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The Prexie Era

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Manuscript Censor Markings on Post Cards

by Dann Mayo



The two postcards shown here have unassuming censor markings; both are uncommon, but one is pricey while the other will likely be inexpensive when found.

Manuscript censors 351, 1361, 1534, 1897, 4628, 4629, 5175, 7629 are recorded¹ for Bermuda from mid-July to mid-August 1942. These are rated as 10 out of 10 points for scarcity. The P.C. 90 preceding the number is the British designation for a Postal Censorship form used in the UK and many overseas possessions that reads OPENED BY EXAMINER usually with a printed censor number.

Note on the first postcard that number 4344 is not on the list, and it was sent a year and a half before the CCSG's earliest recorded date. As with any manuscript marking, a degree of skepticism is healthy, and one ultimately has to rely on gut instinct. Here, to me, this marking just feels right. First, we have the other examples of Bermuda manuscript recorded in the CCSG catalog. Second, the database of examiner numbers composed by Konrad Morenweiser and published on the CCSG's website² shows that a British censor was using PC 90 labels numbered 4344 in Bermuda from mid-November 1940 through early July 1942.



While I have seen US censor tapes used in lieu of handstamps on postcards, I do not recall seeing a similar usage by British censors, and only a small number of handstamps brought in with examiners transferred to Bermuda from Gibraltar in late 1940 are recorded. So, a resort to a manuscript marking seems normal.

A second card, from the same correspondence, bears a New York handstamp with added manuscript number 6007. This marking is recorded in Broderick and Mayo³ as type S 3.1.2, used in New York between August and November 1942. 6007 is from the block of numbers (5001-10000; not all of which were used) assigned to NY in February 1942. This marking is not common (B&M assigned 50 points on a scale of 2 to 250); and while I have not kept a detailed census my best guess is that I have seen under a dozen examples over the past 40 years of collecting, vs. thousands (possibly

over 20,000) of covers with common US tapes – not that great a difference in the count for the Bermuda manuscript PC 90 markings. But Bermuda censorship collecting is still hot, while a general lack of interest in WWII US censorship collecting keeps the value of B&M S 3.1.2 at a very minor fraction of that of the Bermuda manuscript marking.

Footnotes

- 1 Peter C Burrows, ed: British Empire Civil Censorship Devices World War II, Section 6, British West Indies & Falkland Islands, Civil Censorship Study Group, (2016)
- 2 At <http://c-c-s-g.org/forum/viewtopic.php?f=25&t=88>. Unfortunately viewing of this database is restricted to CCSG members.
- 3 Civil Censorship in the United States during WWII, Civil Censorship Study Group & War Cover Club (1980)

55-Cent Airmail Letter Rate from the United States to the Cook Islands

by Gordon Eubanks



This August 1943 cover shows airmail correspondence from a Coast Guard Service Lieutenant Commander at FPO 49 (San Juan, Puerto Rico), to Rarotonga, Cook Islands. There are no postal markings on the reverse. Since the letter was to a foreign country the 6-cent airmail concession rate for military personnel did not apply.

The August 1943 *Official Foreign Air Mail Guide* indicates intermittent service and a 50-cent rate. Since all commercial FAM routes in the Pacific were suspended due to the war, transport was by military transport, and military mail, including this piece, took priority.

The Cook Islands, a group of 15 islands in the South Pacific, are located about 2,000 miles northeast of New Zealand. A British protectorate from 1888, the islands became part of the British Empire in 1900; in 1901 they were within the boundaries of New Zealand. This status continued until 1965 when the islands became self-governing. Thus, the islands were part of New Zealand in 1943. The letter is addressed to Rarotonga (*sic*), the

largest island in the chain.

The most interesting aspect of this letter is the application of a 5-cent airmail surcharge for onward air service to the Cook Islands. The surcharge was intended to expedite service, especially between the North and South Islands. Such letters were to be indorsed “By Air in New Zealand.” While no posted United States 55-cent airmail rate to the Cook Islands exists, it is reasonable to conclude the surcharge also applied to the Cook Islands. Certainly, the endorsement “by air in New Zealand”, applied in Puerto Rico, indicated a belief that the surcharge applied to the Cook Islands in 1943 when the letter was mailed.

Interestingly, evidence of censorship on the letter is lacking. Coast Guard mail was subject to examination, usually by naval censorship, less often by the Coast Guard, itself. In this case, because the writer was an officer, he was entitled to self-censorship.

I want to thank Louis Fiset for suggesting this article and providing invaluable assistance.

The 2-Cent Convention Rate for Post and Postal Cards during the Prexie Era

by Stephen L. Suffet

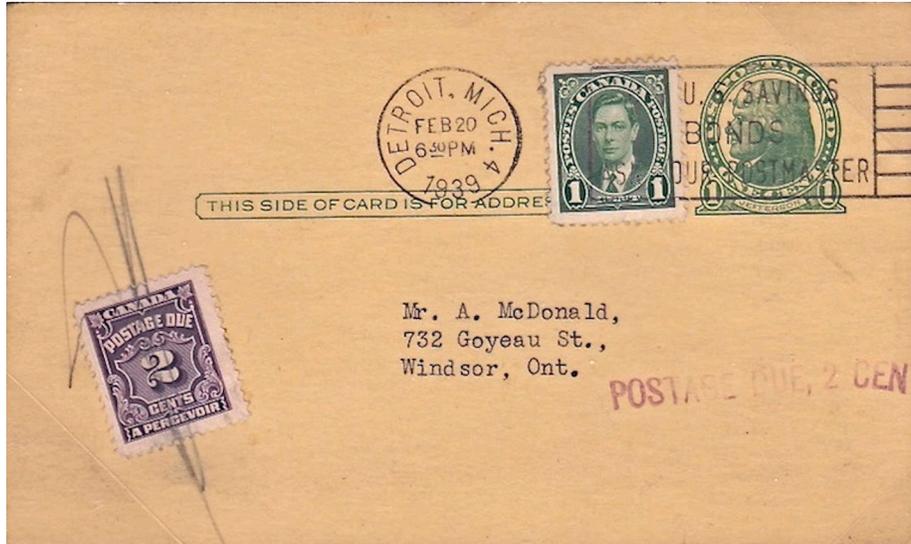


Figure 1 An unsuccessful attempt to use a Canadian 1-cent stamp to pay half the 2-cent convention rate. Detroit, Michigan, to Windsor, Ontario, Canada. February 20, 1939. Rated 2 cents postage due, with the deficiency doubled as a penalty for underpaid international mail.

In previous issues of this newsletter (Nos. 86 and 87), I discussed the 3 cents per ounce surface letter rate from the United States to certain foreign countries. Effectively 2 cents per piece less than the surface letter rate to most foreign countries, this convention rate, often incorrectly referred to as a “treaty rate,” was the same as the basic domestic first class letter rate. It was already in effect when the Presidential Series was introduced in 1938, and it continued through July 31, 1958, to Canada and Mexico, and through October 31, 1953, to all other members of the Postal Union of the Americas and Spain.

The convention rate was also in effect to Newfoundland (including Labrador) from before 1938 until that British Dominion became a province of Canada just before midnight on March 31, 1949. The 3-cent rate to

Newfoundland thus continued through July 31, 1958, although Newfoundland was no longer a separate entity.

In addition, the 3-cent convention rate was in effect to the Republic of the Philippines from October 1, 1947, through October 31, 1953.

Whenever the 3-cent convention rate was in effect, the surface post and postal card rate to the same countries was 2 cents. When the Presidential Series appeared in 1938 the surface postal and postal card rate to non-convention rate countries was 3 cents, while the domestic post and postal card rate was 1 cent. The 2-cent convention rate was therefore right in the middle.

While mistaken overpayment sometimes occurred, mistaken underpayment was

particularly common before the U.S. domestic surface post and postal card rate increased to 2 cents on January 1, 1952. Many people apparently reasoned that since the letter rate to convention rate counties was identical to the domestic letter rate, the same must be true

for the post and postal card rate. That was an erroneous presumption.

This article shows six examples of the 2-cent convention post and postal card rate during the Prexie era. Two were underpaid.

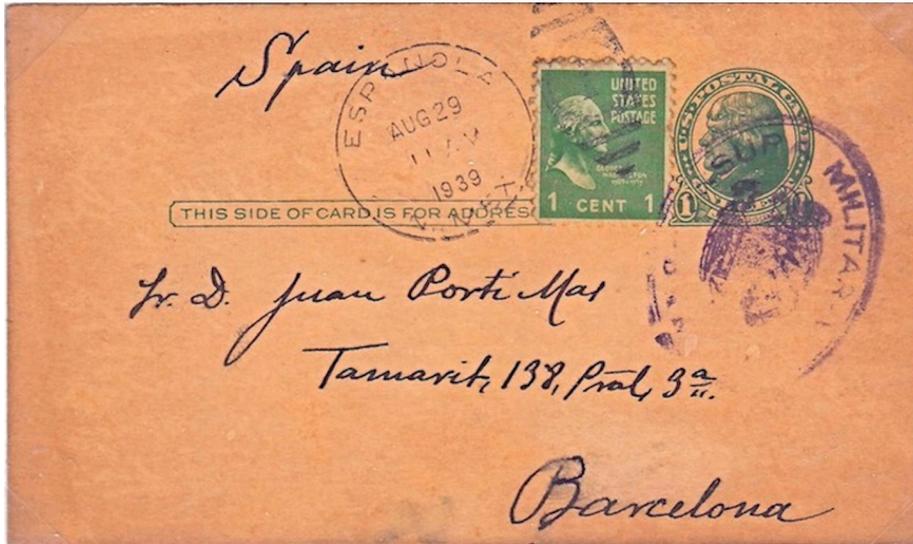


Figure 2: The 2-cent convention rate. Espanola, New Mexico, to Barcelona, Spain. August 29, 1939. Spanish Civil War era censorship applied by the victorious Nationalist (Fascist) regime.



Figure 3: 2-cent convention rate. Laredo, Texas, to Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. April 18, 1940.



Figure 4: 2-cent convention rate, 1-cent underpaid. Christopher, Illinois, to San Jose, Costa Rica. June 17, 1949. Rate 10 international gold centimes postage due, supposedly equivalent to twice the deficiency. This was an error on the part of the U.S. post office. With the publication of the July 1948 issue of The United States Official Postal Guide, Part II, the value of the U.S. cent was reduced from 5 to 3 international gold centimes, so two times the 1-cent deficiency should have been 6 international gold centimes, not 10. The Postal Bulletin of October 14, 1948 (No. 19175), reminded postmasters of this reduction. Somehow word had not reached the exchange office in New York by the following June! There is no indication on the post card what if any postage due the San Jose post office collected in Costa Rican centimos.

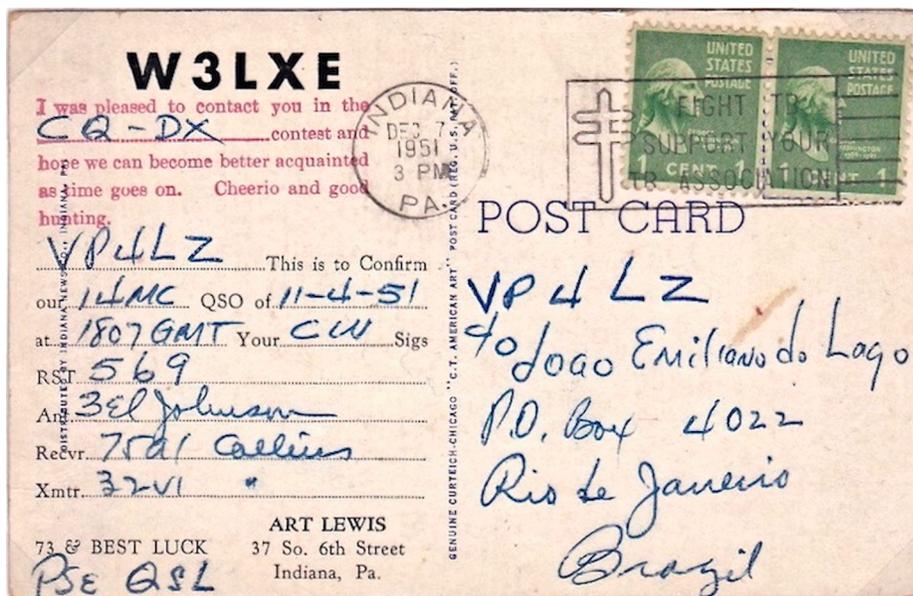


Figure 5: 2-cent convention rate. Indiana, Pennsylvania, to Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. December 7, 1951.

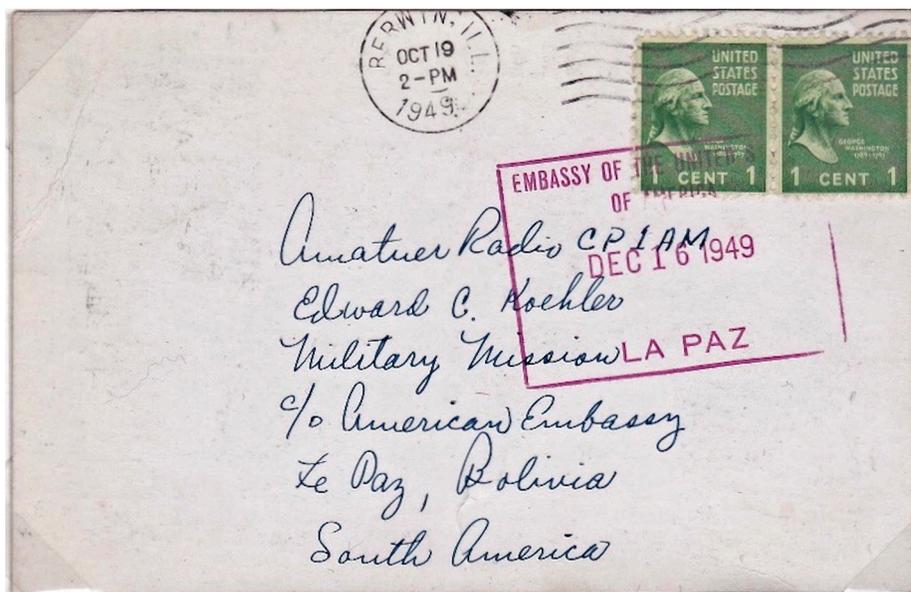


Figure 6: 2-cent convention rate. Berwyn, Illinois, to La Paz, Bolivia. October 19, 1949. The December 16, 1949, receiving marking shows it took the post card 58 days to reach its destination, the U.S. Embassy. For 10 cents it could have gone by air and likely would have arrived in a few days.

Prexie Era Exhibits at Sarasota, 2021

The Prexie Era Study Group will be gathering at the Sarasota National Stamp Expo February 5-7, 2021. Yes, 2021. That seems a long way away, but not too early to finish or polish exhibits. The show has initially committed 50 frames to our group and there is a possibility of more if we commit well in advance. The Sarasota show typically fills its frames 6 months or more in advance. That's one of the reasons for this early notice. For you authors in the *Prexie Era* Newsletter or the *U.S. Specialist* or any publication, Sarasota also sponsors a literature exhibit restricted to articles only. The literature also fills quickly. We will have a call for exhibits shortly after the first of the year along with more information. Sarasota is a great place to be in February and offers plenty to do for non-philatelic spouses. So, start your exhibit engines now and save up those airline miles for February 2021 in Sarasota.

The Trans-Pacific Route to Germany and Poland in 1940

by Ken Lawrence



Figure 1: September 13, 1940, Dallas to Berlin, endorsed “Via Pacific Ports and Siberia,” censored at Berlin, forwarded to a Berlin address, sent by surface mail at the 5 cents per ounce Universal Postal Union rate.

For one month in 1940 — from September 6 to October 5 — senders in the United States could mail letters to Germany and Poland by a trans-Pacific route. The September 3, 1940, *Postal Bulletin* (#18022) carried this announcement dated August 29:

MAILS FOR GERMANY AND POLAND

Commencing with the sailing of the S.S. *President Cleveland* from San Francisco, September 6, 1940, Postal Union (regular) mails (ordinary and registered) for Germany and Poland will be dispatched via Japan and the trans-Siberian railway. Consequently, all mails for the countries named should be routed via San Francisco or Seattle until otherwise instructed.

SMITH W. PERDUM
Second Assistant Postmaster General

Even before the S.S. *President Cleveland* departed with the first load of mail to Germany and Poland over that route, Perdum had amended his order with this September 4 notice published in the September 9 *Postal Bulletin* (#18026):

MAILS FOR ESTONIA, GERMANY, LATVIA, POLAND, AND UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

In connection with the notices appearing in the August 8 and September 3 issues of the *POSTAL BULLETIN*, relative to the routing and dispatch of mails for Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics via Japan and the trans-Siberian railway, it is directed that mails for the countries mentioned be hereafter routed exclusively to San Francisco.

SMITH W. PERDUM
Second Assistant Postmaster General

That one was followed in short order by this September 10 notice in the September 11 *Postal Bulletin* (#18028):

MAILS FOR ESTONIA, GERMANY, LATVIA, POLAND, AND UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

Referring to the notices appearing in the August 8 and September 3 issues of the *POSTAL BULLETIN*, relative to the routing and dispatch of mails for Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics via Japan and the trans-Siberian railway, attention is invited to the fact that the trans-Pacific Clipper mail service is not available for the dispatch of air mails to the countries mentioned. Postmasters will cause due notice of the foregoing to be taken

at their offices.

SMITH W. PERDUM
Second Assistant Postmaster General

The Figure 1 surface-rate cover from the United States to Germany complied with all those instructions and restrictions. Canceled SEP 13 1940 at Dallas, Texas, it was posted in time to catch the S.S. *President Garfield*, which departed San Francisco on September 17.

Finally, this October 4 notice appeared in the October 7 Postal Bulletin (#18046):

MAILS FOR GERMANY AND POLAND
The notice of August 29 printed in the **POSTAL BULLETIN** of September 3 providing for the forwarding via the trans-Pacific route of surface mails for Germany and Poland is rescinded effective immediately. Consequently, all such mails for the countries named, whether or not specifically addressed for dispatch by some other route, will be sent to New York for dispatch by steamships sailing from that port.

SMITH W. PERDUM
Second Assistant Postmaster General

No explanation accompanied the notice, but it probably represented the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration's agreement with Great Britain to allow British censorship of

U.S. mail addressed to Axis and Axis-occupied destinations in Europe, and, to the extent possible, to restrict foreign mail from routes that could have evaded interception at British censorship stations.

The Figure 2 combination-rate cover from the United States to Germany bears a SEP 27 1940 cancel of Hartford, Connecticut. Postage included the 5 cents per ounce surface rate to a foreign destination, a 3 cents per ounce surcharge for domestic air transport to San Francisco, and a 3 cents per half ounce surcharge for air mail transport in Europe, in this case from the terminus of the trans-Siberian railway at Moscow onward by air to Berlin.

The cover was posted well ahead of Perdum's termination order. The S.S. *President Coolidge* departed San Francisco for Japan on October 5, the day after Perdum signed his order, but two days before notice was sent to postmasters. It is therefore virtually certain that the letter sailed on the last trans-Pacific departure that carried U.S. letters to Germany and Poland.

Prepayment of U.S. postage for a wartime flight from Moscow to Berlin is probably rare, but in my opinion is overshadowed by the significance of the route.



Figure 2: September 27, 1940, Hartford, Connecticut, to Franzensbad, Egerland, Germany (part of annexed Czech Sudetenland), endorsed "via San Francisco" and "via Japan & Siberia S.S. President Coolidge," censored at Berlin, forwarded to Landsberg am Lech, Bavaria, sent by air mail "To - EXCHANGE OFFICE - Only" at the 5 cents per ounce UPU rate plus 3

cents per ounce air surcharge within the continental U.S. plus 3 cents per half ounce air surcharge within Europe.

Maximum Postage, Special Handling, and Insurance Fees

by Bob Hohertz



This shipping card, sent from New York in May of 1952, was part of a package sent both insured and with special handling. It was part of Bob Rufe's special handling collection until recently, and all of the following commentary is based on his write-up.

So far as special handling goes, as of January 1, 1949, the rate for handling a package weighing more than ten pounds was 25 cents. Trouble was, the highest denomination of special handling stamp available was 20 cents. Accordingly, special handling shipments over ten pounds began to use regular postage stamps to pay the fee.

The package this card was part of weighed well

over ten pounds, so the special handling fee was set at the maximum 25 cents.

In May 1952, the maximum weight allowed for a parcel post package was 70 pounds. If we assume a package of that weight went to Zone 8, the maximum distance, the postage would amount to \$9.93.

The maximum insurance coverage allowed at the time was \$200, costing 35 cents.

The postage paid was \$10.53. This was made up of $\$.25 + \$9.93 + \$.35 = \10.53 . Thus it paid the maximum postage, maximum special handling fee, and maximum insurance fee. As Bob put it, "A true 'Chart Buster.'"