

# THE PREXIE ERA

*The Bulletin of the BIA 1938 Presidential Series Committee*



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## NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN.....

The summer and fall have been hot, and so has collector interest in Prexie Era material. Like many others, I have fallen prey to on-line auctions, like eBay, where there is always something going on (see the article on p. 3 - Ed.) It seems that the days of \$2 Prexie cover finds are over, only rarely can a gem be found hiding in a dealer's junk box. The good news is that Prexie collecting is getting too darn popular. The bad news is that I am having trouble finding stuff!

I'd like to remind all PSC members of an exciting opportunity: Len Piskiewicz, one of our members and the editor of the BIA's "Specialist" is seeking volunteers to write a short article on the usages of each Prexie value. Len will gladly help guide novices through the writing process — you can contact him at "lenp@pacbell.net". This is a great opportunity to begin your career as a philatelic journalist. It'll never be easier! Let's have a good response from our members!

We had a good and spirited time at our annual Prexiepex meeting at Florex earlier this month. It was good to see some of the older members and a couple of new ones also joined. Several viewers commented favorably on John's Famous Americans exhibit and my Prexie display, so we continue to evangelize.

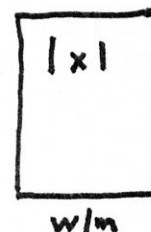
Next year's annual Prexiepex will again be held in conjunction with the BIA annual meeting. Mark your calendars for NAPIEX next June.

*Jeff Shapiro*

## EDITORIAL CHATTER.....

This is another abbreviated (4-page) issue to get back to our goal of a newsletter every 3 or 4 months. Perhaps next time I can get out an 8-page edition. Remember also that comments, suggestions and articles (especially about Prexie Era stamps) are always welcome.

Speaking of Prexie stamps, a good friend of mine (and former Siegel auction describer) recently lent me a 2c Prexie with a distinct, but unrecognizable watermark on it! Has anyone ever heard of a similar item? I'll bring this one to Chicagopex if you would like to look at it.



*John Grabowski*

## PSC REGIONAL MEETING AT CHICAGOPEX, NOV. 20, AT THE ROSEMONT CONV. CTR.....

***PSC member Bob Schlesinger has made arrangements for a Prexie meeting and swapfest during Chicagopex at 10:00 AM on Saturday, Nov. 20. Try to make it — it should be fun!!***

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**THE PREXIE ERA ON DISPLAY.....****WESTPEX at San Francisco (April 16-18, 1999):**

"U.S. Prexies, A Study of Rates", Bob Schlesinger, Silver.

**Philadelphia National Stamp Exhibition (Oct. 1-3, 1999):**

"Collecting Prexie Postal History", Jeffrey Shapiro, Gold

**FLOREX (PREXIEPEX X) at Orlando (Nov. 5-7):**

"Famous Americans at Work", John Grabowski, Vermeil

"Collecting Prexie Postal History", Jeffrey Shapiro, Gold

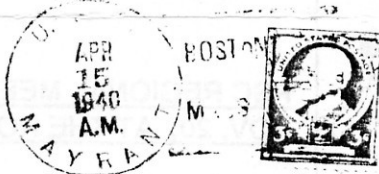
***Great effort everyone, keep up the good work!***

**"PREXIES" — EKV??.....**

Has anyone ever wondered about the origin of our basic name, "Prexies"?

Some hand scribbles on the backflap of a Famous Americans cover may shed some light on this area:

*T. Wolcott  
U.S.S. Mayrant  
Boston, Mass*



*Lyle Ramsay  
101 N. Division St.  
Northfield  
Minn.*

*Sent 100 diff. Precs & Prexies  
April 19, 1940  
owed him 34  
Precs.*

The scribble reads: "Sent 100 diff. Precs (*precancels* — Ed.) & Prexies/April 19, 1940/owed him 34 Precs." Underline emphasis added. Does anyone have an earlier reference to "Prexies"?

**THE eBay PHENOMENON by John Grabowski**

"Technology can help us get where we want to go" — from a 5th grader essay on leadership, posted in the local Wal-Mart store. An outstanding example of technology helping our philatelic endeavors is the development of the Internet and the eBay auction site in particular. This auction site, which probably accounts for at least 95% of all philatelic material being auctioned, promises to have a profound impact on how we buy and sell philatelic material, and indeed, even who participates in the hobby.

PSC member and dealer, Chuck McFarland, suggested this summer that I take a look at the Prexie covers being bought and sold on eBay. I did, and was simply amazed at the breadth and depth of material being auctioned! In the U.S. cover section, there are about 4,000 to 5,000 new lots listed each week with Prexie covers constituting over 100 items of this number. It's a hot area, normally well more than 50% of the covers find buyers — some at prices over \$100 or even \$200 (one even went for \$315!)

I encourage all Prexie cover lovers to visit this auction site (start at ebay.com and click your way through). Several PSC members are already participating as buyers and sellers, including such luminaries as your editor, the current and past chairmen, BIA editor Len Piskiewicz, Gerry Tenney, George Wagner, Bob Schlesinger, Ron Strawser, David Wessely, Joe Bock, Ray Newburn and Jeff Widener, to mention just a few. Most prices are modest, in the \$2 to \$20 range.

My initial impression is that eBay is causing a rise in Prexie cover prices, especially for the more uncommon items. The auction also provides a public record of price levels and trends. This is an area we may be able to monitor and report on in this newsletter (see the following section).

The eBay auction is easy to use, especially for buyers, which requires only a simple registration process. eBay functions as a facilitator, enabling buyers and sellers to come together and complete the transaction through the postal system. The selling process is a bit more complicated as eBay does not store picture scans of auction lots — they must be stored at a third party site where they can be accessed when a potential bidder wishes to view the lot. Lots which do not contain scanned images do not sell well, if at all. There are several options for image storage: one's ISP, Photopoint.com, or AuctionWatch.com, to name a few. Members with further questions in this area may e-mail the editor. Selling fees are relatively modest, usually just a 25c listing fee and 5% commission, if the lot sells — see the eBay site for more details.

As I mentioned earlier, the auction of each lot is a private transaction between bidder and seller. Neither eBay, nor anyone else (unless, of course, an expertization certificate is referenced) guarantees the authenticity of a lot. Usually, this is not a problem with Prexie covers, as I have seen very few alterations or fraudulent creations in this area. The biggest problem is buying covers with incorrect rate frankings as this can significantly reduce the cover's value — caveat emptor!

The eBay phenomenon is kind of a "people's auction" — good material is available and the free market process will sort out price levels over a period of time. It will likely have a detrimental effect on existing auction houses and stamp bourses. It also promises to enlarge the collecting community by removing geographic barriers and making material available at modest prices. The PSC stands to benefit by gaining new members and forming new friendships. Some comments from other PSC members using eBay:

"About one month ago I discovered the ease of using eBay.com and have been amazed at the really good things I have looked at. Of course, I will not be seeing anything physically for another year as all my purchases are being shipped to Elyria.....", David Wessely (*David is teaching in Egypt for two years — Ed.*)

"As long as I can sell my more common duplicate material for big bucks and buy some of the rarer items I really need at modest prices, I'm a really big fan of eBay!", Jeff Shapiro



**A very small sample of recent eBay price realizations:**

24 7c Prexies, plus others, to pay a \$1.75 excess indemnity registered cover in 1955 sold for \$315 in July and the same cover again for \$315 to a different buyer in October (*this is the highest eBay Prexie cover I have seen - Ed.*)

3c Prexie postcard rate to Burma (1951), third 1c Prexie added after being returned postage due, \$77 (Sept.)

4.5c Prexie coil solo paying the third class + minimum insurance rate, \$122 (Sept.)

4.5c Prexie coil solo underpaying the double weight rate (1941), 1c & 1/2c dues added, \$124.50 (Sept.)

3c Prexie into Santa Fe (Manhattan Project), Army censorship, \$107.50 (Sept.)

A strip of 5 1c vertical coils paying the 5c domestic airmail rate (1947), \$87 (Sept.)

48c airmail + registry rate to French Morocco (1941), French censorship, \$127.76 (Nov.)

A registered domestic *postcard* with 40c in Prexies paying the registry rate (1956), \$137.50 (Nov.)

**Letters & Follow-ups:****Prexie Usage From Swan Island:**

Ed Ryan has a letter to England (8c double surface rate!) from a fellow who handled the mail on Swan Island and talks about the island's mail service: "Also, we do not have a harbor and those boats which come here are anchored off shore a short distance. The local natives row out to the boats to pick up the supplies and mail. Less than a year ago, a boat came a little too to shore and was grounded and dashed; some damage was done to it." No "tin cans" were mentioned in the letter, but the delivery technique appears similar. He mentions that the mail in 1954 was routed through Tampa, but the letter I have is postmarked Elizabeth City, NC. I suspect he routed it through his wife in NC where she may have checked the weight and/or applied postage. There is no corner card on my cover, although there is a circular received stamp with the date and Swan Is. On the back is a rubber handstamp of the latitude and longitude of the island (17 24'N 83 56'W). There is also a return address of the sender and "via Tampa, Florida". Found the following on the www — even though it's a hurricane page, there's quite a bit of background information on Swan Is. and interesting links:

"<http://www.weatherwatchers.org/tropical/1998/13/swan.html>" — Thanks, Ed!

**Prexie Plate Number Printing History:**

Wallace Cleland writes: "As you know, I have issued Research Papers that give the printing history of the early plates up through the Fourth Bureau issue. I have considerable information on the printing periods of the Prexie 400 subject plates, and I have thought about issuing a Research Paper on these. The 4c to \$5.00 values are in good shape. The plate pairings are all worked out, and many of the individual printing periods are written down. Where a pair of plates were at press together, 20 times, or so, I just copied the first time to press and the last dropped, as well as the number of times to press. The individual data are in the records, but writing them down is a chore. It can be done, of course, if anyone has a specific need for the dates. The records are in the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. How many members might be interested in the 4c to \$5.00 data? If there is sufficient interest, I will put out a Research Paper. The 1c, 2c and 3c would also require further work if there is sufficient interest. (PSC members: please contact the Editor with your thought's on Wallace's work)