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Issue No. 28

The Prexie Era

The Newsletter of the USSS 1938 Presidential Era Study Group

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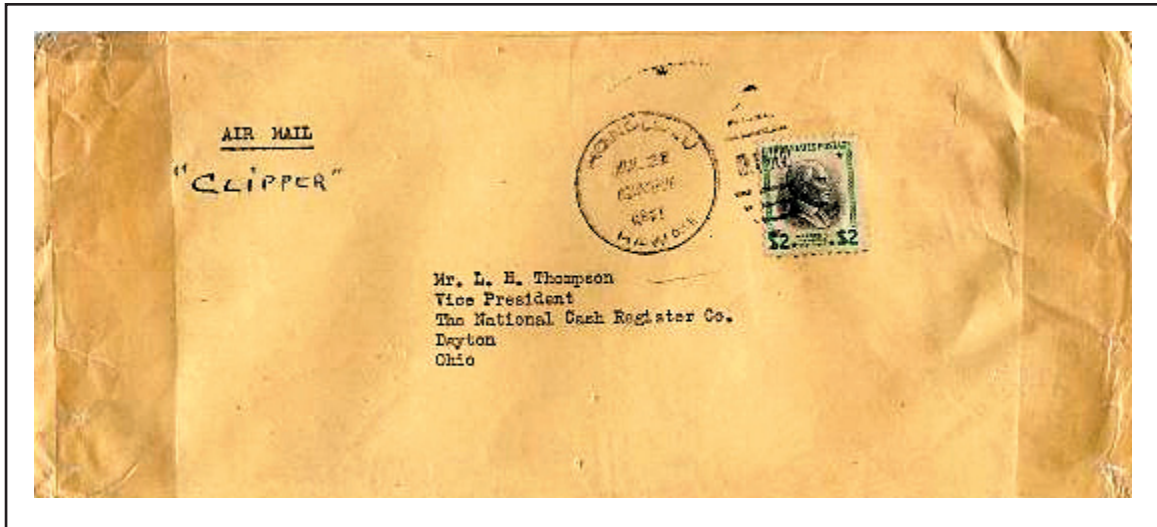
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A Prexie Cover Sells on Ebay For \$1,560.13!

When the auction closed on October 24, 2003, and the last of eighteen bids had been cast by 5 bidders, Chip Briggs was the winner of Ebay Item #2958580643 -- a solo use of a \$2.00 Prexie [Scott #833] from Hawaii to Ohio via Clipper over FAM Route 14. The franking represented ten times the minimum required franking for airmail from Hawaii to mainland United States [20 cents per 1/2 oz.]. The cover was postmarked July 28, 1941.



When Did Mail Service Resume in Hawaii After December 7, 1941?

Postal history dealer Labron Harris raised this question last summer when we were talking at BALPEX. We know that mail was suspended for a short time after the attack on Pearl Harbor, but we do not know for certain when the mail resumed.

In my attempt to answer the question I looked through all of the *Postal Bulletins* and *Supplements*, but did not find the answer. The only reference I could find anywhere was a brief statement in the recent update of the 1951 Report to President Truman stating that the Office of Censorship opened in Honolulu on December 13. [THE UNITED STATES POST OFFICE IN WORLD WAR II, p.78, L. Sherman, M.D., ed., 2002] This, of course, does not answer the question of resumption of service or the start date of the censoring of the mail.

Can anyone produce a cover to or from Hawaii earlier, say, than December 31 [so we can begin to establish a date of service resumption and of the start of censorship?] Send your answers and images to me. I will report the results.

A Prexie Forerunner to U.S. Internment Camp Mail

by

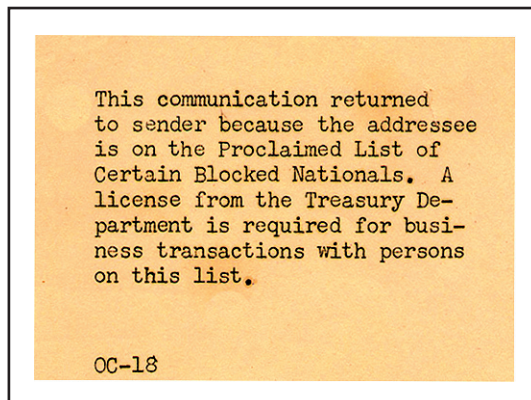
Louis Fiset

This 1942 Prexie cover (IMAGE 1), paying the correct 35 cents airmail rate to Bolivia, was returned to the writer by a censor at the Miami censor station (Examiner #1747). The letter never left the country. Why this is so became evident upon examining the censor's explanatory note [BRODERICK & MAYO, CIVIL CENSOR-

IN THE UNITED STATES DURING WORLD WAR II, F.18.2, p.93] tucked inside the cover.



The note (IMAGE 2) indicates the addressee, a German business, is on the Proclaimed List of Certain Blocked Nationals, and that without a license from the Treasury Department business transactions with persons on the list are forbidden.



Beginning in July 1941, the United States initiated unilateral economic warfare on Germany by blacklisting certain German companies and individuals residing in Latin America. This included the cancellation of contracts of Germans working for U.S. companies and the boycotting and blacklisting of Germans without any regard to their activities, political stance or loyalties. This foreign policy was in response to the State Department's perception that Germany posed an economic threat to the United States' trade interests in the Western Hemisphere, which it arrogated to itself. Moreover, government officials believed that this advantage further abetted pro-Nazi German ex-patriots living and working in the region. By March 1942, the Proclaimed List of businesses and individuals reached nearly 6,000.

The blacklisting was only the first step in the State Department's effort to rid the Western Hemisphere of Hitler's presence. It became the primary means for producing lists of deportees who would be heading north to Texas internment camps by the hundreds beginning in April 1942. In Bolivia alone 221 German aliens were deported during the War. IMAGE 3 [shown on the next page] shows a cover with a 6 cents Transport stamp from a German deportee at the Kenedy Internment Camp, one of three INS camps that held the majority of the 4,000 German deportees sent to the United States during World War II.

Collectors should be on the lookout for other "Return to Sender" covers destined for German-named businesses and individuals in Latin America. Nineteen Latin American companies cooperated in the deportation pro-

gram by assisting the State Department in identifying businesses and individuals to blacklist. Such covers might well be viewed as forerunners to United States internment camp mail.



When Do Subscriptions Expire?

This question comes up often. All subscriptions will expire with the publication of Issue No. 32 [Winter 2005]. At that time subscribers to the digital edition will be able to renew for \$5.00 for four Issues.. They will receive a CD-R containing all Issues from 1-32. Subscribers to the paper edition will be able to renew for \$10 [unless postage increases between now and then]. They will not receive the CD-R

Another Nice 10 Cents Prexie Coil Franking

by

Dickson Preston

George Wagner, in his stimulating piece on the 10 cents Prexie coil in the Fall 2003 number of *The Prexie Era Newsletter*, asks for other unusual usages of this stamp, which is so difficult to find on cover. I would like to report a recent acquisition, a war-time cover sent to Vichy France (established June 1940) with a strip of three 10 cents coils paying the 30 cents transatlantic clipper air rate to Europe.



The cover, from one Wm. M. Wilson, was postmarked Philadelphia 7 April 1941, and backstamped in Lyon,

but the date of arrival is not readable. The letter was opened twice, first by French censors and second by French customs. The censors closed the letter with a white paper strip imprinted “Controle,” which is now hidden under the customs tape on the right end of the envelope. They also applied lozenge-shaped censor markings with code letters “WK”, for Marseilles, front and back. The customs people subsequently re-closed the letter with translucent tapes imprinted “POSTES, TELEGRAPHES ET TELEPHONES (Art. 29, IV’ fasc. de l’Instruction generale),” which are tied by double-circle handstamps reading “DOUANE GARE MARSEILLE” (customs railroad station Marseilles).

The letter would have been flown on Atlantic FAM 18, via Lisbon to Marseilles, more than a year before service to unoccupied France was suspended in November, 1942. Following this route, it was not censored by the Germans.

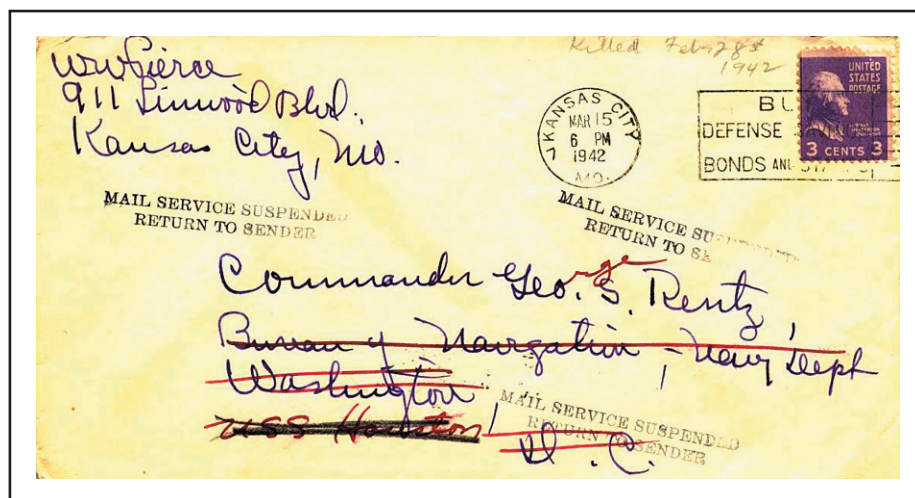
Correction from Issue No. 27: Postal history dealer Jim Forte has pointed out that the year “1952” on page 3, line 2, should be “1962”.

USS Houston

by

Jeffrey M. Shapiro

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the *USS Houston* (CA-30), the flagship for the Asiatic Fleet, commissioned in 1930, was ordered to sail from the Phillipines to join American, British, Dutch and Australian (ABDA) forces to destroy Japanese naval units operating in the southwest Pacific Ocean.



On the evening of February 26, 1942, the *Houston*, along with 10 ABDA destroyers and cruisers, entered the Sunda Strait in an effort to thwart the Japanese invasion of Java. In the Battle of the Java Sea which followed early in the morning of March 1, after a furious confrontation with two Japanese cruisers, the *Mogami Maru* and the *Mikuma Maru*, the *USS Houston* sank.

Of the 1,000 men on board, only 368 survived the sinking. These men would become slave laborers for

the Japanese throughout Southeast Asia, with many forced to build the infamous bridge over the River Kwai.

The *Houston*'s fate was kept top secret by the United States for almost six months. This secrecy can be seen with this Prexie cover addressed to George Rentz, an officer on the *Houston*, and mailed on March 15, 1942, from Kansas City, two weeks after the ship had been sunk. The letter was returned to the sender fifty days later, with the auxiliary marking "MAIL SERVICE SUSPENDED". Records indicate that the addressee died when the vessel sunk.

New Census Being Conducted; Solo Prexie Rates CD-R Now Available

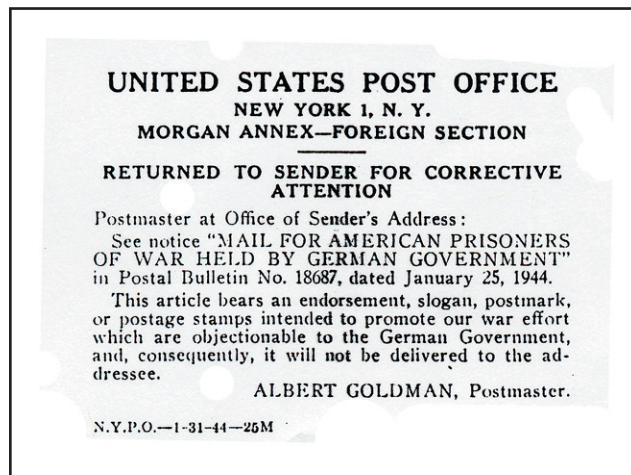
Jeff Shapiro is compiling a census of non-philatelic covers with uses of the following Prexie values: 1-1/2 cents vertical coil [all uses]; and, solo uses of the 14, 19, and 22 cents and \$1.00, \$2.00 and the \$5.00 values. He will report his results in the *Newsletter*.

I have compiled a CD-R which contains the solo rates for Prexie values 1 cent through 50 cents taken from Issues Nos. 9 - 15 of the *Newsletter*. No multiple rates were included so there are no Dollar rates in the compilation. I will make this CD-R available to any subscriber who sends \$10.00 to the publication fund. Why do we need this contribution? Because the costs of printing and mailing remain high even though we have drastically cut our expenses thanks to more than 40% of our subscribers who take the online digital edition.

World War Two Letter Mail Labels [continued from Issue No. 25]

by

Steven M. Roth



This label generally is found on mail that was sent to United States military personnel who were held as prisoners-of-war, when the outside of the envelope contained some patriotic matter (such as the popular "Win the War" adhesive stamp). The letter would be intercepted by the U.S. authorities who would place this label on the envelope and return it to the sender. If the letter made it past the U.S. authorities, the Red Cross or the Axis Powers would remove the stamp before delivering the letter to

the POW. Below is an example of such a letter.

PRISONER OF WAR POST
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

RANK AND NAME (CAPITAL LETTERS) LT. H. LAWSON CORLEY UNITED STATES PRISONER OF WAR.

PRISONER OF WAR No. _____
(SEE NOTE ON FLAP)

CAMP NAME AND No. STALAG LUFT 3

SUBSIDIARY CAMP No. _____

11829 COUNTRY GERMANY
U.S. CENSOR OCT. 25 VIA NEW YORK, N. Y. 157

In this case, the form letter made it past the U.S. Censor, but the German censor removed the U.S. stamp, possibly a “Win the War” or similar stamp, but clearly not a Prexie.

Some Forerunners of World War II Interrupted Mail

by

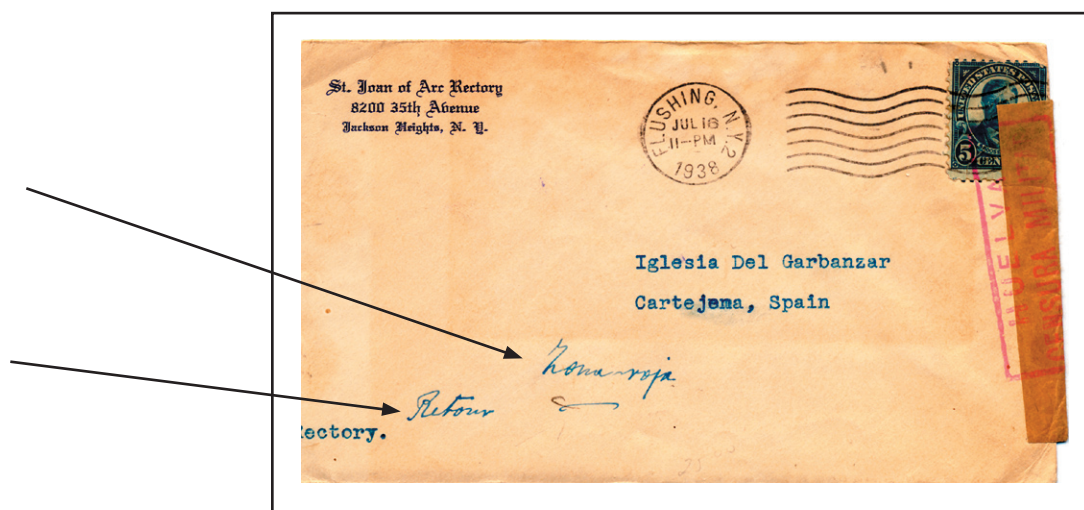
Steven M. Roth

Even before the outbreak of World War II in Europe on September 1, 1939, a letter sent abroad from the United States to a destination that was undergoing conflict often was interrupted in its journey. I include such mail in my forerunners collection if the conflict is considered by historians to have been a harbinger of the World War. Here are some examples from my holdings.

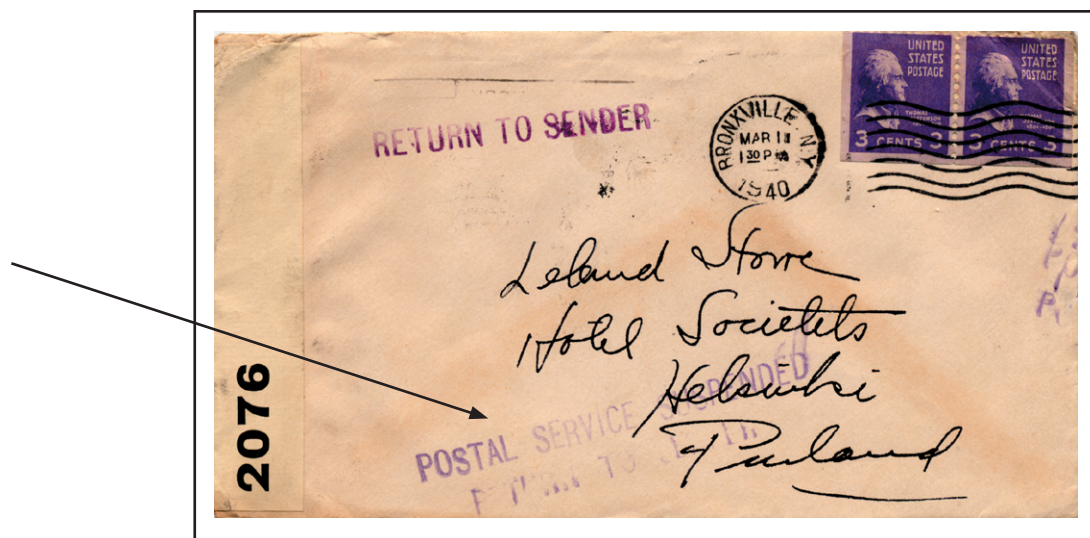


This letter was sent to Mongolia [China] in 1936 just after the Japanese occupied that northern Province. The letter was returned with the handstamp: “SERVICE TEMPORARILY/SUSPENDED/RETURN TO SENDER.”

This cover, addressed to Cartejena, Spain, was mailed on July 16, 1938, during the Spanish Civil War. It was received by the Loyalist [Franco] forces, marked in manuscript "Retour/Zona rosa" [Return/Red Zone], and not sent on to the town then held by the leftist Republicans.



The last cover was sent to Finland during the so-called "Winter War" which lasted from November 30, 1939 through March 13, 1940, between the Soviet Union and Finland. Mail to Finland was temporarily suspended. The letter was marked: "RETURN TO SENDER" and "POSTAL SERVICE SUSPENDED/RETURN TO SENDER". This cover was postmarked March 1, 1940.



A New Newsletter That Might Interest Subscribers

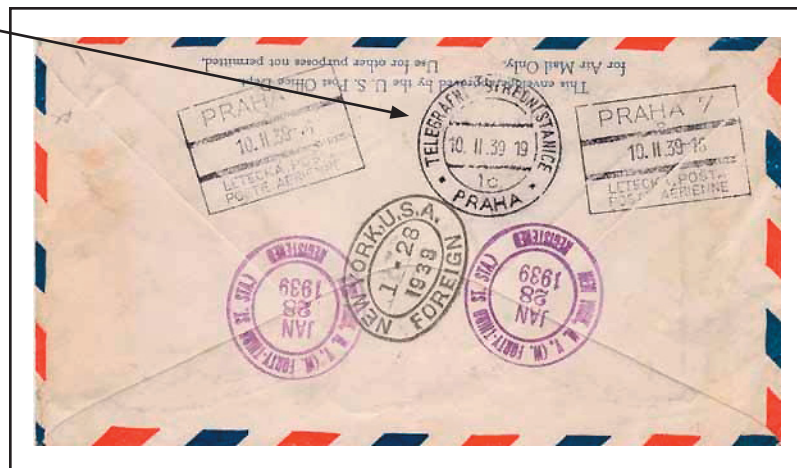
I recently received from subscriber Ken Pitt the digital edition of a newsletter called "King George VI Post & Mail". It is published by the King George VI Study Group of the British North America Philatelic Society. I suspect that many topics to be covered in future issues will interest subscribers to the *Prexie Era Newsletter*. Information and a sample digital copy can be obtained from Gary Steele at GARY.STEELE@NS.SYMPATICO.CA

By Steamer, Airplane and Pneumatic Tube

by

Dickson Preston

One of my delights in Prexie era collecting is to find combination frankings of the Fourth Bureau Issue with the Prexie series. So I was pleased when Ebay sent me this pre-clipper air mail cover sent from New York to Prague in January 1939, franked with a 20 cents Golden Gate and two 3 cents Jeffersons. The sender paid 5 cents per ounce for an international surface letter, two times 3 cents per half ounce for delivery by air in Europe, and 15 cents international registration, for a total of 26 cents. Since the letter was sent from New York, there was no need for domestic airmail. The New York Post Office applied the blue airmail Form 2978 to show that postage for airmail delivery within Europe had been paid. The letter was mailed 28 January 1939 in New York, was routed via the SS Roosevelt, and arrived in Prague on 10 February 1939, where it received the rectangular Prague 7 airmail arrival marking. It was sent before both the Nazi takeover of Czechoslovakia in March and the opening of the transatlantic clipper service in May 1939. Thus this historical cover shows a fine combination of an unusual rate, a good destination, and a mixed issue franking.



But the really exciting aspect of this cover is the red sequence number 2063 placed below the 3 cents stamps. This sequence number identifies this letter as one which was carried on a network of pneumatic

tubes within the city of Prague. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the Prague Post Office used this network for rapid delivery of mail within the city. Mail was loaded into cylinders, and pushed by air pressure through a network of tubes which connected all the major post offices in the city. For an extra fee, a sender could have his message whisked across the city in a matter of minutes. Similar systems operated in Vienna, Paris, Berlin, and other large cities.

With the advent of air mail services, the pneumatic systems were also used to provide rapid delivery of airmail letters and cards. In Prague, air mail sent to addresses outside the central part of the city was forwarded across town by the pneumatic mail, with no extra fee being charged for the service. The letter shown here can be identified as a pneumatic one in three ways. First, the letter displays the large four-digit sequence number 2063, mentioned above, which was used to keep track of the items sent through the Prague's pneumatic system. This sequence number confirms that the letter was carried on the pneumatic network. Second, the address is in District II, away from the city's center. Third, the letter carries a telegraph office backstamp dated 10 February 1939, at 1900 hours. In European cities, the pneumatic network was often operated by the telegraph-side of the postal-telegraph organization.

Pneumatic mail was also provided to arriving airmail on a regular basis in Vienna, and occasionally in Berlin. Can anyone show a Prexie example from either of these two cities?

Mystery Cover

Can anyone explain this cover? Why the 30 cents rate to China rather than the 70 cents FAM 14 airmail rate?



The cover was postmarked in New York City on September 14, 1941. It does not have any transit markings on its back other than a Shanghai receiving chop in Chinese. The arrival date in China was October 14, 1941, as indicated by a docketing on the back.

Coming Next Issue: Censorship of Philatelic Material in World War II

I will discuss this topic in our next Issue. It has nothing to do with so-called "philatelic covers", but relates to the treatment of stamps as currency for import and export purposes. If anyone has any covers relating to this topic, I would appreciate having a scan to use in the article; I have none.