

# The Postal Markings of Newbury and Newburyport, Mass. - 1755-1851

## Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this postal history exhibit is to illustrate the postal markings used by the colonial and U.S. Post Offices of Newbury and Newburyport, Mass. from the earliest known markings in 1755 through June 1, 1851, when postal markings became increasingly standardized.

## Organization

The organization is essentially chronological. Markings used at the Newbury colonial post office are shown first, with manuscript markings preceding the only hand stamp. Those of the Newburyport Congressional and U. S. Post Office follow, again with manuscript markings preceding hand stamps.

**Page layout:** At upper right is whether the postmark is a manuscript, or a hand stamp of specific size and color. Below are noted any hand stamped auxiliary markings on the page, e.g., rate. "PAID", "FREE", etc. The date range each marking was used is in a gray box to the side of the cover it refers to. Also included for the reader's information are the rate and rate period, the date the cover was postmarked in Essex County, and for ship covers, when known, the ship and ship's captain. **Important items are outlined in red.**

## Background

Newbury Plantation was settled in 1635 by a group of pioneers from Wiltshire, England. Newbury was one of the earliest colonial post offices on the post road north of Boston, as shown in the famous Herman Moll "Post Map" of 1729. On January 28, 1764 (approved Feb. 4), the General Court of Massachusetts passed "An act for erecting part of the town of Newbury into a new town by the name of Newburyport." The new town was the smallest in the state, covering only 647 acres, but had a substantial population of 2,800. There were three shipyards and several ferries. Despite being situated within the new town, the colonial Newbury post office kept that name until it was taken over by the rebels in 1775. Newburyport, along with Salem, Haverhill and Ipswich, was one of four Essex County Revolutionary Post offices established by the Massachusetts Provincial Congress in May 1775. Newburyport grew rapidly, and by 1790 was the 13<sup>th</sup> largest town in the United States with 4,837 people. By 1850, it had a population of 9,572 and had become a city.

## Newbury

## Colonial manuscript postmarks

### The earliest reported Newbury postmark



Newbury to Newcastle, NH

datelined Sept. 9, 1755

The rate of 1dwt, 8gr\* was for a single letter sent up to 60 miles, per the Act of Queen Anne, effective June 1, 1711.

The Newbury "Newby p<sup>d</sup>" manuscript town mark is believed to be **unique**.

\* rates in pennyweights (dwt) and grains (gr) of coined silver