

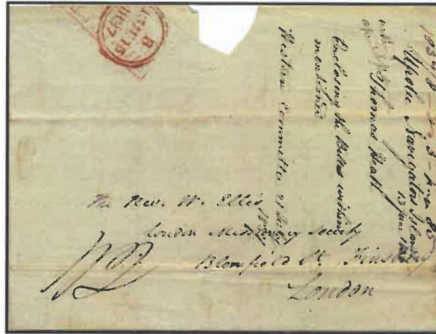
# THE POSTAL HISTORY OF PRE-COLONIAL SAMOA

### The pre-post office era 1836-1877

This section shows the different ways of handling and transporting the mail from and to Samoa as well as different rates that were in use during this early period.

The first permanent staff of missionaries from the London Missionary Society arrived in Samoa in June 1836. Almost all outgoing mail during this early period went by ship mail to Sydney and, in most cases, continued to London. The postal rates in the beginning of the period were based on charges applied in Sydney and in London. The charges applied in London also included inland mileages charges.

*The earliest recorded cover in private hands*



## The Samoa Express Post Office 1877-1881

In 1877 the proprietor of the "Fiji Times" decided to establish a newspaper in Samoa as well, and at the same time to open a post office with the main purpose of providing stamps and facilities for mailing and distributing the newspapers.

The post office also provided services for the population of Samoa. The so-called Samoa Express Post Office was in operation from 1 October 1877 until 31 August 1881 and during this period the first Samoan postal cancellation was introduced.

*One of only eleven recorded covers, seven are in this collection*



### The re-opened Samoa Express Post Office 1881

After the closure of the Samoa Express Post Office on 31 August 1881, the consuls invited the former postmaster, Andrew Speirs, to continue the operation, this time as a provisional function.

The re-opened Samoa Express Post Office finally closed on 31 December 1881.

*The only recorded cover from this short-lived post office*

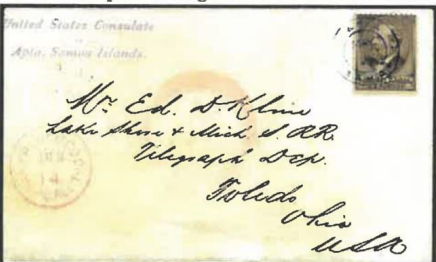


### The Apia Municipal Post Office 1882-1886

After the closure of the re-opened Samoa Express Post Office in 1881, a need to solve the postal situation arose. Historical records show that the Municipal Board adopted a "Regulation for the Post Office" on 7 February 1882 and then elected the British citizen James Laurenson as Provisional Municipal Postmaster. Mr Laurenson was later succeeded by Thomas Strettle Kelsall on 3 March 1882 and, after Mr Kelsall's death, by John Davis on 14 August 1885. Mr Kelsall was assisted by Mr Davis from early April 1885 and until the death of Mr Kelsall.

The Municipal Post Office operated at least until December 1886.

One of only two covers where U.S. stamps  
were cancelled in Apia



### The Australian Branch Line 1886-1893

To be able to provide for the growing commercial and political interests in the Pacific area, Germany decided to subsidise a direct shipping line between Bremerhaven and Sydney, with a separate branch line between Sydney and Apia. The Australian Branch Line was operated by SS *Lübeck* of the Norddeutscher Lloyd. There was a political conflict and unrest in Apia, between Germany on one side and Great Britain and the U.S.A. on the other side, a reason why most Germans and the German Consular affairs in Apia chose to use the operation of the new German-controlled Australian Branch Line.

Mail to Europe on the westbound trip from Apia via Sydney was at least two weeks slower than the eastbound trip via San Francisco supplied by the U.S.-based Oceanic Steamship Company, a disadvantage that already after the first three years of operation started to decrease the mail volumes to the degree, that operation was finally closed in 1893.

*Cancelled on arrival to Apia on the inaugural trip*



## The German Postal Steamship Agency Apia 1886-1887 and The Imperial German Postal Agency Apia 1887-1900

On 22 September 1886 the German Postal Steamship Agency Apia started its operation in the localities of the German company "Deutsche Handels- und Plantagengesellschaft der Südsee-Inseln". The British and American Consuls almost immediately made complaints that a German post office wasn't allowed to operate in Samoa as there already was a post office of the Municipality. At the same time some of the many German traders complained about the location of the post office.

On 23 July 1887, less than a year after the introduction of the German service, the German Postal Steamship Agency Apia was changed into the Imperial German Postal Agency Apia with Oskar Schlüter as postmaster, in the premises of the German Consulate.

*One of the most important covers, cancelled with both the provisional handstamp type 4 as the new type 6 that arrived together with new stamps on 2 April 1889*



### The John Davis Post Office 1886-1900

On 22 September 1886 the German Postal Steamship Agency Apia, later changed to the Imperial German Postal Agency, opened. As this Agency became a Postal problem for the non-German group of the population, King Malietoa appointed John Davis Postmaster of the Kingdom of Samoa on 20 December 1886. There are no postal evidences that the John Davis Post Office started to operate until 2 March 1887.

Because of the transition of the Western part of Samoa into a German Colony on 1 March 1900, the John Davis Post Office closed on 28 February 1900.

*One of the earliest covers from the John Davis Post Office. The seven earliest recorded covers are all shown in the exhibit*



# THE POSTAL HISTORY OF PRE-COLONIAL SAMOA

## The purpose of the exhibit ...

... is to present the postal history progress and events through the different postal services in operation during the Pre-Colonial period for Samoa. During the Pre-Colonial period Samoa was an independent Kingdom that did not operate any postal services itself, but during this period several different postal services operated in parallel and even jointly. During the whole Pre-Colonial period it was also possible to send ship letters outside the post offices.

Postal services or periods	PRE 1877	1877-1881	1881	1882-1886	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894-1900	Pages
Introduction														1
The Pre-Post Office Period														2-6
The Samoa Express P.O.														7-11
The re-opened Samoa Express P.O.														12
The Apia Municipal P.O.														13-18
The Australian Branch Line														19-21
The German Postal Steamship P.O.														22-24
The Imperial German P.O.														25-36
The John Davis P.O.														37-54
Mail sent outside the P.O.														55-57
Incoming mail														58-60

## The treatment ...

... in this exhibit is based on the fact that each of the postal operations only operated through one post office each, all positioned in Apia on the island of Upolu. What happened in Apia reflected on these postal operations and the treatment is therefore based on this. The most important factor was the different changes of the cancellations, also used only one at the time, and of course the different rates and routes used during this period. The exhibit is structured into chapters and sub-chapters, where the chapters deal with the different postal services or periods and the sub-chapters mostly describes the different cancellations or the postal events. Each chapter is described with a separate introductory page.

## Importance

This exhibit is by far the most comprehensive ever formed of all these different postal services.

## Quality and Rarity

Most rarity statements are based on more than 25 years of personal research, and in many instances made in co-operation with Robert P. Odenweller RDP Hon. FRPSL for inclusion in his published book. Many new and important findings have been made during this research but as they now are made public, and in many instances been dedicated to me, through the published book, I have chosen not to specify this personal research on the pages in the exhibit.

## Presentation

The most important items are all marked with thicker frames.

## Literature references

Robert P. Odenweller, "The Stamps and Postal History of Nineteenth Century Samoa" is the definitive work of the period dealt with in this exhibit, except for the German postal services.

Dr. Friedrich F. Steuer and Ronald F. Steuer, "Handbuch und Katalog der deutschen Kolonial-Vorläufer" is the most complete work regarding the German postal services.