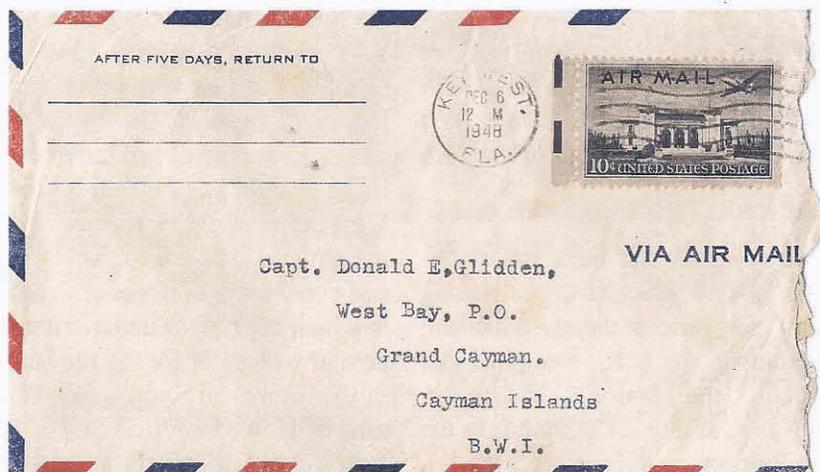


A mysterious cover from Swan Island

By **Steven Zirinsky**
Of the USA

The cover at right seems innocuous enough, but the addressee was believed involved in some of the activities at Swan Island in the western Caribbean during this era. Can any member shed any light on the cover, the addressee, or the activities at Swan Island during this period? Please forward information to the editor.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to my late friend Dr. Gale Raymond, it



is know that Radio Swan was a pirate radio station based in the Swan Islands, a group of islands in the western Caribbean Sea, near the coastline of Honduras. Under the “Radio Swan” and “Radio Americas” names, the station was in operation from 1960 to 1968. In 1960, a Central Intelligence Agency entity called “Gibraltar Steamship Company” [which didn’t own any steamships] owned and established Radio Swan on Swan Island, a covert operation to win supporters for U.S. policies and discredit Fidel Castro. Has anyone studied the postal history and could write an article?)

The Dated Cancellers (Part 1)

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to how much money was added to the Treasury from the charges on postage, which was, in fact, estimated as being a total of over £14 million between 1793 and 1815, this being a further incentive to have a fairly accurate record of letters and parcels being posted at each local post office.

Dated Straight Line Cancellers

Thus it was that Francis Freeling issued a letter to the Central Sorting Office in November 1798 to get the new dated straight line instruments manufactured and issued to the Deputy Postmasters in the West Indies. Hence, these instruments are sometimes referred to as “Freeling Cancellers.” This was duly implemented by the Central Sorting Office, but there does not appear to have been any letter sent from the PMGs themselves as a directive to the Travelling Surveyor of Posts of the Imperial Packet Agency, also that Francis Freeling had no authority to issue such instruments or to request or require that such instruments should be used. What should have happened is that Francis Freeling should, having had the instruments manufactured, gone back to the PMGs and requested them to issue a directive to the Travelling Surveyor of Posts (Mr. Chomeley Willoughby) of the Imperial Packet Agency (founded by Cromwell in 1653

and then given Royal Charter by Charles II in 1663), who was based in Bridgetown, Barbados. He would then have instructed his Deputy Postmasters in the various post offices in the West Indies to use these instruments, as a matter of course.

However, this did not happen, with the result that the Deputy Postmasters used these new instruments at their discretion, rather than as a directed matter of course, with the effect that some postmasters used the instruments diligently (e.g., Bahamas and Virgin Islands), because they felt so inclined, while other Deputy Postmasters used them either haphazardly or hardly at all (e.g., St. Vincent, with an earliest reported date of June 1799, and Grenada), because they did not feel inclined to use them. There may even have been a feeling of resentment, in some cases, at being instructed by someone outside the Agency, instead of by the Travelling Surveyor of Posts, their own management.

The further articles in this series are:

Part 2: The reason for the issue of Circular Date Cancellers in the United Kingdom.

Part 3: An additional reason for Dated Cancellers in the Colonies.

Part 4: The Fleuron Cancellers.

Part 5: The Fleuron Cancellor for St. Vincent.