



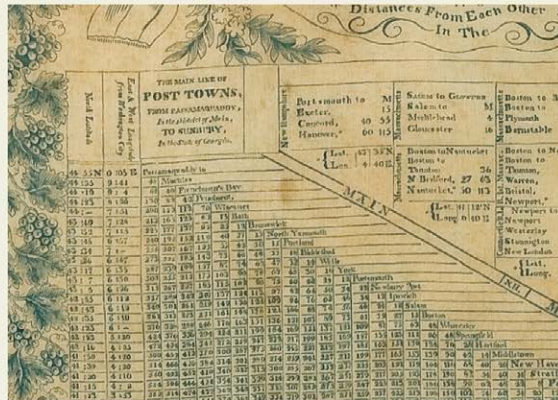
# U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

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Article: Postal History You Can Wear: Rates-and-Routes Bandana from 1815  
 Author(s): Diane DeBlois

## The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues

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A rare piece of early Americana: Fragment of an elaborate table of U.S. postal rates and routes, printed in Scotland in 1815—on a linen bandana. The entire bandana is shown close to lifesized on our centerfold this issue, accompanied by an explanatory article, “Postal History You Can Wear,” by Diane DeBlois.

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## POSTAL HISTORY YOU CAN WEAR: U.S. RATES-AND-ROUTES BANDANA FROM 1815

DIANE DEBLOIS

### Introduction

Better known to textile buffs than to philatelists, a piece of early printed fabric now celebrating its bicentennial has intrigued historians since the 19th century. Entitled: *A Geographical View of All The Post Towns in The United States of America And Their Distances From Each Other According to The Establishment of the Post Master General in The Year 1815*, this large kerchief or bandana<sup>1</sup> is marked: “Printed by R. Gillespie, Anderston Printfield, near Glasgow.”

Few of these bandanas have survived. A splendid example, printed in blue ink on linen fabric, is shown as Figure 1 on the two pages that follow. This bandana, from the Wintertur collection,<sup>2</sup> is the one most cited in the textile literature,<sup>3</sup> though an example printed in red (faded to brown) was auctioned at a New York map gallery in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

### Early reports

Various reports about the Gillespie bandana go back to the 19th century. An account published first in the *Concord* (New Hampshire) *Monitor*, and then reprinted in the *The Conservative* of Nebraska City of August 25, 1898, tells how George F. Ives of Danbury, Connecticut, acquired a copy of the bandana and mailed a detailed photograph of it to Major Lewis Downing in Nebraska. Ives was apparently a collector of Americana particularly interested in stagecoaching in New England. Editor Julius Sterling Morton admired the ingenuity of the “handy helper” fabric chart, and observed: “Nowadays we stick a two-cent stamp in the corner of an envelope and post the letter without further thought if it is going anywhere in this broad land.”

Alice Morse Earle, an early social historian whose observations of the postal service in her 1901 *Stage-Coach and Tavern Days* are surprisingly accurate, believed that the bandana reflected British admiration for the American topographical survey of 1811-12, which mapped the post road from Passamaquoddy to St. Mary’s.<sup>5</sup> Though the survey was notable, the Gillespie bandana was based on prior information.

### Richard Gillespie

Richard Gillespie was one of the three sons of William Gillespie, an industrial entrepreneur who had helped establish Anderston as an area dedicated to cotton and linen spinning, weaving, and printing. Richard had taken over the calico-printing business around 1809,<sup>6</sup> but it was his brother Colin who was undoubtedly the link to American postal information. Colin had emigrated to the United States in 1793, became a citizen in 1798, and then split his time between New York and Glasgow under the trade name Colin Gillespie & Company. When war between his two countries ended in 1814, it might have been his idea

Figure 1. A Geographical View Of All The Post Towns In The United States Of America And Their Distances From Each Other According To The Establishment of The Post Master General In The Year 1815. Printed by Anderston Printfield, Anderston, Scotland, 1815. 21" x 22 3/4" plus margins. Image shown through the courtesy of the Winterthur Museum, gift of Henry Francis du Pont.



### A GEOGRAPHICAL VIEW OF ALL THE POST TOWNS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THEIR DISTANCES FROM EACH OTHER ACCORDING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE POST MASTER GENERAL IN THE YEAR 1815.

Post Town	Distances to other Post Towns	Distances to other Post Towns	Distances to other Post Towns	Distances to other Post Towns	Distances to other Post Towns	Distances to other Post Towns	Distances to other Post Towns	Distances to other Post Towns	Distances to other Post Towns
44:55N	0:05E	Pennamaddy to	44:55N 0:05E	44:55N 0:05E	44:55N 0:05E	44:55N 0:05E	44:55N 0:05E	44:55N 0:05E	44:55N 0:05E

#### A TABLE EXHIBITING THE LENGTHS AND BREADTHS OF THE SEVERAL UNITED STATES

State or Territory	Length in Miles	Breadth in Miles	Area in Square Miles	Latitude	Longitude	Population
Vermont	158	70	11,000	44	72	230,000
New Hampshire	165	75	9,500	42	45	280,000
Maine	200	200	38,400	43	48	1,200,000
New Jersey	150	150	10,000	41	10	1,200,000





CROSS POST ROADS.

Main table containing a grid of distances between various towns across different states (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina). Includes latitude and longitude coordinates for specific locations.

GENERAL EXPLANATION OF THE TABLE.

I-THE MAIN LINE.

To know the distance from Boston to New York - first find Boston and from thence carry your eye straight down the column to the square or angle of meeting opposite New York, and you will find the distance to be 252 miles

II-THE CROSS POST ROADS.

To know the distance from any place on the Main Line to any other place in the Cross Roads - First, find the distance from the place you are at to the place on the Main Line where the Cross Road branches from the Main Line, which added to the distance marked in the column opposite the place in the Cross Roads will be the answer. Example - The distance from Boston to Pittsburg is required, Boston to Philadelphia is 347 miles, and from Philadelphia to Pittsburg is 310 miles, both added together make 657 miles, being the distance from Boston to Pittsburg, which was required

Printed by R. CHESBROUGH, Anderton Prinsfield, Near GLASGOW.



to have his brother provide an easily portable chart of the postal network that would serve re-opened commercial traffic.<sup>7</sup>

He didn't design the chart itself. Instead, he copied a broadside, which was printed on paper with the same title as the bandana. The example in the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society shows the following authorship: "An engraved plate. 99th Massachusetts district copyright issued to Samuel A. Ruddock, as author, 12 May, 1796. B. Callender sculp Boston."<sup>8</sup>

### Differences from the source material

What changes did the Gillespies make to the 1796 broadside? The most obvious addition was the decorative border which included visual references contemporary with 1815: Madison as President; as well as both sides of the so-called "capped bust" coin, without denomination, but with the year (the designer turned the eagle the wrong way). City populations have been updated. But the Scots didn't revise enough to bring either the postal or the geographical information up to 1815.

To begin with, the postage rates as quoted (6¢ for a distance not exceeding 30 miles; 8¢ for 60; 10¢ for 100; 12¢ [leaving off the half cent] for 150; 15¢ for 200; 17¢ for 250; 20¢ for 350; 22¢ for 450 and 25¢ for over 450) were superseded in 1799, when the 6¢, 15¢, and 22¢ were dropped, as well as different intervals established, starting at 40 miles rather than 30, and going to 500 rather than 450.

The title of the main triangular data display, "The Main Line of Post Towns, from Passamaquoddy, in the district of Main, to Sunbury, In the State of Georgia" closely reflects the *Act to Establish Post Roads after 1 June 1794*. The bandana calls Gouldsborough Frenchmen's Bay, and elides several post offices, for instance, between Gouldsborough and Penobscot, leaves out Washington City and Georgetown, and changes some of the stops between Petersburgh and Fayetteville. To illustrate how the postal service had matured in Maine, for instance, from 1794 to the Act of April 28, 1810, the trunk line to North Yarmouth with originally six post office stops, now had 26 (Calais, to Denneysville and Scodie, Machias, Jones, Addison, Harrington, Steuben, Sullivan, Trenton, Orland, Buckstown, Prospect, Belfast, Northport, Lincolnville, Canaan, Camden, Warren, Waldoboro, Newcastle, Wiscasset, Woolwich, Bath, Brunswick, Freeport.) Also, the cross post roads closely reflect the routes mandated in 1794. So, for instance, bandana users would not know that, as of 1797, there was a cross route from New York, via White Plains, Bedford, Frederickstown, Dover, Sharon, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Pittsfield, and Williamstown, to Bennington in Vermont.

But the primary intent of printing a graph of distances was to provide a tool for computing postal charges. Once new rates were taken into consideration, the mileage between two places would still be reasonably accurate. And the overall production, in the words of Richard Arkway, "through a unique blend of functional tools and patriotic iconography, emphasizes the essential role of the postal system in the life of the young republic. Its thousands of miles of post roads, many hundreds of local offices, regular timetables and simple rate-setting structure made it the only efficient and reliable system for oiling the wheels of commerce and connecting millions of far-flung citizens to one another and to their country."

Now 200 years old, this striking artifact speaks eloquently down the ages to the current generation of collectors who, perhaps for different reasons, are no less interested in rates and routes.

### Endnotes

1. Sometimes called a handkerchief (kerchief from the French, to cover one's head) these large printed fabric pieces are more likely to be called bandanas (from the Tamil) in America, and to be thought of as neck gear.
2. A gift to the Winterthur Museum by Henry F. duPont in 1959. Object ID#1959.0967, 20.25 x 26 inches.
3. Item number 47 in Herbert Ridgeway Collins, *Threads of History: Americana Recorded on Cloth 1775 to the Present*, Smithsonian 1979, without any further description.

4. Cohen & Taliaferro, New York, Catalog Two, listed at \$18,500. Thanks to Richard Arkway's description for some of the information in this article.

5. Alice Morse Earle, *Stage-Coach and Tavern Days*, Benjamin Blom, New York City, 1900, page 281.

6. Alexander Thomson, *Random Notes and Rambling Recollections of Drydock ...* 1895, page 14 [Google Books].

7. Information on Colin Gillespie comes from his case before the U.S. Supreme Court [The Frances, 12 U.S. 8 Cranch 1814, pages 363 and following] to restore New York property condemned during the War because, although a naturalized citizen, he maintained business and property in an enemy country. He deposed that he was in Scotland in 1794, the U.S. in 1795, Scotland in 1796, and the U.S. in 1797, returning to Scotland in 1799 to be married but bringing his wife back to New York until 1802. He continued to divide his time, but the breakout of the war caught him in Glasgow. He swore that business concerns kept him from returning to the U.S. until October 1813. This timetable suggests that he bought the Ruddock broadside some time in 1797, and arranged to have the bandana printed by his brother to help prove his patriotic attachment to his new country after the war.

8. Copy in the Massachusetts Historical Society (call #31122 Evans Early American Imprints First Series), who supply the following information: Samuel Abiel Ruddock [1767-1828] and Benjamin Callender [1773-1856]. Ruddock, a mapmaker and surveyor, responded to the Massachusetts Legislature's call for bids to make the first maps of Maine and Massachusetts, submitting a bid on March 13, 1797. ■

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Additional offices in London

[www.harmersinternational.com](http://www.harmersinternational.com)  
Email: [info@harmersinternational.com](mailto:info@harmersinternational.com)