



# The Prexie Era

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## Release of "Prize Court" Mail to The Netherlands

by Louis Fiset



Figure 1: Condemned philatelic mail from 1941 to The Netherlands, released in 1951 to The Netherlands Shipping and Trading Committee for subsequent delivery to addressee.

As a general rule, collectors of commercial postal history tend to avoid philatelically inspired covers. Collectors of censored mail, however, delight with covers when they are censored *because* they are philatelic. The items illustrated here provide two examples.

Upon entering World War II in December 1941, the U.S. Office of Censorship was charged with examination of mail crossing the nation's borders. A special Philatelic Unit at the New York Censor Station was devoted to examination of philatelic mail. The foreign exchange of mint postage stamps was strictly regulated as a means of currency control, requiring annual permits by both businesses and individuals. The Philatelic Unit was charged with returning mail to senders in violation of regulations.

By the time the U.S. got into the war, the conflict was more than two years old, and a U.K. censor station at Bermuda had been examining transit ship and air mail since March 1940. The U.K. practice was to condemn philatelic mail with stamps, separate them from the correspondence, and later liquidate them.

The U.K.'s Prize Court determined whether certain war prizes, such as ships, goods, and other seized valuables, met all legal requirements for seizure. Proceeds from subsequent disposal of such booty would help reimburse the nation for costs of the war.

Stamps originating in neutral or occupied countries and their territories, most often contained in registered mail, were forwarded by Imperial Censorship directly to the Prize Court. Such condemned covers therefore do not bear the usual Bermuda censor labels.

The Prize Court released the correspondence sans stamps in five batches, from 1948 to October 1951. The stamps themselves were sorted, catalogued, then sold at H.R. Harmer's

1949 auction held at Hamilton, Bermuda. The sale netted \$40,000 (\$415,000 in 2017 dollars).

Most of the released condemned mail received a "Released by Prize Court" marking before being placed into the mail stream. Mail addressed to The Netherlands, however, appears to have been an exception.

Recently three registered, philatelic covers have come to light in which explanatory Dutch language labels are attached to the covers, with accompanying circular markings in black reading *COMMISSIE VOOR AANGEHONDEN LADIGEN*, or Netherlands Shipping and Trading Committee. Two of them may be seen here.

The cover in Figure 1 bears a faint "Released by Prize Court" marking underneath the label, visible with strong back lighting. Figure 2 shows a similar marking peaking out beneath the label, also fully visible with back lighting. A detail from the Manchukuo cover shows the entire marking. The two attached labels have almost identical wording, but differ in design. Both use the acronym, COVAL, to designate the Committee, Amsterdam receivers show the dates October 5, 1951, and November 17, 1951.



COVAL was established by the Dutch government in October 1939 to represent its interests in cargo and ships detained abroad due to the war, and subsequently represented the government in exile in London. Following liberation, COVAL was given the task of handling the remaining Dutch assets worldwide.

When the Prize Court released the covers, those addressed to The Netherlands were turned over to COVAL for subsequent distribution. An earlier agreement between the two countries may have included a pro rata share of proceeds from the Harmer auction.



Figure 2: Prize Court mail with design variation on Dutch COVAL label released in 1951.

## Second PrexieEraPex Planned

Jeff Shapiro has announced the second PrexieEraPex, to be held at Philatelic Show, Boxborough, MA, on May 4-8, 2018. A full range of activities will be offered, including 100+ exhibit frames reserved to display some of the finest Twentieth Century U.S. material available that spans the Prexie era period.

The “Roland Rustad Memorial Award” will be awarded by the jury to the best exhibit of Presidential Era (1938-1962) material. Grand Award winning Prexie exhibitor, Steve Suffet, has agreed to serve on the jury.

This event, occurring on the 80th anniversary of the 1938 Presidential Series, will include seminars and talks on Prexie era topics. Ken Lawrence has agreed to present an APS On-the-Road Course. A fellowship dinner is also planned.

Please consider participating in this periodic event. Membership in the Prexie-Era Group is not required, but encouraged. Full information, including an exhibit prospectus and entry form, can be found on the Northeastern Federation of Stamp Clubs website, at [nefed.org](http://nefed.org)

## A Prexie Era Unicorn Found

by Daniel S. Pagter

Air Parcel Post (APP) became a category of service in 1948 for both domestic and international mail. Like Parcel Post service, other countries first engaged the service before the United States Post Office Department (USPOD). On March 15, 1948, The USPOD initiated international APP service to all 26 countries choosing to participate in the service. Domestic APP followed on September 1, 1948. Both provided similar services, except inclusion of first class/letter matter, and several interesting, but minor differences. The common goal for the two APP services was to provide faster transportation of non-first class mail matter.

*The Prexie Era* (No. 78) included an example of domestic APP posted during the eleventh week of the new service. This article provides an international APP counterpart mailed eight months to the day from the start of international service. The *Official U.S. Postal Guide* has been consulted for much of what follows below.

The cost of posting a domestic APP was weight based, in pounds, and further determined by the distance travelled to the destination. The distance calculation was based on eight zones with 1800 miles determined as the minimum mileage for the open ended zone eight. The rate for zone eight domestic parcels was 80 cents per pound to a maximum of 70 pounds. Most countries of the world exceed 1800 miles from some point in the “domestic mail areas” of the U.S., which include territories and possessions beyond the 48 states and U.S. military post offices around the globe.

International APP rates were set by weight, but with four-ounce units determining the amount, not pounds. Each country had a different rate basis for each weight unit. These differences

may have been based upon the airlines used, air routes, and airline contracts available to each country destination. The units remained four-ounce steps up to the maximum allowed weight for the country of receipt. The weight of APP matter could not exceed the maximum weight of ordinary parcel post matter to the destination country, and it could be set lower.

A major difference between domestic and international APP involved the inclusion of “first class” mail. The USPOD treated domestic APP as part of Airmail/First Class matter, not as parcel post. Domestic APP thus could include all classes of mail including first class, or a mix there of. Under UPU rules international APP could include a mix of all categories except “letters and letter packages,” which the USPOD called “first class” mail. An exception was non-current letters and their envelopes, franked or unfranked. An example is letters from a former lover, which qualified as “commercial papers” and allowed in international APP mail.

The international APP rating scheme produced such a complicated system that Wawrukiewicz and Beecher omit the rates in *U.S. International Postal Rates, 1872-1996*. Only APP rates established long after the end of the Prexie era may be found in the book, beginning January 1, 1981. At that time all participating countries were grouped into five rate groups and three weight ranges. The first weight range was four ounces up to 16 ounces, with each of the four units assessed the same unit rate. The second weight range was up to five pounds (20 units), all at the same, but reduced unit rate. At a weight over five pounds, the unit of weight increased to eight ounces.

Although absent from Wawrukiewicz and Beecher are the participating countries and



Figure 1: International Air Parcel Post (APP) cover with attachments, to South Africa in 1958.

their rates and weight limits, they may be found in the annual *Official Postal Guides, Part II -- International Postal Mail* under the alphabetized individual country listings. No tables exist in the guides for APP specifically, or parcel post in general.

Ordinary parcel post rates will not be found in the Wawrukiewicz book, either, except for some brief exceptions. A change in rate or country service occurring between consecutive annual guides may sometimes be found in the monthly postal guides serving as supplements to the *U.S. Postal Guide, Parts I and II*. Additional services such as registration, insurance, C.O.D. and sealing of parcels may also be found

under individual country listings in the *U.S. Postal Guides*. Required forms, including numbered stickers and labels, are also shown and discussed.

Thus, Prexie era collectors of international parcel post and air parcel post will likely need Part II of the appropriate *U.S. Postal Guide*. In addition to outgoing international mail requirements, the Guides include the rates of postage for all types of incoming mail from all countries. But even then the USPOD cut a corner on parcel post mail in Section 88:

Parcels to be considered as fully prepaid. As parcel-post packages received from

a number of foreign countries are unaccompanied by postage stamps, the postage having been prepaid by means of cash, all parcels from abroad will be considered as fully prepaid, unless define information is known to the contrary.

Shown in Figure 1 is an international APP envelope, with attachments, to South Africa and posted at New York on November 15 1948. It contained four ounces of mixed non-first class matter, specifically a price list (printed matter) and a sample of merchandise, specifically a hypodermic syringe. The APP rate for the first four ounces to South Africa was \$1.31. In addition to the required payment of proper APP postage and designation of contents of a parcel post nature, other required items were the blue Par Avion/by Airmail label (Form 2978), and

Customs Declaration label (Form 2966) with the current value of the finished article in the open market at time of dispatch. Normally required, an International Parcel Post sticker (Form 2922) was not required for any “gift” packages with a free sample of merchandise qualifying as a gift, and is therefore absent here. Parcel post mail to South Africa could not be registered, insured or sent C.O.D. Figure 2 is included here to show an outstanding example of Form 2922 in actual use during the waning years of the Prexie era.

Sealing of APP to South Africa was optional, and this sender sealed the package. Sealing requirements appeared in *The Postal Guide* for each country participating in Parcel Post and APP, with three options available; sealing required, unsealed required, and sender’s option. In some cases a specific method of



Figure 2: Form 2922 used on late Prexie era mail.

sealing was also described and required.

Had the South Africa item weighed more than four ounces, the postage required would have dropped to 94 cents for each additional four ounces or fraction to the maximum weight limit of 11 pounds (\$41.73 maximum postage cost). For comparison, Turkey allowed 44 pounds at \$100.90 maximum postage, with 11 pounds being only \$25.66 in postage. Russia did not accept APP and limited the maximum parcel post weight to 22 pounds with two different rates, one to Russia in Europe and a second to Russia in Asia.

For South Africa destinations, the mailer could calculate and prepay wharfage and other duty charges to avoid the recipient from having to pay. The Department of Customs, Union of South Africa did not accept direct prepayment of customs fees by the sender for specific packages. The sender at time of mailing could prepay by affixing South African customs duty stamps obtained in advance from the official representative of the Department of Customs of the Union of South Africa at 44 Whitehall St. New York, NY. The mailer could also forward to the recipient an international postal money order to cover the duty fees. Lastly the sender could trust the recipient would willingly pay the assessed duty fees. Duty was not prepaid by the sender on this Figure 1 item, and there is no way to tell if the sender sent the penny to the recipient or if the recipient paid the fee out of pocket. Duty was likely paid, however, since the item was not returned.

Other sending options shown below illustrate International APP as a compromise between cost and transit time saved:

- If sent via normal airmail as merchandise weighing up to eight ounces, this envelope would have cost \$2.00, based upon 25 cents per half ounce for four ounces. Thus, APP saved the mailer 61 cents without any

compromised air service.

- A sample of merchandise of 18 ounces or less could have been sent via surface for three cents at 1.5 cents per two ounces, with a three-cent minimum and customs Forms 2976 and 2976-A attached.
- The item could have been up rated to the letter rate as merchandise, including samples. The surface rate was 14 cents -- five cents for the first ounce and three cents for each additional ounce.
- If the mailer had added four ounces to the contents to make a package over the eight-ounce minimum for ordinary parcel post, the cost would have been 14 cents for up to a pound.

While saving significant postage expense, each of the three surface rates noted here would have added weeks or more to the delivery time of the parcel.

Wawrukiewicz has noted “examples of international air parcel post in collector’s hands are almost non-existent.” Wawrukiewicz and Beecher show no examples from the 1948-1996 period, and all international APP subject matter is covered on a single page (p. 216). The International Air Parcel Post package shown here is truly a unicorn. Subscribers with other international APP usages should report them to your editor. Perhaps together we can assemble and enjoy an entire herd of unicorns.

#### REFERENCES

United States Post Office Department. *United States Official Postal Guide: Part II -- International Postal Service*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, First Series, Volume 4, First Edition, July 1948.) pp. 3, 5, 7-15, 48-65, 332, 336-9.

Henry Beecher and Tony Wawrukiewicz. *U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-2011*. (Portland: CAMA Publishing Company, 3rd Edition, 2011), Air Parcel Post chapter.

## World War II Italian POW Parolees in the U.S.

by Jeffrey Shapiro



Figure 1: Uncensored domestic correspondence from a former Italian POW now assigned to non-combat duty at Pine Camp, New York.

From June 1940 through September 1943, hundreds of thousands of young Italian soldiers were sent to war, poorly equipped, poorly trained, and poorly led. As a result, approximately 600,000 were taken prisoner by the Allies, with an estimated 51,000 of them winding up in 21 POW camps in 18 U.S. states.

On September 8, 1943, an armistice was signed between the Italian government and the Allies, even though the German armies still occupied northern Italy. To complicate matters, Nazi collaborators were able to free the imprisoned

Benito Mussolini, former Italian leader, and a new, Italian Social Republic, was established.

Italian POWs had to make a decision to remain loyal to Mussolini or to cooperate with their former American “enemy” by accepting non-combat labor assignments in and outside the POW camps. Many of the prisoners had little political affiliation and couldn’t wait to leave camp and get into the countryside to perform farm labor, work in the forests, and fight fires

It has been estimated that paroled Italian POWs

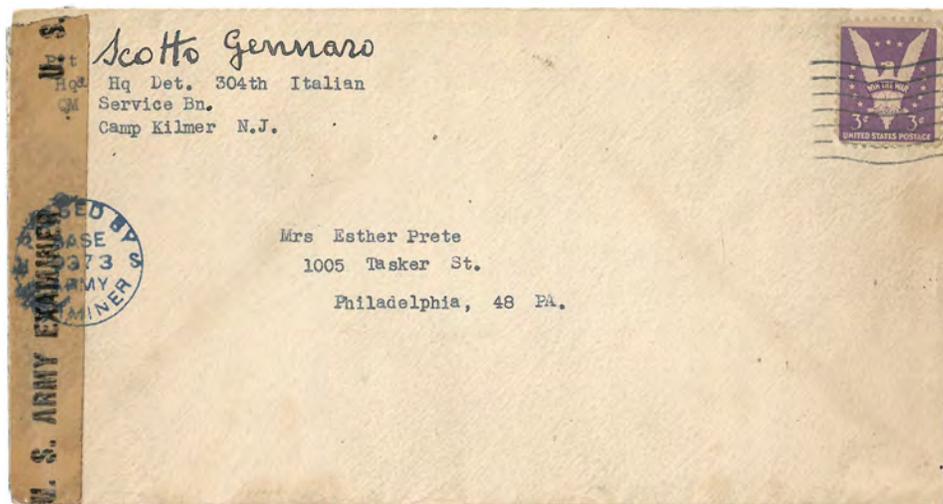


Figure 2: Censored correspondence from a former Italian POW assigned to the Quartermaster Corps at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

in the U.S. contributed more than a million man hours to a labor-starved civilian work force during the war years.

Two covers from paroled Italian POWs are shown here. The first cover was sent by Italian POW, Eues Manfe, at Pine Camp, NY.

Today known as Camp Drum, it is located in the Adirondack Mountains, near the Canadian border. Designated as a training area for the US Army in 1917, Pine Camp saw continuous growth and expansion. German POWs captured in North Africa started arriving at Pine Camp in 1942. In 1943, Italian POWs began to join them. About 1,000 POWs eventually called Pine Camp “home” for the remainder of the war.

Domestic labor shortage caused by World War II was widespread throughout the region and country. The Army responded by quickly organizing “Work Companies,” first sending German POWs to nearby St. Regis Paper Company’s logging camps. In 1943, Italian POWs were sent to various logging operations at former Civilian Conservation Camps (CCC) located near Pine Camp. Eventually, supervised labor camps were set up in locations near Booneville, Conifer and Old Forge. Besides

logging work, POWs were sent to other locations as farm hands and factory workers.

The correspondence in Figure 2 shows an unusual censored domestic letter sent by POW, Scotto Gennaro, housed at Camp Kilmer, NJ.

Camp Kilmer was named after poet, Joyce Kilmer, who was killed at the Second Battle of the Marne in July 1918. The Camp, located a few miles north of New Brunswick, NJ (Kilmer’s birthplace) was selected to serve as a major point of embarkation for Europe-bound troops, starting in July 1942, because of excellent, nearby rail connections.

Beginning in 1944, Italian POWs were sent to Camp Kilmer. Anti-fascist prisoners on good behavior were allowed to join non-combatant Army service battalions, such as the Quartermaster Corps, and served the Allied cause for the duration of the war.

It should be noted that loss of POW status brought surrender of the free frank privilege. However, members of the U.S. armed forces were permitted free postage on their ordinary mail. Thus, the free frank status for paroled Italian POWs serving in the U.S. army in World War II remains unclear.

## C23 - Supplementary Mail during the Prexie Era

by Louis Fiset

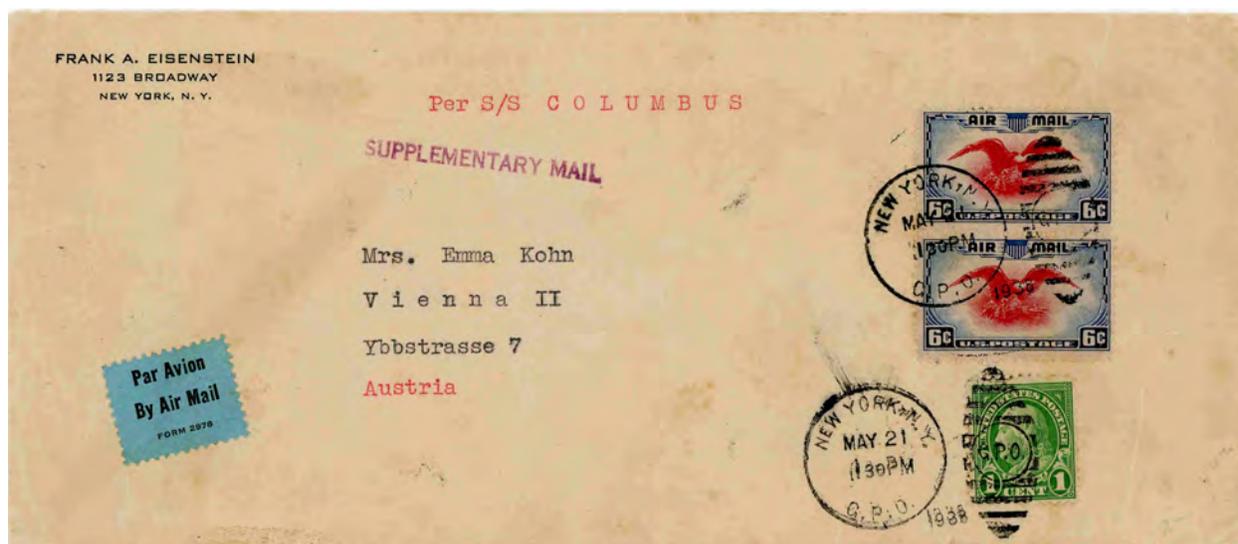


Figure 1: Supplementary mail on 1938 New York foreign letter to Europe. [Bob Hohertz collection]

By the time the 6-cent bi-colored Eagle airmail stamp appeared on May 14, 1938, both the 1-cent (April 25, 1938) and 1.5-cent (May 5, 1938) Prexie definitives were in circulation. This stamp enjoyed a three year life until replaced by the Transport Series stamp on June 25, 1941. So, C23 on cover definitely fits into the category of early Prexie era postal history.

The cover here, addressed to Austria, shows two Eagle stamps and a copy of the newly replaced 1-cent Fourth Bureau Issue definitive. It bears the directive "Per S/S COLUMBUS, a North German Lloyd cruise ship that sailed between Bremen and the Western Hemisphere until scuttled by its crew in December 1939. The 13 cents postage pays double the regular rate of 5 cents, plus an additional 3 cents for air service in Europe.

Of special interest here is the magenta SUPPLEMENTARY MAIL auxiliary marking applied on the cover bearing a NEW YORK, N.Y. G.P.O. MAY 21, 1938 1:30 PM postmark.

Supplementary mail was a special post office service of dispatching mail after the regular

mail closed. On foreign mail the fee was double the regular rate, but no fee to be added on postage for air mail service. This enabled a letter to reach a departing ship after the regular mail closing but before the ship set sail.

For the *Columbus's* sailing on May 21, 1938, Figure 2 reads in part: "(mails close \*1 P.M., supplementary 3 P.M.; sails 5 P.M.)" This is consistent with the 1:30 PM postmark shown.

Supplementary mail service ended in 1941.

**COLUMBUS (North German Lloyd), Cobh (Queenstown) May 27, Plymouth May 28, Cherbourg May 28 and Bremen May 29 (mails close \*1 P. M., supplementary 3 P. M.; sails 5 P. M.), from W. 46th St. Letter mail and printed matter for Europe, Africa and West Asia (except Aden, Ceylon, Gibraltar, India, Madeira, Portugal, Scotland and South Africa), printed matter for French Morocco and letter mail for Iraq. Parcel post for Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.**

Figure 2: *New York Times*, May 21, 1938.

### REFERENCE

Piszkiwicz, Leonard. *United States Supplementary Mail*. (Katy, Tx: United States Stamp Society, 2009.)