

EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN POSTAL SYSTEM TO 1792

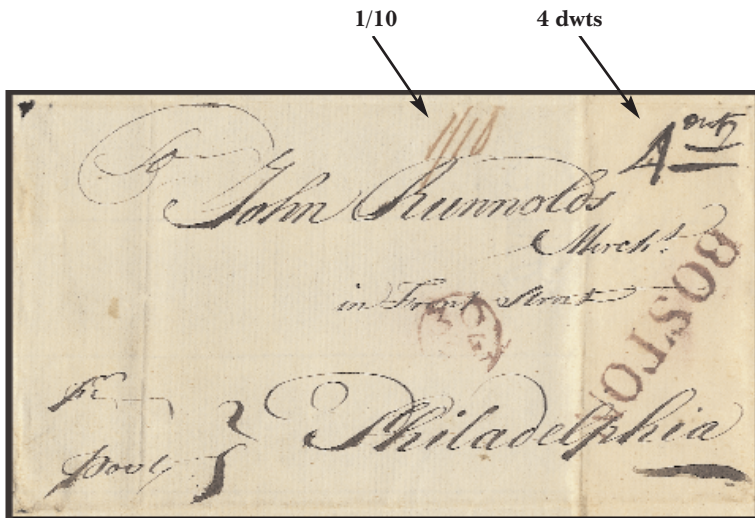
The following chronology traces the evolution of the postal system in North America, ending in 1792 when Congress established the U.S. Post Office (most of the information is quoted from *The Colonial Posts in The United States of America 1606-1783* and *Boston Postal Markings to 1890*).

Pre-1692	Parliamentary Post	Transitional Period	Congressional Post	Confederation Post	U.S. Post Office
1639	The first notice of a post office in North America appears in the records of the general court of Massachusetts Bay for the year 1639, identifying Richard Fairbanks of Boston as the person responsible for mail sent to and received from overseas.				
1672-73	King Charles II authorizes Governor Lovelace of New York to establish regular postal communication between the colonies. The post operates for a few months before the Dutch recapture New York City				
1674	24 post routes in operation in Connecticut, New Hampshire and Virginia.				
1683	William Penn authorizes Henry Waldy to establish a post in the newly-founded colony of Pennsylvania (www.ushistory.org).				
1684	King Charles II instructs Governor Dongan of New York to establish a permanent post service, and Dongan suggests a route from Nova Scotia to the Carolinas, but the ambitious plan is dropped in favor of a post within the colony of New York.				
1685	Edward Randolph is appointed Postmaster for the Colonies.				
1692	The Parliamentary Post is established. King William III grants a patent to Thomas Neale, Master of the Mint, to establish post offices in the ports of several islands and the American Colonies. Neale appoints Andrew Hamilton, Governor of New Jersey, to be his Deputy Postmaster, and the General Post Office is established in Philadelphia.				
1698	Neale passes the patent to Hamilton and R. West.				
1702	First post office packet service between England and Jamaica.				
1707	The Crown repurchases the Neale patent.				
1710-11	The Act of Queen Anne 1710, effective June 1, 1711, establishes General Post Offices in the American Colonies, under the management of John Hamilton (son of Andrew).				
1753	Benjamin Franklin and William Hunter (of Williamsburg) are appointed Joint Postmasters General for the North American Colonies (they issue a detailed set of instructions to postmasters in 1754)				
1755	The Falmouth-New York Packet is established. First sailing leaves Falmouth on November 15.				
1762-63	Packet service expanded to include Pensacola (Florida) and Charleston S.C. A monthly service between New York, Quebec and Montreal is established (1763).				
1765	The King George III Act establishes new rates. Northern and Southern Districts are established.				
1774-75	As the conflict between the Colonies and Great Britain intensifies, post offices begin to break away from the Parliamentary Post. William Goddard establishes an independent American post office. Benjamin Franklin is dismissed from office (January 31, 1774).				
1775-82	The Continental Congress establishes a General Post Office (July 26, 1775) and appoints Benjamin Franklin the first Postmaster General of the United Colonies. The Congressional Post operates until 1782, when the Articles of Confederation are passed.			1775-83 Parliamentary Post operates in areas occupied by the British during the war.	
1782-92	The Confederation Post is established (effective October 18). The Constitution is passed in 1789, but the first U.S. post office is not established until 1792.			1783 End of Parliamentary Post.	
1792	United States Post Office is established (June 1)				

PENNYWEIGHT/STERLING CONVERSION TABLE

The table below provides an easy reference to pennyweight (dwt/gr) rates and their equivalents in Sterling (shillings and pence), as often marked on covers prior to 1792 (when rates were first marked in U.S. dollars and cents). The three columns at right provide inflation conversions for Philadelphia, including a column for the additional 2p carrier fee.

Pennyweight (dwt)/Grains (gr) [1dwt=24gr]	Pennyweight equivalent in pence (p/d) [1dwt=3p]	Shillings/pence [1sh=12p]	INFLATION FACTOR IN PHILADELPHIA		
			Pence x 1.67 inflation factor	Shilling/pence	+2p Carrier Fee
0.8	1p	1p	N/A	N/A	N/A
0.16	2p	2p	N/A	N/A	N/A
1.0	3p	3p	5p	5p	7p
1.8	4p	4p	7p	7p	9p
1.16	5p	5p	8p	8p	10p
2.0	6p	6p	10p	10p	1/-
2.8	7p	7p	12p	1/-	1/2
2.16	8p	8p	14p	1/2	1/4
3.0	9p	9p	15p	1/3	1/5
3.8	10p	10p	17p	1/5	1/7
3.16	11p	11p	18p	1/6	1/8
4.0	12p	1/-	20p	1/8	1/10
4.8	13p	1/1	22p	1/10	2/-
4.16	14p	1/2	23p	1/11	2/1
5.0	15p	1/3	25p	2/1	2/3
5.8	16p	1/4	27p	2/3	2/5
5.16	17p	1/5	28p	2/4	2/6
6.0	18p	1/6	30p	2/6	2/8
6.8	19p	1/7	32p	2/8	2/10
6.16	20p	1/8	34p	2/10	3/-
7.0	21p	1/9	35p	2/11	3/1
7.8	22p	1/10	37p	3/1	3/3
7.16	23p	1/11	39p	3/3	3/5
8.0	24p	2/-	40p	3/4	3/6
8.8	25p	2/1	42p	3/6	3/8
8.16	26p	2/2	44p	3/8	3/10



The cover shown here is a good example of Colonial-period markings and rates. The "4dwts" at upper right was applied at origin (Boston 1773). 4dwt is the equivalent of 12p, or one shilling (1/-), the 300-400 mile rate from Boston to Philadelphia. The "1/10" was applied by the Philadelphia post office to indicate a total of 1sh10p was due from the addressee. To arrive at this amount, the 4dwt postage was converted to local currency at the rate of 1.67; therefore, 12p x 1.67=20p (1/8). The 2p carrier fee was added to the converted postage, for a total of 22p (1/10).

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