New Karl Lewis
New Zealand Covers?

by Todd J. Lewis (KL Project coordinator)

I have recently received images of six covers from Paul Wreglesworth, editor of The Kiwi, the journal of the New Zealand Society of Great Britain. These covers were used in New Zealand and have characteristics of Karl Lewis’s work. The purpose of this article is to analyze these six New Zealand origin covers as to whether they are attributable to Karl Lewis. A companion article was submitted to The Kiwi chronicling Lewis’s entire known involvement with New Zealand and its dependencies, information that our society has previously published in Japanese Philately.

Lewis’s history of visiting New Zealand is well-documented, based upon a lecture he gave on 19 January 1906 to the Yokohama Literary Society. This is evidenced by a postcard invitation (Figure 1) addressed to Mr. F. Urhan who lived in the foreign settlement at No. 180. His talk was entitled “Rotorua and a Bicycle Ride in New Zealand (Illustrated).” Rotorua is Maori for “second lake” and the city named for it in New Zealand’s North Island. An article in Japan Weekly Mail of 27 January 1906 (Figure 2, page 16) discussed Mr. Lewis’s talk including his extremely beautiful illustrated views.

New Zealand Covers

The six covers illustrated and discussed in this article are submitted for analysis as to whether they were of Karl Lewis origin. The six covers bear cancels from a number of different post offices, each within one the three cities of Whangarei, Auckland, and Christchurch.

First-Day Covers

There are three first-day covers prepared for the 1d (1 penny) + 1d New Zealand Health Issue semi-postal stamp issued on 1 October 1938. They each contain a Karl Lewis Lake Taupo and Mt. Ngauruhoe cachet identical to those produced for the foreign series New Zealand covers, which were discussed at JP 68/263. There is a First Day of Issue banner across the top appropriately explaining the issue of the affixed stamp. The health issue stamp depicts two small children playing on a lawn emphasizing the importance of fresh
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YOKOHAMA LITERARY SOCIETY.

The usual fortnightly meeting of the Yokohama Literary Society was held in Van Schaick Hall on Friday evening when a varied programme was presented to members and their friends.

The paper read by Mr. Karl Lewis was descriptive of a visit paid to Rotomau, the centre of the New Zealand thermal spring district, and of a bicycle ride thence to Napier, in the Hawke Bay Province, 160 miles away. Mr. Lewis’s contribution consisted chiefly of extracts from a journal that he kept at the time and was illustrated by some extremely beautiful lantern views which greatly enhanced its interest. The North Island of New Zealand, he said, is traversed by a line of volcanic activity, the extreme known points of which are White Island in the Bay of Plenty (east) and the famous mountains of Ruapehu, over 9,000 feet in height, situated 150 miles to the south-west. Returns is on this line; and by consequence is a dreary, desolate hole, the soil being mostly pumice and sand on which the d tree alone can maintain life, but the boiling springs, fumaroles, solfatara and mud-pools afford the necessary attraction to sightseers. Moreover, it is the railway terminus of attractions are provided in the shape of a hospital and sanatorium, while for those who are not ardently fascinated by such objects, the small park and garden, fountain, tennis lawn, arbours and pleasant shady walks offer a pleasant contrast to the destitution that too largely prevails. The place is 900 feet above the sea and the air is much dryer and bracing than that of the coast, from which it is 40 miles distant. The mean temperature in winter is 45° and the most agreeable months are February, March and April. But of course it is the baths that make Rotomau so favoured a resort—and this despite the mosquitoes, which bite through one’s clothes. Having referred to the artificial geysers in the Park, Mr. Lewis proceeded to describe the baths which are apparently good for, among other ailments, rheumatism and cutaneous diseases, and almost any conceivable temperature may be obtained from 80 to 100 Fahr. Ohinemutu, a mile distant, seems with streams and springs, holes, jets and pits, pools, and so on—all, or nearly all, on the boil. Some are used for washing clothes, and others for boilers by the native community. Some of the latter springs are large enough to accommodate a barrel; there are also small fumaroles where eggs may be boiled without undue waste of caloric; and some moderately hard orifices are used in steam baking ovens. In the adjacent lake there is an island, attached to which is the romantic story of Hinemoa, who, from the mainland opposite, swam across one night to her lover and afterwards took the chill from her body by lying herself in Waikimihia, the hot spring of the island, hence known to this day as Hinemoa’s bath. Her sweetness does not seem to have been a person of much spirit or she would not have allowed the lady to risk her life; probably he could not swim, and at any rate his name was Taneakai. This place was formerly the island home of the fathers of the tribe and the seat of the religious ceremonies, where the priests kept sacred the emblems brought from their ancestral home. All the natives, men, women and children, smoke, and between cooking themselves in hot water and baking themselves in the sunshine, lie flat lazily and pleasantly. If they have plenty of “ritual” (potea) and tobacco all is well; if they have plenty of rum all is better. If real be happiness these people are filled up with happiness for they rest mostly all the time, everything is so easy for them. After a few days’ stay at Rotomau Mr. Lewis and a friend started on bicycles for Napier, the capital of the provience of Hawke’s Bay, which they reached on Christmas Day. The road passes through country in which every prominent rock seems to have a name derived from legend, and special notice was taken of the wonderful Te Hoku falls on the Waitarowatau near Lake Tungari, and of the mountain Tongariro. The lecturer related many of the old Maori legends which cling to these famous spots. Though the going was very bad in places, owing to the pumice-sand,

Figure 3

Figure 4

Cover A

Cover B

Figure 2
air in the life of the young. The two subjects on the stamp are actually two photographic images of the same child. One penny of the two pence purchase price was to be donated to the Children’s Health Camps movement. These covers each contain 1d of valid postage, paying the domestic postal rate within New Zealand.

Cover A (Figure 3, page 16) has a small Whangarei circular cancellation dated on the first day of issue and a typed local Whangarei address for a Mr. Skinner, possibly the preparer of this cover. Whangarei is the northernmost city in New Zealand and the regional capital of the Northland Region.

Cover B (Figure 4, page 16) has a large Whangarei circular cancellation dated on the first day of issue and a typed local Whangarei address for a Mr. Blumenthal, possibly the preparer of this cover.

Cover C (Figure 5) has a small Onerahi circular cancellation dated on the first day of issue and a handwritten local Onerahi address for a Mr. Church, possibly the preparer of this cover. Onerahi is a seaside suburb of Whangarei.

Secondarily used First-Day Cover

Cover D (Figure 6) was prepared in a similar way to the first three covers, but is dated 8 November 1938. It was not sent on the first day of issue but was repurposed for the New Zealand Airmail Societies’ Exhibition. The Air Mail Society of New Zealand hosted the National Air Mail Exhibition (open to New Zealand and international exhibitors) in the Builders’ Chambers, Christchurch on 7-9 November 1938. A commemorative “winged” cancellation was used at the exhibition post office during the 3 days of the show. Special souvenir cards were printed for the Society (Figure 7, page 18) and a limited number of picture postcards were issued. There is a typed red banner across the center of the front of this Figure 6 cover explaining that it was posted at this event. There is no evidence that Karl Lewis was privy to knowledge of this event.

In addition to the 1d + 1d health stamp the cover contains a 6d air mail stamp, for a total of 7d in valid postage. In accordance with the postage rates established on 26 July 1938, this paid the correct amount for surface mail to
non-Commonwealth countries of 2½d for the first ounce and 1½d for each additional ounce plus the registration fee of 3d (i.e., the cover would have weighed between 1 and 2 ounces). It is interesting that this cover celebrating an airmail exposition was sent by surface mail to a Mr. Hintermann in Switzerland. On the reverse, the cover has a Zürich-Seebach 2 XII 38 arrival cancel and a return address of J. F. Johnson, 62 King St., Whangarei.

Other covers

Cover E (Figure 8) was posted on 15 August 1940 from Auckland and contains a different cachet from all the others. It was sent by airmail to a Mr. Donovan in Australia and was franked with a total of 2d (½d + 1½d) postage. This covered the 2d rate for the first ½ ounce of weight to Commonwealth countries established on 1 October 1939. The address and caption were handwritten by a single individual. The cachet contains an illustration of the Bay of Islands, which includes the small town of Paihia, situated in the far northern portion of New Zealand’s North Island. It is approximately 60 km north of Whangarei. The cachet design appears to be a view looking northward of the Waitangi Bridge connecting Paihia with the Waitangi Treaty Grounds, and is somewhat consistent with a later photograph from a tourist brochure (Figure 9).
Cover F (Figure 10) was also posted to Mr. Donovan on 27 May 1941 from the Upper Symonds Street post office in Auckland. It contains the usual Lake Taupo and Mt. Ngauruhoe cachet. The address and caption were handwritten by the same individual as for Cover E but with a different pen. It was franked with the appropriate postage amount of 2d.

Analysis

The envelope size and paper type appear identical to those utilized by Karl Lewis during the same era. The typewriters used to address the Covers A, B, and D, to Skinner, Blumenthal, and Hintermann, are different and none match the one used by Karl Lewis though the machine used on the Hintermann cover is a close match and probably from the same manufacturer. Also, these addresses were not typed in the style of Karl Lewis. He frequently added spacing between letters, underlining, red-colored words and decorative characters. He almost never included a period after “Mr” on philatelic cover addresses, although on one of the wrappers he sent to New Zealand (Figure 11) he typed the word in a most interesting way. The hand captioned and addressed Covers E and F sent to Mr. Donovan were both prepared by the same individual, but not in the hand of Karl Lewis. Cover C was written in yet another hand.

Over time, it appears that 2 artists painted the cachets on the Karl Lewis covers that were sent from New Zealand (Figure 12, page 20, and Figure 13, page 20). Differences between the artists involve a slight difference in perspective and stylistic differences in the rendering of the landscape and buildings. These changes are consistent for each artist’s work. The five Lake Taupo and Mt. Ngauruhoe cached covers (A-D and F) examined in this analysis were produced by a single artist displaying the same characteristics as most
of the covers used by Karl Lewis to represent New Zealand. These were painted by the same artist who produced the Figure 12 cover.

Karl Lewis would have had ordered more covers painted than required for his immediate needs in anticipation of years of future orders. I feel that some of these extra covers were supplied to an individual in New Zealand both unaddressed and unlabeled. Unaddressed foreign covers are known for other locations including being philatelically used by individuals probably without his knowledge. This most commonly occurred in Fiji (see JP 68/284-285), and generally represented later dates in 1940 or 1941, a time period during which Karl Lewis had limited access to the mails.

I believe that the Cover E cachet was also painted by one of Karl Lewis’s artists in Japan. I found no other similar cachets amongst thousands of his covers, but unique designs are not unheard of. This cover may have been produced by request or been secondary to a remembrance noting that many of his foreign locations utilized multiple different cachet illustrations sometimes unrelated to the cover’s theme. Thus, I would conclude that these covers were illustrated for Karl Lewis by one of his artists in Japan and sent to New Zealand in a wrapper without caption or addressee. The recipient would have probably been Mr. Geoghegan, his agent in New Zealand, and the addressee of the wrapper Lewis sent on 2 September 1940 (Figure 11). This shipment could have also carried Covers E and F which were also sent to Mr. Donovan in Australia.

Information about Mr. Henry W. Geoghegan is scant. He was not only Karl Lewis’s agent in New Zealand but two recent finds also define him as a client collector. These were Foreign Series covers mailed to him from Pitcairn Island (Figure 14, page 21) and Nauru (Figure 15, page 21). The Pitcairn cover is dated 23 May 1937 and has a typed “in care of” an address in Auckland. The later Nauru cover dated 9 December 1937 contains a modified PO Box address, also in Auckland. This cover also contains the mailing agent’s name on the reverse (Figure 16, page 21).
There is a third known cover sent to Mr. Donovan with an unreadable date but at least 2 January 1940 or later based upon the issue date of the applied postage stamps (Figure 17, page 22). It bears 2d in postage with a Symonds Street (in Auckland) cancellation. It has a hand painted cachet of a bird in the style of Karl Lewis but is not his. This is annotated as “A Native of NZ” and depicts a pukeko in a marsh. The cover was sent by Henry Geoghegan and the reverse contains his handwritten P.O. Box address (Figure 18, page 22). This handwriting can be confidently identified as by the same hand that addressed the other two Donovan covers (E and F). Thus, Mr. Geoghegan is definitely responsible for the sending of several of these illustrated covers and, as Karl Lewis’s agent in New Zealand, would have been the distributor for all of the newly acquired material.
Due to Lewis’s progressive infirmity and the changing world situation, his cover orders were dropping precipitously during the late 1930s with few produced, creating a greater surplus of prepared blank covers. This could explain the availability of covers for use by others in New Zealand through 1941. The earlier covers, A-D, were repurposed by adding a “NEW ZEALAND HEALTH STAMP FIRST DAY OF ISSUE.” banner at the front top. Three covers were appropriately utilized on 31 October 1938 for the first day of the 1d + 1d Health Issue semi-postal stamp. Cover D was identically prepared but not utilized until a week later on 8 November 1938 at an airmail exhibition in Christchurch. It contained a typed caption across the front and utilized commemorative cancels for the stamps as well as a registration tag. It is interesting that Cover D sent to Mr. Hintermann was mailed to Switzerland as Karl Lewis had only one known client in Europe (resident in England) with no other clients have being identified.

In conclusion, I would have to categorize these six covers (Covers A-F) as hybrids. I do believe that they were all commissioned by Karl Lewis and painted by his artists in Japan. They were then forwarded by Mr. Lewis to a representative in New Zealand, probably Mr. Geoghegan. These covers had become surplus when the number of specific orders did not match the number of prepainted covers or had been requested specifically as blanks. Discrepancies exist amongst most of the covers and all of those from Karl Lewis, noting that the handwriting and typing do not match any samples from Karl Lewis’s work. It would also be highly unlikely that he would have foreknowledge to prepare first day covers for a New Zealand semi-postal stamp issue or for the subsequent airmail exposition. The later covers were mailed at a time when he was winding down and had become unable to send mail from Japan. A salient point is that none of the recipients of the six covers have been identified as receiving any mailing from him. Thus, I feel that creative individuals repurposed available Karl Lewis prepared covers, perhaps with his foreknowledge, creating a first day cover in three cases, a repurposed FDC for a commemorative event and two late covers that mimicked Karl Lewis’s typical usage pattern.

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