

Synopsis “Postal Conventions used in the Thirteen Original Colonies and Florida 1639-1782”.

British North America, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, was a land rich in resources. Multiple attempts to settle and colonize the territory were ongoing. Where successful, there was desire to communicate with home. Boston, in 1639, passed the first Postal Act in North America which created a “Posthouse”. The exhibit begins there. We chose the area under study to be the precursor to the United States of America. They are the 13 original colonies, and Florida, added in 1763 with the end of the Seven Years War. The exhibit ends when, politically and postally, the separate Colonies unite to form a Confederation, late in 1782. The exhibit reviews the postal efforts in those 143 years. All letters to, arising from, transiting through the 13 Original Colonies are candidates for this study. They are New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

TREATMENT: The exhibit follows the sequence of Postal Laws which gave rules to the Posts. The major rate provisions are the backbone of a chronological presentation. The Laws are the Sections, and rates are the thread, “privately carried”, then shortest distance and lightest to longer and heavier. All discrete services, usages, routes and markings will be shown.

IMPORTANCE: The exhibit chronicles nothing less than the birth of postal activities in North America, first Crown, then Patriot, leading to the creation of fully functional National Post, coinciding with the reduction of the original British system. In this era, Posts were the only regular system for communication, hence their importance for civilization’s success.

RARITY: As of 2025, the earliest letter shown is 374 years old. There are many unique items. All of the “first style” Crown markings are shown, as are most of the “second style”. Special letters include:

1. Earliest letter from America, 1651.
2. Earliest domestic letter, 1655.
3. First mention of Boston’s (Fayrebanke’s) Posthouse on a letter, 1687
4. Earliest proof of a viable Post 1707, a Postmaster Free Frank.
5. Earliest manuscript town marking, 1708.
6. Earliest handstamped city postmark on America mail, 1711.
7. Mail carried by a Wampanoag Indian, 1711, Pilgrim letter carrier.
8. Earliest Rhode Island, also a Way letter, so marked, 1714.
9. Earliest New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York and Maryland markings.
10. Earliest Neale Patent letter.
11. Earliest NEW YORK handstamp on a Falmouth Packet letter, 1756
12. Unique SAVANNA 1765
13. Unique NEW BERN oval, earliest known domestically made marking

14. One of 2 known PENSACOLA
15. Two BFreeFranklin franks, one as PMG of the Constitutional Post
16. Unique Occupied SAVANNAH marking 1781
17. Yorktown "flag of truce" letter

DIFFICULTY OF ACQUISITION: Elements in this exhibit were first acquired 40 years ago. Finding examples of many markings was challenging until an Historical Society sale in 2007 released abundant colonial address panels, some with docketing to allow proper dating. This collection is the most complete assemblage of colonial material. All 13 Colonies (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia) are represented. Missing are any Governor Lovelace Post letters, 1672-1673, as all are in archives. Also missing are a possible Waldy Quaker Post letter from 1783, and the one letter to the Congressional Post Office in Montreal, 1776.

RESEARCH: We have been writing about colonial mail since 1985. The research, over the past 40 years, leading to these articles was mostly conducted at various archives in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, California and London. I have viewed more than 8000 letters and the conclusions reflect that depth and breadth of investigation. As evidenced by a new citation for November 2024, active research is still happening.

Bibliography: The underlined articles are the most pertinent to this exhibit

Timothy O'Connor, *Rate Markings in Colonial Boston*, Postal History Journal (US), No. 81, February 1989, pp15-20.

Timothy O'Connor, *Colonial Postal Laws and Ben Franklin*, Postal History Journal (US), No. 88, June 1991, pp. 30-32.

Timothy O'Connor, *Report of a New Boston Handstamp*, The Chronicle of the U.S. Classics Postal Issues, Vol. 44, No. 3, August 1992, pp 164-165.

Timothy O'Connor and Mark Schwartz, *Use of the Franking Privilege in New England in 1699-1707*, The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues, Volume 63, No. 4, November 2011, pp. 305-311.

Timothy O'Connor, *Neale Patent Mail 1693-1707*, The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Issues, Vol. 65, No. 1, February 2013, pp 10-24.

Timothy O'Connor, *The Congressional Post Office at Montreal 1775-1776*, Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues, Vol. 70, No. 1, Feb. 2018, pp. 11-24. **Susan McDonald Award 2018**

Timothy O'Connor, *The Free Franks of Dr. Benjamin Franklin*, The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues, Vol. 72, No.1 2020, pp.13-28. **Susan McDonald Award 2020**

Timothy O'Connor, *Newfoundland to Boston 1703*, BNAPS Topics, Vol. 77, No. 3, Whole Number 564, 2020, pp. 45

Timothy O'Connor, *Postal Rate Broadside of 1763 created by Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft*, Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues, Vol. 76, No.4, November 2024, pp. 325-331.