

north and south connecting there with one another, and with the packets from England. The system was under the control of two deputies, of equal authority, one of whom was Franklin, and the other John Foxcroft. As this system had a long history when Canada came to be comprised in it, it seems essential to a proper presentation of the subject that a sketch of that history should be furnished.

The first notice of a post office in North America appears in the records of the general court of Massachusetts Bay for the year 1639. The colony was just ten years old. Letters from home, always eagerly looked for, were then awaited with double anxiety in view of the distracted state of England.

King Charles was at this time midway in the course of his great experiment in absolute government, which ten years before had driven these people from their homes, and ten years later was to carry him to the block.

Some effective arrangement for the exchange of correspondence between New and Old England was a necessity. Until 1639 there was none. On the English side, it was the practice for sea captains, who intended making a trip to America, to give public notice of the fact, and to place a bag for the reception of letters in one of the coffee houses. On the day of sailing, the bag was closed and taken on board the vessel to America.

It was at this point that the scheme failed. There was no one in America charged with the duty of receiving and distributing the letters; and consequently, many letters were misdelivered, and many not delivered at all. It was to provide a remedy for this state of things that an ordinance¹ was passed on the 5th of November, 1639.

By this ordinance public notice was given that all letters from beyond the seas were to be taken to the tavern kept by Richard Fairbank, in Boston, who engaged that they should be delivered according to their addresses. He was to receive a penny for every letter he delivered, and was to answer for all miscarriages due to his neglect. The Fairbank's tavern was a resort of some prominence. Through the correspondence of the time, it appears as the meeting place for various committees of the colony, and returns to the surveyor general were ordered to be made at Fairbank's in 1645.

The ordinance of 1639, besides giving directions for the receipt and delivery of letters coming to Boston from beyond the sea,

¹ *Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, third series, VII. 48.