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The Prexie Era

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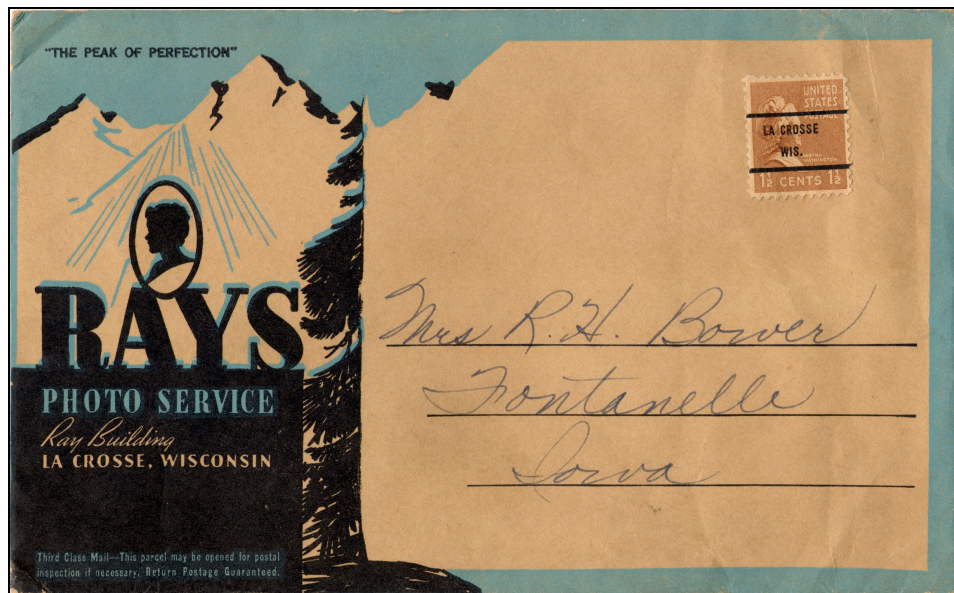
Editor's Notes

- The remainder of Bill Helbock's Prexie collection, which includes two well known high value oversize pieces, will be auctioned by Harmer & Schau at the 2012 StampShow being held in Sacramento, August 16-19. The online catalog should appear some time in July.
- Tony Wawrukiewicz has recently completed digitization of the *U.S. Postal Bulletin* from 1880 to 1971. It is currently up and running on the internet. The web site has been designed to be user friendly, with a series of "frequently asked questions" to help navigate the site and bring users up to speed. Wawrukiewicz provides appropriate screen shots from the web site's PDF Search page to aid with the learning curve. Tony has written about the project in detail in numerous publications, most recently the Spring 2012 issue of *Military Postal History Society Bulletin* and the May 2012 issue of *The United States Specialist*. Access to the site is universal, making affiliation with sponsoring organizations unnecessary. The complete run may be found at: <http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/>

Photo Order Cancelled – Paper Rationing

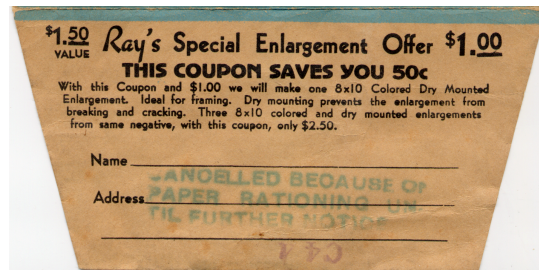
by

Louis Fiset



During World War II the home front suffered many deprivations as war raged continents away. Nearly all food products were rationed. Cloth, wood and metal, as well as rubber and leather, were all rationed so that the armed forces would have enough materiel to meet their needs. Gasoline, oil and grease, kerosene, industrial alcohol, and ink. Paper, carbon paper, pencils, pens and typewriter ribbons, erasers, paperclips, and envelopes were also in short supply. New automobiles, tires for any cars, and most auto parts were all unavailable as factories converted production to meet the needs of the War Department. Nylon and silk were used for parachutes, not women's stockings.

The undated cover shown here provides empirical evidence on its flap that photographic paper was also rationed or unavailable, probably due to its silver content. It reads, **CANCELLED BECAUSE OF PAPER RATIONING UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**. Likely the La Crosse, Wisconsin photo lab mailer contained the negatives being returned to the patron by third class.



This cover provides an additional story. Rays Photo Service was in fact Helen Mae Hoeft, who used the shop name as a pseudonym to avoid sex-discrimination in the photo field. She feared customers would not buy photographic services from a woman when she started up in 1924. The name of the business has changed since her time, but as of 1978 was still in operation in La Crosse.

The contemporaneous photograph shown below bears Hoeft's oval stamp with the slogan "Nationally Known Guaranteed Prints." It remains unclear whether Hoeft took the photograph, herself, or merely developed it at the studio for another photographer.



Free Forwarding of Mail Due to Official Orders

by

Bob Hohertz

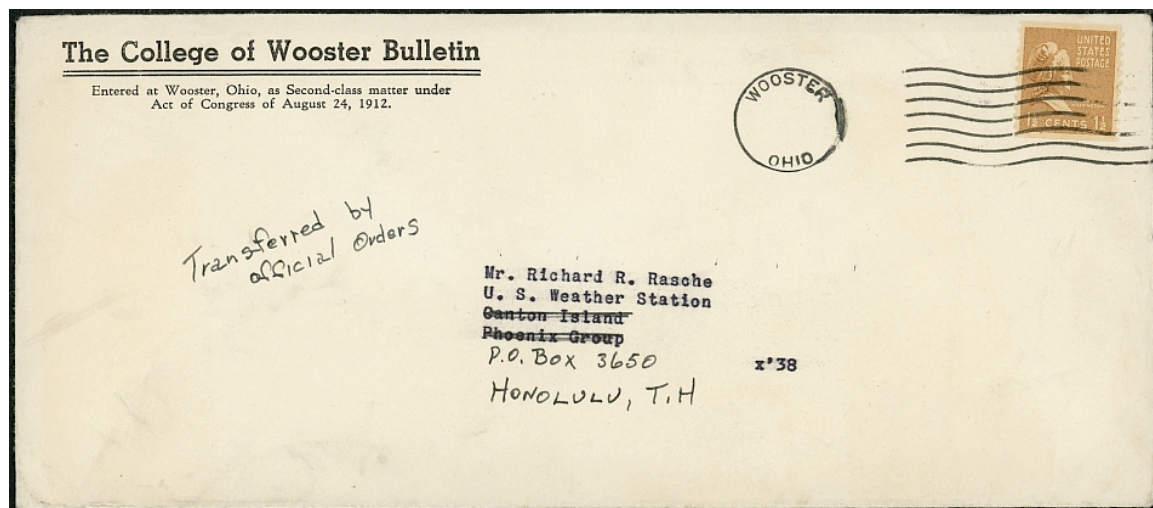


In the last issue of *The Prexie Era* (No. 55) I showed the free forwarding of a 2-cent carrier drop rate letter addressed to a member of the military in Seattle in December 1943. Another unusual use of the free forwarding service is shown here, an October 1941 registered cover posted to Camp Grant, Illinois and forwarded to Fort Worden, Washington.

Since first class postage had been paid, any additional charge for forwarding would not have been required. And had the letter not been properly delivered, there would not have been a second registration fee payable upon forwarding. However, since by regulation the U.S. Post Office Department did not deliver mail directly to a serviceman at a military installation, likely the post office considered the letter properly delivered once it was handed over to Camp Grant's mail unit for further handling. To avoid a second charge for re-registration, the cover was stamped "CHANGE OF ADDRESS DUE TO OFFICIAL ORDERS" before a postal clerk returned it to the mail stream.

The backstamps show the letter was registered at Lindsay, California on October 15, 1941; received at Rockford, Illinois October 19; registered again at Camp Grant, Illinois October 22; and received at Fort Worden, Washington on October 25.

Another interesting cover that was forwarded free due to the addressee being transferred by official orders is the one illustrated below, originally sent by the College of Wooster to an alumnus serving at the U.S. Weather Station on Canton Island.



The corner card indicates it was entered as second-class matter. It has a receiving mark on the back indicating it reached Canton Island on July 4, 1952 so, assuming it didn't take more than three months getting there, it was mailed during the period when second-class transient mail cost two cents for the first two ounces. At the time, Canton Island was under joint jurisdiction of the United States and Great Britain, and it may not have been clear whether this mailing was U.S. second-class or foreign printed matter. Whatever the logic, it was mailed at the foreign printed matter rate of one-and-one-half cents.

When it reached Canton Island the addressee had moved on to Honolulu. It was then treated as internal U.S. mail and forwarded to him free of charge due to his having been "Transferred by official orders."

This cover was in Larry Paige's collection. He had written it up as an example of the one-and-one-half-cent non-profit third-class books and catalogs rate in effect from January 1, 1952 through July 31, 1958. There are several problems with this classification, at least in my mind. First and foremost, the corner card saying that it was entered as second-class matter should have defined how it would have been treated as a domestic mailing.

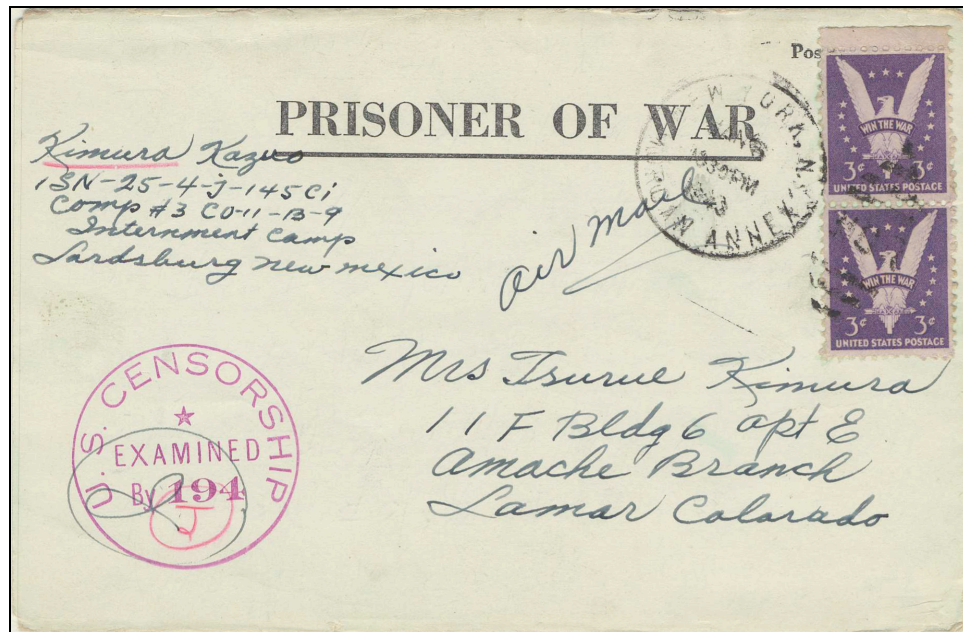
Second, a footnote in Beecher & Wawrukiewicz says that a regular non-profit mailing should have "Sec. 34.65(d) PL&R" printed on it, and this one has nothing of the sort, not even a "non-profit" indication.

Finally, there is another footnote in B&W to the effect that books and catalogs were defined elsewhere as having at least twenty-four pages. This cover doesn't look like it could have held anything that bulky, though I suppose it is possible. At any rate, while I would love to have it be an example of that elusive rate, I doubt it is.

A Patriotic Cover --- Internment Camp to Relocation Center

by

Jeffrey Shapiro



The censored, **PRISONER OF WAR** lettersheet shown here originated at Lordsburg, New Mexico bearing two patriotic 3c "Win the War" stamps, to pay the prevailing 6 cents per ounce domestic airmail rate. It was written by a Japanese enemy alien interned at the Lordsburg Internment Camp to his wife at the Granada Relocation Center (Amache) in southeastern Colorado. Since the letter was written in Japanese ("J") the Army censor at Lordsburg forwarded the lettersheet to the New York censor station's POW Unit where it was censored by a Japanese fluent civilian employee, then placed into the mail stream on January 6, 1943.

Released on Independence Day, July 4, 1942, the 3c "Win The War" stamp featured the American Eagle with wings spread in a "V" for victory shape, surrounded by thirteen stars. The eagle's talons are grasping arrows, but ironically, no olive branches are visible. With twenty billion printed, postal patrons could add a bit of patriotism to their World War II era correspondence rather than go with the common 3-cent Jefferson Prexie definitive. The irony on the lettersheet here should not be overlooked.

As a result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and entry of the U.S. into World War II, the US Department of Justice detained German, Italian, and Japanese nationals declared by presidential proclamation to be enemy aliens. Later, after undergoing loyalty hearings, detainees declared threats to national security were transferred into Army custody and held at half a dozen Army facilities located around the western U.S., including Camp Lordsburg, in southwest New Mexico. The first detainees began to arrive at Camp Lordsburg in June 1942, and eventually more than 1,500 Japanese nationals were interned there. In the spring of 1943 all civilian internees held by the War Department were returned to Department of Justice jurisdiction and moved to camps run by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Once emptied, the Army internment camps became POW camps for German and Italian soldiers captured in North Africa and Europe.

In the meantime, on February 19, 1942 President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the War Department to expel more than 100,000 residents of Japanese ancestry living in the west coast states and incarcerate them in ten relocation centers located in the high desert country of the arid west and the swamplands of Arkansas. These centers were operated by a civilian agency, the War Relocation Authority.

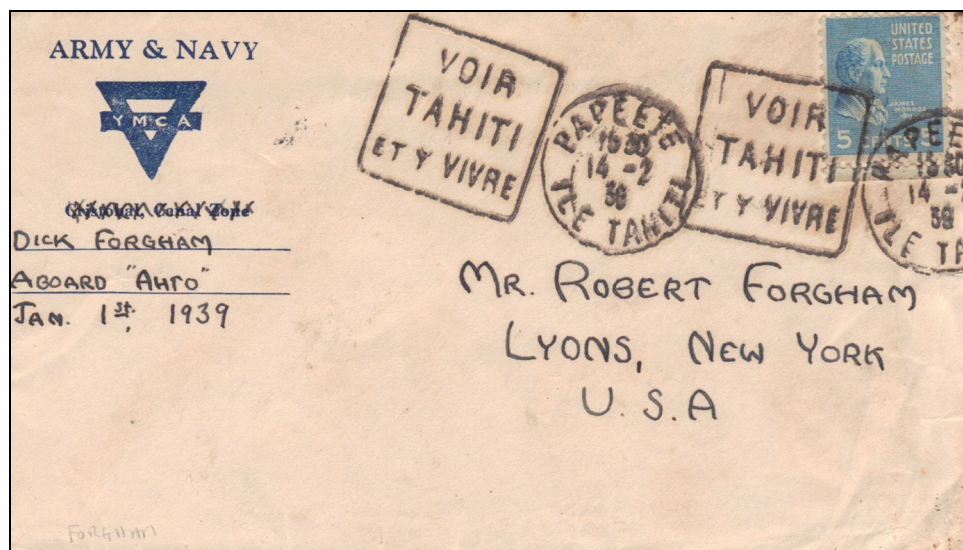
The correspondence between a Japanese alien couple shown here originated under Army jurisdiction, was censored under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Office of Censorship, and delivered to the addressee being held by the War Relocation Authority.

A Paquebot Cover Back to the United States

by

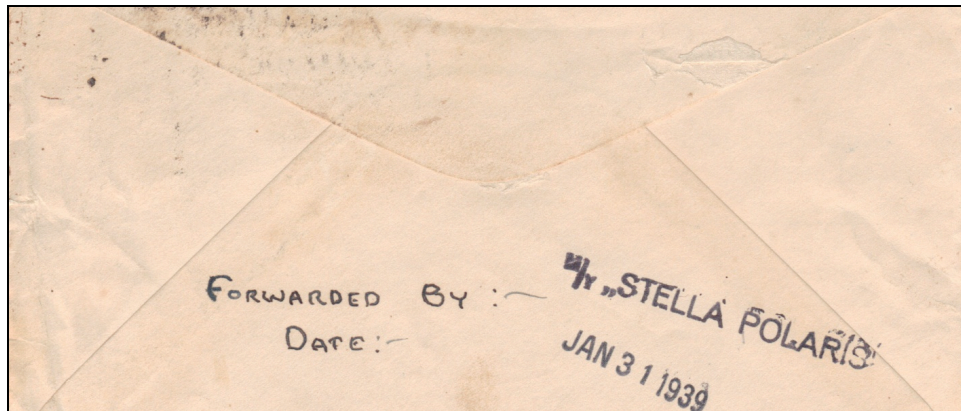
Albert “Chip” Briggs

Mail posted on vessels on the high seas has been governed by international regulations since 1891. In July of that year the Universal Postal Union convention agreed that articles mailed on ships could be prepaid by stamps and in accordance with the postal rates of the nation to which the vessel belonged. The UPU convention of 1897 required the word “paquebot” be applied to the article. The translation from the official French is: “The post office which receives correspondence posted on board, provides same with its common datestamp, adding handwritten or by a stamp the word Paquebot.” The 1924 UPU convention specified further that while postage may be prepaid according to the rates of the country under which flag the vessel sails; if the mailing occurred during the stay at one of the two terminal ports of the voyage or at a port of call prepayment is valid only if the postage stamps and rates of the country in whose waters the vessel lies are used.



The cover illustrated here was posted on board a vessel in the South Pacific identified in the return address as “Ahro” on New Years Day, 1939. The letter was then handed for forwarding to another ship, the M/V *Stella Polaris*. This transpired on January 31, 1939 as reflected by hand

stamps on the cover's reverse. The envelope was franked with a 5-cent James Monroe stamp. It was then placed in the mails on Valentines Day, 1939 in Papeete, Tahiti, headed for New York.



This letter seems to conform to some rules and not others. The *Ahro* was presumably a yacht or sailing vessel registered in the United States (no specific information has been found). The passing of the letter from the *Ahro* to the *Stella Polaris* occurred somewhere in international waters in the South Pacific. The 5-cent stamp would prepay the UPU international surface rate then in effect. U.S. postage was valid since the *Ahro* was not in Tahitian waters, which would otherwise require Tahiti franking. The 14/2/39 Papeete datestamp was applied as required; however there was no application of the word paquebot.

The M/V *Stella Polaris*, shown below, launched in 1927, was one of the first custom built cruise ships. She was frequently called the "Royal Yacht" of cruising. Capable of housing 200 passengers in lavish accommodations, the ship also boasted a crew of 130. Owned by the Bergen Line of Norway, she was seized by the German government in 1940 and until 1943 used as a recreational vessel for U-boat crews.



After the war the ship was refurbished and until 1969 plied the world's oceans. The letter illustrated here was undoubtedly handled by the *Stella Polaris* while on a 1939 world cruise. Of particular interest it was handled by two vessels, franked by a 5 cent Prexie stamp, and sent back to the United States as a paquebot letter.

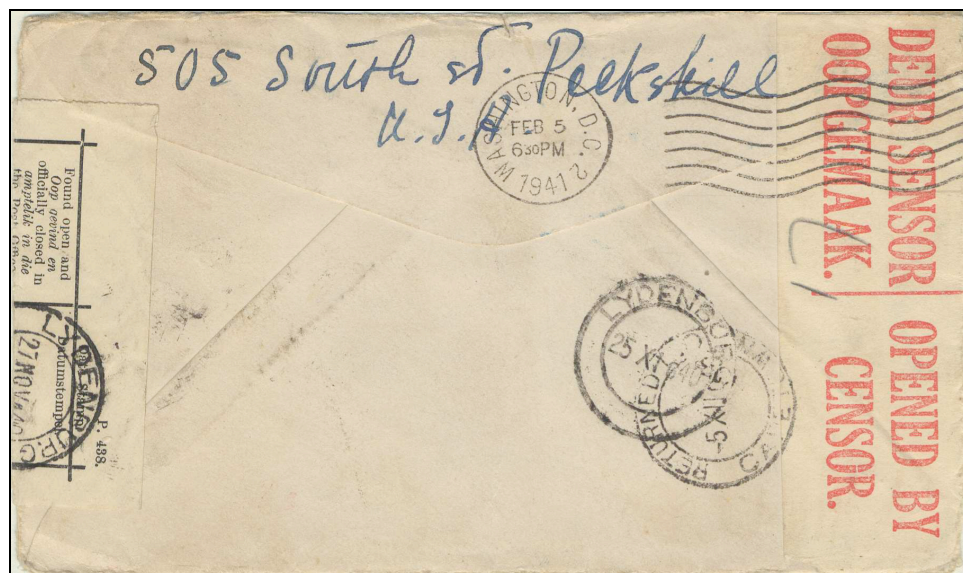
55-cent Rate to South Africa, Returned UNKNOWN

by

Jeffrey Shapiro



With war spreading through Europe in 1940, mail destined for South Africa was sent from North America by the trans-Pacific route via Hong Kong at 70 cents per half ounce. However postal officials may have acted on the manuscript instruction of "Trans Atlantic via London" and sent the cover across the Atlantic at the rate of 55c per half ounce. (The official 55-cent rate via the Atlantic ended June 14, 1940 and this letter was mailed June 24th) With most airmail from London reserved for official and military mail, this letter was probably carried onwards by boat to South Africa, arriving 6 weeks later. The letter was censored, marked unknown and returned to sender, arriving almost 8 months later.

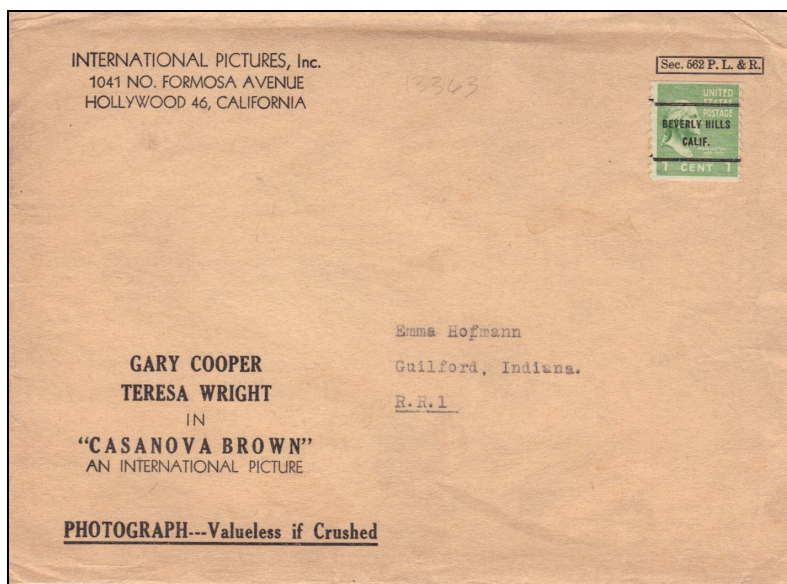


Sometimes the Fun Is on the Inside

by

Albert “Chip” Briggs

Postal historians are frequently so preoccupied with the outside of a cover that we fail to appreciate its contents, if still available. The object of my desire the day I bought this was a clean, complete, smallish brown envelope with a 1-cent horizontal coil bearing a Beverly Hills, Calif. pre-cancel. It just looked nice. It was sent from International Pictures in Hollywood, California to Emma Hoffman on Rural Route 1, Guilford, Indiana. The upper right had the familiar printed endorsement, Sec. 562 P. L. & R. The bottom left corner mentioned a movie titled “Casanova Brown” starring Gary Cooper and Teresa Wright.



While there is certainly nothing wrong with the cover, it was the contents along with the cover which I have come to appreciate and display both in my homemade cover album. Inside was a photograph of Gary Cooper, sent as publicity for the movie mentioned on the envelope. It has a facsimile signature as well.

In this film, Gary Cooper plays Casanova Q. Brown, a young man notified at his wedding rehearsal in Chicago that he is the father of a brand new baby in New York. This lighthearted romantic comedy directed by Sam Wood was released in 1944 and actually had its world premiere in the liberated territories of France on August 5, 1944. The film opened in the states in San Francisco on August 23. The critical reviews were mixed but the movie did make some money and was nominated for three Oscars, art direction, sound recording and scoring.

Although not a rarity or a gem by any means in the postal history sense, it appeals both to my fascination with the Prexies and my love of old movies.