

ERRORS FREAKS AND ODDITIES FROM JAMAICA LOCALLY APPLIED WAR STAMP OVERPRINTS

SYNOPSIS

SCOPE & PURPOSE

This single frame philatelic exhibit presents examples of errors, freaks, and oddities that appeared on Jamaican locally applied WAR STAMP overprints from 1916 through 1918. The stamps in this exhibit are used to emphasize the stress upon labor and resources experienced by the British West Indies colonies during World War One (1914-1918).

In the case of Jamaica, it is important to recognize that sending 15,600 middleclass planters, builders, skilled craftsmen, machinists, and even printshop workers to participate as soldiers of war strained the lives of those on the home front. The experienced labor force was seriously depleted. Additionally, with active U-Boats disrupting trade and resupply, the colony embraced a "Waste Not - Want Not" approach to daily life. This included using everything including what is today considered "Printers Waste". This exhibit shows examples of the released overprinted stamps which may have failed to meet standards but were needed to meet the purpose of their issue: Collect a tax to fund the war effort.

TREATMENT

The stamps are presented in order of issue and placed into groupings identified by their three distinct print settings. Examples of human errors, mechanical freaks, and oddities give a glimpse into the struggles the less experienced print shop workers had with meeting short deadlines, mechanical maintenance and printer cleaning. The goal is to see these stamps not through the eyes of philatelists but as what had to be placed in post offices to meet the public demand in a wartime environment.

HIGHLIGHTS

Significant items in this exhibit are highlighted by RED backing. This includes the only example seen by this exhibitor in the decades of study: A double letter insert (Third setting) on a cover of my own discovery.

CONTINUED

RESEARCH

My several decades of experience collecting and studying these overprints, their printing and their uses is the basis of my research. However, my personal library of reference works published from 1925 through 2009, a visit to the American Philatelic Research Library Digital Collection, and my participation in the West Indies Philatelic Study Group (UK) also contributed to this exhibit.

CHALLENGES

The identification of Errors, Freaks, and Oddities requires close and patient examination of these stamps to separate a larger number of over and under inking (neglected flat-plate cleaning) from the fewer authentic examples.

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

Title Page

Overprints Applied Properly

Section A: First Local Application – Straight-Line Overprint

Section B: Second Local Application – Narrow Vertical Spaced Overprint

Section C: Third Local Application – Wide Vertical Spaced Overprint

Primary References

1. Davis, John G. M., War Tax Stamps of the British Empire, First World War, The West Indies (2009). The Royal Philatelic Society London, UK. pp 215-256
 2. Howe, Glen D, World War: A White Mans War? World War One and the West Indies (2011). BBC History: www.bbc.co.uk/world-war Accessed March 22, 2025
 3. American Philatelic Research Library digital collection. American Philatelist, Volume XXXII, #8, May 1919, Page 304
 4. Understanding the process: Bunt, John P., The War Stamp Overprints of the Falkland Islands, 1918-1920 (1996). J. P. Bunt. Cornwall, UK, pp 4-5
-