

The 'Squared Circle' Postmarks of Jamaica

By THOMAS FOSTER

Although the Jamaica Post Office reluctantly achieved independence in 1860, it continued to use British operating procedures and equipment. Until the late 19th century, official regulations stated that the office date-stamp should be impressed on the letter, leaving the stamp to be cancelled by the numbered obliterator and, of course, this meant that two distinct operations on every piece of mail. As business gradually increased, various ways of reducing this work were sought, only one of which, the duplex obliterator, Type O2, was applicable to the Jamaica Post Office.

The breakthrough came when Great Britain and Jamaica joined the Universal Postal Union and as that august body viewed the use of obl iterators with some disfavour, a change in the system had to be decided on.

From early 1882 onwards, all new permanent Jamaican date-stamps were intended to cancel stamps on letters and as the existing obl iterators wore out, they were not renewed and those remaining in use were finally withdrawn between 1894 and 1901. The British Post Office, however, still remained unconvinced that stamps would be completely obliterated until, to paraphrase a previous writer, some genius succeeded where Euclid had failed



and squared the circle, thus producing a workable and easily-handled combined date-stamp and obliterator which became known as the 'Squared Circle' type. Following the normal course of events, these were introduced into the Jamaica Post Office, all items concerned being manufactured in Great Britain on orders from Jamaica. Unfortunately, individual despatch dates do not exist.

The new date-stamps certainly obliterated efficiently and, before long, complaints mounted regarding their penetrative powers. As a result, some postmasters took it upon themselves, probably with official sanction, to reduce the sharpness of the corners by filing them down. Early impressions always fall into the listed types and any apparent corner differences are simply due either to wear, to which they were extremely susceptible, or the action mentioned above.

Because of the possibility of damage to mail, it was eventually decided to re-equip with new markings and as the Jamaica Post Office still insisted upon some obl iterating work being done by the dater, the replacement had two concentric circles forming the circumference, thus producing the 'Double Circle' date-stamp, Type A, which was to remain a distinctive feature of Jamaica's postal history until the early 1940's. All new permanent daters issued from 1892 onwards were of this type except for a brief period about 1900, when a number of larger 'Squared Circles' were brought into use as an experiment, owing to the size of the then current 'Llandovery Falls' stamps. Most were soon discarded but others remained in use with some of the smaller marks until 1938, generally at little offices which had not received replacement date-stamps.

In the following lists, daters used by the Post Towns are given the prefix, 'PSQC', and those by the Kingston G.P.O., 'KSQC'. Where this classification was the first postmark used by an office, the date of opening is given below the office name, otherwise the last known date of the preceding type is quoted. The earliest and latest known dates of use of each 'Squared Circle' mark are also included. These postmarks were almost

always struck in black ink and none of them can be considered scarce but it is difficult to find clear strikes of certain items.

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who can add to the information presented in this collation.

POST TOWNS

Type PSQC1

This was the standard post town date-stamp of the classification and it began to be issued in early 1882. There have been attempts in the past to divide it into sub-types based on a structural study of the obl iterating corners but it has already been stressed that any differences were due to wear etc.



Indeed, the only possible sub-division occurs where certain date-stamps with long office names have separating dots between them and the name of the colony, and they are noted where existing. Office names of more than one word often contain a separating dot, as indicated in the listing, but others do not. In all cases, the 'month' plug was placed on the left side of the dater but transpositions of the 'month' and 'day' plugs occur on many marks and are widely collected, being indicated thus (4) after the dates of use.

The early daters of this type were equipped with four time code plugs, i.e. 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', which were intended to indicate morning, noon, afternoon and evening mailing times but they were seldom used correctly, if at all, and probably were never issued with the later daters. MANDEVILLE used the code plug 'M' in its date-stamp, possibly because of its growing importance as a mail distribution centre and frequent mailing times. In the following list, the different code plugs employed by the offices are shown and a dash (—) denotes that none was used. Varieties of these plugs exist and are collected and, therefore, included in by signs as indicated in the footnotes.

The date-stamp itself was set in a holder with a circular frame of about 35 mm, which often shows as a circle around the inked impression and the year in the earliest known date is that of issue unless otherwise stated.

Post Town	Index Codes	Dates of Use and Remarks
Anchovy, St. James. (Opened Nov. 15th 1881)	A, C, -	Jul. 21st 1882-Oct. 1 st 1918.(4) Code 'C' exists(1) Or (3)
Annotto Bay, St. Mary. (P11, Jan. 24th 1885)	-	Mar. 30th 1885-Apr. 14th 1895(4)
Bath, St. Thomas (P11, June 1st 1896)	-	May 5th 1890-Aug. 1923(4)
Black-River, St. Elizabeth. (P11, 1882)	A, B, C, -	Aug. 13th 1882-Oct. 1st 1913(4)) or Code 'C' exists(1) or (3)
Browns Town, St. Ann. (P11, Sept. 6th 1882).	A	Mar. 2nd 1883-Sept. 14th 1912(4)
Cave Valley, St. Ann (Opened Mar. 7th 1881, using TRD1 Undated)	C, -	Jun. 24th 1882-Sept. 14th 1935(4)
Chapelton, Clarendon. (P11, 1890)	-	Feb. 21st 1890-Sept. 1st 1909(7)
Christiana, Manchester. (Opened Feb. 18th 1890).	-	Feb. 19th 1890-Nov. 10th 1917(4). Known Dated Feb. 9th 1890 In Error.(1, 7)
Crofts Hill, Clarendon. (Opened Aug. 9th 1887).	-	Nov. 8th 1887-Dec. 4 th 1929.
Cross Keys, Manchester (Opened Nov. 1st 1881).	A, B, C, D	(8)Oct. 9th 1882-Apr. 8th 1916(4) Code 'C' exists(1)
Darliston, Westmoreland. (Opened Mar. 13th 1886)	-	Issued 1886. Jul. 28 th 1887-Jul. 29th 1935.

<i>Post Town</i>	<i>Index Codes</i>	<i>Dates of Use and Remarks</i>
Devon, Manchester. (Opened Jan. 15th 1881, using TRD1 Undated) Falmouth, Trelawney. (P11, May 1 1896).	A, B, C, - A, B	Apr. 14th 1882-Apr. 26th 1915. Code 'C' exists(3) Feb. 23rd 1883-June 1 st 1909(4). Code 'B' exists (1 or 3)
Frankfield, Clarendon (Opened May 16th 1890).	-	June 25th 1890-Sept. 9th 1926.(7) Has separating dots at sides.
Glengoffe, St. Catherine. (Opened Apr. 1st 1882)	A, B, C, -	Mar. 1882-July 10 th 1927.(4) Known dated Jan. 17th 1882 in error. (8) May 9th 1885-Nov. 1926.(4) Known in blue ink June 22nd 1905.
Hagley Gap, St. Thomas. (TRD2, June 20th 1884).	-	Sept. 3rd 1890-Dec. 24th 1925.(4, 7) Has separating dots at sides.
Hampstead, St. Mary. (P13, Nov. 19th 1889).	-	Issued 1884. May 21 st 1885-Aug. 29th 1910. (Pronounced 'Law-Lands').
Laughlands, St. Ann. (TRD1, Feb. 25th 1884)	-	Issued 1882. Mar. 19th 1883-1935.
Lluidas Vale, St. Catherine. (Opened Mar. 7th 1881, using TRD1 Undated) Manchioneal, Portland. (P11, Oct. 7th 1895). Mandeville, Manchester. (P11, Sept. 26th 1884) Mile Gully, Manchester. (P9, May 4th 1886)	A, B, C, - - M A, C, -	Apr. 2nd 1890-Sept. 18th 1901. (8)Apr. 18th 1885-Jan. 5th 1925. Issued 1885. Code 'C' exists(3). Mar. 17th 1886-Nov. 12th 1894.(4)
Montego Bay, St. James. (P11 b, 1886)	C, -	Dec. 16th 1884-Sept. 15th 1896.(4) Code 'C' exists(1, 2 or 3)
Old Harbour, St. Catherine (P11, 1883?) Oracabessa, St. Mary. (Opened Nov. 1st 1881). Port Antonio, Portland. (P11 b, Sept. 9th 1892). Port Morant, St. Thomas (P11, 1887). St. Margaret's Bay, Portland. (TRD3, 1889)	A, C A, B, C - - - -	Mar. 9th 1883-Dec. 2nd 1908.(4) (8)Feb. 2nd 1882-Apr. 17th 1911.(4) (8)Jan. 25th 1889-June 13th 1902.(1, 2, 3, 7) (8) Feb. 23rd, 1890-Nov. 18th 1904.(4) (8)Feb. 17th 1890-Feb. 24th 1902.(4) Has separating dots at sides.
Salt River, Clarendon. (P13, Feb. 12th 1890).	-	Mar. 2nd 1890-Nov. 11th 1938.(4) Has separating dots at sides.
Stewart Town, Trelawney. (P11, 1887)	-	Apr. 22nd 1890-May 30th 1925.(4, 1)
Ulster SPRING, Trelawney. (TRD1, May 20 1881).	A, B, C, -	Feb. 3rd 1882-Jan. 10th 1918.(4)
Up Park Camp, St. Andrew (TRD2, July 8th 1885).	-	July 8th 1885-Feb. 10 th 1910.(4)
Whitehouse, Westmoreland Opened early 1892).	-	June 20th 1892-Dec. 15th, 1915.
York Castle, St. Ann. (Opened Mar. 1st, 1879, probably using unrecorded TRD).	-	Issued 1882. May 8th 1883-Oct. 19th 1899.

Footnotes

- (1)Sideways to left.
- (2)Sideways to right.
- (3)Reversed.
- (4)Exists with 'day' and 'month' plugs inverted.
- (5)Exists with 'month' plug inverted.
- (6)Exists with 'day' plug inverted.
- (7)Usually found in very worn condition.
- (8)Date of issue unknown.

Type PSQC2

The larger class of date-stamp was brought into use in 1900 and believed to have been introduced owing to the larger size of the 'Llandoverly Falls' stamps.

The basic format is similar to PSQC1 but the 'day' plug is normally placed at the left side and there are always separating dots on either side of the date-stamp. The outer circumference is composed of three concentric circles and none of these markings used time-code plugs. There are no recorded dates of despatch to the island.

Mavis Bank, St. Andrew. (Opened 1900).	Nov. 26 1900-Mar. 8 th 1919.(4) Only recorded with 'day' and 'month' plugs in transposed position.
Riverside, Hanover. (Opened 1900, probably using unrecorded TRD).	(8)Jan. 2nd 1901-May 3 rd 1935.(4)
SPANISH Town, St. Catherine. (DC2a and DC1a still current).	May 6th 1900-Dec. 14 th 1923. (4) Known in blue ink Apr. 4th-Oct. 3rd 1904.
Spur Tree, Manchester. (P11, Aug. 30th 1900).	Aug. 31st 1900-Feb. 27 th 1918. (4, 1)



Type PSQC3

Similar in all respect to PSQC2 but the outer circumference is composed of only two concentric circles.

Post Town	Dates of Use and Remarks
Fellowship, Portland. (TRD8a, July 5th 1900).	Sept. 26th 1900-Dec. 1935.(4) Only recorded with 'day' and 'month' plugs in transposed position.

'Squared Circle' markings were not issued to the Kingston G.P.O. until some three years after they had first been used by the post towns and then they replaced the old type K11 daters and were used concurrently with the early Kingston 'Double Circle' types of the next decade.

KINGSTON SQUARED CIRCLES



Type KSQC1

Very similar to PSQC1 and differing only in the style of the code plugs, in this type consisting of a Roman numeral and a capital letter which together comprised a 'signature' dater with time coding. The numeral was fixed but the letters rotated through the alphabet and indicated the time of postmarking. All the alphabet was used but only the listed letters have been recorded, these various index combinations being collected and many of them hard to find. The earliest and latest known dates of each individual date-stamp are also given.

A set of five, possibly six, date-stamps were introduced in early 1885 and can be individually identified by the fixed Roman numerals I to V. It was the usual practice to issue such equipment in sets of six items and the 'unrecorded' mark with numeral VI may have been used on non-postal duties within the G.P.O. As has been stated, these markings were 'signature' date-stamps, i.e., each was used only by a particular postal employee or at a certain counter position.

Date-stamp I	IA IB IC ID IE IF IG IH II IJ IK IL IM IN IO IP IQ IR IS IT IU IV IK IY <i>January 7th 1885-August 23rd 1892.</i>
Date-stamp II	IIA IIB IIC IID IIE IIF IIG IIH III IIK IIL IIM IIN IO IIP IIQ IIR IIS IIT IIU IIV IIX IIY <i>January 10th 1885-June 1890.</i>
Date-stamp III	IIIA IIIB IIIC IIID IIIE IIIF IIIG IIH IIJ IIK IIIL IIIM IIIN IIIO IIIP IIQ IIIR IIIS IIIV IIW <i>January 26th 1885-April 15th 1897.</i>
Date-stamp IV	IVB IVC IVD IVE IVF IVG IVH IVI IVL IVO IVT IVW IVX IVY <i>February 8th 1885-November 1889.</i>
Date-stamp V	VC VD VE VG VH VI VK VN VQ VR VV VX VY VZ <i>January 27th 1885-June 28th 1892.</i>

These five date-stamps were used extensively for back-stamping mail passing through the G.P.O. and in later years appear in a very worn condition and are difficult to distinguish from worn strikes of 'Double Circle' markings which used similar index combinations.

Type KSQC2

As KSQC1 but with an index combination comprised of an Arabic numeral and letter. A set of six date-stamps were put into service in early 1890 and are distinguished by the numerals 1 to 6. Date-stamp 5 has never been recorded and 6 is uncommon, both items probably being used on non-postal business in the G.P.O.

Date-stamp 1	IA IB IC ID IE IF IG 111 II IK IL IM IN IO 1P IQ IR IS 1T IU IV IX 1Y 1Z <i>April 4th 1890-January 27th 1894.</i>
Date-stamp 2	2A 2B 2C 2D 2E 2F 2G 2H 2I 2K 2L 2M 2N 2O 2P 2R 2U 2V 2W 2X <i>March 4th 1890-February 2nd 1896.</i>
Date-stamp 3	3A 3B 3C 3D 3E 3F 3G 3H 3I 3K 3L 3M 3N 3O 3R 3S 3T 3U 3V 3W 3X <i>February 15th 1890-July 7th 1892.</i>
Date-stamp 4	4A 4B 4C 4D 4E 4F 4G 4H 4I 4K 4L 4M 4N 4O 4P 4R 4S 4T 4U 4V 4W 4X 4Y <i>March 9th 1890-August 8th 1893.</i>
Date-stamp 6	6A <i>1889-November 4th 1889.</i>

The notes after the listing of the last Type KSQC1 are also applicable here.



Type KSQC 3



Type KSQC 4

Type KSQC3

This type had the same basic format as PSQC1 but no time code plug was included. It was issued for use at the special post office operating at the Jamaica Exhibition of 1891 (as shown on the -id. pictorial stamp of 1920) in Kingston. There are separating dots at either side of the date-stamp and this is yet another Jamaican postal marking which is nowhere near as scarce as is often maintained.

It was in use from January 27th to May 16th, 1891.

Type KSQC4

The final type issued at the same time as PSQC2. The separating dots on either side are replaced by eight-rayed stars and each of the four corners are comprised of only one arc and a triangular segment. The 'month' plug is placed at the left and there is a letter and an Arabic numeral, in that order, placed above the date as an index combination. The movable letter indicated the time of postmarking and was possibly used alphabetically in turn through the alphabet but the numeral was fixed. So far, only Date-stamp 2 has been seen but it is possible that other daters of this type were used on non-postal business.

Date-stamp 2	A2 C2 D2 E2 F2 G2 H2 I2 K2 L2 M2 N2 O2 Q2 <i>September 8th 1900-October 17th 1902.</i>
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A transposed index combination, '2M', is known used between October 2nd, 1900 and May 29th, 1901.

Forgeries

Several faked Jamaica postal markings have been made in past years to deceive the unwary and a glaring example occurs in this classification. Identical blocks of four of the 4d. MCA of 1911 exist, beautifully date-stamped with a larger than usual 'Squared Circle' marking reading 'REGISTERED' at the top in place of the office name and dated 1896, which at once reveals its true colours! On these fakes, the outer rim of the holder shows up as a square rather than the usual circular form.

Acknowledgements & Bibliography.

'Jamaica' by Collett, Buckland Edwards, Morton & Nicholson (Gibbons 1928).

British Caribbean Philatelic Journal. Paul Aman, D.D.S.; L. A. Couxtney; R. H. Lant; Hooton Mitchell, F.B.O.A., F.S.M.C.; Thomas E. Moseley; Clinton L. von Pohle; Colonel F. F. Seifert, U.S.A.F.; Robert Topaz; W. K. Watson; and many others.