

Soldiers' letters to or from Canada 1802–1841



David Handelman 2006–2007

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By the same author:

- ✉ *Allan Steinhart, Postal Historian* (co-editor, with Gray Scrimgeour), available from the Postal History Society of Canada PHSC (1997).
- ✉ *Canadian manuscript town postmarks* (co-author with Jacques Poitras) PHSC (1999), out of print (a second edition is contemplated).
- ✉ *Ontario broken circles* (editor) by Bruce Graham, PHSC (2001), out of print (a second edition is contemplated—with trepidation).
- ✉ *AR—avis de réception*, PHSC (2002).

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Introduction

SOLDIERS and sailors serving in the British Army or Navy were entitled to a special concessionary rate on mail received or sent out. This monograph discusses examples to or from Canada, in the period 1802–1841. It is an expansion of an article [TO], which covered only a small fraction of what is here.

There are several aspects to this study. One is the postal history. Another is the history. Many of the folded letter sheets discuss the local situation, such as disease, famine, riots, Sometimes they discuss the treatment the soldiers received at the hands of their officers. Each item shown is significant with respect to one or the other criterion, sometimes both. When an interesting topic appears in a letter, I include a brief discussion; thus for yellow fever (which is mentioned in at least three letters), I included material from Wikipedia on the disease.

The first section deals with the postal history preliminaries (rates, routes, rules, . . .). The second section treats six soldiers' letters (including an officer's letter), dated 1802, 1814, 1818, 1821, 1834, & 1841.

The third section consists of a correspondence between a soldier, Mark Josephs, and his in-laws in Montreal, over the period 1827–1841. There are 11 soldiers' letters here, mailed from Ireland, British Guiana, and Bermuda (even within these places, Josephs moved around, so they are rarely from the same town), and we follow his rise through the ranks and the multiple tragedy near the end. (There is a soap-opera quality to them.)

From the postal history point of view, some of the items are rare, for example, the very clear Missent to Liverpool England handstamp (second reported) and two examples with black Bermuda Paid datestamp (fourth and fifth examples reported [in black]).

A typical definition of postal history involves the study of rates, routes, and markings. Unfortunately, the rates for soldiers' letters are monotonous in this period. Very often, the letters were carried by war ship, and the routes are not usually very exciting. Normally, the markings are *Pd 1* (indicating prepayment of the concessionary rate, one penny), the military endorsements, plus the usual town marks of origin and destination as on any other cover in this period—if you've seen one, you've seen them all. The odd exception of course delights us, as do the exotic origins (of some of them).

However, the contents are sometimes of much greater interest than the postal history. The Josephs correspondence documents the rise and fall of a soldier in the British Army, including discussions of local conditions and politics. This isn't postal history and the contents don't contribute to a postal history exhibit, but it is worthwhile to record.

This is prepared as a portable document file (.pdf) that anyone (with Adobe Acrobat and a reasonably good printer) can print. To print this commercially in sufficiently high quality and in full colour that respects the typography would be prohibitively expensive for a small run.

Postal history preliminaries

FROM [R] (the authoritative book on British and some Empire rates before 1840), concessionary rates for the military were introduced in 1795, and modified occasionally thereafter. The only personnel eligible for these cheap rates were sergeants and below (although sergeants-major were sometimes excluded) and their equivalent ranks (seaman, soldier, etc). Excluded were commissioned officers, warrant officers, midshipmen, and various odds and ends, such as civilian employees.

At the time, the ordinary postal rates from points abroad, and even in the same country, were excessive, and quite beyond the means of the vast majority of the population. Giving active military personnel (excluding officers, who were normally well-off) what was in this period extremely cheap postage was probably motivated by considerations of morale.

The 1795 act gave the rates as 1d if prepaid from the soldier (seaman, etc), and 1d collect if addressed to the soldier; this applied only to single weight letters, but was good from/to anywhere in the British Empire. If the letter from the soldier were sent collect, it would be charged the usual rate, which could be quite substantial; if it were prepaid to the soldier, it would also be charged the full rate. In 1806, the rules were modified so that the concessionary postage had to be prepaid in either direction, otherwise the full rate would be charged.

In 1823, special concessionary rates were applied to the East Indies (the Indian subcontinent); from there, mail had to be sent collect, and was charged 3d, made up of 1d concessionary rate and 2d gratuity (to the captain of the private ship carrying the mail). This was increased to 4d in 1840.

Soldier's letters (as they are traditionally called, even if sent by seamen) are usually easy to identify. The lower left corner will typically have a signature of the commanding officer of the sender, frequently written at a 45° angle from the upper left to lower right, together with his rank and unit. The Quebec 1802 cover (see the table of illustrations on the same page as the table of contents) shows an 1802 example mailed from Quebec to Montreal. The signature at the lower left reads *WF Macbean/Lt Col Com of 6th Regt*. In this case, it was conveniently marked *a soldier's letter*, but not many are so indicated. This is very early for a Canadian soldier's letter, but not the earliest (two earlier ones appeared in Cavendish's Dorothy Sanderson sale).

As observed previously, commissioned officers were not eligible for the concessionary rates. The figure Antwerp 1814 shows such an example, mailed in 1814 by a British officer in Antwerp (Belgium) to *America*, meaning British America. The figure India 1834 is likely the only known one to BNA with an India soldier's letter handstamp.

Six examples

HERE we discuss a variety of soldiers' letters over 1802–1841. The first, Quebec 1802, is very early and domestic Canadian. The endorsement is nonstandard, but this may be attributable to its earliness. The second (Antwerp 1814) is an example to show that officers were not eligible for the concessionary rates; mailed from Belgium (before Waterloo took place) to Upper Canada, the total postage charged was about five shillings, an enormous amount. The contents of both covers are not even slightly interesting.

The third, Halifax 1818, is a seaman's letter from on board his ship, to his wife in England, complaining that he has just been drafted for another five years service. The fourth, Halifax 1821, is far more interesting. It concerns eligibility for prize money from the Castine Fund, including a certificate of eligibility, which was subsequently processed by the Fund administrators. We identify the seizure which led to the prize, and explain the significance of the Castine Fund (which was largely used to help build Dalhousie University), and other connections.

The fifth, India 1834, has no contents, but is here based solely on its postal history relevance. It is a sailor's letter from Madras (India) to Clyde River (Nova Scotia), and is the only example of which I'm aware of the use of an India soldier's handstamp (in this case, Robertson InSol-5) on a letter to British North America. It is in very rough shape.

The sixth, Laprairie 1841, concerns a sergeant who has just come from that hellhole, British Guiana (about which we will read more in the Josephs correspondence), and is very relieved to be in Lower Canada.

Quebec 1802

From Quebec to Montreal, 1802; boring contents, but third earliest Canadian soldier's letter (of which I'm aware).

Endorsements Soldier's name not on front of cover (John Doherty, Corporal 6th regiment) *a soldier's letter* nonstandardly at left; WF Macbean, Lt-Col, Commander 6th regiment at lower left

Postmarks Handstamp **PAID** 1d; there is a faint Quebec straightline on reverse, dated 3 August 1802 (not particularly scarce).



Quebec 1802. To Montreal
Nonstandard endorsement.

Mr Angus McDonald
Sir

Quebec 29 April 1802

I received your favor of the 26th ultimo and have to inform you that your mother and brother went from this [place] yesterday in a vessel for Montreal & that your brother was in apparently better health than on his arrival, which we hope God may continue. The doctor says that he expects his cure will have the desired effect.

If the wind is not very favourable, your mother will be at Montreal by the time this reaches you; if not, soon after you will please to give our compliments to her and Donald and your other brother. I shall likewise count it a great favor if you inquire for a letter I send with this for my father-in-law, Jno (?) McDonald, River au Raisin, and give it to your mother to carry up with her. I have directed it to your care and any future commands will be punctually obeyed by sir . . .

Jno Doherty, Corporal 6th regiment.

PS You will be so good as to give my wife's compliments with mine to Mr Desoulmier, the parish priest, and tell him from that I haven't been at my duty since with himself, that indeed I deserve a great scolding. I went once to Mr Plicy (?), now Bishop, and when I told him it was two years since I received sacraments, he refused hearing my confession, though I expostulated and told him I wasn't my own master, and could not go when I wished.

Postal history A very early, but not the earliest, soldier's letter from Canada (there were examples from 1799 and 1800 in the Sanderson collection). The lack of the soldier's endorsement on the front was evidently tolerated in this early period.

Antwerp 1814

Officer's mail ineligible for concessionary rates. From A Maclaine to his brother Major Maclaine with the 57th regiment. A very routine letter, but mailed from Antwerp prior to the battle of Waterloo (won by Blücher, with help from Wellington).

Postmarks Colchester (two faint red handstamps at right) 19 & 20 November 1814, Halifax (four blobs marking, dated 13 March 1815), straightline Montreal transit mark, dated 20 April 1815.

Antwerp, September 13, 1814

My dear Hector

I have this moment received a letter from Collector (?) Ross, who gives me the melancholy news of Commissioner Clepham's death. In him he seems to have lost a good friend and which I am truly sorry for.

I am in great hopes soon to hear of A Mc's (?) arrival in London. How soon that happens, I shall be off from this [place] on leave to see him and all my friends.

Juliana and her [xxx] has had a very narrow escape from being drowned in the gulf. Margaret has gone with Ross to Ayr where she will get married. Do not forget to write often to your friends.

Your affectionate brother, A Maclaine

Postal history As observed previously, commissioned officers were not eligible for the concessionary rates. This cover was mailed in 1814 by a British officer in Antwerp (Belgium) to *America*, meaning British America. It went via Halifax and Montreal. The rates marks are faint, and will likely not show in the image, but full rates were charged.

The rating is complicated, and part of the following is conjectural. The faint rate marks are (in red) *Pd* 2/3, (red or black) 1/8, and (red or black) 3/3. The red 2/3 (stg) is prepaid and is made up of the packet rate (1/3) from Falmouth, and the internal UK rate from Colchester to Falmouth (360 miles, 1/1, less one penny for transatlantic service).

The 1/8 possibly refers to the rate Antwerp–United Kingdom (it had just recently changed from 1/4). There is a problem—how could the transatlantic fee be prepaid? Thanks to Kevin Preece for his comments on the rates.

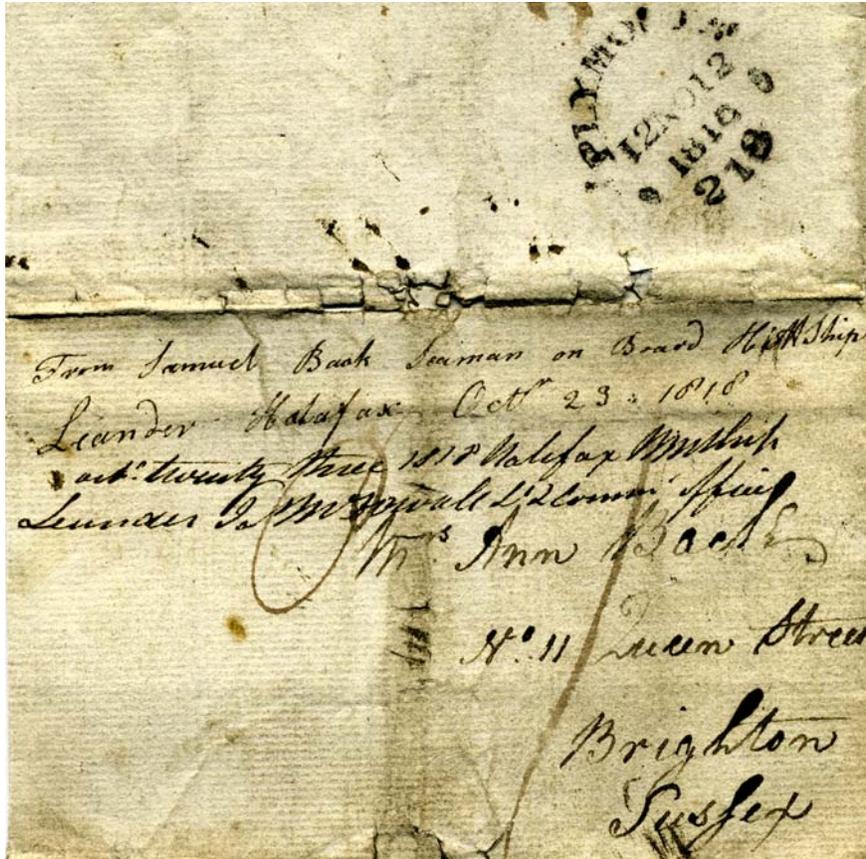
On arrival at Halifax (four blobs marking, dated 13 March 1815), it was charged an additional 3/3 (currency) collect, equivalent to 2/10sterling,



Antwerp 1814. Officers' mail ineligible for concessionary rates
 From Antwerp, arrived in Colchester (two faint red datestamps at right), 19
 & 20 November 1814.

covering a single rate for a distance 1400–1500 miles, which would put the address far to the west of York (Toronto). There is a Montreal straightline transit mark, dated 20 April 1815.

Background It was addressed to Major Maclaine, 57th Regiment, given initially as part of Lord Hill's Army, which was struck through and replaced by *British Army*. Lord Hill was one of Wellington's high-ranking officers at Waterloo a bit later, and was in Europe at the time.



Halifax 1818. Seaman's letter to Brighton (Sussex)
Commander's endorsement is nonstandard.

The 57th regiment (Middlesex, 1755–1966, known as the *Die hards*, from which that expression came into use in English) had been shipped to Canada in May 1814 to participate in the War of 1812, which was almost over. Most of the regiment had returned to the UK by August 1815.

Halifax 1818

Seaman's letter from on board the *Leander* at Halifax, 1818, to Brighton (UK). Forced to serve an additional five years in the RN. ex-Stulberg.

Endorsements Samuel Beck, Seaman on board HM Ship *Leander*, Halifax; signed by James McDowell, Lt & Commanding officer, Halifax, irregularly, across the cover below the seaman's endorsement.

Postmarks Large red *PI* (1d prepaid). Backstamped Plymouth 12 November 1818 with 218 (mileage) at base and blobs separating the mileage from the name, transit mark; addressed to Brighton (Sussex).

His majesty's ship *Leander*, Halifax Nova Scotia October 22 1818

My dear wife

It is with sorrow I inform you that I was drafted again yesterday on board this ship, when I expected to be at home with you by the *Dee*. It is said here we are to remain out here five years. I would thank you to go and enquire of the gentlemen of Brighton what foundation there is for this story and don't fail to send out to me the result of your inquiries.

I should my dear wife have written to you before only expecting to be at home as soon as this scroll, by the *Dee*. I hope, my dear, you will feel no uneasiness at this disappointment as I shall by and by be at home, to pass, I hope, the remainder of our lives with more satisfaction.

You will not fail to inform me in your xxx how my daughter does remember me with sincere affection to my father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Direct as formerly to Samuel Beck, Seaman, His Majesty's ship *Leander*, Bermuda or elsewhere, and believe me dear wife, I remain your affectionate husband, Samuel Beck.

Background From Wikipedia, the *Leander* (second of five with this name in the Royal Navy) was a fourth rate frigate of 60 guns, launched 1813. Took part in the battle of Fort Henry during the War of 1812. In Algiers 1816, took part in Second Barbary War, 125 of crew lost or wounded in heavy fire from shore batteries (Wikipedia). It then set sail for Nova Scotia, and left for the East Indies in 1819.

This letter was likely carried aboard the *Dee*.

Drafted presumably refers to being compulsorily re-enlisted in the Navy (possibly related to press gangs, but the connection is not clear to me).

Halifax 1821

From Halifax on business (and endorsed by a Sergeant-Major) to Ireland (1821), concerning the Castine Fund.

Endorsements Sergeant Major John Rowe, 62nd regiment, Halifax; commanding officer (as noted in the certificate).

Postmarks Faint red ms *I*, faint black Halifax NS Paid datestamp (known use, 1817–39, more commonly in red). Red double framed lozenge Dublin receiver dated 13 June 1821 (known 1815–1836).

James Currey

Agreeable to the request contained in your letter of 27th February last addressed to Lt & Adjutant Parker, I send you herewith a certificate which I make no doubts will enable to receive your proportion of the Castine Prize Money from the agents, on referring to the Castine Prize List retained at the Regiment.



Halifax 1821. To Ireland

Official letter concerning eligibility for Castine Fund, from a sergeant-major.

Your name appears as being duly entitled to it. Therefore, I am suprised how the agent or the Deputy Treasurer of the hospital could inform you that your name did not appear in Prize List sent from the regiment.

The regiment is in good health and there is no expectation of our leaving Halifax. Paymaster Darby died in August 1819 and Lt Col Goodrige in August 1820. Sergeants Massey and Lambeth join me in our best respects to you.

John Rowe, Sgt Major
62nd Regiment

NB In order to avoid the expense of postage if you have any further occasion to write to the Regiment, address your letter to me.

On another page is a certificate, which was apparently processed on the September date noted.

Handstamped in orange **BOARD 12 SEPT. 1821**

We hereby certify that James Currey, whose description is annexed was en-

No. 13
BOARD 12 SEPT. 1821 Halifax 7th May 1821

We hereby Certify that James Cunnery whose description is annexed was entitled to Prize Money for the Captures on the Penobscot in North America in September 1814. having served as a Private in British Major Biddalls Company 62nd Regiment on that Occasion.

Description

Name	Age at Enlistment		Complexion	Hair	Complexion	Trade or Occupation	Where Born			Date of Enlistment
	Years	Months					Parish	Town	County	
James Cunnery	19	5 th	Swarthy	Brown	Green	Labourer	Drummond	Halifax	Ontario	20 Nov ^r 1797

G. J. A. Smith, Lieut. Colonel } Commanding Officer
 John Parker, Lieut. } Adjutant
 Richard Lellan } Paymaster

Halifax 1821A. Form used by Castine Fund officials

The whole letter was obviously submitted to the Castine Fund after it had been received by Currey; the orange BOARD handstamp was applied in September 1821, well after he had received the letter.

titled to Prize Money for the capture on the Penobscot in North America in September 1814, having served as private in Brevet Major Riddall's Company, the 62nd regiment, on that occasion.

[Now a description in the form of a table.]

Name James Currey; age at enlistment 19; 5 feet 8½ inches; complexion swarthy; hair brown; eyes grey; trade labourer; born in the parish of Dramsmore, town of Ballycastle, county Antrim; date of enlistment 20 November 1797.

Signed by George Gauntlett, Lt Colonel, commanding officer; Edward Parker Lt, adjutant; and Richard Jellicoe (?) paymaster.

Background From Wikipedia, in September 1814, Sir John Coape Sherbrooke led a British Army into eastern Maine and was successful in capturing Castine, Hamden, Bangor, and Machais. The Americans were given the option of swearing allegiance to the King or quitting the country. The vast majority swore allegiance and were even permitted to keep their firearms. This is the only large tract of territory held by either side at the conclusion of the war and was given back to the United States by the Treaty of Ghent. The British did not leave Maine until April 1815, at which time they took large sums of money retained from duties in occupied Maine, back to Nova Scotia. This money, called the *Castine Fund*, was used in the establishment of Dalhousie University in Halifax.

As an aside [dh], the Castine Fund certainly also included funds from war prizes, the most famous being the USS *Chesapeake* (there is a monument to its capture—including the anchor—in Halifax, and the plaque specifically mentions that part of the prize money went to the Castine Fund, and in any event, it is clear from this letter that prize funds were included). I mention this because *none* of the on-line references referred to other sources of money for the Castine Fund.

Why is the USS *Chesapeake* so famous? Because its captain, James Lawrence, uttered the fatuous but famous *Don't give up the ship*. No one has heard of the ship that captured it—HMS *Shannon*, under Captain Phillip Broke—in 1813. He issued a challenge to the *Chesapeake* to come out of its harbour and fight. Despite his ship being undermanned and outgunned, Lawrence decided to do just that. Broke won a lopsided victory—the *Chesapeake* was captured in under an hour. Lawrence made his statement as he lay dying. If he hadn't died, he ought to have been court-martialed for recklessness.

The action for which Currey was to receive prize money is rather complicated, as it involved the recapture of a British ship. He was part of the 62nd (Wiltshire) Regiment of Foot Soldiers (amusingly, the latter is often abbreviated to Regiment of Foot). In 1813, it moved from France to North America; it was at Castine in 1814–1815; it returned to Europe too late

to help Blücher win the battle of Waterloo [F]. It was stationed in Halifax 1818–1823.

The US privateer *Hyder Ally* (a privateer is essentially a pirate ship authorized by a national government) had seized a British East Indiaman in 1814. It was sent as a prize back to the US, under Lieutenant Oxnard. He took it to Portland (Maine), and was rather surprised to find that the British were occupying most of the Maine coast. After a long chase, the ship was recaptured by the British near the Penobscot River (hence the reference to the Penobscot in the certificate). Despite this bad luck, Oxnard became a successful captain and a wealthy man after the War of 1812 [I].

India 1834

From India to Clyde River, Nova Scotia, 1834; no contents. In *really* bad condition, but unique India soldier's letter handstamp to BNA.

Endorsements Sailor's endorsement is at the top, and too faded to read; the commanding officer's endorsement appears above the address, reading *JL Fletcher Sr Lt HMS Curacao/Madras Africa*. At first, I thought this was a misspelling of *Curaçao*, but it appears so often in references to other ships that it perhaps is the correct spelling of the ship's name. He located Madras in Africa. Nonstandard endorsement.

Postmarks Large brown red postmark (the character after the *R* is an ampersand &) is Robertson InSol-5 ([T, 196]), known use 1823–1848; only India soldier's handstamp letter to BNA of which I am aware. This is not listed in other than black; however, the reddish brown colour could be a result of exposure.

Two strikes of a common red brown London circle transit mark, dated 29 July 1834, are on reverse. Faint serif Halifax (NS) circle (in common use), transit mark. Clyde River did not have a post office until 1850 [C].

Postal history The soldier's rate from the Indian subcontinent was 3d (stg), composed of 1d concessionary rate and 2d gratuity (to the captain of the private ship carrying the mail from India) commenced in 1823, and had to be sent collect (that is, not prepaid). This letter was sent collect, but rated *Packet 4d*. Since the destination was not Halifax, there was no carrier fee charge (correcting a statement in the *Topics* article [T]); instead, the additional 1d is likely the result of converting sterling to Halifax currency. (At any rate, I can't think of any other explanation.)

Background There are a number of ships named *Curaçao*, sometimes spelled as the Lieutenant did, *Curacao* (regardless of the spelling, it's pronounced Cure'a-sow), including one involved in a tragic incident in World War II, when it was sliced in half by the RMS *Queen Mary*, resulting in 338 deaths.



India 1834. India Soldier's letter to Halifax via London (1834)

The ship carrying it to England is unknown; however, from Falmouth, it was carried on the packet *Lady Pelham*, arriving in Halifax 22 September. This also accounts for the notation *Packet* appearing to the right of the big circle. Condition is terrible, but this is unique.

There are references to an HMS *Curacoa* in the New Zealand War (1863), but this appears to be a different ship.

Laprairie 1841

From La Prairie (LC) 1841 to his father, Henry Cook, plumber & glazier, Guildford Street, Chertsey, Surrey, England. Expresses great relief at being out of British Guiana, otherwise boring.

Endorsements William Cook, Sergeant, 70th regiment; commanding officer's endorsement appears to be [xxx] White, Major for Cdr.

Postmarks Large red *1*, red 1829-type Laprairie double broken circle (not abnormally late), large red London tombstone receiver dated 15 July, and Chertsey (England) double broken circle dated the next day.

Dear Father

I take the pleasure of writing to you in hope of finding you in good health as it leaves me at present. I thank god for it & I am very happy to acknowledge the receipt of your kind & welcome letter which I received when on board her Majesty's ship *Sapphire* in Carlisle Bay (Barbados) on the 29th April & were very happy to hear you were all in good health.



Laprairie (LC) 1841. To England

With 1829-type Laprairie double broken circle.

We left Demerara on the 24th April, arrived at Barbados on the 27th, sailed for Quebec on the 1st May & arrived at Quebec after a beautiful passage on the 29th May. [We] sailed again on the steamer *Queen* for Montreal on the 31st May but did not stay there, but were trans-shipped to the steamer *Royal Victoria* for Laprairie—which is our station at present—at which we landed on the evening of the first June, a most glorious day after leaving a place like the West Indies, a most unhealthy spot as [for] three years there is almost certain death to any British subject.

But we are now in a christian country once again and the place is now in a very quiet state, which was more than we expected to find it, as we had our vessel well equipped for war in case of an attack being made on us; but a person would scarce credit what many of our men suffered from the cold in our passage, although in the month of May & they were well provided for it too, as they had flannel shirts & drawers issued to them in addition to cloth trousers which is never worn in the Indies, for we get a blue serge instead.

I heard from Caroline a short time before I left the West Indies but did not answer her letter as I was expecting to leave every day for Canada, so if you should meet with an opportunity of letting her know that I am safely arrived in Canada & in a perfect state of health, I shall be ever thankful to you. I would have wrote to her this packet, but I am busy at present [and] I can scarce find time, but will write to her in the course of a week or two for whenever we

change our station, it gives me a little to do, but thank god, everything goes well with me at present & I am getting so stout you would scarce know me.

I am very happy that the Wrecclsham lads are plucking up their spirits a little as they are taking a notion of the red cloth which they will wish they done [sic] long ago if they take care of themselves [[I have no idea what this means]]. We are getting 120 from Ireland this year but they are not arrived at present so I cannot say whether any of the Wrecclsham lads will join us or not but we have as fine a regiment at present as there is in Canada out of 21.

Dear father, I would be obliged to you if you could let Caroline know the time I have been from home as she is very anxious to kown. It is eight years next November that I enlisted at Guildford on the 22nd of that month, but please god the next three years will soon wear off & then we return home again. But the two years and two months in the West Indies was worse than all the rest. I will write again in a short time, as I can offer no remarks whatever on the state or appearance of the country at present being a total stranger in it so no mare at present.

From your ever affectionate son, Sergt W Cook, 70th regiment
Please direct Laprairie near Montreal Lower Canada.

Background From Wikipedia, the 70th (Surrey) Regiment of Foot was in the in British Guiana 1838–1841; it was in in Canada 1841–1843. See Josephs' 1841 letters (end of next section) for problems in British Guiana.

Josephs–Borrowdale correspondence

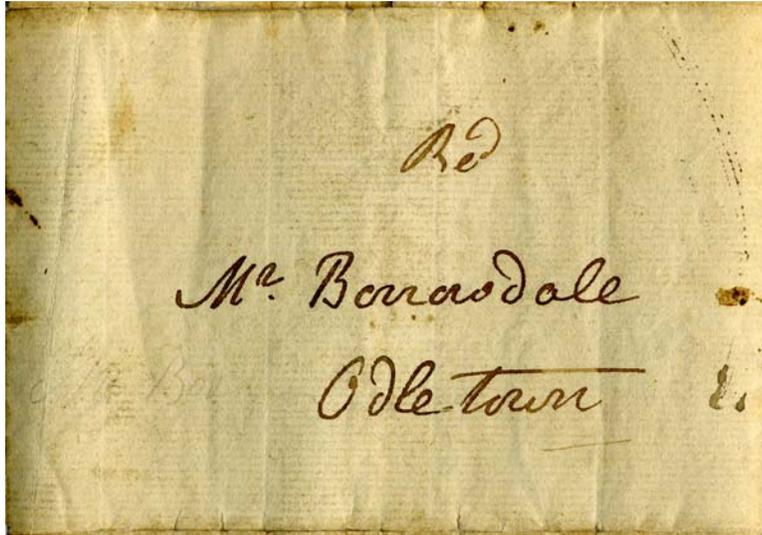
THIS section contains 11 soldiers letters endorsed (but not all written) by Mark Josephs, a soldier in the 76th regiment from around 1820 to at least 1841. There is an additional letter, hand-delivered, from the Chaplain at Montreal in 1827 which sets the stage for the correspondence. It is addressed to the future father-in-law, Borrowdale, and expresses concerns about his daughter marrying a common soldier (Josephs). The remainder of the correspondence is addressed to the Borrowdale family in Odletown (various spellings), near Montreal.

Josephs rises through the ranks (as we see from his endorsements), and writes from various places in Ireland, then from British Guiana, and finally from Bermuda. He describes local conditions in considerable detail. Particularly interesting is his description of the effects of yellow fever on the military in British Guiana, and the subsequent tragic effects on his family, his career, and his future with the Borrowdales.

At the same time, some of the covers are significant postal history items, particularly the last two.

Josephs O 1827?

Likely 1826 or 1827; the paper is watermarked 1823, to Mr Borrowdale, Odletown. Apparently hand delivered.



Josephs o 1826. From Chaplain in Montreal to Borrowdale family
Apparently hand delivered, as there are no postmarks.

Montreal May 7th

I think it my duty to inform you that your daughter Elisabeth is going to commit a foolish act which may occasion her sorrow as long as she lives. She is about to unite herself to a common soldier of the 76th regiment.

I have nothing particular against the character of the young man. But I know what are the miseries and indecencies of a common barrack room, and I regret that so respectable a young woman should throw herself into such a situation. Indeed both your daughters are in every point of view so respectable that any father might be proud of them and I have always treated them as daughters rather than as servants.

On the present occasion, I have given to Elisabeth the advice of a father, but her heart appears to be set on the marriage and all counsel is in vain. As she is under 21 years of age, she cannot marry without your consent. I request therefore you will write to me by return of post, either giving or withholding your consent. Direct to me

Theodore BB Stevens, Chaplain to Her Majesty's Forces, Montreal

Postal history The ms *Re^d* that appears on the address side also appears on the reverse, and likely means *replied*.



Josephs 1 1827. Waterford (Ireland) to Montreal

No postmarks; carried by hand

The paper is watermarked 1823, and the first of the soldier's letters to the Borrowdales is dated 1827. Although the chaplain did not give the soldier's name, his regiment, the 76th, is consistent with that of Mark Josephs, the sender of the rest of the letters. (And he is a private soldier in 1827.) The letter is addressed to Odletown, an alternative spelling for Odelltown on the Island of Montreal, which had a post office from 1878 to 1913.

Josephs 1 1827

From Ireland, to Ann Borrowdale (sister-in-law), to the care of the Reverend BB Stevens, Montreal Lower Canada. The first letter of the two on this sheet was written by Elizabeth (Betsey) Josephs.

Endorsements across top: From Mark Josephs Soldier, Tipperary, 76th regt
 endorsement at lower left: illegible

Postmarks Large red Waterford datestamp, with red ms *Pd 1*, indicating prepaid soldier's concessionary rate; London tombstone dated 9 OC 1827. Docketed *Received 1st January 1828*.

Waterford, September 21st 1827

Dear Sister

I now embrace this favourable opportunity of wishing to inform you that I received your welcome letter from John at Fermoy. It gave great pleasure to hear that you my dear sister with our dear parents, brothers, sisters, and my grandmothers were in good health as it leaves us at present, thank God. We are arrived in this country the 8th of this month after a pleasant but long passage of five weeks.

My dear Ann, you will be happy to know that I was not sick more than six or seven days during the passage. Dear sister, the reports you heard of my sailing (?) mournfully upon my trunk at one time and half-wasted away at another on board ship before we left Quebec is I am happy to say, quite false, and whoever told you so only intended to make you unhappy.

The 70th regiment arrived in Fermoy about 4 days after us. John is quite well. This is a very plentiful centre (?); potatoes 28 pounds for five pence, eggs three for one penny, beef and mutton the contract price of 2½d per pound, bread sevenpence per four pound loaf, and clothing very cheap but the inhabitants very poor.

My dear sister, you will please to write to our dear parents. Tell them now that I am [ham!] well and happy, tell them that I intend to send them a letter as soon as we have settled. It will perhaps be a fortnight longer, for we are in expectation of going to Dublin for the winter. Remember Josephs and myself to Mr and Mrs Stevens, to [Ontares?] George and Dr [xxx], to Margaret and Rose, and all inquiring friends.

To conclude for the present wishing you all the joy this world can afford and happiness in the next and believe me to remain your ever affectionate sister till death.

Betsey Josephs

Appended is the following brief note by Mark Josephs

My Dear Sister-in-law

I hope you do not believe every idle tale that is told you concerning Betsey being unhappy, for believe me she is not. My dear Ann, I hope you will not consider me so base a wretch as to make a woman unhappy whom I adore to the very bottom of my heart—on the contrary, I shall take delight in doing everything in my power to make her happy and comfortable, so conclude in remaining your every affectionate brother-in-law.

Mark Josephs

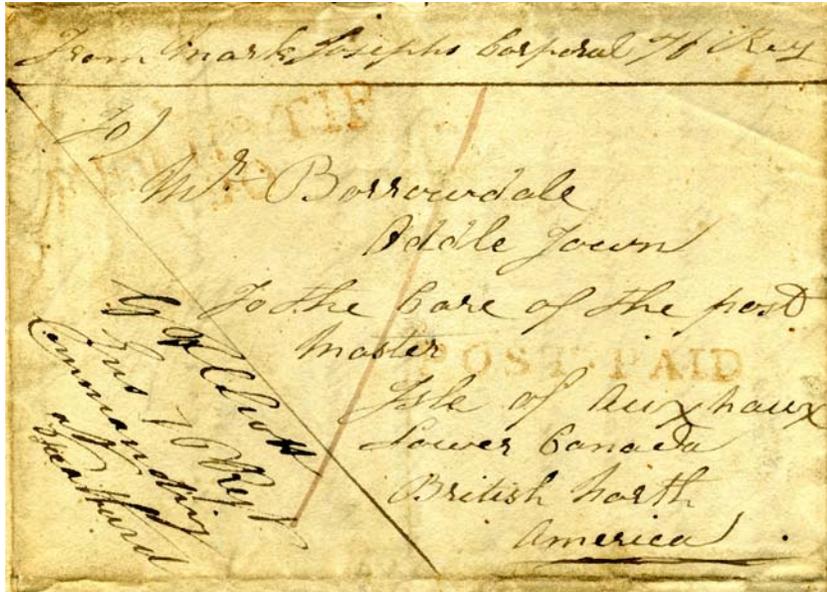
PS Answer this by return of post, and direct [to]

Mark Josephs, Private, Light Infantry Company
76th Regiment, Waterford Ireland, or elsewhere

Spelling: whith for with; where for were; verry for very; bee for be;

Josephs 2 1828

From Ireland, to Mr Borrowdale, Oddle Town, to the care of the post master Isle aux noix, Lower Canada British North America.



Josephs 2 1828. Tipperary to Montreal

Endorsements across top: From Mark Josephs Corporal, Tipperary, 76th regt endorsement at lower left: G O (?) Elliott (?)/Ens 76 Regt/Commanding/Feathard

Postmarks xExx TIP/90 (mileage from Tipperary) faint red POST PAID red, with red ms *1*, indicating prepaid soldier's concessionary rate; faint red datestamp on reverse in large circle, May 28 1828; 7A at base (town name difficult to read, but might be Waterford).

Dear Father in Law

Feathard Tipperary, May 20th 1828

As it is now some time since you heard from us, we sat down to write to you hoping our letter will find you and all relations in Canada well and happy. We are ourselves tolerably so thank God at present, with the exception of your amiable daughter, having a slight cold.

We have wrote to Ann since our arrival in Ireland as you have no doubt heard. We arrived in this country in September last after a long but pleasant passage of six weeks. Provisions are very cheap here and the country is at present very quiet.

I have been, since our arrival in this country, afflicted with a severe fever that confined me to my bed for six weeks but thank God, am now perfectly recovered. We do not live in barracks as I have permission to live in the town where we have every thing very comfortable.

You may rest assured, my dear sir, that it shall be the study and pride of my life to render your daughter happy now she has become my wife. I trust and

hope neither her [xxx] nor myself will never have occasion to regard the step we have taken.

We are very sorry to hear by Ann's letter of Margaret's ill state of health and sincerely hope with the blessing of the Almighty that she is perfectly recovered. Give my love to your dear partner and to every one of your family.

Please to answer this soon, for we shall always be extremely happy to hear from you and our thoughts and conversation are frequently directed to you and our other firends in Canada. Hoping you will write shortly and that it will be to state you are all well and happy. I remain

Your affectionate son in law
and sincere well wishes

Mark Josephs, Corporal 76th regiment

PS Direct to

Mark Josephs, Corporal
Captain Martin's Company
76th Regiment, Kilkenny
Ireland or elsewhere

There is a further letter from his wife Elizabeth.

Dear Father and Mother

I enclose a few lines to assure you of my continued affection towards you as well my dear Grandmother, brothers, and sisters, and all friends in Canada tho at a great distance from you, my thoughts and wishes are often with you. I live comfortably with my dear husband and only wish we were nearer you. Pray write soon, letting us know how you are and believe me sincerely

Your affectionate daughter, Elizabeth Josephs

(PS) When you write, please to put a penny into the post with the letter, and it will come free.

Postal history Elizabeth's last comment refers to prepaid concessionary rate being available on letters *to* soldier as well as from.

Background Josephs mentions that he suffered from a severe fever for a prolonged period. Ireland did not have the healthiest climate at the time.

Josephs 3 1829

From Cashell (Ireland) to Mr Borrowdale, Isle aux Noix, Lower Canada, British North America, to the care of the post master.

Endorsements Mark Josephs, Corporal 76th Reg. Commanding officer's endorsation is illegible.

Postmarks Small rectangular Cashell/29 (mileage to Dublin), POST PAID straightline; fancy rectangle and less fancy rectangle at Dublin, both 6 January 1829, all in red. Large brownish red *1*, indicating prepayment of concessionary rate. Black Halifax four blobs receiver, dated MR ?, transit mark.



Josephs 3 1828. Cashell (Ireland) to Montreal
Arrived in March 1829.

Cashell, 31st December 1828

Dear Father and Mother

It is with pleasure I set down to acquaint you with a circumstance which occurred a short time since. Elizabeth was safely delivered of a fine girl who was a few days since christened Ann Holborne Josephs.

Since I last wrote to you we have thank God enjoyed excellent health and Betsey and our child are both at present remarkably well. Our situation in the army is as pleasant as we can expect in a country like this where the people have been so long dissatisfied with the Government, and therefore of course with the army.

Since we have been at our present station, serious disturbances have occurred, but fortunately they have hitherto in every case, been got over with[out] any serious injury to the service or the country. Our regiment will perhaps remain in Ireland two or three years. I am at present corporal, and expect further promotion.

Give my respects to the whole family and all enquiring (?) friends. I trust you will have the goodness to write to us, as we are anxious to hear from you. With every wish for your welfare and happiness here and hereafter, I remain . . .

PS Direct [to]

Mark Josephs, Corporal
76th Regiment, Cashell
Ireland or elsewhere

In a completely different hand is a message, apparently written by Margaret Borrowdale (sister-in-law). It appears to be a religious poem copied onto the letter; aside from being almost illegible, it seems to be irrelevant.

Background The disturbances referred to in the letter probably are riots over food (potato crop failures occurred regularly from 1825). This will be discussed later.

Josephs 4 1830

From Cashell to Odle Town, to the care of the post master Isle aux Noix, Lower Canada, North America. Josephs has been promoted to Sergeant. The letter is on laid paper, watermarked WMD 1821. Docketing on the letter, *Received on the 13th June*.

Endorsements Mark Josephs, Sergeant, 76th Regiment [Cashell Ireland]; commanding officer's endorsement is illegible.

Postmarks red POST PAID straightline; small unreadable double circle date stamp on reverse; large brownish red 1, indicating prepayment of concessionary rate

Cashell, 13th March 1830

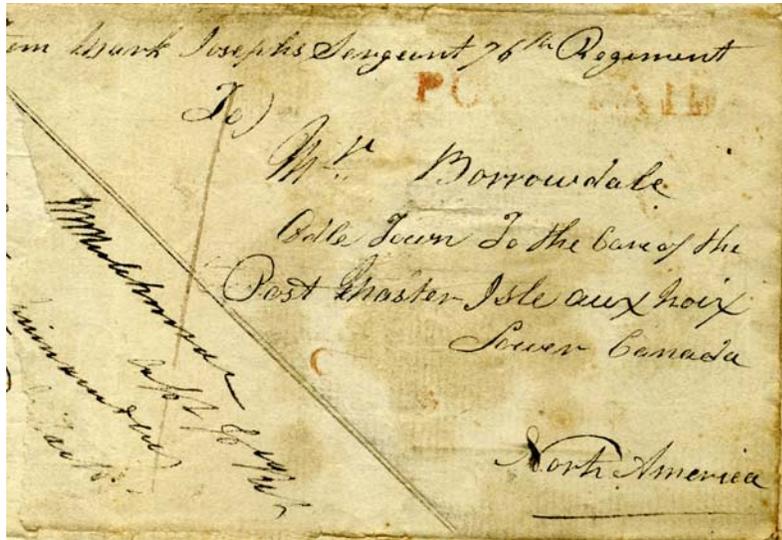
Dear Father and Mother

I now embrace this favourable opportunity of answering your welcome letter dated November 28th. It gave us much happiness to hear of your being all in good health as this leaves. Elizabeth has enjoyed excellent health thank God since we left America. Our little daughter grows a fine child and is very well with the exception of a slight cold. But as for myself, this country does not agree with my health.

You wish to know if Ireland is any quieter than it was, but I am very sorry to say it is anything else but quiet, particularly in this county. You have perhaps seen an account in some of the papers of the Reverend John Gring (?) protestant minister being shot within 200 yards of his home and several other protestant ministers been shot at during the last four or five months, such is the state of party feelings in this country.

Everything is very cheap here: bread 6½d per four pound loaf, beef 2d and 3d per pound, mutton 3½d per pound, pork 1½d per pound, butter 6d per pound, potatoes 3d per stone, eggs three for a penny, clothing of every sort very cheap.

But soldiers are very much [xxx] about in this country, out every week search-



Josephs 4 1830. Cashell (Ireland) to Canada

I cannot identify the backstamp (at right).

ing for arms and marching provisions. The detachment that I am stationed with has to march every Friday from this place to Clonmell with prisoners. About a month since, we marched forty prisoners mostly heavy (?) crimes such as murder, conspiracy, house-breaking, and robbery.

I have not been to England yet since our arrival in the country. But please God spares us our lives, we intend to go the next winter. I shall make it my business to go through Manchester, as that will be my nearest way to Birmingham, the place that I shall have to go to so that Betsey will have an opportunity of seeing her uncle and aunt during the time that we stay in Manchester I have received letter from England stating it to be in a distressed state at present.

Give our love to Henry and all the rest of the family and receive the same yourself from your ever affectionate son and daughter, Mark and Elizabeth Josephs.

Direct for Mark Josephs
Sergeant, Captain Trench's Company
76th Regiment

Cashell County Tipperary Ireland or elsewhere

[PS] I was promoted to the rank of Sergeant the day I sent you the last letter.

PS There is 500 prisoners in our gaol [jail] at Clonmell for trial in this country. So much for Ireland.

Josephs 5 1832

From Athlone (Ireland) to Odle Town, the Post Master, Isle aux Noix, Lower



Josephs 5 1832. Athlone (Ireland) to Canada
Common double Quebec 1831-type double broken circle.

Canada. Mostly concerns the cholera epidemic in Ireland, which had spread to Canada in the same year.

Endorsements Sergeant Mark Josephs, 76th Regiment; commanding officer's endorsement is largely illegible, but based on later letters, appears to read xx Clarke, Major.

Postmarks Athlone black double broken circle split in two by the folded letter sheets, SE 6 1842; large (faint) red *Pd 1* (concessionary rate), rectangular double framed (Dublin; night duty?) paid transit mark PAID/SE 7/1832; faint red double broken circle Quebec transit marking, NO 20 1832.

Dear Sir

Athlone 3rd September 1832

It is now nearly two years since I wrote to you and have received no answer, which surprises both myself and my wife, as neither of us can in any way account for your sorry silence, a silence that gives my Elizabeth much uneasiness and causes us both to think something must have occurred to have hindered her dear and indulgent parents from writing to her and if so why not her brothers and sisters write as they cannot forget they have a sister Elizabeth still living, and although at a distance could receive no greater happiness than to hear from them and to know they were all well and happy.

Dear Sir, let me impose (?) of you to answer this by return of post as we are in suspense until we hear from you. Our oldest daughter, who is now nearly four years old sends her Grandmother a kiss and says she will come and see you. Our

youngest, Sarah, who is a year and a half old has been afflicted with sickness [cholera] for nearly four months, but has recovered and now runs about.

. . . This country is in a sad state, what with agitation and the cholera raging in almost every town in Ireland. This place has been visited with it but not so severe as most other places. Our regiment has been confined to barracks since arriving to it. The first time in June, when [xxx] became confined only for a fortnight during which period there were only one person in the whole town died with the disease and it left for a few days. When intercourse was opened with the town, and the inhabitants [xxx] to think the last to have it broke out with redoubled violence taking of every person it attacked which has not been more than forty or forty five persons inhabitants thank the almighty during †he period our regiment has been confined (which has been six weeks) to barracks. We have only lost one man and woman belonging to the regiment.

I see accounts in the newspapers that it has broke out in Montreal and Quebec and that it has committed greater ravages at both places and at St Johns [LC] and several other places.

May it please the almighty dispenser of all events to keep it and every other disease of the like nature from the [xxx] of my Elizabeth's parents and cause health and happiness to reign among you all in the [xxx] prayers of your ever affectionate son and daughter

M E Josephs

PS Direct your letters [to]

Mark Josephs, Sergeant

Captain Moriarty's Company, 76 Regiment

Athlone, Ireland or elsewhere

Background His letter discusses agitation in Ireland and the cholera epidemic. Even in the 1830s, the potato crop failed most years.

From Wikipedia, concerning the *uprisings*, emancipation of Catholics (for example, permitting Catholics to sit in Parliament) was in the air, but was blocked by the King; he argued that to grant it would break his coronation oath that he defend the Anglican church. A campaign under lawyer and politician Daniel O'Connell and his Catholic Association led to the conceding of Catholic emancipation in 1829. O'Connell, at the head of the Repeal Association, then mounted an unsuccessful campaign for restoration of Irish self-government. O'Connell's tactics were largely peaceful, using mass rallies to show the popular support for his campaign. However his campaign was unsuccessful.

Despite O'Connell's peaceful methods, there was also a great deal of violence and rural unrest in the country. In Ulster, there were repeated outbreaks of sectarian violence, such as the celebrated riot at Dolly's Brae, between Catholics and the nascent Orange Order. Elsewhere, tensions between the rapidly growing rural population on one side and their landlords and the state on the other, gave rise to much agrarian violence and social unrest. The most sustained outbreak of violence was the *Tithe War* of the

1830s, over the obligation of the mostly Catholic peasantry to pay tithes to the Protestant Church of Ireland. The Royal Irish Constabulary was set up in response to such violence to police rural areas.

Also from Wikipedia, concerning *cholera*; this is a water-borne disease caused by the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*, which is typically ingested by drinking contaminated water, or by eating improperly cooked fish, especially shellfish. There were several European epidemics in the nineteenth century.

Cholera is transmitted through ingestion of feces contaminated with the bacterium. The contamination usually occurs when untreated sewage is released into waterways, affecting the water supply, any foods washed in the water, and shellfish living in the affected waterway—it is rarely spread directly from person to person.

Symptoms include those of general gastro-intestinal tract upset, including profuse diarrhea, and are caused by the enterotoxins that *V cholerae* produces. The resulting diarrhea allows bacteria to spread to other people under unsanitary conditions. The massive diarrhea causes dehydration (the usual cause of death) and loss of electrolytes. Untreated cholera typically has a death rate of 50–60%. (The treatment consists of rehydration and restoring electrolytes, and is very effective.)

The second European cholera pandemic reached London and Paris by 1832; it also reached Canadian port cities, such as Quebec, Montreal, and York (Toronto), the same year. The Canadian epidemics were the direct result of Irish immigration, which in turn was due to regular failure of the potato crop.

Josephs 6 1833

Mark Josephs used his privilege to send this at the cheap rate to his father; the letter is written by Joseph Poole to Mr Borrowdale, whom he addresses as his brother (possibly his brother-in-law). It mentions that Josephs' family comes from Birmingham. The least interesting letter of the batch.

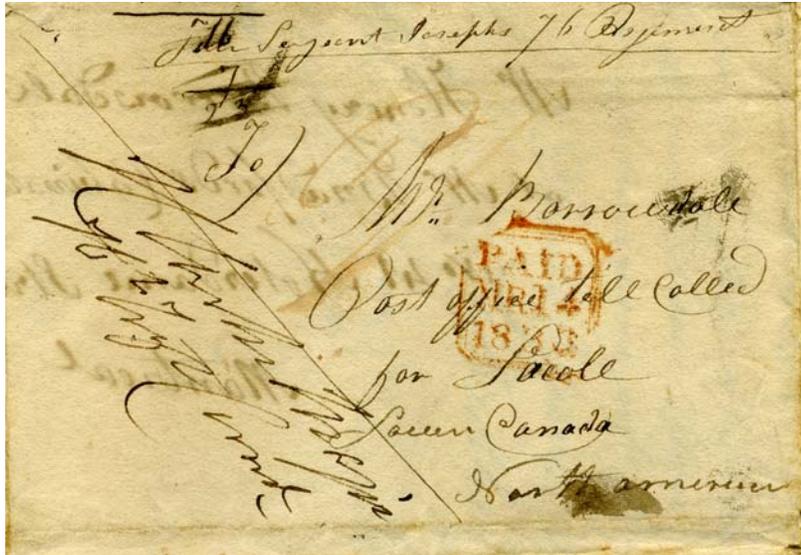
Endorsements Sergeant Josephs, 76th regiment; same commanding officer's endorsement as on previous.

Postmarks Double broken circle Athlone dated MR 13 1833; ms *Pd 1* and next day, red double line paid rectangle (Dublin) which is oddly truncated at the upper left and lower right corners.

Dear Brother

[Manchester, February 4, 1833]

I am very glad of embracing an opportunity of writing to you, as your son-in-law [Josephs] will convey the letter to you from Ireland. My nephew, the soldier, is on a furlough to his Father's in Birmingham, and on his return to our home, I formed ready (?) a few lines for him to take.



Josephs 6 1833. Manchester to Canada

Carried to Athlone for mailing with the concessionary rate.

Dear John believe me we were very glad to see him, who gives us a long account off family affairs and your prosperity in America; time will not permit to write a long letter at present.

I am exceedingly sorry to say that my dear son Theophilus is very ill—but by the help of God, I hope he will recover again. My dear old mother departed this life about four years ago, aged 84. Also my sister Jane Smith is dead and left to my two sons, £246, further my son Joshua is comfortably married and resides in Liverpool, and doing very well. The trade of Manchester is middling brisk, and eatables are pretty reasonable. Your relatives in this quarter are apparently in good health.

Dear John, I have a desire that you write upon the first convenient opportunity, and direct thus: Joshua Poole, 23 Ryton Street, Manchester, Lancashire.

Be pleased to accept of all, our real respects and loving kindness to yourself, and your loving wife, and the rest of your dear family, hoping this scrawl will find you all in perfect health. As for us, we are as well as can be expected during the sickness of our dear son Theophilus—so no more at present.

From your affectionate
brother Joshua Poole

Josephs 7 1833

To Mr Borrowdale, Post Office till called for, Lacole [Lacolle] Lower Canada, North America, 9 March 1833. Another yawner.

Endorsements Sargeant Josephs, 76th Regiment; same commanding officer's endorsement as on letters 5 and 6.

Postmarks Double broken circle Athlone, dated MR 13 1833 (same date as letter 6), ms *Pd 1* and red double line truncated paid rectangle.



Josephs 7 1833. From Athlone (Ireland)

Athlone, 9 March 1833

Dear Father and Mother

I take this opportunity of answering your affectionate letter. It gave us great pleasure to hear you [xxx] are all in good health as thank God this leaves (?) all here at present.

I should have answered your letter sooner but [xxx] as I was going to England to see your brother and sister Poole in Manchester whom I found well, except Theophilus who was being ill XXX—so ill that I think he will scarcely re[cover]. XXX and Joshua is married and lives in Liver[pool]; both himself and wife were in Manchester. When I called, she (?) made me quite welcome (?) and wished very much to see my Betsey and our own dear children, but it being winter, the weather was much too severe for them to cross the [xxx]. However, if please God spares us, I intend sending them [xxx] for a fortnight and three weeks [that is, five weeks] when the warm weather comes.

The distance from this place to Dublin is 60 miles, and from Dublin to Liverpool is about 180 miles, and from Liverpool to Manchester is about 36, thereby making the total distance from Athlone in Ireland to Manchester in England 276 miles.

With this letter I have sent one from Manchester [Joseph G] [XXX] has taken the directions of [f] it as it could not be franked without it being directed by me. [S?]he has put about a dozen of seeds in it for you, and in this you will find a few more, if not lost. I hope they are the same sort you want, as I cannot find any other seed called *Liburnum*. It is a tree covered in summer with long yellow golden flowers in chains. If there is any other sort of seed you want, let me know and I will if possible procure it for you.

[XXX] so [xxx] Sarah according to her wish a lock [xxx] of her little nieces hair, Ann's, who is the [XXX] [XXX] is tied at both ends and Sarah's is tied at one. You will receive a newspaper [xxx xxx] with these letters or in a few days after.

Betsey wishes to know how the orchard you planted thrives, and whether you make your own cider from it. Ireland remains in the same state as usual.

No more at present from
your own affectionate son and daughter-in-law, Mark and Elizabeth Joseph.

Naturally, I found no seeds in this or the previous letter.

[XXX]: document damage made this unreadable or absent.

Spelling: as for has; heare for hear; mee for me; haire for hair; cyder for cider

Josephs 8 1839

Addressed to Mr Borrowdale, Odell Town near La Colle, Lower Canada, North America, from British Guiana. Death of two children from yellow fever; regiment lost 320 men (about one-third). Discusses pension plan.

Endorsements Mark Josephs, colour sergeant, 76 Regiment; commanding officer's endorsement illegible.

Postmarks *Pd 1* (the stroke of the *1* is enormous), faint large black Demarara double broken circle dated 19 June, and Montreal double circle receiver dated OCT 27 1839.

Caponey Essequibo 19th June 1839

Dear Father and Mother,

With pleasure I now write to inform you that I received your welcome letter dated 16th August [1838] and feel quite happy that you are all well. As this leaves us all at present thanks the Almighty—the West Indies is a very unhealthy climate. We have lost our fine children, a boy and girl, named Thomas and Mary, since our arrival in the West Indies, and the regiment has lost three hundred and twenty besides women and children.

We have still two children, a boy and girl, named Henry and Ann; Henry eighteen months old, and Ann ten years. We are sincerely sorry to hear of the death of Hannah [?] and hope that Henry and Margaret have entirely recovered their health.

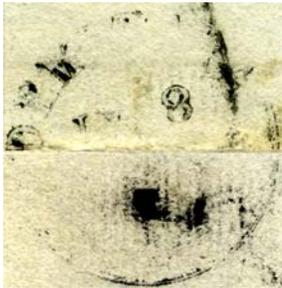
I read in the papers of a skirmish having taken place between a party of the rebels and the volunteers of Oddle Town in which the volunteers behaved with greater spirit.

You wish to know how long our regiment is likely to remain in the West



Josephs 8 1839. From Essequibo (British Guiana)

Dateline *Caponey Essequibo*, the latter is now spelled with an *i*. I couldn't find any reference to Caponey (or Capony, or Caponi, . . .).



Josephs 8A. Demerara backstamp

In two parts, only DEM is (barely) legible.

Indies—that is quite uncertain as it entirely depends on the state of affairs in Canada. If that country continues in a disturbed state, it will be the means of our removal to America sooner than otherwise, as there is only one regiment before us, namely the 67th and the at-present under orders. However, I have every reason to believe that our stay in the West Indies will not exceed more than one year.

I have little more than two years to complete the period of twenty one years service, when if please God spares me and I hold the same rank as at present, I shall be enabled to get my discharge with a pension of one shilling and eight pence per day. Although I could now get my discharge and about fifty pounds

as a compensation for past services, which sum would no more than defray the expenses of passage either to England or Canada, and then what little ready money I am in possession of besides, amounting say to about one hundred and forty or fifty pounds sterling, the savings of our industry, would go but a very little way in setting us for life unless we received some assistance on our commencing, as I may say, the world.

Betsey [Elizabeth] wishes to know your advice on the above. Likewise the age of yourself and her mother as well as which of her sisters and brothers are at home with you, and those that are from home, where they are and have settled. Betsey wishes to know if her cow is still alive and if you have any produce from her and whether you have considered that it would answer us to leave the service and commence with a shop in your neighbourhood upon the above sum. Likewise, whether you have heard what has become of her cousin Samuel Be (?). Please to let us know whether you have cleared your farm and how your new orchard thrives.

No more at present from your every affectionate son and daughter, M E Josephs. Ann [their daughter] desires to be remembered to Grandfather and mother as well as her uncles and aunts and says she would like to come and see you; as for young Harry, he sends you a lock of his hair.

PS Direct your letter as follows

Mark Josephs, colour sergeant
Captain Sheppard's Company, 76th Regiment
Barbadoes West Indies or elsewhere.

Unfortunately, no lock of hair was not found in the letter. (In other covers of the era, I have found ribbon sent as a colour sample, so enclosures sometimes do survive.)

Background The “unhealthy conditions” likely refers to the epidemic of yellow fever that broke out in British Guiana in 1837, about which more in the next letter.

The *skirmish* of course refers to the 1837–38 Lower Canada rebellion; since news travelled slowly, it is not surprising he didn't read about it until almost two years after it occurred. In 1837, coordinated rebellions broke out in Upper and Lower Canada; when news of the rebellion in Lower Canada reached Upper Canada, the Lieutenant-Governor thereof, Bond Head, sent troops to Lower Canada to help suppress the rebellion there. Then the uprising in Upper Canada under William Lyon Mackenzie took place, but was pitifully organized and easily put down by the remaining British troops.

The rebellion in Lower Canada, originally organized by Louis-Joseph Papineau, then Woolfred Nelson—after Papineau escaped to the US—was more serious, but was put down. Many of those who had also escaped to the US raided Lower Canada in 1838 (under the leadership of Robert Nelson), but this had also been put down by the end of 1838.

The two rebellions lead to the Durham report, which recommended union of the colonies and responsible government for them, both of which were implemented. Both Mackenzie and Papineau returned to Canada (respectively, in 1849 or 1845) and served in the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada.

The reason for the rebellions is fairly clear—the obstinate refusal of the Family Compact (in Upper Canada) and the Château Clique (Lower Canada), groups of unelected anglophile businessmen who controlled government, to allow political reform. Mackenzie wanted the colony to remain in British hands, but with responsible government; Papineau may have wanted to establish an independent republic.

I could find no reference to a skirmish occurring between the self-styled *Patriotes* (the rebels; they have become part of Quebec hagiography—as has Mackenzie in Ontario, especially since his grandson, William Lyon Mackenzie King, was the longest-serving and nuttiest prime minister in the British Empire) and volunteers or anyone else at Odletown.

Essequibo is a river in British Guiana; Caponi or Caponey is still a mystery.

Josephs 9 1839

Addressed to Mr John Borrowdale, Lacolle, Lower Canada, North America. Death of wife from continuing yellow fever epidemic in British Guiana.

Endorsements Mark Josephs, colour sergeant, 76 Regiment No 309; commanding officer's endorsement illegible.

Postmarks *Pd 1* (the stroke of the *1* is large), faint Demerara double broken circle dated 19 June, and red evening duty (double-framed) Liverpool tombstone, dated 25 DEC 1839.

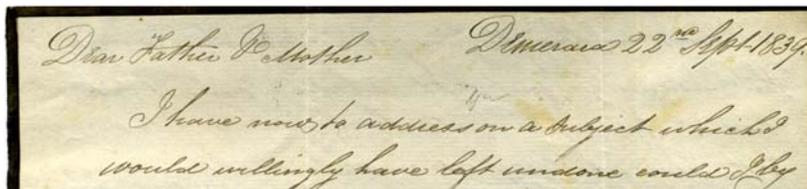
Demerara 22nd September 1839

Dear Father and Mother,

I have now to address on a subject which I would willingly have left undone could I by that means have kept the melancholy news I have to relate from reaching you by any other channel, as I am aware that it will be received with the deepest regret. But if it is felt so by you what must be my grief to yours, you have certainly lost a beloved daughter but me an affectionate wife and one who in the army had scarce a parallel both as a wife and mother.

She died of the yellow fever after three or four days sickness and what still heightens my misfortunes I was in hospital with the fever at the time she was fallen sick. I had not even the melancholy satisfaction of attending her in her last moments.

Dear Father and Mother, I hope you will not take this too much to heart, as I am now thank God get quite sound, consequently the children are not quite orphans, altho' I cannot take care of them as their mother could. The children are both very well and the fever which raged so much in the Colony is now



Josephs 9 1839. Demerara to Canada (1839)
 Inside of letter shows penned mourning boundary.

much abated and scarce any case latterly has been fatal.

We lost about 70 men in three months besides six officers and the band [xxx], and about seven women and seven children, which is about one man out of three according to the number of men we had here so after all I have to thank God that he spared me to look after the children when such a number has been taken off with the same complaint that seized me.

The regiment expected to leave here about April or May for Barbados, when we shall either be sent home or go to America, but whether the regiment leaves or not, the Commanding Officer has promised to send me to the Depot as soon as the draught arrives if God spares me so long.

I have sent you a lock of my wife's hair cut off a few days previous to her being sick as I think you will prize it more than anything else I could have sent you.

Give my kind love to my brother and sisters and let them know that we had been laying it out a few days before we were seized with the sickness to go and stop with them. But it pleased God to take her before hand. Ann sends her love to all, and should it please God to spare us, I trust we shall all meet again

in the course of a few months as it is my intention to settle along with you after I am discharged.

Have the kindness to answer this as quickly as possible, as I shall be uneasy until I hear from you.

I remain dear Father and Mother, your affectionate son

M Josephs

[PS] Direct to

Mark Josephs, colour sergeant, 76th Regiment

Captain Sheppard's Company, 76th Regiment

Demerara West Indies or elsewhere.

PS My poor little boy Henry is growing; he will be two years old on 29 November ensuing. My daughter will be ten years old the next day, 30 November.

On mourning paper, the black boundary made by pen, only on first page. Again, the lock of hair did not survive 160+ years of handling.

Background From Wikipedia, *yellow fever* (yellow jack, black vomit, or American plague) is an acute viral disease and an important cause of hemorrhagic illness in many African and South American countries. In 1881, Charles Finlay (Cuba) found the carrier (mosquitoes), and in 1900, Walter Reed (US) determined that draining swamps would prevent it.

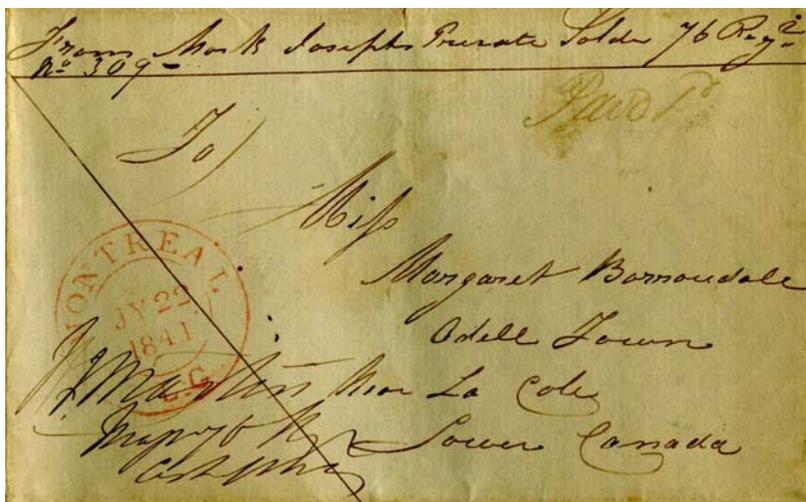
Yellow fever is caused by a virus of the family Flaviviridae, carried by mosquito saliva. The disease is transmitted from forest monkeys to humans and later in an epidemic, from humans to humans, via the mosquito.

Yellow fever infections are frequently severe. After infection, the virus first replicates locally, followed by spreading via the lymphatic system. After 3–6 days incubation, fever, muscle aches, headache, and backache occur, and possibly a red tongue, flushed face, and reddening of the eyes. Later, the disease is sometimes complicated by jaundice and liver failure (causing yellow skin colour, hence *yellow fever*). If the disease progresses, delirium, seizures, and coma ensue.

There is no specific cure for yellow fever. Treatment consists of fluid replacement, with transfusion of blood derivatives in severe cases. In severe cases, dialysis may be necessary. A fever victim requires lots of rest and fresh air, and must drink plenty of fluids. The death rate is about 5%, although historically it has been much higher. Patients who die usually do so within a week.

The yellow fever epidemic in British Guiana lasted 1837–1841, with extreme effects on the British military (which had no natural immunity), as supported by Josephs' comments on deaths in his regiment in this and the previous letter. Malaria was also endemic to the region.

However, yellow fever and malaria were not confined to tropical climates.



Josephs 10 1841. Bermuda to Canada

Bermuda datestamp on reverse, Fourth recorded example in black.

Over the period 1826–1832, thousands of workers, mostly Irish, on the Rideau Canal (connecting Bytown to Kingston) died of yellow fever and malaria. One of the sources for the mosquitos was likely Dow's Great Swamp, now called Dow's Lake, a small recreational lake about one kilometre from my home. (Since there have never been monkeys around here—except on Parliament Hill—the early cases must have been among the immigrants, and mosquitos spread the disease.)

Josephs 10 1841

From Bermuda to Mrs Margaret Borrowdale, Odell Town near Lacolle, Lower Canada, North America. Josephs has been demoted drastically.

Endorsements Mark Josephs, Private Soldier, 76 Regiment No 309; commanding officer's endorsement might read Martin.

Postmarks Faint small *Paid 1* upper right, faint black Bermuda Paid double broken circle dated JUNE 3 1841 (fourth recorded example), and red double circle Montreal, dated JY 22 1841.

Dear Sister

Hamilton Bermuda 4th June 1841

Your kind and welcome letter came safe to hand on the 17th instant. It gave me infinite pleasure to hear [from] you and all my dear friends were all well in health as thank the almighty. This leaves me and my poor motherless children at present. Ann grows a fine girl; she was 12 years old on the 30th of November last [this does not agree with the previous letter—she should be 11] and takes

after her ever to be lamented mother, in goodness and mildness of temper.

And as for my poor little Henry, you would be delighted to see him, he grows a fine manly little fellow. Every person admires him, he was three years of age on the 29th of November last. He speaks very plain, having been obliged to have his tongue cut three times in consequence of his being tongue-tied, he has not the slightest recollections of his mother but calls every woman that takes any notice of him his dear Mama.

I am extremely sorry to have given you all so much uneasiness, but my dear sister, the reason of my long silence has been in consequence of expecting the regiment would have been ordered to procede from here to the Canadas. However, there is at present but little expectation of an event so much wished for taking place at present.

As I believe five regiments are ordered from the West Indies to Canada, my period of service, that is to say, twenty-one years, expires on the 22nd of February next, at which time, if it pleases the almighty Disposer of all things to spare my life, I intend to make application for my discharge on a modified pension, which although small, being perhaps not more than ten pounds, or one shilling per day, will I conceive be much better than remaining longer in a service that I am anxious to leave for the purpose of benefitting my children, whereas by remaining two or three years longer, I would only gain an addition of one penny or two pence per diem to my pension. Moreover, I have no person either to comfort or console myself or children since the severe loss of a loving wife and tender mother to my children.

Dear sister, in consequence of my having been promised several times to be sent home with my children and these promises not having been fulfilled has bid me to speak the sentiments of my mind rather too freely to my officers, the consequences of which have been to reduce me to the rank of private; however, I have been offered to be promoted again which I have refused as it would tend to keep me some time longer in the service and which I am not the least inclined to.

Bermuda is a very healthy climate, the chief produces [being] arrowroot and onions. I should like to send you a present of arrowroot providing you can get it forwarded, either from New York or Baltimore as there are a great many Bermuda vessels continually trading in these ports, and generally not more than five or six days passage.

Ann and Henry send their love to their dear Grandfather and Mother, Uncles and Aunts, and little cousins, and say that they should like to see them.

Give my kindest respects to all my dear friends and I hope little niece thrives well and may the almighty in his goodness grant her health, wisdom, and understanding is the sincere wish of her loving uncle.

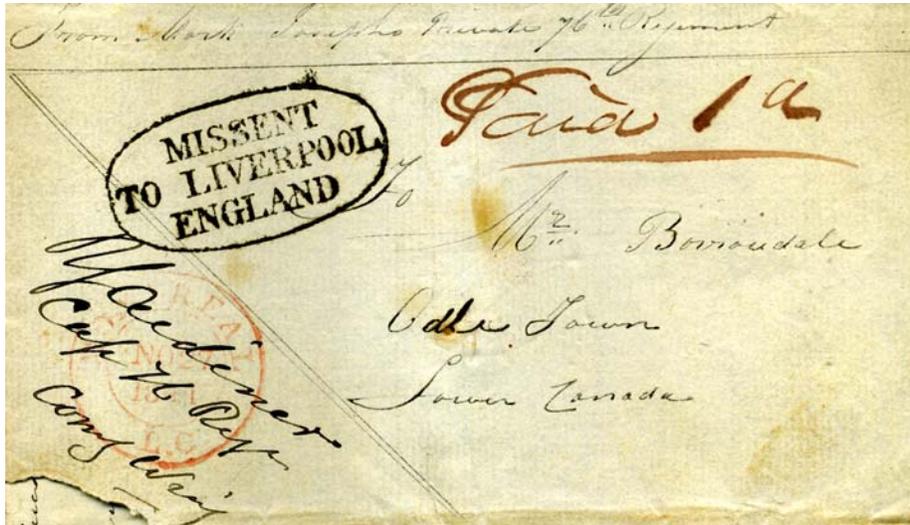
And believe me to remain

yours affectionately

Mark Josephs

[PS] Lines on my wife's head board [tombstone?]

Thou art gone to the grave, it was vain to [xxx] thee
Sincere God was thy guardian, thy saviour, thy guide



Josephs 11 1841. Missent to Liverpool soldier's letter to Canada From Hamilton (Bermuda) with rare large Bermuda Paid handstamp on reverse, shown in Josephs 11A. This is the second recorded strike of the missent handstamp. With common Montreal double circle receiving mark.

He gave thee, he took thee, and he shall restore thee
 And death has no sting, since thy saviour hath died.
 [PS] Answer this letter by return of post and direct [to]

Mark Josephs, private,
 Captain Cockcroft's Company, 76th Regiment
 Bermuda or elsewhere.

Josephs explains the demotion in the next letter.

Josephs 11 1841

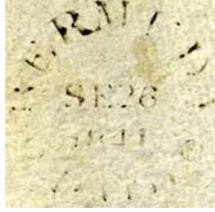
From Bermuda to Mr Borrowdale, Odle Town, Lower Canada. Josephs explains his demotion. We find out the date of marriage, 28 May 1827, at the "protestant church of Quebec".

Endorsements Mark Josephs, Private, 76th Regiment; commanding officer's endorsement might read Martin.

Postmarks Red *Paid 1d* upper right, faint black Bermuda Paid double broken circle dated SE 26 1841 (fifth recorded example), red double circle Montreal, dated NO 27 1841, "Missent to Liverpool England", second reported strike.

Hamilton Bermuda 26th September 1841

My dear Father



Josephs 11A. Bermuda Paid handstamp on reverse

Fifth recorded example in black.

I yesterday was handed a letter by Captain Cockcroft, the Captain of the Company to which I belong. It both surprised and pained me to find that you formed so unfavourable an opinion of my character as to consider that I have disgraced myself and children, by neglecting and bringing them to want and misery of a common barrack room as you pleased to term it, how you have formed that opinion of me is a mystery unless it is in consequence of my being reduced. If so, believe me it was for no disgrace. If it were, it was in my power to have kept it a secret from you by desiring you to have directed [addressed the letters] as formerly. However, I feel convinced that you are not aware of the rules of the service.

Trifling faults will often reduce a commissioned officer to the ranks, not only that [xxx] it was for any disgraceful act, I should not have been offered promotion again, as I was, by the identical person you wrote to, likewise, by the commanding officer of the regiment.

I do not think any thing of the bad opinion you have formed of me, but I think you should have spared one who is now at rest in her grave, one who was [xxx] dear to me, one who is always in my thoughts. I mean my beloved wife, the fond mother of my children, one who was universally beloved and respected, one that defied any person to say that either herself or husband ever disgraced themselves or children—until her own father says, “My daughter disgraced herself by getting married prematurely, and her husband by neglecting his children.”

However allow me to say that she was not married prematurely, but by license in the protestant church of Quebec on the 28th day of May 1827, the marriage certificate I have by me at present. However, I suppose Captain Cockcroft will give you every information you require on the subject.

You wish to know in your letter whether I was of temperate habit. If your meaning is whether I abstain from liquors entirely, I answer you candidly that I do not, but that I take a glass of spirits, wine, beer, or porter whenever I think it necessary. Neither am I an advocate for total abstinence, our regiment is under orders for Halifax and will embark about the 10th or 13th of October. I expect to accompany them to Halifax, and from there proceed to England for the purpose of being discharged and pensioned at about one shilling per day.

I always thought of settling in the Canadas with my children agreeable to their mother’s wish, however, your ungracious letter together with my being so poor, not being able to command more than one hundred pounds, puts it entirely out of the question, as I consider it too trivial a sum to do anything with

in the Canadas, although in England with perserverance I think it would be nearly sufficient to procure a respectable living. However, whether I remain in England or return to Demerara where my best treasure is now moulding, rest assured, the respectability and welfare of my children shall be my only consideration. Allow me to remind you that your Grandchildren are not in want or misery in a common barrack room, nor have they been since their deplorable loss.

Ann is with a lady learning the use of a needle and Harry is with a married sergeant who keeps the school and library, and as a [xxx] to their [xxx]. Therefore, if you can believe the above, you will find you have done me a great pain of injustice by saying (?) to my charge, the crime that I was not guilty of and by that whatever you say of me that you will speak more kindly of [xxx] whose only fault was marrying the choice of her [xxx] heart and that choice a soldier.

[xxx] [xxx] [xxx] with kindness to being one of the family and may the almighty dispenser of all good grant you all the happiness in this world and the next is the sincere wish of yours [xxx] truly M Josephs.

Be pleased (?) to answer this immediately, otherwise I may not get it.

[PS] Direct [to]

Mark Josephs, private, soldier
 Captain Cockcroft's Company, 76th Regiment
 Halifax or elsewhere.

Postal history The cover not only has the rare Bermuda Paid handstamp on reverse (the fifth example in black—including that on the previous letter—that Danny Handelman and I could find a record of), but has an exceptionally clear strike of the missent to Liverpool oval. This is recorded in [T, 161] with proof date of 3 December 1840, and the comment *not seen*.

This is the second example in the literature (that we could find), the first also having a Canadian connection. It appeared on a domestic Upper Canada money letter mailed 3 July 1841. This was lot # 312 of Cavendish Auctions Vivien Sussex golden jubilee sale of 6 March 2002. It was ex-Steinhart, and sold for £2,800 plus the vig.

Kevin Preece was kind enough to supply the following information about the route. From the date of the Bermuda handstamp, the letter was likely carried by the *Margaret* on that date, arriving at Halifax on 11 October. Presumably, it was misdirected at this point, and put aboard the *Acadia*, leaving Halifax on 18 October, arriving in Liverpool on 29 October. Then it was put aboard the *Caledonia* leaving Liverpool 4 November, arriving in Halifax 16 November (and Boston on the 18th).

Background Josephs explains that presumably in order to keep soldiers (even officers) in the army, near the end of their term, they are reduced in rank for a trivial offense; later, they are offered promotion back to their former rank—provided they sign up for another term. Nasty! Particularly

since their pensions will be substantially reduced if they do not re-enlist.

The statement “misery of a common barrack room” that Josephs attributes to his father-in-law is reminiscent of the 1827(?) Chaplain’s letter (Joseph o, the Chaplain’s letter) “miseries and indecencies of a common barrack room”. I wonder whether Borrowdale had been reading the old letters, or simply remembered the Chaplain’s expression.

The 76th regiment was stationed in Halifax (Nova Scotia—this corrects an error in my *Topics* article, [TO]) 1841–1842. So for a short period, Josephs was in geographic proximity to his in-laws. There are no other letters, and internet searches for Josephs or his family drew a blank, so we have no way of knowing if he did return to England as he outlined in the letter, or whether there was a reconciliation with the Borrowdales, and he and his family settled in Montreal.

Danny and I managed to find some information on the 76th regiment on the Internet. The following is summarized from [B] and other sources. The regiment was formed in 1787, and served in India 1788–1806. It arrived in BNA in 1814, as the War of 1812 ended; the 76th was left in Canada to assist in watching the border, and continued until 1827, when it was recalled to Britain. It left the West Indies to go to Nova Scotia in 1841 and removed in 1842. It did not participate in any wars.

Colophon

TEX (pronounced *tek*) was used to typeset the monograph. This is typesetting software developed by Donald Knuth, initially in the late 1970s, and modified over the years. The particular flavour is plain, not straightjacket LaTeX (which unfortunately is the variety of choice for 99% of TeX users).

The font family is ITC Elysium, with the occasional display cap from its companion font Prague, and some characters from Dingbats. Included in the font family is the *expert set*, which includes SMALL CAPS and text figures (0123456789) among other sorts.

I have tried to make this as typographically correct as possible, in part for the æsthetics, but also to show that it is possible to do this easily. For example, TeX automatically creates ligatures from *fi*, *fi*, and incorporates the font’s kerns via the metrics file. Its automatic hyphenation algorithm is very sophisticated, but requires occasional help. The incidence of rivers of white is reduced. And yes, the drop caps *are* in colour (just for fun).

On the other hand, it doesn’t know not to indent after a heading (nor do very many philatelic editors), nor when to use text figures (in-line, as

opposed to titling), nor when to use small caps. So I designed macros to do these things. It can also be adapted to avoid widows (a *widow* is either a single word occupying the last line of a paragraph or the last line of a paragraph occupying the first line of a page) by adjusting penalties, but I prefer to kill widows myself.

I am continually annoyed by the lazy word processing that passes itself off as serious typesetting, particularly in philatelic journals and books. Someone must have advised the editors/typesetters as follows.

- ⑧ Spend no time learning anything about typography, use an off-the-shelf word processor, put in some flashy effects (such as wrap-around), then use high-gloss paper, simultaneously making production more expensive and giving the impression of a well-made book.
- ⑧ Convince readers that all covers are mourning covers, by printing them with a black background.
- ⑧ Have no regard for readability (cram as much as you can into a single page, or double space your way to oblivion; make paragraphs really, really, really long).
- ⑧ Make sure that an index—if you bother to create one—is feeble, so as to be useless. Do the references in the worst possible way, which is with superscripts (in the text) and listed in order of appearance (this is, unfortunately, standard in some parts of academia; other parts, including mathematics, use a much cleaner style).
- ⑧ Don't edit out grammar errors, especially run-on sentences, misuse of *it's*, excessive capitalization, and numerous other distractions (extraneous or missing commas and apostrophes are favourites).
- ⑧ Use underlining and full caps [*read a f@%#@%g book on typography!*], don't worry about widows and orphans, or tracking, or feathering, or rivers of white, or proper uses of the different dashes, or different types of fractions, or excessive use of quotation marks, bold text, and italicized text; or the use of the letter *ex*, *x*, for the multiplication sign \times ,
- ⑧ Insult your readers with a lack of accents on foreign names and words, and if you do use a non-roman alphabet occasionally, make sure you confuse the characters, for example, β (Greek *beta*) and ß (*eszett*, part of the roman alphabet used in German). *End of rant.*

References

- [B] www.bermuda-online.org/britarmy.htm
- [C] Frank Campbell *Canada post offices 1755–1895*, mimeographed by the author (1958), in various versions (reprinted later) and with supplements and corrections.

- [F] <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~crossroads/regiments/regiments-infantry-2.html>
- [I] <http://www.imaginemaine.com/mainestories/HyderAlly.html>
- [R] David Robinson *for the Port & Carriage of letters*, published by the author, Scotland (1990).
- [T] Colin Tabcart *Robertson revisited*, James Bendon, Limassol, Cyprus (1997).
- [TO] Editor *Stampless corner* (4), BNA Topics vol 62, # 2 (2005) pp 37-47.