

Even after that date the post office in Virginia was on a somewhat irregular footing, at least in regard to the conveyance of the mails. In a gazetteer published in 1749,¹ it is stated that while regular trips are made by mail courier from Portsmouth to Philadelphia, southward to Williamsburg the courier's movements were uncertain, as he did not set out until there were sufficient letters posted for the south, to guarantee his wages from the postage on them. There was a post office at this period as far south as Charlestown, but the post carriage for that office was still more uncertain.

With the exception of the Virginian contretemps, the period from 1710 until after the middle of the eighteenth century was one of quiescence. Deputy postmaster general succeeded deputy postmaster general; and the annals of their administrations carry little that is interesting. After the retirement of Hamilton in 1721, a change was made in the relations between the deputy postmaster general and the general post office, by which the post office in London was relieved of all expense in connection with the maintenance of the North American postal system.

Hamilton had a salary of £200 a year. But the profits from the post office did not quite cover that amount, as on his withdrawal, there was due to him £355 arrears of salary. In recommending the claim to the treasury, the postmaster general stated that the post office in America had been put on such a footing that if it produced no profit, it would no longer be a charge on the revenue.²

The facilities given to the public were not increased during that period. Indeed, in 1714, they were diminished, as the courier's trips between Boston and Philadelphia, which in 1693 were performed weekly throughout the year, were reduced to fortnightly during the winter months, and they remained at that frequency until 1753.

It is obvious that the post office was not used by the public any more than was absolutely necessary, and that every means was taken to evade the regulations designed to preserve the postmaster general's monopoly. Thomas Hancock, in a letter written in 1740, to Governor Talcott of Connecticut, told him that he saved the colony from forty shillings to three pounds every year, through the interest he had with the captains of the London ships, who delivered the letters to him instead of handing them over to the post office.³

¹ Douglas' *Historical and Political Summary*.

² G.P.O., *Treasury*, VI. 206-207.

³ *Talcott Papers*, vol. 5.