The Prexie Era

Inside this Issue:

Larry Robert Paige
October 18, 1937 - October 26, 2009

I always enjoyed talking with Larry Paige at major stamp shows, because of his great enthusiasm and his philatelic knowledge. He was also a person of great compassion, who felt keenly the sufferings of others. We have lost a fine philatelist and a kindly human being.

Dickson Preston

Most subscribers to this newsletter will remember Larry Paige as one of the premier collectors of Prexie postal history and certainly one of the most knowledgeable. His encyclopedic grasp of details associated with the series enabled him to find Prexie covers with elusive rates and dates, the best postal markings, and undiscovered material often missed by other experienced collectors. His collection focused on solo and multi-franked single stamp usages. At the time of his death last October he lacked only one solo usage – the $5 value – yet to be discovered.

Larry came relatively late to Prexie philately. His stamp collecting interests began with British North America, and he built major collections of Canada's 'Small Queens' and 'Admiral' issues. He became a recognized expert on the Canadian Flag Cancels, in use at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. His in depth article "Canadian Flag Cancels The Classic Era -- 1896-1902" was published in the 1981 *Congress Book*. His exhibit of the flag cancels was a consistent gold medal winner at major World Series of Philately shows.

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2009 Subscriptions Payable Now

The Fall 2009 issue is the last in the quartet of *The Prexie Era* for 2009. This means it is time for readers to renew your subscriptions. Rates for 2010 remain the same as for last year: $5 for the electronic version, $10 for the color "snail-mail" version and, if you subscribe to both versions, well, you do the math. Unless prior arrangements have been made, please send payments and/or questions to Jeff Shapiro directly:

Jeff Shapiro
P.O. Box 3211
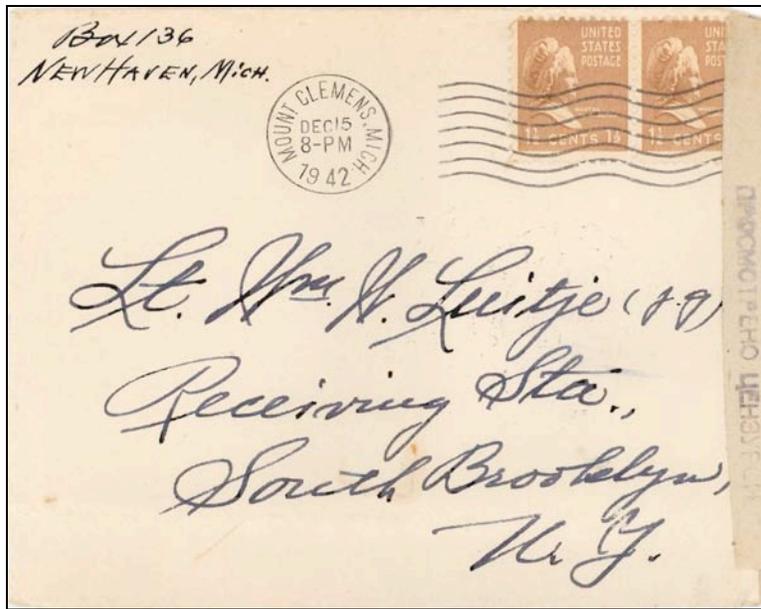Fayville, MA 01745-0211
dirtyoldcovers@aol.com

If your subscription is not current by the time the next issue comes out this will be the last one you receive.

A Domestic Cover (Michigan to New York) With Russian Censor Tape

by

Jeffrey Shapiro

The Arctic Convoys of World War II operated between the United States and Great Britain to the northern ports of Archangel (Arkangelsk) and Murmansk, providing essential supplies from the Allies for the Soviet Union's struggle against the Germans. Records show there were 78 convoys between August 1941 and May 1945. These convoys ran twice monthly, but were suspended for three months in Summer 1941 after German aircraft and U-boats attacked and heavily damaged a 35 vessel convoy. After a secret German plan to intercept the remainder of the Convoy by the German battleship *Tirpitz* was discovered by the British Enigma Project, the surviving group of eleven ships, now known as the "Lost Convoy," was ordered to scatter and reassemble at Archangel instead of returning to England as planned.

Communication between the "Lost Convoy" and the rest of the world remained open. Individuals writing to the crew, such as this December 15, 1942 Christmas greeting to Lieutenant William W Luitje, in command of the Convoy's armed guards, were instructed to address their correspondence to "Receiving Station, South Brooklyn, NY, where mail was collected and sent to England for delivery via the British navy to Archangel. This, therefore, explains the cover's Russian censor tape and receiving mark.

The events surrounding the "Lost Convoy" are believed to have inspired Alistair Maclean's 1946 novel, H.M.S. *Ulysses*.

Tales from the Other Side – Part VII: Troubled Eights

by

Francis Ferguson
ferg@FloridaStampShows.com

EFO material covers a wide range of types and presentations. Duplication of some of the more common errors is routine, while others happen in a totally random fashion --- resulting in unique pieces.

What do you call an error that can be found on all printings of a specific plate number? I call it an "oops". The Bureau called it a mistake – on all 918,142 impressions of plate number 22880 from the 1½-cent Martha Washington definitive. Every plate number from all four positions on the press sheet has its second 8 inverted. To the casual viewer the inverted fat bottom of the eight is not seen. Close examination of the illustration above will show the mistake.

This production error represents the only plate number specific error found in the Presidential Series. A rather remarkable achievement considering the quantity of material produced.

In the course of attending two major stamp shows, I was able to locate the four position pieces of plate 22880, for a total cost of less than four dollars. An on-line auction (in the last year) has been noted screaming the description "PRINTING ERROR" with an opening price of $5 --- way over priced for something that was produced in such quantities as this! Of course the person who posted the auction item failed to note that ALL of the material printed from this plate had the error. Sadly, this is considered a small matter of omission in the world of online stamping.

The piece sold for $11 after spirited bidding. A little knowledge would have saved the buyer some dollars.

To put this in perspective, the most expensive plate number for the 1½-cent Martha Washington stamp is number 21880 – which had only 6,800 impressions recorded. It has a Durlands catalog value of $100. And both eights are right side up!

US Navy Air Transport Squadron (NATS)

by

Bob Watson

During World War II arrangements for airmail service from the USA to New Zealand (and other areas of the South Pacific) were poorly spelled out in *The Postal Bulletin*. From July 12, 1940, when Pan American Airways (PAA) established a through route, these destinations were served by FAM 19. The bombing of Pearl Harbor caused PAA to quickly pull out of the Pacific region except for service to Hawaii. Almost immediately, however, service was restored to the South Pacific by the Navy Air Transport Squadron (NATS) including carriage of civilian airmail on a space available basis.

NATS initially operated between San Francisco and Brisbane, Australia, but later extended its route to Sydney, Australia with branch flights to Auckland, New Zealand. The US Navy Post Office (USN PO 132) opened at Mechanics Bay, Auckland on July 15, 1942.

Normally no markings were applied to give evidence of the route taken, but registration transit marks can give sure evidence. The first figure shows an example of such a registered cover, and the several postmarks on the back have provided a bit of fun tracing its route:

Los Angeles (Del Valle Sta.)	Sep 25 1943	
San Francisco	Sep 25 1943	
San Francisco	Sep 29 1943	[presumably held for the next available flight]
Honolulu	Oct 1 1943	
US Navy 128 (Pearl City, Hawaii)	Oct 5 1943	[transferred to the Navy for NATS service]
US Navy 132 (Auckland)	Oct 13 1943	
Upper Symonds St. Postmen's Branch	Oct 15 1943	[only evidence of receipt in the NZ postal system]

The second figure shows the cover was censored at the San Francisco field censor station (10401). Sixty-five cents paid the 50-cent half-ounce airmail rate to New Zealand plus the 15-cent foreign registry fee.

Navy pilots and PAA personnel under Navy contract jointly operated the transpacific service from San Francisco to Brisbane and later to Sydney. This service flew forces mail, urgent cargo, and personnel in that order of priority.

Aircraft shortages meant a through flight could be made only once each week, every ten days, or an even longer delay. Since civilian mail was carried on a space available basis, this cover, although unusual, is likely not rare.

The main Pacific route flown by NATS was as follows*:

	FPO address
Honolulu	US Navy 128
Palmyra	US Navy 309
Christmas Island, or	US Navy 308
Canton Island	US Navy 310
Wallis Island (Uea), or	US Navy 207
Pago Pago, Tutuila	US Navy 129
Lauthala Bay, Suva	US Navy 130
Ile Nou, Noumea	US Navy 131
Brisbane	US Navy 143
Sydney	US Navy 135

From Pago Pago, on the NATS San Francisco-Australia trunk route, branch flights were made eastward to Bora Bora (US Navy 156), and south to Auckland (US Navy 132).
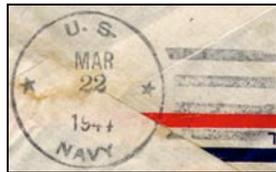
*Robin Startup (ed.) *Airmails of New Zealand, Volume III: International Airmails 1940-1970*, (The Air Mail Society of New Zealand Inc., 1997), pp.49-50.

[Ed. Note:] Airmail service to New Zealand and Australia during World War II by the Navy Air Transport Squadron is not widely known to Prexie era collectors. This article should send us all scurrying to the backs of our wartime covers for evidence of the Navy's treatment of airmail to and from the South Pacific. See the next article. Who can provide an example of NATS service to or from other countries?

U.S. Diplomat's Mail from New Zealand Via NATS

by

Louis Fiset

In this issue Bob Watson has nicely introduced Prexie era collectors to the role played by the Navy Air Transport Squadron (NATS) in providing airmail service to and from the South Pacific following Pan American Airway's suspension of FAM 19 service. Likely the triple rate (50 cents x 3) cover shown here bearing Fleet Post Office markings was flown by the same service, from New Zealand to the U.S. The U.S. Navy cancel and transit marking, however, do not provide information to determine the route, as in Watson's example. However, the March 22, 1944 transit marking indicates when the correspondence was turned over to the U.S. Post Office Department for final delivery. This transfer, after nine days in transit, may have occurred at Honolulu or San Francisco.

The cover is of special interest to me because of the writer's connection to the diplomatic exchange ship, M.S. *Gripsholm*. Thomas Eliot Weil was a career diplomat, having joined the Foreign Service in 1935. He was serving as vice consul in Shanghai at the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941 and held there by Japanese forces for seven months before his repatriation. This began June 29, 1942 when the Japanese exchange ship, S.S. *Conte Verde,* departed Shanghai for a rendezvous with the *Gripsholm* at Lourenço Marques, Moçambique, which occurred on July 22nd. His journey home ended August 25, 1942 when the *Gripsholm* reached New York Harbor.

After returning to the U.S., Weil, like most diplomats held by Japan, Germany, and Italy, was reposted, in this case to Wellington, New Zealand, with the American Legation. Diplomats were permitted to censor their own mail, but required to fully prepay postage for airmail service.

Surface Mail Sent in Air Mail Envelopes – Part I

by

Dickson Preston

One intriguing aspect of Prexie era postal history is the manner in which the USPOD handled short paid airmail letters. The primary focus of this informal article will be examples for which 3-cent domestic surface postage was paid but airmail envelopes were used.

Two sections in the 1948 Postal Laws and Regulations are relevant to these examples. Section 34.92 concerns prepayment of airmail. "The postage on air mail should be fully prepaid in order to expedite its handling, and postmasters shall make every effort to have patrons prepay the full amount of such matter. Nevertheless short paid mail ... shall, if it bears at least one full rate (that is, 6 cents), be rated with the deficiency and dispatched as intended by the sender. The amount shall be collected upon delivery of the matter." Section 34.91 concerns the use of airmail envelopes. "Envelopes of distinctive design approved by the department for air mail may be used for air mail only."

Figure 1. *Sent as surface mail. Hand stamped "Air Mail Fee / Not Fully Prepaid / Treat as Ordinary Mail." December 10, 1946.*

These sections leave the treatment of letters paying 3-cent surface postage but enclosed in air mail envelopes up to the discretion of the local postmasters. Since these letters did not bear one full airmail rate, they did not qualify for forwarding by air. Left to their own devices, postmasters employed a variety of methods ensure that airmail was fully prepaid. One method was to note that airmail postage was not fully prepaid and treat the letter as surface mail (Figures 1 and 2).

Another method was to deny any service at all because postal regulations were not followed and return the letter to the sender (Figure 3). A third method was to return the letter for additional postage, but this did not always work out as easily as planned (Figure 4). In this example, the return address was insufficient, so the letter was forwarded to the addressee, who was assessed postage due. It all seems rather silly, since the letter only traveled within Portland, Oregon, but regulations are regulations.

Figure 2. Sent as surface mail. Hand stamped "Not Entitled to Air Mail Service/ Insufficient Postage." May 21, 1947.

Figure 3. Returned to Sender. Hand stamped "Air Mail envelopes not permissible / in other than Air Service" and "Return to Sender." November 16, 1944.
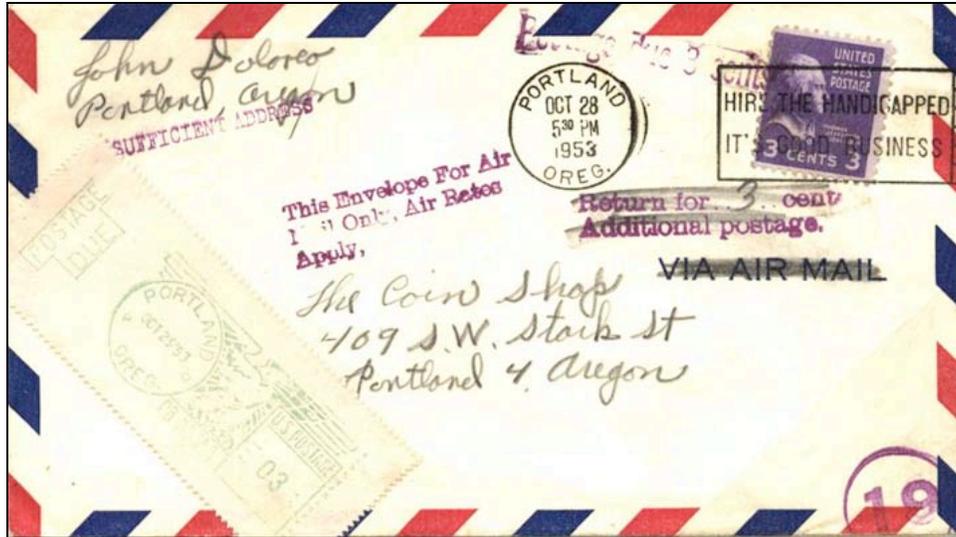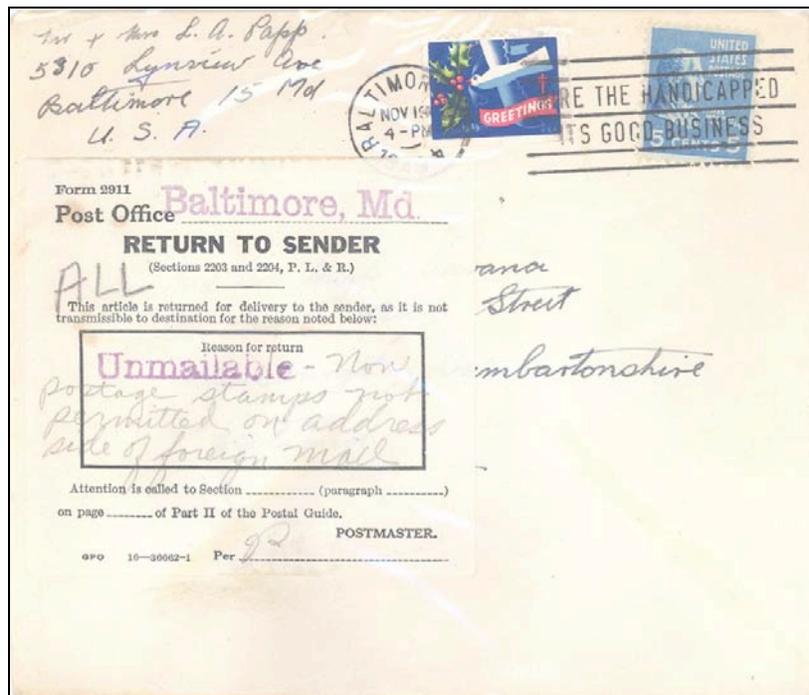
Figure 4. *Returned for postage. Hand stamped "This Envelope for Air / Mail Only, Air Rates / Apply" and "Return for 3 cents / Additional postage." Corner card had "Insufficient Address," so addressee charged 3¢ postage due. All within Portland, Oregon. October 28, 1953.*

RETURN TO SENDER - "Unmailable"

by

Jeffrey Shapiro

This letter, postmarked November 19, 1949 to England, was returned to the sender because postal regulations regarding foreign mail prohibited the use of "non postage stamps" on the address side of the envelope, such as the Christmas seal seen here.