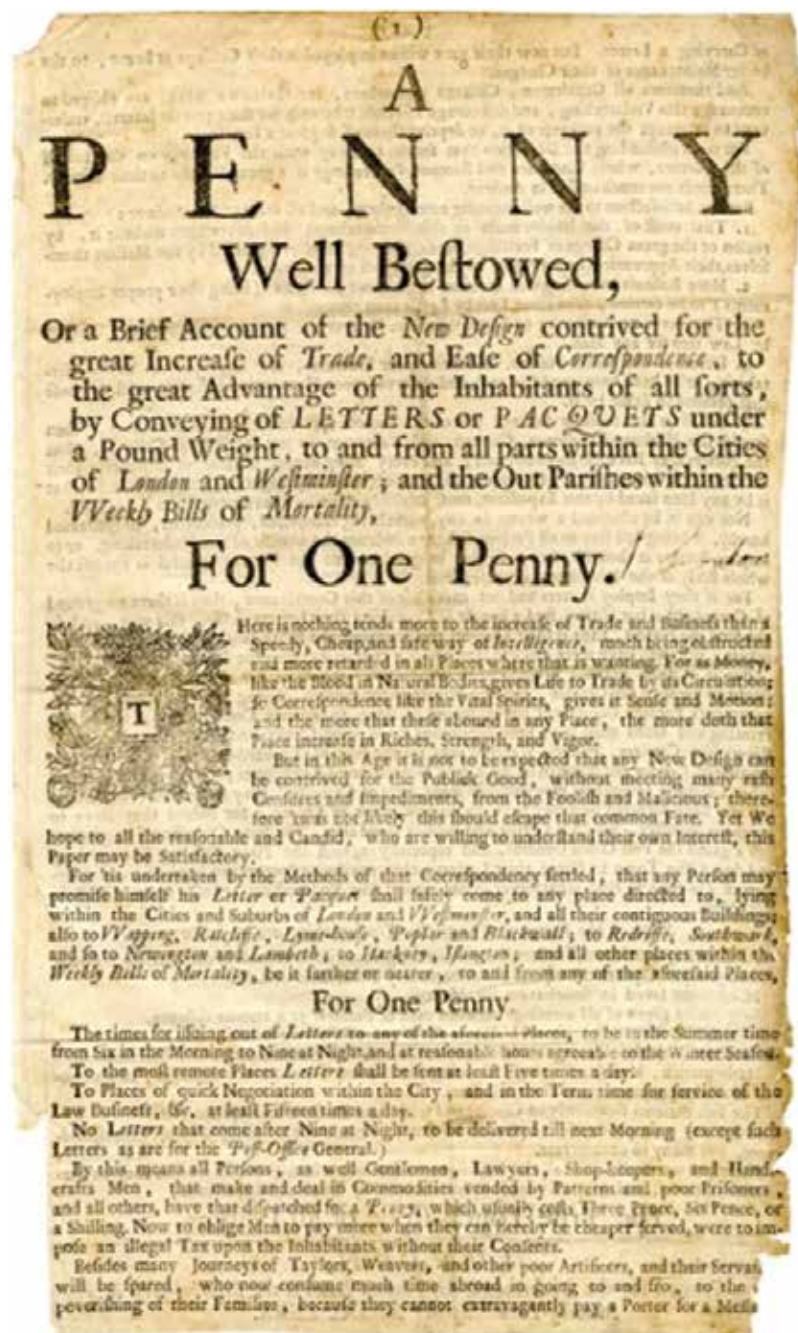


Philatelic Events in History:

The Dockwra Post Paid Mark

(From Mekeel's Weekly and STAMPS, with images added)



Page 1 of "A Penny Well Bestowed" broadsheet of 1680 advertising William Dockwra's London Penny Post. For a closer look, please use your pdf magnifier tool. (See also page 2)

or Carrying a Letter. But now their time will be employed in their Callings at home, to the better Maintenance of their Charges.

And therefore all Gentlemen, Citizens and others, for their own sakes, are obliged to encourage this Undertaking, and discourage all those who only for their private Interest, endeavour to interrupt the progress of it, to deprive them of so great a benefit.

For notwithstanding the Objection that seems to sway with the Vulgar, on the behalf of the Porters, whose Clamours and Riotous Proceedings is a great Scandal to their Society. There needs not much be said in Answer.

But for Satisfaction to the well meaning among them, and all others, We Answer :

1. That most of the Employment in this Undertaking, had never been without it, by reason of the great Charge of Postridg, Messages being usually dispatch'd by the Masters themselves, their Apprentices or Servants, to the great loss of their time.

2. More Business increasing will occasion much more Burthens (being their proper Implyments) to be carried, then their Loss by Letters can amount to.

3. They have no Authority to Monopolize the Delivery of Letters to themselves, it being by Law free for any Man.

4. Divers of the Ticket-Porters, and many poor Freemen, are employed in this Undertaking, who have been good Citizens, and deserve more Encouragement than most of those that pretend to suffer by it.

5. But if no Man must be suffered whom the Porters apprehend injurious to them, then should the Hackney-Coachmen, Carmen, and Watermen, be put out of their Callings, that the Porters may have the more Business; and every Shop-keeper for fear of displeasing their Servants (the Porters) must spend more, and gain less, than they might to humour them; for what is by any Man saved by this Expedient, must infallibly again be spent amongst the Tradesmen.

Nor can it be esteemed a wrong to any, none being compelled, prohibited, or restrained hereby, it being left free to all Persons either to imbrace the benefit of this Undertaking, or to Employ Porters at their Pleasure; so that in good earnest the Porters Quarrel is against the whole Body of the Inhabitants in these Cities.

For if they Employ Porters and not make use of this Contrivance, then is there no ground of Complaint; but if they find a Benefit in Conveying their Letters, &c. this way, and do not send the Porters, then is their Quarrel really against the Inhabitants, and not the Undertakers, who will have more cause to lament (if it miscarries) than the Porters.

But if it were granted prejudicial to the Porters (which is not allowed) yet the Lesser ought to yield to the Greater, and the Private to the Publick, seeing in all well-regulated Governments Publick Good was never forced to stoop to Private Convenience; for if so, Printing and Guns must have been Suppressed for Writing-Clerks and Fletchers, Navigable Rivers for Carriers, Publick Water-Works for the sake of Tankard-Bearers, and the Jack-Smiths of London put down to set up a new Generation of Turn-spits; yet though these and other Laudable Inventions may damnify some sorts of Callings, they seldom hurt the Persons for we have hitherto seen they have found new ways of Living, for indeed they serve to brighten Industry, which is a great and Publick Good also. The same Objection (or greater) lies against the Post-Office General, and especially against the Pettit Officers Employed up and down the Town to Carry their Letters, they not being Porters nor some of them Freemen of London; so that whatsoever is said against this Undertaking reflects upon that Publick Office.

Some of the Conveniences of this Undertaking are as follows :

All Countrey Gentlemen, Traders, &c. can hereby give notice to Friends of their Arrival to Town. Lawyers and Clyents correspond about necessary Occurrences in Law.

Much time saved in Solicitation for Moneys.

Free notice given of all meetings between men of Business at a remote distance.

Parents may converse with their absent Children at Boarding-Schools &c.

Children with their Parents to the Improvement of their Hands, Scile, and Learning.

Mathematick, Musick, Singing, Dancing-Masters and Teachers of Languages, to give notice of all disappointments to their Schollers.

The sick Patients frequently to Correspond with their Doctors and Apothecaries.

And many more profitable and pleasant uses may be made of this cheap way of Correspondence, too many to enumerate.

Therefore we shall leave all the Ingenious to find out wherein our Invention may be serviceable to them, and refer all people to be convinced by Time and Experience,

The True Touch-stone of all Designs.

L O N D O N,

Printed for the Undertakers, by Thomas James at the Printing-press in
Mincing-Lane April. M. DC. LXXX.

William Dockwra: Pioneer of Postage Paid Stamps

STAMPS Magazine August 16, 1952



London Penny Post "Original Dockwra" entire dated January 13, 1680/81 with the first triangular "L/PENNY POST PAID" fleur-de-lis triangular prepayment stamp lower left.

The curtailment of postal services in the United States because of an effort by the Post Office Department to cut its expenses, has raised a hue and cry throughout the land. Something will be done about the reduction in mail deliveries, and other services to which we have been accustomed, but suppose there were no mail deliveries whatever, as was the situation in London in 1680? What would we do? Would we as individuals be permitted to start up our own service as William Dockwra did in 17th Century London?

Howard Robinson, in *The British Post Office: A History*, writes: "Such a service was badly needed. The Post Office had made even less adequate provision for London than for the smaller urban communities elsewhere in England. There was but one General Letter Office in London, though receiving houses for London letters were already in use, that is, for London letters that were going out of town. A Londoner could send a letter to Edinburgh...with little trouble, but the Post Office offered no provision for sending a letter from Westminster to Clackwall in the eastern part of London, or from Hackney in the north to Lambeth or Southwark on the south side of the Thames. The disregard of this obvious use of the Post Office is astonishing, if we realize that at least one in ten of the total popula-

tion of England lived in the sprawling metropolis: London had at the time about half a million people in its various parishes...What is more, letters that came from outside the metropolis were not delivered by the Post Office to the various houses, not even sent to the districts. They had to be called for at the General Letter Office by the persons for whom they were intended, or by messengers who were regularly hired for the purpose.”

...There are, of course, some small communities in the United States that have no mail deliveries, and in which the inhabitants go to their local post office to pick up their mail. However, can you imagine Buffalo, New Orleans, Minneapolis, Cincinnati or Seattle without mail delivery? That would be the picture of London in 1680.

William Dockwra’s Penny Post came into service on Lady Day, March 25, 1680, although most sources state that the service began April 1. Harry J. Maguire, in *Stanley Gibbons Monthly Journal*, July 31, 1907, states: “It is generally stated that the Penny Post was set up on April 1st, 1680, but March 25th, a week earlier, is here assigned on the authority of a contemporary antiquarian, John Aubrey. He errs, however, in giving the day as Friday, whereas both dates fell on Thursday. Lady Day, on which the legal year began, seems a natural selection for the launching of an enterprise; the First of April, on the other hand, has particularly inauspicious associations.”

Dockwra was assisted in his project by Robert Murray, but the partners quarreled soon after the Penny Post began, and parted company.

The Penny Post’s boundaries were the cities and suburbs of London and Westminster, including Blackwall, Limehouse, Poplar, Ratcliff, Redriff, Southwark, Stepney, Wapping and many smaller places in between.



A unique undated Dockwra postmark, circa 1683, the postmark impression being on a small piece. This “H” marking is Hermitage office Government Dockwra type 1.

Seven districts were created, each with its own central office. There were hundreds of collection points—four hundred to five hundred, according to accounts—in shops, taverns, inns, coffee houses and other public places. And, the mails were collected from these receiving rooms every hour. Can you picture that service even today, anywhere?

Once collected, the letters and parcels were returned to the district offices, there sorted for delivery, registered and postmarked with the distinctive Dockwra marking, and then distributed by the postmen.

The rates were most reasonable: One penny each for letters or packages that were not heavier than sixteen ounces or not valued at more than £10; and the penny postage—prepaid—permitted delivery anywhere within the Dockwra service.

Collections began at 8 o'clock each morning, and this mail was delivered by the postmen leaving the district offices at 9 o'clock. Such service! Subsequent hourly pick-ups were also given the same delivery service, truly a service to Londoners then, and one that we can be jealous of even today, anywhere! The last delivery was at 9 P.M.!

Dockwra pioneered distinctive markings on all mail, and although his service was extensive, there are only thirteen known Dockwra covers or pieces extant today....Seven of these known pieces are in the British Museum...and one that has been recorded but its whereabouts is not known at present. There is also one small piece.



The principle Dockwra marking was the pioneer paid stamp “Penny Post Paid” in a triangle. In addition, he originated markings such as illustrated in the heart designs herewith. “Mor. 8” and “AF. 4” indicated the time that the letters left the Dockwra post offices—8 o'clock in the



1682 Penny Post Paid Dockwra handstamp on letter posted at Lime Street to Warwick Lane in London. A prime artefact in the Fletcher Collection.

morning and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The initial letter in the triangular "Penny Post Paid" designated the office, the "W" (page 5) for Westminster, and "L" for Lyme Street, which was the main office and Dockwra's home; "T" (seen in the cover) for Temple, etc.

Dockwra did not enjoy his monopoly for long. His service, and its profits, attracted the attention of the Duke of York (later James II) upon whom the post office revenues were conferred in 1663. The Duke entered suit against Dockwra—many suits, in fact—and finally on Nov. 23, 1682, the post was taken from Dockwra and turned over to the Duke's government post office.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that in 1692 when Thomas Neale was granted a royal patent to establish posts in America, he designated Andrew Hamilton Governor of West and East Jersey, as Deputy Postmaster, and that the activities of Hamilton in establishing colonial postal routes may have been influenced by William Dockwra, who had come to America, and who at that time had become a proprietor in East Jersey.

* * * * *

The Original British Government Post Paid Mark of 1683

(From Mekeel's Weekly, May 22, 1944)

Carefully searching through some 1,200 late 17th century British documents, mostly letters written from Oxford



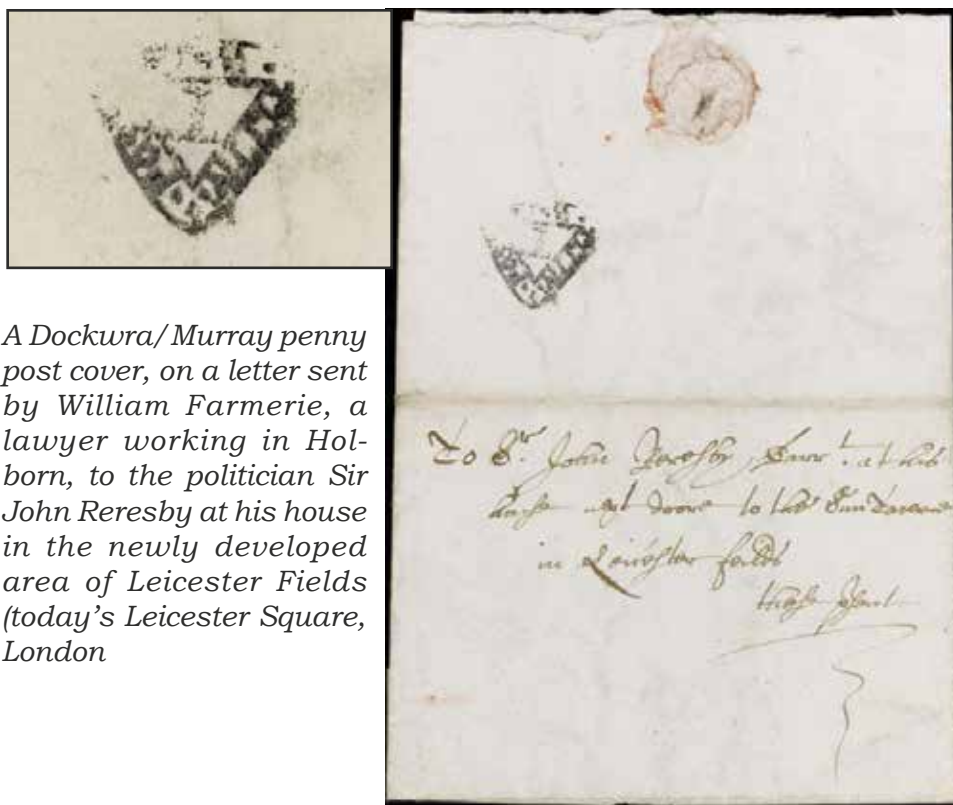
This is the cover as it was illustrated in this Mekeel's article, which was a preview of the Harmer auction in which it was to be sold. Although it is referred to in the article as the earliest such marking, there are a number of earlier usages, as presented throughout this Stamp News Online article. JFD.

to London by Robert Heath Charles A. Stonehill, New York collector and dealer in rare books, found only two which bore the "Post Payd Penny" mark.

He referred to Ernest S. Gladstone's book, "Great Britain's First Postage Stamp" (1924), and learned that scholarly gentleman had fished through vast accumulations of letters of the same period in the British Museum and had come up with only a very few examples of either William Dockwra's "Penny Post Paid" mark, or of the similar official government one which followed it.

Mr. Stonehill worked out this theory to explain the great rarity of these markings:

"At the end of the 17th century, a Nobleman, a Statesman, or a Gentleman, in fact any Englishman of sufficient importance to render his correspondence possibly worth preserving, would not have employed the Penny Post to deliver a letter in London. He would have sent his message by hand by one of his servants. This was the common practice, and for a letter to have come from one house to another by such a mechanical means as the Post would have been considered an indignity. Out-of-town mail could not have been handled by Dockwra, and neither would the Government Penny-Post Office have handled an out-of-town letter. It was a separate department of the Post Office



A Dockwra/Murray penny post cover, on a letter sent by William Farmerie, a lawyer working in Holborn, to the politician Sir John Reresby at his house in the newly developed area of Leicester Fields (today's Leicester Square, London

and not fused with inter-urban posts. Therefore the only specimens of 17th Century London Post Paid Penny marks that are likely to come down to us are those on letters from out of town which came to London by private stage or by messenger and were, on reaching London, posted to their proper local destination.”

The two Heath letters bearing the little triangular postmark were taken by hand to London and there left at the Post Office instead of being delivered by hand at the Inner Temple, to which they were addressed, deduces Mr. Stonehill.

“So naturally these marks are rare. It must have been a great exception for a letter to be sent from out of town to London by messenger and then posted from London to London. And the correspondence of plain citizen Jones of London to plain citizen Smith of the same city has not survived these two and a half centuries.”

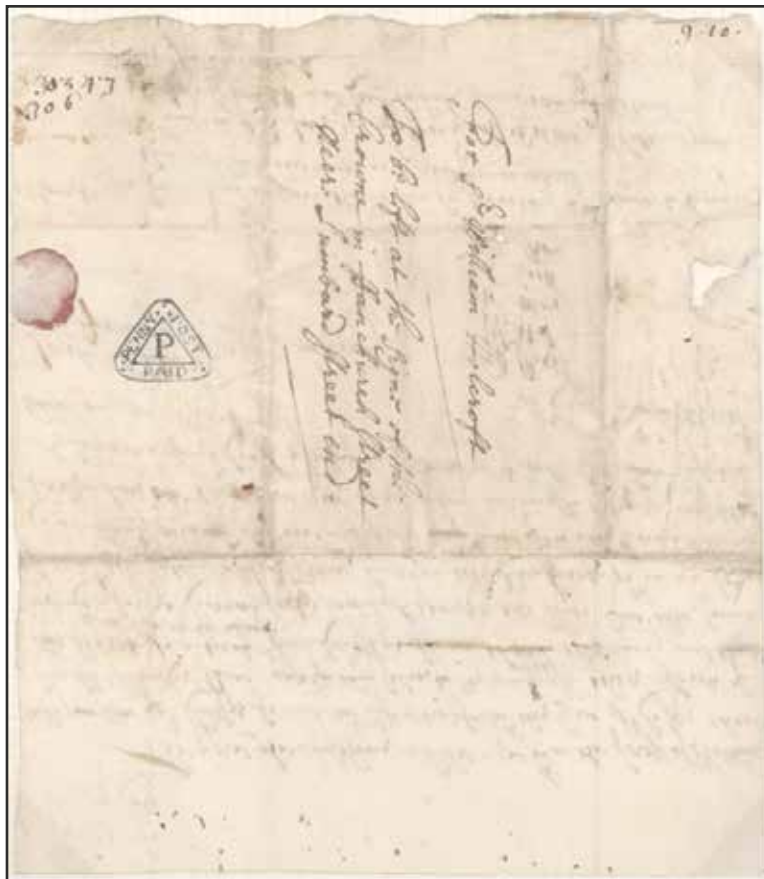
The earliest Gladstone find in the British Museum of the Government Post Paid Penny mark was on a letter dated July 26, 1683. The Government's service was an-

nounced to begin Dec. 11, 1682. The earlier of the two Stonehill finds in the Heath correspondence is on a letter dated May 9, 1683, or two and a half months before the Gladstone letter. [As noted, this is no longer regarded as the earliest usage. JFD.]

In 1939, C. L'Estrange Ewen reported an example of this postmark on a letter he said was dated Jan. 15, 1683. Mr. Stonehill is dubious of the Ewen item for various reasons, and believes his Heath find may easily be the earliest recorded official Government Post Paid postal mark of the British Post Office and, for that matter, of the world. It is, he says, the direct forerunner of modern philately.

The two "Heath" letters will be auctioned in the June 5, 6, 7 [1944] sale of H. R. Harmer, 32 E. 57th St., New York, 22.

#



Letter sent through Dockwra's Penny Post with the mark of the St. Paul's office, January 1680