

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

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this postal history exhibit is to illustrate the postal markings used by the colonial and U.S. Post Offices of Newbury and Newburyport, Mass. on stampless covers until stamps became required on letters in January, 1856. This includes town marks, auxiliary marks and rate marks, both manuscript and hand stamped.

Organization

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. All known markings are included as well as several not listed in the American Stampless Cover Catalog.

Page layout: At upper right is whether the town mark is a manuscript, or a hand stamp of specific size and color. Below are noted any hand stamped auxiliary markings on the page, e.g., rate. "PAID", "FREE", etc. The date range each marking was used is in a gray box to the side of the cover to which it refers. Also included for the reader's information 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. **Items outlined in red are either unique or one of 4 or fewer recorded.**

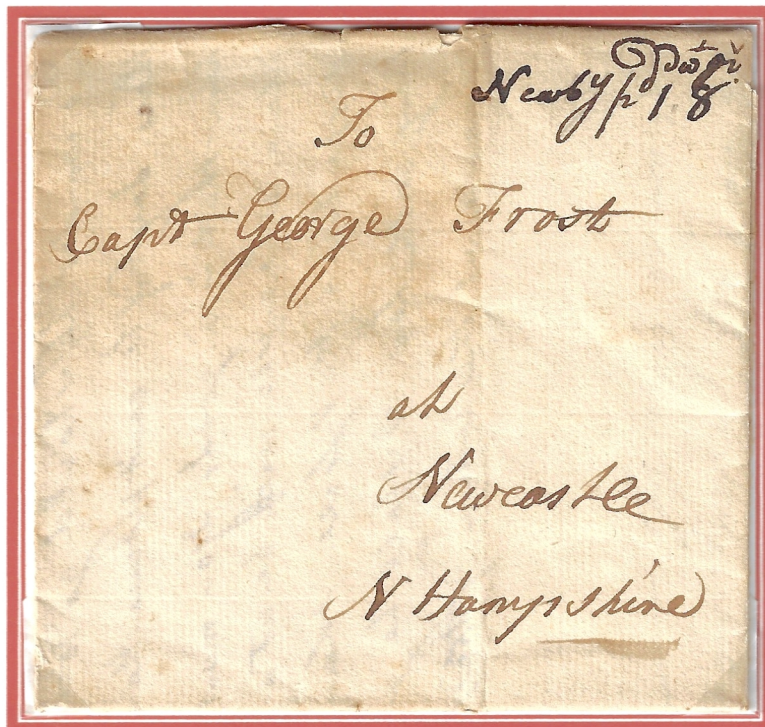
Background

Newbury, settled in 1635, had one of the earliest colonial post offices on the post road north of Boston, as shown in the Herman Moll "Post Map" of 1729. On January 28, 1764, the General Court of Massachusetts passed "An act for erecting part of the town of Newbury into a new town by the name of Newburyport." The new town was the smallest in the state, covering only 647 acres, but had a substantial population of 2,800 and with a large number of merchants and ship-owners, became very important to the maritime trade of Massachusetts and New England, and later to the whaling industry. Despite being situated within the new town, and even though Newburyport manuscript postmarks were used as early as 1768, it was still officially the Newbury post office until taken over by the rebels in 1775. Newburyport, along with Salem, Haverhill and Ipswich, was one of four Essex County Revolutionary Post offices established by the Massachusetts Provincial Congress in May 1775. Newburyport grew rapidly, and by 1790 was the 13th largest town in the United States with 4,837 people. By 1850, it had a population of 9,572 and had become a city.

Newbury

Colonial manuscript postmarks

The earliest reported Newbury postmark



Newbury to Newcastle, NH

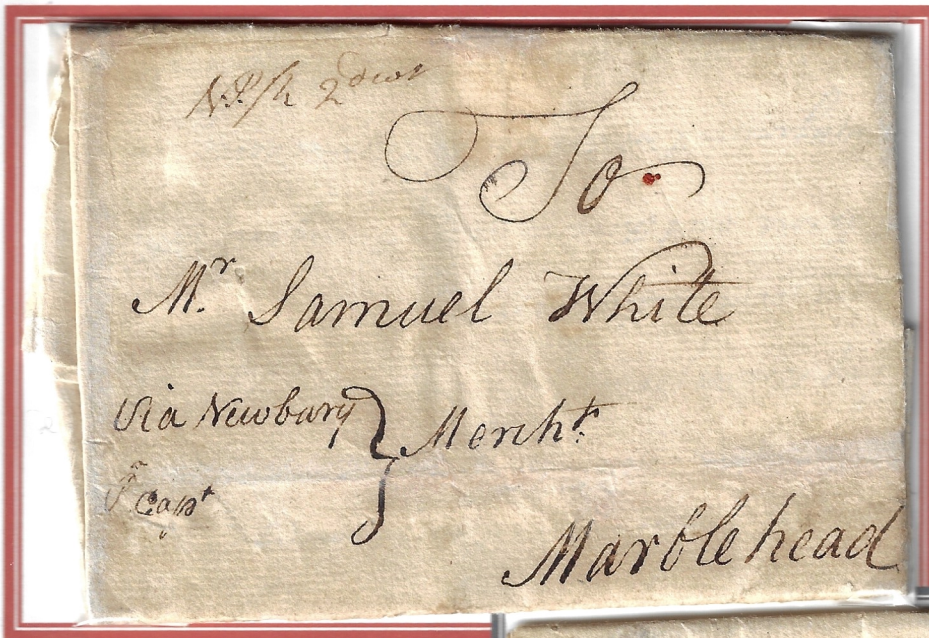
datelined Sept. 9, 1755

The Newbury "Newby p^d" manuscript town mark is believed to be **unique**.

The rate of 1dwt, 8gr* was for a single letter sent up to 60 miles, per the Act of Queen Anne, effective June 1, 1711.

* rates in pennyweights (dwt) and grains (gr) of coined silver

The Only Reported Colonial Newbury(port) Ship Letter



NP 2 dwt

The manuscript "NP" was used after 1764, when Newburyport was established and the post office was situated there. "NP" was used until at least 1789.

The rate of 2dwt was for a single ship letter sent up to 60 miles, and included a 16gr ship fee, per the Act of King George III, Oct. 10, 1765

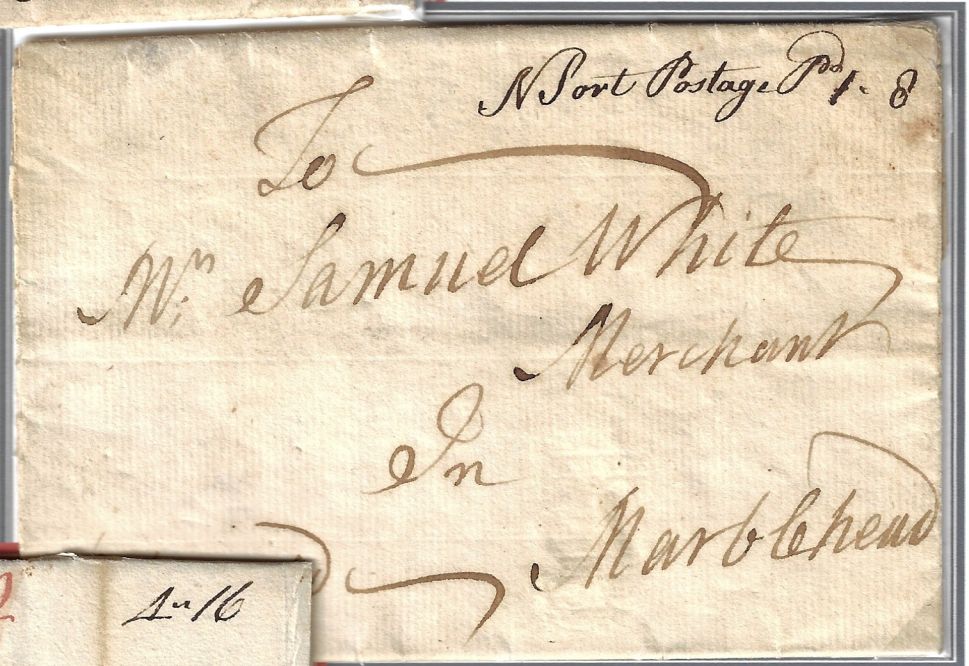
Point a Pitre, Guadeloupe via Newburyport to Marblehead, Mass. c. September, 1768

NPort Postage Pd 8

The "NPort Postage Pd" manuscript appears to be unique.

The rate of 1dwt, 8gr was for a single letter sent up to 60 miles, per the Act of King George III, Oct. 10, 1765.

Newburyport to Marblehead, Mass. datelined June 3, 1774



One of 4 Known Colonial Newbury Hand Stamps

**NEWBURY
FEB 13**

Three examples of this "NEWBURY" hand stamp are known used on Feb. 3 and one on Mar. 28 (in Newbury Archives).

The rate of 4dwt, was for a single letter sent 400-500 miles, per the Act of King George III, Oct. 10, 1765.

Also rated 2 shillings, 2p in Penna. currency.

Newburyport to Phila., Pa.

February 3, 1775



Newburyport

Congressional manuscript postmarks

NPost 1/6 1/2

Two letters are known rated in this manner, the other datelined Oct. 31, 1775 and rated in Philadelphia (but not Newburyport) as a double letter.

First rated at 1sh, 6½d in local currency, as a single letter sent 400-500 miles, per the Act of the Mass. Provincial Congress, May 13, 1775.

Rated in Phila. at 4dwt, 16gr, per the Resolution of Congress, September 30, 1775.

Also rated 2sh, 2d in local Penna. currency.

Newburyport to Philadelphia, Pa
datelined October 10, 1775

Rated per the Act of the Mass. Provincial Congress



N-4.16

The rate of 4dwt, 16gr was for a single letter sent 400-500 miles, per the Act of King George III, Oct. 10, 1765.

Also rated 2 shillings, 2p in local Pennsylvania currency.

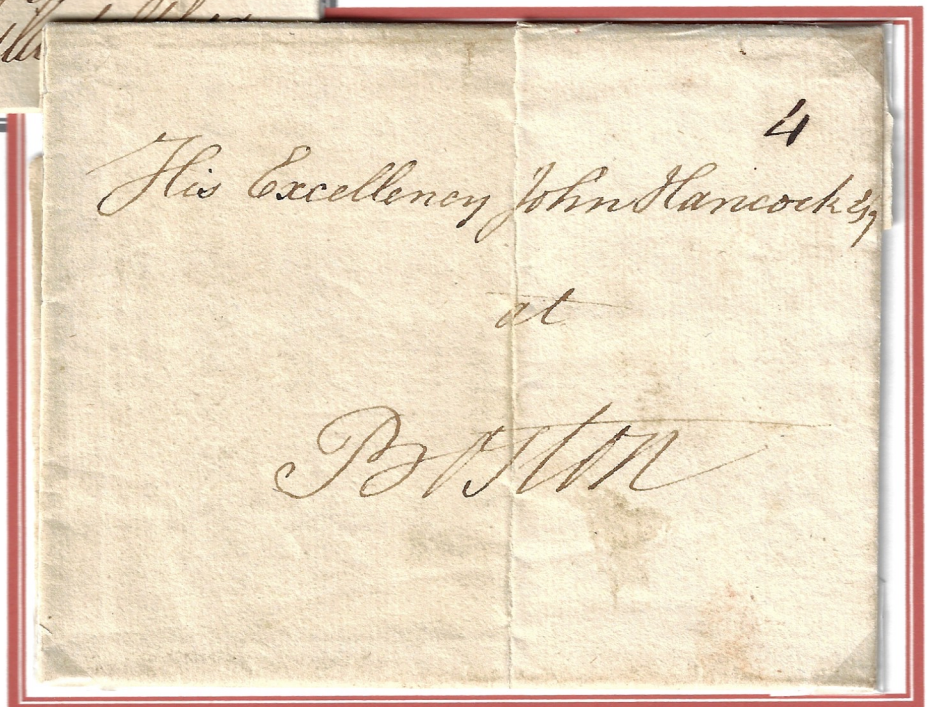
Newburyport to Philadelphia, Pa.
datelined April 2, 1776

The "Six Week" Rate One of Four Known Letters

Rated in 4dwt as a triple letter sent up to 60 miles, per the Resolution of Congress, December 12, 1780.

This Resolution fixed rates at half the pre-war levels, and appears to have been in force from c. February 1 until mid-March, 1781. Unpaid covers are marked with the full rate, with the recipient paying the 50% rate.

Newburyport to Boston, Mass.
datelined February 27, 1781



Newburyport Sep 5

Various Newburyport manuscript postmarks are known used from 1794 to 1798. This "Newburyport" type is known in 1794 and 1796.

The rate of 10c was for a single letter sent 60-100 miles, per the Act of Congress, Feb. 20, 1792 (eff. June 1).



Newburyport to Biddeford, Maine

September 5, 1794

Newb. Nov 2

Only two examples of this "Newb." type of manuscript are known.

The rate of 8c was for a single letter sent 30-60 miles, per the Act of Congress, Feb. 20, 1792 (eff. June 1).



Newburyport to Cambridge, Mass.

November 2, 1798

“to port” ship letters / drop letter



The rate of 4c was for a ship letter addressed to the port of entry, per the Act of Congress, Feb. 20, 1792 (eff. June 1).

St. Pierre, Martinique to Newburyport

September 5, 1792

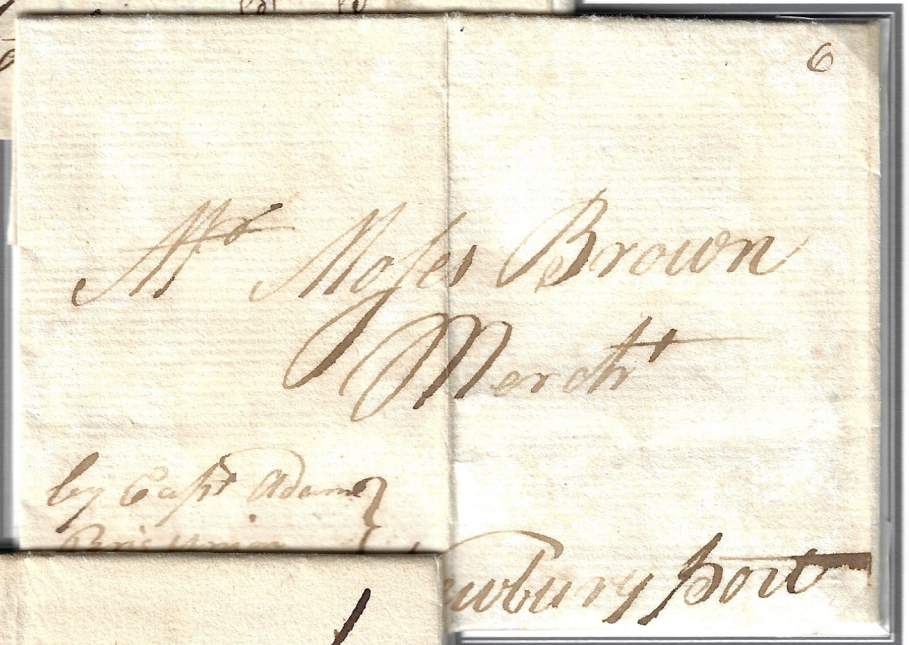
Brig *Leonard*, Wells, master

The rate of 6c was for a ship letter addressed to the port of entry, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 2, 1799.

Cap Francois, Haiti to Newburyport

October 26, 1800

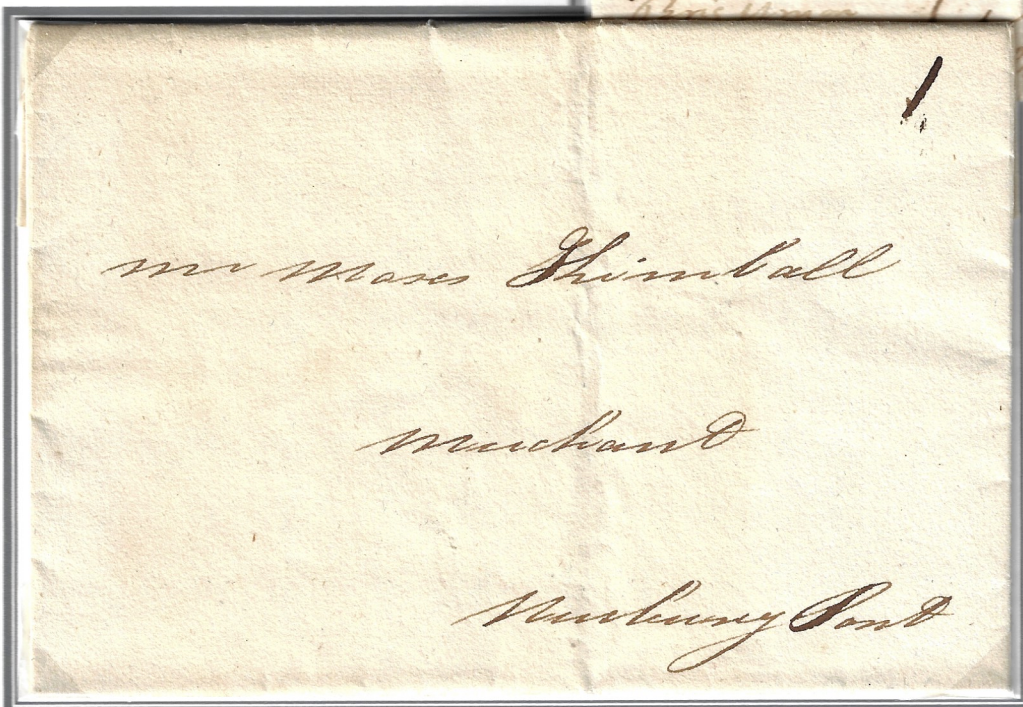
Brig *Union*, Adams, master



The rate of 1c was for a letter picked up and dropped off at the same post office, per the Act of Congress, May 8, 1794 (eff. June 1).

Newburyport to Newburyport, Mass.

November 1, 1808



2x3mm "PAID"; 14x4mm "SHIP"

The earliest known example of the first standardized Federal CDS



This 26mm Newburyport CDS is the earliest known example of the first Federal standardized hand stamps sent out by the PMG to five towns on April 18, 1799. This CDS is known used to 1814.

The rate of 12½c was for a single letter sent 90-150 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 2, 1799.

Newburyport to New Gloucester, Maine
May 6, 1799

This is the earliest known Newburyport "PAID" hand stamp

The rate of 17c was for a single letter sent 150-300 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 2, 1799.

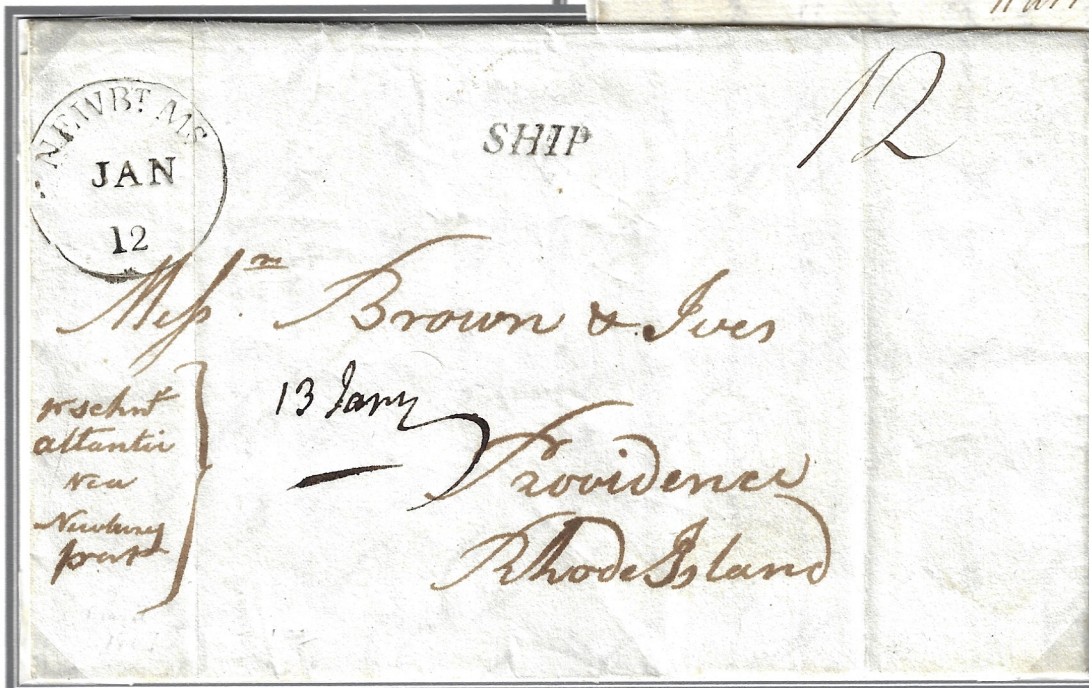
Newburyport to Warren, Maine
March 11, 1800



This italicized Newburyport "SHIP" hand stamp is known used from 1801 to 1810.

The rate of 12c was for a single ship letter sent 40-90 miles, and included a 2c ship fee, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 2, 1799.

Paramaribo, Brazil via
Newburyport to Providence, RI
January 12, 1807



Newburyport

purple / red 26mm CDS w/ "MASS."

purple 22x5½mm "FREE"; red 20½x5mm "SHIP."

Restored Rate Letter

This new 26mm Newburyport purple CDS is known used from 1816 to 1818.

The rate of 12½c was for a single letter sent 90-150 miles, per the Act of Congress, Feb. 13, 1816 (eff. Mar. 31).

Newburyport to Brunswick, Maine
April 6, 1816



This 22½mm "FREE" in purple or red is known used from 1817 to 1832.

Per Sec. 17 of the Act of Congress, Mar. 2, 1799 - still in effect - postmasters were allowed to send and receive letters up to ½ oz., free of postage.

Newburyport to Hopkinton, NH
December 11, 1817

This new 26mm Newburyport red CDS is known used in 1820.

The 20½x5mm "SHIP." hand stamp is known used from 1818 to 1832.

The rate of 14½c was for a single ship letter sent 80-150 miles, including a 2c ship fee, per the Act of Congress, Apr. 9, 1816 (eff. May 1).

Gonaives, Haiti via Newburyport to Westfield, Mass.

September 16, 1820

Schr Paul Jones, Bickford, master



Newburyport

red / purple 25mm CDS w/ "M S"

red 22x5½mm "FREE"; purple 21x5mm "PAID"

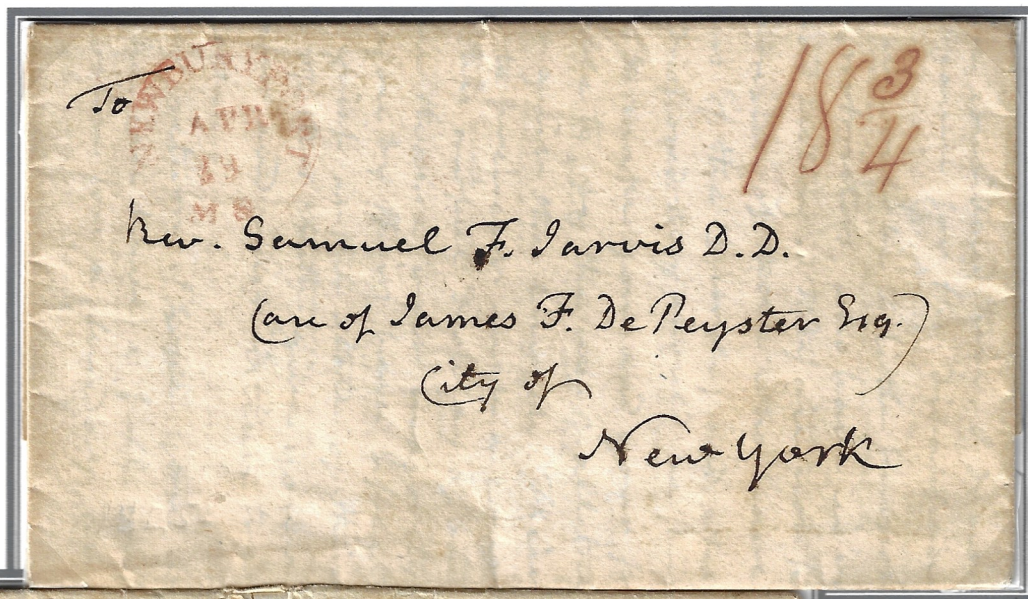
Anticipatory Rate Increase

This new 25mm Newburyport red CDS is known used from 1823 to mid-Oct. 1830.

The rate of 18¼c was for a single letter sent 150-400 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1825 (eff. May 1).

The PM assumed that the letter would arrive in New York after the new rate went into effect.

Newburyport to New York, NY
April 29, 1825



Per Sec. 17 of the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1825 (eff. May 1), postmasters were allowed to send and receive letters up to ½ oz., free of postage.

Newburyport to Goffsbome, Maine
July 29, 1829

This 25mm purple Newburyport CDS is known used from mid-Oct. to Dec. 1830.

The rate of 10c was for a single letter sent 30-80 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1825 (eff. May 1).

Newburyport to Boston, Mass.
October 28, 1830



red 21x5mm "PAID"; 20x5mm "SHIP."; 22x5½mm "FREE"



This 30mm red Newburyport CDS is known used from Feb. 1831 to July 1833.

The rate of 10c was for a single letter sent 30-80 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1825 (eff. May 1).

Newburyport to Boston, Mass.
February 5, 1831

This 20x5mm "SHIP." is known used from 1816 to 1832.

The rate of 12c was for a single ship letter sent 30-80 miles, including a 2c ship fee, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1825 (eff. May 1).

Cadiz via Newburyport to Providence, RI

January 11, 1832

Ship *Inez*, Pike, 51 days

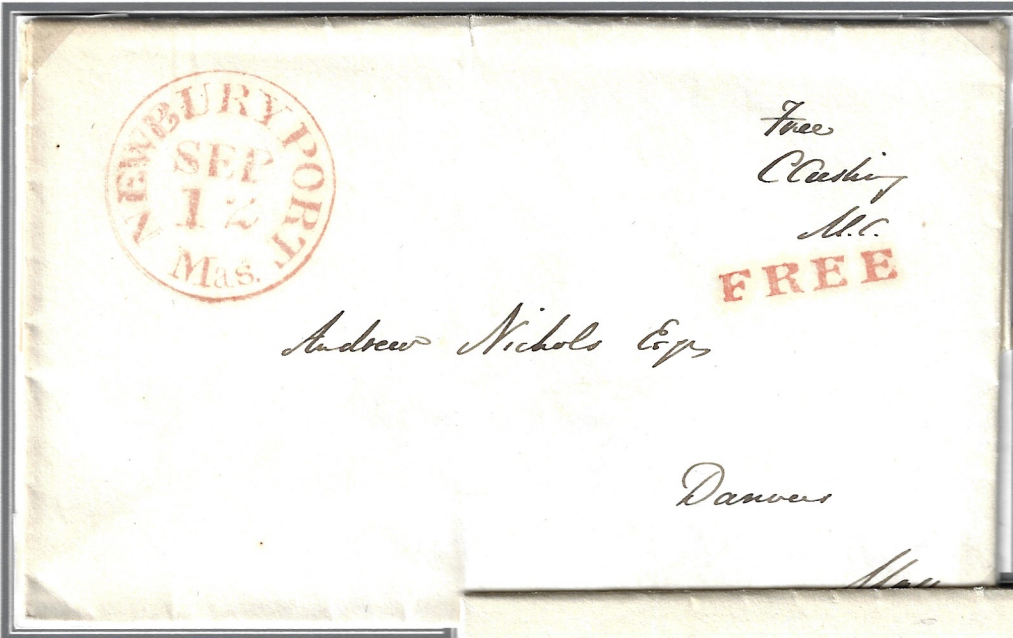


Per Sec. 27 of the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1825 (eff. May 1), Comptrollers of the Treasury may send and receive letters, free of postage.

Newburyport to Washington, DC
September 8, 1832



red 22x4mm "PAID"; 23x3½mm "FREE"



This 23x3½mm "FREE" is known used from 1836 to 1853.

Per Sec. 27 of the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1825 (eff. May 1), Members of Congress were allowed to send and receive letters of up to 2 oz. free of postage, during a session of Congress and 60 days before and after.

Newburyport to Danvers, Mass.
September 12, 1836

This 30mm red Newburyport CDS is known used from Dec. 1833 to Sep. 1843.

The rate of 6c was for a single letter sent up to 30 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1825 (eff. May 1).

Newburyport to Salem, Mass.
September 20, 1835



This 30mm blue Newburyport CDS is known used only in early 1846.

By the early 1840s, the outer rim of this CDS (struck then in red) had worn badly.

The rate of 5c was for a ½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1845 (eff. July 1).

Newburyport to Boston, Mass.
March 26, 1846



Newburyport

blue / red 29½mm CDS w/ "Ms."

blue 8x13mm "5", 15x12mm "10", 15½x4mm "PAID"; red 15x12mm "10"

These 29½mm blue and red Newburyport CDS' are known used from July 1846 to Nov. 1850.

The "5" and "10" hand stamps in blue and red are known used from March 1847 to June 1851.

The rate of 5c was for a ½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1845 (eff. July 1).

Newburyport to Wells River, Vt.
April 5, 1849

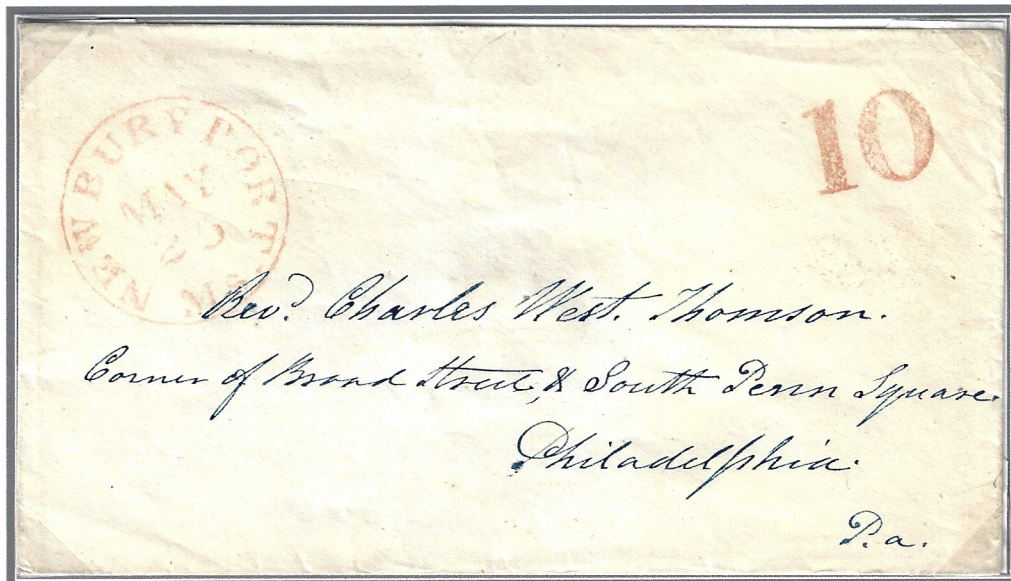


The rate of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1845 (eff. July 1).

Newburyport to Feltville, NJ
November 30, 1850

The rate of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1845 (eff. July 1).

Newburyport to Philadelphia, PA
May 25, c.1848



Newburyport

black 29½mm CDS w/ "Ms."; 33mm CDS w/ "MASS."

black 17x20mm "3/PAID", 9x11mm "5"; red 19x8mm "FREE"

At this point (July 1, 1851), the rate for a paid became 3c, while a 2c penalty was assessed for an unpaid letter.

This 29½mm black Newburyport CDS and "3/PAID" are both known used from July 1851 to mid-1853.

The rate of 3c was for a ½ oz. paid letter sent up to 3000 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1851 (eff. July 1).

Newburyport to South Hadley, Mass.
April 14, 1853



The rate of 5c was for a ½ oz. unpaid letter sent up to 3000 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1851 (eff. July 1).

Newburyport to Portsmouth, NH
August 17, 1852

This 33mm black Newburyport CDS is known used in 1852-1855.

The Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1847 (eff. May 1) reinstated the franking privilege for deputy postmasters earning less than \$200 year. This privilege had been limited to official business in the Act of 1845.

Newburyport to Mason Village, NH
May 10, 1852





This 29½mm Newburyport CDS is known used in red and black in 1853-1856.

The rate of 3c was for a ½ oz. paid letter sent up to 3000 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1851 (eff. July 1).

Newburyport to Farmington, Me.

July 6, c.1854



This "PAID/3" is known used in 1853-1855.

The rate of 3c was for a ½ oz. paid letter sent up to 3000 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1851 (eff. July 1).

Newburyport to Amesbury, Mass.

February 28, 1855

Newburyport red 32mm CDS w/ int. "PAID"; black 32mm CDS w/ "MASS."

red 10x8mm attached "10"; black 10x8 "10"

Foreign Mail - Canada and the Maritimes



The "through rate" of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent between the U.S. and the Maritimes, up to 3000 miles, per the agreement effective July 6, 1851.

Newburyport, Mass. via St. Andrews and St. John, N.B. to Pictou, Nova Scotia.

April 4, 1855

Schr Life Boat, Smith, master

The "through rate" of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent between the U.S. and Canada West, per the agreement effective April 6, 1851.



Newburyport, Mass. via Buffalo and Hamilton, CW to Galt, Ontario, CW

Sept. 5, 1855

Newburyport

red 32mm CDS w/ integral PAID; black 33mm CDS w/ year

red 20x5mm "PAID"; black 11x7mm "24"

Foreign Mail - Overseas

To Valparaiso, Chile

The 48c rate was for a 1/2 oz. letter sent from the U.S. to Chile, by Am. Pkt then Br. Pkt via Panama, per the agreement from Oct. 1853 to Dec. 1856. A 24c debit to the U.K. was noted.



Newburyport, Mass. via New York and Panama to Valparaiso, Chile.

April 4, 1855

U.S. Mail SS Co. Illinois (April 20-29)

Pacific Steam Navigation Co. ?? (May ~5-29)

To London, England



The 24c rate was for a 1/2 oz. packet letter sent to the U.K. A 5c debit to the U.S. was noted (sent by Br. Pkt.) and the rate of 1 shilling was paid in the U.K., per the U.S.-U.K. agreement of December 1848.

Newburyport, Mass. via Boston, Mass. and Liverpool to London.

September 5, 1856

Cunard steamer Niagara
(September 10-21)

red 20x5mm "SHIP", 11x7mm "5"; black 20x5mm "SHIP", 12x7mm "6"

Epilogue

The Act of Congress, March 3, 1855, established that as of January 1, 1856, domestic letters were required to be prepaid by cash or stamps. Foreign letters were not subject to this requirement, and many private ship letters continued to arrive at the port of Newburyport for many years. Two such examples, reflecting the Act of Congress of March 3, 1855 and of March 3, 1863 are shown below.

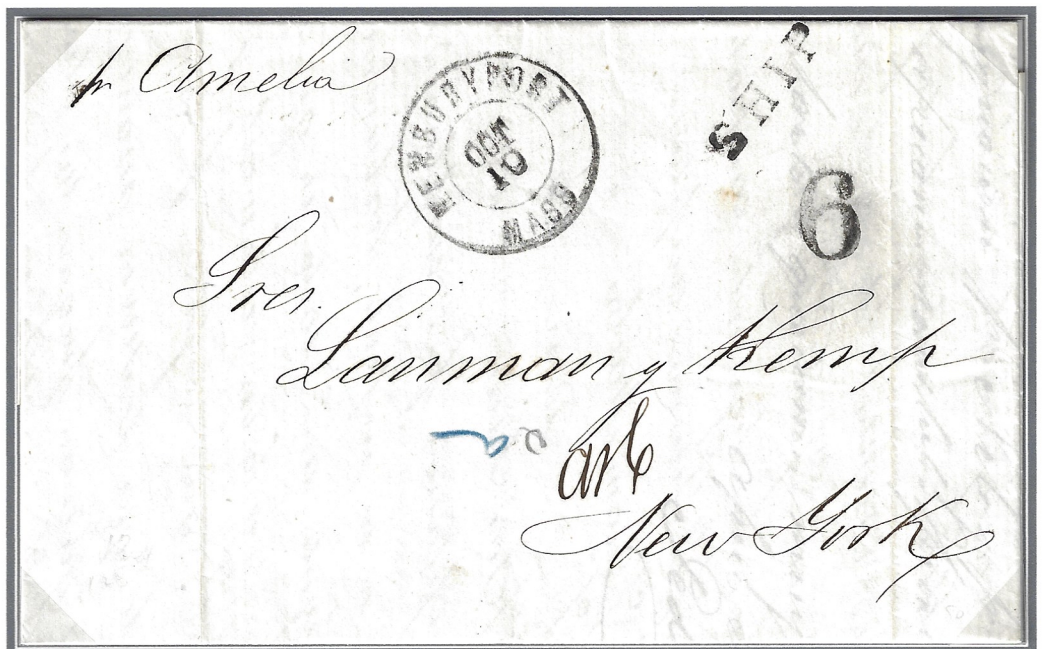
The rate of 5c was for a ½ oz. ship letter sent up to 3000 miles, per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1855 (eff. April 1).



Unknown origin via Newburyport to Essex, Mass.

November 6, 1857

The rate of 6c was double the domestic rate for a ½ oz. ship letter sent anywhere in the U.S., per the Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1863 (eff. July 1).



Mayaguez, Porto Rico via Newburyport to New York, NY

October 10, 1864

Schr Amelia, unknown, master