

Lagos 1st Issue, 1874-76: Codes A and B

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Following a display last year and its report in *Cameo* marking 'The 150th Anniversary of Lagos's First Postage Stamps in 1874' [*Cameo*, number 124, volume 26, number 1, pp.16-19], a follow-up display examined the case of Codes A and B on the postmarks of these stamps. Here is a summary list describing the codes on the stamps in my collection.

1874

June: =

July: A, A, A, A, A, B, B, B, #, B, B

Aug: A

Sep: =

Oct: B, B, B, B, B, B, B, A/A/A/B (27th)

Nov: A/B/B (2nd), B, B, B, B, A, #

Dec: B, B, B, A, B, B, B, B/B

1875

Jan: A/B/B/B (6th, Bs are backward), A/B (19th), B, B, B

Feb: A, A, A, B, A, A, B

Mar: B, A/A/A/B (8th), B, B/B, A, A/B/B (31st)

Apr: A, A, A, A, A, B, A, A, B, B

May: A/B (11th), A, B, B, A, B, B/B (21st)

Jun: A/B (1st), A, A, #, B, A/A (21st), B, A/A (24th), A/A/A (26th)

Jul: A, A, A, B, B, B, A, B, B/B (31st), #

Aug: A, #, B, A, A/A (17th), A/B/B (20th), B/B (31st)

Sep: B/B, A, B

Oct: A/A/B/B (1st), B, B, A, B, B/B, A, A/B/B (27th)

Nov: A/A (13th), A, A

Dec: A, A, A, A/A/A/A (13th), A/A (24th), A/A (27th), A/A (28th)

1876

Jan: A/A/# (4th), A/A (10th), A/A (12th), A, A/A/A (29th)

Feb: A, A, A

Key:

A, or B, = single date cancel.

/ = same day, with date in brackets.

= unclear code.

underline: cancellations one or two days before or on day the steamer left Lagos.

There are 87 Code As and 77 Code Bs. Though not completely conclusive, some points were noted and discussed at the meeting. It is suggested that the mail was cancelled when received at the Lagos Post Office, with more mail brought there just before the homeward steamer was expected. The idea of Codes A and B being two different post office desk counters or two different postal clerks gained little credence. Far more support was declared for Code A and B being time-based cancellations, used for mornings (8-11am on weekdays, 8am-12pm on Saturdays) and afternoons (2-5pm) respectively. What is not in doubt was that from November 1875 onwards only Code A was used. It can be speculated that the Code B canceller had been worn out or simply lost or stolen. In February 1876, the obliterator canceller wholly replaced the old Code cancellers.







