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Editor's Note

2014 Subscriptions Payable Now

The Fall 2013 issue was the last in the quartet of *The Prexie Era* for 2013. This means it is time for readers to renew your subscriptions for the upcoming year. Rates for 2014 remain the same as for last year: \$5 for the electronic version, \$10 for the color “snail-mail” version. If you subscribe to both versions, well, you do the math. Unless prior arrangements have been made, please send payments and/or questions to Jeff Shapiro directly.

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Mail Service to/from the Philippines Prior to and at the Beginning of World War II

by

Albert “Chip” Briggs

Trans-Pacific airmail service to the Philippine Islands began on November 22, 1935. Announced in Postal Bulletin #16794 (November 1, 1935), the first west-bound trip was to leave San Francisco on November 28th with intermediate stops at Honolulu, Wake Island, and Guam. The postage rate was 75 cents per half-ounce. The first east-bound flight was scheduled to depart from Manila on December 2nd. The inauguration of the new Trans-Pacific mail service was quite an event, and a crowd estimated at 125,000 people lined the shore in San Francisco to watch the departure. This route was designated Foreign Air Mail Route 14, or FAM-14. On April 21, 1937 the rate was reduced to 50 cents per half-ounce, which remained in effect until 1946.

Trans-Pacific clipper mail service proved reliable. The volumes of mail transported increased significantly once the war in Europe began. Covers such as the ones shown in Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the 50-cent rate to and from the Philippines prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor.



Figure 1: All-coil pairs pay the half-ounce airmail rate to the Philippine Islands in 1939.

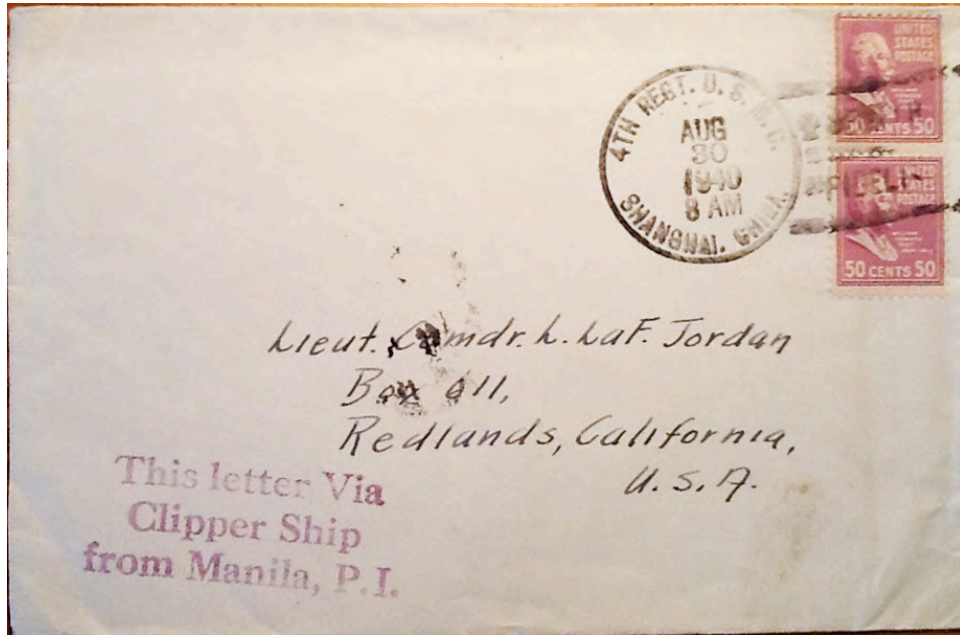


Figure 2: Two 50-cent Taft stamps pay double the airmail rate for a one-ounce letter initially mailed by surface means from a U. S. Marine in Shanghai, China and sent airmail from Manila to the United States.

Interrupted mail on the last pre-war flight of the *Anzac Clipper* has been previously shown in this newsletter. A newly discovered cover, also on this last flight that departed San Francisco December 6, 1941, has recently come to light. The cover, illustrated in Figure 3, is franked with two 25-cent McKinley stamps and originated in Auburn, New York on December 2, 1941. The interesting aspects of this cover are not only that it was on this last pre-war flight, but also contains the original letter as well as a previously unrecorded censor slip.

The eight-page letter, focusing primarily on hometown memories and fears of war, refers to a \$5.00 enclosed gift. The passage describing the monetary gift may be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 5 shows the censor slip enclosed by Honolulu censorship. Printed on blue paper, it refers to the uncertainty of mail movements in the Pacific area and specifically to the money enclosed, stating in part, “. . . this letter with its monetary enclosure is returned in order to protect your funds.” The enclosure slip is signed in type: **INFORMATION CONTROL BRANCH**. To the author's knowledge no other examples of this censor slip have been reported.



Figure 3: From Auburn, New York to the Philippines carried on the last pre-war flight of Anzac Clipper.

I am sending you and Ed
a check this year for your Christ-
mas gift, as I have not been
able to do any shopping yet. Then
later Barbara will send you
her Senior Photograph which she
thot you would like to have.
Hope you can use this \$5.00
to buy some thing you really
need.

Figure 4: Detail from the eight-page letter referring to a Christmas gift of an enclosed \$5 check.

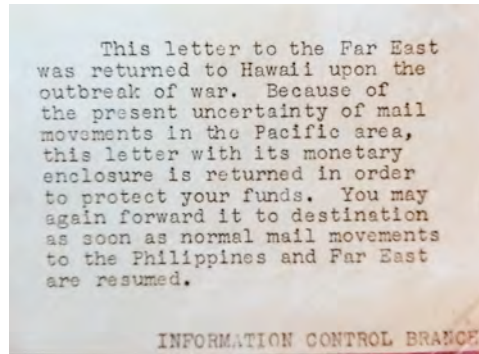


Figure 5: INFORMATION CONTROL BRANCH censor slip.

Mail bound from the Philippines to the continental United States is also found interrupted or re-routed. Figure 6 shows a cover postmarked on December 5, 1941 from a sailor aboard the USS *Houston*, stationed at Manila,. The sender, Walter Gillespie Winslow LT JG was captured when the *Houston* was sunk in the Battle of the Java Sea in February 1942. He survived the war and was liberated in 1945.

The cover, unable to make the Trans-Pacific crossing due to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, had to be routed via Asia, Africa, and across the Atlantic to its ultimate destination at Washington, D.C. The rate for this route was 70 cents per half-ounce. 20 cents in postage due stamps was added in Washington to make up this rate.

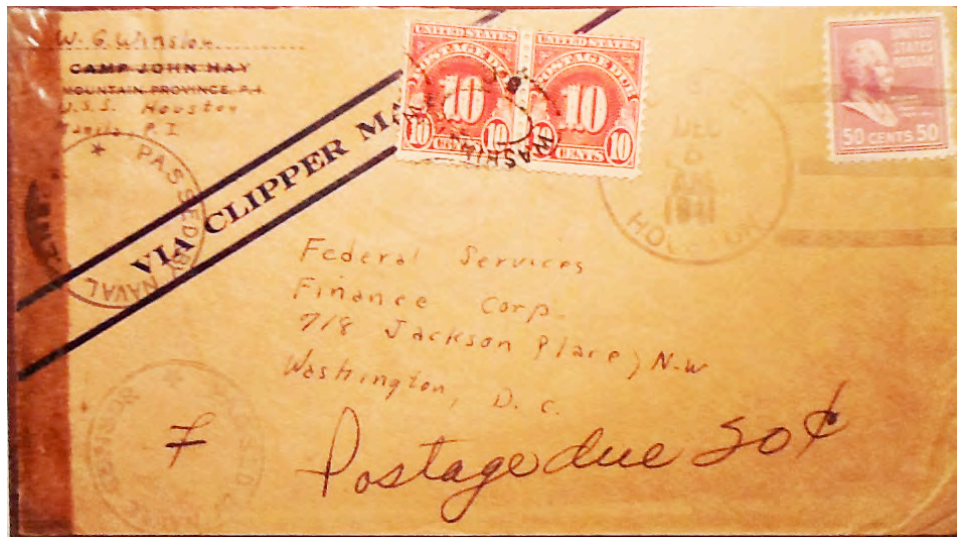


Figure 6: A re-routed airmail letter from Manila to Washington, D.C., requiring additional postage.

Figure 7 shows a cover mailed from DePere, Wisconsin on January 12, 1942 to Private Reginald D. Evraets. Private Evraets was assigned to Coast Artillery, stationed on Corregidor, where the mail was addressed. With the surrender of Allied Forces by General Wainwright, Evraets was taken prisoner and held by his Japanese captors at Military Prison Camp #1, Cabanatuan. Uncertain of his fate, the soldier's family was unaware of his capture until they received a telegram from the War Department in February 1943. Another letter, from the Red Cross in 1945, confirmed his liberation. Private Evraets was freed from Cabanatuan by Army Rangers, a story depicted in the Hollywood film *The Great Raid*.

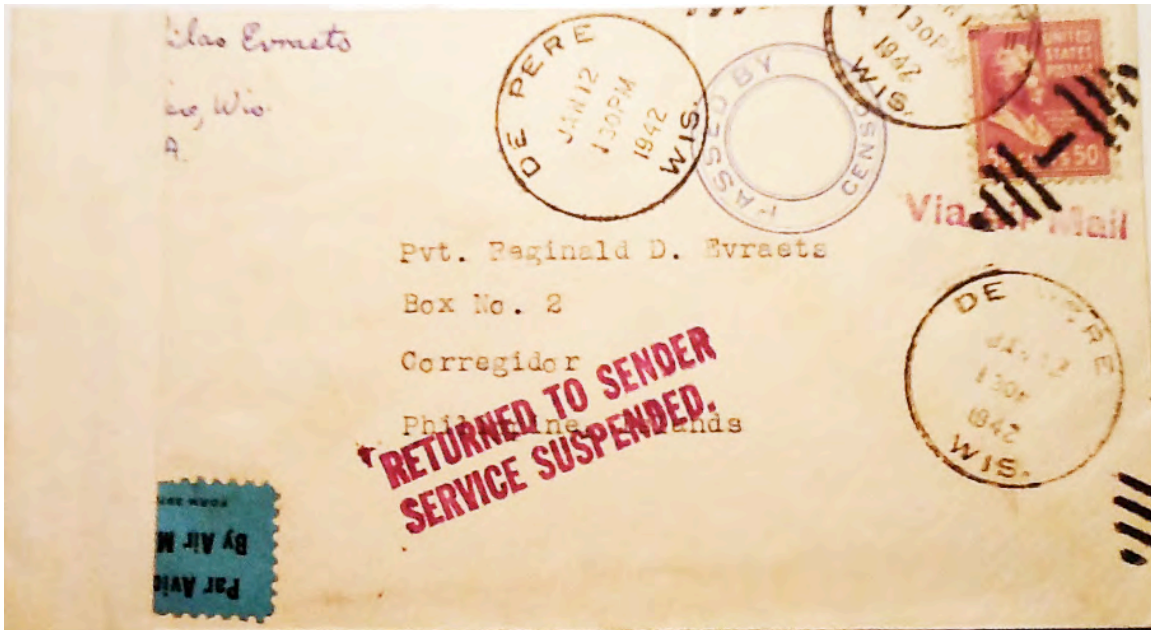


Figure 7: Airmail letter to an Army private taken captive at Corregidor and interned in the Philippines. He was later liberated and survived the war.

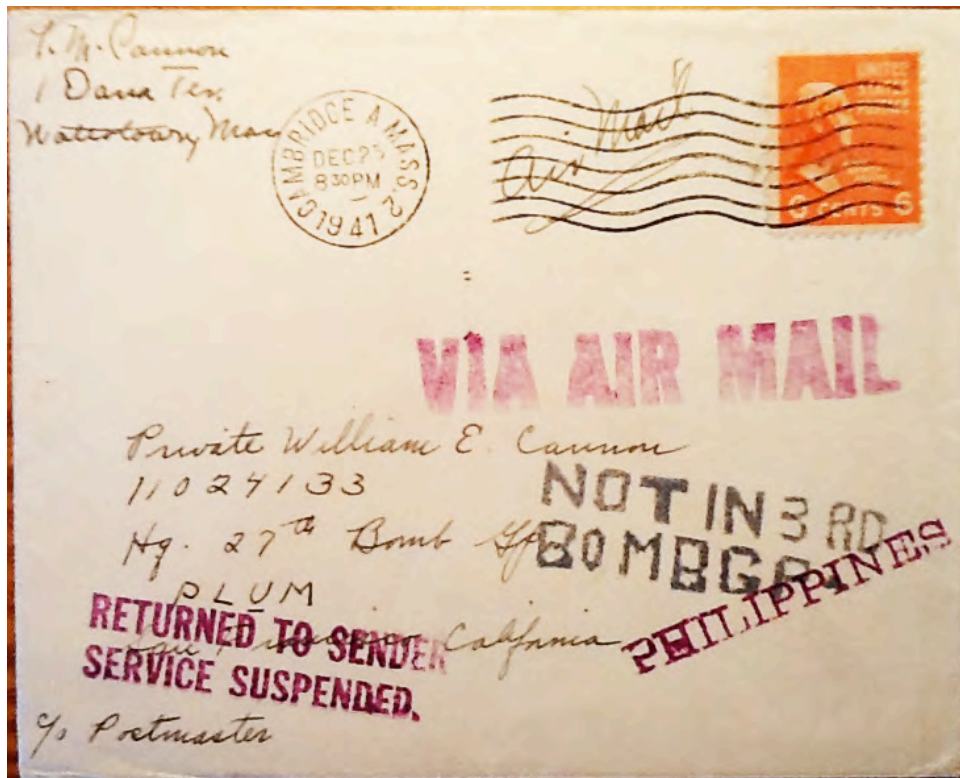


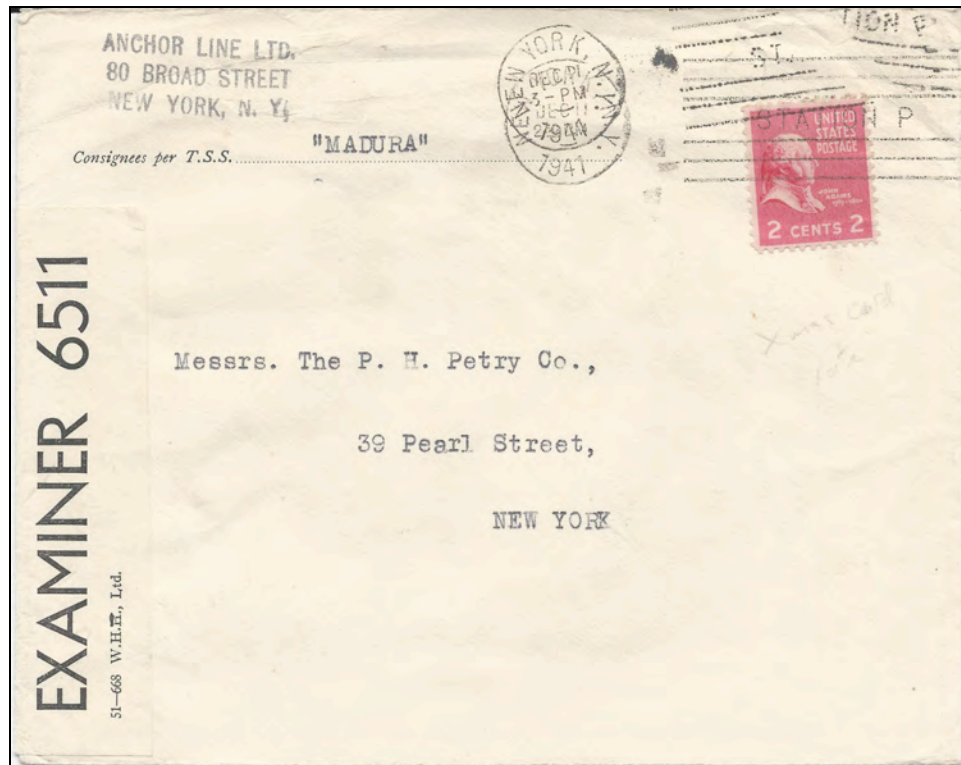
Figure 8: Christmas card sent to an undercover address (PLUM) for troops destined for the Philippines.

Another unusual example of interrupted airmail service intended for the Philippines may be seen in Figure 8. This Christmas card, addressed to Private William Cannon, was postmarked December 23, 1942. The address contains the designation: PLUM, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, California. This address was used for mail sent to troops heading to strengthen existing forces in the Philippines. Its use was intended to help maintain secrecy with the intention that soldiers could inform their families and friends of their location 45 days after departure. With the initial military defeats in the Pacific these troops were returned to the states, and mail sent to the PLUM destination was also returned.

A Censored Local Letter

by

Robert Schlesinger



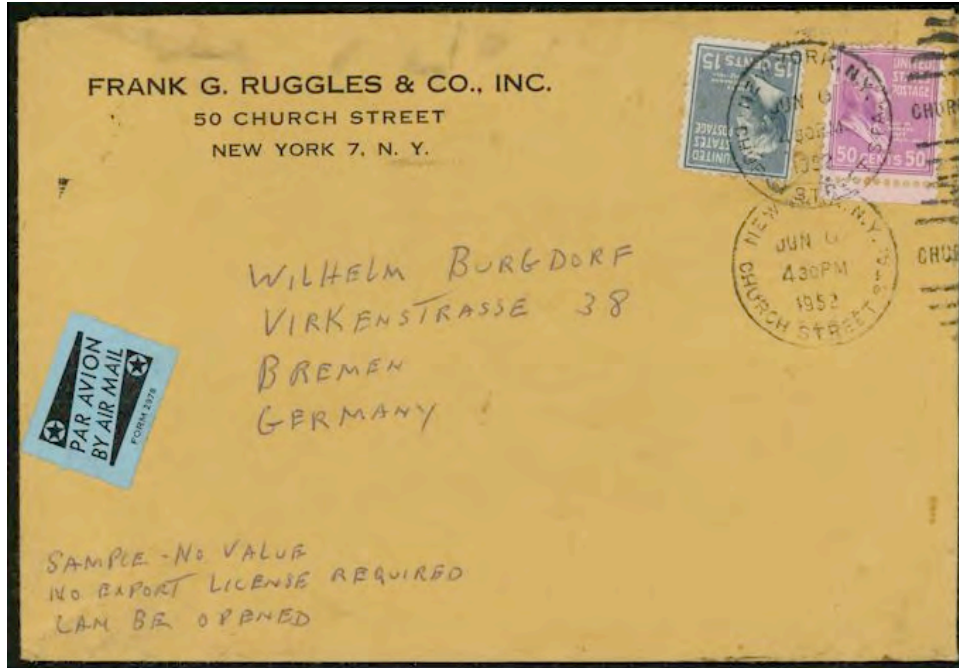
The cover shown here, which likely contained business correspondence, illustrates the common 2-cent per ounce first class, local letter rate (in effect July 1, 1885 to March 26, 1944), but is more interesting having been censored in England. The sender is Anchor Line, Ltd., a Glasgow shipping line with offices in New York, which provided passenger service between the United Kingdom and New York. The addressee is a freight hauling business headquartered in New York.

It appears the un-posted correspondence was handed over to British censorship, examined, then placed aboard TSS *Madura* sailing westbound to New York. The ship may have called at Bermuda, but censors there, having seen the prior censorship, would have placed it on board the next ship bound for New York. The U.S. was now at war, but because U.S. censorship had not yet been established, on December 11, 1941 the correspondence went directly into the mail stream, for delivery that day or the next.

An Unusual Rate

by

Bob Hohertz



The cover illustrated here was sent by air to Germany in 1952. A note from the sender says that it contained a sample of no value, and it was sent at the special rate for small packets, samples of merchandise and commercial papers lumped under the category of “other articles.”

The rates beginning on May 1, 1949 were specific to a country, and were not available to all countries. The rate to West Germany (*PB 19224*, April 19, 1949) was forty-three cents up to and including the first two ounces, and twenty-two cents for each additional two ounces. The items sent apparently weighed between two and four ounces for a total postage of sixty-five cents. The cover conforms to the requirement that a blue Par Avion/By Air Mail label be affixed and the classification of the mail plainly marked.

What might have been in the envelope? Frank G. Ruggles & Company, Inc. apparently dealt in asbestos products. Chances are some carcinogenic item was enclosed.

AIR-MAIL SERVICE FOR REGULAR-MAIL ARTICLES OTHER THAN LETTERS AND POST CARDS TO CERTAIN COUNTRIES

Effective May 1, 1949, a new feature will be inaugurated in the international air-mail service, providing for articles in the Postal Union (regular) mails other than letters, letter packages, and post cards to be accepted for air dispatch to the countries named in the table below at the postage rates indicated.

Commercial papers, printed matter, samples of merchandise, and small packets (to countries which accept them) will be sent by air if paid at the rates shown below. The articles must bear the blue “Par Avion/By Air Mail” label and be plainly marked “Commercial Papers,” “Printed Matter,” etc., to designate their classification in the mails. They must not be sealed, and must comply in other respects with the provisions applicable to such articles in the surface mails, as set forth in sections 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 of the July 1948 Postal Guide, Part II.

\$2 and \$5 Prexie Census Revived

by

Jeffrey Shapiro



A recent conversation by the Philatelic Group of Boston turned to the rarity of some twentieth century postal history items, including the rumored existence of a solo franking of the \$5 Prexie. Guy Dillaway, a nationally recognized philatelic judge, exhibitor, and secret Prexie collector mentioned he had acquired such a cover and later provided me with the scan shown here.

Dickson Preston and I came up with the following "best case scenario" rate explanation for this damaged, forwarded, and returned November 17, 1938 \$5 First Day Cover:

Three ounces --- six times the 70¢ per half ounce Trans-Pacific airmail rate to Java (in effect April 1937 - December 1941) plus 15¢ for international registration with a 65¢ overpayment --- Or, if a 3.5 ounce letter it would have been 5¢ underpaid!

Receiving marks give an idea of the cover's travels. Receiving a first day cancel by the POD in Washington, D.C. on November 17, 1938, the cover received domestic airmail service to San Francisco then onward via Trans-Pacific Clipper to Hong Kong. There the letter would have been handed over to KLM for air transport to Java. The cover was returned by surface routes to the sender in Philadelphia and received five weeks later, on January 27, 1939.

Note: The Scott US Specialty Catalog shows a total of 15,615 First Day Covers serviced for the \$5 Coolidge Presidential issue --- A small number but still impressive as \$5 in 1938 Depression-Era dollars equal \$84 in today's buying power.

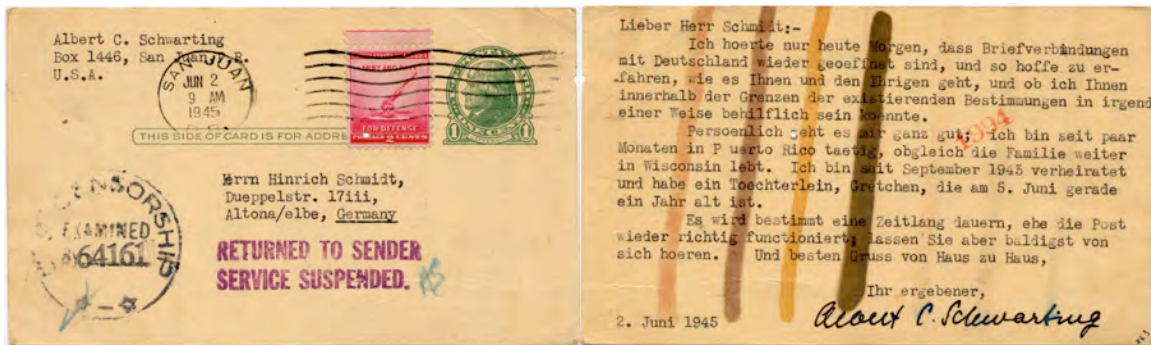
While some collectors may consider this example a philatelically contrived cover, it nevertheless provides a nice usage to an exotic destination. This begs the need to re-open the never-completed and almost forgotten census of \$2 and \$5 Prexie frankings initiated by members of the Prexie Era Committee a few years ago. Please check your collections for covers (not tags) and send scans of them to me at: coverlover@gmail.com Covers need not be solo franks.

Chemical Censorship

by

Louis Fiset

Resumption of mail service to Europe began on February 16, 1944 with non-illustrated postal cards to southern provinces in Italy and ended with special delivery service to Germany on August 4, 1948. Postal patrons attempting to reconnect with family, friends, and business acquaintances throughout that four year period were often frustrated by fast changing regulations that were poorly communicated by postal workers. The postal card illustrated here reveals some of that confusion. It also reveals the existence of chemical censorship by the U.S. Office of Censorship, rarely seen on outbound mail originating in the U.S.



The postal card is postmarked June 2, 1945 at San Juan, Puerto Rico. It was censored at the San Juan censor field office and returned to the sender. By June 1945 postal service had resumed, in part, to many of the overrun countries, including Italy, France, The Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, and others. However, other countries, such as Albania, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Germany, still awaited any form of mail service. All attempts to communicate with these countries resulted in mail being returned.

Postal relations with Germany resumed on April 2, 1946 when non-illustrated postal cards were permitted. This was 14 months after the postal card shown here was postmarked. The erroneous message on the back reads in part, "I heard only this morning that communication with Germany has once again resumed . . ."

Of interest to collectors of censored mail are the eight vertical streaks appearing on the message side of the card. Censors at New York and San Juan employed chemicals to detect secret writing with invisible inks applied with improvised quills. Urine, lemon juice, vinegar, and other liquids could be applied and later made visible by heating or dipping in chemicals. Each streak shown on the card represents a separate reagent used to identify a different invisible ink.

Chemical censorship applied by U.S. censors is rarely seen. Usually, the sender or addressee was on a "watch list" of individuals or businesses whose mail was to be closely scrutinized. Mail containing invisible inks was condemned and forwarded to specialists at the field station for final disposition. Such mail likely has never found its way into collectors' hands.