

The Danish postal service in the Danish West Indies, 1781-1917

Det danske postvæsen i Dansk Vestindien, 1781-1917

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(Translated by Chris King)

Dansk Vestindien - Historisk baggrund

De Vestindiske Øer (Dansk Vestindien) er betegnelsen for Danmark-Norges besiddelser i Caribien, nemlig de tre øer Sankt Thomas, Sankt Jan og Sankt Croix samt en del mindre ubeboede holme og skær. Øerne var i dansk-norsk besiddelse fra henholdsvis 1666, 1718 og 1733, indtil de blev solgt til USA den 31. marts 1917.

Dansk Vestindien er en interessant del af danmarkshistorien, og den startede i realiteten i 1672, da danskerne sendte en lille flåde ud mod Vestindien og kom til den stort set ubeboede ø St. Thomas. Man gik i land, satte et flag på stranden og erklærede, at nu var St. Thomas en dansk koloni. Da der var gået nogle år, ville man gerne udvide sit område, og derfor erklærede man også den lille ø St. Jan øst for St. Thomas som en del af kolonien.

St. Jan og St. Thomas er begge meget bjergrige, og derfor er der ikke ingen af disse to øer, der egner sig specielt godt til sukkerdyrkning. Danskerne fik senere lov til at købe øen St. Croix af Frankrig, og denne ø er helt anderledes end St. Thomas og St. Jan. St. Croix, der er på størrelse med den danske ø Møn, og har en meget stor og frugtbar slette på midten af øen, som egner sig til at dyrke sukkerrør. Arbejds-kraften på øerne var slaver, som danskerne først og fremmest havde hentet i Afrika. Der blev også købt slaver på de andre øer i Caribien, men de fleste ca. 110.000 slaver blev sejlet over på danske skibe fra Afrika til Vestindien. Forholdene på slaveskibene var meget rædselsfulde. Manglen på mad og vand i kombination med forskellige sygdomme betød, at ca. hver femte slave døde inden de nåede frem til Vestindien. Selvom

Danish West Indies Historical background

The West Indies (Danish West Indies) was the name for the Danish-Norwegian possessions in the Caribbean, namely the three islands of St Thomas, St Jan and St Croix and a number of smaller uninhabited islets and skerries. The islands were in Danish-Norwegian possession from 1666, 1718 and 1733 until they were sold to the USA on 31 March 1917.

The Danish West Indies is an interesting part of Danish history, and it actually started in 1672 when the Danes sent a small fleet to the West Indies and arrived at the largely uninhabited island of St Thomas. They landed, put a flag on the beach and declared that St Thomas was now a Danish colony. After a few years, they wanted to expand their territory, so they also declared the small island of St Jan east of St Thomas as part of the colony.

St Jan and St Thomas are both very mountainous, so neither of these two islands is particularly suitable for sugar cultivation. The Danes were later allowed to buy the island of St Croix from France and this island is completely different from St Thomas and St Jan. St Croix, which is the size of the Danish island of Møn, has a very large and fertile plain in the centre of the island that is suitable for growing sugar cane. The labour force on the islands was slaves, which the Danes had primarily imported from Africa. Slaves were also bought on the other islands in the Caribbean, but most of the approximately 110,000 slaves were shipped on Danish ships from Africa to the West Indies. Conditions on the slave ships were appalling. The lack of food and water combined with various diseases meant that around one in five slaves died before

England afskaffede slaveriet i 1807, skete det først Danmark og Dansk Vestindien i 1848 efter et slaveoprør.

I anden halvdel af 1800-tallet var der forskellige initiativer til at få øerne solgt til USA. Det lykkedes af forskellige grunde ikke, men efter udbruddet af første verdenskrig henvendte USA sig igen til Danmark og ville nu gerne købe øerne. USA købte de tre små øer St. Thomas, St. Jan og St. Croix den 31. marts 1917 mod en betaling på 25 mill. dollar.

I salgstraktaten fra 1917 stod der blandt andet, at alle papirer og indbo, der var i offentlige bygninger i Dansk Vestindien, ikke var omfattet af salget. De havde ingen interesse for USA eller den lokale befolkning - så dette tog danskerne med hjem til Danmark. Det betyder, at alle kilderne til øernes historie før 1917 findes på Rigsarkivet i København. I forbindelse med 100-års jubilæet for salget af øerne er alle papirer blevet digitaliseret, og det betyder nu, at alle har uhindret adgang til dette kildemateriale.

Posten fra Dansk Vestindien

I tiden indtil 1755 foregik postbefordringen til og fra Dansk Vestindien med private skibe uden offentlig indblanding. Efter 1755 blev der etableret en fast forbindelse mellem England og St. Thomas. Breve med transitstempler kendes, men lokale poststempler på St. Thomas blev først lanceret af det britiske postvæsen under den britiske besættelse i 1809.

Dansk Vestindiens egentlige posthistorie begynder med det reglement for Postvæsenet på Dansk Vestindien, der blev udstedt i form af en Kongelig Placat fra 1. november 1781. Bekendtgørelsen foreskrev, at både private og offentligere breve fremover skulle befordres mere sikkert og ordentligt end hidtil imellem Danmark og de danske øer i Vestindien. Den øvrige post måtte som hidtil sendes med skibe, der lejlighedsvis anløb øerne.

reaching the West Indies. Although Great Britain abolished slavery in 1807, Denmark and the Danish West Indies did not do so until 1848 after a slave revolt.

In the second half of the 19th century, there were various initiatives to sell the islands to the USA. For various reasons, these did not succeed, but after the outbreak of the First World War, the USA approached Denmark again wanting to buy the islands. The USA bought the three small islands of St Thomas, St Jan and St Croix on 31 March 1917 for a payment of 25 million dollars.

The sales treaty from 1917 stated, among other things, that all papers and contents that were in public buildings in the Danish West Indies were not included in the sale. They were of no interest to the USA or the local population, so the Danes took them home to Denmark. This means that all the sources for the history of the islands before 1917 can be found at the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen. In connection with the 100th anniversary of the sale of the islands, all documentation has been digitised, which means that everyone now has unhindered access to this source material.

Mail from the Danish West Indies

Until 1755, mail was transported to and from the Danish West Indies by private ships without government interference. After 1755, a permanent link was established between Great Britain and St Thomas. Letters with transit postmarks are known, but local postmarks on St Thomas were first introduced by the British postal service in 1809 during the British occupation.

The actual postal history of the Danish West Indies began with the Regulations for the Post Office in the Danish West Indies, which was issued in the form of a Royal Notice on 1 November 1781. The order stipulated that both private and official letters were to be transported more safely and properly between Denmark and the Danish islands in the West Indies than before. Other mail had to be sent by ships that occasionally called at the islands, as previously.

Ud over dette fremgår det også, at der i København og på alle tre øer skulle indrettes brevkontorer ved hver toldbod, og at posten imellem de i alt fire poststeder var omfattet af denne bekendtgørelse. På disse brevkontorer blev alle dokumenter og breve modtaget og udleveret.

Før afrejse fra et af de fire poststeder skulle skibskaptajnen henvende sig på brevkontoret for at afhente post og et postbevis. På den måde kunne man kontrollere de fornødne tilladelser forud for afsejling. Brevene blev transporteret og afleveret i en forsejlet sæk.

Taksten for breve mellem øerne var 5 vestindiske styvere (1 styver = 1 1/3 cents) og taksten til Danmark var 10 vestindiske styvere. Der var portofrihed for statens breve, og skibsrederen skulle kun betale halv porto for de breve, han fik fragtet med egne skibe. Skibsrederen modtog i øvrigt ingen betaling for at fragte posten.

Denne ordning var dog ingen succes, idet en stor del af breve bragtes ad private kanaler fra sted til sted.

Mange har i øvrigt den opfattelse, at de fleste breve til Europa blev sendt med danske skibe, men antallet af danske skibe, der sejlede mellem Dansk Vestindien og Danmark, var meget begrænset. En stor del af posten fra Dansk Vestindien blev ekspederet af det engelske postvæsen og senere også via franske og tyske skibe.

Under Napoleonskrigene blev øerne besat af englænderne, der oprettede provisoriske postkontorer på St. Thomas og St. Croix. Danmark var selvfølgelig uden forbindelse med Dansk Vestindien under den engelske besættelse, og transporten af post og varer fandt derfor næsten udelukkende sted med engelske skibe, især orlogsskibe, der sejlede til England.

In addition to this, it also stated that post offices were to be set up in Copenhagen and on all three islands at each customs office, and that mail between the four post offices in total was covered by this order. All documents and letters were received and delivered at these post offices.

Before departure, a ship's captain had to go to the post office to collect mail and a postal certificate. This way, the necessary authorisations could be checked prior to sailing. The letters were transported and delivered in a sealed bag.

The rate for letters between the islands was 5 West Indian stuivers (1 Stuiver = 1 1/3 US cents = 2 skilling) and the rate to Denmark was 10 West Indian Stuivers. Postage was free for government letters, and the shipowner had to pay only half postage for the letters he had transported on his own ships. The shipowner did not receive any payment for transporting the mail.

However, this arrangement was not a success, as a large proportion of letters were carried privately from place to place.

Many believe that most letters to Europe were sent by Danish ships, but the number of Danish ships travelling between the Danish West Indies and Denmark was very limited. Much of the mail from the Danish West Indies was dispatched by the British postal service and later also via French and German ships.

During the Napoleonic Wars, the islands were occupied by the British, who set up provisional post offices on St Thomas and St Croix. Of course, Denmark had no connection with the Danish West Indies during the British occupation, and the transport of mail and goods was therefore almost exclusively carried out by British ships, especially warships sailing to Great Britain.

In the period after the peace settlement in 1815, mail to Europe was still predominant-

I perioden efter fredsafslutningen i 1815 blev posten til Europa fortsat overvejende sendt med engelske skibe. Posten blev enten sent som "Packet Letters" eller som "Ship Letters". "Packet letters" blev befordret på regulære britiske postskibe, der blev betalt af det engelske postvæsen. Fra 1817 kostede det 1 Shilling 3 d [pence] + indlandsporto til London. Ship Letters blev befordret af almindelige private skibe. – Denne portotakst blev fra 1815 takseret til 6 pence, samt en "Captain Fee" på 2 pence. Hertil kom så indlandsporto fra udskebningshavnen til London. (Brev – A1, T. Gade.)

ly sent by British ships. The mail was either sent as 'Packet Letters' or 'Ship Letters'. 'Packet letters were carried on regular British mail ships that were paid for by the British Post Office. From 1817 it cost 1/3d (1 shilling and threepence) + inland postage to London. Ship Letters were carried by ordinary private ships. From 1815, this postage was charged at 6 pence, plus a 'Captain's Fee' of 2 pence. To this was added the inland postage from the port of arrival to London (Letter A1, T. Gade).



Figur A1. Skibsbrev sendt med privat skib til Danmark, før Royal Mail Steam Packet blev etableret i 1842. Brevet er sendt fra St. Croix til Cork (COVE) i Irland. Porto fra St. Croix til Cork er betalt kontant. Poststempet "Post Paid" blev påført på det lokale postkontor i Cork og 2 S 11 d er det beløb, der blev betalt i Cork af skibets kaptajn, for at brevet blev sendt videre fra Cork til Altona. Modtageren her måtte betale 13 lybske skilling omregnet til 42 danske skilling, som udgør portoen fra Altona til København. (T.Gade)

Figure A1. Ship's letter sent by private ship to Denmark before the Royal Mail Steam Packet was established in 1842. The letter was sent from St Croix to Cork (Cobh) in Ireland. The postage from St. Croix to Cork was paid in cash. The handstamp 'Post Paid' was applied at the local post office in Cork and 2/11d is the amount paid in Cork by the ship's captain to forward the letter from Cork to Altona. The recipient had to pay 13 Lübeck schilling, converted to 42 Danish skilling, which was the postage from Altona to Copenhagen (T. Gade).

I den efterfølgende periode frem til 1842 blev næsten alle breve til Danmark sendt med danske skibe. Frem til 1807 kendes der to breve sendt til København. Det ene brev er fra 1739 og det andet fra 1748, og begge breve er sendt til København. I perioden efter den engelske besættelse og frem til 1842 anslår man, at der er mindre end 30 breve bevaret sendt med danske skibe til Danmark (brev A2, M. Kewriga.)

In the subsequent period until 1842, almost all letters to Denmark were sent by Danish ships. Before 1807, two letters sent to Copenhagen are known. One letter is from 1739 and the other from 1748. In the period after the British occupation up to 1842, it is estimated that less than 30 letters sent by Danish ships to Denmark have survived. (Letter A2, M. Kewriga.)



Figur A2. Det tidligste registrerede brev fra Dansk Vestindien i privateje. Brevet er sendt med dansk skib fra Christiansvæn (senere Christiansted) den 23. september 1748 til København. Der er ingen portopåtegninger på brevet. De få breve, der eksisterer fra denne periode, befinder sig næsten alle i Postmuseet eller i arkiver på Rigsarkivet i København. (M.Kewriga)

Figure A2. The earliest recorded letter from the Danish West Indies in private ownership. The letter was sent by Danish ship from Christiansvæn (later Christiansted) on 23 September 1748 to Copenhagen. There are no postal markings on the letter. The few letters that exist from this period are almost all in the Danish Postal Museum or in archives at the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen (M. Kewriga).

Englænderne etablerede i 1842 Royal Mail Steam Company, RMSP. Samtidig blev der også oprettet et britisk postagentur på St. Thomas, hvorfra det var muligt at sende post med RMSP til andre vestindiske øer, til Nord-og Sydamerika samt til Europa.

Portotaksten til Danmark var en del højere end de danske portotakster, men der afgik flere skibe om måneden fra St. Thomas til England, idet der kunne gå måneder mellem de danske skibe sejlede mellem øerne og København. Efter etableringen af RMSP blev de fleste breve sendt med disse skibe til Danmark (Brev A3, T. Gade.)

In 1842, the British established the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, RMSP. At the same time, a British postal agency was also established on St Thomas, from where it was possible to send mail with RMSP to other West Indian islands, to North and South America, and to Europe.

The postage rate to Denmark was a lot higher than the Danish postage rates, but there were several ships a month from St Thomas to Great Britain, as months could pass between the Danish ships sailing from the islands to Copenhagen. After the establishment of the RMSP, most letters were sent with these ships to Denmark (Letter A3, T. Gade.)



Figur A3. Brev af 3. vægtklasse sendt 13. maj 1856 fra St. Croix til København. Brevet er modtaget og stemplet i Christiansted og sendt videre til St. Thomas. Porto fra St. Croix til St. Thomas er betalt kontant. Modtaget på det engelske postkontor i St. Thomas 14. maj – transitstempel på bagsiden. Sendt med Royal Mail Steam Packet til England. Påtegninger 2 S 6 d udgør den engelske porto. Den belgiske og preussiske porto andrager 10 ½ SGR i alt inkl. den engelske porto 36 SGR, omregnet til 48 Sch Cour som er det samme som 154 danske skilling. Hertil skulle modtager også betale den danske porto på 26 skilling. I alt skulle modtager betale 180 danske skilling – påtegning på bagsiden. (T.Gade)

Figure A3. Letter of 3rd weight class sent 13 May 1856 from St. Croix to Copenhagen. The letter was received and postmarked in Christiansted and sent on to St. Thomas. The postage from St Croix to St Thomas was paid in cash. Received at the British Post Office in St. Thomas 14 May, transit date stamp on reverse. Sent by Royal Mail Steam Packet to Great Britain. Endorsed 2/6d constituting the British postage. The Belgian and Prussian postage totalled 10½ silbergroschen, plus the British postage of 25½ silbergroschen (2/6d), making 36 silbergroschen, converted to 48 schilling Courant, which is the equivalent of 154 Danish skilling. In addition, the recipient had to pay the Danish postage of 26 Danish skilling. In total, the recipient had to pay 180 Danish skilling as per the endorsement on reverse (T. Gade).

Ud over at sende posten med de engelske skibe benyttede mange muligheden at sende posten med udenlandske købmænd. Specielt meget post til Frankrig og de franske kolonier blev sendt med de lokale franske købmænd, der udover varer og passagerer også kunne medtage post på deres skibe.

Frankrig havde igennem flere år forsøgt at opnå en aftale på lignende måde som den briterne opnåede i forbindelse med etablering af Royal Mail Steam Packet. Denne aftale indebar, at post, der blev befordret med deres skibe, kunne undgå lokalporto, når den indleveredes eller afhentedes direkte på deres eget postkontor. Dette lykkedes endeligt i 1865 hvor rederiet Compagnie Transatlantique begyndte at anløbe St. Thomas.

In addition to sending mail with the British ships, many people took the opportunity to send the mail with foreign merchants. A lot of mail to France and the French colonies was sent with the local French merchants, who, in addition to goods and passengers, could also carry mail on their ships.

For several years, France had been trying to reach an agreement similar to that reached by the British in connection with the establishment of the Royal Mail Steam Packet. This agreement meant that mail carried on their ships could avoid local postage when delivered or collected directly at their own post office. This finally succeeded in 1865 when the Compagnie Transatlantique began calling at St Thomas.



Figur A4. Forudbetalt brev sendt 12. november 1859 fra Christiansted til Ahrensburg i Holsten. Brevet blev oprindeligt takseret i London med 1S 41/2d, som udgør portoen til Danmark, men brevet er korrekt rettet til 1 S 2 d, da brevet kun skulle til Hamburg og herefter blev sendt videre med det danske postvæsen til Ahrensburg. (T.Gade)

Figure A4. Prepaid letter sent 12 November 1859 from Christiansted to Ahrensburg in Holstein. The letter was originally assessed in London at 1/4½d, which is the postage to Denmark, but the letter is corrected to 1/2d, as the letter was only going to Hamburg and was then sent on with the Danish postal service to Ahrensburg (T. Gade).

I april 1871 begyndte også to tyske rederier Norddeutscher Lloyd og HAPAG at anløbe St. Thomas på deres ruter. De to tyske rederier samarbejdede med det danske postvæsen, og fra august 1872 blev det muligt at sende breve fra Dansk Vestindien til Tyskland og Danmark for 7 cents.

Dansk Vestindiens indtræden i den Internationale Postunion den 1. september 1877 betød, at al ind- og udgående post fremover skulle passere de dansk-vestindiske posthuse og det engelske posthus måtte derfor nedlægges. Portoet blev fastsat til 12 cents uanset, om det blev sendt med fransk eller engelsk skib.

In April 1871, two German shipping companies, Norddeutscher Lloyd and H.A.P. A.G., also began calling at St Thomas on their routes. The two German shipping companies cooperated with the Danish postal service, and from August 1872 it became possible to send letters from the Danish West Indies to Germany and Denmark for 7 cents.

The Danish West Indies' accession to the Universal Postal Union on 1 September 1877 meant that all incoming and outgoing mail had to pass through the Danish-West Indies post offices and the British post office had to be closed. Postage was set at 12 cents regardless of whether it was sent by French or British ship.



Figur A5. Brev i 2. vægtklasse sendt den 15. februar fra St. Thomas til København. Brevet er frankeret med de britiske frimærker Queen Victoria 2 S blå og 3 d rosenrød. Frimærkerne er annulleret med det engelske stempel "kombineret stempel med kontrolbogstavskode A". Brevet er ankomststemplet i København (T.Gade).

Figure A5. 2nd weight class letter sent on 15 February from St. Thomas to Copenhagen. The letter is franked with the British stamps Queen Victoria 2/- blue and 3d rose red. The stamps are cancelled with the British 'duplex canceller with control letter code A'. The letter has an arrival date stamp in Copenhagen (T. Gade).

Indførelse af frimærker i Dansk Vestindien 1856 - 1917

Efter oprettelsen af et postvæsen på øerne 1. april 1856 introduceredes det første frimærke. Det var et 3 cents kvadratisk, utakket mærke, der som udgangspunkt var til anvendelse lokalt og til brug mellem øernes postkontorer. Der eksisterer dog nogle få breve til Danmark frankeret med 9 cents i form af tre x 3 cents sendt direkte med dansk skib. (B1 lokal brev 3 Cents single med hvid gummi, F. Banke) (B2 brev til København 3 x 3 cents, M. Kewriga.)

Hvis breve skulle til udlandet, blev brevene for det meste fremsendt til det engelske postkontor på St. Thomas, fra de øvrige postkontorer frankeret med 3 cents lokalporto, eller de blev indleveret ufrankeret direkte på det engelske postkontor uden om postkontorerne, og her blev brevene frankeret med engelske frimærker. Dette medførte at meget lokalpost blev afleveret direkte på det engelske postkontor for at spare lokalporto, som så gik glip af disse indtægter. (B2 brev til København 3 x 3 cents, M. Kewriga.)

Introduction of stamps in the Danish West Indies 1856-1917

After the establishment of a postal service on the islands on 1 April 1856, the first stamp was introduced. It was a 3-cent square, imperforate stamp, initially intended for local use and for use between the islands' post offices. However, there are a few letters to Denmark franked with 9 cents in the form of three x 3 cent stamps sent directly by Danish ship. (B1 local letter 3 cents single with white gum, F. Banke) (B2 letter to Copenhagen 3 x 3 cents, M. Kewriga.)

If letters were going abroad from the other post offices, they were usually sent to the British post office on St Thomas, franked with 3 cents local postage, or they were handed in unstamped directly to the British post office, and here the letters were franked with British stamps. This meant that a lot of local mail was delivered directly to the British post office to save the local postage, which then missed out on this revenue. (B2 letter to Copenhagen 3 x 3 cents, M. Kewriga.)



Figur B1. Lokalbrev fra Frederiksted med 3 cents, 1. vægtklasse med hvid gummi annulleret med stumt femringstempel med punkt i midten, med antikvadaystempel Frederiksted 25.6.1856 til Christiansted. Et nyopdaget brev, som er det bedst bevarede af de nu 3 kendte breve med 3 cents hvid gummi på lokalforsendelser. (F. Banke)

Figure B1. 1st weight class local letter sent from Frederiksted franked with 3 cent stamp, with white gum, cancelled by five-ring canceller with dot in centre, with antiqua date stamp Frederiksted 25.6.1856 to Christiansted. A newly discovered letter which is the best preserved of the now 3 known letters with 3 cent white gum on local mail (F. Banke).



Figur B2. Brev fra Christiansted 30. juni 1857 med trestribe 9 cents med hvid gummi annulleret med 5-ringstempel med punkt i midten og sendt direkte med dansk skib fra Dansk Vestindien til København. Der kendes kun 2 breve frankeret med denne takst og forsendelsesmåde. (M. Kewriga)

Figure B2. Letter from Christiansted 30 June 1857 with strip of three 3 cent stamps with white gum making 9 cents, cancelled with 5-ring canceller with dot in centre and sent directly by Danish ship from the Danish West Indies to Copenhagen. Only 2 letters are known franked with this rate and method of dispatch (M. Kewriga).



Figur B3. Brev fra St. Thomas 27.8.1873 med 7 cents 1. vægtklasse med kvadratisk udgave 3 og 4 cents til Tyskland, annulleret med femringsstempel med sektorkile. Brevet afspejler det postale behov for et 4 cents frimærke, der blev nødvendigt med indførslen af 7 cents taksten i august 1873. På bagsiden blåt FORWARDED By CEO. A. PHILIPS og Co. (B. Winther)

Figure B3. Letter from St. Thomas 27.8.1873 with 7 cents 1st weight class with square issue 3 and 4 cents to Germany, cancelled with five-ring wedge canceller. The cover reflects the postal need for a 4 cent stamp that became necessary with the introduction of the 7 cent rate in August 1873. On the reverse side blue FORWARDED By CEO. A. PHILIPS and Co (B. Winther).



Figur B4. Brev fra St. Thomas 16.5.1875 med tofarvet 7 cents single sendt med det tyske rederi HAPAG til København via Tyskland. (M. Kewriga)

Figure B4. Letter from St. Thomas 16.5.1875 with single bicoloured 7 cents sent by the German shipping company H.A.P. A.G. to Copenhagen via Germany (M. Kewriga).

I august 1873 blev der indgået en kontrakt med Hamburg Amerika Linjen, som indebar en nedsat brevporto mellem Danmark og Tyskland. Der var 1 månedlig afgang med de tyske H.A.P. A.G.-skibe tilhørende Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft i forseglede post sæk til en reduceret takst 7 cents. Brevene skulle påtegnes. "Via Hamburg", og det er en af de sjældneste særtakster fra DVI.

Den reducerede 7 cents-takst bevirkede, at Finansministeriet i 1873 hos Generalpostdirektoratet bestilte nye kvadratiske takkede 3 cents, samt et nyt oplag af kvadratiske 4 cents mærker med linjetakning 12 ½. (B3 brev til Dresden med linjetakkede kvadrat 3 og 4 Cents, B. Winter.)

Disse to udgaver fik dog en kort kurseringsperiode, da man anså frimærkeformatet for uhensigtsmæssigt. (B4 brev til København med 7 cents single tofarvet frankering, M. Kewriga).

7 cents-taksten i forseglede brevsæk fortsatte frem til 1905, hvor der den 1. april blev indført nyt møntsystem, hvor 7 cent blev omregnet til 35 bit. Den omregnede

In August 1873, a contract was signed with the Hamburg-Amerika Line, which meant reduced letter postage between Denmark and Germany. There was a monthly departure of the German H.A.P. A.G. ships belonging to Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft in sealed mail sacks at a reduced rate of 7 cents. The letters had to be marked 'Via Hamburg', which is one of the rarest special rates from DWI.

The reduced 7 cent rate resulted in the Ministry of Finance ordering new square perforated 3 cent stamps from the General Post Directorate in 1873, as well as a new issue of square 4 cent stamps with line perforation 12 ½. (B3 letter to Dresden with line perforated square 3 and 4 cent stamps, B. Winter.)

However, these two issues were given a short run as the stamp format was deemed inappropriate (B4 letter to Copenhagen with 7 cents single bicolour franking, M. Kewriga).

The 7 cent rate in sealed mail bags continued until 1 April 1905, when a new monetary system was introduced, converting 7

bit-takst blev dog kortvarig, idet kontrakten med H.A.P.A.G. ophørte i 1907. Formentlig skyldtes det, at der kun var en månedlig postafgang, og at alternative postruter var blevet øget betydeligt med årene. Der kendes til dato ingen registrerede 35 bit-breve (B5 brev til København med 7 cents tofarvet blandingsfrankering, J. Læby.)

cents to 35 bit. However, the converted bit rate was short-lived, as the mail contract with H.A.P.A.G. ended in 1907. This was probably because there was only one departure a month, and that alternative mail routes had increased significantly over the years. To date no 35 bit letters are recorded (B5 letter to Copenhagen with 7 cents two-colour mixed franking, J. Læby.)



Figur B5. Brev fra Christiansted 13.12.1897 med 7 cents blandingsfrankering til København Via Hamburg. Opfrankeret på 2 cents helsag med parstykke 2 cents + 3 cents. (J. Læby)

Figure B5. Letter from Christiansted 13 December 1897 with 7 cents mixed franking to Copenhagen via Hamburg. 2 cents postal stationery envelope uprated with pair of 1 cent + 3 cent stamps (J. Læby).



Figur B6. Brev fra St. Thomas 9.12.1877 med tofarvet 12 cents single 1. vægtklasse 0 -15 gram, takstperiode 1.9.1877 til 1.4. 1879 bagside ankomststempleet New York 27.12.1877. (J. Læby)

Figure B6. Letter from St. Thomas 9.12.1877 with bicoloured 12 cents single 1st weight class 0 -15 grammes, rate period 1.9.1877-1.4. 1879, on reverse arrival date stamp New York 27.12.1877 (J. Læby).

Tofarvede udgaver

Den 1. september 1877 indtrådte DVI i Verdensforeningen, og i den forbindelse introduceredes et 12 cents frimærke af samme type og format som de danske, dog med ændring af tekst i ovalbåndet, der blev ændret til Dansk-Vestindiske Øer, ligesom `Øre` blev udskiftet med `Cents.` (B6 brev til USA med tofarvet 12 cents single 1. tryk, J. Læby.).

I den forbindelse opfordrede Verdenspostforeningen til at frimærker til 1. sats af internationale tryksager, brevkort og breve, fremadrettet skulle fremstille i henholdsvis grøn, rød og blå farve.

Fra dette tidspunkt fulgte de dansk vestindiske frimærkeudgaver - med enkelte undtagelser - parallelt de danske udgaver.

Bicolour issues

On 1 September 1877, DWI joined the UPU, and in this connection a 12 cents stamp was issued in the same design and format as the Danish stamps, but with a change of text to Dansk Vestindiske Øer in the oval band, and 'øre' was replaced with 'cents'. (B6 letter to USA with bicoloured 12 cents single 1st printing, J. Læby.)

In this connection, the member countries of the Universal Postal Union agreed standard colours for stamps used for the lowest priced international printed matter, postcards and letters to be printed in green, red and blue respectively.

From this point on, the Danish West Indies stamp issues paralleled the Danish issues, with a few exceptions.



Figur B7. Postkort fra St. Thomas 22.12.1901 med tysk damper AUSTRALIA, til Budingen 10.1.1902 med 3 x 1 cents blækannuleret 22 XII 1901, transit med tysk bureau stempel AUS WESTINDIEN – Hamburg Dampfer/Über Cöln. (J. Læby)

Figure B7 Postcard from St. Thomas 22.12.1901 carried by German steamer AUSTRALIA, to Budingen 10.1.1902 with 3 x 1 cent pen cancelled and with handwritten date 22 XII 1901, later by German TPO transit handstamp AUS WESTINDIEN Hamburg Dampfer/Über Cöln (J. Læby).

Våbentype udgaven

I 1900 udstedtes nye 1 cents og 5 cents i henholdsvis grøn og blå farve i type som de danske våbentypeudgaver. Mærkerne kom til salg 1. maj 1900, mens værdierne 2 og 8 cents først til salg i 1903. (B7 skibspost på brevkortkort til Tyskland med 3 x 1 cents våben, J Læby.)

Takstnedsættelse

Den 1. januar 1902 blev portosatserne nedsat for såvel indenlandske som udenlandske brevkort og breve til henholdsvis 2 cents og 8 cents. Takstnedsættelsen nødvendiggjorde fremstilling af nye frimærker med pålydende 2 og 8 cents våbentype, men da fremstillingen trak ud, blev fremstilling af midlertidig provisoriske frimærker nødvendig. Løsningen blev lokalt fremstillede overtryk (Lokalovertryk) på henholdsvis 3 og 10 cents tofarvede mærker, som blev overtryk til henholdsvis 2 og 8 cent. (B8 brevkort til Skanderborg med provisorier 2 på 3 cents, J Læby.)

The Arms Issue

In 1900, new 1 cent and 5 cents were issued in green and blue respectively, in the same design as the Danish Arms issues. These stamps went on sale on 1 May 1900, while the 2 and 8 cent values were not available until 1903. (B7 ship mail on postcard to Germany with 3 x 1 cent Arms type, J. Læby.)

Rate reduction

On 1 January 1902, the postage rates for both domestic and foreign postcards and letters were reduced to 2 cents and 8 cents respectively. The rate reduction necessitated the production of new Arms type stamps with a face value of 2 and 8 cents, but as production was slow, the introduction of provisional stamps became necessary. The solution was locally produced overprints on 3 and 10 cent bicoloured stamps, which were overprinted with 2 and 8 cents respectively. (B8 letter card to Skanderborg with provisional 2 on 3 cents, J. Læby.)



Figur B8. Brevkort fra St. Thomas 18.4.1902 med lokalovertrykket af 2 på 3 cents provisoriet sendt via Le Havre til Danmark. Ankomststemplet Skanderborg J.B.P. 5.5. (J. Læby)

Figure B8. Postcard from St Thomas 18.4.1902 with local overprint of 2 on 3 cents provisional sent via Le Havre to Denmark. Arrival date stamp Skanderborg J.B.P. 5.5. (J. Læby).

Fordi beholdningen af 3 og 10 cents tofarvede i Vestindien ikke rakte til, udsendes yderligere et parti, som blev overtrykt i København (Københavnrovertryk). (B9 brev til New York med provisorier 4 x 2 på 3 cents, J Læby.)

Leveringen af de nye værdier trak imidlertid stadig ud, og manglen på 2 cents frimærker voksede. Derfor blev det ved Bekendtgørelse fra Guvernementet St. Thomas den 20. januar 1903, tilladt Postkontorerne på St. Thomas, St. Jan og St. Croix midlertidigt at acceptere diagonalt halverede 4 cents mærker.

Først i april 1903 ankom de nye, længe ventede 2 og 8 cents våbentypemærker til afløsning af de halverede 4 cents mærker. Herefter ophørte anvendelsen af halverede 4 cents mærker på henholdsvis St. Thomas og St. Jan den 23. maj og på St. Croix den 4. juni 1903. (B10 brev til Danmark med 2 x 8 cents 2. vægt kl. T. Gade.)

Because the stock of 3 and 10 cent bicoloured stamps in the West Indies was insufficient, another batch, overprinted in Copenhagen, was sent out. (B9 letter to New York with provisional overprint 4 x 2 on 3 cents, J. Læby.)

However, the delivery of the new values was still delayed and the shortage of 2 cent stamps grew. Therefore, by Order of the Governor of St. Thomas on 20 January 1903, the Post Offices on St. Thomas, St. Jan and St. Croix were allowed to temporarily accept diagonally bisected 4 cent prepaying 2 cents postage.

It wasn't until April 1903 that the long-awaited new 2 and 8 cent Arms type stamps arrived to replace the bisected 4 cent stamps. After this, the use of bisected 4 cent stamps ceased on St. Thomas and St. Jan on 23 May and on St. Croix on 4 June 1903. (B10 letter to Denmark with 2 x 8 cents 2nd weight class, T. Gade.)



Figur B9. Brev fra St. Thomas 10.7.1902 med 4-strebe af 2 på 3 cents "Københavnrovertrykket" påtegnet "Medina" til New York, ankomststemplet 15.7.1902, 1. vægtklasse 0 - 20 gram 8 cents. (J. Læby)

Figure B9. Letter from St. Thomas 10.7.1902 with 4 strip of 2 on 3 cents 'Copenhagen Overprint' endorsed Medina to New York, arrival date stamp 15.7.1902, 1st weight class 0-20 grammes 8 cents (J. Læby).



Figur B10. Brev fra St. Thomas 4.10.1904 til Danmark med parstykke 8 cents 2. vægtklasse, ankomststemplet København 10. november 1904. (T. Gade)

Figure B10. Letter from St. Thomas 4.10.1904 to Denmark with pair of 8 cents 2nd weight class, arrival date stamp Copenhagen 10 November 1904 (T. Gade).

Møntreform i Dansk Vestindien

Den 1. april 1905 blev det besluttet at ændre pengesystemet på øerne. Ændringen var udsprunget af, at salget af vores kolonier til USA blev forkastet af Rigsdagen i 1902. Herefter nedsatte regeringen "Den Kongelige Dansk Vestindisk Kommission" Som skulle undersøge muligheder for at hjælpe øernes økonomi. I sin betænkning foreslog Kommissionen, at man knyttede stærkere bånd til det fransk-caribiske samfund, for at fremme handlen og i den forbindelse ændredes pengesystemet, så det kom på linje med den franske franc.

Rigsdagen tiltrådte forslaget, og i lov af 29. marts 1904 blev det fastslået, at 1 dollar frem-over skulle svare til 5 franc, mens 1 cent svarede til 5 bit. De nye bit-udgaver kom først til salg den 15. juli 1905, og indtil da benyttede man cents-mærker og afregnede efter ovennævnte forhold.

Monetary reform in the Danish West Indies

On 1 April 1905, it was decided to change the monetary system in the islands. The change was the result of the sale of the islands to the USA being rejected by the Danish Parliament in 1902. The government then set up the 'Royal Danish West Indies Commission' to investigate ways to help the islands' economy. In its report, the Commission suggested forging stronger ties with the French-Caribbean community to promote trade and changing the monetary system to align it with the French franc.

The Danish Parliament accepted the proposal, and the law of 29 March 1904 established that 1 dollar would in future be equivalent to 5 francs, while 1 cent was equivalent to 5 bit. The new bit stamps did not go on sale until 15 July 1905, and until then cents stamps were used and valued according to the above exchange rates.

Cents-mærkerne blev aldrig ugyldiggjort og kunne anvendes som frigørelsesmiddel, til vi afstod øerne til USA, herunder overgangsperioden frem til 30.9.1917. (B11 brevkort med blandingsfrankering til Danmark med 1 cents og 5 bit, J. Læby.)

The cents stamps were never invalidated and could be used as a means of payment until the islands were ceded to the USA, including the transition period until 30 September 1917. (B11 postcard with mixed franking to Denmark with 1 cent and 5 bit, J. Læby.)



Figur B11. Helsagsbrevkort fra Christiansted 22.6.1908 overtrykt 1 cent 1902 "Lokalovertryk" opfrankeret med 5 bit Chr. IV til København via New York, omadresseret til Humlebæk 8.7.1908. (J. Læby)

Figure B11. Postal stationery card from Christiansted 22.6.1908 locally overprinted 1 cent 1902 franked with 5 bit Christian IX to Copenhagen via New York, re-addressed to Humlebæk 8.7.1908 (J. Læby).



Figur B12. Brev af 2. vægtniveau fra St. Thomas 5.11.1905 med tysk skib til Porto au Prince. Sendt inden for 600 sømil. UPU-takst 80 bit + Rec. gebyr 25 bit. Bemærk påtegning "To be hurried up" (haster). Ankomststempel på bagsiden Port au Prince 17.11.1905. (T. Gade)

Figure B12. Letter of 2nd weight class from St Thomas 05.11.1905 by German ship to Porto au Prince. Sent within 600 nautical miles. UPU rate 80 bit + Registration fee 25 bit. Note endorsement 'To be hurried up'. Arrival date stamp on the reverse Port au Prince 17.11.1905 (T. Gade).

Chr. IX 1905 udgaven

I april 1905 kom de nye bit mærker til salg med portræt af kongen i 6 forskellige værdier. Det var første gang i Dansk Vestindien, at man trykte mærker med monarkens portræt, som fremstod i silhuet. (B12 brev til Haiti med Chr. IX, T. Gade.)

St. Thomas havn udgaven

Denne udgave kom til salg i november 1905, det var de første motivfrimærke i hele kongeriget, hvor krydseren "Ingolf" er afbilledet med St. Thomas havn som baggrund. Mærket udkom i tre værdier 1, 2, og 5 franc og trykt i ark af 25 stk. hos H. H. Thiele i København. B13 adressebrev til Tyskland omadresseret med 1 og 2 francs, J Læby.)

Christian IX 1905 Issue

In April 1905, the new bit denominated stamps went on sale with a portrait of the king in 6 different values. It was the first time in the Danish West Indies that stamps were printed with the monarch's portrait in silhouette. (B12 letter to Haiti with Christian IX, T. Gade).

St Thomas Harbour Issue

This issue went on sale in November 1905, it was the first themed stamp in the entire kingdom, depicting the cruiser Ingolf against the background of St. Thomas harbour. The stamp was issued in three values of 1, 2 and 5 francs and printed in sheets of 25 by H. H. Thiele in Copenhagen. (B13 address letter to Germany re-addressed with 1 and 2 francs, J. Læby.)



Figur B13. Adressebrev sendt fra St. Thomas 20.10.1915 med direkte dansk skib til København 1. pakke a` 2,5 til 5 kg. 160 bit + efterfølgende 20 bit pr. ½ kg 80 bit i alt 240 bit. 2. pakke a` 1,6 kg. 1 til 2,5 kg. 85 bit, samlet porto 325 bit underfrankeret med 10 bit. På bagsiden ankomststemplet København B. Told-Postk. 10.5.1916. Efter at pakkerne har været oplagt på Københavns Tolbod i 20 dage omadresseres pakkerne til Tyskland med transit via Hamburg 31.5.1916 til Lübeck, ankomststemplet 2.6.1916. (J. Læby)

Figure B13 Parcel card sent from St Thomas 20.10.1915 by direct Danish ship to Copenhagen, 1st parcel of 2.5 to 5 kilogrammes 160 bit + additional 20 bit per ½ kilogramme or part thereof, 80 bit, totalling 240 bit, 2nd parcel of 1.6 kilogrammes 1 to 2.5 kilogrammes 85 bit, total postage 325 bit underfranked by 10 bit. Copenhagen B arrival date stamp on reverse. Customs-Postk. 10.5.1916. After the parcels had been stored at the Copenhagen customs office for 20 days, the parcels were redirected to Lübeck in Germany with transit via Hamburg 31.5.1916, arrival date stamp 2.6.1916 (J. Læby).



Figur B14. Lokalbrev fra St. Croix, Christiansted 2.12.1905 med provisorieovertryk 5 bit på 4 cent tofarvet og 5 bit på våbentype, lokaltakst 0 til 20 gram 10 bit. (J. Læby)

Figure B14. Local letter from St. Croix, Christiansted 2.12.1905 with provisional overprint 5 bit on 4 cent bicoloured and 5 bit on Arms type, local rate 0 to 20 grammes 10 bit (J. Læby).



Figur B15. Stort rekommanderet brevklip fra Christiansted 1.11.1915 til Den Dansk Vestindiske Nationalbank på St. Thomas: Rekommandationsgebyr 25 bit + lokaltakst for 3 vægtklasse 3 x 10 bit = ialt 55 bit. Brevkippet illustrerer tydeligt bankens engagement i denne frimærkeemmission. (J. Læby)

Figure B15. Large registered letter cut out from Christiansted 1 November 1915 to the Danish West Indian National Bank on St. Thomas: Registration fee 25 bit + local rate for third weight class 3 x 10 bit = a total of 55 bit. The letter clearly illustrates the bank's involvement in this stamp issue (J. Læby).

Provisorisk 5 bit udgave

Denne udgave udkom til salg 1. juni 1905, serien består af 3 mærker: 5 cents og 8 cents våbentype, samt 2 farvet 4 cents, alle mærker blev overtrykt med 5 – bit – 1905, hos H. H. Thiele i København.

Der blev ikke givet nogen officiel grund til udgivelsen af mærkerne. Man må derfor antage, at provisorierne blev fremstillet for at opbruge oplaget af de forældede cents-mærker.

Det viste sig dog, at mærkerne var svære at få fat i, idet hele oplaget, som var til salg på postkontorerne i St. Thomas, Christianssted og Frederikssted, blev udsolgt på under et kvarter. Årsagen hertil var, at repræsentanter for en komite til opførelse af et spedalskhedshospital på øerne, som havde indgået en aftale med Guvernementet, var mødt frem på de 3 postkontorer og havde købt næsten hele oplaget med økonomisk støtte fra den Dansk Vestindiske Nationalbank.

Aftalen gik ud på, at banken skulle benytte mærkerne på breve mellem bankafdelingerne, der efterfølgende afleverede de brugte mærker til spedalskhedskomiteen. Forhandlingen af provisorierne blev overdraget til en frimærkehandler i København, der betalte 40 øre pr. sæt og videresolgte mærkerne for 75 øre pr sæt.

Brugsbreve med provisorie-mærkerne er derfor sjældne, da næsten alle mærker er blevet klippet eller vasket af. (B14 lokal brev provisorier 2x5 bit, J. Læby og B15 R-brevstykke med provisorier 11x5 bit, J. Læby.)

Frederik VIII udgaven

Den 29. januar 1906 døde Chr. IX. herefter gik man i gang med at forberede nye frimærker med portræt af Fr. VIII, som blev trykt i kobbertryk og rammen i bogtryk, hos H. H. Thieles i København. Der kom dog til at gå to år, før de nye frimærker af Fr. VIII var færdigtrykt i 8 forskellige værdier, og de kom først til salg 5. august 1908.

Provisional 5 bit Issue

This issue was released for sale on 1 June 1905. The series consists of 3 stamps: the 5 cents and 8 cents Arms type, and the bicoloured 4 cents, all stamps were overprinted with 5 bit 1905, at H. H. Thiele in Copenhagen.

No official reason was given for the issue of the stamps. It must therefore be assumed that the provisionals were produced to use up the stock of the obsolete cents stamps.

However, it turned out that the stamps were hard to get hold of, as the entire run, which was on sale at the post offices in St Thomas, Christiansted and Frederiksted, was sold out in less than 15 minutes. The reason for this was that representatives of a committee for the construction of a leprosy hospital on the islands, which had entered into an agreement with the Governorate, had turned up at the three post offices and bought almost the entire issue with financial support from the Danish West Indies National Bank.

The agreement was that the bank would use the stamps on letters between its branches, which subsequently handed over the used stamps to the leprosy committee. A stamp dealer in Copenhagen was entrusted with the sale of the provisional stamps, paying 40 øre per set and reselling the stamps for 75 øre per set. Covers with the provisional stamps are therefore rare, as almost all stamps have been cut or washed off. B14 local letter provisional 2 x 5 bit, J. Læby and B15 Registered letter cut out with provisional stamps 11 x 5 bit, J. Læby.

Frederik VIII Issue

On 29 January 1906, Christian IX died, after which the preparation of new stamps with a portrait of Frederik VIII began. This was printed in copperplate recess and the frame printed in letterpress at H. H. Thiele in Copenhagen. However, it took two years for the new stamps of Frederik VIII to be printed in 8 different values, and they did not go on sale until 5 August 1908.

Dette bevirkede, at man i oktober 1907 blev nødt til at trykke et ekstra oplag af de mest benyttede værdier 5, 10 og 25 bit med Chr. IX portræt. (B16 pengebrev til København med 3x 25 bit Fr. VIII, J Læby.)

This meant that in October 1907, an extra run of the most popular values of 5, 10 and 25 bit with the portrait of Christian IX had to be printed. (B16 Money letter to Copenhagen with 3 x 25 bit Frederik VIII, J. Læby)



Figur B16. Pengebrev indlagt 500 franc stemplet St. Thomas 24.12.1912 og på bagsiden er forseglet og ankomststemplet Københavns Pengepostkontor 9.1.1913. Fra 1. april 1871 blev kravet om brug af de særligt "forede" kuverter til pengeforsendelser afskaffet for forsendelser med 1-2 pengesedler. Dette brev må have indeholdt fem 100 franc sedler, da det var højeste valør, men dette har man ladet passere ved kontroltællingen. Grundtaksten for 1. vægtklasse 0 – 20 gram 25 bit, forsikring 20 bit pr. 300 franc = 40 bit samt kontroltælling 10 bit i alt 75 bit. (J. Læby)

Figure B16. 'Unlined' money letter weighing 15 grammes containing 500 francs cancelled St. Thomas 24.12.1912, the reverse is sealed and date stamped on arrival with Københavns Pengepostkontor 9.1.1913. From 1 April 1871, the requirement to use the specially 'lined' envelopes for money letters was abolished for items containing a maximum of 1-2 banknotes. but as only 100 franc banknotes were used as the highest denomination, the letter must probably have contained 5 100 franc banknotes. However, this was ignored in the post office verification count. The basic rate for 1st weight class 0-20 grammes 25 bit, insurance 20 bit per 300 francs = 40 bit and verification counting 10 bit totalling 75 bit. (J. Læby)

Chr. X udgaven

I maj 1912 døde Fr. VIII, og derfor blev der bestilt nye frimærker med portræt af Chr. X set i profil, denne gang varede det over tre år, før de første to mærker 5 og 25 bit, af i alt 8 værdier nåede frem til øernes posthuse. Grunden til forsinkelsen, var at man lå inde med store mængder af Fr. VIII udgaven, som først skulle opbruges. En anden årsag var at man havde problemer med fremstillingen af det nye tyndere papir, der skulle

The Christian X Issue

In May 1912, Frederik VIII died, so new stamps with a portrait of Christian X in profile were ordered. This time it took over three years before the first two stamps, 5 and 25 bit, of a total of 8 values, reached the islands' post offices. The reason for the delay was that there were large quantities of the Frederik VIII issue that needed to be used up first. Another reason was

bruges i de nye trykmaskiner, som H. H. Thieles bogtrykkeri havde anskaffet efter branden på trykkeriet i 1912.

På nær 5 og 25 bit, der som nævnt kom til salg i 1915, kom næsten ingen af mærkerne til salg, før øerne blev solgt i 1917.

Ifølge Postmester F. C. Carstensen i St. Thomas, kom blot 10 ark af hver værdi til salg på øerne i januar 1917, der blev fordelt med henholdsvis 5 arksæt til St. Thomas 3 arksæt til Christiansted og 2 arksæt til Frederiksted Postkontor. (B17 opfranket helsagskort til Rudme fra Postmester Carstensen St.Thomas Postkontor med 2 x 5 bit Chr. X, J Læby.)

that there were problems with the production of the new thinner paper to be used in the replacement printing presses that H. H. Thiele's printing house had acquired after the fire at the print shop in 1912.

With the exception of the 5 and 25 bit, which, as previously mentioned, went on sale in 1915, almost none of the stamps went on sale until the islands were sold in 1917.

According to Postmaster F. C. Carstensen in St Thomas, only 10 sheets of each value were available for sale on the islands in January 1917, with 5 sets of sheets for St Thomas, 3 for Christiansted and 2 for Frederiksted Post Office. (B17 franked postal stationery card to Rudme from Postmaster Carstensen St.Thomas Post Office with 2 x 5 bit Christian X, J Læby.)



Figur B17. Helsagsbrevkort med 5 bit fra ST. THOMAS POSTKONTOR 16.10.1916 opfranket med 5 Chr. X til Rudme på Fyn. I teksten meddeler postmester Carstensen adressaten, at Chr. X-frimærkerne kun er til rådighed som 5 og 25 bit frimærker. hvilket tydeligt viser manglen på de nye Chr. X-frimærker på øerne. (J. Læby)

Figure B17. Postal stationery card with 5 bit from ST. THOMAS POSTKONTOR 16.10.1916 franked with 5 Bit Christian X to Rudme on Funen. In the text, Postmaster Carstensen advises the addressee that only the 5 and 25 bit Christian X stamps are available, which clearly shows the lack of the new Christian X stamps on the islands (J. Læby).



Figur C1. Transferday.

Figure C1. Transfer day.

Overdragelsesperioden 1. april til 30. september 1917

Den 31. marts 1917 blev Dansk Vestindien overdraget til USA for 25 mill. dollars. Denne dag betegnes som TRANSFER DAY – hvilket er den engelske betegnelse for overdragelsesdagen. Dansk Vestindien skiftede herefter navn til U.S Virgin Islands. (C1 – postkort /Transfer day, J. Læby.)

Beslutningen om at sælge øerne blev ikke truffet fra den ene dag til den anden. Forhandlingerne med USA havde stået på igennem mange år. Fra dansk side blev salget i 1917 hovedsageligt begrundet af økonomiske årsager, eftersom øerne ikke var rentable. Sukkerproduktionen var ikke overskudsgivende, fordi jorden efterhånden var blevet udpint. Aktuelt spillede købssummen også en stor rolle.

I Danmark opstod der politisk uro om selve forløbet af salget af Dansk Vestindien. Salget blev derfor genstand for den første danske folkeafstemning den 14. december 1916. I den forbindelse fik kvinderne for første gang ret til at stemme til en folkeafstemning.

The handover period 1 April to 30 September 1917

On 31 March 1917, the Danish West Indies were transferred to the USA for 25 million dollars. This day is known as TRANSFER DAY. The Danish West Indies then changed its name to the US Virgin Islands. (C1 postcard /Transfer day, J. Læby.)

The decision to sell the islands was not made overnight. Negotiations with the USA had been going on for many years. From the Danish side, the sale in 1917 was mainly motivated by economic reasons, as the islands were not profitable. Sugar production was not profitable because the soil had gradually become depleted. The purchase price also played a major role.

In Denmark, political unrest arose over the actual process of selling the Danish West Indies. The sale was therefore the subject of the first Danish referendum on 14 December 1916, when for the first time women were given the right to vote in a referendum.

I forbindelse med folkeafstemningen blev der fremstillet protestmærker og satiriske postkort. Disse blev udgivet af "Dansk Vestindisk Samfund" i ark af 10 stk., og de afspejlede den følelsesladede debat i offentligheden om salget. Der blev også udgivet en række publikationer og valgaviser op til afstemningsdagen. Folkeafstemningen resulterede i et klart flertal for salget af øerne til USA. Forslaget blev vedtaget med 284.000 stemmer for og 168.000 imod. Synes man tallet er lille, skal man huske på at den danske befolkning totalt set kun var på ca. 1,5 mill.

In connection with the referendum, protest labels and satirical postcards were produced. These were published by the Danish West Indies Society in sheets of 10 and reflected the emotional public debate about the sale. A number of publications and election newspapers were also issued in the run-up to polling day. The referendum resulted in a clear majority in favour of the sale of the islands to the USA. The proposal passed with 284,000 votes in favour and 168,000 against. If you think this number is small, remember that the total Danish population was only around 1.5 million.



Figur C2. Et satirisk postkort der blev fremstillet "for eller i mod" salget af Dansk Vestindien til USA

Figure C2. A satirical postcard that was produced 'for or against' the sale of the Danish West Indies to the USA..

De satiriske postkort lagde op til, at befolkningen i vores kolonier selv skulle stemme om deres tilhørsforhold, men det kom ikke på tale. (C2 – postkort mod salget, J. Læby.)

The satirical postcards suggested that the people in the Danish colony should themselves vote on their relationship, but this was out of the question. (C2 postcard against the sale, J. Læby.)

Danmark solgte derfor øerne uden at spørge befolkningen på Dansk Vestindien. Vi solgte vores landsmænd og tjente dermed nok engang penge på vores tidligere slaver og deres efterkommere.

Denmark therefore sold the islands without consulting the people of the Danish West Indies. Denmark sold its compatriots and again made money from its former slaves and their descendants.

Nogle har dog hævdet, at det er sandsynligt, at lokalbefolkningen selv ønskede at bryde forbindelsen til en kolonimagt, som ikke sikrede ordentlige levevilkår og indtægtsmuligheder.

USA var særdeles interesseret i at købe øerne, fordi USA mente, at der var en stor risiko for, at tyskerne ville besætte Dansk Vestindien og måske senere anvende øerne som en base mod USA. Første verdenskrig var i fuld gang, og som led i Tysklands krig mod Storbritannien og Frankrig førte man den såkaldte ubådskrig.

Overdragelsestraktaten blev proklameret den 22. januar 1917 med ikrafttræden den 31. marts 1917. Postale forhold var en del af denne traktat, og de skulle træde i kraft den 1. april 1917. Da denne dato var en søndag, og posthusene var lukkede på øerne, blev mandag den 2. april anført som den officielle første dag. (C3 - førstedagsbrevet 2. april, T. Gade, C4 - C5 viser yderligere april breve, T. Gade.)

Der findes breve og postkort stemplet både den 31. marts og 1. april sendt til samme modtager, men disse må betragtes som filatelistiske forsendelser.

However, some have argued that it is likely that the locals themselves wanted to sever ties with a colonial power that did not provide decent living conditions and economic opportunities.

The USA was particularly interested in buying the islands because it believed there was a high risk that the Germans would occupy the Danish West Indies and perhaps later use the islands as a base against her. World War I was in full swing, and as part of Germany's fight against Britain and France, the so-called U-boat war was being waged.

The Treaty of Transfer was proclaimed on 22 January 1917 and came into force on 31 March 1917. Postal matters were part of this treaty and were to be effective on 1 April 1917. As this date was a Sunday and post offices were closed on the islands, Monday 2 April was listed as the official first day. (C3 first day letter 2 April, T. Gade, C4 - C5 additional letters from April. T. Gade.)

There are letters and postcards date stamped both on 31 March and 1 April sent to the same recipient, but these must be considered philatelic items.



Figur C3. Førstedagsbrev – sendt 2. april 1917 til København og frankeret med det nye amerikanske 5 cents frimærke. Frimærket er annulleret med det dansk-vestindiske stempel St. Thomas. Engelsk censur label nr. 681. (T.Gade)

Figure C3. First day cover sent 2.4.1917 to Copenhagen and franked with the new American 5 cents stamp. The stamp was cancelled with the Danish West Indies date stamp St. Thomas. British censorship label no. 681 (T. Gade).



Figur C4. Anbefalet brev af 2. vægtklasse sendt fra Christiansted den 4. april 1917 til New York. Brevet er korrekt frankeret. Højest usædvanligt er der i kombination med de almindelige amerikanske frimærker også anvendt det amerikanske "10 cents U.S. Registration stamp". Det amerikanske postvæsen stoppede med at anvende dette frimærke i 1913, men accepterede at de allerede cirkulerende 10 cents frimærker fortsat kunne anvendes. Brevet er ankomststemplet New York den 15. april 1917. (T.Gade)

Figure C4. Registered letter of 2nd weight class sent from Christiansted on 4.4.1917 to New York. The letter is correctly franked. Most unusually, the '10 cent US Registration stamp' is also used in combination with the ordinary American stamps. The US Postal Service had stopped using this stamp in 1913, but accepted that the 10 cent stamps remaining in circulation could still be used. The letter is postmarked New York on 15.4.1917 (T. Gade).



Figur C5. Brev med engelsk censur sendt som en tryksag i 2. vægtklasse frankeret med et amerikansk 2 cents frimærke og annulleret med det dansk-vestindiske stempel St. Thomas den 3. april 1917. Brevet er accepteret på postkontoret i St. Thomas, men ikke accepteret som en tryksag i Porto Rico. Dette betyder, at brevet er underfrankeret med 3 cents og derfor blev sat i porto med 30 centimes. Modtager måtte betale 24 øre ved modtagelsen. Ankomststemplet i København den 16. maj 1917 – brevet har været 43 dage undervejs. (T.Gade)

Figure C5. Letter with British censorship sent as 2nd weight class printed matter franked with an American 2 cents stamp and cancelled with the Danish West Indies date stamp St. Thomas on 3.4.1917. The letter was accepted at the post office in St. Thomas, but not accepted as a printed matter in Porto Rico. This meant that the item was underfranked by 3 cents and therefore 30 gold centimes postage due was assessed. The recipient had to pay 24 øre on receipt. Date stamped on arrival in Copenhagen on 16.5.1917, the letter had been 43 days in transit (T. Gade).

I henhold til traktaten var det aftalt, at både Dansk Vestindiens hidtidige frimærker og amerikanske frimærker kunne anvendes – også i kombination – i en 6 måneders periode. (C4 REC brev incl. 10 cents, T. Gade, C5 2 cents brevet sat i porto, T. Gade og C6 / Frederiksted brev 25 bit til Danmark, T. Gade.)

According to the treaty, it was agreed that both the stamps of the Danish West Indies and the USA could be used in mixed frankings for a six month period. (C4 Registered letter bearing 10 cents stamp, T. Gade, C5 2 cents postage due letter, T. Gade and C6 Frederiksted letter 25 bit to Denmark, T. Gade.)



Figur C6. Brev sendt fra Frederiksted 21. april 1917 til København. Korrekt frankeret med det dansk-vestindiske frimærke Christian X 25 bit. Engelsk censur label 4894. Ankomststempel den 6. juni 1917. (T.Gade)

Figure C6. Letter sent from Frederiksted on 21 April 1917 to Copenhagen. Correctly franked with the Danish West Indies Christian X 25 bit stamp. British censorship label 4894. Arrival date stamp on 6 June 1917 (T. Gade).

Overdragelsesperioden sluttede 30. september 1917.

Kombinationsfrankering ser man tit, dog er næsten alle filatelistisk fremstillet. De fleste af disse breve er sendt til Otto Kieldrup, men også navnet L.V. Nielsen og A. J Nørgaard forekommer. Brevene er tit overfrankeret og altid sendt lokalt. Brevene findes både afstemplet med det danske og det amerikanske stempel. Breve, som ikke er filatelistisk fremstillet og sendt korrekt frankeret med frimærker fra både Dansk Vestindien og USA, er meget sjældne. (C7 Mix brev 2 x 10 bit og 1 cent sendt til DK, T. Gade.)

The handover period ended 30 September 1917

Mixed frankings are often seen, but almost all are philatelically produced. Most of these letters were sent to Otto Kieldrup, but the names L. V. Nielsen and A. J. Nørgaard also appear. The letters are often overfranked and are always sent locally. They are cancelled with both the Danish and the American hand stamps. Letters that are not philatelically produced and sent correctly franked with stamps from both the Danish West Indies and the USA are very rare. (C7 Mixed franking letter 2 x 10 bit and 1 cent sent to Denmark, T. Gade.)



Figur C7. Brev sendt med engelsk censur fra Christiansted den 21. april 1917 til København. Kombinationsfrankering - frimærkerne er stemplet med det dansk-vestindiske stempel Christiansted. Brevet er korrekt frankeret. Ankomststempel 7. juni 1917. (T.Gade)

Figure C7. Letter sent with British censorship from Christiansted on 21.4.1917 to Copenhagen. The mixed franking is cancelled with the Danish-West Indian handstamp Christiansted. The letter is correctly franked. Arrival postmark 7.6.1917 (T. Gade).

Valutakursen, som var gældende efter overdragelsen betød, at 5 bit var lig med 1 U.S. cent. Det betød, at fx udenlandske breve skulle frankeres med 25 bit eller 5 cents. Ved indenlandske breve var portoen 10 bit eller 2 cents.

The exchange rate that applied after the transfer meant that 5 bit were equal to 1 US cent. This meant that foreign letters, for example, had to be franked with 25 bit or 5 cents. For domestic letters, the postage was 10 bit or 2 cents.

Efter det amerikanske flag var hejst lørdag den 31. marts 1917, overtog den nye U.S. Postmaster de tidligere Dansk Vestindiske postkontorer på øerne. Fra dette tidspunkt var det kun muligt at købe amerikanske frimærker, og dermed kunne Dansk Vestindiske frimærker kun anvendes, hvis de var tilgængelige på private hænder.

After the American flag was raised on Saturday 31 March 1917, the new US Postmaster took over the former Danish West Indies post offices on the islands. From this point on, it was only possible to buy American stamps, and thus Danish West Indies stamps could only be used if they were already in private hands.

Af en eller anden grund var den nye U.S. Postmaster ikke i besiddelse af amerikanske annulleringsstempler, og posthusene på øerne fortsatte derfor med at anvende de gamle dansk-vestindiske stempler et godt stykke ind i transferperioden. Det senest kendte brev er afstemplet Christiansted den 19. maj 1917.

For some reason, the new US Postmaster was not in possession of American cancellers, so the post offices on the islands continued to use the old Danish West Indies handstamps well into the transfer period. The last known letter is postmarked Christiansted on 19 May 1917.

Det var i øvrigt den fungerende U.S. Postmaster fra Porto Rico der overtog postkontoret i St. Thomas. Han fungerede kun i en kort periode som postmester, hvorefter det igen blev den tidligere danske postmester Carstensen, der fortsatte på det amerikanske postkontor på St. Thomas.

Om eftermiddagen fredag den 31. marts 1917 blev det danske flag strøget, efter at musikkorpset havde spillet "Kong Christian". C8 Postkort "Old Glory" T. Gade.

Postkort med Dannebrog's sidste dag. Danmark havde officielt solgt sin sidste tropekoloni.

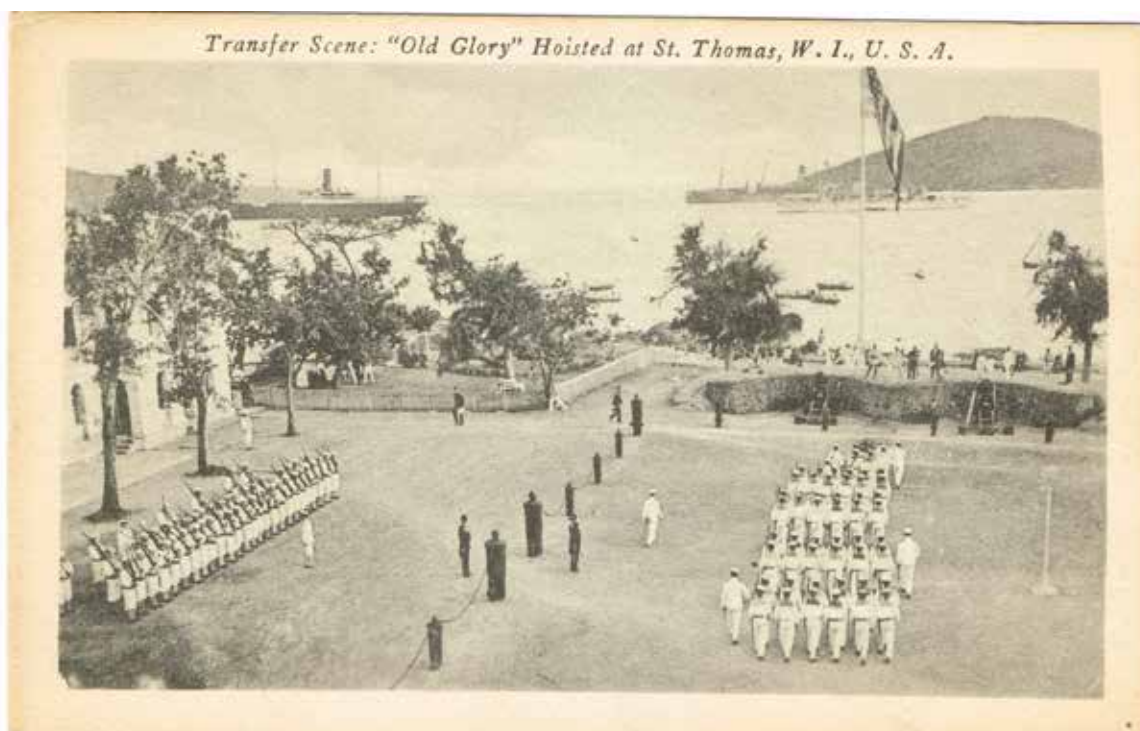
Der skal lyde en særlig tak til Benny Winther, Frank Banke og Matthew Kewriga USA, med bidrag af illustrationer.

Incidentally, it was the acting US Postmaster from Porto Rico who took over the post office in St Thomas. He served as postmaster only for a short period, after which it was the former Danish postmaster Carstensen who continued at the US post office on St Thomas.

On the afternoon of Friday 31 March 1917, the Danish flag was lowered after the band had played 'King Christian'. (C8 Postcard 'Old Glory' T. Gade).

Postcard showing the last day of Dannebrog. Denmark had officially sold its last tropical colony.

Special thanks to Benny Winther, Frank Banke and Matthew Kewriga for contributing illustrations.



Figur C8. Postkort "Ole Glory" .

Figure C8. Postcard 'Old Glory'.