

Boston's Use of the 1847 Issue

America's First Stamps from
America's First Post Office

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America's First Stamps from America's First Post Office

Purpose and Scope

This postal history exhibit shows how the first U.S. government 5c and 10c adhesives were used from Boston, the nation's third largest post office, to frank mail sent both domestically and out of the country.

Organization

- Domestic Letters
- Combinations with the Boston Penny Post
- Foreign Letters
- Demonetized Use

Within each chapter, the organization is by rate zone (under/over 300 miles), and within that by weight.

Background

The Act of Congress, March 3, 1845 (eff. July 1), established new and simplified rates. Letters sent up to 300 miles were charged 5¢ per ½ oz., and those sent over 300 miles, 10¢ per ½ oz. Section 11 of the Act of Congress, March 3, 1847, authorized Postmaster General Cave Johnson to prepare and issue postage stamps. He contracted with Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson to prepare both 5c and 10c adhesives. These stamps were issued on July 1 of that year. Beginning on July 2 and over the next 4 years, Boston would receive 401,000 5c stamps and 41,000 10c stamps, a number exceeded only by New York and Philadelphia.

Important or unusual items framed in red. Cover populations based on USPCS Census. e = certificate.

Prologue

Before the 1847 issue, adhesives were used to pay for about two dozen letters sent from Boston (to New York) via the U.S. Post Office. The letter below bears a NY Postmaster Provisional stamp, produced in 1845 for NY Postmaster Robert H. Morris by Rawdon, Hatch & Wright. The Boston postmaster was aware of these stamps and that the New York P.O. would accept them as valid postage. He applied the red CDS and magenta manuscript "5", indicating 5c due, and the letter was stamped "PAID" in New York.

Use of the NY Postmaster Provisional on a Letter from Boston



The rate of 5¢ was for a ½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles.

Boston to New York, NY
November 8, 1845

This 29½ mm Boston CDS is reported used from July 5, 1841 to June 5, 1852.

The manuscript "5" was replaced by an integral rate CDS in 2Q45, dating this cover to 1845.

Domestic Letters

up to 300 miles

up to ½ oz.

The rate of 5c was for a ½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles.

This Boston CDS with integral “5 Cts” (“N – Cts” close) is reported used from Apr. 16, 1846 to May 15, 1851.



Boston to Northampton, Mass.

February 23, 1850

Boston & Albany Railroad



Boston to Ware, Mass.

June 21, 1851

The rate of 5c was for a ½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles.

This 30½ mm “BOSTON & ALBANY” CDS is reported used in red from July 29, 1848 to Oct. 2, 1851.

Domestic Letters

up to 300 miles

½-1 oz.

The rate of 10c was
for a ½-1 oz. letter
sent up to 300 miles.

Boston to Lenox, Mass.
October 27, 1847

This red Boston CDS with
straight integral "10 Cts" is
reported used from Dec. 21,
1846 to June 23, 1851.



Underpaid Letter

The rate of 5c was
for a ½ oz. letter sent
up to 300 miles. Rated
as a ½-1 oz. letter and
marked "5 Due."

Boston to Walpole, NH
August 11, 1849

This red worn Boston CDS
with slanted integral "10 Cts"
is reported used from Apr.
14, 1849 to Feb. 19, 1856.

The rate of 10c was
for a ½-1 oz. letter
sent up to 300 miles.

Boston to Hanover, NH
March 2, c.1850



Domestic Letters

up to 300 miles

1-1½ oz. / 1-2 oz.

The Triple Rate and its Elimination

Beginning July 1, 1845, at 5c per ½ oz., the U.S. rate for a 1-1½ oz. (triple) letter, sent up to 300 miles, was 15c. However, Great Britain had no triple rate. The progression in the U.K. was 0-½ oz., (single rate); ½-1 oz. (double rate); and 1-2 oz. (quadruple rate). When the U.S.-U.K. Postal Convention was signed on Jan. 3, 1849, it explicitly noted that the U.S. and U.K. had a difference in their respective rate progressions. However, per a notice of March 15, 1849, the U.S. Postmaster General eliminated the triple rate. Thus, the use of the 1847 issue stamps to prepay the triple rate was allowed for only about 20 months.

Sent Prior to March 15, 1849

One of two reported strips of three 5c 1847s used at Boston

The rate of 15c was for a 1-1½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles.

This 29¼ mm Boston CDS is reported used from Jan. 23, 1844 to July 15, 1856.



Boston to New York, NY

August 16, 1847

Sent After March 15, 1849 - Elimination of the Triple Rate

One of two reported combinations of the 5c and 10c 1847 used at Boston

The rate of 20c was for a 1-2 oz. letter sent up to 300 miles.

The presence of both red crayon "15" and "unpaid 5" markings strongly suggests a rerating due to the elimination of the triple rate.

(cover front)



Boston to New York, NY

May 31, c. 1849

Domestic Letters

up to 300 miles *

1-2 oz.

The two vertical pairs on the cover below were cut from a block of four.



Scan @100%
Reconstructed block

One of 2 reported examples of four 5c adhesives paying the quadruple under-300 mile rate from Boston



Boston to New York, NY

December 10, 1850

After March 15, 1849, the rate of 20c was for a 1-2 oz. letter sent up to 300 miles. It is possible that this was sent in 1847 or 1848, in which case the letter would have weighed 1½-2 oz.

The two vertical pairs originally formed a block.

This red handstamp "20"
is reported used from
Sept. 12, 1850 to
Feb. 17, 1851.

Domestic Letters

over 300 miles

up to ½ oz.



The rate of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles.

Boston to Galena, Illinois

June 10, 1851

This Boston CDS with integral "10 cts" (worn, circle close) is reported used in red from Apr. 14, 1849 to Feb. 19, 1856.

One of 3 1847 Covers from Boston to Texas

The rate of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles.

Boston via to Houston, Tx.

March 4, 1851

This Boston CDS with slanting integral "10 cts" is reported used in red from June 16, 1846 to March 8, 1851.



The rate of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles.

Boston to Philadelphia, Pa.

March 26, 1850

This Boston CDS with upright integral "10 Cts" is reported used in red from Dec. 21, 1846 to June 23, 1851.

Domestic Letters

over 300 miles

up to ½ oz.



U.S. Express Mail

The rate of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles.

This route agent marking "U.S. Express Mail / Boston / Mass." is reported used in red in 1843 and from Mar. 6, 1844 to Oct. 13, 1852.

Boston to Philadelphia, Pa.

November 5, c.1850

The "U. S. Express Mail" marking provided no special service; the mail was carried along regular routes, and postage rates were unchanged. This "service" was established between Boston and New York in 1842, as a response to Independent Mail Companies and the perception that they carried mail faster than the U.S. Post Office.

over 300 miles

½-1 oz.

One of 2 reported Boston Covers with a strip of four 5c adhesives

The rate of 20c was for a ½ -1oz. letter sent over 300 miles.



Boston to Philadelphia, Pa.

June 13, c.1849

Domestic Letters

over 300 miles

up to ½ oz.



U.S. Express Mail

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over 300 miles

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One of 2 reported Boston Covers with a strip of four 5c adhesives

The rate of 20c was for a ½ -1oz. letter sent over 300 miles.



Boston to Philadelphia, Pa.

June 13, c.1849

Combination with the Boston Penny Post

up to 300 miles

0-½ oz.

Boston Semi-Official Penny Post and Delivery

On Feb. 18, 1849, the postmaster at Boston, Nathaniel Green, announced that Mr. James H. Patterson and his carriers had been appointed to provide letter delivery in Boston. The Letter Carrier's Office was established at 23 Sudbury St., moving in 1850 to the Merchant's Exchange. During the years 1849-1857, the first specific penny post markings and adhesives were introduced.

The Only Recorded Boston Penny Post - 5c 1847 Combination Sent Overseas



Boston, Mass. via Liverpool to Paris, France

March 6, 1850

Cunard steamer *America*

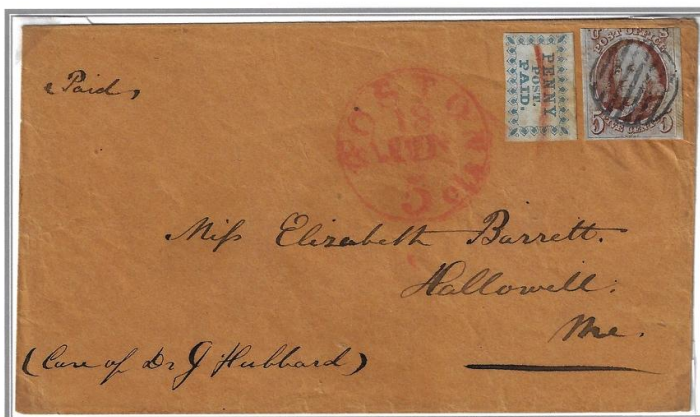
The penny post stamp paid for delivery to the P.O. The 5c rate was for a <½oz. letter sent under 300 miles to the port of debarkation.

The addressee paid 30 decimes (20 dec. to the U.K., 10 dec. to France) for a ¼-½ oz. letter.

The USPS Census contains 28 examples of the 5c 1847 used in combination with the first Penny Post adhesive.

The ringed circle cancel is reported used in April 1850.

One of 4 Recorded 1847 covers with the 2nd Boston Penny Post Adhesive



Boston, Mass. to Hallowell, Me.

June 18, 1851

The penny post stamp paid for delivery to the P.O.

The rate of 5c was for a ½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles.

This carrier stamp is known used as early as April 30, 1851. As the 1847 issue was demonetized after June 30, 1851, this combination could be used for only 2, possibly 3 months. This is the latest known example.

Combination with the Boston Penny Post

over 300 miles

0-½ oz.



The penny post stamp paid for delivery to the P.O. The rate of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles.

Franked with a single 5c 1847 and marked "5 Due."

c (front)

Boston, Mass. to Washington D.C.

April 13, c.1850

The Only Recorded 1847 10c Rate Cover with a Boston Carrier Stamp

The penny post stamp paid for delivery to the P.O. The rate of 10c was for a ½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles.



Boston, Mass. to Milwaukee, Wisc.

May 2, 1849

Foreign Letters

up to 300 miles

Canada

up to ½ oz. / ½-1 oz.

Until April 6, 1851, there was no convention with Canada or the Maritimes that allowed for a “through rate” for letters sent between the United States and Canada. Until then, postage could only be paid to and from the border. In the U.S., the 5c per ½ oz. rate applied for letters sent up to 300 miles to the border, and 10c for those sent over 300 miles. From 1843-1851, Canada had zoned rates: 4½d Canadian per ½ oz. for 0-60 miles; 7d for 61-100 miles; 9d for 101-200 miles; and 11½d for 201-300 miles.

The rate of 5c was for a ½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles “to the lines” at Derby Line. The 4½d Canadian paid for the 0-60 miles to Sherbrooke.



Boston via Derby Line, Vt. and Stanstead to Sherbrooke, East Canada

August 8, 1848

The Only Recorded Example of the 1847 Issue Forwarded by Favor's Express



St. John, N.B. via Boston and Queenston to Hamilton, Canada West
Steamer Admiral

August 1, 1850

The rate of 10c was for a ½-1 oz. letter sent up to 300 miles “to the lines” north of Burlington.

The 4½d Canadian for a distance of 0-60 miles was paid at Montreal.



Reverse @100%

Foreign Letters

over 300 miles

Canada / Mexico

up to ½ oz.

Sent from One Part of B.N.A. to Another via the Boston P.O.

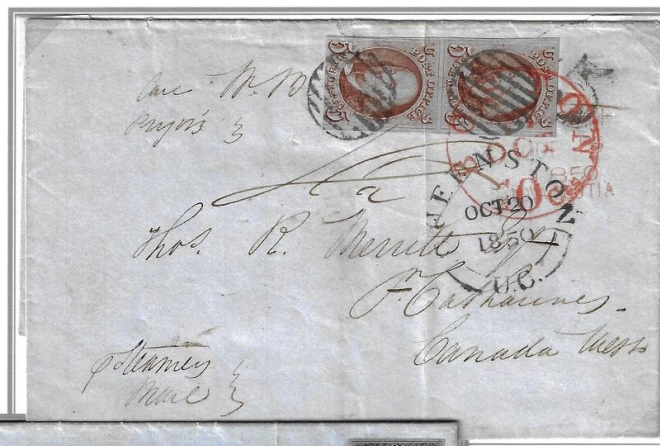
The rate of 10c was for a
0-½oz. letter sent over to
300 miles to the exchange
office at Queenston.

The 4½d Canadian
for a distance of 0-60
miles was paid at
St. Catharine's, C.W.

Halifax to Boston, forwarded to
St. Catharine's, Canada West

October 17, 1850

Cunard steamer *Cambria*



The rate of 10c was
for a ½ oz. letter sent
over 300 miles to
Queenston.

The 11½d Can.,
(200-300 mi. from
Queenston, U.C.) was
paid at Amherstberg.

Boston to Amherstberg, C.W.
October 10, 1849

One of 3 Recorded 1847 covers to Mexico

The rate of 10c was
for a ½ oz. letter sent
over 300 miles to New
Orleans; then by private
ship to Vera Cruz. The ship
letter fee was not struck;
this was not uncommon
in the early 1850s.

Boston to Vera Cruz, Mexico

May 31, 1851

Schooner *Bonita* from New Orleans



Two of three pre-treaty letters known sent from Boston to the U.K. bearing an 1847 adhesive.



Boston via New York to London

February 25, 1848

R. M. S. Hibernia

The 5c adhesive paid the rate to the port of departure.

The 1 shilling rate was paid in the U.K. by the addressee.



Montreal via Boston and New York to Liverpool

June 19, 1848

R. M. S. Acadia

Carried Privately from Montreal to Boston - Express Mail to NY

The 5c adhesive paid the rate to the port of departure.

The 1 shilling rate was paid in the U.K. by the addressee.

Foreign Letters

United Kingdom / Germany - Post Treaty

packet rate

up to ½ oz. / up to ½ oz.

The U.S. - U.K. Postal Convention went into effect Feb. 15, 1849. The basic letter weight was ½ oz., with weight progression up to the individual country. The total rate between the two countries was 24c (12d), with 16c (8d) sea postage to the country whose packet carried the letter, 3s (1½d) British inland postage and 5c (2½d) for U.S. inland postage. The total could be prepaid or left unpaid. Additional articles sent by the PMG on June 19 directed how letters were to be marked, showing how the 24c (12d) was to be split between the two countries.

For mail sent from the U.S. beyond the U.K., utilizing the agreements between the U.K. and those countries, the sender had to pay 5c for transit to the port of departure. The addressee was to pay the remaining rate.



Boston via Liverpool to London

September 24, 1850

R.M.S. Asia

One of 2 reported treaty letters from Boston to the U.K. paid by a combination of a 5c 1847 plus cash.

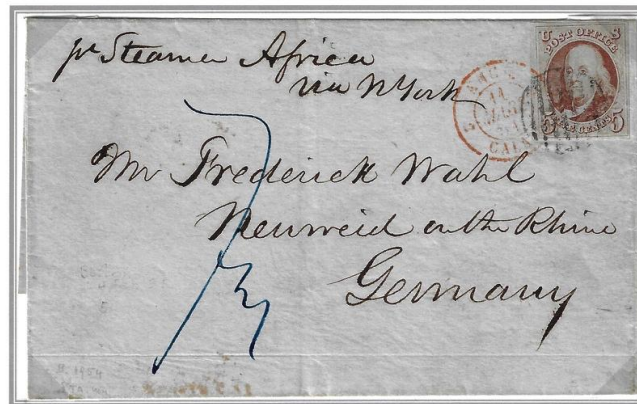
The 24c rate was for a paid ≤½ oz. packet letter, with a 19c credit noted due the U.K.

The "19" hand stamp is known used from September 12, 1849 to November 16, 1859.

One of 2 reported letters from Boston to Germany bearing an 1847 adhesive

The 5c adhesive paid the rate to the port for a ½ oz. packet letter. The addressee paid 7 1/3 silbergroschen, which was the inland rate from the U.K. to Germany. It is unclear how the transatlantic rate was charged or credited to the U.K.

The 19 decime rate was paid in France, including 10 decimes for the U.K. and 9 decimes for a 7½g letter sent 500-600km from Boulogne to Cognac.



Boston and Liverpool to Neuwid on the Rhine

February 24, 1851

R.M.S. Africa

Two of 7 recorded 5c 1847 letters from Boston to France

The 5c adhesive paid the rate to the port for a <½oz. packet letter.

The addressee paid 15 decimes (10 dec. to the U.K., 5 dec. to France).



Boston via New York and Liverpool to Paris

December ~15, 1850

Cunard steamer *Asia*

The only known use of a 5c 1847 stamp on an Am. Packet cover to France



Boston via Liverpool and London to La Rochelle, France

February 3, 1851

Collins Line steamer *Arctic*

The 5c adhesive paid the rate to the port for a <½oz. packet letter, with 16c paid in cash for the sea post.

An additional 15 decimes was due from the addressee, including 10 dec. discriminatory sea post. The latter was still inherent in the 1843 U.K.-France treaty even though discriminatory and retaliatory rates between the U.S. and U.K. had been eliminated.

1847 Issue Demonetized Use

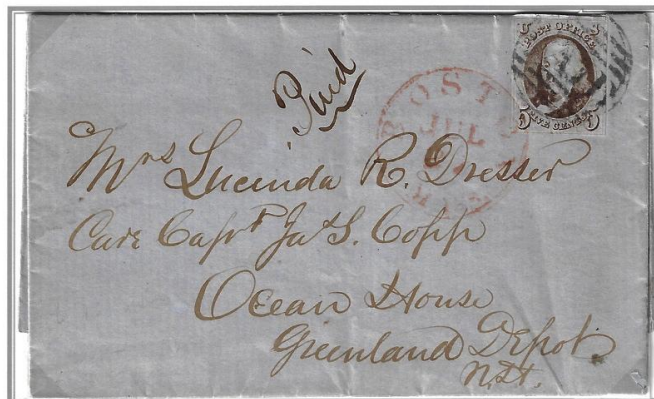
Epilogue

The Act of Congress, Mar. 3, 1851 established new postage rates of 3c per ½ oz. for a paid letter (5c unpaid) sent up to 3000 miles, and 6c for a paid letter (10c unpaid) sent over a greater distance. On June 10, 1851, in expectation of these new rates, Postmaster General Nathan K. Hall issued a regulation that the five and ten cent postage stamps of 1847 would no longer be accepted as legal postage as of July 1, 1851. Still, except for a few small towns, deputy postmasters continued to accept them.

The latest of five demonetized 5c 1847 adhesives used at Boston

The 5c rate was a 2c overpayment on a letter of up to ½ oz. sent up to 3000 miles.

This large Boston "PAID" in grid cancel is known used in black from January 16, 1852 to October 15, 1855.



Boston to Greenland Depot, NH

July 27, 1852

The only recorded demonetized 1847 stamp used to Canada

The 10c rate was for a through letter of up to ½ oz. sent from the United States up to 3000 miles to the Canadian border, and from there to anywhere in Canada.

Although the postage was correct, use of the adhesive itself was illegal.

The small Boston "PAID" in grid cancel is known used in black from July 12, 1851 to Jan. 15, 1852.



Boston via Buffalo to Hamilton, Canada West

December 20, 1851

Questions?