

Postal Conventions used in the Thirteen Original Colonies and Florida 1639 -1782

The purpose of this chronological exhibit is to illustrate the birth and growth of Crown and Constitutional systems in the 13 original colonies and Florida over a 143 year period of time. The exhibit ends in late October 1782 when the Colonies become a Confederation in the postal sense. The scope includes any letter arising in, sent to or transiting through the Colonies and Florida.

This presentation identifies the extant Postal Conventions which delineate the rules of each Post. The Conventions are the exhibit **Sections**. Central to these laws are the rates determined by distance travelled and weight. Rates are **Subsections**. Both are found at the top left of each page. Postal services and special colonial issues (i.e. Packet, ship, way letters, currencies) may be noted top right. Since a vast majority of letters were sent outside any Post, a Section may begin with “privately carried” mail. Rated letters follow according to distance and weight, shortest and lightest to longer and heavier. Letters without inland rates are placed according to secondary factors (i.e. Ship/Packet). Rate analysis, notes about markings and routes may be found near the letters. This exhibit is complete with all Acts, Laws and Resolutions in these thirteen colonies presented. All known “first period” handstamps are shown. Unique and special letters warrant a **red** matte. Research, repairs and certificates are noted. Scans (noted) are used to reorient postal notations and display verso markings. All thirteen colonies are represented.

1. **Forerunners:** 1739-1693, Various Colonies initiated efforts to begin the reliable transmission of letters. Copying the Coffee house model, the Massachusetts General Court, in 1639, established North America’s first Posthouse at Richard Fayrebankes tavern. Example of Official, domestic, ship mail and privately carried letters. No American rates, but some postal notations, some letters enter foreign Posts. All Lovelace Post 1672-1673 letters are archived, but the Post’s consequence, the Boston Post Road, is mentioned. Putative Waddy Post letters are missing.
2. **Neale Patent Period** 1693-1711: The first enduring multi-Colony Post was a northeast endeavor. The first postal markings appear. Free and ship letters codified. Rates, in “local Mony”, are stipulated between towns with Post Offices. No mileages mentioned. The first handstamp on a letter from the Colonies in early 1711.
3. **Act of Queen Anne** 1711-1765: Designed to raise revenue for war costs, this comprehensive Act set rules for postal services in all Her Majesties Dominions. Monopoly, rates in Sterling, stipulated rates between named cities, otherwise by mileages and weights (sheets). Some ratemarks in local currencies until Franklin-Hunter Instructions of 1753 mandate specie in America. Inland letters usually paid by recipient. New handstamps. Free mail tradition continued. Rate and route modifications of 1754, 1763. Falmouth Packet service.
4. **Act of King George III** October 1765-1775. Rates corrected and reduced, acknowledging the longer North American distances. Rates in Sterling, expressed in specie, until rebellion in 1775. More marking devices. Pinnacle of Crown Post in the Colonies. This Act reappears in some cities occupied by the British during the War for Independence.
5. **Transitional Period:** 1774-1775: Liberally defined, as various private and Colony Provisional Posts arise. Some cooperation between Posts, and letters with features of both. Rates in Colony currencies, specie and Sterling. Nonuniform starting and ending dates in separate Colonies.
6. **Constitutional Post:** 1775-1782. Created July 26, 1775 but Post Offices not “settled” until late 1775, November 1 in New England. Rates in specie, by distance and weight. Many rate Resolutions due to fiscal instability. Route modifications due to war.
7. **Act of King George III, late:** 1775-1782. Crown Post offices reappear in occupied cities. Earlier marking devices return. Mail during campaigns. Exhibit ends with a unique, purely American, Crown handstamp.

