

Jamaica Single Ring and Squared-Circle Postmarks

Thanks to the likes of Foster, Potter and many others, there is a large volume of information available to the collector of early Jamaican postmarks. The collector of the obliterator marks is particularly well served, due largely to the efforts of Robert Topaz and his often quoted work on their relative scarcity.

The obliterator postmarks were in use from 1859 as a means of canceling stamps, to avoid re-use, at the post office of dispatch. Concurrently, each office had a circular date-stamp to be used either as a dispatch, transit or arrival mark as required. Some obl iterators were still in use in the early years of the Twentieth century, but most fell out of use during the 1880's and 1890's.

As the obliterator postmarks declined, it became accepted practice to cancel stamps at the point of dispatch using one of the several types of date-stamp available to the Jamaican post offices. Many of the well established offices brought their old single ring circular date-stamps into use for such purposes. Other offices, particularly the many new offices that opened during this period, used either short-lived temporary rubber date-stamps or the combined obliterator/date-stamp squared-circle type postmarks that became fashionable from 1882. From about 1890, the double ring type circular date-stamp became the new permanent standard instrument for most offices, new and old, such that by the early 1900's the obliterator, single ring and squared-circle postmarks were only sporadically used for canceling purposes.

Foster records some 83 post towns issued with single ring circular date-stamps (his Types P11 and P12, excluding the rare P13) and gives each instrument a rarity rating. What is not clear is how many of these date-stamps were used legitimately for the canceling of postage stamps once the accompanying obliterator fell out of use or whether the Foster rarity ratings still apply to such use. Similarly, while it is well known that a total of 40 (excluding Kingston) post-offices were issued with the squared-circle type postmark, no attempt (that the author is aware of) has been made to measure relative scarcity of each *covering their entire lifespans* (which stretched well into the 20th century in many cases).

The closest that I have been able to find is a work by Delf Norona titled "Relative rarity of 19th Century Jamaican Cancellations" that appeared in the September, 1928 issue of *The American Philatelist*. While this work contains much very interesting information, some of which is included herein, it relies to a very large extent upon analysis of 15,000 copies of the 1d key-plate of 1889. It can, therefore, only be relied upon to demonstrate the relative rarity of the single ring and squared-circle postmarks during a period of use of about 10 years and upon a single stamp.

A thorough re-examination and census of the single ring and squared-circle date-stamps would seem, therefore, somewhat overdue and a first attempt of such forms the basis of this article. When conducting a census of any description, the sample size is all important. Only if the sample is large enough and random can any firm conclusions be drawn from the results. Finding a large, random sample of early used Jamaican stamps would be many collectors' idea of heaven, one would suspect, but the likelihood of locating such a hoard today is slim and another approach is called for.

During the 1994-5 period I laboriously noted the details of every single fully dated circular or squared-circle datestamp I came upon whilst browsing at stamp fairs, examining auction lots etc. This information formed the basis of the census presented in the following pages. This base information has since been supplemented by information received from two collectors (Ray Stanton, Bill Witschard and Keith Moh) whose collections of these postmarks are not of the one-of-each variety and therefore contain at least a semblance of randomness.

Taking all this into account, therefore, the census of the Jamaica circular and squared-circle postmarks that follows should not be considered definitive. However, the information from the four sources used was largely consistent, so I think it can safely be considered a reasonable first approximation. Only as more collectors volunteer additional information will the reliability of the study be improved.

Part 1 - Jamaica Single Ring Postmarks - Census and Rarity

Post Town	Type	As adhesive canceler		Codes	WA Census		1928 Census	
		E.K.D.	L.K.D.		No. Seen	Rarity	No. on 1d key	Rarity
Adelphi	P11	MR 16 1900	JY 7 1902	None	8	N	2	R
Alley	P11	AU 11 1893	OC 9 1894	None	2	R	12	N
Balaclava	P11	AP 29 1801	DE 10 1895	B	10	N	?	?
Bluefields	P11	JY 20 1891	JY 29 1904	None	5	S	4	R
Blue Mountain Valley	P11	JY 30 1892	JA 4 1907	A	7	N	19	N
Buff Bay	P11	FE 18 1884	FE 8 1913	None	32	C	26	N
Bull Bay	P11	JY 30 1896	JU 20 1928	None	2	R	2	R
Chapelton	P11	JY 31 1886	?? ?? 1890	A	1	R	-	-
Claremont	P11	SP 5 1890	OC 4 1900	None	9	N	24	N
Clarks Town	P11	SP 20 1894	MY 9 1902	B	6	S	2	R
Cold Spring	P11	JA 29 1892	NO 14 1898	None	2	R	2	R
Dry Harbour	P11	MR 1 1893	NO 2 1896	None	4	S	4	R
Duncans	P11	MY 22 1889	AU 27 1902	A	22	N	41	C
Ewarton	P11	JU 9 1890	AU 20 1902	None	10	N	15	N
Golden Spring	P11	MY 8 1888	SP 5 1890	None	2	R	2	R
Gordon Town	P11	SP 10 1886	NO 24 1910	None	15	N	4	R
Grange Hill	P11	SP 17 1894		??	-	-	3	R
Green Island	P11	JA 2 1894	AP 29 1917	None	10	N	7	S
Guys-Hill	P11	AP 5 1897	AU 31 1903	None	8	N	1	R
Half-Way-Tree	P11	SP 12 1890	FE 15 1907	B, None	35	C	23	N
Hampden	P11	JA 25 1905	JU 4 1923	B	12	N	-	-
Hayes	P11	MY 14 1889	MY 30 1922	None	10	N	2	R
Hope Bay	P11	JA 13 1886	MR 7 1910	A	8	N	8	S
Lacovia	P11	AP 19 1899	NO 18 1916	A	31	C	3	R
Linstead	P11	MY 10 1893	OC 30 1894	A	1	R	-	-
Little-London	P11	JA 11 1892	JU 29 1896	A	7	N	8	S
Little River	P11	AP 1 1892	DE 20 1899	B	3	R	1	R
Lucea	P11	AU 4 1890	JY 17 1892	A	11	N	16	N
Malvern	P12	JY 20 1891	OC 19 1898	W	7	N	3	R
May Pen	P11	DE 11 1890	OC 8 1898	None	18	N	49	C
Middle Quarters	P11	FE 24 1888	JA 14 1895	CA	8	N	15	N
Milk River	P11	AU 8 1892	AU 6 1909	None	13	N	10	N
Moneague	P11	MR 5 1891	FE 2 1909	None	23	N	34	N
Morant Bay	P11	SP 13 1887	MR 10 1894	A	9	N	31	N
Newmarket	P11	JY 15 1891	OC 7 1898	A	7	N	5	S
Newport	P12	AP 8 1889	OC 12 1908	A	11	N	19	N
Ocho Rios	P11	SP 11 1889	AP 28 1930	None	45	C	41	C
Pedro	P11	AP 12 1899	SP 22 1939	None	11	N	5	S
Petersfield	P11	MY 1 1893	AP 7 1906	None	14	N	4	R
Port Antonio	P11	FE 22 1888	AU 3 1894	C reversed, None	2	R	-	-
Port Maria	P11	JY 1 1885	DE ?? 1896	C	15	N	56	C
Port Royal	P11	DE 5 1891	AP 7 1897	A	10	N	5	S
Porus	P11	JY 24 1889	AU 13 1892	None	3	R	7	S
Priestman's River	P11	MY 22 1893	NO 19 1902	B	14	N	7	S

Post Town	Type	As adhesive canceler		Codes	WA Census		1928 Census	
		E.K.D.	L.K.D.		No. Seen	Rarity	No. on 1d key	Rarity
Ramble	P11	MY 9 1892	MY 29 1893	None	2	R	1	R
Richmond	P11	JU 5 1895	AU 2 1898	None	1	R	-	-
Rio Bueno	P11	?? ?? 1891	MR 10 1902	None	2	R	1	R
Saint David	P11	?? ?? 1891	DE 11 1903	A	5	S	10	N
Salt Gut	P11	MR 18 1891	JU 6 1894	A, None	4	S	39	C
Santa Cruz	P11	AP 27 1891	OC 6 1899	None	18	N	20	N
Savanna-la-Mar	P11	JY 1 1890	JU 25 1894	None	9	N	64	C
Shooter's Hill	P11	AU 11 1890	JA 3 1904	A	19	N	23	N
Southfield	P11	JA 2 1899	JA 12 1939	BC, None	17	N	1	R
Spur Tree	P11	JU 8 1891	AU 30 1900	None	3	R	3	R
St. Anns Bay	P11	JA 26 1891	MY 26 1892	None	11	N	173	VC
Trinity-Ville	P11	OC 2 1891	MY 2 1935	C	9	N	8	S
Watson's Hill	P11	FE 2 1901	JA 21 1923	A	9	N	-	-

Table 1

Total sample = 592 865

The results of the analysis of 592 reasonably random Jamaican stamps cancelled with Foster Type P11 or P12 instruments are shown in Table 1. The emergency uses of these date-stamps due to loss or damage to obliterations have been excluded, as these fall outside of what could be described as “normal use”.

The EKD is that of the earliest date of use of the date-stamp as a canceller, not to be confused with the dates given by Foster and Potter which are invariably earlier frequently being the date of despatch of the instrument from the UK.

The LKD and Code Letter information is taken from Potter, updated, as required by the author. Author's updates are in bold italics.

Also included, for comparative purposes, are the results of the 1928 census carried out by Delf Norona (see introduction), based upon analysis of a large quantity of the 1889 1d key-plate. [Note – my copy of this work is incomplete, missing the relevant information for Balaclava. If anyone can provide the missing figure, I'd be very grateful!]

In both cases, the quantity of each date-stamp within the respective total samples is used to calculate a relative scarcity. Any mechanism of calculating rarity is obviously arbitrary, but that employed here is as follows:

Rarity Rating	Occurrence
R (rare)	< 1 per 200
S (scarce)	1 per 100
N (normal)	2-4 per 100
C (common)	5-10 per 100
VC (very common)	> 10 per 100

Part 2 - Jamaica Squared-Circle Postmarks - Census and Rarity

See SQC

Part 3 - Endnote

In addition to the 1928 study by Delf Norona, another key-plate based work appeared in the Jamaica Philatelic Society's Quarterly Bulletin of March 1942. In an article titled "An Adventure In Postmarks", Arthur Pierce gave the results of his examination of 25,000 1d key-plates, all used between 1892 and 1896. Unfortunately, Pierce thought fit to publish only some aspects of his findings, but, even though incomplete, they are well worth summarizing.

After putting to one side the numerous Kingston postmarks and those with such poor or partial marks to defy accurate identification, Pierce was left with the following specimens for closer examination:

Obliterator postmarks - 313 (just over 1%)
Single Ring postmarks - 1240 (about 5%)
Squared Circle postmarks - 1264 (about 5%)
Temporary Rubber Datestamps - 15 (0.06%)

Of the Single Ring postmarks, Pierce comments that they "were about evenly distributed, or at least with all the listed towns in fair quantity. I have not tabulated them". Annoyingly, he doesn't qualify what he means by "listed towns" either! The one surprise is that he only found 2 copies (in a sample of 25,000!) of the Half Way Tree CDS (whereas Norona recorded 23)

Of the Squared-Circles, Pierce reports finding a full set of 35 (of the small type), all bar ten being "relatively plentiful". The ten are:

York Castle - 6 copies
St. Margaret's Bay - 5 copies
Croft's Hill - 4 copies
Hagly Gap, Anchovy - 3 copies
Salt River, Christiana - 2 copies
Hampstead, Darliston, Jamaica Exhibition P.O. - 1 copy

On the basis that he also found one stamp "used in Caymans", he concludes that the Hampstead, Darliston and Jamaica Exhibition P.O. postmarks are as rare as Cayman SG Z2 (catalogue £400) on the 1d Keyplate "at least during the period in question". As shown in the previous section, both the Hampstead and Darliston squared-circle postmarks lived long lives, but it is interesting to note their apparent rarity early in their life spans. The "R" rating bestowed upon the Jamaica Exhibition P.O. postmark seems completely vindicated!

Bill Atmore

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