

Appendix
(F.)

Report of the Commissioners.

26th March.

To the Right Honorable Sir Charles Bagot, Knight Grand Cross of the most Honorable Military Order of the Bath, one of Her Majesty's most Honorable Privy Council, Governor General of British North America, and Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the Island of Prince Edward, and Vice Admiral of the same.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

We who have hereunto subscribed our names and affixed our seals, having been appointed Commissioners to inquire into the administration of the Post Office within the Provinces of British North America, have the honor to certify that we have entered upon the performance of our duties with a deep sense of the importance of the trust reposed in us, and an earnest desire to be instrumental in furthering the wishes of Her Majesty's Government for the improvement of the Post Office Establishment in this part of Her Majesty's Dominions.

For collecting information and making ourselves acquainted with the opinions of the people as to the present, and their wishes as to the future, administration of the Department, almost the only course open to us was that of taking evidence by means of written correspondence.

To have procured the attendance of witnesses from all parts of a country which, in a straight line drawn from one extremity to the other, extends over more than sixteen hundred miles, was obviously impossible. We therefore prepared circular letters and series of written questions, which we addressed without distinction of classes, to all persons from whom they were likely to draw forth useful information: we addressed a second series of questions to the Proprietors, Editors and Publishers of Newspapers; a third to the heads of Civil and Military Departments; a fourth to the Post Masters touching their emoluments; and a fifth was subsequently despatched to the Post Masters for information as to the value of their franking privilege. We also requested from Mr. Stayner, the Deputy Post Master General for Canada, from Mr. Howe, the Deputy Post Master General for the Lower Provinces, and from some of the Post Masters, a variety of returns shewing the general state of the Department under their charge. These circulars and queries, together with the principal returns, and copious extracts from the correspondence, will be found in the Appendix to this Report.

The number of written communications (exclusive of returns) received by us, is upwards of 1500; a fact which not only shews that the inhabitants of these Colonies take much interest in the subject, but also enables us to report with some degree of confidence, on the state of public opinion, in regard to most of the points within the scope of our inquiry.

We shall presently have to submit a detailed statement of the actual condition of the Department, to which a short account of the rise and progress of the Post Office Establishment in these Provinces may, we hope, be advantageously prefixed. That account must necessarily be a short one; for we have to regret the absence of such documents as would enable us to furnish a more detailed history of the Department; and it will be seen that the absence of more authentic records has compelled us to copy from the Quebec Almanach of remote years, lists of the Post Offices then in existence; and that we have derived from the same source some scraps of information respecting the

number of Mails then transmitted between different places, and their gradual increase.*

A General Post Office was first established in North America by the 9th Anne, chapter 10, section 4, where amongst other things, the inland rates on letters sent by post through certain Towns in the Provinces of New England, Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania, were prescribed. The rates thus fixed continued until the passing of the 5th Geo. 3, chapter 25, by which Act the rates now collected in these Provinces, and in such of the West India Islands as are provided with inland Post accommodation, were established.

We have not been able to discover any record of the manner in which the administration of the Post Office in North America was conducted before the Reign of George the Third. In 1759, the year of the conquest of Canada, Benjamin Franklin was Deputy Post Master General of North America. By his excellent management he appears to have extended Post accommodation in the Provinces, and to have greatly increased the revenue of the Department. It is stated in his memoirs that when he was appointed to the office the revenue collected was not enough to defray his salary of £300 a year, but ere long he was enabled to remit to the British Treasury £3000, the profit for one year. In the year 1766, Dr. Franklin was examined at the Bar of the House of Commons touching the contemplated repeal of the Stamp Act passed the year before. Being questioned as to the extent of Post Office accommodation in America, he gave the following evidence:—

“ Question. Are you not concerned in the management of the Post Office in America ?

“ Answer. Yes; I am Deputy Post Master General of North America.

“ Question. Don't you think the distribution of stamps by Post to all the inhabitants very practicable if there was no opposition ?

“ Answer. The Posts only go along the sea-coasts; they do not, except in a few cases, go back into the country, and if they did, sending for stamps by Post would occasion an expense of postage amounting in many cases to much more than the stamps themselves.

“ Question. Can you dispense the stamps by Post in Canada ?

“ Answer. There is only a Post between Quebec and Montreal. The inhabitants live so scattered and remote from each other in that vast country, that the Posts cannot be supported among them, and therefore they cannot get stamps per Post. The English Colonies, too, along the frontiers are very thinly settled.”

In the year 1774 Franklin was dismissed from office.

The first Deputy Post Master General resident in Canada was Mr. Hugh Finlay. We find by an advertisement in the Quebec Gazette, published July the 23rd, 1767, that in that year he was performing under Franklin, the duties of Post Master at Quebec. The Commission by which he was appointed Deputy Post Master General is dated 7th July, 1784, one year after the peace with America; and as it is known that the British Government did not, during the

* Previous to the appointment of the present D. P. M. G. no records were kept in the Post Office. The Documents belonging to the Department were treated as private property by each successive holder of the Office, and reserved by him or his representatives on his resignation or death.

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First established by 9th Anne, chap. 10.

Present rates fixed by 5th Geo. III., chap. 25.

Dr. Franklin, Deputy Post Master General in 1759.

App. A., Nos. 1 and 2.

No. 3.

No. 4.

No. 5.

No. 6.

No. 7 to 11.

Sketch of History of Department in British North America.

Mr. Finlay, the first Deputy Post Master General after American Revolution, appointed in 1767.