

THE US ARMY AND ITS POSTAL SERVICE ABROAD DURING WORLD WAR II

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The Japanese government counted on these setbacks, plus the ones that would follow in the next 6 months as Japanese forces tore through the paper-thin defenses of the British, Dutch and Americans in the Pacific, to lead the United States to seek a negotiated settlement. Instead, American public opinion, American industry and over 15 million American citizens were mobilized in an effort aimed at the total defeat not just of Japan, but of the other Axis Powers as well.

This exhibit focuses on the mail to and from members of the US Army (including Army Air Forces) serving abroad. It deals first with the handling of this mail: the army postal office numbering system(s), postal markings, postage rates, Army censorship and special classes of mail that emerged because of the war. The second part of the exhibit follows the expansion of the Army Postal Service coincident with the geographic dispersal of the Army as it dealt with the Axis threat.

The following pages do not completely illustrate the history of the war or the military postal history of the period, since they exclude Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard mail handled by the Fleet Post Office system abroad, as well as almost all military mail within the United States. They do, however, — cover much the largest part of the war and the US military mail that it generated.

This exhibit was created by, and is the property of the late Al Kugel, and is being supplied by his heirs as a courtesy to the Military Postal History Society. (See <http://militaryphs.org>) The Military Postal History Society (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.

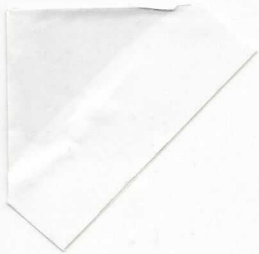
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Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941; the war begins.

**THE US ARMY AND ITS POSTAL SERVICE ABROAD
DURING WORLD WAR II
PLAN OF EXHIBIT**

I. Army Mail

A. APO Numbers

1. Regular Numbers
2. Non-standard Numbers
3. Transit Numbers
4. Deletion of Numbers

B. Military Postal Markings

1. American Base Forces
2. US Army Postal Service
3. Miscellaneous Text/Design
4. BPO Postmarks
5. PRS Postmarks
6. Auxiliary Markings

C. Rates

1. US Troops
2. Official Mail

D. APO Use by Non-US Army Personnel

1. Other US Military
2. Civil Servants
3. Red Cross
4. Other American Civilians
5. Allied Forces
6. Foreign & UN Officials

E. APO Incoming Mail

1. From US

2. From Abroad

F. Army Censorship

1. Provisional Devices
2. Devices Standard for Certain Areas
3. Standard Devices
4. Blue Envelopes
5. Anomalies

G. Special Classes of Mail

1. V-Mail
2. War Ballots
3. Telegrams
4. POW Mail

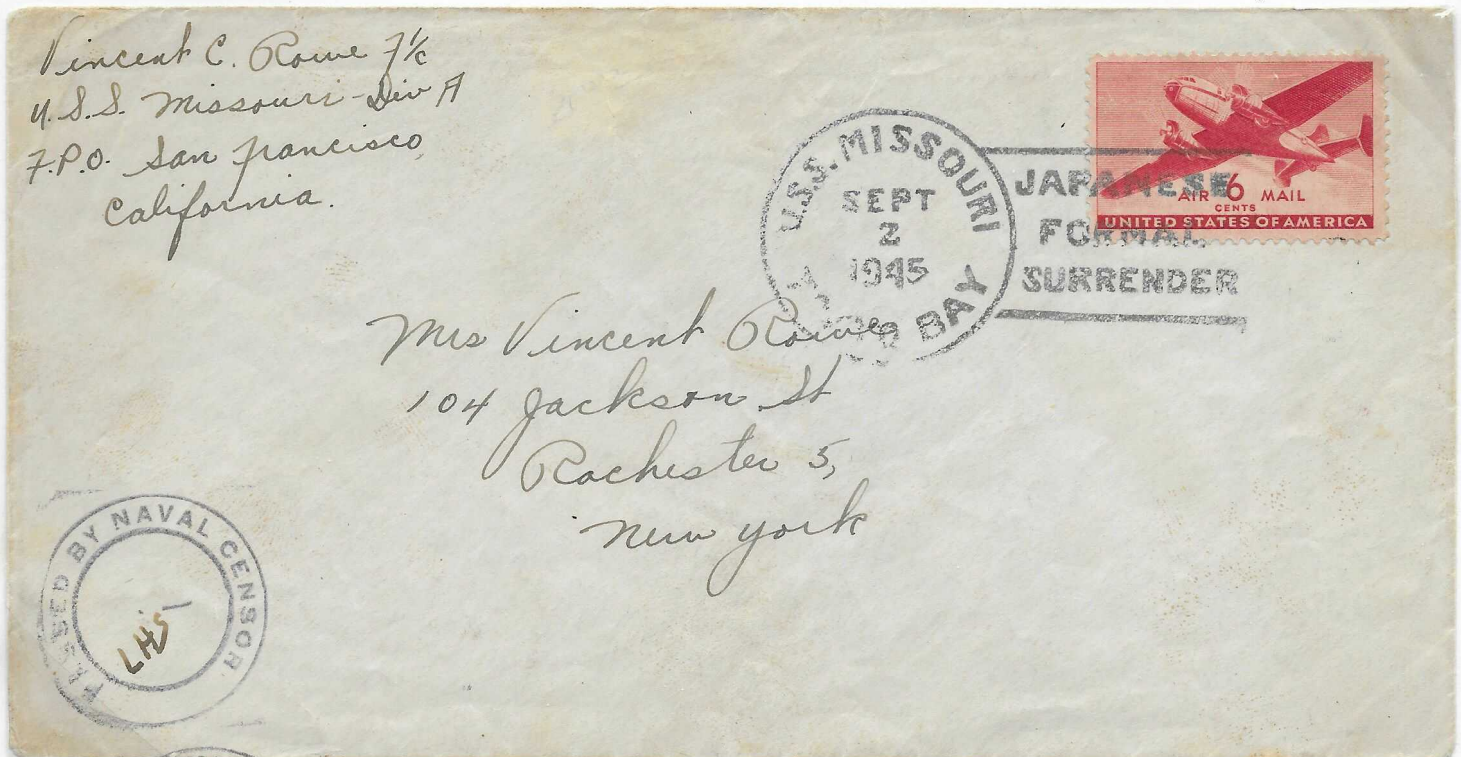
II. US Army at War

A. Establishing Defensive and Supply Systems

1. Western Hemisphere
2. Atlantic Ocean Eastward
3. Pacific Ocean Westward

B. Offensive Operations

1. Western Hemisphere
2. Europe and Africa
3. China-Burma-India Theater
4. South Pacific Area
5. South West Pacific Area
6. Central Pacific Area



USS Missouri, Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945; the war ends.

**ARMY MAIL
APO NUMBERS**

Regular Numbers
Stationary Offices

R. H. Davis
AmEmbassy
APO #193
% Postmaster, New York



Mr. W.B. Baruch, Vice-President

Sch

*From Maj. R.E. Curry
APO 999 % PM
Seattle, Wash*



Approved for pouch



Lowell S. Blandell

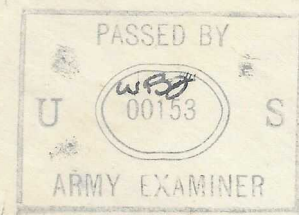
S/Sgt. Ernest C. Carlsen
ATC STATION
APO 2494, New York City



VIA AIR MAIL

Illinois

S/Sgt. C. L. Morgan
9th Comm. Sqdn
APO #695 c/o Postmaster
New York City

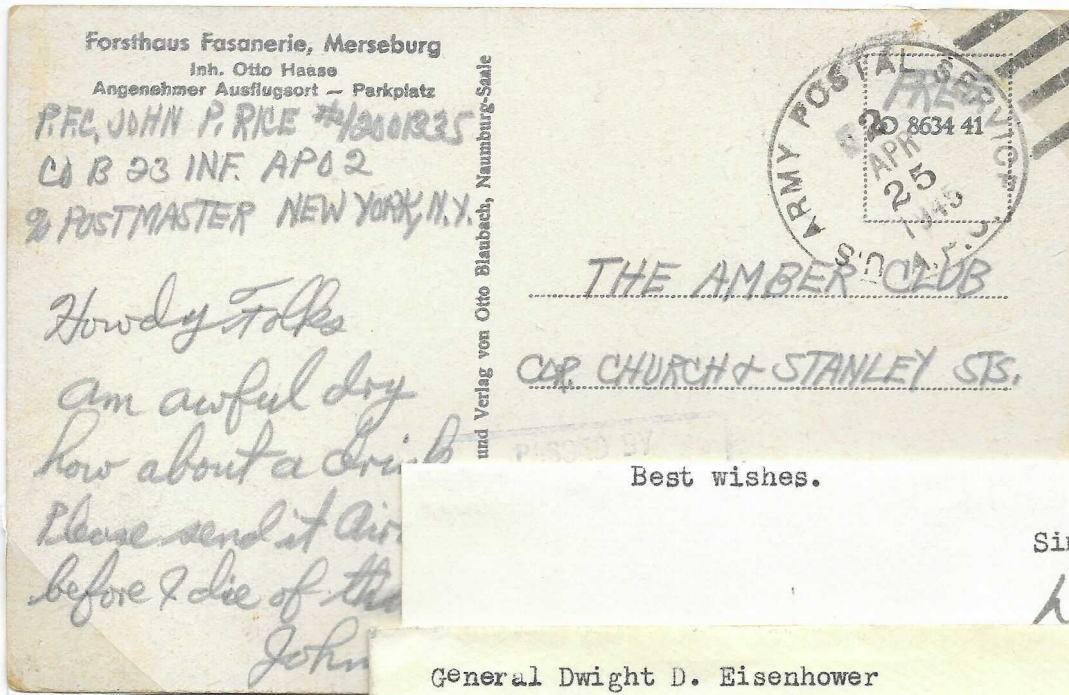


"Regular" (as opposed to transit) APOs used most of the numbers between 1 and 1058, plus a handful in the 2000 and 3000 series. The majority of APO numbers were assigned to locations rather than to units. Occasionally the locations of such "stationary" APOs would change, but most of them stayed in the same country, and many in the same place, once assigned.

Among the more elusive and sought-after of the stationary APOs are 193 (US Embassy and Military Mission, Moscow, mailing address only; covers carried by diplomatic pouch for mailing through nearby APO, in this case 523, Teheran), 999 (various Canadian locations, example above from Ft. Smith, NWT), and 2494 (Bowen Field, Haiti).

APO Numbers

Regular Numbers
Units



APO 2 was located at Merseburg, in eastern Germany when this card was sent.

The 2nd Inf. Division (about 12,000 men at full strength) saw a tremendous amount of combat. Its losses from June 7, 1944 to May 9, 1945 were 3,031 killed and 12,785 wounded.

THE AMBER CLUB
CAP. CHURCH & STANLEY STS.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

N. Wright Shuman

General Dwight D. Eisenhower
APO 757, New York, N.Y.



Mr. R. Bruce Engle
822 N. Fairview Ave.
Lansing, Mich.

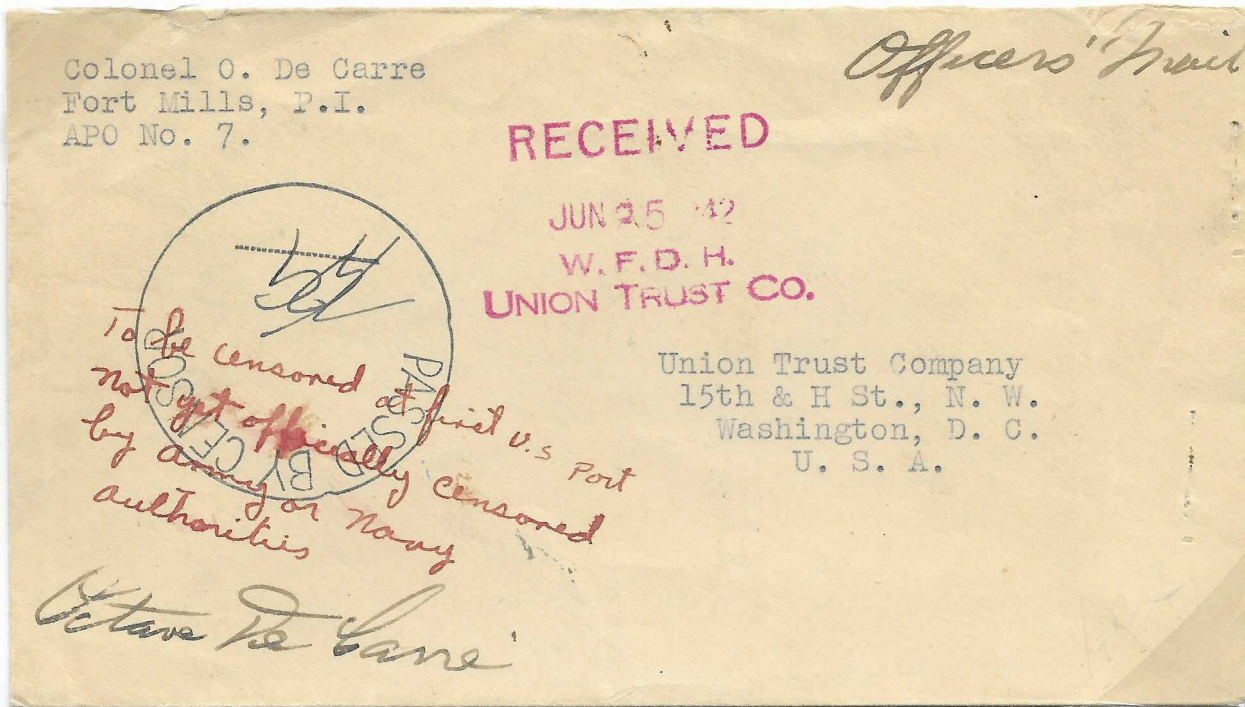
APO 757 served HQ, US Forces, Europe and, later, Supreme HQ, Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEP). At Versailles when this letter was sent.

Beginning in May 1942 an effort was made to co-ordinate APO numbers with Division numbers. Of the first 100 APO numbers, 44 were assigned to Infantry Divisions of the same number, and APOs 251 through 263 were assigned to the 1st through 13th Armored Divisions, respectively. No attempt was made to systematically assign numbers to APOs serving higher-level organizations (Corps, etc.), and the co-ordination of APO and Division numbers was eventually abandoned.

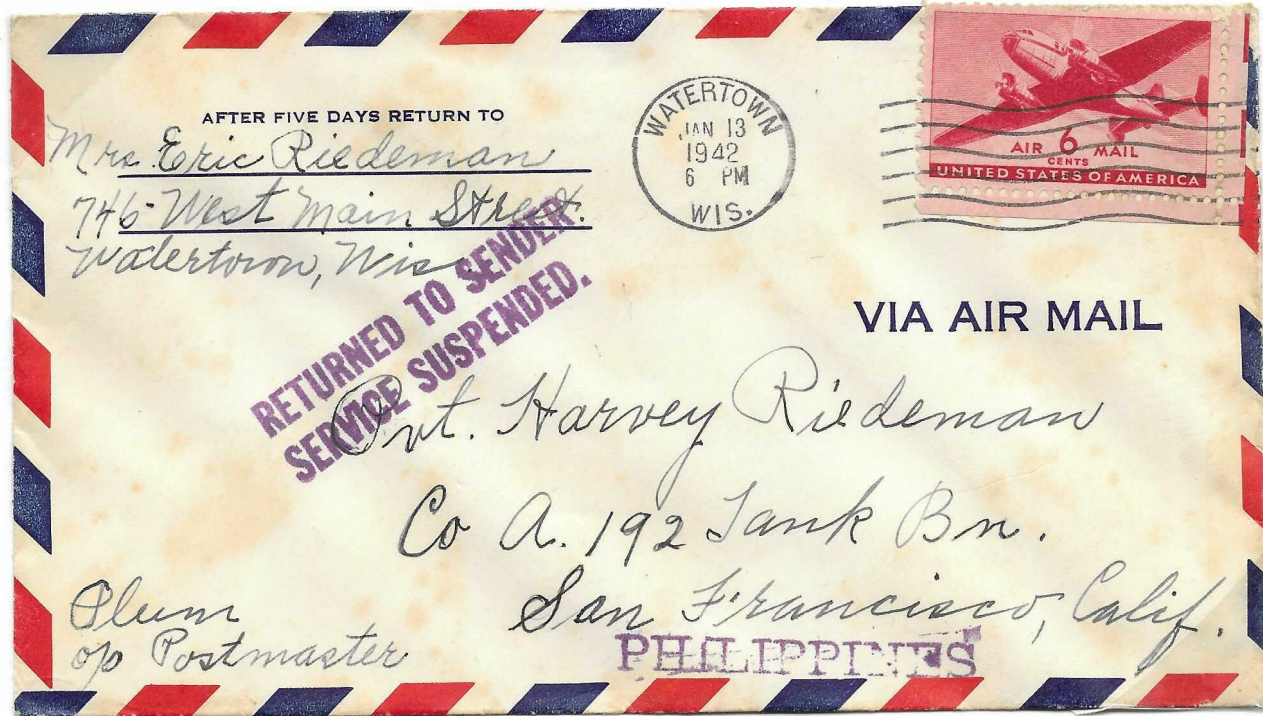
Return addresses of Army combat units very seldom include the Division number, but instead identify the sender to a regiment or even smaller unit. An "Order of Battle" listing is necessary to identify these smaller units to their divisions.

APO Numbers

Non-Standard "Numbers"



APO 7 was assigned in the Philippines to Ft. Mills, as indicated in the return address. Cover carried to Australia by submarine, censored there and posted.



"Plum" was the code address assigned to the Philippines. 192nd Tank Bn. was destroyed on Bataan.

Early in the war at least 2 short-lived non-standard APO identification systems were introduced. In the Philippines APOs 1 - 7 were established, none with postmark. In lieu of transit APO numbers, code-names such as "Plum" and "Straw Hat" were assigned to several locations in the Pacific.

APO Numbers

Transit Numbers



APO 888 return address, posted through APO 810 (Baldurshagi, Iceland).

APO 1221, recorded used by various air units in Palestine, Egypt and Libya. The unit history of the "Black Scorpions" (64th Fighter Squadron) places them in Libya from 13 November 1942 to 13 March 1943.



A need to keep track of units in transit without breaching security resulted in the assignment of transit-APO numbers: APO numbers that were allocated to a unit (or even to an individual) in transit and almost always abandoned upon or shortly after arrival at the ultimate destination. So far the following 3-digit APO numbers, officially "Never Activated," have been identified as transit APOs: 888, 899 and 904. When it became clear that as many as 1000 regular APOs would be created, 4- and 5-digit transit numbers were assigned.

Comp Bowers 5602-A
APO 914 Postmaster
San Francisco, Cal.

EXAMINED BY



VIA CLIPPER

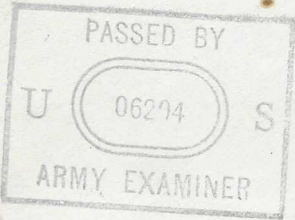
*Cpl. Ralph Sommer 13007262
Btry C-55 C.A. (Det) #4
A.P.O. 914 of Postmaster
San Francisco Calif.*



*Put Louis Rogers 35064498
Btry D 428 C.A. (a a)
A.P.O. 914 of Postmaster
San Francisco Calif*



air mail



*Mrs Lucinda Rogers
Hazelwood Sanatorium
Louisville, Ky*

On 1 July 1942 it was ordered that APO numbers be deleted from APO postmarks and this order appears to have been carried out universally, if not immediately in all cases. Most APO numbers had been permanently incorporated into the postmarks, and were carved out. As the APO number continued to be used in the return address, little security advantage was gained by leaving it out of the postmark, and the numbers were ordered restored on 10 March 1943. This was accomplished, in most cases, for regular mail cancels by using movable numeral slugs in the date/time portion of the postmark. Registry and M.O.B. cancels did not have room for this, and so remained unnumbered.

APO 914 opened on Canton Island 13 March 1942, and remained there for the remainder of the war.

MILITARY POSTAL MARKINGS

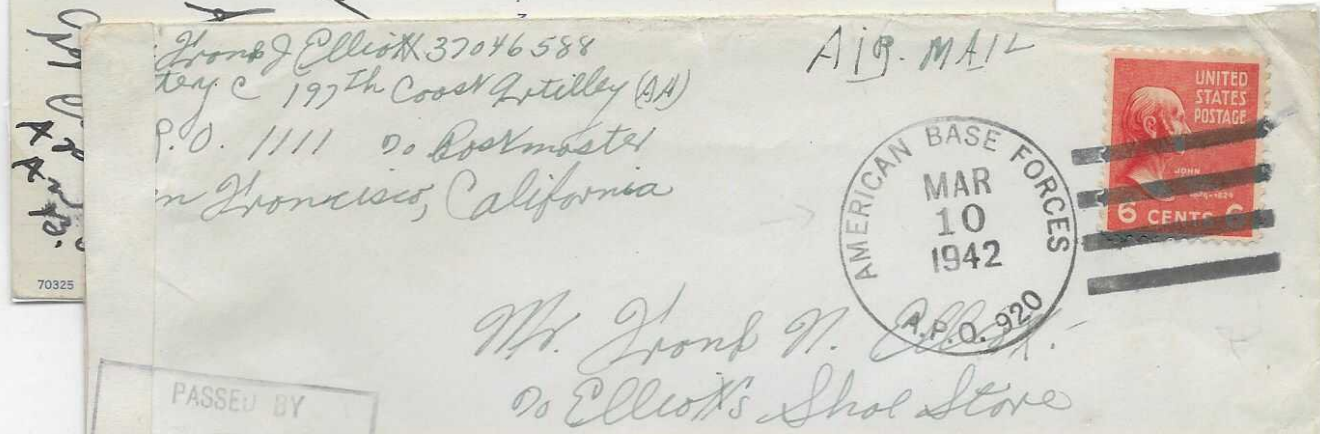
Handstamps

American Base Forces



APO 806, Antigua

APO 920, Batchelor Field, NT, Australia (1st day of operation)



APO 810, Baldurshagi, Iceland

"American Base Forces" was, beginning 16 April 1941, used in postmarks supplied to US troops serving in territories not under US administration. This nomenclature continued to be used in APO postmarks created during the first half of 1942, and some of these postmarks remained in use throughout the war. The vast majority of the 35 different APOs which used American Base Forces postmarks were located in Allied colonies in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

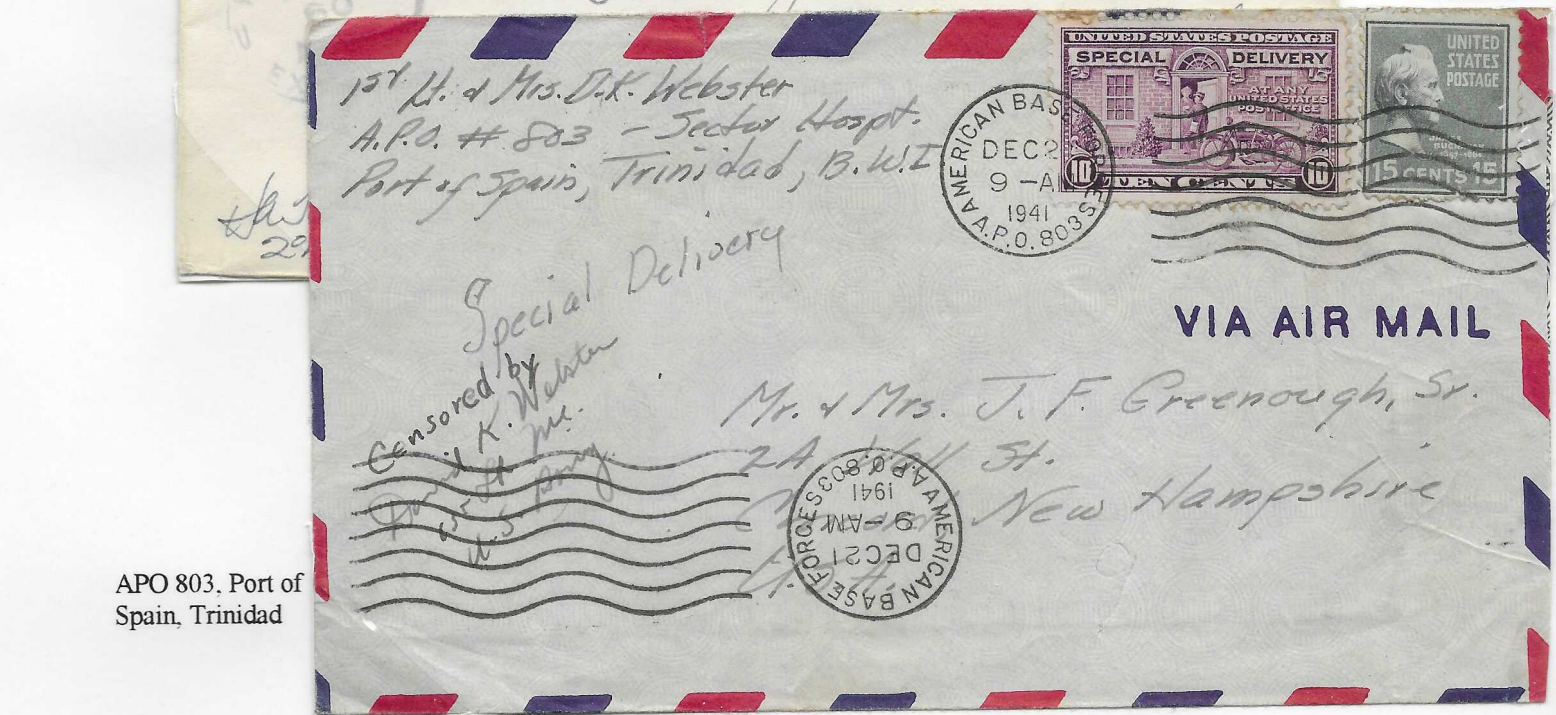
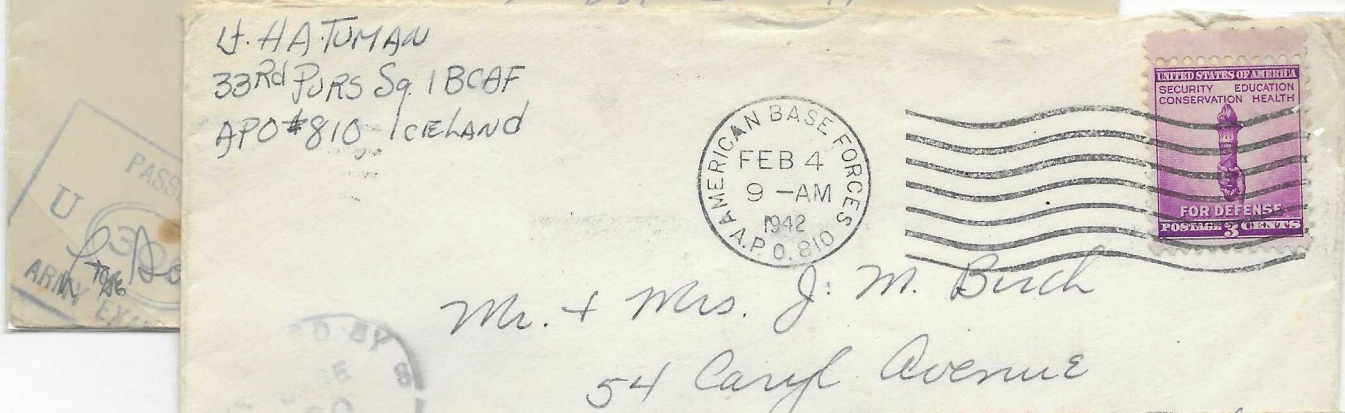
Postmarks
American Base Forces

Machine Cancellations



APO 802, St.
George, Bermuda

APO 810, Baldur-
shagi, Iceland



APO 803, Port of
Spain, Trinidad

Machine cancellations incorporating "American Base Forces" daters were assigned to the few stations with sufficient volume to justify their use, in Bermuda, Trinidad and Iceland.

Military Postal Markings
American Base Forces

Special Services Datestamps

APO 929, Port Moresby,
New Guinea

APO 928, Milne Bay,
New Guinea

929
159848

DOLLARS	
CENTS	

RECEIPT
FOR REMITTER
TO DETACH AND HOLD
SEE OTHER SIDE

MAR 21 1944
ISSUING OFFICE
STAMP HERE



Registry and Money Order Business datestamps are recorded for enough of the APOs which used the American Base Forces nomenclature to justify the assumption that these were routinely issued to each such APO. Even philatelic usage of M.O.B. datestamps is scarce, and non-philatelic use is rare.

Sgt. Anthony Anzalone 31076267
Co. "B" 334th Engrs. Regt. (S-S)
A.P.O. 680 Post Master
New York New York.
U.S.A.



Converse Rubber Co.

Put. Frank A. Ryan
3916 9674
Med. Res. Co. B 101 Med. Regt.
A.P.O. 716 Postmaster
San Francisco, Calif.

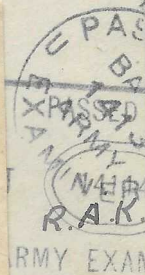


U. S. EXAMINER NO.

GPO

16-23701-1

Sgt Frank Brinker
1126th Tro. C. Avn.
A.P.O. 73 Post. Phil.



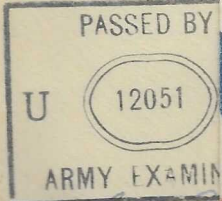
Mr Martin Brinker
4548 Aero Ave. #10
St. Louis, Missouri

Some American Base Forces postmarks continued to be used well after the end of the war. The excision of APO numbers pursuant to orders issued 1 July 1942 allowed the reassignment of a few of these datestamps to new offices, as in the case of each of the examples above: APO 680, Ahwaz, Iran; APO 716, Americal Div., then on Guadalcanal; 9 PRS (Postal Regulating Station), Clark Field, Philippines.

Postmarks
U.S. Army Postal Service

Regular Mail Handstamps

M/Sgt Vincent Anastasio
9th Airways Detachment
APO #720 c/o Postmaster
San Francisco, California



To: Lonnie A. Stephenson
Co. C. 35th Eng. Reg.
A.P.O. 918 9, P.M.
Seattle Washington



In transit

Free

Mr. J. Macdonald
2- Bay St
Summit, N.J.



Company
Drive
Rees

Beginning in early 1942 (earliest recorded date is 21 March, from APO 502, New Caledonia), the Army introduced what was to be its standard format for APO cancels for the rest of the war: a duplex handstamp with a single-circle dater incorporating the text "U.S. Army Postal Service" with a 4-bar killer. Approximately a dozen major varieties of this design, based on size, spacing and additional or deleted text, have been reported, and about as many more sub-varieties.

APO 720 (Penrhyn Island, a scarce location) and 918 (various Canadian locations on the Alcan Highway, shown here from Brook's Brook, Y.T.) show the two usual designs. APO 632 (Batista Field, Cuba) had one of the most unusual text spacings.

Postmarks
U.S. Army Postal Service

Regular Mail Handstamps
Sub-Units

Pfc. Bernard Matzner: 36802887
817th Q.M. Sqr. Co.
A.P.O. 464
70 PM New York N.Y.



Free

*Pl. Lt. Parmentier
Serv. Sqdn.
637
Postmaster
N.Y.*

OPENED BY US ARMY CENSOR



Free

The Crusader

File

FROM
Lt. LeRoy A. Dyer 0-730714
451st Bomb. Sqdn. A.P.O. 638
New York, N.Y.



Mr. Clarence Hon
1062 N. Leek St.
Lansing, Mich.

Numerous APOs had sub-units, designated by a letter or a number, but only a few of these designations show up in the regular mail handstamps. While the number of sub-units so identified was not large, examples of these postmarks are not uncommon, as these sub-units tended to serve organizations or locations where large amounts of mail were generated.

APO 375-B, Monticino, Italy, subordinate to APO then located at Leghorn. APO 637-1, subordinate to the APO serving the 8th Fighter Command, Watford, England. APO 638-A, subordinate to the APO serving the 9th Air Defense Command, Sunninghill, England.

Postmarks
Unusual Types

Chaplain John F. Ryan
A.P.O. 675
Miami, Florida



*T/4 Alfred E. Gordon 30044187
co a 307 Engr Bn
A.P.O. 469 c/o Postmaster
New York (1) N.Y.*



Miss

POST CARD

21 FEB 1944
PASSED BY



c/o

PASSED BY
SEP 18
NY
NER

*Thomas Co. O. Allen
10 Indian Rd
Edgewood
Rhode Island
U.S.A.*

ALIAN FLORA & FAUNA SERIES



Opened by U.S. Censor

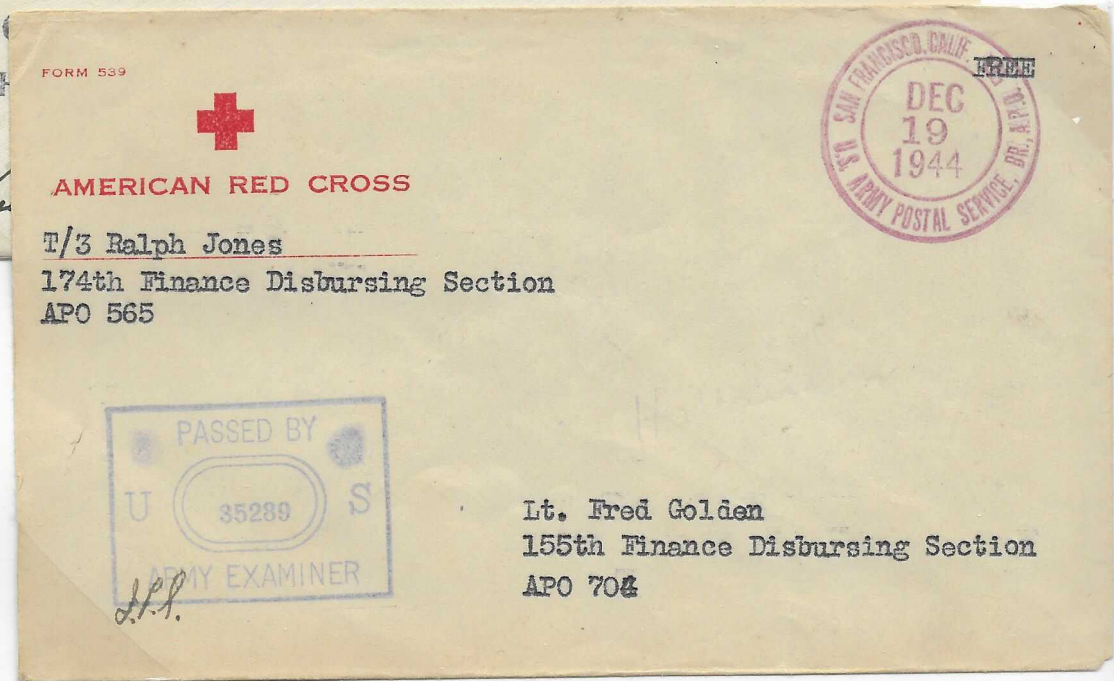
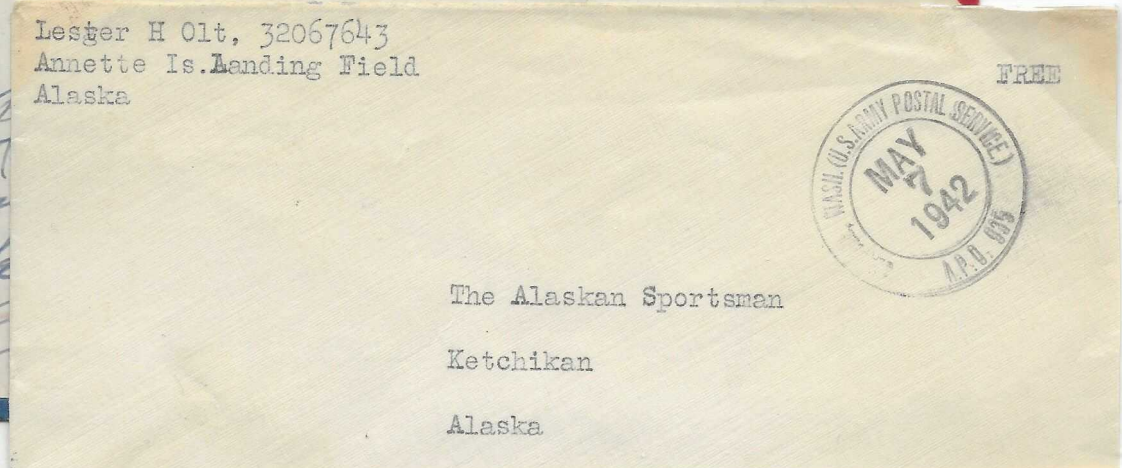
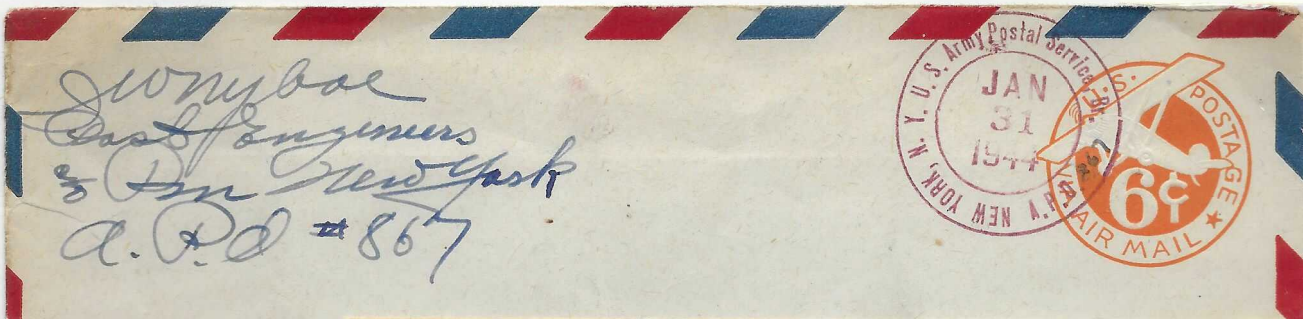


In the postmarks intended for first class mail, the most prevalent departure from the normal types of cancels was the use of a double-circle design. (Those which look like special services daters are distinguished by the presence of killer bars.) These occur with various wording. The special services daters are also known with departures from the normal American Base Forces and Army Postal Service wording. The identification of sub-units is more prevalent in these postmarks than in first class cancels, since tracking of registered mail was of greater importance to the Post Office.

APO 675, Recife, Brazil. APO 469, 82nd Airborne Div. (then in England). APO 922, Townsville, Australia. APO 921, Unit 2, precise location in Australia unknown (APO 921 main office was at Adelaide River, N.T.).

Military Postal Markings
U.S. Army Postal Service

Special Service Datestamps
Varieties and Unusual Usages



APO 867, Viex Fort, St.
Lucia. APO 935 Annette
Island, Alaska APO 565,
Hollandia, New Guinea

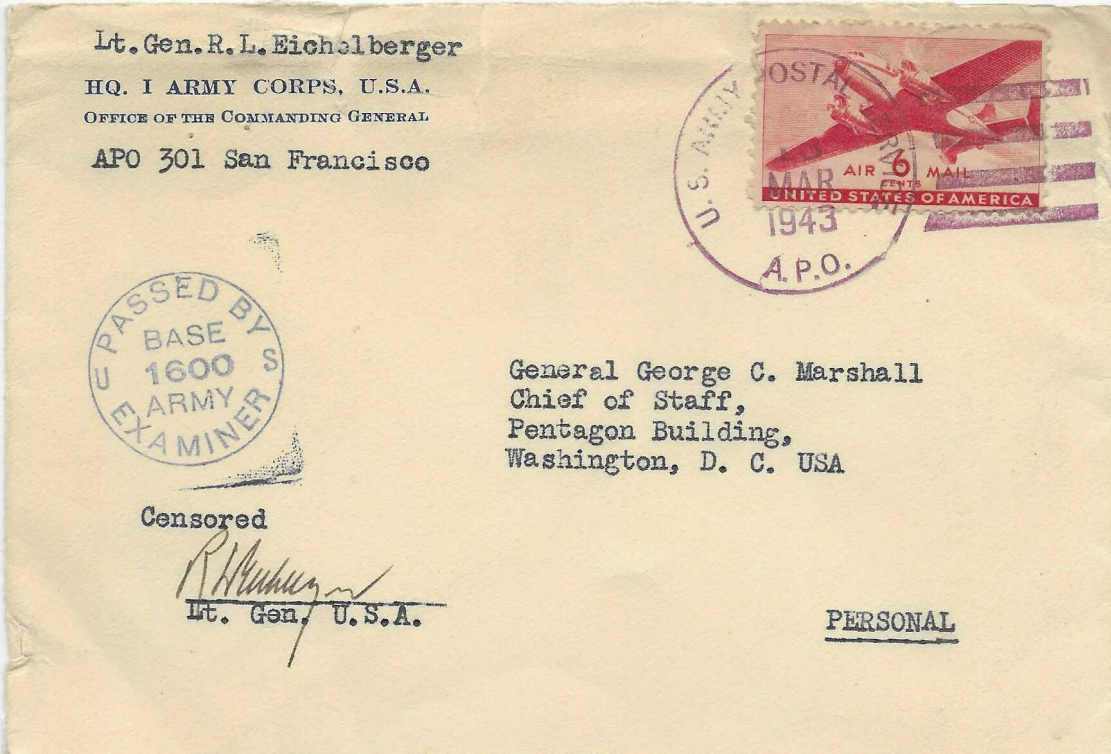
Lt. Fred Golden
155th Finance Disbursing Section
APO 704

Army Postal Service special purpose ("registry") daters occur in several styles. As they did not have space for a time slug, those that were de-numbered in 1942 had to be replaced later, or the APO number had to be added by hand.

Usage as a "cancel" on first class mail matter is not uncommon on post office (especially finance branch) mail, but it is very unusual on non-post office mail.

Military Postal Markings
U.S. Army Postal Service

Color

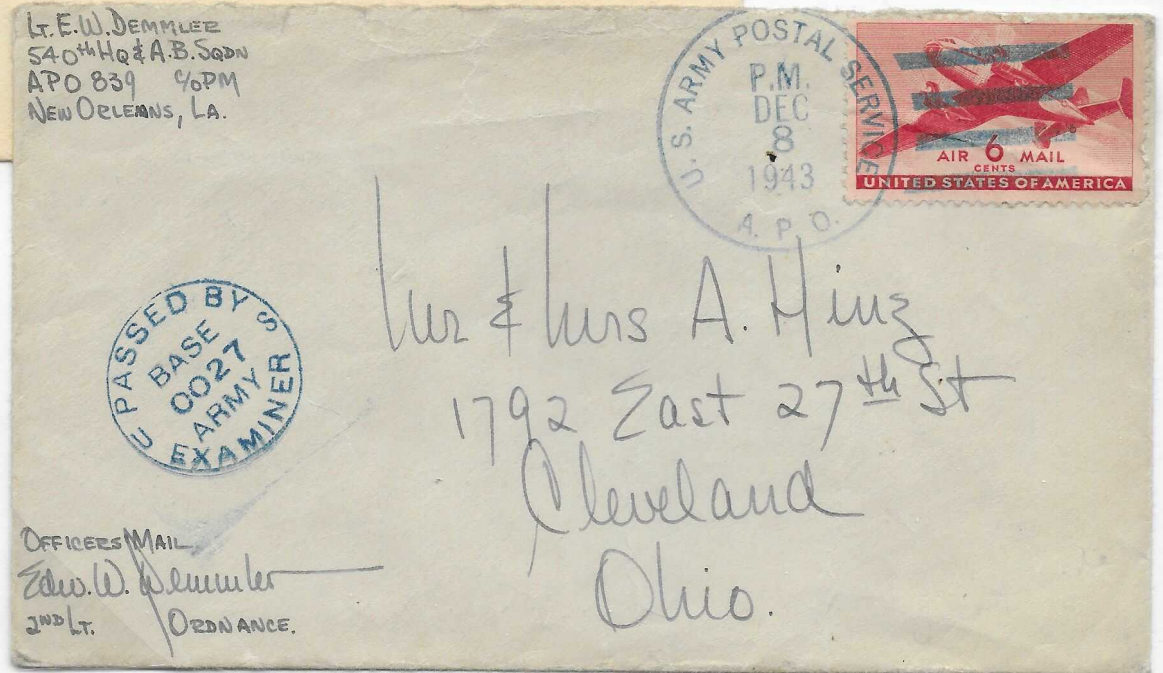


APO 301, Rockhampton, Australia. Note Gen. Eichelberger self-censor.

Censored

R. L. Eichelberger
Lt. Gen. U.S.A.

PERSONAL



APO 839, Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Inks other than black are uncommon. The most prevalent use of magenta ink occurs in Australia, while blue occurs with about equal (in-) frequency in all theatres.