

## Back Issue of Military Postal History Society 'Bulletin': (Bulletin Fal 2015)

Back issues of the Military Postal History Society 'Bulletin' are now available. The issues available span the period from 1937 to 2022. The MPHS is a non-profit organization for philatelists and stamp collectors interested in the collecting and studying of the postal aspects of all wars and military actions of all countries, including soldiers' campaign covers, naval mail, occupation and internment covers, patriotics, propaganda, V-mail, censorship and similar related material.

You are encouraged to join the MPHS to realize the additional benefits of membership. See: <http://militaryphs.org/membership>

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*Holiday Cards of the Great War Sent Home*

*I Wanna Go Home!*

*Belgian Congo Forces in the Middle East (WWII)*

*Dutch East Indies (WWII)*

*Initial British Postage Due pm WW I Overseas Soldier's Mail & Field Service Postcards*

*Quixotic Item for the Issue (Portuguese Card) (WWI)*

*An Introduction to the Military Postal System of the North Vientam Army and the Viet Cong*

*Return to Sender: Devices Used to Identify Service Suspended Mails During WWII*



The Christmas Truce 1914: Courtesy Illustrated London News - by A. C. Michael - The Guardian

# Military Postal History Society Bulletin

Volume 54, Issue # 4  
Fall 2015

www.militaryPHS.org

## Holiday Cards of the Great War Sent Home By Members of the MPHS

A challenge was issued to the MPHS membership in issue numbers 2 and 3 of 2015. To say that “Every cloud has a silver lining”, would be to understate the response! For, in fact, the adage “When it rains, it pours,” would aptly describe the enthusiasm that marked the solicitation—namely, *show us the variety of Christmas and Holiday cards used by the soldiers of the fighting forces serving in Europe in the Great War.*

While the fighting continued along the various fronts, military formations, individuals and service organizations took time to memorialize the religious and secular holidays reflecting their ethnic and national identities. During the first year of fighting, the famous one day “Christmas ceasefire” initiated by members of the warring forces of Britain and Germany on the Western front was a dramatic reminder of the importance of those traditions.

The response of our readers was magnificent, and in fact overwhelming. In the next several pages, examples are presented—together with their postal history where practicable—of the cards sent home by those soldiers. The donors of the cards are cited in Appendix A.



Figures 1 & 2: Christmas card - The commander of the U.S. 79th Division reminded his officers and men that the “Dawn of Peace” has come after two years away from home.

*Continued on pg. 4*

**PLEASE NOTE: To encourage writers, promote lead articles and touch upon the wide ranging interests of our members, new lead articles will always appear on the cover page, while second and third parts of prior issue lead articles can be found several pages into an issue. There is no continuation of a second part to the previous issue’s lead article this month.**

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# Military Postal History Society



Vol. 54, No. 4

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The Military Postal History Society promotes the study of the postal aspects of all wars and military actions of all nations. A non-profit corporation, it was founded in 1937 as the War Cover Club, American Philatelic Society, Unit # 19. Home page: <http://www.military.PHS.Org>

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The MPHS *Bulletin* (ISSN 1075-5640) is published quarterly. Subscription is included in annual membership dues: \$20.00 digital version U.S. & Worldwide; \$30.00 to U.S. addresses; \$36.00 to Canada addresses; \$42.00 to Mexico addresses; \$40.00 to all other countries (air mail). Send membership inquiries and changes of address to the Secretary. Back issues \$2.50 from the Secretary.. Printed in USA. Copyright 2016 by the MPHS, Inc. All rights reserved.

## President's Message

by Ed Dubin

There are two upcoming events for the society that are showcased in this *Bulletin*. The first is further information on the digital option for the 2016 dues year. The second is the start of our planned participation in events of next year's New York international show.

For members we had a correct e-mail address for, the announcement of a 2016 digital option is not new. In September we ran a successful test of our e-mail notification and *Bulletin* access procedures. The feedback we received was helpful in setting up our dues structure and option offerings (see page 3). Members will have **three options for 2016**. They can receive a paper copy of the *Bulletin*, **or** a digital copy at a reduced dues level **or** both a paper and digital version at a slight increase over the paper dues. Digital bulletin dues are the same for domestic and international members.

The dues level for domestic paper bulletin copies remains unchanged having kept pace with printing and postage increases. However, this is not the case for international mailings. Our present international dues structure does not cover production and mailing expenses. Primarily because of the steady increase in international postage rates we lose money on every international mailing. While the international rate increase may seem significant, in our benchmarking of other society dues we are still at the lower end for international membership dues. Additionally, the digital bulletin dues rate offers a significant cost advantage over paper copies and protection from further increases as postage rates rise.

In addition to a NY society table, the proposed Manhattan historic military sites bus tour and two military postal history seminars, our 2016 spring bulletin will be expanded on a one time basis. Last month Sergio Lugo received approval for a special NY show edition, expanding to 56 pages. Each article will have a relationship to a year ending in "six." The increased production cost is being covered by member donations (*additional donations are still needed*) and soliciting dealers to sponsor *Bulletin* ads. Dealers were offered a three bulletin package (Fall, Winter and Spring). You will find the first of these ads in this issue. If you are attending the NY show please stop by each of these dealers and mention seeing their bulletin ads.

For the first time in a long time, we have a Vietnam War article. Available research tends to slant most of our articles to the WWI / WWII period. I would like to challenge our members to present articles (short or long) on the events of the last 65 years that have bearing on our specialty. One advantage of publication is you will hear from collectors with your same interest and add to your subject knowledge.

## THE DIGITAL AGE HAS DAWNED FOR THE MPHS

### *Stars Wars* Music Please:

It's not as dramatic as that, but it's 'pon us. After spending the last half of 2015 on the subject, a committee of the MPHS is ready to usher in the electronic/digital transmittal of the *MPHS Bulletin*. That occurs with the next issue of 2016—around February 10, 2016 - "God willing and the cr-ek don't rise!"

Faced with rising costs, a smaller membership, and attracting younger generations, the committee explored several alternatives before coming to you. Between this issue and the release of the next (about Feb. 10th), we'll have 3 months to iron out any problems that arise.

**BUT we need your cooperation in all particulars.**

### DUES RELEVANCE:

- We anticipate a wide reaction of preferences towards receipt of a digital *Bulletin*. This will be settled (except in the case of Life Members) by your dues payment.
- Dues are as follows for 2016:

	<u>PAPER</u>	<u>DIGITAL</u>	<u>DIGITAL &amp; PAPER</u>
Domestic	\$25	\$20	\$30
Canada	\$31	\$20	\$36
Mexico	\$37	\$20	\$42
International	\$40	\$20	\$45

- We encourage digital if you are a life member.

### WE NEED YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS UNBLOCKED and ACCEPTING:

The Society has embarked on a program of sending "blast emails" to all members who have supplied an email address to us. At this time, 300 members are on our email list. Some members may not be receiving Society email messages because their "spam filter" intercepts the message and places it in a "Junk" or "Spam" email folders.

We request that you make the Society email handler an 'accept address' in your email program. This action is also called whitelisting. The address to allow is:

[ten.pairlist.net](http://ten.pairlist.net)

Official Society email originates from this server

The following webpage (courtesy of [about.com](http://about.com)) describes how you use Outlook (an email program) to set our email address as "accepted":

<http://goo.gl/QdxRfm>

When you enter the above web address, please note that some of the letters are in UPPER CASE, and some are in lower case.

### IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE THE BLAST EMAIL.

First check your junk or spam folder. If it is not there, please contact Louis Fiset, at [fiset@u.washington.edu](mailto:fiset@u.washington.edu)

**TEXT SEARCHING:** One particular advantage of digital bulletins for those of you leaning towards that option is their accessibility in terms of word/character searches. The PDF files of the *Bulletin* that you can download from the Society private area, are **fully** text-searchable. This feature makes it easier to zero in on topics of particular interest to you in individual *Bulletins* and their respective articles.

**ACCESSING and USING ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT FORMATS (for MPHS members)** The MPHS is beginning to offer its documents electronically. Using these formats allows them to be offered at low or no cost to members. If you wish to download electronic versions of MPHS documents, there will be links on each download page, describing how to handle the document format(s) offered, such as PDF and others.

### TO DOWNLOAD THE BULLETIN: Go to

<http://www.militaryphs.org/members/>

Username is: military

Password is: SEMPER%omphs

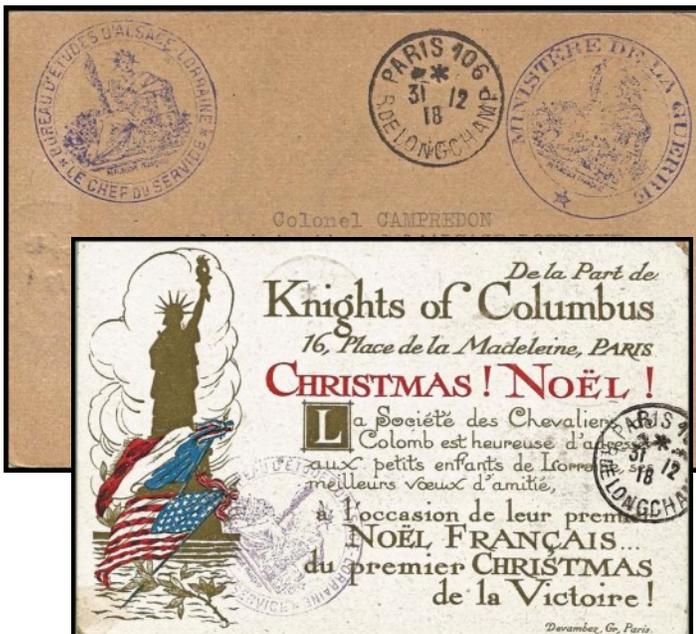
The start of the password is ALL CAPS; the second word in the password is all lower case. A copy and paste of username & password may not work with some computers, in such cases type in the username /password .

Once logged in you will find two *Bulletin* files. One is a 13+ MEG PDF file. The other is a lower quality 5 MEG PDF file. If you want a hard copy printed the 13 MEG file is what you want. The 5 MEG file is suitable for hand held devices and controlling data charges.

If you elect the digital bulletin for 2016, you will receive an e-mail with a unique password for each quarterly bulletin. The digital *Bulletin* will be available about the same time the file is sent to our printer, meaning that digital subscribers have access to their bulletins through the webpage about 10 days before the paper copies are sent out.



Figures 3 & 4: Christmas postcard & envelope supplied by the YMCA. Pvt. Oley Gillespie writes his sister in West Virginia that “the hills are covered in snow,” in November 1918 while serving with the Command and Control Center of Battery A, 66th Artillery. Lt. Bagwall was the regimental censor.



Figures 5 & 6: Submitter’s translation: “The Society of the Knights of Columbus is happy to tell the little children of Lorraine best wishes and friendship on the occasion of the first French Christmas—the first Christmas of Victory” from the Minister of War and the Alsace Bureau of Studies in December 1918

The completely unexpected number of such holiday cards (78 by 9 contributors) prompted the editor to re-approach the matter of presenting all holiday cards. We hope to develop a webpage on the MPHS website but that has not been fully resolved as we began experiencing input problems. A list of the cards presented in this first part is shown in **Appendix A**. An electronic file containing all images is available upon request from [lugopspe@q.com](mailto:lugopspe@q.com).

The submittal of scans of such cards revealed several things about them:

1. Many were addressed to young daughters and sisters. Typically, the mailing envelope/cover was retained in these cases as treasured mementos of father or brother;
2. In many cases, the envelope/cover was not retained.
3. Many cards & post cards were inserted into envelopes.
4. Surprisingly, many cards were created by military units for the men in their ranks—either to thank them for their service or for them to use in writing home.
5. The service organizations used the holidays as occasions to distribute many card varieties to soldiers.
6. Shown here are cards (to be inserted in envelopes), postcards (could be mailed without envelopes) and special cards and paper ephemera items.

Even with the responses received by MPHS members, we suspect that many more such cards can be found—particularly for the armies of the Alliance powers. Whether such is the case remains to be seen, but we also believe a good start has been made in identifying the varieties that remain in existence.

As to their postal history, a number of markings, cancellations, dates, units and addressees can be found. Where that information could be identified in the submittals, that information is provided. Typically, as is the case with most war-time correspondence, details in the correspondence is skimpy, brief, and basically non-descriptive.

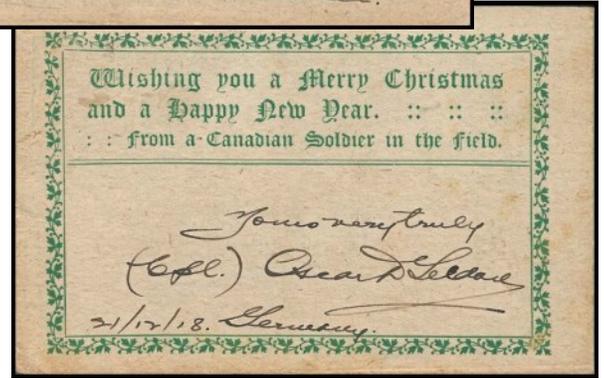


Figure 7: 1918 card insert produced by the YMCA. Cover not shown



Figures 8, 9, 10, 11 (at left): Many cards exist without any indicia of their respective postal histories.

Figure 8: Contributed by Alan Lauer, the Engineer corps of Canada, U.S., and France are represented in this Parisian card  
 Figures 9 and 10: YMCA card, produced by Devenpart, Paris. Bill was writing from the 147th Infantry at APO 763  
 Figure 11: November 1918 card insert produced by YMCA, printer Draeger



*Et cetera*  
 Wishing you a very  
 Happy New Year and  
 Hoping to see and  
 be with you soon  
 Hope to be with you  
 by Easter. Bill  
 Co. G. 149th APO 763.

Figures 12 and 13 Knights of Columbus postcard distributed to Canadian Armed Forces.. Used by Cpl. Oscar LeDare on December 21, 1918, while stationed in Germany to write to Middleton, Nova Scotia. British censor. The salutation ends with the phrase “in the ‘field’” Another KofC card ends with “In England”.



Figures 14 and 15: Cpl. Lochman of the 561st Pioneer Infantry (engineering infantry) writes Mr. Harvey at the clock shop of Lancaster, PA. from APO 761 in Bitburg, Germany for the 1919 New Years.



Postcards, as opposed to Christmas cards inserted into envelopes, were very popular—for their ease of transmission. Many exist, unused, or written upon and enclosed in an envelope, or simply sent through the mails.



Figure 16: The 143th, 144th, and 145th Trench Mortar Batteries (TMB) were part of the 48th (South Midland) Division, an infantry division of the British Army. The division saw action on the Western Front, then was transferred to the Italian Front in November 1917 where it remained until 1919.



Figures 18 (above) and 19 (below): Corporal Harry Smith sent this otherwise unidentifiable YMCA postcard to his grandparents. Not to be overlooked was the U.S. Navy, in what appears to be a YMCA Christmas or New Year's greeting card of 1918, printed by Draeger.

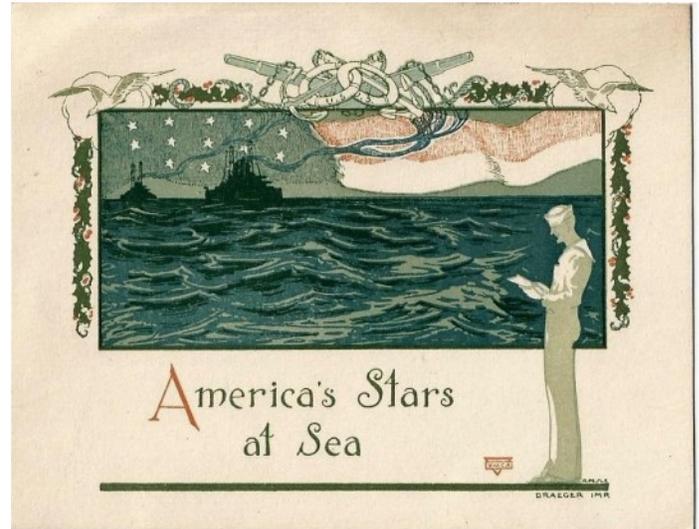


Figure 20: Clarence of the 68th Engineers was writing to his sister on November 25th wishing her a Merry Christmas. The YMCA card was also printed by Draeger, but designed by Rene Vincent. The envelope for this card, has long since disappeared.

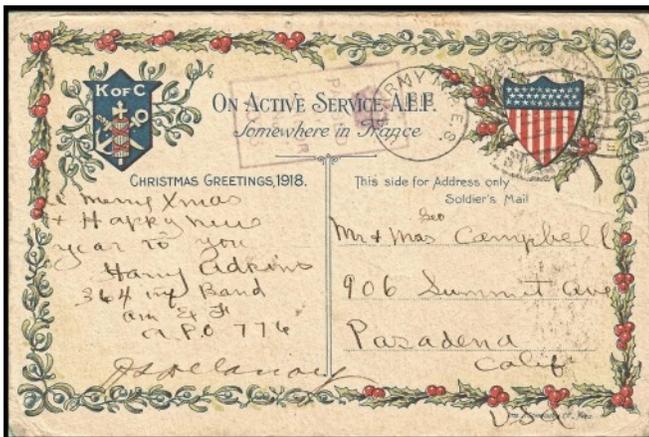
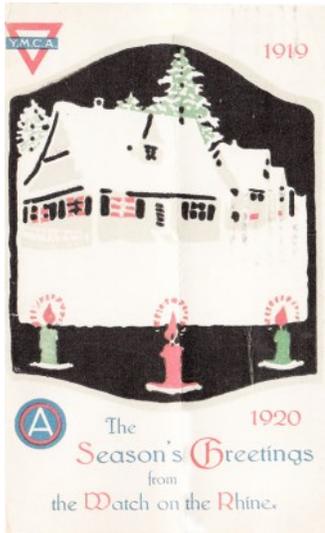


Figure 17: The postcard was sent in December 1918 by Harry Adkins with the 364th Infantry Band, APO 776, 91st Infantry Division. The unit served with the British Army, as suggested by the cancel over the shield and British censor marking, superimposed by the U.S. Army M.P.E.S. cancel.

Postcards could be easily reproduced in localities near the fighting, used by the units themselves or by service organizations. The fighting units appear to have preferred such postcards, as opposed to cards inserted in envelopes—probably because of their economy. Service organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus,



were known to give the postcards free of charge to servicemen, while other service organizations charged the serviceman. It is unknown as to what fee arrangements existed with those service organizations in the post-war period.



Figures 25 (& 26): Stock French postcards were used by the J.W.B. to celebrate the 1919 New Year. In this case the LeMans card shows a JWB New Years Greeting imprinted on the reverse of this otherwise mint postcard.



Figures 21 (&22) Edgar Harburg forwarded his December 1919 Christmas postcard from the Third Army, Army of Occupation through the Central Post Office.



Figures 23 (& 24): Writing his on November 25 1918, R.H. Rogers of the 7th Engineers reported on the YMCA card that he had entered Germany. The card was printed by Draeger, and designed by Anita Parkhurst. A similar card exists without the 7th Engineers caption. The cover disappeared long ago.



Figures 27 & 28 (above) and 29 (left): Above, the German, postally used Christmas card, was sent in 1915. The message basically wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

At the left, Regrettably, nothing of a postal history nature exists with this Christmas card.



Figure 30: This YMCA card was designed by Jacques Carlu. The card was addressed to Mrs. Thomas Farley of Fall River, Massachusetts, but the envelope is gone.

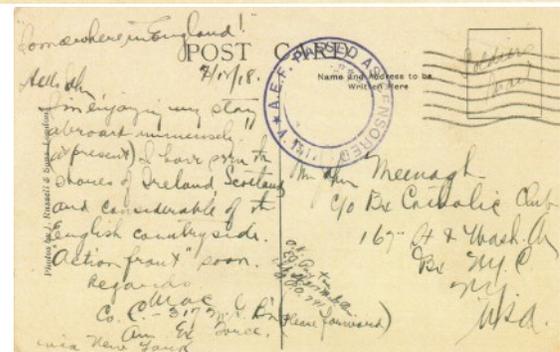
Insofar as the figures are concerned, thus far a review of military unit or Christian Christmas cards have been presented. Among other major faiths, the only similar holiday cards for December that have been found were published by the Jewish Welfare Board.

Roughly 225,000 Jews served in the armed forces of the United States in WW I. They represented nearly 5% of the number mobilized. It is not known what the percentage, or numbers, of Jews were that served in the British, French, German, Austro-Hungarian or Russian armies. We suspect that those percentages were higher than in the U.S. Army in the case of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German armies, but considerably less for the armed forces of other belligerents (e.g. the Italian armies.)

In the case of the U.S., the Jewish Welfare Board for Soldier and Sailor Relief (JWB for short) became the chief social welfare agency working with the U.S. military on behalf of **all** American servicemen, with the needs of Jewish servicemen as their particular focus. The JWB carried on an extensive two year+ program of services, both in the U.S. and overseas, with the A.E.F. In the case of holiday mail, however, their contributions were limited, and the authors have only been able to pinpoint two examples of such mail during the 1918 holiday period. These are illustrated in **Figures 25 & 26 and 31**.



Figure 31: This JWB Hannukah postcard was not used overseas, but rather stateside. Sgt. R. Issacamat Camp Greene, Charlotte, North Carolina was writing to Miss Esther Handelsman of Philadelphia, PA. on November 27, 1918. Anyone care to translate?

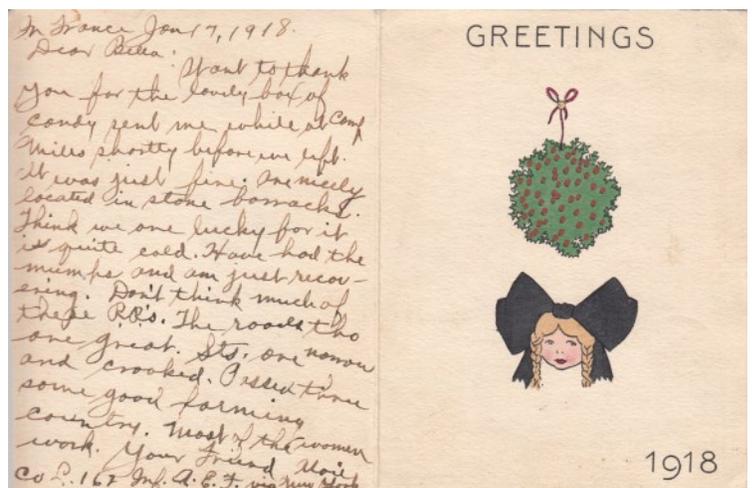
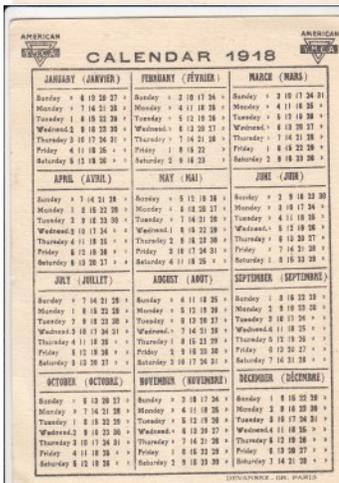


Figures 32 and 33: Writing from England, Mac had had a good visit to the British Isles, but was soon off to action in France. with Co. C, 317th Machine Gun Battalion, after July 12, 1918. His regimental censor was at work on a card commemorating the leaders of the B.E.F. and the A.E.F. .

A postcard variant were the two sided bi-fold cards. Usually printed on both sides, the only way to mail them was in envelopes, but unfortunately the latter no longer survive in the sample holdings of the authors. Unlike many other WW I cards and souvenir ephemera material,



**Figures 34 & 35:** The Czech Legion in Siberia. Cancelled by Czech Legion FPO 3 and the message is dated 24 December 1919, sent by a Legionnaire in Irkutsk, Russia (upper right of message). The Legion "franking" contains two of the four Legion stamps that really were not required on "free" mail. They appear to be from the issue's reprint (when the Legion returned to Czechoslovakia, 1919-20). The card apparently was prepared while in Russia, but franked/cancelled by the field post service when it was brought back for delivery in Czechoslovakia.



**Figures 36 & 37** Figure 36 is unused, while 37 is a YMCA card (similarly without a cover/envelope) used in January 1918 by doughboy Aloise of the 162nd Infantry, 41st U.S. Infantry Division (APO 727). He had been battling the mumps after his recent arrival from New York. He was bivouacked in stone barracks, and didn't like the railroads,

such cards in our possession were solely products of commercial printers. They sought to profit from cards that humorously portray the fighting and calendars that could be used to track the time remaining in 1918 or 1919 before the sender's return. **See Figures 36 & 37.**

As previously noted, the numbers of cards received were so numerous that a specific webpage dedicated to holiday cards is being designed for future release by the MPHS. We know you can appreciate the amount of time expended by volunteers to design and develop the webpage and include those many scans, while encountering unexpected glitches. Look for the announcement (and release) of the webpage as early as issue # 1 of 2016 (to be issued approximately **February 10, 2016**). **IN THE MEAN-TIME, MAY ALL OF YOU HAVE WONDERFUL HOLIDAYS, A Merry Christmas, and a philatelically rewarding New Year.**

*Sergio Lago*



**Figure 38:** Used, German Christmas Greetings 1917

## APPENDIX A—1: Holiday Cards Submitted by MPHS Members

<u>Fig. #</u>	<u>Contributed by:</u>	<u>Sender &amp; Unit</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Other Info:</u>
1 & 2	Fred Hensel	79th Division	12/18	Card only; no cover/envelope
3 & 4	David Kent Also Sergio Lugo Also Al Kugel	66th Artillery George Pflieger J.M. Black, 88th Division	11/18 Unknown Dec. 3, 1918	YMCA card & Cover/Envelope.  With cover/envelope to Mr. Alfred Sundin
5 & 6	Greg Ciesielski	Minister of War	Dec. 1, 1918	To Children of Lorraine
7	Sergio Lugo	Sgt. Jim Richardson, APO 704	November 1918	YMCA Card & Envelope
8	Alan Lauer			Engineer Units Canada, U.S., France
9 & 10	Cary Finder Also Sergio Lugo	Bill—147th Infantry	December 1918	Card only, used, no cover/envelope Card only, mint
11	Sergio Lugo	Sgt. Harvey—APO 744 28th Infantry Division	Dec. 1, 1918	YMCA card, & cover (not shown)
12 & 13	Greg Ciesielski Also Greg Ciesielski	Cpl. Oscar LeDare, Canadian forces	Dec. 21, 1918	KofC postcard "In the Field" ending Mint, same design, "In England" ending
14 & 15	Fred Hensel	Cpl. Lochman 61st Pioneer Infantry	Dec. 31, 1918	Postcard
16	Konrad Meyer	143rd, 144th, 145th Trench Mortar Batteries, 42nd British Infantry Division		Postcard, mint
17	Greg Ciesielski  Also Cary Finder Also Sergio Lugo Also Sergio Lugo Also Greg Ciesielski Also Al Kugel	Harry Adkins, 364th Infantry APO 776 George—2nd Depot Div.  Clarence Roper to Willow, OK.  AEF men of New Haven County Jail	December 1918  December 1918   December 1918	KofC Postcard, British censor,   Mint No envelope Plus 18 other examples of same postcard Used
18	Cary Finder Also Sergio Lugo	Cpl. Harry Smith		YMCA postcard, used, no cover
19	David Kent	U.S. Navy		YMCA card, no cover/envelope
20	Sergio Lugo	Clarence; 68th Engineers		YMCA card, used, no cover/envelope
21 & 22	Konrad Meyer  Also Cary Finder  Also Fred Hensel	Edgar Harburg, Army of Occupation Gus; Back from Leave in South France John Anderson, 8th Infantry; Allied Forces Government APO 927, Central Post Office	December 1919  December 1919	YMCA postcard, used
23 & 24	Fred Hensel Also Sergio Lugo	R.A. Rogers; 7th Engineers		YMCA card, used, no cover/envelope Mint card, without 7th Engineers inscription
25 & 26	Sergio Lugo			JWB, Imprinted Fr. postcard, LeMans
27 & 28	Otto Bloedow	Germany Christmas Card		
29	Sergio Lugo			Mint, Soldier with little girl
30	Sergio Lugo  Also Al Kugel			Mint card Old Man Winter Chasing Huns to Mrs. Thomas Farley of Fall River, MASS. Mint Card
31	Sergio Lugo	Sgt. Isaacman, Camp Greene	Nov. 27, 1918	JWB Card, Used
32 & 33	Al Kugel	Mac, Co. C; 317 Machine Gun Battalion	July, 1918	Postcard portraying Sir Douglas Haig and General John Pershing
34 & 35	Hal Vogel		1919-1920	Czech Legion postcard
36 & 37	Sergio Lugo	Aloise— 162nd Infantry, 41st Infantry Div.	January 17, 1918	YMCA card, used, no cover/envelope
38	Newton Crouch	German Red Cross postcard 1917	December 28, 1917	

## EMBROIDERING THE GREAT WAR—

### The Golden Age of Embroidered Postcards

By Sergio Lugo and Dasa Metzler

**Figure 1** shows a rarity, nearly one hundred years after the times and events that it represents. For it is more than what it seems, namely, an American YMCA cover, of which many of our readers have seen thousands of surviving examples.

The significance of the cover lies in its contents! Those contents have been given space and attention in, among others, the Australian War Museum and Great Britain's Imperial War Museum in consequence of the significance the contents had to those nation's respective fighting men. For in fact, **Figure 1** is one of the few surviving covers used by AEF servicemen to forward one of the novelties of the "Great War."



**Figures 1 & 2:** Letter (and contents) sent in March 1919 by Howard Kosier to Dollie Kosier, most probably his sister. He was a member of an Ambulance Company in the AEF.



During the four years of that conflagration, significant numbers were purchased. **Figure 2** is that of which

we write, an example of the estimated ten million (10,000,000) so-called "WWI Silks" postcards produced, distributed, and sold throughout France and Belgium - mainly to Britons and Americans serving in their respective expeditionary forces. An estimated 10,000 patterns were produced during the war.

What quickly becomes evident with such cards, is the infinitesimally small number of postally used variants. The co-author of this article has made the collecting of "WWI Silks" one of her favorite collecting pastimes—in large measure because she was an instructor of embroidery in her younger days. She continues to collect these majestic reminders of the Great War, with a collection now approaching 1,500 cards. Not surprisingly in light of their attractiveness, many can be found in on-line auctions. Or displayed at on-line websites. One of the most extensive collections in private hands can be found via the internet at [silkpostcard.co.uk](http://silkpostcard.co.uk).

As already suggested, the overwhelming majority of her cards are mint—with roughly 95% being a safe guesstimate of that percentage. It, therefore, became a challenge to find enough cards to justify their inclusion in a military postal history journal. But we did and this colorful "postal history" is advanced in the pages that follow as appropriate to the interests of our readers. We propose to enthrall you with aspects and illustrations of "WWI silks" that you may have been unaware of, or simply didn't know, as a feature of military postal history.

Let us begin at the beginning—namely with those cards known as "Stevengraph." These embroidered cards made their appearance in the 1880s and 1890s, as expensive, highly ornate and artistic outgrowths of the Industrial Revolution. Their beauty and scarcity still command a high price as a search of the internet will show.

But their very costliness made them of limited commercial appeal. Enter the Paris Exhibition of 1900. There, the embroidered postcard got its initial commercial birth - introduced as it was by Adolf Grieder & Cie of Zurich, Switzerland. The objectives of the company were straightforward—to expose an increasingly interested public in another variant of the postcard—with its colorful illustrations and patterns at a reasonably affordable price.

At first, most of those designs emphasized flowers, with their associated romantic captions. Unfortunately, their continued comparatively high prices still did not make them an attractive seller in the tourist or postcard collecting trades. Despite this, in the following decade, manufacturers of hand made and machine made postcards existed in France, Belgium, Germany and the United States.

Embroidered silk postcards evolved in the course of the first decade of the twentieth century. The main transformation was in the arena of presentation, not content. Initially, as illustrated by **Figure 3** such postcards consisted of silk mesh (technically known as organza) panels applied to the surface of a card by tacking glue along the borders. By the onset of the Great War, the pan-



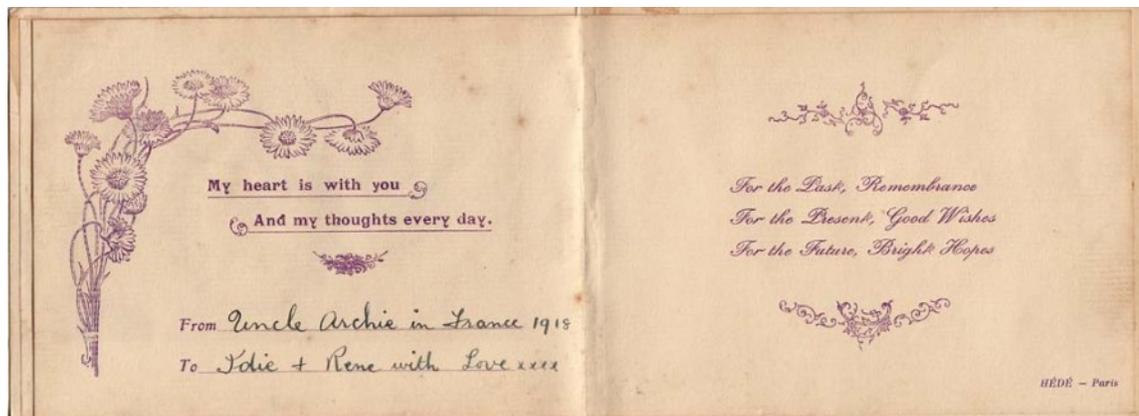
**Figure 3:** Embroidered silk panel before mounting. Improved post 1917 card design showing U.S. sunflower, not flag.



**Figure 4:** The embroidered silk panel of **Figure 3** mounted onto the reverse of card. Manufacturers varied the borders, first introduced in 1903, from plain to highly embossed, ornate frames for the design.



**Figures 5 and 6:** The inside panels of an exceedingly rare multi-paneled embroidered silk postcard of the Great War. In **Figure 5** above the design appears in reverse imagery. The color of the reverse imagery of the silk threads has been imprinted over time on the right panel of the postcard. The silk thread of the left panel at the right edge was merely for decoration on the front of the card.



working in convents. A hand embroidery machine came into existence as early as 1846, however, the machine was such a threat to the traditional hand embroiders that it did not reach its potential on the market until 1915, as war demand necessitated alternatives to hand manufacture. By 1915, 14 different manufacturers of hand embroidery machinery were displacing the hand embroiders.

Early designs of silk postcards produced during the war evolved from patterns with longer embroidery stitches to more sophisticated patterns with shorter stitches. Captions were usually shorter, tighter stitches. Differentiating between hand versus machine embroidery can be difficult for the non-experienced eye. Machine embroidery stood out more definitively on the mesh with its precise appearance and white sewing thread intertwined with silk embroidery threads.

Figure 7:

The Brit was upending the German “Boche” in this highly decorative card made early on in the war. (note the long embroidery stitches of the curtain).



Figure 8:

Likewise in the dress of the child. The arrows point to threads left by the fabricator—uncut and untied.

Embroidered cards, however, interfered with post office processing of mail; not unlike “glitter” or leather postcards in the United States. These were banned by the 1907 Post Office Congressional legislation. At some point in time, European postal officials required that all novelty cards were to be sent in brown translucent envelopes, that were basically early versions of glassine envelopes. During the war, a regular paper envelope served just as conveniently, but the translucent envelopes still found employment - as in the case of the censored postcard illustrated by Figures 9 and 10.

The strips of silk mesh (organza) were stretched

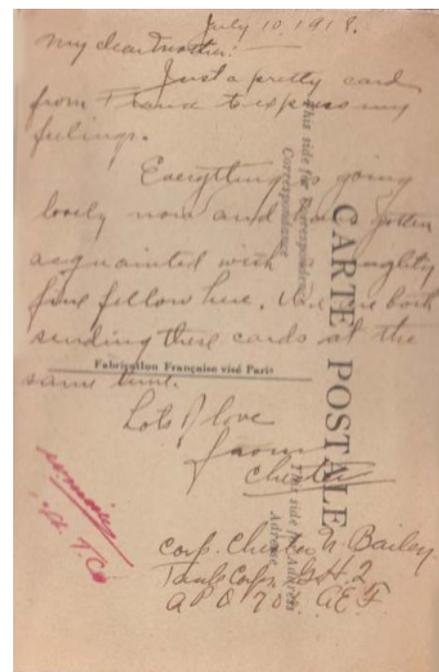


Figure s 9 and 10: A translucent envelope is suggested by the red censor marking of the unit officer at the lower left. Corp. Chester Bailey was writing from the AEF’s Tank Corps at AEF Headquarters, APO 702 on July 10, 1919, explaining that everything was fine.

over a simple wooden frame and embroidered. Strips were repeatedly embroidered with the same design; with as many as 400 identical patterns on the same strip. Once a panel of repetitive designs was completed, the multi image strips were sent to factories for cutting and mounting.

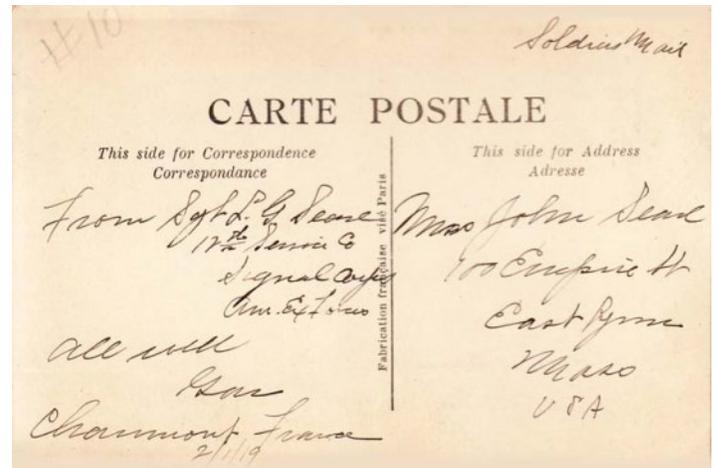
Spelling mistakes could be repeated, and are not uncommon on machine manufactured cards. By the same token, alterations could be deliberately made to preexisting patterns, which explains the absence of the Russian colors after 1917 in postcards honoring the Allies. A faithful ally until that time, wartime shortages, the revolution that overthrew the monarchy and set in motion a three year civil war, and her huge casualties (accounting for 40% of the Allied military dead), forced the country to sue for peace in that year and withdraw from the war.



**Figure 11 :** Produced in France, as evidenced by the French “fighting rooster” emblem, the card was meant for an English speaking audience. The Russian flag at the left, and the absence of the American flag, indicates production before 1917. The Russian colors are excluded below.



**Figures 12 and 13:** Written in February 1919, from Chaumont, France, by Sgt. Searl of the 12th Service Company of the Signal Corps to a family member. The absence of the censor marking suggests that the card was enclosed in either a paper or a translucent envelope.



Some other attributes of embroidered postcards are worth mentioning. Threads that had become faded by sunlight or were just too old were sometimes used. In consequence, distinct differentiation of designs might prove possible. However, because the cards were intended as souvenirs many were exposed to environmental conditions—whether sunlight or smoke suffused rooms that would have affected the silk thread colors or the borders.

A new feature introduced to such cards during the war was the creation of a two part pattern. The envelope flap design, at the top of many cards, was created to appeal to the public. An embroidered flap was attached to the mesh and glued to the panel. This resulted in creating a pocket for a small card to be inserted. Insert cards were part of the card. But, in addition, many other items found their way into the pocket as **Figures 15—17** on the next page suggest.



**Figure 14:** A Happy Birthday card in the two part format. Produced by an embroidery machine. The card inserted into the pocket is shown as **Figure 15** on the next page.

Inserts most typically involved greeting cards (as in **Figure 15**). On occasion the soldier felt the urge to send an example of military script (in the case of **Figure 16** issued by the French). Even more exotic, was the occasional miniature handkerchief sent home (see **Figure 17**).



Figures 15—17:

Figure 15: French military script;  
 Figure 16: A typical card insert;  
 Figure 17: a miniature handkerchief

Figure 20: “Tommy” Barrow of Figure 19 was writing to his daughter.—Miss E. Paul of Barrow on Trent, England. The card was likely produced before 1917.

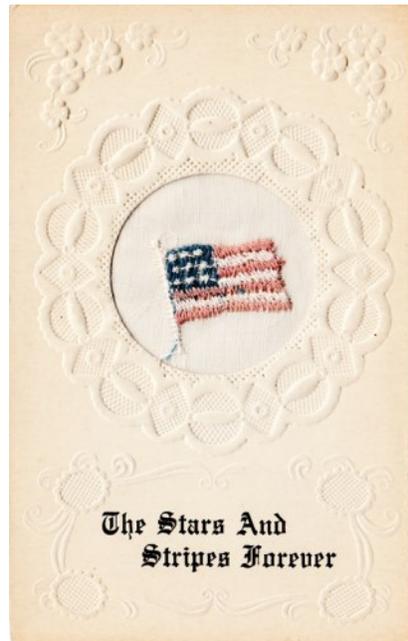
Figure 21: German language postcard praising Germany.

A variant of the flap postcard became very popular. It took the form of postcards into which photos could be inserted, as in Figures 18 - 20.



Figure 18:  
 This Belgian soldier did not record his name or the mailing address on the reverse of the card.

Figure 19 (below): Whereas the Tommy did so, as he was writing his daughter



Before closing, it's well to remember that among the postal history of embroidered silk postcards can be found those produced in Germany as well as those manufactured in the U.S. German production of such WW I silks ceased soon after the onset of the war, and the remaining stock was used up, as in Figure 21

Figure 22: At the left, an American produced embroidered postcard.

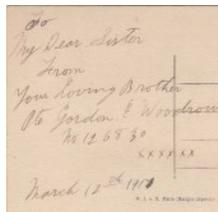
A barrage of “WWI silks,” in conclusion, are shown for the readers enjoyment. The captions explain the postcards and their postal history. We hope you’ve enjoyed this look into a somewhat aesthetic aspect of the Great War, and we thank Dasa Metzler profusely for having made a very small part of her collection available to you, as well as for her initial research into the subject.



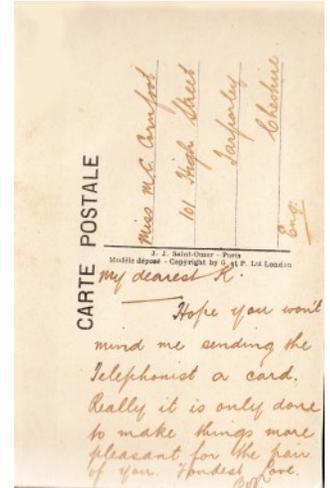
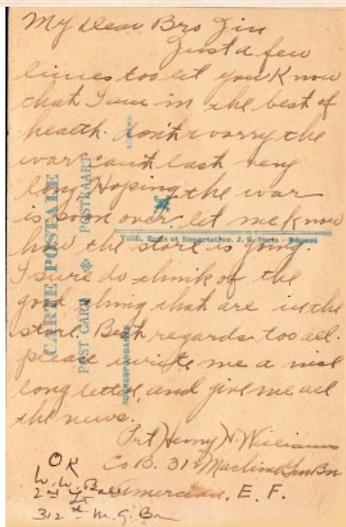
Figures 27: Scenes of the front-lines, as well as significant battles of the war (Arras, Ypres) that were fought on the Western front, are uncommon.



Figures 22—24: Pvt. Gordon Woodrow was writing his sister (Edna) in March 1916, recording for posterity his serial # of 126830



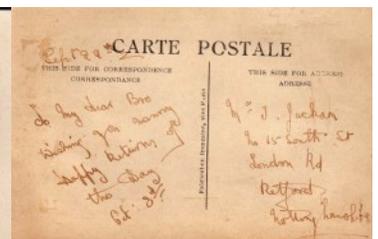
Figures 25 and 26 (below): As is evident by the article, “WWI Silks” took on a highly patriotic theme; in this case emphasizing the number of years the war had been fought. Pvt. Harry Williams of Co. B, 312th Machine Gun Battalion was writing to his brother Jim, with Lt. W.W. Ball of his battalion censoring the card.



Figures 28 and 29: Cards commemorated military and naval formations as well. In this instance, the writer was sending a card to Miss Cornfoot of Cheshire, England.



Figures 30—32: The end of the war brought an end to the large scale production of the cards. In this example of a British American airplane a brother is writing to J. Jackson (probably in 1918) at Retford, Nottinghamshire, England, having inserted a card beneath the flap Figures 31 & 32 below. By 1920, the sale of such cards petered out, never again to reach its golden years level.



**Special MPHS Tour of Lower Manhattan:**

I'm planning a tour of Lower Manhattan for those of you going to New York 2016, and who would like a break from the Show on Thursday (June 2). What's special about this!

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**Found on the Editor's Desk—and it's worth passing along.**



The MPHS Table at New York 2016 is booth number 1280. It will be continually staffed by MPHS members—you among them if you'd like to volunteer and provide respite to some of our stalwart representatives. Please contact Ed Dubin if you'd like to help. The MPHS Board meeting will be held on Tuesday morning (9 - 12 noon, Room 1E17), followed in the afternoon (1 to 4 pm; Room 1E15) by the MPHS General Meeting and Dan Telep's presentation on the NVA/VC postal system. On Wednesday morning (10 to 12, Room 1E11), Sergio Lugo will be presenting his talk on the Social Welfare Organizations of World War I that worked with the military. All are welcome to these MPHS activities.

The U.S. Postal Service has released the subjects for the daily postmarks available during WSS-NY 2016. One of them is Armed Forces Day

Military related postal history can be found throughout the Javits Center. Your patronage, in particular, **of the following dealers is most appreciated, as they represent organizations that have helped sponsor this MPHS Special Edition.** Please introduce yourself to them as a member of the MPHS.



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## What's Coming To You In Future *Bulletins*

In addition to our informative 12 pages of regular columns, the following are slated for the pages of the next 4 issues:

WINTER (# 1; January to March, release about Feb. 10):

- The Angels of Bataan
- Part II: The NVA and VC Postal System
- A Secret Writing Laboratory in WW II
- Soldiers will be Soldiers
- Maximizing the C Ration
- Matchbook Postcards of WW II
- Tientsin, China
- An Unusual Stampless Naval Communication Cover
- MPHS Auction # 210

SPRING (# 2, April to June; NY 2016 Special Edition), release about April 10:

- On the Trail During the Mexican War (1846)
- Ferment on the 1916 American Scene
- Before a War: U.S. in 1956 Southeast Asia
- Postal History of German East Africa in WW I
- Decoration Day as Forerunner to Memorial Day
- Mitsui Corporation—2 Different Wars

- 1916—The Third War Year
- The WWI Ubiquitous “I am quite well...” Cards
- MPHS Auction # 211

SUMMER (# 3, July to Sept, 2016; release about 9/10/16)

- Part III: The NVA and VC Postal System
- Just Trying to Keep Everyone Honest—Canadian
- The Battles of Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes
- ABA Airlines *GRIPEN* Shot Down by German Fighter
- British Officer's Mail from the Cradle of Civilization
- Brusilov Campaign: Its Impact on World History –Pt. I
- MPHS Auction # 212

FALL (# 4, October to Dec., 2016, release about 11/10/16)

- o Part IV: The NVA and VC Postal System
- Christmas Cards, Part II (Only If the Holiday Cards webpage not up and running)
- The German U-Boat War of 1914-1918
- WW I Cover as a Billboard - Too Much to Understand
- Brusilov Campaign: Its Impact on World History: Pt. II
- General Eichelberger
- American Airmen in Italy: 1917 - 1918
- BOAC Service to Sweden during WW II and the Crash of the Kinnekulle, Sweden

### E-mails to the Editor

Your thoughts on the articles and presentations in the Bulletin are solicited. So, how about a novel idea for this solicitation. Why don't you send in a thumbs up or thumbs down on what you've read in our most recent Bulletins, and this one.

And BTW, MAKE IT POSITIVE. We don't need a rehash of our favorite Smokey Bear capped D.I. motivational practices. What is needed is encouragement about their articles in terms of the facts and issues. Leave the pointing fingers to the editor re. grammar, sentence structure, totally incorrect observations, punctuation, minor discrepancies, font size etc. What we really are seeking from you is the creation of a positive environment that encourages writers. Thanks for appreciating that need. And for this issue, thumbs up or down on:



- |                        |   |   |
|------------------------|---|---|
| • Articles             | X | X |
| • Coverage:            | X | X |
| • Auction :            | X | X |
| • Article substance:   | X | X |
| • Multi-part articles: | X | X |
| • More Scans           | X | X |

**Additional comments via e-mail** (to [lugopspe@q.com](mailto:lugopspe@q.com)):

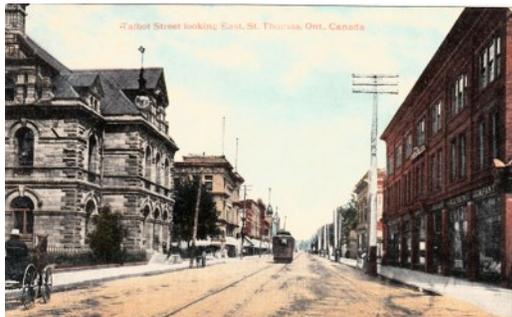
*From Larry Nelson:* *August 20, 2015*

**Re: Quixotic Issue Comment Re. Ryukyus Cover.** In the latest bulletin (# 3) you raised a question about 21 BPO (page 22) and what it might be. BPO's handled the incoming and outgoing mail for the APO's in their area of responsibility, in this case Okinawa. In Jim Forte's APO book he states "This Army postal unit may not have used a distinctive postmarking device." This is clearly not the case from your cover. Also, in Bart Billings book "U. S. Postal Machines of the Army Post Offices WWII" Vol. 1 at page103 he shows other examples. He states that 21 BPO serviced APOs 239, 239-2 and 331.

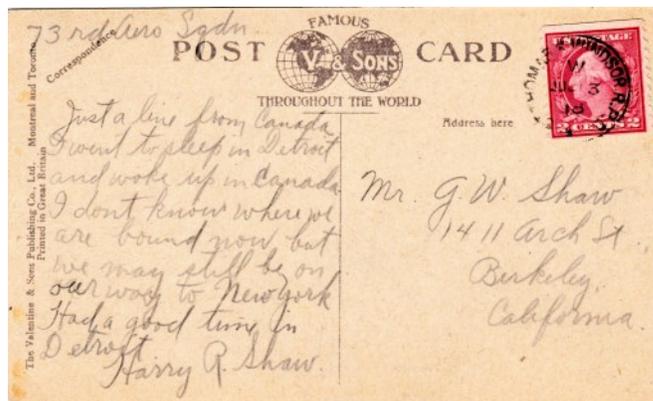
*Reply:* Thanks Larry, I was unaware of such BPOs. The Ryukyus cover has proven very revealing.

*From: Bob Swanson* *Sept. 2, 2016*

**Re: Ontario, Canada article** in the latest bulletin (# 3), a postcard of the city (front and reverse) is provided of an American soldier going through the town at virtually the same time as the soldier in the article.



### E-mails to the Editor (cont'd)



*Reply:* Thank you Bob for this complement to the article. .

*From Newton Crouch* *August 20, 2015*

**Re: WWI XMAS Silks** Unaware of this issue's article on Embroidered Postcards, Newton sent in two scans of WW I material related to the Christmas Cards also discussed herein. The two silk cards are below, while his Christmas cards from soldiers appears in the spreadsheet on pg. 10.

*Reply:* Thank you, Newton.



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## APO/DPO/FPO Openings & Closings

by David Kent

These APO, FPO and DPO actions were announced in the Postal Bulletin between August & October 2015. Announcements advise Postal Service staff that they may now accept mail addressed to numbers listed as “Active,” and may no longer accept mail addressed to numbers listed as “Closed.” Actual dates of operation may differ from the dates given. Some numbers may be Mailing Addresses Only rather than representing an operating post office.

TYPE	#	ACTION	DATE
APO	09308	Open	9/17/15
APO	09333	Open	9/17/15
APO	09348	Open	10/15/15
APO	09378	Open	9/17/15
APO	09802	Close	9/3/15
APO	09815	Open	9/3/15
APO	34044	Close	8/6/15
APO	96208	Open	8/20/15
APO	96251	Open	9/3/15
FPO	96624	Close	8/6/15

Normally the effective date of an action is the publication date of that issue of the *Postal Bulletin*. Exceptions would be marked with an asterisk\*.

APO 09802 was at the Oman Air Base in Al Udeid, Qatar. FPO 96624 was assigned to the Navy’s last amphibious assault ship, *USS Peleliu*, which was decommissioned last March. It’s hard to guess whether it took this long to wind down the ship’s business, or the responsible people are not reporting things promptly. The opening of APO 96208 was reported twice (Aug. 20 and Sept. 3), but the earlier date is probably more accurate.

Trying to find the locations of newly-opened APOs is frustrating. NATO recently opened new military centers in eastern Europe such as Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Romania, all formerly part of the Soviet Empire, but staffs at each center are small (about 40 people), and as NATO bases not all of those are Americans. Internet sources imply that Americans at these facilities are receiving mail through the local American Embassy.



Auction Manager Thierry Delespesse is seeking higher grade consignments for Auction # 211 in the MPHS Special Edition due out in April 2016. Please contact him for more details at [Apocovers@aim.com](mailto:Apocovers@aim.com)

## Editor’s Notes

by Sergio Lugo

Manuscripts/illustrations for publication are welcome. A **writer’s guide** to article content, format and preferred layout is available by contacting me directly. Thanks for your consideration and please take up the challenge. You are the lifeblood of the MPHS *Bulletin*, as readers and authors. You’ll be encouraged at the reception you will receive. Please submit your article to my home address by the dates shown below to Sergio Lugo, 1190 S. Grape, Denver, CO. 80246. Phone: 303-691-0393, or digitally to my e-mail address at [lugopspe@q.com](mailto:lugopspe@q.com). No responsibility is accepted for material submitted. Enclose stamped, self addressed return envelope with correspondence for any return mail.

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### DEADLINES

Issue	Article Deadline to Editor and Revisions	Issue Timeframe for <i>Bulletin</i> in Member Hands
Winter	February 20 to 25	Mid March
Spring	March 20—25	Mid April NY2016 Special Edition
Summer	July 20 to 25	Mid August
Fall	October 20 to 25	Mid November

There is no auction in this issue at the request of the Auction Manager, Thierry Delespesse, who needs a break during the Fall issue. The auction reappears in the Winter issue.

- Sergio

## Secretary’s Report

by Louis Fiset

Membership July 27, 2015	405
New Members	+6
Reinstated	+1
Resigned	0
Deceased	-1
Membership October 30, 2015	411

### **Please welcome these new members**

3617	Scheer, Andre, The Netherlands
3618	Telep, Daniel, Sewickley, PA.
3619	Sullivan, Mike, Albuquerque, NM
3620	Holmes, Charles, Chicago, IL.
3621	Holder III, Franklin P., Eastman, GA.
3622	Palay, Myron, Lakewood, OH.

### **Reinstated**

2741	Becker, Jonathan W.
------	---------------------

### **Taps for Honored Members:**

3173	Burgers, Hendrick
------	-------------------

Promote your Society with the many collecting, and non-collecting, acquaintances that you meet, so that they too, can enjoy the benefits of membership. A membership application is on our website. Dues info. is on pg. 3 of this issue. New applicants can join directly from there with convenient online payment by Paypal. Forms can be obtained from Louis Fiset, PO Box 15927, Seattle, WA. 98115-0927 e-mail: [fiset@u.washington.edu](mailto:fiset@u.washington.edu)

## Book Review

by Alan Warren

*Return to Sender: Devices Used to Identify Service Suspended Mails during WW II*, second edition, by Michael B. Deery. 344 pages, 8 ½ by 11 inches, spiral bound, Wallaceburg, Ontario, Canada, 2015, ISBN 978-0-9869145-1-5. Postpaid to USA addresses: hard copy \$30, from Charles LaBlonde, 15091 Ridgefield Lane, Colorado Springs CO 80921-3554, or on CD in PDF format \$13.50 from Michael Deery, 28726 Island View Road, Wallaceburg ON N8A 4K9, Canada. For book or CD pricing to other countries, contact Deery (michderr@kent.net).

This second edition expands the information related to devices and markings applied to returned mail during the Second World War by 80 pages over the 2011 first edition. The scope is worldwide and includes both Allied and Axis powers, and is presented geographically by country. Mail was suspended for several reasons, due to rapidly changing regulations, either within the country of posting, while in transit by interception, or at the country of destination. Aspects of suspended mail include service interrupted, mail not forwardable, refused, no service available, or diversion from air to surface mail.

RETURN TO SENDER  
Devices used to identify  
Service Suspended mails during WWII



Michael Deery  
Wallaceburg, Ontario, Canada

Second edition 2015

The introductory pages include a list of acronyms and abbreviations, and explain the organization of the catalog. The devices focus on handstamp, label, machine cancel, memo or enclosed slip, and manuscript items. Categories are generic mail service suspended, mail service suspended or disrupted, and air mail service suspended. The figure numbering of the first edition is retained and where new images are introduced they carry new numbers beginning with 175. There are over 250 cover illustrations.

Each device is illustrated and its measurements given in millimeters, and a catalog number, earliest and

latest recorded use, color, and specific notes. Rarity factors are not presented although the author does give the number of examples studied for each entry from his database.

The first section shows an overview of generic devices that imply suspended mail service. These include pointing finger handstamps and other labels or markings denoting return for a variety of reasons. The generic markings are shown for nine different countries. In some cases the covers were censored as well. The time period is just before and just after the declaration of war.

The remaining sections of the catalog present the suspended mail services and devices used throughout the war for the British Commonwealth nations, United States, European countries, Central and South America, and Asia. In a number of examples the destination along with the actual route of a cover are shown. Throughout the book there are discussions that provide background, general commentary, or postal details that enrich our understanding.

An appendix lists a few unidentified markings for which the author has seen only one example, and he provides a few details about the pieces but seeks more information. Another appendix lists all figures in numerical order with a brief description and page number. All illustrations are in black and white. Four pages are devoted to an extensive bibliography.

Pages lack a header with the title of the book and the section that is under discussion. The page numbering has even numbers on the right hand pages instead of the usual convention of odd pages on the right.

There is an enormous wealth of information in this catalog, not only defining the various returned mail or suspended mail circumstances, but especially the images of the devices that were used for these services. Many of the covers shown are also censored, but the censorship markings are beyond the scope of this excellent catalog.

## Philatelic Militaria

by Alan Warren

[The following articles appeared in recent issues of a variety of journals and may be of interest to military postal history collectors. Copies of the complete articles can usually be obtained through the American Philatelic Research Library, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte PA 16823.]

Robert Pinet describes some **mail of Belgian refugees during World War I** in the July/August *Canadian Philatelist*. In the August *Airpost Journal*, John Symons shows two covers sent to a 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant from his wife in Michigan in 1945. He was injured in the Battle of the Bulge and moved several times until he ended up at Fort Sam Houston hospital in San Antonio. The first letter followed him with a number of **auxiliary markings** until it finally reached him. A second letter took a similar journey before reaching him at the hospital. It bore a marking that he should advise the sender of his change of address!

Jerome Jarnick reports on the **Royal Canadian Air Force “Y” Wing** during WW II in the May issue of the *Canadian Military Mail Study Group Bulletin* of BNAPS. It was actually based on U.S. soil in 1943, specifically Alaska’s Annette Island, and used the U.S. APO 935. The mission was to protect the important port and rail terminal of Prince Rupert.

Jesse Robitaille offers the first of a two-part series on **military postal services of Canada** in the August 25 issue of *Canadian Stamp News*. During the War of 1812 a plea was made to provide mail service for ground troops. In 1815 an MPO was established at Fort Chambly in Quebec. A more formal approach was taken in 1911 when the Canadian Postal Corps was established, later known as the Canadian Forces Postal Service (CFPS).

David Hobden illustrates **Canada’s second oldest soldier’s letter** in the August *Newsletter* of the Canadian Military Mail Study Group. It was sent by an officer in Quebec to an enlisted man in Montreal, dated January 9, 1800. The officer was actually sending the enclosed message to his wife, but asked the enlisted man to convey the letter, thus saving 8d in postage! In the same issue David Hanes shows several covers that bear **markings related to Military Detention Barracks**.

Kevin Lowther writes about the **American volunteers who served in World War I** in the September *American Stamp Dealer & Collector*. He describes the efforts as seen by Canada, Great Britain and France. In the same issue John Hotchner offers the first part in a series on **United Nations Forces in the Korean War**. This part looks at the involvement of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, Great Britain, Greece, and India, illustrated with a cover in each example.

John Burnett begins a new series on little known facts of WW II and Canada in the July-September *BNA Topics*. Due to the large number of British officers held by Germany after the evacuation at Dunkirk, an arrangement was made to **lend Canadian officers to Great Britain**, known as the CANLOAN operation. Burnett provides some clues to identify CANLOAN related covers.

In the same issue Jonathan Johnson describes the **conversion of the Grand Hotel in La Panne, Belgium into a hospital** known as Ambulance de l’Ocean in 1915. Canada sent a group of volunteer nurses for a 6-months tour of duty at the hospital, following which more than half of them enlisted in the Canadian Army Medical Corps. Some of the nurses’ mail is shown.

The 1940-1941 **travels of postal inspector Olaf Thorp in Norway, during the German occupation**, are summarized based on his memoirs in the September *Norwegian War and Field Post Journal*. Frank Acevedo presents part 3 of his series on **Puerto Rico** and the Spanish American War in the third quarter 2015 issue of *Possessions*. He lists the last **thirteen unnumbered military postal stations** and shows their location on a map. A short de-

scription of each of these stations includes one cover for each one along with occupation date and opening date.

Dave Hill writes about one man’s **post card correspondence, namely a German soldier during WW I** in the October issue of *Stamp Lover*. He shows some postal markings on these cards including “Cöln-Deutz,” “Hafenkompanie Zeebrugge,” “Starkstromabteilung,” “K.D. Feldpost des Marine-Korps,” and “Kaiserliche Marine Schiffspost.” All are from 1915-1916.

Barry Brown provides information about **war savings stamps of Canada** in the August issue of *War Times*, newsletter of the World War II Study Group of BNAPS. Author Daniel Telep, who served with the U. S. Marine Corps in Vietnam, writes about **postal history and related artifacts of North Vietnam** during that period in the October *American Philatelist*. In the same issue of the *AP*, the late Doug Lehmann describes the **war ration books and stamps that consumers had to use during World War II** in the United States.

Wolfgang Baldus recounts the story of the **so-called Narvik stamp** in the October *German Postal Specialist*. The battles of Narvik resulted in Germany taking the area when the British and French defenders withdrew in May 1940. Sometime after the Second World War the Narvik stamp appeared, depicting the Narvik shield and dated 1940 with a swastika and numerals 25 and +50 but no currency. They were printed in the margins of Hitler commemorative sheets on watermarked paper. A second variety appeared years later in a darker blue on unwatermarked paper, printed in sheets of 9 (3 x 3). Multiples are scarce. Covers bearing these labels are poorly designed creations intended for the unknowing collector.

## On the Show Circuit

By Alan WAreN

[Note: The purpose of this column is to bring to the attention of MPHS members the awards obtained in recent shows for exhibits that are basically about military postal history. This may include exhibits by non-members. While there are many non-military related exhibits by members, these are not recorded here.]

**Andrew Urushima** received a gold and the APS 1900-1940 medal of excellence at National Topical Stamp Show in Oregon in August with his **“The Games of the XIIth Olympiad.”** **Dave Kent** won a vermeil for his **“The Development of the American Submarine”** along with the **ATA Ships on Stamps Unit award**.

**Ed Dubin** took a gold and the MPHS award at APS StampShow in Grand Rapids, Mich., in August with his **“Civilians and German and Austro-Hungarian POWs Interned in the U.S. during World War I.”** Another

gold went to **Andrew Mazzara** for “**British and Guernsey Stamps and Their Use during German Occupation 1940-45.**”

At the same show a gold along with the AAPE novice award went to **Daniel Ryterband** for “**A Country Divided: Effects of the American Civil War on the Mails,**” and another gold along with a Polonus Philatelic Society gold went to **Roman Sobus** for “**Internal Camp Post at Offizierlager IIC - Woldenberg 1942-1945.**”

Continuing with StampShow awards, in the single frame category, **Andrew Urushima** won a gold and a Polonus Philatelic Society gold for “**The 1944 Gross Born POW Olympics.**” Another gold and the Canal Zone Study Group award went to **David Zemer** for “**World War I Censorship of Mail in the Canal Zone.**”

**Al Kugel** took a vermeil for “**Allied Forces in the Baltic Area in the Aftermath of World War I.**” In the literature competition of this show **Norman Gruenzner** received a silver for the MPHS publication *Combat and Special Operations of United States Motor Torpedo Boats during World War Two.*

Several military related exhibits were seen at Balpex in Maryland in September. **David & Laurie Bernstein** won a vermeil, an AAPE award of honor, and the MPHS certificate for “**A Postal History of the German Battleship Bismarck.**” They received another vermeil for “**Taffy 3 – Two Hours of Guts and Gumption.**” At the same show **N. O. Goode** won a gold and the APS 1940-1980 medal of excellence for “**A Message to the Enemy.**” Another gold and the Postal History Society award went to the **Pollock Family** for “**The Role of the Union Navy in the American Civil War.**”

A vermeil and the MPHS award went to **Steve Henderson** at the Omaha Stamp Show in September for his “**They Were Soldiers Once: Vietnam War Postal History.**” **Henry Sweets** also took a vermeil for “**U.S. Navy in Asiatic Waters 1899-1917.**” **Phil Miller** won a silver and the Germany Philatelic Society’s special award for “**Foreign Volunteers in the German Military in WW II,**” and another silver for “**German Afrika Korps in WW II.**”

Several military related exhibits were also entered at Bnapex held in September in Niagara Falls. The Sam Nickle award for best military postal history exhibit along with a gold went to **David Hobden** for “**In Defense of the Border: Canadian Military Mails 1667-1885.**” Another gold and the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society award was taken by **Earle Covert** with his “**Armed Forces Air Letters.**”

Gold medals also went to **Darcy Hickson** for “**Sewell Camp: The White City, 1915,**” to **Jon Johnson** for “**Canadian Military Hospitals at Sea,**” and to **Michael Powell** for “**Interned in Canada.**” **Doreen Fitzgerald** received a silver for “**World War II: Messages Home in**

**Silk.**”

At the Milcopex show in Milwaukee in October, **Jerry Miller** won a gold, the AAPE plan and headings award, the Rossica award, and the show Reserve Grand for his “**The Evolution of ‘Via Siberia’ Mail 1897-1945.**” **Jaroslav Verner** took a gold, the MPHS award, the APS 1900-1940 medal of excellence, and the Society for Czechoslovak Philately award with his “**Mail of the Czechoslovak Legion Organizations in Russia 1914-1929.**”

At the same show **Al Kugel** received a gold for “**The Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1925.**” Al also won a gold and the U.S. Stamp Society statue of freedom medal for his “**The AEF Booklet Pane Stamps of 1917.**”

Al Kugel took a gold, the MPHS award, and the Indiana Stamp Club 20<sup>th</sup> century award at Indypex in Indianapolis in October with his “**Postal History of the American Forces in China 1900-1941.**” Another gold went to **Charles La Blonde** for “**World War II German and Italian Sailor’s Mail from Goa to the Geneva Red Cross.**” **John R. Becker III** received a vermeil and the Robert H. Rhodehamel memorial Indiana showcase award with his “**Hoosier Contributions to World War II.**” **Robert Zeigler’s** “**The International Refugee Organization’s Geneva, Switzerland Office 1948-1952**” display was in the court of honor.

**Louis Fiset** received a gold and the AAPE plan and headings excellence award at Seapex in Tukwila, Wash., in September with his “**Mail between USA and France in World War II, 1939-1948.**” Another gold at that show together with the MPHS award and the APS 1940-1980 medal of excellence award went to **Kathryn Johnson** for “**America’s Victory Mail: World War II V-Mail 1942-1945.**” **Michael Dixon** received a vermeil for “**World War II British Military Postal History as shown by the use of Air Mail Letter Cards and Air Letters.**”

At the same show **Gerard Menge** took a silver and the People’s Choice award for “**Austria 1938 – Anschluss.**” A silver-bronze went to **Bradley Fritts** for his “**German Colonies in Pacific and Aftermath of WW I.**” **Allen Klein** won a gold and the MPHS award at Sescal in Los Angeles in October for his “**Salute to U.S.S. Macon.**” Another gold, the Lighthouse Stamp Society award, and the American Philatelic Congress award went to **Louis Fiset** for “**MS Gripsholm: Ocean liner, Cruise Ship, and Mercy Ship.**”

Louis Fiset also received a vermeil for “**Great Britain Interns Her Refugees from the Third Reich 1940-1942.**” Vermeil awards were also received by **Peter Melz** for “**Boer-Side Philately of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902,**” and by **K. Joe Youssefi** for “**Early Occupations and Interventions in Persia 1812-1880.**”

## Stars & Strife:

### Belgian Congo Forces in the Middle East

Regis Hoffman and Thomas Richards

This installment examines the Belgian Congo forces operating with the British Middle East Force (M.E.F.) during WW II. The cover illustrated in Figure 1 is addressed to the famous actress Dorothy Lamour in Hollywood.



**Figure 1.** Registered cover to Dorothy Lamour from a Belgian Congo forces member attached to the M.E.F.

The cover itself “has character”:

- The Belgian Congo stamps on this registered cover are cancelled with a boxed “Poste Militaire – No. 101” marking of March 25, 1944.
- The simple registration label (lower left) reads RPM 101 MEF – No. 711.”
- The cover bears a British crown “PASSED BY CENSOR” mark.
- The letter was subject to civil censorship in the Belgian Congo, indicated by the straight line “CENSURE CONGO BELGE” mark.
- The cover was additionally censored in the United States (most likely Miami, Florida backstamp).

The British Middle East Command was established in Cairo, Egypt during June of 1939. Its control extended over Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, British Somaliland, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Libya and Greece. Allied forces, under the British Middle East Command, included units from the United Kingdom and the British colonies of British East Africa, British Somaliland, British West Africa, the Indian Empire, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, the Mandate of Palestine, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Sudan. Ethiopian ir-

regular forces, the Free French and Belgian Congo troops of the *Force Publique* also served under the M.E.F..

Congolese soldiers of the *Force Publique* were involved in fighting Italian forces, suffering 500 casualties during the WW II East African Campaign and were instrumental in forcing Italian forces out of Abyssinia. Detachments of Congolese soldiers also served in the Middle East and in Burma. In total, the *Force Publique* comprised approximately 40,000 men.

The British forces provided the Congolese troops with a military post office assigned the code “101”. This office was located in Cairo, Egypt and relied on the British Base Post Office. Some regulations on mail included:

- Private mail must be written only in clear language and in one language; if a language other than English is used it must be indicated on the envelope by writing the words 'in French,' etc.;
- All correspondence must be examined and signed by an officer before being able to receive the Censor’s seal; this visa will be made by signing at the bottom of the text and on the addressed side of the envelope;



**Figure 2** shows a 1936 studio publicity photograph of Dorothy Lamour receiving a bundle of fan mail. The inscription on the reverse reads: “Mail Day in Hollywood – mail in Hollywood can be received almost anywhere. Dorothy Lamour leaves the administration building at the Paramount Studio, and walks into a ‘mail room boy’ who greets her with an armful of mail which her admiring public has sent.”

- The officers and under-officers of Law and Order may examine their own letters; this also applies to female personnel.
- After 'franking,' the correspondence will be delivered to the officer charged with the application of the seal of the Censor; correspondence at units without seals of Censure will, after 'franking,' be forwarded to the closest unit which does possess a seal of Censure.

Actress Dorothy Lamour was one of Hollywood's most popular stars and is most famous for her roles in a series of *Road* pictures co-starring Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. Her trademark was the sarong in which she was often lightly clad in the role of an exotic South Sea heroine.

The Hollywood studios actively encouraged the writing of fan letters, and publicity photographs such as **Figure 2** promulgated the illusion that stars actually read their fan mail. The sheer volume of fan letters precluded this – many stars received thousands of letters per week. Hollywood studio fan mail departments processed the majority of fan letters.

The MPHS Auction allows you to fill your postal history needs at reasonable prices. Help the Society by donating materials (we are a 501 c (3) organization), or purchasing lots. You won't regret it. No auction this issue, will be renewed in next issue.

**LOOKING FOR** info. on **U.S. Forces mail on the island of FIJI** during WW II. Specialist collector has a wide variety of such mail involving the island, and is looking for specialists having similar interests in Fiji OR U.S. Forces mail to commiserate with, explore aspects of the materials he has that he doesn't understand, and also to purchase or exchange imagery of material. Please contact Bryan Jones at [<baj73@btinternet.com>](mailto:baj73@btinternet.com)

**LOOKING FOR** letters/postal history related to **MOE BERG**, major league baseball catcher in the 1930s. An iconoclast stamp collector, **Berg** was also a spy extraordinaire, whose espionage benefitted the U.S. in WW II and Cold War. Author is searching for material that will complement his article on this most extraordinary of clandestine heroes. If you have material to sell or to contribute to the project, contact Steve Henderson at [vshendeson@aol.com](mailto:vshendeson@aol.com)

**LOOKING FOR ADS** are one time per year/no charge ads by individuals undertaking research or seeking out materials for their special interests. These are not paid classified ads.

**LOOKING FOR** Military Postal History **Material for inclusion in future MPHS Auctions**, either through consignment or donation. Not too worry—this issue's lack of an auction was a deliberate decision to relieve the auction manager of the demands for one issue. The auction will be raring to go again in the next issue. Contact Thierry Delespesse at [Apocovers@aim.com](mailto:Apocovers@aim.com)

**LOOKING FOR WANTED** – Scans or to buy **Tobacco Mailing Instructions, Supplementary Package & Tobacco Instructions, and License/Order labels**, issued by the Office of the **Provost Marshall General**, contact [peterburrows@btinternet.com](mailto:peterburrows@btinternet.com)

## INITIAL BRITISH POSTAGE DUE ON WORLD WAR I OVERSEAS SOLDIERS' MAIL and FIELD SERVICE POSTCARDS

by R.D. Martorelli

Among the many departments at the General Post Office in London in the early 20th century were the Inland Section and the Foreign Branch, aka Foreign Section. The Inland Section primarily dealt with letters, packets, and newspapers posted at or arriving in London. It was responsible for canceling the mail matter, assessing rates and services, and sorting and dispatching mail within London and outwards to the rest of the United Kingdom. The Foreign Branch primarily dealt with dispatching of mails from overseas, including assessing the rates and determining if there was any postage due. This work was a difficult one, as rates varied from different countries within the British Empire as well as whether the letter was conveyed by a private ship or a regular packet, or subject to a special postal treaty. The introduction of the Universal Postal Union and more standardized rates made the work easier, but there was still much to know and apply.

Both departments used a similar looking postage due handstamp containing the amount due in large characters at the top, with the department initials (I.S. or F.B.) underneath. While in general the duties of these two departments were separated by the origin of the mail, in practice, the foreign-origin mail was sometimes processed by either department. In any large accumulation of postage due mail, it is common to find an Inland Section postage due marking applied to a foreign-origin letter or postcard.

Under the agreements made at the 1906 UPU Congress of Rome, the prevailing international letter rates in 1914 were set at 25 centimes (standard currency of the UPU) for a 20 gram (approximately 1 oz) letter and 10 centimes for a postcard. At the conversion rate of one British penny to 10 centimes, this meant that mail to or from Great Britain had to be prepaid at an equivalent of 2 ½ d for a letter and 1d for a postcard. The recipient of unpaid or underpaid international mail was charged double the postage deficiency.

On the illustrated February 1914 letter (see **Figure 1**) from England to France, the postage paid of 1d was equivalent to 10 centimes, but the franking was underpaid by 1 ½d/15 centimes. In accord with the UPU rules, the French Post Office charged double the 15 centimes shortfall. It collected 30 centimes from the addressee of the letter, as evidenced by the postage due stamps. On the 1914 postcard from the United States to England (see **Figure 2**), the postage paid of 1 cent was equivalent to 5 centimes, but franking was underpaid by 1 cent/5 centimes. Following the UPU rates, the British Post Office charged double the 5 centimes shortfall. It collected 10 centimes from the addressee of this postal card as evidenced by the 1d postage due stamp.

Such was the state of postal rates prior to the assass-

ination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenbergthe, in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. Reacting to the assassination, Austria



**Figure 1 :** In this pre-war example, the French assessed 30 centimes postage due from the addressee.



**Figure 2:** In another pre-war example, a U.S. postal card was assessed 10 centimes (2 cents) from the addressee, which doubled the shortfall.

declared war on Serbia. Russia, in turn, declared war on Austria in support of Serbia. That action triggered Germany's treaty provisions with Austria, and Germany declared war on Russia. In accordance with its treaty with Russia, France declared war on Germany. Once it was clear that the Germans had invaded Belgium, Great Britain declared war on Germany and Austria. The military action coming from these declarations of war was the deployment of armies. Russia began its mobilization on July 29, 1914, France and Germany in August, and Great Britain on August 4.

On August 6, the British Imperial General Staff made the decision to send the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to France. It comprised 150,000 soldiers in two corps and a cavalry division. An advance party arrived in France on August 7 and the main body of the BEF crossed to the French ports of Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais between August 12 and 17. They moved forward to a concentration area at Mauberge, France, near the Belgian border.

There the BEF assembled by August 20, about 20 miles from Mons, Belgium.

When the BEF first arrived in France, Field Post Offices were established and a very high volume of letters and postcards were sent and received by the British "Tommys." During the first month of war, BEF troops were granted a concession letter rate for mail to England at the domestic rate of 1d. Several sources consulted state that there was only initially one rate prescribed for either a letter or a postcard.

In the first weeks of British involvement in the fighting, troops were often unable to obtain stamps. On the receipt of an unstamped letter from a "Tommy" on active service, the recipient had to pay the postage due. As noted earlier, the postal rules called for a doubling of the amount of the postage due. As a war time concession, the amount payable was adjusted to the simple amount due, without a penalty surcharge.



**Figure 3:** Very early example of a stamped postage due from the BEF's deployment.

In looking at examples of unstamped early mail, which was contrary to postal regulations at that time, it is evident that there is inconsistent treatment of the lack of postage. The illustrated August 19 postcard (see **Figure 3**) was mailed just after the arrival of the BEF in France. The circular "PASSED BY CENSOR 199" mark was the first design used by the BEF. It was replaced by a square box marking in November 1914. Mailed from Army Base Post Office "A" (above the cancel date) at one of the three ports, this card received a "1/2 d F.B." mark to note the postage due. This was the simple domestic rate of 1/2 d for postcards, and was collected by the 1/2 d stamp.

The August 20 letter (see **Figure 4**), on the other hand, was mailed from Army Post Office 41. It did not have the required 1d stamp. On arrival in England, the letter was charged with postage due, at the single rate, as noted by the "1d. I.S." marking.

The August 22 letter shown in **Figure 5** was mailed from Army Base Post Office "B" and censored by the same person as the August 19 postcard (**Figure 3**). It

was treated similarly to the August 20 cover (**Figure 4**), with the postage due collected by a 1d stamp. Lastly, the postcard dated August 25 was mailed from Army Base Post Office "A" completely without postage. In contrast to the August 19 postcard, this card received a "1d.I.S." mark to note the postage due. This was double the domestic rate of 1/2 d for postcards, and collected by a 1d stamp.



**Figure 4:** Another early example of a postage due from the BEF's deployment.



**Figure 5:** Cover treated similarly to **Figure 4** cover, and shows a postage due stamp used to collect the deficiency

It is reasonable to conclude, that in the confusion of the times, the London GPO initially assumed that since letters from the BEF were to be only charged postage due



**Figure 6:** Almost a carbon copy of **Figure 3**.

for the domestic letter rate, then postcards would be rated due at the domestic postcard rate. This appears to have been clarified in the subsequent two week period until the end of August 1914.

Both **Figures 6** and **3** were mailed from a soldier in the Divisional Trains of the 2nd Division, I Corps, BEF. The 2nd came into existence as a permanent formation in 1809. It was one of the first British formations in France at the beginning of August 1914. It remained on the Western Front throughout the war, taking part in all the major battles, including the Battle of Mons on August 23-24, and the retreat afterwards when the French Fifth Army withdrew, dangerously exposing the BEF right flank.

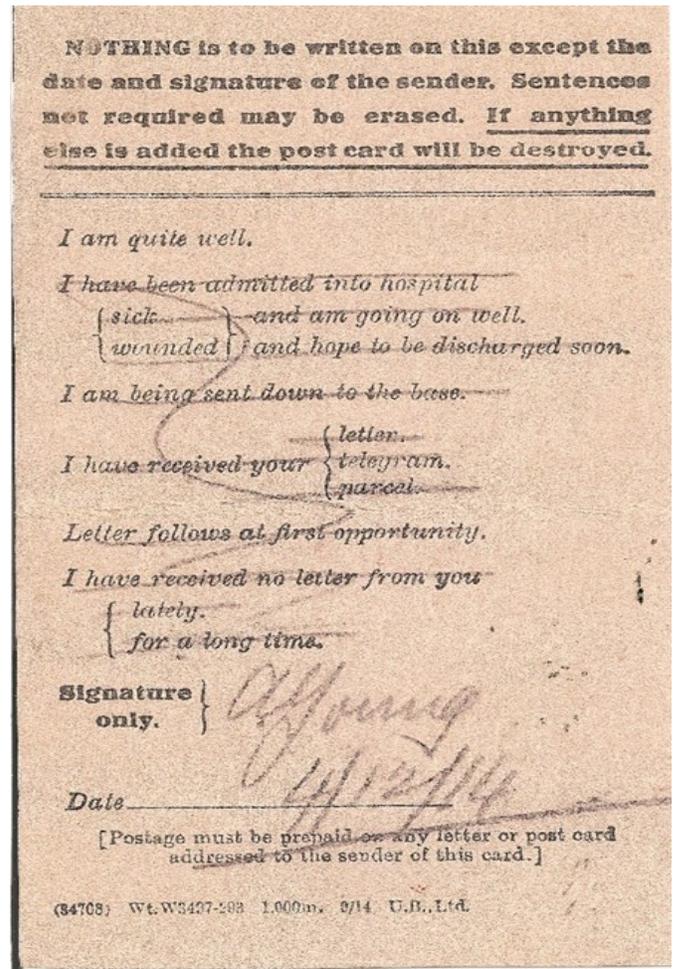


**Figure 7:** Cover reflecting the British post offices recognition of the futility of collecting postage due on “Tommy” mail.

Divisional Trains was comprised of the division’s support structure, including horse transport companies, pioneer battalions, machine gun corps, a veterinary section, and labor companies. Divisional Trains were an important cog in the “Lines of Communication,” representing the army’s logistical tail to the camps, stores, dumps, and workshops of the rear areas. The “Line of Communication” started with the supply lines from Britain to a French port, then by rail to an Advanced Supply Depot. From there, material was moved to Divisional supply points. Horse Transport Companies of Divisional Trains moved food, equipment and ammunition to forward supply dumps where goods were taken over by the quartermaster of the infantry, artillery or other attached units. The unit itself then moved the material by horse and man to the front line positions.

It soon became evident to postal authorities in the U.K. that with so much unstamped mail arriving from the BEF, it was going to be a time-consuming venture to collect the amounts due. On August 31, Mr. Charles Hobhouse, the Postmaster General, announced in the House of Commons “It has been decided by the Government that in future all letters written by soldiers on active service may be sent to this country without any payment by the soldier

and without any charge being made upon the recipient of the letter. In other words, correspondence written by the soldier on active service to his relations or friends will be



**Figure 8:** Another solution to soldier’s mail – the pre-printed “statements” Army Form postcard

carried free of charge.” This directive was implemented, and can be seen in the illustrated uncharged postcard of September and letter of November 1914 (see **Figure 8**).

In October 1914, the British Army introduced the Field Service Postcard (Army Form A.2042). This postcard had choices of brief messages to send basic information in an open format which was easy to complete and censor. From a censorship perspective, soldiers were not allowed to divulge information in letters or postcards about their whereabouts or conditions on the front line in the “Great War.” Key phrases about health (“I am quite well” or “I have been admitted into hospital”) and communication with home (“I have/have not received letter from you”) were pre-printed on the reverse. The purpose of the cards was to reassure loved ones that the soldiers were alive and well and to confirm that letters and parcels from home were getting through to the Front. The sender was told to indicate to the recipient how he was by simply deleting those phrases which did not apply and signing and dating the card.

The limited choice of message, and a warning – “NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the postcard will be destroyed.”–, made it clear that there was to be no disclosure of military information. As this was a postcard, as opposed to an envelope, it was simple for officers to quickly review and pass it on for mailing. After its initial deployment, the BEF grew from 150,000 troops to 8,500,000 (out of a total 42,000,000 allied forces) by 1918. Without the Field Service Postcard, the logistics of censorship would have overwhelmed the British Army, and severely interrupted the mail flow.

Exceptions to the “no additional message” rule on the Postcards were sometimes made at year end, when brief greetings, e.g., Happy New Year, Merry Xmas, etc., were permitted. The cards were initially issued at two per officer or enlisted man per week, but as the war continued, they were issued on demand with no limit to quantity. Multiple companies were contracted to print the very large numbers of cards required. A total of 228,378,000 cards were printed from September 1914 until July 1918. An Internet image search has revealed at least thirty discrete cards, based on the information printed at the bottom of the back of the cards. The cards originally started as a nominal 5 1/2 “ by 3 1/2 “ size. As the war continued, and paper supplies grew short, the card was reduced in size to 4 1/2” by 3” or less.

In their initial form, the postcards were imprinted with a 1d indicia, but this was soon changed to reflect the free postage concession. The volume of post sent from the front to home in 1916 was five million pieces of mail per week, with Tommies sending an average of 5 items in the post every week.

Among the many historical artifacts preserved by the British Imperial War Museum, there exists one man’s collection of mail. He was on active duty in France in 1917 for two months before being killed in action. In those two months, he sent home 19 letters and 20 Field Service



**Figure 9:**

Postcards. The free-of-charge Field Service Post Cards

were distributed within the British Armed Forces, and also to some Commonwealth contingents. Initially, the cards were distributed to soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force, but soon after arriving in Europe, the US took the British model and printed cards labeled “American Expeditionary Forces Field Service Post Card”.

Free transmission of mail applied only to troops on service overseas, not to those on duty in the UK, or in training prior to going overseas. However, in 1914-15 a concession/privilege was granted to troops about to go to France, who sometimes put their farewell letters or cards into local postboxes unstamped. Often, in such cases the post office stamped the item with a special cachet to authorize free transmission of the letter/card to its destination within the U.K. There were several varieties of hand-stamps, including “ARMY LETTER FREE”, and “ON ACTIVE SERVICE”.

Governments regularly made decisions about ways to make that mail flow easier, including reduced rate or free mail, changes in postage due rules, or special formats for soldier’s use. The Field Service Postcard was one example of the latter category and the Honor Envelope was another. This was an envelope (green originally for the BEF and blue for the AEF) signed by the sender, verifying that it contained only private and family matters and therefore was exempt from censorship. This envelope was used in both WWI and WWII. A last remarkable example of those efforts was, the updating of microfilm use from the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 that resulted in the World War II British Airgraph and U.S. V-mail.

In a pattern repeated many times in the 20th century, the political decision to go to war was done in advance of the review of logistics needed to support the war. The movement of mail to and from deployed troops has always been recognized as an important part of troop morale. Receiving well wishes and gifts from home is one of the few comforts a soldier has on the front, and writing or taping messages or modern day e-mail are among the few activities available to keep in touch with home. Letters do not just keep families informed; they also serve a propaganda purpose by helping to sustain popular support at home for the war. Censorship of mail and news reporting has always been exercised as much to prevent leakage of military information as well as to reduce negative information that would have been upsetting to home –front support of the conflict. To see this, compare the impact of news reporting in the US population during WWII, the Vietnam War, and Desert Storm.

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## Quixotic Item for the Issue

by Sergio Lugo

A force of 55,000 men on the field in the Great War was a relatively miniscule amount. That small number represented the full fighting force of one of the last entrants into the Great War. The *Corpo Expedicionário Português (CEP)* (aka the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps) was that nation's sole military force on the Western Front. Portuguese neutrality ended in 1916 following the seizure of interned German merchant ships in Portuguese harbors.

The force was split into two elements:

- 1 Portuguese Expeditionary Corps (CEP) – an infantry force of 55,000, operating under the British First Army; &
2. Independent Heavy Artillery Corps (*Corpo de Artilharia Pesada Independente* or CAPI) – nine batteries of heavy railway guns supplied by France and Britain operat-

ing under the control of the French Army.

Initially, CEP was a single reinforced infantry division and heavier than British divisions. Subsequently, it was reorganized into an army corps of two divisions and support troops. CEP took the responsibility for an entire



Unused, mint postcard drew my attention by the verbiage. Not French!, not Spanish!, I realized it was Portuguese - it was a card produced for the CEP!! It reads” EM BOA GUARDA Two young French girls and an English “Tommy” that have been saved from a destroyed house after the battle.” The reverse shows that it should be franked with a British stamp. The quixotic element of this card is why there was not a Portuguese portrayed?

independent sector of the Western Front. CEP experienced its first combat on 4 June 1917. A year later, the CEP's 2nd Division became engaged in the Battle of Lys on April 9 in Belgium. The Germans launched the battle with a violent bombardment lasting two hours by 1700 artillery guns. The attack on the CEP's 4 brigades by eight German divisions pitted 100,000 Germans against 20,000 Portuguese. The bulk of the CEP's 2nd Division ceased to exist as a fighting formation. The CEP collapse was a small part of the general collapse suffered by the British [First](#) and [Fifth](#) armies before the German [Spring Offensive](#). The Portuguese had one third of their men killed or captured. On 16 June, the CEP 1st Division, replaced the [14th British Division](#) in defending the Lillers-Steenbekque line.

In September 1918, CEP reorganized under General Garcia Rosado. By October, four battalions were combat ready. These four infantry battalions, and other remaining CEP units, participated in the Hundred Days Offensive. CEP's last action occurred on armistice day, 11 November, when the 4th Company of the IV Infantry Battalion, under the command of Captain Barros Bastos, made the last assault against the Germans on the passage of the Scheldt river, Belgium. By the close of that day, the CEP had, in toto, lost 2,160 dead, 5,224 wounded and 6,678 prisoners – 14,000 casualties out of an establishment of 55,000 or 18% of all CEP troops. For more information on the CEP, see the internet which provides several websites on the heroism of that force.

## An Introduction to The Military Postal System of the North Vietnam Army and the Viet Cong

By Daniel M. Telep

“The subject of North Viet Nam wartime usages of military mail has fascinated me since my unit, the First Battalion, Ninth Marines, captured a mail courier’s pouch in the DMZ in 1967! One of the captured covers, I recall, resembled (Figure 1), a patriotic cover with an American plane being shot down. Imagine my surprise upon holding such a treasure, there in the thick of combat. But it was to be another 15 years, in 1985 before I began to search out, accumulate, assemble and exhibit my holdings. Fortunately since then, my collection has received four gold medals in APS and ASDA competitions.”



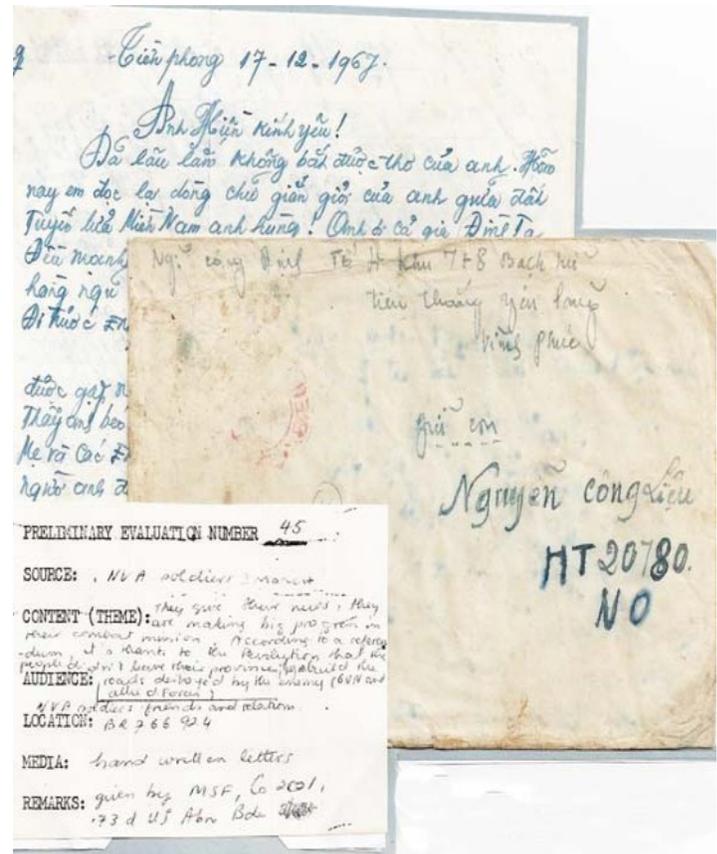
**Figure 1: Military frank 1967 issue: Soldier and woman guerrilla, Hanoi machine cancel to Hom Thu No. 91364 CS. A cover like this was captured by author Telep (3rd Marine Division) in 1967, while stationed at Con Thien in the DMZ**

This was the introductory paragraph I wrote for a recent article in the *Indo-China Philatelist*, requesting help with a census of recorded usages of military mail markings. Any reader of this MPHS Bulletin article is welcome to share such information with me, as well.

This article will be the first of four on this subject, to build awareness and inform the collecting readers about this fascinating and relatively unknown chapter of military postal history. Mr. Michael Lee Lanning published a book in 1992 entitled, “Inside the VC and NVA.” There he described how the postal services operated. I corroborated his findings with my own interviews of North Vietnamese war participants as I travelled through Vietnam on seven return visits since 1993. Although the system was simplistic, perhaps even primitive, it was, nonetheless, effective. Stringent measures were enforced to ensure security and provide for urgency of delivery. These specific measures will be the subject of future articles in this publication.

NVA correspondence was transported from both

North to South and South to North almost exclusively through Laos and Cambodia on what has been called the “Ho Chi Minh Trail.” At least three entry points, designated “transfer stations,” served the Trail south of the DMZ. Few attempts were made to cross the DMZ into South Vietnam, but (Figure 1) is an example of an exception! The postal organization was heavily staffed by districts and used liaison agents as runners like the mail courier we intercepted in 1967. “Mail was hand carried between distribution points with armed guards and runners called ‘giao liens’ in Vietnamese. (Figure 2). Note the summary of contents attached to the



**Figure 2: A typical example of an NVA incoming cover that was captured. The notational record I created states: NVA soldier, 3 March; they are making big progress in combat missions; According to a referendum it's because the people did not leave their province. The roads destroyed by the enemy (SVN and allied forces).**

envelope by US intelligence personnel. The VC postal system in the South used the same operations as the NVA.

One NVA source told me it normally took three to four months to receive mail from his home! Several reasons for this slow progress explain the delay, but such delays made necessary an elaborate system of urgency markings. In addition to the urgency markings, practical differences existed in the form of mail. Southbound mail was normally sent in envelopes, while Northbound mails typically were folded letter sheets. Almost all VC correspondence utilized the folded letter sheet format.

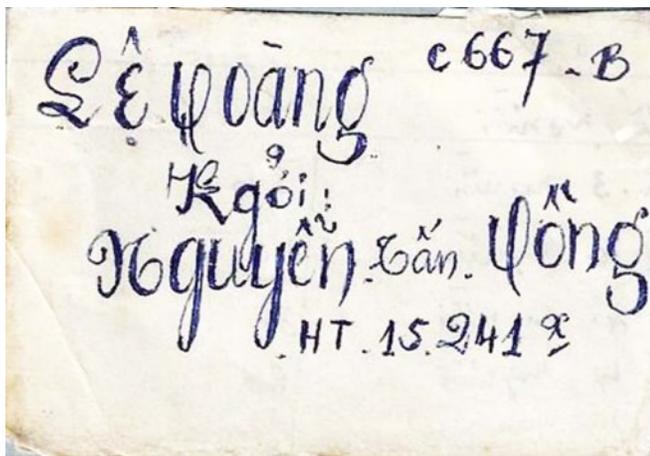


Figure 3 Illustrates a typical cover addressed to a VC unit deployed in the South, identified by the HT (Hom Thu) number, in this case HT 15241.



Figure 5: The unit was Hom Thu # 5716, and the individual was Hop Tho # 2370 on this March 4, 1960 letter.

Figure 4 is a major rarity, the only surviving copy of a giao linh's mail book, used at Binh Duong, Tay Ninh Province, a Communist liaison unit in the South. This 1966 booklet records all mail delivered and received by Hom Tho and Hom Thu addresses, with signatures of recip-

No.2370, the sender, and to Hom Thu No. 5716, the addressee unit. This unit was not yet deployed, so this example was safely used in the North early in the war, military to military, before deployment.



Figure 4: 245 total letters were processed from 20 VC Units between January and September, 1966.

ipients and senders. Two hundred and forty five (245) total letters were processed from 20 VC units between January and September, 1966.

With that background, let's look now at more items of interest. Soldiers were issued two stamps, called 'Military Frank' issues, per month for correspondence. Letters were censored and edited by NVA authorities to prevent content that might be intercepted from being used against them by military intelligence personnel. Figure 5 shows a Military Frank issue of 1959, used on March 4, 1960 by Hop Tho

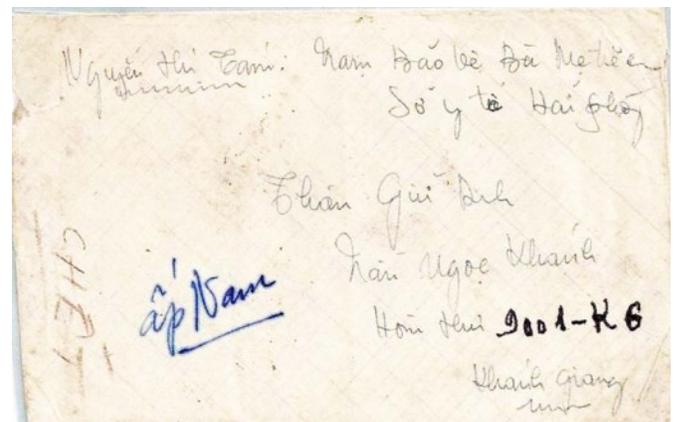


Figure 6: The "Chet" along the left margin indicates that the addressee was "Killed in Action."

Transfer agents, responsible for the latest routing information available for units and individuals deployed in the South, frequently added markings for forwarding and clarifying. Undeliverable mail is illustrated by Figure 6. Sent from Hai Phong in the North to a NVA soldier serving in the South without a Hom Thu number, this item shows the added unit number 9001KG, the forwarding marking to Ap Nam, and finally the ominous word "CHET" meaning 'Killed in Action.' The item was taken from a VC base camp in Tay Ninh before its scheduled burning.

The NVA/VC military postal system offers more investigative opportunities. Future articles will address:

- Security markings and usages
- Communist Allies' Mail
- Command Center markings & usages
- Patriotic covers
- Adversity usages
- POWs' mail



## Rear Guard Cover of the Month

By David Kent

## I WANNA GO HOME!

PFC Herb Williams writes his family in Brooklyn on  
Monday Aug. 27

Dear Folks:

We received our first mail today, and there, sure enough, was one letter from each of you. I knew that you would start your letter campaign, and you are right when you say that everyone should start writing to their Congressmen and newspapers. Pop's enclosed letter was good, but also a bit naive.

We are still getting ready to ship out, but just how soon that will be I don't know. The fellows are still hoping for some good news, but most are satisfied that they won't be overseas too long. After all, they will be getting two points a month overseas, and within a year they will have more than enough points to get out. Continuing the draft will ensure fresh troops to relieve the occupation forces.

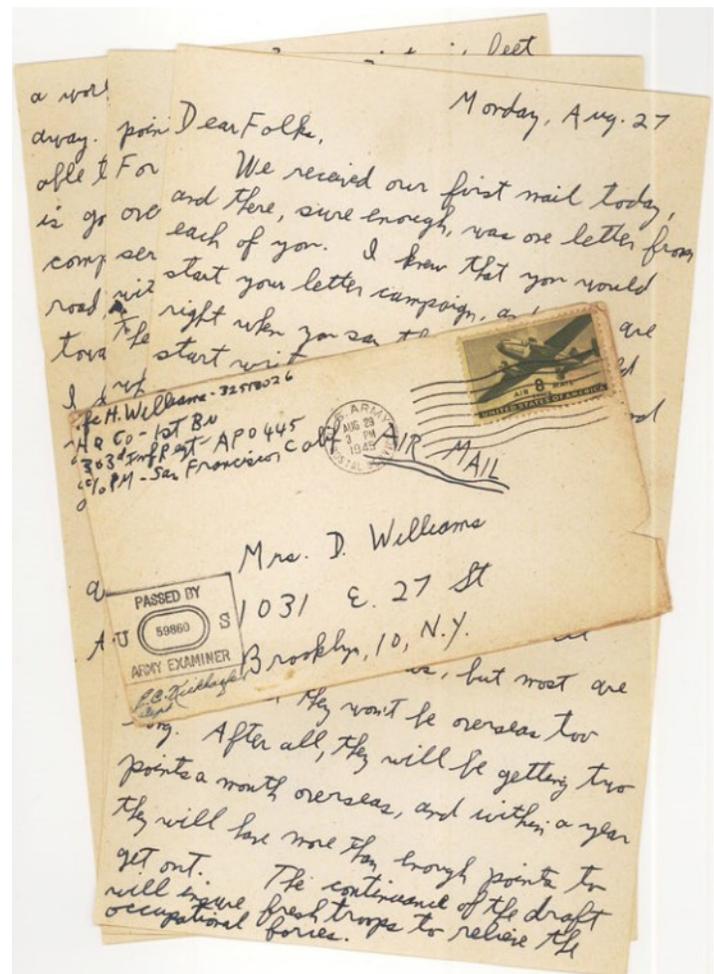
The fellows with fifty and sixty points have the most to complain about. For some this will be their third time overseas; others are in their fifth year of service. Still others, over thirty years and with children, also have a just grievance. The sight of the boys in the Service Command, who have never been overseas and who have it so very easy, is also hard to take.... Last night I hitched a ride to town with a fellow stationed at this camp who was telling me how rough medical basic training is. "Why, one time we had to put up a ward tent in the rain," he said.

Last night I broke my glasses and for the first time that I can remember I am without glasses. I am having another pair made up for me, but in the meantime it is as if I was living in another world, a world which blurs up just six feet away. It is a terrible feeling not to be able to see and be aware of everything that is going on about you. Today the entire company, walking on the left side of the road, passed me by as I was coming toward them on the opposite side of the street. I didn't recognize them until they yelled at me. The guy who invented glasses has my gratitude forever.

I am fine and I hope that you are also. Don't worry about a thing!  
All my love,  
Herb

**Commentary:** As WW II wound down, the military developed a system for deciding who should be discharged first once the war ended. The system assigned points for time in service, time overseas and other factors, specifying that once a serviceman had "earned" a minimum number of points he would be eligible for discharge. We can't tell how long Herb was with the 303rd Infantry Regiment, but if he had been assigned to it for its entire duration, his hopes for an early discharge are understandable.

The 303rd was part of the 97th Infantry Division, with its roots in World War I. It was reactivated in February 1943 at Camp Swift, Texas, moving a year later to Fort



Leonard Wood, Missouri. Six months later the division was entrained for amphibious training in California for the Pacific island-hopping campaign, first to Camp San Luis Obispo and a few months later to Camp Cooke (now Vandenberg Air Force Base). They were still at it at the end of 1944, but the Battle of the Bulge had decimated troop strength in Europe, and the decision was made to send the Division there. Another troop train brought them to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, followed by a voyage to Le Havre, France, and a troop train ride across France to the Rhine River. There followed hard fighting across Germany, finding them in Czechoslovakia at the time of Germany's surrender. However, they were still needed in the Pacific and the Division retraced their outward bound voyage back home, boarding the *SS Brazil* in Le Havre for the voyage to New York. After a brief stay on the Hudson River at Camp Shanks, they were given 30 days leave. The division reassembled at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and boarded another troop train to Seattle, where Herb wrote this letter. On Sept. 1 the division boarded the troop transport *USS Grundy*, which arrived in Cebu in the Philippines on Sept. 16. The convoy continued on to Japan, arriving in Yokohama on Sept. 25. The division was inactivated in Japan on March 31, 1946.

Perhaps Herb had earned his points and was back home by then.