

Jamaica Newsletter No. 26

By Thomas Foster

The first item worthy of mention is a little variety to be found on the typographed **K.G.V 1½d Keyplate** (S.G.59). It shows the '1½d' in each value tablet clearly doubled at the right-hand side but how such 'doubling' could have occurred in this printing process without affecting the rest of the design is puzzling—and I am quite familiar with the 'ink stripping' flaws which create a similar appearance! I do recall, a long time ago, seeing a similar variety on the Ceylon K.G.VI rupee Keyplate stamp.

Current Affairs

Once again, the locally-printed first day covers provided by the Post Office are arousing comment. Many of those sold for the **Commonwealth Conference** issue were poorly printed and the usual complaints have been made of them being far too large for mounting on an album page. The Conference stamps were printed in the usual modern format of six panes of 25 stamps, these being numbered '1Ax4' to '1Fx4' on all values. Quantities printed of this set and the forthcoming **Butterfly** issue are as follows: Commonwealth Conference: 5c., 1,034,000; 10c., 818,000; 30c., 233,000; 50c., 83,000. Butterflies: 10c., 5,027,500; 20c., 2,027,500; 25c., 1,027,500; 30c., 527,500; Miniature Sheet, 27,000.

As has been announced elsewhere, a new J\$5 definitive is due to make its appearance and it is whispered that a new definitive series is on the way. There has been criticism of the current issue in some quarters ever since its appearance but I happen to know that it was very highly thought of by the Post Office hierarchy! The increased postal charges came into effect on May 1st. Amongst the more important changes, the inland letter and printed matter rates go up to 10 cents and 9 cents respectively; airletters will now be 18 cents whilst airmail to Canada and the U.S.A., will cost 20 cents per ½ ounce, and 25 cents per 1 ounce to the United Kingdom.

Registration Labels.

Little has ever been written about these items of postal stationery which occupy three or four volumes in my own collection! From the later years of the 19th century, a handstruck letter 'R' accompanied by a manuscript number indicated registration but early this century, labels in the familiar style appeared which, together with subsequent issues, can be divided into two major types: (a) Those printed in sheet format, either 100 or 1,000 set (earliest known date, September 29th, 1908); (b) Those from reels produced in rolls of 10,000, with side margins imperforate, which first appeared about 1936.

Initially, they were issued only to district and country offices and the first Kingston label did not appear until 1909, when it took the form of a provisional overprint on labels issued for use at the small office of Ginger Hill in St. Elizabeth Parish.

There is as much interest in these labels as there is in the adhesive stamp! At least 60 types have so far been identified, some being printed in one operation and others in two, often in various shades ranging from pale grey-blue to deep indigo existing in the same type or sub-type. Printing errors are not scarce, e.g., labels from MONTEGO BAY can be found spelled 'MANTIGO', 'MONTIGO' and 'MONTEGA'.

The 'sheet' labels were numbered downwards in vertical rows up to 100 or 999 and an unusual cover in my collection bears an unseparated pair tied by the postmark! No watermarked paper has been observed but various perforations exist, the early types being mostly perforated but the later items have clear-cut perforations in several gauges. Certain issues, mainly from the G.P.O., can be found with beautiful clear roulettes but I do not know of any imperforate labels.

The many types generally differ in the lettering formats, the usual style having the post office name above the word 'JAMAICA'. Sometimes both names are aligned and different combinations of upper and lower case type and/or capitals are to

be found, whilst others exist with or without punctuations after the post town and colonial names.

Blank 'sheet format' labels do not exist and when provisionals were needed it was customary to issue an office with sheets belonging to another office, leaving the postmistress to cross out the original and insert the new name in manuscript. Many such items exist but it is important to emphasise that these are of little value except when on the original cover.

The first 'reel format' labels appeared at the G.P.O. and were printed in black on azure paper. These were followed by labels in the normal colour with upper and lower case names and then by labels having tall, narrow capitals. This latter type existed until about 1947 when offices began receiving supplies of a similar type with the lettering in small, square capitals, the differences being distinctive. Later still, some offices received supplies of labels which resembled the original types in upper and lower case but with the addition of the island name, and to date, the district offices in the Corporate Area of Kingston and Lower St. Andrew have been issued with labels bearing the word 'KINGSTON' and the postal district number.¹ Hand-struck registration markings also exist from OCHO RIOS and KINGSTON, the format resembling that of the adhesive labels.

Many provisional issues are to be found amongst the 'reel' types, again, these only being worth collecting when on authentic covers. One type has the label completely void of office name or number whilst another has the number included but is without the office name. In each case, the missing details were intended to have been inserted in manuscript but very often, the label is tied, instead, to the cover by means of the postmark! In addition, the early practice of issuing offices with labels from other offices is still in operation and a tremendous number of examples are known to me and in my albums. It is quite easy to find a small office using labels from up to six other offices over a period of a few months!

Picture Postcards

An attempt is being made to compile a comprehensive checklist of all Jamaican picture postcards published to the present date and it is hoped that this will eventually form part of a forthcoming work. Should any reader have material not already checked by me, I would appreciate data, preferably accompanied by the cards in question. If this is not possible photostats of both sides of the card are required together with details of the colours of both wording and picture. Any items sent will be returned as quickly as possible.

Incidentally, can anyone confirm the existence of an Ottmar Ziehar 'Stamp Post Card' for Jamaica as mentioned in STAMP COLLECTING of August 14th, 1975? I am sure that I have seen one but cannot recall the details.

¹ See 'The Story of Kingston, Jamaica' in STAMP COLLECTING, February 15th, 1973.