

# WATERMARKS AND COUNTERMARKS OF THE AQ LETTERSHEETS OF THE REPUBLIC OF VENICE, 1608 - 1797

**Purpose.** The primary purpose of this traditional exhibit is to make the first showing ever of the watermarks and countermarks in the paper used in the AQ lettersheets that were used extensively in the Republic of Venice from 1608 to 1797. The secondary purpose is to show the types of the AQ Lettersheets that have watermarks or countermarks. Fortunately, all interesting and important types and varieties do.

**Significance.** AQ Lettersheets are the earliest postal stationery. The youngest is 43 years earlier than the Mulready lettersheet. The oldest, from 1608, is 232 years earlier.

**Watermarks and Countermarks.** As explained much more fully on p. 6, the primary differences between watermarks and countermarks in 17th- and 18th-century Italian paper are:

- Watermarks** are:

  - Always in center of a half sheet
  - Larger, more elaborate images
  - Often image of object or animal
- Countermarks** are:

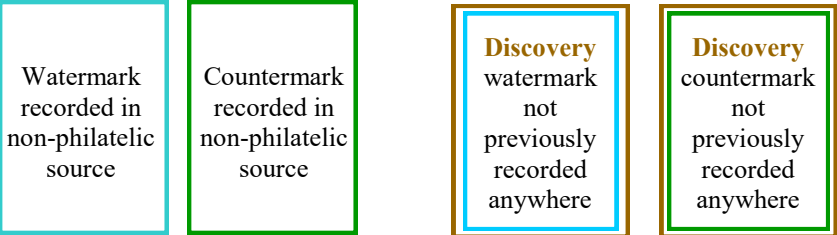
  - Always in corner of other half sheet
  - Smaller, simpler images
  - Usually two letters and a trefoil

**Original research on the watermarks and countermarks.** This exhibit presents groundbreaking original research: the first philatelic showing of, and the first photographs of:

- 33 watermarks or countermarks previously identified only to published non-philatelic sources and by line drawings
- 68 watermarks or countermarks *never* previously seen

**Thus, each of the 33 + 68 = 101 watermarks or countermarks is a discovery new to philately.** A new comprehensive numbering system unites all previous identification systems.

## Identification of discovery watermarks and countermarks.



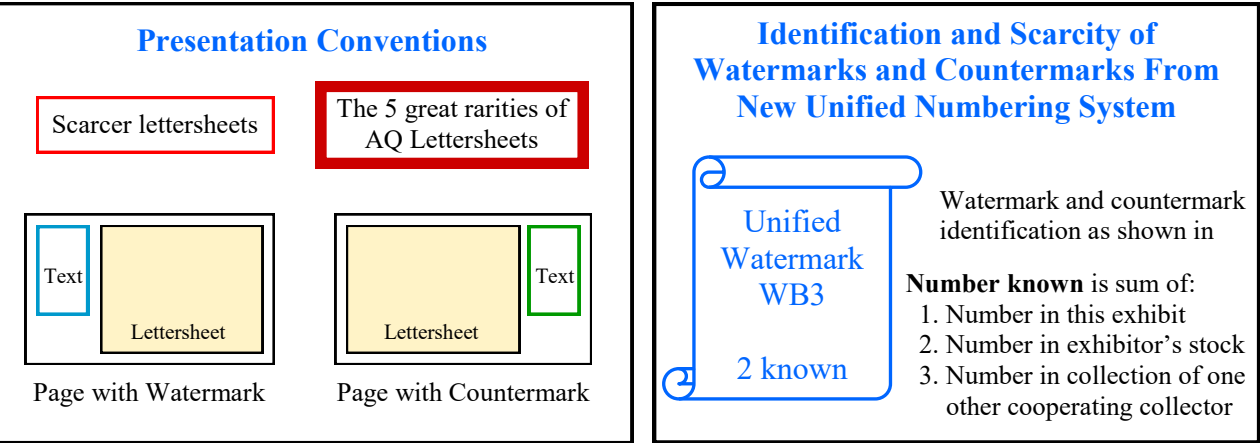
All watermarks appear in a blue box, countermarks in a green box. The 68 discoveries appear in an additional brown frame.



**The AQ Lettersheets.** From 1608 to 1709 the Republic of Venice auctioned the franchise to sell its AQ Lettersheets to the highest bidder, usually for 2-year terms. Until 1709 the Republic printed the name of the successful bidder onto the lettersheets. When the auction did not yield a satisfactory bid, and continuously from 1710 to 1797, the Republic sold the lettersheets itself directly to the public, printing the period of validity on each lettersheet. The printed names of the franchisees and the stated periods of validity are the primary features that distinguish the 88 types of AQ Lettersheets. Most, but not all, have watermarks or countermarks.

## Showing of AQ Lettersheets:

- Includes *all* important types, including the 5 great rarities of AQ lettersheets,
- To the knowledge of the exhibitor, who has collected these lettersheets since 2001, the most comprehensive showing of the types anywhere ever
- Includes 61 of the 88 types, shown chronologically by dal Gian catalogue type (except 8 types appear twice), each with a different watermark or countermark
- Omits only those types that are common, whose watermark or countermark is a duplicate of another type, or has no visible watermark or countermark
- First photograph ever of a watermark or countermark for each type



## Plan of Exhibit

Introduction	Frame	Page
1. The Venetian postal system	1	2
2. AQ lettersheets in the Venetian postal system	1	3
3. How to read an AQ lettersheet	1	4
4. The earliest dated postal stationery	1	5
5. Watermarks and Countermarks on AQ lettersheets	1	6
6. A new Unified Numbering System for Watermarks and Countermarks	1	7
7. Discovery: the only AQ Lettersheet with both Watermark and Countermark	1	8
<b>Watermarks</b> (shown chronologically, by type of lettersheet by dal Gian catalogue)		
A. Crossbow (7 types)		
B. Paschal Lamb (7 types)		
C. Scrollwork (4 types)		
D. Birds (4 types)		
E. Letters (4 types)		
F. Single subjects (14 types)		
<i>Matrix of 31 marks on p. 7</i>		
<b>Countermarks</b> (shown chronologically, by type of lettersheet by dal Gian catalogue)		
A. Letters with Trefoil (44 types)		
B. Letters without Trefoil (15 types)		
C. Lanterns (2 types)		
<i>Matrix of 71 marks on p. 7</i>		
Epilogue	10	7

## Why does the quality of the photographs vary?

1. The thickness and quality of the paper used over 200 years from dozens of sources varies.
2. Contrast and brightness have been manipulated in the photographs to maximize visibility.
3. Most watermarks and countermarks are faint.