

measure which dealt in a comprehensive way with the British post office. Substantially it was the law of the post office for more than a century afterwards.

The effect of the new law on the colonial post office was profound. Until 1710 the terms and conditions under which the post office in the colonies was operated, were matters of arrangement between Hamilton and the several legislatures. While the Neale patent enabled Hamilton to set up post offices in the colonies, the postal charges were fixed by the colonial legislatures at such rates as "the planters shall agree to give."

The Neale patent had been resumed by the crown in 1706, but not abrogated. Hence, until the new act came into force, the crown simply stood in the place of the patentees, and operated under the legislation agreed upon between Hamilton and the colonial governments. New York and Pennsylvania, as their short term acts expired, renewed them with the crown; and New Jersey, which established a postal system in 1709, fixed the rates of postage by act of the legislature, but placed the management of the service in the hands of the postmaster general.

The post office act of 1710 made it no longer necessary to consult the colonial legislatures as to the charges to be made for the conveyance and delivery of letters in North America. The supreme control of the postal system throughout the British dominions, beyond the sea, as well as at home, was vested in the postmaster general of England. The rates of payment were fixed by the act, and the mode in which the surplus revenues were to be disposed of was set forth in the same enactment.

In America, the general post offices at Boston, New York and Philadelphia, which stood quite independent of one another, were reduced to the rank of ordinary offices, and made parts of the system, the headquarters of which were placed by the act in New York.¹ The administration of the system, as reconstructed, was continued in the hands of John Hamilton.

As in all other parts of the British dominions, the rates of postage were sensibly increased.² Under the Neale patent, a letter from New York for Philadelphia cost fourpence-halfpenny. The

¹ New York did not become the headquarters of the postal system until the reconstruction of 1773.

² The postal rates as fixed by the act of Queen Anne were as follows: London to Jamaica, Barbadoes, 1s. 6d.; to New York, 1s. New York, to West Indies, 4d.; to New London or Philadelphia, 9d.; to Boston or Portsmouth, 1s.; to Williamsburg, Va., or Piscataway, 1s. 3d.; to Charlestown, 1s. 6d.; to within 60 miles, 4d.; to within 100 miles, 6d. These charges were for single letters.