

# Paquebot Cover with Perfin

John Lyding (LM#116)

Paquebot is French for “packet boat”. The term was adopted by the Universal Postal Union in 1891 and in 1896 was clarified in the regulations for mail posted on the high seas aboard ocean-going ships. That treaty and the service still exist today.

Section 763.1 of the USPS *International Mail Manual* states: “Mail posted aboard commercial vessels on the high seas may bear postage stamps of the country whose flag the vessel flies. On arrival at the port, an office of that ship must give the mail to the post office of the foreign city. That post office must cancel the stamps and dispatch the items. If the

at this office was familiar with PAQUEBOT mail.

- Canal Zone 15¢ deep green 1978 Towing Locomotive Ship in Lock (Scott #165) - Actual information goes well with the 1979 postmark.
- Perfin Christmas Tree - Perfin pattern **Des. 44.5P** owned by Joseph Balough. Joe was a member of the Perfins Club and he, along with his wife Dorothy, prepared the first *Catalog of United States Perfins* in 1979.
- Addressee - George Consentini is a postal historian and APO/FPO expert. In addition to being a frequent philatelic exhibitor, Consentini, along with Norman Gruenzer, is the author of *United States Numbered Post Offices Assignments and Locations 1941-1944*.
- Circular PAQUEBOT marker West Sacramento, CA Posted at Sea 95691 - The ZIP code of that Post Office.

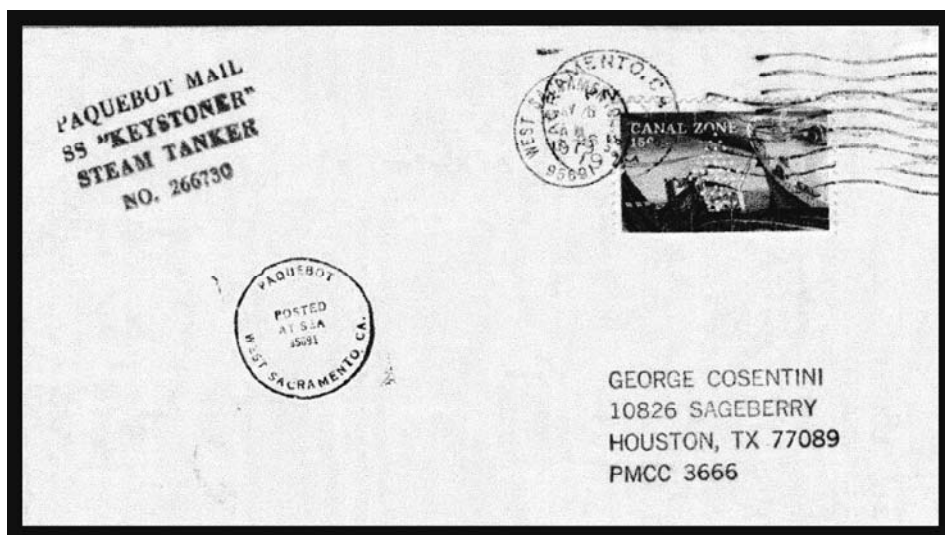


Figure 1  
1979 Paquebot Cover with perfin (80% of actual size)

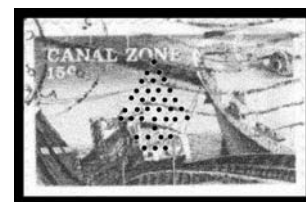


Figure 2  
Stamp from Cover (actual size)  
Perfin darkened

stamps are foreign, the Post Office facility must use a special *Paquebot* postmark or apply the word “PAQUEBOT” to the envelope in ink or with a rubber stamp.”

Here is what I was able to determine about the cover illustrated in Figure 1 above and its various markings, starting with the smaller of the two cancels and going around the cover in a clockwise direction:

- CDS West Sacramento, CA 95691 6 May 1979 - West Sacramento is a city in Yolo County, California. It is contiguous with Sacramento, but the two cities are separated by the Sacramento River.
- CDS Sacramento, CA (ZIP Unreadable) date? 1979 - No one that I could reach by telephone

- PAQUEBOT MAIL SS “KEYSTONER” STEAM TANKER NO. 266730 - The number 266730 is the United States Coast Guard Documentation Number for the ship that was originally owned by the Keystone Tankship Corporation. That company was eventually purchased by a shipping subsidiary of EXXON ending the trail of *Keystoner*.

Unfortunately, the current level of mail posted aboard ocean-going ships is very low and today PAQUEBOT mail is virtually unknown. I attempted to use PAQUEBOT mail during several cruises to no avail. In general, cruise ships make stamps of their next port available for the use of the passengers and, unlike the movie *Titanic*, modern day cruise ships no longer have post offices or carry mail.

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## Paquebot Cover with Perfin (cont.)

During the peer review of this article, it was pointed out that club members outside of California may not realize that Sacramento is nearly 100 miles inland from San Francisco. The Sacramento River, which flows into the northern arm of the San Francisco Bay, is a significant navigable river that has been and is used for transporting grain and other farm produce from California's prolific Central Valley to worldwide markets. So, this PAQUEBOT cover involves an inland port that some might be surprised

is used by large oceangoing vessels.

I dislike attempting to write about anything until I know all of the facts. Fortunately on those occasions when I have really barked up the wrong tree, an eagle-eyed editor or reviewer has saved me from becoming a laughing stock. This perfin cover took me down some interesting alleys and added several postal history facts to our perfin collecting knowledge.

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