

Invalid Use of Government Life Stamps on Overseas Mail - Part 1

I read with great interest, Stephen Jones' February 2015 article about Government Life Stamps used on mail to overseas destinations in *CAPTAIN COCK*. Some years ago, the late Alan Berry spent an afternoon showing me the wide variety of Government Life covers he had assembled over the years. He had a few covers sent to overseas destinations of which one, if I recall correctly, had passed unnoticed by New Zealand and US postal letter authorities and so the cover did not have any postage due markings displayed.

Following Alan's lead, I have kept my eye open for covers to overseas destinations franked with Government Life stamps. Over the past ten years I have acquired three such examples and each has a story to tell which I believe adds further background to the information contained in Stephen's article.

The first day cover illustrated below is franked with two 1941 KGVI 1d. Green definitive stamps plus four Government Life stamps totalling 1s.5½d and mailed from the High Street Branch in Christchurch on 1 AU 47 to Olmsted Falls, Ohio. The New Zealand Post Office ignored the Government Life stamps and assessed the letter as being 1d. short-paid the ruling 3d. rate to a US destination and the cover is marked T 20^c centimes.



The US postal authorities also applied a postage due handstamp on the front cover indicating a charge of 4 cents should be collected on delivery. This hand stamp was likely applied at the receiving post office at the west coast port of entry. A 4 cent "Prexie" was duly affixed to the back of the cover to pay this charge nicely tied by an Olmsted Falls cancel dated AUG 29, 1947. The Returned Letter Office – Wellington back-stamp (-7 AUG 47 -Time-mark "1") reveals that it was processed through the R.L.O. in Wellington.

It would appear that the postage due hammers on this cover are the same as the ones that were used on the cover sent from Christchurch to New Rochelle, New York and described in Stephen's article. At first glance, one might think these markings were applied in Christchurch. However, as the cover illustrated above was processed through the Returned Letter Office some seven days after being posted in Christchurch, this raises the possibility that the R. L. O. may have applied one or both the postage due markings on the front.

Stephen mentions that there is no indication that postage due was actually paid by the recipient of the New Rochelle cover but his article did not mention whether it may have been processed through the

R. L. O. I contacted Stephen about his New Rochelle cover, and, lo and behold, it did indeed feature a Returned Letter Office date-stamp on the back. Remarkably, the date stamp is similar in all respects right down to the Time-mark “1” on -7 AU 47.



New Rochelle Cover

Olmsted Falls Cover

Both covers date-stamped -7 AU 47 (Timemark “1”) Returned Letter Office Wellington C. 1.

One noticeable feature of the two covers is the manuscript entries in the circular T centimes hand stamp have been altered at some stage. In the case of the New Rochelle cover, it would appear that the numeral “6” has been inserted over the “3” in the original “*T30^C*” manuscript entry to result in the double deficiency charge of 60^C being determined. It is unclear why this was done as the New Rochelle envelope is unsealed and could have been accepted at the 1½d. Printed Papers rate. In this case, the tax at double deficiency would have been 3d. or 30[¢].

In the case of the Olmsted Falls cover, we find the numeral “2” has been inserted over the “6” in the original “60^C” manuscript entry. This is appropriate as the letter did have two 1941 1d. KGVI definitives affixed so the short-paid amount was 1d. which, when doubled and converted to centimes at the prevailing rate of 10 centimes per NZ pence, resulted in 20 centimes postage due, not 60 centimes as originally indicated.

In summary, both covers emanating from Christchurch passed through the Returned Letter Office on 7 August 1947 around “1”. Both covers had the deficient postage as expressed in centimes adjusted to reflect the deficiency amount although in the case of the New Rochelle letter, it is questionable as to whether the adjustment was justified. The US postal authorities at the port of entry took the necessary steps to confirm the amount of postage due charge to be levied at the final destination (Olmsted Falls). The New Rochelle cover slipped through the cracks however, and, probably in the absence of the usual port of entry postage due markings, the local postal workers in New Rochelle did not think to charge postage due on the letter. My guess is that the R.L.O. made the changes in the centimes amounts shown on the covers; correctly on the Olmsted Falls cover and incorrectly in the case of the New Rochelle cover.

*to be continued...
Stephen Prest*

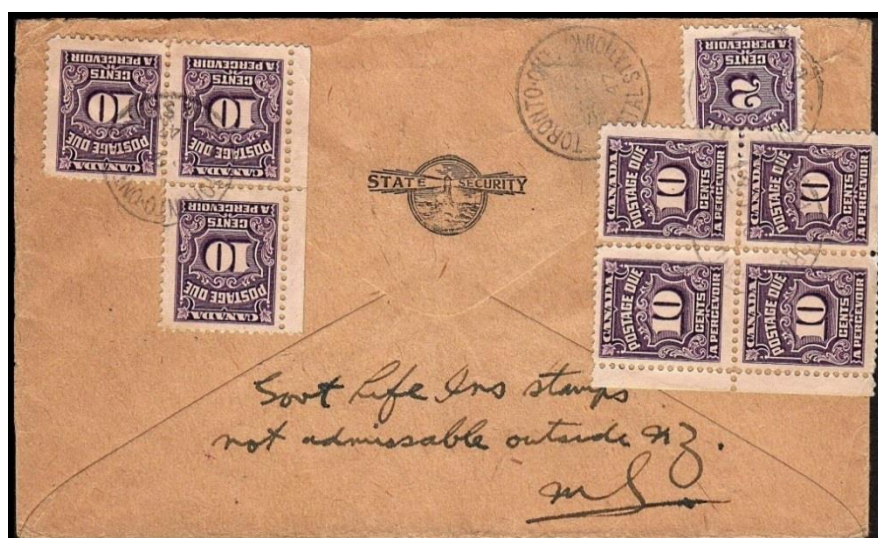
Footnote: Rule 238 of the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department – Rules and Regulations (1922) states in part that “Special stamps ... issued for the Government Insurance Department. ... cannot be used for the prepayment of postage on postal packets for places beyond the Dominion.”

Invalid Use of Government Life Stamps on Overseas Mail - Part 2

Following on from Part 1 on this topic, the Government Life cover illustrated below was sent by airmail to Canada affixed with 2s.4½d. in Government Life stamps. The airmail rate to Canada via British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines was 1s.6d. per half ounce in August 1947.



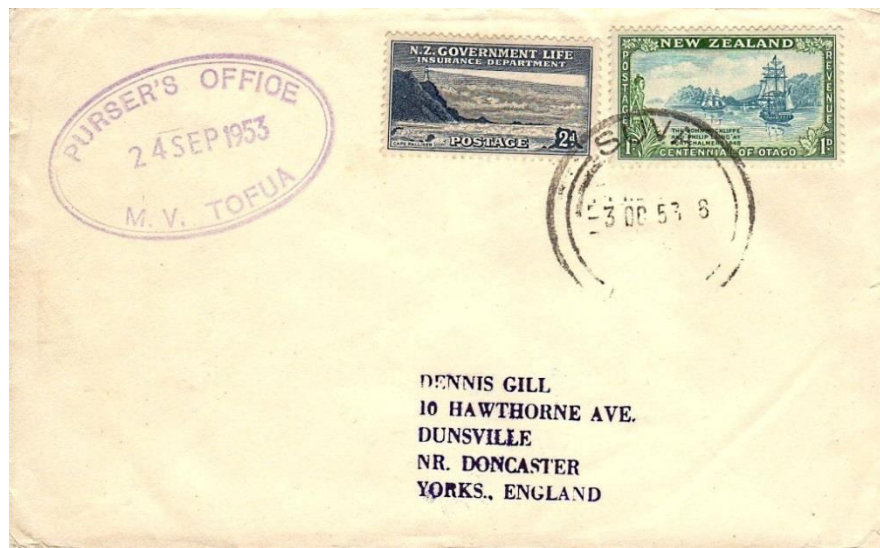
However, the Government Life stamps were invalid for payment of postage for letters sent overseas. This was picked up by postal authorities in Wellington and the letter was rated 1s.6d. short paid which resulted in a tax charge of 360 centimes (18 pence x 2 x 10 centimes per pence) being determined. The reverse side of the cover features an explanatory note that reads “Govt Life Ins stamps not admissible outside NZ” (initiated) “MS”.



The front of the cover has a Toronto Station K receiving postmark dated AUG 18 1947 while the back has 72¢ in Canadian postage due stamps affixed to pay the deficient postage at an exchange rate of 5 centimes per Canadian cent.

Unlike the cover to Olmsted Falls discussed in Part 1, this cover to Toronto shows no evidence it passed through the Returned Letter Office. The Government Life stamps are tied with faint impressions of the Wellington C.1. date stamps, and so, one may conclude that the letter was routed through normal channels to Canada.

The third Government Life cover in my collection forwarded to an overseas destination has a clever twist to it. I suspect the sender knew that Government Life stamps were invalid for letters to overseas destinations so, through subterfuge, he/she arranged to have the letter below posted at sea, specifically on the Union Line's M.V. Tofua en route to Fiji. The cover features a 2d. 1947 Life Stamp together with a single 1d. 1948 Otago Centennial to pay the ruling 3d. surface letter rate to England, is duly postmarked 3 OC 53 in Suva and then forwarded to North Doncaster in Yorkshire. I presume the thinking here is that it would be unlikely that Fijian postal workers would be familiar with the fact the Government Life stamp was invalid for use on letters outside of New Zealand and would process the letter for onward transmission to England in the normal way.



So that's the story of my collection of covers sent overseas with Government Life stamps affixed. Stephen Jones' article in the CAPTAIN COCK February 2015 issue notes that in many cases the postal authorities in overseas destination countries did not bother to affix postage due stamps to Government Life covers despite them having been clearly marked as deficient in postage by New Zealand postal authorities. It may well be that the local receiving post offices were generally unaware that Government Life stamps were invalid for overseas postage and, in light of all the stamps on the cover which would more than pay the letter rate from New Zealand, they may well have thought that the deficient postage mark was mistakenly placed on the cover.

In the case of my two covers where postage due is affixed, the Toronto cover has a very helpful note (likely provided by New Zealand postal authorities) advising the Government Life stamps are invalid while the Olmsted Falls cover described in Part 1 had a standard US Post Office postage due instruction to collect 4¢ thus relieving the Olmsted Falls postmaster of any doubt as to whether he/she should charge the postage due.

In closing, after reading Stephen's article, I consider myself quite fortunate to have acquired the two Government Life covers with postage due stamps affixed and, with luck, who knows, I might be on a hot streak and locate another one or two over the next decade!

I would like to express my appreciation to our Editor, Stephen Jones, for his kind assistance and time taken to respond to my request for further information about the New Rochelle cover. I would also like to thank my colleague, Pat Skinner, for his contributions on matters related to the New Zealand George VI period.

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