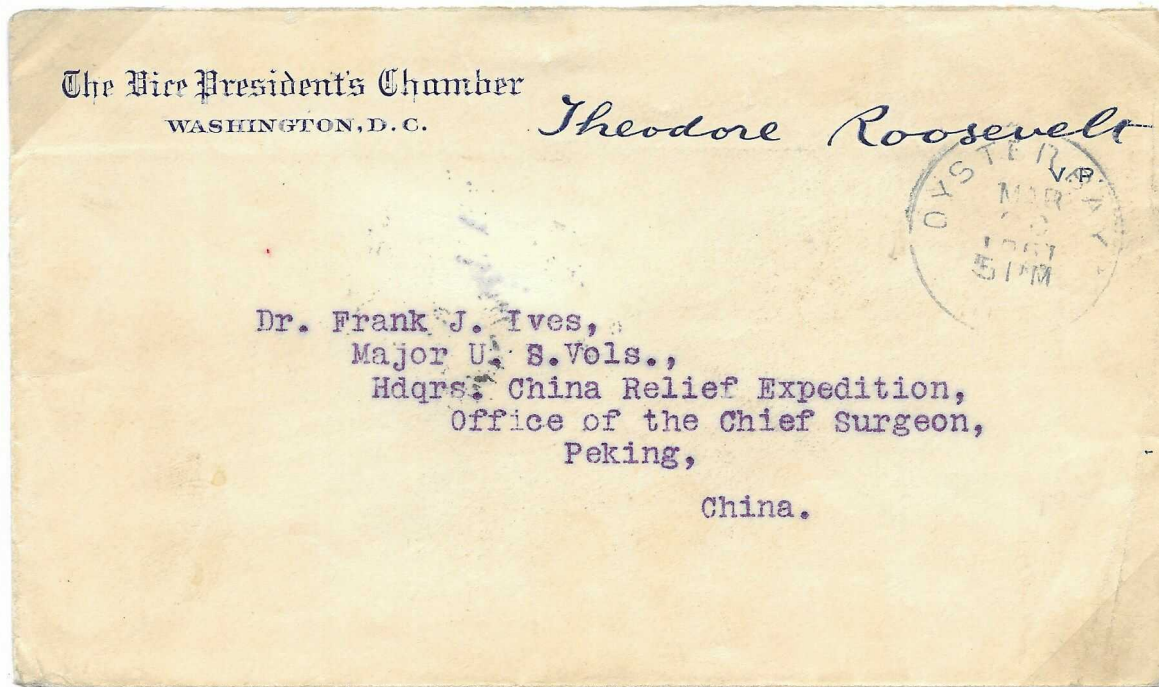


POSTAL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FORCES IN CHINA 1900-1941

This exhibit documents through contemporary postal material the history of the American military forces in China from our participation in the multinational intervention to suppress the Boxer Uprising at the beginning of the 20th Century until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which brought us into World War II. The story gives emphasis to the large variety of postal markings used on mail from the U.S. Army, Navy and Marine personnel during the relevant period, although postal rates and routes are discussed where significant. Reflecting the rules developed during the Spanish-American War, cards and letters from the troops paid only the relevant domestic rates, at times even being handled without prepayment of postage, with the appropriate amount being collected from the addressee as postage due.

Presentation of the material is divided into ten "chapters," each of which represents a specific activity involving U.S. forces. These are developed chronologically, based on the beginning of each event as detailed in the Exhibit Plan on the following page. An attempt has been made to achieve reasonable balance between the events, but some chapters are clearly longer than others, which reflects the length of time involved and the number of men deployed.



Extraordinary official cover sent by Vice President Teddy Roosevelt from his home at Oyster Bay NY to Major Ives with the China Relief Expedition at Peking. On the reverse is an arrival marking of the "Mil. Postal Sta. No. 1/China" dated 21 April 1901.

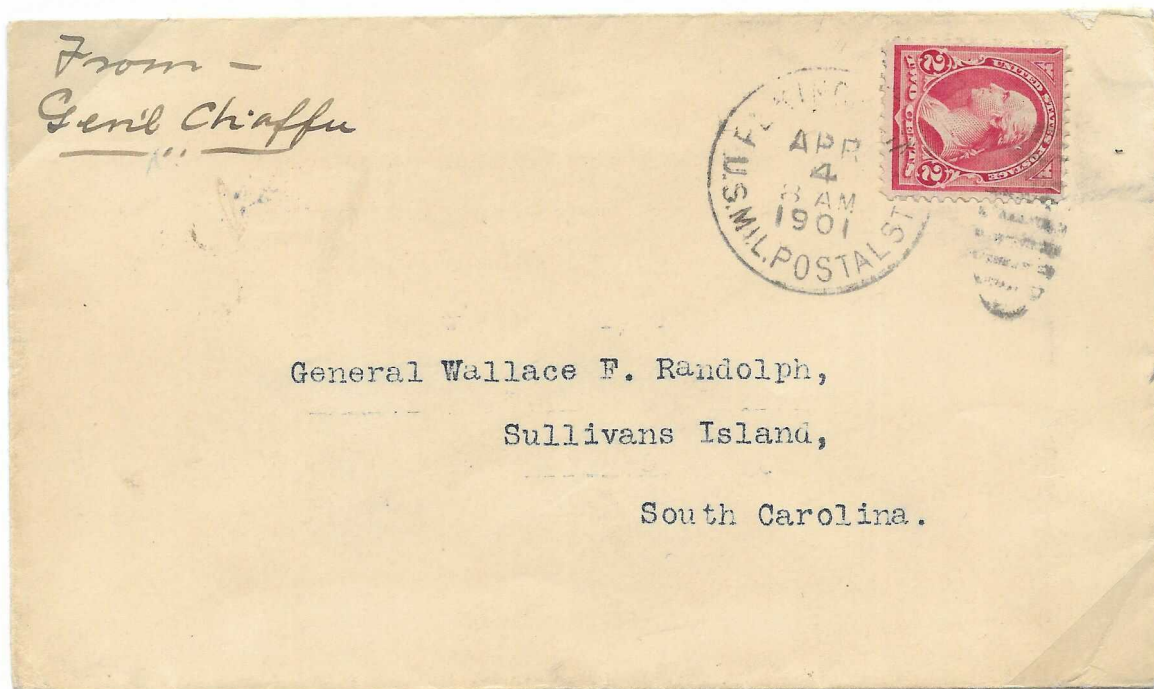
A substantial portion of the material displayed in this exhibit is extremely elusive, and it has required several decades to assemble this showing. In general, the size of the forces sent to China was quite modest, with the largest contingent being the 6,300 men during the Boxer period. In most of the other actions, the participants can be numbered from a couple of thousand down to a hundred or less. As a result, the supply of commercial mail actually sent by the troops is quite limited. Because the exhibit emphasizes earliest and latest known uses of many of the postmarks, it has been necessary in some cases to flesh out the showing with philatelically-created examples made up by collectors eager to obtain unusual postmarks from the other side of the world.

POSTAL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FORCES IN CHINA 1900 - 1941

Plan of the Exhibit

This exhibit is presented in ten "chapters," each relating to a specific military activity. The arrangement is chronological, based on the earliest events for each activity. The specific sections are as follows:

1. China Relief Expedition -- Boxer Uprising 1900-1901.
2. Legation & Embassy Guards in Peking -- 1901-1941.
3. U.S. Navy Yangtze River & South China Patrols -- 1903-1941.
4. U.S. Army Detachment in Tientsin -- 1911-1938.
5. U.S. Navy Purchasing Office in Shanghai -- 1923-1940.
6. West Coast Expeditionary Force - Marines in Shanghai -- 1927-1930.
7. Tientsin Expedition - Third Marines -- 1927-1929.
8. Fourth Marines in Shanghai -- 1930-1941.
9. Second Marines Reinforcing Shanghai -- 1937-1938.
10. Tientsin Marine Detachment -- 1938-1941.



General-to-General letter from the U.S. Military Postal Station in Peking to South Carolina. No return address is provided, but there is a handwritten notation reading "from Gen'l. Chaffee," probably added by Gen. Randolph upon receipt. Chaffee was Commander of the U.S. forces in China Relief Expedition.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION - BOXER PERIOD

In response to the Boxer Uprising in 1900, during which many foreigners and Chinese Christians were murdered by nationalistic insurgents, a group of the Great Powers sent troops to North China. The American contribution to the multinational force was called the China Relief Expedition, commanded by Major General Adna R. Chafee. It consisted of 6,300 men, including 5,000 regular Army personnel, 780 in the First Marine Regiment and about 500 sailors and Marines from the ships of the U.S. Far Eastern Squadron. The first to arrive were Army units sent from the Philippines, which landed at Taku on 6 July 1900. There were no plans to remain in China after the suppression of the uprising, and nearly all Americans were withdrawn by May 1901.

"Peking, China"
19 August 1900

Forerunner Mail sent through San Francisco



Between the arrival of the first American troops in July 1900 and the opening of the first military post office on 18 September, soldiers' letters were sent by military pouch to San Francisco, with or without postage, for forwarding to addressees. (Unfranked mail was routinely accepted under rules established during the Spanish-American War, with postage due being collected from the recipients.)

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION

I.J.P.O. Tientsin
13 August 1900
5 September 1900

Forerunner Mail sent through Japanese Post Office



An alternative to sending forerunner mail by military pouch was to send it via one of the Post Offices Abroad operated in China by various of the Great Powers. The Japanese postal service was favored because it offered the most frequent eastbound Trans-Pacific steamship departures to the U.S. However, postage had to be paid at the full UPU rate of 10 sen for letters. (Upper cover overpaid by 4 1/2 sen, presumably as a souvenir.)

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION
Sent via Japanese P.O.

Tientsin I.J.P.O.
21 September 1900

U.S. Gen. Hosp. - Tientsin - Sept 19-1900 -
Have been here over a month. Payments coming
this week - now we can very ~~start~~ again.
I carried 20 of ten days. Have a double yard also.
Pathologist & lab work. Just what I wanted.
Have been very well satisfied so far. 6 Con had a
fight next day after we arrived. We got 2 wounded
Boxers here - One recovered and liked it here so well
he had to be kicked out. No fighting now - Some
expeditionaries & marchers. Casualties & fatalities
is immense. Nearly a dozen flogs. All hospitals
may have to go to Manila. I don't know with
what I would rather stay here - though
winters are very cold. Stems Father escaped
from Kalgan to Siberia - Many Chinese people
killed. Have rec'd no mail since leaving S.F.,
except 2 notes from fellow Surgeons here in China.
No wonder I want mail. Regards to everyone.
U.S. Post Office opened here yesterday as was
last Sun, U.S.A. Albert Moore



This Japanese postal card represents an important piece of postal history because the message confirms that the U.S. military postal station opened at Tientsin on 18 September, the day before it was written, and notes that no mail has come from San Francisco since the writer arrived a China a month earlier.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION

Mil. P. Sta. No.1 Tientsin/China
19 September 1900

Mil. Postal Sta. No.1/China
15 August 1901

Earliest & Latest Recorded U.S. Military Station Mail

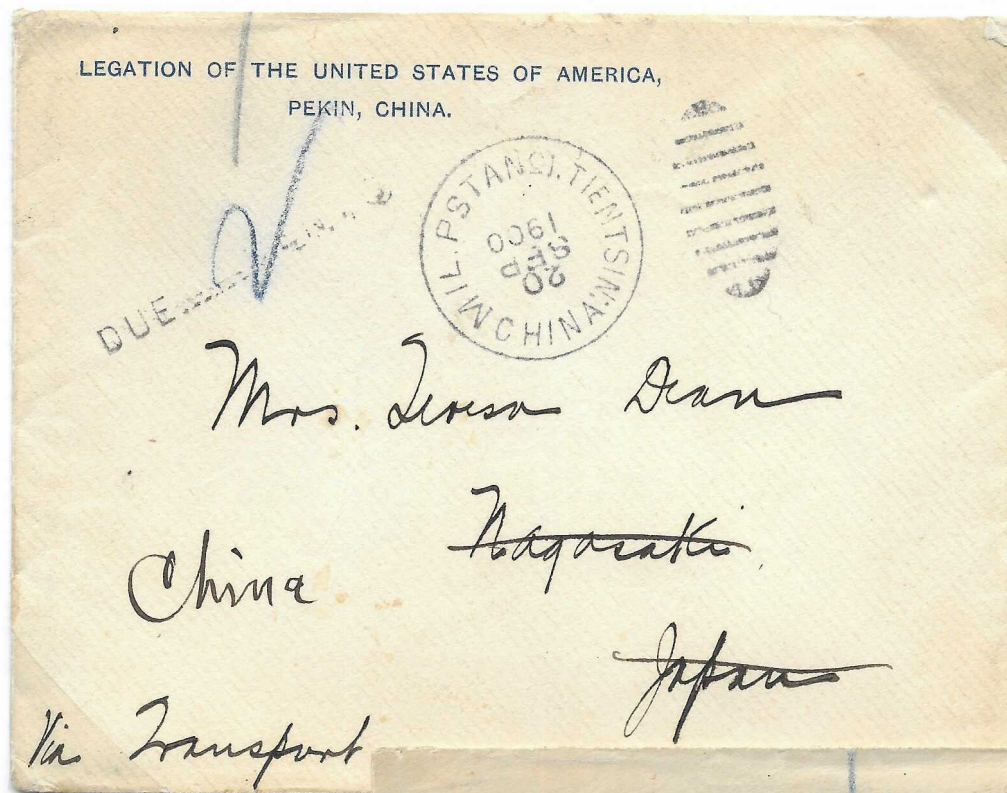


The earliest recorded cover from the U.S. Postal Station in China was postmarked on 19 September 1900 as shown above. The annual report of the Postmaster General states that the military stations "conducted business until about the 15th of May (1901) and were formally discontinued August 31st." All but one company of U.S. troops had left by May 1901, so mail sent after that date is very scarce.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION

Mil. P. Sta. No.1 Tientsin
20 September 1900

Only Recorded Examples of the "Due ____ Cents " Handstamp



Diplomatic cover sent from Peking without postage, but assessed postage due of 2 cents when handled at the M.P.S. in Tientsin.

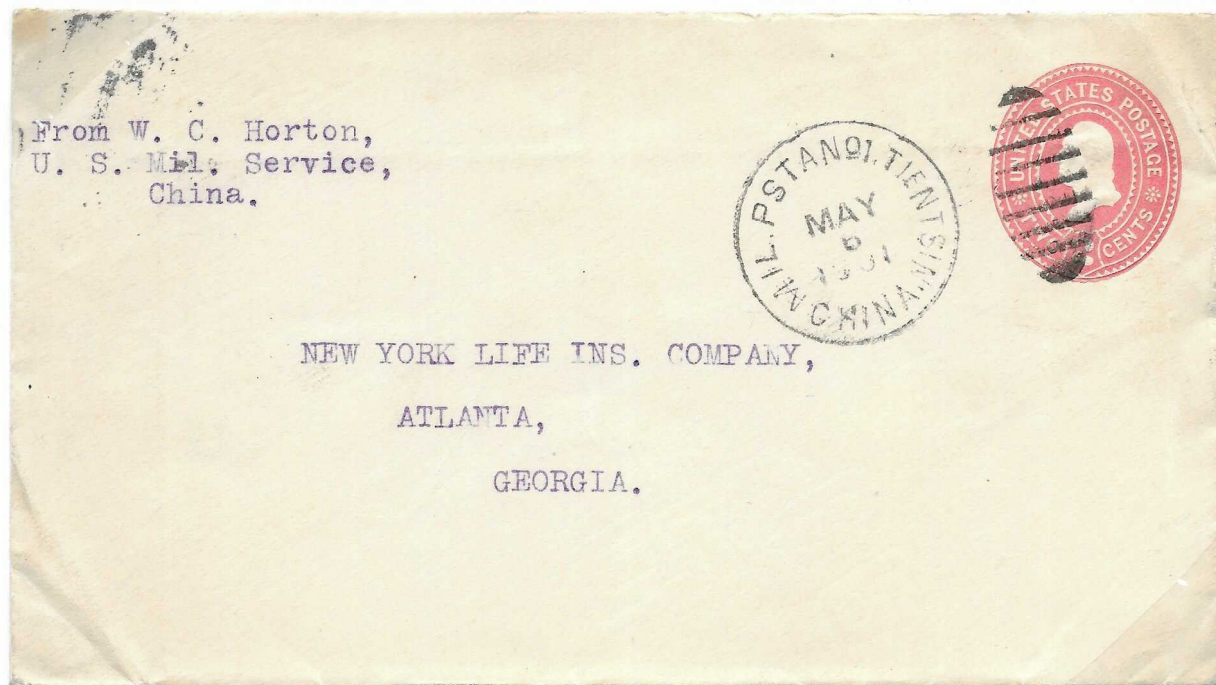
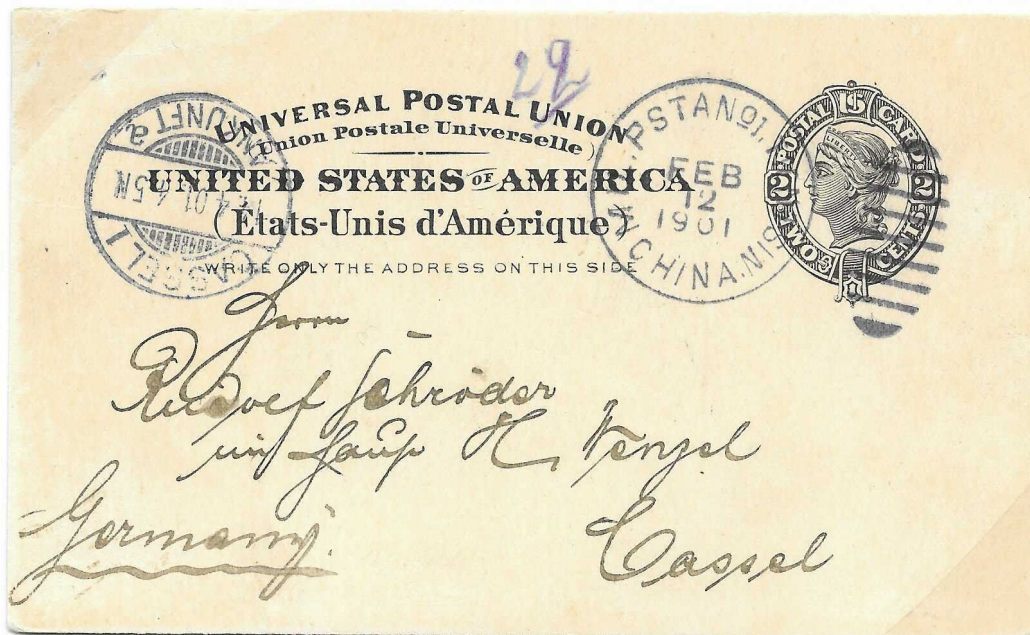
Although fully paid at the UPU rate in theory, the Indian stamps were not recognized at the M.P.S. in Tientsin and postage due was assessed.



These covers were sent prior to the opening of the Military Postal Station in Peking on 30 September 1900. They traveled by military pouch to the postal station in Tientsin where they were processed.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION

Mil. P. Sta. No.1 Tientsin
12 February 1901
8 May 1901



The duplex postmark inscribed with the name "Tientsin" is recorded as used from 19 September 1900 to 18 May 1901. It is shown above on properly paid 2 cent rate international postcard and domestic soldier's letter.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION

Mil. P. Sta. No.1 Tientsin
7 November 1900



Civilians were allowed to use the U.S. Military Postal Stations in China. However, letters not endorsed with a military return address had to be paid at the international rate of 5 cents rather than at the domestic rate of 2 cents.

Mil. Postal Sta. No. 1
1 January 1901
2 February 1901



A new duplex postmark without place name "Tientsin" was introduced in late October and used simultaneously with the previous cds. It is recorded from 27 October 1900 to 15 August 1901. It is shown above (without killer bars) on two postal cards used internationally, one example of which was overpaid by 4 cents for some reason.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION
War Correspondent's Mail

Mil. Postal Sta. No.1
21 December 1900



Cover from a war correspondent for The Chicago Record to the managing editor. The 8 cents postage paid for a weight of four ounces. Backstamped for transit in Tientsin on 24 December and received in Chicago on 29 January 1901.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION
Registered Mail

Mil. Postal Sta. No.1
9 January 1901
24 January 1901
6 May 1901

From W.C.Horton,
U.S.MilP.Sta.No1,
China.



16392

16392

R-----No. 64

New York Life Ins.Co.

4th Floor Austell Building,

Return Receipt Demanded.

Only Recorded
Example of this
Return Receipt
Handstamp

Post Office Department.

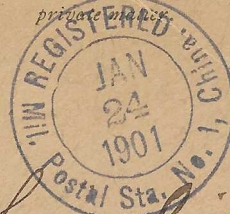
POST OFFICE, Tientsin, China.

MILITARY STATION 1, CHINA.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

(No. 1-A.)

A fee of \$3.00 is fixed by law for use of this envelope to avoid payment of postage.



P. M. Springfield

From Geo. C. Sholes, Supt.
Military Post, Sta. No.1,
China.



946

R-----No.-----

Gebruder Senf,

Leipzig,

Germany.

10740



A double-ring cds with "Registered" at the top of the circle was provided to the Tientsin postal station and used from 24 November 1900 to 2 July 1901. Registered mail from the Military Stations is relatively scarce as only 25 items have been recorded over the past century, including those from Peking and Taku.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION
Money Order Business

Military Postal Sta. No.1
4 April 1901

RECEIPT,
FOR
U. S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER,

1 DOLLARS 15 CENTS.
(AMOUNT FOR WHICH ISSUED)

TO BE GIVEN BY THE ISSUING POST-
MASTER TO THE PURCHASER, WHO WILL
RETAIN SAME AND PRESENT IT AT THE
OFFICE WHERE ISSUED IF NECESSARY TO
MAKE INQUIRY REGARDING THE ORDER.

DETACH HERE. THIS RECEIPT IS FOR THE REMITTER

NO. 1583

DATED STAMP
Military Postal Sta. No. 1
APR 4 1901
OF ISSUING OFFICE

Only recorded example of
M.O.B. Postmark

Post Office Department.

POST OFFICE,.....
MILITARY STATION 1, CHINA.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.
(No. 2-I)

POSTMASTER, *Saginaw*

COUNTY, *Mich*

M. O. B.

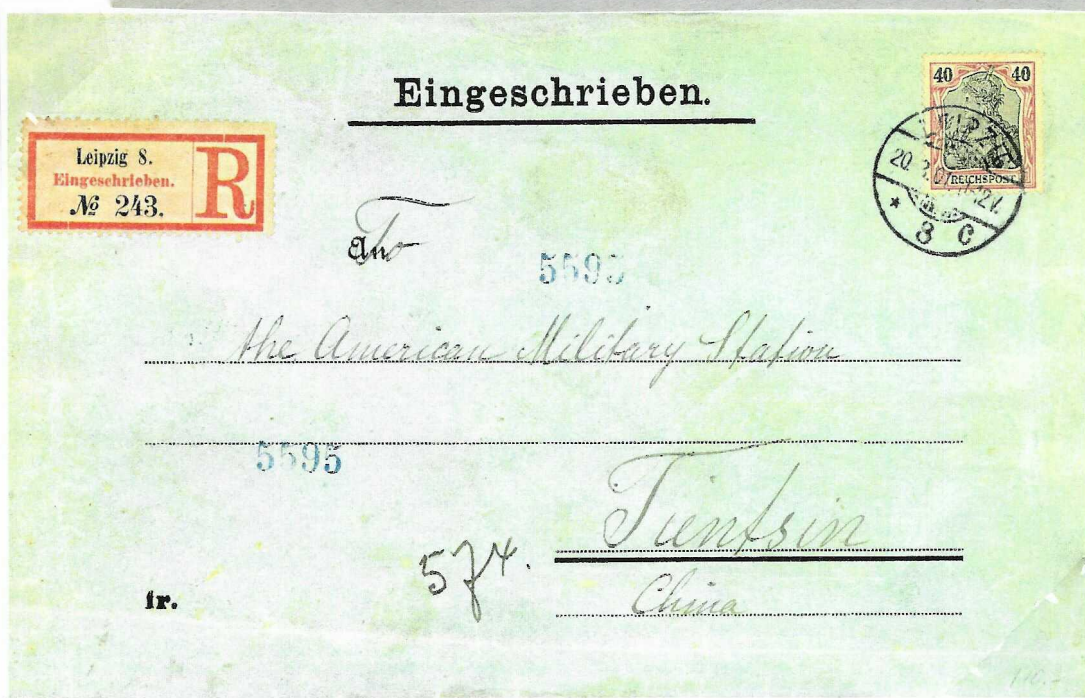
A penalty of \$300 is fixed by law for using
this envelope to avoid payment of postage on
private matter.

WILEY STATION
JAN 12 1901
CHINA

A double-ring cds with "M.O.B." at the bottom of the circle was provided to the Tientsin postal station for use on money orders. With only one example, it is not possible to know the time period during which it was used.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION
Receiving Marking

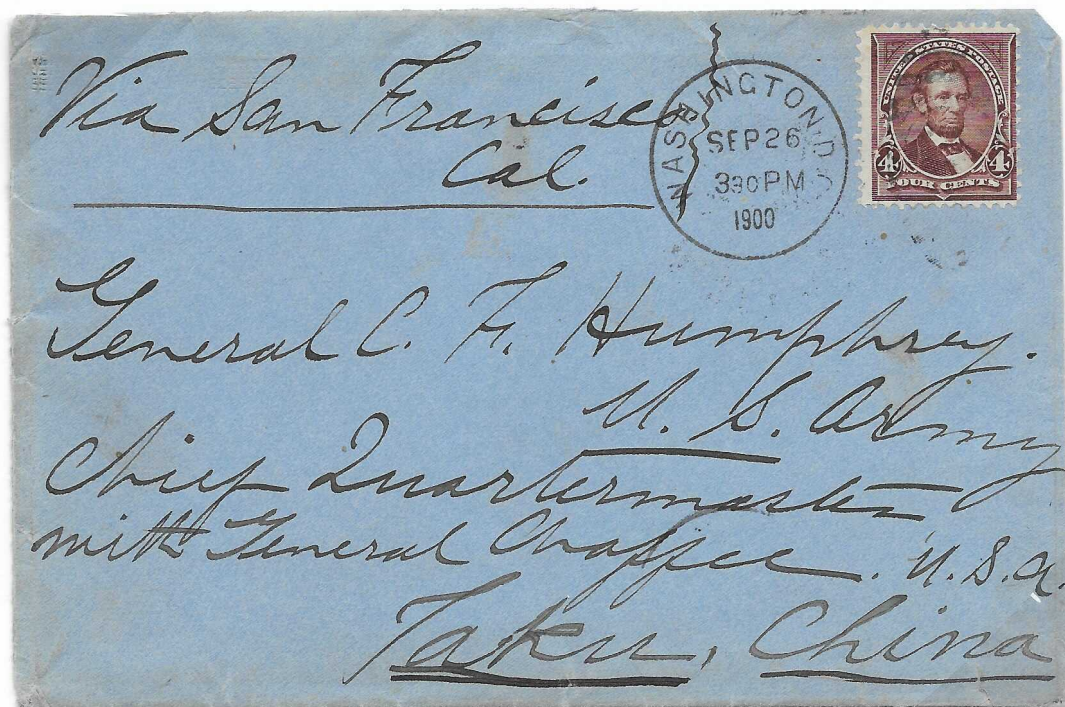
Military Postal Sta. No.1
1 May 1901



A double-ring cds with "Received" at the top of the circle was provided to the Tientsin postal station for use on incoming or in transit registered mail. Fewer than five examples are recorded, dated from 31 October 1900 to 1 May 1901.

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION
Incoming Mail

Mil. Postal Sta. No.1
7 November 1900
19 February 1901



Incoming mail to the troops in China is considerably scarcer than outgoing examples as the soldiers generally did not save the envelopes. Fortunately, most of what is available was backstamped on arrival so that the transit time can be calculated (37 and 38 days, respectively, for the covers shown here).

CHINA RELIEF EXPEDITION

Mil. P. Sta. No.1 Peking
18 November 1900
19 November 1900



The first postmark provided for the Military Station in Peking showed the name of the city, although spelled "Pekin." This marking is recorded used for only about two months from 30 September to 28 November 1900. Japanese China stamps on the upper card were added as a souvenir and had no postal value at the U.S. military station. Lower card to Sweden is one of very few foreign destinations observed on mail from American troops. It was assessed postage due as if it were letter mail, presumably due to writing (return address) on the front.