



# The postal service of the Lavarello Company with South America, following the Convention of 15 March 1873

## The history of the Company

Gio. Batta Lavarello was born in Recco in 1824 into a seafaring family and began sailing at a very young age on his father's brig. He studied at the Nautical School of Recco and after numerous trips he obtained the Longtime Captain's license in 1859.

He had the merit of having resumed, even with modest means, after years of interruption, the South American Line for the transport of emigrants to La Plata starting from 4 January 1864 with a screw clipper, the "Buenos Aires" with a navigation that lasted 70 days, reporting a modest initial success.

Years went by and the Lavarello Company continued its service to the ports of La Plata with mixed success. With the entry of new partners into the company, larger and faster ships were purchased, but the fierce competition revealed all the efforts made to be insufficient.

Other clippers were purchased, the "Montevideo" in 1867, the "Liguria" in 1869 and the "Aquila" in 1870, which allowed the Lavarello Company to make six or seven annual departures towards South America.

## The postal history

On 15 March 1873 a Convention was stipulated between the Minister of Public Works of the Kingdom of Italy and Giovanni Battista Lavarello, as representative of the Lavarello & C. Company of Genoa for a periodic monthly service between Italy (the port of Genoa) and South America (the ports of Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Montevideo), valid from 1 April 1873.

The Convention was the result obtained by G.B. Lavarello after a service activity with the ports of South America which lasted from 1864, first with a small fleet of sailing clippers, and subsequently, with large iron steamers which covered the distance on average in 23 days and which carried about a thousand travelers for each trip.

The Article 2 of the Convention obliged the Lavarello Company to assign four steamers to the line with South America: the "Espresso" (later renamed "Cristoforo Colombo") built in 1870, the "Nord America", "Sud America" and "Europa" launched in 1872, while the Article 3 established the agreement on the itinerary which was initially defined with departure from Genoa to Buenos Aires touching the ports of Marseilles, Gibraltar, Cadiz, S. Vincenzo and Montevideo.

At that point, we were in 1870, G.B. Lavarello found in Matteo Bruzzo a valid partner capable of giving the company a definitive boost.

Real iron screw steamers were purchased, the first of which, the "Espresso" entered service in 1870. In 1872 the three ships that made up the fleet entered the line and in the following years contrasted the French competition in the transport of goods and passengers to South America: the "Sud America", the "Nord America" and the "Europa".

For many years the Lavarello Company had a completely pre-eminent place in the national naval scene which faded towards the end of the decade, but G.B. Lavarello, well supported by his shareholders and by the reputation he now enjoyed, stood firm against the increasingly fierce competition, until he suddenly died on the evening of 6 December 1881, leaving a huge void in the family and a general regret in the Italian maritime panorama.

## Plan

The aim of the exhibit is to illustrate the postal service of the Lavarello Company developed between the ports of Genoa and La Plata, following the Convention stipulated on 15 March 1873 with the Kingdom of Italy until the end of the maritime activities of the Lavarello family in 1891.

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A few years after the sale of the Lavarello Company, the sons Pietro and Enrico wanted to continue the business in their father's name and the first ship they bought was called "G. B. Lavarello", in honor of his father.

The Convention established very precise obligations for the Lavarello Company (articles 4, 5, 6 and 7), but offered very little in return, referring to Law No. 604 of 5 May 1862 "the captains or masters of non-contract ships, for the direct transport of correspondence from foreign countries or for foreign countries, they will receive the remuneration of 10 centesimi for each letter and 5 centesimi for each printed matter, while for letters and printed matters from, or for, the Italian State, the remuneration of 5 centesimi for letters and 1 centesimo for printed matters.

On 31 March 1878 the contract between the Kingdom of Italy and the Lavarello Company expired and was never renewed. However, G.B. Lavarello continued with his service and the correspondence forwarded through his steamers were subjected to the rate of non-contract ships.

After the end of the contract with the Kingdom of Italy, the Lavarello Company, despite obvious difficulties, decided to continue its service with South America, but on 6 December 1881 due to illness, G.B. Lavarello suddenly died.

## Bibliography

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## 1<sup>st</sup> chapter : The correspondences to Brazil

The activity of the Lavarello Company with the Brazilian port of Rio de Janeiro was practically nil and this is explained by the fact that since 1 March 1865 a direct postal convention had been in force between Italy and Brazil which allowed the offices to regularly exchange correspondence in a closed envelope, leaving no room for other private services; confirmed by the fact that the port of Rio de Janeiro was included in the itinerary of the Lavarello Company only from the end of 1874 and limited to the return journey.



From 1 May 1865 was in effect the first Italo-Brazilian Convention and the single rate rate was established in 1,20 Lire for each 7,5 grams of weight.

From 1 July 1875, before the entrance of Brazil on the GPU on 1 July 1877, the rate of letters prepaid to destination in Brazil, in accordance to the Italian - Brazilian Convention was 1.10 lire: 30 centesimi for each 15 grams, as required by the article 11 of GPU for letters addressed to non-members countries, 80 centesimi for each 7.5 grams for carriage in closed mail to a Brazilian port by a British packet.



5 July 1873. Single rate letter from La Spezia to Pelotas (Brazil), prepaid 1,20 Lire to destination.

The letter was carried in closed mail to Brazil through England and on 9 July in Southampton was placed on board on the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company packet "DOURO" that disembarked the letter in Rio de Janeiro on 31 July. The letter then was carried to Pelotas, in the region of Rio Grande do Sul.

With the entrance of Brazil on the GPU, on 1 July 1877, the prepaid rate of letters addressed from Italy to Brazil was set at 60 centesimi for each 15 grams.



4 July 1876. Single rate letter from Milan to Cuyabá (Brazil), prepaid 1,10 Lire to destination.

The letter was carried in closed mail to Brazil through England and on 10 July it was placed on board in Southampton on the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company packet "DOURO" that disembarked the letter in Rio de Janeiro on 1 August and then it reached Cuyabá.

30 December 1877. Single rate letter from Camajore (Lucca) to Bage (Brazil), prepaid 60 centesimi to destination, in accordance with the rate introduced by the General Postal Union from 1 July 1877. The letter, after the transit of Genoa on 31 December, was carried in a closed mail through England to Southampton, where on 9 January was embarked on the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company packet "NEVA" that disembarked it in Rio de Janeiro on 30 January 1878 and then carried to Bage.



2<sup>nd</sup> chapter : The postal service of Lavarello Company during the validity of the Convention



The contract stipulated by the Italian Postal Administration and the Lavarello Company provided for the possibility of shipments from Italy to South America and vice versa, through the port of Genoa.  
The letters sent from Genoa to the ports of Buenos Aires and Montevideo were certainly very few; in fact, those known to date are very rare.



10 February 1875. Single rate letter from Genoa to Rosario di Santa Fè (Argentina), prepaid 70 centesimi to the port of disembarkation of Buenos Aires, according to the rate defined by the agreement of 17 March 1874. The letter was embarked in Genoa on the packet "Nord America" of the Lavarello Company, that disembarked the letter in Buenos Aires on 12 March and then delivery in Rosario de Santa Fè on 15 March.

The rate of 70 centesimi, for letters sent with the Italian postal services of the Lavarello Company, was defined by an agreement between Italy and the States of La Plata (Argentina and Uruguay) on 17 March 1874, a year after the signing of the Convention between the Lavarello Company and the Kingdom of Italy and consisted of 60 centesimi for the Italian State (the same that were received by Italy for shipments with English and/or French mediation) and 10 centesimi that were recognized to the Lavarello Company as a fee for the captain of the ship.

**They are two of the three letters recorded carried to Argentina by the Lavarello Company at the 70 centesimi rate.**

The cause of the low number of letters sent by the steamers of the Lavarello Company can be identified in the difference in the frequency of trips (monthly by the Lavarello and weekly by the English and French companies) which made consignments preferable with the English and French packet, and in the management direct accountant with these administrations, even if with higher rates, but paid entirely to users.



11 January 1875. Single rate letter from Genoa to Rosario di Santa Fè (Argentina), prepaid 70 centesimi to the port of disembarkation of Buenos Aires, according to the rate defined by the agreement of 17 March 1874. The letter was embarked in Genoa on the packet "Europa" of the Lavarello Company, that disembarked the letter in Buenos Aires on 13 February and then delivery in Rosario de Santa Fè on 14 February.



30 September 1876. Single rate letter from Genoa to Buenos Aires (Argentina), prepaid 50 centesimi to the port of disembarkation of Buenos Aires, according to the rate effective from 1 January 1876.  
The letter was embarked in Genoa on the packet "Nord America" of the Lavarello Company, that disembarked the letter in Buenos Aires on 28 October 1876.  
**Only 3 letters recorded carried to Argentina by the Lavarello Company at the 50 centesimi rate.**

From 1 January 1876 the rate of letters exchanged between Italy and the States of La Plata transported by the postal steamers of the Lavarello Company was reduced to 50 centesimi for every 15 grams (40 centesimi for the Italian State and 10 centesimi as a fee for the captain) valid until the end of the Convention on 31 March 1878.



31 May 1876. Single rate letter from Chiavari to Paysandù (Uruguay), prepaid 50 centesimi to the port of disembarkation of Montevideo, according to the rate effective from 1 January 1876 and charged 10 centèsimos on delivery for the Uruguayan domestic rate. The letter was carried to Genoa, and it was embarked on the packet "Nord America" of the Lavarello Company, that disembarked the letter in Montevideo on 26 June for delivery in Paysandù.  
**Only 3 letters recorded carried to Uruguay by the Lavarello Company at the 50 centesimi rate.**

2<sup>nd</sup> chapter : The postal service of Lavarello Company during the validity of the Convention



The correspondences sent from Argentina and Uruguay with the postal services of the Lavarello Company could be prepaid up to destination with Italian stamps affixed by the sender at a rate of 70 centesimi, or with stamps from Argentina and Uruguay for the internal rate of their profit, while the taxation at destination of 90 centesimi was the responsibility of Italy.

Upon arrival in Genoa the letters received the handstamp "Da Buenos Aires coi Postali Italiani" or "Da Montevideo coi Postali Italiani". Insufficiently prepaid letters had to pay the rate considering the applied stamps, but, instead, were considered unfranked and charged 1 Lira on delivery.



From 1 January 1876 the rate for letters sent from ports of La Plata to Italy with the Lavarello postal service was the same as the rate for letters sent from Italy: 50 centesimi if prepaid or 1 Lira if sent unpaid and charged on delivery.



On 26 August 1874, the Ministry sent the Provincial Directorate of Genoa the definitive handstamp with the wording on two lines "Da Buenos Aires/coi Postali Italiani", which was supplied to the central office of Genoa with the handstamp numeral 13 that was used for canceling the stamps. The first occasion for the use of this handstamp was the arrival at the port of Genoa of the steamship "Europa" of the Lavarello Company on September 18, 1874.

6 August 1875. Single rate letter from Montevideo (Uruguay) to Genoa, prepaid 10 centesimos for the Uruguayan domestic rate and charged 90 centesimi on delivery in Genoa without considering the Uruguayan stamp applied to the departure. The letter was embarked on the packet "Europa" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 31 August, where received the handstamp "Da Montevideo coi Postali Italiani", and subsequently delivered to its destination on 31 August 1875.

6 June 1876. Single rate letter from Montevideo (Uruguay) to Genoa, prepaid 20 centesimos for the Uruguayan domestic rate and charged 10 tenths on delivery in Genoa without considering the Uruguayan stamp applied to the departure. The letter was embarked on the packet "C. Colombo" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 6 July, where received the handstamp "Da Montevideo coi Postali Italiani".

5 March 1876. Single rate letter from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Genoa, charged 10 tenths on delivery in Genoa. The letter was embarked on the packet "Sud America" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 30 March, where received the handstamp "Da Buenos Aires coi Postali Italiani", and subsequently delivered to its destination on 31 March.



5 December 1876. Single rate letter from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Genoa, prepaid 5 centavos for the Argentinian domestic rate and charged 10 tenths on delivery in Genoa without considering the Argentinian stamp applied to the departure. The letter was embarked on the packet "Sud America" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 30 December, where received the handstamp "Da Buenos Aires coi Postali Italiani", and subsequently delivered to Borgo Pila on 31 December 1876.



19 August 1874. Single rate letter from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Sirola (Ancona), prepaid 70 centesimi as required by the agreements between the Lavarello Company and the Italian Postal Administration. The letter was embarked on the packet "Europa" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked in Genoa on 18 September, where received the handstamp "Da Buenos Aires coi Postali Italiani", which is the first date recorded of the applications of this handstamp on letters prepaid to destination. The letter was subsequently carried to Sirola (Ancona) on 22 September with the cancellation of the stamps applied in Buenos Aires with the 13-point numeral of the central office in Genoa, and on 23 September was delivered to Ancona.



3<sup>rd</sup> chapter : The postal service of Lavarello Company after the end of the Convention



On 31 March 1878 the contract between the Italian Government and the Lavarello Company ended and was never renewed. However, G.B. Lavarello continued with his service and the correspondence forwarded through his steamers were subjected to the rate of non-contract ships, but the very few known letters, sent in this period to South America prepaid at the rate of 30 centesimi, confirm the scarce use of the packets of the Lavarello Company for the transport of correspondence.

Immediately after the end of the contract with the Lavarello Company, the post office of Genoa resumed considering the correspondence that arrived in Genoa transported with the Lavarello Company as non-contract ships. Letters were considered unpaid and charged 40 centesimi on delivery (30 centesimi for the Kingdom of Italy as the rate of unpaid letters transported with non-contract ships and 10 centesimi for the captain of the ship) and the affixing of the handstamp "con Bastim. Mercant."



13 July 1878. Single rate letter from Chiavari to Montevideo (Uruguay), prepaid 30 centesimi (20 centesimi single rate letter and 10 centesimi fee for the captain of the ship), according to the rate of non-contract ship. The letter was embarked on the packet "Europa" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Montevideo on 5 August, charged 10 centesimos on delivery for the Uruguayan domestic fee.

6 July 1878. Single rate letter from Montevideo (Uruguay) to Spigno Monferrato (Alessandria), prepaid on the reverse 10 centesimos for the Uruguayan domestic rate.

The letter was embarked on the packet "Sud America" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 30 July, where received the handstamp "con Bastim. Mercant.", charged 40 centesimi on delivery to confirm carriage by a non-contract ship.



6 December 1878. Single rate letter from Montevideo (Uruguay) to Genoa, prepaid 10 centesimos for the Uruguayan domestic rate. The letter was embarked on the packet "Europa" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 30 December, where received the handstamp "con Bastim. Mercant.", charged 40 centesimi on delivery to confirm carriage by a non-contract ship.

8 April 1878. Single rate letter from Montevideo (Uruguay) to Genoa, prepaid 10 centesimos for the Uruguayan domestic rate.

The letter was embarked on the packet "Sud America" on the first voyage of a packet of the Lavarello Company after the end of the contract with the Italian Government on 31 March 1878. The letter was disembarked in Genoa on 5 May, where received the handstamp "con Bastim. Mercant.", charged 40 centesimi on delivery to confirm carriage by a non-contract ship.

3<sup>rd</sup> chapter : The postal service of Lavarello Company after the end of the Convention

On 1 April 1878 Argentina entered the General Postal Union and from that moment the letters from Buenos Aires to Genoa with the steamers of the Lavarello Company could be prepaid according to the new rate of 16 centavos every 15 grams up to destination, reduced to 12 centavos from 1 July 1881.



Uruguay joined the Universal Postal Union on 1 July 1880 and from that moment the letters from Montevideo to Genoa with the steamers of the Lavarello Company were prepaid at the rate of 10 centesimos for every 15 grams.



13 March 1879. Single rate letter from Genoa to Buenos Aires (Argentina), prepaid 60 centesimi in accordance with the rate introduced by the General Postal Union, effective from 1 April 1878 to 31 March 1879. The letter contains the answer to a letter received on 5 February with the "Nord America" and was probably embarked on the packet "Sud America" of the Lavarello Company which disembarked it in Buenos Aires on 18 April 1879.

The port of Marseilles was not always included in the itinerary of the Lavarello Company Line, but only in some limited periods. In some periods the steamer of the Lavarello Company coming from South America, before docking in Genoa, also made a stop in the Marseilles port of call, in other cases however, immediately after docking in Genoa, the steamer was sent to Marseilles to load and/or unload goods and passengers bound for and/or coming from France. In this case, the letter on the right was unloaded in Genoa on 31 March and the following day sent to France by railway and on 2 April during the night transit it received the red handstamp "ITALIE/AMB. M. CENIS B". The letter arrived in Bordeaux on 3 April 1880.



7 March 1880. Single rate letter from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Bordeaux (France), prepaid 16 centavos to destination. The letter was embarked on the packet "Europa" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 31 March and subsequently delivered to Bordeaux, where arrived on 3 April 1880.



7 March 1881. Single rate letter from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Sampierdarena (Genoa), prepaid 16 centavos to destination. The letter was embarked on the packet "Sud America" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 31 March and subsequently delivered to Sampierdarena, where arrived on 1 April 1881.



7 August 1881. Single rate letter from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Genoa, prepaid 12 centavos to destination. The letter was embarked on the packet "Nord America" of the Lavarello Company that disembarked it in Genoa on 6 September 1881.

4<sup>th</sup> chapter : The epilogue of Lavarello Company

After the end of the contract with the Italian Government, the Lavarello Company, despite obvious difficulties, decided to continue its service with South America, but the death of G. B. Lavarello on 6 December 1881 was the beginning of the end of the glorious Lavarello Company. The business passes to the sons of G. B. Lavarello.



On 28 February 1883, the shareholders' meeting decided to put the Company into liquidation which was taken over by Matteo Bruzzo & C. which sometime later, the 30 December 1887, will change its name to "La Veloce - Navigazione a vapore italiana".



13 February 1894. Postal stationery of 3 centesimos from Montevideo to Backnang (Germany) via Genoa. It was embarked on the packet "Nord America II" that disembarked it in Genoa and subsequently delivered to Germany.

On 2 January 1883, to complicate the situation even more, the ship "Nord America" returning from Plata, rounding Cape Palos, near Cartagena in Spain, ran aground on the shallows near the Hormigas Islands. There were no victims, but the ship with its cargo was lost. The shipwreck of "Nord America" practically coincided with the passage of the Lavarello Company to the Matteo Bruzzo & C. Company which in 1883 purchased the ship "Stirling Castle" launched on 21 January 1882 in Glasgow of 4,950 gross tons and 18 knots speed, which was renamed "Nord America II" in memory of the shipwrecked a few months earlier on the Spanish coast.



24 February 1890. Postal stationery of 6 centavos from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Altona an der Elbe (Germany) via Genoa. It was embarked on the packet "Nord America II" that disembarked in Genoa and then delivered to Germany.



1888. Double rate letter from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Paris (France) via Genoa, prepaid 24 centavos to destination. The letter was embarked on the packet "Nord America II" of the La Veloce Company that disembarked it in Genoa and subsequently delivered to Paris.



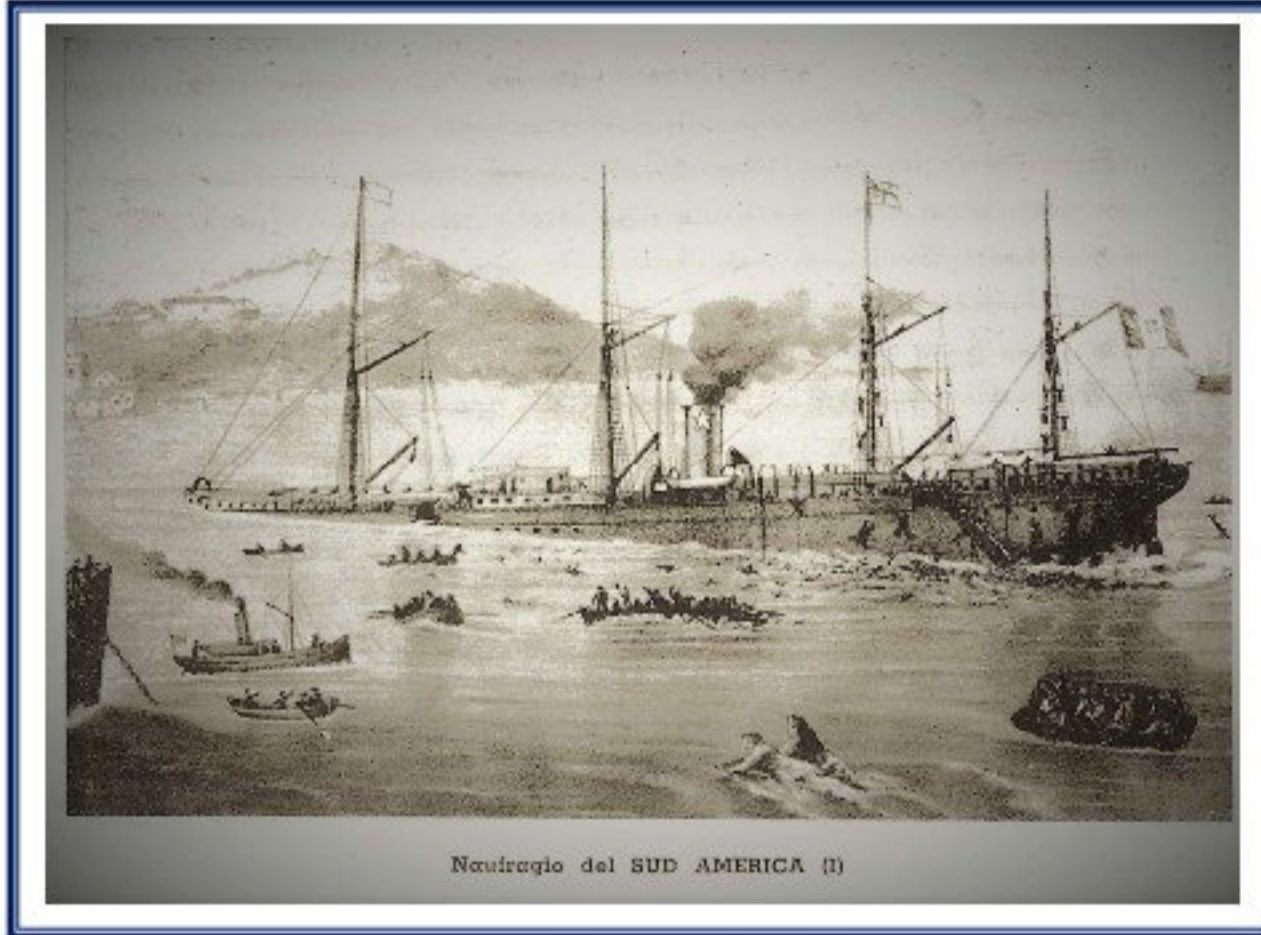
17 September 1898. Single rate letter from Buenos Aires (Argentina) to Elberfeld (Germany) via Genoa, prepaid 12 centavos to destination. The letter was embarked on the packet "Nord America II" of the La Veloce Company that disembarked it in Genoa and subsequently delivered to Germany.

4<sup>th</sup> chapter : The epilogue of Lavarello Company

With the sale of the Lavarello Company, the "Sud America" also passed to the Matteo Bruzzo & C. Company and subsequently to "La Veloce - Navigazione a vapore italiana". On 13 September 1888, the "Sud America" also followed the fate of its twin "Nord America".



While at anchor in the port of Las Palmas, in the Spanish archipelago of the Canary Islands, it was rammed by a French steamer which, due to its greater and considerable tonnage, opened a leak in one side which caused it to sink in less than half an hour.



Naufragio del SUD AMERICA (I)

The shipwreck of the "Sud America" of 13 September 1888.



21 December 1889. Postal stationery of 6 centavos sent from Buenos Aires to Berlin (Germany) via Genoa, embarked on the ship "Matteo Bruzzo" of the Matteo Bruzzo Company. The letter was disembarked in Genoa and subsequently carried to Berlin (Germany).



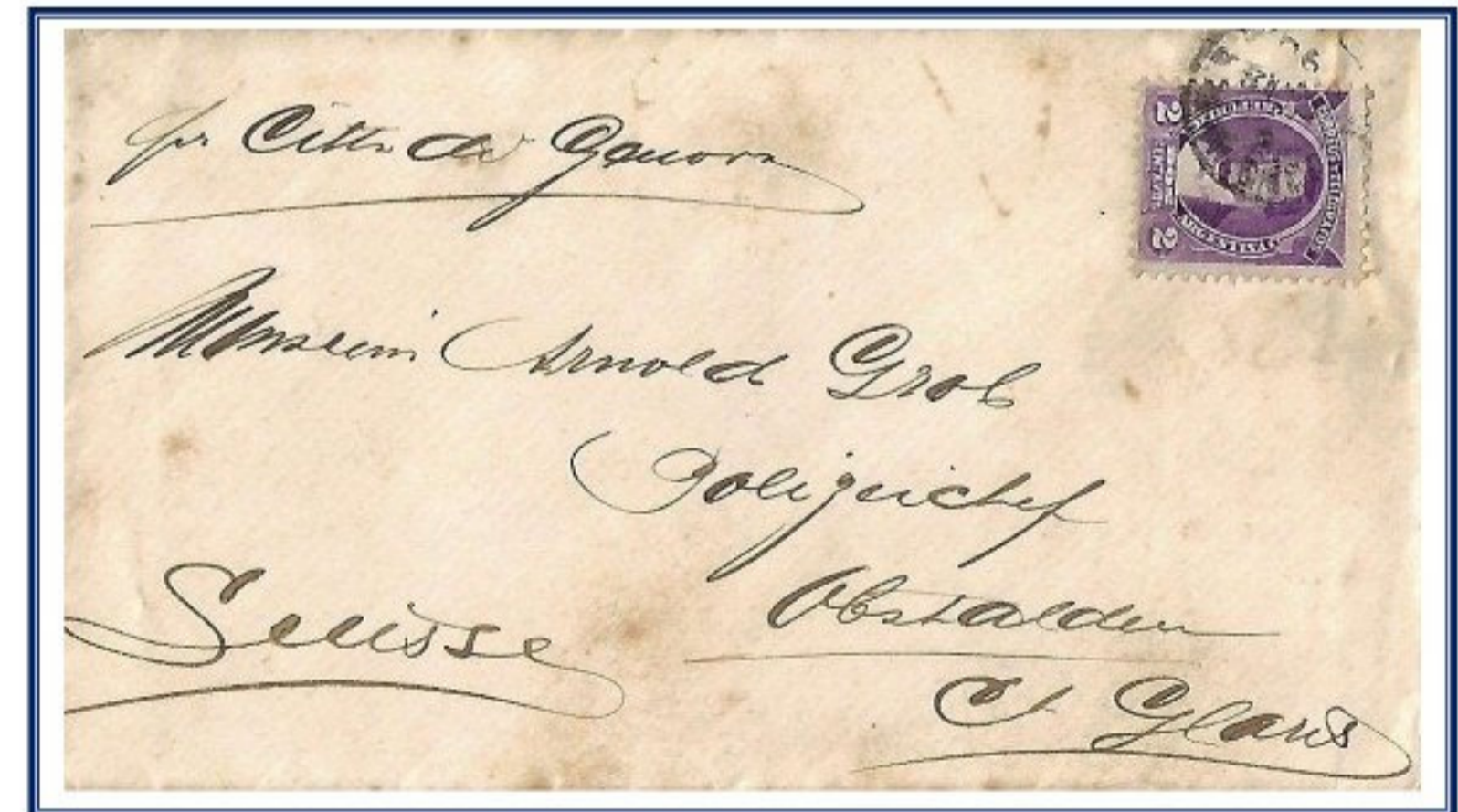
NORD AMERICA (II)

The new "Nord America II" purchased in 1883, formerly "Stirling Castle".



12 February 1889. Postal stationery of 12 centavos sent from Buenos Aires to Credit Lyonnais in Paris (France) via Genoa, embarked on the ship "G.B. Lavarello" of the new company of the Lavarello Brothers. The letter was disembarked in Genoa on 9 March 1889 and subsequently carried to Paris where several months later, on 11 January 1890, it was rejected and sent back to Buenos Aires where it arrived on 7 February 1890.

Lavarello's sons, Pietro and Enrico, wanted to continue the business in their father's name, setting up the Società di Navigazione Italiana Fratelli Lavarello fu G. B. based in Genoa. The company bought several ships and the first of these was named "G. B. Lavarello", in honor of his father, who took service on 18 December 1886 with its maiden voyage complete with emigrants who, with the only coal port of San Vincenzo in the Caribbean, reached Montevideo in twenty days. After a good start many difficulties arose and in 1891 it was decided to put the company into liquidation which was sold in all its activities to the "La Veloce".



December 1890. Opened envelope containing a greeting card sent from Buenos Aires to Switzerland, via Genoa, embarked on the ship "Città di Genova" of the new company of the Lavarello Brothers. The letter was disembarked in Genoa and subsequently carried to Muhlehorn (Switzerland), where it arrived on 5 January 1891.