

# ***Philadelphia-Great Britain Mails, 1683 to GPU***

## **Purpose and Scope**

This exhibit illustrates the evolution of Philadelphia's letter mails to, from, or through Great Britain from colonial times until the General Postal Union. Because Philadelphia was America's largest city for 140 years, the city's postal relations with Great Britain are to a great extent emblematic of the developing nation's communications not only with the Great Britain, but with the rest of the world via the use of the British mail system. A few of the key events documented are:

- Falmouth-New York packet service beginning in 1755, a reaction to the French and Indian War.
- Postal impacts of the War of Independence 1775-1783, and the War of 1812-1815.
- Scheduled Cope Line service between Philadelphia and Liverpool beginning in 1822.
- The advent of transatlantic steamship service in the 1830s.
- A "special arrangement" for expediting the inland leg of incoming British packet mails in the 1840s.
- Operation of the Philadelphia Exchange Office under the 1848 U.S.-Great Britain postal convention.

Both incoming and outgoing mail is shown, as well as letters for Philadelphia that arrived or departed via other American ports, and those that arrived at Philadelphia for transport to other cities.

## **Treatment**

- Chapters are based on governmental acts that set postage rates, beginning before the 1710 Act of Queen Anne and ending shortly after the General Postal Union treaty took effect in 1875.
- Early covers reflect British postal rates until the American revolution began in 1775.
- From 1775 to 1848 U.S.-G.B. convention, covers are explained in per the postal regulations of both countries.
- Within each rate period, covers illustrating key events that influenced mail transport and processing.

### **London to Philadelphia, *B Free Franklin***



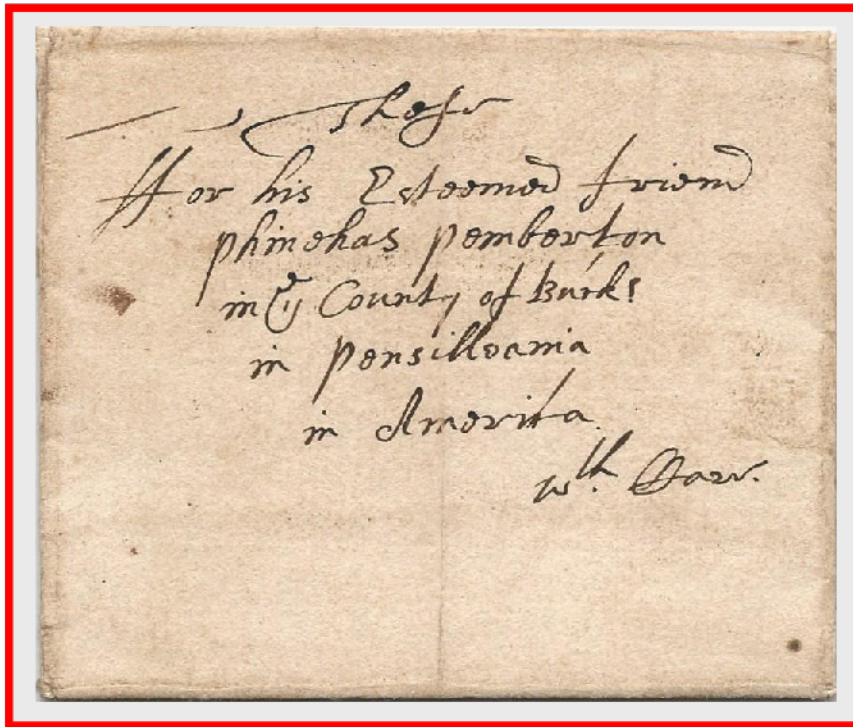
**London to Philadelphia, ca. 1764-1774**

Undated cover front of a letter from Benjamin Franklin to his wife; London GPO postmarked *FREE*  
***B Free Franklin*** : free frank as Deputy Postmaster General for the North American colonies

*Dr. Franklin was appointed Deputy PMG for North America in 1753. He moved to London in 1764, where he lobbied Parliament on behalf of the colonies. He returned to Philadelphia in 1775 after having been removed from his position for insubordination.*

## Private Sailing Ship

## Earliest Letter to Pennsylvania in Private Hands



These  
For his Esteemed friend  
Phinehas Pemberton  
in ye County of Bucks  
in Pensilvania  
in America

With Caer [sic]

Pemberton was Penn's chief administrator in Bucks Co., and lived on 300 acres in Falls Twp., just up the river from Penn's estate.

In July 1683 Penn established a post with a rate to "The Falls" of 3d. The absence of postmarks suggests this letter was delivered privately or called for in Philadelphia.

Warrington, Cheshire, 25 April 1683

Private ship to Philadelphia, departure and arrival unknown

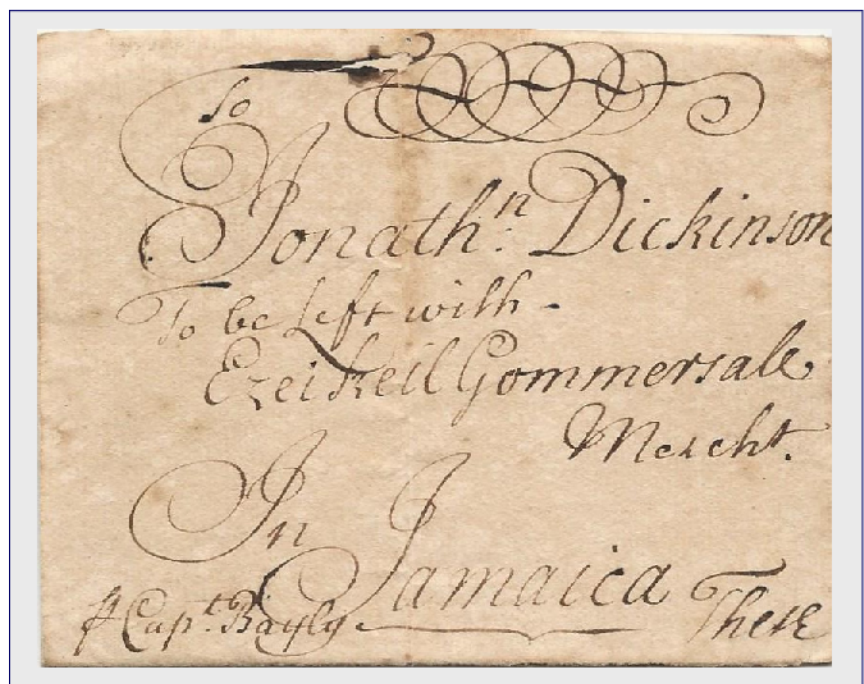
## Private Ship to Jamaica

Sent unpaid

Ship *Hannah* :  
Philadelphia 23 September  
Kingston 9 December

77 days

Jonathan Dickinson, an Englishman based in Jamaica, was a wealthy sugar merchant and slave trader with considerable commercial and real estate interests in Philadelphia.



Philadelphia, 22 September 1708

In 1700 the population of Philadelphia was about 2,500; a municipal charter was not issued by William Penn until 1701.

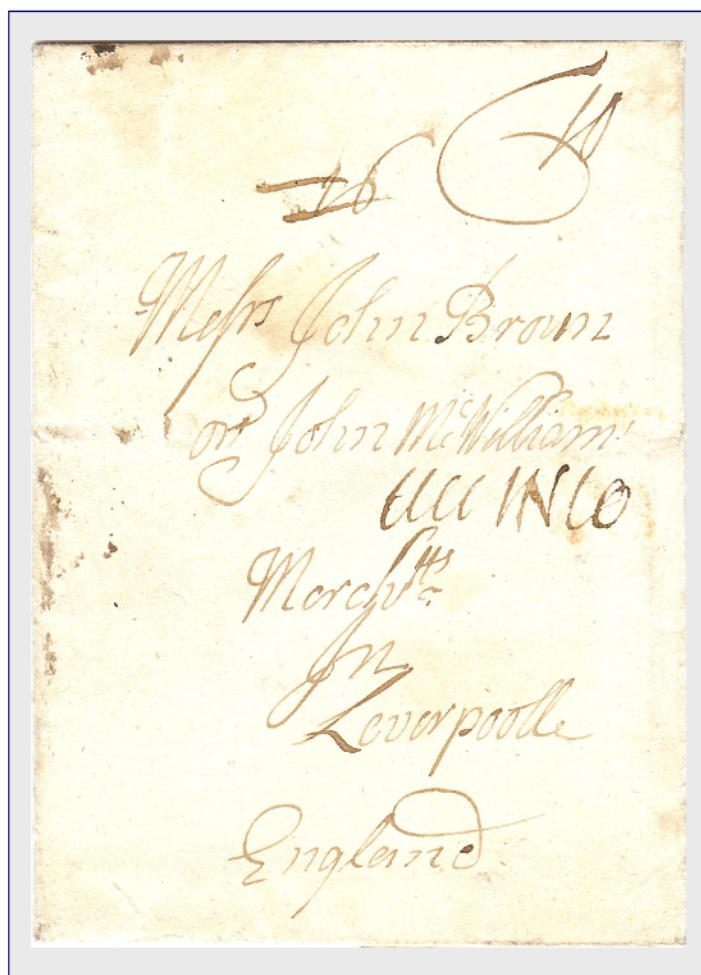


Private Sailing Ship  
British Contract Sailing Ship

## Via Lisbon &amp; London



reverse



26

1/6

ALL IN LO

All 1N10

Philadelphia, 22 August 1712

Sent unpaid. Private ship *Andrews* (25 August) to Lisbon, where rated **1/6** due by British Post Office  
Packet *Queen* : Lisbon 1 November, Falmouth 18 November, London 21 November

London rated **1/10** due: 1s6d packet, 4d inland to Liverpool

Liverpool 24 November

96 days

**Act of 1710, 9 Anne c 10**  
effective 1 June 1711

Distance from London  
to 80 miles 3<sup>d</sup>  
over 80 miles 4<sup>d</sup>

Ship letters  
1<sup>d</sup> plus inland postage

Packet letters, to/from London  
Portugal 1s6<sup>d</sup>  
New York 1s

Distance from New York  
under 60 miles 4<sup>d</sup>  
60-100 miles 6<sup>d</sup>

Philadelphia to:  
New York 9<sup>d</sup>  
Boston 1s9<sup>d</sup>

*This letter was probably intended for the packet to Bristol, advertised as the Edgley. Edgley never reached New York, but sailed into Philadelphia on 3 May 1712 for repairs. She did not return to Bristol, but left Philadelphia for Nevis on 5 June. The Edgley was the last advertised Bristol Packet.*

*In 1712 only a letter via packet from Lisbon would have been charged 1s6d in London.*

## Private Sailing Ship

## To Liverpool, Landed at Deal

Sent unpaid by private ship to London,  
mails ashore at Deal

London 28 November

London rated **In All 7** due:  
3d Deal to London  
4d London to Liverpool

Received 1 December

61 days



reverse



Philadelphia 30 September 1715

## The Coffee House as Letter Receiver



Sent unpaid by  
private ship to Bristol

Bristol rated **5** due:  
1<sup>d</sup> ship  
4<sup>d</sup> inland to London

London 21 April

Received 1 May

58 days

Philadelphia, 5 March 1734

The **Pennsylvania Coffee House** provided a place for businessmen and politicians with an interest in the colony to meet for socializing and deal-making. Letters could be delivered there, and a ship's bag was available for patrons to deposit their letters for Philadelphia, paying the ship captain 1<sup>d</sup>. The house was in Birchin Lane near the Lombard Street post office.



## Private Sailing Ship



London, 8 November 1745

Sent unpaid by private ship  
Bristol 10 November  
Boston 23 January

Boston marked **BoSh 7.16** due  
 $7^{\text{dwt}} 16^{\text{gr}} = 1\text{s} 11^{\text{d}}$   
 $= 1\text{s} 9^{\text{d}}$  inland, 2<sup>d</sup> delivery

Received 26 January

75 days

## Prepaid Ship Letter

Prepaid **3:8** $3^{\text{dwt}} = 9^{\text{d}}$  inland to New York $8^{\text{gr}} = 1^{\text{d}}$  outgoing ship feePhiladelphia marked **Phi. paid dwt / 3:8**Private ship *Friendship*

New York 2 January

Dover 15 April

Dover rated **4<sup>d</sup>** due:1<sup>d</sup> ship3<sup>d</sup> inland to London

Received 17 April

106 days (voyage only)

Rated by Benjamin Franklin

Philadelphia Postmaster 1737-1753

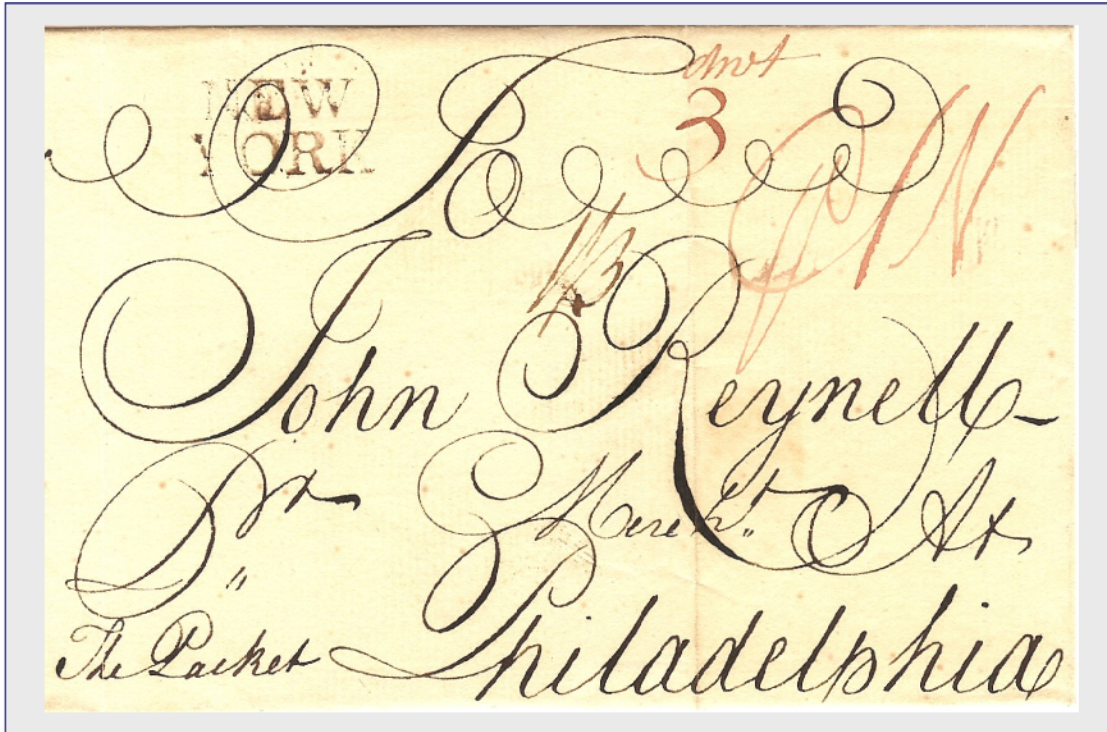
Two prepaid ship letters recorded  
from Philadelphia in the colonial period



Philadelphia, 30 October 1748

**Seven-Years War Results in Introduction of Falmouth-New York Packet Service**

In November 1755 Great Britain introduced packet service to speed communication with military units in the American colonies, who were engaged in what Americans call the *French and Indian Wars*.

**Falmouth Packet, Single Rate Prepaid**

London, 11 September 1756

Prepaid one shilling: **P1N**, the packet rate from London to New York

Packet *General Wall* : Falmouth 11 September, New York 8 November  
New York rated **3<sup>dwt</sup>** due for inland postage

Philadelphia rated **1/3** due in local currency:  $3^{\text{dwt}} = 9^{\text{d}} \text{ stg.}; 9^{\text{d}} \text{ stg.} \times 1.66 = 15^{\text{d}} = 1/3$

Received 10 November    61 days

*The distance from New York to Philadelphia was known to be less than 100 miles, but the rate was nevertheless set at 3 pennyweights of silver (3<sup>dwt</sup>), or 9<sup>d</sup> sterling. This rate was determined by subtracting the Boston-New York rate (1s) from the Boston-Philadelphia rate (1s9d). Coinage was scarce, so payment of postage due was often made in local Pennsylvania currency. One pennyweight = three pence sterling. Sterling x 1.66 = local Pennsylvania currency.*

***There was neither a requirement nor the facility to prepay Colonial inland postage in Great Britain.***



## Falmouth Packet, Double Rate Prepaid



London, 29 February 1764

Prepaid 2 shillings

Packet *Harriet* : Falmouth 17 March, New York 2 May  
 New York rated 6<sup>dwt</sup> due for double inland

Philadelphia rated 2/8 due in local currency: 30<sup>d</sup> inland, 2<sup>d</sup> carrier

Received 4 May 1764    65 days

Westbound trips took at least two months plus an overland trip to Philadelphia of at least two days. Scheduled, one-day stage service between New York and Philadelphia was unavailable until 1785.

## Falmouth Packet, Triple Rate Unpaid



London, 11 April 1767

Sent unpaid, London rated **3N**: 3 shillings due for letter of three sheets via packet to New York

Packet *Lord Hyde* : Falmouth 16 April, New York 28 May  
 New York rated **18<sup>dwt</sup>** due: (4<sup>dwt</sup> packet + 2<sup>dwt</sup> inland) x 3

Received 29 May 1767 49 days

Act of 1765, 5 Geo III c 25 effective 10 October 1765			
United Kingdom		American Colonies	
To one post stage	1 <sup>d</sup>	Under 60 miles	4 <sup>d</sup>
One to two post stages	2 <sup>d</sup>	Under 100 miles	6 <sup>d</sup>
		Under 200 miles	8 <sup>d</sup>
Distance from London		Each add'l. 100 miles	2 <sup>d</sup>
to 80 miles	3 <sup>d</sup>		
over 80 miles	4 <sup>d</sup>	Port to Port	4 <sup>d</sup>
Ship letters			
Inland postage plus	1 <sup>d</sup>		
Packet letters to New York	1s		
		Postage from New York to Philadelphia reduced to 6 <sup>d</sup>	

A GPO London notice of 24 October 1755 required prepayment of the packet letter rate, but this rule was not strictly enforced until it was reiterated in a GPO notice of 22 May 1784.



## Private Sailing Ship

## To The Son of William Penn—Double Rate Via Ireland



Philadelphia, 1 August 1772

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Snow Charlotte* :  
 Philadelphia 12 August  
 Waterford 21 September

London rated **1/9 due**:  
 1<sup>d</sup> ship  
 8<sup>d</sup> inland to Dublin (2 x 4<sup>d</sup>)  
 1/- packet to London (2 x 6<sup>d</sup>)

Received 25 September

45 days

WATERFORD

not recorded by Robertson

## Single Rate via Falmouth

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Mary & Elizabeth* :  
 Philadelphia 13 September  
 Falmouth arrival unknown

Falmouth rated **5 due**:  
 1<sup>d</sup> ship  
 4<sup>d</sup> inland to Pool

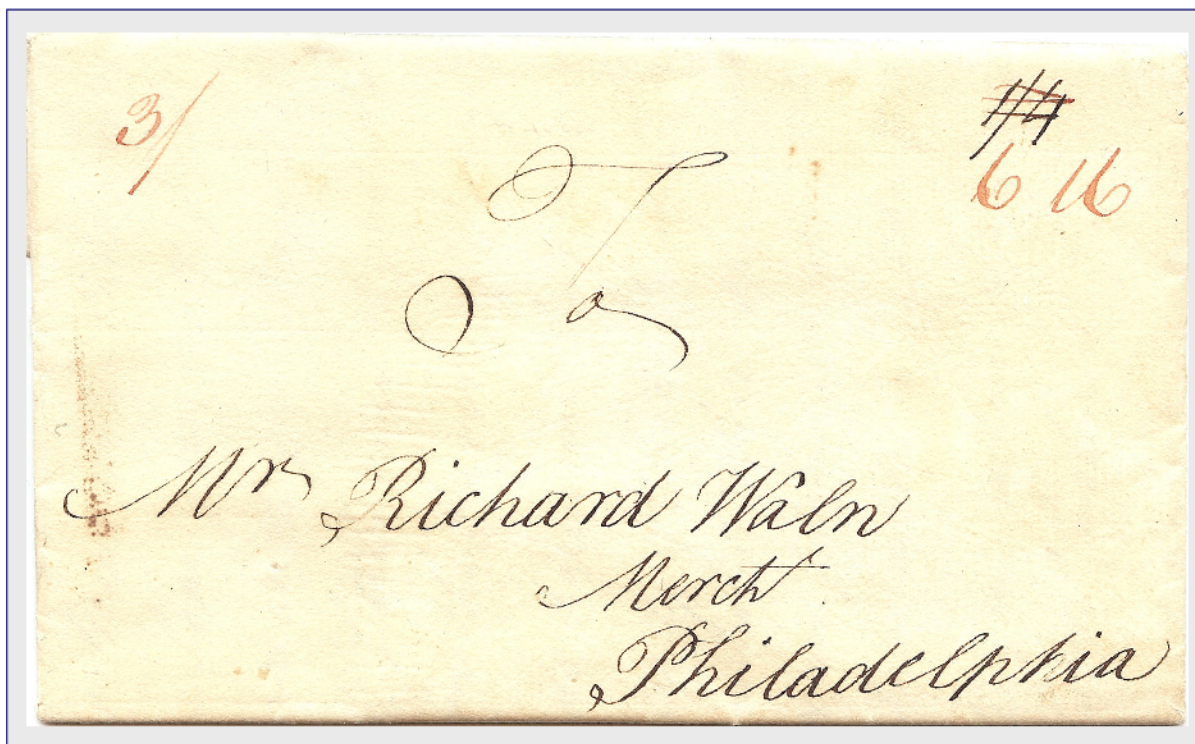
FALMOUTH  
SHIP-LRE

Philadelphia, 11 September 1773



## Private Sailing Ship

From Jamaica Via Wilmington, N.C.

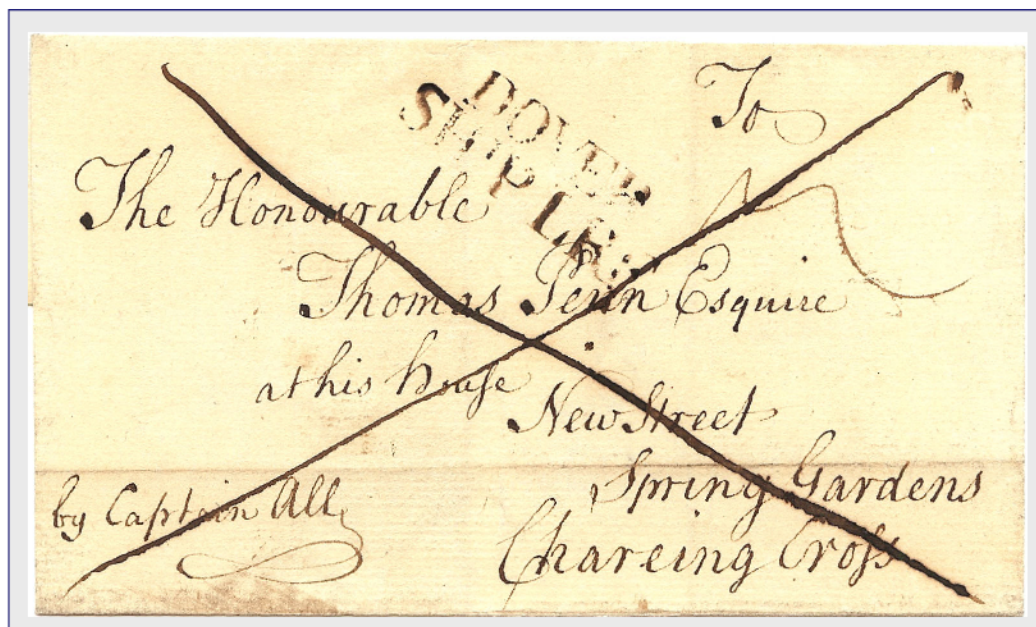


Kingston, 24 December 1771

Sent unpaid by private ship, departure &amp; arrival dates unknown

Wilmington rated  $1/4$  stg. due; Philadelphia converted to  $6^{dwt} 16^{gr}$  for ship and inland =  $20^d$  stg.Phila. rated  $3/-$  due in local currency:  $(20^d \text{ stg.} \times 1.67) = 34^d$ ;  $34d + 2d \text{ delivery} = 36^d$ 

## Forwarded in England



Philadelphia, 12 October 1772

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Richard Penn*:  
Philadelphia 19 October  
Dover 23 NovemberDover rated  $2^d$  to London  
London rated  $2^d$  for  
forwarding to Windsor

Rec'd 24 November 47 days

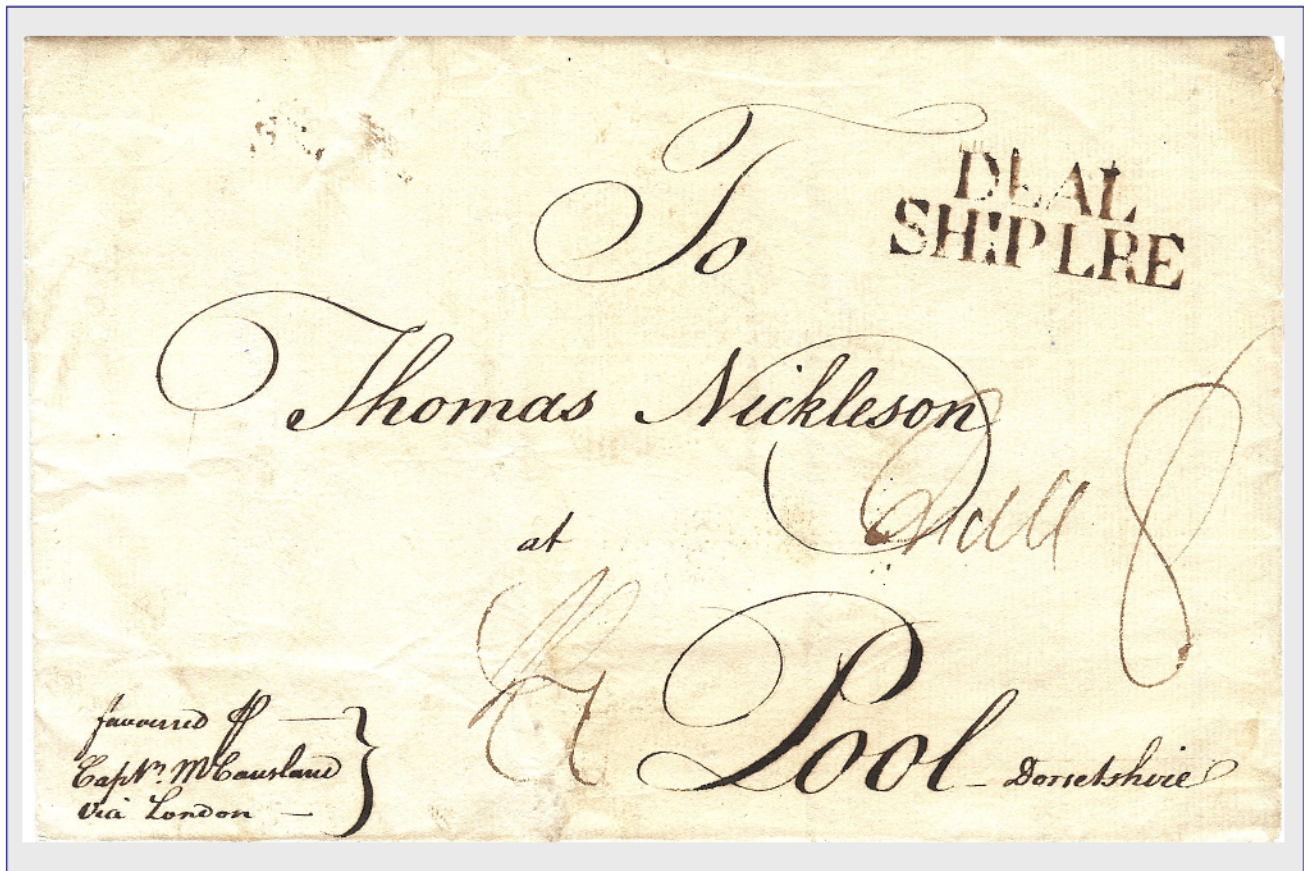


reverse

From R. Hockley, co-executor of Penn's estates, to **Thomas Penn**, Proprietor of the Province of Pennsylvania 1771-1775.



## Bound for London, Mails Landed at Deal



Philadelphia, 15 July 1774

Sent unpaid by private ship

Ship *Jane* : Philadelphia 18 July, Deal 20 AugustLondon rated **In All 8<sup>d</sup>** due: 1d ship, 3d inland to London, 4d inland to Poole

Received 23 August 40 days

*Deal is on the southeast coast, about 70 miles by sea from London. Putting the London mails ashore at Deal saved at least a day, more if wind and tides were adverse. The time saved was partly offset by the addressee having to pay an additional three pence inland postage to London.*



## British Contract Sailing Ship

## Falmouth Packet, Single Rate Prepaid



Exeter, 6 June 1772

Prepaid **1N4**: 1s packet + 4<sup>d</sup> inland

Packet Lord Hyde  
 Falmouth 11 June  
 New York 6 August

New York rated **2<sup>dwt</sup>** due for inland

Received 8 August

64 days

## Falmouth Packet, Single Rate Unpaid

Sent unpaid by packet *Harriot*  
 Falmouth 30 January  
 New York 14 March

New York rated **6<sup>dwt</sup>** due:  
 packet (4<sup>dwt</sup>) + inland (2<sup>dwt</sup>)

Philadelphia rated **2/8** due  
 in local currency:  
 6<sup>dwt</sup> x3 = 2s6<sup>d</sup>  
 + 2<sup>d</sup> carrier = 2/8

Received 16 March

70 days



From Thomas Penn, Proprietor of  
 Pennsylvania 1718-1775.  
 Son of William Penn.



London, 6 January 1773

Prior to a 22 May 1784 London GPO Notice, prepayment of packet postage from London to New York was optional.

Local currencies fluctuated at different rates, so the Act of 1765 required payment of postage in the colonies be made in relation to rates defined in sterling. Inflation in Pennsylvania in 1773 was high—local currency had lost 16.5 percent of its value.



## Private Sailing Ship

From Barbados via New York



Barbados, 3 September 1772

Sent unpaid by private ship *Montgomery* : Barbados 7 September, New York 5 October

New York rated **Sh 2.16** due: 2<sup>dwt</sup> ship, 16<sup>gr</sup> inland to Philadelphia (8<sup>d</sup> total, in sterling)  
 Philadelphia charged **1/4** due in local currency: 8<sup>d</sup> x 1.67 = 14<sup>d</sup>, + 2d carrier fee = 1<sup>s</sup>4<sup>d</sup>

Received 7 October      31 days



## British Contract Sailing Ship

## GPO London's Collection of American Unpaid Postage

Sent unpaid. New York rated **To pay 6d** in red,  
a debit to London for colonial inland postage

Packet *Mercury*

New York 7 April

Falmouth 26 May

London backstamp 28 May

**IN.<sup>D</sup> AND PAC.<sup>T</sup>/POSTAGE**

applied in London, where rated **1/6** due for  
Colonial inland plus packet postage

London rerated **2/4**, to include 6<sup>d</sup> to Ireland  
plus 4<sup>d</sup> Irish inland

Dublin incorrectly rerated **2/8** due 50 days

**IN.<sup>D</sup> AND PAC.<sup>T</sup>  
POSTAGE** 9 recorded



Philadelphia, 5 April 1774



Philadelphia, 6 September 1774

Double rate, sent unpaid. New York rated  
**To pay 1/-** in red, a debit to London for  
colonial inland postage

Packet *Mercury*

New York 8 September

Falmouth 8 October

London backstamp 11 October

**INLAND AND/PACKET POSTAGE**

applied in London, where rated **3/-** due for  
Colonial inland plus packet postage

London rerated **3/8** to include 8d inland to Poole  
33 days

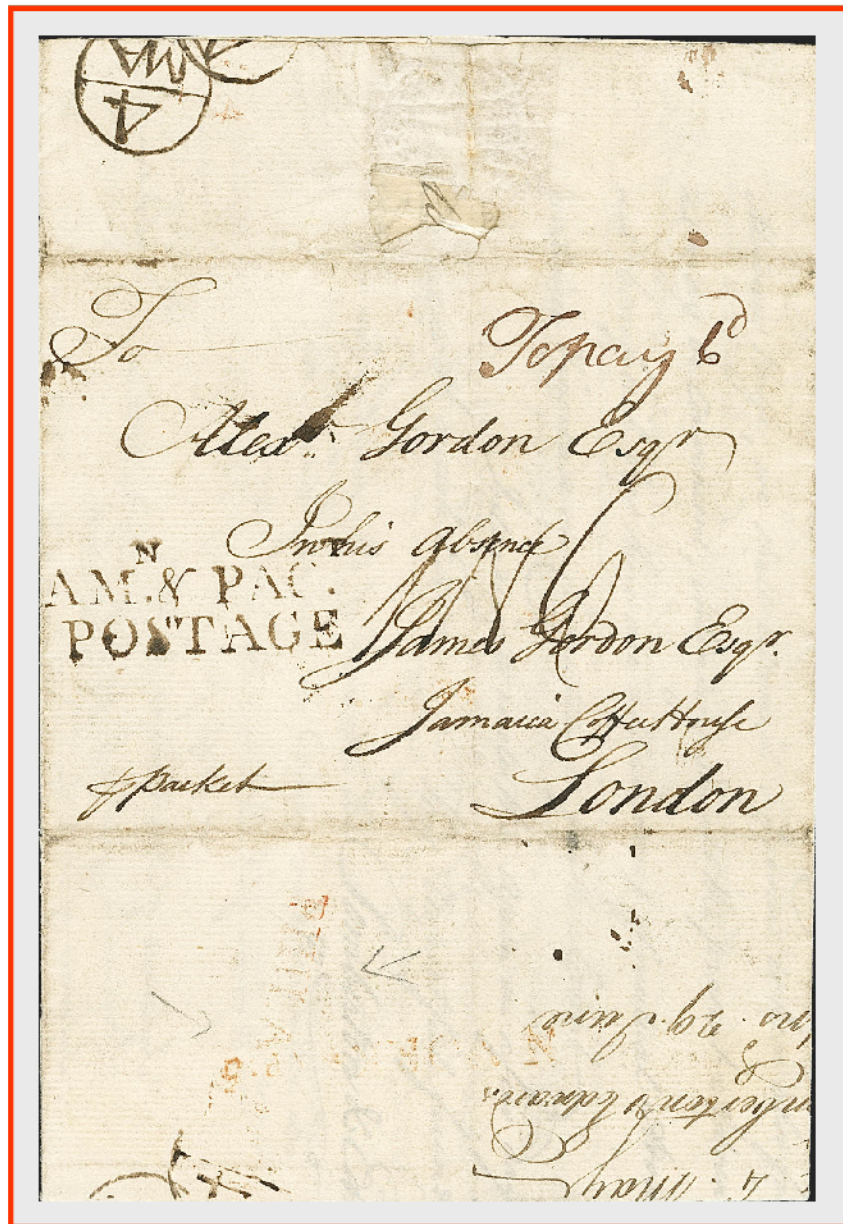
**INLAND AND  
PACKET POSTAGE** 8 recorded

*Six types of London postmarks denote  
unpaid American and packet postage.  
All are rare.*

In February 1756 Wm. Franklin, GPO Comptroller in Philadelphia, issued a notice that packet letters from New York to London must be prepaid for both packet and American inland postage; single rates were 4<sup>dwt</sup> (1/-) and 2<sup>dwt</sup> (6d), respectively. This edict was not regularly followed, and Britain did not demand prepayment of incoming packet letters from America until 1784. In the early 1770s London used the handstamps shown here to inform addressees of their additional postage due.



## GPO London's Collection of American Unpaid Postage



Philadelphia, 4 April 1775

Sent unpaid. New York rated **To pay 6d** in red,  
a debit to London for colonial inland postage.

Packet *Duke of Cumberland* : New York 6 April, Falmouth 4 May, London backstamp 4 May 33 days

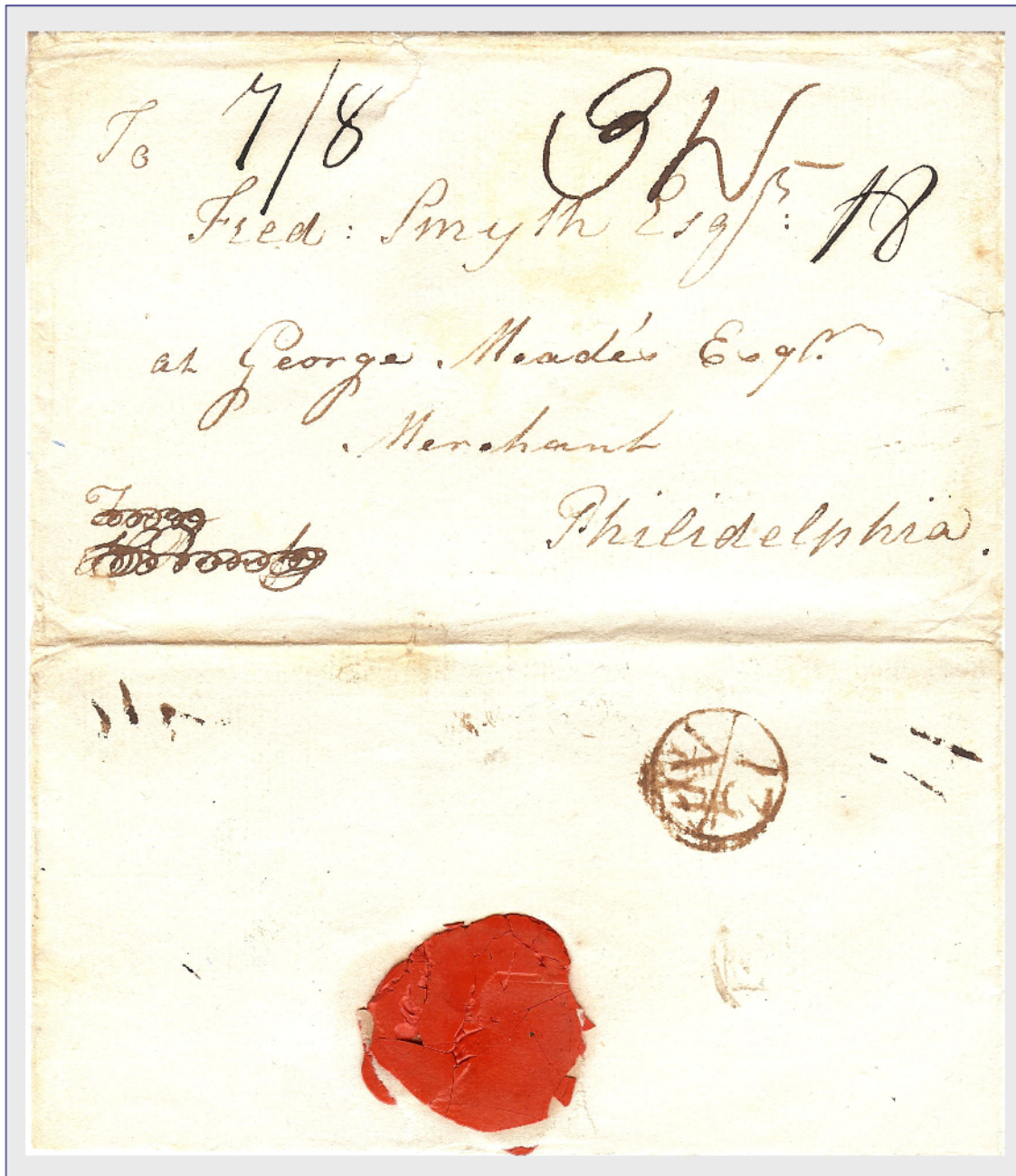
AM.<sup>N</sup> & PAC.<sup>T</sup>/POSTAGE applied in London, where rated **1/6** due for colonial inland plus packet postage

AM.<sup>N</sup> & PAC.<sup>T</sup>  
POSTAGE

The only recorded example

Letter discusses the great scarcity of money. Two weeks to the day after this letter was written, Paul Revere warned Sam Adams that 100 British soldiers were on their way to Concord to destroy arms.

## Falmouth Packet, Triple Rate Unpaid



London, 13 April 1774

Sent unpaid by packet *Harriot* : Falmouth 15 April, New York 14 May  
 New York rated **18<sup>dwt</sup>** due = ( 4<sup>dwt</sup> packet + 2<sup>dwt</sup> inland) x 3 = 54<sup>d</sup> stg.

Phila. rated **7/8** due in local currency: (54<sup>d</sup> stg. x 1.67) = 7/6; + 2<sup>d</sup> delivery = 7/8

Received 16 May 32 days

Addressed to the business of George Meade, grandfather of Civil War General George Meade.