

# Vatican Notes

Volume VI

September - October 1957

Number 2

## VATICAN CITY PHILATELIC NEWS

During the early part of October, Vatican City will release a 35 and 60 Lire set of stamps to commemorate the Pontifical Academy of Science. The Academy dates back to the time of Galileo and is housed in the building originally erected as a summer casino for Pope Pius IV in 1558. It is located in the Vatican gardens to the right of St. Peter's basilica and in back of the Vatican Palace. It is used only when members of the Pontifical Academy travel to Rome to meet with the Holy Father.

A commemorative issue is planned for release by Vatican City to mark the 8th centenary of the Mariazell Shrine in Austria. It is expected that the set will be issued in December, 1957. The shrine at Mariazell is famous throughout Austria. Many pilgrimages are made to this shrine each year, especially during the months of June and July. Additional information on the Shrine and the stamps will appear in subsequent issues.

It has finally been ascertained that the red cancel used on all FDC's of the St. Dominic Savio issue did not have any special significance or meaning.

Linn's Weekly Stamp News currently plans to feature the Vatican Philatelic Society and stamps of Vatican City and Roman States in the issue of November 25th, 1957.

An "error" in VC # 131 has been reported by Frater Richard T. Tobias, MSC of Sacred Heart Seminary, Shelby Ohio. Brother Tobias found the item while sorting stamps at the Mission Stamp Club. Upon inspection what had at first appeared to be a tear was found to be an unintentional printing fold (see photo) diagonally across the upper right corner. How many of this issue and in what positions this fold is to be found is not known at this time.



To this date, the following values of the Popes issue of 1953 have been reprinted - 3, 5, 10, 12, 20, 35, 100, and 50 Lire special delivery. Information on all but three of these has been given in previous issues of Vatican Notes. The three latest, not all of which are as yet available in this country, are discussed below:

- 20 L - medallion of the reprint is in black instead of brownish black as in the originals. There is no "show through" visible on the reverse side of the stamp in the reprint as there is for the medallion of the original.
- 100 L - same as above. In addition, the shade of purple used for the major portion of the stamp is paler in the reprint.
- 50 L - special delivery, same as for the 20 L above.

An overprint has been applied to the stamps of our Lady of Czestochowa issue to commemorate the visit of Cardinal Wyszynski of Poland to Rome. These overprints, which were applied privately and not by Vatican City, are NOT a Vatican issue, but are of the same character as the Black Border overprint on the 1 Lire value of the definitives of 1929 by Chirici in 1939. In view of the warning given to philatelists almost the day they first appeared, none have been offered to the trade for sale. Italian correspondents indicate that these items are unknown in Italy and none have been seen. Members of VPS are asked to communicate with Mr. William Wonneberger if they have knowledge of any of these overprints.

Final dates for the last two commemorative issues to be postally valid have been announced. The St. Dominic Savio issue will be invalidated for postage purposes on June 30, 1958. The Capranica College issue will be invalidated on December 31, 1957.

The 50 Lire stamp of the airmail issue of 1947 has been reported with an imperforate left margin. To date, only one sheet - with ten stamps imperforate - of this value in this condition is known.

The supply of the stamps of Our Lady of Czestochowa issue have been exhausted at the Vatican City Post Office. The only commemorative issue still available from this source is the Capranica College issue.

The world's first English language catalogue of Vatican City, treated in a highly specialized form, will be released at the end of September, 1957. The catalogue, which is being printed by the House of Bolaffi in Italy, was written by the Dean of Italian area philately - Ing. Alberto Diena. It will be profusely illustrated and will price all stamps, blocks, gutter pairs, varieties, errors, and first day covers. Its price will be low for a catalogue and well within the reach of all collectors.

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Editor's Note - This issue of Vatican Notes is being sent to press without waiting for the nominations for VPS Officers called for on page 4 of the last issue in order to bring the mailing date more nearly in line with the publication date shown on the issue. The closing date for nominations is October 15, 1957. Those nominated will be listed in the next issue and ballots for the election will accompany that issue.

#### PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY

Members of the Vatican Philatelic Society who still have not paid their 1957 - 1958 dues are urged to do so at once in order not to miss the many benefits of membership including the increased benefits outlined in the April - June 1957 issue of Vatican Notes. Send your \$2.00 by check or money order to the Secretary -  
Wallace R. Smith, 165-15 Union Turnpike, Flushing 66, New York.

## THE VATICAN CITY FDC STORY \*\*

by William Wonneberger, jr.

We who are fortunate enough to call America our home have become accustomed to high quality first day covers. Some of us have only recently entered this segment of philately and have sent wantlists for U. S. issues on FDC's to dealers and by return mail have received every item requested. Accustomed to such service we naturally expect the same when we enter the field of foreign first day covers. Many a collector has been disappointed with what he calls poor service and poor stock of dealers in foreign stamps. The dealers are not to blame. Suppose we see why. Being familiar with Vatican City, I will use this country as an example.

Vatican City became an independent and sovereign nation on June 7, 1929, at twelve noon. Its first issue of stamps was placed on sale on August 1, 1929. There was an unusual rush for postage stamps and a few collectors decided to have this issue cancelled to show the day of issue. The series of stamps was placed on an assortment of paper, with the result that today we find the first issue of Vatican stamps cancelled and tied to ordinary writing paper, post cards, government stationery (available at the post office), leaflets, and too few envelopes. Cachets were unheard of.

Two years later the stamps of this issue were overprinted to provide postage dues, parcel post stamps, and a new regular postage value. Extremely few collectors obtained any of these issues with a first day cancel.

With the "basic" stamps for postal usage released, the Vatican began to issue commemorative stamps. From 1933 to 1938, four commemorative issues were released. The stamps were eagerly sought but first day covers were shunned by all but a few! Even the release of the first set of air mails did not attract philatelists to first day covers. For the first ten years of its postal history, Vatican City first day covers existed in an extremely small number and most of these were not true covers as we know them today. Leaflets replaced writing paper and government stationery to a great degree for the few who had the foresight to obtain first day cancels. Envelopes were used slightly more, but still in small quantities.

When Pope Pius XI joined his Maker on February 10, 1939, world attention was focused on Vatican City. Ten days later the first seven values of the original issue in 1929 were released bearing the overprint of a burial umbrella of the early Christians and the legend, "SEDE VACANTE," indicating that the Chair of Peter, occupied by the Pope, was now vacant. This sad event of world importance was possibly responsible for a heavy demand for the issue by philatelists. A huge increase in demand was noted for first day cancels applied to stamps on a conservatively-ornamented leaflet. Others affixed the stamps to pictorial cards depicting the deceased Pontiff and requested first day cancels. Others, in increasing numbers, affixed the series to envelopes and applied for first day cancels. Vatican City stamps had, to a marked degree, at last entered the realm of first day covers!

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\*\* Reprinted, with permission, from the March - April 1957 issue of FIRST DAYS, the official publication of the American First Day Cover Society.

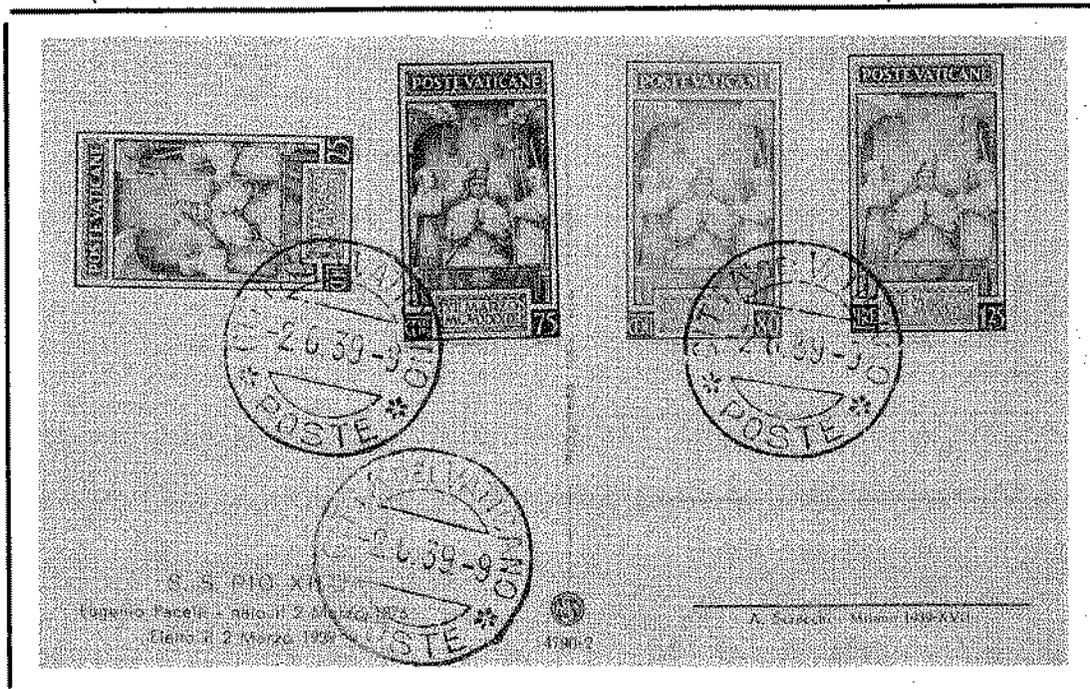
Three months to the day after the election of Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli as Pope Pius XII, the Vatican released a set of four stamps depicting the coronation scene. First day covers continued in demand with most stamp-lovers using pictorial post cards and envelopes for the issue. The first cacheted cover (other than those of a few individuals for personal use) appeared on the scene: the coat of arms of the new Pope with appropriate wording marking the event.

World War II arrived and Vatican first day covers again slid into the almost-unknown. In fact, first days of issue of some of the wartime issues are debated to this day! The only covers prepared for the issues of 1940 to 1945 were those serviced by the residents of Vatican City of Rome. Fortunately, most of these were in the form of envelopes.

When the war was over, philatelists turned their attention to their hobby once more. The Vatican postal authorities released a set of fourteen stamps for ordinary postage with commemorative theme to mark the fourth centenary of the convening of the Council of Trent. The stamps were beautifully designed and bi-colored. When arranged together they provided an excellent display of philatelic art and beauty. Most collectors made every endeavor to obtain this set of miniature art for their albums. Still others sought a more suitable philatelic memento and this was provided in the form of an attractive folder providing a space for each value with a suitable historic notation under each stamp.

Collectors were attracted to this new "enterprise" to a great extent, so much so that when the next issue of ordinary stamps in 1948, illustrating the basilicas of greater Rome, was announced, another beautiful folder was prepared in the same format.

(This article will be concluded in the next issue.)



An early Vatican City First Day Cover with the stamps affixed to a pictorial post card. This is the Pope Pius XII coronation issue (Scott 68 - 71) and had a first day of issue of June 2, 1939. The reverse side of this card bears a picture of the Pope.

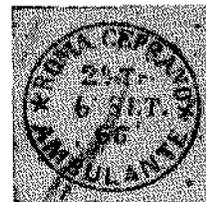
## POSTAL MARKINGS ON ROMAN STATES COVERS

by William A. Johnson, jr.

The purpose of this article is to describe briefly the various types of Roman States covers according to the cancellations and postal markings applied. This is an expansion of the corresponding sections of the opening general article in this series on Roman States covers which appeared in the last issue.

The method by which mail was transported gives a very interesting category:

- A. Courier mail - carried by special messenger, usually on horseback; characterized by slit in envelopes. The earliest cover of this type in my collection is 1458. Covers marked CITO (deliver fast at all risk) were of this group - the first special delivery.
- B. Calvacatta mail - also carried by messenger on horseback; similar to our pony express. Such letters used the "X" Cross Roads to designate this type. This mail ran according to a regular schedule.
- C. Stage Coach mail - also ran according to a regular schedule. Early covers around 1797 had D.I.P. (Diligenza Transporte Postale) to designate this type of mail. Later covers around 1840 had cachet of the general seal of of the stage coach department - Pontifical.
- D. Railroad (Ambulante) mail - first Papal railway was inaugurated July 7, 1856 between Rome and Frascati. Later lines ran between Rome and Civitavecchia, and later connected Ancona and Foggia with Naples. The map on the following page shows the Papal railway system. Three types of railroad cancellations are shown below; others will be illustrated in the next issue.



- E. Steamship (Paquebot) mail - early covers, 1825, show the Italian Paquebot cachet. Later covers around 1850 show the Steamship Agency in Civitavecchia. These last covers have beautiful cachets showing pictures of steamships.
- F. Telegrams sent by mail - when cablegrams were received in Rome, a telegraph form was issued and then dispatched by mail to the proper parties. Telegrams were also sent out on similar forms. These covers appeared around 1858.

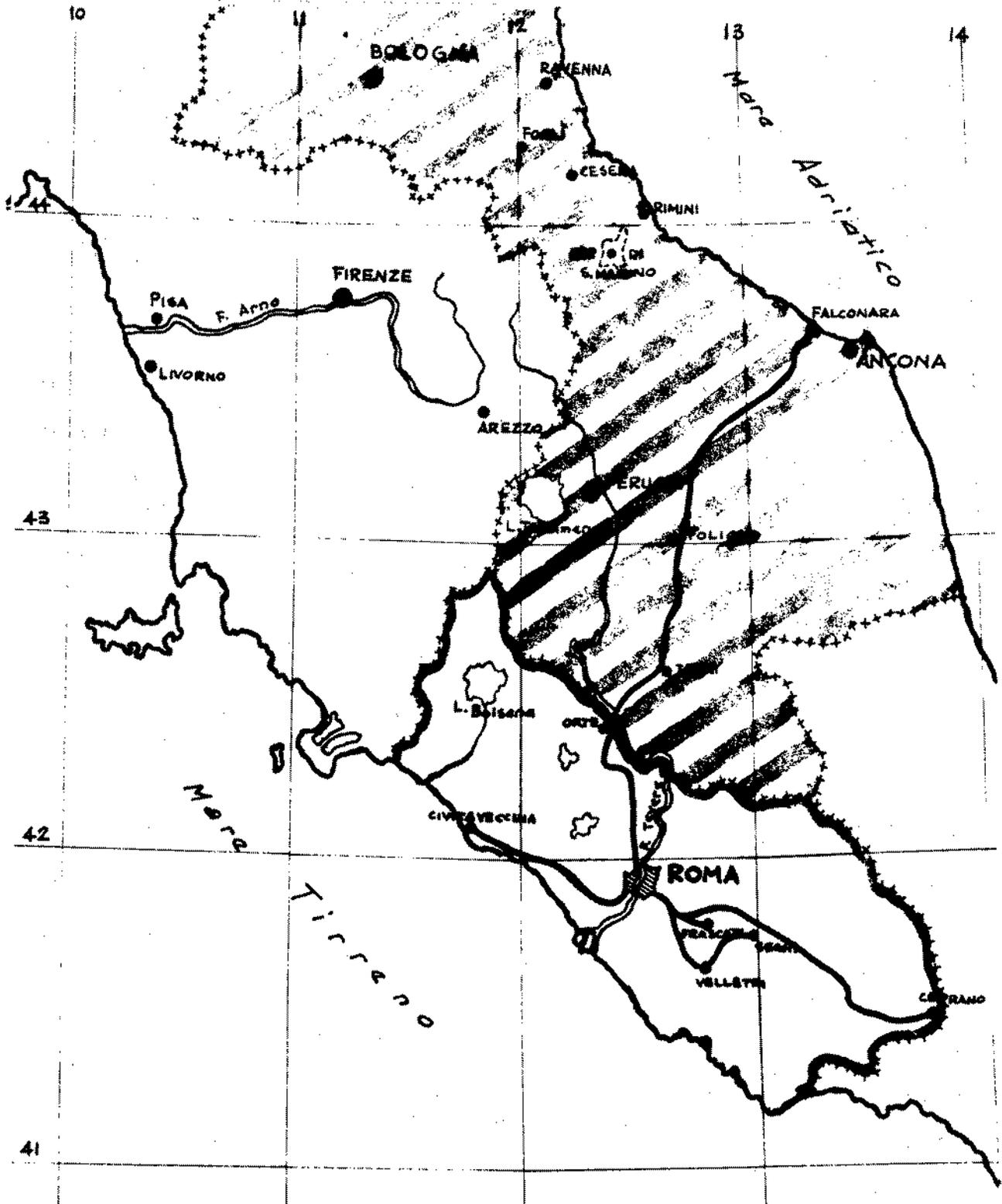
In the Napoleonic period there were a whole series of postal markings. Napoleon's first occupation of the Papal States was late in 1796 and the second started in the middle 1800's. Although the French continued in power until 1815, the post offices were turned back to the Papal States on May 21, 1814. Many post offices, however, continued to use the Napoleonic markings as late as the 1820's. The Roman States were divided by Napoleon into postal districts; numbers such as 116, 117, etc. indicated these districts.

(This article will be concluded in the next issue.)

# PAPAL RAILROAD MAP

**NOTE:**

YELLOW & WHITE STRIPES PLUS SOLID YELLOW SECTION  
Papal States at its greatest-1815-1861.  
Solid yellow shows last holdings of Papal Empire  
RED LINES Designate R.R.'S LINES OF PAPAL STATES.



Territorio sotto la sovranità del Pontefice dal 1815 al 1861 (parte gialla e giallo-bianca) e dal 1861 al 1870 (parte gialla). Le linee ferroviarie sono tracciate in colore rosso.

## THE JUBILEE HOLY YEAR

The Holy Year of Jubilee is a spiritual celebration, with "remission" its main idea. The ancient Jews celebrated a Jubilee Year every fifty years with remission of bondage to slaves. The remission of the Christian Holy Year was the full remission of the temporal punishment due to sins that remained even after the sins had been forgiven in the sacrament of Penance. This is called a Plenary Indulgence (full remission.) This was granted to those who made the difficult and dangerous pilgrimage to Rome to the tomb of St. Peter, and who received the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist worthily.

The origin of the Christian Holy Year is not known, but the first recorded Holy Year was held under Boniface VIII in 1300. Tradition tells us that one had been held 100 years previously. Boniface VIII intended that the Holy Year should be celebrated every 100 years. Because so many people pointed out that few would live to see another Holy Year, Clement VI held another Holy Year in 1350. In order to make the Holy Year and its indulgence available to every generation, succeeding popes lessened the interval to 33 years and then to 25 years. They were held each quarter century from 1475 to 1775; because the Holy See was vacant in 1800, the next was held in 1825. Due to political troubles there were no further Holy Year celebrations until 1900 under Leo XIII. Pope Pius XI called for the regular celebration in 1925 and an extra Holy Year in 1933 to mark the 1900th anniversary of the death of Our Lord on the Cross. Under Pope Pius XII the regular Holy Year was celebrated in 1950. Because of the inability of all to travel to Rome and visit the four pilgrimage churches, Pope Pius XII made the Holy Year indulgence available to all who visited designated local churches, received the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, and prayed for the intention of the Pope.

The pilgrimage to Rome must be climaxed by a visit to the four basilicas of St. Peter, St. John Lateran, St. Paul outside the Walls, and St. Mary Major. Each of these churches has a special "Holy Door" which is opened with great ceremony on the eve of the Holy Year. By entering the churches through these doors and fulfilling the previously mentioned conditions, the pilgrim is granted the plenary indulgence of the Holy Year.

Since the Holy Year of 1933 was to mark the 1900th anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the cross for the salvation of mankind, the semipostal stamps of that year bear a symbol of this fact - the orb surmounted by the cross. The symbolic meaning of this is that from the cross of Christ flows, in a continual stream, the charity of Christ which encompasses the world. On examination, we see the band coming from the foot of the cross and encircling the orb, which is the world. (These stamps are shown in the June 1956 issue.) The inscription "O CRUX AVE SPES UNICA" are words from the sixth stanza of the Latin poem "Vexilla Regis" (Banners of the King) found in the Roman Breviary for the celebration of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Not only does the inscription and symbol point to the Redemption of Man by the death of Christ on the cross, but also it emphasizes that only through the suffering and death of Christ on Calvary is there salvation.

There are four distinct designs on the stamps of the Jubilee Holy Year of 1950 (Scott 132-139). The first of these, which appears on the 5 and 20 Lire values, shows "Christ Giving the Keys to Peter" and is taken from a painting by

Perugino on the right wall of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. Only the central part of the Fresco is portrayed on the stamp. In the foreground St. Peter, on one knee, reverently receives the keys from Christ, surrounded by the other Apostles. In the square in the middle left is depicted the payment of the money of tribute (Mat. XVII, 23-26), while on opposite sides of the picture, barely visible on the stamp, are shown two episodes of attempts to stone Christ. The center background is a representation of the Temple at Jerusalem, and on either side, not reproduced on the stamp, are two triumphal arches. This design was probably chosen for the Holy Year in reference to the indulgence granted by the Pope to those fulfilling the four conditions mentioned above. The power to grant an indulgence comes under the "Power of the Keys" given by Christ to St. Peter as head of his Church, the power of binding or loosing sin.

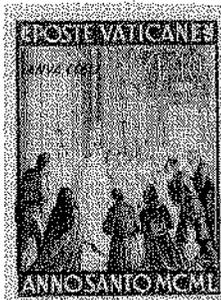


The second design, which is used on the 6 and 25 Lire values, shows the four basilicas which have the Holy Doors through which the pilgrims must enter to fulfill the first condition for the gaining of the Holy Year indulgence. In the near foreground is St. Peter's as viewed from the apse end of the basilica. In the middle foreground to the left is St. Mary Major viewed also from the apse end, while beyond is St. John Lateran whose facade faces to the left. These two churches are depicted as within the walls of ancient Rome. In the background is St. Paul outside the Walls.

The third design, appearing on the 8 and 30 Lire values, is taken from Giotto's portrait of "Pope Boniface VIII Proclaiming the First Holy Year" in 1300. This commemoration of the first recorded Holy Year was placed on the first pilaster of the right aisle in the basilica of St. John Lateran, and was originally painted for the portico of the adjacent Lateran Palace where the Popes in ancient times gave the Papal benediction. Boniface is represented as giving his blessing from the loggia, while the cleric at the right reads the Bull of Indulgence. The indulgence of the year 1300 is said to have attracted two million pilgrims, among whom were Dante and Giotto.



The 10 and 60 Lire values carry the fourth design which shows Pope Pius XII in the artist's conception of the opening ceremony of the Holy Year. On the Vigil of Christmas, 1949, Pius XII approached the Holy Door of St. Peter's which had been sealed by masonry since the last Holy Year of 1933. The Sanpietrini has loosened the masonry beforehand so that the door was ready to be lowered in one piece. With a mason's hammer, the Pope strikes the door three or more times and the door is lowered and taken away. This portal was to remain open until the end of the Holy Year, when it was again bricked up. As can be seen from the design, this ceremony takes place in the vestibule of St. Peter's, and the Holy Door is the one at the right leading from the vestibule into the church. Pope Pius XII enters through the Holy Door first and the Holy Year is officially begun. At the same time, and with the same accompanying prayers, three Cardinals designated by the Pope are performing the same ceremony at the other three basilicas.



## ROMAN STATES COVERS

by William A. Johnson, jr.

As the opening article in a series on Roman States Covers, I would like to present listings of the various categories together with the types of cancellations and postal markings and methods of transportation. It is not intended to give detailed information on any group in this article, but rather to outline the areas to be explored in the future.

First, from a philatelic standpoint, Roman States history may be divided into four periods:

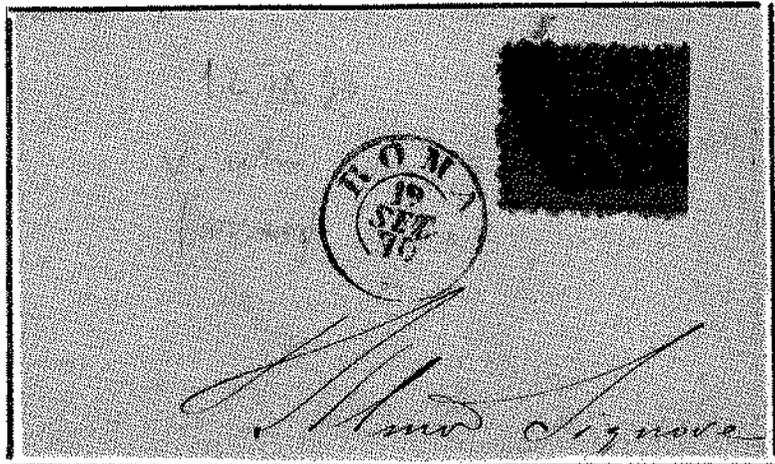
- (A) The first period runs until Napoleonic covers made their first appearance in 1800. This is the date of the second occupation of the Papal States by the French.
- (B) The second period is the Napoleonic Period running from 1800 until May 21, 1814 when the post offices were returned to the control of the Papal States. Actually, some post offices used Napoleonic markings until the 1820's.
- (C) The third period runs from 1814 until the Papal States were invalidated on October 1, 1870.
- (D) The fourth period runs from 1859 when Pontifical States were being occupied and stamps of Italy, Sardinia and Tuscany were used with Roman States cancellations.

Another interesting category covers the methods by which mail was transported:

- (A) Courier mail
- (B) Calvacatta mail (pony express)
- (C) Stage coach
- (D) Railroad (Ambulante)
- (E) Steamship (Paquebot)
- (F) Telegrams delivered by mail
- (G) Postoffice cachets

In the Napoleonic period, there is the following:

- (A) French postal markings
- (B) Commissioners of War covers
- (C) Military covers



Portion of a Roman States Cover of the Third Period

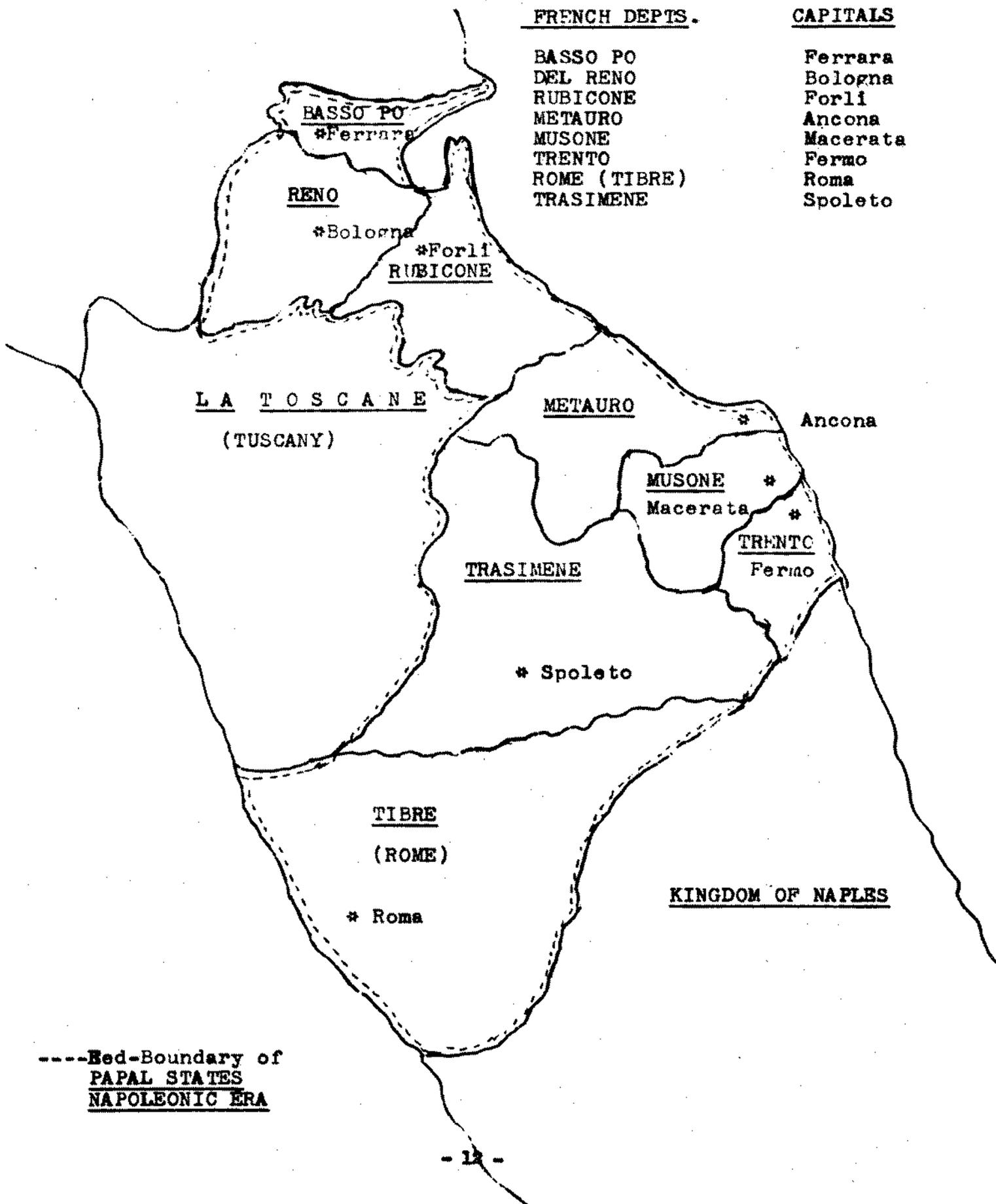
There are also the following separate types of covers, all of which are interesting:

- (A) Cito covers - first special delivery
- (B) Ferrara - Commachio cross cancellations
- (C) Disinfected cholera covers
- (D) Free franking cachets of church and governmental agencies
- (E) Military covers
- (F) Bisect stamps and their use

A listing can also be made of all postal markings, such as Assurata (insured) and Dopo La Partenza (too late, mail has departed), etc. Of course, in addition, there are the major variety of stamps, a catalogue of which is already being covered. However, in this group there are covers with Roman States stamps plus postage due stamps of other countries, since during the last years of the Roman States, their stamps were not recognized by certain other countries.

Roman States collectors are asked to let me know which groups are of the most interest, as a guide for the scheduling of future articles.

NAPOLEONIC DISTRICTS OF PAPAL STATES.



----Bed-Boundary of PAPAL STATES NAPOLEONIC ERA