

LEGATION/EMBASSY GUARDS - PEKING

As a condition of the Peace Protocol signed by China on 7 September 1901 following the defeat of the Boxers, the intervening powers had the right to maintain Legation guards in Peking. The United States designated 5 officers and 160 men of the Army's 9th Infantry to remain in China as Legation Guards. They performed this function until being replaced by Marines on 12 September 1905.

Inbound Mail via German P.O.

Peking
20 February 1904
20 July 1905

Forerunners of Marine Guard Mail

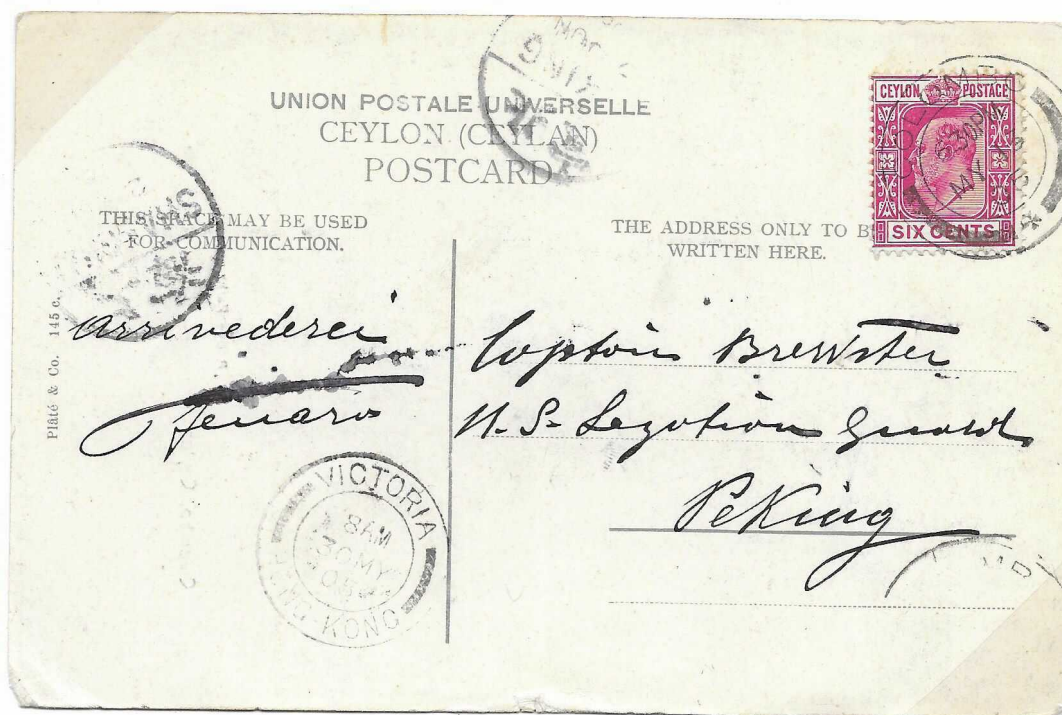


As forerunners to the Marine mail, the postcards shown above from Bavaria and Italy were sent to Captain Brewster of the U.S. Legation Guard in Peking during the period in which this duty was assigned to the Army.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Inbound Mail via Chinese P.O.

Peking
7 June 1905

Forerunner of Marine Guard Mail



Picture postcard of Colombo, Ceylon sent to Capt. Brewster of the U.S. Legation Guards in Peking. Mailed from Colombo on 13 May 1905, it bears transit marks of Victoria, Hong Kong (30 May) and the Chinese post office in Shanghai (2 June). The Peking receiving mark is dated 7 June), when which it was delivered to the U.S. Legation. Examples of mail from the period when the Army supplied the Legation Guards is very elusive.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING

Peking
20 October 1905
11 December 1905

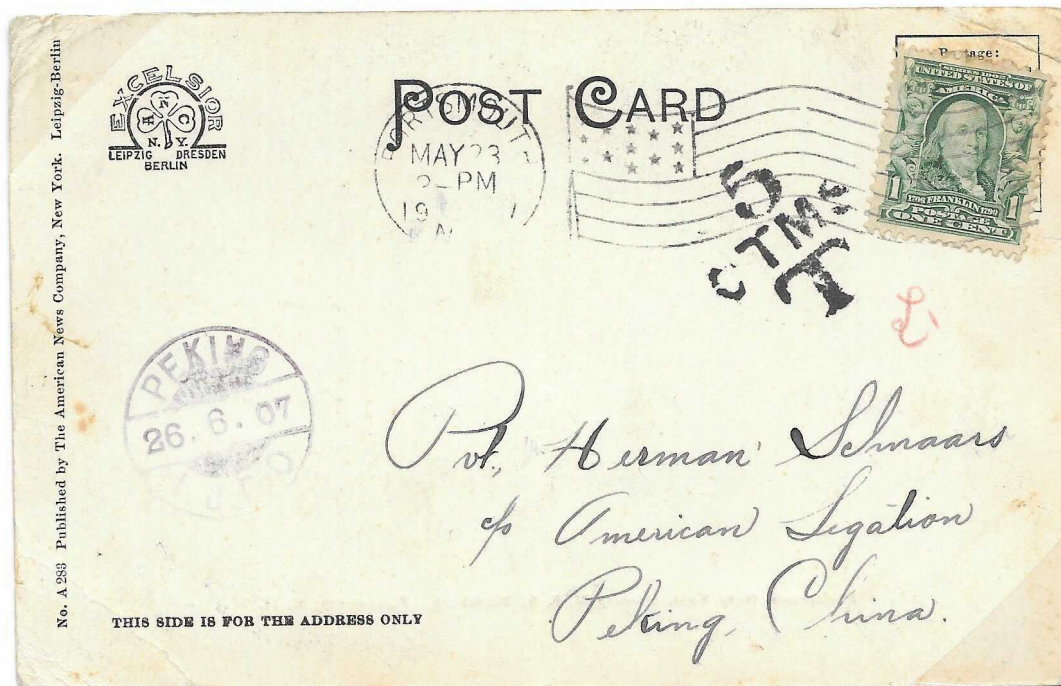
Earliest Recorded Marine Guard Mail



On 28 September 1900, following the end of the threat from the Boxers, all of the Marines in China were withdrawn to the Philippines. However, in 1905, a decision was reached to assign the traditional duty of Legation Guards to the Marine Corps. Accordingly, a contingent of 2 officers and 100 men arrived in Peking on 12 September 1905 to take over this responsibility, which continued until late 1941. Initially, no special postal facility was provided for the use of the Marines in the Legation Guard. Therefore, mail was mostly sent and received through the Chinese post office. The postcard and cover shown above are the earliest known mail from the Marine Guard -- in fact the only recorded examples originating in 1905. Note the use of the special cachet reading "United States Legation Guard,/U.S. Marine Corps,/Pekin, China."

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Inbound Mail

Peking
11 January 1906
26 June 1907



Much of the inbound mail to the Legation Guards was sent via the post offices abroad operated by various Great Powers in China. Above examples show that international postage rates applied on mail to the Marines at this time. The letter from California was correctly paid at 5 cents and, as attested by a backstamp, arrived via the French post office in Peking. The postcard was underpaid by 1 cent so that postage due was assessed; it arrived via the Japanese post office in Peking.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Inbound Returned Mail

Peking
15 June 1906



This well-traveled cover never did catch up with the intended recipient and was eventually returned to the sender in Buffalo after five months. Initially addressed to Batavia in the Dutch East Indies, with a manuscript direction "Please Forward to Peking, China." Backstamped at Batavia, Weltevreden and Soerabaja in the East Indies and sent on via Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tientsin to Peking. There, it was endorsed in red "Not in American Legation Guard, Peking, China." Apparently advertised for a month by the Chinese post office, it was then turned over to the Japanese post office there for transmittal to the U.S., where it was returned to the sender.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Outbound Mail via Chinese P.O.

Peking
 21 February 1908
 23 October 1916



In the normal course of events, mail from the Legation Guards was posted through the Chinese post office in Peking for transmission to the U.S. Above examples of a postcard and letter were correctly franked at 4 and 10 Chinese cents, respectively.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Outbound Mail via Chinese P.O.

Peking
26 December 1914



Dec. 25
1914

AMERICAN LEGATION GUARD
PEKING, CHINA

Dear Mr. & Mrs.:

On your warm
Christmas to you and
the family. I hope you
eat a pie for me!
I ate one, for each of
you

MISSSENT TO
SHERMAN, CAL.

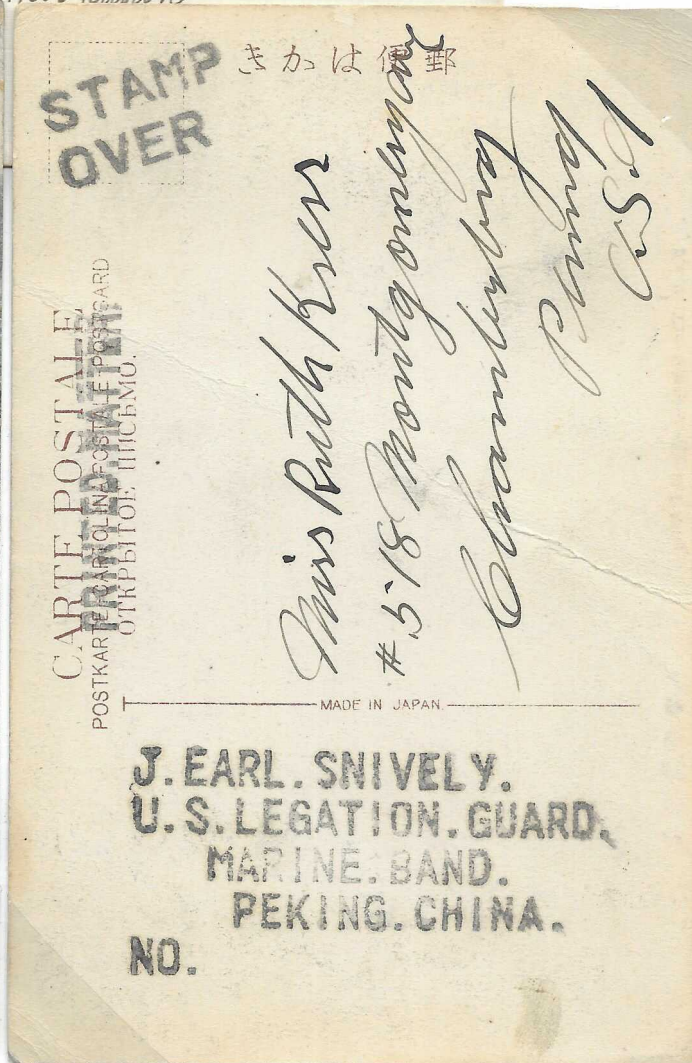
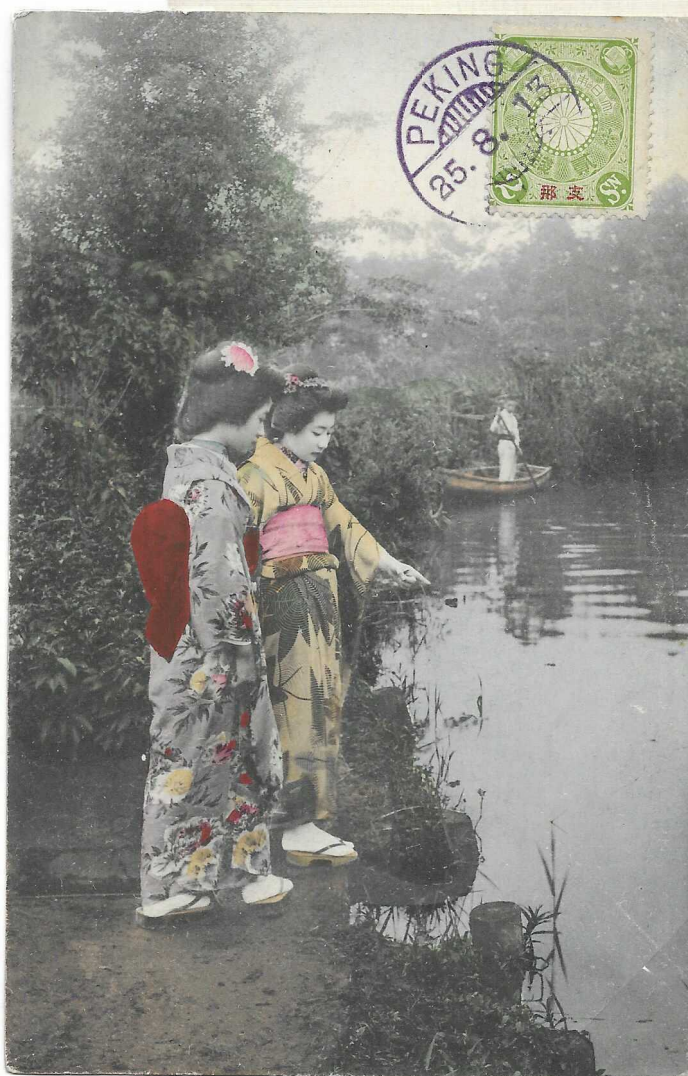
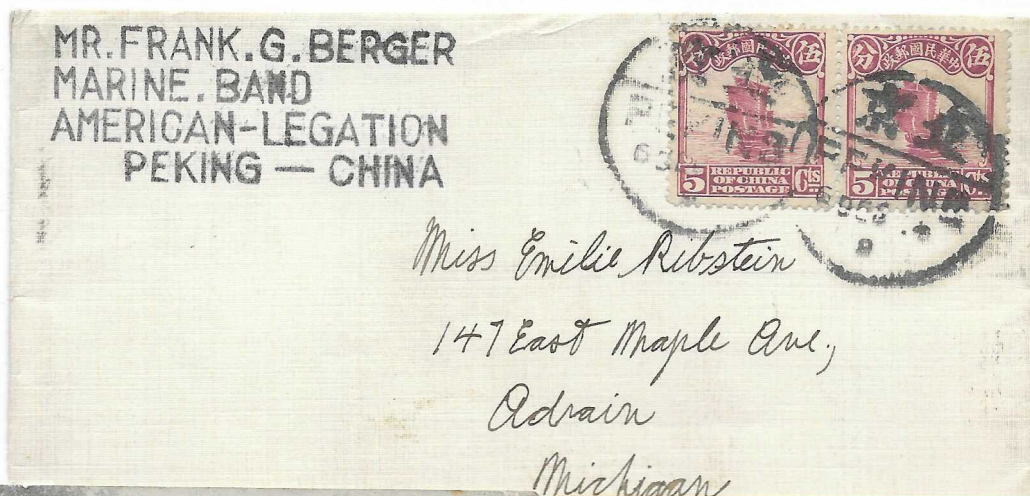


Mr. F. B. Huntington,
20 Dudley Place,
Yonkers,
N. Y.
United States of America

Although World War I had broken out in Europe at the time this letter was sent, neither China nor the United States would be participants until 1917, so mail was not subject to censorship or any unusual treatment.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
 Outbound Mail via Chinese P.O.
 Outbound Mail via Japanese P.O.

Peking
 25 August 1913
 7 _____ 1914
 6 December 1924

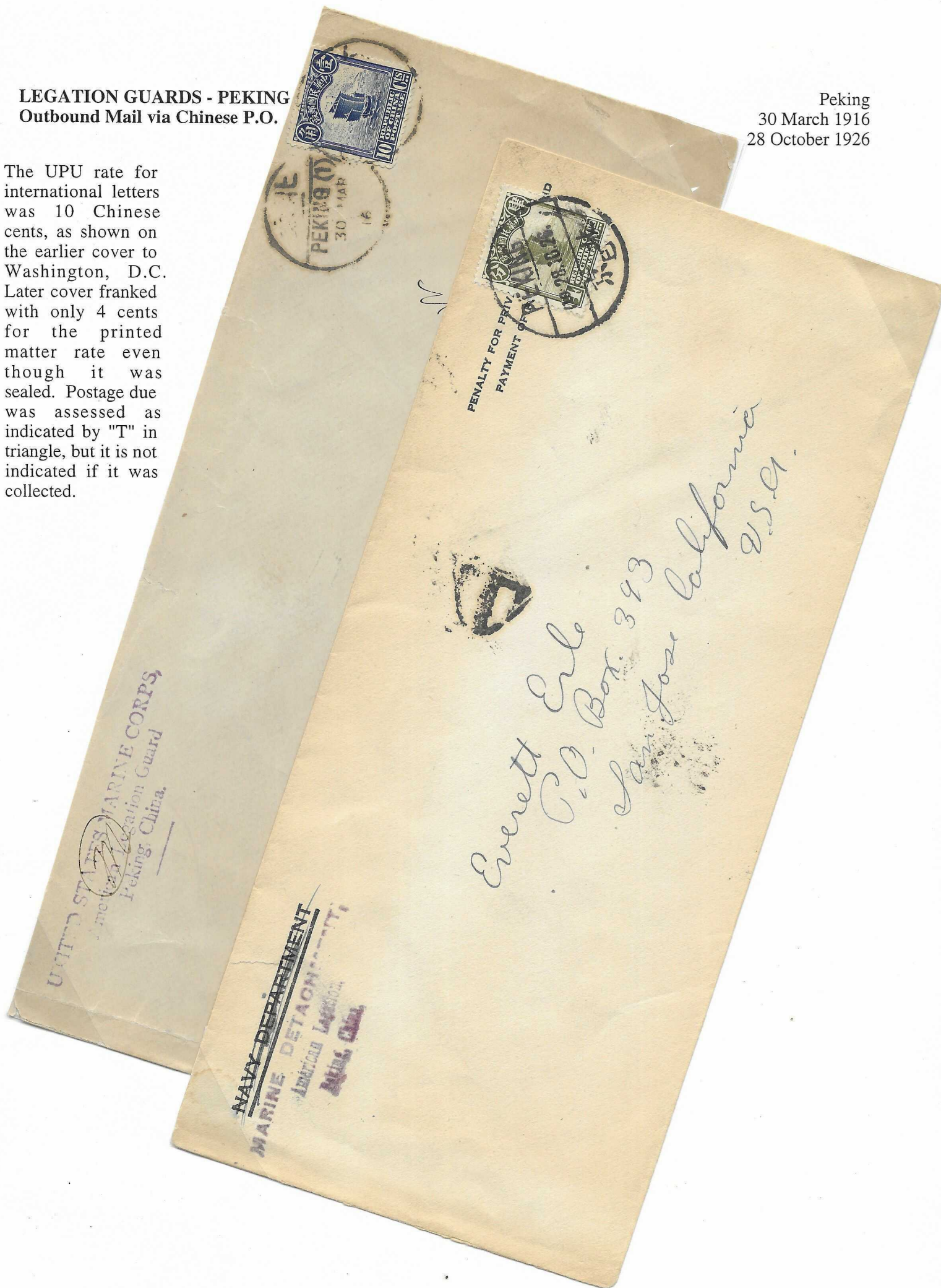


Letter and postcards sent from members of the Marine Band in Peking. The cover is properly paid at the UPU rate for international letters at 10 Chinese cents. Postcards from the same sender paid at the printed matter rate of 2 sen in Japanese Office in China stamps.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Outbound Mail via Chinese P.O.

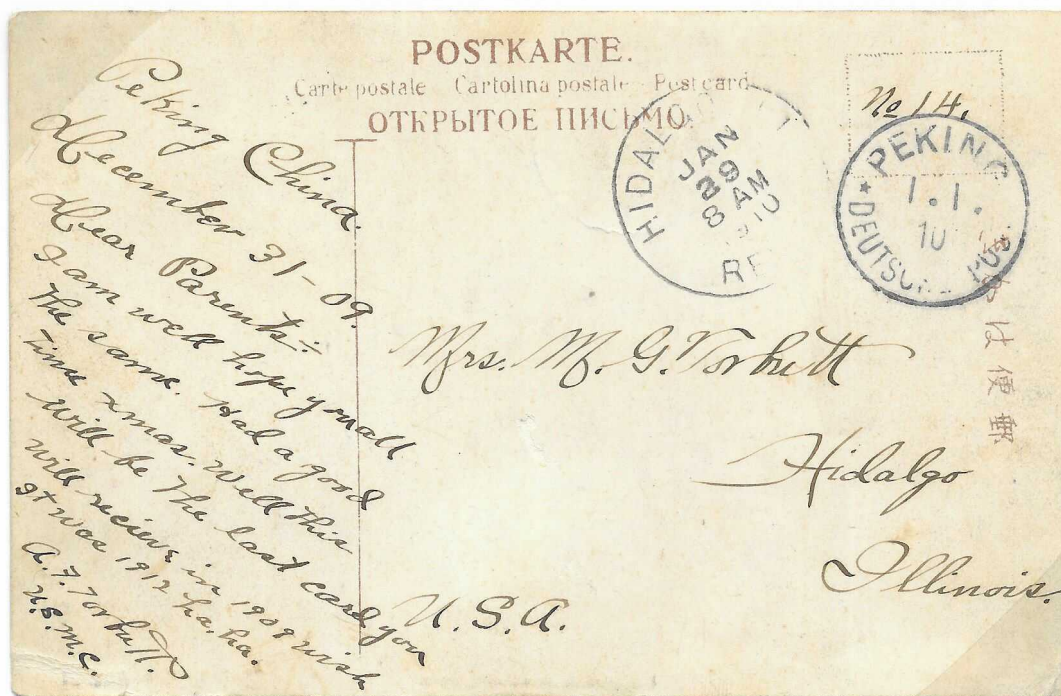
Peking
 30 March 1916
 28 October 1926

The UPU rate for international letters was 10 Chinese cents, as shown on the earlier cover to Washington, D.C. Later cover franked with only 4 cents for the printed matter rate even though it was sealed. Postage due was assessed as indicated by "T" in triangle, but it is not indicated if it was collected.



LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Outbound Mail via German P.O.

Peking
1 January 1910
11 November 1910



Mail from the Marines was despatched in the most convenient manner, which often meant the use of the post offices abroad of the other countries represented in Peking. The card and cover shown above went via the German postal service. Postcard is correctly franked with a 4 cent German China stamp on the picture side. The cover is overfranked by 2 Chinese cents and arrived in under a month even though it was forwarded to Texas.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Outbound Mail via Japanese P.O.

Peking
31 October 1916

Earliest cover of registered mail from the Marine Guards known to exhibitor. The Japanese postal service was highly regarded for reliability and, thus, was a natural choice for sending valuable mail.

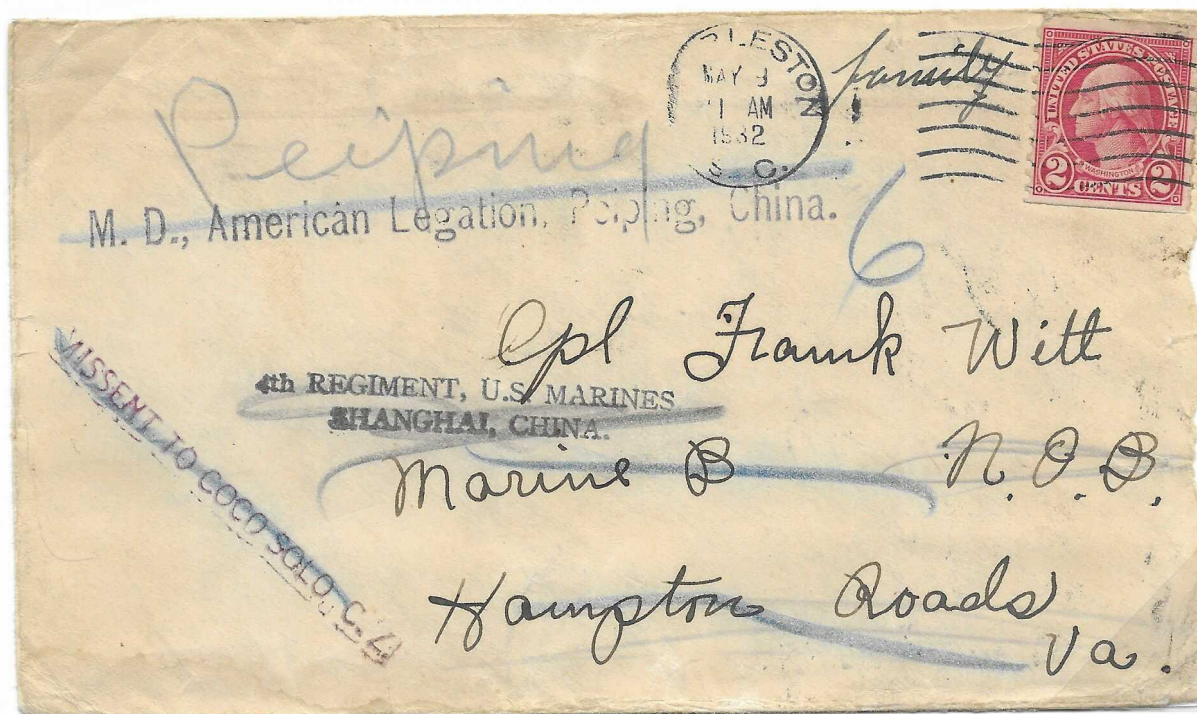


The cover is franked with 38 sen in Japanese China stamps, which paid the 10 sen registration fee plus postage on 2.1 to 2.9 ounces (10 sen for first 20 grams, plus 6 sen for each of three additional 20 grams).

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Inbound Mail via Shanghai

Peking
7 December 1909

Peiping
July 1932



Upper postcard sent to a Marine in the Legation Guard from the U.S. to our post office in Shanghai, where a Rec'd" marking was applied. Lower cover sent to Marine Barracks in Hampton Roads and then forwarded. Initially missent to Coco Solo, C.Z. (transit mark of 25 May 1932) it then went to the 4th Marine Regiment in Shanghai (backstamp of 8 July 1932) and finally to the American Legation in Peiping.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Registered Mail Forerunners

Peking
18 October 1920

Washington, D.C.
4 June 1922

Registered mail prior to the opening of the U.S. post office is extremely elusive. Long cover is the only example of outbound registration known to exhibitor. It has return address of "T. A. Tieken, Marine Detachment, American Legation, Peking China" on reverse. Franked with 20 Chinese cents on the front and 6 cents on reverse. Sent via Moukden, Manchuria and Seattle.



Small cover is only example of inbound registered mail prior to the opening of the U.S. post office known to exhibitor. It went from New Zealand to New York and was then forwarded to Marine Corps HQ in Washington. There it was readdressed to "Headquarters Detachment, American Legation, Peking, China." No postal markings beyond Washington, indicate that it traveled to the Legation by diplomatic pouch.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEKING
Outbound Mail via Chinese P.O.

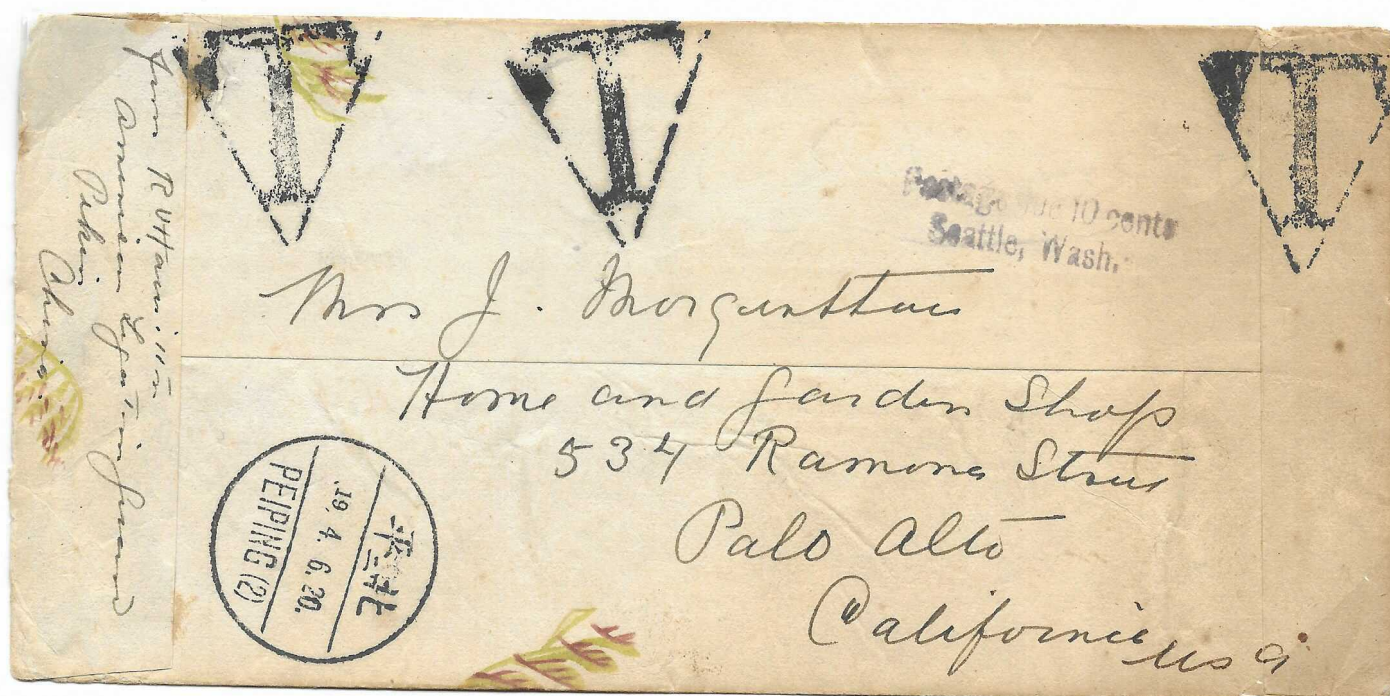
Peiping
2 October 1929
2 April 1930



Covers with the corner card of the YMCA serving the Legation Guards in Peking. Note the name change to Peiping ("Northern Peace") by the Nationalist government in 1928. Lower example is domestic usage to the YMCA for sailors in Shanghai with appropriate receiving mark of 6 April 1930 on reverse.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEIPING
Unfranked Mail via Chinese P.O.

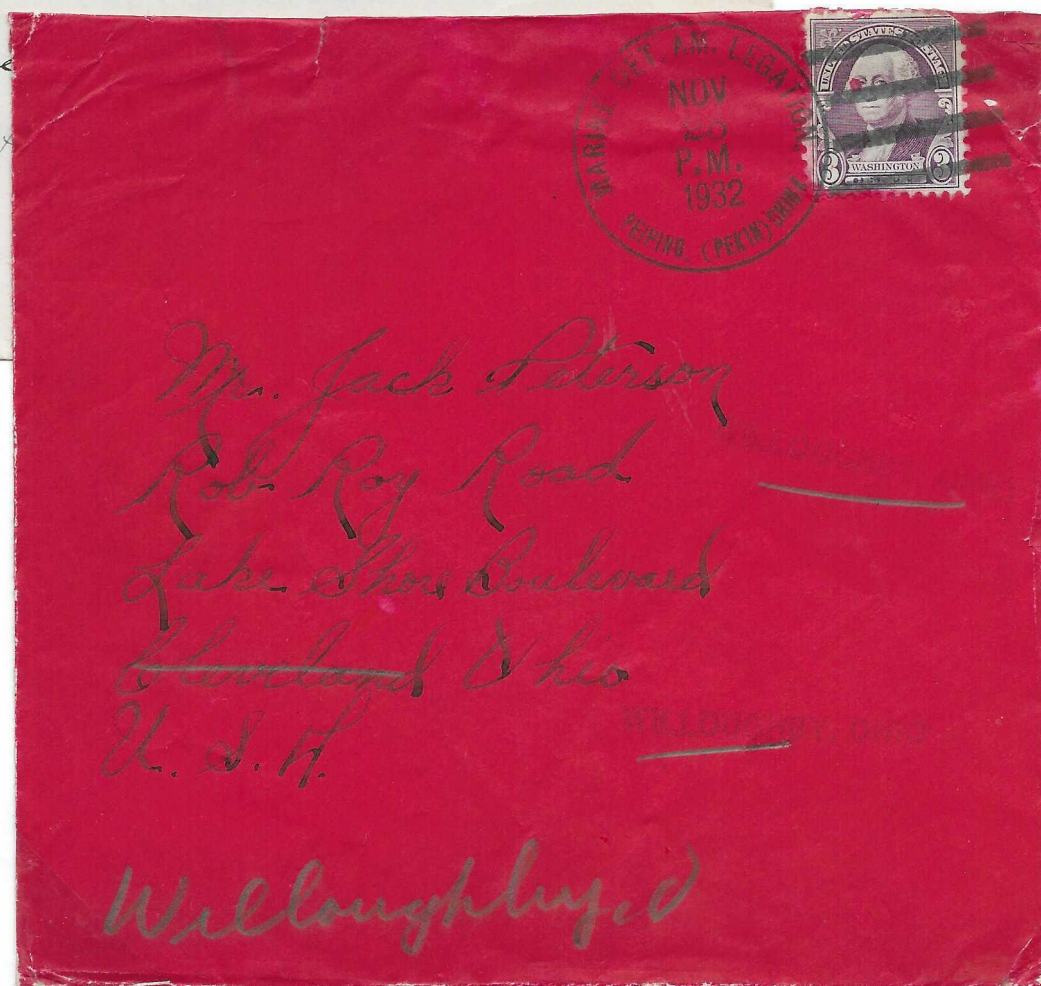
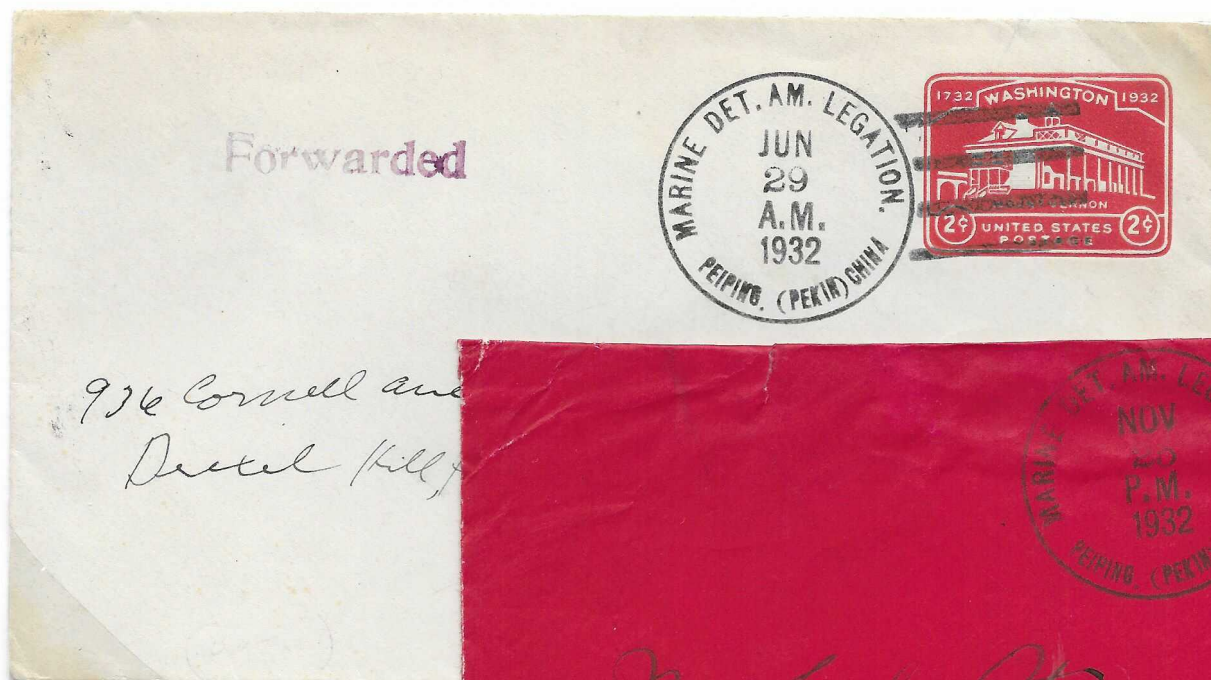
Peiping
4 June 1931



A most unusual cover sent completely unfranked by "R. V. Hamilton, American Legation Guard, Pekin, China" to California. Three strikes of large "T" in triangle were applied to denote postage due. This was followed up by a marking reading "Postage due 10 cents/Seattle, Wash." (double deficiency of the international rate) but neither postage due stamps nor receiving marks were applied.

LEGATION GUARDS - PEIPING
United States P.O.

Peiping
29 June 1932
25 November 1932



Marine records report that a branch of the New York post office was opened on 2 February 1932 to serve the Legation Guards in Peiping. Postage to the U.S. was paid at domestic rates, i.e. 2 cents for letters through 5 July 1932 and 3 cents afterward. Lower example obviously contained a Christmas card in an appropriately colored envelope. The mail was actually delivered to and from the mainland in diplomatic pouches, so there was no involvement with the Chinese postal service.