



Travelling Post Offices & Postal Agencies of British Guiana / Guyana

Keith Morris



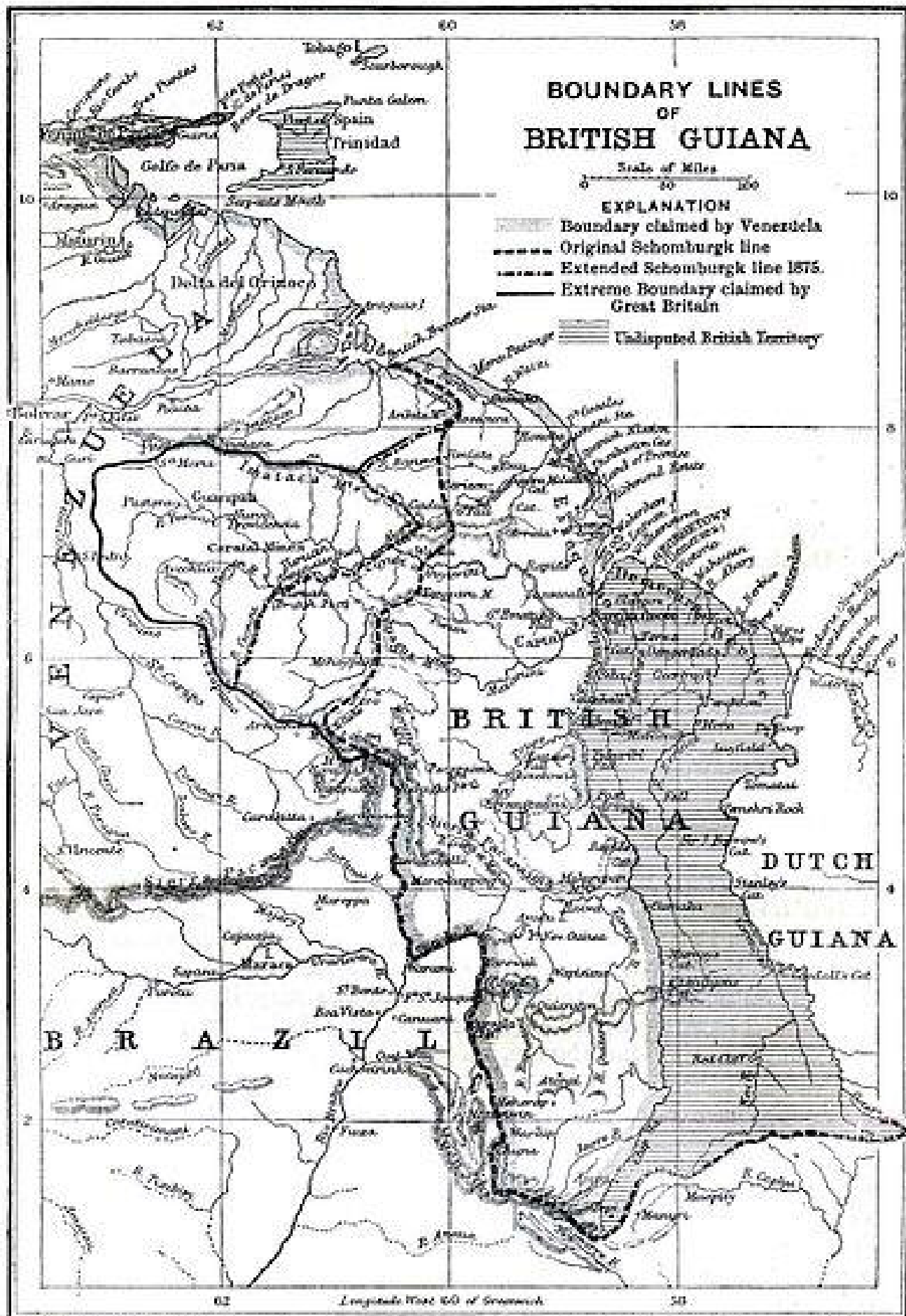


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General Account of the TPOs and TPAs

Good postal services generally depend on good road and rail communications and in British Guiana these existed only in the flat coastal plain which contained 90 per cent of the population. The Interior, prior to the coming of aircraft, was accessible only by river, and Guiana, 'The Land of Waters', has many rivers. Unfortunately, the rivers were seldom navigable for long reaches, being full of rapids and falls. Yet these rivers provided the only mail-routes to the remote and scattered settlements of the Interior in the early days, and to a large extent continue to do so even now. Rapids and falls have sometimes been navigated, at considerable risk to life and mails, and sometimes avoided, by 'portage' on roads constructed for the purpose.



In most countries TPOs were a mere adjunct to the main mail-system. In British Guiana the mail-system would have broken down immediately if the TPOs and TPAs had ceased to operate. Yet because the opening-up of the Interior came slowly, so did the development of the system of Travelling Post Offices. In the 1879 PO Handbook, none were mentioned, though possibly a TPO on the Demerara Railway was overlooked. The 1884 PO Guide lists four: Demerara Railway, and the Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo River Steamers. It omitted the Upper Demerara River TPO, which was then functioning. The 1906 PO Guide lists those five, plus the Berbice, and West Coast Railways, Bartica Steamer and Pomeroon River Boat - making nine in all. By 1946 the number had increased to 15, and by 1966 there were no less than 19 TPOs or TPAs working, plus two 'Mobile Postal Units' which were virtually TPOs and will be included in this survey. Brief notes will be supplied about each TPO in turn, but for sundry reasons they will be considered in some sort of geographical, rather than historical, order. (Some dates of opening were unknown, and some TPOs have opened and closed several times.)

The central part of the coastal strip was well served by three Railway TPOs. Various rivers reach the sea at

points served by these coastal TPOs. Thus, the TPAs on the Mahaica, Mahaicony and Abary Rivers all transferred their mails to the East Coast or Berbice Railway TPO. The Upper and Lower Demerara River services ran to Georgetown, and the Tumatumari - Rockstone - Wismar TPA used to link with this service at Wismar. Bartica Steamer (and earlier, Mazaruni Steamer) would pick up at Bartica mails from Cuyuni, Mazaruni and Puruni TPAs, and at Fort Wiland, mails from Bonasika Creek TPA, and bring them all to Parika, the terminus of West Coast Railway TPO.

British Guiana's three major rivers, Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice, were too wide to be bridged, but regular ferry services take the mails across them, and on one of these (the Essequibo Steamer) there was a TPO on board.

To the east, the Upper and Lower Berbice River services and the Canje TPA brought mails to New Amsterdam. The Corentyne River (the Colony's eastern boundary) had a TPA which brought mails to Skeldon, whence they went by mail vans (which once were ranked as TPOs) to New Amsterdam, where the ferry linked with the coastal railway, at Rosignol.

To the west, mails from TPO Pomeroun went to Charity, whence the Arabian Coast mail vans brought them to Adventure, the terminus of the Essequibo Estuary Steamer TPO, which then brought them to Parika, the terminus of the West Coast Railway. Long ago, the North West Steamer, and in recent times N.W.D. Mobile Agency, have served remote parts of that district and mails were brought to Morawhanna or Mabaruma to be transported to Georgetown by the only prolonged sea-voyage involved in the whole system described. This was shown by the line of dashes marked 'N.W. Steamer'.)

Most of the inland surface mails were carried by trains, steamers or mail vans of the (Government) Transport & Harbours Department. But on some rivers (e.g. the Mazaruni, Puruni, Cuyuni and Upper and Lower Demerara) TPOs or TPAs would have been operated on privately owned boats, under contract to the PMG.

A TPO was operated in a special compartment of the train or steamer, set apart for the travelling postal official. A TPA may well have no more than a locker in which the boat's captain or the contractor guarantees to keep the mails secure. Most TPOs accept and deliver ordinary or registered packets and parcels up to 11lb, sell stamps, and sell or cash Postal Orders and Money Orders. TPAs varied in the facilities they offered. One dealt only with ordinary letters and the sale of stamps. Some dealt with registered mail, and parcels and Postal Orders, and even with the sending of telegrams if there was a telegraph office en route. Because TPOs delivered mails to distributing offices which passed them on to the next link in the chain of services, it was even possible to send a letter 'Express' while travelling on the boat which was carrying it.

Contractors on TPAs were paid fixed sums, not dependent on the amount of postal business done. If business increased considerably, they generally refused to carry on, and a new tender was called for. The service may have been raised to the status of a TPO, and have an official of the Post Office on board. Similarly, a TPO may be lowered to the status of a TPA.

From what has been said it will be seen that the travelling offices provide two indispensable services: the routine conveyance of mails over large areas of the Colony, and the provision of postal facilities in remote areas where none would otherwise exist. Of relatively minor importance was the privilege of 'posting on board' the various trains and boats.

Cancellations of the TPOs and TPAs

Abbreviations used:

TPO = Travelling Post Office;

TPA = Travelling Postal Agency;

PA = Postal Agency;

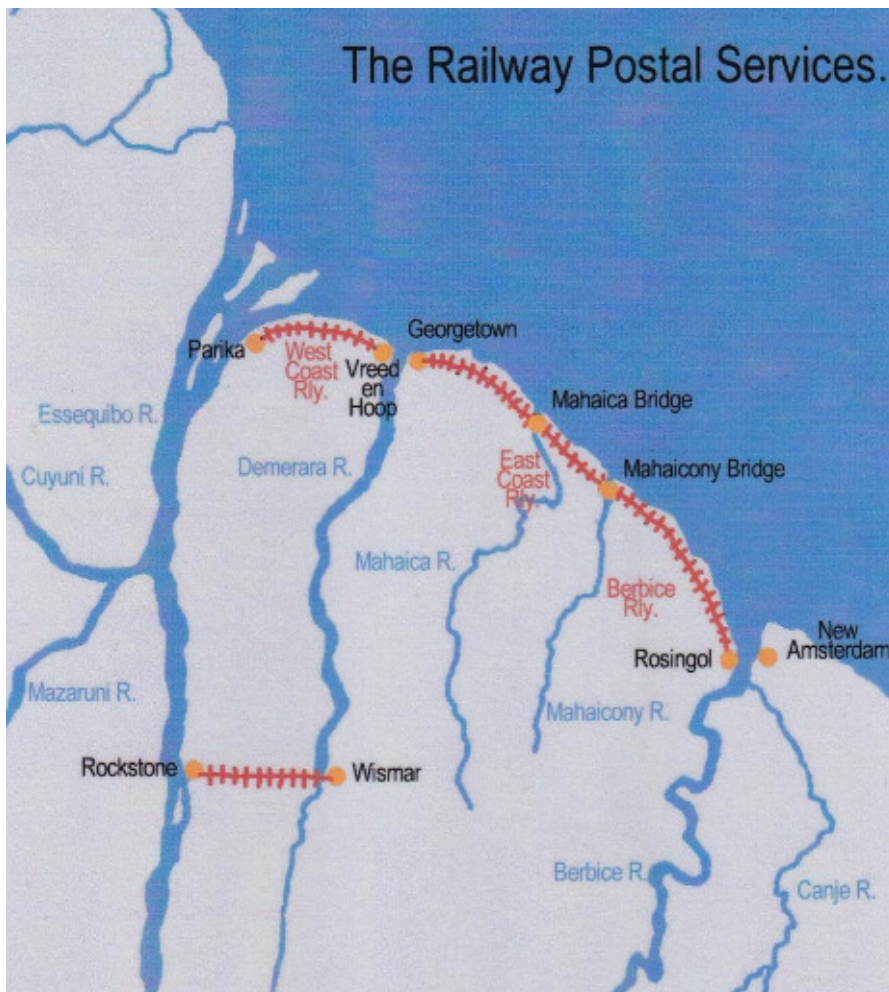
GPO = General Post Office;

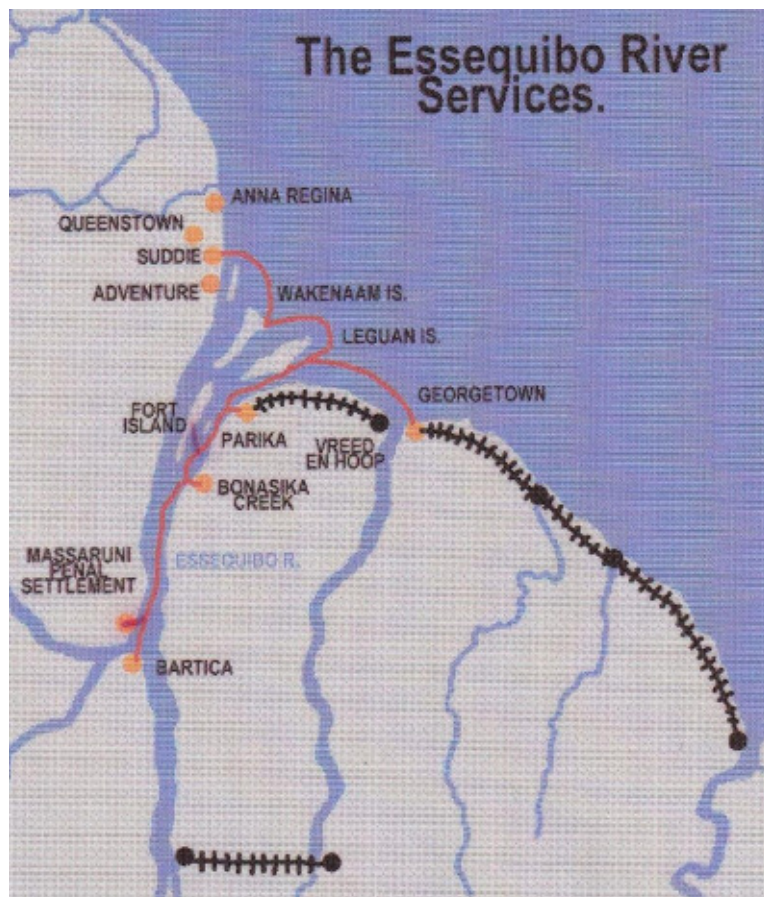
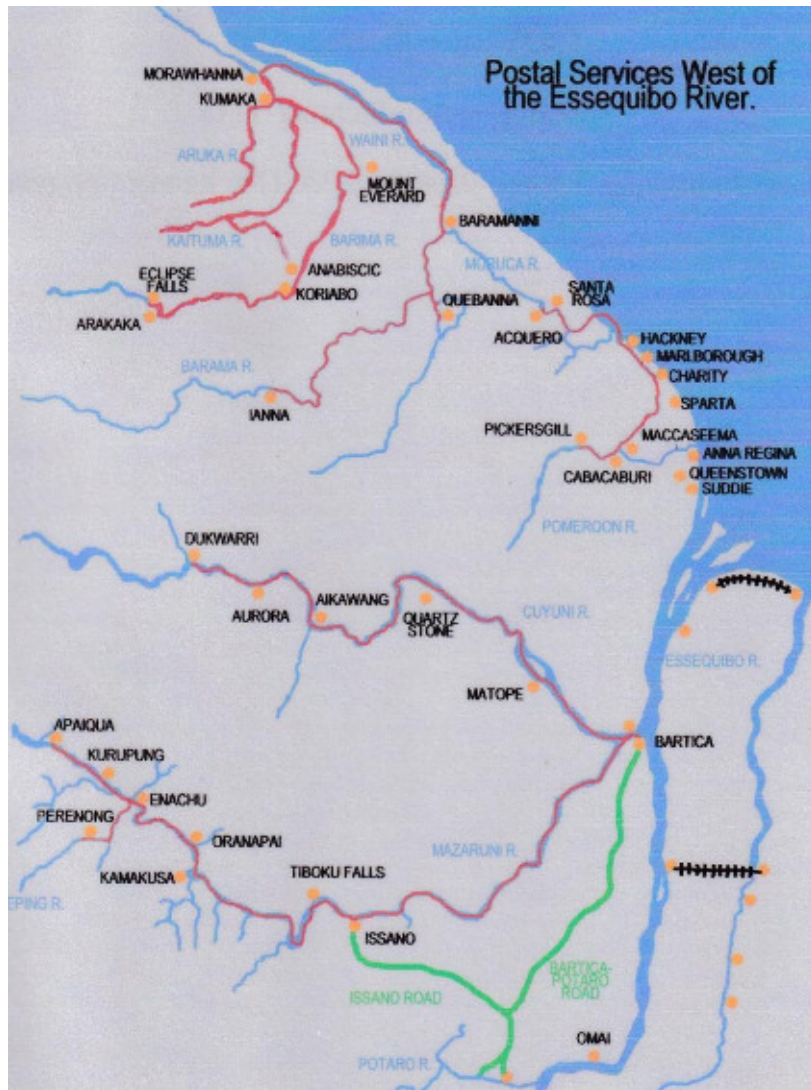
TPM = Travelling Postal Manager

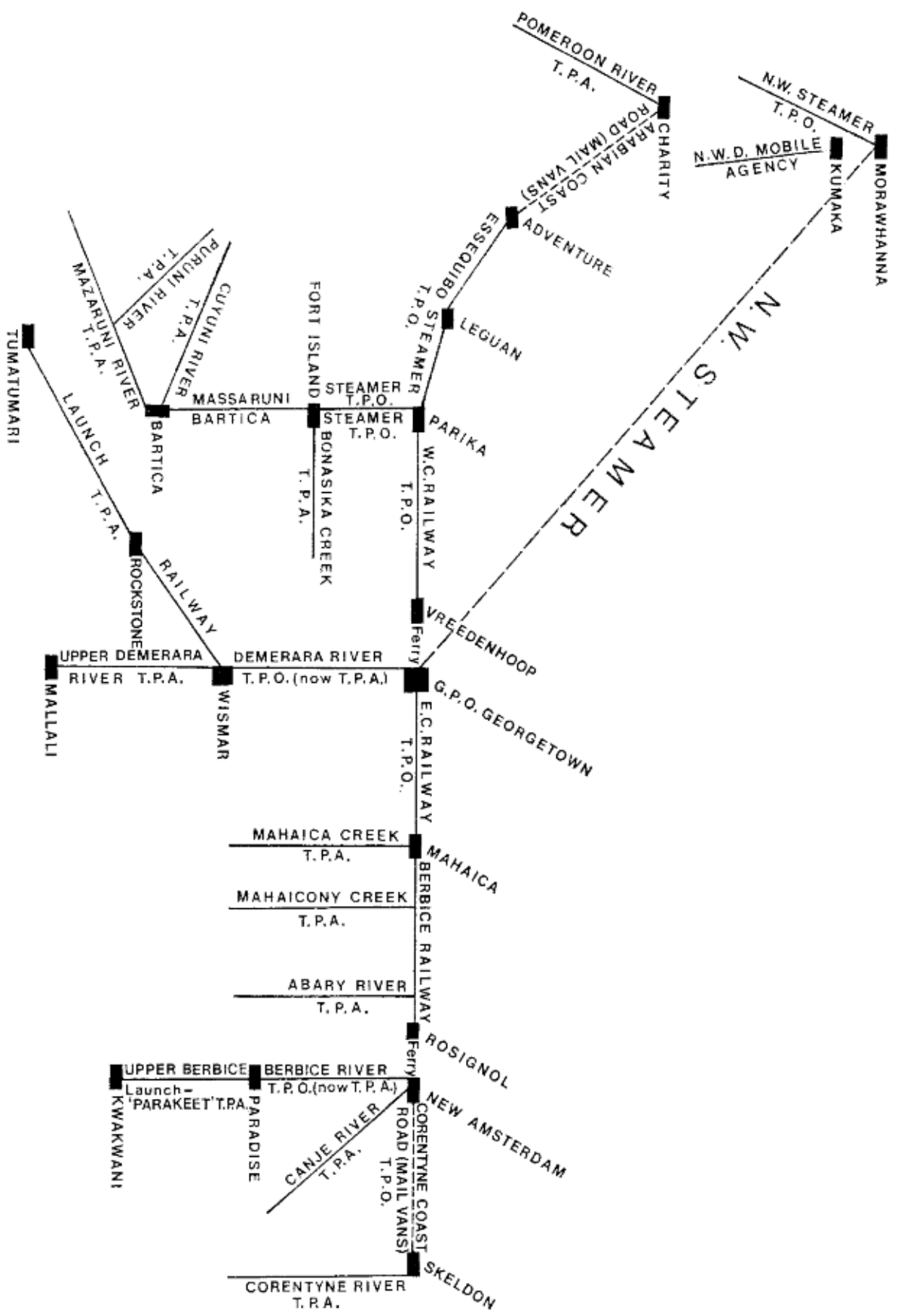
River Services East of the Essequibo River.



The Railway Postal Services.







Preliminary Note: Pitfalls to Avoid

When comparing a map of British Guiana's rivers with the river TPO postmarks, you may well be confused.

Thus, there was no Bartica River; the Bartica Steamer sailed up the Essequibo River, to Bartica.

The Essequibo Steamer plies across the estuary of that river, to the Arabian Coast. It used to run to Suddie, and was sometimes called the Suddie Steamer.

'Massaruni' was an older spelling of 'Mazaruni', but the Massaruni Steamer ran, not on the Mazaruni River, but up the Essequibo River to Massaruni Prison. TPA Mazaruni serves the Mazaruni River.

Some of the date-stamps read 'P.A.' where one would expect to see 'TPA', and some contain no reference to 'TPO.' or 'TPA' at all.

'TPA Parakeet' gives the name of the launch, not the name of a place or river it serves.

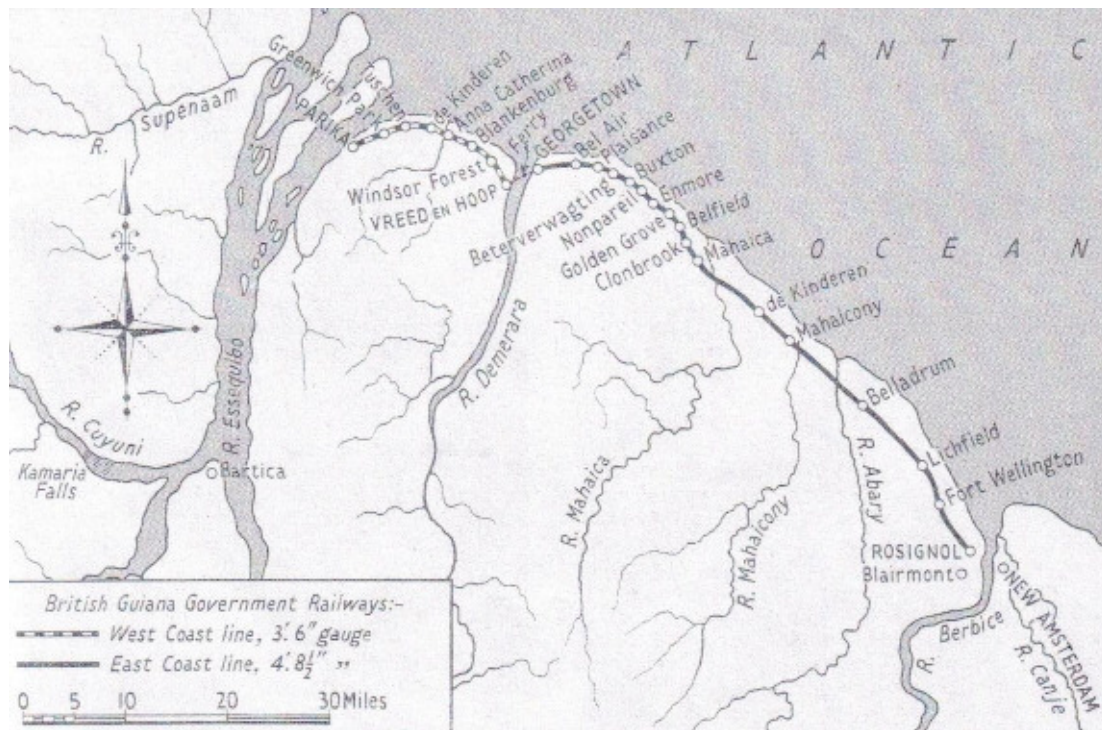
Three of the TPAs never used a date-stamp, and others have operated for periods without one.

Classification of Cancellations

The first attempt to classify the TPO cancellations was made by Mr PW Hosking in an article, published by 'Stamp Collecting' in 1958.

Townsend & Howse in their work of 1970 used another system.

Proud in his book in 2000 used yet another system.



The East Coast and West Coast lines of the British Guiana Government Railways





Demerara (or East Coast) Railway




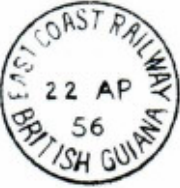

The East Coast Demerara and West Coast Berbice Railways form one continuous standard gauge single track line from Georgetown to Rosignol (60 miles). It was the oldest (and costliest) railway in South America. The first section, from Georgetown to Plaisance, opened on 3rd November 1848 and cost £127,000. Mail was certainly carried from 1850, at first free of charge. By then the eastern terminus was Belfield, and mails going further east were taken by mail-wagon. As the railway was extended step by step, the rail and wagon services were adjusted accordingly. On 31st August 1864 it was extended to Mahaica, which remained the terminus until 1899. Up to that year the TPO postmarks show the name of this - the original 'Demerara Railway'. Just before the opening of the first section of the Berbice extension in 1899, the TPO on the Demerara Railway changed its date-stamp to one reading 'TPO Railway. E.C.' and various forms of 'East Coast Railway' date-stamps have been in use ever since. The service has continued to run from Georgetown to Mahaica, though Mahaica was not on the boundary of Demerara and Berbice. One morning and one afternoon mail train has performed this service without much change, even in time-table, for well over a century.

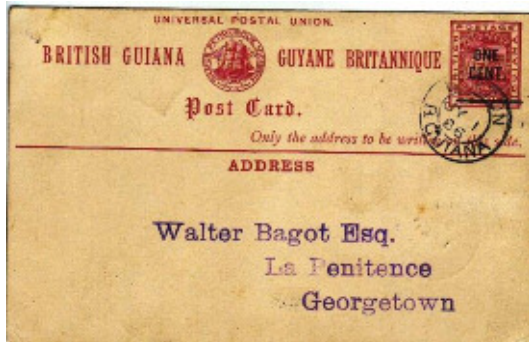
The *Blue Book* of 1881 makes it almost certain that a TPO was established on the Demerara Railway on 1st July 1877 but the earliest postmark known was for 21st October 1881. Possibly no date-stamp was issued at first. The 'E.R.' code-mark has been suggested as possibly filling this gap, but it was known as early as 1876, and in any case the code-mark in those days would almost certainly have been a double round. The first unmistakable reference to a TPO on the railway was in a *Gazette* Notice of 20th November 1882:

From 1.12.1882 the Officer travelling with mails on the Demerara Railway will accept telegrams either in trains or at any Station on the line, which will be handed in at the next Postal Telegraph Office. A letter-box will also be established inside the luggage van of every train and will be cleared on arrival at Georgetown.

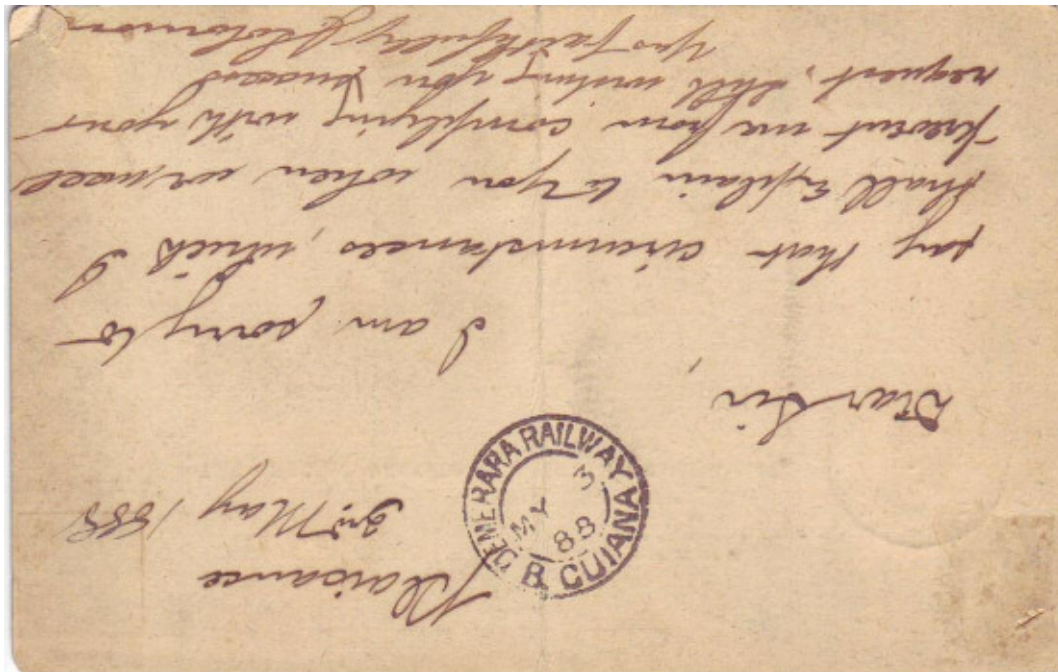
The 1914-15 PO Report says: '1.5.14. TPO on trains discontinued, but reverted to on 1.1.1915'. The reason for this break in continuity was not known'.

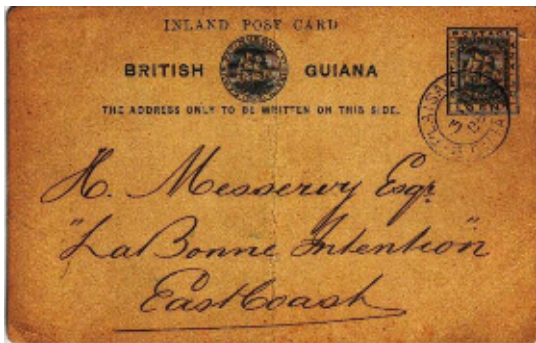
			
Diameter: 23.5mm	Diameter: 28.5mm	Diameter: 28.5mm	Diameter: 27.5mm
From: 1881	From: 1899	From: 1900	From: 1905
To: 1899	To: 1907	To: 1905	To: 1912

				
Diameter 29.5m	Diameter 23.5m	Diameter 26.5m	Diameter 24m	Diameter 28m
: m	: m	: m	: m	: m
From: 1912	From: 1926	From: 1936	From: 1954	From:
To: 1925	To: 1935	To: 1953	To: 1964	To:
				Found in Proof Book in GPO, England



Stationery card of July 1st 1886 addressed to Georgetown from Plantation Annadale concerning the conveyance of 80 bags of syrup sugar and 6 ties of molasses sugar sent by rail on the Demerara Railway





Stationery card of May 3rd 1888 addressed to La Bonne Intention, (Georgetown) from Plaisance with the transit mark of the Demerara Railway



Cover addressed to New Amsterdam September 20th 1901 from Georgetown and carried on the TPO on the East Coast Railway



Earliest known date
– 5 July 1899 –
of this mark

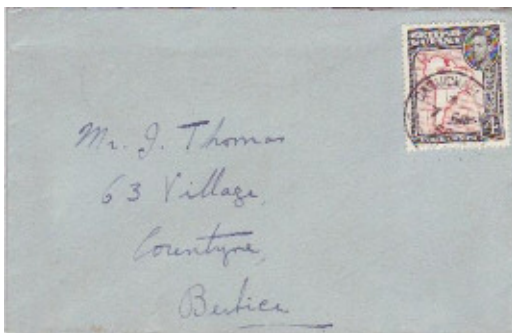


Cover from Mahaica to Chicago, USA with TPO EC Railway mark. Montgomery Ward were a famous mail-order house founded in 1872. Posted on March 19th 1914 and received in Chicago in the am on March 23rd. The rate for postage from BG to the USA was 5 cents.

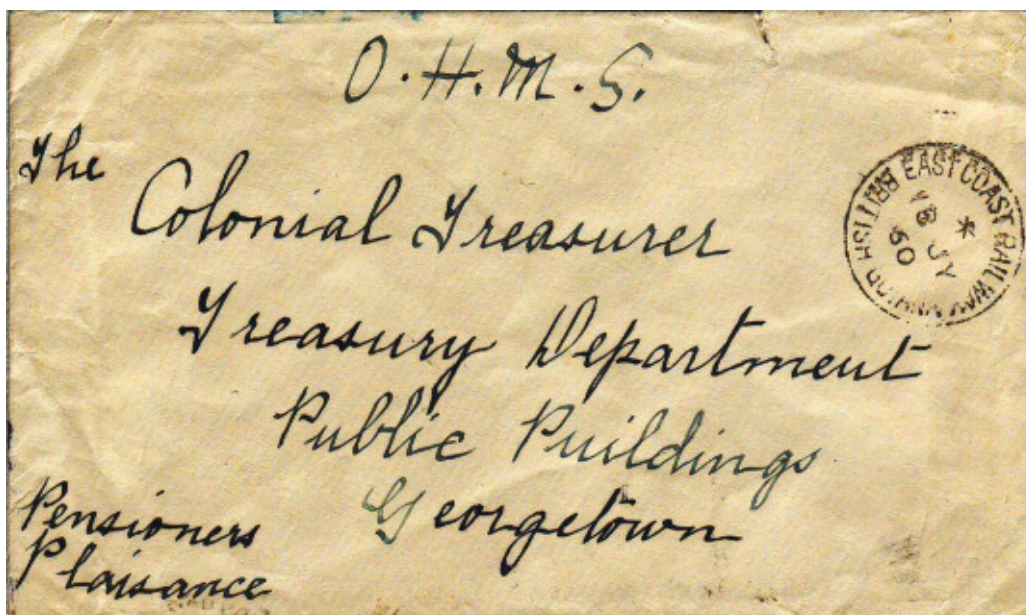


Stationery card with faint pencil written message concerning the learning of taxidermy sent from Buxton Village on the East Coast, BG via the EC Railway and Georgetown on the 2nd May 1935 to Omaha, Nebraska, USA via Georgetown and New York where it was noticed that the card was underpaid by 4 cents and a charge was raised.

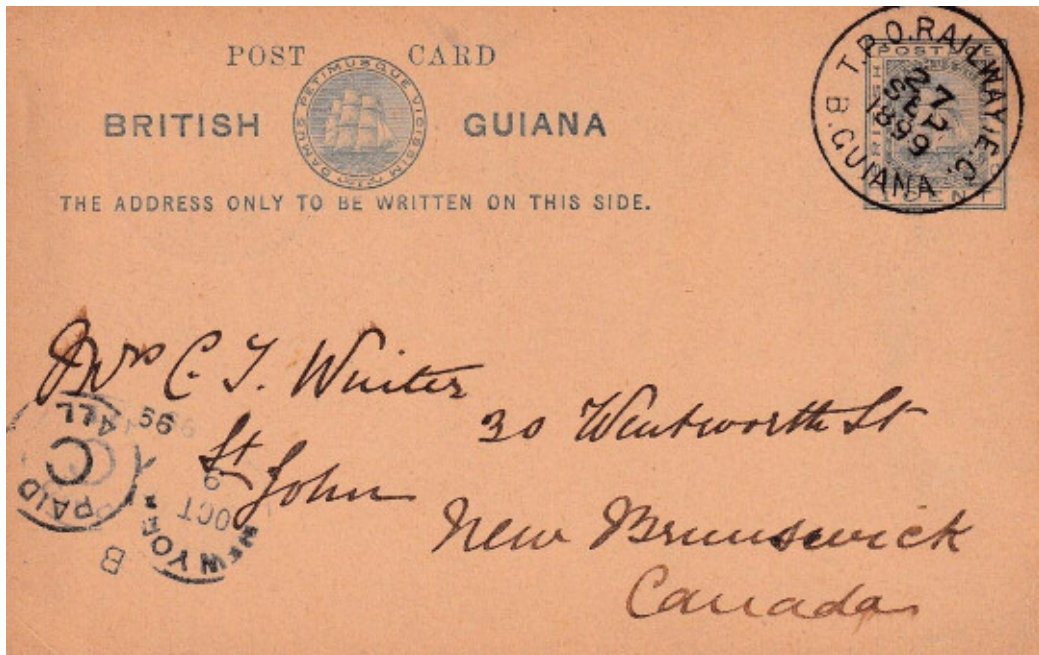
Buxton Village was founded in 1840 by a group of 128-132 freed Afro-Guyanese slaves who purchased the Plantation Orange Nassau following their emancipation in 1838.



Cover from Carmichael, Georgetown to Courentyne, Berbice dated 7th February 1952 it travelled along the East Coast Railway to New Amsterdam and on to its final destination from there. There is an unreadable mark which would probably throw more light on its route if it could be deciphered.



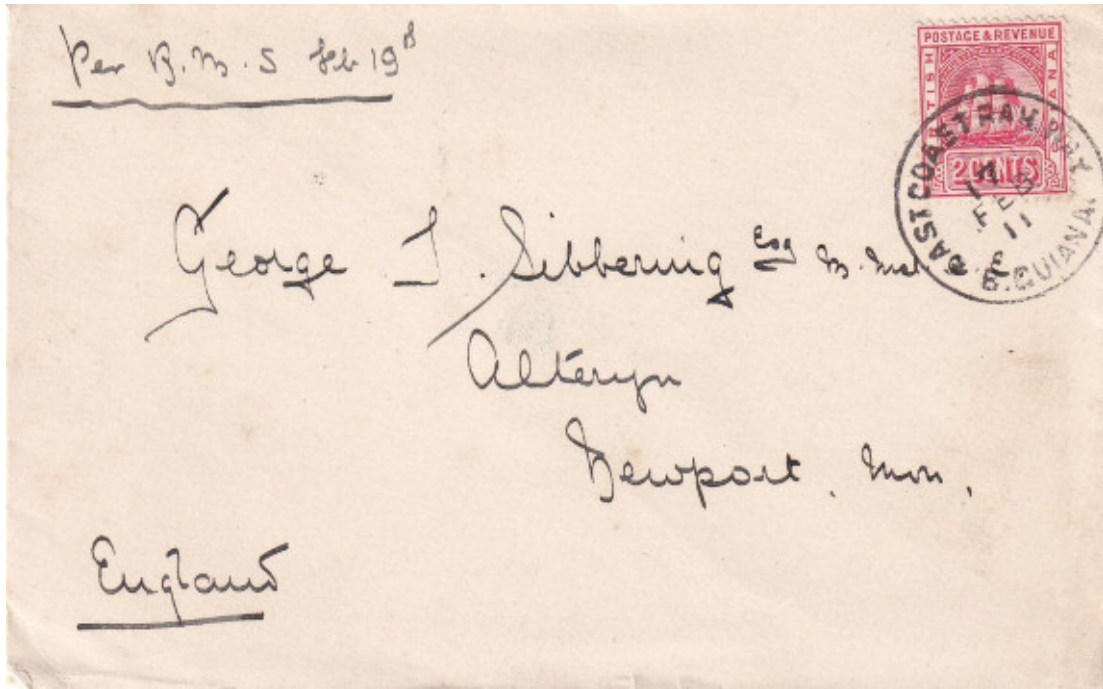
Unstamped OHMS cover with a good mark of the East Coast Railway dated 18th July 1960



Stationery postcard to New Brunswick, Canada



Cover to Arlington, Mass, USA



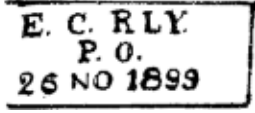


Cover to Newport, Monmouthshire via Royal Mail Ship



The (East Coast) Berbice Railway

On 10th October 1899 the Demerara Railway line was extended to Mahaicony, which remained the terminus for about ten months. A separate compartment on the train was fitted up as a TPO, so the TPO on this 'Berbice extension' began before it had a name, or had entered Berbice. It seems possible that the E.C. Rly PO' mark, so far only known for November 1899, may have had a brief period of use on this Mahaicony extension.

The line was extended to its present terminus Rosignol, on the Berbice River, on 1st August 1900. The 1901-1902 PO Report mentions TPOs on the service from Georgetown to Mahaica and back (thrice daily) and Georgetown to Rosignol and back (daily). This schedule lasted at least up to 1904, but by 1906 the services were given as Georgetown to Mahaica and back, and Rosignol to Mahaica and back. The latter schedule was the same as that given in the 1943 PO Guide, but the 1954 PO Guide shows a return to the 1901-2 schedule. The 'Berbice Railway' served POs in Demerara (De Kinderen and Mahaicony) and did not enter Berbice until it crossed the Abary River.

Early Berbice Railway cancellations are not rare, yet none has come to light dated earlier than 1905. This, combined with the fact that the service then ran from Georgetown to Rosignol, long ago suggested the probability that some of the 'TPO Railway, E.C.' marks might have been employed indiscriminately on the East Coast or the Berbice Railway TPO Covers from Mahaica to New Amsterdam (1900-2) and Fort Wellington to New Amsterdam (1901) all bearing the East Coast mark and from Fort Wellington to New Amsterdam (1904) bearing prove this point beyond doubt, for all travelled on the Berbice Railway alone, and would have shown its TPO date-stamp if there had then been one in existence.

			
Diameter: 15x35mm From: 1899 To: 1899	Diameter: 27.5mm From: 1901 To: 1905	Diameter: 27.5MM From: 1905 To: 1925	Diameter: 24mm From: 1926 To: 1936

	
Diameter: 27mm From: 1935 To: 1966	Diameter: 28mm From: To: Found in Proof Book in GPO, England



Another cover to Montgomery Ward in Chicago dated 9th September 1911 with a backstamp of Georgetown on the same day. It has 2 x 2 cent and 1 x 1 cent stamps which was the rate for USA at that time, it arrived in Chicago on September 21st 1911



By the date of this cover – 26th January 1935 the international rate had risen to 6 cents, again this cover also has a Georgetown backstamp.



Cover to Scotland with 4 cents postage which was the colonial rate for the time. Posted on 7th November 1936 from the Bath Estate, and backstamped with a Georgetown mark



Cover to England with 9 cents postage and dated 6th April 1967



A Swiss stationery card sent to British Guiana and then cancelled by favour on the incorrect stamps dated 15th October 1969







Cover with 7 cents postage to England dated 8th May 1988




West Coast (Demerara) Railway

This West Coast Railway was a single-track 3'6" gauge line which runs for 18 miles from Vreed en hoop (West Bank, Demerara River, opposite Georgetown, and linked to it by regular Ferry services) to Parika (East Bank, Essequibo River, opposite to the island of Leguan).

Up to 1899, residents on this coast received their mails by mail-wagon. The PO Report for 1899-1900 states that on 1st September 1899 the new railway on West Coast Demerara opened for public traffic as far as Leonora, and that on 4th October 1899 the line was extended to Greenwich Park on East Bank, Essequibo. The Boerasirie River, the boundary of Demerara and Essequibo, had been bridged for this purpose. A TPO was established from the opening on 1st September, a separate compartment of the train being fitted up for use. The line was extended to Parika sometime in 1914, possibly 26th August 1914, when, the PO Report tells us, 'The PO, at Naamryck, W.C. Dem., transferred to Parika... the new terminus of the West Coast Railway'.

Essequibo Steamer, with mails from the Arabian Coast and the Estuary Islands, and Bartica Steamer, with mails from the Interior, makes Parika their terminus.

			
Diameter: 27.5mm	Diameter: 27.5mm	Diameter: 23mm	Diameter: 24.5mm
From: 1899	From: 1899	From: 1909?	From: 1929
To: 1909	To: 1909	To: 1929?	To: 1952

		
Diameter: 30.5mm	Diameter: 30.5mm	Diameter: 30.5mm
From: 1952	From: 1952	From: 1952
To: 1952	To: 1952	To: 1966



Mail Train at Parika Station



Underpaid by 6 cents cover to Philadelphia, Penn, USA with the mark of the West Coast Railway TPO. The transit mark of GPO Georgetown timed at 2pm on the same day is reversed. I suspect the sender underpaid by accident thinking that the Printed Matter rate to the USA was 1 cent.



Cover from Bartica to Vreed en Hoop on the West Bank posted on 8th August 1958. It would have travelled from Bartica on the Bartica Steamer to Parika where it would have been transferred to the TPO West Cost Railway hence the two different backstamps.



Local posted cover to Und-en-Loop with backstamp of the railway



Cover to Waltham, Mas and redirected to Boston USA

The (Lower) Demerara River Steamer






At first, postal communications along the banks of the Demerara River were confined to those settlements which could be reached by the East Bank and West Bank Roads, which extended only a few miles up-river. On 1st March 1881 a TPO was established on a river steamer plying between Georgetown and Lucky Spot, some 72 miles up-river. By 1885, the southern terminus had been changed to Akyma, six miles beyond Lucky Spot. At some time between 1897 and 1901, it became Wismar, 67 miles from Georgetown, and there the terminus then remained.


At Wismar the (Lower) Demerara River TPO linked with a TPO service on the Upper Demerara River and, for a time, with a railway and launch service to Tumatumari and the Potaro District. At Georgetown, of course, it connected with the East Coast Railway and with the Ferry to Vreed en Hoop, and the West Coast Railway system and points beyond.

For a long time the TPO served many intermediate points, some of which had Post Offices (eg Dunoon, Dalgin and Hyde Park), but latterly it served only Wismar and Mackenzie (now Linden). The West and East Bank Road mail services covered settlements as far as Wales (W. Bank) and Atkinson Field (E. Bank).

Oddly enough, this service on one of the major rivers and to the capital itself was from the beginning run under private contract by Messrs Sproston Ltd. The service has had its ups and downs. In 1931 a launch and steamer service was introduced and only the steamer service (on Wednesdays and Saturdays) had a TPO. Sealed mails were carried by launch on other days, but no postal business was done en route. A *Gazette* Notice of February 1952 refers to an additional Mail Service operating between Georgetown and Wismar/Mackenzie by Samsair Launch Services. 'The above additional Launch Service was established from 3.1.1951 Mr Samsair appointed Postal Agent on board the launch for sale of stamps and acceptance and delivery of letters.' It was not known if Mr Samsair used a date-stamp. From 28th September 1957 another mail service additional to that of the regular TPO was provided three times a week by the *MV Cay Sal*, running to Mackenzie. Again, no datestamp was known. By 1961 the annual cash turnover on the Demerara River TPO had fallen to \$1271 and a *Gazette* Notice of 1964 announced:

'Establishment of a Postal Agency instead of a Travelling Post Office on the Demerara River Steamer Service, with effect from 15th Aug. 1964, with Mr MF Parrwas as Postal Agent.'

				
Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 26mm	Diameter: 23mm	Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 23.5mm
From: 1882	From: 1895	From: 1910	From: 1927	From: 1942
To: 1892	To: 1908	To: 1924	To: 1942	To: 1966

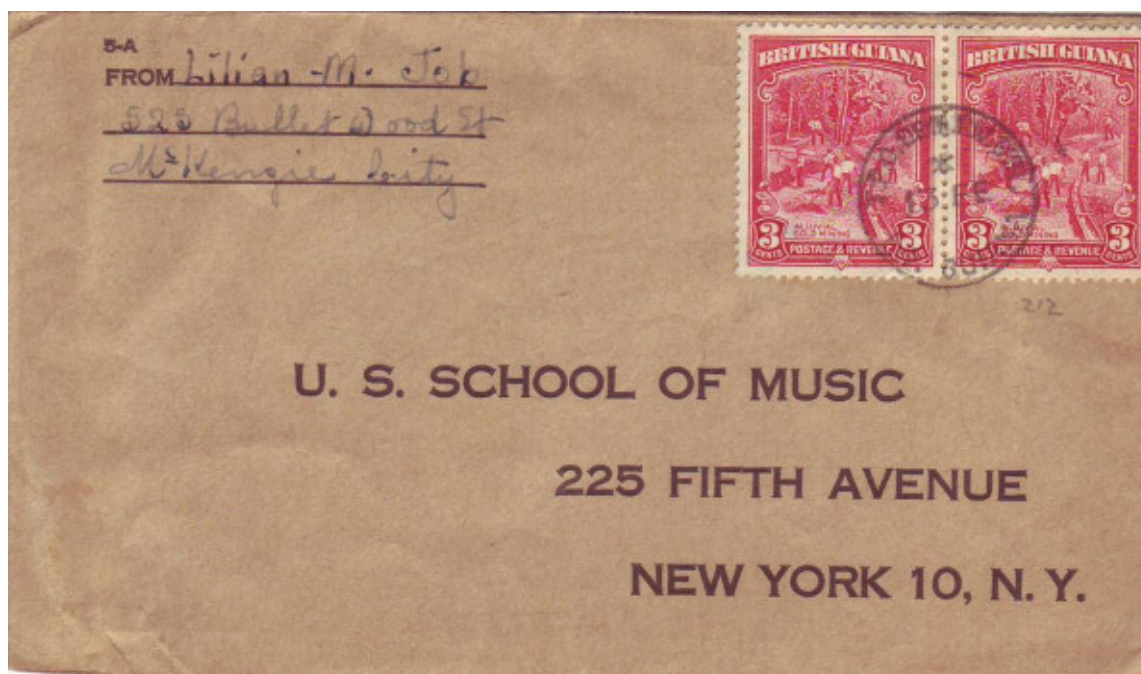

Diameter: 30mm
From:
To:



TPO Demerara River. MV Canje Pheasant



From Mackenzie (now Linden) to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada with postage of 40 cents for Airmail via the TPO Demerara Steamer dated Friday 9th April 1943, on the reverse is a bundle backstamp of the Sorting Office Superintendent for the same day at 5pm probably at Georgetown marking the bundle as checked for correct postage before being put in the mailbag for North America/Canada. At this time it was thought the TPO only operated on Wednesdays and Saturdays and all other days the mails were carried in sealed bags. This possibly indicates that this method or working had ceased by the time this cover was posted.

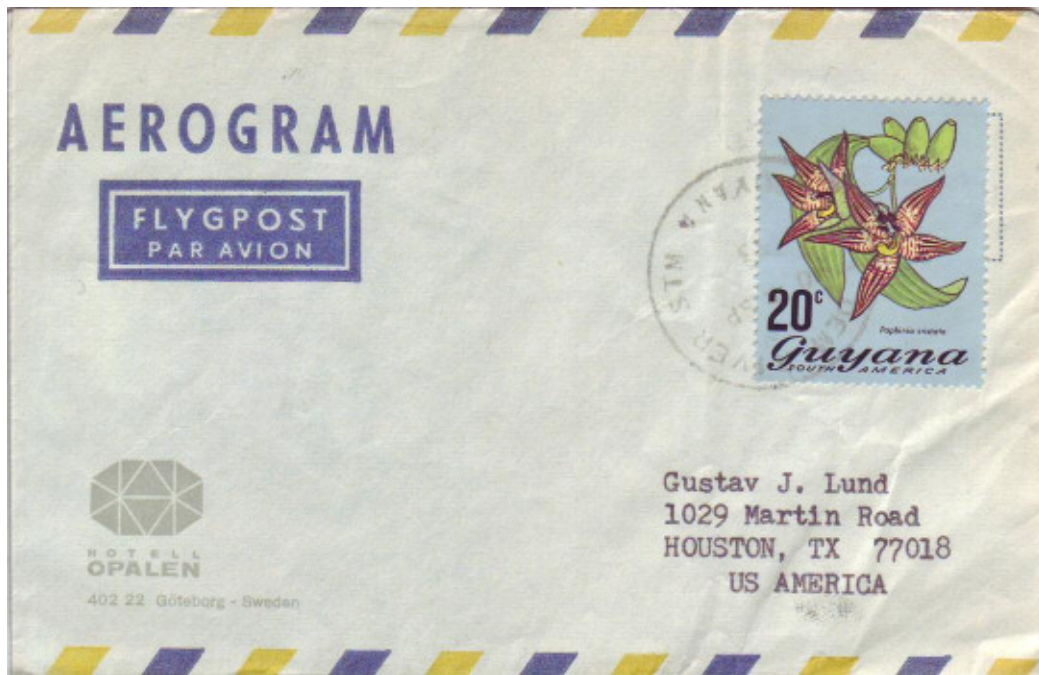


Cover from Mackenzie to New York dated Friday 13th February 1948 with the correct 6 cent postage with a backstamp of GPO Georgetown for the same day.

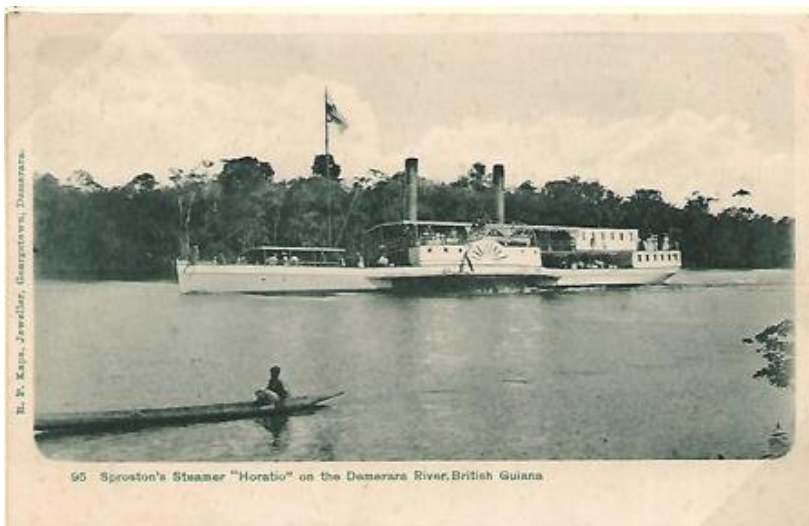




Collectors cover of March 20th 1967



Aerogram to Gustav J Lund in Houston Texas, USA with 20 cents postage.



95 - Sproston's Steamer "Horatio" on the Demerara River, British Guiana

Messrs Spronston's Demerara River Mail Steamer "Horatio" on the Demerara River.

Spronston's also ran the narrow-gauge railway that connected the Demerara at Wismar to the Essequibo at Rockstone. Courtesy of Rob Wheeler

Upper Demerara River Launch TPO or TPA

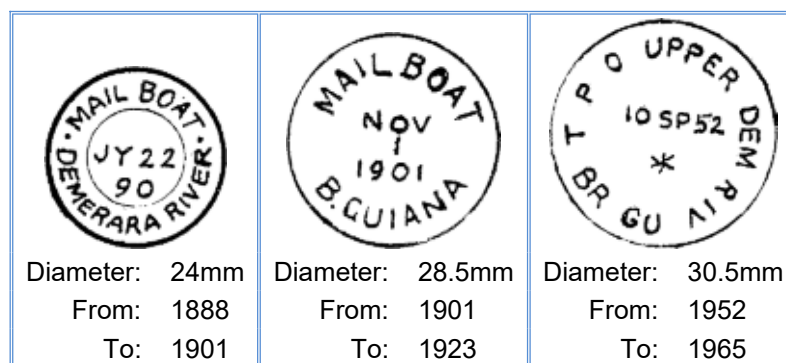
This service has linked with the TPO on the lower Demerara River and, for a time, with the Tumatumari – Rockstone – Wismar TPA.

The PO Report says that a TPO was established on a steamer plying between 'Georgetown and the Upper Demerara River' on 1st March 1881, but this might refer only to the service to Lucky Spot. Again, it refers to a PO 'established on 1.3.1881 at Mallali at the foot of first rapids, Riv. Demerary'. But a *Gazette* Notice gives 1st July 1881 as Mallali POs opening date, and says, 'A mail boat will meet the Steamer every Wed. at Lucky Spot or any other place which may be hereafter decided on. Correspondence will be delivered to and from en route'. The next PO Report referred to this as an experimental service which was discontinued from 1st April 1882. It was re-established on 1st October, 1883 but was referred to as a 'Postal Service' and not as a TPO. The 1884 PO Guide lists four TPOs, but not this one, though it refers to a special mail boat conveying mails to Mallali and places above Lucky Spot. The 1885 Report mentions 'mails by boat between Akaima and rapids at Mallali'. The PO at Mallali had closed and did not re-open until 1st February 1888. On that date the mail boat service was made bi-weekly. There was still no mention of the specific phrase 'Travelling Post Office', but it was possible that the TPO began then. Certainly, the first recorded postmark was for '?3.1888'.

In 1897 a PO was opened at Wismar, but the 1898 *British Guiana Directory* still gave Akyma as the terminus and not till 1901 do we find the service described as 'Wismar to Mallali and back bi-weekly' and for the first time listed as a TPO. The service, which in the early days had been run by private contractors with collapsible canvas boats, it was for many years conducted by Messrs Sproston Ltd, but they ceased to do so in 1922, and by 1st October 1929 the service had to be discontinued 'owing to lack of transport facilities'. Upper Demerara River residents had to make their own arrangements for posting and delivery of their mail at Wismar PO.

A *Gazette* Notice announced that an 'Upper Demerara River TPA will operate, commencing February 1941, between Wismar and Mallali... Mr Wreford Allicock appointed Travelling Postal Agent'. This service was certainly operating in 1943, 1950 and 1951 and probably had an unbroken 'life' to 1966 but at first no date-stamp was issued. The Postal Agent at Coomacka (one of the TPAs stops) said that she waited before posting a certain letter, 'for the Launch to be issued with its own cancellation, and it did not come until August 1952'.

In 1961, contractors tendering for this service had to undertake (among other things) to provide an inboard or outboard motor boat, to convey 'mails' from Wismar to Mallali (with 17 intermediate stops); 'mails' included baskets, bags, books, private letter bags, police open bags, etc.; to sell stamps, postal stationery and postal orders: to pay the legal costs of the contract, and to find two sureties for the sum of \$700. It was not surprising that the service has lacked continuity!





Local cover to Georgetown dated 8th July 1890 with an Inland Revenue 2 cent stamp, also has a backstamp dated the same day.



Cover to Georgetown cancelled "Mailboat / B Guiana" 1 Nov 1901. Courtesy of Rob Wheeler



Cover from Coomacka (bauxite mining area) to England dated 10th September 1952. This is an early example of the handstamp as it had not been issued to the TPO until about a month before this date.

The Tumatumari – Rockstone – Wismar TPA

This service was needed to get mails to and from the gold-mining settlements of the Potaro District. POs were established at Tumatumari and Potaro Landing as early as 1895/6. Mails had to be taken by TPO Bartica Steamer to Bartica and then by launch up the dangerous rapids of the Essequibo River to Rockstone and then on into the Potaro River. An alternative and safer route became possible from 25th January 1897, when Messrs Sproston's Ltd opened a light railway from Wismar to Rockstone, crossing the Demerara - Essequibo 'divide', and thus avoiding the dangers of the Essequibo River route. The route Tumatumari to Rockstone by launch, Rockstone to Wismar by rail, and Wismar to Georgetown by TPO Demerara Steamer was welcomed, and was undoubtedly used in those early days, though the service was much interrupted. But there was no mention of a TPO functioning on it.

In 1933 the opening of the Bartica – Potaro Road made it possible to send mails from Bartica by lorry to the gold settlements of Potaro. The 1934 PO Report said it was hoped that soon all Potaro mails could go by road. Sproston's had ceased to operate the Rockstone – Wismar route in 1929, since when services had been irregular and one would have thought that the need for them had vanished. Yet strangely enough, the first official reference to a TPA operating on this route was contained in the 1943 PO Guide, which describes it as, 'By rail to Rockstone (from Wismar) and then by motor-boat to Omai Landing, Madre Landing, Tumatumari and back'. The light railway had by then been leased to a Mr Hamilton, and the 1954 Guide gives the name of the Travelling Postal Agent as 'Hamilton Transport Service'. Exactly how the agent accompanied the mails on their complicated journey was not clear, but he was to be responsible for 'Conveyance of mails; acceptance and delivery of *letter* (a telling singular!) and Stamps sold'. Mr Long says that Hamilton operated the TPA until 16th November 1957, when it was discontinued. About 1959 the railway lines were sold for scrap metal.

To summarise then, it was not known when this TPA was established but it was some time before 1943; it closed in 1957. No date-stamp was issued, but covers which came by this route may be recognised:

- (a) If they came from Tumatumari and bore a **Wismar** transit mark, or
- (b) If they came from some other Potaro District PO and bore a **Tumatumari** transit mark.

Mail by other routes usually bore a Bartica transit mark.

A train, headed by a Hunslet Baltic 4-6-4 side-tank locomotive, stops at a passenger halt on the British Guiana Government Railways



Essequibo (Estuary) Steamer TPO

The estuary of the Essequibo was much wider than that of the Demerara or Berbice River, where ferries plied at hourly intervals. As early as 1841 a Colonial Steamer was bringing mails from Airy Hall, on the Arabian Coast, across the river to Georgetown. In 1877 the service was from Philadelphia or Tuschen, West Coast Demerara, to Aurora on the Arabian Coast, thrice weekly, but there was still no TPO on board.

The PO Report for 1880 tells us, '1.7.1880. TPO established on board Steamer running daily between Georgetown and Essequibo in place of Police Officers in charge of mail bags'.

No Essequibo terminus was named, but in 1882 and 1884 it was Onderneeming. From there the coast road mail-wagons carried mails as far as Sparta. In crossing the estuary, the steamer called at Leguan and Wakenaam Waslands. The Essequibo terminus was later given, in various PO Reports, as Suddie (1901-2), Onderneeming (1906), Adventure (1919), Supenaam (1923), and Adventure (1932 and after). Onderneeming was only two miles, and Adventure three miles, from Suddie, the capital of Essequibo County. The TPO has sometimes been called the 'Suddie Steamer' and this name was shown in some of the date-stamps used.

Parika, which became the terminus of the West Coast Railway and was given a PO in 1914, later became the Demerara terminus of the Essequibo Steamer (certainly by 1932, and possibly earlier). This shortened the steamer's voyage from 50 miles to 14 miles and enabled the TPO to connect with the W.C. Railway TPO. At the other end, it connected with the Arabian Coast Mail Van service, which in turn connected with TPO Pomeroun River.

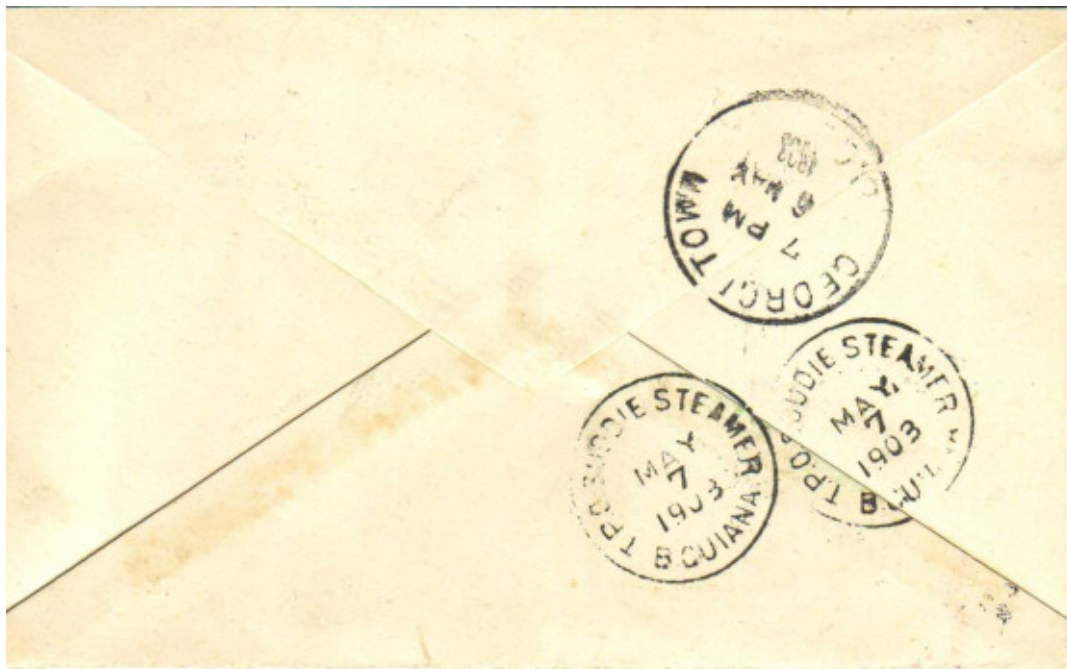
Cancellations used by this TPO may be somewhat confusing; there is concurrent use of handstamps with different names for the same TPO.

Diameter: 23mm	Diameter: 23mm	Diameter: 28mm	Diameter: 28mm	Diameter: 24mm
From: 1881	From: 1885	From: 1899	From: 1905	From: 1910
To: 1883	To: 1898	To: 1905	To: 1910	To: 1913

Diameter: 23mm	Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 25mm	Diameter: 30.5mm
From: 1913	From: 1918	From: 1929	From: 1952
To: 1929	To: 1921	To: 1951	To: 1965




2 cent postal stationery envelope addressed to Abingdon, cancelled with Suddie Steamer / 4 Oct 1907, backstamped Georgetown 6pm the same day, arrived in Abingdon OC 22 07. "By R.M.S." – Royal Mail Steamer. Courtesy of Rob Wheeler



This cover addressed to the Reverend Wyllie in Belfield, some 12 miles east of Georgetown; probably travelled by rail to Georgetown and then by the Suddie Steamer to Queenstown on the Essequibo coast dated 7th May 1903.

The Reverend Robert Wyllie attended St Stephen's College in Annadale, New York and then the General Theological College, New York, and was ordained a priest at Maine in 1876. From 1878 to 1881 he was the private chaplain to the Bishop of Nova Scotia before moving to British Guiana where from 1882 to 1885 he was curate at St George's, Georgetown. From 1885 to 1894 he was Perpetual Curate of St Bartholomew's Church at Queenstown, near Suddie. In 1904 he went to England and from then until 1923 was curate at the following locations: Peasedown, Somerset; Tamworth with Amington; Ospinge, Kent and at Holy Cross, Canterbury. By 1932 he was living (possibly retired), at Srinager, Kashmir, North India.

Georgetown,
 19. 3 1903



We are sending to your address per
~~to-morrow's steamer~~ *per*
~~Books~~ *Staty as ordered*
 containing *(except items mentioned below)*
 which we hope will safely reach you.

"THE ARGOSY" COMPANY LIMITED.

We are out of Little *Per* *Black Libba* just now
 & are ordering "Word-making & taking" per *mail*

POST CARD.



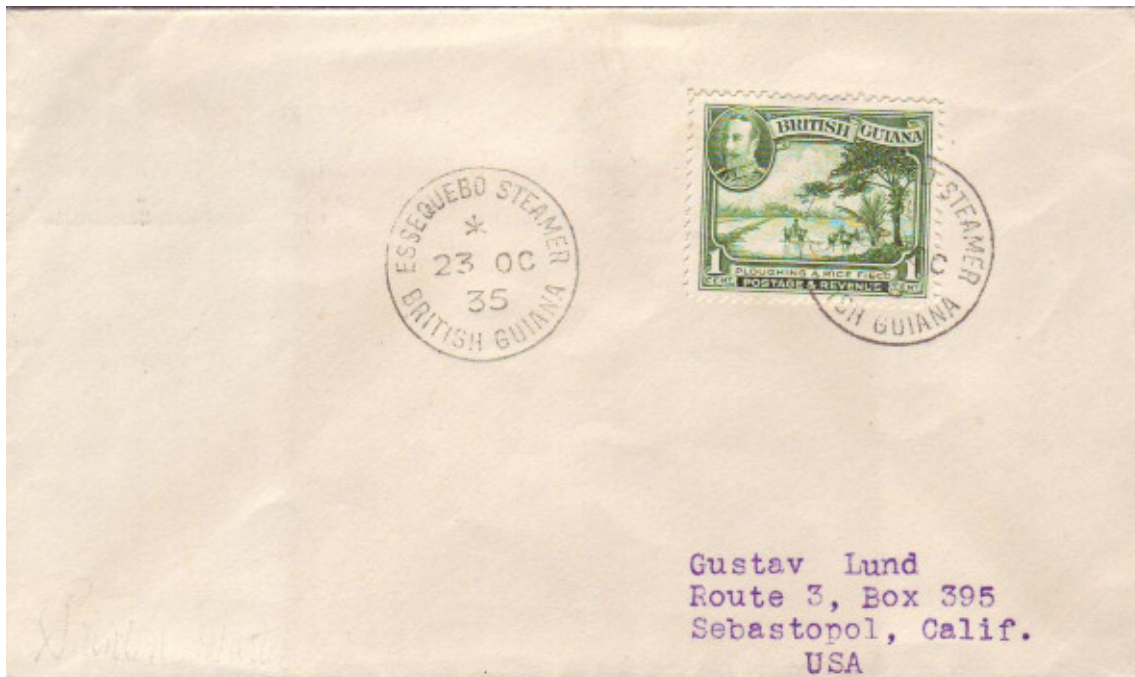
Rev. R. Wyllie
 St Bartholomew
 Essequibo

Card from "The Argosy" Company Limited, Georgetown to St Bartholomew's Church, Essequibo dated 20th March 1903 advising the despatch of a parcel via steamer.

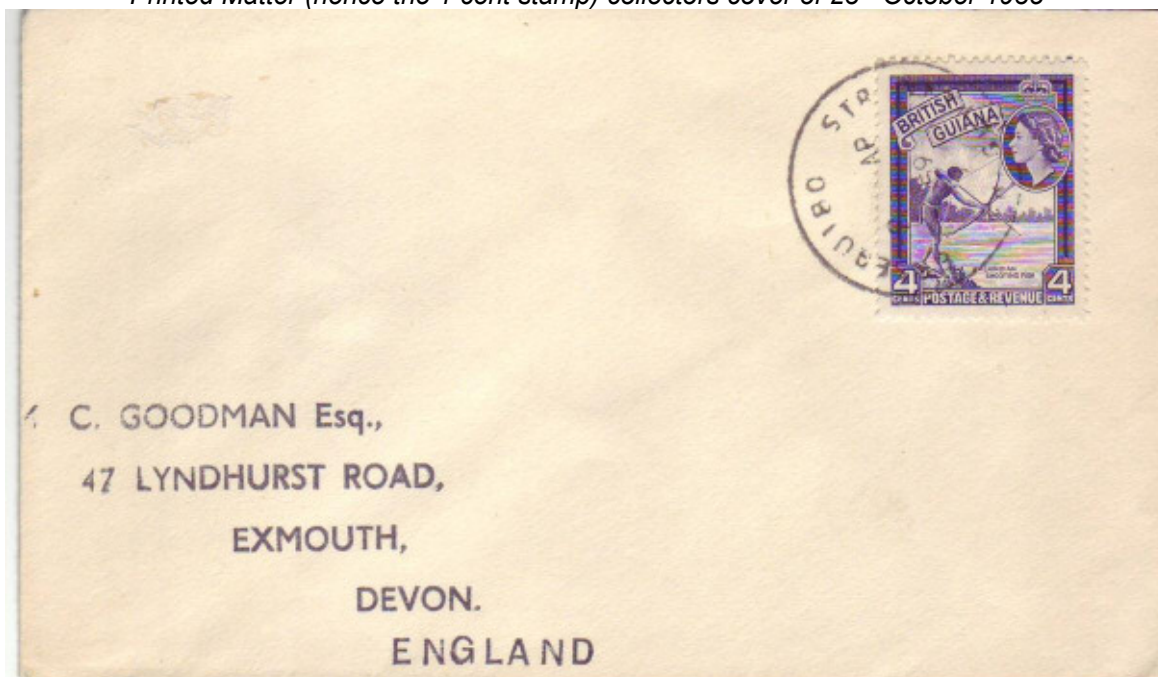


ROGER WELLS,
 9 GREAT COATES ROAD,
 GRIMSBY,
 ENGLAND.

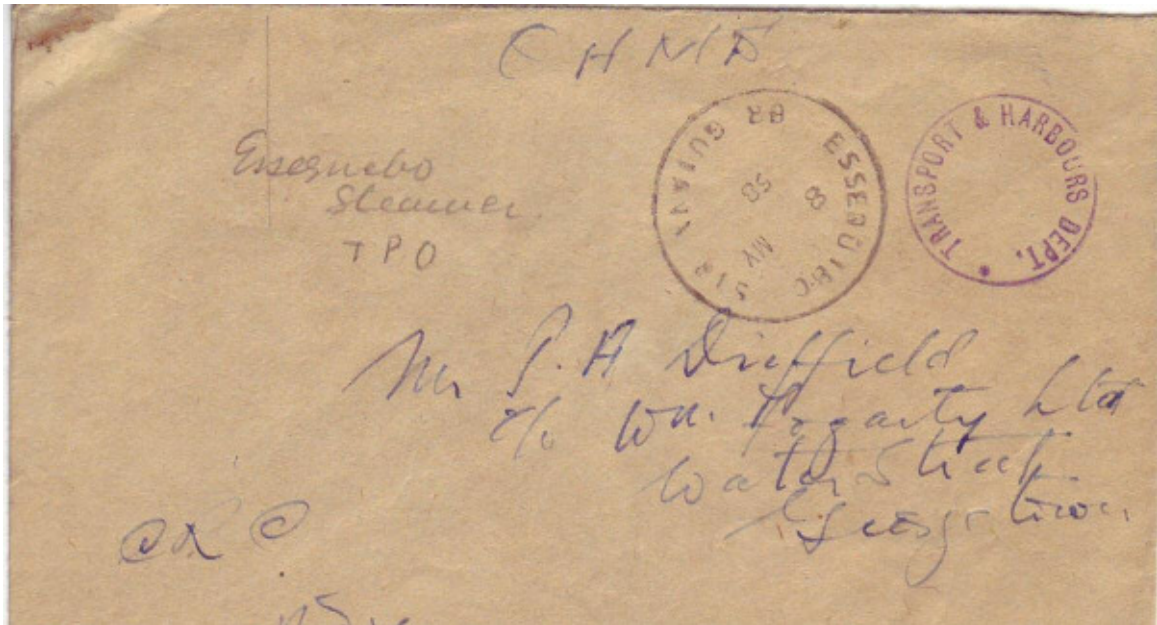
Collectors cover of 23rd March 1948



Printed Matter (hence the 1 cent stamp) collectors cover of 23rd October 1935



Collectors cover of 8th April 1959



Government unstamped cover of 8th May 1958 addressed to Georgetown with the cachet of the *Transport & Harbours Department* which ran the Essequibo steamer TPO



Cover to New York with stamps cancelled with 2 strikes of TPO Esse Str dated 12 July 1918



Pomeroon River TPO or TPA




The PO Report for 1882 says, '2.4.1882. Postal communication established with Pomeroon River and POs opened at Hackney and Cabacaburi. Mails were conveyed by bateaux to and from Anna Regina in connection with Arabian Coast Mail Coach Service'. In 1883 the total mail (8 letters) was lost when, 'Mail Boat contacted a 'water-haas' swimming across the river and was upset'. The boat must have been of a size to suit the mail, for a 'water-haas' was no bigger than a small pig.





In December 1896 the *Gazette* announced that '... from 1.1.1897 a tri-weekly service between Anna Regina and Hackney will be commenced. On same date a weekly service between Hackney and Santa Rosa Mission will be commenced'. The TPO on the Pomeroon River obviously dates from 1st January 1897, for a *Gazette* Notice the next month states the time-table of the run from Hackney to Cabacaburi and then to Anna Regina, and says, 'A Travelling Post Office has been established on Mail Boats plying between Cabacaburi and Hackney. Boats will not stop but persons can go out when boat was passing to transact postal businesses. The first paragraph will have made it clear that the Pomeroon was then a very remote District. When contracts were invited for the TPO it was laid down that the Post Office official in charge 'will be required to aid in propelling the boat'.

In 1898-99 the Moruca River boat ran from Hackney to Santa Rosa and then on to Baramanni, where a launch picked up the mails and took them to Morawhanna, to be carried to Georgetown by the North-West Steamer. It seems that there was no TPO on this boat, for the 1903 Report says, 'The larger boat which plies between Hackney and Cabacaburi was equipped as a TPO'.

The opening and closing of POs in the District brought about changes in the termini of the TPO from time to time. From 1st December 1899 to 1st October 1902, Maccaseema replaced Cabacaburi; from 16th August 1909, Marlborough replaced Hackney; on 1st April 1910, Aqueero replaced Santa Rosa; and on 1st January 1918, Charity replaced Marlborough. Notices up to 8th February 1918 mention the Pomeroon TPO, but one of 22nd February 1922 says, 'Captain of Government Launch on Pomeroon River has been appointed a Travelling Postmaster'. A postmark of 2nd August 1920 narrows the gap of what must have been quite a brief closure of the service.

From 3rd November 1941, owing to the discontinuance of the service run by the Transport & Harbours Department, Mr PEM Duke was appointed Travelling Postal Agent on the Pomeroon – Moruca Rivers, and the 'Duke's Boat' continued in this service up to 1966. Note the reduction to the status of TPA, which was reflected in postmarks from 1943 onwards. The modern service has been from Charity to Cabacaburi and return (Monday and Thursday), from Charity to Pomeroon Mouth and return (Tuesday and Saturday), and Charity to Acquero (alternate Tuesdays) and return (alternate Wednesdays).

			<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="margin: 0;">POSTED ON BOARD</p> <p style="margin: 0;">POMEROON STEAMER</p> </div>
Diameter: 27mm	Diameter: 28mm	Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 29 x 60mm
From: 1898	From: 1923	From: 1932	From: 1935
To: 1917	To: 11932	To: 1942	To: 1943

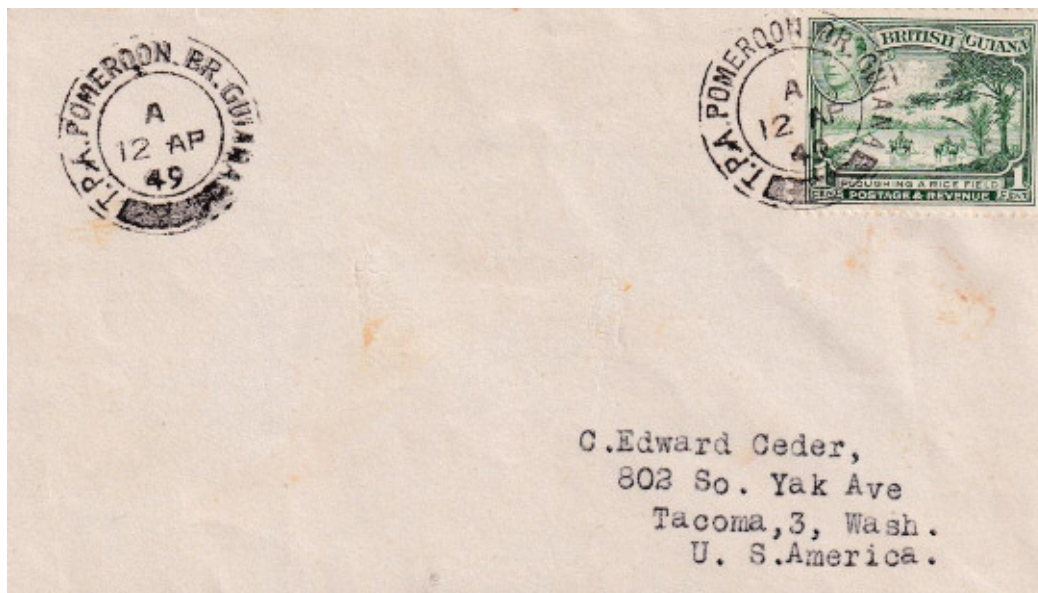
			
Diameter: 27mm	Diameter: 30mm	Diameter: 30mm	Diameter: 30mm
From: 1943	From: 1952	From: 1952	From: 1974
To: 1952	To: 1952	To: 1966	To:



Cover to California cancelled on the **TPO Pomeroon / British Guiana** dated 6 February 1939 in use 1932-42. Courtesy of Rob Wheeler



Printed Matter (hence the 1 cent stamp) collectors cover of 28th October 1935



Printed Matter (hence the 1 cent stamp) collectors cover of 12th April 1949



Collectors cover of the TPA Pomeroon of 9th July 1984



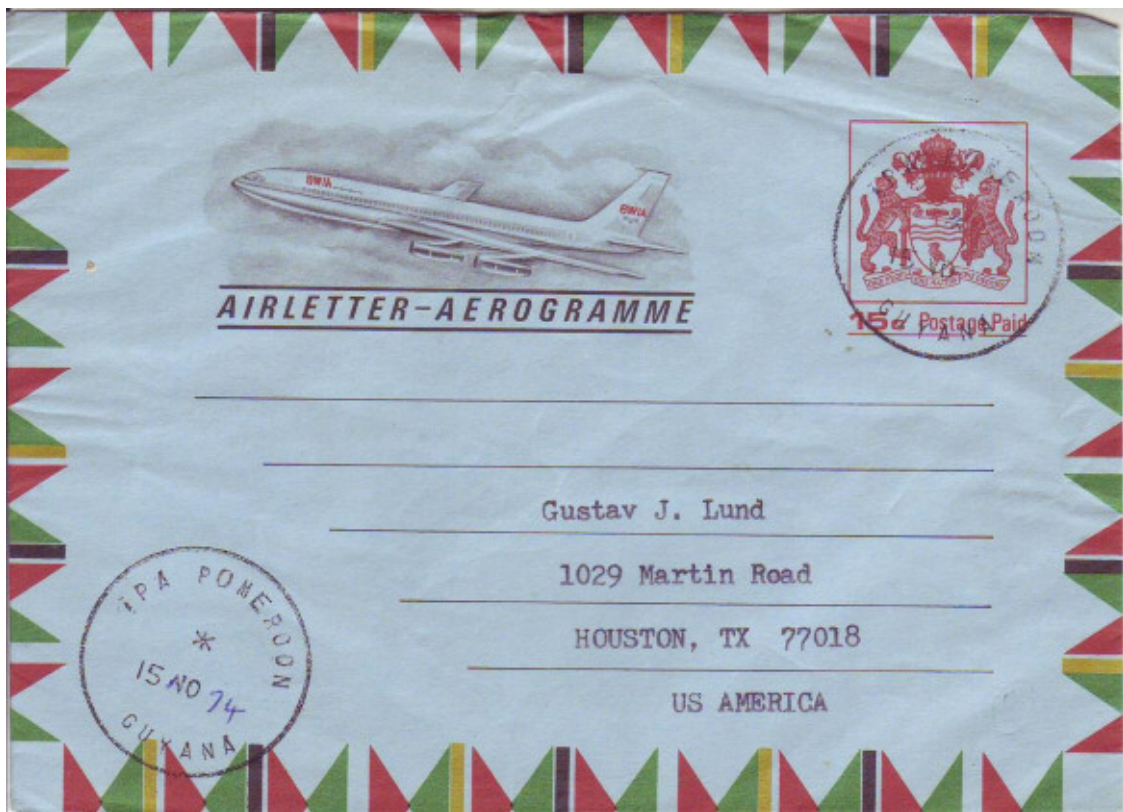
Collectors cover of the TPA Pomeroon of 14th September 2000

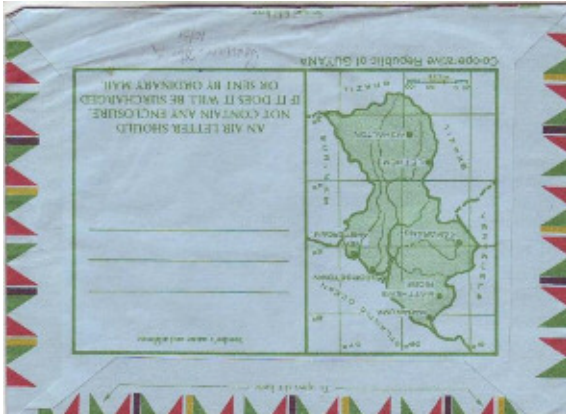


Collectors cover of the TPA Pomeroon of 12th February 1974



Collectors cover of the TPA Pomeroon 5th October 1979





Collectors cover of the TPA Pomeroon 15th November 1974



Printed Matter, (hence the 1 cent stamp), another collectors cover of 12th April 1949



Cover to Slough, England with 2 strikes of the TPA Pomeroon dated 9 July 1952

North West Steamer TPO

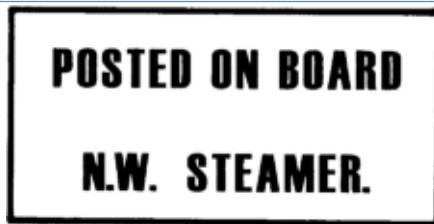
The North West District has always been 'The Forgotten Province' of British Guiana, but in the 1890s gold mining brought some semblance of prosperity for a while and Post Offices were opened at Morawhanna (1890), Baramanni and Koriabo (1893), Arakaka (1894), Amacura (1896) and Five Star (1902). Morawhanna was the Government HQ and could be reached by sea from Georgetown. The real problem lay in getting the mails from the river Districts, especially the Barima to Morawhanna.

A *Gazette* Notice of 29th October 1890 said that mails for Barima District would be despatched from GPO every Thursday, and the 1891 Directory said that they were carried 'by the Revenue Cutter'. Later, the Georgetown steamer ran to Morawhanna and then 53 miles up the Barima River to Mt Everard. From 20th December 1897, a further service was provided by a launch which picked up mails from the steamer and took them to Koriabo (75 miles) and Arakaka (120 miles above Morawhanna). In over twenty notices checked, this service was never referred to as a TPO.

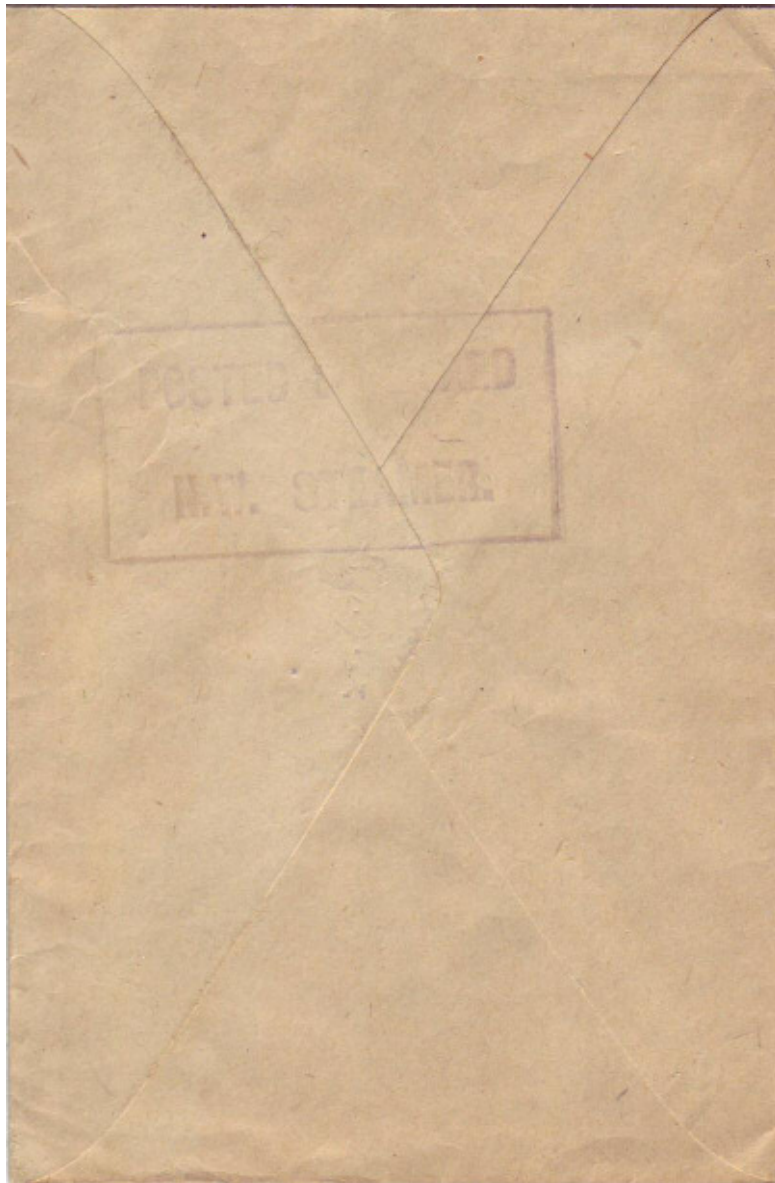
Yet 'TPO North West Str.' postmarks exist though they were very rare. Two District Commissioners have expressed certainty that the TPO was on the steamer from Georgetown to Mt Everard, and even that it was still operating in the period 1918-29. A cover with the strange 'Posted on Board / N.W. Steamer' mark of 1937 may not be complete proof of the existence of a TPO on board, for it might have been applied by the purser. As late as 1959, the S.S. *Tarpon*, on the Morawhanna run, had a letter-box on board, but a letter posted in it showed only the Georgetown arrival mark.



Diameter: 26mm
From: 1895
To: 1899



Diameter: 30 x 60mm
From: 1933
To: 1937



**POSTED ON BOARD
N.W. STEAMER.**

Internal cover from Georgetown dated 23rd June 1936 to Demerara with the rarely seen (only 3 examples known) Posted on board / NW steamer

The North West District Mobile Agency

This was the nearest modern counterpart of the old North West Steamer, but with considerable differences. It was a purely local service; the S.S. *Tarpon* brought mails from Georgetown to Morawhanna and Mabaruma. The launch served a larger area of the N.W. District than did the old N.W. Steamer with its auxiliary launch service.

The N.W. District, after a short period of mining activities, had suffered another long period of neglect when, in 1949, the Government made some amends, particularly in remembering its responsibilities towards the primitive Amerindians dwelling in its remote and scattered settlements. The aptly named Mobile Medical launch *Relief* began to take desperately needed medical supplies to these Districts. A road service was out of the question, since there were but 12 miles of road in 8,000 square miles of difficult country.

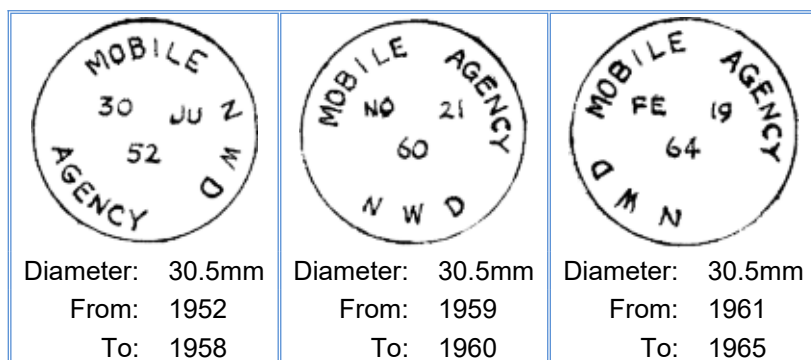
Mr Van Gronigen, the Government Dispenser on the *Relief*, said in a 1953 letter:

'On 1.8.1951, as well as Dispenser's duties, I was appointed Travelling Postal Agent on the Launch (Mobile Agency, N.W.D.). I am required to convey and deliver all mail, inclusive of baskets, bags, letters, newspapers, parcels, etc, to sell POs and stamps, to clear all Post-boxes, and to register letters and parcels.... I do a regular 4 weekly service: 1st week: Up the Aruka and Koriabo Rivers and their tributaries to Bonsekai Creek and Maridown on the Koriabo. 2nd week: Up the Kaituma and Barima Rivers and their tributaries to Eclipse Falls on the Barima and Anabwasci Creek on the Kaituma (176 miles). 3rd week: Up the Waini and Barama Rivers and their tributaries to Quebanna on the Waini and Ianna Gold Mine on the Barama (200 miles). 4th week: Up the Imbotero Creek on the Barima River on the Venezuelan frontier (17 miles). Mileage was only given in one direction'.

The *Gazette* Notice announcing the establishment of the TPA in 1951 gave only the first three weeks of this schedule.

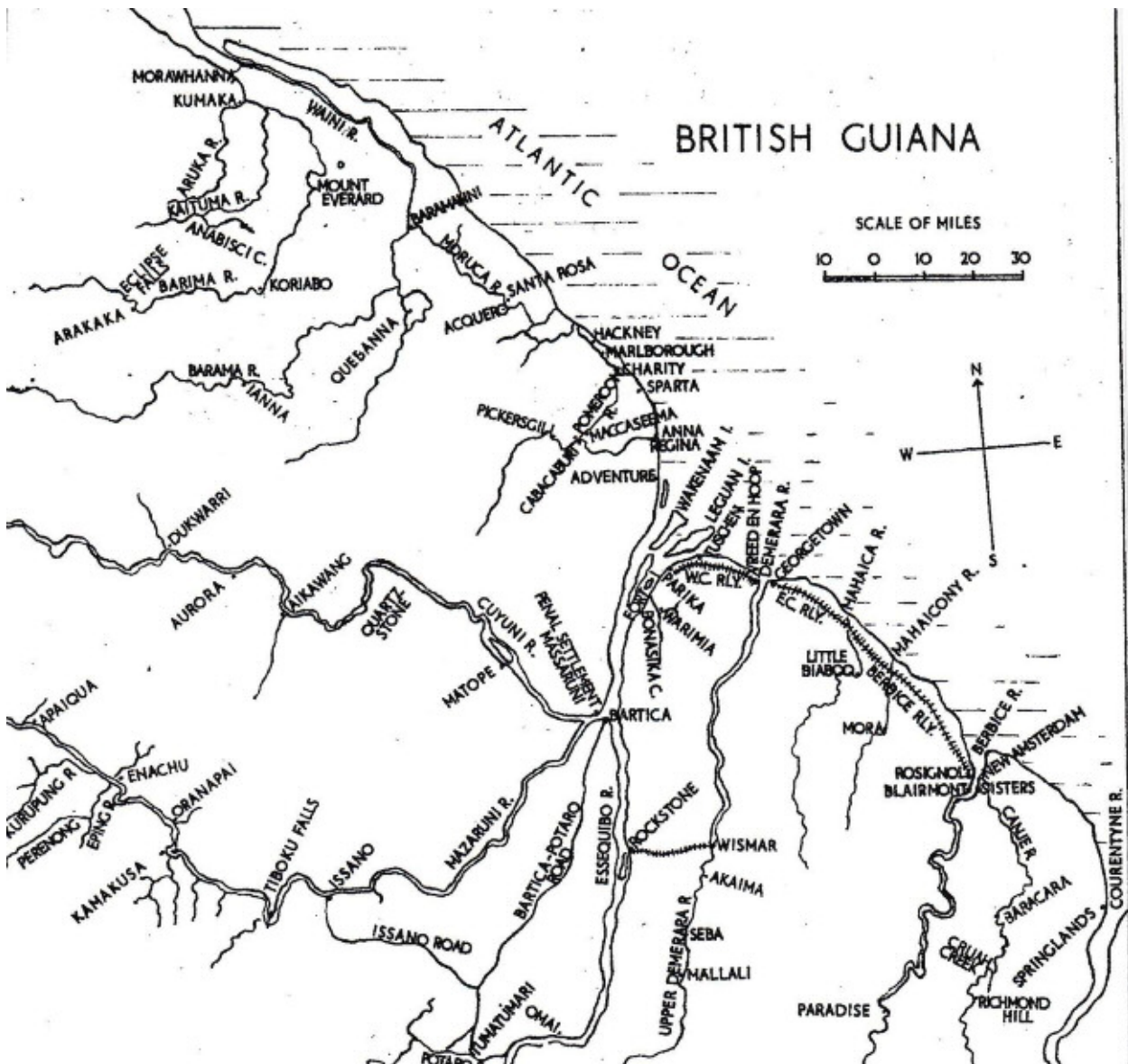
Between 1951 and 1960, four Government Dispensers worked on the *Relief* and all automatically became postal agents as well. There seems to have been an interruption to the service, though it was not gazetted, for the *Daily Graphic* announced the resumption of the service in November 1960. The launch was based at Kumaka, whence mails were taken to Mabaruma (Government HQ since 1926) for transport by the *Tarpon* to Georgetown.

The TPA has been variously referred to as 'N.W.D. Medical Mobile Launch Unit', 'Mobile Agency, N.W.D.' and 'N.W.D. Mobile Unit'. The skeleton date-stamp has appeared in three forms, incorporating in different ways 'Mobile Agency' with 'N.W.D.'





Collectors cover of the Mobile Agency N W D dated 7th September 1973



Massaruni Steamer TPO

This steamer may be regarded as the precursor of the 'Bartica Steamer', though for five years they both ran on very similar voyages up the Essequibo River to Bartica (at the confluence of that river with the Mazaruni and Cuyuni) or to Massaruni Prison settlement (at the mouth of the Massaruni River, opposite to Bartica).

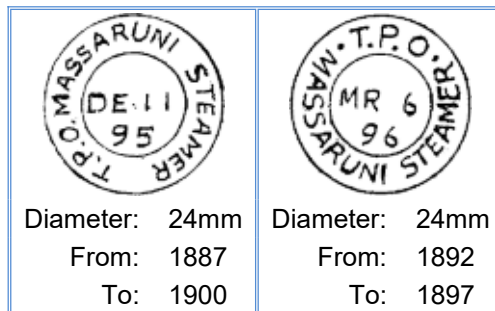
The 1883 *British Guiana Directory* says that:

'Lady Longden Steamer leaves Georgetown every Tues. and Fri. at 8 am and returns on the following day (Penal Settlement, Massaruni).'

The 1884 PO Guide gives this service as 'Mails for Penal Settlement, Massaruni and Bartica Grove'. There was no mention of a TPO until a *Gazette* Notice tells us:

'From 16.2.1886 a Post Office Sorter will travel on board the Settlement and Bartica Grove Steamer for purposes of delivering letters, etc, to persons residing at places between Tuschen and the Settlement, of receiving correspondence for despatch, and performing the usual postal duties.'





The earliest recorded postmark, of '?.3.1885', may possibly be a date error. The Massaruni Steamer and the Bartica Steamer were both listed as TPOs in the 1891 PO Report. The 1901 Report gives only the Bartica Steamer, so presumably the Massaruni Steamer TPO ceased to operate at some time between 24th November 1899 (date of the latest known postmark) and 1901. The *British Guiana Directory* for 1898 may help to explain the existence of two completely different types of Massaruni Steamer cancellations concurrent for some years. It mentions a colonial steamer leaving Georgetown for Bartica Grove every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, one leaving 'Georgetown for Massaruni every Tues and Thurs at 8.30 am calling at Tuschen, and return the following day', and one leaving 'Georgetown for Massaruni and then to Bartica Grove, every Tuesday and Thursday at 8.30 am, returning same way next day, touching at Tuschen both ways. The first must be Bartica Steamer, and the others must both be 'Massaruni Steamer', on the same itinerary, at the same time, except that one steamer called at Bartica and the other did not.






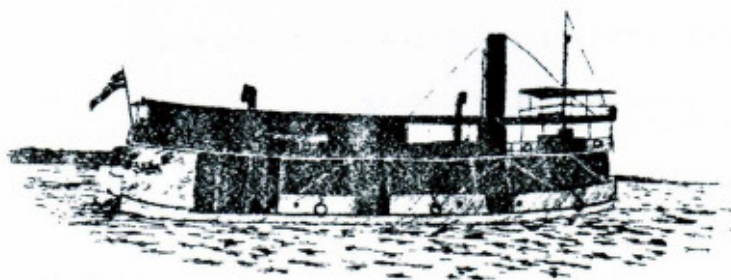
Bartica Steamer TPO

This TPO seems to have been established in 1891 (see notes on Massaruni Steamer). The first postmarks were not found before 1900 and since they were not rare it was difficult to account for this nine-year gap.

The Bartica Steamer operated continuously up to 1966. In the 1943 PO Guide it was called the 'Essequibo River Steamer', leaving Parika thrice weekly for Fort Wasland and Bartica. In the 1954 Guide it was again called 'Bartica Steamer', and ran to the same schedule. The steamer sailed from Georgetown, as in olden times, but it seems that the TPO operated only from Parika to Bartica. At Parika the TPO links with the W.C. Railway and Essequibo Estuary Steamer TPOs. At Fort Wasland the mails for that PO were collected, and also those of the Bonasika Creek TPA at Bartica it connects with TPAs on the Mazaruni, Cuyuni and Puruni Rivers, and also with the Bartica – Potaro Road mail service.

			
Diameter: 28mm	Diameter: 22mm	Diameter: 23mm	Diameter: 24mm
From: 1900	From: 1909	From: 1912	From: 1926
To: 1909	To: 1912	To: 1925	To: 1951

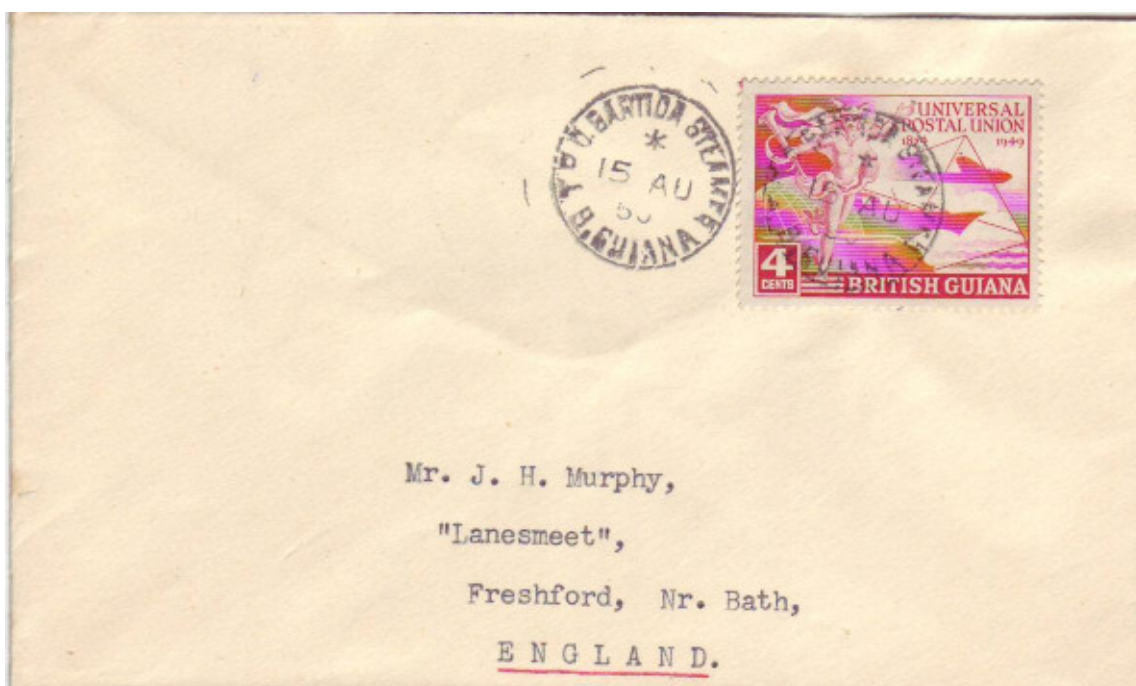
		
Diameter: 27.5mm	Diameter: 30 mm	Diameter: 30 mm
From: 1947	From: 1952	From: 1975
To: 1952	To: 1965	To:



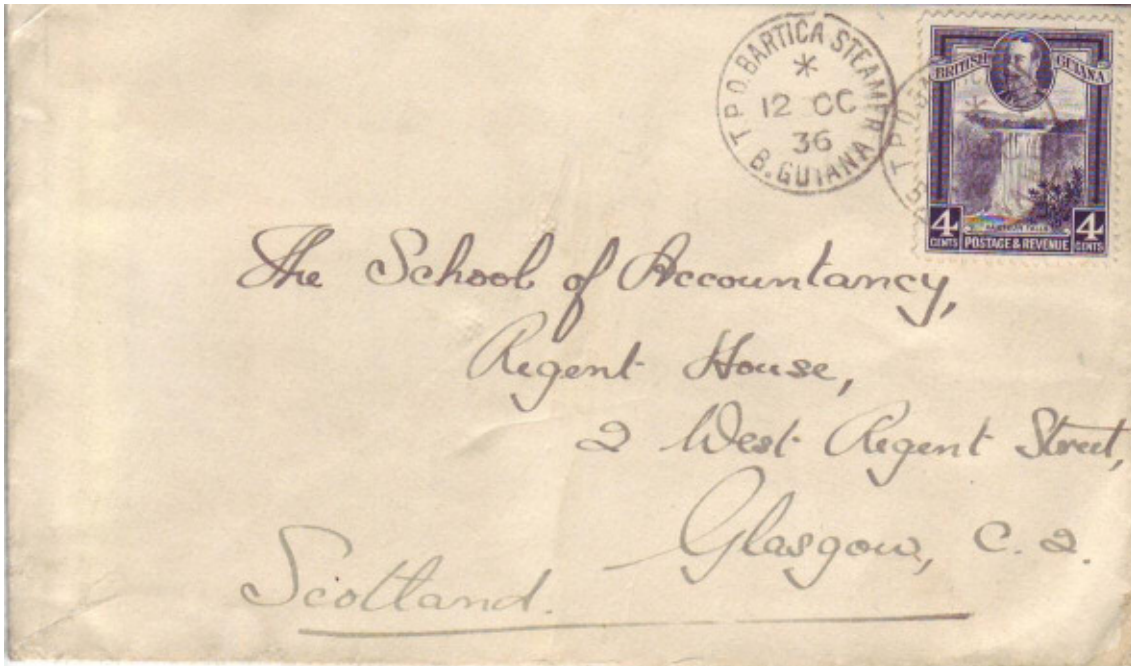
SS Basra



Collectors cover of the TPO Bartica Steamer dated 17th March 1948



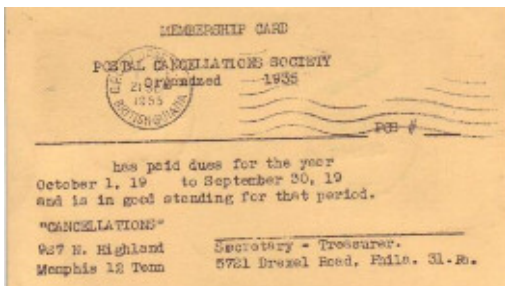
Collectors cover of the TPO Bartica Steamer dated 15th August 1950 with a backstamp of Georgetown the next day



Cover from Guiana to Glasgow, Scotland with the postmark of TPO Bartica Steamer dated 12th October 1936, it has a backstamp of Georgetown of the same day



Collectors card of the TPO Bartica Steamer dated 20th September 1955





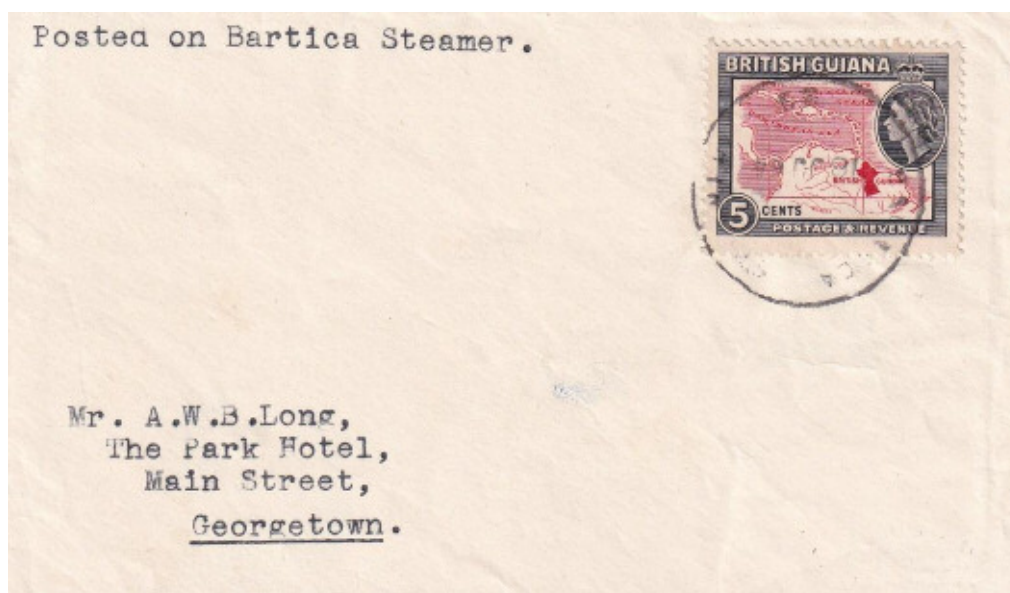
Collectors cover of the TPO Bartica Steamer dated 10th May 1976
 Note the inverted M



Collectors cover of the TPO Bartica Steamer dated 24th May 1975
 Note the reversed E



Registered cover to Georgetown BG cancelled on the front with 2 strikes and on the reverse with 2 strikes of the skeleton postmark dated 22 January 1960.



Cover with poor strike of the skeleton mark as above. Dated 18 June 1964.



Bonasika Creek TPA

Only a large-scale map will show the places mentioned. A TPA was set up at Bonasika in 1944, but the agent must have made his own arrangements for getting his mails to Fort Wasland, to be picked up by Bartica Steamer TPO. In 1953 a PA was set up at Warimia, on a tributary of Bonasika Creek and the job of dealing with mails on the two creeks must have created difficulties.

In 1955 the PMG announced:

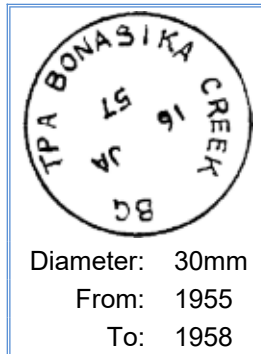
'A Travelling Postal Agency will be established at Bonasika Creek and Mr GA Persaud appointed Travelling Postal Agent from 1.10.1955. The TPA will convey and deliver mails and sell stamps to residents in the Bonasika Creek between Warimia and the mouth of the Bonasika.'

From 1st September 1957, other arrangements were made for Warimia mails and the TPA service was established instead between Bonasika and Fort Wasland. A cover dated a month later shows a Fort Wasland transit mark. At last the connection with Bartica Steamer was ensured. A PMG Notice of 4th February 1958 mentions the curtailment of the TPA service from thrice weekly to once weekly. A GPO letter of 1964 said the TPA was still in existence, but the Postal Agent at Two Mouth, Bonasika, said:

'Presently there was a *letter carrier* operating between Fort Wasland and Moona Creek, which delivers mails to residents of Bonasika.... He clears two letter boxes on his way out of the Creek to connect with Bartica Steamer at Fort Wasland.'

Cancellations of the TPA were rare, and were known only for 1955-58. Mr Mangar, who replaced Mr Persaud as Travelling Postal Agent on 1st June 1959, says that Mr Persaud did not hand over a date-stamp, and that he had to get his mail cancelled at Fort Wasland. A cover from him in 1960 bears this out. The TPA date-stamp was probably returned to GPO Stores and re-issued on 1st May 1962 to the new Postal Agency at Two Mouth. The 'T' had been removed from the stamp, so that it read, 'P.A. Bonasika Creek'.

TPA Bonasika Creek has used only one cancellation.





Collectors cover of the TPA Bonasika Creek dated 10th November 1974
 Note the missing T and E



Collectors cover with stamps cancelled by 4 strikes, 2 clear of stamps of TPA Bonasika Creek dated 16th November.
 Note the missing T and E and year

Mazaruni River TPO or TPA

Reference to a map will give some idea of the difficulties in running a mail service up this river and its many tributaries, where diamond and gold-mining settlements sprang up from the 1920s onwards. The lower reaches of the Mazaruni were so dangerous that the Government, in 1933-36 built an extension of the Bartica – Potaro Road to reach the river at Wassano, so that mails could reach there from Bartica by lorry (121 miles), thus avoiding the worst of the dangers. But a man who had been engaged in the service in the early days wrote:

`Long ago we used to travel from Bartica up the Mazaruni all the way... it was a very dangerous journey ... you encounter dangerous fishes and eels ... piria (piranha?) take a big chunk out of you ... eel give shock to kill ... sting ray, you may lose a foot.... Snakes put all the rest to shame... Why endure all this? Diamonds and gold in the river...`

In *Man Alone*, VGC Norwood gives a good description of the mail-boat in the 1950s. On his trip, a negro went overboard and was eaten alive by piranha!

In 1924 Kamakusa became the Government Station on the Mazaruni, and was given a PO. Mails were taken from Bartica by Evan Wong's launch to Kamakusa, where they were sorted. `All shop owners were to instruct their boat captains when reporting at Kamakusa to call at the PO and ask for mails for their respective shops.' On 20th March 1925, a TPO was established on a mail-boat plying between Kamakusa and the police station in the Kurupung. The boat ran at 10-day intervals, and calls were made at Oranapai, Buck Canwaster, Red Hill Bay, Enachu and police stations in the Perenong and Eping Rivers (first day of trip), and labara, Serenambu, Akerman's Shop and the police station in the Kurupung River (second day of trip). The TPO was a local, Mazaruni, service, which did not carry the mails to Bartica, but from 4th January 1926 the TPO left Bartica at twelve-day intervals and served the places listed above (except that Perenong was omitted). In 1928 the service was by `tent boat'. By 1934 Apiqua had become the western terminus for the TPO.




Two mail-boats were sunk during 1936. Mr Peries was the last contractor to run the mails from Bartica, for by the end of that year the 'Wassano Road' was opened, and the PMG said in his report:




`Fortnightly mail service to and from Mazaruni District became a weekly one on 1.12.36. Bags now transported by road instead of river between Bartica and Wassano to avoid rapids and falls... responsible for loss of mail in the past.`

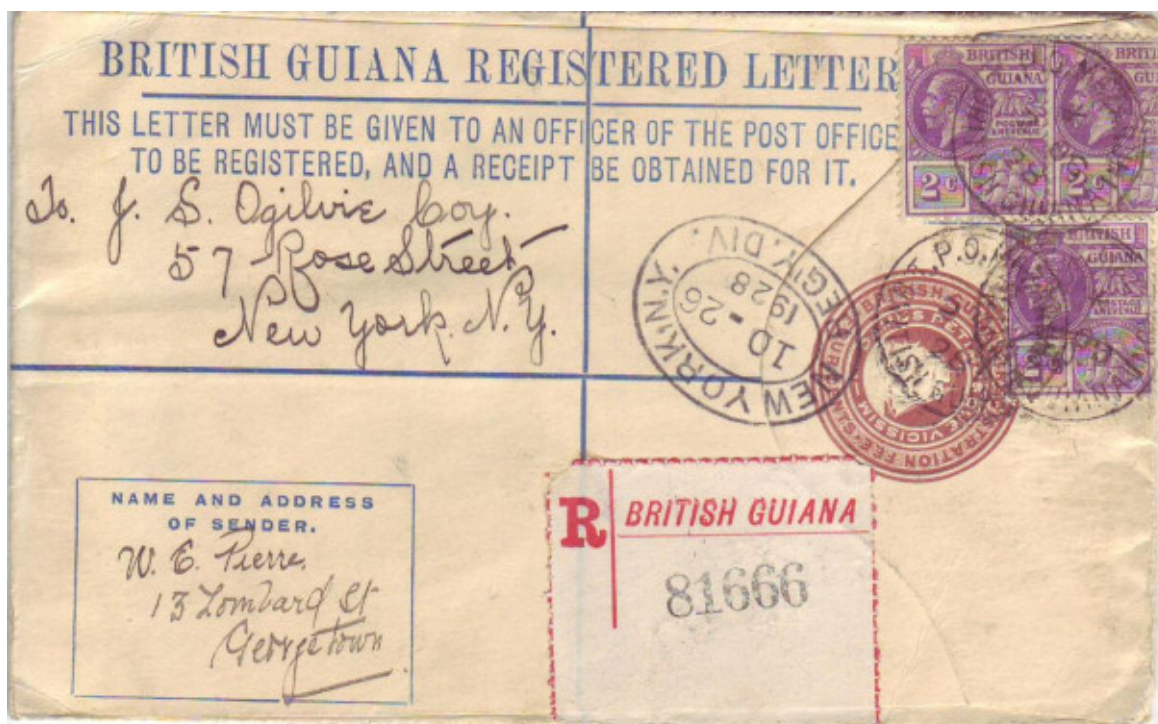
The TPO calls were given as Wassano, Kamakusa, Enachu, Kurupung and Apiqua.

The service was first referred to as a TPA in a Report made by the PMG after he had carried out an inspection in 1940. For a time, two mail-boats were used and the service was twice weekly. But by 1943 the PO Guide shows a once weekly service from Wassano with, `Mails for Mazaruni TPA, Kamakusa, Oranapai, Enachu (including Tumereng), Upper Eping, Perenong, Kurupung, and Wasseneru... arriving back at Wassano... connecting with the Bartica – Wassano – Bartica motor road service, and arriving at Bartica... for the Bartica – Parika – Georgetown mail.' (ie Bartica Steamer.)

This service continued unchanged (except for minor adjustments due to opening of new PAs en route) right up to 1966.

		
Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 25mm
From: 1926	From: 1927	From: 1927
To: 1926	To: 1927	To: 1932

		
Diameter: 23.5mm	Diameter: 30.5mm	Diameter: 30.5mm
From: 1932	From: 1947	From: 1974
To: 1949	To: 1964	To:



Registered cover from Georgetown to New York with the mark of TPO Mazaruni dated 5th October 1928.

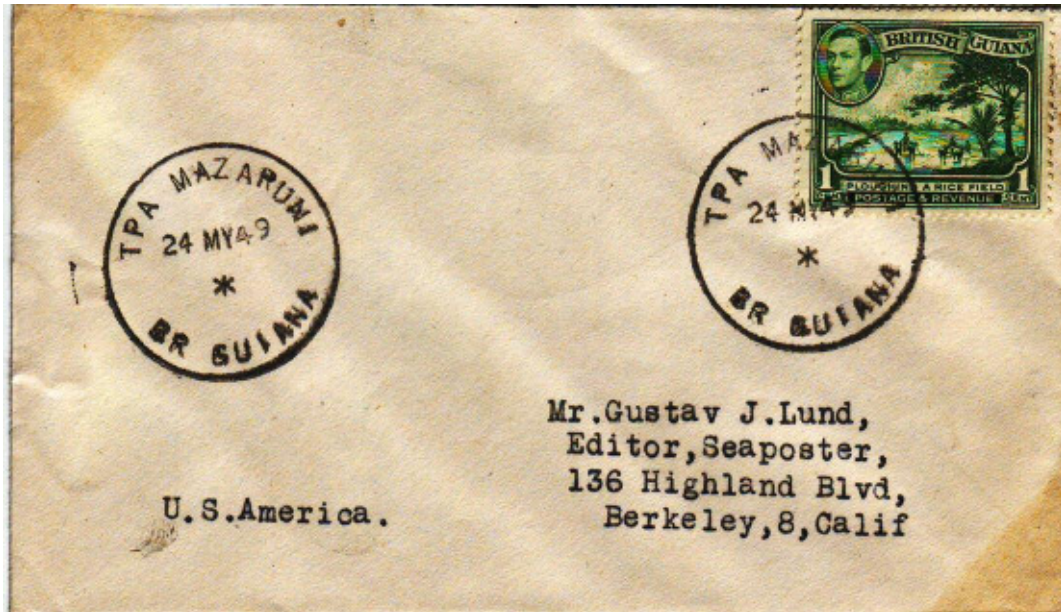




Collectors cover of the TPO Mazaruni dated 29th November 1948 with a backstamp of Georgetown



Collectors cover of the TPO Mazaruni dated 13th March 1949 with a backstamp of Georgetown



Collectors cover of the TPA Mazaruni dated 24th May 1949

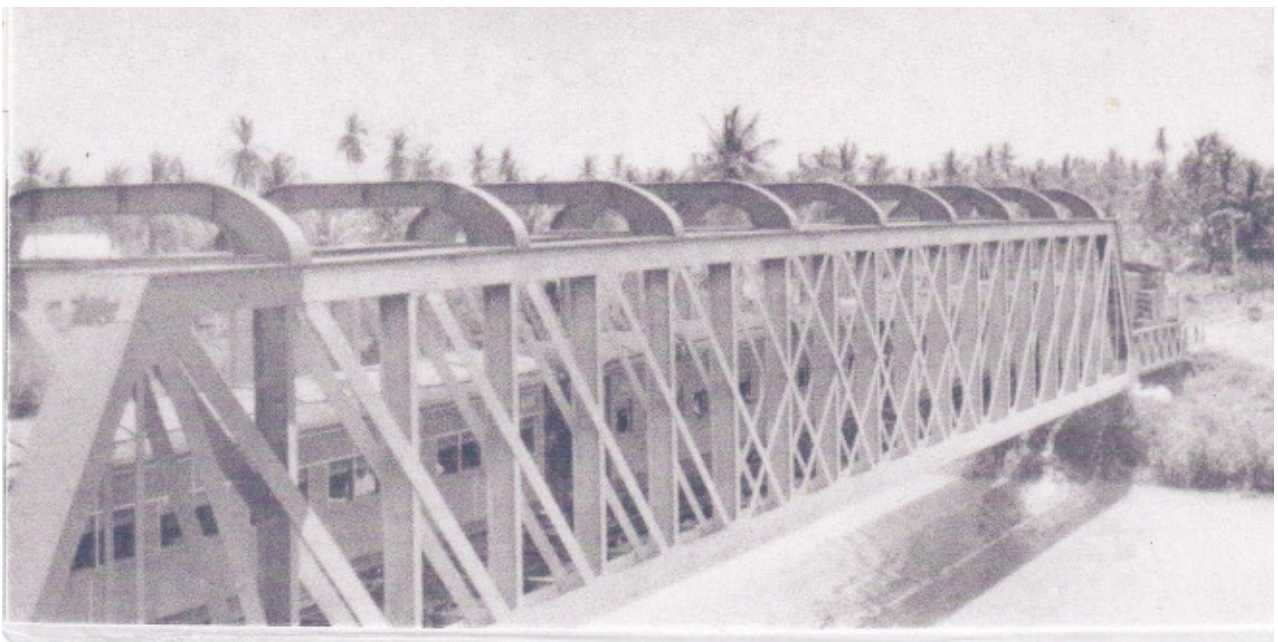


Collectors cover of the TPO Mazaruni dated 18th December 1974

Puruni River TPA

The days of the Puruni 'gold rush' lasted from about 1886 to 1907. A PO was then established, but there was no TPO on the river. It was not known when the Puruni TPA of modern times was set up, but it was mentioned in the 1943 PO Guide: 'An irregular Service (when occasion offers) by outboard or inboard motor boats from Bartica serves: Puiari Landing, and Thomas Falls, Mara Mara, Ecapsi Landing, Water Dog Landing and Deer Creek Landing.' The Puruni was a tributary of the Mazaruni, but this service was obviously independent of the Mazaruni TPA it was not known when the TPA ceased functioning, but the 1954 PO Guide merely says that 'Mails for Puruni River were dispatched from Bartica each Tuesday via Mazaruni River TPA for the following places...' (The list was the same as in 1943). Letters from miners in the District have latterly been brought by any boat's Captain and posted at Bartica.

A PMG has stated, 'No date-stamp ever issued to the TPA'



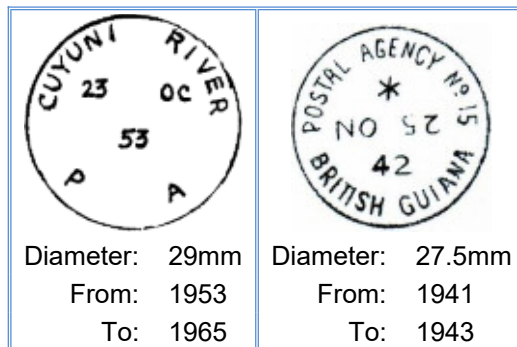
A diesel-hauled train crossing the Mahaicony river bridge on the East Coast line. With a central span of 200 ft., supported on concrete piers, and an overall length of 308 ft., this is the longest of four such bridges

Cuyuni River TPA

A *Gazette* Notice of 14th January 1941 states that: 'Commencing February 1941 a TPA will operate fortnightly on River Cuyuni between Bartica and Aurora (Cuyuni Goldfields Ltd.) calling at Matope and Quartzstone en route. Mr R Persaud appointed TPM' It was not known when this TPA closed down; it may have been in 1950, when the Cuyuni Gold Company ceased operating. Mr Barker, the Surveyor at Aurora in 1942, thought that the TPA used the 'Postal Agency No. 15' date-stamp, but this might equally well have been used at Aurora PA.

The Cuyuni River Launch TPA was re-established from 1.6.1951, when a *Gazette* Notice says: 'Launch leaves Bartica 2nd Thursday of each month. Stops at: Dukwarri, Aikawang, Quartzstone, Sulphur Rose, Aurora and Julian Ross.' The list was not in geographical order and implies a lack of familiarity with the district. The Postal Agent at Dukwarri in 1953 described the hair-raising journey up-river on the mail-boat which was, for example, at Devil's Wasland Hole, hauled for a hundred yards over the rocks. The Cuyuni Mail Boat which left Bartica on 22nd August 1953 was badly damaged when it sank. The PMG reported 'Mail recovered and returned to RLO, addresses being illegible'.

The 1954 PO Guide said that the dates of departure and arrival of the monthly TPA boat were uncertain and could not be stated in advance. The western terminus was still Dukwarri. After 1959 mails were very irregular, and small in quantity, as there were only a few miners left in the district.





Mahaica Creek TPA

The Mahaica Creek TPA was established in 1946 on a launch plying from Mahaica Bridge to Biaboo. The 1954 PO Guide mentions calls at Biaboo and No. 10, and a *Gazette* Notice of 19th April 1958 states:

'Letters and Telegrams by post for Mahaica Creek were delivered each weekday by Launch Service TPA for Handsome Tree, No. 10, Quackoodam, Powder Flask, Little Biaboo, Big Biaboo and Joe Hoop.'

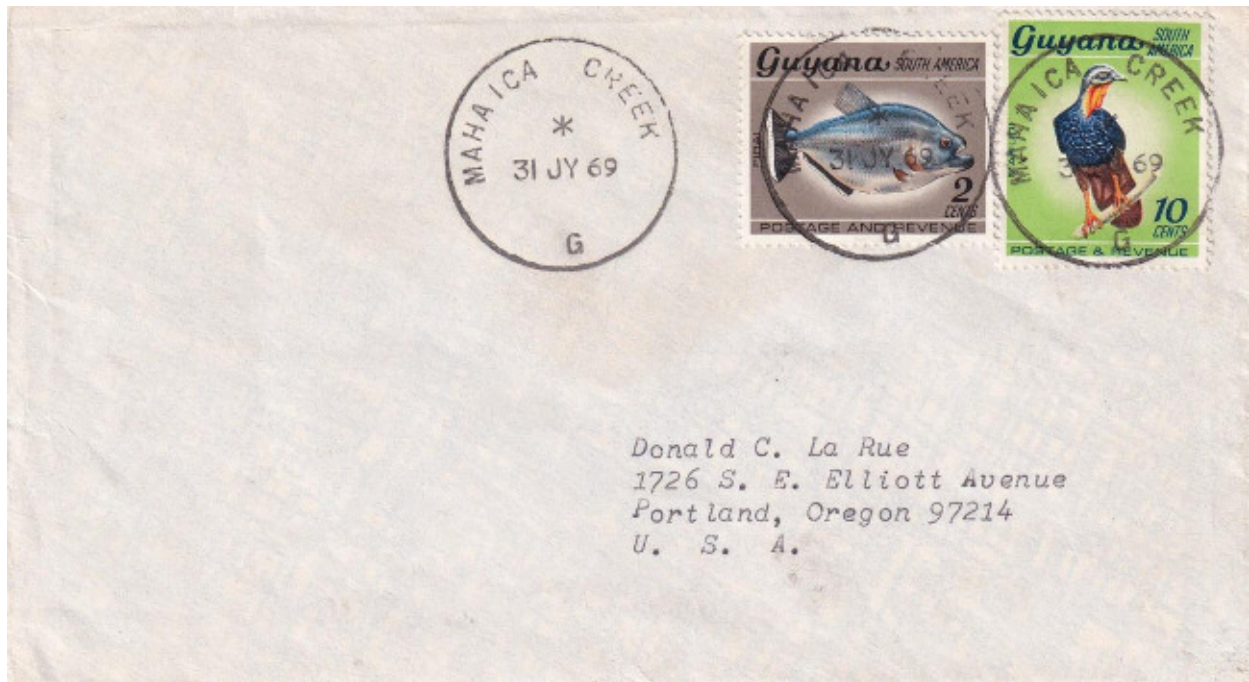
Only the Biaboo settlements were large enough to merit mention in the gazetteer. The service sometimes goes by the name of Joe Hoop TPA, from the name of its southern terminus. Yet Joe Hoop was a settlement of only three or four families. The TPA connected with the East Coast Railway at Mahaica.

The Travelling Postal Agent stated that he was not issued with a date-stamp until 2nd January 1955, and a GPO letter supports this.

	
Diameter: 30mm	Diameter: 30mm
From: 1955	From: ?
To: 1965	To: ?



Cover to Worthing, England dated 23rd May 1958 with a backstamp of British Guiana / GPO of 23rd May 1958



Donald C. La Rue
 1726 S. E. Elliott Avenue
 Portland, Oregon 97214
 U. S. A.

Cover to Portland, Oregon, USA dated 31 July 1969





Air Mail Cover to GB with Mahaica Creek TPA dated 3 August 1986. Courtesy of Rob Wheeler

Mahaicony Creek TPA

The TPA on the Mahaicony Creek (like that on the Abary River) owed its origin to the Mahaicony – Abary Rice Development Scheme, which was sponsored by the Government in 1942 to encourage the growth of rice in the District between the two rivers. In 1945 a PA was set up at Mahaicony – Abary, but still the tenant farmers and residents of little riverside settlements had no mail service.

The Mahaicony Creek TPA was established on 1st May 1949 on a passenger boat which was doing daily runs, bringing farmers and milk-vendors down to Mahaicony, whose Postmaster took the TPA, mail and put it on the train for Georgetown, or the east-bound train, if it was addressed to Berbice, and delivered to the TPA the mails bound for the river settlements. The 1954 PO Guide gives as the agent, the 'Mahaicony Producers Co-op Society'. It does not state the route or terminus of the TPA (nor did the Notice announcing its establishment in 1949). A local Postal Agent gives the stops as: Wash Clothes, Hyde Park. Esau & Jacob, Governor Light, Mora, Pine Ground and Laluni. These were not in order, and it seems likely that the terminus was Mora, some 15 miles up-river.

Whereas the 'Mahaica Creek' date-stamp gives the name in full, that of Mahaicony Creek abbreviates 'Mahaicony' to 'MO' - the 'O' being the first letter which varies from the spelling of 'Mahaica'. Strikes show three varieties, caused by shifts in the position of 'TPA'

	
Diameter: 30mm	Diameter: 30mm
From: 1949	From: ?
To: 1964	To: ?



Air Mail Cover to GB with Mahaicony Creek TPA dated 19 August 1986. Courtesy of Rob Wheeler

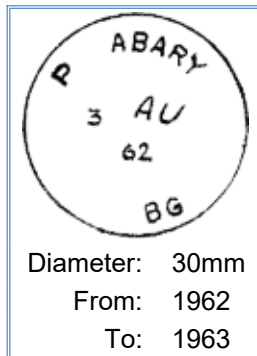


Cover to Worthing, England dated 4th April 1959

Abary River TPA

Some of the notes on Mahaicony Creek TPA apply equally here, but the residents on the Abary River had to wait longer for a mail-service, for their TPA was not established until 1st July 1962. It was then stated to be operating 'between the Abary Bridge and Ithaca'. But GPO information in 1966 was that 'The terminus of the TPA Abary River was Morooni and not Ithaca on West Bank, Berbice River, where a Postal Agency was in operation'.

The amount of mail handled must be very small, and cancellations were extremely hard to find. TPAs on the Cuyuni and Corentyne Rivers have used date-stamps reading 'PA' instead of 'TPA', The Abary River TPA has used an even more inaccurate mark, reading 'P Abary'.



Cover addressed to Georgetown with stamp cancelled by single strike of the only mark recorded for this service

The (Lower) Berbice River TPO

This TPO was one of the earliest to be set up.





'From 1.3.1881 a clerk will be placed in charge of a TPO on board the Contract Steamer.... Correspondence will be delivered and received as far as possible en route.'





By 1882, the terminus had become Coomacka Downs. The 1884 PO Guide says,

'Mails for persons residing along the Berbice River beyond Swasters were despatched from New Amsterdam by Steamer leaving at 8am on Tues. and Sat. Steamer stops at Coomacka and arrives New Amsterdam on return journey at 2pm on Mon. and Thurs. The Steamer stops to receive and deliver letters to persons sending off a bateau'.

Coomacka was the terminus, certainly up to 1906 and probably until about 1920. By then the Rupununi 'cattle trail' from Annai to Tacama had been opened up, and the boat would be making 'cattle trips' as well as mail trips. Edgar Mittelholzer, *in My Bones and, My Flute*, describes 'a rather grubby little steamer called the *Arawana*.... The lower deck ... had a perpetual odour of cow-dung, tar and humanity'. This was Berbice River TPO in the 1930s, by which time the terminus was Paradwase first mentioned as such in 1925.

The 1943 PO Guide shows the TPO service from New Amsterdam to Paradwase, with about twenty-five intermediate stops, connecting 'with mails from and to Kwakwani' (see Upper Berbice service). At New Amsterdam, of course, the TPO connects with the Corentyne Road service and (via the Ferry to Blairmont) with the Berbice Railway. In 1959 the terminus became Ituni, four miles above Paradwase which was about 100 miles up-river. From 1st December 1963, the service was demoted to the status of a TPA, but the date-stamp was not changed. After 2nd April 1964, the launch *Parakeet* has shared the mail-service on the lower Berbice River with the Berbice River TPA.

			
Diameter: 23.5mm	Diameter: 25mm	Diameter: 23.5mm	Diameter: 26.5mm
From: 1881	From: 1913	From: 1925	From: 1937
To: 1913	To: 1925	To: 1945	To: 1941

			
Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 23.5 mm	Diameter: 24 mm	Diameter: 28 mm
From: 1947	From: 24.1.1956	From:	From:
To: 1955	To: 8.1.1964	To:	To:
			Found in Proof Book in GPO, England

Berbice Steamer T.P.O.

"A lazy uneventful day in the paddle steamer up the Berbice river. Monotonous vegetable walls on either bank, occasionally broken by bovianders' cabins. Now and then an unstable dug-out canoe would shoot out from the green shadows and an unkempt, bearded figure would deliver or receive a parcel of mail. We slung our hammocks on deck. There was a steward who made gin-swizzles of a kind and served revolting meals at intervals of two hours. On the whole a tolerable day's journey."

from "Ninety-Two Days" Evelyn Waugh, 1934.



Cover to New Amsterdam posted on the steamer 29 September 1937, backstamped New Amsterdam 6.30am 1 October 1937 and Georgetown 11.30 am with pencil "SS Lultanqui". Courtesy of Rob Wheeler



Cover from River Berbice to Philadelphia, USA with 6 cent stamp and TPO Berbice Steamer dated 12th June 1941. It has a backstamp of Georgetown



Cover from Kaieteur Falls on the Potaro River addressed to New York, USA which was routed on the TPO Berbice Steamer on 31st January 1935, it has the backstamp of New Amsterdam on the 1st February 1935



Local cover to Georgetown dated 8th January 1964



Collectors cover dated 17th May 2000 with New Amsterdam transit mark



Collectors cover dated 10th July 1984



Collectors cover dated 15th November 1976



Airmail cover to Canada with stamps cancelled by 3 strikes dated 17 April 1942





Cover to a collector in Greenock, Scotland with 2 strikes dated 10 October 1955



Air mail cover to London with stamps cancelled by 3 strikes dated 22 August 1955. This cover was posted at Paradise – the upper terminal of the TPO.



Upper Berbice River Mail Service - TPA Parakeet

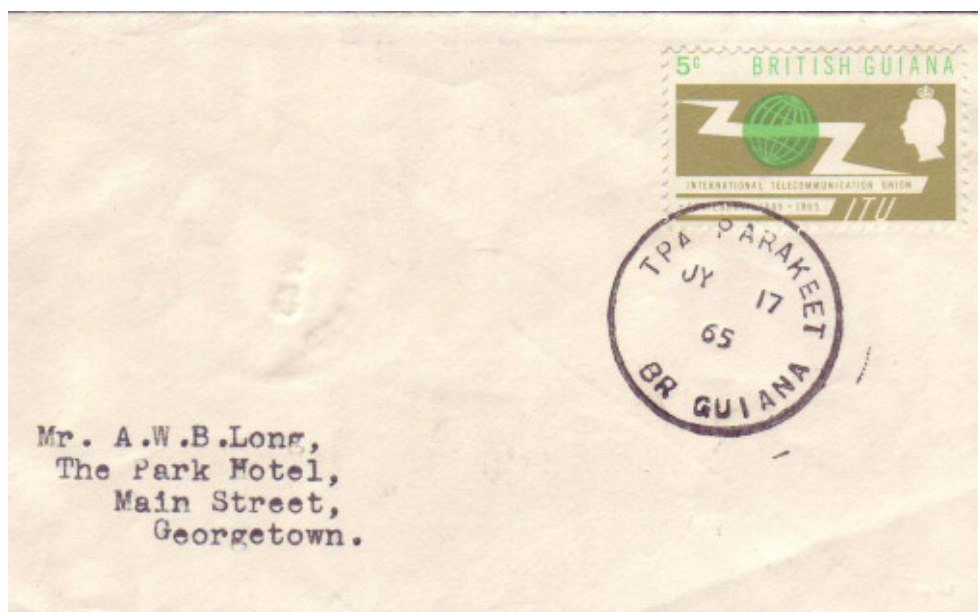
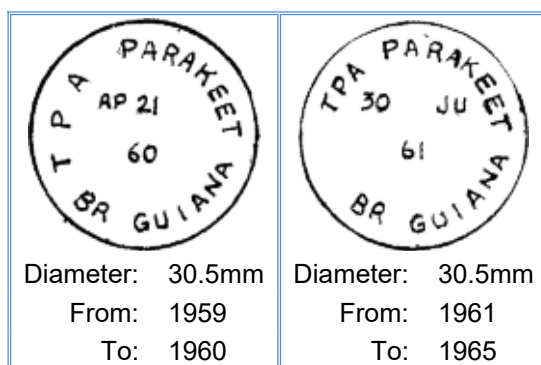
Residents along the upper Berbice River had no postal facilities until 1943, when a PA was set up at Kwakwani, bauxite mining settlement some 137 miles up-river. Private enterprise, ie the Reynolds Metals Company's Launch, took the mails down to Paradwase, the terminus of the Berbice River Steamer.

A PO Notice seventeen years later announced:

'It was notified ... that the Purser on the Launch Parakeet, Mr Leon E. Saul, has been appointed Postal Agent, with effect from 1.12.1959, for the Upper Berbice River. His duties include sale of postage stamps and Inland POs, Registration of letters and acceptance of parcels, delivery of Mails between Hururu, Moranama, Wakamuku and Arima, and despatch of Mails to New Amsterdam.'

The places mentioned were all between Kwakwani and Paradwase, and it seems that the Reynolds Company still dealt with Kwakwani mails.

The *Parakeet* was actually constructed for the Canje Creek TPA whose run takes only two days, so to fill in time for the highly paid crew; it was sent up the Berbice River. After 1963, it also helped the Berbice Steamer with mails on the Lower Berbice. It thus carried, at different times and in different places, two different TPAs, with two distinctive datestamps - 'TPA Parakeet', and 'Canje Launch'. Mr Saul, in a letter in 1960, said, 'I was issued with a date-stamp from the start I leave for Canje Creek every Monday and return on Tuesdays. I leave for Kwakwani every Thursday and return Fridays. I am the Postal Agent on the Parakeet for the Berbice River Service only'.



Collectors cover dated 17th July 1965

Canje River TPO or TPA

Residents along the Canje River were singularly ill-provided with postal facilities, for up to 1897 the only PO in the District was at Reliance, only four miles up-river. Then a *Gazette* Notice announced:


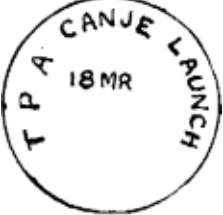



`Arrangements made for performance of fortnightly mail service between Reliance and Richmond Hill from 31.5.1897. Boats leave Reliance on alternate Mondays, arriving at Richmond Hill alternate Tues.... A TPO was established on the Mail Boat and arrangements made for delivery and reception and registration of letters and also for sale of stamps on the boat. The Post Boat will not stop at intermediate stations ... but persons ... must make their own arrangements by going out to the boat when passing.'

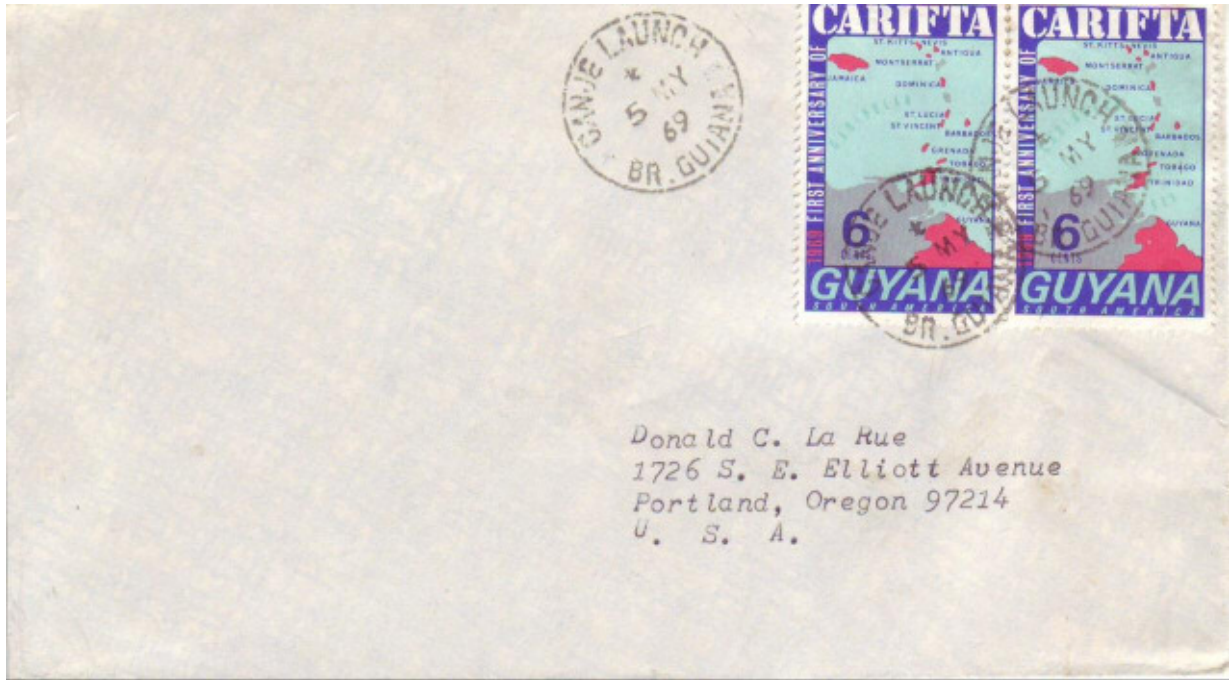
As a point of interest, a photograph shows people paddling a corial out to post their letters on the *Parakeet*, doing the Canje run in 1960!

On 23rd March 1899, Richmond Hill PO closed, and so did the TPO service. By the 17th July that year, a regular weekly service was re-established, this time between New Amsterdam and Richmond Hill. But the PO Report for 1899-1900 calls this an `Attempt made privately to revive Canje Creek boat service', and says that the project was soon abandoned. The TPO was not mentioned in lists for 1901 and 1906, yet cancellations dated 1901 were recorded for TPO Canje and for Richmond Hill, both of which were said to have closed.

References have been found to a Canje mail service in 1909, 1915, 1919 and 1920, when it was closed; and again between 1932 and 1939. It was uncertain if, at any of these times, there was a TPO on the mail boat. If so, its postmarks have not come to light.

A TPO had been re-established by 1943, when the PO Guide lists it as a weekly service running from Canje Bridge to Cruah Creek (56 miles) and serving twenty-five settlements en route. By 1944 it had been reduced to the status of a TPA, and was mentioned as such in the 1954 PO Guide and in a 1964 GPO list. There was a temporary breakdown of the service in mid-1958. From 1959 it has been operated on the launch *Parakeet* (see notes on Upper Berbice). At various times, it has been run by private contractors, by the Transport & Harbours Department and on a PO subsidised launch.

				
Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 29mm	Diameter: 23.5mm	Diameter: 24mm	Diameter: 28mm
From: 1899	From: 1945	From: 1945	From: 1952	From:
To: 1901	To:	To: 1951	To: 1966	To:



Cover to Portland, Oregon with Canje Launch dated 5th May 1969



Cover to Bath, England with Canje Launch dated 17th July 1984.



Corentyne River TPA

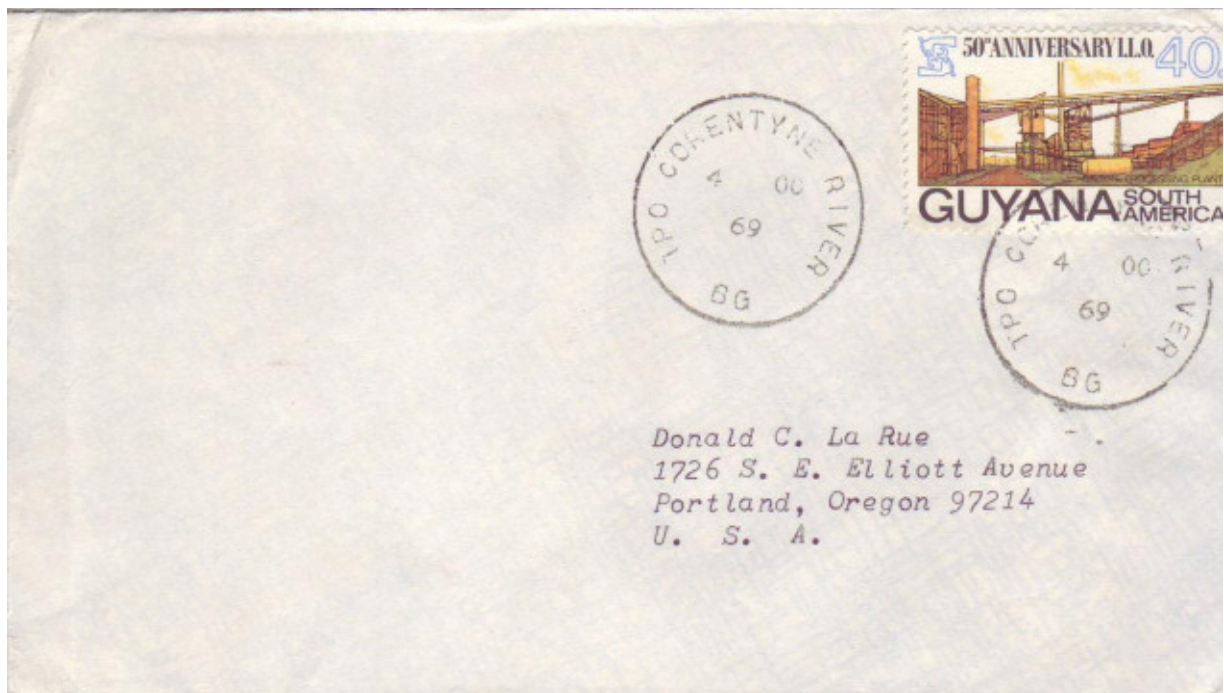
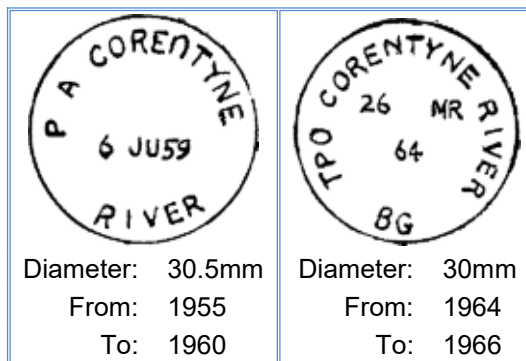
A few postmarks from Orealla in 1897-99 form the only evidence there was of any postal service up the Corentyne River in early times. A *Gazette* Notice announcing the establishment of a TPA, on the Corentyne River Launch on 1st July 1951 said,

'Launch leaves Springlands 1st and 3rd Monday. Stops at: Tiger Creek, Duck Creek, Orealla. Hepzibah and such other places as the PMG may from time to time direct'.

Duties included the sale of stamps and POs, registration, acceptance and delivery of mails. A local resident says that the agent resigned six months later, owing to poor pay. On 1st January 1954 the service was re-established and the run extended a few miles beyond Hepzibah (64 miles up-river) to Flat Landing. Notices asking for tenders in 1957 and 1961 gave the terminus as Siparuta. Although this service opened at the beginning of 1954 it was not included in the PO Guide of that year.

The boundary of British Guiana here was the left bank of the Corentyne River at high water mark. The river therefore belongs to Surinam, and the Dutch will not even let the Guyanese fish in it. It was a strange anomaly, then, that this TPA has always operated on a Dutch river.

The date-stamps present some more anomalies in spelling. The name of the river had, from early times, been variously spelt as 'Courantyne'. 'Courentyne', etc. and the postal authorities had introduced some strange abbreviations of their own! By Notice 386/60 of 1960, HE the Governor decreed that the official spelling should be 'Corentyne'.



Cover to Portland, Oregon with Corentyne Launch dated 4th October 1969



Cover to St Leonards on Sea, England with TPO Corentyne River dated in manuscript the 27th September 2000 and naming the launch which was Orealla



Essequibo Coast and Corentyne Coast Mail Van Services

These, like the mail-wagons before them, have formed an essential link in the Colony's postal services. They were at first provided by private contractors, but by 1949 the Transport & Harbours Department was running its own mail van service, and the PO Report for that year said that Travelling Sorters had been appointed for the Essequibo and Corentyne Coasts to ensure that only postal officials handled the mail. The PMG, in a letter of 21st March 1950, listed these Mail Van Services as TPOs. They were not so listed in the 1954 PO Guide. The sorters used no date-stamps but took letters entrusted to them to the nearest office to be postmarked.

Mobile Postal Unit No. 1

In the last two years before Independence, British Guiana set up two 'Mobile Postal Units', believed to be the first of their kind in the Caribbean. These 'Post Offices on Wheels' were each staffed with a clerk and a postman-driver, and operated to set daily schedules, though these were varied as the need arose. The vehicles could thus be used in areas of shifting population, where it would be uneconomical to set up full time POs.

Mobile Postal Unit No. 1 was set up on 17th February 1965, on Motor Vehicle No. XLR 78, to operate in the Greater Georgetown area, serving Campbelville, Bel Air Park, East and West Ruimveldt Housing Scheme, Lodge and Ruimveldt Police Station areas. The PO Notice said:

'Normal PO business will be transacted, including acceptance of Inland and Overseas parcels, payment of Money and Postal Orders made payable at the Mobile PO, but excluding telegrams and delivery of mails'.

Two months later, the schedule was amended to include Agricola, East Bank, Demerara River.



Diameter: 30mm

From: 1965

To: 1966



Mobile Post Office No 1 being inaugurated by the Minster on 17th February 1965

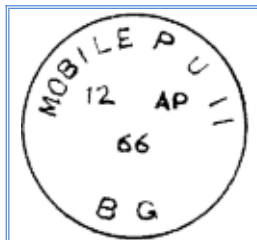


Airmail cover to Switzerland with 2 strikes dated 24 February 1966

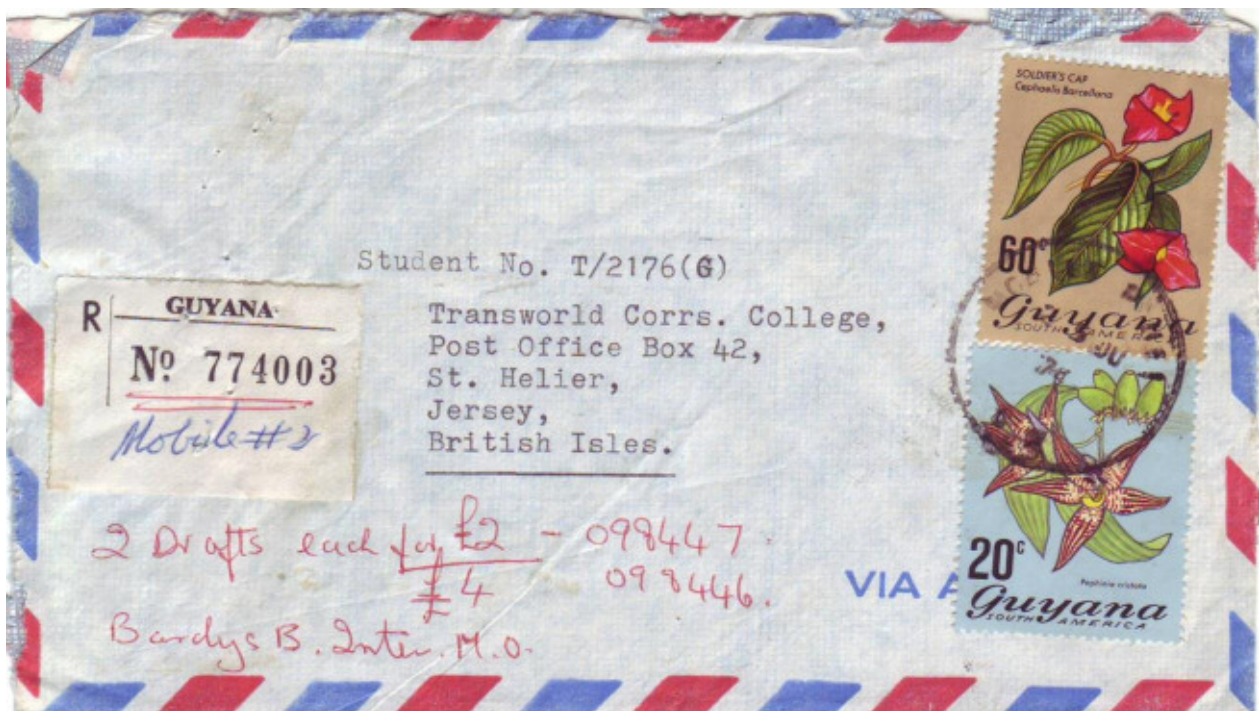
Mobile Postal Unit No. 2

'Another Mobile Post Office established on Motor Vehicle No. LT 752 operated from Monday 4th April, 1966, on the following schedule and in the areas given hereunder on the Corentyne Coast' (PO Notice). The places served were Tain, Port Mourant, Rose Hall, Albion, Fyrish, Yakusari, Johanna, Mikiburi, Lesbeholden and Bush Lot, a stay of 45-75 minutes being made at each place. Normal PO business was transacted (as from Mobile PO No. 1).

During 1984 Robin Stubbs exchanged correspondence with the Guyana Post Office Corporation and received a letter explaining that the Mobile Unit No 2 did not currently exist and that the postal officer was using a double ring handstamp NA VENDOR (IV) / GUYANA

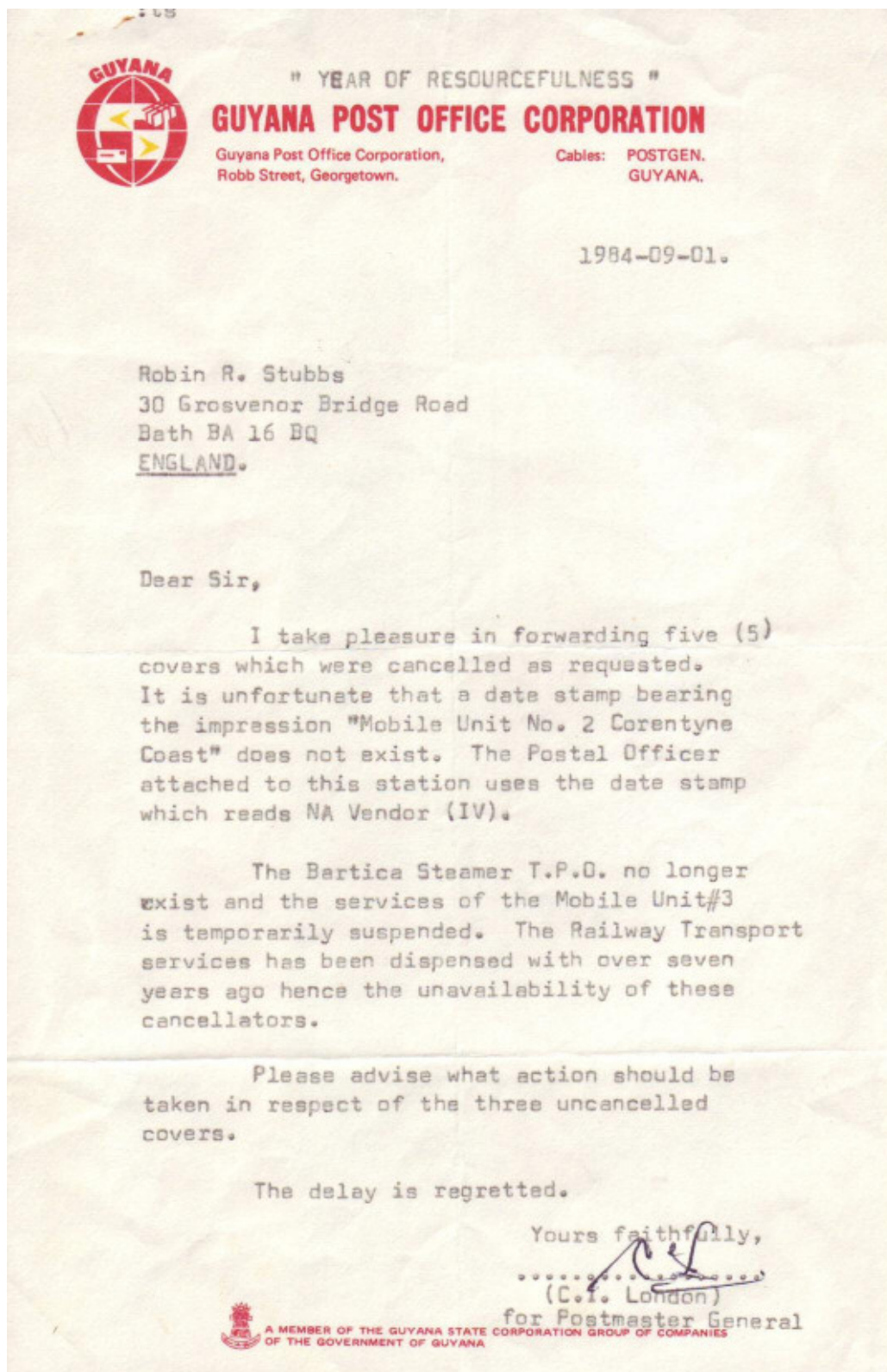


Diameter: 30mm
From: 1966
To: 1966

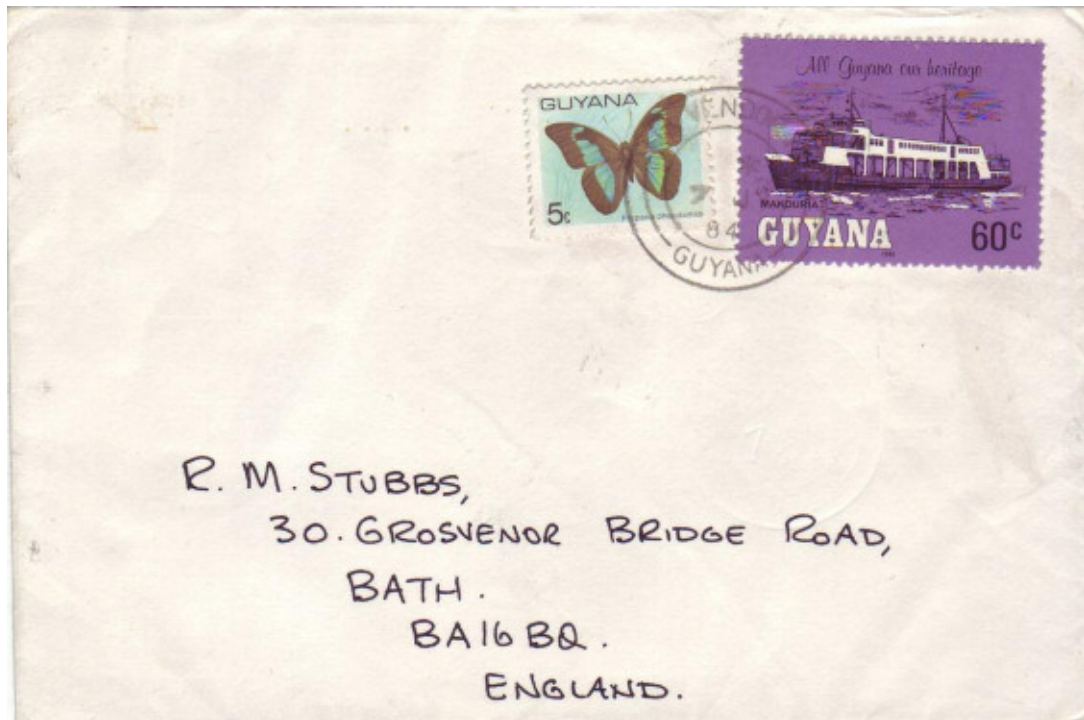


Registered cover to St Helier, Jersey, UK from BB Polder, Corentyne dated 25th June 1974 with manuscript Mobile #2 and Mobile P U II on front and 3 further strikes on reverse as well as a Regd. Airmail / Guiana dated 27th June 1974

Mobile Unit No 2 / Corentyne Coast



The letter explains all that is known about this service



Cover received with letter on previous page

Mobile Postal Unit No. 3

In a list of Postal Agencies sent to Robin Stubbs in 1984 there is listed a Mobile Unit No. 3 on the route Soesdyke – Linden Highway, which, even at that time had been suspended.

No handstamp currently recorded.

Surinam Boat Service

The inclusion of this service, in British Guiana's TPOs, may be deemed unjustified. But the cancellation used incorporates the name of the Colony (albeit, in Dutch) and may be found on British Guiana's adhesives. The very existence of the datestamp implies a postal official travelling on board.

For what period the boats carried a TPO was not known, but it was recorded on stamps of British Guiana and Surinam for 1903-8. A Surinam specialist said that it was replaced by a cancellation of five straight horizontal lines, in use up to 1925, but this seems unlikely to have been the mark of a TPO. A card carrying a Surinam adhesive cancelled and dated 6th June 1907 was posted on board and delivered at Nickerie but the terminus of the service was in British Guiana. A strike exists dated '?.6.1903' on an adhesive of British Guiana.



Diameter: 25 mm
From: 1903
To: 1907



Utg. Bromet & Co., Paramaribo - 15

Plantage Waterland

Suriname

CANCELLATIONS USED ON BOARD SURINAAMSCH E VAARTUIGEN DIENST

This Government Shipping Company ran between Suriname and British Guiana, plying between Paramaribo, Nickerie, and Georgetown. Their ships carried a Travelling Post Office.

- 1st. type (fig. 38) A squared circle, with SURINAME BRITSCH GUYANA round the top, and the date in the centre in three lines. In black. In use from March 1903 to August 1908, so far recorded, although it is thought that the T.P.O. was probably installed in 1900 and in use after 1908. Covers R.

CANCELLATIONS USED ON THE FERRY SERVICE COMPANY RUNNING ACROSS THE SURINAME RIVER

The Ferry Service for some years carried a Travelling Post Office, and plied (a) between Paramaribo and Fort Nieuw Amsterdam on Saturdays from 1895 to 1.7.1902, and (b) between Paramaribo and the plantation "De Guineesche Vriend-schap" on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 1895 to 1907.

- 1st. type The Little round postmark with FERRY DIENST round the top and the date below in three lines. In black. In use 1895 to 1903. In purple in 1903. Covers RR.
- 2nd. type (fig. 40) The Squared circle with FERRIJ DIENST round the top, and the date in three lines below. In black. In use January 1904 to December 1910. Covers RR.



Fig. 38



Fig. 40

From Suriname – A Postal History 1700 -1956 by Dr JD Riddell. A limited edition of 500 copies

Postal Agencies of Guyana

In 1984 Robin Stubbs was in correspondence with the Guyana Post Office Corporation in Georgetown. It seems his first letter was 'lost in the post' and in the event he managed to obtain two lists of postal agencies dated a few months apart. They are set out here for reference.

4th June 1984

Postal Agencies

- 1 Abary Creek
- 2 Aishalton
- 3 Annai
- 4 Apaiqua
- 5 Apoteri
- 6 Arakaka
- 7 Barbara Grant
- 8 Bartica River Steamer
- 9 \Bonasika
- 10 Butukari
- 11 Canje River Launch Service
- 12 Corentyne River Launch Service
- 13 Dartmouth
- 14 Ekereku
- 15 Enachu
- 16 Five Miles Caburi
- 17 Fort Island
- 18 Imbaimadai
- 19 Issano
- 20 Ituni
- 21 Kato
- 22 Lower River Launch Service
- 23 Lower Pomeroon River Launch Service
- 24 Mahaicony Creek Launch Service
- 25 Maria Henrietta
- 26 Mazaruni River Launch
- 27 Melanie Damishana
- 28 Mibicuri
- 29 Mobile Unit No 1
- 30 Mobile Unit No 2 (did not exist on 1.9.1984.
Cancellation read N/A Vendor (IV))
- 31 Morwhanna
- 32 No 19 Corentyne
- 33 No 51 Corentyne
- 34 North Hogg Island
- 35 Paruima
- 36 Saint Mary's Quarry
- 37 Sisters
- 38 Stampa
- 39 Teperu
- 40 Tumatumari
- 41 Upper Demerara River Launch Service
- 42 Upper Eping
- 43 Upper Pomeroon River Launch Service
- 44 Winiperu
- 45 Zeelandia
- Mobile Unit No 3 (Temporarily suspended)

1st September 1984

Postal Agencies

- 1 Aishalton
 - 2 Annai
 - 3 Apaiqua
 - 4 Anarika
 - 5 Apoteri
 - 6 Arakaka
 - 7 Dartmouth
 - 8 Ekereku
 - 9 Fort Island
 - 10 A.P.O. Guyana Defence Force
 - 11 Imbaimadai
 - 12 Ituni
 - 13 Kaieteur Top
 - 14 Karandarnawa
 - 15 Karasabai
 - 16 Kato
 - 17 Kurupung
 - 18 Mibicuri - Black Bush Polder
 - 19 Mara
 - 20 Monkey Mountain
 - 21 Morwhanna
 - 22 No 19
 - 23 No 51
 - 24 Oranapai
 - 25 Orealla
 - 26 Orinduik
 - 27 Papaya
 - 28 Paramakatoi
 - 29 Port Kaituma
 - 30 Potaro - 72 miles
 - 31 Sand Creek
 - 32 Sisters
 - 33 Timehri
 - 34 Tumatumari
 - 35 Velgraad
 - 36 Winiperu
 - 37 Yupukari
- Travelling Postal Agencies**
- 1 Bartica Steamer
 - 2 Berbice River Steamer
 - 3 Canje Launch
 - 4 Mahaica Creek
 - 5 Mahaicony
 - 6 Pomeroon
 - 7 Mobile Unit No 2 - Corentyne Coast
 - 8 Mobile Unit No 3 - Soesdyke - Linden Highway
(suspended)

British Guiana Railway System

The British Guiana East Coast Railway System

By Shammane Joseph

The first public announcement of the idea of rail transport in British Guiana was posited by the Royal Gazette newspaper on 14th February 1837. It stated that it “was happy to find that the anticipation of a railroad on the East Coast is on the eve of accomplishment.” Proceeding, the article pointed out “the pressing need of the planter to substitute mechanical for manual labour. This may be taken that the planters were haunted by the spectre of full emancipation.

The article deliberated that upwards of 1,000 effective labourers were distributed throughout the year on work that would become archaic by the establishment of the railway. It placed the value of each man at £30 per annum, and considered that the East Coast proprietors would benefit to the extent of £30,000 per annum, while also having the advantage of shipping their produce and receiving their supplies. Reference was also made to the significance of the planters being able to convey troops and provisions with a dispatch not otherwise to be obtained, and to the residents of Georgetown being in the position to receive regular supplies of meat and milk from the cattle-farms on the East Coast.

The first public step was taken on 10th March 1837, when a general meeting of the proprietors and representatives of the estates on the East Coast of Demerara was held. At this meeting, four pledges were collectively adopted and moved by Dr Michael McTurk and seconded by James Stuart. The stakeholders agreed that the “speedy and extensive introduction of iron railways into British Guiana was of great importance, to the interests of the Colony.” They also agreed that “the East Coast of Demerara lying between the port of Georgetown and the stream or creek of Mahaica East Coast was immediately favour-able to the success of an iron Railway.” Further, the stakeholders wanted the railway to be constructed by a Joint Stock Company. This Company comprised of the members of the first meeting, who were responsible for raising capital by means of shares of a moderate amount and by allowing other colonists and other individuals elsewhere to be part of the Company.

At that meeting, an election was taken for the appointment of a Committee for the Association and Dr Michael McTurk, Peter Rose, Creswell Spencer, James Stuart, George Rainy, John Croal, John Jones, B. J. Hopkinson, George Bonyun, James and George Matthews were declared elected officials for the Committee. This Committee quickly carried out its assigned work as on 30th May, 1837, “the prospectus of a Joint Stock Company to be denominated the Demerary East Coast railway between the port of Georgetown and the stream of Mahaica” was published in the Royal Gazette newspaper.

The resources of the company were placed at £120,000 divided into 2,400 shares at £50 each. The prospectus depicted the immense boom that was evidently taking place in railway construction at that period. They gave a list of English railways which were paying large dividends, while the stocks of the various companies stood at several hundred percent. It suggested that the railway would run through extremely easy country, and that there were no opposing acclivities that had to be pierced by tunnels or excavated by cuttings. Moreover, great depressions of the surface were to be obliterated by embankments or bridged over by masonry. It continued that nature herself had done for Demerary what art had imperfectly performed for other places.

It alluded to heavy burdens posed by:

- * The great expense of transporting produce to the only port of the colony (Georgetown) for shipment abroad;
- * The structure of the punts, schooners and loggers engaged in the local transport;
- * The slowness of the crew at high tide and their inability to navigate the shores and rivers;
- * The enormous cost of these vessels and their wear and tear under tropical climatic conditions;
- * The heavy insurance premiums needed and;
- * The loss of apprentice crew labour.

Further, mention was made of the rapidly approaching unconditional emancipation of the slaves and it urged that, “only by the substitution of machinery, to the greatest possible extent can the planter and particularly the sugar grower of Demerary, hope to compensate the probable deficiency of human labour and to combat the foreign producer in the markets of Great Britain.” The prospectus also noted that production in 1836 for estates lying along the proposed line (Georgetown-Mahaica) was 13,000 tons of sugar; 11,400 puncheons molasses and rum; 1,000 bales of cotton; 900 bags of coffee; 80,000 bunches of plantains, and about 100 head of cattle and that their transportation cost to Georgetown would have been less by railway.

Regarding the construction cost of the proposed line, the prospectus was vague. It stated that the cost of works would not have exceeded or even reached one-half of the sums that would have been required for an equal length of British railway. Although no definite estimate was mentioned, capital cost was placed at £120,000 for a 20-mile railway suggesting that the promoters anticipated that line construction would not have exceeded £4,500 to £5,000 per mile. The prospectus concluded by stating that as soon as £60,000, being one-half of the capital stock of the company, were applied for and assigned, a general meeting of the shareholders would be convened to determine the further management of the Company.

The prospectus appeared regularly in the press but no immediate further action was discerned. The "Royal Gazette" of 6th February 1838 published the approved estimates of the expenditure for Demerara County that showed an amount of £14,000 was deposited for the Georgetown-Mahaica Railway. Further, the Colonial Estimates printed in March, 1839, recorded the sum of £14,000 for the Georgetown-Mahaica Railway as not expended. Having lapsed, and as it was not re-voted when the approved estimates of expenditures for Demerara County for the following year appeared, it must be assumed that between 1837 and 1840 the idea had been abandoned.

On 10th February 1845, the matter resurfaced when a "Meeting of the General Committee of the Agricultural and Commercial Society of British Guiana" along with those persons interested in the formation of the Iron Railway between Georgetown and Mahaica was held. Additionally, a considerable number of proprietors and representatives of estates on the East Coast had expressed a wish to revive the railway project between the river Demerara and Mahaica Creek. At this meeting, the Hon. HEF Young (Government Secretary) presided while most of those whose names appeared as original committee members were present.

The gathering unanimously agreed to co-operate with any Committee appointed to carry into effect the proposal for establishing a railway between the river Demerara and Mahaica Creek. H.E.F Young having addressed the Meeting pointed out the advantages of having a railway passing through the fertile and populous district between Georgetown and the river Mahaica. "It was then moved by Mr. Thomas Porter, Jnr., seconded by Mr T Forrester and unanimously resolved, that the present was a most favourable time for establishing a railway between Georgetown and Mahaica."

The members agreed to the appointment of a sub-Committee to examine all documents relating to the railway and a new prospectus of the proposed railway was to be laid before the said Committee at an adjourned meeting held two days later. At the adjourned meeting, a draft prospectus of the proposed railway was presented. It was decided that the prospectus be published and that a public meeting be held on "the 22nd February for the furtherance of the objects it set forth in the prospectus."

The "Royal Gazette" published the prospectus of the Joint Stock Company on 15th February 1845, which was denominated the "Demerara East Coast Railway Company." The prospectus stated that the capital for the railway was placed at £100,000 in 10,000 shares of £10 each, whereas the 1837 prospectus had provided for a capital of £120,000 divided into 24,000 shares at £50 each. This reduction in the price of shares illustrated the difficulties with raising the required capital, especially locally, which led to the abandonment of the project in the previous decade.

The new prospectus did not differ to any material extent to that of 1837. The general optimistic tone was retained, and the "level country" and other physical advantages for the construction of a railway, stressed. The redundancy unemployed capital, which existed in the money market was also posited as favourable to the project, while attention was again drawn to the difficulty and expense of getting produce to Georgetown. It stated that the traffic from the conveyance of the produce, and supplies to estates was conducted at a great expense by means of schooners and other vessels. The number of these so employed were ascertained as: 20 Schooners valued at \$5,000 each and totalled \$100,000; 9 Sea punts valued at \$800.00 and totalled \$7,200 and; 80 Shipping punts valued at \$120.00 and totalled \$9,600. Together, the total transportation amounted to \$16,000. Meanwhile the annual navigation and maintenance expense were estimated as follows: Schooners \$55,000; Sea Punts \$10,260 and Shipping \$12,480.

The prospectus stated that the traffic by these vessels was conducted at much risk and expense, and that the proposed railway would negate the need for such a large capital investment, saving at least one-half of the annual expense. Further, a large portion of the labour that was removed from estate cultivation and employed to transport produce by shipping vessels would be made available for field labour. In attempting to estimate the volume of annual traffic the prospectus placed the tonnage of goods traffic at 23,303 tons between Georgetown and Mahaica exclusive of any inter-station traffic. However, the annual average for the years after was actually only one-quarter of that amount. Finally, with regard to passenger traffic, the prospectus stated that the number of passengers, travelling on the road between Georgetown and Mahaica was estimated "to be at present 700 daily or upwards 200,000 annually. The habits of the population are so migratory that, with the facilities for travelling, which will be afforded by a railroad, a considerable increase in the number of travellers may be confidently expected."

The new prospectus which was published on 15th February 1845 predicted the payment of 10 per cent dividends and mentioned that from estimates already obtained the cost of construction of the railway would not exceed £100,000. It stated the line of the road, the description of the railway, and the plans and estimates for the execution of the work were to be determined by a practical engineer who was familiar with the construction of railways in Great Britain, and whose services, would have been obtained by the Directors as soon as the Directors were appointed by the shareholders. Finally, the prospectus anticipated that the Colonial Legislature would readily grant the necessary legislation to enable the Company to be incorporated, and thought it likely that “besides other aid from the proprietors along the line, a free grant would be given of the land required for the purposes of the Railway.”

Joseph Locke was nominated by the Provisional Committee in Georgetown to appoint an Engineer to perform the above duties. He recommended the Surveying Engineer of the Jamaica Railway. The expenses of the Engineer were defrayed by a deposit of five shillings per share, which was paid by the subscribers on receiving information of the number of shares that were allotted to them.

Subsequently, a public meeting was held and sixty-nine men attended. They were described in the press as “the most respectable and influential gentlemen in the community”. Everyone was highly in favour of the project, but some discussions took place as regards the capital. The Hon. John Croal, who presided, moved the amount be fixed at £150,000 instead of £100,000 as originally suggested. In the end, a majority of the meeting agreed to the motion, and the prospectus as previously published was adopted.

No stones were left unturned to raise capital abroad as is evidenced by the fact that more names were added to the original list. The Provisional Committee, whose appointment had been confirmed at the general meeting, lost no time in getting to work, and penned a letter on the 3rd March, 1845 to the shareholders in England who had been selected to form a Sub-Committee to push the project abroad. This Sub-Committee undertook the duty of allotting to applicants in Europe two-thirds of the 13 shares of the proposed company. The prospectus provided for a deposit of £5 per share on allotment. The money was lodged with Messrs. Smith, Payne & Smiths, and the Colonial Bank in London. The Sub-Committee was authorised to withdraw from these deposits such sums necessary to pay the preliminary expenses connected with the formation of the Company. The London Sub-Committee approved of the prospectus and they immediately advertised it in the “Times,” “Morning Chronicle” and “Railway Times” newspapers.

The Sub-Committee in London took up the matter with enthusiasm, and on their advice at a meeting of the local committee in May, 1845, some drastic alterations in the prospectus were made. The capital was raised from £100,000 to £200,000. A total of 2000 shares, at the value of £10 each were reserved for issuance in the colony, instead of one-third of the total number as originally provided for. The London Committee was empowered to add to their numbers from time to time, as they deemed necessary and to dispose of all shares except 2,000 reserved for subscribers in the British Guiana colony. They were further requested to increase the amount of £5 deposit on each share to such sum as they saw fit.

On the 31st May 1845, the Provisional Committee instructed the Sub-Committee in London to summon a meeting as soon as 15,000 shares were subscribed in Britain. At the meeting of the shareholders, a London Board of Directors was created with nine members to manage the affairs of the company. Further, a Local Board of Management in Demerara was formed with five shareholders who resided in the Colony. They were appointed to transact the business of the company within the Colony. The London Committee was also requested to submit a draft of such an enactment to be passed by the local Legislature as would be acceptable to the shareholders in Great Britain.

In September of the same year, the local Committee notified the Committee in London, that 1,000 shares were all that were needed for subscribers in the colony and that the balance were to be allotted in England. This action seemed somewhat strange, as very shortly afterwards when the allotment of shares in the colony took place 1,726 shares were applied for, and as only 1,000 were available, a pro rata distribution had to be made. The local Committee at this stage represented to the London Committee that the Home Government should be approached “to permit the necessary measures to be adopted for procuring the introduction into the colony of labourers from Madeira, the Canary Islands and elsewhere, whose services might be made available in the construction of the proposed railway, and counteract in some degree the evils apprehended from the abstraction of labourers from agricultural pursuits in the districts through which the line would pass.” In October 1845, the London Board informed the local Committee that they had selected HEF Young (Government Secretary) and seven other men to form the Demerara Committee of Management.

The extent to which railway enthusiasm had taken hold of the colony at this time was shown by the fact that, one of the first acts of the Demerara Committee was to pass a resolution moved by the Hon. John Croal which stated “That it is the opinion of this Committee that railroads should be extended throughout the colony, that

capital should be raised for the purpose under such regulations and restrictions as may be deemed necessary, and that the following lines should in the first instance be undertaken, viz:-

East Coast Railway

West Coast of Demerara to Greenwich Park

Arabian Coast and West Coast of Essequibo, from Pln.

With ferries to connect Demerara and Essequibo and the respective lines.”

The resolution was forwarded to London, but appeared to have had a cold reception. The London Committee subsequently decided that while the draft Act to incorporate the company provided ample powers for tending the proposed line, there should be no mention of the West Coast of Demerara or of the Essequibo County railway development.

During this period, the need for a practical engineer to come out to the Colony engaged the attention of the London Committee. On the recommendation of Mr Locke, a Consulting Engineer in England, Frederick Catherwood, a civil engineer who had experiences on railroads in England and North America, was chosen. Catherwood arrived in the colony in December 1845, and started work on the survey of the East Coast line with G. Butts, who possessed extensive knowledge of the estates and villages through which the proposed line would run. Upon completion of the survey, a preliminary report and plans were handed to the local Committee on April. 1846. Catherwood was urged to undertake surveys of lines for railways in the West Coast of Demerara, but he expressed his inability to do more than have a hurried look around this district because he had previous commitments in Jamaica. He submitted his final report to the London Committee in October 1846.

Catherwood appeared to have been very thorough with his methods. While carrying out his survey he supervised various experiments with regard to pile driving, shrinkage of embankments, enlargement of trenches, use of pegasse as fuel, and the manufacture of bricks and pipes.

Pertaining to the front lands of Plantation Bel Air, which were lent by proprietors for the purpose of experiments with pegasse, Catherwood later reported that peat was found in great abundance in the extensive savannah aback of the estate. It measured in thickness from a few inches to 20 feet deep, and at that time, it was valueless. However, when properly prepared and dried it was a substitute for coal or wood in furnaces and in different boiling houses. Later it was bought to be used by the Railway Company as fuel.

It did not appear as if the railway committee even attempted to carry out this suggestion, and it was later realised that Peat was too hot as a fuel for locomotives. However, kiln-dried pegasse proved to be unsuitable as a source of fuel for the kitchens of Georgetown. The experiment concerning the manufacture of bricks and drain pipes appeared to have proved satisfactory as later, when the work of constructing the railway began brick making was done to facilitate certain buildings for the railway.

The provision of necessary legislation for incorporating the company, took definite shape. On 23rd October 1845, a Bill for this purpose was introduced in the Legislature. The Attorney General had previously been asked to accept the position as counsel for the Company to see the Bill through, but had declined, promising that in his official capacity he would watch its progress. The bill was passed and published on 18th July 1846, as Ordinance No 2 of that year.

It was significant that Ordinance No 2 of 1846 fixed the capital of the company at £250,000 in 10,000 shares at £25 each, instead of £200,000 in 20000 shares at £10 each, as was decided during the previous year. No traces were discovered for the reason for this alteration, which ultimately proved to be a bad thing for the company. Had the larger number of shares at a smaller value been retained, it would have been extremely probable that the capital liability would have spread over a greater number of individuals, and the necessity to reduce the share capital through the failure of shareholders to pay, might never have arisen.

The line was opened to general traffic from Georgetown to Plaisance on 3rd November 1848. Two inward and two outward trains ran each day. The fares were 40 cents first class and 20 cents second class. The next 4½ miles of track took two years to build and the extension to Buxton was opened on the 14th of March 1850. From there it took seven months to proceed to Enmore. Seven weeks after the opening of the Enmore Station the line to Belfield was opened, but because of financing difficulties the next 1¼ mile stretch to Two Friends took nearly two years to complete. Further, financial difficulties began dogging the Company. From the onset the Directors found themselves short of capital. The fact is that the great majority of the shareholders had failed to pay up for their shares. By 1858 overdue shares amounted to nearly \$170,000 and because most of the shareholders were West Indian proprietors and merchants the depression prevailing in the sugar market offered little prospect of collecting this amount. With an appropriately reduced share capital, the amount subscribed as shares represented a greater proportion of the total, and this enabled the company to borrow money on the security of the railway.

The Directors accordingly increased the share capital from \$120,000 to \$840,000, and the value of the shares from \$120 to \$84. Even so, they found it difficult to raise a loan and by the time the railway had reached Two Friends no capital was available for its completion to Mahaica. The Directors therefore concentrated their efforts to Mahaica with government funding.

On the 10th May 1858, Ordinance No 14 was passed and became law. It empowered the Demerara Railway Company to raise £175,000 and gave a government guarantee of interest at 6% for 45 years. Among the various enactments of this Ordinance, was the provision of an appointment for a Government Member on the local committee. RW Imlach was appointed Government Director, and his honorarium fixed at 300 pounds sterling a year, payable from railway funds.

In 1859, His Excellency the Governor informed the Combined Court, that the invoices for the two locomotives ordered by the Government had reached the colony. He pointed out that the government was in no better position as regards obtaining security from the railway Company than some months earlier when delivery of the 40 goods wagons had been refused. Nevertheless, he was of the opinion that under all the circumstances, it was better to lend both the engines and the wagons to the Company. He obtained an acknowledgment of the loan from the local directors, and this course was agreed to.

Press references to the railway at this time described it as a concern evidently brought into existence on an unlucky day, and cursed with ill luck. Everyone who came into connection with it had burnt his fingers, and in the management and control, everyone who had any reputation to lose had lost it. One article in the "Royal Gazette" concluded as follows: "We would not wish our worst enemy greater evil than to be made sole proprietor of the Demerara Railway Company with an obligation to work it for a term years."

No action appeared to have been taken by the London Directors to raise money under the provisions of Ordinance 14 of 1858. At the time this Bill was passed, it was understood that both the local and London Directors were in agreement with its terms. However, this was not the case, as objections were subsequently raised, and the meaning of certain of the clauses stated to be obscure. In order to remove any doubt that might have existed, a declaratory Ordinance to give effect to the arrangement previously entered into was passed early in 1859 (No 4 of 1859), but this encountered serious opposition from the London Board, and the Ordinance never became law, as it was eventually disallowed.

In September 1859, the Attorney General introduced in the Court of Policy a further Bill providing for the abolition of the post of Government Director on the Railway Board. He pointed out that, by Ordinance 14 of 1858, the government had undertaken to guarantee interest for 45 years on a £175,000. The sum was to be raised within of the passing of the Ordinance. A year elapsed and the money had not yet been raised, consequently it was unfair to retain a Government Nominee on the board. The Bill was passed through all its stages and made law the same day Ordinance 19 of 1859 came into being.

Two months later a further Ordinance was passed (No 23 of 1859) afforded the Demerara Railway Company the following measures of relief:

The line from Georgetown to Belfield must be kept in a proper state of repair, and an adequate supply of rolling stock, including locomotives maintained. No demand for payment of any part of the principal money due in respect of the mortgage for the £50,000 loan, and if the company raised and expended upon the line, including its completion to Mahaica, a sum of not less than 30,000 the mortgage would be forthwith cancelled.

The amount standing at the credit of the Sinking Fund provided for in Ordinance 14 of 1858 and invested in consolidated 3% annuities amounting to £5002 to be withdrawn and handed back to the company for improvements and repairs to the existing line. Hereafter the company should not be liable to pay any amounts in respect of this Sinking Fund. Claims by the colony for the locomotives and goods wagons lent to the company and various sums of money advanced for repairs to the line amounting to 8,864 pounds sterling, with interest thereon were given up, released and abandoned. Provided, however, that the Governor and Court of Policy should have the right to revise and approve tariffs, and that; a local committee of three Directors resident in the colony should always be in office, with power to the Governor to temporarily fill all vacancies occurring.

The Ordinance provided, further, for the retention by Government of all its legal rights under previous Ordinances to recover from the railway all liabilities incurred in the past and enumerated above in the event of the company not carrying out the terms of this Ordinance as interpreted by Government. This last provision amounted merely to safeguard the interest of the Government. During the passage of this Bill through the Legislature, a storm of protest was raised and public indignation meetings held, but it was eventually passed, and became law on the 4th November 1859.

At a general meeting of the stakeholders held in England shortly after, a resolution was passed accepting the terms laid down in the Ordinance and thanking the Governor and Legislature for the manner in which the

Railway Company's interests had been recognised. In July, 1860, an extraordinary general meeting of the shareholders of the Demerara Railway Company was held at Liverpool when they passed their own resolutions.

The Liverpool Directors, evidently perturbed at the manner in which the Demerara resolutions had been passed against their wishes, and in preparation for a consequent meeting at which this policy was reviewed, issued a printed circular to the Demerara shareholders on 20th August 1860. On the 15th September 1860, the Chairman and Secretary sent another circular to the shareholders requesting a review of the resolutions.

At the annual general meeting held on 30th April 1861, a deputation of London shareholders armed with proxies attended with the object of insisting on the Directors pledging themselves to devise prompt measures for the completion of the line to Mahaica, and converting the bonds into 7% stock for this purpose. The Liverpool Directors made every effort at this meeting to carry their policy but in the end the Directors' report was "referred back in order that it might contain an assurance that the resolutions passed at the extraordinary meeting of 20th June, 1860, would be carried out."

Press comments on the working of the railway at this time revealed that at last a measure of satisfaction was being afforded the public. The Manager and Chief Engineer Mr W I Martin was referred to as untiring in his efforts to supply a good service, and while break-downs were not infrequent, allowances are made in the press, and the public reminded that the locomotives were past efficient service. Later in that year two new locomotives arrived in the Colony, they cost £1,425 each and were named "Georgetown" and "Mahaica".

There are no records of any subsequent meetings held to decide the points of dispute between the Liverpool Directors and the London shareholders. However, it was discovered that an Ordinance was passed in the Colonial Legislature on the 26th August 1861 which showed that the latter had carried the day. This Ordinance (No 18 of 1861) empowered the company to create, and issue perpetual preference stock to an extent not exceeding £115,000, in order to raise a sum of not less than £30,000 for the purposes mentioned in Ordinance No. 23 of 1859, and also to provide the means by exchange, adjustment or otherwise, of satisfying and extinguishing all existing claims in respect of bonds and preference stock previously created, and finally to satisfy all existing debts and liabilities of the company. This preference stock was to bear interest perpetually at 7% per annum, and after the satisfaction of all existing bonds and preference stock, this interest was to have priority and to be payable out of the revenue of the company in each year before the payment of any dividend on the ordinary capital stock of the company. It was further provided that if the net revenue of any year was insufficient to the whole interest at the rate aforesaid, the unpaid portion would remain chargeable on the net revenues of future years.

As further evidence of the victory won by the London shareholders in their fight against the Liverpool Directors, an Ordinance was passed early in 1862 repealing the sections of Ordinance 15 of 1855 which required the management of the company to be located in the city of Liverpool. However, it was decided by a resolution passed that at a general meeting it would be decided at what place in the United Kingdom the management would be carried on. In September of the same year at an extraordinary general meeting in Liverpool, resolutions were passed as to the manner in which the provisions of Ordinance 18, 1861 were to be carried out, and transferred the management of the company to London. The Liverpool Directors were peeved at this decision but eventually conceded.

The welfare of the railway depended on the industrial activity in the areas through which its line passed. An attempt was made at this time to float a company for cotton growing on the East Coast of Demerara. On 10th July 1862, an advertisement appeared in the press by The Demerara Cotton Company, Ltd. established and registered under the Joint Stock Companies Act, with a capital of £50,000 in 10,000 of £5 each. No subsequent mention of this company can be discovered, and it may be assumed that it formed one of the numerous schemes formulated for the development of the colony which came to naught.

When the next half yearly general meeting of the Railway Company took place in London in May, 1863, the Chairman (Mr JA Tinne) informed the meeting that the arrangements for the conversion of the bonds and old preference stock had been carried out with great success, and ample funds had been provided for the completion of the railway in accordance with the Colonial Ordinance so as to secure the cancellation of the Government mortgage. He added that there was now a far brighter outlook for the company than in his opinion, there had been ever before.

The line was formally opened to Clonbrook on the 1st August 1863, and the tariff fares showed the 1st class to Clonbrook was 88 cents as compared with 85 cents at the time, and second class 56 cents as compared with 51 cents. A third class was also provided, the fare being 36 cents while no third class accommodations were allowed.

In 1863, two further locomotives arrived in the colony, costing £1,593 each. They were named respectively "Victoria" and "Alexandra," Alexandra did duty for the Transport Department as a relief engine. The "Victoria"

came to the end of her career in 1921. The affairs of the company were satisfactorily straightened out at the time, and this was evidenced by the fact that at the first half yearly meeting in April, 1864, the Chairman reported that revenue permitted not only of interest being paid on the 7% preference stock, but it was also possible to declare a dividend of 21% on the ordinary stock of the company. The shareholders were delighted with this great news and the fact that the Mahaica link was finally completed.

On the 31st August 1864, His Excellency the Governor Sir Francis Hincks formally opened the completed railway line from Georgetown to Mahaica. A large party of especially invited guests left Georgetown at 11am by a special train that was elaborately decorated. On arrival at Mahaica about an hour and half later, the party gathered on the station. James Stuart, the Chairman of the Demerara Board, whom, after referring to the advantages that the completion of the railway afforded all classes of the community, requested His Excellency to declare the line open. His Excellency expressed the gratification he felt in that this was the first opportunity he had to refer publicly to the Demerara Railway Company. He referred to similar undertakings in other colonies, and complimented the company in having secured the services of a manager so esteemed as Mr. Martin, and expressed his regret that owing to some delay in executing the necessary legal documents, he could not present the mortgage on the railway held by the colony. He however, expressed his belief that there was not a man in the colony who did not heartily approve of that mortgage being cancelled now that the line was finished according to the terms of the arrangements entered into. His Excellency then declared the line of the railway from Georgetown to Mahaica Creek opened.

The railway, measuring twenty-one and a half miles, had taken eighteen years, to build, and the Chairman at a meeting of the shareholders in London early in 1865, stated the cost of construction, to have been £313,890. The cost of the railway to the company, however, seemed to have been only £49,023, the balance of £64,867 representing the Government loan or £45,000 together with various other sums advanced by Government under the mortgage, and the cost of two locomotives and forty goods wagons imported at Government expense, repayment of all of which sums was waived under the provisions of Ordinance No 23 of 1859. The amount actually received from the shareholders was £250,100 and £135,100 ordinary stock and £115,000 or 7% perpetual preference stock. In subsequent years a further £29,900 was received, making the total of ordinary stock £166,000, which together with the £115,000 preference stock brought the total capital to £280,000. During the following two or three decades the railway appeared to have enjoyed more peaceful times. Operating with a varying measure of success it was able to pay interest to its 7% preference stockholders with regularity, and dividends averaging 5% to the ordinary shareholders.

The railway emerged as a cargo carrier but ended up as a passenger service. Two and a quarter million passengers were carried on the Georgetown – Mahaica railway service up to 1962 and accounted for four-fifths of the revenue of roughly \$800,000 and only the remaining one-fifth was earned from cargo. The sugar and rum cargo was lost to canal, and with the introduction of bulk loading, sugar was shifted to road transport. From the original commodities for which the railway was designed only three items remained with the railways. Only one-tenth of the plantain traffic was outward bound instead of inward. The other two products retained by the railway system were molasses and cattle, but in 1962, these two commodities accounted respectively for a mere 7% and 1% of the revenue from the Georgetown – Rosignol railway system. In the course of the years the rice traffic on this railway replaced the lost sugar traffic but only to the extent of about 10% of the railway's annual revenue and with the intervening increase in the country's population there was a corresponding increase in out-going shop-goods to this area, but even so, in 1962 the transport of 5,000 tons of shop-goods on the East Coast Railway earned \$16,000 representing a mere 2% of the total revenue.

Later, there were extension lines to Blairmont but they never paid their way, and as a result there was extreme dissatisfaction on the part of the public at the service afforded. The Government appointed a Committee of the Combined Court in 1918 to enquire into the Train Service, and report as to the advisability of the colony acquiring the property. This Committee, of which Sir Joseph Nunan was Chairman, submitted a preliminary report dated 27th November, 1918 and a final report on 31st March, 1919. Further, because of the Committee's Report, the Colonial Government decided to purchase the Railway. In 1921, the Demerara Railway Company was put up for sale 1st January 1922 the government took over its assets. No purchase price was fixed, but government agreed to pay the Company annually for as long as the rail was working. This was bad business as later events proved that the railway service had been turning out a loss for many years. It was now the government's intention to scrap the railways and concentrate on building good roads throughout the country.

Post war development in British Guiana commenced with financial assistance under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act 1945 under which initially \$12 million was allocated to British Guiana. The country's total allocation under the Act was \$20.7 million. After the enactment of this legislation, British Guiana was required to prepare a ten-year development plan 1947/56 and a Development Committee of the Legislative Council was appointed to formulate this Plan. The ten-year plan was laid before the Legislative Council in December 1947, and in 1950, it was comprehensively revised. During this period, 1947-1952 government investment for development purposes totalled about \$28 million. This amount was distributed broadly under the main heads

of expenditure as follows: \$10.3 m. mainly on economic programmes such as agriculture, forestry, transportation, communications, industry and general surveys and research.

In 1953, at the invitation of the Government, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) sent a mission to the country to survey the economy as a whole and to make recommendations on the level and direction of future development, taking into account the internal and external financial resources that were available. The Mission found that British Guiana was a developing economy and that in many fields the degree of progress and development was already high. They agreed generally with the Government's proposals for continuing development, and suggested a number of new proposals. Over the whole field of development, the Mission recommended an investment programme of \$66 million for the five years 1954 to 1958 with emphasis on agriculture, transport and communication.

Major public investments were recommended in the field of agriculture, and of transport and communications; 37% of the development funds was allocated to agriculture and 34% to transport and communications. The expansion and diversification of agricultural production were seen as essential to the further growth of the economy. The proposed transport and communications system was closely linked to agricultural development.

The government accepted the World Bank programme in principle and as a sound basis for future development, but it was considered that a larger programme than the Mission recommended was required. In order to make an immediate start on such an expanded programme, it was decided to draw up an initial programme for the two years 1954/55 which would later be absorbed into a comprehensive long-term programme. Accordingly, a programme was formulated for the expenditure of \$44 million during the two years 1954–1955. In this development plan, only 30% was spent on transport and communications.

In 1957, there was a change in Government and the programme was reviewed and increased from \$91 million to \$102 million. Most of the increase was allocated to agriculture which increased from \$4m. to \$5m.

It was stated that with the vexed problem of maintaining the East and West coast railways in terms of the likely changes in the traffic pattern without prejudging the issue, it seemed unlikely that the IBRD conclusions of 1953 would have stood without revision, especially if the price mechanism was intelligently used to encourage the maximum utilization of resources, and not discourage private investment in road transport.

Due to light construction, and poor maintenance throughout their existence, the railways had become an expensive unit in British Guiana's transport system. The obsolescent equipment caused operating deficits; there were excessive costs of maintenance, and unduly high expenditures for administration and staff. The lines had carried substantial traffic, mostly passengers, some of it in daily peak periods. It was clear that if funds for renewals and modernization were available when the lines were taken over in 1921, the railways would have been made self-supporting. Competition between the two services was not the cause of the condition of the railways, nor did competition from road transport have any serious adverse effect. The problems developed simply through continued financial stringency. A sequence of difficulties during the twenties, the world depression, and the war and its aftermath led unavoidably to neglect in upkeep and maintenance of services. Until 1951, the situation had steadily worsened. Since then, a hinted program of rehabilitation had some small effect. The economics recommended by a Ways and Means Committee of the Legislative Council in May 1952 and a new management had succeeded in halting the rising deficit. During that time, two possible ways to achieve solvency were prescribed. One was to bring the railway completely up to efficient standards; the other was to abandon the railway after alternative road transport facilities had been provided. The mission studied both methods and the alternative costs were compared.

It was recommended that both railways have a single-track line, with crossing loops at the stations and further crossing facilities at intermediate plantation sidings. On the East Coast line, the distance between crossing points varied considerably, and this reduced the capacity. One or two additional crossing loops were needed. The West Coast line did not require additional crossing facilities. Increased crossing facilities for the East Coast line cost \$150,000. The track consisted of 70lb yard rails on hardwood sleepers. This was unusually heavy for the trainloads, which were limited to the maximum 10 tons per axle imposed by the strength of the bridges. A heavy track was required because the lines had no ballast and they were of soft formation. Such construction was sensible when good ballast was unobtainable. Hardwood sleepers of excellent quality were readily available and rails and fastenings were relatively cheap. In spite of its age, there was still a long life in the track, and a sufficient stock of second-hand material from Bermuda was still on site for relaying purposes. After a century of traffic, the formation was stable. Points and crossings were required.

Further, as stone ballast was procurable, it was recommended that a light ballast bed of not more than 6 feet depth was to be laid down on the East Coast main line, omitting the branch lines. This would have reduced maintenance and brought the growth of weeds under better control, and thus help rid the track of stray cattle that were now a menace to safe running. Relaying of track, points and crossings on the East Coast line were estimated to cost \$ 350,000.

In addition, on the East Coast line there were over 200 bridges and culverts, On the whole, they were in good condition but a small number needed attention to make up for arrears in maintenance. Repairs to bridges and culverts estimated for the East Coast line was \$267,000.

Also, buildings were made of wood, and if kept in repair and given a coat of paint at regular intervals, were indestructible. Small improvements in amenities and some improvements to platforms were needed. The estimated cost of repairs to buildings for the East Coast line was \$50,000.

The rolling stock was the critical factor for the efficiency of the railways. Stock consisted of 7 steam locomotives, 2 diesel electric locomotives, petrol tractors, 4 rail cars, 55 passenger carriages (seating capacity 2,951), 87 vans and other coaching vehicles, 344 goods wagons (carrying capacity 2,463 tons), 9 ice vans vehicles (carrying capacity 76 tons) Of these, the following units were in reasonable working condition: 4 steam locomotives, 4 rail cars, 7 petrol rail tractors, powered only for shunting bout, 30 bogie carriages (seating 1,500), 9 vans, about 30 goods wagons (capacity 500 tons), a small number of tank and service vehicles. All the rest of the stocks were scrap value and, if the railways were retained, their repair and maintenance costs were prohibitive.

The mission further suggested that for the five years immediately ahead, it would be wise to schedule only a portion of investment as together with improved operating methods, this would assure the efficient handling of the existing volume of traffic plus a normal annual increase. Careful study indicated at that time that on that basis, the East Coast line programme would have been carried out as follows: 5 diesel electric locomotives cost \$400, 000, 3 passenger rail cars and trailers cost \$250, 000, 15 bogie passenger coaches cost \$430,000, 400 tons capacity in bogie wagons cost \$240,000, 600 tons capacity in 4-wheel wagons cost \$420,000, 8 vans and other vehicles cost \$60,000. The mission did not recommend any abridgement in the programme for the West Coast line. The rolling stock program for the two lines would have thus totalled an estimated \$2,268,000.

They stated that due to the present layout of Georgetown, the good sidings, sheds, loading wharves, workshops and general stores were crowded together in a confined space, intersected by public roadways and commercial premises. The operation was cumbersome; there were excessive staff and heavy operating and maintenance costs. The solution was in the removal of the locomotive, carriage, and wagon workshops to railway land available at Kitty. This suggestion appeared feasible and simplified the planning of the railway connection with the new wharf that was recommended. There would have been a relief from the congestion on the present site which would have resulted in appreciable savings in operating costs. The removal of the workshops, their re-building at Kitty, and the inclusion of a permanent way workshop, sidings, staff quarters, office accommodation and the remodelling of the track layout of the present site, were estimated to cost \$300,000.

The East Coast line had its own special operating features. Its passenger traffic was mostly concentrated in the early morning hours when people moved into Georgetown and in the afternoon when they moved out. Five trains arrived at the terminus between 6:45am and 11am. The next train arrived until nearly 6pm, followed by two other trains within slightly more than an hour. Similarly, only two trains left Georgetown in the morning and six in the afternoon and evening. Only two trains travelled the entire distance of the line each way. The peak traffic consisted of workers, schoolchildren and marketing villagers. This pattern of traffic had its advantage of increasing the capacity of the single lines, reducing the number of crossings, and limiting the chance of delay. On the other hand, it necessitated an early start from country stations, and trains either ran empty to those stations or were stationed there overnight.

There were four intermediate stations between Georgetown and Rosignol in addition to the two terminals where trains kept overnight. The procedure was costly and locomotives were kept under steam, crews were on duty overnight without producing revenue, accommodations were provided for them, while arrangements were made for cleaning fires, watering locomotives, and sweeping carriages. The introduction of diesel traction would have eliminated much of this expense. Diesel locomotives needed little attention, consumed no fuel or water when standing, and train crews could have their home at the station where trains started and ended their daily runs.

It was recommended that a close study be made of the possibility of concentrating the passenger train staff at one intermediate station. Mahaica – Mahaicony was indicated, in order to achieve savings in time and costs in the traffic and locomotive running departments. Preliminary consideration of this question showed that the timetable of passenger trains in each direction between Georgetown and Rosignol, even with the addition of one extra mixed train for local goods and third class passengers, were assured by a daily four diesel engines and eight crews, and with a fifth engine and two crews resting or standing by.

It was stated that the modernization of the equipment would have substantially reduced operating, repair and maintenance costs. Reductions in staff had always presented problems. It was believed that unless savings

were effected in the operating costs the railway could not efficiently serve the economy and many would be forced to cease operations. It was suggested, that to avoid the hardship that a sudden cut in personnel would entail, the size of the staff was to be decreased gradually, mainly by not filling vacancies as they occurred, but by filling them with persons whose posts were to be abolished since approximately 3%-4% of the staff left the service each year due to death, retirement, resignation and other factors, a reduction of 15-20% would thus be achieved over a five year period without real problems.

Annual sums of \$120,000 for renewals were included in the estimate of operating expenditures. At one time, the railways maintained a renewals fund but in 1930, the contributions were discontinued and in 1947, the proceeds realized from the investment of the fund were absorbed in the general revenue of the colony. The reinstating of such a fund for renewals was recommended especially for those items of more limited life. The sum suggested represented an annual contribution of 3% of the total capital investment of \$4 million for rolling stock and workshop. The total cost to put this into operating condition would have cost \$4,378,000.

The fare and rate structure of the railways for passenger and goods traffic was reasonable for existing operating conditions. However, the introduction of new equipment, especially uniformed containers as recommended and a larger proportion of bogie rolling stock of higher capacity would have brought a need for a thorough study and revision of the tariff structure. A decision to retain the railways on a permanent basis would have made it even more important to undertake the study promptly. In particular, the problem of "less than wagon load" consignments should have been studied, as this would have had considerable influence on the proportion of high-capacity bogie wagons to low capacity four-wheel wagons which were to be provided in the railway investment programme.

The roads did not have the capacity to handle the additional traffic with daily and seasonal peaks that the railways carried. In recognition of this fact, it was suggested that the railway alignments be used for new roads. There were both technical and economic objections to this. In the first place, the railway embankments were not more than seven to eight feet wide. One hundred years railway traffic had packed them solid. To be used for roads, the embankments would have to be widened and it would take many years before they became evenly settled. During those years, maintenance would be both difficult and costly. Moreover, nearly 300 bridges and culverts would have had to be widened to carry the full width of the road and all steel spans would have to be replaced. The total cost would be prohibitive. Finally, to build the roads, the railroads would have to be closed down even if the conversion was planned in stages. During the process of building, there would be no satisfactory means of coastal transport.

The total cost of roads to replace the railway system was estimated to amount to \$11,670,000. Of this sum, however, approximately 6,990,000 would have been spent even if the railways were retained for improvement of the existing roads-\$5,690,000 on the East Coast Road (including the cost of future deviations). This left a total of \$4,680,000 (\$3,360,000 for the East Coast) as the additional construction cost to replace the railways. In addition to construction costs, maintenance was considered. The additional cost for increased maintenance of the larger road surface was estimated at 1¼ percent of the construction cost. This would mean an annual cost for maintenance of the East Coast Road of \$58,000 a year or a total of \$81,100 per year.

Further, the cost of the equipment needed for adequate road transport in the event the railways were scrapped was calculated on the assumption that most of the good's traffic now carried by the railways were taken over by the steamer services and by private, industrial and commercial firms using their own vehicles, leaving only a small portion to be handled by private road haulers. A number of Lorries were needed to be imported but since private enterprise supplied the capital, the cost was small. This item was omitted from the cost calculation. The situation was different with regards to passenger traffic. A well organised passenger road transport system was essential if the railways were to cease operations. There was little private experience in the colony with passenger transport. It would come on line within the five-year transition period, but meanwhile the road services would probably have to be operated at least initially by the Transport and Harbour Department. Passenger traffic on the East Coast line during the second half of 1952 totalled 14.5 million miles, or an estimated 29 million for a 12 months period. With normal development, it was estimated that this figure would rise to 33.4 million in 1958. The number of buses necessary to carry equivalent traffic was roughly estimated. The East Coast bus schedules operated by private owners covered an annual mileage of 33,300 miles per bus, and the local bus service in Georgetown, with 80% of the buses in service, showed an annual mileage per bus in service of 24,000. On this basis, the East Coast schedules would average 26,600 miles per year per bus. A fully occupied bus during all of its trips could therefore carry traffic of $26,600 \times 40 = 1,064,000$ passenger miles. However, not all buses would be full, and no bus would be full over the whole distance of its run. In practice only from one-half to two-thirds of capacity would be used. Using the higher ratio each bus would be expected to carry 700,000 passenger miles. On this rather optimistic basis, 48 buses would be required to replace the East Coast line.

After 1958, even if the railways were abandoned, there would remain an annual cost to the government of up to \$72,000 for the railway perpetual stock. Based on the factors presented, the mission recommended that

railways be retained, and that the government undertake a programme for their rehabilitation and modernization, as a part of the recommended five-year development program. The transport problem of most immediate urgency that faced the government was to decide on the future of the railway system. The government particularly requested the mission to consider whether the Railway, in view of its short haul and heavy operating losses, should be abandoned in favour of road transport. After a study of the complex factors involved, the mission concluded that the railway should be retained as essential to the colony's economy, but to enable the railway to provide efficient service, its equipment and operations should be overhauled and modernized. The mission recommendations were based on the fact that the extra capital cost of a construction program for roads would be adequate to carry the railway's present and prospective traffic that would have amounted to at least \$4.6 million more than the cost of rehabilitating the railway.

During this period an efficient railway service was not provided even though diesel-powered locomotives were imported on January 2nd 1955 and thereafter. Although they were goods trains, they were used as short passenger trains if required, but they were not sufficiently fast for general passenger trains services, but the services were still poor. Many village representatives during the village conferences, asked Governor Alfred Savage to encourage the fixing of the railways. There were complaints of the windows falling off, and in some cases, there were no windows. Engineers were sent to Britain for training, whilst there were some visiting engineers who came to survey and make recommendations. Even though there were improvements in the arrival and departure times of the trains, these improvements were seen as naught because by 1965 some officials had characterized it as inefficient and wasteful of government-funds. There were tremendous losses from the railway being incurred.

Even though there were many feasibility studies done on the railway and the suggestions by some that the railways should remain opened, they were eventually closed. In addition, the country could not afford both the rail and road along the coast and they were thus sacrificed for roads.

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History of the British Guiana West Coast Railway, 1897-1971

By Shammane Joseph

The British Guiana government and the Demerara Company concluded a contract in 1896 to construct the West Coast Railway. The railway was completed by 1912 from Vreed-en-Hoop to Greenwich, West Coast Demerara. However, controversy arose during this period when Governor Walter Egerton persuaded the Demerara Railway Company to extend its West Coast line to Parika, securing a thorough communication link between the Essequibo and Demerara estuaries.

He was able to get finance for this project but there was so much uproar over the covert deal done by Governor Egerton, this extension was almost shelved. Nevertheless, by 1914 the railway track was extended 3½ miles to Parika. The completed track was 18½ miles long, with a 3ft 6ins gauge line. During its construction there were financial problems which plagued the company, more so the expectation of revenue was never achieved from this new railway. As such on 1st January 1919, the Company received from the government a guaranteed subsidy for each ½ year a sum equal to interest at the rate of 4% per annum on the sum of £52, 083. 6s 8d. An annual subsidy was also paid to the Company for the conveyance of mails, police and prisoners.

The woes of the railway continued and therefore in 1922, the government of British Guiana acquired the West Coast Railway from the Colonial Transport Department, then in 1931 it was nationalised by Ordinance 31 and run by the Transport and Harbours Department. This was done in the hope of improving its services to the community.

The railway followed the contour of the seaboard and was two miles away from the edge of the sea, and close to the highway. It had no sharp course or steep gradients, and there was an unobstructed view of the track for at least ½ mile ahead. The line was unfenced and was freely trespassed by the public and cattle. The railway track was below sea level and during high tide became inundated. It crossed approximately 104 drainage canals and one steel bridge. It had 1¼ miles of sidings, loops and spurs. Seventy pounds rails were used as tracks, due to the soft nature of the foundation the maximum axle load permitted only nine tons. The maximum speed of the railway was 20 miles per hour.

There were eight stations and the principal ones were Vreed-en-Hoop and Parika. They had terminal stations with marshalling yards, locomotives running sheds, workshops and electric lighting plants. Only Parika had quarters for train crews. These were the only stations equipped with semaphore signals. Five of the six intermediate stations had facilities for crossing and shunting trains. Industrial sidings were situated at junction miles eight and thirteen. There were nine passenger halts where a shelter is provided and trains stopped to pick up and set down passengers. The rolling stocks were upgraded in 1955-56 when carriage frames and locomotives were acquired. This was like a heart transplant for the railway.

These additions included three Ford Industrial Diesel 64 BHP Bagley Locomotives which were made in 1942, one Ford V8 Petrol 32 HP locomotive created in 1954, and four Gardner 204 H.P. diesel mechanical locomotives. Three were created in 1955 and one in 1956. Apart from that there were twenty-one passenger coaches with nine hundred and twenty-two seats, one cattle wagon and five vans. Of the 27 coaches in stock 10 were out of service since 1924. As for the goods vehicles they carried 310 tons of food.

The West Coast Railway provided the only reliable land link for passengers from the Essequibo islands, Adventure, and Bartica to Georgetown. This railway was taxed heavily each week, especially weekends when the trains connected with the mornings and evenings Parika/Adventure ferries. The absence of trucking services saw to the railway having prominence as the main mover of shop goods, molasses was dependent on rail transport, rice and sugar from Uitvlugt and Lenora estates.

Travel was even more intense on the days having outward Bartica ferry connections, since Bartica passengers travelled on the same train. In addition, many residents along the coastland from Vreed-en-Hoop to Parika made regular use of this service. The capacity of the West Coast Railway was affected by the capacity of the ferry services on the Demerara River.

The peak period of the ferry services was overloaded and the ferry schemes compounded peak train loadings due to the one-hour interval in ferry sailings. Due to this overload the numbers of railway vehicles were insufficient for passenger traffic.

This West Coast Railway had its problems but it was not the fact that it was not making a profit or too expensive to maintain, the financial problem went deeper. When the British Guiana government agreed to pay the Demerara Railway Company annuity annually from January 1919, free taxation from all local taxation of G\$123,849 and also 4% per annum on G\$336,000 debenture stock, it took away valuable finance from the railway. The government paid a cash sum of \$95,570.46 plus annual payments of lesser significance as life

annuities of \$1480 to Ms. Martin who was 80 years old, \$1768 to Mr Wigglesworth who was 70 years, five other persons appearing under the name of Williams were paid \$2.16 each, Forde and Lewis collected \$1.63 each, while Adams and Andrews received \$1.68. Therefore, by 31st December 1968 the Guyana Government paid over six million tax free annuities alone and approximately one million dollars more in interest payments for debts inherited from the Demerara Railway Company.

The Government was paying for old rolling stocks which were less than 20 years old. With all of these financial payments of some seven million dollars the West Coast Railway was deemed a liability to the government and the people of Guyana.

The government during this period undertook impressive road building projects and saw the railway as added pressure on the coffers of the state. Between 1955 and 1970 feasibility studies were carried out on the transportation systems of Guyana. It was advised by the Transport Economist BJ Smodlaka on February 10th 1962, that “the West Coast Railway should not be withdrawn, but be maintained in service for both passenger and goods traffic. However, steps should be taken to operate it on basis of a Tramway System with additional halts and crossing facilities. Two Diesel Electric Locomotives and seven passenger coaches should be purchased for immediate use on the West Coast Railway”. By 1970 the government had not made any definite intentions to phase out this railway.

However, their intentions changed when the government hired De Leuw Cather & Company of Canada Limited. They advised that the West Coast Railway services be closed in 1971 and a bus service ought to be operated in lieu of the railway at an annual cost slightly over half the annual railway operating cost.

They claimed that the bus had greater flexibility, conveniences and a higher level of comfort. Twenty buses were deemed required to provide equivalent services and that the railway rights-of-way ought to be retained for future transport needs. This advice was considered and the West Coast Railway was replaced by a bus service which was believed by many that it would have been more adequate and less costly to maintain. The railway lines were later uprooted but this researcher could not find information on what happened to the tracks.

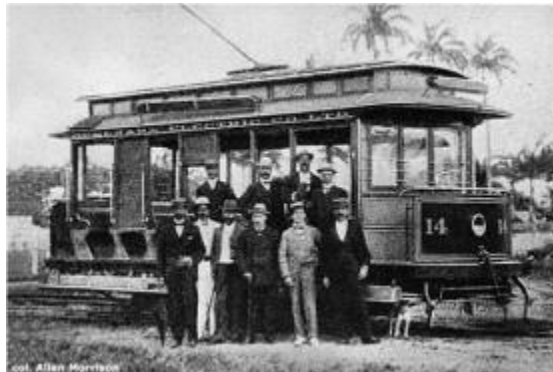
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British Guiana Tramway System

History of the tramways in British Guiana, 1877-1930

By Shammane Joseph

The Georgetown Tramway Company Limited was a limited liability company incorporated under Ordinance 11 in 1877. This Ordinance enabled the company to lay and maintain certain tramways in and near Georgetown. The tramways were to be constructed and work well and not impede or injure the ordinary traffic of the streets; more over the trams were to be to the public's advantage. The tramways were advantageous to the public because they were laid throughout the town, and the roads which ran alongside the tramways were repaired by the company. Moreover, the company brought in locomotive engines which were smokeless and noiseless, and carried both passengers and goods.



Picture taken from *The Tramways of Georgetown*, by Allan Morrison - circa 1900

This joint stock company was formed by the following petitioners, John S Hills, George Stragen, Charles H Gilbert, Robert A George and Anderson Forshaw. The company was given the concession for the tramways for 21 years, after which its successes and failures would have been reviewed. According to the ordinance, "the George-town Tramway Company limited shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession during a term of 21 years". The company began with a capital of \$45,000, which was divided into 600 preferential shares at \$50 each and 60 ordinary shares at \$250 each. Shares could only be transferred by persons authorized by the board of directors of the company. No person was allowed to have shares valued more than \$7,500 of the initial capital of the company, and if the capital increased not more than \$15,000.

In the first year of the company, the profits were distributed among the holders of preferential shares, until the holders of such shares had received a sum equal to 6% on the amount of their shares, and the remainder of the profits were distributed amongst the holders of the ordinary shares. In the second year, the preferential shareholders received 8% after which the remainder were distributed in the proportion of one fourth amongst the holders of the preferential shares and three fourths amongst the ordinary shareholders.

Meetings of the company were held in January and July each year. At the general meetings, the shareholders each had a vote for every such share held by him up to 20 shares, and an additional vote for every two of such shares beyond 20 and up to 30. The holders of the preferential shares had a vote for every five of such shares up to 50, and additional vote for every 10 of such shares beyond the first 50. At the last general meeting of the company two directors were required to retire, but they were eligible for re-election if qualified. Two thirds of the company shareholders had the power to decide by vote on the eligibility of the returning directors. The numbers of directors could have been seven or three. If the company had financial problems; then the present and past shareholders of not more than one year away, were liable to contribute to the assets of the company to an amount sufficient for payment of debts and liabilities of the company.

The lines of the tramway extended from La Penitence Depot to the Demerara Railway Company Station; Post Office to Camp Street and from Stabroek Market up Croal Street to Vlissengen Road towards the D'Urban Race Course. The head office was located at Lot 134 La Penitence.

On weekdays, the tram cars commenced running on all the lines at 6 am and continued running until 9.20pm; the last car left the railway station, Croal Street and Camp Street at 10.30pm. On Saturdays, the Croal Street cars left the market at intervals of 15 minutes and after 12 pm the cars left the market every half hour and proceeded to Vlissengen Road when they left at 9.20pm on weekdays and 10pm on Saturdays. On Sundays, the tram cars ran from 9 am to 11am and noon to 9 pm. There were two short breaks during this time frame.

Tickets were distributed to passengers by the conductors on the tramcars and cost four cents each or packets of six for a shilling. On Mondays, tickets were sold for \$6 each and domestic servants paid \$1 each. Children's tickets had to be applied for at the head office of the company. The prices ranged from \$1-\$6. Special arrangements for excursions, school tours and other occasions were allowed.

The Georgetown Tramway Company Limited, in its initial stage, was considered a plus for the population. However, it soon became a nightmare for passengers and directors of the company, owing to poor management, late arrival of tramcars, and constant breakdown of locomotives. This saw the shareholders losing profits from what should have been a lucrative investment. There-fore, after 21 years of service the Georgetown Tramway Company Limited's assets were incorporated to a new company which promised to construct, maintain and operate electrical tramways throughout the city of Georgetown and its vicinity, in the hope of promoting the development of the city and its suburbs. The existing tramways and the lighting system of Georgetown were consolidated, which assisted in the more efficient and economical working of the Demerara Electric Company, and conduciveness to the public.

In 1899, under Ordinance 13 the Georgetown Tramway Company Limited was replaced by the Demerara Electric Company, a Canadian company based in Montreal, which launched the electric tramways in Georgetown on 25th February, 1901. The proprietors of the company were William Baylies Chapman, Financial Agent; John Hutchinson, Banker; Benjamin Franklin Pearson, Financial Agent; and Charles Hazlitt. According to the ordinance, the company had perpetual succession, without limited liability. It could have borrowed money from banks or other financiers, or even mortgage some of its assets. Moreover, the capital of this new company was \$500,000, divided into 5,000 shares at \$100 each, with power to increase the same to \$850,000 upon the authority of the majority of the votes of the shareholders. By 1922, it had a capital of \$425,000 and bond issues worth \$500,000. However, the previous company had a capital of \$45,000 and could only increase same by \$20,000. The previous company could not own immovable properties, but this company could have *“owned, purchased and possessed any immovable or movable properties which were deemed necessary and proper for the benefit and advantage of the said company”*.

This new company saw to the upgrading of George-town's tramway. It became an electric tramway that worked with the overload trolley system which had about 10 miles of line, with a 4ft 8ins gauge. The new company added 14 open electric trams which had eight benches. The new cars were numbered 1-14. In 1902 two more tramcars were added, and in 1909 another pair of cars were introduced which had nine benches. The cars were numbered 15-18 respectively. The company also extended the Electric Car Service to Peter's Hall on the east bank of the Demerara River, a distance of four miles out of Georgetown. By 1922, the total tram lines were extended to 18 miles and the gauge increased by ½ inch. The company also installed a turbine engine at the company's power station the same year in order to eliminate the effects of vibration.

The company's three main termini were located at the seawall, Camp Street and at the Railway platform. The tram cars left these termini at 6.02 am every day except on Sundays, and 15 minutes thereafter until 10.17 pm. On Sundays the first-class car left the seawall terminal at 7.02 am and at every 15 minutes until 10.17 pm; there were approximately 5 different routes which were taken by the tram cars. They covered more areas in Georgetown than the previous tram cars.

Tickets were sold at 5 cents for a single fare by the conductor or from the company's office in strips of three tickets for 12 cents. Books of 60 tickets were available at the company's office at \$2.40 per book.

This company also had its share of problems. As a result, in January 1930 the Demerara Electric Tramway was abandoned (29 years later). Twelve miles of the tramway lines were bought by Edward S Sills who found it necessary to provide a more satisfactory method for the transportation of fuel cut on his property.

The tramway lines were dug up and taken from Georgetown, some thirty miles south of the capital, for the transportation of wallaba wood for fuel and for other purposes. The balance was sold to a Japanese interest and the amount defrayed was more than enough to cover the total cost of the tramway.

Source: <http://www.stabroeknews.com/>

GUYANA (British Guiana): Based on Demerara Railway Public TT dated October 1899 (a) and Government Railways Public Timetables dated November 1933 (b), December 1952/June 1953 (c), and May 1967 (d).

GUYANE (French Guiana):) Based on South American Railways by Rowe and South American SURINAM (Dutch Guiana):) Handbook 1946.

Former names: []. All points shown served by passenger trains, unless noted.

BRITISH GUIANA GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS Distances in miles

The intermediate platforms were known as 'Side Lines' in 1899 and 'Stellings' in 1967.
Pl. = Platform Some obvious typing errors in the 1967 TT have been ignored.

EAST COAST RAILWAY Gauge 4' 8½"

0	Georgetown	abcd	13½	Enmore	abcd
1	Albert Street	d	13½	Haslington	d
	[Albert Street Platform	c]	14	Golden Grove	ad
1½	Kitty	bcd		[Golden Grove Platform	bc]
3	Bel Air	ad [Bel Air Platform bc]	14½	Nabaclis	d
3½	Sophia	d [Sophia Platform bc]	14½	Cove-en-John	d
3½	Lilliendaal	d		[Cove & John Platform	c]
3½	Turkeyen	d	15½	Victoria	d
4½	Cummings Lodge	d [Cuming's Lodge a]	15½	Belfield	dabcd
4½	Industry	d [Industry Platform c]	15½	Nooten Zuill	d
4½	Ogle	d	16	Low Lands	d
5	Goed Verwagting	d	16½	Hope	ad [Hope Platform bc]
5	Sparendaam	d	16½	Dochfour	d
5½	Plaisance	abcd	16½	Anns Grove	d
5½	Better Hope	d	17	Clonbrook	abcd
5½	Vryheids Lust	d	17½	Bee Hive	d
6	Montrose	d	17½	Green Field	d [Greenfield Pl. c]
6	Brothers	d	18	Orange Nassau	d
6½	Felicity	d	18½	Grove	d
6½	Le Ressenouvenir	ad	18½	Unity	d [Unity Pl. bc]
	[Le Ressenouvenir Platform	bc]	18½	Lancaster	d
7	Success	ad [Success Platform b]	19½	Spring Hall	d
7	Chateau Margot	ad	19½	Tranquility Hall	d
7½	La Bonne Intention	d	20	Cambridge	d
	[La Bonne Intention Pl. c]		20	Good Intent	d
7½	Beterverwagting	abcd	20½	Jones Town	d
8	Triumph	d	20½	Hand-en-Veldt	d
8½	Mon Repos	ad [Mon Repos Pl. bc]	20½	Good Hope	d
8½	De Endragt	d	21½	Mahaica	abcd
8½	Good Hope	d	21½	Trois Amis	d
9	Two Friends	d	22	Gorichem	d
9½	Lusignan	ad [Lusignan Pl. bc]	22½	Wilhemina	d
9½	Annandale	d	22½	Bygeval	d
10½	New Orange Nassau	d	23	Vevay	d
10½	Buxton	abcd	23½	De Hoop	d [De Hoop Platform bc]
10½	Friendship	d	23½	Belvedere	d
10½	Vigilance	d	24	Manilla	d
11	Bladen Hall	d	24½	Strangroven	d
11½	Strathspey	d	24½	Mes Delices	d
11½	Non Pareil	ad	24½	Content	d
	[Non Pareil Platform	bc]	25½	Danzic	d
11½	Enterprise	d	25½	Columbia	d [Columbia Pl. bc]
12	Elizabeth Hall	d	25½	Glaziers Lust	cd
12½	Bachelor's Adventure	d	25½	Prospect	d
	[Bachelor's Adventure Pl. bc]		26	Harmony	d
12½	Paradise	d	26½	Rebecca's Lust	d
13	Foullis	d	26½	Broom Hall	d
13½	Porters Hope	d	26½	Fairfield	d [Fairfield Pl. bc]

EAST COAST RAILWAY (contd.)

27	Bath	d	
27½	Quakers Hall	d	
27½	De Kinderen	ad [De Kinderen Pl. bc]	
27¾	Zeeland	d	
28	Planters Hall	d	
28½	Cottage	d	
28½	Belmont	d	
28¾	Perseverence	d	
29	Bushy Park	d	
29½	Park	d	
29½	Now-or-Never	d	
29½	Sarah	d	
29¾	Drill	d [Drill Platform c]	
30½	Yorkshire Hall	d	
30½	La Raisonable	d	
30¾	Ormsary	d	
31½	Taymouth Manor	d	
31¾	Farm	d	
32½	Mahaicony	abcd (1899 terminus)	
32¾	Park	d	
33¼	Fellowship	d	
33½	Grove	d	
33¾	Huntley	d	
34¼	Airy Hall	d [Airy Hall Pl. bc]	
34¾	Dundee	d [Dundee Platform bc]	
35	Novar	d	
35½	Good Faith	d	
35¾	Recess	d [Recess Platform b]	
36¼	Calcutta	d	
36½	Catherine (Burma)	d	
		[Burma Platform c]	
36¾	Little Abary	d	
37	Sans Souci	d	
37¼	Letter T	d	
37¾	Adventure	d	
38¾	Abary Bridge	bcd	
38¾	Profit	d	
39¼	Foulis	d	
40	El Dorado	d	
40½	Belladrum	bcd	
40¾	Paradise	d	
41	Golden Fleece	d	
41½	Weldaad	d [Weldaad Platform c]	
41¾	Hope	d	
42½	Washington	cd	
42¾	Rising Sun	d	
43	Sea Field	d	
43¼	No. 42	d	
43¾	No. 41	d	
44	Belle Vue	d	
44½	Lichfield	bcd	
44¾	Cottage	d	
44¾	Moor Park	d	
45	No. 37	d	
45	Phoenix	d	
45¼	Kingelley	d	
45½	Brahin	d	
45¾	Ross	d	
46	Yeoville	d	
46¼	Chester	d	
46½	Britannia	d [Britannia Pl. bc]	
47	Trafalgar	d	
47¼	Tempe No. 29	d	
47½	Union No. 28	d	
48¼	Onverwagt	d [Onverwagt Pl. bc]	
48½	Lovely Lass	d	
48¾	Bush Lot	d [Bush Lot Pl. bc]	
49¼	Annandale	d	
49¾	Bel Air	d	
50¼	Hope Town	d	
50½	St. John's No. 20	d	
50¾	No. 19	d	
51	Fort Wellington	bcd	
51¼	Bath No. 18	d	
51¾	No. 17	d	
52	No. 16	*	
52½	No. 14	*	
52¾	Bath No. 1	d [Bath Platform bc]	
53¼	Bath No. 2	d	
53½	Woodley Park No. 13	d	
53½	Bath No. 12	d	
53¾	Woodland No. 11	d	
		[No. 11 (Woodlands) Pl. bc]	
54¼	Mende Retreat No. 10	d	
54½	Expectation No. 9	d	
54¾	Inverness No. 8	d	
55½	Williamstaad No. 7	d	
		[No. 7 (Willem Stad) Pl. bc]	
55¾	Bel Air No. 6	d	
56	Rome No. 5	d	
		[No. 5 (Rome) Platform bc]	
56¼	Edderton No. 4	d	
56¾	Mon Choise No. 3	d	
57	Cotton Tree	d	
58½	Sir James De Edward	d	
59¼	Rosignol Estate	d	
60½	Rosignol	bcd	

* these stops shown only in another 1960's timetable.

WEST
COAST RAILWAY Gauge 3' 6"

0	Vreed-en-Hoop	abcd
½	Best	d
2	Crane	d [Crane Platform bc]
2½	Nouvelle Flanders	d
2½	Union & Rotterdam	d
3	Haarlem	d [Haarlem Platform b]
4	Wallers Delight	d
4½	Ruimzeet	d
5	Windsor Forest	cd
	[Windsor Forest Pl. b]	
5½	La Jalousie	d
6	Blankenburg	d
	[Blankenburg Platform bc]	
6½	Den Amstel & Fellowship	d
7	Hague	abcd
7½	Cornelia Ida	d
	[Cornelia Ida Platform b]	
8½	Anna Catherine	d
8½	Edinburgh	d
9	Leonora	abcd
9½	Stewartville	bd
	[Stewartville Platform c]	
10	Uitvlugt	cd [Uitvlugt Pl. b]
10½	Zeeburg	d
11	De Willem	d [De Willem Platform b]
11½	Meten-Meer-Zorg	d
12	Boeraserie	abd [Boerasirie c]
12½	Zeevlugt	d
14	Tuschen	abcd
14½	Vergenoegen	d
15	Philadelphia	d
15½	Barnwell	d
16	Greenwich Park	ad (1899 terminus)
16	Good Hope	d
16½	Ruby	d
16½	Farm	d [Farm Platform bc]
17	La Destin	d
18	Orangestein	d
18½	Bushy Park	d
18½	Hydroonie	d
19	Parika	bcd

PROUSTON'S RAILWAY Gauge 1.0m

passenger service to Wismar (ref. South American Handbook 1926), closed 1950?

Km 0	Rockstone
.	Greenheart Camp (passengers?)
30	Wismar

EMBA RAILROAD Gauge 3' 0"

Class of the World's Railways, Hollingsworth offers to passenger service operating in 1980

m 0	Linden [McKenzie]
48	Ituni Township

MCKENZIE - THREE FRIENDS Gauge 2' 6"

3

1957 Railway Gazette map, passengers?

- . McKenzie
- . Three Friends

PORT KAITUMA - MATTHEWS RIDGE RLY

Port Kaituma to Matthews Ridge, 40 km.
Opened 1959. Gauge 4' 8½"
Passenger service (employees)?

SURINAM:

PARAMARIBO GOVERNMENT RAILWAY

h: based on TT/fares information in South American Handbook 1946. Other information from Modern Tramway May 1968. Gauge 1.0m Opened 1903/1911.
Closed: Paramaribo-Onverwacht 1957/1961
Kabel-Dam 1940, Brownsweg-Kabel 1960's
Onverwacht-Brownsweg 1988.

Km 0	Paramaribo	h
3	Beekhuizen	
17	Lelydorp	h
.	Smalkalden ?	
30	Onverwacht	h
41	Republiek	h
48	Zanderij	h
80	Kwakoegrone	h
96	Guiana Goldplacer	h
103	Placer De Jong	h
112	Brownsweg	h
.	Sara ?	
128	Kabelstation	h
173	Dam	h

MARIENBURG SUGAR ESTATES RLY Gauge 4' 8½"

East of Paramaribo. Workmens service in 1959.

SURINAM ALUMINIUM CO. RLY Gauge 3' 6"

Moengo to River Cottico. 13 km.
Employees passenger service.

FRENCH GUIANA:

C DE F CHANTIERS CHAVINO Gauge 0.60m

passenger service operated.

Km 0	Saint-Laurent de Maroni
10	Saint-Jean

C DE F SAINT-ELIE ET ADIEU-VAT 0.50m

Mule traction, passenger service?

0	Gare Tigre (Saint-Nazaire)
.	Dieu-Mer
15	Saint-Elie

References

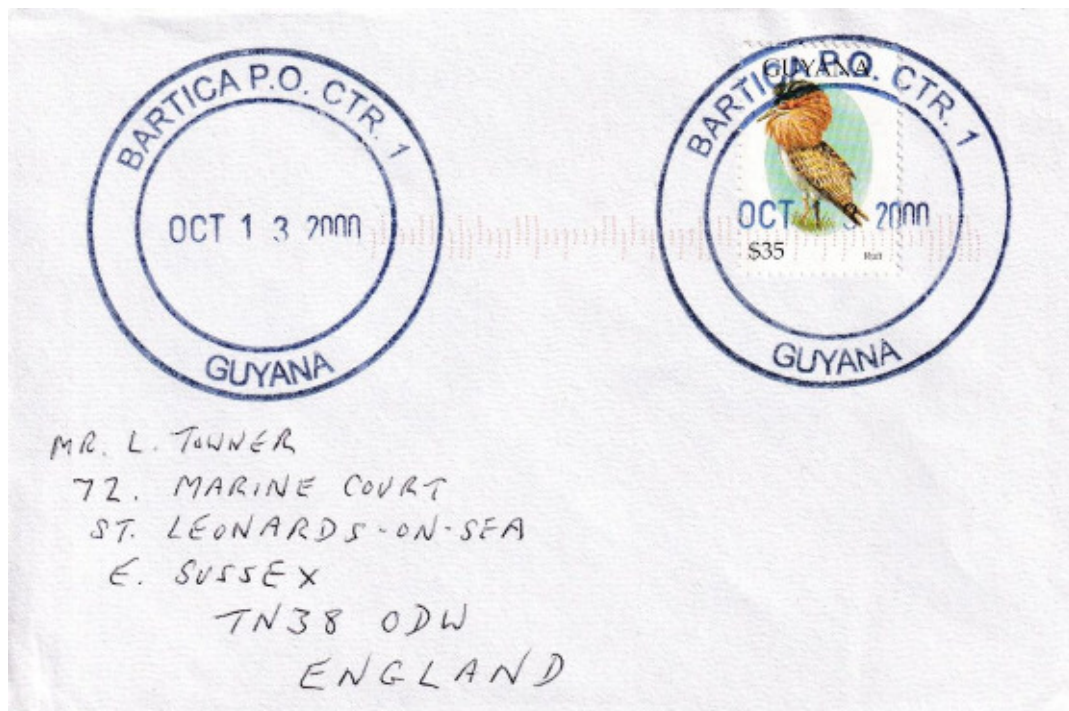
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Robin Stubbs
www in general

Work in Progress?

Any information on these covers will be gratefully received.



According to Proud – Ida Sabina



Two collector's cover which are as yet unattributed