

U.S. PACIFIC ISLANDS BULLETIN

An occasional bulletin about U.S. Post Offices in the Pacific area (including the successor administrations in the Caroline, Marshall, and Line Islands.)

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FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

The Postal Datestamps of the Four Main Post Offices:

On July 12, 1984 the Federated States of Micronesia took responsibility from the United States Postal Service for most aspects of the F.S.M. Postal Services.

The Federated States of Micronesia Postal Service issued their own postage stamps on July 12 1984. U.S. Postage Stamps were invalidated from the same date. (George L. Maclado Jr. has confirmed this with the F.S.M. Postmaster General). However a few covers have been seen with U.S. Postage stamps cancelled after July 11 1984.

The four Post Offices then in existence, Ponape (Pohnpei), Yap, Kosrae, and Truk (Chuuk) continued to use the existing U.S. 4-Bar and double circle datestamps for a further four years, latterly side by side with FSMFO datestamps.

This study will attempt to bridge the gap between postal markings recorded by Robert T. Murphy in "A Postal History/Cancellation Study of the U.S. Pacific Islands" and the setting up of the Federated States of Micronesia Postal Service and then carry the record forward to the present date.

The study will appear as a series in the next few editions of the "U.S. Pacific Islands Bulletin". Corrections, criticism and comments would be most welcome.

Introduction

Postal Datestamps used since July 12 1984 can be split into 5 groups.

Group 1: Prior to postal independence the four Post Offices used two types of postal datestamp. A single circle type with 4 bars to the right (4-Bar) was used to cancel stamps and a double circle was used, mostly with red ink, to datestamp documents and on Registered Mail, but also occasionally to cancel stamps. Most of the double circle datestamps included the office name around the top and the abbreviation U.F.P.O. or USPS at the bottom. Following postal independence the Yap and Kosrae Post Offices removed the letters 'US' or 'USPO' from these datestamps while the Truk and Ponape Post Offices continued to use them unchanged. The Double Circle datestamps at Truk and Kosrae included the letter 'TT' after the office name. 'TT' was the correct abbreviated address code for the offices at that time, although it was rarely used. It was also an abbreviation of Trust Territory - referring to the status of the territory as part of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Possibly for this reason one datestamp at Kosrae had not only the letters 'TT' removed but also the whole of the 'USPO' inscription. The 4-Bars used at Kosrae and Truk also included the 'TT' inscription. Initially one of the Kosrae 4 bars had this removed, the other one continued in use for a further two years or so before the 'TT' inscription was removed. The Truk 4-Bar continued in use unaltered until the datestamp was replaced.

Group 2: These 'French type' datestamps were introduced on May 1 1986, and have been seen used with both Black and Red ink. I have never seen them used on commercial covers and would appreciate photocopies of any commercial covers in readers collections for illustration in this series. The datestamps were probably intended as counter datestamps. The wording on them is unusual in that it includes not only the office name and the initials FSM but also either Western or Eastern Caroline Islands. Although these words or more usually the abbreviations WCI or ECI are often seen as part of the address on commercial mail in this period it had never been used on any postal marking.

The setting of the date-slugs on these datestamps is unlike those seen on any other FSMFO datestamp. All other datestamps are set up in the U.S. way e.g. MONTH/DAY/YEAR. These 'French Type' datestamps use only numbers and follow the European pattern e.g. DAY/MONTH/YEAR. There is always a dash (-) in front of the month slug which appears to make it impossible to assemble in the U.S. way. One such attempt has been seen from Truk.

To Be Continued.....