

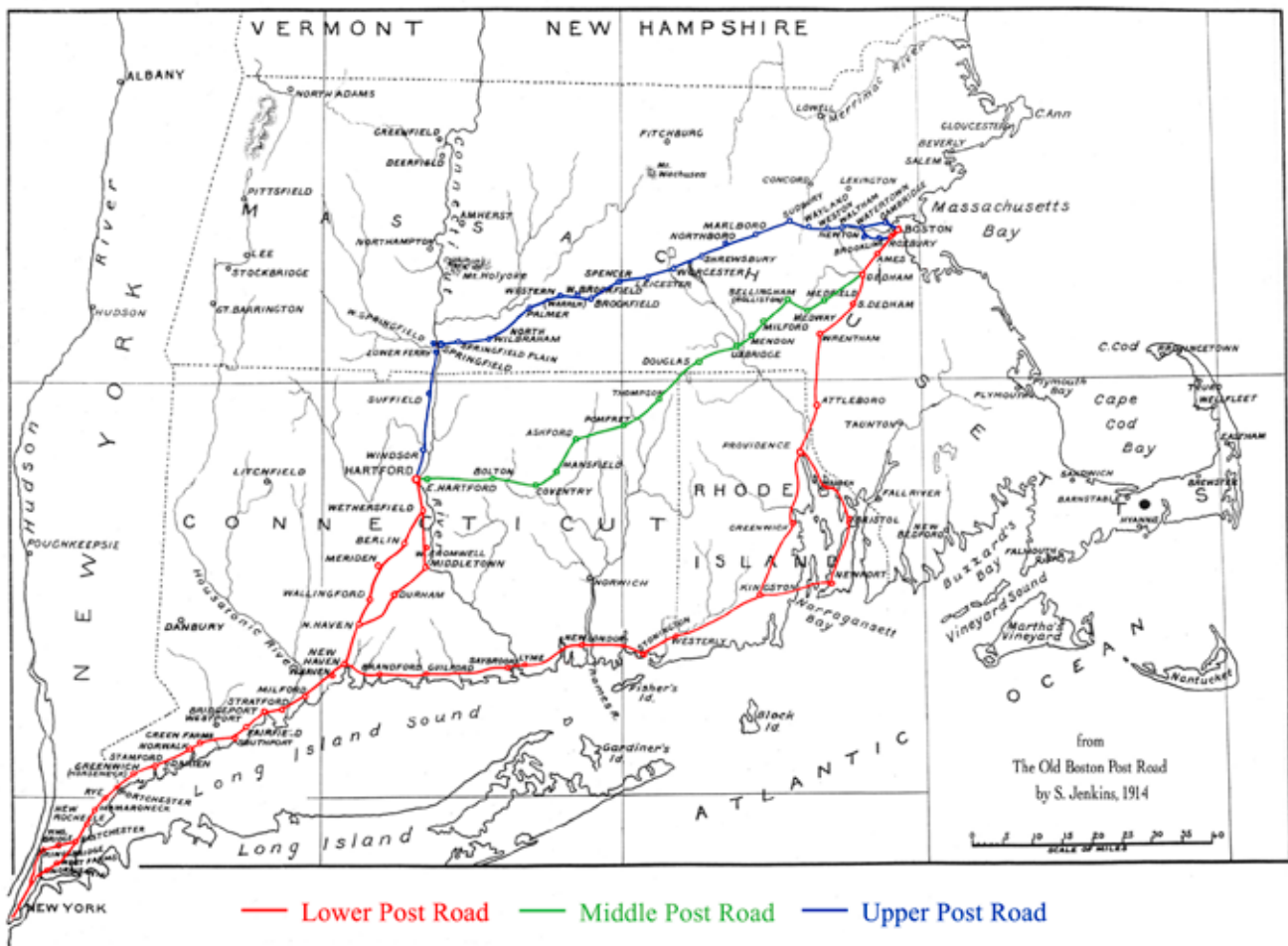
18th Century Connecticut Postal History



The first New England Post Road Map published by Herman Moll, 1708, 1729.

Select Examples
from
The King's Highway Collection

The first mention of an official mail here is in a communication between Governors Lovelace of New York and Winthrop of Massachusetts in 1673. Charles II of England intended that the Colonies be “in close correspondency,” and Lovelace asked Winthrop to locate “the most able woodmen, to make the most faicle way for a post, which in the process of tyme would be the King’s best highway.” Thus began the Post Road in New England.



New London ~ Piscataqua (Portsmouth)

August 2, 1750



N Ln 8/ paid the Tenor rate along the “lower” Post Road to Boston and then Portsmouth.

From New Haven, the Lower Post Road held to the coast passing Old Lyme, Groton, Westerly, various Rhode Island towns and Attleboro. It joined the “middle route” in Dedham and then on to Boston.

New Haven ~ New York

May 16, 1765



NH 2 paid the single weight rate to New York. (reduced image)

New Haven ~ New York

November 28, 1766



NH 4 paid the double weight rate to New York. (reduced image)

New Haven, on the Quinnipiac River, was always an important Post Road city. It was a place where the rider “should have a fresh horse constantly by,” and was the home of Yale College and maritime enterprises.

Hartford ~ New York

August 10, 1766



*Hartford to New York 2.16 dwt rate with **HART/FORD** two-line straightline struck over a Franklin mark on the reverse, an example of the first handstamp used in Hartford. (full strike reconstruction inset)*

This letter is addressed to William Bayard in New York. He started the Revolutionary War as a Sons of Liberty member, but eventually changed sides becoming a Loyalist. He would not fight for independence and moved to England. Bayard's home was burned and his large holding of land in Hoboken, New Jersey was confiscated.

Hartford ~ Boston

June 1, 1767



Hartford 2:16 paid the single internal rate for 101-200 miles.

Hartford ~ New York

May 18, 1772

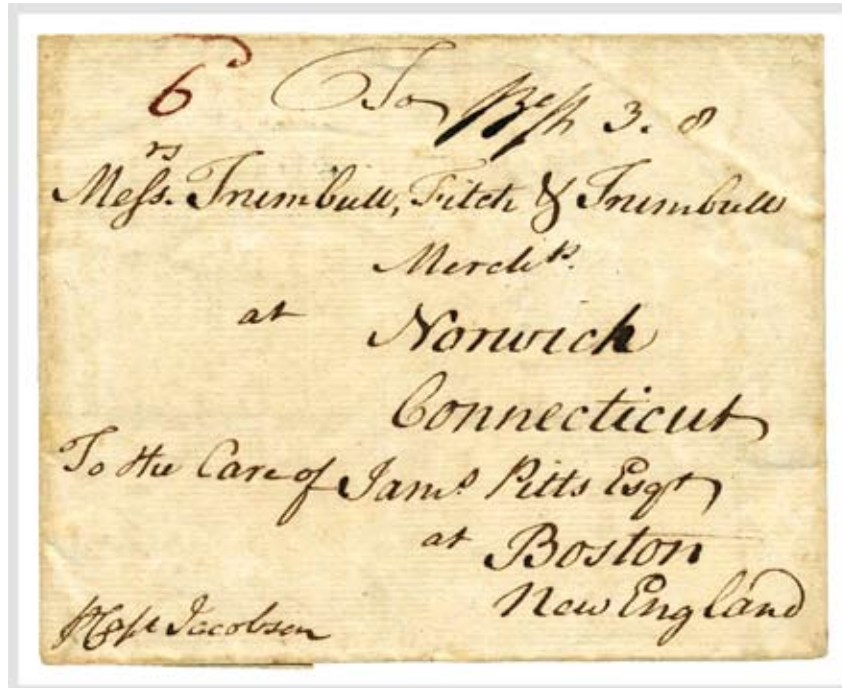


*Hartford 2:16 paid the single internal rate for 101-200 miles.
1/4 is a New York local currency. (reduced image)*

Hartford was a hub for the Post Road which could reach Boston on the 'middle route' via Manchester, Coventry, Putnam, Uxbridge, Medfield and Dedham, or the 'upper route' via Springfield, the Brookfields, Worcester and Sudbury. Like New Haven, Hartford was an important commercial city, linking the seacoast to the interior.

London ~ Boston ~ New London ~ Norwich

1767



Carried privately by **Capt. Jacobson** from London to Boston, where it entered the Royal Post. **BoSh 3.8** in specie paid the internal rate to New London and the 16 grs ship fee. The red 6^d is a local Norwich fee for the conveyance up the Thames River to the Norwich Post Office.

Some population centers were without formal connection to the Royal Post. Norwich and surrounding towns were 17 miles distant from the closest official office. As John Olenkiewicz points out in his article regarding this matter in *The Connecticut Postal History Society Journal*, August 1994, Norwich was the second largest town in the state and an economic power as an inland port on the navigable Thames. It is reasonable to believe that enterprising businessmen would create a private delivery service to transport their letters.

Turks Island ~ Providence ~ New London ~ Norwich ~ Lebanon

December 17, 1767



The above folded letter was privately carried to Providence, hence there is no ship fee. The script **Pro:2** indicates the inland rate from Providence to New London; **8^d** is the local current equivalent. The Norwich local fee to carry the letter up the Thames river was 6d, and **1/2** is the local Connecticut result ($6 + 8 = 14 = 1/2$).

New London had a British Parliamentary Post Office that was the distribution point for mail directed to eastern Connecticut. The standard practice at the time was that the New London Postmaster would advertise in a local paper that a certain individual had mail to be collected. Since Norwich was without a formal mail system before the Revolutionary War, some mail to that area, including Lebanon, was alternatively carried outside the British Post. Clearly, a private delivery service was more expeditious.

New York ~ Stamford

April 9, 1768



Inns and Taverns were convenient way stations where letters were often deposited. The sender suggested that this letter “be left at the Tavern” in Stamford. Between Kingsbridge in New York and Norwalk, Stamford was on the direct line to New Haven. The rating 7^d ym is most curious, and no other examples seem to exist, based on a thorough search of CT archives by noted postal historian John Olenkiewicz. With imagination ym could be construed as Em for Eastern Mail. The official rate for this distance was 4 p Sterling, so perhaps there were local fees or even a private post operating on the ‘King’s Highway’.

New York ~ New London ~ Norwich ~ Lebanon

November 24, 1768

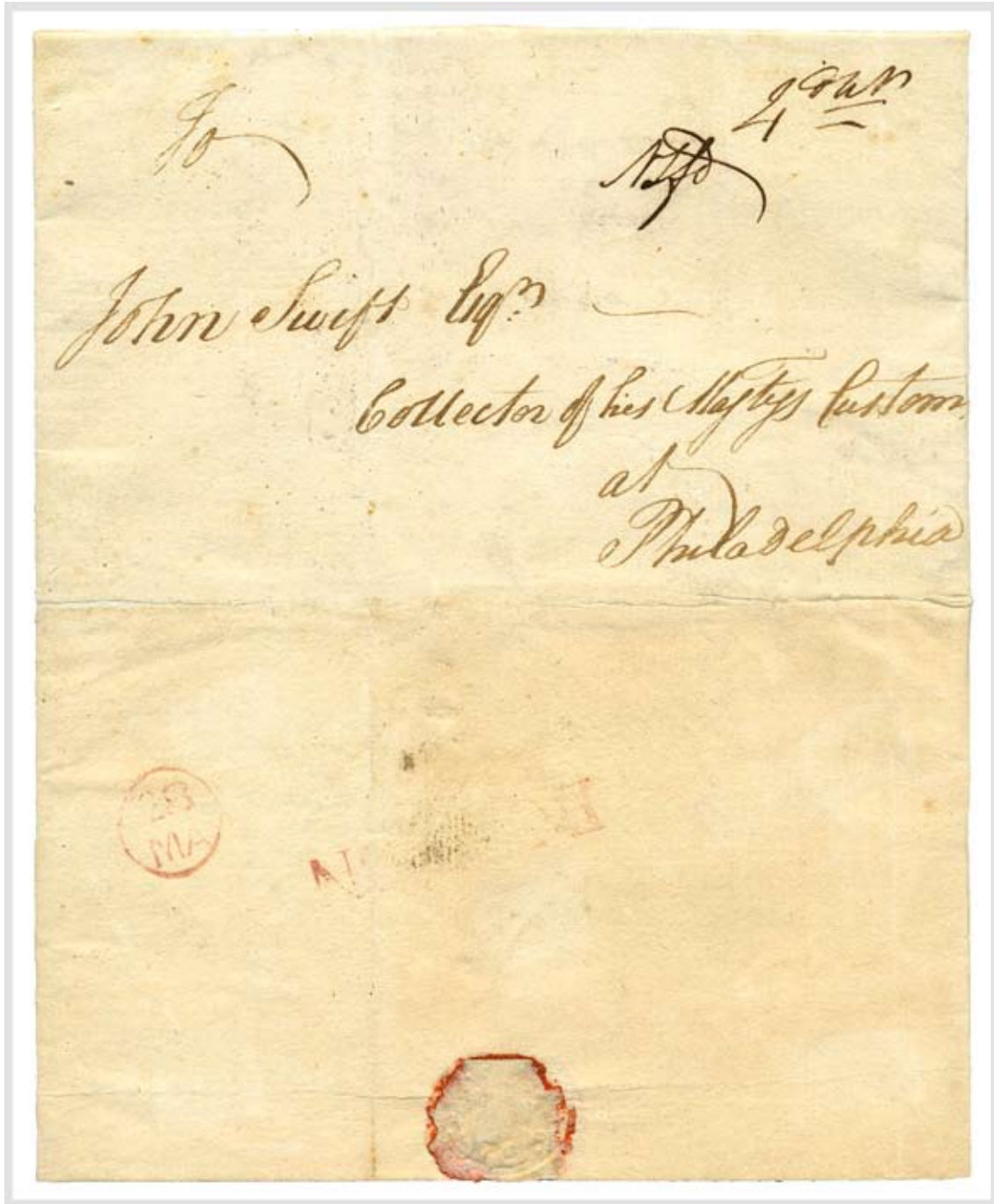


The route from New York to New London accounts for the 2:16 rating (8p), the 11^d being the local Connecticut equivalent. An additional 6d was charged for the trip up the river to Norwich. 11d + 6d = 17d, therefore the 1/5 indicating the conversion to Connecticut currency.

By the early 1770s advertisements in the Norwich Packet outline a schedule of private mail runs to Hartford as well as New London. The independent postal activity was well received and becoming quite organized.

Boston ~ New London ~ Philadelphia

May 28, 1770



4 dwl paid the inland rate from Boston to Philadelphia via New London — *NLfd*.
The letter is from Nathaniel Coffin, the King's Cashier at the Customs House and a noted Royalist.

Neither the Act of Anne nor the Act of George III make any mention of forwarding notations by the offices.

Fairfield ~ New York ~ London

September 5, 1774



The Fairfield *F.d 2* dwt silver equals 6^d sterling inland rate to New York City, where the **NEW-YORK** straightline was applied and the letter was marked *To pay 6^d*. It left by Packet Boat on September 20th (Franklin Mark), arriving in London 10 Nov (Bishop Mark) and charged the total of 1 sh 6 p sterling.

New Haven ~ Wethersfield

January 6, 1775



NEW*HAVEN SL (45 x 4.5 mm) - Only known example. (detail)



The **NEW*HAVEN** handstamp fits the description of others delivered to Royal Postmasters late in 1774, according to Kingsley, in *The Chronicle*, #123, 128. This mark is the only known example of this style straightline. It is also the earliest New Haven handstamp currently recorded. (*reduced image*)

New Haven ~ New York

November 11, 1775



*Many of the early Congressional letters are rated in specie and a local currency. The 2 dwt, or 1 shilling local New York script, paid for this 61-100 miles letter. The N*HAVEN NOVE:14 straightline handstamp measures 34 x 5 mm and was in use from 1775-1790.*



This letter was written by the noted rebel, Pierpont Edwards. After graduating from Princeton College, he entered private law practice in New Haven in 1771. Edwards served in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Politically very active, he later became a Delegate from Connecticut to the Continental Congress. In 1816, Edwards became a founder of the Connecticut Toleration Party.

Goshen ~ New York City ~ Durham

February 4, 1776



Dated Goshen (NY), entered the mail in New York City, N*YORK*MA:7 1776 straightline applied; the rate to New Haven was 2 dwt, or 11d New York local currency to Durham.

Newburyport ~ Hartford ~ Philadelphia

June 15, 1776



Rated to Philadelphia from Newburyport, even though it entered the post at Hartford. (reduced image)

Hartford ~ New York

August 18, 1776



Re-rated as a double in New York, 5 dwt 8 grs, and the 2.16 of Hartford was crossed out; 2/6 is a New York local currency. The British reoccupied New York on September 15th. (reduced image)

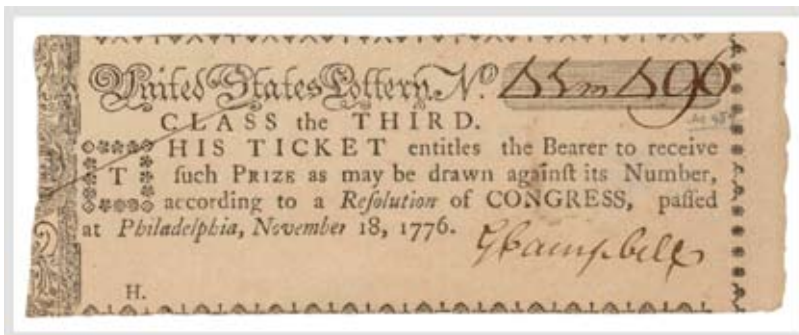
Middletown ~ Philadelphia

November 16, 1778



The Middletown 6 dwt was the cost for a 301-400 mile trip to Philadelphia and the Lottery.

Throughout the 18th Century lotteries were used to fund private and public projects, such as roads, libraries, colleges, canals, and bridges. On November 18, 1776, the Continental Congress enacted a national lottery to finance the Revolutionary War.



*A typical example of a Continental Congress National Lottery ticket to fund the Revolution.
(Not directly related to the above letter.)*

Military Express ~ Hartford

April 30, 1780



Military Express could speed the mails, or communications, without regard for established postal routes or the schedules of the riders. We suspect that there are many instances of local military delivery systems. In this example, Major General Robert Howe created such a Post between Connecticut and West Point, where he was headquartered in 1780.

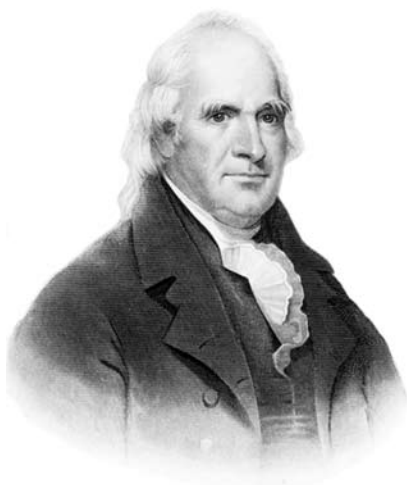
Unfortunately, this letter's docketing does not specify the locale of origin. Jonathan Trumbull was entitled to the franking privilege as Governor, but this letter to the Deputy Quartermaster of the Army probably dealt with the enormous issue of provisioning the troops, hence the *Public Service*. Connecticut played a major role in supplying the Army.

Fairfield ~ Poughkeepsie

July 22, 1780



Fairfield to Poughkeepsie; Way Mail 106 dwt 16 grs, or 40x the 2:16 rate for 101-200 miles, marked p Post.



This letter is addressed to George Clinton, a four term Governor of New York. On March 4, 1805, he became the fourth Vice President of the United States. He was the second man to serve in that office under Thomas Jefferson, replacing Aaron Burr.

Amsterdam ~ Boston ~ Glastenbury

December 26, 1782



BOSTON straightline 28 x 5 mm (detail)



Sent from Amsterdam December 26, 1782, entered the post 13 March;
Boston to Glastenbury rate 2 dwt 16 grn plus ship fee of 16 grn totals 3.8