

The Rev. Meister Mystery

Who was he and what was his BWI connection?

Our intrepid reporter Dr. Eric M. Bateson of Australia examines the case.

The mystery

Covers addressed to “L. Meister,” prefixed by either “Reverend” or “Mister” were noted in a review of philatelic covers of North America.¹ Initially his covers were sent to Montserrat, and subsequently to different cities in the USA. The covers did not give his full name, only the initial “L” along with “Montserrat” or the name of the city and state. Those addressed to “Reverend” give no hint of his religious denomination. Philatelically, most of his covers are not very remarkable, with brief descriptions in sale catalogues which rarely gave his name and as a result, cannot be identified as his.

Philatelic material

Several covers and postal stationery were available for review, including those in my collection, in auction sale catalogues, and illustrated in articles in philatelic journals kindly sent to me by a philatelic dealer. The covers are listed in chronological order as follows:

Montserrat, 1907-1911. Two covers, one from my collection (*Figure 1*), one from the Charles Freeland collection², and two postal stationery postcards.³ All were addressed to “Reverend.”

St. Kitts 1910. A postcard (see *Figure 2*).

Aberdeen, Mississippi, 1915. A post office box number.



FIGURE 1

Reverend Meister cover to Montserrat, bearing British Honduras surcharges (1¢, 2¢, 3¢ of 1888-89; 5¢ and 15¢ of 1891). Cover is dated February 27, 1911.

Amarillo, Texas, 1920-22. Three covers, all addressed to “Mister.” Two from my collection (e.g., *Figure 3*) and one included in an article in this *Journal* in October 2003.⁴



FIGURE 2

Reverend Meister 1d postcard of Antigua, used in St. Kitts and dated April 26, 1910.

Leavenworth, Kansas, 1922. Two covers to “Reverend,” one from my collection redirected from Amarillo (*Figure 4*), and one from a recent auction sale.⁵

Central Wichita, Kansas, 1923. One cover addressed to “Mister” (*Figure 5*).

Dorrance, Kansas, 1923-24. Two covers from my collection, both addressed to “Reverend” (e.g., *Figure 6*).

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FIGURE 3

Meister cover to Amarillo, Texas, bearing British Honduras 1913-21 25¢ back-green and emerald. The cover is postmarked July 7, 1922.

Delia, Kansas, 1925. One cover from my collection addressed to "Reverend."

Kansas City, Kansas, 1925. A cover addressed to "Mister" which was redirected from Delia (note: this cover was illustrated in the *Journal* in 2006).⁶

Holyoke, Colorado, 1927-32. Thirteen covers addressed to "Mister" -- six from my collection (e.g., *Figures 7, 8, 9*); five from the stock of a dealer⁷, and two from recent auction sales.⁸



FIGURE 4

Reverend Meister cover to Amarillo, Texas, redirected to Leavenworth, Kansas. The cover bears Barbados stamps from the 1921-24 series and is postmarked January 11, 1922.

Analysis of Meister's philatelic material is considered in four sections: status, personal, religion, philatelic.

Status:

Evidence of his two professions can be found in the handwriting of his name and address on the self-addressed envelopes sent to him from four different post offices. The style of writing is very flamboyant and can be seen especially in *Figures 5* and *7* (sent to "Mister"), in *Figure 8*, and the cover illustrated in the *Journal* in October



FIGURE 5

Meister cover to Wichita, Kansas, bearing Dominica 1921-1922 stamps, and postmarked in May 1923.

2006⁹ sent to "Mister." All the covers sent to Montserrat were addressed to "Reverend" and those to Holyoke (his last known address) were sent to "Mister."

Personal:

The Special Collections librarian of the Amarillo (Texas) Public Library¹⁰ and the librarian of the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library in Kansas¹¹ kindly found the following personal details about Meister. They confirmed he was a Catholic priest and that the initial "L" stood for "Leonard." He was born in Egenhofen, Germany in 1873. His date of arrival in the West Indies is not known, but it was probably before 1905 and the date of departure via Trinidad and Cristobal with arrival in New Orleans is 1914.



FIGURE 6

Reverend Meister cover to Dorrance, Kansas, bearing Dominica stamps of the 1921-22 series. The cover was postmarked on January 4, 1924.

Religion:

Montserrat: Father George Agar of the Catholic Church in Montserrat¹² confirmed that Meister was the local priest from 1905 to 1910, which corresponds with the period of his philatelic activities on the island.

Basseterre, St. Kitts: A postcard cancelled "26 04 10" (see *Figure 2*) places him for a brief stay and at the end of his stipend in Montserrat.

United States: There is evidence to show Meister was a priest in the following locations: Aberdeen, Mississippi (a post office box address in 1915); Missouri (World War I draft, 1917-1918); Amarillo, Texas (federal census of 1920); Leavenworth, Kansas (two covers addressed to "Reverend"); Delia, Kansas (state census, 1925); Kansas City, Kansas (a street address in 1925); Holyoke, Colorado (he conducted a funeral service in St. Patrick's Catholic Church in 1926). He was one of several short term pastors. St. Patrick's Catholic Church was destroyed by fire in 1935).



FIGURE 7

Meister cover to Holyoke, Colorado with British Guiana 96¢ stamp of 1913-21 series. The cover was postmarked on November 12, 1931.

Philatelic:

Steve Dewett of Empire Stamp Auctions¹³ kindly sent copies of covers from his stock which included two post cards sent to Meister (“Reverend”) from the post office in Antigua. One was undated and the message said, “I am sorry your order was too late re 3d Leeward Island stamps, old colours all sold out.” The second card, cancelled “JA 4 11” said, “The stamps he required had arrived and would be forwarded to him at the first opportunity.”



FIGURE 8

Meister cover to Holyoke, Colorado bearing Antigua 1923-29 2/- stamp. The cover was postmarked on July 27, 1932.

Dr. Everett Parker, editor of the *Journal*,¹⁴ found information which was of great help in starting the investigation of Meister. In addition to details of the funeral held in Holyoke, Colorado, he found a reference to an advertisement in *Mekeel's Stamp Weekly* in December 1915 titled “Current Issues of the West Indies Colonies.” Here there was a listing of individual stamps for sale. The ad also sought people to send a wants list for Edwardian issues. The address was: Rev. L. Meister, Box 255, Aberdeen, Mississippi.

Meister’s covers are of two types. The majority are probably commercial, used to carry stamps purchased from post offices. Some are more philatelic and may have been created in order for sale in the philatelic trade (examples are Figures 7-9). The stamps seen so far on his covers are mainly from the BWI, but I have notes from auction catalogues of covers addressed to him from Ascension, Papua, Trengganu and Zanzibar. I have not seen any of his covers dated after 1935.

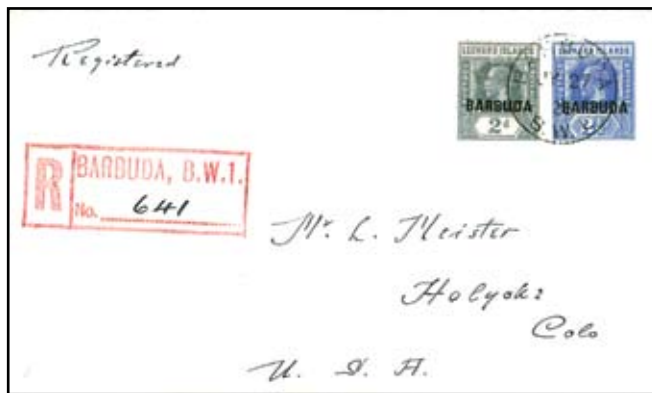


FIGURE 9a & b

Two of a set of four matching Mister Meister covers to Holyoke, Colorado, each bearing low values of the 1922 issue of Barbuda with consecutive registration numbers (641-644), indicating a particularly philatelic item.

It is hoped that this article may have thrown some light on the philatelic activities of the Rev. Leonard Meister, and I would be delighted to hear from others who have covers or additional information about the man. The author can be reached through his daughter’s electronic mail: lackhelen@yahoo.com.au.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Bateson, E.M. “American and Canadian Providers of Philatelic covers of the Empire Period (1890-1935) of the BWI,” *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (October 2006), 4.

- ² Victoria Stamp Company, Auction 13 (December 2001), Lot 92.
- ³ Drewett, Steve. Empire Stamp Auctions, personal communication (February 16, 2010).
- ⁴ Matheson, Ian. "Registration Labels, Handstamps and Manuscript Endorsements of British Honduras," *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (October 2003), 5.
- ⁵ Victoria Stamp Company, Auction 21 (June 2006), Lot 53.
- ⁶ Hart, Jerone. "Straight Line Registered Handstamps of the Barbados GPO: 1925 to 1950," *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (October 2006), 22.
- ⁷ Drewett, Steve. Empire Stamp Auctions, personal communication (February 26, 2010).
- ⁸ Postal History Auctions, Auction 70 (March 2004), Lot 98; Auction 80 (September 2006), Lot 95.
- ⁹ *Op. cit.*, Hart.
- ¹⁰ Brown, Gayle. Library Assistant, Special Collections Department, Amarillo (Texas) Public Library. Personal communications (October and November 2009).
- ¹¹ Mithen, Jeanette C. Special Collections Librarian, Topeka and Shawnee County (Kansas) Public Library. Personal communication (November 2009).
- ¹² Agar, George. Catholic parish priest, Montserrat. Personal communication (February 2010).
- ¹³ *Op. cit.*, Drewett (personal communication, February 2010).
- ¹⁴ Parker, Everett L., Editor, *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal*. Personal communication (September 2009).
- ¹⁵ Bateson, Eric. "Registration Number Sequences on BWI Philatelic Covers." *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (July 2007), 14.

Acknowledgments

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Jamaica World War II Censor Notes

By Hap Pattiz

Previously unrecorded censor chop #35 found



In 1939 and 1940 when Jamaica covers were censored with Miller Type L5, the local censor also often stamped the cover with his or her assigned number. Previously these censor chops have been known numbered between 6 and 27. The above cover is from Linstead, Jamaica to New York on October 29, 1940, with newly discovered chop #35, applied on the tape twice each on front and back.