

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

In the first decade of the Twentieth Century the Cayman Islands were undeveloped economically and philatelically. They only issued their own stamps in 1900 and the number of letters that were despatched in the three years 1904-7 averaged just over 7,000 per annum. It is amazing therefore that in the space of 15 months the Commissioner, who was the de facto Post Master, found it necessary to issue five provisional adhesives and on two separate occasions had to resort to manuscript provisionals. This was termed the "Great Scandal" in the philatelic community of the time, as it was believed that it was done to benefit the Commissioner and or other Caymanians, especially as shortly afterwards a consignment of low value stamps with a face value of £670 was placed in the London market. However the Commissioner, George Hirst, was found not guilty of any wrong doing, and philatelists have traditionally blamed the inexperienced, 20 year old Postmistress Miss Parsons, as she appeared shortly afterwards to have been demoted to Assistant.

The exhibiter's recent investigation in the Cayman archives has proved that this was not the case. Although her inexperience is readily apparent there is never any suggestion of impropriety. She was actually promoted to be Clerk to the Commissioner, with a salary increase, and only styled herself "Assistant" because the Commissioner wanted the Post Office to stay open during the new Post Master's lunch time. The real villain was the Commissioner himself, who was a doctor with no real experience of colonial administration. He withdrew the low value Edwardian and Victorian issues shortly after his arrival on the island in early 1907 because he thought they were obsolete, and then stubbornly refused to admit the error and re-issue them when supplies of the George V stamps were exhausted. No real investigation was carried out by the Jamaican authorities. The Commissioner simply refused to answer their letters asking him "to explain why you consider the stamps are obsolete" until they stopped writing. As a consequence the Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Crewe's statement that "I am of the opinion that Mr Hirst has successfully replied to the allegations made by the dealers" was a complete whitewash.

The exhibit shows the variety of surcharges and manuscript provisionals that were issued during this highly charged period of 15 months in the Islands' philatelic history, the issues that were withdrawn by the Commissioner which made them necessary, and some of the forgeries that were created to satisfy the insatiable demand of collectors world wide that resulted in a huge increase in price of the provisionals.



Manuscript provisional in blue pencil with no initial, dated 8th October 1908. One of only two known.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907 – 08

THE DEFINITIVE ISSUES THAT WERE SURCHARGED

Net Numbers Sold by the Cayman Post Office After Eliminating Specimens, and Surcharges.



1d Carmine
Multi Crown C.A. Perf. 14
7,360 Issued on 18.10.05.



4d. Brown&Blue
Multi Crown C.A. Perf. 14
5,028 Issued on 13.03.07.



5/- Salmon&Green
Multi Crown C.A. Perf.14
1,548 Issued on 13.03.07.



4d.Black&Red on Yellow
Multi Crown C.A. Perf. 14
5,395 Issued on 27.12.07.

De La Rue Requisition Number, Date of Invoice, and Gross Numbers Printed



De la Rue Req. 60/05 22.08.05
12,000



De la Rue Req. 97/06 04.01.07
6,240



De la Rue Req. 97/06 04.01.07.
6,240



De la Rue Req. 74/07 19.02.08.
6,240

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

EDWARD VII 1D RED, SURCHARGED "ONE HALFPENNY".

In May 1907 the Commissioner obtained the reluctant permission of the Governor in Jamaica to surcharge forty sheets of 1d Edward VII M.C.C.A. stamps due to the fact that his stock of the ½ d denomination was very low. At the same time he was supplied with a copy of Lord Ripon's 1893 circular about the possibility of fining officers who found it necessary to take such action. 4,800 stamps were surcharged at the Government Printing Office in Jamaica with the words "One Halfpenny" in two lines. They were issued on 30th August and managed to satisfy demand for about twelve weeks. The printing works in Jamaica was not capable of producing high quality work, and the surcharge appears in widely different positions on the face of the stamp, with on occasion part appearing on the adjoining stamp. Many of the letters are broken, or have spaces filled with ink where they should be blank. The major variety in the original sheets, a dented frame at Row 1/6 in the Left Pane, persists. A maximum of 40 of these existed.



Dented frame in Row 1/6.



Clogged "e" in "One". Broken "H" in "Halfpenny"-
upper left hand stamp.



Period in adjacent stamp.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

EDWARD VII 1D RED, SURCHARGED "ONE HALFPENNY", CANCELLED GEORGETOWN
(A&S Type 4) unless otherwise stated.



08.10.07.
Broken "n" in "One"



Dented frame



Cancelled Cayman Brac.
A&S Type 2



27.10.07.
Damaged "H" in "Halfpenny"



04.11.07.



12.11.07.



20.11.07.



Registered O.H.M.S. envelope from the Post Office containing stamps, addressed in Miss Parsons' hand, to a collector in Minneapolis, franked with the ½ d on 1d provisional and a 1907 bi-coloured 4d, the correct commercial rate. It was cancelled in Georgetown on 23rd November 1907, the last days of availability, as the ½ d on 5/- had to be issued three days later on 26th November.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

THE DEFINITIVE ISSUES THAT WERE WITHDRAWN AS "OBSOLETE"

The Jamaican authorities gave the Commissioner instructions to return the package of stamps he had withdrawn to the Crown Agents in London for "profitable disposal". After a couple of amateurish attempts to sell them direct so that they would not have to pass through Jamaica he reluctantly did so. They were sold to Healy & Co. for £900; a profit over face of £230. The Edward VII stamps were the 1905 M.C.C.A. issue, but because stockpiling in the Cayman Post Office was limited to distinguishing between "Queen's heads" and "King's heads" it is possible that some of the earlier 1902 C.A. issue might have been included. Even today it is very difficult to understand how the Commissioner could have been so stubborn as to have issued three, maybe four provisionals, with this quantity of stamps physically present in the Cayman Islands. The make-up of the package was as follows:-



Victoria 1d carmine, Crown C.A. Perf 14, printed by De la Rue in 2 lots.
Req. 36/00. 48,600 invoiced on 07.08.00. Req. 36/01. 49,320 invoiced on 30.05.01.
Total - 97,920. First issued on 19.02.01. **33,449 withdrawn in Feb/March 1907.**

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

THE DEFINITIVES THAT WERE WITHDRAWN AS "OBSOLETE"



Edward VII 1/2 d green M.C.C.A. Perf. 14
 Printed by De la Rue in 3 lots.
 Req. 74/04. 12,240 invoiced on 20.09.04.
 Req. 60/05. 12,600 invoiced on 22.08.05.
 Req. 97/06. 6,120 invoiced on 04. 01.07.
 Total 30,960. First issued in March 1905
9,720 withdrawn in Feb/March 1907



Edward VII 1d carmine M.C.C.A. Perf. 14
 Printed by De la Rue – only one printing
 Req. 60/05. 12,600 invoiced on 22.08.05.
 First issued on 18.10.05.
 4,800 surcharged and issued on 30.08.07.
2,011 withdrawn in Feb/march 1907



Edward VII 2 1/2 d bright blue M.C.C.A. Perf. 14
 Printed by De la Rue in 3 lots
 Req. 74/04 12,000 invoiced on 20.09.04.
 Req. 60/05 12,000 invoiced on 22.08.05.
 Req. 97/06 5,040 invoiced on 04.01.07.
 Total 29,040. First issued in March 1905
10,660 withdrawn in Feb/March 1907



Edward VII 6d brown M.C.C.A. Perf 14
 Printed by De la Rue in 3 lots
 Req. 74/04 1,200 invoiced on 20.09.04.
 Req. 60/05 1,440 invoiced on 22.08.05.
 Req. 12/06 6,240 invoiced on 24.02.06.
 Total 8,880. First issued in March 1905
4,882 withdrawn in Feb/March 1907



Edward VII 1/- orange M.C.C.A. Perf 14
 Printed by De la Rue in 3 lots
 Req. 74/04 1,200 invoiced on 20.09.04
 Req. 60/05 1,440 invoiced on 22.08.05.
 Req. 12/06 6,240 invoiced on 24.02.06.
 Total 8,880. First issued in March 1905
5,492 withdrawn in Feb/March 1907

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

THE DEFINITIVE ISSUES THAT WERE WITHDRAWN AS "OBSOLETE"

The package of withdrawn stamps was returned to the Crown Agents and sold in the spring of 1908. Miss Parsons was forced to resort to manuscript provisionals throughout May (the L.K.D. for these is June 1st.) De la Rue's requisition 22/08, invoiced on 27.04.08 must have arrived at the beginning of June. Unfortunately it contained only 52 sheets of ½ d (6,240 stamps), but with these and a further requisition of 104 sheets of ½ d (12,488 stamps) she muddled through until some pennies arrived in September. Ironically many of the stamps in the package that was sold were immediately returned to the Cayman to be converted into used. The dates on the Victorian stamps below would suggest that they arrived on the same steamer that brought requisition 22/08 of halfpennies. So Miss Parsons was forced to put two ½ d stamps on current mail, whilst at the same time creating "used" blocks for the philatelic trade on the Victorian pennies that the Commissioner had declared "obsolete". These were not demonetised until 1940. As the examples below suggest, the reverse flow of stamps from the package continued for some time.



Cancelled Georgetown (A&S Type IV) 03.06.08



Cancelled Georgetown (A&S Type IV) 06. & 08. 06.08.



7.11.09.



31.01.10.



24.07.09.

Cancelled Georgetown (A&S Type V) E.K.D. 02.03.09.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

THE FORGERIES

Demand for the Cayman provisionals can only be described as an unsatisfied feeding frenzy. Whitfield King alone wrote 40 letters of complaint to either the Cayman Post Office itself, or to the Colonial Office accusing the former of incompetence, giving preferential treatment to other customers etc. As a consequence forgeries proliferated.

Forged Surcharges



The "1" is too stubby and the "0" does not have the characteristic weakness top and/or bottom.



Poor quality forgery. The foot of the "2" is elongated and the top tip should be circular. The "0" does not have the characteristic weakness top and/or bottom.



Genuine Georgetown cancel (A&S Type 5). Good forgery but the angle of the constituent parts is wrong, and the "D" is too strong.

Forged Cancellations



Georgetown (A&S Type 4)
The "D" of GRAND is reversed.



Stake Bay, Cayman Brac (A&S Type 2)
The "M" is completely wrong. The sides should taper outwards from top to bottom, and the middle "V" should reach the foot of the letter.



Georgetown (A&S Type 4)
The "G" is completely wrong.
The genuine letter has no reverse.

Forged Definitives

After surcharging 33 sheets of the 5/- definitive only 1,548 stamps remained. As a consequence they are scarcer than the provisionals themselves, and so formed another target for the forgers.



Georgetown (A&S Type 5)
Madam Joseph No. 110
The "G" is completely wrong.
The genuine letter has no reverse.
The right leg of "R" is too vertical.



Began life in Ceylon and was washed of everything but the cancel. There is no Nuwara Eliya in the Caymans. The colour is off, and the impression coarse. Smeets?



Georgetown (A&S Type 4). Perfs., paper and W. Mk. are correct, but the colour is off and the cancel wrong. The foot of the "G" is too pronounced and the "D" has too flat a top.



Georgetown (A&S Type 4)
Dented Frame.
The "M" is clearly wrong.
The sides should taper out and the "V" reach the foot.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

EDWARD VII 5/- SALMON & GREEN, SURCHARGED 1/2D & 1D

The release of the first provisional created a huge demand and the Post Office was very quickly submerged beneath a wave of applications that it had no way of satisfying. It can also be argued that the surcharging of 40 sheets of the 1d made it inevitable that the Post office would soon exhaust stocks of that denomination. At the end of November stocks of both the ½ d and the 1d ran out and the Commissioner authorised three separate issues of provisionals that were carried out by Miss Parsons, the Post Mistress, with crude home-made hand stamps. The first was on 23rd November when 15 sheets of the 5/- stamp were surcharged 1d, the second on 26th November when 15 sheets of the 5/- were surcharged ½ d and finally on 9th December when a further 3 sheets were surcharged 1d - in all 1800 x ½ d stamps and 2160 x 1d stamps. There was no fraction bar on the ½ d. and the surcharging appears to have been done more hurriedly. On some stamps large parts of the surcharge are missing. On both issues there are examples of a doubled surcharge but on the ½ d, in addition, there are examples of an inverted surcharge, and a pair exists with the surcharge missing entirely on one stamp. Examples of a dented frame from row 1/6 of the left hand pane exist on both issues. There is a maximum possible of 18 of the 1d and 15 of the ½ d.



Doubled Surcharge

Dented Frame



CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

Used copies of both the ½ d and 1d that were genuinely cancelled during the period of the emergency (November 23rd to December 27th) are scarce. The ½ d is more difficult to find than the 1d. In addition, although a small supply of the 1d was sent to Cayman Brac they may never have been used during the critical period, and as far as we are aware no supplies of the ½ d were ever sent. As a consequence many of the used copies that are extant were mint copies sent back to the Cayman to be converted into used, or were sent to the Post Office on pre-addressed, pre-franked envelopes.

EDWARD VII 5/- SALMON & GREEN, SURCHARGED 1/2 D, CANCELLED GEORGETOWN.



A&S Type IV - F.D.I. 26.11.07.



A&S Type V - E.K.D. 02.03.09.



Pre-addressed, registered envelope, pre-franked with a ½ on 5/- salmon and green and an Edward VII 2 ½ blue, paying the correct commercial rate to Great Britain, cancelled A&S Type IV on 04.02.08. Taking into account the transit times W.T.Wilson in Birmingham must have received the mint ½ d on 5/- from the first batch despatched from the Islands, and immediately written back ordering more, especially as in the first instance he had probably ordered the "½ d provisional" and expected to receive the ½ d on 1d red.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

EDWARD VII 5/-, SALMON & GREEN, SURCHARGED 1D, CANCELLED GEORGETOWN
(A&S Type 4) unless otherwise stated.



29.11.07.



Possibly Dec.9th



29.01.??
Stake Bay Type II



04.12.07.

R.H. stamp has a Dented Frame



Registered O.H.M.S. envelope to Oscar Herbst in Charlottenburg, Germany, cancelled on 12.12.07., addressed in Miss Parsons' hand, franked with a pair of 1d on 5/- provisionals and a bicoloured 4d. Unfortunately an additional adhesive has been cut out of the envelope, possibly because it was discovered to have a dented frame.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

EDWARD VII 4D BROWN & BLUE, SURCHARGED 2 ½ D.

New supplies of the ½ d and 1d arrived on 27th December 1907, but were almost exhausted by the end of January, as was the 2½ d. So when the yacht "Zenaida" arrived unexpectedly in Georgetown on February 12th with an offer to carry mails to Cuba the Commissioner decided to create yet another provisional. The Police Inspector was given a metal hand stamp with instructions to surcharge 4 sheets of the 4d bicoloured stamp with 2 ½ d. These were sold out two days later so that genuine postally used examples have a very small time frame. Like its predecessor, the ½ d on 5/-, the 2½ d has no fraction bar and examples of a doubled surcharge are known.



Late Cancel Sep. 1909.
Georgetown, A&S Type V



Cancelled Georgetown, A&S Type IV on day of issue, 12.02.08.

EDWARD VII 4D BLACK & RED ON YELLOW, SURCHARGED 1D.

Three months later the stock of low value stamps ran out again. An American merchant, resident on the island, probably F N Lambert, complained about their non availability for use on receipts. Again the Police Inspector was pressed into service to surcharge 1d on the new 4d stamp, inscribed Postage & Revenue. For some strange reason (it could not have been shortage of stamps) three complete sheets and 36 odd copies are recorded as having been surcharged. Inverted and doubled surcharges are known. Strict instructions were issued that this issue was only to be used for fiscal purposes. Used copies do exist but were cancelled by accident or by favour.



Broken Inner Frame Line



Inverted



Doubled



Used

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

MANUSCRIPT PROVISIONALS MAY 1908

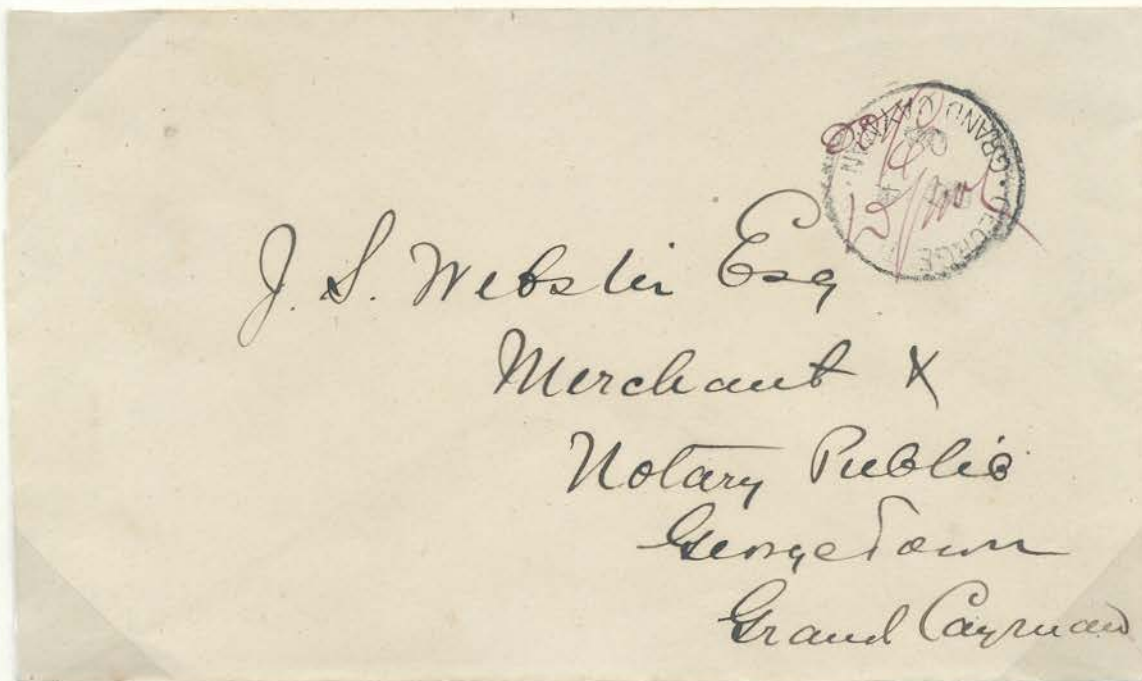
The manuscript provisionals have caused considerable debate amongst philatelists and there is still no full understanding or consensus. Due to the Commissioner's predilection for ordering stamps in miserly quantities the stocks of ½ d and 1d stamps were exhausted by May 1908, and instructions were given that letters were to be handed to Miss Parsons with the necessary cash, and endorsed by her as "Paid". The number of covers that have survived is very small (less than a dozen) and the majority were sent by F.N.Lambert to his wife in Jamaica. Although not a philatelist he was always alert to an opportunity of making money through unusual philatelic material, and there is every possibility that these covers were philatelic in origin. The fact that he posted the letters on successive days and numbered them so they could be read in sequence suggests the opposite. The covers were endorsed "Postage Paid G.A.P." in red ink, with a minority showing the amount paid (½ d or 1d), between 12th May and 1st June.



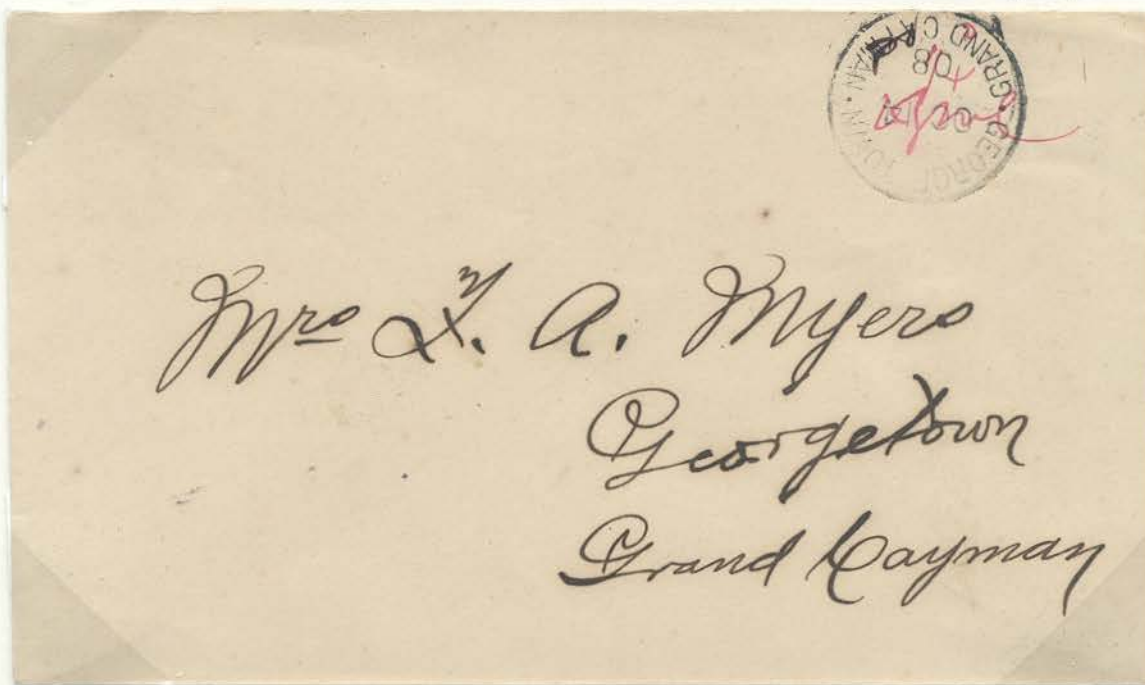
CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

MANUSCRIPT PROVISIONALS OCTOBER 1908

The second set of manuscript provisionals exist between the 4th and 27th October 1908. Again they were caused by the Commissioner ordering the new ¼ d stamp in parsimonious quantities. One format is relatively common-known covers amount to over seventy- but why the vast majority are addressed in the same hand to different addresses in Georgetown is unclear, and it remains a possibility that they are philatelic in origin. On the other hand it is most unlikely that Miss Parsons' replacement as Postmaster, WJ McCausland, who was specially recruited from outside the Caymans, would have resorted to unnecessary and large scale creation of manuscript provisionals within weeks of taking up his appointment. He followed the convention that red ink was for paid letters, but used a variety of different shades of red and endorsed the majority of the covers in two lines "Pd ¼d W J McC."



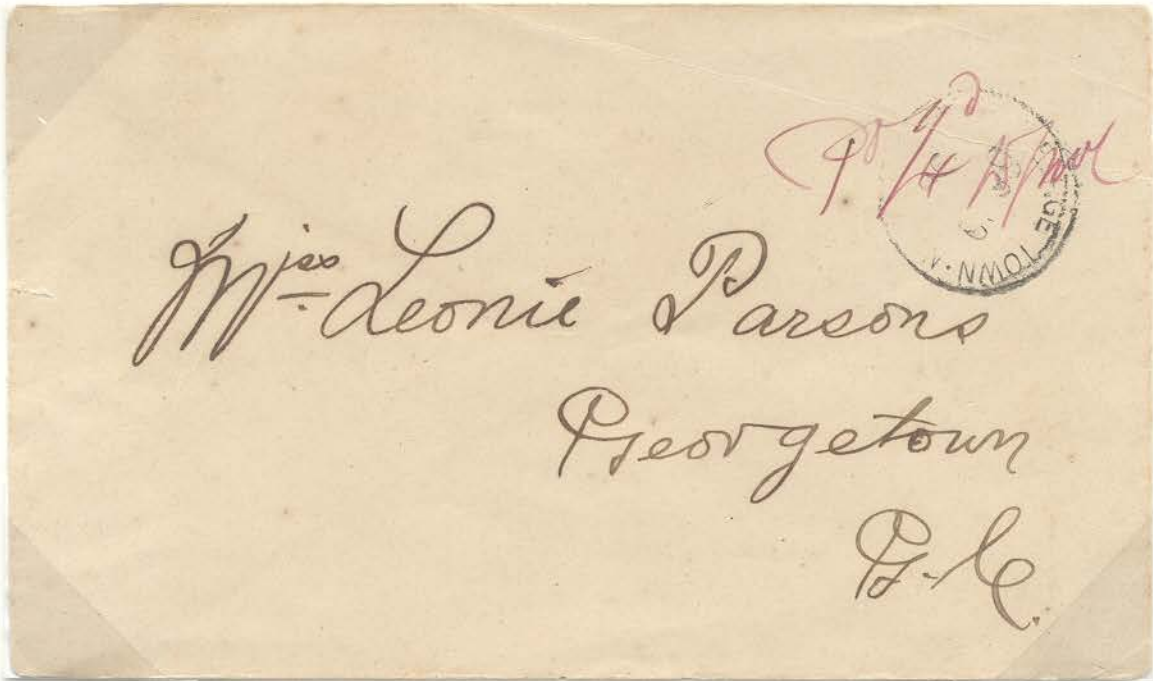
A cover with the common franking, but addressed in a different hand to the majority.



A cover on which McCausland absentmindedly started in black, and then changed to red.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

MANUSCRIPT PROVISIONALS OCTOBER 1908



Two very different examples of McCausland employing a single straight line to frank the covers. Compared with the two-line variety these are uncommon.

CAYMAN ISLANDS PROVISIONALS 1907-08

MANUSCRIPT PROVISIONALS OCTOBER 1908



A handful of the provisionals appear to be endorsed with a forged version of McCausland's initials, probably by Miss Parsons when a customer brought in a letter during the Postmaster's lunch break. Arguably, if he had authorised her to do so, it is a legitimate manuscript franking, and would appear to be his response to her using her own initials on the 15th October, as she had done when she was Postmistress on the May manuscript provisionals.



An unusual cover with the cancel in the bottom left hand corner. In addition the manuscript frank was obviously inscribed with the cover on the vertical rather than the horizontal axis.