

THE U. S. POSTAL AGENCY IN SHANGHAI REGISTERED MAIL 1900 - 1922

This exhibit tells chronologically the story of the registration service provided at the U.S. Postal Agency in Shanghai, China from the 1900 registry label up to the closing of the office in December 1922. Examples will be shown of both the black and red labels, as well as the postal markings related to registration and the various types of franking used on registered mail. The latter include not only unoverprinted U.S. stamps but the special issues with new denominations in Chinese currency that were introduced in the final years of service.

Because Shanghai was the primary center of American commerce in China and, indeed, for all of East Asia, considerable quantities of registered mail were processed there. As a result, this post office provided a substantial quantity of material for students of the registry system, although some of the of the examples were in use for only a short time and are highly elusive. Nevertheless, the diversity of activities being conducted in China in the early 20th Century makes for a particularly rich mixture of possibilities, from which the collector can sort through for the more difficult examples.



Inbound registered cover from New York to Shanghai. Three examples (two on reverse) of previously unrecorded handstamp reading "Received in Bad Order /U.S. Postal Agency Shanghai." It has backstamp of Shanghai Reg. Div. of 30 October 1903. Because the addressee could not be located, the letter had to be returned to the sender.

During the relatively short period covered by the exhibit, there were a surprisingly large number of different registration markings utilized at the postal agency in China. Because these were not always clearly struck, it is necessary to pay close attention to the details, especially those involving differences in wording and/or the use of different case letters in otherwise similar postmarks. The text will attempt to point out these differences as appropriate. Note that the exhibit contains four markings that are believed to be the only recorded examples.

**STANDARD SHANGHAI POSTMARK
DOUBLE-OVAL POSTMARK
REGISTRATION LABELS**

21 September 1900
8 August 1903

Prior to the introduction of a special oval registry datestamp in 1903, standard (non-registry) postmarks inscribed "U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai" were used to cancel the stamps on registered mail. Note that until 1 June 1903, mail from Shanghai to the United States was required to pay international postage. Thus, the upper cover to New York was assessed 13 cents (UPU letter rate of 5 cents plus 8 cents registration).



The registration label printed in black is different from those supplied by the Bureau of Engraving & Printing and is believed to have been obtained from a local printer.

FIRST FOUR-LINE REGISTRATION MARKING

21 March 1905
22 January 1906

Following the discontinuance of the oval registry marking and registration labels, a new four-line datestamp was introduced. The first version, with the wording entirely in capital letters, is recorded as used from 23 August 1904 to 19 February 1906. Normally the registry marking was not used as a postmark to cancel the stamps, as the postal regulations specified use of a separate "killer."



M. J. CONNELL,

EXPORTER AND IMPORTER,

SEATTLE, WASH.,



C 1581.

M^r A. R. Hager

P. O. Box 429.

76 Escobedo

Manila, P.I.

During this period, postage was normally paid with U.S. stamps from the Second Bureau series, which were on sale at the Postal Agency in Shanghai.

**FIRST FOUR-LINE REGISTRATION MARKING
WITH LARGE SERIFFED "REGISTERED"
ONLY RECORDED EXAMPLE**

27 January 1908

A later version of the straight-line registration marking in all capital letters appeared in the Mizuhara collection. As compared to the original version, it had considerably larger letters and the word "Registered" at the top had serifs. There is only this single recorded example of this postmark variety. It is not known whether there was an accident to the older postmark that required a substitute to be acquired and placed in use.



Use of a registration datestamp as a cancellation is unusual as the postal regulations specified the use of a killer to cancel the postage. Standard postal rate paid of 2 cents domestic postage plus 8 cents registry fee as of this date.

**SECOND FOUR-LINE REGISTRATION
OVAL "R(egistry) D(ivision)" KILLER**

24 May 1909

Still later, a second distinct type of four-line datestamp was introduced, with the wording in a combination of upper and lower case letters. It is recorded as used from 3 December 1908 to 15 January 1912. In addition, a new oval "killer" reading "U.S. Postal Agency/R.D./Shanghai,China" was provided to cancel the postage; used from 30 March 1907 to 30 Dec. 1922.

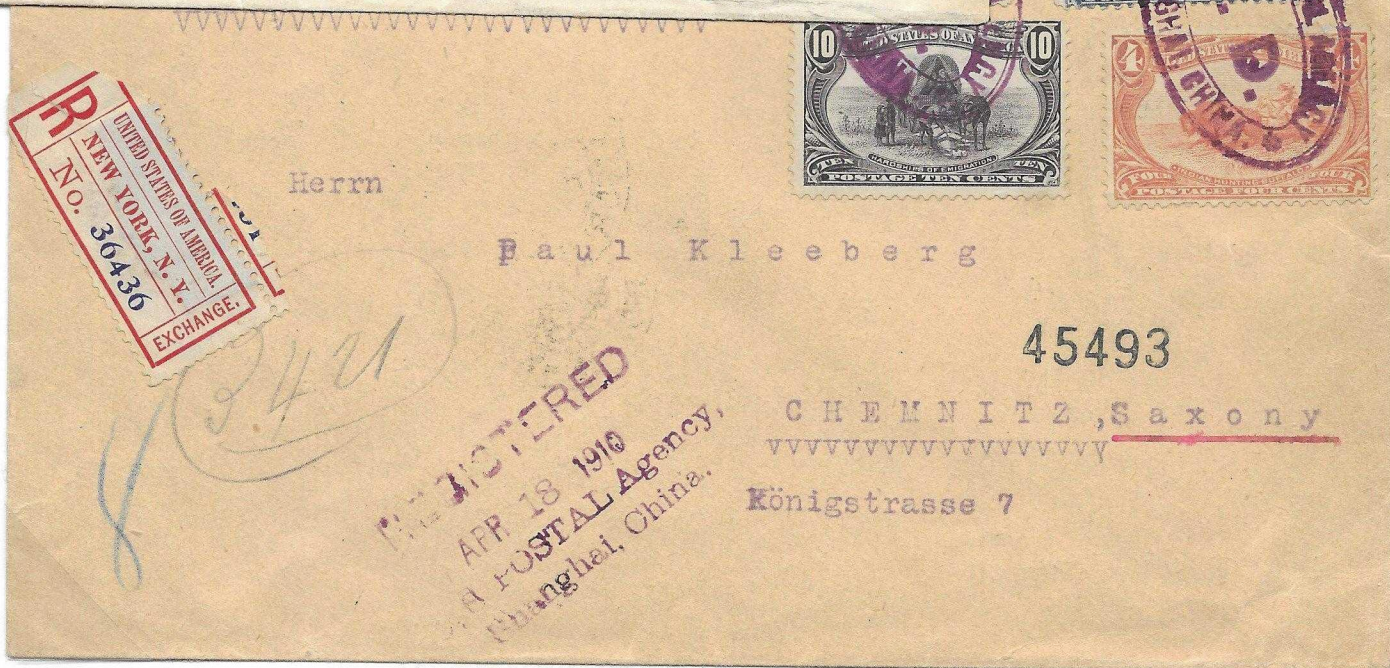


Note the wide spacing of the four-line "Registered" marking that was struck on this part of a registered packet containing photographic film sent to Philadelphia and paid by 80 cents in Second Bureau adhesives.

**SECOND FOUR-LINE REGISTRATION
OVAL "R(egistry) D(ivision)" KILLER**

3 May 1910
18 April 1910

A very similar marking but with narrower spacing between the four lines appeared slightly later.



The registration fee increased from 8 to 10 cents on 1 November 1909. Thus, the postage paid on the upper cover was 4 cents for a double-weight domestic letter plus 10 cents registry. Lower cover paid 10 cents for a double-weight international letter plus 10 cents registry. The use of commemorative postage is unusual.

14 July 1911
7 June 1913

41854

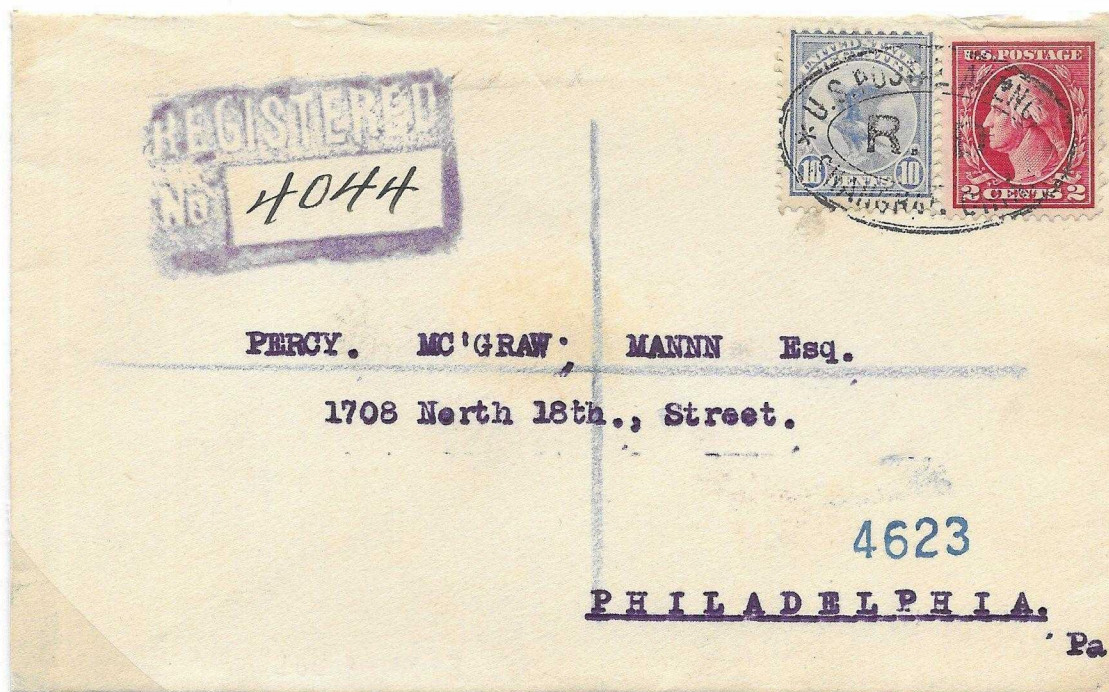
Grant Cordery, Esq.
Trust Officer.
Central Trust Co. of California
San Francisco

U.S. A.

REGISTERED

REGISTERED

340

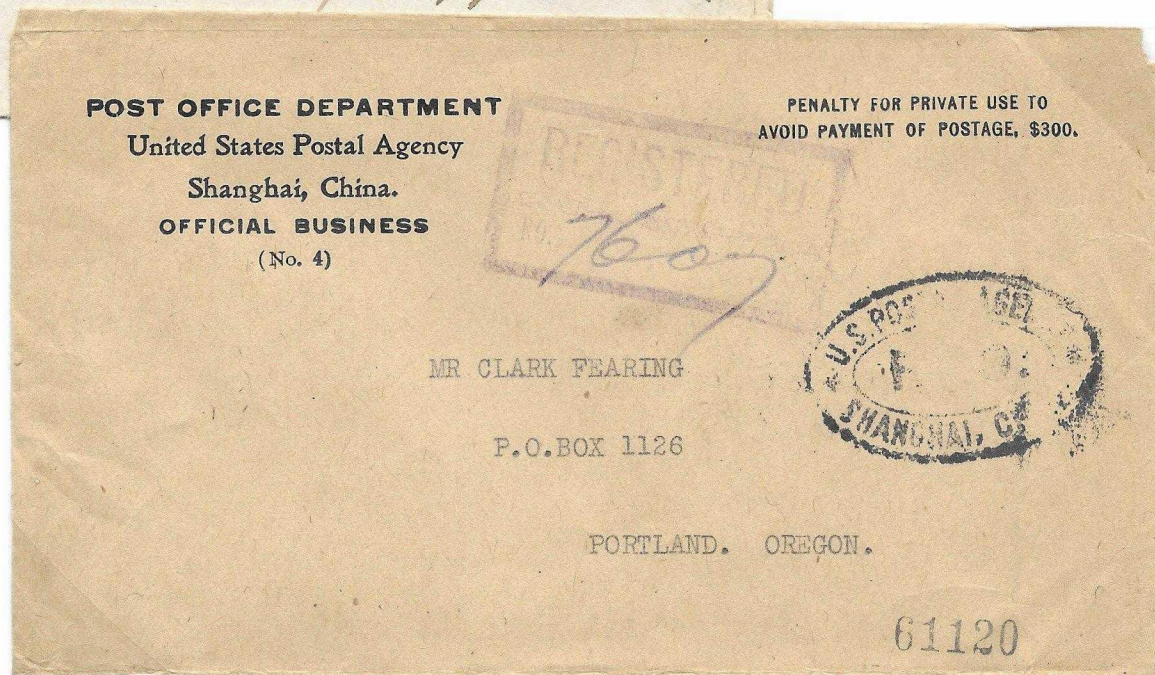


A new 10 cent stamp to pay registration fees was introduced in the U.S. on 1 December 1911. This special use was abolished as of 28 May 1913, but the stamp remained valid for postage as shown on the cover above.

OVAL R. D. KILLER
REGISTRATION BOX

15 January 1912
5 September 1919

The Washington-Franklin head stamps were extensively used at the postal agency in Shanghai, mostly the values from 1 cent to 5 cents as well as 10 cents. Covers properly franked with other values are especially sought after by specialists.



Official mail could be sent registered without payment of postage or registration fees if an appropriate "penalty" envelope was used. Note that the "Registered" box on the official cover is of the standard type used in the United States, while those used on commercial mail are negative (i.e. lettering in white on a colored background).

**SECOND CIRCULAR REGISTRATION DATESTAMP
OVAL KILLER WITH SMALLER "R. D."**

5 September 1914

Later, a second version of the circular registration datestamp was introduced, reading "SHANGHAI, CHINA, (U.S. Postal Agency.)/REGISTERED" in a combination of upper and lower case letters. It is recorded as used from 9 March 1914 to 10 May 1919. In addition, a slightly different version of the oval "killer" (with thinner "R. D.") came into use, as shown below.



Special parcel post stamps were introduced in the U. S. on 1 January 1913. However, effective 1 July 1913, regular stamps could be used on parcel post, and parcel post stamps were valid for use on any other mail matter.

OVAL R. D. KILLER
"REGISTERED" HANDSTAMPS

18 August 1916
 16 January 1918
 28 December 1918

These covers show three different types of "Registered" handstamps. However, there is no evidence to prove that any of them were actually applied by the postal service. In fact, it is likely that business firms would have their own devices to mark the outgoing mail that was to be registered.



Typical payment of postage with Washington-Franklin stamps: 12 cents for prewar domestic registered letter, 13 cents including wartime surtax of one cent, and 15 cents for international registered letter. Note double censorship of the letter to German agency for POWs in Stockholm -- even after the Armistice.

**SMALL OVAL U.S.P.O. CHINA KILLER
ONLY RECORDED EXAMPLE**

21 January 1918

The cover below is the discovery example of a previously unrecorded killer inscribed "U.S. Post Office/Shanghai/China." No example of this marking was included in either the Fisher or Mizuhara collections. On the reverse is a normal circular Shanghai registration marking.



Mailed during World War I, this letter was subject to censorship as indicated by the "Opened" tape. It is properly franked for the period, including the war tax and registration fee. Backstamped for arrival in San Francisco on 17 February 1918.

**STATION "A" REGISTRATION DATESTAMP
ONLY RECORDED EXAMPLE**

1 July 1919

Some years ago, a registry marking inscribed "Sta. A" was described by Bounds. (However, the cover involved disappeared from sight and did not surface again until recently.) He noted that the location of this branch was not disclosed in any official publication, including the Postal Guides for 1918 to 1921. Surprisingly, although this postmark dates back 90 years, no other examples have turned up in the interim.



This registered cover was mailed from The Oriental Press in Shanghai to Zellerbach Paper Company in San Francisco, probably involving payment for a shipment of newsprint. It was properly franked with 2 cents postage and 10 cents for the registry fee. Received in California on 27 July.

LATE CIRCULAR REGISTRATION DATESTAMPS

Several additional versions of the circular registration datestamp came into use during the late stages of the Shanghai post office. One that reads "U.S. Postal Agency, Shanghai, China /REGISTERED" was used from 17 October 1919 to 21 May 1921. The final version, which has only "U.S. POSTAL AGENCY, SHANGHAI, CHINA." was used in 1921 and 1922.

15 May 1920
10 September 1921



The circular registration markings were designed to be used as backstamps. Thus, they are shown above on the reverse of the covers to which they were applied.

SHANGHAI OVERPRINTS

29 July 1919
14 October 1919

Because of fluctuations in the value of the Chinese dollar, the U.S. post office in Shanghai was losing business to competing services of other great powers because its rates were stated in American dollars. As a result, it was decided to sell stamps for Chinese dollars (worth approximately 50 U.S. cents at the time). Thus, on 24 May 1919, stamps of the Third Bureau issue were overprinted "Shanghai/China" and a new denomination. These were placed on sale at the the agency in Shanghai on 1 July 1919. Denominations ranged from 2 cents on 1 cent up to \$2.00 on the \$1.00 Franklin value.

SHANGHAI-NANKING RAILWAY.

From:-

Mr. C.H. Chang.
M.D.T.'s Office,
Shanghai Nanking Railway,
Shanghai, China.

To:-

Messrs. Pelton Publishing Company,
7-J Wilcox Block,
Meriden, Conn.,
U. S. A.



REGISTERED.

INTERNATIONAL SLEEPING CAR CO SHANGHAI AGENT

Cable Address: "WAGONLITS"

ASTOR HOUSE HOTEL.

Tele:

The Agent,

International Sleeping Car Co.,

231 Fifth Avenue,

New York, N.Y.

REGISTERED

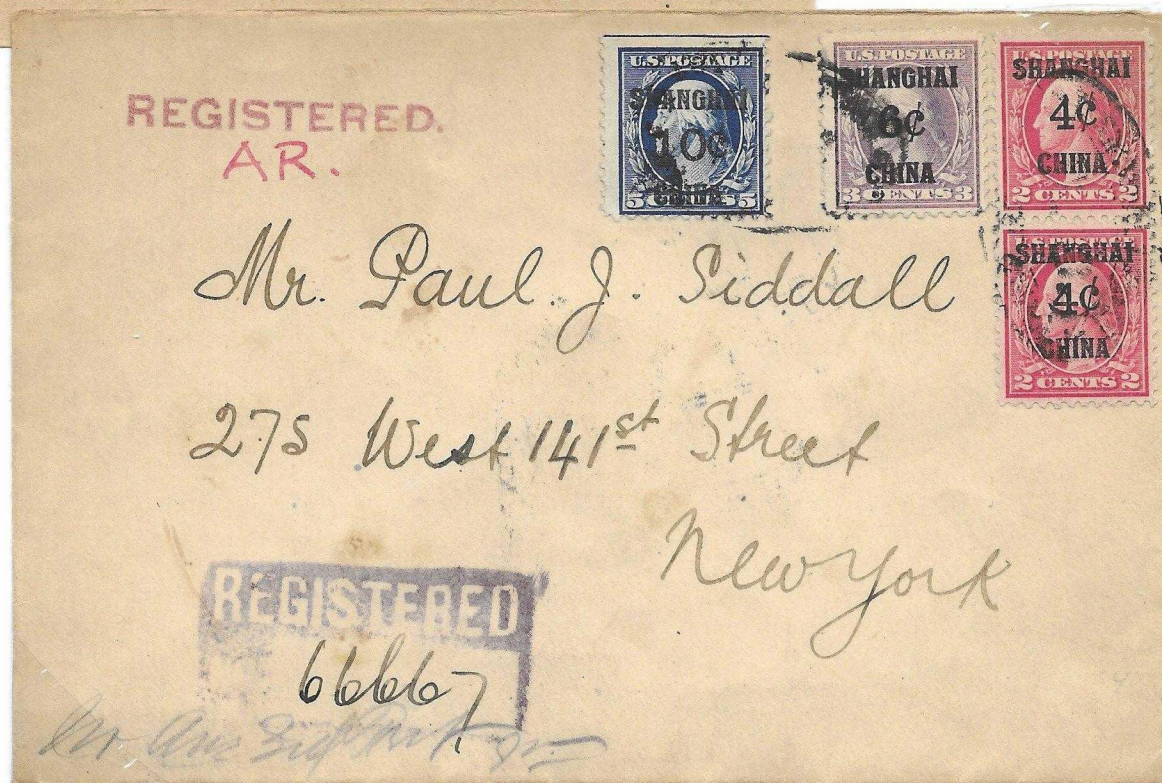
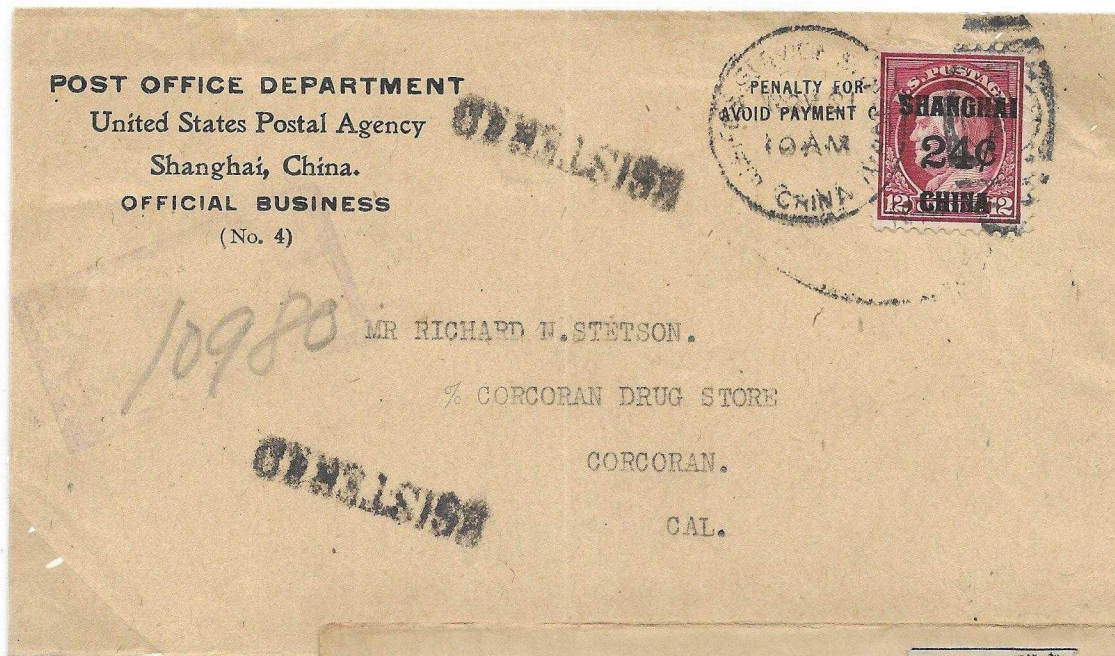


Postage paid on the above registered letters was 24 Chinese cents, equivalent to 12 U.S. cents, comprising the 2 cent domestic letter rate plus 10 cents registration.

SHANGHAI OVERPRINTS
STRAIGHT-LINE "REGISTERED" HANDSTAMPS

21 November 1919
6 March 1922

"Registered" handstamps were used to further designate valuable mail, shown here struck in black and red.



These examples were franked with U.S. stamps that were surcharged for 24 Chinese cents, paying the postage and registration fee. The upper cover has a corner card of the U.S. Postal Agency in Shanghai but paid full postage nevertheless. The sender of the lower cover requested a return receipt as indicated by "A.R." under the registration handstamp.

SHANGHAI OVERPRINTS

28 April 1922
28 August 1922

Upper example shows unusual usage of Shanghai overprints on a registered parcel tag. Customs declaration on reverse indicates that the package contained an ivory necklace valued at \$20.00.



Even though 255,000 copies each were produced in the first and second printings, postal demand was high for the two lowest values, which were exhausted in June 1922. Because of the time delay in obtaining new supplies from Washington, the postal agent obtained permission to have 10,000 each of the 1 cent and 2 cent stamps overprinted locally by the Oriental Press. Examples of these stamps are shown on the lower registered cover.