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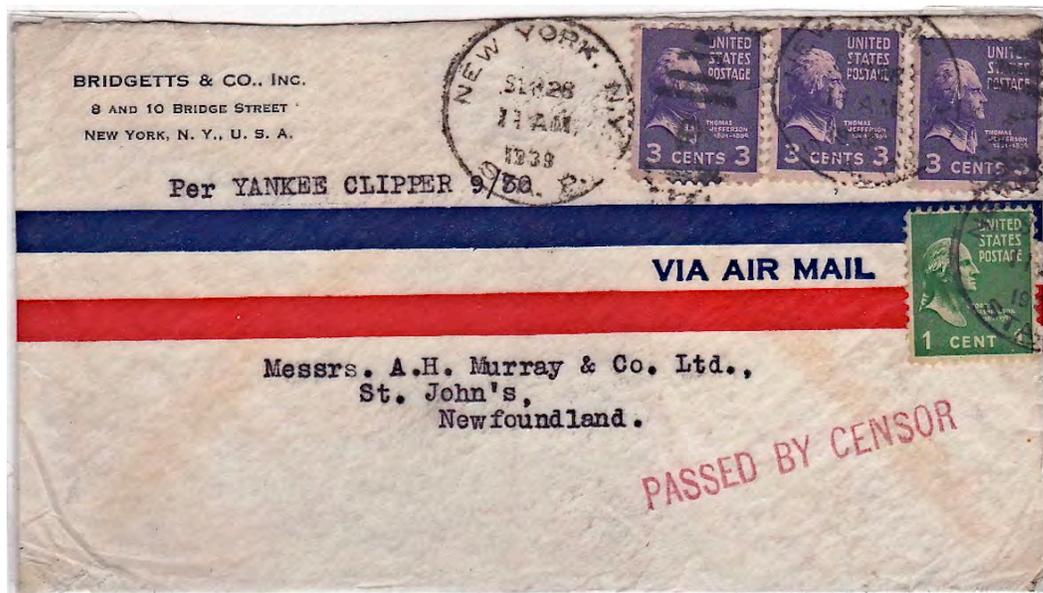
The Prexie Era

Newsletter of the USSS 1938 Presidential-Era Committee

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Last Flight Cover to Newfoundland

by Stephen L. Suffet



Most Prexie era postal history specialists know that the first flight on the Northern Branch of Foreign Air Mail Route 18 (Northern FAM 18) took off from Port Washington, New York, on Saturday, June 24, 1939. After a three-day weather-related delay in Shediac, New Brunswick, the flight continued to Botwood, Newfoundland, and then onward across the Atlantic to Foynes, Ireland, and finally to Southampton, England. Pan American Airways provided this service every other Saturday through September 30. The service was then suspended for the winter season and did not resume until the following spring. That means

there were only eight eastbound Northern FAM 18 flights in 1939. Please note that because of the outbreak of World War II, the last two Northern FAM flights for 1939, the September 16 and September 30 flights, terminated in Foynes instead of in Southampton.

The air mail rate from the USA to Newfoundland on Northern FAM 18 was 10 cents per half ounce, but only for articles actually addressed to Newfoundland. For mail sent onward to Canada or back to the USA the rate was 15 cents per half ounce. These same 10-cent and 15-cent rates applied to mail sent from the USA

to Newfoundland via British Imperial Airways (IA), which provided trans-Atlantic service to Southampton through Montreal, Botwood and Foynes, rather than through Shediac, Botwood, and Foynes. Unlike the Northern FAM 18 flights, the IA flights continued to fly to Southampton after the war began.

The first eastbound IA trans-Atlantic flight took off from Port Washington on August 9, 1939, and the last one for the season departed on September 27. These were Wednesday flights, usually every two weeks, but in one instance as World War II began, there was a three-week gap. That means there were only four IA flights on that route in 1939. In total, there were just twelve flights for which the 10-cent and 15-cent rates to Newfoundland applied.

The figure above shows an air mail cover to Saint John's, Newfoundland, postmarked in New York, NY, on September 28, 1939. It is endorsed "Per YANKEE CLIPPER 9/30" and four Prexies correctly paid the 10-cent rate. The Yankee Clipper was, of course, a Pan American Airways Boeing 314 flying boat. The "PASSED BY CENSOR" marking was applied by British authorities upon the cover's arrival in Newfoundland. It is truly a last flight cover, at least for the 1939 season, but possibly also

for the 10-cent rate at the time.

We do not know for certain what the FAM or IA rate to Newfoundland was when service resumed the following spring. What we do know is that *The Postal Bulletin* of May 1, 1942, announced: "Effective May 1, 1942, through air mail service of a frequency of daily except Sunday will be available to Newfoundland. The postage required on civilian mail posted in continental United States and Alaska to be carried by this service to Newfoundland, and civilian mail posted in Army post offices in Newfoundland for the United States and Alaska, shall be 15 cents per half ounce or fraction."

We also know that from November 1, 1946, through March 31, 1949, the air mail rate to Newfoundland from the USA, or from any of its possessions or military post offices abroad, was 10 cents per half ounce, as it was to most Western Hemisphere countries other than Canada and Mexico. A few minutes before midnight March 31, 1949, Newfoundland became a province of Canada, so effective April 1, 1949, the air mail rate to Newfoundland dropped to 6 cents per ounce, which was the USA's rate to Canada or Mexico, as well as its domestic air mail rate.

2017 Subscriptions Payable Now

The Fall 2016 issue was the last in the quartet of *The Prexie Era* for 2016. This means it is time for readers to renew your subscriptions for the upcoming year. Rates for 2017 remain the same as for last year: \$5 for the electronic version, \$10 for the color "snail-mail" version. Unless prior arrangements have been made, please send payments and/or questions to:

Jeff Shapiro
P.O. Box 3211
Fayetteville, MA 01745-0211

International Return Receipt Requested After Mailing

by Lucien Klein

Requested after mailing
Form 2865
Post Office Department, United States of America
Administration des Postes des Etats-Unis d'Amérique
(To be filled in by the office of origin)
(A remplir par le bureau d'origine)
Registered article (Envoi recommandé) 46
Parcel insured for \$ 5.00
Mailed at the post office of Pinellas Park, Fla. USA.
on Aug. 25, 1941, under No. 46
Mailed by M. O.J. Richardson
and addressed to M. O.J. Richardson
at Cayenne, French Guyana
Pinellas Park, Fla.
O.J. Richardson
Pinellas Park, Fla.
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Etats-Unis d'Amérique
POSTAL SERVICE
Service des postes
5-11654

The undersigned declares that the article described on the other side was duly delivered
Le soussigné déclare que l'envoi mentionné d'autre part a été dûment livré
on Dec 6, 1941
SIGNATURE: C. Cook
Postmark of the office of destination
du destinataire: Cayenne, French Guyana, Dec 3 1941
of the addressee: du destinataire:
of the agent of the office of destination: de l'agent du bureau destinataire:
This receipt must be signed by the addressee, or, if the regulations of the country of destination so provide, by the agent of the office of destination, and returned by the first mail direct to the sender.
Cet avis doit être signé par le destinataire, ou, si les règlements du pays de destination le comportent, par l'agent du bureau destinataire et renvoyé par le premier courrier directement à l'expéditeur.
U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 5-11654

Figure: International Return Receipt Requested After Mailing Form 2865, postmarked December 3, 1941 regarding a registered letter mailed August 25, 1941.

An article was sent by registered mail from Pinellas Park, Florida, on August 25, 1941, to Cayenne, French Guyana. On December 3, 1941, the sender, O.J. Richardson, requested a return receipt for the article mailed. Form 2865 was used, franked with a 10-cent Prexie stamp.

The international return receipt requested after mailing rate of 10 cents was in effect from December 1, 1925 to November 1, 1953. “Requested after mailing” is written in the top left corner on the front of the form.

The addressee and an agent of the Cayenne post office signed on the reverse side of the form stating the article was delivered on December 6, 1941. The form was mailed back to the sender in Pinellas Park, Florida (without a street address) on February 7, 1942.

Why am I writing about this? Because, at least at the APS StampShow in Portland, last August, this is the first example of this use, franked with a Prexie, that those (dealers and collectors) who looked at it had ever seen.

America First Committee

by Lucien Klein

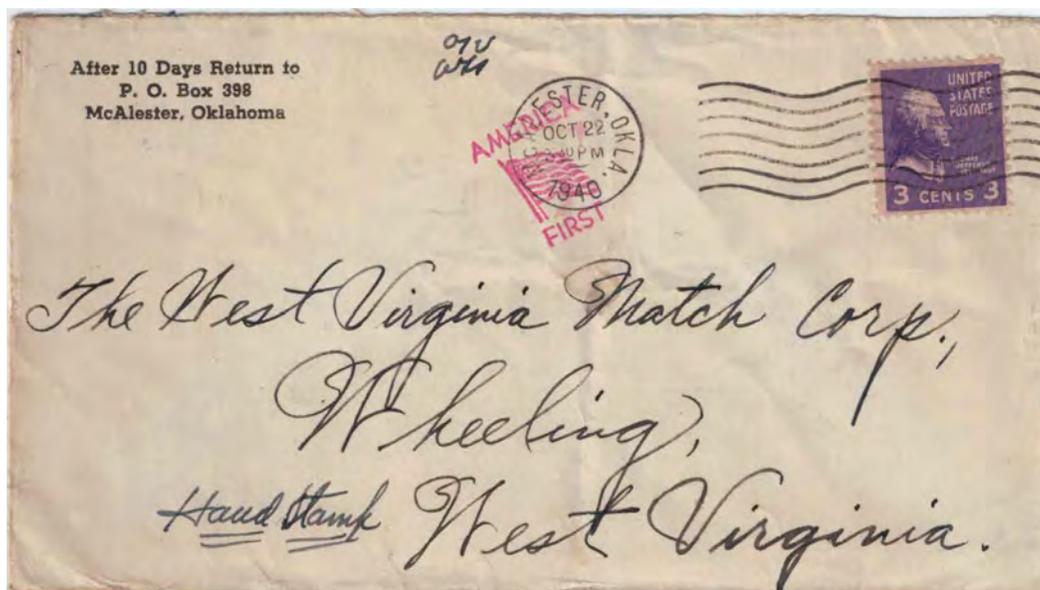


Figure: A cover promoting the America First movement 13 months before the U.S. entered World War II.

In issue number 70 of *The Prexie Era*, in an article about the Famous Americans Issue in Wartime, 1940 – 1941, Louis Fiset mentions that labels on mail promoting America First are difficult to come by. The cover shown here, although not franked with a Famous Americans Issue stamp, but with a 3-cent Prexie, promotes the America First movement.

The phrase, America First, has had different meanings at different times. On September 4, 1940, the America First Committee was founded at Yale University in Connecticut. This October 22, 1940 cover, from McAlester, Oklahoma and addressed to Wheeling, West Virginia, bears a faint America First handstamp with an American flag between the words,

America, and, First. The McAlester postmark is struck over the America First handstamp.

The America First Committee wanted the United States to stay out of the war in Europe. Its basic assumption was that America was protected by two oceans and its vast land mass and that intervention in Europe would turn out no better than it had in World War I. At its peak, it claimed 800,000 dues paying members in 450 autonomous chapters. Noteworthy members included Charles Lindbergh, Walt Disney, John F. Kennedy and Gerald Ford.

The organization dissolved on December 10, 1941, as a result of the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

Vermont Statehood Censored FDCs

by Glen Estus



I have been building an exhibit of the Vermont Statehood issue of 1941 (Scott #903) for almost 30 years. Since it's a fairly modern issue, first day covers are rather common, with even the more expensive ones available given a little patience.

Perhaps the most interesting FDCs are those mailed to foreign countries. In 1941, the world may have been at war, but collectors abroad still attempted to add U.S. new issues to their collections. I have three censored Vermont Statehood FDCs in my collection, each of

which bears a pair overpaying the international surface rate by 1 cent.

The first Vermont Statehood censored FDC, shown above, went from the Montpelier, the state capital, to Denmark. By now German forces had occupied Denmark for almost a year. The cover was intercepted by German censorship at Frankfurt and opened for inspection there. It's interesting that the reverse also has a label from the National America Denmark Association with wording: "Freedom and Independence for Denmark." Apparently,

this bit of propaganda failed to attract enough attention by the German censor to condemn the cover.

The second cover went to Australia where it was received in Epping, N.S.W. (New South Wales) on April 3, 1941. It was then forwarded to Burnwood, N.S.W. It was marked in red, "unknown/29.4.41" on April 29, 1941. Finally, a manuscript marking may be seen on the back "Received / Lautoka / 31/5/41". Today, Lautoka is the second largest city in Fiji.

Also found on the front of this busy cover is an "OPENED BY CENSOR" resealing label tied by a rubber stamped "PASSED BY CENSOR/S.71" marking. This censorship took place at Sydney, Australia.

Finally, a most unusual destination: Java in the Netherlands East Indies (NEI). On May 5, 1941, one month after the first day of issue of the Vermont Statehood stamp, the cover was received and censored in the NEI.



1940 New York World's Fair Employee, Interned

by Louis Fiset



Sixty-one Italian nationals employed at the Italy Pavilion during the New York World's Fair were stranded in the U.S. at the close of the Fair in October 1940. Italy had entered World War II the previous June, and safe transatlantic passage back to the homeland could not be guaranteed. Soon overstaying their work visas, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) arrested, then detained the group at Ellis Island. Subsequently the workers were mixed in with approximately 1,000 merchant seamen at the Fort Missoula, Montana internment camp, all fellow Italian nationals.

The cover shown above highlights a story of a single restaurant worker at the Fair's Italian Line Restaurant, one that continues to resonate more than 75 years after it was written. First, however, here are details of what we can read from the cover, itself.

Hidden from view by a censor resealing label and thick paper directive, and visible only with strong back lighting, we see the letter was postmarked Missoula, Montana, November 21, 1941. The return address reads: **Luigi**

Venetta/NY World's Fair/Box 1539/Missoula, Montana. The letter is addressed to Venetta's wife, Louisa, in Fidenza (Parma), Italy. The letter was dispatched by air via New York to Bermuda, off loaded, and examined by a British censor. With the U.S. now in the war and postal relations with Italy suspended, it was sent back to New York, docketed on July 23, 1942, and eventually returned to the writer. Upon arrival at Fort Missoula, the letter was passed by an INS censor, as seen by the prominent black square rubber stamp marking.

By now Venetta had departed the internment camp. On October 23, 1942 the letter was forwarded to **Ship Lantern Jun Milton, NEW YORK, N.Y.** Despite multiple attempts in October and November 1942 to locate the address, Venetta could not be found. It thus ended up at the Dead Letter Office. There the letter and envelope were separated, and the cover eventually would have been recycled as scrap had it (and many others) not been rescued.

This so-far unique cover begs to be included in an exhibit, but until recently I couldn't fill

in necessary details of the story to justify it. Here's what I know now.

Luigi Vanetta was an employee of the Italian Line as a waiter and worked on the S.S. *Conte Biancamano* for more than a decade. He arrived in New York two weeks before the opening of the Fair, then returned to Italy the following October. He arrived again the next April and worked at the Italy Pavilion through closure of the Fair on October 27, 1940. Soon after, the INS swept him up with his coworkers and eventually transported him to Fort Missoula.

Almost a year had passed by the time Luigi's letter to Louisa was returned to Fort Missoula. But unlike most of his fellow inmates, Vanetta had been paroled by the Justice Department because he posed no threat to the nation's security. But where did Vanetta go after leaving the internment camp?

The answer lies written on the forwarding tape glued to the front of the cover. After a frustrating internet search for a non-existent ship, a last ditch Google search revealed a **Ship Lantern Inn, Milton, N.Y.** A quick read of the inn's website immediately solved the mystery!

Milton is a village on the western shore of the Hudson River, just down stream from

Poughkeepsie and a reasonable train ride north of New York City.

It appears the hand written forwarding address instruction Vanetta left behind was partially illegible. If so, perhaps other forwarded mail never reached him, as well.

Fortunately, the Ship Lantern Inn is still in business, and the third generation Italian owner provided additional details. Mike Foglia's grandfather, an immigrant from Parma province, opened the inn in 1925 as well as an adjacent restaurant, called The Terrace Dining Room. Over the years the grandfather sponsored a number of Italian nationals, providing employment for them at the inn and restaurant while they awaited naturalization.

The grandfather had an association with the operators of the Italian Line Restaurant at the World's Fair, which may have resulted in an initial connection with Vanetta. Although the current owner was not born until after World War II, he nevertheless confirmed the likelihood that Luigi Vanetta received his parole from the INS in part because of the grandfather's compassion, himself an immigrant from the same province and who may have been provided similar assistance by earlier immigrants when he first arrived after the turn of the century.



Picture postcard of a ca. 1940 view of the Terrace Dining Room at the Ship Lantern Inn, Milton, New York.

A Long Trip to the Philippines

by Mike Ley



The October 31, 1939 Pan American Airways timetable for its Trans-Pacific service called for a weekly departure from San Francisco on Tuesdays, with arrival in Manila the following Monday with scheduled stops at Honolulu, Midway, Wake, and Guam, and then continuing on to Hong Kong.

The cover shown here is addressed to Iloilo City, Philippines, bearing a 50-cent Taft paying the 50 cents per half-ounce rate for Trans-Pacific service to the Philippines. It is postmarked December 23, 1939 at Johnson City, NY and has a 1939 Christmas seal tied by a Manila back stamp dated January 28, 1940, 36 days later. Things did not go according to plan.

The second edition of Edward B. Proud's *Intercontinental Airmails Volume One Transatlantic and Pacific* tells part of the story and gives clues to the rest. According to Proud, the first Trans-Pacific flight available to this cover would have been on the *Philippine Clipper*, departing from San Francisco January 3, 1940. Unfortunately the plane had to return due to mechanical trouble. It left again on January 5 but once more had to return to San Francisco for the same reason. Finally, it left on January 11, but this time had to return because of inclement weather. After all these delays the mail was placed on the S.S. *Matsonia*, which sailed on January 12. The *Philippine Clipper* took off again on January 13 and this time

made it to Honolulu. It was delayed there for a few days and finally returned to San Francisco January 16 because of more mechanical troubles, never completing the intended trip beyond Honolulu.

So, did the *Matsonia* take this cover to the Philippines? This is not likely as it was a luxury liner that traveled back and forth between San Francisco and Honolulu. The mail could have been transferred to another ship. But there may have been a better option. The *China Clipper* left San Francisco on January 17, arriving in Honolulu January 18. Could the cover have been transferred to the *China Clipper*? I have been unable to find any logs for the S.S. *Matsonia*, but its normal speed was 24 mph so should have made the 2,396 mile trip in 100

hours, arriving in four days, on January 16.

Likely, this cover was transferred to the *China Clipper*, but the troubles were not over yet. The plane left Honolulu January 18, but returned the same day due to bad weather. It was subject to continuous delays until Wake Island where it departed on January 23. It was forced back but took off again January 24. It arrived in Guam January 24 and left for Manila January 26 where it arrived January 27. This is consistent with the Manila post office back stamp, on January 28.

As a postscript I should note that the *China Clipper* was repaired and left San Francisco January 30 on a near normal trip, arriving in Manila on February 6.

1947 to Syria, Returned



Recently on ebay appeared this August 21, 1947, 5-cent surface cover from Chicago to Beirut, Syria, that was returned to sender having never left the country. The return label, applied at New York's Morgan Station, refers to the May 20, 1947 issue of *The Postal Bulletin*.

The text calls attention to the fact that the office of Beirut (Beyrouth) is located in Lebanon, not

Syria. Postmasters should return all articles addressed to "Beirut, Syria", or "Beyrouth, Syria", for the correct address. This would avoid both criticism and missending of mail.

Lebanon achieved independence from France in 1943, and Syria's official independence occurred in 1946. This may explain the sensitivity expressed in the *Bulletin* notice.