

## YANGTZE & SOUTH CHINA PATROLS

Although ships of the Asiatic Fleet made frequent visits to Chinese ports as courtesy calls, to obtain supplies and for other purposes, the only U.S. Navy activity in China was the patrol boats on the Yangtze and Pearl Rivers. Following the Boxer Uprising, in 1903 the United States sent gunboats from Manila to Shanghai, where they were officially assigned to patrol the lower Yangtze River. These vessels and/or their replacements remained on patrol up until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. (Mail sent from the gunboats prior to the early-1930s is elusive, but a few examples are recorded back into the first decade of the past century.)

U.S.S. Concord  
11 January 1907

U.S.S. Wilmington  
12 March 1910

U.S.S. "CONCORD."

Jan 11.07

Dear Mr. ...

letter of  
the box



Mrs Dixie Hixon

770 Santa Clara Ave

Flamida

Concord was assigned to China in March 1906. It remained in the Far East until 1908, serving on the Yangtze patrol and as station ship at Shanghai. This cover was mailed prior to the creation of on board postal facilities, thus sent through the U.S. Postal Agency in Shanghai.

Wilmington commenced river service on 17 December 1908, serving in the Yangtze Patrol as far upriver as Hankow. It was transferred to Hong Kong in 1912.

CARTE POSTALE

Postkarte - Cartolina Postale - Post Card  
ОТКРЫТОЕ ПИСЬМО



Mr Adam Jett

Chamblee

Georgia  
USA

This letter me  
will received  
your letter  
not get time to  
write Jeff

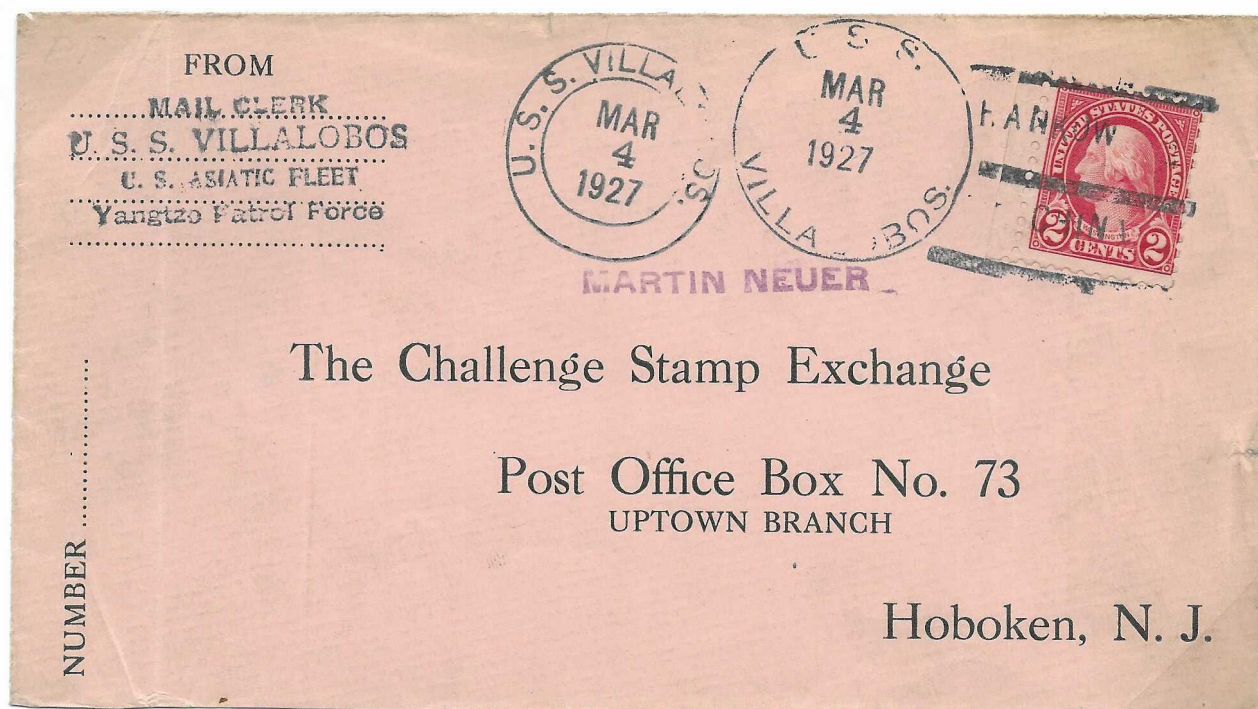
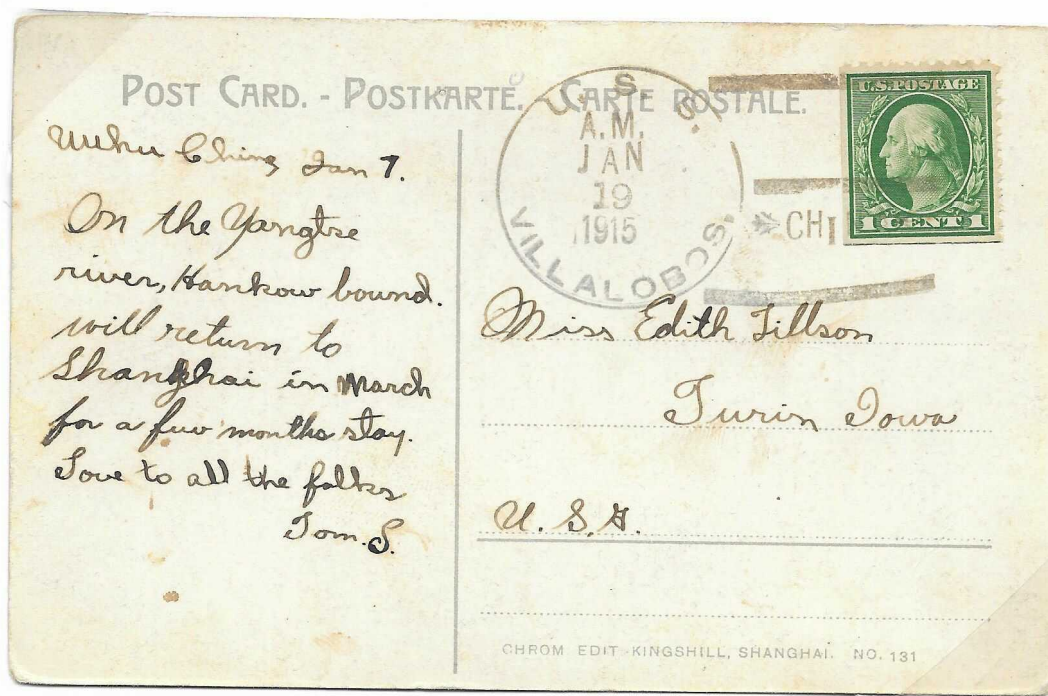
MADE IN JAPAN.

さかば郵便



YANGTZE PATROL

U.S.S. Villalobos  
19 January 1915  
4 March 1927



The USS *Villalobos* and *Elcano* were captured in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War in 1898 and were chosen as the initial vessels for service in China when the Yangtze Patrol was inaugurated in 1903. *Villalobos* operated there for 25 years until being decommissioned on 9 October 1928. It served as the model for the fictitious USS *San Pablo* that later starred in the novel and movie "The Sand Pebbles."



**YANGTZE PATROL**  
Registered Mail

Captured from the Spanish in the Philippines, *Elcano* was one of the original ships sent to China for river patrol work in 1903. Upon replacement by newer vessels, it was used as a target and sunk in October 1928. Its registration marking is very elusive, with fewer than 10 examples being recorded.

U.S.S. *Elcano*  
11 May 1916  
17 November 1927



125308  
of Navigation,  
my Department,  
Washington, D.C.

Small cover is distinctive in that the registry fee was paid by one of the special stamps issued for this purpose. This is the only such example of this stamp recorded from China and one of only five on covers originating from outside the continental United States.

After.....days, return to

*Dr. Louis H. Roddis U.S.N.*

U. S. S. *ELCANO*,  
Asiatic Station.  
Via SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.



*Levy's Book Store*

29870

*Philadelphia*

*Pennsylvania*



*9th St. below Market.*

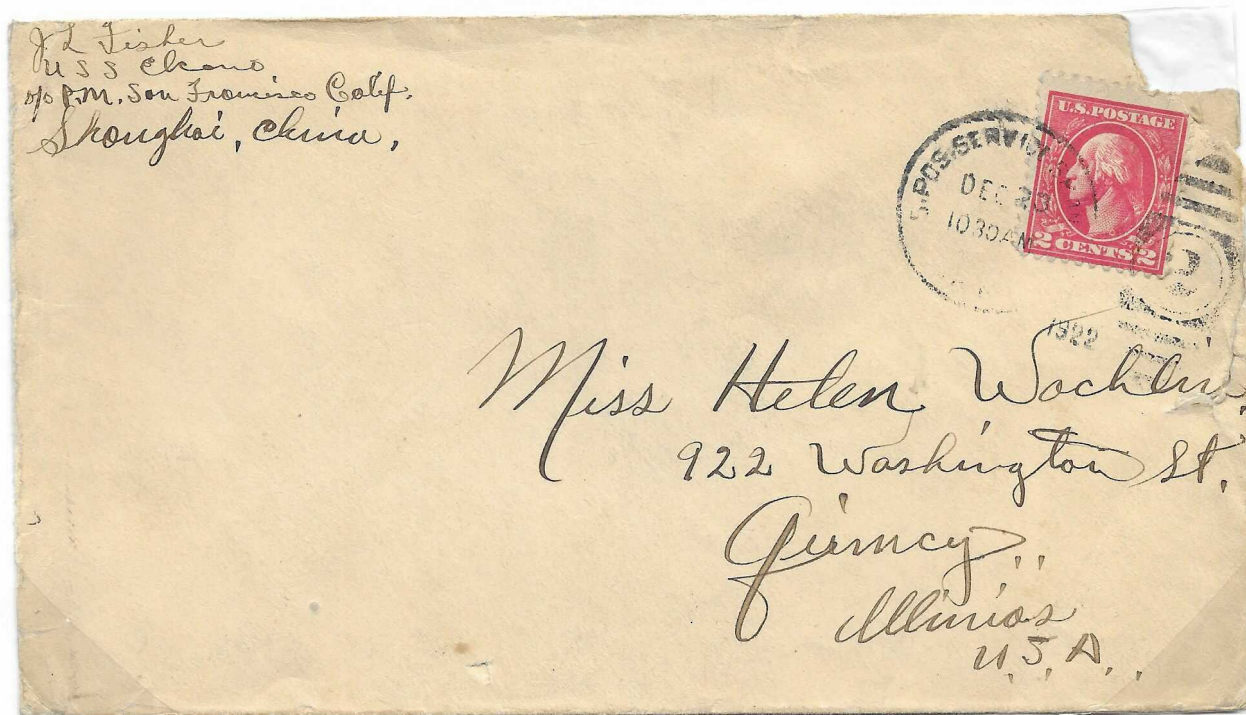
Return receipt demanded



YANGTZE PATROL

U.S.S. Elcano  
23 December 1922

Sent Through U. S. Postal Agency in Shanghai



Very few examples of Yangtze Patrol mail sent through the U.S. Postal Agency in Shanghai have been observed. In fact, this is a very late usage, being sent just eight days before the post office was closed down.



## YANGTZE PATROL

In 1914, *Monocacy* and *Palos* joined the Patrol. These shallow-draft vessels were specifically designed to navigate the Yangtze gorges and to operate as far inland as Chungking, some 1,300 miles upstream from the home base at Shanghai. Covers from the early period of service of these gunboats are very elusive.

U.S.S. *Palos*  
20 December 1917  
ca. 1935



The large piece is the front portion of a parcel wrapping sent from *Palos* at Chungking to the mail clerk for the Fourth Marines in Shanghai. Postage of \$2.13 Chinese was paid for internal airmail service.



**YANGTZE PATROL  
Registered Mail**

*Isabel* was a special case of a non-gunboat assigned to the Patrol. It was a yacht fitted out as a destroyer during the World War and sent to China in 1921, where it served as the flagship of the Yangtze Patrol. *Isabel*'s final tour of duty ended in 1932.

U.S.S. *Isabel*  
March 1924  
2 May 1927



The registered cover sent by a sailor on *Isabel* to his wife in San Francisco. Manuscript notations of "moved" and "sailed" suggest non-delivery. However, designations of "Unclaimed/Return to Writer" are crossed out. Backstamps of Seattle and San Francisco run from 5 to 21 April 1924.



**YANGTZE PATROL**  
**Use of Chinese P.O.**  
**Official Mail**

Official covers sent from *Isabel*. Upper example was addressed to the Commander of the Yangtze Patrol at Shanghai and it was easier to use the Chinese post office for internal postal service at only 3 Chinese cents.

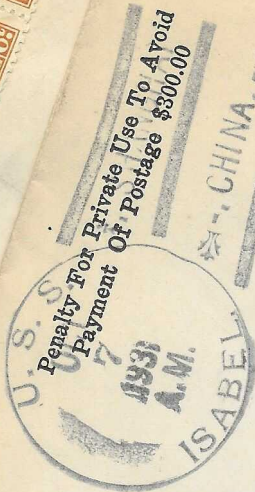
Ichang  
 9 June 1924

U.S.S. Isabel  
 7 October 1931

COMMANDER YANGTZE PATROL FORCE  
 UNITED STATES ASIATIC FLEET  
 U. S. S. ISABEL, FLAGSHIP  
 via Seattle, Washington.  
 OFFICIAL BUSINESS

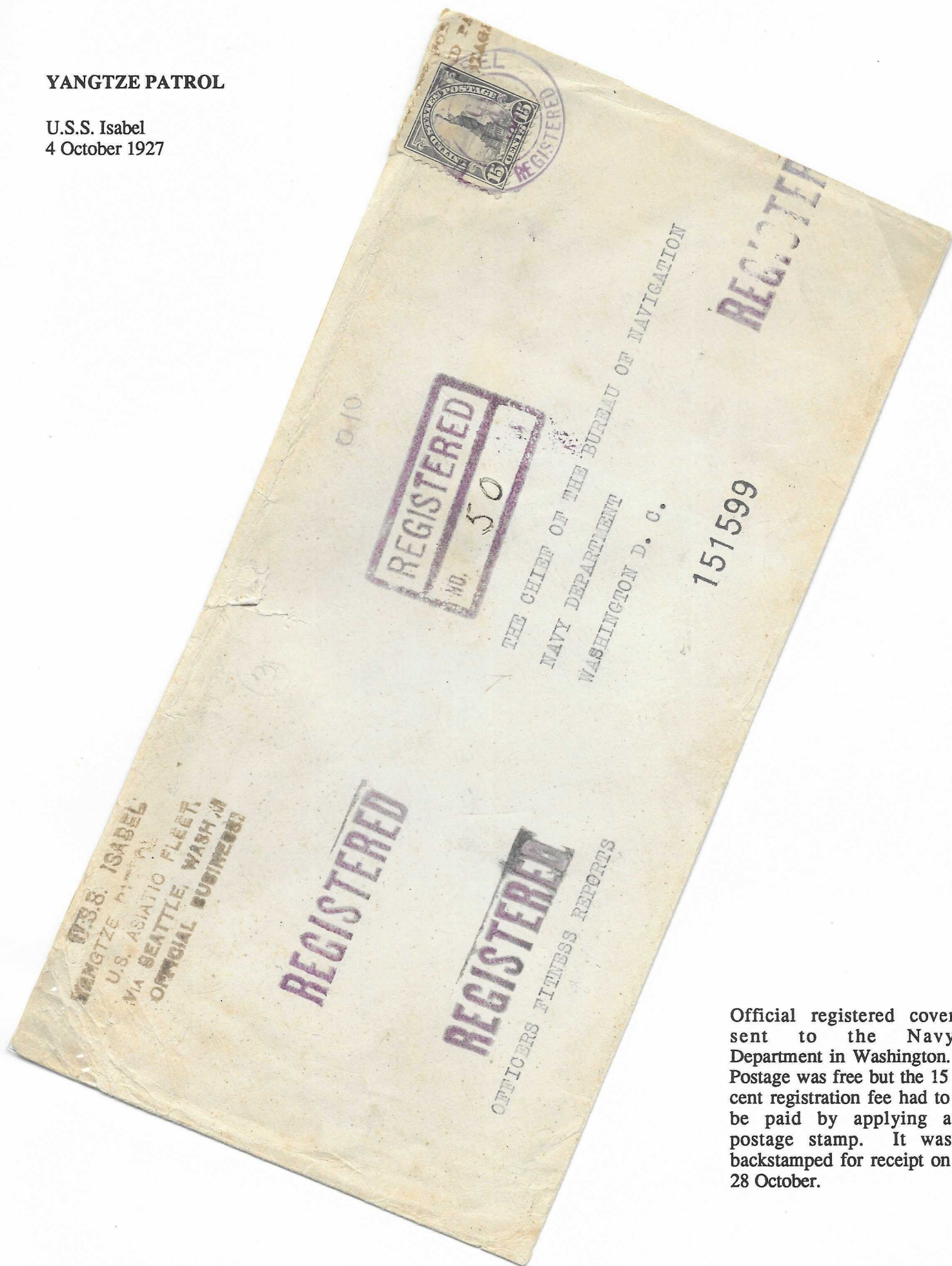
NAVY DEPARTMENT  
 U. S. S. ISABEL  
 Asiatic Station  
 Via Seattle, Washington  
 OFFICIAL BUSINESS

CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF NAVIGATION,  
 NAVY DEPARTMENT,  
 WASHINGTON, D.C.



**YANGTZE PATROL**

U.S.S. Isabel  
4 October 1927

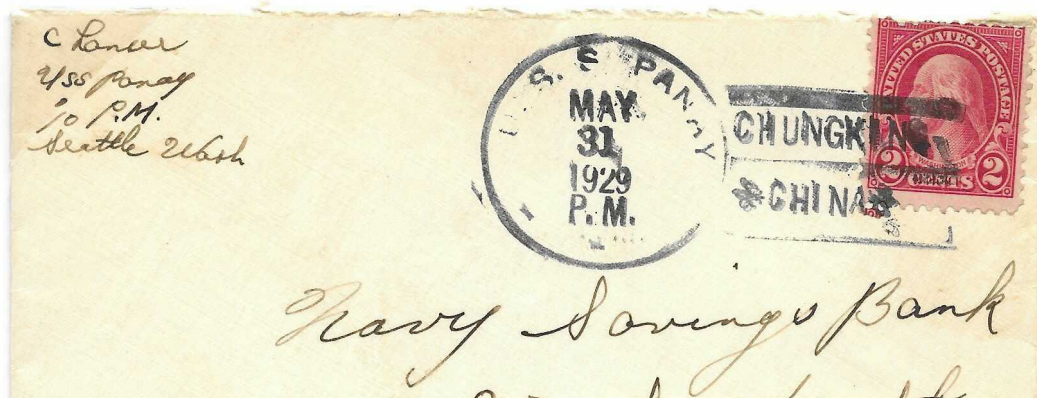


Official registered cover sent to the Navy Department in Washington. Postage was free but the 15 cent registration fee had to be paid by applying a postage stamp. It was backstamped for receipt on 28 October.



YANGTZE PATROL

U.S.S. Panay  
31 May 1929  
27 October 1934  
10 November 1937



Panay was another of the *Guam* class gunboats that joined the Patrol in 1928. It was attacked and sunk by Japanese warplanes near Nanking on 12 December 1937 during the Sino-Japanese War.

Upper cover used from Chungking, which was the western terminus of the patrol, nearly 2,000 miles upriver from Shanghai.



YANGTZE PATROL

U.S.S. Panay  
2 February 1933



Registered mail from the *Panay* is extraordinarily elusive, with fewer than five examples being recorded. In the case of the example above, postage of 3¢ and the registration fee of 15¢ are paid with Fourth Bureau adhesives and cancelled with the standard postmark of the ship, rather than by a killer. The cover is backstamped with the double-circle registration *U.S.S. Panay* datestamp and has a transit marking of the Navy Purchasing Office in Shanghai.



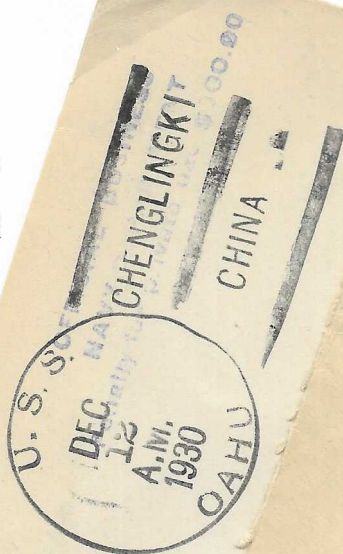
**YANGTZE PATROL**  
**Official Mail**  
**Sent via Chinese P.O.**

U.S.S. Oahu  
 12 December 1930  
 8 May 1936

Left cover sent from  
 esoteric location of  
 Chenglingki, a small  
 village in the Hunan  
 Province.

NAVY DEPARTMENT  
 U. S. S. OAHU  
 Via Radio, Washington  
 OFFICIAL BUSINESS

H. Hawk  
 Lt. (J.G.) C.V. Hawk  
 U.S.S. Oahu  
 Yangtze Patrol  
 via Fourth Marines



7/20/36  
 Mr. David Marks  
 1280 East South Temple  
 Salt Lake City, Utah  
 U.S.A.

*Oahu* was another of the  
*Guam* class gunboats put  
 into service in 1928. Sent  
 to the Philippines with the  
 outbreak of war in 1941, it  
 was sunk by Japanese guns  
 on Bataan in May 1942.



**YANGTZE PATROL  
Official Mail  
Inbound Mail**

U.S.S. Oahu  
3 December 1933  
20 April 1934

Large cover ex the  
U.S. Navy Godown  
(warehouse) in Hankow  
via *Oahu* to Navy Dept.  
in Washington.



g Division,  
Supplies and Accounts,  
ment,  
D.C.,

POST C.

Printed in England

Correspondence



*I'll see you  
on the station  
soon.*

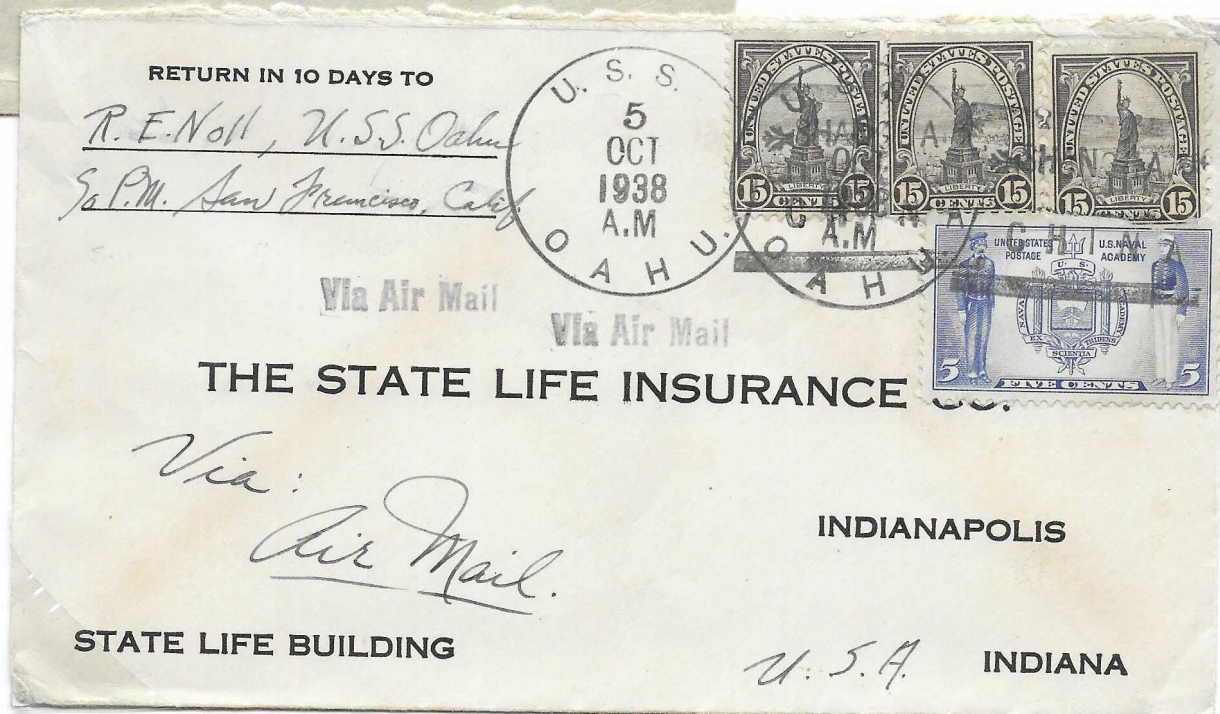
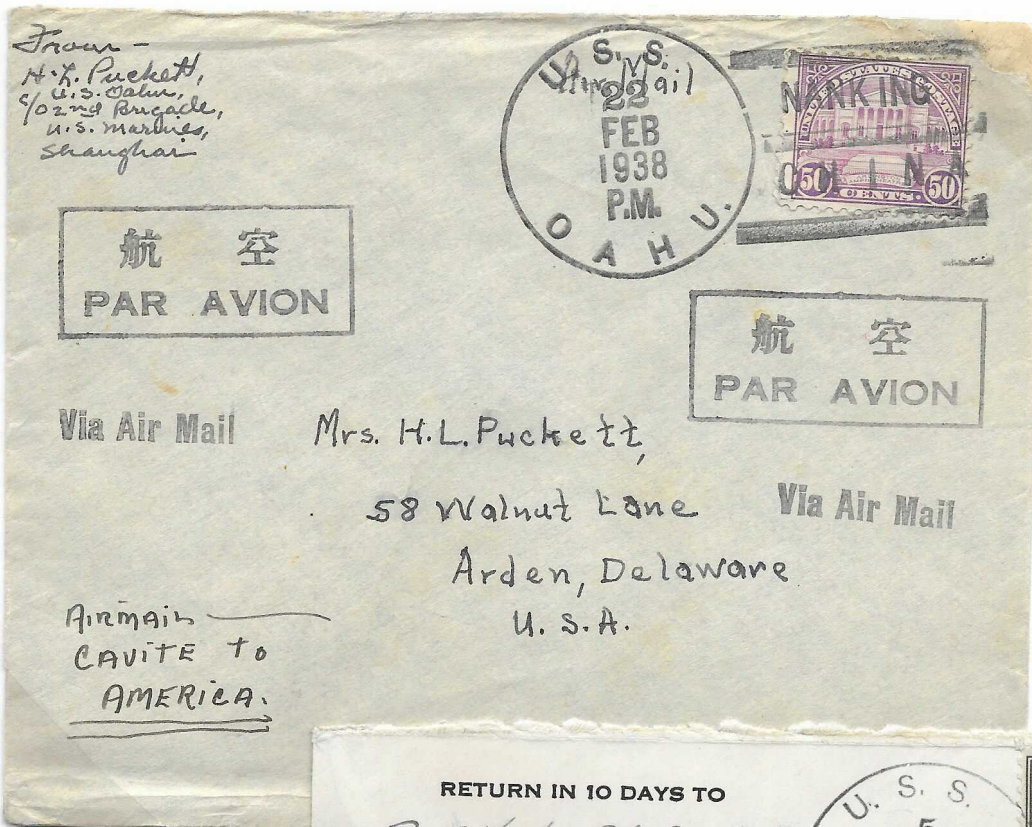
*Mr. A.K. Robinson  
U.S.S. Oahu  
~~Hankow~~  
Chonglink China.*

Picture postcard of Sandakan  
mailed from British North  
Borneo to U.S.S. *Oahu* in  
China represents the most  
exotic Yangtze usage one  
could possibly imagine.



YANGTZE PATROL

U.S.S. Oahu  
22 February 1938  
5 October 1938



The Oahu postmarks shown above have locations in the killer bars of Nanking and Shanghai, respectively. Both covers were franked with 50 cents U.S. postage to pay the fee for transportation on the Pan Am Clipper from the Philippines to the U.S. mainland.



# YANGTZE PATROL

U.S.S. Tutuila  
5 July 1931  
1938 (?)



U.S. Navy Godown, Hankow,  
China, D.C.



Mr. George S. Hill,  
627 Fairmount Avenue,  
Philadelphia Pa U.S.A.

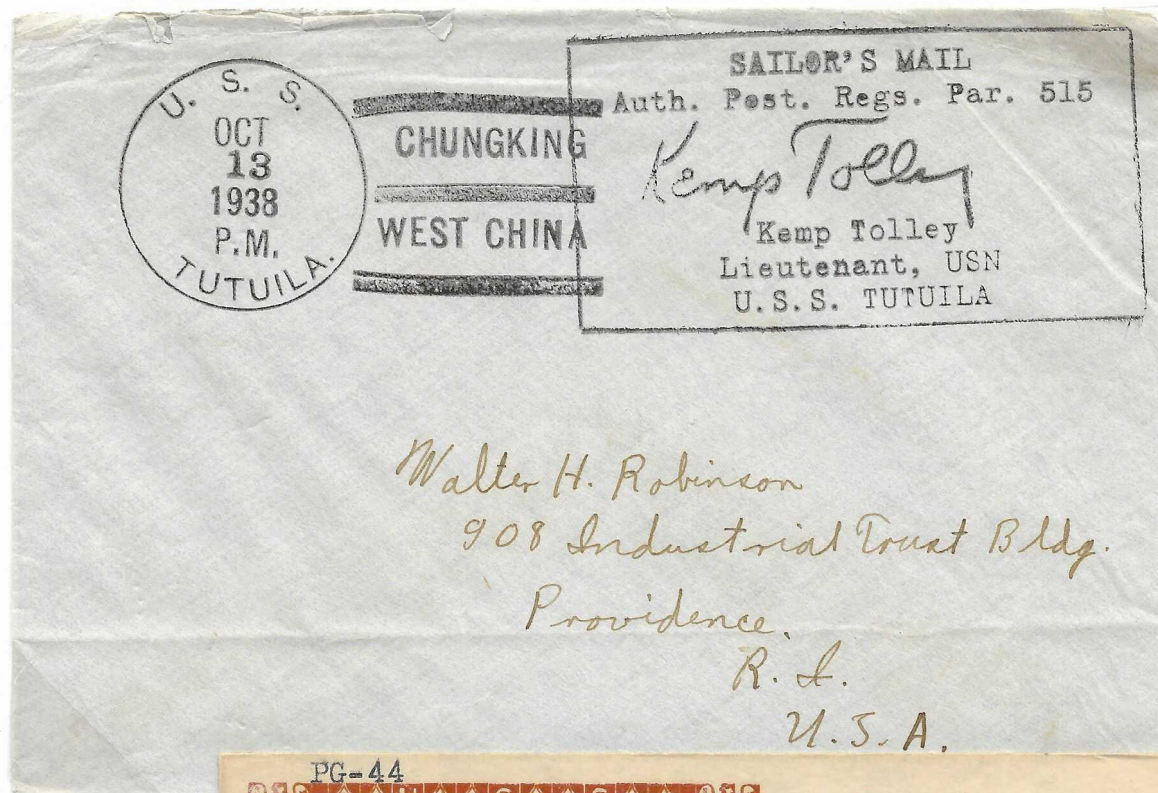
NAVY DEPARTMENT  
U. S. NAVY GODOWN  
HANKOW, CHINA  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

*Tutuila* was another of the *Guam* class ships that joined the Patrol in 1928. The covers shown above originated from the U.S. Navy Godown (warehouse) in Hankow. Note the misspelling of the name of the city in the killer bars of the upper cover.



YANGTZE PATROL  
Registered Cancel  
Parcel Post Cancel

U.S.S. Tutuila  
13 October 1938  
21 December 1939

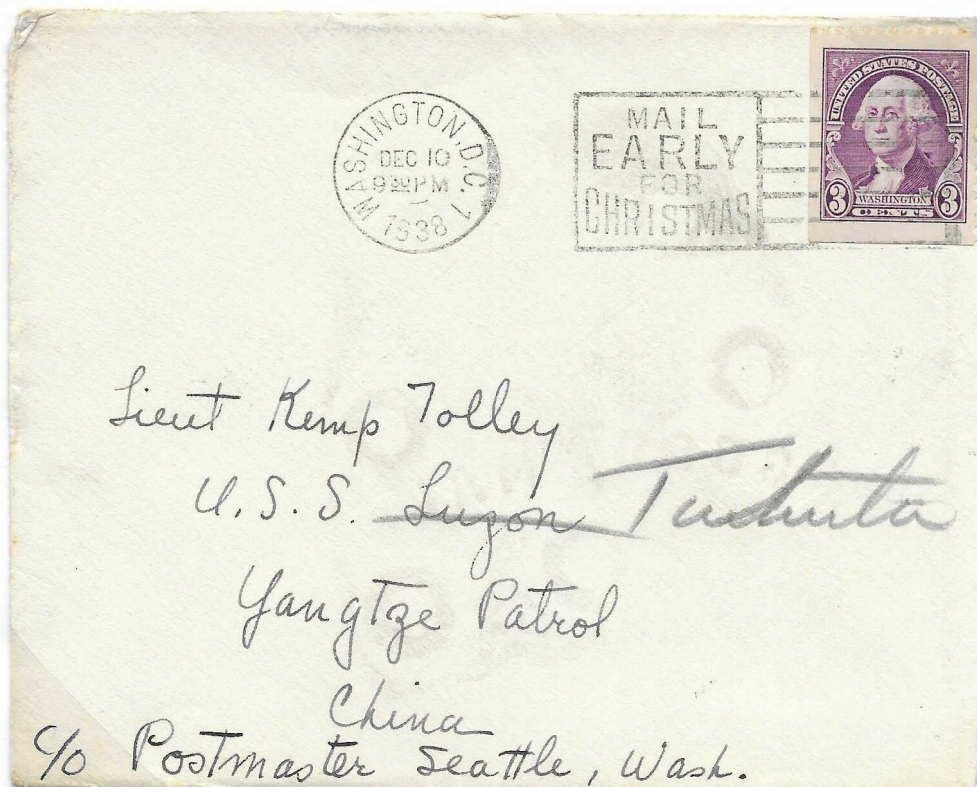


Upper cover shows endorsement cachet that was used during periods when the on board post office ran out of stamps. Below is a blatantly philatelic cover with a cachet depicting the *Tutuila*. It is of interest as it bears the vessel's registration and parcel post markings -- not seen otherwise.



**YANGTZE PATROL**  
Inbound Mail

U.S.S. Tutuila  
10 January 1939  
July 1939



Inbound mail to crew members serving on the Yangtze Patrol is unusual. Upper example addressed to *Luzon* but delivered to *Tutuila* as confirmed by receiving backstamp dated one month after mailing. *Tutuila* was at Chungking at the outbreak of the war, so was safe from the Japanese. The crew was evacuated to India in January 1942 and the vessel turned over to the Chinese Nationalists the following month.