

Synopsis – Carrier Use in Boston.

The earliest indication of carrier service in Boston was in 1693. In the early 1800s, that service was hit and miss and appears to have had a semi official status. The earliest cover of which the exhibitor knows bearing a rate that includes a 2c delivery fee is from 1836. In 1849 a separate division of the post office was established to handle city delivery.

Treatment

This exhibit begins with a focus on the two carrier stamps, bearing “Penny Post” (1849-50) and “Penny Post Paid” (1850-1855). It illustrates their concomitant use with U.S. postage stamps, and the use of all known red and black cancels, both crayon, and handstamp. The exhibit also shows the various receiving handstamps struck on the reverse; and the circular “Penny Post Paid” grid used as both separate marking and a cancel in black, red and blue.

In 1859, the one cent collection fee for letters taken by the carrier to the post office was discontinued. The exhibit ends in 1860 with the required use of a U.S. adhesive to pay the carrier fee; and with a “Due 1c” marking used that same year to reflect non-payment of the 1c fee.

Importance

This exhibit demonstrates that even in a major city, a well run and effective carrier service can be successful enough to meet the needs of its populace and not require independent local posts. Most local Boston posts were small and did not amount to much. This contrasts with New York, which had multiple large and successful local posts.

Knowledge and Research

I have been collecting this material for at least a dozen years. Based on the knowledge I have gained over this time as well as I talking with other expert collectors, I believe the exhibit is essentially complete. That knowledge is conveyed to the reader in this exhibit.

Condition

The condition of the material in this exhibit is generally excellent and is the best I have come across.

Difficulty of Acquisition

This exhibit includes several unique or very rare items:

- A cover bearing the earliest known (5/2/49) example of the first carrier adhesive used in combination with two 5c 1847s

- The only known combination of the first carrier adhesive used in combination with a single 5c 1847 and sent overseas.
- The first carrier adhesive in a local cover
- The only known cover with a “7 O’Clock” receiving marking
- The second carrier adhesive canceled by the hollow black star
- Covers bearing the black and blue “Penny Post Paid” (2) circular grids.
- The “Due 1c” marking in red.

Reference

Schwartz, Mark S., *Carrier Service in Boston*, the Penny Post, July 1, 2024, pp. 22-47.

Carrier Service at Boston: 1821-1863

Purpose and Scope

To illustrate the scope and scale of **carrier service** at Boston from the earliest evidence of a desire for such service in the early 1820s until free mail delivery was authorized on July 1, 1863. Independent local companies are not included. **Important or unusual items framed in red.** **e = certificate.**

Organization

- Prolog
- The “Semi-Official” Boston Penny Post
- The First Adhesive “Penny Post”
- The Second Adhesive “Penny Post Paid”
- The Circular Grid Handstamp
- Receiving Handstamps
- Use of 1c Government Adhesive
- Non-Payment of Carrier Fee

Background

On November 6, 1639, the Massachusetts General Court named John Fairbanks’ tavern in Boston as the first post office in the American Colonies, but delivery to the addressee was not yet an option. The earliest recorded indication of carrier services was in 1693, when Sec. 2 of the Massachusetts Post Office Act stated: “And if any letters or packets shall lie and remain at the post office uncalled for, for the space of forty-eight hours, the Post Master then sending them forth to the respective houses of the persons to whom they are directed, shall have and receive one penny for each letter and packet.”

Prologue

Carrier Service in Philadelphia

Before Boston had any real organized and extensive carrier service, some other major American cities did. Philadelphia was one of the earliest, with carrier service provided even before the Declaration of Independence. The letter below shows two different ratings, the first applied at Newburyport in coined silver (required by the Post Office); the second applied in Philadelphia in local shillings and pence; the latter included a carrier fee.

~2d Carrier Fee in Philadelphia

Rated at 4shillings,
16gr at Newburyport,
Mass. as a single letter
sent 400-500 miles to
Philadelphia, Pa., per the
Act of King George of
1765. There re-rated at 2
shillings, 2d local
currency, including a ~2d
fee in Philadelphia for
local delivery.



Newburyport, Mass. to Philadelphia, Pa.

datelined April 2, 1776