

# A potted postal history of pre-Confederation Prince Edward Island

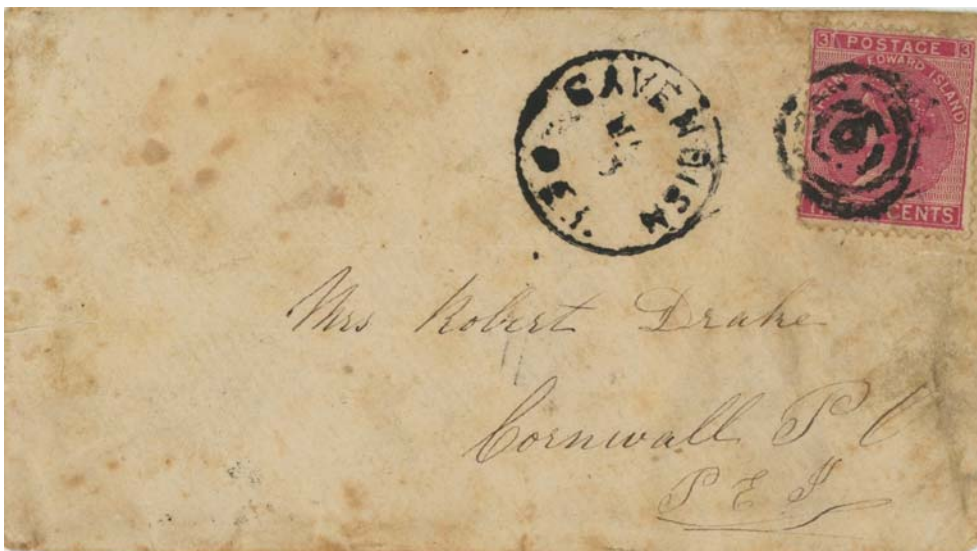
**PEI** BECAME a British colony in 1755, as part of Nova Scotia (NS). In 1769, it became a separate colony. Unlike the other British colonies in the region, it was forced into a feudal agricultural system. It was divided into 67 lots, all but three of which were awarded to court favourites in Britain or high-ranking military officers. Economic development was thus greatly retarded. These absentee landlords were completely bought off by Canada when PEI joined Confederation (that is, Canada) on 1 July 1873; this is the endpoint of the exhibit.

Material is not easy to come by, as the population was limited, stationary, and poor, and postal service (both within the Island and externally) was terrible.

- *Very early correspondence*: between landlords and their managers on the Island (1790s); bits of the correspondence of Daniel Green, an early UEL settler (1800s).
- *Rate anomalies*: A recurring theme is the difficulties postal officials (notably in the UK) had in rating covers between UK and PEI; this persisted from the eighteenth century to at least 1839.
- Newspapers were sent free to UK from the Island; we show an example of a *newspaper wrapper* (1839). We also have a *consignee's letter* from UK to PEI (1841). Both are extremely difficult to find.
- PEI employed a number of *postmark styles* that differed from those of its nearby BNA colonies, Upper & Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick (NB). We show samples of three styles of town handstamps, and a few ratestamps. Strikes are generally awful.
- It is a particular challenge to find *money & registered letters*; few exist, since the vast majority of the population was in poverty. We show a couple of each, and conclude with the unique **PEI registration covering wrapper** (used to enclose registered letters).

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Arguably the most famous real place on the Island, **Cavendish** contains **Green Gables** farm, where **Anne** grew up (Avonlea was Cavendish in disguise). The author of *Anne of Green Gables*, Lucy Maud Montgomery OBE (1874–1942), grew up nearby, and was assistant postmaster there (1898–ca 1908).



Montgomery was the most successful Canadian author of all time, in terms of sales.

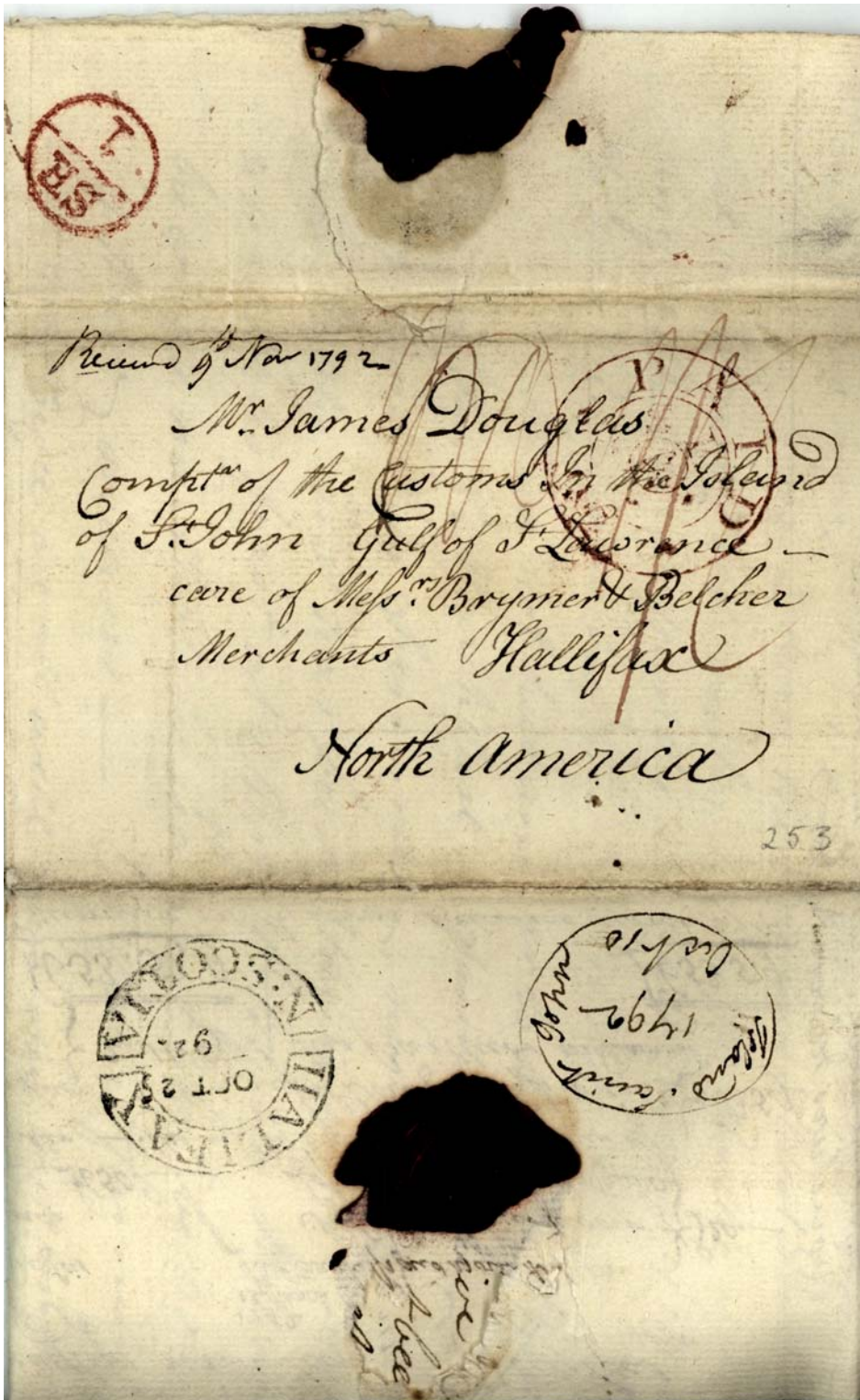
If it hadn't been for Anne, PEI would have been almost as poor in the twentieth century as it had been in the nineteenth. The tourist industry, largely based on her, has contributed immensely to the Island economy.

*Cavendish–Cornwall* (PEI), 3 May 1873 (*just* before Confederation). Several strikes are known of this datestamp; Zevely type (see p 12). This strike is unusually clear. Island 3¢ rate paid by stamp.

## St John's Island

... or Island Saint John, or Saint John Island, as the Island was known (a direct translation from *Isle St Jean*, its name under the *Ancien Régime*), until 1799. It was separated from Nova Scotia in 1769. In 1767, it was divided into lots, assigned to absentee landlords in Britain. This retarded economic development until PEI joined Confederation 1 July 1873.

The earliest cover in private hands is dated 1790.



Ms postmark *Island Saint John*. At upper left is the notation *Received 9th Nov 1792*, so it apparently took a month to destination after it arrived at Charlottetown.

Only known eighteenth century postmark of the Island.

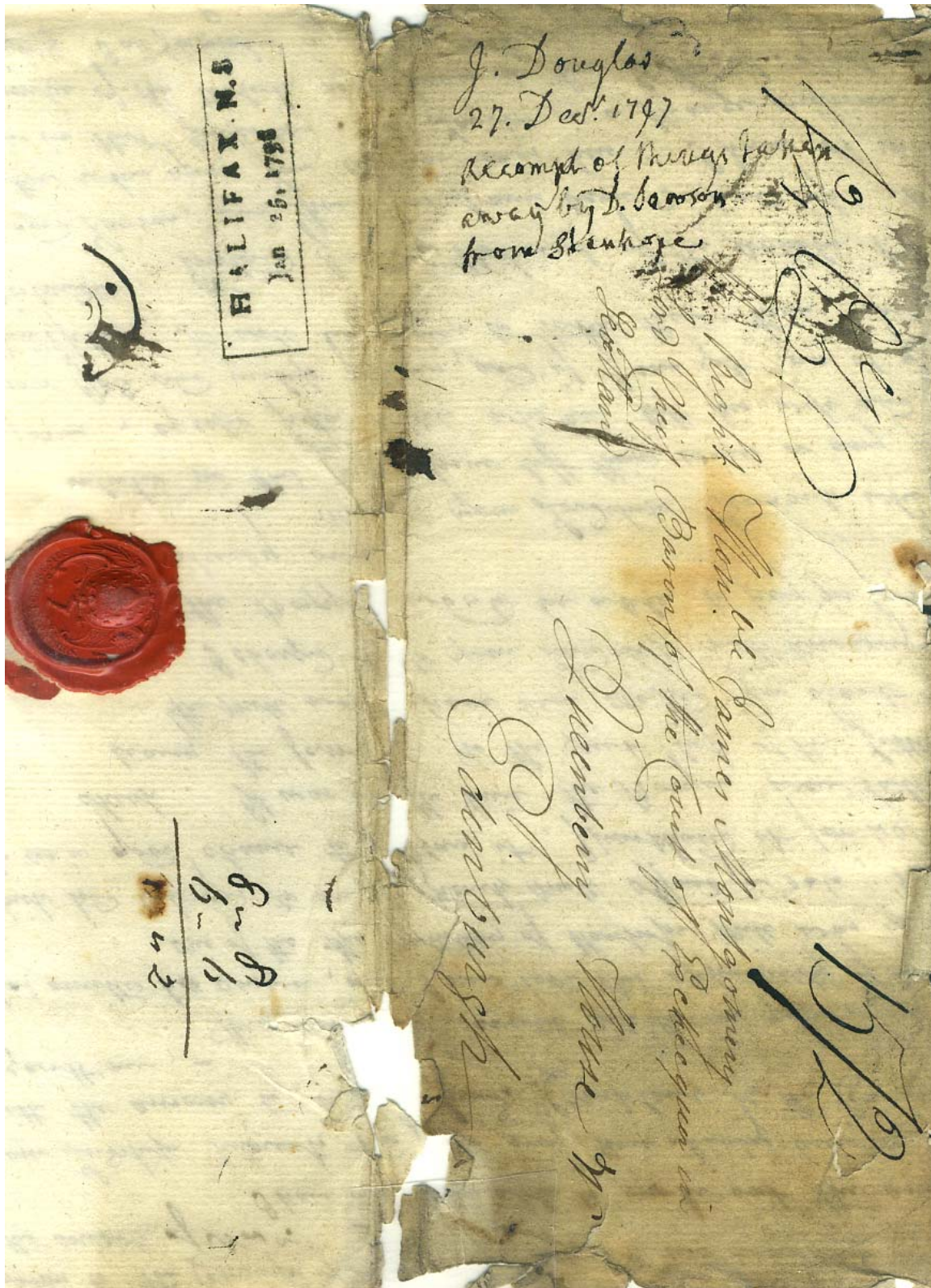
Edinburgh to Charlottetown via Halifax, 1 September 1792. Addressed to the comptroller of customs (in Charlottetown) from an absentee landlord, and concerns settlement. Prepaid *INO* and *IN7*; the former is the packet rate, and the latter is the combined Edinburgh–London–Falmouth rate (mail went through London at this time).

Edinburgh Bishop mark **SR 1**, Halifax fancy double circle (1788–96), and Island Saint John ms.

Ex-Steinhart

## St John Island to Scotland

There was no official postal route between the Island and anywhere, but mail was carried to or from Halifax by local inhabitants.



To Edinburgh via Halifax, septuple rate, 1797–98 (anomalous rates). **Rated**  $1\frac{3}{4}$  oz (seven times single letter rate), and  $15/2$  stg charged. The rate was evidently made up as  $7 \times 2/2$ ; packet charge was  $1/-$ , the combined Falmouth to London to Edinburgh internal rate was normally  $10d + 7d$ , but here it was taken as only  $1/2$ . According to contents, letter was carried to Halifax by *two young men*, hence no internal BNA charge.

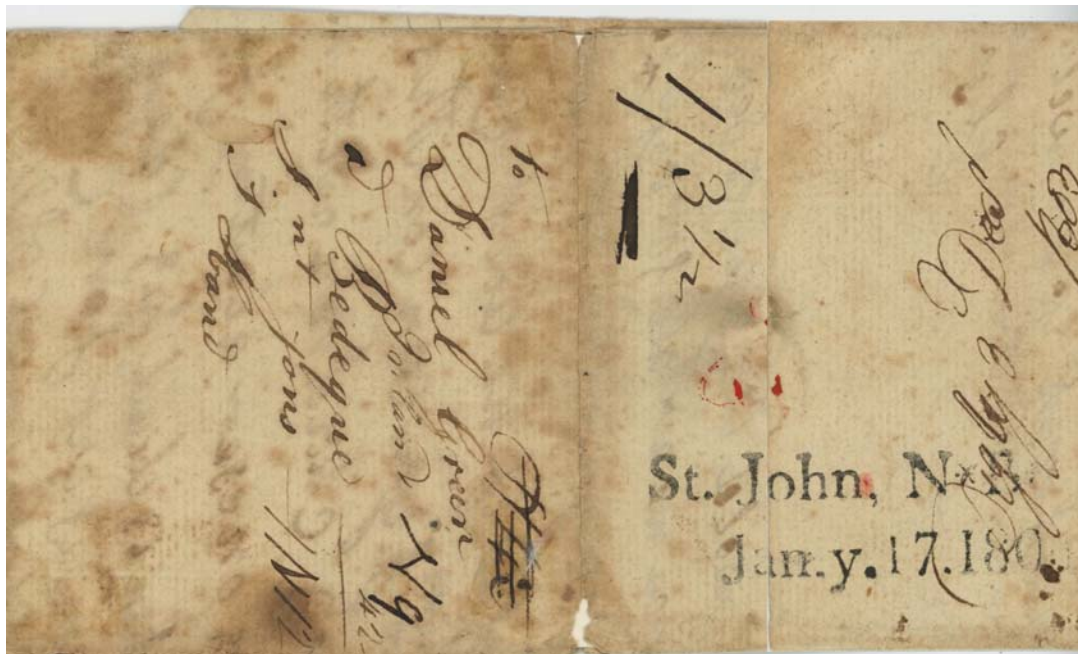
Boxed HALIFAX straightline (known 1797–99; five or fewer examples known).

The letter is to an absentee landlord from his manager at Lot 11.

## Green family correspondence

Daniel Green was a UEL from Philadelphia, making his way via New York (1783) and New Brunswick (1784) to Bedeque (by 1803) on the Island. The Green family founded what was later called Summerside, near Bedeque.

Although the name change to Prince Edward Island had taken place in 1799, it was still commonly referred to as St John's Island, as is the case here.



Manuscript *Digby 3 Decr 1803* (NS); at most three other examples known, all 1823–24.

**St. John, N\*B** straightline  
**Jan.y. 17.1803** 1795–1820

Rated initially  $N4\frac{1}{2}$  (d cy)  
Digby–Saint John (NB),  
 $N9d$  at StJ (likely to Halifax),  
and additional  $2d$  BNA port  
to port rate, total  $1/3\frac{1}{2}$  due.

There was no Island delivery  
at this time; the letter would  
have been picked up at Char-  
lottetown.

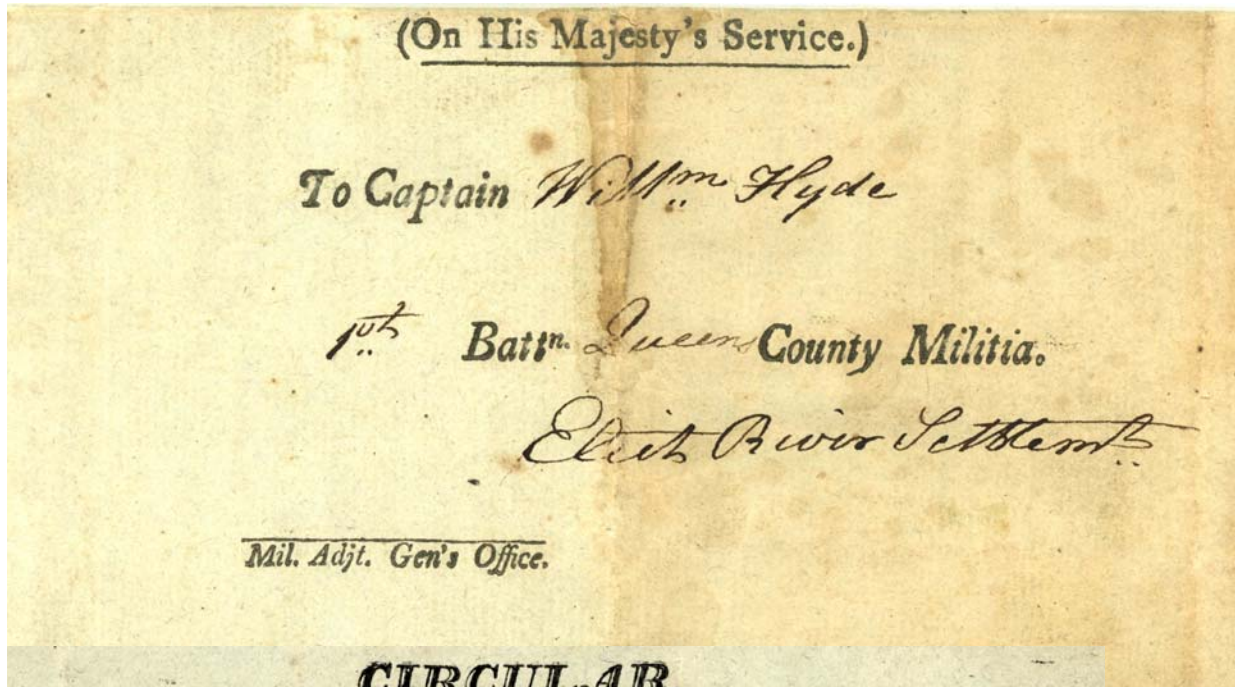
From a sister-in-law in Grand Passage, 20 November 1803. Grand Passage (Nova Scotia) is the name of the strait separating Brier's Island from Long Island in the Bay of Fundy. Ten days to Digby, and six weeks to Saint John in the difficult winter season.



*Philadelphia to Bedeque, 1805.* Faint red **PHI** circle (left). Rated **PAID 12½¢** for 150–400 miles to New York, then collect  $4\frac{1}{2}d$  cy New York to Halifax port to port rate ( $4d$  stg), and the by then standard  $8d$  cy Halifax to Charlottetown. There is an additional  $4\frac{1}{2}d$  cy charged, but it is unclear why.

## Internal delivery, 1816–17

For these two years, there was delivery of mail from the only post office on the Island, Charlottetown, to other PEI communities. The routes were to Princetown and Georgetown. Finding examples is difficult. There was no internal delivery from 1818 to about 1827.



### CIRCULAR.

MILITIA ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
CHARLOTTE-TOWN, 23<sup>d</sup> April 1816

SIR,

BY ORDER of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor I herewith transmit You several approved Forms of Warrants, which are to be used by You or in your absence by the Chief Officer commanding Your Company—as circumstances require.

YOU are to observe that there is no Summons requisite to bring a Delinquent for Non-Attendance the first time before you—it is sufficient that the Clerk of the Company verbally call on him for the amount of his Fine, which in case of his refusing to pay, you then issue the Warrant of Distress according to the form marked A. If the Delinquent has no Effects whereon to levy the amount of the Fine, you issue your Warrant to Commit according to Form marked B.—In the event of the Delinquent absenting himself a second time you are to issue the Warrant to bring him to the Field according to Form marked C.—and in case of his not offering you such a reasonable excuse as you may deem sufficient, you commit the Offender for Five Days, according to the Form B. You are at the First Muster of your Company, after the receipt of this Letter to read the same to your Company, so that they may be fully aware of the Penalties they are liable to for neglect of Duty in the instance alluded to.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your Ob'dt Servant,

J. F. Holland,  
Col. & M. Ad. Genl.

To *Wm. Hyde Esq* Captain,  
of the *Queen's* County Militia.

Charlottetown—Eliot River Settlement (the river runs through lots 32 and 65, just south of C), circular, free, 1816.

As a result of post-War of 1812 hysteria, militia service was compulsory for settlers. This circular gives examples of the forms to be sent to delinquents.

Punishment for repeat offenses included substantial fines and incarceration. Sent through the mail (as indicated by OHMS at top), but no postage charged.

## Different rate schemes on covers carried on the same ship!

Postmasters in Charlottetown, Halifax, and Falmouth seemed to have a great deal of difficulty correctly rating covers to or from P E I.



Charlottetown—London, same address and packet, 1816. Charlottetown—Pictou (N S)—Halifax, then carried on the same ship (same date Halifax cancels—on which the ship left port), and then Falmouth—London.

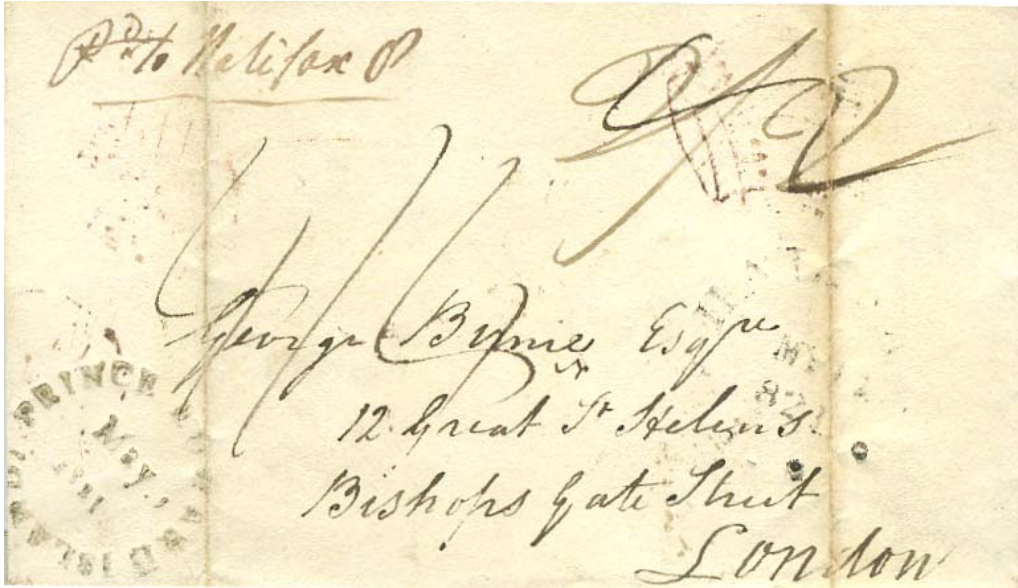
Earlier (bottom) rated  $4\frac{1}{2} + 7$  (C—P, P—H); this was converted to 10 d sterling and added to the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  packet rate to London, making  $3/-$ . This was struck though and the  $11\frac{1}{2}$  d cy was erroneously treated as sterling, making the final amount due,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ .

Later cover (top) rated 7 d cy (just Pictou to Halifax; possibly carried to P), and then rated,  $2\frac{1}{8}\frac{1}{2}$ —this may be a result of translating 7 d currency to  $6\frac{1}{2}$  d sterling (usual translation was 6 d stg), and adding the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  packet rate to London; this was replaced by an inexplicable  $2\frac{1}{9}\frac{1}{2}$ .

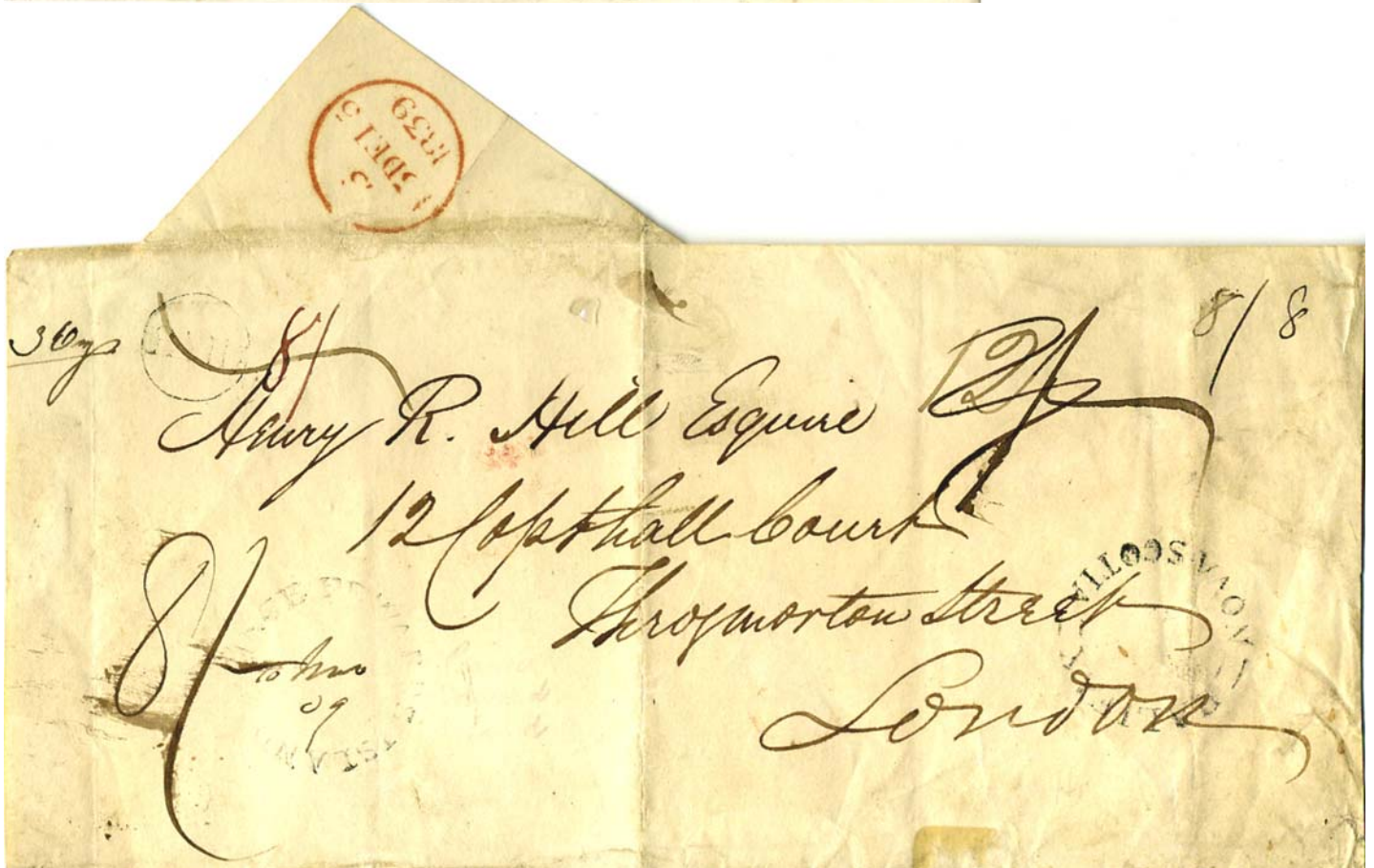
Manuscript Pictou town datestamps, fewer than five known in this period.

## Rerated, PEI to England

*More rating problems.* Large crowns (usually in red) were often used to strike through a rate mark, in order to replace it with a correction. To add to the general confusion, by the 1830s, PEI currency was devalued even with respect to Halifax currency.



Charlottetown–London, single to double, 1821. Rated *Pd to Halifax 8 d cy* (compulsory prepayment), then charged single Falmouth packet and F–L, combined 2/2 stg. Cancelled by red crown and replaced by double rate, 4/4. Enclosure detected in UK. Unusually clear strike of PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND circular datestamp (1814–28, used at Charlottetown), and faint Halifax four blobs dater.



Multiple, misrated, partially prepaid, Charlottetown–London, November 1839. Rated 3 oz (duodecuple rate). PAID 8/, computed from  $12 \times 8$  d cy, prepaid from Charlottetown to Halifax. Then charged 12/– stg, based on 1/ stg packet rate, BNA to UK.

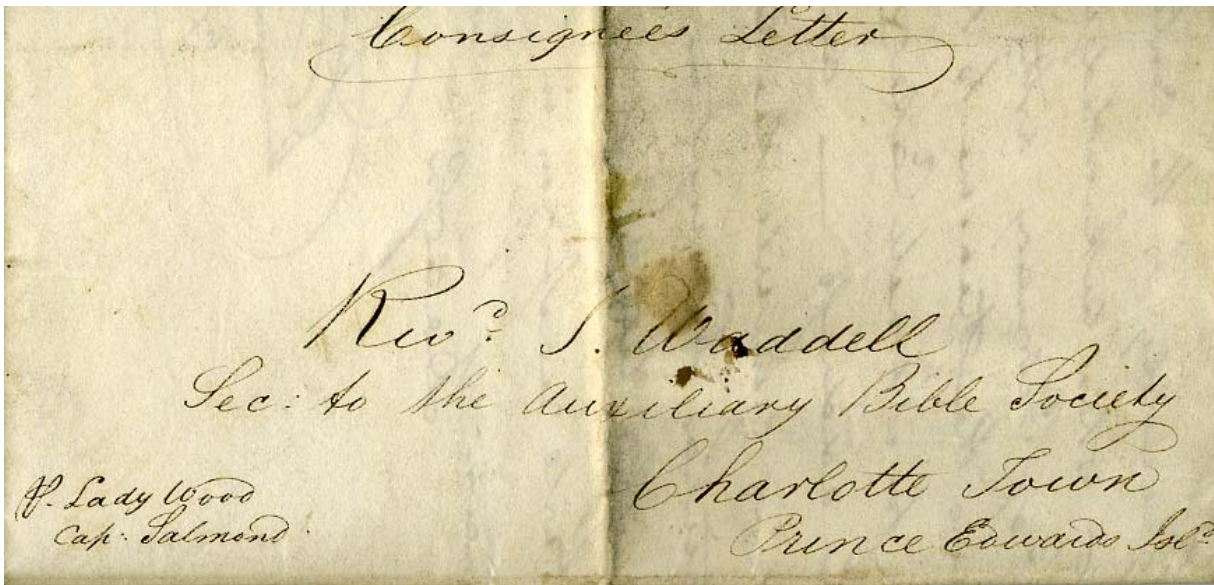
However, from mid-1839, postage to port (in this case, Halifax) on letters to UK from BNA was supposed to be 2 d stg per quarter ounce—so the rate should have been  $12 \times 1/2 = 14$  stg, less the amount prepaid, 8/ PEI currency. At the time, 1/ stg = 1/6 PEI cy, so the credit was 5/4 stg, resulting in a net charge of  $14/ - 5/4 = 8/8$  stg; this appears in the upper right. The large 8/– (lower left) marking may have been the result of a preliminary (mis)calculation.

## Freeish mail

Neither *newspapers* (published in P E I), nor *consignee's letters* (accompanying parcels on private ships, but delivered in the mail) required postage.



Newspaper wrapper, P E I-Exmouth-London, 1839.  
 Rated 0d! No postage was required on newspapers from P E I to either UK or Canada. Complete wrapper.  
 With ms dated Prince Edwards Island double broken circle on front and dated double broken circle Exmouth on reverse. Originally sent to Exmouth, then readdressed to London (no additional charge for redirection, a special feature of newspapers).



Consignee's letter, London-Charlottetown, 1841. No postage charged. Carried on private ship, the *Lady Wood*, under Capt Salmond. Invoice accompanying a shipment of bibles.

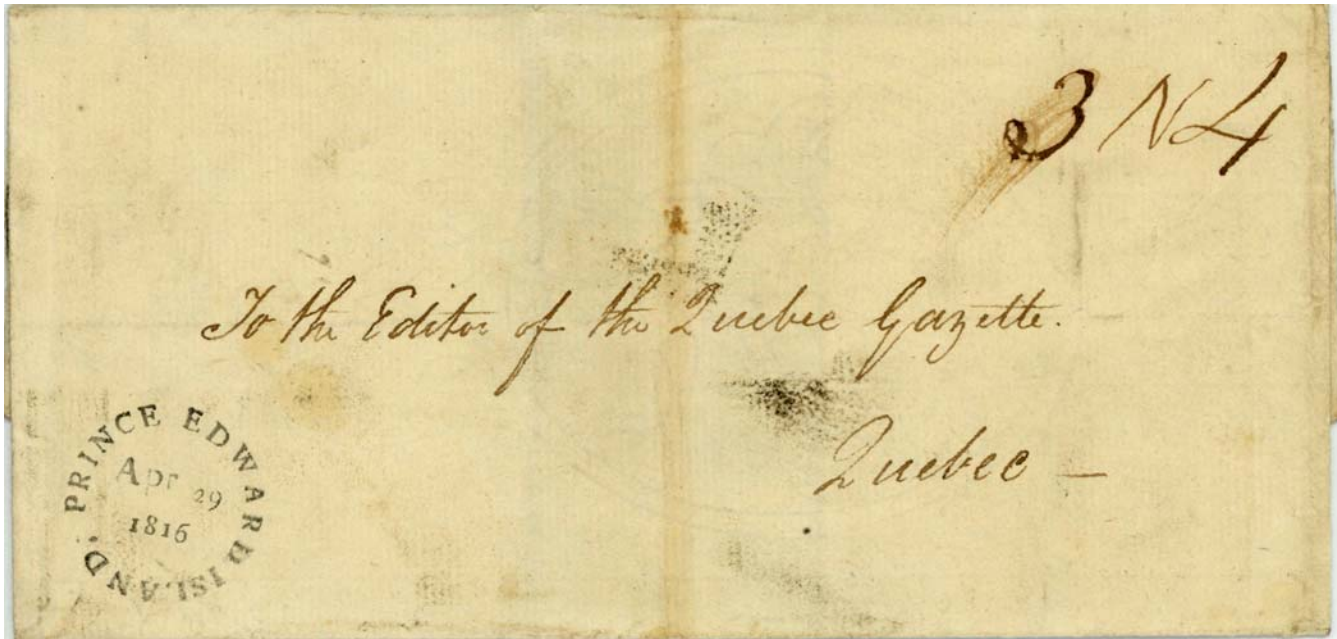
| The Prince Edwards Island                      |      | Aux <sup>y</sup> Bible Soc <sup>y</sup> |                                 | London 30 <sup>th</sup> March 1841 |        |
|--|------|---|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
| Bought of Richard Cockles,                     |      |   |                                 |                                    |        |
| Deputy to the British & Foreign Bible Society. |      |   |                                 |                                    |        |
| N <sup>o</sup> 10, Earl Street, Black Friars.  |      |   |                                 |                                    |        |
|  | 17/6 | 7                                       | Pica Bible 6 <sup>rs</sup>      | - 3/6                              | 3 7 8  |
|  | 27/6 | 6                                       | Pica Bible 4 <sup>rs</sup>      | - 1/6                              | 4 16 - |
|  |      |   | Case, Ship's Expenses & Freight |                                    | 16 4   |
| P. E. I.                                       |      |   |                                 |                                    |        |



## Postmarks

Charlottetown was the only post office on the Island until 1827, when a number of other offices were opened—but not officially authorized. In 1851, their status was regularized.

The first few datestamps were applied in Charlottetown, but read PRINCE EDWARD(S) ISLAND. Good strikes of *any* of the datestamps are difficult to find.



First PEI datestamp; in use ca 1814–28. An exceptionally clear strike.

Charlottetown–Quebec, 1816. Rated 3N4 (red indicates prepaid). The letter must have gone via Halifax, but the rates don't add up (no surprise for PEI). Charlottetown–Halifax was 8 d (Halifax) cy at this time; Halifax–Quebec (632 miles) was 1/6 stg, equivalent to about 1/8 (Halifax) cy; the sum of the two is 2/4. Likely the rate was based entirely on mileage, PEI–Quebec, in this case under 700 miles total; single rate was 1/8 cy, and the letter contained an enclosure, so charged double.



Second PEI datestamp; in use ca 1821–36. This POST OFFICE double circle handstamp was part of a general order for offices in NS and NB.

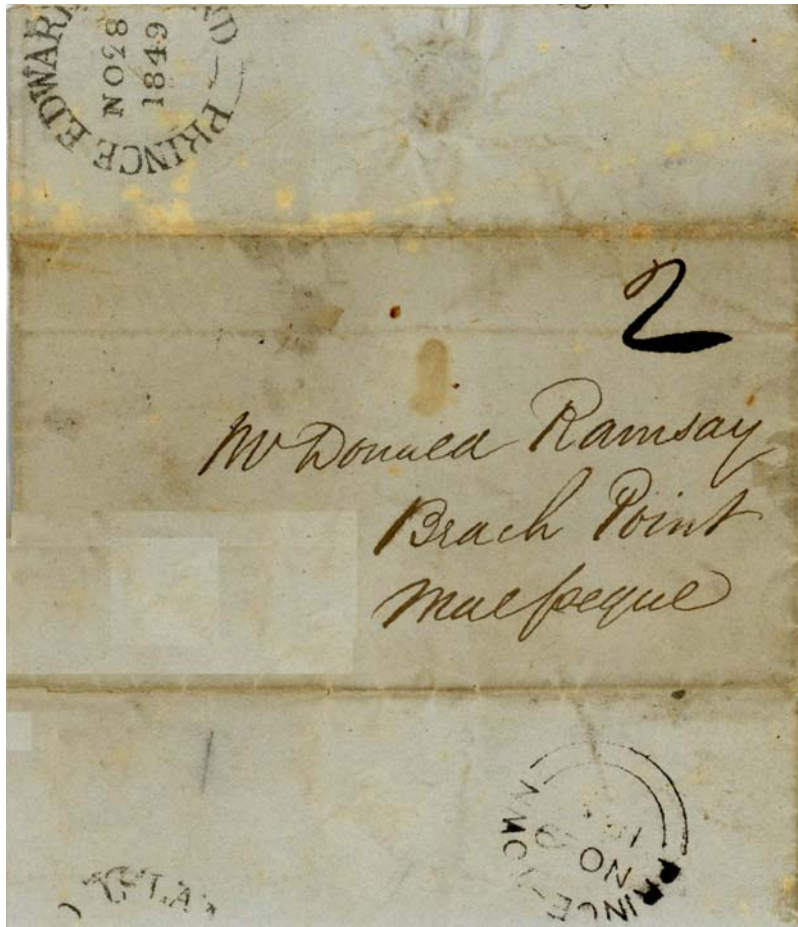
Charlottetown to London, 1833. Rated PAID 8 d cy to Halifax (prepayment compulsory on letters to UK), and the usual packet rate 2/2 stg collect, made up of 1/2 packet to Falmouth, and 1/- Falmouth to London. Standard Halifax four blobs dater (1814–45).

## Postmark styles

We illustrate some styles of postmark different from those of the rest of BNA in use on the Island.

### Nonserif double broken circles

Differ from those of Upper and Lower Canada, as well as from those of N S and N B. There is no provincial designation (so they resemble UK daters), and they came in pairs, one with PAID, the other without. Since no one had any money, the former are more difficult to find. Ordered from UK in 1848 for four offices.



*Princetown, 1849; typeset dated. Proofed 1848; fewer than twenty strikes known.*

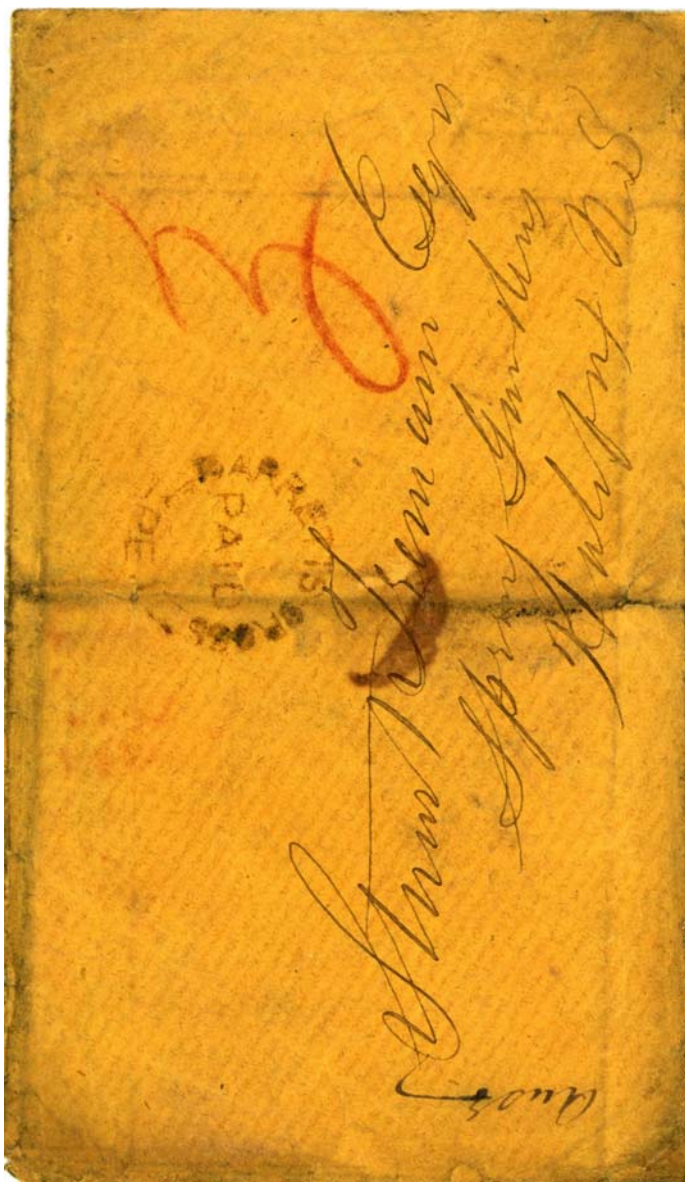
*Rated collect 2 d local cy, the Island rate from the beginning to 1871.*

Now for something not completely different



*Georgetown Paid, 1858. On reverse is GEORGETOWN (without PAID). Dozens of examples are known of the latter, but only two of the former.*

*Compulsory prepayment, 6 d to the U S; via Saint John.*



*Barrett's Cross Paid, 1857. Normal BNA double broken circle (provincial designation), but with PAID in the centre. Two strikes reported.*

*Rated paid 3 d, intercolonial BNA (to Halifax).*

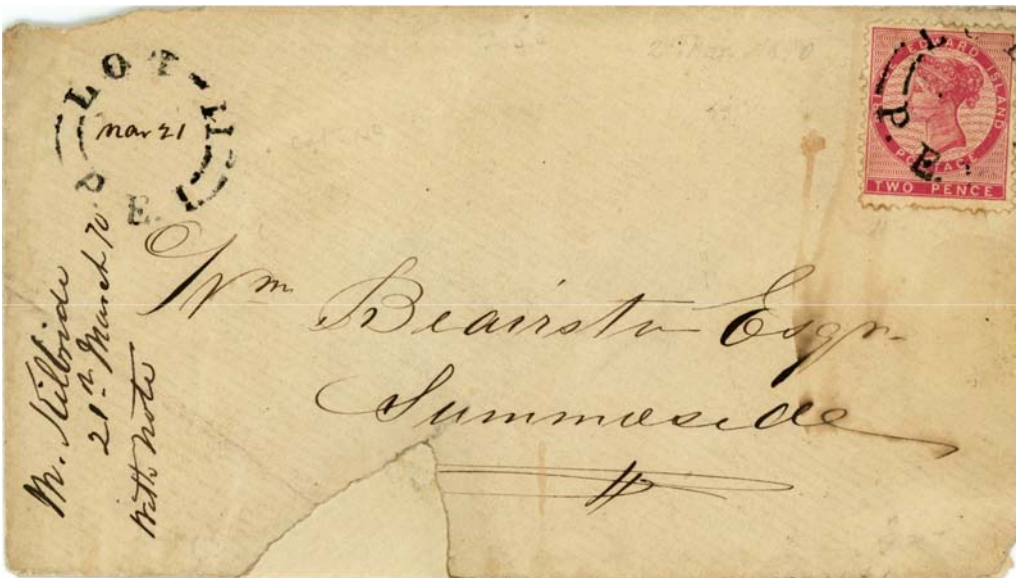
## Serif double broken paid circles

With PAID in centre. No similar examples are known for the rest of Canada. Ordered for eleven offices in 1853.



Tignish Paid, 1858-64.

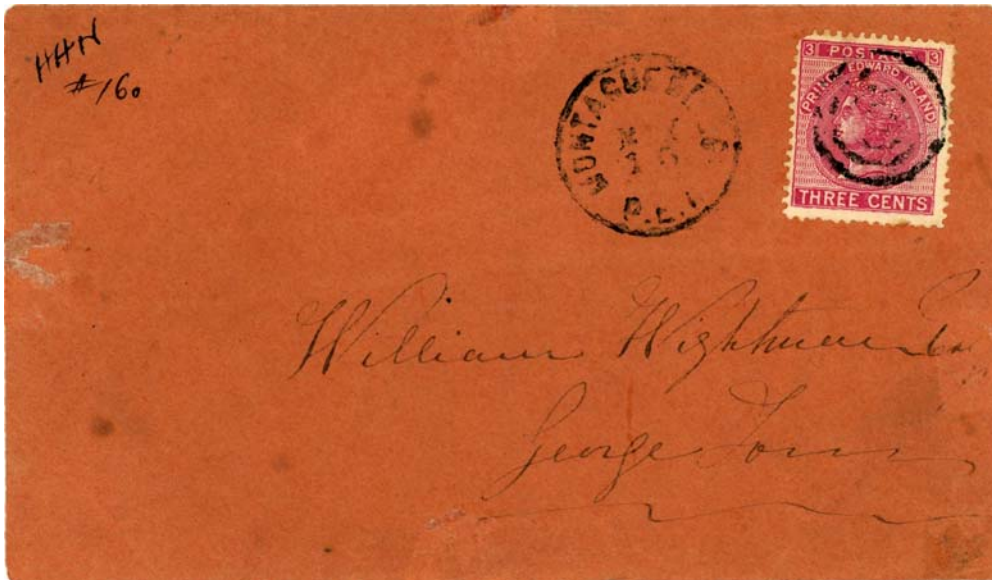
To Summerside. 2d stamp issued 1864 to pay the Island rate.



Lot-11, with PAID removed, 1870. Several strikes known with PAID, but this is the only one without it. Around twenty offices were simply LOT #, some not known to have received handstamps.

## Zevely-type circles

Similar to some postmarks manufactured by JH Zevely in the U.S., annoyingly, without space for the damn year. It is not known if these were ordered from him. They were issued 1871–72.



Montague Bridge, May 1872 or 1873. In use 1871–1873.

The 3¢ stamp issued 1 January 1872, when the Island (finally) switched to decimal, pays the Island rate.



Wood Islands, 18 March 1873 (has a Charlottetown backstamp). Fewer than five examples known. Single rate to U.S., 6¢ (from 1 January 1872).

# Rate handstamps

A few places had homemade postmarks to indicate the 2 d Island rate.

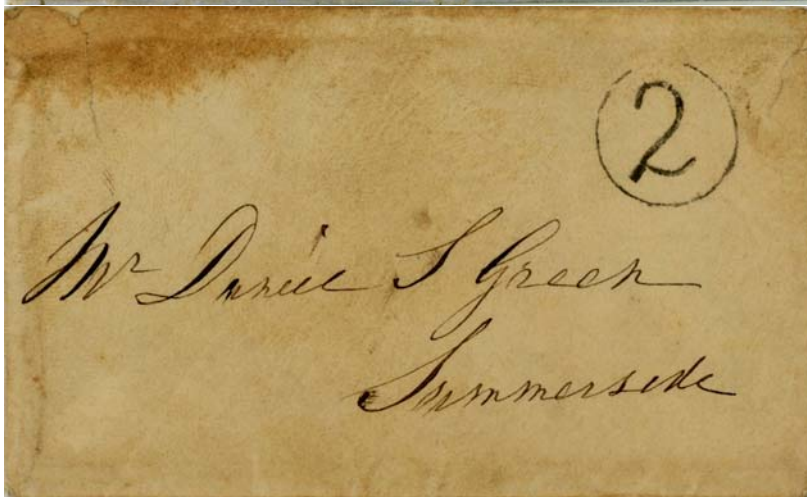


*Kildaire—St Eleanors, 1855.* Black 2 indicating unpaid. Probably applied at Summerside. Several examples are known.

Dateline reads *Kildaire*, which had a post office (1851–1914), but no postmarks have been reported. Sender has endorsed the letter, *please forward to Summerside*.

Red large circle

**SUMMERSIDE P.E. ISLAND** and faint double broken circle **St ELEANORS**.



*Charlottetown?—Summerside, 1859.* Encircled black 2 (unpaid). The office of origin of this ratestamp is unknown.



Addressee is a descendant of Daniel Green, founder of Summerside (Green's Shore).



*St Eleanors—Charlottetown, 1860.* Large red 2 (paid), used at St Eleanors. **No other examples reported.** Double broken circle **ST ELEANORS-PAID** (three examples reported).

On reverse, the datestamp without PAID, in red:



## Money letters

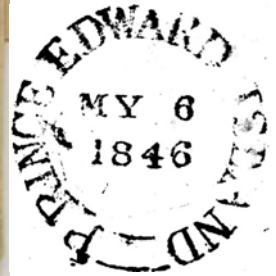
Along with Upper & Lower Canada, NS, and NB, PEI had a money letter system for keeping track of letters with valuable contents (they were entered on letter bills accompanying the mail). It is unknown when it was instituted in PEI (Canada's system began in 1825). Since PEI was very poor, it is not surprising that only **four money letters have been reported**.

There was no additional fee for this service, but the contents may have increased the weight or number of sheets, increasing the postage.

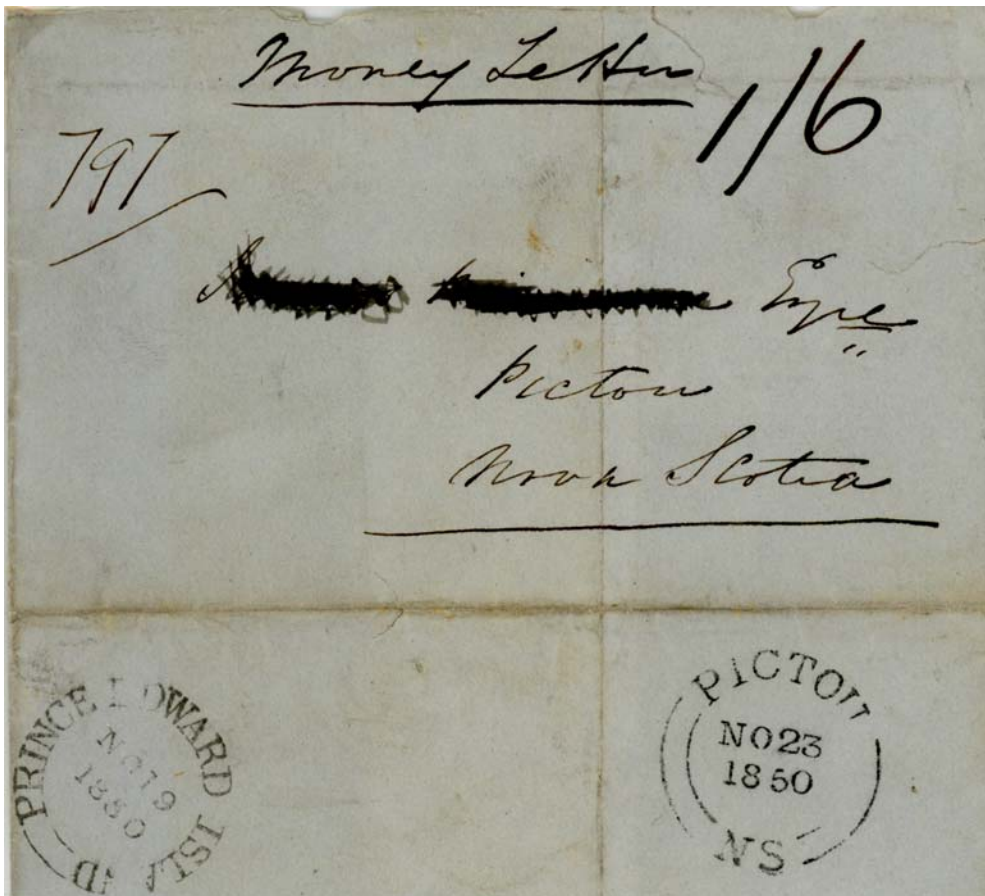
As with the other BNA colonies, the Island's money letter system was superseded by registration, which began at least as early as 1855.



*Sept 4th 1846*  
Dateline



Tignish–Charlottetown, within the Island, 1846.  
Rated collect 2 d PEI currency, Island rate.



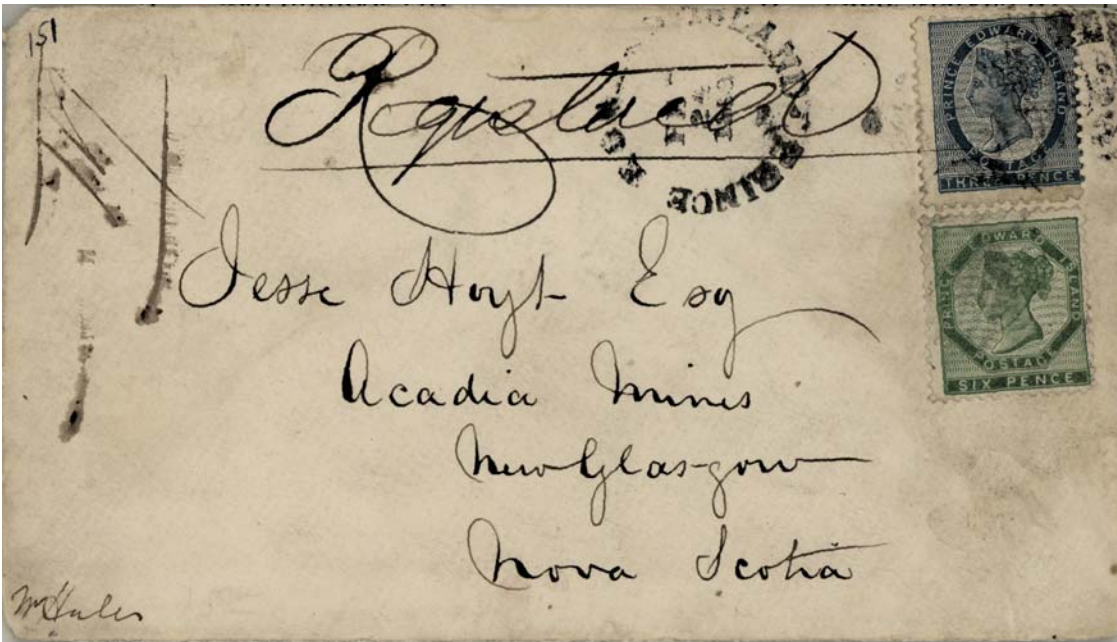
Charlottetown–Pictou (Nova Scotia), 1850. Ms 797 is a letter bill number, probably applied at Pictou.  
Rated collect 1/6 cy, quadruple (two ounces), special rate PEI–Pictou (4½ d per half ounce).

## Registration

Few PEI registered covers are known, and information about the registration system is also sparse; registration began in the 1850s, and early registration fees are not documented.



Registered Charlottetown-Georgetown, 2 April 1855. Apparently rated 2 d Island rate plus 6 d registration fee, all prepaid. A candidate for the earliest known PEI registered item. An envelope, also unusual for PEI in this period.



Charlottetown-Acadia Mines (NS), 1868. Rated 6 d registration fee and 3 d intercolonial within BNA. Registration number appears at the left, and may be III. Via Amherst and Truro.



Charlottetown-Stellarton (NS), December 1871. Rated 3 d registered and 3 d intercolonial.

Greene certificate #13757.

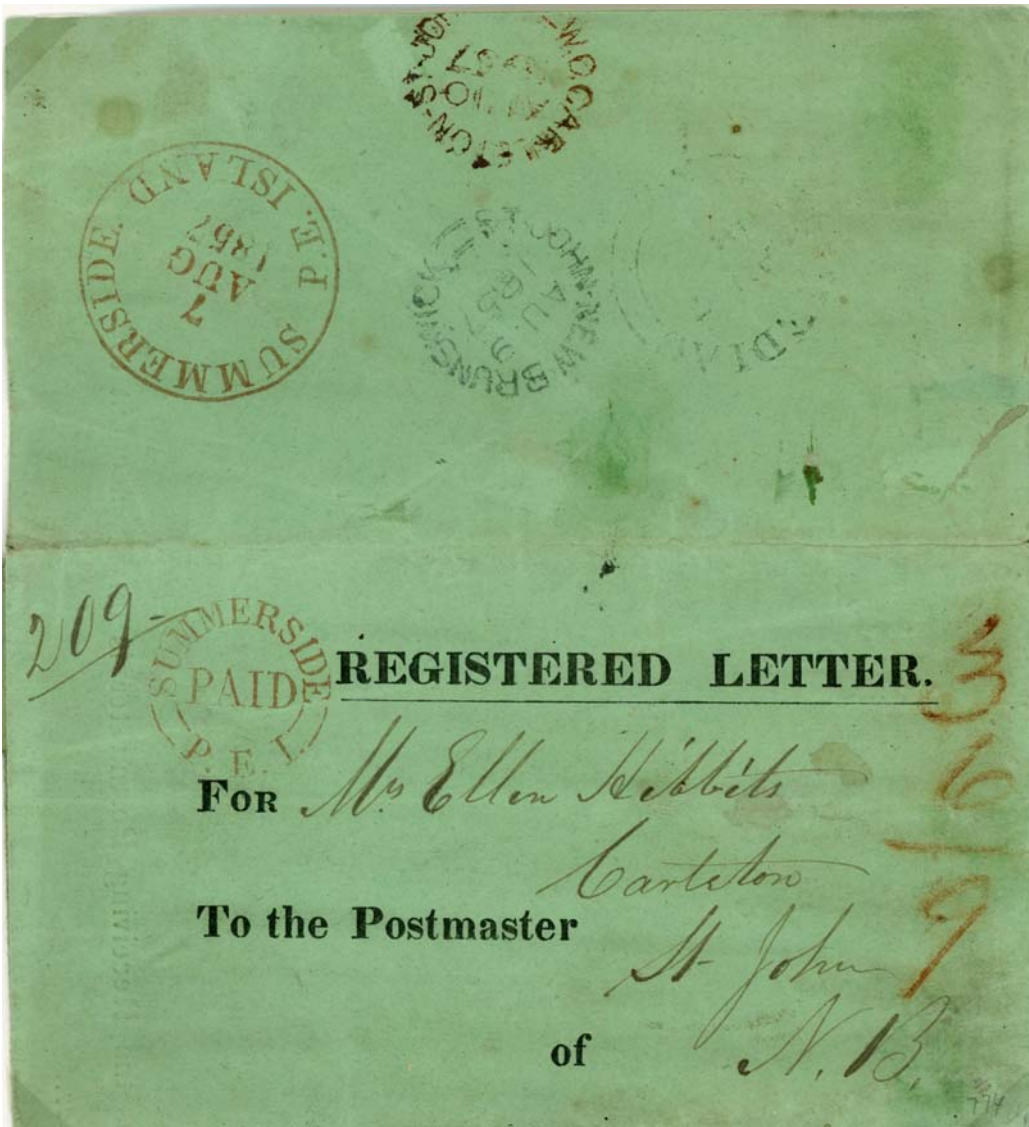
After March 1871, the registration fee changed to 3 d (date unknown; implementing legislation passed in March). This lasted only until the end of the year, when PEI finally converted to decimal (1 January 1872).

One of two PEI registered covers known in this rate period.



# Registration letter wrapper

Used to wrap registered letters. To be signed on the inside by the recipient as proof that the registered letter had arrived, to protect the postmaster. *Only P E I example known.*



For a registered letter from Summerside to Saint John (NB), 1857. Rated 6 d registration fee (apparently; there are no reliable sources for P E I registration fees in this period), and 3 d intercolonial letter rate.

Fewer than ten examples of the double broken circle **SUMMERSIDE P.E.I. PAID** handstamp have been reported; the large **SUMMERSIDE P.E. ISLAND** circle is known 1853-74, but with year slug only in 1857. The way office **W.O. CARLETON-ST. JOHN** datestamp is known 1852-57; it became a post office in 1857.

