

Queensland Mail to the USA via San Francisco

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On 1 January 1876 a postal convention for mail between Queensland and the United States became effective. It was similar to the NSW-USA convention effective in 1874, using the contract steamships plying between Sydney, Auckland and San Francisco. Key elements of the convention were:

“The single rate of international letter-postage shall be twelve cents in the United States and sixpence in Queensland on each letter weighing half an ounce or less ... (and are) fully prepaid and delivered free of all charges whatsoever.”

“Every fully prepaid letter dispatched from one country to the other shall be plainly stamped with the words ‘paid all’ in red ink on the right-hand upper corner of the address.”



Fig. 1

Figure 1 shows a 19 October 1875 letter from Brisbane endorsed “via California Mail” sent before the Queensland-USA convention applied. There is a Sydney 23 OCT backstamp and a red circular PAID ALL applied in Sydney. The Sydney post office sometimes applied paid all markings to mail originating in Australian Colonies not yet signatories to postal conventions with the United States. Apparently the Sydney



Fig. 2

clerks used the paid all marking to indicate a letter was properly prepaid in Australia, not that no postage was due

in the United States. The cover was sent on the *City of Melbourne* and received a 22 DEC San Francisco arrival CDS and a black “10” for double the 5 cent steamship rate due from July 1875 for mail from countries without postal conventions with USA.¹

Figure 2 shows the earliest recorded Queensland to USA convention cover. It is endorsed “Via San Francisco” and is dated 24 June 1876 at

Brisbane. It was properly marked with a muddy red PAID ALL in circle marking. This marking was definitely applied at Brisbane, but was not recognized as such by Campbell.² The cover has a San Francisco arrival CDS of 27 July 1876, and it traveled by railroad to Cincinnati, Ohio where no postage was due.

Figure 3 (next page) is an 1879 cover from Warwick to San Francisco with the same Brisbane PAID ALL marking but this time in black ink – contrary to the terms of the convention. All subsequent Queensland via San Francisco to the USA covers show the Brisbane PAID ALL in circle in black ink. Figure 3 has a red arrival San Francisco PAID ALL CDS of 21 May. Note that the covers in Figures 1-3 all are franked at one shilling, rather than the single 6d rate. Possibly all are double rates or was there confusion in Queensland about the single rate?

Campbell’s rate chart does not specifically list a 6d rate to the USA beginning in 1876.³ It lists an 8d rate via San Francisco “before 1881.” The Tabart book⁴ only lists rates between Queensland and the UK, but that information is helpful. Beginning in March 1881 Queensland initiated mail to the UK via



Fig. 3

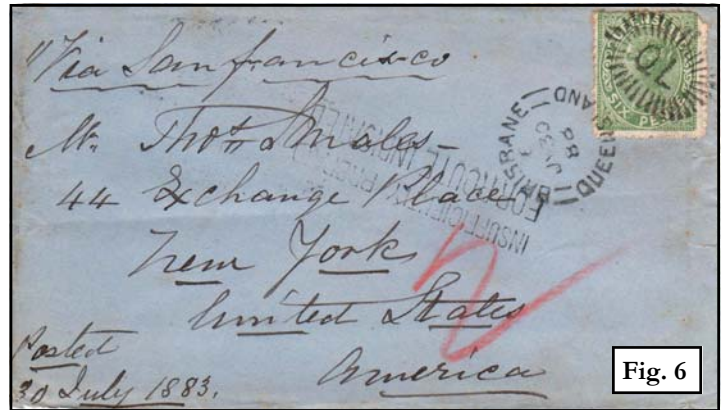


Fig. 6

Torres Straits and Suez. In order to support the Torres Straits route, Queensland set a rate of 4d to England and raised the rate to England via Sydney and San Francisco to 8d to discourage use of that route. Figures 4 and 5 show uses from Brisbane (30 September 1881) and Jimboomba (25 October 1882) to New York. Both show 8d rates and the black Brisbane PAID ALL in circle with no postage due from addressee. At this period an 8d rate applied for via San Francisco mail to the USA.



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Figure 6 shows an 1883 Brisbane cover to New York franked at 6d and endorsed "Via San Francisco". The rate via San Francisco was 8d at this time and the cover is struck with the two-line INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID/ FOR ROUTE INDICATED handstamp. This marking is illustrated by Campbell on page 117, and he describes the one cover he recorded on page 118. I believe three covers are now recorded with this device – all addressed to the United States and franked at 6d via San Francisco. These three covers were all routed via Torres Straits, Batavia, Suez, and England. The red 2 in

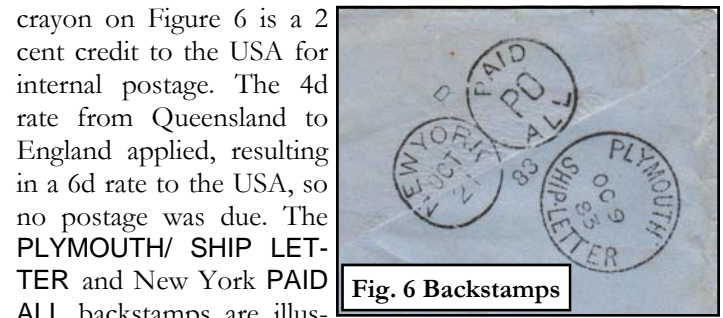


Fig. 6 Backstamps

crayon on Figure 6 is a 2 cent credit to the USA for internal postage. The 4d rate from Queensland to England applied, resulting in a 6d rate to the USA, so no postage was due. The PLYMOUTH/ SHIP LETTER and New York PAID ALL backstamps are illustrated. Use of the Tabcart book, page 221, indicates that the cover departed Brisbane 15 August on the Queensland Royal Mail *Chyebassa*, arriving Suez on 25 September, went through the Suez Canal and arrived at Plymouth on 9 October. Had it been franked at 8d the cover would have reached San Francisco on 7 September and New York about the middle of September.

At some point Queensland reduced the "via San Francisco" rate to the USA back to the 6d treaty rate. Figure 7 shows a 6d rate from March 1889. I record other via San Francisco 6d rates from Queensland to the USA in 1890 and 1891 before the 2½d UPU rate applied from late 1891. Exactly when the 8d rate was reduced 6d is not clear but must have been between 1885 and 1889.



Fig. 7

¹ For an analysis of arriving USA steamship and private ship rates, see *United States Incoming Steamship Mail, 1847-1875, Second Edition*, Theron Weirenga, U.S. Classics Society, 2000.
² *Queensland Postal History*, H.M. Campbell, R.P.S.V., 1990, page 109.
³ *Ibid.*, page 307.
⁴ *Australia New Zealand UK Mails Volume 2 - 1881-1900*, Colin Tabcart (self-published), 2011, page 21. sas/o