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# *The Prexie Era*

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## Editor's Notes

### 2012 Subscriptions Payable Now

The Fall 2011 issue is the last in the quartet of *The Prexie Era* for 2011. This means it is time for readers to renew your subscriptions. Rates for 2012 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:

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

\* \* \* \*

In the article on the Fort Ontario emergency refugee shelter (Issue No. 54) I erroneously listed the airmail letter rate to Cuba as 10 cents. The rate changed to 8 cents on June 29, 1945. Since the postcard was mailed the following October, the franking was therefore two cents overpaid. Thanks to Bob Hohertz for pointing this out.

\* \* \* \*

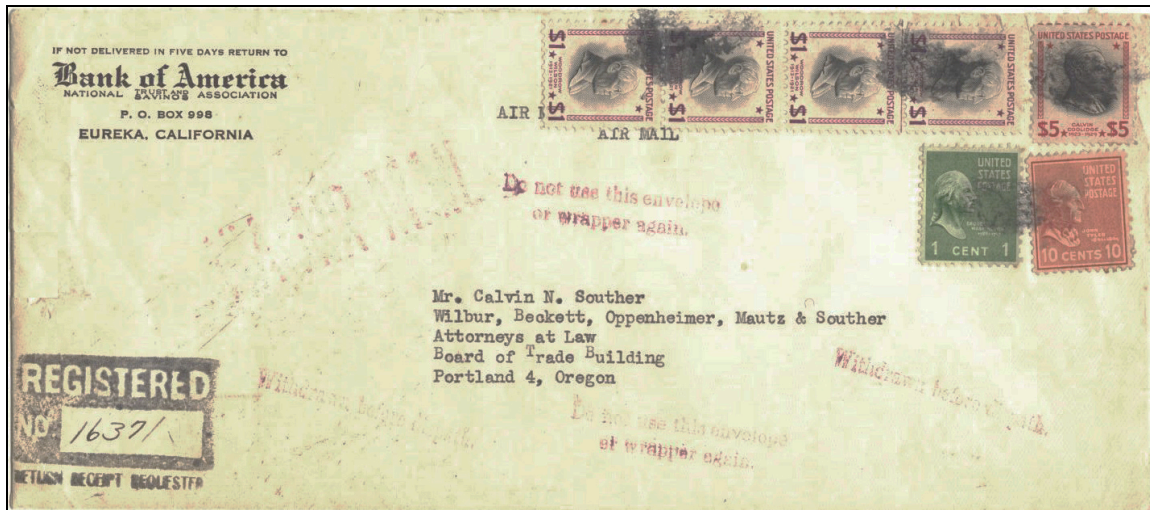


Airmail letter to Finland, postmarked July 12, 1941, censored at the destination. During the Winter War against the U.S.S.R. (Nov. 30, 1939 – Mar. 13, 1940), U.S. mail service to Finland was suspended, then resumed following the end of hostilities. When the U.S. entered World War II, mail was again suspended, this time for the duration of the War. Having gone to war against an Allied nation, albeit to preserve its autonomy, Finland became an enemy country of the U.S.

**\$5.00 Prexie Registered Letter Withdrawn Before Dispatch**

by

Dickson Preston



On 12 January 1948, some hapless individual from the Eureka, California branch of the Bank of America presented a high-value letter at the local post office. The registered letter was intended to go by air to Portland, Oregon, and a return receipt was requested. The total postage of \$9.11 may be broken down as follows:

Airmail postage, 2 x 5 cents per ounce	.10
Registration fee, minimum with indemnity	.20
Return receipt fee, showing where and to whom delivered	.31
Supplementary fee, 1st \$1,000	.10
Supplementary fee, next \$56,000	
@ 15 cents per \$1,000 for Zone 4	8.40
	-----
Total	\$ 9.11

Note that the 31-cent return receipt fee has been inferred. Since all the other fees are multiples of 5 cents, the normal 4-cent return receipt fee cannot produce the total of \$9.11, but the 31-cent fee can.

Later the same day the Bank elected to withdraw the letter from the mails before it had been dispatched from the Eureka post office. The procedure for doing so, as stated in Section 59.68 of the 1948 PL&R was followed, in part, by the postal clerk processing the request.

(1) **Before dispatch:** The sender shall write on his registry receipt "Withdrawn before dispatch," sign his name thereto, and surrender the receipt. The postal employee shall write or stamp "Withdrawn before dispatch" on the counterpart of the receipt in the registration book . . . and shall write or stamp the same words and imprint the postmark on the face of the article.

In the case at hand the clerk did stamp the words "Withdrawn before dispatch" on the face of the envelope, but he did not place a postmark there. He also added "Do not use this envelope or wrapper again," a marking normally appearing on articles returned because of an invalid address.

All was not perfect at the Eureka post office that day. For one thing the purple stamp pad was badly in need of fresh ink, so all the markings, including "VIA AIR MAIL" and the registry postmark on the back, are very feebly struck. For another, the "Withdrawn" marking was misspelled, so that it actually reads **Withdrawn before dispath.**



Figure 2. Date of Posting

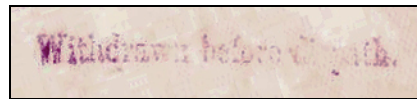


Figure 3. "Withdrawn before dispath"

Did the bank get its \$9.11 postage back? According to the PL&R, "Application for postage paid on registered mail withdrawn before dispatch should be made to the Third Assistant Postmaster General, Division of Registered Mails." Section 35.9 explains the process of making such an application. Note that the passage reads "postage," that is, the 10 cents paid for airmail. The 1949 Postal Guide is less encouraging about the rest of the amount paid. Per Ch. XIII Art. 18,

After a registration receipt has been issued for a letter or parcel, the article is considered as having been registered and if withdrawn before dispatch no refund of registry fee, restricted delivery fee, or return receipt fee is ordinarily permissible.

So the Bank of America could have recovered its 10 cents postage by applying to the Third Assistant Postmaster General's Office, but they were out of luck for the remaining \$9.01. That amount is substantial -- \$104 in 2011 dollars (see Bureau of Labor and Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator at <http://www.bls.gov/bls/inflation.htm>.) Perhaps another section of the Postal Guide describing who may request a withdrawal is relevant here. "Mail deposited by a person adjudicated of unsound mind may be withdrawn by a duly appointed guardian." I leave it to the reader to judge for himself whether this provision applies to whomever may have made the decisions which cost his employer, a bank at that, such a substantial amount of money.



## 5-Cent DC-4 Skymaster Crash Cover

by

Steve B. Davis



This cover, postmarked New York and addressed to Bogota, Colombia, appeared on eBay. The bidding got too pricey for my budget, so I lost out on it. However, I researched the cover before I bid, which turned out to be an interesting exercise. I knew the dates from the markings on the cover. Using them, I searched for plane crashes and here's what I discovered.

### Accident Details

Date:	May 30, 1947
Time:	17:41 hrs (5:41 p.m.)
Operator:	Eastern Air Lines
Flight:	605
Route:	Newark-Baltimore-Miami
Aircraft Type:	Douglas C-54B-15-DO
Registration:	NC88814
Aboard:	53 (passengers: 49, crew: 4)
Fatalities:	53 (no survivors)
Ground:	0 injuries or fatalities

### Summary of accident:

While on approach to Baltimore at 4,000 feet, the plane suddenly went into a nose dive, inverted, and crashed. Possible problems with the elevator. The official cause was never determined.

Source: [www.planecrashinfo.com](http://www.planecrashinfo.com)

## No Service/Return to Sender

by

Louis Fiset



The cover illustrated here, courtesy of Jeffrey Shapiro, was postmarked August 29, 1939, two months after trans-Atlantic airmail service from New York to Europe was inaugurated on the FAM-18 route. At this time flights on the northern route began in New York, proceeding to Southampton, England, via Foynes, Ireland. The northern route flights would end on September 30th with the oncoming of a change in season.

The letter, addressed to Czechoslovakia, was in transit when World War II officially began on 3 September 1939. Up until the time the U.S. entered the War, most air and regular mail to Czechoslovakia and other countries occupied by the Axis was allowed to pass by the belligerent nations, although all of it was subject to censorship. But this cover, to Slesko, located in the border region where Hitler amassed troops for the invasion of Poland, was returned to the sender by the British post office, likely because of inevitable confusion surrounding the start of the war. Service from the U.S. to Czechoslovakia was soon restored, and collectors will find numerous examples in dealers' stocks.

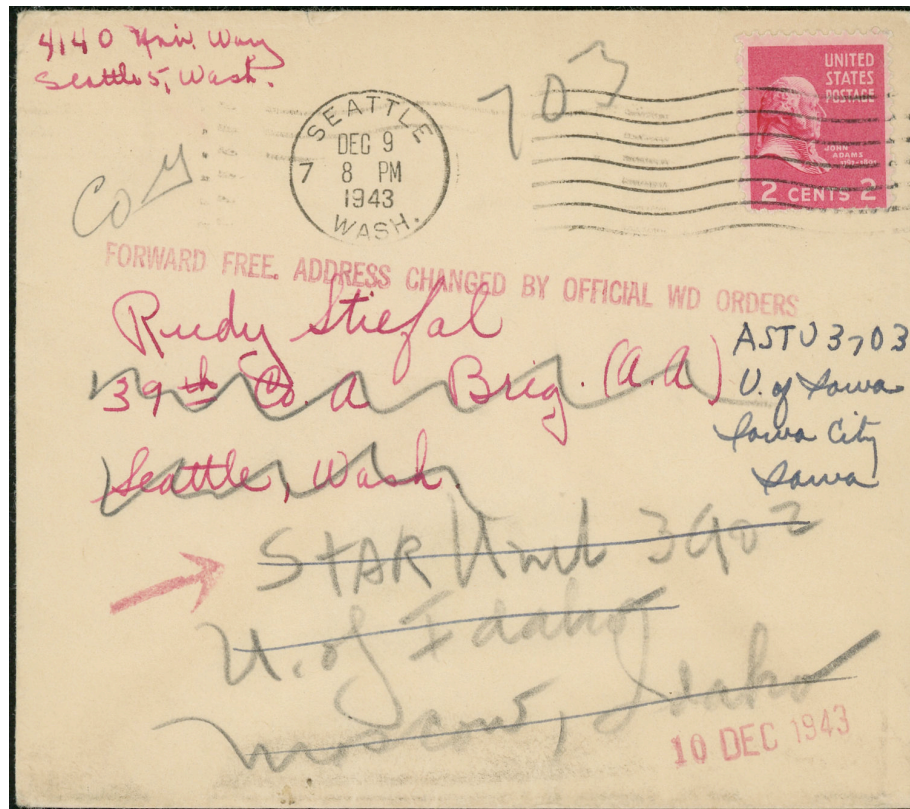
The **NO SERVICE/RETURN TO SENDER** boxed censor marking is British in origin. The most common of the UK service suspended markings, it was in use between 1939 and 1941 and most frequently seen on mail to Axis and Axis occupied countries. Although the marking was applied in Great Britain, details on exactly where are currently lacking.

Source: Michael Deery. *RETURN TO SENDER Devices Used to Identify Service Suspended Mails During WWII*. (Ontario, Canada: Michael Deery, 2011), pp. 57-63.

## Free Forwarding Due to Official Orders

by

Bob Hohertz



Paragraph 10, Section 769 of Postal Laws and Regulations, 1932, provided for forwarding of third and fourth class mail without charge when a change of address resulted from official government orders.

While such covers aren't exactly common, most of us own or have seen greeting cards that were forwarded free to people whose addresses had changed due to official orders. The bulk of these involved military personnel, but the one shown below did not. The addressee was relocated as a member of the Soil Conservation Service.

The card above was sent sealed; the sender paid the carrier drop rate of two cents rather than mailing it by third class. By the time it arrived the addressee had been transferred to Moscow, Idaho, and ultimately on to Iowa City. The card was stamped **FORWARD FREE. ADDRESS CHANGED BY OFFICIAL WD ORDERS** and forwarded without payment of the additional one cent otherwise required for forwarding a drop rate cover out of the original delivery area. The **WD** likely indicates War Department.

This example of free forwarding represents a somewhat unusual use of the rule.



## Re-routing of Airmail to Rhodesia in World War II

by

Louis Fiset

World War II exerted a major impact on transmission of U.S. intercontinental airmail by forcing changes to several well established prewar routes. Closure of major routes across Europe to Africa and transpacific routes to Asia provide two examples known to students of aerophilately and World War II postal history. These changes resulted in inevitable delays and in some cases led to new airmail rates. The two covers here, posted in 1940 and 1943 to south central Africa, in the geographic region known as Rhodesia, illustrate these deviations from the norm.



The first cover was postmarked January 17, 1940 when the war was less than five months old, with the U.S. standing on the sidelines. Italy had not yet entered the war; thus air routes across the Mediterranean were still open. A 50-cent Clipper stamp pays the 30-cent transatlantic airmail rate to Europe plus the 20-cent surcharge for air transmission from Europe to Northern and Southern Rhodesia. A manuscript directive calls attention to the Europe-to-Africa leg. No receiving mark appears on the cover, but the 1939 *U.S. Official Postal Guide* indicates a 9 to 10 day ordinary transmission time from New York.

Interestingly, January 17th marks the day censors at the Bermuda censor station began opening mail on eastbound Clipper flights. However, given that only two censors were active at the time, the **PASSED BY CENSOR** marking was likely applied in Great Britain, possibly Liverpool.

Following closure of the Mediterranean route, mail to Northern and Southern Rhodesia was dispatched from the U.S. on the transpacific route and onward from Hong Kong. The rate was 90 cents per half-ounce.

The second cover, postmarked almost exactly two years after the first, is franked with Transport airmail stamps from the 1941 series that replaced the Clipper series and pays the 60-cent transatlantic rate from Miami to Lagos with connecting airmail service across Africa. The route became effective December 6, 1941. This letter was censored at the New York censor station (5848) and passed by a UK censor stationed in Northern Rhodesia. A March 3, 1943 Leopoldville transit marking on the back indicates a significant delay in transmission.



Together these two covers reflect a re-routing of mail, a change in postal rate, and delay in transmission. They also call to mind the changing face of the world's maps after World War II. In 1953 the territories of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were united as the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In 1964 Northern Rhodesia became the Republic of Zambia, and the next year Southern Rhodesia declared itself independent as Rhodesia. In 1980 Rhodesia gained international recognition as the Republic of Zimbabwe.

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### **“Plum” Mail Returned to Sender**

by

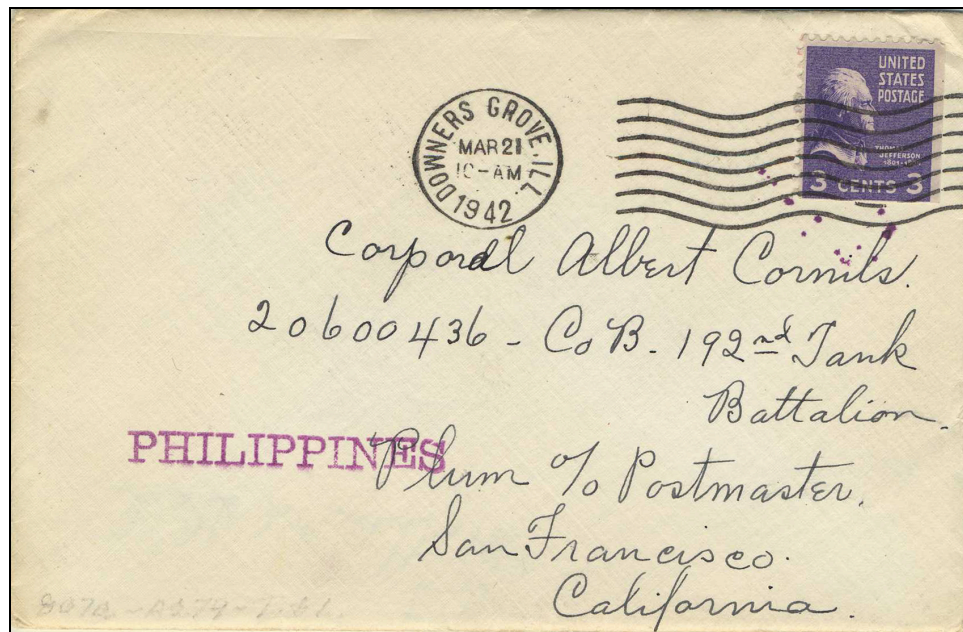
Jeffrey Shapiro

Illustrated below is a cover sent by a family member in Illinois to Cpl. Albert Cornlis, Company B of the 192nd Tank Battalion in the Philippines. The letter, postmarked March 21, 1942, was franked with a 3-cent Prexie booklet stamp to pay first class postage to a U.S. territory. It received a **"RETURN TO SENDER SERVICE SUSPENDED"** marking on the back.

The address line contains the word “Plum”, a military code name for Philippine Islands. A code system was established for advance bases in the Pacific after the attack on Pearl Harbor, designed to keep the locations of these shore facilities secret from the enemy. Two among the 18 known examples are “Bobcat” (Bora Bora, Society Islands) and “Cactus” (Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands.) These code names would eventually be replaced by a system of Navy mailing numbers, similar to the APO system.

By the time this letter was posted, the Battalion was in retreat - and 18 days later had surrendered to the Japanese Army. The 192nd Tank Battalion was a mobilized Army National Guard Unit of combined tank companies from Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio and Wisconsin, activated by the U.S. Army in November 1940 and sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for training. The Battalion was equipped with 54 of the Army's new M3 Stuart tanks, just rolling off the assembly lines and shipped to the Philippines in October 1941.





On December 21, 1941, the Battalion was ordered north from Manila to engage the Japanese invaders on the Bataan Peninsula. When the Battalion confronted the Imperial Japanese Army's 4th Regiment on December 22, 1941 near the town of Damortis, the 192nd became the first American armor to engage the enemy in tank to tank combat during World War II. The 192nd tanks, lacking adequate fuel supplies, were badly mangled. Skirmishes continued as the Battalion joined the general retreat towards Bataan and provided support defending the airfield and the beaches during the final struggle, until April 9, 1942 when U.S. forces and their allies surrendered to the Japanese. Some of the remnants of the 192nd escaped to the jungles, while most participated in the Bataan Death March. While some languished at the Cabanatuan POW Camp (liberated by U.S. Army Rangers December 30, 1944), other survivors were sent throughout the Japanese Empire to serve as slave laborers.

Of the 593 officers and men of the 192nd Tank Battalion who initially went to the Philippines, only 265 survived the War. Cpl. Albert Cornils was one of them. Cornils was born in 1916 and joined the Illinois National Guard after graduating high school, receiving training as a radio operator and a tank driver. In September 1940, his unit was sent to Fort Knox, KY for further training. In October 1941, Cornils was sent to the Philippines as part of the 192nd Battalion. When the American Forces surrendered in April 1942, Cornils barely survived what would become known as the Bataan Death March. After languishing at various POW camps in the Philippines, Cornils was sent to Formosa in November 1944 where he worked as a farm laborer, then on to northern Japan (Honshu) in January 1945 where he worked in an open-pit copper mine. In September 1945, Cornils was liberated by the US Navy.

After discharge from the Army in May 1946, Cornils eventually moved to Colorado, married and had two children. He died on December 7, 1995, at age 79, 54 years to the day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Sources: Wikipedia and the Proviso East High (Illinois) School Bataan Commemorative Research Project.