

PAQUEBOT MAIL

by

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Paquebot is a French word for packet boat, and postal administrations use paquebot hand stamps to mark mail received from a seagoing vessel, that has no, on board post office.

At the Vienna conference in 1891 the Universal Postal Union established special handling regulations for mail posted on the high seas abroad ocean going vessels.

The rules were further clarified at the Wahington DC conference of the UPU in 1897

It was used first in Great Britain in 1894, and the term was adopted for general use by the Universal Postal Union in 1896

In the Mediterranean hand written "Paquebot a vapeur" have been recorded as early as the 1844 period fig.1 and fig.2.



Fig 1



Fig.2

The earliest recorded date found in the London GPO records is the issue of a "PAQUEBOT" hand stamp to Malta on 30th January 1894 measuring 33x4mm fig.3.

PAQUEBOT

Fig.3

At a later date a larger hand stamp bearing this inscription (46x 6 mm) fig 4 was adopted.

In 1930 a circular date stamp bearing the caption "PAQUEBOT MALTA with Maltese crosses fig.5 was introduced, and six years later a circular hand stamp consisting of "PAQUEBOT MALTA with Maltese crosses and killer blocks" was introduced fig.6

PAQUEBOT

Fig.4



Fig.5

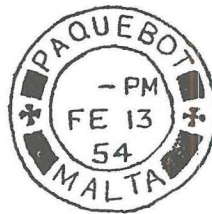


Fig.6

Unrecorded letter sent from Malta to Hungary dated February 1898 showing two different hand stamps fig.7

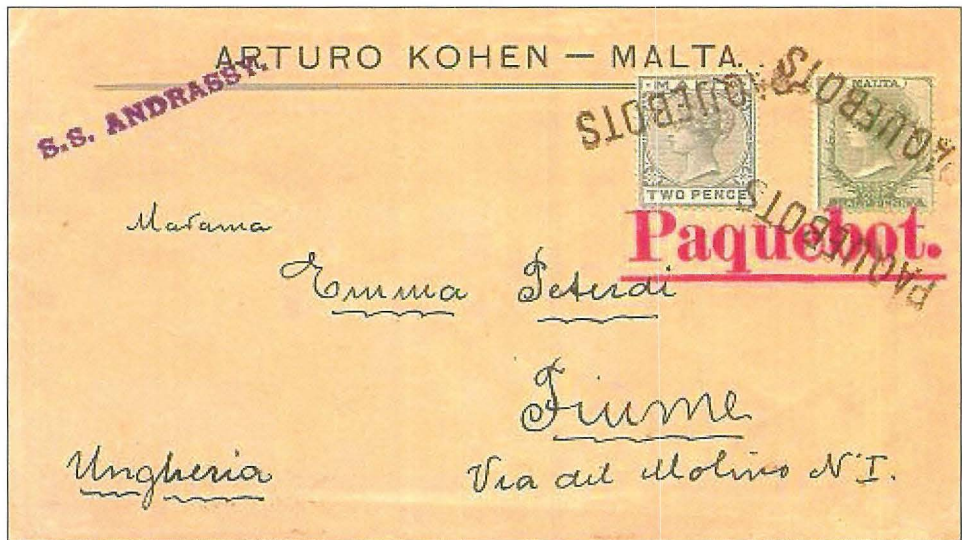


Fig.7

The concept is based on the fact that a merchant ship on the high seas, is sovereign national territory of the country whose flag she flies (similar to an embassy) and therefore mail posted aboard a ship in international waters is entitled to be franked with stamps of, and in accordance with the postal rates of the country of the ship's registry.

It can be seen that when the ship reaches its next port and mail posted by passengers and crew is handed to local postal authorities that difficulties will arise and for this reason, back in 1896 rules were laid down by the UPU as stated in Mr John De Battista article p.40, Vol. 41/1

These rules have been regularly up dated, the last time being in Lausanne in 1974.

Such mail might originate with passengers or crew, or it might be picked up at a port of call lacking postal facilities for onward transportation to the next port having postal facilities.

Mail posted at sea used to be generally held by the ship's purser or postal officer, if it had one, until the next port with postal facilities was reached.

When the ship reaches the next port, the purser or postal officer delivers all mail received during the voyage to the post office serving the port. The mail is then marked "Paquebot" and is postmarked by the post office and entered into the mail stream for delivery.

Covers and cards mailed at sea are generally referred to as "paquebot" covers.

In the 1930 the Knight of Malta operated a service to Syracuse and Tunis fig.8

Other Maritime postal hand stamps will be featured in future articles.

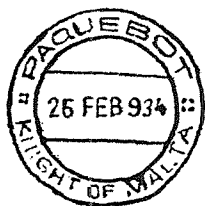


Fig.8

