

Fancy That!

Part II

New York City Foreign Mail Cancellations

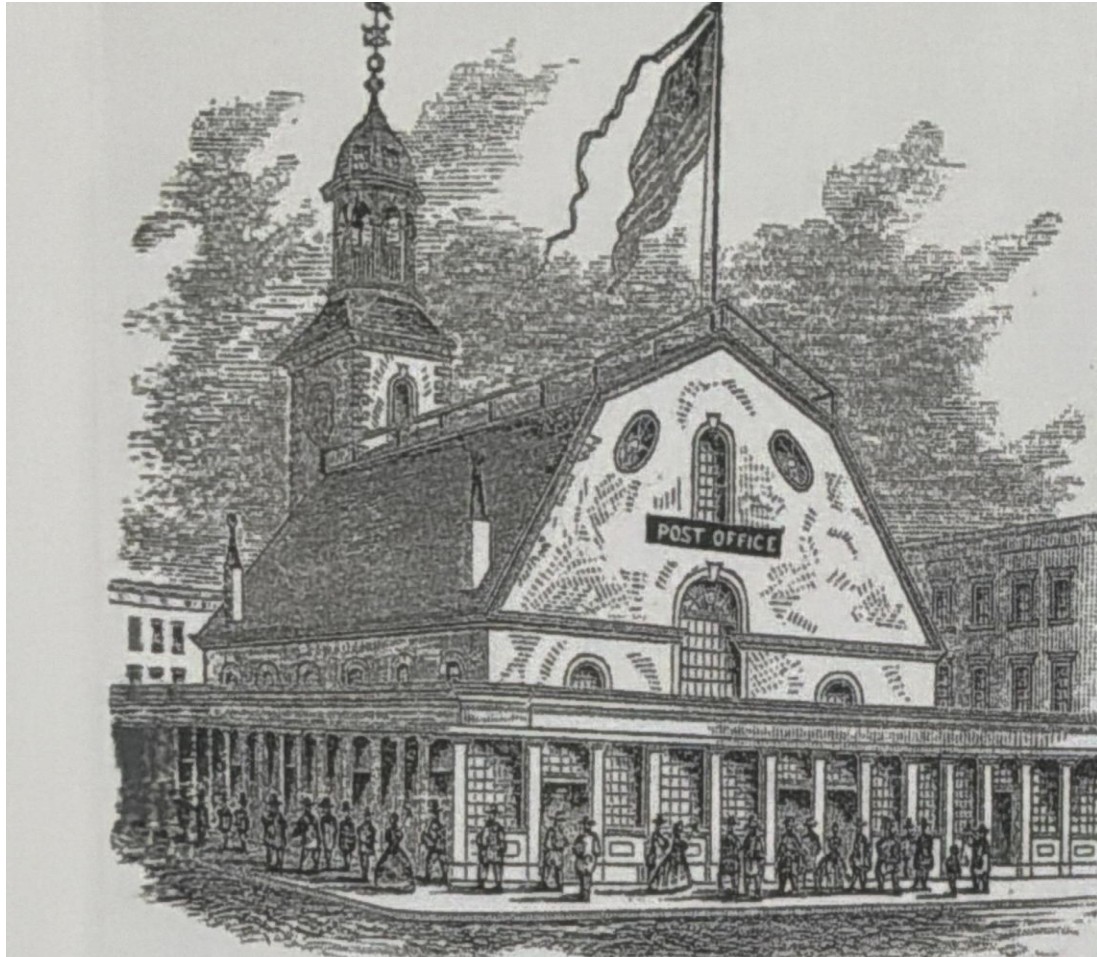
A journey of discovery

**By Bill Gallagher
Poway Stamp Club
July 8, 2026**

The Dutch Church Post Office 1845 - 1875

High Volume 1873, approx. 9.8 million / yr. 10% was NYFM = 1 million / yr.

Rough working conditions, Rat infested, Gas lighting

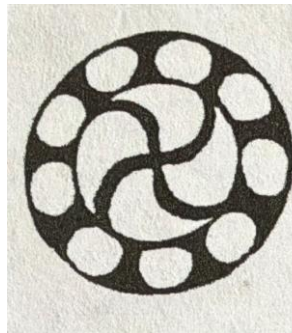


- **Cats on pay role**
 - \$5 / mo. To feed 60 ratters
- **1868 Postmaster General Randall's annual report**
 - Patched and battered, full of dark corners and discomforts. The sunlight can scarcely penetrate its gloomy interior. Gas is burnt there day and night and men work by it. It is over an old graveyard, and under its rotting floors lie the skulls and bones, and the damp mold of dead men. On removing the floors for repairs a short time ago, these unwelcome sights were exposed to view. The building is unfit for any use whatever, and yet there.... 300 men are at work and inhale a poisoned atmosphere with every breath they draw.



What is a New York Foreign Mail Cancellation?

- A cancellation or killer applied to stamps on mail entering the postal system in New York City and bound for foreign destinations, except for Canada.



Who Made Them?

- Unknown
- Records for the 1870 – 1878 time period have been lost.
- Studies of postal volume, cancel type and number, point to a source outside the postal service
 - Possibly the work of two individuals



Why So Fancy

- A means of focusing attention on the Foreign Mail service in one of the fastest growing cities in the world.
 - New Post Office approved, built 1875, opening budget splurge?
- Competition from a skilled carver? Fancy cancels were in their heyday. The Waterbury cancels had set the bar quite high.



- Because they could.

What Led To Their Creation?

Around 1850 the foreign mail service was moved to a separate area on the 2nd floor of the Post Office. This separation of the mail services allowed for the development of procedures specific to each department. One of these was the use of cancellation devices specific to the foreign mail service.



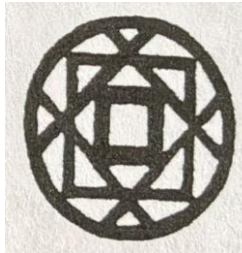
Foreign Mail Procedures

- All outbound foreign mail received a **RED postmark** and a **BLACK NYFM** cancel, except for mail sent to Canada.
- Canadian mail was processed in the domestic mail service. It received a **Black PM** and a Domestic Mail cancellation



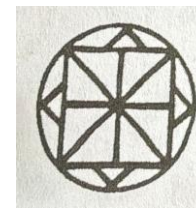
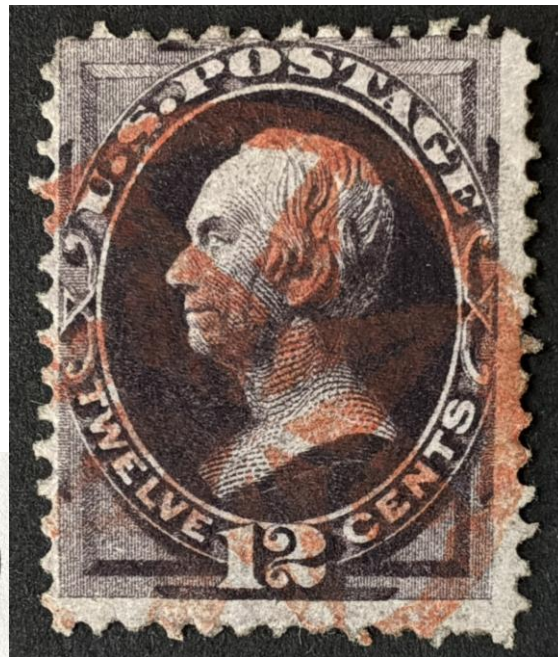
Procedures cont.

- Mail to Mexico, Central and South America was initially processed in the foreign mail department and received a **Black NYFM** cancellation. It was then sent to the domestic department where it received a **Black PM** and sent overland to New Orleans or San Fransico, then on to a ship to its destination.
- Mistakes were made....



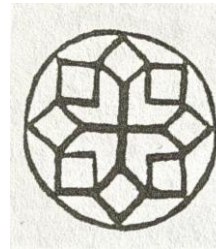
Procedures cont.

- Supplemental Mail received a **RED PM** and a **RED Cancel**.
 - Double the rate for mail that missed the post office cut off.
 - The service got your mail on the ship if it was still docked.



J. Murray Bartels 1920's

- Discovery credit goes to Bartels.
 - Purchased 100 covers sent from NYC to Spain from Spanish dealer.
 - Business correspondence spanning years
 - Knew what he had
 - Got out his drafting tools and made tracings 55
 - 1927 sold 77 types at auction. Coined the term NYFM Cancel (NY geometrics)



- **Edwin Miliken 1940's**
 - Collected from Germany, France, Italy etc.
 - Expanded to 116
- **Wuad & Vlissingen 1968**
 - Expanded to 157
 - Wrote THE book on NYFM cancels*
- **William Weiss 1990**
 - Expanded to 250+
 - In-depth information on cancels. Size, rarity
 - Cover study / census 4500
- *All the above concentrated on the 1870 – 1878 period.*
 - *It is where you find the most intricate designs*



Destinations

Most of the canceled stamps were on covers sent to European countries with economic ties to NYC.

Great Britain, France,
Germany, Italy, Mexico

Most letters recovered were **business correspondence** that continued for months and sometimes years.

a few “**missionary**” letters

*** Irish underrepresented



Statistics

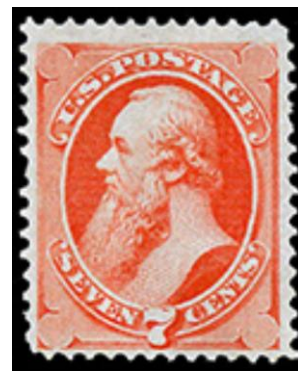
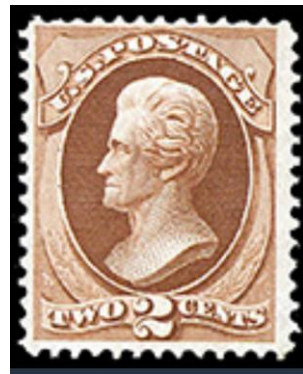
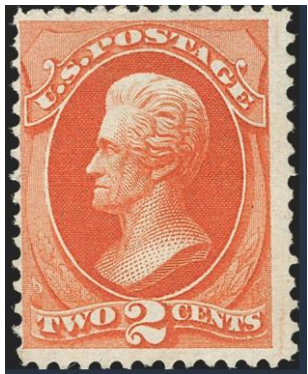
Large Bank note Stamps 134 – 179. National grilled < National < Continental.

Easier found off cover (c) > covers (s) > post cards (r) > postal stationary (vr).

90 cent (r) < 6, 10, 3 and 7 cent (c).

Singles (c) > Pairs (s) > Strips (r) > Blocks (r).

50 – 60 NYCFM geometric cancellations are common.

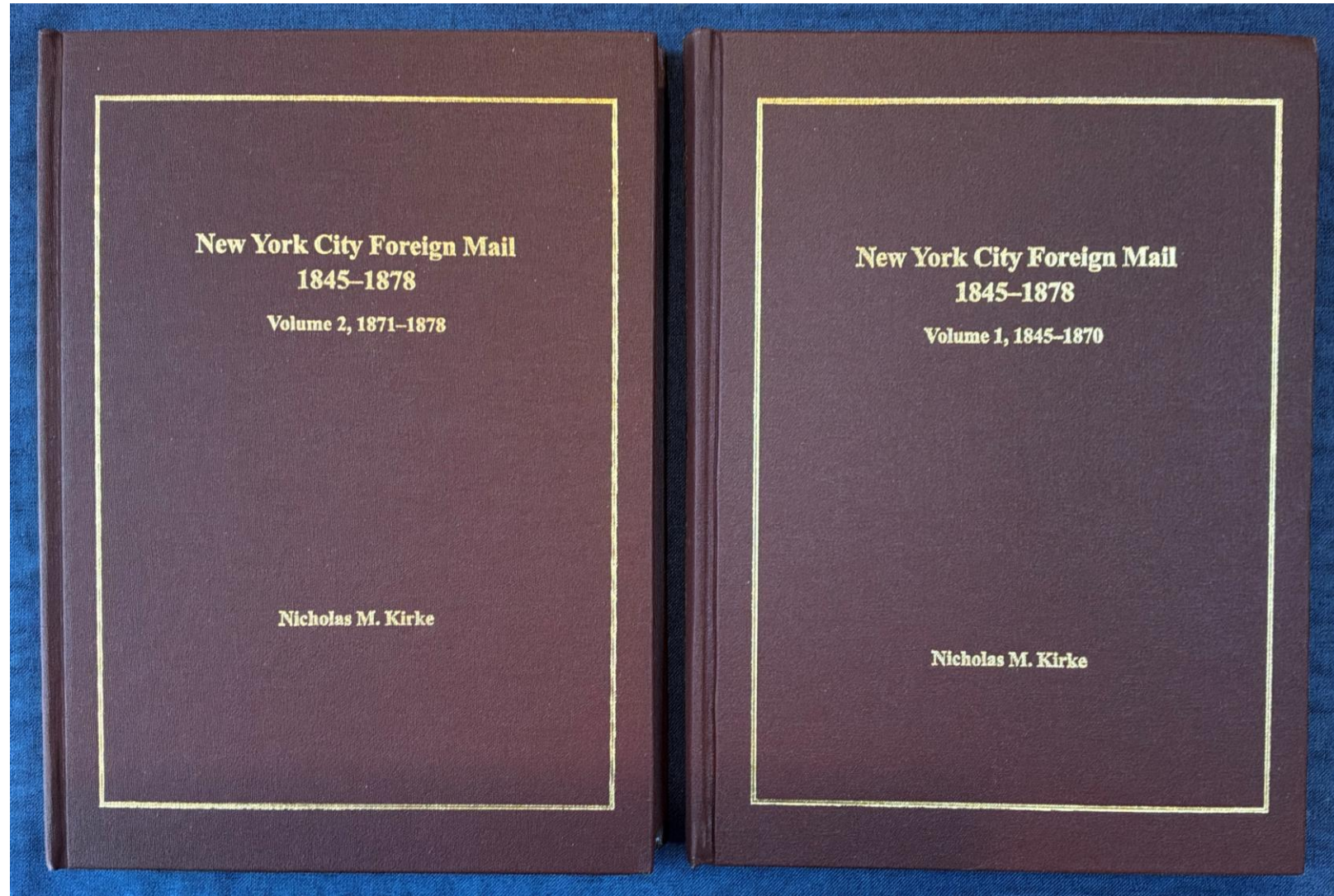


A new book on NYCFM

Nicholas Kirke

New York City Foreign Mail
1845 - 1878

vol. 1 & 2



Kirke Advances New Ideas

- **Changes name** - from NYFM cancellations to

New York **City** Foreign Mail Cancellations

- **Refines the definition**
 - Not all NYFM originated in NYC, it only had to enter the system in there.

New Definition

Outbound Foreign **letter** mail entering the US postal system at New York City and **receiving a NYCFM cancel**



Entry to the NYCFM Mail (6)

- **Standard:**

- Outgoing Foreign mail originating in NYC. Receiving a NYCFM cancel

- **3rd Party**

- Co. like Wells Fargo accepts foreign mail and payment in another city or country. Transports it to NYC, where it enters the mail and receives a NYCFM cancel.

- **Bootlegged Mail**

- Letters carried by hand or boot from other cities or countries to NYC, where it enters the mail and receives a NYCFM cancel.

- **Handling Errors**

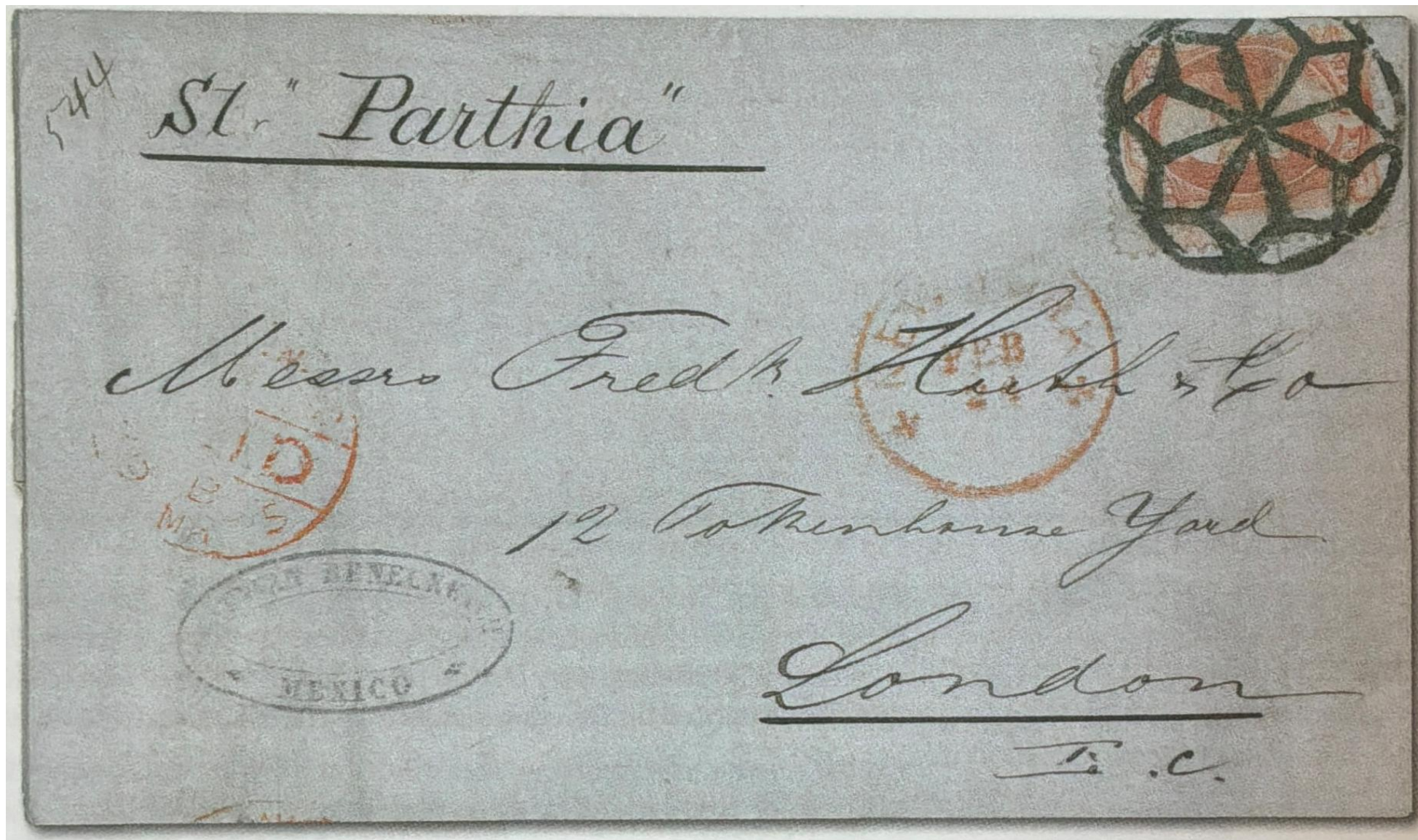
- Letters entering the mail in another US city or town, traveling to NYC for delivery to another country. Postage pre-paid at origin (1)
 - Incoming letters entering the mail in another country traveling to NYC for delivery to a US address. Postage pre-paid at origin (1)
 - Incoming Steamship mail originating in other countries entering the US mail at NYC for delivery to a US address. (?)

**3rd Party
Mail**



Vancouver Island, British Columbia to Sussex, England. Entered mail 6/3/1871 at NYC.

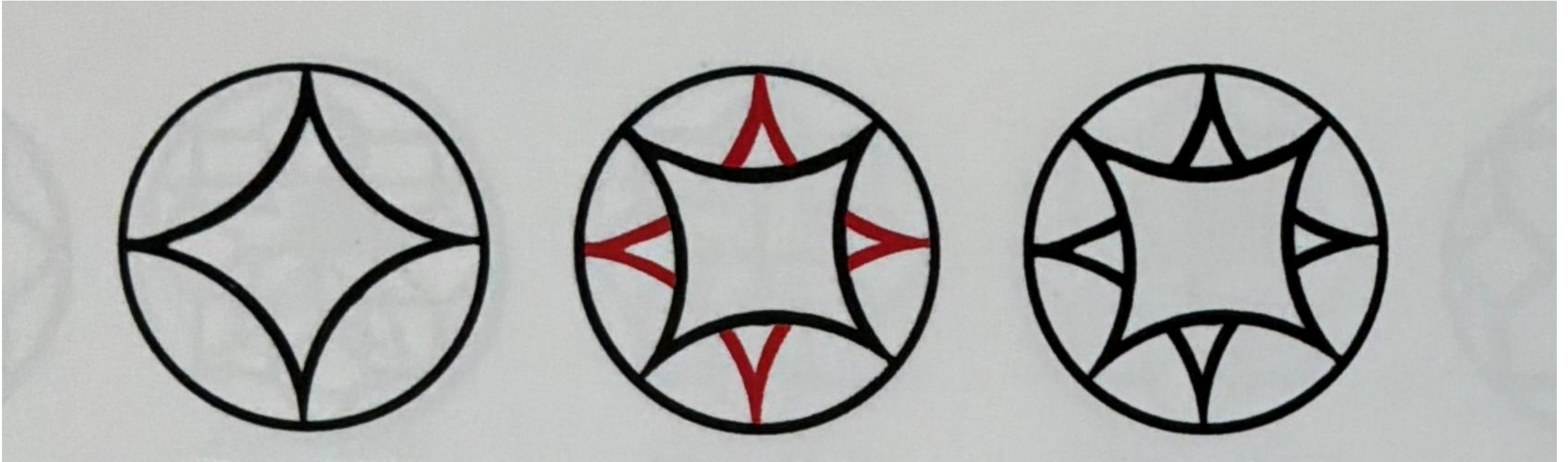
**Bootlegged
Mail**



Carried from Mexico to NYC where it entered the mail and received a NYCFM cancel 2/24/74. Send on to Queenstown, IE. via Cunard ship *Russia* 3/8. Delivered in London 3/9/74

A New Way to Organize

- **Previously organized by shape:** Grids, Stars, Geometric, Pictorial. **ST-4P1**
- **Chronological numbering system:** Date of first use + type. **74-12-12-IGEO**
 - Allows for placement in historical time frame.
 - Shows evolution of designs



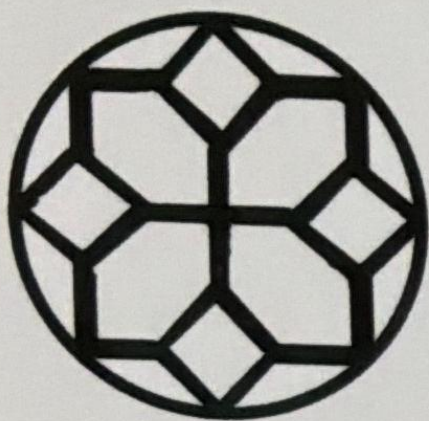


Figure 28-74.
10/17/1874
to
11/14/1875



Figure 28-75.
Design linkage.

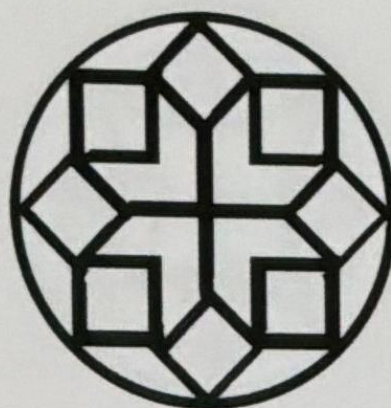


Figure 28-76.
2/27/1875
to
3/26/1875

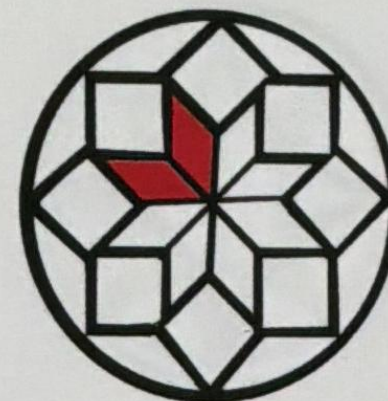


Figure 28-77.
Design linkage.

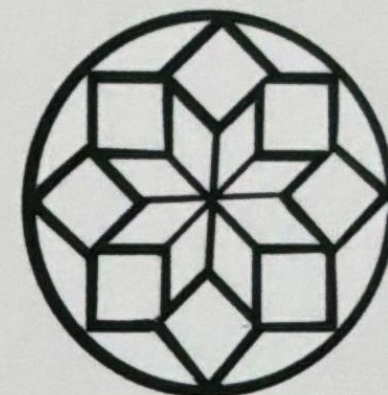


Figure 28-78.
1/11/1875
to
7/27/1875

Expands Time Frame

1845 - 1878

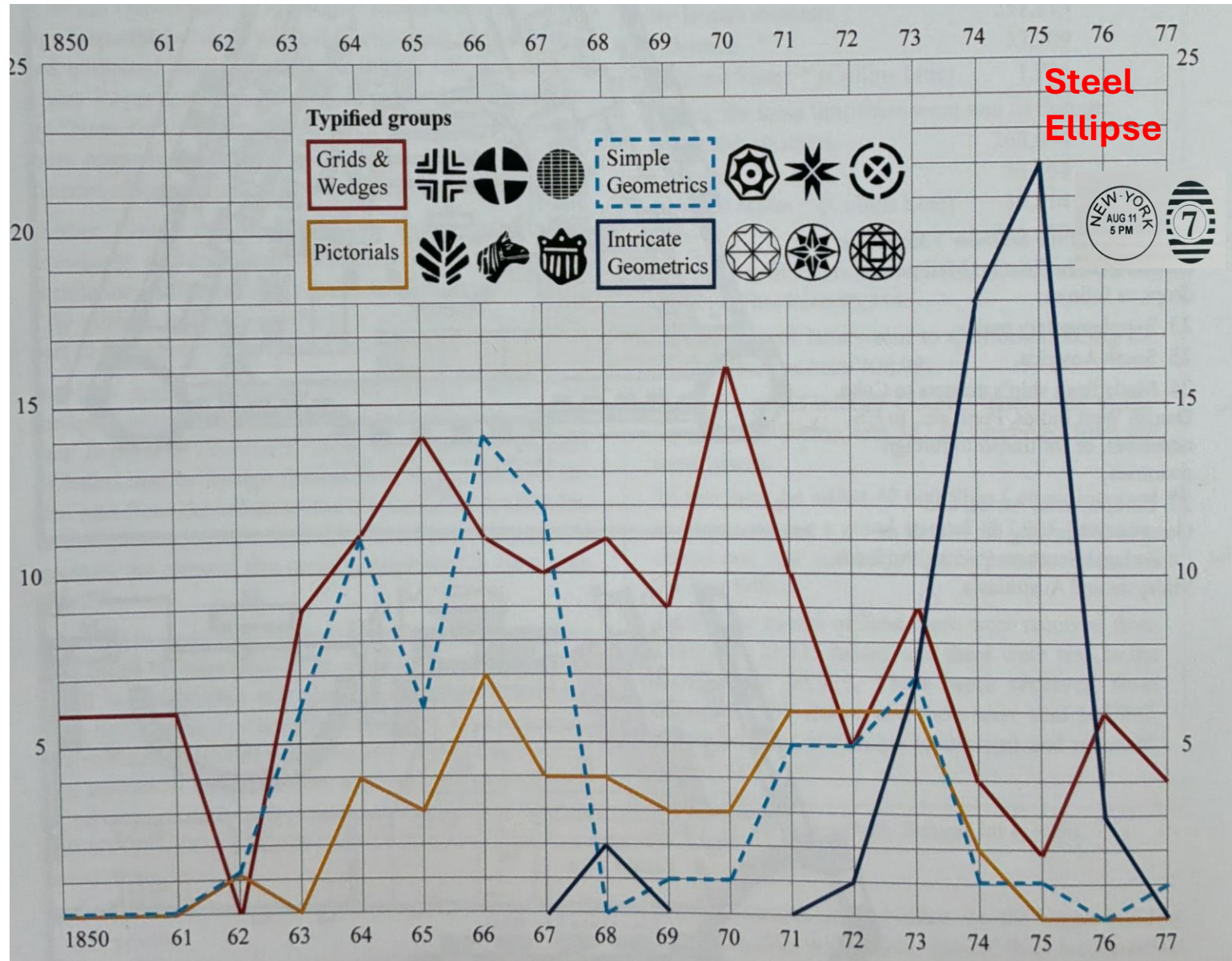
Grids & Wedges: 1845 – 1862

First Simple Geometric
Cancels (2) 1862

1861 and 1869 series

Intricate Fancy Cancels
1870 – 1878

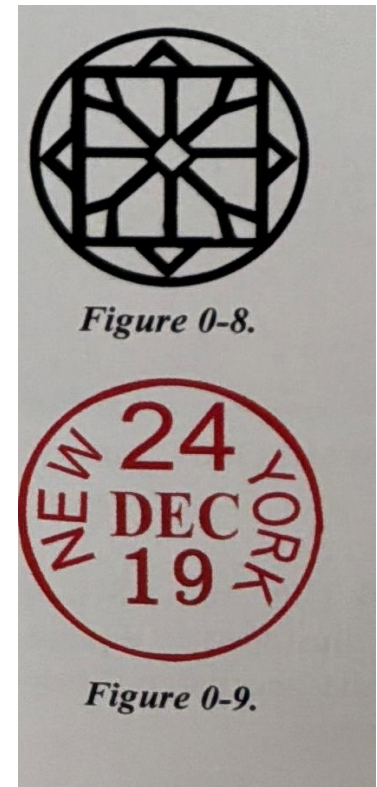
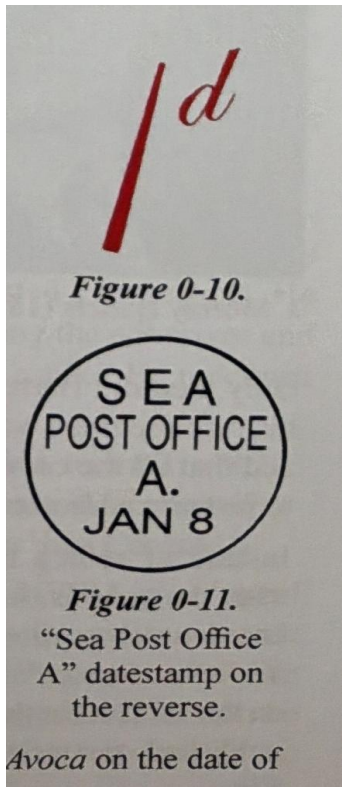
UPU & Steel Ellipse Duplex



UPU

- Kirke commented that while the cancels were an interesting area of study, they were secondary to the postal history.
- A bit like an iceberg, pretty on top but much more to study below the water line.





NYC to Burma, 28 cents, 5 countries, 3 ships, 1 train , 1 canal

Postage - #153 & 146

Cancellations – Intricate Geometric

Postmarks – CDS, Sea post, Credit

Destinations – Exotic, Historical

Rates – 28 cents, '71 – '75 via GB, Brindisi

Routes - Complex

Transport - Ships, Trains, Horses, Canal

Recipients - ?

So, do you want to take a quick look down some rabbit holes?



- Rates
- Routes
 - Transport
- Postmarks

Rates Prior to UPU

France (Including Algeria)

1/1 /1870	4¢	Prepaid to United Kingdom Frontier
1/1 /1870	10¢	(1/4 ounce) Prepaid Direct to French Frontier
1/1 /1870	16¢	(1/3 to 1/2 ounce) Fully prepaid via England to France
1/1 /1870	20¢	(1/2 to 2/3 ounce) Fully prepaid via England to France
4/5 /1870	12¢	(2/3 ounce) Fully paid to France via United Kingdom
5/18/1870	15¢	(3/8 ounce) Fully paid to France via United Kingdom
7/1 /1870	10¢	(1/3 ounce) Fully prepaid via England to France (credit to England 6¢)
8/1 /1874	9¢	Direct to France (new Treaty)
1/1 /1876	5¢	Universal Postal Union

Germany (Including German States, Prussia)

1/1 /1870	10¢	Direct via Hamburg or Bremen
1/1 /1870	15¢	Per Prussian closed mail via England
7/1 /1870	7¢	Via North German Postal Union direct
10/1 /1871	10¢	Per Prussian closed mail via England
3/31/1871	6¢	Direct via Hamburg or Bremen
7/1 /1871	7¢	Direct via Hamburg or Bremen
10/1 /1871	6¢	Direct via Hamburg or Bremen
10/1 /1871	7¢	Per Prussian closed mail via England
8/1 /1874	10¢	Via France
7/1 /1875	5¢	Universal Postal Union

Routes

1850 – 1861

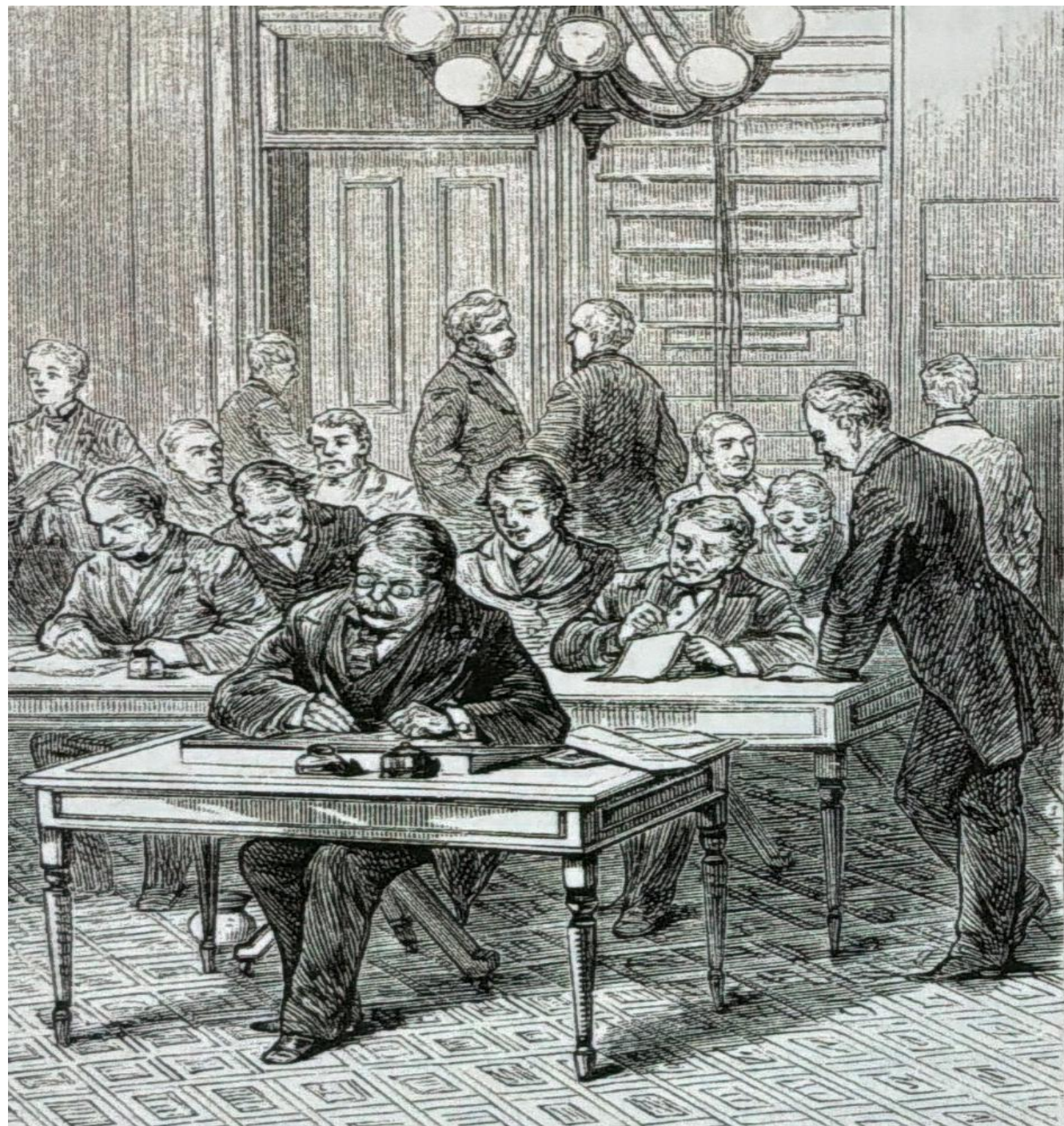
5 shipping lines used 12 ships

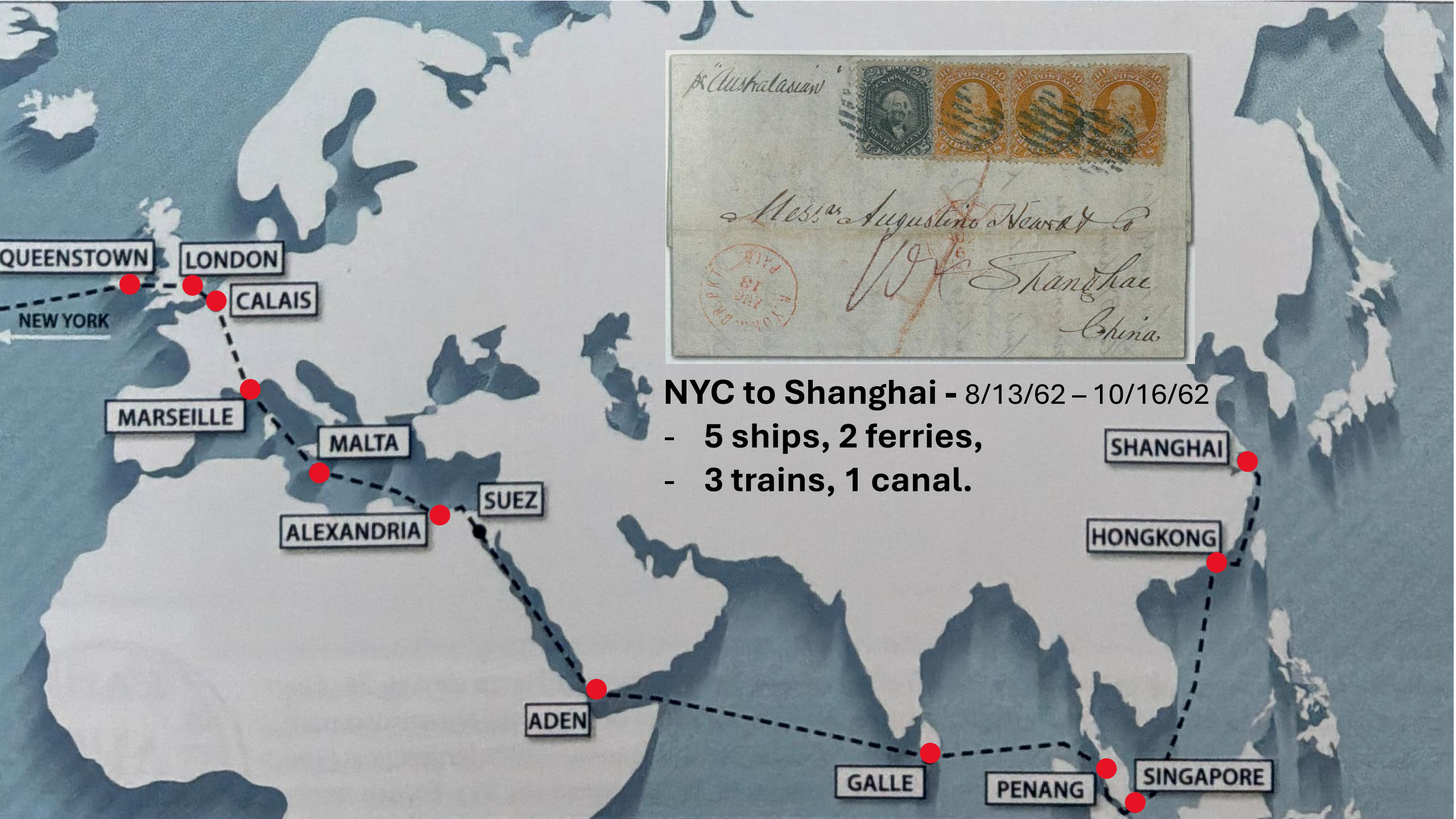
1862 – 1869

15 shipping lines used 68 ships

1870 – 1877

20 shipping lines used 106 ships





QUEENSTOWN

LONDON

CALAIS

NEW YORK

MARSEILLE

MALTA

ALEXANDRIA

SUEZ

ADEN

GALLE

PENANG

SINGAPORE

HONGKONG

SHANGHAI

NYC to Shanghai - 8/13/62 – 10/16/62

- 5 ships, 2 ferries,
- 3 trains, 1 canal.



Routes



NYC to Paris

NYC to C & So. America

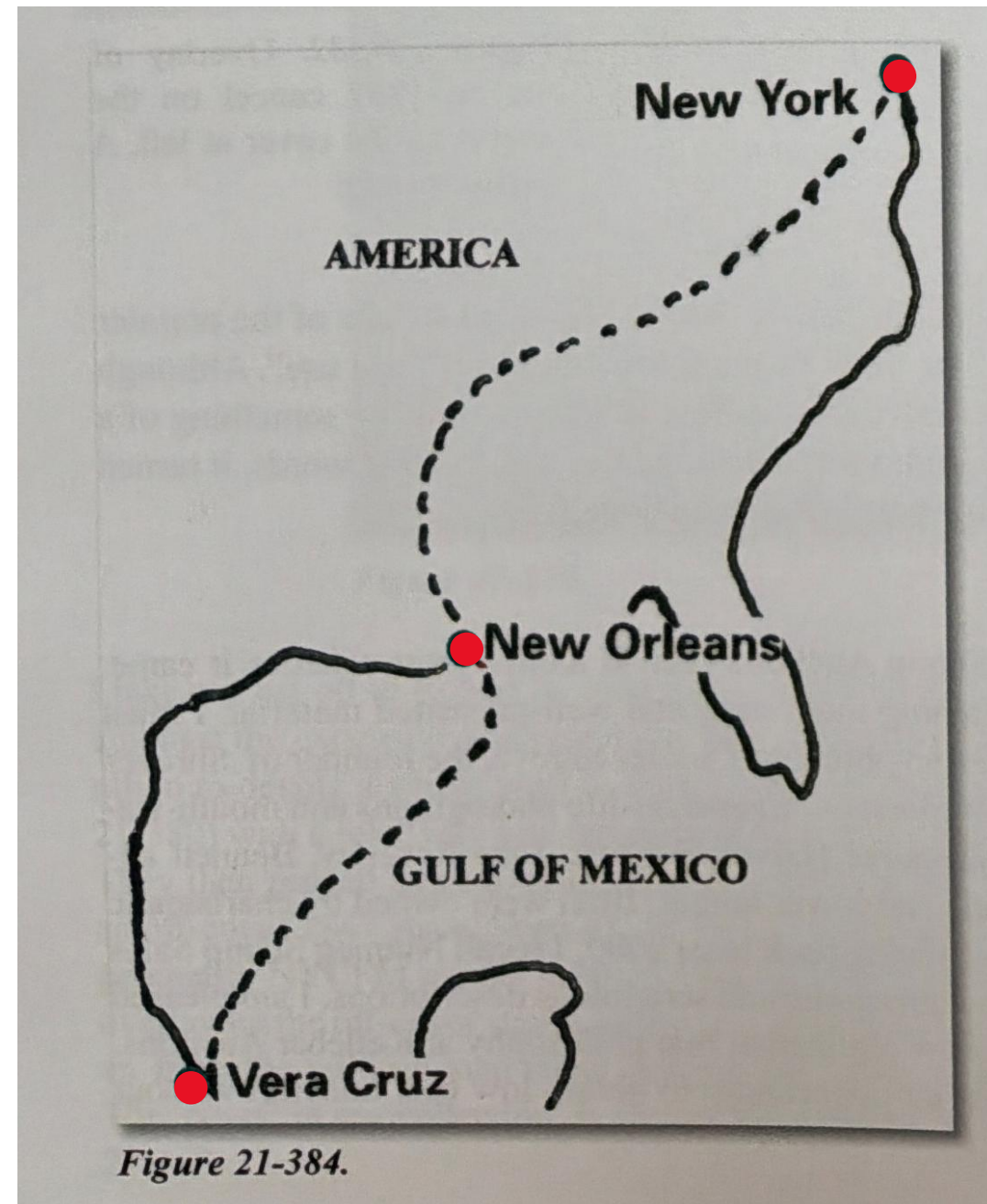


Figure 21-384.

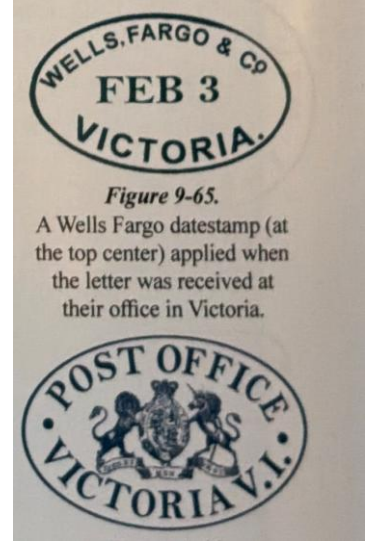
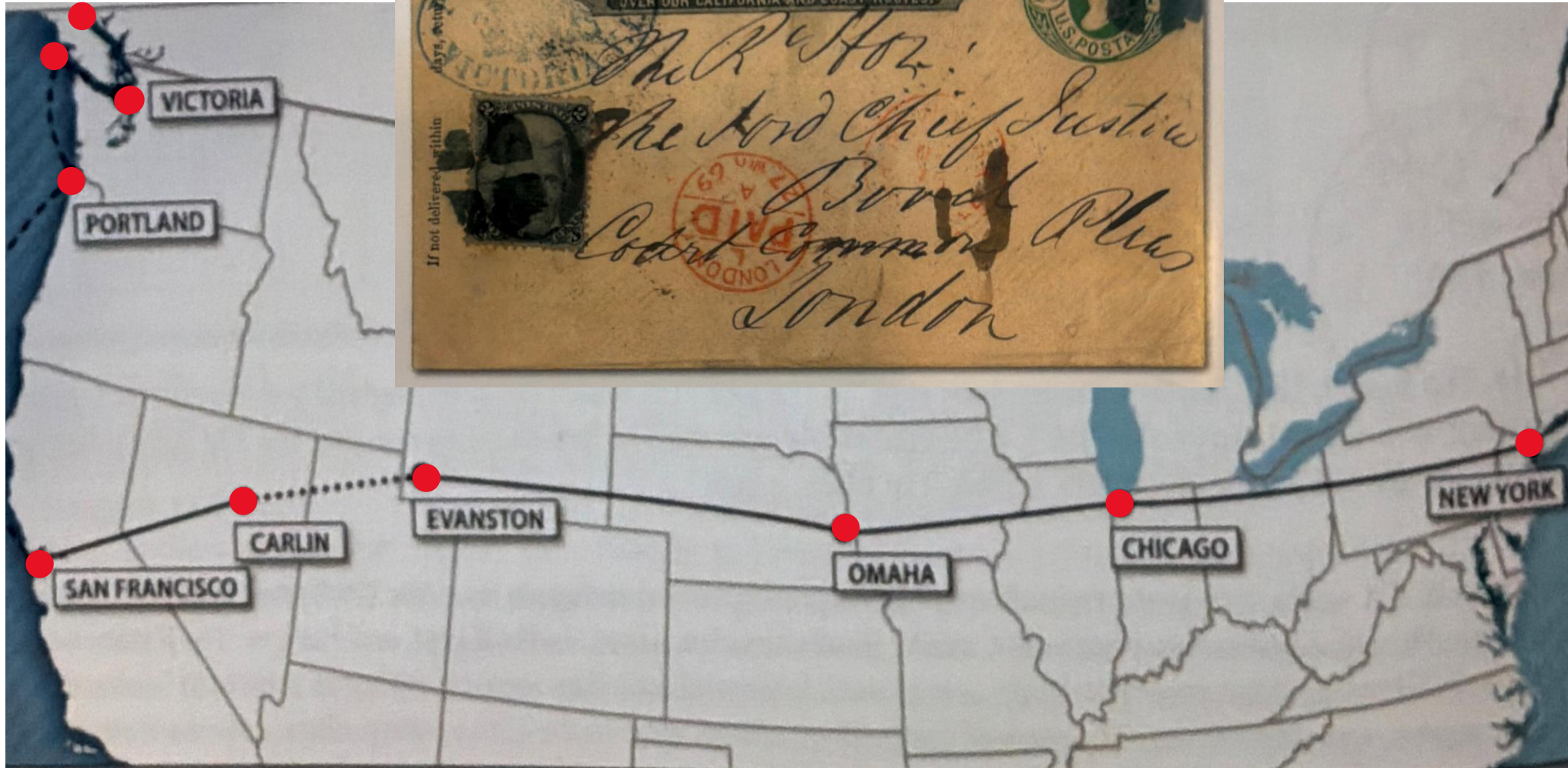
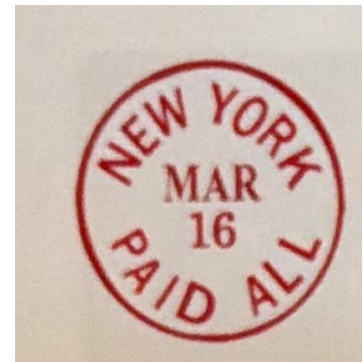


Figure 9-65.
A Wells Fargo datestamp (at the top center) applied when the letter was received at their office in Victoria.

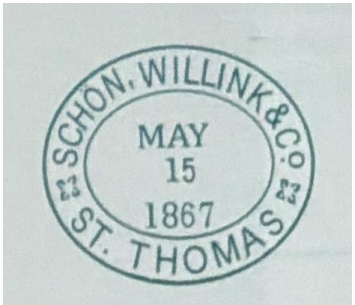
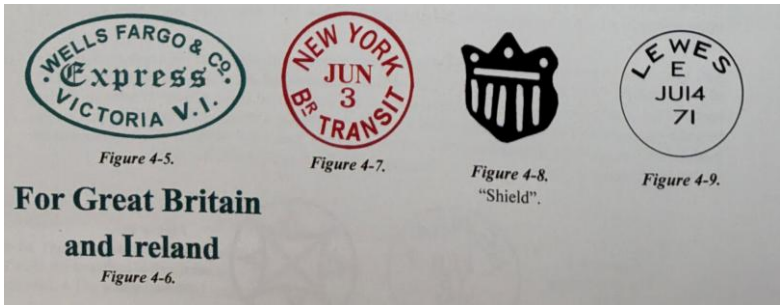
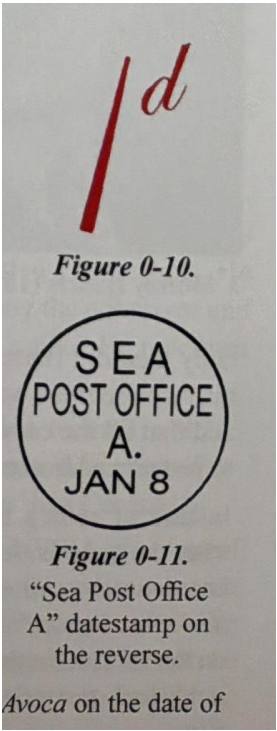
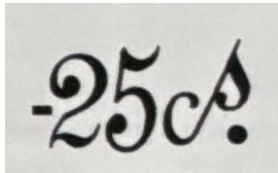
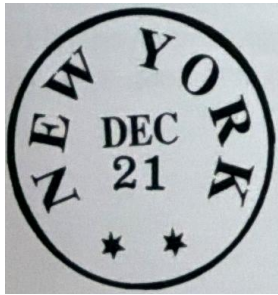
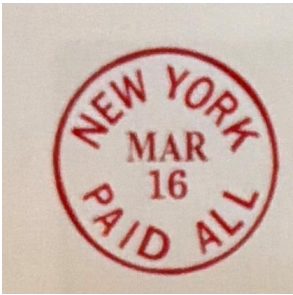
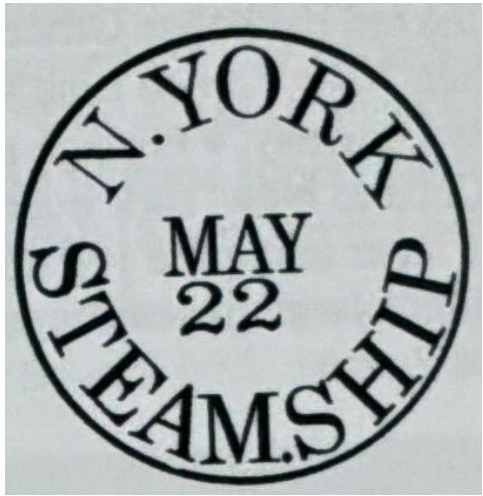
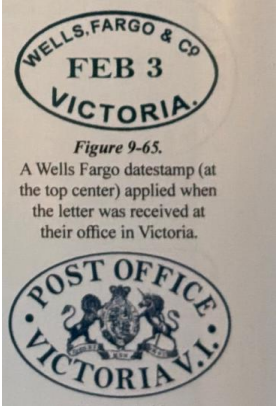
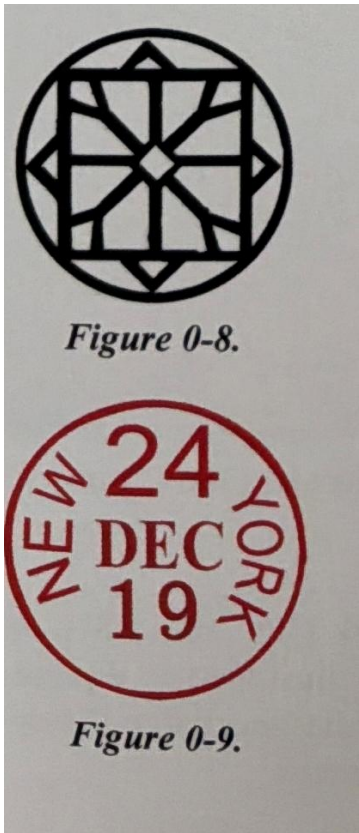


2/8/69 to 3/27/69 **Victoria Island, BC to London via NYC by 3rd Party Carrier.**
2 Ships, 5 trains, Stagecoach, RR history, rare postal stationary piece.

Transport



Postmarks: Foreign & Domestic



Final Thoughts

- Expanded time range = New hunting grounds.

Collectors might want to recheck their collections for 1860 - 1870
New York City Foreign Mail.

(< 1 % recovered, Kirke)

- Chronological order = Consider reorganization of my
NYCFM pages.
- Stamps provide a timeline for history.



THE END

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