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# Republic of Liberia

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## FINDING GUIDE

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*Scott No. 93, 75-cent surcharge on \$1 ultramarine and black with "O S" official overprint. Henry Harper Rogers Collection, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.*



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## SCOPE & CONTENT

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Most of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum's holdings of Liberian philately are not organized as such. Rather, they are scattered throughout multiple collections transferred by the U.S. Post Office Department and the United States Postal Service; purchased using private funds; and donated by individual collectors. The purpose of this finding guide is to describe this Liberian material in one document and thereby make it accessible to researchers.

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## PROVENANCE

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Most collections described herein have their provenance given below, except for Found In Collections (FIC) materials. FIC refers to objects in the museum's possession whose provenance is unknown, undocumented, or has not been researched.

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## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

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Liberia was founded in 1822 as a West African colony of the United States. Its initial population was composed of freed American slaves returned to Africa under the sponsorship of the American Colonization Society. Africans liberated from slave ships captured by the U.S. and British navies were also frequently resettled in Liberia. In 1847, Liberians adopted a Constitution modeled after that of the United States and declared their independence.

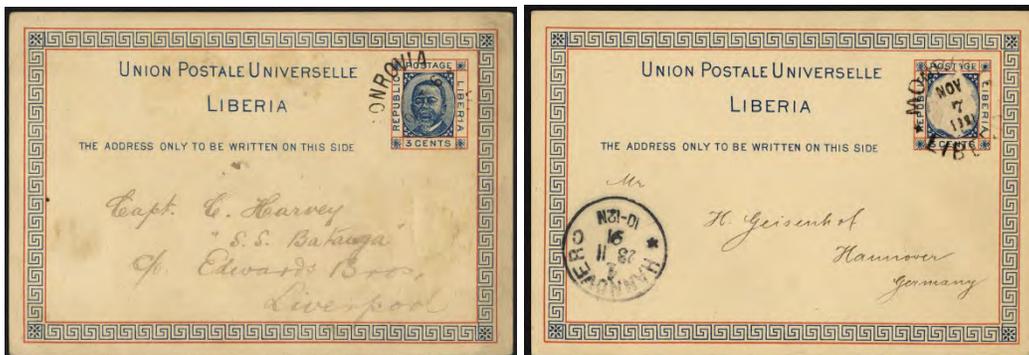
The first postage stamps of Liberia were issued in 1860. Commonly referred to as the "Liberty seated" issue, they were lithographed in London by Dando, Toddhunter and Smith.

By the early 1890s, Liberia's postal service recognized that the sale of postage stamps to collectors was an important source of revenue for the economically underdeveloped, debtor nation. Determined to make their stamps more attractive, they turned to their resident minister in Great Britain, who contracted with Waterlow and Sons Ltd. for the design and production of the country's pictorial issue of 1892-1896. Later series were engraved and printed by the firms of H.L. Peckmore and Son; E.W. Wright Banknote Co.; and American Banknote Co.

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## INVENTORY OF COLLECTIONS

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*Following Liberia's 1891 presidential elections, Hilary R.W. Johnson's portrait was scraped from some postal cards until a new design featuring his successor could be prepared. An intact and a "scraped" example are shown here. Arthur Eugene Michel Collection, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.*

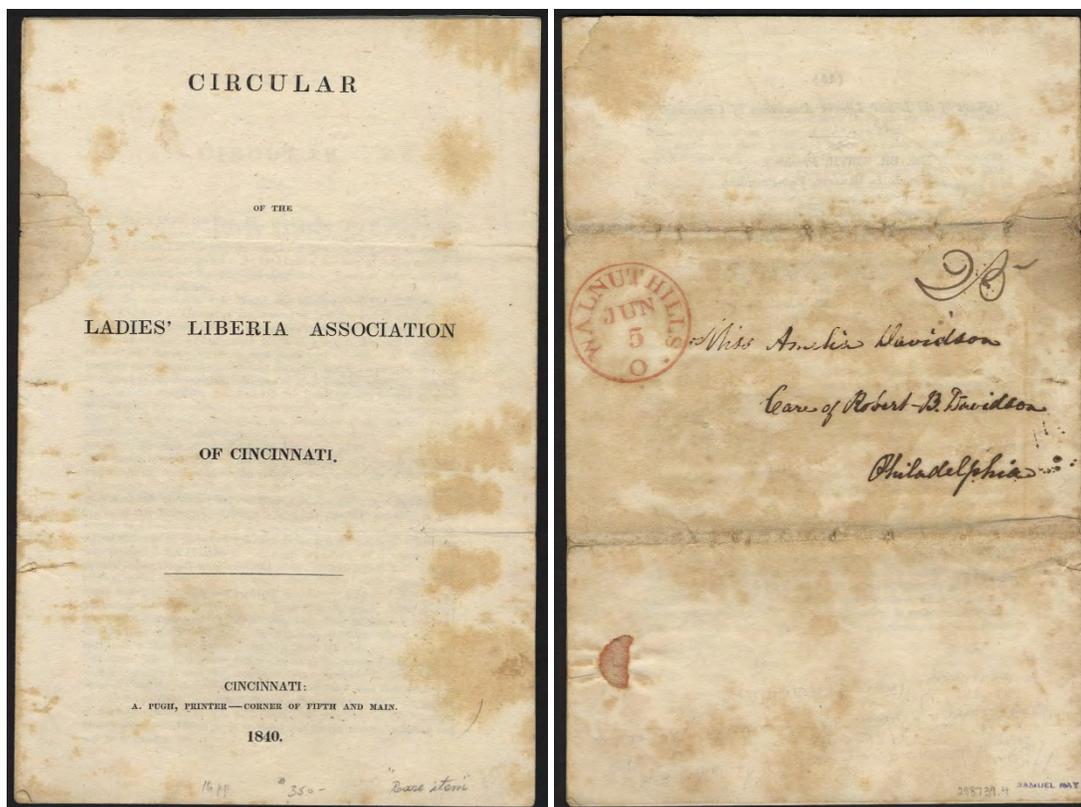
**Accession 152441** consists of 143 volumes and 3 boxes of the Arthur Eugene Michel Collection. Michel, a New York City advertising executive, bequeathed his virtually complete worldwide postal stationery collection to the Smithsonian in 1939. Liberian specimens are contained in Volume 83.

**Accessions 245624, 264055, 304513, and 314632** consist of die proofs and essays for stamps of various countries donated between 1962 and 1972. Liberian specimens are contained in 4 envelopes and 3 folders. Represented are the 1948 Airmail issue (16 proofs); 1950 Literacy issue (3 proofs); 1952 Jehudi Ashmun issue (175 proofs); 1953 Birds issue (118 proofs) and the 1958 President Tubman's European tour issue (217 proofs).



*The 1949 issue of Liberia was designed by Arthur Szyk and produced in 6-color lithography by Herman Jaffe. Accession 263967, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.*

**Accessions 257999 and 263967** were donated in 1964 and 1965 respectively by J. Walter Feigenbaum of Maryland. **Highlights:** a specialized grouping of the 1949 issue designed by Arthur Szyk, including full sheets, imperforate plate proofs, and specimen overprints; a complete set of die proofs for the 1952 Jehudi Ashmun issue; and an assortment of printing varieties, including imperforate singles and pairs, overprint varieties, and plate proof singles.



*Modeled after the Philadelphia Ladies' Liberia Association, the Cincinnati group's mission was "to promote education and religion in Africa."* Accession 288739, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

**Accession 288739** was purchased using the Milton A. Holmes Memorial Fund. It includes a 16-page Ladies' Liberia Association of Cincinnati pamphlet sent through the U.S. mail in 1840 and a printed circular mailed by the American Colonization Society's Washington, D.C. office in 1848. Three additional items in this accession are unrelated to Liberia.

**Accession 288856** was purchased using the Pitney-Bowes, Inc. Philately Fund. It includes an August 5, 1846 stampless cover from Eutaw, Alabama to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church. The letter concerns passage to Liberia for a former slave and his family who wish to become missionaries. It also includes a circa 1852 stampless cover from the Rev. James M. Priest, a Presbyterian missionary in Liberia who later became a senator, vice president under Daniel Bashiel Warner, and a justice of Liberia's Supreme Court.

**Accession 1980.0252** consists of nine volumes (containing approximately 8,300 specimens) of the Colonel Henry Harper Rogers Collection of Liberia. Born in Rome, New York in 1908, Rogers joined the Army ROTC at North Carolina State College. In 1934 he received a Ph.D. in physics from the Pennsylvania State University. He retired from the army in 1963 with the rank of colonel, and afterwards taught physics at Emory University. He donated his collection to the Smithsonian Institution in 1980.

Rogers' interest in Liberian philately stemmed from his ancestor, U.S. Senator Robert Goodloe Harper of Maryland, an early supporter of the American Colonization Society who chose the site and the name for the Liberia colony. One of Harper's manumitted slaves, Arthur Harper, was among the first settlers of Maryland-in-Africa (later incorporated into Liberia as Maryland County) and became a prominent politician in the new colony.

- *Volume 1* consists of 56 pages of regular issue postage stamps, 1860-1971 (Scott Nos. 1-576); semipostals; airmail postage; special delivery stamps; postage dues; and officials. **Highlights:** Scott Nos. 64D, 80-81, 92-93.
- *Volume 2* consists of 54 pages of airmail postage, 1936-1971 (Scott Nos. C1-C185); mint and used blocks and multiples of regular issue postage; souvenir sheets; and imperforate varieties.



*Rejected essay for Scott No. 47, the \$1 value in the pictorial series of 1892-1896. Rogers states that it was prepared by an unnamed German firm. Henry Harper Rogers Collection, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.*

- *Volume 3* consists of 48 pages. Eighteen pages of perforation, paper, surcharge, shade, and overprint varieties (including specimen overprints) in singles, blocks, and multiples. Twenty-six pages of models, essays, large and small die proofs, plate proofs, trial color proofs, and progressive proofs. Four pages of counterfeits and forgeries, including a complete set of Fourniers. **Highlights:** complete blocks of ten with all ten types of the surcharge issue of 1915-1916; essay for an unissued \$1 pale lavender stamp executed by an unknown German firm in 1881; approved model for an unissued 10-cent value in the 1936 airmail series.



Locally printed 10-cent brick red registry envelope used from Harper, Liberia to Dar es Salaam, then twice-forwarded via Polzin and Sagan to Cameroun. Henry Harper Rogers Collection, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

- *Volume 4* consists of 45 pages. Twenty-three pages of postal stationery, including registered mail envelopes, 1882-1894; twenty-two pages of stamps with town cancels or cancelled to order. **Highlights:** “scraped” postal card with portrait of President Hilary R.W. Johnson deleted; locally printed 10-cent brick red registered envelope of 1900 postally used to Dar es Salaam; German military and *seepost* cancels on Liberian stamps; British paquebot cancels on Liberian stamps.



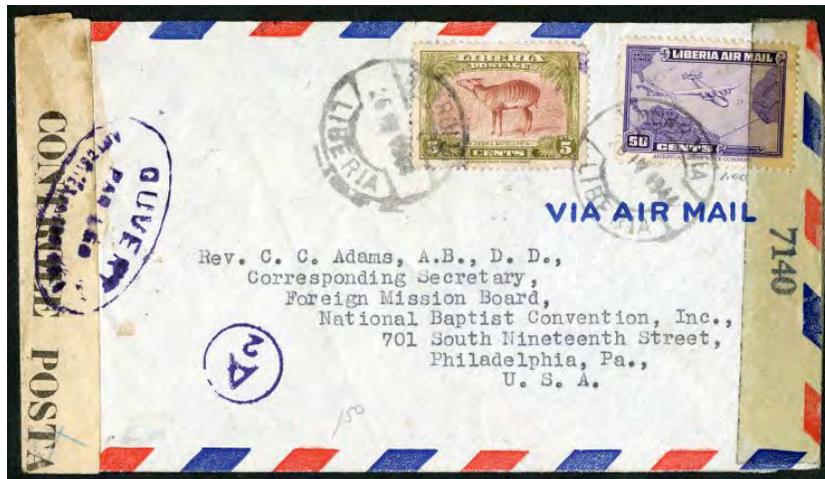
*Liberia Scott No. 62a*, the inverted elephant in the pictorial series of 1897-1905. In his 1971 book, *A Century of Liberian Philately*, Rogers stated that this stamp was said to exist but that he had never seen one. Then, in 1974, the discovery sheet of 60 inverts came on the market though the Canadian dealer Kasimir Bilecki. Rogers obtained this top margin copy, Position 3, for his collection. Henry Harper Rogers Collection, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

- *Volume 5* consists of 50 pages. Three pages of registered mail etiquettes and stamps; forty-one pages of perforation, printing, and overprint varieties and errors, including inverted centers. One page of postal stationery cut squares (possibly forgeries). Five pages of revenues, including postage used as revenues. **Highlights:** Scott No. 62a, F2, F3.



Examples of Liberia Scott No. 21 in rose red have been controversial since they were first reported in 1893. Different authorities have at various times held them to be fakes, proofs, genuine color errors, remainders, or postal counterfeits. This inland cover purports to be from Monrovia to Cape Mount, but the rose red is not tied to the cover nor even cancelled at all.  
Henry Harper Rogers Collection, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

- *Volume 6* consists of 26 pages of stamps used on piece and on cover, including first day covers and commercial uses, many to the United States. **Highlights:** U.S. Army APOs in Liberia during World War II; diplomatic pouch cover from the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia; the controversial Scott No. 21 in rose red on a questionable cover.
- *Volume 7* consists of 25 pages of covers, mostly commercial uses to Great Britain and Europe.



This 1944 cover from Monrovia to Philadelphia was subjected to double censorship: once in French Equatorial Africa (resealing tape and purple markings at left) and again at New York (resealing tape at right). Henry Harper Rogers Collection, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

- *Volume 8* consists of 30 pages of airmail covers and official mail, mostly commercial uses to the United States. Includes World War II censored covers and first flight covers.
- *Volume 9* consists of Colonel Rogers' research material, including newspaper and magazine articles; issues of the Liberian Postal Bulletin; Liberian Postal Society correspondence covering 1960s-1970s; and black-and-white photocopies of Liberian covers.

INVENTORY OF FOUND IN COLLECTIONS MATERIAL



First day cover of the 1938 airmail series, addressed to U.S. Postmaster General James A. Farley and carried on Air France's aeromaritime service from Monrovia to Paris. Smithsonian National Postal Museum cover collection.

**Cover collection:** Boxes C519-C520 and C585 of the museum's general cover collections contain Liberian material. This consists mostly of mint postal stationery and first day covers of the Mathilda Newport, Centenary of Independence, and Liberian Presidents issues. There is heavy duplication.



In 1941, Pan American Airways announced the first direct airmail service between Liberia and the United States. The Liberian Post Office overprinted existing stamps for use on the flight and placed them on sale through the Liberian Consul General in New York. When Pan Am postponed the flight until 1942, the stamps were withdrawn and have become modern rarities. Smithsonian National Postal Museum reference collection.

**Reference collection:** The museum's general worldwide reference collection consists of hundreds of thousands of stamps in stockbooks, small Hollinger boxes, and Scott album pages. Liberian issues through approximately the mid-1980s are found in stockbooks 318-321, one half of a small Hollinger box, and three folders of mounted Scott album pages that were formerly on display. **Highlights:** UPU specimen overprints transferred from the Post Office Department; Scott Nos. C17 and C23.

**Unknown accession:** Six (6) Albums of Liberian regular and air mail issues, 1936-1953.

- *Volume 1:* Air mail issues of 1936-1945 in singles, multiples, and with inverted surcharges.
- *Volume 2:* Provisional air mail issues of 1944-1945.
- *Volume 3:* Air mail issue of 1948, including full sheets, proofs, and varieties.
- *Volume 4:* Air mail issue of 1952, including specimens, color proofs, and varieties.
- *Volume 5:* Liberian overprints and surcharges of the 1940s; color trials of the 1950 issues.
- *Volume 6:* Varieties of the 1952 souvenir sheet (Scott 69a).

**Unknown accession:** Gray Hollinger box containing 2 albums.

- *Volume 1:* 51 pages, 1892-1949. Full panes, partial and reconstructed panes of issued stamps with plating notations, constant varieties, and color shifts. Two full panes of forgeries of Scott No. 64, one with bogus cancels. Numerous varieties of the 1936 overprints on the issue of 1918.
- *Volume 2:* 45 pages, 1949-1957. Full panes, partial and reconstructed panes of issued stamps with plating notations, constant varieties, and color shifts; presentation album from the Universal Postal Union Congress at Ottawa in 1957; proof sheets.

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#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The following resources related to the stamps and postal history of Liberia may be consulted in the National Postal Museum Library:

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## **CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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