

HAWAIIAN POSTAL CARDS and ENVELOPES: KINGDOM, PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, and REPUBLIC ISSUES



Synopsis of Exhibit

Historical Background: King David Kalakaua instructed Hawaiian postal authorities to order postal cards in 1881. Thus begins Hawaii's short use of postal cards and envelopes, which ended in 1900 when the United States postal service absorbed the Hawaiian postal service. In between 1881 and 1900, Hawaii issued a wide assortment of postal cards and envelopes, which were all printed by the American Bank Note Company (ABNC). Postal cards were issued in 1 cent, 2 cents, and 3 cents, and envelopes were issued in 1 cent, 2 cents, 4 cents, 5 cents, and 10 cents to meet Hawaii's domestic and foreign postal needs. Postal cards were initially engraved, but later orders were produced by lithograph. After the Royal government was overthrown postal cards and envelopes were overprinted, and in 1894 the newly established Republic of Hawaii issued new 1 cent and 2 cents postal cards. With regards to the envelopes, ABNC was instructed to provide a variety of envelopes, resulting in several sizes, weights, and types of paper being used in their production. Later orders were produced using new knives and ink colors on the 1 cent and 2 cents issues. The design used on the envelopes was from a drawing of Honolulu Harbor drawn by Henry Whitney, Hawaii's first Postmaster General. The Provisional and Republic governments continued to allow the use of Royal government postal issues until Hawaii ceased having an independent postal system. This occurred on June 14, 1900, when Hawaii's postal system was absorbed into the U.S. postal system, and all of Hawaii's postal issues became invalid for use, thus ended Hawaii's brief use of postal cards and envelopes.

Purpose and Philatelic Significance: This exhibit presents in chronological order, postal cards (single and reply) and envelopes from the Kingdom of Hawaii, the Provisional Government of 1893, and Republic of Hawaii periods. Examples of postal cards will show different printing types, with varieties of paper shades and inks. The envelopes start with trial color and as issued color proofs, and will show different varieties of sizes, knives, paper thicknesses, inks and paper colors. Prime examples of intended use and up-rated supplemental postage to numerous foreign countries are shown.

Exhibit Plan: Exhibited are mint and used examples of postal cards and envelopes, including up-rated and registered usages. This five-frame exhibit is organized as follows: Section I – **Title Page**, Section II – **Postal Cards**, Section III - **Paid Reply Postal Cards**, and Section IV - **Stamped Postal Envelopes**.

Significant Items: Postal card highlights include a miss-cut card (one of three known), the notch or broken "IP" variety of the 1892 and overprinted 1893 issues; Earliest Known Uses of the 1 cent issue of 1889, the 1 cent 1894 issue, and the 1 cent paid reply issue of 1889; a 3 cent postal card to a scarce destination, San Marino (1900 population 9,000); and a postal card dated June 13, 1900, the last official day for use of any Hawaiian postal issue.

Stamped postal envelope highlights include a set of die/plate proofs in trial color black and in issued colors; Earliest Known Uses of the 2 cents rose issue of 1884 and the 5 cents blue issue of 1884 (thick paper); an envelope of the 1 cent issue of 1889, knife P-11 without flaw in the ornament; U. S. postage due

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adhesives used on a 5 cents overprint issue; double overprints of the Provisional Government of 1893 issues in the two cents rose red (2 envelopes – one showing inverted overprint, one of four known) and five cents denominations; a size 12 black 10 cents overprinted issue (200 envelopes overprinted), and a used (cut square) of the blue paper inside, black 10 cents overprinted issue (200 envelopes overprinted).

Also, presented are several examples of postal stationery with overprint varieties (diagonal overprint, missing or broken letters/numbers, etc.), and stamped postal envelopes with indicia offsets inside, which usually are known in quantities of ten or less. In addition, there are many ink color varieties not listed in catalogs.

Destinations and Routes: As may be expected, most mail originating in Hawaii was destined for the U. S., with Germany also being well represented. Scarcer destinations include smaller European, all South American, and Asian countries. Most mail destined for the U. S. and Europe went through San Francisco, so postal stationery bearing transit marks from other west coast U. S. and Canadian ports is scarce.

Scarcity, Condition and Difficulty of Acquisition: Quantities issued of Hawaiian postal stationery range from 386,000 to 200 items, with most issues being less than 40,000 items. Many postal stationery items, such as the 1893 overprinted 1-cent and 2-cents envelopes, the 2-cents and 3-cents postal cards, and all of the paid reply postal cards, were infrequently used, making used examples very scarce and mint examples more prevalent. Tropical weather and a slowly growing literate population also impact on scarcity and condition. Most of the proofs are very difficult to come-by, especially with regard to the postal cards. Some of the postal card essays are unique and have not been on the market in decades. This has made the acquisition of quality material challenging.

Missing Items: Many essays, with the exception of the “Special Despatch Letter” essays, are in the possession of museums and missing from this exhibit. Many proofs are also unique and infrequently come up for sale. Some used paid reply postal cards, used 2 cents, 4 cents, 5 cents, and 10 cents blue-paper-inside stamped postal envelopes are not shown. Printed in limited quantities, as used items, these issues are in great demand. Double or triple overprint postal cards and stamped postal envelopes are particularly difficult to locate, as most are known in quantities of ten or less.

References:

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- 3) Meyer, Henry A., Harris, Frederic R.: Hawaii, Its Stamps and Postal History, 1948.
- 4) United Postal Stationery Society: The Postal Stationery of the Possessions and Administrative Areas of the United States, 1971.
- 5) Post Office In Paradise: <http://www.hawaiianstamps.com/>