

PHILATELIC BULLETIN



Sarasota Philatelic Club

2025

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Stamp Quiz

Last month's Stamp Quiz was answered by Bob Inderbitzen. Congratulations to Bob who correctly guessed that the stamp was the 5 pfennig Plebiscite issue from Schleswig. After WW I, the former Schleswig-Holstein Province in Germany was divided into North and South Schleswig. These stamps were issued pending outcome of the plebiscite on which country the region wished to join. Stay tuned for next month's Stamp Quiz!



Latest Reported Cover From U.S. Postal Agency in Hiogo, Japan?

By Vincent Centonze

I recently came across the cover shown in Figure 1, which was sent from the U.S. Postal Agency at the consulate in Hiogo, Japan, to Leith, Scotland. This is a new find of a rare postmark on cover from the postal agency in Hiogo, and possibly the latest known cover before the consulate closed. Whenever I evaluate a cover, I like to deconstruct everything about it, in this case, the ports, ships, and postal history. This article will touch on a little of each.

The cover bears an undated single-circle HIOGO. /JAPAN. postmark and each stamp is canceled by a mute round killer with a cross in the center. This postmark and cancel are identified as HIO-Pmk3 and HIO-Can6, respectively, in Frajola, Perlman, and Scamp's book, *The United States Post Offices in China and Japan 1867 to 1874*.¹ The cover also has a red SAN FRANCISCO CAL/DEC/1/PAID handstamp which is a key factor in determining when the cover was sent. Unfortunately, the back flap is missing so only a small, undiscernible part of another postmark is visible. The cover is franked with a 6¢ Lincoln definitive and 10¢ Jefferson definitive, both from the issue of 1873 with secret marks, printed by the Continental Bank Note Company (Scott 159 and 161, respectively). The franking paid the pre-UPU letter rate of 10¢ per ½ ounce from Japan to San Francisco,² plus 6¢ per ½ ounce to Scotland (Great Britain) from the U.S. for 16¢ total.³



Figure 1. Cover from U.S. Postal Agency in Hiogo, Japan, to Leith, Scotland. It may be the last reported cover sent from Hiogo.

The consulate in Hiogo opened in March or April 1868 and was the third postal agency to open in Japan.⁴ It was open for a relatively short period of less than seven years and closed in December 1874.⁵ At the time the cover was sent, Hiogo was a separate port town; however, in 1889 it merged with the nearby village of Kobe.⁶ It has subsequently been absorbed into the greater Kobe metropolitan area, although the prefecture is still named for Hiogo (Hyogo). Hiogo never used the typical Circular Date Stamps (CDS) such as were sent to other postal agencies but canceled mail with locally-made wood-carved postmarks and killers.⁷ Because of the short period in which it was in operation, there are relatively few types of postmarks and canceling devices.

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The Prez Sez ...

First meeting at Fruitville Library: 11 club members and 3 guests in attendance—the room is generously sized; the room is immediately to your left of the main entrance, and we expect to have a sign. Set-up and take down did not seem onerous. We will plan to start gathering at 5:30 to allow time for setting up and socializing. When we have a speaker that program will start at 6PM.

We tested the AV setup which is excellent and Phil Leber gave us a tutorial of the Club and Show websites using the Library's internet. This means that zoom presentations would be possible. In November Phil will give a talk about Telegraphy and the Post Office (more details to come) and December will be the Holiday Party at Liz Hisey's house.

Next Meeting

October 7th –5:30 PM

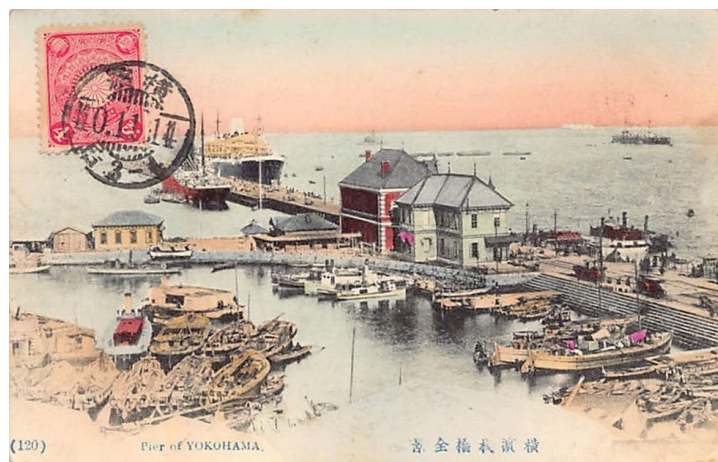
Fruitville Library

Topic/Speaker:

Jim Mazepa will give a talk titled "Some of my Favorite things"

Latest Reported Cover From U.S. Postal Agency in Hiogo? (cont.)

The earliest documented use of the 6¢ and 10¢ stamps is 6/8/73 and 8/2/73, respectively; therefore, empirically the cover must have been sent between late 1873 and December 1874 when the consulate closed. According to *The United States Post Offices in China and Japan 1867 to 1874*, based on the San Francisco handstamp date of 1 December, the cover was sent in early November 1874 and sailed on the Pacific Mail Steam Ship (PMSS) Company's eastbound trip (ET) 119.⁸ The PMSS, founded in 1848 in San Francisco, was the backbone of transpacific mail, passengers, and cargo in the 1860s and 1870s, and was contracted by the U.S. Government to carry the mail from the postal agencies in China and Japan.⁹ In addition, the PMSS operated branch-line steamships that connected the various U.S. Consulates and postal agencies, including the Hiogo port and Yokohama.¹⁰ This cover was placed on the branch-line steamship SS *Golden Age* on a stop in Hiogo enroute from Shanghai to Yokohama; *Golden Age* departed Shanghai on 10/27/74 and arrived Yokohama on 11/3/74.¹¹ The usual transit time between Hiogo and Yokohama was two or three days;¹² therefore, *Golden Age* probably made its port call at Hiogo around 10/31/74 or 11/1/74. So, it is likely the cover was mailed on or about 10/31/74 or 11/1/74. The postcard in Figure 2 shows the Kobe port, originally the Hiogo port, as it appeared in 1929. The card is franked on the picture side with a 2 sen green Mt. Fuji stamp of the 1926 Famous View definitive issues (Japan Scott 194, Sakura 173) postmarked 11/17/29 (listed on the postmark as the 4th year of the Taisho period). It is not addressed and has no message, so was likely sold as a stamped, cancelled souvenir. The postcard in Figure 3 shows the port of Yokohama as it appeared in 1907. The card is franked on the picture side with a 4 sen rose Chrysanthemum stamp of the 1899-1907 issue (Japan Scott 99, Sakura 77) and postmarked on 11/14/07 (listed on the postmark as the 40th year of the Meiji period). It was sent to Marseille, France; the UPU international postcard rate from Japan was 4 sen from 10/1/97 through 12/31/21.



(Left) Figure 2. Unmailed souvenir postcard from 1929 showing the Kobe port, which was the Hiogo port in 1874. The card bears a 2 sen Mt. Fuji definitive. (Right) Figure 3. 1907 postcard from Yokohama to Marseille, France, franked with a 4 sen Chrysanthemum definitive. The image on the card is of the port of Yokohama.

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Latest Reported Cover From U.S. Postal Agency in Hiogo? (cont.)

After the cover passed through both of these ports, it was placed on the PMSS-chartered steamship, SS *Vancouver*, which departed Yokohama on 11/9/74 and arrived San Francisco on 11/30/74 or 12/1/74, and the San Francisco postmark was applied on 12/1/74.¹³

For those of us interested in maritime postal history, the ships also hold a certain fascination. SS *Golden Age* was built in 1853 for the New York and Australian Navigation Company; PMSS purchased it a short time later in 1854.¹⁴ Figure 4 shows an 1853 engraving of *Golden Age*. Shortly after it carried this cover, *Golden Age* was sold to the Mitsubishi Mail Steam Ship Company of Japan and was renamed the *Hiroshima Maru*.¹⁵ SS *Vancouver* was launched in October 1873 and owned by the China Trans-Pacific Steam Ship Co., Ltd., London; as was often the case with many ships, PMSS chartered it.¹⁶ *Vancouver* was sold in 1878 to the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, and renamed SS *Tamar*.¹⁷ Unfortunately, despite extensively searching the internet and printed references, I could find no images of the *Vancouver*.

So, is the cover in Figure 1 the latest known use from the U.S. Postal Agency in Hiogo? According to *The United States Post Offices in China and Japan 1867 to 1874*, as of its 2006 publication date the latest known cover from Hiogo was received in San Francisco on 11/12/74. If that information is current, the cover in Figure 1 is the last reported use from Hiogo because it was posted approximately two weeks *after* the cover discussed in the book.¹⁸ In all, only three covers with this Hiogo postmark and killer are known.¹⁹

Note that even though references say the consulate closed in late 1874, there are stamps on the market that were issued as late as 1888 with Hiogo cancels! Obviously, there are many fake cancelations, so as always... Buyer Beware! If anyone has additional information or interesting items they would like to share regarding the U.S. Postal Agencies in Japan, or if you happen to have a favorite item or stamp you would like to talk about, send your comments to me at: centonzevincent@gmail.com. Happy Collecting!

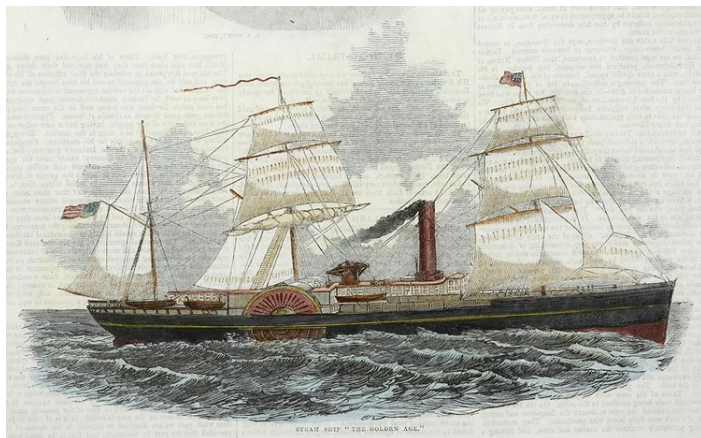


Figure 4. 1853 Print of the SS *Golden Age*. The steamship was built for the New York and Australian Navigation Company before it was sold to PMSS a year later. It was later sold to the Mitsubishi Mail Steam Ship Company of Japan and renamed the *Hiroshima Maru*. It remained in service into the 1890s.

References

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