

Danish West Indies 1856 - 1917

Stamps and Postage Due

Introduction. The Danish West Indies, a former Danish possession, is located to the East of Puerto Rico and consists of three islands: St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John. The main island is St. Thomas with the present-day capital Charlotte Amalie. The islands were sold by Denmark to the United States for \$25,000,000 in 1917, which also brought about the cessation of Danish West Indies stamps.

Because of its advantageous location, St. Thomas was an important first port of call for ships from Europe and later a major coal hub in the Caribbean for the steamers to and from Europe and the U.S.A. The British Royal Mail Steam Ship Company established its main mail-hub for the entire Caribbean area in St. Thomas in 1842, but also French, German, Spanish and U.S.A. operations offered mail service, the same as well for local and private shipping mail companies.

Treatment. The aim of this exhibit is to show all the postage and postage due stamps and their use on letters from 1856 throughout the years until the transition to U.S.A.

The material is aiming to show essays and proofs, all of the issued stamps and postage due with a changing display of unused and used stamps, postmarks used at various locations, inverted watermarks, UPU specimens, varieties and plated stamps for especially the classics and bicoloured issues, multiples and also many printings. The use of the stamps are showing examples on letters and to some extent also letters for the which the stamps were printed (purpose of issue: POI), as well as examples of letters where the stamps were used to pay the full letter rate, both for inland and foreign postal rates.

In 1905 the monetary system changed from 'c and S' to the new currency, 'BIT and Francs'. Simultaneously with new issues of Denmark, the King's portrait, Christian IX, was used for the first time with the new BIT currency.

Rarity. Although the postal law was issued on 10 November 1855, it was only on 1 April 1856 that the first classic stamp issue was put into circulation and lasting until 1873.

The 3c was only initially meant to serve the purpose of paying the postage for letter rates within the islands only and for a 9c letter rate by direct Danish ship to the mother country, not for foreign mail. Consequently, the classic stamps are scarce on letters and the

same can be said for the early printings of the 1874 bicoloured issue. It was only when the islands joined the Universal Postal Union on 1.9.1877 and all other mail operations ceased, that DWI stamps became frequently used on foreign mail. Demand increased for more values and larger volumes, which means of course, that more stamps have survived to this day compared the stamps issued until 1874.

Scarce items and only recorded are marked with text in red, black bold text has been used for guidance and important information.

Organisation of the exhibit

- 1 The classic issue 1856 - 1866
- 2 The classic issue perforation 12½, 1873
- 3 Bicoloured perforation 14x13½ 1873 - 1895
1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14 and 50c
- 4 Provisional 1 CENT, 1887
- 5 Provisional 10 CENTS 1895
- 6 Bicoloured perforation 12½ 1896 - 1901
1, 3, 4, 5 and 10c
- 7 Coat of arms 1 and 5c, 1901
- 8 Provisional 1902, Local overprint
Copenhagen overprint
- 9 Provisional, 2c bisected (4c bicoloured), 1903
- 10 Coat of arms 2 and 8c, 1903
- 11 Provisional 5 BIT 1905
- 12 King Christian IX, 5, 10, 20, 25, 40 and 50 BIT, 1905
- 13 St. Thomas Harbour, 1, 2 and 5 Francs, 1907
- 14 King Frederik VIII, 1907
- 15 King Christian X, 1915
- 16 Postage due cents
- 17 Postage due BIT
- 18 Transition to USA

Nomenclature. For the bicoloured oval issues the nomenclature from Lasse Nielsen's 6-volume books has been used. The DAKA listing for Antiqua (ANT) and Grotesque (LAP) postmarks, for registration marks and labels Vic Engström's listing were used.

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DWI philately and postal history census, compiled over a period of 50 years.