

Online presentation to the West Africa Study Circle

**Some more rare postal cancels from the early areas of British influence
1898 - 1906**

SIERRA LEONE

June 8th, 2024

Simon Beving Binsted

(The Beving Collection)

History of the Beving Collection

The Beving Collection of stamps, picture postcards and covers of the British and French West African colonies from 1876 to 1907, is named in honour of Karl-Adolf-Georg Beving, born in Donaueschingen, in the Kingdom of Baden in 1858 and naturalised as a British Citizen in 1895 under the name of Charles Beving - and his son Charles “Addy” Beving. It is currently managed by his grandson, Simon Beving Binsted in Andorra. The collection today features more than 3.500 items, mostly postally used, and nearly all identified by 600 d.p.i. - 1.200 d.p.i. scans.

The collection originated in the schoolboy collection of Addy Beving from stamps steamed off letters sent by his father, a pioneer cotton trader and merchant from his travels all over West Africa. The Charles Beving Collection of Native Textiles is the largest collection of its kind in the world and was donated to the British Museum in 1935.

Reference material, scans from the collection and specialist, highly-detailed, up-to-date self-calculating spreadsheets for each Colony are available to members of the West Africa Study Group and France and Colonies Philatelic Societies upon request

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Approximate areas of British influence

>1897

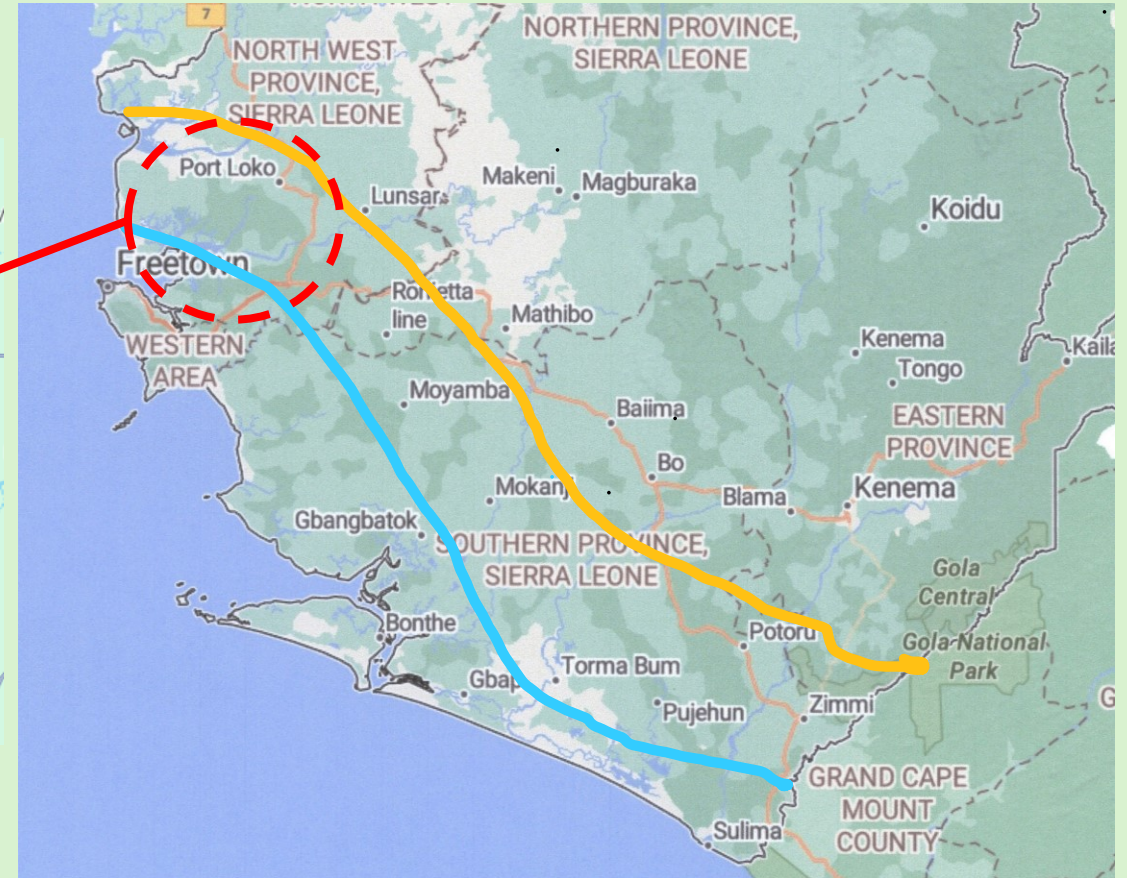
1898 > 1906



Port Lok[k]o[h]



Magbelli





Port Lokkoh (Port Lokko)

SG 42 1d lilac and carmine

As we can see from the map, by the very last years of the 19th century, pioneer traders like Karl Beving had started to venture further inland by rickety steamer up the main rivers from the wide delta, east of the Freetown peninsula. Progress up country in Sierra Leone was much slower than in many of the other West African territories because of determined resistance from the native inhabitants. The Post Office at Port Lokkoh was set up in May 1898 and the earliest cancel found from the settlement was in September 1899. Our very rare cancel on a QV stamp for 1902 is the one illustrated by Walton.

SG 42 1d lilac and carmine



Magbelli (Magbele Bridge)

Similarly, the community at Magbelli (now Magbele Bridge, over the Rokel river) must only have consisted of a very few settlers grouped around the American Wesleyan mission house there, run by George and Mary Clarke. For a couple of weeks in 1893, the Mission was used as a postal agency, but it was only in November 1899 that an official Post Office was set up. As far as we are aware, there is only one other Walton 095.01 MAGBELLI cancel on a rather faded QV SG42 and up to 1907 only two or three more KEVII examples have been found.

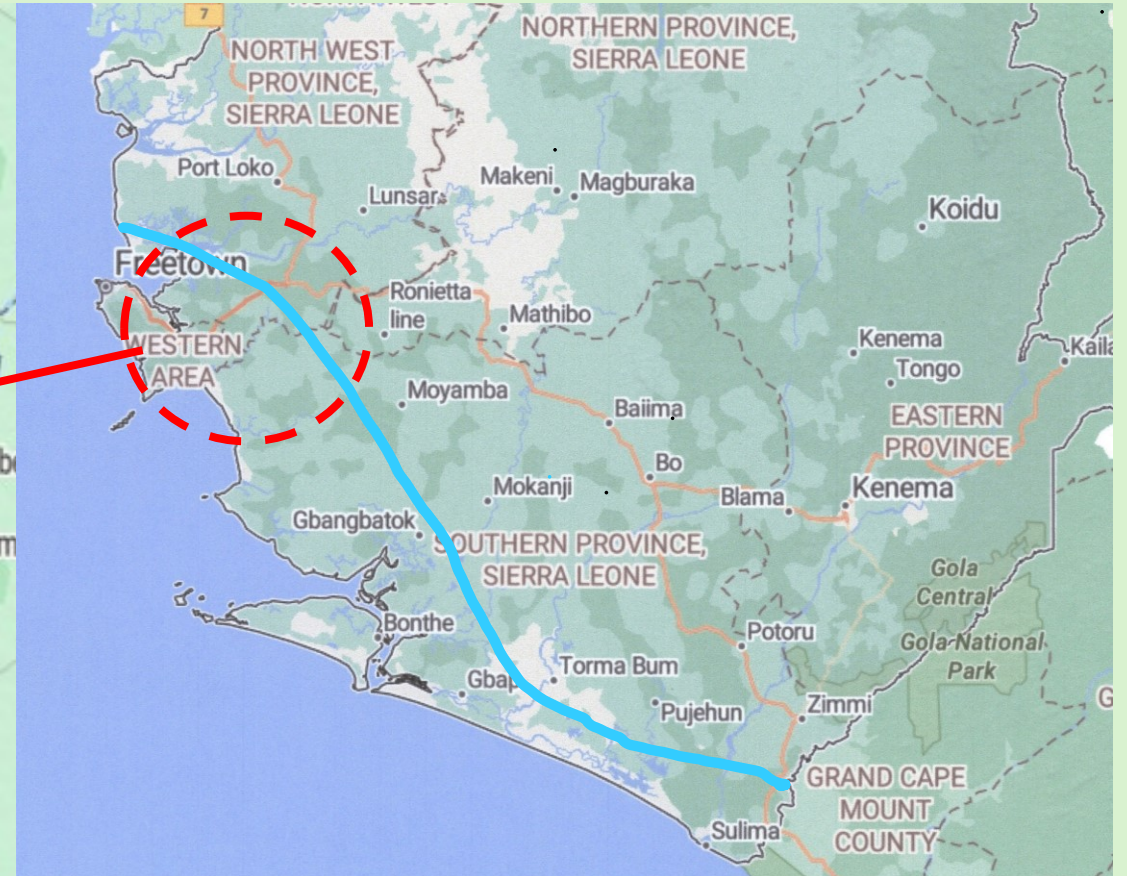
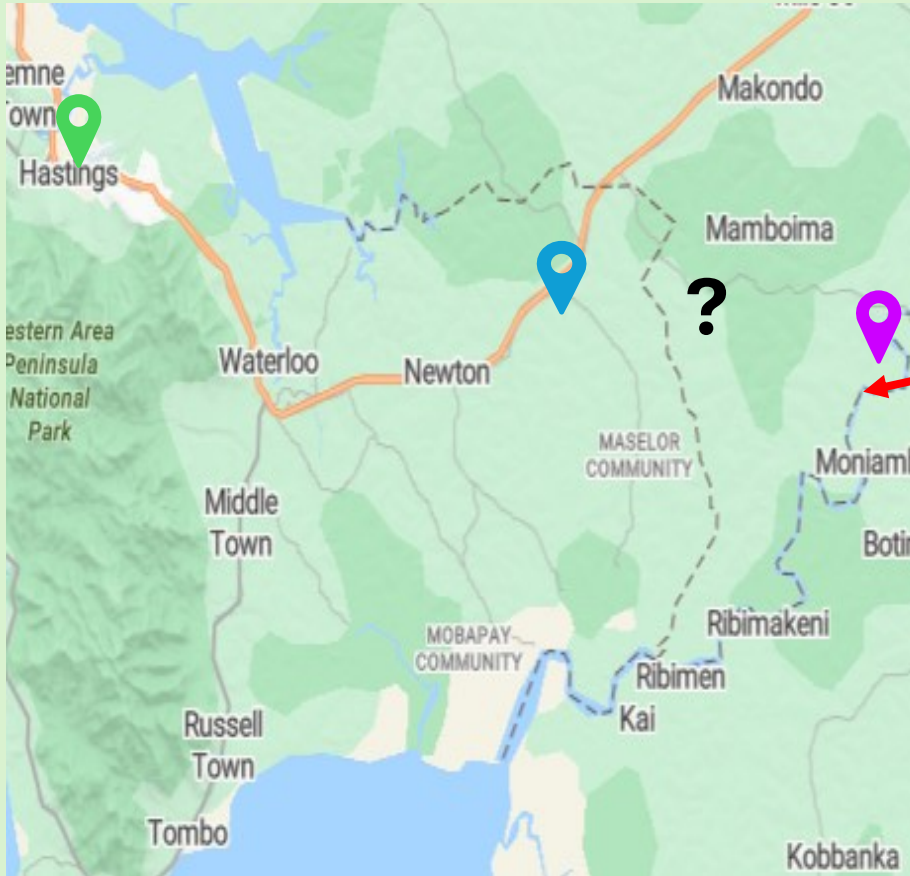


Approximate areas of British influence

>1897

1898 > 1906

-  Hastings
-  Songo
-  Makomba
-  Mabang



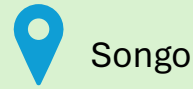
SG 73 ½d purple and green



Hastings

The cancels in this section of today's presentation were, I believe, all originally stops on the railway line being built from Freetown. The line would eventually reach, via Bo, to Kenema some 200 miles away in the south-eastern district of Bandajuma by the autumn of 1906. Strangely enough, after so much effort on the part of the British to open up the hinterland, there are now no functioning railways in Sierra Leone as far as I can make out.

Hastings, some six or seven miles down the eastern side of the peninsula from Freetown, was reached by rail in 1893, but Walton 051.01 cancels from the office's first handstamp are still exceptionally difficult to come by, especially cancels on QV issues. This one from 1900 may be one of only two known and there are perhaps three more on KE VII stamps.



Songo

SG 73 ½d purple and green

Here we revisit the railway town of Prince Alfred Town which was re-named **SONGO** in 1897, possibly because Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh and Queen Victoria's second son, had by then inherited the title of Prince-Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in the German Empire, which Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales, had tactfully renounced being the heir apparent of the British Empire. Although the name change was made in 1897, the Post Office there only re-opened on Nov 3, 1903.

SG 87 1d purple and rosine



Songo

This postmark is 128.02 in the Walton handbook and rated with the B code as "Rare" or Just 3-5 copies known, of which we have two in the collection. The year date of the cancel on the SG 73 above is smudged and very difficult to read but I believe it to be (19)04.

Walton only records one single example of use on Nov 11, 1904 using code C and there are perhaps a further three examples with Code B. As usual, I shall be very happy to have details of those further rare copies! The office was closed in 1910 and only re-opened in 1925.



SG 44 2d lilac and orange

? Makomba



As far as Google maps is concerned MAKOMBA doesn't exist! My guess is that it was a temporary railway camp on the line being built from Songo to Mabang and onwards to Rotifunk, which is why there is no trace of any settlement today.

Walton maintains it was in Ronietta District and Proud says nothing about the location. Walton states that it was opened around January 1901 and closed in June of the same year and then both experts confirm that our stamp on the left is the EKD.

SG 45 2½d lilac and ultramarine

? Makomba

Both these cancellations are Walton 100.01 rated in the 2015 handbook as "Rare" meaning "just 1 or 2 copies known". This is strange: he tacitly acknowledges that both of these stamps now in the Beving Collection must be from 1901, but he illustrates neither of these, showing a scan of one Code B with no date at all and another, black and white, reduced-size handstamp print bearing the full date of 1 JU 01. So, are there four genuine examples of MAKOMBA, or just three? As ever, I would be very glad to know!



SG 74 1d purple and rosine



Mabang

It would appear that the railway arrived in MABANG late in 1902 and the railway Post Office was opened on Jan 01, 1903.

This first handstamp with a centre star is Walton's 090.01 and this 1906 cancel is illustrated there, upright in black and white - but not the stamp itself – as the EKD. If Walton's rating of "Rare" is to be believed, there must be another four later cancels somewhere, before the next handstamp arrived in October 1907, so I shall look forward to hearing of them in due course.

However, there cannot have been many letter writers there even then, because cancellations of the 1907 handstamp are also equally rare!

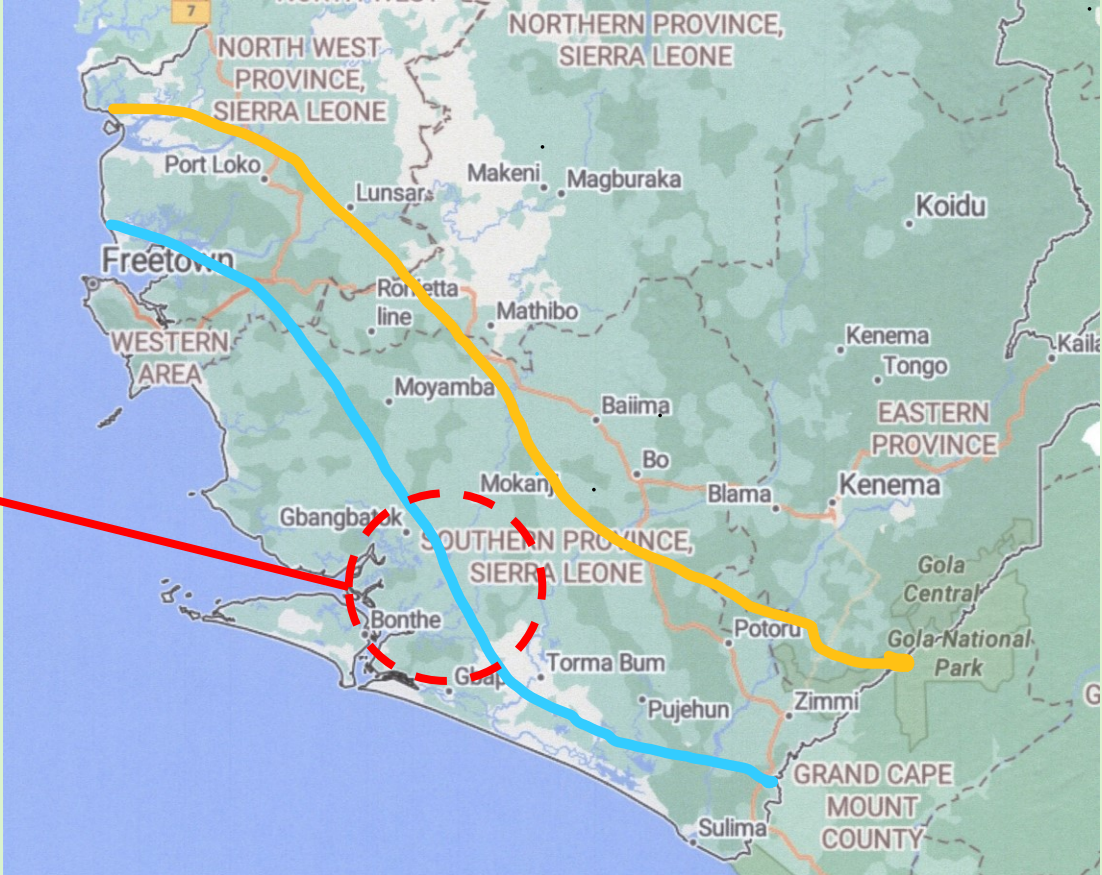
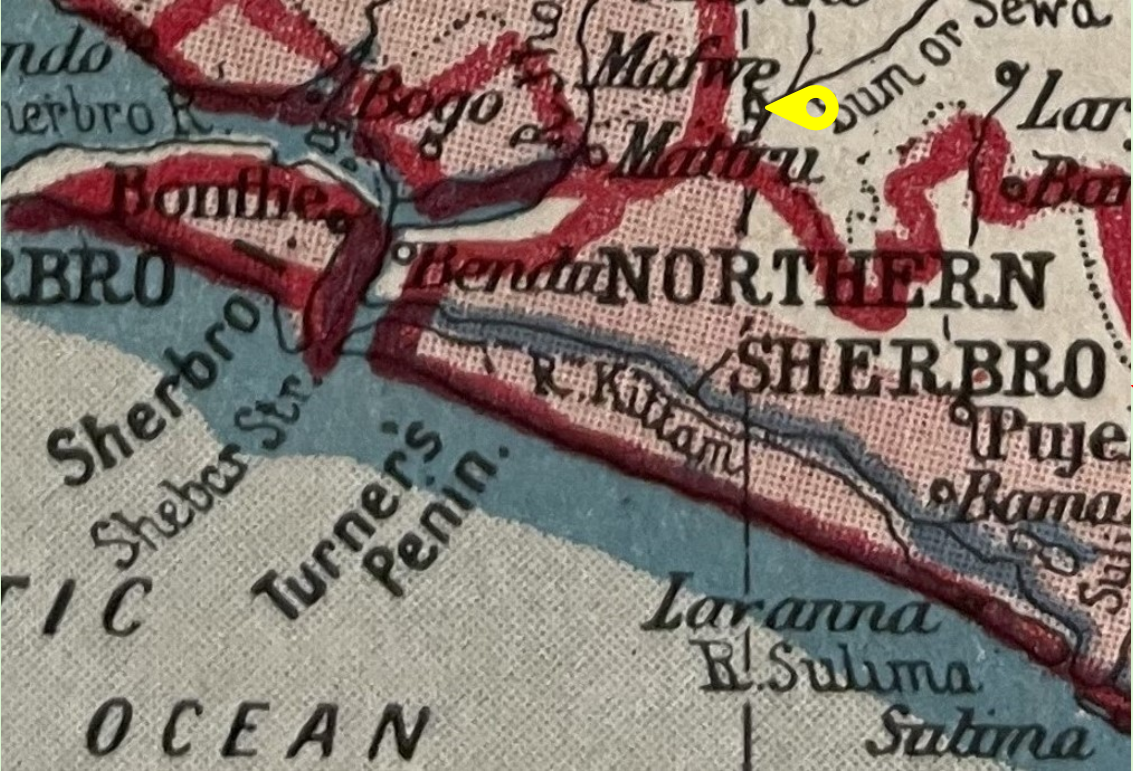
Magnification of Harmsworths New Atlas of the World 1920 (I)

>1897

1898 >1906



Mafweh (Mafwe)



SG 74 1d purple and rosine



Mafweh (Mafwe)

MAFWEH is another of those places like Makomba that does not appear to exist today and would probably have been an upriver tented camp for the troops of W.A.F.F. the West African Frontier Force.

There are probably only three or four known cancels, and these two shown here are in this collection. Postmark is 094.01 in the Walton 2015 handbook and in use from May 29, 1905 to January 28, 1908 making our example on the left the EKD.

SG 87 1d purple and rosine



Mafweh (Mafwe)

There is definitely one QV example ½d SG41 without code and a facial scuff dated AU 30 99 that I saw offered by Hamilton in 2022, that he said then was his only recorded example on a QV stamp, and presumably someone has the one noted by Walton dated in 1908. It would be interesting to know if there are any others out there because there is no doubt that MAFWEH cancels are exceptionally difficult to come by.



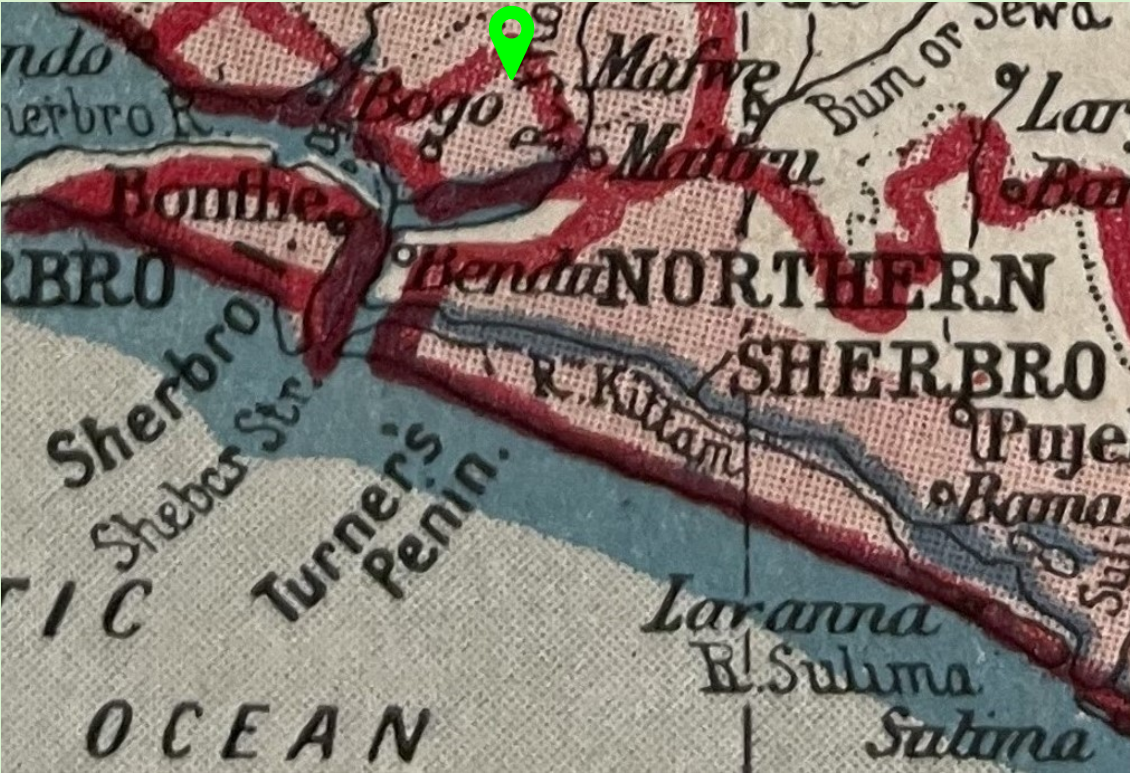
Magnification of Harmsworths New Atlas of the World 1920 (II)

>1897

1898>1905



Victoria





 Victoria

No guesses as to why a tiny settlement in the back of beyond up another small river in the Sherbro District was named VICTORIA, and it is vaguely possible, one supposes, that Herself may even have been amused. After all, by that time she had even had a railway station named after her.

There are a couple of known Code B cancels bearing the legend VICTORIA.SHERBRO from 3 AU 99 and 6 JU 00, but this *unique* Walton 155.01 code C cancel, dated 4 OC 05 from a subsequent handstamp sent out in June 1903, is the only known survivor and the Post Office promptly shut up shop in December 1906, presumably for lack of customers.

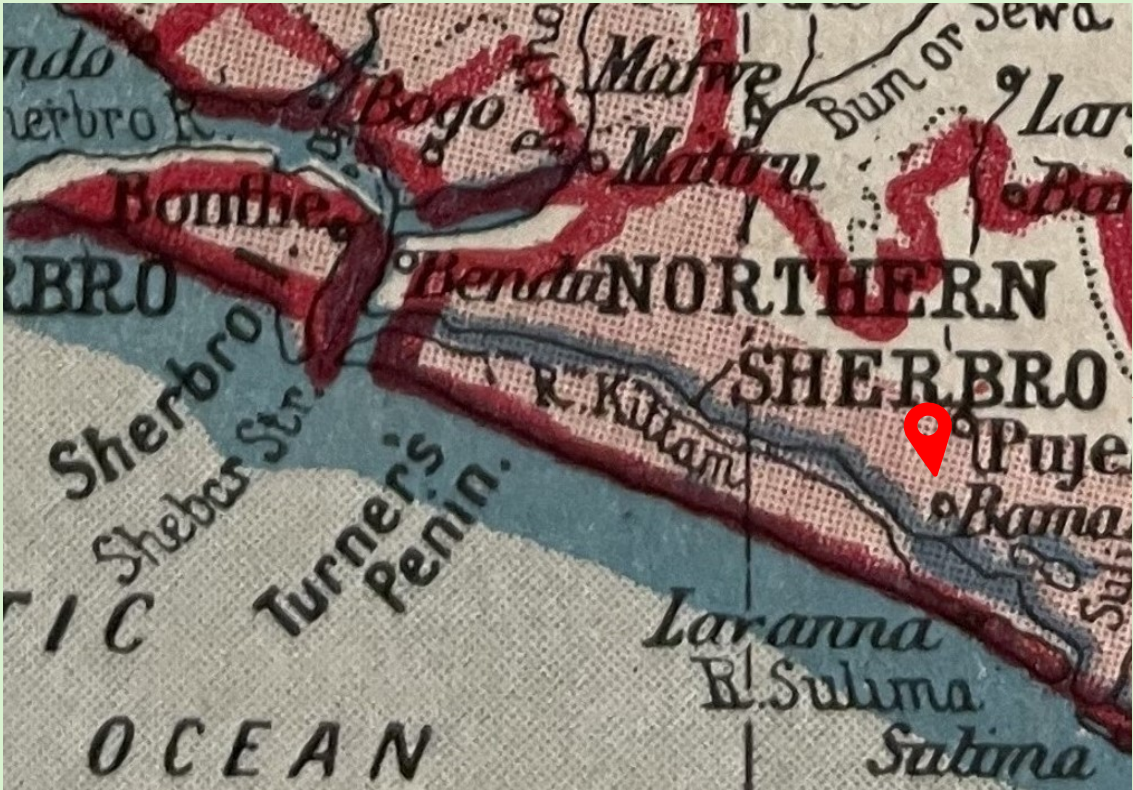
Magnification of Harmsworths New Atlas of the World 1920 (II)

>1897

1898>1905



Boma





Boma



So, finally, to the continuing controversy over BOMA.

When I bought this stamp from Hamilton in 2010, he had been offering it for some time and I was intrigued. Apart from it being absolutely unique, it *had* originally been conjectured to have been from BOMPEHTUK in the Bandajuma District but the slant of the last letter looks wrong. However, Walton reported in 2015 that Proud had stated it to be from BOMA in, of all places, the Belgian Congo, thousands of miles across the water down south. This to my mind was highly improbable, if not absurd.

So, I would like to see some very convincing evidence of this, since on consulting Addy Beving's trusty 1920 atlas I see there was, just like Mafweh, an evidently important settlement – probably a military camp – right there in Sierra Leone on the shore of an inland lake north-west of Sulymah, of which vestiges even exist today. So, where does the Belgian Congo idea come from? BOMA, by the way, is a very common name in Africa for a circular, fenced village meeting place.

Thank you!

I also hope to be able to
make a future presentation of our rare-office
cancels from Gold Coast

Any further questions: ceo@servissim.ad