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# A MISSION UNFULFILLED: THE POST OFFICE AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION IN RURAL NEW ENGLAND, 1821-1835

Michael S. Foley

In the tale of *Rip Van Winkle* (1818), Washington Irving carefully described the sleepy Catskill town from which Rip had strayed before the Revolution. In those days, Irving wrote, one could usually find the town notables congregated in front of the inn, where

it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller...how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

When Rip returned from the mountains twenty years later, however, he discovered that "the character of the people seemed changed." Instead of being out of touch, the crowd assembled in front of the inn sounded remarkably well informed. Rip encountered them as they were "haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens - elections - members of Congress - liberty. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Washington Irving, *The Complete Works of Washington Irving*, ed. Richard Dilworth Rust (8 vols., Boston, 1978), VIII, 32-37.

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Irving did not attempt to explain this new climate of enlightenment, but others directly attributed its rise to the growth of the postal system. Alexis de Tocqueville, for instance, marvelled that “in Michigan forests there is not a cabin so isolated. . .not a valley so wild, that it does not receive letters and newspapers at least once a week.” Then, to appease doubters, he wrote “we saw it ourselves.”<sup>2</sup>

These descriptions convey a certain fascination with the way everyday life in remote areas of the early republic had been altered by the spread of information. Yet overlooked in these depictions is a third, more nuanced scenario from rural America which tells a different story.

In Durham, New Hampshire, in the 1820s and 1830s, the largest general store in town, Frost’s, loomed high above the waterfront of the Oyster River. Like the inn in *Rip Van Winkle*, it must have been a natural gathering place. Within, not only could patrons purchase almost anything, but they could pick up and send their mail, too, for the store also housed the post office. When customers completed their business, they could linger, have a drink of rum, and talk with their neighbors.<sup>3</sup> The postmaster tailored the operation of the post office itself, however, to a more select clientele. On one wall of the store (or at least behind the desk), he kept a small, locked mail box containing twenty-four pigeonholes, each of which had been labeled with the names of regular postal customers. Nearby, a large bookkeeper’s desk held the daybooks and general ledgers for both the general store and the post office. On the underside of the angled desk top (divided into thirds over three stationery compartments) clerks scribbled calculations before marking down totals in the account books.<sup>4</sup> Although anyone could take advantage of the postal service, the postmaster maintained a special section of the postal account daybook to record only the business of the most frequent patrons.

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Wayne E. Fuller, *The American Mail: Enlarger of Common Life* (Chicago, 1972), 82.

<sup>3</sup> Daybooks from the store reveal that Frost not only sold New England and West Indian rum by the gallon, half-gallon, quart, and pint, but by the glass, too. In addition, the store carried everything from drygoods and produce to farm implements and clothing (including seal skin caps and buffalo robes). Daybooks, vols. 12-17, Frost Collection (Baker Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA).

<sup>4</sup> Both the mail box (21 inches high by 24 inches wide by 11 inches deep) and the desk are part of the collection of the Durham Historic Association. There is some speculation that the post office box may have been, at one point, accessible to patrons outside the building. Those with an assigned pigeonhole would use a key to open the box and remove their mail. To date, I have been unable to verify this practice.

The design of the mail box and the format of these accounts indicate that, even as late as the 1830s, residents of this relatively large agricultural community felt the impact of the nation's postal policies rather unevenly. Although Durham's location ten miles northwest of Portsmouth on the New Hampshire Turnpike necessitated the establishment of its first post office in 1796, proportionately few used the post office either for sending or receiving letters and newspapers throughout the first one-third of the nineteenth century. Despite the intentions of Congress and the observations of writers like Irving and Tocqueville, most residents of at least one New Hampshire town continued to rely on other means of exchanging information through the 1830s. In Durham, the mere availability of the postal service did not mean that everyone used it.

Only in the last ten years have historians begun to explore the growth of the post office and its role within the larger developing system of information distribution in early America. They have measured the growth of the post office against the stated goals of prominent statesmen and deemed it a success. In particular, Richard Kielbowicz and Richard John have focused on the relationship between postal policy and the American political climate. Kielbowicz has demonstrated the importance of postal operations in determining the quantity of public information (i.e., information presented in newspapers) available in an area, and the speed and frequency of its delivery. More significant, he argues, was the cost of sending newspapers. Although one could pay as much as twenty-five cents to mail a single page letter, a newspaper of any weight could be sent anywhere in the country for no more than one and one-half cents. According to Kielbowicz, the Founding Fathers legislated cheap postage for newspapers as a way of "uniting a fragile nation."<sup>5</sup> James Madison, after all, had written in 1792 that the "political intelligence" carried by newspapers was "justly reckoned among the surest means of preventing the degeneracy of a free government, as well as of recommending every salutary public measure to the confidence and cooperation of all virtuous citizens."<sup>6</sup>

By the 1820s and 1830s the postal system had emerged as a central player in an evolving American political culture. In filling a void that he

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<sup>5</sup> Richard B. Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700-1860s* (New York, 1989), 3, 179.

<sup>6</sup> James Madison, "Address of the House of Representatives to the President," Nov. 9, 1792, in *Papers of James Madison*, ed. William T. Hutchinson *et al.*, (17 vols., Chicago, and Charlottesville, 1962-1991), XIV, 404.

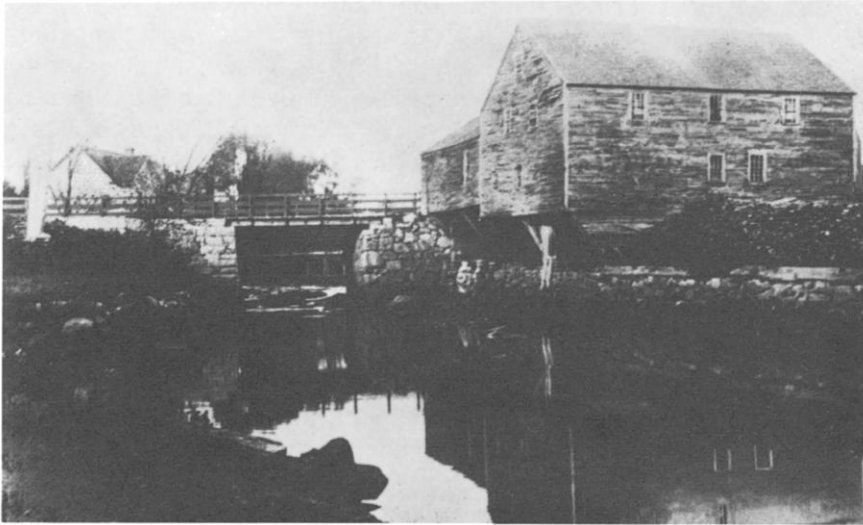
concluded had been left by the onset of the "new" social history and the popularity of community studies, Richard John has recently produced an important book on the subject, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse*. Although it is fundamentally an institutional analysis of the postal service, John has given us the most thorough examination of the origins of the Post Office Act of 1792, its passage, and its implementation. More important, he uncovers an interesting social context for the postal service as he explores controversies surrounding Sunday mails, post office mismanagement and political patronage, and the distribution of abolitionist print.

The emphasis placed by these scholars and others on the government's operation of the postal service has led to a consensus view that the growth of the mails had a democratizing effect on nineteenth-century Americans, much as Irving and Tocqueville thought. The post office, through the carrying of mail (and newspapers, in particular), is said to have helped transform American culture as it fulfilled its role as part of an elaborate network established to educate, inform, and engage the nation's virtuous citizenry. According to Richard John, Americans found themselves in a new world, one in which "the press was the principal mass medium, the stagecoach an important form of public transportation, and the postal system a powerful agent of change." By 1828, John argues, the expansion of the postal service had created a sense of nationhood, "an imagined community that incorporated a far flung citizenry into the political process." Likewise, Richard D. Brown cites statistics on the "spread of post offices, newspapers, books, schools, lyceums, and the like" as revealing that, by the 1820s, "public information, once scarce, was now circulating extensively and that institutions to promote learning . . . were more and more part of the cultural landscape." William Gilmore best summarized the prevailing acceptance of this idea when he asserted that, collectively, post offices, print centers, district schools, and academies formed a network of institutions that were central to a "new cultural environment."<sup>7</sup>

The studies produced by these historians, although valuable, have not explored fully the role of the post office in such a "new cultural environment." What is needed is some sense of how the new services provided

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<sup>7</sup> Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), 7, 168; Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill, 1996), 117; William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville, 1989), 103.



The Frost Store as it appeared in 1880. The post office, which operated out of the store from 1808 to 1848, is believed to have been housed in the smaller wing of the building that ran perpendicular to the bridge. *Frost Collection, Durham Historic Association.*

by the post office were actually *used* by ordinary citizens. Institutional analyses cannot provide this. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to suggest that through an examination of local postal records we may begin to discern important details regarding the dissemination of information into and out of a community. Despite some gaps in the bookkeeping, the postal records available for Durham tell us who used the post office and, generally, for what purpose. Ultimately, I will argue that if a “new cultural environment” was evolving, it was unfolding slowly. Just as Ronald Zboray has found that national distribution networks for story papers and other printed material could not unite a heterogeneous reading public, evidence from Durham suggests that the wide net cast by the postal system engaged only a fraction of the population.<sup>8</sup> Use of the

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<sup>8</sup> Ronald Zboray, “Technology and the Character of Community Life in Antebellum America: The Role of Story Papers,” in *Communication and Change in American Religious History*, ed. Leonard I. Sweet (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993), 185-215; See also, Zboray, *A*

Durham post office was dominated by a small group of professional men and local officials, and even the newspapers coming into town, although usually posted for only a penny, were subscribed to and purchased by relatively few.

Furthermore, students of the early republic will recognize this persistence of localism in the face of national market influences as the result of factors which continue to be of interest in two ongoing historiographical debates surrounding rural *mentalité* and the dawn of the second American party system, respectively. In Durham, the familial concerns and religious values predicted by the rural paradigms of James Henretta, Christopher Clark and others, manifested themselves both in the form of a heretofore understated thirst for religious newspapers and pamphlets, and in a preference for the party of Andrew Jackson.

A description of Durham, its post office and postal records is in order at the outset. Durham's population of 1,538 in 1820 and 1,606 in 1830 made it similar in some ways to the fortunate farmstead hamlets of William Gilmore's *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life*, but its location on the New Hampshire turnpike and across Great Bay from Portsmouth confounds this parallel. Gilmore's cultural habitats were much more isolated than Durham in the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>9</sup> Even so, in 1830 over 91 percent of Americans and over 86 percent of New Englanders lived in towns of fewer than 2,500 persons, thus making Durham fairly typical.<sup>10</sup> In fact, Durham's proximity to lanes of commerce made it more likely to be active in communication networks than most rural towns and, therefore, more likely to be subject to cosmopolitan influences.

Between 1796 and 1808 the Durham post office changed hands four times before the responsibility passed to George Frost who ran it until 1828, when his son George Frost, Jr., became postmaster. The younger Frost served in that capacity until 1848. Like almost all local postmasters, the Frosts made their living from other vocations. George Frost administered his varied business dealings from the location of his primary enterprise, the general store situated in the center of town. He also owned several farm properties and wood lots (which he harvested for trade with local shipbuilders and for Fort Constitution in Portsmouth

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*Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life*, 283-343.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1970* (2 vols., Washington, DC, 1973) I, pt. 1, sec. 1, 62.



harbor which needed firewood).<sup>11</sup> In addition, Frost served his community as a magistrate, town moderator, and representative to the General Court in 1807.<sup>12</sup>

During the forty years that the Frosts controlled the post office, they ran it from their general store. For Frost, this must have been an ideal arrangement. The presence of the post office probably generated some additional business for the store and, as postmaster, Frost and those from whom he received mail could post letters for free.<sup>13</sup>

Typically, one of the frustrations scholars must face when working with local postal records of this era is the inconsistency of the recordkeeping and a general lack of completeness.<sup>14</sup> The Frosts, however, used a thorough (though not altogether efficient) system of recording postal transactions. My analysis is pieced together using three different types of records that, when combined, provide a complete picture of postal business in Durham. The first is a group of fairly straightforward daily account books in which Frost recorded almost every

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<sup>11</sup> For a more extensive discussion of Frost's businesses, see Robert W. Lovett, "A Tidewater Merchant in New Hampshire," *Business History Review*, 33 (Spring 1959), 60-72.

<sup>12</sup> Everett S. Stackpole and Lucien Thompson, *History of the Town of Durham, New Hampshire* (2 vols., Durham, 1913), I, 332. Abraham Lincoln has been used as an example of a village postmaster who was "typically a well known merchant or professional. . . often an entrepreneurial man-on-the-make." Richard John, "Managing the Mails: The Postal System, Public Policy, and American Political Culture, 1823-1836" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1989), 56.

<sup>13</sup> Lovett, "A Tidewater Merchant in New Hampshire," 69. See also Stackpole, *History of the Town of Durham, New Hampshire*, 332. For an interesting description of a postal operation within a general store, see James O. Robertson and Janet C. Robertson, *All Our Yesterdays: A Century of Family Life in an American Small Town* (New York, 1993), 147-48, 164, 168-69. The Robertsons argue that thanks to free postage on mail sent to postmasters, the postmaster in Hampton, Connecticut during this same period became a "social welfare worker" with many people writing to him expressing intimate family matters and asking him to pass information along to loved ones.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the immense amount of official documentation required by the general post office in Washington, local postmasters had to keep records on individual patrons, particularly since postal transactions were often processed on credit. No other collection of local postal records that I have seen comes even close to being as complete as the Frost records. See, for example, David Hubbard Sumner Papers, Solomon Henkel Papers, Paxton, Massachusetts Post Office Records, and the Rutland, Massachusetts Post Office Records (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA); David Hubbard Sumner Papers (Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier); the Bridgeport, Vermont Post Office Records, and the William H. Moore papers (Baker Library, Harvard University); and the Edmund Toppan Papers (Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH).



postal transaction for a given period chronologically.<sup>15</sup> Their only shortcoming is that they do not consistently distinguish between postage charged for mails received or for mails sent. Most people paid for letters upon receipt (or put it on their tab) rather than when they sent them, so most of the transactions in these books are evidence of letters, newspapers, and pamphlets being received, with a much smaller number of letters being sent.<sup>16</sup> In addition, they include quarterly postage charges for newspaper subscriptions, with the name of the patron, the name of the newspaper, the dates covered, and the postage. Though such records are available for occasional periods beginning in 1815, I chose to work with a more complete set available from 1821 to 1835.

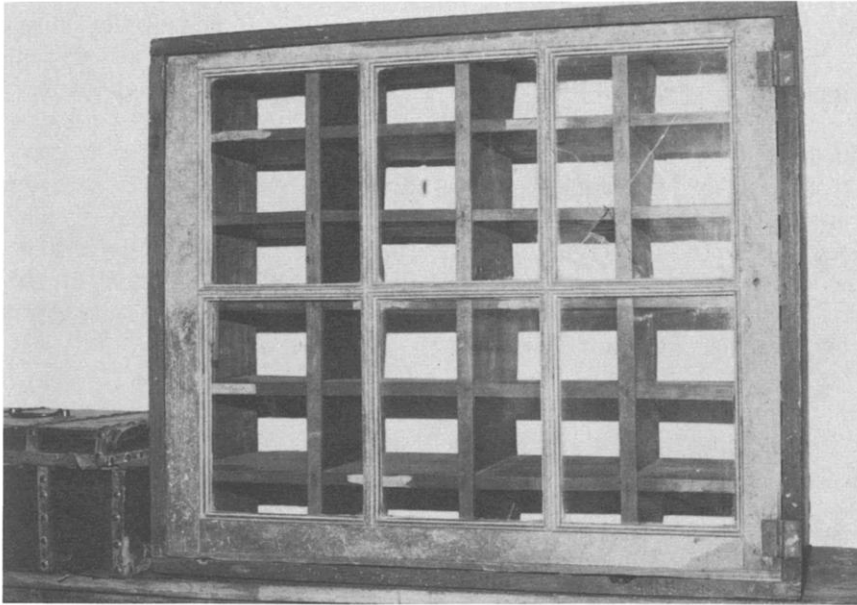
Most postmasters who also owned general stores were in the habit of recording postal transactions with the rest of the store's business in their general store daybooks, so we are fortunate that the Frosts left behind the more accessible postal daybooks. That said, there were times when postal transactions were recorded in the general store daybooks, particularly after George Frost, Jr. assumed responsibility for the operation. Thus, the second source used in this study is a group of general store daybooks covering the same periods as the postal daybooks. From these two sources I have mined a population of over 7,000 postal transactions over the equivalent of eleven and one-half years (from January 1821 to February 1823, from July 1826 to October 1827, and from January 1828 to December 1835). This represents a complete picture of all Durham postal business for these dates and of the people who generated it.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> These records include the date, the name of the patron, often a brief description of the transaction, the postage due, and an indication of payment status (postal business was usually done on credit). Postal accounts (1821-1827), Durham Town Records (Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire). In 1828, when George Frost, Jr., became postmaster, he continued to use such a "letter book" but divided it into two parts: one maintained the daybook format, while the other part recorded transactions for the most frequent patrons in a general ledger, individual account format. Letterbook, Frost Family Collection (Durham Historic Association, Durham, NH).

<sup>16</sup> This is confirmed by a record of accounts current maintained by Frost from 1810 to 1829 and the official *Accounts of Mails Received* and *Accounts of Mails Sent* reported to the General Post Office in Washington. Generally speaking, revenue from mails sent never amounted to more than fifteen to twenty percent of revenue from mails received. Post Office Accounts Current, Frost Family Collection; *Accounts of Mails Received* and *Accounts of Mails Sent*, Durham Town Records.

<sup>17</sup> It does not, however, represent a complete picture of all postal activity. We know that there must have been some significant body of letters being sent from the Durham post office that does not appear in these two sources. Because most mail was sent unpaid, the Frosts had no reason to record unpaid letters being sent or paid letters being received in the daybooks because they had no bearing on their profit calculation. But because use of



Post Office box used in the Frost Store, 1808-1848, Frost Collection, *Durham Historic Association*: photograph by Michael S. Foley.

the mails generally involved both sending and receiving mail (it would be highly unlikely that a person only sent or only received letters), and because this study covers more than eleven years of postal transactions, it seems certain that the population of postal patrons present in both sources is complete. Furthermore, Durham residents were not likely to use post offices in neighboring towns. Rather residents from adjacent communities were more likely to use the Durham post office (18 such patrons responsible for 133 transactions were excluded from this study). The only towns contiguous to Durham with their own post offices were Madbury to the northeast and Newmarket to the south. Postal revenues for the year ending March 31, 1830, were only \$2.25 in Madbury and \$33.78 in Newmarket (compared to Durham's \$122.00). Thus, if citizens of Durham did use another post office, Newmarket seems the likely candidate. But the location of that post office in downtown Newmarket, although not far from the Durham town line, would have been more convenient than Frost's for only a few families living in the sparsely settled southwest corner of Durham. Postal revenue figures from Congress, House, Receipts from Postage in Post Office Department, 1830, by State and Territory, H. Doc 119, 21st Cong., 2d sess., Serial 209, 1.

The third type of record used in this analysis is a specially printed quarterly account sheet provided by the postal service to postmasters and used to record only prepaid postage on newspaper and pamphlet subscriptions. The postal service distributed such account sheets to ensure uniformity of recordkeeping and to reinforce the particular importance of collecting postage due on papers (the circulation of which was growing rapidly).<sup>18</sup> Though they appear quite mundane, these three sources, taken together, present a rare opportunity to examine an essential aspect of the stream of information exchange in rural New Hampshire.

Walk-in business at the post office did not always work the way it does today. For example, although Sabbatarians across the country crusaded against operating the postal service on Sundays, the postmaster general required all post offices to operate seven days a week.<sup>19</sup> The Frosts seem to have ignored this law in Durham as their daily postage records indicate that not one transaction occurred on a Sunday in the 1820s and 1830s. Just the same, their accounts also show that it was not unusual to send mail on December 25, Christmas Day.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The dates of the quarter were noted on these sheets as were, for each newspaper: the name of the newspaper, the city of origin, the frequency of delivery, the number of subscribers (though no names), the total number of issues expected in the quarter, and the postage paid. Again, these records are not complete, but I have used every sheet that is available from October 1829 to December 1832, from April to September 1834, and from January to December 1835. *Account of Newspapers and Pamphlets Received*, Postal Accounts, Durham Town Records. The postmaster regulation and instruction manual advised, "Experience has proved how inattentive many people are to the payment of such small debts as arise from trusting the postages of newspapers: you are therefore not to give credit. Some postmasters write that they have scarcely collected 50 per cent of this postage. To save in future any trouble or inconvenience on that account, it will be proper for you to require the subscribers who receive papers through your office, at the commencement of every quarter, to pay the amount of one quarter's subscription in advance, and without such payment in advance, not to deliver them any newspapers, even though they tender you the money for them singly." *Post-Office Laws, Instructions and Forms, Published for the Regulation of the Post-Office* (Washington, DC, 1828), 47-48.

<sup>19</sup> At post offices where the mail arrived on Sundays, the postmaster was required to keep the post office open for at least an hour after delivery unless it interfered with "the hours of public worship." In such cases, it was to be kept open for one hour "after the usual time of dissolving the meeting." *Post-Office Laws*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Richard R. John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously: the Postal System, the Sabbath, and the Transformation of American Political Culture," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10 (Winter 1990), 517-67. Of 7,055 transactions appearing in the postage account books, 3 took place on a Sunday; but since Frost's store did not even open on Sundays, it appears that incorrect dates were recorded for these few transactions. Postage Account Books, Durham Town Records; Letter Book, Frost Family Collection. The Durham records show postal activity on December 25 in 1821, 1822, 1826, 1828, 1829,

Postal business in Durham increased significantly during the 1820s (Table 1). Although it was not unusual for a week to pass without anyone posting a letter from Durham in 1821 and 1822, by 1827 there were letters leaving town nearly every day of every month. In addition, the number of transactions in a given month had increased dramatically by 1827. While only 231 transactions were processed in the Durham post office in the twelve months from July 1821 to June 1822, transactions for the same months from 1826 to 1827 numbered 848, a 367 percent increase. After 1827, postal business seemed to plateau before dropping off in the first half of the 1830s. By June 1835, the number of transactions processed in twelve months had dropped to 636, nearly 25 percent lower than the peak of 1827, but still 275 percent higher than 1822. This decrease in postal business may represent a stabilization among the postal patrons or, more likely, reflects a dissatisfaction with the notorious inefficiencies of the postal service under the direction of Postmaster General William T. Barry, who had taken that position in 1829.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, by the 1830s, the Durham post office was playing a greater role in the stream of information dissemination than it had in the early twenties, at least for some.

In contrast to the situation today, not everyone used the post office in the early nineteenth century. The reasons for this may never be fully explained. It is generally assumed that the cost of mailing a letter was one obstruction to the use of the postal system. The postage charged depended on the distance a letter was sent. In the 1820s postage rates were based on a system of five zones: on a single page letter being sent up to 30 miles the sender (or recipient) paid 6 cents; 30 to 80 miles, 10 cents; 80 to 150 miles, 12 1/2 cents; 150 to 400 miles, 18 1/2 cents; and over 400 miles, 25 cents. These postage rates were doubled for two-page letters and tripled for three-page letters, and so on. When translated into today's dollars and cents and compared to our current first class letter rate

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1830, 1833, and 1835. Interestingly, the Rev. Alvan Tobey is shown to have conducted postal business on Christmas Day, 1835. Postage Account Books, 1821, 1822, 1826, Durham Town Records; Letter Book, Frost Family Collection.

<sup>21</sup> In 1833, Hezekiah Niles, publisher of *Niles' Weekly Register*, complained in a column that his paper was "exceedingly harassed, and much injured, by the long-enduring irregularity of the mails, and the excessive carelessness or gross ignorance, or something worse, in a good many of the post offices." Leonard D. White, *The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1829-1861* (New York, 1954), 252. White spends an entire chapter chronicling the "decline of the Post Office" under Barry before describing its "renaissance" under his successor, Amos Kendall.

**Table 1: Level of Business, Durham Post Office, July 1821 to June 1822, July 1826 to June 1827, July 1829 to June 1830, and July 1834 to June 1835**

Month	1821-1822		1826-1827		1829-1830		1834-1835	
	Days	Trans	Days	Trans	Days	Trans	Days	Trans
July	7	13	21	62	26	77	20	34
Aug.	10	12	25	87	25	59	25	60
Sept.	13	20	23	62	23	59	25	58
Oct.	8	8	26	74	23	67	22	43
Nov.	14	22	21	58	25	79	20	47
Dec.	10	23	20	85	26	93	22	55
Jan.	11	19	20	73	25	79	23	57
Feb.	12	21	23	65	23	66	20	49
Mar.	16	25	24	85	27	80	24	63
Apr.	13	26	21	68	24	64	23	54
May	8	15	24	78	23	54	22	59
June	17	27	21	51	25	59	22	57
Total	139	231	269	848	295	836	268	636
Average	11.6	19.3	22.4	70.7	24.6	69.7	22.3	53.0

Note: *Days* refers to the number of individual days on which at least one transaction was processed in a given month. *Trans* refers to the total number of transactions each month. Sources: Postal accounts (1821-1827), Durham town records, Special Collections Department, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire; Letter Book (1828-1835), Frost family collection, Durham Historic Association; General Store Daybooks (1821-1835), Frost Collection, Historical Collections Department, Baker Library, Harvard University.

of 32 cents, these charges do seem quite expensive indeed: 6 cents in 1822 would equal roughly 69 cents today; 10 cents = \$1.16; 12 1/2 cents = \$1.44; 18 1/2 cents = \$2.14; and 25 cents = \$2.89.<sup>22</sup> It is, however,

<sup>22</sup> *The Post-Office Law, with Instructions and Forms, Published for the Regulation of the Post-Office* (Washington, DC, 1817), 25. In 1825, the postage charged for letters traveling from 150 to 400 miles went up from 18 1/2 cents to 18 3/4 cents. *Post-Office Law, Instruction and Forms, Published for the Regulation of the Post-Office* (Washington, DC, 1825); John J. McCusker, "How Much Is That in Real Money? A Historical Price Index for Use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States,"

of little consequence that today's postal patron would consider such rates prohibitive; it is more important to understand how Americans might have felt about them in the 1820s.

Historians have long speculated that "given the wage and income levels of farmers and laborers during the period," these postal rates "in all likelihood seemed quite high, perhaps even prohibitive, to most individuals." In his new book, Richard John does little to challenge this notion, suggesting that for a common laborer earning \$1.00 a day, "letter writing was an expensive proposition." A laborer working in New York, he writes, would have to pay 25 cents (or one quarter of a day's pay) to send a letter to Buffalo. As we shall see, however, this example is flawed; in the 1820s, few would have cause to send mail that far away.<sup>23</sup>

When compared to a day's wage and the cost of other commonly purchased goods, postal rates were not necessarily too dear for most Durham residents. For instance, assorted Durham town records indicate that, consistent with John's example, the town paid \$1.00 a day for road work in the 1820s. At the same time, quickly consumed items such as a gallon of cider cost 8 cents; a quart of rum, 30 cents; two quarts of molasses, 33 cents; three pecks of corn, 75 cents.<sup>24</sup> Other records show customers being charged 50 cents for a three pound bag of sugar,<sup>25</sup> 25 cents for a pint of brandy, one dollar for a black silk handkerchief, four dollars for a pair of chair cushions, and six dollars for a buffalo robe.<sup>26</sup> Most telling, perhaps, is the frequency with which some customers purchased the same items, in particular rum and molasses. The daybooks from the general store show many customers coming in every two or three days to spend far more than the cost of postage for an average letter on a quart, two quarts, or a gallon of rum.<sup>27</sup> Certainly, given the cost of

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*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 101 (Oct. 1991), 297-373. These figures were computed using the commodity price index numbers for 1822 and 1991 in Table A-2.

<sup>23</sup> Allen R. Pred, *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States System of Cities, 1790-1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), 81; John, *Spreading the News*, 159.

<sup>24</sup> Account of expenses from Joseph Coe to Town of Durham, 1820, Durham Town Records. Coe was reimbursed by the town for his expenses in caring for Benjamin Thilpot who was incapacitated with a broken leg. Also see daybooks, vols. 12-17, Frost Collection (Baker Library, Harvard University).

<sup>25</sup> Bill from Mathes and Hanson to John Libbey, 1820, Durham Town Records.

<sup>26</sup> Bill from Abraham Perkins to William Stetson, 1821-1823, *ibid.* Also see daybooks, vols. 12-17, Frost Collection (Baker Library, Harvard University).

<sup>27</sup> For example, a few residents of Durham who rarely appear in the postal records, but who bought rum regularly from the Frost general store included Jacob Johnson, Eunice Crummett, Stephen Twombly, and George Huil. Daybooks, vols. 12-17, Frost Collection (Baker Library, Harvard University).



such ordinary items, postage rates of 6, 10, and even 12 1/2 cents seem within the reach of most Durham residents. It appears unlikely, therefore, that postage rates alone would keep people away from the post office altogether.

Still, although the Durham post office had been in operation for more than 25 years, not many people were in the habit of visiting it. Despite Durham's total population of 1,538 in 1820 and 1,606 in 1830, a total of only 349 patrons made 7,055 transactions over the course of this eleven and one-half year period. When measured against 1830 U.S. Census records, the postal accounts indicate that fewer than one-half of Durham's adults transacted business at the post office during the period under consideration.<sup>28</sup> On the surface, this does not seem unreasonably low, but, to be more precise, it must be recognized that even these figures are inflated. Of the 349 patrons counted, 132 of them made only one transaction each during this time. Indeed, the median number of transactions made by these 349 people was 2; that is, more than half of the Frosts' postal patrons generated only one or two transactions over the course of more than *eleven years*. This is astonishingly low, particularly since the names of 634 Durham residents were listed in the index to the general ledger of the Frost store. If Durham residents sensed the development of a "new cultural environment," only a fraction of them might have seen the post office as an integral part of it.

Not surprisingly, nearly 75 percent of these patrons were men. This is consistent with John's findings that the local post office was "hardly a representative cross section of the public," but rather a "bastion of white male solidarity and an adjunct to the racially and sexually stratified world of politics and commerce." Using a list of dead letters posted in an 1824 issue of the *National Intelligencer*, John estimates that women "may have written as many as 20 percent of all the letters in the country."<sup>29</sup> The Durham records reflect an alternative scenario. At first glance, 79 women were responsible for 320 (or 4.5 percent) of 7,055 transactions. And even if we add to this all of the transactions made by men but noted by the postmaster as taking place on behalf of women, the result is a total of 123 women participating in 478 transactions, or 6.8 percent of the 7,055 total over eleven years.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> 1830 census records list 358 men and 454 women over age 20, or 812 total.

<sup>29</sup> John, *Spreading the News*, 162, 158.

<sup>30</sup> The Frosts often recorded transactions using a man's name, but then noted that the letter was "for his wife," "for his daughter," or "for Miss—." Whether the patron paid for it or took it on credit, the amount due was charged to his account in the general ledger.



Consequently, we might quickly surmise that the post office was simply part of the ordinary male sphere if we did not also recognize that of the 166 men who used the post office more than once only a much smaller group made frequent use of the post office: 4,770 individual transactions can be attributed to just 22 men (Table 2). Thus, more than two-thirds (67.6 percent) of the transactions recorded in these account books were generated by less than 2 percent (1.37 percent) of the population, or only 6 percent of the 349 patrons noted. In fact, 30 percent of all postal transactions (2,171) were generated by only five men. Those in Washington who sought to include more people in the system of information distribution through the expansion of the postal service would have been disappointed with the low level of participation present in Durham.

Even though the postal records do not include biographical information on these twenty-two patrons beyond certain titles (*e.g.* Dr., Rev., and Esq.) a town history published in 1913 reveals important details on all but two of them. Collectively, this group of men constituted a who's who of business and community leaders. Of the twenty-two most frequent users of the post office, seven worked with the law (five lawyers, one judge, and the clerk of the Court of Common Pleas for Strafford County). In addition, the three successive pastors of the Congregational church, three shipbuilders, and two doctors were among this small group of regular patrons. The occupations of four of the twenty-two are unknown, though two of them held elected office during the period under consideration. In fact eleven of these men were elected to one of four offices (Selectman, Moderator, Town Clerk, Representative to the General Court) during the 1820s and 1830s. It is not surprising that such men of prominence in the community would use the postal service regularly to communicate with the world beyond Durham.

The elite nature of participation in the postal network during this period has not gone unrecognized by scholars. Wayne E. Fuller first noted the likelihood that the "average American received only a few more letters in 1850 than his father had in 1800." The much touted increased

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Although I suspect that most of these transactions occurred because the male was more likely to find himself in the general store than the woman for whom he received the letter, there also may have been an air of chivalry to these encounters. For example, in 1835, several letters for Miss Susan Leighton were received (and later paid for) by Charles Mathes, the man she would later marry in 1836. Postal Accounts, Durham Town Records; letter book, Frost Family Collection; daybooks, vols. 12-17, Frost Collection (Baker Library, Harvard University).

**Table 2: Top Twenty-Two Users of the Post Office,  
Number of Transactions, January 1821 - February 1823,  
July 1826 - October 1827, January 1828 - December 1835.**

Patron	Occupation	Offices Held (see key)	Number of Transactions
John Richardson	Lawyer	M,TC	573
Valentine Smith	Judge	S,TC	525
Benjamin Mathes	Unknown	M,R	419
John Coe	Shipbuilder		343
Alvan Tobey	Minister		311
Richard Steele	Doctor/GenStore	M	290
Ebenezer Smith, Jr.	Lawyer		276
Benjamin Kelley	Inn Keeper	S,M,TC	264
Richard Ela	Lawyer	M	243
Robert Page	Minister		191
Joseph Coe	Shipbuilder	S,R,M,TC	166
Federal Burt	Minister		147
Stephen Mitchell	Lawyer		131
Abraham Perkins & Son	Gen. Store		113
Andrew Simpson	Shipbuilder	M,R	110
John W. Davis	Unknown		103
Ebenezer Smith, Sr.	Lawyer	S,M,R	102
Frederick Cushing	Doctor		98
Abraham Perkins	Gen. Store/ Deacon	S	95
John Odell	Unknown		95
Joseph W. Page	Unknown	S,M	94
Benjamin Thompson	Clerk of Court, J.P.		81
Total			4770

Note: Abbreviations for Town Offices: S = selectman,  
R = Representative to the General Court, M = moderator,  
TC = town clerk

flow of letters was “largely the result of businessmen’s increasing reliance upon the postal service.” In Fuller’s view, “the Post Office had become the good right arm of business in antebellum America.” Allan Pred, writing in 1973, concurred with Fuller in suggesting that use of the mails as late as 1840 was “probably still confined to a relatively small minority of the total population, most of whom were involved with commerce.” Richard John, in his latest work, concedes that before 1845, “few Americans ever sent or received a letter through the mail” and he acknowledges that the “imagined community” created by the Post Office evolved from “a complicated drama of inclusion and exclusion in which certain groups won while others lost.” But John’s focus on women and blacks as those most restricted from use of the mails obscures the broader lack of participation by those who might be described as nonelites. Since the cost of sending and receiving letters was not prohibitive, we must conclude that most people simply did not need to communicate with others beyond Durham and its environs. Therefore, if some nonelites did use the post office, it would be interesting to know how far their circle of correspondence extended when compared to that of the business and political elite.<sup>31</sup>

The use of a five zone system to determine the amount of postage charged makes it possible to get some idea of where or, more specifically, how far most letters traveled on their way to and from Durham. An accounting of the items charged at each rate indicates that 79 percent of the mail arriving and departing Durham originated in or was received in locations no farther than 80 miles away. In fact, a little more than half of those letters were posted for 10 cents, which means that they traveled within a 30 to 80 mile radius from Durham; the other half stayed within 30 miles. Ten percent of Durham’s mail came from or went to places between 80 and 150 miles away, another ten percent between 150 and 400 miles away, and less than two percent ranged beyond 400 miles during this period.<sup>32</sup>

Although the daybooks contain only infrequent notations regarding the specific destinations or points of origin of letters, the official *Account of Mails Sent* prepared for the General Post Office make up for that

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<sup>31</sup> Fuller, *The American Mail*, 88; Pred, *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information*, 79; John, *Spreading the News*, 156, 168.

<sup>32</sup> Breakdown of postal rates charged: 2,435 pieces at 6 cents; 2,957 pieces at 10 cents; 620 pieces at 12 ½ cents; 668 pieces at 18 ½ cents; 154 pieces at 25 cents. Note that the total of 6,834 pieces is less than the 7,055 transactions described earlier. This is due largely to transactions reflecting payment of only newspaper postage.

shortcoming.<sup>33</sup> Based on an examination of these forms, it seems safe to conclude that most of Durham's mail came from or was sent to places just beyond the point at which it was still reasonable to communicate with someone face to face (Table 3). Much of the six-cent mail was sent to Portsmouth, Exeter (the former state capital), Dover, and Northwood. Most of the ten-cent mail traveled to and from family, friends, and business relations in other parts of New England, especially Boston and Lowell.

Statistics can often be misleading, however, and one must be cautious when forming an analysis based in large part on such data. For instance, the number of pieces of mail coming or going over 400 miles is somewhat skewed due to the unusual frequency with which Judge Valentine Smith paid 25 cents (Table 4). Over eleven years, Smith paid 25 cents 56 times, making him responsible for more than one third of the total number of letters in that range (154). As Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and later chief justice of Sessions, Smith was one of the few residents of Durham who might have reason to correspond with individuals beyond a 400 mile radius. Without him, over the course of eleven years fewer than 100 pieces of mail would have traveled to or from destinations 400 miles beyond Durham. A Durham equivalent of Richard John's New York laborer would have been a rare individual indeed.

One of the most important details to understand from Durham is that the top 22 users of the postal service kept 79 percent of their mail within the first two rate zones. This is consistent with the mailing patterns of the whole population of 349 patrons who had 79 percent of their letters coming from or going to addresses within an 80 mile circle. Consequently, these residents of Durham were most often charged 6 or 10 cents in a postal transaction (with the obvious qualification that a small proportion of these letters were heavier and, therefore, cost more to mail). This leads to the issue of payment.

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<sup>33</sup> In most cases, it is difficult to match the letters listed on the *Account of Mails Received* and *Account of Mails Sent* to those recorded in the daybooks because the daybooks list only the patron, and the forms list only the destination or originating post office. Frost would have recorded letters received in his post office on the form on the day they arrived, but might record the same letters in the daybook over several days as the recipients came to claim them. It is a little easier to link letters sent between the two records, but it is very imprecise. It is also impossible to determine from where most mail to Durham originated because the *Account of Mails Received* lists most letters (at all postal rates) as coming from Portsmouth, the nearest distribution office, thus obscuring the real points of origin. *Accounts of Mails Received* and *Accounts of Mails Sent*, Postal Accounts, Durham Town Records.

**Table 3: Most Common Destinations of Letters Departing Durham, 1831.\***

Destination	Number of Letters	Percentage of Total (941)
Boston, Mass.	97	10.3
Lowell, Mass.	82	8.7
Exeter, N.H.	31	3.3
Portsmouth, N.H.	31	3.3
New York, N.Y.	27	2.9
Dover, N.H.	26	2.8
Northwood, N.H.	23	2.4
Salisbury, Mass.	15	1.6
Concord, N.H.	14	1.5
Newburyport, Mass.	14	1.5

\*Although records of *Accounts of Mails Sent* have survived for other years, they are complete only for 1831, 1832, 1834, and 1835. Unfortunately, beginning in 1832, Frost began using a system of recording many of the letters in general terms such as "Northern," "Southern," "Eastern," and "Western." 1831, therefore, is the only complete year with specific destinations listed. *Accounts of Mails Sent*, Postal Accounts, Durham Town Records, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire.

Although many would have been charged only six or ten cents per transaction, few patrons paid the Frosts at the time of their postal transaction. In fact, more than 95 percent of those who made more than one transaction in the period under review deferred paying the amount of postage due. Most postal patrons had general store accounts to which would be added, periodically, the amounts they had been charged for postage in the postal daybooks and general store daybooks. It seems that, at least in Durham's case, postal transactions were informal encounters, with little expectation of payment upfront.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> At the end of each quarter, when the postmaster calculated his commission (based on total postal proceeds) and the balance due the General Post Office, he used the *Accounts of Mails Sent* and *Accounts of Mails Received*, rather than the patron accounts. He did not have a separate cash box from which he sent the amount due Washington because all postal revenues were combined with those of the general store. Consequently, he simply sent a note to the general post master, and any revenue left over (which should have matched the amount of commission reported) was absorbed into the store's profits. See *Accounts of Mails Sent and Received*, Postal Records, Durham Town Records; and book of Accounts Current, Frost Family Collection.

**Table 4: Top Twenty-Two Users of the Post Office, Approximate Breakdown of Postal Rates Charged, January 1821 - February 1823, July 1826 - October 1827, January 1828 - December 1835.**

Name	to 30mi (6 ct)	30-80mi (10 ct)	80-150 (12.5c)	150-400 (18.5c)	400+ mi (25ct)	Total *
John Richardson	141	324	4	19	6	494
Valentine Smith	104	68	69	54	56	351
Ben. Mathes	235	147	40	57	6	485
John Coe	175	207	5	40	2	429
Alvan Tobey	99	114	94	13	4	324
Rich. Steele	101	83	40	56	5	285
E Smith Jr.	126	108	39	8	0	281
Ben. Kelley	108	114	26	12	10	270
Richard Ela	76	97	38	18	7	236
Robert Page	47	83	17	9	0	156
Joseph Coe	96	91	3	0	0	190
Federal Burt	18	37	23	33	1	112
S. Mitchell	53	67	4	5	1	130
Perkins & Son	73	55	1	6	0	135
And. Simpson	40	60	12	12	2	126
John W.Davis	2	106	0	0	0	108
E Smith Sr.	30	33	4	31	1	99
Fred Cushing	18	54	2	23	0	97
Abe. Perkins	37	18	12	0	0	67
John Odell	38	40	14	30	5	127
Joseph Page	73	23	0	2	0	98
B. Thompson	35	25	2	0	6	68
Total	1725	1954	449	428	112	4668

\* Totals in this column will not necessarily agree with totals in Table 2. Table 2 shows number of *transactions* while this one shows the number of *items* sent or received. One transaction often included payment for more than one letter and frequently included postage paid on newspapers and pamphlets.

For some customers, however, payment on the spot was much more common. Among those who rarely used the postal service, 51 percent paid their bill at the time of the transaction. In contrast, out of 4,770 transactions made by the 22 most regular patrons, less than 2 percent of the transactions involved cash payment.<sup>35</sup> This percentage would have been even lower if not for Abraham Perkins and Andrew Simpson, both of whom went through periods when they paid up front. Perkins, a general store owner himself, paid cash for nearly all of his postal transactions until 1828 when George Frost, Jr., included him among the frequent patrons listed in the general ledger section of the letter book, thus extending credit. Simpson, a shipbuilder, had almost never paid at the time of a transaction until July 1827 after which he paid cash every time until 1828 when he again began receiving credit. Perkins's pattern is difficult to comprehend because there were times when he mailed letters on credit. Simpson's pattern suggests, however, that the postmaster may have had difficulty getting payment from him and, after July 1827, insisted that he pay with each letter sent (or received).

Clearly, then, the Frosts expected anyone who might not be seen around the post office again for a long time to settle his bill. The same would be required of patrons with a history of recalcitrance. Frequent customers, in contrast, were expected to pay up periodically during one of their many visits to the store. The one exception to this was the advance payment of postage on newspapers to which one had a subscription.

Just as recipients were more likely to pay postage on letters, newspaper and pamphlet buyers also paid postage. As a result, George Frost's account books from the 1820s are a valuable source for understanding the amount of public information that made its way into Durham in the form of newspapers. Frost recorded individual transactions in which a patron would pick up a paper at the post office and pay the postage (or put it on his account) at that time. Because postmasters were often agents for newspapers, it is likely that extra issues of certain papers were ordered by Frost every week with the intention of winning some regular subscribers. Patrons with subscriptions were then supposed to pay postage in advance at the beginning of every quarter. In Durham at least, this system did not seem to work very well. During the 1820s, the postmaster extended credit to everyone who had a subscription

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<sup>35</sup> Out of 4,770 transactions, these 22 customers paid for only 72 transactions (1.5 percent) on the spot.



to a newspaper. Every quarter, Frost noted who held subscriptions to which newspapers, but he never recorded the postage (usually thirteen cents per quarter per paper [one cent per week]) as paid at that time. Typically, subscribers would pay for postage on their paper after having received it for a year or more. Perhaps this lenient policy was part of an effort to entice more customers to subscribe to newspapers because, at that time, few Durham residents held subscriptions.

Given Richard Kielbowicz's contention that a proto-Jacksonian motivation to spread public information to as many American citizens as possible drove the concept of cheap postage for newspapers, the total of eight people with newspaper subscriptions in the winter of 1823 indicates that the plan was not working as designed. By 1827, the number of newspaper subscribers in Durham had risen to thirty-four, still only eight percent of the adult male population. Richard D. Brown has echoed others in suggesting that, in the early republic, "ideology and political exigency dictated an expansive, publicly oriented policy for the dissemination of information." Newspapers were viewed as a major part of this strategy, thus Congress encouraged the distribution of newspapers via the postal service to "virtually every town and country in the United States."<sup>36</sup> With subscriptions for most newspapers priced at no more than two dollars per year and postage set at only fifty-two cents a year for weeklies, it is surprising, therefore, to learn how few newspapers made it to Durham.

An analysis of a more complete set of postage records for newspaper subscriptions from 1829 to 1835 confirms that even in the 1830s, when the number of newspapers using the mails increased by an average of 2.3 million copies per year, relatively few citizens in Durham held subscriptions.<sup>37</sup> These printed account forms were used by Frost to keep track of quarterly newspaper postage payments. Though they did not include the name of the patron, for each newspaper the postmaster recorded the paper's point of origin, the number of subscribers, the frequency of delivery, and the total postage due from all subscribers to that paper. When compared to Durham's population in 1830, the total number of subscribers in any given quarter was small, from as few as 22 subscribers in the Winter of 1832 to as many as 69 in the Fall of 1835.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York, 1989), 13.

<sup>37</sup> Figures on newspapers using the mails cited in Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> *Account of Newspapers and Pamphlets Received*, Postal Records, Durham Town Records.

Furthermore, it is certain that these figures are inflated; we know that several individuals held subscriptions to more than one paper at any given time. In any case, even in the fall of 1835, fewer than 9 percent of the adult population subscribed to newspapers or pamphlets.<sup>39</sup>

It may be that residents of Durham were hesitant to invite news from the outside world into their homogeneous community. Kielbowicz has cited Robert Kelley's suggestion that many favored a "quiet, stable, localized, face-to-face society, simple in form and manageable," well into the Jacksonian era. Thus, it would be understandable to find citizens in rural areas seeking to insulate themselves from the more rapid social and cultural change taking place in urban areas. In fact, some Americans feared a further reduction in newspaper postage, believing that it would "extend the reach of city papers with alien values."<sup>40</sup> The Durham postal records seem to support this interpretation.

Though many were published in urban centers, more than one third of the ninety-seven newspapers and pamphlets to which residents of Durham held subscriptions from 1821 to 1835 were religious in nature and the list of titles suggests a willingness to experiment with such papers. It was common for an individual to hold a subscription for only one or two quarters. Moreover, the denominational breakdown was quite varied.

The Frosts' records show five Congregationalist titles, two Presbyterian, two Congregationalist *and* Presbyterian, three Unitarian, one Methodist, five Universalist, three Episcopal, three Anti-Sectarian, and three Anti-Mission.<sup>41</sup> One might think that, in this respect, Durham may have been a special case. The number of titles rooted in the more "progressive" Christian faiths reflects the town's earlier history of wrestling with conservative orthodoxy and issues of church and state.<sup>42</sup> Yet, as David

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<sup>39</sup> Based on U.S. Census figures for 1830 that showed 358 males and 454 females over age 20.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Lloyd Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics: The First Century* (New York, 1979), 162; Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail*, 58.

<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, beginning in the fall of 1832, the records of irregular newspapers (those not subscribed to) show two titles, *The Evening and Morning Star* and *The Latter Day Saints Newspaper and Advocate* coming to Durham from Kirtland, Ohio, temporary home of the Mormon Church. *Account of Newspaper and Pamphlets Received, 1832-1835*, Postal Accounts, Durham Town Records.

<sup>42</sup> In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, citizens of Durham had demonstrated a passionate commitment to religion and religious toleration. In 1808, they severed their relations with longtime Congregationalist minister, Curtis Coe, and ceased collecting a ministerial tax. The town later resurrected the tax but only on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, despite some ambivalence, the separation of church and town in Durham preceded New Hampshire's landmark Toleration Act (which legislated religious

Paul Nord has found in examining the work of the American Tract Society, many Americans hungered for religious reading during this time, and publishers of religious material worked feverishly to supplant the popular, "satanic" press with their own "sanctified" press.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, the number of religious titles passing through the Durham post office was consistent with figures gleaned from postal records in other parts of the country at the same time (Table 5). As in Durham, religious titles accounted for approximately one-third of all newspapers coming into both Berkshire, New York, and Jacksonville, Illinois, two towns of comparable size. Although the denominational background varied to some extent between the three locations (see Appendix, parts II and III), the importance of the "sanctified" press to Americans at this time is obvious. Still, that was not what Congress had intended in making newspapers more accessible through the postal system. As Richard Brown notes, by the 1830s, "the republican standard of public virtue, in which an alert citizenry was ever watchful against abuses of power, was being overshadowed by attention to private virtue and personal achievement."<sup>44</sup> Thus, it makes sense that more than half of the titles subscribed to in these three towns were either religious papers or specialized publications focusing on subjects like literature, farming, abolition, and temperance.

The Founders had hoped cheap postage on newspapers would spread political information throughout the country, and, as a result, inspire greater democratic participation. A fair share of secular newspapers did come through the Durham post office and almost all of these papers had clearly stated political leanings. Yet, the number of subscribers in any given quarter never amounted to more than thirty-three. Of course, unlike mailing and receiving letters, reading newspapers was often a group activity. Subscribers shared their newspapers with family members,

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toleration and outlawed ministerial taxation) by twelve years. By 1820, the Congregationalist Church had been revived under a new minister and a new, nonsectarian, "Christian" church had also been formed. On disestablishment in Durham, see Charles E. Clark, "Disestablishment at the Grass Roots: Curtis Coe and the Separation of Church and Town," *Historical New Hampshire*, 36 (Winter 1981), 280-305. On religious dissent and disestablishment in New Hampshire, see William G. McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630-1883: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State* (2 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1971), II, 833-911.

<sup>43</sup> David Paul Nord, "Systematic Benevolence: Religious Publishing and the Marketplace in Early Nineteenth Century America," in *Communication and Change in American Religious History*, 246; Nord, "Religious Reading and Readers in Antebellum America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15 (Summer 1995), 241-72.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, *The Strength of a People*, 122.

**Table 5: Breakdown of Religious, Secular, and Specialty Titles  
Among Newspapers to Which Residents Held Subscriptions:  
Durham, New Hampshire, 1821-1835; Berkshire, New York, 1824-  
1835, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1831-1832.**

Type of Newspaper	Durham	Berkshire	Jacksonville
Religious (Overall)	35	18	49
Congregational	5	1	9
Presbyterian	2	2	11
Congregational & Presb	2	2	0
Methodist	1	1	6
Baptist	0	1	4
Episcopal	3	0	0
Universalist	5	8	1
Unitarian	3	1	1
Anti-Mission	3	0	0
Anti-Sectarian /Christian	3	0	1
Undenominational	2	1	2
Miscellaneous	1	1	2
Unknown	5	0	12
<i>Secular</i> (Overall)	39	30	64
Whig/Pro-Adams/Pro- Clay/Anti-Jackson	25	8	18
Democrat/Pro-Jackson /Anti-Adams/Anti-Clay	11	7	11
Neutral	1	2	2
Other	0	0	1
Unknown	2	13	32
<i>Specialty</i> (Overall)	23	10	20
Literary	5	3	5
Medicine	2	0	0
Education	2	0	1
Farming	1	1	9
Anti-Masonic	1	3	1
Masonic	0	2	0
Anti-Slavery	4	0	1
Temperance	2	1	1
Miscellaneous	6	0	4
Total Number of Titles	97	58	133

Sources: See Appendix

neighbors, and friends. It is not inconceivable to imagine the Frost store as a center for this kind of activity. One contemporary approvingly remarked, "There is scarcely a village or country post office in the United States, particularly if it be kept in a tavern or store, in which newspapers are not as free to all comers, as to the persons to whom they rightfully belong."<sup>45</sup> The practice became so widespread that, in April 1830, the *New Hampshire Gazette* reprinted an editorial from the *New York Constellation* condemning "newspaper spongers." The paper described the subscribers' complaints "that as soon as they lay down their papers, and even before they have time to pick them up, some snatcher or borrower, or beggar, gets possession of them and they are seen no more."<sup>46</sup> Obviously, the best way to avoid being a "sponger" meant buying one's own copy. Equally apparent is that the practices of lending, borrowing, and stealing newspapers undoubtedly spread the information they contained to more people than just the subscribers.<sup>47</sup>

Ultimately, however, even if we allow for a considerable amount of shared reading, these subscriptions had a negligible impact on politics in Durham. For instance, although the number of anti-Jackson titles exceeded pro-Jackson titles by more than two to one (Appendix, part I), Durham voted for electors who supported Andrew Jackson in all three elections of 1824, 1828, and 1832. Likewise, with the possible exception of the *New Hampshire Gazette*, the anti-Jackson papers generally had more subscribers than those supporting Old Hickory. Consequently, it is safe to conclude that these papers, though they may have influenced the votes of some, had no material effect on the voters of the town as a whole. Information on which Durham's support for Jackson was based must have been distributed through other, probably oral, means at political rallies and through a network of party activists.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Cited in John, *Spreading the News*, 154-55.

<sup>46</sup> "Newspaper Spongers," *New Hampshire Gazette*, Apr. 6, 1830.

<sup>47</sup> This is especially important in terms of newspaper reading by women. In Durham, women's names rarely appear among subscription records (when they do, the papers are usually religious in nature), but it is likely that they read them second-hand. On the growing evidence of women reading political news, particularly in the 1840s and 1850s, see Ronald Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, "Political News and Female Readership In Antebellum Boston and Its Region," *Journalism History*, 22 (Spring 1996), 2-14; and Elizabeth Varon, "Tippecanoe and the Ladies, Too: White Women and Party Politics in Antebellum Virginia," *Journal of American History*, 82 (Sept. 1995), 494-521.

<sup>48</sup> For example, the records show 19 people subscribing to 11 anti-Jackson papers while only 5 subscribers are listed for four pro-Jackson papers. When compared to the 96 votes for the electors supporting Henry Clay, the 134 votes garnered by Jackson's electors

Indeed, what we may be seeing here is evidence of the political divisions that occurred across the country at this time, giving rise to the second American party system. As Lawrence Kohl, Harry L. Watson, and others have found, at the local level, citizens typically divided into two camps: the more cosmopolitan, market-oriented Whigs who maintained greater contact with the outside world, and everyone else who lived in the more insulated, traditional, rural society, and voted for Jackson. As Kohl has noted, Jackson's Democratic party "appealed chiefly to those still living in the web of traditional social relationships," while Whigs lived in a "world of contracts and constitutions, corporations, and voluntary associations."<sup>49</sup>

Despite the best intentions of those in Washington, then, proportionately few residents of Durham subscribed to newspapers with a political message and the impact of such publications that did make it there was limited. Nevertheless, from the early 1820s up to 1835 the postal records show a pattern of increased interest in newspapers and, as with the religious titles, an attendant willingness to experiment with their reading. Moreover, an overall analysis of newspaper and pamphlet subscriptions shows that by the 1830s, residents of Durham were more likely to allow publications printed in big cities into their community. Yet, one important distinction remained: more than seventy percent of the secular papers with clear political agendas did not come from urban centers. Thus, Durham's readers generally trusted information from the city only if it brought religious teachings or other morally and culturally uplifting information. Again, this seems to confirm Kielbowicz's contention that the rural readership attempted to protect itself from the "alien values" of the cities.<sup>50</sup> Such instincts were slow to change. In fact,

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in Durham indicates that voters did not necessarily rely on the trickling down of information from newspapers to make their decisions. Election results for 1824, 1828, and 1832, listed in Record of Votes, Box 1, Folder 7, Box 2, Folder 1, and Box 2, Folder 2 (New Hampshire State Archives, Concord).

<sup>49</sup> Lawrence Frederick Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era* (New York, 1989), 15-16. See also: Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990), 236-37; Watson, *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina* (Baton Rouge, 1981); Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979); and John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic*, Vol. I: *Commerce and Compromise, 1820-1850* (New York, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> The information world of some readers, however, did extend to some distant cities. Irregular issues of newspapers from places such as New Orleans, Louisiana; Louisville, Kentucky; Wilmington, North Carolina; and Natchez, Mississippi appear in the quarterly



Durhamites might have been experiencing the kind of “democratic dilemma” that Randolph Roth has found in the Connecticut Valley of Vermont, in which citizens struggled to “reconcile their commitment to the formally open, progressive, competitive society they had created with their equally earnest desire to protect their families, values, spiritual beliefs.”<sup>51</sup>

Durham residents also struggled in making a smooth transition to the system of advance payment of newspaper and pamphlet postage. During the first few years of their use, the new account sheets indicate that George Frost, Jr., followed the instructions at the top of the form that made it clear that the postmaster was to secure payment for postage at the *beginning* of every quarter in advance of delivery; however, this system apparently broke down in the Fall of 1832. At that time he began an improvised system whereby he recorded the names of subscribers to whom he allowed the deferral of payment of postage charges in the date column. Almost all of these names were subsequently crossed out, signifying that those individuals had paid their tab.<sup>52</sup>

Most useful for the purposes of this study is that these names recorded by Frost provide a link between the population of residents sending and receiving letters at the post office and the population of residents picking up their newspapers there. Out of a total of fifty-one legible names (for each quarter a certain number of names are illegible because Frost drew lines through them) over seven quarters, eighty percent were names of individuals who also appeared in the surviving postal records from the twenties. In fact, nine of the twenty-two most frequent users of the postal service appear as subscribers to newspapers in the mid-thirties. As a result, it is safe to conclude that the majority of the six percent of the adult population subscribing to newspapers also were accustomed to disseminating and receiving information through the mails themselves.<sup>53</sup>

In *Journey to America*, Alexis de Toqueville wrote, “I only know of one means of increasing the prosperity of the people, whose application is infallible and on which I think one can count in all countries and in all

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records from 1832 to 1835. *Account of Newspapers and Pamphlets Received*, Postal Accounts, Durham Town Records.

<sup>51</sup> Randolph Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791-1850* (New York, 1987), 310.

<sup>52</sup> For more on “deadbeat readers,” see Thomas C. Leonard, *News For All: America's Coming-of-Age with the Press* (New York, 1995), 36-47.

<sup>53</sup> *Account of Newspapers and Pamphlets Received, 1832-1835*, Postal Accounts, Durham Town Records.



places. That means is none other than increasing the facility of communication between men.”<sup>54</sup> If Tocqueville was right, then most residents of Durham did not prosper. The vast majority of adults in Durham did not read newspapers nor did they write letters to family, friends, and business associates. The twenty-four men who regularly visited the Frost general store to empty their private mail boxes and send their own letters, however, could tell a different story.<sup>55</sup> They were among those responsible for the overwhelming majority of Durham’s postal business and most of its newspaper subscriptions. As symbols of both the Market Revolution and a parallel revolution in communications, they undoubtedly prospered.

To be sure, the post office contributed to a “new cultural environment” and an “imagined community” for men like these. After all, in 1790, the entire state of New Hampshire had generated only \$409 in net postal revenue through its lone post office in Portsmouth. By 1831, the Portsmouth office alone brought in \$1,555 out of a total of \$16,338 in net postal revenue for the entire state.<sup>56</sup> Even in Durham, postal activity increased significantly between 1820 and 1835. Certainly, then, the postal service had fulfilled its mission in expanding the reach of the mails to the farthest points of a vast nation, and therefore facilitating the distribution of information to all who wanted it. Or had it?

Most of Durham’s citizens continued to operate within a system of face-to-face communication despite the growth and extension of the postal service. This was true even though sending a letter as far as eighty miles cost only ten cents (or less), and the quarterly subscription price plus quarterly postage due on a weekly newspaper totaled only sixty-three cents. These charges, when compared to other household expenses, were affordable and, as with payment on other goods, credit was readily available. The explanation for this proportionately low level of participation in the mail system is much more complicated, therefore, than one based on cost alone. At least two factors are suggested by the evidence. First, the majority of people in Durham did not need to rely on

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail*, 75.

<sup>55</sup> The following names still are legible on the Frost mail box: J.A. Richardson, Joseph Coe, A. Perkins, Andrew Simpson, Rev. A. Tobey, John Mooney, Nathan Woodman, — E. Thompson, and Rev. W. Guilford. The first four are among the top 22 users listed in Table 3 and all but the last two appear in the postal records of 1821-1835. Post Office Box (Durham Historic Association, Durham, NH).

<sup>56</sup> *American State Papers, Class VII: Post Office Department* (Washington, DC, 1834), 13, 267.

a postal system to communicate with their friends and relatives. For most of them, their network of interpersonal relationships would not have extended much farther than surrounding towns. To send a letter to someone with whom one might easily speak in person must have seemed an unnecessary luxury. Indeed, if messages were sent, many may have been carried by friends and family traveling to those places. Consequently, few made visits to the post office a part of their regular routine. Second, residents of Durham were interested in preserving their own value system; news from the big cities could only undermine the old order. Even those who did subscribe to newspapers were in the habit of reading papers that, for the most part, were centered on religion, and other non-political topics. Information from the world beyond New Hampshire was of interest only insofar as it could inform readers about one of these subjects. The political news that did reach Durham came from papers printed primarily in New Hampshire and focused on state politics. As historians of rural *mentalité* have stressed, this kind of localism could persist in the face of national modernization and the expansion of markets because so many Americans who lived in rural areas continued to view the world through a "prism of family values."<sup>57</sup>

As Richard Kielbowicz has demonstrated, the postal reforms legislated in the 1840s through the 1860s resulted in lower postal rates for all mail and thus significantly extended the service to more people. It is likely that Durham residents were affected by these changes as well, but their participation in the stream of information during the 1820s and 1830s undermines Kielbowicz's argument that, in particular, the low postage rates on newspapers contributed to a higher readership and, consequently, a better informed virtuous citizenry.

The tremendous increase in the number of newspapers being sent through the mails must have affected readership for some segments of the population, and a growing reliance on the mails possibly contributed to a "new cultural environment" for these citizens. But this group represents only one side of market society culture; historians who make sweeping conclusions about national cultural unification based on increased postal revenues and the circulation of printed materials lose sight of the majority of Americans who are not represented in such sources. By examining the

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<sup>57</sup> James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35 (Jan. 1978), 32; Christopher Clark, "Economics and Culture: Opening Up the Rural History of the Early American Northeast," *American Quarterly*, 43 (June 1991), 279-301; Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, 1990).

local context of Durham, New Hampshire, through its postal records, this article demonstrates that an “imagined community” of national scale remained beyond the perception of most residents, and that the old cultural environment would not be pushed aside too easily.

## APPENDIX

## I. Newspaper Subscriptions: Durham, New Hampshire, 1823-1835

Religious Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Highest Number of Subscribers in any Quarter</u>
Boston Recorder	Congregational	4
Christian Mirror (Portland)	Congregational	1
Christian Mission	Unknown	1
Christian Philanthropist (New Bedford, Mass.)	Unitarian	2
Zion's Herald (Boston/NYC)	Methodist	22
The Spectator (Phila?)	Presbyterian	1
New York Observer	Presbyterian	1
Christian Intelligencer (Portland)	Universalist	1
New Hampshire Repository	Congregational	3
Christian Herald (Portsmouth)	Anti-Sectarian	4
Trumpet & Universalist Messenger (Boston)	Universalist	2
Priestcraft Unmasked (NYC)	Anti-Mission	5
Home Missionary & American Pastor's Journal* (NYC)	Presbyterian & Congregational	2
Monthly Preacher* (NYC)	Udenominational	1
Missionary Herald* (Boston)	Congregational	1
American Tract Magazine*	Tract Interests	6
Gospel Luminary* (New York)	Anti-Sectarian	1
Protestant Reformer (Exeter)	Anti-Mission	2
Episcopal Watchman (Hartford)	Episcopal	2
Lowell Evangelist and Journal of Religion and Literature	Unknown	1
Episcopal Recorder (Phila.)	Episcopal	1
Sabbath School Instructor (Portland)	Unknown	1
Unitarian Monitor (Dover, NH)	Unitarian	1
Banner of the Church (Boston)	Episcopal	1
Star in the East New Hampshire Universalist (Concord)	Universalist	1
Sunday School Journal (Phila)	Udenominational	1
Christian Palladium (Union Mills, NY)	Unknown	1
Universalist Magazine (Boston)	Universalist	2
American Quarterly Register* Presbyterian & (Boston)	Congregational	1
New Hampshire Observer (Concord)	Congregational	1
The Unitarian (Cambridge, Mass.)	Unitarian	1
Priestcraft Exposed (Concord?)	Anti-Mission	1
The Expositor (Concord)	Universalist	1
Christian Journal (Exeter, NH)	Anti-Sectarian	13
Sabbath School Advertiser (Gilmanton, NH)	Unknown	1

\* Denotes pamphlet, not newspaper.

Secular Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Party Affiliation</u>	<u>Highest Number of Subscribers in any Quarter</u>
Bangor Register	Pro-Adams	1
New England Galaxy (Boston)	Pro-Adams	3
Haverhill Gazette and Essex Patriot (Haverhill, Mass.)	Pro-Crawford	1
Commercial Advertiser (Portsmouth)	Pro-Adams	4
Connecticut Herald (New Haven)	Pro-Jackson	1
New Hampshire Gazette (Portsmouth)	Pro-Jackson	4
Boston Weekly Messenger	Pro-Adams	8
Essex Register (Salem, Mass.)	Pro-Adams	1
Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics	Pro-Adams & Pro-Clay	6
The Evening Gazette (Boston)	Pro-Adams	1
New Hampshire Journal (Concord)	Pro-Adams	5
New Hampshire Statesman & Concord Register	Pro-Adams	1
Nashua Constellation	Pro-Jackson	1
Nashua Gazette	Pro-Jackson	1
New Hampshire Patriot & State Gazette (Concord)	Pro-Jackson	1
Boston Courier	Pro-Adams	2
Eastern Argus (Portland)	Pro-Jackson	1
Brattleboro Messenger	Pro-Adams	1
Eastern Republican (Portland)	Pro-Jackson	1
Old Countryman (Boston, New York)	Neutral	1
Morning Courier & New York Enquirer for the Country	Pro-Clay	1
Workingman's Advocate (Boston)	Pro-Jackson	1
Massachusetts Journal (Boston)	Pro-Adams	1
Portsmouth State Herald	Pro-Clay	1
Exeter Newsletter	Pro-Clay	3
Penobscot Journal (Bangor)	Anti-Jackson	1
Dover Gazette & Strafford Advertiser (Dover, NH)	Pro-Jackson	1
Lowell Journal & Triweekly Advertiser (Lowell, MA)	Anti-Jackson	1
Daily Atlas (Boston)	Whig	1
Courier and Enquirer (Concord)	Whig	2
Extra Globe (Washington)	Pro-Jackson	1
New Hampshire Argus & Spectator (Claremont?/Newport, NH)	Pro-Van Buren	1
Portland Advertiser (Portland)	Pro-Clay	3
Concord Monitor	Unknown	4
Bangor Courier	Whig	1
Citizen's Press (Meredith, NH)	Unknown	6
National Intelligencer (Washington)	Pro-Adams, Pro-Clay	1
Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot	Pro-Clay	4
Maine Recorder (Limington, ME)	Pro-Clay	1

Specialty Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Highest Number of Subscribers in any Quarter</u>
New England Farmer (Boston)	Farming	4
Boston Medical Intelligencer	Medicine	1
Boston Medical and Surgical Journal	Medicine	1
American Traveller (Boston)	News from Abroad	1
Monthly Traveller* (Boston)	News from Abroad	1
Philadelphia Album and Ladies Literary Gazette (Philadelphia)	Literature & Fashion	1
The Souvenir (Philadelphia)	Literature & Fashion	1
Ladies Magazine and Literary Gazette* (Boston)	Literature & Fashion	1
New England Magazine* (Boston)	Original Articles	1
The Literary Gazette (Concord)	Literature	1
African Repository and Colonial Journal*	Anti-Slavery	2
Herald of Freedom (Concord)	Anti-Slavery	1
The Liberator (Boston)	Anti-Slavery	1
Human Rights (New York)	Anti-Slavery	1
Journal of Humanity (Andover, MA)	Temperance	3
Temperance Agent (New York)	Temperance	1
Education Reporter & Weekly Lyceum (Boston)	Education	1
Journal of the American Educational Society (Boston)	Education	4
Boston Free Press (Boston)	Anti-Masonic	1
Penny Magazine (Boston/London)	Science, Art, History	3
Youth's Companion (Boston)	Unknown	2
Monthly Concert (New York)	Music	1
Herald of Reason and Common Scribe (Poughkeepsie, NY)	Church & State issues	1

Sources: Postage Account Books, 1821-1827, and Account of Newspapers and Pamphlets Received, 1829-1835, Durham Town Records, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire. Denomination of religious newspapers determined using: Gaylord P. Albaugh, *History and Annotated Bibliography of American Religious Periodicals and Newspapers Established from 1730 Through 1830*, 2 vols., (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1994). The denomination of those not found in Albaugh were determined from the AAS on-line catalog or they are listed as "unknown." Information on the *Christian Journal* was obtained from the newspaper collection at the Exeter, New Hampshire Historical Society, MSS 21, Box 2. Party affiliation for secular newspapers was determined through an examination of election year issues from the holdings of the American Antiquarian Society (or, for a few, by using the AAS on-line catalog). The same process was used to determine the description used for the specialty titles.

## II. Newspaper Subscriptions: Berkshire, New York 1824-1835

Religious Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Number of Subscribers in 1824-1835</u>
New York Baptist Register (Utica)	Baptist	5
Gospel Advocate (Buffalo?)	Universalist	10
Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate (Utica)	Universalist	13
Gospel Herald (NYC)	Universalist	12
The Philanthropist (Ithaca)	Unitarian	6
Herald of Truth (Geneva)	Universalist	2
Christian Advocate & Journal & Zion's Herald (Boston/NYC)	Methodist	20
Religious Intelligencer (New Haven)	Evangelical	6
Herald of Universal Salvation	Universalist	2
Missionary Herald (Boston)	Congregational	5
New York Observer (NYC)	Presbyterian	14
Universalist Expositor	Universalist	1
Christian Journal (Utica)	Presb. & Cong.	6
Journal & Telegraph (Albany)	Presb & Cong.	4
Trumpet Universalist Review (Boston)	Universalist	1
Religious Enquirer (Hartford)	Universalist	1
New York Evangelist	Presbyterian	8
Sunday School Journal (Phila.)	Undenominational	1

Secular Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Party Affiliation</u>	<u>Number of Subscribers 1824-1835</u>
Owego Gazette	Pro-Jackson	4
Elmira Telegraph	Unknown	1
Albany Argus	Pro-Jackson	4
New York Standard & American	Unknown	2
Elmira Gazette	Unknown	1
Congressional Globe	Unknown	4
New York Statesman	Neutral	1
Extra Globe (Washington)	Pro-Jackson	4
Susquehannah Register	Unknown	1
Western Banner	Unknown	2
Springfield Gazette	Pro-Clay	1
Oswego Advertiser	Unknown	5
New York American	Pro-Clay	1
Boston Statesman	Pro-Clay	1
Republican & Advertiser (Canton)	Pro-Jackson	1
Elmira Republican	Unknown	1
Auburn Banner	Unknown	6
Pittsfield Sun	Pro-Jackson	1
Troy Budget	Pro-Jackson	1
New York Evening Post	Pro-Jackson	2



Berkshire Journal (Lenox, Mass.)	Pro-Adams	1
Courier & Enquirer	Pro-Clay	2
Buffalo Republican	Unknown	1
Onandaga Republican	Unknown	1
Niles' Weekly Register	Whig	1
Ohio Atlas	Unknown	1
Onandaga Standard (Syracuse)	Unknown	1
Albany Weekly Journal	Whig	1
Columbia Register (New Haven)	Anti-Jackson	1
Saturday Courier (Philadelphia)	Neutral	1

Specialty Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number of Subscribers 1824-1835</u>
Ithaca Journal	Literary	4
Ontario Phoenix	Anti-Masonic	2
Philadelphia Family Visitor & Parlor Companion	Literary	1
Antimasonic Telegraph	Anti-Masonic	1
The Craftsman (Rochester)	Freemason	2
New York Pilot	Anti-Masonic	1
American Masonic Record	Freemason	1
The Cultivator	Farming	1
Monthly Repository (New York)	Literary	1
Temperance Recorder (Albany)	Temperance	3

Sources: William Moore Papers, 1824-1835, Baker Library, Harvard University. Denominations of religious papers determined using Albaugh and AAS on-line catalog. Descriptions of secular and specialty titles determined through examination of issues held in the AAS collection, the AAS on-line catalog, and with the help of Louis H. Fox, "New York City Newspapers, 1820-1850, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 21 (1927).

## III. Newspaper Subscriptions, Jacksonville, Illinois, 1831-1832

Religious Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Number of Subscribers</u>
American Bible Repository (Andover, Mass.)	Congregational	1
American National Preacher (NYC)	Undenominational	2
American Quarterly Register (Andover, Mass.)	Undenominational	1
American Tract Magazine (Boston)	Tract Interests	2
Baptist Weekly Journal of the Mississippi Valley (Cincinnati)	Baptist	5
Boston Recorder	Congregational	3
Calvinistic Magazine (Rogersville, Tenn.) Jacksonville, Illinois, 1831-1832	Presbyterian	1
Christian Advocate (Phila.)	Presbyterian	3
Christian Advocate and Journal		

# POST OFFICE IN RURAL NEW ENGLAND

647

and Zion's Herald (Boston/NYC)	Methodist	58
Christian Examiner (Boston)	Unitarian	1
Christian Magazine (Phila.)	Presbyterian	1
Christian Messenger (Georgetown, KY)	Christian	22
Christian Monthly Spectator (New Haven)	Congregational	3
Christian Soldier (Boston)	Unknown	1
Christian Watchman and Baptist		
Register (Boston)	Baptist	1
Cincinnati Journal	Presbyterian	4
Connecticut Observer	Congregational	4
Evangelical Magazine & Gospel		
Advocate (Utica, NY)	Universalist	1
Evangelist (Hartford)	Congregational?	1
Evangelist (Cincinnati)	Unknown	1
General Assembly Minutes	Presbyterian	4
Gospel Herald (Lexington, KY)	Methodist	7
Home Messenger	Unknown	1
Home Missionary & American		
Pastor's Journal (NYC)	Congregational	5
Home Missionary Magazine		
(London)	Unknown	1
Illinois Sunday School Banner	Unknown	1
Methodist Preacher (Boston)	Methodist	1
Millennial Harbinger (Bethany, VA)	Disciples	15
Missionary Herald (Boston)	Congregational	4
Missionary Reporter and Education		
Register (Phila.)	Presbyterian	4
New England Church Herald	Unknown	1
New England Christian Herald	Methodist	1
New York Evangelist	Presbyterian	2
New York Observer	Presbyterian	7
Pioneer & Western Baptist		
(Rock Spring, Ill.)	Baptist	13
Presbyterian (Phila.)	Presbyterian	4
Religious and Literary		
Intelligencer (Princeton, KY)	Presbyterian	6
Revivalist	Unknown	2
Sabbath School Herald (New Haven)	Congregational	1
Spirit of the Pilgrims (Boston)	Congregational	2
Standard (Cincinnati)	Baptist?	2
Sunday School Banner (Toronto)	Methodist	1
Sunday School Herald	Unknown	1
Sunday School Journal (Phila.)	Unknown	10
Sunday School Recorder	Unknown	1
Theology	Unknown	1
Western Luminary (Lexington, KY)	Presbyterian	6
Youth's Friend (Phila.)	Unknown	1
Youth's Instructor & Guardian	Methodist	1

Secular Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Party Affiliation</u>	<u>Number of Subscribers</u>
Alton Spectator	Whig	1
Beardstown Chronicle	Whig	7
Castigator (Boston?)	Democratic	2
Cincinnati American	National Republican	3
Commentator (Frankfort, KY)	Whig	2
Commercial Chronicle and Daily Marylander (Baltimore)	Unknown	2
Connecticut Courant (Hartford)	Whig	1
Daily Globe (Washington)	Democratic	3
E----- Globe	Unknown	1
Free Enquirer (New Harmony, NY)	Utopian socialist	3
The Galenian (Galenia, Ill.)	Democratic	2
Gallia Free Press (Gallipolis, OH)	Unknown	1
Illinois Advocate (Edwardsville)	Whig	5
Illinois Herald (Springfield)	Democratic	11
Illinois Intelligencer (Vandalia)	Whig	12
Kanawha Banner (Kanawha, VA)	Whig	1
Kentucky Balance	Unknown	1
Kentucky Centinel	Unknown	1
Kentucky Gazette (Lexington)	Democratic	5
Kentucky Observer	Unknown	2
Kentucky Reporter (Lexington)	Pro-Adams	7
Le Courier des Etats Unis (NYC)	Unknown	1
Lexington Observer	Pro-Jackson	4
La----- Public Advocate	Unknown	1
Liberal Advocate	Unknown	1
Little Rec---	Unknown	1
Louisville Focus	Anti-Jackson	8
Louisville Journal	Anti-Jackson	3
Louisville Public Advertiser	Pro-Jackson	22
Louisville Weekly Poster	Unknown	2
Mad River Current	Unknown	1
Marietta Gazette (Ohio)	Whig	1
Massachusetts Spy (Worcester)	Unknown	1
Missouri Correspondent	Unknown	4
Missouri Intelligencer	Unknown	1
Missouri Reporter	Unknown	1
Missouri Republican (St. Louis)	Democratic	9
Morning Courier & Enquirer (NYC)	Whig	2
Nashville Reporter	Unknown	1
Nashville Republican & State Gazette	Unknown	1
National Intelligencer	Whig	2
National Republican and Ohio Political Register (Cincinnati)	Unknown	1
New York Evening Post	Democratic	4
New York Journal of Commerce	Unknown	3
New York Mercury	Unknown	2
New York Spectator	Whig	1

# POST OFFICE IN RURAL NEW ENGLAND

649

Niles' Weekly Register	Whig	9
Ohio Patriot	Democratic	1
Old Countryman	Neutral	1
Palmyra Centinel	Unknown	1
Peoples' Advocate	Unknown	1
R----- Post	Unknown	1
Sangamon Journal (Springfield)	Whig	8
Saturday Courier (Phila.)	Unknown	1
Sentinel	Unknown	1
Southern Advocate (Huntsville, AL)	Whig	1
Sparta Review (Tenn.)	Unknown	1
St. Louis Times	Unknown	6
Supporter and Sciota Gazetter (Chillicothe, Ohio)	Neutral	1
Susquehannah Democrat	Unknown	1
Torch Light & Public Advertiser (Hagerstown, MD)	Unknown	1
United States Gazette (Phila.)	Unknown	1
Wayne Centinel (Palmyra, NY)	Unknown	2
Western Citizen (Paris, KY)	Democratic	1

## Specialty and Miscellaneous Titles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number of Subscribers</u>
The Agriculturist (NYC)	Farming	1
Age and Argus (London)	Unknown	1
Alarum	Unknown	1
American Annals of Education and Instruction (Boston)	Education	2
Jacksonville, Illinois, 1831-1832		
American Farmer (Baltimore)	Farming	1
Anti-Conspirator (Cincinnati)	Anti-Masonic	1
The Casket	Literary?	1
Cincinnati Chronicle and Literary Gazette	Literary	1
Farm Budget	Farming	1
Farmers' Chronicle	Farming	2
Farmers' Enquirer	Farming	3
Farmers' Herald	Farming	1
Farmers' Reporter and United States Agriculturist (Cincinnati)	Farming	9
Godey's Ladies Book (Phila.)	Literature & Fashion	2
Illinois Monthly Magazine (Vandalia)	Literary	17
Journal of Humanity (Andover, MA)	Temperance	10
The Liberator (Boston)	Abolitionist	2
New England Farmer (Boston)	Farming	1
New Orleans Magazine	Unknown	1
Saturday Evening Post (Phila.)	Literary	5
Western Ploughboy (Edwardsville, Ill.)	Farming	4
Youth's Magazine (NYC)	Children's	4

Source: Frank J. Heintz, "Newspapers and Periodicals in the Lincoln-Douglas Country, 1831-1832," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. 23 (Oct. 1930), pp. 414-421. Heintz provided most of the descriptions used here, though I have provided some descriptions for those he did not and I have changed some of his based my use of the following sources: Albaugh; Stephen Gutgesell, *Guide to Ohio Newspapers, 1793-1973*, (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1974); the AAS on-line catalog, and original issues from the AAS collection.