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The Prexie Era

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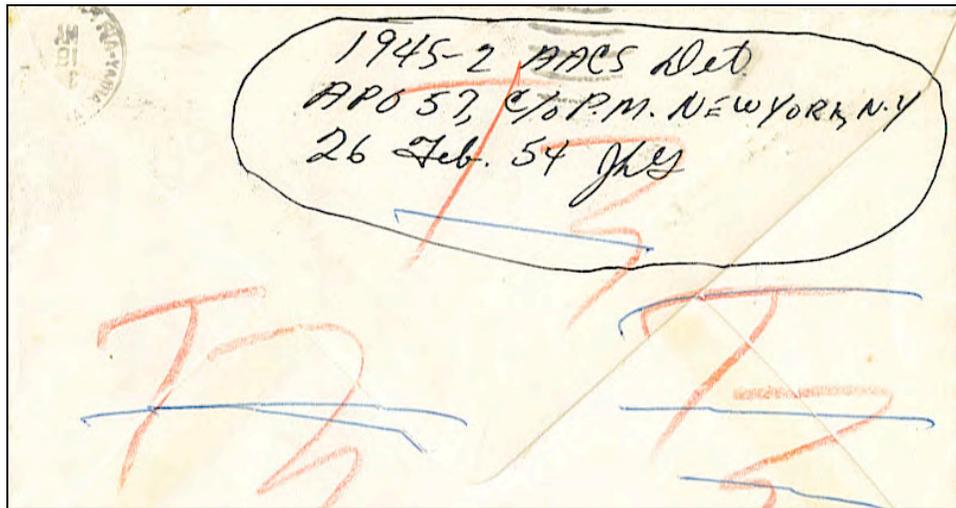
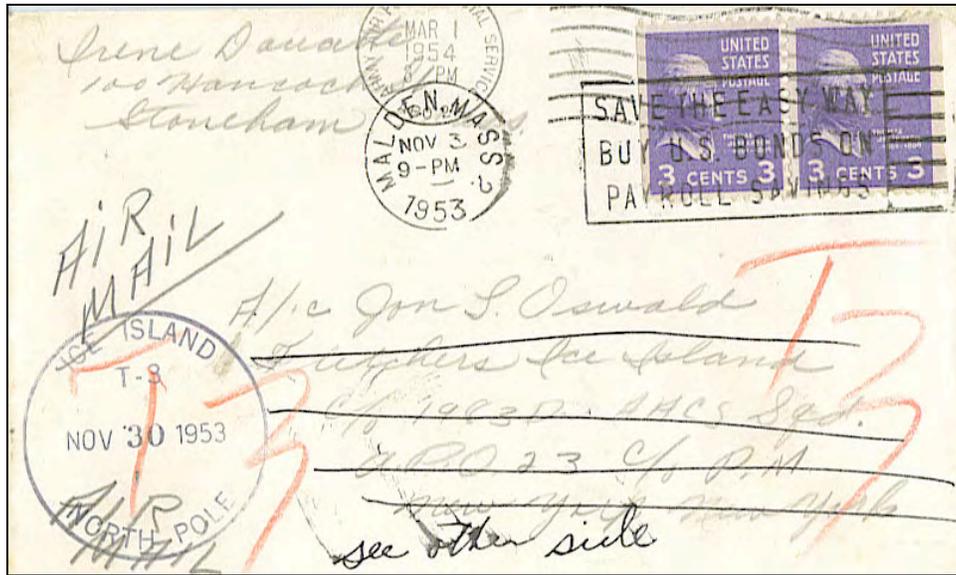
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Air Mail to an Iceberg

by

Albert Briggs

During their years of service Presidential Series stamps may be found on covers traveling to many exotic destinations. In the realm of domestic uses mail to various APO's can provide an interesting source for different routes and locations. I recently obtained a cover addressed to "Fletcher's Ice Island" which certainly makes my Top 10 list of fascinating destinations.



This letter was mailed from Walden, Massachusetts on November 3, 1953 and directed to Thule, Greenland via APO 23. The "AACCS Sqd." in the address line likely refers to Alaska Air Command Station Squadron. The letter was received November 30, 1953 bearing the circular receiver with the words: Ice Island/T-3/North Pole. The addressee was apparently no longer at Fletcher's Ice Island, and the letter was forwarded to APO 57 located at Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany. It was forwarded from APO 23 on March 1, 1954. The North Pole designation refers

to the fact that T-3 drifted as high as 88 degrees north latitude, close to the geographic North Pole.

Fletcher’s Ice Island was the name given to a large iceberg discovered in 1946. Initially designated T-3, it was determined to be a huge piece of the Arctic ice shelf that had broken off from the ancient glacial ice foot of Ellesmere Island. Measuring seven miles long and three miles wide, it rose 50 feet above the surrounding ice pack.

In 1952 Alaska Air Command organized Project ICICLE with the goal of establishing a weather station on one of the ice islands. Colonel Joseph Fletcher was put in command, and T-3 became the selected site.

On March 19, 1952 a C-47 plane from Thule Air Base landed on the iceberg. Insulated huts were flown in pieces to the island and assembled. Scientists arrived shortly afterwards and embarked on a number of investigations. The station was abandoned in May 1954. It was reoccupied intermittently for the next 25 years, including 1957-1958 during the International Geophysical Year. The ice mass drifted through the Fram Strait in 1983 and presumably into the northern Atlantic Ocean, eventually melting away.

Air-Surface-Air Postcards to Europe

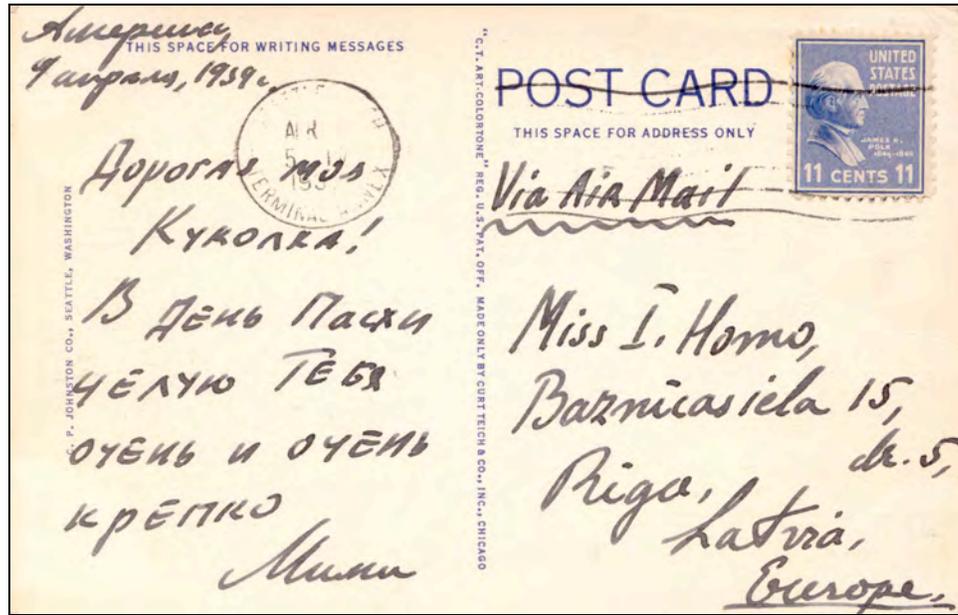
by

Bob Hohertz



Prexie-Era postal history collectors are well aware of the surcharge plus basic rate pattern for letters sent airmail in the United States, surface mail to Europe, and airmail within Europe, 3 cents + 5 cents + 3 cents. What was the proper charge for a postcard sent air – surface – air? The air surcharges presumably would have remained the same as for a letter, but what would the surface postage have been: the 3-cent foreign postcard rate of the 5-cent foreign letter rate?

The first postcard shown, franked with three Prexies totaling 11 cents postage, paid the full letter rate for air-surface-air service from Seattle to Riga, Latvia in 1939. The principle must have been that since no reduced airmail rate existed for postcards, if any portion of the route was by air, the full letter rate applied.



The second postcard, mailed a month later than the first one shown, gives evidence that the 11-cent rate was not an isolated charge as the result of a decision by an over-zealous postal employee. This time the sender purchased an 11-cent Prexie adhesive to cover the postage, to the delight of at least one later collector.



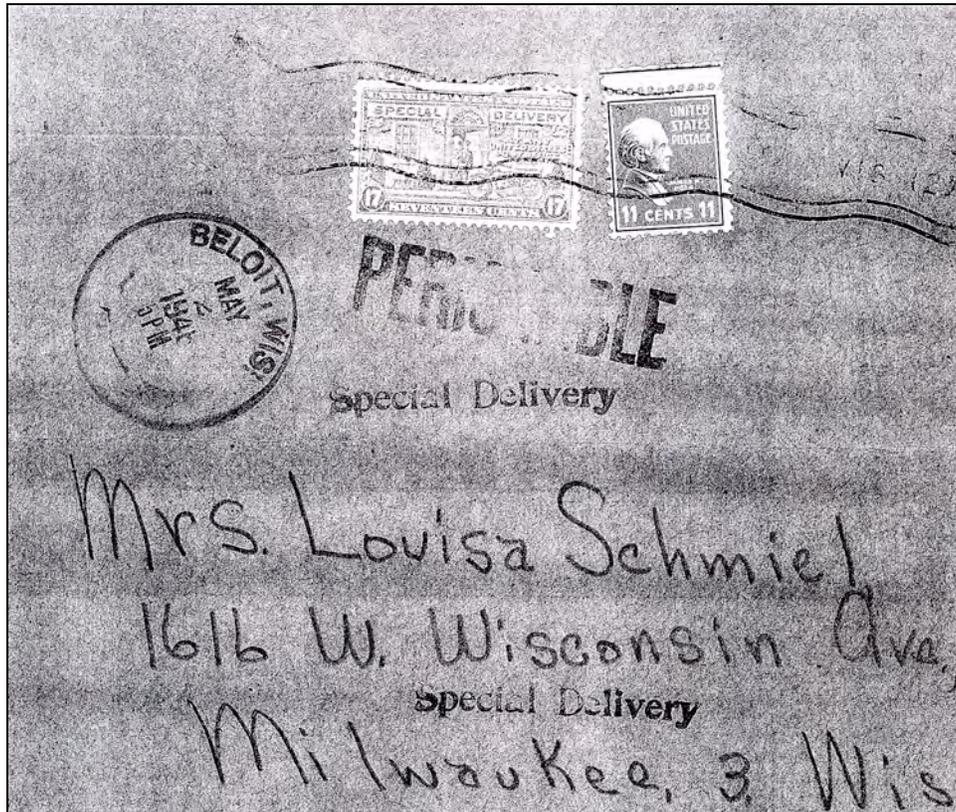
The final example bears out the general principle that if airmail was involved, full letter rates applied. In this case the 3-cent surcharge was for airmail from San Francisco to New York, but 5 cents was assessed for the surface rate to Athens. [Ed. Note: By April 19 1945 normal postal relations between the U.S. and Greece had resumed except for registration and special delivery services.]

Can anyone cite a PL&R reference that covers postcards sent partly by air and partly by surface? If not, and we are left to deduce the rate, does anyone have a counter example, either a postcard sent air-surface-air for eight cents or air-surface for five cents? There must be other examples in our collections.

Prexie Era Postal Rates – Third Class/Special Delivery

by

Jim Felton



Third-class single piece special delivery mail, postmarked May 2, 1948. 11 cents pays seven times the 1.5 cents per two ounces rate (June 15, 1925 - December 31, 1948); and 17 cents pays the special delivery rate for mail other than first class weighing less than two pounds (November 1, 1944 – December 31, 1948.) Note the **PERISHABLE** marking indicating merchandise is enclosed.



Tales from the Other Side – Part IV: Gutter Pairs

by

Francis Ferguson
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There are many things in the arena of Prexy EFO material that can make a person stand up and take notice. One in particular always gets my undivided attention – gutter pairs and gutter snipes. This article will deal with gutter pairs and sometime in a future article, gutter snipes.

For definition purposes, a gutter pair is one that has two complete stamps with all perforations intact with a margin paper gutter between. If any portion of the either stamp is missing it is not a gutter pair, but rather a gutter snipe. Gutter snipes are fairly common whereas gutter pairs are much more rare.



Gutter pairs represent a total failure of the production and inspection process. Horizontal or vertical gutter pairs can exist showing the common margin between two adjacent panes that should have been trimmed down the middle to create two separate panes. The basic cause is simple – the failure of the cutting process to separate two sheets in the appropriate manner.

Numerous ways exist for a gutter pair to be created; the occurrence of a paper fold in the perforation/cutting process, and the failure of the cutting knife to be properly aligned are the most likely. The end result being a gutter pair, either horizontal or vertical that exists for collectors to find ---that REALLY should not have escaped the over-sight of the inspectors.

In my collecting efforts I have managed to obtain “2.98” examples of gutter pairs. All three are illustrated with this article. The 2- and 3-cent gutter pairs are classic examples. The 30-cent pair is technically a gutter snipe because it lacks perforations on the left side of the pair. Regardless of the technical requirements for a gutter pair, the 30-cent value is a visual treat.

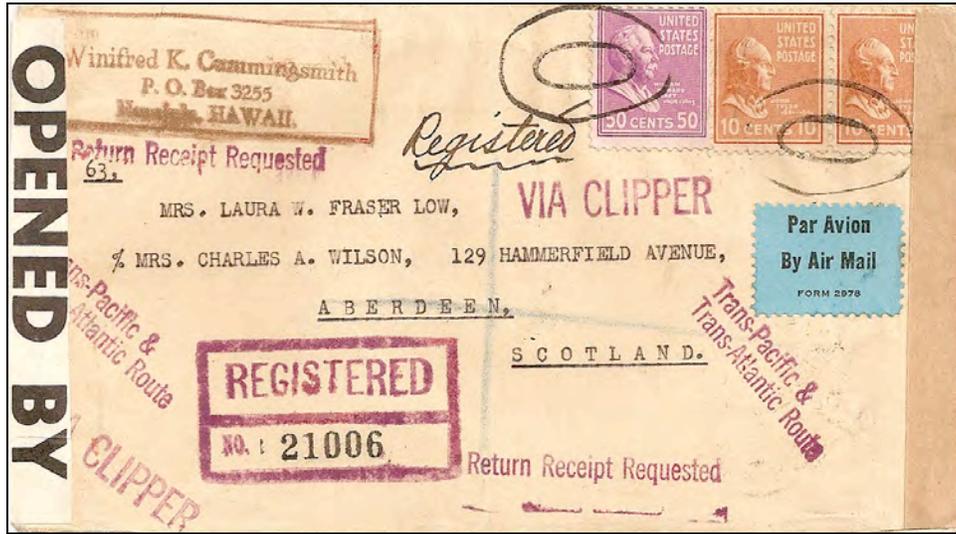


According to the 2007 Scott Specialized Catalogue only seven of the thirty-two Prexies exist with either a full vertical or horizontal gutter; many are un-priced due to infrequent sales activity. I am personally aware of a 6-cent horizontal pair illustrated in Roland E. Rustad’s *The Prexies* that provides a stunning example of a pair that to this day remains unlisted in the Scott catalogue.

Resumption of Airmail Service from Hawaii after Pearl Harbor

by

Robert Schlesinger
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I recently acquired a cover that may shed light on the resumption of airmail service from Hawaii to the mainland following the December 7, 1941 bombing at Pearl Harbor. The item illustrated here is a registered “two ocean” cover with correctly paid additive airmail rates (20 cents + 30 cents) from Honolulu going to Scotland. The letter entered the mail stream just five days after the attack. Although postmarked at Honolulu on December 12th, the cover was not received at San Francisco until January 3, 1942, presumably having arrived on a flight earlier in the day or the day before. The letter was back stamped New York the next day and, after a delay imposed by censorship in Great Britain [*Ed. Note: Examiner #709 is not a known Bermuda censor station number*] reached London on January 23, 1942. I am soliciting comments on the date airmail service resumed from Hawaii to the mainland. Is January 3, 1942 when airmail service resumed or can anyone provide an earlier date?



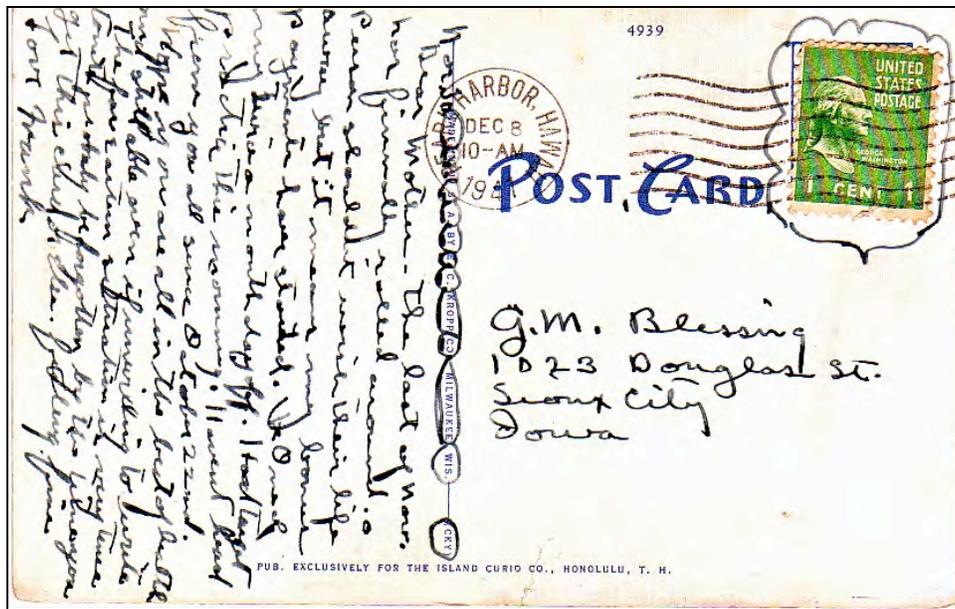
"December 8, 1941"

by

Jeff Shapiro

While not usually considered part of the study of postal history, I find there's a certain guilty pleasure in reading other's people's mail!

To make my point I'm illustrating here two covers postmarked at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 8, 1941, one day after the attack by Japanese naval forces against the United States. Each offers a special perspective at the dawn of the US involvement in World War II in the Pacific Theater.



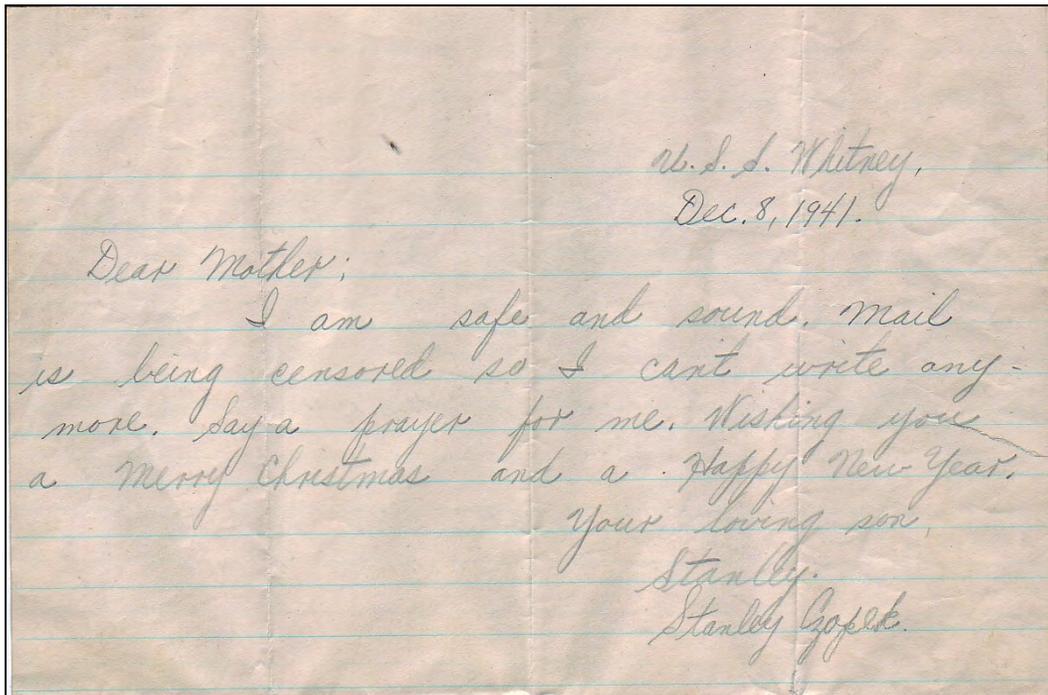
The first example, a picture post card datelined November 30, 1941, was written and then probably forgotten by a sailor enjoying the rest and relaxation of shore leave in Honolulu. Probably mailed on Saturday and postmarked Monday, December 8, 1941, this uncensored postcard, franked with a 1-cent Prexie paying the domestic post card rate, contains the following understatement: "The far eastern situation is very tense tonite probably be forgotten by the time you get this card."

The second cover, from a sailor on the USS Whitney, is franked with a pair of 10-cent Prexies paying the 20 cents per half-ounce Clipper airmail rate to the mainland. It too was postmarked December 8, 1941. A much shorter message, it likely sums up the thoughts of all in the military that terrible historic weekend --- "Say a prayer for me. Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

The writer was likely in the thick of action on that fateful Sunday morning. The destroyer tender USS Whitney, launched in 1923, was built to provide unglamorous but vital service supplying and repairing the destroyer fleet. This is exactly what the crew was doing on the morning of December 7, 1941 while moored at Pearl Harbor along side five destroyers. Japanese pilots

strafed the ship during their first wave over Ford Island, but none of Whitney's sailors were injured.. The crew fought back with the ship's antiaircraft guns. Following conclusion of the attack the crew went on to fight fires on the ships burning nearby.

Over the next few days and weeks surviving crewmen from the ships at Pearl Harbor were each provided a single officially printed "I am well" formula postcard to be sent to next of kin. They are relatively scarce. Not as scarce, however, as the "unofficial" ones that got out of Hawaii even fires at Pearl Harbor were still smoldering.



59-Cent Airmail Rate To Netherlands East Indies

by

Louis Fiset

The two covers illustrated here show business mail to Java, in the Netherlands East Indies revealing an unusual and relatively short lived (May 23, 1939-June 14, 1940) airmail rate of 59 cents per half-ounce. The rate paid for trans-Atlantic air service to Europe, and subsequent air service from Europe to the destination via Cairo and Singapore. This provided an alternative to the 70 cents per half-ounce rate routed through San Francisco and Manila, through Hong Kong or Singapore. The covers, both postmarked in March 1940, show Singapore and Palestine censorship, respectively, suggesting the first went via the Pacific route despite the lower franking and clear directive, whereas the second was indeed routed via Europe. The trans-Atlantic route was terminated after June 14, 1940.

The same 59-cent rate via Europe applied to South Africa, but only from May 23, 1939 until June 30, 1939 when the rate was reduced to 55 cents. In effect for only 39 days, the 59-cent rate to South Africa presents a significant challenge to collectors.

