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Editorial

One of my editorials during the 35 hurricane seasons I lived through was titled "Expect the Unexpected" and a similar one was titled "Overprepared is better than unprepared". I need not elaborate, you know what I am aiming at during our Covid-19 trying times.

The impact of the emergency has also affected the stamp world, suffice to mention the postponement of London 2020. Yet, for many of us, philately and postal history are proving therapeutic during the lockdown and restrictions caused by the pandemic. Our brain activity does not waste time to feed depression and hypochondria; instead, we should be fully absorbed in our puzzles about overprints, postal tariffs, reprints, "return to sender" covers (speaking of which we should return Covid-19 to the sender). We watch less television and read fewer newspapers; we happily soak stamps, measure perforations, look for a sideways watermark, and the location of a certain Field Post Office. We ought to thank: Rowland Hill for inventing this piece of gummed paper; the Tassis dynasty of postal entrepreneurs who served most of Europe and modernised the service; thanks go to the wise men who instead of throwing away letters and covers they archived them, thus perpetuating the enjoyment of postal historians who delve into postal minutiae of the past, thereby reconstructing a whole epoch of hitherto neglected, yet important details. Even erudite historians of wide acclaim are appreciating postal history and philately.

This edition does not feature the new issues of the Italian area because many of them have been postponed; instead of confusing corrigenda, we prefer to wait for the "all clear" to present a valid list of new stamps.

On a positive note, I mention the gold and large vermeil medals won at Sarasota 2020 by articles published in recent issues of Fil-Italia. You may seriously consider writing an article for our journal. GM

PAPAL STATES - 3 cent
The story of a stamp with no matching Tariff

By Roberto Quondamatteo – ASPOT – CIFO   *Translated by Giorgio Migliavacca*

reprinted from Notiziario CIFO No. 286 June 2018

Pursuant to the 18 June 1866 Edict of the State Secretariat, the Papal States legal tender expressed in Scudi (Ècus) and Bajocchi was discontinued and replaced by a new currency denominated in Lire and Cents. However, at that point in time there were no postage stamps denominated in cents and a first step was taken by converting the old postal tariffs to the new decimal system.

By 7 July, the post offices were informed that the printed matter tariff had been set at 3 cents; this tariff was further confirmed by Cardinal Antonelli's Edict issued on 9 July 1866 which specified that the 3 cent tariff applied to newspapers, gazettes and periodicals not exceeding 40 grammes.

The Edict pointed out that due to the lack of cents denominated stamps, frankings had to utilise the half bajocco postage stamp. The ordinance set the basic weight domestic letters' tariff PD (10c paid to destination by sender) and PA (Porto Assegnato, 20c to be paid by addressee at destination); similarly, letters from senders in town/district to addressees in town/district paid 5c for PD and 10c for PA paid by the addressee - maximum basic weight not to exceed 10 grammes. Registered letters paid a 20c fee to be added to the tariff. As far as internal postal accountancy was concerned 5c corresponded to 1 soldo (1 bajocco).

Although on 12 September 1866 Pope Pius IX gave his approval to the issue of new stamps denominated in cents, it took over one year to get
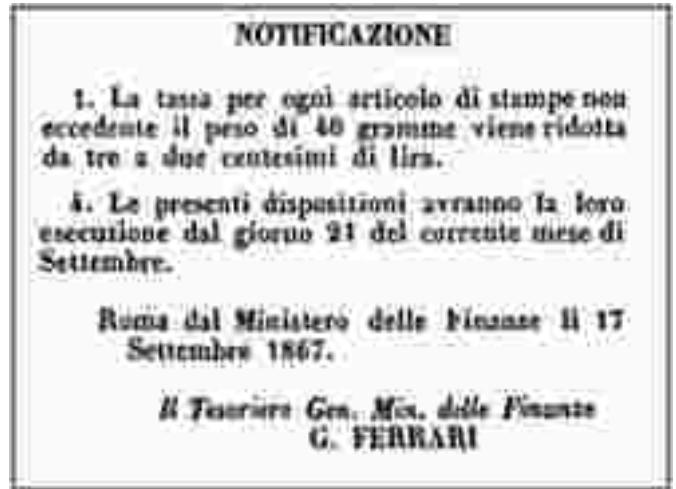
Fig. 2: Sections 1 and 4 of the Ordinance regarding 'Adjustments to the mail tariffs   of some items sent to destinations within the Papal States', 1867, G. Ferrari.

them printed and distributed to post offices.

With such a delay it is not difficult to appreciate that everything was at a standstill for many months. On 17 September 1867, Finance Minister Giuseppe Ferrari signed the "Regulations on the the use of Postage Stamps" (Fig. 1) with Section 2 specifying the approved colours of the seven new denominations and their first day of postal validity (21 September).

On 17 September Ferrari also issued an Ordinance for the purpose of harmonising Papal States tariffs with those of Italy; specifically, this meant that the basic printed matter tariff was reduced from 3c to 2c for each step of 40 grammes (Fig. 2).

Colour Shades

I just mentioned that the September 1867 Regulations (Fig. 1) included a list of the of the new decimal currency stamps and their respective colours. The reason for this reiteration is that before going to press it was decide to switch the colour of two denominations. As a matter of fact, when, on 10 August 1867, the Papal Posts administration issued the order to print the new issue, the 2c was to be printed on ash-grey paper, whereas the 3c was to be printed on green paper (Fedele, Gallenga, "*Per Servizio di Nostro Signore*" – p. 539 – see bibliography).

The requisition figures were respectively of 1800 and 375 sheets: a further confirmation that at this early stage the decision to reduce the basic printed matter tariff to 2c had already been taken, thus

Fig. 1: Section 2, 'Regulations on the use of Postage Stamps', Rome, 1867, approved by Finance Minister Giuseppe Ferrari.

Fig. 3: 1867, 3 cents green, one of the very few recorded examples printed on green paper originating from printer's test sheets of the first requisition order. (Viennafil auction, 2019)

Fig. 4: 1867, 3 cents grey (Sassone catalogue no. 15), first printing (Sassone Antichi Stati)

making the 3c denomination virtually unnecessary. The first requisition order for the 3c was reduced to very few test sheets; in fact, the unissued 3c stamps printed on green paper listed by catalogues originated from these test sheets. Only five or six such test stamps have survived, they are all single examples without gum: it would seem that most test sheets of the 3c were destroyed.

In all likelihood, the switch of colours was motivated by "contingent" causes such as the shortage of grey paper. Indeed, while there was a good supply of green paper, the ash-grey paper had not arrived yet. As a result, the 3c printing was put on hold, no big deal since the printed matter tariff had been lowered from 3c to 2c. At that point it was justifiably decided to use the green paper to print the 2c denomination which was needed for franking printed matter.

The First Printing - 1867

The absence of a 3c tariff to match that specific denomination is the cause of the small quantity printed; sure enough the 3c had only three printings: the first in 1867, the second in 1868 the last one in 1869 reaching a grand-total of 103,200 stamps.

The three printings can be easily detected because of their colour and for the presence or lack of perforations, which, as we shall see, created two additional sub-types.

The first printing consisting of 24,000 stamps (grey paper, imperforate, Sassone no. 15) was delivered in September 1867. The stamps were printed in sheets of 64 stamps (4 panes of 16 stamps each), for a total of 375 sheets. The four panes were separated by interpane gutters (alleys) while ample margins were left at the top of the sheet and at the right handside.
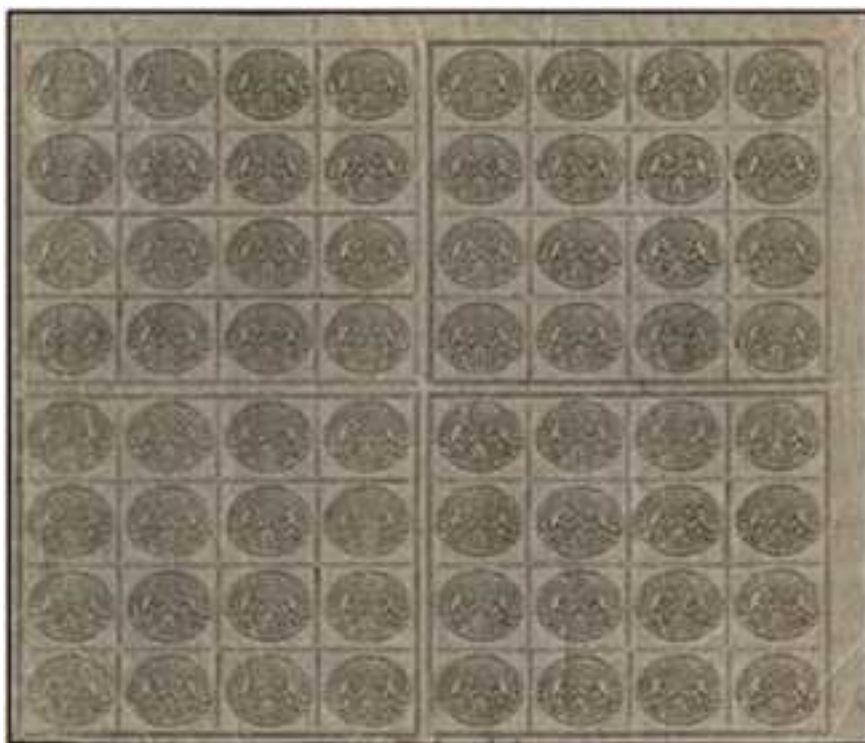

Fig. 5: – 1867, first printing, full sheet of the 3 cents grey (Sassone no. 15). Setting of 64 stamps divided in 4 panes of 16 stamps each; the panes are separated by interpane gutters.

[Barcella, Bizzarri, A. Zanaria, M. Zanaria "Etats Pontificaux"].
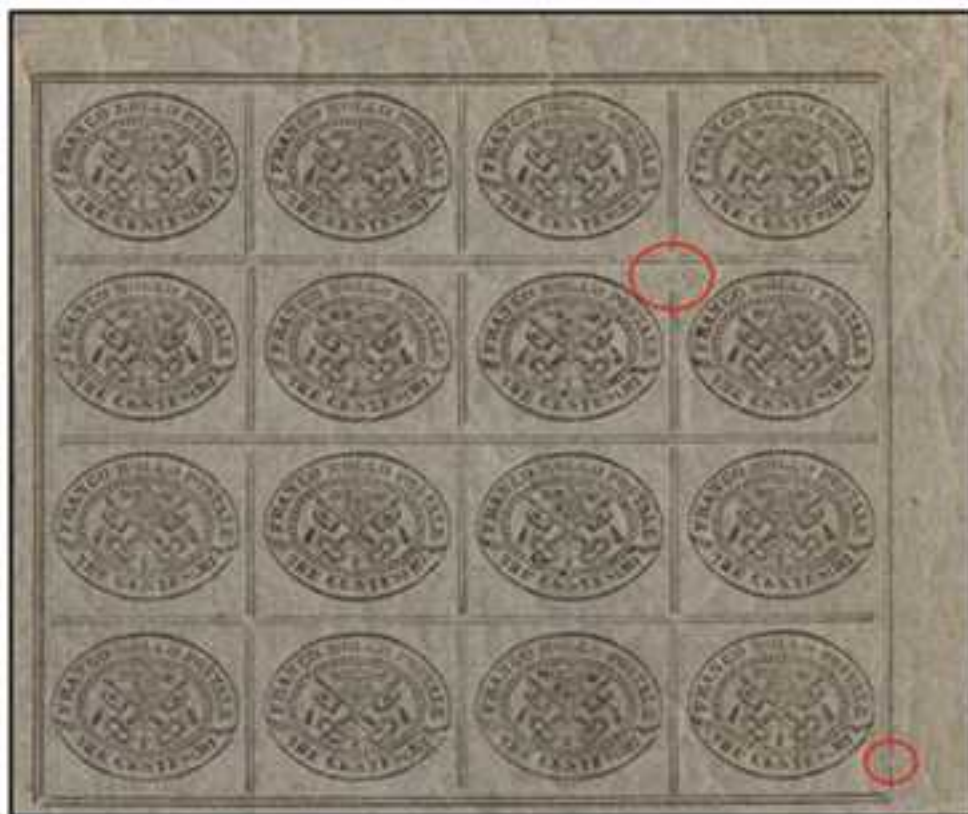
Fig. 6: Details from Fig. 5: upper right pane of 16 stamps. Please notice the vertical gutter lines interruption between the stamps of sheet positions 15 and 16 (second horizontal row of the sheet); additionally, notice the break of the perimeter lines at far right of horizontal row 4 of the sheet (position 32).

Perforations tests were carried out for the purpose of producing postage stamps that would easily separate; such tests took place at an early stage as the first printing was completed. We have no information regarding the number of sheets used for this experimental perforation, but we can hypothesize a very small number of sheets (let's say up to 10 sheets - or 640 stamps).

Since the vast majority of these perforated stamps are found in mint condition, it has always been speculated that these 640 perforated 3c first printing had never been distributed to the various post offices and therefore had no regular postal use. This point of view is supported by the fact that, after September 1870 (annexation to Italy) the test sheets were found at the Headquarters of the Posts of Florence. Nonetheless, the letter picture below (Fig. 7) proves in unequivocal manner that a portion of the test perforated stamps had regular postal use.

We can therefore confirm that, in May 1868, the perforated 3c grey stamps could only be those of the first printing.

Fig. 7: 13 May 1868, letter from Rome to Viterbo with a tricoloured franking to pay step 1 (10c) domestic tariff using one 2c and one 3c perforated stamps and one 5c imperforate. The 3c is undoubtedly one of those from test perforations sheets of the 1867 first printing. [Barcella, Bizzarri, A. Zanaria, M. Zanaria "Etats Pontificaux"].

The Second Printing - 1868

The second printing of the 3c denomination (Sassone no. 14) was delivered in February 1868; it consisted of 19,200 stamps (300 sheets). For the purpose the letterpress setting of the first printing was used (sheet of 64 stamps [8 x 8] divided in four panes of 16 stamps separated by interpane gutters. What was distinctly new was the colour of the paper which had mutated from grey to a pinkish gradation.

There is no specific explanation for this change of colour; it was most likely occasioned by the shortage of grey paper. Actually, supply difficulties of the special German paper (chalk-surfaced and coloured) chosen for printing the decimal denominated cents stamps occurred regularly for all the seven denominations of the cents series. So much so, that in many instances the delivery of stamps to the post offices were described as "on account", which meant that it was based on the reams of paper in stock at the Cameral Printing Works in Rome. The paper, produced by "Schmitt & Nast" was delivered directly from Germany.
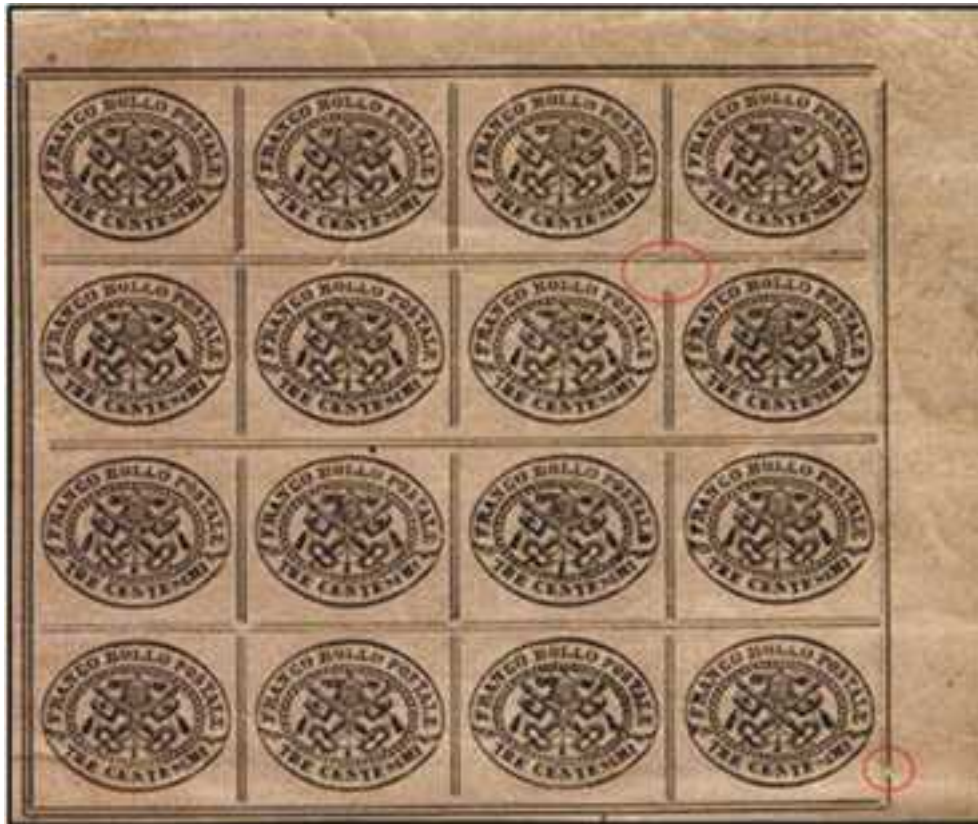
Fig. 8: Upper right pane of 16 stamps of the pinkish gradation of the 3c (Sassone no. 14) from a full sheet of 64 stamps, second printing. As in Fig. 6 we can notice the vertical gutter lines interruption between the stamps of sheet positions 15 and 16 (second horizontal row of the sheet); additionally, notice the break of the perimeter lines at far right of horizontal row 4 of the sheet (position 32) which proves that this was the same plate used for the first printing; additionally, we see at top right corner a break of the perimeter lines.
[Barcella, Bizzarri, A. Zanaria, M. Zanaria "Etats Pontificaux"].

Fig. 9: 29 March 1868, from Rome to Cesena (Romagne). Basic letter weight tariff for a Kingdom of Italy destination, 20c franking consisting of one 5c imperforate + horizontal strip of five of the 3c pinkish gradation, imperforate (Sassone no. 14) from the second printing. Notice the interpane gutter between the first and secon stamps at left. [Barcella, Bizzarri, A. Zanaria, M. Zanaria "Etats Pontificaux"].

About 15 sheets of the second printing were also test perforated (Fig. 10); as can be seen at Fig. 11, a portion of the 960 perforated stamps had regular postal use. The item under examination is a large newspaper wrapper reaching the 8th step of the 2c basic tariff and therefore requiring a 16c franking consisting two perforated 3c stamps (from the test perforations of the 1868 second printing) and a perforated 10c.

Fig. 10: test perforated full sheet of 64 3c stamps pinkish gradation (second printing) Sassone no. 23. The printing plate setting follows the criteria of the first printing with four panes of 16 stamps separated by interpane gutters. It can be clearly noticed that the perforator applied only a single strike on each of the two interpane gutters (vertical and horizontal). [Barcella, Bizzarri, A. Zanaria, M. Zanaria "Etats Pontificaux"].

Fig. 11: Large newspaper wrapper from Rome to Modena; notice the handwritten "p 8" at top left: because of the weight of the printed matter inside the wrapper the postage to be paid by the sender reached the 8th step of the 2c basic tariff and therefore required a 16c franking consisting two perforated 3c stamps pinkish shade (from the test perforations of th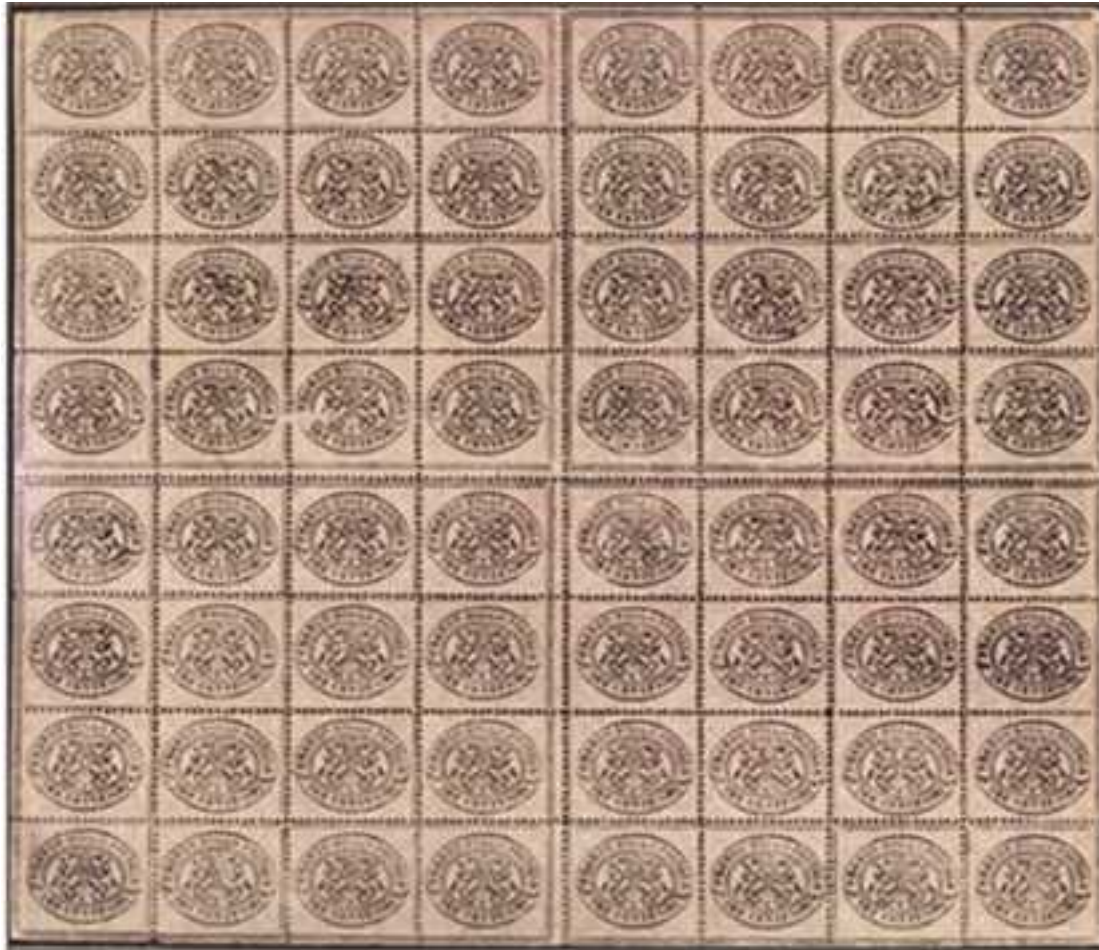e 1868 second printing, Sassone no. 23) and a perforated 10c. [Barcella, Bizzarri, A. Zanaria, M. Zanaria "Etats Pontificaux"].

The Third Printing - 1869

After the test perforations applied to sheets of 64 stamps of most denominations of the "cents" issue, in March 1868, for the first time, a new setting of the printing plate was adopted. It consisted of a letterpress plate of 120 stamps to be used for the 2, 5, 10, and 20c denominations. The new setting substantially reduced printing costs: one sheet of coloured paper could now fit two sheets of 120 stamps each. The old setting of 64 stamps would also fit two sheets but the grand-total was 128 stamps, almost half of the 240 stamps printed with the new setting. All the "cents" denominations except for the 3c were printed using the new "120 x 2" setting. The reason why the innovative setting was not used to print the 3c is to be found in its purposeless nature: unfortunately this denomination had no matching tariff and as such its use was extremely low. It was therefore decided not to create a new printing plate for this denomination which required the assembling of an additional 56 typographical stereos.

In June 1869 some 60,000 3c stamps in the old setting of 64 stamps per sheet were delivered by the Cameral Printing Works. This marked a come back of the first printing ash grey, but this time in two different nuances: grey (Sassone no. 24) and light grey (Sassone no. 24b). In comparing these sheets with the old setting (first and second printing) it can be easily noticed that the interpane gutters separating the 4 panes of 16 stamps had been eliminated.

Fig. 12: Full sheet of the 3c grey (Sassone no. 24). Setting of 64 stamps without interpane gutters. 1869 third printing.

[Barcella, Bizzarri, A. Zanaria, M. Zanaria "Etats Pontificaux"].

After we add up the three printings (1867, 1868 and 1869) a grand-total of 103,000 stamps were printed. Therefore the   3 cents denomination, considering all the 19 years of philatelic life of the Papal States and the resulting 18 denominations in bajocchi and cents, ranks third after the 1 Scudo (50,000 printed) and 50 baj. (60,000 printed). This tally is across the board without distinctions between the various printings and types.

Remainders

After the *Capture of Rome* on 20 September 1870, the Posts Headquarters in Rome counted all the cents denominated stamps that had remained unsold: the 3c (for which the subtypes, nuances, loose multiples and isolated stamps were overlooked) the grand-total was 50,807 stamps.

Gallenga stated that actually at the Central Depot only 35,601 3 cents were found, they were joined by the remainders of the Civitavecchia district post offices (370 3 cents stamps) and, of course, those of Rome's district (14,836 3 cents stamps) Naturally, this is the lowest quantity of the seven decimal denominations. If we compare this data with the bajocchi stamps data suffice to say that of the 1 Scudo top denomination only a little more than 24,300 examples were sent to Florence in 1871.
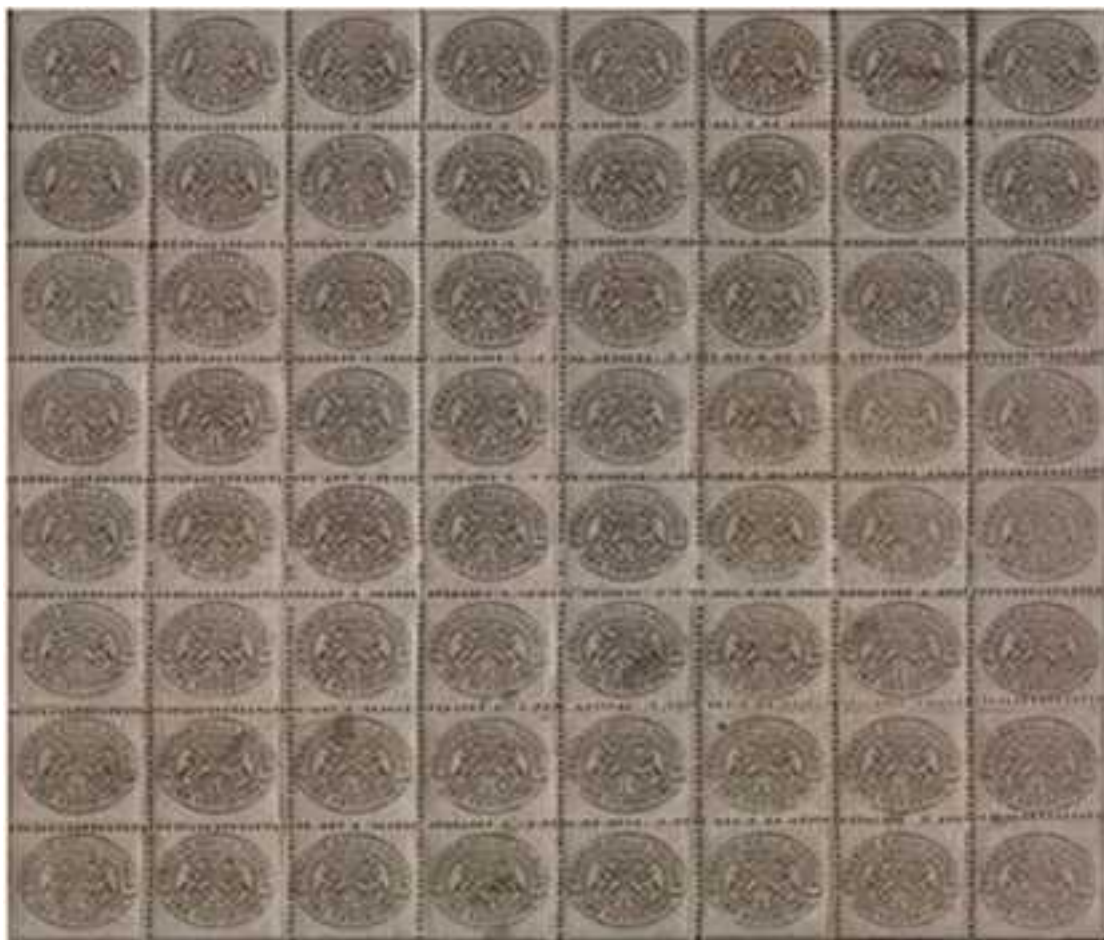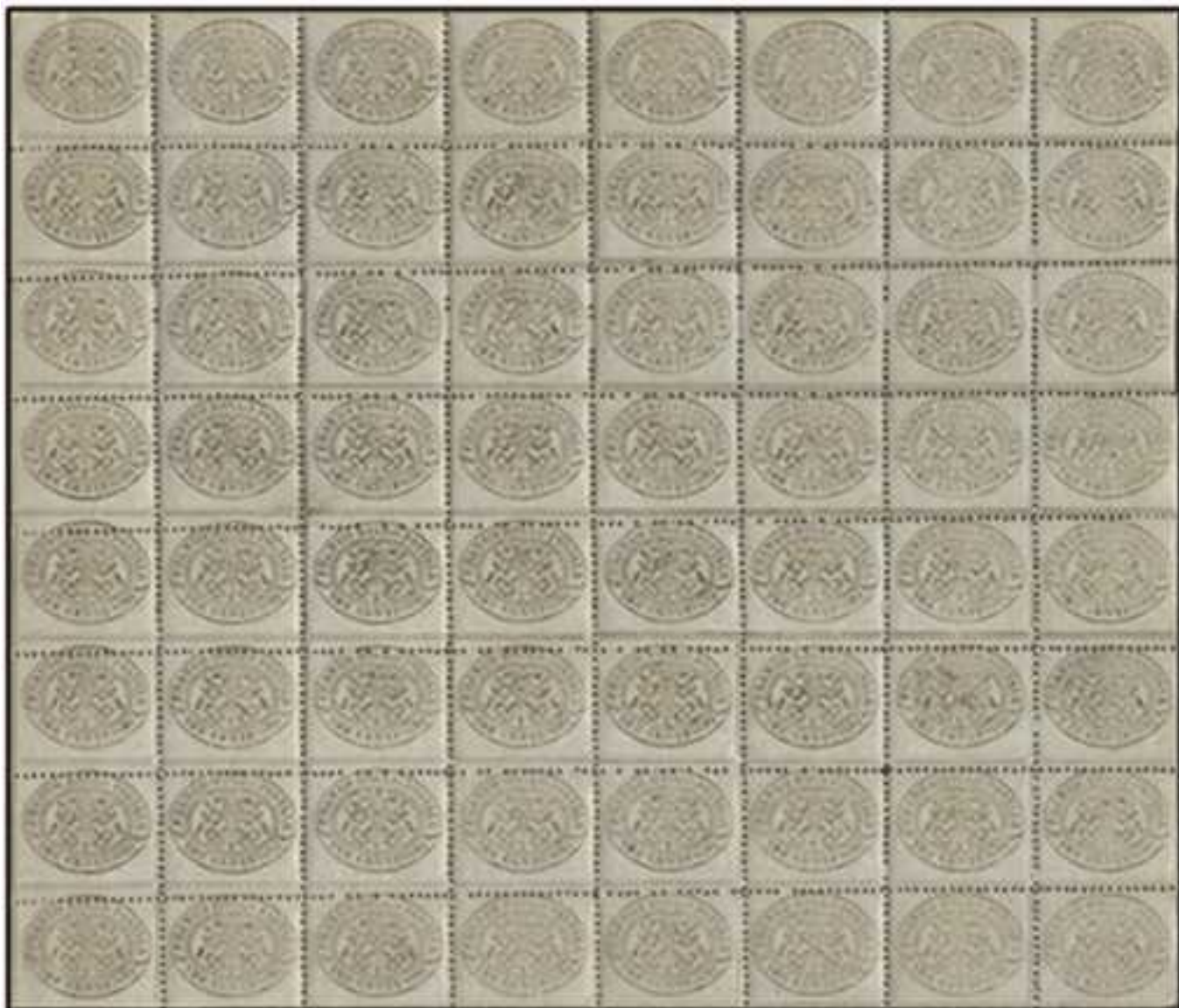
Fig. 13: Full sheet of the 3c light grey (Sassone no. 24b). Setting of 64 stamps without interpane gutters. 1869 third printing. [Ferrario auction, 2017]

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The forgotten Mezzana

by Francesco Giuliani

Translated by Giorgio Migliavacca

reprinted from "*Arte del Francobollo*" N° 100, March 2020

The artistic design legacy of the impeccable miniaturist has been dispersed at a recent international auction. Documents, drawings and sketches of extraordinary importance for Italy's 1900s history that should have been secured by the Historical Museum of Communication, their natural haven, have found home elsewhere.

At this point in time, to talk about Corrado Mezzana we must start with the most recent development which has resulted in an auction sale in Stuttgart of a considerable portion of the philatelic artwork created by the greatest Italian stamp designer.

As one leaves through the 16 November 2019 auction catalogue lavishly produced by Peter Feuser's Südphila and examines the results of the sale, there is a feeling of dejection and helplessness for the way Italy has glossed over this opportunity. Of this Mezzana treasure trove today we only have virtual images that could have otherwise enriched the Historical Museum of Communication in Rome, the appropriate haven for philatelic history relics.

In all fairness and for the sake of thoroughness, this story has a wider background. In 1990, the year that marked the centenary of Mezzana's birth on no less than "Philately Day", in addition to a most welcomed commemorative stamp featuring his self-portrait, a volume titled "The Art of Stamps: Corrado Mezzana" was launched. The publisher was the Administration of Posts and Telecommunications; the volume consists of important research by co-authors Franco Filanci and Lucia Mezzana Zilli, Mezzana's daughter. At the end of page 125, we get some explicit and useful information" "*All the preparatory artwork (designs and sketches) for the production of postage stamps are the property of the family of Edgar Erskine Hume Jr.* **[1922-1975, son of the Major General by the same name; Fil-Italia ed. note]** *of Frankfort, Kentucky, USA*". The same information is included in the entry that Rosanna Ruscio

Fig. 1: Photographic portrait of a young Corrado Mezzana with his signature.

has written on Mezzana in "*Treccani's Italian Biographical Dictionary*", vol. 74 published in 2010.

Almost fifty years have passed since this material was sold (either directly or indirectly) by the family of the artist to a foreign buyer without anyone sensing that these precious cultural assets should have remained in Italy, specifically in that Rome so dear to Mezzana.

Let's move forward to 2019 when a chunk of the Mezzana treasure trove was placed on the auction block in Great Britain at Warwick & Warwick, and later on (16 November) at Stuttgart-based Südphila-Peter Feuser where it found more keen buyers especially at such affordable prices.

At the eleventh hour, before the Südphila sale, former Minister and former Emilia-Romagna Senator, Honourable Carlo Giovanardi rang an alarm bell after being alerted by Rome-based philatelist Aniello Veneri who had sought some intervention of both the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, while concurrently exhorting for action the Government' Printing Works Mint as well as Poste Italiane.

These initiatives were reported by the philatelic press and, subsequently, by mass media, leading to a Parliamentary Question by Senator Gaetano Quagliarello on the eve of the auction. The move urging the Ministry of Culture to intervene by securing the entire collection remains, to this day, a dead letter. It generated some bureaucratic passing off of responsibility while the auction sold the vast majority of the lots to buyers from all over the globe, with all due respect to Italian philately. Fabio Bonacina,

Fig. 2 & 3: April 1953, President of Italy Luigi Einaudi and Minister of Industry and Commerce Pietro Campilli attended the opening of the exhibition of Corrado Mezzana philatelic artwork held in Rome. [A video of this exhibition can be viewed on Youtube by searching "Retrospettiva di Corrado Mezzana".)

Fig. 4 & 5: Mezzana's painting inspired his design for "Italy at Work" 50 cent for the Aosta Valley.

head of the Italian Philatelic Press Union (USFI) wrote an article for the online daily Vaccari Magazine appropriately and realistically headlined "*Bye-bye Treasure*".

As you peruse the list of prices realized and compare them with the respective lots estimates, it is easy to figure out that with a few tens of thousands Italy could have secured the entire collection which would have better documented some very significant chapters of the history of Italian philately which impacted Italian history and culture.

Other observers have emphasized that in Italy culture has always been neglected and year after year thousands of archaeological items and works of art leave our shores to find a home elsewhere. From north to south, the most important necropolises have become a generous and diverse source of supply to unpunished grave robbers; not to mention paintings and works of art stolen from churches and museums which, sometimes, resemble a "self-service" temptation for criminals. Commentators add that Italy has

too many cultural assets and is unable to manage them as it should, therefore there is no point in shouting 'scandal' for some sketches and drawings.

If truth be told this is the usual myopic political approach of those who do not realize that culture can substantially increase the nation's revenues as well as creating many jobs and business opportunities on a large scale. Instead, attention is paid to boosting clientelism without achieving anything valid or significant.

At the end of the day, paradoxically, the pretence is that of people who genuinely thought about a happy ending complete with the landing of Mezzana's artwork treasure at an Italian museum. On such a background, how can we turn a blind eye to the anger and grief of so many art lovers?

Painting was his love: stamps gave him fame

The philatelic production of Corrado Mezzana encompasses decades fraught with developments of great (and often tragic) importance spanning from the 1930s to the early 1950s.

Mezzana was born in Rome in 1890 and his daughter Lucia has emphasized his almost genetic bond to the world of the posts since his father Giuseppe had moved from Sarzana (Liguria region) to Rome after winning a competitive exam of the postal administration. After graduating in jurisprudence in 1912, Corrado, a well-read man who was also a skilled writer, followed his call, his passionate love for fine arts - an arena where he vastly improved his knowledge.

Fig. 6 & 7: Mezzana's painting showing scouts helping a wine carter inspired his design for "Italy at Work" 40 lire for Latium; in background: a Roman aqueduct and the dome of St. Peter's

After becoming part of the artistic world of the capital, Mezzana gradually came to the limelight with a remarkable number of artistic works until 1952 when he died at 62 years of age.

It is easy to recognize his soft spots after going through his most important works, sacred art being a prominent one, which explains his enthusiastic philatelic collaboration with Vatican City.

His real passion was painting, a love he never concealed, not even when faced with a question by a philatelist like Enzo Diena. Leafing through the book "*Italy at Work - The Italian pictorial definitive*" (1995 edition) by Danilo Bogoni and Andrea Malvestio we read his sincere and flawless answer: "*I should not tell it to a philatelist, but I sincerely prefer painting. A stamp requires creativeness which must give way to inventiveness and to the art of artifice: sometimes it is a true puzzle especially when you try to fit so many persons and so many words in such a restricted space while avoiding minuscule details. Nevertheless, I must add   that it gives a more generous gratification when the work of the designer, if deserving, can be appreciated by a very large number of people,* decidedly much more than those visiting a 'personal exhibition' or a museum.*"

These words give the depth and breadth of Mezzana: the artist and stamp designer. He confesses his fondness of painting, the main and more illustrious art that ties him to the great tradition of the past, nevertheless the miniature format of stamps offers him unprecedented exposure and visibility and, ultimately, may shift the public's attention to his larger-scale works which allowed him to express his art without too much technical conditioning.

The shift of interest did not materialize; in recent decades Mezzana the painter has been somewhat forgotten; a good artist indeed, a flawless professional in his field, yet not that close to excellence: and this impression gets stronger as time goes by.

Fig. 8 & 9: 1930 Virgil bimillenial - "Salute to the Motherland" - approved design for the 30 cent stamp (courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions) and the issued stamp.

His paintings, sacred or secular, do not stand out for special qualities while his philatelic artwork and drawings have a longlasting impact. It is therefore no exaggeration to state that his stamps are by far the niche of his still vital and popular artistic output.

More to the point, stamps follow a trend which is the opposite of the one that pertains to Mezzana's paintings simply because his stamp drawings and sketches were popular since day one and today they are still loved and coveted by enthusiasts and specialized collectors.

Why such a contrast? The answer is once more to be found in the above-mentioned quote: Mezzana was able to enrich and expatiate the limited space of the stamp design by adding to it a considerable number of pictorial elements and aspects, including graphic and lexical ones.

The settings he loved are those with many people, rich in details, including symbolic and allegorical references, without exposing the artifice, but avoiding redundancy. His creativity, curiosity and artistic discipline blend well with his classical sense of measure combined with his propensity to balance and clarity. All of these qualities enhance his ability to catch at first sight the attention of the viewer by offering him an elegant and comprehensible scene which is comforting in its gracefulness and viewpoint, thus stimulating a closer look to enjoy all the details and hidden or deeper meanings. It is not by chance that Mezzana's style is easily identified, even before your read his name on the lower margin of the stamps he created for Italy, Vatican City and San Marino, the latter being the only collaboration with the oldest republic to pay - in 1947 - a philatelic tribute to the USA President Franklin D. Roosevelt who was also a stamp collector.

It is the extent of his prolific production of stamp designs that leaves the door open to less inspired moments as well as innovations and ingenious solutions in which his classic approach gives way to the fertile contribution of modernity. The care spent on the main design is extended to the inscriptions which are always enhanced and harmonized; just have a good look at his unmistakable cartouches and his tasteful choice of fonts.

First encounter with stamps: a long-lasting passion

Mezzana's first encounter with the philatelic world took place in the 1920s. Being a Roman Catholic, he suggested some sacred topics, but they did not generate interest. In 1925 he submitted the St. Francis of Assisi drawing to complement the commemorative set issued the following year in remembrance of the seventh centenary of the death of the great founder of the Franciscan Order.

In 1929 he took on a project that must have been dear to him, the signing of the Lateran Treaty between Italy and the Vatican which brought an end to a long phase of conflict after the 1870 Capture of Rome. To salute the historic landmark the religious authorities suggested to issue a set of stamps and Mezzana submitted a drawing reminiscent of the Liberty style with tondo portraits of Pius XI and Victor Emmanuel III flanking the central scene.

With the two drawings for a proposed 1930 series celebrating the Congress of Italians residing abroad we enter the essence of the issues that made Mezzana famous during the two decades of the fascist era.

1930 was, indeed, the year that saw Mezzana's triumphal entrance into the stamp world, not for his sacred themes, but for his ability to capture the Roman spirit and values as seen through the eyes of the fascist regime.

During the fascist era, Rome favored cultural celebrations exuding a clear fascination with a past that was meant as a political compass needle for the future, in this respect Mezzana's personality was perfectly suitable to the needs of the time. It was, therefore, his turn to sign all the commemorative sets of stamps saluting the great bimillenaries, except for the Horace set issued in 1936.

As we know, such stamp issues are majestic and full of meaning, starting with the innovative one created for the bimillenial of the birth of Virgil - the epic poet of eternal Rome and Augustus' pacification. This set consisting of 13 stamps (nine definitive values with a complement of four airmail ones) is a long-winded invitation in Latin to seek out the ancient mother - the ancestors' land: '*Antiquam exquirite matrem*' (*Aeneid*, **3, 96**). The solemn sentences, without any translation whatsoever, complete the classical scene that with poetical mastery guide the viewer to the mission of Rome, to the beauty of rural life as well as to a past of wars that ten years later would become a tragedy.

1937 marked the bimillenial of the birth of Augustus saluted with a set of 15 stamps, inscribed with quotes from the *Res gestae Divi Augusti* as well as works by Horace and Virgil. Of course, the winner of Actium points directly to Mussolini.

The last bimillenial was that of the Roman historian Titus Livy in 1941; it was celebrated with less pomp and the set of four stamps confirms the staid approach. Two different designs were adopted; however, both are inscribed with quotes that refer to an ongoing

Fig.10: 1932, Dante Alighieri Society, 100 lire airmail stamp depicting a pensive Leonardo da Vinci, approved artwork by Mezzana (courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions) - the issued stamp was actually engraved by Alberto Repettati. The scroll is inscribed with Leonardo's own words: "A man pressing hard on the air, by means of wide spread wings, will be able to subjugate the air and lift himself up in it".

war. The regime lays claim to the need to take part in the war, deeming the move necessary for asserting globally positive values; once more we see Mezzana imparting his unmistakable style to the stamp designs.

In 1938 Mezzana had worked on the 16 values set celebrating the Proclamation of the Empire; the designs include quotes from Mussolini's speeches signed with the "*M*" of the fascist leader signature.

A decidedly more popular mode and therefore a more functional way of communicating while responding to the propaganda needs of the regime is to be found in the long set issued in 1932 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome.

The 20 stamps include 16 definitive values, 2 airmail values and 2 express mail stamps; the Italian language inscriptions from Mussolini's quotes are lapidary and incisive, gaining the strength of a catchphrase which amplifies the

Fig.11: 1933, Graf Zeppelin Goodwill Tour, 20 lire airmail approved artwork by Mezzana (courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions) - depicting the Coliseum and Maxentius' Basilica (Fori Imperiali).

Fig.12: 1933, Graf Zeppelin Goodwill Tour, the six values issued set.

Fig.13: 1933, Balbo's North Atlantic Mass Flight, approved artwork by Mezzana (courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions).

Fig.14: 1932, the 50 cent of the 10th anniversary of the March on Rome depicting the statue of Mussolini by Graziosi at Bologna's stadium where it was destroyed by a World War II air raid. It is the only stamp of the set of 20 denominations depicting Mussolini. The scroll features the famous motto by the Duce "If I press forward follow me!..." omitting the words completing the catchphrase "if I retreat kill me, if they kill me avenge me". This stamp features a rather odd way of expressing the face value which should be 50 cent, while here it is "Lire 0.50". As explained by Enzo Diena, this design was to be used on the top value of the set - as a bombastically expensive 50 Lire which would have been written as 'L. 50' with the leader topping all the achievements of the regime. On second thought, common sense prevailed and Mussolini agreed with his advisers who told him his glorious and heroic image would be better placed on a 50 cent, the most used postal rate, resulting in its use on millions of covers and postcards.

impact of the images and is easily memorized: *Perché l'Italia abbia pane per tutti i suoi figli*, **So that Italy shall have bread for all of her sons;** *Trepida vigilanza su ogni culla*, **Trepidation and vigilance over each cradle;** *Le paludi redente*, **The reclaimed swamps; and** *Il tricolore su tutti gli stadi*, **The tricolored flag on all stadiums.**

Fig.16: 1940 Berlin-Rome Axis unadopted designs for the April 1941 issue which had different and more elaborate frames, but the portraits were almost the same; the motto "Two Peoples one War" was added; some 25 million sets were printed. (courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions).

The one set on which we would have preferred not to see the signature of Mezzana is the Italian-German brotherhood in arms set of stamps: the Berlin-Rome Axis. In January 1941 three values of this set signed by Amedeo Pesci were issued,

Fig.15: 1932, not approved design for a 50 cent of the 10th anniversary of the March on Rome set depicting the head of the statue of Mussolini by Graziosi at Bologna's stadium; this must have been Mezzana's first approach which most likely did not please the Duce since his head was pushed in a corner with him gazing at a fearless medusa in the opposite corner, eventually crossed out with blue crayon (courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions).

Fig.16: 1941, one of the proposed designs submitted by Corrado Mezzana for a new set celebrating the annexation of Dalmatia which took place on 18 May 1941; it depicts the winged lion of St. Marc of Traù's (Trogir) Public Loggia sculpted by Niccolò Fiorentino and Andrea Alessi in 1471. This great work of art was destroyed by dynamite in 1932 together with seven other similar lions by the iconoclastic fury of the Juguslav nationalists to express their anti-Italian hatred. Mezzana's sketch is kept at the Historical Museum of Communication, EUR, Rome; other sketches of the same set are also on display at the said Museum.

in April an additional three stamps signed by Mezzana were added and issued. The latter are artistically much more elaborate in a classical mode and with greater symbolism: there is no comparison with the earlier ones. The problem, though, stems from the very leaders depicted on the stamps: Hitler, complete with swastika, and Mussolini, with the more familiar fascio. The inscription above these symbols '*Due Popoli Una Guerra*' (Two Peoples one War) explains, if there was such a need, the reason for this set of stamps.

Not even at this juncture, Mezzana's activity takes a pause. The 18 May 1941 royal decree-law formalizes the increase of Italy's possessions in the Dalmatian region and to celebrate such fleeting success the Roman artist is assigned the task of producing a substantial set of stamps. As usual, Mezzana displays his professional dedication by getting familiar with the areas and landscapes involved, even onboard an airplane (as Filanci reminds us in his Novellario). As confirmed by the remaining drawings and artwork the results reflect clearly the highly aesthetic approach of the artist. Thus, we can admire views of the Palace of Diocletian at Split, views of Traù, Šibenik, Zadar, Perast, as well as portraits of Diocletian and St. Jerome. Furthermore, the airmail stamps depict, respectively, the Lion of St. Mark and a birdseye

view of major monuments of Dalmatian towns from Zadar to Kotor. The glories of ancient Rome and of the Most Serene Republic of Venice are quite exalted; history, however, took a different and abortive course, making Mezzana's work unusable.

The last stamps created by Mezzana for the Kingdom of Italy were issued on 28 September 1942 to commemorate the third centenary of the death of Galileo Galilei; this set is highly appreciated by philatelists worldwide for its delicate nuances and great care for details.

Among the airmail stamp designs signed by Mezzana we must mention two sets specifically created for great historic events of the aviation; both sets are icons of Italian and global philately. They were issued at less than one month from one another. On 24 April 1933, a set of six stamps was issued to salute the goodwill flight to Italy of the "*Graf Zeppelin*" airship. This was followed on 20 May by two eye-catching triptychs celebrating the memorable North Atlantic Mass Flight headed by Italo Balbo. The captivating designs of both issues feature ancient Roman monuments including the Coliseum, the Castle of the Holy Angel and the Roman Forum, among others (Figs. 11, 12, 13).

From this summary, it becomes quite evident that Mezzana's role was very much to the forefront when it came to achieving the goals of fascist politics through stamps. It was like a hand in glove: an encounter beneficial to both parties involved. Mussolini's regime paid great attention to the specious and propagandist use of communications, without neglecting, for understandable reasons, the stamps: small, yes, but powerful means of persuasion and able to reach virtually everywhere.

Mezzana unstintingly contributed his talent to the cause. From the pages written by his daughter for the 1990 volume, we notice some passages that tend to portray a quarrelsome artist, almost uncooperative and downright little appreciated by the regime of those days. A closer look at certain circumstances takes us to different conclusions, showing a Mezzana always willing to offer his contribution as evinced by the episode of the stamp project of a set for the take-over of Dalmatia mentioned earlier.

Indeed, the artist who had glamorized so many stamps of the fascist era did not fall out of favour at the end of the regime; he was not kept in the background holding against Mezzana his collaborationism. How come? To answer this question we must widen the context of the observation by focusing especially on the stamps of the Vatican.

From secular to sacred: the Vatican stamps

In 1936 Mezzana signed his first Vatican set of stamps heralding the World Exhibition of the Catholic Press with a set of eight stamps featuring four different subjects. It was a homecoming to the themes that he felt so congenial in the 1920s; themes that made sporadic appearances on Italian stamps such as the set saluting the 1933 Holy Year of Redemption created by our artist. Thereafter and until his death, Mezzana cherished his collaboration with the Church-State. In 1938, next to the Italian set celebrating the dawn of the Italian Empire, we find the first Vatican stamp issue of eight airmail stamps as well as the six values set celebrating the Sixth International Congress of Christian Archaeology. The various denominations share two different designs: the Crypt of Saint Cecilia at the Saint Callisto catacombs on the Via Appia, and the Basilica of the Saints Nereo and Achilleo at the catacomb of Saint Domitilla. The inscriptions are faithfully in Latin. Mezzana's signature appears also on four 1939 stamps hailing the coronation of Pope Pius XII. The set utilizes only one design capturing the moment of the actual coronation of Pope Pacelli. The years that followed were

Fig.17: 1936, the 80 cent value, part of a set of eight stamps created by Mezzana. This value and the 25 cent depict St. John Bosco

marked by a sequence of tragic war events; in 1943 the artist contributed the design for the four values of the set celebrating the 25th year of Episcopacy of Pius XII. In 1944 he signed four exquisite designs featuring, among others, portraits of Raphael and Canova for the set paying homage to the fourth centenary of the Pontifical Academy of Fine Arts and Letters of the Virtuosi at Rome's Pantheon.

Mezzana's collaboration was not seamless, however, he did sign the Vatican's definitive stamps issued in 1940 and 1945, the postage due stamps featuring the papal coat of arms with the Keys of St. Peter and the *Triregno* or papal tiara. Indeed, from an artistic viewpoint, the results are truly remarkable. Case in point, the 1946 somewhat belated set commemorating the fourth centenary of the opening of the Council of Trent. This impressive issue of twelve definitive stamps complemented by two express stamps is a veritable gallery of the protagonists of that ecumenical summit: from Paul III, the prime mover of the Council, to St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, St. Thomas More,

Fig.18: 1946, the 5 lire value, part of a Vatican set of fourteen stamps designed by Mezzana and commemorating the fourth centenary of the opening of the Council of Trent.

Fig.19: 1949, the 25 lire value, featuring the Jubilee's Basilicas part of a set of eight Vatican stamps created by Mezzana to salute the upcoming 1950 Holy Year.

former Chancellor of Henry VIII, to Charles V, the "universal" emperor.

By and large, Mezzana became - with some foresight - a point of reference of Vatican philately, an achievement that provided him a timely safety net during a traumatic and dramatic transition period.

In Rome he had friends and admirers, both inside the Vatican and in the Catholic circles of the eternal city. Actually, this position of strength prevented any loss of his prominence among Italian stamp designers. In 1946, he was given the task of creating a set marking the Advent of the Republic which he accomplished; however, he did not sign the eight stamps stating that he simply offered his technical and artistic consultancy.

The post-war years

!947 saw him working on the sole philatelic assignment he accepted from San Marino: an homage to the USA President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In 1948 he signed his first republican set of stamps: the six values set celebrating the sixth centenary of the birth of St. Catherine of Siena. The theme couldn't be more congenial to his proclivities and the result was just outstanding; the designs were replete with

symbolic and historical references. The artist reminisced on episodes of the life of the saint celebrating the everlasting human longing for a peace that finds consolation and support in the Almighty.

From the 1300s Mezzana (through the 30 lire stamp, Fig. 21) links us to the early post-war years of the 1940s with a most appropriate quote which captures the essence of the words the saint told Raymond of Capua, author of a fundamental biography of St. Catherine, the *Legenda major*: 'After the storm, the Lord will

Fig.20: 1947, one of Mezzana's proposed and adopted designs for San Marino's eight values set paying tribute to the United States of America President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Fig.21: Mezzana's proposed and adopted design for the 30 lire of Italy's set of six values celebrating the Sixth Centenary of the Birth of St. Catherine of Siena portrayed while dictating her memoirs to her biographer Raymond of Capua. In 1380, Catherine died and Raymond was elected Master General of Dominican Order.
(Courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions)

Fig. 22: Mezzana's proposed design depicting a weaver and in the background L'Aquila's Basilica of St. Mary of Collemaggio, therefore showcasing the Abruzzi and Molise region; it was utilised for the 10 lire value of the 1950 definitive series 'Italy at Work' , but the background was changed to a view of the coast of Bagnara Calabra and the region was also changed to Calabria.
(Courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions)

give us the calm'.

After entering his last years Mezzana's inspiration remained strong, giving him the energy to work intensively on philatelic projects.

In 1948, he was commissioned to create the designs for a set of stamps celebrating the centenary of the Italian Risorgimento; his work was brilliantly inspired by historical prints. However, there was a stark contrast and an ideological clash with the many sets he had designed for the fascist regime.

In 1949, on the same wavelength, he signed the 100 lire stamp for the centenary of the revolutionary Roman Republic that exiled the Pope to Gaeta; this stamp remains in our 21st century highly popular with collectors, a true masterpiece of elegance and clarity.

The following year he was working on his most famous and challenging set of stamps: unlike the rhetoric and patchy "*Democratica*" the second definitive of the Republic better known as "*Italy at Work*" was a more persuasive and popular series with great traction. Mezzana, who had submitted drawings as early as 1945, a lustrum later found himself working on the designs of no less than 19 definitive stamps depicting the hard-working and industrious 19 regions of Italy (in those days Abruzzo and Molise formed one region). He sourced some of the images from his own figurative repertory. A lot has been written about this definitive series, not by chance, and readers who would like to know more should read the Bogoni and Malvestio book mentioned earlier.

The limitations of this definitive series are rooted in its 'rigidity' which did not allow to devote more than one stamp to each region because it would have imbalanced the equilibrium among the regions; further drawbacks are to be

Fig. 23: Mezzana's proposed but not adopted design for the Umbria region showing the watering of the cows. The design was changed to that of a ploughman and two cows with the background showing the Convent of St. Francis of Assisi. (Courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions)

Fig. 24: Mezzana's proposed but not adopted design for the Emilia Romagna region featuring a seeder. The design was replaced with that of a hemp gatherer (Courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions)

found in the large and somewhat unpractical format, which, nevertheless, favoured Mezzana in his efforts to express the best of his talent. On the other hand, if the format was smaller it would have also impacted negatively the result, and strongly limit the charm that these stamps exude. On this aspect, there would be much to be discussed.

Instead, some comments could be made about the 'topicality' of this definitive series and its accord with the period during which the stamps of this series were used on mail. It has been said that "*Italy at Work*" was born old, outdated and that it omitted various aspects of Italian industriousness.

Nonetheless a stamp set and more so a definitive (as attractive as a commemorative one) is not a scientific or sociological document. A stamp issue must reflect a significant image of the nation without renouncing to a touch of poetry or lyricism: in this respect "Italy at

Work" reaches the pinnacle of excellence. The 1950 Italy was still a traditional country, with more than 40 percent of the workforce aborted by the primary sector (agriculture, mining, fishing, quarrying etc,). The emigration situation in the South, as well as industrial development and incentives for medium and small businesses were rapidly changing: therefore, the criticisms about Mezzana's work sound rather unfair and baseless. Almost three generations later "*Italy at Work*" is, not surprisingly, by far the most appreciated definitive series.

Among the sketches and finalized artwork pieces offered at the Feuser auction of last November there were a few items connected to the 1950 definitive series. One of them is an unadopted artwork for a proposed 3 lire denomination showcasing the Campania region with a laid-back young guitarist sitting on the edge of a fishing boat while serenading his sweet-heart: indeed, this portrayal has little to do with work but it is undeniably charming (see headline frame of this article, page 62).

Fig. 25: Mezzana's adopted design for the 1952 set of two stamps celebrating the centenary of the first stamps of Modena and Parma. A slight change was made by inverting the placement of the commemorated stamps. (Courtesy of Peter Feuser Auctions)

recycled and used for Calabria (Fig. 22).

The unadopted artwork for the 55 lire (Fig. 23) showcasing the Umbria region has a cartouche inscribed 'L'abbeverata' (watering of the cows); the adopted artwork is a rearrangement captioned 'The plough'. The 65 lire showcasing Emilia-Romagna began with an unadopted artwork (Fig. 24) portraying a seeder and a cartouche inscribed 'La semina' (Sowing time); the rethinking resulted in the adopted artwork captioned 'La canapa' (the hemp harvest) featuring a female farmer with a pitchfork on her shoulder and the Pomposa Abbey in the background.

The use of *"Italy at Work"* definitive stamps on Italian mail had a relatively short life, nevertheless collectors' fondness for this series and its author will remain rock-solid well into the 21st century.

In 1952, Mezzana   created the two denominations with the same design commemorating the centenary of the first stamps of Modena and Parma (Fig. 25); at the same time he was working for the Vatican on the charming 50 lire saluting the centenary of the first stamps of the Papal States issued in 1852.

Sadly, on 15 September 1952, Mezzana succumbed to the illness that had struck him, he was 62 years old. Undoubtedly he had a lot more to communicate and share with the world and our sorrow became even greater in 1953 when the Vatican posthumously issued his set of 13 stamps featuring as many Popes: from St. Peter to Pius XII.

Fig. 27: Mezzana's oil painting depicting Don Bosco welcoming a young St. Dominic Savio was the basis for the stamp design of the 500 lire stamp celebrating the centenary of St. John Bosco (inset at top right).

Farewell to a giant of stamp design

Mezzana's birth centenary was duly celebrated in 1990 with a 600 lire stamp depicting his self-portrait and issued in conjunction with the fifth edition of "Philately Day". The cartouche with his name and the lay-out of the stamp are reminiscent of the *"Italy at Work"* definitive series, in the lower margin we find a spot-on mention: "Self-portrait" (Fig. 28).

It must be said that two years earlier, in 1988, Mezzana's name was placed on the lower margin

Another unadopted artwork is more on target; it depicts a weaver and in the background L'Aquila's Basilica of St. Mary of Collemaggio, therefore showcasing the Abruzzi and Molise region. The main subject of the design was

at right as author of the design of the 500 lire stamp issued to celebrate the centenary of the death of St. John Bosco (Fig. 27). It was no mistake; the artist was credited because he is the author of both components of the stamp design: Don Bosco welcoming a young St. Dominic Savio and at right a majestic statue of Bosco.

The artist had created these designs somewhere between the 1920s and 1930s providing evidence of his skills and love for sacred subjects.

There would be much more to write about Corrado Mezzana and, sure enough, it would generate further observations and ponder. In any event, it would seem that all said this proves that the stamp design heritage of the Roman master, the impeccable miniaturist of the philatelic 1900s, is still very much alive; his pivotal role during decades of extraordinary importance as far as Italian history of the past century is concerned begs the question: was it wise to gloss over the dispersal of his *own* work of art cache?

Fig. 28: Mezzana's self-portrait was used for the 1990 600 lire "Philately Day" stamp (inset at lower left corner). The cartouche with his name and the lay-out of the stamp are reminiscent of the "Italy at Work" definitive series.

FIUME'S HAND-OVERPRINTS©

by Ivan Martinaš© and Nenad Rogina©

This article is a follow-up to the article published in FIL-ITALIA Volume XLII, no. 1, Winter 2016: FIUME FORGERIES, Detection and Identification, and in a Vol. XLII no. 2 article dealing with the first hand-overprint and machine overprints.

In order to accurately identify and categorize the various Fiume overprints on Hungarian stamps, it is necessary to have a good knowledge of the characteristic features and appearance of the genuine overprints. As philatelists would say, the original is only one and the forgeries are many.

This is especially important for Fiume's hand-overprints on Hungarian stamps. In addition to the generally accepted six hand-overprint types, there are many additional overprint subtypes. The classification of the six types of hand-overprints was first introduced in March 1955 by Guglielmo Oliva in his book "*I Francobolli di Fiume*".

The classification of hand-overprints sub-types is something that some philatelic scholars may not agree with. Philatelic authors also seem to disagree about the place and the way in which hand-overprints were executed and used. According to the existing literature, hand-overprints were executed at Adolf Kirchofer & Co. -- Fiume's printing workshop. Some authors believe that in addition to hand-overprinting at Kirchofer's place, hand-overprinting was also carried out at the post office, which resulted in errors and a number of subtypes of hand-overprints as we know them today.

Overprint settings consisted of interchangeable, moving letters, which resulted in overprinted stamps showing varieties such as letters moved, replaced, or missing. The fact is that after the "official" overprinting process private persons and among them, of course, philatelists could "officially" have Hungarian postage stamps overprinted. It was possible to bring individual stamps or multiples and blocks to the post office and have them overprinted. In rare cases, even cancelled individual stamps were overprinted.

Rare examples of genuine hand-overprints applied on already cancelled postage-due stamps

1914 postage due stamp, cancelled in 1915, overprinted in 1918.	*1908-9 postage due stamp, cancelled in 1912, overprinted in 1918.*	*1903 postage due stamp, cancelled in Budapest, overprinted in 1918.*	*1914 postage due stamp, cancelled in Budapest, overprinted in 1918.*

In this article, we will deal with the description and charachteristics of genuine hand-overprints so that we can more easily identify forged overprints which are numerous but detectable on Fiume overprints on Hungarian stamps.

According to the time-honoured and widely adopted classification introduced by the pioneer Fiume expert Guglielmo Oliva there are 6 (six) types of hand-overprints.

TYPE 1   FIUME   FIUME   **TYPE 2**

TYPE 3   FIUME   FIUME   **TYPE 4**

TYPE 5   FIUME   FIUME   **TYPE 6**

Hand-oveprint TYPE 1

Hand-overprint Type 1 has the same letters of hand-overprint Type 2, but it has easily detectable damage to all letters except the letter I. Due to unavoidable wear the chipping damage to the various letters may vary in extent and, therefore, there may be slight differences between hand-overprints of the same type. Damage begins with the shortened lower beak of the letter E, continues with diagonal damage to the letters U and M (similar to scratches) and finally to the letter F which deteriorated rapidly. All letters of Type 1 look heavier than the corresponding ones in Type 2.

Genuine Type 1 hand-overprints showing varying degrees of wear and chipping

The first subtype of hand-overprint Type 1 has an heavier letter **F** which is similar to the letter F of the hand-overprint Type 4. ▼
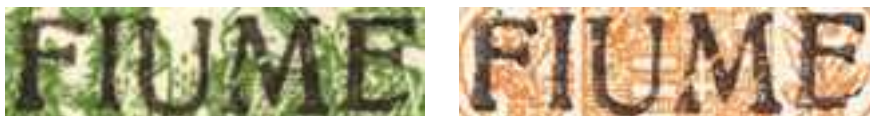
The first subtype of hand-overprint Type 1 is the rarest because it is found mostly on rare stamps or rare postage-due stamps. ▼

The second subtype of the hand-overprint type 1 has a distinctive letter **F with a shorter mid-bar** which cannot be found in any other type of hand-overprint. ▼

Due to its characteristic and eye-catching letter damage, there are not many forgeries that look similar to **hand-overprint Type 1**.

*Example of **forged** hand-overprint similar to Type 1*
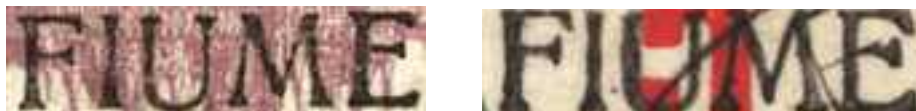
Hand-overprint TYPE 2

   Hand-overprint Type 2 is identical to Type 1 hand-overprint except for the absence of damage to the letters, additionally the width of the overprint is slightly wider than in Type 1. Hand-overprint Type 2 is very similar to machine-made overprints. The letters are so similar that some letters from the machine-made overprint appear to have been used for hand-overprints.

Genuine hand-overprint Type 2 (at left): the similarity to Type 1 hand-overprint can be seen.
The image at right shows the early phase of the damage to the letter E.

   Type 2 of hand-overprint overprint has the the highest number of subtypes, some of which are so different that they deserve a new type name. Nevertheless, the classification introduced by Mr. Oliva is still widely accepted in professional literature and catalogs. As some subtypes of Type 2 hand-overprint have letters of Type 4 hand-overprint, the question arises if the overprint is a subtype of Type 2 or Type 4. Regardless of the appearance of the letters, it is more simple to compare the width of the overprints. Type 2 hand-overprint has a slightly shorter overprint than Type 4.

Subtype 1 of Type 2 hand-overprint has a distinctive letter F. ▼

Subtype 1 of Type 2 hand-overprint, examples shown below ▼

Subtype 2 of Type 2 hand-overprint has the letter F ▼similar to the one in Type 4 hand-overprint

Subtype 3 of Type 2 hand-overprint has worn letters rounded around the edges. This overprint subtype can be found only on postage-due stamps.

Subtype 4 of Type 2 hand-overprint has characteristics of Type 2 hand-overprints. The letter **M** is always slightly rotated clockwise. However, the color of the overprint is greasy black, which is **not** the case with other hand-overprints. For this reason, some authors consider this overprint a forgery. After examining a large number of Fiume overprints, we have found this overprint only on 10f. values, both with red and white figures. Also, as a rule, these overprints can be found on sheets of paper with other Fiume stamps cancelled to order - CTO - (i.e. favour cancelled). On such sheets, the stamps are combined with other values, mostly cheap machine-overprints, while the two 10f. stamps are with this Subtype 4 of Type 2 hand-overprint.

Type 2 hand-overprints abound with missing, replaced and damaged letters.
Examples of **genuine** Type 2 hand-overprints ▼   presenting missing letters varieties.

Examples of <u>genuine</u> ▼   Type 2 hand-overprints showing <u>skid</u> impressions

Examples of <u>genuine</u> ▼   Type 2 hand-overprints showing damaged letters

Examples of <u>genuine</u> ▼   double [mixed overprints]: Type 2 hand-overprint + machine overprint

Type 2 hand-overprint + machine overprint (better defined serifs and letters)

Due to the fact that Type 2 hand-overprint is similar to the machine overprint, there are many forgeries that resemble Type 2 hand-overprint. They differ from the original in geometry, overprint color and overprint technique.

Examples of <u>forged</u> hand-overprints similar to Type 2

Hand-overprint TYPE 3

Hand-overprint Type 3 has letters similar to Type 2 except for an easy to spot clue: the vertex of the "V" necklines of the letter **M** ends at the same level of the feet of the two legs. Compared to Type 4, the width of the syllable (FIU) of Type 3 is shorter; it seems higher but it is not.

Genuine examples ▲ of Type 3 hand-overprint

Similar to Types 1 and 2, the **subtype** of Type 3 has an altered letter **F** which is similar to the letter F of Type 4 hand-overprint.

Examples ▼ of the **subtype** of Type 3

Missing, damaged and incomplete letters have been recorded on Type 3 hand-overprints. Examples of **genuine Type 3** ▼   hand-overprints showing damaged letters.

There have been many attempts to forge Type 3 hand-overprint. Some of them have succeeded somehow, but the genuine overprint ink color is grey. Additionally, genuine overprints do not have sharp or prominent serifs.

Examples of **forged** hand-overprints similar to Type 3

Forged thin font overprint similar to the machine-overprint

Forged overprint: black ink, straight lines and sharp lettering

Forged overprints: black ink, serifs are blunt

Forged overprint: black ink, "M" has a sharp vertex of the V necklines

Forged overprints: black ink, straight-line letters, thick font

Forged overprints: grayish black ink, sharp lines with numerous letter cracks

Forged overprint: greenish-black ink, thick font, sharp lines

Forged overprints: pale gray ink, the letter M often has blunt serifs at the top

Hand-overprint TYPE 4

Hand-overprint Type 4 has the recognizable letter F, which is found in Type 2 and Type 3 of hand-overprints and their subtypes. The space between letters is wider than Type 2 and 3 and the tongue or mid-line of the letter E has moved up. The vertex of the V necklines of the letter "M" ends at the same level of the feet of the two legs.

Genuine Type 4 hand-overprints

Although large quantities of Type 4 hand-overprint can be found, no subtypes have been reported. The only example that can be characterized as a subtype is the **replaced letter E**, which is similar to the letter E from Type 6 hand-overprint - the mid-line or tongue of the letter E is in the middle; the alignment of the letters is uneven. In catalogues and professional literature, this is recorded as a variety rather than a subtype.

Examples of **genuine** Type 4 hand-overprints varieties such as **missing letter I and changed letter E** similar to the one from Type 6.

Missing letter F; **E** similar to the one from Type 6: examples of **<u>genuine</u>** Type 4 hand-overprints

Missing letter F: examples of **<u>genuine</u>** Type 4 hand-overprints

Missing letter I: examples of **_genuine_** Type 4 hand-overprints

Skid or damaged letters: examples of **_genuine_** Type 4 hand-overprints

Type 2 and Type 4 hand-overprints in combination on pairs

For a long time it was considered that there were no combinations of two types of overprints on the same sheet. However, the examples below show cancelled-to-order (CTOS) stamps with a combination of two types of hand-overprints and overprint errors.

Rare examples of <u>genuine</u> hand-overprints: top stamps Type 4 and bottom stamp Type 2 with missing letter **I**

Due to the specific letter positioning and width of the syllable, there are not many forgeries that are dangerously similar to Type 4 hand-overprint.

The overprint is black and fonts are thicker; notice that the height is shorter than the original

The overprint is black, fonts are too thin and, at times, too thick

Hand-overprint TYPE 5

Hand-overprint Type 5 is completely different from the previous four: the base of letters **F and I have a longer left serif**, the "V" neck lines of the letter M turn slightly to the left, **U** and **M** are narrower than in the previous types.

Genuine hand-overprints Type 5

Rare examples of genuine hand-overprints Type 5

Subtypes and replaced or missing letters of Type 5 hand-overprint have not been recorded, only damaged or incomplete letters are recorded.

<u>**Genuine**</u> Type 5 hand-overprints with damaged letters

Forged hand-overprints Type 5

Hand-overprint TYPE 6

Like its predecessor, Type 6 does not find subtypes. The overprint type is different from the previous ones. The mid-line (or tongue) of the letter **E** is in the middle and the serifs are distinctively marked. It needs to be reiterated that the letter E is not the same as the Type 4 one with replaced E. The letter **F** is also distinctive, with a long sloping serif at the end of the top arm. This F is quite different letter F from any other type of hand or machine overprint.

Genuine hand-overprints Type 6

Rare examples of genuine hand-overprint Type 6

Due to the particularly challenging shape of the letters, we do not find many forgeries that are dangerously similar to Type 6 hand-overprint.

Forged hand-overprints Type 6

AEOLIAN ISLES
NATANTE POST OFFICES
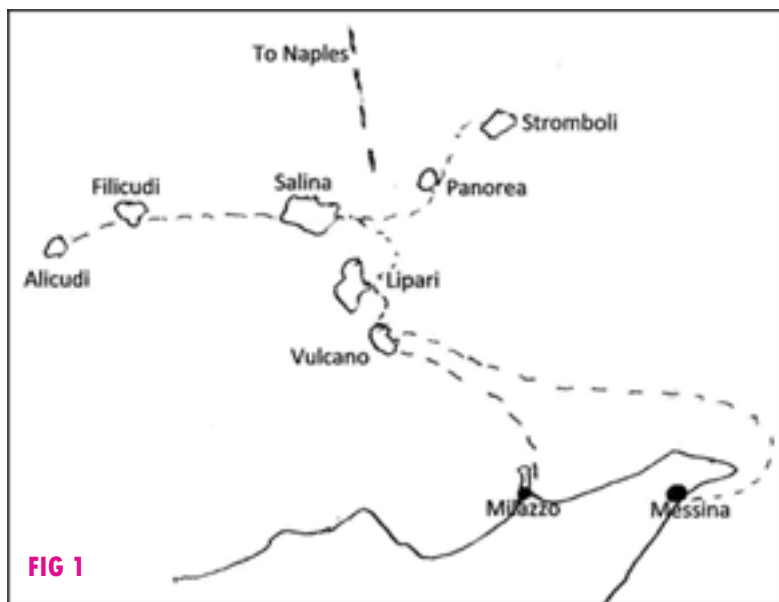## Floating Post Offices

By Alan Becker

FIG 1

FIG 2

FIG 3

On 1st January 1890 the "Navigazione Generale Italiana" ceded the maritime lines to the Aeolian Isles to the "Società Siciliana di Navigazione a Vapore" based at Messina; this was confirmed in a decree of 1893 to run for period of 15 years. Their fleet of steamers were the 'Milazzo', 'Scilla', 'Reggio', 'Corsica' and 'Toscana', all renamed older vessels.

The routes assigned to the 'Siciliana' were:
- **Milazzo, Lipari, Salina**   daily
- **Messina, Lipari, Rinella or Malfa, Salina, Panarea, Stromboli**   weekly
- **Messina, Lipari, Rinella or Malfa, Salina, Alicudi, Filicudi**   weekly

FIG 2a

Two new vessels were added in 1899, the 'Flora' and the 'Zelina'.

From the 1st January 1926 the "Eolia" Society was established to run maritime services from Messina and Milazzo to the Aeolian Isles for a period of 20 years as part of group "D" government services.

FIG 3a

The lines were more or less the same as the previous "S i c i l i a n a" society.

The vessels were the "Siciliana", "Adele", "Etna", "F l o r a" and "Vulcano" on the following routes:

Milazzo, Lipari, Canneto, Salina, Rinella or Malfa, Panarea, Stromboli daily

Messina, Lipari, Canneto, Salina, Rinella or Malfa, Panarea, Stromboli	weekly
Lipari, Vulcano	daily
Lipari, Salina, Rinella or Malfa, Filardi, Alicudi	weekly

As usual all the above information comes from Ogliani and Radogna's Trasporti Marittimi volumes.

A map (fig.1) shows the Aeolian Isles in relation to Sicily, Canneto was a town on the island of Lipari and Rinella and Malfa were towns on Salina..

In sorting through my examples of mail posted on routes between Naples and Messina I came across two 'Dahmann' postcards carried on the above lines.

The first (fig.2) was posted on the Messina route 4 June 1927, the adhesives cancelled with fig,2a.

I could not find a route from Messina to Naples which included the Aeolian Isles but obviously the cds for that of Messina does.

The second (fig.3) was posted on the Milazzo route on17 May 1927, the adhesives cancelled with fig.3a.

Mail carried and cancelled on these two routes cannot be common, has anyone further examples and dates?

Gold & Large Vermeil medals
for Fil-Italia articles at Sarasota 2020

The 2020, 66th Sarasota National Stamp Expo & Writers Unit 30 held from 7 to 9 February included the Second Exhibition of Philatelic and Postal History articles published during the last four years.

The jury headed by John Hotchner examined about 40 articles and bestowed the Grand Award on Dr. Charles DiComo for his splendid article on the 3 cents, 1851, USA postage stamp.

Italy was represented by two entries consisting of articles recently published by the Italy & Colonies Study Circle Quarterly Journal "Fil-Italia": a Gold Medal was awarded to Claudio Incerti for his well researched article on the elusive Covers of Italy's 1933 North Atlantic Mass Flight sent to Mayors in USA and Canada. Additionally, Giorgio Migliavacca won a Large Vermeil Medal for his 2019 article "1919-1920, the Fiume Endeavour: Printed Media and the Role of the Postal Service" shortly after reprinted in the Italian version by "Storie di Posta" - the prestigious magazine published by the Italian Academy of Philately and Postal History.

The Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition is part of the American Philatelic Society's "World Series of Philately" program.

FIUME ADDENDA

By Clive Griffiths

This is a follow up to David Gooder's excellent selection of Fiume covers. I have two that are very similar to his Fig. 4 in that they both come from the post office Fiume 5 and both carry postage dues.

The first, like David's was self-addressed by Kronik, but was left at Fiume 5 on 9 January. He picked it up on 13 January, as he did the cover shown by David. However, this one was taxed at 30f - stamped T plus handwritten 30. (Was this the rate for local letters perhaps?)

The second cover was addressed to Kronik at Fiume 5 by one of his correspondents in Vienna, Hans (or Franz) Bucher and deliberately mis-franked with an Austrian 2f newspaper stamp, no doubt on Kronik's instructions. However, the cover only arrived at Fiume 5 on 22 January, just three days after the practice of bisecting postages dues had been halted. The cover was taxed a full 40f (3x12f + 2 x 4f), so poor Kronik could not add to his hoard of bisects!

The amount of mail for which Kronik personally is responsible must be very large and one wonders what else he found time to do whilst he was living in Fiume. No doubt there is an interesting biography there, if only one had the sources.

A CURIOUS AIRMAIL ITEM

By Richard Harlow

   Locked up as I am one must find things to do, so I took time to study one of the lots in the September sale. At first sight it appeared an odd 1932 10 cent. postal stationery card franked with a block of four 15c. Virgil and a typed address to Rome but cancelled with Greek date stamps for Salonika. One wondered how it passed through the post without penalty. The clue came in the addressee – S. Bayer, well-known dealer of the time but for whom many of the rare early airmail covers would never exist.

   The sender of the card was a director of the Airline Company "Cidyd" of Paris and Belgrade. My view is that Bayer sent the self-addressed card to the airline, typing in under 'Cartolina Postale Italiana' the word 'REPONSE' in an attempt to make it an official prepaid reply-card

which did in fact work. The obverse also bears a Rome postman's oval numbered cachet.

   The text of the message is also of interest. Dated 19th April the writer states that on 2nd May at 6.40 a.m. their plane will depart from Salonika for Skopje, Belgrade, Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Nuremberg, Strasburg and Paris. He also gives postage rates for the flight.

The Trouble Collectors Go for 500 Lire

By Richard Harlow

   Came across this 1863 entire from Lodi to Genova. Having removed the stamp our man has searched for another Lodi cancel to cut out and stick over the space. He got the 27th but even though a bit difused the month can be seen to be Ottobre. Then he prices it at five hundred lire.

AN 1801 PUZZLE

By Alan Becker

This puzzle is about an intriguing letter (fig.1) which initially caught my attention as it has been disinfected twice on its journey to Genoa. Although not entirely certain the two slits, 24mm and 32 mm, for disinfection could have been carried out at Toulon or more likely Marseille

FIG.1

since this method of treatment was common during this period in France whereas at Genoa the letters were opened for disinfection and re-sealed with wafers at this time.

The contents of the letter, shown below, raise questions, one of which is what was the initial destination of the ship, which started out from Ajaccio, Corsica, since after suffering a broken mainmast it was in the vicinity of Goletta, present-day La Golette, Tunisia, where it appears to have been written from, although the writer has headed the letter 'Provenza a Bendormi' . The only reference to 'Provenza a Bendormi' I can find is a Wikipedia entry showing a large county of Sicily lying on the northern coast between Palermo and Messina once owned by the Geraci family from the 9th to the13th centuries (fig.2). I suppose this could be an early version of Benidorm in Spain but it seems very unlikely and would have been an unusual route for the ship to have travelled in this period especially as Marseille and Toulon
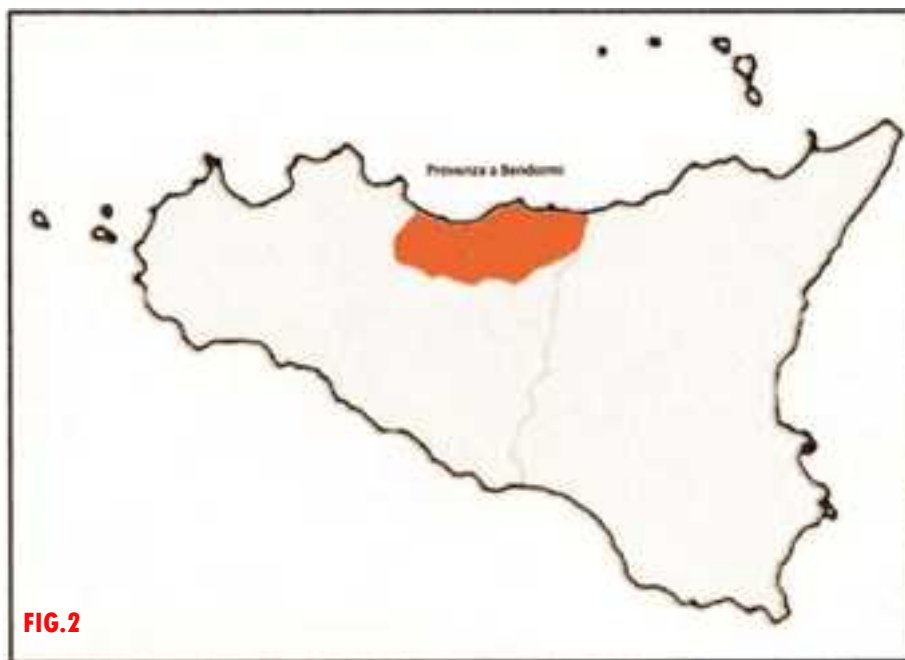
are mentioned in the text. The letter is addressed to Emanuel Gnecco in Genoa, a fairly well known correspondence.

FIG.2

"*Provenza a Bendormi 15th March 1801*

Sending the present with best wishes and to give you at the same time news that some days after our departure from Ajaccio a storm at sea had damaged the wood of the foremast and as a consequence in order to repair this misfortune we were granted leave to enter the Roads of Tunis where we have been unjustifiably plundered by an English Man-of-

War (War Brig) and anchored for many hours under the Battery of Goletta. I feel it will be better from the copy of the deposition remitted enclosed made in front of the

Commissioner of Commercial Relations of the Republic [of Genoa] accredited to the Bey of Tunis.

FIG.3

The original of the said deposition remains with me, until we will be face to face. So much for the crew after being held in arrest for two days on board the English (vessel) for great malice we have disembarked ashore, believing no doubt that we were to be made slaves.

We were taken to our aforesaid Commissioner who had embarked us on a Marseille-bound ship, since shortly he must depart with all the Frenchmen which are found here. We have been forced to leave in haste because of three English Frigates which patrol the sea, one of which has fired its cannons in our direction, as was said, chasing us as far as under this Fortress and up until now we do not know if we will make the Quarantine at Marseille or else at Toulon. Please send your response to Marseille addressing the letter to Citizen Nicolo Dodero (son of) Andrea who himself will inform me and forward it wherever I will be. Please Captain Michele Dominici begs to be informed if you sorted out his business so that he may decide whether to come to Genoa or return to his home. I have no other news and while wholeheartedly greeting you, I plead and remain your most obedient servant

Gio. Batᵃ Vicenzo Crovetto"

I include a scan of the contents (fig.3) since my translation may not be 100% accurate, I would appreciate any comments.

In Memoriam
Alfredo Bessone

It is with deep sadness that we announce the untimely death of a great contributing writer of Fil-Italia. His profession as a Lab Doctor got him used to carefully observe all small details, thus becoming overly meticulous, especially during his examination of tiny samples under the microscope in order to reach an accurate diagnosis. He applied the same passion and precision when writing articles for philatelic periodicals and when mounting his collections: especially his beloved L.A.T.I. collection which explored all the facets from postal to historical, geographical and human.

Dr. Bessone's keen interest in aerophilately started in the by now distant 1968 when, as a young military medical officer in Florence, he was introduced to Dr. Cherubini who later co-authored with Dr. Taragni the Italian Airmail Catalogue - a most important standard reference work heavily used by the deceased. That encounter was decisive in his aerophilatelic career which culminated with the Florence 2015 stamp exhibition where he won the Grand Award, a Murano glass sailing boat which will continue to sail on the mantelpiece of his home fireplace.

The Resurrection: from Street Art to Stamp

By Danilo Bogoni

When, on rare occasions, we stop to examine and even admire a stamp such as the one you might have recently added to your Vatican collection, our immediate reaction is: what is the story behind this image? Why was it chosen, why not another image? And why the issuing country has given the assignment to create the image to a specific graphic designer instead of a particular artist?

Those of you who have recently bought the 2020 "Happy Easter" € 1.15 stamp issued by the Vatican may well have asked why the choice fell on a depiction that clearly belongs to Poor Art, Street Art which is widely appreciated.

Of course, we know that the decision was taken by Pope Francis, but it is in stark contrast with the great works of the old masters so often depicted on Vatican stamps. The Lord's Ascension, indeed, by an unknown artist who painted it in an indefinite location.

The Vatican flyer for this new issue describes this Easter stamp as "*The 1.15 euro stamp dedicated to Easter 2020 represents a reworking - in the form of street art - of the Ascension by Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911) located in Rome, near the Vittorio Emanuele II Bridge.*" A rather generic description that says little or almost nothing. Besides, there was not much to say since the author of the mural, despite careful research, could not be identified. However, the vague location of the mural was most likely an incentive for collectors to find where this Resurrection was.

Quite unexpectedly, the painter herself, Alessia Babrow, came out into the open after a friend of hers provided a link to the online magazine "*Artslife*" where news of of the Vatican stamp was featured. She reacted by leaving an off the cuff comment" "It's nice to know that they do stamps with your work without telling you or citing your name. Luckily enough I have friends and the Lord loves me. Anyway, it really is a beautiful stamp!"

Although the mystery of her name had finally been solved, the cantankerous Alessia continues to remain taciturn. No photographs of her, nothing about her background, who she is, where she going from or where she is going. Her short answer was that she

A Street Art version of the Ascension of the Lord by Alessia Babrow ©

The Ascension of the Lord by Heinrich Hofmann; in late 1854 through early 1855 Hofmann visited Italy and sojourned in Rome. He is famous worldwide for his many paintings of the life of Jesus and his work has been welcomed by a wide range of denominations: from Catholic to Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist.

The hand of Alessia Babrow holds a version of her Ascension of the Lord (Alessia Babrow©)

has resolved that "her work should speak about her" adding that she is considered a multi-faceted artist because she uses various techniques and forms of art to convey her messages "...like being multilingual; an expressive medium is more functional". Each work of hers is imbued with the feelings of her conscience and experience, she comments.

How did Alessia's *Ascension of the Lord* become a stamp?

The street artist admits that for quite some time she had in mind to create a contemporary icon of Christ but she could not gather inspiration; also because it had to be a Jesus with a big heart. Alessia Babrow explained the crux of the matter: Christ could not be depicted with a tangerine-sized heart because he must have had a big one as witnessed by his actions.

"Then, last year in February, it so happened that I read a testimony by Paramahansa Yogananda. After meeting the Bavarian stigmatic Therese Neumann the mystyc woman said that the *Ascension* was the work of German painter Heinrich Hofmann (1824-

1911)...I looked for the painting and after finding it, I immediately realised that it was the most suitable for Street Art.

Of course, I revisited it in a contemporary style, so that it would become a unique symbol for each generation, a message for anyone who looked at it; this is how this poster art of mine was born on a piece of paper: a Christ with a big heart. I cannot deny that I have always asked myself why he was always depicted with a tangerine-sized heart, when he actually had a gigantic heart, as I depicted him."

"During the night I went, and still go, around Rome to affix this work of mine in various dimensions. As it happened with other works of mine, this Christ of mine in some cases has been stolen; some of which I replaced."

As of 14 February there is no longer the need to remove any version of Alessia's *Ascension*; just buy one of the 80,000 copies of the Vatican 2020 "Happy Easter" stamps.

Before the name of the author of the Street Art *Ascension* was discovered a Vatican spokesperson confirmed that once the artist would be identified he/she would have been treated like the artists who design the stamps of the Vatican.

ON THE BOOKSHELF

La Famiglia Tasso e le poste nello Stato di Milano in età spagnola (1556-1650) (The Tassis Family and the posts of the State of Milan during Spanish rule (1556-1650) by Marco Gerosa, Camerata Cornello June 2019, in Italian, perfect bound, 216 A4 pages (21 x 29.7 cm), replete with black and white illustrations and maps; bibliography and index. €25 + postage & handling; available from the publishers: Tassis Museum, e-mail: *info@museodeitasso.com*; and Vaccari: e-mail: *info@vaccari.it*

After four decades of research and related books published by the Postal History Tassis Museum of Camerata Cornello near Bergamo, the imposing mosaic of postal communications in Italy and — by extension — in Europe is showing a clearer and larger picture that will take many more years of research tesserae to complete. In the meantime, a massive amount of information, previously unavailable, is now shared with postal historians, academicians and collectors worldwide.

The Tassis Museum multi-faceted initiatives have successfully materialized through the untiring work of postal history academician Gianfranco Lazzarini who for decades served as Mayor of Camerata Cornello. Under his leadership at least twelve major monographs have been published, this being the latest.

After the publishing initiatives that have reconstructed a large portion of the history of the Tassis family, this new volume completes the research of the branch of Simon Tassis, the towering postmaster of the Habsburgs in Milan and Rome during the crucial early decades of the 16th century. His sons, Ruggero and Antonio, are meticulously investigated through the painstaking research carried out by Dr. Marco Gerosa in order to place them in the proper historical, administrative, postal and political context.

As so aptly put by Pavia's University Professor Matteo Di Tullio in his preface to Gerosa's work "the archival research is ample and carefully carried out at various Italian and foreign archives; the ability to unravel from such a mountain of documents the relevant facts considerably qualifies this research which, like all the works at the frontier of knowledge, will surely stimulate new and interesting studies".

The volume on Simon Tassis published in 2008 with Italian and English text explored also Ruggero and Antonio Tassis; however, Gerosa who had contributed crucial research to that volume has had over ten years to add new information and double-check printed sources which inevitably contain some inaccuracies.

Ample space is given to Simon's son Ruggero Tassis, his wife Lucina Cattaneo and their offspring. Before the father's death, King Philip II of Spain granted Ruggero the right to succeed Simon as Postmaster General of the State of Milan, a post he held from 1556 until his death in 1588 at 57 years of age. He was the commander in chief of postmasters throughout Lombardy and beyond: the latter including Volargna and Castelnuovo in Venetian territory; Castelluccio and Marcaria belonging to the Duchy of Mantua; as well as Rovereto and Vò belonging to the Bishopric Principality of Trent in South Tyrol. These out of state posts enjoyed a strategic location and were part of a far-reaching setup initiated by Simon which included posts in hot spots of the Most Serene Republic of Venice such as: Ponte San Marco near Desenzano, Coccaglio and Martinengo, the last two being passed on to Ruggero. Following in his father's footsteps, in 1579, Ruggero opened a postal operation in Brescia headed by a postmaster. During the course of time Venice aired her displeasure for this Milanese infiltration which, by 1571, included Rivoltella "and other places in Brescia's territory". In 1582, Venice took some decisive steps to relocate and take control of two Milanese posts in Venetian territory; nevertheless, this flexing of muscles did not put an end to the Milanese intrusion which was still alive and well twenty years later.

Under the vigilant eye of Ruggero, the Ordinario couriers regularly serving at pre-set days the most critical postal artery of the Italian peninsula Milan-Rome-Milan were instructed in the mid-1570s to ride day and night, thus cutting in half the delivery time: from 14-15 days to 6-7 days. In times of epidemics, the unexpected could happen to the couriers; during 1575 the courier on duty on the Venice-Milan route was intercepted at the border with Brescia by the commissioner of Milan's Health Tribunal who ordered the temporary seizure of three dispatch cases filled with letters and two bundles for the purpose of disinfecting the mail entering the Milanese State. The courier himself was undressed and washed from head to toe with vinegar; after this procedure, the courier was given "cleaned" clothes, the confiscated mail which had been duly treated and a health-pass permitting him to go to Milan.

The chronic malaise of the Habsburg's finances had caused problems for Simon who had to use his savings to keep the postal service going; a generation later, his son Roger found himself in a similar if not worse situation.

The Guild of the Merchants of Milan had its network of messengers delivering mail to

Genoa, Venice, Lyon and when needed even as far as Flanders, France and other countries. This postal network is confirmed by documents of the 1430s; as time went by, the service improved and expanded. Since 1518 the Lombard capital had a memorandum of understanding regulating the interaction with the Milan-bound courier linking the Bavarian postal epicentre of Lindau on Lake Constance to Lombardy via Fussach and the Alps. Beginning in 1474 without scheduled departure or arrival time, the service, which constituted the shortest route between Milan and Lindau, conveyed mail, guided travellers and transported goods. In 1518 the Guilds of the Merchants of Milan and Lindau signed a memorandum setting the weekly periodicity and other crucial details. The 330-kilometre route passing through Austria, Liechtenstein and Switzerland was covered in five and a half days. Intermodal transport proved reliable enough: in fact, the courier went by boat across Lake Constance and Lake Como, by horse and wagon through the plains of the River Rhine and Lombardy, and with mules through the gorges north and south of the 2113-metre-high Splügen Pass.

The competitive couriers of the merchants had been a thorn in Simon and Roger's side; the early symptoms of a clash manifested themselves in 1556. The legal dispute turned into a rollercoaster; the merchants' couriers were subjected to a series of humiliations, including the seizure of mail, while Venice aimed at preventing their activities within her Republic. The controversy came to an end in 1592 with a ruling of the Milanese Senate favourable to the merchants; nonetheless, the story did not end there.

Ruggero Tassis died on 19 October 1588 leaving many unresolved problems for his heirs. At the top of the list was the fact that his general postmastership could not be passed on to his children because he had been granted only one-lifetime title to the post.

At the twilight of the 16th century, the Milanese posts went through a transition; the post of Postmaster General was entrusted to Giacomo Filippo Zonio on 1 November 1588, reportedly an individual with no connection with Roger's sons. In May 1593 he was replaced by Oliviero Panizzone Sacco as acting Postmaster General; his proactive demeanor was unpopular with postmasters and government officials. In 1596 the post was given to Ercole Appiani who had paid no rent or commission to both Don Juans de Tassis father and son Postmasters General of the King of Spain.

During the 1600s the Milanese economy suffered so many drawbacks that even a shortlist would take up a lot of space; the real problem, though, was the steady decline of Spain as a super-power. Skilled workers and artisans were leaving Milan for nearby places and states, this, in turn, strengthened foreign competitors resulting in loss of exports. For example, in 1604, gold thread manufacturing technology mastered in Milan was exported employing highly skilled artisans emigrating to France, and metalworking artisans emigrated to Lyon.

As Philip III of Spain ascended the throne, Milan was unprepared for the winds of change that ensued. Don Juan de Tassis-Acuña and Don Juan de Tassis-Peralta Jr. held the titles of Postmasters General of the King. On 14 June 1599 Philip III gave control of the posts of the State of Milan to de Tassis father and son as Postmasters General of that State — a title they could retain for two generations. As pointed out by the author of this book neither of them ever visited Milan and its postal headquarters, instead they delegated their administrative powers to Ruggero's widow, Lucina Cattaneo.

In 1599, after many tribulations, Lucina Cattaneo Tassis had managed to secure an extortionate lease which gave her the administration of the Milanese posts, initially from her cousins — the Tassis-Villamediana — and later on, with great difficulties, from Giovanni Battista and Geronimo Serra, the new Genoese owners of the Milanese posts whose story will follow soon. Luckily enough Lucina was assisted by a competent and highly experienced Deputy Postmaster General by the name of Ottavio Codogno who in due course became the author of acclaimed postal guides.

In 1619 Lucina died and her surviving sons, Ottavio and Francesco, made attempts to gain control of the Milanese post office, but negotiations with Don Juan de Tassis-Villamediana carried out by Codogno on their behalf in Madrid lasted almost a year. The transaction never materialised because of the exorbitant sum requested by Don Juan de

Tassis-Peralta and Villamediana.

On 21 May 1604, at Valladolid, Don Juan Sr. de Tassis-Acuña, Peralta and Villamediana, with the approval of his wife Donna Maria de Peralta, and son (Don Juan de Tassis-Peralta and Villamediana), who was the heir of the Count's titles and privileges, decided to sell the Milanese posts to the Genoese nobleman Battista Serra (1576-1643) for 47,000 ducati [362 pounds of fine gold]. This transaction was made possible through some financial assistance and high level contacts of his uncle Girolamo [Geronimo] Serra (1547-1616) and was to remain valid throughout the lives of Don Juan father and son. Battista Serra reiterated the uncle's role as a business partner in a 1609 document; this, however, would have later repercussions in the form of inheritance claims by family members. Meanwhile, Don Juan Sr. died on 12 September 1607; as a result, Don Juan Jr. de Tassis-Peralta-Villamediana became the sole Postmaster General of the King of Spain.

On 6 December 1617, a year after his uncle's death, Battista Serra secured full control and perpetual right [usually four or five lifetimes] to the Milanese posts from Philip III for 38,000 ducati.

In 1638 Battista Serra sold 50% of the Milanese posts to his brother-in-law, Paolo Francesco Doria of Genoa for 50,000 ducati. The two families were closely interrelated through marriage and business. The postal intrigue did not end there because the transaction did not receive royal assent due to a law that made offices and fiefdoms indivisible. The next few years saw complex lawsuits between the Serra and the Doria. The Count of Oñate Tassis—Villamediana had in the meantime agreed to appoint Giovanni Battista Serra official administrator of the office of Postmaster General of the State of Milan; this development, together with the death of Battista, on 16 July 1643, brought an end to the litigation between Doria and Serra on condition of producing regular financial statements and paying a lease of 40,000 silver reales to Oñate over a period of three years.

Very little has been written in the past about Ruggero's widow; however Gerosa's chapter on Lucina Cattaneo-Tassis is extensive, well researched and rich of informative and detailed footnotes — a method used also throughout the book.

The second part focuses on family events, business and problems of the Milanese Tassis; Ruggero's brother Antonio is portrayed in a five-page biography, the same treatment is given to the sisters and sons. The second chapter of Part II deals with the developments and problems which resulted in the withering of this branch of the Tassis family tree. Part III visits the dwellings, palaces and postal headquarters of the Tassis; additionally, the book discusses the fiefs, estates and assets of the Milanese dynasty.

The bibliography is vast, there is also an index of the parts and chapters, but unfortunately, there is no general index of names, places and topics which would have been valuable to other researchers.

The State of Milan was under Spanish rule from 1535 to 1714; in 1714 the Treaty of Baden put an end to the Spanish Succession War, and as a result, the former State of Milan as well as the Duchy of Mantua were formally ceded to the Habsburgs of Austria, who ruled them until the French take-over by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1797. We hope that Dr. Gerosa is already working on a second volume that will cover the remaining years of Spanish rule of Milan from 1650 to 1714. For its rich contents and the very low price this is a book not to be missed. *Reviewed by Giorgio Migliavacca*

Mail across the Oceans — From the beginning to 1875; *La correspondance à travers les océans—Des origins jusqu'à 1875* by James Van der Linden in cooperation with Jozef Bernard Lux and Paul Wijnants; published by le Musée des Timbres et de Monnaies de Monaco, December 2019, hard-bound + color jacket, 296 A4 pages (21 x 29.7 cm) in English + 296 pages in French, replete with color and black and white illustrations and maps; bibliography and table of contents. €60 - postage included; purchase contacts: *patrick@maselis. be* [order form at: *https://www.monacophil. eu/en/downloads/HR_MonacoPhil2019_A4_ CatalogueOrderForm_EN.pdf*]

If you collect maritime mail this is the book you will consult the most: easy to read, easy to answer your questions, authoritative, documented, wide-ranging and factual.

The author of this magnificent volume is well-known as a signatory of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists and author of the popular standard reference book on transit marks. Former President of the Royal Philatelic Society of London, Patrick Maselis in his foreword stated that "It would be particularly difficult to summarise the volume of information, which consists of conventions, regulations and decrees linked to the maritime postal service across five continents". On his part, Van der Linden points out that "this work is intended to serve as a practical handbook covering all the different packet ship lines, with a short description of each line, a map showing the routes (missing from many studies), the names of ships used by the lines (often found in letters) and,

finally, an overview of the specific stamps that appear on letters transported via these lines."

The main subject of this book can be rather intricate and to see the down to earth approach of the author implies great knowledge and a first-class communication talent: qualities that are not encountered too often. His familiarity with the literature on the subject has brought to his attention to the areas that needed more research and clearer presentation. In fact, this is a book that can easily be appreciated by non-collectors.

The opus is divided into five parts: North and South Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the multiple ocean crossings mail.

The North Atlantic section elaborates on Spanish packet mail, the Dutch lines and the French transatlantic lines. The chapter on the steamships serving the Caribbean provides valuable information about the British line and the Spanish, German and French mail routes. Equally fascinating is the section focusing on the steamship service to North America with specific attention to British, French, American, Spanish, German, Belgian, Norwegian and Dutch lines.

Part II examines mail conveyance to and from the South Atlantic using sailing packets for Spanish, Portuguese, British and French mail. Steam packets expedited the delivery of letters and packets by French, British, Italian and German lines.

Part III focuses on the conveyance on the Indian-Atlantic Ocean postal routes performed by sailing packets and British and French steam packets.

Part IV explores in great detail the Pacific Ocean mail crossings. Before 1840 the service was initially performed by Italian entrepreneur Pedro Alessandri between 1827 and early 1832; in 1828 an English merchant in Valparaiso competed on the Valparaiso-Callao route. The turning point came in 1835 when a plan was devised to launch a steamship line from Valparaiso to Panama and from there taking the overland route crossing the isthmus and thus facilitating the conveyance of mail to the West Indies, England and Europe. In 1840, the task was undertaken by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company sailing from the United Kingdom to the Pacific coasts of South America. This important development gave Panama a prominent role in the conveyance of European mail to the Pacific west coast. This overland route was greatly improved by the 1855 inauguration of the Panama railroad. The book examines all the aspects of the "Panama Transit" which led to a faster conveyance

of mail to and from New Zealand and the Australian Colonies.
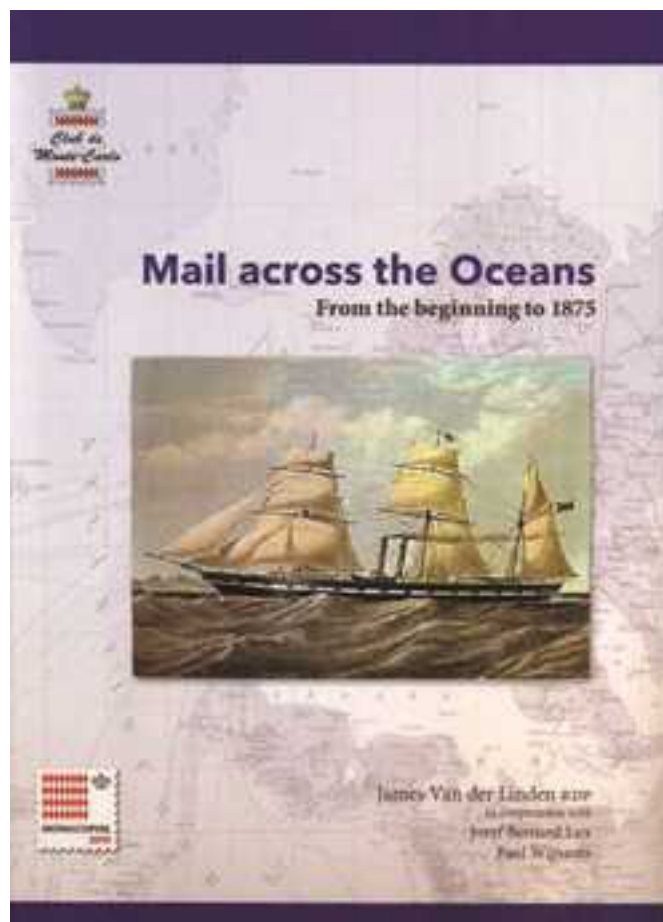
In his preface, Van der Linden points out that the multiple ocean mail crossings have been for a long time a neglected but engaging area that had not received much attention by postal history scholars. Part V scrutinizes the mail that had to sail through two or three oceans to reach its destination. This magnum opus ends with a 10-page bibliography.

Having succeeded in completing such a colossal work congratulations are due to the author for such a great achievement which will be very beneficial to collectors and scholars worldwide. Here you have 360 degrees, truly comprehensive view of oceanic postal conveyance. The text is bi-lingual, the book is lavishly produced and illustrated and it is a veritable milestone in postal history literature.

A message posted on the Amazon page offering this book to global buyers states that it is "unavailable due to high demand". We trust that it is available at the source mentioned at the beginning of this review, it would be wise to secure this splendid volume before it is out of print.

Reviewed by Giorgio Migliavacca

An Invitation to Members and Readers

The Editor is inviting members and readers to contribute articles to Fil-Italia.

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Secretary's Notes

Honourary Secretary Richard Harlow

MEMBERSHIP:

We regretfully have to report the death of two members: Sergio de Benedictis and airmail expert Dr. Alfredo Bessone.

On the bright side we welcome **two new members**:
Dr. Geoffrey HODGETTS of Ontario, Canada
John Keiran COSTELLO of Pontypool, Wales.

MEETINGS:

- Saturday 27th June, 2p.m. ~ Auction, Union Jack Club, London
- Saturday 30th September. 2 p.m. A.G.M. & Auction, UJC, London
- 1st-4th October ~ Society week-end at Worcester. Details from Convenor Susan Chislett
- Saturday 12th December. 2 p.m. Auction, UJC, London.

PUBLICATIONS: To hand is the new Stanley Gibbons catalogue for Switzerland which has divested itself of Italy but retained Leichtenstein and the issues for the United Nations office situated at Geneva. In a slightly bigger format than before there are price rises in the early issues and Specimen stamps are included for the first time. The usual Gibbons clarity. 217 pages at £27. 95.

A SURPRISE: Whilst currently reading " A House In The Mountains" by Caroline Moorhead, a story of partisan activity in Piedmont during WWII I was surprised to learn that Giorgio Bolaffi of the celebrated philatelic firm of Turin had became the leader of a partisan group in the mountains. Having buried his stock of stamps and fled to avoid deportation to Dachau or elsewhere there came a time when his unit was short of supplies so he went down back into Turin, dug up his box and sold a quantity of his stamps to raise the necessary funds. His unit along with others were able to clear Piedmont and Turin of German and Fascist troops before the arrival of the Allies. As Michael Caine would say, "Very few people know that".

UNUSUAL E-MAILS RECEIVED: An offer to appear on the TV programme "Mastermind" and an offer from a baker in Livorno to supply cakes for the society.

NAPLES: Interesting lot appearing in the September auction (Lot 188) in the shape of an entire letter to Sir George Pocock, Knight of the Order of Bath, in London from his agent in Naples. The letter 1769 - 13th June. advises Sir George that the rare set of books called "Hercolanum" which originally the King refused to have printed, then later allowed a number of copies to be printed as gifts for Foreign Ministers. As to be expected at Naples some have now come onto the market at 16 ducats a volume if one buys a set or 18 ducats per single volume. Is Sir George interested for himself or his friends?

Sir George an ex-Admiral was at the siege of Havana and collected £1500 in prize money.

The EL bears yellow straight-line 'Napoli' and rated 1s. on arrival. On reverse a Bishop mark and time stamps. With the lot are two small contemporary water colours of the Bay of Naples.