

Fabulous Firsts: **India–Scinde District** (July 1, 1852)

(This article is based primarily on an article by Berry Wood in the June 12, 1939 issue of Mekeel's Weekly, with images added; plus information on the website:

<http://indianpostagestamps.com/scinde/scinde.html>

I refer you to that site for an excellent detailed article on these stamps. JFD.)



*The first stamp
Sc. A3*

Although they have been granted catalogue rank, and are usually regarded as the first general issues for India, the stamps of the Scinde District Dawk are really local issues.

In January, 1851, Sir H. Bartle Frere became Commissioner of Scinde. At that time the postal facilities in the district were extremely poor, and the arrangements were in the hands of the local Government. When the Commissioner approached the authorities with a view to their improving the postal service, he was told that the post office did not pay its way, and that there were many other uses to which money would be put before any could be spared for improving the posts.

With the assistance of E. A. L. Coffey, the postmaster in Scinde, the Commissioner established a postal service. Instructions were issued to all Government offices in Scinde that they should receive and forward all letters handed in, and that each letter was to be franked with a stamp which had been specially prepared for the purpose. The Commissioner ordered the stamps from England, but the name of the firm which manufactured them is unknown. At one time it was believed that De La Rue & Co. had produced the stamps, but a search through the firm's records failed to bring forward any proof to substantiate this belief. (See footnote, p. 4)

The design of the stamp consisted of a representation of

the East India Company's seal: a heart-shaped device divided into three segments, in each of which was one of the letters E. I. C. Above this was the figure 4, and at the foot the value "1/2 Anna". The whole was enclosed in a circular garter containing the inscription "Scinde District Dawk". At the lower part of the garter there was a buckle.



A computer-enhanced image of the first stamp

10,000 stamps were embossed in colourless relief on red circular wafers, and it was expected that they would last for about six months. However, the post proved to be so popular that the supply became exhausted in about two months.



Scinde Dawk 1/2 anna scarlet, tied by type B (8x8) diamond of dots cancel to small native cover

The wafers were extremely brittle, and broke so easily that they were found to be unsuitable for postal purposes. When the supply of red stamps became exhausted, however, the manufacturers received instructions to emboss the next supply on white paper, and these new stamps were delivered, probably, in December, 1852. (See page 3.)

Once more a difficulty arose, because the stamps on white paper were not prominent enough, therefore, with the next supply of stamps the colour of the paper was



Sc. A1, 1/2a white. Left, used with Kotree and Hyderabad cancellations; right, an enhanced image to bring out the design, with rectangular dots cancellation.



India-Scinde Dawk, Sc. A2

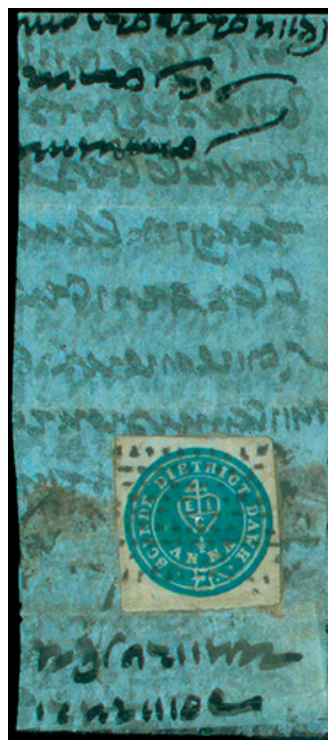
changed to blue.

The rarest of all these coloured papers is the red, this being due to its brittle nature, and many specimens have become damaged

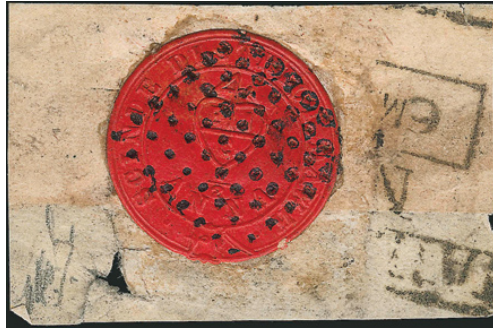
in the course of time. Least expensive are the white stamps, which were in use for two years.

The blue stamps were issued, probably, in the summer of 1854. On Oct. 16, 1854, the Secretary to the Government of India wrote to the Officiating Director-General of Post Offices regarding the Scinde stamps. The letter contained this paragraph :—"You will issue the necessary instructions to the offices of the Department. The Government of Bombay has been requested to take immediate steps to prohibit the further sale of these stamps, even for local use in Scinde, and that any stock of such stamps which may remain in that Province may be destroyed."

The cancellation most frequently found on the stamps of Scinde consists of a rectangle of dots. There are several varieties of the arrangement of this postmark. It is



1/2a blue, Sc. A2, tied by dotted grid on large part of native cover.



1/2a red with 8x8, 64 dots, cancellation

known containing 49 dots, in seven rows of seven; 51 dots, the first and last rows containing eight and the other rows seven; 64 dots, in eight rows of eight; 81 dots, in nine rows of nine.



1/2a blue, Sc. A2 with neat strike of "96" in open grid cancel

Other cancellations consist of seven parallel lines, eleven parallel lines with the figures 96 in the centre, a circle of dots, and either a large or small star. A few stamps have been found pen-marked with a cross.

(1) at

<http://indianpostagestamps.com/scinde/scinde.html>

we learn:

Postal reforms of Sind were announced on 15th October 1851 and the stamp was issued on 1st July 1852. Providing necessary time for correspondence with Bombay, hardly six months' time was left to get stamps printed from England. The evidence suggests that the embossing device, if not manufactured indigenously might have been brought from England from M/s De La & Co, but the [red] stamps were embossed in India only....

From a very close study of the designs of the stamps it is apparent that white and red are of one design and the blue of some other. As M/s De La Rue made their own die they differ from the white in thicker lettering and the outer ring. This belief is strengthened by the fact that the Post Master of Sind confirmed through his letter dated 25th September 1852 to Sir Frere about the receipt of some 10,000 stamps from England and subsequent references of having ordered fresh supplies from England. So, it appears that white and red were indigenous while blue was from England.