Contract Steamship Mail Between Cuba and the South Atlantic Coast of the United States (1848-1861)
Type of Correspondence

- Between Cuba and Charleston & Savannah (Oct. 1848 to June 30, 1851)
- Printed matter (1848 until June 1851)
- Between Cuba and Charleston & Savannah (July 1, 1851 until 1861*)
- Printed matter (July 1851 until 1861*)
- Between Cuba and Canada
- Between Cuba and Europe
The First US Post Office Contract

• Authorized by Congress in 1845 & 1847
• Awarded to Moses Cohen Mordecai, merchant of Charleston, on October 1847
• $50,000 per annum for fortnightly trips between Charleston, Savannah and Havana
• Mordecai built a 1,000 ton steamer in Baltimore for this route, the *Isabel*
• This ship made about 250 trips to Cuba until the outbreak of the US Civil War
Steamer *Isabel* entering Havana harbor
• Mrs. Moses Cohen Mordecai (Isabel Rebecca Lyons Mordecai)
First “Steamship” Rates
(October 1848 to June 1851)

• All outgoing mail had to be prepaid
• Letters of up to ½ ounce: 12 ½ cents
• Rate increments followed the “British” system
• Printed matter: 3 cents if prepaid, 6 cents if unpaid
• These rates initially applied only to mail carried on board contract steamships
From Cuba via Savannah
Rate – 12 ½ cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba via Savannah
Rate – 12½ cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba via Savannah
Printed matter rate – 6 cents (unpaid).
From Cuba via Charleston
Rates – 12 ½ cents for ½ ounce and 50 cents for 1½ ounces.
From Cuba via Charleston
Rate – 12 ½ cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba via Charleston

Rate – 12 ½ cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba via Charleston

Printed matter rate – 6 cents (unpaid).
From Charleston to Cuba
Rate – 12 ½ cents for ½ ounce.
Via Charleston to Cuba

Rate – 12 ½ cents for ½ ounce.
Second “Steamship” Rates  
(July 1851 to June 1864)

• Postal reform in the USA
• Letters of up to ½ ounce: 10 cents
• Printed matter: 2 cents
• These rates were extended to mail carried along postal routes
• Special rates for mail to Canada and Mexico
• European transit mail was allowed
From Cuba to Charleston

Rate – 10 cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba to Charleston

Rates – 20 cents for 1 ounce and 40 cents for 1½ ounces.
From Cuba via Charleston
Rate – One silver real internal mail fee and 10 cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba via Charleston

Rate – 60 cents for 2 ounces.
From Cuba via Charleston
Rate – 10 cents for ½ ounce forwarded and re-rated to free.
From Cuba via Charleston

Rates – 10 cents for ½ ounce, and 20 cents for 1 ounce.
From San Juan via Havana & Charleston

Rate – One silver real local fee, 1 shilling by British steamer to Havana, and 10 cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba via Charleston

Rate – 20 cents for 1 ounce.
Via Charleston to Cuba
Rate – 20 cents for 1 ounce.
From Cuba Savannah
Rate – Half silver real internal mail fee and 10 cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba via Savannah

Printed matter rate – 2 cents.
Rates to Canada (July 1851 to 1864)

• Mail had to be fully prepaid or fully unpaid
• Up to 3,000 miles: 10 cents for ½ ounce
• Over 3,000 miles: 15 cents for ½ ounce (this applied only to mail from the west coast of the US or from the West Indies)
• Distance traveled on maritime routes was considered for these rates
From Cuba to Canada via Charleston

Rate – 15 cents for ½ ounce.
From Cuba to Canada via Savannah

Rate – 15 cents for ½ ounce.