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Great Britain Interns Her Jewish Refugees In World War II

by

Louis Fiset

Early in 1939, The Council for German Jewry in Great Britain made arrangements to rent Kitchener Camp, a World War I facility located in Southeast England at Richborough, near Sandwich. Kitchener Camp was an accommodation by the British for German Jews who had documentation for emigration to another country but were awaiting their place on the quota. Originally, the camp was to house about 3,500 male refugees, primarily from Germany and Austria. After the outbreak of the war, most of the detainees were allowed to volunteer for the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, with the remainder being transferred to the Ramsey Camp on the Isle of Man. The camp was disbanded by June 1940.



The multiple significance of the incoming cover to Kitchener Camp shown above is easy to miss. Postmarked June 27, 1940, the 30-cent franking with Famous American stamps paid the trans-Atlantic half-ounce airmail rate to England. By this time Kitchener Camp had closed with its occupants dispersed. Directory assistance was provided (“No trace B3”), after which the letter was forwarded to one of the numerous hotels serving as internment camps on the Isle of Man.

The manuscript pencil marking, “1. 10/7” indicates the addressee had left the Isle of Man on 7 July, the same day the S.S. *Dunera* departed Liverpool with 2,288 Jewish internees and POWs bound for internment in Australia. The name, Leon David Halpersohn, appears on the passenger list, thereby confirming the significance of the pencil marking. The Jewish refugee disembarked at Sydney 57 days later and was transported to the Hay Internment Camp.

Mail for internees sent to Canada on ships departing Liverpool earlier that month was forwarded to them via Canada’s Base A.P.O at Ottawa. However, mail for internees sent to Australia was returned to the sender. In this case the letter has a New York receiver on the back, dated 6 December 1940.

Finally, the letter was posted during the period from March to November 1940 when mail planes on the FAM 18 route were diverted to avoid Bermuda censorship. The censor resealing tape was applied in England.

Honolulu/Dec 7/8:00AM/1941/Hawaii

by

Lucien Klein



In 1997 I acquired the cover shown above, postmarked Honolulu, December 7, 1941. It was part of a State Life Insurance Company lot acquired earlier by a part time dealer. The back side reveals the sender as Clifton C. Steggs, USS *Medusa*, c/o Postmaster, San Pedro, Calif., and the provisional censor marking, “RELEASED BY I.C.B. 72”. Likely the correspondence contained a premium payment and was dropped into a Honolulu mail receptacle on Saturday evening, December 6th. [Ed. Note: The repair ship *Medusa* (AR-1), was at Pearl Harbor during the attack. The crew is credited with downing two Japanese dive bombers and firing on a midget submarine in harbor waters that was eventually sunk by a destroyer.]

I have seen several covers addressed by military personnel to the same company, both before and after December 7th. For some years after acquiring this cover, I was unable to learn of any other cover with a similar historical cancel, thereby raising doubts about its authenticity. Then, the Oct – Nov 2003 issue of *La Posta: A Journal of American Postal History* documented a cover with an 11:00 a.m., December 7, 1941 Honolulu cancel. More recently, from the Randy Neil collection a Mason Shoe Manufacturing Company cover with a 9:00 a.m. December 7, 1941 Honolulu cancel appeared in a Nutmeg auction.

Then, notice came of the National Postal Museum exhibit, running from June 6, 2009 to June 6, 2010, focusing on FDR and Stamps of the Great Depression. It includes a cover postmarked Honolulu, Dec 7, 8:00 A M, 1941. This double weight cover is shown below, which now documents two known covers with an 8:00 a.m. Honolulu cancel. Are there more?

This cover was donated to the museum by the estate of John R. Rion, who died in 2006. According to the website, on December 6th Private Rion dropped the oversize envelope at the Honolulu post office, containing a photograph, and addressed to his business partner, a barber in Perry, Iowa. The website showing this cover and telling more about Rion can be found at:

http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/museum/1d_Pearl_Harbor_Mail.html



I am compiling a census of covers processed at the Honolulu post office on December 7, 1941, addressed to any destination and postmarked at any hour of the day. If you have such a cover, please send me a scan and description. My email address is: lusal@msn.com

I am also searching for original (primary) source information on the operation of the Honolulu post office on December 7, 1941. Please let me know if you have or have seen any such information.

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The Postal Bulletin, Thursday December 11, 1941 (No. 18343)

JAPAN—SUSPENSION OF MAIL SERVICE TO

ORDER No. 16547:
 Ordered that, during the continuance of hostilities between the United States and Japan, no letters, packages (including parcel post) or other mail matter originating within the United States or its possessions and destined for Japan or its possessions, or addressed to any post office, port, or other place under the jurisdiction or control of Japan, shall be dispatched from the United States, or its possessions, to their respective destinations. All foreign transit mails to and from Japan, or its possessions, etc., shall be held at exchange offices. With respect to other foreign transit mails, further instructions will be given exchange offices.

Postmasters at offices of the United States and its possessions are hereby instructed to forward to the appropriate exchange office any mail matter on hand or hereafter received, addressed for delivery in Japan, its possessions or any post office, port, or other place under the jurisdiction or control of Japan.

The Japanese possessions are to be considered as including Chosen (Korea), Taiwan (Formosa), Bokoto (Pescadores) Islands, and Karafuto (Japanese Sakhalin).

The places under the jurisdiction of Japan are to be considered as including Marianne (Ladrone) Islands, Marshall Islands, Caroline Islands (Mandates under Versailles Treaty), and Leased Territory of Kwantung.

The territory under the control of Japan is to be considered as including Manchuria and the occupied part of China.

FRANK C. WALKER,
Postmaster General.

More Unusual Prexie Postcard Uses

by

Bob Hohertz

Here are two more postcard usages that may be of interest to readers of *The Prexie Era*. The first is the original message half of a registered international paid reply postal card sent to Ternopil, Soviet Union, in 1941. Ternopil is a major city in what is now the western part of Ukraine. The card is written in German and, from what I can determine concerns serious family matters. Interestingly, the card was routed via San Francisco.



The second postcard was also sent in 1941 to the western Ukraine region, then part of the Soviet Union. It went airmail via FAM-18 with registry and return receipt requested fees paid. There is a 1-cent convenience overpayment of postage – 30 cents air, 15 cents foreign registry and 5 cents return receipt fee.

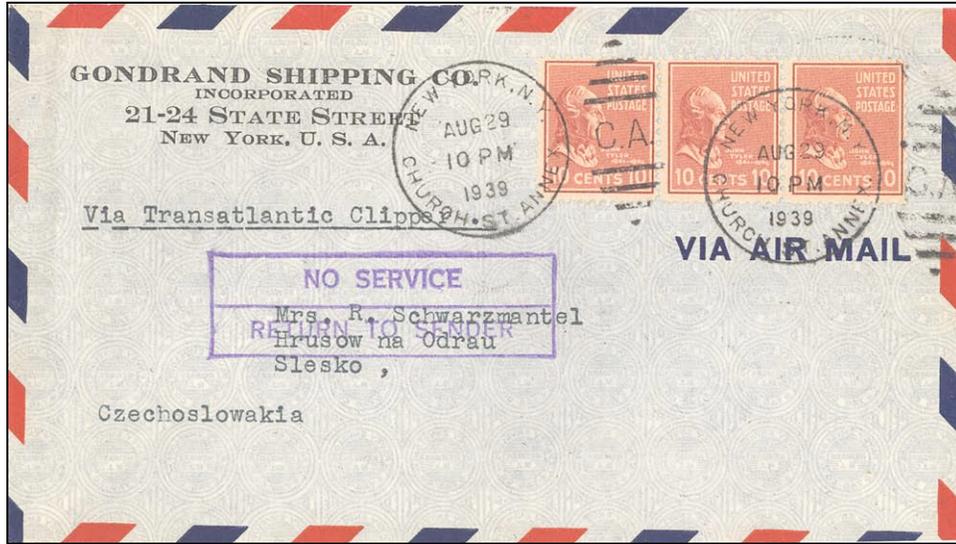


The card and its message, in Yiddish, was sent to Kremenets exactly two months before the German-Soviet war broke out. The Germans moved into the area several days later, and by August of 1942 had murdered virtually the entire Jewish population, some 15,000 people.

Suspended Mail, September 1939

by

Jeff Shapiro



Illustrated here is a cover sent by trans-Atlantic airmail service franked with a strip of three 10-cent Prexies to prepay the 30 cents per half-ounce rate to Europe. It was in transit at the outbreak of World War II.

The cover is addressed to the Slesko region of Czechoslovakia, a part of North Moravia, located on the Czech-Polish border, an area rich in iron and coal deposits. Normal mail service continued to the region even after Czechoslovakia was annexed and incorporated into Greater Germany in March 1939.

But on September 1, 1939 and without a declaration of war, German forces invaded Poland from the north, south and west. Invasion forces marched through the Slesko region. The German invasion resulted in declarations of war by Great Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand on September 3, 1939.

With the turmoil of the German invasion, this cover, mailed on August 29, 1939 from downtown Manhattan, likely made the September 1st FAM-18 flight of PANAM's *Yankee Clipper* to Southampton, but was intercepted by British postal authorities and returned to the sender.

SECOND ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL,
Washington, September 6, 1939.
MAILS FOR GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, GERMANY, POLAND, AND OTHER COUNTRIES

It is announced for the information of postmasters and patrons of the service that at this time direct steamship service with Great Britain and France is less frequent than heretofore. The Department is utilizing every opportunity at its command in the forwarding of both Postal Union (regular) and parcel-post mails to those countries.

The absence of direct steamship facilities with Germany and Poland requires the forwarding of mails for those countries to other countries for onward transmission to destination. However, mailers in the United States are assured that every available means will be employed with a view to expediting the delivery of all mails to addressees in the countries named.

The steamship services to ports in the Orient, South Pacific, South Africa, South and Central America to date are not affected.

Any changes to the foregoing will be duly announced.

AMBROSE O'CONNELL,
Second Assistant Postmaster General.

“Detain” Label: A Mystery of World War II Bermuda Censorship

by

Lawrence Sherman



Peter A. Flynn’s book, *Intercepted in Bermuda: The Censorship of Transatlantic Mail During the Second World War*, provides a great resource for collectors of World War II postal history to help understand their wartime trans-Atlantic mail. It records that on the day German forces entered Polish soil on September 1, 1939, nine British censors (four for international cables, five for mail) set to work at Hamilton, Bermuda. Intercontinental aviation became a reality by 1939, and Bermuda was strategically located to serve as a refueling station for flying boats on the new transatlantic air route. Laying close to major sea routes in the North Atlantic, the island colony quickly became “the most important censorship and contraband control point for transatlantic mail.” Transit mail -- mail to and from other places that went through Bermuda, became the main concern of the Imperial Censorship Detachment, whose numbers peaked at nearly 1,000 in 1941.

Flynn details the markings, sealing tapes, and labels used by Bermuda censors and analyses 7,854 covers handled by them. He also tabulates usages of censorship devices. The “Detain” label on the cover shown here is a PC116 label (tiny print, upper right of label) used only in 1940. *Six “Detain” examples are known, 0.08% of the total* (p. 55). Flynn states it is “another rare label, printed in black and also used in late 1940. Examples have been recorded on letters from the United States to Hungary, Germany, and Italy” (p. 75).

The cover shown above originated in Cordelia, California on November 5, 1940 as surface registered mail intended for delivery in Budapest. Two Prexies paid the 15-cent registry fee; two Famous Americans the 5-cent UPU rate from the United States. The cover was examined and detained by a Bermuda censor.

Why was the cover detained in Bermuda and when was it released? Manuscript markings on the label tell us: the cover was docketed on “21.11.40”; the likely examiner was “3655”; and unnamed vessel “16” was traveling eastbound (“E”). But the markings are silent on a reason for detention. Did the envelope contain unused postage stamps? Was the addressee on the Black List maintained by United Kingdom censors (“listed”)? We know that most detained mail was released in 1946. But why it was detained in the first place *Intercepted in Bermuda* cannot tell us.

Third Class 1.5-Cent Rate

by

Bill Geijsbeek



It can be surmised that the Northern Benefit Association was a typical beneficent organization covering illness and/or death benefits. It needed to make announcements of assessments (typically printed matter - thus qualifying for third class rates). Since many members were local, this material could be sent by the 1-cent drop letter rate. But for addressees outside of Chinook, Montana, the 1.5-cent third class rate per 2 ounces could be used (effective April 15, 1925 – December 31, 1948), as was the case here. And yes, the envelope was mailed with an unsealed flap. In addition, this 1-cent window envelope has a 1941 watermark, which was therefore current when used.

Common as Dirt – The 6-Cent Transport Airmail Stamp

by

Bill Helbock

Continued from Issue No. 44

Another story of wartime imprisonment and corresponding human loss is represented by the following two covers. The double weight letter shown above is from a wife in Wyoming desperate to contact her husband in the Philippines. It was received by Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces in Australia (U.S.A.F.I.A.) probably in February or March 1942. The red "LAST REPORTED P.I." handstamp on the reverse indicates USAFIA was aware of the last reported location of Sergeant Sinadine. Apparently USAFIA made an additional effort to locate the sergeant as evidenced by the pencil manuscript notation "Mindanao P.I. / mia.s(?) 5/28/42" on the left side of the cover. It is known that the U.S. Air Corps operated flights to an advance base on Mindanao into May 1942.

I speculate that being transported to Mindanao, the cover was returned to USAFIA and forwarded on to the Adjutant General's Office in Washington. A black "Rec'd A. G. O. / For Directory Service" with SEPT 10 1942 date appears top center. The further "RETURN TO SENDER /

Soldier Missing in Action / (Verified in War Department) struck in red at far left would have directed the letter back to Mrs. Sinadine.



The next cover illustrates another attempt by Mrs. Sinadine to contact her husband. Postmarked March 30, 1942, it was addressed in care of General Douglas MacArthur at the 19th Headquarters Bombing Squadron in Australia. A clerk at APO 501, which served MacArthur's headquarters, applied a "SERVICE SUSPENDED" marking and directed the letter to be returned to sender. It appears that an earlier handstamp to "TRY U.S. ARMY / WAR DEPARTMENT / WASHINGTON, D.C." was crossed out. Interestingly, another handstamp located under the 6¢ Transport that originally read "Last Reported P.I." with mss. Mia 8/22/42 was crossed out.



These few examples illustrate only a tiny sample of the many fascinating stories that can be told through a collection specializing in the domestic wartime uses of the common 6-cent Transport.

Although the 6-cent Transport was not a convenient denomination to pay prevailing international airmail rates—the 30-cent per half-ounce rate to Europe required five copies for example, they can occasionally be found in “helping” roles, such as may be seen in the next two covers.



The first is an airmail cover to South Africa from Renton, Washington, postmarked December 7, 1942. It was franked with a 6-cent Transport stamp helping pay the old 95 cents per half-ounce rate in effect August 6, 1940 through July 17, 1941. The correct rate at the time of posting was actually 60 cents (effective December 2, 1941), but confusion over rapidly changing international rates was common.



A 6-cent Transport makes up part of the 90 cents franking to pay air post and registration to Mount Isa, Queensland, Australia shown in this second example. The cover was postmarked Portland, Oregon, June 29, 1942. Unfortunately, no civilian international airmail service to Australia existed by this date so the cover was first flown to San Francisco and then went by ship to Brisbane where it arrived August 21st. From there the letter was carried on to its destination, arriving six days later.