

26th CONGRESS,
1st Session.

[SENATE.]

[547]

RESOLUTIONS

SUBMITTED

By MR. WEBSTER, *relative to a reduction of the postage on Letters.*

JUNE 10, 1840.

Submitted, laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed.

Resolved, That the rates of postage charged on letters transmitted by the mails of the United States ought to be reduced.

Resolved, That it is expedient to inquire into the utility of so altering the present regulations of the Post Office Department as to connect the use of stamps, or stamped covers, with a large reduction of the rates of postage.

Extract from a newspaper published in the city of London.

THE PENNY-POSTAGE STAMPS.

Yesterday the following notice was issued by the post-office authorities:

GENERAL POST OFFICE, April 28, 1840.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

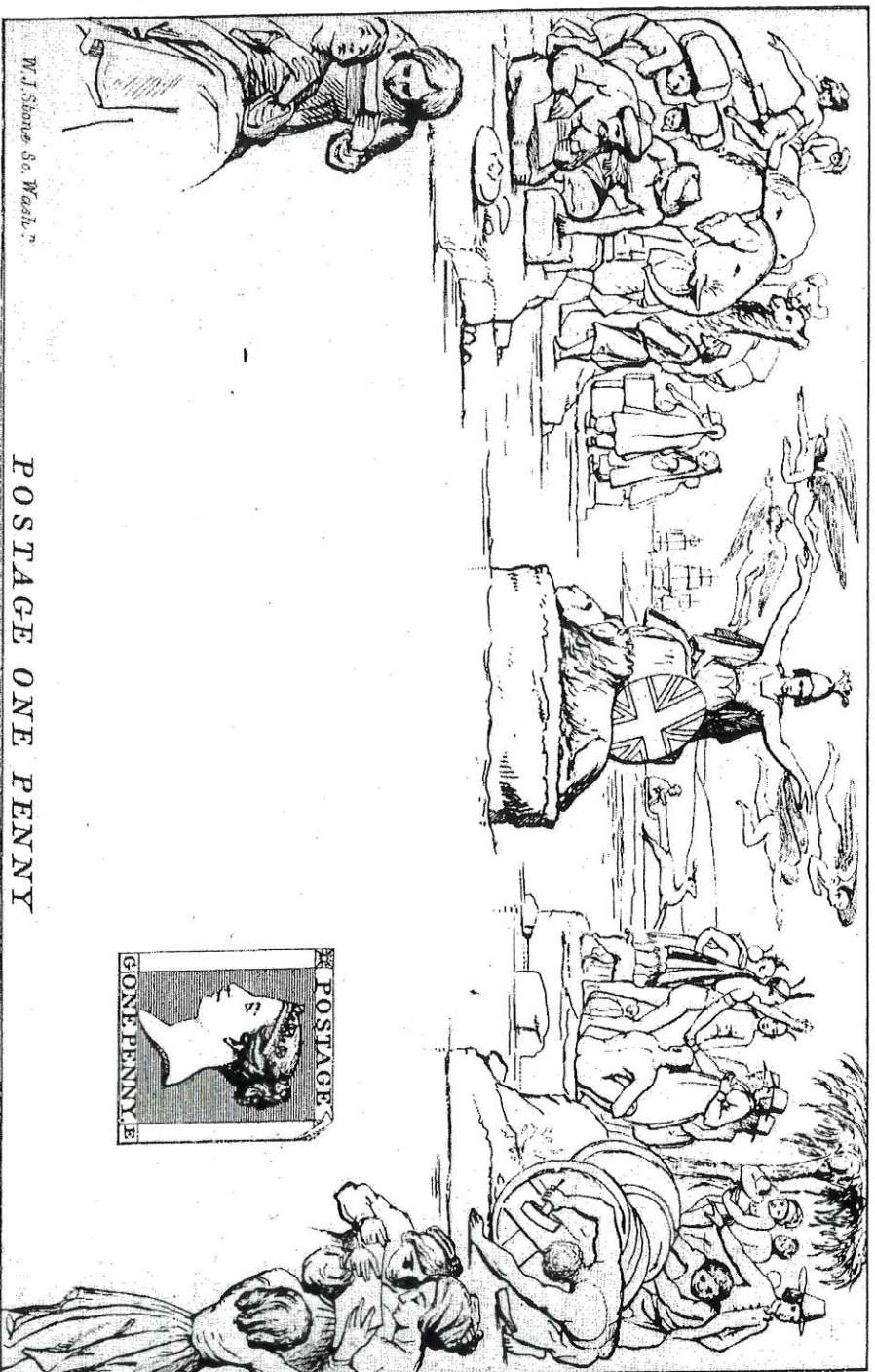
The Lords of the Treasury having fixed the 6th of May next for the issue of postage-stamps, on and after that day all letters written on stamped paper, or enclosed in stamped covers, or having stamps affixed to them; the stamps in every such case being equal in value or amount to the rates of postage now chargeable on such letters, if prepaid, will pass free of postage in whatever part of the United Kingdom they may be posted.

In those cases where the value of stamps on the letter is less than the amount of the postage to which it would be now liable, if prepaid, the letter will be charged double the amount of such difference on delivery. An inland letter, for example, weighing more than half an ounce, and exceeding an ounce, if bearing only a penny stamp, will be charged two pence, on delivery.

The same regulation applies to letters prepaid by money, where the full and proper rate of postage has not been paid in advance.

Stamps may be used for printed votes and proceedings in Parliament; if the stamps, however, should be less in value than the proper rate of postage to which these documents are subject, only the difference, and not double the difference, is to be charged.

Blair & Rives, printers.



The Congressional Mulready and

Daniel Webster

by Harold M. Stral

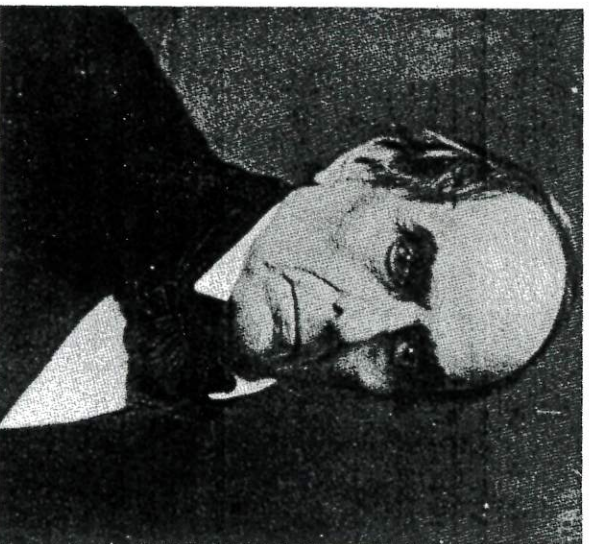
The excellent series of articles on the birth of the postage stamp by James Grimwood-Taylor properly ends with the issuance of the Penny Black label and the Mulready envelopes.

The first reproductions of these appeared in the United States little more than a month after they were issued. They were the result of efforts by Senator Daniel Webster.

Daniel Webster is generally recognized as one of the greatest statesmen and orators of nineteenth-century America. His legendary ability to hold audiences spellbound was, in fact, the subject of Steven Vincent Benét's well-known short story, "The Devil and Daniel Webster." He served in Congress for twenty-four years, including nineteen years as a senator, and was also Secretary of State under William Henry Harrison. Much has been written about his many contributions to legislation during his service in Congress.

But Daniel Webster also made a contribution that is of particular interest to philatelists. He was responsible for what appears to be Congress's first call for postal reform in the United States and for suggesting that postage stamps be used to accomplish this reform. In connection with his reform efforts, he is responsible for what are undoubtedly the world's first reproductions of a postage stamp and of postal stationery (Figure 1). Surprisingly, this landmark of U.S. postal history has gone almost unnoticed. The only prior mention of it that I have found is in a 1947 treatise by Van Dyk MacBride titled "Bar-nabas Bates — The Rowland Hill of America."

The American Philatelist



Daniel Webster.

The Author

In addition to the Mulready envelope and related material, Harold M. Stral collects U.S. stampless circular-rate mail and other advertising-related postal history.

530/June 1990

On June 10, 1840, Senator Webster introduced two resolutions in the Senate. In reporting these resolutions on the following day, the *Congressional Globe*, predecessor of the *Congressional Record*, stated:

The following resolutions submitted yesterday by Mr. Webster were considered and agreed to:

“Resolved, That the rates of postage charged on letters transmitted by the mails of the United States ought to be reduced.

Resolved, That it is expedient to inquire into the utility of so altering the present regulations of the Post Office Department as to connect the use of stamps, or stamped covers, with a large reduction of the rates of postage.”

The original manuscript of this resolution, in Senator Webster’s handwriting, reproduced from microfilm, is shown in Figure 2. The original docketing by the Clerk of the Senate is shown in Figure 3.

After approval of the resolution, new docketing read “submitted, laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed” (Figure 4). The barely legible writing in the lower part of the document reads “an accompanying drawing sent to Mr. Stone,” undoubtedly referring to the Mulready lettersheet. There was no reference to the Penny Black. Could the clerk have felt it was not worthy of mention, or could it have already been moistened and attached to the lettersheet?

The resolutions were printed in Volume VII of the *Public Documents of the First Session of the Senate of the 26th Congress*, also known as the *Journal of Congress* (Figure 5). Also included was the copy of

a notice “from a newspaper published in the city of London” (Figure 2). This notice to the public, issued by the General Post Office of Great Britain on April 28, 1840, announced the use of the postage stamps beginning May 6, 1840. The actual-size reproductions of the Mulready lettersheet and of the Penny Black were inserted immediately after the resolution pages.

At that time, the records of Congress were maintained by commercial printers.

The Government Printing Office first assumed responsibility for these records in 1868 when the name of the *Congressional Globe* was changed to the *Congressional Record*.

The choice of a printer was frequently the most exciting event of a session of Congress, and frequently took days or weeks. The printing contract was a political plum and was generally awarded to editors or printers who had supported the majority party.

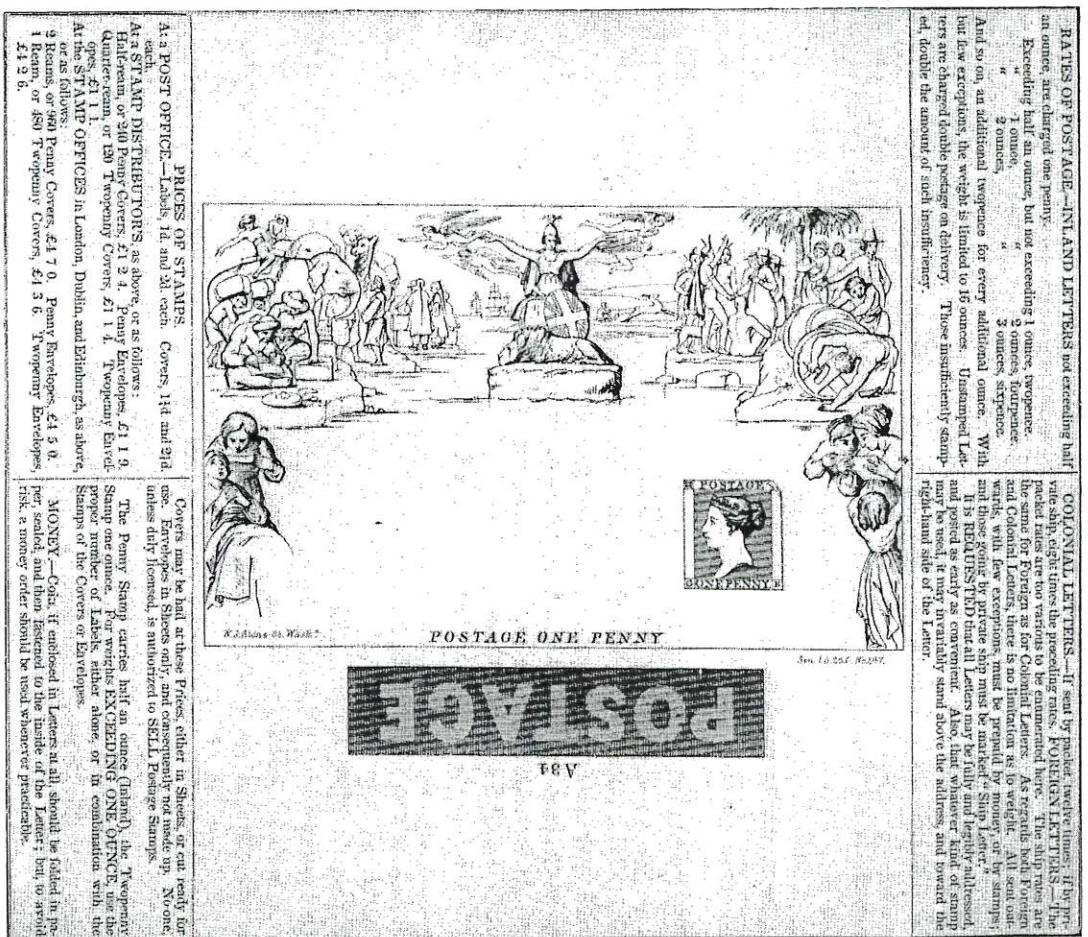
During this period the Whigs usually selected Blair and Rives, who were responsible for the material described in this article.

No provision was made by Congress for the proper editing of government publications, this being left entirely to the direction of the Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate. Printers followed generally accepted printing customs or set up new ones of their own.

Daniel Webster undoubtedly provided the Mulready lettersheet and the Penny Black that Blair and Rives used to prepare the reproductions. Their reproduction in the *Journal of Congress* was certainly a result of Webster’s influence as the printers were not obligated to include this rather expensive addition to the journal. The volume in which it appears had only two other illustrations, the other two being maps relating to territorial bills.

The artist’s inscription on the cover’s left corner reads: “W. J. Stone, So. Wash.” This indicates that the printer did not have an artist on the staff capable of reproducing the Mulready. Had the printer been an employee of the printer, his name might have been allowed, but certainly not his address.

The artist, William J. Stone, was a



The American Philatelist



Joshua Bates.

He was internationally known, and his visit to Great Britain was almost as important an event as a visit by the President of the United States. Perhaps even more so, as Webster was very involved with international affairs. At that time, considerable friction existed between the United States and Great Britain on a variety of international concerns. In fact, one of Webster's major actions after he was appointed Secretary of State by President Harrison was to negotiate the Webster-Ashburton Treaty with Great Britain. This treaty, among other things, established the boundary between Canada and the state of Maine.

It was during his visit to Great Britain, on September 6, 1839, that the "Treasury Competition," was announced. This competition was presented as an invitation "to artists, scientists and the general public to submit ideas and designs in connection with the forthcoming institution of prepaid postage and the Penny Post." The Treasury Competition was discussed in detail by Mr. Grimwood-Taylor in the January and February issues of the *AP*. Based on this information, it is logical to assume that Daniel Webster's interest in postal reform began in 1839 during his visit to Great Britain.

After they were issued in Great Britain, the Mulready lettersheet and the stamp had plenty of time to reach Webster in Washington before June 10. The trip by steamer took about fourteen days. Twenty-five steamers from Liverpool and twelve from London served New York monthly during 1840. As a round-trip took about twenty-eight days, ships departed at least daily.

The American Philatelist

However, further research showed that Webster's exposure to postal reform activities and ideas was much greater than initially had been thought because of his involvement with the London banking firm of Baring Brothers. Baring Brothers had important connections with American financial firms. Lord Ashburton, who became head of the firm in 1810, had spent many years in the late

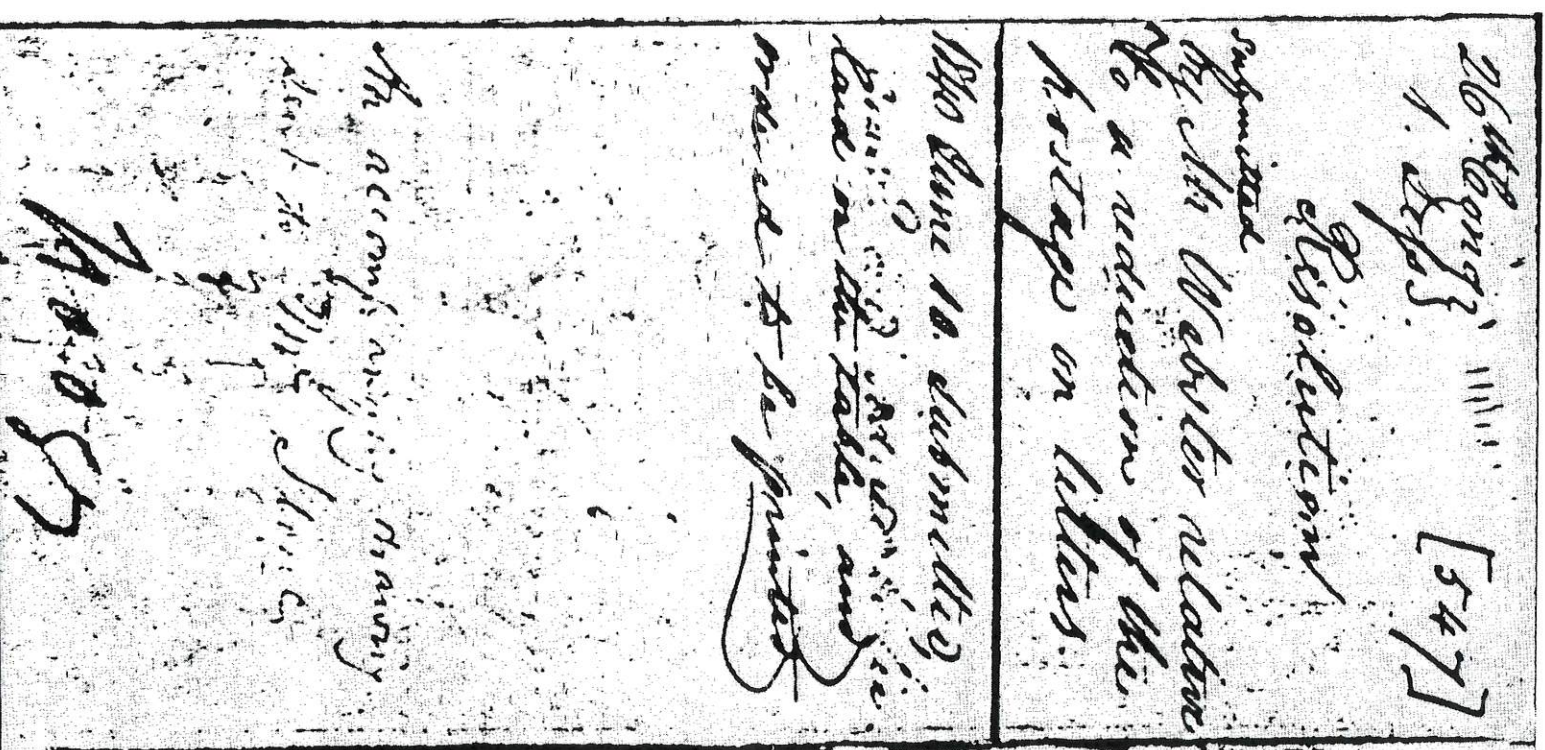


Figure 4. The docketing of the resolution, reproduced from microfilm. The notation "[547]," upper right, appears in the lower right corner of the Mulready reproduction and also on the printed resolution. Note the faint line reading "An accompanying drawing sent to Mr. Stone."

1700s as the firm's representative in the United States. He was married to the daughter of U.S. Senator William Bingham of Pennsylvania. In addition, he was responsible, with Daniel Webster, for the negotiation of the previously mentioned 1842 Ashburton-Webster Treaty. Without question, Webster had close relations with the United States' leading banking contacts in Great Britain.

More significantly, Joshua Bates was an important officer of Baring Brothers during Webster's visit. Joshua Bates, a Boston native, had joined Baring Brothers in 1828 and later became head of the firm. Probably no one in Great Britain, other than Rowland Hill, Henry Cole, and George Moffat, had greater involvement in postal reform than Joshua Bates! In his diary, Rowland Hill records that:

Mr. Moffat had proposed to me the establishment of a 'mercantile committee' to collect evidence in favour of the plan.

His proposal being gladly accepted, he went to work with such earnestness, that I soon found in him one of the most zealous, steady, and efficient supporters. Funds he raised with comparative ease, but the foundation of a committee he found more difficult than he had expected. Now, however, February 5th, 1838, he wrote to inform me that he had at length prevailed upon Mr. Bates, a wealthy American of the house

of Baring Brothers, to accept the office of Chairman; and this point being secured, other good members were easily obtained.

Joshua Bates was responsible for establishing the Boston Public Library, contributing \$50,000 in 1852 for the purchase of books if the city provided an appropriate building. Later, he donated 27,000 books to the library.

Bates and Webster apparently had more than just a business or political relationship. The collections of Webster's letters contain one from Joshua Bates along with one to Bates from Webster. Both letters are of a warm, personal nature, discussing the health of their families, referring to previous meetings of their families, and implying additional correspondence.

In view of this relationship and Bates' involvement with postal reforms, there is little doubt that he provided Webster with the Mulready and Penny Black. Whether he sent it personally, or ordered it done, one cannot say, as there is no letter in Webster's known correspondence that makes reference to the stamps.

Perhaps there is no other evidence of Webster's involvement in postal reform because he was concerned with other matters. His major interests were international relations and constitutional law. He was appointed Secretary of State on March 4, 1841, but had undoubtedly taken over the responsibilities of that office well before that date. He was also heavily involved in Harrison's presidential campaign and is known to have written or rewritten many of Harrison's speeches, including his inaugural address.

Even if the action described here is Daniel Webster's sole contribution to our postal history, he still deserves more recognition than he has received.

Acknowledgment: I would like to express my appreciation to Robson Lowe for his help and encouragement, to the Newberry Library of Chicago for use of its material on Daniel Webster, and to Dartmouth College Library for its assistance.

If anyone can provide me with any additional information on Daniel Webster that relates to this article or to postal reform in general, it would be greatly appreciated. Letters should be addressed to Harold M. Stral, c/o Kaufman Goldman Stral Inc., 230 E. Ohio, Suite 306, Chicago, IL 60611.

Bibliography

- The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster*, National Edition, Volumes 17-18, Little, Brown & Co., 1903.
The Blanchford Collection of Websteriana, the Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.
Robson Lowe, personal communications.
U.S. Government Publications, Anne Morris Boyd and Rae Elizabeth Rips, the H.W. Wilson Company, 1949.
The British Postage Stamp of the Nineteenth Century, Robson Lowe, the National Postal Museum, 1968.
The New York Historical Society Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860, George Groce and David Wallace, Yale University Press, 1957.
The British Post Office - A History, Howard Robinson, Princeton University Press, 1948.
The Papers of Daniel Webster, Microfilm Edition, Charles M. Wilse, Editor, Dartmouth College Library/University Microfilms, 1971.
Encyclopedia Britannica, Eleventh Edition, London, 1910.

Figure 5. The first page of resolutions, as printed in the *Journal of Congress*, just ahead of the page of reproductions.

26th Congress,
1st Session. [SENATE.] [547]

RESOLUTIONS

RECORDED

By Mr. WEBSTER, relative to a reduction of the postage on Letters.

JUNE 10, 1840.

Submitted, laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed.

Messrsd, That the rates of postage charged on letters transmitted by the mails of the United States ought to be reduced.

Resolved, That it is expedient to inquire into the utility of so altering the present regulations of the Post Office Department as to connect the use of stamps, or stamped covers, with a large reduction of the rates of postage.

Extract from a newspaper published in the city of London.

THE PENNY POSTAGE STAMPS.

Yesterday the following notice was issued by the post-office authorities:

GENERAL POST OFFICE, April 28, 1840.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

The Lords of the Treasury having fixed the 6th of May next for the issue of postage-stamps, on and after that day all letters written on stamped paper, or enclosed in stamped covers, or having stamps affixed to them; the stamps in every such case being equal in value or amount to the rates of postage now chargeable on such letters, if prepaid, will pass free of postage in whatever part of the United Kingdom they may be posted.

In those cases where the value of stamps on the letter is less than the amount of the postage to which it would be now liable, if prepaid, the letter will be charged double the amount of such difference on delivery. An inland letter, for example, weighing more than half an ounce, and not exceeding an ounce, if bearing only a penny stamp, will be charged two-pence, on delivery.

The same regulation applies to letters prepaid by money, where the full and proper rate of postage has not been paid in advance.

Stamps may be used for printed votes and proceedings in Parliament; if the stamp, however, should be less in value than the proper rate of postage to which these documents are subject, only the difference, and not double the difference, is to be charged.

Blair & Biver, printers.

Lower Refun - C3

14/0552

EX. GOVERNMENT BOOKS

Mulreadies – Copy Design

Apart from the caricatures the actual design was copied by several commercial organisations including Whitaker's Almanac and E A Holton, a stamp dealer in Boston, Massachusetts. The most significant copy was the reproduction of the envelope and the Penny Black made subject of the resolution by Mr T Webster in the Senate of the United States and ordered to be printed on 10 June 1840 with illustrations.

26th CONGRESS,
1st Session. [SENATE.] [547]

RESOLUTIONS

By MR. WEBSTER, relative to a reduction of the postage on Letters.

JUNE 10, 1840.

Submitted, laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed.

Resolved, That the rates of postage charged on letters transmitted by the mails of the United States ought to be reduced.

Resolved, That it is expedient to inquire into the utility of so altering the present regulations of the Post Office Department as to connect the use of stamps, or stamped covers, with a large reduction of the rates of postage.

Extract from a newspaper published in the city of London.

THE PENNY-POSTAGE STAMPS.

Yesterday the following notice was issued by the post-office authorities:

GENERAL Post Office, April 28, 1840.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

The Lords of the Treasury having fixed the 6th of May next for the issue of postage-stamps, on and after that day all letters written on stamped paper, or enclosed in stamped covers, or having stamps affixed to them, the stamps in every such case being equal in value or amount to the rates of postage now chargeable on such letters, if prepaid, will pass free of postage in whatever part of the United Kingdom they may be posted.

In those cases where the value of stamps on the letter is less than the amount of the postage to which it would be now liable, if prepaid, the letter will be charged double the amount of such difference on delivery.

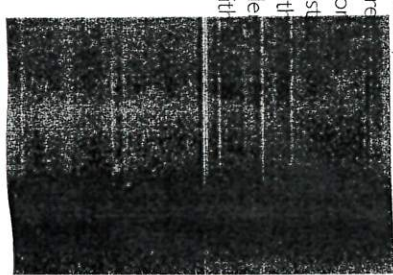
An inland letter, for example, weighing more than half an ounce, and not exceeding an ounce, if bearing only a penny stamp, will be charged twopence, on delivery.

The same regulation applies to letters prepaid by money, where the full and proper rate of postage has not been paid in advance.

Stamps may be used for printed votes and proceedings in Parliament; if the stamps, however, should be less in value than the proper rate of postage to which these documents are subject, only the difference, and not double the difference, is to be charged.

Blair & Miven, printers.

44 The Mulready envelope, whilst panned in Great Britain, caused much interest. A resolution of Mr T Webster in the Senate of the United States ordered it to be printed with illustrations.



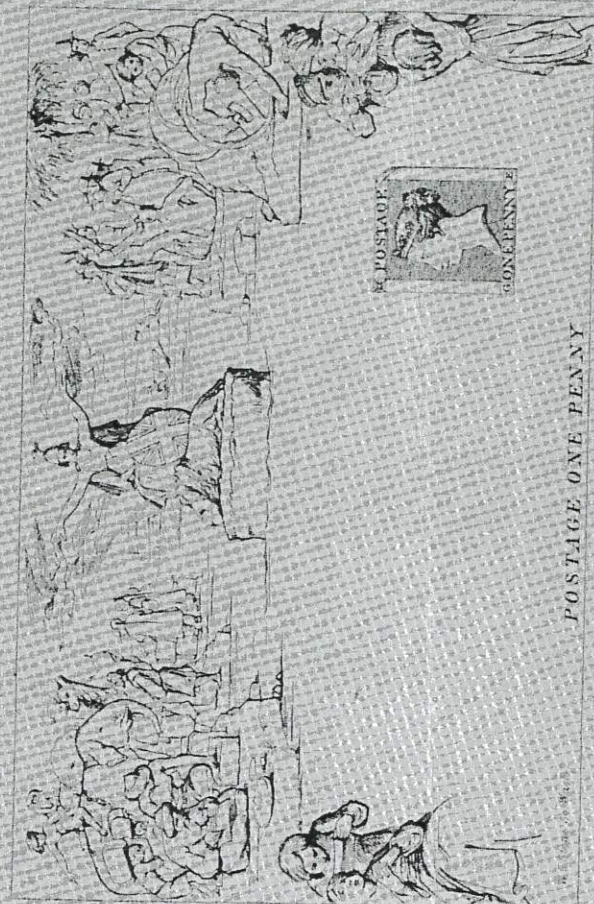
RATES OF POSTAGE.—INLAND LETTERS not exceeding half an ounce, are charged one penny.

Exceeding half an ounce, but not exceeding 1 ounce, twopence.
 1 ounce, 2 ounces, fourpence.
 3 ounces, 3 ounces, sixpence.

And so on, an additional twopence for every additional ounce. With but few exceptions, the weight is limited to 16 ounces. Unstamped Letters are charged double postage on delivery. Those insufficiently stamped, double the amount of such insufficiency.

COLONIAL LETTERS—If sent by packet, twelve times; if by private ship, eight times the preceding rates. **FOREIGN LETTERS**—The packet rates are too various to be enumerated here. The ship rates are the same for Foreign as for Colonial Letters. As regards both Foreign and Colonial Letters, there is no limitation as to weight. All sent outwards, with few exceptions, must be prepaid by money, or by stamps; and those going by private ship must be marked "Ship Letter."

It is **REQUIRED** that all Letters may be fully and legibly addressed, and posted as early as convenient. Also, that whatever kind of stamp may be used, it may invariably stand above the address, and toward the right-hand side of the Letter.



POSTAGE ONE PENNY

POSTAGE
ONE PENNY

1840

PRICES OF STAMPS.

At a **POST OFFICE**—Labels, 1d. and 2d. each. Covers, 1d. and 2d. each.

At a **STAMP DISTRIBUTOR'S**, as above, or as follows.

Half ream, or 240 Penny Covers, £1 2 4. Penny Envelopes, £1 1 9.
 Quarter ream, or 120 Twopenny Covers, £1 1 4. Twopenny Envelopes, £1 1 4.

At the **STAMP OFFICES** in London, Dublin, and Edinburgh, as above, or as follows.

2 Reams, or 480 Penny Covers, £1 7 0. Penny Envelopes, £1 5 0.
 1 Ream, or 240 Twopenny Covers, £1 3 6. Twopenny Envelopes, £1 2 6.

Covers may be had at these Prices, either in Sheets, or cut ready for use. Envelopes in Sheets only, and consequently not made up. No one, unless duly licensed, is authorized to SELL Postage Stamps.

The Penny Stamp carries half an ounce (halfp), the Twopenny Stamp one ounce. For weights **EXCEEDING ONE OUNCE**, use the proper number of Labels, either alone, or in combination with the Stamps of the Covers or Envelopes.

MONEY—Coin, if enclosed in Letters at all, should be folded in paper, sealed, and then fastened to the inside of the Letter; but, to avoid risk, a money order should be used whenever practicable.