

Judge's Synopsis

The Postal Markings of Newbury and Newburyport, Mass. During the Stampless Period – 1755-1855

Treatment

This single frame postal history (marcophily) exhibit traces the postal history of Newbury and Newburyport on stampless covers from the earliest known letter marked at the colonial Newbury post office (1755) until stamps became required on letters in January 1856. This exhibit includes all known markings of the office that began as Newbury, and remained officially the Newbury PO until the rebels took it over as the Newburyport PO in 1775. However, between 1764 and 1775, note that manuscript town marks applied at the Newbury post office between 1764 and mid-1775 were variations on “Newburyport”, not Newbury. The exception was the official Newbury hand stamp used in Feb.- March 1775.

The organization is essentially chronological. Markings used at the Newbury colonial post office are shown first, with manuscript markings preceding the only hand stamp. Those of the Newburyport Congressional and U. S. Post Office follow, again with manuscript markings preceding hand stamps. At the upper right of each page is the type of postmark (manuscript, CDS, etc.), and if a hand stamp, its dimensions and color (if not black). Below that is noted any hand stamped auxiliary markings on the page, e.g., rate, “PAID”, “FREE”, etc. Manuscript town marks from the 18th century are duplicated for clarity. For all covers, the date range in which each marking was used is contained in a gray box to the side of the appropriate covers. Also included are the rate and rate period, the date the cover was postmarked in Essex County, and for ship covers, when known, the ship and ship's captain.

Important covers are framed in red.

Importance

The towns of Newbury and Newburyport have a history that spans the history of this country. Newbury is one of the country's earliest post offices, and is noted on the famous Herman Moll map of the first decade of the 1700s. Newbury was one of five colonial post offices in Massachusetts (along with Boston, Salem, Marblehead and Holmes Hole) for which postal markings are recorded, and was a major Massachusetts port. As such, this town is representative of most small northeastern towns established during the Colonial period.

Among the important covers are:

- The only colonial Newbury (“Newby”) manuscript mark and one of 4 known colonial NEWBURY hand stamps.
- The only reported colonial Newburyport ship letter (while the post office was still officially Newbury; 1768)
- An October 1775 letter initially rated at Newburyport as per the Act of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress of May 13, 1775, later rated at the destination as per the Resolution of Congress of Sept. 30, 1775.
- One of four known letters (of any origin) rated per the Resolution of Congress, Dec. 12, 1780. This rate period lasted only 6 weeks.
- The earliest known example of any of the first standardized town circles provided by the PMG in 1799 (Newburyport, May 6).
- A cover sent from Newburyport to Valparaiso, Chile in 1855. With the 48c rate split evenly between U.S. and British packets.

Personal Study and Research

The length of time that I have collected this material (over 20 years), and have kept records of both the material in his collection and the material seen in other collections, exhibits and auction catalogs, has allowed me to more precisely determine the time periods in which the markings were used, and the transition from the use of one marking to another.

Condition and Rarity

The covers in this exhibit are generally in excellent condition with very fine examples of the marking. Those that are not are either the earliest known post mark of a particular post office, or they contain a unique or seldom seen marking.

Please note that scanning makes wrinkles and creases look much worse than they are.

This exhibit contains all of the unique or rare Newbury / Newburyport items of which this exhibitor is aware.

History of the Exhibit

This exhibit has won the single frame grand the last five times it was shown.

Key Reference: American Stampless Cover Catalog, Vols. 1-3, D. G. Phillips, ed., 1987-1997