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Issue No. 25

The Prexie Era

The Newsletter of the BIA 1938 Presidential Era Study Group

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A Security Marking in WW II

by

Steven M. Roth

Shown below is a 6-bar, orange-red marking on a cover, dated 1942, which originated in Washington, DC, and that was addressed to a British officer in London, England. It transited through the Trinidad post office.



I have seen this marking used on mail to and from the United States, England and the Commonwealth countries in late 1941 and in 1942. In each instance the 6-bar marking (or some variety of the marking) obscured the CDS, in whole or in part, as if the marking were serving some wartime location security function.

Here is what I do not know about this marking, but would like to learn:

1. What was the purpose of the marking?
2. Was it applied in the United States and/or elsewhere?
3. Was the marking used only on mail addressed to or from military personnel?
4. Was the marking used on mail at the starting and/or ending post offices, or was it applied only to mail that passed through a transit office (as in the case of the cover shown above)?

Editor's note: The marking and cover are a beautiful combination of orange-red (marking) and blue (stamp and envelope). The cover was part of the inventory of the **Prexie-Era Postal History Net Pricelist** sent out by Jim Forte with Newsletter No. 24. It can be seen, in color, in that Pricelist. (Inventory number TR430906) Jim, at my request, made the illustration available to me for the Newsletter.

A Reader's Report: Trans-Pacific Airmail to Europe - The 30 Cents Legacy Rate

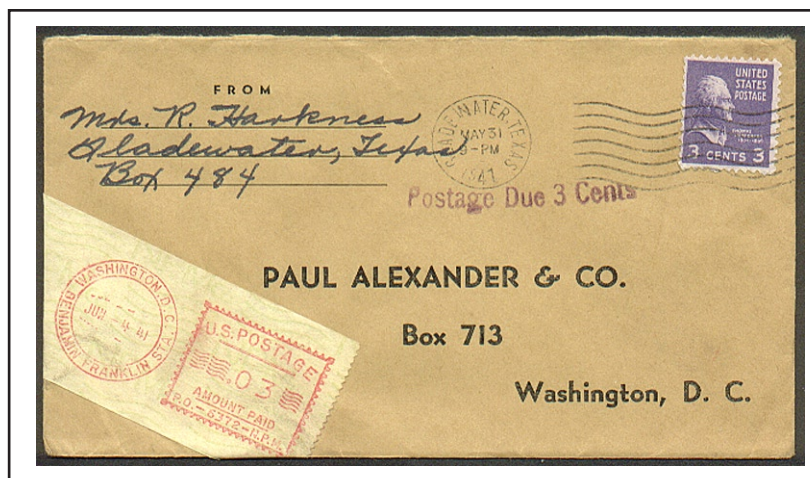
In Newsletter No. 24 I stated that I had recorded only one 70¢ FAM 14 cover to Turkey. Now, Dr. Roger G. Schnell has written to me that he also has in his collection a pre-FAM 22 70¢ airmail cover to Turkey. Does any other reader have this usage to report?

Covers from Our Readers

Reader Steven Kok has sent this interesting registered cover with Canal Zone overprinted Prexies:



Postal History dealer Ken Pitt has offered this unusual “Due” cover for inclusion in the Newsletter:



From contributor Tom Myers we have this incoming “Due” cover from France (postmarked March 1953):



World War II Letter Mail Labels [continued from Newsletter No. 23]

by

Steven M. Roth

This form is found on a cover that was addressed to Romania in 1944. It was inscribed “Through U.S.S.R. Mail”, and was franked with 85¢ postage for airmail carriage via FAM 22, plus the international registered mail fee. [Note: We saw a different “message” used with this generic form in Newsletter No. 20, p.9.]

This communication is returned since the Japanese government has refused delivery of any mail to American Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees held by Japan unless it complies with all of the following conditions:

1. Letters must not be more than twenty-four (24) words in length. This total does not include the salutation (i.e. "Dear Son") nor the signature.
2. Letters must be typewritten or block printed in legible capital letters.
3. Subject matter must be strictly personal; no military or political matters or opinions may be included.

THESE CONDITIONS HAVE BEEN IMPOSED BY THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT AND NOT BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.

Form 1698 Rev.

Note that this label is a revision of Form 1698 (having fewer restrictions than that form) which we showed in Newsletter No. 23, p.9.

The Postage Due "Search Fee"

by

Clyde Jennings and Jay Jennings

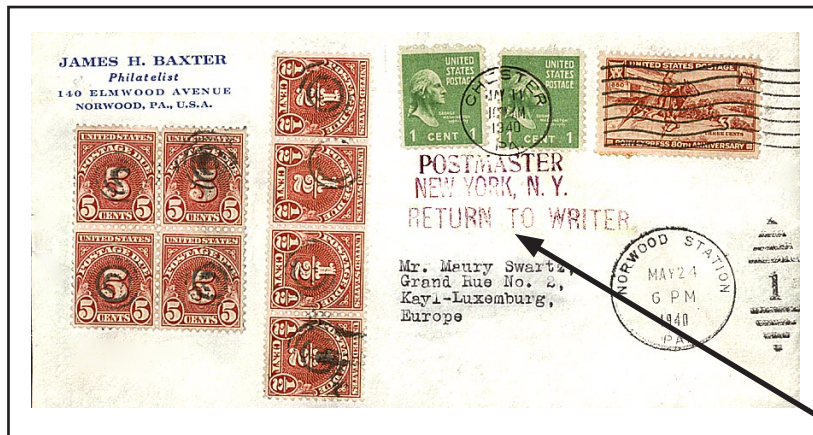
Germany invaded the Benelux countries, including Luxemburg, on May 10, 1940. The New York postmaster instituted the practice of holding mail addressed to these countries. To that end, he also advertised in the New York newspapers that for a fee (which was calculated according to the amount of time involved) the post office would search for letters that were held so they could be returned to those senders who had prepaid the search fee.

The cover shown on page 6 of this Newsletter is one such letter.

This letter required an eleven minute search for which a 22¢ fee was charged.

The key to identifying these letters lies in the purple handstamp: "POSTMASTER/NEW YORK, N.Y./RETURN TO WRITER", as shown by the arrow in the illustration.

[The cover illustration is on next page]



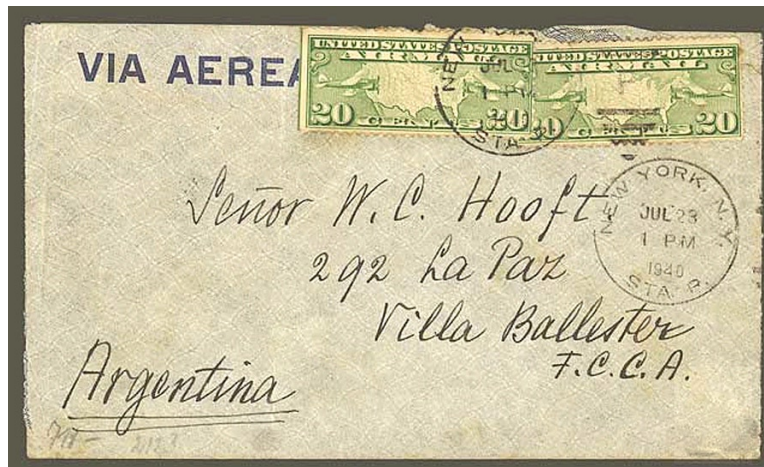
[Key to identification]

Airmail from New York to Argentina: Censored by Germany?

by

Steven M. Roth

I recently purchased the cover shown below because it puzzled me. Now that I have studied the cover, it still confuses me. Perhaps you can help me understand how and why it received Nazi censorship?



[2]



[3]

[4]

[1]

The cover was mailed from New York City to Argentina on July 23, 1940. It reached Argentina, as evidenced by a receiving backstamp (see arrow “[1]” in illustration), but I can only make out the first two letters [“JU”] of the backstamp date (The seller of the cover claims that the arrival date was June 23, 1943, but my careful examination of the cover under a strong glass does not support this -- or any identifiable -- arrival date.) At some point the letter came into the possession of the Germans who opened the letter, examined it, and then resealed it. I am satisfied that the sealing tape and the handstamps tying the tape are genuine. The censorship tape is tied by a purple German censorship marking “[2]” and also by the Argentina receiving CDS (thus indicating that the letter was opened and inspected before it reached Argentina). There also is a black, small circular handstamp that is divided in half by a horizontal black line. It contains the numeral “64” in the top portion; it contains the number “3” in the bottom half. “[3]” There also are some illegible pencil notations . “[4]”

So, how did this occur? Here is some collateral history of the period that might be useful: Among the Latin American countries, only Argentina openly sided with the Nazis, while also holding itself out as a Neutral. Meanwhile, in 1940 Germany engaged in an active and fairly successful campaign to sink Allied ships along the coast of South America.

What are your thoughts about this cover? Let me know so I can publish them in a future Newsletter.

***Return to Sender/No Service Available: When Was Letter Service
to Neutral Switzerland Temporarily Suspended? An Update***

by

Steven M. Roth

In Newsletter No. 22 I stated that I would like to examine a cover successfully sent from the United States to Switzerland after November 1942 and before March 24, 1943, to determine if there was a break between the German imposed suspension of mail service to Switzerland and the published onset of the blockade imposed by the United States. I recently discovered such a cover, but I suspect that it is merely an enticing anomaly.



This cover originated in New York on March 23, 1943. The New York branch of the Office of Censorship examined and resealed it. There are no markings on the back. Nothing about the cover suggests its disposition

(continued on page 9)

Unusual Prexie Usage: International Airmail Message Postal Card with Attached Reply Card

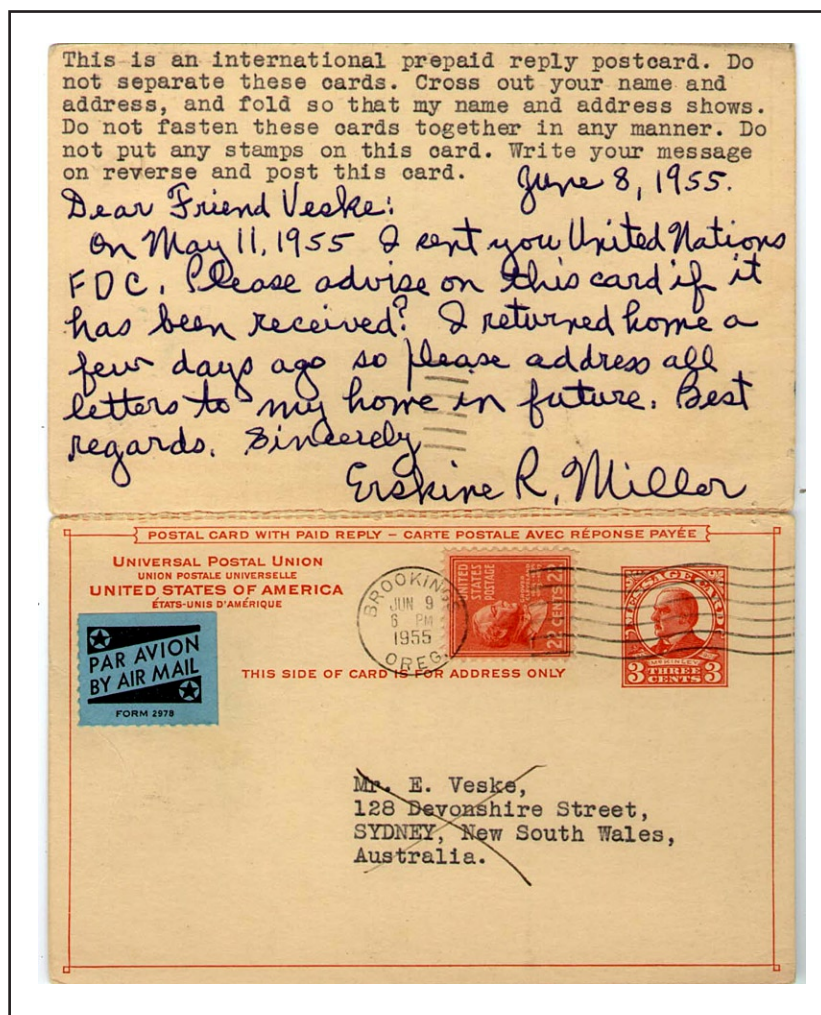
by

Leonard Piszkiwicz

International airmail message postal cards with attached reply cards are rarely seen, probably because they were subject to letter rates of postage. [Note that while the USPOD has issued international reply cards for surface mail, no such airmail card has ever been issued.]

Illustrated is a card (Scott #UY12, issued in 1926, and not replaced until the 4¢ Liberty card of 1956) that was mailed to Australia in 1955 by airmail. A 22¢ Prexie was added to make the airmail letter rate. The sender also added a 1¢ Prexie coil to the reply side, but asked his recipient to return the cards unsevered. The card probably should have been returned unsevered with the U.S. 4¢ postage paid, but the Australian sender added 6½d and 1d stamps to pay the 7½d Australian international surface letter rate. Do any of our readers have an insight as to why the surface letter rate was paid for return?

[Original Message Side]





[Switzerland Update]

(continued from page 7)

by Censorship, but it likely was sent on to Switzerland since it is not marked otherwise. Since this cover entered the mails on March 23, it likely was examined and released by Censorship on or about the 23rd. Otherwise, how should we account for the fact that when the United States suspended service to Switzerland on March 24, this letter was not returned to the sender or held by Censorship? And, too, why was it not intercepted en route and returned? Indeed, if the cover ever did arrive at the border of Switzerland, why was it not blocked by the German suspension of service during the so-called Nazi First Period of suspended service if this period extended to or even beyond March 24?

Without markings to indicate information about this cover's journey, I am not yet prepared to accept this cover as the indication that there was any interval between the apparent two periods of suspended service.

Other updating data I have to report are:

1. Airmail service to Switzerland resumed on June 21, 1945, per the notice in the **Postal Bulletin**, dated June 22, 1945 (PB No.18834);
2. The earliest CDS I have examined for the First Period is September 21, 1942 on a surface cover; and,
3. The latest CDS I have examined for the First Period is a surface cover dated February 15, 1943.

One writer to this Editor has stated that the United States' period of suspension began in November 1942, not on or about March 24, 1943, as I have written, although he cited no support for this position.

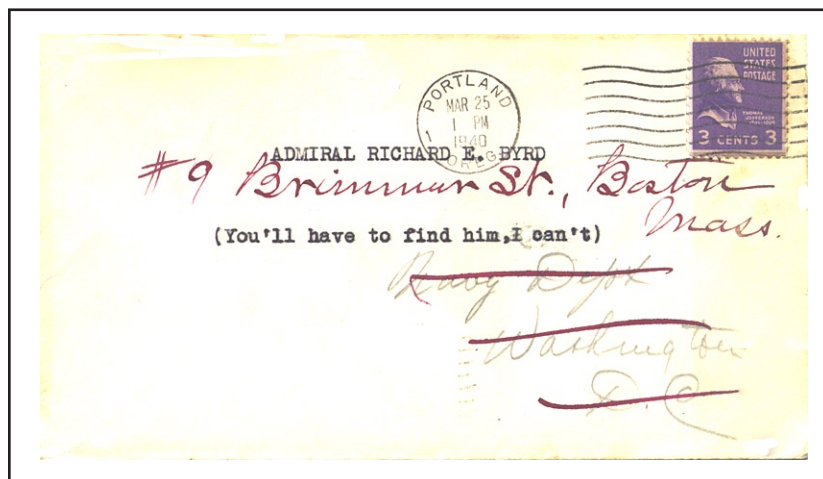
In the next Issue, I will examine covers that were in the censorship system (United States and Bermuda) before November 1942, but received the "No Service Available" handstamp, and why this factor does not mean that the United States' period of suspension (the Second Period) started in November 1942.

O Brother, Admiral Byrd, Where Art Thou?

by

Jeffrey Shapiro

With only a name to go on (albeit a famous one) the Post Office found the correct delivery address after only two attempts on this 1940 cover franked with a 3¢ Prexie, paying the prevailing domestic First Class rate.



Editor's Request: PLEASE send me material for
the next Issue.