

16 February 1951 Omnibus
Inauguration of
University of the West Indies



Antigua



Barbados



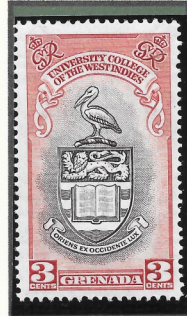
British
Guiana



British
Honduras



Dominica



Grenada



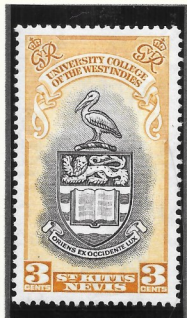
Jamaica



Leeward
Islands



Montserrat



St Kitts
Nevis
(Anguilla)



St Lucia



St Vincent



Trinidad
(& Tobago)



Virgin
Islands

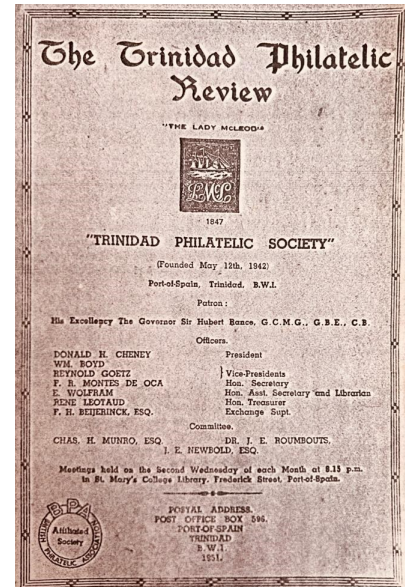


Some years ago, whilst putting together a presentation featuring 'Birds of the Caribbean' on postage stamps I noticed something unusual about an Omnibus issue. In 1951 (some 51 years after Trinidad and Tobago had become one country and some 39 years after the islands began to produce 'Trinidad and Tobago' stamps) the country's stamps in the University of the West Indies Omnibus were labelled Trinidad only. A recent share by the Trinidad and Tobago Philatelic Society has cast some light on this omission.

'Fram', F.R.A. Montes De Oca (the Society's Hon Sec 1951, Treasurer 1957 and Librarian for many years) wrote an article in the Trinidad Philatelic Review 1951 recounting what had happened.

On 16 February 1951 the Crown Agents released an omnibus set of two stamps to mark the inauguration of the University College of the West Indies. The stamps were released in the following 14 countries – Antigua, Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, The British Virgin Isles, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Leeward Islands, Montserrat, St Kitts Nevis and Anguilla, St Lucia, St Vincent, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Most of the stamps were valued at 3 cents and 12 cents (Jamaica still used pounds shillings and pence) The 3-cent stamp featured the university's new coat of arms, atop of which stood a pelican (since this bird was found all over the Caribbean and symbolised piety). The 12-cent stamp featured HRH Princess Alice, the University Chancellor. Today the university boasts a medical school of world renown and is attended by persons from across the 17 English speaking territories of the Caribbean.



In July 1950 Mr Wm, Boyd the then President of Trinidad's Philatelic Society, announced plans for the omnibus. In December the Crown Agents Bulletin stated that 'Trinidad' would be one of the countries involved and some collectors began to wonder whether Trinidad's partner island Tobago would be excluded. When it became evident that this would be the case many philatelists assumed that the missing 'and Tobago' would be overprinted. The press became aware and the Hon. Member of Tobago's Island Ward argued that the island should have had its name included on the stamp. It was explained that the mistake was on the part of the Colonial Office, and whilst no offence was intended to Tobago, the stamp could not be changed at that stage. The Hon. Minister of Communications and Works wrote apologising to the people of Tobago. It was decided that there was not sufficient space on the stamps to allow for overprinting.

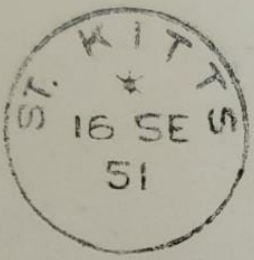
On the day of the release savvy collectors ensured that they obtained First Day Covers from Tobago, ideally with the Tobago postmark above the Trinidad title. There are not many of them around.



However, another island was also excluded in the 1951 University Omnibus. In 1825 Anguilla had been put under the control of St Christopher/Kitts, and in 1882 St Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla were made a joint constituent part of the Leeward Island Federation. By 1903 the 'joint body' of St Kitts Nevis and Anguilla had stamps, but they were only labelled 'St Kitts Nevis'. Anguilla finally made an appearance on a postage stamp when an overprint marked its Tercentenary...however it was excluded from the 1951 the University of the West Indies Omnibus, only properly being acknowledged on stamps in 1952 definitives. I cannot find a record of apologies being made to the Anguillans for the Omnibus omission, but clearly it grated and was another factor in the islands eventual decision to declare independence on 4 September 1967.

VIA AIR MAIL

First Day Cover



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