



# FRANCE and COLONIES PHILATELIST

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*Thomas Cook Undercover Mail  
(see page 67)*



*St. Pierre et Miquelon Show  
Expo 2011 Rousing Success  
(see page 78)*

**CONTENTS****ARTICLES**

- Thomas Cook Undercover Mail  
(*Ed Fraser*) ..... 67

**SHORTER CONTRIBUTIONS**

- Occupied France to the United States (1870-1871)  
(*Stan Luft.*) ..... 81
- An Indochina Postage Due Cover  
(*Jack Dykhouse*) ..... 86
- Senegal: A Registered Post Card  
(*David L. Herendeen*) ..... 87
- From the Penal Colony (*James Polk*) ..... 89
- Gleanings From the Group Type:  
(*Edward Grabowski*) ..... 93

**OTHER FEATURES**

- St. Pierre et Miquelon..... 78
- The Rolfe E. Wyer Collection..... 83
- Book Review..... 88
- Show Reports ..... 92

**SOCIETY NEWS**

- President's Letter ..... 90
- Is Participation for You? (*David L. Herendeen*) ..... 91
- Membership Notices..... 92
- Advertisers ..... 95

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**CLEVELAND****ARE YOU****GETTING****READY YET?**

# "Thomas Cook" Undercover Mail

## The Service between Canada and France during WWII

Ed Fraser

[Ed Fraser, not a member of the FCPS, has been a student of this special topic for many years. He has previously published a version of this article in the *Scandinavian Collectors Club Posthorn*.<sup>1</sup> There is additional historical information in that article that has been edited here because of its strong relationship to Canada. Those interested in more detail are directed to the earlier article. For us, Ed has reduced some information about this service from different countries while enhancing that relevant to France. To date he has reported only four covers. Ed hopes that FCPS members may scour their cover collections to see if they can find any more of these gems.]

Only in recent decades has there been much focus on pulling together the detail of the World War II civilian wartime mail service between Canada, Germany and the occupied nations. This detail has been elusive to find, unlike the more documented London based Thomas Cook undercover mail service that was widely used and openly advertised in the British press. The London service used Amsterdam, Holland as the neutral place for sending mail into Germany and receiving mail replies from Germany, but in May 1940 Holland fell and London then changed the service to instead use neutral Portugal. That service, principally using Box 506, Lisbon, handled a large volume of mail for the first few years of the war while the Axis tolerated allowing such mail, or didn't yet enforce harsh laws they had against anyone sending letters to an enemy country using undercover mail schemes.

At the outbreak of World War II, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, and Canada did so a week later on 10 September. In a much lower profile way, though, Canada took steps to initiate an undercover mail service through the neutral

United States almost immediately, and by 24 November 1939 had finalized an agreement with Thomas Cook & Son in Toronto to do the job. This can be confirmed by the newspaper article from the *Montreal Gazette* of 25 November 1939 shown as Fig. 1. [The author would greatly appreciate knowing of other concurrent public announcements or newspaper articles about this Canadian service, which probably were made in both French and English.]

Information about this service was apparently available through post offices and by writing to Thomas Cook in Toronto, but copies of such information have apparently eluded

the philatelic community. Only just recently has information been found in official Canadian Government records that can confirm that the reply address for Thomas Cook was situated at "Box 252, New York, U.S.A." This is not a

Montreal Gazette Nov. 25 1939

### Thomas Cook Handles All Letters to Reich

Ottawa, November 24.—(C)—Justice Minister Lapointe, in his capacity as Acting Secretary of State, and Postmaster General Power announced tonight that Thomas Cook and Son, Limited, Toronto, have been appointed licensed intermediary for the forwarding of harmless social messages to persons in enemy or enemy-occupied territory.

Private letters to enemy or enemy-occupied territory sent through a neutral country are now allowed to be forwarded at the sender's risk as to delivery in the country of destination, subject to the usual conditions of censorship when sent through the intermediary of Thomas Cook and Son.

Letters cannot, however, be forwarded direct to enemy or enemy-occupied territory.

British subjects and others in Canada wishing to communicate with relatives or friends in enemy or enemy occupied countries should forward such letters to Thomas Cook and Son, accompanied by a remittance of 50 cents to cover the expense of transmitting the letter to a neutral country, the transmission from there to the enemy territory, and the transmission of the reply to the sender in Canada.

Letters intended for transmission to enemy or enemy-occupied countries should be as brief as possible, and should in all cases have the inner cover left open in accordance with the enemy censorship regulations, and should be confined entirely to private and family notes, without any reference whatever to military or naval movements, or to political and economic conditions.

Figure 1. Newspaper Announcement of Service.



valid address without giving the specific post office in New York City, as there are many, so the location "Grand Central Annex" would also be necessary, but I think this "error" in the recorded description is still within bounds of kind of official shorthand. Hopefully the full details of these additional records will be written about in the philatelic press soon. All the information collectors currently have has been deduced from the bulk of covers, and some enclosed slips from Thomas Cook in Toronto occasionally found in such surviving mail. The bulk of covers I am referring to I'll guess is less than 1,000 that have been identified, and are basically all addressed to:

Care of Post Box 252  
Grand Central Annex Post Office  
New York, U.S.A.

They typically have Axis censorship, are addressed to different names, and also have Canadian censorship indicating they somehow went from New York to Canada – as it would not make sense to have come *from* occupied Europe to Canada, and then onward to neutral New York. Unfortunately neither Canada nor the United States routinely postmarked any of this mail on arrival or in transit, which would have been a nice plus. A few years ago I found a single helpful exception, where for an unknown reason a New York backstamp was applied, and it is *under* the Ottawa censor's re-sealing tape. Additionally, most known covers are without contents, and I believe were generally those probably retained by the Thomas Cook people where only the contents were passed along. At some point Thomas Cook's empty covers then wound up in the philatelic community.

While much of the functioning of this service is discussed in correspondence that can be found in official Canadian microfilm records in scattered places, and more needs to be found, one such letter involving Dutch and Norwegian seamen would seem of particular interest to our collector community. That is shown here as Fig. 2 (next page), and is a most interesting complaint. It's a wonderful thing that such a letter was written, as it winds up telling of a wartime story somehow easily lost in history!

This letter describes the situation quite well, but it does not appear that any accommoda-

tion was ever made for these seamen or any other group, for that matter. The related replies that followed were typically bureaucratic: they offered nothing.

Reviewing the history, France was attacked by Germany on 10 May 1940. The country capitulated, and an armistice went into effect 25 June 1940 with the government of Pétain. Under terms of the armistice, a designated area in the north and west of France, the *zone occupée*, was occupied by the German Army, and in this region, the Vichy Government was subordinate to the Germans. Most of the remaining third of the country was set aside as the *zone libre*, to be controlled by the Vichy government. Alsace and Lorraine were reincorporated into Germany proper. Several departments along the Italian border were occupied by Italian troops, while areas along the Belgian frontier were administered by the German occupation authorities in Brussels. The entire Atlantic coastline was declared a military zone.

When the Allies invaded North Africa on 8 November 1942, the Germans and Italians immediately occupied the remaining "unoccupied" part of France. The liberation of France began on D-Day (6 June 1944) and ended in December. Paris itself was liberated on 25 August 1944.

Although the Service was announced in November 1939 in the newspaper piece (shown in Fig. 1), the earliest reported usage is a cover, shown in Fig. 3, coming out of Germany can-

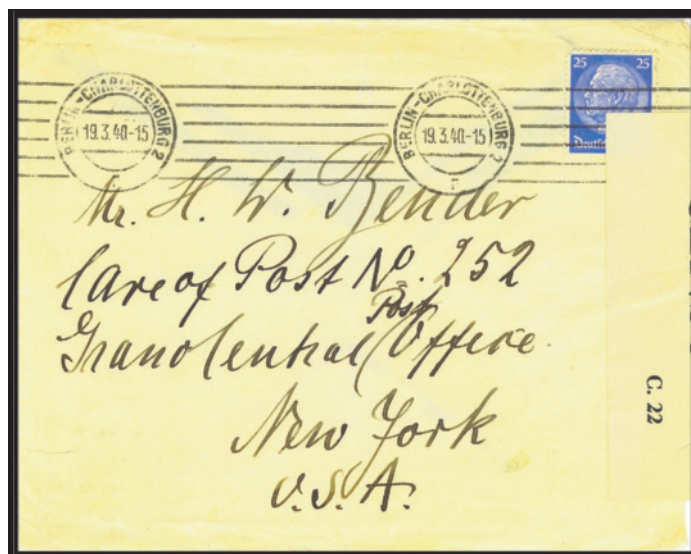


Figure 3. Earliest reported usage of Box 252 service – 19 March 1940.



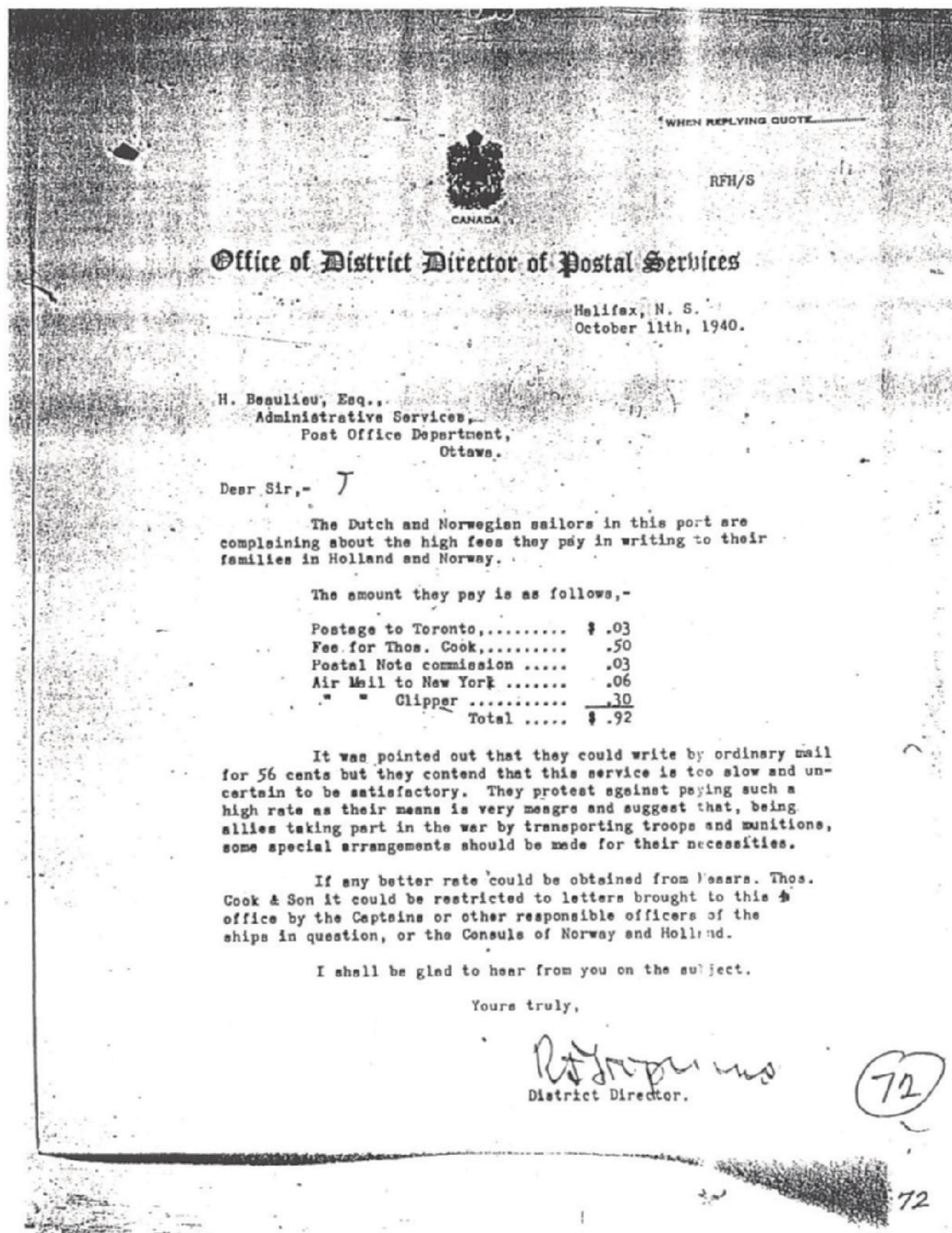


Figure 2. Description of postal fees for the Thomas Cook Service.



celebrated 19 March 1940. This was first reported by Rowe<sup>2</sup> in the 1970s. It would suggest that the service did not actually begin operation until only perhaps February or March of 1940, but that is still an open question. Can any reader report an earlier example?

While initially this service was intended for people in Canada to be able to write to Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, subsequent official announcements certainly would have added other countries as they fell under Nazi control and mail service to them from neutral countries became re-established. For example, mail service to at least parts of Occupied France resumed only on 18 July 1940<sup>3</sup>. Figs. 4, 5 and 6 show three French covers addressed to Box 252. One has British "P.C. 90" censorship (probably Bermuda) and the other two have "C. 18" Ottawa censorship, using a French text resealing tape. None show Nazi censorship, a typical clue to me that these three are probably from Vichy France. I do not know if there is "Box 252" mail from the German Occupied Zone, and would appreciate hearing additional information from readers.

It is of course not known where in Canada any of these addressees actually were. One of my hopes is to find Canada-location information for all Box 252 covers whenever possible. I have identified a few. Having an unusual name, and even having a sender's name and address all



Figure 5. Cover postmarked Lodève – Herault 3 Sept 1940 (~ 30 mi NW of Montpellier). Reverse shows Canadian Ottawa censor tape C. 18.



Figure 6. Cover postmarked Bourg-en-Bresse, 16 Sept 1940 (~45 mi W of Geneva and 40 mi NNE of Lyon). reverse shows transit cancel LYON 17 IX 40 and Canadian Ottawa censor tape C.18



Figure 4. Cover postmarked Cuisery – Saône et Loire 17 Oct 1940 (~60 mi NW of Geneva). Reverse shows British "P.C. 90" censorship tape.

might help. The situation here with Box 252 mail is very unusual. Usually *letters home* during wartime survive better, but here no *letters home*—back to the family in Europe—are known or identified, and we only have these envelopes without letters from home in Europe to work with. Hopefully a little publicity, like this article, might result in some of the *letters home* turning up, even after all these years.

### Why Thomas Cook & Son?

When WWII started, supposedly as a modest revenue generation effort to offset lost travel agency business, Thomas Cook & Son pro-



**Renseignements à l'Usage des Personnes Désirant Communiquer avec des amis Domiciliés en pays Ennemis ou Territoires Occupés par l'Ennemi.**

L'autorisation a été donnée permettant l'envoi de communications aux personnes domiciliées en territoires ennemis conformément aux conditions suivantes:

Cette autorisation comprend les territoires suivants: Belgique, Tchécoslovaquie, Danzig, Danemark, France (occupation allemande), Allemagne, Hollande, Italie et possessions italiennes, Luxembourg, Norvège, Pologne (occupation allemande) et les îles de la Manche.

1. Les communications doivent être brèves. On ne permet pas des ratures.
2. Les lettres ne doivent pas donner l'adresse de l'expéditeur. Elles doivent être écrites soit en anglais soit dans la langue du pays de destination (sauf le tchèque) et ne doivent contenir que des renseignements personnels.
  - (a) Aucune allusion n'est permise à une ville, village, localité ou voyage en Grande-Bretagne, à une phase quelconque de la guerre ou à Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., ou leurs succursales. Il ne peut être inclus dans les lettres aucune annexe du genre suivant: imprimés, cartes géographiques, plans, croquis, dessins, photographies ou d'autres images ou timbres-poste ou fiscaux.
  - (b) Des lettres d'affaires ou des lettres donnant des instructions relatives aux biens ou aux questions d'argent ne doivent pas être remises à Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., mais devraient être soumises par l'expéditeur au Trading with the Enemy Branch of the Treasury and Board of Trade, Imperial House, Kingsway, Londres, W.C.2.
3. Chaque lettre doit être mise dans une enveloppe ouverte, non-timbrée, portant l'adresse exacte du destinataire qui doit être prié de diriger toute réponse au nom complet de l'expéditeur aux soins de la Boîte Postale 506 à Lisbonne (Lissabon en cas des lettres provenant de l'Allemagne ou des territoires sous l'occupation allemande), Portugal.
4. Cette enveloppe ouverte contenant la lettre doit être mise dans une autre enveloppe dûment timbrée et remise à Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., Berkeley Street, Piccadilly, Londres, W.1, avec une fiche donnant en lettres simples et lisibles le nom et l'adresse exacte de l'expéditeur, ainsi qu'une enveloppe dûment adressée à l'expéditeur pour la transmission de toute réponse reçue du destinataire.
5. La communication à Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., doit renfermer un mandat (Postal Order) de 2s. (timbres-poste ou coupons internationaux ne seront pas acceptés) ce qui couvre le port d'une enveloppe contenant une communication au pays neutre et ensuite au destinataire, ainsi que le port d'une réponse éventuelle du pays neutre au Siège central de Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., à Londres et ensuite à l'expéditeur. Ce paiement ne comprend pas le droit postal de la réponse du territoire ennemi au pays neutre.
  - Les lettres dont le poids est supérieur à 1 once (oz.) seront sujettes à surtaxe. Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., s'occupent de cette transmission aux risques et périls de ceux ayant recours à leurs services et à la condition expresse qu'aucune poursuite ne pourra être intentée contre eux sous le chef d'actes ou défauts de leur part ou de la part de toute personne de leurs services.
6. La transmission de correspondance par ce moyen ne comprend pas des remises d'argent, soit directes ou indirectes, aux territoires ennemis, pour lesquelles un permis du Trading with the Enemy Branch (voir 2b ci-dessus) est nécessaire. Ce permis n'est normalement accordé que dans le cas où le bénéficiaire est un sujet britannique ou une veuve de naissance britannique. Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., sont à même de donner tous renseignements utiles quant aux dispositions nécessaires pour l'obtention des permis pour les remises de ce genre, ainsi que pour la transmission de paiements dans le cas où un permis est accordé.
7. Les communications destinées aux prisonniers de guerre, de la marine, l'armée ou l'aviation britanniques et alliées et aux internés civils ne peuvent être transmises par le moyen des susdits arrangements mais doivent être remises conformément aux règlements spéciaux en vigueur, dont des détails peuvent être obtenus à tout bureau de Poste.

**X** Les indications données ci-dessus contiennent TOUS renseignements que nous avons pu obtenir et il est essentiel qu'elles soient suivies à la lettre, faute de quoi des dépenses et des délais supplémentaires s'ensuivront. **X**

(146/8/40 R. J.R.P.)

**Notes for persons wishing to communicate with friends in Enemy Countries, or Territory in the occupation of the Enemy.**

Authority has been given to permit communication with persons in enemy territories, subject to the following conditions.

The territories included in these arrangements are: Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Danzig, Denmark, France (German-occupied), Germany, Holland, Italy and Italian Possessions, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland (German-occupied) and the Channel Islands.

1. Communications must be brief. Erasures are not permitted.
2. Letters must omit the sender's address. They may be in English or in the language of the country for which they are intended (except Czech), and must contain nothing but matters of personal interest.
  - (a) No reference may be made to any town, village, locality or journey in Great Britain, to any phase of the war, or to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., or any of their offices. No enclosure of the following nature is permitted: printed matter, map, plan, sketch, drawing, print, photograph, or other pictorial representation, or postage or revenue stamp.
  - (b) Business letters and letters containing directions about property or money matters must not be sent to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., but should be submitted by the sender to the Trading with the Enemy Branch of the Treasury and Board of Trade, Imperial House, Kingsway, London, W.C.
3. Each letter must be placed in an open unstamped envelope fully inscribed to the addressee, who should be asked to address any reply to your full name, care of Post Box 506, LISBON (Lissabon in the case of letters from Germany or German-occupied territory), Portugal.
4. The open envelope containing the letter should be placed in an outer stamped envelope and sent to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., Berkeley Street, Piccadilly, London, W.1, together with a memorandum, plainly written, containing in block characters the name and full address of the sender, and an open addressed envelope for the forwarding of a reply, should one be received from the correspondent.
5. The communication to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., must enclose Postal Order value 2s. (stamps or International Coupons cannot be accepted), which fee will cover the postage of one envelope containing one communication to the neutral country, and from the neutral country to the addressee, also of a reply (if any) from the neutral country to Messrs. Cook's Head Office in London, and from that office to the intended recipient. The fee does not include the cost of postage of the reply from enemy territory to the neutral country.
  - Letters exceeding one ounce in weight will be subject to an additional charge.
  - Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., undertake this transaction at the sole risk in all respects of the party requiring their services, and on the express understanding that no action will lie against them by reason of any act or default on their part or on the part of any person or agent employed by them.
6. Letters under this scheme may not cover remittances, directly or indirectly, to enemy territory, for which a licence of the Trading with the Enemy Branch (see paragraph 2b above) is necessary. Normally such licence is only granted where the recipient is a British subject or a widow of British birth. Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., can give information as to the arrangements for obtaining licences for such remittances, and for the transmission of payments if the licence is granted.
7. Communications for Prisoners of War, i.e., British and Allied Naval, Military, and Air Force prisoners and Civilian internees, must not be sent under the foregoing arrangements, but forwarded in accordance with the regulations of which particulars may be obtained at any Post Office.

**X** Unless above directions are followed EXACTLY, delay and extra expense will result. These notes convey ALL information available. **X**

(144/8/40, J.R.P.)

Figure 7. August 1940 Instruction Sheets in French and English detailing the Thomas Cook Scheme.

posed to the British Government to be allowed to offer a forwarding service for civilian mail between England and Germany, using Holland as they had done in WWI. I would presume the same reason applied to Thomas Cook & Son in Canada, except using the United States was more convenient than Holland. There is ambiguous information in previous references.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Handling of this Mail*

The evidence from known covers suggests that Thomas Cook maintained books with the names and addresses of the Canadian senders, and the names and possibly the addresses the mail was sent to in occupied Europe. The 50¢ fee covered receiving one reply. Of course the addressee in

occupied Europe would have no way to know that, so surely additional replies were sent, sometimes from other family members and friends as well, who would normally figure the person really was in New York City. (How would they really know they were writing to an official "undercover address" unless told in the letter, and the Ottawa censor missed blocking the letter?) According to proposed directive in the Canadian Archives, and the rules printed for the British Thomas Cook service, it was specifically forbidden in all outgoing letters to mention the Thomas Cook name, or to write about anything that would indicate that the sender was not at the return address place. The rules are shown in French and English in Fig. 7. A few examples of violation of this rule have been found. For ex-



ample, I have several covers from Germany to Canada that are addressed to Box 252 and also include the intended recipients name AND their Canadian address!

These additional replies from Europe I believe usually may have been held or sent onward by Thomas Cook while requesting payment from the Canadian addressee of an additional 25¢ fee. They may have been held when the addressee still owed 25¢ from a prior “extra delivery.” I have an example from 19 August 1940 suggesting that this 25¢ fee was applied.

### *The “New York” Address*

I believe that instructions given by Thomas Cook were very likely in some cases printed on a slip of paper or handstamped, in English, and enclosed in the letter into occupied Europe, and it said “Your reply to this letter should be addressed to me care of post box No. 252, Grand Central Annex Post Office, New York, U.S.A.” I say this because this message is written in its entirety on the cover shown in Fig. 8. It is sad that Thomas Cook didn’t consider that the recipient might not read English. It’s also odd that they didn’t have the proper American form for the address, which would have been to “Post Office Box 252, Grand Central Station Annex” or “P.O.Box 252, Grand Central Annex” and to the city and state “New York, N.Y.” and not just the city and “U.S.A.” I have seen only a few covers addressed to “New

York, N.Y.” or specifying “New York City.” All the rest have the same poorly constructed address format.

It is not certain whether the mail to Box 252 at the Grand Central Annex post office was picked up by the local Thomas Cook office people in NYC, or it was bundled within the U.S. post office there and sent on to Canadian censorship. This is based on some personal conversations years ago with Thomas Cook’s office in the area that used the Grand Central Annex post office for their mail, and with conversations with their then retired mail clerk who picked up their mail daily from that post office during the War. He was quite certain he never saw quantity of mail that was then passed on to Canada, and didn’t remember even any such mail, although specific Box number information was not remembered. (business mail would likely always be picked up from a postal clerk anyway rather than out of the lobby post office box itself. Of course, how the mail to Occupied Europe, including France, was handled is still unknown – and different ways may well have been used.

### *The Thomas Cook Archives*

In 2009 I received interesting additional information about Thomas Cook from C.J. van der Horst in Holland<sup>6</sup>. He got copies of some notes that are related to the Thomas Cook scheme from the Thomas Cook archives in England. These notes, anonymous and unpublished, consist of three plain typewritten pages that were heavily annotated in handwritten comments at Thomas Cook in England. They seem to be exactly the sort of thing that would be easily overlooked or lost. However, while the notations sometimes are hard to figure out exactly, they give interesting insight into Thomas Cook’s considerations in London about the mail service. Unfortunately, so far we have not found finalized letters or directives on much of this, but they may exist somewhere.

The most significant parts of these notes refer to the Thomas Cook London wartime mail scheme being usable by not only Great Britain, but also the Colonies and Dominions. (This helps explain why pieces of information have turned up in some different British Colonies,

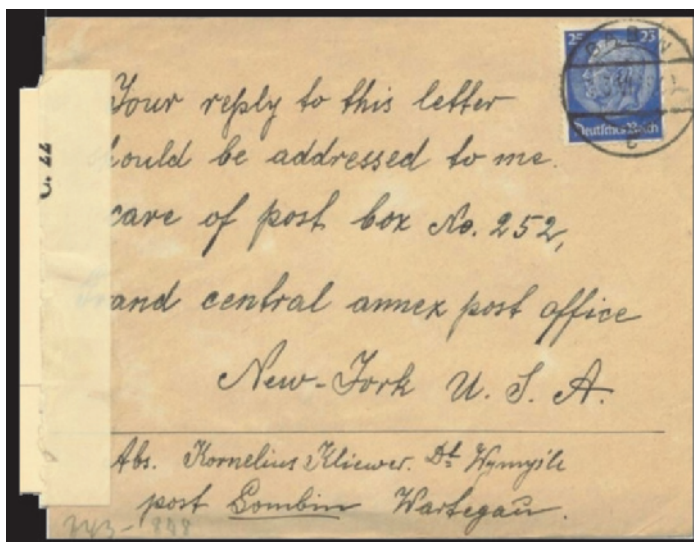


Figure 8. Cover showing the complete instructions apparently written out as the address.

for example.) Specifically referencing Canada, there is a manuscript notation reading: "Canada—All letters from residents in Canada to be sent to Toronto Office, which forwards them in bulk to Dominion Censor at Ottawa, as already arranged. ? Ottawa to post them in bulk to T.C. & S., New York." This was apparently written awaiting confirmation of this, which results in the *question mark* appearing mid-text. Also, it adds "If so, New York to post them to Postbox. Genoa for reposting to Germany."

Three steps forward and one back? The handwritten word looks to me to be "Genoa" but maybe it is not. The best I can figure is that at that time a good mail route into Germany may have been through Italy, and Thomas Cook planned to send the mail from New York to their office in Genoa for that reason? That seems a mistake because it would involve extra handing and possibly extra postage costs. My guess is that this step was eliminated from the plan. However, I do find that some covers do show Italian directives for routing when coming from Europe, as apparently the best mail routing was often through Italy.

In looking at known "reply" mail out of Axis controlled areas that involved use of the Thomas Cook scheme, various articles have already discussed how they might have been processed. After Allied censorship, this processing was done by the Thomas Cook people, and usually three choices are proposed. The mail was either forwarded by re-addressing and adding franking to the envelope out of Europe, by putting the envelope and contents into another envelope and addressing and franking that envelope (a so called "ambulance cover"), or by simply removing the letter, and forwarding just the letter in an addressed and franked envelope. For Canada, two choices are the likely suggestions because it is not known that Thomas Cook in Canada ever used the first option: "re-addressing with a label and adding postage" as was done by Thomas Cook in England. Using the remaining two choices, this would seem to account for some covers being found in addressee's possessions, and others apparently being found in small bulk as if disposed that way by a Thomas Cook connection at some unknown later date.

The handling of the Thomas Cook mail, however, could involve an additional choice. It is also possible that the public was able to both send and pick up mail directly at the Thomas Cook offices themselves, or perhaps in particular at the main office in Toronto. This was in fact the case for the Box 506, Lisbon mail handled by Thomas Cook in London. This method is generally overlooked in the philatelic literature, although the Thomas Cook Archives in England shows this happened by reference to the Thomas Cook staff magazine<sup>5</sup> of August 1985. The introduction notes:

*Several months ago we asked if any present or retired staff could write an article on how the company handled enemy mail during the last war. Here David Kitt, assistant manager, Central Information Services in Peterborough, gives an account.*

The article also says he joined the company in August 1940. He relates that in London the Thomas Cook office on Berkeley Street was an active place for the public, where the staff helped people put together letters for occupied Europe that met all the censor restrictions. Letters with problems had to be re-written, because no erasures were allowed. There were 6 writing desks there for customer use. Also, fees were collected, and replies from Europe picked up by people who had arranged to have any replies held there where they could come in for them. This, he relates, included many soldiers, especially many from Poland who were with the Polish Air Force units that were nearby. Very unfortunately, there is no comment in the article about stamp collecting or the envelopes.

Perhaps empty envelopes, "request for additional payment" slips, etc., were collected or accumulated in the Thomas Cook office – and someone thought to save them? There is also no comment about the official restrictions on "enemy stamps" that even if only irregularly enforced, may have been an issue to Thomas Cook.<sup>7</sup> Might Thomas Cook have looked to reduce the circulation of the replying envelopes? So far, my best guess (completely unproven) is that if the envelope had return address or other information on it that was clearly not in the enclosed letter out of Axis Europe, Thomas Cook would forward the envelope with the letter. Alternatively, if there seemed to be no additional information on the envelope – perhaps

no return address, for example – Thomas Cook might have opted to save on the mailing weight and only sent the contents onward.

### **Censorship**

The censorship of Box 252 addressed mail is often somewhat distinctive, because they usually have both Axis and Canadian censor tapes. In fact, only 3 covers in a sampling of 100 were without Axis censorship where it might have been expected

This observation makes it noteworthy that the mail from Norway and France is often distinctively without Nazi censorship. It appears that much mail to Canada or Great Britain from France received no French or Nazi censorship when from Vichy France. This includes the Box 252 examples I have seen. (I would like to find an example with Nazi censorship. However, I suspect all recognized undercover mail from Nazi controlled areas of France were stopped by the Nazis. Can a reader add detail to this?)

Also, very few covers addressed to Box 252, regardless of origin, have the usual Allied censorship – for example, P.C. 90, censorship. The first suggestion here is that the Allied censors specifically knew about Box 252 being for Canada, and that it would receive Canadian censorship down-the-line, and therefore they did not bother to censor this mail before it was delivered to New York. The Canadian censorship for this time period is shown by the “C” letter on the censor tapes – and the known numbers actually ALL correspond to censor numbers at just the Ottawa censorship office

### **Box 252 Mail and German Censorship**

Questions about German censorship can only be partly answered. I have gotten some additional background information about the German censor’s handling of undercover mail from three sources. The first source involves the recent discovery of an example of a cover addressed to Box 252 that was rejected by the German censors. I have found no references to rejections of covers addressed to this Box 252, Grand Central Annex address, but its rejection is not unique. This cover was posted in Vienna, canceled 16 June 1941, and has the German censor tape and markings, but no additional

dating. Additionally, although no contents or surviving letters are known, I have another cover from 27 May 1940 that successfully reached Box 252 that is from the same sender in Vienna (and likely to the same addressee, although the name was not put in this 1940 addressing). It is now also known that the sender survived the war, and the addressee, her son, also was from Vienna, but was working in Toronto during that time. To further complicate the “return to sender” procedure the German censorship followed, I do have other covers addressed to the Box 252 address that are also from Vienna that were not stopped. They were also handled by the Frankfurt censor office, and mailed even later by other people. All are postmarked in 1941 – one in August, three in November, and two in the first few days of December. Whether because they were apparently handled by different censors, or regulation instructions changed a little over the months, both could be explanations. As far as is known, enforced or not, German regulations were specific about forbidding anyone from sending mail to a neutral country address where that mail would be forwarded onward to a person in a country at war with Germany.

The two handstamps the censor applied to the front of the cover in Fig. 9 are listed and pictured in the extremely comprehensive work of Landsmann.<sup>3</sup>

The German text of the one handstamp reads: “Return to sender! Mail to enemy countries -



Figure 9. Cover from Vienna, 16 June 1941, to Box 252, Grand Central Annex, New York that was returned to the sender by the German censors in Frankfurt.



even via a neutral country - is forbidden. This is according to an order re: information transmission, dated 2 April 1940. In the event of a repetition, a report will be made regarding this violation. The censorship office." With that warning, one could be afraid to try sending to Box 252 a second time!

The German text of the second handstamp reads "Mailings permitted only via the German Red Cross, Berlin SW 61, Blücherplatz 2."

A small number of examples are known of German censor rejected covers addressed to Box 506, Lisbon - the address used for the Thomas Cook undercover mail scheme operated out of England. They are hard to find, though, and in asking Landsmann<sup>8</sup> about it, his thought was that it seems almost as if the German censors didn't always want to stop the mail, because it could be some source of information for them. Hence, his suggestion was that they were perhaps more likely to simply destroy a letter that they would not pass, rather than return it. However, he adds that so far they have not found any information with instructions about that.

A further observation might be offered. At the start of WWII, the British censoring process started immediately, even using some censor sealing tapes on hand from WWI. However, it appears that the Germans had overlooked such preparation, and for months had neither handstamps nor proper re-sealing tapes to use. They also seem to not have had very specific rules, and neutral country mail routing was probably not considered. Note that the Thomas Cook schemes only apparently came into serious use beginning around March 1940, and per the German censor's handstamp shown in Fig. 9, regulations forbidding this routing may well only have come into effect on the quoted "2 April 1940" - perhaps in reaction to this new "Thomas Cook" mail influx that someone in charge noticed. I do wonder if perhaps many German censors missed knowing of this rule, as some of the mail allowed to pass was so blatantly in violation of this 2 April 1940 rule. This would alert a German censor - but they somehow were passed into the mails.

## *Canadian Censorship -*

The references I have seen all indicate that the mail for Thomas Cook was censored in Ottawa, and my study corroborates this fact. Tyacke,<sup>9</sup> has written many articles about Canadian censorship, and his book also discusses the Thomas Cook scheme. He discusses the various cities and censor numbers, but still, there are no clues for Box 252 mail being censored anywhere but Ottawa. More detailed research about the censors must be performed in the Canadian Archives in which many WWII records may be still sealed. This is still an open research topic.

## *The Box 506, Lisbon, Portugal Routing*

Figure 6 illustrated the typical instruction sheets detailing the Thomas Cook scheme. No such instructions have been found for Canada in either French or English. These instructions can come from the censor on a censor form, or from Thomas Cook, or perhaps from the Post Office - but, again, only planned instructions have been found on Canadian Archive microfilm - to date, no examples of the actual printed instructions have been reported by philatelists.

Figure 10 shows a typical French cover to Box 506, Lisbon, that has been re-addressed by Thomas Cook in London with a yellow re-address label. These glamorous covers are eas-



Figure 10. Box 506 cover from France with two-country franking, France and Great Britain.

ily recognized, with two country franking. However, many are not re-addressed, and show just the Box 506, Lisbon addressing, and no yellow label or extra handstamp and cancels.

### *The Connection to WWI*

Lastly, I contacted Graham Mark in England who has written extensively about WWI British censorship.<sup>10</sup> He has also included information about undercover mail in WWI, and has made some comparisons to the WWII censorship procedures. As he describes, Thomas Cook, and other organizations, offered mail forwarding services through neutral countries during especially the later part of the First World War.

The WWI British censorship was controlled through the War Office, and in their report made following that war there are references to undercover mail. It includes the interesting comment that the censor people saw serious intelligence collecting value in having a known intermediary handling any neutral-country mail re-directing scheme. Additionally, they made some comments that they preferred having the intermediary being British if that were possible, and were very unhappy about some they considered pro-German, perhaps just set up to collect information for Germany, and apparently without giving the names in the report, the British looked to block use of such forwarders later in the war.

There are comments as well that use of a known intermediary would be far easier to censor and also watch, than if the government alternatively banned all such mail, and left people up to their own devices to elude the rules, which they were sure people would. That, they indicated, can be far harder to pick up, much less monitor. The person who authored the final WWI British report was called upon in the late 1930's to write up censorship procedures should another war come to pass, and apparently he made heavy use of his WWI report to do that.

While the British approach to WWII undercover mail followed WWI precedents, some of the German procedures likely considered their WWI experiences as well. (Perhaps that might account in part for allowing such mail to continue?)

### *Mail Volume*

For the period 1940-1941, the total incoming mail to Canada was 14,837 and the total outgoing was 18,537, for a total of 33,374. A further breakdown (e.g. by month, by country, etc.) would be most interesting to find, but is apparently not available. Working with just the available numbers suggests that about all of the covers addressed to Box 252, Grand Central Annex, New York, are from the 14,837 number. Again, it would be interesting to locate examples from the outgoing 18,537 items going into Axis Europe, and likely appearing to be sent from New York, or probably Grand Central Annex Station in New York City (a large midtown post office).

Some additional numbers are also given in the official Canadian microfilm archives that reflects data for the period after the time when the U.S. entered the war, as well. When the U.S. entered the war with Germany, Box 252 in New York could no longer function as a neutral country address. The data from 1942 onward has to reflect the handling of some of this mail through another neutral country. Unlike Canada and England, when the United States entered the war, they made the decision to forbid concessions to any private entity, including Thomas Cook, that would permit them to be a forwarding agent for Americans, using a neutral country for routing their mail into Axis Europe.

For the 1942-1945 period, the records indicate several thousand incoming and outgoing letters were handled. Again further specifics and more break down of the Canadian records have yet to be located and reported, although information from other sources suggests this post-Pearl Harbor mail was all routed through Lisbon (apparently using the Cook box address "Box 615, Lisbon, Portugal) instead of a box address in the United States. The exception would be mail from Axis Europe that was addressed to Box 252, New York that left Axis hands before they stopped all mail to the U.S. sometime during Dec 1941, or that may have been mailed to Box 252 from a neutral country well after Dec 1941. The Allied procedure was to always accept (and then censor) incoming mail, as the rules were not against receipt – it was only the send-

ing of mail to an enemy controlled country, directly or indirectly, that was prohibited.

## Conclusion

This article has described how mail was handled so that even persons living in occupied lands could communicate with relatives living in other countries. Evidence indicates that there was a more humanitarian view to the importance of some civilized communication between countries during WWI. With the exception of the British, Canadians and Australians, whose use is well documented, this did not carry over into WWII. Communications was delegated to established agreements for POW's and Internees, and/or the Red Cross, which was apparently very overwhelmed. As described in this article, the Thomas Cook WWII scheme performed that service, and did it fairly efficiently, overcoming many censorship and political complications. Hopefully, the accurate details of this service can eventually be fully documented. I hope not too much has already been lost to history.

The author collects WWII Thomas Cook related undercover mail, and would greatly appreciate any additional information, comments, or questions and more examples relating to France.

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## Endnotes

1. Fraser, E., "The World War II "Thomas Cook" Undercover Mail Service between Canada and Norway," *Posthorn*, May 2008, pp. 3-9, and Part II update November 2009, pp. 3-11.
2. Rowe, K., "The Mystery of Box 252, a WWII Accommodation Address," *BNA Topics*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Whole No. 352, March-April 1976, pp. 14-17. Dr. Rowe wrote a number of articles about undercover mail, including several about Box 252. The one cited provides a good overview, and it includes his request for information about any dating before 19 March 1940, the earliest he had found at that point. It is available as a download from the British North America Philatelic Society website:

[www.bnatopics.org/journals/1976](http://www.bnatopics.org/journals/1976)

and select Whole Number 352

3. Landsmann, H., *Die Zensur von Zivilpost in Deutschland im 2. Weltkrieg*, [in German], available since 2008 in book or CD form. As a large format, nicely printed 464 page paperback book published in January 2009, it is now available from U.S. booksellers. I'll estimate that in many areas it may almost double the information previously available. The key reference has been the Riemer book on German WWII civil censorship which was last updated in 1979 [also in German]. Even so, there are still some footnotes in the 1979 Riemer which are not copied in this large new book. The Landsmann CD has handstamp and cover illustrations in color, and the text is searchable. The book's illustrations are in black and white. It is a wonderful reference.
4. Gilbert, A.E., "Post Box 506, Lisbon-Correspondence in WWII," *Stamp Collecting*, 21 December 1979, pp. 559-569. This widely referenced article indicated that Thomas Cook in England set up a box in Amsterdam for Canadian use, but I have never found anything in the official records confirming this, and of course, no usages are known.
5. Kitt, D., "By appointment to the British Government, YOU will handle enemy mail," *Internationally Speaking with Thomas Cook*, August 1985, p. 19. This was the Thomas Cook staff magazine, which ran for a total of 22 issues, from August 1985 to June/July 1989.
6. van der Horst, C.J., Private Communication.
7. Sondheim, P., "Confiscated World War II Mail Addressed to the Faroes," *Posthorn*, November 2006, pp. 7-10. This article describes finding official records about the British seizure of mail, and its apparent subsequent sale in the philatelic community. He advises that this practice was not confined to mail for the Faroes. Unfortunately, he has only been partially successful in finding these detailed records, but he has enthusiasm that he will locate more.
8. Landsmann, H., Private Communication.
9. Tyache, J. and LaBlonde, C., *The Postal History of World War II Mail between Canada and Switzerland*, The American Helvetia Philatelic Society, June 2008. Includes many useful black and white illustrations. It is available from

The American Helvetia Philatelic Society  
P.O.Box 15053  
Asheville, NC 28813.

It is also available from the authors for about \$30

10. Mark, G., *British Censorship of Civil Mail WW I*. A current *supplement* is available via the Civil Censorship Study Group website:

<http://www.postalcensorship.com/ccsg/index.html>

The original I believe is out-of-print, but neither has full detail about the undercover civilian mail schemes used during WWI, including one initiated by Thomas Cook & Son.



# St. Pierre et Miquelon

## Expo 2011: Un Grand Succès

The first ever stamp exhibition was held in St. Pierre et Miquelon from 1-4 June 2011. This had been the long-time dream of FCPS member **Jean-Jacques Tilliard**. "J.-J.", as he is known to his friends, has worked tirelessly to make this show happen. He recounts this history in his opening remarks at the Palmare banquet. The English translation is given below.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*This exhibition is a milestone event for Saint-Pierre et Miquelon's Philately.*

*Without going into details, I would like to retrace the various steps that led to this event.*

*Our Club was founded by Michel Malvaux and Georges Leroux in 1982. Its purpose was originally to enable philatelic enthusiasts to meet and exchange stamps. In 1983, I adhered to the Club and in 1992 I became its President.*

*Over time, the number of members declined and around the year 2000 the Club suffered from a serious lack of interest. However, Thanks to **Loïc Detcheverry**'s support, I held on.*

*In 2004, I decided to engage in conferences. It is during one of those conferences held in Montreal at the Olympic Stadium, that I met François Brice who told me about philatelic competitions and encouraged me to participate.*

*After this encounter ; I presented my first study "The 1885 SPM Gothic overprint" at a regional competition in Lakeshore. A gold medal allowed me to apply for a national level competition. Then my study was selected for a world competition in Russia. I won my first medal in St. Petersburg, 14 months after my debuts. This award confirmed the potential of our stamps. 2006 thus marks a turning point for our club and for the philately of our islands.*

*Following the good results obtained in major competitions, the various meetings and encounters made in Europe, Asia or the Americas, Can-*

*ada and the United States persuaded St. Pierre and Miquelon to apply to become a full member of FIAF ; to apply as a country. It is true that the geographical position of our islands and their status made this possible.*

*To gain this membership to the FIAF, we had to convince the Central American and South American countries. After a first failure in 2008, 2009 was the year, and our club and our community owe it for the most part to Mr. Peter McCann, Jim Mazepa and Charles Verge who are here with us tonight.*

*Our affiliation to the FIAF gives St Pierre and Miquelon an exceptional power. Our vote now equals that of big countries such as the United States, Canada, Brazil, Paraguay, Costa Rica etc ... To date, 23 countries make up the Inter-American federation which is becoming more and more influential. At the 2011 Paraguay Exhibit our archipelago was among the world's most rewarded country*

*This step was a huge step for our small islands and for our club which, with the recent arrival of talented and energetic members such JJOLiviero and FF on its board of directors, is now "fully armed" to take up the challenge.*

*I am proud to preside over a club that has managed to regain momentum with exciting and ambitious projects. We currently have 14 members, all of them dynamic and young at heart.*

- *Jean-Louis Desdouets, our webmaster, participated in an exhibit for the first time this year.*
- *Olivier Detcheverry won a silver gilt medal in Asuncion. That was his first international exhibit with his presentation of "The Pointe aux Canons lighthouse"*
- *Loïc Detcheverry highlighted our heritage of old postcards.*
- *Rita Melin introduces a new theme: Naval assistance to fishermen.*

- *Jean-Louis Rabottini presented at a regional level.*
- *Livie-Laure Tillard won the International FIP youth (YouF) grand prize in London, specialty one frame.*
- *Joëlle Olaïsola conducted a study on the eye in SPM stamps*

*I want to acknowledge the diligence of our Honorary President Jules Girardin and I thank David Allen for his dedication and commitment to selling our stamps on the neighboring continent, a task he has taken very seriously, but unfortunately without recognition.*

*I take this opportunity to commend the excellent work of our artist Patrick Derible who designed the logo and the first stamp bearing the logo of the FIAF. I thank the Philatelic Commission for agreeing to this project which was dear to me. However I would like our philately to be given even more emphasize. To this effect, I have suggested that we recreate a seasonal postal office on Fishermen's Island and that our philatelic heritage be exhibited in our museums. Ladies and gentlemen, today marks our first philatelic competition, an event which has the privilege of hosting "big names" such as*

- *Peter McCann: Vice-President of the International Federation (FIP).*
- *- Jim Mazepa: President of the FIAF.*
- *- Charles Verge: president of the jury, a man with multiple titles.*
- *- Henk Slabbinck: President of the European Academy.*

*If these key figures in the world of philately are here, it is because they believe in our islands, which although small boast great results at an international level. For their support, I thank them sincerely.*

*A special thank you to all those who made the trip especially for this event and all those who took part in the event, including Marc Derible for the certificates, Jean-Paul Apesteguy for the sculpture and Cedric Lafourcade for his help.*

*Have a nice Palmarès evening !*

As you will see, FCPS members (and their relatives) did quite well, and the results for them are given below.

Gold medal and Grand Award to **Jean-Jacques Tillard** for his "Les vignettes postales de SPM 1885-1892," and the APS Award of Excellence pre-1900. Gold and Reserve Grand to **James Taylor** for "Saint-Pierre et Miquelon 1835-1931." Also golds to **Jeff Ward** for "French Guiana and Inini Commemoratives," **Loic Detcheverry** for "La pêche à SPM au début du siècle dernier," and another to **J.-J.** for "Les entiers postaux aux types Alphée Dubois et Groupe à S.P.M." **Loic's** exhibit also received the awards for most popular exhibit, originality and the APS Award of Excellence 1940-1980.

There were also successful single frame exhibits. These include Gold and the grand to **James Taylor** for "S.P.M. 1926 Stamp Shortage." Other golds went to **Jeff Ward** for "The Cayenne Airmails," and three(!) to **J.-J. Tillard** including "Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, le renard, émission de 1952," "Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, le 20F montagne et arbres de 1947," and "Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, la croix de Langlade de 1947." A vermeil and an AAPE Presentation Award went to Olivier Detcheverry for "Le phare de la pointe aux canons à St-Pierre et Miquelon," and a silver to Joelle Olaïsola for "Le regard à travers les timbres de S.P.M."

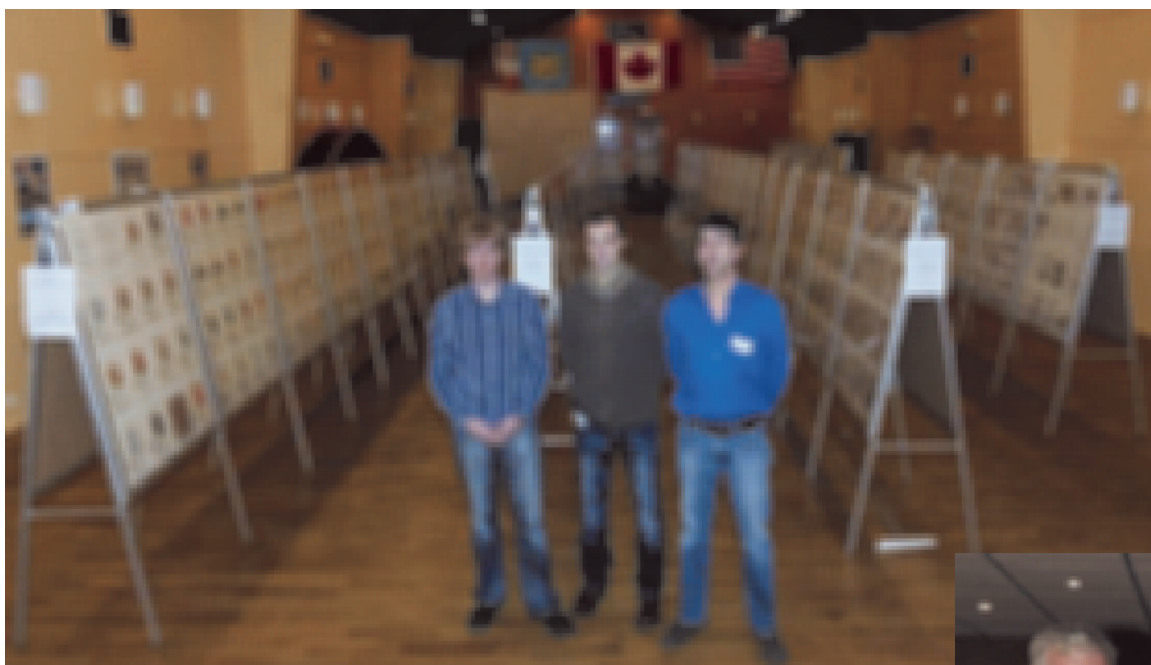
In the youth category, Livie-Laure Tillard received a vermeil for her exhibit "La Marianne de Briat surchargée Saint-Pierre et Miquelon 1990-1996."

Those of us who have gotten to know **J.-J. Tillard**, and **Loic Detcheverry** will attest to what wonderful gentlemen they are. I am sure I can speak for all of the FCPS members who have gotten to know them over the last several years in giving them a hearty **BRAVO** for a job well-done! We hope to see them (as well as their family members) here in the U.S. whenever they get the opportunity.

For more information, see:

**[www.clubphilatelique.com](http://www.clubphilatelique.com)**

And navigate to Expo 2011.



Show organizers included FCPS members **J.-J. Tilliard** (left) and **Loïc Detcheverry** (center).



**J.-J. Tilliard** and his Grand Award!



**James Taylor** receiving his Grand Award for single frame exhibits.



**Loïc Detcheverry** receiving the Most Popular Exhibit award.



# Occupied France to the United States (1870-1871)

*Stanley J. Luft (FCPS 915)*

Among the prized items in my exhibit of Alsace-Lorraine 1870 to UPU are three differently rated covers to United States destinations. Figure 1 is a 22 December 1870 cover from Ay-Champagne (Marne Dept.) in the German occupied zone, to New York. It bears the correct 60 centimes in Occupation Stamps for less than 15 gram mail from the North German Union via British closed mail. Among the markings are three strikes of a blue boxed K.PR.FELD POST / RELAIS No 23 of the 23rd Infantry Division of XII [Saxon] Corps, assigned at this time to Epernay (Marne), as well as a red FRANCO (Prepaid) and an indistinct red New York arrival.



Figure 1.

Even scarcer is Figure 2, a 1 franc rate for the second weight (15-30 gram) band, also to New York City, and bearing four copies of the 25



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

centimes value. Mailed from Weiler (Bas-Rhin Dept.) on 2 October 1871, it bears a red boxed FRNCO indicating it was fully prepaid and an indistinct red New York Paid arrival date stamp, having transited via Cologne, Belgium and England.

I am indebted to Alain Demeraux, Vice-President of SPAL, for information of the itinerary for letters between Occupied France and England, and to Jerry Miller of Chicago and the Germany Philatelic Society, for general discussions and translations from the German.

But my very favorite of the three is a cover (Fig. 3) that was short paid from Strasbourg (but now Strassburg i. Elsass) on 17 November 1870 to Wheeling, West Virginia--a not very usual destination at the time. It bears only 50 centimes postage rather than the habitual 60 centimes and, though marked FRANCO, this was rectified with a red crayon 3 (for *silbergroschen*). It does not appear that any tax was collected and there is no arrival backstamp. But it does contain a long letter from an American lady doing the Grand Tour of Europe (rather very poor timing!--SJL) to her niece, which includes a brief description of the war damages in Strasbourg (Fig. 4). Definitely a prize item!



Figure 4.



# The Rolfe E. Wyer Collection

On 25-26 May 2011, Spink Shreves Galleries in New York auctioned the collection of French colonial material formed by FCPS member **Rolfe Wyer**. Your editor was only able to capture a single lot in the very successful sale. I recently spoke with Mr. Wyer and he expressed his satisfaction with using the Spink Shreves firm and noted that all 1252 lots in the auction sold! This is a very rare occurrence, indeed. Because Mr. Wyer is not well-known to our membership, I asked if he would approve of this brief article. It shows how a devoted and relentless quest for quality can build an incredible collection.

In the introduction to the catalogue, Charles Shreve, president of Spink USA Inc wrote:

*As one peruses the pages of this catalog, one thing becomes very apparent - this is not your typical collection of French Colonies and French Offices Abroad. In fact, it's not your "typical" collection of any philatelic area. The Wyer collection, quite simply, is a magnificent collection in every sense of the word. It is a collection that was built with exceptional taste, attention to quality and a passion for completeness.*

*There has not been a French Colonies collection of this size and value to be offered in the philatelic market in many, many years and certainly none that has been offered at unreserved public auction. The collection is filled with hundreds of incredibly scarce stamps, varieties, errors - and even some select covers - many of which will not be seen again for years to come. One will be further impressed by some of the auxiliary areas that Mr. Wyer also collected - French Colonies that were once occupied by the British or Germans (i.e. Cameroun and Togo).*

*Mr. Wyer comes from an impressive family line-*

*age of serious philatelists, so his philatelic tastes are literally part of his genes. His grandfather, J.I. Wyer III, who was the State Librarian of New York, collected 19<sup>th</sup> Century United States stamps. His father, William Wyer, is a well known philatelist of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He built a large and important collection of British Commonwealth that was sold by Harmer Rooke in 1978. But, it was his collection of U.S. Railroad covers that William Wyer is most noted for - being the finest collection of its kind ever*

*formed. In fact, many of his most valuable covers now grace great collections of today. Not to mention he, along with his close friend Charles Remele, authored a USA railroad cover catalog that is still in use today. The Wyer Railroad collection was sold by Daniel F. Kelleher & Co. in 1977.*



*Considering the areas already covered by the family, William Wyer suggested to his son Rolfe (who was about nine or ten years old at the time), that he collect France and Colonies. At the age of 12 he went to boarding school and afterwards to Williams College, graduating in 1944. He did not collect again until 1975 when he was working for Teledyne, Inc. as a Group Executive. His job included a lot of travel both in the United States and abroad - including attending the Paris Air Show which occurred every two years. It was during these years that his interest in his stamp collection was rekindled. After a few years, it was obvious to him that trying to collect both France and Colonies was too much to accomplish, so he sold off his France and some of his colonies whose condition was not satisfactory.*

*Rolfe Wyer has concentrated solely on his French Colonies collection since he retired from Teledyne in 1990. His efforts have resulted in the exciting collection that is now*

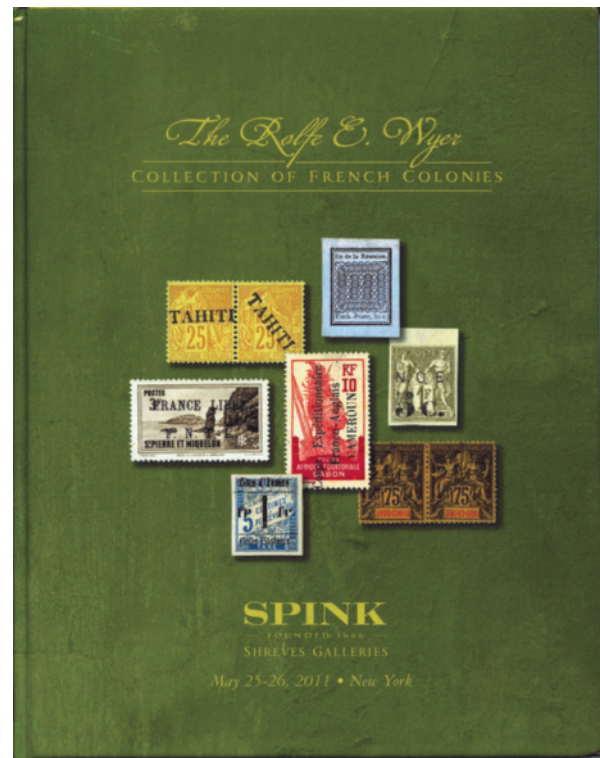


being offered here by Spink Shreves Galleries. There is no doubt that the Rolfe E. Wyer Collection of French Colonies and French Offices Abroad is one of the finest ever formed. We are pleased and privileged to have been selected by Mr. Wyer to present it to our clientele.

Spink Shreves still have copies of this full-color hard cover catalogue available. They may be ordered by contacting the company by email at:

[Shreves@Spink.com](mailto:Shreves@Spink.com)

Copies are sent postpaid for \$20 within the U.S. and \$30 to overseas members. This is an important addition to the library of those who wish to have records of some amazingly rare French colonial items. A sampling of some of the items taken at random are shown on the next page and a half. The quality speaks for itself!



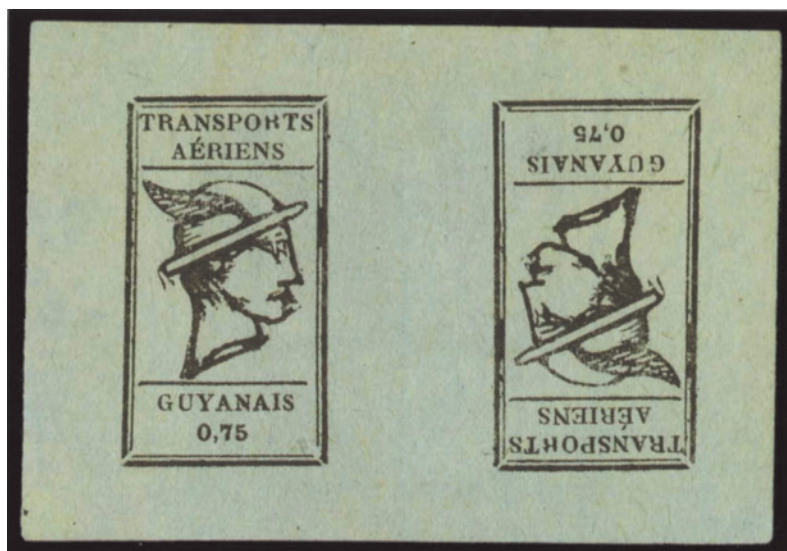
Lot 225  
Annam & Tonkin  
Y&T 5b+5  
Unique pair



Lot 76  
Port-Saïd  
Y&T 61f+61



Lot 555. Guadeloupe strip of 4 1c CG. Only 4c rated cover, ex-Grabowski.



Lot 430  
Guyane Français  
Y&T PA6a



Lot 225  
Réunion  
PA1a



Lot 529  
Gabon  
Y&T 5



Lot 396  
Guyane Français  
Y&T 6c



Lot 803  
Martinique  
Y&T 9



Lot 1081  
Côte des Somalis  
Y&T 29a



Lot 908  
Nossi-Bé  
Y&T 29a



Lot 1158  
Tahiti  
Y&T 14+14var



# An Indochina Postage Due Cover

Jack Dykhouse (FCPS 1624)

In 1928, the rate for an internal letter in Indo-China was 5 cents. The letter shown below shows how a sender tried to meet that requirement by attaching a cut out from an unused up-rated 4 cents postal stationery stamp and a normal 1 cent stamp. The cover was sent from Son Tay, Tonkin to Kien Duong, Tonkin on 22 June 1928. Kien Duong (also spelled Kien Xuong) was a small village near Thai-Binh.

The problem was that it was illegal to cut out the indicium and use it for postage on another envelope. The postal employee at Son Tay outlined the franking with a blue crayon and applied the "T" indicating there was postage due. The stamps were not cancelled in Son Tay. The blue crayon was the standard UPU approved method for indicating that there was no credit for the stamps.

The cover was backstamped in Hanoi on the same day and was postmarked upon arrival at Thai Binh, Tonkin on the next day, 23 June. Postage due stamps totaling 8 cents were ap-

plied in Thai Binh. Credit appears to have been given for the 1 cent stamp (even though it was cut out from another envelope), but not the 4 cents indicium. The 8 cents postage due was double the wrong deficiency. The postage due should have been 10 cents, with no credit given for either illegal "stamp."

A label (neither the author nor the editor has never seen this type of label) was attached to the lower left corner on the envelope stating that 8 cents was to be collected. My guess is that the label was used by the main post office when the amount was to have been collected by a rural post office. The rural post office probably did not stock postage due stamps. The cover then received rural postmark reading KIENXUONG, PROVINCE DE THAI-BINH. The addressee did not wish to pay the 8 cents and the cover was refused as indicated by both the manuscript and handstamped "Refusé" markings. There was no return address, so the letter could not be returned to the sender. I don't know how the cover later appeared in the philatelic marketplace.



# Senegal: A Registered Post Card

## Often Hard to Find Commercial Colonial Items

David L. Herendeen (FCPS 2532)

One of the major purposes for the institution of special post card rates by the UPU in the late 1800s was to facilitate cost effective communication between the rapidly growing tourist industry and home. As a result, it is unusual to see registered post cards. Shown in Fig. 1 is a card sent within Dakar, Senegal on 11 February 1924. The message informs a landlord that the sender will be terminating rental of his room at the end of the month. It was undoubtedly sent registered to prove receipt in case of any later legal problems.

A new series of provisional definitives was released from 1922-1927 to accommodate vari-

ous rate changes made in 1924, 1925 and 1926.

The domestic post card rate was 20c and the registration was 35c (rate of 1 April 1920). Thus the required postage was 55c. As you can see, the card is franked with a 60c provisional overprint and is 5c overpaid. The overpayment is more than simple convenience. The last 50c stamps were printed in January 1922. This was the rate for single-weight UPU letters. The 60c on 75c provisional overprint was issued in September 1922. This rate was for single-weight registered letters used domestically or to the French community. If the 50c stamps were unavailable, it would have taken two or

three of these stamps (30c, which may not have been available, + 25c or 25c+25c+5c) to make up the correct rate, and they would not have fit on the post card. It was simpler to overpay. All in all, a very scarce usage.



Figure 1. Post card sent locally in Dakar. Franked 60c for registration and post card rate. Overfranked 5c.



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## Book Review:

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***Syria and Lebanon: Free French Censorship World War II 1941-1945*** by William Charles Robertson", (Wiveliscombe, The Civil Censorship Study Group, 2011). A4, ring bound, viii + 132 pages. Available from Graham Mark, Oast House West, Golden Hill, Wiveliscombe, Somerset TA4 2NT, UK. Costs: £11.00 (CCSG members), £13.00 (non-members) + P&P: UK £1.75, Europe £4.50. worldwide air £7.00. USA and Canadian orders to **Charles LaBlonde**, 15091 Ridgefield Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80921-3554, USA, costs including P&P, US \$20.00 (CCSG members), US \$24.00 (nonmembers).

Bill Robertson is well-known for researching many aspects of middle eastern postal history and for kindly publishing his findings; in such fields as Turkish air mails and postal censorship in the region. He notes that this present volume was inspired by David M Zimmerman's 1980 treatise on 'Free French Censorship in the Levant' and Bill's first book on this subject: 'Free French Censorship in Syria' (1989).

He describes the historical background and the launch on 8 June 1941 of 'Operation Exporter', designed to wrest control of Lebanon and Syria from the Vichy regime. The censorship network was set up with advice from the British Chief Censor, Palestine: while the Free French forces were given operational responsibility with Aleppo, Beirut and Damascus as the

censorship centers. British liaison officers were associated with the Aleppo and Beirut centers. He gives a useful account of the sources of mail and their destinations when this became an Allied-controlled area. All forms of mail transport are included, by land, by sea and by air.

Robertson takes each of the three centers in turn and looks at the various operational phases from the late summer of 1941 to the late summer of 1945. Full documentation is given of the comprehensive 'audit trail' system used by the censors with the attendant 'Cross of Lorraine' handstamps and the coded manuscript dating system, otherwise referred to as the 'Censor Signature'. The bewildering array of FFL re-sealing labels is also discussed.

The range of Appendices covers a variety of extracts from the UK National Archives, and from the French Military Archives, a nine page index of FFL censor marks and a Bibliography.

The whole volume gives evidence of a painstaking and detailed study, conducted with academic thoroughness. Bill Robertson is to be congratulated on this valuable addition to the literature. It should be in the library of all interested in WWII postal history.

Richard Beith

*This book review was communicated to the editor by FCPS member **Charles LaBlonde**.*



**GARFIELD-PERRY 2012**  
**Is less than nine months away!**  
**Have you started planning?**

# From the Penal Colony

James Polk (FCPS 2791)

The unhappy 1917 postcard shown in Fig. 1 offers a view of phosphate “exploitation” on Makatea, an island in French Oceania northeast of Tahiti that is part of the Tuomotu archipelago. Sent by a German prisoner interned there for two and a half years, it was posted from the prison fortress on Île Sainte-Marguerite in the Mediterranean, just south of Cannes. The writer, Herr Rohling, addresses *mein lieber Willy* in Muenster, Germany, with clear, cultivated handwriting, using the *Franchise Postale* for civilian political prisoners (*Internes Civils*).

Herr Rohling tells his friend that after his long years in Tahiti, he was brought to the south of France after a voyage of 86 days. Unfortunately all his luggage got lost or was simply not sent along to New Zealand, one of the stops along the way. Now he’s back in Europe with only a few tropical items of clothing. He’s freezing. He’s on the Riviera, yes, but in prison, and finds the south of France *ungemütlich kalt* — unpleasantly cold.

He’d be very happy to hear any news about Willy and offers best wishes to all the family and his acquaintances, Alas, the card is returned, from Muenster (West). Willy’s whereabouts are *Unbekannt* — unknown — to the German post office. The big French frying-pan violet postmark, *Commissariat Speciale, Cannes*, dominates many other hen-scratchings and faded markings in various colours in German and French, saying *nicht*, and *retour* and addressee not known, and forget it.



Figure 1. The Phosphate Mines on Makatea.

The card is a witness to an unhappy scrap of WWI history, most of it largely forgotten now: enemy civilians condemned to prisons, with missing connections and displacement for everyone at the ragged end of the Great War, which would drag on to 11 November 1918, after destroying an estimated 10 to 16 million lives for reasons and purposes still obscure.



Figure 2. Message Side of Post Card.



The prisons are abandoned now. Makatea, never a tropical paradise, was a phosphate giant in its day, an economic engine for French Oceania, with an estimated 11 to 16 million tons of phosphate gouged out of its sides from 1908 to the 1960s. A one-time population of over 3,000 has waned to some 60 souls; the towns are now in disrepair, the mines abandoned.

Our writer was incarcerated in the Fort Royal prison on the Île Sainte-Marguerite, famous for its role in Dumas' *The Man in the Iron Mask*. It is no longer operational as a prison, but it is a tourist attraction, replete with youth hostel and snack bar. One can take a ferry (a half-mile trip) from Cannes for a visit.

In the Dumas novel, the mysterious prisoner is the twin of Louis XIV who ultimately escapes to save France. Of Herr Rohling, after his odyssey from the South Seas to the South of France, there is no further record.




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## Membership Notices

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### NEW MEMBER

- 3376 Mitton, Denis R., Gig Harbor, WA
- 3377 Clark, Edric, Park Rapids, MN
- 3378 Wunderlich, Howard, Ronkonkoma, NY
- 3379 Pennacchiotti, Stéphane, Chenimenil, France

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## Show Reports

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### Garfield-Perry 2011

Cleveland, OH, March 2011

Gold medal to **J.-J. Tillard** for his "Les Entiers Postaux Aux Types 'Alphée Dubois' et 'Groupe' à St.-Pierre et Miquelon." Single frame exhibits include Gold to **J.-J.** for "Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, Le Renard émission de 1952," and Gold and the single-frame Grand to **Paul Larsen** for his Leeward Island revenues.

### Philadelphia National 2011

Oaks, PA, April 2011

Gold medal to **J.-J. Tillard** for his "Les Entiers Postaux Aux Types 'Alphée Dubois' et 'Groupe' à St.-Pierre et Miquelon," also both a Gold and Vermeil to **Steve Washburne**. J.-J. also had two single frame Golds for "Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, Le Renard émission de 1952" and "Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, Le 20F 'Montagne et Arbres' de 1947."

### TEXPEX 2011

Dallas, TX, April 2011

Gold medal to **Ralph DeBoard** for his "The Postal History of Tahiti Through the First Pictorial Issue" and a Gold to **Eliot Landau**.

### Philatelic Show 2011

Boxborough, MA, April 2011

Vermeil medal to **Steve Washburne**.

### Plymouth Show 2011

Plymouth, MI, April 2011

Vermeil medals to **Paul Larsen** for his "French Sudan and Niger" and to **Al Kugel**. Silver to **Roger Quinby**. **Al Kugel** also received a Vermeil for a single-frame exhibit.

### ROPEX 2011

Rochester, NY, May 2011

Gold medal and Grand to **Eliot Landau** for his "Classic France: Postal History of the Ceres and Napoleon Issues of 1849-1875." He also received the APS pre-1900 award and the Postal History Society award. Also Gold to **Roger Quinby**.

## President's Letter

After a short break the show season is warming up again in the Midwest. (Don't get me started on whether or not Ohio is in the Midwest. As a native Minnesotan, we hardly accept Indiana as Midwest.) I will let you look at a schedule to find those that interest you, but I must plug the **APS Stampshow**, which will be in Columbus, OH in August. We will have a table there that will likely not be staffed throughout the show, but it will be a spot to rest between meetings, shopping and exhibit viewing. With luck you will find another member or two there to chat. Or you can sit behind the table and solicit new members!

Last time I mentioned **Dave Herendeen's** exhibit, *The Evolution of Postage Due Stamps in the French Community*, as a Champion of Champions contender. I apologize to four other members who also have exhibits in the C-of-C. They are **Eliot Landau** showing *Classic France: Postal History of the Ceres and Napoleon Issues*, **Al Kugel's** Greek exhibit, **Paul Larsen's** Caroline Islands, and **Jamie Gough's** UPU study round out the FCPS group. That's pretty impressive for our society to have five entrants.

Our FCPS show schedule is firming up for the next few years, too. It has taken a while to reach all interested parties, but here is the list:

- ♦ Garfield-Perry March Party in 2012
- ♦ SANDICAL in January 2014
- ♦ TEXPEX in April 2015 (not yet confirmed)
- ♦ Milwaukee in Fall 2016.

Our plan remains that we will have a table at the May-June 2016 international show in New York City if the cost is reasonable.

We do need volunteers to help Dave with our meetings, since he continues to increase his philatelic involvement in a wider arena than just the FCPS. Please contact him and let him know of your interest. Dave has now led the charge to put on two fantastic meetings so he has a pretty good plan ready. He can delegate relatively small bits so that no one has to take

on a monumental organizational task.

Let me again plug the **Vaurie Fund**, which is how we fund FCPS publications. Our efforts to digitize our journal and upgrade our website have used a substantial portion of the fund, so your contributions are most welcome. Because we are not an organization with endless resources, every dollar helps.

Most of you should have received an e-mail announcement from me that connected you to a significant American auction of French Colonies material. Dave has separately covered that in our journal. I also included Roumet and Lugdunum sales in that e-mail, and I hope that you all found something of interest. If you were not familiar with the French auctioneers, you should now have electronic links to two of them with regular sales of excellent postal history and stamps. I expect they have added you to their mailing lists if you participated in either sale. My Algerian postal history has benefited greatly from both of them, as well as a few others in France and elsewhere.

As a side note, if our membership list didn't include your e-mail address or it had an out of date address, you didn't receive the notice. I encourage you to pass along current information to Joel Bromberg at:

[jbromberg@inta.org](mailto:jbromberg@inta.org)

If we ever do another announcement like the auction alert, you will then be on our list. I sent the alert out to about twenty people at a time to improve my chances of getting past spam filters. I hope it worked!

About a year ago I found a suggestion to advertise our hobby that I have now adopted. I cut out stamp pictures from *Linn's Stamp News* and paste them on No. 10 envelopes. I limit the cutouts to oversize, bright pictures. I add an imperative **COLLECT STAMPS!!** by hand and voila, an ad for philately! Do you have any other simple ideas to promote our fantastic hobby?

I hope you enjoy your summer and find time to get to a show, mount an exhibit, and add something interesting to your collection. Some morning when you are feeling especially creative why not write an article for the FCP?



## *Is Participation for You?*

*David L. Herendeen, Editor*

In speaking with **Rolfe Wyer** (see article on page 83), I asked him if he considered himself a *closet collector* (i.e. one who is not active in organized philately.) He agreed that he was. This got me thinking about how each of us participates in philately in different ways. I didn't attend my first stamp show until 1976! In general, I was not particularly impressed. It was thus that I too remained a *closet collector* for 15 years. It was not until 1988 that I decided to try my hand at exhibiting. Although I received a very modest award, I then and there swore that I could do this. I went back and licked my wounds for a couple of years.

After trying the *exhibiting thing* again in 1990, I was thoroughly bitten. It was now a matter of my sacred honor to get a Gold medal. I would get 11 consecutive Vermeils before getting my first Gold. In 1993, I tried my first international in Poland. I received a Large Vermeil in my first attempt with five frames. I was off and running again, now internationally as well as nationally. As one of the small number of American exhibitors (around 1,100 according to the AAPE) I was starting to be noticed by the *movers and shakers* of organized philately. Soon I was serving as a director and officer of a number of organizations. It was then that I learned that to get such positions was simple—just volunteer! Thanks to good friend Peter McCann, I became a philatelic judge in 1996. This seemed a natural thing to do to repay the hobby that I loved. I have thoroughly enjoyed judging and helping other collectors improve their collecting experience.

And then, there was research and writing. My first article appeared in the *Philatelic Exhibitor* in 1993. My first longer research piece appeared in the *Collectors Club Philatelist* in 1996. As a writer and editor in *real life*, I enjoyed both the research and the writing of these articles. So much so, in fact, that I accepted my first post as the editor of the British *Caribbean Philatelic Journal* in 1998. Since then, I have also edited our journal for the best part of

five years. These stints seem to be lifetime appointments, but that is a story for another time.

As you can see, I was now an entrenched member of organized philately. Attaining this status means not only that you are a joiner, but that you are appearing around the country exhibiting, judging, meeting and just plain schmoozing with your many friends. It is, indeed, one big club. The social rewards for such camaraderie are great and, I feel, the philatelic experience is greatly enriched by having peers with whom to discuss new ideas. I wouldn't trade this for anything. It is also amazing that you can gain insight into your collecting specialty talking with others who know nothing about your area.

The FCPS seems to have about 40 members that contribute articles to the FCP, attend our wonderful expositions, or otherwise become known to us. I know these members all value these experiences greatly. This group represents about 12% of the total membership, which is about the same percentage of active members in any group, philatelic or not.

That said, I hope that perhaps some of the other 88% of our members might consider participating with to enrich their philatelic experiences. You will quickly learn that the majority of us a very friendly and giving people with a strong devotion to our hobby. If you live within driving distance of Columbus, OH, perhaps you will consider visiting our meeting at the Garfield-Perry show in March 2012. We had a number of *first-timers* in Chicago and they all enjoyed the experience.

### *About Nine Months Now!*

Our next show at Garfield Perry (Cleveland, OH) will take place in less than nine months—March 2012. Are you thinking about your exhibit and planning to make a presentation to entertain and enlighten your fellow members. Again, I am always at the ready to help you in any way I can.

Please don't hesitate to contact me, Ken Nilsestuen, Ed Grabowski or any of our other senior members. We are always willing to listen and proffer our advice.

# Gleanings From the Group Type:

## Some Observations on Karikal, French India

Ed Grabowski (FCPS 1469)

Among the five French establishments in India, Karikal stands alone because it had a unique and quite spectacular boxed **INDE** cancel. Languois and Bourselet note its temporary use from 1893. Struck on Group Type stamps and covers, this cancel has always been a favorite of both dealers and collectors. An example of this cancel, seen in Fig. 1, is used on a registered letter posted from Karikal to Rennes, France on 7 July 1896 at the 50c rate (25c postage and 25c registration) via the *Modane A Paris* rail line. Dealers always demand a premium for covers with this cancellation, and collectors are willing to pay it. My most recent cover showing this cancelation is



Figure 1. Cover properly posted from the French Office at Karikal in 1896 at the 50c registered rate to France showing the boxed **INDE** cancel.

from 1908, so its use seems more than temporary. In fact, I have found these covers to be reasonably readily available, and have often wondered if the premium they command is misplaced. But such is not the issue of this note.

More than ten years ago I noted the somewhat ratty cover shown in Figs. 2 and 3 in the

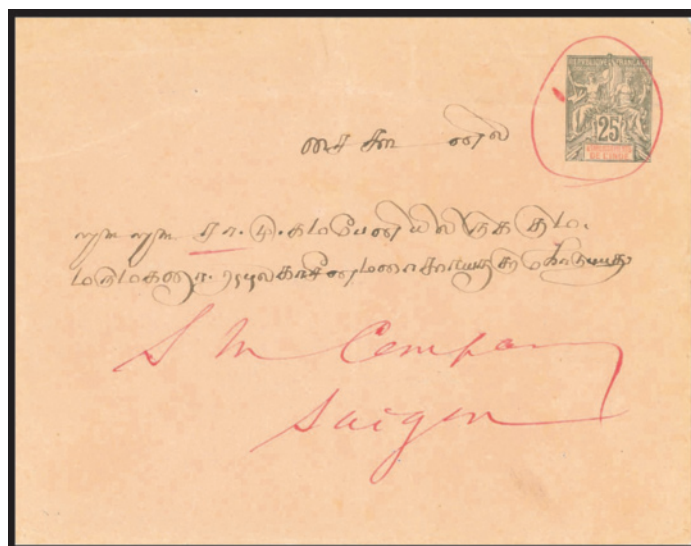


Figure 2. French Indian 25c postal stationery envelope showing no French or British postal markings on the front.



Figure 3. Reverse of the envelope in Figure 2 showing two British post office datestamps and a Saigon arrival from late 1896.

French Colonies box of the Triple S firm of Ohio. It is a 25c large-format French India Group Type envelope addressed in one of the obscure Indian languages. The post office clerk handling the letter has provided the partial address translation: **SM Company, Saigon**, and added a curious circle and dot in the area of the stamp. The reverse shows two transit datestamps from the British Indian Offices at **KARIKAL, 21SE 96** and **NEGAPATAM, 26SE 96**; and a French Colonial arrival at Saigon on October 7, 1896. Negapatam is a small office



somewhat south of Karikal. I passed on this cover when I first saw it and continued to do so for the next ten years. This was primarily due to its condition and my uncertainty as to how it traveled through the posts, although it clearly did. At the WESTPEX show this year the cover was still in the Triple S box and in need of a home. For some reason, I now decided that there might be something of interest here, and I finally purchased it.

The language on the front of the envelope in Fig. 2 is Tamil, the local language in the Karikal area of India. I was able to get the following translation through Abad Rizvi a fellow member of the British Empire Study Group in NYC: **To be given to the Son-in-law ABUL QASIM MARAIKAR working in S.M. Company in Saigon.** There is nothing unusual here, just an address provided in a somewhat remote language which was partially translated by a local postal clerk to facilitate the letter's transit through the international mails. But why the curious pen markings in the vicinity of the stamp and the lack of any postal markings on the front of the envelope? Although I could take a couple of guesses on the remaining questions on this letter, I thought it better to consult knowledgeable specialists.

Henk Slabbink, of the AEP in Europe, put me in touch with Ron Wood of the States, who provided all of the relevant information. He notes that the British and French post offices in Karikal agreed to carry each others **correctly** franked letters without imposition of any postage due charges. So the French stationery envelope shown in Fig. 2 was incorrectly posted in the British Office at Karikal. Because it was properly franked at the 25c rate, it was placed into the British system, and successfully arrived in Saigon on a British ship.

Possibly it was incorrectly mailed by someone not familiar with the local postal systems. The red circle around the stamp was to note that it was a French area stamp and not to be cancelled by the British. The two transits on the reverse show that it was handled by the British system. The arrival in Saigon on October 7<sup>th</sup> clearly indicates that there was no problem in the transit and delivery of the item at its destination. The lack of proper French processing at the letter's introduction to the posts was not an issue. But, as they say, the story does not end here.

I recently came across an item from the same correspondence, but it properly traveled through the French system (Fig. 4). It was posted at the French office in Karikal on October 2, 1897, almost one year later that that in Figure 2. It shows the French boxed **INDE** Karikal cancel, and traveled to Saigon via Pondichery and French Packet Line N. Whatever the issues were in the posting of the cover in Figure 2 at the British office, they were resolved within the year.



Figure 4. Envelope from the same correspondence in 1897 showing proper French markings.

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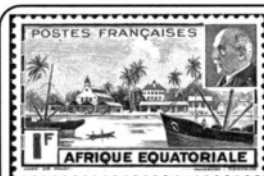
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