

1870

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

R.M.S.P. Elbe

Maiden Voyage

London to Jamaica via Southampton and St. Thomas



March 1, 1870. Textbook strikes of the London Branch Office, Lombard Street duplex canceller (Dubus 37a) obliterates the one shilling rate to Jamaica by West India Packet, effective since Jan. 1, 1853. Here a double rated letter franked with a vertical pair of the 1/- Issue of 1867, plate 4.

London Times, Thursday March 3.

THE MAILS &c., Southampton.

Wednesday (March 2). The Royal Mail Company's new screw steamship Elbe, Capt. T.A. Bevis, sailed hence to-day on her first ocean voyage with the West India, Pacific and Mexican mails.



March 19. Kingston, Jamaica transit backstamp.

March 20. Newport, Jamaica arrival handstamp on letter face.

1871

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

R. M. S. P. Shannon

London to Jamaica via Southampton and St Thomas



March 1, 1871. Letter to Newport, Jamaica, paid at the one shilling rate by West India Packet, effective since Jan. 1, 1853. Rate paid by Issue of 1867, plate 4. It is cancelled by the London Branch Office at Lombard Street (Dubus 37a) where this distinctive duplex obliterator was employed.

March 2. The Royal Mail Steam Packet Shannon, Commander Reeks, departed from Southampton with the West India, Mexican and Pacific mails.

The Colonial Standard and Jamaica Despatch, Kingston, March 23. The R.M.C. Steamer Shannon, Reeks, arrived here yesterday morning and landed her mails and passengers. She left Southampton on the 2nd inst., arrived at St. Thomas on the 18th and left on the 19th for this port. The Shannon left this morning for Colon.



1871

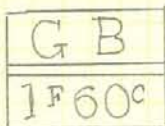
ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

Caracas, Venezuela to France via St. Thomas and Plymouth  
R.M.S.P. Nile



November 8, 1871. Letter datelined at Caracas and addressed to Burdeas (Bordeaux). It bears a fine strike of the oval receiving mark at the Caracas Post Office. This letter no doubt went by the

Gulf route steamer Eider to meet the R.M.S.P. Nile at St. Thomas the 14th, as the London Times noted Eider was at St. Thomas on that date.



November 28. The Nile, out from St. Thomas the 14th, landed the mails at Plymouth the 27th and proceeded via Cherbourg to Southampton where she arrived the 28th (see below). This was a rather unusual routing. Arrival backstamp at London following the Plymouth landing. The "tray" mark was struck at London per Article 34, showing France owed Britain 1 franc 60centimes per 30 grams for letters from West Indian points, unpaid.



November 28. French entry at Calais on the Calais to Paris T.P.O.



November 29. Arrival backstamp at Bordeaux. 12 decimes (1F20 centimes or 1 shilling) due.

London Times: Arrived at Southampton Nov. 28, 1871, Royal Mail Company's screw steamship Nile, Capt. R. Revett. The Nile left Colon on the 5th inst., Jamaica on the 9th, and St. Thomas on the 19th; and having landed the mails at Plymouth on Monday afternoon (27th) she proceeded via Cherbourg to Southampton, where she arrived yesterday (28th) morning.

The Royal Mail steamer Moselle, Capt. J.T. Moir, from Southampton on the 17th of October, arrived out at Jamaica on the 4th inst. and proceeded for Colon. The Arno was at St. Lucia, the Eider (from the Gulf route), the Mersey (from Porto Rico) and the Tyne were at St. Thomas.

1873

ROYAL WEST INDIA MAIL PACKET COMPANY  
LIVERPOOL - PORTO PLATA, HAITI via St. Thomas.

August 16, 1873. Letter prepaid at Liverpool for Porto Plata, Santo Domingo. The Royal West India Mail packets sailed from Southampton to the West Indies. One port of call on the main voyage was St. Thomas, Danish West Indies.



PAID  
C

London  
accounting  
mark.

ST. THOMAS  
A  
SP 2  
73

R.M.S.P. Elbe  
Southampton Aug. 18  
Barbadoes 31  
St. Thomas Sep. 3  
Jamel 5

Sept. 2, 1873. British Post Office at St. Thomas transit backstamp. Rates beyond the regular routes were higher and generally had to be paid in advance to guarantee forwarding the letters. Here 2/- rate allowed further transit through Jacmel, Haiti. Sept. 6, docket notes receipt at Porto Plata.

1865

WEST INDIA MAIL  
ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY



Numeral  
obliterator  
of Manches-  
ter.



Sept. 1, 1865. Letter posted at Manchester for Guadalajara, Mexico, "per R(oyal) M(ail) Steamer from Southampton". Prepaid 1/- rate to Vera Cruz.



2

Sept. 2, 1865. London transit.

2 pesos, Mexican charge mark for inland rate, Vera Cruz to Guadalajara.

1870-71

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

R.M.S.P. Elbe

3050 tons, 350' x 40', 2 funnels, 2 masts, clipper bow, iron screw steamer, compound expansion engines, 12½ knots. Built Clydeside by Elder in 1870. West Indies steamer for many years, by 1886 she was running to Buenos Aires. The Cunard Line chartered Elbe in March 1902 to bring Etruria's passengers home from Horta after the latter lost her propeller.



115 b  
après retouche      after retouch  
5 à petite boule    5 with small serif  
1870-71

December 29, 1870. Letter posted at the Inland Branch, London, franked with the 1 shilling rate to Mexico by Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. by a copy of the Issue of 1867, Plate 4. It is cancelled by the Inland Branch duplex with the "105" in the obliterator retouched showing a small serif on the loop of the 5 (Dubus 115b). The "k" in the cds is the 2nd code for "105". The "Z" is the date code for Dec. 29, 1870 (Cf. chart in Dubus.)

London Times, Jan. 3, 1871. THE MAILS, &c., SOUTHAMPTON, Monday. The Royal Mail Company's screw steamship Elbe, Capt. E.M. Leeds, sailed to-day with the West Indian, Mexican and Pacific Mails.

Schedule to Vera Cruz was 14½ days steaming to St. Thomas, a day layover, and 8 days 6 hours by feeder steamer to Vera Cruz or 23 days 6 hours. Docket notes a January 28 arrival at Mexico City which gives about 2 days Vera Cruz to Mexico City, for which carriage a Mexican postage of 4 pesos was due.

4

1871

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

R.M.S.P. Tasmanian

2250 tons, built 1858 by Clyde, 346' x 39'. Compound engines were installed in 1871 which reduced coal expenditure on a passage to St. Thomas from 1088 to 466 tons. She was capable of 12-12½ knots.



December 1, 1871. Letter posted at Manchester and paid at the 1 shilling rate to Mexico via Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. Paid by 1/- Issue of 1867, plate 5. Endorsed "Via Southampton". "498" is British Post Office number assigned to Manchester.

London Times, Dec. 4, 1871. The Royal Mail Company's steamship Tasmanian, Capt. E.M. Leeds, sailed from Southampton on Saturday afternoon, Dec. 2, with the West Indian, Pacific and Mexico mails.

Scheduled time for the Atlantic and Colon (Panama) route, Southampton to St. Thomas was 14½ days steaming. The Mexican Route by an auxiliary steamer via the Old Bahama Channel was St. Thomas-Havana-Vera Cruz-Tampico and return. This allowed 8 days 6 hours to Vera Cruz.

December 25, 1871. Docket notes receipt at Vera Cruz, putting the letter, 23 days out of Southampton, right on schedule.

Mexican postage of 4 pesos due for delivery from Vera Cruz to Mexico City.

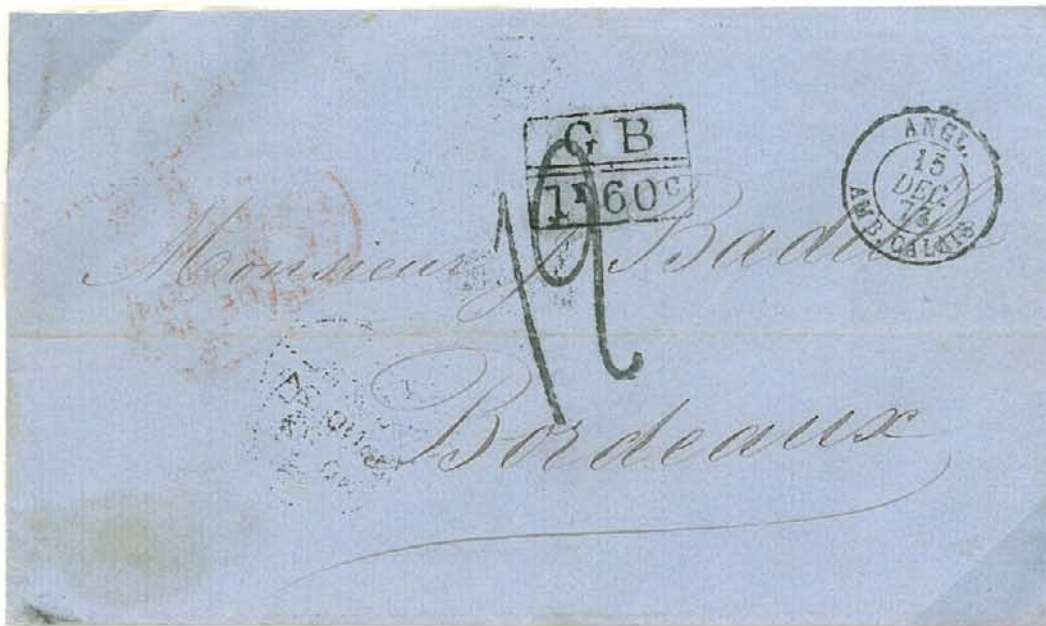
**4** Competition now existed for the R.M.S.P. Co. as noted in a London Times shipping notice: Friday Dec. 1, 1871. Steam to the WEST INDIES from SOUTHAMPTON.—The magnificent Clyde built ROYAL MAIL STEAMSHIPS of the NORTH GERMAN LLOYD leave Southampton on the 10th of each month for St. Thomas, thence to Colon, about 17 days, viz - HANNOVER, 3000 tons, 700 Horsepower, Sunday 10th December.

1873

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

Jacmel, Haiti to France via Barbados

R.M.S.P. Tasmania, Jacmel to Plymouth



A  
JACMEL  
NO 24  
73

EC  
LONDON  
DE 15  
73

G.B.  
1860C

November 4, 1873. An unpaid letter posted at the British Consular Post Office at Jacmel, Haiti, backstamp. This letter was transported by the R.M.S.P. Tasmania which made the through run from Colon to the U.K. Her dates were:

Colon	Nov. 21	Barbados	Nov. 30
Jamaica	23-25	Plymouth	Dec. 13
→ Jacmel	26		

ANGL.  
15  
DEC.  
73  
AMB. CALAIS

PARIS A BORDEAUX  
15  
DEC  
73  
A

BORDEAUX  
24/16  
DEC.  
73  
(32)

19

December 15. London transit backstamp. London struck the Franco-British Convention of 1856 "tray" mark which charged France one franc 60 centimes per 30 grams bulk for unpaid letters from South and Central America to France that had been conveyed by British Packet. Same day French entry mark at Calais and Paris to Bordeaux night train (circular center).

December 16. Bordeaux arrival backstamp. Letter rated at 12 decimes due, equivalent to one shilling, the single rate from Central America.



1876

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

R.M.S.P. Moselle

Southampton to Colon, Panama



September 29, 1876. A letter posted at London at the one shilling rate to Panama (in effect since May 1856.) Payment is by the 1/- Issue of 1873, plate 12. The penny red, Issue of 1864, plate 159, paid a late fee. The London Inland Branch duplex cancellation, Dubus 196, was a newer type with a double circle date stamp. These were issued Nos. 27 to 52 with code letters A to Z. Here No. 29 is C. The date code "B" should be "C".

Letter is endorsed: p/Moselle/s/. This 3250 ton, iron screw steamer was a sister ship to Tagus. Both were built by Elder in 1871.

R.M.S.P. Moselle's dates were:

Southampton	October 2
St. Thomas	16-17
Jacmel	19
Jamaica	20-21
Colon	25.

Letter went by the Panama Railroad, Colon to Panama City. It was subject to 10 reales local postage at Panama, shown by the blue manuscript "10".

1875 - 76

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

R.M.S.P. Tagus



December 16, 1875. A letter to Puerto Plata, Santo Domingo, paid at London by the one shilling Issue of 1873, plate 11. This was the correct 1/- Packet Letter rate to Hayti and St. Domingo. Cancellation is by the duplex of the London Inland Branch (Dubus 127a with rounded head of the "9"). The date stamp exhibits the 2nd code for stamp 94, the lower case "m". "F" is the correct code date for December 16, 1875. Letter is endorsed: Per West Indian Mail.

December 17. R.M.S.P. Tagus departed from Southampton, her dates were:

Southampton	Dec. 17, 1875
Barbadoes	31
St. Thomas	Jan. 2, 1876
Port-au-Prince	4.

A local steamer carried this letter from Port-au-Prince, Hayti to Puerto Plata, Santo Domingo. Docket notes receipt January 6 at Santo Domingo.

1877

PACKET LETTERS  
TRANSATLANTIC MAIL  
WEST INDIA MAIL - PACKET SERVICE  
ENGLAND - MEXICO VIA NEW YORK



Pr. 2-62  
11.15

Nov. 10, 1877. Letter posted to Saltillo, Mexico, per SS "Abyssinia", Cunard Line Steamer to N.Y. 1 shilling (24¢) standard prepaid packet letter rate which included portion of trip handled by West India Mail Packet service.

Nov. 23, 1877. New York Foreign Department forwarded letter via West India Mail Packet.



Backstamp:  
Dec. 31, 1877.  
Vera Cruz transit.  
Mms. notes letter  
received at Saltillo  
Jan. 5, 1878.

25c.

Mexican inland  
rate of 25  
centavos.

1859

MIDDLEBOROUGH, MASS. TO PERU VIA NEW YORK & PANAMA  
22¢ Rate Effective December 1856 to October 1867  
United States Mail Steamship Company S.S. Moses Taylor  
Mail to the whaling Bark Triton of New Bedford



PAID

22



May 31, 1859. Letter paid at Middleborough, Mass. at the 22¢ rate to Peru via Panama. This was divided 10¢ for American handling and 12¢ for British carriage down the west coast of South America.

12

June 6. The New York Exchange Office marked this letter with a 12¢ credit to Britain for Pacific Mail Steam Packet service.

The S.S. Moses Taylor of the U.S. Mail Steamship Co. departed from New York for Aspinwall (now Colon) on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus of Panama.

June 17. Moses Taylor arrived at Aspinwall.

June 18. Mail, which had been bagged ashore at Aspinwall, went across the Isthmus by the Panama Railroad to Panama on the Pacific side where the letter received the PANAMA transit at the British consular office there. It then went down the west coast by British Packet. to Paita, Peru.



The New Bedford registered Triton had originally been ship-rigged, but was altered to a bark-rig. in 1857. The managing agent or owner was Isaac Howland Jr. & Co. Triton departed New Bedford, Capt. John B. Durnin, for the Pacific July 11, 1857. During her voyage she shipped home 240 barrels of sperm oil, 43 bbls. whale oil and 7100 lb. whale bone. She had an additional 939 bbls. of sperm oil on board when she returned to port June 27, 1860.

1860

WEST INDIA MAIL SERVICE  
WEST COAST OF SOUTH AMERICA - Peru



YSLAY

Mar. 1, 1860. Letter prepaid 2 shillings at London, West India Packet Mail rate for West Coast of South America. Noted "Paid 2/-" and marked 2/- in red by mail clerk.

Mar. 21, 1860 Letter was handled by British Postal Agent at Panama for cross-isthmus trip. Thence by steamer down the West Coast of South America.

Peruvian port town of Islay, transit. Letter then went overland to Puno, a city on the shores of Lake Titicaca.

R.M.S. Tasmania sailed March 2, 1860 from Southampton for St. Thomas.

1859

UNITED STATES TO WEST COAST OF SOUTH AMERICA

BRITISH MAIL - 22¢ Rate to Peru, Postal Regulations of 1857

The rates to Peru by the Regulations of 1855 were 32¢ on letters sent. In the regulations of 1857, the rate was reduced to 22¢ on letters sent; being the U.S. and foreign postage, prepayment required, and 10¢ on letters received; being the U.S. postage only.



September 1, 1859. Letter posted at New York with 22¢ postage prepaid in cash. Letter marked "22" in pencil and "paid" in mms.

12



The New York Exchange Office credited the British Packet Office with 12¢, the foreign share of the postage.

Sept. 15, 1859. British Packet Office, Panama, transit mark which forwarded letter cross-isthmus to Callao, Peru.

1867

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

MAIL SERVICE FROM THE WESTERN COAST OF SOUTH AMERICA  
PERU VIA PANAMA

Mails from the Western Coast of South America were conveyed by contract carrier to Panama, thence by Royal Mail Packet onward. The rate, as per Consular Instructions of 1863, was 1/- (24¢) per half-ounce.



PANAMA  
20 JUN 1867  
TRANSIT

Corner card of sender who handed his letter to a contract steamer, unpaid at Calloa, Peru to Marblehead, Mass.

June 20, 1867. British office at Panama who handled the cross-isthmus trip.

34

Rate of 34¢ due from recipient, being 24¢ (blue mms.) credited to Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. and 10¢ to U.S. for inland delivery.

1867

ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY

British Guiana to Ireland via Barbados, St. Thomas and Southampton

R. M. S. P. Douro

2800 tons, 326' x 40' beam, iron, earliest screw steamer built to Royal Mail order. Built 1865 by Caird. She sailed on the West India route until 1869, when she opened the Southampton-Plate through-service. The Spanish steamship Yrurac Bat holed her off Cape Finisterre April 1, 1882. Both vessels sank, Douro with the loss of 17 lives.



September 7, 1867. Twice a month steamers went out from St. Thomas on the Barbados and Demerara, British Guiana route, carrying the mail from and to meet the Atlantic and Colon route. This letter was paid 24 cents, equivalent to the 1 shilling rate to U.K. via Southampton at Demerara (Georgetown).



September 27. Arrived at Southampton, West India mail steamer Douro. Same day transit at London.



September 28. Transit backstamp aboard the Holyhead and Kingstown Packet which ferried mail and passengers across the Irish Sea from Britain to Dublin. Kingstown is the port city of Dublin.



c.1869

WEST INDIES MAIL  
VERA-CRUZ TO NEW YORK



June 7, c.1869. Letter posted at Vera Cruz. Even though "Paid" this did not include ship handling to New York.



June 24. Docket notes letter incoming at New York with 10¢ due as a "Steamship" letter. 10¢ "Post Road" rate applied from Mexico direct to New York or British and Danish West Indies by American Packet via N.Y. and British Packet via St. Thomas.

1867

WEST INDIES MAIL

HAVANA TO NEW YORK

Double Rate



The Direct Rate to Cuba, effective from August 1864, was 10¢ per half ounce, as was rate to certain Mexican ports and British and Danish West Indies.



March 22, 1867. Company backstamp, mailing date of letter at Havana, Cuba. Directed by Steamer "Rapidan".



April 2, 1867. Docket notes letter received this date. Letter weighed from  $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 oz., thus subject to  $10¢ \times 2 = 20¢$  collect as per 1864 rate schedule.

1860

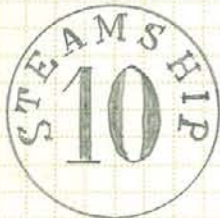
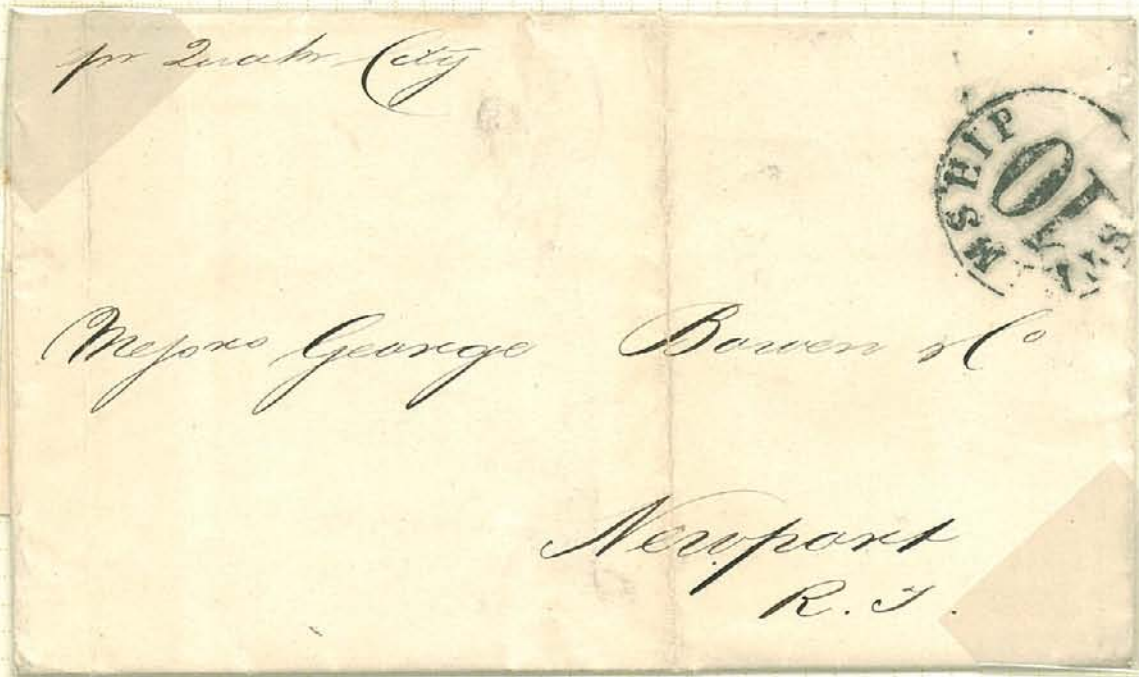
WEST INDIES MAIL

HAVANA, CUBA TO NEWPORT, R.I. VIA NEW YORK

S.S. Quaker City

1428 ton wooden side-paddle steamer built 1854 at Philadelphia, which city was her first home port. Documented No. 20528. Sold Aug. 12, 1861 to U.S. Navy, renamed USS Quaker City Dec. 14, 1861. Redocumented Aug. 11, 1865. Sold foreign 1869.

March 24, 1860. Letter datelined at Havana. Letter within tells of Captain Taylor of the Brig "Matron" who is now in New Orleans. The Matron was a 197 ton schooner built 1854 at Newport, R.I. Registered at New York Jan. 13, 1855.



Letter received at New York and subject to the 10¢ Steamship letter charge.

1875

NEW-YORK, HAVANA AND MEXICAN MAIL STEAMSHIP LINE  
HAVANA TO NEW YORK DIRECT

S.S. City of Vera Cruz

This line had two services, to Havana direct and to the Mexican Gulf ports. An April 1875 advertisement in the New York Times ran:

NEW-YORK, HAVANA AND MEXICAN MAIL SS LINE

For Havana Direct

CITY OF NEW-YORK

CITY OF HAVANA

CITY OF VERA-CRUZ

For Vera Cruz and New Orleans, calling at Havana, Progreso, Campeachy, Tuspan and Tampico

CITY OF HAVANA

Alexandre & Sons

CITY OF MERIDA

No. 31 and 33 Broadway.



April 9, 1875. Letter datelined at Havana and endorsed: pr "City of Vera Cruz". She sailed from Havana on April 10.

N.Y. Times. Arrived N.Y. Wednesday April 14, 1875. Steam-ship City of Vera Cruz, Deaken, Havana April 10 with mdse and passengers to F. Alexandre & Sons; April 11 lat 26.40 lon 79.50 passed a United States frigate, monitor, store-ship and tender bound N.

April 15. Arrival handstamp at New York with 10¢ in U.S. currency due, the steamship rate.

1860

WEST INDIES MAIL SERVICE  
NEW ORLEANS TO NEW YORK VIA HAVANA

S.S. Bienville

1558 ton wooden paddle steamer built 1860 at Brooklyn, N.Y. New York was her first home port, official document No. 2551. Sold Aug. 14, 1861 to U.S.N., renamed U.S.S. Bienville on Oct. 23, 1861. Redocumented Nov. 27, 1867. Bienville burnt on Aug. 15, 1872 at Watling Island, Bahamas with the loss of 42 lives.

Sept. 17, 1860. Letter datelined at Havana. D.T. Lanman & Kemp correspondence, prominent N.Y. drug firm.



Sept. 22. Shipping and Commercial List (N.Y.) notes the arrival of the Steamer Bienville, Capt. Bullock, at New York this date from New Orleans and Havana. Lanman & Kemp docketed the letter as received on Monday Sept. 24.

10¢ single steamer letter rate due.