

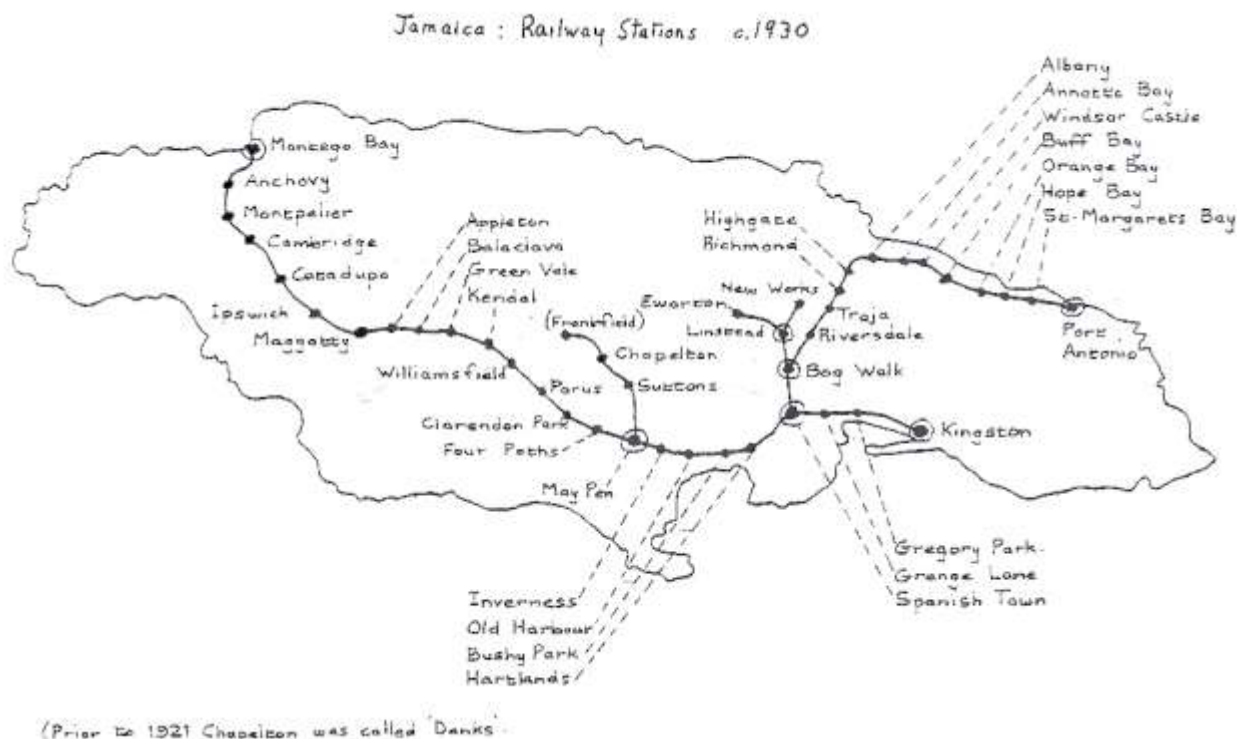
B207 2005-DEC – RAILWAY STATION POSTMARKS

BY RICHARD HART

One of the pleasures of collecting the big blue Jamaica Railway Station Postmarks was that they could be found on large stamps such as the 1d Llandovery Falls, the 1½d Contingent and the 6d Port Royal Harbour.

Prompted by the arrival of *The Postal History of Jamaica* by E B Proud I got round, at last, to studying closely the album of railway station postmarks that formed a small part of the Amaryllis Collection of Jamaica. Having the benefit of extremely short sight I am able to study difficult marks more easily, pick out features that can be overlooked and reassess the Amaryllis dates and marks that do not seem to have appeared in the Literature.

Sir Mortimer Wheeler remarked, I believe, that an archaeological excavation had no value until it was properly published. The same could be said for a collection of postmarks.



I illustrate some of the better marks and label them with simple abbreviations that are easier to handle than the traditional typology which I find irritatingly inconsistent (see e.g. *Jamaica Railway Town Cancellations Part 2 Topaz*, Seifert & Cwiakala, B.C.P.S.G.J. undated (Topaz et al)).

JR indicates the earliest styling (issued 1901): JAMAICA RAILWAY (at the top) and place name in the lower part of the circle. The JR lettering is bold and somewhat squat as in early JR(ST) cancellers that were issued shortly after the Government had taken over the Railway from the American company that had, by 1896, extended the network to some 200 miles.

By 1924 forty one railway stations had, for a while at least, served as post offices or postal agencies. In about a fifth of these locations the postal work had been completely transferred from the local offices.

Most cancellers were approx. 32mm in diameter and had a central dating unit that could be removed (and replaced inverted quite often!). Months and years were neatly shown apparently by slugs but dates by numbers on bands that shifted horizontally so that occasionally parts of three 'dates' appear on the same strike. The stations were also supplied with a distinctive lightish blue ink.

From 1903 some circular date stamps JR(ST) included the word STATION in the outer component of the canceller. Various small crosses and small arcs in the case of -MAY PEN- divide the two parts of the legend on the outer circles of some marks. These I relate to the individual stations as it seems pointless to invent a typological code for them.

As early possibly as 1903, certainly by 1910, it must have become obvious that the Railway would remain Government controlled for the foreseeable future. By this time replacement cds marks V'T. read JAMAICA GOV'T. RAILWAY



JR Hartlands



VT. +Buff Bay+



V'T. Orange Bay
T.P.O. Oct 2 1913

In about nine circular date cancellers (GNT), issued from 1921, the word GOVERNMENT was not abbreviated. These marks are somewhat elusive and the Spanish Town mark of 1920 (illustrated below) may be the sole surviving complete strike. This particular version is unusual in that the "top" reading has an additional 'S' on RAILWAYS. The dating unit is not only difficult to read it is also inverted. The -MAY PEN- GNT mark also reads JAMAICA GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS at the top.

V'T. & GNT and very late JR marks have striking tall thin lettering.

For short periods in 1906 and 1907 an unsatisfactory red ink was used at a few stations. Impressions were usually poor but not as messy as the impressions created by the dark violet ink issued in the last few months that railway station postmarks were applied.

Additional wording 'BAGGAGE DEP'T' or 'BAGGAGE OFFICE' is found on marks applied at Kingston 1903-1912. On these strikes the tiny decorative crosses separating the top and bottom wording of the outer ring appear.

A major development was implemented on 1st September 1913. Sorting Carriages were added to trains on the main routes: Kingston to Port Antonio and Kingston to Montego Bay. Shortly afterwards, a temporary rubber rectangular cachet was supplied with T.P.O. boxed and with the letters 14 mm high. Amaryllis claimed the ORANGE BAY example illustrated above had the EKD travelling post office mark. Before this T.P.O. cachet was applied letters posted on train postboxes had received no special mark. The system of clearing the railway station postboxes ten minutes before a train was due and using the special station postmark ceased on 31st December 1924. A special effort appears to have been made by collectors to acquire covers postmarked with this date. However, the cancellers were left at the stations for dating rail tickets although postmarks crop up intermittently and may have been used for some official railway business.



V'T.
ALBANY
MAR 14 1919



JR (?one of three versions)
CAMBRIDGE
AUG ? 1905



V'T
+KINGSTON BAGGAGE OFFICE+
DEC 20 1911



JR(ST)
+KINGSTON STATION+
JUN 1 1904

A Second 'Jamaica Government Railways' cds

Close examination of the distinctive blue cds marks formerly part of the Amaryllis Collection has not only revealed a wider range of dates for various marks but has also revealed a mark not previously recorded 'JAMAICA GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS SPANISH TOWN' Fig.2 (i.e. with the extra 'S' previously only recorded for MAY PEN Fig.1).

I would be interested to hear of any other examples of this Spanish Town mark and of any marks using the plural form, 'RAILWAYS'.

Editors note: This mark is not even recorded in the recent Proud book, however, Mike Hamilton informed me that **three** Spanish Town plural form marks were in the Swarbrick collection (also illustrated).

Hart Collection:

Fig. 1



GNT(S)
MAY PEN
? ? 1923 (inverted)

Fig. 2



GNT (S)
+SPANISH TOWN
(possibly MAR 20) 1920 (inverted)

Swarbrick Collection:

