

August Events: **U.S. Territory August Connections**

by **John F. Dunn**

This month we take a look at a number of events that took place in August, all related in one way or another to the relationship between the United States and its Territories (listed in the *Scott Catalogs* under U.S. Possessions), most influenced by the events up to and surrounding the Spanish-American War, a short-lived 1898 conflict between the U.S. and Spain that stemmed from U.S. intervention in the Cuban War of Independence.



As the Trans-Mississippi Exposition was held while the Spanish-American War was taking place, Patriotic covers such as this, with its “Remember the Maine” theme, and a 1¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 285), can be found. In this case the stamps, also including two Sc. 279Bg, are tied by a “San Francisco Cala. Aug. 30 8-AM '98” machine cancel shortly after the war had ended.

Maine in Havana harbor is loosely regarded as ‘the cause’ of the war, but that was just the final act that led to what was destined to be a U.S. declaration of war against Spain, which actually was preceded by Spain’s declaration of war against the U.S. in response to U.S. demands that Spain surrender control of Cuba.

The war was brief, lasting just ten weeks. Although the charge up San Juan Hill by “Rough Riders,” led by former

There had been continuing revolts against Spanish rule in Cuba. What is known as the Second Cuban Insurrection, which began in 1895, continued into 1898 with increasing U.S. involvement diplomatically, in newspaper coverage and ultimately, militarily. The sinking of the U.S. battleship

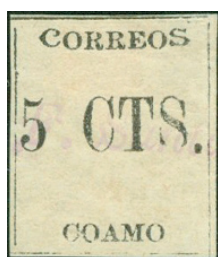
Assistant Secretary of the Navy and future United States President Theodore Roosevelt is one of the best remembered events of the war, it was U.S. Naval power that actually determined the outcome. At the same time as war was being conducted in the Caribbean, the U.S. Navy was also taking on the Spanish and defeating them in the Pacific, where the U.S. already was playing a role in Hawaii.

On August 12, 1898, a Protocol of Peace was signed between the U.S. and Spain. In the Treaty of Paris, signed on December 10, 1898, Spain ceded Puerto Rico, along with the Philippines and Guam to the United States and relinquished sovereignty over Cuba, but did not cede it to the U.S. However, long before the formal signing of the Treaty, the United States had started on the path towards control of the region.

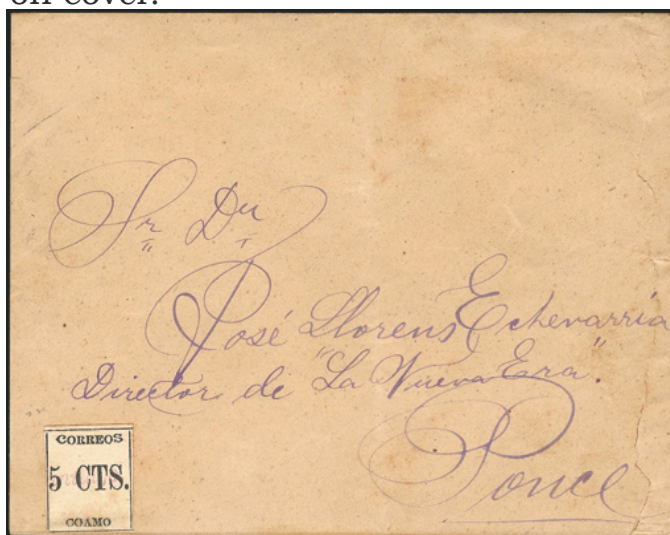
Puerto Rico

On July 25, 1898, the U.S. invaded Spanish-controlled Puerto Rico. By August 9, in the Battle of Coamo, the U.S. had defeated the Spanish forces. This brings us to one of our August events, the creation of the Puerto Rico Coamo Provisional.

Shortly after the U.S. took control of Puerto Rico, regular stamps were not available, and in August 1898 the Coamo Provisional was produced. Shown here is an unused single as well as a stamp on a cover to Ponce, Puerto Rico with a "Military Sta. 1 Porto Rico, Wash. D.C. Recd. Aug. 19, '98" backstamp, making this the earliest known use of the stamp on cover.



Puerto Rico
Sc. 201



While the cover on page 2 is the earliest known use, the philatelic world first learned of the existence of the Coamo Provisional in *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News*, based on reports of covers such as this that were



sent by Captain R. D. Potts to his wife in San Francisco. There are ten known Coamo covers, seven used locally. Although the stamps were not valid on mail sent outside of Puerto Rico, Potts was a stamp collector and decided to use the stamps on his mail back home. (In 1900 he wrote to New England Stamp Company, offering them for sale.)

The cover, addressed to the Presidio in San Francisco, shows a “Military Sta. 1 Porto Rico. Wash D.C. Aug. 30 '98 12 M.” duplex cancel, and is backstamped “San Francisco Sep. 12 '98 11 PM” duplex and “Presidio Cal. Rec'd. Sep. 13, 1898 9 AM”.

This cover is the first of three covers mailed by Potts to San Francisco and one of only two covers bearing a pair



of the stamps. Using your pdf magnifier, a close look will show that the stamps have a fancy outlined “5”, which is found only on positions 6 and 7 of the sheet.

Also shown on page 3 is a full sheet of the Coamo Provisional, with positions 6 and 7 showing the fancy “5”.

The first U.S. Post Office in Puerto Rico was established on August 3, 1898. Shown here is a cover to Marlboro, Mass., used on that first day from the Playa de Ponce Military Station No. 1 with a “M. Sta No. 1/Porto Rico/Aug 3, 98” duplex provisional railway postmark struck over a violet “Soldier’s Letter/Collect postage from Addressee/W.F. Dusseault, Chaplain/6th Regt/ Mass. Vols.” handstamp, the cover also with a U.S. 2¢ Postage Due (Sc. J39) affixed and tied by a cork cancel upon arrival.



Puerto Rico was formally turned over to the United States on October 18, 1898. Shown here is an October 17, 1898 “Transfer Day” commemorative cover with ten values from the 1890-97 Alfonso XIII issued overprinted by local postal clerks to commemorate the last day of Spanish control over the island with violet boxed “Habilitado/17/Octubre/1898” hand-stamps (the 10c with an inverted overprint) and tied by six strikes of “Admon. Central/Puerto Rico/17 Oct. 98” postmarks. These stamps were sold only in San Juan on



October 17 and the morning of the 18th, and this is the only known cover.

Cuba

As with Puerto Rico, stamps were in short supply after the U.S. took control of Cuba in August 1898. This led to the Cuba Puerto Principe provisionals, produced by surcharging available Cuban stamps that had been issued under Spanish control.

Shown here is a 5c on 1m orange brown tied by a “Correo de Puerto Principe, Ysla de Cuba ENO 1899” double-circle date-stamp on an illustrated red



and blue Uncle Sam, Eagle, Shield and Cannon Patriotic cover to Sturgis, South Dakota, with patriotic slogans in the design including “Monroe Doctrine”, “Justice and Humanity” and “The Declaration of War”, the cover also with a Havana backstamp and Sturgis February 8, 1899, receiving backstamp. This is believed to be the only known Spanish-American War Patriotic cover franked with a Puerto Principe provisional.



This next cover bears the same cachet as seen on the cover illustrated on page 1, but it bears Cuba stamps, specifically the 1899 3 centavos on U.S. 3¢, 5c on 5¢ and

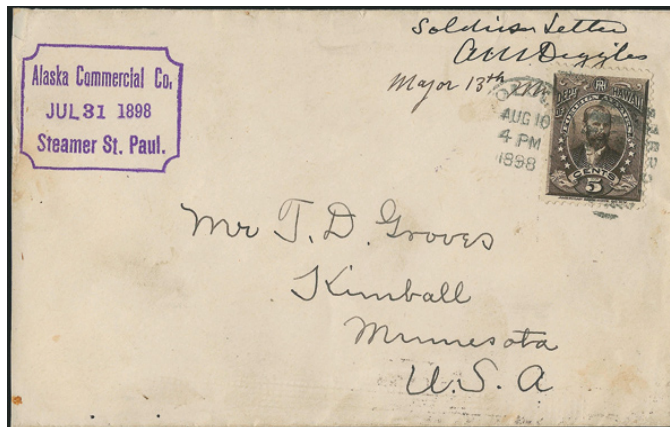
10c on 10¢, tied by target cancels on a cover to Leipzig, Germany, also with a “Havana Post Office, Mar. 17, 1899 Reg. No.” receiving backstamp.

Hawaii

As mentioned earlier, U.S. involvement in Hawaii predated the outbreak of the Spanish American War, beginning with the arrival of Protestant Missionaries in 1820 and continuing with commercial interests who sought annexation of Hawaii by the United States.

Even before 1898, U.S. military interests viewed Hawaii as vital to any outbreak with Spain that might take place, particularly as a stopping point for the American Navy on its way to the Philippines.

Shown here is a cover to Kimball, Minn., with a Hawaii 1896 5¢ black brown Official (Sc. O2) tied by a “Honolulu H.I. Aug. 10, 1898” duplex datestamp, endorsed “Sol-



diers Letter” at top and signed “A.M. Diggles “Major 13th Minnesota.” The Hawaiian government allowed U.S. soldiers to send letters home with the postage paid by Official stamps. The 13th Minnesota participated in the Battle of Manila and the 1899 Philippine uprising.

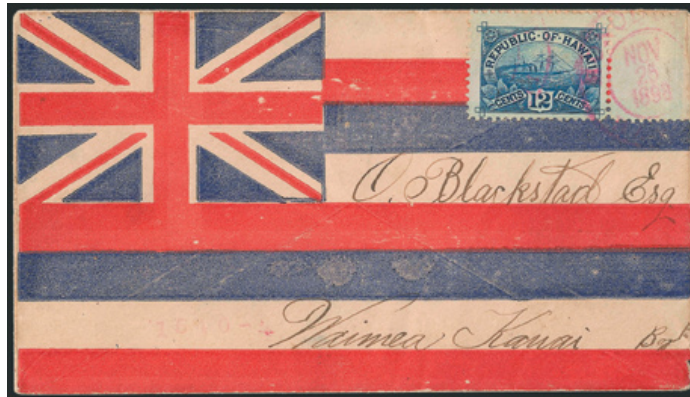
This next cover also bears the 1896 5¢ black brown Official (Sc. O2), in this case tied by a “Honolulu H.I. Jun. 9, 1898” duplex datestamp on a red and blue



“Remember the Maine” Spanish-American War Patriotic cover to San Francisco, also endorsed “Soldiers Letter”

at top, with the soldier's name and regiment designation at the side and a purple "Foreign Office Honolulu H.I." double-circle handstamp.

This next Patriotic cover to Waimea, Kauai displays an overall Hawaiian Flag cachet with an 1894 12¢ blue (Sc. 78) tied by a "Honolulu Hawaii Nov. 25, 1898" double-circle datestamp. The Hawaiian flag design is especially appropriate as it manifests Hawaii's annexation by the U.S. as well as its connection to the Spanish-American War.



The August 12, 1898 ceremony in which Hawaii became a territory of the U.S.

Philippines

Although Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States, the Filipinos had other thoughts. While they were willing to accept U.S. involvement in freeing the Philippines from Spain, independence was their goal—and in fact had been even before the Spanish-American War.

As a result, when the United States demonstrated no plans to give up control, the ensuing Philippine-American



1998 Centennial souvenir sheets, Sc. 2561-2565, issued during Pilipinas '98, depict revolutionary scenes as well as stamps of the Filipino Revolutionary Government.

War was much more costly than the Spanish-American War had been, with more than 4,200 American soldiers killed. The war officially came to an end in 1901, although some outbreaks took place as late as 1913.



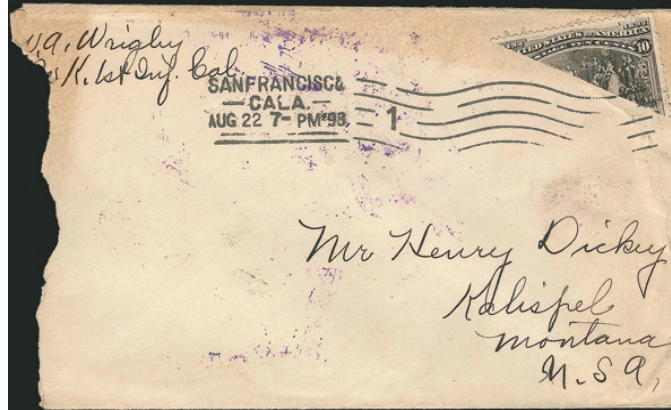
A cover with a “Manila Bay June 30, 1898” dateline on an enclosure with the “Remember the Maine” patriotic design, with a Hong Kong 10c Victoria stamp tied by a “Hong Kong JY 5, 1898” circular datestamp. The cover addressed to Oakland, Oregon, also bears a purple “U.S. Consulate Hong Kong”, and San Francisco and receiving backstamps. The enclosure includes “We captured about 65 Spaniards and 3 or 4 hundred guns and several thousand rounds of ammunition... We can see the masts of the Spanish ships that Dewey sunk still sticking out of the water.”

As noted earlier, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on August 12, 1898, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States. In fact, the very first battle of the Spanish-American War took place in the Philippines on May 1, 1898. That battle took just a few hours before Commodore Dewey’s Asiatic Squadron had

defeated the Spanish squadron and the U.S. had gained control of Manila Bay and the arsenal and navy yard at Cavite.



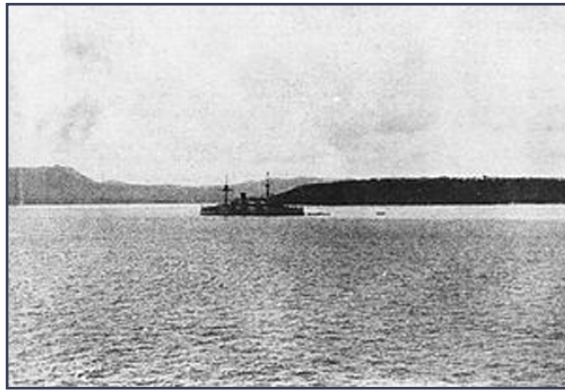
A cover with “Soldier’s Letter” endorsement posted stampless per the Special Privileged given to soldiers as long as the letters were properly endorsed by a senior officer or chaplain. The postage was to be paid upon arrival in the U.S., thus 2¢ Due stamp, but no penalty fee. See also page 9



A 10¢ Columbian bisect used from the Philippines, tied by a San Francisco Aug. 22, 1898 machine cancel, sent by a soldier in the Philippines, but not as a Soldier's Letter.

Guam

The U.S. also took formal control over Guam with the August 12, 1898, signing of the Treaty of Paris. August 15, 1898; however, by June 21 of that year, the Spanish on Guam had already surrendered, without a shot being fired, to a U.S.



The USS Charleston entering the Apra, Guam harbor on June 20, 1898

party led by the Captain Henry Glass of the *USS Charleston*, which was transporting troops to the Philippines.

An extensive narration of the capture of Guam can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capture_of_Guam. The casual nature of the operation is manifested in another Wikipedia quote: “No U.S. forces were left on Guam, but the only U.S. citizen on the island, Frank Portusach, told Captain Glass that he would look after things until U.S. forces returned.”

As a result, the U.S. occupation of and administration on Guam did not take place until 1899. The first mail evidencing U.S. presence was on From July 7, 1899 mail that was canceled on the *USS Yosemite*, followed on August 15, 1899 with mail from Agana. The pages that follow show examples of mail from Guam.

This is the earliest registered letter from Guam, dated August 17. In addition to the postmark that arrived on the Yosemite, several old Spanish markings were found in the Government House in Agana, and it is believed that they were used there temporarily by Assistant Postmaster Perez, a native of Guam, while Postmaster Hobby conducted the postal business on board the Yosemite.



Shown here, the circular date stamp was inscribed "Marianas" and did not have a year date; was usually accompanied by an oval killer filled with dots and a star in the center; and Registered mail was designated by an additional strike of a rectangle inscribed "CERTIF." These markings are recorded as used between August 17 and December 8, 1899.

A cover to Greenfield, Mass. with 1¢ and 2¢ Guam overprints (Sc. 1, 2) cancelled by a September 6, 1899 "Agana, Isle of Guam" straightline postmark with separate date stamp, the reverse with a "Mil. Sta. No. 1 Manila Phil Isl" date stamp Rec'd Sep 14" transit circular date stamp and Greenfield October 23 receiver. This was the first marking used



under the U.S. administration on Guam, first on the Yosemite, and later in Agana when the post office moved ashore.

A cover to San Francisco with 1¢ and 5¢ Guam overprints (Sc. 1, 5) with a “Marianas” September 11 (1899) postmark, the stamps tied by matching strikes of a dark violet oval of dots and star, the cover also with “from



W.H. Rush/U.S.S. Solace” and Yokohama, Japan 16 Sep 99 and San Francisco Oct 9, 1899 backstamps. It is believed they were used on shore in Agana before the Navy post office was moved there from the Yosemite, and that during the U.S. period of use, the year slug was replaced by the half moon seen on this cover.



A cover to Washington, D.C., with the 1899 1¢ and 2¢ “Guam” overprint First Printings (Sc. 1, 2a) tied by blue “Agana, Isle of Guam/Nov. 21, 1899” straightline datestamp, also with partial Mil. Sta. (No. 1 Manila) and Washington D.C. backstamps. This is the first canceller used on Guam under U.S. Administration, first on the USS Yosemite, then later at Agana.

Right, a cover to Greenfield, Mass., endorsed "U.S.S. Yosemite, Guam" with a "San Luis D'Apra, Guam, Dec. -9 1899" blue two-line handstamp that ties a U.S. 2¢.



Below, a cover to Altoona, Pa., with 1¢, 2¢ and 5¢ Guam overprints (Sc. 1, 2, 5) tied by a February 24, 1900 "San Luis D'Apra,



Guam" straightline postmark with separate datestamp, also with two partial strikes of 'bear's paw' grids, and backstamped San Francisco Mar 22 and Altoona Mar 27.

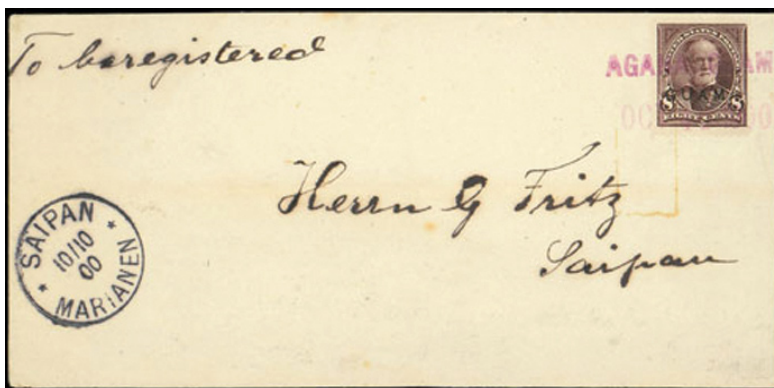
When the Guam post office was moved ashore in November of 1899, the Yosemite moved to a more secure anchorage at San Luis d'Apra harbor. Its mail facilities remained

an unofficial branch of the Guam post office until the ship was lost to a typhoon in November of 1900. The cancelling device is believed to have been privately fabricated aboard the Yosemite.

A May 22, 1900, use of the postmark that came on the Yosemite was placed in service in Agana the day that the post office opened, August, 15, 1899. This May 22, 1900, use is the latest recorded example of



this type of the marking, on a cover, with 2¢ postage and 10¢ Special Delivery "Guam" overprints.



A cover to G. Fritz, the German governor at Saipan, Marianne with the 8¢ Guam overprint (Sc. 7) tied by another type of the “Agana, Guam” magenta straightline handstamp, with a matching separate October 4, 1900, datestamp, the cover also with a manuscript “To be registered” instruction.

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