

The 1940 Bermuda Half-Penny Provisional Issue and Its Postal Uses

In December 1940 the supply of ½d. stamps in Bermuda was dwindling. New supplies from England were delayed by problems with the trans-Atlantic clipper stranded in the Azores. Authorities worried that they would exhaust the remaining supply of ½d. stamps which were in great demand at Christmastime. They authorized overprinting the regular 1d. stamp. The new Half-Penny Provisional went on sale December 20, 1940 and was withdrawn on January 21, 1941. A total of 348,000 stamps were printed in three different printings.

Purpose: To explain why there was a shortage of ½d. stamps in late 1940 and how the Bermuda postal authorities addressed that shortage and to show variations and anomalies that resulted from the overprinting process. The principal purpose of the exhibit is to show how the stamp was used to meet the several postal rates in effect in Bermuda in 1940-1941.

Scope: This stamp was on sale at island post offices for thirty one days. Postal patrons used the ½d. stamp on their mail for a few months. The latest date shown in this exhibit is June 7, 1941, a relatively late usage. The stamp was rarely used thereafter on commercial mail.

- Plan:**
- 1) Variations resulting from the overprinting process.
 - 2) Use of the stamp to pay the postal rates of the day
 - a) local mail
 - b) surface mail
 - c) airmail
 - d) special rates established by U.P.U. Conventions for printed matter and paquebot mail
 - 3) Conclusion

Special items are outlined in Red.



The flap on this cover is open to show that the envelope was unsealed, a necessary condition for the ½d. rate. Subsequent unsealed covers in the exhibit are noted but not shown.

**Lacking much notice by the Post Office, annotated first day covers are the exception not the rule.

Half-penny stamp used on the first day, 20 December 1940.

Variations Resulting from the Overprinting Process

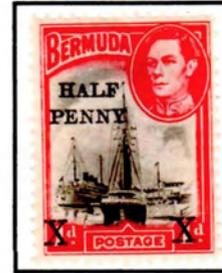
Color Variations. The One Penny stamp of the 1938 King George VI issue was the stamp overprinted. The first printing (1938) of the 1d. stamp was Rose-Red & Black, the second printing (1940) was Red & Black. Both printings were overprinted. Original and overprinted issues are shown below.



Original One Penny Issue
Rose-Red & Black



Red & Black



Overprinted Issue
Rose-Red & Black



Red & Black

Stamps were printed in sheets of sixty. Five hundred sheets were overprinted by the Royal Gazette Press in Hamilton and went on sale December 20, 1940. An additional 4,000 sheets were overprinted the next day and in early January, 1941 1,3,00 more sheets were overprinted for a total of 348,000 overprinted stamps.

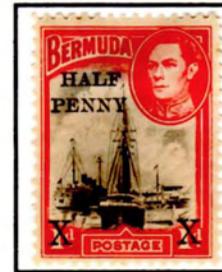
Spacing Variations. The spacing variations shown below are the result of tightening the slugs in the printing forms during and between the three printings. Three variations occur in the vertical spacing between the base of the word "PENNY" and the left "X" that obliterated the original 1d. Denomination.



12.75 mm.

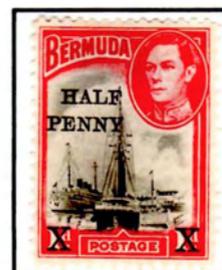


13.5 mm.



14.25 mm.

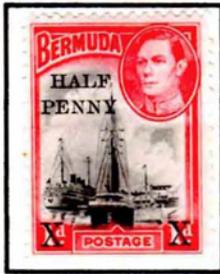
Vertical Alignment Variations. Another variation is found in the position of "HALF" in its vertical alignment with "PENNY." The normal alignment (left below) is such that the left edge of the vertical side of the "E" of "PENNY" passes through or just to the left or right of the center crossbar of the "H" of "HALF." The printing process produced a variation (right below) where the "H" is almost directly over the "E" of "PENNY."



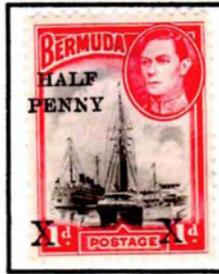
Variations Resulting from the Overprinting Process

Letter Anomalies. There are three cases where various types of anomalies occurred during printing.

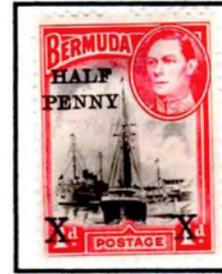
1. Broken "L" in "HALF" is common and occurs clearly on the horizontal leg of the "L."
2. The "P" shift occurs when the "P" in "PENNY" shift to the left edge of the stamp. An extreme shift occurs when the migration of the "P" moves outside of the stamp design itself.
3. The damaged "N" anomaly is rare. It's in the lower right corner of the first "N" in "PENNY."



Broken "L"

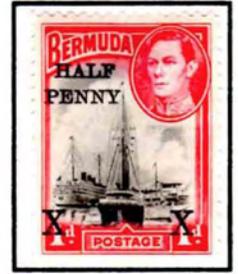
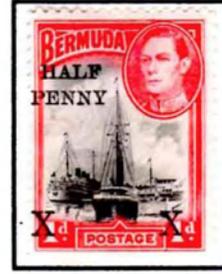
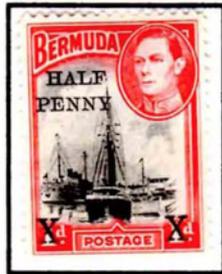
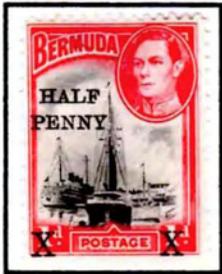


"P" Shift

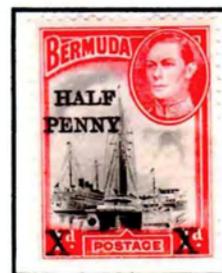


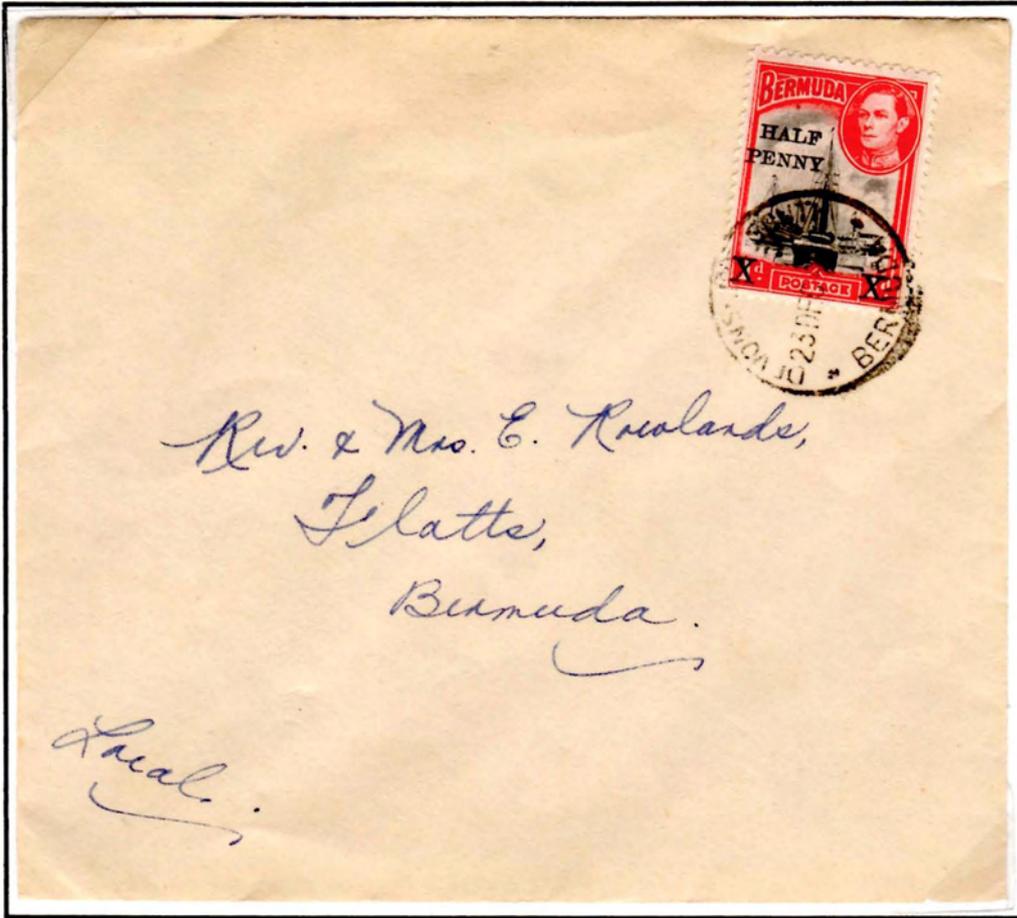
Damaged "N"

Migrating Dot. The most challenging variation to discern occurs on the bottom portion of the stamp. There is a dot that occurs about 3.5mm to the right of the left "X" and 1mm upward. It is most often located at or near the left stern of the sailboat. There is no consensus on the purpose of the dot with one claim suggesting its purpose was to make forgery of the surcharge more difficult. The dot migrates upward and to the left until it can be found against the hull of the large ship in the lower left portion of the stamp.



Strength of the Overprint. Since the plates used in the overprinting process required re-inking from time to time one can easily find darker and lighter impressions. Two examples are shown below.

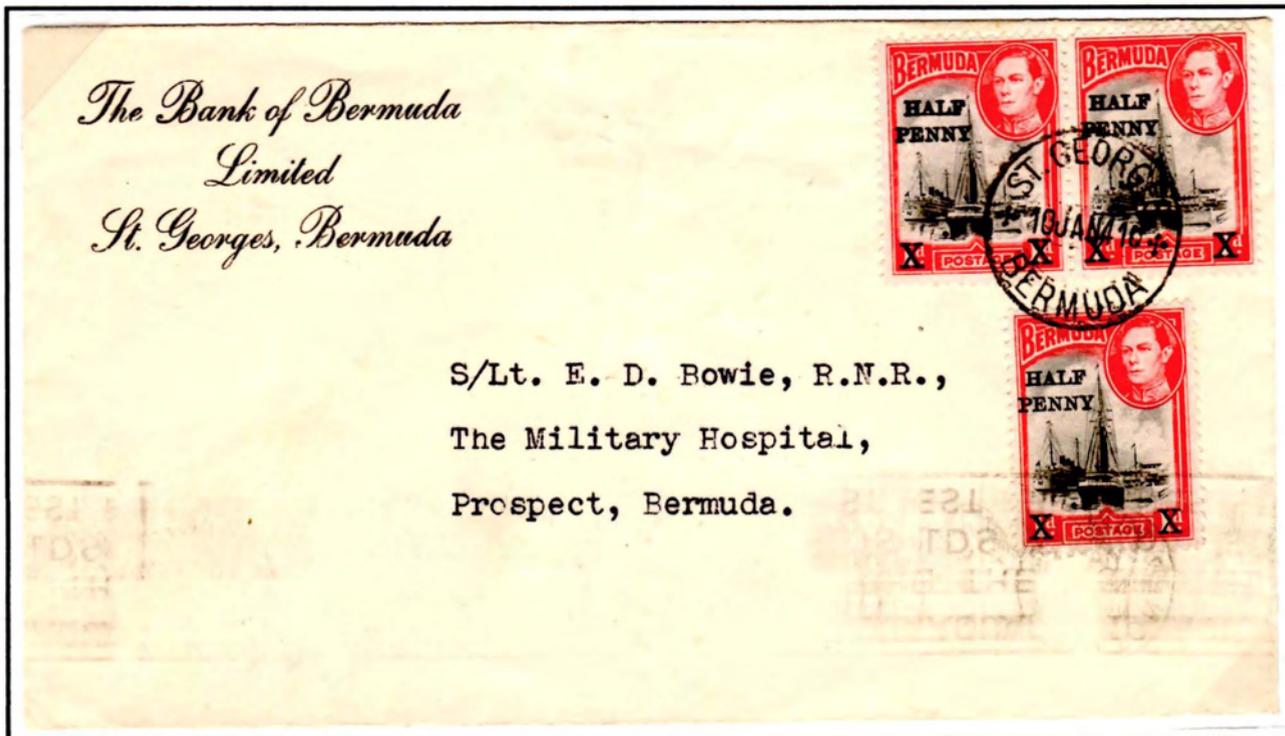




23 December 1940 Devonshire South Sub-Post Office. Unsealed.



Posted at Crawl. Flatts Village backstamp 23 December 1940. Unsealed. **Posted at small Crawl sub-post office showing the rare Damaged "N."



10 January 1941 St. Georges Post Office. Backstamped Hamilton 11 January 1941. Mail to Naval Officer at the British Army Barracks at Prospect near Hamilton. *Heavy overprint.*



27 January 1941 Hamilton Post Office slogan cancel. Overprinted issue combined with regular ½d. issue to pay the correct inland letter rate.



23 December 1940 Hamilton Post Office to Bramley, Leeds, England.



21 December 1940 St. Georges Post Office to Glasgow, Scotland. Censored.

Local Censorship in Bermuda

Censorship of mail from Bermuda operated separately from the Imperial censorship operation that intercepted and examined trans-Atlantic mail. Local operations began on September 3, 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. Outgoing mail was sampled for examination. Local censors also used a "white list," a list of individuals and businesses in Bermuda considered reliable and/or whose mail was exempt from examination. The sampling process and the "white list" explain why some mail is censored and other mail not, even though they passed through the system at same time.



24 December 1940 Mangrove Bay Post Office to Ottawa, Canada. Sender marked "Card only" to call attention to the proper U.P.U. rate for "cards and other greetings of a sentimental nature passing between countries." However the sealed card required 2½d. to pay the proper rate.

14 January 1941. St. Georges Post Office double-ring slogan cancel to Toronto, Canada. Censored. Heavy overprint & "P" shift.

*The Bank of Bermuda,
Limited
St. Georges, Bermuda.*



**The Manager,
Canadian Bank of Commerce,
Toronto, 2,
Ontario,**



28 February 1941 Hamilton Post Office to Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Franked with four regular ¼d. stamps in short supply plus single ½d. overprint issue. Broken "L."



12 March 1941 St. Georges Post Office to Nassau, Bahamas. "P" shift on left side pair in block of four.



7 June 1941 Hamilton Post Office to Montego Bay, Jamaica. Backstamped 28 June 1941 Kingston and Montego Bay. Rate: 2½d. + 3d. Registry fee = 5½d. 6d. Paid. Overpaid ½d. Censor number 140 used November 1940 to November 1941.

Pre-Paid Registered Letter to British West Indies

Rate: Two & Half Pence + Three Pence Registration Fee (5½d.)

No. 5998

CURRENCY AND EXCHANGE CONTROL BOARD.

Permit to Take ^{Stamps} Currency and/or Exchange Abroad.

Date Jan 20 1941
Name R. Fountain
Address Devonshire
Occupation or Business Cable Service

Currency	Stamps
Cheques	
Debits	Current & surcharged
Total Amount	2/6

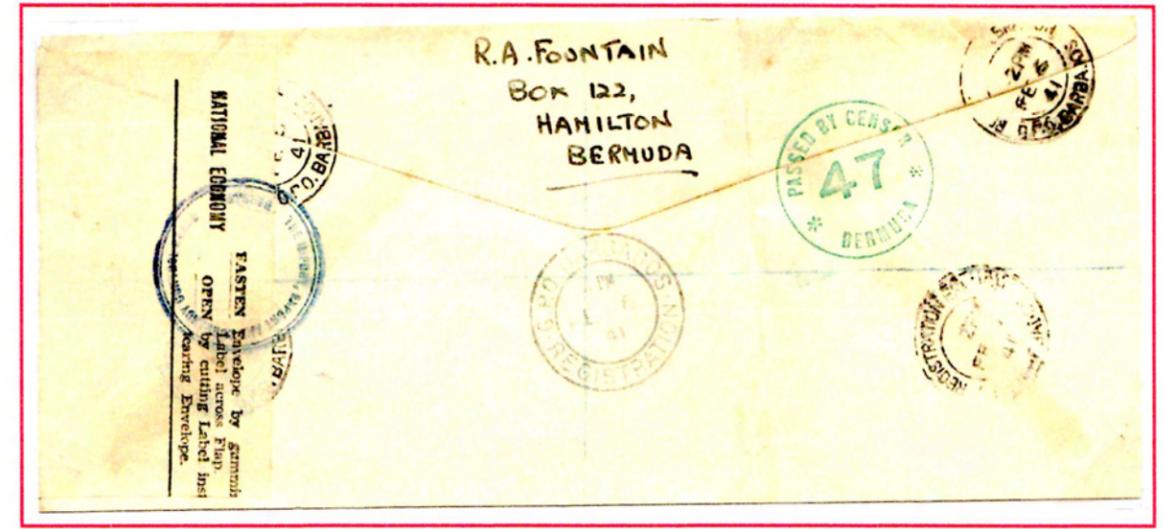
Remarks.
Kenneth Leseur Esq
Barbados

Permission is granted for currency and/or exchange to the total amount of _____
to be taken abroad for the purpose of _____

THE CURRENCY AND EXCHANGE CONTROL BOARD
per E. Arkwright



Reduced image of back of cover



26 January 1941 Hamilton Post Office registered letter to Barbados. Backstamped 6 February 1941 G.P.O. Barbados. Sender mailed sixty half-penny stamps to Cable & Wireless in Barbados. Such mail required permission from the Bermuda Currency & Exchange Control Board. Approved permit is shown at the left. Overpaid by a penny. Several "P" shifts.

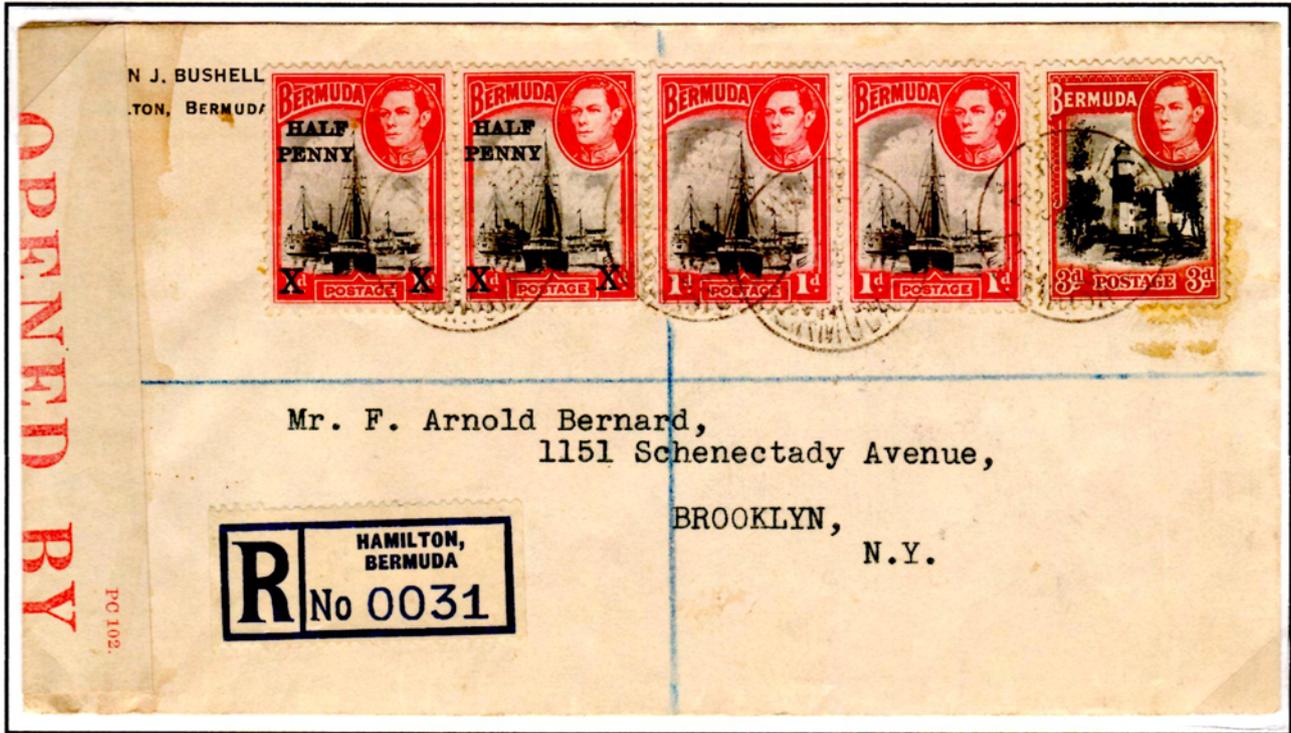
**One of four known pieces attributed to Censor #47.



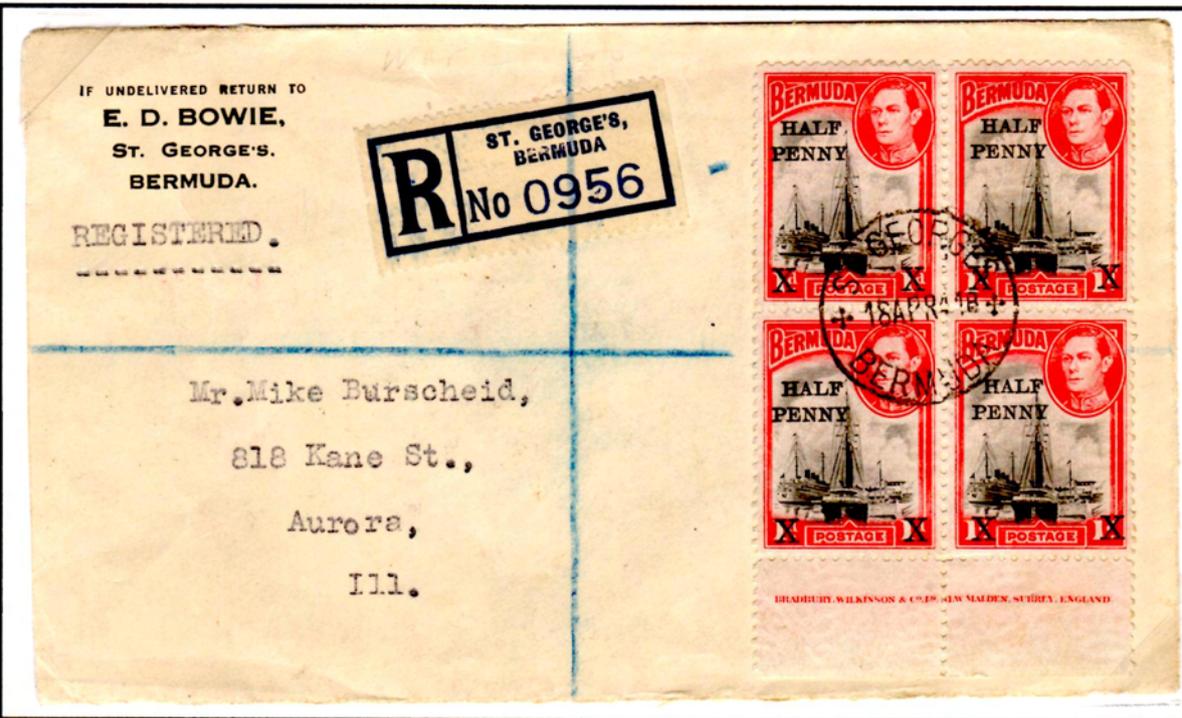
23 December 1940 Hamilton Post Office to Brooklyn. Damaged "N" in upper right corner stamp.



14 February 1941 Hamilton Post Office to Fort Defiance, Virginia. Broken "L" top row second stamp.



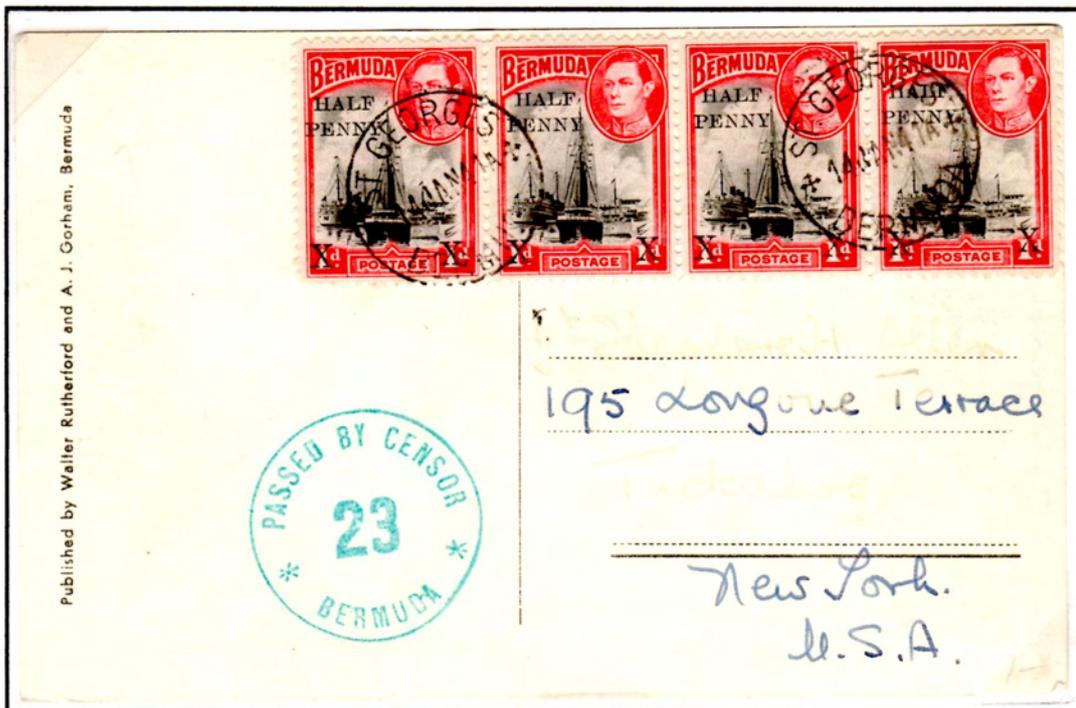
20 January 1941 Hamilton Post Office to Brooklyn, N.Y. PC102 type censor labels used from February 1940 to June 1941.



18 April 1941 St. Georges Post Office to Aurora, Illinois. Six pence postage and registry fee required twelve half-penny stamps which took both sides of the envelope.



17 January 1941 Ireland Island Sub-Post Office to Decorah, Iowa on uprated postal card. Censored at nearby Royal Navy Dockyard which ran its own censorship operation. Royal Navy "tombstone" censor mark doesn't identify ship/station using it.



14 January 1941 St. Georges Post Office to New York City on picture post card. Censor #23 examined all mail originating in St. Georges.

Airmail

Letters to U.S.

Rate: Seven & Half Pence (7½d.)



21 February 1941 St. Georges Post office to Mamaroneck, NY.

Broken "L" on stamp in upper right corner on envelope front. Several "P" shifts.

Using the ½d. stamp to pay the 7½d. airmail rate to the United States required affixing fifteen stamps to an envelope creating odd postal artifacts.

Air Mail

Registered Letters to U.S.

Top: Seven & Half-Pence Airmail + Three Pence Registry Fee (10½d.)

Bottom: One Shilling Three Pence Double Weight Airmail + Three Pence Registry Fee (1s.6d.)

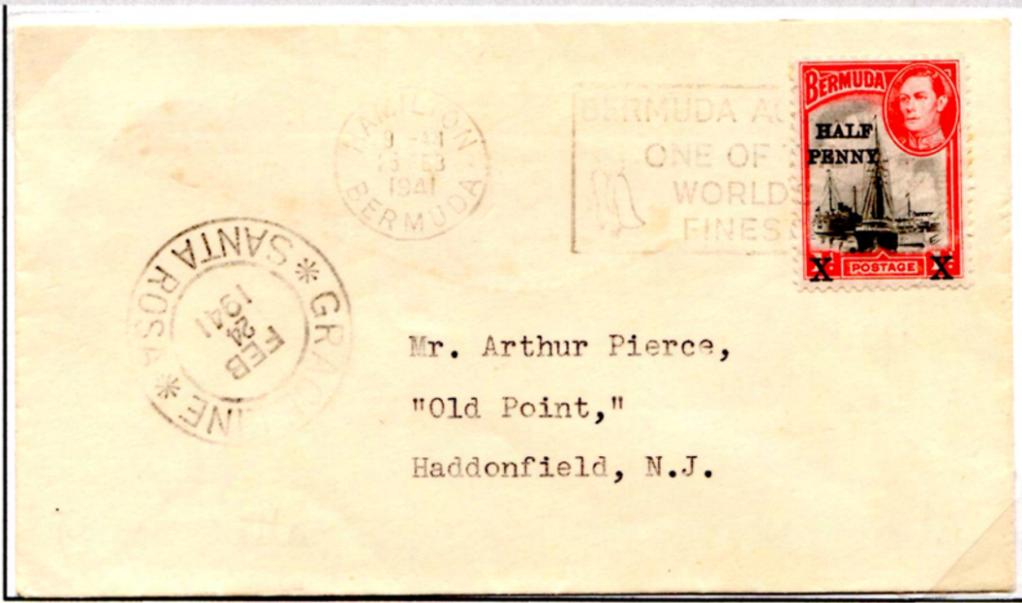
U.P.U. Special Rates

Paquebot Mail Greeting Card Conclusion



1891 U.P.U. - letters mailed on ships or at ports of call were subject to the rates of the host country.

Passenger on Grace Line Ship, *Santa Rosa*, paid ½d. to post unsealed letter aboard ship to be mailed at Hamilton on 16 February 1941 when the ship called there.



1911 - U.P.U. - cards sent between friends could be sent through the mail to foreign countries at the U.P.U. printed matter rate of a half penny. →



Conclusion: 21 January 1941 St. Georges hand cancel on last day that the provisional overprinted ½d. stamp was on sale at Bermuda post offices.