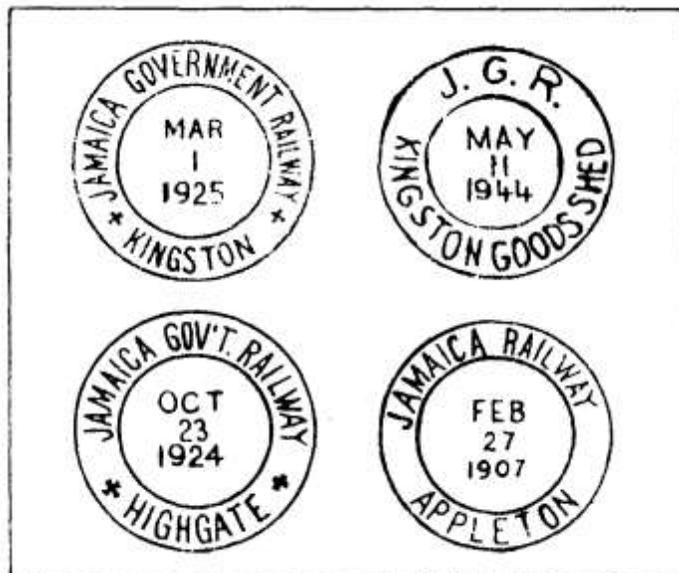


## PHILATELY AND THE RAILWAY

By. Col. Fred E. Seifert

Editor British Caribbean Philatelic Study Group

During the 300 years of its existence, the Jamaica Post Office has employed numerous means for transporting the mails. One of these has been the Jamaica Railway, which had a celebration of its own last short of a year ago when its 125th Anniversary was marked by issuance of a set of commemorative stamps



The Jamaica Railway first came into service on Friday, 21st November 1845, upon the completion of a line from Kingston to Angels Station, just beyond Spanish Town, a distance of slightly over 14 miles. The opening was celebrated as a gala event, with the Earl of Elgin, then Governor of Jamaica, and many other dignitaries attending and making the first trip from Kingston to Spanish Town and return. Music was furnished by the band of the 1st West India Regiment.

The train was pulled by the locomotive Projector, depicted on the 3 cents stamp of the commemorative set shown above. The gentleman in the high hat is David Smith, Manager and one of the Founders of the company. The stamp is based on an 1862 photo. The Projector and an identical engine, the Patriot, were 2-2-2 outside cylinder, single-framed tender engines, built by Sharp Bros. of Manchester, England. They were originally intended for use by the Berlin-Hamburg Railway, but were diverted to Jamaica to expedite delivery, with two replacements then constructed for the Germany company.

As the state of the art of locomotive construction progressed, from time to time new models were introduced on the Jamaica Railway, and older engines were modified in the Kingston Shops. Finally in recent years, steam gave way to the diesel power that is presently in use. An excellent article, The Jamaica Government Railway and its Locomotives, by P.C. Dewhurst, appeared serially in The Locomotive during 1919, and a copy of it may be seen in the West India Reference Library of the Institute of Jamaica.

In 1869 eleven miles of track were added to extend the railway to Old Harbour. Then in 1879, the Jamaica Railway Company was bought out by the Government, and in 1885 extensions of 2¼ miles from Old Harbour to Porus, and 14½ miles from Angels to Ewarton were opened. Five year later in 1890, the Government sold the railway to the West India Improvement Company, an American syndicate. A proviso of the sale was that lines be extended to Montego Bay and Port Antonio. These were soon under construction, and that to Montego Bay completed in 1894 to add 66 miles, while the line to Port Antonio was opened two years later, adding another 54½ miles to the system.

The American owners were unable to make financial success of the Railway, and in 1898 after they had defaulted in paying interest on the mort gage bonds, the bondholders took

## PHILATELY AND THE RAILWAY

By. Col. Fred E. Seifert

Editor British Caribbean Philatelic Study Group

over. In 1900 a Supreme Court decision enabled the Government to re some ownership. Two additional extensions were made; 13 miles from May Pen to Chapelton in 1913 and 10 miles from Chapelton to Frankfield in 1925. During World War II additional trackage was constructed to serve the U.S. Military Bases. Since that time the only further construction has been an 18% mill line built by Alcoa Minerals Ltd. of Jamaica, will physical connection to the J.R.C. system to haul bauxite from their mines to a specially constructor port. The line is leased to the J.R.C., with Alcoa providing the rolling stock and J.R.C. the motive power. With this addition, the total track mileage became 229.

Just when mail began to be carried by the Rail way is not recorded, but it is known that in 1873 the Postmaster terminated a mail contract because he found the rail service to be unreliable. However, on 5th August 1878 Daily Mail Service was begun between Kingston, Spanish Town and Old Harbour after improvements including re-laid track and ballast, new bridges and better maintained equipment gave promise of more reliable service. Post Office Receiving Boxes were placed at each of these three stations The earliest example of a piece of mail bearing a marking to evidence carriage by rail is shown below. The RAILWAY LETTER BOX/SPANISH TOWN marking apparently indicates that it was deposited in that box. This is the only example of this marking known to the writer, and no such markings of Kingston or Old Harbour have yet been reported, although they may exist. Whether or not this service continued between 1890 and 1900 when the American Co. and the bondholders operated the Railway is not known By 1900 with resumption of Government ownership, letter boxes were installed at all Railway station with passenger facilities. Mail posted in these boxes is readily identified, for the stamps were cancelled with the station date-stamps which also served (and still do) to validate railway tickets. These have a die facing upward, covered by an inked ribbon, the item to b stamped being placed face down against the ribbon It is then struck with a flat plate on a spring-loaded arm to make an impression of the die.



Space will not permit listing of all the known markings used at the various Jamaica Railway. Stations and offices, but a few of the types are illustrated here. The first stamps to be used read 'JAMAICA RAILWAY' at the top, while later versions read 'JAMAICA GOV'T. RAILWAY', 'JAMAICA GOVERNMENT RAILWAY' (or RAILWAYS), or simply 'J.G.R.' Most

# PHILATELY AND THE RAILWAY

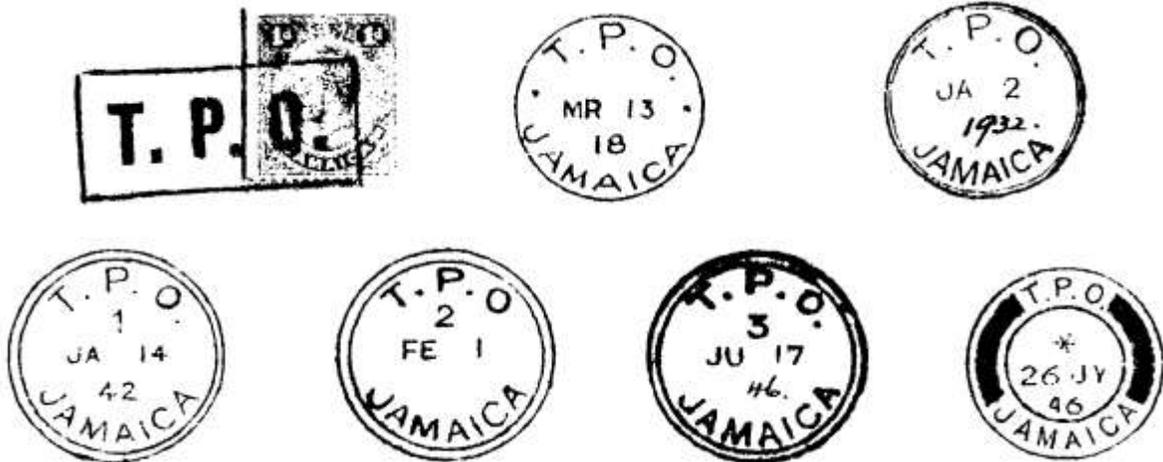
By. Col. Fred E. Seifert

Editor British Caribbean Philatelic Study Group

of the stations used at least two types. Strikes generally bear dates between 1901 and 1926 and are in blue ink. Red black and purple ink strikes are also found but are rare.

Train Post Offices which permitted the public to post mail aboard trains were first used on 1 September 1913. The first postmark employed by them was a boxed T.P.O. stamp struck in purple ink, with the best strike being found on a piece also bearing ANNOTTO BAY station mark of SEP 19, 1913. This boxed mark was subsequently replaced with steel date-stamps, with a number of varieties being used during the life of this service. Some are shown below.

On 14 May 1966 all T.P.O.'s, rail and highway made their last runs. It had been determined that more efficient movement of mail could be made by the use of a number of motor van trunk lines operating out of the G.P.O., with feeder lines connecting with them to serve offices off of the main routes. In the heyday of railroading, the Jamaica Government Railway was able to survive despite the political interference that it was subject to as a Government Department. However, when trucks and motor cars arrived on the scene and began to take away much freight and passenger traffic, the Railway began to decline. Finally after a lengthy study of the matter, the Government decided to loosen its control, and on 1st April 1960 the Jamaica Government Railway's "rights, powers, privileges, assets and liabilities" were taken over by the Jamaica Railway Corporation, a public corporation governed by a six-man board appointed by the Minister of Communications. Those interested in further study of the various J.G.R. Station and T.P.O. markings will find a detailed article by Thomas Foster in Vol. 3, No. 1 of West Indies Stamps, edited and published by the late Everard Aguilar in 1965. (It should be noted that through a numbering error there were two issues of that publication bearing this same issue number). Early articles on Jamaica Railway markings include a comprehensive one by B.deBurca in the February 5th, 1960 issue of Stamp Collecting, and some data will also be found in the Handbooks on Jamaica by Collett, Nicholson, et al, and by Alfred N. Johnson.



All of the Jamaica Railway markings are scarce to rare, and building up a collection of them is a challenging project. Since many collectors and dealers fail to recognize them, now and then one can find a few 'sleeping' in club circuit books or dealers' stocks and purchase them for the nominal value of the stamp. Good hunting!