

3.11 Walter Quensell's competitors

Walter Quensell was aware of competitors, one of whom in the early 1930s was Albert C. Roessler (A.C. Roe) the well-known Newark, New Jersey stamp dealer

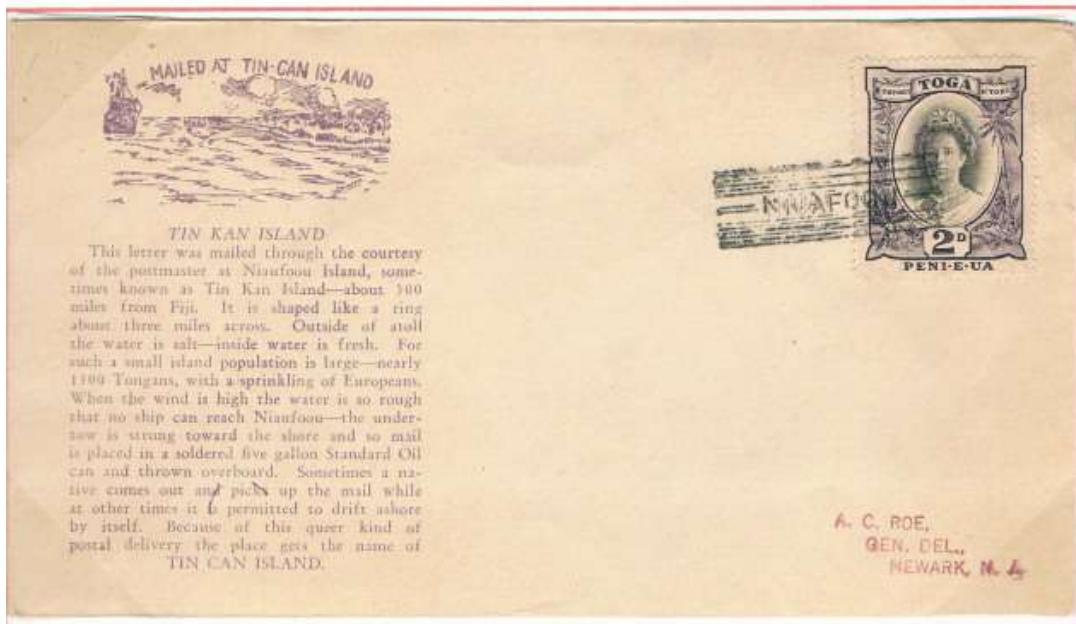


8th September
1931 illustrated
self-addressed
MAILED AT TIN-CAN
ISLAND cover
produced by
A. C. Roe

The label "MAILED AT TIN CAN ISLAND" was applied by Albert C. Roessler and is *Reference 1, PC-16 Rarity DD*

The stamps have Nuku'alofa (not Niuafou'ou) Tonga postmarks for 8th September 1931.

Roessler may have been confused as to whether Tin Can Island was Nuku'alofa instead of Niuafou'ou. There must be an element of doubt as to whether this cover actually travelled by Tin Can Mail.



9th October 1933
illustrated self-
addressed MAILED
AT TIN-CAN ISLAND
TIN KAN ISLAND
cover produced by
A. C. Roe

The 2d stamp received a duplicated Niuafou'ou 7-bar canceller

This cover is only known used on this day and is *Reference 1. PC-28 Rarity DD*

3.11 Walter Quensell's competitors

In the late 1930s and 1940s, another competitor was the Finau Stamp Service of Nuku'alofa

Two similar, but not identical Finau covers to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Queen Salote's accession to the throne 1918-1938, but used in 1939

A 1939 Registered cover to England with, unusually two postmarks, one for the 5th and the other for the 13th June



A 20th June 1939 Registered cover to the Kenmore Stamp Company of New York



Both illustrated Queen Salote covers are Reference 1. PC - 11 Rarity D



Islands Cruise Ship
Delivers the "Tin Can Mail" at Niuafu'u

THE island of Niuafu'u, well known as Tin Can Island, is the most *Nova*-western outpost of the Group. It is about halfway between Suva and Pangopango, right on the mail route. Niuafu'u is a ring shape, 1 1/2 miles wide, surrounding a crater-lake 2 1/2 miles diameter. In the centre of the lake the islands, and in the centre of each, a small lake abounding in wild ducks and pigeons. This island has the largest coconut in the Pacific.

It has a population of about fifteen hundred happy and care-free souls of fine physique Tonga here where the famous breadfruits, pineapples, bananas, and other luxuries of nature are in abundance without cultivation.

Landing on Niuafu'u is a difficult matter and is often impossible. Mail for this island is therefore a sealed biscuit tin and thrown overboard to be picked up by natives in outrigger canoes. The covers sought by philatelists, are endorsed with the "tin can mail" stamp and delivered back to the ship in Suva.

Tongan Stamps - Mint Current Issue - Mint or Used

1d - Arms of Tonga (Green).	6d - Coral.
1d - Breadfruit tree.	7 1/2d - Queen Salote.
1 1/2d - Queen Salote.	10d - Queen Salote.
2d - Queen Salote.	1 - Queen Salote.
2 1/2d - Queen Salote.	2 - View in Haapai.
3d - Prehistoric Trilith.	2 1/2 - Parrot.
5d - Queen Salote.	5 - View Vavau Harbour.

TONGAN JUBILEES, 1d, 2d, 2 1/2d; on sale, up to October 12, 1939. 1 - per set.

Special Tin Can Mail cover, franked with 8 different stamps, despatched from Niuafu'u to any address. Same, with 2 diff., 1 - , but of smaller size. Large, with 5 diff., 2 6.

COMMISSION: Mint or used stamps can be supplied at 10% over face. Minimum charge, 1. Postage and registered fee extra. Servicing covers, 20% over face. Appropriate covers at 1d each, 1.

REMITTANCE: British, U.S.A., and Australasian currency, through registered post, accepted. No mint or stamps accepted. Please do not ask for exchange or send anything unsolicited.

P.O. Box 40
NUKUALOFA

FINAU STAMP SERVICE

FRIED
OCT

3.11 Walter Quensell's competitors

Two later, similar but not identical, illustrated Finau covers to Bristol in 1939 and 1940

3rd December 1939



17th August 1940



Both these illustrated covers are Reference 1. PC - 5a and PC - 5 respectively both Rarity D

3.12 Delayed, censored and expedited mail - Second World War

Tin Can Mail continued during the Second World War despite censorship and delays. After the bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941, and the USA entering the war, the volume of Tin Can Mail substantially decreased.

A 1939 Registered, re-directed and delayed cover to Rangoon Burma, put into the sea from the Cruise Steamer Maunganui on 10th August 1939.



The stamps are cancelled with Niuafou postmarks for 28th August 1939. On the front is a RANGOON CANTONMENT receiving stamp for 14th June 1940, over nine months later.

The cover was routed via Sydney and Perth, where on the reverse is a G.P.O. SYDNEY NSW AUST transit mark for 6th May 1940, a REGISTERED PERTH WEST AUSTRALIA transit mark for 20th May 1940, and a RANGOON REGISTRATION RECEIVING mark for 12th June 1940.

3.12 Delayed, censored and expedited mail - Second World War

Another 1939 Registered, and delayed cover put into the sea from the Cruise Steamer Maunganui on 10th August 1939. This one was censored, was sent to Heliopolis, Egypt



The stamps are cancelled with Niuafu'ou postmarks for 28th August 1939.

The cover was opened by an Egyptian Censor, and re-sealed with an EGYPTIAN CENSORSHIP label. On the front are two Egyptian POSTAL CENSOR hand stamps.

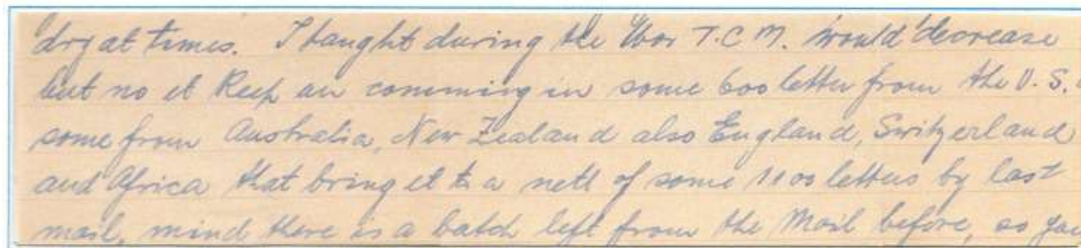
The reverse of the cover (reduced)



There is a HELIOPOLIS receiving mark for 29th August 1940, a year and a day later.

3.12 Delayed, censored and expedited mail - Second World War

A 1941 illustrated censored, re-directed and delayed cover to U.S.A. Enclosed was an October 1941 two-page letter from Walter Quensell, part of which is shown.



".....I thought during the war TCM would decrease but no, it kept on coming in, some 600 letters from the USA, some from Australia, New Zealand and also England, Switzerland and Africa that brings it to a nett of some 1,100 letters by last mail....."

Little did Walter Quensell know the bombing of Pearl Harbour was immanent.



The cover has a Niuafu'ou postmark for 22nd October 1941. It was addressed to Kingsville, Ohio, but re-directed to Grand Rapids, Minnisota. It was censored, opened and re-sealed by Examiner 1620. This illustrated cover is Reference 1. PC - 32 Rarity D

On the reverse are back stamps for Nuku'alofa 11th December 1941 nearly two months after posting in Niuafu'ou (and with delays caused by the USA declaring war on Japan), and Kingsville, Ohio 12th February 1942. It is not known when the cover finally arrived at Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

3.12 Delayed, censored and expedited mail - Second World War

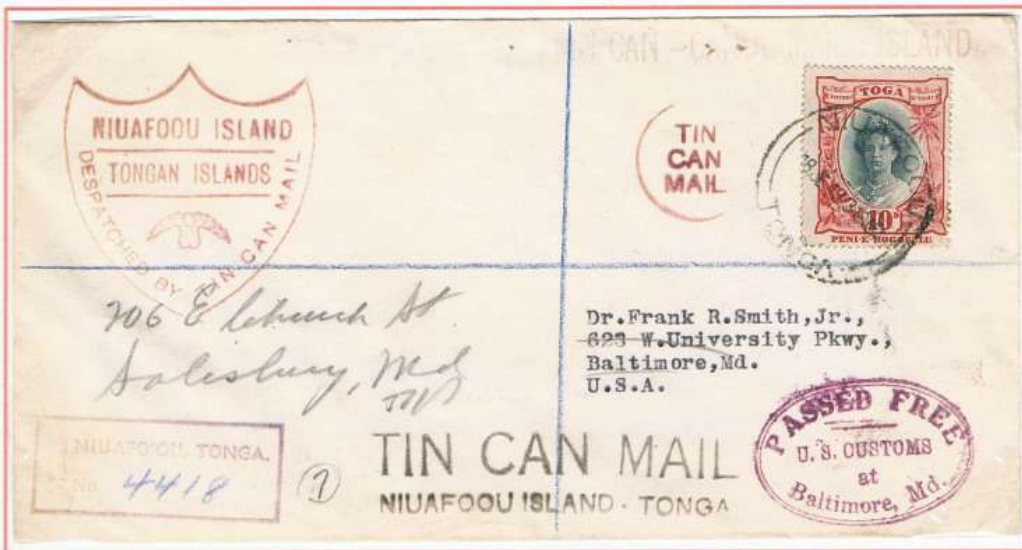
A 17th October 1941 Registered, censored and delayed cover from Niuafu'ou to U.S.A
It arrived in Montana 10 months later in August 1942.



Reference 2

The cover was censored in Tonga. The diamond-shaped PASSED BY CENSOR 2 mark was only in use from early May to late August 1942, so the cover must have been delayed in Tonga before continuing its journey to Montana.

An 18th June 1943 Registered "Passed Free" by Customs" cover from Niuafu'ou to U.S.A.
It arrived at Baltimore on 12th March 1945 and re-addressed to Salisbury, Maryland, where it arrived two days later on 14th March, a delay of 21 months.



3.12 Delayed, censored and expedited mail - Second World War

A 1942 twice censored, underpaid (and taxed) cover to New York

This cover was sent from Niuafu'ou on 14th July 1942, and went via Nuku'alofa to New York



The cover was censored in Tonga (but there is no evidence to suggest it was opened and re-sealed in Tonga).

It was opened and censored again, in either Hawaii or on arrival in U.S.A and re-sealed with the American EXAMINED BY 10312 re-sealing label. It is not known when it arrived in New York.

Reference 2

A 1943 twice censored cover to New South Wales, Australia

This cover was sent from Niuafu'ou on 16th October 1943, and went via Nuku'alofa to Australia

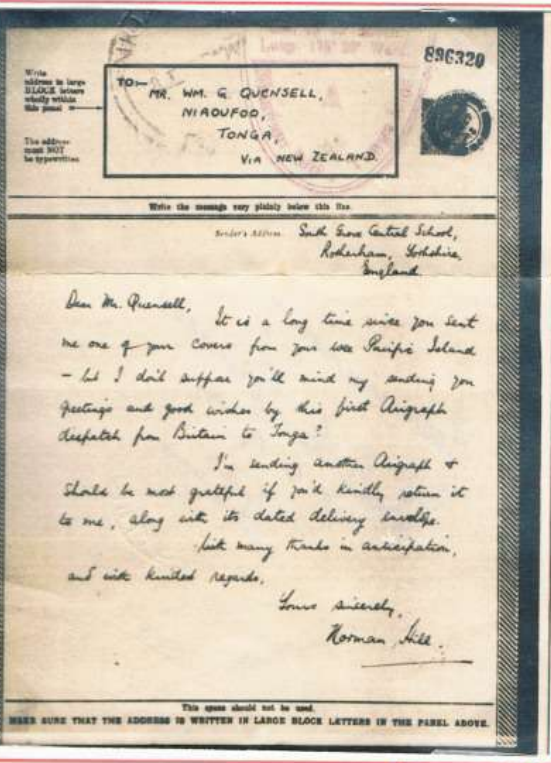


Reference 2 The cover was opened, censored and re-sealed in Tonga by two strips of PC 90 OPENED BY EXAMINER WW/2 sealing tape. In Australia, it was again opened, censored and re-sealed by CENSOR 2, and a mauve diamond 2 PASSED BY CENSOR 1657 handstamp applied. It is not known when it arrived in Australia.

3.12 Delayed, censored and expedited mail - Second World War

One way of expediting Tin Can Mail during World War II was by using the Airgraph service.

This 1943 Airgraph to Niuafou'ou is one of only two known to have been delivered by Tin Can Mail. In 1941, Kodak devised a means of photographing written messages and images onto spools of negative film which could be transported relatively inexpensively. At the destination, the negatives were developed to produce photographic prints capable of being read by the recipient.



Walter Quensell signed the back of the Airgraph

*James Cunningham
Walter G. Quensell
T.C.M.
7/8/43*

The service between England and Tonga was introduced in 1943. This Airgraph to Niuafou'ou delivered by Tin Can Mail, was sent on 2nd April by Norman Hill of Rotherham on the first flight.

In his message, Mr Hill requested Walter Quensell to return one of them with its dated delivery envelope.

Both went via Wellington, New Zealand, where the microfilm was developed and the message sent to Nukualofa, in an Airgraph Message envelope with a Wellington postmark for 6th May 1943.

There is a Nuku'alofa backstamp for 13th May. From there it was sent on to Niuafou'ou where its receiving mark is indistinct, but believed to be 18th May.

Reference 2



4. 1946 Volcanic eruption
4.1 1946 Pre-eruption cover

A July 1946 pre-eruption cover to Canada, from Walter Quensell who left for Nuku'alofa at the end of July never to return. One of the last known covers prior to the September eruption.



The postmarks are indistinct, but probably read 9th July 1946. On the reverse is a Nuku'alofa postmark 11th July, and one for Montreal 30th September.

Little did Walter Quensell anticipate that within two months, Niuafou'ou would suffer from volcanic eruptions. The OUTWARD-TIN-CAN-MAIL COVER, NIUAFOOU-TONGA, South - Sea, cachet is Reference 1. ML-15 Rarity

4.2 The eruption, its aftermath and evacuation

Reports and a photograph about the September 1946 volcanic eruption

In 1st September 1946, earthquakes and tremors hit Niuafou'ou for nine days culminating in a massive volcanic eruption. This was the 10th time in just over a century that Niuafou'ou suffered from a volcanic eruption. Sister Maraulia, of the Catholic Mission at Angaha, wrote - "The tragic event occurred on Monday 9th September at 7.30pm after an hour of earth tremors and quakes and shakes.....the memorable night of 10th September was to be still worse than the night before.....what a night it was to see fire coming out of the water. A dozen big mouths pitting out fire from midnight until 7am Wednesday morning....."

Derby Daily Telegraph 21st September 1946



Page 74 of *The Fire has Jumped* records that in her speech on 26th June 1947, Queen Salote said - "...although there was no loss of life, for which God be praised..."

The volcanic eruption of Niuafou'ou Island in 1946, which caused evacuation of the Tongan inhabitants and a disruption of the "Tin Can Mail"



4.2 The eruption, its aftermath and evacuation

The Evacuation Ordinance 1946 (No. 2 of 1946)

An Order-in-Council required to evacuate the island was approved by Queen Salote on 23rd October 1946 and published, in both English and Tongan, in the Tonga Government Gazette 8th November 1946.

(This is a photocopy. Originals are not available)

TONGA GOVERNMENT GAZETTE.

No. 13. NUKU'ALOFA, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH. 1946.

ORDER-IN-COUNCIL.

ORDER OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN COUNCIL.

THE EVACUATION ORDINANCE, 1946.
(No. 2 of 1946.)

In exercise of the powers vested in Her by the Evacuation Ordinance, 1946, and otherwise, and with the advice of Her Ministers, Her Majesty the Queen is pleased to order and it is hereby ordered:—

1. This Order may be cited as the Evacuation of Niuafo'ou Order, 1946.

2. Whereas it is in the interest and for the welfare of the persons at present inhabiting the Island of Niuafo'ou that they be compulsorily evacuated therefrom, these said inhabitants of Niuafo'ou shall be evacuated in such manner and time as the Competent Authority appointed for the evacuation shall order.

Given under the hand and official seal of the Queen at Nuku'alofa this 23rd day of October, 1946.

S. F. TONGILAVA,
Clerk to Privy Council.

TU'UTU'UNI 'I HE FAKATAHA TOKONI.

KOE TU'UTU'UNI 'A 'ENE 'AFIO KOE KUINI 'I HE FAKATAHA TOKONI, 1946.

(Fika 2 'oe 1946.)

Koe'uhi koe ngahi mafai kuo tuku atu kiate ia 'e he Lao Fakataha Tokoni ki he Fetukutuku, 1946, mo ha feitu'u kehe, pea 'i he fakahinohino 'a 'Ene kau Minisita, kuo finangalo lelei 'a 'Ene 'Afio koe Kuini ke tu'utu'uni pea 'oku tu'utu'uni 'eni 'o pehe:—

1. 'E ui 'ae Tu'utu'uni ni koe Tu'utu'uni ki he Fetukutuku 'o Niuafo'ou, 1946.

2. Koe'uhi koe lelei moe tu'umalie 'ae kakai 'oku nau lolotonga nofo'i 'ae motu ko Niuafo'ou 'e fetukutuku fakamalohi'i kinautolu mei ai, koe kakai ko'eni 'o Niuafo'ou kuo tau lau ki ai 'e fetukutuku mai 'i he founga moe taimi 'e pehe 'e he Pule Fe'unga na'e fili ki he fetukutuku ke tu'utu'uni ke nau fetukutuku.

Na'e fai 'i he tohinima 'a 'Ene 'Afio moe Sila faka-Pule'anga 'ae Kuini 'i Nuku'alofa 'i he 'aho 23 'o 'Okatopa, 1946.

S. F. TONGILAVA,
Kalake ki he Fakataha Tokoni.

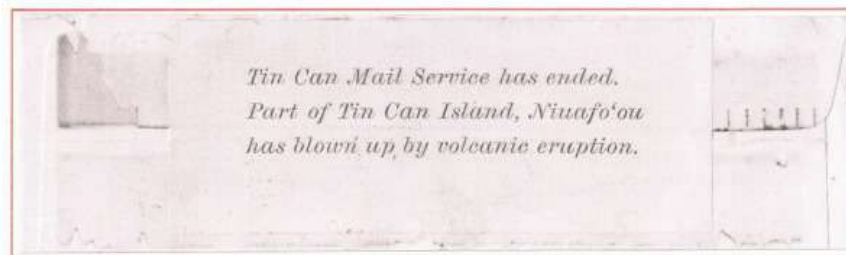
4.2 The eruption, its aftermath and evacuation

A 1946 outgoing cover to the U.S.A personally addressed by Walter Quensell from Nuku'alofa

Walter Quensell, now living in Nuku'alofa, was dealing with enquiries about Tin Can Mail. This 1946 outgoing cover to Philadelphia has the stamps cancelled by a Nuku'alofa postmark for 10th December 1946.



On the reverse is a gummed label informing the recipient that the Tin Can Mail Service has ended. This is Reference 1. E - 5 Rarity D.



Enclosed, is a typed letter from Walter Quensell informing his "friends" that Tin Can Mail had come to an end on 9th September 1946 as Niuafo'ou had been blown up by a great volcanic eruption.

He said he had lived on the island for 27 years but left forty days before the eruption.

Devastation was caused by the earthquakes and volcanic eruption. The Government buildings and islanders' home in Angaha village were destroyed, and the local residents were dispossessed of their homes and property.

The Government was faced with a dilemma. Should Angaha be rebuilt or Niuafo'ou evacuated? The Honourable Premier's Annual Report for 1946 stated the result of a plebiscite was that 228 islanders elected to remain and 1,078 wished to depart. The Government decided to evacuate the islanders to Tonaataou and the island of Eua.

4.2 The eruption, its aftermath and evacuation

Most of the islanders were evacuated on 21st December 1946

The two stamps on this cover have been cancelled with a Nuku'alofa (not Niuafu'ou) postmark for 27th December 1946

This illustrated evacuation cover was especially prepared by Mr. J. J. Costello and addressed to him in Fiji. It was supposed to be the last Tin Can Mail as the majority of the islanders had just been evacuated. The ink cancellation on the stamps includes the date 21-12-46.



After the volcanic eruption on 9th September 1946, mail from Niuafu'ou was routed via Nuku'alofa.

Walter Quensell was no longer resident in Niuafu'ou. The stamps were pen-cancelled by John Malikamu, the island's acting postmaster.

As indicated by the manuscript note, signed by John Malikamu, the acting Postmaster, the rubber stamp [of Niuafu'ou] had been destroyed. Reference 1. E - 1 *Rarity DD*

This cover and the ink cancellation of the stamps are Reference 1. E - 4 and E - 3a respectively, both *Rarity D*.

The reverse of the cover (reduced)



On the reverse there is SUVA FIJI receiving mark for 27 DEC 46 and an oval rubber handstamp PURSER'S OFFICE 21 DEC 1946 M.V. MATUA



This Auckland newspaper cutting for 30th December 1946 reported that 28 natives chose to remain on Niuafu'ou. However, the actual number was 228.



On the reverse is an oval rubber handstamp PURSER'S OFFICE 21 DEC 1946 M.V. MATUA
There is also a Nuku'alofa receiving stamp for 22nd December 1946.

4.2 The eruption, its aftermath and evacuation

Walter Quensell's 1946 volcanic eruption letter which he sent to his "friends" informing them that Tin Can Mail had come to an end

WALTER GEO. QUENSELL,
Nukualofa, Tonga,
South Seas.

NUKUALOFA,
TONGA,
OCEANIA.

My Dear Friend,

Your letter of sometime ago came safely to hand, for which many thanks.

As you may have heard Niuafu'ou or Tin Can Island, has been blown up by a very great volcanic eruption. Some ten craters broke out on or about the 9th & 10th September, 1946.

Great damage has been done which I estimate to be somewhere about £50,000. All Government buildings have been destroyed together with my Tin Can Mail Office, therefore the world famous Tin Can Service has come to an end.

As perhaps you know, I started this Tin Can Mail Service on 15th October, 1919 and which terminated on 9th September, 1946.

I lived on the Island for 27 years but left just forty days before the eruption, which although it wrought great destruction I am happy to say that no lives were lost. I certainly consider myself very lucky as at the very spot where I had lived so long one of the craters erupted burning and burying the whole premises.

Yours truly,

WALTER GEORGE QUENSELL.