

JAMAICA  
ITS POSTAL HISTORY, POSTAGE STAMPS AND POSTMARKS

**CHAPTER I THE JAMAICA POST OFFICE**

(1671-1926)

*The period up to 1890, by the REV. C. S. MORTON ; and the subsequent years by one in the Post Office of Jamaica.*

JAMAICA has the honour of being the first British Colony to establish a Post Office.

Shortly after Jamaica had passed from Spanish to British hands, King Charles II instructed Thomas Lynch, the Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica, to make arrangements for a Post Office under the management of Daniel O'Neil, the Postmaster-General of London, to whom all accounts were to be sent.

The masters of vessels were to give good caution for such letters as they might receive "inclosed in males and bougetts," and when a place for receipt and dispatch of letters had been set up in Jamaica, for all parts, all private persons were to be inhibited from carrying mails<sup>1</sup>.

However, in these unsettled days there was generally a hiatus between permission and performance, and Jamaica was so busy putting her house in order that the letter-box received scant attention.

A gentleman at Port Royal wrote mournfully to the Secretary of the G.P.O., London, on 11 August, 1670, "that he had omitted to state in his last letter":

"A grand mechiefe to every person in there letters from there correspondents which every man or meld takes up, and open stiffles<sup>2</sup> as they please;

if any office from my Lord were established for receipt of all letters, both coming in and out it would well satisfie the people."<sup>3</sup>

This grand mischief was put right by the Council of Jamaica, which met at St. Jago de la Vega ,(Spanish Town) on 21 September, 1671, when the Marshal was ordered to go on board every vessel and receive all letters :

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<sup>1</sup> C.O. 1, 17 : No. 31, dated 1663. C.O. refers to Colonial Office records filed in the Public Record Office, London.

<sup>2</sup> "Stiffles" possibly "stiffless," i.e. without ceremony.

<sup>3</sup> C.O. 1, 25 : No. 53. Richard Brown to Williamson.

Sir Joseph Williamson (1633-1701) as Secretary to Arlington, who was at the head of the Post Office, took an active part in its management. (*Nat. Dict. of Biography.*)

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"From the masters and passengers which they are not willing to deliver themselves, or if nobody else that is known be there to demand them, and haveing drawn them all up into a list to give a receipt for them: and distinguish what are received from the master and what from the passengers, set it up at the Post House in town, and at the Market Place at the point ; and to receive 3d for every superscription and give in his own for £500.

"Ordered that Gabriel Martin on his petition have the sole privelege to hire horses from Passage Fort to town and back, and have horses ready for all persons from sunrising till 8 at night. . . ."

The services of the Marshal were utilized, as he was the first person to board all vessels coming into the harbour, in his capacity of quarantine officer, but complaints soon arose that whereas Port Royal—then called Cagua, or the Point—was the resort of all the merchants, yet great inconvenience for correspondence was caused owing "to the badness of the horses and furniture" between St. Jago and Passage Fort.

To remedy this, Gabriel Martin was appointed Postmaster of Jamaica with the monopoly of supplying horses to and from Passage Fort and St. Jago de la Vega, by the Grand Council of Jamaica, on 31 October, 1671; and all persons were requested to take notice of Mr. Martin as Postmaster, and to see that he took care to have good furniture both for single and double horses. Following his instructions, Mr. Martin had a Post House both at Passage Fort and another at St. Jago, and hung up signs at both to show that all persons who wanted horses could have them at two shillings the single journey, three shillings the return, and four shillings for two horses.<sup>4</sup>

For a few years Mr. Martin enjoyed his office of Postmaster with all the profits and fees thereof, and *then* he, with his posthorses, galloped clean out of the pages of history.

On 18 October, 1683, the House of Assembly once again were a-discussing the advisability of erecting a Post Office in the island for foreign letters and establishing an inland post. No convenient Gabriel Martin was at hand, and the matter lapsed. Little did they realize, that unbeknown to them or the official authorities, a gentleman would arrive and strive to push a Jamaica Post Office through the back door.

It happened on this wise.

James Wale, a merchant in Jamaica and a citizen of London, whilst trading in his sloop *James* with the Spaniards off Carthagenia, was seized by Captain Yankey of the French privateer *The Dolphin*. The cargo was sold, the sloop condemned, the crew tortured, "whereof one dyed," and Captain Wale barely escaped to Jamaica with his life.

The case was heard at the Admiralty Court at Jamaica on 25 November, 1684,<sup>5</sup> and the wrong being clearly proved, Captain Mitchell was dispatched to demand instant satisfaction.

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<sup>4</sup> C.O. 140 : 1. *The Council Book of Jamaica*, 1661-72, pp. 245-246.

<sup>5</sup> C.O. 67. The case of James Wale, Merchant, His Majesty's subject, owner of the *James Slope* and her Loadinge of Merchandize, unjustly seized in the West Indies. . . . (39-III. And other depositions on the same (seq).

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No satisfaction being forthcoming, James Wale was sent to England by Lieutenant-Governor Molesworth to lay the case before the British Government.

On his arrival in England, the Earl of Rochester, His Majesty's Postmaster-General, took considerable interest in the case of James Wale, and when it was realized that France, though full of fair speeches, would not benefit Wale by taking any practical measures, Rochester, who always felt sympathy with the underdog—possibly because, as Halifax records, he gained promotion by being kicked upstairs—became Wale's patron and armed him with "a deputation" to look after a Post Office in Jamaica.

Wale returned to Jamaica, and upon landing in November 1687, immediately set up his Post Office; but the methods of this blunt sea-captain did not commend themselves to the planters, who one and all complained that he was extorting money illegally. They informed him that no Post Office existed, and that it required an Act of Parliament to establish it, and further, if it was established there would be so little for it to do, it would be a useless burden.

Neither did Wale receive any sympathy from Lieutenant-Governor Molesworth, who refused to acknowledge his rights, and this decision was confirmed by the Council on 17 November, 1687, on the grounds that the ships delivered the letters at the doors of Port Royal without charge. "In remoter parts," they added, "it is different, but at least reasonable rates should be fixed and the power should not be given to private persons to levy arbitrary exactions."<sup>6</sup>

"By the last ships," wrote Lieutenant-Governor Molesworth to William Blathwayt on 7 December, 1687, "arrived one Mr. James Wall with a deputation from Lord Rochester, as Postmaster of the Island, in virtue of which he stopped all the letters that came by the ship and charged the merchants sevenpence halfpenny for every one and proportionately for packets, and this without first acquainting me of his intention. Afterwards he showed me his deputation, which I refused as he was an officer of an office not established, and as to which I had no instructions, though I offered to summon the Council to hear what he might have to say. The merchants ... offer several reasons against the office which will be laid before you."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Calendar of State Papers for 1687* (Section 1521).

<sup>7</sup> *Calendar of State Papers*, 7 December 1687 (1555). In the State papers the name is either spelt "Wall" or "Wale". The gentleman in question signs himself "Wale"

The historians differ considerably; John Oldmixon (1708) gives "Wale" (*The British Empire in America*, Vol. II, page 285), whilst Leslie (1740. *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica*, Letter VIIIa page 281) and Bridges (1828. *Annals*, Vol. 1, page 300) give "Wade," and Henry Barham writing early in the eighteenth century, gives "Whale" in one place (Add. MS. 12423) and "Wale" in another (Sloane MS. 3918, page 140). Long has a note that Barham was a miserable writer and in historical fact not always accurate, but it is doubtful whether any of the writers verified the matter, to judge from the paucity of information they record as to the Post Office.

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Mr. Wale was so importunate that on 3 February, 1688, the Council again considered the business of the Post Office, and His Grace the Duke of Albemarle was asked to establish it.

The Governor accordingly wrote to England, and the matter was put into the hands of Sir Thomas Powis, His Majesty's Attorney-General, whose report was as follows :

Upon perusal of the Statute for settling the Post Office in the 12th Year of the late King. It is manifest that the King is thereby empowered to appoint a Post throughout his dominions and in Jamaica by consequence. By the said Act no rate is fixed or settled for Jamaica without which nothing can be done.

Therefore it seems to me since the King may approve & settle a Post there, that he may also settle a reasonable rate where none is otherwise settled or provided. And I know no rate so fit to goe by as the rates provided by the Act for Ireland.

(Signed) T. POWIS.\*<sup>8</sup>

*26th June, 1688.*

An Order in Council was passed on 22 July, 1688, authorizing the Earl of Rochester to set up a Post Office in the Colony, with so many stages or running posts as should seem requisite for the speedy dispersing of letters. The Order further fixed the rates of postage both for Packet and inland communications, which were based on Powis' report.<sup>9</sup>

This Order was a Counsel of perfection as Jamaica was not in a position to have any running posts, and James Wale suffered so many reverses at sea that both he and his Postal Service vanished. In 1696 the whole of the West Indian Post Offices were placed under the charge of James Neale, the Postmaster of New York.

Leslie (1740, *supra*, page 241) stated that the 1687 Post Office though well designed to serve excellent purposes had very little effect ; and the Rev. G. W. Bridges wrote (*supra*, page 300) that this Post Office did not succeed and for many years was little more than a nominal appointment.

In England, the British Treasury questioned the General Post Office as to their authority for awarding ship masters one penny for every letter handed in at the Post Office. The Post Office replied there was no authority, but the existing law was insufficient to compel masters of vessels to deliver letters to the Postmaster and the penny was an inducement and had become customary.

To legalize this levy a statute (9 Anne, chapter 10) was passed,<sup>10</sup> and the Post Office of Jamaica has always taken its official beginning from this statute.

A report of a Postal Committee appointed in the island in 1814 opens with the words: "We have investigated the subject from the earliest period in which it is mentioned in the Journals of the House and a bill in 1706 was to erect an office for receipt and safer delivery of letters

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<sup>8</sup> C.O. 138, 6, page 122. T. Powis' Report and Order in Council to establish a Post Office (1688).

<sup>9</sup> C.O. 138, 6, page 122 ; and P.C. 1, 72, page 721, being the Privy Council Minutes for 22nd July, 1688, where it is indexed "A Post Office to be erected and established at Port Royal."

The preamble of the Order runs as follows : "Upon reading the report of Sir Thomas Powis, Knight, His Majesty's Attorney General and of Henry Pollexfen Esq. concerning the settling of a Post Office at Jamaica, it is ordered" . etc.

The full text of the Order is given in F. J. Melville's Jamaica, pages 11 and 12.

<sup>10</sup> 9 Anne. "An Act for establishing a General Post Office for all Her Majesty's Dominions."

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but that it appears that the Post Offices were established under and by authority of the British Statutes 9th of Anne, c. 10 and 5 George III, c. 25, and the rates of postage fixed by the latter in 1765." <sup>11</sup>

In these early days there was very little correspondence in the island, and the post taken by merchant vessels consisted of letters for England, which were enclosed in the Governor's bag for greater safety, and a stone put into the bag in order that it might be immediately sunk to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy.

The times of sailing were very uncertain, and the public and Government put to such great inconvenience that the establishment of Mr. Dummer's packet service at the beginning of the eighteenth century was hailed in Jamaica as a great boon.

Mr. Dummer, with the approval of the Home Authorities, appointed his own postmasters in the West Indies, and Mr. Thomas Wood was dispatched to Jamaica with the following instructions in his pocket :

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY SIR ROBERT COTTON, KNIGHT, AND SIR THOMAS FRANKLAND, BARONET, POST MASTERS GENERAL ... TO THOMAS WOOD, GENTLEMAN, THEIR DEPUTY POSTMASTER OF HER MAJESTY'S ISLAND OF JAMAICA IN THE WEST INDIES.

- 1st. You are to keep your office in good order, and not to suffer any person whatsoever . . . upon the arrival of a Mail to inspect or handle the letters, but are carefully to tell over the charge of letters twice at least before you deliver any, that you may be certain of the number and Port of the letters you receive answer the number and Port mentioned in the bill sent you therewith, and not to trust the letters with careless and ignorant servants, nor are you to suffer their letters to be open in any place where (they) can to your house have access and you are to use the same diligence at the sending away the mail that the letters may not lye open to inspection so as they may be intercepted ; nor are you to deliver back any letter put into your office unless you are sure it be to the same Person who brought the same. . . .
- 2nd. You are truly to date the Labil that shall be brought along with each Mail, viz.:—at what time you received it and what time you dispatched the same away as also by a particular Letter to be sent Us with the Mail to acquaint us with the precise time of the arrival at, and departure of each Packett boat from your Island.
- 3rd. You are also to cause all letters and Packetts received by you without any delay to be carefully delivered as directed from time to time so that all Persons receiving letters may have convenient time to return their answers by the departure of the said packett boat which is to stay no longer than the time appointed being ten days, which when expired you are to order the Captain of the Packett Boat to sail away with the Mail immediately, Wind and Weather permitting.

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<sup>11</sup> The Royal Gazette, 24-31 December, 1814. A similar statement was made by a Committee appointed in 1835 (C.O. 137: 206).

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- 4th. You are carefully to collect all letters and packets within the Island of Jamaica, which you are to tell over distinctly, and making the same up in several Packetts to put them in one or more Baggs which shall be carefully tyed up and seal'd with your own Seal . . . sending there-with an exact list expressing the numbers of Letters sent from your Island ; and if any Letters . . . shall be brought by shipping to Jamaica you are to collect the same and to make them up in several Packetts whereon shall be indorsed the name of the place from whence they came. . . .
- 5th. You are also if at any time any letters or packetts happen to remain at your office, if you do not know to whom to deliver them to cause to be written in a Fair sheet of paper the Names of the Party's to whom the same are directed, and affix the same upon the outward Gate or upon such Publick Place of Meeting as you shall see cause whereby notice may be given to all Corners and Goers that such Letters remain at your office indisposed of. [This practice continued till about 1907.]
- 6th. You are upon the Arrival and Dispatch of each Mail to attend the service of your office in your own Person, unless very urgent occasions shall cause you for some time to be absent, and at such time you are to appoint some trusty and discreet Person to supply your place that no neglect may happen.
- 7th. You are also to the utmost of your Ability and Skill by all lawful means to promote Her Majesty's Service in your Place . . . and justly, diligently, and faithfully demean Yourself in your said Employment. Given under our hands and seal of office at Her Majesty's Post Office General this — day of July, 1705.

R. C.

T. F.

(ROBERT COTTON) :

(THOMAS FRANKLIN).

To Mr. Thomas Wood	Deputy at	Jamaica.
do Mr. Alexander Skein	„ at	Barbados.
do Mr. Richard Buckeredge	„ at	Antego.
do Cotto. Anthony Hodges	„ at	Monserat.
do Mr Wm. Burr	„ at	Nevis.
do Mr. John Belding	„ at	St. Xtophers. <sup>12</sup>

Mr. Wood was also empowered to give notice to the Spaniards in Jamaica that he would see that their letters were conveyed to and from Europe, with the proviso that all in-letters would be opened by the Governor of Jamaica and censored, and out-letters, to prevent criminal correspondence with the French, would be read by the Secretary of State.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> P.O. 1 (1703-09), page 52.

<sup>13</sup> C.O. 5 : 3 : No. 23. Captain Robert Cecill pro Board of Plantations (8 November, 1705) in reply to Rt. Hon. Hodges on improving the means of correspondence with the Spaniards in Jamaica.

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The scheme relating to Mr. Dummer's Packet Service was set up publicly at Kingston and Spanish Town. Addressing the Assembly on 20 July, 1705, Handasyd, the Governor of Jamaica, said : "Whereas Her Majesty does think that the greatest encouragement be given to the Packet Boats in the constant bringing and carrying of letters . . . the Packet Boats be exempt from the powder duty." <sup>14</sup>

Dummer had more trouble at Jamaica than at other West Indian islands as his masters were obliged to carry the mails and other packets eight or ten miles into the country and to attend at the Governor's remote house for orders, so that the vessel could not be cleaned. Fifteen hundred private letters were brought to England by each packet, but only four of the twelve monthly packets completed the voyage.

"The Captain arrived in Jamaica," stated a writer in 1706, "with his men in a small caske they made of the Rack of the Packet Boat after she was cast ashore, and coming back to Jamaica with the mail and money they were taken by a French privateer who plundered the money but the Mail was thrown overboard."

Dummer found the cost of replacing his shipwrecked or captured ships so ruinous that he informed the Post Office that he could not continue his contract and that the service should be taken over by them, the income from letters accruing to the Crown.

"We believe," replied the Postmaster-General, "the correspondence cannot be carried on by a private undertaker for it will require such a stock and constant expence."<sup>15</sup>

The G.P.O., however, found such difficulty in arranging for the conveyance of the mails to Jamaica, that the London merchants induced Dummer to resume.

With good heart Dummer replaced the boats he had lost, but ill-success dogged him, and after losing nine boats in five years the Jamaica merchants enjoined their correspondents on no account to send goods or letters by Edward Dummer's boats. Bankrupt and broken-hearted, Dummer died in London in April 1713.

Letters were taken by merchant ships until the Packet service was resumed in the latter half of the century, and a very hazardous performance it was, as we were at war either with France or Spain, and all ships had to pass within sight of some French or Spanish possessions, and run the gauntlet of the French and American privateers, and "the pyrates were to be seized, burnt or otherwise destroyed."

Some account of these days is given by Mr. Norway in his book, *The Post Office Packet Service*.

In 1826 Jamaica had a second monthly packet, the first having as its destination Carthagena, and the second Vera Cruz. To eke out their scanty wages the Packet seamen "from time immemorial" were allowed to trade in potatoes, which, stated the G.P.O., was productive of decided accommodation to numerous persons in the West Indies.

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<sup>14</sup> C.O. 140. This and a similar amended Act for Exempting Packet Boats from Powder Duty are the only two Acts of a postal nature on the Jamaica Statute Book prior to 1860. The Act is given in C.O. 138: 12.

<sup>15</sup> Treasury, 64 : 89, pages 352-382: Dummer to Post Office, 20 February, 1707, and replies.

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With the advent of steam vessels, the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company secured the contract, and from the sailing of R.M.S.P. *Thames* on 1 January, 1842, to the present day this Company have carried the mails to and from Jamaica, except between 1 July, 1905, and 1 June, 1907, when the mails went by first steamer of any line.<sup>16</sup>

In the early days, letters destined by the Jamaica planters for London were largely directed to the Jamaica Coffee House in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill, London. A notice inserted in the public press in 1750 refers to it as having been used for sixty years past as the place at which letters should be left for transmission to Jamaica, and similarly many letters were received there.<sup>17</sup>

After the cessation of Mr. Dummer's Packet service in 1711 the Jamaica Post Office disappeared until Governor Nicholas Lawes, some six years later, attempted to re-establish it.

Memorial from Sir Nicholas Lawes relating to a Post Office to be settled in that island. (Undated.)

To the Rt. Hon. the Lord Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. Sheweth . . .

And I also believe a Post Office to be established in that island in a regular manner for the security and convenience of letters would be of great advantage to trade; make the correspondence among the people in the Island quick, easy, safe, but the Undertaker must have some encouragement, at least the profit for a certain term because it will require a great expense in the beginning to put it going, but time may bring it to some advantage I hope, to the public revenue of that island.

If your Lordships in your great wisdom shall think these foregoing proposals to be encouraged I humbly request your approbation and instructions thereupon<sup>18</sup>.

This was received on 10 October, 1717, and read by the Board in Committee on the 17th, but, in their "great wisdom" nothing came of it, until the year 1720, when a Post Office was re-established at Kingston. By this time the planters had grown so accustomed to the merchant captains taking their letters that they looked with a jaundiced eye on such an intermediary as a Post Office, and the Post Office played second fiddle to the Admiralty.

"29th March, 1721. A Complaint having been made to the House that the letters brought to this island by the ships of Great Britain, are taken up by Robert Baldwyn, John Cleaves, and Gilbert Kennedy and that they have exacted money for letters directed to members of the Assembly. . . . Ordered that they be taken into custody."

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<sup>16</sup> A Link of Empire, published by the R.M.S.P. Co. (London, 1910, illustrated), gives the original charter, etc. etc.

<sup>17</sup> It was intended to give an illustration, but an exhaustive search has failed to find any illustration of the Jamaica Coffee House. The site is marked with an index letter on a view of "The Ruins of the Fire in Cornhill, 1748" (Add. Prints, page 57. Gulston Collection in Guildhall Library, London), but this of course gives no indication of the type of building.

<sup>18</sup> C.O. 138: 15. Memorial of Sir Nicholas Lawes relating to Counsellors for Jamaica, Printing Press, and to a Post Office to be settled in that island. (1717?)

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"8th March, 1726. (Seeing) Mr. Bartlet had detained the letters of several members . . . and extorted several sums of money from them and other inhabitants of the island on pretence of some power or deputation from the Post Office in England: which this House having not before been made aware of, and it being . . . a breach of privilege and a grievance, Resolved the matter be left to Committee."<sup>19</sup>

On 11 April, 1755, the House of Assembly moved that an enquiry should be made by what authority Edward Dismore acted as Postmaster-General of Jamaica, and likewise what charges he had demanded and received for the postage of letters and packets.

A Select Committee of five reported on 21 September, 1755

"It appears to the Committee on examining Mr. Dismore in the most solemn manner that he hath acted as Postmaster of this island by a deputation from the right honourable Thomas, Earl of Leicester, and Sir Everard Fawkner, Knight, Postmasters general of Great Britain ; That he hath received 7½d currency for a single letter, and 1s 3d. for a double letter, sent one hundred miles: and for packets 2s 6d. per ounce within one hundred miles, and 5 sh. per ounce beyond it; and that for foreign letters received and delivered at Kingston he hath only demanded 7½d; That he doth not send a post to every part of the island but only to such places as he thought proper, for that the revenue of the office would not admit of keeping it all over the island. That he doth not send a post to St. Ann, St. Mary, St. George, Portland, St. Thomas in the East, St. Thomas in the Vale, St. John, and Vere; and that if any letters came into his office for persons residing in any of these parishes, those letters were not forwarded, but detained there until called for : That the post generally goes on foot : the said Edward Dismore likewise acknowledges that he takes postage of letters directed to members of the Army on His Majesty's Service ; he laid before the Committee the annexed account as a true account of the inland postage and the expenses of the office, for one year ; by which it appears the whole amount of the inland postage is only £824 1s. 3d, and the charges are £759 17s 6d, so that the nett profits of the office are only £64 3s. 9d. per annum, except for the postage of foreign letters which is about £260 per annum ; out of which he paid one penny sterling per letter to the masters of ships when demanded; He also informed the Committee it was impossible for him to comply with the Act of Parliament (9 Anne) with respect to the said Post Office: That he acts on a salary of £50 sterling per annum and is to account with the postmaster general for the profits of the office ; but in case he should be out of pocket he does not apprehend the Post Master General is to reimburse him.

"Upon the examination of Mrs. Anne Macculloch, in the most solemn manner, it appeared to the Committee that she once acted in the office of postmaster of this island, and carried on the post of the leeward parishes and St. Mary : That, in or about April, 1754, she was superseded by Mr. Dismore: That some time before that she farmed the office to Mr. William Graham, her deputy, for £200 per annum: That the rates of postage at that time were no more than 7½d for a single letter, and 1s 3d. for any packet to the most distant part of the island, and that she should be very well satisfied with the same rates in case she was permitted to execute the said office."

Mr. William Graham stated he served two years and nine months, that the rates were as above and he got a livelihood by the profits, and that he employed four negroes for the Postal business.

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<sup>19</sup> From the Journals of the House of Assembly. C.O. 540, pages 539, 578, 585.

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The postage received is given by Mr. Dismore as £193, at Kingston; £97 at Spanish Town; £14 at Old Harbour ; £33 at Clarendon; £100 at St. Elizabeth; £202 at Westmoreland ; £84 at Hanover ; £94 at St. James, and £4 by Expresses. It is evident from his accounts that the overseas mails came via Passage Fort.

No man can serve two masters, and as Jamaica was so eager to have a finger in the Postal pie, Mr. Dismore could but keep the key of his office in his own pocket, and refuse the requests for admittance and critical inspection as courteously as possible. The island authorities determined that if they could not walk in, Mr. Dismore should walk out, and accordingly on 19 October, 1758, the Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica summarily dismissed Edward Dismore and appointed Robert Lock as the Island Postmaster.

At the Court of St. James, held on 15 December, 1759, this proceeding was declared illegal, and the Governor was ordered to reinstate Dismore and the Assembly to abandon their "very indecent conduct."

Further friction occurred when George Mackenzie, Postmaster of Old Harbour, was ordered to attend a, Court Martial for not doing duty in the Foot Militia of St. Dorothy.

Mr. Mackenzie was tried on 4 September, 1776, at Bagg's Tavern in Spanish Town, and pleaded that he was the only officer in St. Dorothy collecting H.M. revenue and that his attendance at his office was necessary to continue the course of post uninterrupted. As his judges could find no provision in the Act for exempting Postmasters, Mackenzie was ordered to pay two pounds or enjoy three months imprisonment.

Upon this, Dismore informed the Governor he was referring the matter to his superiors in London.

"When Mr. Dismore," replied Thomas Harrison, "condescends to think that the Attorney-General of this island is the proper Council for the Post Office he will meet with most respectful attention."

Dismore wrote to Todd, Secretary of the G.P.O. (8 October):

"I need not point out the subsequent consequences that arise when my several deputies throughout the Island find themselves destitute of that protection which has induced them to hold their offices as the Salaries allowed are by no means thought by them adequate to the duty and attendance required."

The Governor attempted to gain his ground by storm.

Ordered that Edward Dismore Esq. Postmaster General of this Island do on 31st October attend the Committee appointed to inspect the Post Office of this Island at the House of William Harvey Esq. in Kingston.

By the Committee. EDWARD WEBLEY,  
26th October, 1776. Chairman.

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Edward Dismore refused to attend on the ground that he was only amenable for his conduct to H.M. Postmaster-General, so could not comply with these orders, but "his respect for the legislature of Jamaica would at all times be duly observed" ; and the home authorities again upheld Dismore for his proper and diligent conduct. And so the tale went on.

Edward Dismore was the first Postmaster to make any extensive improvements in the working of the Jamaica Post Office, and during this period Post Offices were established at the following places, all of which were most diligently supervised by an annual inspection.

Leeward: Spanish Town, Baillie's Tavern, Old Harbour, Clarendon, Vere, Goshen, Lacovia, Black River, Savannah La Mar, Saltspring Barquadier, Flint River and Lucea.

North Side: Buff Bay, Port Antonio, Annotto Bay, Port Maria, Salt Gut, Dry Harbour, Blackheath, St. Ann's Bay, Rio Bueno, Duncans, Martha Brae in Trelawney near Falmouth, and Montego Bay.

Windward: Yallah's, Blue Mountain, Morant Bay, Port Morant, Bath, Amity Hall, and Manchioneal.

Head Office at Kingston.

In order to improve the Post at Kingston Mr. Dismore published the following letter for general information:

GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
JAMAICA,  
8th March, 1780.

As many inconveniences arise from the miscarriage of letters owing to a loose and negligent mode of collecting them at public houses and stores intended to go by men of War or merchant ships . . . I do therefore . . . give notice that in future there will be proper cases at this office for the reception of all letters which will be regularly secured, packed, and put in proper bags and under the seal of the G.P.O. be delivered to the masters of such ships, who may call for them the evening before they sail, and in failure thereof a boat with a responsible person will be in constant readiness of carrying mail bags on board. And whereas many letters for Great Britain are frequently put into this office to go by different ships, many of which may happen to be duplicates, it is therefore recommended to all persons that the name of the ship or vessel they wish the same to go by, may be wrote on the corner of each letter, which will be properly attended to, and put into that ship's bag accordingly.

This being the first office for entering ships, etc. coming to this island and, from its nature, the proper office of intelligence, the public may have . . . every interesting news that can be collected, by a discreet person, constantly attending the several arrivals in Port Royal Harbour for that purpose, to be conveyed from thence to this office with all possible despatch. And in order to deter in future any person or persons making or interfering with the making any collection of letters . . . the following clause of an Act . . . 9th of Queen Anne is hereafter recited for general information.

(Signed) EDWARD DISMORE.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Long's History of Jamaica, published in London in 1774, gives an interesting account of the inland mails of that time (q.v. F. J. Melville's Jamaica, page 16).

## JAMAICA

### ITS POSTAL HISTORY, POSTAGE STAMPS AND POSTMARKS

The policy of development was continued by Dismore's successors, George Brooks, and Francis Dashwood, first son of Robert Dashwood of Yellow Wood (d. 1793).

The island pushed ahead so rapidly, that the Postal Authorities in London considered the expenditure must be curtailed. Jamaica, however, was so averse to the resultant curtailment of her mail facilities that the House of Assembly on 25 November, 1814, appointed a Committee to enquire into the management of the Post Office, and in order to obtain exact information the said Committee investigated the subject from the earliest period in which it was mentioned in the journals of the House (i.e. 1706), and also examined John Milbourne Marsh, the then Deputy Postmaster-General, and Richard Stokes, his principal clerk.

The Committee, in presenting their report in the following December, stated that many Post Offices formerly established in useful places had been closed ; that the amount of commission to Postmasters being only 10 per cent did not invite proper persons to serve the public; that the postboys, being slaves, were no evidence in cases of robbery; that a charge of 10 per cent not warranted by law was generally made on Packet letters delivered in Kingston, and of 7½d for letters sent to merchant ships and men-of-war, which sums were regarded as the postal clerks' gratuities.

It is interesting to compare Mr. Marsh's amount of postage with Mr. Dismore's some sixty years prior.

	Select Committee	
	of 1755	of 1814
Annual amount of inland postage	£824	£12,590 currency
Annual amount from Great Britain to Jamaica	—	£9,406 8s. 10d.
Annual amount from Jamaica by packet	£250	£9,840
Nett profit	about £64	about £4,280 <sup>21</sup>

Early in the new century notices appeared as follows :

MAY HILL POST OFFICE,

12 June, 1811.

In consequence of the great difficulty attending Postage Accounts due to this Office, Notice is hereby given that no Letters will be delivered hereafter to any Person whatever unless paid for at the time of delivery.

Gentlemen taking newspapers are requested to settle their Arrears immediately at the expiration of the present quarter which terminates on the 1st July next, and in future to make a quarter's advance, or their papers will be discontinued, without distinction.

GEORGE P. JOHNSON.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The full report of the Committee was published in the Royal Gazette of Jamaica, 1814, Vol. XXXVI, No53.

<sup>22</sup> The Royal Gazette, 1811, Vol. XXXIII, No. 25, page 7.

## JAMAICA

### ITS POSTAL HISTORY, POSTAGE STAMPS AND POSTMARKS

In 1835 Jamaica made great efforts to take over the control of her own Post Office, on the grounds

- 1) That the annual Postal balance of some thousands of pounds should benefit the Colony and not go to the G.P.O., London.
- 2) That having control, Jamaica would correct many grave irregularities of the Post.
- 3) That as the North American Colonies had been permitted to take over their Post Offices, the same privilege should be afforded Jamaica. (C.O. 137, 206.)

However, in spite of all the endeavours of William Burge, the Jamaica Agent in London, Great Britain jealously guarded the control and unwittingly made a rod for her own back as the transference was a matter of coercion twenty-five years later, when the question was debated in both Houses, time after time, with much warmth of feeling. Rowland Hill's scheme of Penny Postage, introduced into England in 1840, aroused the greatest interest in Jamaica, and meetings were held in all the Northside towns to petition for cheaper postage throughout the island.

"While only one penny sterling," wrote John. G. Vidal, Clerk to the House of Assembly, in a memorial to the British Government in 1840, "is permitted for each letter at home, We are paying nine pence for letters carried not half the distance, and a letter weighing eight ounces is charged five shillings and four pence."

The parishes of Portland, and of Clarendon in 1841, and St. James in 1843, all forwarded Memorials to the Queen on the subject; and at a meeting held at the Falmouth Court House on Christmas Eve, 1842, Mr. J. Castello, the Editor of the Falmouth Post, stated "he thought that a penny stamp on each paper would be an equitable tax." This was probably the first time the use of postage stamps for Jamaica had been advocated.

In spite of a very strongly worded Memorial drawn up by the Assembly and forwarded to the Queen in 1853, the only reduction prior to Jamaica taking over control, was that the postage of printed papers within the island was reduced to one penny per ounce in 1843 (Maberley, 31 October, 1843).

The local postage was considerable, whilst each Packet Postage amounted to an average £200. Only one letter in four was prepaid in Kingston, and only one in ten of those emanating from the country districts, whether addressed to Kingston or London. The only letters habitually prepaid were the Sailors' and Soldiers' at a penny each.

## JAMAICA

### ITS POSTAL HISTORY, POSTAGE STAMPS AND POSTMARKS

Neither was Jamaica more successful in her endeavours for better mail transit in the island.

"We are satisfied," wrote Maberley in 1843, "that the local Jamaica mails are afforded the best security which the description of people the Postmaster was obliged to employ as couriers would permit . . . and that a greater rate of speed could not be maintained as the remuneration for mail conveyance was not sufficient to induce many persons to tender for the service." It was this parsimony of remuneration to the district Postmasters and Mistresses that lay at the root of the trouble, and greatly hindered the development of the Post in Jamaica throughout the whole of the nineteenth century.

Thirty-five prominent citizens of Montego Bay raised such a terrific clamour in 1855, that these importunate Northside gentry had perforce to be granted better mail facilities.

The district posts left Kingston once a week on Saturdays, at midday for Windward, at 3 p.m. for Northside, and at 6 p.m. for the South-side; and a Post left Kingston for Spanish Town at 7 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and returned the same day.

The mail was conveyed on a mule, the postman, a negro slave, riding another, and it went at the average rate of about 70 miles in the twenty-four hours. The Windward, Portland and Port Maria Mails were taken by three slaves on foot, which the Committee on Post Reform, in 1814, considered a dilatory method of conveyance.

The mules were well trained, accidents seldom occurred, and very few attempts were made to rob the mail, although later<sup>23</sup> it became necessary to arm the postmen with pistols.

The correspondence and newspapers were first placed in brown paper and canvas bags, which were put into leather portmanteaux furnished by the General Post Office, well strapped together with a chain from end to end, the chain being carefully sealed. All the Post Offices were supplied with seals bearing the name of the office on them, and every precaution was taken to prevent the postboys from loitering, as the postmasters had power to bring before the Magistrate any case of negligence.

The district Post Offices, on the score of economy and safety, were established at the Court House at Montego Bay, Falmouth, and Say. La Max. In the smaller places the Post Offices were very primitive, badly situated, and difficult to reach. The postmistresses had to supply all the office stationery out of their eight to twelve pound annual emolument.

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<sup>23</sup> \* Report of James Wilson, the Postmaster, dated 12 April, 1844.

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Mr. Manford, the Postmaster of Spanish Town (in 1879), thus described his office:

"In 1849 I had no place given me for keeping the Post Office, no fixtures, no boxes for the receiving of Public Letters, or for making up the mails, and I had to find a place to keep the Spanish Town Post Office.

"I was obliged to purchase for nine pounds the fixtures and other requisites in my predecessor's office, and Mr. Osborn gave me a room free of rent (or rather) part of Messrs. Jordan and Osborn's store of stationery free of charge. I repaid him in placing the addresses in the Gazette by authority instead of giving him actual money for the room, he being the Contractor for issuing and printing them.

"My part I railed round, and this was used as the Post Office till 1868, when the Governor removed the Office to the Lower Part of the Court House. The Mails from the North and South Side were due at midnight, and having to be dispatched to arrive at the G.P.O., Kingston, at 5 a.m. left one no chance but to be on the look out."

From July 1847 there were two posts a week to the Northside, Southside, and to Leeward, but the mails rarely ran to time owing to rough roads, fallen trees, floods, storms, and hurricanes, and the ill-condition of the mules. It often took thirty hours for the mails to reach Montego Bay from Kingston ; the River Road was often impassable owing to landslides, and the mails had to go over a mountainous track over boulders ; at Rio Bueno the river was frequently so swollen that the mails were carried several miles from the main road through Stewart Town; and a favourite story was that the mails took so long toiling over Mount Diavolo that when they finally reached Duncans in the early hours, the Postmistress was in such a state of drowsiness that she handed out her husband's nether garments instead of the mail bag.

In 1860 Jamaica took over the control of her own Post Office, and celebrated the event by clothing her postmen in a distinctive uniform of blue cloth with red facings, but the breeches were home-made.<sup>24</sup>

In 1863 four letter-boxes of cast iron were placed about Kingston, but in all other respects there was little alteration in methods. The same idlers crowded around the Post Office on Packet days, whilst the clerk in charge of the postage stamps was not accommodating and took his time and convenience in supplying customers.

To amend the late arrival of the mails, the authorities determined that all persons employed in carrying mails from town to town should also carry watches, and the Contractor in Kingston was instructed:

Commencing in February (1868) an Official WATCH will be entrusted to the Courier in charge of the Northward Mails. The watches having been contracted to go for 72 hours without being wound up, will regulate the carriage of the mails with a uniform rate of time from Kingston to Montego Bay and back.

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<sup>24</sup> \* Jamaica Gazette, 3 October, 1861 ; Jamaica Guardian, 13 December, 1861, page 2.

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At each Post Office the Courier must exhibit his watch to the Postmaster so that the necessary entries may be made in the Time Bill. The Post Masters have been instructed to satisfy themselves as to the good order of the clocks, and in event of accidents report the cause.

You will make your Couriers clearly to understand that they are responsible for the safe custody and good treatment of the Time Pieces, and it will therefore be their duty to bring to the notice of the Post Office any matters in connection with the watches that may require attention.

I am, Sir,

Postmaster for Jamaica.

Your obedient Servant,

A. J. BRYMER.

P.S. On reaching Montego Bay the Courier must deliver the Clock to the Postmaster who will acknowledge it on the Way Bill and make an entry on handing it to the Courier for the return ride.

The intention was good, but either owing to the roads or the couriers the watches got out of order.

On 2 July, 1868, the system of Tri-weekly Inland Posts was inaugurated.<sup>25</sup>

To prepare for this increase of work all the Deputy Postmasters were given the following instructions for the public :

- 1) A late Fee of 3d. for letters posted after a certain time. The letters to be fully prepaid by stamps.
- 2) Stamps will NOT be sold after the letter box is closed.
- 3) For the reception of late letters an extra Stamp Box is to be provided.

The mails also arrived at Spanish Town by the iron road, there being in 1864 two trains a day from Kingston when the line was not flooded by the Rio Cobre. In July 1869 the line was extended to Old Harbour, but the trains seldom ran to time and had to be drawn by the "Emancipation" in front, and pushed by "The New Era" locomotive in the rear.

Explosions, breakdowns, accidents, and cows led the Postmaster to terminate the mail contract in 1873 and spend his £200 per annum to better purpose, and the mails went by road.

In 1879 the Governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave, took over the railway on behalf of the Government at £90,000. The permanent way was relaid and ballasted, twenty-eight bridges were built, besides numerous other improvements, and the mails again were sent by rail.

F. Sullivan notified the public on 11 August, 1878:

On and after August 5th Daily Mails will be carried by Railway between Kingston, Spanish Town and Old Harbour. For the convenience of the public a Post Office Receiving Box will be placed at each Railway Station.

To meet increased business the G.P.O., Kingston, had to move to larger premises in 1866/67 ; and to avoid congestion there was a general house delivery of letters in Kingston on and after 11 January, 1872. The Inland Postage for 1876 amounted to £9322, and the Packet to 5504, an average of thirty bags going by each bi-monthly steamer (R.M.S.P.).

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<sup>25</sup> G.P.O. notice dated 19 June, 1868, signed by William Kemble.

## JAMAICA

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On 1 April, 1876, the Colonies were circularized as to joining the Postal Union. The Governor of Jamaica telegraphed on 27 May: "Jamaica should certainly join postal union. I will consult Legislative Council."

Sullivan, in a long letter on the subject to the Colonial Secretary, dated 24 October, 1877, stated :-

"Following English practise, in Jamaica when a Registered letter has been lost and the responsibility for such loss clearly brought home, the officer at fault is required to make good the contents to the loser, where such contents are moderate in amount. This is simply an act of Grace.

As proposed the sender of a letter that had been lost would be entitled to an indemnity of £2—no matter what the actual value of the contents of such letter may have been.

. . . With respect to exchange of letters with value declared I would remark, that as at present constituted, the Jamaica Post Office is not in a position to undertake so great a responsibility. The salaries of the District Postmasters are so small that it is only by careful selection and the exercise of considerable forbearance . . . that a tolerably successful working of the Department is arrived at.

"Mail conveyance over the more important lines of road is performed at night and the safety of the mails is at the mercy of the Mail Courier unwatched by any Guard, and who probably is only in receipt of some 6sh. or 8sh. a week. In my opinion it speaks volumes in favor of the Class of people so trusted that a Mail Robbery is of very rare occurrence.

"Unprotected as the mails undoubtedly are it would not be advisable to create any fresh temptation to plunder, and . . . the transmission of Articles of value and money for a stated insurance is not now possible in Jamaica at any rate." (C.O. 137, 485.)

Jamaica joined the Postal Union on 1 April, 1877, but was exempted from its provisions regarding Money Orders, and the Exchange of Letters with value declared.

To improve Mail transit, Jamaica endeavoured to establish a Mail Coach Company with a capital of about £6000, but although a lengthy prospectus was broadcasted nothing came of the project, until a few years later, when as a result of enthusiastic public meetings in the Northside towns, His Excellency ordered two mail carts from England.<sup>26</sup>

Only one mail coach arrived, and the Morning Journal (15 August, 1873) described it as "a clumsy Noah's Ark on wheels requiring two or three elephants to draw it, and best fitted for use as a Porter's Lodge."

The taxpayers of Spanish Town first beheld it on 19 August, 1873, when it was brought in by Inspector Crosby with F. Allwood, the P.O. Inspector, on the box, the journey from Kingston to Queen's College, Spanish Town (13 miles), having been completed in 1 hour 30 minutes.

It proved to be so heavy as to be utterly useless, and Jamaica's first mail coach ended its days in a shed of the Kingston Barracks.

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<sup>26</sup> County Union Paper (Montego Bay), 25 March, 1865 ; Colonial Standard, 27 May, 1865; Falmouth Post, 29 July, 1870, and 30 January, 1872. C.O. 137: Letter of W. C. Sergeant, Crown Agent to Colonial Office, London, 18 September, 1874.

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At the end of 1878 the Government subsidized a mail coach between Old Harbour and Mandeville which gave great satisfaction.

The Governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave, wrote in June 1879:

"There is at present no public conveyance of any kind whatever about this island except the distance from Spanish Town to Old Harbour of the railway, and a small mail coach which induced by a guarantee from the Government has run with success for a few months from the Railway Terminus at Old Harbour to . . . Mandeville."

A mail coach service between St. Anne's Bay and Kingston commenced on 31 October, 1881, and one to Annotto Bay on 2 October, 1884.

When the railway was opened to Porus on 26 February, 1885, and later to other places, a daily delivery became universal.<sup>27</sup>

In 1883 a Royal Commission was appointed to enquire into the Government Departments. The Post Office came in for very little criticism. "The Post Office Department is one of the best managed in the Island," stated the Report, " but it does not pay its way owing to having to convey a vast quantity of official correspondence, and free, which reduces its income £2000 a year, and secondly, the Island Telegraph, though a great convenience, reduces the income. . . The country Post Offices are 91 in number, and it is not expedient to close any of them; though the postal system has been extended faster than the wants of the people warranted, but it is a great convenience to numbers in every district."

Although prepayment had been enjoined by the Postmaster, and indeed was the almost universal practice, yet it was not enforced till 1872 by the following notice:

GENERAL POST OFFICE,

31st December, 1871.

### POSTAL CHANGES.

On and after 1st January the postage on inland letters will be prepaid. Newspapers ½d. each.

Country letters received in Kingston will be delivered by the Post Office Letter Carrier at houses specified on the address, if prepaid in the morning.

If unpaid or insufficiently paid in the afternoon, Packet letters will also be delivered from house to house but not Packet newspapers, at any rate on day of receipt.

By an annual payment of: £2 :2: 0 any person can cause his correspondence to be retained in office for delivery on application.

FRED SULLIVAN,

Postmaster for Jamaica.

It may be convenient here to give the rates of postage within the island as given by Mr. Sullivan in 1877.

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<sup>27</sup> The office of a Travelling Postal Supervisor was established in 1871, abolished in 1879, and revived in 1891.

JAMAICA  
ITS POSTAL HISTORY, POSTAGE STAMPS AND POSTMARKS  
INLAND POSTAL RATES.

1860	Town or Office Delivery	4d	These rates fixed by 5 George III. Cap. 25.
	Under sixty miles	4d	
	Over 60 and under 100 miles	6d	
	Over 100 miles	8d	
1861	Town or Office Delivery	1d	
	Under 30 miles or within the same parish	2d	
	Over 30 miles and under 60 miles	4d	
	Over 60 miles and under 100 miles	6d	
	Over 100 miles if under $\frac{1}{4}$ oz.	6d	
	Over 100 miles if over oz. and not exceeding $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	8d	
1862	Under 30 miles	2d	
	Over 30 miles and under 60 miles	3d	
	Over 60 miles	4d	
1865	Under 30 miles	2d	
	Over 30 miles	3d	

G.P.O. Notice dated 1st December, 1864: "Inland Postage. . . . On and after 1st January, 1865, the 4d rate of postage will be abolished, and a uniform rate of three pence charged upon all letters not exceeding  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. in weight will be conveyed a distance exceeding 30 miles, except upon inter-parochial which will be taxed as at present, 2d.

The present rate of progressing for heavier letters will continue as at present.

(Signed) A. J. BRYMER.

1872	If prepaid	2d
	Unpaid letters charged with double postage.	

PACKET POSTAGE.

Until 1863 the rate of postage on letters to England was, whether by packet or private ship . . . . . 6d. per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.

On 1 April, 1863, the rate was altered as under :

If by packet	1s. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz
If by private ship	3d. per oz

(Signed) F. SULLIVAN. Postmaster for Jamaica.

Subsequent rates were :

April 29th, 1884. Between Kingston, Up Park Camp, Gordon Town, Cold Spring, Halfway Tree, Spanish Town, Old Harbour and Port Royal, these places having a daily mail service. .1d. per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.

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On 24 September, 1885, the Legislative Council suggested reducing postage to one penny over the whole island, but as the Postmaster reported the Postal income would be reduced from £10,900 to £5000 the matter dropped, to be revived on 16 April, 1886, and 16 April, 1888.

February 1st, 1886. All Post Offices on the Porus and Ewarton Railway Extensions .  
1d. per ½ oz.<sup>28</sup>

December 27th, 1889. Throughout the island . 1d. per ½ ounce.

A Post Office Notice dated 24 September, 1889, heralded one penny postage per 1 ounce to come into force on 1 January, 1890, but a later Notice, dated 27 December, 1889, authorized penny post from that date (i.e. 27 December).

The old Postmasters of the good old days and slow old ways may be left to rest in peace, but mention must be made of Mr. Frederic Sullivan, as all who collect the stamps of Jamaica owe a great deal to his able administration of the Post Office.

Mr. F. Sullivan, who became Chief Clerk of the Post Office in 1861, and Postmaster on 1 May, 1870, though for some years previously he had been practically in charge, was the first Postmaster of the new school, spending his time in his office and always being found at his post.<sup>29</sup>

Mr. Sullivan realized that real efficiency could only be gained by meeting the demand for increased wages in order to procure efficient men.

The Commissioners in 1883 had stated that the illiterate character of the Postmasters was a bar to any attempt to add to their responsibilities.

As, however, the island finance could not meet higher wages, without increased taxation, Mr. Sullivan endeavoured to keep his Department self-supporting, at the same time realizing the first necessity was a cheap and efficient post.

Writing to the Secretary of State on 14 May, 1890, Mr. Sullivan said: "Rigid economy has ever been my rule in the disbursement of Funds, but at the same time I advocated a liberal treatment of those who contribute to the Service, not only by economizing expenses but by realizing revenue. The only blame that has been attached to my administration of the Post Office Department is that it was too advanced."

The advance was well illustrated by Acting-Governor Rushworth in 1877:<sup>30</sup>

"When Jamaica took over control there were only two island posts a week and comparatively few Ocean Mails, and the work of the Office was effected with comparative ease by five officers, while now it is with extreme difficulty maintained with

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<sup>28</sup> The G.P.O. notices are dated 16 April, 1884, and 19 January, 1886, respectively. See also Daily Gleaner, 14 October, 1885, and 4 February, 1886.

<sup>29</sup> "The Post Office has greatly improved. The returns of 1871 show a total of 1,362,000 letters, etc. Owing to the scattered state of the population in many districts, great numbers of letters are still sent by private hands " (Gardner's History, page 500).

<sup>30</sup> Despatch of Acting Governor Rushworth to Secretary of State, 30 April, 1877.

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a staff of 16 officers; the duties now comprising a letter delivery in Kingston, three posts a week, a business of £40,000 a year in Money Orders, 81 District Post Offices to control, and Ocean Mails averaging eight a week. . . . When Mr. Kemble retired Mr. Sullivan was then appointed Postmaster for Jamaica and has since conducted the business of the Department to the entire satisfaction of the Government. He is as energetic and zealous an officer as is to be found in the Service, and the generally admitted efficiency is to be attributed to his assiduity and devotion . . . and the Community has benefitted by the improvements that have of late years taken place in the Postal System of the Colony."

The Post Office continued to show a series of intrepid advances, utilized opportunities, and spirited reforms (Colonial Standard, 2 Oct., 1889 ; 29 Dec., 1890) ; with the nett result that the twenty years of Mr. Sullivan's administration witnessed the introduction of the prepaid system, a general house to house delivery by letter-carriers, the admission of Jamaica into the Postal Union, the issue of reply-paid postcards, the establishment of a mail coach service, the authorization of an Inter-Colonial Money Order System, the establishment of a Parcels Post Exchange between Jamaica and the U.S.A. and England, the introduction of the Postal Order System, and the reduction of the local postage to a uniform rate of a penny.

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The following is a review in chronological order of the progress of the Jamaica Post Office during the period 1890 to 1926, and is compiled by one who has had the privilege of serving in the Department during the whole period.

The year 1890 was a remarkable one in the history of the Jamaica Post Office, since it was, on the 1st January of that year, that the local postage on letters was reduced from 2d per half ounce to 1d per half ounce, and on the 1st June the postage on letters for places carried by vessels not under contract with the Imperial or any other Government was reduced from 4d to 2½d per half ounce.

On 1 April, 1890, the payment of official postage by means of stamps was introduced, and stamps surcharged "Official," not available for the prepayment of ordinary correspondence, were issued—the denominations were ½d, 1d, and 2d. The ½d were locally surcharged, with the result that a number of errors are recorded.

On the same date local postal orders were introduced of the following denominations, 6d, 1/-, 1/6, 2/6, 5/-, and 10/-, and these had the effect of displacing postage stamps which were a recognized means of remittances of small sums, the Post Office redeeming them at 2½ per cent discount, a privilege which still exists but is seldom used.

The year 1891 saw the establishment of a Post and Telegraph Station in the Jamaica Exhibition Building on the 27<sup>th</sup> January and it was maintained until 16th May—the private letter-boxes used then are still in existence in the Montego Bay P.O., and a framed set of stamps of Australia and photographs of Post and Telegraph Offices, which were sent for exhibition, still adorn the wall of the present G.P.O., Kingston.

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The postage on letters to all countries in the Postal Union was reduced from 4d. per half ounce to 2½d on 1 January, 1891, and in three years the loss righted itself by the increase in mail matter. This was considered a remarkable recovery.

The registration fee locally and abroad was reduced from 4d to 2d, and the redirection fee abolished on 1 June, 1893. In this year an incident occurred in the conveyance of a mail in the country the like of which had never occurred before nor since—a walking mail courier was waylaid between Richmond and Annotto Bay and murdered, the mail bag was rifled—the murderer has never been brought to justice.<sup>31</sup> In this year was introduced by law the private telephone system which means that anyone desiring telephone communication between points outside of the area which was and is controlled by the Jamaica Telephone Co., under licence, could obtain the right from the Government under a licence which the Postmaster for Jamaica issued.

The prepayment of postage on official letters introduced in 1890 was discontinued at 31 December, 1897, and the franking system reverted to.

On 24 May, 1899, Jamaica joined the Imperial penny postage scheme, and letters from that date could be sent to any part of the British Empire at 1d per half ounce. This reduction was hailed with delight all over Jamaica.

The event of 1901 was the inauguration of a Direct Service between the United Kingdom and Jamaica via Bristol fortnightly, under a contract concluded between the Imperial Government and Messrs. Elder, Dempster & Co., of Liverpool, for conveying bananas to England, and mail and passengers were included ; Jamaica's contribution being £20,000 per annum. This Service helped in no small manner to bring Jamaica nearer the United Kingdom, and certain passenger facilities offered by these boats were taken full advantage of. The exchange of correspondence in a short time showed marked increase and has never seriously fallen off.

In this year also mailing boxes on passenger trains were introduced and duly appreciated.

Bicycles were first used in 1903 for clearing pillar-boxes; their use has been considerably extended, particularly in the delivery of letters.

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<sup>31</sup> For the special Postal Labels affixed to letters recovered from a mailbag washed away in a river near Annotto Bay on 18 February, 1890, vide G.S.M., November, 1927, page 39.-EDITOR.

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The mails to the interior of the Colony were until 1902 a tri-weekly service only, but in this year a daily service to all Post Offices was introduced, and the effect was an increase in the exchange of correspondence.

For the first time in the annals of the Post Office there was a surplus between the Revenue and Expenditure in 1905, and since then the Department has always been self-supporting and frequently augments the revenue of the Colony with a surplus.

In the year 1907 Kingston was suddenly thrown into a state of disorder at about 3 p.m., on the 14th January, by the occurrence of an earthquake, and the buildings (three) in which the Post Office was conducted did not escape. The building in which the receipt and dispatch of mails was conducted was not so badly damaged, but the blocking of the approach to it made it impossible to clear it rapidly for reoccupation; therefore on the following morning P.O. business was established under a *lignum-vitae* tree in the yard of the building in which the Executive Branch had been housed—"Blundell Hall."

The posting boxes in the original building, as well as the street collecting boxes, were intact, and a couple of boxes were hurriedly erected in the yard above referred to. Letter-carriers were arranged behind empty parcels post boxes, and on these, letters for street delivery were alphabetically assorted, and with the aid of the police a delivery of letters was thus maintained for several days. The telegraph service was shortly restored on the verandah of a building constructed entirely of wood in which the parcels post business was done, as the lines were not interrupted to any extent.

As soon as the approach to the original building was cleared, it was reoccupied (4 February, 1907), and a substantial old building in front of it, which had housed the Audit Office and Treasury, was occupied by the Administration, telegraph and parcels post branches. This, strange to say, had the singular effect of concentrating the Department, a condition for which it had been crying out for years.

The train service was not interrupted, so that internal communication was maintained with very little break.

The staff of young women behaved splendidly under the most trying conditions, particularly as shocks of minute intensity were constantly occurring for some days after.

On 1 August, 1908, the cash on delivery system of parcels between the United Kingdom and Jamaica was introduced and has since grown considerably. It has undoubtedly had the effect of encouraging the purchase of British-made goods.

On 1 April, 1910, mails were conveyed for the first time by a motor conveyance supplied by the Jamaica Motor Co., under a contract; the experiment was, however, short-lived, for in a brief time the cars failed to perform the service, and by arrangement the contractors were relieved and a motor service was not introduced again until 1913.

## JAMAICA

### ITS POSTAL HISTORY, POSTAGE STAMPS AND POSTMARKS

On 24 October, 1913, for the first time in the annals of the Post Office, it was housed in a building which might be described as suitable—this being the direct result of the earthquake of 1907. The Department had been suffering for years from the want of suitable and adequate accommodation, and the public were not slow in appreciating the improved accommodation, for in less than two years extra space had to be provided, and in 1923 an adjacent and commodious building was purchased by the Government and the greater portion of it allotted to the parcels post branch, which had grown considerably.

On 1 January, 1911, sixpenny telegrams were introduced and full advantage was taken of the change by the public, as is reflected in the increased number of telegrams.

On 26 February, 1912, an electric stamping machine was for the first time used in the G.P.O., Kingston, and proved a great help in the gain of time in stamping mail matter.

On 2 September, 1912, by an arrangement with the London P.O., British postal orders were sold at all post offices in Jamaica, and redeemed locally or in any part of the British Empire.

On 20 October, 1913, the Public Works Department undertook to carry out a daily motor service on one of the main lines of post, and this was successfully accomplished. It has since been handed over to a contractor, and all the main lines of post are now by motor conveyance under contract.

In the year 1914 the Great War started, and the effect on the Post Office varied as time progressed. Gradually the regularity and frequency of arrival of mail boats direct from England diminished, the volume of mail matter exchanged became less, and the importation of parcels post reduced to a minimum.

Merchants in the United States did not fail to take advantage of the trade condition and in a short time the importation from America was considerably increased. Jamaica did not escape loss of mail matter as a result of enemy action, several ships being lost which carried mails in which Jamaica was interested.

From 1 April, 1916, to meet the depletion of revenue caused by the Great War, various rates were imposed as a War Tax.

(These are given in the chapter on the War Stamps.—ED.)

## JAMAICA

### ITS POSTAL HISTORY, POSTAGE STAMPS AND POSTMARKS

During this year three public call telephone stations, under the direct control of the Jamaica Telephone Co. and the Post Office, were erected at suitable centres.

The most outstanding event of the year 1919 was the remarkable increase in the Revenue Receipt of the Department of 50 per cent, and during 1919 and 1920 there was an exodus of trained telegraph operators to the United States, and the Administration was sorely tried to maintain the stations.

This Department did not escape the disease known as "Strike" which was taking place all over the world, and for a very short period on 22 December, 1919, the work of the Department was held up as a result of a strike, which was happily soon settled.

At the end of 1924 there were 236 post offices in existence, or an average of one office to every 17.8 square miles. In 1904, or twenty years before, there were 159 post offices, or an average of one to every 26.4 square miles. The increase is 48.4 per cent in twenty years.

The Jamaica Post Office cannot be accused of creating new issues of postage stamps; on the contrary, the Colony has been most conservative and has almost exclusively used the portrait of the reigning Sovereign for the design of its postage stamps. The first pictorial stamp issued was the 1d. "Llandoverly Falls" in 1900, and between 1919 and 1922 the present pictorial issue was launched.