



## 18 Oct 2023 ZOOM Presentation

The presenter, Harold Krische was introduced by Andrew Chung.



Harold Krische resides near Vancouver, Canada. He is currently vice-president of the Military Postal History Society, and a member of many philatelic societies including the APS, Collectors Club of New York, Philatelic Specialists Society of Canada, Forces Postal History Society, International Society of Japanese Philately, German Colonies Collectors Group, The Royal Philatelic Society of Canada, American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors and the British North American Philatelic Society. His prime collecting and research interests encompass the postal history of the Japanese prisoner of war camps during World War I.

Harold has presented on aspects of military postal history at the Smithsonian Postal History Symposium, led a variety of philatelic zoom presentations and written articles for numerous philatelic journals. His submission of selected articles to Philatelic Literature Exhibitions have been highly recognized. Harold credits much of his philatelic passion to the mentorship and inspiration afforded by Emil Auer and fellow postal historians.

### **The 4 R's of Postal History – Harold Krische (Presented to the PSSC – October 18, 2023)**

“So, what is it that fuels and creates your passion for philately” was a question that helped shape this presentation. Harold’s response to the question identified four specific domains that excite him as an ardent postal historian. ‘The 4 “R’s” of Postal History’, uses the experiences associated with Harold’s recent publication, ‘*American Aid for German War Prisoners: A Postal History*’, to reflect upon, and delineate, key aspects of the role of a postal historian. His four “R’s” of postal history were identified as:

- Rabbit Holes
- Research
- Revelation & Reflection
- Representation

Perspectives and approaches related to each of these domains were shared in the context of providing a meaningful ability to share the learning. The value and importance of each component of the process was linked to some powerful themes including the importance of collaboration. Harold maintains that the intentionality of purpose associated with a focus upon his four “R’s” creates even more passion for his exploration of all postal history matters.

Most philatelists will be familiar with the First ‘R’: ‘Rabbit Holes. These items seem to have the instantaneous ability to arouse curiosity and promote reflective questions. They have you wondering. As rewarding as ‘Rabbit Holes’ can be, they can also bring frustrations and can consume inequitable amounts of time and energy that might be better spent on other aspects of your collecting domain.



Harold suggested that one needs to consciously work on developing skill sets to be able to ask the right questions and frame an understanding of the potential that a particular Rabbit Hole holds. Examples were given that included the envelope shown in Figure 1. Questions that were posed included:

- Who produced this label or approved its use?
- Should “FREE” postage have been afforded this item give the date of use and country of use?
- What could this letter have been about?
- Who was associated with this Aid Society, and would such a society name not have been problematic in the United States during WWII?
- Is this society formally registered?

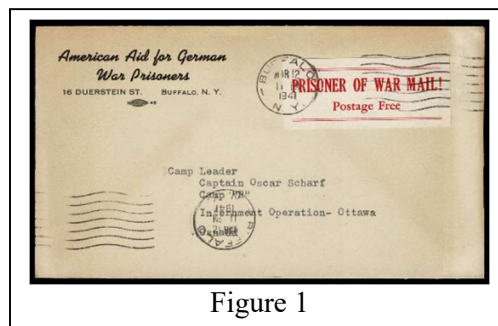
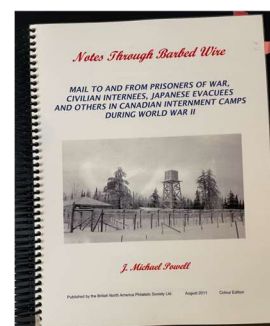
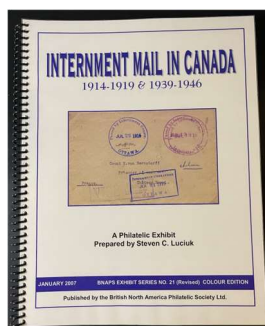
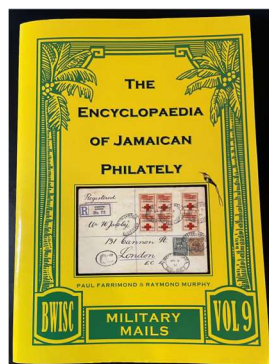
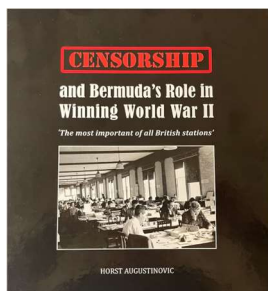


Figure 1

The questions for this particular envelope continue on: who was the recipient, was this part of an ongoing correspondence, and was such correspondence being censored given that it was going into a prisoner of war camp. One then has to be able to assess the likelihood of being able to respond to such questions.

On occasion, ‘Rabbit Holes’ are strongly supported by associated knowledge or information. Examples were provided of such sources via existing literature. Harold noted numerous examples of mail associated with American Aid for German War Prisoners (AAGWP) in other publications that were well outside of his particular areas of interest. These included excellent postal history works such as those written by Augustinovic and Farrimond/Murphy and a couple of BNAPS publications by Powell and Luciuk.



Powell gives this description of the American Aid for German War Prisoners.

### **American Aid for German War Prisoners**

*A less well known organization providing services for P.O.W.'s was the "American Aid for German War Prisoners". The group was largely a front for Nazi sympathizers, drawing their funding in large part from the German Embassy. They provided German P.O.W.'s held in Canada with packages of supplies out of their offices in Buffalo, New York.*

Research has shown that this presumption was not accurate as no funding for the AAWP came from the German Embassy and the AAWP vice president was cleared through judicial proceedings of all allegations against her.



Almost all the correspondence to or from the AAGWP was to or from Emil Auer of 16 Duerstein Street, Buffalo, New York. When Harold was in Buffalo he found the location, an ordinary house in a residential neighbourhood (Figure 2).

He also discovered that Emil Auer (1904-1996) was born in Germany but spent most of his life in the USA. He was a professional philatelist which partly explains why some of this mail was preserved. He was also a humanitarian and a naturalist (Figure 3).

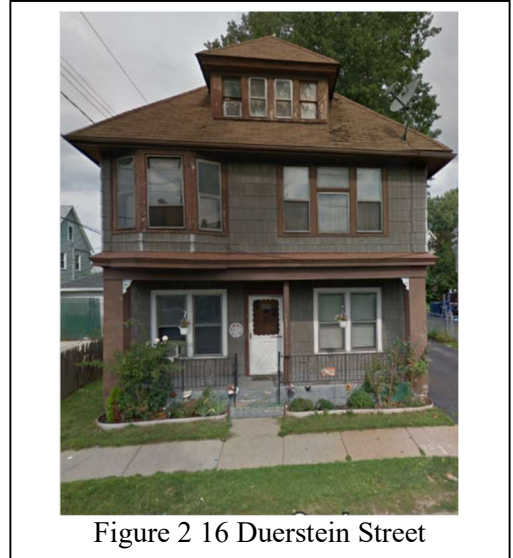


Figure 2 16 Duerstein Street



Figure 3 Emil Auer

As a young man Harold met Emil Auer. He showed a

picture of an elderly Emil Auer with about a 17-year-old Harold. He said that he got very little information about AAGWP from Auer because by the time he was asking the questions Auer was in mental decline.

The second 'R', Research, can often quickly confirm the viability of a Rabbit Hole. Numerous examples were shared of a variety of research venues that were explored. Harold also shared how one can find some of those sources and even be able to study "techniques" used by others (such as Rob Faux via his blog).

A particular AAGWP fund raising card (Figure 4). was used to illustrate the process of determining the registration status of the society and how that led to finding approximately 1800 pages of information in several archive files in Washington D.C. The Fulton

newspaper archive was another useful resource that was identified.

Harold spent some time articulating the importance of creating a census once you have begun spending serious time on a postal history domain. He shared his approach for developing a qualitative and quantitative census that allowed for useful analysis. Patterns of use could be readily seen and the rarity of mail going from the AAGWP address into POW camps could readily be understood.

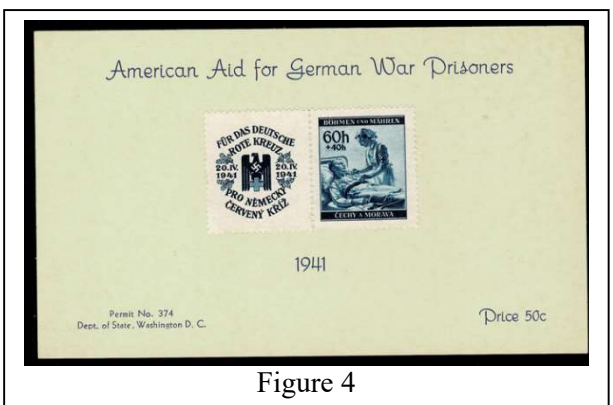


Figure 4



Even elements of the POW label came together from differing sources as a result of the research process. The archives in Washington DC contained a request submitted by AAGWP for approval to issue 500 fundraising cards along with the approval that was granted. An article published in the German Philatelic Society confirmed that this label was prohibited from use after only a short period of time by the Postmaster in Buffalo, New York. (Figure 5. The Label). Auer himself believed that he had either 250 or 500 of these labels printed and that only a few were ever used on envelopes into Canadian and Jamaican camps. Some were used on parcels, but no examples have ever been recorded. The vast majority were never used but interestingly the labels re-materialized in 1946 on a couple of covers from Hans Neubeck. One cover was from the internment camp in Lincoln, North Dakota and the other from the Ellis Island internment facility in New York. (Figure 6).

A key point that was continually stressed was the importance of collaboration and the power inherent in seeking out such opportunities. Harold shared the work that he has been able to contribute to the outstanding database initially developed by Paul Farrimond on the POW mail of the Jamaican camps (the AAGWP sent thousands of parcels into these camps). The joint efforts to expand the database resulted in the identification of numerous government-issued postal stationery varieties that had previously not been noted. Yes some quality Rabbit Holes lead to other quality tunnels! Never research in isolation.

The third 'R', revelation & reflection (yes, potentially these could be two separate entities) is such a key part of any process once significant time has been invested in research. More questions should abound at this time, including, but not limited to:

- Where is the learning at and how is it meaningful?
- What are the significant aspects of understandings being attained and how might it be relevant for others?
- What have become apparent that was not anticipated?
- How can one account for what has happened and what were the implications?
- What has been frustrating and what am I still missing?
- What has been proven and what is best structured as hypothesis?

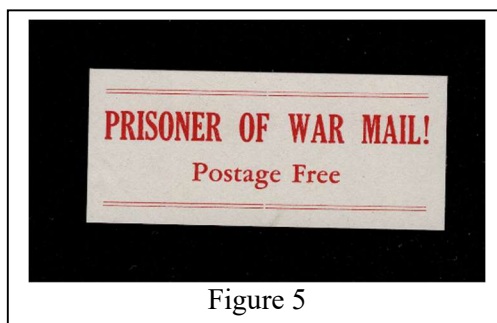


Figure 5

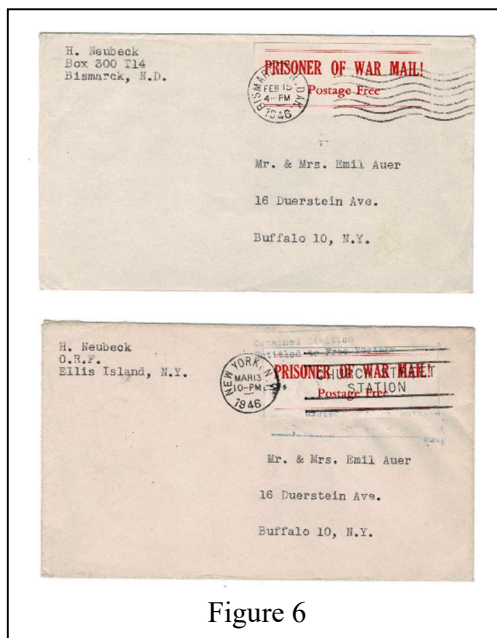


Figure 6



Harold shared that his process of reflection took him back to the recipient of the envelope for more extensive research. This quickly resulted in access to interesting information about Captain Oskar Scharf who at one point was Captain of the SS Europa, one of the largest luxury liners that crossed the Atlantic (Figure 7). More importantly, it prompted careful examination of a small quantity of letter sheets used by Scharf to correspond with Emil Auer, chair of AAGWP. The contents of these letter sheets were illuminating on numerous fronts. Written primarily in German (75% of them), they conveyed the important of focus on the mental health of POWs and the requests that Scharf made for items that supported POW interactions and engagement reflected that. Elements of the social history and culture of the camps that Scharf was in (Camp R & #130) became apparent.



Figure 7 Captain Scharf in dark suite

Several other revelations were shared including the political and social pressures faced by AAGWP and the reason that support from this aid society stopped promptly in 1943. This of course facilitated the data reflected in the census very nicely.

The fourth ‘R’, was identified as “representation”. One theme that was touched on throughout the presentation was collaboration. This is such an essential part of the process. One also learns quickly that the knowledge and understandings that are accrued in undertaking a ‘postal historian’ role have so many possibly potential implications for others well outside of ones’ collecting interests. It is thus important to share your knowledge, to be willing to present it in a variety of forms. While this can be most helpful for other collectors, this process will enrich your own experience and promote further growth. Representation of your knowledge and materials can be rendered in so many different ways whether it be through exhibiting, writing articles, supporting cumulative works, writing books, doing zoom presentations, creating youtube videos or setting up your own accessible web site. The connections that such efforts will facilitate will continue to fuel your passions further still. (Figure 8)

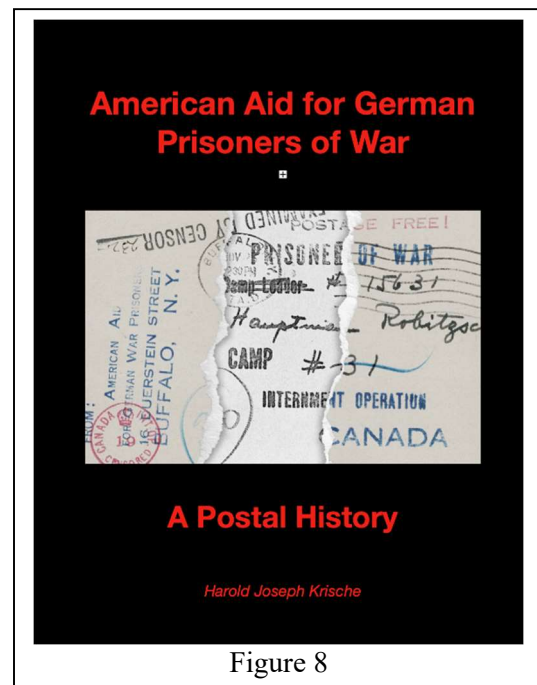


Figure 8

An active question and answer period concluded the presentation.