

Summer 2002



Issue No. 23

# *The* Prexie Era

*The Newsletter of the BIA 1938 Presidential Era Study Group*

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**Your contributions to the Newsletter  
in the form of articles, notes and/or  
financial assistance will enable us to  
continue publishing.**

## Message From the Editor

This is the fourth issue of the Newsletter I have edited. I appreciate the contributions of the readers who have sent me articles, etc. I hope that others of you will send me your articles, notes on material you own, whatever you think might interest our other readers.

Jeff Shapiro has asked me to remind you that if you have not sent him at least \$5.00 in cash or mint postage as a contribution by the time Issue No. 24 (the next Issue) is ready to mail, that this Issue (No. 23) will be your last. I refer you to Jeff's statement in Issue No. 21. We cannot publish and mail the Newsletter without your help -- both with content and with expenses.

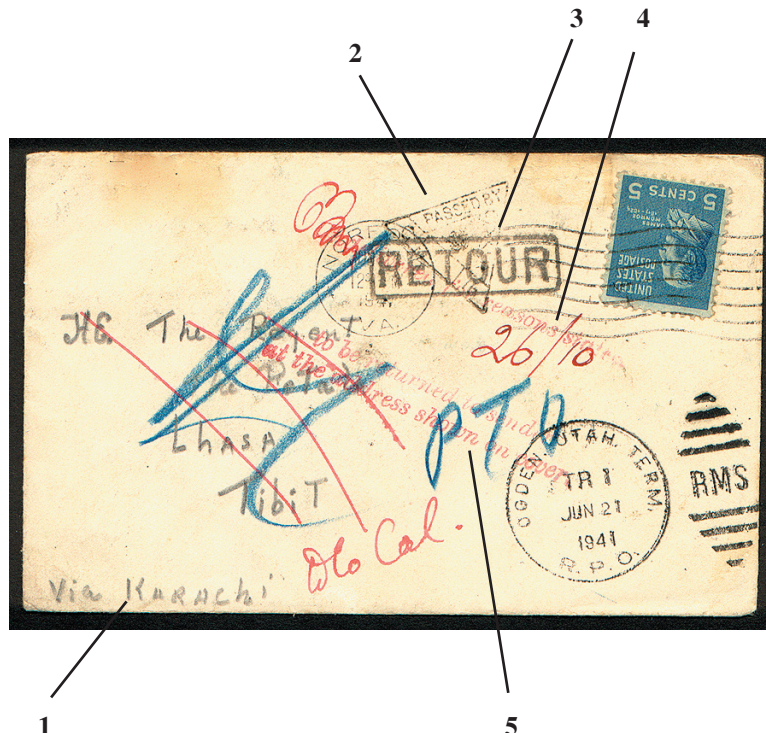
### Returned From Tibet: No Postal Exchange Convention or Available Agent

by

Steven M. Roth

**Editor's Note:** Northern Virginia postal history dealer Kenneth A. Pitt recently sent me this cover for examination.

The cover originated at Norfolk, Virginia on June 18, 1941. It was carried by the Railway Mail Service to the west coast where it embarked for Lhasa, Tibet via India. Along the way it received a British India handstamp "Passed By Censor", two Gyantse [Tibet] handstamps, two Bombay handstamps, one Calcutta handstamp, some miscellaneous handstamps, and some very interesting manuscript notations.

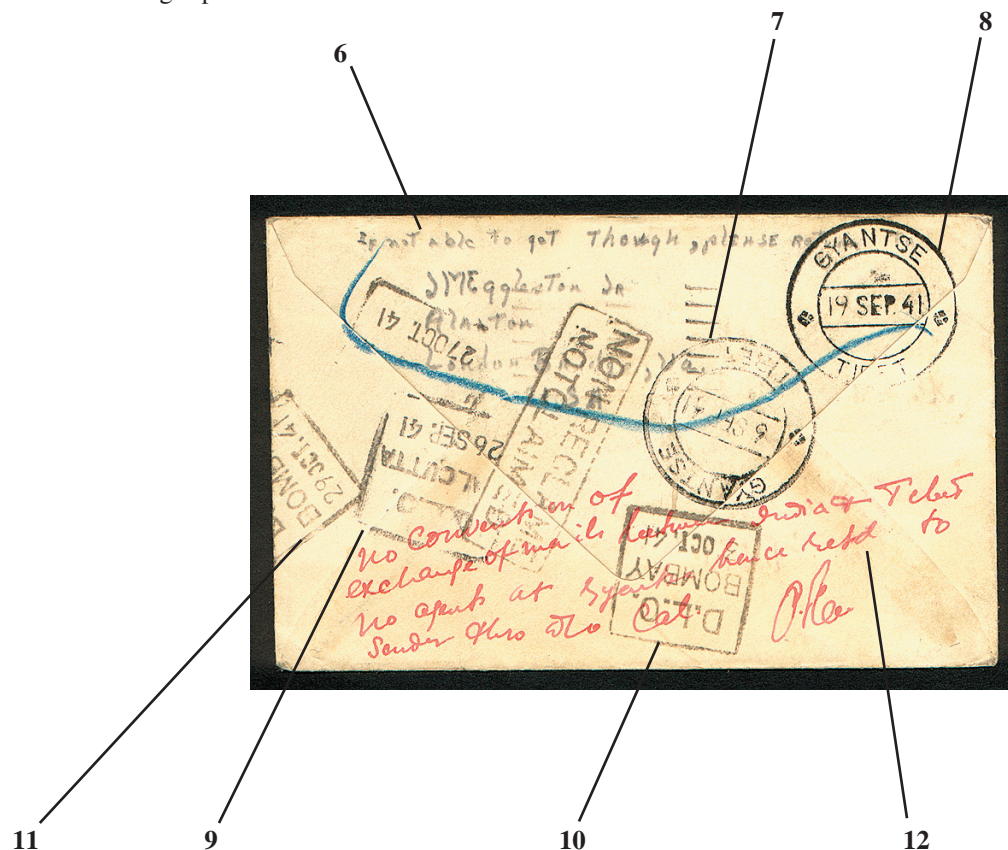


Key to the numbers:

1. Sender's admonition to route the letter via Karachi.

2. British Censor handstamp applied at Karachi
3. "Retour" [Return] handstamp
4. "returned to sender for the reasons stated" handstamp [red]
5. "to be returned to sender/at the address shown on over" handstamp [red]

The interesting aspects of this cover reveal themselves on its back side.



6. Sender's notation in pencil: "If not able to get through, please return to/J M Eggleston Jr/London Bridge, Va".
7. GYANTSE [Tibet] cds [dated September 6, 1941]
8. GYANTSE [Tibet] cds [dated September 19, 1941]
9. Handstamp "D.L.O./CALCUTTA/26 Sep 41"
10. Handstamp "D.L.O./BOMBAY/ 3 Oct 41"
11. Handstamp "D.L.O./BOMBAY/29 Oct 41"
12. Manuscript notation: "No convention of exchange of mails between India & Tibet. No agent at Gyantse. Have returned to sender. DLO Cal [cutta]".

Apparently, what happened to this cover is this: The cover was censored at Karachi (then a part of India) and was allowed to pass. It was delivered to Gyantse, Tibet and held there. It was never called for by the addressee or by a mail agent so it was returned to the sender via Bombay and Calcutta.

Because Tibet was not a member of the Universal Postal Union, a sender could not prepay the Tibet internal postage. The practice, I am told, was to enclose funds in the letter for the postage. The letter would then be opened at the Tibetan border by a mail agent who would use the currency to pay the Tibet postage. When,

as in this case, no agent presented himself, the letter was held for a certain time, then routed back through India, apparently being held from time-to-time at dead letter offices along the way. Can anyone add to this story or, perhaps, correct my interpretation?

**Editor's Note:** This cover is best viewed in color because of the many markings and notations on it, some of which are in red or blue ink. Contact me if you would like me to send you a copy of the cover as an email <.pdf>, <.gif> or <.jpeg> attachment.

### Effects of War on the Delivery of Mail to Chungking, China

by

Jeffrey Shapiro

One of the misconceptions concerning the delivery of letters from the United States to China in World War II is that mail service to China was suspended throughout the country. In fact, mail was suspended only where its delivery was difficult to achieve (before the U.S. entered the War) or in those scattered areas in China occupied or controlled by Japan (after December 8, 1941).

After the Japanese invaded China on July 7, 1937, the Kwantung Army pushed the Nationalist government out of its capital at Nanking, then out of its successor capital at Hankow, and on to Chungking where the Nationalist government settled for the duration of World War II. Although the Japanese army never made a serious attempt to invade and occupy Chungking, it did engage in long-term saturation bombing of the capital city.

Shown below are two covers addressed to Chungking, but treated differently, during the time when it was the capital of Free China.



Service Suspended/Return to Sender

This registered letter, dated January 8, 1942, originated in Texas. It travelled to China via New York and



Miami along FAM 22, across the South Atlantic Ocean and Africa to India, where the letter was examined by British censorship and “passed”. The British authorities determined that service to Chungking was suspended and, therefore, they returned the letter to the U.S.

At this time (1942) Chungking not only was not threatened by the Japanese, but most of the saturation bombing had ceased. So....why was service suspended to Chungking? Probably because the Japanese had occupied Hong Kong as of Christmas Day 1941, and the delivery of mail to all parts of China was then uncertain.

This uncertainty somewhat changed during the next year, and delivery using FAM 22 was used, as demonstrated by the “two oceans” cover shown below.



This cover originated in Hawaii on March 17, 1943. It was flown across the Pacific Ocean to the west coast of mainland United States, was then carried to New York City, and then to Miami. From Miami it was dispatched via FAM 22 across the Atlantic Ocean to Africa and then to Free China. It was delivered to Chungking several weeks later.

The Prexie-Era Study Group will meet at the Pennsylvania National Stamp Exhibition in King of Prussia, PA over the weekend of October 11-13, 2002. Come join us if you can.

### **Around the World Airmail to Greece**

by

Dr. Roger G. Schnell

This registered letter originated in Detroit, MI on April 2, 1941. It was flown by domestic airmail to San Francisco. It departed on April 4, 1941 via Pan American FAM 14 for Hong Kong, where the letter was

censored. It then was carried via BOAC to Basra -- then by rail to Istanbul and onward to Greece. The postage for this routing was 70 cents (there are two 20-cents Prexies on the back) rather than the 30 cents postage that would have been applicable had this letter been sent via FAM 18 directly to Europe. The letter (which arrived at Greece sometime after April 6 when the Germans began their invasion of the Balkans and Greece) was refused admission to Greece, and was returned to the United States via Switzerland, Frankfurt and Lisbon over FAM 18 to New York (where the handstamp "RETURN TO SENDER/SERVICE SUSPENDED" was applied.) It arrived back in Detroit December 3, 1941.



If you are tired of seeing only postal history in our Newsletter, send me some articles or notes on stamps, rates or anything else that you think will interest our readers. As your Editor, I can only publish what you send me or I am able to dig out of my own World War II related Prexie-Era holdings.

### Enigmatic Sea Route: To Sweden via Egypt

by

Steven M. Roth

Shown below is a cover your Editor picked up awhile ago on Ebay. I would appreciate your input in helping me understand its routing.

The cover originated in Michigan on May 1, 1940. It traveled to Sweden by ocean mail (1 cent overpayment) via Egypt. The letter was censored in Egypt where it received a censorship handstamp on the front and another on the back of the cover. It was opened and resealed with an Egyptian censorship tape.



Here is what was happening historically that might have been relevant to this routing. In April 1940 Germany invaded Denmark. In May, when this cover was dispatched, Germany and Norway were engaged in ferocious combat. U-boats were beginning to lay mines in the North Atlantic Ocean, and the Battle of the Atlantic was just underway. The Mediterranean was closed to most Allied shipping.

The only postal reference I have been able to find appeared in the *Postal Bulletin Supplement* for March 1940 ["Changes in the Routing of Mails for Certain European Countries"] where it was stated:

“Regular mails (including airmails) for Sweden...are now being  
dispatched via Italy and Germany”

**Free color illustrations available.** I will make available to readers via e-mail attachment free color <.pdf>, <.gif> or <.jpg> copies of any of the illustrations that appear in any issue of the Newsletter if the original illustrations were sent to me in color. Feel free to contact me for copies.

### Fractional Overprints of the Canal Zone

by

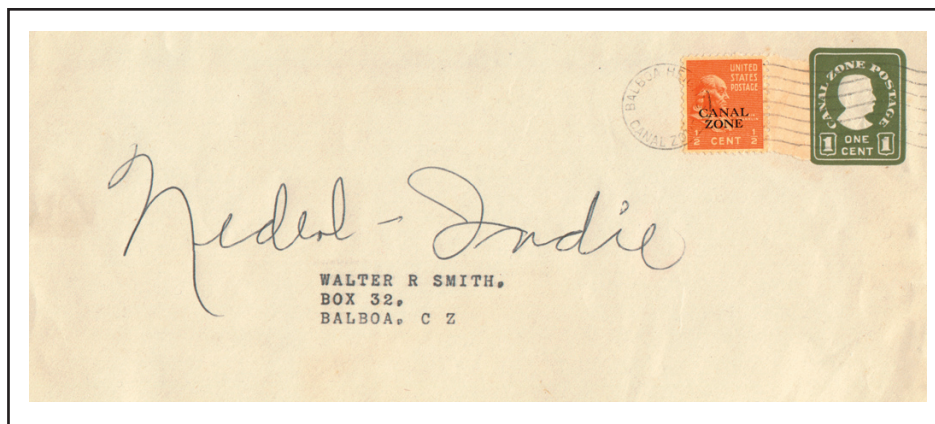
Robert Schlesinger

The 1/2 cent Ben Franklin and 1-1/2 cents Martha Washington sheet stamps - from the 1938 Prexie issue - were issued by the Canal Zone Postal Service so that it would be able to provide stamps for various book rates and third class usages.

The Scott catalog shows an issue date of September 1, 1939 -- a date of some significance to World War II postal history collectors (the invasion of Poland by Germany and the outbreak of the War in Europe).

According to “The Prexies” by Rollie Rustad, a total of 993,643 stamps of the 1/2 cent value were issued and 1,119,991 stamps of the 1-1/2 cents value were issued. These totals account for the relatively low catalog value of the mint stamps, but the low catalog value of plain used copies (now 15 cents each) belies the rest of the story.

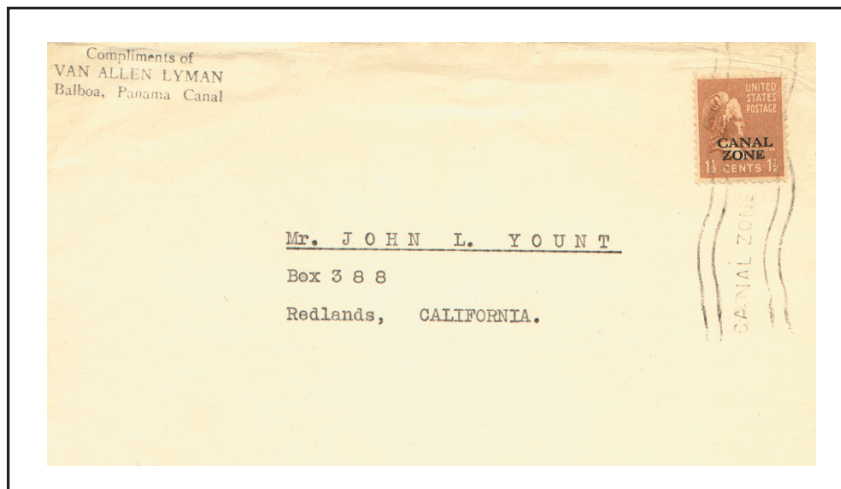
Commercially used covers bearing a solo 1/2 cent Ben Franklin or the 1-1/2 cents Martha Washington are scarce to rare. **Figure 1** shows a proper, non-philatelic use of the 1/2 cent value applied to a 1 cent entire to pay the unsealed third class mail rate.



**Figure 1**

The Balboa Heights, CZ circular date stamp is mute. This, along with the fact that the envelope was un gummed (which indicates that the envelope was unsealed) strongly suggests that the contents was a printed circular or some other similar third class usage. There are few such commercial usages available to collectors.

**Figure 2** also shows a third class usage. This cover, too, was unsealed, and bears a Canal Zone roller, attesting to its usage.



**Figure 2**



Although I do not have an exact census of such covers, there are VERY few solo 1-1/2 cents covers known to collectors, probably less than one dozen.

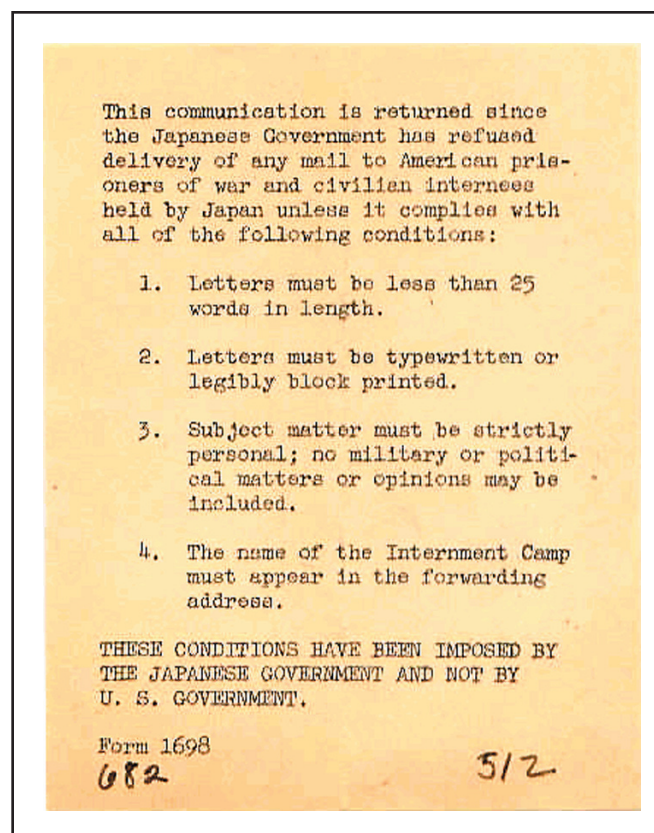
### **World War II Letter Mail Labels**

[continued from Issue #22]

by

Steven M. Roth

This label was attached to a letter datelined September 20, 1943. The label is self-explanatory.



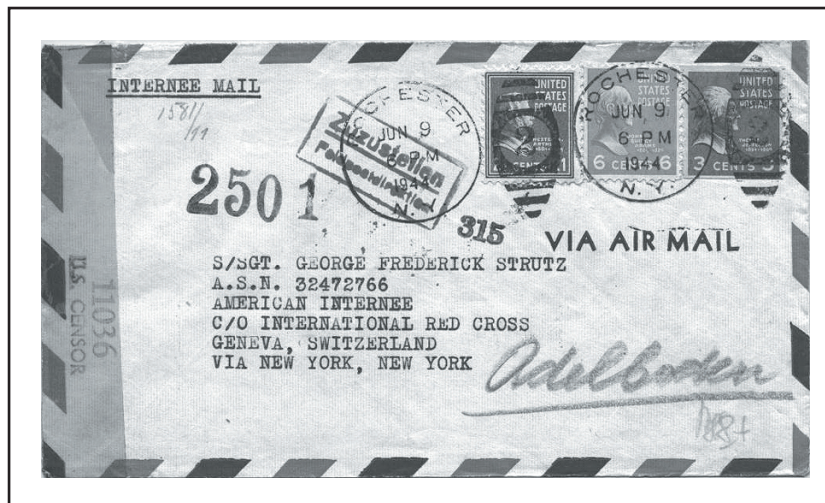
### **An Example of Internee Mail to Switzerland**

by

Jeffrey Shapiro

While I've seen many covers addressed to prisoners of war held by Germany, Italy and Japan during

World War II, this is the first Prexie cover I have seen addressed to an internee being held by the Swiss.



Franked with three Prexies paying the thirty cents per half ounce airmail rate to Europe, this cover was mailed from Rochester, NY on June 9, 1944, and probably was flown to Europe via Lisbon, Portugal. It then would have been carried by train to Geneva, Switzerland. During its travels the cover was examined by both American and German censors. The International Red Cross determined that the addressee was interned by the Swiss government in the town of Adelboden. The cover was dispatched to Adelboden.

Switzerland was not occupied during World War II because of its neutrality. In order to maintain this neutrality, the Swiss government mandated that all aircraft and air crews which landed without proper authorization or which crashed within its territory were to be interned.

From 1943 until the end of the European War, an estimated 170 United States military craft made emergency landings or crashed in Switzerland as a byproduct of bombing runs against strategic German targets in the nearby Ruhr Valley. As a result, early in 1943 an internment camp was established by the Swiss government in Adelboden, an abandoned ski resort in the Alps. The camp was named Camp Mahoney in honor of Joseph Mahoney, the first United States airman killed in Switzerland in World War II.

By the spring of 1944 the camp had become dangerously overcrowded. While the enlisted men internees remained at the camp, the interned officers were transferred to the neighboring village of Davos-Platz, on June 24, 1944, where they were assigned to the Palace Hotel. They remained quartered there until the end of the War.

**Editor's Note:** As a companion to this cover, see the Air Transport Camp Mahoney cover described at page 5, Issue No. 21 of the Newsletter.