

## XXVIII

# Hotel and Proprietary Post Offices

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This chapter deals with post offices established on privately owned premises, especially hotels. In other respects, such offices were the same as ordinary post offices, except that some of them were opened seasonally. However, their postmarks incorporate the name of the establishment as well as the name of the city, a feature that gives them special appeal. The hotel post offices in particular have a strong collector following, quite sufficient to justify devoting a chapter to the subject.

## Hotels

The first hotel post offices were opened in Shepherd's Hotel and the Continental Hotel in Cairo on November 1st 1891. Winter tourism had developed substantially in the latter half of the 19th century. Egypt had two major attractions for Europeans: an abundance of stupendous, monumental relics and ruins, and a warm, sunny climate to which to escape from the cold, dull winters of Europe. The tourists were generally wealthy, and demanded luxurious accommodations and all possible amenities. Conveniently located post offices staffed with clerks familiar with European languages were one such amenity, and obviously, hotels having them had an advantage.

Of the two original hotels with post offices, the Continental still exists, but without a post office; Shepherd's was burned down in 1953, but a new hotel in a different location was later opened with the same name, without a post office. Other hotel post offices were opened or closed at various times, but none, insofar as I know, is operating today. The accompanying chart lists all the hotel post offices with data on their periods of operation and the overall scarcity of their postmarks. Further information on the history of the hotels and the recorded dates of use of each of the many postmarks used can be found in works by J. Boulad d'Humières<sup>1</sup>, by Benians<sup>2</sup>, by Ålund<sup>3</sup>, and by Winter<sup>4</sup>.

Three hotel post offices require special comment.

The Continental Hotel (its original name) was renamed The Grand Continental Hotel about 1900; however, use of the date-stamps bearing these names overlapped for about two years. The name apparently reverted to The Continental Hotel about 1909, and again there was an overlap in the use of the corresponding date-stamps. The third change came shortly after World War I, during which the Savoy Hotel was converted to a military hospital, and was never reopened. The owners also owned the Continental, and when it became certain that the Savoy was gone, the Continental was renamed The

Continental-Savoy. It remained under that name until after the post office was closed, but in the 1960s it was again known as the Continental.

The Mena House Hotel originally housed a post office, known as Pyramids/Mena House. However, after about two years of operation, the post office was moved across the road to a small building of its own, and became known simply as Pyramids. For a short time, the Arabic word for "pyramids", *abram*, was used instead in the European part of the date-stamp.

The Heliopolis Palace Hotel was closed in 1958, when it was converted to house the Joint Ministries of Syria and Egypt of the UAR. In 1982, after the dissolution of the UAR, it was reopened as a conference hotel, and a post office was re-installed. After less than a year of operation, the hotel and post office were again closed, and the hotel was converted to offices of the Presidency of the Republic.

There are two instances of a special hotel post office date-stamp being created for a conference or congress, both in 1964. In January, the Council of the Arab League Heads of State met at the Nile Hilton Hotel, and a suitably inscribed date-stamp was used during the occasion. In September, a "Summit Conference" was held at the Palestine Hotel. It did not ordinarily have a post office on its premises, but one was opened for the occasion, and used a date-stamp inscribed POSTES / CONFERENCE AU SOMMET / HOTEL PALESTINE.

The Arabic inscriptions on date-stamps of hotel post offices at first used the word *bosta*, later *barid*. For hotel, the word *lokanda* (of Italian origin) was used at first, but was later changed to *funduq*. However, the Luxor and Cataract hotels for a time used a simulation of the French pronunciation of the word hotel: *autel*.

Black ink was used for the most part, but blue was occasionally used, and the Palestine Hotel used grey-violet ink. There seems to be no special significance to the color used.

Benians introduced code letters for use in identifying the various types of hotel postmarks. In this chapter they are modified in order to remove several ambiguities (e.g., "HC" in the original version was used both for the Continental and Cataract hotels). The revised codes are included in the chart. If the name of the hotel consisted of two words, the two capital letters are used in the code; in other cases, a following consonant is used, set in lower-case type; e.g., HWP = Winter Palace, HS<sub>m</sub> = Semiramis. In the special case of the two Savoy Hotels, HS<sub>v</sub>C and HS<sub>v</sub>A are used for the Cairo and Assuan locations, respectively. In most circumstances, however, it should not be necessary to use such codes.

The scarcity factors included in the Chart are just that, and reflect the relative frequencies of occurrence, the commonest, Continental and Shepherd's, having the factor 1. There are, of course, some differences in the scarcity of the various postmarks of a given hotel. The scarcity factors in the Chart refer to the commonest type; in a case where there is an unusually large range in scarcity, a range is given. They do not directly indicate value, and hotels with a factor of 5 are worth little more than those of 1, for in both cases examples are plentiful enough to saturate the demand. With some of the more recent offices, the factors are likely to become lower with time, as more examples are turned up.

Three hotels used meter machine franking for a time (and perhaps still do). These frankings do not necessarily indicate that a post office was operating, for the machines were used at the desk or business offices of the hotels, and guests were sometimes permitted to have their letters franked by them upon payment of the required postage.

The latest dates for them in the chart probably have little significance.

HOTEL POST OFFICES						
Hotel	Code	Dates Seen	Opened	Closed	Factor	
Cataract	H-Ct	4 JA 01–2 AP 58(?)	NO–DE 00		4	
Continental, (inc. Continental -Savoy)	H-Cn	12 DE 91–3 JA 54	1 NO 91	195-?	1	
Gezireh Palace	H-GP	5 MR 94–12 DE 07	1894	1914	10	
Heliopolis Palace	H-HP	8 OC 55–26 FE 58, FE 82 reopened 1982		25 OC 58 1982	60 125	
Luxor	H-Lx	5 JA 94–20 FE 08	NO 93	AP 09	8	
Mena House	H-MH	7 MR 92–30 AP 94	15 DE 91		50	
Nile Hilton meter	H-NH	22 FE 59–196? 14 NO 63–1 SE 65	22 FE 59	197?	*10	
Palestine	H-PI	5 SE 64	SE 64	SE 64	50+	
San Stefano	H-SS	6 AU 95–23 AU 16	MY 95		9	
Savoy, Aswan	H-SvA	22 DE 02–2 FE 12	NO–DE 02	1913?	14	
Savoy, Cairo	H-SvC	30 DE 98–9 NO 14	NO 98	1914	7	
Semiramis meter	H-Sm	23 FE 07–8 AP 10 29 JN 61–5 SE 71	JA 07	AP 10	25	
Shepherd's meter	H-Sp	14 DE 91–26 JY 52 6 MY 61–5 SE 71	1 NO 91	26 JY 52	1	
Sheraton	H-Sr	72–22 MR 78	MR 70?	78?	125	
Winter Palace	H-WP	FE 06–12 DE 50	NO 05	195-?	4	

\* Nile Hilton, H-NH4 and H-NH5 are factor 50.

## Postmark Types

Rectangular registration cachets of the standard Egyptian type were probably used at all hotel post offices except the Heliopolis Palace, the Nile Hilton, Sheraton, and Palestine Hotels, but they have been recorded only for the Continental (Fig. 1) and Continental Savoy, Ghezira Palace, Luxor, San Stefano, Shepherd's, and Winter Palace Hotels. All of them are much scarcer than the ordinary date-stamps.

Most of the postmarks have been recorded and illustrated by Boulad and by Benians (on whose work the illustrations for the Hotel Post Office postmarks are based), but some additional information is reported by Murphy and Eriksson<sup>5</sup>, and by Toutounji<sup>6</sup>.





Fig. 1 Registration handstamp.

N.B. All dates below are expressed with two-letter abbreviations for the months, even though for a particular Type roman numerals may be used; i.e., the form of the date in this list is not necessarily the same as on the postmarks.

Cataract - H-Ct

1: JA 01-5 MR 14

(blue seen 15 NO 08-22 JA 14)

2: 9 FE 20-26 FE 28

3: 14 JA 25-21 MR 56 (also in blue)



H-Ct 1



H-Ct 2



H-Ct 3

Continental, inc. Continental Savoy - H-Cn

1, 1c, 1e have 3.5 mm between lines of date bar, P above I; 1a, 1b have 5mm between lines, P above N.

- 1: (m. abbr., shift shown with T): 12 DE 91-2 FE 28
- 1c: (m. abbr., no T): 12 FE 97-27 MR 00
- 1d: (m. in Roman numerals, with T): 28-30 JA 00
- 1e: (m. Roman. no T): 16 JA 00
- 1a: (m. abbr., with T): 14 DE 91-26 FE 94
- 1b: (m. Roman, with T): 18 JA 94-29 JA 94
- 2: 21 MR 00-5 JA 09

- 3: ? ? 00-14 AP 10
- 4: 8 MY 09-11 JA 22
- 5: 2 MR 22-8 MY 32
- 6: ? ? 29-31 AU 33
- 7: 20 DE 33-21 NO 53
- 8: 7 FE 10-15 FE 22 (also in blue)
- 9: 18 MY 22-11 FE 29
- 10: 4 JA 31
- 11: 27 AP 37
- 12: 9 MR 33-3 JA 54



H-Cn 1



H-Cn 2



H-Cn 3



H-Cn 4



H-Cn 5



H-Cn 6



H-Cn 7



H-Cn 8



H-Cn 9



H-Cn 10



H-Cn 11



H-Cn 12

Gezireh Palace - H-GP  
1: 24 MR 94-12 DE 07



H-GP 1

Heliopolis Palace - H-HP  
1: 8 OC 55  
2: 1 OC 55-26 FE 58

3: ? FE 82



H-HP 1



H-HP 2



H-HP 3

Luxor - H-Lx

1: 5 JA 94-31 JA 01 (also in blue)  
2: 19 FE 01-2 MR 10 (also in blue)



H-Lx 1



H-Lx 2

Mena House - H-MH  
1: 5 MR 92-30 AP 94



H-MH 1

Nile Hilton - H-NH  
1: 22 FE 59  
2: ? DE 62-9 JN 63  
3: ? ? 66-3 SE 71



H-NH 1



H-NH 2



H-NH 3



Nile Hilton contd.

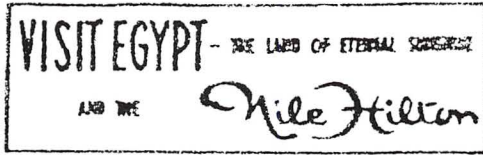
- 4: 13 JA 64
- 5: ?
- 6: ?



H-NH 4



H-NH 5



= 11 11 63 = القاهرة - CAIRO =  
H-NH 6

Palestine - H-PI

- 1: 5 SE 64



H-PI 1

San Stefano - H-SS

- 1: 6 AU 95-? ? 98
- 2: 8 MY 96-8 AU 99
- 3: 28 SE 99-8 MY 08

- 4: 16 AP 08-1 SE 11 (in blue 2 JN 08)
- 5: 6 JY 16-23 AU 16



H-SS 1



H-SS 2



H-SS 3



H-SS 4



H-SS 5

Savoy, Aswan - H-SvA

- 1: 22 DE 02-8 JA 10
- 2: 8 MR 05-27 FE 13
- 2a: 2 JA 12-13 FE 13



H-SvA 1



H-SvA 2

Savoy, Cairo - H-SvC

- 1: 30 DE 98-21 SE 99
- 2: 14 DE 99-5 JY 10

- 3: ? AP 01-? NO 13
- 4: 25 MR 09-9 SE 14



H-SvC 1



H-SvC 2



H-SvC 3



H-SvC 4

Semiramis - H-Sm

- 1: 23 FE 07-21 FE 09
- 2: 4 MR 07-- JA 10

- 3: ? NO 09-8 AP 10
- 4: ?



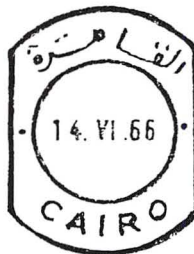
H-Sm 1



H-Sm 2



H-Sm 3



H-Sm 4





Shepherd's - H-Sp

- 1: 14 DE 91-10 MR 98
- 1a: (shift as "T 2", etc., instead of "T II", etc.):  
MR 92
- 2: 27 DE 91-15 JN 97  
(seen with T inverted, 15 MR 92)
- 3: ? FE 93-13 JY 98  
(T missing 23 FE 96-5 FE 98)
- 4: 31 DE 98-14 JA 99
- 5: 28 DE 95-28 FE 09
- 6: 12 NO 07-27 NO 09
- 7: 3 NO 07-? NO 30
- 8: 7 DE 31-26 JY 52
- 9: 7 FE 10-8 MR 37
- 10: 9 MR 38-9 NO 46
- 11: ?



H-Sp 1



H-Sp 2



H-Sp 3



H-Sp 4



H-Sp 5



H-Sp 6



H-Sp 7



H-Sp 8



H-Sp 9



H-Sp 10



H-Sp 11



## Sheraton - H-Sr

1: 19 AP 72

2: 15 AP 75-22 MR 78



H-Sr 1



H-Sr 2

## Winter Palace - H-WP

1: - FE 06-3 JA 08 (also in blue)

2: 19 DE 06-? AP 14 (also in blue)

3: 6 MR 09-? AP 14

(seen in blue 7 JA-17 MR 09)

4: 12 JA 22-14 MR 37 (also in blue)

5: 11 MR 26-15 FE 50 (also in blue)

6: 1 FE 33-12 DE 50 (also in blue)



H-WP 1



H-WP 2



H-WP 3



H-WP 4



H-WP 5



H-WP 6

On the centennial of the Mena House Hotel, March 23rd 1970, a commemorative stamp was issued depicting the hotel along with the recently opened Sheraton Hotel. A pictorial circular date-stamp was provided for the first day of use (Fig. 2). Although the cancellation is inscribed MENA HOUSE and SHERATON, as well as CAIRO, the precise site of its use is uncertain.

## Stationery

Special stationery was commonly provided for use by guests. It included postcards, letter cards and envelopes, which were in some cases embellished with elaborate designs in multicolor. The variety is large, and although they make attractive additions to collections, they are not treated here (Fig. 3).







## Other Privately Owned Sites

The only purely private establishments to have post offices were Thomas Cook & Sons Tourist Agency, located next to the Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo, and the Simon Arzt department store, located near the docks in Port Said. For the "Seamen's Home" postmarks, see Chapter XXXII.

Cook's is recorded from 16 OC 94 to 26 MY 51, but the reported date of opening is November 1894. It was burnt to the ground in the riots on July 26th 1952. Examples of its date-stamps are readily available; the registration cachet is somewhat scarce.

Dates recorded for postmarks of Cook's Tourist Agency:

1: 13 DE 94-30 AP 03  
2: 5 AP 03-23 MR 09  
3: 5 JN 00-30 SE 29  
4: 28 JY 32-18 AP 33  
5: 3 OC 43-26 MY 51

6: 29 OC 24  
7: 17 JA 35-17 JA 36  
8: 10-31 AU 16  
9: 3 MR 16-28 MR 31 (also violet)  
10: 30 OC 33-8 NO 47 (also in blue)



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

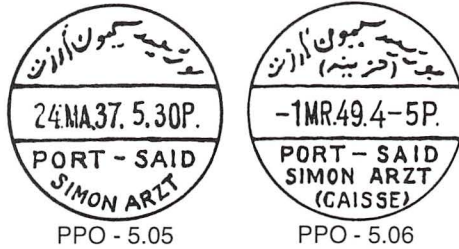


9



10

Date-stamps of the Simon Arzt store are known from August 25th 1934 to February 24th 1960. This post office used two date-stamps (recorded in black or violet) and the standard rectangular registration cachet (inscribed PORT SAID SIMON ARZT). Examples of the date-stamps are not scarce, but the registration cachet is quite scarce.



## References

### Special Acknowledgement

I thank Lucien Totounji for the information about the Heliopolis and Palestine Hotels, and for the drawing of H-HP3.

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2. F.W. Benians, *QC IX* (7/8), 82-93 (whole no. 103/104, Sep./Dec. 1977), *X* (2), 33-9 (whole no. 106, June 1978), *X* (5), 114-18 (whole no. 109, Mar. 1979), *XI* (6), 158-61 (whole no. 122, June 1982).
3. L. Ålund, *L'OP* No. 117, 603-7 (Apr. 1966/Jan. 1967).
4. A. Winter, *QC VII* (12), 220-1 (whole no. 84, Dec. 1972).
5. J.M. Murphy and S. Eriksson, *QC XV* (10), 276-7 (whole no. 173, June 1995).
6. L.-H. Toutounji, *QC XV* (10), 278 (whole no. 173, June 1995).