

20¢ Prexie Postal History

by Richard Pederson

The 20¢ stamp, from the Presidential Issue of 1938 (i.e., the Prexies), depicts our twentieth President, James A. Garfield. Garfield is the only sitting member of the U.S. House of Representatives to be elected President. Unfortunately, his Presidency was short-lived as he was shot by an assassin just four months after his election and he died of an infection resulting from treatment of the bullet wound two and one-half months after being shot.

The 20¢ Prexie, which is pictured in Figure 1, appears only in sheet format. It is frequently found on international mail and some of the more often encountered solo uses are also on international mail.

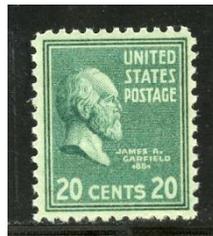


Figure 1. 20¢ sheet stamp.

During the period of use for the Prexies, stretching from 1938 through the early 1960s, several domestic solo uses of the 20¢ were possible. First, and most common, was for payment of the air mail rate to and from Hawaii, in effect through January 14, 1945. Figure 2 shows both the front of an envelope mailed on April 12, 1943 from the Maui town of Hana to Conimicut, Rhode Island. The envelope has “VIA CLIPPER” typed and hand-stamped on the front.

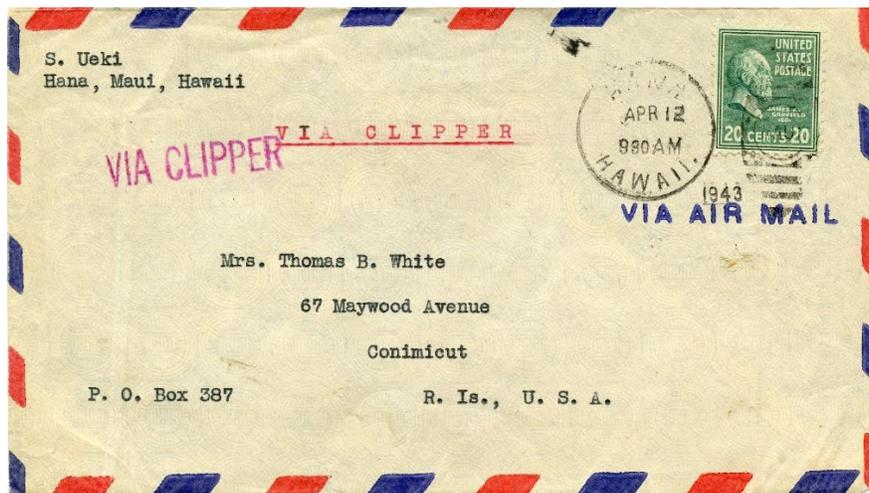


Figure 2. Cover sent from Maui, Hawaii to Rhode Island.

In Figure 3 is another domestic solo use, cancelled June 12, 1939. It combines payment of the 2¢ local rate in effect for carrier post offices thru June 23, 1940, a 3¢ return receipt fee in effect thru March 25, 1944, and a 15¢ registration fee also in effect thru March 25, 1944. This rate combination was only in effect for about 20 months after the 20¢ Prexie was issued, so is somewhat more difficult to find.

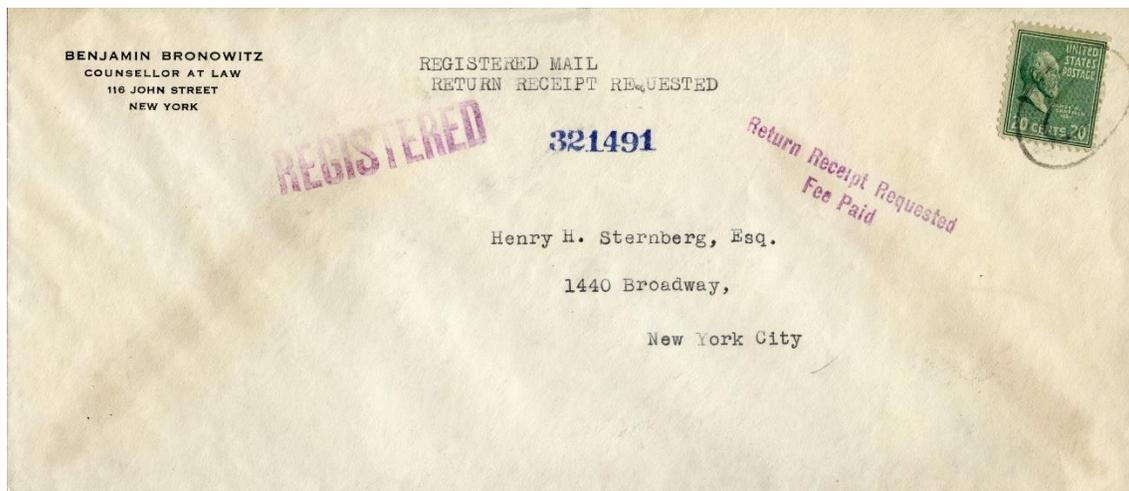


Figure 3. Front and reverse of registered envelope sent locally with return receipt requested.

Another, less frequently encountered, solo use was for payment of the registration fee, on a government penalty envelope, for an item with an indemnity of less than or equal to \$5. This 20¢ registration fee was in effect from March 26, 1944 thru December 31, 1948. Although first-class postage was not required on a government penalty envelope, payment of other fees, such as registration, was required. Figure 4 shows the front and back of such an envelope sent from the Navy Department in San Francisco to the U.S.S. La Salle (AP-102), a troop transport, via the Fleet Post Office (FPO) in San Francisco on September 16, 1944.



Figure 4. Front and reverse of registered government penalty envelope.

Perhaps even a harder to find solo use is a 20¢ Prexie paying the local zone third-class rate of 20¢ for an item weighing up to two pounds. It was in effect from October 1, 1953 through January 31, 1960. Figure 5 shows the front of an American Locker Company tag paying that rate for an item (most likely replacement locks and keys) sent to the Building Director of the Portland, Oregon Y.W.C.A. The reverse of the tag, also shown in Figure 5, contains another 20¢ Prexie used to return a similar item to the American Locker Company in Portland.



Figure 5. Front and reverse of American Locker Company tag.

The final Domestic solo use, shown in Figure 6, involves a convenience overpayment. A 15¢ special delivery fee for first-class matter weighing two pounds or less was in effect from January 1, 1949 thru December 31, 1951. A 20¢ Prexie pays the 15¢ registration fee and 3¢ first-class rate with an overpayment of 2¢. Even though the cover was marked “Special Delivery” and sufficient payment was attached, there is no indication that the cover actually received special delivery service since there is no “FEE CLAIMED” marking on the front or reverse (not shown).

In addition to the domestic solo usages shown, other possible domestic solo uses include a local first-class rate of 2¢ with an 18¢ registration fee and a 20¢ air mail rate between Guam and Hawaii.

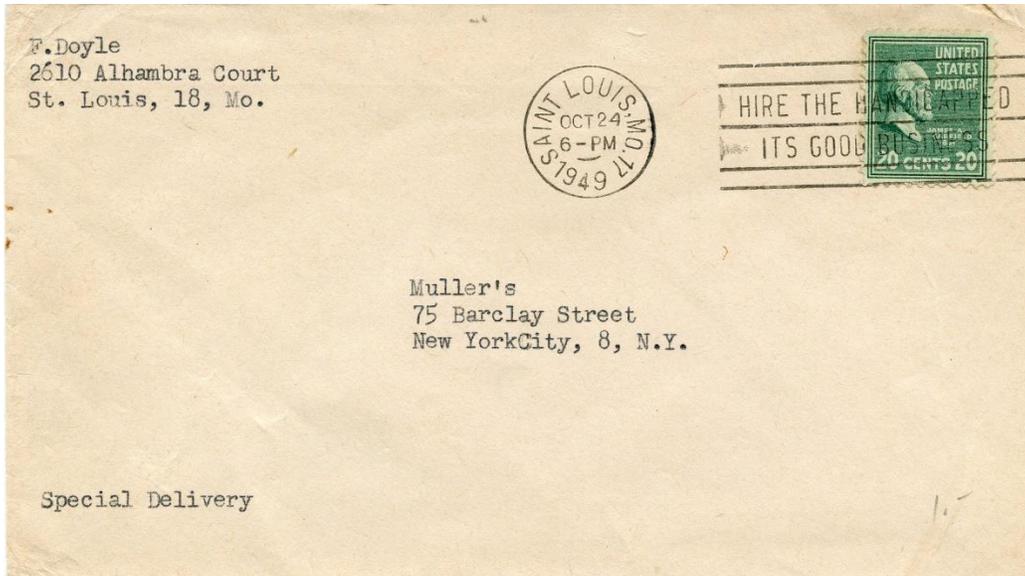


Figure 6. Payment of first-class rate and special delivery fee plus 2¢ convenience overpayment.

As indicated previously, solo uses of the 20¢ Prexie can be found on international mail. Until April 1, 1945, there was a 10¢ air mail rate in effect for many countries in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Double weight covers sent to any of those locations could have used a 20¢ Prexie to pay the air mail rate. Figure 7 shows the front and reverse of an envelope sent on December 20, 1951, from Montgomery Ward in Chicago, Illinois to Honduras paying the 20¢ air mail rate for a double weight cover. Although the cover is a window envelope, the destination country is revealed by the Tegucigalpa, Honduras receiving stamp, dated December 24, 1951, on the reverse.



Figure 7. Front and reverse of air mail to Honduras.

A second, more frequently encountered international solo use of the 20¢ Prexie involved payment of the 5¢ UPU international surface rate in effect thru March 31, 1945, plus the 15¢ international registration fee in effect thru January 31, 1945. Figure 8 pictures the front and reverse of a registered cover sent on March 17, 1939 from New York City to Palestine, Jerusalem paying that rate combination. International solo uses paying four times the 5¢ surface rate are also possible.



Figure 8. Front and reverse of registered surface letter to Jerusalem.

Multiples of the 20¢ Prexie could also be used to pay some domestic and international rates. Until April 1, 1945, the Foreign Air Mail (FAM) rate to some countries in South America was 40¢. Figure 9 shows a censored cover sent from New York City, on June 24, 1942 to Buenos Aires, Argentina at the 40¢ FAM rate.



Figure 9. FAM to Argentina.

Figure 10 pictures a domestic cover containing two 20¢ Prexies sent from Plymouth, Wisconsin to Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The 40¢ in postage paid the 3¢ first class rate, the 7¢ return receipt fee and the 30¢ registration fee for an item with no indemnity, both in effect from January 1, 1952 thru June 30, 1957.



Figure 10. Front and reverse of domestic registered letter with return receipt requested.

The 20¢ Prexie was also frequently used on both domestic and international mail, along with other stamps, to pay a variety of rates and fees. Figure 11 pictures a registered first-class letter sent from Neptune, New Jersey to Los Angeles, California, with a return receipt requested. The 20¢ Prexie pays the 20¢ registration fee for an item with an indemnity of less than or equal to \$5 and the two 2¢ Prexies pay the 4¢ return receipt fee, both in effect from March 26, 1944 thru December 31, 1948. The 3¢ stamped envelope pays the then current first-class rate.

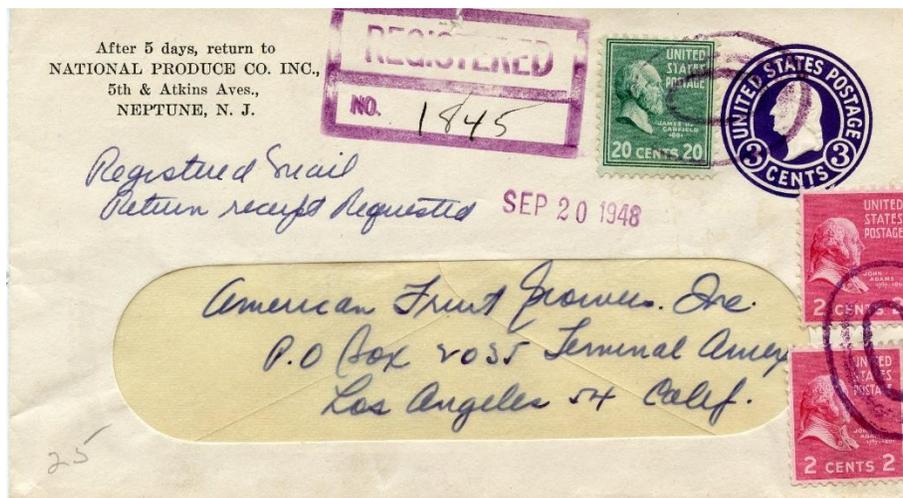


Figure 11. Registered, return receipt requested, stamped envelope.

The next example (Figure 12) shows the 20¢ Prexie paying the special delivery fee on an air mail cover mailed on September 12, 1955 from Waco, Texas to Providence, Rhode Island. The 20¢ Prexie pays the special delivery fee for a first-class item weighing less than or equal to two pounds, in effect from January 1, 1952 thru June 30, 1957. The 6¢ air mail stamp pays the then current domestic air mail rate.



Figure 12. Registered domestic air mail.

As in the previous example, the 20¢ Prexies on the Figure 13 cover are used to pay the registration fee, this time on a first-class letter. The two 20¢ Prexies pay the 40¢ registration fee required on a letter mailed from Sparta, Wisconsin, on January 20, 1951, having an indemnity greater than or equal to \$25.01 and less than or equal to \$50, a rate that was in effect from January 1, 1949 thru December 31, 1951. The 3¢ stamped envelope pays the first-class rate.



Figure 13. Front and reverse of registered first-class letter with indemnity greater than \$25 and less than or equal to \$50.

The 20¢ Prexie was also often used, in combination with other stamps, to pay the fourth-class parcel post rate for delivery of domestic packages. Those rates were calculated based upon weight and distance, with distance determined by parcel post zone. There are eight different parcel post zones with Zone 1 rates applying to parcels shipped less than 50 miles, and Zone 8 to items sent 1,800 or more miles.

Zones 2 through 7 applied to intermediate distances, Parcels sent to U.S. possessions and territories are charged at Zone 8 rates.

Figure 14 pictures a parcel tag used to mail a package from Montgomery Ward in Albany, New York to an address in Woronoco, Massachusetts. The distance between those locations is approximately 80 miles, so Zone 2 rates, covering distances between 50 and 150 miles, applied. The stamps on the tag have Montgomery Ward (“MW”) Chicago precancels which included the month and year, so we know the package was mailed in April 1951. The 57¢ in postage, made up of two 20¢ and single 16¢ and 1¢ Prexies, paid the Zone 2 rate for a package weighing up to 23 pounds. In April 1951, the first pound cost 12¢. Pounds 2 thru 10 cost 2.1¢ each, and pounds 11 thru 23 cost 2¢ each, for a total package cost of 57¢.

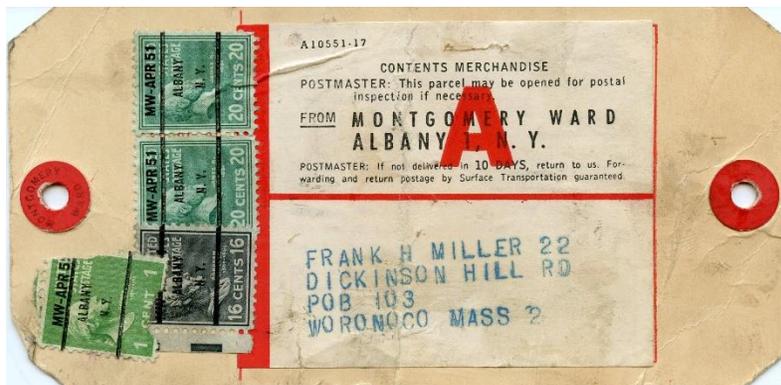


Figure 14. Tag for second zone parcel.

Labels used to mail other domestic parcels are shown in Figures 15 and 16. Figure 15 shows a parcel label made up by folding a piece of paper. The label is addressed to Pvt. E. W. Mellinger, stationed in Fort Logan, Colorado and contains two 15¢ Prexies, a 2¢ Defense issue, and a 50¢ Arlington Amphitheatre Fourth Bureau issue. The sender, Mr. I. F. Mellinger, located in Leetonia, Ohio, attached 82¢ in postage to cover the cost of mailing an 11 pound parcel at the Zone 6 rates (1 pound at 12¢, and 10 pounds at 7¢/pound) that were in effect through March 25, 1944.

As shown in Figure 16, upon receiving the package, Pvt. Mellinger, refolded the label, addressed it to Mr. Mellinger, and attached 54¢ postage, made up of two 20¢ Prexies, two 2¢ Defense issues, and a 10¢ Prexie, to cover the cost of sending a return 7-pound package (1 pound at 12¢, and 6 pounds at 7¢/pound). Figure 17 shows the unfolded piece of paper with the Figure 16 label containing the two 20¢ Prexies.



Figure 15. Label for an 11-pound Zone 6 parcel.



Figure 16. Return label for a 7-pound Zone 6 parcel.



Figure 17. Unfolded paper showing Figure 16 label.

The 20¢ Prexie is also frequently used with other stamps to pay for postage and fees on international mail. Figure 18 pictures a cover containing a 20¢ Prexie and a 10¢ Ethelbert Nevin Famous American issue that combine to pay the 30¢ air mail rate to Europe that was in effect from April 28, 1939 thru October 31, 1946. The cover was mailed from New York City to Torino, Italy on July 5, 1940. Figure 19 shows this same rate being paid with a 20¢ Prexie, a 4¢ Prexie, and a 6¢ air mail stamped envelope. The cover which was mailed from New York City to Baden, Germany on July 2, 1941, also contains German censor marks on the reverse.



Figure 18. Air mail to Italy.



Figure 19. Front and reverse of censored air mail to Germany.



Figure 20. Front and reverse of air mail letter to Colombia.

The final example (Figure 20), shows a registered air mail cover sent from Cornish, New Hampshire to Pereira, Colombia. The four 20¢ Prexies and one 5¢ Prexie pay twice the 35¢ per ½ ounce air mail rate to Colombia in effect thru March 31, 1945 plus the 15¢ international registration fee in effect thru January 31, 1945.

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[This article originally appeared in the December 1, 2019 edition of U.S. Stamp News.]