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He has contributed to the AMERICAN PHILATELIST and STAMP COLLECTING and one of his articles THE FOURTH "CHINA MARINES" REGIMENT USMC was published in the 1961 Congress Year Book. He is the author of the book THE UNITED STATES FORCES IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS WWII, that was published by the American Philatelic Society, and awarded a Silver at the London International in 1970.

He is involved in the world wide sale of food as the Director, Food Products Division of an International Export Management Company.

## Letters, New Hebrides Islands

1842 - 1865

By Stanley C. Jersey

### HISTORY

#### DISCOVERY

The discovery of the New Hebrides, like that of the Solomon islands, was made early in the history of Pacific exploration, but it was not completely charted until after other parts of the Pacific had become known. The New Hebrides group was first visited by the Spaniard Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, one of Mendana's captains (1565-1614), in 1606, during his search for the southern continent of Terra Australis Incognita, Quiros approached the New Hebrides from the northeast. After passing through the Banks islands, which he described as being fertile and beautiful; he sighted the three islands of Maewo, Omba and Raga, and mistook them for one extensive land. After two days more, the ships entered a great bay farther to the southwest. On three sides of the bay high mountains rose into the clouds, and broad rivers flowed into it from the interior. Quiros was convinced that he had reached the shores of the southern continent. He named the new land "Tierra Australis des Espiritu Santo". The report of reconnoitering parties further convinced him of its richness, and he determined to found there a new province for the King of Spain. A city was planned on the banks of the principal river, the Yora (originally named the Jordan by Quiros), and given the name of New Jerusalem. An official hierarchy was created for the new province, and crops were planted to supply the occupation. However, after three weeks of great activity, Quiros decided that the venture had no chance of success and the expedition sailed, leaving the group to an isolation which was unbroken for over 160 years.

The next European expedition to visit the islands was that of the Frenchman, Louis Antoine de Bougainville in 1768. Bougainville entered the group to the north of Maewo, passed close to the shores of Omba, and so approached the opposite coast of Espiritu Santo to that seen by Quiros. He recognized that he was in Quiros' group, and like him he was misled by the apparent continuity of the land. However, boat parties proved that

what had seemed at first to be bays were passages between separate islands; and the ship finally passed through the strait between Espiritu Santo and Malekula into open sea to the west.

The group was visited by Captain James Cook five years later on his second voyage, who surveyed most of its shores and named it the New Hebrides. Cook sighted Maewo on July 16, 1773, passed southward between it and Omba, and so reached the east coast of Malekula, where he found anchorage in Port Sandwich. From there he sailed south as far as Tana (sometimes spelled Tanna), which, since he had missed Aneityum, he took to be the southernmost island of the group. Thence he sailed north again, following the western coasts as far as Cape Cumberland on Espiritu Santo. He entered the bay of St. Philip and St. James, and recognized it as the scene of Quiros' grandiose but short-lived project of colonization. Cook gave the world the first detailed account of the islands and their people; and his chart remained in use until towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Within the following twenty years several other navigators passed through the northern part of the group — La Perouse in 1788; Bligh in 1789, and Bligh again in 1792 on his second voyage; and D'Entrecasteaux in 1793. Captain J.S.C. Dumond d'Urville, of the French Navy, investigated the New Hebrides and other South Sea Island (1826-1829) and was considered by some as second to the Explorer Cook. But he made only minor contributions to its discovery.

### THE SANDALWOOD TRADE

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Sandalwood gatherers came to the beautiful New Hebrides, and an occasional whaler entered some of the bays. In 1825, the trader Peter Dillon passed through the group and learned that there was an abundance of sandalwood on the island of Eromanga. He communicated his discovery to traders residing in Tahiti and in 1829 a minor rush to Eromanga took place. Vessels sent out from Papeete were followed by others from Honolulu; labour was recruited at Rotuma and Tongatapu; and soon several timber camps were established and labourers were at work<sup>1</sup>. However, before long hostilities broke out between the Polynesian labourers and the natives of Eromanga, and fever also attacked the newcomers. Before the middle of 1830 work had ceased and the last party had been withdrawn.

In 1839 a fresh attempt to develop the sandalwood of the group was begun, this time under the leadership of merchants of Sydney, Australia. The first voyages were encouraging, and within a few years the traffic had spread from Eromanga to a number of other islands. In 1845 Captain Paddon established a central depot at Aneityum staffed by Europeans. From this depot small vessels worked the neighboring islands and to it came larger ships to carry the timber directly to China. Several other merchants had similar stations in later years, but most worked on a less ambitious scale. Frequently they would have at some central point, such as Dillon Bay (in Eromanga) or Port Resolution (in Tana), an agent whose job it would be to travel up and down the coast making agreements with the natives to cut loads of sandalwood in advance of the returning ship.

Many of these sandalwood agents were ruffians. Their principal articles of trade were firearms and spirits. They frequently instigated, or took part in, native wars and sometimes sought revenge for imagined grievances in the pillaging of villages and the indiscriminate shooting of their inhabitants. After about 1860 the center of the trade tended to shift from Eromanga to Espiritu Santo and other northern islands, so that few parts of the group escaped their attention.

By about 1865 most of the sandalwood within easy reach of the coasts had been cut down; and within three or four years the trade declined from almost its peak to negligible

1 Laura Judd, *Honolulu* — the Lakeside Press, Chicago, Illinois, p. 82. On December 21, 1829, the ships "Kamechamaha" and the "Becket" sailed from Honolulu for the New Hebrides, but the "Kamehameha", carrying Governor Boki, was lost and never heard of again. The "Becket" returned to Hawaii in August, 1830 manned by twelve natives and eight foreigners. More than 400 men perished on this venture.

proportions. But another traffic, even more disruptive of native life, had risen to take its place. This was the recruitment of forced labor in the islands for the plantations of neighboring territories. It was a Pacific-wide movement, but the New Hebrides were one of the earliest recruiting grounds; and they remained one of the most promising.

## THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

On November 19, 1839 John Williams of the London Missionary Society (LMS), landed Samoan native teachers on Tana. On the following day he reached Eromanga, where he and a companion were killed by natives, whose only close contact with Europeans had been with sandalwood traders. The martyrdom of Williams drew the attention of British Evangelicals to the New Hebrides and founded the missionary history of the group upon a note of sombreness which later events were to sustain. In no other part of the Pacific have so many missionaries been killed in the course of their work.

John Williams had trained many Christian natives to become teachers and Pastors. The mission in Tahiti supplied native Christian teachers first for Samoa and later the Cook Islands. Teachers from there eventually moved to other islands in behalf of Christianity and the L.M.S. Williams loss had such a great impact that old missionary books relate how Raratonge (Cook Islands) determined to avenge his death by sending missionaries to Erromanga, and how, when volunteers were requested — men and women of all ages said, "Take us"\* Native Vaa from Aitutaki who went to Erromanga died there after five years service and Pinikoa of Aitutaki and Kaveriri of Mangaia, (Cook Islands) were killed by the natives of the Sandwich Islands.

The London Missionary Society determined to continue its work. Polynesian native teachers were landed, at first on Efate and the southern islands, then as far north as Espiritu Santo. European missionaries merely visited the islands at intervals of several years on tours of inspection. The lot of the teachers was hard. Many were killed by the people among whom they had settled and many more died of fevers. The reward of their labours, in terms of conversions, was slight. But they prepared the way for the European teachers who followed them.

The island of Tana was selected as the station where the LMS would attempt to make their inroads. It is probably the most fertile and attractive island in the group, and its southerly location gives it an equable climate so that it was the most suitable for Europeans. The name Tana was obtained by Captain Cook in questioning natives of Eromanga on one of his trips. It means "ground" or "land." The island is known to its own people as "Ipari".

The Reverend Henry Nisbet, and the Reverend George Turner, members of the LMS, were commissioned on Monday, August 10, 1840 and sailed the following day for Australia. The directors of the Society had instructed the new missionaries to proceed to Tana, and establish a station. At Sydney, they were to meet the missionary brig "Camden" which would transport them to Samoa and eventually to the New Hebrides.\* They reached Tana, the last week in May, 1842. Here they were to supervise the LMS activities and organize the mission activities.

All went well and the missionaries were becoming settled on Tana by constructing their house and building the LMS station. However, the natives never became friendly. It is assumed that the missionaries were mistaken for the cruel sandalwooders who were known to plunder the island. Their position became so intense that the hostility of the natives forced them to leave and they were barely saved when a passing whaling vessel assisted in their quick evacuation.

## MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Very few early letters appear to have survived from the missionaries of the New

\*LMS, Missionary Record Book, Cook Islands

\*Rev. George Turner, LLD, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*





A letter (Fig. 1) bearing the date July 27, 1842, posted shortly after Reverend Nisbet's arrival is considered as the earliest recorded letter from New Hebrides. The text reads:

PORT RESOLUTION  
TANA – 27th July 1842

My dear sister Sarah:

“By the “Camden”, which sailed nearly 3 weeks ago – I sent home four letters – one for Father – James – Isabella – Mary. Now an opportunity occurs to Sydney – and by this I wish to tell you how we have got on thus far. There are at present 3 vessels in the harbour – which have been at various islands in search of sandal wood – 2 of these I expect will soon go to Sydney.

In my former letters I told you how we had got on up to the time of launching. As yet between us and the natives all goes on very comfortably. We are pushing on with the erection of our house – a plan of which I drew out in father's letter. We have got up all the frame including that of the roof – and now some of our people are preparing thatch to close it in – while George and I are preparing the places for the windows and doors – and expect that this week we shall have a great part of the weather boarding put together. We have it raised on large stones about 1½ feet from the ground – and that space we intend to fill up with sand and so as to prevent the damp. We get on more slowly than we otherwise should as our native teachers have been ill ever since we came so that we have only one or two men to assist us – and the natives have not yet learned to teach their bodies much to work – still we have got from them some assistance and this just reminds me that I hope Father will send me out some useful tools of which I spoke before as we have to depend upon ourselves for our carpentering. I can tell you my hands are getting harder than they used to be when I was with you at home.

After a pretty good run we came to anchor at Aneiteum on the 13th July. Here we met the two remaining teachers placed here on our last voyage – two having gone to Tana some months after being located here. The son of the chief with whom one of them had been formerly located, on hearing of their being still on Aneiteum – came on purpose to fetch them away that they might again begin their work on that part of Tana.

The report of the teachers showed that they had made little real progress in the evangelisation of the people of this island. The numbers few and very irregular at services and non earnestly trying to acquire the art of reading. Their greatest temporal trial had been a scarcity of provisions, but the people had not treated them badly. Thus we were impressed still more with the conviction that European agents were called for in order to carry on the work here with vigour. But as the numbers on all this island cannot be compared with those of a single district of we determined to visit that island before coming to a decision as to the proper place for commencing operations.

Within these few months the Roman Catholics have taken up their positions here. They are finishing the erection of a fine large house 3 stories high partly iron and partly wood. They have a large establishment – 8 priests and 8 lay brothers. This is no doubt to be in readiness to embrace and occupy any openings in the surrounding islands. This is the way the Papists go to work for the purpose of extending the interests of their superstition. Why is it that the church at home can spare us so few agents for the dissemination of the pure doctrines of the gospel? We heard from the teachers that the people at the station vacated last voyage were still very friendly, and that they wished teachers to be located among them. When we had made necessary arrangements here we sailed than I used to.

We have two or three hot springs in the bay – very hot – one that I have visited is just upon the boiling point. You can scarcely dare to put your fingers in – Will boil an

egg in about 2 or 3 minutes.

Mr. Heath has commenced a class of boys – and is getting on – the ladies have also commenced a girls class and have a number attending. Thus things have been begun. Hope that it is the commencement of great things. My dear Sarah sends her kind love to you all – Mrs. Lurner's love – kind remembrance from Mr. Turner. My kind regards to all the friends – Love to all at home.

Your own Brother,  
Harry”

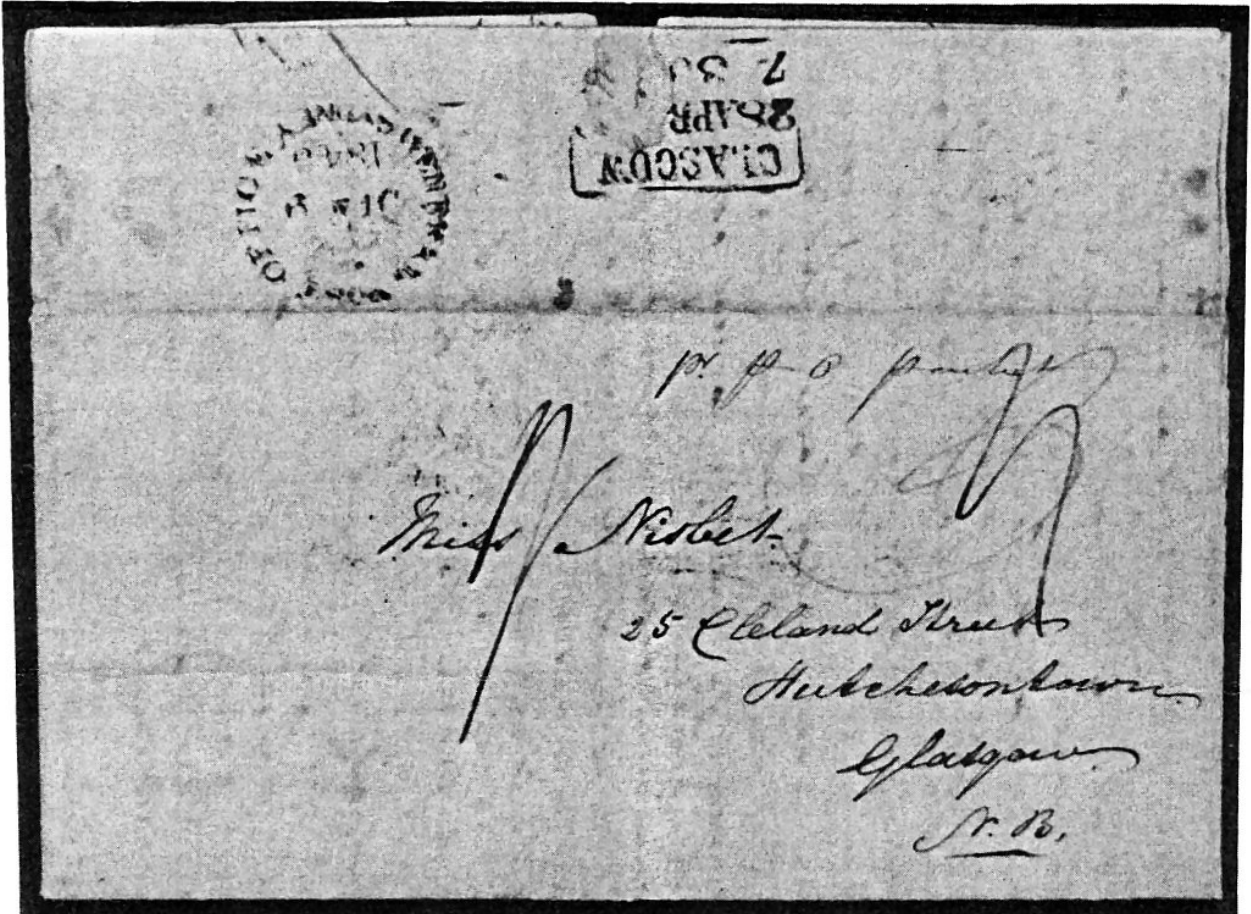


Fig. 2. From Island of Aneiteum to Scotland 1848. Postmarked Sydney DEC 9 1848 (General PostOffice (black) R.B. type 7) and Glasgow 28 APR 1849. (S.C. Jersey Collection)

Another letter (Fig. 2) from the island of Aneiteum, on board the mission vessel – “John Williams,” dated August 1, 1848, relating some of the missionaries experiences, is quoted:

Island of Aneiteum  
On Board the “J.W.”  
1st August 1848

My dear sister Sarah:

“Before leaving the Samoa I wrote a hurried letter to Father telling you of our arrangements and prospective movement. I left that letter there to wait for an opportunity to Sydney, but I do not know whether it may yet have gone, or whether this may not precede it, and I expect the opportunities from this island are likely to be more frequent owing to the number of Sandal Wood vessels going and returning. The company who have had a branch here for some years still keep on their operations – and this causes a number of vessels to frequent this place. In my letter to Father I told



you of my appointment to assist in the commencement of a mission on the New Hebrides, and we then expected that we might be able to begin on Efate — a large and populous island. But our arrangements are now somewhat different and instead of telling you that I expect to take up my residence for some months on one of these islands, I expect that I shall now return again to Samoa. So I shall in the meantime only give you a very brief account of the progress of our voyage thus far. When I return to Samoa, after having visited the New Caledonia group, I shall be able to tell you the remainder.

We left Apia on the 3rd July — with a few Raratongans and Samoan teachers on board. On the following day we cast anchor at Savaii where we took in other two teachers and got a present of provisions for the voyage. After a little fraternal intercourse with the mission family there, we again set sail towards the evening of the same day, on our voyage westward.

Our fame is spreading abroad to the distant parts of the island — and many are daily coming to look and admire at things to them so new. All appear friendly — so that we hope that by the time when we shall be able to take journeys to a distance — the people will be somewhat freshly prepared to receive us. When chiefs come from a distance, we give them a small present and with that they appear quite pleased. When we have got our house finished and know a little more of the language we hope to pay some visits to distant villages.

We are beginning to find out which is real life in this bunch of degraded men — we have seen one little row and had to act as pacifiers — you must just imagine that you see a great many marked men — with their faces painted red and black — some of them bawling at the top of their voice their angry declarations — and see them brandishing their spears and massy clubs — and then you will have something like a picture of a native quarrel. We soon succeeded in quieting them — We can go among them without the slightest fear or apprehension — On the next day some of the parties brought large game — Perhaps as a peace offering — The only things that at present we are much at a loss for are fowls and pigs — but even with reference to these we hope to get pretty comfortably along.

On Sabbaths a good many people attend our services — We meet them in the open air in front of our present habitation — but when we have got our house finished we hope to get a chapel under weigh — so that in rainy weather we may be sheltered. Since we came here we have had some very cold weather, at least to us it appeared so — Last Sabbath we felt it particularly so — at other times it is very ward — The volcano sometimes makes a great noise and sends out clouds of sparks — of course I cannot now enter into description and particulars — We are busy now but hope for more leisure by and by. As to ourselves — the whole party are very well and all moving on comfortably — a great blessing while we have so much to do. Although my work is now very harsh — I feel stronger and better for the other side of the island — Where we had a meeting of the chiefs in one of their when they with apparent willingness agreed to all our propositions, and we left the teachers among them hoping that they would pay more attention to instruction that they have hitherto done. We took one of the people of that district with us to Samoa last voyage, who appears to hold on to the side of truth. He returned on a visit to his native land, and preceding us explained all about the workings of the gospel as he had seen it in Samoa — which seemed to have made a favorable impression on their minds.

Having finished this engagement we sailed for where we arrived on Sab. 16th. A number of the chiefs and people came off — with whom we had some friendly conversation. With this we were greatly cheered, as being so much more encouraging that on our last visit. We heard from the teachers that they were still kindly treated by the chief and people among whom they reside. But they do not appear to have made much progress in the work of evangelisation. They have only small congregations and



do not succeed in again getting up schools — so that the principal part of their engagements consist in visiting the people from place to place and talking with them. However, on proposing to and the other chiefs to re-occupy a station in their land — we found that although they seemed to be agreeable to it — yet — there was still one chief and his family much opposed to us — This very family which has hitherto caused us all the trouble we could not let them have teachers this voyage — but that they must talk with that chief and his family and if they were all united in their desire by the next visit, they might than be favoured with instructions. We reinforced the station at present occupied by the addition of one teacher. We then made for calling at Nina by the way. On leaving the port experienced some difficulties from baffling winds — but at last got safe to sea. Called at the little island of Niva in the boat, and had some conversation with a few old acquaintances there, among whom was one of the principal chiefs. Were sorry that we had no teachers to leave with them this voyage — but told them that we should see what could be done by next visit.

On Thurs. 20th July — we made . Got the teachers on board and heard their account of their work and the state of things at their stations. We had here to learn the melancholy tidings that 4 out of our 9 teachers had died. Three of these we placed there last voyage, — so soon was their missionary life brought to a close! The other was one of the first lot of teachers located on the island. The remaining teachers had all suffered very severely from disease. Two of the stations had been vacated owing to the death of the teachers who had occupied. Another was cavated from circumstances arising out of the most cold blooded massacre of the crew of a wrecked vessel by the people among whom they were stationed — and which resulted in the teachers being obliged to escape for their personal safety. I should like to note the particulars of the atrocious affair but cannot now take time to write it to you. At the remaining stations the teachers have been labouring but not with so much apparent success as on our former visit. Their congregations were more irregular, and much fewer in number, — and their schools were not attended with much spirit by the people. Yet there were some evidences that the teachers and their instructions are not without a salutary influence among the people. They had also visited several distant parts of the island, and gave a good report of the willingness of the people to hear their message, an? the desire of some of the chiefs to receive teachers — especially from several of those inhabiting the large harbour on the S. W. end the island, where the three sandal wood vessels, formerly reported, committed such outrages upon the natives.

We now took into consideration the propriety of beginning operations upon this island — but many circumstances connected the massacre noticed above and the treatment of the teachers at some of the stations pointed clearly to the propriety of taking up Aneiteum in the first place, and from thence extends a superintending care over the various stations on the New Hebrides. On this therefore we decided, — and the mission will be commenced by our two friends from Nova Scotia and one of our own number from Samoa. But the sphere of labour here is comparatively so contracted that it is not deemed requisite to detain me at present from returning in the vessel to Samoa. But before leaving we determined to visit the harbour noticed above, that we might have some intercourse with the chiefs and leave teachers among them.

We found it a spacious place, far surpassing what we had expected, perhaps one of the finest among the South Sea Islands. From the entrance to the anchorage may be a distance of 6 miles — and when you are in it is completely land locked. It is formed by several fine islands and the main land. The scenery is altogether very fine. I have not seen anything like it before on any of the islands. The intercourse we had with the people was very cheering, — although at present there are two parties on hostile terms, but both promised that they would give up fighting. We left teachers at two places under very pleasing circumstances, encouraging the hope that at no distant period we may be permitted to rejoice in great things effected for the benighted inhabitants. This

would form a fine manageable district for two active missionaries.

But those who do business on the great deep are often brought into circumstances of difficulty and peril and missionary voyages are not exempt from their share. So this instance we were brought into a critical position by the dying away of the wind while we were still in the neighborhood of the land after leaving the harbour. The current was taking us fast in towards the shore. But in the kind Providence of God before midnight – we were favoured with a most acceptable breeze and got safe to sea. Thus we are continually reminded how entirely we are dependent upon Him who giveth unto all life, and breath and all things – and if we could but constantly remember it, these things are ever calling upon us to render the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise for all the benefits freely conferred.

We are now at anchor in this harbour where we arrive last Saturday – and the brethren who are to be located here are getting their goods landed, and making necessary arrangements. It now remains for us, and you, and all the friends of Jesus to be instant in prayer.

That this may be the blessing of God prove the beginning of great things for this group – that the Sun of righteousness may speedily rise upon them all with under his wings.

I have only room to add my love to Father and sisters – and very kind remembrances to dear friends. When I left my dear family were all well – but I daresay my dearest Sarah has written you by this time and thanked you all also for all things received by the “J.W.”. Hope soon to hear from you after my return to Samoa, and that it may contain the intelligence that you all continue to be favoured with every needful blessing from Him from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, and now for the present I remain”

Your ever affec. Bro.

Henry Nisbet

Mr. Turner, who is now sitting by me writing says that he sends love to you all.

A history of Rev. Nisbet life and Pacific activities was recorded on page 65 of “Pacifica”: October 1977 issue and reads:

“Nisbet sailed from Plymouth in 1840 for Sydney, N.S.W., arriving there in June 1841: soon after, he married Sarah Crook, daughter of a Tahitian missionary. In June 1842, Nisbet and Rev. George Turner went to Tanna in the New Hebrides, headquarters of the LMS Mission. This was three years after Rev. John Williams had been killed. Due to further attacks by the natives, Nisbet and Turner were evacuated in February 1843, both going to Samoa, Nisbet to Vaiee – Turner to Malua. Nisbet’s daughter Sarah was born in 1846, Nisbet visited Niue in October that year and again in 1848. In that year there began a civil war in Samoa which lasted 7 years and during which much of the good work carried out by the LMS was destroyed. Most of this time, Nisbet was at Sapapalii on Savail. About 1856, Nisbet started to supervise the rewriting of the Samoan Bible, taking over from Turner as Director at Malua in 1859 for 4 years. He visited Australia in 1867, then England and Canada. He received his degree of LLD from Glasgow University in 1870, and eventually died at Malua, Samoa on 9 May 1876.”

There are three inbound letters recorded by the writer. One of the items was Lot Number 1369, in the Wolffers sale of June 16-18 under title: Sydney to Tana (New Hebrides) (no markings). The lot is described “1842, Sydney to Mr. Nisbet, Tana, Sept., outer page of FL from Linda Crook (probably a relative of Mrs. Nisbet), the message is a postscript to the main letter concerning an accident which took the life of one of the Dr. Ross’s servants.”

Another in the collection of Mr. Jim Crompton of Manchester, is addressed to Rev. Henry Nisbet, of Tana, c/o Reverend Dr. Ross, (Sydney), from Glasgow, Scotland. The

markings are red? Paid 20 AP 20/1842, and red oval "Paid Ship Letter/ 20/AP/20/1842 (London)" and Black "Ship Letter/Jy 29/1842/(Sydney)/D/S, 4 page letter from A. Turner concerning a shipment of goods plus family news:

The text of the letter reads:

GLASGOW.

APRIL 18TH. 1842

My Dear Sir,

I have your favours enclosing full set of exchange for 60 packets sent off on the 26th last month, The goods to your order addressed to the care of the Reverend John Arundel. The Soft Goods are packed by themselves in a box and marked I2.

- (1) The Ironmongery are packed along with George's in a strong case and marked H. & I. and the nails in a case marked 4.
- (2) I stated the particulars and value of each package to Mr. Arundel desired him to cause them to be shipped in the regular way, procuring Bills of Lading and effecting the Insurance. I am sorry that order was not executed sooner, you know it consisted from a needle, very nearly to an anchor and I had to wait a long time on some of the Ironmongery coming from England, but having now some experience in rush orders I will be able to execute any future orders with quicker despatch. I kept as near to your price as I could, but was obliged in some things to deviate, I hope you will be pleased on the whole with the goods, should there be anything sent that is unsuitable or whatever may be wrong please name it to me as a guide to me in future orders.

The invoice enclosed is a copy of the original, which was sent with the goods.

Having finished the business part of this letter the first thing that occurs to me are the important changes which have taken place in our families since we last shook hands. I have lost my dear mother, you a dear sister, and George and Mary have been bereaved of their first born, these in their severals — have been — which I trust will be sanctified to us all. We are apt to think far more upon events that seem to us a — than those of a — nature although the latter may be more numerous in our life than the former, but Christianity teaches us that the one is as essential as the other to our well being. "All are young in Christ".

I was much pleased when I learned that you had got married, I always had thoughts that you were a very likely young man to get married and in this I have not been disappointed, and from what has been told me of your beloved wife she must be a darling, possessing all the qualifications calculated to make you happy. I have not seen the lady but on your account I esteem her, please therefore present my kind regards to her.

I may here inform you that Joe Brown has got married to Miss Keen, daughter of Major Keen living at Bristol. He met with her —, I believe she is a very pious and mighty accomplished lady. I must now think of getting married myself and only hope that I may be as fortunate as you and Joe.

I have nothing particular to say regarding news, having sent you a newspaper two days ago, I wrote George and Mary last week and sent them a newspaper also.

Business has been big news, very dull all over the land, never has it been so much so in the memory of our oldest merchants. There have been an increasing number of failures and I sincerely hope the cause of millions may not be much effected by this great national calamity, although when I consider that the great bulk of the subscriptions are derived from the middle and working classes, I have some fear that there may be a deficiency next month. I am glad to say that there is only a falling off of about £20 in all the society connected with Dr. King's Church, we had a meeting a few days ago when the Annual Reports were laid before us showing the state of the matter. I hope soon to hear from you at Tanna, it is my prayer that God may defend and prosper you and yours there.

I need not say that I would be glad to hear from you soon.  
Believe me to remain My Dear Sir,

Yours very truly,  
A.C.TURNER ESQ.

THE REVD. HENRY NESBIT.  
To TURNER & McLELLAN.

1841 December 31st.

To Congregational Map from October 1840 17.0d.

1841 December 31st.

To Edinburgh received from — £1.10.0d.

1842 March 10th.

To Goods per invoice £70. 8.9d.  
£72.15.9d.

By D. on Banks 3.0d.

By Bill D4 £59.18.8d.

To Balance £12.14.1d.

The third is a cover in my collectin and posted at Glasgow, May 9, 1843 addressed to Rev. Henry Nisbet of Tana, N.H. c/o the Rev. Dr. Ross, Sydney.

An important and interesting part of the Nisbet correspondence were the interisland letters sent by native missionaries all written in their own language, from various islands to Rev. Nisbet. The interisland mail was privately carried and this study relates only to New Hebrides. Letters originated at various locals including New Caledonia, Nuie, Rarotonga, Funafuti are known. One of the letters in my collection is from Rev. J. Inglis to Rev. Nisbet on Samoa, the others are from native teachers. The details of each are:

1. Dateline: Aneiteum, New Hebrides/November 1853. Addressed to Rev. Nisbet at Savail (Samoa) from Rev. J. Inglis. Noted that it was answered September 1854. Dateline: Bokala, 18 Julii 1855. Docketed "Eromanga" addressed to Lalomalava, (Aneityum), New Hebrides.
3. Dateline: Lalomalava, Ketopa 31, 1853 "Docketed Aneiteum/October addressed to Faasaleleaga a native letter written in Roman script to Rev. Nisbet.
4. Dateline: Eromaga — 24 October 1857 to Rev. Nisbet, Lafotulafai.

Rev. Inglis's interisland letter of November 1853 to Rev. Nisbet on Samoa reads as follows:

Aneiteum, New Hebrides  
November, 1853

My dear Sir,

"You will please to accept of my best thanks for the young cow you so kindly and promptly sent me by the "John Williams" I hope that by the time missionaries arrive for other island in this group we shall be in circumstances to supply them with live stock and in this way your bounty will be extended indefinitely.

Mrs. Inplis and I feel much encouraged and gratified by the expression of so much *knowledge* and confidence publicly and privately on the part of the Samoan brethren toward us. I need not say how much we esteem it an honour and a privilege to be associated with brethren so esteemed and beloved.

You will be pleased to hear of the encouraging appearance of the mission both on this island and throughout this group. My arrival on this island was very opportune. The work had so far advanced that the services of another missionary were (desperately?) needed. I am happy to say that Mrs. Imphis and I have enjoyed good health since we came here. We have got very convenient and comfortable mission premises — and we are now busy erecting a new church to be capable of holding from 6 to 700 persons. In my district, I have 13 schools and have enrolled upwards of 700 scholars.

The capacity of the natives for acquiring knowledge and making general improve-



ment is equal to that of any natives I have seen. I have an afternoon teachers class attended by about 50. Mrs. Implis has also a select female class attended by about 20=20 She has also a small boarding school attended by eight women. The improvement of the natives is highly satisfactory. God has done and is doing great things for us. Where of we are glad.

Mr. Geddis station is, as was to be expected, considerably more advanced than mine. Our intercourse has been very harmonious and comfortable. Mr. Geddis has done every thing to his power to help us to get fully established in our station. We have just received the gospel of Mark printed in Sydney, the first entire book of Scripture printed in this language.

The bishop of New Zealand was here in August in a chartered vessel. I did not see him. It came on a stormy day and he did not get around to my station. He is going home to London next January to procure a vessel and is to return after two years with increase; means for carrying on missionary operation in these seas.

Praying that the blessing of God may rest upon your missionary labours and that your lovely islands may soon enjoy all the blessings of a settled peace.

I am yours in the bonds of the gospel  
John Implis"

There are two interesting aspects to the items addressed to Tana. One that the mail was addressed % Rev. Dr. Ross at Sydney, Australia, undoubtedly a LMS official who acted as a transfer agent or general agent for the South Sea missions. Possibly, mail was pouched to Dr. Ross, who transhipped it as opportunity presented, but the unmarked letters can only be via a Mission vessel or private bag! The collection of letters was intact in 1976. There can be no questions that LMS vessels played the South Pacific waters and brought supplies and mail to the outer island; to and from Sydney and from Sydney to Samoa and the islands of South Pacific. It is evident that Rev. Nisbit received his mail regardless where he was stationed. This collection of correspondence is evidence of this. Interisland mail from this period is not only interesting, but almost non-existent!

#### **A COVER FROM A SANDALWOOD TRADER**

A known cover from an American sandalwood collector from Aneityum was posted in 1865. The letter shows he went to make his fortune and in describing conditions he indicates he is very unhappy.

It is described as lot #1231, in the Stanley Gibbons Sale No. 1XX1, Hong Kong, 28-29 September 1976. "1865 March 22 very rare cover together with original enclosure from Charles Hyde, a trader, to his father in San Francisco or Sacramento, sent from Aneityum, which is the most southerly of the New Hebrides, forwarded through Sydney to Hong Kong where the agents RUSSELL & CO. applied their mark and then to San Francisco arriving August 7 where the "Ship 4" charge mark was applied. Dr. Hyde not being in San Francisco, but Sacramento, the "4" is changed to "6" in m/s for the forwarding charge. Charles Hyde is writing his father after several years being from home, advising that he is "staying at a savage island trading for Sandalwood" and giving directions on how letters should be addressed; wonderful early item from this territory." (Ex W. R. Wellsted collection).

This is the only cover I have seen from the Sandalwood traders. Like the missionary mail, they are quite elusive.

#### **H.M.S. "CURACOA"**

Cecil Foljambe, a crew member of the *H.M.S. "Curacoa's"* on a South Sea Island cruise in 1865, wrote a number of letters to his mother, Viscountess Milton. The Folgambe correspondence was auctioned off by Robson Lowe LTD on December 13, 1967. Lot 1154 contained a very interesting New Hebrides cover, and is described as: "1865 (28 July) with G.B. 4d in combination with N.S.W. 6d both cancelled "B56." "The enclosure is written from "*H.M.S. ESK*" at Aneiteum, New Hebrides."

Excerpts from part of the Foljambe correspondence:

### SEPTEMBER 18, 19, 20th, 1865

“On the 18th and 19th and being 500 miles from Erromayo. 20th September – misty weather, ship standing SE to Lat 19.40 Long. 162.30 to S. of New Caledonia – wind NE. At 6 p.m. the wind shifted to south in a heavy squall taking the ship aback and carrying away the – mast. We stood before the wind all night which was not much beaten down by very heavy rain; at 6 a.m. 21st having run 90 miles North we hauled up to ESE and at noon we were in Lat. 17.41 S. Long 162.40 E. We now got up steam and as it fell calm, made good a little more than we had been lately doing. On the 22nd noon – Lat 17.20 Long. 163.20, dist. to Erromayo 270 miles, Sunday 24th today, we are distant 157, having got up steam again this morning when the bearing of the engine became heated and we were obliged to stop. At 4 this afternoon as we are now making 8 knots. But we have only 70 tons of coal left now, so we shall have to be economical till we get to New Caledonia as we may not be able to get any there. We were to have got there on the 20th and the “Eclipse” was to have met us with our mails, but as we are to visit the Loyalty ID., and I. of – I doubt if we get there before the 1st October. We are just 14 days from Solomon Ids. today.”

### SEPTEMBER 25, 1865

“Monday 25th. At daylight (having been going 9 knots under steam and sail) we sighted Erromayo ahead and – on the right. At 7:30 a.m. we anchored in Dillon’s Bay. We had come here to see if the natives had behaved themselves. Since we left last time, they had killed a white man, so we intend punishing them tomorrow. Another reason we came here was to take Mr. & Mrs. Henry away, but they are not yet ready for though all the sandalwood on the island has been cut, all has not yet been shipped. I expect they will leave in a month or two. We heard that the natives of Tanna had murdered another white trader, and six of them (natives, I mean) had been killed in the following manner; they were examining one of our spent shells which had not burst (the least tap sets one of them off) and it burst amongst them, killing six and wounding several others. Now it strikes one that we are altogether in the wrong in punishing (as we call it) these so-called monsters, for instance look at the Solomon Islanders who had only seen Bishop Patterson once a year for 5 or 6 years; they are cannibals also, but as the traders have never been there, they have no cause to hate or kill white men. The sandalwood traders and indeed most of the white men in these islands are the very scum of England and America, who are afraid to show their faces in civilized places, make these poor creatures what they are. They try to cheat them and look on them as an inferior order of beings, practicing greater cruelties that the cannibals themselves are capable of. For instance, one Captain of a sandalwood schooner the other day boasted that having taken in his cargo of sandalwood, and was sailing along the coast, he shot down inoffensive natives as they stood on the beach for the charitable purpose of spoiling the trade for the next comers. Another one boasted of having shot the natives as they paddled on shore after selling him sandalwood. Can you wonder after this that they detest white men and would kill and eat them when a chance occurs. These traders lay all the blame on the missionaries’ shoulders, but I can assure you what I have told you is a fact. For the afternoon I went on shore and had a bathe in the river, also visiting the native villages and got some bows and arrows, clubs, too. I did not take any gun, and indeed you could not venture far from the Trading Establishment and Mission. I am afraid Mr. Jordan, the Missionary here, and the traders are not good friends. I returned on board at 6 p.m. The hills here are something like New Zealand, being grassy or rather brake on top and trees in the ravines and on the sides are terrained in the same manner. This island is thickly populated, but not so much so as Tanna; nor is it so high.

Tuesday, Sept. 26th In the forenoon we got ready for our afternoon cruise and at 1 p.m. weighed anchor and steamed 2 or 3 miles along the coast to the Northward to

Elizabeth Bay to a village called Tifu where we anchored 350 yards from the beach at 1.45 and as soon as the ship swung, opened fire with our port broadside amongst them, and the carnage must have been terrible for the poor creatures did not expect it at all. Some of them were watching the ship from behind the rocks and one of them actually fired his musket in return to our fire”

“The object of our visit was this; Mr. Paton, the missionary who resided here 3 years, was obliged to leave some 7 or 10 months ago, on account of the natives having turned him out of his house which they ransacked and would have killed him, had not a chief for whom he had done a good turn once, hid him till a sandalwood vessel came and he could get away. So the first thing we did on anchoring was to send on shore by Mr. Paton a letter to the refractory ship to say that if they did not come off and render account for what they had done, by 12 o'clock next day the Commodore would take summary measures to punish them, namely to fire on them and destroy all villages, cultivations, etc., — the place.”

“The chiefs did not come by noon next day, so we prepared for action and shifted our berth to nearer in, and got everything ready. I asked to go with the landy party, but the Commodore said that he wanted me, as signal midshipman, to stop by him so I was obliged to be content. Well, next morning, 12th, Saturday the hands were turned up at 4 and everything got ready for landing. Boats armed, etc. At 7 a.m. we opened fire with great guns (with shells) on the villages round the harbour at the same time.”

“As the natives in all these islands of this group (New Hebrides) are cannibals, it was not, of course, safe to go on shore; however, the “*Bayspring*” had brought a missionary for a station near which he had been at before for a year but had to leave 3 months ago. His name is Mr. Morrison, so one officer from each mess was allowed to go and I went to sketch. Messrs. Bunchley and Veitch also accompanied us. We landed on a white sandy beach at 1 p.m. and struck at once into the bush accompanied by Mr. & Mrs. Morrison and 2 natives, the thicket was very tangled and the track narrow, on this account Mr. Bunchley got only a few although some very beautiful birds, several very gorgeous parrots. Mr. Veitch also got some valuable plants and a few ferns — after walking about 3 or 4 miles over an undulating bush country, we came to an area of the sea which connects Vila Anchorage at another place with the sea, we found Mr. Morrison's boat here, untouched and pulled across to a native village and then went to a point where Mr. M's house was, and had tea there, which we were very thankful for, it having been very hot. I will sketch one of the native houses.”

“The natives here seem a very poor and wretched lot and their houses are low and comfortless. They wear no clothing, nor do they possess much of any interest or worth, except earrings and noserings.”

“Friday I went on shore with Bunchley & Veitch, though no one else got a change to go on shore. We started at 7:30 a.m. but did not go more than 2 or 3 miles from the beach. Saw several villages, etc. The natives had some nice armlets and earrings made of different colored shells cut into odd shapes and strung. I got some of them. Some of them also had pigs' tusks stuck in their woolly hair. We got some fine parrots, etc. and some more rare plants and returned on board by 1 p.m. quite ready for our dinners. I got several sketches of houses, etc. whilst on shore. I think the savage nature of these people is in a great measure brought out by the traders trying to cheat them. There was one white man living here, a German dealing in sandalwood, etc. etc. At 3 p.m. we sailed and parted company with the “*Bayspring*” then returning to Vila Erromayo and — ect. and Api and Paana where some canoes came off and brought fruit and bows and arrows in —. The next morning we were close to Malicolo and had to beat around a point so we got to Port Sandwich by 10 a.m. and anchored there. The people are much like the inhabitants of Vate in their appearance and manners, but the language is totally different. The diversity of tongues is something wonderful amongst this group. In some of the islands (even small ones) as many as 12 different languages are spoken totally unintelligible to



each other.”

Of course we had to inquire into the brutal murders that have been committed here lately, and as I told you before, we prepared for landing but did not do so as the country was in a bad state for marching. We got a very defiant message from the chief and so the Commodore intends to call here on our way South — Tuesday 15th. We had some coast natives on board who were to all appearance friendly, and they allowed themselves after much persuading to be photographed. It is curious what an objection all these islanders have to be photographed. In most cases the photographer had to resort to all kinds of plans such as showing them something or getting them to watch something, etc. I went on shore in the afternoon but did not go far from the beach and stockade, and after a nice bathe in the river came off having got some sketches and curiosities, sandalwood, etc. At 8 p.m. we weighed and proceeded under sail “*Bayspring*” in company to the NNW. By morning at 9 having run 70 miles we were close to Vate or Sandwich Island which at first appeared to be low and wooded, but on nearing it it proved to be hilly having low flats some miles in extent near the coasts. At 10 we got up steam and anchored in a beautiful landlocked harbour behind an island named Vila at 12. It is a beautiful anchorage, very deep blue water and surrounded by low islands covered with the most luxuriant tropical vegetation, while on the land side are low thickly wooded hills and mountains in the distance forming a beautiful picture with the little covers and beaches of dazzling white sand and fringes of coconut trees.”

The story of H.M.S. “*Curacoa*” in the New Hebrides is substantiated from another source. When the New Hebrides Missionaries were assembled at their annual meeting on Aneityum, “H.M.S. “*Curacoa*” arrived at the Harbor to investigate the grievances of white men and trading vessels among the islands. At each of these island, the Commodore (Sir William Wiseman, Bart, C.B.) summoned the principal Chiefs. From the Mission Synod: “At each of these Islands, the Commodore summoned the principal Chiefs near the harbours to appear before him, and explained to them that his visit was to inquire into the complaints British subjects had made against them, and to see if they had any against British subjects; and when he had found out the truth he would punish those who had done the wrong and protect those who had suffered wrong. The Queen did not send him to compel them to become Christians, or to punish them for not becoming Christians. She left them to do as they liked in this matter; but she was very angry at them because they had encouraged her subjects to live amongst them, sold them land, and promised to protect them, and afterwards murdered some of them and attempted to murder others, and stolen and destroyed their property; that the inhabitants of these islands were talked of over the whole world for their trechery, cruelty, and murders; and that the Queen would no longer allow them to murder or injure her subjects, who were living peaceably among them either as Missionaries or Traders. She would send a Ship of War every year to inquire into their conduct, and if any white man injured any Native they were to tell the Captain of the Man-of-War, and the white man would be punished as fast as the black man.”

“After spending much time, and using peaceably every means in his power in trying to get the guilty parties on Tanna, and not succeeding, he shelled two villages, — having the day before informed the Natives that he would do so, and advising to have all women, children, and sick removed, which in fact they did. Indeed nearly the whole of the inhabitants, young and old, went to Nowar’s land, where they were instructed they would be safe, while they witnessed what a Man-of-war could in punishing murderers. But before the hour approached, a foolish host of Tannese warriors had assembled on the beach, painted and armed and determined to fight the Man-of-war! And the Chief of a village on the other side of the bay was at that moment assembled with his men on the high ground within our view, and dancing to a war song in defiance.”

“The Commodore caused a shell to strike the hill and explode with terrific fury just underneath the dancers. The earth and the bush were torn and thrown into the air above



and around them; and next moment the whole host were seen disappearing over the brow of the hill. Two shots were sent over the heads of the warriors on the shore, with terrific noise and uproar; in an instant, every man was making haste for Nowar's land, the place of refuge. The Commodore then shelled the villages, and destroyed their property."

The Reverend John G. Paton, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, in the company of Reverend Copeland, reached the New Hebrides on August 29, 1858. In his first letter from Tanna to his home parish in Scotland, he wrote:

"We found the Tannese to be painted Savages, enveloped in all the superstition and wickedness of Heathenism. All the men and children go in a state of nudity. The older women wear grass skirts, and the young women and girls, grass or leaf aprons like Eve in Eden. They are exceedingly ignorant, vicious, and bigoted, and almost void of natural affection. Instead of the inhabitants of Port Resolution being improved by coming in contact with white men they are rendered much worse for they have learned all their vices but none of their virtues, — if such are possessed by the pioneer traders among such races! The Sandal-wood Traders are as a class the most godless of men, whose cruelty and wickedness make us ashamed to own them as our countrymen. By them the poor defenceless Natives are oppressed and robbed on every hand; and if they offer the slightest resistance, they are ruthlessly silenced by the musket or revolver. Few months here pass without some of them being shot, and, instead of their murderers feeling ashamed, they boast of how they despatch them. Such treatment keeps the Natives always burning under a desire for revenge, so that it is a wonder any white man is allowed to come among them. Indeed, all Traders here are able to maintain their position only by revolvers and rifles; but we hope a better state of affairs is at hand for Tanna."

The best description of letters during this same period is quoted from the book "*Honolulu*", Sketches of Life in the Hawaiian Islands from 1828 to 1861 by Laura Fish Judd: "We seldom hear from the envoys. Mails are like angels' visits, few and far between. We watch the ocean in our anxiety to catch the first glimpse of a sail, and listen with suppressed breath for every item of news." *Letters from the New Hebrides, 1842 to 1865* are also like angels' visits, few and far between.

#### THE END

Note: The letters have been left intact, and no attempt has been made to change any spelling or make alterations. Where a blank space has been left open, this indicates that the word was not understood or deciphered.

#### NEW HEBRIDES PLACE NAMES

ANTEITYUM — The most southern most island.

EFATE ISLAND — Also known as Sandwich Island.

ESPIRITU SANTO — The largest island in the group.

EROMANGA — (or Erromango) The largest of the Southern Islands.

MAEWO — (or Aurora) island.

MALEKULA — The second largest island.

NINA — Island of Aniwa.

OMBA — (native name) now called Aoba.

PORT SANDWICH — A harbor in the South-East of Malekula.

PORT RESOLUTION — On Tana Island.

RAGA ISLAND — East of Espiritu Santo in the central area.

ST. PHILLIPS BAY AND ST. JAMES BAY — on Espiritu Santo Island.

TANA — (or Tanna)

VILA — On Efate Island.

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