

to encourage it. He foresaw a difficulty in the lack of small currency, tobacco which was the only specie, being in the governor's words "very incommodious to receive small payments in, and of very uncertain value."¹

The line of posts established by Hamilton extended from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to Philadelphia. Over this long line, couriers travelled with the mails weekly each way.² The volume of correspondence carried cannot be ascertained, as the great mass of it, being on public business, would be free of postage. But the postage collected throughout North America during the first four years, from 1693 to 1697, was only £1456 18s. 3d., an average receipt of considerably less than £400 a year.

By way of comparison it may be noted that, in 1693, the revenue between London and Edinburgh was £500; and it was explained that nearly the whole of that amount was for government despatches. The expenses of the Portsmouth-Philadelphia service during those years were £3817 6s. 11d.³ The deficit of £2360 8s. 8d. fell upon Neale. Results such as these would be sufficiently discouraging. But Neale and his deputy, Hamilton, were hopeful, and drew comfort from the fact that the revenue of New York which was quite insignificant the first year had doubled itself in the third year.

At the end of the sixth year, the revenue had increased to the point at which all the expenses were met, except Hamilton's salary.⁴ In 1699, Hamilton went to England, and joined Neale in an appeal to the treasury.⁵ After pointing out the benefits accruing to the colonies from the post office—the increase in the transatlantic and intercolonial trade, the rapid diffusion of intelligence in time of war, and the facilities afforded for the delivery of public letters—they declared that unless steps were taken to secure to them the transmission of the whole, and not a mere portion of the oversea correspondence, they might be compelled to abandon the undertaking.

The plan Neale and Hamilton proposed to this end, was to put a stop to the collection of letters at the English coffee houses, and to compel the shipmasters to take all their letters from the local post office, where they would be made up in sealed bags.

Besides ensuring to Neale, by this means, the postage on all

¹ *Spottwood Letters* (published by Virginia Hist. Soc.), I. 22.

² Minutes of council, New Hampshire (*N. H. Prov. Papers*, 1686-1722), p. 100.

³ G.P.O., *Treasury*, II. 256.

⁴ *Cal. Treasury Papers*, 1697-1702, p. 289

⁵ G.P.O., *Treasury*, II. 253.