

EGYPT.

1866. The First Issue.

The plan of the Exhibit is as follows: a brief history of the postal system just prior to 1866, showing examples of the Posta Europea system used internally and overseas and the Government Post system from April 1865 until December 31, 1866. The overseas usages demonstrating the same system employed after the first issue's introduction. We see the Essays as requested by the Egyptian Postmaster General, these include two of the five recorded Essays by Negroni of Paris and the more numerous examples in somewhat similar style, prepared by Prevost of Paris.

Finally the Essays and Proofs by Pellas of Genoa, the eventually contracted printer of the issue, are shown. These include rarities such as the 1 piastre value overprinted 10 paras and the 2 piastre value overprinted 20 paras of which only three examples exist, perforated Proofs in multiples, showing the marginal inscriptions as used on the issued sheets.

Also shown is a half sheet of 100 of the watermarked paper utilised by Pellas. As this particular item does not 'display' well an illustration of the watermark types is shown.

On the remaining frames the set of seven different values, issued on January 1, 1866 are shown in detail stamp by stamp, beginning with the 5 para grey value and an explanation of the two background types found on all values of the issue through to the 10 piastre.

A guide to the perforation of the sheets follows, as the sheet size of 200 was the same for the seven values, with the exception of the 1 piastre issued in two panes of 100 divided by a gutter margin. It should be stated that all multiples of the first Egyptian issue can be considered scarce, to quote Peter A S Smith FRPSL from 'Egypt Stamps & Postal History' 'Although blocks of four or larger are known for all values they are rare to very rare' and in this Exhibit the 5 para is represented by two strips of four and a block of four, the 10 para with two remarkable unused blocks of six, a strip of three and a strip of four on letter.

The 20 para is represented by a block of four perforated and imperforate with watermark, the 1 piastre by the largest known multiple of the first issue, the famous block of 53. The 10 piastre value by the unique unused pair ex King Farouk.

Due to the perforation and watermarked paper of the issue not being adapted successfully, perforation and watermark varieties are displayed along with selected background and overprint retouches, errors and plate varieties.

Covers are exhibited within the stamp display, primarily under the 1 piastre value which was the normal internal rate for a 10 gram letter.

Even with the 1 piastre value covers from towns other than Alexandria and Cairo are infrequently found and the Exhibit also includes a Territorial Post Office cover from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia bearing the 1 piastre, this being one of the four recorded examples.

This is the second earliest stamped cover known from Saudi Arabia.²

Combination covers with the Austrian, French, British and Italian Post Offices are also shown to illustrate how mail was sent abroad bearing the first issue, which was not valid for prepayment of postage to foreign countries outside the Turkish Empire.

The remaining values on letter can be considered extremely unusual and examples of the 5 para, 10 para, 20 para and 2 piastre (there are only three covers with 5 piastre and 10 piastre values recorded) are noted here along with a study of the extant cancellations, Instructional markings applied to unpaid letters, short paid letters, a registered cover, registration receipt form and a Consular Mail entire all being used within the period from January 1, 1866 until July 31, 1867.

1. Published by James Bendon, Limassol, 1999.

2. 'The Early Postal History of Saudi Arabia' by Baron Jacob von Uexkull, 2001