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The Prexie Era

The Newsletter of the USSS 1938 Presidential Era Study Group

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A Note From Your Editor/Publisher

Two volunteers came forth to edit the *The Prexie Era* for the next eight issues. Jeff Shapiro selected Acting Editor/Publisher **Louis Fiset** to serve as Editor/Publisher, while **Steve Davis** agreed to work as the webmaster for the Prexie era website, which will be coming on line in the next few months. Steve will provide details in the next issue of the newsletter.

Former editor/publisher **Steve Roth** has generously donated photocopies of the daily Post Office Department Postal Bulletins published from 1940-1945. For readers in need of copies of specific PBs during this period, contact your editor. I will periodically publish scans of relevant PB items, including the one accompanying Kurt Stauffer's article on mail of POWs held by Germany.

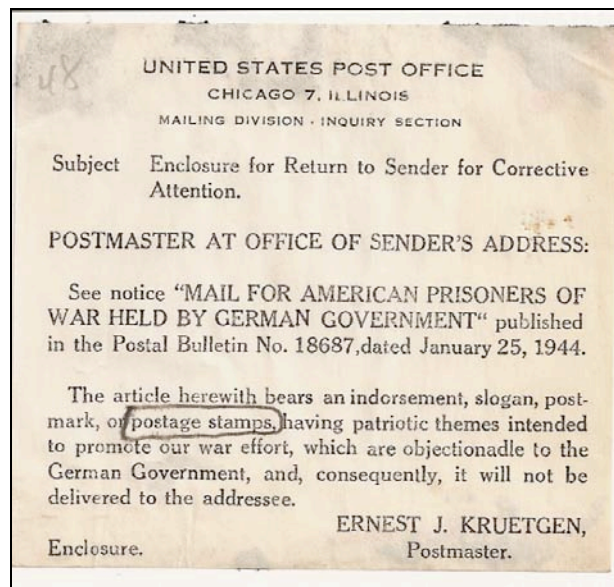
Germany Refuses To Pass POW Mail Bearing Propaganda Slogans

by

Kurt Stauffer

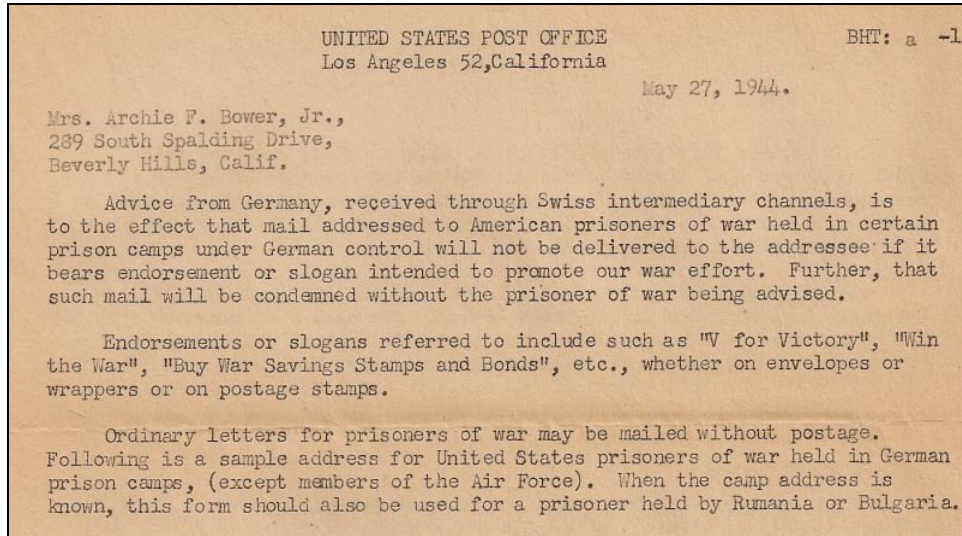
One of the most precious things a POW can receive from home is mail. During WWII, besides food, mail was always a topic of conversation among POWs. Both German and Japanese officials allowed mail to be received by prisoners they held, but imposed rules and regulations of their own.

Germany refused to allow POW mail to pass that contained Allied propaganda. This is shown on an enclosure slip used by the U.S. Post Office at Chicago stating "The article herewith bears an indorsement (sic), slogan, postmark, or postage stamps, having patriotic themes intended to promote our war effort, which are objectionadle (sic) to the German Government, and, consequently, it will not be delivered to the addressee." Interestingly, Japan was not listed on the form.

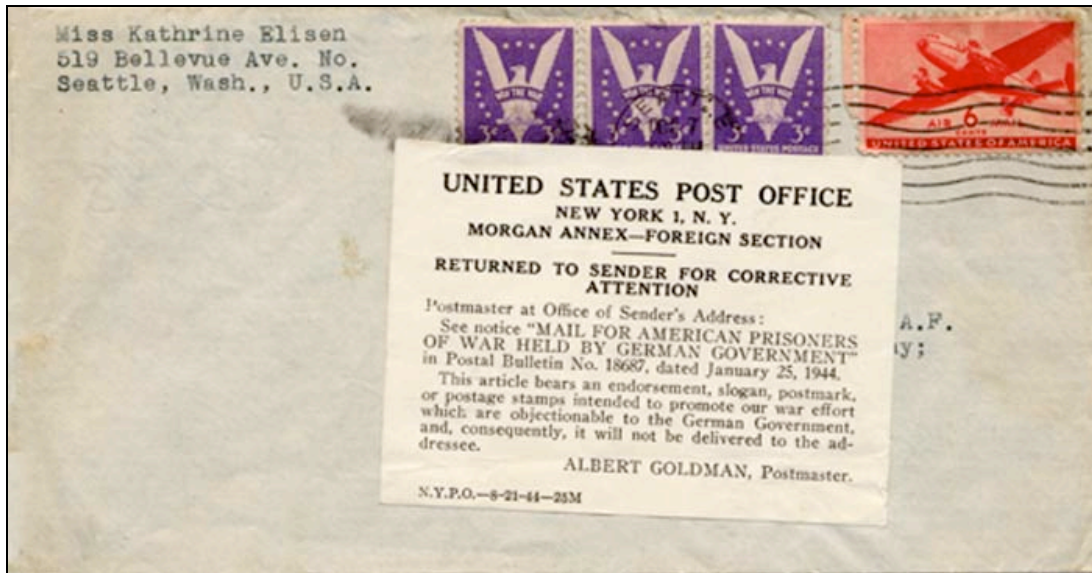


One of the postage stamps covered by Postal Bulletin no 18687 dated January 25, 1944 was the "Win the War" stamp, issued July 4, 1942. I have never seen this stamp successfully used on

POW mail to Germany, but have found examples that made it to Japan. That mail addressed to POWs was allowed free postage makes scarce surviving covers with stamps affixed, and those with “Win the War” stamps even scarcer. Most franked mail bore postage to pay for domestic airmail service to New York.



A circular sent out by the Post Office in 1944, illustrated above, lists the rules as they applied to mail destined for POWs held by Germany. I have not found comparable published regulations for mail sent to POWs in Japanese hands.



The figure above illustrates mail returned to the sender because the presence of the “Win the War” stamps violated regulations for mail sent to POWs in Europe. The letter reached New York’s Morgan Annex where a label was placed serving to obliterate the addressee and explain why the letter was being returned. This particular label was printed on August 21, 1944. The text is similar to that on the enclosure slip issued by the Chicago Post Office, but the language is more precise and correct. POW Unit censors never examined the contents.

(Ed. Note:) Relevant portions of Postal Bulletin 18687 referenced above are reproduced below. Note that German censors also refused to pass POW mail with Defense Issue stamps attached.

**INSTRUCTIONS OF
FIRST AND SECOND ASSISTANT POSTMASTERS GENERAL**

MAIL FOR AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR HELD BY GERMAN GOVERNMENT

Advice from Germany through Swiss intermediary channels states that, effective March 1, 1944, mail addressed to American prisoners of war held in certain prison camps under German control will not be delivered to the addressee if it bears endorsements or slogans intended to promote our war effort. Further, that such mail will be condemned without the addressee prisoners being advised. These endorsements include such as "V for Victory," "Win the War," and other of like character including post-office cancelations reading "Buy U. S. Savings Bonds Ask Your Postmaster," "Buy War Savings Stamps and Bonds," as well as postage stamps having patriotic themes as "Win the War" and "For Defense." This is further confirmed through information sent the American Red Cross from representatives in Switzerland.

Tales from the Other Side – Part III: Solvents

by

Francis Ferguson
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The art of collecting is one that can be different things for different people. I have a particular interest in inking varieties of the Prexie series – of which a wealth of material exists. From fairly common over/under inked varieties to the more scarce solvent ink runs and shifted central vignettes on the dollar values, all can be visually interesting and challenging to pursue. This article highlights ink solvent problems that can obliterate images into a meaningless blur. All these types of errors should have been red-lined in the production process and removed by inspectors. Thankfully, some have slipped through.

During production an ink solvent is used to clean the printing plates. This process is neither difficult nor technically sophisticated, but requires a certain degree of diligence. Any trace of solvent remaining on the plate will mar the first images subsequently printed.

The three examples I illustrate in this article range from a single stamp being obliterated on the 4-cent example to nearly a full three stamps on the 2-cent sheet value. The block of six of the 10-cent example was purchased over a period of about a year as two horizontal strips of three, and rejoined for the nice dramatic block.





One should expect ink solvent errors for each of the single color stamps in the series. The toughest to locate should be the 22-cent value that had less than 50 million copies printed; the next toughest would be the 24-cent value with its 91 million copies. Even though these printing totals sound high, they are small in comparison to the overall averages for this series. My personal goal is to find an example for as many values as possible – let the hunt continue!

This is only one facet of the vibrant field of inking errors. Over-inked, under-inked and registration issues include a whole range of messed up pieces that are a visual treat. This column will explore those areas in the future.

A Rare Canton Island Prexie Usage

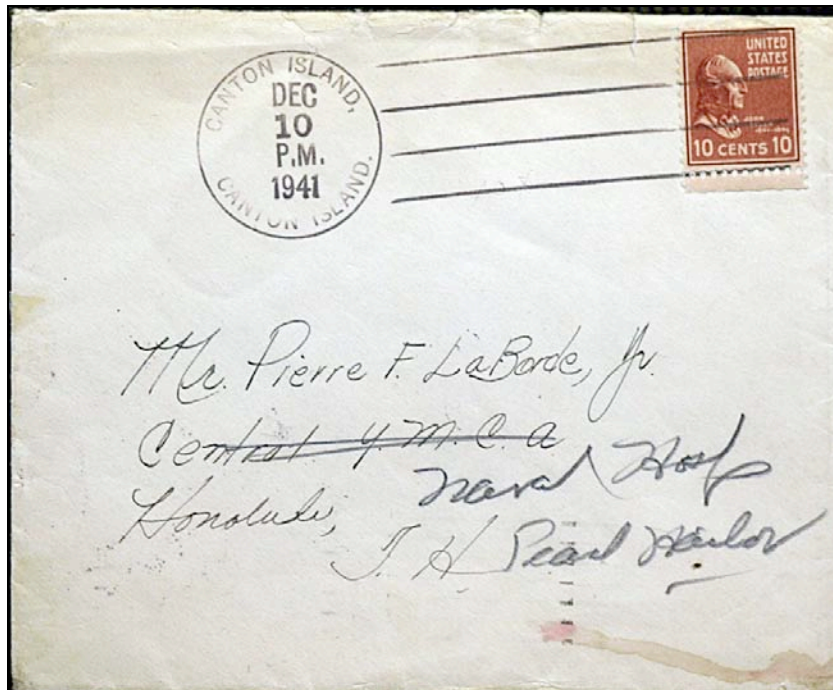
By

Albert Briggs

One of the more fascinating and challenging areas of Presidential Series Postal History is trans-Pacific airmail prior to the uniform airmail rates introduced on October 1, 1946. Specifically, the rates to and from the various Pacific islands where Pan-American Clippers provided airmail service can be difficult to locate. A listing of the half-ounce rates to pay for airmail service between the continental U.S. and possessions, and between possessions may be found in G. H. Davis's *The Transports* and Thomas Boyle's *Airmail Operations during World War II*.

In my personal experience, intra-island covers are particularly difficult to find. Here I report a recently acquired usage of the 10-cent airmail rate between Canton Island and Hawaii. In addition, the cover provides clues on the evacuation of the atoll following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Canton Island is a small atoll located in the South Pacific roughly halfway between Hawaii and Fiji. It measures roughly 4.5 miles wide by 9 miles long. The island, discovered in 1824, was named Canton in 1854 after a whaling ship that ran aground on March 4 of that year. Interest in the island as a strategic location was expressed by both Great Britain and United States; in April 1939 London and Washington agreed to administer the island jointly as a condominium. Such agreements essentially confer joint sovereignty under international law.



In May 1938 Frank McKenzie, Pan-American Airways engineer in charge of building bases on both Wake and Midway Islands, surveyed Canton Island for the same purpose. The island's lagoon proved favorable, and the resulting decision led to construction of a seaplane base as a

Pacific flight stop over. Completed in mid-August 1939, the first aircraft arrived on August 24, 1939.

Due to outbreak of the Pacific war, seaplane service at Canton Island on the FAM-19 route was relatively short-lived. The last civilian flight prior to service disruption departed December 4, 1941 for New Caledonia. Shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, plans quickly developed to evacuate all civilians from the island, including Pan-Am staff, and to transport everyone by tugboat to Pago Pago, American Samoa.

The cover illustrated here, front and back, shows the intended 10-cent airmail rate from Canton Island to Hawaii as well as disruption of mail service and the resultant evacuation to American Samoa. Postmarked Canton Island, December 10, 1941, the letter was addressed to a Mr. Pierre LaBorde in Honolulu. By the time the letter reached Hawaii LaBorde was located at the Naval Hospital, Pearl Harbor. Little is known about him.



The reverse of the cover reveals the letter was posted by Pat Harrison, a contractor on Canton Island. Of particular note is the Pago Pago, Samoa transit marking dated December --, 1941, with an illegible day date. The letter reached the Honolulu post office on February 7, 1942. This letter, originally franked with postage for air service to Hawaii, undoubtedly accompanied the Canton Island evacuees traveling by sea to American Samoa. From there it was forwarded to Honolulu, likely by ship, as well. While demonstrating the rare 10-cent airmail rate, this cover also illustrates the early disruption and rerouting of mail service due to the outbreak of war.

The cover was sent to American Philatelic Society Expertizing Service where on March 16, 2006 it received certificate number 168371 stating the item as “genuine in all respects.”

APO Use of a Fourteen-Cent Prexie

by

Dickson Preston



From the point of view of a simple Prexie postal history collector such as myself, the most outstanding feature of this cover is the use of a 14-cent Prexie sent from an APO. This item, however, has other intriguing features. The letter was sent by military airmail from Assam, in India, to Sierra Leone, in West Africa. APO 689, the Headquarters of the Northern Combat Area Command at Ledo, Assam, was on a major Air Transport Command (ATC) route to the beleaguered Nationalist Chinese forces in Chungking. According to Boyle, when this letter was posted on 9 May 1944, a major ATC route carried mail and supplies from Miami to China via central Africa:

A priority military route carrying high priority supplies for China, and carrying air mail between U.S. servicemen in the Middle East, India, and China, and the U.S., was still flying the South Atlantic route across Africa from Khartoum and Asmara and then around the southern end of the Arabian peninsula to Karachi and on to destination via the trans-India route. (Thomas Boyle, *Airmail Operations during World War II*, p. 117).

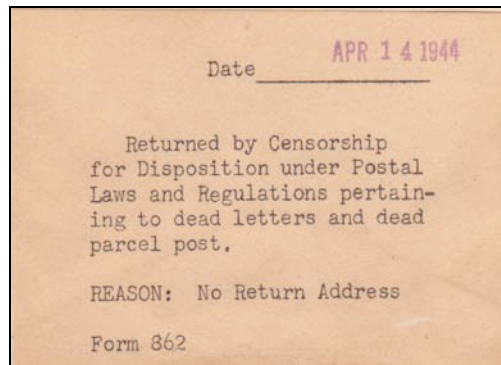
This letter would have taken part of this route in reverse on its way from Assam to Sierra Leone in what must have been an almost empty airplane.

The postage rates along this reverse route are astonishing. The rule was that airmail postage required from an APO to a foreign destination was the same as the airmail postage charged from the United States to that destination. Thus S/Sgt Bowman paid 50 cents, the airmail postage from the U.S. to Sierra Leone, to send his letter. But consider some other possibilities. If he had sent the letter to a nearby destination in India, the air postage would have been 70 cents. If he had sent it to Venezuela, where the letter would have been flown across the South Atlantic instead of being diverted to a town in West Africa, he would have paid 25 cents. If he had sent it to someone in the U.S., the postage would have been the 6-cent military concession rate. You got it: the farther his letter went, the less postage he had to pay.

FAM-22 Refugee Camp Cover To Africa

by

Jeff Shapiro



This February 17, 1944 airmail cover, addressed to a Polish Refugee Camp in India, never got past the New York censor station. It would otherwise have flown the FAM-22 route to Lagos and onward by BOAC's Horseshoe Route to its destination. The letter was returned to the writer for failure to provide a return address.

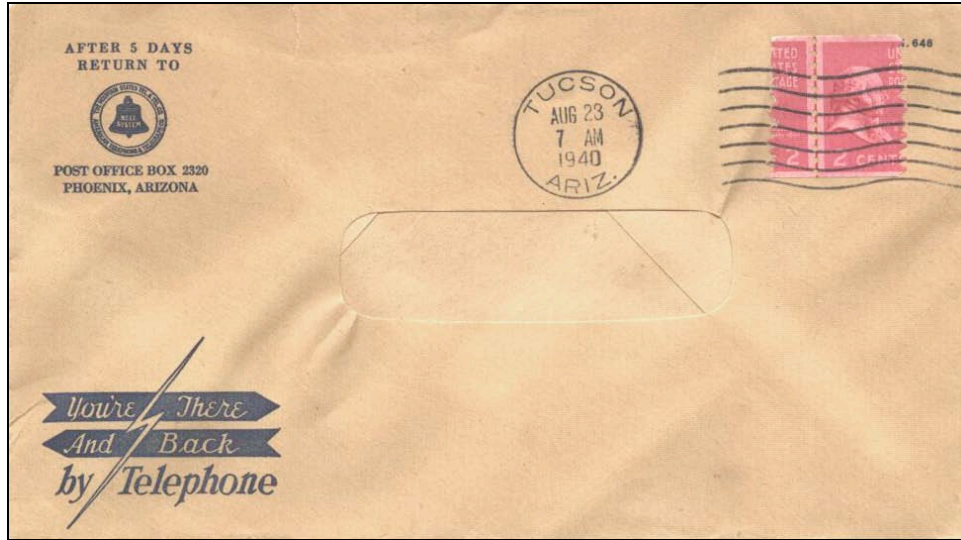
When German forces invaded Poland in September 1939 many Poles escaped to neighboring countries, including the Soviet Union. In 1942, claiming limited resources for its own people, the USSR expelled these refugees. An estimated 110,000 Poles sought asylum in Iran, Iraq, British East Africa, New Zealand, Mexico, and India. One of the largest refugee camps was established in Kalhapur City in India's Maharashtra state. It accommodated 21,000 people, including 2,500 children.

After World War II ended many of the Polish refugees refused to return to their homeland; boundaries had changed and many of their former homes were now part of the Soviet Union. Following closure of the Kalhapur Camp in 1948, most of the refugees resettled in Great Britain, Australia, and Canada.

Joint Line Pair Solo Franking

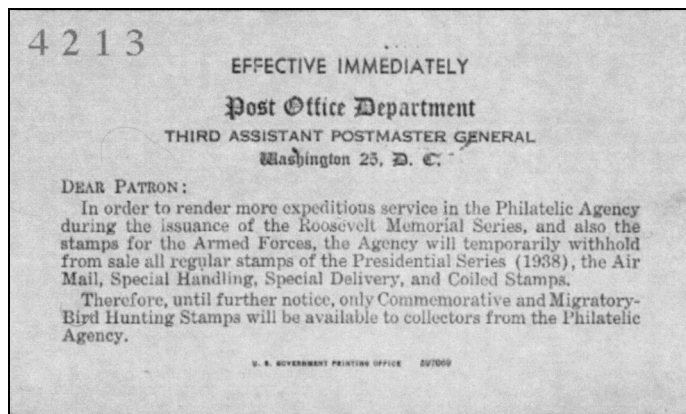
by

Dickson Preston



Solo frankings are highly prized by many cover collectors, especially so among those of us addicted to the 1938 Presidential Series. Coils are popular also, especially uses of joint line pairs, which are made where the bottom row of one plate joins the top row of its sister plate on a two-plate rotary press. For the normal mind a solo franking and a joint line pair would seem to be incompatible, but this cover shows you can have it both ways. The stamp dispensing contraption which was franking the Phoenix telephone bill envelopes on 23 August 1940 got out of alignment. The result is a line pair condensed into a single stamp: a joint line pair solo franking.

1945 Prexie Sales Temporarily Halted



Recently seen on ebay is a Post Office Department notice mailed July 7, 1945 announcing the Philatelic Agency was suspending sale of all regular and coiled stamps of the Prexie issue and other definitive issues in order to “render more expeditious service” of the Roosevelt Memorial Series.