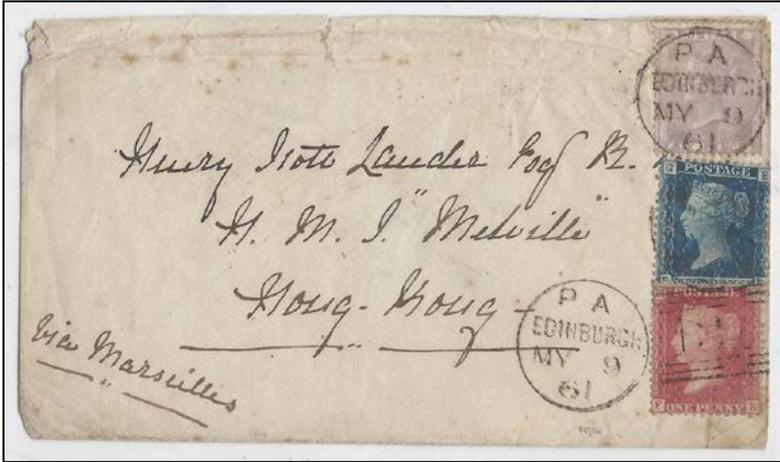


# JUST AN OLD COVER by John Latter

It wasn't much to look at – a bit grubby and damaged from its opening. I almost passed it over.



As shown above, the cover has a Great Britain red penny star (probably Sc. # 20) + a two penny blue (Sc. # 29 – Plate 8) + a sixpenny violet (Sc# 27) tied by an Edinburgh duplex hammer and dated May 9, 1861. It also featured a faint red **London** transit back stamp as well as a manuscript instruction 'Via Marseilles'

It was the address that really caught my attention:

**Henry Scott Lauder**  
**HMS "Melville"**  
**Hong Kong**

"Via Marseilles" indicated how the writer wished the letter routed. This letter likely was sent by ship to Marseilles, but there was also an overland option that would have the letter sent across the English Channel to France and then travel by carriage to Marseilles, where it would be loaded on board a ship. I believe this cover travelled by ship from the south of England to Marseilles as there is no transit stamp for a French port that would be present had it gone by the overland route.

**Marseilles** is, today, the largest and busiest commercial sea port on the Mediterranean Sea. However this sea port, located in the south of France, was very important way back in the 1800's and earlier. Mail and other goods originating in Europe and destined for the 'Far East' would often be shipped to Marseilles, and transferred onto other larger ships to travel around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of the African Continent and on across the Indian Ocean. Goods from India, Burma, Straits Settlements, etc. would also be sent in the opposite direction, to Marseilles and placed in ships to go onto European ports. **France** made money both coming and going!

**HMS Melville** was one of the British Royal Navy's 74 gun 'ships of the line'. Having been built in India & launched in 1817, she saw service in many parts of the world and participated in the first **Opium War** between Britain and China. During those battles a number of her crew were killed.

In 1857 HMS Melville was converted into a **hospital ship** and berthed in Hong Kong. In 1873 she was sold to raise funds for the purchase of the existing land-based "**Seaman's Hospital**" which was later renamed **The Mount Shadwell Hospital**. Mount Shadwell flourished until the outbreak of WW II during which it was badly damaged. It was refurbished at the end of WWII and in 1991 the hospital was renamed the **Ruttonjee Hospital** and extended to 600 beds. It is still there today.

**Henry Scott Melville** was the Royal Navy's Assistant-Surgeon aboard the hospital ship. He was also an ardent researcher & published medical and scientific papers including early works on Diatoms. The study of Diatoms, eventually lead to the discovery of **Penicillin**.

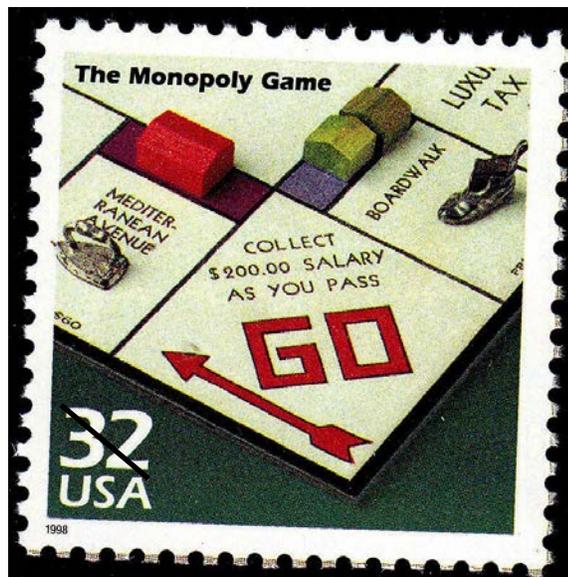
Just eight years after this letter was mailed, in 1869, the **Suez Canal** would open reducing time and distance for mail going to the 'Far East' and Australia, but Marseilles would still be a major transfer point for years to come.

It was just an old dirty cover but.....

# Monopoly and Stamp Collecting by Red Hill

One may wonder what the game of Monopoly has to do with stamp collecting. One connection maybe the inclusion of a Monopoly board on the 1930 Celebrate the Century sheet (Scott number 31850). Or, unknown to this author but probably issued somewhere sometime, on one of the thousands of souvenir sheets issued by one or more foreign countries. But this story has nothing to do with either of these. For those of you who do not know the history of Monopoly, it was created in its present form by an out of work plumber who lived in Atlantic City New Jersey in 1932-33 named Charles Darrow. Similar games in slightly different formats can be traced back to a 1903 game designed by Elizabeth J. Magie Phillips named *The Landlord's Game*. The original Monopoly board was hand-drawn on a four by four foot square piece of oil cloth using India ink. The playing pieces were hand craved wood objects and the playing cards index cards. The game came so popular with friends of Darrow that he could not keep up with the demand. He sold the publishing rights to Parker Brother in 1935, retaining the royalty rights.

These royalty rights provided a very good income and made Mr. Darrow a rich man. In the late 1940s he purchased a small farm in Ottsville, PA to which he moved his family. Over the next decade he purchased additional farms in the area which they combined into one larger farm. Several barns housing both beef cattle and dairy cows along with many acres of pasture land and crops soon followed. His son became the manager of these farms. The original farm house and about fifteen surrounding acres became a gentlemen's farm where Mr. Darrow and his wife, Esther resided. On these fifteen acres two green houses were erected where Mrs. Darrow raised her orchids and other tropical plants. The old barn was remodeled into horse stalls on the first floor and a heated entertainment room on the second. This second floor contained a half-court basketball court, a scuffle board court and an open area used for various entertainment items. The grounds contained many outdoor recreational activities, bushes, trees, shrubs and a large fruit and vegetable garden.



In order to maintain the grounds, green-houses and barn, he hired local high school students, usually two or three. They would work after school, Saturdays and school holidays during the school year. During the summer they would work full-time. I lived about a half-mile from this estate. During the summer between my seventh and eighth grades a position came open to work on the grounds. My mother was friends with Mrs. Darrow and was asked if I would like to work for them. I immediately said yes. For the next five years, until I graduated from high school, I would ride my bike to the farm and maintain the grounds.

This is where stamps entered the picture. My uncle, who had an extensive stamp collection, introduced me to stamp collecting during my eighth grade. I was immediately interested in the hobby and now had the means to pay for it. When I started to work earlier in that year, I made an agreement with my parents that half of what I earned from Mr. Darrow would be placed into a savings account to be used for either college or a car (only if I did not go to college). The other half was mine to use as I pleased. It turned out that a good portion of my half went into my ever growing United States and United Nations stamp collections.

Thus, the game of Monopoly indirectly financed a boy's interest in stamp collecting, allowing him to build a collection that he is still adding to today.