



U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

Volume: 63 Number: 2 Year: 2011 Chronicle: 230

Article: The Liverpool and Philadelphia Steamship Company: Early Years of the Inman Line

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The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues



What's going on here? 12¢ Washington on 30¢ Nesbitt envelope, posted at Boston in 1866 and franked to pay two times the 21¢ French-mail rate to Switzerland. But all 30¢ entire envelopes are business size and this one is small. Chip Gledman explores the origin of this and two other similar entire envelopes in our 1861 section on page 134.

THE CHRONICLE May 2011 (No. 230)

May 2011

Volume 63, No. 2

Whole No. 230

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**THE LIVERPOOL AND PHILADELPHIA STEAMSHIP COMPANY:
EARLY YEARS OF THE INMAN LINE, 1850-1857**

JOHN H. BARWIS

In early 1857, Inman line steamships began offering regular passenger and cargo service between New York and Liverpool. Initially, the Inman line had no mail contracts, but from October 1857 onward its ships occasionally functioned as American packets under a series of single-voyage contracts with the U.S. Postmaster General. In January 1868 the Inman line started to carry British contract mails usually loaded or off-loaded at the Queenstown call. Hubbard and Winter provide a brief history of the line, as well as comprehensive sailing tables for the period 1857-1875.¹

Less well known are the Inman line's activities during its early years, between 1850 and 1857, when it provided monthly steamship service between Liverpool and Philadelphia. The company held no mail contracts during that time, so it carried only ship letters. The purpose of this article is to discuss the history of the Inman line's Liverpool-Philadelphia operations, and to provide complete sailing data for this route.

Origin of the Inman Line

Unlike Samuel Cunard's hardscrabble beginnings, William Inman (1825-1881) was born into a relatively wealthy family of successful merchants. Three years after the family moved to Liverpool, William left school at age 16 to work as a clerk. In 1845, at age 20, he accepted a position as junior clerk at Richardson Brothers & Company, which dealt in linen and foodstuffs from its offices in Liverpool and Belfast. The company was run by Irish Quakers, John Grubb Richardson and his five brothers.

In 1848, after only three years with Richardson Brothers and at the young age of 23, Inman was made a junior partner. Inman brought to the business a keen interest in new technology, particularly steam transportation. He believed that the future of shipping involved screw propulsion rather than the paddlewheels in use at the time. During the first year in his new job he engaged David Tod of Glasgow to build for his personal use the 112-foot screw-driven steam yacht *Vesta*.² William Inman was clearly a man of vision and means.

In 1850 Inman convinced the Richardson Brothers to form a steamship group within their company. Inman's partners in the new group were John Grubb Richardson, his brother Joseph Richardson and a Belfast businessman named Joseph Treffry. The new venture enjoyed substantial investment capital, largely from textile manufacturing in Ireland. David Tod, initially reluctant to become involved with screw-driven propulsion, was sufficiently impressed with *Vesta's* performance on Liverpool-Glasgow runs that he became one of the new company's shareholders. By the summer of 1849, the Glasgow shipbuilding firm of Tod & Macgregor had begun construction—for its own account—of the world's first ocean-going iron steamship, the *City of Glasgow*. She was fitted with a two-cylinder, 350-horsepower beam engine geared to a single shaft that turned a screw 18 feet in diameter. The ship could accommodate 52 passengers in first class, 85 in second class, and 400 in steerage. The screw-propulsion design freed below-deck space not available in paddle wheelers, so the ship had stowage for 1,200 tons of cargo. Like most ocean-going steamships of the day, the *City of Glasgow* was sail-assisted and carried "an enormous amount of canvas."³

On 28 February 1850 Tod & Macgregor launched the *City of Glasgow* from its Clyde-side yard. The plan was to run her between New York and Glasgow with cargo and passengers. She departed on her maiden voyage in April and made New York in just less than 17 days, slower than the mail steamers but twice as fast as sailing ships. Under Tod &



Figure 1. The Inman line steamer *City of Glasgow*, oil on canvas, artist unknown. Courtesy National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

Macgregor, her three additional trips in 1850 proved that iron steamships could profitably compete in transatlantic service without government subsidy.⁴ An image of the *City of Glasgow* is shown in Figure 1.

Building the Inman Fleet

The first business venture of Richardson Brothers' steamship group was to purchase the *City of Glasgow* from Tod & Macgregor while the ship was on her fourth voyage to New York. The Richardson group was officially titled The Liverpool & Philadelphia Steam Ship Company, but probably because Inman ran the company from the very beginning it was informally called the Inman line. By 1855 Tod & Macgregor had built four additional ships for the company, each of which resembled the *City of Glasgow*: all iron, clipper bow and hull, narrow proportions, screw-driven and bark rigged. The Tod & Macgregor's early Inman ships and their launch dates, length and tonnage are shown in Table 1.

<i>City of Glasgow</i>	1850	227 ft	1,609 tons
<i>City of Manchester</i>	1851	265 ft	2,109 tons
<i>City of Philadelphia</i>	1854	294 ft	2,168 tons
<i>City of Baltimore</i>	1856	331 ft	2,368 tons
<i>City of Washington</i>	1856	319 ft	2,381 tons

Table 1. Early Inman line steamships, launch dates and vital statistics.

Four of these vessels initiated their Inman line service on the Liverpool-Philadelphia route. The fifth, the *City of Washington*, made only one trip to Philadelphia before the Inman line moved to New York in 1857. In addition, in 1854 the Inman Line purchased the

1,874 ton *Kangaroo*, launched in Glasgow by Laurence, Hill & Company in 1853 for the Australasian Pacific Mail Steam Packet Company. The *Kangaroo* made four 1856 sailings on the Liverpool-Philadelphia route, then continued on the Liverpool and New York route after the Inman line left Philadelphia.

Inman and his partners must have seen the economics of their venture as fairly robust. The average cost of the first five ships built for them was only \$62,000, in stark contrast with the \$90,000 cost of the Cunard *America*, and the prices close to \$150,000 the Collins line paid.⁵ The Inman line operating costs were also very competitive. *City of Glasgow* burned only 20 tons of coal per day, whereas Cunard's *America* and *Asia* consumed 60 and 76 tons per day, respectively.⁶ As well as lower construction cost and greater operating efficiency, the Inman fleet provided the lowest available steamship transport costs for its own company's goods, thus creating a significant competitive advantage for its import-export business.

The Liverpool-Philadelphia Route

It would have made little sense for the Inman line to compete for cargo with the three financially subsidized steamship companies already conveying contract mails between Great Britain and New York. Philadelphia was a sensible alternative, since it had no scheduled international steamer service, and its only available direct scheduled transatlantic service was provided by the small sailing ships of the Cope Line.⁷ As a destination, Philadelphia offered the Inman partners a strong manufacturing base, a vibrant business community, rail connections north, south and west, and a population larger than any American city but New York. Further, the Richardsons had the advantage of Quaker business connections there.

On 11 December 1850, *City of Glasgow* departed Liverpool for Philadelphia, her maiden voyage under the Inman flag. To say the Quaker City was excited would be an understatement. Announcements of a formal reception for Captain Matthews were published two weeks before the ship had sailed. The celebratory dinner was planned to be "...one of the most sumptuous entertainments ever given in this country."⁸

The *City of Glasgow's* passing of Cape May at 13:00 hours on 1 January was duly published in Philadelphia the next day so the city would be ready for the celebrations. When the ship appeared below the Lazaretto on 2 January, she was greeted by 300-400 of Philadelphia's "leading citizens" aboard the steamboat *Trenton*. An artillery detachment from the Washington Grays fired a six-gun salute from the *Trenton*; a second detachment fired a 100-gun salute from the wharf above Pine Street. The Washington Grays' brass band was on duty at the Philadelphia Exchange and "discoursed the most eloquent music."⁹

The celebratory dinner, held on 11 January at the Chinese Museum on 9th Street, was attended by Governor Johnston, James Buchanan, members of both branches of the legislature and the city's most prominent businessmen.¹⁰

For her return trip, *City of Glasgow* departed Philadelphia on 16 January 1851 and arrived at Liverpool on the January 30. Her passage of 13 days, 16 hours was reported to have been equal or faster than Cunard's *Niagara* from Boston. This report appears to have been inaccurate as the voyage actually was one day and 16 hours longer than *Niagara's* voyage. This prompted additional excitement in Philadelphia. As expressed in a letter to the editor, the service would restore Philadelphia's "...original supremacy as the great importing city..." Further, Philadelphia's mid-Atlantic geographic position and superior rail connections were critical because "the connection between interior trade and foreign commerce is indeed close and inseparable; and no city can hope to command the one without commanding the other."¹¹

Philadelphia's movers and shakers clearly saw the beginning of their scheduled transatlantic steam service as the onset of an exciting new era, and a possible breakout from the city's number-two commercial status.

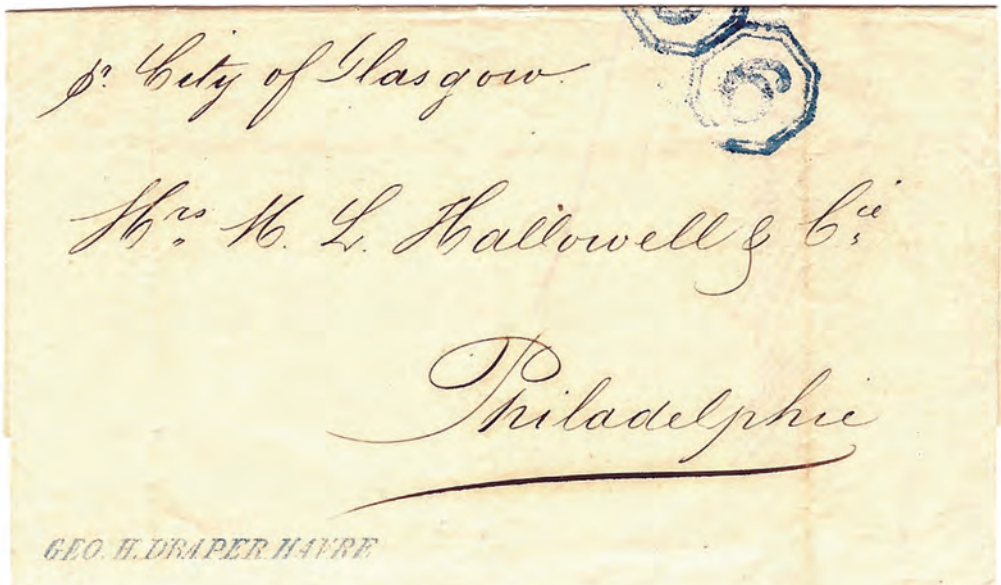


Figure 2. Letter from Lyon, forwarded to Liverpool and carried by the *City of Glasgow*, 1850. Maiden voyage of the Inman Line. Philadelphia rated 6¢ due for delivery at the port. Author's collection.

Figure 2 is a cover carried on the *City of Glasgow's* maiden voyage to Philadelphia. It was datelined Lyon, France, on 28 November 1850. From there it was forwarded by George Draper to the Inman offices in Liverpool. It may have been a consignee letter since no British ship letter fee was paid. (A consignee letter travelled on a vessel with cargo and was addressed to the recipient of that cargo; in the United Kingdom, such letters were not charged ship-letter fees.) At Philadelphia, the Figure 2 cover was rated 6¢ ship fee due for delivery at the port. As was the custom at the Philadelphia post office at the time, no arrival datestamp was applied on letters to local addresses.

In July 1851 the *City of Manchester* was added to the route, and alternated monthly sailings with the *City of Glasgow* until March 1854. Figure 3 illustrates an early cover carried by the *City of Manchester*. The letter was written in Glasgow on 31 October 1851, and left Liverpool on 5 November as a consignee letter. On 20 November Philadelphia rated the letter 6¢ ship fee due for delivery at the port.

Figure 4 is another early letter carried by the *City of Manchester*, addressed to a destination beyond Philadelphia, in this case a merchant in Buffalo, New York. The sender prepaid eight pence, the British outgoing ship-letter rate, with a strip of four Great Britain 2 penny blue stamps (Scott 4), and posted the letter in Liverpool on 17 September 1851. The ship sailed the same day, and arrived at Philadelphia on 3 October. Philadelphia rated the letter 7¢ due—2¢ for the ship fee and 5¢ for the unpaid letter rate to Buffalo.

Since, for humanitarian reasons, John Grubb Richardson was opposed to carrying steerage passengers, for the first 16 months the company carried only first- and second-class passengers and cargo. He changed his mind after economic damage of the potato blights drove 219,000 Irish emigrants to America in 1851 alone. In April 1852 the company began carrying third-class passengers at £6/6s from Liverpool and \$20 from Philadelphia.

By 1853 the company was doing well financially, conveying 300-400 steerage passengers on westbound voyages.¹² At that rate, a single year of cash flow from passenger bookings alone would have covered almost half the original capital cost of a ship. Richardson's thriving linen manufacturing and export businesses were enhancing Inman line

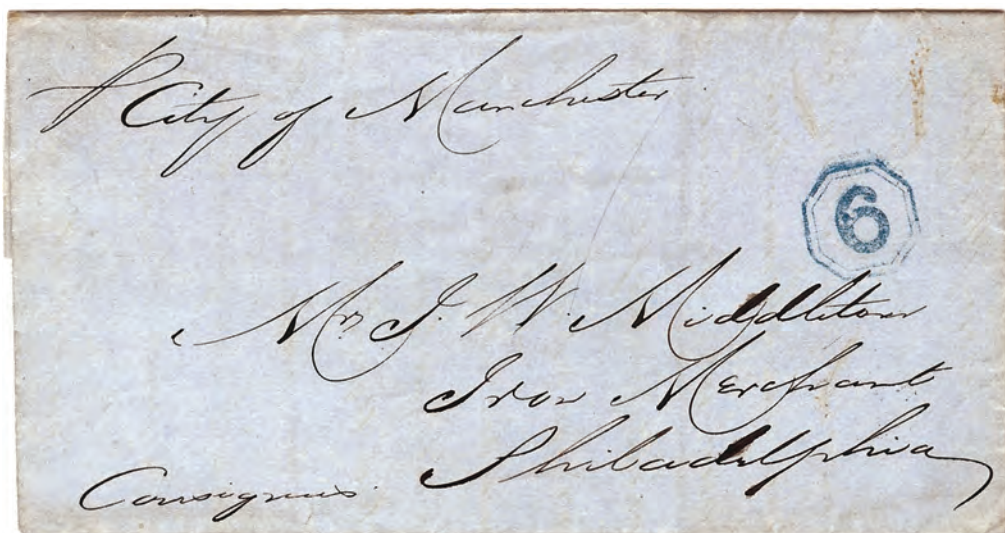


Figure 3. Consignee letter from Glasgow, carried by the *City of Manchester*, 1851. Philadelphia rated 6¢ due for delivery at the port. Author's collection.



Figure 4. Letter posted in Liverpool, carried by the *City of Manchester*, 1851. Sender paid the 8d ship-letter rate. Philadelphia rated 7¢ due: 2¢ ship fee plus 5¢ inland. Courtesy Richard Winter.

revenue, and the route's two ships were operating efficiently, with trips averaging about 18 days to Philadelphia and 17 days to Liverpool. Inman commissioned Tod & Macgregor to build a new ship, the *City of Philadelphia*, to be launched in 1854.

Figure 5 is a letter from Sheffield dated 24 November, 1853, that was carried by the *City of Manchester*, which departed Liverpool on 7 December, the last Inman line sailing of the year. She arrived at Philadelphia on 23 December, and letters were handed in at the post office the same day. Philadelphia rated the letter 7¢ due for the 2¢ ship-letter fee plus the

DEP LP	ARR PH	INMAN STEAMER	DEP PH	ARR LP	NOTES
1850					
11 Dec	3 Jan	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	16 Jan	30 Jan	
1851					
12 Feb	3 Mar	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	17 Mar	31 Mar	
16 Apr	3 May	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	15 May	31 May	
18 Jun	7 Jul	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	17 Jul	1 Aug	
26 Jul	14 Aug	<i>City of Manchester</i>	28 Aug	14 Sep	1
13 Aug	30 Aug	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	11 Sep	1 Oct	
17 Sep	3 Oct	<i>City of Manchester</i>	9 Oct	23 Oct	
9 Oct	28 Oct	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	6 Nov	23 Nov	
5 Nov	20 Nov	<i>City of Manchester</i>	4 Dec	20 Dec	
10 Dec	2 Jan	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	8 Jan	23 Jan	
31 Dec	22 Jan	<i>City of Manchester</i>	14 Feb	2 Mar	
1852					
4 Feb	25 Feb	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	4 Mar	23 Mar	
5 Mar	20 Mar	<i>City of Manchester</i>	1 Apr	16 Apr	
10 Apr	25 Apr	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	6 May	21 May	
5 May	23 May	<i>City of Manchester</i>	3 Jun	17 Jun	
2 Jun	19 Jun	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	26 Jun	12 Jul	
23 Jun	10 Jul	<i>City of Manchester</i>	17 Jul	3 Aug	
21 Jul	9 Aug	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	14 Aug	29 Aug	
8 Sep	23 Sep	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	2 Oct	19 Oct	
29 Sep	14 Oct	<i>City of Manchester</i>	23 Oct	6 Nov	
27 Oct	15 Nov	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	20 Nov	7 Dec	
8 Dec	27 Dec	<i>City of Manchester</i>	6 Jan	20 Jan	
1853					
9 Jan	31 Jan	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	7 Feb	26 Feb	
2 Feb	19 Feb	<i>City of Manchester</i>	3 Mar	18 Mar	
2 Mar	23 Mar	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	31 Mar	16 Apr	
30 Mar	18 Apr	<i>City of Manchester</i>	23 Apr	11 May	
20 Apr	8 May	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	14 May	29 May	
18 May	3 Jun	<i>City of Manchester</i>	11 Jun	27 Jun	
9 Jun	26 Jun	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	2 Jul	27 Jul	
6 Jul	24 Jul	<i>City of Manchester</i>	30 Jul	17 Aug	
30 Jul	13 Aug	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	20 Aug	4 Sep	
24 Aug	10 Sep	<i>City of Manchester</i>	17 Sep	2 Oct	
14 Sep	2 Oct	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	8 Oct	22 Oct	
12 Oct	1 Nov	<i>City of Manchester</i>	5 Nov	20 Nov	
9 Nov	28 Nov	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	10 Dec	29 Dec	
7 Dec	23 Dec	<i>City of Manchester</i>	7 Jan	22 Jan	
1854					
4 Jan	30 Jan	<i>City of Glasgow</i>	6 Feb	20 Feb	
1 Feb	18 Feb	<i>City of Manchester</i>	27 Feb	17 Mar	
1 Mar		<i>City of Glasgow</i>			2
22 Mar	10 Apr	<i>City of Manchester</i>	15 Apr	1 May	
10 May	26 May	<i>City of Manchester</i>	3 Jun	19 Jun	
28 Jun	14 Jul	<i>City of Manchester</i>	22 Jul	6 Aug	
30 Aug		<i>City of Philadelphia</i>			3
7 Sep	27 Sep	<i>City of Manchester</i>	1 Oct	14 Oct	
18 Oct	7 Nov	<i>City of Manchester</i>	15 Nov	29 Nov	
20 Dec	6 Jan	<i>City of Manchester</i>	18 Jan	5 Feb	
1855					
No sailings					
1856					
23 Apr	8 May	<i>City of Baltimore</i>	15 May	28 May	
4 Jun	17 Jun	<i>City of Baltimore</i>	26 Jun	9 Jul	
16 Jul	29 Jul	<i>City of Baltimore</i>	7 Aug	20 Aug	
30 Jul	13 Aug	<i>Kangaroo</i>	21 Aug	3 Sep	

DEP LP	ARR PH	INMAN STEAMER	DEP PH	ARR LP	NOTES
13 Aug	29 Aug	<i>City of Manchester</i>	4 Sep	19 Sep	
27 Aug	10 Sep	<i>City of Baltimore</i>	18 Sep	1 Oct	
10 Sep	25 Sep	<i>Kangaroo</i>	2 Oct	16 Oct	
24 Sep	12 Oct	<i>City of Manchester</i>	17 Oct	1 Nov	
8 Oct	23 Oct	<i>City of Baltimore</i>	29 Oct	17 Nov	
22 Oct	9 Nov	<i>Kangaroo</i>	13 Nov	27 Nov	
19 Nov	12 Dec	<i>City of Manchester</i>	18 Dec	1 Jan	
5 Nov	18 Nov	<i>City of Washington</i>	4 Dec	16 Dec	
3 Dec	18 Dec	<i>City of Baltimore</i>	1 Jan	15 Jan	
17 Dec	1 Jan	<i>Kangaroo</i>	15 Jan	23 Feb	4
1857					
14 Jan		<i>City of Manchester</i>			5

1. Largest ship then sailing from Liverpool.
2. Lost and presumed sunk; 480 lives lost.
3. Ran aground off Cape Race and destroyed on 14 September.
4. Ice-bound three weeks in Delaware River.
5. Damaged enroute; put into New York on 2 February.

5¢ unpaid letter rate to Baltimore. This was also likely a consignee letter since no British outgoing ship-letter fee was paid.

The New Year began auspiciously enough when Philadelphia's exchange office for British mails opened on 1 January, a political plum delivered by James Campbell, a Philadelphia lawyer who had been appointed Postmaster General in March 1853.¹³ But subsequent lobbying by local commercial interests failed to produce a government mail contract, a subsidy which would have bolstered Inman line income, and also would have increased the frequency of the line's arrivals and departures.

Disappointment was followed by disaster when the *City of Glasgow* was lost at sea after departing Liverpool on 1 March on her second westbound voyage of the year. On 21 April the ship *Baldaur*, 400 miles north of the Azores, saw a steamship similar in description to the *City of Glasgow* steeply listing, but found only flotsam when the site was approached.¹⁴ Inman later declared the ship was presumed sunk, with the loss of 480 lives.

Construction of the *City of Philadelphia* was nearing completion when the *City of*



Figure 5. Consignee letter from Sheffield carried by the *City of Manchester*, 1853. Philadelphia rated 7¢ due: 2¢ ship fee plus 5¢ inland postage. Author's collection.

Glasgow was lost, so she was assigned to the route to maintain Inman's monthly schedule. She was launched on 30 May 1854, and departed on her maiden voyage to Philadelphia on 30 August.¹⁵ On 14 September she struck a rock near Cape Race, Newfoundland. For safety reasons, the captain intentionally beached her in three fathoms of water. All lives were saved but the new ship was a total loss. As a consequence of these two disasters, seven of the eight Inman arrivals at Philadelphia in 1854 were made by the *City of Manchester*.

These maritime tragedies, along with pressure the British government was applying to lease its vessels as transports to support the Crimean War, caused the Richardsons and Treffry to dissolve their partnership with William Inman. Unconstrained by his partners' Quaker pacifism, Inman then rented his three remaining ships (*City of Manchester*, *City of Washington* and *City of Baltimore*) to the French government for the duration of the war. Thus no Inman sailings were made to Philadelphia during 1855.

Final Year in Philadelphia

After Inman's absence from Philadelphia for more than a year, in May 1856 the *City of Baltimore* arrived from Liverpool to reopen transatlantic steamer service. Inman's challenge was that the city's import-export businesses had moved on to other shipping providers, most of which were operating out of New York. Some traders may have reverted to sail, since the Cope Line was still operating a monthly schedule from Philadelphia to Liverpool. The Inman Line reintroduced its service by giving a dinner on board the *City of Baltimore* at which many supportive speeches were given. A week later Philadelphia's largest newspaper ran a long editorial, which essentially pleaded for business on behalf of the Inman line.¹⁶ Three excerpts provide the flavor:

The speeches delivered at the dinner given on board the steamer, on Tuesday, exhibited the necessity for energetic action to sustain the line, and the enthusiasm of all the Philadelphians present showed that those interested most deeply in the trade of the city, feel properly that it is so. We do not doubt that the same measure of steady and encouraging support which caused this line to prove so successful before the transfer of the vessels to the Crimean transport business, will again be readily accorded by all engaged in the shipping business of Philadelphia.

If half the import business now transacted by our merchants through New York vessels were transferred to these boats, the thing would be done, and the merchants themselves would be greatly the gainers.

The Cunard steamers are sustained by the lucrative mail patronage of the British government, as the Collins line is by the United States. Our Philadelphia steamers have never had any such help, yet, depending alone upon passengers and freight, they have done a profitable and increasing business.

Inman assigned the *Kangaroo* to the Philadelphia route to supplement the *City of Manchester* and the *City of Baltimore* in providing fortnightly service. Figure 6 is a mourning cover posted in Manchester on 15 July 1856. The sender endorsed the cover for the *City of Baltimore* and overpaid the outgoing ship-letter rate with a Great Britain one shilling adhesive (Scott 5). Liverpool backstamped the letter on the July 16, the day of departure. The *City of Baltimore* arrived at Philadelphia on 29 July. Philadelphia applied its SHIP handstamp and rated the letter 5¢ due, representing the 2¢ ship fee plus 3¢ inland postage to Ulster County, New York.

Inman recognized that New York had become the primary gateway to the United States, and moved its western terminus from Philadelphia to New York in January 1857. The initial intent was to alternate between the two ports, but events continued to work against the company. The *City of Manchester* left Liverpool for Philadelphia on 14 January 1857, but put into New York instead after her superstructure was badly damaged at sea.¹⁷ The *Kangaroo* became ice-bound for three weeks in the Delaware River on attempting to depart Philadelphia in January 1857.¹⁸ Although in March 1857 the company's name was



Figure 6. Mourning cover posted in Manchester and carried by the *City of Baltimore* in 1856. The one shilling stamp overpaid the 8d ship rate. Philadelphia assessed 5¢ due: 2¢ ship fee plus 3¢ inland postage. Courtesy Richard Winter.

changed to the Liverpool, Philadelphia & New York Steam Ship Company, Philadelphia had already seen its last Inman arrival.

Sailing Table

Philadelphia arrival and departure dates in the accompanying sailing table were taken from the *North American and United States Gazette*, a Philadelphia daily launched by Benjamin Franklin in the 1730s. Richard Winter provided Liverpool dates, based on unpublished research done in British newspaper archives.

Endnotes

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2. Stephen Fox, *Transatlantic—Samuel Cunard, Isambard Brunel, and the Great Atlantic Steamships* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), pg. 176.
3. Eugene W. Smith, *Trans-Atlantic Passenger Ships* (Boston: George H. Dean Co., 1947), pg. 67.
4. Fox, *op. cit.*, pg. 177.
5. John's Maritime History Society, "The Inman Line," <http://maritime-history-one.webs.com/theinmanline.htm>, last viewed January 2011.
6. Fox, *op. cit.*, pg. 178.
7. John H. Barwis, "The Path to Philadelphia's Attainment of Exchange Office Status for U.S.-British Mails," *The Congress Book 2009* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The American Philatelic Congress, 2009), pp. 35-50.
8. *North American and United States Gazette*, 27 Nov. 1850, 28 Dec. 1850.
9. *Ibid.*, 2 Jan. 1851, 3 Jan. 1851.
10. *Ibid.*, 9 Jan. 1851.
11. *Ibid.*, 17 Feb. 1851.
12. Fox, *op. cit.*, pg. 180.
13. Barwis, *op. cit.*, pg. 46.
14. Fox, *op. cit.*, pg. 182.
15. N.R.P. Bonsor, *North Atlantic Seaway*, 5 vols. (New York: Arco Pub. Co., 1975-1980), Vol. 1, pg. 220.
16. *North American and United States Gazette*, 15 May 1856.
17. Hubbard and Winter, *op. cit.*, pg. 198.
18. C.R.V. Gibbs, *Passenger Liners of the Western Ocean: A Record of Atlantic Steam and Motor Passenger Vessels from 1838 to the Present Day* (New York: John De Graff, Inc., 1957), pp. 112-24. ■