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# *The Prexie Era*

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## Editor's Notes

### Complete Run of *The Prexie Era* Now Available on CD

Thanks to Steve Roth, former editor/publisher of *The Prexie Era*, a complete run of the newsletter, from Whole Nos. 1-51, is now available on CD as pdf files. Subscribers may purchase disks for \$12 postpaid, or non-subscribers, \$22 postpaid. Checks should be made out to Jeff Shapiro and mailed to him at:

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

Accompanying this issue of *The Prexie Era*, Supplement 1 contains an article on an analysis of color of the Van Buren Prexie based on research by Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris recently conducted on a reflectance spectrophotometer at the National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C. Below, Lyman Caswell provides an introduction to this article. A first time contributor, Lyman has recently examined Hungary overprints using the same technology at the Postal Museum. He is a retired chemistry professor and a long-time stamp collector.

### Identification of Colors of Stamps

by

Lyman R. Caswell, Ph.D.

The identification of the color of a stamp can often mean distinguishing between a rare stamp and a common one, or between a genuine stamp and a counterfeit one. In some cases, the differences are very subtle, distinguishable only under special conditions. The problem is complicated by the fact that inks with different spectral components in their reflected colors can appear to be the same color to the human optical system, which synthesizes a single color out of the combination.

The article accompanying this issue of the newsletter, "The Colors of Martin Van Buren: An Engraved Postage Stamp (1938-1959)," by Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris, is an excellent example of what can be done with modern technology to investigate and identify the colors of stamps. The authors used an instrument called a "reflectance spectrophotometer," to produce the spectrum of the visible light reflected from the surface of a stamp. This instrument was the Foster & Freeman Video Spectral Comparator 6000 (VSC 6000) at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum (NPM). It records the reflectance spectral curve of a surface in both analog form (Figures 2, 4, 9, and 10 in the accompanying article), and in digital form at one-nanometer intervals from 400 to 1000 nanometers. This covers the visible range of the spectrum (400-780 nm) and a short distance into the near infrared (780-1000 nm.). If the reflectance curves of two stamps are congruent, that is, have the same shape, the stamps have been printed with the same ink. If they are not congruent, the inks used for the two stamps have different compositions, even if the stamps have the same color to the eye.

Procedures for interpretation of reflectance spectra of surfaces were developed by the *Commission Internationale de l'Éclairage* (CIE, International Commission for Illumination) in 1931, and revised in 1960 and in 1976.<sup>1</sup> From a spectrum are derived the "tristimulus values," X, Y, and Z, which correspond to the estimated response to the spectrum by the visual pigments of the human eye in, respectively, red, green, and blue. The green value, Y, also is a measure of the

“luminance,” or intensity of the reflected light. From these values are computed the “chromaticity coordinates,”  $x$  and  $y$ . A plot of  $y$  against  $x$ , such as Figure 8 in the article by DeBlois and Harris, clearly shows by the grouping of the points the similarities and relationships among the inks used for similar stamps.

These measurements were originally used for the comparison of painted surfaces. Before the development of modern computer technology, they required time-consuming and tedious computations, and had never been used to evaluate the colors of stamps. Today, with NPM’s VSC 6000, the entire process of measurement and computation requires only a few minutes per stamp. Data for many stamps can be collected, processed and stored for comparison in a short time. It takes about an hour to learn to use the VSC 6000. No special technical or mathematical skills by the user are needed.

The VSC 6000 includes a combination of 14 integrated illumination systems, sophisticated optics, high magnification, and specialized software. Five of the key features are

1. A magnification range extending to x140 optical magnification, allowing stamps and surcharges to be examined in greater detail without the need for an external microscope.
2. A dedicated light source that allows for reflectance and absorption examination with a 100 W filtered spot light using a band-pass filter allowing greater discrimination between surcharge and stamp inks.
3. A variety of image enhancement functions for comparison purposes, such as side light to study grills or embossing.
4. A high intensity tungsten halogen 250 W light with a variety of high-pass and low-pass filters, providing a total of 80 different wavebands of available illumination to remove colors to determine if a surcharge is over or under a cancellation.
5. A multi-lens system to provide either broad-beam or focused light.

I have recently had the opportunity to use NPM’s VSC 6000 to examine the 1919 “Szeged” overprints on stamps of Hungary, some of which are red, and some green. This is only the second time this technique has been used to study colored overprints. The first, on surcharges of the 1881-1888 Spanish Philippine Issues, will soon appear in print.<sup>2</sup>

I am now evaluating the results of my study in terms of differences between the overprints applied by two different printers, and the differences between genuine and counterfeit overprints. In addition to measuring colors, I also used the VSC 6000 to measure distances between parts of the overprints, factors relevant for identifying counterfeits. Publication of the results will follow when I have completed the analysis of all the data.

The work of DeBlois and Harris was supported by a grant from the National Postal Museum. Information about grants for research at NPM can be found on the Museum’s website, [www.postalmuseum.sci.edu](http://www.postalmuseum.sci.edu). My studies with the VSC 6000 were supported by a grant from the Institute for Analytical Philately, Inc. (IAP), a nonprofit corporation. The IAP has arrangements for grantees to use the VSC 6000 at NPM. The IAP’s “Centers of Excellence” where other types of research can be done are the Center for Ink and Printability Research at Western Michigan University, the Munsell Color Science Laboratory at Rochester Institute of Technology, and the X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy laboratory at Rutgers University, where inks can be analyzed for elemental content. Information about the IAP can be found at the website.

<sup>1</sup> Fred W. Billmeyer, Jr., and Max Saltzman, *Principles of Color Technology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1981; pp. 34-58.

<sup>2</sup> Don Peterson and Thomas Lera, “Illustrated Guide to Genuine Surcharge Types of the 1881-1888 Spanish Philippine Issues,” in press.

## End of Airmail Service Beyond Europe To Africa In 1940

by

Louis Fiset



Following initiation of trans-Atlantic airmail service from the U.S. (FAM-18), mail addressed to Africa destinations could be sent from Europe if patrons prepaid an air fee, varying from 3 cents to 30 cents, depending on distance. Airmail all the way to Egypt, for example, would require 36 cents postage (30¢ + 6¢ air fee), whereas to distant Union of South Africa, the postage was 55¢ (30¢ + 25¢ air fee). Bob Schlesinger cites a 15¢ air fee to Tanganyika in his article below.

Italy's entry into World War II brought an end to this service. Flights from Europe to Africa had to cross Mediterranean air space, which was closed after June 10, 1940. Airmail to Africa destinations went via trans-Pacific routes until December 6, 1941 when FAM-22 service began.

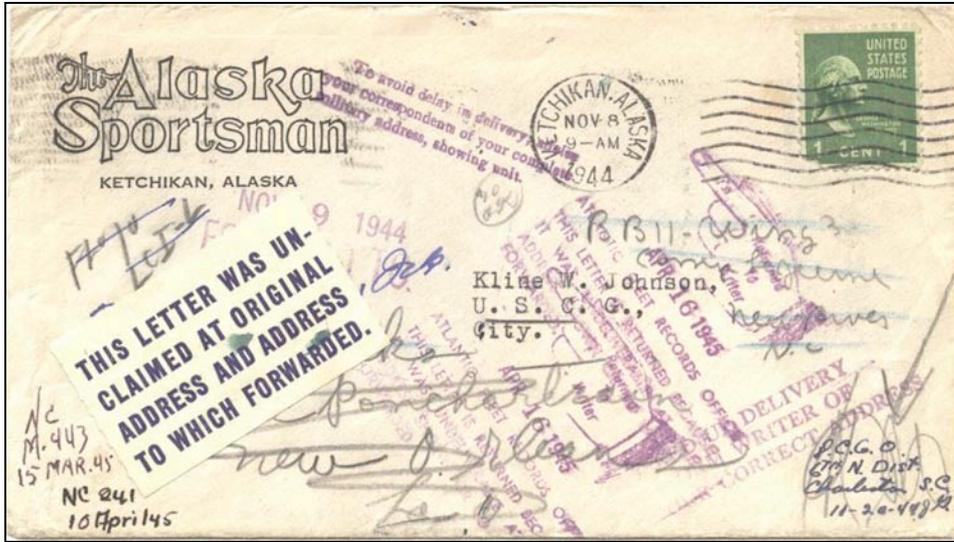
The cover illustrated here, bearing 55¢ postage to pay for air service to South Africa, was postmarked July 13, 1940 nearly a month after the air space was closed. Thus, the letter went by ship. On August 6, 1940, airmail service to South Africa resumed via San Francisco, Hong Kong (or Singapore), and onward by air via Cairo. Postage was 95¢ per half-ounce. The table below, reflecting air fees in effect to June 1940, was reproduced from the July 1939 Postal Guide Part II.

FOREIGN AIR MAIL RATES			
The air mail fees for conveyance of articles by the available air service from Europe to the countries indicated in Africa and to U. S. S. R. in Asia, where such articles are carried to Europe by steamship, are as follows:			
	Air fee in addition to regular postage (cents per ½ ounce)	Air fee in addition to regular postage (cents per ½ ounce)	
Algeria.....	3	French Guinea.....	20
Libya.....	3	French Sudan.....	20
Morocco.....	3	Gold Coast Colony.....	20
Tunisia.....	3	Italian Somaliland.....	20
Egypt.....	6	Ivory Coast.....	20
Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.....	10	Liberia.....	20
Dahomey.....	15	Northern Rhodesia.....	20
Kenya.....	15	Nyasaland.....	20
Mauritania.....	15	Portuguese East Africa.....	20
Niger.....	15	Southern Rhodesia.....	20
Nigeria.....	15	Gambia.....	25
Senegal.....	15	Portuguese Guinea.....	25
Tanganyika Territory.....	15	Southwest Africa.....	25
Togoland.....	15	Union of South Africa.....	25
France.....	15	Angola.....	30
Zanzibar.....	15	French Somaliland.....	30
Belgian Congo.....	20	Madagascar.....	30
Cameroons.....	20	Mauritius.....	20
Eritrea.....	20	Reunion.....	30
Ethiopia.....	20	Sierra Leone.....	30
French Equatorial Africa.....	20	U. S. S. R. in Asia.....	15

## A Long Distance Drop Letter

by

Dickson Preston



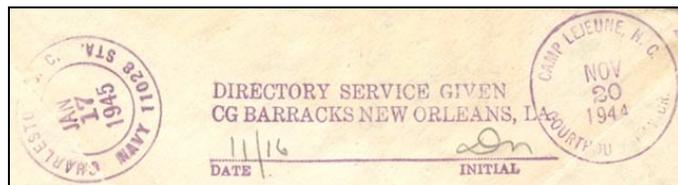
The idea of lower postage for a drop letter is that less service is involved, because the letter normally never leaves the post office in which it was mailed. The illustrated letter, sent by the *Alaska Sportsman* magazine to a Coast Guard serviceman within Ketchikan, is franked at the 1-cent drop letter rate. Since Ketchikan had no carrier service, the letter should have been delivered within the post office at which it was mailed. However, the intended receiver, Kline Johnson, proved hard to find. Even though a drop letter, this item was redirected twice, travelled several thousand miles, and finally was returned after a futile five-month search for the addressee.

The original address was **Kline W. Johnson/ U. S. C. G./City**. The letter, postmarked in Ketchikan on November 8, 1944, was redirected in pencil below a purple hand stamp,

NOV 9 1944  
FORWARDED TO.  
CG Barracks  
Lake Ponchartrain  
New Orleans  
La.

At the new address we see "DIRECTORY SERVICE GIVEN/ CG BARRACKS NEW ORLEANS, LA." on November 16th. The letter was again redirected, with a New Orleans back stamp applied as the letter continued on its way on the same day. Its next destination was,

BB11 - Wing 3  
Camp Lejeune  
New River  
N.C.



BB11 was a building number (not a battleship!) at a Marine barracks and amphibious training facility on the North Carolina coast. There never was a post office called "New River" in North Carolina, the name being the original one for Camp Lejeune. Presumably the directory service used both names, just to be sure. On arrival the letter was back stamped "Camp Lejeune, N.C./Courthouse Bay Br." on November 20th. Courthouse Bay is an outlying facility of the camp.

From here the trail gets murkier. A manuscript annotation "P.C.G.O./6th Naval Dist./Charleston S.C/ 11-20-44 JG" was added the same date as the marking from Camp Lejeune. A back stamp from the Charleston, S.C. Navy Station 11028 shows the letter was still there on January 17th of the next year. Two other handwritten markings, "NC/M443/15 MAR. 45" and "NC 241 10 April 45," show unsuccessful attempt to find the elusive Kline Johnson. If any reader can decipher these abbreviations, please contact the editor or the author. Finally, the letter was "Returned to writer" with pointing hand and a great purple wail of despair,

APR 16 1945  
ATLANTIC FLEET RECORDS OFFICE  
THIS LETTER IS RETURNED BECAUSE  
IT WAS UNDELIVERABLE AT EITHER  
ADDRESS SHOWN OR TO WHICH  
FORWARDED.

The substance of this message is repeated on a paste-on sticker. Two other markings offer some good advice,

SPEED UP DELIVERY  
INFORM WRITER OF  
YOUR CORRECT ADDRESS

To avoid delay in delivery, advise  
your correspondents of your complete  
military address, showing unit.

There is no doubt that delivery of this letter could have been speeded up by more information about the addressee. But would he have wanted to receive it? The contents are a printed circular advertising that a subscription to the *Alaska Sportsman* would make a perfect Christmas gift. Perhaps not, if the addressee had been transferred to New Orleans or Camp Lejeune.



This kind of printed matter would normally have been sent at the 1.5-cent single piece third class rate; the publisher of the *Alaska Sportsman* saved one-half cent by sending it as a one cent drop letter within Ketchikan. Since drop letters are first class mail, the letter was forwarded free, although two cents additional postage would have been due for delivery at another post office. But since the letter was never delivered, it was returned to the sender at no extra charge. Indeed, this letter travelled a long way and got a lot of service for the cost of a 1-cent drop letter.

## Surface-Air Combination To Tanganyika

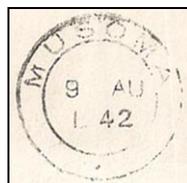
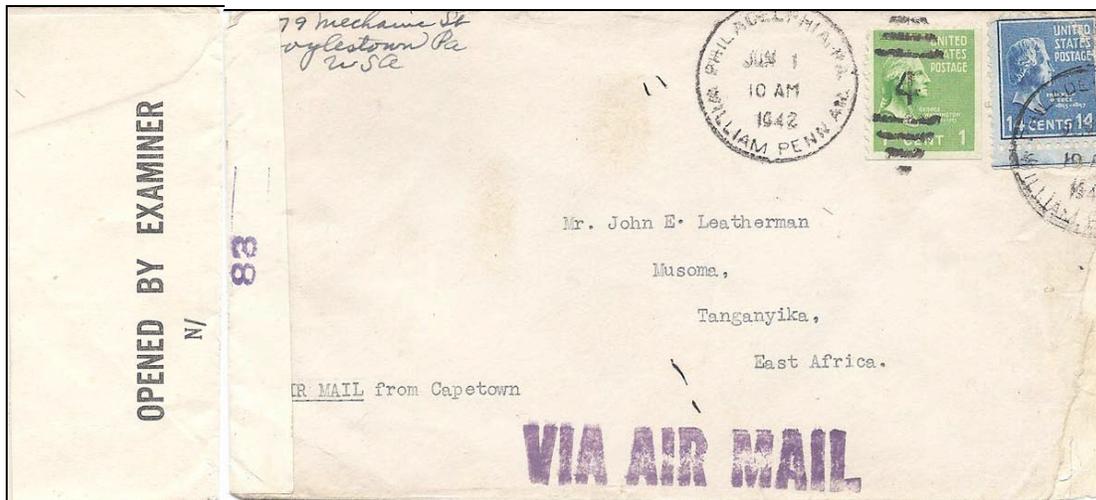
by

Robert Schlesinger  
[Robertsles@aol.com](mailto:Robertsles@aol.com)

At various points during the World War II era, the Post Office Department (POD) had to tailor delivery of U.S. mail addressed to foreign destinations, sent via surface mail or airmail. In some cases the mail would be carried by both surface route (ship) and air.

After the fall of France in June 1940 and Italy's entry into the war, POD had to reroute airmail matter crossing the Mediterranean to various parts of Africa from trans-Atlantic routes to trans-Pacific. This increased distances the mail had to travel to reach destinations, also increased costs in postage. Previous to this change, the rate to Tanganyika, for example, was 45 cents per half-ounce, including 30¢ for the trans-Atlantic (FAM-18) flight plus 15¢ air fee for service beyond Europe. The change in routing brought an 85¢ per half-ounce price tag, representing an almost 100% postage rate increase.

The Postal Bulletin of November 1, 1940 (PB18065) presented a cost effective alternative to the price increase. Effective on that date, a letter addressed to Tanganyika could be sent by steamship from New York to Capetown, South Africa, a voyage estimated at 29 days. From there, onward to Durban by train then airmail to Dar es Salam (Tanganyika), totaling another three days. The cost for this surface/air combination mail would be 25¢ per half-ounce – 5¢ regular surface rate plus 20¢ per half-ounce for airmail postage from Capetown to Tanganyika's capitol. The illustration shows such a usage that was 70 days in transit, the last leg by train to Musoma on Lake Victoria in the British colony's far north, no doubt consuming much of the transit time. The 1939 published estimate for airmail all the way from the U.S. to Dar es Salam was 10-11 days, roughly one-third the time as the combined surface/air routing. As the old saying goes, "Time is money!", certainly applied in this case.



## Special Handling Of A Book Rate Package To An Italian POW

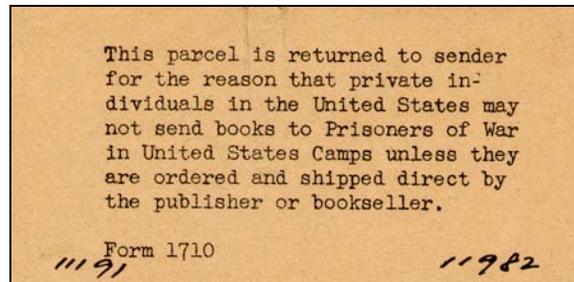
by

Louis Fiset



Shown here is a partial wrapper used to send a package of books from Cleveland, July 11, 1944 to an Italian POW brought to the USA for internment earlier in the war. The book rate was 1 cent per pound, so the package, containing one or more books, weighed less than five pounds. The sender added 10 cents postage so the package would receive special handling as first class mail.

Unfortunately for the POW, the package was returned to the sender by a POW Unit censor (11191) at the New York censor station. An enclosure slip was placed inside the returned package providing details on why the book(s) could not be delivered.



Special Handling stamps used on POW mail are uncommon. For readers interested in learning more about Special Handling stamps and their usages before, during, and after the Prexie era, Bob Rufe has posted his five frame exhibit, "U.S. Special Handling 1925-1959 - The Stamps and the Service," on the internet. This reserve grand award exhibit may be found on the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors (AAPE) website at: <http://www.aape.org/exhibits.asp>.

## A Follow-Up To A Follow-Up: A December 7, 1941 Cover To Hawaii

by

Jeffrey Shapiro



December 7, 1941 began as a quiet Sunday across America, but the surprise attack on the Territory of Hawaii by the Empire of Japan against the United States, created "a date which (would) live in infamy" and unify America.

Timeline: December 7, 1941:

- 1:23 PM EST (7:53 AM Hawaii) The first waves Japanese bombs fall on Pearl Harbor Hawaii
- 1:28 PM EST (7:58 AM Hawaii) Message received from Oahu at Mere Island Naval Station, CA "Air Raid Pearl Harbor. This Is No Drill"
- 1:47 PM EST (8:17 AM Hawaii) Navy Secretary Frank Knox informed Franklin Roosevelt of the Japanese attack
- 2:10 PM EST (8:40 AM Hawaii) Second wave of Japanese attack planes reaches Oahu
- 2:22 PM EST (8:52 AM Hawaii) Press Secretary Steve Early holds press hookup with Associated Press, United Press and International News Service to announce Japanese attack.
- 2:26 PM EST (8:56 AM Hawaii) First announcement to the public regarding attack interrupts New York Giants vs. Brooklyn Dodgers football game made on WOR radio.
- 2:29 PM EST (8:59 AM Hawaii) NBC Red Network makes first national announcement of the attack, interrupting the end of Sammy Kaye's "Sunday Serenade."

For the rest of the afternoon and evening, radio programming was interrupted to bring in further bulletins from around the world, including a false report that Manila had been bombed.

Friends and families across the country heard these broadcasts and began to worry about loved ones in harm's way. A writer in Minnesota composed a letter to a member of the 35th Infantry Regiment, stationed at Schofield Barracks in the Territory of Hawaii, which was strafed by

Japanese planes as a secondary target. The letter was posted and cancelled 8 PM Central Standard Time (9PM EST --- 2:30 PM Hawaii) on December 7th. --- a 20-cent Prexie paying the half-ounce airmail Clipper rate to Hawaii.

Once the bombing ended, Regiment personnel evacuated the wounded and relocated family and civilians caught in the calamity. Pre-planned positions were occupied around Oahu in anticipation of an expected follow-up attack. The 35th Infantry Regiment departed Hawaii on November 25, 1942 as part of the 25th Infantry Division to defend Guadalcanal. There it earned its name the "Lightning Division."

\* \* \* \* \*

### Mail On *Anzac Clipper's* Emergency Return Flight December 7, 1941

by

Louis Fiset



In the last issue (No. 51), Albert "Chip" Briggs discussed treatment of mail carried on the last pre-war FAM-14 flight of *Anzac Clipper*, diverted from Honolulu to a river landing at Hilo on the island of Hawaii during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The flying boat offloaded its mail, freight, and 32 passengers, and returned immediately to San Francisco, arriving December 8th.

But did *Anzac Clipper* also carry mail on this return flight? The commercial cover illustrated here suggests it did. Under ordinary circumstances, mail generated in cities and towns on Hawaii destined for the U.S. mainland and other points east of the islands was forwarded by inter island air service to the Honolulu post office and loaded on the next eastbound Clipper. Any mail accompanying the *Anzac Clipper* emergency return flight would therefore have been outbound correspondence not yet forwarded to Honolulu. Nor would any of this mail bear censor markings.

This cover was postmarked, Hilo, on Sunday, December 7, 1941 and bears no censor markings. Only a back stamp is missing to confirm date of delivery. While carriage on *Anzac Clipper* cannot be certain because of this, I have never seen an outbound Hawaii cover postmarked on or after December 7th that did not bear a censor marking. Can a reader provide a second example?