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# *The Prexie Era*

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## **Prexie Era Non-Standard Postmark: Camp Swift, Texas**

by Stephen L. Suffet

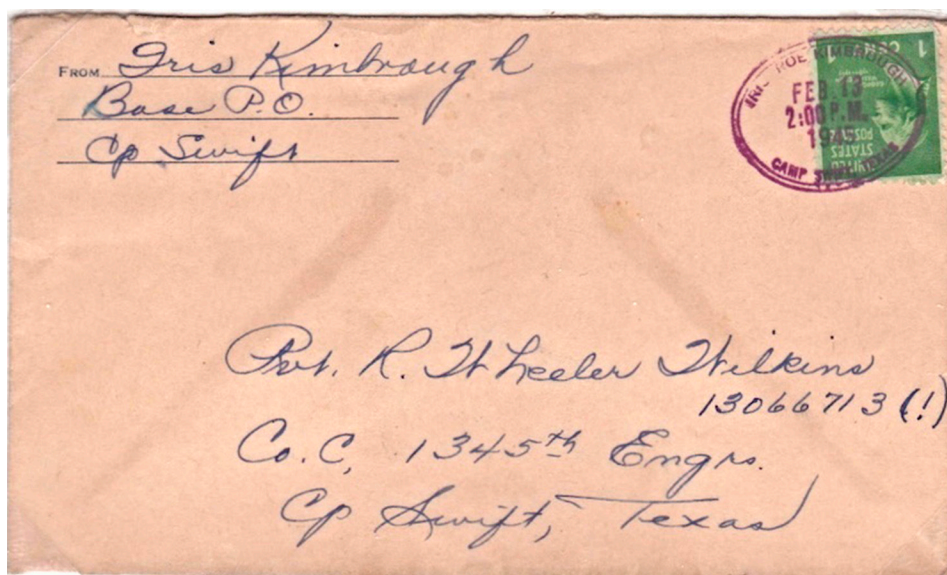


Figure 1. 1-cent local non-carrier usage within Camp Swift, Texas, with non-standard postmark. February 13, 1945.

Figure 1 shows a cover with a 1-cent stamp canceled with a most unusual postmark. It is a double line oval device measuring 31 by 25 millimeters. Inside the oval along the top is the name of a person, IRIS ROE KIMBROUGH, while inside the oval along the bottom are the words CAMP SWIFT, TEXAS. On three lines in the center of the oval are the month and day, time, and year: FEB. 13 / 2:00 PM. / 1945. This non-standard postmark is struck in magenta ink.

Located in Bastrop County, Texas, approximately seven miles north of the town of Bastrop, Camp Swift was built early in 1942 as a U.S. Army transit and training center. The camp was later used as a facility for German prisoners-of-war, and during the war it housed as many as 10,000 POWs at one time, as well as up to 90,000 American soldiers. Camp Swift still exists today as a Texas National Guard training facility. The Texas Wing of the Civil Air Patrol uses it as its home base, and FEMA



Figure 2. Part of Camp Swift, Texas, circa 1942-1945. Photographer unknown. The post office was located in the left end of the long building closest to the front.

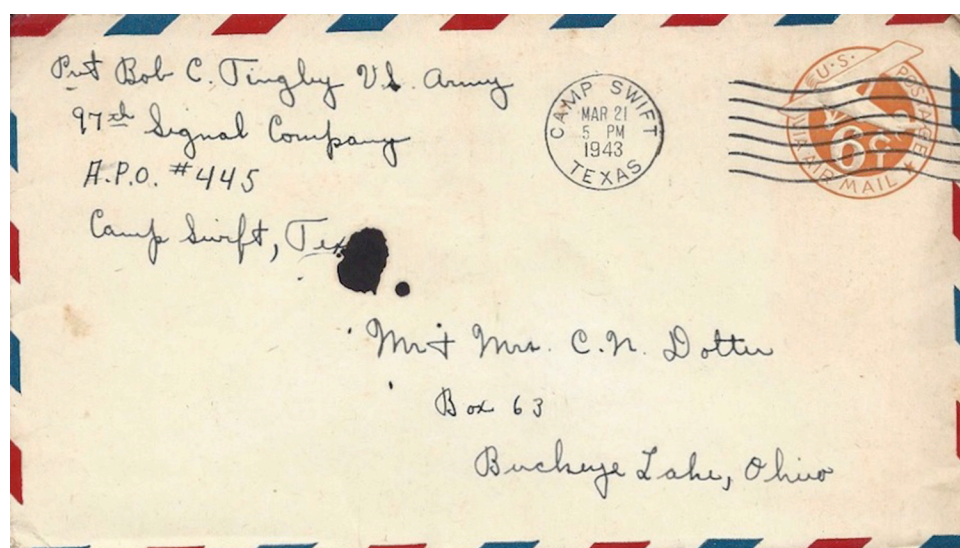


Figure 3. 6-cent airmail stamped envelope with Camp Swift, Texas, machine cancellation. March 21, 1943. A.P.O. #445, in return address. This Army Post Office served only units of the 97th Infantry Division while in training at Camp Swift, and it departed at the end of January 1944 when the 97th was relocated.

has designated it as a primary staging area for Central Texas.

The Camp Swift post office, visible in Figure 2, opened on or about June 1, 1942, as an independent branch of the Bastrop post office.

As such, it was a civilian post office under the jurisdiction of the Post Office Department, rather than an Army Post Office run by the War Department. Nevertheless, from February 25, 1943, through January 31, 1944, Army Post Office 445 served the 97th Infantry Division

while it was in training at Camp Swift. Figure 3 shows a cover mailed during that period, with a Camp Swift machine cancellation and A.P.O. #445 in the return address. While both were at Camp Swift, the APO and the civilian post office most likely operated side-by-side. The civilian post office remained after APO 445 was relocated along with the 97th Infantry Division to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

As a branch of the Bastrop post office, the Camp Swift post office did not have its own postmaster, so its employees were at least nominally under the supervision of the Bastrop postmaster. How much supervision that postmaster exercised I do not know. What I have been able to find out is that Iris Kimbrough, whose name is in the return address of the cover in Figure 1, was a postal employee at Camp Swift. Perhaps she was even the employee in charge.

Why did Iris have her own postmark made up? One can only speculate. Maybe she used it only on mail within Camp Swift. Then again, maybe not. We do know that the Camp Swift post office had a Universal canceling machine, so we could reasonably guess that it had been issued one or more standard devices for hand

stamping postmarks. If so, I have not been able to find an example of any such postmark, so it could be that the devices were lost, damaged, stolen, or never even issued.

In any case, additional examples of Iris Kimbrough's non-standard postmark should exist. Has any reader of *The Prexie Era* seen one? I have not.

Here are two final comments:

- The cover in Figure 1 is addressed to a soldier at Camp Swift, so the 1-cent stamp paid the one-ounce first class rate for a local letter deposited for pickup at a post office without carrier service. In practice, a company clerk would pick up mail for his unit and then distribute it at mail call. That, however, was not considered carrier service since the company clerk was not a Post Office Department letter carrier.
- One can still address mail to Camp Swift, Texas. The ZIP Code is 78602, which is also the ZIP Code for Bastrop. There is, however, no longer a Camp Swift branch office on base. Mail addressed to Camp Swift is delivered from the Bastrop Carrier Annex in town.

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# The Missing 23-Cent Benjamin Harrison Stamp

by Ken Lawrence



Figure 1. A total of 23 cents postage, paid by one 3-cent Thomas Jefferson sheet stamp and one 20-cent James A. Garfield stamp, paid 8 cents double letter ( $\leq$  two ounces) UPU surface postage plus 15 cents registry fee on this December 6, 1939, cover from Sacramento, California, which transited New York City December 10 and arrived at Schattdorf, Switzerland, December 26.

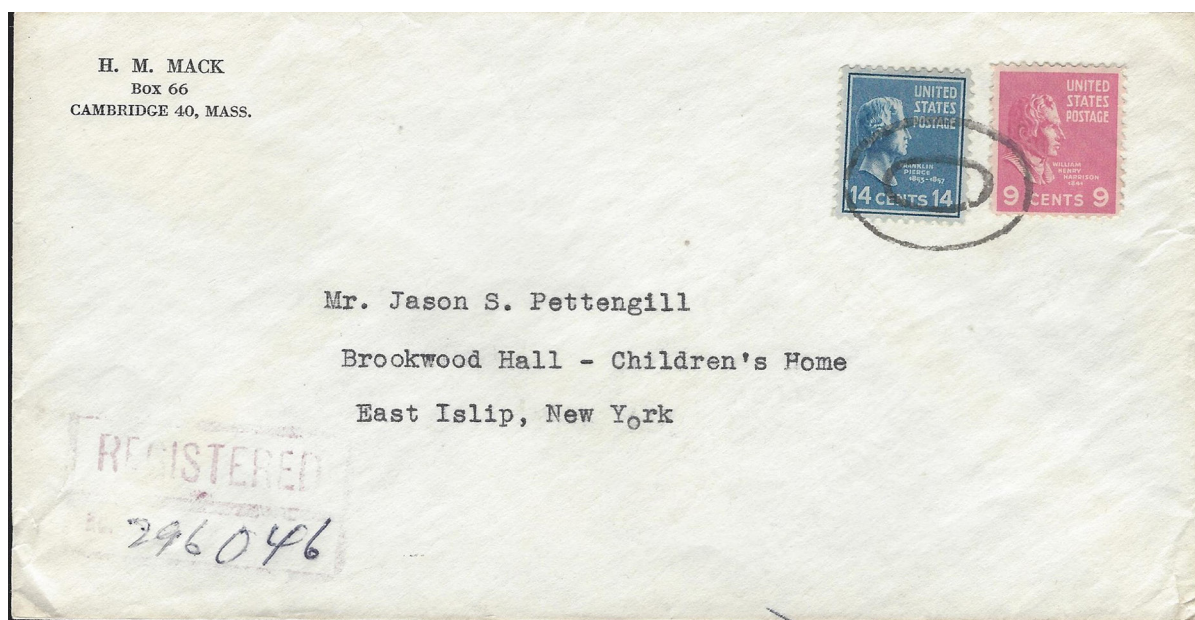
United States presidents numbered in order from one through twenty-two (George Washington through Grover Cleveland) appeared in portrait and inscription sequence on consecutive whole-cent denominations of 1938 Presidential series postage stamps.

Benjamin Harrison was the 23rd president of the United States. Breaking rank in the set, his image and name are on the 24-cent denomination. The real 24th president was Grover Cleveland, who, as noted, had already been featured on the 22-cent stamp.

After the 23rd level lapse, the series resumed with 25th president William McKinley as

the subject of the 25-cent stamp. The rest of the progression advanced by leaps to higher useful round-number denominations: Theodore Roosevelt on the 30-cent; William Howard Taft on the 50-cent; Woodrow Wilson on the \$1; Warren G. Harding on the \$2; and Calvin Coolidge on the \$5, completing the roster of former presidents who were no longer alive.

I haven't read or heard a plausible explanation or an implausible excuse\* for giving Cleveland's second number to Harrison instead of Harrison's own, nor do I see why whoever made that choice thought a 24-cent stamp might have been of greater interest or use than a 23-cent.



*Figure 2.* A total of 23 cents postage, paid by one 9-cent William Henry Harrison stamp and one 14-cent Franklin Pierce stamp, paid 3 cents single letter surface postage plus 20 cents registry fee on this December 16, 1946, cover mailed at Cambridge, Massachusetts, which arrived at East Islip, New York, the following day.

(However, the 24-cent Prexie was a more useful stamp than Roland Rustad's list of uncommon rate and fee combinations to pay single-stamp uses suggested. Intuitive solo uses were four times the various 6 cents per ounce and per half-ounce, and three times the various 8 cents per ounce and per half-ounce, air mail rates, typically on large envelopes.)

My Figure 1 cover shows that from the very outset a 23-cent Harrison stamp would have been handy to have (8 cents double foreign letter plus 15 cents registry to a Universal Postal Union member country destination), and my Figure 2 cover demonstrates that it would have become a commonly used denomination (3 cents single domestic letter plus 20 cents registry) after the 1944 rate and fee increases.

The thrust of these observations is that the 22-cent Grover Cleveland stamp was the Post Office Department's mistake. My Figure 3 cover — another that required 23 cents postage to pay for the same common rate and fee

combination as the Figure 2 cover — illustrates the absurdity of the denomination. It is as near to a "common" use of the 22-cent stamp as one is likely to find.

Cleveland's stamp had so few practical uses from 1938 until 1985, when 22 cents became the single domestic letter rate (introduced by non-denominated D-rate stamps and stamped envelopes), that collectors of single Presidential series stamps on cover have a difficult time finding examples that pay exact combinations of postage and fees.

But if the POD had issued a 23-cent Harrison stamp and a 24-cent Cleveland stamp, assigning correct sequential denominations to both presidents, the series would have remained true to its premise, and would better have served those of us who learned the presidents' numbers from our stamp collections, with the gap at number 22 placing the asterisk for Cleveland's detached terms at our first encounter with him.

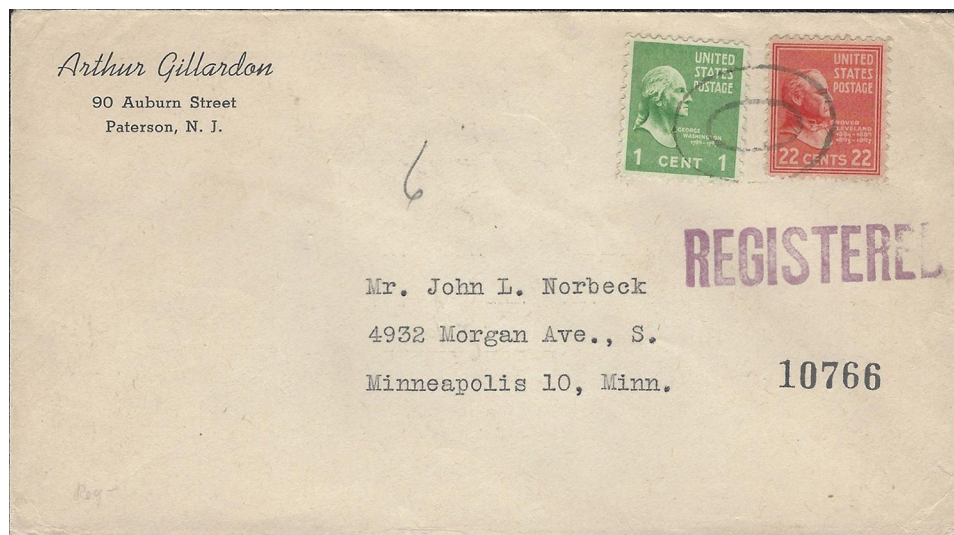


Figure 3. A total of 23 cents postage, paid by one 1-cent George Washington sheet stamp and one 22-cent Grover Cleveland stamp, paid 3 cents single letter surface postage plus 20 cents registry fee on this October 15, 1947, cover mailed at Paterson, New Jersey, which arrived at Minneapolis, Minnesota, two days later.

To confirm this article's conjecture, collectors who have passed the point of diminishing returns in pursuit of solo-use Prexie covers might benefit from reversing the challenge: Try to collect as many Prexie era whole-cent exact-rate and exact-rate-and-fee combination cover steps from 1 cent to 25 cents as possible, without regard to the stamps, postal indicia, or meter imprints that paid their postage. Which ones are truly scarce, besides exact-rate combination 19-cent and 22-cent frankings? Not 23 cents, I can assure them.

\* Elmo Scott Watson, in a contemporaneous end-of-the-year retrospective syndicated news

story on the Presidential series, wrote: "It will be noticed that there is no 23-cent stamp. That's not because of any superstition in regard to that number or any desire to avoid perpetuation of the '23-skidoo' tradition. Grover Cleveland, who appears on the 22-cent stamp, served two terms in the White House, but they were not consecutive. He was defeated by Benjamin Harrison, who served one, then 'staged a comeback' and was elected for another four-year term. So it seemed the logical thing to place his portrait with the dates of his two terms on the 22-cent stamp and place Harrison on the 24-cent issue." Logical to place Harrison on the 24 cent, or goofy thinking?

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# Repatriation of Enemy Nationals on SS *Drottningholm*, 1942

by Louis Fiset



When the U.S. entered World War II, diplomats of enemy nations and their staffs and families were detained pending safe repatriation to their homelands.

On May 7, 1942 the Swedish American Line ship, SS *Drottningholm*, under charter by the State Department, sailed for Lisbon from New York harbor with 948 passengers, all members of the diplomatic corps and officials from Germany, Italy, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, American Republics, as well as their families and staffs.

A second diplomatic voyage left New York on June 3, 1942, with 949 enemy “non-officials” aboard.

The message on the postcard, showing the ship in its prewar livery, was written in Spanish on June 3rd as the passenger awaited her departure for Lisbon later in the day. Likely she was a German national who played a lesser diplomatic role in Bolivia, or a family member of a diplomat repatriated on the first voyage. The postcard was held by U.S. censorship and not released until September 12, 1945

## A Deceptively Unusual Occurrence of UK/US Censorship

by Dann Mayo



Figure 1. Correspondence from the U.S. to England, posted 11 days before an agreement between the U.S., UK and Canada to avoid duplication of censorship. Shown here, censorship at Los Angeles (1630) and London (373).

[Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the *Civil Censorship Study Group Bulletin*, 47:1(Jan 2020), p40.]

The cover shown in Figure 1, sent four weeks after the United States began censoring civilian mail, bears an early Los Angeles censor handstamp (Broderick and Mayo C 1.3, recorded used January-March 1942) and a British PC 90 tape. The GB tape is common and the LA handstamp is not particularly scarce, but their appearance together is.

On January 21, 1942, censorship officials the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom entered into an agreement that established procedures for sharing information, and further,

that provided for a centralization of records, and measures designed to avoid duplication of effort by allocating primary responsibility for examination to the various signatories.

Under this agreement, a cover censored in the US would not be re-opened for examination in the UK unless there was something about it that caught British censorship's attention (most likely the presence of the name of the sender or addressee on a watch list). The duplication of effort shown on the above cover is just the sort of thing they wanted to eliminate. Subsequently, one tends to find US-GB covers censored in one country or the other, but not both.



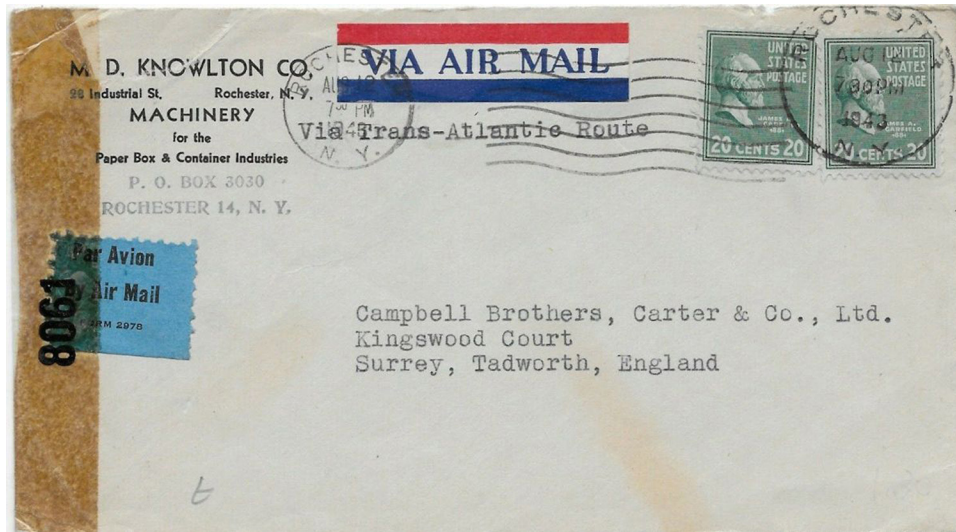


Figure 2. Airmail correspondence from the U.S. to England, postmarked August 12, 1943, showing single censorship, at New York. Over franked by 10 cents.



Figure 3. 1943 correspondence from the U.S. to England showing British censorship (3279), at London.

The standard treatment for US-UK airmail would have been censorship in the US, as international airmail was supposed to be 100 percent censored before transmission.

When a cover missed being examined in the US it was fair game for the British censors. (Surface mail received less scrutiny on the US, so that GB-only censorship is more common on such covers.)

*Note:* The brief but useful post-war official Report on the Office of Censorship, which was reproduced in Broderick and Mayo, is now available for free at:

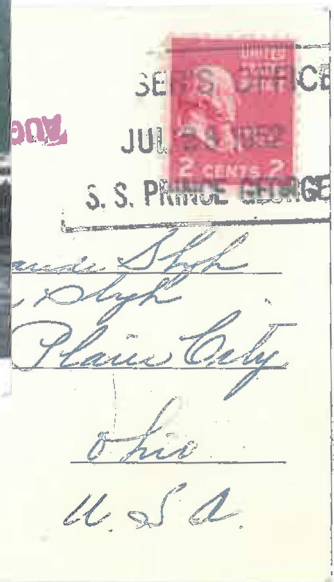
<http://bl-libg-doghill.ads.iu.edu/gpd-web/historical/Reportontheofficeofcensorship.pdf>

## Two Ill-fated *Prince George* Passenger Ships

by Jeffrey Shapiro



Canadian National Steamships' S.S. "Prince George"



While a John Adams Prexie paid the common domestic postcard rate, I was struck by the ship's purser's improvised provisional cancel. But there was more to be discovered about the SS *Prince George* pictured on the reverse side. This was the second passenger ship of that name to cruise the Inside Passage Route between Skagway, AK, Prince Rupert and Vancouver, BC.

The first *Prince George* was in service for the Grand Trunk Steamship Company from August 1910 until September 22, 1945. The second, launched in 1947, initiated service for the successor to the bankrupt Grand Trunk Line, the Canadian National Steamship Company.

Besides passengers, both ships carried bad luck. Not only did the ship run aground four times (December 1910, July 1920, December 1933 and December 1937), on September 22,

1945, the first *Prince George* caught fire while docked at Ketchikan, Alaska then ran aground at nearby Gravina Island while being towed. The ill-fated ship languished there until 1948 when it was towed to Seattle for scrap.

The second *Prince George* also sailed the Inside Passage, and the bad luck continued. In September 1950, off Prince Rupert, the ship collided with its sister ship, SS *Princess Kathleen*. Then in October 1953, in heavy fog, the ship ran aground in Johnstone Strait, off Vancouver Island.

After repair, the *Prince George* resumed summer cruises to Southeast Alaska until 1976 when the ship was sold for use as a floating restaurant. In October 1995, the ship caught fire in Britannia Beach, BC, was destroyed then sold to China for scrap. As it was being towed across the Pacific, the burned-out hulk sank.