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## **A Few Facts Concerning the First Issue of the Hawaiian Islands**

By: James M. Chute

In the year 1873, Em. Fenard, first clerk of the post office, Honolulu, prepared for us, by command of Hon. C.R. Bishop, H.H. Majesty's minister of foreign affairs, a historical sketch of, and the laws, relating to, the Hawaiian post office. This matter was published in the "Philatelist" for April and May, 1875. Recent investigations prove much of the information therein contained to be untrustworthy. The date of the first issue is given as 1852, but we propose to give the exact date of issue, and some facts hitherto unpublished. The Act of April 27, 1846, makes the first mention of the Hawaiian post office and various regulations - all that were necessary in the incipient stage of civilization and industry then existing - were drawn up. Previous to 1859, all inter-island letters were carried free of charge. This was recommended by the minister of the interior as an inducement to the native population in letter writing. (See report in "Polynesian" newspaper, 1851). The Act of June 18, 1851, to create and regulate a post office in Honolulu reads as follows:

WHEREAS, The fifteenth article of the treaty with the United States renders indispensable the establishment of a post office in Honolulu;

WHEREAS, The public interest urgently requires greater regularity in the postal intercourse between Honolulu and San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, The service of the post office cannot be performed without adequate remuneration;

Therefore, BE IT ENACTED by the house of nobles and representatives in legislative council assembled:

I. - There shall be established a post office in Honolulu, and, for the time being, the "Polynesian" office is declared to be the post office.

II. - The duties of the postmaster shall be performed by some person to be appointed, and compensated by, and subject to removal at the pleasure of the minister of the interior;

III. - The postmaster shall charge the following rates of postage to and from this kingdom, viz: five cents for every single letter weighing less than half an ounce, forwarded to or received from any foreign port, and on packets weighing half an ounce, and under one ounce, ten cents, and five cents for every additional half ounce; two cents on each newspaper, price current, printed circular, or other printed paper (not being a pamphlet); two and one-half cents for every sheet of all pamphlets.

IV. - (This section relates to the compensation of ship captains for carrying mails.)

V. - (Relates to the delivery of mail to the post office boat.)

VI. - (Relates to the immediate delivery of mail from foreign vessels, etc.)

VII. - (Relates to the delivery of mail from vessels having contagious diseases on board.)

VIII. - (Relates to the delivery of inter-island mails by coasting vessels, etc.)

IX. - The outward postage on all letters, newspapers and pamphlets shall be in all cases be prepaid.

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X. - The postmaster is hereby authorized to issue stamps of the value of the outward postage of letters, pamphlets, and newspapers.

XI. - This Act shall take effect immediately after publication in the "Polynesian" and "Elele" newspapers.

(signed) KAMEHAMEHA

Keoni Ana.

By this Act, the postage on United States letters was reduced from fifty to thirteen cents to any point east of the Rocky Mountains. This amount covered the entire Hawaiian and United States postage, five cents being the foreign rate of the islands, two cents the United States sea postage, and six cents for the United States inland rate. Mr. H.M. Whitney was appointed postmaster of Honolulu, and he commenced the issue of stamps on the 28th of June, 1851. Mr. Em. Fenard fixed the date of issue as 1852, and states that Mr. Whitney was postmaster from that date to 1856. A reference to the files of the "Polynesian" newspaper fixes the date of issue, and shows us that Mr. Whitney was postmaster up to the middle of 1857. So much for official information. Three stamps were issued by Mr. Whitney, viz: two cents pale blue; five cents pale blue; thirteen cents pale blue; printed on yellowish-white paper. They were set up and printed in the Polynesian office, one form only being used for each value, consequently there are no typical variations to long for. Our illustrations give a fair representation of these extremely scarce and interesting stamps, which are found in but a few princely collections.

We have stated that one form only was used for each value. We are informed by Mr. C.E. Hitchcock, the actual printer, that "they were struck off one at a time," and that "only a few hundreds were printed, as but a few were called for." All three values have the words "Hawaiian Postage" above the fancy inner framework, but some objections being made that the 13 cents,

which was specially issued for the double Hawaiian and U.S. postage, only expressed the postage of the former. The design of that value was changed late in 1851, to more clearly denote the purpose for which it was intended, and "H.I. & U.S. Postage" replaced the former inscription. The mail carrier or inter-island delivery system was entirely suspended, by order of

the King, in the latter part of 1855, and put in operation again June 1, 1856, as appears by the various post office notices published in the "Polynesian". We intend to continue our researches, and hope to place before our readers many new facts regarding the subsequent issues of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

James M. Chute