

# Trans-Pacific Mails Of Yokohama And Shanghai: 1871 - 1879

The Pacific Mail Steam Ship Company (PMSS) began contract mail service between San Francisco and Shanghai, China, via Yokohama, Japan, in January 1867. United States consular post offices were established in Shanghai (June 11, 1867) and in Yokohama (July 27, 1867) to handle this mail. United States stamps were employed at other offices. However, the Yokohama office was not supplied with a postmark device until November 1870.

In 1871 regular mail service between San Francisco and Shanghai was on a once a month schedule. Feeder line steamers SS Costa Rica and New York operated between Yokohama and Shanghai, a ten day trip. Four larger PMSS steamers operated between San Francisco and Yokohama, generally a twenty two day trip. Additional vessels were contracted as needed.

The Yokohama and Shanghai United States postal agencies developed along separate paths. Japan inaugurated a domestic mail system on April 20, 1871 and foreign mails were delivered into one of the foreign postal agencies, such as the U.S. agency, under cover. On January 1, 1875 Japan started their own foreign mail system and all foreign post offices were closed. However, the U.S. postal agency in Shanghai remained open after China joined the U.P.U. in 1875.

This exhibit, which is the first display of the collection and is a work in progress, shows rates and usages of the period between 1871 and 1879. It is organized as follows:

I. Mails To And From Yokohama, Japan. This portion of exhibit shows the handling of mails via the U.S. postal agency in Yokohama. In the period before January 1, 1875 the postal rates for letter mail were a composite of the 10c Trans-Pacific rate by American packet to San Francisco, plus the U.S. rate if addressed to any foreign destination. After that date, mails were handled under separate treaties between U.S. and Japan until Japan joined the U.P.U.

## Japan - United States rate summary

January 1, 1867	- 10c Trans-Pacific rate
January 1, 1875	- 15c treaty rate
January 1, 1876	- 12c treaty rate
April 1, 1876	- 5c treaty rate
June 1, 1877	- 5c U.P.U. rate

II. Mails To and From Shanghai, China. This portion of exhibit shows the handling of mails via the U.S. postal agency in Shanghai. In the period before July 1, 1875 the postal rates for letter mail were a composite of the 10c Trans-Pacific rate by American packet to San Francisco, plus the U.S. rate if addressed to any foreign destination. U.P.U. rates became effective on that date.

## China - United States rate summary

January 1, 1867	- 10c Trans-Pacific rate
July 1, 1875	- 5c U.P.U. rate

**U.S. Post Office in Yokohama, Japan**

**10c Trans-Pacific Rate To U.S.**



23 October 1871 Hiogo, via Yokohama, to Natick, Massachusetts  
carried by PMSS *Japan* to San Francisco, double 10c rate prepaid including 2c grill  
sent under cover through Japanese mail system from Hiogo to Yokohama



23 October 1872 Yokohama to San Francisco, carried by PMSS *Japan* to San Francisco  
14 November San Francisco arrival, single 10c rate

*These two covers were carried on the same steamer, sent a year apart, from Japan.*

**U.S. Post Office in Yokohama, Japan**

**10c Trans-Pacific Rate To U.S.**



23 May 1873 Yokohama to Hartford, carried by PMSS *Alaska* to San Francisco  
triple 10c rate

U.S. Post Office in Yokohama, Japan

10c Trans-Pacific Rate To U.S.



NOV 3 1873  
YOKOHAMA

Mrs Stuart-Clamage  
Care J. H. Weber  
Cogswell & Co  
520 Lake St  
Chicago Ill.

3 November 1873 Yokohama to Chicago  
carried by PMSS *Great Republic*  
to San Francisco  
quintuple 10c rate

**U.S. Post Office in Yokohama, Japan**  
**16c Trans-Pacific Rate To Great Britain**



22 July 1871 Yokohama to Gravesend, England, carried by PMSS *Japan* to San Francisco  
22 August New York City transit, single 16c rate



22 May 1871 Yokohama to London, England, carried by PMSS *China* to San Francisco  
2c overpayment of double rate

**U.S. Post Office in Yokohama, Japan**  
**20c Trans-Pacific Rate To Germany**



19 July 1874 Yokohama to Frankfurt, Germany, prepaid correct 20c rate  
carried by PMSS *Colorado* to San Francisco, 9 August 1874 San Francisco transit  
31 August 1874 arrival backstamp

**U.S. Post Office in Yokohama, Japan**  
**6c Printed Matter Rate To Italy**



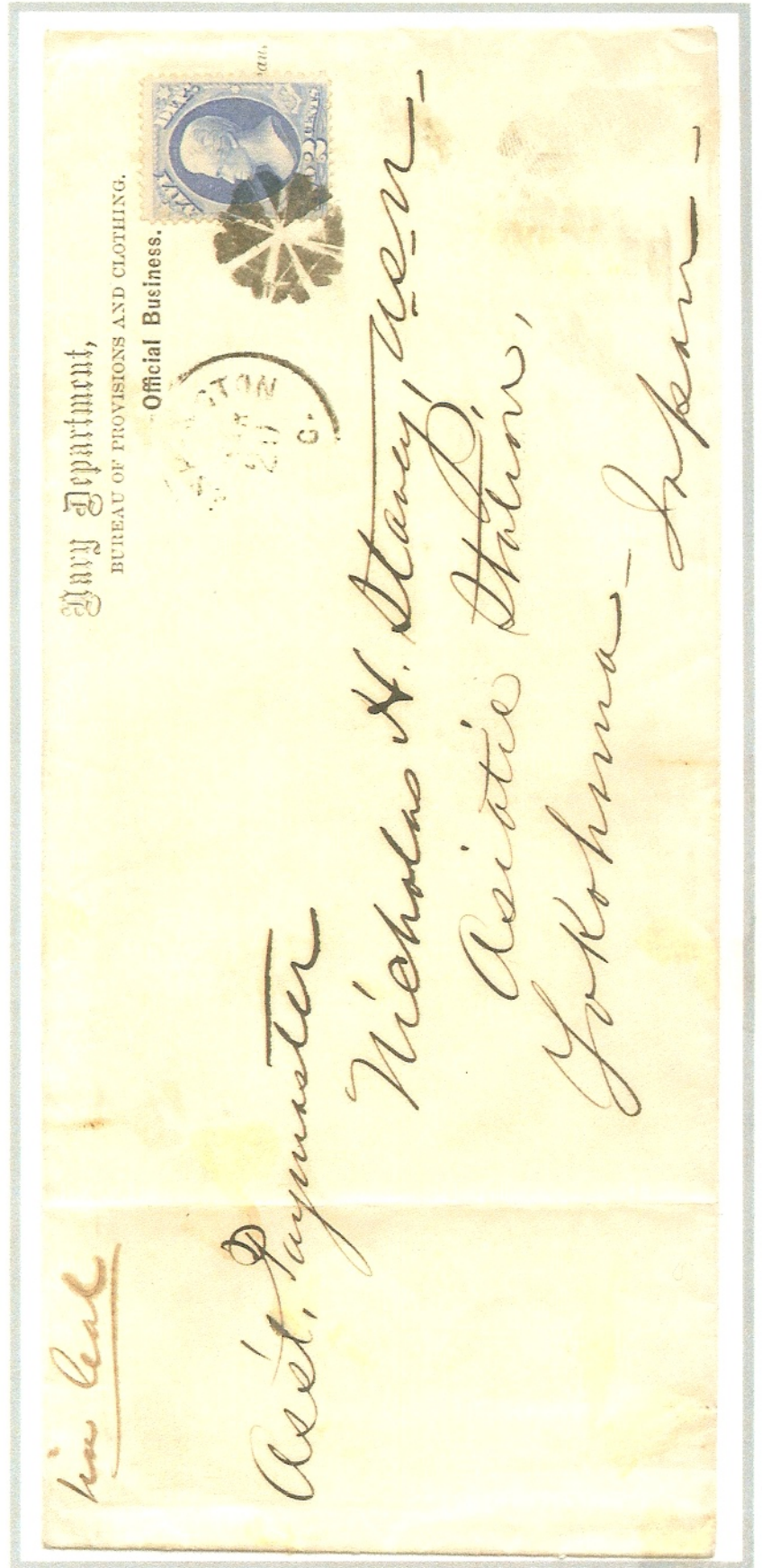
1 October 1873 Yokohama printed circular to Genoa, Italy  
carried by *Quang Se*, contracted to PMSS, to San Francisco arriving 27 October  
received Genoa 23 November docket

U.S. Post Office in Yokohama, Japan  
2c Trans-Pacific Rate Circular Rate To Japan

20 March 1874  
Washington, D.C. to Yokohama

carried by PMSS *Great Republic*  
to Yokohama

prepaid correct 2c rate with  
2c Navy Department official



# Foreign Mail Office in Yokohama, Japan

## 15c Treaty Rate To Japan



19 February 1875 Salem, Massachusetts to Yokohama, carried by PMSS *China* to Yokohama prepaid correct 15c rate, Yokohama Japan 28 March arrival backstamp with time



15 June 1875 San Francisco to Yokohama, carried by PMSS *Colorado* to Yokohama prepaid double 15c rate, Yokohama Japan 9 July arrival backstamp with time

The fifteen cents per half ounce treaty rate between Japan and the United States became effective on January 1, 1875. On this same date Japan started their own foreign mail system. New postmarks were employed that had "Yokohama Japan" in English with date and time slugs.

**Foreign Mail Office in Yokohama, Japan**  
**15c Trans-Pacific Rate To Japan**

12 March 1875 Washington, D.C. to  
Tokio

carried by PMSS *Alaska* to Yokohama

21 April 6 P.M. Yokohama arrival  
prepaid correct 15c rate with 15c  
Treasury Department official



Treasury Department,

FIRST CONTROLLER'S OFFICE.

Hon. John A. Bingham  
United States Minister  
Tokio, Japan,

U.S. Packet,

U.S. Post Office in Shanghai, China

2c Printed Matter Trans-Pacific Rate To United States



11 December 1873 Shanghai prices current to New York  
carried by PMSS *China* to San Francisco  
2c printed matter rate prepaid

U.S. Post Office in Shanghai, China

10c Trans-Pacific Rate To United States



13 June 1871 Shanghai to New York, single 10c rate prepaid with grilled stamp carried by PMSS *America* to San Francisco, 16 July San Francisco transit



12 September 1871 Shanghai to Wisconsin, prepaid single rate with pair 2c and single 6c carried by PMSS *Arizona* to San Francisco, transit backstamp

**U.S. Post Office in Shanghai, China**

**10c Trans-Pacific Rate To United States**



12 December 1872 Shanghai to Michigan, prepaid single 10c rate  
carried by American sailing ship *Scotia*, under contract, to San Francisco  
22 January 1873 San Francisco transit (an exceptionally long trip)



14 January 1873 Shanghai to Michigan, prepaid 20c double rate  
carried by PMSS *Japan* to San Francisco, 15 February San Francisco transit

*Above two covers are from consecutive sailings. The top cover was sent by sailing vessel from Yokohama while the lower cover was carried by a steam ship.*

U.S. Post Office in Shanghai, China  
10c Trans-Pacific Rate To United States



2 May 1873 Shanghai to Tennessee, carried by British Steamer *Quang Se*, under contract, to San Francisco  
1 June San Francisco transit, single 10c rate



12 May 1873 Shanghai to New York  
carried by PMSS *Alaska* to San Francisco, prepaid 20c double rate

U.S. Post Office in Shanghai, China

5c U.P.U. Rate To United States



22 July 1877 Kiukiang, China to Massachusetts

by Chinese Imperial mail from Kiukiang to Shanghai

26 July U.S. Post Office Shanghai, by SS *Oceanic* of Oriental & Occidental S.S. Co. to San Francisco

31 August San Francisco transit

prepaid double 5c U.P.U. rate

*The five cents per half ounce U.P.U. rate became effective on July 1, 1875.*

U.S. Post Office in Shanghai, China

10c Registry Fee + 5c U.P.U. Rate To United States



3 June 1879 Shanghai registered to New York  
10c registry fee plus 5c rate prepaid, French stamp superfluous  
carried by PMSS *Alaska* to San Francisco  
5 July 1879 San Francisco Registered transit backstamp