



Free Franks

“Free” Franks

- The franking privilege is the right to send and or receive mail free from postage.
- The word frank comes from the Latin via French and Middle English and means free.
- Samuel Johnson’s famous dictionary of 1755 defines:
Frank - “A letter which pays no postage”
To Frank - “To exempt letters from postage.”

British Origins

- **Circa 1535** – Sir Brian Tuke, Master of the Posts, occasionally would endorse his covers with his signature. Some of his successors similarly marked their mail.
- **1652** - The Council of State ordered all mail to and from members of Parliament and Officers of State be sent free.
- **1653** - Qualified mail without an official seal should be endorsed “For the Service of the Commonwealth”
- **1660** - With the Restoration, Parliament retained Franking Privileges. Endorsement became “On His Majesty’s Service”
- **1693** - British, but not American, franked mail required the signature of the sender

Use in the American Colonies



On his Maj: Service
To y^e Hono: W: Partridge Esq:
Lieut Govern & Commd in chief of his
Maj: Province of New Hampshire
And Assembly
1698

August 9, 1698



To
M^r: Carrisoll Patten
Boston
To the Hon^{ble}
Nathaniel Byfield Esq:
in
Bristol
Frank
J.B

June 6, 1707



To
Samuel Johnson Esq:
att^y. at Law at
Edenton
from
1771

1771



Mr Wm Murray
The Earl of Sandhurst
Hatton
from
J Maitland
Edinburgh

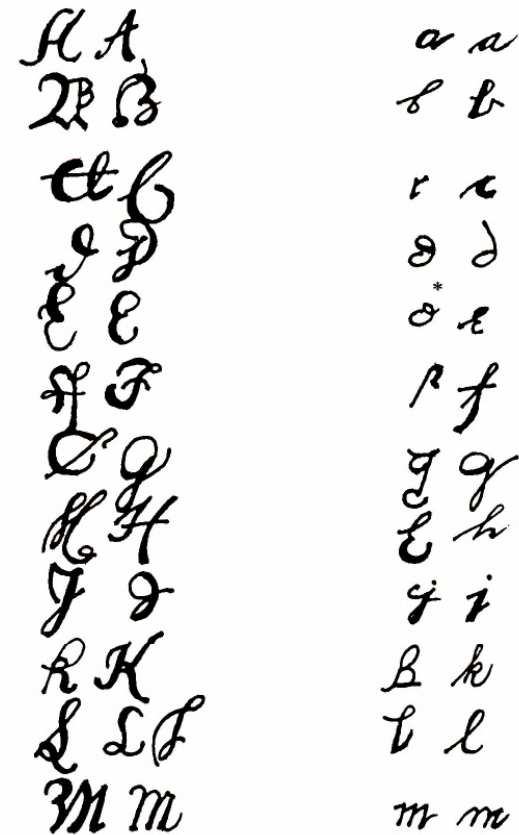
July 8, 1776

The 17th Century Capital F



Examples of Letters of the 17th Center Found in Parish Registers

A	A A A A H	aa	N	N N N N N	n
B	B B B B		O	O O O O	o
C	C C C C C	c c c c	P	P P P P P	p
D	D D D D D	d d d d	Q	Q Q Q Q	q
E	E E E E E	e e e e	R	R R R R R	r
F	F F F F F	f f f f	S	S S S S S	s
G	G G G G G	g g g g	T	T T T T T	t
H	H H H H H	h h h h	U	U U U U U	u
I	I I I I I	i i i i	V	V V V V V	v
J	J J J J J	j j j j	W	W W W W W	w
K	K K K K K	k k k k	X	X X X X X	x
L	L L L L L	l l l l	Y	Y Y Y Y Y	y
M	M M M M M	m m m m	Z	Z Z Z Z Z	z



*Confusion sometimes results in not correctly identifying J as e, as in the following words:

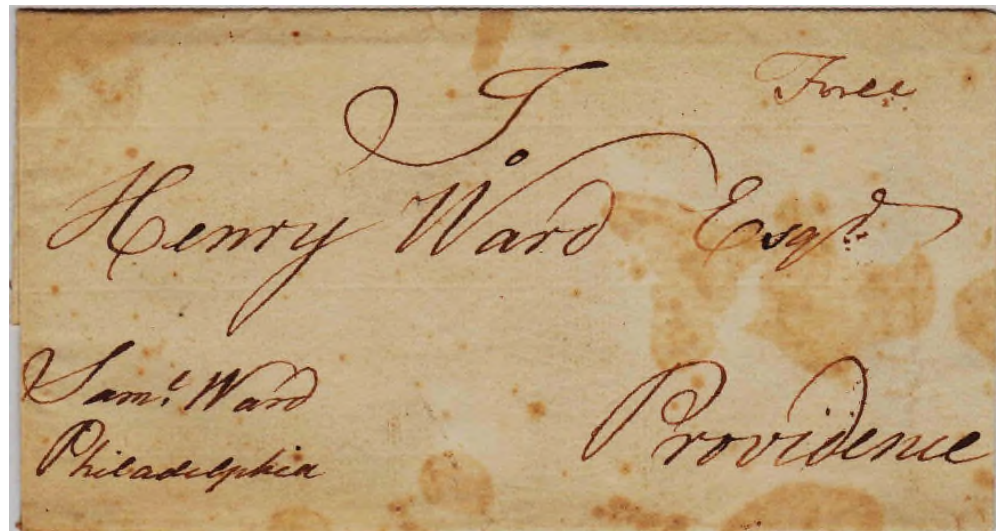
one	deep	me
feel	seal	

Continental Congress Franking Laws

- **November 8, 1775** - Letters to and from the delegates of the United Colonies, during the sessions of Congress, pass, and be carried free of postage, the members having engaged upon their honour not to frank or enclose any letters but their own.
- **November 10, 1775** - All letters to and from the commander in chief in the continental army be carried free of postage.
- **January 9, 1776** - No postage be paid for any letters to or from private soldiers, while engaged in actual service in the defence of the United Colonies; and that such letters be, franked by some person authorised for that purpose, by the commanding officer of the department.
- **February, 16, 1776** - That no postage be paid on officers letters, they engaging on honor to frank or enclose no letters but their own.
- **April 19, 1776** - That letters which are directed for any general in the continental service, commanding in a separate department, be carried free of postage
- **April 28, 1784** - That all letters and packets to and from the late Commander in chief of the armies of the United States, shall pass and be carried free of postage until the further orders of Congress: and that the postmaster general be, and he is hereby directed to refund to the said late Commander in chief, all. the monies paid by him for the postage of letters or packets since the time of his resignation.
- **April 23, 1787** - Letters to and from delegates to the Constitutional Convention shall pass free of postage

Continental Congress

Before and after Franking was approved.



Declaration of Independence Sequence

- **June 7, 1776** - Richard Henry Lee introduces Independence resolution.
- **June 11, 1776** - Congress appointed a "Committee of Five" to draft a Declaration.
- **June 28, 1776** - The "Committee of Five" presented a proposed Declaration of Independence.
- **July 2, 1776** - Vote for independence - Twelve affirmative votes and one abstention. Benjamin Harrison (VA) presided. Thomas Willing (PA), Charles Humphreys (PA) and George Read (DE) voted NO. John Dickinson (PA) and Robert Morris (PA) purposely stayed away. Others, such as Richard Henry Lee, Samuel Chase, Elbridge Gerry and Oliver Wolcott, were away for legitimate reasons.
- **July 4, 1776** - Congress approved the wording of the Declaration of Independence.. Benjamin Harrison (VA) presided. John Hancock (President) and Charles Thomson (Secretary) signed the approved draft .
- **July 4-5, 1776** - The original copy of the Declaration was sent to the printer, John Dunlop. This original copy of the Declaration of Independence, called the "Fair Copy" apparently has not survived.
- **July 15, 1776** - New York gives its delegation the authority to vote for independence.
- **July 19, 1776** - Timothy Matlack asked to engross the Declaration
- **August 2, 1776** - "The Declaration of Independence, being engrossed, and compared at the table, was signed by current members present at that time (43 – 49),
- **January 8, 1777** - Congress agreed for the first time to have an authentic copy of the Declaration printed with the names of the members who had subscribed it; and to send one to each of the states with the request "to have the same put upon record." There were 55 names on the published list. Thomas McKean of Delaware was not included.
- **1781** - Thomas McKean serves as President from July 10, 1781 to November 4, 1781. He signed the Declaration of Independence at this time.

Independence Votes and Signers

Voted YES / Signed on 8/2 (32)

Adams, John
Adams, Samuel
Bartlett, Josiah
Braxton, Carter
Clark, Abraham
Ellery, William
Franklin, Benjamin
Gwinnett, Button
Hall, Lyman
Hancock, John
Harrison V, Benjamin
Hewes, Joseph
Heyward, Thomas
Hopkins, Stephen
Hopkinson, Francis
Huntington, Samuel
Jefferson, Thomas
Lynch, Jr., Thomas
Middleton, Arthur
Morton, John
Paca, William
Paine, Robert Treat
Penn, John
Rodney, Caesar
Rutledge, Edward
Sherman, Roger
Stockton, Richard
Stone, Thomas
Walton, George
Whipple Jr., William
Wilson, James
Witherspoon, John Knox

Voted YES / Signed 1781 (1)

McKean, Thomas

Probably voted YES / Signed on 8/2/76 (3)

Hart, John
Lee, Francis Lightfoot
Nelson, Jr., Thomas

Voted NO / Signed on 8/2/76 (1)

Read, George

Abstained / Signed 8/2/76 (4)

Floyd, William
Lewis, Francis
Livingston, Philip
Morris, Lewis*

Absent / Signed 8/2/76 (3)

Carroll, Charles, of Carrollton
Chase, Samuel
Hooper, William *

Purposely Absent / Signed 8/2/76 (1)

Morris Jr., Robert

Absent 7/2/76 / Signed On or After 9/4/76 (2)

Gerry, Elbridge
Lee, Richard Henry

Absent 7/2/76 / Signed After 9/27/76 (2)

Wolcott, Oliver
Wythe, George

Not Delegate on 7/2/76, / Signed 8/2/76 (6)

Clymer, George *
Ross, George *
Rush, Benjamin *
Smith, James
Taylor, George
Williams, William

Not Delegate on 7/2/76 / Signed 11/19/76 (1)

Thornton, Matthew

Voted YES / Did Not Sign

Rogers, John (Illness)

Voted NO / Did Not Sign

Humphreys, Charles
Willing, Thomas

Abstained / Did Not Sign

Alsop, John
Clinton, George
Livingston, Robert
Wisner, Henry

Purposely Absent / Did Not Sign

Dickinson, John

* Probable

Number of Franks Known

A - 1-5

B - 6-10

C - 11 or More

Declaration of Independence Signer Franks

To
On the Publick Service,
John Thomas Esq.
First Brigadier General in the American Army
at
Cambridge
Congress Philadelphia
John Hancock

**John Hancock B
Massachusetts**

Mrs. Sarah McKean,
At the Governor's,
Philadelphia.
Thos McKean

**Thomas McKean A
Delaware**

New York 1776 FREE.
Mrs Anne Livingston
at Doctor Shippens in
Second Street
R. H. Lee. Philadelphia

**Richard Henry Lee A
Virginia**

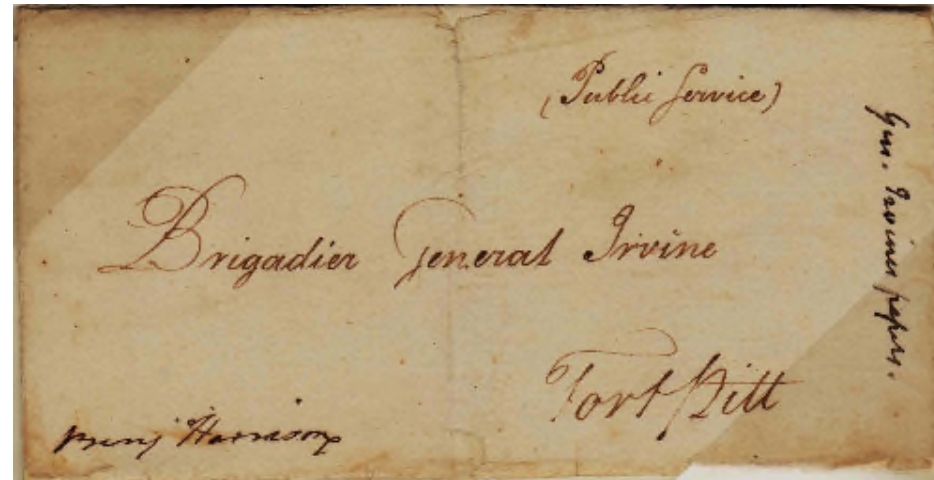
To
Mrs Mary Williams
at
Col. Williams's
Lebanon
in Connecticut
Wm Williams
Phila

**William Williams A
Connecticut**

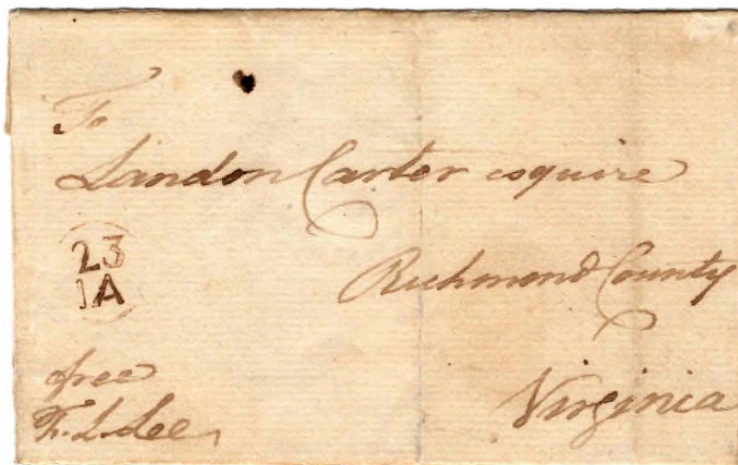
Declaration of Independence Signer Franks



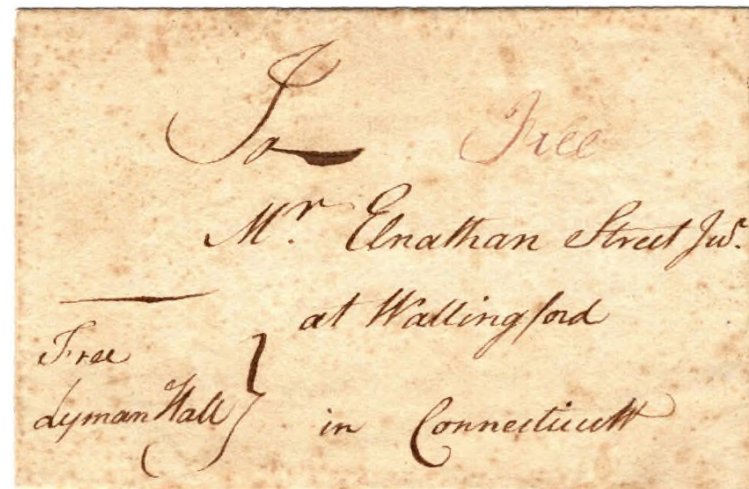
Robert Morris B
Pennsylvania



Benjamin Harrison A
Virginia

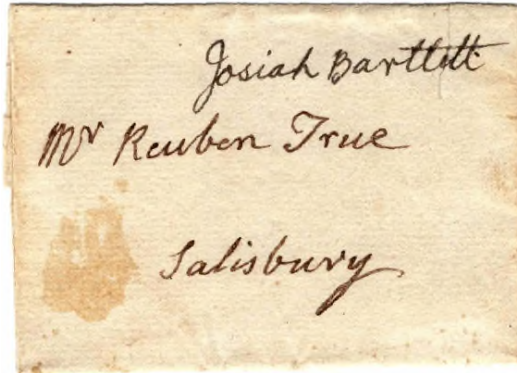


Francis Lightfoot Lee A
Virginia



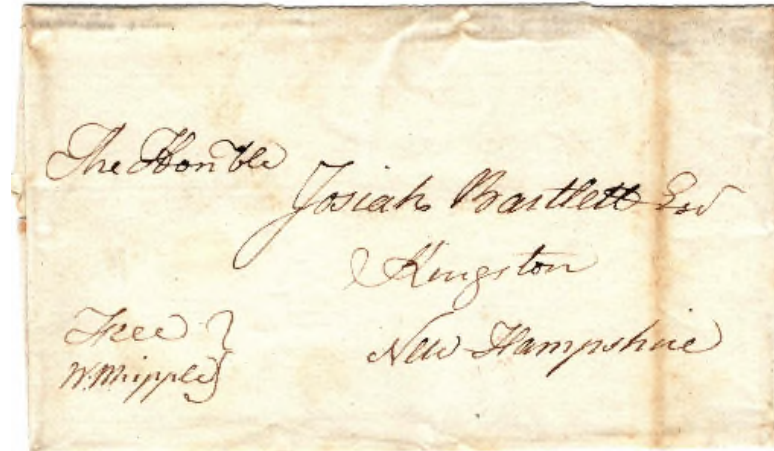
Lyman Hall A
Georgia

Declaration of Independence Signer Franks



Josiah Bartlett
Mr Reuben True
Salisbury

Josiah Bartlett B
New Hampshire



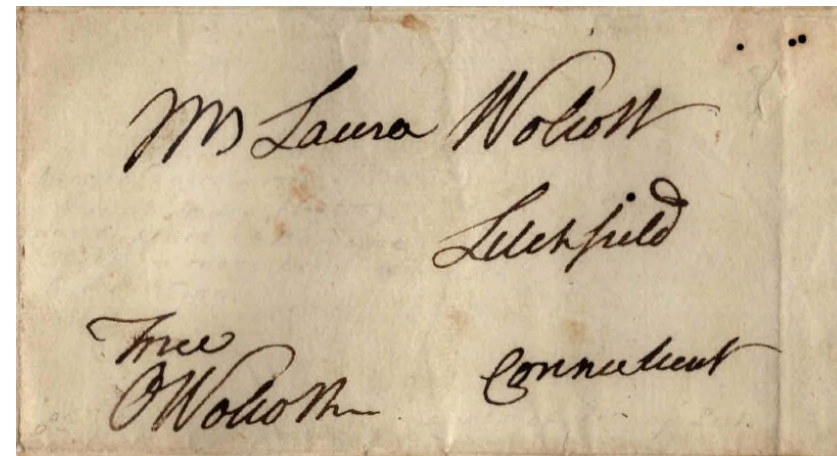
The Honble
Josiah Bartlett Esq
Kingston
New Hampshire
Free }
Whipple }

William Whipple A
New Hampshire



To
The Hon.ble
Nicholas Cook Esq.
Governor of the Colony
Rhode-Island
Hopkins

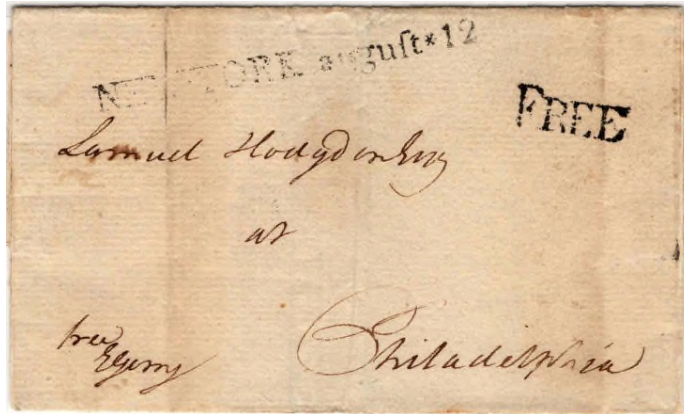
Stephen Hopkins A
Rhode Island



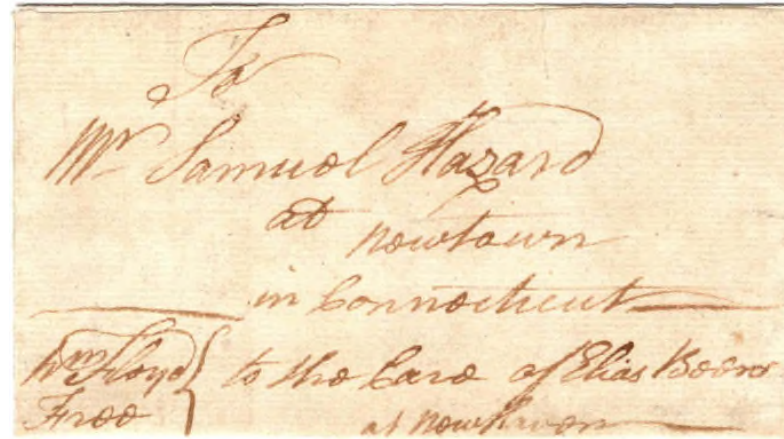
Mr Laura Wolcott
Leitchfield
Free
Wolcott
Connecticut

Oliver Wolcott A
Connecticut

Declaration of Independence Signer Franks



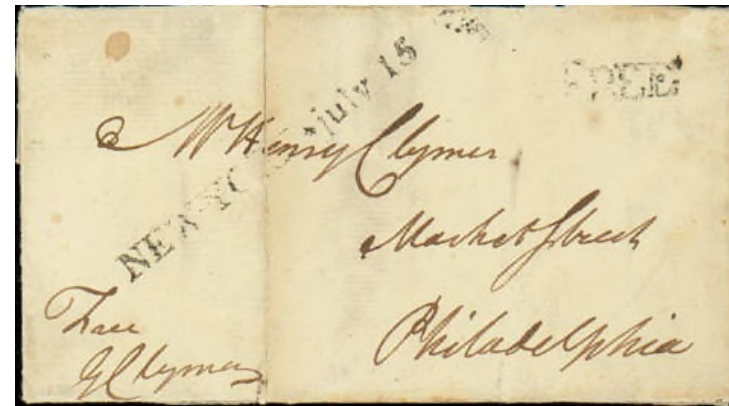
Elbridge Gerry B
Massachusetts



William Floyd A
New York

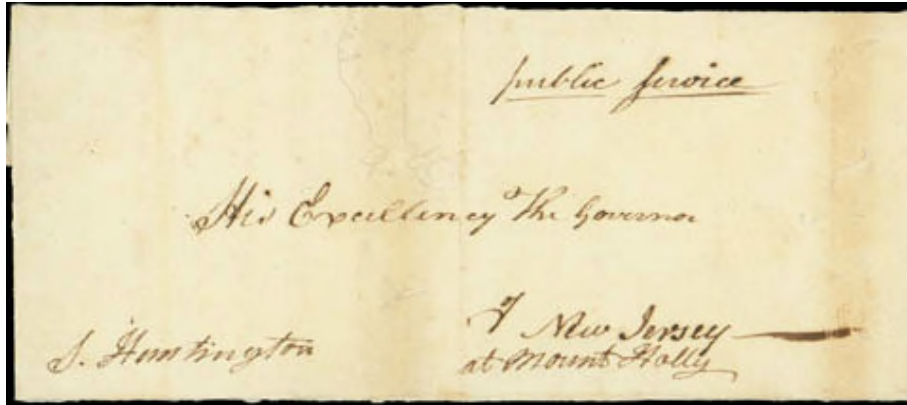


Samuel Chase A
Maryland



George Clymer B
Pennsylvania

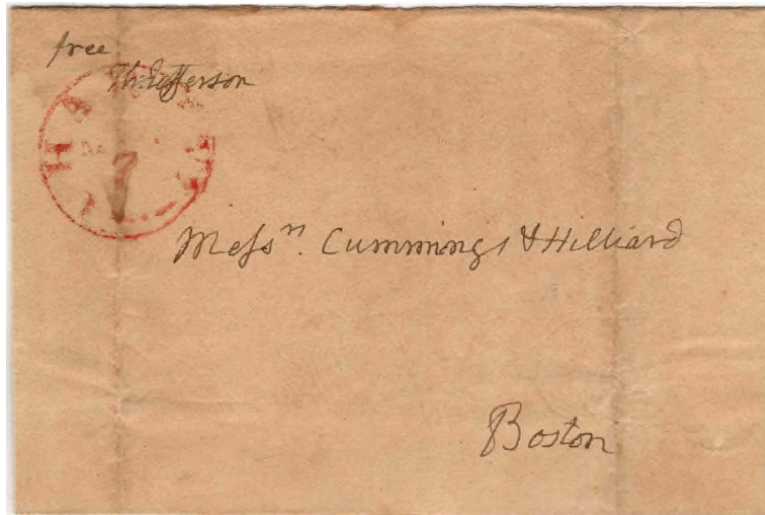
Declaration of Independence Signer Franks



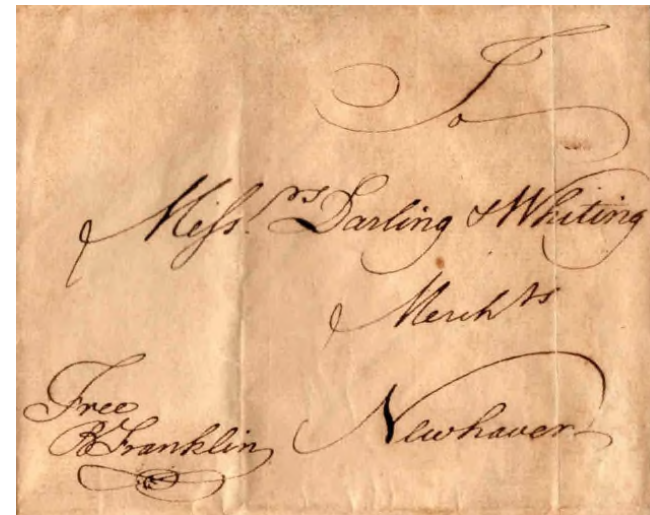
Samuel Huntington A
Connecticut



John Adams C
Massachusetts



Thomas Jefferson C
Virginia



Benjamin Franklin C
Pennsylvania

Alternate Frank Style

On Public Service
To
Col. Robert L. Hooper,
Quartermaster at
Mr. Alricks. Easton

Francis Hopkinson
New Jersey

Continental Navy Board
Bordentown 24th March 1778

Sir

Be pleased to furnish the Board
Mr. William Alricks with a public
Wagon for the Removal of the Continen-
tal Naval Chest, now at Mr. Livers, to
Easton & you will oblige

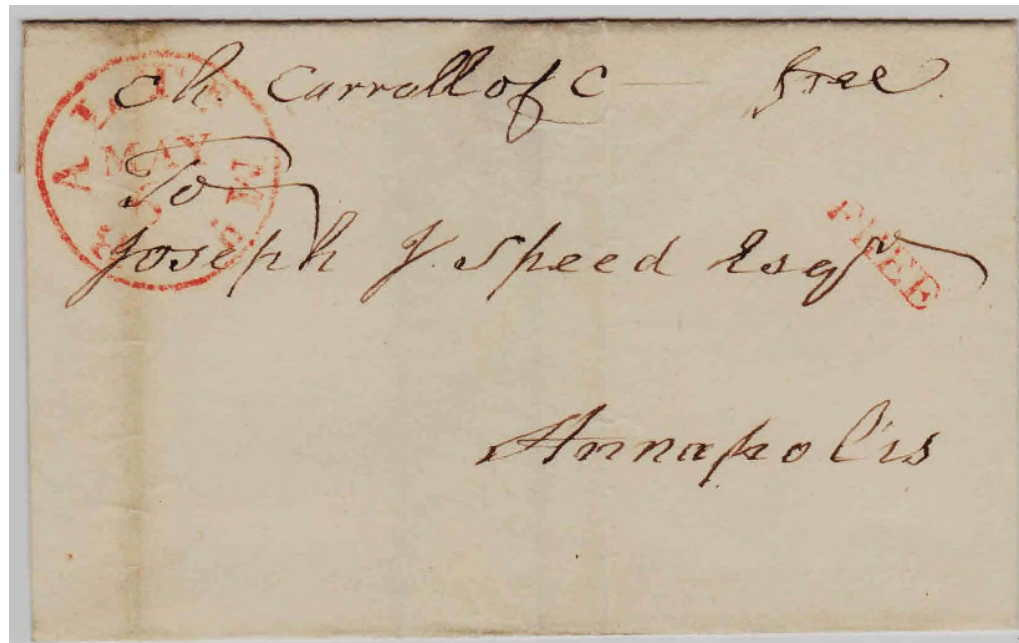
Your humble servant
Fra. Hopkinson

Col. Hooper.

Last Living Signer

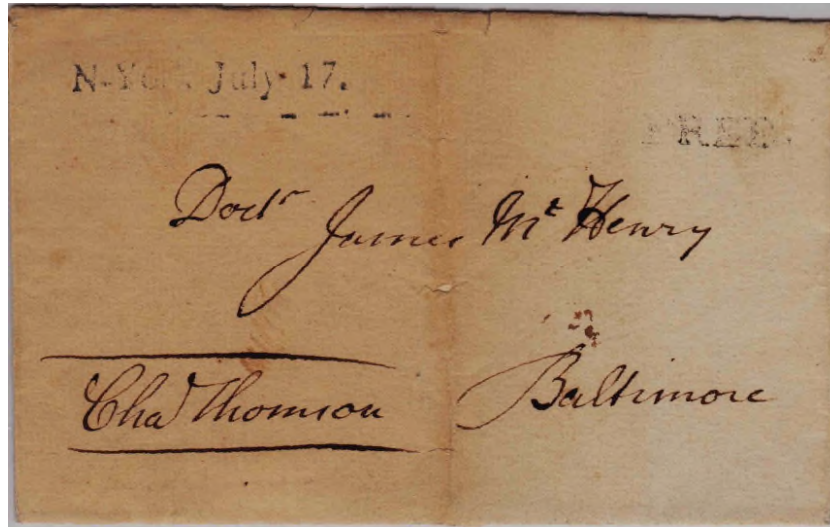
Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, the only surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, be, and he is hereby authorized to receive and transmit letters and packages by the mail free of postage.

APPROVED, 23 May 1828



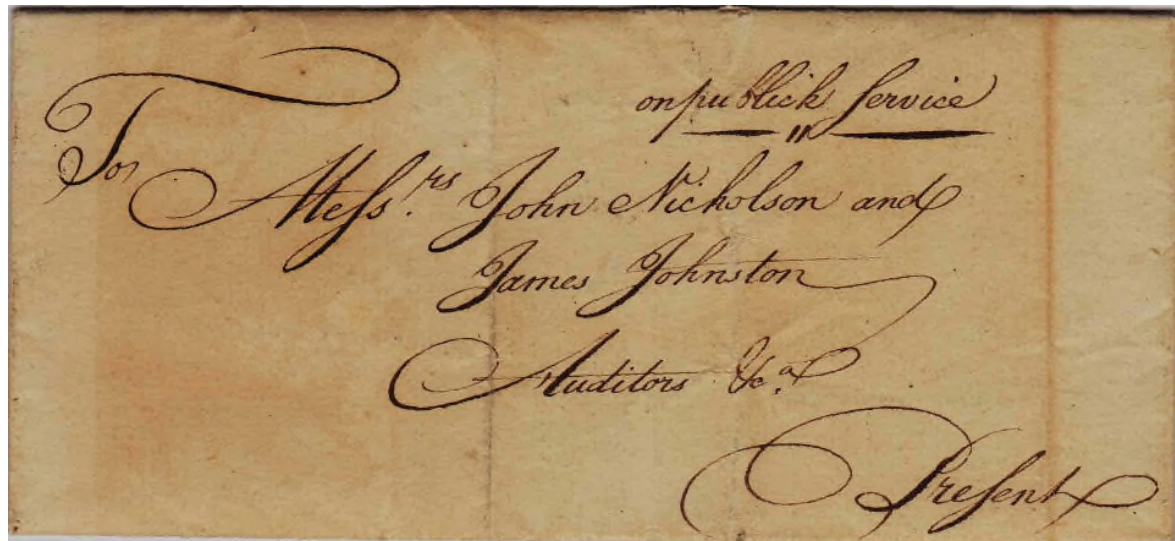
Charles Carroll of Carrollton A

Declaration of Independence Related Franks



Charles Thomson
Forgotten Signer

Timothy Matlack
Engrosser



Signer Free Franks Known

New Hampshire

Josiah Bartlett **B**
Matthew Thornton **N**
William Whipple **A**

Massachusetts

John Hancock **B**
John Adams **C**
Samuel Adams **N**
Robert Treat Paine **N**
Elbridge Gerry **B**

Rhode Island

Stephen Hopkins **A**
William Ellery **A**

Connecticut

Roger Sherman **N**
Samuel Huntington **A**
William Williams **A**
Oliver Wolcott **A**

Number of Franks Known

N - None

A - 1-5

B - 6-10

C - 11 or More

New York

William Floyd **A**
Philip Livingston **N**
Francis Lewis **N**
Lewis Morris **N**

New Jersey

Richard Stockton **N**
John Witherspoon **N**
Francis Hopkinson **N**
John Hart **N**
Abraham Clark **A**

Pennsylvania

Robert Morris **B**
Benjamin Rush **N**
Benjamin Franklin **C**
John Morton **N**
George Clymer **B**
James Smith **N**
George Taylor **N**
James Wilson **N**
George Ross **N**

Delaware

Caesar Rodney **N**
George Read **N**
Thomas McKean **A**

Maryland

Samuel Chase **A**
William Paca **N**
Thomas Stone **N**
Charles Carroll **A**

Virginia

George Wythe **N**
Richard Henry Lee **B**
Thomas Jefferson **C**
Benjamin Harrison **A**
Thomas Nelson, Jr. **A**
Francis Lightfoot Lee **A**
Carter Braxton **N**

North Carolina

William Hooper **A**
Joseph Hewes **N**
John Penn **N**

South Carolina

Edward Rutledge **N**
Thomas Heyward **N**
Thomas Lynch **N**
Arthur Middleton **N**

Georgia

Button Gwinnett **N**
Lyman Hall **A**
George Walton **A**

Congressional Franking Rules

- **Nov 8, 1775** Delegates during sessions
- **Oct 18, 1782** Delegates while attending
- **Apr 23, 1787** Members of Constitutional Convention
- **June 1, 1792** - two ounce limit. While attending and up to 20 days after session
- **March 31, 1816** - During session, 30 day before and after session
- **Dec 19, 1821** - Any document regardless of weight printed by order of either House.
- **March 3, 1825** - During session, 60 days before and after
- **March 2, 1833** - 60 days before session, during session and until start of next session (considered the first Monday of December)
- **July 1, 1845** - Members may receive mail during recess
- **March 1, 1847** - Former members may frank until the first Monday of December following the expiration of their term of office.
- **March 3, 1863** - Franking privileges for former members were withdrawn.
- **June 8, 1872** - Franking privileges for former members were restored.
- **July 1, 1873** - Franking privileges abolished. Regular postage stamps purchased and distributed for members official use.
- **March 3, 1875** - Members may only frank printed public documents and seeds.
- **March 3, 1891** - Members may use a frank on mail to Government Officials.
- **January 12, 1895** - Franking restored for outgoing official mail. Applies until the first day of December following the expiration of respective term of office. For the first time, personal signatures are not mandatory.

Congressional Franks



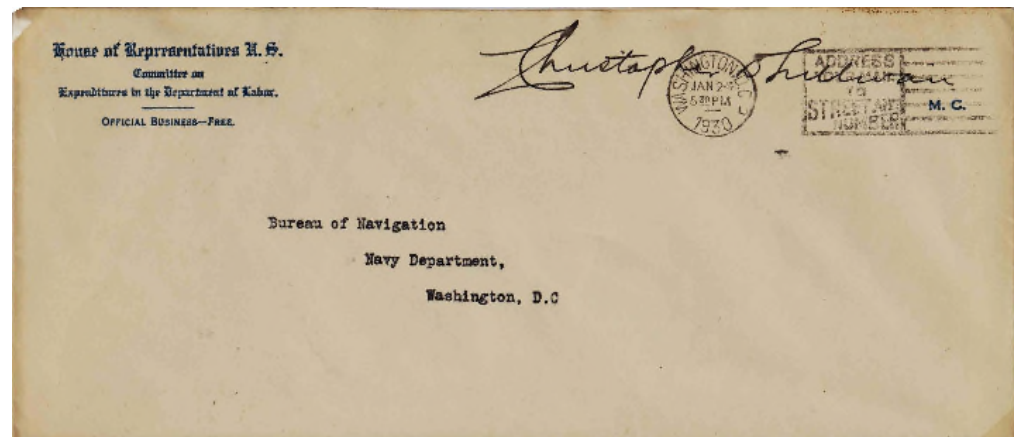
Peter A. Muhlenberg



Sam Houston

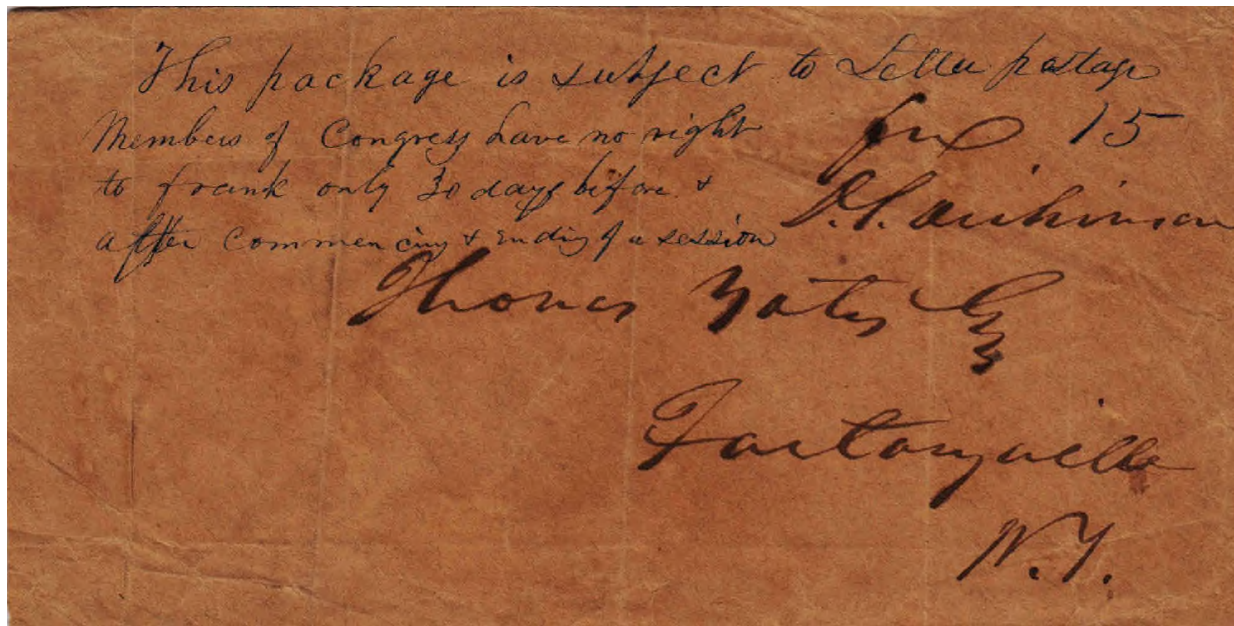


Hezekiah Bradley Smith



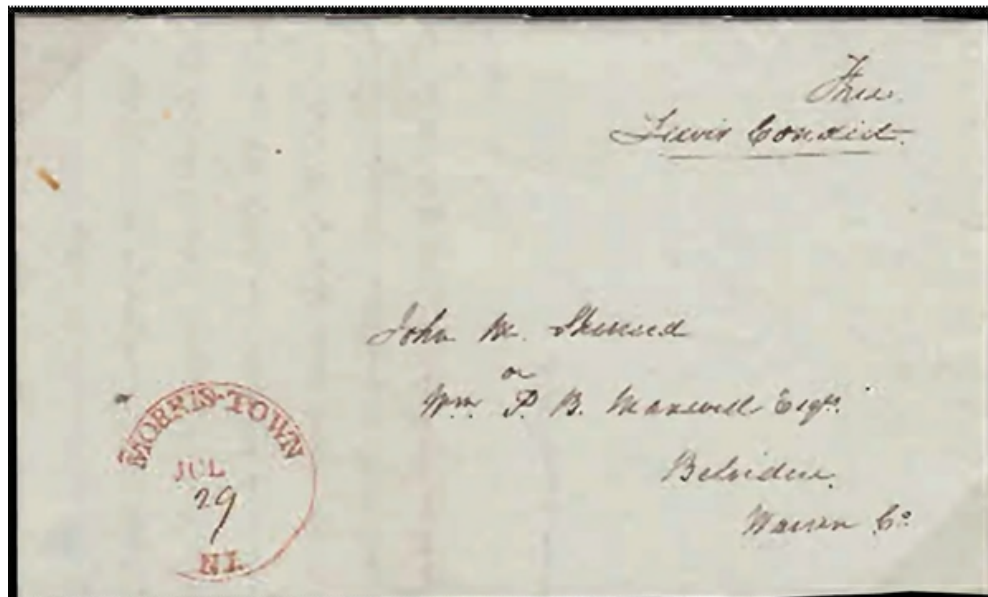
Christopher D. Sullivan

Congressional Franks

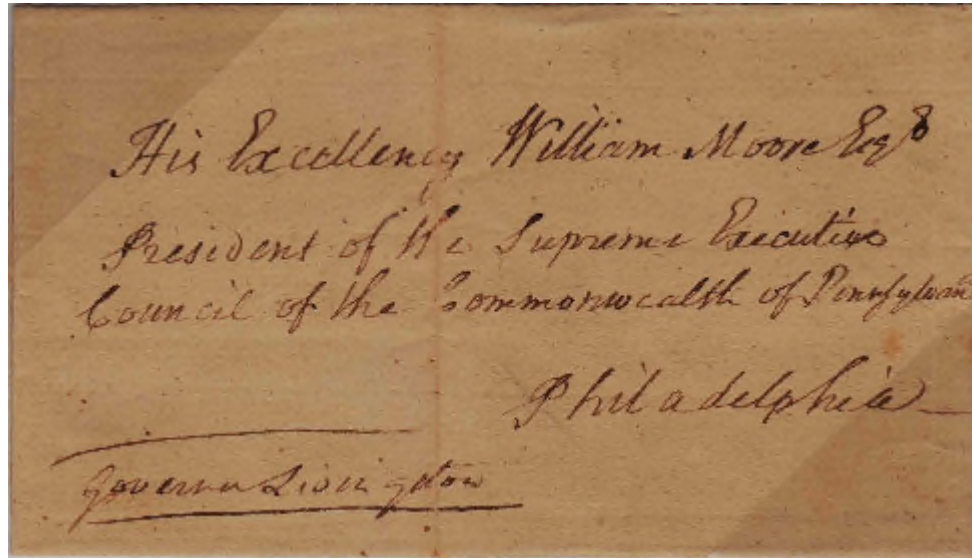


Senator Daniel Stevens Dickinson served from 1844 to 1851. During that period his frank would have been valid during the whole year. The postmaster improperly charged postage.

Dated July 29, 1833. **Lewis Conduct** left office March 4, 1833.

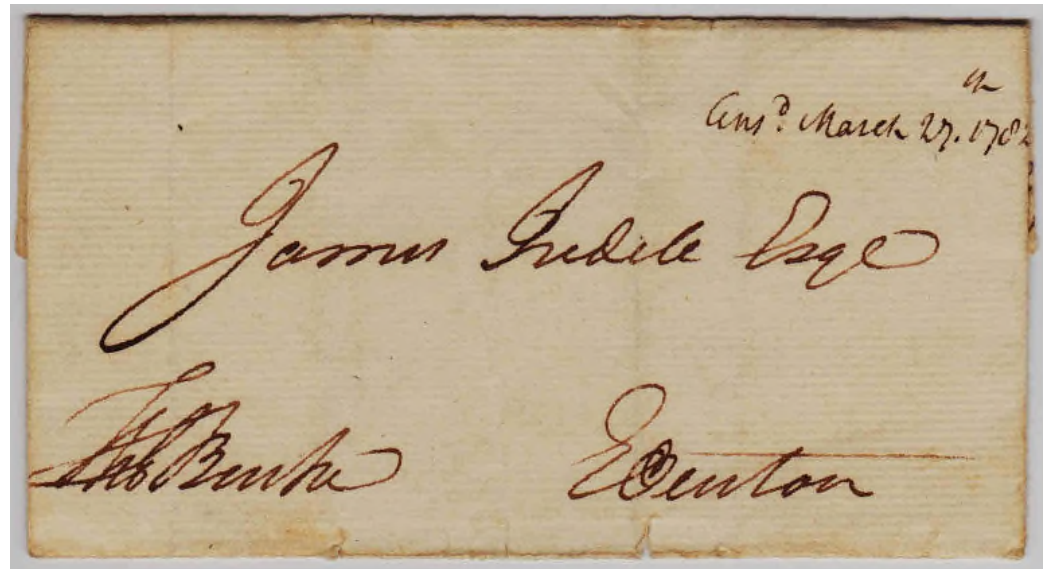


Franks By Governors



His Excellency William Moore Esq^d
President of the Supreme Executive
Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia
Governor Livingston

William Livingston (New Jersey)



Ans? March 27. 1702
James Ingham Esq^d
Edenton

Thomas Burke (North Carolina)

Two Signature Covers



Elbert Herring, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs provides the authorizing frank.

LT R. E. Lee verifies that this 1837 cover is official Engineering Service usage.

Departmental Franking *Brownout* Of 1845-1847

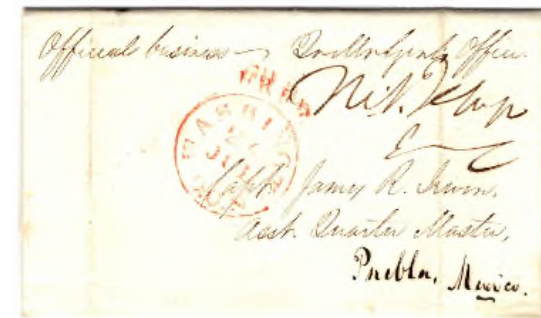
The Act of March 3, 1845, effective July 1, 1845, recognized the abuse of the franking privilege and repealed all previous franking laws. Congress then restored the privilege to themselves, the President, the Vice President, the Ex-Presidents and their widows, all on a personal basis, plus the postmasters and state governors on a more limited scale. They gave the franking privilege to the three Assistant Postmasters General, but for official business only. It was not given to the Postmaster General, cabinet members or any other official in the executive department. The new law required all those government officials who had previously had the franking privilege (the departmental officers) to keep account of all postage charged and payable by them so that the charges could be refunded to them quarterly by their own offices.



1843



1845



1847

Franking Abuse

Political Campaign



Signed Blanks

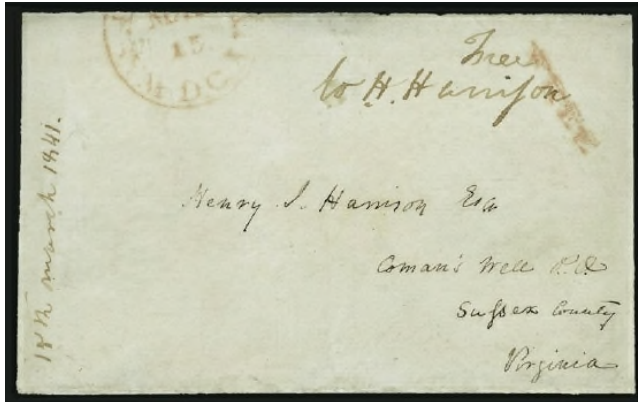


Condoned

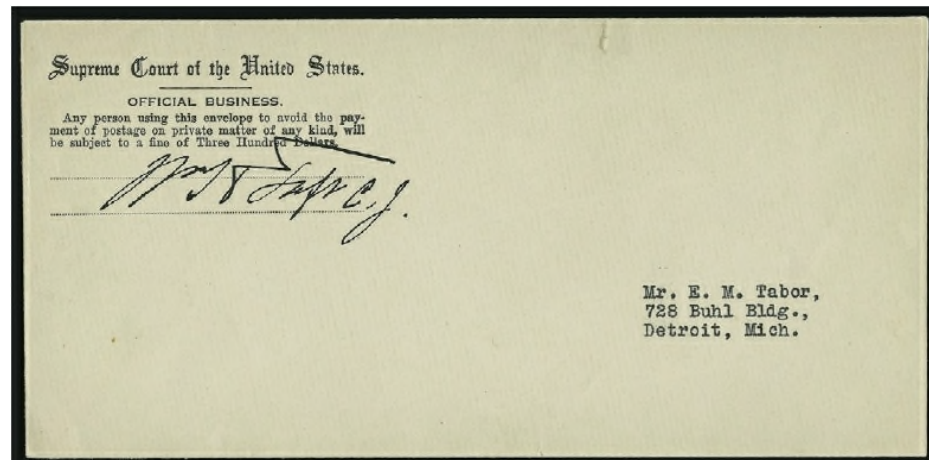
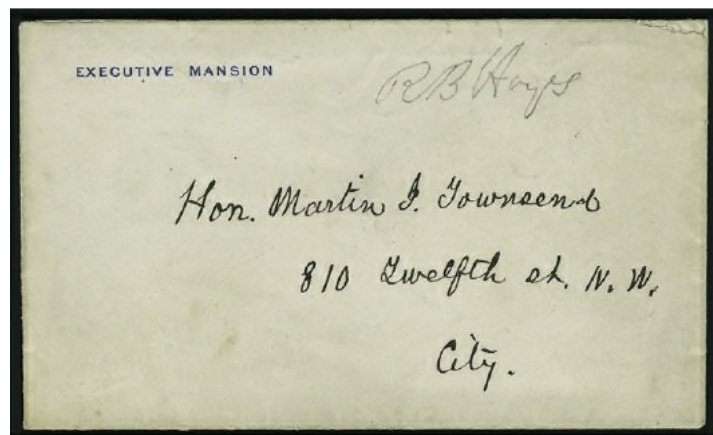
Presidential Franks

- Presidents from Washington to Grant received the franking privilege by individual acts of Congress.
- Ex-Presidents from Washington to Buchanan were given the privilege by individual acts of Congress.
- By law effective March 25, 1957, all ex-Presidents have the franking privilege.

Legitimate Franks



NOT Legitimate Franks



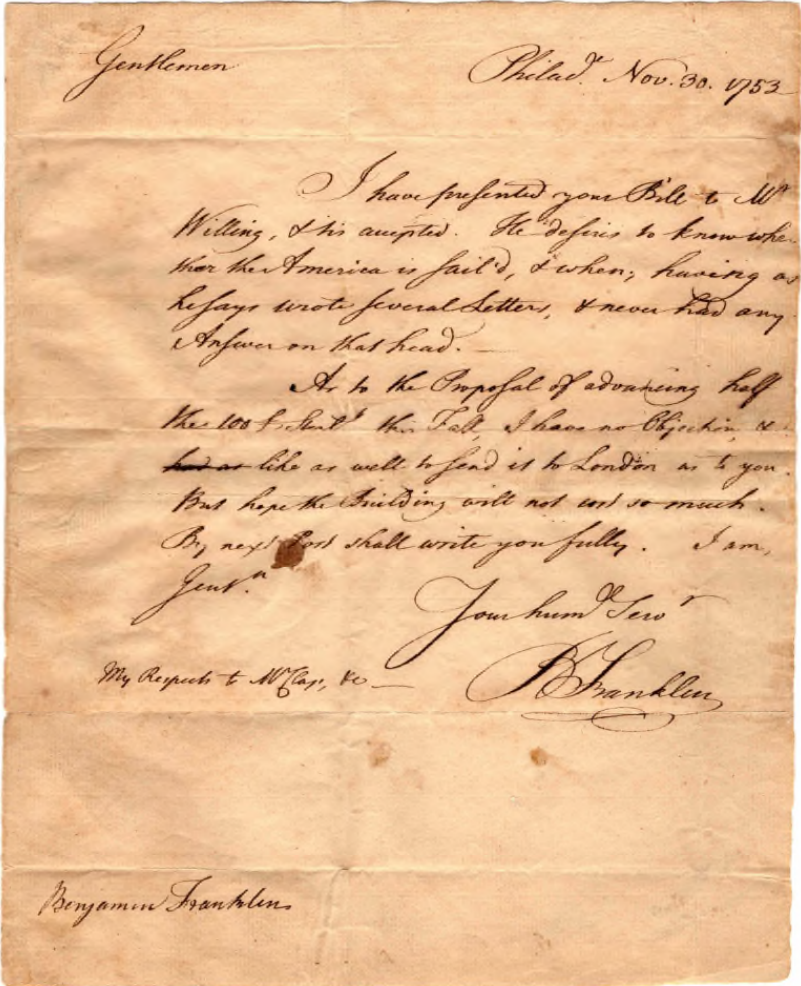
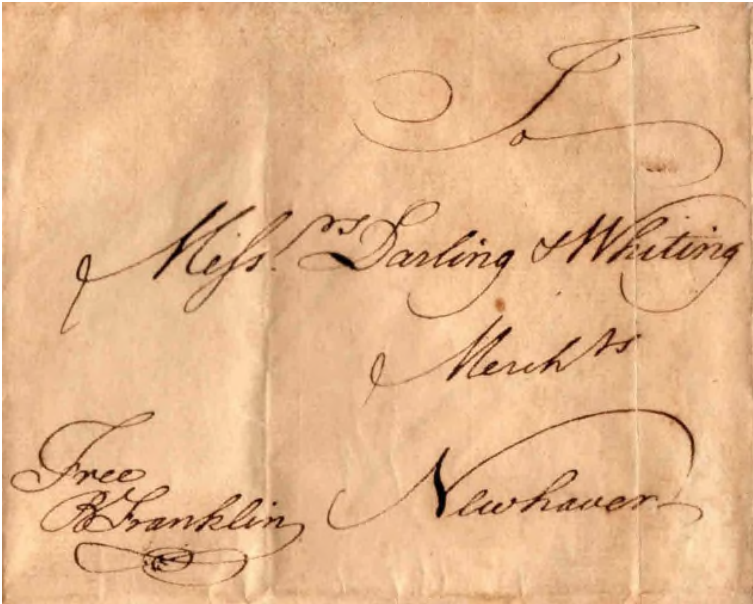
The covers on this page are Ex-Robertson

Benjamin Franklin Franks

Franklin's Franking Privilege:

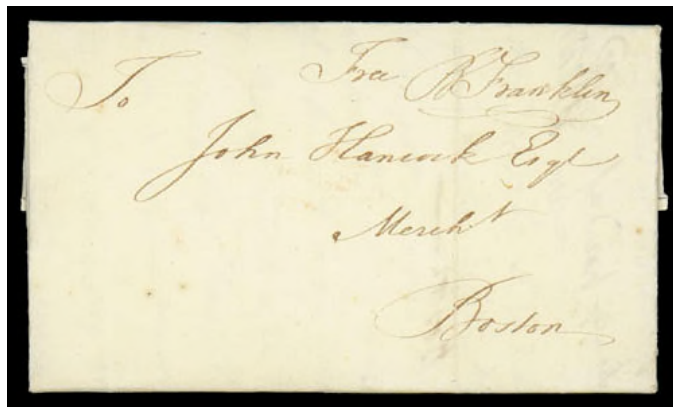
- October or November 1753 – February 2, 1774 – Co-Deputy Postmaster General
- July 26, 1775-November 9, 1776-Postmaster General

Earliest Known Franklin Frank
November 30, 1753



“Free B Franklin”

5 known



London, April 13, 1765

“B Free Franklin”

6 known

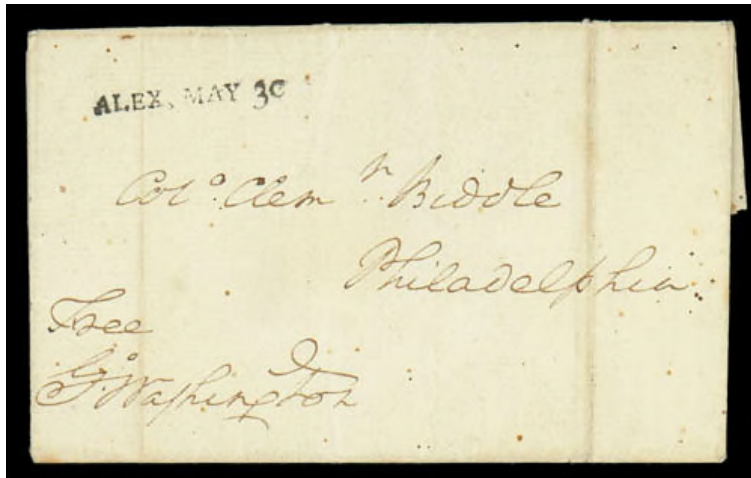


London, May 9, 1766

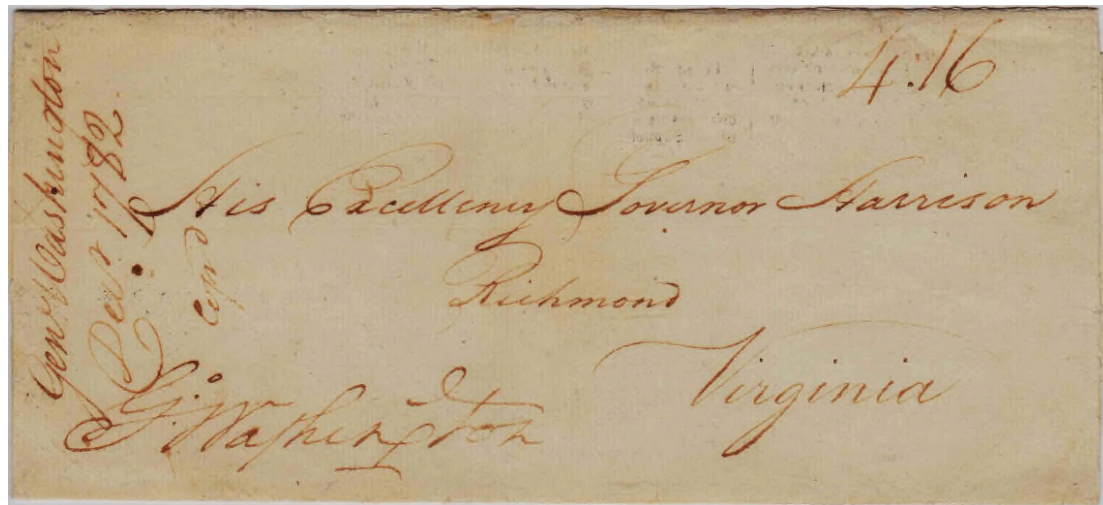
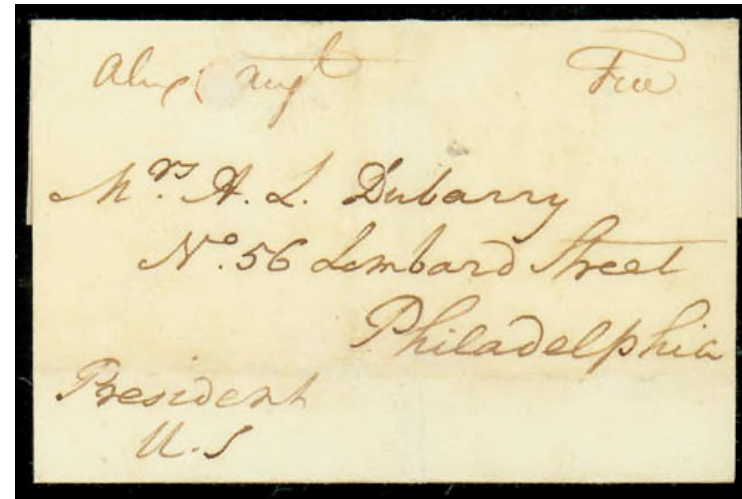
George Washington Franks

Washington's Franking Privilege:

- November 10, 1775 – December 23, 1783 – As Commander of the Army
- April 28, 1784 - Personal Frank by Act of Continental Congress
- April 30, 1789 – March 4, 1797 – As President
- March 3, 1797 – Based on Act of April 28, 1784 (Not as Ex-President)



1788 Rare Use of "Free"



1782
Not Accepted