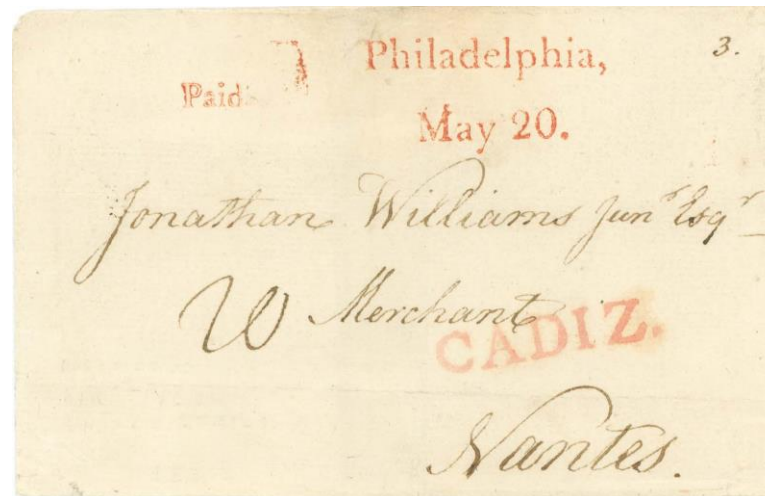




North American Blockade Run Mail, 1775-1815



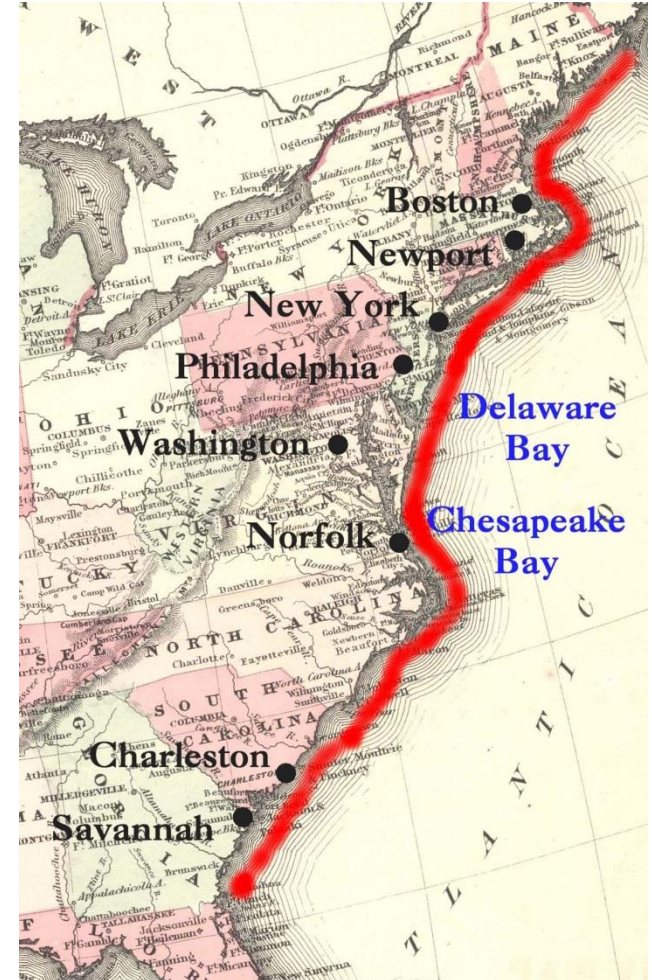
Steven Walske
RPSL
February 2015

Revolutionary War Chronology

- April 1775-March 1776 – British army besieged at Boston
- September 1776 – British occupied New York City
- 1777 – General Howe occupied Philadelphia, but General Burgoyne's army surrendered at Saratoga, New York
- March 1778 – France entered the war on the American side. British evacuated Philadelphia for defensive posture
- June 1779 – Spain entered the war on the American side. Franco-Spanish armada to Portsmouth, GB in August
- May 1780 – British occupied Charleston, South Carolina
- 1781 – Lord Cornwallis fought through Carolinas to Virginia, but surrendered October 19, 1781 at Yorktown
- March 1783 – News of November 1782 Peace Treaty received

Partial British Blockade, September 1775 to February 1776

- Admiralty's July 6, 1775 "seize and detain" order set squadrons off New York, Delaware Bay, Chesapeake Bay and Charleston, South Carolina
- British naval forces grew from 19 to 39 ships in 1775 (seven on blockade at December 31)
- Superseded by March 1, 1776 Prohibitory Act



“Seize & Detain” Start of the Blockade



Dated in New York City on January 6, 1776

American blockade runner *Sampson* left January 10

Arrived at Portsmouth, England on February 8 – 4d due

Sampson seized February 19 at Portsmouth by British warship

Blockade 1st Phase, March 1776 to June 1778

- Parliament's "Prohibitory Act" banned commerce with rebel colonies and ordered seizure of all American ships, effective March 1, 1776 (received by U.S. Congress on February 27)
- British warships on station grew from 39 to 67, with 32 on blockade in March 1778
- March 1778 French entry into the war caused a world-wide re-alignment of British naval forces

First Phase of the British Blockade



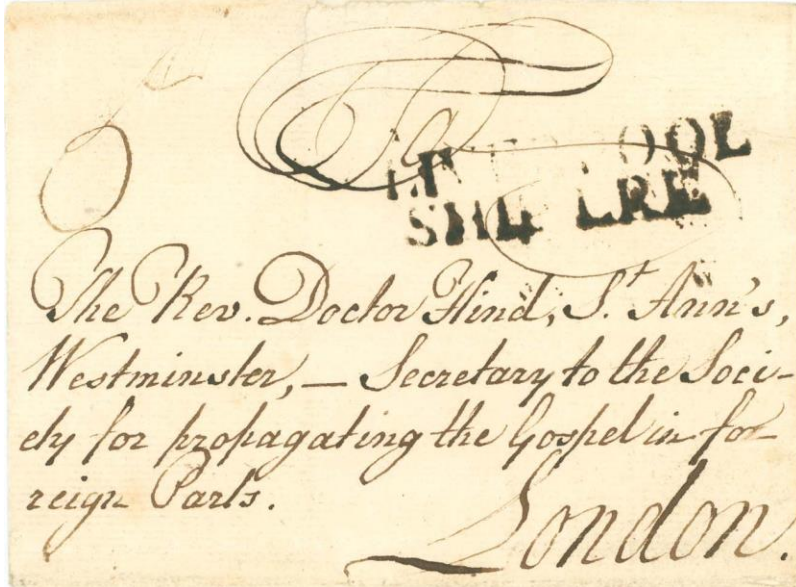
Dated in Nantes, France on November 15, 1776

Carried by blockade runner into New London, Connecticut

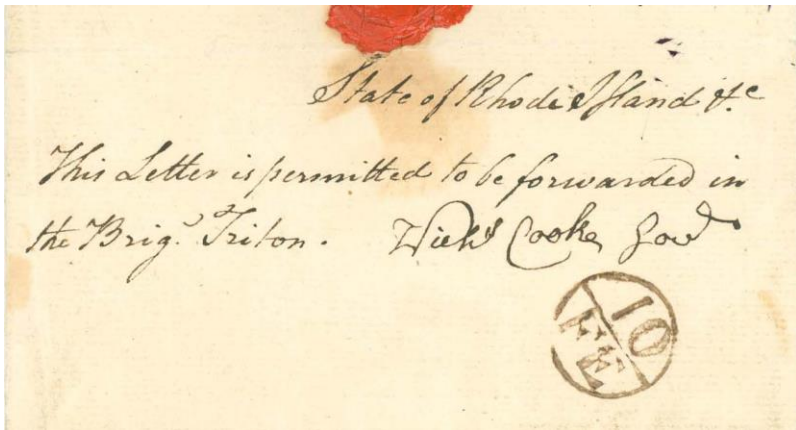
3 dwt 8 grains due to Philadelphia – no ship fee charged

Re-stated to 1/7 local currency – 1.667 times sterling equivalent

Cartel Ship Through the British Blockade



Sept 19 1776
The Rev. Doctor Hind, S^t Ann's,
Westminster, — Secretary to the Soci-
ety for propagating the Gospel in for-
eign Parts.
London.



State of Rhode Island &c
This Letter is permitted to be forwarded in
the Brig. Triton. Wm Cooke Gov^r
Feb 17 1777

Dated in Providence, RI on
September 19, 1776

Censored by American Governor

Cartel *Triton* left December 16
with 79 British POWs

Arrived at Cork January 20 —
mail carried to Liverpool on
February 7 by the ship *William*

Rated 5d due (1d ship plus 4d)

Received February 17, 1777

Blockade 2nd Phase, July 1778 to October 1781

- British withdrew from Philadelphia in June 1778 and consolidated naval forces at New York and Newport
- French squadron attacked Newport in July 1778
- Over half of North American naval command re-assigned to Channel and West Indies – 26 ships off U.S. in December 1779
- Admiralty authorized loyalist privateers out of New York in September 1778
- Captured Savannah in December 1778, evacuated Newport in October 1779, and captured Charleston in May 1780 as part of new “Southern Strategy”

Second Phase of the British Blockade



Dated in Nantes, France on May 15, 1779

Carried by blockade runner *Courier de l'Europe* into Boston

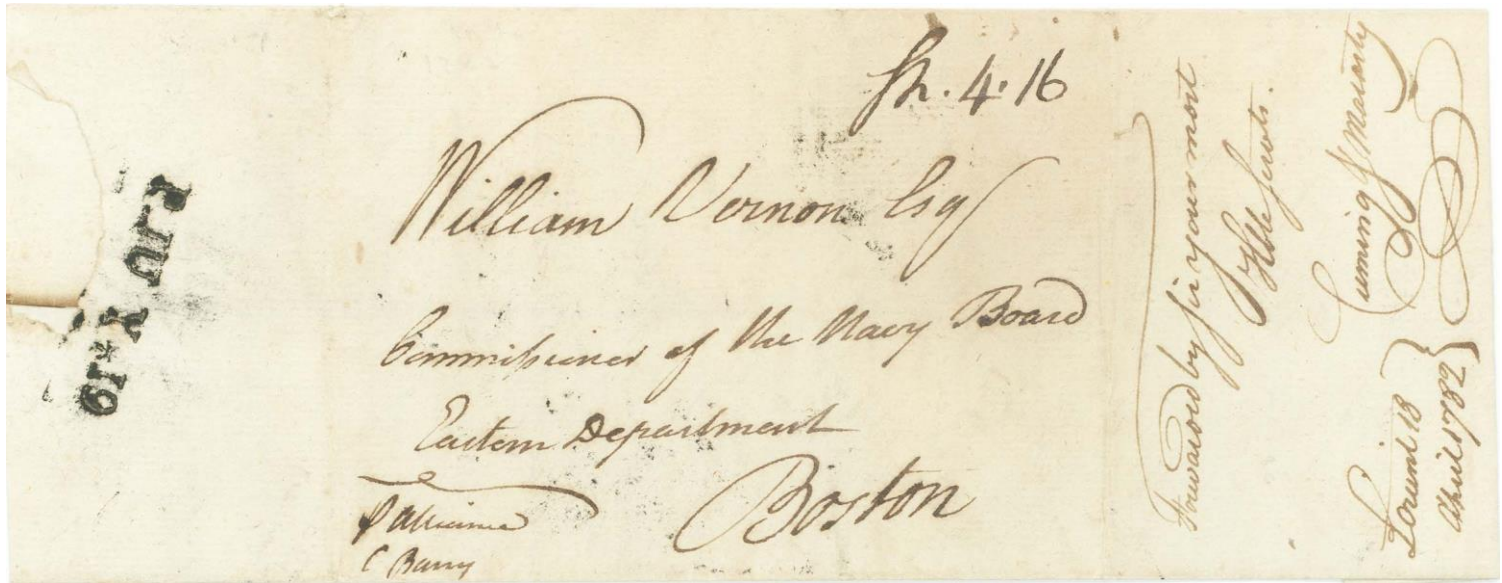
18 dwt due to Alexandria – 16 dwt plus 2 dwt ship fee

April 1779 rates were three times the 1775 rates

Blockade 3rd Phase, Nov. 1781 to March 1783

- Cornwallis' October 1781 defeat at Yorktown and November 1781 departure of French fleet allowed British naval forces to concentrate on a strict blockade
- British naval forces stood at 62 warships in January 1783, with most on blockade
- Blockade ended when news of the November 1782 Peace Treaty was received in March 1783

Third Phase of the British Blockade



Forwarded from Lorient, France on April 18, 1782

Endorsed to the departed U.S. 36-gun naval frigate *Alliance*

Carried by privateer *St Helena* through blockaded Delaware Bay on July 18

Postmarked in Philadelphia on July 19 – rated 4 dwt 16 grains due to Boston

Blockade Mail Through Chesapeake Bay



Postmarked in Philadelphia
on Oct. 5, 1782 – rated paid

Blockade runner to Ostend

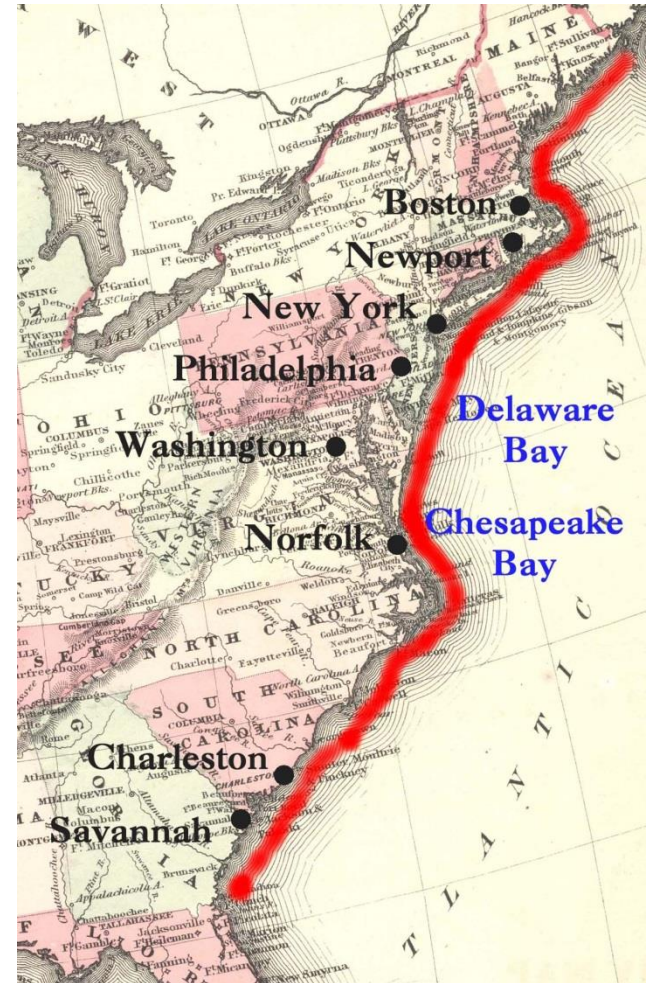
Hand-carried across the
Channel to London

January 22, 1783 London
Penny Post markings

American Blockade, May 1775 to March 1783

American privateers attacked British shipping supporting British-occupied enclaves:

- Boston: 5/75 to 3/76
- Newport: 12/76 to 10/79
- New York: 5/75 to 3/83
- Philadelphia: 9/77 to 6/78
- Savannah: 12/78 to 7/82
- Charleston: 5/80 to 12/82



Effectiveness of the American Blockade

Congress issued 1,700 Letters of Marque

Various states issued 1,000 privateer licenses

Captured 3,000 British prizes (1,000 re-captured)

9 of 19 Falmouth packets on the New York line were captured; 8 more attacked



American Blockade of British-Occupied New York, May 1775-November 1783



Dated August 13, 1780 in N.Y.C. – endorsed to 20-gun ship *Fanny*
Arrived October 14 in Dover – rated double-weight 3/10 due
Falmouth packet *Antelope* to Madeira on December 2

American Blockade of British-Occupied Savannah, December 1778-July 1782



Dated January 18, 1779 near Savannah, Georgia – rated 1/6 due Falmouth packet *Lord Hyde* left January 18 and arrived February 22
From Captain Campbell of 71st Regiment of Foot

American Blockade of British-Occupied Charleston, May 1780-December 1782



Dated June 17, 1782 in Charleston, SC – endorsed to ship *Fame*
Arrived with convoy at Deal on August 4 – re-rated 6d due
Fame was an 8-gun British Letter of Marque ship

War of 1812 Abbreviated Chronology

- June 12, 1812 – United States declared war on Great Britain
- June 23, 1812 – Parliament revoked Orders in Council
- November 21, 1812 – Britain ordered blockade of Atlantic seaboard; order received by the American station on January 13
- April 1814 – Napoleon abdicated
- August-September 1814 – Burning of Washington and repulse at Baltimore of the first of three British armies
- September 1814 – 2nd British army repulsed in upstate New York
- December 24, 1814 – Peace Treaty signed at Ghent; approved by United States on February 15, 1815
- January 8, 1815 – 3rd British army repulsed at New Orleans

British Blockade During the War of 1812

Implemented in stages:

Delaware & Chesapeake Bays (Mid-Atlantic) on February 6, 1813

New York area on May 26, 1813

Southern coast (Savannah to Norfolk) on September 1, 1813

New England coast on April 25, 1814

Gulf coast announced on November 16, 1813 but never implemented

Blockade lifted March 6, 1815

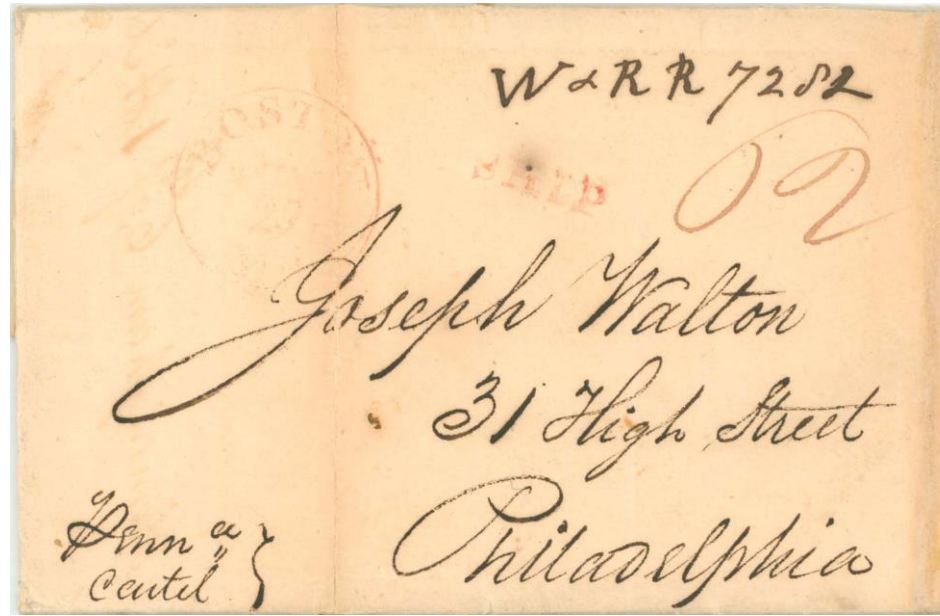


Mid-Atlantic Blockade, February 1813 to March 1815



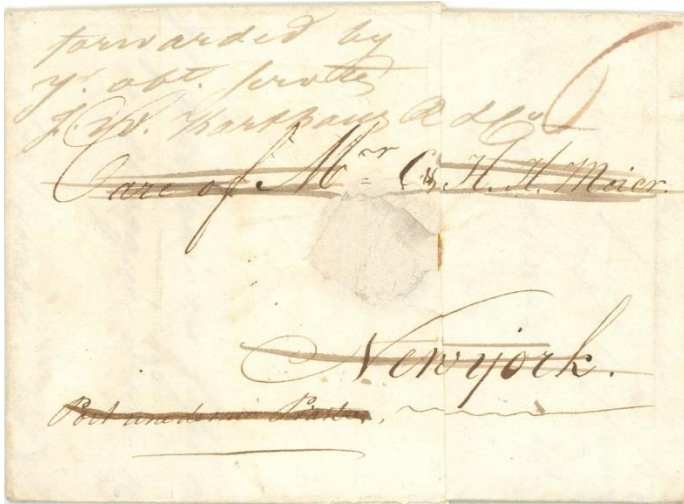
October 21, 1814 London Paid Ship Letter – prepaid 1/1 (half packet rate)
Cartel *San Felipe* left December 2 and arrived at Norfolk on February 23
Posted March 2 with 33¢ due to New York – February 1815 War rates

Around the Mid-Atlantic Blockade



Dated Birmingham, GB January 6, 1813 – endorsed to cartel
Mail prohibited on *Pennsylvania* – sent instead on licensed *Henry*
Left Liverpool March 18 – captured by HMS *La Hogue* April 28
Released to Boston June 23 – triple 62¢ due to Philadelphia

New York Blockade, May 1813 to March 1815



Dated Bordeaux, France
September 8, 1813 – paid one
“denier piastre”

Baltimore Privateer *Delille* to
New York May 11, 1814 – 6¢
in-port ship fee due



Delille captured 5 prizes on this
trip – chased by British frigate
on May 10

Re-posted May 17 in nearby
Jersey City – 17¢ due to
Baltimore

Cartel Through the New York Blockade



Posted October 19, 1814 in Lymington – prepaid 9d to London
October 22 London Post Paid Withdrawn Ship Letter – prepaid 8.5d
Cartel *Jenny* to New York on December 2 – 6¢ in-port ship fee due

Southern Blockade, Sept. 1813 to March 1815



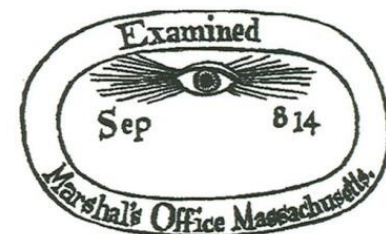
Dated June 12, 1814 – blockade runner to Spanish Florida

Spanish ship to Havana – placed in the mails at Cadiz, Spain

Sent overland to England via Bayonne, France – April 1814 2/2 rate

London Foreign Office September 21 – double weight 6/2.5 due in Scotland

New England Blockade, April 1814 to March 1815



Dated Le Havre, France December 10, 1813 – ship captured by British
Examined by GB POW Transport Office and sent by cartel ship to Boston
Censored by Boston Provost Marshal on September 6, 1814 - 82¢ due

North American Blockade Run Mail, 1775 to 1815



Steve Walske