A WORD ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF STAMPS
(LE TIMBRE-POSTE JOURNAL – 1863)

In another pamphlet, we gave notice on the origin of stamps, and we proposed not to return to this
subject, unless we discovered new documents, which we now have, in part to the kindness of one of our
correspondents, we are able to throw new light on this interesting discovery.

Let us speak to our correspondent.

The postage stamp, according to MR. ED. FOURNIER, is a recent invention, tracing back to 23
March 1823, when the Swedish G. TREFFENBERG proposed to the State nobility of his country,
regarding issuing a paper stamp for use of letters in envelopes (the proposal was rejected by a large
majority), the postage stamp, we say, seems to be the contrary, according to the following statement,
preserved in the archives of the Imperial Library of France and cited by MR. D’AURIAC in his anecdote
History of French industry, a creation of the XVII century.

We read the following with respect to a small service station:

"August 16, 1653 - It is to wit for all those who want to write from one Paris neighborhood to
another, that their letters, notes or memories will faithfully and diligently be carried to their address and
they will promptly provide a written response when they provide their letters with a prepaid ticket,
because we will take no money; the ticket which will be attached to the letter, or put around the letter or
in such other manner they find fit, so that the clerk can see it clearly and easily ..."

The date will be filled with the day or month that it will be sent ... There will be general clerks at
the palace who will sell these prepaid tickets to those who to have them for the marked price, and each is
to accept the number he pleases, so that when we write up the sale, we do not lack for doing fair
business.”

This statement indicates the acquisition of the tickets was at the palace, the portressses of
convents, the gatekeepers of colleges and communities and prison guards. The price of each was fixed at
a penny typed, that is to say a marked royal effigy penny, and “canvassers were advised to give any
number of tickets to their attorneys and the clerks so they could inform them at all times of the estate of
their business, and fathers to their children who are in college or convents and their citizen artisans.

The statement concludes:

"Clerks will begin to go and carry letters as of August 8, 1653. This time is given so that
everyone has enough time to accept tickets.”

We also have the following passage from PELLISSON, which relate to the same innovation:

"In 1653, a master of requests, nominated by VÉLAYER had obtained the privilege or gift of the
king, in order to set up boxes in various parts of Paris, and then establish an office at the palace, where
they were sold for a penny piece, some tickets were printed with a particular brand on them. These tickets were unrelated to the other tickets: *Postpaid the ... day of the month of ... in the year 1653 or 1654.* In order to serve, it was necessary to keep the date of the day and month blank to be written in only when the ticket was paid for, thereafter, you only had to twist this ticket around the letter you had written to your friend, and throw it into the box. There were people who had orders to open the boxes three times a day and take the tickets to wherever they were addressed. Besides prepaid tickets, we make sure the letter carefully arrives, and if he wanted a response, he sent another prepaid ticket enclosed in his letter.”

PELLISSON did not say that VÉLAYER was the inventor of the postage system; so we can only note the discovery without being able to attach to the person to whom it is owed.

The stamps of VÉLAYER were probably made by the French as there was so much abuse in England since the reign of Charles II until 1784. We then saw people make provisions for one year. (See The History of the House of Commons by CHARLES THOMSOND.)

The courtiers of Louis XIV, who followed the prince to the armies, appear to have used the same method of postage, as it was economically ingenious. The letters of PELLISON to Miss de Scudery, which are in the possession of Mr. Fuillet de Conches, give us a visible trace of a kind of postage stamp. (See the next page. *End of Article*)

It is not clear when and why the stamps that were created in 1653 ceased to exist, and until the arrival of 1823 without ever being discussed. It was then that MR. TREFFENBERG proposed the adoption in Sweden; we have seen how his suggestion was unsuccessful. Finally we come to MR. ROWLAND-HILL, who is currently the secretary of the Post Office in England, who introduced the stamps in his country, following the circumstances noted here, reported by MR. ALPHONSE ESQUIROS:

“A traveler was passing through, thirty years ago, a district in the north of England; he came to the door of an inn, where the postman had stopped to deliver a letter. A young girl came out to receive it, turned it and turned it again in her hand, then asked what was the price of the delivery.

“It was a lot of money, because obviously the girl was poor and the postman demanded a shilling. She sighed deeply, said the letter came from her brother, but she had no money and therefore she handed the letter back to the postman.

“The traveler was a man who journeyed around the world to learn and observe things, as he had a good heart, he offered to pay the postage of the letter, in spite of the resistance of the girl. This stubborn resistance and the situation gave him time to reflect on the case. Barely had the postman turned his back when the young tavern keeper confessed that it was an address return, agreed between her and her brother; there was a hieroglyphic sign marked on the envelope which told her everything she needed to know, but the letter itself contained no writing.

“We are both so poor, she added, that we imagined this was the best way to correspond and the letters are free.
“The traveler went on his way, wondering if a tax system giving rise to so miserable fraud as this was not a vicious system. The sun went down before ROWLAND-HILL (this was the name of the traveler) would have dreamed to organize the postal system on a new basis. It was said that in England, where the family business is very strong, but where members usually live scattered apart, where there is free trade and industry knows no bounds, the correspondence was limited only by the enormity of postage and that lowering this barrier, we could provide a great service to society, without compromising the treasury resources.

“His views were approved by the British government, and January 10, 1840, the letters postpaid more than 10 cents to circulate throughout the whole of the British Isles.

“This bold innovation soon surpassed the expectations of the legislators, ten years later, in 1850, the number of letters had increased from 1,500,000 to 7,239,962.”

From the foregoing, it seems that the first letters were actually dated 1653. Must we conclude from this that MESSRS. TREFFENBERG AND ROWLAND-HILL, were the executors of an idea put before them or were they ignorant of the existence of stamps before their time, the same idea that had germinated in both the minds of each of them?

Both assumptions are eligible. We have a tendency to believe the last. Indeed, the 1653 stamps were current for a certain time and their use is restricted only to the city of Paris, for with that exception the only other places they were used was the court of Charles II and that of Louis XIV, which were not made for the public, as there has nowhere else be found a trace of usage.

There is therefore nothing extraordinary that MESSRS. TREFFENBERG and ROWLAND-HILL did not have knowledge of the fact that local governments had passed this practice 180 years before them, so it is ignored in our time, as it took sifting through archives to determine the almost ephemeral existence.

Anyway, that MESSRS TREFFENBERG and ROWLAND-HILL have or have not experienced the stamps of the XVIIth century, it is no less true that it is their initiative, especially the last one, that we need the franking system that we appreciate everyday in our facilities. While allowing the contemporaries of Louis XIV their share of honor to have first imagined, we believe the whole world must grateful to England to have achieved what others had before her, disdainfully declared impossible, and to be able to conduct what France had once so carelessly dropped into disuse.
Miss,
Let me know if you know not some good remedy against love or against its absence, and if you are acquainted with it, let me have the pleasure to ask you, and if you find it, send it to Your very humble and very obedient servant,
Pisandre.

*Translation may not be quite accurate*

In addition to the prepaid ticket that you put on this letter, if you wish it to be taken away, write solicitous, if you want an answer, send another prepaid ticket in your letter.

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<td>For Miss Sapho, resident of the street of New Country Sansomales, Paris. By prepaid ticket.</td>
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