

Association

French Lines

Shipping Lines: History and Heritage



French Lines

CHIQUO MANNA 50000

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President's Message

The French Lines Association was created in 1995 and is dedicated to the conservation and promotion of French shipping company heritage. The Association is a recognised public interest institution with locations in commercial ports that have marked the companies' history such as Le Havre, Marseille, Dunkirk, Bordeaux and Paris.



In Le Havre, we have an area spanning almost 2,500 m² dedicated to the historical preservation of the *Compagnie Générale Maritime* heritage, successor of the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* and the *Messageries Maritimes*, as well as the *Société Nationale Corse Méditerranée*.

Over the years, our work has been acknowledged by members of the Merchant Navy. Some have become partners of French Lines, such as *Louis-Dreyfus*, *Marseille Fret*, *STIM d'Orbigny*, *La Méridionale de Navigation*, *la Compagnie Nationale de Navigation* and *Armateurs de France*.

French Lines also house a number of archives including archives for companies such as *Delmas*, *Chargeurs Réunis* and *Le Borgne*.

Our objective is to raise awareness of the Merchant Navy's vital role in politics, technology, economics and society throughout history, as well as its influence on the evolution of taste and art.

This heritage is intrinsic to the French Lines Association. However, pieces held in large numbers are sold to generate funds for the development and preservation of collections. Our reserves house remarkable collections of paper archives, photographs and archived film footage, along with items such as original posters, paintings and graphic works, furniture and artistic pieces and a significant collection of models and various pieces of tableware.

Thanks to our comprehensive collection, we have preserved the memory of French shipping companies since 1850, allowing us to paint a complete picture by cross-referencing and corroborating sources. The task of gathering oral histories adds a cultural and individual element that is an essential addition to our heritage material.

French Lines has partnered with many communities and public institutions. We have distributed collections, exhibitions and works both in France and abroad (London, Valencia, Brussels, Genoa etc.) and contributed to the development of numerous publications and audiovisual creations.

Of course, we need you and your support to ensure that the heritage of the Merchant Navy lives on. Join us!

Eric Giniely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Giniely".





French Lines: Heritage and Objectives

From ship plans and photographic albums of administrative records, to models and silverware, French Lines retains an exceptional heritage - both for its variety and unique accounts of the French Merchant Navy's development since the mid-nineteenth century. Certain items considered among the most remarkable and of public interest in terms of maritime history have been classed as historical monuments since 1998.

As well as their preservation and development, the constant enrichment of collections is an integral part of the Association's objectives. This is carried out on a continuous basis through donations from individuals and businesses, as well as acquisitions.

The French Lines Association has organised and carried out various exhibitions since its foundation. There are always plans for other original and ambitious projects that will showcase the diversity of its rich collection.

Collections

Furniture pieces

The French Lines Association possesses hundreds of furniture pieces, from cast-iron swivel chairs of "1900 liners", to the avant-garde furniture of *France III* (1962), as well as woodwork from *France II* (1912) and the famous *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* red deck chairs. Pedestal tables, chairs, desks, beds, wardrobes and libraries are sometimes used for reconstructions. This is possible thanks to countless photographic records retained in our archives.



Tableware

Companies sought to offer constantly renewed luxury on board liners, making them genuine floating palaces. This is evident from our collection of silverware, crystal glassware, pottery and porcelain, along with thousands of printed menus that give us an insight into cruises and crossings, as well as breakfasts and gala dinners - over a century of gastronomy!



Silverware

Thousands of pieces of silverware, created by great silversmith houses such as *Puiforcat*, *Christofle* and *Ercuis*, adorned the tables of French liners. We have kept and restored cutlery and cast parts to make complete sets to show the public the radiance of life on board.

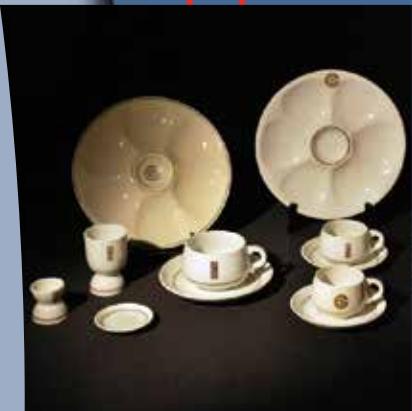
Plates

Tableware had a special importance on board larger vessels, which were considered ambassadors of French service. What could be more appealing than a sumptuously set table laden with the most delicious national dishes? Fine porcelain decorated with various company monograms, delicate and often short-lived, came from the best French manufacturers (*Haviland* and *Gérard Dufraisseix & Abbot* in Limoges, *Digoin Sarreguemines*) and stood alongside elegant crystal from houses such as *Daum*, *Lalique* and *Saint-Louis*.

Textile Collection

Waiters, ships' bell boys, engineering officers, porters and sailors have all donned these work clothes. Each profession was distinguished by a uniform. Facings and stripes may have denoted different ranks, but all were equally proud to serve companies that flew the national flag across the world's seas. The items of clothing on display at Le Havre are a touching testimony to the lives of sailors on board.

French Lines also possesses a large number of textile items such as scarves, ties, flags and rugs. The exceptional collection of tapestries that once decorated the *France III* (1962) contain the famous signatures of Jean Picart Le Doux, Lucien Coutaud and Robert Wogenscky.



Posters

The greatest illustrators and poster designers used their talent to capture the power of the liners and the allure of voyages to faraway destinations since the late nineteenth century.

The creativity of these artists was largely encouraged by orders from shipping companies anxious to increase their growing clientèle. French Lines has an exceptional collection of over 500 original posters that still bring us on a voyage of discovery. Indeed we are transported across continents and back in time as we gaze at works signed by Cassandre, Albert Sébille, Sandy Hook and Albert Brenet.



Promotional Items

A century of creation is unfolded for those who stop to contemplate the countless merchandise and advertising items produced by these shipping companies.

A seemingly endless inventory of everyday items, from the indispensable to the superfluous, the common to the refined, are kept by the French Lines Association. Such items include snow globes, pins, ashtrays, inkwells, scarves, games, ribbons and stamps.



Medals, Tokens and Memorabilia

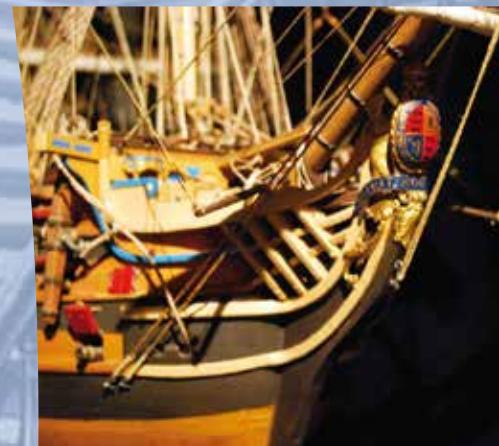
It is a Merchant Navy tradition to celebrate a significant event with a commemorative medal.

Guests are given a medal to celebrate the launch of a ship as a souvenir of that day. A President's memory is commemorated in the same way. As well as men, a vessel may be decorated for acts of war and rescue operations. The Association also keeps meeting tokens given to shipping company shareholders, as well as medals awarded to employees for fair and loyal service and trophies won in sporting competitions.



Models

Models have always had a special meaning for people who have sailed across oceans or accompanied vessels from their construction until their demise. Whether crossing oceans by sail, paddle, coal or oil; cargo ships, liners and specialised vessels represent an important chapter in technical development. French Lines houses the largest collection of French Merchant Navy models from 1850 to 1996, including the original model of *Normandie* that was presented at the International Art and Technology Exhibition in 1937, or the series of 100 miniatures of French Line's entire fleet requested by Maurice Basile to celebrate the company's centenary in 1955.



Artwork

At one time ships were decorated with original artwork. A prime example of this is *France II* (1912), which was adorned with eighteenth century paintings, earning the ship the nickname "Versailles of the Atlantic". Shipping offices and port agencies possessed portraits of ships and fine prints, calling on the help of great painters such as Mathurin Méheut, Henri Rousseau, Albert Sébille and Marin-Marie. We still possess a large number of paintings, gouaches, watercolours, drawings and prints that illustrate the history of twentieth century art.



Films and Photographs

The French Lines Association has retained most of the communication footage (reports, documentaries, fiction) commissioned by the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*, *Messageries Maritimes* and the *Compagnie Générale Maritime*. These films are a unique source of animated images involving the Merchant Navy, liners, sea journeys and various destinations.

The entire film collection is inventoried. The preservation of images and films are guaranteed and by saving copies on professional media. There are 50 titles in the collection today that exist in Betacam SP (analogue) format. The original reels are deposited at the *Pôle Image Haute-Normandie* and the National Centre for Cinematography (French Film Archives).



French Lines also has an exceptional collection of photographs that are mostly taken from the archives of the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* and the *Messageries Maritimes*. It is currently one of the most significant photographic collections dedicated to the French Merchant Navy.

The photographs come in different forms including glass plates, photo paper, negatives, ektachromes and slides. Photographs are scanned in high definition in order to preserve images on fragile media. You can see a selection of these photographs on the Association's website (www.frenchlines.com).



Photographic and film collections are available for personal and professional use by request to the French Lines Multimedia Service (multimedia@frenchlines.com) who distribute images from their archives. French Lines release archived images through the press, publishers and audiovisual documentaries and for the sale of photographic reproductions.



Some figures:

- 80,000 photos (20,000 negatives) covering 160 years of history
- Over 10,000 digitisations carried out
- 300 films
- Oldest film: 1913
- Most recent film: 1990

Archives

The archives of the French Lines Association retrace the economic, social, technical, commercial and artistic aspects of French shipping lines over a century and a half. These archives (about 6 linear kilometres) are spread over two Association conservation sites - the headquarters in Le Havre and the delegation in Marseille.

French Lines signed an agreement with the *Direction des Archives de France* in 1996. As such, all its work is conducted under the scientific and technical control of the Working World Archive Centre (*Centre des Archives du Monde du Travail*) in Roubaix.

Archives in Le Havre

The main archives kept in Le Havre belong to the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* and the *Messageries Maritimes*, as well as the company born from their merger in 1976, the *Compagnie Générale Maritime*. Other collections, such as those from the *Delmas*, *Chargeurs Réunis* and *Le Borgne* companies have helped expand the collections.

The inventory of classified archives has been entered into a database. The archives are now accessible to the public thanks to this classification. Each year we welcome many researchers to our Documentation Centre in Le Havre to carry out work for academic publications or for personal research. As well as on-site consultation, the Documentation Centre also responds to requests that are sent by mail or Internet.

Tens of thousands of archived documents are listed and available on our website (www.frenchlines.com). As part of the national plan for the digitisation of cultural heritage, scanned documents are directly accessible to the public via this website. Such documents include passenger lists, agency reports and photographs of ports from around the world.

Apart from the completion of this important source of information, the Association also houses:

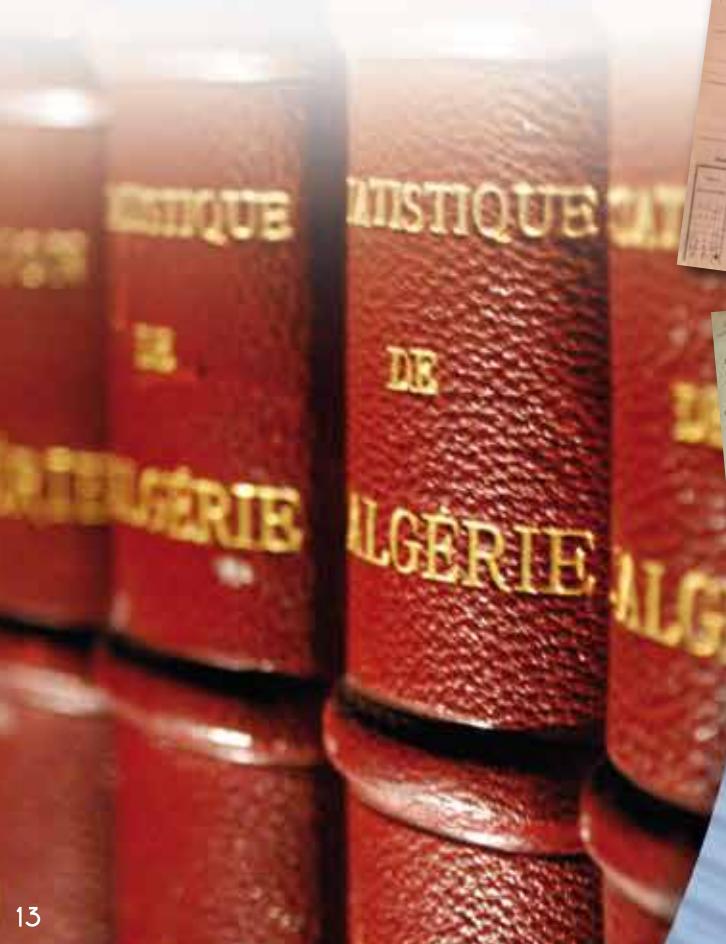
- over 26,000 maritime-related works spanning a period of two centuries and covering a wide range of topics,
- Several thousand old and contemporary periodicals, including shipping newspapers and specialised journals,
- Various historical records that consist of newspaper clippings on topics regarding ports, vessels, shipping lines, international conflicts, artists, etc.

Archives in Marseille

The SNCM is an essential source for preserving memories on account of its history and years of service. The French Lines Association ensures that this archived heritage, some of which dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, is sorted and stored appropriately.

800 linear metres of archives have been sorted, classified and catalogued since 2000. They are available to researchers and may be used or lent for exhibitions concerning maritime history.

As well as maintaining a cultural partnership, the French Lines Association has signed a technical assistance agreement with SNCM to manage its current records. This agreement stipulates that an archivist shall manage the flow, storage, communication and final removal of documents produced by the company. SNCM permanently holds about 5,000 to 6,000 linear metres of archives that are managed on its behalf by the Association.



Sound Archives

French Lines has had a well-established sound and audiovisual heritage since its initiation. This original collection includes radio recordings, important speeches like that of General de Gaulle at the launch of *France III* (1962) and advertising materials. The collection has been regularly updated with new sound archives produced by the Association. There have also been individual donations or donations from depots like the *Comité Central des Armateurs de France*, consisting of hundreds of recordings.

We try to handle all types of audio recordings on all media such as vinyl, magnetic tapes, audio cassettes, MiniDiscs and now digital files. The Association also has recorded English classes that French Line produced for its employees, as well as ocean sounds, songs and interviews.

The sound archives have been regularly expanded since the beginning of the 2000s with oral history interviews. This aim is firmly rooted in the Association's objective, allowing the conservation of important intangible heritage representing collective maritime history. It involves the collection of experiences and everyday life of those connected with the Merchant Navy (sailors, office workers, passengers, spouses, children and privileged witnesses).

The sound archives perfectly complement our other document collections and are an integral part of our development projects. The oral recordings were part of several exhibitions, including "Mum, I'm a Sailor", which was dedicated to the careers of the Merchant Navy. Documents are available to the public and can be accessed on our premises. A number of interviews are also available online on the Association's website (www.frenchlines.com).



Some figures:

- Over 100 hours of interviews
- More than 300 audio cassettes
- Dozens of vinyl and magnetic tapes
- Hundreds of MiniDiscs





A Brief History History

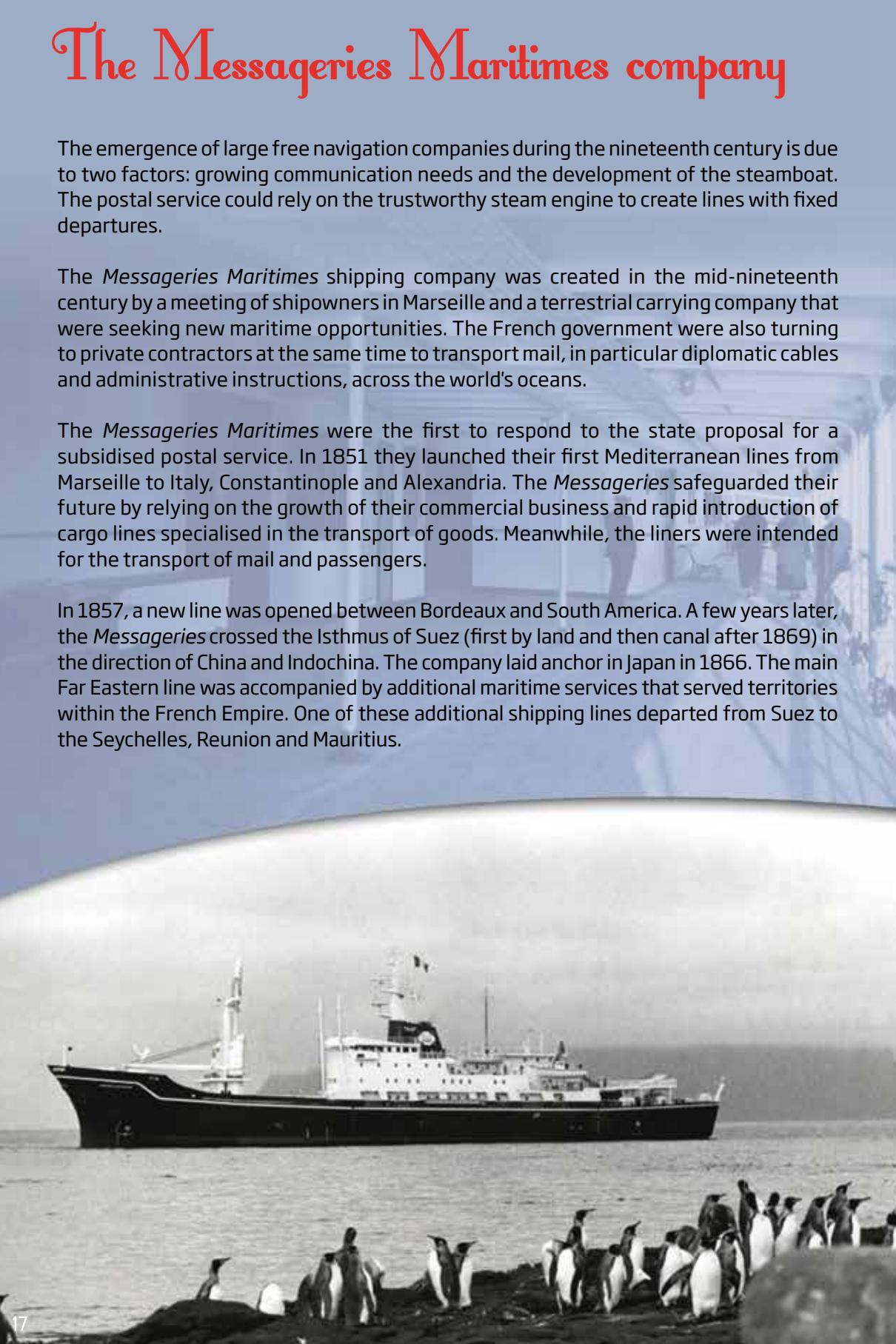
The Messageries Maritimes company

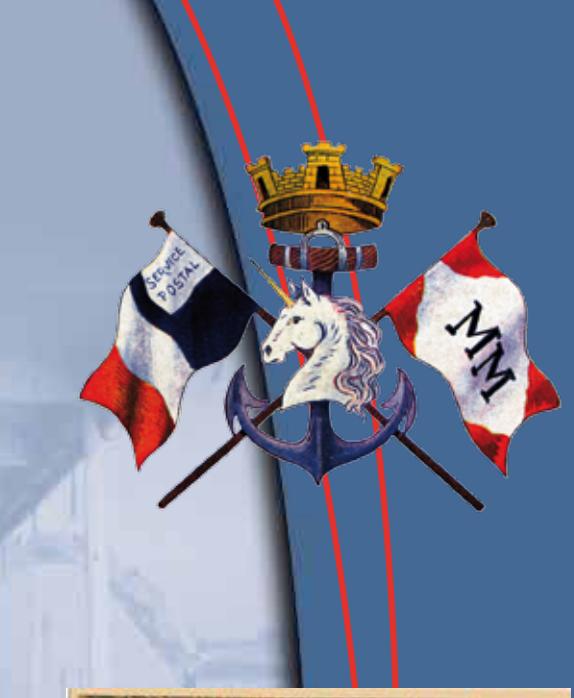
The emergence of large free navigation companies during the nineteenth century is due to two factors: growing communication needs and the development of the steamboat. The postal service could rely on the trustworthy steam engine to create lines with fixed departures.

The *Messageries Maritimes* shipping company was created in the mid-nineteenth century by a meeting of shipowners in Marseille and a terrestrial carrying company that were seeking new maritime opportunities. The French government were also turning to private contractors at the same time to transport mail, in particular diplomatic cables and administrative instructions, across the world's oceans.

The *Messageries Maritimes* were the first to respond to the state proposal for a subsidised postal service. In 1851 they launched their first Mediterranean lines from Marseille to Italy, Constantinople and Alexandria. The *Messageries* safeguarded their future by relying on the growth of their commercial business and rapid introduction of cargo lines specialised in the transport of goods. Meanwhile, the liners were intended for the transport of mail and passengers.

In 1857, a new line was opened between Bordeaux and South America. A few years later, the *Messageries* crossed the Isthmus of Suez (first by land and then canal after 1869) in the direction of China and Indochina. The company laid anchor in Japan in 1866. The main Far Eastern line was accompanied by additional maritime services that served territories within the French Empire. One of these additional shipping lines departed from Suez to the Seychelles, Reunion and Mauritius.





The *Messageries Maritimes* signed a new agreement with the State in 1881 for the creation of a new postal service to Australia and New Caledonia. In light of France's growing presence in Africa, the company adapted its lines and established ports of call on the East African coast, the Comoros and Madagascar. The geographical reach of the *Messageries Maritimes* was far and wide, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific remaining its preferred waters.

The *Messageries* also developed their commercial lines. As regular as the "postal" lines, the commercial lines were more flexible regarding stops, which allowed the company to take on goods. At the end of the nineteenth century, the company's commercial lines left from Dunkirk, Le Havre and Marseille to the Black Sea, Russia, South America and the Far East.



The *Messageries Maritimes* became synonymous with long journeys to far-flung destinations. Vessels under the *Licorne* flag made voyages around the world a reality and were the embodiment of dreams of the Orient. Painters and poster designer competed to create company advertisements that truly invited people to travel. Liners such as *Aramis*, *Félix Roussel*, or *Mariette Pacha* further explored, even in their accommodation, these exotic yearnings and changing scenery.



A company founded during colonial expansion, the *Messageries Maritimes* fell into decline after the end of the French Empire and the revolution in air transport. Despite developing cruises for tourists and commissioning the *Pasteur* in 1966, the liner service was slowly phased out. The *Messageries Maritimes* merged with the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* in 1976 to form the *Compagnie Générale Maritime*.

André Lebon

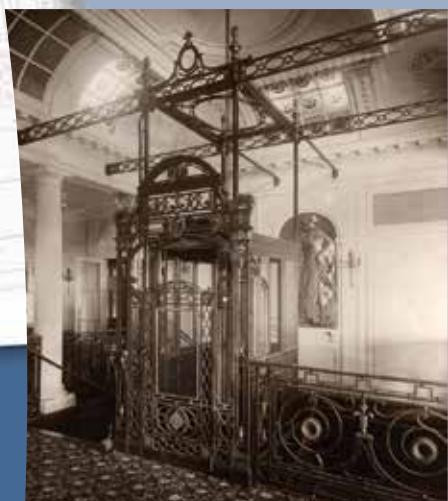
Messageries Maritimes, 1915 - 1952

The *André Lebon* liner was built for the Far East line and was the twin of *Paul Lecat*. It was named after former Minister of Commerce and the Colonies and President of the *Messageries Maritimes* from 1902 to 1914. Commissioned in November 1915, the vessel was requisitioned on 24th August 1916 and converted into a hospital ship. The ship returned to the Far East Line in 1918 after being assigned to the medical service of the *Armée d'Orient* (Army of the Orient) during the First World War.

The young Deng Xiaoping, future Chinese communist leader and successor of Mao Zedong, boarded the ship for France on 27th August 1920, along with 80 students from the Work-Study movement.

The *André Lebon* was in Japan during an earthquake on 1st September 1923 that devastated Tokyo and Yokohama. The ship welcomed 1,500 refugees and assisted the French Ambassador Paul Claudel. The heroic conduct of the ship was widely recognised. On return to Marseille on 25th October 1923, all were welcomed by the company's General Director, Georges Philippart, who boarded the ship. Commander Cousin and chief engineer Sentout were respectively made *Officier* and *Chevalier* of the *Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur*.

The *André Lebon* was sunk in shallow water after an Allied air raid in 1944. After being re-floated, repaired and modified in La Seyne, the ship departed for Indochina in October 1945. The liner was withdrawn from service on 12th December 1952, bringing an end to a long and distinguished career.



Key Figures

Passengers:200 in 1st class
184 in 2nd class
109 in 3rd class
564 in 4th class

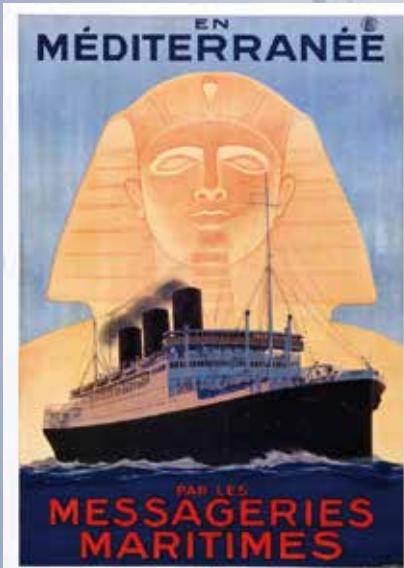
Length:.....161.30 metres

Width:.....18.80 metres

Speed:.....17 knots

Champollion

Messageries Maritimes, 1925 - 1952



The *Champollion* was commissioned alongside its sister *Mariette Pacha* by the *Messageries Maritimes* contract services to the *Société Provençale de Constructions Navales* (La Ciotat shipyard). Assigned to the express Egypt-Syria line, the *Champollion* was launched on 16th March 1924 in the presence of Luynes Auteroche, great-nephew of *Champollion*. Georges Philippar wanted the ship's layout to embody the spirit of the destination country. As such, the reception areas were exotically decorated. The *Champollion* and *Mariette Pacha* combined the cabins' "Art Deco" interior with lounges inspired by ancient Egypt - a popular trend since the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. With the *Champollion*, the *Messageries Maritimes* had created a true gem of Egyptian-inspired naval design.

Following its maiden voyage in August 1925, the ship first departed Marseille for Alexandria and Beirut on 14th September 1925. The ship was withdrawn from service in 1933 to undergo significant modifications in La Ciotat shipyard. Second class capacity was significantly increased from 133 to 253 passengers. Requisitioned in 1939 and used as a troopship, the vessel was damaged twice during the Second World War. The ship once again transported troops to destinations in Indochina, Madagascar and North Africa upon return to the *Messageries Maritimes* contract services in 1946. The *Champollion* returned to the Marseille-Alexandria-Beirut line in 1951. The ship ran aground off the coast of Beirut in 1952, killing 15 of the 400 passengers and crew after getting caught in oil escaping from a broken hull. The wreck was then sold for scrap.



Key Figures

Passengers:
.....188 in 1st class
.....133 in 2nd class
.....128 in 3rd class
.....500 in 4th class

Length:.....156.70 metres

Width:.....19.20 metres

Speed:.....16 knots

The Compagnie Générale Transatlantique

Postal services were more difficult to set up in the Atlantic than in the Mediterranean. The British (Cunard Line, White Star Line) were the first to finally embark on this new venture in 1840. The French State wished to develop a credible free navigation company for a direct line of steamships between France and New York, which was the gateway to the American market.

Railway financiers quickly put themselves forward as candidates for maritime postal lines. Such candidates included the Pereire brothers, Emile and Isaac. They founded the *Compagnie Générale Maritime* in 1855. This would later become the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*. To build a fleet, they purchased a cod-fishing shipyard in Normandy and began to transport goods from Le Havre and Bordeaux to the Caribbean and South America.

Following lengthy negotiation with the State, the Pereire brothers obtained a concession and subsidy for the service to New York, as well as State financing for their fleet. The first ships (*Washington*, *Lafayette*, *Europe*) were built in Scotland. However, the company were committed to building in France, began to carry out their own projects in Penhoët, near Saint-Nazaire, in 1861.

The company also changed its name to *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* in the same year and, in 1862, *La Louisiane* took to the sea for its first voyage to the West Indies and Mexico. The Le Havre-New York regular line was launched on 15th June 1864 by the postal steamer *Washington*. The first decades of transatlantic lines were secure due to the movement of emigrants. Between the late nineteenth century and 1920s nearly 72 million Europeans left the Old Continent for the New World, taking liners, mixed cargo ships or specialised vessels known as "single class" ships.





Despite its turbulent history, the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* developed and found its footing, becoming a public company in 1879. By the end of the nineteenth century the fleet of province liners (*La Normandie*, *La Champagne*, *La Bourgogne*, *La Lorraine*) followed by *La Savoie* in 1901 had already formed the French Line's brand image

- speed, comfort, luxurious

surroundings and fine dining. French Line focussed on service and hospitality to attract a wealthy clientèle and ward off foreign competition. The new twentieth century units such as *France* in 1912, *Paris* in 1921 and *Île-de-France* in 1927 were designed and furnished to ensure the well-being of passengers and to highlight French expertise.

French Line diversified its activities. Aside from freight transport, which provided a portion of its resources, the company migrated to Mediterranean lines in 1890 and developed cruises and voyages to North Africa.

Shaken by the global financial crisis of 1930, French Line began work on a new transatlantic *chef-d'œuvre* in luxury and technology. The *Normandie* was commissioned in 1935 and garnered worldwide admiration. Its construction amassed huge debt and the French State subsequently took control of the company.

The *France* liner, launched in 1962, enjoyed several good years of passenger transport. However, there was strong competition from new aircraft that could cross the Atlantic in 8 hours. The company turned its focus to tourism and holidaymakers. However, despite prestigious cruises (The Imperial Cruise in 1969 and World Cruises in 1972 and 1974) the State decided to no longer subsidise the line. The vessel was withdrawn from service in 1974.

The *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* concentrated on cargo transport thereafter. The company merged with the *Messageries Maritimes* in 1976 to form the *Compagnie Générale Maritime*.

Normandie

Compagnie Générale Transatlantique,
1935-1942

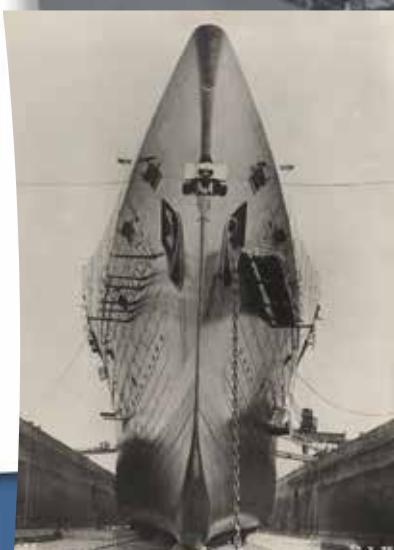
Does the greatest vessel of all require any introduction? The *Normandie* was and will remain the largest and most luxurious ship ever built for the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*. Launched in 1935, the *Normandie* was the largest vessel in the world until the completion of the *Queen Elizabeth* (Cunard) in 1940.

Of course, the ship's career was unfortunately cut short by World War II. However, it was considered the archetype of transatlantic liners due to its technical characteristics, style and luxurious accommodation, not to mention its records for speed. The *Normandie* entered service on the Le Havre-New York line on 29th May 1935. It won the Blue Riband on its maiden voyage in both directions, making it the fastest liner in the world at the time.

The *Normandie* left Le Havre for the last time on 24th August 1939 and docked at Pier 88 on the France-New York line on 28th August, following its 139th regular crossing. The ship was laid up and later requisitioned by the United States who renamed it the *USS Lafayette*.

A fire broke out on board while the liner was being converted into a troopship in February 1942. Afraid that the fire would spread to the port, the New York Fire Department doused the ship's superstructure with water. The liner had to be cut to the height of the promenade deck in order to be released and re-floated. The wreck was recovered after more than twenty months' effort. Several reconstruction projects were proposed, but were ruled out due to cost. What remained of the *Normandie* was scrapped in 1946.

The *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* was awarded the German liner *Europa* as compensation. This vessel was converted and returned to service in 1950 under the name *Liberté*.



Key figures

Length:	313.75 metres
Width:	36.4 metres
Engine power:	160000 horsepower
Service speed:	29-30 knots

France

Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, 1962 - 1974

The new French Line flagship was launched in Saint-Nazaire on 11th May 1960, in the presence of its godmother Yvonne de Gaulle. It first departure for New York took place on 3rd February 1962. *France* was the longest liner in the world at the time. However, the vessel entered service as the market share for transatlantic liners was falling year after year in favour of new aircraft technology. However, *France* enjoyed the same success as *Normandie* in its heyday.

Operating mainly from Le Havre, Southampton and New York, *France* undertook several cruises each year. It embarked on two world cruises in 1972 and 1974 - the only world cruises organised by the company.

The French government decided to no longer fund the ship's operation in the spring of 1974. Its fate decided, *France* was docked in Le Havre and laid up in December, remaining in limbo at the "Quai de l'oubli". *France* crossed the Atlantic 377 times, transporting nearly 600,000 passengers during its time at French Line.



France was the last transatlantic liner built on behalf of the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* and closed the Le Havre - New York line in September 1974, which had been in operation for 110 years. It was the third company vessel to bear this name after *France I* in 1865 and the *France II* in 1912.

The vessel was sold to a Norwegian shipping company and rechristened *Norway* in 1979. Completely transformed, the liner became the largest cruise ship in the world and began a new career in the Caribbean. It was towed to Bremerhaven (Germany) in 2003 where it was laid up until the end of July. Many investors were interested in the ship. However, after the failure of several projects, it was beached at the Bay of Alang (India) in 2006 and broken up for scrap.

Key figures

Length:.....315.66 metres

Width:.....33.70 metres

Motor power: 160000 horsepower

Service speed:.....31 knots



The Compagnie Générale Maritime

The *Compagnie Générale Maritime* (CGM) was born from the merger between the *Messageries Maritimes* and the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* - two of the largest French shipping companies in operation. The merging of this powerful group began in 1973 and was completed in 1976. The first French maritime group was born and established itself in the Winterthur Tower in La Défense.

The company's main activity during the 1980s was the international transport of goods thanks to a fleet of over 70 vessels. This activity was two-tiered. On one hand, the company operated carrier vessels such as freighters, oil, gas and ore tankers. On the other hand, they also possessed a fleet of vessels with smaller capacity for the transport of liquid foods or chemical products. This service was a cabotage operation by subsidiaries such as the *Finistérienne* or *CGAM*. The *CGM* rapidly ascended to become the leader in the field of containerised services. However, the company also developed other areas, such as specialised package transportation and long range roll-on/roll-off services. The group diversified its activities between 1982 and 1992 expanding into many areas such as aquaculture, warehousing, freight shipping, hotels, property, handling, trade, ship repair, restoration, banking, business services, tourism and transit.

However, revenue for the group began to steadily decline from 1989. An action plan was launched in 1992 to reduce debt and improve competitiveness by refocussing on maritime transport activity. The French State could no longer subsidise the company and it was privatised on 1996. The *Compagnie Maritime d'Affrètement* (CMA) seized this new opportunity and assumed control of the *CGM*. The *CMA CGM* group thus became the first French shipping carrier.

The merger between *CMA* and *CGM* became effective in 1999. The "CMA CGM French Line" group operated a fleet of 78 ships. As of 2012, the company has 396 ships and is the third-largest container shipping company worldwide.



SNCM



The present SNCM (*Société Nationale Maritime Corse Méditerranée*) is the successor of the prestigious *Navigation Mixte* and *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* ("Mediterranean" branch), created respectively in 1850 and 1855.

Along with the SNCF their role was to provide a public transport service for passengers, post and cargo throughout the French territory. In this case the service was between mainland France, Corsica and the French colonies in North Africa.

With the advent of aviation, their postal service - let's not forget that the French word for liner i.e. "paquebot" is derived from the English term "packet boat" for vessels that transported post - disappeared during the first half of the twentieth century. However, the original operation continued until the 1960s when it was downsized to Corsica following decolonisation.

The French Line Mediterranean lines merged with the *Compagnie Navigation Mixte* in 1969 to form the *Compagnie Générale Transméditerranéenne*. However, the company was forced to undergo changes due to the political, economic and social situation in Corsica following events at Aléria. Its capital was restructured around CGMF and SNCF. Rechristened as SNCM, the company was entrusted with implementing a new concept: territorial continuity between the continent and Corsica, where it had a monopoly and funding by the French State, following required decentralisation of the Corsican Assembly.

This monopoly ended in 2002 and the European Union opened the service up to competition, even though airline transport for holidaymakers was growing. Faced with this new situation, the company had to adapt quickly. The company had to become competitive once again in order to protect its historic role as the link between mainland France and Corsica.



SNCM

Delmas*

The *Jean Guiton* was launched on 14th June 1867. It was the first steamship to connect with La Rochelle and Île de Ré. The "Franck Delmas & Cie" company was created and led by Franck and Julien Delmas. In 1873 they were joined by their brother Émile, who fled Alsace after it was annexed by Prussia, and founded "Delmas Frères". The *Roue de Mulhouse* was adopted as the company's emblem in honour of the lost French provinces.

After initial success in local maritime transport, the "Delmas Brothers" opened traffic towards Spain and Great Britain for the transport of coal, mine supports and iron ore. New destinations, such as North Africa, soon followed. This decision paid off after the phylloxera ravaged the French vineyards in the late nineteenth century. As a result, wine had to be imported in bulk from Algeria.

In 1913, this company had 11 active vessels. Following the First World War, the "Delmas Frères et Vieljeux" company turned their attention to new potential traffic along the west coast of Africa. Agencies were quickly set up and a regular line was established.

The group had a significant network of branches and lines at its disposal on the eve of the Second World War. The conflict resulted in the loss of 70 vessels and the death of the President of the Board of Directors, Léonce Vieljeux and several members of his family. They were executed by the Nazis in Struthof concentration camp (Lower-Rhine) in September 1944, due to their ties with the Resistance.

The second half of the twentieth century was marked by constant growth and return to success. In particular, the company launched the first generation automated French commercial fleet. Finally, after 124 years of business and overcoming many challenges, *Delmas* was taken over by the *Bolloré* group in 1991. The group changed hands again in 2006 and became a member of *CMA CGM*.



*Companies and their subsidiaries whose archives are retained by the French Lines Association.

Chargeurs Réunis*

The Chargeurs Réunis (United Shippers) company was founded in Le Havre in 1872, under the name *Compagnie de Navigation à Vapeur*. Their steamships operated regular services with South America. The company also served the West African coast. In 1883, it acquired the *Société Postale de l'Atlantique* and the *Compagnie Commerciale des Transports à Vapeur Français* in 1894. It also took charge of the *Compagnie de Navigation Sud-Atlantique* in 1916.

The company came under the control of *Fabre & Cie* in 1927. It entered the field of aerial transport and attempted to gain control of *Aéropostale*. The company created *Aéromaritime* during the 1930s to supplement shipping lines with air lines.

The Chargeurs Réunis became independent once again in 1937. The company acquired a number of French shipping companies between 1964 and 1976 including *Compagnie Fabre*, *Fraissinet*, *SGTM*, *Paquet* and *Union Navale*.

The Chargeurs Réunis engaged in many activities through its subsidiaries, such as international air and maritime transport, warehousing, port customs clearance and even the hospitality industry.

The *Compagnie des Chargeurs Réunis* gradually ceased its shipping activities from 1987 and turned towards new business sectors, in particular to textiles and film.



Union Navale :

Founded by the ATIC (Technical Association for Coal Import) in 1956, the company specialised in bulk transport.

Compagnie Fabre :

1881: creation of the *Compagnie Française de Navigation à Vapeur Cyprien Fabre & Cie*.

1955: merged with *Fraissinet* to form the *Compagnie de Navigation Fraissinet et Cyprien Fabre*.

1965: merged with *SGTM* (*Société Générale de Transports Maritimes*) to form the *Fabre - SGTM company*.

1965: acquired by the Chargeurs Réunis.

Carline :

An economic interest grouping comprised of *ATA-Walon*, *Société Française de Transports Maritimes* (Worms Group) and *SOGESTRAN*. Created in the 1970s to develop the car transport industry within the maritime field under European cabotage.

RAN



French Lines
French Lines
Services

Shop

French Lines has many original items stemming from the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* and the *Messageries Maritimes*. It is possible to purchase certain items that were made in large numbers by founding companies.

In our shop you will find illustrations, posters, postcards, menus and medals, periodicals and promotional items among many other items!

A wide range of souvenirs are also available such as postcards and posters inspired by original visuals, reproductions of photographs and watercolours, as well as films and many books devoted to shipping companies and the history of the Merchant Navy. Accounts of the luxury of life on board and tableware items are available on request.

Make a part of history yours! See our website (www.frenchlines.com) to visit our shop to buy and pay online. You can also come and place your order at the Association headquarters in Le Havre.

The sale of products is entirely devoted to the conservation and development of collections.

www.frenchlines.com

FIND US ONLINE

A space devoted to culture where you can find information regarding ships, a database dedicated to Merchant Navy professions with clips and interviews, passenger lists, etc.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Support membership.....	300 €	

Date

Signature of shareholder

Crédits

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