American Sailing Packets on the North Atlantic
1818 to 1840

PURPOSE:

To show inauguration and development of American Packet Service to link the business communities between New York - Liverpool, and New York - London.

SCOPE:

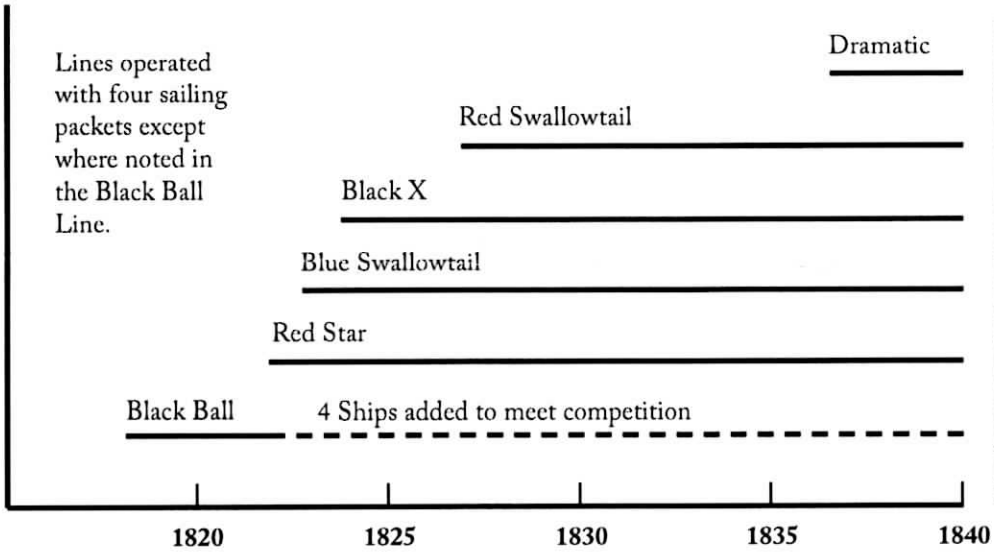
Before advent of steamships capable of crossing the Atlantic, businesses had no reliable year-round communications. Philatelic items carried by American packets illustrate development and growth of necessary business communication links that helped fuel the industrial revolution during its early stages.

PACKET HISTORY:

In early 1815, American business interests recognized the need for reliable communications among United States, Great Britain and Europe. To meet this need, American maritime management developed innovative tactics using ships that departed on a published schedule with or without a full hold and sailed during winter months. The Black Ball Line initiated this service transporting passengers, mail and business news along with premium manufactured goods like silks, woolens, ceramics, fine wine, and specie. American sailing packets remained the mail and business intelligence carrier of choice on the North Atlantic until the coming of steam in 1840.

The exhibitor conducted research over a ten year period using contemporary sources resulting in the publication the book, "North Atlantic Packets Departures & Arrivals 1818-1840". In 2011, the book received the Stanley B. Ashbrook Cup for best philatelic research in 2010. The Ship Information boxes, shaded in blue, contain the results of this research.

Indicates story line information. Indicates a significant item.



This diagram illustrates the introduction of packet service by line. In 1840, the British government's contract with the Cunard Line challenged sailing packet service. Although American sailing packets continued to sail for many years after the coming of steam, they carried less and less valuable cargoes. As a result of the gradual declining revenue, one by one they abandoned packet service.

PLAN:

Section 1: Early Years - Black Ball Line	1818 - 1822
Section 2: Competition	1822 - 1830
Section 3: American Dominance	1830 - 1837
Section 4: Effect of Steam	1838 - 1840
Section 5: Decline of Sailing Packet Service	