Unusual Cover Addressed to Kankan, French Guinea with mixed Polish and French Postage – See Page11.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIL SYSTEM IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE POSTAL SERVICE IN LWÓW (LVIV)

By: Dr. Inger Kuzych

Editor’s Note: This is the third of a three-part article on the history of the post in Central Europe. The previous issues (#550 & 551) featured Part 1 (covering Early European Mails and Getting Organized in the Habsburg Dominions) and Part 2 (covering Early Post in Poland). This issue covers Starting Up the Particular Post in Lwów (Lviv, Lemberg). Postal Intrigues and Earliest Postal Insignias from Lwów and Lemberg. We are grateful to Inger Kuzych for contributing this article, which has received very favorable comments from our members.

Starting up the Particular Post in Lwów (Lviv, Lemberg)

The posts described in Parts 1 & 2 were of a public type. They served the interests of the country — connecting it with other states abroad — and also linked important strategic, administrative, and economic locales within the country itself. Public posts were maintained by the state.

In contrast, particular posts served the interests of certain circles — specific cities, districts, or counties. Such posts were self-governing authorities, and could be brought to life only by a decree of central governmental authorities. Particular posts had the same privileges as public ones. Interference with their privileges was forbidden and was prosecuted by municipal or city courts. The establishment of particular posts was provided for in the constitution of 1620.

Dominico Monteluppi is credited with establishing a reliable particular post in Kraków in the early 17th century, and it is he who also organized the first postal center in Lwów in 1625 (Figure 1). This service was supposed to insure the functioning of postal routes from Lwów to Warsaw, Lublin, Gdańsk, Kraków, and somewhat later, to Kamieniec Podolski (Kamianets-Podilskyi). He set up this center in a Lwów building that survives to the present day at No. 2 Rynok (Market) Square (Figure 2).

Figure 1 – Souvenir sheet issued by Ukraine Post in 2006 for the 450th Anniversary of the Founding of Lviv. Based on a copper-plate engraving made in 1618, it is the earliest known view of the city and dates back to just before the establishment of the Lwów postal service in the 1620's.

Figure 2 – Cover sent via air mail from Lviv to the USA on 20 May 2008 depicts the Bandinelli Palace, both on its cachet and on the special blue “Post on the Market Square – Lviv 6” cancellation applied at the Palace. This structure officially became the Lviv Postal Museum seven month later.

While postal traffic between Kraków and Lwów was fairly significant, Monteluppi’s Lwów post service was rather rudimentary. It was up to another Italian merchant, Roberto Bandinelli, to carry out improvements and develop the organization. Roberto had settled in and become a citizen of Lwów around 1622. He was the grandson of the renowned sculptor Bartolommeo (Baccio) Bandinelli, whose masterpieces include the well-known statue of Hercules and Cacus in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence.

In a decree of 4 March 1629, Polish King Zygmunt III accepted Roberto Bandinelli into the royal retinue and at the same time granted him the privilege of conducting regular royal mails to Italy, to other European cities, and even overseas. Bandinelli also
acquired the title of “Royal Postmaster.” As such he managed postal affairs from the city that was his particular postal seat (Lwów), while in other cities he set up representatives, the so-called “correspondents.”

At that time the voivode (provincial administrator, similar to a governor) Stanisław Lubomirski and the Polish crown hetman (the highest ranking officer) Stanisław Koniecpolski issued a series of “Universals” in which they accepted Roberto Bandinelli into their service and protection. These decrees further announced the significance of the new postal service to both the citizenry and the state, that no interference would be tolerated for this important service, and that any necessary aid should be provided to Roberto Bandinelli.

In consultation with the magistrates of Lwów, Roberto Bandinelli proposed to the town council an organizational plan for the post, the so-called Ordinatio Posthal. This document survives to this day in the city’s historical archives. The text includes the statement that: “The postal ministry from Lwów to Lublin, to Warsaw, to Toruń, Gdańsk, and also other countries and…from those cities back, is granted to the eminent Roberto Bandinelli.” On the 12th of May 1629, the text of the Ordinatio was entered into the city records. The postal service in Ukraine traces its beginning to 1629 and Bandinelli’s organizational efforts.

Mail from the city left once a week on Saturdays; it was sent in two directions. The first route went northwest to the Baltic Sea through Zamość (Zamostia), Lublin, Warsaw, Toruń, Gdańsk. The other route went west to Jarosław (Yaroslav), Rzeszów (Riashiv), Tarnów, and Kraków. Parcels could be sent out in other directions by special arrangement.

Figures differ as to the original number of postal couriers. One source says 21, but since only 17 couriers are named, that is likely the initial number. One of these served as commander. The names of the original group have survived: Symon or Lomyvoda, Bartholomeo Kozel, Jan Mościński, Martin Sokrynky, Martin Kapusta, Jan Surówka, Martin Opryshko, Stanislaw Volovets, Yakiv Kamensky, Andriy Opryshko or Plakhta, Voitekh Shvets from Bashty, Martin who goes to the Jews, Vorona Sharpanyi, Beniek formerly Tsipak, Jan Volokh from Pidhiria, and Hresko Sokynyk. Over time, the number dwindled to 12.

Couriers were given a postal identification, distinctive clothing in the colors of the royal post, and a post horn, which they were supposed to blow when passing/riding through a town or when approaching the postal building (Figure 3).

The couriers were formally sworn in, and their duties were clearly spelled out. For example, the courier to and from Warsaw was to return in two weeks. If it was not possible to fulfill this timetable for some reason, he was to explain or justify his delay in writing. If this was not done, he would be fined 5 groszy and imprisoned. An acquittal might be obtained from a postal agent – a “correspondent” – who could certify that some sort of accident had occurred en route, e.g., the delivery wagon broke down. Couriers were not allowed to accept letters on their own. Doing so could entail a fine of up to 8 groszy, imprisonment, and the loss of right to serve as a courier.

The postal service guaranteed the safe delivery of letters and parcels with seals unbroken. If a letter was lost, withheld, or delivered with a broken seal, the courier was supposed to explain and apologize to the “correspondent.” If the mishap occurred through inattention or carelessness, the courier would be severely punished.

Couriers were only to take the prescribed fees from the senders (who were responsible for paying for delivery). These fees depended on the distance the mail was carried and the size of the letter (number of sheets). If some urgent dispatch needed to be sent that could not wait till Saturday, then the postmaster was obligated to arrange for delivery by a separate courier. In this case, however, the citizen was supposed to provide his own courier. In order to prevent any infringement to the established postal service, this courier was not allowed to take any other
correspondence en route. If this rule was broken, a severe fine of 30 groszy was levied. Monies accumulated from fines went toward the needs of the post.

Postal services at this time were fairly expensive. For each half sheet of paper or for half a loth in weight (6.3 grams), cost to Jarosław was 1 grosz, to Rzeszów or Zamość– 1.5 groszy, to Tarnów or Lublin – 2 groszy, to Kraków or Warsaw – 3 groszy, to Toruń 4.5 groszy, and to Gdańsk 6 groszy. For comparison, the average daily wage for a laborer was just over 5 groszy.

Postal Intrigues

It should be pointed out that Bandinelli’s postal arrangement was a departure from the way the Polish posts had earlier been structured. Whereas the organization and maintenance of postal routes were previously financed by the king, this responsibility now fell to the postal entrepreneur. The sovereign provided him with certain privileges and freed him from public obligations, but in return he had to agree to carry mails at a constant fee.

Additionally, the entrepreneur had to abide by the postal regulations ratified by the various city councils to which he delivered the mails. It was this dependence on the city councils, however, that hindered postal development.

In 1633, King Władysław IV reconfirmed Bandinelli’s postal privileges. Even though Bandinelli had earlier received the title of “Royal Postmaster” and had invested 1,500 gold crowns (a considerable sum) in this new venture, he apparently had some enemies in the local administration jealous of his status, his privileges, and his income. The city council decided to circumvent his private initiative and establish its own official post with its own coursers. Not surprisingly,

**LWÓW’S FIRST POST OFFICE**

History has not only preserved the names of Lwow’s first mail carriers, but also the building where Roberto Bandinelli lived and from where the post was sent. It is the same building (No. 2 Rynok Square) where Monteluppi had earlier set up the first postal center and it is one of the lovelier Renaissance buildings on the Square complex.

The building was built at the end of the 16th-early 17th century by the Lwow merchant and apothecary Jarozh Wedelski, who in 1589 had acquired an old building constructed in the Gothic style and rebuilt it in the style of the late Renaissance. The interior of the first floor retained some of the original Gothic elements. The building was rebuilt again in 1629 by Roberto Bandinelli, who used the first floor to run his postal business and the upper floors as his residence.

Although Bandinelli may have been ill-treated in his efforts to establish a postal service, his labors have not been forgotten. Today his former home is still remembered as the place where Ukraine’s first regular postal service was established. Local tour guides refer to the domicile as “Budynok Bandinelli” or “Palats Bandinelli,” i.e., the Bandinelli Building or Bandinelli Palace. His postal office survives to the present in this building, which is now the Lviv Postal Museum. Opened on 12 December 2008, it is the first such museum in Ukraine.
Before Lemberg: (Part 3) (cont.)

the royal post suffered severe losses.

Sometime after 1639, Bandinelli was forced to liquidate his business and in 1639 he began legal actions against the city council [4]. These proceedings dragged on and eventually Bandinelli was accused of all sorts of charges (misuse of posts, embezzlement, unfair treatment of servants, etc.). Nonetheless, even though he was forced to suspend his service for a while, Bandinelli eventually was able to restart it [12] – perhaps after a royal intervention into the entire affair. In later years he expanded his deliveries to include the entire territory of the Ruthenian voivodeship (province). In 1650 he travelled to Vienna to negotiate a new postal contract with that city, but he died there shortly afterwards. We know that his successor was Andrzej Krzczonowicz and after him Lwów’s postmastership was held by Fabian Zywert (1668). Figure 6 shows a merchant’s letter dated 28 January 1684 sent from Lwów to Kraków. The Lwów postal service continued on into the 18th century with other officials running the postal service from the same building (No. 2 Rynok Square) where Monteluppi and Bandinelli had begun the enterprise early the previous century.

Earliest Postal Insignias from Lwów and Lemberg

The oldest postal seals from Lwów date to 1766; about 10 examples are known on market receipts. (Postal seals in Poland, as a whole, date back to 1764.) The dimensions of the red seals are 30.5 x 33 mm; the Latin inscription reads “Sigillum Officii Postae S.R.M. Leopoliensis” (Seal of the Leopolis (Lwów) Post Office), see Figure 7. The oldest Lwów postal cancellation – one of a number of cancels created by the Universal of King Stanislaw II August of 18 December 1764 for all of the major cities in Poland – is a vertical, black oval with double border showing the Latin name of the city, “LEOPOLIS”. A royal crown surmounts the word while a post horn – with its mouth piece to the right – appears below it (Figure 8). This unique postmark is only known from an article by Leopold Siwiec in Kurier Literacko-Naukowy No. 42 (15 October 1934), which merely included a reproduction without any detailed information on dimensions or date of usage. An Austrian publication, however, lists the introductory date of this cancellation as 1768 [11], four years before the First Partition of Poland and the transformation of Lwów into Lemberg.

Following Austria’s acquisition of Galicia in 1772, Polish postal regulations were preserved for a short time. A complete reorganization took place several months later when a Postal Directorate was established at Lemberg, the capital of the new Austrian crownland. Austrian authorities began operating the postal system fully on 1 June 1773. Nonetheless, some Polish postal regulations and customs were retained for a short period.

Austria’s first two postmarks, both for the city of Vienna, date to 1751. Over the next half century, many more Austrian cities and towns introduced markings, almost all of which simply consisted of single-line names and some of which occasionally appeared in a box. During the transition period following the onset of Austrian rule in Galicia, the distinctive circular...
or oval Polish postmarks continued to be used, but only a few examples have survived.

In 1773, the first Austrian postmarks were introduced in Galicia (in Lemberg and in Casimir); they were clearly modeled on the previous Polish ones, displaying a tripartite design. The circular Austrian markings, however, consisted of an imperial double-headed eagle replacing the Polish crown, the German name for the city replacing the Latin name, and the post horn – frequently but not always – turned the opposite way, with the mouthpiece to the left (Figure 9). Over the next decade, several more circular postmarks of this regional type were manufactured for Lemberg.

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Footnote:
Brief mention also needs to be made of another popular particular post in Przemyśl (Peremyshl). This city on the main postal route between Kraków and Lwów was an important communication juncture between Hungary and the north. Peremyśl’s councilors lobbied for the formation of their own postal service and received it in an ordinance of 1667. However, because of the large expense of maintaining a mounted postal service, here only a foot courier service was established. Przemyśl postmasters were obliged to make sure that mails destined beyond Kraków, Lublin, and Lwów (e.g., to Warsaw) were expedited by the public post.

Bibliography (for three-part article):