

HONG KONG POSTAL STATIONERY

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with contributions from members of the HKSC, HKPS, and others

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Part 1. INTRODUCTION

I expect to see “new finds” (redundant, but that is what discoveries are dubbed in our philatelic parlance) in Hong Kong postal history. That’s what makes it fun. That’s why I collect it. I don’t expect to see dramatic new finds in Hong Kong postal stationery, any more than I expect to see them in Hong Kong stamps. I can’t recall the last time I saw something new, and really of major significance, in Hong Kong stamps. Until 2003, the last significant “new” item I recall in Hong Kong postal stationery was the 20c KG V registered postal envelope with flap folding to the rear, and I was one of the discoverers of that. And then in the Spring of 2003 along came the Hong Kong registered envelope with “R” in oval at the top left, and “Fee Paid” at the bottom left, both in bright red – not just one example, but eight used and one mint, of which I am aware. Now how could something that amazingly different go unrecognized / unreported for so long?

So when Dr. Cheung twisted my arm hard enough for me to agree to write an article for the HKPS journal, Hong Kong postal stationery new finds came to mind. After I completed the original HKPS registration envelope article, I thought I should expand it beyond the constraints of that topic to encompass new finds and to include updates to the earliest and latest dates that Col. Webb and others have recorded for the rest of the various types of Hong Kong postal stationery. This occurred not just because of the new “R” in an oval registered envelope finds documented in the predecessor article, but also because of a few “new” items that have come to hand in recent years that I hadn’t yet gotten around to reporting. Don’t get your hopes up – nothing as dramatic as the new registered envelope with “R” in oval, but still interesting. Also there are a couple of items that I would term “fly speck” finds, if I was joshing one of my China-collecting friends about a find of similar magnitude in Chinese stamps. Then again, rounded versus pointed flaps of KG V postal stationery envelopes could also be termed “fly specks,” but they are cataloged.

Hong Kong postal stationery has been one of my collecting interests for many years, initially because it was a relatively inexpensive topic that bridged the gap between stamps and postal history. Another attractive feature is that, with the exception of a handful of rare and expensive items, a Hong Kong postal stationery collection can be “completed” (if you’re willing to settle for just one of each cataloged item) without having to mortgage the house. Speaking of cataloged, that is another reason that I decided to do this article on Hong Kong postal stationery. Besides Webb, there are five other catalogs of, or including at least parts of, Hong Kong postal stationery. And as with any publication, some errors have crept into each that need to be corrected for the record. No disrespect is intended in pointing out the mistakes of those authors. It is just a matter of continuing to improve the body of philatelic knowledge for the benefit of contemporary and future collectors. I assume mistakes will be found in this effort, and hope those who find them will let me know, and/or publish corrections of my goofs.

As any of you who know me well are aware, Col. Webb’s penchant for Earliest Recorded Date (ERD) and Latest Recorded Date (LRD) rubbed off on me. It adds another reason to continue the hunt. From a postal history view point, ERD is of considerably more significance than LRD. The fact that someone found an old QV envelope laying around and used it in 1910 is really of little significance, but Colonel Webb started it, so I will carry it on. Similarly, modern philatelically contrived “first day covers” commemorating the issue of a new aerogramme don’t do much for me, but they do serve to document the fact of the issue and in some cases they are the only such record. I sometimes chided one of my postal history mentors for creating paquebot covers. His response was that if he had not, there would have been a number of such marks that never would have been documented. This wise gentleman also had a favorite saying: “Finds are where you find

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them.” How true. A couple of the “finds” documented herein were lying undiscovered in my collection until I began the research for this article. So thanks, Andrew, for twisting my arm.

The pertinent information for these finds and the ERD / LRD information are summarized in tabular form. Each table contains one of the five basic types of Hong Kong postal stationery: post cards, envelopes, registered envelopes, newspaper wrappers, and aerogrammes. In cases of lengthy entries, more than one table has been included per postal stationery type, with a table generally including items issued during a single reign or set of reigns. These tables appear at the beginning of each part or section of this article.

Each table is generally in chronological order by issue date of the postal stationery items in that table. This has resulted in some cases where the Webb and/or Schoenfeld catalog numbers, used for reference between the tables and the text, do not progress in strictly ascending numerical order. However, the value of listing PS items contiguously with others issued at the same time seemed to outweigh this relatively minor inconvenience. The text also includes illustrations of significant covers, and other related information. Since color renditions were not available for some of the illustrations, they had to be scanned from black and white photocopies, not all of high quality, unfortunately. You will see some figure numbers with alpha suffixes (e.g., Figure PC- 1a). In some cases these suffixes denote closely related aspects of a cover or covers, but in other cases they were employed simply to avoid renumbering the rest of the figures in that part of the article when I decided to include an additional figure after the draft was completed.

Dr. Schoenfeld provided an update to the Hong Kong postal stationery information recorded by Col. Webb, Yang, Higgins & Gage, et. al., which is, in general, more complete and accurate, as would be expected of a later publication. Although a few updates to Schoenfeld’s work are provided herein, it is, in my opinion, the best of any of the catalogs that address Hong Kong postal stationery. Both Webb and Schoenfeld catalog numbers are listed for each item in the tables herein, where those catalog numbers exist. Note that Dr. Schoenfeld’s catalog contains a cross-reference to issue numbers in other postal stationery catalogs. Schoenfeld is often abbreviated “Sch.” herein. Mr. Yang’s reference numbers are used for postal stationery items post-dating those cataloged by Schoenfeld. “NEW” finds are designated as such in the tables.

These tables include ERD and LRD, where they extend Webb’s and other records, and/or I was aware of such dates. Many of these ERD’s / LRD’s are from my own collection, as denoted by “LCS” in the Notes area of the tables (although most have since been sold along with other parts of my collection). Others were recorded in HKSC Bulletin 268, or were gleaned from various other publications, which are also referenced in the notes, such as Mr. Proud’s 1991 record of postal stationery usage at the various Treaty Ports. However, I make no claim that I have done anywhere near an exhaustive search for such information, as time and energy did not permit reviewing all of the auction catalogs in my 40 year accumulation. Besides the record in the table notes about the source of the finds, ERD’s, and LRD’s, the notes also contain related information that I thought of significance and/or interest. Updates (corrections) to other Hong Kong postal stationery catalogs are mentioned in the text, or in the table notes, where appropriate.

Another source for ERD’s / LRD’s was Ebay. One only has to look at the tremendous increase in information on security markings published over the last few years by Philippe Orsetti and his associates to realize what an amazing research tool Ebay and other web resources have become. Speaking of which, I’d like to thank Michel Houde, Web Master, and the HKSC for agreeing to publish this record of Hong Kong postal stationery finds and updates on the HKSC web site (<http://www.hongkongstudycircle.com/index.html>). To transform this article into a living document, as has been done for security markings, collectors will need to watch for and submit new information when they see it, and the web site record must be updated on a timely basis.

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In the interests of time and space, I have only included the official Hong Kong aerogram issues, beginning with those that Col. Webb recorded in Section A of his Hong Kong Airmails booklet, from which his ERD / LRD cites were taken for the aerogram listings herein. There are new finds and updates with the general British aerogram issues and unofficial types listed by Webb, as well, but they will have to wait for another article, and maybe for another writer. Similarly, I did not include the post cards used during the WW II Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, nor the newer (Queen Elizabeth era) types of postage prepaid postcards, Christmas aerogrammes, etc. Besides the time and space constraints for this article, I have yet to see a non-philatelic usage of such items, and have seen very few FDC's. I find both of these observations quite surprising.

I still called this document an "article" when the first entire version was completed and published. However it has continued to evolve and expand as new and interesting material has been found and added, such that "article" is no longer an accurate appellation. Although an effort has been made to include all known varieties of the various types of used HK postal stationery, this document cannot be termed a catalog in the normally accepted understanding of that term, since it includes a considerable amount of postal history information, in addition to the basic set of facts generally found in a catalog. Therefore, it now seems appropriate to term this document a monograph.

You will see from the yellow highlights that many updates have been incorporated in this 5.2013 version of the monograph. In general, an effort has been made to include an illustration and description of the ERD of each PC, PSE, and NW subtype listed in the tables (the RE and AG parts of the monograph are planned for update in the future). A few scans have been added of instances of a very small number of known usages of specific PS subtypes (e.g., I was very pleased to finally find an illustration of the second of only two recorded uses of the 3c / 5c / 18c PC: see Figure PC-1f). Other illustrations have been added of what I believe to be significant postal history related usages of HK postal stationery (e.g., Figure PC-3k depicts the only known HK reply card returned from the Seychelles Islands). A few images of errors and other unusual PS features have also been included: e.g., the only inverted stamp on a provisional PC that I have seen (Figure PC-1a-3), and the only known examples of almost completely inverted "4 Cent" surcharges in red (Figure PC- 4f) and black (Figure PC- 4g) on the QV 3c brown PC. Additionally, a few relevant images of PS usage statistics, and other such related information, have been included: e.g., the HKPO notice that a charge of 1c was added to the face value of PSE sold in packets of 5 (i.e., 1/5 cent per envelope). Sections addressing Official Paid and Postage Paid PCs and PSE have also been added .

The major addition that has been made to this monograph at the beginning of 2013 is an appendix entitled "Hong Kong Queen Victoria Post Card Earliest Uses at Hong Kong and the British Treaty Ports". It consists of a database that maps the earliest known QV PC from HK and each of the TPs and agencies to each type and subtype of QV PC, and a separate illustrated census of each of these earliest known uses. I believe that this can be a very useful tool to those who collect this material, and I am deeply indebted to Mr. Chan Chi Ho for his expertise and tireless effort in developing this appendix. I also wish to thank all of the others who have sent scans and related information that contribute to our body of knowledge concerning HK postal stationery and its related postal history. Additionally, I want to specifically express my appreciation to our Webmaster, Michel Houde, for the gracious gift of his expertise and effort on behalf of myself, members of the HKSC and HKPS, and all the others who avail themselves of the information which he makes available.

Please email proposed updates to this monograph, to me at: leescamp@att.net.

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