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The Cipex Issue of *LIBERIA*

Set commemorates 100th anniversary of Republic as well as centenary exhibit; design includes two U. S. stamps of 1847

By FRANKLIN R. BRUNS, JR.

THE year 1947 was an important one for Liberia—marking the 100th anniversary of the Republic. Thus, when a proposal was made that Liberia mark the 100th anniversary of the first United States postage stamps, and the great Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition to be held in New York, Postmaster General Nete-Sie Brownell saw the possibilities of a double commemorative and approved such an issue.

In considering the design, it was agreed the stamps should be reproductions of the 5 and 10-cent United States stamps of 1847. It was further agreed these should be subordinated to a Liberian motif—but the choice lay between the first type of Liberian postage stamp, issued in 1860, or the seal of the Republic. It was finally decided that the classic "Liberia Seated" type (Scott's A1) should be used.

Preliminary discussions were entered into with the E. A. Wright Bank Note Co. of Philadelphia. That firm had its artist prepare a rough pencil sketch early in July, 1946, and submitted it on July 9th along with a letter from J. E. Minchhoff, vice president, as follows:

"Our artist was discussing the layout for the proposed Liberia stamp, and has suggested a very rough pencil layout, taking into consideration the important parts of the stamp as designated by you.

Before preparing a finished sketch we thought it best for you to approve the general layout.

This pencil sketch is very rough, and was only intended for our own observations, but I thought it best to send it to you as it would give you some idea of the finished design."

The design was almost exactly as desired, and authorization was forwarded to the Wright firm to proceed with the finished sketch. However, a point was raised as to the right of a foreign government to reproduce United States stamps even if the stamps had been demonetized, and even though they were greatly reduced.

E. A. Wright did not want to proceed until an official clearance had been secured. Thus, before any further work could be accomplished, an effort was made to secure an opinion.

The query was directed to Joseph J. Lawler, Third Assistant Postmaster General of the United States.

The reply received from Mr. Lawler was as follows:

September 11, 1946

"I was very much interested in your letter of August 28, advising this Bureau of the intention of the Repub-



lic of Liberia to issue a stamp commemorating the 100th anniversary of our 1847 series, which will employ small reproductions of the original designs. You ask whether there will be any objection to this procedure.

"Ordinarily a matter of this character is brought to the Department's attention through diplomatic channels and it seems strange that we have thus far received no official notification of the Liberian proposal.

"I am not completely prepared to say, in view of existing statutes affecting jurisdictions other than the Post Office Department, just what the disposition might be toward such an arrangement.

"I do appreciate, however, your action in notifying me of the desires of the foreign postal administration to participate in the centennial celebration and I will be glad to notify you of any decisions reached should the proposal be formally submitted for approval."

(signed) JOSEPH J. LAWLER

While awaiting this ruling, E. A. Wright was advised to ready the finished sketch. This was done during the summer, and was delayed for various reasons until the first part of 1947.

On February 25th, a composite photographic and ink layout was forwarded from the E. A. Wright Bank Note Co., showing the first type of Liberia (12-cent value) centered, with the 5-cent 1847 in the lower left, and the 10-cent 1847 in the lower right. The name of the country (Liberia) was placed across the top, and directly above the two United States stamps, in white lettering against a heavy background, were the value tablets with "Postage / 3 / cents." In the lower center, also in white lettering against a solid background, were the years "1847-1860-1947."

In the large sketch such a layout looked most attractive, but in the small stamp-sized photo reduction, the design was extremely top-heavy.

Design Radically Changed

The first step to improve the design was the lightening of the contrast of white against black insofar as "LIBERIA" was concerned. This was accomplished by graying the name of the country.

The second step was the painting out of the value "Twelve" on the Liberian reproduction.

These changes still did not make for a satisfactory layout, and the whole thing was returned with various suggestions.

As adopted, these changes called for the dropping of the name of the country to the bottom; raising the 5 and 10-cent 1847's to the left and right, respectively; further lightening of the background for the value tablets and dropping them to a position below the U. S. reproductions; and placing the small panel with the three years above the Liberian stamp design.

The design was approved with these changes. Still, however, no official approval to proceed was received from Liberia, and the matter waited until March—just two months before the stamps were to be issued in Liberia.

Finally, Postmaster General Nete-Sie Brownell forwarded his approval. The order was immediately placed with the E. A. Wright firm, and was confirmed on March 10th.

There were to be four stamps: the 5-cent postage, and 12, 25 and 50-cent air mail denominations, each printed in a single color, in small sheets of 20 subjects.

Perforated proofs of the 25-cent air mail value were the first to be submitted, mailed April 28th and approved April 29th. The color of the proof was a dull red-violet, and was ordered and printed in a bright red-violet.

Then followed the 50-cent air mail (approved April 30th); the 12-cent air mail (approved May 2nd); and the 5-cent postage (approved May 6th).

Since it had been planned to issue the stamps May 9th, the E. A. Wright Bank Note Co. exerted almost superhuman efforts to lay down the plates and have the stamps printed and perforated by that date.

Even night and day shifts could not permit completion of this program, particularly since the printing firm was specifically ordered to exercise great care in the perforating.

On May 9th the shipment to the Liberian Post Office was sent via registered air mail, and on May 15th the shipment for the Philatelic Agency was sent to New York.

As a special concession, Postmaster General Nete-Sie Brownell cabled authorization to issue the stamps in New York on Saturday, May 16th, but withheld first day sale in Liberia until June 6th. This concession was made only that the stamps might go on sale simultaneously with the opening of the Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition in New York's Grand Central Palace.

There were 130,000 of the 5-cent postage stamp, printed in bright red; 50,000 of the 12-cent air mail, in bright green; 50,000 of the 25-cent air mail in bright red-violet (the color of the U. S. Edison stamp); and 30,000 of the 50-cent air mail, in rich blue. All, as noted, were printed in sheets of 20 (5 deep by 4 wide) with no marginal inscriptions.

Two sets of perforated proofs were prepared. One 5-cent stamp exists overprinted "Specimen" in diagonal double-lined letters, and one set is known to exist overprinted "Specimen" in solid red letters the width of the Liberian reproduction and placed about an eighth of an inch below the top of that stamp.

Special first day covers from Monrovia were prepared with the wording "First Day Issue / Liberia Centennial Stamp / June 6, 1947 / Monrovia, Liberia" in four lines in the upper left corner of each envelope. These appear to have been prepared for favored Liberians only, and none were made available to the Liberian Philatelic Agency despite repeated requests.

Matilda Newport

Every nation has its legendary woman, whose valiant efforts in some way contributed to the welfare of the country. Liberia is no exception.

On December 15, 1821, the first group of negro emigrants from the United States bought the future site of Monrovia from "kings" Peter, George, Yoda and Long Peter of the De and Mamba tribes. This purchase embraced a strip of coastland 130 miles long, and 40 wide.

Trouble between the pioneer settlers and natives flared when colonists attempting to

settle on Bushrod Island were forcibly prevented from so doing. On November 11, 1842, the settlement at Monrovia was attacked by the De, Mamba and Vai tribes, who lost their advantage when they stopped to plunder, and were forced to retreat.

On November 30th the De's again began to assemble large forces in the woods, and on December 1st about 1,000 of them attacked the stockade at Monrovia—then manned by 35 colonist warriors, many sick and wounded. It remained for a woman, Matilda Newport (a counterpart of our Molly Pitcher) to fire a cannon which routed the attackers, and Monrovia was saved.

Several attempts have been made to secure a stamp, or set of stamps, honoring her valiant deed, but fortunately none of these efforts succeeded until 1947—the 125th anniversary of her action.

In an earlier instance, two rough sketches were prepared through the efforts, presumably, of the late Jacques Koerpel, former Liberian Philatelic Adviser.

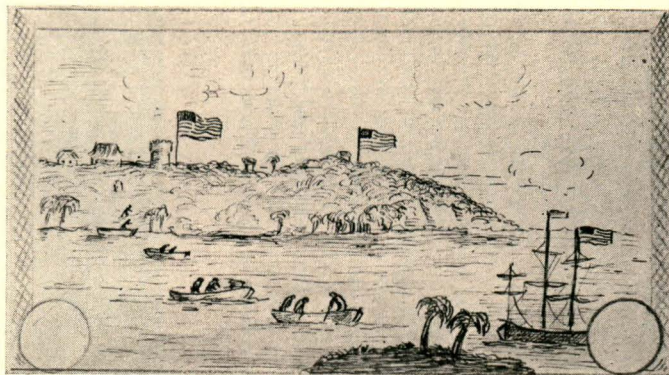
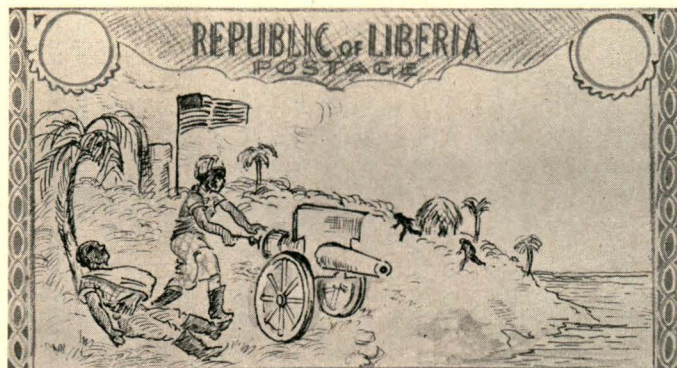
One of the sketches showed Matilda Newport firing a cannon, while beside her lay a wounded male settler. The second design showed a shoreline, with small boats apparently leaving the site of the settlement (over which two flags are flying) to meet a large sailing boat off shore.

A second effort was made when the American Bank Note Co. was requested to prepare a vignette. The design, upright in presentation, showed the Matilda Newport monument in Liberia. This, too, was not accepted.

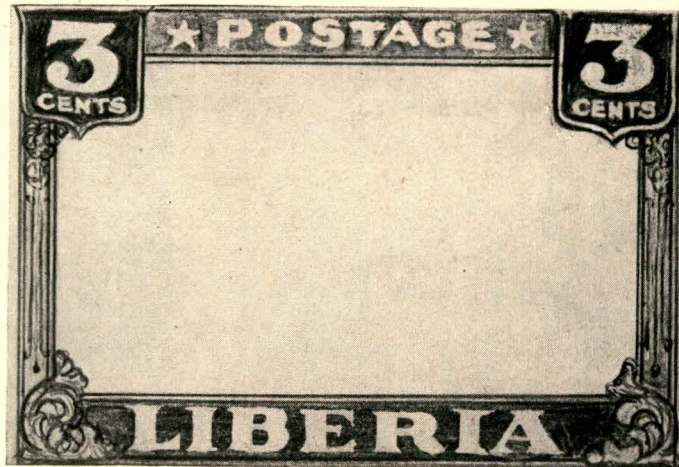
The third, and successful effort began in late 1945, and reached its conclusion with the issuance of a set of five stamps on December 1, 1947.

The E. A. Wright Bank Note Co. of Philadelphia was requested to submit a design, showing Matilda Newport in the act of firing a cannon. Since there were no sketches, paintings or engravings of Matilda Newport, the bank note firm engaged an artist to prepare a central vignette.

While this was being done, the artist at E. A. Wright prepared two frame sketches in crayon. When the ink sketch of the vignette arrived it was agreed the two frames were not satisfactory, and another was prepared, featuring palm trees.



Rejected designs executed in crayon (bottom) and pen and ink for commemorative stamp honoring Matilda Newport.



THE CIPEX ISSUE OF LIBERIA

The proposed center vignette was a faithful representation of a cannon in use in 1822, with Matilda Newport shown touching off the loaded cannon.

In the original drawing submitted, "Postage" and "Liberia" appeared at the top, in white block letters against a colored background. Directly below, in black, appeared "Matilda Newport / Assault of Monrovia December 1822" in two lines. The value "3" appeared in white against a solid background (circular) in the lower right, and "Three Cents" in white against a solid background also, in the lower center. Palm trees, in the color of the frame, set off the design at the sides.

submitted, adding a 1-cent value to the 3c, 5c and 10c postage, and 25c air mail stamps already stipulated. Proofs of the 1-cent value were submitted July 28th and immediately approved.

Printing was in sheets of 25, perforated, and with no inscriptions in the sheet margins. The printing order called for 200,000 of the 1-cent value in bright green and black; 100,000 of the 3-cent stamp in red-purple and black; 60,000 of the 5-cent in ultramarine and black, and 60,000 of the 10-cent in orange and black. There were 25,000 of the 25-cent air mail, in scarlet and black.

Since December 1st is observed as a national holiday in Liberia, Postmaster General



Wash drawings prepared by artists of E. A. Wright Bank Note Co. in Philadelphia for stamp to commemorate Matilda Newport, the "Molly Pitcher" of Liberia. Design at left was rejected; one at right was used as basis for the stamp as issued.

Again, the stamp-size reduction showed various defects. When rectified in a second wash drawing, the stamp was approved. These modifications called for the use of a cent sign in the value tablet; elimination of "Three cents" in the lower portion and the substitution of "Postage" (or "Airmail"); raising up "Liberia" and the commemorative inscription; and enlargement of the center vignette.

Acknowledgement of the order to proceed with this issue was received from the E. A. Wright Bank Note Co. dated March 11th, and on July 8th that firm was authorized to proceed with the printing based on proofs

Nete-Sie Brownell authorized the sale of these stamps simultaneously in Monrovia and at the Liberian Philatelic Agency in New York on Sunday, November 30th.

First day covers were provided with special printed inscriptions in the upper left. The Postage values were on one cover, and the 25-cent air mail on another.

A proof of the lithographed center vignette exists in black, on gummed stamp paper, overprinted "Specimen" in solid red-violet letters.

Imperforate plate proofs of the completed stamp exist also, and there is a unique set of die proofs each centered on a square sheet of gummed stamp paper.