

The Stamps and Postal History of Tonga

This 2c postal stationery envelope with 3c additional stamps to pay the correct 5c fee was transported to Tonga via Samoa. Posted at Bountiful, Utah (now a suburb of Salt Lake City) on April 13th, 1896 and with the transit cancel of San Francisco of 15th April it was addressed to George at Mua, Nuku'alofa. The German Post Office on Samoa added its receiver for 14 5 96. The letter arrived in Tonga at Vavau on 21st May, and was then despatched to Nuku'alofa, arriving on the 24th. George had moved to Haapai, so it was readdressed and arrived at Haapai on the 29th May. The appropriate cancels are on the reverse, but note the incorrect spelling of "HAAPIA".



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This envelope to George in Lifuka, Haapai is again franked by the 2½d rose, SG33, but one can only speculate why it was used, since the correct inter-island postage was 1d. The stamp is again cancelled by the Nuku'alofa single circle postmark for 9th July (96), arriving next day at Haapai with the incorrectly spelled "HAAPIA" receiver on the reverse. Inter-island mail is very rare at this time.



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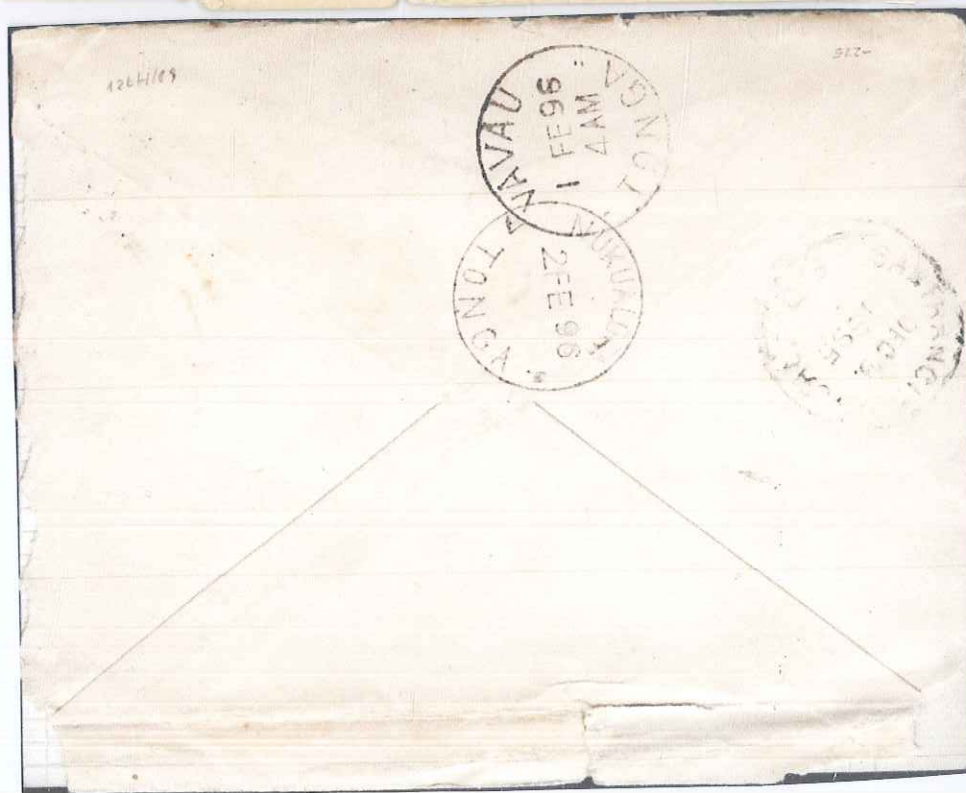
These covers were sent by George to his father in February and March, 1896. Each is franked with a 2½d rose stamp (SG 33) showing the king's head – one of a set of stamps that he did not wish to see issued because he disliked the likeness. The stamps were issued in July, 1895, the third stamp issue that year! It is the correct postage for letters weighing less than ½ ounce to the USA. Both stamps are cancelled by the Nuku'alofa single circle cancel, in use from 1888 to 1898, Proud D2, but here with the year slugs missing. Mail to the USA was carried to Samoa aboard a NZ ship and thence to San Francisco.



A photograph of George, date unknown. © 2001 www.orsonprattbrown.com

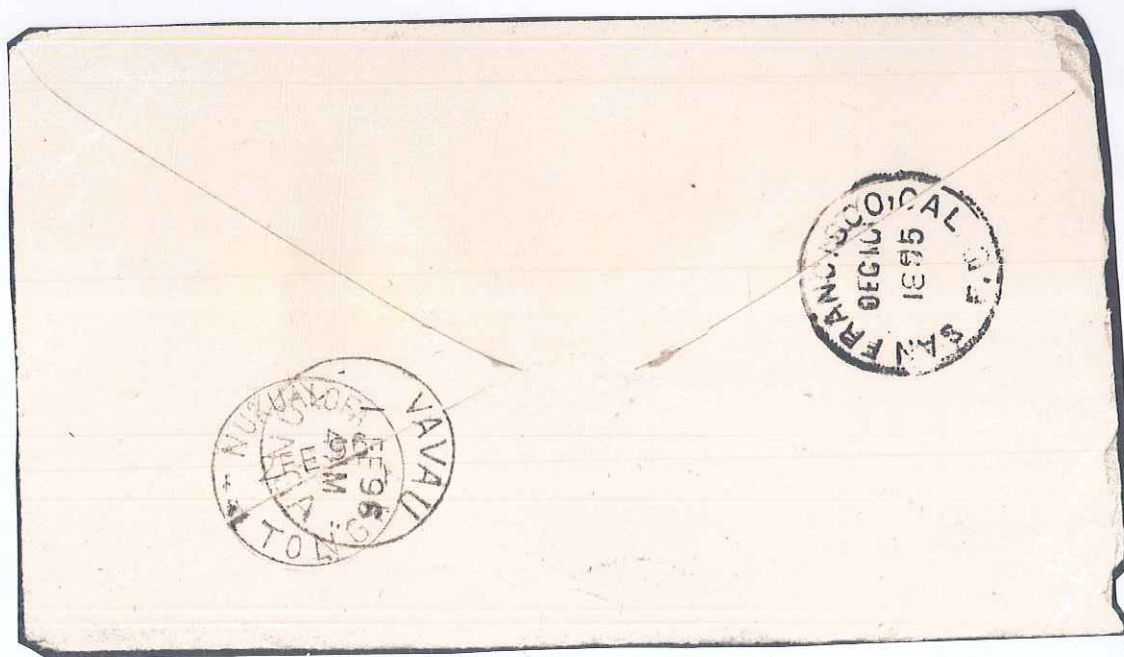
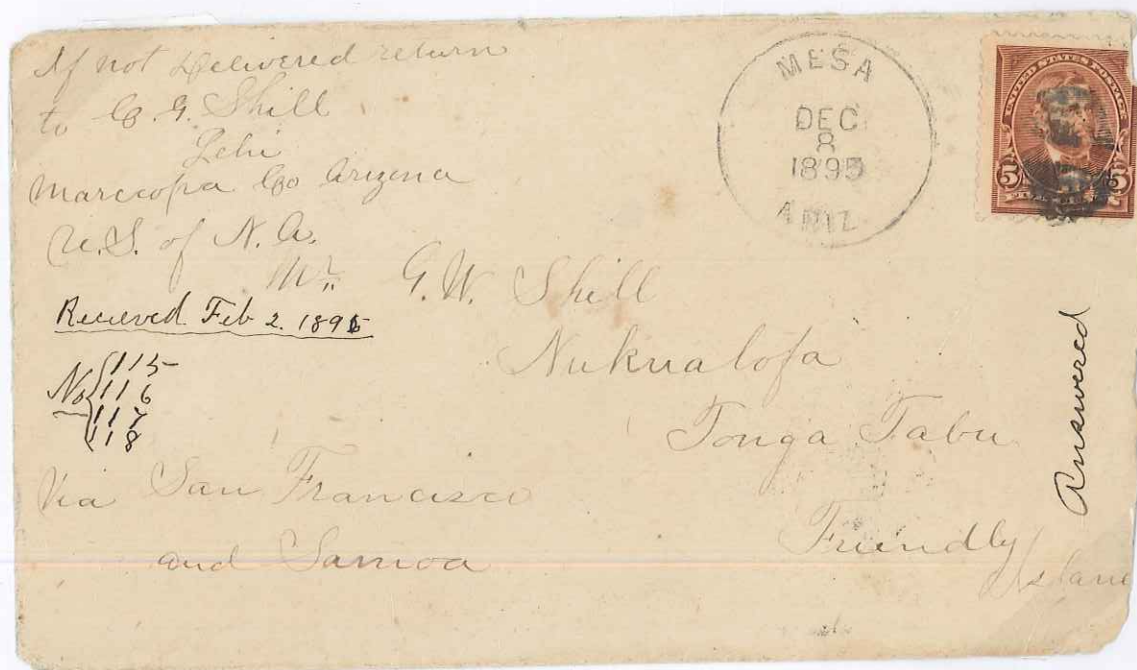
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Elder George Washington Shill was born at Croydon, Morgan County, Utah on 22nd May, 1870, the third of 11 children of Charles Shill and Harriet Paynter. Because of his mother's poor health the family moved to Lehi, Maricopa County, Arizona Territory in 1880. Nothing more is known of George until he left San Francisco for Tonga as a disciple of the Mormon Church on or about 1/10/1894. We are fortunate that he kept much of the mail sent to him. This is a cover from Lehi sent by T P Biggs on 6 Dec, 1895, arriving in Tonga at Vavau on 1st February, 1896, forwarded to Nuku'alofa and arriving next day.



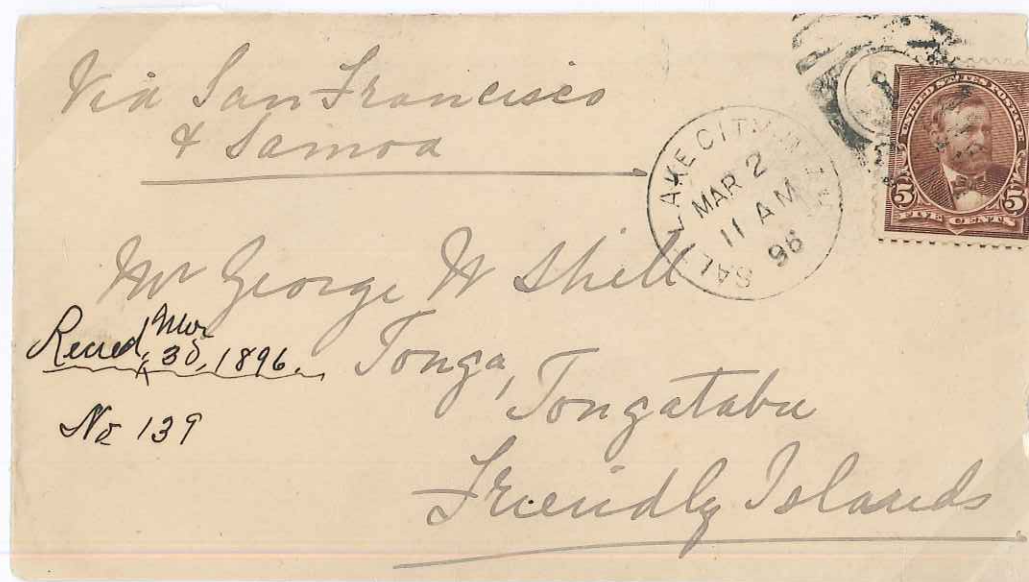
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This letter was sent by George's father from Mesa, Arizona Territory on December 8th 1895. It carries a San Francisco transit cancel for December 10th and then obviously travelled to Tonga with the previous item, since it also has the Vavau and Nuku'alofa cancels for 1st and 2nd February, 1896, respectively. Charles was well regarded in his church and amongst the wider community.



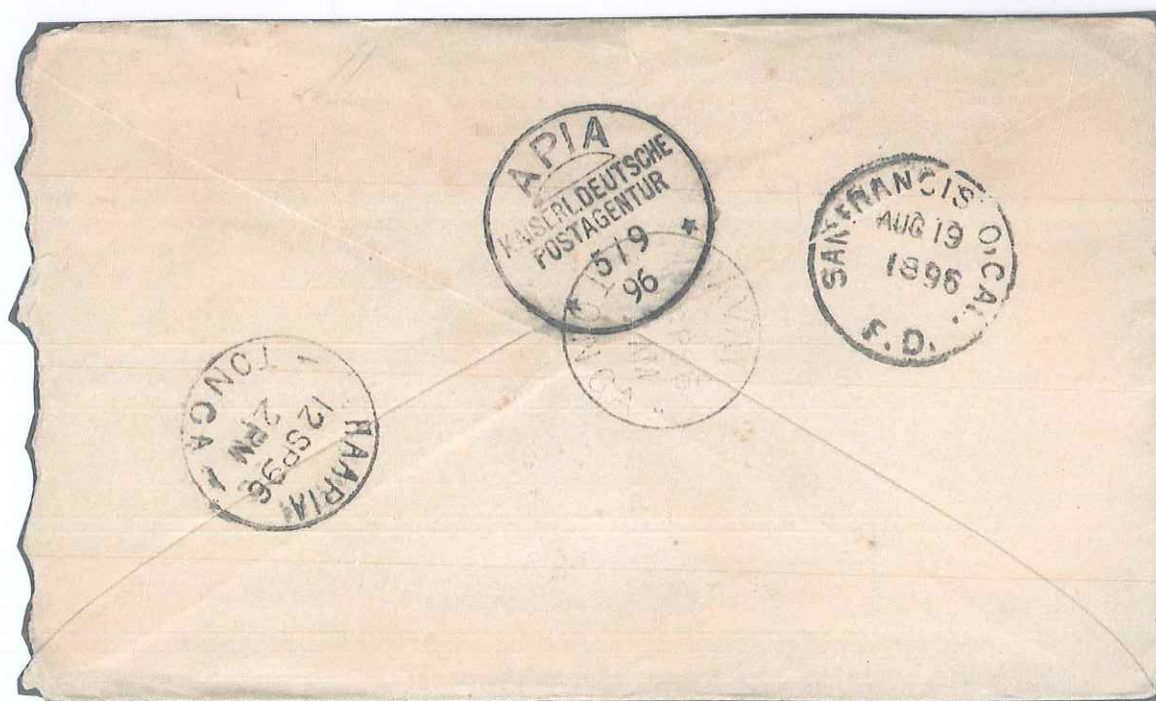
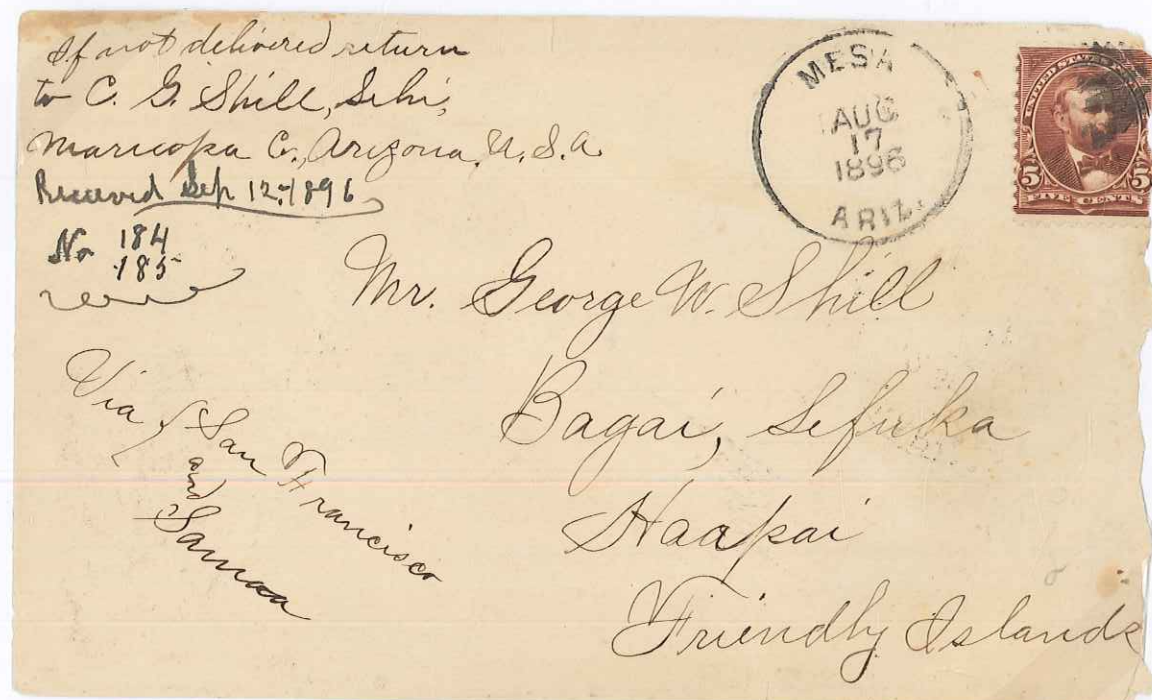
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There is no indication of the sender of this envelope although the writing bears some similarities to the hand of Charles Shill, George's father. Sent from Salt Lake City on MAR 2 /96, it carries the transit cancels for San Francisco (MAR 3 1896) and Vavau on 27 MR 96. There is then a Nuku'alofa receiver for 29 MR (96) - Proud type D2.



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This is another envelope addressed by Charles Shill and postmarked at Mesa, Arizona Territory on AUG 17/96. With transit cancellations for San Francisco on AUG 19.1896 and the German Post Office in Samoa on 9/96, it entered the Tongan postal service at Vavau on 17 AP 96. (There is a feint cancel partly obscured by the overlying German cancel). Addressed to Bagai in Haapai it arrived on 12 SP 96 at 2PM. Again, note the spelling.



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By December, 1896, George was receiving mail at Lifuka, a small island whose main village, Pangai, or Bagai, is the capital of the Haapai group. This letter to him was sent by T R Condie, from Morgan City, Utah. Condie founded the township of Croydon, originally Lost Creek, in 1862 with Charles Shill. It was renamed because of the origin of many of the settlers. The stamps appear to have been cancelled by finger-tip! The Morgan cancel is dated DEC 8 1896. On the reverse are the usual San Francisco and Samoa transit cancels. There is a Vavau cancel for 31 DEC 96 7 AM and a Haapai receiver for the same day at 2 PM.

