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U.S. Mail to Turkey in World War II

by

Louis Fiset

Despite intense pressure from Nazi Germany and the Western Allies, Turkey remained neutral until the last months of World War II, joining the Allies on 23 February 1945. This largely ceremonial move assured the country of charter membership in the United Nations.

Turkey's neutrality meant international mail moved in and out of the country throughout the war, and mail service was never suspended. Nevertheless, geographically situated in a region of intense combat in nearby Mediterranean and Balkan countries, creative routes had to be devised to circumvent the fighting. This article shows U.S. mail to Turkey generated from 1940 to 1944. Because *The Postal Bulletins* and *U.S. Postal Guides* remain largely silent on wartime alternate routings and their accompanying rates to Turkey (and other countries, as well), collectors must rely on the philatelic evidence. Some of the evidence is provided here.

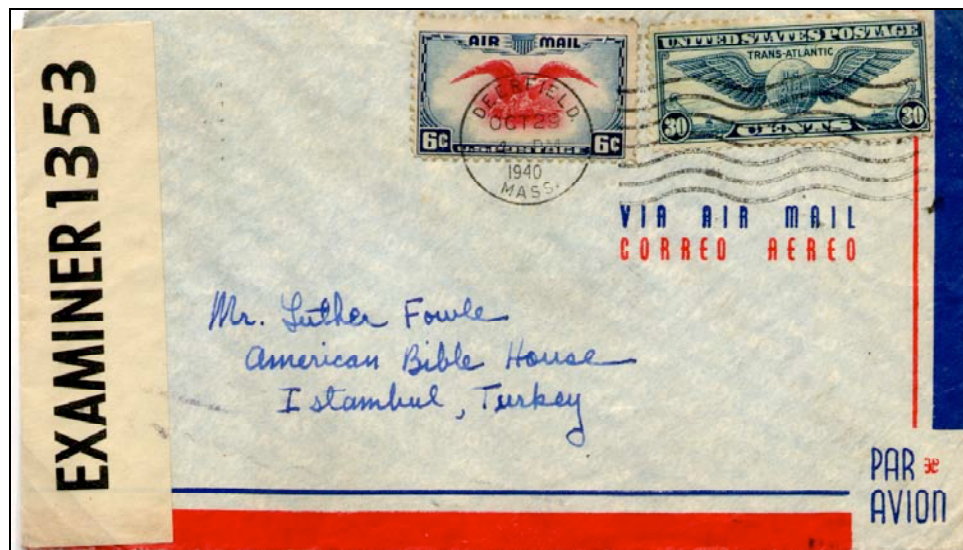


Figure 1: Postmarked 29 Oct 1940; received 21 Nov. Transit time 24 days

Figure 1 shows a trans-Atlantic airmail (FAM-18) cover to Lisbon, censored at Bermuda, with onward air carriage to Istanbul. The 1939 *U.S. Postal Guide* indicates the rate for trans-Atlantic airmail to Turkey was 30 cents, a rate that also included air service within Europe. By mid-June 1940, Italy had entered the war, cutting off airmail service routed across the Mediterranean. Thus, this letter was most likely carried on BOAC's trans-Africa route: Lisbon – Lagos – Khartoum – Cairo. The Egyptian airline, Misr Airwork, then carried the letter to Adana, Turkey. The Turkish airline, Devlet Hava Yallari (DHY), carried it from Adana to Istanbul. This emergency airmail routing via Egypt, in Africa, required prepayment of a 6-cent "beyond Europe" airmail fee. However, because the cover bears no evidence of British censorship at Cairo, this routing, although logical, remains speculative.

A second FAM-18 cover, from 23 May 1941, is shown in Figure 2, paying the trans-Atlantic rate to Turkey with onward air service within Europe. It, too, was censored at Bermuda. However, Deutsche Lufthansa carried it from Lisbon along the following route: Munich – Vienna – Budapest – Sofia – Istanbul. The letter was passed by a German censor at Vienna (**Ag**). This

letter took twice the time to reach its destination than the first cover, most likely due to the stopover at Vienna for censorship.



Figure 2: Postmarked 23 May 1941; received 10 July. Transit time: 49 days

Figure 3, postmarked 6 October 1941, also paid the trans-Atlantic airmail rate, but this letter was diverted to FAM-14 on the trans-Pacific route via its recent (May 1941) extension to Singapore. There British censors opened the letter (brown resealing tape), then forwarded it on BOAC's Horseshoe Route: Singapore – Cairo. At Cairo British censors opened the letter a second time. Like the cover in Figure 1, Misr Airwork and DHY flew this letter onward to its destination.



Figure 3: Postmarked 6 Oct 1941; received 21 Nov. Transit time: 47 days

Figure 4 shows yet another attempt to employ the 30-cent trans-Atlantic route to reach Turkey. This 25 November 1941 correspondence indeed reached Lisbon, but from there was flown by BOAC to London. It was then placed on a ship bound for Durban and was censored upon arrival. The letter was flown by BOAC to Cairo and passed by British censors there. Carriage by Misr Airwork: Cairo – Adana; and DHY: Adana – Istanbul, completed the journey. The 96-day transit reflects the long ocean voyage down the west coast of Africa.



Figure 4: Postmarked 25 Nov 1941; received 28 Feb 1942. Transit time: 96 days

Figure 5 shows mail postmarked 5 September 1941 and paying the combined domestic airmail rate and onward surface from the New York exchange office. It was carried by ship via Portugal or Spain and onward by surface routes to Istanbul. The letter was docketed (T8287) and censored at Cairo. This all-international surface letter was 97 days in transit, only one day longer than the cover shown in Figure 4 that went by trans-Atlantic air to Lisbon.

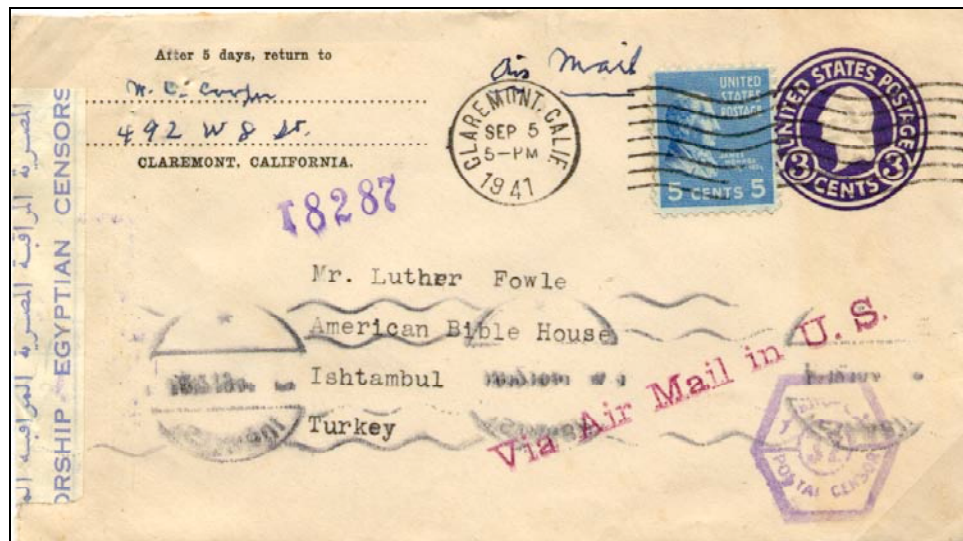


Figure 5: Postmarked 5 Sep 1941; received 10 Dec. Transit time: 97 days

On 5 November 1941 the *Los Angeles Times* announced a new trans-Atlantic airmail route between the U.S. and Africa, scheduled to start about 29 November (actual, 6 December). This gave correspondents weeks to prepare FAM-22 mail for addressees in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The cover shown in Figure 6 was intended for this new service as shown by a "TRANSATLANTIC CLIPPER" directive and 70 cents postage paid. It was posted 3 December 1941 in time for the inaugural flight of FAM-22 across the South Atlantic to Leopoldville. Instead, it was directed to San Francisco for trans-Pacific (FAM-14) carriage to Singapore and onward via the BOAC Horseshoe Route. The letter, flown from San Francisco, reached Hawaii

as Japanese imperial forces were attacking Pearl Harbor. It was held there, eventually censored (I.C.B.), then returned to the mainland, possibly on PanAm's first resumed flight after the attack, departing 19 December. From San Francisco it went via domestic airline to Miami for carriage on FAM-22 -- as originally intended. The cover received both U.S. (Hawaii) and British (Palestine) censorship.



Figure 6: Postmarked 3 Dec 1941

Most civilian mail carried on FAM-22 occurred after April 1942, including the 25 February 1943 cover shown in Figure 7. Paying the 70-cent airmail rate for South Atlantic service to Africa and beyond, the letter was carried along the following route: PanAm, Miami – Lagos; BOAC, Lagos – Cairo; Misr Airwork, Cairo – Adana; and DHY, Adana – Istanbul. The letter was censored at New York and Cairo.



Figure 7: Postmarked 25 Feb 1943; received 10 Apr. Transit time: 45 days

The cover shown in Figure 8 was only 11 days in transit, representing the shortest duration in this series, by far. It followed the same route as the cover in Figure 7. However, the letter was passed without opening by British censors in Cairo, which may partially explain the reduced transit time.

By now, German forces had been largely pushed out of the Mediterranean Theater, making transit times to Turkey shorter and routing more predictable. The tortuous routing had come to an end.

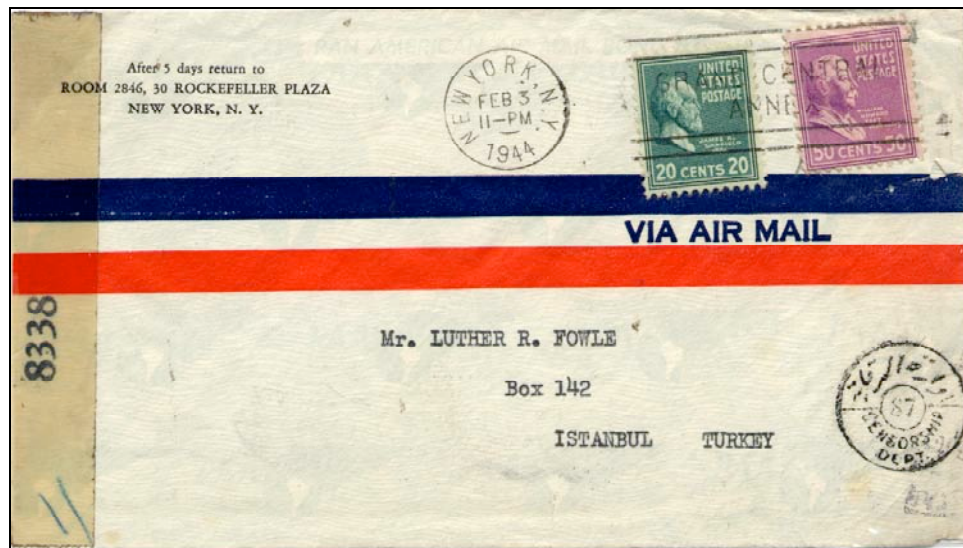


Figure 8: Postmarked 3 Feb 1944; received 13 Feb. Transit time: 11 days

Each of the covers in this article reveals a different journey to Istanbul. Other routes may exist by which mail to this neutral country was sent. I encourage readers to share covers from their collection that may shed further light on the subject.

World War II Adventures of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson : Seeds

by

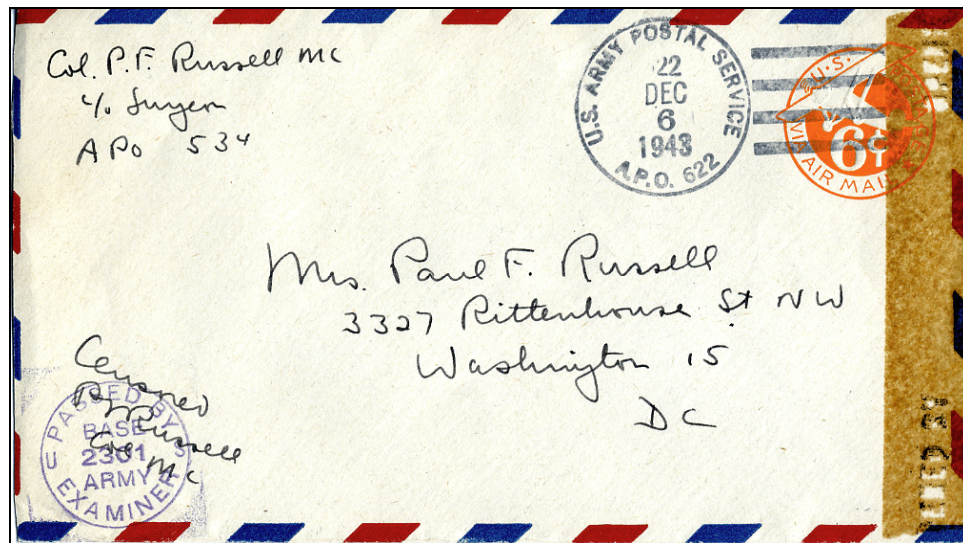
Lawrence Sherman



Having survived their harrowing voyage on the torpedoed Danish steamship *Vidar* (see *The Prexie Era* No. 43, Fall 2008, p. 10), the two intrepid Prexies, Adams and Jefferson, were

again ready for international postal duty. Time of departure: October 1940. Assignment: carrying seeds, this time not of independence, but of useful plant varieties. Destination: India.

There are several areas of interest for this letter that carried Burpee's seeds from Philadelphia to Madras. The stamps paid the international letter rate for correspondence that cleared Customs, as shown by the "Letter Rate" and "Affidavit Filed" handstamps and turquoise Customs label declaring that the envelope "May Be Officially Opened." It was indeed opened by a censor in Madras. Konrad Morenweiser's *Zivilzensur in Britisch Indien 1939-1945* documents these facts about the censor markings: the red and white censor tape, type 6A1, was used in Madras between September 1939 and April 1941, and the double triangle black handstamp, type 3A, also used in that city, between May 1940 and December 1941.



Adding special interest to the mail is its recipient, Dr. Paul F. Russell. Before Pearl Harbor, Dr. Russell was a research specialist in tropical diseases with the Rockefeller Foundation. He spent years in the Philippines, Malaya, and India studying the epidemiology, prevention, and control of malaria. It was in India in 1940 that the Prexies encountered him working in the Madras facility of the renowned Pasteur Institute.

After Pearl Harbor, Dr. Russell accepted a commission in the United States Army. Soon Col. Russell was assigned to General MacArthur's headquarters in Australia and served on MacArthur's senior staff. He later wrote that he would never forget the general's remarks to him in May 1943: "Doctor, this will be a long war if for every division I have facing the enemy I must count on a second division in hospital with malaria and a third division convalescing from this disease!"

The main source of casualties filling hospitals and complicating the system of evacuation in the jungle warfare of the South Pacific? Endemic malaria. During the New Guinea campaign more than 1.5 times as many American soldiers were evacuated from the combat zone for malaria as for battle wounds; disease caused 71 percent of evacuations by air, and three fifths of the sick were malaria cases. The incidence of malaria at the heavily infected Milne Bay base reached 4,000 cases per 1,000 troops per year. Col. Russell recommended to Gen. MacArthur that commanders be made responsible for their men taking Atabrine, a malarial suppressive drug, and that antimalarial units be given first priority for transport. Gen. MacArthur turned these recommendations into direct orders. Within weeks already-trained

malaria survey and control units were at work in the field, men were taking their suppressive medicine, and malaria rates among American forces declined. (General MacArthur established the Combined Advisory Committee on Tropical Medicine, Hygiene, and Sanitation in March 1943; by June 1944, MacArthur had issued 15 directives, 14 of them dealing with malaria.)

Control of malaria was urgently needed in another theater of war after Allied forces invaded North Africa in November 1942 and occupied Sicily in July-August 1943. The highest malarial disease rate among American forces in the world was recorded in the North African theater, where there were 8,516 cases per 1,000 troops per year in August 1943. Yet survey and control units did not reach theater until September because of shipping delays. Col. Russell became theater malariologist in September 1943 and was responsible for all malaria control activities. Implementation of the program became a command responsibility. Groundwork was finally laid for an effective control program in North Africa and the similarly malaria-afflicted Italian communications zone.

The second illustration, above, shows an airmail letter to Col. Russell's wife, sent from Senegal (APO 622) where he was then the area malariologist.

Prexie Rate Anomaly

by

Dickson Preston



Here is one for my rate specialist friends out there in Prexie-Era Land. The cover shown was sent by military airmail from APO 652 in Stone, Staffordshire, Great Britain on 14 November 1944. At the time 2nd Lt. Parker, who was in a Casual Squadron of the Army Air Force, was in transit using high number APO 16640-LA-9. He paid the 6-cent military concession rate to send the letter to his home town, Highland, Kansas.

What is odd is the application of 1-cent postage when the letter arrived in Highland on New Year's eve morning. I do not have the data for 1944, but in 1949 Highland was a third class post office with post office boxes and Rural Delivery boxes, but no carrier delivery. The 1-cent could represent the drop letter rate. But why would this letter be charged this 1-cent rate in addition to the airmail postage? Perhaps someone can make some sense out of this franking.

The 1938 National Air Mail Week and Early Prexy Usage

by

Jeffrey Shapiro

1938 was an important year for American philately. Not only was it the year most of the Fifth Bureau Series (Prexies) were issued, but 1938 marked the 20th anniversary of airmail service in the United States.

Going about our busy lives in the 21st century, we seldom reflect on the stunning scientific achievements of the last one hundred years -- like our mastery of the air. With the first walks on the moon a distant memory and a new international space station in orbit, the only time air travel is mentioned is when we complain about how late our flight was! Today, we even take for granted that most of our ordinary first-class mail travels by air.

But in 1938, just seventy-two years ago the story was much different with the world mired in the Great Depression and for most people air travel a novelty. (Remember, the Wright Brothers had taken their first experimental flights at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina only thirty-five years earlier, and that regularly scheduled air service from the United States to Great Britain across the Atlantic Ocean was still a year away.)

In an effort to promote the speed and efficiency of airmail service, and to convince financially-strapped Americans to use airmail at double the 3-cent first class surface letter rate, the U.S. Post Office, under Postmaster General James A. Farley, launched a nation-wide publicity campaign. Dubbed the National Air Mail Week (NAMW), activities were planned to honor twenty years of airmail service in the U.S. (The U.S. Post Office inaugurated airmail service on May 15, 1918, using a Curtis "Jenny" bi-plane between New York City and Washington DC via Philadelphia, a distance of 218 miles.) Held May 15-21, 1938, the goal was to get every patriotic American citizen to mail and/or receive an airmail letter during the week-long celebration. A Post Office slogan reminded the public that "air mail is read first and answered first."

An estimated 9,600 post offices across the United States and its territories in the largest cities to the smallest crossroads, prepared special cachets, giving each locality a chance to boast about its uniqueness -- beauty, history and/or the progressive nature. Cachets, many sponsored by local businesses, civic organizations and individuals, decorated souvenir envelopes that were carried on one-day only NAMW special flights occurring on May 19th.

While a few airports were dedicated during the NAMW celebration, many of the participating localities without air facilities were creative in accommodating these one-time only flights. Back roads were closed and fields cleared to create temporary runways for planes to take off and land carrying their precious NAMW event covers. Pilots were recruited, and local postmasters were responsible for designating appropriate landing areas. A typical flight included four to eight pickups before unloading the mail at a hub location.

Government records show that on May 19th, 1,700 volunteer pilots, including four dozen women, flew an estimated 134,000 air miles in just one day! National Air Mail Week was a success. The Post Office estimated that over 15,000,000 airmail letters were posted May 15-21, 1938!

By National Air Mail Week three Presidential Series stamps had been issued: 1-cent George Washington (April 25); 1.5-cent Martha Washington (May 5); and half-cent Benjamin Franklin (May 19 -- during National Air Mail Week). Examples of NAMW souvenir covers franked with these new stamps paying part of the 6-cent per ounce domestic airmail rate are shown here.

