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Advertiser: Leonard H. Hartmann

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Let me show the utility of the book with a cover example from my own collection. The letter, pictured in Figure 1, originated in Sanquhar, Scotland on 13 November 1850 and was addressed to San Francisco. It was endorsed "Per Panama Mail" so I know it was sent by RMSP Co. steamer to the Caribbean and not by transatlantic packet to New York. The November 1850 date puts the letter under the third contract, found in Chapter 3. On page 122 I find that my letter departed Southampton 18 November 1850 on the steamer *Trent*, which took the letter to Madeira (25 Nov.), St. Thomas (13 Dec.), Santa Martha (18 Dec.), Carthagen (19 Dec.), and Chagres (20 Dec.). Chagres was the terminus of this RMSP Co. trip. If my letter had been addressed to Havana instead of San Francisco, it would have been transferred at St. Thomas, according to the route map on page 121, to branch route 3. On page 126, we find that the branch steamer *Conway* departed St. Thomas on the day of arrival of *Trent*, 13 December 1850, for Puerto Rico (13 Dec.), Jacmel (15 Dec.), Jamaica (16 Dec.), and Havana (20 Dec.) en route to the branch terminus at Belize.

This book has very little text aside from the contract and instructions reproduced in the appendices, but primarily contains sailing tables. At the beginning of the book, the authors have devoted 16 pages to topics related to the basic operations of the RMSP Co. These include some information about the ships, hazards at sea, sailing conditions and health in the West Indies, regulations relative to passengers, rules to be observed on board, cargo and freight, and cost and handling of the mail. After this, the book quickly gets to the heart and importance of its content, the sailing tables. Sprinkled throughout the tables are attractive and important examples of covers carried by the RMSP Co. steamers, each with a brief description of the pertinent voyage(s).

There is so much data in this book that it is easy to extract incorrect data. You may find that you have used the wrong table or the wrong part of the right table. I know this from experience because I made a number of mistakes when I first started using the tables. The data is all there, however, just be very careful when trying to extract dates from the tables.

I can not stress enough the importance of this book for collectors and students worldwide. A very large gap in the published information related to steamship operations in the Caribbean, at least those of the RMSP Co., has been closed with this new book. No serious philatelic library should be without a copy. The Postal History Society in Great Britain has published a very fine product in this book. The authors forever will be remembered for their colossal efforts in bringing this data to the fingertips of interested collections and students everywhere. □

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