



The PrexieEra

The Newsletter of the USSS 1938 Presidential Era Study Group

Published Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer

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The Postman as Historian

by

Louis Fiset

My fascination with postal history relating to war resides in its impact on the delivery of the mail – from delays due to censorship or alternate mail routes, to the suspension of mail service, altogether. Sometimes the postman, himself, provides helpful information on why an individual piece of correspondence got delayed or was never delivered. The two postal cards shown here from World War II illustrate the point.



The first card, a piece of business correspondence addressed to London, was postmarked May 23, 1940 long before the U.S. entered the war. The card reached London, but was returned to the sender sometime after July 8th. A rubber stamp on the message side indicates the official reason for the return: RETURN TO SENDER/House Empty. It is the postman's single word addition penciled on the face of the card, however, that causes us to catch our breath: "Demolished." The building likely fell victim to the aerial bombing by the Luftwaffe, which was intensifying at this time to become known as the Battle of Britain.



The time period of the second card is immediately apparent from the two-cent commemorative in tribute to President Roosevelt, who died at Warm Springs, Georgia on April 12, 1945. The April 1, 1946 postmark is an important date, for on this day post-war postal relations with Germany resumed. Initially, non-illustrated postal cards and letters weighing up to one ounce sent by surface routes were permitted. The message, in German, reveals the writer was attempting to reestablish contact with relatives in Hamburg. But as in the first example, the postal card was returned to the sender. And once again the penciled notation by the postman tells us why: *Haus zerstört/Empfänger/verzogen wohin/unbekannt*. The story brief but clear: “House destroyed/Addressee/gone away whereabouts/unknown.” The large port city of Hamburg was bombed repeatedly and heavily by British and U.S. air forces from 1943 to 1945.

The two postal card shown, written at both ends of the war, reveal the misery inflicted upon civilians during times of major conflict. The magnitude of the Second World War is too vast for most individuals to grasp in terms of the number of lives lost and property destroyed. Sometimes a few scribbled words on an undelivered postal card help put a human face on it.

\$2.00 and \$5.00 Prexies Covers Census to be Undertaken by Study Group

The Presidential Issue Study Group, chaired by Jeffrey Shapiro, convened at Washington 2006. Among the topics discussed, the Study Group decided to maintain a census of the \$2.00 and the \$5.00 Prexie stamps used on covers or on wrappers (but NOT used on tags). The use does not have to be a solo use, but it should not be a philatelic use, if possible.

Subscribers are urged to send information about uses of the \$2.00 and uses of the \$5.00 stamps to Jeff Shapiro (PO Box 3211, Fayville, MA 01745-3211) with the following information:

- Cover date [month, day, year]
- Post office of origin
- Addressee and full address
- Scott # for all stamps [not only the \$2.00 or the \$5.00]
- An image [preferably a color scan at 400 dpi saved as a TIFF file] or a color photocopy [ratio 1:1]. The image should show both sides of the cover or wrapper if the reverse has any information on it

We will publish the results of the census in the Newsletter.

Subscriber's Inquiry: Airmail to Greenland

Subscriber Tony Wawrukiewicz recently contacted several Newsletter subscribers to ask if any of them knew the non-military, non-concession airmail rate for mail from the United States to Greenland during World War II. He asked if anyone has an example of a cover to show him? No one did. He also asked if such covers were routed through Denmark. Finally, he wanted to know if such covers indicated censoring by the military or civilian Censorship Office.

None of the five subscribers contacted by Tony could answer the questions or had a non-military cover in his possession to show as an example.

Can any Subscriber show an example? If so, you can contact Tony directly via e-mail [tonywaw@spiritone.com]. If you will also send your information and an image to the Editor, I will publish it in the Newsletter for the benefit of all Subscribers.

36¢ Reverse Horseshoe Route Cover to Syria

By

Steven M. Roth

The cover shown below is an example of the scarce 36¢ rate used on FAM 18 for covers going to the Middle East via England prior to July 10, 1940 (when Italy entered World War II and closed the Mediterranean Sea to Allied air traffic).

This cover, addressed to Lebanon/Syria, was sent via the reverse Horseshoe Route described in the Newsletter in Issues Nos. 26 [pp. 9-10], 27 [p.10], and 33 [p.5].



The cover was postmarked in the United States on January 8, 1941. It appears that the writer expected the letter to be flown via FAM 18 at the former airmail rate (30¢ from the U.S. to England via Pan American

Airways, plus 6¢ from England to destination by BOAC). Instead, the letter traveled the slow reverse Horseshoe Route to Durban, South Africa, where the letter was opened, examined and then resealed with the South African censorship tape before being sent on to its destination in the Middle East. Does anyone else have a 36¢ rate reverse Horseshoe Route cover I can see?

Some Observations on U.S. Internment Camp Mail in WW II

by

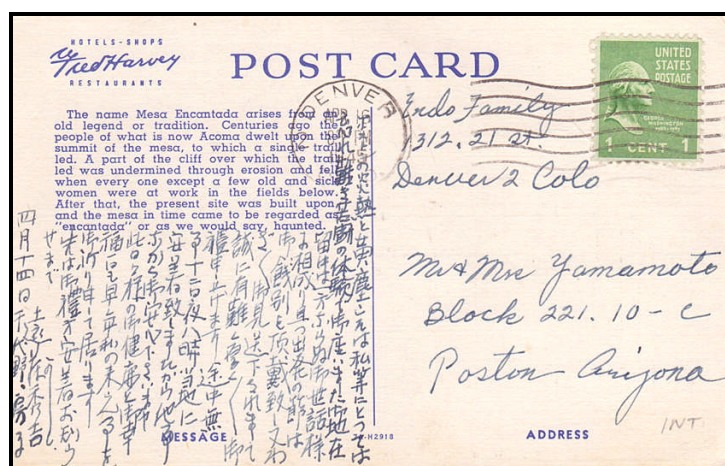
Jeffrey Shapiro

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, hundreds of thousands of Japanese Americans became known by the racial slur “Japs”, and suddenly became seen as potential Japanese spies and agents.

Reflecting the paranoia of the day, Lieutenant General John DeWitt wrote President Roosevelt in January, 1942, “A Jap is a Jap ... It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not ... The Japanese are an enemy race.”

A few weeks later the President signed Executive Order 9066 which called for the evacuation of all Japanese descendents from California, Oregon and Washington as a war-time precaution. Construction began immediately on ten internment camps in desolate areas of California, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and Arkansas.

The affected Japanese (two-third of whom were American citizens) were given only a few days notice to evacuate and were told to report only with what they could carry. From 1942 thru 1946, an estimated 110,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry occupied those ten camps.



The cover pictured above shows an example of mail into one of these internment camps established in Arizona, ironically located on reservation land leased from American Indian tribes.

This April, 1945 post card, franked with a one cent Prexie stamp paying the prevailing domestic post card rate, was mailed to the Colorado River Relocation Center located at Poston in LaPaz County. At its peak this camp housed 18,000 internees, larger than most communities in Arizona. (Note: Mail *into* internment camps is more difficult to find than is outgoing mail from the camps.)

Jewish Internment Camps in Mauritius

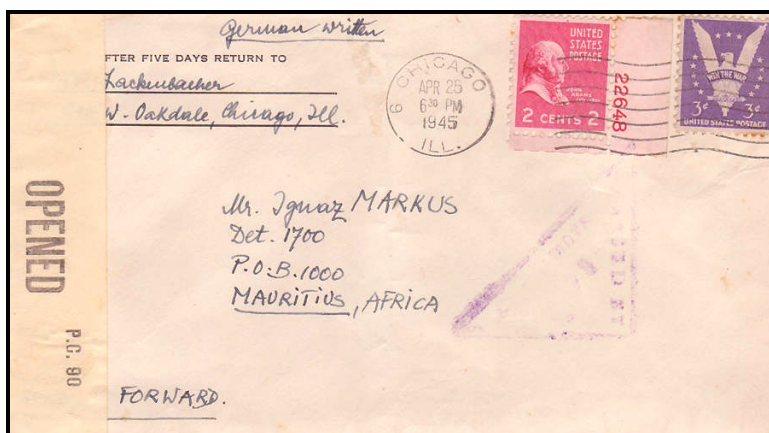
by

Jeffrey Shapiro

By the late 1930's, many European Jews realized that their lives were in extreme jeopardy by the policies of the Nazis. Desperate to flee, but sensing a growing resentment from the Allies to provide shelter, Palestine seemed the only alternative.

The British, in control of Palestine by a League of Nations Mandate, and aware of growing Arab resentment over Jewish immigration, blocked further attempts by these European refugees to settle there.

In the fall of 1940, 3600 refugees from Germany and occupied Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia were impounded on the ocean liner Patria, berthed in Haifa harbor. On November 25, 1940, saboteurs blew up the ship, resulting in 267 deaths. After weeks of negotiation, some of the survivors were allowed to land in Palestine, but 1584 were deported to the remote Indian Ocean island colony of Mauritius.



Unlimited mail to and from the detainees was allowed, but all had to use the same incoming address: P.O. Box 1000. This one address facilitated censoring operations.

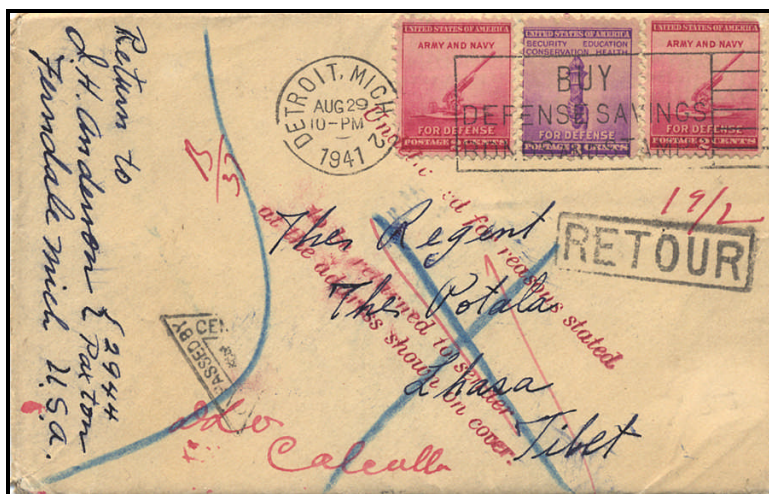
In the illustrated example, a 2 cent plate number single was added to a 3 cent “Win the War” stamp to pay the 5 cents per ounce international surface rate on this 1945 multi-censored cover to an internee at the Camp.

Returned From Tibet: Another Example

by

David Wessely

I recently acquired for my stock [as a postal history dealer] the cover shown below which travel by ocean mail to the border between Tibet and India before it was refused in Tibet and returned.



The explanation for the various manuscript and hand stamp markings on this cover are found in Steve Roth's article, with respect to a similar cover, **Returned From Tibet: No Postal Exchange Convention or Available Agent**, The Prexie Era Newsletter, Summer 2003 [Issue No.23], pp. 2-4. This is the third such cover I have recorded. The other was described in **Cover From United States Fails to Reach Tibet**, Chambers Stamp Journal, June 30, 1941, p.1.

Free Franking in World War II: Pertinent Dates

Compiled by
Steven M. Roth

A Subscriber recently asked me if could point him toward the relevant dates for free franking of civilian mail during WW II. I did, and I thought the dates might be useful to others so here they are:

1. March 27, 1942 [Public Law 507, 77th Congress]. Congress passes law granting free franking to “any domestic letter matter admissible to the mails as ordinary mail matter” for all active duty members of armed forces wherever they are located.”
2. April 1, 1942 [Postal Bulletin 18418, April 1, 1942]. Free franking regulations addressed in the Postal Bulletin. Privilege extended to cover postal cards.
3. July 10, 1942. Regulations issued to clarify previous Regulation. Special delivery qualified if the special delivery fee paid. Registered mail, COD mail and insured mail could not be free franked. Philatelic mail [e.g., FDCs] could not be free franked.
4. July 1, 1943. [Postal Bulletin 18635, August 18, 1943] Privilege extended to WACs.
5. April 1, 1944. Free dispatch by airmail of absentee ballots.
6. December 31, 1945. Original date set for expiration of free franking privilege. Privilege extended.
7. December 31, 1947. Privilege ends.

PAN AM's Private Label Explaining Delay

From time-to-time I have shown WW II Post Office and Office of Censorship labels in this Newsletter when I thought the labels would interest our Subscribers. Now, I have a private label that caught my attention. Pan American Airways issued this label to explain the delay in processing and returning First Flight covers relating to War delays over New Zealand.

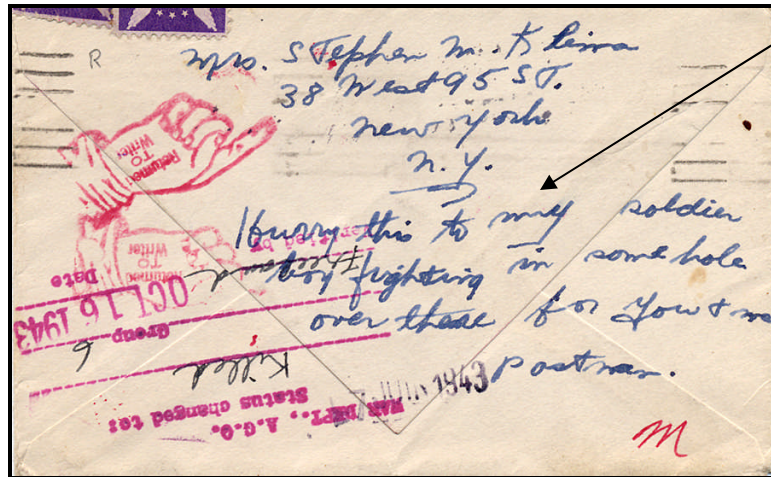


A Pair of Heart-Breaking Covers

by

Steven M. Roth

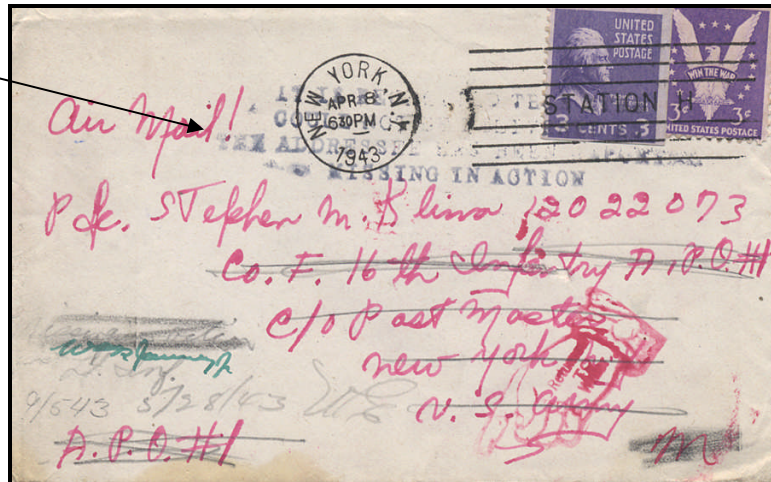
In February 1943, Mrs. Stephen M. Klima wrote to Pfc. Stephen M. Klima who was off somewhere fighting in WW II. Mrs. Klima scribbled the following note on the back of the cover: “Hurry this to my soldier boy fighting in some hole over there for you & me, Postman.”



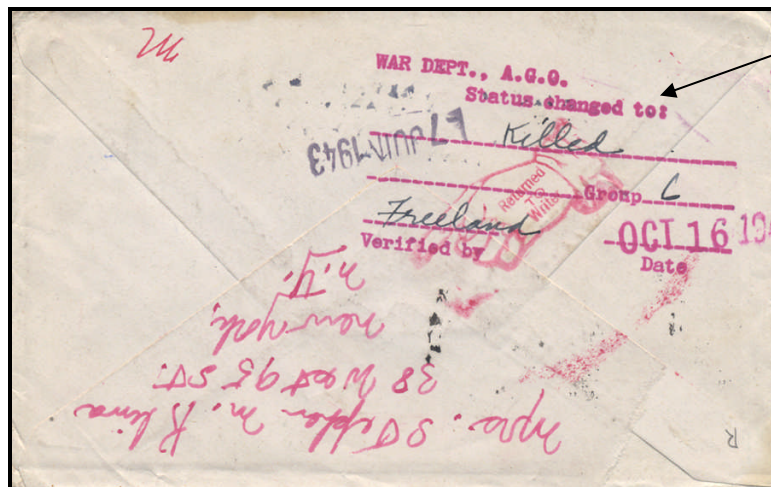
The letter was held and was marked with the notation on it that it could not be delivered to the soldier because he was missing in action.



In the meantime, not yet having received back this letter, Mrs. Klima wrote to the soldier again in April 1943. This letter, too, was marked that the soldier was missing in action.



Then, in October 1943, the reasons for non-delivery were revised and entered onto both letters. The letters were returned to Mrs. Klima. Her soldier boy had been killed in action.



This Issue Late and Content is Sparse

This Issue of the Newsletter is late being published. This is the first time since I became Editor with Issue No. 20. This Issue also is very heavy on pieces relating to WW II. In both cases, this is because I did not have enough material from Subscribers to fill a full Issue.

The same generous people keep writing for the Newsletter, over and over again. A few other people contribute occasionally. That lack of participation from other Subscribers won't do if we are to keep this Newsletter going.

I need articles, notices, etc., for the next Issue. I cannot publish until I have enough material to fill it with. Please help us out. Thanks.