

Fall 2001



Issue No. 20

The Prexie Era

The Newsletter of the BIA 1938 Presidential Era Study Committee

Inside this Issue:

Message from Former Editor John Grabowski

Message from the Current Editor

Chairman's Notes

To the Gaza Strip and Back in 1949 by Stephen L. Suffet

Email Addresses: It's Time to Update

Prexies at Auction: Thoughts of a Market Watcher by John Grabowski

The 14,275 Miles Journey: A Well-Travelled Cover by Jeffrey Shapiro

Classified Notices: Buy, Sell, Trade

World War II Letter Mail Labels by Steven M. Roth

Steven M. Roth, Editor

1280 21st Street, NW, #209, Washington, DC 20036-2343

smroth@starpower.net

202.293.2563

Message from Former Editor John Grabowski

It has been a real pleasure and privilege to serve as Editor of the Prexie Era Study Committee Newsletter over the past several years. The time has come, however, for me to "pass the baton" to a fresh and enthusiastic new Editor. Despite my good intentions, it has become increasingly difficult for me to produce the three or four issues each year that our member want and deserve.

The primary reasons for my lack of time have been the usual culprits: a growing investment business; a deluge of new investment information on the Internet for me to sift through and absorb; the economic slowdown and its affect on my new business; new computer hardware and software for me to learn; and, a few new philatelic pursuits to fill-up my free time.

The Prexie Era Study Committee is a great group to work with. Member support and participation are about the best in any philatelic society I have seen – please keep up this good work. I'm sure that our new Editor, Steve Roth, will appreciate your contributions.

Although I am turning the reins over to a new Editor with this Issue of the Newsletter, I have no plans to abandon Prexie Era collecting or writing for our Newsletter. With Steve's permission and encouragement, you will be hearing a lot from me.

John Grabowski

**Subscriptions to the Newsletter
are free. Sign-up a friend.**

Message from the Current Editor

I am pleased, to paraphrase John's words above, to "take up the baton" as your new Editor and publisher.

My goal is to publish at least four issues each year, with more Newsletters coming if I have sufficient material available. I hope to run five or six articles or reports in each issue, and to keep administrative/news matters to a minimum. To do this, I will need your help.

Please send me your reports of stamps and covers, or whatever else interests you and which might also interest our members. If possible, send them to me in digital (MS Word or WordPerfect) format, although this is not necessary. You can write-up the material yourself or I will be glad to assist you (or, if you prefer, I even will write the report or article for you; I then will publish the report or article over your name).

For those of you who do not yet know me, here are a few words about my Prexie Era interests: I began collecting all Prexie rates and usages about eleven years ago. I eventually narrowed my focus so that now I collect Prexies on civilian mail only if the covers are going abroad during Word War II. I have further refined this collection to include only examples of such civilian mail if the rates, or the routes and/or the deliverability of the mail was adversely affected by combat conditions, by other military restrictions, or by non-military political factors. [Inevitably, I also have drifted into several related collections involving non-Prexie stamps issued and used during the Prexie Era, repeating the same theme as my current Prexie collection.]

Chairman's Notes

Welcome to the Twenty-First Century version of the Prexie Era Study Committee's Newsletter.

It's been a long time coming, but as you see, it's been worth the wait. Our new Editor, Steve Roth, has done a wonderful job resurrecting this great Newsletter. I hope all of you have plans to help Steve keep this a continuing publishing success.

The past few years have been good to the Prexies and Prexie-era emissions. Besides record-breaking prices for this material's postal history on Ebay, at last count I estimate that 16 individuals have been exhibiting Prexie-era material at national and regional stamp shows with great results.

I've also received a lot of nice comments regarding the ongoing series of articles written by Committee members, appearing in the United States Specialist, edited by Prexie aficionado, Len Piskiewicz.

As for Committee activities, we have held a number of regional meetings across the country to help members meet each other and to spread the word that PREXIE ERA materials RULE !!

Our next meeting will be at STaMpsHOW 2001 in Chicago. I hope to see you there !!

Jeffrey Shapiro

To the Gaza Strip and Back in 1949

by

Stephen L. Suffet

The Setting

The armies of the Arab League attacked the State of Israel in the morning of May 15, 1948, just hours after Israel had proclaimed its independence as a sovereign state. At that time the armed forces of Egypt were occupying the Gaza Strip, a narrow land mass found along the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, stretching from the top of the Sinai Desert to and beyond the city of Gaza.

Although Egypt occupied and administered the Gaza Strip until it was driven away by the Israelis during the 1967 Six Days War, Egypt never officially annexed the region. In fact, during its nineteen year occupation of the Gaza Strip, ordinary stamps from Egypt were not valid for use in the Gaza Strip. Instead, Egypt issued stamps for use in the region which were overprinted with the word **Palestine**.

Under the partition plan approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1947, the Gaza Strip was to become part of the Arab State of Palestine. This has not occurred as of 2001.

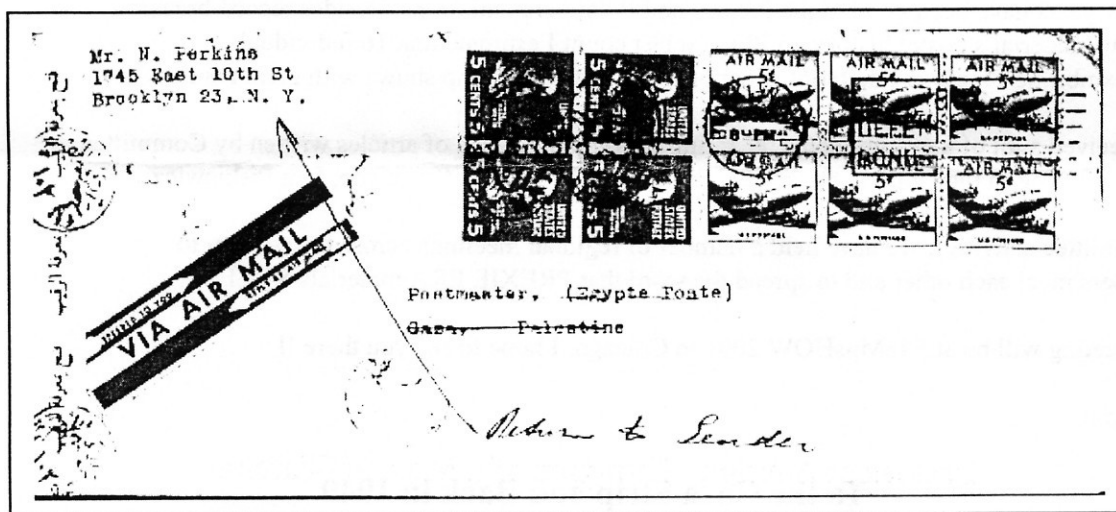
The Airmail Rates

Under the United States international airmail rate schedule that went into effect on November 1, 1946, the postage to Egypt was established at 15¢ per half ounce. The rate to Israel was set at 25¢ per half ounce.

The Questions

1. Which airmail rate (the 15¢ rate to Egypt or the 25¢ rate to Israel) applied to mail from the United States to the Gaza Strip?
2. Why was the letter returned to the sender?

The Cover



This double-weight cover was mailed from the United States to the City of Gaza in 1949. It was censored by Egyptian censors as shown by the censor tape and censor handstamp.

Although the cover was addressed to the Egyptian Post Office ("Egypte Poste") in Gaza, the name of the destination country was correctly given as *Palestine*, not as Egypt. Because the letter was mailed to territory partitioned and allocated by the United Nations to Israel, the letter properly was rated at 25¢ for airmail to Israel, rather than at 15¢, as it would have been for airmail to Egypt.

The receiving handstamp which appears on the back of the cover shows that the letter reached Gaza. For reasons not discernible from the cover, the letter was returned to the sender. Perhaps the censors required that the letter not be delivered?

Study Committee to Meet at Chicago STaMpsHOW

The Prexie Era Study Committee will meet on Saturday, August 25, at 2:00 pm. at the APS show to be held in Chicago. The meeting will be informal, and you are encouraged to bring along interesting covers and stamps to show among members and/or to trade.

E-mail Addresses: It's Time to Update

If you have not already sent in your E-mail address so that John Grabowski has listed it in Issue No. 17 (1998) or earlier, please do so now. Or, if like me, you have changed your E-mail address since it was listed, please send it to me for listing in a future Newsletter.

Here are the addresses I still have of a few of the members [after the recent loss of my hard drive and address book]:

Joe Bock	jorobock@sedona.net
John Grabowski	minnjohn@uswest.net
Len Piskiewicz	lenp@pacbell.net
Steven M. Roth	smroth@starpower.net
Jeffrey Shapiro	coverlover1@yahoo.com
Robert Schlesinger	robertsles@aol.com
Stephen L. Suffet	suffet@worldnet.att.net

Prexies at Auction: Thoughts of a Market Watcher

by

John Grabowski

Here are some thoughts on eBay activity. [Ed. Note: John's observations are as timely and cogent today as they were when he first wrote them.]

Someone once said: you can learn alot just by watching. That certainly is true when it comes to online auction material, especially when it comes to Prexie covers on eBay.

The new listings have slowed down to about one hundred additions per week, down from 150 or so new listings per week at year-end 2000.

The most notable trend for the past year is that many of the Prexie lots fail to attract any bidders at all. There probably are two reasons for this: (i) much of the "better" material available to sellers has already been sold online; and, (ii) many new sellers just do not realize what quality of material will attract serious Prexie postal historians. That is, too much common material is now being offered by eBay sellers. This is particularly true of mixed frankings (*i.e.*, Prexies on a cover along with non-Prexies) for common services and/or to common destinations.

On the other hand, the high end of the market for Prexie material continues to be strong for better solo usages, unusual rates and for scarce destinations. For example, there were eBay sales of the 11¢ solo stamp on cover which realized the following hammer prices: \$189.50 for a solo use on a 1939 postcard to Latvia (air/surface combi mail) at auction on April 1, 2000; \$510.37 for a solo use on an undated, probably 3rd Class, usage, at auction on July 9,

2000; and, \$1,136.11 for a solo use on a 1951 insured airmail cover, at auction on July 16, 2000.

It also is interesting to compare prices realized on items that are similar. I take as my example the 1-½¢ vertical coil [Martha Washington] paying the 3rd Class rate — an item seldom seen. In the two examples I have noted, the covers realized \$183.50 (April 26, 2000) and \$160.60 (July 9, 2000), respectively.

Three lots of the 1-½¢ vertical coil paying the regular 3¢ First Class rate (also not very common), realized \$15 (December 28, 2000), \$21.50 (July 8, 2000), and \$27.50 (July 26, 2000), respectively.

The results of the sale of 17¢ solo usage also are interesting: \$51 (October 28, 2000); \$56 (May 13, 2000); and, \$150.10 (May 14, 2000).

[Ed. Note: John updated his observations and thoughts in an email to the Editor on July 1, 2001, as follows] :

“It is now my observation that pricing of this material on eBay is becoming more rational (*i.e.*, lower) although the exotic items still command very active bidding and, therefore, high prices. In fact, many of the common items now are going unsold on eBay at any price. It is a clear sign that this market has matured after the initial rush of 1999 and 2000.”

Classified Notices: Buy, Sell and Trade

There is no set editorial or Committee policy concerning classified notices for members. I am willing (if space is available) to include free notices for members if you would like. Send me your short notices and I will run them as space permits.

The 14,275 Miles Journey: A Well-Travelled Cover

by

Jeffrey Shapiro

For many philatelists, nothing seems to stop their pursuit of acquiring another stamp or cover — not even a World War. In serving this need, the firm of Stanley Gibbons, Inc. mailed a stamp order to a United States Marine Corporal who was stationed in the South Pacific.

The cover [see the illustration on the next page] was a double rate registered airmail letter franked with 32¢

the registry fee [for under \$5.00 indemnity].



As you can see from the postal markings on the back of the envelope, this cover traveled quite a distance.



at least 14,275 miles from point of deposit into the mains to the point of delivery.

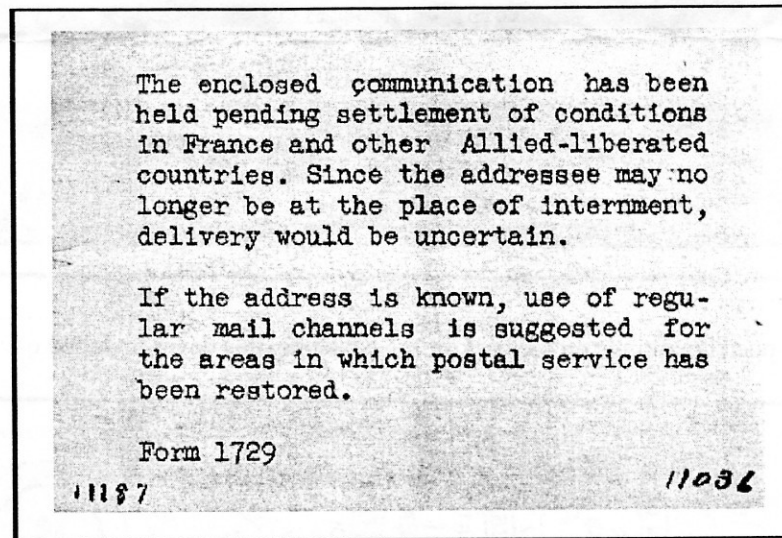
World War II Letter Mail Labels

by

Steven M. Roth

I have been accumulating civilian mail sent to the several theatres of war during World War II which demonstrate adverse conditions that affected mail transportation and delivery. Generally, these conditions were alluded to through the use of hand stamps and/or printed labels applied to the envelopes.

Below is a sampling of my holdings of such labels, with some observations by me.



This label [Form 1729] was attached by the Office of Censorship to a letter mailed from the United States on December 14, 1944, to an address in then recently liberated France. The letter was censored in the U.S. where it received a second, very common, label [Form OC-15] indicating that the letter was returned to the sender by the Office of Censorship. The above label explained the reason for the censor's return of the letter.

* * * * *

Another label — this one attached to the envelope by the Post Office Department — was applied after examination of the letter by the Office of Censorship, which directed the Post Office at San Francisco (the point of origin of the letter) to attach the PO Form 2911 [Return To Sender] label with the indicated reason on this 1942 letter to occupied Norway:

Form 2911
 Post Office San Francisco, Calif.
RETURN TO SENDER
 (Sections 2303 and 2304, P. L. & E.)

This article is returned for delivery to the sender, as it is not transmissible to destination for the reason noted below:

Reason for return

**Service restricted to
 nonillustrated post cards.
 Postage rate 3¢ ea.**

Attention is called to Section _____ (paragraph _____)
 on page _____ of Part II of the Postal Guide.
William H. McCarthy, POSTMASTER.
 GPO 16-36042-1 Per _____

* * * * *

Next, there is P.O. Form 862 which, while self-explanatory, requires some comment.

Date APR 24 1943

Returned by Censorship
 for Disposition under Postal
 Laws and Regulations pertain-
 ing to dead letters and dead
 parcel post.

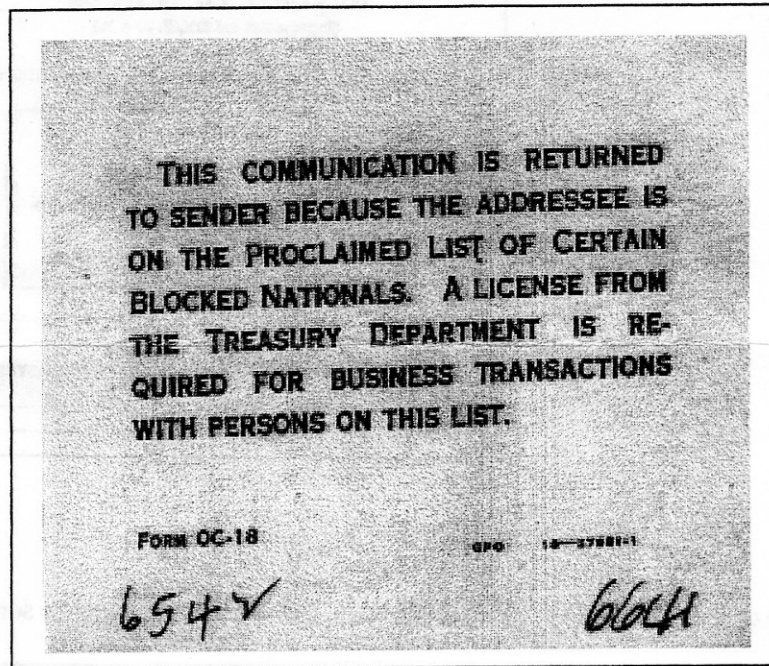
REASON: No Return Address

Form 862

My comment is this: although the label states that the letter lacked a return address, in fact this cover did have a return address, but it was placed on the back of the envelope. The Office of Censorship Regulations, however, required that civilian mail going abroad (in this case to occupied Netherlands in 1943) had to have a full legible return address placed in the upper-left corner at the front of the envelope.

* * * * *

Finally, the last label I will show for this Issue of the Newsletter was one applied by the Office of Censorship when mail was uncovered addressed to a recipient who was on the United States Treasury Department's Watch List.*



*NOTE: In 1990, I researched and wrote a monograph called "The Censorship of International Civilian Mail During World War II: The History, Structure and Operation of the United States Office of Censorship" (La Posta Monograph Series, Volume 6). While I did not discuss the labels and handstamps used by Censorship, I did examine in detail how mail was censored, how decisions were made to censor or not to censor a letter, and the practical problems incurred in operating the Office of Censorship — all based on original research among thousands of previously classified documents stored at the National Archives.

The monograph currently is out-of-print, but we are considering revising portions of it and publishing a new edition.

Newsletter Subscription Information

Anyone can
by sending

Jeffrey N. Shapiro
P.O. Box 3211
Fayville, MA 01745-0211

contribute postage
01745-3211, or that
both.