THE FIJI TIMES EXPRESS STAMPS

INTRODUCTION

The Fiji Times Express provided mail service in the absence of a government postal system. In March 1869 an effort was made to augment the British consular "post office," which had provided limited service since 1858. In September 1869 the *Fiji Times* newspaper was established at Levuka. The publisher, G. L. Griffith, found the consular post office too unreliable to distribute newspapers, so he established the Fiji Times Express in November 1870 to distribute newspapers and to provide the public with better postal service.

The Fiji Times Express had 14 district branches, each supervised by an agent. Nine opened on November 1, 1870; two more on November 5; two more on February 8, 1871; and the final one on June 14, 1871. The main office was at Levuka, and the other branches were located on Viti Levu (6), Vanua Levu (4), Taveuni (2), Kadavu (1) and Vanua Balavu (1).

Rates

The Fiji Times Express charges were published in the October 22, 1870, edition of the *Fiji Times*:

From Levuka to any part of the world	3d
From Districts to any part of the world	6d
From Levuka to Districts	6d
From Districts to Levuka	6d
From one District to another	9d
Newspapers: Levuka	1d
Newspapers: to or from Districts	2d
Fiji Times always free	

A special "Private Bag" service was also provided for planters and others.

On December 17, 1870, two new rates to New Zealand were added: 6d from Levuka and 9d from Districts.

The Fiji Times Express stamps were originally intended only for internal Fiji postage, but they were later accepted as prepayment in New South Wales and Victoria.

Settings, Papers & Printings

The Fiji Times Express stamps were printed at the newspaper office. Two settings comprising 24 stamps (6 wide x 4 high) were made. The First Setting had 6d, 1sh, 1d and 3d denominations (a full horizontal row of each in that order). The Second Setting had three 9d values substituted for the last three 3d in the bottom row.

Three distinct paper types have been identified by David E. Gillis (*Fiji Times Express Stamps: The Three Issued Paper Types and Other FTE Topics*, 2011). Gillis' paper study improved the previous classification system and is used in this exhibit.

The First Setting was printed only on **Quadrillé** paper that shows a watermark pattern of horizontal and vertical lines that create a pattern of nearly square boxes (Paper Type 1). An estimated 600 of each value were printed on Quadrillé paper (all First Setting).

The Second Setting was printed on two types of paper. Paper Type 2 is **Pseudo Laid Batonné,** which shows a watermarked pattern of fine closely-spaced vertical lines and wider-spaced thick vertical lines. Gillis describes this paper as "Pseudo" Laid Batonné because its characteristics do not exactly match true Laid Batonné paper.

Second Setting stamps were also printed on paper classified by Gillis as **Pseudo Laid Wove** paper (Paper Type 3). These show faint vertical lines without the wide-spaced lines of Batonné paper.

The Fiji Times Express was terminated in January 1872 at the government's request, and the stamps were withdrawn from use. In 1876 and 1888 the collector demand for rare Fiji Times Express stamps resulted in two new settings. Stamps from these printings are classified as Official Imitations.

Earliest Recorded Mail from Fiji

Letter datelined "Bark Pilot, Fejee Islands, October 13th 1847"
from Captain Joseph Hartwell to his wife Lydia in Salem, Massachusetts

Carried by whaling vessel to New York, entered mails on May 2, 1848, 7¢ ship-letter rate

Captain Hartwell states:
"Capt. Wallis is about leaving the Amiable Islands for the land of the brave"

Joseph Hartwell was captain of the whaler *Gambia*,
which traveled to New Zealand and Fiji in 1844

Mail from USS *John Adams* during First Fiji Expedition

Notation at origin in upper right corner:
"U.S.S. 'John Adams', Feejee Islands, Oct. 10th 1855 — All well."

Addressed to Miss Mary. E. Potter, Kingston, Rhode Island

Received at New York with "N.YORK STEAMSHIP" dateless circle
and "40" cents due handstamp

   The First Fiji Expedition undertaken by the U.S. Navy occurred in October 1855 during the civil war on the islands. The U.S.S. *John Adams*, under Commander Edward B. Boutwell, was sent to monitor the unrest in October 1855. When Commander Boutwell heard of arson attacks on an American's store, he demanded financial compensation from King Cakobau. A deadline was given and, when the king failed to pay, a landing party of marines and sailors was sent ashore to capture the king in the island's village. Fijian warriors put up some resistance, resulting in one American death and two wounded. Ultimately the U.S. landing party was successful in routing a contingent of natives from Lautoka, but King Cakobau and the survivors escaped capture, and the debt was never paid.

Fiji Times Express Stamps

The Fiji Times Express stamps were printed at the office of the *Fiji Times* at Levuka. The rates were set at 3d increments, and the First Setting contained denominations for the 3d, 6d and 1sh rates (the 9d rate could be made up with 3d and 6d stamps). In response to greater demand for 9d stamps, three 3d positions in the bottom row were changed to 9d.

All stamps in this exhibit are identified by Stanley Gibbons number (SG), gum condition (NG=No Gum, OG=Original Gum) and setting position (number in brackets [#]).

SG 3 NG [1]

SG 4 OG [10]

SG 1 NG [13]

SG 2 NG [20]

First Setting (1870)

6d [1]	6d [2]	6d [3]	6d [4]	6d [5]	6d [6]
1sh [7]	1sh [8]	1sh [9]	1sh [10]	1sh [11]	1sh [12]
1d [13]	1d [14]	1d [15]	1d [16]	1d [17]	1d [18]
3d [19]	3d [20]	3d [21]	3d [22]	3d [23]	3d [24]

Setting of 24 in four horizontal rows of six, with denominations as shown above

Unused examples of each denomination
on Quadrillé paper are shown at left

Second Setting (1871)

SG 7 OG [3]

SG 9 OG [9]

SG 5 OG [15]

SG 6 NG [20]

6d [1]	6d [2]	6d [3]	6d [4]	6d [5]	6d [6]
1sh [7]	1sh [8]	1sh [9]	1sh [10]	1sh [11]	1sh [12]
1d [13]	1d [14]	1d [15]	1d [16]	1d [17]	1d [18]
3d [19]	3d [20]	3d [21]	9d [22]	9d [23]	9d [24]

SG 8 OG [23]

Same arrangement with three 9d denominations substituted for 3d in bottom row

Unused examples of each denomination
on Pseudo Laid Batonné paper are shown above
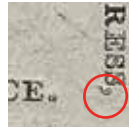
Comma after "Express" — Position 22

Photo detail

First Setting with 3d Denomination (Quadrillé Paper)

SG 2 NG [22]

SG 2 [22]

Position 22 in the bottom row was set with
a comma after EXPRESS instead of a period
The stamp at left is unused

Second Setting with 9d Denomination (Pseudo Laid Batonné Paper)

SG 8 OG [22]

When the denomination was changed from 3d to 9d,
the comma after EXPRESS remained in Position 22
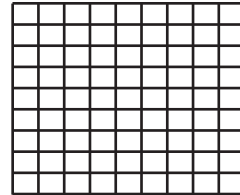The stamp above is unused with original gum

Paper Types According to Gillis Classification

Three distinct paper types have been identified by David E. Gillis (*Fiji Times Express Stamps: The Three Issued Paper Types and Other FTE Topics*, 2011, The Pacific Islands Study Circle). Gillis' paper study improved the previous classification system. The three papers and watermark patterns are shown below.
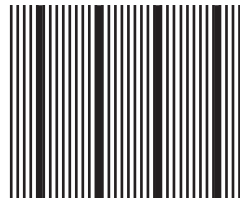
Paper Type 1
Quadrillé

SG 4 [8]

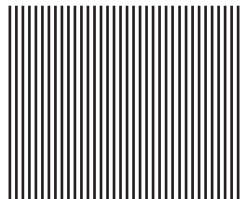**Paper Type 2**
Pseudo Laid Batonné

SG 9 NG [9]

Paper Type 3
Pseudo Laid Wove

SG 9 [11]

Paper Color Variation

Variables influencing paper color make it difficult to classify shades and debatable whether shade differences are due to any factor other than environment. However, certain very bright rose shades are considered more desirable. The stamps below are arranged with the paper showing the least amount of rose at left and the most at right.

Pale Rose ⟶ *Medium Rose* ⟶ *Bright Rose*

Paper Type 1
Quadrillé

SG 3 [1]   SG 1 [11] Bua Star

Paper Type 2
Pseudo
Laid Batonné

SG 7 OG [2]   SG 9 OG [9]   SG 6 NG [19]   SG 6 OG [19]

SG 5 NG [17]   SG 5 OG [16]   SG 7 OG [5]   SG 5 OG [13]

SG 6 OG [21]   SG 7 OG [1]   SG 8 OG [23]

Paper Type 3
Pseudo
Laid Wove

SG 6 [20]   SG 6 NG [19]   SG 5 OG [16]

First Setting (1870) — 1sh and 1d Se-Tenant Block of Six

Paper Type 1
Quadrillé

1sh horizontal pair [8-9] and single [10]
1d strip of three [13-15]

The alignment of margins and Quadrillé watermark (and vertical crease through Positions 9/15) confirms that these stamps originally came from the same sheet and are shown here correctly rejoined to form a block of six with original gum

1sh pair ex Col. Evans

1d strip of three ex Ferrary

6d [1]	6d [2]	6d [3]	6d [4]	6d [5]	6d [6]
1sh [7]	1sh [8]	1sh [9]	1sh [10]	1sh [11]	1sh [12]
1d [13]	1d [14]	1d [15]	1d [16]	1d [17]	1d [18]
3d [19]	3d [20]	3d [21]	3d [22]	3d [23]	3d [24]

SG 4 0G [8-10] and SG 1 OG [13-15]

First Setting (1870) — 6d and 1sh Se-Tenant Pair

Paper Type 1
Quadrillé
6d/1sh vertical pair [2/8]

6d [1]	6d [2]	6d [3]	6d [4]	6d [5]	6d [6]
1sh [7]	1sh [8]	1sh [9]	1sh [10]	1sh [11]	1sh [12]
1d [13]	1d [14]	1d [15]	1d [16]	1d [17]	1d [18]
3d [19]	3d [20]	3d [21]	3d [22]	3d [23]	3d [24]

SG 3 NG [2] and SG 4 NG [8] Repair

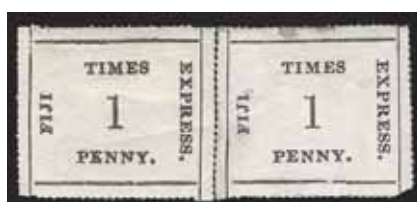# Second Setting (1871) — 6d/1sh/1d/9d Se-Tenant Strip of Four

Paper Type 2
Pseudo Laid Batonné
6d/1sh/1d/9d vertical strip with original gum [4/10/16/22]—9d Comma after EXPRESS

6d [1]	6d [2]	6d [3]	6d [4]	6d [5]	6d [6]
1sh [7]	1sh [8]	1sh [9]	1sh [10]	1sh [11]	1sh [12]
1d [13]	1d [14]	1d [15]	1d [16]	1d [17]	1d [18]
3d [19]	3d [20]	3d [21]	9d [22]	9d [23]	9d [24]

SG 7/9/5/8 OG [4/10/16/22]

Second Setting (1871) — 1d Pair

Paper Type 3
Pseudo Laid Wove

1d [14-15] with original gum

The alignment of margins and Laid lines (and slight gum crease) confirms that
these two stamps originally came from the same sheet and are shown here
correctly rejoined to form a pair with original gum

6d [1]	6d [2]	6d [3]	6d [4]	6d [5]	6d [6]
1sh [7]	1sh [8]	1sh [9]	1sh [10]	1sh [11]	1sh [12]
1d [13]	1d [14]	1d [15]	1d [16]	1d [17]	1d [18]
3d [19]	3d [20]	3d [21]	9d [22]	9d [23]	9d [24]

SG 5 OG [14-15]

"BUA" Star Cancellation

SG 1 [15]

The 8-point Star cancel with negative "BUA" was used at
the Bua District Office on Vanua Levu

It is the only handstamped cancellation used on Fiji Times Express stamps

The 1d stamp is from the First Setting on Quadrillé Paper (Type 1)

Pen Cancellations

SG 7 [3]

SG 9 [9]

The "#" pen cancel is believed to have been applied at
the Levuka main office, due to its frequency of use

The 6d stamp is from the Second Setting on Pseudo Laid Batonné Paper (Type 2)

The 1sh stamp is from the Second Setting on Pseudo Laid Wove Paper (Type 3)

First Setting (1870) — 3d and 6d Combination with New South Wales

SG 2 [24] and SG 3 [1]

3d [24] and 6d [1] First Setting on Quadrillé Paper (Type 1)

"X" pen cancels applied at the **Rewa District Office (on Viti Levu),**
along with small **"REWA" handstamp** struck in matching ink

Fiji Times Express 9d postage includes 6d rate from Rewa to New South Wales
and 3d rate for postage from New South Wales to Victoria

New South Wales 3d stamp cancelled at Sydney by oval "NSW" portion of duplex,
and a complete strike of "SYDNEY C DE 31 1870" duplex datestamp
ties Fiji Times Express stamps

"MELBOURNE 2A JA 3 71" and Brunswick (Victoria) receiving backstamps

The only recorded Fiji Times Express cover with a postmark from an outlying District office

*British Philatelic Association Expertising certificate (2003)
and The Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria certificate (1985)
confirm genuineness and that no stamps are missing*

First Setting (1870) — 3d and 6d Combination with New South Wales

SG 2 [20] and SG 3 [2]

3d [20] and 6d [2] First Setting on Quadrillé Paper (Type 1)
"#" pen cancels applied at Levuka main office
Fiji Times Express 9d postage includes 6d rate from Rewa to New South Wales
and 3d rate for postage from New South Wales to Victoria
New South Wales 3d stamp cancelled at Sydney by oval "NSW" portion of duplex,
and a complete strike of "SYDNEY C DE 31 1870" duplex datestamp
ties Fiji Times Express stamps
"MELBOURNE 2A JA 3 71" receiving backstamp
Same Sydney and Melbourne postmark dates as Dodd cover on previous page
Sender's notation at upper left "With a newspaper"

British Philatelic Association Expertising certificate (2003)
and Royal Philatelic Society of London certificate (1981)

Ex Sir W. Lacon Threlford

Second Imitation (1888)

In response to demand from collectors, the *Fiji Times* proprietors made reprints in 1876 and 1888 from settings that imitate the original settings

The 1876 Imitation was printed from a setting of 40 (8 x 5) with the denominations arranged in ascending order from top to bottom: 1d/3d/6d/1sh

The 1888 Imitation was printed from a setting of 30 (6 x 5) with the denominations arranged in descending order from top to bottom: 1sh/9d/6d/3d/1d

The strip above comes from the 1888 Imitation