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Railway Cancellations of Jamaica  
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### **(1) Brief Historical Outline**

Incorporated in 1843, the promoters of the Jamaica Railway Company were Mr. William Smith of Manchester, and Mr. David Smith of Jamaica. A single line to the Angles beyond Spanish Town was opened on November 21st, 1845, by the Governor, the Earl of Elgin. Further progress by the Jamaica Railway Company was not made until 1869, when the line was extended to Old Harbour from Spanish Town. Extracts from the report on the proceedings are worth recording.

"An enormous crowd of spectators was collected all around the station, and several very extensive booths were filled with well dressed females." "The excellent band of the 1st West India Regt. taking its stand in the last third class carriage playing lively airs."

At the 'superb dejeuner' after the ceremony was over, "Several well timed speeches were made, and the company did not separate until a late hour."

In 1879 the Government purchased the complete undertaking of the Jamaica Railway Company, for the sum of £93,932. The system was improved, especially the stations and permanent way, and the undertaking soon began to show a profit.

In 1885 new extensions were opened to Ewarton and Porus, and loans to the extent of £635,000 were raised to defray the cost. Further surveys were made to extend to Port Antonio and Montego Bay, when Mr. Frederick Wesson and other American capitalists submitted a proposal for the purchase of the Railway from the Government for £800,000, of which £100,000 was to be paid in cash and the balance in second mortgage bonds of 4 per cent. The purchasers further undertook to extend the line at the rate of 12½ miles in eighteen months, and at the rate of 12½ miles per annum thereafter until through communication was established between Kingston and Montego Bay and Kingston and Annotto Bay. Various other clauses were inserted, including the grant by the Government of one square mile of Government land for each mile of new line constructed. The Railway was finally transferred to the Company on January 1st, 1890.

Extensions went ahead and included the purchase of a section of 124 miles from Porus, which has been constructed by The West Indian Development Co., but in 1894 default on the payment of interest on the mortgage bonds exceeding one year, the trustees assumed possession of the line, since when it has been administered as a Government Department.

Few railways have had such a chequered career. In this case the venture has only once paid a dividend since its inception. In the year 1943, it showed a loss of £330,000 despite the fact that nearly all road competition had ceased through lack of petrol and its only other competitor was one coastal steamer.

Under the Lend Lease Act, the United States Government established a large Airfield, and also a Naval Base, and to both branch lines were constructed.

### **(ii) The Carriage of Mails by Railway.**

- 1864. Mails arrived at Spanish Town by Iron Road, there being two trains a day from Kingston when the line was not flooded by the River 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 the front and THE NEW ERA behind or in the rear.
- Explosions, breakdowns, accidents, and cows led the Post Office to terminate the Mail contract in 1873, and they spent the £200 to better purpose, and the mails went by road.
- 1879. The Governor, Sir Antony Musgrave, wrote : —  
"There is no public conveyance of any kind whatever about the island except the distance from Spanish Town to Old Harbour of the Rly. and a small mail coach which induced by a guarantee from the Government, has run with success for a few months from the Railway

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terminus at Old Harbour to Mandeville."

- 1885. When the railway was opened to Porus on February 26th of this year, and later to other places, daily deliveries became universal.
- 1891. Mailing Boxes introduced on Passenger trains.
- 1901. Saw the introduction of facilities for posting mails at the forty-three stations.

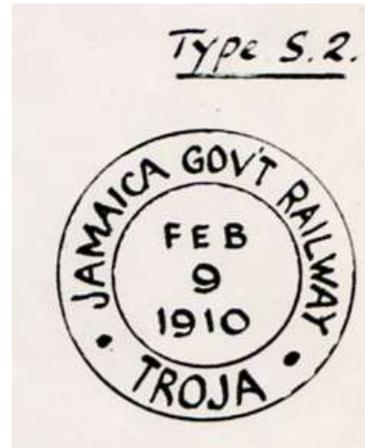
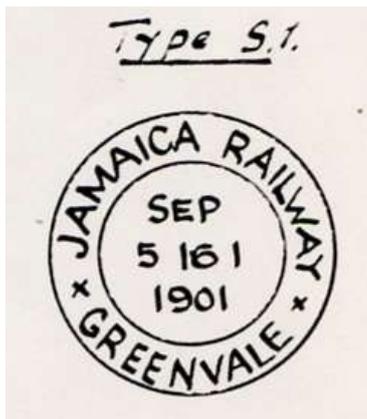
The office of travelling Postal Supervisor was established in 1871, abolished in 1879, revived 1891.

**(iii) The Railway Cancellations.**

The Postmarks of these mails are divided into two types which I have classed as S.1 and S.2. The first bears the words: 'JAMAICA RAILWAY' at the top, and the name of the station, such as KINGSTON, in the lower half of the circle, the date being in the middle in three lines. Diameter of circle 31 mm.

Type S.2 is a later type similar to S.1, but with the inscription 'JAMAICA. GOVT. RAILWAY'. These date stamps are usually in blue ink, or greenish blue, but early ones can be found in red and are very scarce. I possess one example in black which I think is unique, anyhow it has not been recorded.

The facilities for posting letters at the several railway stations ceased after 31st December, 1924, but restarted on March 28th, 1927, since when all such letters have been postmarked with the T.P.O. cancellations and the station names abolished. Forty-four station names are known, but there are only forty-three stations, as Chapleton was originally called DANKS.



CHAPLETON postmark is very scarce, as are some of the smaller stations such as Windsor Castle Sidings.

STATION NAMES.

Kingston	Ewarton	Montpelier
Albany	Four Paths	New Works
Anchovy	Grange Lane	Old Harbour
An notto Bay	Green Vale	Orange Bay
Appleton	Gregory Park	Port Antonia
Balaclava	Hartlands	Porus
Bernard Lodge	Highgate	Richmond
Bog Walk	Hope Bay	Riverside
Buff Bay	Inverness	St. Margaret's Bay
Bushey Park	Ipswich	Spanish Town
Cambridge	Kendal	Suttons
Catadupa	Linstead	Troja
Danks	Maggotty Bay	Williamsfield
Chapleton	May Pen	Windsor Castle Sidings
Clarendon Park	Montego Bay	.

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Several of these can be found with both types of dated stamps.

The blue or coloured postmarks are the dating stamps of the various stations. These were used when the Government permitted the posting of letters at the railway stations. The letters could be posted up to 10 mins before the scheduled time of departure of the train.

The Station Master cleared the boxes, obliterated the stamps and entered the number of letters posted in his baggage book. He then handed the letters to the Postal Clerk in charge of the Travelling Post Office. The T.P.O. postmark was then stamped on the letter, which was handed over at the terminal station of which there were three to begin with, viz. Kingston, Montego Bay, and Port Antonio; later two more were added, Ipswich and Richmond. On receipt at the terminal station they were stamped with a receiving mark.

All regular trains to and from these places had Post Offices on board, and sold stamps, and also telegrams could be accepted en route, these being handed in to the nearest railway station, and telegraphed over the Company's wires. The Travelling P.O. did not sell stamps till the train was on its way.

From 1st September, 1913, all letters bore T.P.O. date stamps consisting of a single-lined circle 26 mm. in diameter, "T.P.O." at top and "Jamaica" at bottom, the date being in the middle in two lines. It is always found in black ink. This system was stopped on 31st December, 1924, but restarted 28th March, 1927.

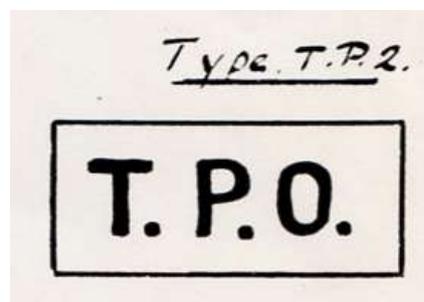
**(iv) The T.P.O. Cancellations.**

There are three types of T.P.O. marks which I have classified; these are Types T.P. 1, T.P. 2, and T.P. 3. These are quite simple to distinguish:

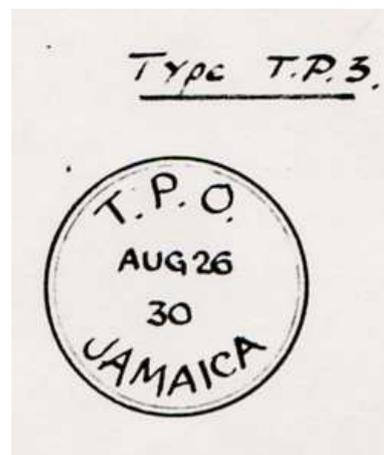
T.P.O. 1 is a single-lined circle, 26 mm. in diameter with T.P.O. at the top and JAMAICA at the bottom, the date being in the middle in two lines; and is always found in black ink. In 1927 with the re-introduction of the Travelling Post Offices a new cancellation is found, this time a double-lined circle, similar to the ordinary Town date stamp found on modern stamps. There is one point with regard to T.P. 1. There is nearly always a break in the line circle, and one or two have almost pear-shaped point. This break in the circle may be due to the lateral movement of the train, which I understand is considerable, but there was obviously more than one date stamp in use from 1901 or even earlier, and it would be possible from a close study of covers to determine the route taken by these small differences, but unfortunately early T.P.O.'s on cover are very scarce.



T.P.O. 2. Here is something which has not as yet been recorded. It consists of a rectangular purple cancellation, 38 mm. x 17 mm, with no date, and just the letters T.P.O. inside. There is no real evidence of the exact date for this, but I rather assume that it is really the first type of T.P.O. cancellation in use. The Jamaica handbook does not even list it. It may of course have been a temporary obliterator, but it would mean the acquisition of a number of covers to prove either statement.



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We have at the moment writing yet a, fourth type of travelling postmark, T.P. 4, which came into use about 1939. The double-lined circles as in Type 3 are used, but below the letter P. of T.P.O. there is a numeral, either 1, 2 or 3. These numerals denote four trains:

- 1 Kingston to Montego Bay
- 2 Montego Bay to Kingston
- 3 Port Antonio to Kingston
- 3 Kingston to Port Antonio

The cancellation with the numeral 3 is used on the service worked by the single train running between Port Antonio and Kingston and back on the same day. So far all the examples seen of this postmark bear the month and the day, but the year is left out. Due to the War it has not been possible to obtain much definite information as to the working of the modern T.P.O.'s, and the date given, 1939, may be subject to revision.

