



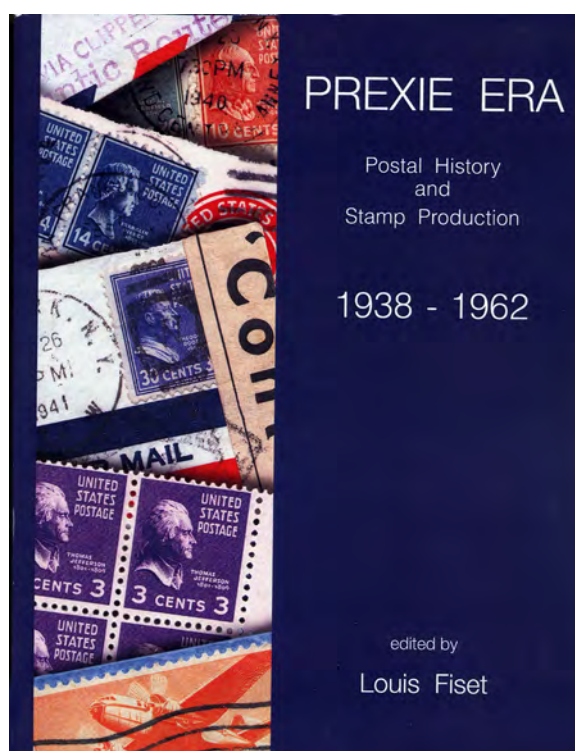
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The Prexie Era

Newsletter of the USSS 1938 Presidential-Era Committee

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New Book on U.S. 20th Century Postal History - 'Prexie Era'



The American Philatelic Society has just published *Prexie Era: Postal History and Stamp Production, 1938-1962*, a book highlighting 20th century U.S. postal history. Its focus is on stamp production, domestic rates and postal uses, as well as the changes of international mail routes, delays, and rates shaped by historical events of World War II.

Louis Fiset has compiled 15 essays written by nine experts in the field, all of whom have contributed to *The Prexie Era*. Their extensive

knowledge and passion for their subject are well known to both collectors and exhibitors.

This book is the first major work on the subject since Bill Helbock's 1988 tome, *Prexie Postal History*, and Roland Rustad's *The Prexies*, in 1994. Rather than repeat what is already known, information in this volume focuses on a time period when the Prexies were in current use rather than on the Prexie series, exclusively. The Prexie era offers rich opportunities for collecting mail generated during times of

explosive change, such as wartime crises and expanded airmail service. Stamps throughout the era contribute.

Essay topics are diverse and range from Albert “Chip” Briggs’s two essays on production and uses of the 3-cent Jefferson stamp to Ralph Nafziger’s World War II censorship of first day covers. Stephen L. Suffet concludes this volume with a provocative essay arguing why the Prexie era should end in 1962.

Titles of the essays included in the volume appear in the table below.

Prexie Era: Postal History and Stamp Production, 1938-1962 is in soft cover, 8.5 inches by 11 inches, 286 pages, with 407 full-color philatelic illustrations, 7 tables, bibliography with 102 references, and index. It is available on the APS website, <https://www.stamps.org>, \$39 to APS members and \$43 to non-members.

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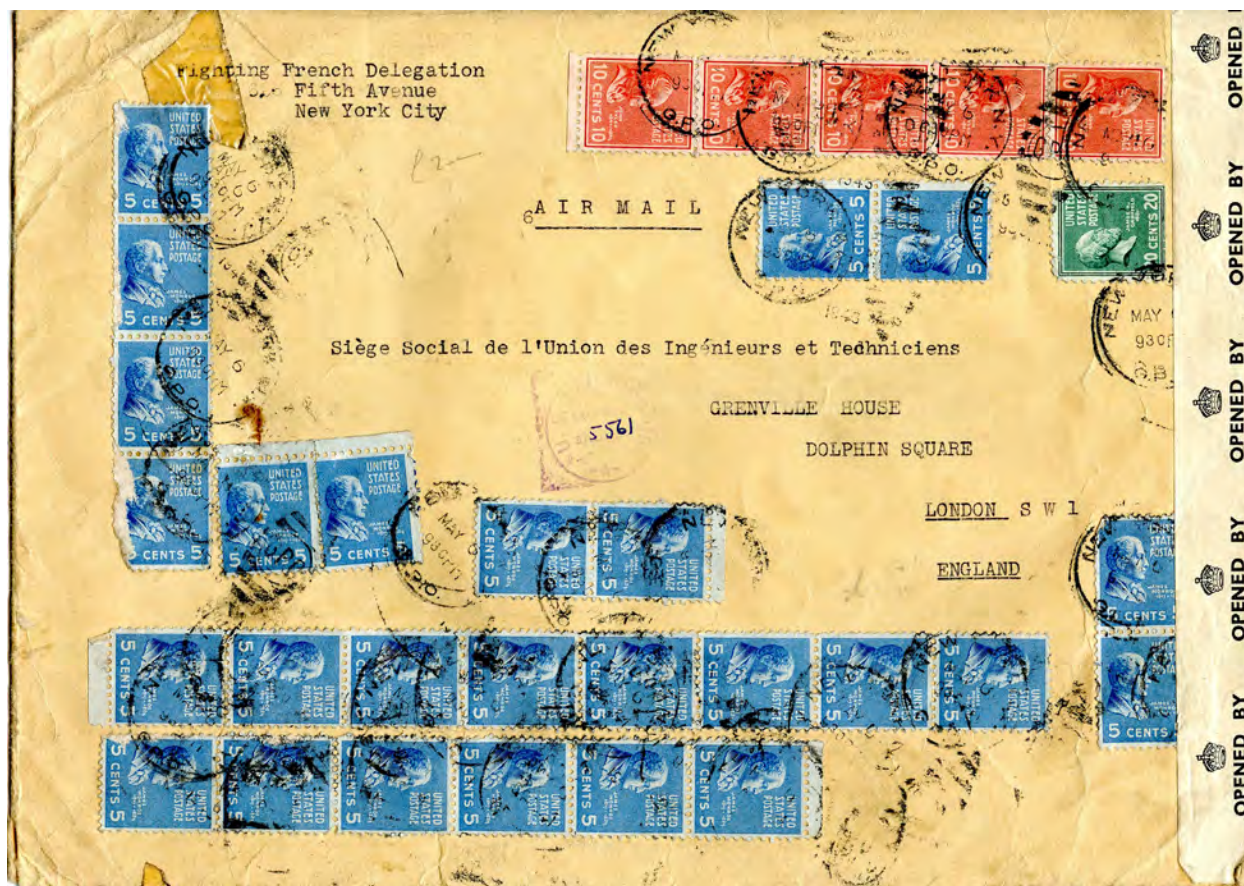
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Stephen L. Suffet

Prexie Census Data

by Richard Pederson



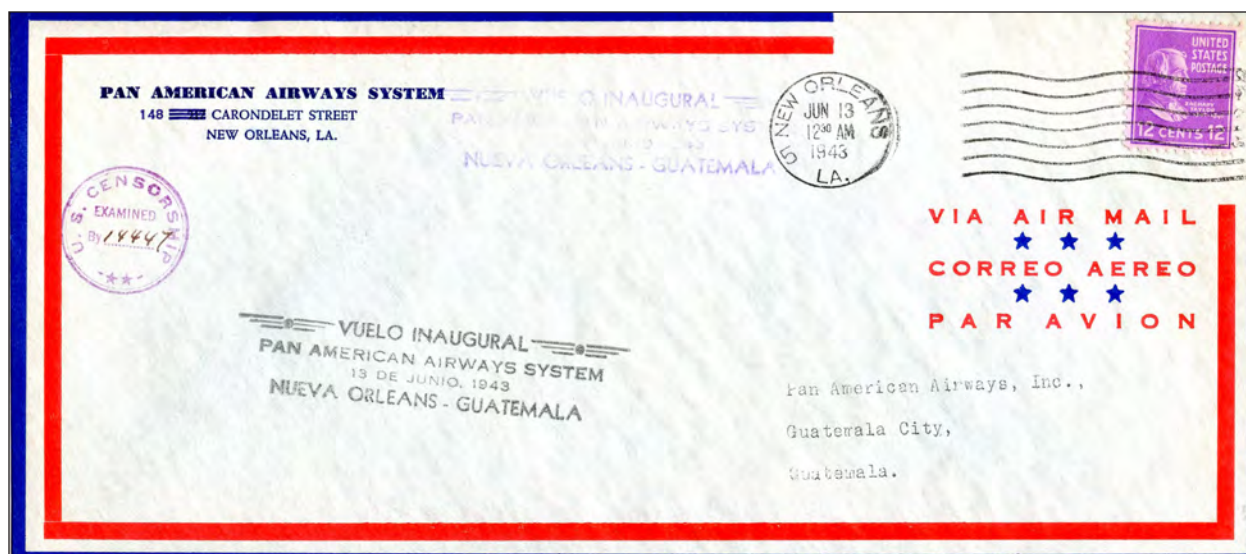
In building a Prexie postal history exhibit, I have encountered the problem that no good census data for Prexies currently exists. Scarcity is a big factor in judging exhibits, but before claiming that an item is “only one of three” known or “unique,” you should have some substance on which to base your claim.

After spending close to 20 years collecting Prexie postal history, I have a pretty good feel for what is scarce and what is not. Am I able to quantify that feeling? Certainly not! Such information is available for much nineteenth century postal history, but not for more recent issues, such as the Prexies.

I am working on a general Prexie postal history exhibit and one showcasing multiple copies of

a single Prexie on cover, parcel piece, or tag. An example of the later is shown above, illustrating a censored cover mailed from New York City to London, containing 26 copies of the 5-cent Prexie stamp picturing James Monroe.

Answering questions such as those posed above are critical to developing an exhibit and accurately characterizing the scarcity of your item. With that in mind, I have added an area on my website, www.pedersonstamps.com/, to collect census data on Prexie solo uses and on covers containing multiple copies of a given Prexie value. For solo uses, I list the number known for selected Prexie stamps and, where applicable, track the number known for each specific usage. For instance, for the 12-cent Prexie, there are a number of possible domestic



and international solo usages. Some, such as the one paying four times the non-local first class rate, are not difficult to find. Others, such as the cover pictured in Figure 2 paying the airmail rate to Guatemala that was in effect until April 1, 1945, are difficult to find. I intend to focus my data collection on those usages that I have found to be scarce.

For each item that I maintain data on, I will attempt, when possible, to describe the item, show its picture, indicate where I got the information (i.e., person, on-line source,

literature source), and provide data to quantify the scarcity (e.g., contains the most of a given stamp, is one of ten solo uses known). I encourage readers of *The Prexie Era* to return to my website and view the census data, then look at their collections and provide me updates and/or additions to the census data.

You can either send scans via e-mail to rich@pedersonstamps.com or pictures and descriptions via snail mail to P.O. Box 662, Clemson, SC 29633. If you do not want certain information to be displayed (e.g., your name) please let me know and I will honor your request.

To view the information I have entered so far, click on the "Prexie Census Data" menu item at the left of my home page which will bring up the screen shown to the left. Then select the desired type of census and follow the instructions on each succeeding screen.

Prexie Census Data

This portion of the Pederson Stamps website tracks census information for U.S. stamps included in the Fifth Bureau Issue, otherwise known as the Presidential Series of 1938 and referred to by specialists in that series as the Prexies. The site tracks information related to two Prexie areas: solo uses of selected Prexie stamps; and the use of multiple copies of a specified Prexie on cover or parcel piece. Please select the link below for the census of interest.

[Census Tracking Selected Solo Use Prexies](#)
[Census Tracking Largest Number of a Given Prexie on Cover or Parcel Piece](#)

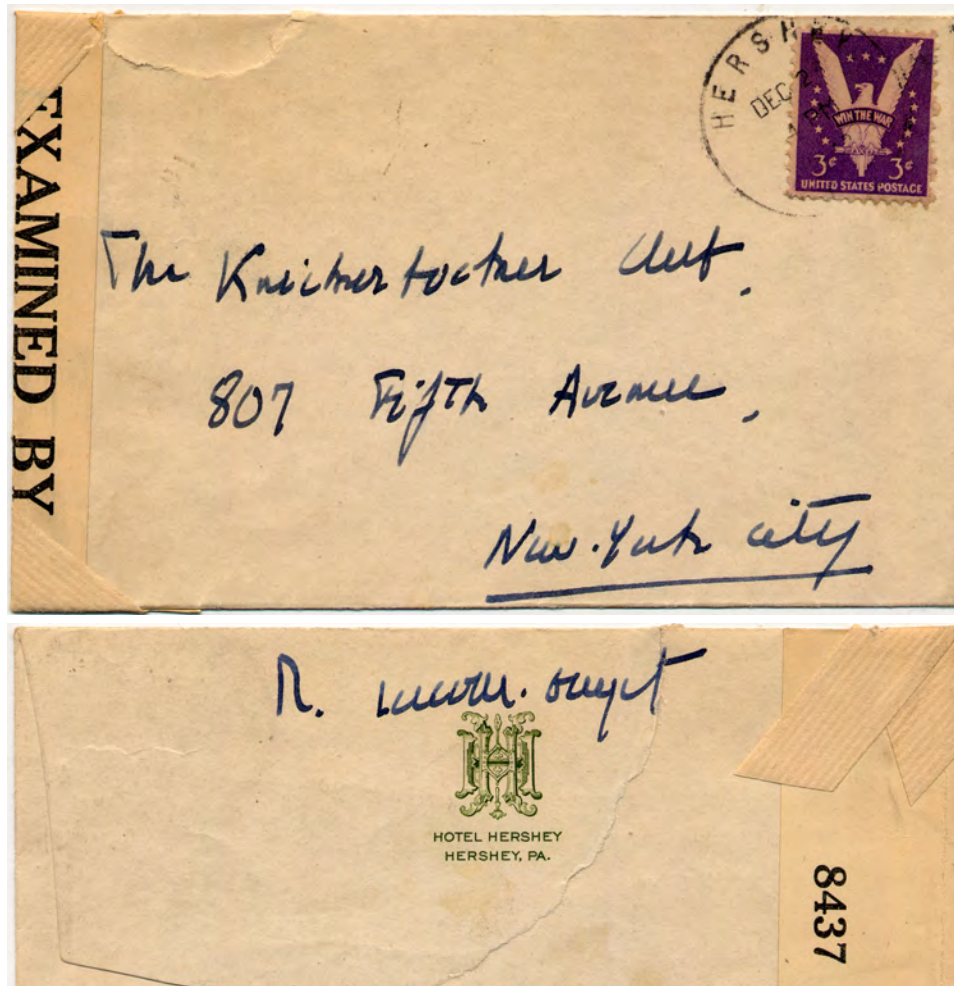
Davis Prexie Website Revised

Steve Davis reports that he has made changes to his Prexie website. Updates now make the site easier to navigate.

Davis requests that news items and other additions should be emailed to him at: stamperdad@yahoo.ca

Domestic Censorship - Interned Diplomat

by Louis Fiset

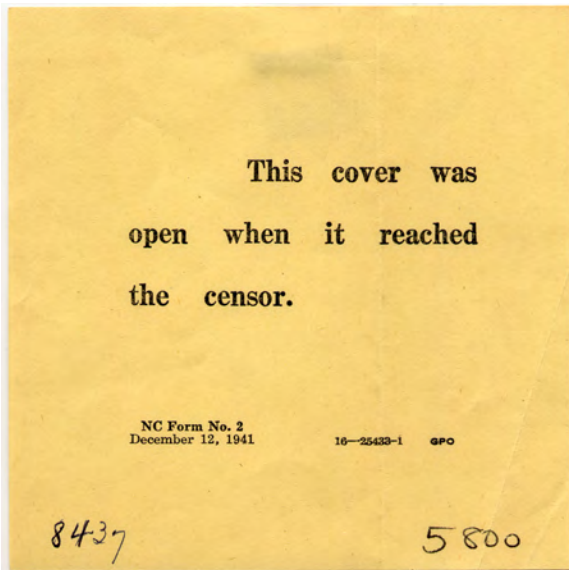


Collectors of World War II covers originating in the U.S. often encounter domestic mail bearing evidence of censorship. Mail to and from Alaska or Hawaii, Manhattan Project mail in and out of Los Alamos, New Mexico, and internee mail to and from Japanese aliens offer a few of the more common examples.

However, some censored domestic mail is more difficult to diagnose, such as the cover shown here. Except for the censor's resealing label, this December 7, 1942 item appears to be ordinary correspondence going from the Hotel Hershey, at Hershey, Pennsylvania, to the Knickerbocker Club, a gentleman's club in New York City, dating to 1871.

So, why the censorship by examiners at the New York field censor station? The answer lies with the nature of the "guests" staying at the Hotel Hershey. They were French diplomats, their staffs, and families -- all 94 of them.

In November 1942 German and Italian armies moved into Vichy France, formerly a "neutral" client state of Germany, in attempt to prevent the Allied invasion of Italy from advancing. With severance of relations, the U.S. diplomatic corps at Vichy was interned. The French ambassador, along with the French consuls and consular agents scattered throughout the U.S., were rounded up and sent to the upscale Hotel Hershey to await arrangements for repatriation



at the earliest possible time.

Although the name of the writer on the back of the envelope is difficult to make out, it may be that of Raymond Imbault-Huart, Vichy French consul general in Chicago, who had been at his post for about a year. His wife and three young sons joined him in captivity upon leaving Chicago on November 11, 1942.

Despite their diplomatic status, the mail of all detained diplomats, including the German, Italian, Japanese, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Romanian, and French contingents and their families, was subject to censorship if it passed through the regular mail stream. This included both domestic and international mail.

The French entourage was transferred to the Cascades Inn, at Hot Springs, Virginia, on October 1, 1943. On February 14, 1944 the entire group of 94 travelled under guard to New York and boarded the diplomatic exchange ship, M.S. *Gripsholm*, which departed the next day for Lisbon on its first transatlantic exchange voyage.

An added feature of the example shown here is the enclosure slip found inside explaining that the cover was open when it reached the censor. It was endorsed by examiner 8437 who resealed the letter, and a supervisor (5800).

Thanks to Collyer Church for providing this interesting item.

Prexie Era Subscription Expiration

Jeff Shapiro has pointed out that less than half the subscribers who receive hard copies of the quarterly newsletter are routinely paying the \$10 subscription renewal fee. This modest fee barely pays the cost of reproducing and mailing out a year's subscription.

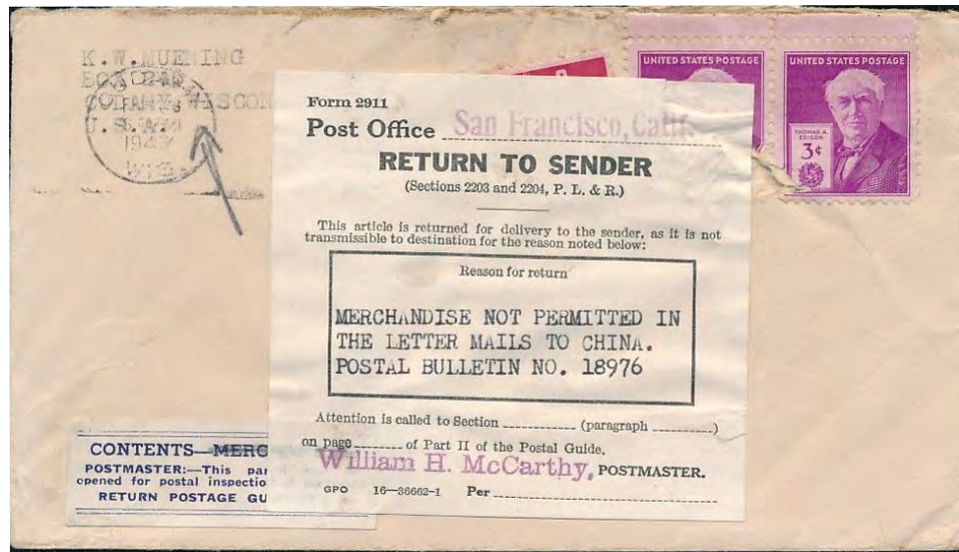
If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, please let Jeff or me know. If you appreciate the newsletter and wish to see it continue, please pay your annual \$10 subscription.

If you believe it's okay for Jeff and me to pay for your subscription, this will be the last issue you receive.

Please contact Jeff at: coverlover@gmail.com

1947 Merchandise Letter to China Returned

by Art Farnsworth



The cover illustrated above recently appeared on ebay and is reproduced here. It bears eight cents postage paying the two-ounce UPU letter rate, and was postmarked Cudahy, Wisconsin, February 16, 1947. At the bottom left is a label indicating an enclosure of merchandise.

The letter reached San Francisco, on the first leg of its intended transpacific transport. However, it was removed from the mail stream, then returned for reasons stated in *Postal Bulletin* 18976, published on October 31, 1946.

Specifically, letter packages containing dutiable merchandise to China were prohibited because of China's refusal to accept them. The complete text of the directive may be seen below.

Postmasters' **RETURN TO SENDER** labels may be found fairly frequently on mail generated during World War II and its aftermath. However, the example shown here is unusual because of the circumstances imposed on mail to China from 1941 onward.

INSTRUCTION OF SECOND ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL	
INTERNATIONAL MAILS	
ERRONEOUS ACCEPTANCE OF LETTER PACKAGES CONTAINING MERCHANDISE TO CHINA	
It has been brought to the attention of this office that many packages containing merchandise and prepaid at the letter rate of postage are being accepted at United States post offices for delivery in China, notwithstanding the fact that, as indicated in paragraph 7 of section 3 on page 5 of Part II of the 1941 Official Postal Guide, China does not accept dutiable articles in letter packages.	
This Department has not been advised what articles are liable to customs duty in China or in foreign countries generally.	
The mailing of letter packages containing articles of merchandise results in their return, if observed before dispatch, or if erroneously dispatched to China, the subsequent return from that country.	
Postmasters are therefore directed to take such action as may be necessary to prevent the acceptance of letter packages containing merchandise addressed for delivery in China, or the other countries named in paragraph 7 above mentioned.	

American Locker Company Tags Follow-Up

by Richard Pederson



After my article on the American Locker Co. tags was published (Issue No. 75), I received several comments from readers providing additional information. Dan Pagter indicated that the tags were likely used for “mailing locks and keys, be it for replacement or repair” and that printed matter, such as advertisements, could have been included with the locks and keys in fourth class mail. Dan further speculated that the tags were attached to “sturdy reusable containers” that “were closed and held shut by a permanently attached wrapping cord.”

Dan’s explanation was confirmed by fellow Prexie collector Chuck Gherman who was able to contact a representative of the American Locker Co., which is still in business. The representative indicated they still place lockers in public places and mail replacement locks to those locations. American Locker is now located in Las Vegas, Nevada and is a subsidiary of Cole Kepro International, LLC, a sheet metal

manufacturing business. Their website says that their lockers are internationally recognized because of their “iconic key with the plastic orange cap.” I suspect this iconic key is what was being referred to in the American Locker Co. advertisement that says “The Key is your Check,” which was shown in my article

All but one of the tags in my possession had the same postage on both sides. The outlier was addressed to Seattle, Washington, a zone three destination, with 40 cents additional postage on the return side. Apparently more lock and key sets were returned than sent.

Chuck, who also has a collection of the American Locker Co. tags, provided scans of an additional solo local use within Portland. Single, 20-cent Garfield stamps were used on both sides of the tag to pay the up-to-two-pound rate between the American Locker Co. and the Trailways Bus Depot, and the return.

Dead Letter Office - Returned Mail

by Louis Fiset



Figure 1: Cover returned from occupied France and opened in error by the Dead Letter Office. Resealed by the DLO and returned to sender.

A first class letter that cannot be delivered as addressed is either forwarded or returned. However, in the absence of a return address on the outside of the cover, the letter goes to the Dead Letter Office (DLO) where employees can look for clues in the envelope's content to aide in ultimate delivery or return to the writer. In 1825 the Post Office Department established its dead letter office in Washington, D.C. to open and examine undeliverable mail, and it continues operation down to the present day as the Mail Recovery Center.

During World War II volumes of mail sent to the DLO increased as postal relations were

severed with countries at war with the U.S. or that fell under Axis control. Two unusual items in this article show mail addressed to Paris in 1940 after German troops occupied the north of France and suspended postal relations with the U.S. Figure 1 shows a cover opened by the DLO in error and how it was handled. The cover in Figure 2 bears a hand struck marking indicating a 5-cent fee for the return of a letter absent the sender's address.

The cover shown in Figure 1 was returned from Marseille more than a year after it's original posting. Upon its return to the U.S. it was immediately forwarded to the DLO at New



Figure 2: A cover with no return address returned from occupied France and turned over to the DLO for disposition. The COLLECT FIVE CENTS marking indicates a fee for the service provided to locate the sender.

York because no return address appeared on the back and the vertically typed return address on the front went unnoticed. Upon realization that a return address indeed was present, the DLO resealed the cover with clear tape, applied an official seal, tying it with a double ring canceler dated October 9, 1941. A clerk then applied an OPENED IN ERROR AT/DEAD LETTER BRANCH/NEW YORK, N.Y. hand stamp above the canceler to indicate what had happened.

The letter then entered the mail stream the next day. But by now the writer, a publisher of fine art books, had changed location, requiring the POD to, in its final effort, forward it across the city. In all, the letter appears to have been in transit for at least 13 months.

The cover in Figure 2 also reached France only to be returned from Marseille after examination by German censors at Frankfurt. Originally postmarked July 21, 1940, a month after German forces entered Paris, it bears a New York transit mark dated November 18, 1941. A Gloucester, Massachusetts receiver also appears, struck three days later.

The COLLECT FIVE CENTS hand stamp marking

on the face makes this cover unusual. Tony Wawrukiewicz, an expert on Dead Letter Office mail, cannot recall ever seeing another example. The information contained in the marking usually appears on the face of the ambulance cover containing the returned letter and addressed to the writer.

No evidence exists that this cover ever became reunited with the writer. This raises the question of how such letters survived and found their way into postal history collections.

Prior to April 1942 covers and their accompanying letters were to be burned. However, in a P.L.&R. directive dated February 23, 1942, postmasters were advised to “carefully preserve all waste paper, which shall include dead and unclaimed domestic printed mater . . .”, which should then be sold subject to competitive bids. *The Postal Bulletin* of April 13, 1942 (PB 18423) adds that contents should be “mutilated by tearing across two ways and shall be sold as waste paper.”

This directive helps explain why some World War II era undeliverable covers with no return address have survived.