

Forwarding Agents of Malta.

L. De Zanche

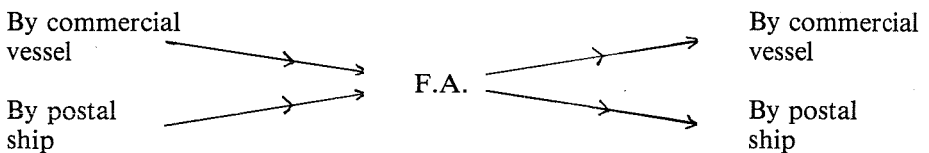
According to Rowe (1) the Forwarding Agent (F.A.) is “a person or firm who undertakes to see that the goods or correspondence of another are transported without himself acting as a carrier”. Many F.A.s were merchants, ship brokers, bankers and Consuls. They operated on *international* routes, forwarding commercial letters, which formed the bulk of the mail.

There were two reasons for forwarding (2). The first was that sometimes it was not possible for the sender nor for the addressee to pay the postage to destination (letters could not be sent with postage paid nor with postage due): in some cases part of the route was not covered by official postal services; in other cases the postal route crossed countries which had not any treaty for mutual exchange of mail or were at war. In situations like these, the presence of F.A.s was mandatory for having mail arrived at destination.

The second reason for forwarding was that, even when postal links were established, they were often slow and expensive and could not cope with the increasing demands of international traffic. Trade needed the fastest exchange of letters, which were the only way for getting news from less or more remote markets. This goal was achieved by F.A.s, who delivered letters to the first courier or sailing ship. Very often they had to pay for forwarding mail and no doubt they included such expenses in their normal service charges.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the most common method of indicating forwarding was by means of a manuscript endorsement. Handstamped markings began to predominate in the 19th century.

F.A.s operating in an island (Malta, Syra, Corfu, Rodi) could receive and forward mail by commercial or postal ships.



More than 50 F.A.s of Malta have been recorded (1). I illustrate hereunder four letters which arrived at destination through the good offices of Maltese F.A.s.

The letter reproduced in Fig. 1 left Boston in 1827, addressed to the Rev. A. Bigelow (location unknown) “care of the American Consul at Gibraltar” (1st F.A.), who sent it to P. Eynaud of Malta, who in turn forwarded the letter to destination. Note the endorsement “Rec.d & forwarded by Y(our) O(bedient) S(ervant) P. Eynaud Malta 17th April 1827”. In this case the intervention of two F.A.s was mandatory, because at that time there was not any postal link between Boston and the destination.

The letter reproduced in the Fig. 2 went from Tripoli di Barberia to Nizza and was twice forwarded by the Sardinian Consuls of Malta and Leghorn, who struck their cachets on the front.

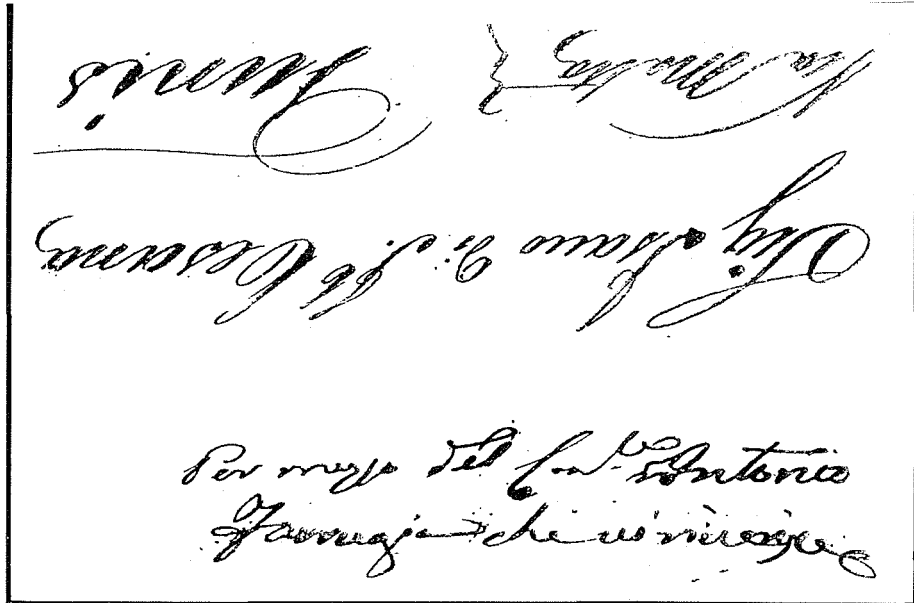


Fig 3.

The letter reproduced in Fig. 3 was sent from Civitavecchia to Tunisi "Via Malta" "per mezzo del Cav. Antonio Farrugia che vi riverisce" (= By means of Cav. A. Farrugia who greets you).

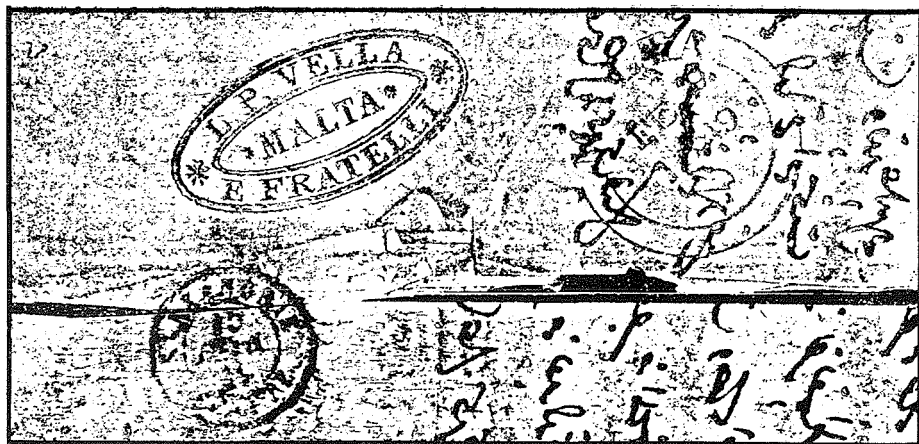


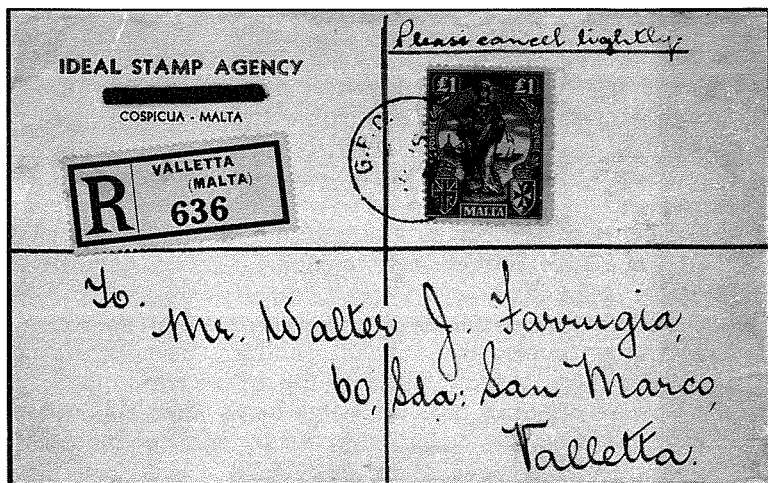
Fig 4.

Fig. 4 reproduces a letter from Leghorn to Alexandria (1849). We do not know how it arrived to Malta. The F.A. "L.P. Vella e fratelli" forwarded it to Alexandria, entrusting it to the Malta P.O. Note the arrival postmark of the French P.O.

REFERENCES:-

1. K. Rowe: The postal history of the forwarding agents Louisville, 1984.
2. L. De Zanche: I corrispondenti postali con particolare riguardo all'area del Mediterraneo, Padova, 1982.

MALTA POSTAL HISTORY



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