

## The Discriminatory, Retaliatory and Restored Rates Period 1847 - 1849

Entire sent from Liverpool to Philadelphia via New York on  
board Cunard's 'Hibernia' departing 8<sup>th</sup> July 1848



The letter was paid '1/-' at Liverpool for the British ½ ounce packet rate. On arrival at New York on 21st July the US Reprisal Act required the letter to be charged '29' cents for the 5¢ postage to Philadelphia (under 300 miles) and the 24¢ American packet postage from England.

This exhibit illustrates the rates and charge marks resulting from each phase of this period on mail between the USA and Great Britain carried on American and British packet ships. **Notable items are highlighted in red text.**

## Shown are

- a) Discriminatory charges on mail carried by American Ocean Line ships
- b) Retaliatory rates applied to mail carried on British Cunard Line vessels
- c) Examples of rating handstamps applied at New York, Boston and other cities
- d) Examples of restored rates (ship fee and inland postage rates)

## Dates:

- Cunard contract from Liverpool to Boston renewed July 1846. New York added as alternative terminus from January 1848.
- Ocean Steam Navigation given US contract from New York to Bremerhaven with stop off the Isle of Wight for British and French Mails. First sailing: 1<sup>st</sup> June 1847.
- British Post Office issued order that mails for Britain and France on Ocean Line's *Washington* be charged as if carried by British steamer, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1847.
- US declare British charge to be Discriminatory and passes the Reprisal Act 27<sup>th</sup> June 1848, creating the so-called Retaliatory rates.
- US and British Governments agree treaty on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1848, to commence 15<sup>th</sup> February 1849, with rates prior to June 1847 to be Restored in the interim.

## References:

- Hargest, GE: *History of Letter Post Communication Between the United States and Europe, 1845-1875*  
 Hubbard, W & Winter, RF: *North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75*, US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc 1988  
 Tabart, C: *Robertson Revisited*, James Bendon, Ltd., Limassol, 1997  
 Blake, M & Davis, W: *Boston Postmarks to 1890*, Quarterman Publications, Lawrence, USA, 1974  
 Tabart, C: *United Kingdom Letter rates Inland and Overseas 1635 to 1900*, 2nd edition, 2003, HH Sales Ltd

## Ocean Line - Discriminatory Tax Introduced

Prepaid entire sent from New York to Sheffield on board the first voyage of Ocean Line's 'Washington' on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1847



## New York:

'PAID' and '24' cents US packet fee in manuscript  
'NEW - YORK / JUN 1'

## London:

'1/-' British packet charge in manuscript  
'X Cwn C 16 JU 16 1847' transit mark

Ocean Line 'Washington'

dep New York	1 <sup>st</sup> Jun 1847 <sup>1</sup>
arr Southampton (off Cowes)	15 <sup>th</sup> Jun

The order to charge packet rates on mail brought by Ocean Line ships was contained in a June 9<sup>th</sup> General Post Office Instruction. The US Government determined that it was Discriminatory and contravened the Most Favoured Nation Treaty of July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1815<sup>2</sup>.

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

2 Harnest GF: History of Letter Post Communication Between the US and Europe 1845-1875, Quarterman Publications, 1975, pp23

Ocean Line - Discriminatory Tax - Eastbound 2<sup>nd</sup> Voyage

Letter sent from New York to Paris via Southampton (Coves, IoW) and Le Havre on board Ocean Line's 'Washington' on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1847



Marks:  
 'PAID' '24' applied at New York (24¢ US packet rate)  
 'OUTRE-MER / 11 OCT 47 / LE HAVRE' (overseas mail)  
 'LIGNE-DU-HAVRE / 11 OCT 47 / 1' (on reverse, TPO from Le Havre to Paris)  
 'PARIS POSTE RESTANTE / 12 OCT 47' (on reverse, arrival Paris)  
 '9' 9 decimes postage due applied at Le Havre.  
 Ocean Line 'Washington'  
 dep New York 23<sup>rd</sup> Sep  
 arr off Southampton 9<sup>th</sup> Oct  
 Rate:  
 French sea tax 1 decime  
 French inland 8 decime for 7½ to 10 grm

The US PO avoided landing the French mails at Southampton and the French PO treated them as ship letters to avoid the terms of the 1843 Anglo-French treaty for US mail by GB packets<sup>1</sup>.

Prepaid entire sent from New York via Southampton to London on board the second voyage of Ocean Line's 'Washington' on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1847

New York: 'PAID'  
 (24¢ not noted)  
 London: '1/-'  
 Discriminatory British packet charge applied in pen.  
 London marks on reverse:



Mails for the UK were charged 1/- the ½oz even though US packet postage had been paid. However, the mails for France avoided going via Britain and the discriminatory tax.

<sup>1</sup> Winter, RF: Understanding Transatlantic Mail Volume 1, American Philatelic Society, 2006, pp273

Ocean Line - Discriminatory Tax - westbound 2<sup>nd</sup> voyage

Letter sent from Calcutta to London and forwarded via Southampton and New York to Boston on board Ocean Line's 'Washington' in October 1847



Reverse, reduced:



'CALCUTTA / G.P.O. / SHIP LETTER / 18 SE 18 / 1847'

P&O Line's 'Bentinck' carried the letter from Calcutta to Suez from where it was transported via Alexandria and Marseilles to London.

London arrival mark:  
'3 AM 3 / OC21 / 1847'

Obverse, London:

'PAID L.S. 230C23 1847'

'1/-' Discriminatory British packet charge

New York:

'29' cents US packet fee of 24¢ plus 5¢ domestic postage due

Ocean Line 'Washington' (2<sup>nd</sup> return voyage)

dep Southampton (off Cowes) 24 Oct

arr New York 9 Nov 1847<sup>1</sup>

The Post Office charged 1 shilling even though the letter was endorsed for the American packet ship *Washington*. Letters westbound via Ocean Line ships are uncommon at this time<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hubbard, W & Winter, RF: North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75, US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc 1988

<sup>2</sup> Winter, RF: Understanding Transatlantic Mail Volume 1, American Philatelic Society, 2006, pp 93

Ocean Line - Discriminatory Tax - 4<sup>th</sup> Eastbound and Westbound voyage

Prepaid entire sent from Havana via New York to London on board the fourth voyage of Ocean Line's 'Washington' on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1848



New York: 'PAID' '24'  
US packet fee of 24¢

Ocean Line 'Washington'  
dep New York 21<sup>st</sup> Feb  
arr Southampton 7<sup>th</sup> Mar

London mails off loaded  
off of Cowes, IoW.

London: '1/-'  
Manuscript 1 shilling  
discriminatory British  
Packet charge.

'AW 8 MR 8 1848'  
London transit mark on  
reverse.

Prepaid entire sent from London via Southampton to New York on board the return of fourth voyage of Ocean Line's 'Washington' on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1848

London:  
'PAID DH 20MR20 1848'

'1/-' Discriminatory  
British packet charge

New York:  
'24' cents US packet fee  
due [Winter type 302]

Ocean Line 'Washington'  
dep S'hampton 21<sup>st</sup> Mar  
arr New York 7<sup>th</sup> Apr



At the London Post Office the letter was charged 1 shilling even though it was endorsed for carriage by the American packet ship Washington. Letters westbound via Ocean Line ships are thus uncommon in this period<sup>1</sup>.

1 Winter, RF: Understanding Transatlantic Mail Volume 1, American Philatelic Society, 2006, pp93 and 94

Cunard Line - Retaliatory Rate Introduced - First Eastbound Voyage

Letter sent from New York to London via Liverpool  
on board Cunard Line's 'Britannia' in July 1848



'24' cents retaliatory charge applied in New York (pencil, upper left of address panel).

Cunard Line 'Britannia'  
dep New York 5<sup>th</sup> July  
arr Liverpool 19<sup>th</sup> July

First eastbound voyage subject to the charges of the US Reprisal Act passed by Congress on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1848<sup>1</sup>.

London arrival mark 'AH 23JY23 1848' '1/-' in manuscript, packet charge due.

Letter sent by 'PAUL SCHMID & ANDREAE / NEW YORK'

Framed cachet applied. Listed in Longworth's American Almanack, New-York Register, and City Directory for 1842

<sup>1</sup> Hargest, GE: History of Letter Post Communication between the US and Europe 1845-1875, Quarterman Publ'ns, 1975

Cunard Line - Retaliatory Rate Introduced - 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Westbound Voyages

Paid letter sent from London to New York on board Cunard Line's  
'Caledonia' departing Liverpool 24<sup>th</sup> June 1848



Paid 1/- in London

Cunard Line 'Caledonia'  
dep Liverpool 24 Jun  
arr New York 8 Jul<sup>1</sup>

'24' cents retaliatory  
charge made at New York.  
[H&W 302]<sup>2</sup>

First westbound voyage  
subject to the charges  
of the US Reprisal Act  
passed by Congress on  
27th June 1848.

Prices current sent from Liverpool via Boston to New York  
on board Cunard's 'Niagara' departing 1<sup>st</sup> July 1848

Paid 1/- packet fee  
plus 3d late fee  
(7:15pm to 7:30pm)

Cunard Line 'Niagara'  
dep Liverpool 1 Jul  
arr Boston 12 Jul

'29' cents charge for  
24¢ retaliatory rate  
plus 5¢ postage to  
New York (under 300  
miles). [BPM 556]<sup>\*3</sup>

Second westbound  
Cunard voyage subject  
to the Reprisal Act.



\* Earliest possible date for BPM 556 charge mark

<sup>1</sup> Hubbard, W & Winter, RF: North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75, US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc 1988

<sup>2</sup> H&W ibid, postmark #302 first known from November 1847 on return of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ocean Line 'Washington' voyage

<sup>3</sup> Blake, M & Davis, W: Boston Postmarks to 1890, Quarterman Publications, Lawrence, USA, 1974, earliest date possible 12<sup>th</sup> July 1848

Cunard Line - Retaliatory Rate - Boston hand stamps

Prepaid entire sent from Drifffield via Liverpool and Boston to New York  
on board Cunard Line's 'Niagara' 1st July 1848



GB: Paid '1/-'  
packet fee.

Liverpool transit  
on reverse:  
'L JU 28 A'

Boston:  
'BOSTON MS. SHIP  
JUL 12' [BPM 294]<sup>1</sup>

'29' Boston  
Retaliatory charge  
[BPM 555]\*

24¢ retaliatory  
rate plus 5¢  
postage to New York

Prepaid entire sent from Liverpool via Boston to Philadelphia  
on board Cunard Line's 'Niagara' 1st July 1848

GB: Paid '1/-'

'PAID AT LIVERPOOL  
JU 30 1848'

Boston:  
'BOSTON MS. SHIP  
JUL 12' [BPM 294]

'34' Boston  
Retaliatory charge  
[BPM 560]\*

24¢ retaliatory rate  
plus 10¢ postage to  
Philadelphia



Cunard Line 'Niagara'  
dep Liverpool 1 Jul 1848<sup>2</sup>  
arr Boston 12 Jul

\* Earliest possible date for BPM 555 and 560 charge marks

<sup>1</sup> Blake, M & Davis, W: Boston Postmarks to 1890, Quarterman Publications, Lawrence, USA, 1974

<sup>2</sup> Hubbard, W & Winter, RF: North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75, US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc 1988

Cunard Packet - Retaliatory Rate - New York hand stamps

Prepaid entires to New York and Providence sent via New York on board Cunard's 'Niagara' departing 19<sup>th</sup> August 1848



At Liverpool:  
 '1/-' hand stamp &  
 'PAID AT LIVERPOOL  
 AU 19 1848' [Tab M3]<sup>1</sup>

Cunard Line 'Niagara'  
 dep Liverpool 19 Aug  
 arr New York 31 Aug<sup>2</sup>

At New York charged  
 24¢ US packet rate  
 with no additional  
 mileage charge.  
 [Winter 302]



Paid '1/-' British ½ oz packet rate at Manchester but at New York charged the retaliatory 24¢ US packet rate plus 5¢ internal postage for under 300 miles.

Hand stamp mark:

'NEW - YORK / SHIP / date / 29cts' hand stamp incorporating the 24¢ Retaliatory Rate and 5¢ mileage charge [Winter 356]

1 Tabart, C: Robertson Revisited, James Bendon, Ltd., Limassol, 1997

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

Cunard Packet - Retaliatory Rate - Eastbound voyages

Prepaid entire sent from New Bedford, Mass., via New York to London  
on board Cunard's 'Hibernia' on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1848



At New Bedford:  
'PAID' '29' for the  
24¢ US packet rate  
plus 5¢ internal  
postage to New York.

Cunard 'Hibernia'  
dep New York 2 Aug  
arr Liverpool 15 Aug  
'1/-' due in London

On reverse:  
'EE 16AU16 1848'

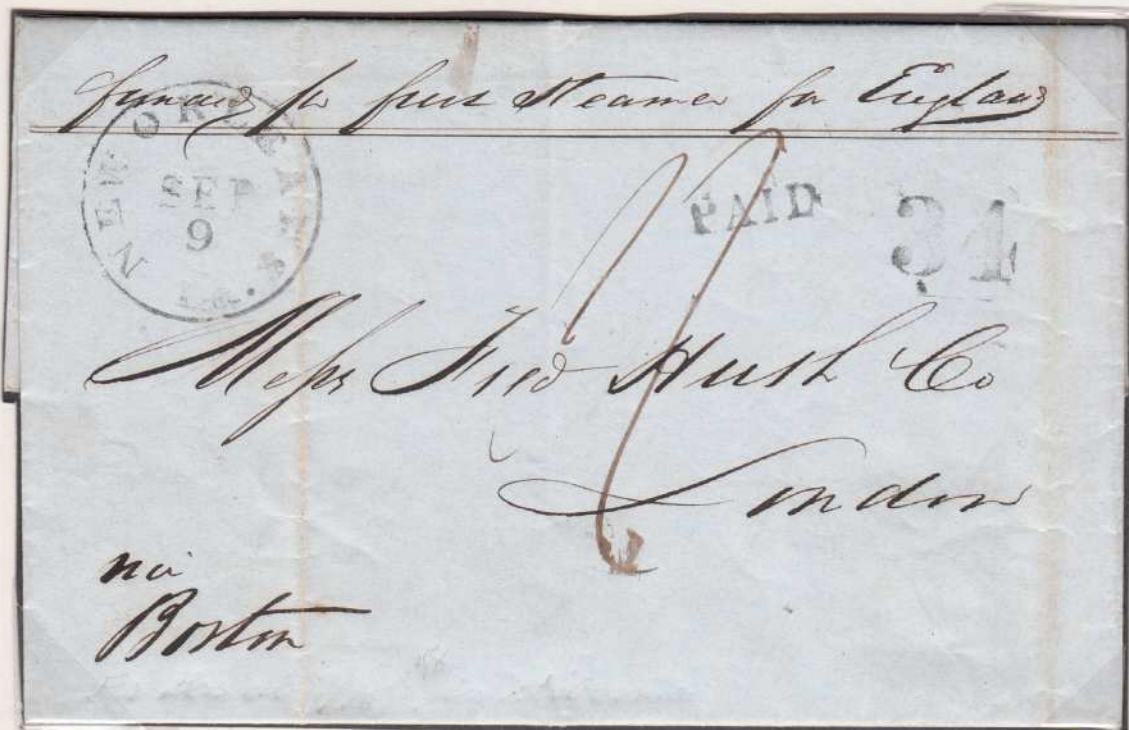
Prepaid entire sent to London from New Orleans via Boston  
on board Cunard's 'Hibernia' on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1848

At New Orleans:  
'PAID' '34' for the  
24¢ US packet rate  
plus 10¢ internal  
postage to Boston.

Cunard 'Hibernia'  
dep Boston 20 Sep  
arr Liverpool 2 Oct

'1/-' due in London

On reverse:  
'CI 3 OC 3 1848'



The US Reprisal Act required that US packet postage be paid on all inbound and  
outbound mail to England whether or not one of the American vessels was used.<sup>1</sup>

Cunard Packet - Retaliatory rate - New York charges

Double rate late fee cover sent from Liverpool via New York to Philadelphia on board Cunard Line's 'Europa' in September 1848



Paid: double packet rate to 1oz 2/-  
 Liverpool experimental late fee 3d

On reverse:  
 'LIVERPOOL SP 2 1848 O'  
 'L SP 2 A' transit [Tab M27]

Cunard 'Europa'  
 dep Liverpool 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep  
 arr New York 14<sup>th</sup> Sep

New York blue ms '58'  
 [2x (24¢+5¢)=58¢]

One of only four covers to Philadelphia recorded at this rate [Barwis]

Prepaid entire sent from Dublin via Liverpool to New York after Retaliatory Act, June 1848, on board Cunard's 'America' departing 28<sup>th</sup> October 1848

Paid '1/-' manuscript British packet rate.

Cunard's 'America'  
 dep Liverpool 28<sup>th</sup> Oct  
 arr New York 8<sup>th</sup> Nov

New York small '24' charge mark in red, use only recorded on covers charged the retaliatory rate. [H&W 301]

Charged 24¢ US packet retaliatory rate with no further charge for delivery in New York.



Rates charged on inbound Cunard Mail

	Pre-Retaliatory	Retaliatory
Inbound to US		
Delivery to port		6¢
Inland <= 300 miles	2¢+5¢= 7¢	29¢
Inland > 300 miles	2¢+10¢= 12¢	34¢

Rates charged on outbound mail carried by Cunard

	Pre-Retaliatory	Retaliatory
US Outbound		
At the port		24¢
To port <= 300 miles	5¢	29¢
To port > 300 miles	10¢	34¢

Tabcart, C: Robertson Revisited, James Bendon, Ltd., Limassol, 1997

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

Prepaid entire sent from Liverpool via New York to Canandaigua  
on board Cunard's 'Europa' departing 16<sup>th</sup> December 1848



Paid: 1 sh  
 Cunard Line's 'Europa'  
 dep Liverpool 16 Dec  
 arr New York 31 Dec  
 New York marks:  
 '24' [H&W 302]  
 'NEW - YORK / SHIP / JAN  
 1 / 34cts' [H&W 357]  
 Charged the retaliatory  
 24¢ US packet rate plus  
 10¢ internal postage for  
 over 300 miles to  
 Canandaigua.

Prepaid entire sent from Dublin via Liverpool and Boston to New York  
on board Cunard's 'America' departing 30<sup>th</sup> December 1848

'PAID DE29 1848 H'  
 '1/-' manuscript  
 British packet rate.  
 Liverpool transit  
 'L DE30 A' on reverse  
 Cunard's 'America'  
 dep Liverpool 30<sup>th</sup> Dec  
 arr Boston 12<sup>th</sup> Jan  
 Boston '7' [BPM 549]  
 ship fee of 2¢  
 inland postage 5¢  
 to New York charged  
 at rates prior to the  
 Retaliatory Act of  
 27<sup>th</sup> June 1848.



The charging of double rate sea postage (24¢ plus 1sh) ended in Great Britain by Treasury warrant dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1848, and in the USA by Post Office Order dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1849.

Hargest, GE: History of Letter Post Communication Between the US and Europe 1845-1875, 2nd edition, Quarterman Publications, 1975, pp29  
 Hubbard, W & Winter, RF: North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75, US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc 1988  
 Blake, M & Davis, W: Boston Postmarks to 1890, Quarterman Publications, Lawrence, USA, 1974

Letter paid at retaliatory rate sent from Charleston via New York and Liverpool to Greenock on board Cunard's 'Europa' 10<sup>th</sup> January 1849



'PAID' '34' 'CHARLESTON  
S.C. JAN 6'

Cunard 'Europa'  
dep New York 10<sup>th</sup> Jan  
arr Liverpool 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan

'1/-' packet rate due

On reverse:  
'AMERICA / LIVERPOOL  
JA22 1849' [Rob. P5]

'GREENOCK M JA23 1849'

The Charleston post office did not announce the restored rates until January 9<sup>th</sup> 1849 when published in the Charleston Mercury.

Letter paid at retaliatory rate sent from New Orleans via Boston and Liverpool to London on board Cunard's 'America' 24<sup>th</sup> January 1849

'PAID' '34'  
'NEW ORLEANS  
La DEC 30'

Cunard 'America'  
dep Boston 24<sup>th</sup> Jan  
arr Liverpool 4<sup>th</sup> Feb

'1/-' packet rate due

On reverse, London:  
'FN 5 FE 5 1849'

The New Orleans post office did not publish the restored rates until January 12<sup>th</sup> 1849.

Endorsed for the earlier 'Europa' New York sailing.



First and second of three eastbound sailings of the Restored rate period. Orders rescinding the retaliatory rates were published: Washington, DC, 4<sup>th</sup> January; New York, 5<sup>th</sup> January; Charleston, 9<sup>th</sup> January and New Orleans, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1849.

Cunard Packet - Restored rate Period - 2<sup>nd</sup> westbound voyage  
New York rate marks

Double rate letter sent from London via Liverpool to New York  
on board Cunard Line's 'Canada' departing 13<sup>th</sup> January 1849



Paid '2/-'  
manuscript double  
packet rate at  
Tooley Street PO  
with London 'PAID  
12 JA 1849'

Cunard's 'Canada'  
dep  
Liverpool 13<sup>th</sup> Jan  
arr  
New York 29<sup>th</sup> Jan

Charged '6' for 6¢  
ship letter fee  
and delivery at  
port of arrival.

[H&W 285]

Single rate letter sent from London via Liverpool and New York to Boston  
on board Cunard's 'Canada' leaving on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1849

Paid '1/-' manuscript  
single packet rate  
'PAID LS 12JA12 1849'

Cunard's 'Canada'  
dep Liverpool 13<sup>th</sup> Jan  
arr New York 29<sup>th</sup> Jan

Charged:  
'7' New York handstamp  
[H&W 287]

US ship fee 2¢  
Inland postage 5¢  
(under 300 miles) 7¢



Restored Rate Period Sailings between Liverpool and NY or Boston					
Dep LP	Arr	NY/B	Packet	Dep NY/B	Arr LP
			Europa	10 Jan (NY)	22 Jan
30 Dec	12 Jan (B)		America	24 Jan (B)	4 Feb
13 Jan	29 Jan (NY)		Canada	7 Feb (NY)	19 Feb
27 Jan	11 Feb (B)		Niagara		
10 Feb	24 Feb (NY)		Europa		

[H&W]

Cunard Packet - Restored Rate Period - 3<sup>rd</sup> westbound voyage  
Boston rate marks

Paid entire sent from Liverpool via Boston to New York  
on board Cunard's 'Niagara' in January 1849



Marks:  
'PAID AT LIVERPOOL JA 26  
1849' [Tab M3]

'7' [BPM 677]  
ship letter fee of 2¢  
plus inland postage 5¢  
from Boston, total due 7¢

Cunard 'Niagara'  
dep Liverpool 27<sup>th</sup> Jan  
arr Boston 11<sup>th</sup> Feb

Third of four westbound  
voyages by Cunard during  
the Restored Rate period.  
Bag from Liverpool opened  
at Boston

Paid entire sent from Liverpool via Boston to Memphis  
on board Cunard's 'Niagara' in January 1849

Marks:  
  
'BOSTON SHIP MS FEB 12'  
[BPM 546]  
  
'12' [BPM 551]  
ship letter fee 2¢  
inland postage 10¢  
from Boston, total 12¢  
  
Cunard 'Niagara'  
dep Liverpool 27<sup>th</sup> Jan  
arr Boston 11<sup>th</sup> Feb  
  
Bag from Liverpool opened  
at Boston



Rates were restored on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1848, effective December 29<sup>th</sup>, to those  
in force prior to the dispute (i.e. 1/- packet rate plus US ship fee and  
inland rates) until the US - GB Treaty commenced on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1849.

Rates:

Cunard packet fee less than ½ oz: 1/-, effective 10<sup>th</sup> January 1840  
US mileage charge: 5¢ < 300 miles, effective 1<sup>st</sup> July 1845 - 30<sup>th</sup> June 1851  
US ship letter fee: 2¢, in effect since 1825, except for Retaliatory Period

References:

Tabart, C: Robertson Revisited, James Bendon, Ltd., Limassol, 1997  
Hubbard, W & Winter, RF: North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75, US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc 1988  
Blake, M & Davis, W: Boston Postmarks to 1890, Quarterman Publications, Lawrence, USA, 1974  
Hargest, GE: History of Letter Post Communication Between the US and Europe 1845-1875, 2nd ed., Quarterman, 1975

Cunard Packet - Restored Rates - Last east (3<sup>rd</sup>) & west-bound (4<sup>th</sup>) sailings

Prepaid entire sent from Niagara Falls via New York to Axminster  
on board Cunard's 'Canada' 7<sup>th</sup> February 1849



Marks:  
At Niagara Falls:  
M/s 'PAID' '24' for  
10¢ internal postage  
for over 300 miles  
to New York.

New treaty rate of  
24¢ was announced  
but not in force.

Cunard 'Canada'<sup>1</sup>  
dep New York 7 Feb  
arr Liverpool 19 Feb

'1/-' Liverpool mark  
for packet rate due

On reverse:  
'AMERICA / LIVERPOOL  
FE 19 1849'

Letter paid cash sent from Liverpool to New Orleans via New York  
on board Cunard's 'Europa' departing 10<sup>th</sup> February 1849

Marks:  
On reverse  
'LIVERPOOL FE 9 1849'

Liverpool transit:  
'L FE 10 A' [Tab M27]

Cunard 'Europa'  
dep Liverpool 10 Feb  
arr New York 24 Feb

New York:  
'12' [Winter 291]  
Ship fee 2¢  
Inland postage 10¢  
Total 12¢



Rates:  
Cunard packet fee less than ½ oz: 1/-, effective 10<sup>th</sup> January 1840  
US mileage charge: 10¢, > 300 miles effective 1<sup>st</sup> July 1845 - 1<sup>st</sup> July 1851  
US ship letter fee: 2¢, in effect since 1825, except for Retaliatory Period

<sup>1</sup> Hubbard, W & Winter, RF: North Atlantic Mail Sailings 1840-75, US Philatelic Classics Society, Inc 1988