

POST AND TELEGRAPHS.

POSTAL SERVICE.

THE first Australasian post-office was established by Governor First post-office. Macquarie in the year 1810, Mr. Isaac Nichols being appointed Postmaster. The office was in High-street (now known as George-street), Sydney, at the residence of Mr. Nichols, who was, "in consideration of the trouble and expense attendant upon this duty," allowed to charge on delivery to parties addressed, 8d. for every English or foreign letter of whatever weight, and for every parcel weighing not more than 20 lb., 1s. 6d. ; but exceeding that weight, 3s. The charge on Colonial letters was 4d., irrespective of weight; and soldiers' letters, or those addressed to their wives, were charged 1d. Very little improvement in regard to postal matters took place for some years. In 1825 an Act was passed by Sir Thomas First Postal Act. Brisbane, with the advice of the Council, "to regulate the postage of letters in New South Wales," giving power for the establishment of post-offices, and to fix the rates of postage.

It was, however, not until 1828 that the provisions of the Act Early postage rates. were put into full force. The rates of postage appear to have depended upon the distance and the difficulty of transmission. The lowest single inland rate was 3d., and the highest 12d., the postage on a letter increasing according to its weight, which was fixed for a single letter at $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce. Letters between New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land were charged 3d. each (ship rate), and newspapers 1d. Other ship letters were charged 4d. single rate, and 6d. for any weight in excess. The privilege of franking Franking. was allowed to the Governor and a number of the chief public officials, and letters to and from convicts passed free under certain regulations.

In 1831 a two-penny post was established in Sydney, and in Sir Richard Bourke's Postal Act. 1835, under Sir Richard Bourke, the Act of 1825 was repealed.

and another Act was passed, which fixed the charge on a single letter at 4d. for 15 miles, 5d. for 20 miles, 6d. for 30 miles, and so on up to 1s. for 300 miles. In 1837 a post-office was established in Melbourne, which was then of course a part of New South Wales. Stamps were introduced in the same year in the shape of stamped covers or envelopes, which are believed to have been the first postage-stamps ever issued.

Stamped covers.

First mail steamer.

Regular steam mail communication with England was first established in 1852; prior to that time the Colony had to depend upon the irregular arrival and despatch of sailing vessels, but in that year the steamships "Australia," "Chusan," and "Great Britain" were despatched from England, making the voyage in 60 days, causing a strong desire in the minds of the Colonists for a more frequent and steady system of communication with the Old World. The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 hindered for a while the accomplishment of this object, but in 1856 a line of steamers was again laid on, and the service was carried on by the Peninsular and Oriental Company, and the Royal Mail Company for some years, without giving so much satisfaction to the public as might have been expected.

The Panama line.

As far back as 1854 a proposal was made for the establishment of a line of mail packets *via* Panama, and negotiations on the subject were carried on for several years between the Government of the United Kingdom and those of New South Wales and New Zealand. The result was that in 1866 the line was started, and continued in operation until the end of 1868, when it was terminated through the failure of the company by which it had been carried out. In the following year New South Wales, in conjunction with New Zealand, inaugurated a mail service *via* San Francisco, which, with a few interruptions and under various conditions, has been continued up to the present time. The contract expired in November, 1890, but the service is continued by the New Zealand Government, and the steamers still make Sydney their terminus.

San Francisco route.

The establishment of a mail route *via* America had the effect of stimulating the steamship-owners who were engaged in the service *via* Suez, and from that time there was a marked improvement in the steamers employed, as well as in the punctuality and speed with which the mails were delivered. The Peninsular and Oriental Company have carried mails for the colonies almost from the inception of the ocean steam service, with very few interruptions. Towards the end of 1878 the Orient Company commenced carrying mails between Australia and the United Kingdom, and has continued to do so ever since. In the year 1883 the fine steamers of the Messageries Maritimes of France entered the service, to be followed in 1887, by the North German Lloyd's, so that there are now one or two mails received and despatched every week, and a voyage to Europe, which was formerly a formidable undertaking, involving great loss of time and much discomfort, is regarded as a mere pleasure trip to fill up a holiday.

Mail service *via* Suez.

French and German steamers.

The following statement gives the number of letters and newspapers passing, in 1861, through the post-offices of the various Colonies. It will be seen on comparing these figures with those in the next table that the postal business for all Australasia in 1861 was less than is now transacted by any individual Colony, Tasmania and Western Australia excepted:—

Letters and papers carried.

Colony.	No. of Post Offices.	Letters.	Newspapers.
New South Wales	340	4,369,463	3,384,245
Victoria	369	6,109,929	4,277,179
Queensland	24	515,211	427,489
South Australia	160	1,540,472	1,089,424
Western Australia .....	...	193,317	137,476
Tasmania	100	835,873	895,656
New Zealand .....	...	1,236,768	1,428,351
Australasia .....	...	14,801,033	11,639,820

The following shows the postal business of each of the colonies during 1890, the number of letters, &c., being obtained by adding

Postal business.

AMOUNT OF POSTAL BUSINESS.

inland letters passing through the office, and thus counted once, to Intercolonial and Foreign letters, &c., received and despatched :—

Colony.	Post Offices.	Letters and Post Cards.	Books, Parcels, and Packages.	Newspapers.	Revenue.
					£
New South Wales	1,338	58,385,300	8,939,600	40,597,200	427,330
Victoria	1,671	62,526,448	7,684,915	22,729,005	*330,000
Queensland	892	14,709,504	2,047,446	11,463,720	131,000
South Australia	609	16,794,679	1,251,416	9,460,075	111,491
Western Australia	82	2,629,698	329,871	2,135,906	15,459
Tasmania	315	5,172,824	963,167	4,941,571	41,759
New Zealand	1,058	22,877,320	4,403,181	11,137,846	199,735
Australasia	5,965	183,095,773	25,619,596	102,465,329	1,256,774

* Approximate.

Of the totals given for Australasia, 155,806,775 letters and post-cards ; 18,280,459 books, parcels, and packages ; and 76,304,556 newspapers were "inland," that is, they were posted and delivered within the same Colony, while 27,288,998 letters, 7,339,137 parcels, and 26,160,773 newspapers were received from or despatched to places beyond the Colony. Every article is thus counted once by each Colony through whose post-office it passes, and while the figures given above are correct in showing the postal business of each individual Colony, the totals for Australasia are too large, as intercolonial letters are counted both in the receiving and despatching Colony. To amend this error, a deduction of $12\frac{1}{2}$ million letters, &c., must be made from the figures given, and on the following page, where the number of letters per inhabitant is given, this has been done, and the number of letters and post-cards taken as 172,595,961.

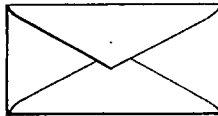
LETTERS CARRIED
POST-CARDS INCLUDED

1861



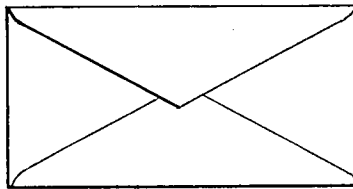
Nº 14,801,033

1871



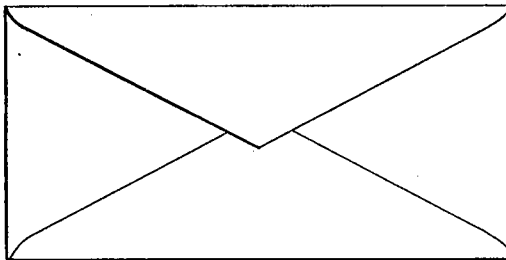
Nº 32,121,642

1881



Nº 85,493,851

1890



Nº 183,095,773

During 1889 the number of letters passing through the post-offices of New South Wales greatly exceeded that of Victoria, but in 1890 the reverse was the case, as the foregoing table shows. The increase in Victoria in 1890 over the preceding year amounted to nearly fourteen and a half millions, a circumstance almost entirely due to the reduction of fee from 2d. to 1d. on all letters posted in the Colony for delivery within its boundaries. In New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania newspapers were carried free during 1890, which largely extended their circulation through the post. In all the other colonies a small fee was charged, and Queensland has since then also imposed a newspaper postage. The following table shows the number of letters and post-cards, books, &c., and newspapers per head during 1890. Victoria and Western Australia take the lead in respect to letters, but Western Australia and New South Wales stand foremost as regards newspapers :—

Letters, &c., Books, &c., and Newspapers per head.

Colony.	Number per Inhabitant.		
	Letters, &c.	Books, Parcels, &c.	Newspapers.
New South Wales.....	53	8	37
Victoria	56	7	20
Queensland.....	38	5	30
South Australia.....	53	4	30
Western Australia.....	56	7	45
Tasmania.....	36	7	34
New Zealand	37	7	18

The following table shows the number of letters and post-cards per head in some of the principal countries of the world. With the exception of the United Kingdom the extent of the corres-

Postal business
in other
countries.

POSTAL FACILITIES.

pendence in Australasia largely exceeds that of any of the countries named :—

Country.	Number of Letters and Post-cards per head of Population.
United Kingdom.....	51
France	19
Belgium	22
Netherlands	21
Germany	27
Denmark	22
Sweden	24
Norway.....	13
Russia	2
Austro-Hungary	17
Switzerland	35
Italy	7
Spain.....	6
Portugal	6
Canada	22
Cape Colony.....	9
Australasia	46

Postal facilities in Australasia.

The following table illustrates the extent of the postal facilities in regard to the number of inhabitants, and the square miles of territory to each post-office. It will be seen that Western Australia has one office to every 261 persons, while New South Wales, with the largest postal business of the colonies, has the least number of offices compared with population; Western Australia, the least when compared with territory :—

Colony.	Number of Inhabitants to each Post Office.	Number of Square Miles of Territory to each Office.
	Number.	Square Miles..
New South Wales	838	232
Victoria	678	53
Queensland	441	749
South Australia	526	1,484
Western Australia.....	261	5,699
Tasmania	461	83
New Zealand	529	88
Australasia	611	510

All the colonies, with the exception of New Zealand, have, in conjunction with the Imperial Government, entered into an agreement with the Peninsular and Oriental, and the Orient Steam Navigation Companies. Under this contract the two Companies have undertaken a weekly mail service for a yearly subsidy of £170,000. This subsidy is made up by a contribution of £95,000 from the Imperial Government, and of £75,000 from the six contracting colonies, distributed on the basis of population as follows:—

Colony.	Amount of Subsidy, 1890.
New South Wales	£ 26,639
Victoria	26,543
Queensland	9,635
South Australia	7,580
Tasmania	3,567
Western Australia	1,036
Total	75,000

The estimated net cost to be made good from revenue in New South Wales was only £564, while the cost of this service to Queensland amounted to £11,329. Victoria, after paying her share of the subsidy, had a surplus available of £3,891. Returns for the other colonies are unfortunately not available.

The mail service has been performed with great regularity and expedition. The average time of both services in 1890 was:—

	Days.
London to Sydney	34 $\frac{1}{2}$
Sydney to London	35 $\frac{1}{2}$

In addition to the federal ocean mail service *via* Suez, New South Wales and New Zealand, until November, 1890, subsidised the Union Steamship Company for a four-weekly service, *via* San Francisco, to the amount of £37,000, of which New South Wales paid £25,750, and New Zealand £11,250. On the termination of the contract New South Wales withdrew from the agreement, while New Zealand concluded a new contract with the company. The cost of this service during 1890 was £7,610 to

New South Wales, £4,552 to Victoria, and £1,612 to Queensland, while New Zealand has a surplus available of £7,466. The New Zealand Shipping Company is also under contract to carry mails from New Zealand to the United Kingdom, and the cost of this service during 1890 was £2,975. The average time during the same year by the San Francisco route was:—

	Days.
London to Sydney	40 $\frac{1}{3}$
Sydney to London	40

Time by the
American
service.

Torres Straits
Route.

The British India Steam Navigation Company, sailing from Brisbane, *via* Torres Straits, carry mails under contract with the Queensland Government. This route is from four to ten days longer than those previously mentioned, letters occupying 46 days in transit. Queensland, under the former contract, paid the company an annual subsidy of £55,000. This contract ceased in January, 1890, and under a new contract the Colony agreed to pay the company an annual subsidy of £19,800 for a four-weekly, or £32,500 for a fortnightly service. The latter service was commenced on 1st July, 1890, the monthly service having lasted nearly six months, and the cost to Queensland of the Torres Straits service is stated to have been £32,430.

French and
German mail
steamers.

Besides those mentioned the other steamship companies trading with the Australasian Colonies carry mails, notably the Messageries Maritimes Company and the North German Lloyd, sailing from Sydney, and the Shaw, Saville, and Albion Company, sailing from Lyttelton, *via* Magellan Straits. The companies are paid by the Colonies in proportion to the weight of mail matter carried, but the Messageries Maritimes Company and the North German Lloyd are in receipt of large subsidies from the French and German Governments respectively. The postage to the United Kingdom was reduced in January, 1891, from 6d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. *via* Italy, and 4d. *via* the long sea route, to the uniform rate of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

Universal Postal
Union.

In 1891 the Colonies were represented at the Congress of the Universal Postal Union held in Vienna, and on July 4th, a convention was signed on their behalf, by which they joined the

Union from October 1st, 1891. From that date the rate of postage to all British Colonies and possessions and foreign countries included in the Union was reduced to 2½d. As was to be expected, the immediate result of the alteration was a reduction in revenue, but it is confidently anticipated that so far as these Colonies are concerned, the time is not far distant when the revenue from this branch of postal service will reach its original volume.

TELEGRAPHS.

In no country in the world has the development of telegraphic communication been so rapid as in Australasia, and in none has it been taken advantage of by the public to anything like the same extent. Taking Australasia as a whole, there are only four countries in the world that possess a greater extent of telegraph lines, and only five in which a larger number of messages are actually sent. In no other country, however, does the number of messages bear anything approaching the same ratio to the population. The following table illustrates these remarks:—

Country.	Length of telegraph lines (poles).	Messages. †	Messages per head of population.
	Miles.	No.	No.
United Kingdom	31,440	66,409,000	1·7
France*	59,915	28,094,000	0·7
Belgium*	4,013	5,173,000	0·8
Netherlands	3,186	4,118,000	0·9
Germany	58,048	25,783,000	0·5
Denmark	2,748	1,495,000	0·7
Sweden	5,388	1,709,000	0·3
Norway	4,661	1,373,000	0·7
Russia	74,276	9,949,000	0·1
Austria-Hungary	37,085	12,914,000	0·3
Switzerland	4,418	3,380,000	1·1
Italy	21,020	8,140,000	0·3
Spain	14,710	4,085,000	0·3
Portugal	3,191	1,730,000	0·4
United States.....	178,754	54,108,000	0·9
Canada.....	30,014	4,232,000	0·8
Cape Colony	4,924	1,376,000	0·9
Australasia	43,598	11,753,000	3·1

* Government lines only.

The totals of the telegrams of the Australasian Colonies amount to 13,113,000 ; from this number has been deducted 1,360,000, to avoid the counting of Intercolonial telegrams, both in the despatching and the receiving Colonies.

Number of mes-
sages per head.

The return for the United States includes only the lines of the Western Union Company, who own the principal part of the United States telegraph system. From the above table it appears that the population of Australasia sent more than three messages through the telegraph in the year for each inhabitant. In the United Kingdom the number was about one and three-quarters to each inhabitant ; in the United States of America about one message for every inhabitant ; in France and Belgium one message and a-half for every two persons ; in Germany one message for every two persons ; in Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Spain, rather more than one message for every four persons. In Canada and the Cape Colony less than one message is sent for every inhabitant in each year.

First Telegraph
Lines.

The electric telegraph was introduced into these Colonies almost at the time of the earliest railway construction. The first telegraph messages were sent in New South Wales in 1851. In Victoria the telegraph line from Melbourne to Williamstown was opened in 1854. The first line in South Australia, from Adelaide to Port Adelaide, was opened in 1856 ; and the first Tasmanian line was completed in 1857. In New Zealand the first telegraph office was opened in 1862 ; and the line from Brisbane to Rockhampton, the first in Queensland, was opened in 1864. Telegraphic communication was established between Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide in 1858. The first telegraph in Western Australia was opened in 1869, and communication between that Colony and all the others of the group was completed in 1877.

Cables.

Australasia is connected with Europe and the rest of the world by means of cables connecting with the various Asiatic continental lines. There are two cables—the older one opened in July, 1872—

joining Port Darwin to Banjowangie in Java, whence communication is provided with Europe by way of Batavia, Singapore, Madras, and Bombay. The cable from Port Darwin to Banjowangie is unfortunately liable to damage through volcanic eruptions, and the question is, therefore, being considered whether a point more to the east should not be substituted for Banjowangie. The length of line between Adelaide and London is 12,570 miles—9,146 cable, and 3,424 miles overland wire. Of the land portion 1,971 miles are between Adelaide and Port Darwin. A second cable was laid in 1888 from Frome, on Roebuck Bay, in Western Australia, to Banjowangie. The eastern colonies are connected with Frome by a line running from Adelaide, *via* Port Augusta, Eucla, and Albany, to Perth. The cable joining Tasmania to the continent of Australia was laid in 1869, the length being about 170 miles. It starts from the township of Flinders, near Cape Schanck, in Victoria, and terminates at Low Head, at the mouth of the Tamar, in Tasmania. New Zealand was joined to the continent by a cable laid in 1876, the length being about 1,191 miles. It has its Australian terminus within sight of the spot where Captain Cook landed on the shores of Botany Bay, and within a stone's throw of the monument of La Perouse. The New Zealand terminus of the cable is at Nelson, on the middle or south island, whence another cable is laid to Wanganui, in the North island, with an alternate line from Picton to Wellington.

All the Colonies show very rapid progress in the period from 1871 to 1881. In the case of Queensland this increase is largely due to the construction of the line to the Gulf of Carpentaria; and in the case of South Australia, to the construction of the lines to Port Darwin and to Eucla, on the boundary of Western Australia.

The following table shows the increase in the number of tele-
 graphical lines for each colony at intervals of ten years, as far as
 the returns are available :—

Length of
Telegraph poles.

LENGTH OF TELEGRAPHS.

Miles of Telegraph (Poles).				
Colony.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1890.
New South Wales.....	1,616	*4,674	8,515	11,231
Victoria .....	.....	*2,295	3,350	6,958
Queensland.....	169	2,525	6,280	9,830
South Australia.....	597	1,183	4,946	5,623
Western Australia .....	.....	*750	1,585	2,892
Tasmania .....	.....	*291	928	2,004
New Zealand .....	.....	2,015	3,824	5,060
Australasia.....	.....	13,733	29,428	43,598

* In 1873.

Length of
Telegraph wires

The next table gives similar particulars, only the amounts are expressed as miles of wire instead of length in poles :—

Miles of Telegraph (Wires).

Colony.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1890.
New South Wales.....	1,981	5,579	14,278	23,598
Victoria .....	.....	3,472	6,626	13,499
Queensland.....	169	2,614	8,585	17,437
South Australia.....	915	1,718	7,228	12,178
Western Australia .....	.....	*750	1,593	3,469
Tasmania .....	.....	241	1,157	3,060
New Zealand .....	.....	3,287	9,653	12,771
Australasia.....	.....	17,661	49,120	86,012

* In 1873.

The number of telegrams passing along the wires of each Colony, and the revenue received by the respective telegraph departments for the year 1890, were as follow :—

Business done by Telegraphs during the year 1890.

Colony.	Number of Telegrams.	Revenue Received.
New South Wales	4,101,449	£ 193,707
Victoria	3,486,541	138,969
Queensland	1,329,925	91,779
South Australia	1,659,983	100,752
Western Australia	196,536	10,890
Tasmania	353,548	15,896
New Zealand	1,984,848	85,954
Australasia	13,112,830	637,947

In connection with the Telegraph Departments of the various Colonies, Telephone Exchanges have, during recent years, been established in the capitals and other important centres of population. The returns relating to Telephones are, however, difficult to separate from those relating to Telegraphs. The number of miles of Telephone wires, as distinct from Telegraph wires, is returned as follows :—Victoria, 7,898 miles ; South Australia, 1,970 miles ; Western Australia, 517 miles ; Tasmania, 382 miles ; New Zealand, 2,036 miles. The same Colonies return the number of subscribers to the Telephone Exchanges—Victoria, 2,307 ; South Australia, 874 ; Western Australia, 106 ; Tasmania, 646 ; New Zealand, 2,587.