

every letter up to a lighted candle, and by some skilful manipulating, the taxable enclosures could be seen.

But it was not only enclosures to which the attention of the officials was directed. The postal charges were found so oppressive that several merchants who had letters to send to the same town used to write their several communications on the same sheet, which on reaching the person addressed was by him passed on to the others, whose letters were on the same sheet.

In the post office the practice was much condemned. As it was not specifically provided against in the act, it had to be tolerated until the act was amended; and thereafter when several letters were written on one paper, each was to be charged as a distinct letter. The letter inspectors then had to satisfy themselves that there was no more than one person's handwriting in the sheet, which was, of course, carefully sealed with wax.

The ounce letter needs no explanation. At present the ounce is the unit of weight for letters sent from Canada to every part of the civilized world. In this aspect it corresponds with the single letter of the pre-penny postage days. But the ounce letter of 1710 and of over a century afterwards was far removed from the single letter in the matter of postage.

In that respect the ounce letter was equal to four single letters, and was charged four times the rate of the single letter. Thus, while a single sheet weighing less than an ounce could pass between two neighbouring towns not over sixty miles apart for fourpence, if it tipped the ounce weight it was chargeable with sixteen pence.

The act of 1710 offered a problem to the paper makers. A sheet of paper had to be made stout enough to stand the handling of the post office without the protection of an envelope, and be yet so light as to allow the largest space possible within the ounce weight.

Under this system, in which distance, number of enclosures and weight were all factors, the charges for letters, such as are posted by thousands in our larger offices every day, were very high. An ounce letter, which at the present time costs but two cents to convey to the remotest post office in the North West of Canada, or to Southern Mexico, in 1710 cost three shillings to carry from New York to Philadelphia. From New York to Boston, the postage on the same letter was four shillings. Between the outermost points of the North American postal system in 1710—Portsmouth, N.H., and Charlestown, N.C.—the postage for an ounce letter was ten shillings.