

POSTOFFICE ON BAHAMAS OCEAN FLOOR

NEW WORLD OF UNDERSEA REVEALED

WILLIAMSON SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION MAKES HISTORY

(From The Nassau Daily Tribune)

On May 6th, "Sea Floor", the world's first undersea post office, will join in the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the publication of "Penny Black", the world's first adhesive stamp that established the postal systems of the world and has made this means of communication the simplest, easiest and cheapest in human social relations.



John Ernest Williamson, author, explorer, originator of undersea photography

"Sea Floor" was first established in a Nassau Marine Garden on August 16, 1939 as a part of the "Bahamas Williamson Undersea Expedition" which was organized by the Explorer, John Ernest Williamson, originator of undersea photography, for the purpose of scientific exploration beneath the sea, the primary object of the post office was to provide facilities for visitors to the photosphere not only to record their impression of the wonders of the deep, but also to send a message back to the world above of their novel expressions in this strange and unfamiliar region.

But instantly the demand of philatelists for the unique postmark "Sea Floor, Bahamas" and the catchet "Posted in the Williamson Photosphere at the Bottom of the Sea near Nassau Bahamas", became so universal that demands started to pour into this diminutive post office from every country in the civilized world. And now, after having been operated during its seasonal period of 1939, "Sea Floor" is being reopened on this historic date in postal development, and the thousands of enquiries that have been accumulated in the meantime will be accommodated.

The special Bahamas Four Penny undersea postage stamp, reproduced from a Williamson undersea photograph of a Nassau Marine Garden — the only stamp in philately bearing an undersea scene — is another major contribution to world knowledge in the sphere of natural history and records still another achievement of man in the mastery of the elements.

In addition to the Government, the following gentlemen have also actively identified themselves with the expedition as sponsors:— Sir Francis Peek, Bt., the Hon. Sir Harry Oakes, Bt., M. L. C., Hon. H. G. Christie, M. E. C., M. H. A., Mr. George Murphy, M. H. A., Mr. R. T. Symonette, M. H. A., Mr. Sidney Farrington, J. P., and Mr. A. Wenner-Gren.

The actual size of the Post Office is 6 x 10 feet. Already Mr. J. H. Peet, Postmaster

General, is faced with the problem of replying to numerous requests for the first day covers of the event, but under the Post Office regulations he is not allowed to provide this accommodation to the public, and so his secretary is engaged full-time returning money and replying to requests from all over the world for first day covers from the "Sea Floor Bahamas" Post Office.

The new Post Office has been authorized by the Bahamas Government in connection with the expedition now being conducted by Mr. Williamson, who has decided for the first time in his 25 years of operation in the Bahamas to permit a limited number of visitors to the island to accompany him on location daily. Facilities have been provided for visitors to the photosphere to record their experiences as the chamber cruises on the floor of the ocean through coral forests inhabited by brilliantly coloured submarine life. These first impressions can then be posted in the undersea post office and sent to their destination with the "Sea Floor" post mark. The expedition will be in the field over a period of five years and work during certain favourable seasons of each year.

Broadcasting from the ocean floor has also been introduced with a powerful radio telephone, making it possible to describe the wonders of the undersea as the ship cruises through coral forest abounding in colourful submarine life.

Telegrams and air mail letters continue to pour in from England, America and Canada for photographs and information about the first undersea post office, and Fox Movietone News sent a photographer to Nassau to record the event for the newsreels. It is estimated that the release reached 100,000,000 through the screen.

The mighty deep has ever held a fascination for man. Beneath its great expanse of 148,000,000 square miles, the ocean is literally one vast teeming foment of life, and in its eerie depths are strewn the wrecks of treasure-laden ships. We conjure up visions of rotting hulks bathed in soft filtered sunlight, while myriads of gaily coloured fish keep watch in the shadows of the coral forests; we picture wrecks gripped in the perpetual darkness of the vast silent depths, jealously guarded by strange, weird monsters; we read of sunken cities, a continent engulfed — the lost Atlantis. But again and again has the grip of the deep refused to surrender to the puny efforts of man the secrets of this undersea world of mystery.

And now comes a man laying With the use of a marvellous invention he has been able to descend to the floor of the ocean and with the aid of his cameras, both still and motion picture, Mr. J. E. Williamson is giving the world a remarkable record of his adventures under the sea. Only the imaginings of Jules Verne can suggest the rugged beauty, the strange terrors and the really valuable scientific revelations of Mr. Williamson's films.

Originator of Undersea Motion Pictures

Mr. Williamson is the originator of undersea motion pictures. While a cartoonist on the "Virginian Pilot" of Norfolk, Virginia, J. E. Williamson conceived the idea of utilizing, for photographic purposes, the flexible metallic

tubes invented by his father, Charles Williamson, for deep sea salvage and submarine engineering. This tube, which formed an open pathway to the floor of the sea where it terminated in a steel chamber, was operated through a surface vessel above.

Young Williamson went quietly to work designing and modelling a special chamber which he believed would enable him to take actual photographs beneath the surface of the sea.

Imagine the excitement a few weeks later when he produced the results of his thought and labour. His pictures — the first successful photographs ever made under the sea — and the story of his plans to make motion pictures in the clear waters of the Bahamas, created such a sensation that the story, with its illustrations, was reprinted in all parts of the world and in every civilized language.

First Motion Pictures Under the Sea

The Williamson Submarine Expedition to the Bahamas followed, and within a year undersea motion pictures reached the screen, revealing the beauty of the marvellous sea gardens in a panoramic journey over thirty leagues of ocean floor, and proving of greatest value to scientists the world over and a source of keen delight to millions of people. Next, through the medium of the Williamson photosphere invention came the realisation of the dreams of Jules Verne with the picturization of "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" which was followed by many of Mr. Williamson's productions, reaching a peak in photographic perfection when he produced the first undersea motion pictures in natural colours.

The Williamson Deep Sea Apparatus

Picture a ship fitted with a powerful bending tube forming an open pathway for you to the floor of the sea hundreds of feet below, and you have a portable "hole in the sea". Here is an open air shaft, through which anyone can descend and remain indefinitely under normal atmospheric pressure in comfort in the observation chamber below, viewing and photographing the illuminated sea or sea-bottom.

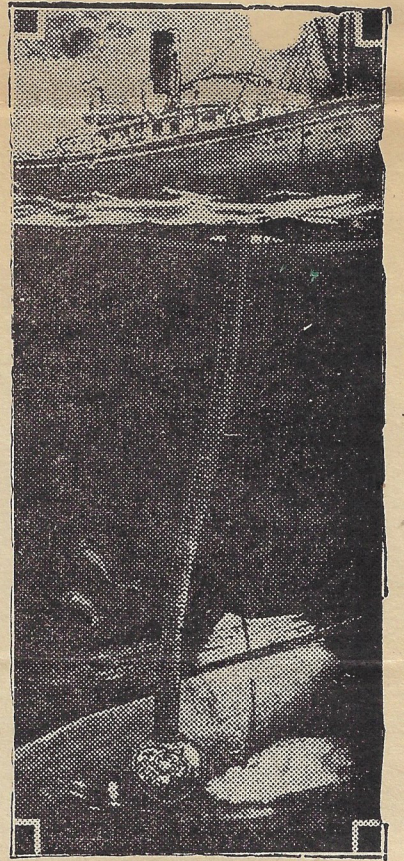
The Williamson Tube is not a



Diver seeking buried treasure photographed from the photosphere.

stiff pipe; it is a flexible tube three or four feet in diameter, made of steel and drop forgings, and can be lengthened or shortened within the construction of its folding walls in much the same way as an accordion. The fact that it is flexible, bending and giving with the wave motion and currents, makes it a safe and adaptable means for man's entry into the world beneath the sea — forming a tunnel to the deep through which anyone may pass freely up or down in normal atmosphere pressure.

The tube terminates in a massive globular steel chamber with a huge glass window designed especially for photographing in the depths.



The parent ship supplies fresh air to the photosphere while a group of scientists and photographers cruise along the ocean bed. The tube can be lengthened or shortened according to the depth of the water.

Lowered into the sea from the ship above are banks of powerful lamps of Mr. Williamson's own design, which flood the scene with light, illuminating great areas of the sea bottom.

A Submarine Fairyland

With the magic of colour photography under the sea, Mr. Williamson has shown in his pictures a group of amazing scenes as beautiful as a visioned fairyland.

Through the magic of the camera and the inspiring narrative of the explorer, audiences have already been taken to the depths of the sea, but now for the first time many who have marvelled at his pictures will be able to live through the amazing natural scenes with him. Behind the great window of the photosphere you seem to rub noses with submarine life and live through breath-taking adventure — as the exquisitely beautiful mysteries of the deep are revealed.

Through the cooperation of Jacques S. Minkus, Director of Gimbel's Famous Stamp Department, New York, "Sea Floor" First Covers have been able to reach a wider public through special service developed by Mr. Minkus to bridge the space that divides the Explorer in remote and difficult fields from the intricate demands of the philatelist.