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The Prexie Era

Newsletter of the USSS 1938 Presidential-Era Committee

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Development and Deployment - U.S. Atomic Bomb 1942-1946

by Joseph Bock

Part 1

Albert Einstein
Old Grove Rd.
Massau Point
Peconic, Long Island
August 2nd, 1939

F.D. Roosevelt,
President of the United States,
White House
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

Some recent work by E.Fermi and L. Szilard, which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future. Certain aspects of the situation which has arisen seem to call for watchfulness and, if necessary, quick action on the part of the Administration. I believe therefore that it is my duty to bring to your attention the following facts and recommendations:

In the course of the last four months it has been made probable - through the work of Joliot in France as well as Fermi and Szilard in America - that it may become possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium, by which vast amounts of power and large quantities of new radium-like elements would be generated. How it appears almost certain that this could be achieved in the immediate future.

Figure 1: Albert Einstein letter to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 2 August 1939.

The history of the U.S. atomic bomb is generally understood to begin with this letter signed by Albert Einstein (but composed by physicists Leo Szilard and Eugene Wigner) warning that physicists in Nazi Germany were working on atomic experiments that could result in a highly destructive new bomb (first two paragraphs only in scan). The letter resulted in the President approving the creation of committees on uranium research. In early 1942 the Corps of Engineers under the direction of General Leslie Groves secretly purchased large tracts of land in rural Tennessee and Washington State for the enrichment of raw uranium.

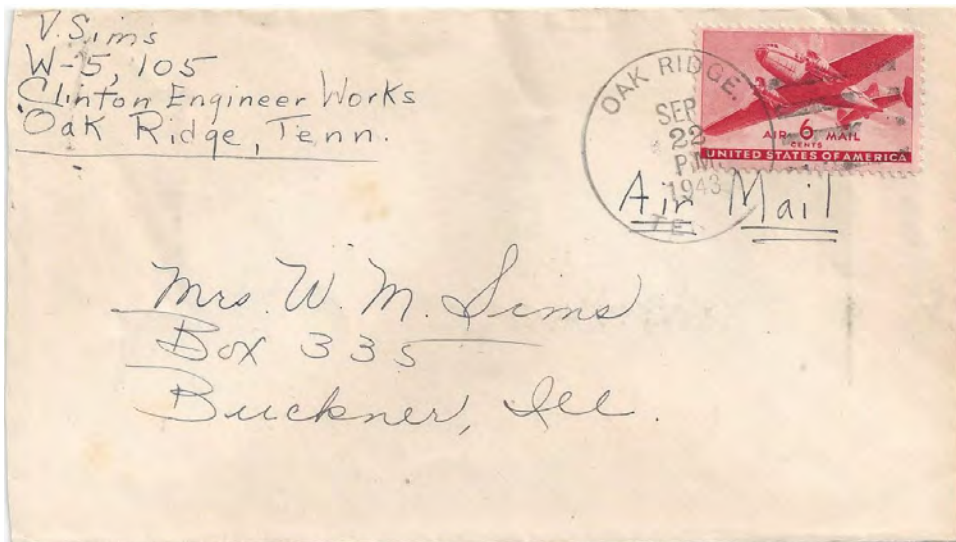


Figure 2: From the Clinton Engineer Works, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 22 September 1943.

The cover in Figure 2 is the earliest reported use from the secret Clinton Engineer Works in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. This large facility processed raw uranium by separating the desirable, rare uranium isotope U-235 from the more common U-238. Over 80,000 men and women were employed there including scientists, construction workers, clerical and military. The majority of workers, however, were women. (1)



Figure 3: From Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 21 May 1945.

An 8-cent Transport airmail use from a Private First Class soldier assigned to a Special Engineer Detachment. The airmail rate in the U.S. was increased from 6 cents to 8 cents per ounce on 26 March 1944 and included military APO and FPO mail within the continental U.S. However, overseas military personnel retained the 6 cents per half ounce special military rate through September 30, 1946.



Figure 4: From a Dupont (Federal) employee at Hanford, Washington, 23 February 1944.

A second secret facility was constructed at Hanford, near Pasco, Washington on the Columbia River. The facility refined and converted raw uranium into weapons grade plutonium. Until a recent family correspondence became available, only two covers had been reported from Hanford. This cover (Figure 4) was sent by Carol Wentz Doriss to her husband, a Corporal in the U.S. Army, stationed at Camp Kearney, Utah. The 6-cent airmail rate is paid by a pair of 3-cent Prexies. All outgoing mail from Oak Ridge, Hanford, and Los Alamos was submitted unsealed for censorship. Consequently, no physical evidence of censorship on outbound mail exists that would compromise the secrecy of ongoing activity at those facilities.

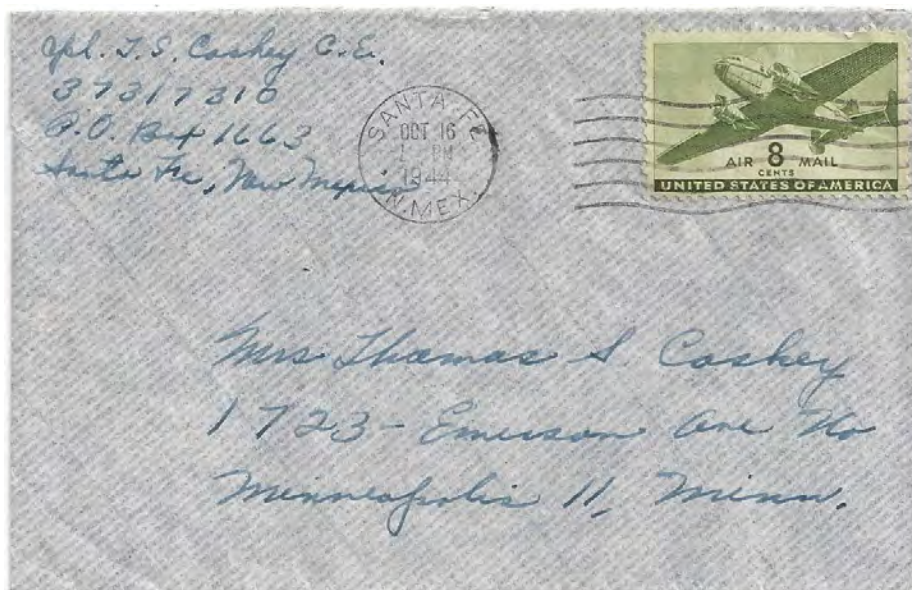


Figure 5: Outbound from Los Alamos, P.O Box 1663 Santa Fe, New Mexico, postmarked 16 October 1944.

The world's first controlled nuclear chain reaction was conducted at the University of Chicago on 2 December 1942 by physicist Enrico Fermi and provided the scientific feasibility for a

nuclear bomb. In 1943 a former boarding school in Los Alamos, New Mexico was acquired for the Manhattan Project by the Army to become the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, under the direction of physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer.

P.O. Box 1663 Santa Fe, New Mexico was one of several undercover postal addresses for military and scientific personnel at the secret Manhattan Project facility in the foothills above Santa Fe. Outbound mail was submitted unsealed to facilitate censorship and avoid obvious markings left by the censors.

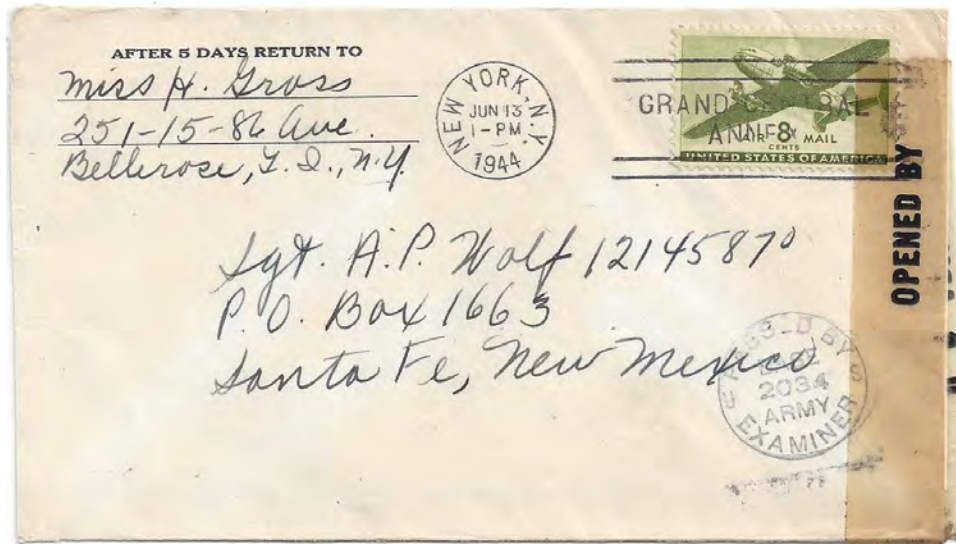


Figure 6: Inbound to Los Alamos, P.O. Box 1663 Santa Fe, New Mexico, postmarked 13 June 1944.

Incoming mail to Los Alamos, New Mexico displayed U.S. Army censorship. All mail, both incoming and outgoing, was censored, but only incoming mail displayed the telltale censorship markings, including rubber stamp examiner markings and resealing tapes.

The development of the U.S. atomic bomb, which became known as the Manhattan Project, was the greatest secret of World War II. Postal censorship played a major role in maintaining this secrecy.

- (1) Kiernan, Denise; *The Girls of Atomic City*. (Touchstone by Simon and Schuster, 2013.)
- (2) Lawrence, Ken; "Postal history and postal historians of the Atomic Bomb," Part 3; *Linn's Stamp News*, December 2016.

The Prexie Era Newsletter Now Online

The United States Stamp Society has posted on its website a complete run of *The Prexie Era* newsletter, through Issue No. 72 (Winter 2016). It is available to USSS members.

The run is searchable by year/issue, author, as well as by key words or topic.

From the Home Page, click on "Resources" at the top right. You will be given a choice of "Prexie Browse" or "Prexie Search". Then, simply follow the instructions.

Issues will be added each year so that only the most recent two years are not included.

An East Coast December 7, 1941 Cover

by Albert “Chip” Briggs



Figure 1: Postmarked December 7, 1941 to Vichy France and returned to sender from Bermuda.

Being a Sunday, there are not a large number of covers found bearing postmarks the day Japan attacked the United States. Certainly, examples from Honolulu during the bombing are coveted.

The cover illustrated here was mailed from New York in the early morning hours of what would later become a “day which will live in infamy”. It was sent by a Dr. Julius Wildstosser in Bronx, New York to Miss Ellen Rosen at Chateau de Charbannes, St. Pierre de Fursac, in the department of Creuse, unoccupied (Vichy) France. The cover is franked with a five cent James Monroe stamp paying the Universal Postal Union surface mail rate in effect at the time.

As mail service to Vichy France was temporarily interrupted on December 12, 1941 and this letter had not made the entire journey across the Atlantic, it was returned to sender. It was censored at Bermuda on the outbound trip and closed with British P.C. 90 censor resealing tape. It was eventually returned to New York in January, 1943 as revealed by the receiver on the back. While the postmark date is eye catching, it is the address that is particularly interesting.

Chateau de Charbannes was an OSE (Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants) facility administered by Felix Chevrier, journalist and composer. The OSE was a worldwide Jewish organization for children’s welfare and health care. During World War II the OSE created a network for the

rescue and sheltering of children in occupied France known as Circuit Garel. During the war years 284 Jewish children received shelter there.

After two raids by French gendarmes under the Vichy government and increasing concerns over safety as the Nazis expanded control in late 1942, the decision was made to close the home. In late 1943 the children were dispersed to the network run by Georges Garel. The vacated home was later used by the French Resistance.

Chevrier ran the home from November 1939 until it closed in 1943.



Figure 2: Chateau de Charbannes, where Jewish children were sheltered during World War II.

U.S.S. *Indianapolis* at Pearl Harbor

by Joe Bock



The cover shown here originated with an Army PFC aboard the U.S.S. *Indianapolis* (CA 35) on 7 October, 1941, while the ship was stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The 20 cents postage affixed paid the half-ounce civilian airmail rate to the mainland then in effect. The 6-cent concession airmail rate did not begin until 26 December 1941.

The *Indianapolis*, a heavy cruiser, was sunk on 30 July 1945 by a Japanese torpedo while returning from Tinian Island in the Pacific after delivering the first atomic bomb to the U.S. Army Air Force.

Only 317 of 1,196 the crewmen survived the sinking. A search team financed by Paul Allen located the wreckage on 19 August 2017 lying in the Philippine Sea at a depth of 18,000 feet.

Sender's Statement and Certificate of Bulk Mailing

by Robert Schlesinger

Form 3606

SENDER'S STATEMENT AND CERTIFICATE OF BULK MAILING

This statement to be prepared in ink in duplicate by mailer. Original to be returned with postage stamps affixed covering fee, after being certified to.

POSTMASTER,
Madison Square, New York

There are presented herewith 11,303 identical pieces of 3rd class matter, each subject to 11 cents postage. Number of pieces to the pound 48 Total number of pounds 40 Total postage paid 165.55 Fee paid 48 Mailed for Neibart Assoc. Press Inc. Total postage by Neibart Assoc. Press Inc. Per Neibart
64 W. 25th St. N. Y.

It is hereby certified that the above-described mailing has been received and number of pieces and postage verified.

FEE FOR CERTIFICATE	
1 to 200 pieces.....	10 cents
201 to 1,000 pieces.....	15 cents
Each additional 1,000 pieces or fraction thereof.....	3 cents

If the time consumed in making the count and issuing the certificate is longer than 20 minutes, the fees charged shall be based on the actual time consumed at the rate of \$1.25 per hour. Additional certificates, 5 cents each.

JOHN F. SHEEHAN Postmaster
Per Joseph A. [Signature]

16-51114-1 U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

Third class bulk mailing all were rated at the third class single piece rate in effect at the time of mailing. Most Prexie era collectors are familiar with the 1-cent and 1.5-cent third class bulk rates. After that, the ‘nitty gritty’ of what happens next is not always clear.

The figure above shows an example of the POD Form 3606, SENDER’S STATEMENT AND CERTIFICATE OF BULK MAILING. The instructions on the certificate explain how the postage – and how the verification and fees – actually worked. “This statement to be prepared in ink in duplicate by mailer.” In other words, the mailing firm, in this case, Neibart Assoc. Press, Inc., was required to tell the post office at time of mailing, what it was mailing – 11,303 identical pieces of third class mail.

“Original to be returned with postage stamps affixed covering fee after certified to.” Here is where the mailing count was verified. The “fee” for the counting is explained right on the certificate itself. The first 200 of the 11,303 pieces cost 10 cents to verify (certify), and

the next 800, 15 cents. Each additional 1000 pieces or fraction thereof) cost another 3 cents to certify, or a total of 33 cents. This amounted to the 48 cents postage affixed to the front of the certificate itself. I believe these certificates were returned to the mailers for their files. This could explain why the forms are hard to find.

The Certificate of Bulk mailing shown below is slightly different, in form and use. In January 1955, (see lower left corner) the POD changed the format of Form 3606. The wording was identical to the previous form. The more important difference was the fact that this bulk mailing being sent by Neibart Assoc. Press, Inc., was by first class mail, as shown in the WHAT CLASS OF MAIL box. The 3 cents postage per piece confirms the first class nature of the mailing. The fee structure for verification of the number of pieces mailed remained as it was; the 33 cents paid correctly verified the 6666 pieces mailed.

This second certificate is interesting in that it begs the question of why was it used at all.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT
SENDER'S STATEMENT AND CERTIFICATE OF BULK MAILING

INSTRUCTION: Mailer is to prepare this statement in ink in duplicate. Original to be returned with postage stamps affixed covering fee, after being certified to.

FEE FOR CERTIFICATE

Not exceeding 200 pieces	10 cents
Not exceeding 1,000 pieces	15 cents
Each additional 1,000 pieces or fraction thereof	3 cents

If the time consumed in making the count and issuing the certificate is longer than 30 minutes, the fees charged shall be based on the actual time consumed at the hourly rate of a substitute clerk, Grade 1. Additional certificates, 5 cents each.

Postage (uncanceled) stamps in payment of and canceled by postmark

TO: Postmaster, *Madison* (City and State)

Presented herewith is the mail described below:

NUMBER OF IDENTICAL PIECES	WHAT CLASS OF MAIL	POSTAGE EACH SUBJECT TO	NUMBER OF PIECES TO THE POUND	TOTAL NUMBER OF POUNDS	TOTAL POSTAGE PAID	FEE PAID
6666	1st	3	34	196	199.98	33

MAILED FOR: *Boston Int'l Econ Soc* MAILED BY: *Robert H. Schaffer* PER: *R. Schaffer*

POSTMASTER'S CERTIFICATE

It is hereby certified that the above-described mailing has been received and number of pieces and postage verified.

Robert H. Schaffer, PM
(Postmaster)

BY: *[Signature]*

POD Form 3606 (Jan. 1955) Replaces previous editions of this form which may be used. 16-51114-5 U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

If the correct first class postage of 3 cents per ounce was paid, it can be viewed as just another first class mailing, not some special rate. Comments are welcome.

Prexie Era Book Awarded A Large Gold at Stampshow 2018

Prexie Era: Stamp Production and Postal History, 1938-1962, came away with a large gold medal in the literature competition at Stampshow 2018, held this past August at Columbus, Ohio.

Steve Schumann, writing for the jury, had this to say regarding originality, significance, and research:

“The scope of this work is enormous, however the work gives the appearance

of being complete due to the careful choice of the various chapters. For example, the workhorse of the era was the 3¢ prexie stamp. What happened with this stamp could have happened with any stamp of the period. But yet each chapter is significant in its own right. This could serve as an example for studies of other areas.”

Hats off to the authors.

A Registered Berlin Airlift Cover

by Jeffrey Shapiro



Figure: August 1948 registered airmail to Berlin, entering the city as part of the Berlin Airlift designed to break the Soviet blockade of goods into the British, U.S., and French sectors.

The cover illustrated here bears 35 cents postage to pay the 15-cent airmail rate to Europe (in effect 1946 through 1961) and 20-cent registration fee. At first glance this August 10, 1948 cover is fairly ordinary, since registered mail to postwar Germany resumed on March 25, 1948 and airmail service even earlier, on August 28, 1946. What makes it special is that it was flown into Berlin during the famous Berlin Airlift (June 1948-May 1949). An August 15, 1948 Berlin receiving mark appears on the reverse.

The Berlin Airlift occurred in response to the Soviet Union's attempt in the Spring of 1948 to limit the ability of the United Kingdom, France and the United States to supply their occupied sectors of Berlin, which lay within Russian-occupied Eastern Germany. This was seen as an initial attempt to force the Western Allies to abandon their post-war jurisdictions in the western sections of Berlin.

Many historians believe The Soviet Union's actions precipitated the first major crisis of

the Cold War. In June 1948 the Soviet Union blocked access to road, rail and canal routes into western Berlin. While the possibility of war loomed, the Western Allies formulated a new strategy, to supply the huge population by a massive airlift. The first planes left West Germany on June 26, 1948, and by the height of the operation American, British, French, South African, Australian and New Zealand crews were delivering 9,000 tons of food and fuel to the people of Berlin every day.

The Soviets never interfered with Airlift operations, fearing provocation of open warfare. With the Allies flying in more supplies by air than had been delivered by rail before the Airlift, the Soviets began negotiations early in 1949 to end the Blockade, which officially came to an end on May 12, 1949.

Correspondence flown into Berlin during this period is scarce. Most of the limited space on cargo planes was used to bring the people of Western Berlin the necessities of life. Mail moved on a space available status.

More Bomber Pouch Mail

by Louis Fiset



Figure: Bomber pouch mail to the newspaper, *PM*, containing newspaper copy by one of its columnists in August 1945 after the war in Europe had ended.

In an earlier issue of the newsletter (No. 75, Autumn 2016) I introduced the subject of an expedited letter service from Europe during World War II whereby stripped down fighter planes and B-24 bombers shuttled mail of time sensitive importance to the U.S. The cover shown here is similar to the legal size cover in the earlier article. This example, however, advances our knowledge of this service by illustrating the type of content of some essential mail allowed on these flights.

This correspondence was written by Tom O'Reilly from a Paris hotel that served as a journalist hangout and addressed to an editor at the New York progressive newspaper, *PM*. The cover bears the notation, "O'Reilly's Copy," suggesting an article for an upcoming issue. It passed U.S. Army press censorship on 2 August 1945, was postmarked Washington, D.C. August 6, 1945, 3:30 pm and delivered

at New York 12 hours later. The cover bears required U.S. postage to pay for domestic mail service, although the 9 cents paid remains somewhat confusing.

The correspondence reached *PM*'s newsroom in time for the August 8, 1945 edition. The article, headlined, "Ah! Paris, at Last," appeared in the writer's regular column, "O'Reilly."

O'Reilly described himself as a postwar correspondent. In fact, he was a postwar gossip columnist traveling throughout France, Germany, and England, to offer light hearted diversions from the brutal conflict that had recently ended. During the month of August 1945 he published ten columns in *PM*, bearing such headlines as, "Tom Meets General Patton" (Nuremberg); "How One Lieutenant Got to His Wedding" (London); and "Franks in Frankfurt" (Frankfurt).