

1782 - United States Domestic Postal Rates

On October 18, 1782, The United States Congress established a unified “Confederation Post” and established domestic postal rates. Until 1792, domestic postage was expressed in silver pennyweights (dwts) and grains (one dwt is equal to 24 grains). The October 18, 1782 single-sheet folded letter rates are denoted in the table below, along with the slightly reduced rates of April 5, 1788. Double sheet letters cost double postage, triple sheets cost triple, and so on.

The value of a pennyweight (dwt.) was set at 5/90ths of a dollar by this ordinance.

U.S. Domestic Rates from October 18, 1782 to May 31, 1792

| <u>Distance in Miles</u> | <u>Rates of October 18, 1782</u> | <u>Reduced Rates of April 5, 1788</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | <u>Pennyweights</u> | <u>Pennyweights</u> |
| Up to 60 | 1 dwt 8 grains | 1 dwt |
| 61 to 100 | 2 dwt | 1 dwt 8 grains |
| 101 to 200 | 2 dwt 16 grains | 2 dwt |
| 201 to 300 | 3 dwt 8 grains | 2 dwt 16 grains |
| 301 to 400 | 4 dwt | 3 dwt |
| Each additional 100 | 16 grains | 8 grains |

Pennyweights and grains were a “currency of account” only, so the amounts to be paid were converted into local currencies of shillings and pence. The local currency rate was arrived at by applying a statutory rate of three pence sterling (British) per silver pennyweight. A factor based on the difference in value between the British pence and the local currency was then applied to account for the lower value of the currency in circulation. The conversion factor used for converting British pence into local currency was 1.667 in the mid-Atlantic states of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. A factor of 1.333 was used in the New England states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. The same 1.333 factor was apparently used in the southern states of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. New York used a 2.0 factor.

Ship and Packet Rates

The ordinance mentions postage due, equivalent to one shilling, on packet letters. However, the British and French packet services required prepayment of packet postage during this era so rate was not used. The rate for inbound ship letters was equivalent to 16 grains per letter in addition to the postage.

As stated in the Ordinance: *and to the foregoing rates shall be added a sum not exceeding 4-90ths of a dollar upon every letter, packet or despatch which shall come into the Post Office from beyond sea, by any other conveyance than packets or despatch vessels.*

Conversion of Pennyweight Rates into Local Currencies

| <u>Pennyweight</u> | <u>Pence Sterling</u> <u>(Great Britain)</u> | <u>Local United States Currencies (Pence and Shillings)</u> | | |
|--------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | <u>Mid-Atlantic</u> | <u>New England & South</u> | <u>New York</u> |
| Factor | 3X | 1.667 | 1.333 | 2.0 |
| 8 grains | 1d | 2d | 2d | 2d |
| 16 grains | 2d | 3d | 3d | 4d |
| 1 dwt | 3d | 5d | 4d | 6d |
| 1 dwt 8 grains | 4d | 7d | 6d | 8d |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 dwt 16 grains | 5d | 8d | 7d | 10d |
| 2 dwt | 6d | 10d | 8d | 1 shilling |
| 2 dwt 8 grains | 7d | 1 shilling | 10d | 1 shilling 2d |
| 2 dwt 16 grains | 8d | 1 shilling 2d | 1 shilling | 1 shilling 4d |
| 3 dwt | 9d | 1 shilling 3d | 1 shilling 1d | 1 shilling 6d |
| 3 dwt 8 grains | 10d | 1 shilling 5d | 1 shilling 2d | 1 shilling 8d |
| 3 dwt 16 grains | 11d | 1 shilling 6d | 1 shilling 3d | 1 shilling 10d |
| 4 dwt | 12d | 1 shilling 8d | 1 shilling 4d | 2 shillings |
| 4 dwt 8 grains | 13d | 1 shilling 10d | 1 shilling 6d | 2 shillings 2d |
| 4 dwt 16 grains | 14d | 2 shillings | 1 shilling 7d | 2 shillings 4d |
| 5 dwt | 15d | 2 shillings 1d | 1 shilling 8d | 2 shillings 6d |
| 5 dwt 8 grains | 16d | 2 shillings 3d | 1 shilling 10d | 2 shillings 8d |
| 5 dwt 16 grains | 17d | 2 shillings 4d | 1 shilling 11d | 2 shillings 10d |
| 6 dwt | 18d | 2 shillings 6d | 2 shillings | 3 shillings |
| 6 dwt 8 grains | 19d | 2 shillings 8d | 2 shillings 2d | 3 shillings 2d |
| 6 dwt 16 grains | 20d | 2 shillings 10d | 1 shillings 3d | 3 shillings 4d |
| 7 dwt | 21d | 2 shillings 11d | 2 shillings 4d | 3 shillings 6d |

The pennyweight rate was always marked on letters at the office of origin, and occasionally the local rate was marked at the office of receipt. With respect to Philadelphia (in the mid-Atlantic state of Pennsylvania), 2d was often added to the local rate to account for local carrier service.

This rate structure was superseded on June 1, 1792 when U.S. Congress created the General Post Office and changed the currency to dollars and cents.