

2.1 LETTERS – AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN INLAND RATES

2.1.1 Introduction

From 1722, when the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Kaiser Karl VI issued a decree to take back control of the posts from contractors such as the Paar and Taxis families, the posts became controlled centrally. They were split into two categories: the *Briefpost* (for letter mail) and the *Fahrpost* (for mail by heavy post coach). Letter post was carried by a single messenger, usually on horseback. To ensure his safety, only letters containing nothing of value were permitted. Anything of value and anything weighing more than about 0.5 kg had to be carried securely in heavy post coaches, usually with an armed guard.

The cost of sending an ordinary letter depended on its weight and on as-the-crow-flies distances (see 1.1). The charges varied with time as the mail system developed and became more efficient. For details of letter costs up to 1850 the reader is referred to ‘The Story of the Austrian Post up to 1850’ (Brandon, K., Morrell, R., Taylor, A., Austrian Philatelic Society, 2022, ISBN 978-0-900118-11-10). The tables below start in 1842 and demonstrate how the charging system evolved into the post-1850 era when stamps came into use.

2.1.2 Rate tables

Table 1: Letters - inland rates - 1842-1873

Date introduced	Weight	Issuing office area	Up to 10 Meilen	More than 10 Meilen	
01.08.1842 [1]	each 0.5 Loth	Up to 2 Loth, 2 kr, then additional 0.5 kr per Loth	6 kr	12 kr	
				10 to 20 Meilen	Over 20 Meilen
01.06.1850 [2]	each Loth	2 kr	3 kr	6 kr	9 kr
01.11.1858 [3]	each Loth	3 nkr [3]	5 nkr	10 nkr	15 nkr
01.01.1866 [4]	each Loth	3 nkr	5 nkr	5 nkr	5 nkr
01.01.1868 [5,6]	each Loth	3 nkr	5 nkr		

[1] Austrian **RGB 39, 02.02.1842**: Maximum shown in table: 32 Loth = 1 Vienna Pfund ~ 500 g, but elsewhere it states that sealed letters can be up to 5 Pfund and travel by *Briefpost*. Printed papers up to 16 Loth can also be sent by *Briefpost*. This decree also contains *Fahrpost* tables for heavier packages.

[2] Austrian **RGB 149, 26.03.1850** introducing reduced rates with the introduction of postage stamps. The table on letter post charges shows that no maximum weight was applicable.

[3] Austrian **RGB 174, 02.10.1858** gives rates in *neukreuzer* (new kreuzer), following conversion from 1 Gulden = 60 kreuzer to 1 Gulden = 100 neukreuzer. This decree contains tables of postage rates in the new currency. Local rate up to 16 Loth. The use of *neu* was quickly dropped.

[4] Austrian **RGB 124 of 21.11.1865** for the whole Empire dispensed with distance charges.

[5] Austrian **RGB 148 of 15.12.1867**, amendment to 5 nkr per Loth **irrespective of distance**. It ‘also applies to correspondence sent from Austria to those places in European and Asian Turkey, the Danubian Principalities, Serbia and Egypt, and correspondingly arriving in Austria from places where there are royal postal expeditors; as well as to correspondence sent beyond these places, for example via Alexandria to China, the East Indies and to Austria arriving from there. For such correspondence, both the domestic postage and the postage for delivery in foreign districts or by sea will be determined according to the higher grade.’

[6] **PTRT 20, 28.12.1867**: Hungarian repeat of [5].

Table 2: Letters - inland rates - 1873-1918

Date introduced	Weight	Local	Distance	Additional weight
01.07.1873 [1]	to 15 g to 250 g	3 <i>kr</i> 6 <i>kr</i>	5 <i>kr</i> 10 <i>kr</i>	
01.01.1883	to 20 g to 250 g	3 <i>kr</i> 6 <i>kr</i>	5 <i>kr</i> 10 <i>kr</i>	
01.07.1892 [2]	to 20 g to 250 g to 500 g	3 <i>kr</i> 6 <i>kr</i> 9 <i>kr</i>	5 <i>kr</i> 10 <i>kr</i> 15 <i>kr</i>	
01.01.1900	to 20 g to 250 g to 500 g	6 <i>f</i> 12 <i>f</i> 18 <i>f</i>	10 <i>f</i> 20 <i>f</i> 30 <i>f</i>	
16.01.1907	to 20 g to 250 g	10 <i>f</i> 20 <i>f</i>	10 <i>f</i> 20 <i>f</i>	
01.10.1916	to 20 g	10 <i>f</i>	15 <i>f</i>	Each additional 20 g, 5 <i>f</i>
15.06.1918 [3]	to 20 g	15 <i>f</i>	20 <i>f</i>	Each additional 20 g, 5 <i>f</i>

[1] Austrian **RGB 118, 28.06.1873** applicable to both Austria and Hungary. **PTRT 24, 25.06.1873** states that with the introduction of the metric system, an official reduction in weight unit was made from 1 *Loth* to 0.9 *Loth* (15 g); for unfranked letters the rates are 10 *kr* to 15 g and 15 *kr* to 250 g. Local letters within the administrative district of the sending post office are cheaper. Letters over 250 g up to 1 kg have to go by *Kocsiposta/Fahrpost*. **PTRT 25, 03.07.1873**: provides a reminder that these new weight steps are also to be used for foreign mail.

[2] **PTRT 36, 22.06.1892**: Up to 1 kg allowed for official mail. Size restrictions defined as 10 x 20 x 30 cm maximum unless rolled, in which case 30 cm x 15 cm diameter.

[3] **PTRT 53, 29.05.1918**: Introduction of 5 *f* War Tax levy on inland mail, which was subsumed into published rates after the war. See separate article 2.6.