

1.1 GENERAL NOTES AND DATA SOURCES

1.1.1 Postal rate data sources

A key point about the current work was to make the postal rate data traceable, in other words to provide, where possible, direct links to the original sources, in particular to the historical postal directives, both Austro-Hungarian and Hungarian, and not just reassembling data from various existing philatelic sources, which are often incomplete, contain mistakes or misinterpretations, or miss out various restrictions or conditions. The following sources have been used where available to the author:

1. For nineteenth century postal rates, reference has been made where possible to original sources in postal ordinances: Austro-Hungarian *Reichsgesetzblätter* (Empire decrees, abbreviated here to RGB) and *Handelsministerium Post- und Telegraphen-Verordnungsblätter* (Business Ministry Post and Telegraph Ordinance sheets, here abbreviated to PuTVB). See <https://alex.onb.ac.at>, the website for some, but not yet all, of these historical documents. The year runs of these documents are incompletely available and because they are pdf image files, they have to be searched individually. Many decrees from the Emperor applied also to Hungary after 1867, even up to 1918 (since Hungary was in charge of only its own internal affairs, but Austria was in charge of international matters), but were usually re-issued in full or in part in the Hungarian language.
2. From 1867 onwards, Hungary issued its own version of the postal decree documents, the *Posta és Távirat Rendeletek*. The title changed with time and for a period the telegraph aspects were published separately. The first few years were bilingual Hungarian/German. Documents up to the end of 1945 and for the year 1948 are available online from the Postal Museum as OCR'd (*i.e.* searchable) yearbooks with indexes at:

https://download.postamuseum.hu/Postamuseum_PostaEsTavirdaRendeletek/

These documents are referenced throughout the present listing as PTRTs (but in fact may be entitled variously as PRTs, PRTs or MPHs (1919 communist era)), citing issue no. and date only (*i.e.* not including the decree number). It should be noted that these official sources tend to list only CHANGES to extant rates and CORRECTIONS to documentation held as the reference source in post offices, and generally do not provide complete sets of current rates. This means it is easy to miss changes or to misinterpret them. For contemporary postal staff there were postal rate manuals reissued at various dates, including separate ones for airmail services and foreign parcels. The local post office staff were expected to update these manuals by hand following the issue of the changes appearing in the PTRTs. These postal manuals would have been destroyed when a new issue was made, so none appear to be available in the public archives.

3. The Hungarian monograph series *A Magyar Bélyegek Monográfiája* contains some limited information concerning the basic internal postage rates at different historical points in volumes III, IV and V, but are somewhat incomplete, with very limited information about additional services and foreign mail. For the on-line scanned versions and some translations see: MAFFIT's website, <http://www.maffitt.hu/fooldal/index.html> (choosing the English language option). Then select 'Projects' and 'Monográfiája'.
4. The Hungarian stamp catalogue, *A Magyar Bélyegek Kézikönyve*, by Surányi, L., Visnyovszki, G., Gondolat, Budapest, 1986, ISBN 963-281-692-7, referred to as the 'Black Book' in this current compilation, contains some basic postage rate tables from 1900 to the 1980s, including the post WWII hyperinflation period, on pp. 424-435.
5. For the post WWII hyperinflation period only, Robert Morgan's book: *The Hyperinflation of Hungary 1946-1946: The Postal Rates and Postal History of Hungary's most Impressive*

Inflation, Collectors Club of Chicago, 2003, ISBN 0-916675-14-9, contains much postal information from the original PTRT documents. The text is currently provisionally available at: <http://www.mafitt.hu/fooldal/index.html> under 'Philatelic Library'.

6. For the period 1948-1952, reliance has been placed on the privately printed magazine *Postatarifák Adók Illetékek Közlekedési* which provides detailed tables of then current postal, telegraph and tax rates, re-issued two or three times per year when changes occurred.
7. For the period 1952-1986, original data are sparse, and reliance is placed on the 'Black Book' tables cited above. A simple basic summary has been published in Hungarian in *Bélyegvilág - Filatéli Szemle*, 1997, Vol.97, 7-8, pp.47-51 (without references), although a later article (*Bélyegvilág - Filatéli Szemle*, 1997, Vol.98, 7-8, p.27) made some comments and corrections. Originally, the rates were probably published in *Postaügyi Értesítő (A Magyar Posta Hivatal Lapja)*, which was published weekly from 1953, replacing the PTRTs. Some of these are available through subscription viewing of the Hungarian 'Arcanum' archive at e.g.: https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/view/PostaugyiErtesito_1955/.
8. From the period 1986 to 2025, reliance is placed on published postal rate summary sheets issued to the public by Magyar Posta. Current postage rates can be found on-line on Magyar Posta's website. The rates in English can presently be found at <https://www.posta.hu/dijszabasok>. Some changes to inland rates are given in the official publication *Magyar Közlöny* (<https://magyarkozlony.hu/>) but historical data are difficult to track down. Usually, in this period, postal rate changes were taking place more-or-less annually, but these summary sheets were issued more frequently. It is unclear if all sheets have been procured for this work. Some of these summary sheets have been located on private websites, others have been procured from collector colleagues, and the author would particularly like to thank David Williams, Csaba Kohalmi, Károly Szücs, and Mariann Csátlos for their willing assistance in tracking these down.
9. This compilation deliberately **does not** cover the early days of the public post, pre-1850, with its separate letter-post (*Briefpost*) and coach mail (*Fahrpost*) services, with postal rates depending on service, weight and distance, nor courier services for delivery from receiving post offices. Readers requiring data from this period can find some information and examples in Brandon, K., Morrell, R., Taylor, A., *The story of the Austrian Post*, 2021, Austrian Philatelic Society of GB, ISBN 978-0-900118-11-1, taken from contemporary decrees. Alternatively, the original data can be found by searching on <https://alex.onb.ac.at>.

1.1.2 What else is missing?

A hard-learned fact arising from this work is that nothing in this subject can ever be deemed to be 'complete'. There are plenty of small gaps in the details which remain difficult to fill.

Several obvious areas of postal history are missing at the present time, owing either to data complexity, or absence of detail. These all need more-extensive research and documentataon.

1. Inland and foreign money order rates from 1950 onwards;
2. Telegrams and telegraphic money order rates.
3. Foreign parcel rates.

1.1.3 Conventions used

Dates: are mostly given numerically in the form: day.month.year.

Foreign words: are given in italic font, including currencies and their abbreviations with only the upper unit capitalised.

Weight steps: are mostly given as the upper limit of each step, minimising the use of ‘up to’, or ‘from x to y ’.

Citations of PTRT documents: the reference sources are generally given in **bold** font. The PTRT issue number for that year and the date of its issue are given. The precise decree or ordinance reference number has been dispensed with as not being a particularly useful parameter in the circumstance, and if required can always be found from the cited document.

Notes in tables: these are usually represent by $[n]$ and sometimes by * or similar character, and are explained in numerical order beneath each table. The notes often contain changes in service conditions, exemptions or exceptions, often with the PTRT citation so they can be checked.

Notes below tables: often contain additional PTRT information that may be of use to the user. Google translations into English have been made of relevant paragraphs, and often entire ordinances when the scope and procedure for a service is given.

1.1.4 Currencies

From 1818 to 1867: Following the Napoleonic wars and the return of financial stability, the newly established Privileged National Bank established what is known as the *Conventionsmünze* (convention currency). This version of the Austro-Hungarian *Gulden* consisted of 60 ‘old’ *kreuzer* until 19.11.1857, after which it consisted of 100 *neukreuzer*. The prefix ‘*neu*’ (new) was quickly dropped from common usage. The latter continued in use in Austria until 1900.

After 1867 and until 31.12.1899: Following the State Compromise, Hungary’s own new national bank issued its own currency with 1 Hungarian *Forint* (*Ft*) = 1 Austrian *Gulden* (often abbreviated to *Fl*), and 1 Hungarian *krajczár* = 1 Austrian *kreuzer*. 100 *kr* = 1 *Fl* or *Ft*.

Note: in postal decrees and other old documents the term *österreichische Währung* (Austrian currency, often abbreviated to *ö.W.*) is often referred to in order to distinguish it from other *Gulden* or *kreuzer* currencies in concurrent use in Europe.

From 01.01.1900 until 31.03.1927: 1 Hungarian *Korona* = 100 *fillér*. Up to 1918, the Hungarian *Korona* was tied to the Austrian *Krone*, but from late 1918 it was a separate currency which underwent post-WWI inflation at a different rate to the Austrian *Krone*.

From 01.04.1927 until 31.07.1946: 1 Hungarian *Pengő* = 100 *fillér*. The conversion from the previous inflated *Korona* was 1,000 *K* = 8 *fillér*, 1 *Pengő* = 12,500 *K*.

During the hyperinflation period, 1945-1946, the following abbreviations of Hungarian numbers are used for high numbers of *Pengő* (*P*):

mP = *millió* (1,000,000) *P*; mdP = *milliard* (1,000,000,000) *P*; bP = *billió* (million million = 10^{12}) *P*; tP = *tera* (million billion = 10^{18}) *P*; aP = *adó* (tax) *P*; maP = *millió adó* (1,000,000 tax) *P*. Note that the US billion (= 10^9) is **not** used!

From 01.08.1946: 1 Hungarian *Forint* = 100 *fillér*. The conversion from the previous inflated *adó* (tax) *Pengő* was 200,000,000 *adó P* = 1 *Forint*. At this point, 1 *adó P* was equated to 2×10^{21} ordinary *Pengő*, so 1 *Forint* = 4×10^{29} ordinary *Pengő*. The *Forint* now known internationally as the *HUF*.

1.1.5 Weights and measures

From Empress Maria Theresia's law of 1754, the standardised Vienna Pound, the *Pfund*, was established, divided into 32 *Loth*, with 1 *Lot* or *Loth* = 15.7 g until 31.12.1865. For postal purposes the 31 and 32 *loth* steps were usually ignored. From 01.01.1876, the *Zoll-Loth* (customs *Loth*) was introduced, with 30 *Zoll-Loth* = 1 *Zoll-Pfund* = 500 g, so 1 *Zoll-Loth* was then equal to 16.7 g (which is not in accord with the statement of 17.9 g according to the *Monográfiája* III p.474).

For distance units, 1 *Meile* = 7.5859 km; distance bands for postal purposes were usually based on direct, 'as-the-crow-flies' distances, not actual road distances.

These archaic units of distance and weight were gradually replaced by the metric system from 1873 onwards and disappeared completely from 01.01.1876 with formal adoption of the metric system for all business and tax purposes (see **RGB 62, 31.03.1875, PTRT 8, 06.03.1875**). However, there continued to be mentions of the *Zoll-Loth* in dealings with other countries.

Weight steps for postal purposes were modified to round numbers of grams, *i.e.* the simple letter rate was up to 0.5 *Zoll-Loth* and this became 15 g, a slight reduction. The intended changes in weight steps are laid out in **PTRT 8, 06.03.1875**.

A belated PTRT shows how the Post employed the metric system for distance:

PTRT 2, 22.01.1876: Application of the metric unit of length in postal services.

5. For postal charges based on distance, the Miriametre (1 Miriametre = 10 kilometres) shall be used from January 1, 1876, and the fixed charges due shall also be calculated from that date onward in the amounts specified in the enclosed overview B) according to the new distance categories.

6. The distance of 4 *Meilen*, up to which post stations are obligated to transport passengers by express coach and relays to places located off the main postal route, shall be replaced by a distance of 30 kilometres, and the charges for relays to places located off the main postal route shall be calculated one-third higher than for the same distance on the main postal route.

1.1.6 Measuring distances for postal purposes

Initially a system of counting the number of post-stations was employed, and then probably by string on a map. When the 'Taxquadrat' system was brought in from 01.04.1868 (**PTRT 8, 28.03.1868**), essentially as an extension of the existing German system following from the expiry of the 1860 German-Austrian postal accord, the entire Austro-Hungarian Empire was divided into rectangular shapes (approximately 30 x 30 km) based on lines of longitude and latitude (see example below). Postal distances in *Meilen* were calculated from the separation of the centres of the *Taxquadrante* in which the sending and receiving post offices lay. This could be done by using a ruler or a piece of string on the map, but each post office also received a *Meilenweiser* (distance guide) with precisely calculated tables. This methodology removed arguments concerning the charge being made when delivery distances were close to a postal charge zone boundary.

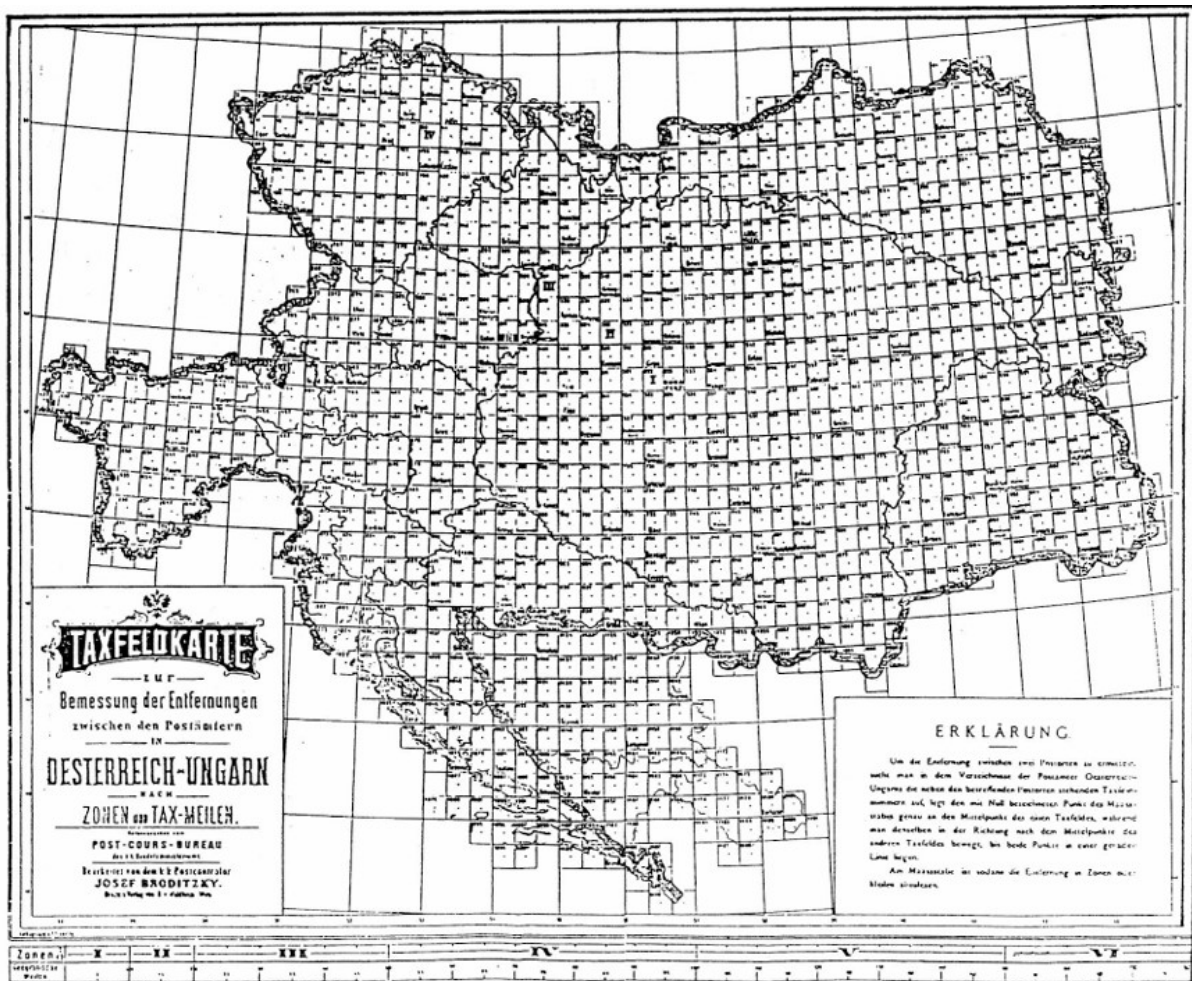


Figure 2: A Taxquadrat map from 1880 (taken from Czirók, D., *A Kocsiposta Története és Viteldijrendszeri Magyarországon 1750 és 1850 Között*, self-published, 1995.) Note that the centre of each quadrat is marked with a reference code and with a dot in the centre for easy use of a ruler to calculate distances.

1.1.7 Finally, a cautionary note:

The author provides no guarantee as to the accuracy and completeness of the data provided in this compilation, which is on a ‘reasonable efforts’ basis. Postal rates are always complicated, especially rates to foreign destinations and understanding their periods of validity. Not all changes in rates are clearly defined in a systematic way by the postal authorities. Not being a Hungarian speaker, the compiler has made extensive use of Google Translate to interpret the large amounts of text in the PTRTs once relevant decrees had been identified, and this on-line service often struggled not only with the older styles of language and spelling (it is getting better!), but also with interpreting postal terminology. Sometimes the quality of the scanned originals is poor. In cases where the translation is given verbatim, the compiler sometimes had some difficulty in correcting the translation and therefore apologises if the translation does not quite make sense philatelically. The keen reader can always locate the original citation and try his own hand at interpreting it!

Lastly, apologies to Hungarian speakers if I missed out the odd diacritical mark.....

R Morrell, Teddington, UK, January 2026

1.1.8 Terminology

Ajánlási díj = postal registration fee

Áruminta = samples

Belföldi = inland

Bélyeg = postage stamp

Bérmentesítési = paid in cash

Biztosítási díja = insurance fee based on value

Csomag = parcel

Díjhiányjelentés = deficiency report (for short payment of fees)

Értékdoboz = valuable box

Értéklevel = value letter (insured letter, money letter)

Értéknyilvánítás = statement of value

Értestő és elismervény = notification and receipt (for collection of parcels)

Expresszdíj = express fee

Fekbér díj = parcel storage fee

Fedezeti lap = telegraphic money order form

Házhozkézbessítési díj = home delivery fee

Helyi = local (delivery area)

Hirlap = newspaper

Hivatalos = official

Kiscsomagok = small parcel

Kocsiposta = coach mail

Könyv = books

Külföldi = foreign

Legiposta = airmail

Levél = letter

Levelezőlap = postcard

Megbízási lap = postal money collection card

Nemzetközi = international

Nyomtatvány = printed matter

Portó = postage due

Portóköteles = postage due to be paid by the recipient (on official mail sent free of charge)

Posta-fiók = rental post office box (for *poste-restante* mail)

Postai megbízási díj = postal money collection fee

(Posta-)utalvány = (postal) money order

Raktár = rental warehousing (for receipt of parcels)

Romló tartalmú = contents subject to deterioration
Potszállítólevél = substitute parcel card (when the original one goes missing)
Súlydíj = weight fee
Sürgős = urgent
Szállítólevél = parcel card
Tankönyve = text-book
Távirati = telegraphic
Távolsági = distance (delivery area - outside postal area of sender)
Terjedelmes, törékeny = bulky, fragile
Tértivevény = return receipt (advice of delivery)
Tudakozvány = tracing document (for missing mail)
Utalványkifizetési díj = money order encashment fee
Utánvétel = cash-on delivery
Utánvételes szállítólevél = COD parcel card
Üzleti papír = business papers
Vakok dombornyomtatvány = Braille literature for the blind
Vámárnyilatkoza = customs declaration
Vissza = return when undelivered
Visszajelentés díja = report fee (fee for a search of a lost item)
Zart-levelezőlap = postal stationery letter card