashan without a referral from the Government Inspecting Office, Glenties.

and signs the letter with *A Lover of Charities.*



15 August 1847 — docketed Ardara (Co Donegal) by an anonymous writer; Blue italic *Convoy/Raphoe* two line handstamp with appropriate Raphoe diamond shaped barred numeral obliterator '383' handstamp tying 1D Red; RAPHOE/AU15/1847 double arc circle postmark backstamp struck.

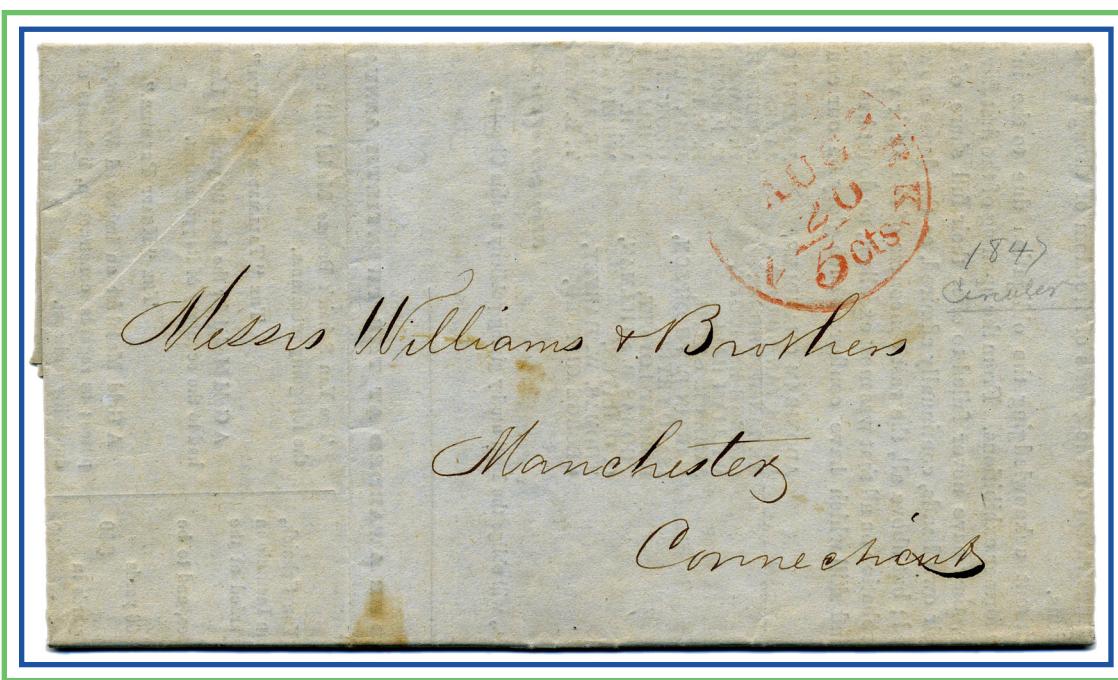
16 August 1847 — orange-red 28mm Dublin 8/AU16/1847/A circle backstamp applied.

Search for the Cause

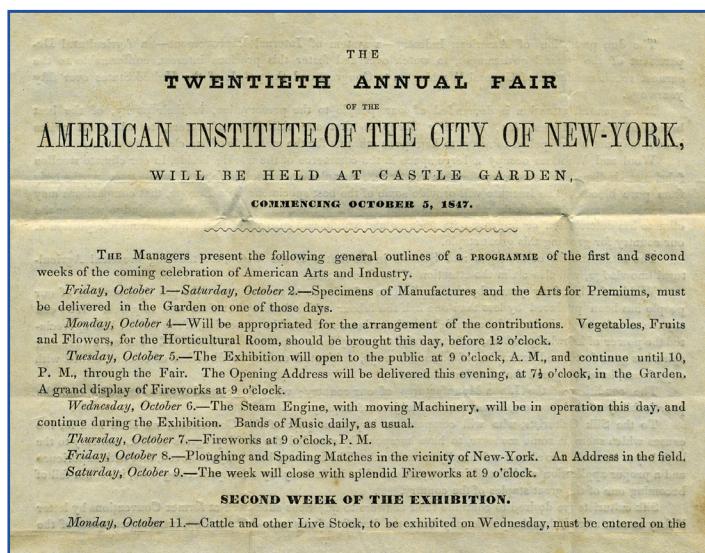
This three page printed circular was sent to the Williams Brothers, soap manufacturers of Manchester, CT, announcing the Twentieth Annual American Institute Fair to be held at Castle Garden in New York, which was set to take place October 5-14, 1847. (Immigrants were processed at Castle Garden prior to the opening of the facilities at Ellis Island on January 1, 1892.)

The well organized two week schedule involving American industrial and agricultural displays and events mentions that the Institute was looking for information concerning the cause of the potato blight:

Facts are wanted in relation to the Potato Disease, to enable the Institute to answer inquiries made by the Royal Central Society of Agriculture of France, and other societies, whose indefatigable investigations are still directed to the causes and the remedy for this appalling disease.



20 August (1847) — printed circular to Manchester, CT, with Red 30mm NEWYORK/AUG/20/5cts



Good News Mixed with Bad News

This partial letter lists several families that have been distributed aid from the CRC and the amounts received. The note of thanks contains some positive news:

I am happy to have to inform you that through your liberality, and the exertions of the relief committee of this parish, there have been no lives lost through hunger during the past seven weeks in this neighborhood.

However, the letter ends with the sad mention that many are falling to the *raging fever*.



27 August 1847 — partial letter with Donegal Town diamond shaped barred numeral obliterator '176' handstamp tying 1D Red (GD); Blue DONEGAL/27/1847 double arc circle postmark backstamp struck.

27 August 1847 — a second Blue double arc circle postmark backstamp struck DONEGAL/28/1847.

29 August 1847 — orange-red 28mm Dublin 5/AU29/1847/A circle backstamp added.

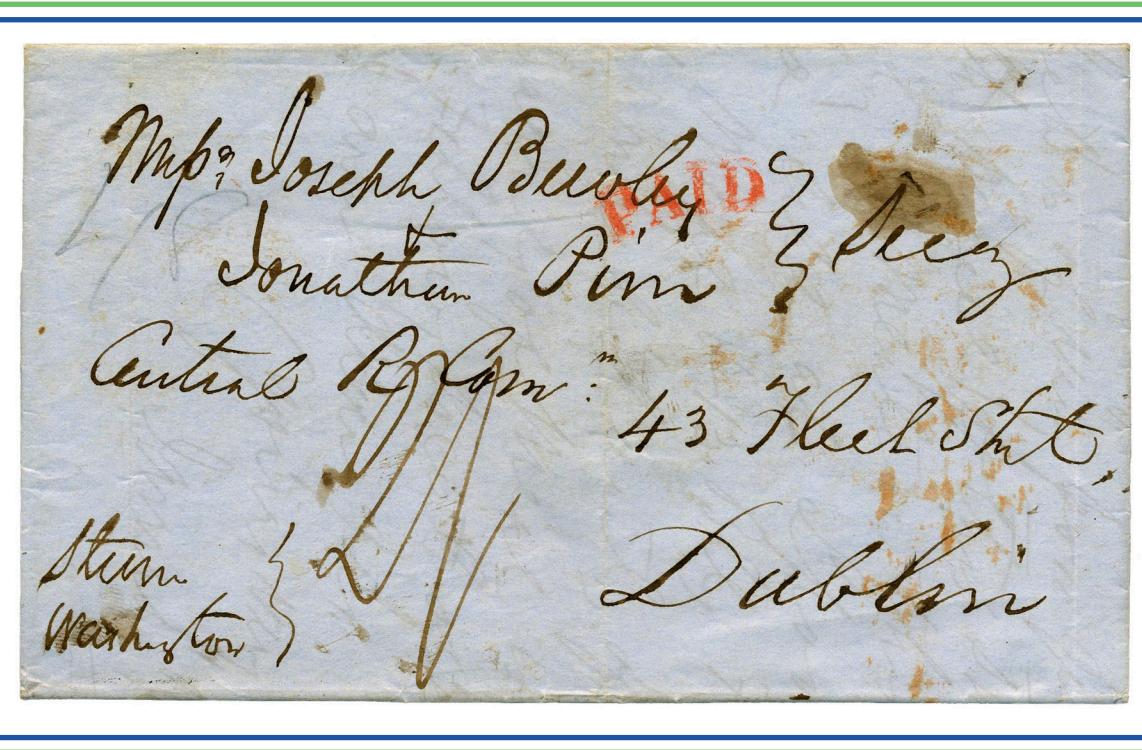
Dwindling Donations

The letter at the left was carried on the second voyage of the *Washington*. As with the maiden voyage, on arrival at Southampton the British letters were rated the Discriminatory Packet Letter Rate, not as Ship Letters. The letter gives the CRC in Dublin a Bill of Lading for a shipment sent via the Packet Ship *Queen of the West*, and of donations by the citizens and Odd Fellows Society of Niles, Michigan. A postscript on the reverse notes *The Queen of the West sailed yesterday*.

The copy letter at the right contains two separate letters written on the same wrapper thereby saving

postage costs: the first is a duplicate of the previous featured example sent on the *USMS Washington*; the second was written seven days later entirely in the hand of James Reyburn, GRC treasurer who succeed Myndert van Schaick, giving a Bill of Lading for the *Queen of the West*, and mentioning a small parcel soon to arrive on the Packet Ship *Cambridge*. Treasurer Reyburn writes here, "The receipts of provisions and money are now drawing to a close and the first of November may enable our committee to make a final report of our doings in aid of the suffering Irish," with the view of the GRC publishing its accounts.

Double Rate Original Letter via USMS Washington



New York to Dublin via Southampton/London September 23 - October 10, 1847

23 September 1847 — datelined New York and contained enclosures necessitating double the 24¢ US Packet to-the-port rate. The 48¢ was paid in cash, as shown by the barely visible manuscript '48' at the upper left and the red PAID arc handstamp strike. The letter, endorsed *Stmr. Washington*, departed from New York on this date for Bremen via Southampton on the second outbound passage of the ship.

9 October 1847 — The *Washington* arrived at Southampton. An orange-red 23mm JX/9 OC 9/1847 transit backstamp indicating midday processing was applied at London after arriving in a closed bag, 2 shillings (2/- in manuscript) was charged for a double Packet Letter. This was equivalent to 48¢ US, thus a double Packet Letter charge was assessed twice.

10 October 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea to Dublin via smaller vessel where an orange-red 27mm 7/OC10/1847 arrival backstamp was struck.

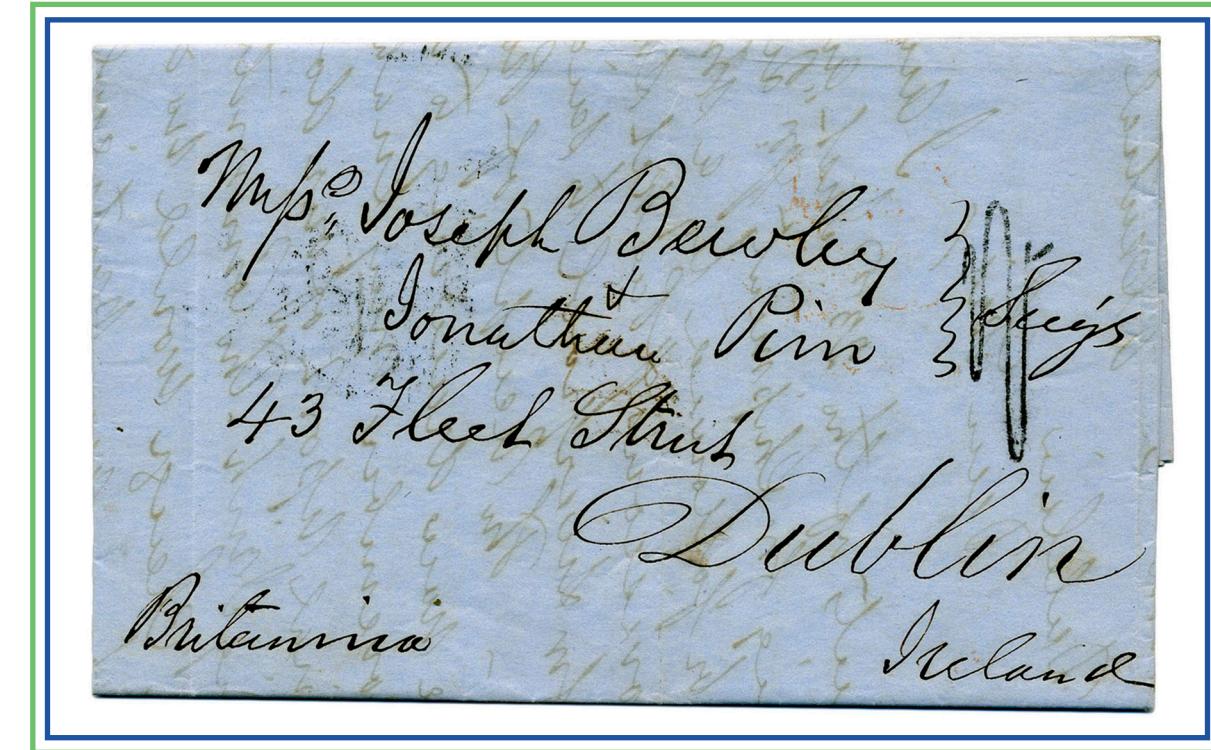


Rate Markings - Left



Rate Marking - Right

Single Rate Copy Letter via RMS Britannia



New York to Dublin via Boston/Liverpool October 1-17, 1847

23 September 1847 — datelined New York, a copy of the previous item.

30 September 1847 — second letter datelined New York; indistinct red Forwarders oval backstamp.

1 October 1847 — *Britannia* sails from Boston for Liverpool; no U.S. postal markings.

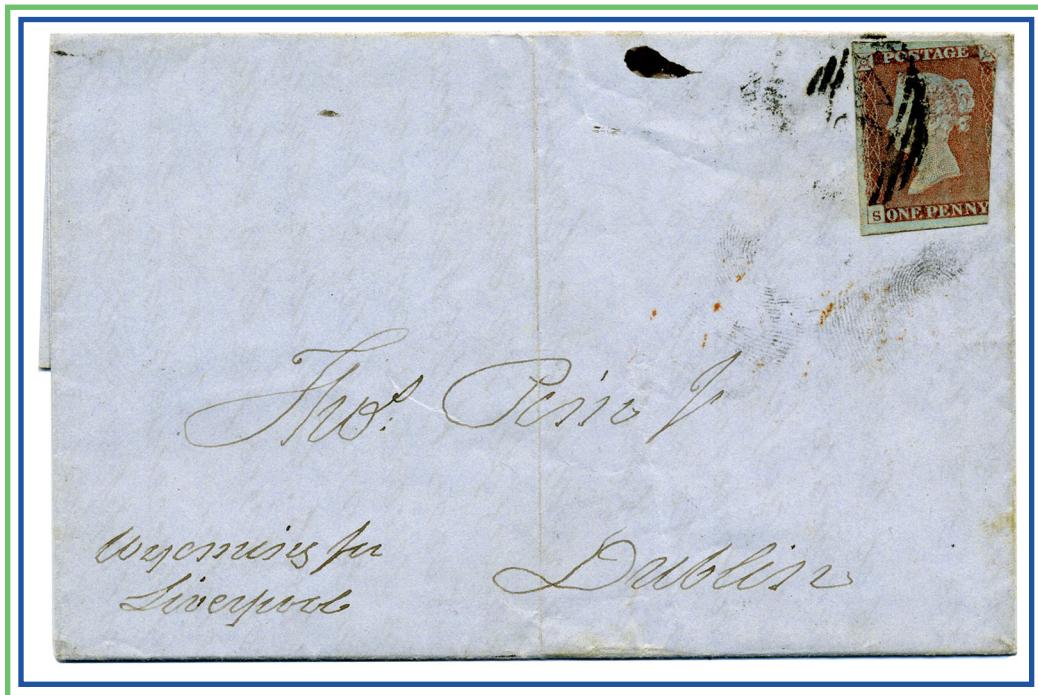
16 October 1847 — The *Britannia* arrived at Liverpool where a black 25mm AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/OC 16/1847 transit backstamp was struck. The letter was rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black '1/-' handstamp.

17 October 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel, an orange-red 27mm 1/OC 17/1847/C backstamp struck upon arrival in Dublin.

NB — W. Hubbard and R. Winter have noted, "Britannia departed Boston on 19 September, shortly after arrival, and proceeded to NY, arriving on 22 September. She left NY on 27 September arriving back in Boston on 30 September, the day before her regular scheduled departure from Boston. This trip was to check out the facilities at NY, soon to become a western terminus for every other Cunard voyage."

Philadelphia-Liverpool-Dublin

Quaker merchant Thomas Pim Cope (1768-1854), the writer of this letter, established a regularly scheduled packet service between Philadelphia and Liverpool in 1821. The addressee is the writer's Irish cousin Thomas Pim, Jr., who was the treasurer and a founding member of the CRC. Although Cope supported aid to Ireland at first, he harbored negative opinions of the native Irish, his enthusiasm soon waned. He is even found referring to Irish hero Daniel O'Connell as an "ambitious demagogue" in his private diary.



30 September 1847 — datelined Philadelphia and endorsed for the Cope Line Ship *Wyoming for Liverpool* which departed that day.

22 October 1847 — in all likelihood this letter was carried 'outside the mails'; the *Wyoming* arrives in Liverpool; backstamped LIVERPOOL/OC22/1847/M and forwarded from Liverpool using a British 1D red, cancelled by an indistinct '446' Liverpool barred numeral dispatch marking.

23 October 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 27mm 2/OC23/1847/D arrival backstamp was added.

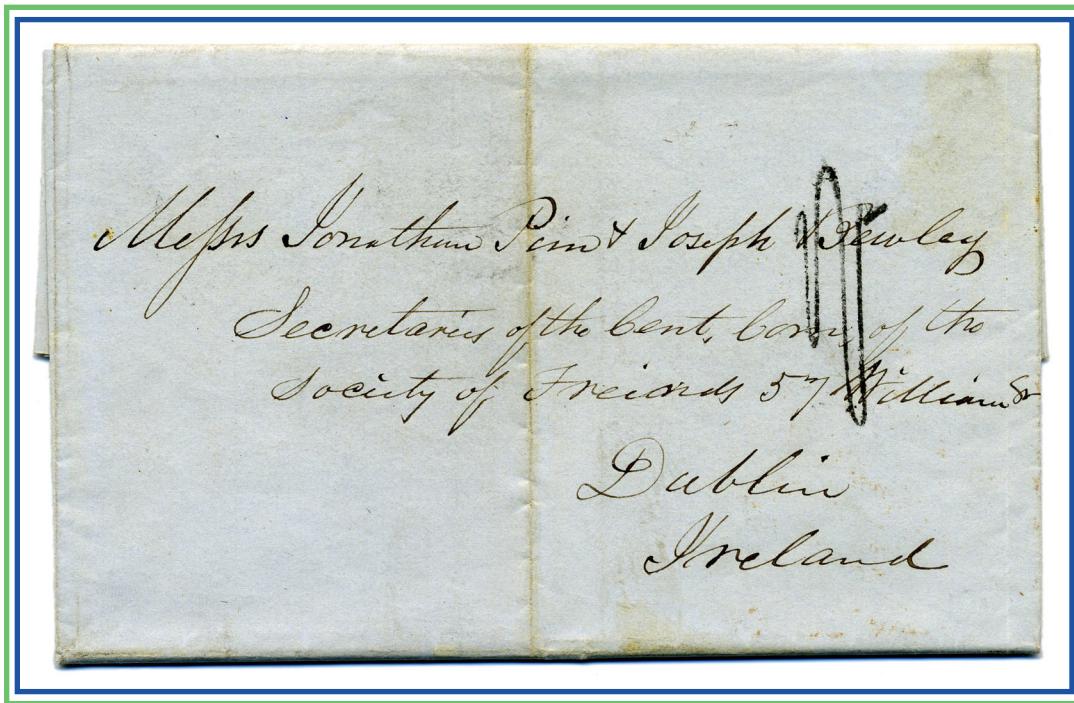


The Cope Line ship Wyoming.

NB — Some sources state that the *Wyoming* arrived in Liverpool on 28 Oct 1847, but this is clearly erroneous because her mail received 22 Oct backstamps.

New Jersey Contribution

This 1847 folded letter is from the Irish Relief Fund of the State of New Jersey, transmitting £114/16/8d. for the benefit of famine victims. It is signed by Newark Mayor Beach Vanderpool, who was also serving as the organization's treasurer. He mentions that the son of a committee member is currently in Europe, possibly Dublin, and would forward any responses personally.



13 October 1847 — datelined City of Newark, State of New Jersey, indistinct red oval forwarding handstamp appears on reverse.

16 October 1847 — The Cunard Ship *RMS Hibernia* leaves Boston.

28 October 1847 — *RMS Hibernia* arrives in Liverpool where a black 25mm AMERICA/LIVERPOOL/OC 28/1847 transit backstamp was struck. The letter was rated at one shilling due, the transatlantic Packet Letter rate, shown by the black-handstamp '1/-'.

29 October 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 27mm 4/OC29/1847/D arrival backstamp was added.

Infamous Strokestown

During the Famine the owners of the Strokestown Mahon Estate, which was facing difficult financial problems, realized that it was less expensive to ship their tenants to Canada than to allow them to stay. In May 1847 1,490 infamously left the estate for Quebec aboard four ships.

Surprisingly, five months after the exodus this letter was written from Strokestown to acknowledge the receipt of aid from the Central Relief Committee earlier in the year.



15 October 1847 — datelined Strokestown, Co Roscommon; Olive STROKESTOWN/OC15/1847 double arc circle postmark with 'P' pen slash indicating the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840.

16 October 1847 — orange-red 27mm 4/PAID/OC16/1847/A arrival handstamp added.



Strokestown Estate

Plea for Winter Clothing

Contemporaneous accounts often described the Irish as being very badly clothed, and even as “naked walking skeletons.” Because their bodies were losing such great amounts of weight, their clothes didn’t fit, that is, if they had any clothes at all that were not pawned. Hand-me-downs were nonexistent since older siblings were actually getting smaller, not larger.

In this letter the Lady of the Manor expresses her concern for what might befall the wretchedly poor children in her district during the upcoming winter and pleads for more clothing from the CRC.

Interestingly, the letter is addressed to 20 Upper Bridge Street where the Quaker run wholesale linen business of Edward Allen & Sons operated. No doubt the firm was involved with the Clothing Sub-Committee of the .



24 October 1847 — datelined Alderford House by Catherine McDermott, Lady of the Manor (Alderford Townland, Kilronan Civil Parish, Boyle Poor Law Union, Boyle Barony, County Roscommon) to CRC Clothing Sub-Committee.

25 October 1847 — Black Receiving House No 1 hs and Italic two line *Ballyfarnon/Boyle* struck on address panel; Blue double arc BOYLE/OC 25/1847 dispatch handstamp; Boyle barred diamond '70' tying 1D (HH, Plate 69).

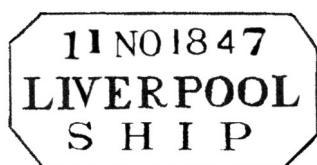
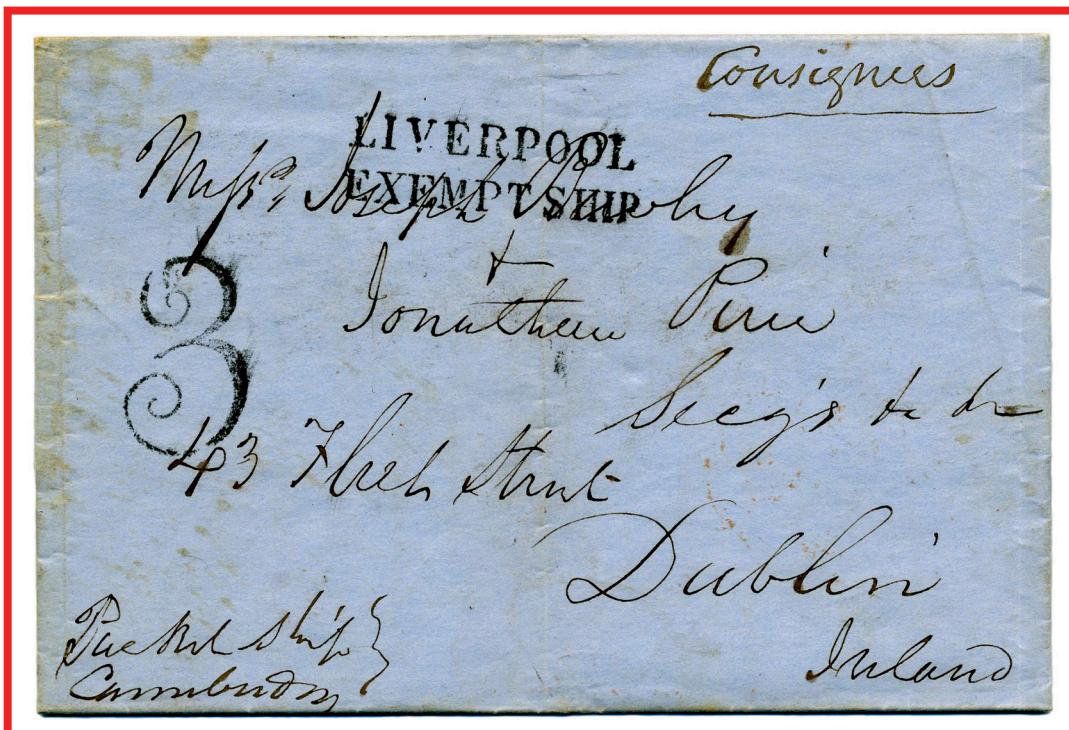
26 October 1847 — orange-red 28mm Dublin 7/OC26/1847/A circle received backstamp.



Aldfordson House, Ballyfarnon, Boyle, Ireland, as seen in 2018.

Coffin Ships

Some ships on the Liverpool-New York leg would stop in Cobh to pick up Irishmen fleeing certain starvation in their homeland. They did this to simply help turn a profit and earned the derisive moniker 'coffin ships'. Steerage conditions below in the cargo hold were so deplorable that many people died en route. We have found records that show 25 people died of fever and/or small pox during one such voyage in February 1849 aboard the Packet Ship *Cambridge*. Many of the other 313 passengers were placed in quarantine upon their arrival in New York. Incidentally, the Black Ball Line which owned the *Cambridge* was founded by a group of New York Quaker merchants headed by Jeremiah Thompson, and included Isaac Wright, his son William Wright, Francis Thompson and Benjamin Marshall. All were Quakers excepting Marshall.



Backstamps

15 October 1847 — datelined New York from the office of the GRC to the Central Relief Committee in Dublin. The letter is endorsed **Consignees** and *Packet Ship Cambridge*. A duplicate of this letter was sent via the steamer *Hibernia*.

11 November 1847 — arrived at Liverpool where a black Type S16 truncated box 11 NO 1847/LIVERPOOL/SHIP handstamp was applied to the reverse. The **LIVERPOOL/EX-EMPT SHIP** (Tabart Type EXSL 1, in use 1840-1864) marking was struck on the front. Along with it is the equally as rare large script-like **3** postage due handstamp, which represents the reduced rate of 2d for the Master's gratuity plus 1d for postage from Liverpool to Dublin. Under 3/4 Victoria C96 para 35, consignees letters paid no Ship Letter rate, and no Inland Rate if addressed to the port of entry. The Post Office was allowed to recover the cost of the master's gratuity and could charge Inland Postage at the prepaid rate if addressed elsewhere.

12 November 1847 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 27mm 8/NO 12/1847/C arrival backstamp was added.

Liverpool Agent

The sender of this letter, Joseph Crosfield of Liverpool, traveled on a fact finding excursion to Ireland with William F. Forster, a leading English Quaker, in late 1846. As Forster continued on with other companions, Crosfield returned home and wrote a significant account of the first week the tour. The London Friends Committee printed 2500 copies of the letter which described the appalling conditions that they had encountered. It greatly increased public awareness. Crosfield became a main CRC agent in Liverpool, arranging for the purchasing and forwarding of cargoes to Dublin. The folded letter below attempts to correct accounting errors made on a donation made by General Armstrong. Crosfield mentions that cargoes of the *Patrick Henry*, *Queen of the West*, and *Henry Clay* were then stored in one warehouse.



2 November 1847 — datelined Liverpool to Dublin CRC, an indistinct '466' Liverpool numeral postal marking ties Penny Red-Brown (Uniform rate 1d per ½oz); 25mm Black Double Arc Circle LIVERPOOL/NO 2/1847/M dispatch backstamp was applied.

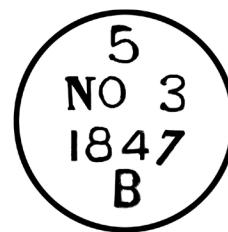
3 November 1847 — an orange-red Dublin 28mm 5/NO 3/1847/B handstamp was struck on the backside upon arrival.



Liverpool Dispatch Backstamp



Liverpool '466' Address Panel Cancellation



Dublin Arrival Backstamp

Joseph Crosfield letter signature

Scarcity of Clothing

The winter of 1846-47 brought with it severe weather which added to the suffering. The people had pawned their clothes previously, now many faced the cold nearly naked.

As the new 1847-48 winter approached and gained strength, George M. Black of Annalong, Co Down, sent this message to the CRC asking them to send badly needed clothing as they had done the previous winter.

I want to take the liberty of again (addressing) you in the hope that you would have the kindness to extend your charity to us again this season by granting us some clothing for our very numerous & destitute poor to whom you were kind enough to send two small bales last winter...



29 November 1847 — datelined Annalong - Kilkeel Co Down; Blue italic two line *Annalong/Kilkeel* struck on address panel; Kilkeel barred diamond '268' tying 1D (LJ) to Dublin CRC.

30 November 1847 — Blue double arc circle KILKEEL/NO30/1847 backstamp; orange-red 28mm Dublin 5/DE1/1847/A circle received backstamp added.

Liverpool Agent

The sender of this letter, Joseph Crosfield of Liverpool, traveled on a fact finding excursion to Ireland with William F. Forster, a leading English Quaker, in late 1846. As Forster continued on with other companions, Crosfield returned home and wrote a significant account of the first week the tour. The London Friends Committee printed 2500 copies of the letter which described the appalling conditions that they had encountered. It greatly increased public awareness. Crosfield became a main CRC agent in Liverpool, arranging for the purchasing and forwarding of cargoes to Dublin.



9 December 1847 — dateline December 1847; barred frame oval obliterator with ingeral '466' tying 1D Red (AD); Black double arc LIVERPOOL/DE 9/1847/L dispatch backstamp.

10 December 1847 — orange-red 28mm Dublin ?/DE10/1847/D circle received backstamp added.

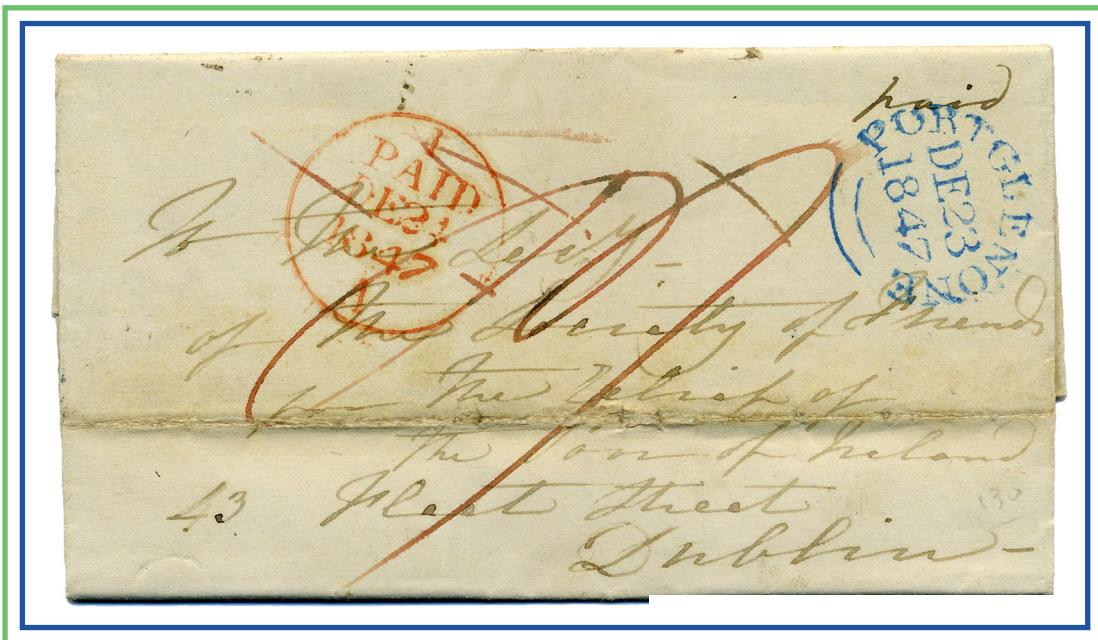


Liverpool '466' Address Panel Cancellation

Fatherless Families

*There are some distressing cases
where families consist only of females & children,
the men having gone to America
with the intention of sending for their families to follow in the Spring.*

Caroline A. Bloxham of Tamlaght, Portglenone (Co Londonderry), and wife of Anglican Reverend Mark Bloxham, wrote the above begging for charitable aid from the CRC.



23 December 1847 — datelined Portglenone (Co Antrim); Blue double arc PORTGLENONE/DE 23/1847 dispatch handstamp.

24 December 1847 — orange-red 28mm Dublin 1/PAID/DE24/1847/A received circle handstamp; 'P' pen slash and ms 'paid' indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 was met.

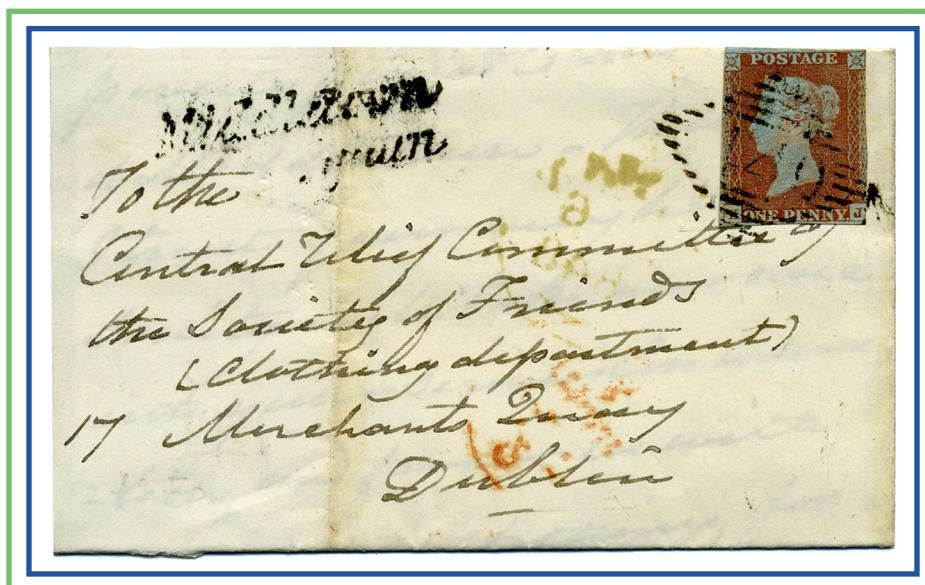


Clothing Shortage

Clothing was a primary concern of many of the local relief committees. Not only had many people pawned their clothes to survive, but there were no proper 'hand-me-downs'. Children were in a particularly vulnerable position; they were getting smaller rather than growing.

Here, the Church of Ireland Curate Thomas Jervis White implores the CRC for another donation:

Middletown is but a perpetual case, in the parish of Tynan, & in consequence of the smallness of its pecuniary endowment, does not enable me, I may say, to do anything toward the clothing of the poor at the inclement season of the year. Great poverty pervades this district of Middletown, therefore I trust your very humane society will take our case into serious consideration, and favor us with a grant of clothing...



6 January 1848 — datelined Middletown Glebe, Tynan (Co Armagh, Province Ulster); Black italic two line *Middletown/Tynan* dispatch handstamp; Tynan '440' barred diamond handstamp tying 1D (KJ) paying the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 to Dublin Central Relief Committee.



Church of St. Michael, Middletown, Tynan, Co Armagh.

Begging for Clothing

This letter written and signed by James M. Kirkwood, "of Woodbrook Lodge" in the Roscommon section of Carrick-on-Shannon. The Kirkwood family was part of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. He tells of a little girl who refuses to eat bread in order to bring it to her dying father.

Kirkwood, High Sheriff of Roscommon in 1848, notes of the dire need of clothing for children in his area and writes to the Quaker Society of Friends in Dublin for additional help.

*Excuse me for begging, the very bags you sent... were converted into clothes.
Several of whom received your clothes this week had no other covering.*



9 February 1848 — partial letter datelined Woodbrook Lodge, Carrick-on-Shannon (Co Roscommon); '42 Paid' in sender's hand at the bottom left of the address panel.

10 February 1848 — rimless CARRICK ON SHANNON/FE10/1848 handstamp struck.

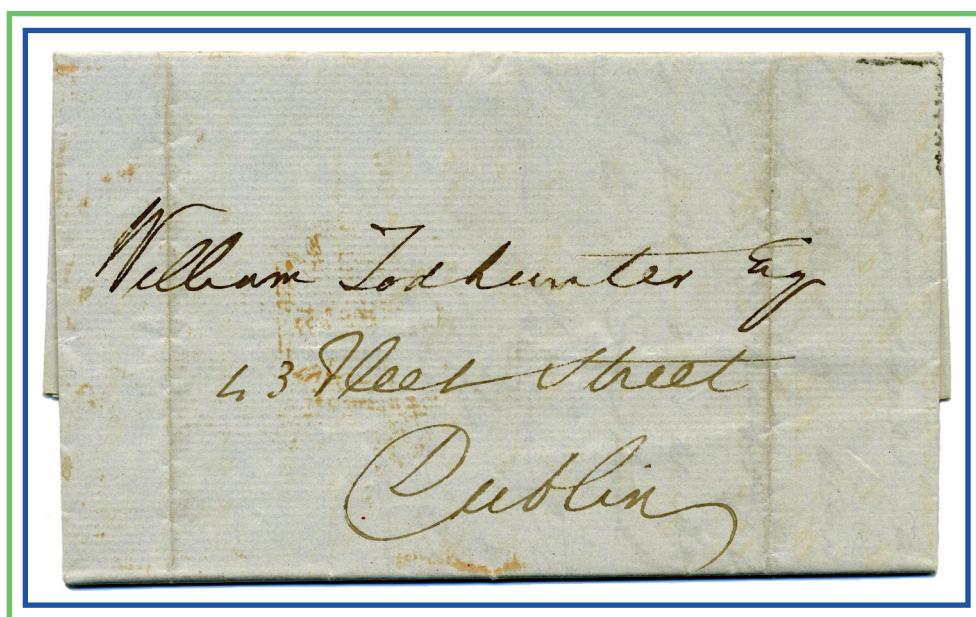
11 February 1848 — an orange-red Dublin 28mm 6/FE11/1848/A handstamp was struck on the backside upon arrival.

Seed Distribution

William Bennett of the London Relief Committee traveled with William Forster on the Quakers first tour of Ireland. Bennett went to distribute green-crop seeds to the small farmers to encourage them to expand the variety of edible Irish crops away from the potato.

For its part the British government tried to sell seeds to the farmers at a reduced rate. They did not realize that the Irish were without money. Rather than let the seeds rot, they gave the seeds to the CRC for distribution. The Society of Friends put William Todhunter, this addressee, in charge. Todhunter is credited with the ingenious scheme to distribute the seeds using the post office for delivery.

This letter from Henry Christie, who was the head of the LRC, concerns seed distribution and shows the close coordination in that effort between the Quakers of London and Dublin.



15 February 1848 — datelined London by Henry Christie, head of the London Relief Committee; red-orange London Branch Lombard Street double frameline Maltese Cross LS/15DE15/1848 unpaid backstamp struck.

16 February 1848 — an orange-red Dublin 28mm (?)/FE15/1848/(?) arrival backstamp was struck directly over the London postmark.



London Unpaid Dispatch Backstamp

Letter to Todhunter

This letter is directed to William Todhunter at the address of the Central Relief Committee.



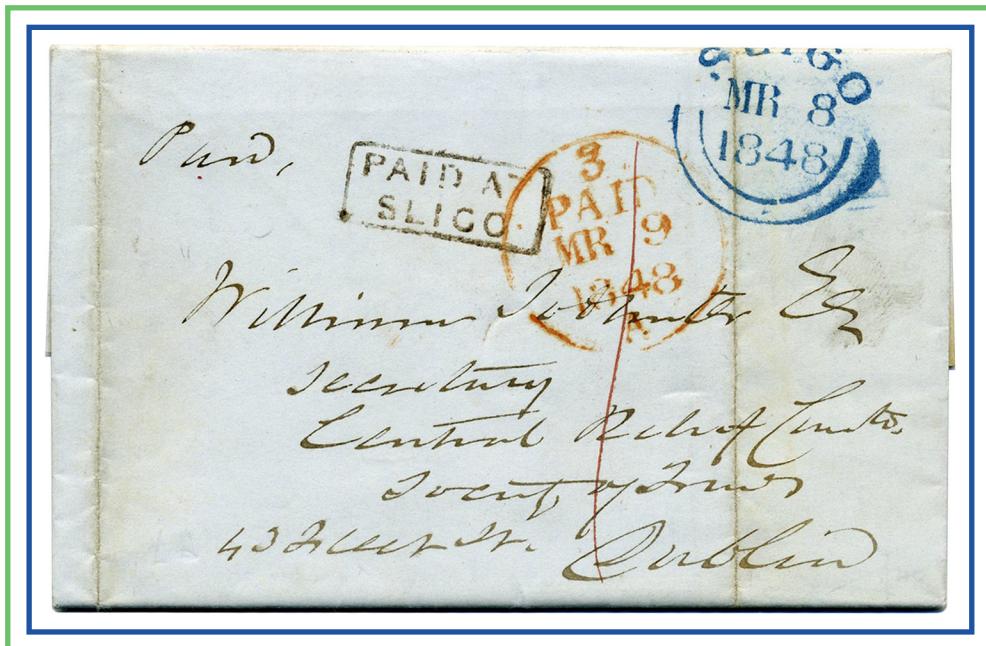
7 March 1848 — docketed Bridport (Co Dorset), W. Hamsell & Co; Bridport barred oval '127' handstamp ties 1D red (Pl71 TH State II).

8 March 1848 — black BRIDPORT/MR 8/1848/A double arc circle on back.

9 March 1848 — orange-red Dublin 8/MR 9/1848/K backstamp; no contents.

Forwarding Cargo

This informed the Central Relief Committee that John O'Connor had engaged the Steamship *Unity*, which would be loading the next day, to take cargo to Ballina for the CRC.



8 March 1848 — datelined Sligo by John O'Connor; PAID AT/SLIGO in box frame hs with Blue SLIGO/MR 8/1848 double arc circle on address panel.

9 March 1848 — an orange-red Dublin 28mm 3/PAID/MR 9/1848/A arrival postmark was also struck on the front; red pen slash ‘/’ indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 was met.

Receipt of Aid

Miss Peyton gratefully acknowledges a grant of clothing value £10 from the Cork Committee Soc of Friends for relief purposes.



14 March 1848 — rimless CARRICK ON SHANNON/MR14/1848 handstamp struck; pen slashes 'P/' indicate the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 was prepaid.

15 March 1848 — an orange-red Dublin 28mm 1/PAID/MR 15/1848/A arrival postmark was also struck on the front.

Importance of Clothing

Your liberal grant was given... to the persons in the greatest distress in this district, many of whom were... as naked as when they came into this world. I can truly say that the distribution of your bale has been the means of saving many from going into the Poor House & to keep families together...

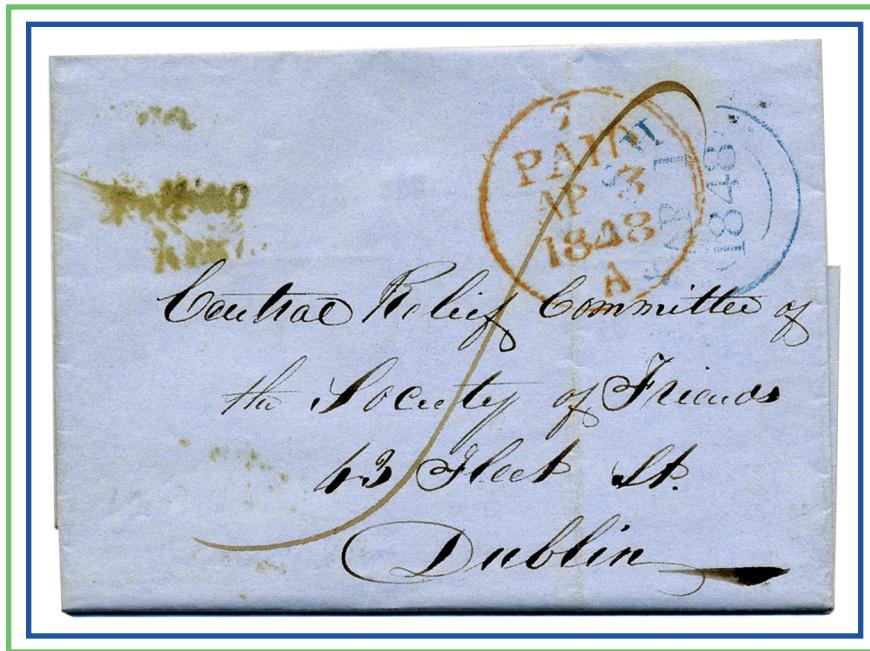


23 March 1848 — datelined Woodlands, Stranorlar by Joseph Johnson, draft enclosed; blueish italic two line *Killygordon/Strabane* handstamp; two 1D red singles (MK & ML) tied by two strikes of the Strabane barred diamond '412' postal marking; blue STRABANE/MR 23/1848 double arc circle backstamp.

24 March 1848 — orange-red Dublin 28mm 4/MR 24/1848/A arrival backstamp.

Scarcity of Clothing

From the great amount of destitution and misery which at present prevail in this neighborhood and the scenes of wretchedness which are everyday becoming more appalling, the poor have want and privation pictured in their face with scarcely a particle of clothing to cover their almost naked bodies.



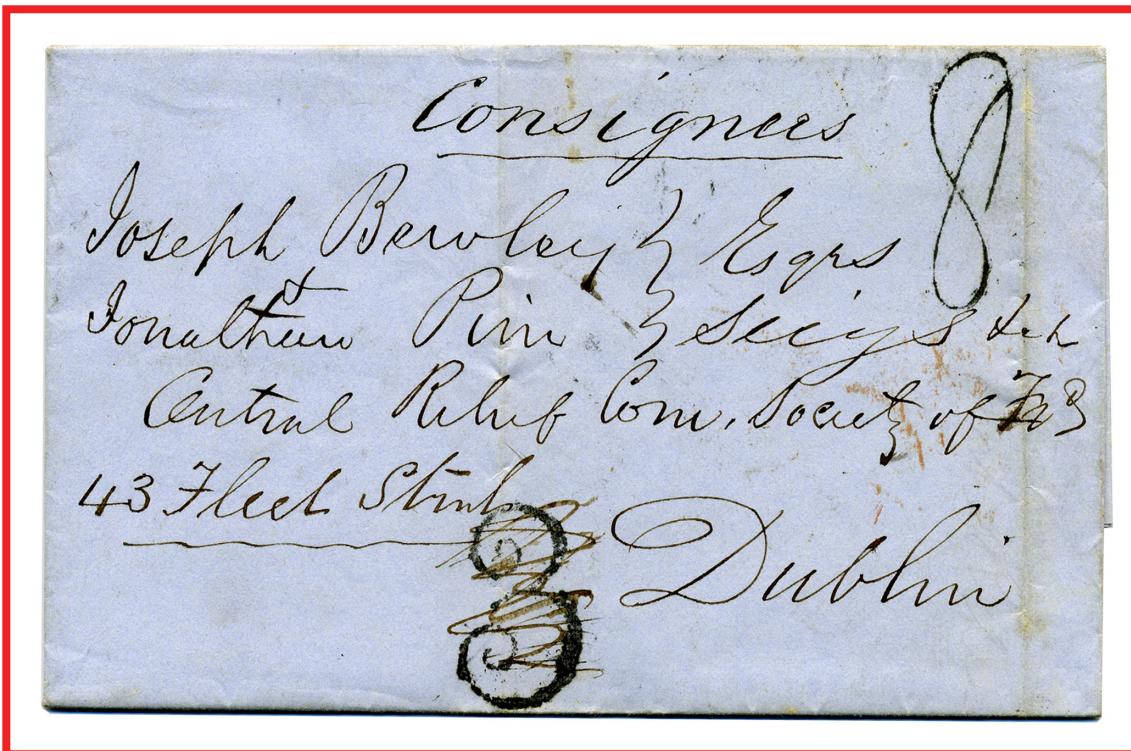
1 April 1848 — datelined Pettigo by Presbyterian minister John Donaldson; blueish italic two line *Pettigo/Kesh* handstamp; blue KESH/AP 1/1848 double arc circle handstamp struck on front and back; ; pen slash ‘/’ indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 was prepaid.

2 April 1848 — blue KESH/AP 2/1848 double arc circle backstamp.

3 April 1848 — an orange-red Dublin 28mm 7/PAID/AP 3/1848/A arrival postal marking was also struck on the front.

Last Shipment

GRC Treasurer James Reyburn comments, "...enclose you Bill of Lading for Forty Barrels of Bread Stuff, say 23 Blls Flour & 17 Blls Indian Corn shipped to your address pr Ship Andrew Foster... This will probably be our last Shipment to your Committee and by an early opportunity I will send you a few copies of our report."



19 June 1848 — datelined New York from the office of the GRC to the Central Relief Committee in Dublin. The letter is endorsed **Consignees**; contents headed *P Ship Andrew Foster*.

20 July 1848 — arrived at Liverpool where a black Type S16 truncated box 20JY1848/LIVERPOOL/SHIP transit handstamp was applied to the reverse.; the rare Liverpool script-like 3 rate mark applied to the front, but this was struck through and replaced by a matching hook 8 handstamp (the regular Ship Letter rate), presumably this was because the ship's name had not been endorsed on the front of the letter.

21 July 1848 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel to Dublin where an orange-red 27mm 5/JY21/1848/E arrival backstamp was added.

Tuam to CRC



19 June 1848 — docketed *Theobold Dillon, Logboy*; illegible blue double arc backstamp; blue TUAM/JU19/1848 double arc circle postmark on address panel; no contents.

20 June 1848 — an orange-red Dublin 28mm 2/PAID/JU20/1848/A arrival postal marking was also struck on the front; pen slash '/' indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 was prepaid.

Galway to CRC



26 June 1848 — docketed as this date; no contents.

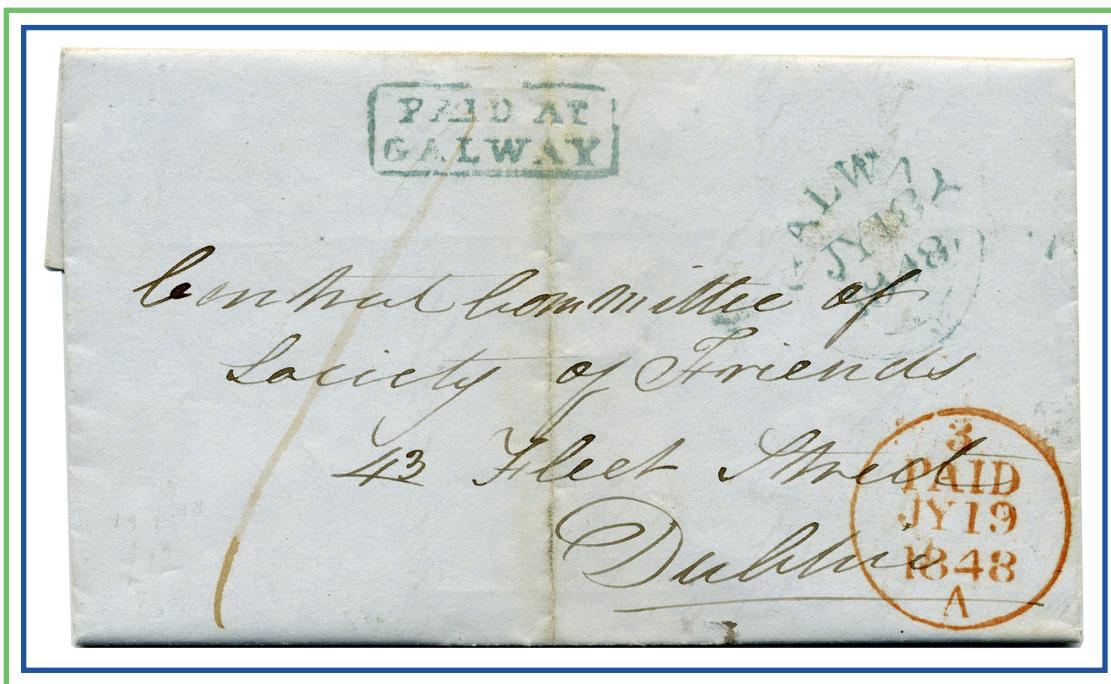
29 June 1848 — blue GALWAY/JU29/1848 double arc postmark; black barred diamond Galway '232' ties 1D (QH) red; black boxed No. 5 Receiving House mark on address panel.

30 June 1848 — an orange-red Dublin 27mm 7/JU30/1848/A arrival backstamp.

Clothes for Bohermore Children

Letter from Wesleyan Minister James Harvey.

I established a school for the children of the destitute poor of Bohermore in the town of Galway, the daily average attendance being from 150-120. Breakfast was allowed... clothes were distributed amongst the children but there were so many... Knowing how ready your truly excellent Society is to every good work I have been induced to apply to you that if it be in your powers, you will make a grant of clothing to these poor children...



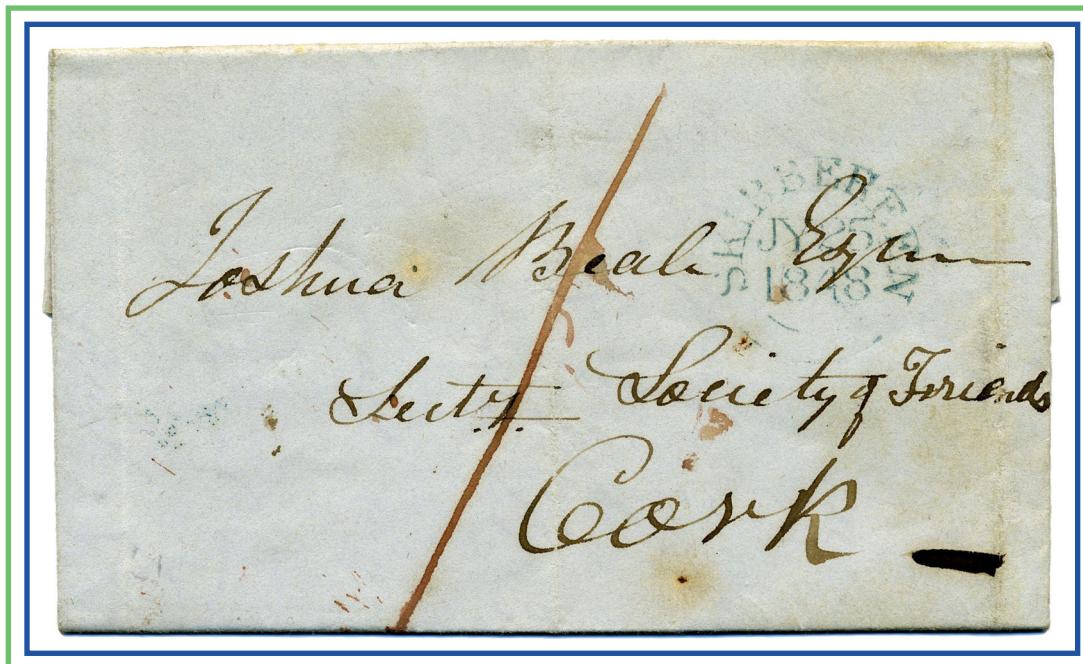
18 July 1848 — datelined Galway from James Harvey to CRC; boxed PAID AT/GALWAY and double arc GALWAY/JY18/1848 handstamps; pen slash ‘/’ indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 was prepaid.

19 July 1848 — an orange-red Dublin 28mm 3/JY19/1848/A arrival backstamp.

Optimism Disappointed

Spirits lifted all over the island during the summer of 1848 because the crops were looking verdant and plentiful. The anticipation was turned to grief by another total crop failure just after this letter to the Quaker Cork Relief Committee was written. The winter of 1848-49 proved to be darker the the infamous days of Black '47. Skibbereen is well known to have been one of the communities that suffered the most. Landowner Thomas Morris wrote:

I am most happy to inform you that the Potatoe Crops in this district are looking as well as ever. I saw them — and trust in the Lord that they will yield an abundant crop... and am confident that in one month we shall have abundance of provisions.



24 July 1848 — datelined Skibbereen by Thomas Morris, Mohoneyh Lodge; black wax Masonic Seeing Eye with 'May It Watch Over You' sealed letter.

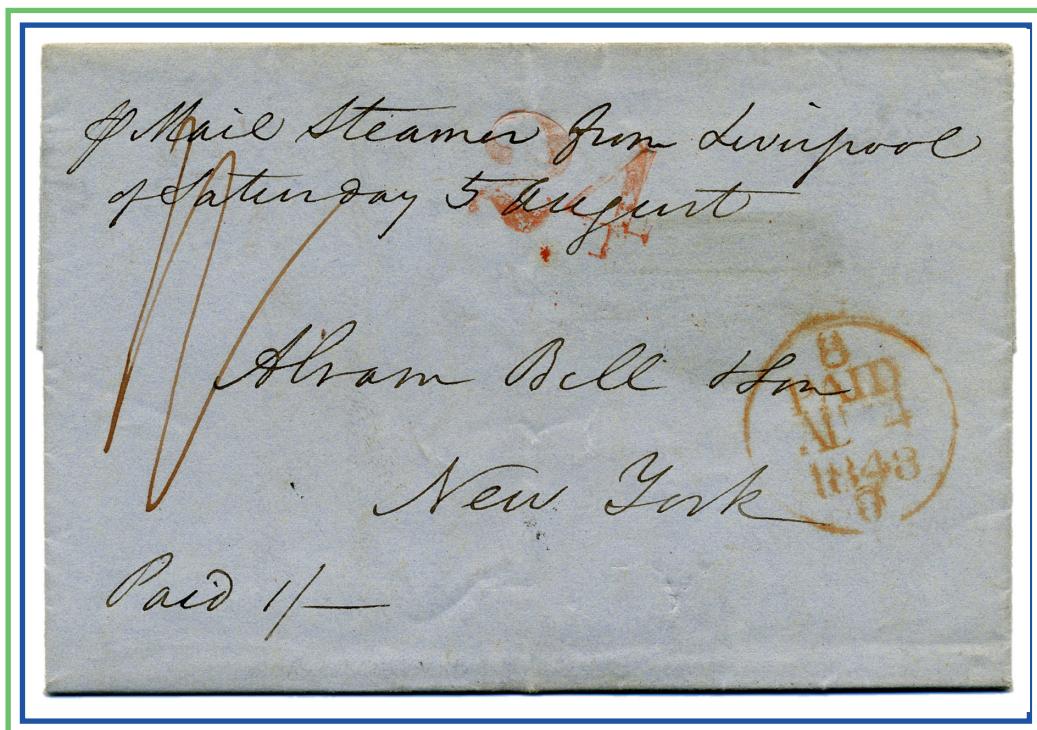
25 July 1848 — blue SKIBBEREEN/JY 25/1848 double arc circle handstamp struck on front. CORK/JY 25/1848/E double arc circle arrival backstamp applied; pen slash '/' indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 was paid.

Retaliatory Rate

The US Congress authorized the US Post Office to charge paid mail carried by Cunard on June 27, 1848, which began the Retaliatory Rate Period. This example was pre-paid in Dublin, however, the large red 24 handstamp indicates that the U.S. was disregarding the payment.

This letter was intended for Quaker James C. Bell, nephew of the sender 'R. Harvey.' There is a postscript mention of the rebellion at Ballingarry. Serious concerns are expressed over the soon to be harvested crop of potatoes:

yellow Corn - ~~round~~ We are quite in the dark
as to Potatoes - there are many complaints, but
whether the Turn will prove unsound, is yet
unknown - It would be a dreadful thing for
the County, if they should prove a failure -



4 August 1848 — datelined Dublin to Abraham Bell & Son in New York, an orange-red 28mm 8/PAID/AU 4/1848(?) handstamp was applied along with a ms *paid 1/-*, carried to Liverpool on small vessel.

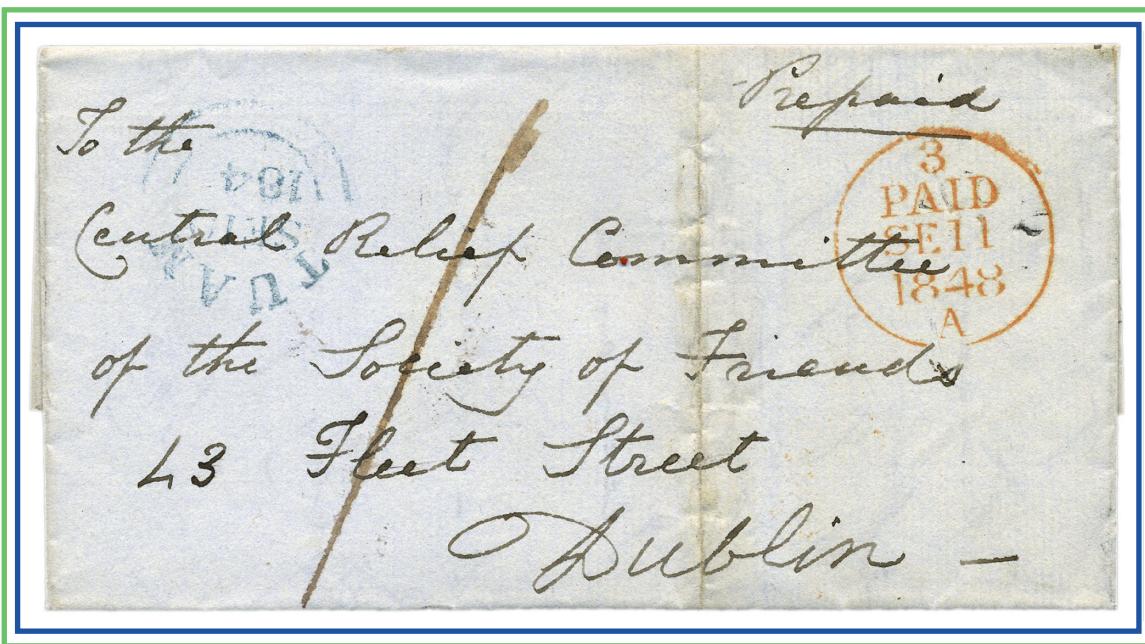
5 August 1848 — a black L/AU 5/A Liverpool Packet Letter Office lozenge transit backstamp was struck, and a penned rate mark was made on the address panel, the Packet Ship *RMS Cambria* departs Liverpool.

19 August 1848 — the *Cambria* arrives in New York where a red 24 cent Retaliatory Rate handstamp is placed on the front.

Expression of Gratitude

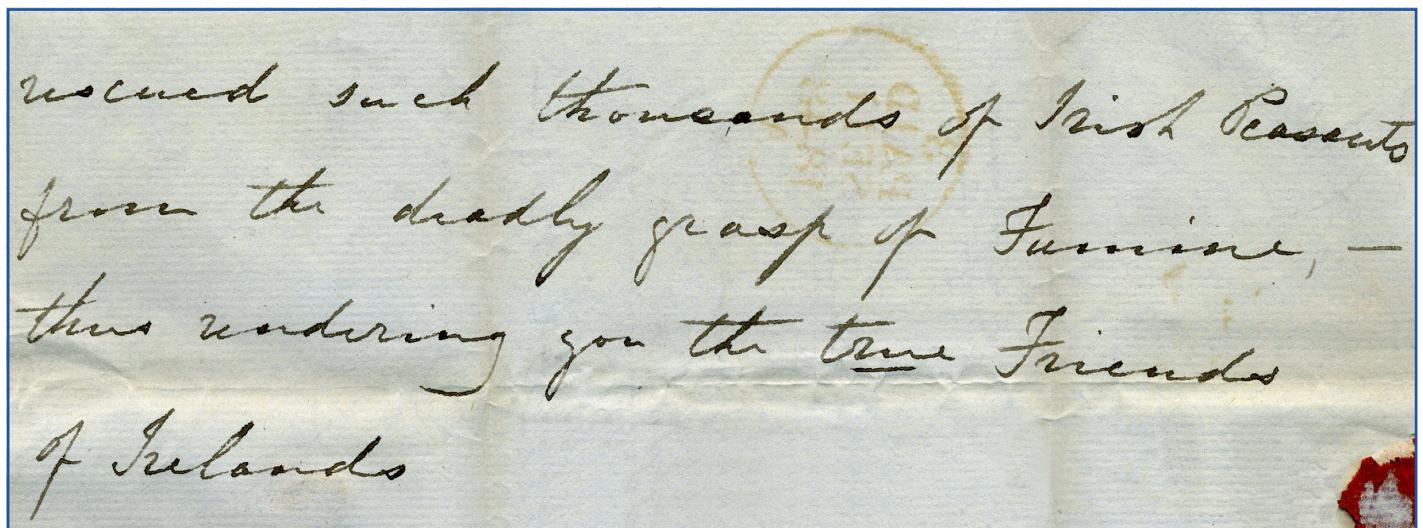
This letter was written by Charlotte Kirwan expressing her profuse thanks to the Dublin CRC on behalf of the people of the Tuam, County Galway, area. She compliments them by saying that the Society of Friends,

rescued such thousands of Irish Peasants from the deadly grasp of Famine — thus rendering you the true Friends of Irelands



9 September 1848 — Blue 27mm Double Arc Circle TUAM/SEP9/1848; ms '/' pen slash indicates the Uniform Penny Postage Rate of 1840 with ms *Prepaid*.

11 September 1848 — Dublin 28mm orange-red 3/PAID/SE11/1848/A receiving postal marking applied.



Quaker Shipping

Dublin CRC Member James Pim, of the large family of successful Quaker merchants, writes here to the very successful shipping firm Abraham Bell & Co. in New York. Abraham Bell was a Quaker who is credited with having transported thousands of immigrants from Ireland during the famine period. Bell's partner Jacob Harvey was a founding member of the New York GRC and was a relative of Joshua Harvey, who was a founding member of the Dublin CRC. An excerpt from Pim's letter:

The reports respecting the potato crop in this country are still contradictory and we cannot yet say whether the blight this season will effect it to any extent. We had advices some weeks since stating the entire crop had failed in the Island of Guernsey.

We are however of (the) opinion that whether the reports prove true or not we shall require a large supply of cheap food drawn from foreign ports.



Abraham Bell (1778-1856)

29 June 1849 — datelined Dublin, backstamped with an orange-red 27mm 5/JU29/1849/K.

30 June 1849 — black 20mm L/JU30/A Liverpool lozenge transit type M28 struck on back-side; British Exchange Office black 'rocker' 19 over CENTS charge mark applied on address panel indicating U.S. was debited under the US-GB Treaty of 1848 at 16¢ Sea (British Packet) + 3¢ (British Inland) = 19¢; RMS *Niagara* departed Liverpool for New York.

14 July 1849 — *Niagara* arrives in New York, a black 24 due from recipient U.S. Exchange Office handstamp added to front, U.S. retained 5¢ (U.S. Inland) of the total rate.

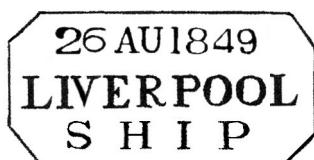
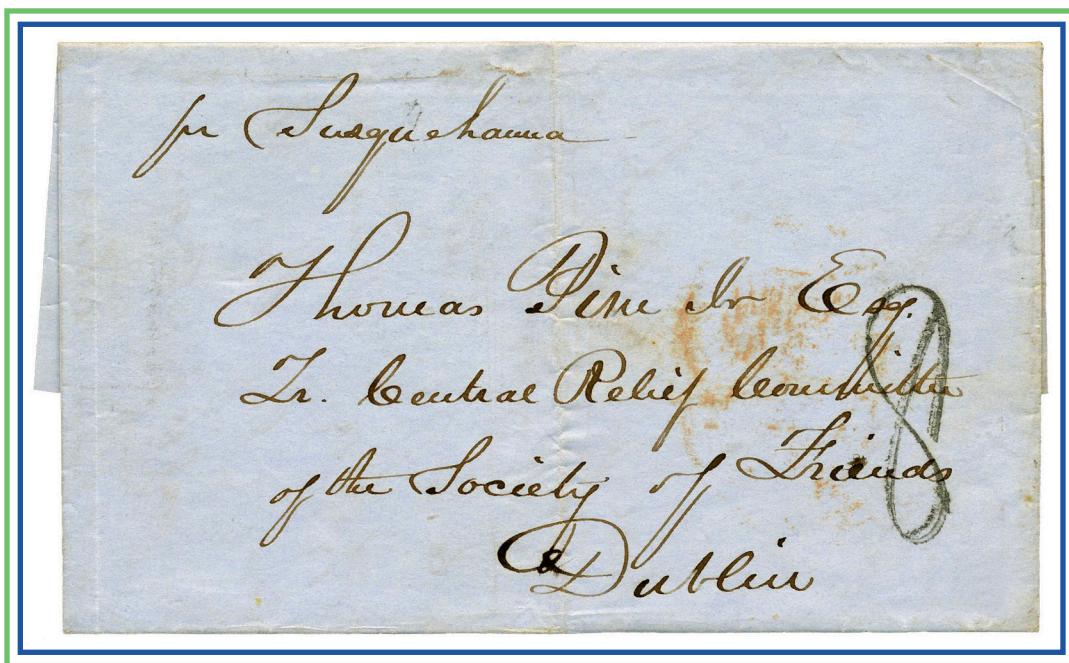
James Pim Jr.
James Pim letter signature
"Quaker father of Irish railways"

Ending the Effort

The Dublin CRC had the philosophy that it should focus on helping people who were not reached by government aid, especially after the enactment of the Poor Laws. So, when the government run soup kitchens finally began to operate, the CRC changed its strategy. It ended its own involvement with soup kitchens in favor of concentrating on encouraging productive industry in early 1848. The CRC promoted expanding fisheries, improving agricultural methods, and increasing manufacturing. It was thought that this would have a longer-lasting benefit for the Irish.

Overwhelmed by the scope of the problem, the Quakers decided to discontinue their relief work in June of 1849. In a widely distributed printed public letter to British Prime Minister John Russell they stated that the problem was beyond voluntary groups, and only the government had the capabilities of dealing with the enormity of the tragedy.

Enclosed with this folded letter from Philadelphia was a draft for £ 10.7.11 stg. sent, ...of our Irish relief committee after its accounts were closed..., apparently ending PRC operations.



Backstamps

9 July 1849 — headed at Philadelphia and addressed to the Treasurer of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends at Dublin, endorsed *pr Susquehanna* (II) of the Quaker owned Cope Line after the new Postal Convention Treaty Rates went into effect. A duplicate letter was sent via the *Hibernia*.

24 July 1849 — letter handed directly to the purser of the *Susquehanna* which departed for Liverpool.

25 August 1849 — *Susquehanna* arrived at Liverpool, a truncated box 26 AU 1849/LIVERPOOL/SHIP backstamp was applied. The New US-Great Britain Treaty Rates went into effect 15 February 1849. This letter was subject to the agreed upon standard 8d Ship Letter Rate within the UK, which had been effective January 10, 1840, thus the Hook 8 handstamp.

27 August 1849 — crossed the Irish Sea via smaller vessel, a red 27mm 8/AU 27/1849/B backstamp was added upon arrival in Dublin.

Strabane-Liverpool-Boston

The Blight on the Potatoes is the severest crush that this country gets...



14 July 1850 — Transatlantic letter datelined Ballyheather, Strabane, Co Tyrone and addressed to the Widow Robinson; blue STRABANE/JY 16/1850 double arc circle handstamp struck on front; ; the British applied '24' and Rocker 19 handstamps in U.S. currency indicating that the Exchange Office allowed them 19¢ out of the total of 24¢, while the U.S. retained their 5¢ Domestic Rate.

17 July 1850 — an orange-red Dublin 25mm 1/JY17/1850/A transit handstamp placed on the back.

18 July 1850 — black Liverpool truncated diamond L/JY 18/A backstamp also applied.

Liverpool-Boston-New York

The general belief is (the present crop being the largest ever Planted) that if one half decays there will be sufficient left for all purposes.



8 August 1850 — transatlantic datelined Liverpool by Quaker corn merchant and investor Peter Leicester & Co to noted Quaker shipper Abraham Bell & Co in New York; two page letter and 2 Grain Market circulars on thin tissue stationery.

9 August 1850 — red PAID AT/LIVERPOOL/AUG 9 1850 truncated box, arc PAID and Rocker 5 over CENTS (US rate Boston-New York) struck; endorsed *per Europa*; black Liverpool transit oval L/AU 9/C backstamped.

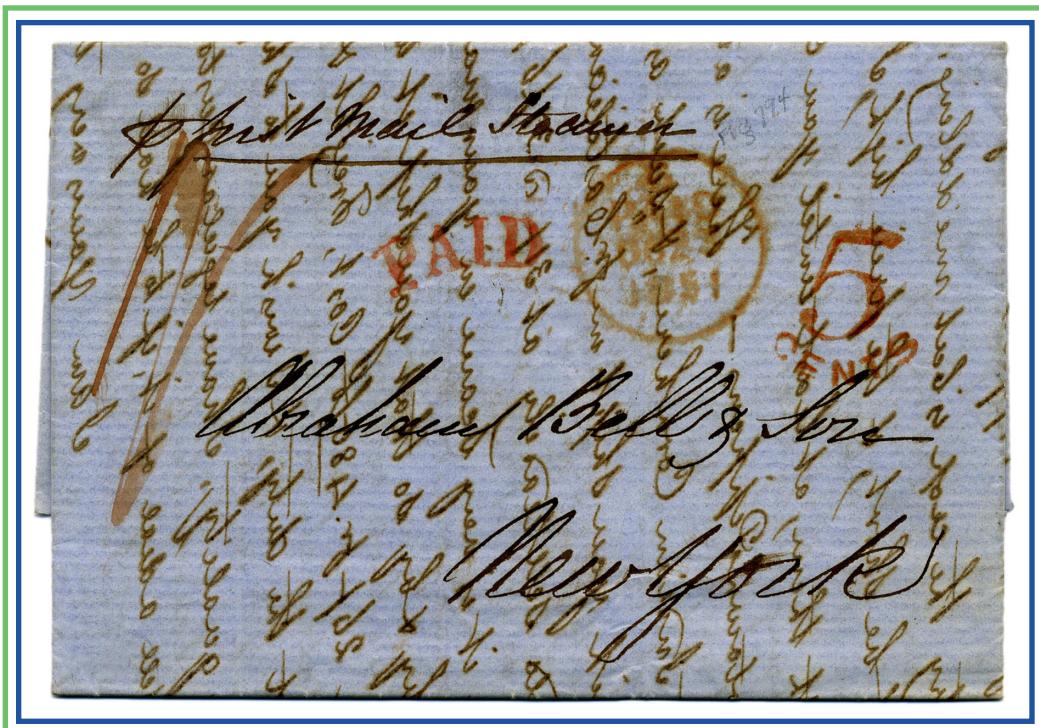
10 August 1850 — the Packet Ship *Europa* leaves for Boston, arriving on August 21st.

The Blight Wanes

There is no specific date that can be given for the end of the Great Irish Famine. In reality, the blight tailed off gradually. Most sources give the ending year as 1851 or 1852.

Dublin Quaker Isaac English sent this folded letter sheet to his cousin Abraham Bell in New York. Being an astute businessman, shipping merchant Bell had trusted agents throughout Europe sending him commodity market 'intelligence' as in this case. Within the letter English reports that Indian Corn will continue to be sought after because, although the potato disease has set in again,

fully one half the crop it is thought will be lost for human food.



23 October 1851 — datelined Dublin, postmarked with an orange-red 25mm (?)/PAID/OC23/1851, ms pr *first mail steamer* and ms 1/- rate.

24 October 1851 — black 20mm L/OC24/B Liverpool lozenge transit type M28 struck on back-side; British Exchange Office red Rocker '5' over CENTS charge mark applied.

25 October 1851 — Cunard ship *Africa* departs Liverpool, but returns after running into rocks on the Irish coast near Belfast.

28 October 1851 — Cunard ship *Canada* departs Liverpool with mail from the *Africa*.

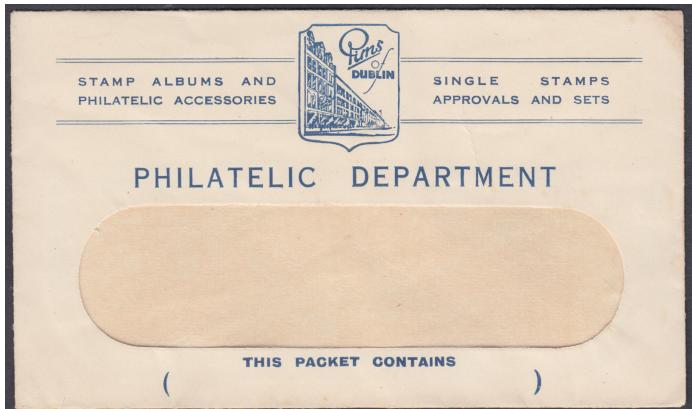
2 December 1851 — red curved PAID handstamp added in New York to address panel; U.S. credited 5¢ (U.S. Inland) of the total rate.



Backstamp

Not in Collection

Addendum Misc



Jonathan Pim



Illustrated London News, February 13, 1847, by James Mahony

I started from Cork for Skibbereen and saw little until we came to Clonakilty, where . . . the horrors of the poverty became visible, in the vast number of famished poor, who flocked around the coach to beg alms: amongst them was a woman carrying in her arms the corpse of a fine child, and making the most distressing appeal to the passengers for aid to enable her to purchase a coffin and bury her dear little baby... — James Mahony

Addendum Misc

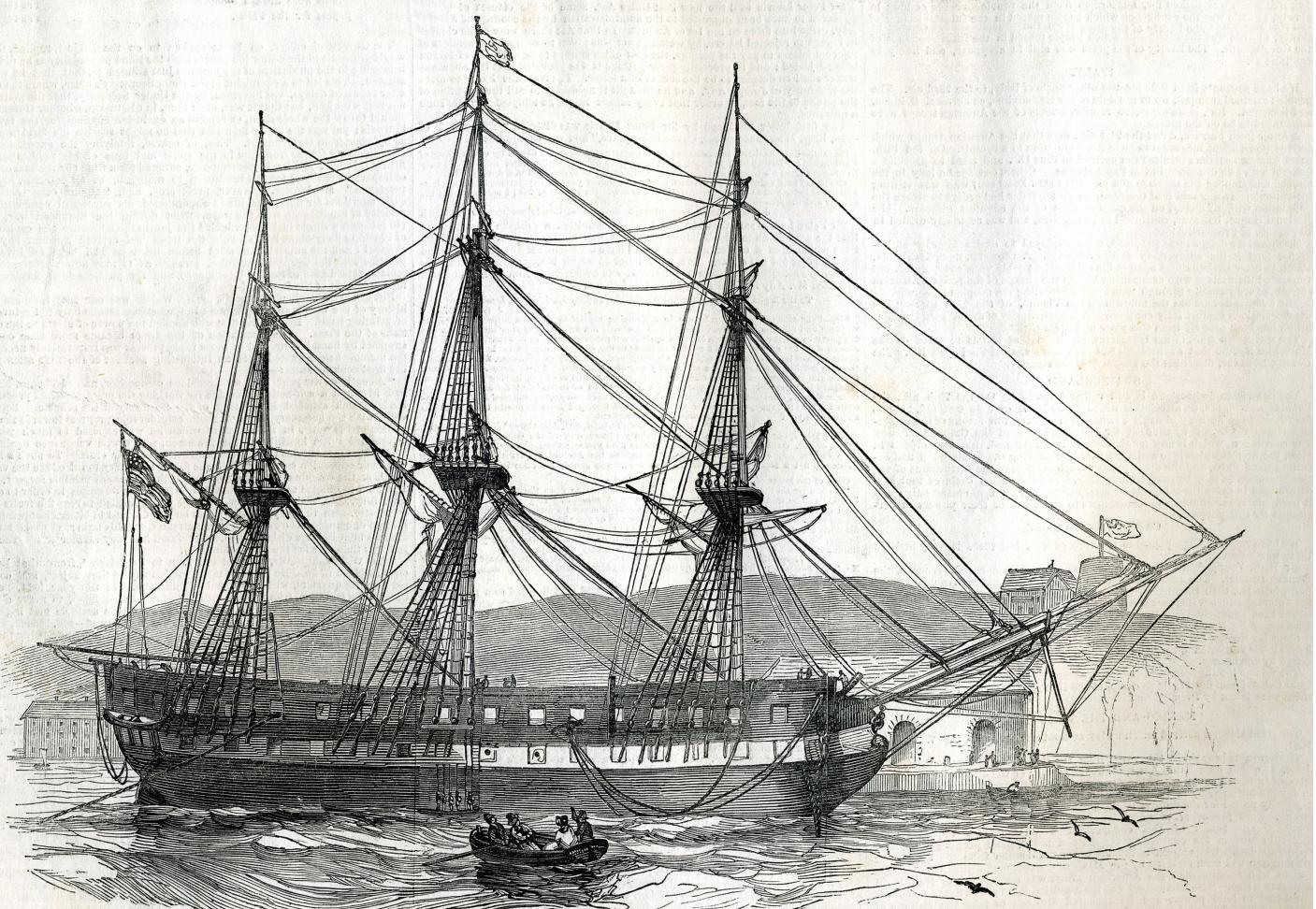


George Coleman De Kay by St. Gaudens





Presented to Commodore George de Kay



The famine relief Frigate *USS Macedonian*, laden with provisions for the destitute Irish.



Irish immigrants debark in New York in 1847 ~ Painting by Samuel B. Waugh.