



The Prexie Era

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Unmailable and Undeliverable Prexie Mail

by Tony Wawrukiewicz



Figure 1

The major area of interest I now have is the process by which U.S. domestic first-class surface unmailable and undeliverable mail was returned. All six items shown in this article reflect one of these two processes and all cards and covers are franked with Presidential series stamps.

The first cover, *Figure 1*, is an unmailable, June 22, 1939 letter from San Francisco to Ft. McDowell, CA. It was franked with the 2¢ Prexie stamp, and thus short paid 1¢ the 3¢ for up to one ounce domestic, surface letter rate of the time. It was ‘Returned for Postage / DUE 1 CENT.’ The letter was returned for this postage due (there was a return address on the envelope’s reverse), and the writer paid the due

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postage with a 1¢ Prexie (interestingly, canceled with a June 24 San Francisco machine cancel) and the letter was then correctly remailed to the addressee.

Before I discuss the post card in *Figure 2*, I need to present some references. These references are from 1902 *Postal Laws and Regulations*, but the references and the conclusions drawn from them continued to be published in subsequent *PL&Rs*, including those of 1932, 1940, and 1948 (those relevant to Prexy postal history).

Section 571, paragraph 2 of the 1902 *PL&R* stated: “If any unpaid or insufficiently paid letter or other matter bear the card or the address of the sender, or he be known to or can be conveniently ascertained by the postmaster, and is within the delivery of the office, the letter or package will at once be returned to him for proper postage.”

This was followed by paragraph 3: “Where the sender of any unpaid or insufficiently paid letter or other matter is not known or can not be conveniently ascertained, such matter will, on receipt thereof, be indorsed “HELD FOR POSTAGE,” the addressee notified by the next mail, by an official card (Form 1543) or otherwise, of such detention and the amount of postage required and requested to remit the same.”

Paragraph 2 of the 1902 *PL&R* is uncertain as to whether postal cards and post cards are included, referring to “letter or other matter” and “letter or package.” But Paragraph 3 is less specific and refers to “any unpaid or insufficiently paid letter or other matter.” More importantly, large numbers of surviving “Held for Postage” post cards in succeeding years indicate that post cards were indeed included in these somewhat nonspecific regulations.

Also, note in paragraph 2 that we read: “If any unpaid or insufficiently paid letter or other

matter bear the card or the address of the sender, or he be known to or can be conveniently ascertained by the postmaster, and is within the delivery of the office, the letter or package will at once be returned to him for proper postage.” This comment is especially important for post cards because more often than not they have no return address. So, if a post card is short paid and has no return address it can only be returned for postage if: “... he ... or can be conveniently ascertained by the postmaster, and is within the delivery of the office”

With all this in mind, let’s now look at the post card in *Figure 2*. This Oct. 7, 1953 card was mailed unpaid from Bowling Green, KY and was thus unmailable. At this time the post card rate was 2¢. The card was first ‘Returned for Postage’ ‘POSTAGE DUE 2 CENTS,’ and since there is no return address on the card, the postmaster must have known the writer in some other manner. When the writer didn’t come up with the 2¢ due, or simultaneous with the postmaster requesting the 2¢ due from the writer, the addressee paid the 2¢ due with the 2¢ Prexie (‘THIS IS THE MAIL / FOR WHICH YOU SENT POSTAGE’), and the card was remailed to the addressee on October 14. A remarkable set of circumstances.

The May 11, 1954 Burlington, Vermont letter in *Figure 3* was first franked at the 3¢ per up to one ounce domestic, surface letter rate with a 3¢ United Nations stamp. This stamp could only pay postage at the United Nations post office in New York City. Therefore the letter was unpaid, unmailable, and ‘Returned for Postage’ ‘Postage due 3 cents.’ The writer paid the correct postage with a 3¢ Prexie, and the letter was remailed to the addressee on May 14.

The 1953 post card with a return address in *Figure 4* was mailed after the rate change of January 1, 1952 (2¢ domestic first-class post card rate now in effect), but franked with only one copy of the 1¢ Prexie. The card was noted

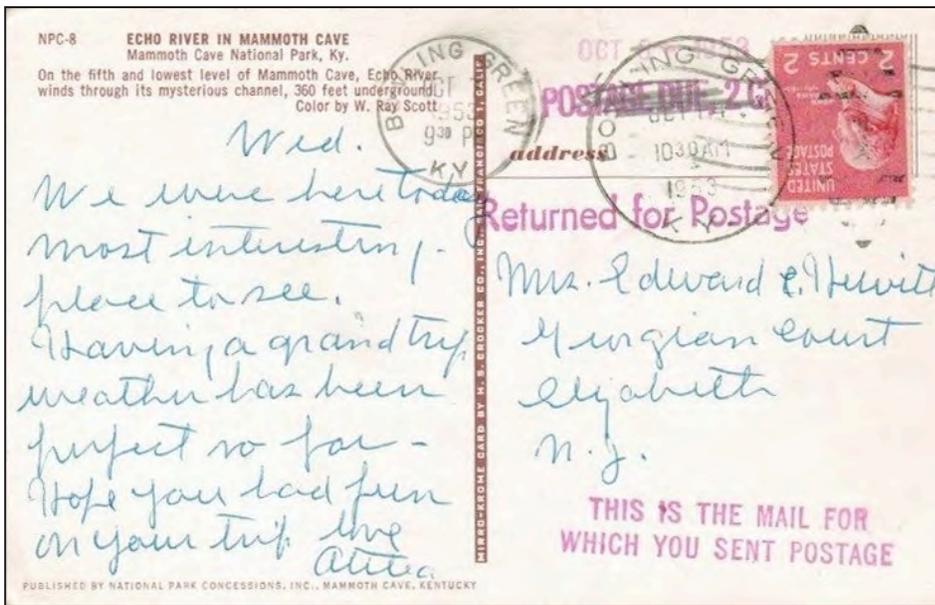


Figure 2

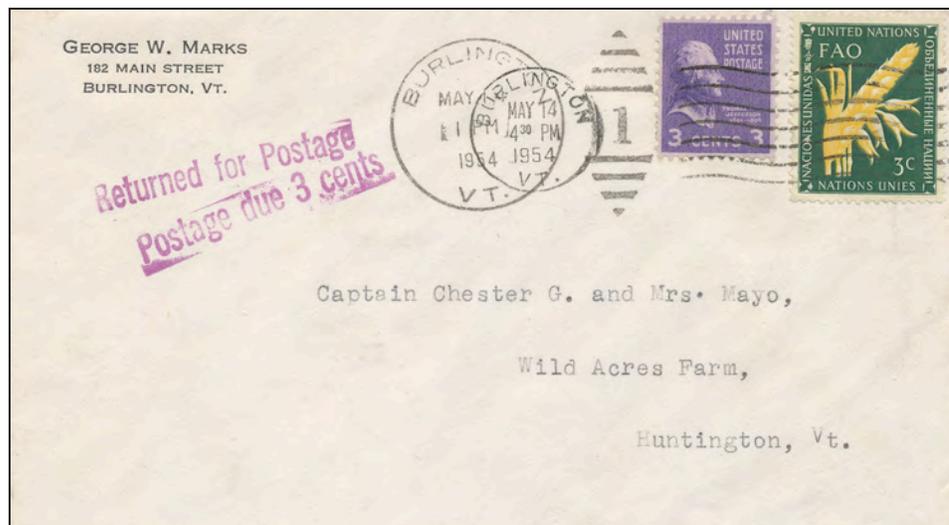


Figure 3

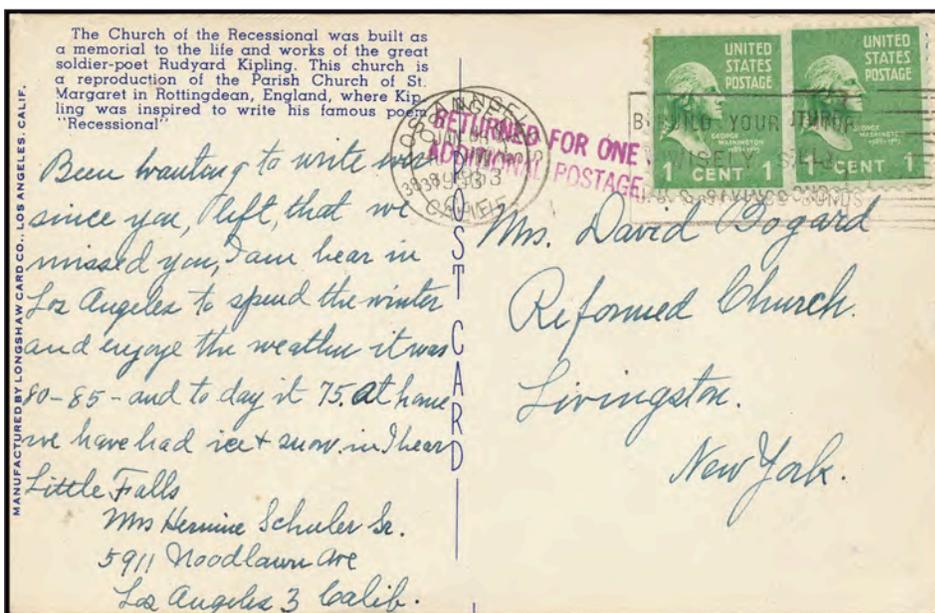


Figure 4

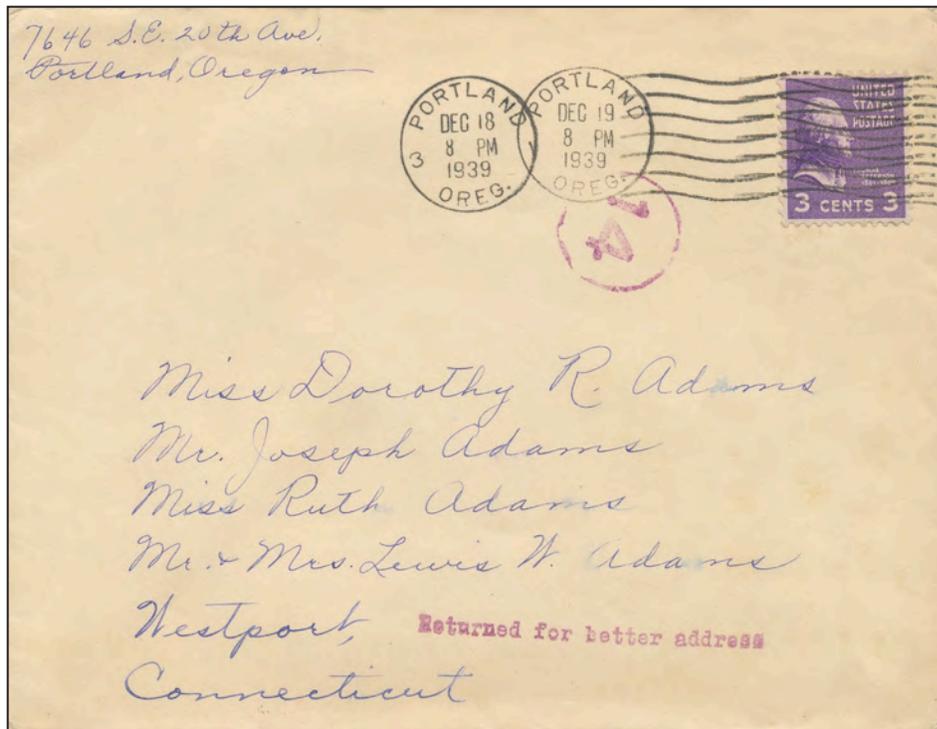


Figure 5

to be short-paid 1¢ at the mailing office, was thus unmailable, and was ‘RETURNED FOR ONE CENT ADDITIONAL POSTAGE’ from the sender. After the 1¢ Prexie was placed on the post card, it was remailed on to the addressee fully paid.

The next item, shown in *Figure 5*, was also unmailable. This December 18, 1939 Portland, OR letter was noted by mailing office to be misdirected (no city or state given in address). It was thus unmailable and ‘Returned for better address.’ The address was then corrected by the writer with the addition of “Westport, Connecticut.” After this uncommonly seen address correction was made, the letter was remailed, correctly, on December 19, without additional postage.

The final item is an example of how undeliverable post and postal cards were handled after 1924, and in particular after 1940. As of the 1924 *PL&R* this important announcement, in Section 611, was made:

“Unpaid, misdirected, unmailable, and

unclaimed domestic postal cards and post cards deposited for local delivery shall be returned to the sender, without additional postage, when they bear his return address in the upper left corner of the address side. Single postal cards and post cards, and double post cards not having postage prepaid on the reply portion, when mailed

for other than local delivery, shall be returned to the sender only when they bear his return card in the upper left corner of the address side, together with a pledge to pay return postage. Such cards bearing the sender’s return card and pledge to pay return postage shall be returned charged with 1¢ postage due, to be collected on delivery, as provided in section 614. All other undeliverable domestic cards shall be held for reclamation two weeks and then if not delivered shall be destroyed or disposed of as waste by postmasters, except that such as are obscene or scurrilous or bear uncanceled postage shall be sent to the Division of Dead Letters. Before being disposed of as waste, the written communication on undeliverable cards shall be cancelled or mutilated so as to prevent the improper use of the correspondence.”

Note that the pledge to pay return postage meant a pledge to pay whatever the post card postage was at the time of return.



Figure 6

In 1941, an insert from the 1940 *PL&R* also noted that local and reply-paid cards now required the card to bear the sender's return address and a pledge to pay return postage in order for the card to be returned. In my experience these onerous requirements for the return of cards resulted in these uses being quite difficult to locate. In fact, the example shown in this article is the only such returned post card that I have seen.

This return process is seen for the post card in *Figure 6*. This undeliverable 1953 card (there is another, readable cancel on the card's reverse) was mailed from Waukegan, IL to Lake Villa, IL. and was returned 'Unclaimed' (the addressee was "gone"). By law, this

appropriately guaranteed card with a return address could be returned 'POSTAGE DUE 2 CENTS,' at the first-class post card rate of the time. The fact that there were 4¢ in postage due stamps on this card indicates that two cards were returned to the sender, and this card was at the stack's top.

I hope these six examples of returned Prexie postal history will stimulate collectors to look for somewhat different types of uses. In particular the post card uses are a challenge to locate because they usually do not have a return address, and it's the ones that have such a return address that are the more interesting and difficult to locate.

Editor's Notes

- You will see in the current newsletter another \$5 Prexie on cover has surfaced. Slowly, the data bank of \$2 and \$5 covers is growing. Please check your holdings and forward scans to your editor or Jeff Shapiro. You should include a brief write-up of the cover so we can publish them in the newsletter. Remember, we are not including tags with the high dollar values.
- Steve Suffet won a Vermeil medal (81 points) at 2014 Philakorea for his five-frame Prexie-era exhibit, "Rates and Usages of the United States One Cent Presidential Series Stamp 1938-1958."
- The United States Stamp Society (USSS) will hold its annual meeting at **Philatelic Show**, Boxborough, MA, May 1-3, 2015.

Early Use of a 20-Cent Transport Stamp

by Joe Bock



This cover shows a 20-cent Transport use on a letter posted aboard the battleship USS *Maryland* at Hawaii, on 15 September 1941. The ship (BB46) was tied up at Pearl Harbor's battleship row on 7 December 1941.

During the Japanese attack, a gunner aboard the *Maryland* shot down a torpedo bomber that had severely damaged the adjacent USS *Oklahoma*,

which ultimately capsized with a heavy loss of life. The *Maryland* was not severely damaged, however, and was returned to action on 26 February 1942.

This cover is of interest to Transport collectors because it shows an early use of the 20-cent stamp that first went on sale 27 August 1941.

6-Cent Transport Pays Return Receipt

by Joe Bock



Use of a 6-cent Transport airmail stamp, posted from Anchorage, Alaska to send back on 30 August 1943, via airmail, a return receipt for a REGISTERED ARTICLE. Postmarked the next day.

Interned German Diplomat, 1941-42

by Louis Fiset



The cover shown here is clearly a philatelic item that ordinarily would not interest most 20th century postal history collectors. What caught my eye is the New York censor's resealing label on a domestic letter.

The correspondence was sent from Gimbel Brothers department store and postmarked May 14, 1942. The addressee was a guest at the upscale Greenbrier Hotel, in White Sulpher Springs, West Virginia. The letter was returned to the retailer because the addressee had apparently moved and left no forwarding address.

On the return, the letter was first directed back to the "Stamp Dept.," then finally, as shown in red pencil, to "Mr. Minkus," presumably the well known stamp dealer and album publisher, Jacques Minkus.

Tucked inside the cover was a censor's enclosure slip, also shown here, explaining to

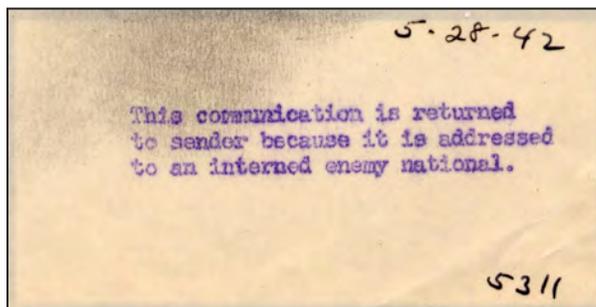
the writer why the letter was being returned.

Mr. Johann Diedrich Entrup was a low ranking member of the German diplomatic corps assigned to the German Embassy, in Washington, D.C. He was involved in "propagating un-American propaganda that is instigated from foreign countries. . . and attacks the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our Constitution."

Within hours of Germany's declaration of war on the U.S., Entrup and his 434 German compatriotes were in

State Department custody. On December 19, 1941 the entourage arrived at The Greenbrier, a haven for wealthy vacationers in peacetime. They departed the hotel on May 5th and left New York Harbor aboard the repatriation ship, M.S. *Gripsholm*, two days later.

The cover's franking is a reminder to Prexie-era collectors that 1940s commemoratives also fall within this time period.



\$5 Prexie on Commercial Mail to Switzerland

by Bob Schlesinger



Illustrated here is an address label cut from a business package to Switzerland paying 37 times the 15-cent per half ounce airmail rate to Europe. The postmark is indistinct on this 18.5 ounce package adorned with a \$5 Prexie.

However, it would have to have been posted after the uniform airmail rate to Europe went into effect November 1, 1946 and the 25-cent San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge airmail stamp was issued, on July 20, 1947.

Presidential-Era Committee Convention at ARIPEX 2015

by Dickson Preston

Plans for our convention at ARIPEX are moving forward apace. It looks like the Presidential-Era's first official convention will be an action-packed weekend, so please plan to exhibit or attend, if you can. Some of the highlights are given below.

Presidential-Era Exhibits. We are looking to have a broad range of Presidential-Era exhibits at this, our first convention, including exhibits of Prexies, Transports, Famous Americans, and

any other U.S. issues from our era, 1938-1959. Exhibits of traditional material, postal history, illustrated mail, revenues, and any category defined in the APS Judges Manual are encouraged. Please note that exhibits of the Liberty Series are not eligible for our Special Award.

New Presidential-Era Exhibits. There is still time to create and enter a new exhibit, since entries for ARIPEX do not close until January 9, 2015.

Presidential-Era Committee Special Award.

The Roland Rustad Memorial Award for the best Presidential-Era exhibit will be presented at the show banquet on Saturday night.

Presidential-Era Group Meeting. An open meeting will take place on Sunday Morning 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. We scheduled the meeting for Sunday, because four members are judges, and will be working evaluating exhibits on Saturday.

Presidential-Era Presentations. There will be two presentations by committee members on subjects in our area. Joseph Bock will present “Development and Delivery of the U.S. Atomic Bomb 1942-1946” and Louis Fiset will speak on “Resumption of U.S. Mail Service to Europe after World War II.”

Show Banquet. The ARIPEX banquet will

take place at 7:00 Saturday evening. The banquet food selection has been chosen to mirror the show theme for Aripex 2015, Native American Artists of the Southwest. For additional information, please see the events tab on the ARIPEX website: www.aripex.org. Tickets should be purchased in advance.

Dealers Breakfast. Kevin Lesk, the show chairman, has invited our members, spouses, friends or judges to a dealer’s breakfast planned for Sunday morning, February 22, 2015 anytime between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m. There will be a full buffet including a made to order omelet station, and other goodies. Price is \$14 all inclusive including tax and tip. Kevin will have ticket vouchers available at the show and on Sunday as well.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at: dicksonp@u.washington.edu

Two-Ocean Airmail Rate, Hawaii to Europe

by Bob Schlesinger



The so called “two ocean” airmail cover is popular among cover collectors and in most cases commands a premium when found. The most common examples during the Prexie

era may be found originating in Hawaii and addressed to destinations in Europe or beyond, thus transiting transpacific, U.S. domestic, and transatlantic airmail routes.

Additive airmail postage was required. For example, the rate from Hawaii to Europe was 50 cents, including 20 cents transpacific to the mainland and 30 cents transatlantic to Europe. This particular rate was in effect from April 21, 1937, through January 14, 1945, when the airmail rate from Hawaii to the mainland was lowered to 15 cents. *Figure 1* shows this rating, which also includes a 15-cent registry fee and 5-cent prepaid return receipt, for a total of 70 cents.



Figure 2

From January 15, 1945 through Oct. 31, 1946 the two-ocean half-ounce airmail rate was 45 cents, as shown in *Figure 2*.

The last change affecting the two ocean rating took place on November 1, 1946 when the territorial airmail surcharge to the mainland was eliminated. Thus, territorial mail from the Pacific region to Europe was now charged the same as if originating on the mainland. The half-ounce airmail rate to Europe was reduced from 30 cents to 15 cents on November 1, 1946. So the 1949 use shown in *Figure 3* is correctly prepaid.

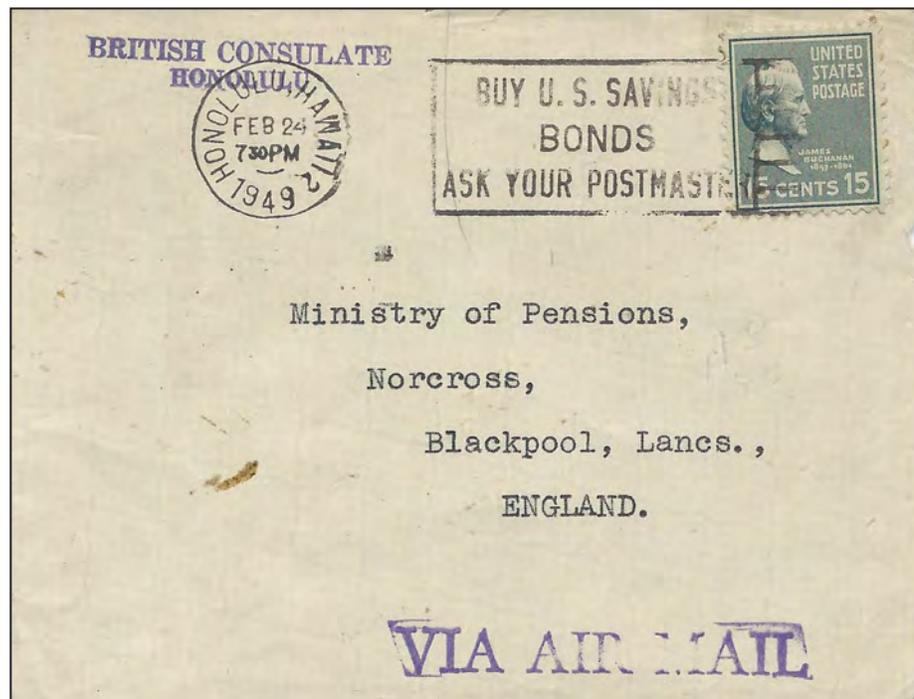


Figure 3