

# The Post Book – La Poste: Presentation of the Book

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## ABSTRACT

### English

#### **The Post Book – La Poste: Presentation of the Book**

Presentation of the bilingual book "The post book 500 years of history in Europe / La poste 500 ans d'histoire en Europe". The book tells the history of the post through the illustration and the reproduction of important iconic documents. After an introduction ranging from the Middle Eastern clay tablets, to the Roman and then Medieval world, documents are presented and annotated in chronological order: from 1501 (postal agreement between Philip the Fair and Francis of Taxis) up to 1874 (treaty of the General Postal Union).

### Italiano

#### **The Post Book – La Poste: Presentazione del libro**

Presentazione del libro bilingue "The post book 500 years of history in Europe / La poste 500 ans d'histoire en Europe" che narra la storia della posta attraverso l'illustrazione di documenti iconici e importanti, tutti riprodotti. Dopo un'introduzione dalle tavole medioorientali d'argilla al mondo romano a quello medievale, si presentano i documenti in ordine cronologico e commentati, dal 1501 (trattato fra Filippo il Bello e Francesco Tasso) sino al 1874: il trattato dell'Unione generale delle poste.

### Deutsch

**The Post Book – La Poste: Buchvorstellung** Vorstellung des zweisprachigen Buches „The post book 500 years of history in Europe / La poste 500 ans d'histoire en Europe“. Das Buch erzählt die Geschichte der Post durch Bilder und die Wiedergabe wichtiger symbolischer Dokumente. Nach einer

Einführung, die von den vorderasiatischen Tontafeln über die römische und dann mittelalterliche Welt reicht, werden die Dokumente in chronologischer Folge vorgestellt und kommentiert: von 1501 (Postvertrag zwischen Philipp dem Schönen und Franz von Taxis) bis 1874 (Weltpostvertrag).

## CONTRIBUTO

### English

01.

[A distinction should be made between the history of the post office, which was considered AS A VERY OLD institution, and postal history.](#)

The latter is a combination of all studies focusing on the transport of mail from one point to another within a demarcated time, location and space.

02.

the Thurn and Taxis family, which came originally from Bergamo, in Northern Italy, organise a postal service between his residence in Innsbruck, in the Austrian Tyrol, and Malines, in Brabant, where Margaret of York, wife of Charles the Bold, had established her court.

For almost four centuries, this family would embody postal services on the European continent.

As one generation followed another and alliances were forged by marriage, the Thurn and Taxis family would strengthen its hold on postal traffic until the second half of the 19th century

[The Archives du Nord in Lille \(France\) include a receipt dated March 1505 for the maintenance of staging posts, which lists the different towns involved.](#)

*acknowledge that I received from Simon Longin, receiver-general...900 pounds...in loan and payment... for what I might and may be owed for several posts...that I have maintained and continue to maintain*

03.

[One of the few personal belongings of Francis of Taxis to have survived](#) is little known to postal historians.

[This Book of Hours was made by Flemish miniaturists in the early 16th century.](#)

The quality of these miniatures is remarkable and, in many ways, it can be compared to the famous Très Riches Heures owned by the Duke of Berry from the same period.

## FRANCISCUS DE TAXIS MAGISTER

### POSTARUM SERENISSIMI PRIN KA(ROLIS)

ARCHI DUCIS AUS(TRIAE)" (Francis of Taxis,  
Postmaster of His Excellency, the Prince Archduke of Austria)

Considering the evolution of the coat of arms of Francis of Taxis, this Book of Hours probably dates back to before 1512.

04.

One of the [earliest known privately owned documents to have travelled from America to Europe, on 15 June 1512](#). Letter sent from Puerto Rico to Seville and addressed to the Casa de Contratación, just 20 years after Christopher Columbus made his voyage.

[“Casa de Contratación” in Seville was a company that was established in order to stimulate and oversee trade with the New World](#). It was based on the same model as the “Casa da India” in Portugal and organised as an agency that was appointed to conduct trade, for its own

account and under its own monopoly, with territories of little value. The totally unexpected development of the American continent made the initial plan completely unworkable.

05.

On 12 November 1516, King Charles I of Spain granted his “captains and postmasters” – Francis and Jean- Baptiste of Taxis his nephew And entitled them to provide and hold a [monopoly](#) of postal services.

This treaty significantly extended [the postal routes assigned to the Thurn](#) and Taxis family, which now stretched from the Netherlands to Spain, Italy, Germany and France. The task was to establish postal services wherever the ruler of Spain and king of France were located. In this treaty, [any other company was forbidden to “run” postal services](#) in these different countries, without the express authorisation of Francis or Jean-Baptiste of Taxis.

06.

the original of which has disappeared, was drafted in Ghent on 14 June 1520.

[Jean-Baptiste of Taxis, nephew of Francis of Taxis, continued the work started by his uncle.](#)

Francis’ nephew Jean-Baptiste would soon help him to run the family business, which became an independent state-owned company. When Francis of Taxis died without any direct descendants in December 1517, it was only natural that his nephew Jean-Baptiste should take over the reins, while other members of the family took charge of postal services in Spain and Italy

[It mentions, for the first time, the provision of a postal service and how it could generate revenue.](#)

Charles V saw how much he could benefit from the establishment of a postal network across his empire.

07.

[Emperor Charles V legitimises the brothers Antoine and Jean-Antoine of Taxis](#)

In addition to twelve legitimate children, Jean- Baptiste of Taxis already had two other sons, Jean-Antoine and Antoine of Taxis, who were the result of a previous Liaison. They accompanied their father when he went to live in the Spanish Netherlands – in order to be closer to the court of the emperor, where important decisions were made. In this document dated 20 March 1539, Charles V authorises Jean-Antoine and Antoine of Taxis to wear the coat of arms of their father. This legitimisation would enable them to be officially involved in the organisation of international postal services.

08.

Miniature of “Santa Caterina d'Alessandria sulla Mariegola della Compagnia dei Corrieri della Serenissima Signoria”

The *Mariegola* (from the Latin *matricula*) consists of statutes listing the rights and duties of members of a trade fraternity.

The *Mariegola* for postal couriers began to be compiled on 4 February 1540, when the weekly postal service between Venice and Rome first began. Saint Catherine is shown with the martyr's palm branch and the broken wheel, which link it to many different artistic and trade fraternities that are associated with the wheel – including postal couriers, who considered her their patron saint. Kneeling at her feet and praying are two messengers

09. 10.

Henry VIII, following his ascension to the throne in 1509, appointed the first Master of the Posts shortly after, in 1516. He was responsible for the carriage of the mail. He organised regular postal services by creating new staging posts in the north of England (in the direction of Scotland) and in the south of the country.

Purely to provide the sovereign with a more efficient service when he was residing away from London with his court. Tuke was continuously in contact with the House of Taxis, which carried mail from Dover to the continent.

He was accused of stealing letters sent by Henry VIII to Margaret of Austria! Fortunately for him, he was able to clear his name and, despite more general criticism concerning his management as England's Master of the Posts, he held on to his position until his death in 1545.

11.

The advent of postal services in Great Britain

The 1635 Royal Charter issued by King Charles I

The proclamation issued by King Charles I on 31 July 1635 officially established the first public post office and postal services, both within the country and with foreign countries. The service concerned the transport of private letters to or from London. This document appoints Thomas Witherings as the sole postmaster, who could carry private mail for individual persons.

Witherings put up broadsheets all over London in order to inform Londoners of the new service

For the first time, a table was provided showing prices for the transport of mail. Until then, postage charges for letters had been calculated for a single sheet. The amount was doubled for two and so on.

One of the reasons that prompted the king to authorise the transport of private letters was that this service represented a source of income

Another even more important reason was that this made it possible to censor these private letters. During this period, the opening of mail sent to or from suspicious people was a very widespread practice at all the courts of Europe. In a sort of secret anteroom of the postal administration, later known as the "Cabinet Noir", mail was opened and carefully resealed after the content had been read.

12.

This proclamation was very strict with its employees!

About ten years before the English proclamation in 1635, it was a Scandinavian country, Denmark, which formalised its postal services and printed its own proclamation concerning the organisation.

One of the first paragraphs refers to the notion of time, and postmasters and postilions were only allowed two hours to cover ten kilometres. They were expected to take the shortest routes. Another article prohibited them from stopping to chat!

As we all know : time is money...

13.

After Denmark established an official postal service in 1624, Sweden followed in 1636. A postal service already existed prior to this date, which was intended for official government mail, but was also open to the general public.

This service began in July 1620 and provided a postal route between the government in Stockholm and the city of Hamburg.

There was no reason to further extend this route, as the Thurn and Taxis family carried mail from Hamburg to most European cities.

A postal service was created within Sweden's borders in 1636 mainly because the country wanted to have its own independent and official system.

It established 'post farms' every twenty or thirty kilometres. The same decree described the new postal system in detail. Unlike the system adopted by other European countries, farmers were recruited.

14.

### Eugène Alexander of Thurn and Taxis loses the monopoly

As a direct consequence of the accession of Philip of Anjou in 1701, the Thurn and Taxis family lost its control of postal services in the Spanish Netherlands.

It was a Frenchman, Léon Pajot d'Onzembray, who assumed the task of organising the transport of mail.

Published in November 1701, created a large number of new coaching inns across the territory

15. Patent signed by Karel Anselm (1790)

16. Competitors

In 1584, Count Johann Baptist von Paar was appointed postmaster of the Austrian Empire by Emperor Charles II. There was a dispute with the Taxis family, about the transport of mail in the Tyrol, a dispute that would last over a century.

17.

In [Switzerland](#), post services were controlled by a highly unusual system. Each canton was autonomous and organised its postal services as it saw fit. Béal Fischer was appointed to provide a postal service.

Béal Fischer was knighted in 1680 by Emperor Leopold I for his contribution to the imperial post. The document bears the imperial seal and gave Fischer the title of Knight of the Holy Roman Empire.

18.

Italy Dedicated to Michele de Tassis was another member of the family

19.

Brussels, was sent on the day of the battle, 18 June 1815.

It was sent by a lieutenant-colonel of the Prussian army to his wife in Prenzlau via Berlin.

20.

Antoine-Marie Chamans, Count of Lavalette (1769- 1830), postmaster of the First Empire from 1804 to 1814 and during the Hundred Days, became chief postal commissioner in 1801 and postmaster general on 19 March 1804.

He was arrested at home on 9 July 1815, taken to the police prefecture and imprisoned in the Conciergerie.

21.

1839: The first sketch of the first postage stamp.

22.

The postage stamp definitely comes from the very first printed sheet and this is the earliest date on which the world's very first postage stamp is known to have existed.

23. U.P.U. (U.G.P. first)

Each country had its own postal conventions and postage rates. Calculating the postage rate for a letter (the price that had to be paid for it to reach its address) became a real puzzle.

In Bern, Switzerland, on 15 September 1874, an agreement was signed by the participants, which committed a total of twenty- two countries – most of which were European countries, together with the USA, Russia and Turkey.