Tonga Tin Can Mail History
1882-1947

<Aim of this Exhibit>
Mails, enclosed in the "tin can", were carried by swimmer or canoes in the solitary island, Niuafoou, Tonga for over 100 years. This extraordinary method of mail delivery was known as "Tin Can Mail". This exhibit shows Tin Can Mail History in 5 frames, from the Earliest recorded cover in 19th century to the TCM suspension by the islander evacuation in 1947, by the technique of "Postal History 2C (Historical, Social and Special Studies)" manner.

<Plan>
1. Beginning of Tin Can Mail (No.3-16)
   After unsatisfactory Rocket mail trial, regular Tin Can Mail service started by Arthur Tindall. In 1921, Swimming Mailman C S Ramsay carried mail 112 times by himself till 1931. After 1927, German trader W G Quensell started to use his own cachet for Tin Can Mail. At this time, Tin Can Mail was not so famous, only known by travelers of pacific cruise.
   1.1. Early Trials(1882-1902) 1.2. Arthur Tindall (1902-1918)
   1.3. Charles Stuart Ramsay (1921-) 1.4. Beginning of TCM cachet by Quensell (1927-)

2. Tin Can Mail Becoming Famous (No.17-40)
   Total Eclipse of Sun in Oct. 1930 in Niuafoou and Quensell's advertising action make Tin Can Mail to be more famous. Swimmers mail stopped by Shark Affairs in 1931, followed by canoe mail. Postmark historically, postmark of NIUAFOOU changed again and again in 1934. Ramsay left the island in 1932.
   2.1. US Naval Eclipse Expedition (1930 October)
   2.2. Discontinuation of Swimming Delivery (1931 April)
   2.3. Crosby's Idea (1931 July) 2.4. Early Canoe Mail (1931-1933)
   2.5. Changeful Year 1934 2.6. Farewell Ramsay !

3. Golden Age of Tin Can Mail (No.41-64)
   Increasing cachet by Quensell makes Tin Can Mail more popular in the world. Many philatelists all over the world asked Quensell to send Tin Can Mail.
   3.1. Increasing Cachets 3.2. Competitors
   3.3. Islanders except Quensell 3.4. Transition of Registered Markings (1933-1946)
   3.5. From the World, To the World 3.6. Karl Lewis and Quensell – Japan Connection

4. Eruption, Evacuation & Suspended (No.65-80)
   During WWII, TCM covers also censored in the world. Because of sudden volcano eruption of Niuafoou on Sep. 1946, all islanders must evacuated soon. Tin Can Mail suspended in 1947 and Quensell, who moved to Nuku'alofa, wrote letters to inform the suspension to the world.
   4.1. World War II and TCM
   4.2. Eruption & Evacuation (Sep.1946-1947)
   4.3. Tin Can Mail suspended

(Total) 80 Pages
<Strong points or Highlights of this Exhibit>
This exhibit tells a story from social aspect of view about Tin Can Mail History before 1947. It is composed of many important "Key items" in the highest level and detailed original study for many years. Examples of Strong points or Highlights are as follows:

1) The Earliest recorded Tin Can Mail cover from NIUAFOOBU. Only recorded cover of NIUAFOOBU in the 19th century. (Page 3)
2) The Earliest recorded non-official Tin Can Mail cover sent in 1912 by a passenger. (Page 5)
3) Earliest recorded Tin Can Mail with Quensell's cachet, from Germany in 1927. (Page 11)
4) Postcard sent soon after “Shark Affair”, cancelled by Quensell’s cachet and delivered directly to the ship off NIUAFOOBU (June 1931). (Page 22)
5) Only Five recorded “mail accident” cover of Tin Can Mail, founded at an island of Fiji in January 1934. (Page 32)
6) Detailed studies of ship routes
7) Variety of cachets on Tin Can Mail usage
8) Outward or inward usages from / to all over the world, for example Romania, South Africa, Mexico, Ceylon, China, etc. (Section 3.5 and 4.1)
9) The Earliest recorded Tin Can Mail from Asia in 1933, sent from Chichibu-maru Sea Post of Japan. (Page 31)
10) “Real” Evacuation covers of evacuations: There are only several usages of “Real” Evacuation covers which were not sent by stamp dealers. All type of usages of three evacuations (September1946, October 1946, December1946) with detailed study of shipping. (cf. Sister Mary Julia’s diary) (Pages 73-76)

<Literature References>
1) Tin Can Mail, Lawrence S. Clark, 1983, Tonga / Tin Can Mail Study Circle (T/TCMSC)
2) Tin Canner, Magazines of Tonga / Tin Can Mail Study Circle (T/TCMSC), 1981-1999
3) Janet Klug, Catalog of Tin Can Mail Cachets, 1985. Also found on the Betty Billingham’s web "Identify your Tin Can Mail Cachets":
   http://www.bettybillingham.co.uk/ Cachets.html
6) Exhibitor (Dr. Kazuyuki Inoue)’s website: Tonga Tin Can Mail History (1882-1983):
   http://blog.livedoor.jp/tincan/
Chapter 1: Beginning of Tin Can Mail
1.1. Early Trials (1882 - 1902)

In 1882, Trader William Travers was said to arrange with Tongan Postal Officials to use kerosene cans or biscuit tins as mail “bags” in the transit of mail from the island to passing steamers and vice versa. But according to my original study by newspapers in 1890s, “Rocket mail from ship” had usually been tried for inward mail and resulted very unsatisfactory. Outward mail was supposed to be carried by native swimmer by Tin Can Mail manner.

Earliest Recorded Letter sent from NIUAFOOU
 carried by the same as Outward Tin Can Mail Manner (November 9, 1897)

NIUAFOOU 1897.11.9 → NUKUALOFA 1897.11.14, Official Mail to Nukualofa, the Capital of Tonga
It is the Earliest recorded letter sent from NIUAFOOU and also the only cover in 19th century before Tonga became a protected state under a Treaty of Friendship with Britain on 18 May 1900. Inward (Arrival) Mail to the Island was shot by Rocket mail in this period, but as it is outward, so supposed to be carried by Native Swimmer, same as the usual Outward Tin Can Mail manner.

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<td>Official</td>
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<td>England</td>
<td>Traveller</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Date of cds: 27 JE 11 (not 13)</td>
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<td>NZ</td>
<td>CS Ramsay</td>
<td>“Tin Can Mail” p.26</td>
<td>No postmark of Niuafoou</td>
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<td>(1922.5.11)</td>
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* Date of the Usage was determined by its contents (if possible) or transit postmark, when the usage has a wrong digit Niuafoou cds
In the Rocket mail period, earlier than the Earliest Official Cover of page 3, several used stamps off cover with early postmarks are recorded. All types of postmarks same as the other Tongan POs are supposed to be used in Niuafoou, too.

First Datestamp of NIUAFOOU
New Discovery
(1880s?-Early 1890s)

First Killer cancel of NIUAFOOU
Only several example reported
(Mid 1890s?)

"The First Rocket mail in the world" trial in Niuafoou
Original Artwork for Commemorative stamp of Niuafoou,
designed by George Bennett, Stamp Designer of Tonga.
EX. Archives collection of George Bennett
1.2. Arthur Tindall (1902 -1918)

Arthur Tindall played a significant part in the TCM history. He traded by his sailing ship and established coconut plantation on Niuafoo. He arranged for the ships of the Union Steamship Co., Ltd of Auckland, to stop off Niuafoo to pick up and deliver mail by TCM system. Later, he invited C.S. Ramsey.

NIUAFOOU SP 29 08
Used stamp with cds in the Tindall period. Off cover from early Tin Can Mail.

ARTHUR FRANCES LEOPOLD TINDALL (1881-1938)
From "Tin Can Mail" by Lawrence Clark

Outward Tin Can Mail in the Tindall period
Earliest Recorded Private Letter Tin Can Mail (June 29, 1912)

NIUAFOOU 1912.6.29 → SUVA (Fiji) 1912.7.3 → NY
Earliest Recorded Private Letter Tin Can Mail, not Official Mail.
Tindall succeeded his coconut plantation on Niuafoou. When the WWI opened in 1914, Tindall left the island for war service, but his company continued plantation and Tin Can Mail service for cruise travellers.

Only recorded TCM after Tindall's departure (May 16, 1915)

NIUAFOOU 1915.5.16 → SUVA (Fiji) 5.16 → Auckland (NZ)

The sender wrote in his letter, Tin Can Mail as "famous".
2nd Earliest postcard usage, and also 4th Earliest Tin Can Mail recorded.

Earliest Picture Postcard in NIUAFOOU (circa 1910)
1.3. Charles Stuart Ramsay (1921-)

Arthur Tindall invited C.S. Ramsey, who acted as famous “Swimming Mailman of Tin Can Island” for 12 years, 112 swims for postal delivery with natives.

Outward Tin Can Mail to Fiji by C S Ramsay
Private Letter Tin Can Mail in Early 1920s (April 16, 1924)

NIUAFOOU (meaningless date) → SUVA (Fiji) 1924.4.16
Letter sent by Stuart Ramsay himself. Already in this period, PO of NIUAFOOU lose their digit types for datetstamp. So the cds has meaningless wrong date <9 DE 18 1250AM>.

"Swimming Ramsay", reduced from famous Original Photograph from my collection to draw artwork for Niuafoou Commemorative stamp.
In Early 1920s NIUAFOOU PO continuously used circular datestamp with meaningless wrong date < 9 DE 18 1250AM > as a simply "Killer" cancellation.

Early Outward TCM to USA soon after Ramsay's arrival
Correspondence of May 11, 1922 by a traveller

NIUAFOOU (meaningless date) → APIA (Samoa) 1922.5.11 → USA
Three correspondence of this date are recorded, all of them has meaningless wrong date postmark as a killer cancellation.
NIUAFOOU PO gave up to use cds with meaningless wrong digit in mid 1920s and new 7 bar killer cancel started to be used. As C. S. Ramsey did not use Tin Can Mail cachet in 1920s, in this period it is very difficult to know the exact date that Outward Mail sent from travelers if it has no transit mark or lost its contents.

Outward Tin Can Mail by a traveller in 1928

NIUAFOOU 7 bar cancel → SUVA (Fiji) 192(6).9.25 → Australia
NIUAFOOU PO gave up to use cds with meaningless wrong digit in mid 1920s 1920s and new 7 bar killer cancel started to be used.
In the article of <Tin Canner>, Vol.10 (1990) pp.18-19, where this cover was first reported, and other cover (reduced copy) Vavau to Australia, cancelled with Vavau Aug.21,1928, with same address, the same typewriter and envelope, was reported, too. So we can easily guess that this should be the usage in 1928.

For reference: from the illustration in "Tin Canner" magazine.
Vavau Aug.21, 1928 → Australia. The same address, the same typewriter; the same envelope as the above envelope.
Handwriting "Sent from SUVA March 28" → NIUAFOOU 7 bar cancel → NY

According to the handwriting date in the letter and my original study of the Shipping list in the New Zealand Herald newspaper, I can found the date of sending should be March 28, 1928, sent from SS Tofua, from Auckland NZ to Suva, Fiji. NIUAFOOU PO forwarded the letter in the next TGM service.

Mar 28.

Dear Gilman:

I'm taking a chance that you may be interested in stamps - enough to like the one that is on this letter. Mailing it from the ship over the side in sealed can a swimmer takes it ashore, we are told - it will be postmarked Niuafoou - this can Island 5½ cents because of this

1. Beginning of Tin Can Mail
1.3. Charles Stuart Ramsay (1921-?)
1.4. Beginning of TCM cachet by Quensell (1927-)

Walter George Quensell, German Trader arrived the island in 1919 and was also involved in Tin Can Mail service. At first he applied his original very simple cachet, "TIN CAN MAIL" and "NIUAFOOU" on the inward mail he treated.

Earliest Tin Can Mail Recorded with Tin Can Mail cachet
Earliest Inward Tin Can Mail from his sister in Germany (1927)

HORNBURG (Germany) 1927.10.22
→ NUKUALOFA 12.12 → NIUAFOOU

Instead of the arrival mark of NIUAFOOU, circular "TIN CAN MAIL" cachet was applied on the cover. Quensell was an immigrant from Germany, he sometimes exchange of letters with his own sister Margarethe, who was in Hornburg Germany. It is the Earliest Tin Can Mail with cachet and also Earliest inward letter recorded.

Photo: Quensell's family in Niuafoou
(from my photo collection)
(Left to right) Pauline Emilie Hoefft, Quensell's sister-in-law and TCM swimmer; Walter George Quensell himself; his son Charles August Quensell; his second wife Emma Louise Hoefft.
Walter George Quensell's second wife Emma Louise Hoeft and children were lived in Auckland NZ. She sometimes wrote letters to her husband George Quensell.

Early Inward Tin Can Mail with Quensell's cachets from his wife in Auckland

AUCKLAND (NZ) 1928.12.28 → (SS.Tofua) → NIUAFOOU, Quensell's cachet was used instead of arrival mark.

AUCKLAND 1930.2.21 → (SS.Tofua) → NIUAFOOU All TCM covers are very scarce without exception till Summer 1930.
Walter George Quensell worked as the Manager of Niuafoou branch, Burns Philip Co Ltd. Quensell sometimes received Business letters by Tin Can Mail, from other branches, e.g. Suva branch or Vava'u branch of Burns Philip.

**Early Inward Tin Can Mail with Quensell's cachet from Suva Branch of Burns Philip**

![Image of envelope with stamps and cachet]

**SUVA (Fiji) 1930.7.5—NIUAFOOU (violet 7-bar cancel), with Quensell's cachet**
Envelope of Suva branch of Burns Philip (South Sea)

**Early Inward Tin Can Mail with Quensell's cachet from Vava'u Branch of Burns Philip**

![Image of envelope with stamps and cachet]

**VAVAU (Tonga) 1930.6.28 —NIUAFOOU with Quensell's cachet as arrival mark**
Envelope of Vava'u branch of Burns Philip (South Sea)
Quensell preferred to exchange letters with foreign people and also to read printed media of foreign countries. So most of Inward Tin Can Mail usages, including printed matter, are addressed to Quensell or his company.

**Earliest Inward Printed Matter TCM from UK**
*(date unknown but circa 1928-1929?)*

Printed matter from White Horse Distiller, England to Quensell’s company, Burns Philp Ltd. Niuafoou

No arrival mark, only single lined cachet by Quensell

Cancelled by machine cancellation with triangular SWL. As it has only “TIN CAN MAIL” of single line as a TCM cachet, the date of use is supposed to be circa 1928-1929.

**Swimmer carrying**

**Inward TCM**

**Picture postcard**

**circa 1930**

Picture Postcard of the Tin Can Mail swimmers carrying Inward Mail from Steamship off island.
SS Ventura, Matson Oceanic Line, run between West Coast of North America and Sydney, Australia. The cachet "VENTURA" is known as the fist ship cachet on TCM.

Only recorded
"VENTURA" ship cachet on TCM cover

SS Ventura (picture postcard)

San Francisco 1930.7.9 → NIUAFOOU (7.26)

Letter from San Francisco branch of the Burns Philp Ltd to the Niuafoou branch. As usual, "TIN CAN MAIL" and "NIUAFOOU" cachets were applied as much as the ship cachet "VENTURA", which is the Earliest ship cachet on TCM cover.

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, the ship arrived SUVA (Fiji) on 27 July 1930, so passed Niuafoou on the previous day.
WG Quensell and CS Ramsey became competitors on business. At first, all outward mail were treated by only Ramsay, but after 1930, because of eclipse expedition, its balance of power gradually changed.

**Letter from Ramsay to Quensell**

*Only Three Recorded Inland Cover in Niuafoou*

![Inland letter from Stuart Ramsay to W. G. Quensell, circa 1930](image)

**Outward Letter directly carried to ship offshore by Quensell**

*Sent from persons concerned to eclipse expedition in June 1930*

![Outward letter directly carried to ship offshore by Quensell](image)

NIUAFOOU (cancelled with only Quensell’s cachet) → PAGO PAGO (American Samoa)

Sent from persons concerned to eclipse expedition to the US Naval Station on American Samoa. Cancelled not with 7 bar cancel but Quensell’s cachets. Exceptional usage before 1930 Summer.
Chapter 2: Tin Can Mail Becoming Famous
2.1. US Naval Eclipse Expedition (1930 October)

On Oct. 21, 1930, a Total Eclipse of sun was observed around Niuafoou. US navy and National Geographic Society dispatched Eclipse Expeditionary party including scientists for the observation and recording. Quensell took part in it with Ramsay and made new cachets. It made Tin Can Mail and Niuafoou more famous.

Total eclipse of sun on Oct. 21, 1930 (Middle) and large observatory instruments in Niuafoou (Upper). Eclipse was recorded by giant telescope and camera (Lower). Original page of the book by C.S. Ramsay and C. P. Plumb, "Tin Can Island", Hurst and Blackett, 1939.

Exceptional Usage Just BEFORE Using "Eclipse cachets"

NIUAFOOU 7-bar cancel (written on 1930.10.5) → Smith's Cove (Canada) 11.12.
Postcard, written by Dr. Thomas A. Jaggar, who was one of famous scientists of expedition for the research of the volcano and earthquake, addressed to his family in Canada. He wrote in the postcard about the purpose of coming there and the extraordinary postal system where mail carried by swimmers. There are two cachets: Single line TCM and Boxed <NIUAFOOU>.
Many scientists arrived Niuafoou for the Eclipse Expedition on the end of Sep. 1930. Both WG Quensell and CS Ramsey worked for them, lending equipment for landing scientific stores, weather observatory and sending their mail.

Exceptional Usage Just Before using “Eclipse cachets”

NIUAFOOU 7-bar cancel (written on 1930.10.16) → USA
Picture Postcard of Niuafoou TCM, also written by Dr. Thomas A. Jagger, addressed to United States. With two cachets: Single line TCM and Boxed <NIUAFOOU>. TCM was “advertised” as a result that members of the Scientific party used photo postcards of Niuafoou to write their letter

Reverse of this postcard above
“Arrival of the Swimming Delivery
of Inward Tin Can Mail by native swimmers”
On Oct. 21, 1930, Quensell applied Special cachets for the US Naval Eclipse Expedition on the letters. After eclipse, letters were carried by USS. Tanger, which was the main vessel of the Eclipse Expedition.

Only Four Recorded Circular violet cachet of NIUAFOU with Crown mark

NIUAFOU 1930.10.21 → PAGO PAGO (Samoa) 11.3 → USA. USS Tanger carried the mail after the eclipse.

USS Tanger, Mine sweeper (Original photo of the ship on the lower left of the cover)
Professor Samuel A. Mitchell, an expert of the eclipse of the Sun, is the scientific leader of the Observatory in Niuafoou in 1930. Quensell wrote a greeting letter to him on December 1930, soon after the eclipse expedition.

Latest Swimmer Mail Recorded
Before Shark Attack on April 1931

NIUAFOOU (only the cachets) — SUVA (Fiji) 1930.12.17 — US mainland.
Written by Quensell himself, to Professor Samuel A. Mitchell, the scientific leader of the Observatory. After scientists' departure, the amount of Outward mail decreased rapidly to prior level.

“Observation point Niuafoou”
(the reverse side of this postcard above, reduced)
2.2. Discontinuation of Swimming Delivery (1931 April)

On April, 1931, two days prior to monthly S.S.Tofua’s visit, a native fisherman and swimmer of TCM, named Folau, was attacked by a man-eating shark and dead later. Government prohibited the mail delivery by swimmer. The story that TCM swimmer was attacked during TCM service was just a “legend” made by Quensell.

Report soon after the accident. The article reports, “two days prior to the Tofus’s visit, it had attacked a native fisherman….”

Original Artwork of Niuafoou Stamp “Ramsay Meets Shark” (Niuafoou, 1996)

Original Artwork of the stamp, designed by George Bennett, Stamp Designer of Tonga. Ramsay wrote in his book that such an accident was not happened during his 112 delivery by swim. It is a Native man who was attacked by shark, not during TCM delivery.

NIUAFOOU’s MAIL

"Tin-Can" Delivery Suspended

Report in the local newspaper on June 19, 1931.

NIUAFOOU cancelled by Quensell’s cachet

Only Recorded Postcard from Niuafoou during Discontinuation of Swimming Delivery (June 1931)

NIUAFOOU cancelled by Quensell’s cachet

← AUCKLAND (NZ) 1931.6.9 LOOSE LETTER → US mainland

By Quensell’s handwriting, Quensell forwarded this postcard by the exceptional way in which stamps were cancelled by his cachet <NIUAFOOU> and directly carried the mail by his canoe to SS Tofua offshore, not usual way through NIUAFOOU PO (7-bar cancel), because of the Discontinuation of Swimming Delivery after Shark attack.

Reverse of this postcard above

Trade Station of Burns Philp Ltd Niuafoou branch, of which Quensell is the Master
2.3. Crosby's Idea (1931 July)

W. G. Crosby is a famous cachet maker and dealer. He is well-known by his Naval commemorative covers. He was thought to advice Quensell about new "Canoe mail" cachets. According to his letter on June 30, 1931, he wrote he will send new cachet rubberstamps and new green colored pad on Jul. 8, 1930.

San Pedro Jul.7, 1931 → Auckland (NZ)
Airmail

From W. G. Crosby, famous Navy cover cachet maker and dealer, to Quensell. This cover was sent soon after shark affairs, and Crosby believes the Tin Can Mail was suspended. So Crosby should have sent it by airmail to Parnell Auckland, where Quensell's wife and children live. The Canoe TCM cachet must have applied later.

Judging from creases of this envelope, the contents inside this envelope should have been "something thick". We can guess what the thick thing is, from Crosby's June 30 letter as follows:

"...I am enclosing a clipping .... About the shark killing the swimmer that delivered the mail to the steamer. Is it understood that there will be no more TIN CAN MAIL? From now on it will be CANOE MAIL. Is this so? If it is I was thinking we could stamp them like this.

Canoe Mail

I have ordered a rubberstamp reading like this for you, also a nice new green colored pad if you will use it. (These were? mailed July 8, 1931)...

Judging from creases and dates, the contents of this envelope was the rubberstamp & new green pad!

Quensell had not used Crosby's rubberstamps themselves, but should have got an idea of his new circular Canoe mail cachet.
Crosby's Letter on July 8, 1931 to Quenseil

Dear Sir:-

I have mailed to you at Niuafoou some self addressed envelopes and enough money for you to buy me stamps to put on my envelopes and mail back to me. With these envelopes I have sent two rubber stamps one reading Canoe Mail like sample Canoe Mail

The other reading Niuafoou like sample.

NIUAFOOU

Notice the aera as a border, just a little different that is what the collectors craves, you understand.

Now this Shark story that has been printed through out the U.S.A. might not be true, and if they still transport their mail in TIN CAN and not by Canoe if that is the case just throw the two rubber stamps away and cancel my covers the way you have always done. On the other hand if they are using a Canoe carrying their mail please have a good size picture of the Canoe taken in the water with the native holding his letter pouch of what ever he carries his mail in, just send it on to me and I will gladly stand all expense of having a good cut made into a rubber stamp and then I will mail it back to you so you can mail a few more letters for me showing a good picture of the natives carrying their mail out to the Mail Steamer in a Canoe. It will be a knock out something different and odd. You will notice that I have addressed a few covers to a few of my friends and different stamp papers.

Now in regards to these last mentioned envelopes, I have stamped them all Canoe Mail, if you do not use these rubber stamps be sure and destroy them, as most of my friends and stamp papers have the "TIN CAN MAIL" covers. I hope you will understand all of this and I am sure you will. I can not begin to thank you enough for the find covers you sent to me, also the Post Card Photos, I have them all in a nice frame hanging in my den. Now
2.4. Early Canoe Mail (1931-1933)

After short suspension because of the Shark Affairs on April 1931, Tin Can Mail restarted soon as "Canoe mail", not "Swimmers Mail". But very small number of 1931 covers existed (circa 10 covers), so the exact date of resumption is unknown. This cover is one of the Earliest Canoe Mail with new circular cachet for CANOE MAIL. Ramsay who could swim no more departed Niuafoou in 1932.

**Earliest Inward Canoe Mail after Shark Affairs**

**(August 1931)**

![Image of cover]

VAVAU (Tonga) 1931.7.23 -- NIUAFOOU (no 7-bar cancel)

With Quensell's new cachet for CANOE MAIL

![New CANOE MAIL cachet]

New CANOE MAIL cachet applied on the cover

Earliest Recorded Usage from Vavau branch of Burns Philp Ltd. According to the New Zealand Herald, this letter was carried by SS Tofua, departing Auckland on August 10, to Niuafoou. It is possible that the deliver of this cover was made by Quensell's Canoe privately, because of no 7-bars cancel on the cover.
The exact date of Official Restart Date of Tin Can Mail by CANOE mail is unknown, but it may be an “important key” whether the cover has official 7-bar postmark as an arrival mark or not. The Earliest Recorded Usage with 7-bar is on Early September 1931, according to my original research.

**Earliest Inward “Official” Canoe Mail**
*after Shark Affairs with violet 7-bar cancel as an arrival postmark*

**September 1931**
*(Soon after 31 August at NUKUALOFA transit)*

![Image of a cover with postmarks and cancels](image)

**HONOLULU (Hawaii) 1931.7.24**
→ **NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 1931.8.31**
→ **NIUAFOOU (7-Bar cancel, violet)**

After short suspension because of the Shark Affairs, TCM restarted soon as Canoe mail. But very small number of 1931 covers existed, so exact date of resumption is unknown.

This cover is one of the Earliest Canoe Mail with NIUAFOOU 7-bar arrival postmark on the cover. It also has TIN CAN MAIL 1-line cachet and new Circular cachet by Quensell.
According to my study of covers during September 1931 to 1933, most Inward covers to NIUAFOOU have 7-bar violet cancel as an arrival mark.

Second Earliest Inward “Official” Canoe Mail after Shark Affairs with violet 7-bar cancel as an arrival postmark

September 1931 (Soon after 6 September at NUKUALOFA transit)

CHICAGO (US) 1931.6.24
→ NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 1931.9.5
→ NIUAFOOU (7-Bar cancel, violet)

After short suspension because of the Shark Affairs, TCM restarted soon as Canoe mail. But very small number of 1931 covers existed, so exact date of resumption is unknown. This cover is one of the Earliest Canoe Mail with TIN CAN MAIL 1-line cachet and Niuafoou arrival postmark on the cover. No cachets indicates Canoe mail.

Part of the reverse side of this cover (reduced, 70 %)
(Right) Nukualofa(Tonga) Sep.5
(Left) Niuafoou (7-Bar cancell, violet)
Only circa 10 covers recorded Inward Usages of 1931

Inward "Official" Canoe Mail after Shark Affairs
September 1931 (Soon after 14 September at NUKUALOFA transit)

PO unknown
(Australia) 1931.9.1
→NUKUALOFA
(Tonga) 1931.9.14
→NIUAFOOU
violet 7-bar cancel

With old type 1-line cachet of Quensell

Exceptional Inward Official mail from NZ
after September 1931, no 7-bar cancel as an arrival postmark
October 1931 (9 October at WELLINTON)

Official cover from NZ
WELINTON (NZ)
1931.10.9
→NIUAFOOU
NIUAFOOU 1-line cachet of Quensell
As arrival mark

28
In 1932 Inward covers slightly increased compared to 1931, were still very rare. Almost all the cover have violet 7-bar cancel as an arrival mark.

**Inward Usages of 1932**

**Inward Canoe Mail on January 1932**

*Inter-island usage from VAVAU*

![Image of envelope with stamp and cancel] VAVAU (Tonga) 1932.1.7 → NUIAFOOU with violet 7-bar cancel

**Inward Canoe Mail on February 1932**

*Arrival from NZ*

![Image of envelope with stamp and cancel] AUCKLAND (NZ) 1932.2.22 → NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 1932.2.29 → NUIAFOOU with violet 7-bar cancel
In 1932 Inward covers from other than Oceania or USA is very scarce. 1932 Outward mail from NIUAFOOU are also very scarce and seldom to be seen.

Only Recorded Inward Canoe Mail From Germany in 1932

HORNBURG (Germany) 1931.12.14 → NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 1932.2.1
NIUAFOOU with violet 7-bar cancel with new type CANOE Mail cachet s of Quensell. Letter sent from Quensell’s sister Margarethe Quensell in Hornburg, Germany.

Only Several Recorded Outward Canoe Mail in 1932

(Quensell’s cachet at NIUAFOOU) → SUVA Fiji 1932.5.4 PAQUEBO → ROTORUA (NZ) 5.11 → WELLINGTON (NZ), Sent by a traveller by Paquebot treatment.
In 1933, Canoe Mail Service of Niuafou became famous gradually. Very interesting origin place of inward TCM come to be found.

**Earliest Recorded Inward TCM Usage from Asia**
*(September 1933)*

---

17-8-33
Dear W Quensell, I had a very pleasant trip to Java, Singapore, Hong Kong, Shanghai & Japan. Found the latter very picturesque & most interesting. Am due Honolulu tomorrow & San Francisco 23rd will be back in Suva on 3rd Oct. Kind Regards

---

Overseas Private Postcard with Scenery issue 6-Sen of Japan
CHICHIBUMARU Seapost Aug 18, 1933
--Nuku'alofa (Tonga) Sep 20 --Niuafou

A friend of Quensell in Fiji, who went to a Pacific-round trip, wrote this postcard in the Chichibu-maru, bound from Japan to Honolulu. It changed ship at Honolulu to South Pacific route, via Fiji, arrived to Niuafou.

Tin Can Mail from Japan was recorded about 20 examples, but most of them were sent by Karl Lewis, who was a photographer and a famous FDC maker, after 1935. This is the Earliest recorded inward usage from not only Japan, but Asia. And this is also a only recorded usage of TCM cancelled with Japanese seapost postmark.
In the end of December 1933, the most serious Tin Can Canoe Mail Accident were occurred during the transport service. A Mail Bag was lost at sea and found in Naitambo island Fiji later. One of the highlight of the exhibit.

Famous Mail Accident during TCM Transport
Only Five Covers Recorded

Lost at sea on 22 December 1933

This envelope was mailed from the
SS Mariposa
December 22nd, 1933, at Nifufo
25.4 N. (Tin Can Island) by encasing
in a tin can which was thrown
overboard near the Island and
mingled with a native gong

Commander SS Mariposa

*Milwaukee Baseball Team*
Milwaukee, Wis.

PLEASE IN-THIS LETTER IN

NIIAFOOU

Posted on SS Mariposa 1933.12.22
→ Lost at sea to NIUAFOOU
→ Found in NAITAMBA island (Fiji) 1934.1.10
→ SUVA Jan.26, postage stamp was applied and added message by hand-writing
→ CHICAGO (US)

On the all envelopes found, post officer of Fiji wrote by hand in red pen as follows: "This article was enclosed in a mail from S.S. Mariposa to Niuafoou Tonga on 22.12.33, was picked up at Naitambo Fiji on 10.1.34. It is the only major accident of Tin Can Mail lost mail bag during transport at sea.
2.5. Changeful Year 1934

Year 1934 is a “changeful year” in the TCM history. Usages were increased, inward or outward, and many ships visited Niuafoou. Quensell’s cachets increased more and more. Postmarks were changed month by month, interesting cds with meaningless wrong digit was used as only a “killer” again.

Outward TCM cancelled with Quensell’s cachet

NIUAFOOU 1934.3.13 → PAGO PAGO (American Samoa)
Stamp cancelled not by 7-bar cancel, but Quensell’s cachet.

New Zealand Coastal, Intercolonial, South Sea Islands, Trans-Pacific

MONTHLY BROCHURE on September 1934
of the Union Steamship of NZ.
Time schedule and rates of ships are indicated in this book.

NIUAFOOU 1934.6.5 → SS Mariposa, offshore Niuafoou
In few ship mail between June and July 1934, old cds used 1910-1925 was used again “without date”. In this case 1-line date stamp of Quensell was combined to be used.
All of outward TCM from April to July, 1934, was not cancelled in Niuafoou, but treated as Paquebot manner. We can easily find the exact date of sending by 1-line date stamp applied by Quensell, with his CANOE Mail or TIN CAN MAIL cachet.

Outward TCM treated as <PAQUEBOT>

NIUAFOOU 1934.5.14 → SUVA (Fiji) 5.15 PAQUEBOT → AUCKLAND (NZ).
Letter written by W.G. Quensell to his son, Charles.

NIUAFOOU 1934.7.4 → HONOLULU 7.9 PAQUEBOT → US mainland
In few ship mail between June and July 1934, letters were cancelled with old type cds, which had been used from 1910s to 1925, "without date". This was continuously used after September of this year with wrong date digit again.

NIUAFOOU 1934.7.25
→ AUCKLAND (NZ)

Stamps were cancelled with NIUAFOOU cds., but no date digit. It is the similar usage as Page 33 (lower), but Quensell did not put on other 1-line date stamp on the space for date.

NIUAFOOU Post Office in those days was supposed to have only the datetamp without enough date digits.

This letter was written by W.G. Quensell to his son Charles.
On August, SS City of Los Angeles visited Niuafoou again with Ramsey. All TCM in August were cancelled with black 7-bar, the same type as used till 1933 in violet.

**TCM with black 7-bar cancel in August**

Los Angeles (USA) 1934.6.26 → NIUAFOOU black 7-bar. Cover delivered by the SS City of LA to the island. A lot of cachets on this envelope were thought to be put on by Quensell after 1935.

NIUAFOOU 7-bar cancel 1934.8.1(Earliest data) → US mainland. Cover sent from SS City of LA. Only a few usage are recorded about this large map cachet of the 2nd Cruise. One of rarest cachet by Quensell.
On the end of August, black 7-bar stopped to use, followed by old type cds with meaningless wrong date, used again as only a “killer”, because of shortage of digits.

**Latest Recorded Usage of the 7-bar killer cancel**

![Image of envelope with stamp]

NIUAFOOU 1934.8.29 → PAGO PAGO (Samoa) 8.30 → NZ. The latest recorded usage of the 7-bar cancellation. Waved cachet by Quensell (Upper left) applied on Aug 1934 with 7-bar killer. Such a cachet was made for indicating the exact date of sending, because the NIUAFOOU PO had only killer cancel.

**Earliest Recorded Usage of wrong date cds, type 1**

![Image of envelope with stamp]

AUCKLAND (NZ) 1934.8.24 → NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 9.5 → NIUAFOOU (cds). Delivered by <Marama>. After this, the old datetamp, which had been used 1910- 1925, were continuously used again. However, as the postmaster was supposed to have had no date digit enough, almost all of the date, except for the usage of early Dec., indicates the wrong date <40 31SP = 2 □> upside-down.
From September, the old type datestamp with meaningless wrong date digit were used as only a “killer” cancel. This most mysterious cds of NIUAFOOU were continuously used for half a year till January 1935.

**Late usage of wrong date cds, type 1**

MONCLAIR (US) 1934.10.3 → NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 11.4 → NIUAFOOU (wrong date). The arrival of this cover was obviously November 1934, but the date of the arrival postmark indicates 30 31SP = 2 (upside-down). From this period, Quensell started to use a new large-boxed-multilingual cachet.

**Early usage of wrong date cds, type 2**

HONOLULU (Hawaii) Dec.10,1934 → NIUAFOOU (wrong date). Reason was unknown, but only a short period of early Dec., the date indication was changed to 7 7 20 JL. (upside-down), instead of 31SP = 2 (upside-down). These new meaningless wrong date cds as a “killer” ended to use on Jan. 1935.
2.6. Farewell Ramsay!

Stuart Ramsay, "Swimming mailman", left NIUAFOOU in 1932, soon after a hurricane did great damaged to his operation. In 1934, he came back to NIUAFOOU during a cruise of SS City of Los Angeles on February and August. He swam and carry the mail, but the Government did not permit him to land on.

Below: Swimming Mailman Ramsay: Original Photograph, Ramsay delivering inward mail by swimming on Feb. 1934, 1st of LA cruise. (Lower Right: Printed Letter inside (reduced), the sender wrote about Swimming Ramsay. Tonga Government did not permit him to land on.

(NIUAFOOU 1934.2.7)
—HONOLULU 4.16
PAQUEBOT
—California USA

Carried by the 1st South Seas Exploration cruise by SS City of Los Angeles. Ramsay swam to carry the mail near shore of the island.

B.A. City of Los Angeles

S.S. April 29, 1934

Dear Paul:

I am writing this letter from the ship and instead of it being put on the book for the postal authorities in the regular way, it will be placed in a small tin can and thrown overboard when we reach the Island of Nuku Hiva. Mail has always been sent ashore in this manner not by the way. It is also known as Tin Can Island for this reason. By the way we'll call the City of Los Angeles will call the same name.

It certainly is an extraordinary island. One of the officers of the ship told me that it is situated in islands and has a small water lake in the center. From above it must look like a large island. He also informed me that Futu was the largest village on the Island but now in 1934 it was totally destroyed by an active volcano. Only the first of the four white houses is the only remaining building. The largest village men is Angina and less than half a dozen white people live there. I am certainly looking forward to seeing it.

Just leave you for now, but I will tell you more about it when I see you.

Yours truly,

[N. Ramsay]
Stuart Ramsay spent some time in South California, and went back to Tonga, as a manager of the Happai branch of Morris Hedstrom Ltd, which was the same company he worked for in Niuafoou. Ramsay died while on a visit to Tonga in June 1969.

**Letter to Ramsay worked as Manager of Happai branch, Morris Hedstrom**

[Image of a letter from Nuku'alofa to Happai, dated 10.24.1947.]

NUKUALOFA 1947.10.24 → HAPPAI. Letter addressed to “C. S. Ramsey”, manager of the Happai branch of Morris Hedstrom Ltd.

[Image of a souvenir cover of Tin Can Mail.]

NIUAFOOU 1963.6.17. Souvenir cover of Tin Can Mail. An original hand-writing signature of “C. S. Ramsay” himself is on the lower left of this cover. One of the his last signature now exist.
Chapter 3: The Golden Age of Tin Can Mail

3.1. Increasing Cachets

Various multilingual cachets had great importance for Quensell to inform TCM to the world. He was not a post officer, but called himself "Tin Can Mail Man". He applied his cachets on the covers to the world for his business and started an advertisement of TCM to the news media all over the world.

Maximum cachet of TCM: Map of NIUAFOOU (120mm × 120mm)

Maximum cachet Quensell made for TCM. As it is too large to apply on usual letter envelope, it exist far fewer copies than the small-sized map cachet of the same period (50mm × 50mm).
More and more ships visited NIUAFOOU as Tin Can Mail became famous by Quensell’s advertisement. Ships or ship companies made commemorative envelopes or cachets for each cruise.

NIUAFOOU 1935.8.10 → CHRISTCHURCH (NZ)
The cover was sent on the <Monowai> cruise on August 1935. This envelope is the fewest one of the ship envelopes. Grenish cruise cachet on the upper left. Two photographs above, the TCM delivery in 1935, were enclosed in this envelope.
Queen Salote Tupou III (1900-1965, Her Reign: 1918-1965) ruled Tonga during the period of Quensell and the active TCM. For the celebration of her long reign, numerous commemorative covers were made in 1938 and 1943-44.

**Outward TCM to Argentine with Commemorative cachet for Queen Salote**

NIUAFOOU 1938.11.8 → ROMANG (Argentina). The cachet for celebrating 20 years of Reign of Queen Salote Tupou III (1918-1938) was applied by Quensell. South America, including Argentine was very rare destination of Tin Can Mail.

Queen Salote Tupou III and Her family (Original Photograph)
Grandmother of Queen Salote Tupou III, that was the Mother of the first wife of Father King George II, was a woman from NIUAFOOU.
HMS Leith visited NIUAFOOU in 1939, and its small boxed cachet is recorded only Two Copies. It is well-known as one of the scarcest ship cachet of Tin Can Mail.

Only Two Recorded usage of Ship “HMS Leith” Cachet on TCM

NIUAFOOU 1939.7.3 → AUCKLAND (NZ). HMS Leith boxed cachet was applied. And Jubilee cachet celebrating the 20th year of Her reign was applied by Quensell.

Original Photo of HMS Leith
3. The Golden Age of Tin Can Mail

3.2. Competitors

After Quensell's success, two competitors appeared. They made covers only for the money-making. One is Roessler (1930-32), famous FFC maker in the USA

Usages of Roessler's "Tin Can Mail"

NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 1931.6.12 → US mainland. "Mailed at Tin Can Island" on the cachet, but it was not delivered through any Tin Can Mail route. Almost all covers by Roessler was from Nukualofa, he may have took Nukualofa for "Tin Can Island".

NIUAFOOU 7-bar cancel → NEW ARK (USA) 1933.10.9. Exceptional usage of Roeslerr TCM. actually sent from NIUAFOOU in 1933. In the explanation on the envelope, "Niuafoou" was wrongly printed as "Niaufoou". In spite of TCM envelope, only several covers recorded which were actually sent from NIUAFOOU.
The other was William Finau [his work related to Tin Can Mail: 1937-1947] was Tongan Stamp Dealer and photographer in NUKUALOFA, Tonga. He made several type envelopes with cachet. He sold and sent them to his customers.

**Usages of William Finau's “Tin Can Mail”**

NIUAFOOU 1939.4.22 → YORK (UK) 6.30. Registered Printed matter from Finau.

NIUAFOOU 1939.4.29 → SEATTLE 7.1 → LARKSPUR 7.5. Registered cover from MV Matua to US. Cachet of Finau on reverse. Exceptionally usage of Quenseill's cachet on Finau cover.
3.3. Islanders except Quensell

According to Quensell's letter in 1935, he is the only white man in the island but there were also 2 R.C.M. Sisters, 1275 native islanders. So it was very rare case that the Islanders except Quensell received/ sent mail. Covers sent by Sisters were named as "Missionary covers".

NIUAFOOU 1937.6.17
→ St. Foyes Les Lyon (France) 11.8

It is "Missionary cover" sent by Roman Catholic Mission Sisters of NIUAFOOU. They used middle-sized photographed envelope made by Quensell. On the reverse side, indicating "Catholic mission" by characteristic handwriting.
The covers to native islanders exists in very rare cases. They were the men who could read or write English on the public position and, e.g. Policemen, Tax officers, wireless operator or superintendent of public schools.

VAVAU (Tonga) 1937.7.7 → NIUAFOOU 1937.8.8.
Official letter of Tonga Government to policeman of NIUAFOOU.

STRATHFIELD (Australia) 1939.3.11 → NIUAFOOU
Letter to Mr. S. Vete, Wireless operator of the island.
3.4. Transition of Registered Markings (1933-46)

Registered service of Niuafoou began in 1930s. Most were sent by Quensell to his family in NZ at first. 1st type of reg. marking was all hand-writing (2.3%, Marlow’s report, 1965). In 1937, 2nd type, hand-writing number on the <NIUAFOOU> label (3.5%), appeared.

Earliest Recorded Usage of Registered Cover from NIUAFOOU

NIUAFOOU 7-bar cancel — SUVA Reg. cds (Fiji) 1933.8.1 — SEATTLE (USA) 10.5 — TACOMA 10.5

It is the Earliest Recorded Registered Cover from NIUAFOOU, with the Reg. No. 14, that is “14th registered mail” from NIUAFOOU.

Earliest Recorded Usage of the 2nd Type of Registered Marking


Handwriting number <R831> was applied on the boxed <NIUAFOOU> handmade label.
From 1938, <REG, Niuafoou / No.> rubber type appeared (43%, according to Marlow's report). On the day August 28, 1939, which is the celebrating day of Queen's 20 years reign, 24.2% of total registered covers from NIUAFOOU were sent in the one day.

Registered Cover from NIUAFOOU with the 3rd type Registered Marking

NIUAFOOU 1939.8.28 → CHRISTCHURCH (NZ). Sent from SS Maunganui.
Registered marking is <Reg.Niuafoou/No.> rubber stamped with “4962” hand-writing.

According to Marlow's report (Tin Canner Vol.6 (1986), pp.37-42), on Aug.28,1938, registered number of this type on this day covered No.13 to No.7156. 7,000 registered letters were supposed to be sent on one time! Most of them has the 20th Anniv. Jubilee cachet of Queen Salote Tupou III. As an autographed cover by Queen Herself was known, many covers were supposed to be made for the commemorative of Her Jubilee event.
This cover has <Tin-Can-Mail / Per RMS Maunganui / Niuafoou Tonga / AUGUST 9, 1939> cachet. It is relatively scare type of the ship cachets.
From 1937, machine made label began to use. Percent. of appear. is 48.5%. In 1944, exceptional cases were reported, in which reg. covers from Niuafoou with Nukualofa reg. label.

**Registered TCM Cover with NIUAFOOU Machine-made Label**

NIUAFOOU 1937.10.19 → NZ. Sent from SS Maunganui. Early machine-made labels were perforated.

**Exceptional Registered Cover from NIUAFOOU, with Reg. label of NUKUALOFA**

NIUAFOOU 1944.1.12 → NUKUALOFA (Tonga) → AUCKLAND (NZ)

Any registered label was put on not at NIUAFOOU, but at NUKUALOFA on the transit.
In 1941-1943, exceptional boxed rubber type reg. marking with hand-writing number appeared. Percentage of appearance was only 1.1%. It was the scarcest variety of the registered markings in Niuafouu.

Registered TCM Cover with Last type of Registered marking
Two Years from Sending to Delivery during WWII

NIUAFOOU 1941.10.17, 1941 (attempt but not sent) & 1943.7.19 (Actually sent)
→ San Pedro (USA) 1945.3.7 → BERKLEY 1945.3.8

The registered cover to US, sent by Quensell himself. He used his large photographed envelope. Addressed usages of this envelope were not so many existed.

Registered marking is Boxed rubber stamp with hand-writing number, which corresponds to Fig.3 of the Catalogue of TCM Cachets (1985). According to Marlow’s report, the percentage of appearance is only 1.1%. It is the scarcest type of the registered markings in Niuafouu.

This cover was prepared and pre-cancelled in 1941 but not sent at that time, later actually sent in 1943, arrived to US mainland in 1945. It took TWO YEARS to arrive. It is very important usage in the postal history during WWII.
3.5. From the World, To the World

Quensell wrote, in the letter in 1947, that he sent about 1,500,000 TCM to 148 countries (areas) for 27 years, and received 22000-40000 letters. The shortest distance covers were to the crew on the ship off Niuafoou, the second shortest were to other Tongan islands.

NIUAFOOU 7-bar, circa 1930--SS Tofua, off NIUAFOOU

NIUATOPUTABU Killer of KEPPEL'S date unknown-- NIUAFOOU 7-bar, circa 1934, Official Mail
NIUATOPUTABU is also the solitary island, about 100km east from NIUAFOOU.
Only Recorded Usage between these two solitary islands.
TCM from/to other Pacific islands, than Fiji, Samoa and Hawaii, are very scarce. USA, NZ and Australia were so common place in TCM that we can find special case, for example, early covers in 1920s or letter to the President F.D.Roosevelt.

Only Recorded TCM sent from Gilbert-Ellice Island

Gilbert-Ellice Island 1938.4.25 — NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 6.8 — NIUAFOOU 8.10
Gilbert Ellice Island is located near Tonga, but it is very scarce origin for TCM covers

TCM address to
President
Franklin D.
Roosevelt,
In White House
(Only Recorded)

NIUAFOOU 1937.5.14 — WASHINGTON DC

President FDR was a philatelist, who was also interested in TCM. He sent it for himself. Cert. marking of Harmer Auction Roosevelt sale was applied on the back of the envelope.
In Europe, GB is most common place, followed by Germany and France. It is very scarce other than such countries. Registered from Sweden and Arrival from Romania are shown here.

Registered Inward TCM from Sweden in 1939

Inward TCM from small town in Romania

Caransebeș (Romania) 1939.1.15 → NIUAFOOU 5.13
Caransebeș is a small town in South East of Romania
TCM from/ to African and M/S American countries are very scarce. Reported countries are Egypt, British Kenya, South Africa, South Rodesia, etc, in Africa; Jamaica, Mexico, British Guiana, Argentine, Brazil, Paraguay, etc in M/S America.

Registered Inward TCM from South Africa in 1935

Rondebosch 9255
Etain Pot Canot Courrier
Tonga
TIN CAN MAIL
Niuafoou Island Tonga

Rondebosch (S Africa) 1935.2.5 → Niuafoou

Inward TCM from Mexico in 1937

Succursa, Mexico City 1937.11.10 → Nuevo Laredo (Mexico) 11.12
→ Nukualofa (Tonga) 1938.1.12 → Niuafoou 2.14
Asia is the scarest destination of TCM. From NIUAFOOU, reported countries are India, Burma, Philippines, Strait Settlement, Hong Kong, China, Japan.

**Outward TCM to China in 1937**

NIUAFOOU 1937.10.10 → BEIPING (北京, China) 11.21 → (transferred) → SYDNEY

**Outward TCM to Philippines in 1936**

NIUAFOOU 1936.9.→ (cancelled by Quensell’s cachet) → SANTA CRUZ (Philippines) 10.20 → (transferred) → US Mainland
Asia is also the scarcest Origin of TCM. Examples of British India (now Pakistan) and Ceylon are shown here. About Japan, one of the Scarcest Origin in Asia is referred in next section.
3.6. Karl Lewis and Quensell – Japan Connection

It was not known well that Karl Lewis, famous FDC maker, had friendly relations with Quensell. Lewis made beautiful hand-painted cacheted envelopes for TCM, and sent them to friend in US through Quensell. Most of inward covers from Japan were sent by Lewis to send the envelopes to Quensell.

KARL LEWIS

YOKOHAMA Scenery postmark 1935.9.19 (Showa 10)
→NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 11.13 →NIUAFOOU

Circa 20 inward covers from Japan were known, but almost all of them were sent from Karl Lewis to Quensell. Most of them were cancelled with Scenery postmarks. On the address of the cover above, it is interesting that Lewis wrote Quensell’s name as “Mr W. Quensell, (?)”, with question mark. It is because that Lewis had no confidence about the spelling of the name of Quensell. This fact proves that this cover is earlier one in the Lewis's TCM covers.
According to Lewis's letter on Aug. 1941, he visited Niuafoou on the board of SS Navua on Mar. 1922, during his South-Pacific round trip. Later, cachets were made on the photographs he took then.

NIUAFOOU 1935.7.18 → US mainland 8.14. Lewis made many beautiful covers with hand-painted cachets. Four designs of the Lewis covers were recorded. This may be one of the Earliest one because its date of use was earlier than the cover in the page 63 (dates 1935.9.19).

Original photograph of the Lewis cover (supposed Karl Lewis had taken it on Mar. 1922)
This photograph founded in the envelope above. On the reverse of the photo, the man received them recorded as "received Oct. 18, 1935". As the composition of the photograph is the same as the that of the cachet, Lewis was supposed to have sent it on request. Comparing with other photograph in 1935, I supposed this is the photograph Lewis took by himself in 1922.
Four Types of Cachets for Special Illustrated cover, made by Karl Lewis for NIUAFOOU, were as follows: View of Agaha Landing Place (two subtypes by point of view), Shore of Niuafoou, Canoe of TCM and House of Native Village.

NIUAFOOU 1936.7.16 → US mainland, View of Agaha Landing Place (Different view) New Discovery in 2004

NIUAFOOU 1938.8.19 → US mainland, Shore of NIUAFOOU, New Discovery in 2005
According to my original study, most cachets were drawn from pictures Lewis took in his journey in 1922. But only "Canoe of TCM" cachet were drawn from Quensell's picture, because there were no CANOE Mail in 1922.

NIUAFOOU 1937.12.20 → US mainland. Cachet of the cover by Lewis is "CANOE of TCM" is NOT drawn from Lewis's photograph, but photo on Quensell's cachet of his envelope. Lewis did not take a picture of canoe mail at his visiting on March 1922, because no "canoe" mail service had started in 1922 (before the Shark affair). Three men on the canoe wears the same wears between Lewis cover and Quensell's envelope. Oarsmen wears (Head to Tail of the canoe), 1) No sleeve shirt, 2) Half-sleeve shirt, 3) No shirt, respectively.

From Quensell's cachet (200% enlarged)

Oarsmen wears (Head to Tail of the canoe),
1) No sleeve shirt,
2) Half-sleeve shirt,
3) No shirt, respectively.
Lewis sent many illustrated envelopes wrapped by papers by registered mail when he ordered to Quensell. Several Usages of High Rate covers for this purpose were reported. The other hand, only one reply from Quensell was reported.

**Highest Rate Registered Inward TCM from Japan (1Yen 28Sen Rate)**

Letter from Lewis to Quensell. Very high value rate cover more than 1 Yen, because it contained many illustrated covers to send. 1Yen 28Sen is the highest rate recorded of TCM from Japan.

**Only Recorded Outward TCM cover to Japan**

Letter from Quensell to Karl Lewis. Lewis sent heavy covers frequently, because of his business purpose, but Quensell wrote only for personal purpose.
Through exchange letters, Lewis and Quensell made good friends. On Feb, 1941, Lewis wrote he had lost his wife and been sick, but he did not want to go away because of having his Japanese friend.

P. C. Box 62, Yokohama, JAPAN. February 24, 1941.

Dear Walt,

How are you getting along? I hope all is well with you, and your family in New Zealand, and that your sons are doing well?. If I had a family, I don’t think I could be away from them, but we had no children, and that was always what we wanted.

This is the last Winter month; and this day, is more like a summer day. The rain, so little, by water, and Electric time I wrote; only ten months my wife had to take to her health, was nearly twenty years. I have known her younger than when I was born. John Gorman, has been here, has sent me:... and advising us to go back to America; but I have been here forty years, have no relatives, but have some friends there, so I shall stay here. You can’t transplant an old tree, and I will stay here until my time comes.

I’d like to be with you for a few months; but that is impossible, sick and old, I must stay here, and don’t want to go away, as I always find the Japanese I come into contact with, courteous and kind, and as I talk Japanese, why should I go away?

Walt can, please post these two letters when there is an opportunity. Thank you. May your life be long, happy, and contented, is my earnest hope.

Yours old and sincere, friend so far away,

Karl Lewis.
Chapter 4: Eruption, Evacuation & Suspended

4.1. World War II and TCM

The Tonga Defense Force came into existence at the beginning of World War II in 1939. In 1943 New Zealand help train two Tongan contingents of about 2000 troops, who saw action in the Solomon Islands. In addition, NZ and US troops were stationed on Tongatabu, which became a staging point for shipping.

NIUAFOOU 1942.12.14 → NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 12.24
Addressed to a Soldier, 1st Battalion, Tonga Defense Force, Nukualofa

Soldiers of Tonga Defense Force in front of Barracks on Tongatapu.
(from "Tin Canner" Vol.12 No.2, 1992)
After the beginnings of WWII, TCM covers, inward or outward, were censored in various countries. Octagonal censorship handstamps "WW" (Empire code for Tonga) were used in Tonga in 1942-43.

Censorship by the British Force WW/1 (1943)

NIUAFOOU 1943.2.18 → AUCKLAND (NZ). Postcard written by Quensell, which was sometimes seen in 1940s. Censored with Octagonal <PASSED WW/1> used by British Force in Tonga.

Double Censored Cover in Tonga and United States in 1942

NIUAFOOU 1942.7.14 → NUKUALOFA → US mainland. Censored with Octagonal <PASSED WW/2> handstamp used by British Force in Tonga and US censorship tape "USA 1530" in USA.
Amount of sending TCM was decreased in WWII period, but because Quensell continued his connection with Europe and Africa, there are some censored TCM in various countries. Exceptional usage censored in African countries are shown here.

**Censorship in South Rodesia**

Sent on MV Matua 1940.9.25
→ NIUAFOOU 1941.4.9
→ GWELO (S.Rhodesia) 1941.7.8
→ redirected to London

Registered TCM sent from SS Matua, censored on Southern Rhodesia, sealed by "OPENED BY CENSOR" tape and cancelled with triangular censorship hand-stamp. After that, it redirected to London.

**Outward Registered TCM with Censorship in Egypt**

NIUAFOOU 1939.8.28 → HELIOPOLIS 1940.8.28
Censored tape and censored mark in Egypt. It took One Year for arrival.
British Tanganyika was an important transit place from Europe. Inward TCM from Europe, censored in Tanganyika is shown.

**Only Recorded Censorship in Tanganyika in Transit**

**On the Inward TCM from Denmark**

**In 1940**

Transit mark of
DARESSALAAM (British Tanganyika)
On reverse

KALVEHAVE (Denmark) 1939.2.21
→ DARESSALAAM (British Tanganyika) 1940.1.12
→ NUKUALOFA 1940.4.3 → NIUAFOOU 1940.5.5

Inward TCM from small town in Denmark, Blue censor tape was by British Tanganyika.
As to TCM covers to America, there are many covers censored in United States, because it was major destination. But other than USA, censorship on TCM was seldom to be seen.

**Outward TCM to Jamaica**

censored in Tonga

NIUAFOOU 1942.0.28 → NUKUALOFA (Tonga) → HALF WAY TREE (Jamaica)

Rare TCM Postcard, especially to Mid America is extremely scarce, with British censorship in Tonga, WW/2 type.

**Outward Registered TCM with Censorship in Canada**

NIUAFOOU 1943.6.18 → SUVA (Fiji) 1945.1.26 → OTTAWA 3.14 → MONTREAL 3.15. Censored in Canada.
TCM covers from/to Asia are scarce originally, but there are still some very rare examples, in which covers sent during this period and double censored.

**Inward TCM with Double Censorship in Ceylon and Australia in 1942-43**

![Inward TCM with Double Censorship in Ceylon and Australia in 1942-43](image)

(Reverse side of the cover)

**BADULLA (Ceylon) 1942.11.30**

→ (Censored in Australia)

→ NIUAFOOU 1943.6.18

L/33 tape (L means British Ceylon Army) at first, and next, censored tape of Australia and Diamond formed Censor mark were applied later.
4. Eruption, Evacuation & Suspended

4.2. Eruption & Evacuation (Sep. 1946-1947)

Niuafo'ou is a volcanic island, which erupted many times in the history. Sep. 9, 1946, the volcano suddenly erupted, lava destroyed the Agaha town, the largest town in the Niuafo'ou. Quensell was safe because he left just before the eruption unexpectedly. But he lost everything in Niuafo'ou.

Eruption of Niuafo'ou in 1946
(Aerial photograph in 1946)

On September 9, 1946, Volcano in Niuafo'ou suddenly erupted, and lava destroyed Agaha, the largest town in the island.

50th ANNIVERSARY OF EVACUATION OF NIUAFO'OU

"We were visited by some terrible earthquakes; some lasted forty minutes. The island was rocking for days, days with terrible force. It actually cracked to pieces with a long trench some two to four miles wide, the ground rose up and sank, it sunk to the hills some 1000 feet above the sea. On the 9th of September the ground tilted some 25 to 30 feet in places. The earth, water and lava flowed down destroying three fourths of the town of Agaha. In less than five minutes the lava was swept away, my home was gone. It was terrible. We could get no help as we were 400 miles from Tonga. Our radio was gone. We did have food and water and very lucky souls in the hills," (Quensell's statement prior to evacuation).

Letter from Quensell, 1951

NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 1951.9.25 → USA

Quensell wrote to his client in his letter on Sep. 9, 1951, about the volcano eruption on Sep. 9 and 10, 1946.

Quensell wrote "... I left in the middle of June 1946 and on the 9 & 10 of September 1946 a great eruption took place and destroyed the capital of the Islands, 'Angaha'. I and my son lost all we owned on the Island. The worst was the loss of my stamp collection of some 50-60000 pieces this collection was started by my Dad in 1848..."

Color Proof of Evacuation by MV Matua on December 1946

Rept. Surface Mail

Frank F. Reilly
106 Grove St.
Hampstead, N. Y.

U.S.A.
Four types of "Evacuation cover" was recorded: 1) Sep 27, 1946, soon after eruption, by Yacht Hifofua; 2) Oct 27, 1946, by Yacht Hifofua; 2) Dec 21, 1946, evacuation by MV Matua; 4) Oct 6, 1947, last evacuation (only commemorative cover, no mailed). First three types evacuation cover are shown in this exhibit.

First Evacuation Cover addressed to NZ
New Discovery in 2005

On this envelope, the sender wrote "Stamps all burned" and "NiuaFocu Tin Can Mail Island After Sept Eruption", because post office was burned completely by eruption. According to "Sister Mary Julia's diary", the Yacht "Hifofua" was gone on Sep 24. It arrived Nuku'alofa on Sep 27. But this letter was addressed to overseas, so post officer put on 5d stamps, and cancelled Oct 8, and sent it to NZ by airmail.
The 2nd Evacuation cover on Oct. 27, 1946, by Yacht Hifofua was unknown till 2005. In my original study, the data of the cover completely accords to Sister Mary Julia’s Diary.

**Second Evacuation Cover by Yacht Hifofua on Oct. 27 to NUKUALOFA**

**New Discovery in 2005**

(NIUAFOU 1946.10.27 → NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 1946.10.31)

According to the “Sister Mary Julia’s diary”, Yacht “Hifofua” made the second evacuation on October 1946, in which Sisters of Catholic Mission of Niuafoou and some people to be carried to Nukualofa. Arrival postmark of the cover accords with the arrival day in the Diary.

Obverse side of the cover: The sender wrote “All stamps destroyed by eruption Sept 9th 1946”, “Niuafoou Angaha Tin Can Mall Island”.

Postcard of Yacht Hifofua which was owned by Queen Salote Tupou III, acted in the Evacuation of Niuafoou

From “Sister Mary Julia’s Diary”

27 October Up at 3am coffee — packing and a last farewell to the people. Then walk down to trail that leads to Tapaipau. Our hearts were sad at the thought of leaving our dear Mission Field. I*eft Angahâ at noon. Mr Small left behind.

31 October Safe in Nukualofa. Mother General and Mother Mark came to greet us at the wharf…

On December 1946, many commemorative covers were made at the third evacuation by MV Matua. Only a few “Real Evacuation” covers which were sent by John Malikamu, act as a postmaster, were recorded.

“Real Evacuation” Cover by John Malikamu of third Evacuation (Dec. 1946)

Pen-cancelled by John Malikamu, act as postmaster,
NIUAFOOU 1946.12.21 → NUKUALOFA 12.22

Cover sent at the evacuation on Dec.21, John Malikamu, who acted as a postmaster, wrote letter and cancelled stamp by his own hand-writing. On the reverse, there are an arrival cds of Nukualofa and cachet of MV Matua. Real evacuation cover, not for commemorative. (ex.Baxendale collection)
Another “Real Evacuation” Cover by Tongan of third Evacuation (Dec. 1946) 
Address to Vava'u
New Discovery

Last day Cover from “Tin Can Island”, Niua Foa;

Mr.
I. Kauuai

Vavau
Tonga Islands.

Pen-cancelled by John Malikamu, act as postmaster,
NIUAFOOU 1946.12.21.1946
→ NUKUALOFA 12.22 → VAVAU 1947.1.2

Cover sent at the evacuation on Dec.21. The sender may be Tongan person other than John Malikamu, who acted as a postmaster, The sender wrote as “Last day Cover from “Tin Can Island”, Niua Foa” and 1d stamp on the cover cancelled by Malikamu’s handwriting. On the reverse, there are an transit and arrival cds of Nukualofa and Vava'u.

Transit postmark (NUKUALOFA, left) and Arrival postmark (VAVAU, right) on the reverse
4.3. Tin Can Mail suspended

Tin Can Mail service by Quensell had ended at the evacuation. Quensell moved to Nukualofa and wrote to his friends in the world, who were looking forward to receive TCM covers, that TCM service had ended.

WALTER GEO. QUENSSELL,
Nukualofa, Tonga,
South Seas.

NUKUALOFA,
TONGA,
OCEANIA.

Dear Friend,

Many thanks for your letter of some months back.

I am sorry to inform you that the world famous Tin Can Mail Service has come to an end.

You probably have heard that a part of the Island has been blown up by a volcanic eruption. Great damage occurred but, happily, no lives were lost. All the people will be taken away from the Island as it is not considered safe to live there any longer. The inhabitants number about 1,350 and they will be brought to Nukualofa as soon as transport can be arranged.

Oh, well, so has ended the unique Tin Can Mail Service.

Yours very truly,

Walt. Geo. Quensell,
former Tin Can Mail Man.

G.W. AMERSON
901 S 7TH AVENUE,
MAYWOOD, ILL.
UNITED STATES AMERICA

NUKUALOFA 1946.12.10
→ USA

Printed Letter of Quensell for his friends all over the world to inform the end of Tin Can Mail Service.
Quensell in NUKUALOFA made a tag too, to inform easily the end of Tin Can Mail, for putting on postcard or envelope.

**Quensell’s Postcard to his Friend to inform the suspension of Tin Can Mail by original Tag**

![Postcard Image]

Tin Can Mail Service has ended. Part of Tin Can Island, Niuafo'ou has blown up by volcanic eruption.
(from the tag by Quensell)

NUKUALOFA (Tonga) 1949.4.22 → Germany

Letter by Quensell after he left Niuafo'ou. A tag informed the end of TCM. To Miss Margarethe Fischer in Germany, all letter was written by German language.

As I also have a letter to Mr. Richard Fischer in 1935, Fisher family and Quensell had been good friends for ten years.
Sir,

I have received your letter of the 3rd January last together with enclosure self-addressed envelope (unstamped). I have received a Money Order from the Money Order Office, Sydney, N.S.W. Australia, No. 4221 for the amount of one shilling and three pence, Tongan currency, and I have affixed one each of the following stamps on the envelope, viz., 2d. 1d. 2d. 2½d. 3d. 6d.

1. There is not now a Post Office at Niuafoua. The Post Office was burnt down on 9th September, 1946 during the volcanic eruptions. The people have been evacuated to other parts of Tonga. A new Post Office is not being erected. In future any orders for postage stamps will be executed at this office.

Yours faithfully,

Chief Postmaster.

Mr. Joe Allan,
690 Greenbrook Road,
North Plainfield,
New Jersey,
U.S.A.
When Quensell was a Tin Can Mail man, he always wrote after his signature as “Tin Can Mail Man (T.C.M.M.).” After his retirement, he wrote as “Former T.C.M.M.” (English) or “T.C.M.M. a.D.” (German). On March 30, 1956, 79-year-old Walter George Quensell died at Nukualofa.

NUKUALOFA 1950.5.21 → Germany

Aerogram was addressed to Miss Fischer in Germany. Very long letter in German language continued for two aerograms. On the reverse side of the aerogram, Quensell wrote after his signature as “T.C.M.M. a.D.” “a.D.” is acronym of “ausser Dienst”, means “retired” in English. In the letter to the English-speaking friends, he wrote as “former T.C.M.M.”

Quensell, Tin Can Mail Postmaster Dies

George Quensell, the man who prepared many “tin can mail” covers for stamp collectors up until 1946, is dead. The unique means of dispatching the mail was carried on from the island of Niufo`ou in the Tongan archipelago of over 100 islands. His death occurred at Nuku'alofa, capital of the Tonga Islands.

Occasionally a ship of the New Zealand Steamship Co. called at Nuku'alofa. Because of the dangerous surf which made impractical the use of boats to approach the land, natives would swim in sealed tin cans of mail to the vessel which would then carry it to the outside world. The ship would also carry mail.

Most of the latter was from collectors who wanted the special cachet applied to covers by Quensell.

Volcanic activity in 1946 brought the evacuation of the 1200 residents of the island. That stopped the tin can mail service which has never been resumed.

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