

Winter 2009



Whole No. 44

# *The Prexie Era*

The Newsletter of the USSS 1938 Presidential Era Study Group

Published Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall

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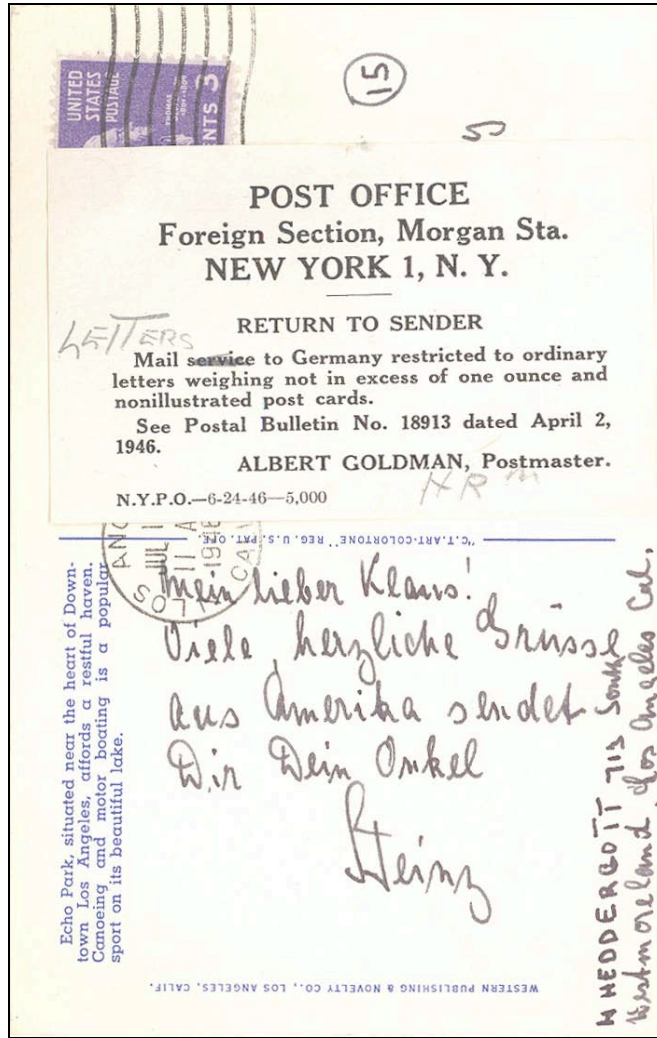
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**Resumption of Postal Service to Liberated Countries  
1944-1946: Nonillustrated Post Cards**

by

Louis Fiset



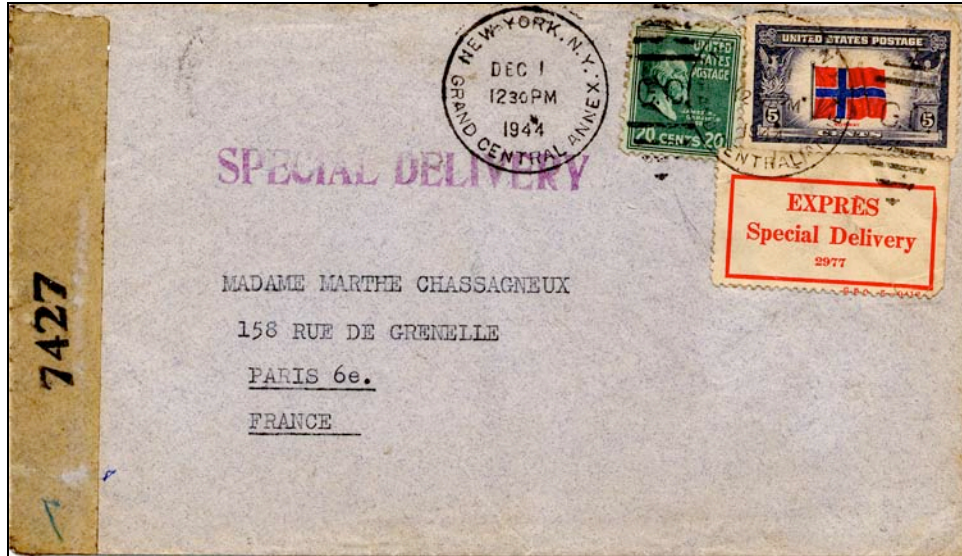
Partial resumption of mail service from the U.S. to the overrun countries of Europe began on February 16, 1944 when post cards and letters weighing up to two ounces could be sent to Sardinia and Sicily and southern provinces in Italy (PB 18693). Rome was added the next month (PB 18736). When partial mail service to France resumed, starting September 4, 1944 (PB18751), the term “post card” was amended to “nonillustrated post card,” thereby specifically excluding picture post cards. Like correspondence to Italy, messages had to be personal, not business related, and content was now restricted to English or French. Presumably picture post cards might contain secret messages to confound New York censors, and reduce the amount of text that could be written.

The nonillustrated post card ban remained in effect in most cases until full mail service was restored to an individual country. The illustration above, from Jeff Shapiro’s collection, shows a failed July 1946 attempt to send a picture post card to Germany. On September 23, 1947 (PB 19069), following restoration of airmail and business mail service, the ban was rescinded. Full mail service to Germany, including registry, resumed August 23, 1948 (PB 19161).

**Resumption of Postal Service to Liberated Countries  
France 1944-1945: Special Delivery Service**

by

Louis Fiset



Allied advances in France following the Normandy landing on June 6, 1944 liberated large areas as German forces were pushed southward. Gradually mail service to France resumed as regions became secured and infrastructure set in place. Initially, personal postcards to the northern areas sent by surface routing were permitted, followed by weight restricted surface letters, and eventually special services such as registered mail, airmail, and special delivery. Full restoration of mail service did not take place to the whole of France, however, until August 1945, a full three months after Germany capitulated.

Examples of mail postmarked within a week or two of a resumed postal service are difficult to come by, leaving collectors having to accept postmarks a month or two later with hopes for later upgrades. I got lucky when I acquired the example shown above. Special Delivery service to most of France, including Paris, resumed on December 1, 1944 (PB 18775). Thus, this letter was posted on the first day of resumed Express Mail service to France. The 25-cent franking pays the 5-cent UPU rate plus 20 cents for Special Delivery service at the prewar rate. The letter was censored at the New York censor station. At this time Allied and German forces were still engaged in deadly combat. In two weeks German forces would launch a massive counteroffensive along a 40-mile front in the Ardennes Forest that became known as the Battle of the Bulge.

Readers may wonder why the writer paid for service to rush the letter to the addressee via special delivery, but failed to further expedite transport of the letter by trans-Atlantic airmail. A look at postal bulletins answers the question. Airmail service to the whole of France did not resume until June 21, 1945, more than seven months later.

**FURTHER EXTENSION OF LIMITED MAIL SERVICE TO FRANCE**  
ORDER No. 26616; DATED NOVEMBER 27, 1944.  
Effective December 1, 1944, order No. 23420, dated November 3, 1944, is modified so as to allow the acceptance for mailing of letters and packages prepaid at the letter rate of postage up to a weight limit of 4 pounds 6 ounces, when addressed for delivery in the liberated areas of continental France to which limited mail service has previously been placed in effect. Provision likewise is hereby made for the resumption of registration and special-delivery service at the usual international rates applicable thereto.

## Airmail from Europe to Siam with 4½-Cent Prexies

by

Howard Lee

Collectors usually find the 4½-cent Prexie on domestic mail franking third class parcels weighing 6 ounces (three times the 1.5 cent rate per two ounces) as seen in the last issue of the newsletter (No. 43). The cover illustrated here, postmarked April 23, 1939, shows a multi franking of the White House Prexie paying the 23-cent airmail rate from Europe to Siam (Thailand after September 15, 1939), in effect for the previous four years.



Beginning April 21, 1937 correspondents in the U.S. could choose two routes for their airmail letters to Siam. On that date airmail service began from San Francisco to Hong Kong (FAM-14) with air onward to Bangkok at the rate of 70 cents per half ounce. This new service was designed to shorten transit times of the old service where mail was routed by ship from the east coast to Europe, with air service beyond and payable at the rate of 23 cents for the air service. This rate had been in effect since July 9, 1935.

The cover shown here bears 28 cents postage. It pays the 5-cent UPU rate to Europe plus the 23-cent airmail rate from Europe (Amsterdam). Note the manuscripts “via Amsterdam” and “from Europe” directly beneath the airmail directives. The cover is back stamped Bangkok May 1, 1939 documenting a transit time of a mere ten days.

The writer, from New York, may have timed his posting to a ship scheduled to leave port the next day, thereby shortening the over all transit time. Correspondents from the western U.S. wishing to send their mail to New York by airmail would have been assessed an additional 3 cents per ounce.

The combined surface/airmail service via Europe remained in place until June 14, 1940. After that, until the beginning of World War II when service was suspended altogether, all airmail to Thailand went on the FAM-14 route, and writers had to pay the full 70 cents per half ounce.

## Tales from the Other Side – Part VI: Gutter Snipes

by

Francis Ferguson  
ferg@FloridaStampShows.com

Ugly duckling. That is one word that comes to mind for a gutter snipe. A gutter snipe is created when something fails in the production process affecting the final cutting of the 4 subject sheets into post office ready panes for distribution. A misalignment of the cutting blade or a paper-fold could be responsible. According to established procedures such defective material should be removed and destroyed. As may be seen from the examples accompanying this article, it did not always happen.



While the visually interesting blocks with gutter snipes are great to look at, the ones that keep me going are used examples that pop up from time to time. I have managed to find more used examples of gutter snipes than I ever expected. Several have appeared on cover or piece, but most appear off paper in general stamp mixes and accumulations. What is someone else's junk is my treasured find. This collecting area of Prexie EFO material can be dirt cheap -- if not free.

The examples shown here are a bit odd to look at and may give the false impression of additional stamps being attached. In the case of the gutter snipe of the 30-cent value shown in the Spring 2008 issue (No. 41), 98 per cent of that stamp is accounted for. The missing 2 per cent makes it a true oddity -- a really big gutter snipe! I venture that 99.99 per cent of the non-collecting public would use that pair for postage, counting it as two stamps never giving a second thought to the extra paper salvage between them. The thought sends shivers down my spine! [I do make sure the 30-cent gutter snipe "pair" is not left out as a temptation for my other half to use as common postage.]

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### Using eBay to Provide Illustrations for Write-Ups

Steve Davis's crash cover illustration article in the last issue (No. 43) was downloaded directly from the eBay website. This is instructive, because we can all enjoy sharing our expertise without having to own the covers we discuss. In the Fall 2007 issue (No. 39) I presented an early FAM 22 non-military cover I have never owned. In this case the owner was willing to provide a jpg color scan at 300 dpi resolution enabling me to reproduce it for the newsletter at high resolution. Readers should be on the lookout for interesting items on eBay they cannot afford to purchase or that may lie outside their immediate collecting interest.

## Vichy French Internment Camp de Noé

by

Jeffrey Shapiro



On this April 1941 cover from New York City to Camp de Noé, at Haute-Garonne, France a 30-cent Winged Globe stamp prepaid the half-ounce airmail rate for trans-Atlantic service to Europe (in effect May 1939 to November 1, 1946) and a 15-cent Prexie paid the international registration fee (in effect April 1925 to February 1, 1945). The letter was routed through Bermuda where it was censored (#2019). The faint double circle purple ink marking was applied at the camp. Mail service to Vichy France continued until November 1942 when German forces occupied the region in response to Allied gains in North Africa, cutting off all service from the U.S.

The French government established a number of civilian internment camps before the start of World War II to house Spanish Republican refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. One of these camps was Camp de Noé, which under Vichy French jurisdiction was a guarded hospital facility intended for the disabled and individuals over age 60. Established in February 1941 it was located near Toulouse in the Midi-Pyrenees Region and set up to house wounded Spanish Republican and International Brigade prisoners. The Camp also accepted detained Jewish refugees with tuberculosis who had been deported from areas of the Saar, the Rheinland, and France.

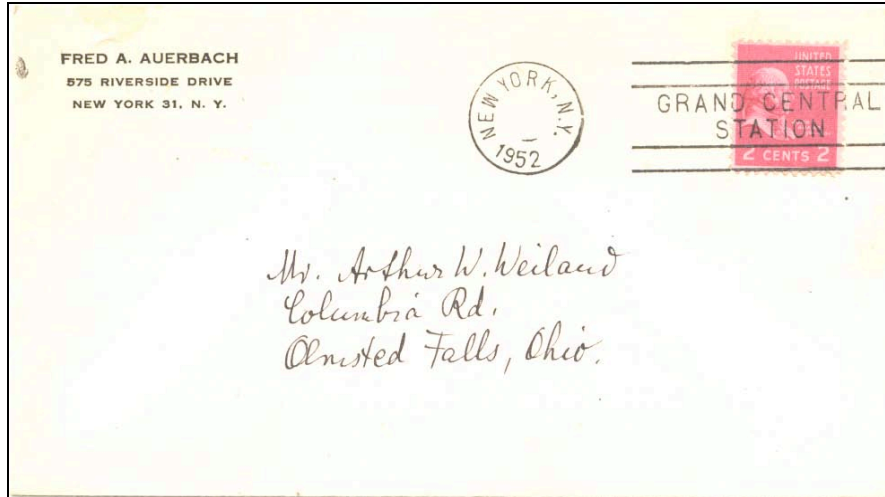
Records show that by April 1941 when this registered letter was sent, nearly 1500 individuals were detained at Camp de Noé.

The hospital closed in December 1941, but the Camp remained operational, serving as a staging area for deportation to the concentration camps. Beginning November 1942 the Germans began sending Jewish detainees to the east, mainly Auschwitz.

## A UPU Printed Matter Rate Anomaly, 1949 to 1953

by

Dickson Preston



The domestic rate for third class single piece mail matter was 1½ cents per two ounces from 15 April 1925 until 31 December 1948. The equivalent UPU rate for printed matter to foreign destinations was also 1½ cents per two ounces. Thus, the rates were the same for both domestic and foreign mail until the domestic rate rose to 2 cents on 1 January 1949.

Since the rates were in effect for almost three years the reason for the anomaly remains unclear. US businesses would enjoy an advantage over foreign rivals if their UPU printed matter rates were lower because they could send advertising at relatively cheaper rates. Perhaps this accounts for the odd rate structure. The covers illustrated here were generated during the anomaly period.

In any case the anomaly ended on 1 November 1953 when the UPU printed matter rate was raised to 2 cents for the first two ounces and 1½ cents for each additional ounce.

## Common as Dirt – The 6-Cent Transport Airmail Stamp

by

Bill Helbock

When I started collecting Prexies back in the 1980s I enjoyed a multi frame exhibit at WESTPEX prepared by Walt Cole that focused entirely on the 3-cent Jefferson stamp. I was so impressed with his imagination and ingenuity that I prevailed upon him to contribute a chapter on the subject for my 1988 monograph, *Prexie Postal History*. In my opinion Walt accomplished a feat, taking one of the most common stamps of the 20th century and with it exploring the many and varied aspects of contemporary postal history.

For us who share a penchant for airmail postal history a similar candidate exists with the widely overlooked and almost equally common 6-cent Transport airmail stamp. As G.H. Davis reports, from June 26, 1941 until distribution finally ended in the late 1940s, postmasters received a total of 4,746,527,700 copies. That's almost five billion stamps -- enough to rate it a *common* stamp by any standard. In addition, the definitive was also released in booklet pane format beginning March 18, 1943.



**Figure 1.** A 6¢ Transport used by a Canadian serviceman through Field Post Office 524 in Italy. Although the letter was mailed by a Canadian through a Canadian field post office to an address in Canada, it was to be transported on a space available basis by the U.S. Army Postal Service. Use of U.S. postage was therefore authorized.

A logical approach for building a collection of 6-cent Transport postal history would include division of subjects into domestic and international uses -- just as Davis and Cole have done. Domestic uses might include proper franking of the stamp in sheet and booklet formats for single and multiple weights. Since the basic domestic airmail rate increased from 6 to 8 cents per ounce on March 26, 1944, opportunities exist to find interesting auxiliary markings associated with improper franking at the old rate. Other auxiliary markings--including interrupted mail transport--also provide subjects to be explored. 6-cent Transports used in lieu of special service stamps such as special delivery and postage due or in combination with other stamps to pay for these special services, and registry, might also be fruitful areas for exploration.



Military and military-related uses would be a major component of the collection. The Postmaster General ordered a special 6-cent rate applied to airmail to or from members of the U.S. armed forces on Christmas Day 1941. Often referred to as the armed forces concession rate, in October 1942 this rate was extended to mail of American civilians served by military post offices outside the continental U.S., and later to the U.S. Merchant Marine in January 1943 and selected allied forces mail carried by the United States on a space available basis (*See Figure 1 above*). The concession rate remained in effect until October 1, 1946.

As Steve Suffet relates in his essay, “United States Postal Rates During World War II” (Sherman, 2002), there has long been a debate over when the PMG order authorizing the 6-cent concession air rate came into effect. Apparently, the order was dated December 23, 1941, and a press release announcing the order was made Christmas Day. However, since the *Postal Bulletin* did not publish Christmas Day, the order did not appear for the record until December 26th. From a practical standpoint, it is interesting to speculate how long it took news of the PMG’s order to reach military units in the field.



**Figure 2.** This cover, franked with a 6-cent Transport and clearly endorsed, “Clipper,” was postmarked at Hickam Field January 7, 1942. It is the earliest use of 6-cent concession rate applied to a clipper cover from troops in Hawaii known to the author. Does anyone have an earlier example to show?

In Hawaii it appears the 20-cent clipper rate was commonly used throughout December and into the first week of January. The earliest use of a 6-cent Transport I have seen is postmarked Hickam Field, January 7th (*Figure 2*). A few examples of mail from troops in Hawaii marked “airmail” and franked at the 6-cent rate may be found prior to January 7th, but these were not intended to pay for clipper service but merely air service to destination once the letter reached the mainland.

The largest components of U.S. Army troops stationed outside the continental U.S. in late December 1941 were located in Hawaii (42,000), the Canal Zone (31,000), and Alaska and Puerto Rico (22,000 each). Prevailing airmail rates for the first ounce to and from those territories were: Hawaii (20 cents), Canal Zone (15 cents), Puerto Rico (10 cents) and Alaska (6 cents). Obviously the greatest monetary advantage gained with the new rate would accrue to personnel stationed in Hawaii.

A census of my admittedly limited collection of mail from December 1941 and January 1942 from troops assigned to the territories reveals that in Puerto Rico the 10-cent rate was still being used on December 27th. In the Canal Zone, airmail letters addressed to the U.S. through late December and well into January 1942 were still being franked with the 15-cent Canal Zone Gaillard Cut airmail stamp, but by early February franking had switched to 6 cents—typically paid with a pair of 3-cent Goethals stamps.

Wartime uses of the 6-cent Transport provide the specialist with unbounded opportunities for the stamp to tell interesting stories. Let me offer a few examples here. *Figure 3* shows a domestic airmail cover originating at New York, Bronx Central Annex, on December 22, 1941. Addressed to PO Box 1539, Missoula, Montana, lying almost dead center on the cover it has a small circular magenta hand stamp reading FORT MISSOULA / CENSORED / MONTANA. Censorship on any piece of domestic mail suggests no ordinary correspondence and that likely a detainee/internee or prisoner of war was somehow involved.



**Figure 3.** This somewhat enigmatic domestic airmail cover from New York to Missoula two weeks after the U.S. entered the war represents an artifact from one of the less celebrated aspects of America’s war on the home front – the internment of Italian merchant seamen.

The address line, “Ex Biancamano,” is the key to why this letter was censored. The addressee was Don Alfredo Bruno, Chaplain (*Reverendo*) of the luxury Italian liner SS *Conte Biancamano* that, homebound from Valparaiso, sought safe harbor in the Canal Zone in June 1940 after Italy entered the war against France and England. The ship was later seized and its crew of 483 interned in the U.S. for the duration of the war. Notably, the crewmen were sent to Fort Missoula internment camp in April 1941 eight months before the U.S. entered the war. As U.S. booty, the ship was re-outfitted as a troop ship, sailing as the USS *Hermitage*. The ship was returned to its Italian owners in 1947.

*To be continued . . . .*