



TRADITIONAL PHILATELY COMMISSION

**An introduction to Traditional Philately
and the creation of a traditional exhibit**

by Jan Berg

Traditional Philately Class

In the special regulations for the evaluation of Traditional philately (SREV) is indicated at the outset that *"Traditional philately embraces all aspects of philately. This includes also those aspects, which may be used in other FIP classes and which are supporting the story the exhibitor is telling by his exhibit. This story must be developed according a logical plan leading through the exhibit. It may include aspects of the story of the stamp such as the way from the essays via proofs to the issued stamp with it's printing phases and all kinds of varieties. It includes all kinds of appropriate material, even material, which might be used to form an exhibit of one of the special classes. The usage of the stamp must normally be demonstrated throughout the exhibit but this might also be a special section of the plan. Then it must be well balanced with the rest of the exhibit. The usage means here the different ways of cancelling, the postal rates and also routes if needed. The presence of rare postmarks, unusual frankings and postal forms has to be considered in judging"*.

We will in this chapter clarify the above paragraph, and also refer to other paragraphs of the regulations, which together constitute the basis for the creation and assessment of a Traditional exhibit.

The selection of items

Let us start looking at the different kinds of items that can or should be included in a Traditional exhibit, and where the typically most important element is the stamp itself. Postage stamps can be displayed both mint and used, as singles or in multiples, and also on covers or other postal documents. When you describe a cover it shall be done out of the perspective of the stamp, even if an accurate and detailed description of postage rates and routes provides added value for assessment purposes.



Unused stamp



Used stamp

When selecting items, quality should normally be very high. When rarity is a factor item of lower quality might be acceptable. Both the shown stamps above are of the best available quality, the unused being the only recorded example and the used one of only seven recorded, both from the small printing of 1891.



Larger multiple, in this case a full sheet of the Samoa Express Post Office remainders of 1881

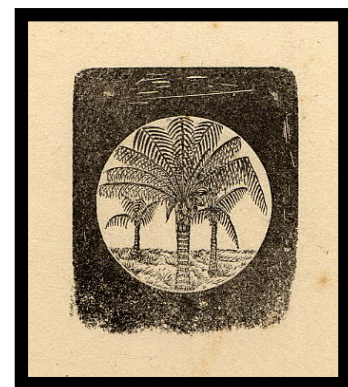
A traditional exhibit should normally also include stamps with varieties of various kinds, for example regarding watermark, gum, perforation, papers and printing. Essays and proofs of both adopted and not adopted designs are also an important part of a Traditional exhibit.



Inverted surcharge



Double perforation



Progressive die proof



Proofs in different colours



Stamps used on cover. As the Samoan stamps were not recognized the cover was taxed with a due of 5d on arrival.



The same Samoan stamps used on a different cover. As the US stamp was added, the cover was not liable to due on arrival.

The different Postal History aspect of these two covers makes both nice additions to a Traditional exhibit, but the difference has to be clearly stated in the exhibit.

To show the variety of usages of the stamps in your exhibit, it is important to try to include other items than the normal domestic or international covers.



Newspaper wrapper

To illustrate postal activities during periods when stamps were not available, also items without stamps could be displayed in a reasonable scope.



Cover sent from Samoa without stamps, but franked on arrival at Fiji

Finally, other special items, including forgeries, postally used revenue stamps or unused revenue stamps, valid for postal use, can be included in the exhibit. This group of items normally appears in a lesser extent, unless the exhibit is highly specialized into this kind of material.



Forgery

A list of different kind of material that belongs to the Traditional Philately will always be incomplete and inadequate. Your choice of collecting area also control the choice of material, but it is normally better out of an assessment point of view that the exhibit includes all kinds of material.

To gather material and start writing up an exhibit

A collection can include almost anything, only you yourself decide what you want to collect. If you intend to show your collection at an exhibition, it is often appropriate to align your collecting so that most gathered material can be used in your future exhibit.

Also, try to find a suitable title on your exhibit as soon as possible, as this will facilitate your future choices of items. A Traditional exhibit could cover a period, an issue or even a single stamp from a country or a region.

I will use my one exhibit "SAMOA 1836-1895" to illustrate the ideas behind my exhibit and my exhibiting. The exhibit sometimes has the title "SAMOA 1836-1900" depending on what I want to display. To make the exhibit as flexible as possible, I choose to enter the title on the initial plan, the introductory page, only.

When you, in your own assessment, have gathered enough material for the area you selected, it is time to establish an introductory page and to begin to mount all the other sheets. Below, I will describe three different types of sheets; the introductory page, the secondary introductory pages and the normal pages.



Introductory page



Secondary introductory page



Normal page

The introductory page

It is a common misunderstanding that only Thematic exhibits and certain Postal history exhibits need to have a well worked-out plan, or an introductory page, but it is equally important for the understanding that a Traditional exhibit has this. Unlike Thematic and Postal History exhibits, where the plan is fundamental for the understanding and treatment of the subject, the introductory page in a Traditional exhibit is normally more of a statement what can be expected to be dealt within the exhibit.

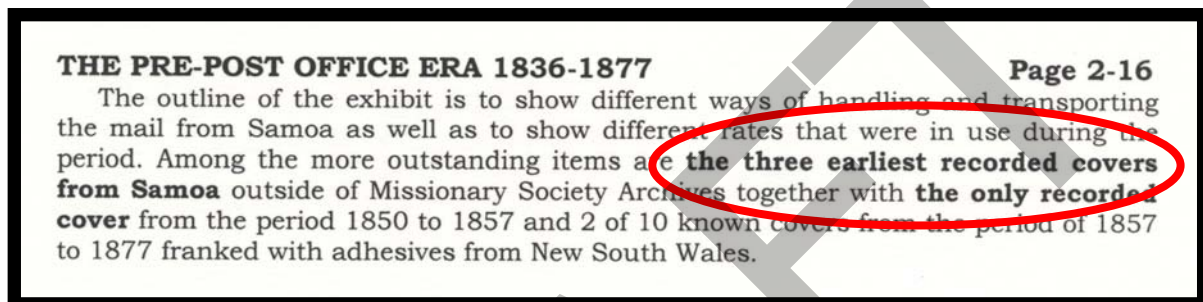
The introductory page shall explain the purpose of the exhibit, but a neatly written up introductory page has no value if the viewer do not understand the purpose. Always ask someone who does not collect your area to read the introduction, and then ask how it was understood. If you are not satisfied with the answer redo your work with the page and ask again.

The introductory page can either consist solely of text or a combination of text and a philatelic item or illustration. If you use an illustration, it should not be too dominant and it should have a direct philatelic association with the descriptive text. Avoid writing historical or geographical information of a general nature; remember it is a philatelic exhibit and not an extract from a textbook on the country.

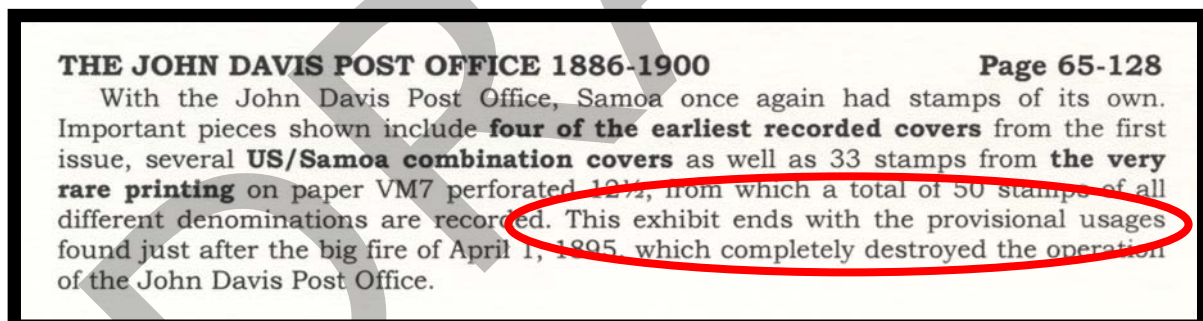
As the introductory page shall give the overall scope of the exhibit, it is important that the viewers take the time to read it; for this reason the introductory sheet should not have text with too small text height and it should be easy to understand. Remember that many viewers and jurors do not have English as their first language. An introductory page for a Traditional exhibit should normally only cover an A4 sheet. Take into account that it can be an advantage to have some descriptive parts on the other sheets in the exhibit or on secondary introductory pages, especially if it is information not necessary for the understanding of the entire exhibit.

The jurors will in their assessment take into account whether the exhibit shows what is described on the introductory page; and to loose important points only because the jurors did not understand the purpose of the exhibit is a mistake that should be avoided. For my Samoa exhibit I have chosen to describe the most important items on the introductory sheet, thereby increasing the jury's understanding of the relative importance and treatment of my exhibit. One of the most important things to put on the introductory sheet is a list of literature references.

Important details and items should be described briefly but you could use bold writing to highlight the most important parts of the exhibit.



It is important to explain on the introductory page why a certain period of time is chosen for the exhibit. In my case it begins in 1836 with the earliest recorded letter from Samoa (outside the Missionary Archives) ...



... and it ends with the provisional usages that was necessary when the post office was completely destroyed in a fire on April 1, 1895.

SAMOA • 1836 - 1895

INTRODUCTION

Page 1

This traditional exhibit shows proofs, stamps, and covers before the start of the competing German Post and then as it operated beside it. The exhibit is divided into sections based on the six different periods of postal operations. Each section has a separate introduction.

THE PRE-POST OFFICE ERA 1836-1877

Page 2-16

The outline of the exhibit is to show different ways of handling and transporting the mail from Samoa as well as to show different rates that were in use during the period. Among the more outstanding items are **the three earliest recorded covers from Samoa** outside of Missionary Society Archives together with **the only recorded cover** from the period 1850 to 1857 and 2 of 10 known covers from the period of 1857 to 1877 franked with adhesives from New South Wales.

THE SAMOA EXPRESS POST OFFICE 1877-1881

Page 17-57

This period includes the first issues of Samoan stamps, which are presented with plating studies and large multiples. Complete sheets of the TWO SHILLINGS from state II and III, together with the FIVE SHILLINGS from state III are included. **The only recorded example on piece** from state IV is presented, as is **the only recorded example on piece** of the 1d, in private holdings. A large number of **imperforate proofs** from states I, II, III and the very difficult to find remainders (as contrasted with the common reprints), are also presented.

THE RE-OPENED SAMOA EXPRESS POST OFFICE 1881

Page 58

After the closure of the Samoa Express Post Office on August 31, 1881, the consuls invited the former postmaster, Andrew Speirs, to continue the operation, this time as a provisional function. The re-opened Samoa Express Post Office finally closed on December 31, 1881. This exhibit shows **the only recorded single stamp** canceled from this very short period.

THE APIA MUNICIPAL POST OFFICE 1882-1886

Page 59-63

Covers from this period are recognized by the normal use of the Apia circular date-stamp directly on the covers, as there were no Samoan stamps available. Shown is one of only two recorded covers where the circular date-stamp was **used to cancel stamps from the United States**. Covers are also included to show the use of **adhesives from all countries known** to handle mail from Samoa during this period.

POSTAL OPERATIONS BESIDES THE POST OFFICES 1877-1886

Page 64

This part shows the possibility to send mail outside the operation of the Post Offices. This was especially used by personnel onboard ships and residents on the island of Tutuila (now American Samoa). One such ship letter is shown in the exhibit.

THE JOHN DAVIS POST OFFICE 1886-1900

Page 65-128

With the John Davis Post Office, Samoa once again had stamps of its own. Important pieces shown include **four of the earliest recorded covers** from the first issue, several **US/Samoa combination covers** as well as 34 stamps from **the very rare printing** on paper VM7 perforated 12½, from which a total of 51 stamps of all different denominations are recorded. This exhibit ends with the provisional usages found just after the big fire of April 1, 1895, which completely destroyed the operation of the John Davis Post Office.

LITERATURE REFERENCES

Robert P. Odenweller, "The Stamps and Postal History of Nineteenth Century Samoa"

Introductory page describing the different postal operations

THE JOHN DAVIS POST OFFICE 1886 - 1895

On September 21st 1886 the German Postal Steamship Agency Apia, later changed to the Imperial German Postal Agency, opened. As this Agency became a Postal problem for the non-German group of the population, King Malietoa appointed John Davis Postmaster of the Kingdom of Samoa on December 20th 1886. There are no postal evidences that the John Davis Post Office started to operate until March 2nd 1887.

Because of the transition of the Western part of Samoa into a German Colony on March 1st 1900, the John Davis Post Office closed on February 28th 1900. This exhibit ends with the provisional usages found just after the big fire of April 1, 1895, which completely destroyed the operation of the John Davis Post Office.

1886 - 1895 PALM TREES ISSUES CENTRE VIGNETTE

Mr Alfred Ernest Cousins of Wellington, New Zealand, first engraved the die for the centre vignette. It is believed that a matrix die was produced from the original centre die and used to lay down impressions on secondary dies on which the frames were added. The progressive die proof is printed on thick white card.

The centre is the same on all values but the frames are all different regarding the number of pearls in the surrounding circle.



Printed in black.
The **only recorded** progressive die proof with unclear design of the coconuts and around the left smaller palm trees.

PROGRESSIVE DIE PROOF PRINTED ON THICK WHITE CARD



Secondary introductory page

Detailed description
of the period

The philatelic information together
with an item has to be there

The secondary introductory pages

The use of secondary introductory pages is a relatively new idea, but it has already been widely spread and accepted by jurors around the world.

Secondary introductory pages are useful where it seems natural for the exhibit, and it can often be a possibility to give a large amount of information, when gathered at the beginning would feel too heavy and take too much space.

Secondary introductory pages should be used to distinguish different parts or chapters of the exhibit; but unlike the usual introductory page, the secondary always have to include philatelic items. Another example of the use of secondary introductory pages may be to introduce the next issue in the exhibit.

Certain sections within an exhibit can be very limited in scope; the secondary introductory page may sometimes be the only sheet in the section.

The normal pages

In order to have a coherent exhibit with overall harmony, it is very important to have a unified presentation on all normal pages. It is important for both the juror's and the viewer's understanding of the exhibit that important information can be found in the same position on the different pages, and it is also an advantage if some principles may be used when mounting.

I have chosen to have:

- A common upper margin of the text.
- A common position for the highest placed philatelic item.

Where possible, the sheets also have the same side margins, and the same bottom margin.

The red lines enclose the area that is used for all mounting, while the blue line specifies the top for all philatelic items. In my exhibit, I have chosen to write all text with the text font Bookman Old style, 10 points, with the exception of description of the items which is written with 8-point text height.

Note that text height differs between different fonts, why a good readable result always must be objective. I have written all headings and important information with bold text.

1886 - 1895 PALM TREES ISSUES
CENTRE VIGNETTE

DIE PROOFS
PRINTED ON THIN PAPER



Black

Die proof with wide distance to the inner circle. The die has also been completed and now has the final appearance with a cleared design of the coconuts and around the left smaller palm tree.

CENTRE VIGNETTE

PRINTED ON THICK WHITE CARD



Black



Maroon

The left die proof is without an engraved inner circle, while the right one has one with a narrow distance to the inner circle. The design of the coconuts and around the left smaller palm tree is clear.

1886 - 1895 PALM TREES ISSUES
HALF PENNY
Printing date: 1886, October 15

PRINTED ON PAPER HM6
PERFORATED 12½
Quantity printed: 12,480



Purple brown



Dark purple brown

The general heading usually consists of two rows and it describes both the issue and the value. The sub-heading gives more detailed information regarding the issue.



Used MAR 2 (1887) on a double-rated (2x6d) cover to England.

MAR 2 (1887) is the earliest date known on any cover. In total four covers are known from this date and this is the **only double-rated**. The cover was sent before an agreement with the U.S.A. was made and as no U.S. stamps were affixed, the cover was cancelled with a "T" and had a manuscript marking of "10" applied as postage due on arrival.

The descriptive text for covers is divided into two parts, the more detailed data are provided in a separate block of text at the bottom of the page.



The result with two normal pages beside each other

Judging criteria

As previously mentioned, it is important that the jurors understand the treatment of the exhibit and also the knowledge you have, and it is your responsibility as exhibitor to make it easier for the juror to absorb this information. Regulations and assessment criteria will be described in detail in another chapter, but I would like to point out how some simple operations can affect the assessment of the exhibit in a positive direction.

Treatment, 20 points

The exhibit must be well balanced and typical for the area chosen. Try to include the entire process of postage stamps, from essays and proofs, via the issued stamps and to the use of them. Larger pieces, technical printing variations and varieties also add great value to the exhibit.

The exhibitor has the possibility to omit certain more common issues or denominations in an exhibit, in order to allow for a detailed accounting of the more important parts within the assigned number of frames. A deliberate omission like this should be indicated on the introductory page or in a synopsis.

A duplication of similar items, such as a deliberate padding of the exhibit, normally render points deduction in the assessment. Duplication is counted, for example, multiple copies of a normal mint stamp without apparent

differences or shades, but also the usage on covers with the same stamp, postage, and destination. If the exhibitor chooses to duplicate with similar items, the reason for this should normally be clearly specified in the exhibit.

A frequent problem in Traditional exhibits is that the last frame contains items that from a philatelic point of view are less important than those that appear in the earlier frames. As an exhibitor you should keep in mind that the whole exhibit must be balanced, which means that additional efforts must be added to getting a good ending of the exhibit. In my exhibit "SAMOA 1836-1895" the end is very good in that it ends with the provisional usages which occurred following the fire that completely destroyed the post office. The end in my larger exhibit "SAMOA 1836-1900" is less successful as there are very few important items from the last year.

Philatelic importance, 10 points

The importance of the exhibit is assessed through an integration of:

- How much important material from the area that is located in the exhibit.
- The significance of the selected area in world philately.

This assessment point can often be the most difficult to receive a high score, but make it easier for the jurors to assess by highlighting the important items, such as with a coherent framework around the items, and through the use of bold texts.

The exhibitor to a large extent determines the degree of importance the exhibit will have already when choosing the area and the scope of the exhibit. If the area selected is too broad (e.g. Great Britain 1840-1950) the importance of the exhibit drops, the same can also happen if the exhibit has been selected too narrow. It is also important that the selected area not knowingly has been limited to only the more common issues from a period, thus ending the exhibit before a more difficult issue. In this case, it is probably better to include the more difficult issue even if it can not be presented on a par with the other issues.

Philatelic and related knowledge, personal study and research, 35 points

Philatelic knowledge includes the ability to make an appropriate selection of items to the exhibit, while the concept of "personal study and research" includes the ability to gain already known knowledge of the area. Most areas in Traditional philately are heavily studied why personal research not is necessary.

Condition, 10 points

It is very important that all items shown are of high condition. For certain types, in particular older material, a lower condition can be accepted if the condition is the highest available.

Rarity, 20 points

Depending on your choice of area, it can be very difficult to get a high score for this criterion, but again, select, and highlight the items you have in the exhibit and that you want the jurors to see.

It is often easy to see your own items as unique, but to describe an item; "this is the only recorded specimen of yellowish green colour cancelled in Edinburgh in 1922" does not benefit the exhibit at an assessment. Had the item been the only recorded copy in yellowish green colour at all, it would be very important information to give in the exhibit.

Presentation, 5 points

Even if presentation provides the minimum points by the regulations, it is one of the most important elements. An attractive and consistent presented exhibit normally gives extra values to all the other assessment criteria. Always put extra care into the design and uniformity of the presentation, without letting the exhibit be boring and repetitive in its approach.

I hope the information given in this chapter will make you all understand the principles and ideas I have been working with when collecting and exhibiting. There are never any straight answers about how it should be done, but the lines I have worked along, and have described in this chapter, have proved successful for me and my exhibiting.

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Jan Berg