

Back Issue of Military Postal History Society 'Bulletin': (Bulletin Feb 1948)

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.

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Mexican Border Campaign 1916 (with National Guard info)

BIENNIAL ELECTION

This spring the biennial election of officers of the War Cover Club will be held, as provided by the Club's constitution. Officers to be elected are: a president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and six directors. All members in good standing are eligible. President Black has appointed the following nominating committee: M. R. Baggett, chairman, H. M. Sanford, C. D. Brenner. Nominations may also be made by any two members. These must be in the hands of the secretary, Dr. Perry, not later than March first. Ballots will be mailed to members and should be returned promptly. The new Club year begins April fifteenth.

The December Bulletin contained a statement to the effect that "all military stations, branches, and money order units located in excess of five miles from the corporate limits of the office to which attached must be discontinued by the close of business on January 25, 1948." The Post Office Department published an interpretation of this law which reached us too late to be included with the above notice. According to this interpretation, the law does not apply to money order units, nor to rural stations, A.P.O. and F.P.O. units.

SOME NEW APO'S OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR. There has just come to light an old collection of cancelled money orders issued by the U. S. Army Postal Service during the First World War. These 110 money orders are nearly all from different post offices and form a unique collection. They furnish a few new early or late dates, but far more important are several other types of information which they provide.

Three of these money orders bear the imprint of the U. S. Army Postal Agency, Siberia, and are the first to be discovered. They are particularly interesting because they were issued by Stations 1, 2, and 3 respectively, as indicated by hand stamps. They thus confirm the recently reported existence of these three branch post offices, about which more information will be given in a later Bulletin.

Also shown by these money orders are a number of hitherto unrecorded branches of Army Post Offices serving the A. E. F. in Europe. Most of these offices had their own money order hand stamps, but they probably did not have their own postmarks, since none are known. Here are the new numbers: 701-B, 701-C, 702-A, 702-B, 702-E, 705-B, 716-A, 716-B, 716-C, 716-G, 717-A, 762-A, 762-C, 762-D. Gaps in some of these series of branches for a given post office permit us to suppose that there were also branches represented by the missing letters. Interested members would be doing a service by trying to ascertain the locations of these branches. Inquiry among former members of the A. E. F. might elicit some of this information.

In December, 1945, APO 503 used a machine cancellation which erroneously contained the date 1946. Unfortunately this mistake cannot be distinguished from the correct use of 1946 a year later, unless the cover bears some other indication of date. The probable explanation of this mistake is that when the new year-slug was received, it was put into use prematurely either through inadvertence or just to prevent its going astray. Have any other similar mistakes in date been noticed?

THE MEXICAN BORDER CAMPAIGN, 1916-1917

By C. D. Brenner

For twenty-six years, until his abdication in May, 1911, Porfirio Diaz held Mexico together through a very firm yet benevolent despotism. Relations with the U. S. were excellent. Madero, who succeeded Diaz as president, after leading a successful revolution against him, was soon the victim of a revolt that placed Huerta in power. With no longer any strong central power to hold it together, the country fell apart. Self-appointed leaders organized factions in various parts of the country which carried on an intermittent civil war with each other, ravaged the country, and kept it in a turmoil. The U. S. Government refused to recognize the Huerta regime because of its revolutionary origin. Efforts to encourage the establishment of a constitutional government and to protect American interests only resulted in creating a strong Anti-American sentiment among all factions, because they felt that we were interfering in purely internal Mexican affairs. This anti-American feeling was shown in the so-called Tampico incident in early April, 1914, when a landing party from the U.S.S. Dolphin was shown considerable indignity in that port.

In order to convince the Mexicans that they would have to respect the American flag, a naval force stationed off Vera Cruz was ordered to seize and hold the customs house of that port so as to cut off supplies to Huerta. This operation was carried out by a landing party of Marines on April 21, 1914. A considerable force of regular army troops under General Funston was immediately sent to Vera Cruz. On May 4th, General Funston declared himself military governor of the city and surrounding territory. This territory was held until evacuated on November 23, 1914.

Huerta was finally forced to resign in July, 1914. He was succeeded by Gen. Carranza. The latter's strongest rival, Pancho Villa, soon declared war on him and Mexico was in the throes of a real civil war. Various efforts to bring peace between the two factions failed. Finally in October, 1915, the U. S. gave de facto recognition to Carranza. This step only increased the hostility of Villa towards us.

During these troubled years the territory of Northern Mexico just south of our border had become the stamping ground of bands of revolutionists and bandits who constantly harassed each other. When too hotly pursued by rival forces it was always easy to step across our border into safety. In order to assure that our border was respected according to international law, our government sent more and more troops down there until nearly all of our small regular army was strung out thinly along the entire length of the border. It was from the dissident elements in Northern Mexico that Villa created his army. One of his first acts was to besiege the Carranzista garrison at Agua Prieta, opposite Douglas, Arizona. The U. S. Government permitted Carranza to send troops across American soil which attacked and defeated the Villa forces around Agua Prieta. This defeat so embittered Villa that he began a campaign of harassment against both Carranzistas and Americans. From this time on the U. S. border, especially along the Lower Rio Grande, was in a constant state of apprehension and turmoil because of frequent and sudden raids into American territory both by Villistas and by Mexican bandits. These incursions culminated in the bold attack on the town of Columbus, New Mexico, on the night of March 9, 1916.

The very next day, Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing was ordered to organize an expedition to pursue and disperse Villa's forces. The troops destined to take part in the expedition were quickly assembled by train. At noon on March 15, 1916,

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they entered Mexico in two columns, from Columbus and from Culberson's ranch some miles to the west. The expedition carried out its operations largely by means of flying cavalry columns, which penetrated about 400 miles into Mexico. Several small engagements were fought and Villa's forces were pretty well scattered or driven out. Then our columns were drawn back to the north somewhat. The territory was divided into five districts, each patrolled by a regiment of cavalry supported by infantry and other troops. In the late spring of 1916, it became known that Carranza, who was always hostile to the U. S., was assembling troops in the north with the ultimate intent of putting them between Pershing's forces and the border and then destroying the expedition. So on May 9, 1916, the National Guard of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas was called into the service of the U. S. and sent to stations on the border. These National Guard troops were actually a part of the punitive expedition, though they did not enter Mexico.

Villa became active again in the territory evacuated by the U. S. forces. The Carranzistas did nothing to hinder his operations, but rather made things as uncomfortable as they could for our forces. Finally the futility of keeping the expedition on Mexican soil became so self-evident that its withdrawal was ordered. On February 5, 1917, the last of General Pershing's troops came back across the border.

The punitive expedition had no field post offices so far as is known. Such postal service as it had appears to have been rather hap-hazard. On a number of occasions mail was flown by airplane from bases in Mexico to troops in the field. Most mail was carried overland by the supply trains of mule-drawn wagons and auto trucks that were continually going back and forth between the base at Columbus and the advance bases. All mail thus brought out of Mexico seems to have been deposited at the post office in Columbus. At least all mail of the expedition so far seem bears the Columbus postmark.

The following units participated in the Punitive Expedition:

Hq., Punitive Exped.		Hq. Btys. A,B,C, 4th F. A.
Hq. 2nd Cav. Brig.		Btys. B, C, 6th F. A.
5th Cavalry		Cos. E,G,H, 2nd Bn. Eng.
7th "		1st Aero Sqdn., Signal Corps
10th "		Det., Q. M. C.
11th "		Det., S. C.
13th "		Det., Ord. Dept.
6th "	Few units.	Field Hosp. No. 3
12th "	Small Det.	Field Hosp. No. 7
6th Infantry		Amb. Co. No. 3
16th "		Amb. Co. No. 7
17th "		Cantonment Hospital
24th "		Truck Train Cos.
20th "	Small Det.	

The punitive expedition represents one phase of the campaign. The border-guard duty of the National Guard is the other.

In the spring of 1916, a series of conferences were held with Mexican General Obregon as a result of which an agreement was reached whereby the Mexicans promised to restore and maintain order along the border and the Americans then to consider withdrawing General Pershing's troops. Carranza refused to sign this agreement.

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There was danger that the American troops in Chihuahua might be attacked by the full Mexican Army and their long line of supply cut. In such an event most of the U. S. regular troops on the border would be sent to the aid of their comrades, leaving large stretches of the border unprotected. Therefore on May 9, 1916, the National Guard units of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas were called to duty and given stations on the border. This force was not considered sufficient, and on June 18, most units of the National Guard of the other states were called out. The new National Defense Act, just approved on June 3, permitted the induction of the National Guard into Federal service in cases of emergency.

The first of the mobilized organizations to reach the border was the 1st Illinois Infantry, which arrived at San Antonio on June 30th. By the end of August there were 111,954 men on the border. They were stationed in moderate-size detachments all along the border and in four large camps at Brownsville, San Antonio, and El Paso in Texas, and at Douglas, Arizona. This was the maximum number to be on the border. Not all the National Guard was on the border at one time. Some units were kept at home and used to relieve units on the border. The total number of men taken into Federal service was 158,664, but they were not all moved to the border.

On February 2, 1917, the National Guard began to be withdrawn from the border to be returned home and mustered out. However, before this movement could be completed the danger of war with Germany loomed up. In this emergency the units of the Guard not yet demobilized were retained in service and a considerable part of the other units was called back into service. Within a few months these troops were actually at war.

The official dates for the Punitive Expedition are March 10, 1916, to February 7, 1917; for the National Guard May 9, 1916, to March 24, 1917, so covers from the border campaign should fall within these dates. There were also some regular army units stationed on the border which did not participate in the Punitive Expedition. No list of these has been found.

The number of men participating in the Punitive Expedition is given as around 45,000. Taking these along with the National Guard, some 160,000 men took part in the Border Campaign. At a very conservative estimate, a million or more letters must have been sent back by these men, yet the number of covers from this campaign in collections today is astonishingly small, probably under a hundred. Most collectors and dealers do not recognize such covers when they see them or attach no importance to them, yet they are just as collectable as the covers from any campaign in which U. S. forces have been engaged. Some covers can be identified only from the town postmark and the return address. There are several types of Y.M.C.A. covers. Some National Guard units took south with them the official stationery they used at home. Some had new stationery made up in the south. Several enterprising firms published series of illustrated post cards bearing reproductions of photos of camp life on the border or scenes from the Punitive Expedition. Someone printed up a series of envelopes with similar pictures covering the entire back side. Letter paper headed with similar photos was offered for sale and also provided by the Y.M.C.A. This illustrated stationery is especially desirable.

It is possible that more types of stationery from the expedition may come to light. A few more facts about its postal service may also be revealed. However, in order that a wider search for material may be started it has been thought wise to publish the available information, so that collectors may know what to look for and have means of verifying covers that they may find. A table of the National Guard units that were called into service is given on a separate page.

(continued on following page)

NATIONAL GUARD UNITS CALLED FOR SERVICE ON MEXICAN BORDER, 1916
(Taken from CHASING VILLA, by Col. Frank Tompkins)

State	Inf.	Cav.	F. A.	Eng.	Sig. C.	Sanitary Troops
Ala.	1, 2, 4	1st. Regt.	Bts. A, C		1st. Co.	Amb. Co., Field Hosp.
Ariz.	1					
Ark.	1, 2					
Calif.	2, 5, 7	1st. Sq.	1st. Bn.	Co. A.	Co. B	Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
Colo.	1, 2 Bns	1st. Sq.	1st. Bn.	Cos A, B	Co. A	F. H. 1
Conn.	1, 2	Tr. A, B	10th Regt.		1st Co.	Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
Del.	1 2 Bns					
D. C.	1 Bn, 3rd	Troop A	Bts. A, B		Co. A	F. H.
Florida	2					F. H. 1
Georgia	1, 2, 5	2d Sq., Tr. A	1st. Bn.			F. H. 1
Idaho	2					
Illinois	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8	1st Regt.	1st. Regt.	Co. A	Co. A	F. H. 1, 2
Ind.	1, 2, 3		1st. Bn.		Co. A	Amb. Co. 1, 2, F. H. 1, 2
Iowa	1, 2, 3	1st. Sq.	1st. Bn.		Co. A	Amb. Co., F. H.
Kansas	1, 2	Troop A	Bty. A		Co. A	
Ken.	1, 2, 3				Co. A	Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
La.	1	2d Separate Troop	Bty Washing- ton Atty.			F. H. 1
Maine	2					
Md.	1, 4, 5	Troop A	Bty. A			Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
Mass.	2, 5, 8, 9	1st. Sq.	1st. Regt.		1st. Bn.	Amb. Co. 1, 2, F. H. 1, 2
Mich.	31, 32, 33	Tr. A, B	Bty. A, B	Co. A	Co. A	Amb. Co. 1, 2, F. H. 1
Minn.	1, 2, 3	1st. Regt.				
Miss.	1					
Mo.	1, 2, 3, 4	Troop B	1st. Bn.	Co. A		Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
Mont.	2	Troop A				
Neb.	4, 5				Co. A	F. H. 1
N. H.	1	Troop A	Bty. A		Co. A	F. H. 1
N. J.	1, 4, 5	1st Sq.	Bn.		1st. Co.	Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
N. M.	1		Bty. A			
N. Y.	2, 3, 7, 12, 14, 23, 69, 71, 74	1st Regt. Sq. A M. G. Troops	1, 2, 3 Regts.	22d 2 Sep. Cos.	1st. Bn	Amb. Co. 1, 2, 3, 4 F. H. 1, 2, 3, 4
N. C.	1, 2, 3	Troops A, B		Cos. A, B		Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
N. D.	1					
Ohio	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8	1st. Sq.	1st. Bn.	1st. Bn. Co. D Co. A	1st. Bn.	Amb. Co. 1, 2 F. H. 1, 2, 3 Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
Okla.	1	Troops A, B				
Oregon	3	Troop A	Bty A			
Penna.	1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 16, 18	1st. Regt.	1, 2, 3 Regts.	Co. A	1st. Bn.	Amb. Co. 1, 2, F. H. 1, 2
R. I.		Tr. A, B, C, M	Bty A			Amb. Co. 1
S. C.	1, 2	Tr. A		Co. A		F. H. 1
S. D.	4					
Tenn.	1, 3	Tr. B, C, D				Amb. Co. 1, F. H. 1
Texas	2, 3, 4,	1st. Sq.	Bty A	Co. A, B		F. H. 1
Utah		Sq. 1, 2	1st Bty.			F. H. 1
Ver.	1					
Va.	1, 2	Sq. 1	1st Bn, Bty C	Co. A	Co. A	F. H. 1
Wash.	2	Tr. B			Co. A	
W. Va.	2					
Wisc.	1, 2, 3	Tr. A, B	Bty A			F. H. 1
Wy.	1 Bn, 2 Bn					

The U.S. Postal Bulletin for January 13, 1948, lists the following active APO's:

c/o Postmaster, New York

APO's 1, 46, 57, 58, 61, 62, 65, 66, 69, 82, 114, 139, 154, 169, 171, 172, 174, 175, 178, 207, 208, 209, 225, 305, 349, 403, 403-A, 406, 407, 407-A, 440, 465, 497, 512, 528, 528-A, 541, 615, 616, 633, 677, 692, 696, 696-A, 698, 742, 743, 751, 757, 777, 782, 790, 794, 800, 807, 843, 856, 858, 859, 862, 863, 864, 865, 872.

c/o Postmaster, San Francisco

APO's 6, 7, 24, 25, 59, 74, 86, 181, 182, 184, 201, 226, 234, 235, 239, 244, 244-1, 246, 249, 264, 301, 309, 317, 323, 328, 331, 334, 343, 455, 459, 468, 500, 502, 503, 547, 612, 613, 660, 703, 704, 707, 710, 712, 713, 714, 719, 736, 815, 900, 901, 902, 909, 913, 915, 917, 919, 925, 929, 950, 951, 953, 954, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 994, 1005, 1007, 1009, 1052, 1054, 1055, 1105.

c/o Postmaster, New Orleans

APO's 662, 817, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 841, 897, 3024.

c/o Postmaster, Seattle

APO's 726, 729, 731, 732, 937, 939, 942, 944, 948, 980, 987.

c/o Postmaster, Miami

APO's 676, 845, 846, 847, 848, 851, 854, 855, 857, 861, 867, 868, 869.

(Contributed by H. M. Rankin)

NEW MEMBERS

269 Schultze, George J. 6138 Lawndale St., Philadelphia, 11, Pa.

Specialty: V-Mail all types, first days

270 Major, Richard M. 420 S. College Ave., Newark, Del.

A.P.O. Covers