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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	I
THE MYSTERY OF THE PRINCE EDWARD "QUEEN"	3
<i>The Story of S. Allen Taylor and the 10 cent "Queen of Prince Edward Island"</i>	
By WILLIAM V. ECKHARDT	
COSTA RICA — PART III	15
<i>First Postage Stamps of 1863</i>	
By R. J. MECHIN	
LIBERIA	36
<i>Independence Issue</i>	
By FRANKLIN R. BRUNS, JR.	
U. S. STAMPS	43
<i>20th Century</i>	

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Table Of Contents

items marked with * cannot be viewed as an individual PDF document

[Click here to view the entire Volume: 27 No: 4 Philatelist: 027-04](#)

	<u>Starting Page</u>
Front Cover (1 page)	Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Scott Publishing Co.	Inside Front Cover
Article (1 page) <i>Henry M. Goodkind</i>	1
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Economist Stamp Co., Inc.	2
The Mystery of the Prince Edward "Queen" (11 pages) <i>William J. Eckhardt</i>	3
Costa Rica (21 pages) <i>Alex. A. Cohen, R. J. Mechin</i>	15
Liberia (7 pages) <i>Franklin R. Bruns, Jr.</i>	36
U.S. Stamps of the 20th Century (15 pages) <i>Sol. Glass</i>	43
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Nassau Stamp Company	57
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Harmer, Rooke & Co., Inc.	58
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Stephen Gould Paper Co.	59
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: J. & H. Stolow, Inc.	60
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Scott Stamp & Coin Co., Inc.	61
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: H.E. Harris & Co. Inc.	62
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: J.C. Morgenthau & Co., Inc.	62
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Equitable Stamp Co.	62
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Y.Q., Rotherfield	62
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: The Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria	63
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Billig & Rich, Inc.	63
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: J. N. Sissons Inc.	63
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: H.E. Harris & Co. Inc.	64
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robson Lowe Ltd.	Inside Back Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: H.R. Harmer	Back Cover

The Independence Issue of

LIBERIA

Set marking the centennial of the Republic passed through four stages before becoming an actual reality.

By FRANKLIN R. BRUNS, JR.

IN the *creation* of a new set of stamps—for that is exactly what is entailed—many problems confront the country of issue, its agents, and the printers. It is probable the decision to commemorate some specific event, or honor one or more distinguished persons, or even authorize a regular postage set, is the simplest part of the entire chain of events.

Liberia's Centennial issue certainly met with about as many "incidents" as any other set of stamps—the wonder is that it really ever became a tangible reality. It was almost as ill-fated as the projected Liberian Centennial Exposition, but not quite.

When the decision was reached to mark the centennial (July 26, 1947), it was felt a set of triangular stamps would lend themselves to the occasion. This was a simple enough choice, but then followed the need to secure appropriate subjects for such a form.

E. A. Wright of Philadelphia was commissioned to prepare the stamps—six values in all, of the following values and subjects:

- 1 cent, Liberian star
- 3 cents, map of Liberia
- 5 cents, Liberty head
- 10 cents, Liberian coat of arms
- 25 cents, Liberian flag
- 50 cents, plane and palm tree

The first four stamps were to be postage, and the last two air mails, with planes in-

cluded in the design; this at least was the plan early in February when the first discussions on the issue took place.

Specifications for the issue as given to the printing firm were: "The stamps are to be shipped on or before July 1. These stamps are to be triangular in format, printed by photogravure or combined photogravure and engraving, in two colors. The frames are to be the same, with apex either up or down (three values in each style) with Liberia—Postage (or Airmail) and '1847—Centenary Liberian Declaration of Independence—1947' in the frame, and the value in the apex of the triangles in the color of the center vignette."

Sketches and photographic reductions of the six stamps were submitted by the E. A. Wright Bank Note Co. on March 25, taking the form of what might best be described as acute triangles. When these sketches were referred to Liberian officials, they felt the layout unsatisfactory for the occasion and the central material, and asked that a flatter triangular form be used.

The sketches were, thereupon, returned to Philadelphia, and on April 29 a second group of designs submitted which, in the eyes of the author, were marked in their improvement, and, with one exception, would have resulted in extremely attractive triangular stamps.

Liberian officials concerned with the centenary observances felt otherwise, however, and the designs went back for a third try.

The second group, also comprising six values, with some revision of subject matter, was:

- 1 cent, Liberian star
- 3 cents, Map of Liberia
- 5 cents, Independence monument
- 10 cents, coat of arms
- 25 cents, plane and palm tree
- 50 cents, Liberian flag and plane

Other than the switching of the designs of the 25 and 50 cent airmails, the replacement of the head of Liberty (patterned after the 1903 issue) by the Independence monument then being erected in Monrovia was the sole major change.

As a last resort, and with an eye cocked towards the rapidly advancing centennial date, E. A. Wright submitted two upright designs styled somewhat after the United States Presidential issue. These were labeled "A" and "B" with the former getting the nod of approval. These two sketches, illustrated here, were submitted by the Phila-

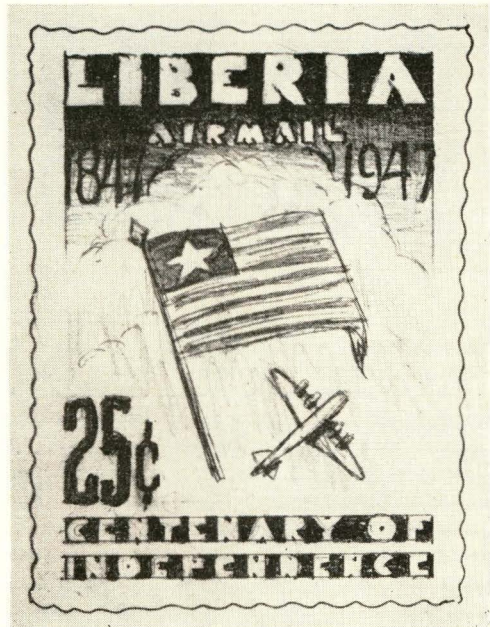
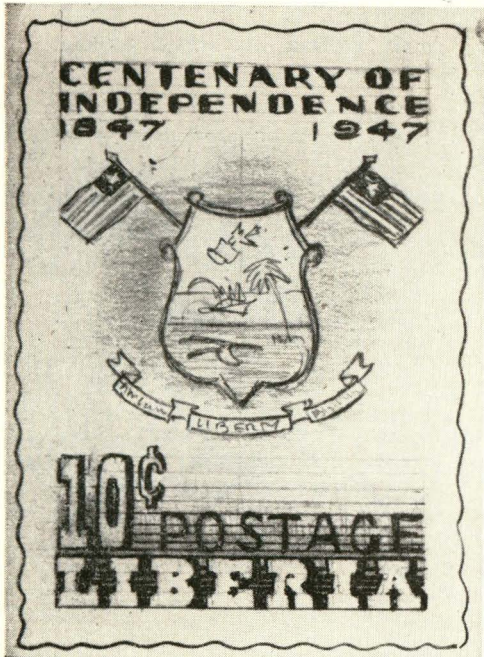
delphia printing firm July 2, and were approved (design A) on July 8, as bicolors.

Engraving and printing would have taken far too much time, and the designs were therefore made single color operations. Black and white stamp-size designs were submitted July 23 (five designs) and July 25 (two sketches), the issue having been increased to seven values.

These artist's wash drawings were:

- 1 cent, Liberian star
- 2 cents, Liberty head
- 3 cents, map of Liberia
- 5 cents, Independence monument
- 10 cents, coat of arms
- 25 cents, palm and plane
- 50 cents, flag and plane

One further major change, and a bit more juggling, was demanded before the set became a reality. A 12-cent airmail value was included and the 10-cent postage value dropped. The designs had "Postage" or "Airmail" in the lower portion between the years



Artist's sketches for the upright rectangular style; that on the left being accepted with modifications.

"1847-1947" and "Liberia" with the value off to the left. To permit an enlarging of the central subjects, the "Postage" was dropped in all values, and "Air Mail" left out on the 12 and 25-cent stamps.

In the realignment of values, the set took on this form:

- 1 cent, Liberian star
- 2 cents, Liberty head
- 3 cents, coat of arms
- 5 cents, map of Liberia
- 12 cents, Joseph J. Roberts statue and plane
- 25 cents, Liberian flag and plane
- 50 cents, Independence monument

By authority of Postmaster General Nete Sie Brownell, these stamps finally made their appearance simultaneously in Monrovia and New York on December 22, 1947.

One Cent

The 1 cent stamp is the only one to have retained its design (subject to changes in format) throughout. It remained steadfast in its presentation of the Liberian star, with a fernlike background. In its issued form, printing was in green in sheets of twenty-five, perforated all around. Proofs of this stamp were approved September 18, and shipment from Philadelphia was made October 23. There was a printing of 100,000 copies (4,000 sheets).

A large die proof in dark green exists, as do small trial color proofs, imperforate, in bright green (rejected) and dark green (approved). No varieties are known to exist.

Two Cents

This value became a part of the set in the third stage and remained constant in the fourth, although the subject—the head of Liberty—had been used for the 5-cent value in the original group of acute triangles. The head was adapted from the 1903 issue of Liberia (Scott's type A29). In its issued form the stamp was printed in red-violet (the color of the United States Edison stamp). Proofs of the accepted design were approved October 17, and shipment was made November 24. The total printing order was

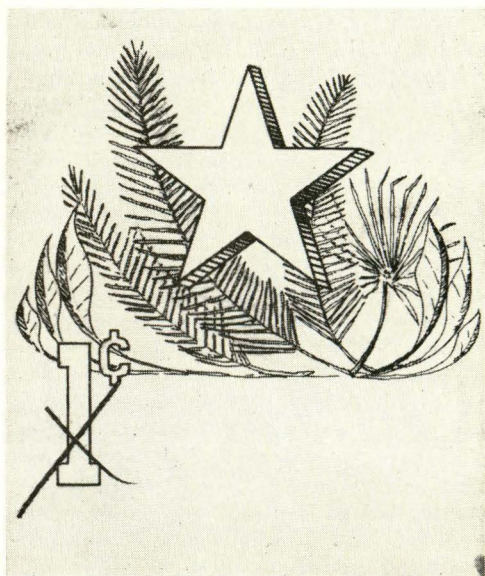
Right: First triangle submitted for the one cent denomination.



Above: Second triangle, wider base.



With "Postage" and (right) without.



Pen drawing for design.



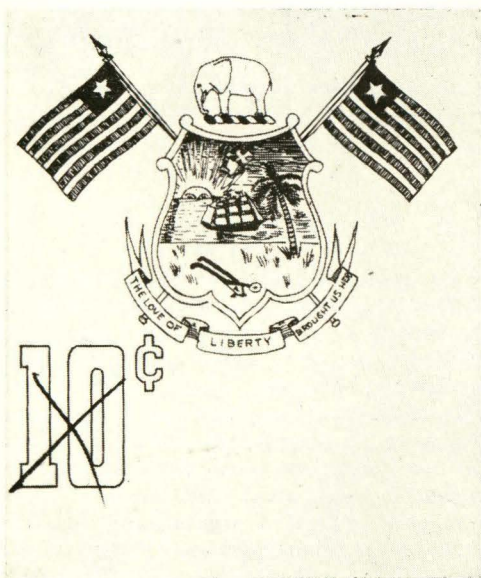
With "Postage" and (right) without.



Left: Rejected "Liberty" triangle for 5-cent value.

for 100,000 stamps (4,000 sheets) in the same format as the 1-cent value.

No large die proof on stamp paper is known, and only the color trial proof imperforate, in the previously approved red-violet color, exists.



Pen drawing for "Coat of Arms" type.

Three Cents

The coat of arms of Liberia, used for the 10-cent value in the first three stages, was switched to the three cent denomination at the very end. Its form varied to conform with the shapes of the various designs. Proofs



Left: "Coat of Arms" design on first triangle essay.



Above: Second triangle design, rejected. Below: Upright designs with "Postage" (left) and without.



were submitted September 26 and approved the following day, and delivery of 100,000 stamps (4,000 sheets) was made November 18.

A large die proof on stamp paper, gummed, and a small imperforate color trial proof exist.

Five Cents

Three changes out of a possible four were made on the design of the 5-cent stamp. In step one the head of Liberty was used; in steps two and three, the Independence monu-

Twenty-five Cents

The subject matter for this stamp was the cause of much concern. In its original form a large land plane was shown on the ground with a palm tree in the foreground (apex upward). In the second stage a large sea-plane was shown in flight with a palm tree again in the foreground. This general motif, with a large white cloud as background, was used in the third stage. At the last moment, the Liberian flag and plane, hitherto on the 50-cent value, was used.

Proofs of the design were approved September 18, and delivery of 30,000 copies (1,200 sheets) was made October 23. Printing was in a deep red, somewhat darker than the color approved.

A large die proof on gummed stamp paper exists, as well as three color trial proofs, imperforate, in various reddish shades.



First essay for the "Flag and Plane" type.



Second essay, also rejected.



Essay submitted for the abandoned "Plane and Palm" type.



Third and fourth (accepted) stage with change to 25-cent value.



Fifty Cents

As noted just above, the Liberian flag and a plane was reserved for this value until the final stage of production, when they were replaced by the Independence monument erected in Monrovia in 1947. This design (the monument) was based on a very large blue-print and apparently differs in a few respects from the monument as actually erected.

Printing was in a sienna brown, sixteen stamps to a sheet, in somewhat larger format than the preceding six stamps. There was a total of 22,512 stamps printed (1,407 sheets). The proofs were approved Sep-



Second and third stage essays submitted for the "Plane and Palm" type, not included in the set as issued.



Artist's drawing for "Map" design.

ment was to have been featured, and in step four the map of Liberia jumped up from the 3-cent status.

Here, too, a total of 100,000 stamps was printed, in blue (4,000 sheets of 25). Proofs of the engraved die were submitted September 26 and approved the following day, with delivery being made November 18.

A large die proof on gummed stamp paper is known, as well as a small imperforate color trial proof in the shade of blue previously agreed upon.

Twelve Cents

In the preliminary stages provision was made for a 10-cent postage value which bore the coat of arms in stages 1, 2 and 3. This value was dropped in the final stages of preparation, and a 12-cent airmail stamp provided for instead, showing a statue in Monrovia in honor of Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Governor prior to the Liberian Declaration of Independence, and the country's first president. This monument was taken from Johnson's two-volume opus on Liberia.

The final order called for 50,000 of this value, in sheets of 25 (2,000 sheets), printed

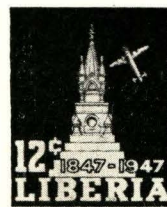
Four stages of the "Map" design, 3-cents until the final accepted stage as a 5-cent stamp.

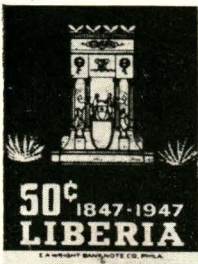


in blood orange. The first sketch of this value was submitted August 11, followed by revised sketches on August 18 and September 25. The first proofs were submitted early in October (possibly the 10th), followed by revised proofs on October 28. The stamps were shipped November 19.

A large die proof in the accepted color, on gummed stamp paper, exists. There is also a set of four color trial proofs, imperforate, in yellow, orange, blood orange (approved), and a deep red-orange.

Accepted design for the 12-cent stamp. The revision occurred only in the plane.





Successive stages in the designing of the 50-cent "Centenary Statue" design from the widely-based triangle, through the small-sized 5-cent layout, and finally the larger sizes without and with (accepted) "Air Mail." Below, pen drawing of the monument.

tember 18, and delivery was made November 25.

A large die proof on gummed stamp paper, imperforate, exists in the final form. There are also imperforate trial color proofs without "Air Mail," in yellow and red-brown; and imperforate trial color proofs with "Air Mail" in three shades of dark brown.

(The End.)

R. J. MECHIN, of Edwards, New York (St. Lawrence County), has diversified philatelic interests—the principal one being Costa Rica insofar as its pre-stamp covers and first issues are concerned. His other specialties are Waterbury cancels on the 3-cent 1869 stamp (U. S.), 19th century covers of Golden, Colo., and the gathering of data on the 30-cent Black of 1860, which was authorized and partially prepared for use, but not issued. His previous writings have appeared in *THE COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST*, *The Stamp Specialist*, and *The London Philatelist*. Exhibition awards include medals at Tipex and Cipex, and his memberships include: C. C., F. R. P. S. L., A. P. S., A. P. C., E. P. S., A. S. E. and Phil. Found. plus honorary memberships in the New Haven Philatelic Society, and Waterbury Stamp Club.