

SOME NOTES ON THE POSTAL HISTORY OF THE DUTCH WEST INDIES

By David Watson

These notes were made when I found information to add to the standard reference work by Julsen & Benders (1). Although their book was published nearly 50 years ago, it's taken me 10 years to complete my additions. Working through the book, the new points were as follows.

'Section I: Development of the Post'

Part 3: British Occupation Period: There was also military mail from the 2nd British occupation of Curacao island in 1940-2, with multiple censorship and usage of Curacao stamps by the British military.

Parts 5 to 10 & 13: 19th Century maritime mail: many of the gaps in the chronology have been filled. The only one left is for the period 1800-07 (2).

'Section II: Postal Markings'

Parts 8, 9 & 14: Recent (3) formal classification of Dutch bridge circular datestamps (cDs) has allowed read-across to cancels used in the Dutch West Indies (DWI). Hence the 'cross' & 1st type of coded (steel) postmarks used in the DWI are variants of the short bridge, kortebalk cDs used in the Netherlands. Their use in the DWI stopped in 1970 when they were replaced by the 2nd type of coded (steel) postmarks.

These were the same as Dutch cilinderbalk cDs. Kortebalk and cilinderbalk cDs were occasionally used in parallel in the Netherlands but not in the DWI (4). As the book by Julsen and Benders was published in 1976, inevitably new codes have been introduced for DWI cilinderbalk cDs: 30, 31, 32, 54, 60 and 61 for Aruba, 36 for Curacao and 3, 5 & 13 for St. Maarten (5). Usage ranges have also been updated (6) and the use or absence of time codes clarified (7).

Part 11: Some slogan cancels were introduced after Julsen & Benders book was published. Reference 6 provides information updated in reference 8: 'CURACAO, THE MASTERPIECE Land of Fiestas IN THE CARIBBEAN' was used in 1985. This was a modified version of 'CURACAO, THE DUTCH MASTERPIECE IN THE CARIBBEAN' which was used in 1977 and had made a comeback by 1992. Two further slogan cancels used since Julsen & Benders book was published: 'SPEND YOUR VACATION IN CURACAO THE ISLAND OF HOSPITALITY' & 'WELCOME IN CURACAO WELCOME HOME'.

'Section III: Implementation of the Post'

A. Administrative Markings'

Part 1: Postal rates for airmail have been reviewed and found to be tiered to take account of airlines' prices for bulk airmail (9). Indeed on at least one occasion there was a ten-fold increase in postage (10).

Parts 2 & 3: Several new handstamps have been identified (5,6,11), including modern missent handstamps for Bonaire and St. Maarten.

Part 5: Newly-identified registration labels for Kralendijk, Bonaire, Philipsburg, St. Maarten, St. Nicolaas, Aruba and Willemstad, Curacao were reported in reference 6, together with new registration handstamps for Oranjestad, Aruba & Philipsburg.

Part 6: New information on censorship of mail from Saba in WWII has been reported (12).

'B. Supplementary Markings'

Part 1: A boxed 'ZEEPOST' cancel for Bonaire (5) has been added to an extensive record of paquebot cancels (13). New KNSM ship cancels (14) have been added to a previous listing (15). Forbidden usage of this shipping line's handstamps on Dutch stamps was also found (14).

Part 2: New airmail markings have been found and the 1st flight between Curacao and Cayenne, French Guiana identified (6).

Part 3b: An up-to-date catalogue of postal meters (16) followed identification of manufacturers of these machines (17).

'C. Special Events Markings'

Part 2: First day markings on Dutch West Indies included, in some cases, both special cancels and cDs on the same cover - rarely if ever found on Dutch 1st day covers.

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