

Philatelic Pioneers

Stamp collecting and philately has been evolving ever since the mid 19th century. During this time there have been some key figures who can be said to have fulfilled the definition of pioneer and whose qualities match many of the associated synonyms. This is the first in an occasional series highlighting some of those who have been most influential in this evolution.

Pioneer,definition: a person who begins or helps develop something new and prepares the way for others to follow .

Pioneer,synonyms: developer, innovator, groundbreaker, trailblazer, pathfinder, front runner, founder, founding father, experimenter, instigator, creator.

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If anyone has a particular "pioneer" they would like to write about or if they have any details of significant achievements relating to personalities previously featured but which have not been adequately reported please get in touch.

Thomas Keay Tapling (Part 1)



Thomas Keay Tapling (30 October 1855 – 11 April 1891) was an English businessman and politician. He played first-class cricket and was also an eminent philatelist who formed one of the greatest stamp collections of his era.

Early life

Tapling was born in Dulwich, London. He was educated first at home and then at Harrow School from age 15. Later he attended Trinity College, Cambridge, graduating BA and LL.B in 1880 and MA and LL.M in 1883. His father, also Thomas Tapling, was a businessman who made a fortune from the manufacture of carpets and household furnishings. His mother was Annie Elizabeth Tapling (née Keay).

Tapling originally intended a career in law, and he was called to the bar at the Middle Temple as a Barrister.

In 1882, however, Thomas Tapling senior died and his son was forced to drop his plans and take over the family business of Thomas Tapling & Son. This does not appear to have been a burden and the business prospered and expanded, providing him with the money to travel and build his stamp collection. He had a reputation as an enlightened employer, who emphasised temperance and thrift to his employees.

Cricket

Tapling played first-class cricket at Cambridge University, turning out for Trinity College, Trinity College Long Vacation Club and Cambridge University Long Vacation Club. He played for the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) against Cambridge University in 1886, his sole official first-class match. He was included in George Vernon's side for an 1889/90 tour of India and Ceylon but was unable to play after a close friend was taken ill in Italy and he opted to stay with him.



Politics

Tapling was a Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) for the Harborough Division of Leicestershire from 1886 to 1891. He was a member of the Standing Committee on Trade

Philately

Tapling began collecting stamps as a schoolboy in 1865. During the 1870s and 1880s he purchased existing collections from other philatelists, including those of William Image, W.A.S. Westoby, Edward B. Evans, and Gustave and Martial Caillebotte. By 1887 his collection was second only to that of Philippe Ferrari de La Renotière. Among his holdings were many world-famous rarities, including both values of the "Post Office" Mauritius and three examples of the Inverted Head Four Annas of India. It is the only intact private collection formed during the Nineteenth century, with examples of practically every stamp issued world-wide up to 1889.

In 1870 or 1871 Tapling joined the Philatelic Society in London (which subsequently became the Royal Philatelic Society London), being elected to its Committee in 1876. He became Vice-President in 1881 following the death of the former incumbent in a railway accident. The Tapling Medal, in silver, was created in his memory by the RPSL and first awarded in 1920. His name was

recorded on the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists in 1921 as one of the original "Fathers of Philately."

Death and legacy

Tapling died at the age of 35 of pleurisy at Gumley Hall, Market Harborough in Leicestershire. His collection was bequeathed to the British Museum. It currently forms the Tapling Collection in the Philatelic Collections of the British Library. The collection includes these rarities:

Hawaii: 1851–52 2 cents to 13 cents (both types), the "Missionaries";
 India: 1854 4 annas blue and pale red, error head inverted, two used on a cover, unique;
 Mauritius: 1847 1d red used on cover and 2d blue, the "Post Office" issue;
 Western Australia: 1854–55 4d blue, error frame inverted."

Source: Thomas Tapling - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

The Hawaiian Missionaries



The Hawaiian Missionaries are the first postage stamps of the Kingdom of Hawaii, issued in 1851. They came to be known as the "Missionaries" because they were primarily found on the correspondence of missionaries working in the Hawaiian Islands. Only a handful of these stamps have survived to the present day, and so they are amongst the great rarities of philately.

Background

In the early 19th century, mail to and from Hawaii was carried by ship captains on an ad hoc basis. By 1849, partly as a side effect of the California Gold Rush and the settlement of California, mail to and from San Francisco had increased greatly. In response, the Hawaiian government established a post office and set postal rates. Henry Martyn Whitney, the first postmaster, was authorized to print stamps for those rates in June 1851, which he did using the printing press of *The Polynesian*, a weekly government newspaper.

Issuance

The stamps went on sale October 1, 1851, in three denominations covering three rates: the 2-cent stamp was for newspapers going to the US, the 5-cent value was for regular mail to the US, and the 13-cent value was for mail to the US East Coast, combining the 5 cents of Hawaiian postage, a 2-cent ship fee, and 6 cents to cover the transcontinental US rate.

The design was very simple, consisting only of a central numeral of the denomination framed by a standard printer's ornament, with the denomination repeated in words at the bottom. The top line read "Hawaiian / Postage" for the 2- and 5-cent values, but "H.I. & U.S. / Postage" for the 13-cent value, reflecting its unusual role of paying two different countries' postage. A thin line surrounded by a thicker line framed the stamp as a whole. All stamps were printed in the same shade of blue on pelure paper, an extremely thin tissue-like paper prone to tearing; 90% of known Missionaries are damaged in some way.

Although the stamps were in regular use until as late as 1856, of the four values issued only about 200 have survived (Scott Trepel's census in the Siegel catalog lists 197, but see below), of which 28 are unused, and 32 are on cover.

The 2-cent is the rarest of the Hawaiian Missionaries, with 15 copies recorded, only one of which is unused. When Maurice Burrus sold this unique unused example in 1921 the price was US\$15,000; when Alfred H. Caspary sold the same stamp in 1963 the price was \$41,000, the highest value ever paid for any stamp at that time (even more than the British Guiana 1c magenta and "Post Office" Mauritius blue two pence and red one penny rarities). An astonishing lore surrounds this stamp: in 1892, one of its earlier owners, Gaston Leroux, was murdered for it by an envious fellow philatelist, Hector Giroux.

In the 1963 movie *Charade*, Charles Lambert placed three valuable stamps on an envelope to hide \$250,000 he had stolen, with accomplices, during WWII but kept for himself. One of these stamps is a 3 cent Hawaiian Missionary intended to represent the rarer 2 cent value.



The most valuable of all Missionary items is a cover sent to New York City bearing the only known use of the 2-cent value on cover, as well as a 5-cent value and two 3-cent US stamps. This is known as the Dawson Cover. It was in a bundle of correspondence shoved into a factory furnace around 1870, but packed so tightly that the fire went out (though one side of the cover bears a scorch mark). The factory was abandoned; 35 years later, a workman cleaning the factory for re-use discovered the stuffed furnace, and knew enough about stamps to save the unusual covers. This cover was acquired by George H. Worthington in 1905, then bought by Alfred H. Caspary in December 1917 for \$6,100. It has changed hands several more times: the Weill brothers bought it for \$25,000 in 1957 for Benjamin Dwight Phillips and eleven years later disposed of it from the Phillips collection for \$90,000, in the 1995 Siegel auction it realized a price of US\$2.09 million (\$1.9 million plus 10% buyer's premium), and in 2013 it sold for \$2.24 million to an American collector making it one of the highest-priced of all philatelic items.

The Dawson cover, may be evidence of the validity of the 1850 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation between the United States and Hawaii as a sovereign nation. Under Article XV,

“So soon as Steam or other mail packets under the flag of either of the contracting parties, shall have commenced running between their respective ports of entry, the contracting parties agree to receive at the post offices of those ports all mailable matter, and to forward it as directed, the destination being to [some] regular post office of either country, charging thereupon the regular postal rate as established by law in the territories of either party receiving said mailable matter, in addition to the original postage of the office whence the mail [was] sent.”

On September 9, 1850, Hawaii's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Crichton Wyllie, asked San Francisco's postmaster J. B. Moore to implement the treaty's mail exchange provision quickly, to support Hawaii's sovereignty against any potential French ambitions in the Hawaiian Islands. Moore agreed by early December, and the Honolulu Post Office opened on December 21, 1850.

The Grinnell Missionaries

In 1920, 43 additional Missionaries appeared on the philatelic market. They came from a Charles Shattuck, whose mother had apparently corresponded with her childhood friend Ursula Newell Emerson, matriarch of a missionary family in Hawaii, were acquired by George H. Grinnell and then sold to dealer John Klemann for \$65,000. But in 1922, the stamps' authenticity became the subject of a court case, and they were adjudged forgeries.

They have been studied on a number of occasions since then, but opinion remains divided. In 1922, experts testified that the Grinnells had been produced by photogravure and not by handset moveable type, but in the 1980s Keith Cordrey contended that they were probably typeset, and the Royal Philatelic Society London agreed. Further analysis showed that the ink and paper were consistent with 1850s types. Even so, the Royal Philatelic Society declared the stamps to be counterfeit. A book detailing their findings was published in 2006 titled *The Investigation of the Grinnell Hawaiian Missionaries* by the Expert Committee of the Royal Philatelic Society London by Patrick Pearson.

In May 2006, Mystic Stamp Company announced that they had acquired 36 of the Grinnells from the descendants of George Grinnell, and were selling the group "as is" for US\$1.5 million.

Many of the surviving Missionaries are repaired, and David Beech has commented that they probably would not have survived had they not been.

Source: *Hawaiian Missionaries (stamps)* - <https://en.wikipedia.org>

(The Tapling Legacy to be continued)