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Wartime Emergency Trans-Pacific Airmail Route to Europe, Africa and the Middle East

by

Steven M. Roth

[Continued from Newsletter No. 33]

Mail to the Middle East also was flown over the emergency Trans-Pacific Route. **Figure 11** is a letter to Iraq. The sender's admonition (partly obscured by the CDS) was "By air mail via Pan American Airway/via Hong Kong". There is a Hong Kong transit handstamp on the back. This letter did not pass through censor's examination.



Figure 11. November 26, 1940.

Figure 12 was flown to Palestine on July 24, 1941. It has a Singapore transit marking on the back. It also has a British resealing tape from censorship in Palestine.



Figure 12

Figure 13 was flown on September 22, 1941 to Lebanon/Syria via Singapore. There is a “TO BE FORWARDED BY/AIR FROM SINGAPORE” handstamp on the front, a Singapore censor’s handstamp on the front and back, and the Singapore resealing tape on the left end. The sender’s admonition, “VIA PACIFIC CLIPPER” appears below the CDS.



Figure 13

Figure 14 was destined for Egypt on September 17, 1941. It has a Hong Kong transit handstamp on the back, an Egyptian resealing tape, and an Egyptian censor’s handstamp on the front.



Figure 14

The Trans-Pacific emergency route also was used for mail from the United States to India. **Figure 15** flew via Hong Kong. It has a Hong Kong censor's handstamp on the back, an India censor resealing tape, and an India censor’s handstamp.

[Figure 15 appears on next page]



Figure 15

Figure 16, a cover to Greece, is an example of the 30¢ legacy rate referred to in Part 1 of this article. This particular accommodation rate was established in the POSTAL BULLETIN SUPPLEMENT for February 1941.



Figure 16.

This cover was originally marked “VIA TRANSATLANTIC/AIR MAIL” by the sender, but this was crossed-out (probably by the postal service although there is no way to be sure). The letter made it as far as Singapore where it was opened and examined, then resealed and handstamped, front and back, by Singapore censorship. It also was marked with a handstamp “POSTAL CORRESPONDENCE SUSPENDED” in Singapore. It then was returned to San Francisco, its place of origin.

Figure 17 is a cover to Latvia via the emergency routing. This route for Latvia, as well as the 30¢ accommodation rate, was specifically covered in the POSTAL BULLETIN for June 21, 1941:

FOREIGN AIR MAIL SERVICE

Beginning at once, air mails for U. S. S. R., Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, shall be dispatched via the Pacific coast and the trans-Pacific air-mail route, to be sent onward from Hong Kong by ordinary means. The total postage shall be 70 cents per half ounce. However, for a time mails for those countries prepaid at the air-mail rate heretofore required, shall be given dispatch via the trans-Pacific route. Inquiring mailers may be informed that the sending of articles for the above-named countries by air mail may not expedite the articles materially over service by ordinary means.



Figure 17

Figure 18, a cover to Turkey via the emergency route, presents two mysteries. First, it was not rated at 70¢, but at 30¢. Granted, this could represent the legacy rate, but that still leaves a second problem: neither the 70¢ Trans-Pacific rate nor the 30¢ Trans-Atlantic rate to Turkey is mentioned in any official postal rate chart or schedule known to this writer. I have recorded only one example of the 70¢ rate to Turkey via the emergency routing, and six 30¢ covers during this period.

Figure 18 was flown via Singapore where it was opened by the Singapore censorship, resealed with resealing tape, and hand stamped with the "PASSED BY/CENSOR 227" Singapore censor handstamp.

[Figure 18 appears on next page]

Reflections On the Marking "CPNY"

by

A.J. Savakis

I read with great interest the three recent articles and/or letters concerning the machine marking CPNY. I



Figure 18

[Savakis - continued from previous page]

wrote a few articles on this subject over the years in the Machine Cancel Forum.^o I cannot say I agree with the most recent note on this subject, the one by Dann Mayo published in Newsletter No. 33.¹ I own examples that are outside the dates given by Mr. Mayo. The CPNY marking was not used for just a few weeks. It was used for more than one year.

I cannot find a contemporary document that defines the initials “CP”. I have found contemporary documents that refer to CPNY and CP [other ports – such as San Francisco], although I have not seen such other port markings on any covers. Some of the ideas put forth over the years to explain the meaning of “CP” are (i) closed pouch, (ii) captain of the port, (iii) check point or censor point, or (iv) Care Postmaster [New York],² but I have not seen any official document verifying these interpretations. I originally thought (and indicated in my Machine Cancel Forum articles) that “CP” referred to a closed pouch system of transferring the mail from the civilian postal system to the military system, but now I don’t believe this is correct. I have since seen documentary evidence that convinces me that the initials “CP” refer to a place or a department, not to mail transfer.

I have concluded, however, that the marking [CPNY] is not rare or even scarce. It was used from mid-1943 until mid-1945.

I have some other questions and observations:

- A. Why did New York use the marking, but no other port did although there are references in contemporaneous documents that refer to CPNY and CP other ports. As I said above, I have yet to see a cover from “CP(some other port)”.
- B. There are lots of theories as to what the initials “CP” mean. I thought I had it when I picked up the RPO book MAIL BY RAIL by Bryant A. Long and William J. Dennis, and in the index it reads CLOSED POUCH (CP). A light bulb went off. The term CLOSED POUCH describes perfectly how the mail went from the RPO system direct to the Armed Guard System. But reviewing the documents that do refer to CPNY, it is obvious they are not referring to the process

¹ “Thoughts on the Machine Marking CPNY”, Dann Mayo, Prexie Era Newsletter, No. 33, p.5.

² LINN’S STAMP NEWS [Collector’s Corner, September 22, 2003, page 40] had a note about the MS GRIPSHOLM. It illustrated a piece of mail addressed to Care Postmaster, New York. The cover had the CPNY marking on the back.

by which the mail is delivered, but to a person or place. The Helbock study has an appendix of original documents that refers to the Chief Postal Censor as CPC, and then to the local as CPNY CPSF SPNO etc. So if the initials carry forward, then CPNY means Chief Postal [Censor for] New York. But these are guesses.

C. Ever wonder why it is referred to as an International machine marking? Well, some examples show the dial, and there is the small tick mark -- horizontal to CPNY and just above CPNY-- that appears. Most International markings have this tick mark. So since it has this characteristic, it is identified as an International.

D. I wrote to the APRL for research on CPNY. The kind librarian found the earliest reference to CPNY in a book called UNITED STATES RF OVERPRINTS ON AIR MAIL STAMPS AND STATIONERY (1944-1945).³ At page 34 Goodkind refers to CPNY as meaning CENSORED POST NEW YORK -- but gives no reference. So besides armed guard mail and refuge mail, CPNY is also applied to Free French mail posted at the port. But note this: the armed guard mail gets the CPNY marking as it leaves the civilian mail and goes into the military. The refuge mail and RF mail gets it when it enters the civilian system. (Still showing an interface!)

So, my thought is that before we add more fuel to the fire, make the January 2002 Machine Cancel Forum article available to the Prexie Era Study Group (please remember the copyright to the Machine Cancel Society). Let's get a response, and see where it all winds up. [Editor's Note: Alex has made the Forum article available to me in digital format. If anyone wants it, contact me with your e-mail address. I'll attach it to your e-mail and return it to you.]

Local Rates at the War Relocation Authority Relocation Centers

by

Louis Fiset

The illustrations below show two examples of first class, local letter surface rates in use during the World War II era. In the first, 1-cent pays the half-ounce rate at a non-carrier post office. The second example [see page 8] shows a 2-cent rate paid at a carrier post office. Together the pair reveals a problem.

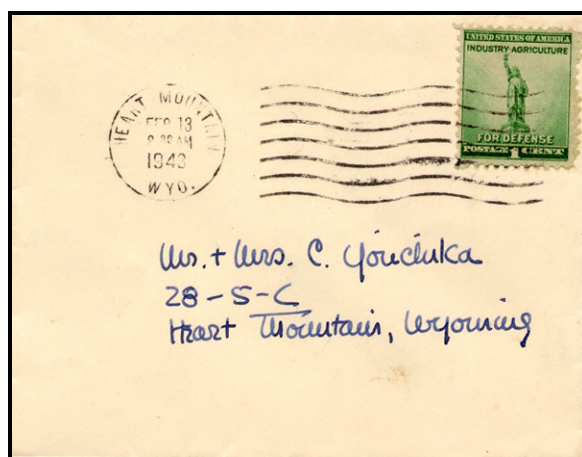


Figure 1: 1-cent local non-carrier post office rate paid at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center.

A close observer will note that each cover was sent and received by Japanese Americans incarcerated at War Relocation Authority relocation centers. Heart Mountain (Heart Mountain Relocation Center) was

³ Collector's Club Handbook No. 5 by Henry Goodkind 91958).

an independent branch of the parent Cody, Wyoming post office, whereas Hunt (Minidoka Relocation Center) was an independent branch of the Twin Falls, Idaho post office. The two rates appear to reflect the availability/non-availability of letter carrier service. The problem is that both branch post offices (and apparently all ten relocation centers) provided home delivery of the mail. Well, sort of.

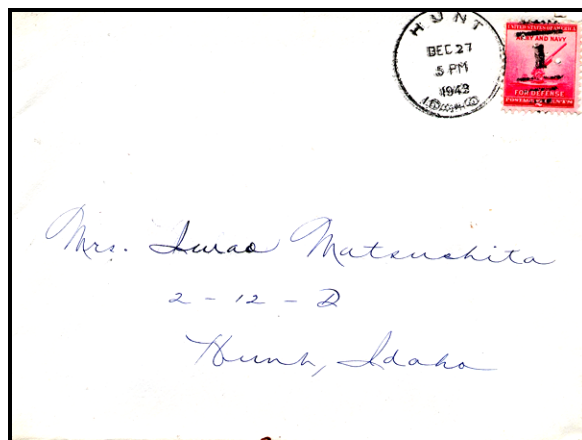


Figure 2: 2-cent local carrier post office rate paid at the Minidoka Relocation Center

Bonded, civil service employees were dispatched to each of the center branch post offices to sell postal supplies, issue and pay money orders, and to register letters and parcels. However, letter carrier service was not included as a service to be provided and paid for by the Post Office Department to the residents. General delivery postal service at the centers, averaging 8,000 patrons, soon proved unworkable, as did schemes for distribution to sub-stations or other large units where individuals would call for the mail in person. Residential delivery service was eventually initiated. The mail sorters and letter carriers were the inmates, themselves, who, although overseen by the branch postmasters, were paid by the War Relocation Authority. Post Office Department salaries were set by law and far exceeded the \$16 per month salary paid to the Japanese American employees. Thus, it appears the center branch post offices were officially non-carrier post offices, and the 1-cent rate applied.

With the recent acquisition shown here I have now recorded three examples of the 1-cent rate paid at the Heart Mountain branch post office. However, I have yet to see an example of this rate paid at any other center. Similarly, I have recorded numerous examples of the 2-cent rate on mail at the Minidoka Relocation Center (in effect until March 26, 1944), but none at any other center.

This small sample size is insufficient to draw any conclusions. Additional research is needed to confirm that home delivery service indeed occurred or did not occur at all centers, not just delivery to larger units such as blocks or sub-stations where individuals would call for their mail. It appears the intent was for home delivery of the mail to be provided. According to post office planners for the Heart Mountain Relocation Center,

The incoming mail will be sorted out to blocks, or other units agreed upon, and will be given to selected evacuees for delivery in accordance with the addresses thereon.⁴

The “addresses thereon” were block number, barrack number, and apartment letter, such as the 28-5-C address shown in the first example.

Currently, it appears that directives from the parent post offices determining the proper local rate to assess depended upon an interpretation of the status of the letter carriers. Who can shed further light on this issue either with information from postal archives or with examples from other centers?

⁴ Lawrence Sherman, MD (ed.) *The United States Post Office In World War II*. Chicago: Chicago Collectors Club, 2002, p. 155.

It's All in How It Was Addressed

by

Bob Hohertz

The first cover that is illustrated was sent to "HONGKONG" (sic) in 1940 at double the seventy-cent per ounce airmail rate in effect from April 21, 1937 until service was suspended December 12, 1941.



The second cover was also sent to Hong Kong during that period, but the postage applied to it for double weight was \$1.60. Since lower denomination Prexies were part of the franking, it was deliberately overpaid. This seems strange until one reads the address: "Hongkong, China". From May 23, 1939 to June 14, 1940, the airmail rate to China was eighty cents per ounce. The charge was correct for double weight to China, but not to Hong Kong.



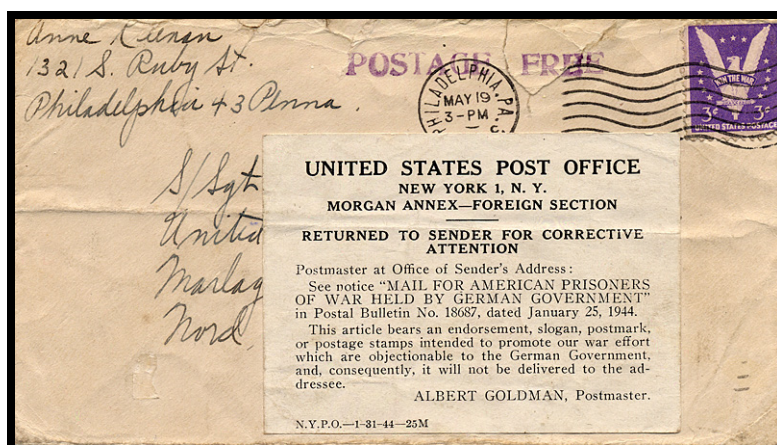
A similar cover was sold on eBay earlier this year, addressed to Hong Kong, China, with \$1.60 postage. One can imagine the postal clerk looking up the rate and saying, "To China? Oh, eighty cents an ounce."

World War II Letter Mail Labels [Continued from Issue No.28]

by

Steven M. Roth

In Prexie Era Newsletter No. 28 [pages 6-7] I showed a Post Office form used in the New York Post Office which returned letters that contained external indicia [such as the Win the War stamp] offensive to Germany. At the time I did not have an example on cover. Now I do. See the cover below.



This cover, like all of the others I've seen, was addressed to a POW held in Germany. When the occasional letter bearing an offensive stamp made it past the U.S. censors or the New York Post Office clerks, the German post office removed the offensive stamp and then sent the letter on to its destination. I showed an example of such a letter in Prexie Era Newsletter No. 28, page 7.

FAM 14 – Airmail to Japan in 1940

by

Steven M. Roth

Airmail covers to Japan in the year or so preceding its entry into World War II are very scarce. The one shown below left New York via FAM 14 on July 18, 1940. It likely flew via San Francisco → Hawaii → Guam → Manila → Macao → Hong Kong → Osaka. It arrived in Osaka on September 10, 1940. It then was handstamped to indicate that the address was insufficient. It was returned to the sender.

