

ARABIAN PHILATELIC ASSOCIATION
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

RANDOM NOTES NO. 7

12 July 1975

Here we are again with your favorite subject, the stamps of Saudi Arabia. Stamp issuing policy is under continuing review in Riyadh, and some more news on this subject is included below. Without more ado, here are the Notes for this issue.

For local members, many are still going on vacation without leaving the required new issues deposit. You may find yourself left out of new issues. Also, please see Rudy Thoden and pick up new issues if you have not done so.

1. Our address list was found to contain numerous errors. We have reprinted it, and the corrected version is attached. {Not in reprint wak}

2. The Arabian Philatelic Association has announced a stamp design contest. The purpose is to provide suggestions for stamp designs to the Saudi Arab Government. Rules for the contest have been sent to all members.

3. The new Faisal stamps were issued July 6, 1975. There were three denominations:

	<u>Center</u>	<u>Inscriptions</u>	<u>Quantity issued</u>
4p	brown	dark green	1,500,000
16p	olive green	violet	1,000,000
23p	purple	dark green	500,000

The 4p denomination is for airmail between Arab countries; 16p pays the airmail rate to the United Kingdom; and 23p pays the airmail rate to the United States. This choice of denominations apparently resulted from a suggestion made by the APA to the Stamp Design Review Committee that the overseas denominations be used in commemorative sets. In this way, the stamps will be used on mail going outside the Kingdom and will thus advertise the Kingdom and its accomplishments.

Other APA suggestions covered first-day covers and souvenir sheets. Our suggestion was that these "be made available to collectors"; for the Faisal Issue, the authorities decided to limit the quantities to 5,000 each, and to sell them as follows:

- a. The items are sold as a package. A folder describing the issue is included.
- b. Only one "package" is to be sold to any one collector.
- c. The collector has to appear in person and fill out a form signifying his intention to buy and his receipt of the cover and souvenir sheet.

The postal authorities seem determined to keep dealers from hoarding or speculating in Saudi Arabian stamps and for this reason have adopted these measures. Unfortunately, collectors outside Saudi Arabia, especially those who depend on new issue dealers, will in most cases be unable to obtain these items. The package was sold at face value: 23p + 16p + 4p and 40p for the souvenir sheet, or SR 4.15 equivalent to US \$1.20.



Interestingly, the authorities used the King's portrait even though they had previously announced that human subjects (and animal) would henceforth not appear on stamps.

4. The next stamp to be issued, about the first part of August, will be in honor of the recent Conference of Islamic Ministers.

5. While in Riyadh recently, the Editor saw a drawing for a proposed design for a stamp honoring the one-hundredth anniversary of the invention of the telephone.

6. On the recent "Blinds' Day" stamps, the braille carries an Arabic text, translated as follows:

"Knowledge is Light"

"Long live Faisal to whom thanks be given for lifting the blind man from the darkness of blindness to the light of knowledge so that he can provide himself through his own efforts with a decent way of life".

7. Randall Baker says that at the auction of the National Philatelic Society, 45 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1BN on 11 August, there are two lots which may be of interest to APA members. One of the lot numbers seems to be missing, so I'll quote the text of his letter - you can follow up if you are interested: "Namely, 333 D. Warin's book at £15 and a 1922 Haworth and Sargent at £4". Those of you who bought Warin's book through me at prices ranging from £4 to £6 over the last few years apparently have a good item! There are no more, incidentally, where I used to order mine - that source dried up a year or two ago. To those who don't know "The Postal Issues of Hejaz, Jeddah, and Nejd" by D.F. Warin, 1927, it is an invaluable reference to the earlies, beautifully printed and illustrated, and highly recommended. Only 350 were printed. The Haworth and Sargent is a small pamphlet, and it is referred to in Warin; in my opinion, if you own Warin, you probably don't really need the other one.

8. Dr. Randall Baker recently published two articles which may be of interest. The first: "Hejaz Stamps and Lawrence of Arabia" was distributed with Random Notes No. 6. Attached to these Notes is the other: "The Capture of al-Qunfudhah by Ibn Saud". Overseas members didn't get the first one, I find, so they will find this one attached, also.

9. I have correspondence from Mr. Carl R. Catherman, Research Chairman for the Yemen Philatelic Society. He gave me some interesting information about the Hodeidah cancellations that we find on stamps of the 1934 Heir Apparent issue. He says: "The cancelling device was removed to Mecca after the occupation (of the Tihama: ed.) and fake covers were produced. Thus, it is quite possible that loose copies of the 1934 issue with Hodeidah cancels are favor cancels. Indeed, some of our members have such copies and the very nice (emphasis Mr. Catherman's ed.) cancellations add to the suspicions about their origin". He adds that only covers registered and properly back stamped by the receiving office would be above suspicion. He says he does not have any such; I have never seen any, myself. Do any of my readers have a good one?

10. If you are missing any of the earlier Random Notes, please write. I have all but No.2 still available. Send \$1.00 for airmail postage for one or two, or \$2.00 for three or more. No charge for the Notes themselves.

JOHN M. WILSON
EDITOR

Retyped May 1988/W.A.King

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The Capture of Al-Qunfudhah by Ibn Saud

by Dr. RANDALL BAKER

THE PORT of al-Qunfudhah lies on the south-eastern shore of the Red Sea, languishing in the torpor of perpetual heat and enervating humidity. Now it has the aura of a forgotten place: a market square of abandoned coral-rag storehouses and streets of proud, crumbling houses which once acted as the courts of wealthy merchants. It is difficult to imagine, now, the pivotal position which this sleepy haven held in the troubled history of the Hejaz (see map).

Originally al-Qunfudhah was the outlet for the *Sanaq* of the Asir, a subdivision of the *Vilayet* (Province) of the Yemen during the times of Ottoman suzerainty. It is not clear when the first post office opened here for, although Mayo' records a boxed strike of Qunfudhah of Tomkins' type 3, (fig.1) the U.P.U. list of post offices in the time around 1895 does not contain this name. I rather fear that the list I have is not complete and so I would welcome information from anyone with a more complete listing of Yemen offices of the Ottoman Empire.

During the Arab Revolt of 1916-1918 the port changed hands several times as it provided a logic entry point for grain supplies destined for the Turkish infantry in the Yemen and the highlands of the Asir. In October, 1916, a Bedouin army, acting under orders from the Hashemite Sherif of Mecca, stormed the town and captured it from the small Turkish garrison. Their success was in no small measure due to the presence of an armed vessel from the Indian Red Sea fleet.

This latter fact is verified by the events of the following December for, with the departure of the warship, the Turks retook the port. Eventually the Hashemites seized control towards the end of the Arab Revolt and the coast to a point just south of al-Qunfudhah was annexed by the Hashemite Arab Government under King Hussein of Mecca. At that time a Turkish-style die (Tomkins type 8) was used in conjunction with Hejaz adhesives (fig.2).

It may well be that the die dates back to Turkish times but, as yet, I have been unable to find any examples of this die used before the date 1920. Writing in 1922 Haworth and Sargent

stated "no specimen of this cancellation has yet been seen by either of the writers, but it is known that a post office *has been* opened". The authors may have meant *re-opened*.

In 1924 war broke out between the Hashemite Arab Kingdom (the Hejaz) and the Sultanate of the Nejd. The forces of the latter consisted of religious zealots formed into a brotherhood (*ikhwan*) set upon reasserting the most fundamentalist form of Islam. They were led by Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud, founder of the modern state of Sa'udi Arabia.

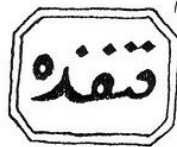
By October 1924, Mecca had fallen and the Nejd issued its first stamps by hand-overprinting captured Hejaz stock. A problem remained, however, for Mecca is dependent upon Jeddah, its port, for the movement of its foreign mails. Until December 1925 Jeddah was held, under siege, by King Ali, eldest son of the now abdicated King Hussein.

The Sa'udis were anxious to assert their *bona fides* as rulers of the Hejaz and it was essential that the pilgrimage should continue but, for this to happen it was necessary to gain an outlet on the Red Sea. So, the *ikhwan* executed a pincers movement and captured Rabigh to the north of Jeddah and al-Qunfudhah to the south.

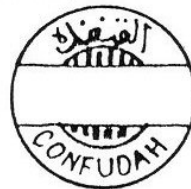
Mail was now routed by camel through al-Qunfudhah and from there to Massaua in Italian Eritrea and so to Port Tawfiq. Whereas the normal travel time from Mecca to Egypt had been 3-5 days it now extended (as on the cover illustrated) to a little over three weeks. The bulk of this was made up of the camel trek from Mecca to al-Qunfudhah (23rd May until the 7th June).

Mail passing along this route was impressed

(Continued on Page 410)



1

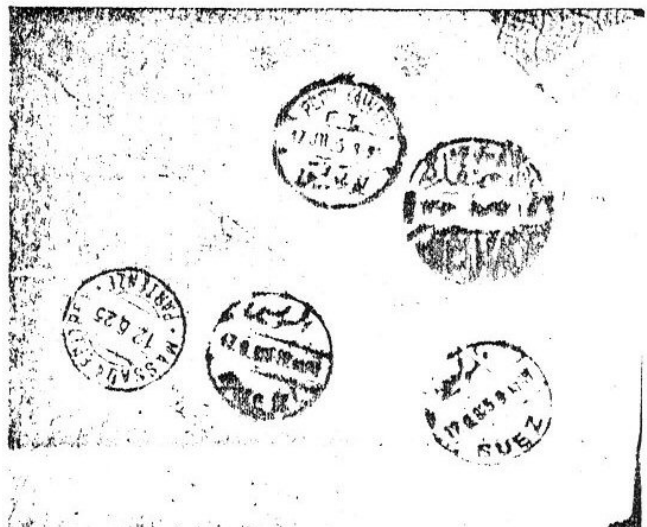
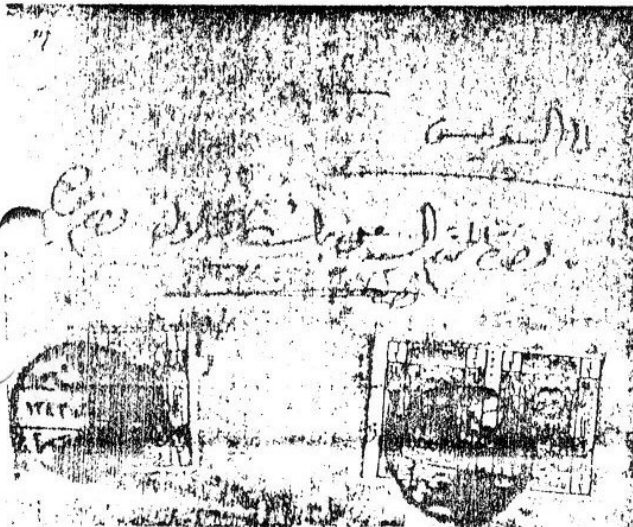


2



3

Front and back of a cover showing selection of transit markings, including the very scarce ALGUNFADA.



The Capture of Al-Qunfudhah by Ibn Saud

(Continued from Page 407)

with a large format, single-ring bilingual die shown in fig.3. The English script is unlike anything used before or since on cancellations from the Hejaz area as all the letters are run together. The basic design, however, resembles the monolingual Mecca cancellation (Haworth and Sargent p.56 lower illustration).

The cover illustrated shows a fascinating selection of transit markings including the very scarce ALQUNFADA. This, I believe is the earliest known use of the strike, as records up to now have spoken of the occupation of the small coastal ports as being "some time before July 1925". This example shows that a Nejd post office was operating at least as early as the 7th June, 1925.

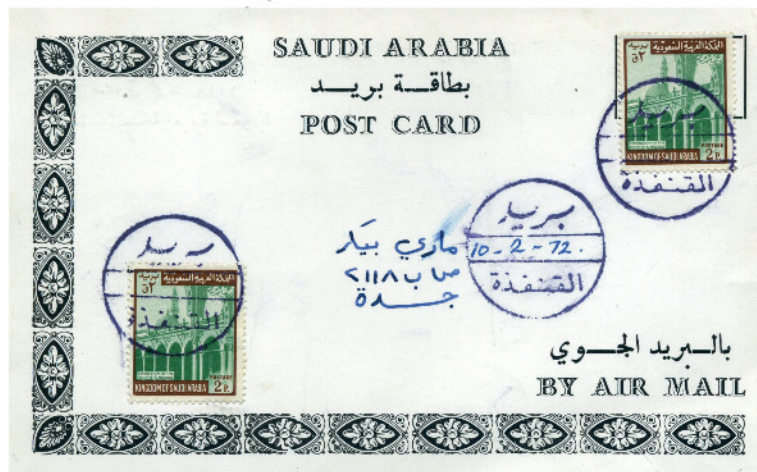
On December 23rd, 1925, Jeddah was surrendered by Mr. Jordan, the British consul and, thereafter, mail reverted to the normal route. Another cover in my collection is dated 29th December from Mecca to Egypt and that passed through Jeddah (taking five days to reach Cairo). So, the al-Qunfudhah route was quickly dropped and after that the town sank back into oblivion.

In conclusion, I enclose a card I posted from there in 1972 which had a home-made die (the old one was "lost") in which the date—Gregorian or Hijira!—is written by the courteous young man who must yearn for the days of the 1925 mail rush. The final irony: my card took eleven days from al-Qunfudhah to Jeddah—only a little less than in the days of Ibn Sa'ud's camels—to cover the 200 kms.

References

- * Mayo M. *Barid al-Sa'udiyah wa al-Hejaz wa Nejd* (in English), p.8.
- * Tomkins Maj. T. L. C. *Notes on the Cancellations of Turkish Arabia*, undated, London.

- * Haworth W. B. and Sargent H. L. *The Postage Stamps of the Hejaz*, London 1922, p.62
- * Wilson J. (ed) *Random Notes No. 1 Attachment No. 1*, Arabian Philatelic Society, Dhahran, 20th April 1971.



A card posted in Saudi Arabia in 1972 with home-made die and date written in by hand.