



THE COLLECTORS CLUB

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Article: **The Identification of Postally Used Liberia - As Illustrated by the Reichsdruckerei Issues**

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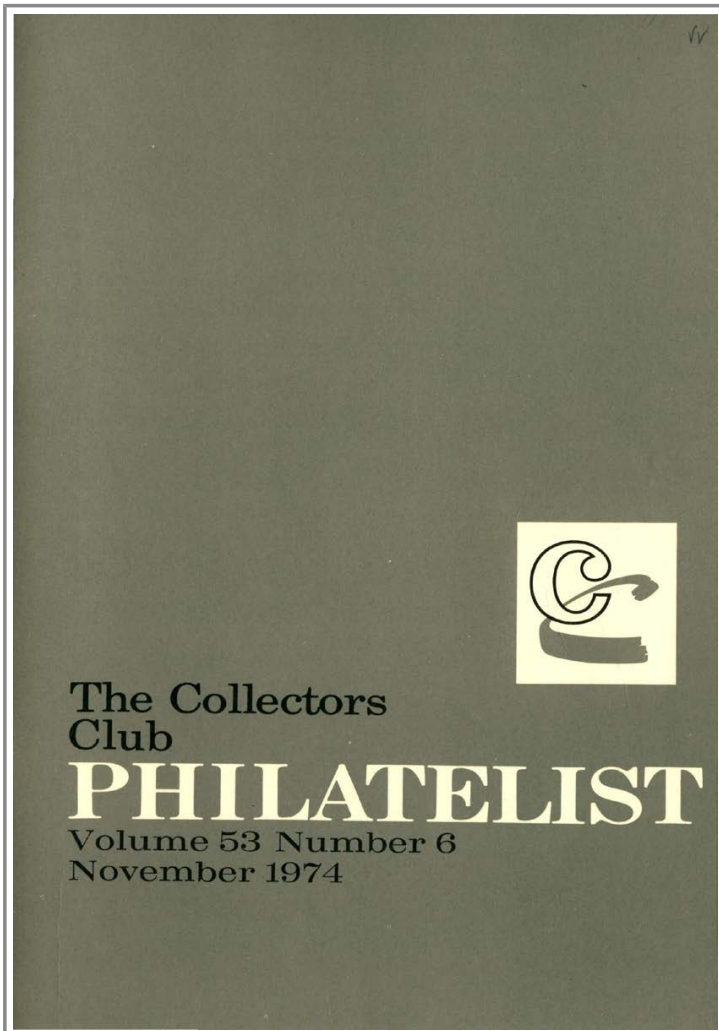


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Back Cover

THE IDENTIFICATION OF POSTALLY USED LIBERIA AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE REICHSDRUCKEREI ISSUES

By Henry Chlanda

The cancelled to order (CTO) stamp is a common phenomenon in many countries. Where the CTO is used extensively it is hard to locate the truly postally used item which tends to be relatively scarce. For the Liberian collector, the CTO is the order of the day, so that the problem is one of the first magnitude. Postally used Liberia are the mark of the philatelist, differentiating him from the accumulator or page-filler. Too, they add a distinct difference to the value of the collection. The Scott catalog discusses the problem as follows:

“Beginning with the issue of 1885, prices in the used column are for ‘cancelled to order’ stamps. Postally used copies sell for much more.” How much more? Well, ten times in many cases would not be unreasonable. Thus, the price differential alone makes it advisable for the Liberia collector to learn how to distinguish the genuinely postally used items from their cancelled-to-order counterparts.

The Liberian stamps printed by the Reichsdruckerei (German State Printing Office) offer a good opportunity to distinguish the CTO's from the genuine cancellations. These issues include Scott nos. 134-5, 183-194, 195-208, 209-213, F20-29, F30-35, and 214-227 as well as the corresponding official overprints. Except for the first two stamps (Scott #134-5) the issues are found in the 1920's although printed years earlier in some cases. The reason lies in the history of the printed contracts and is worth narrating here.

History of the Reichsdruckerei Issues

In 1914, the Liberian government contracted with the firm of J. W. West of Hamburg, Germany for a number of postage stamps. In turn, this firm contracted with the German State Printing Office to actually print the stamps. Two of them, Scott #134 and 135 were sent to Liberia before the outbreak of World War I. A second shipment was then attempted in 1915 and this shipment fell into the hands of the British government and did not reach Liberia until about 1922. The details of just what happened are discussed in the speech of President C. D. B. King on December 19, 1922 when he discussed the Post Office Department in his message to the Liberian Congress:

“It is very gratifying to report that after a series of correspondence with the British Foreign Office through our Minister in London, we have received from the British Government the stamps seized by the British Naval Authority, during the war, from a German ship which were then being shipped to the Liberian Government by the firm of J. W. West of Hamburg, Germany. This firm had in 1914, previous to the outbreak of the great European War, entered into an agreement with the Liberian Government for the printing of a certain number of Postage Stamps. It was these stamps that were thus seized.”



Figure 1. Two typical Liberian CTO cancellations from the 1920's. These cancellations are referred to by Rogers' as Type XI. The left stamp is Scott #212 cancelled by a Robertsport Type XI CTO marking. The right stamp is Scott #226 with a Buchanan CTO cancellation datelined 23.V.24.

The stamps involved were obviously Scott #'s 183-194 and O116-O126. It is possible that F20-F24 were also involved and that the 195-208 issue (#183-194 overprinted "1921") was done on stamps that had been seized. Certainly the overprinted stamps themselves were not among the seized items. We do know from the Table of Post Office Receipts and Disbursements for the Fiscal year 1921-1922 (Appendix I) that the actual face value of the stamps seized by the British in 1915 was \$39,900. We also know that Scott #'s 209-213 were not involved, for President King continued his report,

"I am pleased to report that the issues of Centennial stamps which the late Postmaster General Fuller, with my approval, ordered printed have just arrived. On these stamps are engraved in beautiful and attractive colors a representation of the landing of the pioneer fathers on these shores. They are of one cent, two cents, five cents, ten cents, and one dollar values."

By examination of the watermarks etc. we know that this Centennial issue (Scott #209-213) as well as the subsequent Scott #214-227 issue were printed in Germany by the Reichsdruckerei, as were the Scott F30-35 issue. All of these Reichsdruckerei printed issues, and their official overprints, are most commonly found with CTO postmarks, such as those in Figure 1. This cancellation, or similar variants (referred to as Type XI in the Rogers' Handbook, *A Century of Liberian Philately*) is known from all five major Liberian Post Offices, and probably all the minor post offices as well, from approximately 1915 through the late 1940's. In some cases, the markings are also known into the 1950's. On the Reichsdruckerei issues of the 1920's, I have found this type of CTO in association with the major offices of Monrovia, Harper, Buchanan, Greenville, and Robertsport. Among the smaller towns, I have seen River Cess and Marshall with this style CTO.

In his speech of December 22, 1927, Liberian President, C. D. B. King refers to the Reichsdruckerei issues and one of the reasons for changing the printing contract:

"While there has also been a considerable increase in the number of letters and parcels despatched from this country to foreign parts during the past year, yet, the sales of stamps have not been commensurate with the quantities of letters and parcels despatched.

This fact indicates that there is existing some source other than the Post Offices from which stamps are procurable. To remedy this condition the Government has had printed and engraved in the United States of America a new and complete set of Postal and Revenue stamps by the American Bank Note Company, a most reliable and

trustworthy company of lithographers. By the terms of the arrangements entered into between the Company and the Government suitable provisions have been made to secure these stamps from getting into the hands of the general public or stamp dealers in America or Europe other than by and through the Liberian Government. The old stamps the being called in to be exchanged for the new issues; beginning from the 1st of January 1928 none of the old stamps will be accepted for postage on letters, parcels and papers at any of the County or Rural Post Offices of the Republic.

The amount of cash realized from the sale of Postage Stamps for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1927 and deposited in the Bank of British West Africa was FIVE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTY DOLLARS AND FORTY-SEVEN CENTS."

Thus ended the Reichsdruckerei issues.

CTO vs Genuine—General Characteristics

In examining the genuine vs. the CTO cancel of Liberia, casual observation indicates that the same postal cancellation is used. This is not true. The two types of cancellation differ both in size and placement of the individual letters in the marking. Were full complete bold cancellations of both to be laid together, it would be relatively clear that the postal hammers used to make the cancellations differed on a number of points.



Figure 2. A registered cover with Scott #0146 tied by a black 31mm, Monrovia Type XI cancel datelined 2-VII.25. The cover is backstamped with a black oval REGISTERED/16 JY 25/PLY-MOUTH marking. Superimposed in the lower left corner of the cover is a Scott #0148 with a 29½mm. Monrovia CTO cancel datelined 28.IX.23. The CTO cancel is somewhat greyish and the stamp has full original gum. These two cancels are easily distinguished from one another.

An illustration of the differences between a CTO and a genuine Monrovia cancellation shows a typical CTO cancellation along with a registered cover with a bold strike of the same type, but clearly different cancel, Figure 2. The postally used strike is larger (31 mm. vs. 29½ mm.), the letters are differently shaped and there is a break in the top straight line of the postal cancel



Figure 3. The left stamp (Scott #134) is cancelled by an oily CTO strike showing considerable migration of ink away from the lines of the cancel. The right stamp (Scott #190) is cancelled by a Greenville CTO marking. Typically, it is lightly struck showing numerous breaks in the lines. Both stamps exhibit the usual placement of Liberian CTO cancels with only about 50% of the cancel falling on each stamp.

which is a constant characteristic of this particular hammer. In addition to the postal cancel here I have seen at least five other Type XI cancels used on cover from Monrovia—all being distinctly different from one another. Several of these more closely resemble the CTO hammer, but each can be distinguished.

Before examining the general characteristic differences, it would be appropriate to note that there is one type of CTO cancellation that is quite difficult to protect. Luckily it is rare. That is the CTO applied on a sheet of stamps taken by a dealer or collector to the Liberian post office in question and actually cancelled on the spot. Such do exist, primarily being recognized by the fact that they still have gum on the back, but this was not the typical way of creating a Liberian CTO, most of which probably never passed within the borders of the country.

In examining the CTO strikes on the Liberian Reichsdruckerei issues the following characteristics stand out (some of course apply to all Liberian CTO's and some to CTO's anywhere in the world):

1. The stamps have gum on the back.
 2. The cancel is positioned differently on the stamp. With the exception of the large-size dollar values in the Reichsdruckerei issues, the cancellations are usually one-half or less on the stamp. It is rare in fact to see 75% or more of the cancel struck on Scott #'s 183-208 and their corresponding official over prints. In the large-size Reichsdruckerei emission, the stamp is sufficiently large that a substantial number of CTO strikes fall completely or almost completely on the stamp.
 3. The CTO cancels have only been observed in black or grey-black and it is not believed that any other colors were used. Further the ink seems rather oily, with some migration of ink away from the lines, resulting in blurry lines, letters, etc.
 4. The CTO cancellation is usually lightly but evenly struck, especially on the 1921 issues (Scott #183-194 and 195-208). There are often many breaks in all letters and lines in the cancel. In part, these breaks result from the fact that these stamps are engraved whereas the later issues (209-213, 214-227, F30-34, O141-154) are lithographed.
- Tracings of the cancellations are usually adequate for the identification of specific hammers. These show the diameter, the relative position of the town name to the country name, the spacings of the letters and the shapes of individual letters, particularly the E's and A's.

A second objection to using the breaks in identification is the fact that only a portion of the CTO strike is normally found on the stamp and this may not be the portion of the strike with a distinguishing break. Further, these strikes tend to be so lightly struck that it is frequently impossible to read even

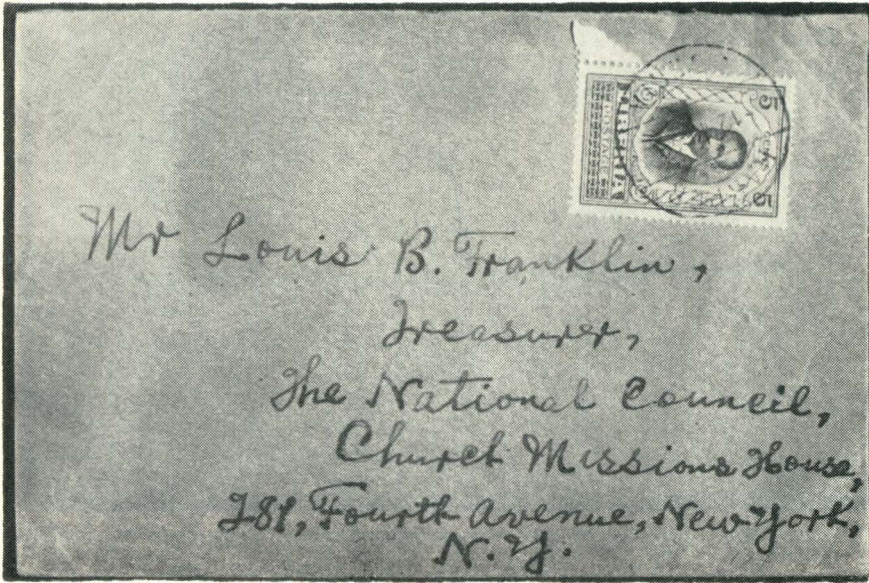


Figure 4. Scott #184 tied to cover by a black 29½ mm. Type XI cancel from Harper dated 12.III.26. This cancel is the authors' sub-type PU-A (see Appendices II and III for more information). The cancel is lightly but evenly struck with about 80% falling on the stamp .

the town or date, although use of the ultra violet lamp sometimes brings out more of the information.

5. The difficulty in reading the date or town, of course, makes it particularly difficult to check the CTO cancel. As noted, in a number of towns, a variety of postally used types of cancellation are known on the Reichsdruckerei issues, many of which are similar. Further, the breaks and distinguishing characteristics would obviously be different if you attempted to compare a faint strike of one town with a genuine strike of a different town.

6. Tracing studies of the CTO cancels indicate that only two different hammers for each town were used on the CTO's. Thus far the only exceptions are River Cess and Marshall, where I have only seen one type for each. This could be due to a lack of data flowing from the seeming scarcity of these towns used as CTO markings. For the other towns both CTO hammers are used indiscriminately on both the engraved and the later lithographed issues. Again, River Cess is an exception in that I have not yet recorded a CTO used on any of the larger size lithographed issues of 1923.

7. All the CTO cancels measure very closely to 29½mm in diameter.

By comparison the postal cancellations show the following characteristics:

1. The stamp will either be free of gum or it is on a cover or piece. While CTO's on piece are known to philatelists, there are not characteristics of the Liberian CTO operation.

2. During the period of their legal postal use, the Reichsdruckerei stamps are almost always seen with the cancel quite well centered on the stamp. It is as though the postal employees had been instructed to create soaked-on-the-nose cancellations. In some cases, especially when only a single stamp is used on the cover, the cancellation is entirely on the stamp with the result that I have seen covers with the stamp or stamps not tied. In Liberian philately, the lack of a tie on the cover has not been a characteristic associated with the

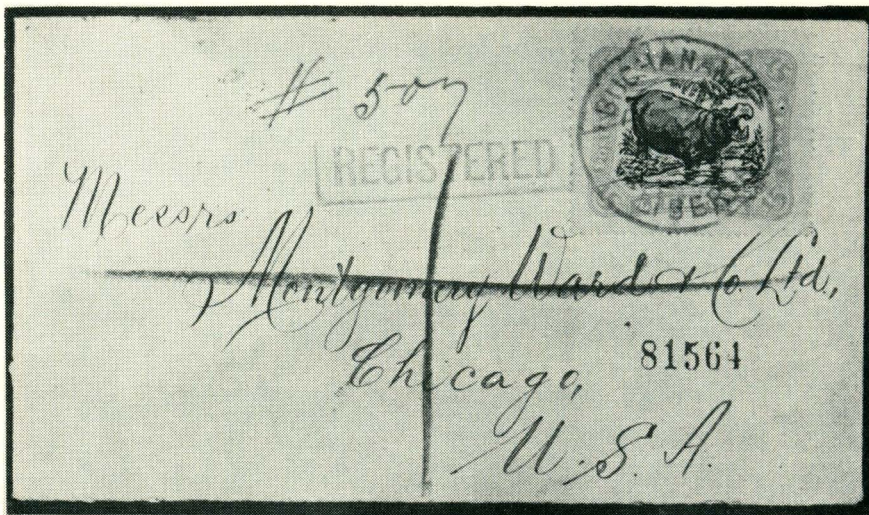


Figure 5. Scott #219 cancelled by a 31 mm. magenta Buchanan Type XI dated 13.III.24. The cover is backstamped in Plymouth (4/26/24) and Chicago (5/10/24). The stamp is not tied by the Buchanan cancel although it is just barely tied by an unusual (for this period) boxed registered marking also in magenta. The crossed crayon markings in blue are typical of many but not all Liberian registered covers in the 1920's.

addition of a stamp to the cover, but conversely with legitimate use.

3. The genuine cancellations are known in blue and magenta as well as black. The grey-black is not likely to be found with the genuine cancel and the only occasionally has an oily appearance.

4. The genuine strikes tend to be clearer than the CTO's. However, the postally used cancellations also often show many breaks in the lines and letters. There is sometimes an uneven character to the strike, with part of the cancellation bold and part light, etc.

5. The date of the cancel should precede January 1, 1928. As President C. D. B. King noted in his December 22, 1927 speech found in the State Papers of Liberia and earlier cited, "... beginning from the 1st of January 1928, none of the old stamps will be accepted for postage..." While it is true that illegal late use of demonetized stamps are known in most countries, and may well have occurred in Liberia as well, it would be most advisable to reject any late cancel of the Reichsdruckerei issues that is not otherwise authenticated, i.e. on an acceptable cover.

6. While at least one genuine hammer is associated with each of the seven postoffices associated with the CTO Reichsdruckerei issues, at least five of them are known with two or more genuine hammers. At least six genuine hammers are known from Monrovia in this period, which is the most I have recorded. There are four from Buchanan and two from Harper, Greenville and Marshall.

7. Most of the postally used cancellations are also 29½mm in size. However, there is also a 31mm size recorded from Monrovia, Buchanan, Harper, Greenville and River Cess. No such size is found on CTO's.

As with many demonetized issues around the world, uses after demonetization of the Reichsdruckerei issues are known. Those in the early 1930's are not common and probably represent the ignorance of the post office clerk. However, after 1935, and particularly in the 1950's, almost all use of these demonetized issues is the result of philatelic interference and the stamps, even on cover, can only detract from the serious collection.

To date it has not proved practicable to individually date each of the CTO strikes. In fact, it is quite possible that the dating would prove meaningless. On the other hand, a considerable amount of knowledge about the general dating patterns of the CTO strikes is available and is useful in identifying the CTO from the genuine cancellation.

Dating of the CTO Cancels

1921 issues

Most dates fall in 1921 and 1922

A few dates are recorded in 1923, 1924, and 1925

No dates have been reported in 1926 and 1927

209-213

Most cancels are known in 1923

A few are reported in 1924, 1925, and 1926

None are recorded in 1927

214-227, F30-35, O141-154

1923, 1924, 1925 dates are common

1926 is scarce

1927 use is not known

This brief summary suggests that any 1927 date would be postally used while the 1926 dates are quite likely to be postal uses if found on the 1921 issues. The odds favor the postally used in 1926 strikes but each needs to be checked out carefully.

While it is clear that the experienced Liberia collector can fairly rapidly sort postally used from CTO's on the basis of size, appearance, color etc. it is also clear that the detailed analysis of tracings can help. The serious collector will find them useful, and in some cases probably essential, in order to study and identify postally used items.



Figure 6. Scott #209 cancelled by a postal Monrovia Type XI, subtype PU-C, cancel. The date of 10.V.23 is the earliest recorded for this sub-type. Later dates (as in Figure 2) show a definite break in the straight line above the day-month position in the dateline.

The importance of the tracing technique can be found in Figure 6, which shows Scott #209. This stamp is common and can be found by the bundle with cancellations not too much different from the one illustrated. Unused it is scarce and actually postally used, it is extremely elusive. The cancellation used on this illustrated stamp I have seen used from 10 V. 23 to 10. IX 26. I have not seen any CTO cancels that *closely* resemble it. If it were not for the additional hint of a bit of paper stuck to the back (presumably from removal from the envelope) with a portion providing us with the words reading "... nt, Libe.../... STER-GENERAL." nearly any collector would have passed over this item without anything more than the most casual of glances. Obviously, a great Liberian rarity would have been missed.

Appendix I

Table of Post Office Receipts and Disbursements for the Fiscal Year 1921-1922

RECEIPTS

Balance from last fiscal year	\$81,983.44
Stamps received from the British Government which were captured by said Government in the year 1915	39,900.00
Stamps from Postmasters and Stamp Agents	5,856.59
Cash from Postmasters and Stamp Agents	5,856.59
Cash for stamps sold by the Postmaster General	635.66
Cash for registration of news papers	10.00
Cash for rent of lock boxes	96.82
Cash for conveyance of passengers ashore in mail boat	4.92
	129,131.75

DISBURSEMENTS

Stamps to Postmasters and Stamp Agents	7,624.63
Stamps to Departments for postages	143.51
Cash paid on account salaries	7,807.35
Cash paid on account mail conveyance	1,973.08
Cash paid account expenses	832.07
Cash paid account commission to Postmasters and Stamp Agents	832.77
Cash paid account stationery and supplies	20.16
Cash paid account rent Harper Post Office	224.00
Cash paid account indebtedness on Money Orders, U.S.A.	979.38
	20,480.95
Balance on hand in cash and stamps	108, 650.00
	129,130.95

Appendix II

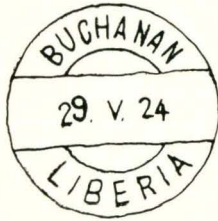
Distinguishing Features of the Type XI Cancellations

All cancels about 29½ mm. unless otherwise noted.

BUCHANAN — Two CTO cancellations (CTO-A and CTO-B) and four postally used (PU-A, PU-B, PU-C, and PU-D). The areas enclosed by the curved lines below BUCHANAN and above LIBERIA are smaller in CTO-A than in CTO-B, PU-A, PU-C, or PU-D. The letters are taller in CTO-A than in CTO-B. CTO-B is distinguished from PU-A by the high bars in the A's of BUCHANAN. CTO-B closely resembles PU-B in the position of letters but the bar of the H is higher in PU-B. PU-C is the distinctive 31mm size. The spacing of the letters is different from all others for PU-D and the final N in BUCHANAN is wider in PU-D than in CTO-B.

GREENVILLE — Two CTO cancellations (CTO-A and CTO-B) and two postally used (PU-A and PU-B). The area enclosed by the curved line above LIBERIA is smaller in CTO-A than in CTO-B. The three parallel lines in the E of GREENVILLE are all the same length in CTO-A. In CTO-B the

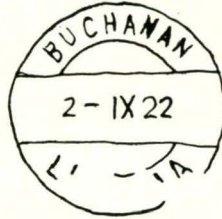
BUCHANAN



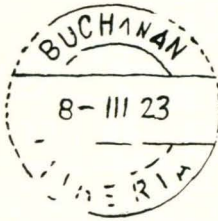
CTO-A



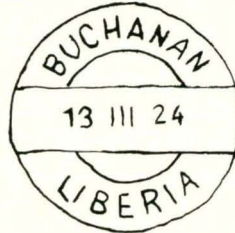
CTO-B



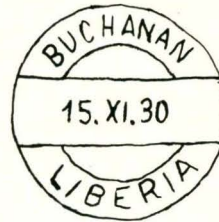
PU-A



PU-B

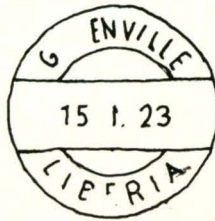


PU-C



PU-D

GREENVILLE



CTO-A



CTO-B



PU-A



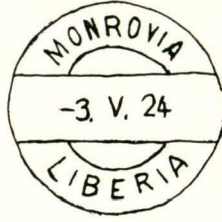
PU-B

Tracings of Cancelled to Order (CTO) and Postally Used (PU) Type XI Cancellations.

MONROVIA



CTO-A



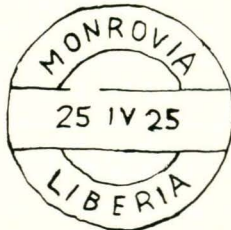
CTO-B



PU-A



PU-B



PU-C



PU-D

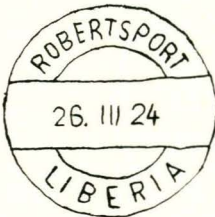


PU-E

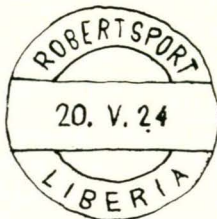


PU-F

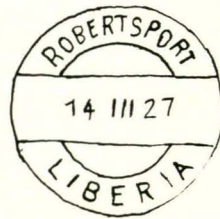
ROBERTSPORT



CTO-A



CTO-B



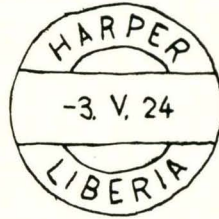
PU-A

Tracings of Cancelled to Order (CTO) and Postally Used (PU) Type XI Cancellations.

HARPER



CTO-A



CTO-B



PU-A

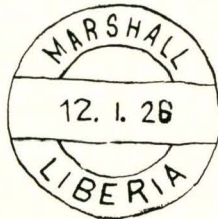


PU-B

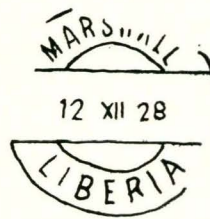
MARSHALL



CTO-A



PU-A



PU-B

RIVER CESS



CTO-A



PU-A

Tracings of Cancelled to Order (CTO) and Postally Used (PU) Type XI Cancellations.

middle line is shorter than the other two. Cancel PU-B is 31mm and easily distinguished from the 29½mm CTO-A, CTO-B, and PU-A. BU-A differs from CTO-A in the letter spacing in LIBERIA and the area enclosed by the curved line above LIBERIA is larger in PU-A. The letter spacing in PU-A is very similar to CTO-B except in the placement of the L, R, and I in LIBERIA. The letters seem to be slightly smaller in PU-A.

HARPER — Two CTO cancellations (CTO-A and CTO-B) and two postally used (PU-A and PU-B). The two parallel lines enclosing the date are ½mm wider in CTO-A than in CTO-B. The H in HARPER is wider in CTO-B than in PU-A. The placement of the letters in LIBERIA is quite different between CTO-A and CTO-B. PU-B is the distinctive 31mm size.

MARSHALL — One CTO cancellation (CTO-A) and two postally used (PU-A and PU-B). PU-B can be easily distinguished from either PU-A or CTO-A because the center parallel bars are 1mm wider. There is a difference in the spacing of the letters in LIBERIA between CTO-A and PU-A. The bar in both A's of MARSHALL is higher in PU-A than in CTO-A.

MONROVIA — Two CTO cancellations (CTO-A and CTO-B) and six postally used (PU-A, PU-B, PU-C, PU-D, PU-E, and PU-F). The lettering is more widely spaced in CTO-A than in CTO-B. PU-C is the 31mm size. The other five postal markings all have at least slight differences in spacing of the lettering. The lettering in P-A, PU-B, and PU-D is more closely spaced than CTO-A for both MONROVIA and LIBERIA. There are significant differences in the spacings of the letters in LIBERIA in comparing CTO-A to PU-E and PU-F. The bars in the A's are lower than either PU-E or PU-F. The letters in CTO-B are more closely spaced than PU-A, PU-B, PU-E or PU-F. The spacing of the letters in LIBERIA is wider in CTO-B than in PU-D. These differences can only be easily seen with the aid of tracings in many cases.

RIVER CESS — One CTO cancellation (CTO-A) and one postally used (PU-A). PU-A is the 31mm size and it is easily distinguished from the 29½mm CTO-A.

ROBERTSPORT — Two CTO cancellations (CTO-A and CTO-B) and one postally used (PU-A). Tracings show many differences in the alignment of letters in comparing CTO-A with CTO-B. The I is very close to the L in LIBERIA in CTO-A. The last R in ROBERTSPORT is wider in CTO-A and the leg of the R is less angled than in CTO-B. The spacing of the letters in PU-A differs from either CTO-A or CTO-B.

Appendix III

Periods of Use for Postally Used Type XI Cancellations in the 1920's

Buchanan	Marshall
PU-A 7-IX.18 to 2-IX.22	PU-A 13.X.25 to 15.III.26
PU-B 15.IV.21 to 8.III.23	PU-B 12.XII.28
PU-C 13.III.24	Monrovia
PU-D 15.XI.30	PU-A 22.IV.15 to -8.IV.23
	PU-B 15.I.21 to 26.VIII.24
Greenville	PU-C 10.V.23 to 10.IX.26
PU-A 2-.XII.25 to 21.VII.30	PU-D 30.I.25 to 25.VI.30
PU-B 13.V.24	PU-E 20.VI.27 to 10.IV.28
	PU-F -9.XII.29 to -6.VII.31
Harper	River Cess
PU-A 11.I.20 to 25.III.26	PU-A 13.VIII.24 to 10.I.29
PU-B -2.V.24 to 12.IX.29	Robertsport
	PU-A 12.VI.21 to 12.II.30