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FRENCH MARITIME MAIL : 1851 - 1940

A display to the Royal Philatelic Society, London
on 15th April, 1982.

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INTRODUCTION

The attached notes are intended to be supplementary to the 'write-up.' It is hoped that they will be found helpful in conjunction with what is said on the pages of the display.

References are made in the left-hand margin to the Frames in which the subjects commented on are to be found. The page on which an item is mounted is indicated by a reference such as 4 (iv), i.e. the fourth page in Frame 4.

Anyone who studies this subject must at once acknowledge indebtedness to the late Monsieur Raymond Salles of the Academie de Philatelie for his remarkable textbook "La Poste Maritime Francaise." Without its seven volumes, one would make many mistakes of interpretation. In addition, amiable correspondence with Monsieur Salles over a number of years helped me to elucidate many problems.

T. V. Roberts
15 April 1982.

Note: it is regretted that it has not been found possible to insert the French accents.

The display attempts to illustrate the development of French maritime postal services throughout the period 1851 to 1940.

Prior to 1851, the French Government had promoted a number of largely experimental services to various parts of the world, the most serious of which, conducted as a State enterprise, was in the Mediterranean between 1837 and 1851. But the State eventually concluded that the desired results were not being achieved and decided to hand over to private shipping companies which were to be given subsidies on condition that they made specified regular sailings to support the development of commerce and to provide an efficient postal service.

These were the beginnings of two famous shipping companies, the Messageries Maritimes and the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique. The latter served New York, Central America and the West Indies. The most important activities of the former were in the Mediterranean, to South America and to the Far East. They also served the Indian Ocean and Australasia.

It was a requirement of the contracts between the shipping companies and the State that a postal agent should be carried on board each paquebot. These agents, who were paid by the State, were to be given first class accommodation on board and were to have considerable powers to require the Captain to give priority to the needs of the mail.

In the early days most of the paquebot mail was posted in ship-side boxes, which were in effect boxes for the last minute mail of the business community at each port of call. Not many letters were actually written and posted on board. It was the job of the agent to mark each letter with his datestamp and to ensure that the correct postage due from the addressee was marked on it or that the correct adhesives had been affixed. In the early days in the Mediterranean, in particular, the agents dealt with unpaid mail (which was the vast majority) most meticulously; marking each letter with the number of 'ports' due and with the place of origin (e.g. 'France' or 'Levant') since this determined the rate of postage; and even sometimes endorsing the precise weight of the letter, in order to confirm the amount of postage.

e.g. 1 (v)
and (vi)

e.g. 9 (xi)

Cachets and datestamps

The agents were provided with various datestamps and cachets with which to mark the letters passing through their hands. It is from these markings that one can learn the story of each letter; which ship carried it, by what route did it go, what were the postal rates, and so forth. Therefore, the write-up throughout the collection makes frequent reference to the date-stamps.

These markings were first described in detail, and were divided into types for those issued from 1866 onwards, in "Catalogue des Marques et Obliterations de la Poste Maritime Francaise" by Bourselet, Marechal, Francois et Gilbert (published by Editions du Graouli in 1936); referred to from now on as 'Graouli.' In the 1960's these listings were much expanded in "La Poste Maritime Francaise" by Raymond Salles. In this outstanding work, which is the definitive textbook on the subject, Monsieur Salles adopts the Graouli classification of types.

1 (i)
to (iv)

Since these types are mentioned frequently in the write-up of this collection, it seems appropriate to put at the beginning of the display a few pages on which the various types are illustrated, together with some port arrival markings which are so commonly seen on Mediterranean mail that, in order to avoid repetition, they are often not mentioned in the write-up.

THE MEDITERRANEAN I

1851 - 1866

The first main area of activity of the future Messageries Maritimes was in the Mediterranean. In 1851 the State entered into an agreement with the Messageries Nationales (which became the Messageries Imperiales in 1853) to take over thirteen of their ships, together with three from the Rostand Company, and to assume responsibility for services to the Levant (Constantinople), Syria, Egypt and Italy, for each of which a 'Ligne' was designated ('Ligne du Levant' etc.).

Considerable demands were soon put upon the Ligne du Levant by the requirements of the Crimean War, as a result of which the Messageries' fleet was much increased. Amongst other purchases, they bought thirteen ships from Britain. And just after the war, in 1857, there was a fresh agreement between them and the Government, as a result of which important changes were made to improve the main services and to create a group of branch lines based on Constantinople. These small lines served the Black Sea ports of Turkey, Roumania and Bulgaria: and also such important trading ports as Salonica and Smyrna, connecting them with the Ligne du Levant.

The Mediterranean 1851 - 1866 contd.

We have then the following principal 'lignes' :

- 1 (v) (a) Ligne du Levant
to
- 8 (vii) Its original route, which was also used as a secondary route during the Crimean War, was from Marseille to Constantinople via Malta, Syra (connection to Piraeus) Smyrna and Les Dardanelles. But for most of its life, until November 1866, the intermediate ports were Messina, Piraeus and Les Dardanelles.
- 8 (viii) (b) Ligne de Syrie
to
- 9 (x) This line served the coast of Syria from Smyrna to Alexandria. It had a complicated life, the ships which served it being supplied by various methods, the chief of which was one or other variation of a circular route round the Mediterranean. For instance, a ship of the Ligne du Levant might sail to Constantinople, then down to Alexandria and thence home to Marseille; and the reverse. Alternatively, the northern part of the route was direct to Smyrna rather than to Constantinople, and, during the campaign in Syria in 1860 - 61, direct to Beyrouth.
- 9 (xi) (c) Ligne d'Egypte
to
- 10 (viii) As one would expect, the basic route of this line was from Marseille to Alexandria; via Malta until October 1862, and thereafter via Messina. The line took part, from time to time, in the service to Syria; most importantly by forming one section of the circular route just mentioned.
- When the French paquebot service to the Far East opened in 1862, the Ligne d'Egypte gradually became specially concerned with ensuring the service between Marseille and Alexandria to connect, by 'overland' across the isthmus, with the monthly sailings from Suez. This importance was recognised by providing the line with three new steamers of 1,000 tons each, the Peluse, Said and Moeris.
- 10 (ix) (d) Ligne d'Italie
to
- 12 (iv) The route of the Ligne d'Italie was from Marseille to Malta via Genoa, Livorno, Civitavecchia, Naples and Messina. This route was known as the 'ligne indirecte,' distinguishing it from the 'ligne directe' which went straight from Marseille to Civitavecchia and Naples, in order to provide quick communication with the French expeditionary force in Rome. This latter line did not have postal agents on board, so it is only mail carried by the ligne indirecte that received paquebot markings.

The Mediterranean 1851 - 1866 contd.12 (v) The branch lines

to

13 (xi)

Prior to 1857, a small paquebot was always based on Piraeus ('Station du Pyree') in order to maintain a connection with the ships of the Ligne du Levant that called at Syra. Through a contract with the Greek Government, this ship also connected with Salonica, bringing mail from there to Piraeus and on to Syra.

During the same period a number of ships were based on Constantinople ('Station de Constantinople'). They chiefly provided a service across the Black Sea for the Army of the Crimea and, for a short time, some of them sailed on the Ligne de Syrie. Few, if any, of those in the Black Sea had postal agents.

The Convention of 1857 between the State and the Messageries Imperiales not only made important changes on the principal lines, but also established a series of small lines based on the Station de Constantinople. These were :

- (i) Ligne du Danube: Constantinople to Galatz.
- (ii) Ligne de Trebizonde: Constantinople to Trebizonde, along the south coast of the Black Sea.
- (iii) Ligne de Thessalie: Constantinople to Piraeus via Salonica; it terminated at Salonica from 1861 onwards.
- (iv) Ligne d'Anatolie: Constantinople to Smyrna, dovetailing into the -
- (v) Ligne de L'Archipel: Smyrna to Syra and Piraeus.

More often than not, the ships running on these branch lines did not have postal agents on board. Accordingly, mail from these lines bearing the datestamps of paquebots is quite uncommon.

The paquebots and their cachets

The Messageries Nationales started in 1851 with a fleet of 16 ships. During the Crimean War this was increased to about 45. From about 1860 there was a replacement programme in which there was a tendency towards ships of around 1,000 tons. Finally, by the end of 1866 when the datestamps bearing ships' names were withdrawn, the fleet of the Messageries Imperiales consisted of 34 ships.

During the whole period 1851 - 1866, 72 different datestamps are known, eight of them being in pairs. This was because the datestamps first issued to four of the ships had the name misspelt (e.g. the Cheliff's first cachet had her name spelt Sheliff). Sixty-nine different datestamps are shown in the display, those missing being the Eridan, the Taurus and the correct spelling of the Mitidjah.

The Mediterranean 1851 - 1866 contd.
The paquebots and their cachets contd.

There are three paquebots which had no datestamps in the Mediterranean, but from which manuscript endorsements of their names are known. Two of these, the Henry IV and the Saintonge, are shown.

Some special features of the services in the Mediterranean during the 'named datestamp' period : 1851 - 66

- e.g. (a) The use of a datestamp on board a ship of a different name.
 2 (ii)
 2 (viii) One would have thought that if it was necessary in emergency for
 8 (v) a ship to use another's datestamp, the 'wrong' one would have
 to been corrected in manuscript or by some other means. Not so. A
 8 (vii) number of instances are known of one ship using the datestamp
 11 (i) belonging to another and without any sign that the name in the
 12 (xi) datestamp was wrong.
 etc.

The reasons for these misuses varied. Several were because a new ship's datestamp was not yet ready, so she was lent the instrument from another ship either temporarily not needing it, or even withdrawn from service. Some other reasons are indicated in the write-up of covers concerned.

- (b) The cancellation of adhesives by ships' datestamps.

It was the rule throughout France that datestamps were not to be used to cancel adhesives on letters. The adhesives were to be cancelled with the cachets provided: dotted diamonds with numbers in the centre, which identified the post office concerned.

In 1851 the paquebots were not provided with obliterating instruments because, presumably, it was assumed that people would not use adhesives to frank their mail. The postal rates to and from the Levant were the same whether prepaid or not. So there was no advantage in stamping one's letters; and there was always the possibility of a letter going astray. It was customary in the business community to send letters unpaid. The use of adhesives on paquebot mail prior to 1857 is rare.

In 1857 the rates of postage were halved if prepaid so that there was an immediate incentive to use adhesives. It was decided to provide the paquebots with cancelling devices of a diamond of dots (8 x 8) with a small anchor in the middle. But these instruments were issued rather slowly, it being March 1858 or so before all ships had one.

- Port
 cancel:
 2 (xi) Meantime the postal agents had to decide what to do about franked
 5 (i) letters which appeared in their post boxes. The correct course
 5 (vii) would have been to apply the datestamp on the cover and to leave
 8 (i) the adhesives to be cancelled on arrival at, say, Marseille or Constantinople. A few did this, but more cancelled the stamps with their datestamp or, in some cases, with their P.D. cachet.

Special features of services in the Mediterranean 1851 - 66 contd.(b) The cancellation of adhesives by ships' datestamps contd.

Ship's Apart from these instances of cancelling by datestamp which
 d'stamp: occurred during 1857 - 58, a number of others are known from later
 2 (xii) years. The common explanation of these is that the agent must
 3 (iv) have left his anchor cancellor behind. No doubt this is correct
 3 (vi) in some instances; but I suspect that the explanation was quite
 (viii) often just the whim of the agent, especially in the years after
 8 (ii) about 1862.
 10 (ii) Whatever the explanation, covers with the adhesives cancelled by
 10 (iv) datestamp are attractive and are much sought after.
 10 (v)
 etc.

(c) "Les obliterations doubles."

P.D.: Another category of attractive and popular covers is described
 1 (ix) neatly by Salles as above. It consists of letters bearing the
 2 (xi) datestamps of two ships. The second datestamp would be applied
 3 (ix) (usually on the reverse, like other transit marks; but sometimes
 etc. on the obverse, which makes a more desirable cover) when a letter
 was transferred from one ship to another.

A moment's thought will make one realise that a lot of mail must have been trans-shipped in the course of its journey. For instance, letters from Salonica for France were transferred to the Ligne du Levant at Syra or Les Dardanelles; and mail for Italy from many Levantine sources joined the Ligne d'Italie at Malta or Messina. It is quite surprising that there are not a great many covers bearing more than one ship's datestamp to be found.

13 (xii) One finds many covers which have obviously been trans-shipped en
 to route, but which bear only the datestamp of the paquebot on which
 15 (x) they started their journey. The reason why, on the other hand, some postal agents applied their datestamps on transit mail coming to them from another ship, is obscure. But when they did, they provided attractive and informative covers.

The two covers bearing the handstamps of three ships are especially interesting.

15 (xi) (d) Accountancy marks.
 (xii)

In connection with Anglo-French postal conventions, these are sometimes seen.

16 (i) - (e) Printed matter.
 (iii)

Very little mail at printed matter rates has survived. I can only show one wrapper, from the Oronte. And the pairs of 4c 'laureated' adhesives cancelled by ship's datestamps in 1864 are interesting.

THE MEDITERRANEAN II1866 - 1872

In 1865 the French postal authorities began trials with a new system of designating the various routes. Instead of date-stamps with ships' names, which gave no indication of the route on which they were sailing, there were to be new instruments indicating the route by a letter of the alphabet. Each route was allotted a letter and the datestamps were numbered in series. The numbers are of little or no use in identifying ships since they were issued to postal agents, who often moved from one ship to another.

The new system was adopted in the Mediterranean in November 1866.

The Ligne du Levant became Ligne U
 The Ligne de Syrie became Ligne X
 The Ligne d'Egypte became Ligne V
 The Ligne d'Italie became Ligne W

20 (i) and the branch lines were lettered Y, Z, AB and AC. Examples of mail from these small lines are all great rarities. I can show only one, a cover from Ligne Y (formerly the Ligne d'Anatolie).

Types of cachets

With the introduction of the alphabetically lettered 'lignes' three new categories of datestamp were introduced :

(i) Cachets de ligne (of Graouli Type A.)

These indicated only the identity of the line concerned, e.g. Ligne U. They were for general use where no other category was appropriate.

(ii) Cachets de provenance or d'escale (of Graouli Type B.)

These octagonal datestamps indicated at the top of the datestamp the origin of the letter in question, most frequently by the name of the port (e.g. Smyrne) from which it came, but sometimes more generally by the name of a country (e.g. Grece); together with the designation of the line and number of the datestamp at the bottom.

(iii) Correspondances d'Armees (of Graouli Type A.)

Troops and naval personnel were entitled to the reduced postage rate of the 'tarif metropolitain' (20c at that time). This was confirmed on a letter by using a datestamp worded at the top 'COR. D. ARM' (or something similar) with the ligne designation and number at the bottom.

The Mediterranean 1866 - 1872 contd.

16 (iv) Ligne U
to

18 (iii) The first sailing on Ligne U was on 3rd November 1866 from Marseille on the route of the former Ligne du Levant. This was maintained until November 1871, when a second route, which was used alternately with the original one, was introduced. This substituted Syra and Smyrna for Piraeus as ports of call.

Postal agents were withdrawn from the paquebots at the end of 1872.

18 (iv) Ligne X
to

18 (xii) Ligne X followed the route of the former Ligne de Syrie as established in 1864; i.e. Marseille to Alexandria via Palermo, Messina, Syra, Smyrna and the ports of the Syrian coast. There were some minor variations around the first six months of 1871, but otherwise the same route was used until the end of 1872, when the postal agents were withdrawn.

19 (i) Ligne V
to

(iv) Ligne V took over the route of the Ligne d'Egypte. It was particularly concerned with making connection with the services to the Far East and to Reunion and Mauritius. Of its three sailings per month from Marseille and Alexandria, that of the 19th from Marseille and that of the 29th from Alexandria carried the mail to or from Indo-China; and those of the 9th from each port carried the mail to or from Reunion and Mauritius.

With the impending opening of the Suez Canal, the arrangements for mail which was going beyond Suez were changed during 1869. A second line was introduced temporarily (Ligne M : see below) because the number of sailings per annum on the Ligne d'Indochine was increased; and the service to Reunion and Mauritius became a branch of that line, sailing from Aden.

The first departure from Marseille directly for the Far East through the Suez Canal was made on 17 April 1870. Thereafter, Ligne V became of less importance and it finally ceased in May 1871.

19 (v) Ligne M
to

(vii) This temporary line made sixteen voyages between Marseille and Alexandria from 23 January 1869 to 19 March 1870.

Monsieur Salles records that the Hoogly made the first departure from Marseille for the Far East (on Ligne N) through the Suez Canal on 17 April 1870. The Ligne M cover dated that day, which is displayed, is therefore rather mysterious.

The Mediterranean 1866 - 1872 contd.19 (viii) Ligne W

to

19 (xii) From October 1866 the route of this line was from Marseille to Messina via Livorno, Civitavecchia and Naples. At the time of the second French expedition to Rome in October 1867, the route was shortened to Civitavecchia and Naples and about a year later, it was reduced still further, so that the line ran only between Marseille and Civitavecchia.

Postal agents were withdrawn at the end of June 1870. Thereafter, until the line closed in early October (French troops having been withdrawn from the Papal States in September - October 1870, French stamps on letters posted in the mobile box at Marseille were cancelled on arrival by the 'grill' handstamp of Civitavecchia.

THE MEDITERRANEAN IIIAFTER 1872

All postal agents on board paquebots in the Mediterranean having been withdrawn at the end of 1872, or earlier, no more ship's datestamps appear after that. Services were continued by the Messageries, the Cie. Fraissinet and others. Mail from them can be identified by various arrival marks, but it does not bear markings applied on board and therefore falls outside the scope of this display.

SOUTH AMERICA I1860 - 1866

- 20 (ii) The original proposition mooted in 1857, for a service to
to South America was for alternate sailings from Bordeaux and
21 (ii) Marseille. But it was decided to divert to the Far East the
ships intended for the latter route and a contract was made with
the Messageries Imperiales for a service from Bordeaux to Rio de
Janeiro via Lisbon, St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands, Pernambuco
and Bahia. This was known as the Ligne du Bresil. Monthly
departures from Bordeaux began in May 1860.

The service was extended to Montevideo and Buenos Ayres by
the Ligne Annexe de la Plata in October 1860. Mail for these
River Plate cities had to be trans-shipped at Rio.

Ships' datestamps and cachets

Apart from datestamps with their names, similar to those
in use in the Mediterranean, the South American paquebots were
provided with a new kind of datestamp which, in addition to the
name of the ship, bore an indication of the origin of the mail.
These 'cachets de provenance ou d'escale' were the fore-runners
of a type (Type B Graouli) which came into widespread use after
1866. They were octagonal in shape with the origin of the mail
(e.g. BRESIL, MONTEVIDEO, COL. FR. etc.) at the top and the name
of the ship at the bottom.

Each postal official on board was provided with handstamps
"PD" and "PP"; postage due handstamps for 8 and 16 decimes; two
kinds of cachet de ligne - a circular one with the name of the
ship and an octagonal one with "POSTES FRANCAISES" at the top
and the name of the ship at the bottom. (Owing to paucity of
examples, it has so far been impossible to determine what was
the intended difference in use of these two instruments); and
'cachets de provenance' as appropriate, including one for forces'
mail (CORRESP. D'ARMEES).

French Consular Agencies

- 21 (iii) A feature of letters carried by the South American paquebots
to is that one often finds on these the cachets of French Consular
22 (ii) Agencies which were established at the ports-of-call in Brazil,
Uruguay and the Argentine. The cachets were octagonal with either
the name of the country (e.g. "URUGUAY") or that of the port
(e.g. "MONTEVIDEO") at the top and a fleuron at the bottom.

The agencies were to act as collecting offices for mail
which was to be handed to the paquebots. Those in Brazil (at
Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Pernambuco, with datestamps worded
'BRESIL 1', 2 and 3, functioned for only just over three months.
Their datestamps are consequently seldom seen. A Franco-
Brazilian postal convention came into force on 1 October 1860.

SOUTH AMERICA 1860 - 1866 contd.
French Consular Agencies contd.

Under it, mail from Brazil for the French paquebots was to be handed direct to the agents on board. Such mail is franked with Brazilian adhesives. The Agencies at Montevideo and Buenos Ayres were active from about November 1860 until 1 May 1875. Mail passing through these Agencies was franked with French adhesives.

The supplementary Mail from Buenos Ayres

- 21 (xi) Because of a change in the date of departure of the French paquebots from Buenos Ayres from the 14th to the 12th of each month, which made it difficult for merchants to reply quickly to letters from Europe arriving by the British Packets on 11/12th of each month, the French consul was asked to organise a supplementary mail.

SOUTH AMERICA II

1866 - 1897

- Ligne J: On the South American routes the changeover from date-stamps with the names of the ships to the system of lettered
 22 (vi) 'lignes' with 'cachets de ligne' and 'de provenance' took place
 to in March 1866. The Ligne du Bresil became Ligne J and the Ligne
 25 (xii) Annexe de la Plata became Ligne K.
- Ligne K: Both these lines were supplied with cachets de ligne and
 22 (iii) cachets de provenance, some of Type A Graouli and some of Type B.
 to (v) The cachets of the Consular Agencies remained in use simultaneously.

In October 1869 Ligne J was extended to Buenos Ayres. Ligne K ceased to exist until it was revived in 1898. The route of Ligne J now became Bordeaux, Lisbon, Dakar, Pernambuco, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Buenos Ayres.

At the end of October 1872 Ligne J was split into two. The main route, known as the 'Ligne Rapide,' was as before but omitting Pernambuco and Bahia. Sailings from Bordeaux were on the 5th of each month. This was the route which attracted the Government subsidy and had postal agents on board. But the Messageries Maritimes ran a second service, with departures from Bordeaux on the 20th, which was not subsidised and on which the mails were entrusted to the captains of the ships. Nevertheless this route, as well as the 'ligne rapide' was supplied with appropriate datestamps.

South America 1866 - 1897 contd.Abandonment of the anchor cancellors

A landmark in this period was the withdrawal of the anchor cancelling instruments on 1 April 1876. Thereafter, cancellation of adhesives was by datestamps. This was in conformity with the withdrawal of numerical cancellors in France.

Combination covers

Covers with combinations of Uruguayan or Argentinian adhesives with those of France are fairly frequently seen. These stem from the realisation by these two countries (respectively in September 1872 and in June 1873) that their post offices were losing revenue through the handing of letters for overseas directly to the consuls of France and Great Britain for transmission to the mail steamers of those countries, paying only French or British postage. Both Uruguay and the Argentine introduced laws requiring mail for overseas to be posted in the local post offices, franked with the internal postage. Letters for the French mail were then delivered to the French mailboats, on which the postal agent either cancelled such French stamps as had been affixed by the sender for the foreign transit or, if no French stamps were affixed, marked them appropriately for postage due. Salles aptly describes these two types of franking as "affranchissements mixtes ou semi-mixtes."

There were three phases to this period, namely, before application of the law requiring internal postage; during the currency of the law; and after the Argentine and Uruguay joined the Universal Postal Union.

During the first phase (Uruguay December 1869 to August 1872): Argentine December 1869 to June 1873) it was legal to post letters directly with the French consul or on board the paquebots. Franking and postal markings were all French (unless, perchance, the letter came from the interior of the country, when internal postage would be necessary).

During the second phase (Uruguay October 1872 to 30 June 1880 : Argentine July 1873 to 31 March 1878) it was necessary for mail to pass through the domestic post office, paying internal postage, and in addition to be franked with French adhesives or to pay postage due to the French.

During this phase, the Argentine allowed certain 'librairies' ('carterias') in Buenos Ayres to sell French (and British) adhesives and to act as agents of the Argentinian post office for transmission of letters to the French ships. The Argentine stamps posted through these 'carterias' are cancelled with large letters of the alphabet in a diamond-shaped frame.

Finally, the third phase begins when the Argentine joined the U.P.U. on 1 April 1878 and when Uruguay did likewise on 1 July 1880. After these dates letters were, of course, franked at U.P.U. rates. French paquebot datestamps are still seen as transit marks.

South America 1866 - 1897 contd.'Marques de routage au tampon'

- 23 (ix) One finds a certain number of combination covers written
to between 1874 and 1877 which bear on the obverse handstamps indi-
24 (iv) cating by which ship they were to go. For example, "POR
EQUATEUR," "POR SENEGAL" etc. Many such covers emanate from two
French business houses - F. Duclos and Georges Roux - and have
characteristic thin pen-strokes across the French stamps.

The implication seems to be that these handstamps were probably applied by the carteria to which these particular firms took their mail and were an extra precaution taken by that carteria to ensure that the letters went to the correct ship; and that the pen-strokes were another precaution taken by the carteria against possible theft of the stamps on the way to the ship.

One also finds handstamps directing the mail to ships other than those of the Messageries. For instance "POR POITOU" or "POR SAVOIE." These were vessels belonging to the Societe Generale de Transports Maritimes a vapeur (S.G.T.M.) which, of its own initiative and without any subsidy, began in June 1867 a monthly service between Marseille, Rio de Janeiro and the River Plate. On arrival at Marseille such letters were struck in red with the entry datestamp "PLATA MARSEILLE"; the French adhesives being cancelled '2240' until 1876 and thereafter with the "MARSEILLE (12)" datestamp.

All French entry marks were withdrawn as from 1 February 1880, from which date the activities of S.G.T.M. pass out of consideration.

SOUTH AMERICA III1898 - 1921

This was the final period during which there were postal agents on board the South American paquebots. It is marked at first by changes in the route and by the appearance of a new kind of datestamp.

- 26 (i) New datestamps of Graouli Type D (a slightly larger octagon than Type B, and with the lettering in sans-serif capitals instead of in seriffed capitals) were first issued experimentally for Nos. 1 and 2 in 1896 - 97. They were adopted for all numbers in 1898, coinciding with a rearrangement of the route. The wording 'BORDEAUX A BUENOS AYRES 1^o L.J.' was applicable to an outward route which went direct from Dakar to Rio de Janeiro and took in Santos on the way onward to

South America 1898 - 1921 contd.

26 (i)
contd.

Montevideo; with return direct from Montevideo to Rio and then via Bahia and Pernambuco to Dakar. 'BORDEAUX A BUENOS 2^O L.K.' on the other hand, sailed outward by the homeward route of the first line, and homeward by the outward route of 1^O. Thus, there was a reappearance of Ligne K.

These arrangements and the use of this type of datestamp continued until 1921, although in 1912 there was a change of contractors.

After 1921 the paquebots continued, but without postal agents.

THE FAR EAST I1862 - 1866

It was following the campaign in Indo-China in 1860 that the French Government decided, instead of establishing a second line to South America from Marseille, to inaugurate a Far Eastern service from Suez. Three new ships which had been intended for the South American route were diverted to the new line: the Imperatrice, Cambodge and Donnai; to which were added the Alpee, also quite new, from the Mediterranean, and the Tigre, which was built in 1862 - 63.

There was to be a main route, the Ligne d'Indochine, with several branch lines.

26 (ii)
to

Ligne d'Indochine

26 (ix)

The principal line ran from Suez to Hong Kong, calling at Aden, Pointe de Galle, Singapore and Saigon. Sailings were at first monthly on the 27th of the month, the first being by the Imperatrice on 27 October 1862. Until the opening of the Suez Canal to commercial traffic early in 1870, the mails to and from France had to be brought across the isthmus by rail, connecting with paquebots of the Ligne d'Egypte in the Mediterranean.

The Far East 1862 - 1866 contd.The branch lines

Some of the branch lines were extensions of the principal line; others were true branches:-

- 26 (x) (i) Ligne Annexe de Calcutta
to
- 26 (xii) A branch service from Galle to Calcutta via Pondicherry (whence most of the surviving mail from this line originates) and Madras was started in November 1862, connecting with the arrivals at Galle of the mailboats on the principal line.
- (ii) Ligne Annexe de Hong Kong a Shanghai
- 27 (i) This extension of the Ligne d'Indochine opened in February 1863.
- 27 (ii) (iii) Ligne Annexe de Shanghai a Yokohama
to
- 27 (iii) This further extension of the principal line was not opened until September 1865. It therefore had but a short life (of fourteen monthly voyages) during the period when datestamps with ships' names were used.
- (iv) Ligne Annexe de Singapore a Batavia
- This branch line, which had been planned, was not achieved during the period under discussion save by a chartered Dutch ship. No postal cachets are known.
- (v) Service to La Reunion and Mauritius
- A branch line from Aden to Mauritius had been envisaged, but in the end this was not established until 1869. In the meantime, a direct route from Marseille was operated from 1864. This and the branch line are treated under the Indian Ocean heading (q.v.).

THE FAR EAST IINOVEMBER 1866 - DECEMBER 1910

In the Far East, the system of alphabetically lettered lignes was adopted at the end of 1866.

The Ligne d'Indochine became Ligne N in November 1866.
The Ligne Annexe de Hong Kong a Shanghai became Ligne R
in January 1867.
The Ligne Annexe de Shanghai a Yokohama became Ligne S
in January 1867.
The Ligne Annexe de Calcutta became Ligne O in January 1867.

The Far East November 1866 - December 1910 contd.27 (iv) Ligne N

to

32 (xii) The route was Suez to Hong Kong from November 1866
 Marseille to Hong Kong from April 1870
 Marseille to Shanghai from August 1871
 Marseille to Yokohama from August 1887

Until the opening of the Suez Canal to commercial traffic, mail still had to cross the isthmus by rail (accompanied by a French postal official).

The transfer of the eastern terminus to Shanghai in August 1871 absorbed Ligne R (q.v.), and the further extension to Yokohama in August 1887 absorbed Ligne S (q.v.).

Ships' datestamps and cachets

Those used on Ligne N were at first of Graouli Type A for the cachets de ligne and of Graouli Type B for the cachets de provenance. The withdrawal of anchor cancelling cachets was made in April-May 1876.

All cachets de provenance were withdrawn following an instruction of September 1887 because their purpose of indicating the origin of mail, and therefore the postal rate applicable, had ceased to apply with the establishment of the U.P.U.

About September 1887 cachets de ligne of Graouli Type D were introduced (worded "LIGNE N"); and in 1898 datestamps of the same type designating the route were supplied: "MARSEILLE A YOKOHAMA L.N." The use of the various types often overlapped chronologically.

The fire at Yokohama

33 (i) The fire at Yokohama in November 1866, which destroyed the French post office there, had consequences which spanned the periods of the Ligne Annexe de Shanghai a Yokohama and of
 to
 33 (iii) Lignes S and R. It resulted in the use of an anchor cancellor ashore at Yokohama for some months; and of ships' datestamps to cancel adhesives aboard during the same time.

33 (iv) Ligne R

This line ran from Hong Kong to Shanghai. It disappeared in August 1871, when the terminus of Ligne N was moved to Shanghai; but the agent on board had been withdrawn at the end of 1869, making the period during which Ligne R cachets were used only three years. All are very rare.

The Far East November 1866 - December 1910 contd.33 (v) Ligne S

to

33 (ix) The successor of the Ligne Annexe de Shanghai a Yokohama. During 1867 - 68 the sailings for Yokohama were from Shanghai, but from March 1869 they were from Hong Kong, cutting out Shanghai and Ligne R. Ligne S existed until August 1887, when Ligne N was eventually extended to Japan.

33 (x) Ligne O

to

33 (xii) The successor to the Ligne Annexe de Calcutta. The service on this line ceased in June 1882.

34 (i) Ligne P

This small branch line ran from Singapore to Batavia, fulfilling the service which had been planned but not achieved in 1862 - 66. Cachets from it have been seen dated up to 1884, but all are extremely rare.

The 'Station de Saigon'

The Messageries Maritimes kept a number of ships at Saigon, partly in order to have quickly available reliefs for any paquebots on the main routes which might break down nearby, and, partly, from 1880 onward, to provide a service on small lines from :

34 (ii) Saigon to Singapore

to Saigon to Haiphong

34 (iv) Saigon to Hong Kong

Saigon to Manila

Les Messageries Fluviales de Cochinchine

Cochinchina was a land of many rivers which formed quite an important communication system. The Messageries Fluviales was created in 1880 to provide a number of services, including a coastal one to Bangkok. Most of the ships which sailed these routes carried datestamps which merely designated them as 'Vapeur No. 1.' etc.

34 (v)

to

34 (ix)

THE FAR EAST III1911 - 1941

In 1911 datestamps of two new types were introduced :

34 (x) (i) Graouli Type E, octagonal, 26mm diameter, worded in
to Sans-serif capitals "MARSEILLE A YOKOHAMA No. 2" etc.

35 (iv) (ii) Graouli Type F, circular, 26mm diameter, worded in
Sans-serif capitals "MARSEILLE A YOKOHAMA No. 1" etc.

The Far East 1911 - 1941 contd.

It will be noted that in these datestamps the designation 'LIGNE N' has been dropped. The line has become the Ligne de Marseille a Yokohama. It continued thus until November 1932, when the terminus was withdrawn to Shanghai.

- 35 (v) The Ligne de Marseille a Shanghai was short-lived, lasting only until December 1933, when the route was once again extended to Japan, but with Kobe instead of Yokohama as the terminus.
- 35 (vi) The Ligne de Marseille a Kobe brought to an end the French Far Eastern paquebot service with postal agents on board. The last homeward voyage to Marseille arrived there in May 1940. Then, on account of war conditions, there were four voyages which terminated at Port Said; and finally, a number of voyages via the Cape of Good Hope in both directions (some without postal officials on board; and not all homeward voyages reaching Marseille). There were no more outward sailings from Marseille after that of 12 September 1941.

THE INDIAN OCEAN AND AUSTRALASIA

The French paquebot service in these areas concerns chiefly the line to La Reunion and Mauritius, which in 1882 became the basis of the service to Australia, terminating at New Caledonia.

- 35 (vii) When the Ligne d'Indochine was started, it had been envisaged that a branch line from Aden to Mauritius would have been set up soon afterwards. In the event, nothing was done until 1864, when it was agreed to base a separate line on Suez
- 35 (viii) with connection to Ligne V in the Mediterranean. Sailings from Marseille on the 9th of each month began on 9 January 1865 with transit of the isthmus by rail and departure from Suez on 17 January. There were twenty-two monthly voyages thus before the line was renamed Ligne T in November 1866.

- 35 (ix) Ligne T
to

- 37 (vii) The route of Ligne T remained as previously until, in April 1869, it was made a branch line of Ligne N from Aden, which it remained until November 1882. It was then transformed into a line from Marseille to Australia and Noumea via La Reunion and Mauritius; with consequent "Suppression de l'affreux sejour a Aden pour les passagers."

The Indian Ocean and Australasia contd.

After some $5\frac{1}{2}$ years, in August 1888, the route was changed again, so that the paquebots sailed direct to King George's Sound in Western Australia from Mahe (Seychelles), and the service to La Reunion, Mauritius and Madagascar was left to Lignes U and V (see below).

Finally, in January 1896, Ligne T was changed into a service specifically to Australia and Noumea; its route becoming Marseille, Port Said, Suez, Aden, Colombo, Freemantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Noumea.

Postal officials were withdrawn from the Ligne T paquebots at the end of the voyage which started from Marseille in May 1903. This was the end of Ligne T, although it did not terminate French maritime activities either on the main route or by way of certain local services among the islands of the Pacific. However, most of these services had no identifying cachets of their own (so that mail from them bears only arrival "Paquebot" cachets of various ports); save that some of the small local ships had cachets or datestamps.

During the life of Ligne T cachets de ligne of Graouli Type A, numbered at first 1 to 3 and later up to No. 7, were in use; followed by datestamps of Type D (numbered up to 6), which were first issued in 1887. In December 1901, these were followed by datestamps in the same type but showing the route (e.g. "MARSEILLE A NOUMEA PAQ. FR. No. 1"). These were numbered up to 4. They had a life of only 18 months.

Cachets de provenance of the general kind worded "COL. FR." and "POSS. AN." or "POSS. ANG." (the latter appearing on mail from Mauritius and Australia) were issued in Graouli Type B between 1867 and 1887. Unusually, cachets de provenance in Type D were issued late in 1887 worded "AUSTRALIE PAQ. FR. T No. 1" (up to 6). This was done following the withdrawal of the "POSS. AN." cachets because the Commonwealth of Australia did not join the U.P.U. until 1 October 1901. After this, these cachets were withdrawn.

Cachets for service mail, almost all in Type A, include some made specially for troops involved in expeditionary forces to Madagascar and Tonkin.

Anchor cancellations, which were withdrawn in April 1876, appear only in the early life of Ligne T.

The Indian Ocean and Australasia contd.37 (viii) Ligne V

to

- 38 (iv) The letter V having become available because of the cessation of the line from Marseille to Alexandria, it was used in 1888 for a new line from Marseille to La Reunion and Mauritius (described in its datestamps as "MARSEILLE A LA REUNION"). This took the place of the service provided by Ligne T, which had been lost because of the diversion of that line from Mahe to Australia.

Between 1888 and the end of 1895, the route of Ligne V was Marseille, Port Said, Suez, Obock, Aden, Zanzibar, Mayotte, Nossi-Be, Diego-Suarez, Ste. Marie, Tamatave, La Reunion, Mauritius. Then, after a year (1896) of sailing outward direct from Djibouti to Diego-Suarez and homeward by the above route, it was changed in 1897 to the 'direct' route in both directions; and continued thus until mid-1912.

The datestamps in use were of Graouli Type D (octagonal : 22mm) worded "MARSEILLE A LA REUNION L.V. No. 1" etc. up to No. 4. Together with appropriate Type C cachets for service mail.

38 (v) Ligne U

to

- 38 (x) This was another Ligne using a letter of the alphabet freed by the closure of a line (Marseille to Constantinople) in the Mediterranean.

Between August 1888 and February 1896, when Mahe was not touched by Ligne V, Ligne U provided a contact between Ligne T and Ligne V by means of a circular route from Mahe to Diego-Suarez, Tamatave, La Reunion and Mauritius. No Ligne U datestamps are known from this period.

During 1896, Ligne U sailed outward from Marseille via the African coast (Zanzibar) and homeward via Mahe; thus performing the reverse of the duty of Ligne V. Then, from 1897 to 1912, while Ligne V followed the direct route via Mahe, all the voyages of Ligne U were by the less direct route via Zanzibar.

The Ligne U datestamps were of Graouli Type D (octagonal : 21mm), numbered 1 to 3, worded "MARSEILLE A LA REUNION 1^oL.U. No. 1" etc. There were also some circular 'forces' cachets, mostly of Type C.

38 (xi) Ligne de Marseille a La Reunion : 1912 - 1940

to

- 38 (xii) In the middle of 1912, it was decided to combine Lignes U and V into one line, providing fortnightly sailings from Marseille. During the last six months of 1912 the cachets of Lignes U and V were still used. Then, in January 1913, new ones of Graouli Type E (octagonal : 26mm), were introduced. Worded "MARSEILLE A LA REUNION No. 1" etc. and numbered up to No. 9, these datestamps remained in use until the line was brought to an end in 1940 by the war.

THE WEST COAST OF AFRICA

39

A service of paquebots to the West Coast of Africa was organised in 1889 by agreements with two companies, the Chargeurs Reunis and Fraissinet Co. for sailings in alternate months respectively, from Bordeaux and Marseille to Libreville, with discretionary extensions to Loango (French Congo) and beyond.

The route from Bordeaux was Ligne L and that from Marseille was Ligne M (both these letters had been in use elsewhere previously, but were not in use in 1889). The contracts expired in 1908; but that of Ligne L was renegotiated for a service to Matadi; (see below).

The principal ports visited by both lines were Dakar, Freetown, Grand Bassam, Cotonou, Libreville, Loango and Loanda; although, according to the contracts, the extension of voyages beyond Libreville was discretionary, depending on the demand. However, the datestamps issued to both lines gave Loango as the African terminus.

In 1908 a fresh agreement with the Chargeurs Reunis provided for a service from Marseille to Matadi (up the estuary of the River Congo) for six voyages a year; to which the company added a further six 'commercial' voyages. Postal agents were on board during all of them. New datestamps, of Graouli Type E were in use; worded "BORDEAUX A MATADI L.L. No. 1" etc., numbered up to 3.

Postal agents were withdrawn in November 1921, after which a service continued on much the same route up to the outbreak of war. Ships' administrative cachets were used on some mail.

CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE WEST INDIES

From 1828 onwards there were some tentative efforts to provide a service of paquebots to Vera Cruz and Fort de France, but it was not until the French sent troops to Mexico in 1862 that an effective and long-lasting service was provided by the Compagnie General Transatlantique.

1862 - 1865

40 (i) Ligne du Mexique

to

41 (i) The principal line ran from St. Nazaire to Vera Cruz via Fort de France and Santiago de Cuba. The first four ships on it were the Floride, the Louisiane, the Tampico and the Vera Cruz. Monthly sailings from St. Nazaire began on 14 April 1862 and continued until July 1865.

Central America and the West Indies contd. 1862 - 1865Ligne du Mexique contd.

The postal agents on board were supplied with datestamps bearing the names of the ships (similar to those in use in the Mediterranean); and with octagonal 'cachets de provenance,' similar to Type B, with the name of the ship at the bottom and, at the top, the indication of origin of the mail (i.e. MEXIQUE, MARTINIQUE, CORRESP. D'ARMEES etc.).

There was a branch line from Fort de France to Guadeloupe and to the British islands of St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada and Trinidad. Mail carried on it is extremely seldom seen.

Consular Agencies

- 41 (ii) Consular Agencies similar to those which were set up in
to South America were established at Vera Cruz and at Santiago de
41 (x) Cuba in June 1862.

1865 - 1940

In August 1865 there was a major reorganisation and expansion of the maritime service to Central America and the West Indies. The most important change was the establishment of two principal lines; one from St. Nazaire to Colon and the other from St. Nazaire to Vera Cruz. At the same time, a number of minor or branch lines were established amongst the islands of the West Indies.

Coinciding with these changes, the system of designating 'lignes' by letters of the alphabet (and so abandoning the use of datestamps showing the names of ships) was introduced. This was over a year earlier than the adoption of this system elsewhere.

- 41 (xi) Consular Agencies
to
43 (vi) A number of new Consular Agencies were created to accord
with the new ports-of-call of the expanded service.

Datestamps and cachets

Datestamps in use on the lines to Central America and in the West Indies were at first of Graouli Type A for the cachets de ligne; and of Type B for the cachets de provenance, of which there were a great many distributed over the various routes.

The anchor cancelling instruments were withdrawn in May 1876. Thereafter (as in France) datestamps were used to cancel adhesives.

Central America and the West Indies 1865 - 1940 contd.Datestamps and cachets contd.

All cachets de provenance were withdrawn in 1887. At that time, Graouli Type D came into use for cachets de ligne; at first, showing the ligne letter and later, (early 1890's) its route. Type E appeared on Ligne A in 1919.

43 (vii) Ligne A
to

45 (v) This line had one of the longest lives of all French maritime routes; 67 years, from August 1865 to November 1932. It ran from St. Nazaire to Colon (Colon-Aspinwall). At first, the only ports-of-call were Fort de France and Ste. Marthe.

Apart from some interruptions during the 1914-18 war, Fort de France was the port of contact with the important branch line (Ligne C : see below) to French Guiana and islands of the British West Indies, including Trinidad. La Guayra became a port-of-call in 1872; Savanilla was substituted for Ste. Marthe in 1872; and Porto Cabello was added in 1872.

Finally in April 1928, the terminus in France was moved from St. Nazaire to Le Havre, foreshadowing the closure of the line in 1932 and the opening of Ligne L (see below).

45 (viii) Ligne L

Le Havre to Colon. Intermediate ports included Plymouth, Pointe a Pitre, Fort de France, Barbados, Trinidad and Venezuelan ports. Commenced in December 1932 and came to an end in September 1939, a life of just under seven years.

The datestamps were of Graouli Type E, worded "LE HAVRE A COLON L. No. 1" etc., up to No. 3.

45 (ix) Ligne B
to

47 (v) This was the second principal line founded in 1865. It ran from St. Nazaire to Vera Cruz and had the following changes of route :

August 1865: via St. Thomas and La Havane.

October 1870 -

May 1871: Franco-Prussian war caused the closure of Ligne A so Ligne B temporarily called at Fort de France, providing contact with Colon via the small branch Ligne L.

March 1875: calls at Pointe a Pitre, Fort de France and St. Pierre introduced: but they were withdrawn at the end of 1878.

1885: St. Thomas omitted from the return voyage which then went direct from La Havane to Santander and St. Nazaire.

Central America and the West Indies 1865 - 1940 contd.Ligne B contd.

At the end of July 1901, the postal agents were withdrawn from Ligne B, apparently by a decision of the head postmaster of St. Nazaire. Sailings on the route via La Havane to Vera Cruz continued until 1931, but mail posted on board is identifiable only by port-of-arrival marks.

Ligne D (principal)

47 (vi)

to

49 (vii)

Ligne D, which had been a branch line (see below), became one of the principal lines in March 1875. The route was from Bordeaux to Colon. To begin with, from 1875 to 1878, the route was formed by, to all intents and purposes, adding to the former local route within the West Indian islands the passage between St. Thomas and Bordeaux. In 1878 the route was moved southward to serve the French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe and the north coast of South America (chiefly Venezuela); Trinidad being added as a port-of-call in 1886. It remained thus until April 1940, when the war brought Ligne D to a close.

The branch lines

Most of the so-called 'lignes annexes' were based on Fort de France, but one or two routes started at St. Thomas.

The two most important ones were :

49 (viii)

to

50 (xi)

(i) Ligne C

This ran from Fort de France to Cayenne during a period of some 75 years, from 1865 to 1940; except for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years from March 1884 to August 1886. During this short period Ligne C made contact with Ligne B at St. Thomas, whereas for almost the whole of its life, it exchanged mails with Ligne A at Fort de France; doing the same with Ligne D from 1933 to 1939 (Ligne A having ceased operations in 1932).

The route of Ligne C was Fort de France, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, Trinidad, Demerara (Georgetown, British Guiana), Surinam (Paramaribo), Cayenne. St. Vincent and Grenada were omitted from October 1874 onward.

50 (xii)

to

51 (iii)

(ii) Ligne D (annexe)

This line ran from St. Thomas to Kingston, Jamaica via St. Jean de Porto Rico, Cap Haitien, and Santiago de Cuba. In 1869 the route was extended to Colon/Aspinwall in expectation of the opening of the line from Panama to Valparaiso, which was planned for 1 January 1870 (see below). This had the effect of doubling the service between St. Nazaire and Colon, since there was Ligne A sailing direct between the two ports; and mail brought from France on Ligne B could be transferred to Ligne D at St. Thomas and so on to Colon.

As already mentioned, Ligne D became a principal line in 1875.

Central America and the West Indies 1865 - 1940 contd.The branch lines contd.(iii) Ligne E

This small branch line had many variations of route centred on Fort de France: sometimes northward to St. Thomas and sometimes to the south, to Venezuela; or, alternatively, to Haiti and Cuba. The last of these ceased in 1897. Between 1875 and 1884, it provided contact, under the title of E - bis, between the Venezuelan ports and St. Thomas; and so with Ligne B. Commonly, there were no postal agents on board.

51 (iv) (iv) Ligne F
to

51 (xi) The letter F was first used (1865 - 68) for a branch line round the Gulf of Mexico from which no markings are known. Then (1872 - 74) for the line from Panama to Valparaiso (see below). Between 1879 and 1886, Ligne F connected St. Thomas with Kingston, via various ports of Porto Rico, Haiti and Cuba. Subsequently, until February 1897, the emphasis was still on connecting St. Thomas with the Spanish West Indies and Haiti, but the call at Kingston was omitted, and from 1891, the route was extended to Vera Cruz via La Havane; and, from 1886 onward, there was a connection from St. Thomas to Bordeaux, but this was an unsubsidised service which did not carry postal agents.

51 (xii) (v) Ligne L
to

52 (iii) Between 1866 and 1872, this branch provided contact between La Guayra, Porto Cabello and Fort de France (and therefore with Ligne A). During the war of 1870 - 71, when Ligne A was suppressed, Ligne L was extended to Colon. The line was closed when Ligne A started calling at La Guayra in 1872. The letter L was subsequently used on the West Coast of Africa and later still, on the principal line from Le Havre to Colon.

THE EAST COAST OF SOUTH AMERICA

A line from Panama to Valparaiso was envisaged as early as 1867 and it was hoped that it would open on 1 January 1870. This was at a time when the imminent opening of the Suez Canal made people optimistic that a canal across the isthmus of Panama, early efforts at which were in train, would materialise before long. In the event, the canal was not finished until 1914.

The East Coast of South America contd.52 (iv) Ligne F

to

52 (viii) The line was entitled Ligne F and was seen as an extension of Ligne A, its departures from Panama being made to coincide with the arrivals of Ligne A at Colon. There were twelve intermediate ports on the run to Valparaiso, of which Guayaquil, Callao and Arica were the most important.

The line had a short life, from mid-March 1872 to January 1874; only twenty-three voyages in all. The commencement had been delayed by difficulties in building the ships intended for Ligne F and by the cessation of ship-building during the Franco-Prussian war.

Consular Agencies were created at some ports.

THE TRANSATLANTIC ROUTE TO THE UNITED STATES1864 - 1866

After some preliminary efforts, a service was arranged by contract with the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique between Le Havre and New York. The first departure from Le Havre was on 15 June 1864 and the last was on 18 February 1866. There were twenty-one voyages during this period of 'named datestamps'; very few examples have survived and, I regret, there is not one on display.

1866 - 1872

52 (ix) Ligne H was adopted as the title of the line from March 1866.

to

52 (xii) It had cachets de ligne of Graouli Type A, numbered 1 to 4 (with octagonal replacement one for No. 2, which had but a short life). These were intended for mail from Le Havre, but remarkably little seems to have been put on board as last minute mail at that port.

At the New York end of the line cachets de provenance of Type B, worded "ETATS-UNIS PAQ. FR. H. No. 1" etc., numbered up to 4, were used; together with a rare Type A "CORR D. ARM" datestamp, which seems to appear on naval letters.

The Transatlantic route to the United States contd.1872 - 1908

The postal agents on Ligne H were withdrawn at the end of 1872. Thereafter, up to 1908, the service was continued but without postal markings of its own. Only 'cachets d'entree' and the 'PAQUEBOT' marks, which came into use under U.P.U. rules in 1894, identify letters posted on board during this time.

1908 - 1939

During this period, datestamps of Type E, worded "LE HAVRE A NEW YORK A" etc. up to F, appear; and in the late 1930's one finds machine cancellations from the S.S. Normandie.

The Company adopted the title of 'French Line.'