

# Vatican Notes

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Why a United States stamp in a Vatican stamp publication? The average judge at a philatelic exhibition seems to feel that when our members exhibit Vatican varieties and errors they are not exhibiting stamps but "printers' waste". Perhaps the above illustrated U.S. freak might aid you in convincing one of those die-hard judges.

Your editor has received many letters from VPS members who were thoroughly disgusted with being ruled out for an award when they placed varieties and errors on their album pages. This lack of philatelic knowledge on the part of the judges has seriously undermined this important segment of Vatican philately. We are trying very hard to bring together a collection of United States varieties of similar characteristics as Vatican. These will be illustrated in the Notes with suitable data. With the aid of this feature we hope to enable those of you who exhibit to obtain awards you are

Justly entitled to. If any member has a United States variety, freak, or error that will enable us to illustrate our point we will be very grateful if they will advise William Wonneberger, Jr. and arrangements will be made to have a highly skilled philatelic minded photographer make reproductions to enable us to illustrate it in the Notes.

The reason we have specified United States stamps for this venture is due to the fact that most exhibition judges when their ruling has been question state, "You don't find that kind of stuff in United States stamps". That was a quote from one letter received. How about it gang! Won't you help us uphold the reputation of Vatican philately?

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Unfortunately, we have not been able to maintain a definite mailing schedule for the Notes. This is due to the fact that all of the work involved is handled by one person in addition to his other society chores. We are making every effort to obtain help in mailing the Notes to you on schedule. Until this is completed we hope you will bear with tardy mailings of your publication, we assure you, this is only temporarily.

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Once again, a new issue release date has been push ahead! The reports from Rome every few days claim that the Pope Nicholas V commemorative issue has been posponed another few days. As we go to press the release date of this issue still hasn't been announced. For those of you who would like to know what this Pope looked like we suggest studying the Fra Angelico stamps. When Fra Angelico painted the detail used in the design he incorporated the features of Pope Nicholas V into the effigy of Pope Sixtus II who was supposed to be portrayed.

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We are forced to postpone the explanatory section of the Vatican catalog for another month. An official ruling is being obtained from the United States Secret Service on illustrations we hope to use. Though we are fairly certain the size in hand is permissible it is better to be safe than sorry, hence the delay.

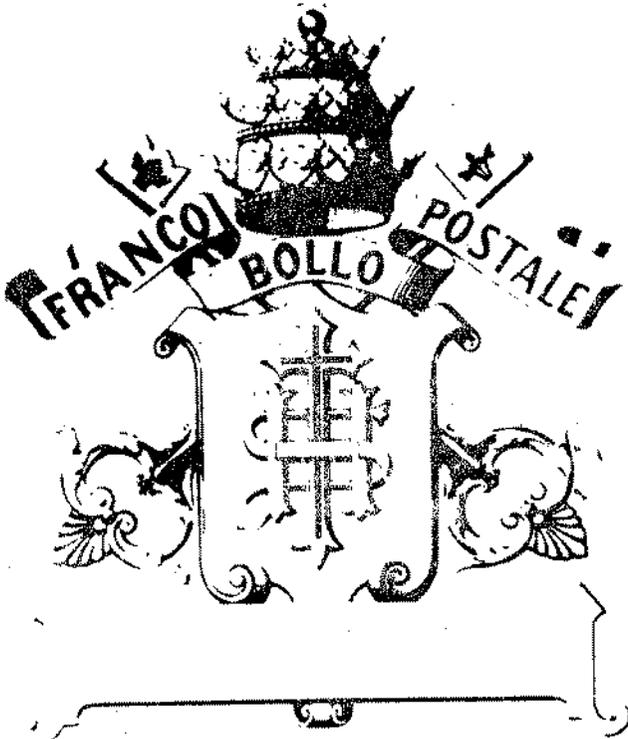
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Meet the Members will again be a regular feature of Vatican Notes. Now would be a good time to put a short biography together, about one page the size of the Notes and get that long overdue picture taken of yourself. Forward them to William Wonneberger, Jr. 67 Jefferson St. Stratford, Connecticut. Photos will be returned to you.

Will we be able to have you meet the rest of the members?

THE VATICAN POSTAL SERVICE  
by William Wonneberger, Jr.

Though Vatican City has the largest philatelic following of any non-English speaking country in the United States, very little has been published about its postal service. Through these words and accompanying illustrations it is hoped that you will have a small idea of the functions of the smallest postal administration in the world.



A proposed design for a new series of Roman States stamps that were not issued after it was occupied by Emmanuel's army.

private messenger. Incoming mail was delivered by two Italian postmen who had to be approved by the Vatican authorities and did not wear the customary postmen's uniforms. This arrangement continued until the signing of the postal treaty with Italy on July 29, 1929, which in turn was followed by the first issue of Vatican stamps three days later.

For the entire period of fifty-nine years that the Roman Question remained unanswered, we find that the Pontifical postal system endured.

On September 20, 1870, the troops of King Emanuel had breached the defenses of Rome and had conquered the last piece of territory of the once important Roman States. The issuance of Roman States stamps had come to an end, and to most people, so did the Papal postal service. In reality, it had ended in name only. Though the Pope had lost his domain of temporal possessions it was still imperative to maintain contact with the far flung dioceses of the Catholic Church. As a result, a Papal postal service continued to function with only distinctive postage stamps lacking.

Asserting that the temporal possessions of the Papacy had been illegally seized, Pope Pius IX refused to use the services of the Italian Postal Administration. All mail originating from the Vatican was dispatched by a



The above cover addressed to Pope Pius X, now St. Pius X, was sent by the Cardinal of Paris, France. It was delivered by one of the two postmen wearing civiliam attire mentioned on the previous page.

Upon the signing of the postal treaty, Vatican officials began immediately to meet the task of enlarging the existing postal service and to bring about a speedy and efficient system for handling the increased postal demands of the new nation. This task existed on a statewide basis only. The State of Vatican City had already become a member of the Universal Postal Union on June 1, 1929, and the international handling requirements were already planned.

Distinct postage stamps of a sovereign nation were a necessity. A "temporary" issue of fifteen values were hastily prepared and placed on sale to meet this demand. The first seven values were very similar to the stamps of the new nation's predecessor, the Roman States, while the remaining values depicted the reigning Pontiff, Pope Pius XI. This set was intended for use only long enough to prepare a more suitable and pictorial issue for the tiniest nation in the world.

Work was begun on a central post office building to meet the increasing demands of the postal service. Up to this time, the post office occupied space in another building in which to process the mails.



The above photograph depicts the central post office of Vatican City as it appeared when the picture was taken in late 1954. The post office is the ground floor only. The structure that appears to be a second story is a separate building and not connected with the post office at all. Directly over the center doorway may be seen the coat of arms of the reigning pontiff when the building was opened, Pope Pius XI.

Entering the post office pictured above, you enter the hall depicted at the top of the following page. Though it looks very much like a modern American bank, this is the room where the public may purchase stamps, mail letters and parcels, and conduct whatever other postal business they might have.

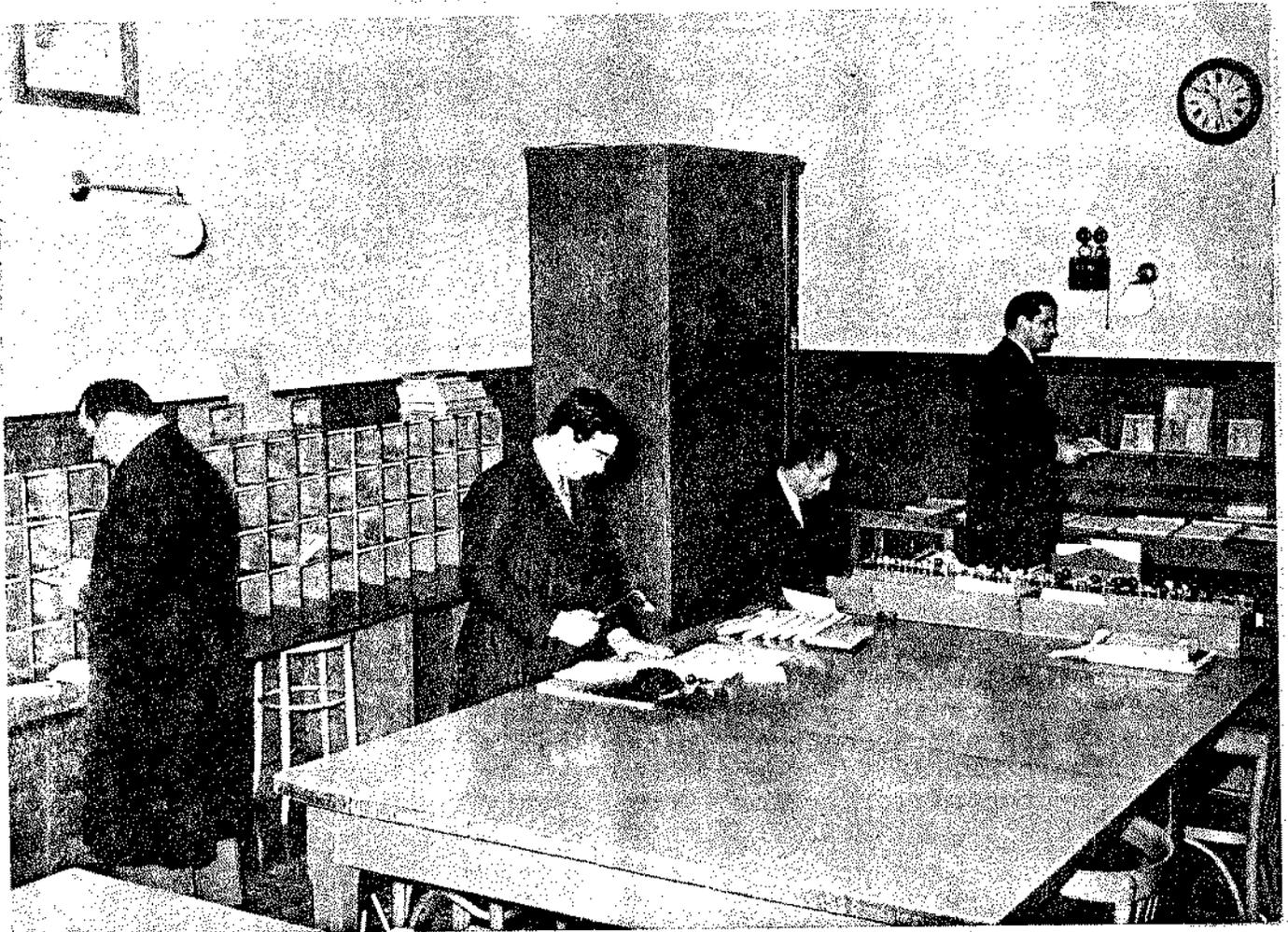
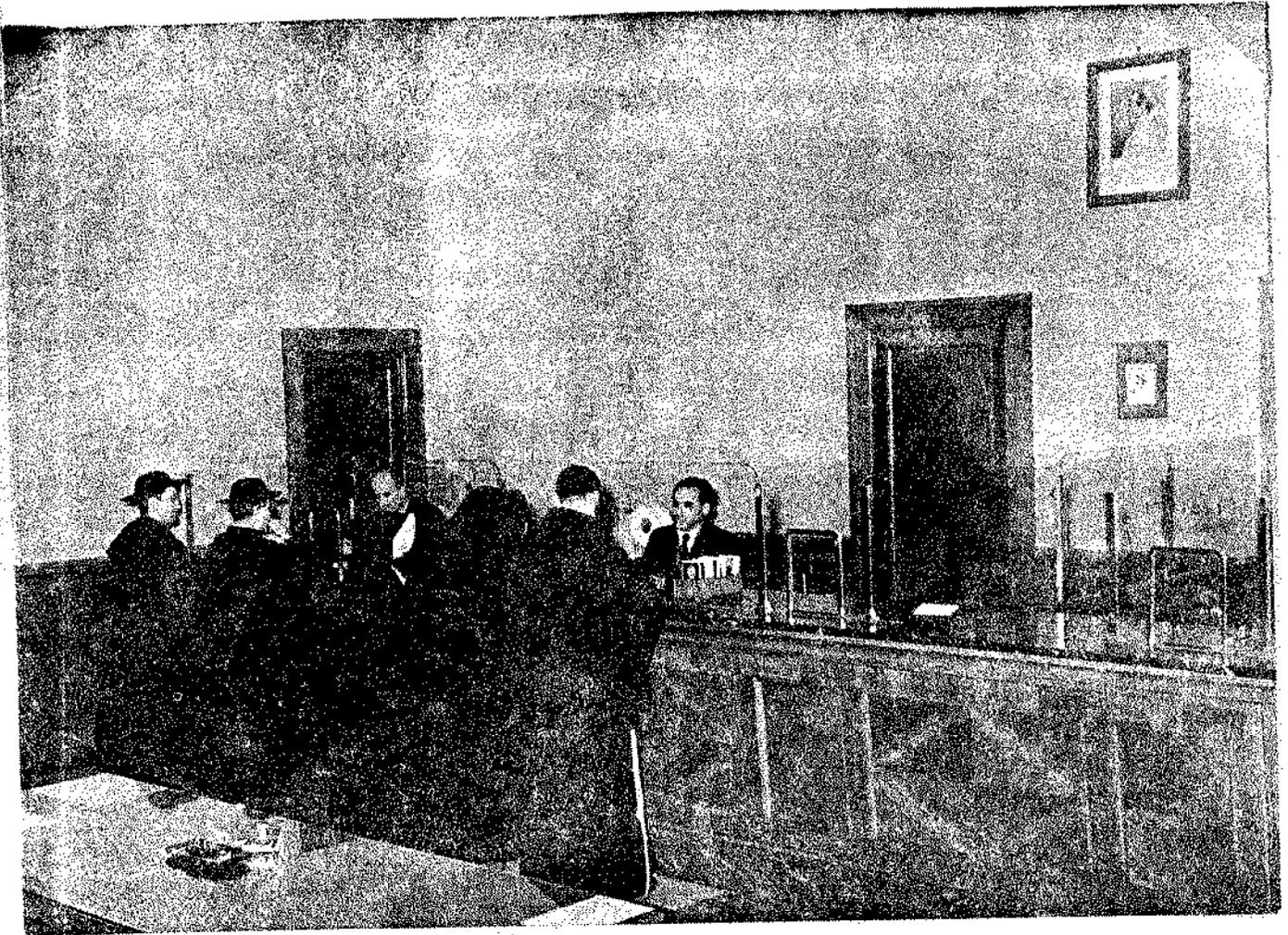
The work room of the post office is not opened to the public. Here we find the postal workers sorting incoming and outgoing mail. In the scene at the bottom of the following page we find the worker at the left sorting incoming mail for distribution to the various offices of the Vatican and its residents. The second worker from the left is hand cancelling outgoing mail. The worker to the far right is sorting outgoing registered mail. Note the many different rubber stamps on the work table needed to properly endorse and dispatch the mail to its proper destination.



On June 28, 1933, the Vatican formally opened its central post office building. The photograph above pictures the dignitaries of the diplomatic corps, as well as those of the Vatican government who participated in the inauguration ceremonies. The then reigning Pontiff, Pope Pius XI, is readily identified in the front row. Directly behind the Pope's right shoulder is the lay governor of the State of Vatican City, His Excellency, Marquis Camillo Serafini, who in addition to his other duties oversees the postal service.

The central post office is located in the Annona or village of the Vatican State. It opens at seven o'clock in the morning and receives its heaviest mail for distribution at seven-thirty and eleven-thirty. Thousands of tourists and pilgrims mail post cards and letters from the Vatican, but all of this "souvenir mail" as well as the philatelic mail accounts for only approximately one third of the total mail handled. The other two thirds of outgoing mail is to the far flung dioceses of the Catholic Church, diplomatic mail to the Papal diplomats in many countries of the world, answers to the requests of scholars and students from practically every country in the world, Vatican publications, and the personal mail of Vatican residents and workers.

Before we continue with the Vatican postal service suppose we pause for a moment and take a photographic tour of the central post office.





The above photograph shows the other end of the work room. At the far left of the picture workers handle the parcel post and bulk mailings originating from Vatican City. In the center of the picture, wearing a light colored suit, is the chief inspector (1954) of the Vatican post office. In the right foreground in front of the rows of postal endorsements a box containing a supply of the Vatican pictorial post cards issued in 1953 may be seen.

When the post office is closed on various feast days and holidays a special "Internal Service" section continues to function to insure a smooth and swift transmission of important mail to and from the Vatican. This Internal Service is for official government use only.

One of the unusual methods of distributing mail to residents of the Annona, the village that houses the Vatican workmen and their families, is the lowering of a basket from floors above street level. The mail is deposited by the postman in the basket and is then hoisted by the addressee. To insure speedy handling of the mails, a full time staff of fifteen is employed by the post office, approximately one postal worker for every seventy people in the Vatican.

As we leave this trim brick building which houses the central post office we glance back and find that in addition to being conveniently situated, it was carefully placed in the small space between the Papal Palace on its left, the Belevedere Palce on its right, the printing plant across the Via Della Tipografia on which the post office is located while rising in back of it is the central power station of Vatican City.

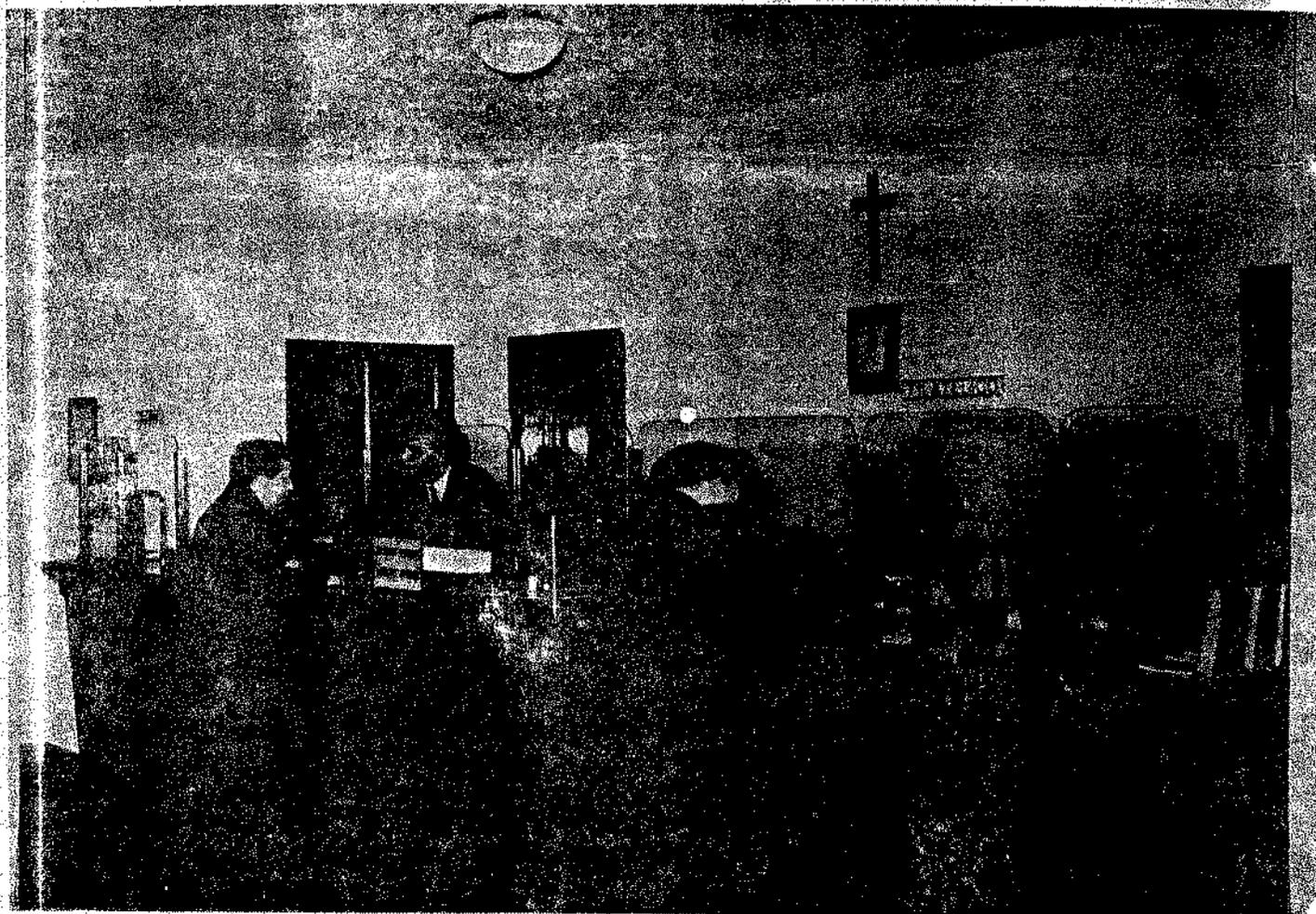
The short walk to one of the sub-stations of the Vatican post office brings to us a puzzling thought. We had heard erroneously that the Vatican issued stamps mainly to sell to collectors but here in its main office there was no "Philatelic Agency". We were sent to the sub-station to purchase the stamps we wanted for our collections. Nevertheless, the main office did prove that the Vatican does have collectors in mind. Though they own the latest cancelling machines made in Brooklyn, New York, they hand cancel most of the letters, usually at the corner only so as not to obliterate the design or theme.



This photograph pictures the sub-station of the Vatican post office system located to the right of the Colonnades surrounding St. Peter's square. This, along with the sub-station on the left side of the Colonnades was erected to primarily serve pilgrims and tourists who visited the Vatican. At each of these sub-stations, as well as the

third sub-station located in the Vatican Museums to serve the northern section of the Vatican State, and the fourth station located on the roof of St. Peter's Basilica, (this station is unique in that it is the only post office located on the roof of a church in the world), we find the interiors to be actual "minatures" as to layout for public use as the main post office in the village. In addition to "Guichets" or windows to serve the public in postal matters, each of these sub-stations have a philatelic window where stamps may be purchased for philatelic purposes. Language is no barrier to requesting the different stamps we need as multi-lingual clerks will fill our order in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, or Swedish.

Even though the State of Vatican City is the smallest sovereign nation in the world, (108.7 acres or approximately one sixth of a square mile), it maintains five different post offices where the needs of residents and tourists alike. Even airmail service is provided. Though the Vatican lacks an airfield it can call its own letters and parcels can be mailed by this speedy service to any country in the world. Mail destined for air delivery is assembled at the Vatican post office and rushed to the Ciampino Airfield on the Via Appia and flown to its destination.



Interior of the sub-station pictured on the previous page. The window to the right is for philatelist while that on the left serves the public.



