

SOME AMAZING JAMAICAN DISCOVERIES !

By THOMAS FOSTER

In the October 1958 issue of the British West Indies Study Circle *Bulletin*, Colonel A. Murray requested information concerning the unusual Clarendon type 'P7' date-stamp that occurs on a local entire of April 16th, 1855, sent from Morgan's Valley in Clarendon Parish to Great Valley, May Hill P.O., in Manchester Parish. No such information was forthcoming and a check of my own extensive records of known pre-stamp entires failed to reveal any further examples.

As the date-stamp did not include the name of the colony in its make-up, it was surmised that it had been manufactured locally on the occasion when the Clarendon type 'P2' date-stamp was lost in 1855, then doing service until the new Clarendon type 'P8' date-stamp arrived. This assumption is now shown to be only partially correct.



P 2



P 8

Type 'P2' of Clarendon is early 1855, whilst Clarendon 'P8' was sent to the colony on May 16th, 1855, exactly one month after the entire was written. From this data, it can be assumed that the loss of Clarendon 'P2' occurred in March 1855.

A search of the G.P.O. Record Books now reveals that on October 22nd, 1850, a utility date-stamp (Type 'A') was sent to the colony together with a 'double set of types and 62 additional letters'.

This marking, surely the forerunner of all modern 'skeleton' postmarks, had a diameter of 33 mm. with lettering 3 mm. in height and, with its multiplicity of 'slugs' and 'positionals', was obviously intended for provisional use in case of damage to, or loss of, any current date-stamp. Its measurements coincide exactly with the Clarendon 'P7' date-stamp and this particular



P 7



P 11

mystery would appear to have been finally solved. Efforts to trace this remarkable entire have failed and the author would be grateful for the chance of a close inspection should its owner happen to read this article.

The search also showed that a similar utility date-stamp (Type 'B') was sent to Jamaica on February 27th, 1858, this time with a diameter of 27½ mm. and slightly smaller lettering. So far, no example of its use has been recorded.



P 12



P 13

With the coming of the obliterated, a new series of single-circle date-stamps, 'P11' and 'P12', were issued to the various post towns and some of these remained in use until after the withdrawal of the obliterated and were the last type of permanent steel date-stamp to be issued in Jamaica prior to the advent of the squared-circle and double-circle types.

A further type of date-stamp, 'P13', resembles 'P11' in some respects, but has the year plug expressed in four figures, and a few remarks regarding this type will prove of interest.

Examples of its use are confined to four post towns, i.e. SALT RIVER, WALKER'S WOOD, HAMPSTEAD and LACOVIA, the last two items being recent discoveries, whilst the first two items have previously been assumed to be of the 'P11' and 'P12' grouping. This assumption can now be disproved and I am convinced that they are further examples of the use of utility date-stamps such as Type 'A' and Type 'B'.



A



B

Type 'P13' appeared nearly four years after the single-circle types 'P11' and 'P12' had ceased to be issued and one would have thought that any new date-stamps would have been of the square-circle format which had been coming into use since about 1882. In addition, the appearance, style and positioning of the lettering is unlike that of 'P11' and 'P12' even though they are of similar format and, unlike those types, examples are exceptionally rare and only appear to have been used for a short time.

HAMPSTEAD is known from June 22nd, 1889, to September 9th, 1889, with three examples; LACOVIA from September 3rd, 1888, to December 9th, 1891, with three examples; SALT RIVER from 1890 to February 12th, 1890, with two examples; and WALKER'S WOOD from April 7th, 1890, to July 18th, 1893, with at least five examples. The Salt River item has an index letter 'A' placed above the date but the other three date-stamps are not known in that condition.

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The post office at Hampstead opened on March 6th 1889, and by September 3rd, 1890, was using a squared circle date-stamp which is very common. Salt River opened

on December 20th, 1889, and was using a squared-circle date-stamp by March 2nd, 1890; but Walker's Wood, which opened on March 31st, 1890, continued to use its 'P13' dater until it received one of the new double-circle types in 1893. On the other hand, Lacovia was quite an old office that had been closed from 1850 until it re-opened in 1869, using a 'P11' date-stamp, which can still be found, until 1916. The 'P13' dater was probably issued there when the current 'P11' required repair or was mislaid.

From this evidence, therefore, it must be assumed that the four date-stamps were of a temporary nature and that the Jamaica Post Office usually employed a utility marking at newly-opened offices pending the arrival of the squared- or double-circle types from England. In that case, other offices which opened about that time may have used them and remain to be discovered. Utility date-stamps had been issued to Jamaica over a number of years and some of the later types had the same diameter (25 mm. and 26½ mm.) as 'P13' with the same characteristics.

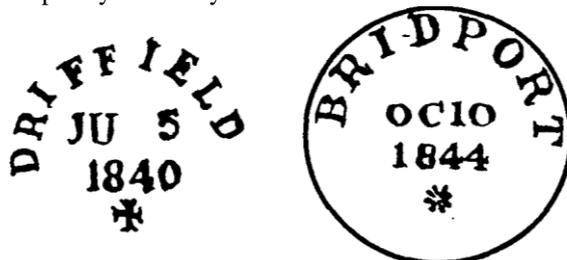
NOTE:—The postmark types mentioned here have been taken from the new work on this subject 'Jamaica, Postal History 1662-1860' by Thomas Foster, and should not be confused with those given in the earlier works of the late L.C.C. Nicholson.

JAMAICAN AND OTHER SKELETONS

(3 July 1969)

SIR,—Thomas Foster, in his article on 'The Amazing Jamaican Discoveries' (April 17th), states, regarding the type 'A' 'utility' date-stamp or 'skeleton' of 1850: "This marking surely the fore-runner of all skeleton postmarks".

Sorry, but we mustn't let him get away with this. As with most of the postmarks used in the Colonies in the 19th century, the skeleton type originated in Great Britain and the first loose-type hand-stamp, 'skeleton', 'traveller' or 'temporary'—as they are called—was without an



Early "Skeleton" cancellations

enclosing ring and was issued late 1839-40. My earliest example of this type is the Driffield hand-stamp, illustrated, enclosed. The first type with an enclosing ring was the Bridport hand-stamp, a fine-looking mark with seriffed letters and a decorative rosette feature. This is a scarce type and I have it recorded for only four towns between 1844 and 1846: Bridport, Rotherham, Dunchurch and Queen borough. This type then appeared with sans-serif letters and subsequently, smaller in diameter, with smaller lettering which is the general type of 'skeleton' postmark which was in normal use for the remainder of the 1800s and which, in fact, is still in use today. It did not, however, originate in Jamaica.

Ewell, Surrey. GEORGE CRABS.

JAMAICAN SKELETON POSTMARKS

SIR,—I feel sure that Mr. George Crabb (July 3rd), has found hidden meanings in my article, 'Some Amazing Jamaican Discoveries', that I was not aware existed.

Firstly, my remark on these 'skeleton' markings being the 'forerunner of all skeleton postmarks' applied only to Jamaican postal history—bearing in mind that there are several modern Jamaican markings of this kind in use of which Mr. Crabb may not be aware and that this was an article dealing exclusively with Jamaican postmarks.

Secondly, at no time did I claim that these skeleton markings originated in Jamaica. I have always been fully aware that the majority of all Jamaican postal markings have been manufactured in this country and that the various types of postmark have been used here before being put into service overseas.

My article simply laid claim to these being the first type of skeleton marking to be used by the Jamaica Post Office.

Hull, Yorkshire THOMAS FOSTER.