



The Prexie Era

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More \$2.00 Harding Stamps on Cover

by Robert Schlesinger



Figure 1: A \$2.00 Harding Prexie paying seven times the 30 cents per half ounce transatlantic airmail rate, posted June 21, 1940.

I recently purchased two \$2.00 Harding covers to be added to the census.

The first cover (Figure 1) bears a total of \$2.10 postage. It prepaid seven times the 30 cents per half-ounce transatlantic airmail rate to Europe. It was postmarked Chicago, June 21, 1940 and flown via Bermuda where it was opened by British censors. The Bermuda censor station had only been in operation for three months and was not fully operational. Hence, most mail passed without examination. Perhaps the registration service drew attention.

The 3.5-ounce weight of the contents made for a bulky envelope for which the creases on the envelope provide evidence. Because there are no backstamps, we do not know how long the cover was in transit. However, British censorship no doubt caused a delay.

The post-World War II cover shown below (Figure 2) bears a solo \$2.00 Harding adhesive. Mailed in New York on December 8, 1945, it was transferred to the Registry Division the same day. The cover was flown to Miami and received there the next day. It then received air

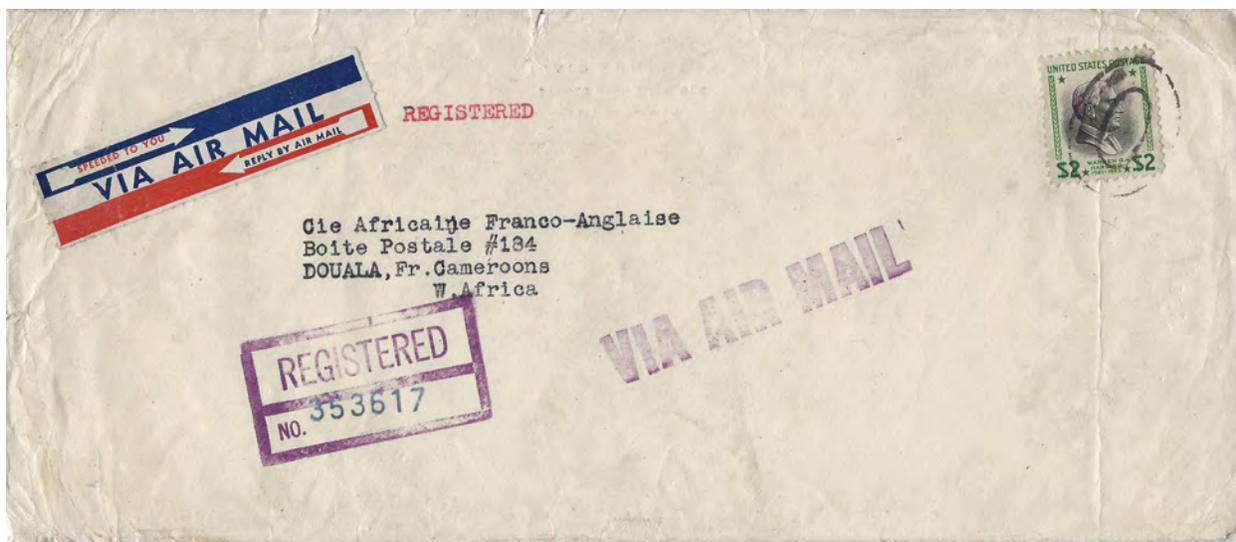


Figure 1: A solo \$2.00 Prexie paying triple (60 cents x 3) the airmail rate to West Africa plus the registry fee.

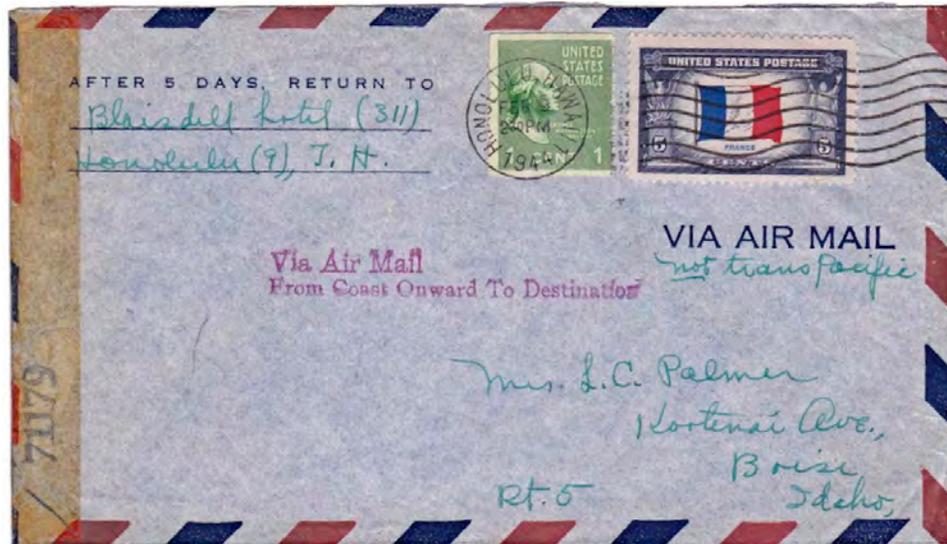
transport to Accra, Gold Coast, and struck with a December 19th receiver. It then travelled to Doala, French Cameroon, where it was received a week later, on December 26, 1945.

The \$2.00 franking paid for triple the 60 cents per half-ounce rate plus the 20-cent registry

fee. The 60-cent airmail rate was in effect from December 2, 1942, until November 1, 1946 when the 25 cents per half ounce unified rate took effect. The 20-cent registry fee was in effect from February 1, 1945 through December 31, 1951, after which the rate was raised to 25 cents.

Reverse Printed Overrun Nations Stamp on Prexie Cover

by Stephen L. Suffet



Sometimes you look for one thing and serendipitously find something else instead. Such is the case with the cover shown above. I found it while rummaging through a dealer's stock at a show several years ago, although I cannot recall the dealer, show, or year.

Anyway, I bought the cover because I collect the 1-cent Presidential stamp in all its formats: sheet stamp, booklet stamp, horizontal coil, and vertical coil. I do not remember how much I paid, but it could not have been more than 10 dollars. Here, a 1-cent horizontal coil teamed up with a 5-cent Flag of France stamp from the Overrun Nations series to pay the 6 cents per ounce domestic airmail rate. The cover was postmarked in Honolulu, Hawaii, on February 9, 1944, and it is addressed to Boise, Idaho. The clipper rate between Hawaii and the mainland was 20 cents per half ounce at the time, but this cover was only flown within the continental USA from the port of entry, Los Angeles or San Francisco, to Boise, so 6 cents postage was sufficient.

I was looking through my plastic tub full of extra covers earlier this year when I noticed

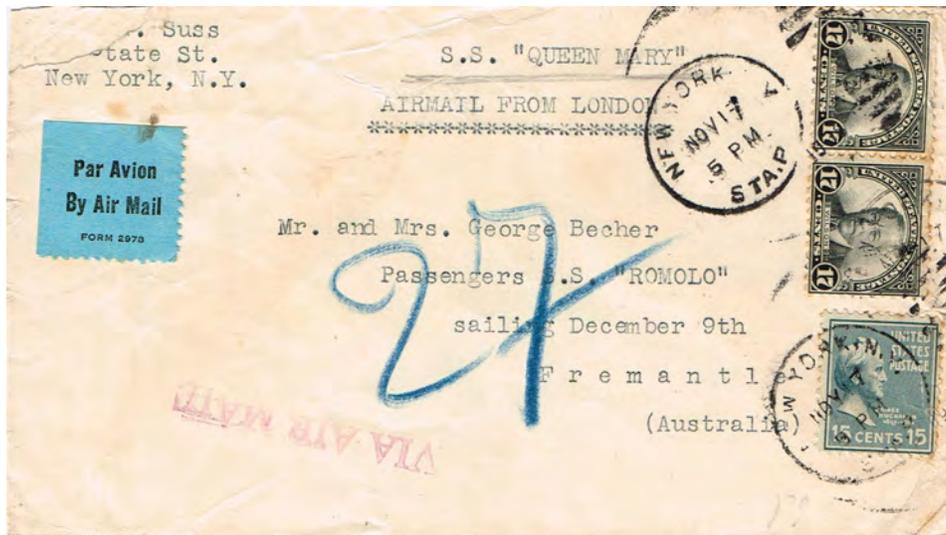
something did not seem right about the 5-cent stamp. The black shading visible in the white center part of the French tricolor was missing from the blue and red parts. On a normal stamp it should have been there. Was this the so-called reverse printed variety, Scott No. 915a, where the black ink was applied first, and the deep blue and dark rose inks were printed over it? On the normal stamp (Scott No. 915) the deep blue and dark rose were printed before the black, so that some black shading is visible on all three parts of the flag.

So I sent the cover to the American Philatelic Expertizing Service, and a few weeks later I received the answer I had hoped for. The cover was returned with an APEX certificate stating "United States, Scott No. 915a, deep blue and dark rose over black, used on airmail cover, genuine in all respects." Single, off-cover stamps, mint or used, routinely sell for \$100 or more, while cacheted first days covers have gone for \$200 and up. I could find no reported sale of a 915a used on a commercial cover, so who knows how much it would fetch?

How is that for good fortune?

Eastbound New York to Australia

by Bill DiPaolo



The cover illustrated above shows an interesting eastbound routing of a letter from New York to Fremantle, Australia. The addressees are passengers on the Italian steamer, S.S. *Romolo*. The envelope specifies the “S.S. QUEEN MARY” and “AIRMAIL FROM LONDON.” Total postage paid is 49 cents, and the only markings are a November 17, 1938 New York duplex, “VIA AIR MAIL” straight line and the number “27” written in blue crayon. The latter likely indicates the passenger’s stateroom number. Postage is paid by a pair of 17-cent Wilsons from the Fourth Bureau Issue and an early use of the 15-cent Prexie. No markings are to be found on the back. The rate calculates at 5 cents for surface transportation from New York to London and 44 cents paying the air mail surcharge from London to Sydney with onward domestic ground service to Fremantle.

In *U.S. International Postal Rates*, Wawrukiewicz and Beecher identify the rate as being available only from December 17, 1934 until July 8, 1935. In fact, this rate and route

continued until December 31, 1938. There are numerous mentions of this routing in *The Postal Bulletin* from its establishment through the 1939 rate change, the latest being #17494 on August 2, 1938. The next reference is #17597 issued on December 27, 1938 when the air mail surcharge was standardized. Effective January 1, 1939, the surcharge became 40 cents for departure from any European city to Australia.

During this period, there were three routings from the U.S. to Australia:

- Pacific Clipper at 70 cents, onward air service within Australia
- Air mail surcharge from London at 44 cents, onward by surface within Australia
- Air mail surcharge from Amsterdam at 40 cents, onward air service within Australia

As a postscript, the *Romolo* crew scuttled the Lloyd Triestino vessel off the Queensland coast to avoid capture shortly after Italy entered the war in June 1940.

Air Parcel Post With ‘LETTER INSIDE’ Printed Endorsement: Combined Rates?

by Dan Pagter

The January 1, 1913 start of the Parcel Post Service introduced the “eight zone” concept, plus local service, based on distance. Other service and fee structures employed the zone concept throughout the 20th century. The weight allowed went from four to eleven pounds at the start of the Parcel Post service. Other classes of mail also saw their weight limits rise in concert until the limit of 70 pounds was set in 1931. Parcel Post postage was based upon a combination of weight in pounds and zone distance, which resulted in the lower Parcel Post postage rate.

Parcel post matter sent at parcel post rates could not be registered. It was restricted to indemnity of “Insurance,” which also began with the start of Parcel Post Service. While restrictions applied as to what qualified as parcel post matter, no prohibition existed for paying for parcel post matter at a higher class of service, such as airmail, or even first class with the related indemnity service of registration. And it was not unusual for mailers to mail at first class for registration or especially airmail in order to achieve faster service.

The Air Parcel Post Service (APP), a zone based service, was created so that parcel post matter, domestic or international, could benefit from the lower cost of parcel post postage rates and the speed of movement that carriage by airplane provided. In the 29 months before the September 1, 1948 start of the APP service, domestic airmail rates had unified and dropped significantly, from as high as 70 cents per ounce to five cents per ounce. The rate rose to six cents on January 1, 1949, but remained stable for more than eight and one half years. APP matter was not limited to parcel post. Any first, third or fourth class matter could be sent APP



Figure 1: Air Parcel Post Service, insured, with LETTER INSIDE, posted June 13, 1949.

if over eight ounces. This new concept allowed mixing of mail classes within one service.

APP matter, especially domestic use during the first year of service, is difficult to find. The item in Figure 1 is an example. But from that small base of uncommon postal history items, this envelope stands out due to the “LETTER INSIDE” endorsement. It is postmarked June 13, 1949, although the final number in the year is blurry and can be mistaken for an “8.” However, the year 1949 is clear in the dated portion of the insurance service endorsement. This date places the item in the tenth month of the new APP service.



Figure 2a: Back side of envelope showing open flap with undisturbed gum.



Figure 2b: Enlarged detail of the affixed Air Parcel Post label.

This envelope, used as a mailing label on a zone eight insured APP parcel weighing up to one pound, has 90 cents postage affixed, which rates at 80 cents for the APP and ten cents for insurance with indemnity of \$5.01 to \$10.00. That this item is insured means the contents included either third or fourth class matter alone. First class matter could not be insured, but had to be registered if indemnity was desired.

The back side of the envelope on the flap has what appears to be a “patented July 6, 1919” date. It is not illustrated. It is unclear, however, if it applies to the envelope, or envelope and text on the envelope. Likely, the envelope used was not produced for the new APP Service. It seems likely the “LETTER ENCLOSED” printed endorsement was an artifact from a different service class of mail (e.g., non-APP) used by the company, which sent out this matter. A personal communication with Tony Wawrukiewicz confirms neither additional first class nor airmail postage was required for such enclosures in APP.

The envelope (Figure 2a), while gummed, was unsealed. An enlarged multicolored APP Service label affixed to the back is shown in Figure 2b. It includes “NATION WIDE WORLD WIDE” as text, which is difficult to read in the illustration. While the envelope itself is a pre-APP artifact, this APP service label was created specifically for the new APP service.

In comparison, Figure 3 shows both sides of an APP registered item, indicating the nature of the contents to be first class matter. It was sent from APO 500 (Tokyo, Japan). A total of \$33.10, paid in full with Prexies, rates at 30 cents registration plus 80 cents per pound for 41 pounds of Zone 8 APP matter.

On ordinary fourth class mail, which includes Parcel Post, and third class mail, if first class

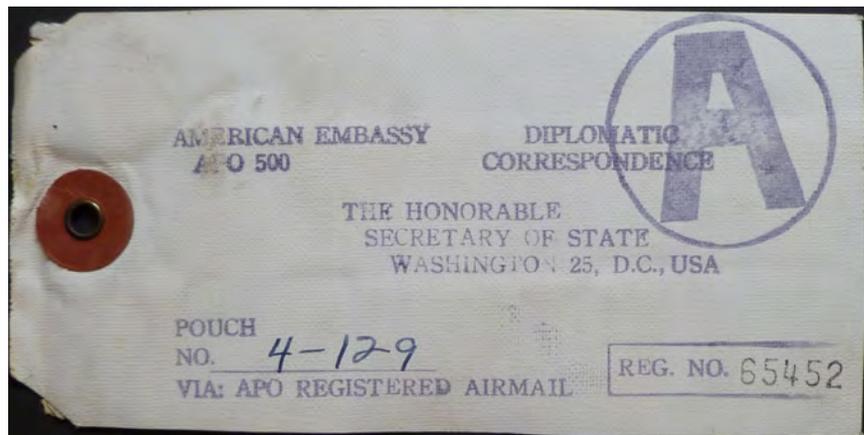


Figure 3: APP registered item sent from APO 500 (Tokyo, Japan), paid with \$33.10 in Prexie stamps.

matter (e.g., letter) was enclosed the postage would be the amount for the third or fourth class matter plus letter rate first class postage applied separately on the envelope or mailing label to indicate the distinction. Figure 4 shows a third class item with 4.5 cents of postage paying a weight of over four and up to six ounces, plus two cents for the first class enclosure, paying the local (in-city) first class letter rate. This local, carrier post office rate remained in effect until March 25, 1944.

In contrast, APP did not require extra payment for a mix of third or fourth class matter with first class or airmail enclosed. APP could include first class matter or a mix of classes with no special distinction, but in so doing did create irregularities. At the time some APP combinations of weights and zones could

result in a postage cost below an average of 3 cents per ounce, the first class letter rate, and below the higher five- or six-cent airmail letter rate. In those cases, the minimum postage for the APP matter was to be calculated at the first class rate of 3 cents per ounce.

With the minimum postage set at the first class rate, the letter enclosed, unlike ordinary third and fourth class matter, would already be paid at the first class rate. And first class, not airmail, was the targeted minimum rate. This belief is confirmed by the correct postage payment on the Figure 1 item. If an additional 6 cents was required for the letter at airmail rate of 6 cents, the total due would either be ninety one cents (80 cents APP + 6 cents Air Letter + 5 cents Insurance [\$5.00 or less indemnity]) or 97 cents (80 cents APP + 6 cents Air Letter



Figure 4: In-city local carrier post office mail sent third class with first class contents.

+ 10 cents Insurance [\$5.01-\$10 indemnity]) in postage and fees. Also, in a close reading of *US Domestic Postal Rates 1872-2011* and a review of USPOD *Official Postal Guides* of the era reveal no requirement to pay extra for an enclosed letter.

A final observation of note is the change in description of APP usages Wawrukiewicz uses in his rate books. In the second edition he writes, “. . . difficult to find . . . air parcel post usages are to be cherished.” But after collectors’ eyes

focused on such material, in the third edition he notes, “Domestic, air parcel post usages are relatively common.” But he does include the early usages such as the subject of this article, as “special” items. Such items remain scarce but I too have seen enough examples of APP, mostly in the form of diplomatic mail tags from the 1950s, to agree with Tony. Additional services such as registered (non-APO), insured,

or special delivery on APP make such items far more difficult to find no matter the era and are uncommon.

Reference

Beecher and Wawrukiewicz. *U.S. Domestic Postal Rates 1872-2011*, (3rd ed.), p. 5, and chapters 7, 10, 13, 30, 34, 36 and 49.

C23 - Stepchild of the Prexie Era

by Bob Hohertz



Figure 1: Incoming to a *Columbus* crewman, at Angel Island, California.

Over the last year and a half I’ve been actively collecting anything and everything to do with the U.S. bi-colored eagle airmail stamp (Scott No. C23). First issued on May 14, 1938, it falls into the early part of the Prexie era, which officially began April 25th of that year. However, we rarely think of this 6-cent adhesive as part of the period we all collect. The Transports, yes, but the earlier bi-colored eagle, not really. I’d like to remedy this by featuring some interesting covers featuring this stepchild of the Prexie era.

I’ll offer two covers that provide the flavor of the period. The background mostly comes from our Editor’s wonderful book, *Detained, Interned, Incarcerated – U.S. Enemy Noncombatant Mail in World War II*. In a nutshell, the German luxury liner S.S. *Columbus* was caught in the Caribbean in early September 1939 when war broke out in Europe. After spending some time at Veracruz, Berlin ordered the crew to make a dash for home, but British naval vessels were waiting off the coast of New Jersey. The *Columbus* crew, not wanting the ship to be



Figure 2: To the same *Columbus* crewman, now at Fort Stanton, New Mexico.

used by the enemy, scuttled it, and the crew members were rescued by a U.S. naval vessel and taken to Ellis Island for detention and eventual repatriation.

For technical reasons the crew were classified as aliens under detention, and the majority of them were sent to San Francisco to meet a Japanese ship that would begin their repatriation. However, they arrived too late, and were sent to the quarantine station located on Angel Island, in San Francisco Bay.

Since safe passage could not be guaranteed, repatriation efforts stopped, and the *Columbus* crew was eventually transferred to quarters at Fort Stanton, in a remote part of southern New Mexico. There, most remained for the duration of the war.

The two covers shown here were sent to the *Columbus* crewman, Reinhold Schreiber, who

was a photographer. The first, shown in Figure 1, went to Schreiber while he was at Angel Island. Sent from Brooklyn in December 1940, it has a red 15 on the front, indicating the barracks where the photographer was housed.

The second cover was mailed from San Francisco in 1941 and reached Schreiber at Fort Stanton. The red 5 directed it to his barracks.

Some *Columbus* crewmen were repatriated around the beginning of 1945. Most, however, including Schreiber, remained at Fort Stanton until August of that year. With a diligent search, several of Schreiber's photographs taken in New Mexico can be found on the internet.

This attractive airmail stamp, issued to pay the one-ounce domestic airmail rate, was widely used until replaced by the 6-cent Transport stamp on June 26, 1941. It deserves to be included in the Prexie era.