

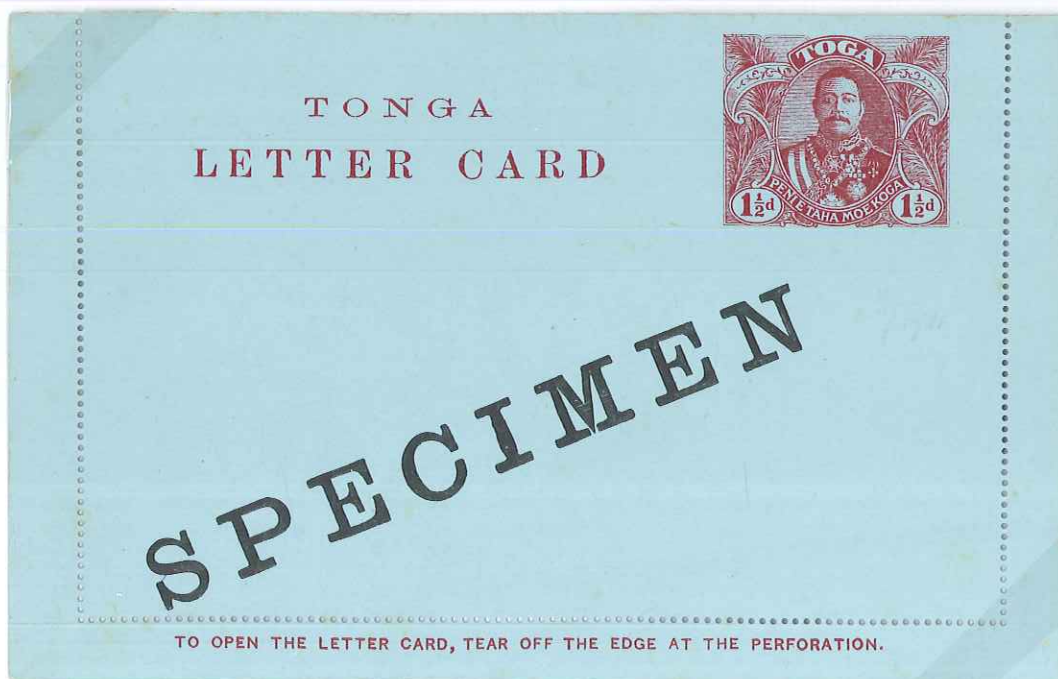
Postal Stationery of Tonga

Lettercards were first issued by the Tongan Post Office in 1911. Because they were folded, they had the advantage over postcards insofar as twice the writing area was available. The first issue has the wording "IF USED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD THE ADDITIONAL POSTAGE REQUIRED SHOULD BE SUPPLIED BY MEANS OF ADHESIVE STAMPS" on the reverse.

A few examples of proofs of the pre-printed stamp are known, as seen in this example:

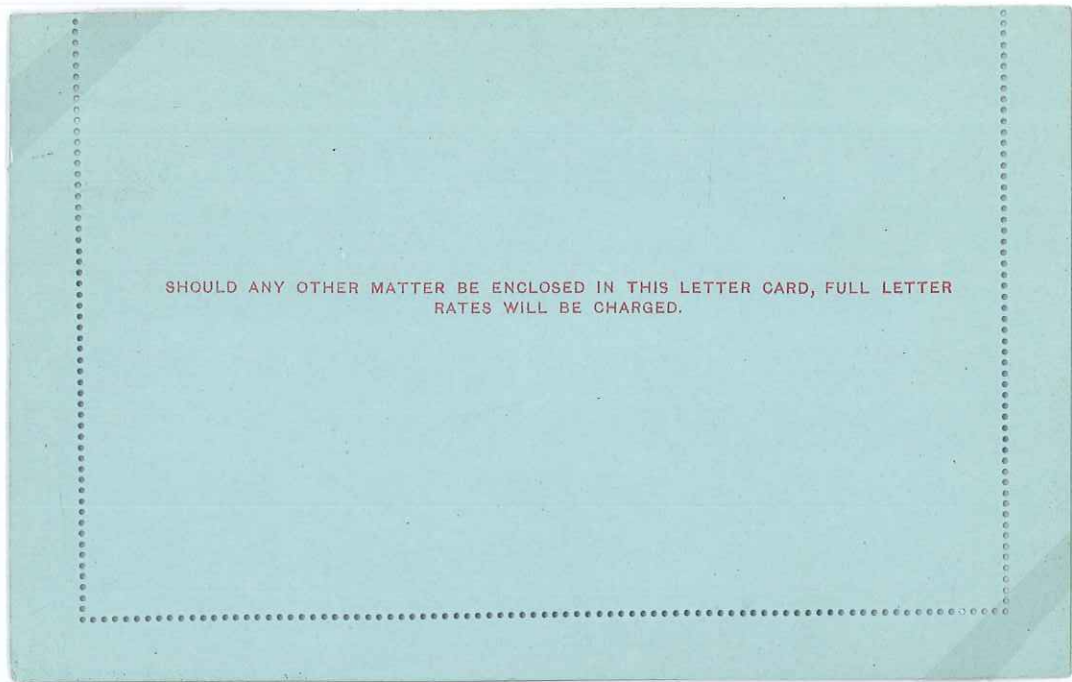


Specimen examples of the lettercard are not uncommon; in fact, although it is now pretty ancient and unreliable for that reason, the Higgins and Gage postal history catalogue states that this lettercard is only known from "SPECIMEN" examples. This specimen lettercard is unusual because the adhesive at the edges became easily stuck down in the hot, wet, Tongan climate but this one has not, except for 5 mm around the lower right corner.



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A second issue followed in 1912. The face is identical to the first issue, but the message on the reverse is now "SHOULD ANY OTHER MATTER BE ENCLOSED IN THIS LETTER CARD, FULL LETTER RATES WILL BE CHARGED."

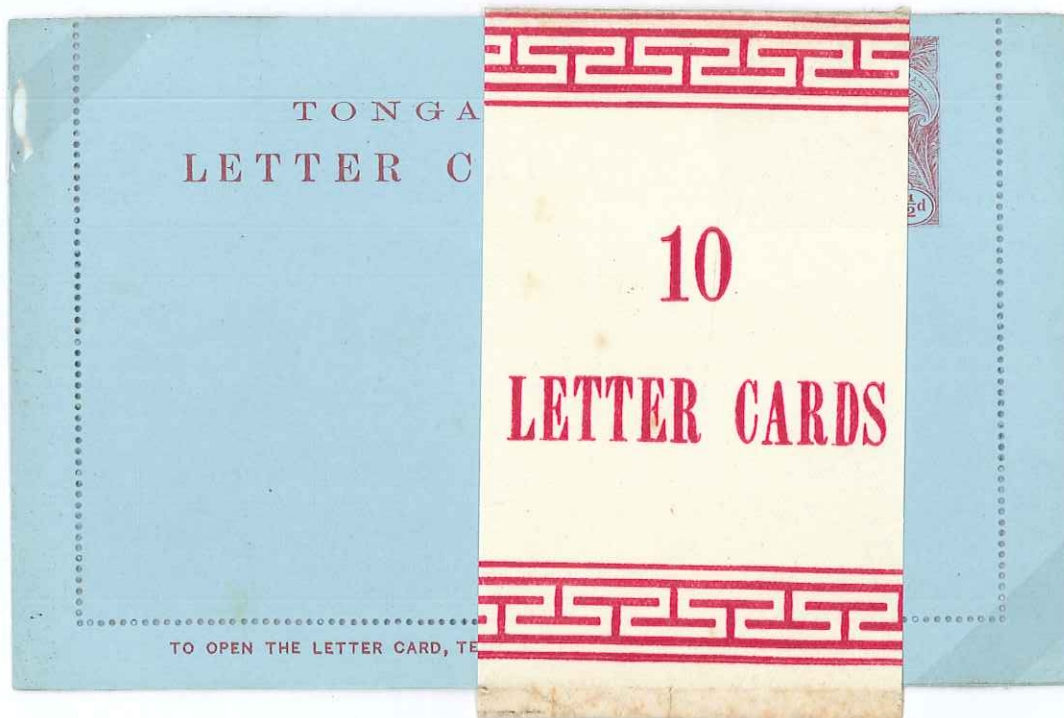


This example to Germany is not surcharged, as before. Posted at Nuku'alofa on 24th June, 1912 and dated the previous day inside, this is a family letter to Germany. A pencilled date of 27/VII/12 inside suggests the arrival date but there are no German cancels present.

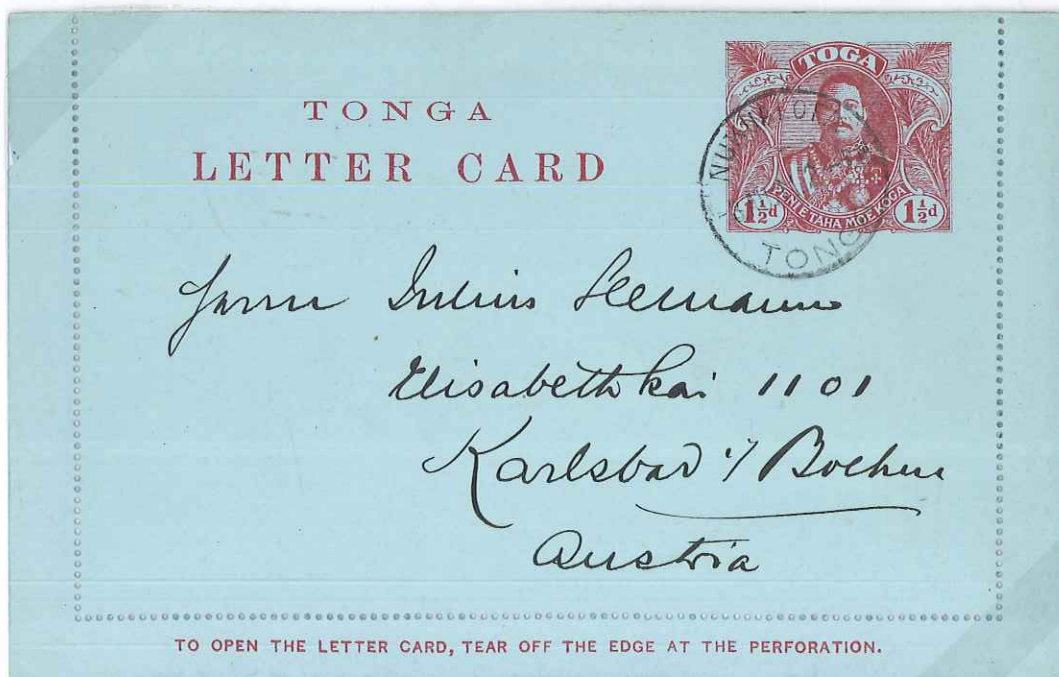


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They were supplied in packs of 10 from the printers, de la Rue, as shown in this example:



The wording on the back really indicates that they were only for use within the Kingdom at the 1½d rate and extra franking was required for postage elsewhere. Despite this, this lettercard has not received additional postage for transmission to Austria. Postmarked at Nuku'alofa on 8th August, 1911 it has a Sydney transit cancel for 1st September on the back – but no Austrian receiver!



Postal Stationery of Tonga

This registered lettercard must be uncommon. It's the only one I have ever seen. Posted at Nuku'alofa on 3rd August, 1912, it is franked by an additional 5d in the form of SG33 & 45. This pays the correct ("FULL RATE") fee of 2d postage and 3d registration. There is a Nuku'alofa registration oval at lower right (Proud type R4) together with a registration etiquette of Kufstein-München. (from abroad via rail mail). On the reverse are an Auckland s/c transit cancel for 8th August and a Hannover receiver for 15th December.



The lettercards were not a success because the edges became stuck together in the climate. Apparently, a number were found in 1939 and used by The Chief Justice as Christmas cards. The lower text reads: "N.B. The stamp is a curiosity of 21 (sic) years ago: The letter cards were discarded owing to impracticability in damp heat"

