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The Prexie Era

Newsletter of the USSS 1938 Presidential-Era Committee

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Presidential-Era Committee Convention at ARIPEX 2015

by Dickson Preston



The Prexie-Era Committee will hold its first formal convention at ARIPEX 2105. We will be a convening society at the show under the name “The Presidential-Era Committee of the United States Stamp Society.” The convention, which has already received an official nod from both the ARIPEX Show Committee and the USSS will include exhibits, presentations, a general meeting, and opportunities to socialize with like-minded philatelists.

ARIPEX 2015 will be held at the Mesa Convention Center in Mesa, AZ on February 20 to 22, 2015. The show hotel, which is adjacent to the show, will be the Phoenix Marriott Hotel Mesa, which will offer special rates for ARIPEX attendees. Please see the ARIPEX website (aripex.org) for further information about the show venue and the hotel.

ARIPEX 2015 will be an excellent opportunity to exhibit Prexie-era stamps and covers, including exhibits of traditional material, postal history, airmail, revenues, illustrated

mail, and other subjects. Three of the five members of the jury are specialists in Prexie-era material. ARIPEX is reserving a minimum of fifty frames for our convention, although

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we are hoping for an even larger turnout. The prospectus and entry form are available at the ARIPEX website (aripex.org).

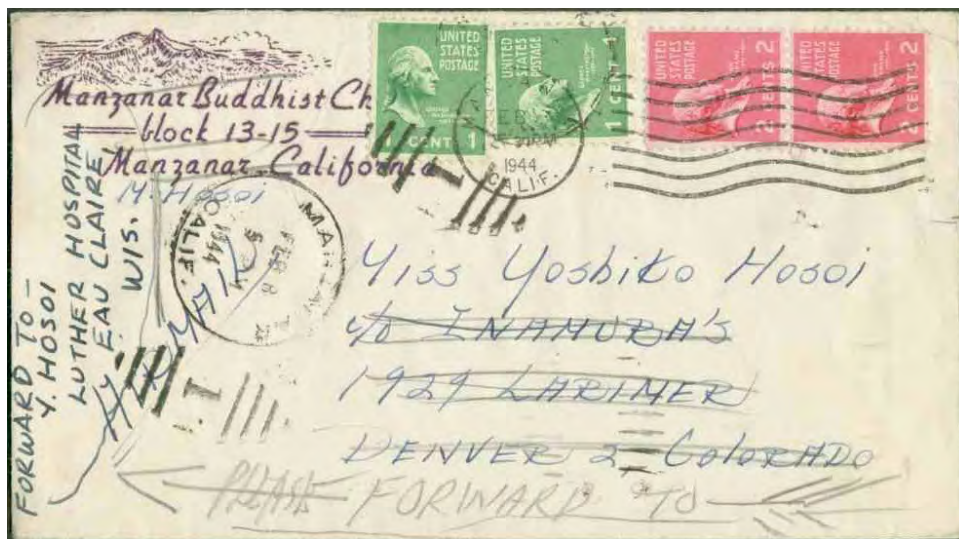
The show will offer presentations on Prexie-era topics. If you would like to do a presentation, please contact Jeffrey Shapiro at coverlover@gmail.com. The Presidential-Era Committee will also offer a special award for the best exhibit of Prexie-era material. The specifics of

this award are still being worked out and will be announced in a later issue of this publication.

Although eight months away, the idea of having the Prexie Era Committee's first formal convention has already generated much enthusiasm. We hope the membership will enjoy this opportunity to join their fellow specialists for three days of philately and fellowship in the warm sunshine of mid-February Arizona.

Scarce Prexie Usage at A Japanese American Relocation Center

by Louis Fiset



At first glance, the cover illustrated here looks pretty ordinary. However, it has a number of hidden attributes of interest to Prexie-era collectors and students of World War II.

First, the letter originated in one of the ten War Relocation Authority centers that incarcerated U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry and their alien elders. The Manzanar camp, located in the Owens Valley of eastern California, opened in March 1942 and closed in November 1945. Each center had a branch post office to serve the needs of the inmates. Los Angeles was the parent post office of the Manzanar branch.

The Prexie franking, under most circumstances, would be common. Six cents pays the one-ounce domestic airmail rate. What makes this franking

special is that Prexies on mail originating in the relocation centers are uncommon. In fact, although I have been collecting relocation mail for more than 30 years, this is the first cover I have seen from any of the centers bearing the 2-cent value.

The parent post offices decided what stamps would be sent out to their branches except when special requests came in from collectors seeking new issue commemoratives. The vast majority of outgoing mail consisted of ordinary 3-cent letters. The Win the War adhesive, issued July 4, 1942, shortly after the centers came into being, served as the postage workhorse throughout the war, at the expense of the 3-cent Jefferson stamp. High value Prexies are rarely seen except on registered mail, which, itself was uncommon.

At Manzanar, one would expect to see a lot of 2-cent frankings. Although the parent post office was more than 200 miles away, postal patrons enjoyed the 2-cent local rate on mail to Los Angeles. Unfortunately for Prexie collectors, however, all such frankings I have encountered are from the Defense Issue.

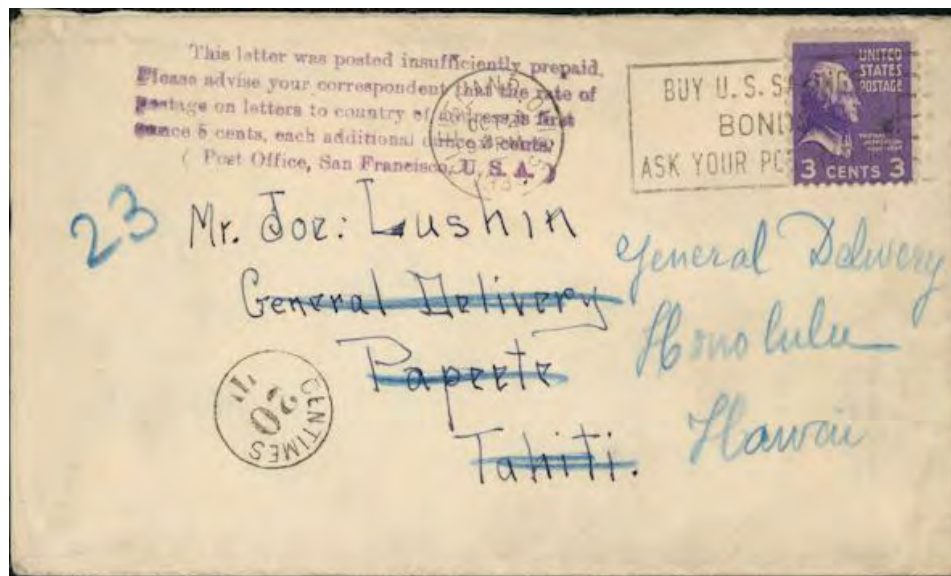
This cover also reveals historical facts of interest. The letter was addressed to a Japanese American in Denver, in care of a family that also appears to be of Japanese ethnicity. The letter was then

forwarded to a hospital in Wisconsin. By this time in the War, almost 50 percent of the inmates in the centers had left camp for resettlement away from the West Coast in communities that would accept Japanese American migrants there, many attended colleges and universities or found employment opportunities. The addressee may have been a nursing student in Denver and was now working in a hospital.

All but one relocation center closed by December 1945, and along with them the branch post offices.

To Charge Postage Due or Not to Charge Postage Due

by Bob Hohertz



The illustrated cover raises an interesting question. Sent from Cleveland, Ohio to Tahiti in 1939, it was unquestionably underpaid by two cents and received a 20 centimes due marking as well as a detailed handstamp explanation. It reads: "This letter was posted insufficiently prepaid. Please advise your correspondent that the rate of postage on letters to country of address is first ounce 5 cents, each additional ounce 3 cents (Post Office, San Francisco, U.S.A.)"

By the time the letter reached Tahiti, the addressee, Mr. Lushin, had moved on to

Honolulu. Once forwarded there, the postage was sufficient, or at least would have been if the letter had been addressed there in the first place. The letter apparently was not returned to sender nor held for postage.

So, should the postage due have been collected? As the addressee was no longer where the Tahiti post office could collect it before delivery, would the Honolulu post office have done so? Could it have been worth the postage to send the difference to Tahiti? I suspect it was delivered without any further action. But then, we are talking about the post office

\$2/\$5 Census Revival

by Prexie Census Committee



In the last newsletter Jeffrey Shapiro announced the revival of the census of \$2 and \$5 Prexie frankings, a project that had remained dormant for some time. Here is an illustration of one of the covers that has been reported.

The \$3 postage affixed pays the 3.5-ounce (40¢ x 7) airmail rate to Chile plus 20¢ registration fee. The letter, postmarked 21 February 1945, was sent by the Chilean Consulate in Los Angeles to Chile's Foreign Ministry, in Santiago. The letter transited Miami on 23 and 24 February and was received on 28 February. Numerous manuscript and printed numbers may be routing numbers within the Foreign Minister's office.

During World War II postal regulations prohibited airmail correspondence exceeding two ounces in weight except to countries in the Western Hemisphere. This cover nicely illustrates the exception.

Another interesting aspect of this cover is the violet, small-box censor marking found just to the right of the address line. Diplomatic correspondence between agencies was considered privileged mail by the U.S. Office of Censorship and thus remained free of examination by its censors.

This marking, which reads **PASSED BY/U.S. CENSOR**, was applied at the Los Angeles field station, as indicated by the censor's identification number (2516). This marking alerted other censors, at Miami and elsewhere, that the item had been reviewed by censorship and allowed to pass unopened. Such markings helped expedite the dispatch of privileged international mail.

Please check your collections for covers bearing \$2 and \$5 frankings (not tags) and send scans to Jeffrey Shapiro at coverlover@gmail.com. Letters need not be solo frankings.

Letter to A Hometown Hero

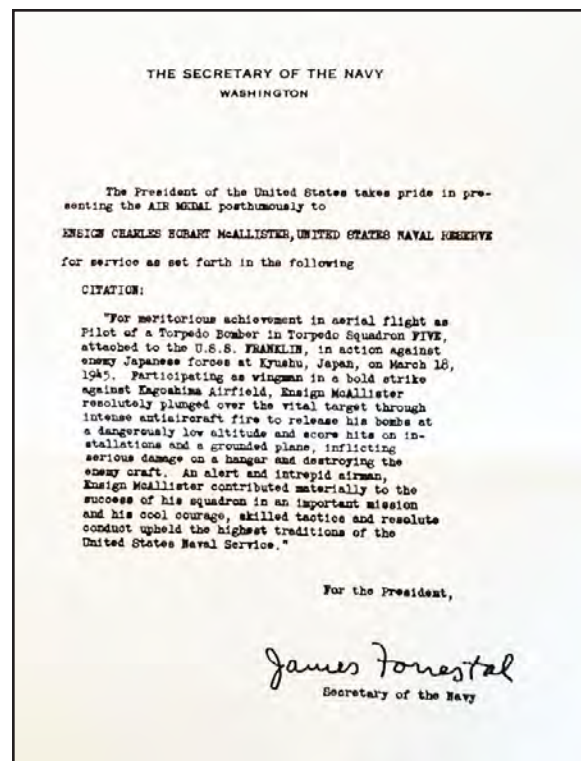
by Albert "Chip" Briggs Jr.



V-Mail was a widely utilized means of communicating with servicemen during the Second World War. Occasionally, one can run across V-Mail that has not been processed or returned to sender for some reason. Such is the case with the cover illustrated above. This cover is addressed to Ensign C. H. McAllister United States Naval Reserve, C/O Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California. The return address is S. O. McAllister, 505 Washington Ave., Vinton, Va. The mailing was postmarked May 1, 1945, near the end of the war. The cover bears a boxed handstamp reading **Returned to Sender, Unclaimed By F.P.O. Directory Service, Wash. D.C.**

Unbeknownst to the family member sending the mail, Ensign McAllister had been killed in action on March 18, 1945. Piloting a torpedo bomber in Torpedo Squadron FIVE attached to the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Franklin*, he was killed in a raid against Kagoshima Airfield. Credited with inflicting serious damage on a hangar and destroying a enemy aircraft on the

ground, he was posthumously awarded the AIR MEDAL. Below may be seen a citation from Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal.



30-Cent Transports to Mauritius

by Joe Bock



The cover shown here is a March 1944 usage of the 30-cent Transport stamp to Mauritius, an island located in the North Indian Ocean east of Madagascar. Mauritius was a British Crown Colony since the early 1800s.

Of special interest here is P.O. Box 1000, an underecover address for a Jewish internment camp. This address was established to receive all camp mail and provided a return address for outgoing mail.

The camp was set up by British authorities for would-be illegal immigrants to Palestine. In September 1940 a contingent of approximately 3,500 Jewish emigrants from Poland, Danzig, and Austria sailed in several ships bound for Haifa, Palestine from Europe, via Crete and Cyprus. Due to crowded refugee camps in Palestine, most were not permitted to disembark.

In December 1940 about 1,500 were sent to Port Louis, Mauritius via the Suez Canal and Red Sea. These desparate refugees were initially confined under harsh conditions. Eventually, camp conditions improved. The inmates

built synagogues and made improvements to housing. Most remained in the camp until late 1945 when they were finally permitted to leave for Palestine.

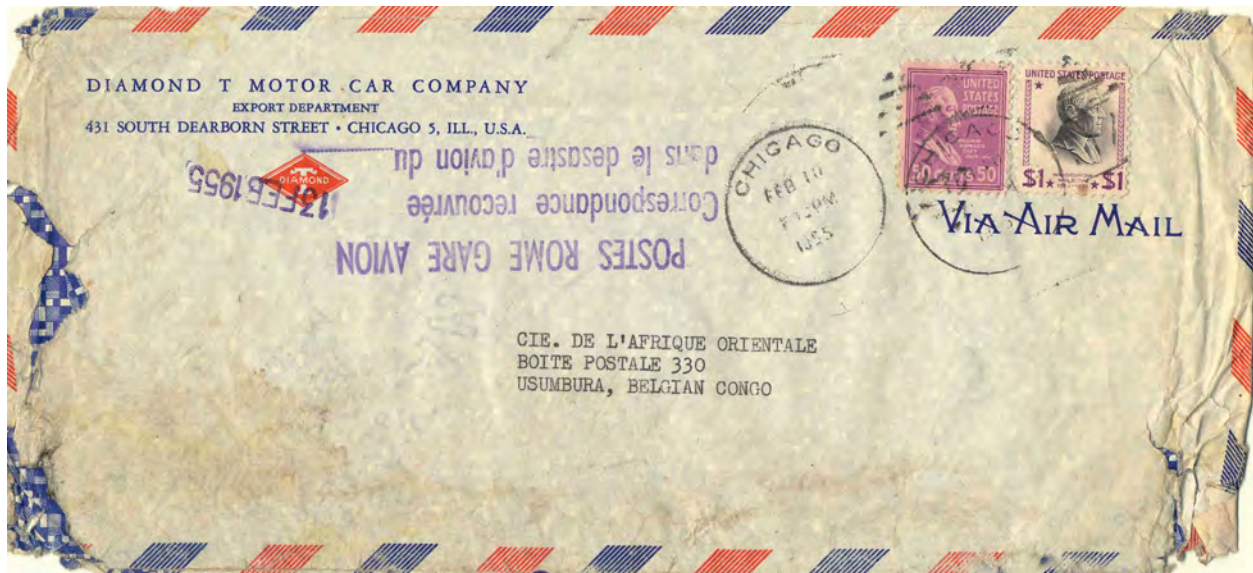
The 60-cent airmail rate to Mauritius, established on 1 July 1939 for trans-Atlantic dispatch to Marseille and onward from France to Madagascar, ended with the fall of France in June 1940. From 2 December 1941 the 60-cent rate paid for trans-Atlantic service to Leopoldville and onward by air to South Africa. From there the letter likely reached Mauritius by ship. Unfortunately, there is no backstamp to confirm this.

This cover bears evidence of having been censored three times. It was first examined at New York (8411), then by British censors at Mauritius (EE/8). Finally, the letter was passed by one of four censors at the Mauritius camp (B 4), as evidenced by the distinctive triangle censor marking.

Incoming mail from the U.S. to the Mauritius internment camp is relatively scarce compared to outgoing mail.

1955 Crash Cover to Belgian Congo

by Jeffrey Shapiro



The combination of single 50-cent and \$1 Prexie stamps prepaid six times the 25 cents per half-ounce uniform airmail rate to Africa, (in effect October 1946 thru June 1971) on this ill-fated February 10, 1955 cover. It was mailed by Chicago's Diamond T Motor Car Company (truck manufacturer) and addressed to Usumbura, Belgian Congo (actually located in the Belgian colony of Ruanda-Urundi). In 1959, this city of 350,000 became the capitol of the independent Republic of Burundi.

As part of it's journey to Africa, the cover was carried aboard a February 13, 1955 SABENA (Society Anonyme Belge de la Navigation Aérienne, or Belgian Corporation for Air Navigation Services) flight from Brussels to Rome.

Fifty miles from Rome's Ciampino Airport, the Douglas DC 6's navigational system failed, and the plane crashed into the side of 7,750 foot Monte Termanillo, killing all twenty-two passengers on board, including the 19 year old aspiring actress and former Miss Italia,

Marcella Marian. The crew of seven also perished.

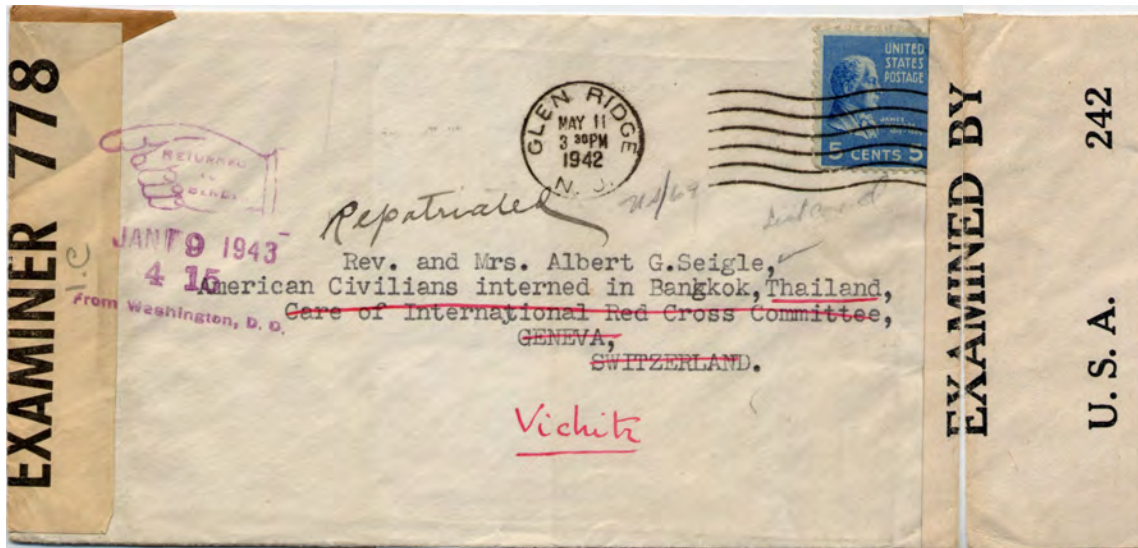
Heavy blowing snow prevented searchers from reaching the crash site for three days. One bag of mail, containing this cover, was eventually retrieved by Italian postal authorities who, after examining and marking the cover, sent it on its way on February 13, 1955. The cover finally reached its destination on March 17, 1955.



Author's Note: In 2009, A Judge at the Minnesota Stamp Expo advised me that in order to improve my exhibit's medal level, I needed to replace the "ratty" covers, pointing specifically to this cover. The Judge seemed genuinely surprised that this cover was a survivor of a terrible disaster. I therefore concluded I need to show less "ratty" examples of "interrupted" mail in my exhibit.)

MS *Gripsholm* Repatriates

by Louis Fiset



In World War II more than 8,000 Western civilians were held in territory controlled by Japan, the vast majority of them U.S. citizens desperate to return home. They included diplomatic personnel, businessmen, newspaper correspondents, missionaries, and other noncombatants. Approximately 3,000 repatriates returned to New York on two voyages of the mercy ship, MS *Gripsholm*. Diplomatic attempts to complete additional voyages designed to rescue the remaining 5,000 continued throughout the war, but were not successful.

I have always believed the addressees on the cover illustrated here returned to the U.S. on the first voyage of the *Gripsholm*, but only recently have I been able to confirm it, thanks to the Ancestry database (ancestry.com), that now provides the passenger lists of all incoming voyages of the ship, both during the war and in peace time.

The letter to Rev. and Mrs. Albert G. Seigle was postmarked 11 May 1942, prior to the release of names of repatriates due to return aboard the Swedish mercy ship. With postage affixed for

dispatch by surface means, it was addressed to the IRC at Geneva with the directive the couple was interned in Thailand. It remains unclear whether the letter, censored at Bermuda (778), ever reached its IRC Geneva destination. This part of the address has been lined out in red, with a notation of unknown significance added, "Vichitz." The letter was examined at the POW Unit (242) of the New York censor station some time after September 10, 1942 when the unit was moved from Chicago. From there the letter was forwarded to Washington, D.C., presumably the State Department.

In manuscript are the words "Repatriated," "US/69," and "List card." These notations help establish the couple was indeed repatriated. On 29 June 1941, 69 civilian internees from Bangkok boarded the Thai passenger ship, SS *Valaya* when it sailed to meet the Japanese exchange ship, *Asama Maru*, at Saigon on 3 July. All were believed to be carrying U.S. passports. Two of the fortunate 69 were the Seigle couple, who, with 1,500 other repatriates now aboard *Asama Maru*, reached Lourenco Marques, Mozambique on 22 July. MS *Gripsholm* arrived two days earlier and was

awaiting the exchange of its 1,500 Japanese repatriates for westerners arriving on the Japanese vessel.

The 52 year old Rev. Seigle, graduate of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, and his 47 year old wife, Jeanette, a graduate in education, were sent to Siam in 1919 to perform missionary work among the Cantonese speaking Chinese in Bangkok. They were sponsored by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church. Prior to World War II they saw the opening of several churches and founded a school in the Bangkok area. Following an alliance pact between Thailand and Japan in December 1941, the missionaries were held by the Japanese pending repatriation.

As seen by the pointed finger **RETURNED TO**

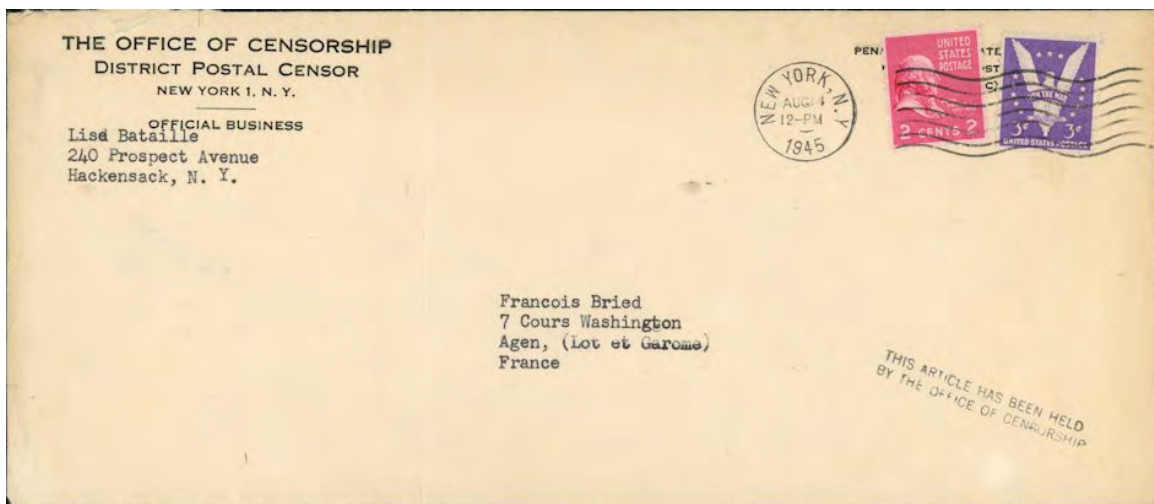
SENDER auxiliary marking, the letter never reached the Seigle couple. It was returned to the writer on 9 January 1943, from Washington, D.C. The writer, from the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Bloomfield, New Jersey, noted in pencil its return to him on 11 January.

The Seigles, meanwhile, had returned to New York harbor on 25 August 1942 and were likely at home in Santa Cruz, California while the letter was still in transit.

After the war Albert and Jeanette returned to Thailand to continue their missionary work, but eventually returned to California for their retirement years. The Reverend died in California on 26 December 1968.

Nobody Immune to Censorship

by Bob Hohertz



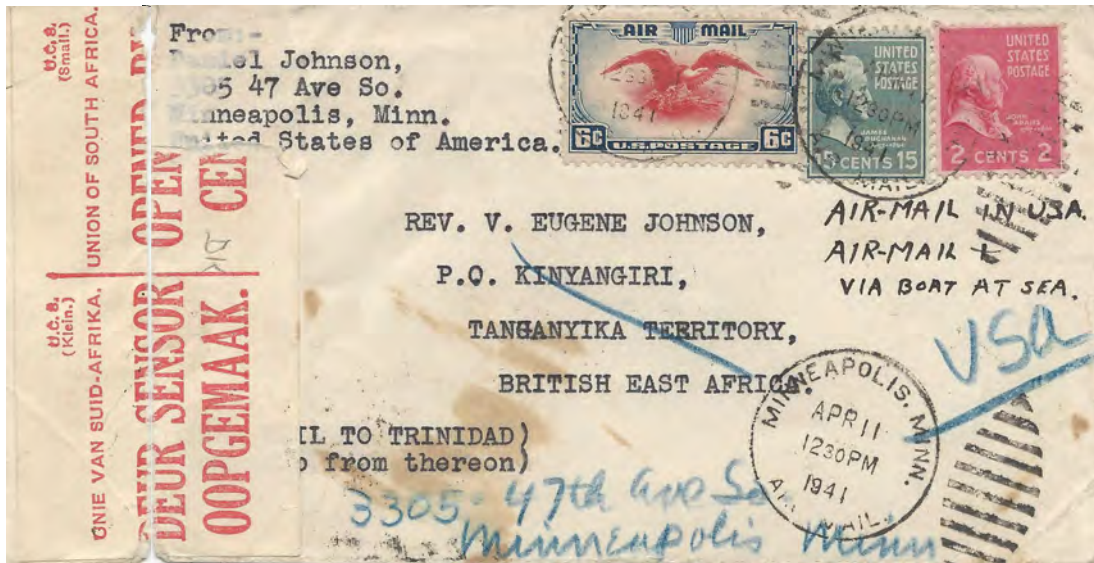
The censor marking on the lower right of this late World War II cover is ironic, to say the least, when one notices the printed return address.

Agen is in the south of France. Postal service to France was resumed “on a rolling basis” beginning 5 September 1944, but by 2 July 1945 a letter not exceeding two ounces

could have been sent anywhere throughout the country. Business communications were limited to ascertainment of facts and exchange of information, which is the only restriction likely to have applied to this communication. Anything more, such as money, could only have been sent on or after 17 August. The envelope is postmarked 4 August, 11 days before the end of censorship.

Air Mail to Africa after Italy Entered World War II

by Robert Schlesinger



Prior to World War II and until Italy entered the war in June 1940, the cost of a half-ounce letter to Tanganyika sent by domestic airmail, trans-Atlantic dispatch by ship, and onward by air from Europe, was 23 cents (5¢ UPU + 3¢ domestic airmail surcharge + 15¢ airmail surcharge from Europe). While this is the rate paid on the cover illustrated here, it is, in fact, underpaid by 5 cents. Note the 1941 postmark.

Italy's involvement resulted in closure of Mediterranean airspace, requiring rerouting of airmail to Tanganyika and elsewhere via trans-Pacific routes, and at higher rates of 85 cents and, eventually, \$1.10. On 1 November 1940 a new airmail surcharge of 20 cents per half ounce came into effect, from Cape Town. This was in addition to the 5-cent UPU rate paying the surface rate from New York to South Africa. This cover went by domestic air from

Minneapolis to New York, by ship to South Africa (where it was censored), and by air to Tanganyika. The correct rate was 28 cents (5¢ UPU + 3¢ domestic airmail surcharge + 20¢



airmail surcharge from Cape Town). Thus, the franking was 5 cents deficient. Apparently no one noticed, as this rate was seldom used.

After a transit time of 51 days to Kinyangiri, the addressee was no longer at this location. So, on 4 August 1941 the letter began its long, return journey to the U.S.

Tanganyika Territory-----	85¢ per ¼ oz. in addition to ordinary postage.	Tue-----	20 days from San Francisco. By steamship from New York to Capetown (about 29 days), thence by air mail (about 3 days).	"Via Pacific." "From Capetown."
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Supplement to the Postal Bulletin of 1 November 1940