

# Applications of Plating to the Expertizing Process

The Fiji Times Express

By Timothy A. Holmes

*(Editor's Note: This article has been reproduced in its entirety from the first volume of "OPINIONS: Philatelic Expertizing—An Inside View", published in 1983 by The Philatelic Foundation. The book continues to receive accolades, the most recent being a Silver Medal in the rigorous SESCAL Literature competition. Mr. Holmes, who is the Foundation's Executive Secretary and an avid student of Fiji philately, offers an example here of the in-depth research and discussion that is to be found in "OPINIONS".)*

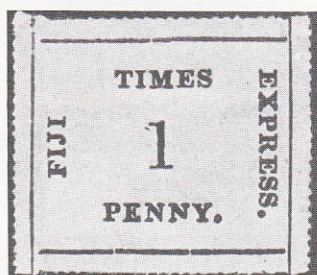


Figure 1.  
Certificate 84 950.  
Submitted as Scott #6, Gibbons #5.

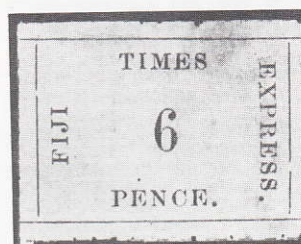


Figure 2.  
Certificate 89 838.  
Submitted as Scott #8, Gibbons #7.

Two stamps are under examination. The first specimen (Figure 1) is a rouletted stamp without gum. The inscriptions are letterpress, the value "1" is 4mm tall; vertical framelines run the full height of the stamp, and the horizontal framelines do not connect with the vertical. The paper is thin, brittle, and almost translucent, with an apparent grid network showing through. In the inscription FIJI TIMES EXPRESS. PENNY., the second N is broken at the lower point. The stamp is submitted as a Fiji Scott #6, Gibbons #5.

The second (Figure 2) with value 6 pence, is of a similar format, but the frame is not as tall, and the figure of value appears a fraction smaller. The paper is thin, with vertical laid lines. The vertical framelines are set within continuous horizontal framelines, both showing, as in the first stamp, breaks between the small pieces of rule used to make the lines. This stamp is submitted as a Fiji Scott #8, Gibbons #7.

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By 1870 the Fiji Islands were yielding to the effects of the missionaries and planters. Though the population engaged in commerce was still small, the distribution of plantations increased inter-island traffic and communications substantially. There was no regular governmental mail service. Recipients of mail from outside the islands had to arrange personally for pick-up from the British Consular Office at Levuka, which could entail a journey of up to 100 miles.

The *Fiji Times*, started as a weekly newspaper in September 1869, experienced difficulty in delivery to points outside of Levuka. The desire of the proprietors to maximize subscribership and the prominent need for improvement of the mails and packet situation gave them the impetus to begin an "express" service.

This service established 14 agents at locations throughout the islands. Commencing November 1st, 1870, the *Fiji Times* issue of three days earlier announced:

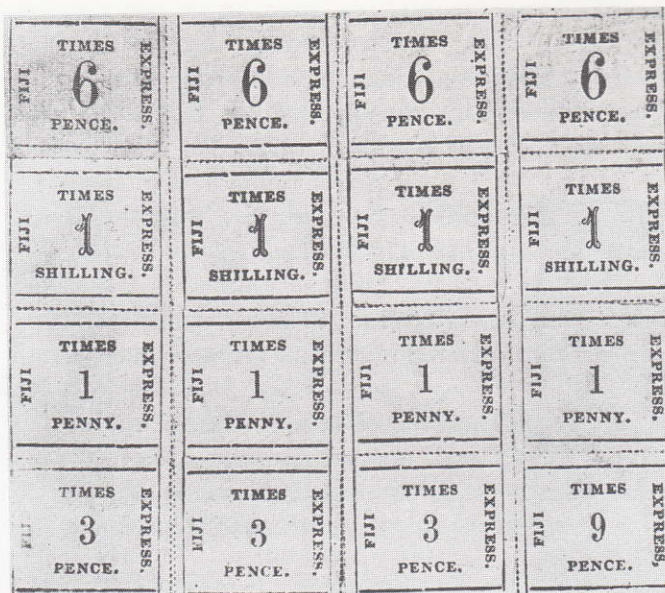


Figure 3.  
Settings of 16 positions from left of sheet, second printing.

Chart 1.

Printing	Paper	Frame: Continuous Frameline	Size	Figures of Value: Height
Original				
1st:	Quadrille	Vertical	22½ x 18½ mm	1 d: 4mm 3 d: 4mm 6 d: 7mm 1 sh: 6¼ mm 9 d: 4mm
2nd	Laid batonne			
Facsimile #1	Vertically laid, pale faded pink, white wove	Horizontal	22½ x 16 mm	1 d: 3¾mm 3 d: 3¾mm 6 d: 3¾mm 1 sh: 6¼mm 9 d: 3¾mm
Facsimile #2	Thick wove, deep pink	Vertical	22 x 18¾ mm	1 d: 5¾mm 3 d: 5¼mm 6 d: 5¼mm 1 sh: 6¼mm 9 d: 6mm
Facsimile #3	White wove	Vertical	23 x 18¼mm	1 d: 4½mm 3 d: 4½mm 6 d: 7mm 1 sh: 7¼mm



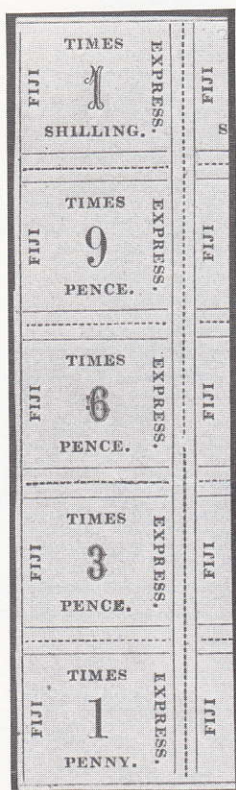


Figure 4.

Second facsimile format (Figure 4, left) is characterized by the large and ornate numerals, which vary considerably from the originals and other facsimiles. Deep pink wove paper.

The first facsimiles (Figure 5, right) show pence values in same size, 3¼mm., only slightly smaller than the originals.

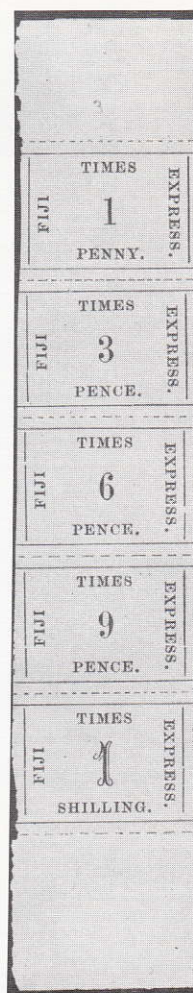


Figure 5.

“We have issued stamps, by supplying themselves with which, the settlers can forward their letters throughout the group without the difficulty so often experienced of enclosing the money, and our arrangements are complete for posting letters or papers and forwarding parcels, etc., to any part of the world. We dispatch mails by every vessel leaving here for the Colonies, and forward parcels, papers, letters, etc., by all crafts leaving Levuka for the other islands of the group.”

The stamps were printed at the newspaper office. The inscriptions were set in printers type. The frames were composed of printers' rules, and the stamps were separated by dotted rules. The stamps show distinctive breaks in the frames and variations in the type, characteristics unique to each position in the form. The sheet format for the original printings was four horizontal rows of six stamps. With each row being a different value, no more than six settings of each value occurred. For the first printing they were 6d, 1 shilling, 1d, and 3d. In the second printing three 9d values supplanted the last three 3d values.

Distinctive types of paper were used in the two printings. The first printing, that of November 1, 1870, was on quadrillé paper, distinguished by a lattice of lines forming a prominent continuous squared “watermark.” The second printing (Figure 3) was on laid battoné paper, in which a similar background consisting of narrow horizontal lines and wider spaced vertical lines form a rectangular pattern.

The second printing was put into use probably in the early part of 1871, and was still in service on January 12, 1872, when the Express ceased operations.

Stamps of both printings are of considerable scarcity. Their appeal to the collector was sufficiently strong in the years shortly following their use that on several occasions newly-created imitations were made by the *Fiji Times* between 1876 and 1888. Like the originals, these were type-set from the fonts available in the newspaper offices.

A survey of reference on the original printings and the facsimiles is summarized in Chart 1.

There was no 9d in facsimile #3. Less is known about this group of types, one sheet being found, and this only in the early 1960's.

In all printings, the 1 shilling figure of value is a large ornate numeral. In the second facsimiles (Figure 4), the 3d and 6d are ornate, bearing no resemblance to the originals; the 6d numeral in the original printings is distinctive by its size.

By this it becomes apparent that the 6d ('patient' 89 838) can only be one of the first facsimiles. The small frame size, with solid horizontals, is checked and confirms. Figure 5 illustrates a strip (vertical row #3), from the Foundation's reference collection, that shows the same breaks in the vertical frame line and dotted rule at bottom, as well as some of the same broken letters, though these are more progressed in the stamp under examination.

The 1d is looked at more carefully. The size of the stamp and typeface look correct. The broken "N" is found in type 2 on a reconstructed sheet, along with breaks in the ruled frame above the M, and below the P and second N. The paper matches that of stamps in the reference, and all descriptions found for the second printing, on quadrille.

There are three types of forgeries, only one close. It does not plate to the originals, of course; the composition of the lines is of a different nature, and the paper is pinkish laid. It also does not alter the determination of "patient" 84 950 as a genuine unused example of the second printing of the *Fiji Times* Express 1d. Once again, a study of plating references has led to an opinion being expressed.

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**Bibliography:**

Useful reference on the *Fiji Times* Express and the subsequent regular issues:

The Postage Stamps Etc. of the Fiji Islands, by Charles J. Phillips London, 1908. Stanley Gibbons Ltd., Publishers.

Fiji — *The Stamps and Postal History, 1870-75*, by J.G. Rodger and R.F. Duberal, Melbourne, 1970. The Hawthorne Press.