



The Tenth Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium

World War I and Its Immediate Aftermath, Select Papers

Edited by
Susan N. Smith

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ABSTRACT

Smith, Susan N., editor. *The Tenth Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium: World War I and Its Immediate Aftermath, Select Papers*. Smithsonian Contributions to History and Technology, number 59, viii + 104 pages, 53 figures, 11 tables, 2022. — On Monday, 11 November 1918, World War I came to an end. Wrought from militarism, nationalism, and imperialism, the Great War broke empires, challenged established gender and race relations, and destroyed millions of lives. Mail became the critical link for families separated and desperate for news. Governments responded to these developments and to the disruption of communication networks, and they also struggled to determine who should be able to communicate with whom and about what.

The Tenth Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium, “WWI and Its Immediate Aftermath,” brought together postal historians at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in November 2018 to address these issues and to mark the centennial of the end of the war. Addressing the United States and countries throughout the world, the papers examined two broad, interrelated questions: How did the logistical and human needs created by the war shape postal services, their employees, and their users? And what can we learn by studying the philatelic and archival materials themselves?

The six studies contained herein address the hiring and treatment of female employees by the British General Post Office; the American development of a transcontinental telephone system; the development of Chile’s ability to produce security papers, including stamps; the censorship of the mail of Indian civilians for British purposes; American governmental efforts to suppress the spread of leftist radicalism through the mail; and the extensive and varying access and use of picture postcards by prisoners of war in Europe.

Cover images: (*Left*) Illustrated “Greetings from Gardelegen” postcard sent to France in March 1915 (detail from Figure 5 in essay by Alexander Kolchinsky; author’s collection; originally published in *The American Philatelist*, 2014). (*Center*) Ten centavos stamp printed by Los Talleres de Especies Valoradas in Chile in 1916 (Figure 2 in essay by William H. Lenarz; author’s collection). (*Right*) Verso of censored cover from Canada to India, addressed to a non-Indian, showing the censor label used to reseal the cover (detail from Figure 4 in essay by Robert Gray; author’s collection).

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Welcome Letter

In November 2018, the Smithsonian National Postal Museum hosted the Tenth Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium. The symposium's theme was "WWI and Its Immediate Aftermath," in recognition of the centennial of the armistice signed on 11 November 1918. It is my great pleasure to present this selection of papers from that gathering.

The National Postal Museum (NPM), the American Philatelic Society (APS), and the American Philatelic Research Library (APRL) jointly sponsored the first of these postal history symposia in 2006. The museum hosted the inaugural gathering and named it in honor of Winton M. Blount (1921–2002), the postmaster general who oversaw the transformation of the Post Office Department into the United States Postal Service. He was an ardent supporter of postal studies at the museum. The National Postal Museum is dedicated to the preservation, study, and presentation of postal history and philately, the American Philatelic Society serves stamp collectors and promotes American philately worldwide, and the American Philatelic Research Library houses one of the world's largest and most accessible collections of philatelic literature. The three have continued to cosponsor these symposia.

The symposia themselves have generally alternated between the National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C. and the American Philatelic Center in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. The previous nine symposia were as follows:

- "What is Postal History?" (Washington, D.C., 3–4 November 2006)
- "Further, Farther, Faster: Transportation Technology and the Mail" (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 21–22 October 2007)
- "When the Mail Goes to War" (Washington, D.C., 27–28 September 2008)
- "Post Office Reform" (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 30 October–1 November 2009, in conjunction with a philatelic exhibition hosted by the United States Philatelic Classics Society)
- "Stamps and the Mail: Imagery, Icons, and Identity" (Washington, D.C., 30 September–1 October 2010)
- "How Commerce and Industry Shaped the Mails" (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 16–18 September 2011, in conjunction with a philatelic exhibition hosted by the United States Philatelic Classics Society)
- "Blue and Gray: Mail and the Civil War" (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 2–4 November 2012)

- “Development of Transoceanic Air Mail Service” (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, 12–14 September 2014 in conjunction with a philatelic exhibition hosted by the American Air Mail Society)
- “How Postal Treaties Influenced Post Office Reforms” (New York, 2 June 2016, in conjunction with the World Stamp Show—NY2016)

I thank the Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press for publishing these papers and making them freely available; Scott Tiff-

ney, Librarian and Director of Information Services at APRL, for his work promoting the symposium and reviewing the essays; and Susan Smith, the Winton M. Blount research chair at NPM, for her work organizing and hosting the symposium and editing and compiling the materials for publication.

I hope you enjoy these papers as much as I have.

Elliot Gruber
Director, National Postal Museum
1 August 2019

Introduction

Wrought from militarism, nationalism, and imperialism, the Great War broke empires, challenged established gender and race relations, and destroyed millions of lives. Mail became the critical link for families separated and desperate for news. Governments responded to these developments and to the disruption of communication networks, and they also struggled to determine who should be able to communicate with whom and about what.

The Tenth Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium, “WWI and Its Immediate Aftermath,” brought together postal historians at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in November 2018 to address these issues and to mark the centennial of the armistice that ended the fighting on the western front. The papers and philatelic exhibits examined two broad interrelated questions: How did the logistical and human needs created by the war shape postal services and their communities? And what can we learn by studying the philatelic and archival materials themselves?

In answer to these questions, the presentations and philatelic exhibits addressed topics as diverse as the mail of prisoners of war, military officials, diplomats, and the general public; the production and use of postage stamps and war savings stamps; shifts in communication networks, including the increasing importance both of women in the workforce and of alternative means of communication, such as the telephone and telegraph; and censorship of letters and newspapers. The presentations told stories of the United States, South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

During the symposium, in addition to viewing the symposium’s philatelic exhibits and asking questions of the specialists, the attendees could tour the museum’s exhibition, *My Fellow Soldiers: Letters from World War I*, with the curator. The exhibition considered the war through the individual relationships expressed in the letters, as well as the cultural ubiquity of letter-writing, whether in newspaper columns or referenced in advertisements or popular music.

As the presentations, exhibits, discussants’ comments, audience questions, and participants’ discussions all made clear, the postal history of World War I is a remarkably diverse field. Our knowledge remains incomplete, however, as so much more remains to be done.

The essays here and the conference materials available at the American Philatelic Society’s website, <https://stamps.org/Postal-History-Symposium>, provide an excellent introduction to the field of World War I postal history.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the symposium presenters and the cosponsors—the American Philatelic Research Library, the American Philatelic Society, and the Smithsonian National Postal Museum—for their participation in the Tenth Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium. At the American Philatelic Society, we thank Executive Director Scott English. At the National Postal Museum, we thank Lynn Heidelbaugh for providing tours of *My Fellow Soldiers*, Jessie Aucoin and Emma Auburn for their logistical help, Daniel Piazza for serving as a moderator, and Director Elliot Gruber for opening the conference and this volume. We are grateful for the participation of the three discussants, John Willis of the Cana-

dian Museum of History, Chris Taft of The Postal Museum in London, and Ryan Reft of the Library of Congress.

We also thank the anonymous peer reviewers and, last but not least, the staff of Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, led by the invaluable Ginger Minkiewicz.

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World War I, Female Telegraphists, and the Employment Priorities of Britain's General Post Office

Joanna Espin

ABSTRACT. In 1914, the General Post Office (GPO) was the largest employer in the United Kingdom and, as such, it had a staff that represented a ready supply of soldiers and sailors. With the declaration of war in August 1914, the GPO immediately mobilized. It released 82,000 male employees for military service during World War I, including 11,000 telegraphists. To counterbalance the resulting labor deficit, the GPO hired unprecedented numbers of women, temporarily sacrificing long-held views on acceptable employment conditions for female staff. This essay assesses how and when the employment of female telegraphists changed during the war, as men continued to leave the GPO for the military. At the conflict's end, the incorporation of demobilized servicemen into the GPO changed the organization's employment priorities, as thousands of women and men employed on temporary contracts for the duration of the war were replaced. In 1926, further changes to employee gender ratios were planned, as consideration turned to the likelihood of a second world war. Throughout World War I, the GPO grappled with its commitment to support ever-increasing military communication and maintain civilian communication networks in the face of huge changes to the labor market, not least of which was the shifting status and treatment of women.

INTRODUCTION

In 1914, the General Post Office (GPO) was the largest employer in the United Kingdom and, as such, it had a male staff that represented a ready supply of soldiers and sailors. With the declaration of war in August 1914, the GPO immediately mobilized. This essay analyzes how the GPO organized telegraphist employment to meet the conflict's communication demands. The GPO released 82,000 male employees for military service during World War I, including 11,000 telegraphists. Sex and prevalent gender stereotypes, based on twentieth-century assumptions about the binary relationship between sex and gender, governed the GPO's organization of labor prior to the outbreak of this war, and, from the onset, informed its attempts to expand the workforce to meet the labor deficit created by the pull of male employees into the military. These stereotypes also dictated the job roles and working conditions appropriate for male and female staff. Indeed, some job titles included reference to the employee's sex, for example, "boy messenger," "lady doctor," and "female typist." In order to understand how these stereotypes impacted individuals, specific reference will be made in this paper to employment figures from the Central Telegraph Office (CTO), the epicenter of the British telegraph system, comparing the experience in this particular office between 1911 and 1931 to national statistics. The establishment books, used in the research of this paper, list people employed by each department at a given time and identify employees' gender, which could be recorded as either "male" or "female," but not their race or ethnicity. Information regarding employee race and ethnicity was not captured in either the GPO's appointment indexes

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or the pension and gratuity applications between the eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. More research is needed to uncover the experiences of ethnically diverse people at the General Post Office, which is complicated by this lack of data. In 1915, GPO managers directed that employees had to be British subjects by birth, but the employment opportunities at the General Post Office for British men and women who may have experienced racism are not made clear in the historical record, and this is an area for further investigation. Further research is also needed into the lived experiences of people who did not identify themselves within the binary system of “male” and “female.”

The GPO recruited temporary workers for the duration of the war only and reverted to prewar working patterns at the end of the conflict. In 1919, the number of male employees increased as demobilized soldiers were incorporated into the GPO workforce. It is interesting to note that eight years after the end of the war, potential military need instigated further changes to employment policy. In 1926, the GPO planned to reverse the expansion of male employment, intending to replace male telegraph workers with women in preparation for a possible second war.

World War I impacted British women's lives paradoxically. Indeed, Susan Grayzel has highlighted how European societies responded to the war in ways that were “as conservative as they were forward-looking.”¹ On the one hand, a host of new opportunities were available to women, including “education, employment, and national service.”² Such opportunities, however, were countered by conservative responses. Wartime rhetoric placed increasing emphasis on the importance of motherhood as the “core” of female identity; most specifically, women were called upon to create more sons and send them to fight for the nation.³ As Grayzel explains, “warring states defined the essence of male service to the nation as combat,” while most nations called upon and celebrated “women as mothers . . . and . . . guardians of morality.”⁴

Historical debate concerning World War I and gender has moved beyond discussion of whether the war was a “good” or “bad” thing for women, into a more complex analysis of “wartime gender terrain,” an approach which reexamines previous binary assumptions about gender and the separate “public” and “private” spheres occupied by men and women.⁵ The blurring and crossing of these boundaries has been explored by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall using examples of “energetic women who claimed the right to vote in church meetings or speak in public” and men who held home and family as central to their identity.⁶ Despite the examples of men and women who crossed gender boundaries, gender stereotypes insinuated themselves into the workplace throughout World War I. Gender stereotypes impacted where and when women could be employed and how the home press represented women's employment.

Telegraphists have been chosen for investigation in this paper because telegraphy was the first job undertaken by substantial numbers of women at the GPO. Telegraphy required some skill and knowledge, but because of perceived operational complexities, certain types of telegraphy were deemed unsuited to women workers. Moreover, working at certain times of day was deemed to be unsuited to women because of the facilities at

different types of offices, perceived concerns regarding the safety of women workers, and assumptions regarding the detrimental impact of fatigue on women's health. Distinctions between what was considered suitable and unsuitable for women's employment, and how these ideas evolved as the war progressed, will be analyzed in the course of this essay.

Women's employment at the GPO preceded the conflict, and by 1911 women formed one-fifth of all postal workers. Few women undertook outdoor employment, such as delivery, or were occupied in engineering. Indoor work was undertaken by both men and women, with the main division between the sexes occurring along the lines of working hours: men attended work at all hours of the day or night, but women largely worked in the daytime only. Working overtime and on Sundays were tasks largely undertaken by men only. Women's work was usually performed in a self-contained division under female supervision, segregated from male employees.⁷

The GPO first employed substantial numbers of women after the passing of the Telegraph Act of 1868, which gave sole responsibility for telegraphic communication in the UK to the postmaster general and paved the way for the transfer of privately established, owned, and operated telegraph systems to the state. Following the act, women already employed as telegraphists became Post Office employees (as photographed in Figure 1). In the following years,



FIGURE 1. Telegraph Room, lantern slide, late nineteenth century, 2010-0433, The Postal Museum, London.

although the sexes were strictly segregated at work, the GPO employed women in clerical roles in the headquarters of the Post Office Savings Bank and in the Returned Letter Office. World War I provided the first opportunity for women to operate telegraph systems in a theater of war, and this novel enterprise was reported in the home press.

NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

To give context to changes in women's employment during World War I, it is helpful to refer to Sallie Heller Hogg's research into the changes in women's employment levels across other industries. Heller Hogg has analyzed the impact of World War I on male and female employment by tracking the number of women employed in various industries between 1894 and 1921. She found the war to be a significant factor behind the surge in women's employment and the presence of women in industries not previously open to them, concluding that "after four years of war, the proportion of women ten years of age and over gainfully employed in the United Kingdom had risen from thirty-two to thirty-seven per cent," including increases in "virtually every 'male industry.'" Furthermore, the ratio of women to men in "virtually every major industrial category covered by the Board of Trade's employment enquiry" showed an increase in the proportion of women in the workplace by July 1920, compared with July 1914.⁸ Nevertheless, Heller Hogg notes, World War I alone did not lead to an increase in female employment; the women's movement and the gains made by women workers prior to the outbreak of war, in the face of conservative opposition, were also important.⁹

THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE DURING WORLD WAR I

During World War I, the GPO played a vital role in keeping the home front and front line connected through the delivery of written communications, and through the telegraph and telephone systems for military and civilian use. Written communications were delivered during the war with impressive speed—letters could arrive at the front lines the day after they were sent. Although the transmission of written communications occurred quickly, the telegraph system allowed for almost instant communication, crucial to efficient military operations. The GPO laid many thousands of miles of cables to link military headquarters in Britain with the Continent. Between March 1914 and March 1915, the GPO laid 185,842 miles of wire, an increase in one year of 64%, taking the total to a vast 3,071,867 miles of Post Office wire. This figure represents 265,765 miles of telegraph wire and 2,806,102 miles of telephone wire.¹⁰

In all, some 13,000 male GPO engineers installed and maintained these new telegraph lines, with male and female temporary workers filling the void created by their departure from


regular service. The GPO, as a government body required to support the war effort, promoted military enlistment and enforced restrictions on male employment from mid-1915 onward, making it more difficult for fit men to find employment outside the military. The postmaster general instructed postmasters in July 1915 that "no man eligible for military service is in the future to be engaged for temporary duties, where work can be efficiently performed by women or by men ineligible for military service."¹¹ Potential male employees needed to prove their unfitness for military service prior to receiving any offer of employment.¹² In October 1915, the postmaster general authorized postmasters to recall to service any individuals pensioned before the age of sixty on the grounds of ill health if they had sufficiently recovered.¹³

The Post Office actively encouraged its male employees to volunteer in World War I and displayed notices encouraging enlistment (see Figure 2). All male employees received a letter in 1915 encouraging them to enlist, the Post Office Union organized recruitment drives, and Post Office circulars would regularly include calls for staff to enlist with the Post Office Rifles. Such recruitment drives assured men that civil jobs would be kept open until their return from military service.

The recruitment poster in Figure 2 was approved by the postmaster general, with space made in the poster's design for his signature. As the head of a government office and a political appointee, the postmaster general pursued the government's interests, answering to the Treasury and to Parliament.¹⁴ In order to communicate with postmasters and sub-postmasters, the postmaster general issued instructions through printed documents called circulars, which the organization had introduced in 1861 to communicate news of appointments, promotions, and senior vacancies. During World War I, circulars also detailed the changing employment regulations to which postmasters were required to adhere. Four men served as postmaster general during World War I, one of whom served twice (Herbert Samuel; see Table 1).

1915: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE TELEGRAPHISTS

In 1915, the need intensified for new telegraphists to replace those leaving to join the army. In the same year, the GPO researched the feasibility of hiring female telegraph operators to help resolve the crisis. A. M. Ogilvie, director of army signals (Home Defence) between 1913 and 1919, and joint second secretary of the Post Office between 1914 and 1919, wrote to Monsieur Frouin, director of telegraphic works in Paris, about his French counterpart's experience of employing women as telegraphists. Ogilvie sought advice "owing to the number of telegraphists now employed in the Army" and asked whether, in light of this, "women trained in Baudot working might not be employed in London on the circuits to France."¹⁵ Baudot code is a variation on Morse code based on a binary system of dots and crosses, invented by Émile Baudot in the 1870s and adopted by the GPO in 1897.¹⁶ Prior to committing to such an

G.  R.

THE

POST OFFICE RIFLES.

8TH BATTALION CITY OF LONDON REGIMENT

Are in Urgent Need of Recruits to complete Establishment of the 3rd Battalion,
and an earnest appeal is therefore made to all Officers of Military age who are
desirous of assisting their colleagues now fighting in Flanders.

The Object of the 3rd Battalion is to supply drafts, after having received the
necessary training.

1. HOW TO ENLIST.

- (1) See your Postmaster and obtain official permission.
- (2) Having obtained permission write to Officer Commanding POST OFFICE RIFLES, 130, Bunhill Row, London, E.C.
- (3) You should not be less than 5ft. 2in. in height with an expanded chest measurement of 34in.
- (4) Age limits - 19 to 40. 19 to 45 ex Soldiers.

2. TERMS OF SERVICE.

- (1) Four years or duration of the War.
- (2) Foreign Service Only.
- (3) Free Discharge on termination of War or engagement.

3. Civil Posts will be kept open until return from Military Service, and such service will count for Civil Pension and for Increment of Civil Salary.

4. THE PAY OF A RIFLEMAN

is equal to full Civil Pay in the case of all Established Officers, plus Free Kit, Rations and Quarters.
N.C.O's receive Extra Pay of their Rank supplemental to Civil Pay.
Un-established Officers receive Full Army Pay and Allowances, Free Kit, Rations and Quarters.

APPROVED BY THE
POSTMASTER-GENERAL.
(Signed) A.M.O.
27/5/16.

(Signed) **J. HARVEY,**
Lieut.-Col. 1/8th Battalion City of London Regiment.
(British Expeditionary Force)

F. A. LABOUCHERE,
Lieut.-Col. 2/8th City of London Regiment.

F. OWEN,
Major 3/8th City of London Regiment.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

FIGURE 2. Post Office Rifles recruitment poster, POST 30/3381A, circa 1915, The Postal Museum, London.

TABLE 1. Postmasters general of the UK, 1910–1921. An asterisk (*) indicates membership in the Cabinet.

Postmaster general (peerage ^a)	Dates of office
*Herbert Samuel (Viscount Samuel)	1910–1914
*C. E. H. Hobhouse	1914–1915
*Herbert Samuel (Viscount Samuel)	1915–1916
J. A. Pease (Lord Gainford)	1916
A. H. Illingworth (Lord Illingworth)	1916–1921

^a A peerage, if indicated, was granted after holding office. Certain personal privileges are afforded to all peers, including access to the House of Lords.

unprecedented employment of women, Ogilvie wanted to know whether “women telegraphists are employed at Paris on the circuits working to [Britain].”¹⁷ It is interesting that Ogilvie felt compelled to seek reassurance through a French precedent before employing women on the London circuits to France. The request suggests that Ogilvie considered this type of work beyond the capabilities of women. Ogilvie’s French counterpart responded with a positive account of female telegraph operators in Paris:

I hasten to inform you, in reply to your letter of November 27th, that for the past several months ladies have been used in Paris during the day service to serve the Baudot apparatus in France. 50% of the female staff shall be employed in the operation of such communications; the yield obtained was found to be as good as with men.¹⁸

Presumably reassured by Frouin’s response, Ogilvie began to employ women to operate the Baudot.

Expanding on the opportunities available to female telegraphists with knowledge of the French language, a letter dated 2 December 1915 sent to the secretary of the GPO from Mr. Newlands, who was believed to have been a manager in the Cable Room at the Central Telegraph Office, reveals that by this point in the war it had “become essential as a measure of precaution and as a war emergency to introduce female workers into the Cable Room of the C.T.O.,” an area of the Central Telegraph Office previously operated solely by male employees.¹⁹ The letter states that these female telegraphists, required to have knowledge of French, ought to be paid the same language allowance as men. For authority, the letter quotes the home secretary’s departmental committee on the employment of “women Substitutes for men” that “the scale of wages payable to women should, as far as conditions permit, and as the work deputed to them reasonably justifies, be based on the rate of wages paid to men who have been engaged in similar duties.”²⁰ Mr. Newlands suggested that women, like men, be paid two shillings and sixpence a week as a special language

allowance grant, which would be awarded in acknowledgement of their special skills, on top of their usual salary.²¹ Though the language allowance was the same sum of money for males and females, the male workers received higher wages. A follow-up letter from the Post Office secretary, dated 31 December 1915, informed the lords commissioners of the Treasury, in a pained tone, that “it has recently become necessary to resort to the employment of women on the Cable duties.”²² This letter seems to erroneously report that the language grant pay award was three shillings and sixpence a week, though the other original documents consistently note it as two shillings and sixpence.²³

By late 1915, the General Post Office had expanded the employment opportunities available to women, with parts of the business now open to women workers for the first time. An instruction issued to surveyors and heads of department, dated 28 October 1915, outlined the order of precedence for potential new recruits, with preference given to married men within each category:

1. Applicants with previous experience of Post Office work and others specifically recommended by the Postmaster.
2. Ex-Army and ex-Navy men. (The Labor Exchanges will put forward the cases of any disabled soldiers who apply and appear suitable for Post Office work; such cases should be treated sympathetically).
3. Men who have applied specifically for Post Office work.
4. Other candidates.²⁴

The circular directed that “no persons who are not natural-born British subjects are to be engaged”;²⁵ as previously stated, the impact of this directive on ethnically diverse employees requires further research. Women are not referred to specifically in the list, although they are included in the first category of “applicants with previous experience” and the final category of “other candidates.”

By 1915, the number of women in the ranks of the GPO had swelled, alongside the employment of more men (see Table 2). On 31 March 1915, the GPO employed 191,032 men and

TABLE 2. The UK’s General Post Office employment changes by gender and role between 1914 and March 1915.^a

Employee gender and role	Change from 1914 to 1915 ^a
Men in established roles	Increase of 4,961 workers
Women in established roles	Increase of 1,169 workers
Men in unestablished roles	Decrease of 2,876 workers
Women in unestablished roles	Increase of 890 workers

^a The 1915 source data were obtained on 31 March and were “compared with the previous year”; although not specifically stated, it is probable the comparison was from March to March.

62,718 women, an overall increase of 4,144 employees over the previous year. These figures include men engaged in naval and military duties, but exclude temporary substitutes engaged to replace them.²⁶

EMPLOYMENT CONSTRAINTS AND GENDER EXPECTATIONS

The GPO needed female employees to fill positions left vacant by men. However, prevailing gender stereotypes governed when and where women could work. The postmaster general was reluctant to employ women at night, particularly as night work would result in unaccompanied women outside after dark. A Post Office circular to postmasters dated 8 June 1914 recommended that “the ordinary scheduled duties of female telegraphists should not extend beyond 8.15 PM.” The one concession was that if “8.30 PM is a more convenient hour [the postmaster general] will not object.”²⁷ This time was perhaps judged appropriate because during the summer months, when the circular was issued, it would still be light outside.

By mid-1915, as noted above, the strain on the labor market resulting from the withdrawal of men into the war effort forced a pragmatic alteration to the Post Office’s approach to women’s night work. A circular to surveyors and heads of departments issued on 15 July 1915 referred to the further large drafts to be made from Post Office staff to meet “the postal and telegraphic requirements of the Army” and the experience in “many places [where] . . . suitable temporary male force is no longer available.”²⁸ From mid-1915, managers could “employ women . . . on both indoor and outdoor duties . . . and . . . keep them on indoor duties until 11.00 PM, provided that the accommodation and general conditions are favourable and that facilities are available, or can be arranged, for their conveyance home.”²⁹ The circular’s reference to “accommodation” is not elaborated on, and could be a reference to a separate lavatory for women’s use. No evidence of the postmaster general’s concern for the safety of male employees travelling home from work has been identified.

Just as the GPO expressed concerns about female telegraph operators walking home alone in the evenings, it advised that telegraph delivery girls should not be employed on outdoor duties after 8:00 PM. A circular to surveyors in July 1915 advised that “girls may be employed on telegraph delivery until 8 PM,” but only in “districts carefully chosen for their suitability.”³⁰ Proposals could be submitted to the postmaster general “for the performance of all-night telephone duties by a staff of women in exchanges where it is found difficult to maintain a sufficient force of male night operators.”³¹ Alongside safety concerns were anxieties over women’s fatigue from overworking and working at night. Subsequently, in October 1915, postmasters were instructed to avoid employing “women on overtime . . . as far as possible.”³²

Women’s fatigue was a national concern; in 1916, the Health of Munitions Workers Committee issued two memorandums: one on the employment of women and the other on hours of work.

The committee decided that both sexes were negatively impacted by frequent changes to shift patterns,³³ but that the “employment of women at night calls for great care and supervision, and that adequate pauses for rest and meals are indispensable.”³⁴ The drive to instigate protective measures for women workers resulted from a perception that they required special shielding measures and the importance of their being able to fulfil their household duties. Women’s night working had, officially, been phased out across the United Kingdom from the mid-nineteenth century and revived only because of the labor demands of World War I. Internationally, the 1906 Berne Convention banned women’s night work because “of reports showing that night work caused deterioration in health due to the difficulty of securing sufficient rest by day, disturbance of home life with its injurious effect upon the children, and diminished value of the work.”³⁵ The Berne Convention did not alter the conditions of male employment and the concerns remained focused on women’s health.

Around the same time that GPO management implemented policies to limit women’s employment through controlling night working and avoiding overtime, women pushed for their opportunities to be broadened. On 4 December 1914, two women, Mabel Boot and E. Mitchell, penned a request to be considered for employment as temporary wireless assistants. They were rejected and so renewed their application on 2 July 1915. Their application was again refused, on the grounds of the unsuitability of “the accommodation of female operators at Wireless Stations.”³⁶ On 23 February 1916, the two women were joined by a third hopeful female candidate, Miss V. A. Pettifer, and wrote once more of their desire to be considered for employment as wireless operators, at stations such as that depicted in Figure 3. Their application on this occasion describes their passionate determination to serve because “the time seems to have arrived when every eligible man is needed for military duties [and] we feel that in this case some could be ably substituted by female labor.”³⁷ Internal GPO correspondence dated March 1916 regarding Boot, Mitchell, and Pettifer’s application cites the “military nature” of the work and the occasional need to swap wireless operators employed by the GPO with “the staff of army wireless stations” as the reasons for women’s unsuitability to the role.³⁸

While women struggled to gain access to employment as wireless assistants on land, women’s attempts to find employment as wireless operators on board ships was discussed in the press. An article printed in the *Daily Express* national newspaper on 9 February 1916 discusses this issue.³⁹ Mr. Godfrey C. Isaacs, managing director of the Marconi Company, which trained and employed women as wireless telegraphists on land, remarked on the unsuitability of women’s physiques to the work of a wireless operator at sea, as such work “must be carried out under very difficult conditions of weather and at all times of the day and night.”⁴⁰ The presence of women among numerous men in close quarters was also of concern to Mr. Isaacs, who stated that “the operator, as the only woman on board a tramp steamer, for instance, with sailors of several different nationalities living a cramped, confined life for long periods, is in an abnormal

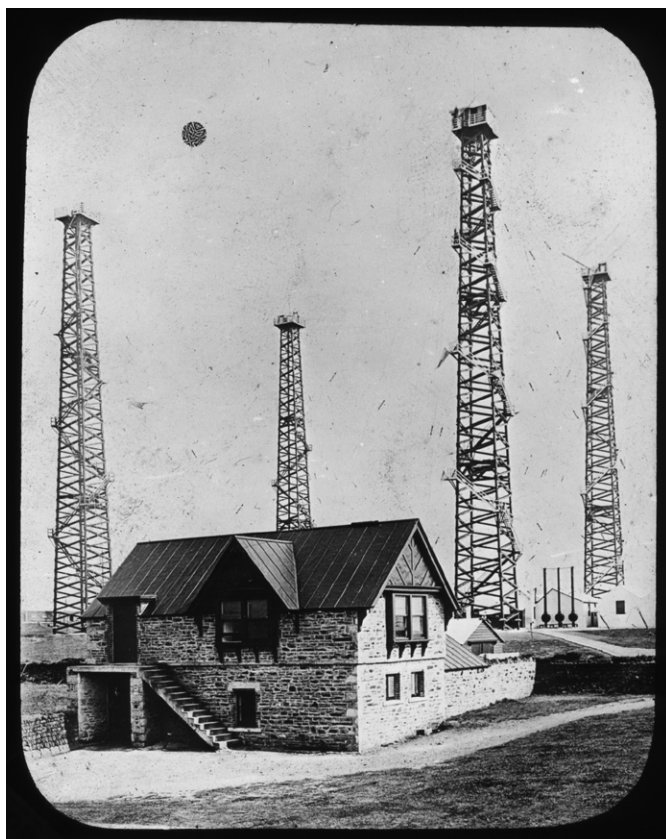


FIGURE 3. Wireless telegraph station, lantern slide, circa 1890, 2010-0418/2, The Postal Museum, London.

position. I should not care to put any woman in such a situation.”⁴¹ For Mr. Isaacs, it seems that an isolated woman working alongside numerous British men was problematic, but a woman working alongside men of other nationalities was out of the question. Countering this argument in the home press, a writer using the pseudonym “Patriot” sent a letter to the *Daily Express*, promoting the urgent need to employ women as wireless operators on board ships:

Miss Alice Hardie, of Liberton, Edinburgh, who has passed a first-class examination in wireless telegraphy and is offering her services as a wireless operator on board ship [sic]. I wonder if any patriotic wireless company or shipowner has employed her yet? A woman that would volunteer her services to go to sea at a time like this, knowing the risk she runs of the ship striking a mine or being torpedoed, is worthy of consideration.⁴²

“Patriot” went on to state that “if I were a wireless operator on board a merchant trading vessel I would send her a wire to come and take my job, and volunteer my services for the fighting forces.”⁴³ One can only speculate as to the identity of

Patriot—perhaps this ardent letter writer was Miss Alice Hardie herself.

Despite some resistance to women undertaking certain types of work, women were encouraged to enter the workplace to release men to fight. One organization encouraging women’s employment was the Corps of Women Signallers, founded by Miss Del Riego in October 1914. At a Corps meeting in May 1915, one member, Miss Everett Green, addressed the assembled group about the opportunity the Corps provided to “women of education and intelligence,” who could “find an outlet for their powers” by undertaking work that had previously been considered “men’s work.”⁴⁴ Miss Everett Green described how women were needed to qualify,

not only as signallers, but as dispatch riders and scouts, for there were many women and girls who had ridden as straight, or know as much about a motor[,] as any man. They would also qualify as telegraphists to take the place of men who had gone to the front from the G.P.O.

The reference to riding “straight” merges female employees’ driving skills with their forthrightness. Miss Everett Green stipulated that the Corps did not want women “who would put a tea-party or some shopping before their training. They must have keenness.”⁴⁵ Miss Everett Green’s call for women workers discouraged women who enjoyed pursuits she considered to be whimsical frivolities, stereotypically “feminine” activities, in favour of keen, traditionally “male” substitutes.

The need for female employees changed the opportunities available to married women, who until World War I had been prohibited from employment at the GPO by the 1876 “marriage bar.” The marriage bar required most female employees to resign upon marriage and forbade the employment of married women in the majority of cases, ultimately restricting the level of seniority to which it was likely women would rise. The bar was still in place in early 1914, prior to the outbreak of war, when the postmaster general issued a directive stating,

a married woman, not being a widow, is not eligible for any appointment on the establishment of the Post Office, and any women holding any position on the establishment, or the situation of full-time assistant at a Head Office or Salaried Sub-Office, will be required to resign on marriage. Postmistresses and Sub-Postmistresses appointed before the 24th February 1914 are, however, exceptionally allowed to retain their appointments on marriage.⁴⁶

The postmaster general strengthened the marriage bar weeks later, in February 1914, by canceling the exception allowing postmistresses and sub-postmistresses to retain their employment after marriage.⁴⁷ Months later, the labor demands of the war forced a reversal in the Post Office’s approach to married women workers: the Post Office pragmatically—and temporarily—suspended

the bar. At the end of the war the GPO reinstated the marriage bar and did not permanently lift it until after World War II. This approach to employing married women, only as a limited and last resort, confirms the reactionary and temporary nature of GPO policy changes. Reinstating “normalcy” was the paramount concern at the end of the conflict. According to Heller Hogg, the war did not change the pivotal homemaker–breadwinner distinction between the sexes, but rather it challenged views as to the “compatibility of work with being a lady and, to a lesser extent, a wife—but still not a mother—than was the case before the war.”⁴⁸ For female GPO employees, however, marriage would remain incompatible with employment until after World War II.

Married and single women alike received lower pay than male GPO employees, even when undertaking jobs previously held by men. The question of what women should be paid in other sectors employing an increasing number of women was debated by the Treasury. One such debate occurred at a conference in March 1915, where “the representatives of a large number of Trade Unions agreed to recommend to their members certain proposals with a view to accelerating the output of Government work (munitions).”⁴⁹ These proposals included relaxing the restrictions around female labor provided that the “admission of semi-skilled or female labour shall not affect adversely the rates customarily paid for the job.”⁵⁰ According to a GPO report, David Lloyd George, a senior British politician who served as prime minister between 1916 and 1922, interpreted the agreement as a guarantee that “women undertaking the work of men would get the same piece rates as men were receiving before the date of this agreement.”⁵¹ In April and May 1915, when pressed in the House of Commons to apply this agreement in the Post Office, the postmaster general stated that “the proposals agreed to at the Conference regarding munitions of war were in many respects not applicable to the different conditions of the Post Office service.”⁵²

The GPO and munitions industries measured employee output and awarded remuneration differently. Jennifer Crew analyzed the wages paid to male and female staff in the UK during World War I. Citing the Engineering Employers’ Federation report on pay received by women based on either piece rates or time rates, she found that “on piece rates women received 40% to 60% of the male rate. On time rates, by 1918, skilled women received between 80 and 95% of the male rate, while [women] labourers received 66 to 80% of the male rate.”⁵³ Given that equal piece rates (which determined the pay based on the level of production) resulted in greater disparity, it is possible that the push by the House of Commons toward encouraging equal piece rates may not have been designed to promote gender pay equality but rather to ensure that women would receive less pay. This episode leads to intriguing questions about the postmaster general’s opinions on pay equality. By not applying the principle proposed by the House of Commons, was he acting to protect women’s pay, or did he believe that the implementation of piece rates could have been used as a stepping-stone for increasing women’s earnings? Either way, the GPO’s female employees,

including telegraphists, received lower wages than men throughout the course of the war and beyond, although, as has already been stated, men and women received some equally paid special grants, such as language grants. The exchange between the government and the postmaster general revealed their relationship: the government could try to influence the postmaster general, but he could concede to or reject its recommendations. As he was a political appointee, much of the postmaster general’s approach was based on party politics, personal outlook, and the broader political climate. What can be identified with certainty is the view of the postmaster general (at this time, A. H. Illingworth) that the war was a specific and isolated incident and that measures introduced during the emergency of wartime should “not . . . act as a precedent for any changes in future.”⁵⁴ This interpretation of the war experience makes clear how hiring females was viewed as a temporary measure only, not to be continued after the war. The postmaster general acted pragmatically in response to the crisis, but always planned to reestablish gender employment norms at the conflict’s end.

Despite efforts to boost employment through the recruitment of women and changing employment norms by employing women later into the evening, continuing the telegraph service at prewar levels was not possible, and in 1915, the hours of public business at many post offices were curtailed and notices advertising the service reduction displayed. Neither the telegraph service nor the postal service would ever regain prewar levels of delivery.

REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE TELEGRAPHISTS IN THE HOME PRESS

Throughout 1917, Post Office circulars called for more women telegraphists aged between twenty-one and thirty to join the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in France. By September 1917, the Post Office was willing to consider women up to the age of forty. Women telegraphists wore a uniform, including shoes described by telephonist Kathleen Bottomley as “dreadful, they were like cast iron, when you had them on you could hardly lift your feet.”⁵⁵ The novelty of women’s employment in the WAAC led to reports about their work in the home press that reveal the cossetting treatment to which some employed women were subjected. One such report appeared in the *Linlithgowshire Gazette* on 14 December 1917. It described how GPO managers frequently alternated women’s duties, in some instances at half-hour intervals, “as they get less tired when their work is changed.”⁵⁶ The *Gazette* reported that, aside from the frequent changes to women’s duties, male and female telegraphists operated under the same rules.⁵⁷ Male employees performing the same role, therefore, did not have their duties changed about in this fashion.

Some male managers found, to their surprise, that there were advantages to having women in the office. In the same article, an unnamed general is quoted as saying that “for thirty years I have been a regular soldier, and I swore only a few months ago

that I would never have a woman near my office. Now, I have experienced two 'Waacs' as clerks, and I can truthfully say that I have never known what comfort was before in my office."⁵⁸ The reporter described women's bravery as "pluck," and recounted a "very bad raid," when female telegraphists remained at their stations in the exchange.⁵⁹ The writer commended their knowledge and experience, "for practically without exception they have been for five or six years members of the postal service at home," adding that "they are perhaps the most skilled workers of the W.A.A.C."⁶⁰ In a report printed in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* on 21 November 1917, the journalist describes the pleasing appearance of the female clerks: "The afternoon sunshine which streamed in brightened the tone of their simple khaki coat frocks and neatly dressed hair," commenting that the women had "released men for more manly and laborious tasks than typing."⁶¹ Such accounts of these women at work demonstrate how pervasive gender ideology had been absorbed into the workplace. Women may have been participating in the workforce, but their femininity was considered as noteworthy as their fortitude and expertise, while men were required to participate in the "more masculine" business of war.

1919–1920: REESTABLISHING THE STATUS QUO

In November 1918, the British army numbered almost 3.8 million men. Twelve months later, it had been reduced to slightly less than 900,000 and by 1922 to just over 230,000. Demobilized GPO employees would return to their jobs, and temporary workers would be removed from their posts. In a circular dated 31 January 1919, the GPO laid out its plans for employees with temporary contracts, stipulating that,

no prospect of permanent appointment can be held out to temporary male Sorting Clerks and Telegraphists and temporary Postmen (other than ex-soldiers), temporary female sorters, &c, . . . and temporary Postwomen, unless possibly some of the women can be given posts as telephonists or female clerical assistants, without prejudice to the claims of others.⁶²

The circular stated that the removal of temporary female workers was as important as removing temporary male workers from the workplace; as such, women's removal from the workplace cannot be regarded as a specifically anti-female course of action. Nevertheless, but unsurprisingly, the circular did have a marked impact on significant numbers of women with shorter service records, precisely because many of them had entered the workplace during the war. The GPO prioritised filling "appointments for Postmen so far as possible by disabled men," with first consideration given to "disabled members of the regular staff."⁶³ Provision was then laid out for the employment of "Auxiliary Postmen . . . and at the same time to provide [employment opportunities] for ex-soldiers and sailors from outside the Post Office."⁶⁴ When it

became necessary to discharge temporary staff, the GPO's guidelines to postmasters stipulated that the first to leave must be those "willing to give up their work," followed by the individuals with shortest time in service, regardless of gender.⁶⁵

Despite the guiding principle that the removal of temporary workers ought not to be based on gender, the postmaster general committed to removing women, regardless of length of service, from the Cable Room at the end of the war. However, women continued to work in the Cable Room beyond the war's end. Until 1921, male and female telegraphists employed at the Central Telegraph Office received different pay. From 1914 to 1921, men older than 21 received 26 shillings a week, while women received 24 shillings a week. On 5 December 1920, the Union of Post Office Workers wrote to the secretary of the General Post Office highlighting the ongoing work of female telegraphists in the Cable Room after 8:15 PM and calling for them to "be paid at the rate proper to the male staff."⁶⁶ The union, which represented women as well as men and included a "Woman Organizer" post on the executive committee, stipulated that it was not requesting that the women be removed from this duty, but rather, demanded that "some recognition should be made of their service."⁶⁷ Internal communication within the GPO advised against removing women, who made up 15% of those working after 8:00 PM, the authors judging it best to "continue as we are," due to the likely objection of male staff who would then be expected to undertake further late duties.⁶⁸ The internal GPO correspondence does not reference how female employees were expected to react to any changes to their employment, nor does it note that female workers might object to any changes—the women's experience and aspirations were, apparently, unworthy of note.

The GPO's response to the union highlights that both male and female employees received the same time allowance of one shilling and sevenpence for working after 8:00 PM, and that female telegraphists' pay "was recently revised in agreement with your Union." The letter concluded that there was "no reason for departing" from this arrangement.⁶⁹ The union did not believe the time allowance represented equality between the sexes, as the base pay remained unequal, and in a letter dated 18 March 1921, repeated its request for women to receive pay equal to men. The union argued that its concern was not the similarity of the time allowance remuneration, but "the difference in the treatment of men and women."⁷⁰ The union's letter explained that women had been working outside the normal hours of attendance but that this was not reflected in their pay, and that men working the same shift received higher pay. The GPO had previously justified unequal pay on the basis that women did not undertake night work, and so these night-working women challenged the GPO's reasoning.

When questioned on equal pay for equal work, the GPO had previously stated that there were reasons special to the Post Office "for paying different rates to men and to women," specifically that on some work performed by men such as full night work, "women are not employed at all."⁷¹ To eliminate this inconsistency, the GPO decided to remove women from this duty in the Cable Room altogether.⁷² Although the condition of the

archival document prevents the author from being identified, the GPO informed the union in a letter dated June 1921 that “from the 27th instant [i.e., of this month], female telegraphists will cease to be employed on duties terminating after 8 PM in the Cable Room of the Central Telegraph Office.”⁷³ The GPO’s priority was to maintain the status quo of unequal pay at the expense of women’s employment on night duties.

The GPO’s stance on wages changed after 1921, when both male and female telegraphists aged 21 and over and employed at the Central Telegraph Office were paid 30 shillings a week. This equalizing of pay in 1921 renders the termination, in the same year, of female workers’ night duties in the Cable Room counterintuitive. The equalizing in pay at this time may have been part of a broader cultural shift toward the acceptance of women in the workplace in some situations, though this shift was still shrouded in limitations informed by the employee’s gender. Another reason for the equalizing of pay in 1921 may be that Albert Illingworth was replaced as postmaster general by Frederick Kellaway in that year. The change in policy may have resulted from the different attitude of the incoming postmaster general, although both men were members of the Liberal Party.

EMPLOYMENT FIGURES FOR THE CENTRAL TELEGRAPH OFFICE

Using figures published in the General Post Office’s establishment books (records produced by the Post Office from 1691 onwards, listing employees of certain ranks by department), it is possible to track the employment of men and women in established telegraphist positions in the Central Telegraph Office, as shown in Table 2. The Central Telegraph Office building housed staff and equipment related to telegraphic communication, including the inland and foreign telegraph operating galleries, the picture telegraphy section, and the administrative offices of the telegraph branch of the London Telecommunications Region. Messages were delivered or phoned in to the CTO, tapped into a telegraph machine, transmitted to a machine at a location closer to the recipient, printed, and, finally, hand delivered.

Between 1914 and 1918 the number of males and females employed at the Central Telegraph Office remained quite constant, with 1,700 men employed from 1914 to 1916, dropping to 1,667 men in 1917 and 1918, and 974 women employed each year from 1914 to 1918 (see Table 3).⁷⁴ The drop in male employees after 1916 may be linked to the the first Military Service Act, passed on 27 January 1916, which made every unmarried man between the ages of 18 and 40 inclusive liable for military service for the period of the war, and does not suggest that demand for the telegraph service had dropped. The Amendment Act of 25 May 1916 expanded conscription to include married men. It is of interest that the number of women employed at the Central Telegraph Office did not increase to meet the labor deficit resulting from the reduction in male employee numbers. It may be that the skilled employees at this office were difficult to replace or that more overtime was utilized in place of extra staff members.

TABLE 3. Number of male and female telegraphists employed at the Central Telegraph Office, 1911–1930 (n/a = data not available).^a

Year	Male telegraphists	Female telegraphists
1911	1,646	930
1912	1,644	950
1913	1,706	976
1914	1,700	974
1915	1,700	974
1916	1,700	974
1917	1,667	974
1918	1,667	974
1919	n/a	n/a
1920	1,667	974
1921	1,667	974
1922	n/a	n/a
1923	1,555	909
1924	1,555	909
1925	1,595	944
1926	1,444	905
1927	1,385	905
1928	1,385	905
1929	857	850
1930	885	903
1931	834	903

^a Source: General Post Office Establishment Books 1911–1931. The Postal Museum, London.

These employment figures at the Central Telegraph Office remained constant until 1921, and the figures from 1923 show a decrease in both male and female employment numbers, as the workforce shrank and telegraph traffic declined. (The figures from 1919 and 1922 are not available.) Nationally, the census records indicate that the ratio of female to male employees increased between 1911 and 1921 (see Table 3).⁷⁵ The ratio of female to male employees at the Central Telegraph Office echoes this national trend, as evidenced by the 1% increase in women workers in 1921 compared with 1911.⁷⁶ By 1930 the GPO employed more women than men at the Central Telegraph Office.

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT WAR

Between 1926 and 1931, there was a significant yearly reduction in the number of male telegraphists employed at the CTO. This reduction resulted from the plan first touted in November 1926 to increase the proportion of women employed on telegraph instrument duties. An August 1927 memorandum elaborating on the “Replacement of men by women on telegraph instrument duties” estimated the transfer of about 322 posts from men to

women during the next five years, as planning for a second war commenced.⁷⁷ The plan acknowledged that should the telegraph traffic continue to decline, there might be “very few vacancies . . . and the net result may well be that while the force on the women’s side remains about the same as at present the male staff will be reduced by between 300 and 400 posts in the next five years.”⁷⁸ It said that in the CTO Inland Galleries, the offices that dealt with telegrams directed to recipients in Great Britain, “a substantial reduction in rank and file [rather than management] force is expected” with a result in 1932 of a “total reduction of force of between 200 and 300 Telegraphists, the bulk of which will fall on the male side.”⁷⁹ Having gone unmentioned, management, by implication, remained in the hands of men.

The August 1927 memorandum, whose author was unnamed, dismissed the military’s involvement in shaping the GPO’s employment priorities, insisting that it seemed “hardly likely that the Post Office staffing policy would be governed to any appreciable extent by Military considerations.”⁸⁰ Contradicting this independent assertion, the following memorandum in the file, dated 15 August 1927, laid out the “difficulties experienced in satisfying the demands of the fighting forces for telegraphists during the late war”⁸¹ and proposed that the Post Office, in conjunction with the War Office, control the enlistment of “such technical men into the Navy Army etc., as soon as a Royal Proclamation were issued for the mobilization of the regular forces.”⁸² Increasing the ratio of female to male telegraphists was not the only solution to the problem of meeting military telegraphy demands in the event of a second war: youths (presumably male) were to be trained in telegraphy for army purposes, militarizing the young male population.

The files at London’s Postal Museum from the mid-1920s reveal that the GPO was prepared to abandon certain gender ideologies and reestablish a pragmatic approach to gender in the workplace, absorbing more women into its force under the expectation that significant numbers of men would once again fill military roles. As previously stated, 82,000 male Post Office employees, including 11,000 telegraphists, enlisted for military service during World War I, so such planning was vital for the continuation of the postal service if and when it would be called upon again to operate military communications. In the 1930s, the British government’s aim was to avoid war with Germany, instituting the policy of appeasement and allowing Hitler’s expansion of German territory to continue without opposition.⁸³ The British government’s preparations for war are widely recognized as commencing in 1938, following the annexation of Austria, and intensifying in March 1939, after the fall of Prague.⁸⁴ The military prepared for war by building new warships and increasing armaments.⁸⁵ On 1 January 1938, the Air Raid Precautions Act compelled all local authorities to begin creating their own air-raid precaution services. The civilian population was encouraged to grow food to supplement rations.⁸⁶ The memorandum written in the late 1920s regarding the GPO’s preparation for war is somewhat incongruous among this well-established historical background. Further research is needed to determine whether the GPO was the only government body to consider preparations for

a second world war as early as 1926 or whether this is evidence of covert administrative preparation, in the shadows of the public policy of appeasement. Research should also be carried out into how perspectives on gender fed into these preparations.

CONCLUSION

The employment priorities of the GPO in London shifted and evolved between 1914 and 1932, reflecting the organization’s difficulty in reconciling the available labor with gender norms. Of the 82,000 GPO employees released for military service in World War I, there were 13,000 casualties, of whom 1,500 had been previously employed as telegraphists. A growing number of female telegraphists filled the gap in the GPO workforce created by men who enlisted. For these women, the war would have a profound impact as they learned new skills, had new experiences, and, perhaps, gained new confidence and adjusted their ambitions. Women operated telegraph systems in theaters of war, bravely meeting danger and challenging contemporary gender views of women as passive and meek. However, newspapers and managers reported women’s feminine charm as well as their courage. The roles available to women expanded alongside the conditions of their employment, as women worked in areas of the GPO previously occupied solely by men, and at later hours than before. However, there were limits to these developments: certain roles were judged to be a step too far, as in the case of female wireless operators at sea. The presence of women in telegraph offices was less desirable once the employment of demobilized soldiers took priority.

Women received lower wages than their male equivalents throughout the war and the marriage bar was reinstated at its close. Successive postmasters general and other senior managers at the GPO believed that changes to working conditions were temporary, as evidenced by the removal of women from the Cable Room in 1921. As the GPO prepared for a second war, it planned to shed its male employees and recruit more women. The GPO prioritized service to the war effort and to this end it would employ, recall, and redistribute its staff, while sacrificing many long-held views on acceptable employment for both females and males.

NOTES

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The “Bell-Shaped” Distribution of United States Signal Corps Telephone and Telegraph in the Great War

Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris

ABSTRACT. American Telephone & Telegraph, with its corporate partners that made up the Bell System, commenced transcontinental telephone service in the United States in 1915, and then prepared to install a system in the European theater of war, based on its command of the new long-line technology, for the American Expeditionary Forces. Over the course of the last year of the Great War this corporate planning was successful, helping to win the war and then leaving postwar France with more modern telephone technology. The papers of a Bell-trained Signal Corps supervising engineer humanize and contextualize these achievements.

INTRODUCTION

Postal systems, at least since the London Penny Post of 1680, have mastered the transmission and distribution of messages by establishing offices to receive and deliver letters within their districts—districts created to exchange closed mails expeditiously with one another.¹ The United States Post Office Department established distribution offices in 1800, served by four-horse post coaches traveling day and night.² Once the railroads began providing first-class mail service (Railway Mail Service was established in 1869), distribution followed the tracks, with postal services along the way provided by mail messengers and special post riders.³

The telegraph in the United States, in contrast, was shaped by the ad hoc outcomes of competition rather than the oversight of a distribution system. The telegraphic message, attenuated by its transmission over distance, was rebooted in strength by the intervention of an electromagnetic relay that made long-line communication practicable.⁴ Because the attenuation of a voice over long lines could not be repaired by an electromagnetic relay, pioneer telephony was restricted to local exchanges that were unable to connect with one another. However, by the outbreak of the Great War, the science for such “long-line” conversation was in place, and American Telephone and Telegraph Company—part of the “Bell System” along with partners Western Electric Company and Bell Labs—was connecting and distributing local exchanges within a national system. By April 1917, when the United States declared war on Germany, the American telephone industry was ready to enter the fray, having developed both the technology and the equipment for these long lines that neither America’s allies nor Germany possessed.

Each communications technology depends for its systematic performance on distribution, which is the most technical and, perhaps, the least observed feature. The communications challenges in France during the Great War, both behind the lines and on the battlefields, were multifaceted. The personal papers of Carroll Thomas Blanck provide insight into the technical aspects of electrical communication and its distribution, advancements in telephony that aided the Allies (see Figure 1). Blanck was awarded the Army Distinguished

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This document is not a passport but is issued with the approval of the Department of State.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
WAR DEPARTMENT.

Form No. 633-1—A. G. O.
Ed. Nov. 26-17—3,000.

CERTIFICATE OF IDENTITY

No. 8011 Place _____ Date _____, 1918

I CERTIFY that Carroll T. Blanck is an Officer of the Army of the United States on detached service as 2nd Lt. Signal R. Co. with Casuals and is entitled under the laws of war, if captured, to the privileges of a prisoner of war. Identification data:

31 (Age.) Brown (Color of eyes.) Brown (Color of hair.)
5-7 3/4 (Height, approximate.) 135 (Weight, approximate.) White (Race.)

REMARKS: None
 (Include here notation of scars, etc., visible when clothed, which will aid in identification.)



R. Sutton
 (Signature of issuing officer.)
 MAJOR, A. G.
 Identification Office
 (Rank and title.)

Index finger
right hand.

Tip of finger this end.



Fingerprint.

Carroll T. Blanck
 (Signature of bearer.)

FIGURE 1. War Department Certificate of Identity issued to Carroll T. Blanck, a second lieutenant of the Signal Reserve Corps, at the Port of Embarkation (Hoboken, New Jersey), for France, 22 February 1918. All images from the authors' collection, which is now in the possession of the University of California, Los Angeles. Carroll T. Blanck Personal Papers, Library Special Collections, UCLA.

Service Medal on his thirty-fifth birthday, 29 November 1921, “for exceptionally meritorious and distinguished services to the Government of the United States, in a duty of great responsibility during World War I, in connection with the control and operation of the telephone and telegraph service of the American Expeditionary Forces.”⁵

BELL TELEPHONE PREPARES FOR WAR

Carroll Blanck was just a teenager when he did “special work” on records and conduit design for Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company in 1902, advancing in the next year to installer and lineman, and in the next to a foreman on construction of lines in Southern California. By the time he was hired in 1907 by the Los Angeles Plant Department of Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, he had worked as an engineer for two years. In 1909 he was promoted to District Engineer and was involved in development and the fundamental planning for new works, specifically long-line development. He was just twenty-three. In 1911 he moved to the Engineering Department in San Francisco as an Exchange Plant Engineer within the Pacific System and was promoted in 1914 to Assistant Appraisal Engineer. The Bell System at this time was a consortium of several local exchange companies owned by American Telephone and Telegraph; Western Electric Company, which manufactured the equipment; and Bell Labs, which carried out research and development. All employees in the Bell System were encouraged to apply for unconditional leave to join the military effort; Blanck applied in October 1917.⁶

When the United States entered the war in 1917, the Signal Corps—the division of the army responsible for communications and information systems—had fewer than 2,000 officers and enlisted men and “was pathetically unprepared to challenge the juggernaut which the Central Powers had cast from the fiery crucible of militarism.” Critical supplies and equipment needed immediately were

field and base telephone units, telegraph systems, enough wire to girdle the earth at least 100 times, radios, buzzer and related annunciator hookups, flag and blinker devices, still and motion picture cameras, thousands of miles of film and complete processing laboratories, pigeons and their lofts as well as trainers, meteorological equipment, motorcycles, automobiles, trucks, and an incidental though nonetheless mountainous assortment ranging from pencils to batteries.⁷

General Owen Squier, chief signal officer, had seen the British and the French lose their finest technical men to the combat forces, so in 1916 he asked the Bell System to organize a reserve corps.⁸

He heard from John Joseph Carty, chief engineer at American Telephone and Telegraph, who had successfully opened the first transcontinental telephone line in January 1915—a global historical event based on the development of the three-electrode

vacuum tube and an understanding of the electron.⁹ In November 1916, Carty outlined his response to Squier’s request:

Our plans contemplate two classes of Signal Corps officers to be recruited from the Bell System. One of these is to consist of engineers and executives who will remain in their offices, wearing the Army uniform, representing the War Department, and taking their orders direct from Washington. Their duty will be to direct the wisest possible military initiation of the Bell System plan and personnel, without at the same time crippling the service as a whole. The other group will consist also of executives and engineers who will select and organize the trained personnel of the Bell System into companies and battalions, for such field service as occasion may require.¹⁰

These plans were accepted throughout the Bell System, and Carty became the link between the War Department Signal Corps and the telephone and telegraph experts of the country. Training would continue at laboratories maintained both in New Jersey (Camp Alfred Vail, under Dr. H. D. Arnold, communicating with Major Robert Millikan of the National Research Council) and in France (near Paris under Major Edwin H. Armstrong).¹¹

For training of personnel in place, the army considered the need for new equipment. Frank B. Jewett, head of Western Electric Company’s Engineering Department, was called to active duty as a major in the U.S. Army.¹² His orders read,

In view of the fact that the present war depends more than ever before on the efficiency of electrical communications of all kinds between each of the elements of the United States forces, both on land and sea, your duties will be primarily to keep constantly in mind any improvements in apparatus and methods of the means used in transmitting communications; to produce, develop and standardize such apparatus as may seem promising from time to time; and in general to advise and counsel the Chief Signal Officer of the Army in all matters tending to bring the Signal Service of the Army to the wisest state of efficiency.¹³

Jewett recruited employees from Western Union and the Postal Telegraph Company as well, and eventually he was responsible for forming twelve Bell battalions as well as two companies dedicated to radio communications.

Thanks to battalion training received by the Bell reserve corps and its commitment to developing hardware, the Bell System was ready to serve when the United States declared war on 6 April 1917. The American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) were formed on 14 May 1917, and the first embarkation was 28 May. General Pershing appointed Brigadier General Edgar Russel as chief signal officer (see Figure 2). The corps’ first challenge was to map out a 400-mile communications line to link London via cable with the lines of battle in France and Germany. Eventually,



FIGURE 2. Chief Signal Officer Edgar Russel photographed in his office at headquarters of the Signal Corps in Tours; handstamp on back: "Signal Corps A.E.F. Photographic Laboratory. U.S. Army."

the Signal Corps determined that a 265-mile extension in France was necessary, specifically requiring "the daring scheme of translating to French soil, across a three thousand-mile barrier of submarine-infested water, a complete, modern, up-to-the-last-minute American Telephone and Telegraph system."¹⁴ To have such a communication system meant building what had originally evolved as a standard American line: "The poles were to be equipped with cross-arms along which ten wires could be strung, from which the experts of the Bell System would be able, by utilizing their scientific methods for multiplex telegraphy and telephony, to squeeze-out many times that number of telephone and telegraph circuits."¹⁵ As can be seen in Figure 3, such a setup would dramatically improve the system of single lines the French already had in place.

During the year beginning May 1917, the creation of the electrical communications network went through four phases:

the *primitive*, which commenced as soon as Pershing set foot in France; the *formative*, which created the central 400 miles of line; the *augmentative*, which expanded the map up to the arrival in March 1918 of the first thirty-three trained personnel of the Woman's Telephone Operating Unit (see Figure 4); and the *organizational*, with a Telephone and Telegraph division under Lieutenant Colonel A. H. Griswold of the 411th Pacific Bell Battalion.¹⁶

BLANCK AND TELEPHONE SYSTEMS IN FRANCE

Blanck's narrative belongs to the organizational phase of the communications network in France. He was granted unconditional leave from Pacific Bell, applied for a commission and, on

15 December 1917, became a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps. He trained at Camp Alfred Vail, New Jersey, for three weeks.¹⁷ He was then assigned as one of the 411th additions to Russel's staff of experienced long-line engineers and left for France on 26 February 1918. As Blanck outlined in a report after the armistice, the Bell System engineers had completed a planning stage and established the first network before the war and had subsequently mapped out the strategic expansion that he would join (see Figure 3).¹⁸

Blanck's expertise was in the design of long-line telephone systems, applying geographic and demographic considerations with an aim of efficiency. Russel, therefore, had him attend conferences with representatives of the Signal Service of both the British and American Expeditionary Forces to recommend plans for communication among headquarters. Blanck's design for Western Electric to build lines extending from Paris into Alsace-Lorraine was adopted. His own 411th Pacific Bell Battalion was in charge of the completed line in the critical months of July and August, with the Saint-Mihiel offensive and the Meuse-Argonne attack—eventually using even abandoned German wires to push through.¹⁹

Reports from the Signal Corps Engineering Department at Tours, under Blanck's command (see Figure 5), give the “nitty-gritty” of responsibilities. In particular, “long line Engineer” Captain O. C. Brill reported on 11 June 1918 that he was responsible for preparing studies for all the new telephone and telegraph long-line projects, making the surveys that included “the number and arrangement of circuits, the class of load and ultimate capacity, the kind and size of wire and other material to be used, the general scheme of transpositions and general route to be followed” to obtain “maximum efficiency in the arrangement and connection of the circuit.” (See Figure 6.) Under Blanck, Brill was to initiate “new projects involving extension to care for new military activities or for increased facilities required as a result of increased traffic.”²⁰

Blanck directed a tripling of the communications links from April to the November armistice, from 75 telephone exchanges serving 2,372 stations and 41 telegraph offices, to 262 telephone exchanges, 8,625 stations and 134 telegraph offices (October).²¹ At the telephone exchanges, operators both received and transmitted calls from and to “stations,” which were either stationary or portable field telephones (see Figure 7). The advantage of the telephone in the field was that sending and receiving voice messages required no special training, whereas telegraph operators needed to be proficient in Morse code.

When cessation of hostilities seemed imminent, the Signal Corps initiated training mechanics from the French army in the operation and maintenance of the multiplex equipment the corps would leave behind. Plans were also made to provide communications links to the United States peace delegation, including portable telephone and telegraph units. The new plans systematically coordinated all the United States Signal Corps offices, the other Allied forces' headquarters, and the French commercial telephone exchanges, and also covered expansion into Germany and Italy to communicate with the American Relief

Administration and to serve the occupation of enemy territory under the terms of the armistice.²²

Blanck was promoted quickly within the Signal Corps. He drafted special engineering plans as a second lieutenant and was made assistant officer in charge of the Engineering Division from 17 April to 16 October 1918. While serving in this position, he was promoted to first lieutenant on 2 July 1918 and to captain on 27 September that same year. When promoted to major on 22 October, he became the officer in charge of the Engineering Division, a position in which he served until 11 March 1919 and after which he served as deputy director of Telephone and Telegraph Services AEF until 8 May, when he was named director (see Figure 8). His promotion to lieutenant colonel occurred on 21 May and he transitioned from director of Telephone and Telegraph Services to director of communications of the American Forces in France on 1 September 1919.

Before leaving France, the Signal Corps had to account for the materiel left behind. Blanck prepared the 418-page “Report of Signal Corps A.E.F. on Signal Corps Installations in France, transferred to the Republic of France, in accordance with general instructions covering ‘Transfer of Installations’ dated May 10th 1919, ‘Final Transfer of Installations and Movables’ dated August 3rd 1919, and ‘General Order 54, Hdq. S.O.S.’ dated August 7th 1919.”²³ The grand total of value transferred was estimated to be \$4,947,139 (war basis) or \$3,485,025 (normal basis; i.e., calculated with no transportation costs). A separate accounting of “Telephone Traffic by Months” gives a total of 47,283,922 calls completed under the AEF Signal Corps—substantially more than recorded elsewhere and giving a more accurate idea of the intensity of wartime communication (see Figure 9).²⁴

As director of communications, Blanck attended President Wilson so that, as a representative of the U.S. Army on communications matters, he could report to the supreme command of the Allied and associated armies on the progress of the peace negotiations (see Figure 10). He returned to the United States on 19 October 1919 having been named a chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

Blanck's commanding officer, Edgar Russel, commended his work as being “thoroughly characteristic of the fine type of young technical men who forsook all to come to the aid of the Country at its time of need” (see Figures 11, 12). In this same letter to Blanck, Russel referenced General Pershing, who considered the Signal Corps to have been indispensable in the war, suggesting that Pershing could have been talking of Blanck when he said: “It is a striking example of the wisdom of placing highly skilled technical men in the places where their experience and skill will count the most.”²⁵

General Joseph Simon Gallieni famously declared that the First Battle of the Marne in 1914 was won by a “*coup de téléphone*”—an acknowledgment that this war was going to rely on electronic communication. Thanks to the technical work of the Bell battalions of the Signal Corps, more advanced telephonic communications—multiplex lines with increased distributive function—were in place to coordinate operations in the Second Battle of the Marne from 15 July to 6 August 1918, when attacks

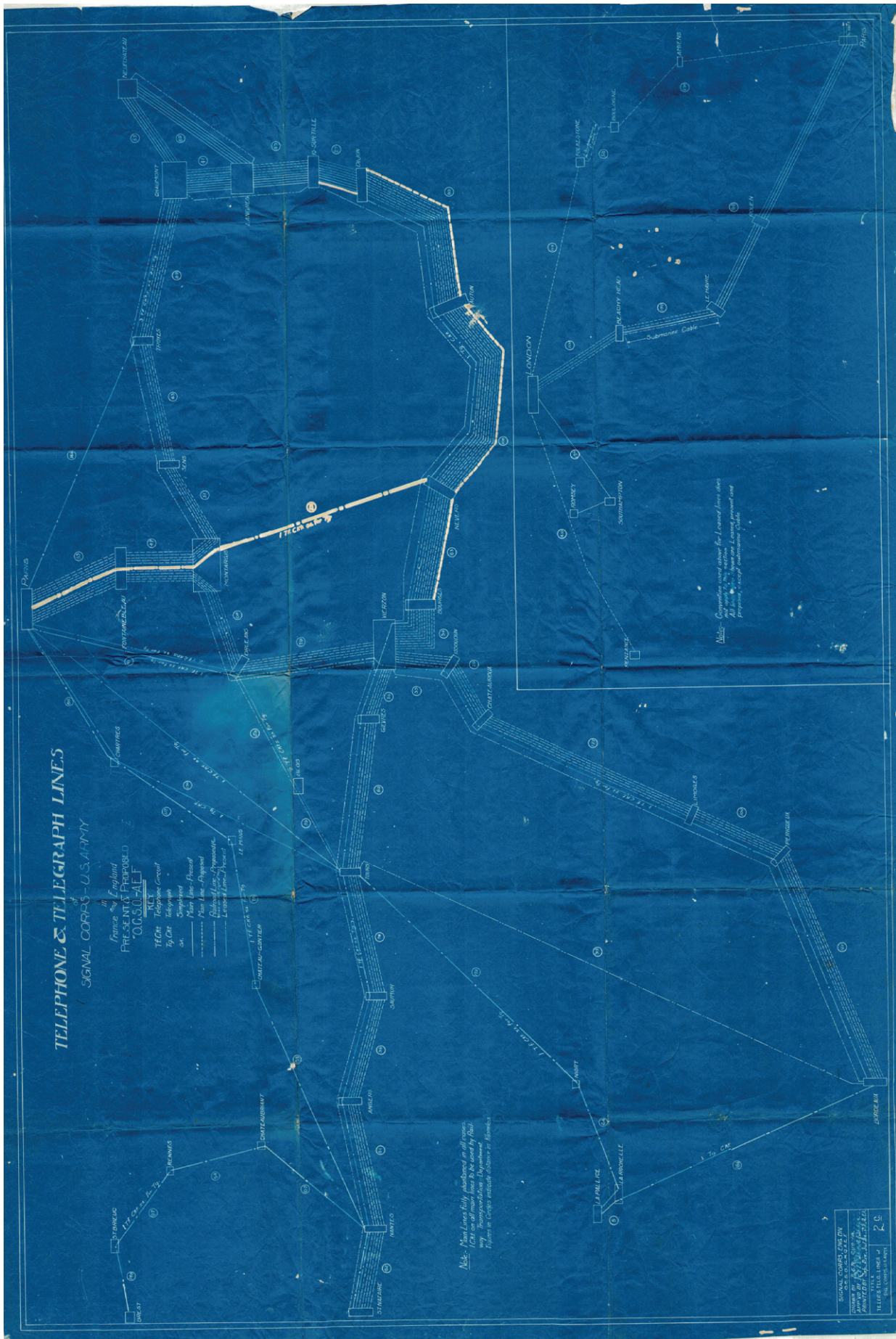
TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH LINES SIGNAL CORPS - U.S. ARMY

From the England
PRESENTLY PROPOSED
COUNCIL
TO CH. Telephone
CH. Completed
Main Line-Proposed
Submarine Cable-Proposed
Submarine Cable-Proposed

Note: Main line fully submerged in all cases
Lines are not main lines to be used by other
any Transportation Department
Figures in circles indicate distance in miles

Note: Consideration must also be given for second line also
and also to the question of the use of the
proposed submarine cable

SIGNAL CORPS, U.S. ARMY
DRAWN BY: [illegible]
REVIEWED BY: [illegible]
TELETYPE UNIT: [illegible]
[illegible]



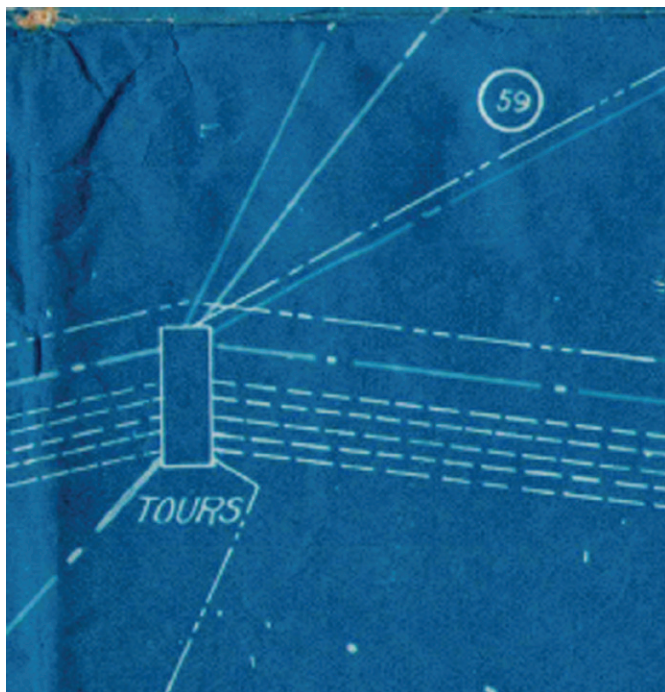


FIGURE 3. (*Opposite*) Blueprint diagram of telephone and telegraph lines prepared by the Signal Corps Engineering Office, 16 February 1918, to show what single lines had been erected by either the French or their allies that the American Engineering Corps would lease, as well as proposed lines that the AEC would build. (*Above*) Inset shows distribution lines from the Tours exchange. Reading the lines clockwise from top: 136 km leased line to Chartres, 1 telegraph circuit; leased line to Paris, 1 telephone circuit, 5 telegraph; proposed four-wire line on the railroad right of way, 58 km to Orleans; leased line, 59 km to Orleans, 2 telephone circuits, 5 for telegraph; proposed four-wire line on the railroad right-of-way to Vierzon; leased line to Gievres, 80 km, and on to Vierzon, 36, 1 telephone circuit, 5 telegraph; 5 proposed main lines to Vierzon via Gievres; proposed four-wire line on the railroad right-of-way to Bordeaux, 315 km; leased line 172 km to north, 1 telephone circuit, 5 for telegraph. The proposed lines to Vierzon and Bordeaux would be the long lines designed by the Engineering Division.

by Allied troops secured victory. “New weapons made it possible to increase the space between enemy soldiers, while electronic communication could extend the distance between sectors of coordinated operators and between commanding officers and their men. In several respects World War I was conducted at unprecedented long range.”²⁶

CONCLUSION

Electrical communication among combatants in Europe was, of course, ancillary to the traditional postal services available, with mail first transported by military personnel, and after 13 June 1917, handled by the United States Mail agency in France.²⁷ The inefficiency of mail handling by field post offices, the French railway, and Army Motor Transport Corps—particularly because of military reluctance to disclose troop location for strategic reasons—led to a new arrangement, by General Order 72 of 9 May 1918, that put mail within France under the AEF via a Military Postal Express Service (renamed Postal Express Service by 16 September 1918).²⁸

Postmaster General Albert Burleson had long believed that the Post Office Department should have control over “all means of the communication of intelligence.”²⁹ President Alfred Vail of American Telephone and Telegraph eagerly described the Bell System in universal service terms such as the postal system delivered:

The telephone system should be universal, interdependent and intercommunicating, affording opportunity for any subscriber to any exchange to communicate with any other subscriber of any other exchange within the limits of speaking distance, giving to every subscriber every possible additional facility for *annihilating time or distance by use of electrical transmission of intelligence or personal communication*. . . . Some sort of a connection with the telephone system should be within reach of all.³⁰

For a single year, 1 July 1918 to 1 July 1919, President Woodrow Wilson, by executive order citing military necessity, transferred control of both the telephone and telegraph systems to the Post Office Department.³¹

In postwar America, this historic year of Post Office control provided the integration and consolidation that the Bell System had long desired. In postwar France, the Bell System provided the country with a modernized system of electric communication.³² Engineer and Lieutenant Colonel Carroll T. Blanck contributed his long-line network expertise to both.³³

NOTES

1. Frank Staff well describes the evolution of the distribution system in Great Britain. *The Penny Post 1680–1918* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966), 162.

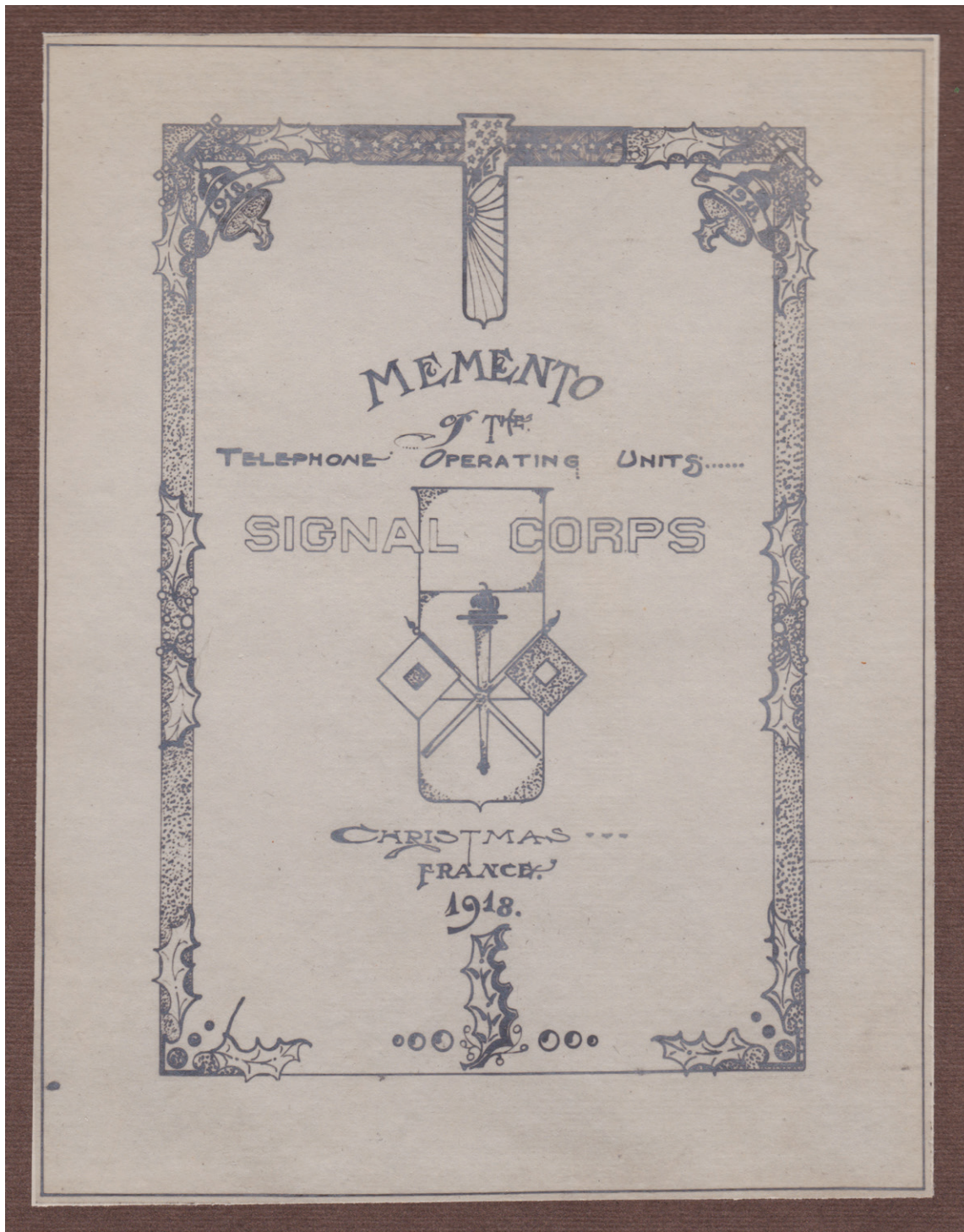


FIGURE 4. Christmas 1918 memento prepared for the Telephone Operating Units of the Signal Corps, shared with Major Blanck who arrived in France along with the Woman's Telephone Operators and oversaw their unit. (Above) Mimeographed cover. (Opposite, top) Letter to Major Blanck forwarding the memento. (Opposite, bottom) Photograph tipped into the memento of the telephone and telegraph operators at the Tours exchange, headquarters of the Signal Corps. Thirteen women are visible: two at left attending the telegraph key, one standing by a telephone station, a courier standing at back, seven sitting at switchboards, and two standing, ready to "patch in."

Address Reply to
Chief Signal Officer, S. O. S.,
American Expeditionary Forces.

221.35 Female (Pamphlet)

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES
HEADQUARTERS SERVICES OF SUPPLY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SIGNAL OFFICER

February 13, 1919

From: Chief Signal Officer, S.O.S.
To: Major, C. T. Blank, Tours
Subject: Memento for members of Signal Corps Operating Unit.

1. Enclosed is a copy of the Christmas memento of the Telephone Operating Units, which it is thought you may desire to keep.

By direction:

J. B. Hickerson
ROY H. COLES
Lieut. Colonel, Signal Corps
Executive Officer.

1 Encls



TOURS

OFFICER IN CHARGE
Capt. W. F. Repp

ASST. OFFICER IN CHARGE
2nd Lt. C. T. Blanck

CHIEF DRAFTSMAN
Sgt. 1st Lt. W. J. Murtagh

CHIEF CLERK
P. W. Chamberlain

DRAFTSMAN
Cpl. J. J. Haggerty
Cpl. G. C. Fisher
Cpl. H. O. Hill
Pvt. 1st Lt. J. R. Thomas

ORDERLY
Cpl. C. C. Cummins
Cpl. J. G. Darr
Clerk A. R. Swale

RAILROAD DIS-
PATCHING LINES
ENGINEER
Capt. J. B. Jones

OPERATIONS
ENGINEER

LONG LINES
ENGINEER
Capt. O. C. Brill

TELEGRAPH
EQUIPMENT
ENGINEER
1st Lt. F. H. Fay

WIRELESS
EQUIPMENT
ENGINEER
1st Lt. P. J. Clarke

LOCAL OUTSIDE
PLANT ENGINEER
1st Lt. D. E. Washburn

LIAISON
1st Lt. Paul Welles

SPECIAL
WORK
Sgt. 1st Lt. A. J. Lynch

2nd Lt. W. F. Brittain
Sgt. 1st Lt. C. S. Hallenbach
Sgt. E. P. Boudroft

2nd Lt. J. O. Shaughnessy
Sgt. E. M. Oren
Cpl. W. M. Harsters

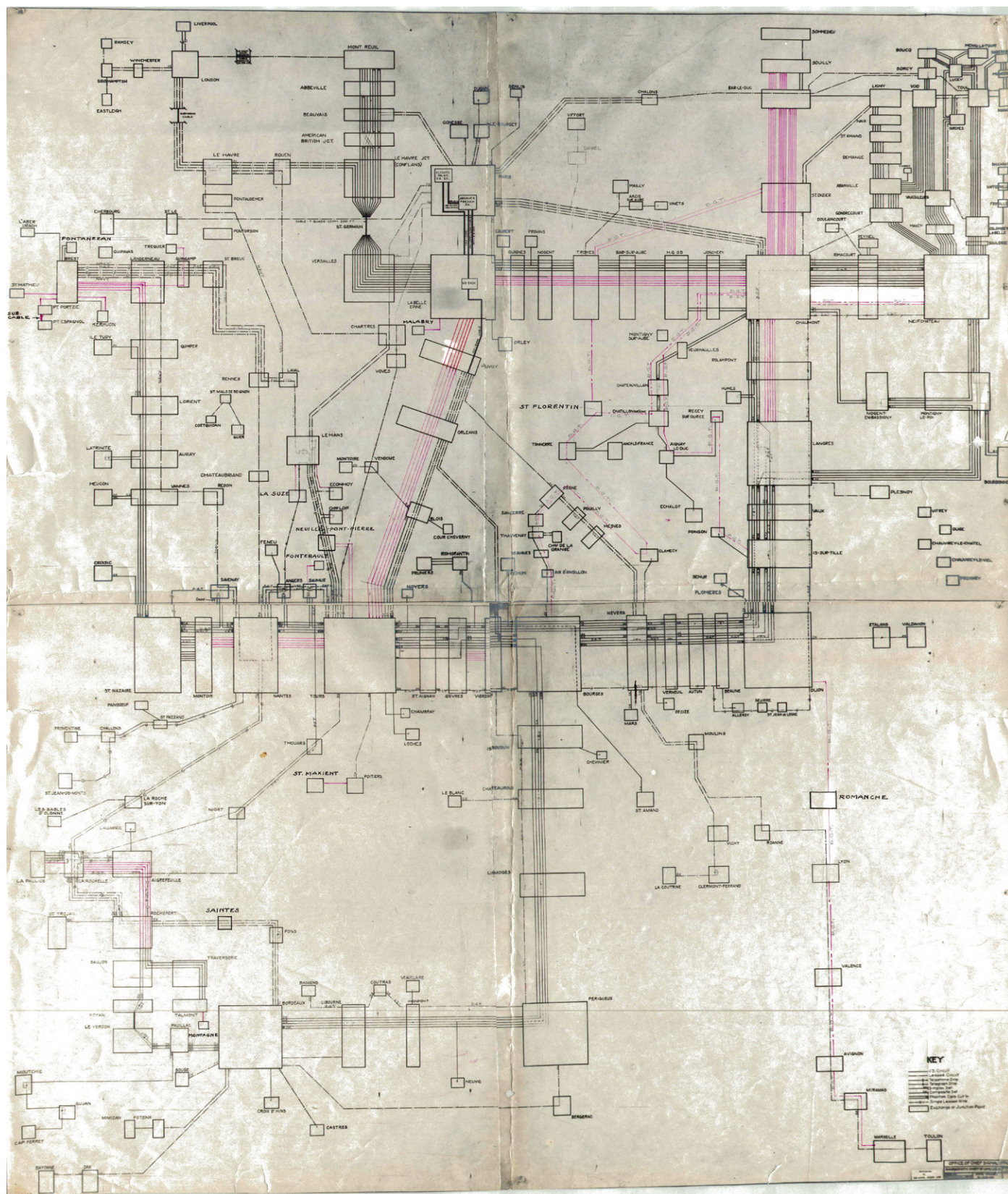
2nd Lt. M. R. Granger
Adj. Picconni
(French Army)

OFFICE OF CHIEF SIGNAL OFFICER, A. L. F.	
ORGANIZATION ENGINEERING DIVISION	
Drawing No. D-4	
Date by <i>W. F. Repp</i>	Date drawn 6/1/18
Approved by <i>W. F. Repp</i>	Scale

FIGURE 5. Organization Engineering Division chart, Office of Chief Signal Officer, AEF, 1 June 1918. C. T. Blanck, at this point a second lieutenant, is the assistant officer in charge, overseeing the office staff and all the engineers, including Captain O. C. Brill, the chief long-lines engineer. Blanck's California experience with the design and appraisal of long lines toward an efficient network led to his being put in charge of all electrical engineering just three months after his arrival in France.



FIGURE 6. Two photographs from the Signal Corps AEF Photographic Laboratory. (*Top*) Signal Corps engineers at Tours preparing plans to place in the large portfolio on the wall labeled “Telephone and Telegraph Survey of German Territory occupied by Third U.S. Army May 1918.” (*Bottom*) Signal Corps office at Tours—Fourth Liberty Loan poster, “Clear the Way!!” is visible behind the typewriter.



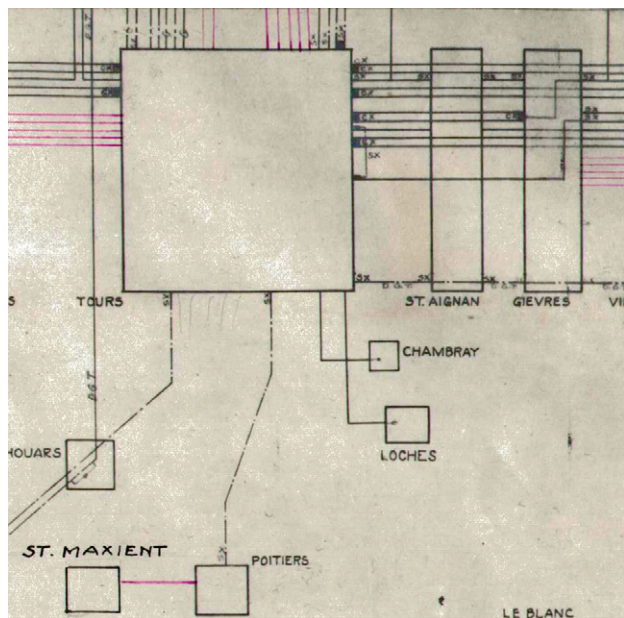


FIGURE 7. (Opposite) “Diagrammatic Chart of Long Lines, Office of Chief Signal Officer A.E.F. 10-28-18” with updating in red. (Above) Inset shows the Tours Exchange, to compare with Figure 3. The long-line development to Bordeaux in the south was superseded by the need for battlefield communication toward the northeast. A simple set is indicated by “sx” on a line, “cx” shows a composite set, and double lines with a blacked-in square indicate where a phantom coil has been cut in. Above the square, from left, are 7 leased lines heading for Le Mans and on to Versailles; 2 lines added to Neuillé-Pont-Pierre; 5 lines added to the American Exchange at Paris; an American line to Blois and 3 leased lines to Orleans through Blois. To the right of the square, from top, are 11 American lines to Vierzon via Gievres, 5 more lines added between the two cities; 1 leased line that eventually goes south to Perigueux. At the bottom of the square, from right: American lines to Camray and Loches; leased line to Poitiers and an added line from there to Saint-Maxient where the Air Service Replacement Concentration Barracks were located. To the left of the square, from top: 5 American lines to Nantes, with 1 heading north to Saumur, 5 added lines to Nantes and onward to Montour to link with Saint-Nazaire.

2. Richard John describes the administrative coordination of a communication circuit of the mails, based on a network of distributing post offices linked to branch offices as being the key to regular service, beginning in 1800 in the United States: *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 73. Dallas W. Smythe explicates the “postal precedent” for electronic communication: *The Structure and Policy of Electronic Communications* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1957), 8. See Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris, Modeling Postal History with Postal Numbers, in *Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Analytical Methods in Philately*, ed. John Barwis and Thomas Lera (Akron, Ohio: Institute for Analytical Philately, 2016) for the structuring of the postal distribution network.
3. Carl H. Scheele, *A Short History of the Mail Service* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970), 95.
4. Robert Luther Thompson, in *Wiring a Continent: The History of the Telegraph Industry in the United States, 1832–1866* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947) devoted a chapter to “Methodless Enthusiasm” for the beginnings of telegraphy in the United States, repeating a phrase first used by James D. Reid in *The Telegraph in America: Its Founders, Promoters, and Noted Men* (New York: Derby Brothers, 1879), 530.
5. *The Pacific Telephone Magazine*, vol. 15, no. 7 (San Francisco: The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Co., January 1922), 13.
6. From Carroll T. Blanck’s biographical resumé in his personal papers (Library Special Collections, UCLA):

June 1902–July 1903: compiling records of telephone plants in Southern California

July 1903–Jan. 04: installing telephones, and lineman

Jan. 04–July 1907: Assistant Foreman in charge of Underground subway installation, underground cable installation, splicing of cables, testing and maintenance of cables and engineering and estimating the cost of all additions to the telephone plants in Southern California. . . .

July 1908–June 1909: Maintenance Foreman. . . . June 1909–March 1911: District Plant Engineer. . . .

March 1911–June 1914. Engineer of Exchange plant. (entire system Pacific Coast). The branch of work on which I was engaged during this period is among the most important and responsible in telephone engineering and consists of subjects as follows:

Computing and weighing of costs of serving communities with telephone service over different arrangement of plants, i.e., these studies are made for the larger exchanges and usually cover a period in the future, of about 15 years and the object is to determine for a specific city the most economical arrangement of central offices, subway leads, pole leads, cables and the preparation of maps to show the most economical arrangement of the more permanent types of plant. These maps are known as fundamental plans and are used as use plans by Division and District Engineers when engineering all extensions to the plant. . . .

June 1914–December 1918: Assistant Appraisal Engineer (entire system on Pacific Coast).

7. Editors of the *Army Times*. *A History of the U.S. Signal Corps*. (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1961), 98.
8. Under Admiral W. S. Benson, chief of naval operations, a test mobilization of the Bell communications facilities was performed in that same year of 1916: “For three days, during which war conditions were simulated as far as possible, the Navy abandoned all other forms of communication between the Navy Department at Washington and the navy yards and naval stations in the continental

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

SALVAGE

CAMP DE GRASSE

MAIN

HEADQUARTERS

S O S

JUNE 1, 1919

IMPORTANT NOTICE

THE AUGUST DIRECTORY WILL CLOSE JULY 20TH, 1919, AND A LIST OF ALL CHANGES AND ADDITIONAL LISTINGS OF PERSONNEL UNDER EXISTING TELEPHONES WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE OFFICE OF THE SIGNAL OFFICER, ARRONDISSEMENT OF TOURS, BUILDING 4, ROOM 130.

IT IS REQUESTED THAT PERSONS WHO ARE TRANSFERRED FROM ONE DEPARTMENT TO ANOTHER OR LEAVING A DEPARTMENT PERMANENTLY, WILL NOTIFY THE TELEPHONE DIRECTORY BUREAU, MAIN 517.

THE EXIGENCIES OF THE SERVICE DEMAND A CORRECT AND UP-TO-DATE TELEPHONE DIRECTORY AND IT IS THEREFORE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY THAT THE DIRECTORY INFORMATION BE FORWARDED BY THE DATE NAMED.

REPORT ALL TELEPHONE TROUBLE TO THE CHIEF OPERATOR

"MAIN 100—FIRE MARSHALL"

ISSUE XIV.
A. G. PRINTING PLANT, S. O. S.

ISSUED BY THE
SIGNAL CORPS

FIGURE 8. Telephone directory for the main salvage operation headquarters at Camp de Grasse, Service of Supply, 1 June 1919. The "General Instructions for Telephone Users" include a six-minute maximum for conversations and the caution to avoid using the telephone whenever possible by sending telegrams. The directory listed forty-three entities including the Signal Corps and the Postal Express Service. Lieutenant Colonel C. T. Blanck's number is listed as Main 11.

Telephone Traffic by Months.

Below is statement of the number of local and long distance telephone connections completed during each of the months indicated.

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>LOCAL</u>	<u>LONG DISTANCE</u>
Prior to and		
July, 1917	38,750	1,800
August "	77,500	3,200
September "	112,500	4,500
October "	186,000	13,230
November "	270,000	16,980
December "	388,000	25,800
January 1918	482,000	29,790
February "	482,000	32,200
March "	535,000	39,800
April "	660,000	42,500
May "	990,000	44,750
June "	1,080,000	48,732
July "	1,865,000	62,220
August "	2,601,800	74,780
September "	2,952,850	78,200
October "	4,288,000	126,485
November "	4,389,000	118,621
December "	4,205,300	106,611
January 1919	4,089,750	122,745
February "	3,781,650	114,869
March "	4,170,975	116,430
April "	3,837,600	119,989
May "	2,769,800	106,905
To June 19th "	1,534,500	44,010
Total.	<u>45,788,775</u>	<u>1,495,147</u>

Telegraph Traffic by Months.

Below is given statement of total number of telegrams handled monthly and the percentage of increase or decrease from month to month.

October 1917	13,166		
November "	38,367	199%	Increase
December "	39,467	3%	"
January 1918	122,921	211%	"
February "	162,669	32%	"
March "	219,076	35%	"
April "	236,086	8%	"
May "	324,192	37%	"
June "	465,798	44%	"
July "	558,988	20%	"
August "	885,635	56%	"
September "	983,389	11%	"
October "	1,255,916	28%	"
November "	1,150,286	8%	Decrease
December "	1,145,591	4%	"
January 1919	1,084,413	5%	"
February "	994,733	16%	"
March "	942,500	5%	"
April "	847,973	10%	"
May "	780,701	8%	"
To June 19. "	<u>292,411</u>	45%	"
	12,144,283		

FIGURE 9. Tables prepared by C. T. Blanck through 19 June 1919. (Top) "Telephone Traffic by Months" and (bottom) "Telegraph Traffic by Months." The total number of telegrams handled peaked in October 1918, as did long-distance telephone connections, while local telephone connections peaked in March 1919, presumably around the peace negotiations. Altogether, telephone traffic was more intense over the war months than was telegraph.



FIGURE 10. Passes issued to Carroll T. Blanck in connection with his responsibilities with President Woodrow Wilson. (Top) Manuscript authorization (when Blanck had the rank of major) to meet the president's party at the railway station, hand stamped by the assistant provost marshal AEF, 13 December 1918. (Middle) Typewritten pass mimeographed on recycled card for Blanck and an assistant to be present at the president's reception in the role of military journalists. (Bottom) Printed pass for Blanck, now a lieutenant colonel, blind-embossed with the seal of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, January 1919.

HEADQUARTERS AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SIGNAL OFFICER

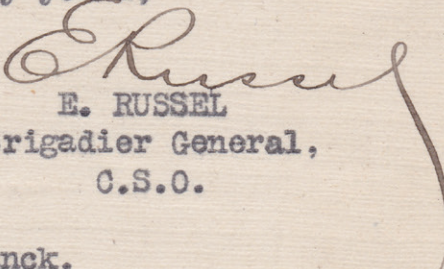
July 10, 1919

My dear Colonel Blanck:

As I relinquish duty in the A.E.F. I feel it is a duty and privilege to tell you how much your services have meant to the Signal Corps, and I may add, to the Country. Perhaps no better expression of my appreciation could be given than the unprecedentedly rapid promotion you have been given through my recommendation, and the responsibility that has been thrust upon you. And I wish to bear witness of your entire worthiness for the one and your success in the other. I regard your work as thoroughly characteristic of the fine type of young technical men who forsook all to come to the aid of the Country at its time of need. General Pershing has justly praised in particular such men in his commendation of the work of the Signal Corps. As an administrator, technician, and in negotiations with our Allies you have displayed admirable qualities and achieved the greatest success.

I congratulate you, and wish you all the prosperity that your services merit.

Very truly yours,


E. RUSSEL
Brigadier General,
C.S.O.

Lieut. Colonel Carroll T. Blanck,
Signal Corps,

FIGURE 11. Typed letter, signed E. Russel, Headquarters American Expeditionary Forces Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 10 July 1919. Russel's admiration for the engineer's work would lead him to recommend Blanck for the Distinguished Service Medal, awarded two years later.

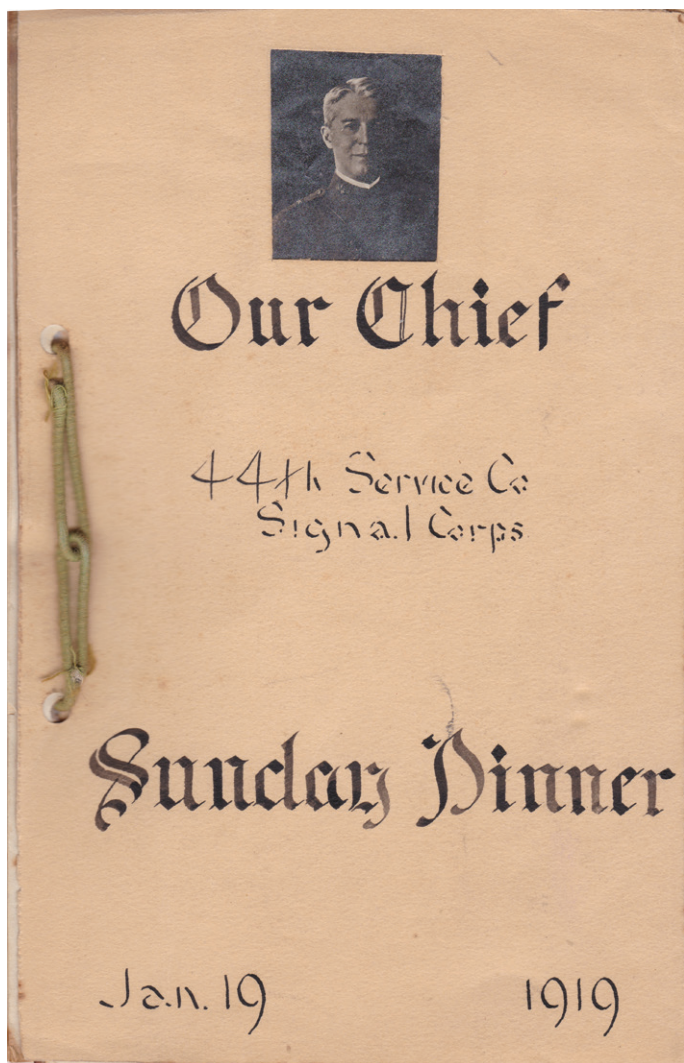


FIGURE 12. Souvenir menu prepared for Signal Corps headquarters: (Left) Photograph of Edgar Russel inserted in frame on the cover. (Below) Photograph (glued to interior page of menu) of the group of engineers present at headquarters. Blanck is seated fourth from right, the image of a self-assured leader of men and just a year after the photograph of him in Figure 1.



United States, and utilized the Bell System for telephone and telegraph communication by wire with all of the naval forces in that territory." *Annual Report of the Directors of American Telephone & Telegraph Company to the Stockholders for the year ending December 31, 1917* (New York: American Telephone & Telegraph Company, 1918), 21.

9. By 1910, Robert Millikan had proved that electricity was particulate and very small but indivisible, and that a quantum of electricity was the fundamental basis for electronic communication. Dr. F. B. Jewett, transmission and protection engineer in AT&T's Engineering Department, consulted with his friend Millikan about the telephone repeater problem, and Millikan recommended Dr. H. D. Arnold, who was trained in the "new physics"; Arnold joined the newly formed Research Branch of the Engineering Department of Western Electric in 1911. In 1913, AT&T purchased the wire rights to seven patents for the Audion (or electron) tube, developed by Lee de Forest. In July 1914, vacuum tube amplifiers—repeaters—were used on the transcontinental telephone line that would go into commercial use in January 1915. The vacuum tube served not only for the repetition and multiplexing of wire-based signals but also for wireless telephony. Robert M. Besançon, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Physics* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1974), 273. M. D. Fagan, ed., *A History of Engineering and Science in the Bell System* (Murray Hill, N.J.: Bell Telephone Laboratories, Inc., 1975), 256–262.
10. A. Lincoln Lavine, *Circuits of Victory* (Garden City, N.Y.: Country Life Press, 1921), 90.
11. Johannes-Geert Hagmann, Mobilizing US physics in World War I, *Physics Today*, August 2017, 44, <https://physicstoday.scitation.org/doi/pdf/10.1063/PT.3.3660>. Constant improvements to the Bell System via the Engineering Department were part of peacetime company policy—the system "is kept permanently in a condition of full vigor and at the point of highest attainable efficiency, anticipating the ever-growing needs of the service and responding successfully to the always-increasing requirements of the public." *Annual Report of the Directors of American Telephone & Telegraph Company to the Stockholders for the year ending December 31, 1914* (New York: American Telephone & Telegraph Company, 1915), 18.
12. In 1915, Western Electric Manufacturing was incorporated in New York as a wholly owned subsidiary of AT&T under the name Western Electric Company, Inc., continuing to exclusively supply the Bell System with the latest improvements in hardware. From 1896 until the 1940s, its head office, the first home of Bell Laboratories, was at 463 West Street in New York City.
13. Lavine, *Circuits of Victory*, 94.
14. Lavine, *Circuits of Victory*, 116. "Americans will want to fight exactly the way they do business: on the straight and shortest line between two points. . . . They must have telephone service on the American, and not on the European scale. We have devices that will permit many messages to pass simultaneously over a single pair of wires. This will mean, to be sure, highly complicated apparatus and highly trained personnel. But it will also mean a tremendous saving in shipments, for it will eliminate thousands of poles and untold tonnage in wires and equipment."
15. Telegraph signals require a path for low frequencies, 50 to 100 hertz, but telephone signals need above 300 hertz. Compositing permitted the addition of two ground-return telegraph circuits to a metallic telephone circuit. Fagan, *Engineering and Science in the Bell System*, 240.
16. The women operators (chosen for their efficiency and fluency in both French and English) were trained by the unit that Blanck would join. "At the request of the Signal Corps the Engineering Department, with the assistance of the operating companies, undertook to secure the necessary operators, and to turn them over properly trained, organized in groups, and equipped to start for France." *Annual Report of the Directors of American Telephone & Telegraph Company to the Stockholders for the year ending December 31, 1918* (New York: American Telephone & Telegraph Company, 1919), 22.
17. Alfred Vail, who had died in 1859, was himself an engineer who, with Samuel F. B. Morse, had first developed and commercialized American telegraphy. His cousin, Theodore Newton Vail, was the first president of American Telephone and Telegraph (1885–1889), a position to which he returned from 1907 to 1919. Camp Alfred Vail was near Little Silver, New Jersey.
18. Typed report prepared by Blanck after the armistice, untitled, 19 June 1919, Blanck Personal Papers (Library Special Collections, UCLA):

Previous to the embarkation from the United States of the American Expeditionary Forces, conferences were held at the office of the Chief Signal Officer of the Army in Washington, at which were present representatives of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company, for the purpose of formulating fundamental plans for the establishment of telephonic and telegraphic communication which would be required in the operations of the A.E.F. overseas.

The plans formulated at these conferences provided for the construction of a long line system consisting of 3-wire lead from the Port of Debarkation to a terminal point approximately 300 miles inland, and for the construction of approximately 400 miles of side line to be equipped with standard 10-pin crossarm and 10 wires strung. The lead to be of 20-wire capacity and to have the associated telephone and telegraph equipment of the various headquarters, depots and training areas. This was the initial effort expended in the engineering details of a Signal Corps telephone and telegraph system to be established overseas, and may be considered as the inauguration of the Engineering Division of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, A.E.F.

[. . .]

During February [1918] a further study was made of the Signal Corps long line system and it was planned in order to provide satisfactory telephonic communication from all points of the Signal Corps system, to install vacuum type telephone repeaters at Autun, Tours, Paris and Vierzon [Figure 3 in this essay illustrates this plan]. And to provide for the rapidly increasing telegraphic communication by the installation of printing telegraph equipment at GHQ, Tours, St. Nazaire, Bordeaux, Bourges, Nevers, Paris and London. In addition to the printer installation it was planned to install a large number of straight Morse telegraph offices, to operate single line Morse on all short, and omnibus lines and duplex operation for circuits having sufficient traffic. The telegraph service to be superimposed on the telephone circuits either by simplexing or compositing.
19. Lavine, *Circuits of Victory*, 476.
20. Typed report prepared by Captain O. C. Brill, no title, 11 June 1918, included in the Blanck Personal Papers (Library Special Collections, UCLA).
21. "Statement Showing Status of Signal Corps, A.E.F. Telephone Exchanges" and "Statement Showing status of Signal Corps, A.E.F. Telegraph Traffic," reported monthly. Blanck Personal Papers (Library Special Collections, UCLA).
22. The *Army Times* editors (*History of the U.S. Signal Corps*, 124) reported 26 million telephone calls.
23. "Report of Signal Corps A.E.F. on Signal Corps Installations in France, transferred to the Republic of France, in accordance with general instructions covering 'Transfer of Installations' dated May 10th 1919, 'Final Transfer of Installations and Movables' dated August 3rd 1919, and 'General Order 54, Hdq. S.O.S.' dated August 7th 1919." Blanck Personal Papers (Library Special Collections, UCLA).

24. *Army Times* Editors, *History of the U.S. Signal Corps*, 123.
25. Typed letter, signed E. Russel, Headquarters American Expeditionary Forces Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 10 July 1919. Blanck Personal Papers (Library Special Collections, UCLA).
26. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 308.
27. Postmaster General Albert Burleson organized special postal service “for the camps and cantonments at home and a new postal service adapted to the needs of the expeditionary forces and the Navy abroad. . . . Army postal stations have followed or anticipated the American troops. The mail is distributed to companies and other units and delivered daily by railroad and army trucks to the various camps, where it is turned over to the authorized representatives of the Army for proper delivery.” A. S. Burleson, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1917* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 6.
28. Theo Van Dam, ed., *The Postal History of the AEF, 1917–1923* (State College, Penn.: American Philatelic Society, 1980), 13.
29. Quoted from *Annual Report of the Postmaster General for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1914*, by Richard John as part of his well-researched exposition on why the Bell System welcomed the “umbrella” of Post Office Department control: *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 367–369.
30. *Annual Report of the Directors of American Telephone & Telegraph Company to the Stockholders for the year ending December 31, 1910* (New York: American Telephone & Telegraph Company, 1911), 43.
31. Michael A. Janson and Christopher S. Yoo outlined the legislative process that led to the president’s order in their article, “The Wires Go to War: The U.S. Experiment with Government Ownership of the Telephone System during World War I.” In summary, legislation was introduced on 27 June 1918, and the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce began hearings on 2 July. Postmaster General Burleson, as well as the secretaries of war and the navy, indicated that government ownership was critical for national security and that a looming strike by telecommunications workers would be debilitating to the war effort. On 16 July 1918, Wilson signed the emergency measure, to remain in place only for the duration of the war. Wilson’s proclamation of 22 July, effective 31 July, directed Burleson to undertake “the supervision, possession, control and operation of telegraph and telephone systems.” Burleson, with Vail’s support, undertook to integrate and consolidate telephone, cable, and wire telegraph operations, and authorized increased rates and the charging of installation fees. The “wires” returned to private control at midnight on 31 July 1919. *Texas Law Review*, 91 (2013): 983–985, https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/467/ (accessed 8 December 2021).
32. Sadly, the French government was not ready to expand its telephonic network. According to M. Clementel, an undersecretary in charge of the Post Office, in a report to the French prime minister after the Great War, “The telephone network did not completely fulfill its function in our country, as often noted: international statistics put France behind most of Europe, due to the slowness and precariousness of long distance communications, the poorly equipped local lines and the lack of subscribers.” Jacques Attali and Yves Stourdze, The Birth of the Telephone and Economic Crisis: The Slow Death of Monologue in French Society, in *The Social Impact of the Telephone*, ed. Ithiel de Sola Pool (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), 106.
33. Blanck’s rank of lieutenant colonel was in the Signal Corps Reserves. He exchanged letters with an eye to applying for a permanent commission, where the highest rank possible would have been major, but he decided to return to civilian life and a career with Pacific Bell.

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- Van Dam, Theo, ed. *The Postal History of the AEF, 1917–1923*. State College, Penn.: The American Philatelic Society, 1980.

Impacts of World War I on the Development of Chile's Security-Printing Plant

William H. Lenarz

ABSTRACT. In 1912, Chile began exploring printing its own paper security items after forty-five years of foreign production. It obtained the necessary technical expertise, equipment, and supplies from distant England, as they were not available domestically or from nearby countries. By the start of World War I, Chile had committed to the project by purchasing equipment and supplies, hiring staff, and building a plant in Santiago. There were war-related challenges, including export restrictions and shipping interruptions, but a small group of dedicated Chileans and Englishmen successfully coped with the challenges, and the plant produced the needed security products: bank notes, bonds, revenue paper, and—of greatest interest here—postage stamps.

INTRODUCTION

Although far from the European battlefields of World War I, Chile and other South American countries suffered from impacts of the war because of their many commercial ties with Europe. In 1913, trade with the British Empire accounted for 38% of Chilean exports and 35% of imports, and trade with Germany accounted for 21% of Chilean exports and 25% of imports. Chilean trade with Germany stopped during the war and trade with the British Empire and European countries participating in the war declined significantly, partly because “shipping and insurance became scarce and expensive.” Trade with the United States increased but total Chilean imports decreased 27% from 1912–1913 to the war years of 1914–1918, causing shortages in goods and foreign exchange.¹

The war's economic impacts on Chile could have been worse, however. In 1912, the Chilean government, not anticipating World War I and the problems it would cause, began exploring the development of a government security printing plant in the capital city, Santiago, after relying on foreign production for forty-five years.² The plant would produce security paper products essential to commerce and the functioning of the government, such as bank notes, bonds, revenue stamps, and—of greatest interest here—postage stamps. The plant's planned activities would include engraving dies to make the plates for printing the security products. Since the products represented government obligations, the plant needed to be designed with security in mind (as for a mint), use strict accounting procedures, and employ security officers. The plant would be called “Los Talleres de Especies Valoradas,” which literally translates to *factory of valuable kinds*, but is equivalent to the English *security printing plant* and is referred to here as TEV.

Efforts to explore and then to develop the security printing plant took place in Santiago and London. While London was a weeks-long steamship voyage from Chile, it was a major center of security printing with many competent security printing tradesmen and it had good sources of machines and supplies not available in Chile. Also, and perhaps

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more importantly, the Chilean Ambassador to England, Agustin Edwards, was from a publishing family and was interested in printing technology. He supported development of the security printing plant and took a very active role in the project.

TABLE 1. Thomas Macdonald's estimates of numbers and costs of the three types of presses needed to print postage stamps and other security paper at the new Chilean security printing plant.^a

Quantity	Description	Cost (£)
2	<i>Taille douce</i> press ^b	3,500
3	Paynes typographic press	1,500
2	Waite & Saville offset press	1,100

^a Proposal from Thomas Macdonald to Agustin Edwards, 14 July 1913, Chile Archivo Nacional de la Administración: Section Ministry of Foreign Relations (ARNAD:MFR), volume 1811.

^b *Taille-douce* means a press used to print postage stamps described as engraved in popular U.S. stamp catalogs. The press also was sometimes referred to as a rotary plate printing machine because the plate was on a cylinder, but this designation applied also to offset presses.

PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A TEV

In 1913, Edwards advanced exploration of developing a TEV by contracting Thomas Macdonald, owner of a London engraving and printing company, to prepare a proposal for a government security printing plant in Santiago. Macdonald submitted the proposal to Edwards on 14 July 1913.³ The proposal included cost estimates, plans for the building, lists of needed machines and supplies, and photos of some machines, as seen in Table 1 and Figure 1. Shortly thereafter, Macdonald submitted a list of personnel that would be required, proposing to hire fifty employees, including six Englishmen, to work under three-year contracts to train Chilean workers and help set up the plant.⁴ (See Table 2.) The list of employees, which was mostly compiled by John Mackenzie, a Chilean printer sent to England to assist the process, did not include a picture engraver, even though Macdonald had recommended one. Macdonald's proposal included contracting a London architect to design the plant and provide architectural drawings, but the drawings were not available in the archival material examined and may no longer exist. Macdonald's description of the plant included security considerations similar to those mentioned above employed by mints.

TABLE 2. Estimates by Thomas Macdonald and John Mackenzie of employees needed for the printing plant. The English workers were to be contracted for three years to train Chilean workers and help with setting up the new plant.^a

Nationality	Number needed	Description	Total salary (£)
Chilean	1	Director General	750
English	1	Manager of Works	500
English	1	Comptroller of Engraving Machinery, Steel Plate Transfer, and Sub-Manager	500
English	1	Engraver	350
English	1	Offset printer	300
English	1	Plate printer	300
English	1	Electrotyper	300
Chilean	7	Good press men	1,050
Chilean	7	Good feeders	525
Chilean	3	Good feeders for perforating	225
Chilean	2	Learners for engraving	300
Chilean	1	Learners for electrotyper	150
Chilean	2	Clerks	300
Chilean	4	Hands for revising	600
Chilean	4	Policemen	100
Chilean	1	Mechanic	150
Chilean	4	Cutters	400
Chilean	2	Packers	150
Chilean	4	Workmen	300
Chilean	1	Storekeeper	100
Total	50		7,350

^a Further information from Thomas Macdonald to Agustin Edwards, 25 July 1913. ARNAD:MFR, volume 1811.

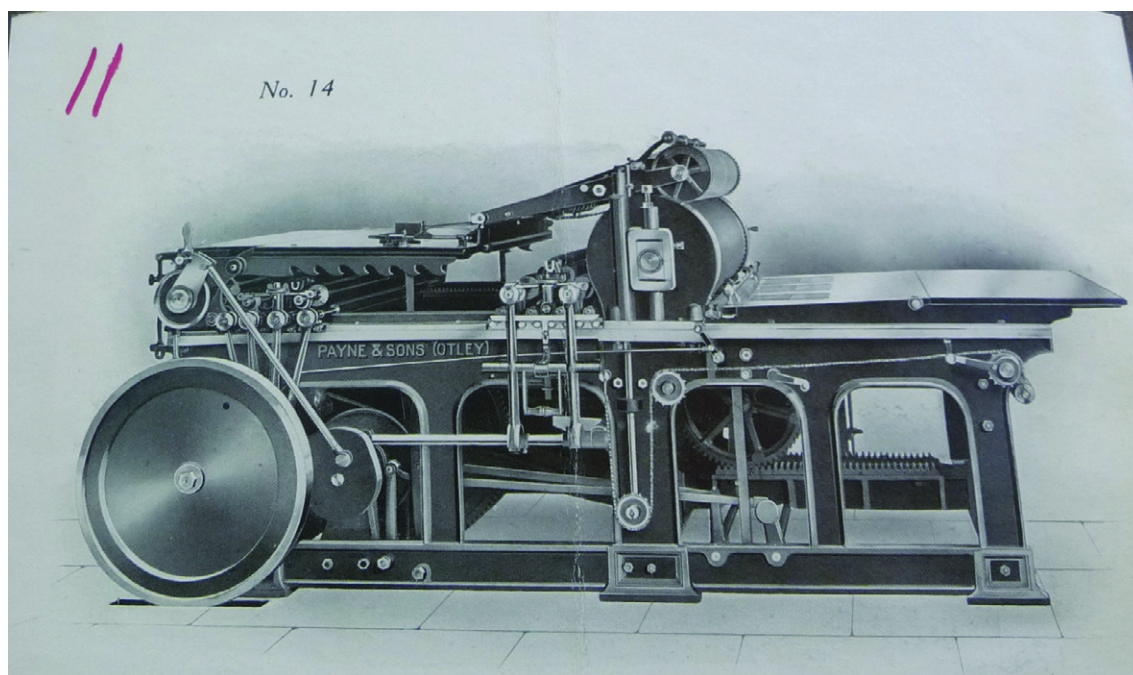
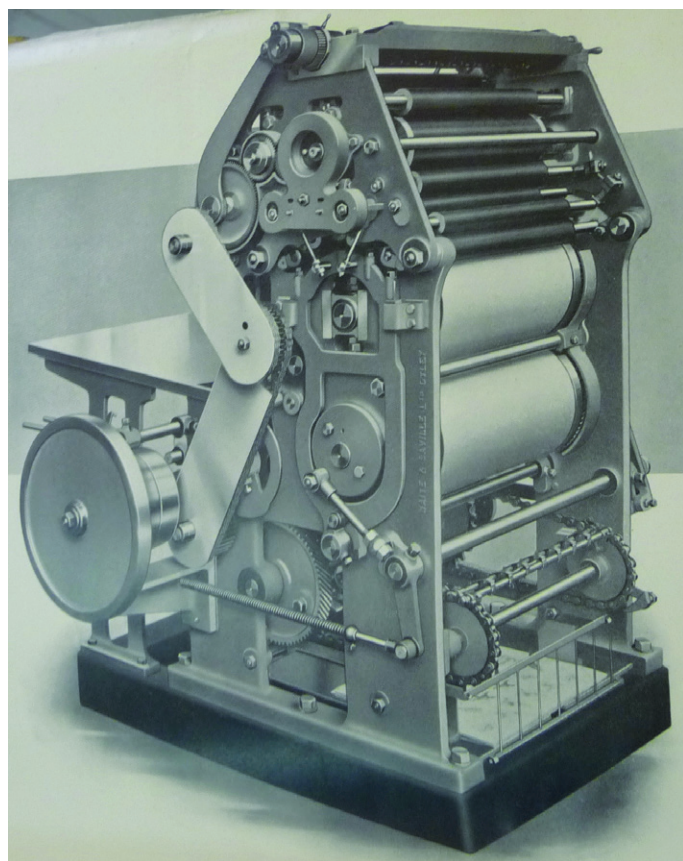
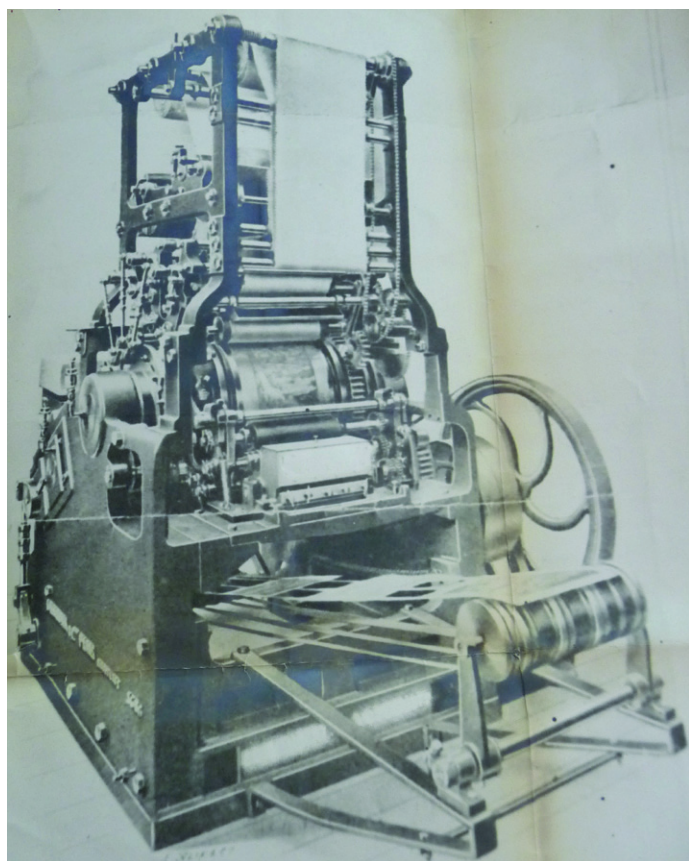


FIGURE 1. Photos of (top left) *taille-douce*, (top right) offset, and (bottom) typographic presses. Photos by Ross Towle from ARNAD: MFR volume 1811, proposal from Thomas Macdonald to Agustín Edwards, 14 July 1913. Courtesy of the Chile Archivo Nacional de la Administración: Ministry of Foreign Relations.

INITIAL WORK OF DEVELOPMENT OF TEV

Chile accepted the proposal and work began in late 1913, shortly before World War I began. For all of the transaction records found in the archive, Thomas Macdonald acted as an ad hoc agent for Chile. A letter from Thomas Macdonald to the Chilean Embassy in London stated:

I have received yours of November 19th enclosing the order for the Rotary Plate Printing Machines, duly signed and sealed, which I have forwarded to John Macdonald at Brussels [*sic*], and I told him you had placed the sum of Five hundred pounds at my disposal for him on account of the work in constructing the Machines, and that I will forward the check upon the receipt of it.⁵

Thomas Macdonald had specified that his son, John Macdonald, undertake construction of these presses. John had a successful printing and engraving business in Belgium that included contracting with R. Hoe & Co. of England to construct *taille-douce* presses for security printing. He and his wife left Belgium because of the German invasion and moved to Santiago in December 1915, where John served under contract as technical director of the TEV.

The plant was constructed, equipment was installed, and the TEV began initial production of postage stamps in the second half of 1915 without suffering significant war-related problems. As development of the plant continued through the duration of the war, however, war-related problems did arise that necessitated considerable effort and correspondence between the Chilean Embassy in London, Thomas Macdonald, and Ignacio Ugarte, TEV director. Although Chile was neutral and geographically distant from the sites of all land and most naval battles of World War I, war-related shortages in material, equipment, and skilled personnel; difficulties in shipping from England to Chile; and British restrictions on exports resulted in increased costs, delayed shipments, and deviations from the original plans for postage-stamp production.⁶ Documents studied and photographed during visits to Chilean government archives in Santiago make it possible to document and examine all of these issues.⁷

IMPACTS OF WAR ON ANNUAL COSTS

The proposal described above included Thomas Macdonald's estimated annual costs of running the TEV (Table 3). Paper was the most significant item in the annual TEV budget, representing 37% of the total. It was necessary to import all supplies other than some of the sundries because they were not available in Chile, usually from England, which was easiest for Macdonald. Those available in Chile included some lubricants, cloth, and chemicals needed for the operations.

TABLE 3. Estimates of proposed annual costs for the TEV printing plant.^a

Description	Cost (£)
Salaries	7,650
Paper for postage stamps	565
Paper for bank notes	3,850
Paper for tobacco bands	3,300
Paper for bonds	390
Inks	750
Gas and electricity	350
Sundries	500
Interest on capital	1,750
Depreciation	3,000
Total	22,105

^a Proposal from Thomas Macdonald to Agustin Edwards, 14 July 1913. ARNAD:MFR, volume 1811.

During the second half of each year, TEV personnel estimated its needs for the next year, based on its inventory of supplies and the Treasury's inventory of security products and anticipated costs, and orders were placed as soon as feasible. For example, in November 1917 Ignacio Ugarte sent a list of anticipated 1918 requirements.⁸ Ordering supplies well in advance allowed the TEV to stock up and reduce the effects of war-related delays and inflation. Indeed, the TEV sometimes ordered more than necessary to meet anticipated needs.

This policy paid off in 1917, when there was a sharp increase in the cost of stamp paper. Thomas Macdonald wrote to Agustin Edwards, 17 April 1917, "Samuel Jones & Co.'s new quotation for stamp paper is much increased, fortunately your instructions on the last order to ship a greater supply than the quantity estimated for was complied with, and has thus saved a considerable sum." He then supplied the quotes showing a fifty percent increase in price.⁹ It is not surprising that paper prices increased in 1917. After its formation in December 1916, Great Britain's new government attempted to stabilize shipping rates by instituting new regulations. Shippers in neutral countries reduced shipments to Great Britain, including those of a significant amount of paper-making materials, to avoid restrictions on shipping rates because they could make more money by shipping to countries that did not pose the rate restrictions.¹⁰ The TEV utilized pre-gummed paper for printing stamps. Macdonald looked into obtaining the needed stamp paper from the United States but considered the U.S. gum inferior to the British.¹¹

Price increases were not limited to paper. For example, the cost of roller composition, used for transferring ink from ink containers to printing plates used by typographic presses, increased due to the necessity of obtaining the material from the

United States after the British prohibited its export. Staff of London embassy wrote, “Roller Composition—With regard to this His Excellency repeats that in view of the fact that it cannot be exported from this country and that it is indispensable for the working of the Establecimiento nothing remains but to place the order with Winstones for immediate execution in the United States, the enhanced price notwithstanding.”¹²

Shipping costs were not explicitly included in Macdonald’s estimated annual TEV costs (Table 3). The ratio of shipping cost to cost of materials shipped to the TEV increased from 0.07 in 1915 to 0.09 in 1916 and 1917, and to 0.10 in 1918.¹³ An increase in shipping insurance contributed to the 1918 increase in relative shipping cost between 1917 and 1918. The insurance increase occurred after 79% of the 1917 shipments had been made.¹⁴ War-related British government policy restricted shipping rate increases after 1916, but the ratio increased between 1917 and 1918 because of the sharp increase in shipping insurance due to increased losses from enemy actions. Not all prices increased. Printing inks and sundries made up 6% of estimated total annual costs (Table 3). Winstone & Sons of England supplied printing inks, and Thomas Macdonald reported on 8 November 1917, “The quotation from Winstones is almost the same as the previous years except for the addition of the colour for the \$2 notes.”¹⁵

WAR-RELATED DELAYS AND DECREASED EFFICIENCY

The British government increased its regulatory authority and military might as the war progressed. The government generated more commerce regulations, greatly increased the size of its military forces, and gained considerable control over the merchant fleet.

New regulations led to new bureaucracies and, thus, more paperwork for the embassy, Thomas Macdonald, and suppliers. The archives contain numerous examples of efforts to obtain export permits. For example, five documents between September 1916 and December 1916 concerned efforts to provide rod composition, printing inks, and chemicals needed by the TEV. The process took two standard documents, two further documents and phone calls about attempts to obtain export permits during October 1916, and a December 1916 letter to Ugarte explaining that it would be necessary to obtain the rod composition from the United States because of the failure to obtain an export license from England.¹⁶

In addition to the time lost to paperwork, firms lost experienced and able-bodied male employees, such as two of Macdonald’s sons, to the draft or enlistment.¹⁷ Suppliers complained about losing experienced personnel to the war, resulting in reduced efficiency and problems with quality. The delays are nicely summarized in a 23 March 1916 letter from Edwards to Ugarte.

You can’t imagine the strong efforts I have made to Macdonald to hurry the shipment of materials. But we stumble with the grave inconvenience of the war that has all of the factories short of personnel. No one wants to provide a date for anything, and if you add to this that there is no security in departure date of steamships. Sometimes when a date is announced without previous notice the departure is cancelled. War has everything disorganized, and the simplest things are real problems.¹⁸

Thomas Macdonald stated in a 9 August 1917 letter to Edwards, “Unfortunately the clerical staff in most of the business houses at the present time are young Ladies and errors are frequent,” a statement likely indicating that inexperienced clerks were replacing men serving in the war.¹⁹

In 1917, Germany turned its submarines loose in the war zone around England on merchant vessels of all but the Central powers, causing more problems in shipping to Chile. Ships were damaged or sunk. In 1917, for example, a shipment to Chile was seriously delayed because the Germans damaged one vessel and sank another. The story starts with the SS *Mexico* still at the dock in Liverpool on 21 March 1917; as Thomas Macdonald wrote to Edwards, “I find the S.S. ‘Mexico’ has not yet sailed and our shipping papers will not come till about monday next.”²⁰ The *Mexico* soon left, but on 23 March 1917 it was damaged by a mine laid by a German submarine in the English Channel off Beachy Head. It returned to port stern first after the crew plugged the hole in the bow with cotton bales.²¹ On 5 April 1917, Thomas Macdonald wrote to Edwards, “W. Wingate & Johnston tell me the cargo of the Mexico will be transshipped to the ‘Galicia’: and sail about the 23rd.”²² The *Galicia* was sunk on 12 May 1917 by a German mine off Teignmouth on the south coast of England.²³ Edwards, perhaps mistakenly, informed Ugarte in a letter that the *Galicia* had been torpedoed.²⁴ Robert Macdonald for Thomas Macdonald sent Edwards paperwork for the *Galicia* on 18 May 1917, and wrote “I am very sorry to learn that the ‘Galacia’ [*sic*] has met also with disaster & will at once take steps to re-order the goods on board – those ex Mexico as well as those for which the invoices are enclosed.”²⁵ An invoice from the firm Morris and Bolton dated 21 September 1917 confirms his actions: a reorder of materials lost on the *Galicia* was to be shipped on the *Orange Branch* and was marked received on 19 October 1917 by Thomas Macdonald.²⁶ Thomas Macdonald received payment for this, and thanked Edwards for the checks, closing on 22 October with “I trust they [presumably the shipped goods] will arrive at Santiago without accident.”²⁷ The two mine attacks on vessels carrying one shipment destined for TEV had delayed the shipment by about six months, even though the Macdonalds quickly responded to the need to first transfer and then replace the goods on the attacked vessels.

Shipping problems continued in 1918, by which time the British government was taking over merchant vessels to meet its

war needs. In at least one case, the commandeering of merchant ships directly impacted shipments to TEV. As Robert Macdonald wrote on 6 May 1918, "Messrs Saunders goods amounting to £578-17-1, have been at Liverpool since January & although they have twice been loaded on boats, each time the ship has been commandeered by the Government & the goods restored to the wharf."²⁸ The reduced number of shipments in 1918 suggest that it was now even more difficult to ship material to Chile than it had been when Edwards wrote the previously quoted letter of 23 March 1916 to Ugarte complaining about shipping disorganization.²⁹

IMPACT OF WAR ON TEV POSTAGE-STAMP PRINTING METHODS

I found no documentation indicating that the Chilean general public noticed any of the problems resulting from these increased costs and difficulties in obtaining supplies and equipment; knowledgeable users of postage stamps, however, did discern the impact.

SHORTAGE OF PRESSES

The original plan was for the TEV to use the *taille-douce* presses specified by Thomas Macdonald to print postage stamps denominated higher than the four-centavos postcard rate, but the war made this plan impractical. By 14 June 1916, the London embassy informed Thomas Macdonald that "Señor Ugarte considers that another *taille-douce* machine, another perforator and another lithographic machine are indispensable."³⁰ In a letter of 18 July 1916 from Edwards to Ugarte (translated), a probable explanation of the need is given: "Nothing has been done yet regarding the acquisition of the new machinery that you need to supply the increased order of revenue stamps."³¹ Macdonald's proposal, based on what was provided to him by Chile, did not include revenue-stamp printing, which required use of the three machines requested by Ugarte as part of the TEV workload.³²

War conditions made it difficult to obtain any of the machinery, but the greatest TEV requirement, the *taille-douce* press, proved to be the most elusive. An offset press was shipped on 1 March 1917.³³ After considerable effort, another *taille-douce* press shipped on 17 October 1918.³⁴ This press, however, had been originally ordered by John Macdonald for the Belgian government, which had paid for it but was in exile in Le Havre, France. The war prevented Hoe & Co. of London from delivering it and also prevented the company from building a new press.

Edwards and Ugarte first used diplomatic channels to seek permission from Belgium for Hoe to send the press to Chile. They were unsuccessful: Edwards informed Ugarte in a 13 November 1916 letter that the Belgian government had refused to cooperate. Ugarte did not give up, and informed Edwards in a 29 August 1917 letter that he had approached the Belgian representative in Chile – again, with no success.

One Madame J. Vershueren had better luck. On 29 April 1918, the Belgian Administration des Postes in Le Havre responded favorably to a 14 March 1918 letter in which she asked that the press be sent to Chile. The Belgians' letter of 29 April 1918 included one condition: that Chile would send a replacement press when the war was over.

Madame J. Vershueren most likely was John Macdonald's mother-in-law, or else another in-law. In a letter to the Chilean London embassy of 8 October 1918, Thomas Macdonald refers to John's wife: "His Excellency will remember Mrs. John Macdonald now at Santiago, (being of Belgian nationality). Her mother & sisters are in London as Belgian refugees, while her father Mon Vershueren is still in Antwerp."³⁵ John's wife, Julia, was the daughter of Jacques, a Belgian typographer, and Desiree Vershueren, who would have been formally known as Madame Jacques Vershueren.³⁶ My research also suggests that the Belgian Administration des Postes would have been familiar with J. Vershueren at least, because he was the printer of Belgian semipostal stamps issued shortly before the Germans invaded Antwerp. This administration was likely also familiar with John Macdonald, because he had designed these semipostal stamps.³⁷ It appears that John Macdonald had married into a Belgian security-printing family and his mother-in-law, or a relative, used the family's connections to help obtain permission for Chile to use the press.

CHANGES IN PRINTING METHODS

Before Chile was able to obtain more presses, the TEV needed to change postage-stamp printing methods to meet the printing demands for bank notes and stamps. The three types of presses were used for different parts of each bank note denomination. Security concerns necessitated use of *taille-douce* presses for printing bank notes, but these concerns were less for 10 centavos postage stamps. The changes started even before Ugarte informed the embassy of the machinery needs. Demand for the bicolored 10 centavos postage stamp, which paid the domestic letter rate, exceeded that for all the other stamps combined. While philatelists have concluded, and standard philatelic catalogs have recorded, that the TEV used not only *taille-douce* but also offset and typographic presses to print the 10 centavos stamps, there was no documentation of the printing method changes in the archival material examined.³⁸

The need to implement these changes became particularly urgent as stamp reserves declined. The American Bank Note Company had shipped the last 10 centavos stamps it produced for Chile in August 1915. Chileans seldom used them for postage after the third quarter of 1916, indicating that the government had maintained a significant reserve of American-printed 10 centavos stamps but that reserve was now depleted and not enough stamps had been printed by the TEV to replenish it.³⁹ The TEV personnel prepared offset frame plates from the *taille-douce* plates sent from London, following the plans to use the *taille-douce* press for these stamps. The 10 centavos stamps with new offset printed frames and centers printed by the *taille-douce*

press from the original plates were issued in June 1916 (Figure 2). Apparently this change allowed the TEV to meet immediate demand for 10 centavos stamps in 1916, but was insufficient to replenish the reserves until 1917.

The following year, the TEV further reduced demands on the *taille-douce* press by moving more of the process first to the



FIGURE 2. Ten centavos stamp printed by TEV in 1916 using off-set press for frame and *taille-douce* press for center. From author's collection.

typograph press and later to an offset printing press. First, it prepared frame plates for the typograph press, and new 10 centavos stamps with typograph-printed frames and centers still printed by the *taille-douce* press were issued in March 1917. Later, an offset center plate was produced, resulting in 10 centavos stamps with typograph frames and offset centers, issued in July 1917.

The new offset printing press and methods of printing were adequate to allow the TEV to print 30 million stamps in 1917, which was 50% higher than Thomas Macdonald's 1913 estimate of 20 million 10 centavos stamps needed per year.⁴⁰ This higher-than-expected production likely was due to the need to replenish the stamp reserves that had been depleted in 1916, and possibly also to increases in postal communication. The war reduced international trade, resulting in shortages of goods and foreign exchange.⁴¹ Telephones were not widely available, so letters were the most frequently available form of communication for the 1917 Chilean population of 3.9 million, which had a literacy rate of 64% in 1920.⁴² War-related shortages may have stimulated more correspondence; available data indicated that the volume of Chilean mail decreased in 1914 with the start of the war, and then increased to 1913 levels in 1916 and exceeded them in 1917 (Table 4). The 9% increase from 1913 to 1917 was considerably less than the 50% production excess of the 10 centavos stamp in 1917 over the 1913 estimates of stamps needed.

The TEV had not followed the proposal's recommendation by Macdonald to hire a picture engraver, and this lack became problematic when satisfactory typograph center plates could not be prepared from the original plates. Ugarte asked Edwards for 10 centavos typograph dies on 9 January 1917.⁴³ The typograph dies were engraved (see Figure 3), and an invoice prepared on 26 March 1918.⁴⁴ By that time, the crisis due to shortage of presses had been resolved by using the typograph press for the frames and the delivery of a new offset press. The dies were not used.

The TEV did not make further changes in printing methods for the 10 centavos stamps, and printed all of the higher denominations with offset presses for the frames and *taille-douce*

TABLE 4. Estimates of Chilean mail service receipts and pieces of mail. A dash (—) indicates data not available.

Year	Estimated receipts (pesos) ^a	Pieces of mail (domestic) ^b	Pieces of mail (foreign) ^b	Pieces of mail (total) ^b	Receipts per total pieces (centavos) ^c
1913	5,038,578	—	—	—	—
1914	4,611,141	61,387,538	4,487,363	65,874,901	7.0
1915	4,746,257	64,593,801	4,136,197	68,729,998	6.9
1916	4,993,452	—	—	—	—
1917	5,497,340	—	—	—	—
1918	5,639,897	—	—	—	—
1919	5,456,282	—	—	—	—

^a Source: Charles A. McQueen. *Chilean Public Finance*. Special Agents Series No. 224. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1924.

^b Source: Anonymous. Pieces of Mail (1914–1915), Chile. *Bulletin of Pan American Union*, 43(2): 252, 1916.

^c Calculated by author.



FIGURE 3. Ten centavos die proofs pulled from dies engraved by firm of Thomas Macdonald for typographic printing by TEV. From author's collection.

presses for the centers. The 5 and 8 centavos monocolored postage stamps, which were in much less demand, were printed using *taille-douce* presses.

War-related press shortages led the TEV staff to produce new plates and to print stamps using printing methods not specified in Thomas Macdonald's proposal. The *taille-douce* presses were originally specified by Macdonald for printing the higher-denomination postage stamps to increase the difficulty of counterfeiting. There are no reports of counterfeits of the stamps not printed by the *taille-douce* presses.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no evidence that the war-related difficulties experienced by the TEV during its first years resulted in serious shortages of postage stamps or its other products. The 10 centavos stamp was one of the first printed by the TEV and, as described above, changes in printing methods were necessary due to excessive demands for press time. If the changes had not been quickly made by the TEV staff under the direction of John Macdonald, serious shortages likely would have occurred. The quality of the stamp (Figure 2) was quite satisfactory, and the stamp widely used (Figure 4).

Ignacio Ugarte, Agustin Edwards, and Thomas and John Macdonald expended considerable effort to overcome the impacts of World War I on the development of the TEV. While Ugarte did not have a technical printing background, he appears to have stayed on top of the problems at the TEV and sometimes criticized or nagged others in his attempts to ensure development of the plant. Edwards also appears to have had a strong interest in

making the TEV successful. He could have delegated tasks such as corresponding with Ugarte and Thomas Macdonald, but he usually undertook them himself. Thomas Macdonald was sixty-four in 1913 and suffering from some health issues. He may have been thinking of retirement, but he seemed to function well as an agent in procuring materials and providing advice. John Macdonald proved to be very capable, and he must have been instrumental in the printing method adjustments that were made.

Efforts by these key people, including their good planning and use of connections, enabled them to overcome the challenges that arose related to World War I. Such challenges could have more seriously impacted the development of the TEV than they did, and this in turn could have resulted in economic and political problems if TEV products—such as the bank notes and stamps that are usually provided by competent governments to facilitate commerce and communication—had not been available. Development continued after the war and eventually the TEV hired Jose Moreno as an engraver of postage stamps and bank notes. Moreno went on to develop a worldwide reputation as an excellent engraver. Today, the TEV continues to fulfil the security printing needs of Chile and sometimes is contracted by other nations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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FIGURE 4. Cover to Netherlands opened by French censor and franked for the UPU (Universal Postal Union) letter rate with pair of 10 centavos stamps, 21 September 1916. The TEV printed the stamps' frames and centers using offset and *taille-douce* presses respectively. From author's collection.

caused problems communicating with archive staff. Ross and Paget provided useful suggestions on drafts of the paper. I thank my sister, Alice Morrow, for using her genealogical skills to help me understand the Macdonald family. I appreciate the suggestions of an anonymous reviewer. Many thanks to Winton M. Blount Research Chair Susan Smith for her great help in preparing my manuscript for publication. I thank staff members of the ARNAD and the AGH for their cordial, patient assistance.

NOTES

1. Bill Albert, *South America and the First World War: The Impact on Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Chile* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 2002), 65.
2. V. Vargas, Algunos Apuntes para la Historia de los Talleres de Especies Valoradas, *Chile Filatelico*, 53–54 (January–October 1943): 179–184 and V. Vargas, Algunos Apuntes para la Historia de los Talleres de Especies Valoradas continued, *Chile Filatelico*, 55 (November–December 1943):201–203. Vargas discussed notes he took while studying Chilean documents in the National Archives of Chile (Archivo Nacional de Chile) related to development of the TEV. These documents are now housed in the Archivo Nacional de la Administración (ARNAD), previously called Archivo Siglo XX, a branch of the National Archives which did not exist when Vargas did his work. In the years preceding World War I, Chilean bank notes and postage stamps were printed by the American Bank Note Company of New York.
3. Thomas Macdonald to Agustin Edwards, letter and proposal, 14 July 1913. Volume 1811 *Legación de Chile de Particulares*, (1913). Chile Archivo Nacional de la Administración: Ministry of Foreign Relations (ARNAD:MFR). A volume at the ARNAD consists of a collection of documents that include carbon copies of correspondence and,

in some cases, printed matter. The material is usually chronologically organized and then bound into a volume. In some cases documents may be supported by other documents that follow but have an earlier date than the main document. Each volume is for a specific ministry and may be specific for particular types of documents. The volumes do not have an author or editor. There was a search engine at ARNAD that allowed searching for volumes by ministry, type of documents, and dates but did not cover all volumes when I visited.

4. Thomas Macdonald to Agustin Edwards, 25 July 1913. Volume 1811, ARNAD:MFR.
5. Thomas Macdonald to Enrique Cuevas, Charge d'Affairs of Chile, London Embassy, 22 November 1913. Volume 1811, ARNAD:MFR. According to the proposal, the presses were French designed and considered the best commercially available for this type of printing because of their capabilities of printing at high speed, 1,500 sheets per hour, and using either damp or dry paper, which could be pregummed. Two of these presses were specified in Thomas Macdonald's proposal, shown in Table 1.
6. There were some minor exceptions to Chile not participating in or being close to World War I battles. Early in the war, Chile violated the Hague Convention on neutrality and allowed German war vessels to spend more than twenty-four hours in Chilean ports to provision. The Allies protested and Chile stopped the practice. A German squadron soundly defeated a British unit off Coronel, Chile, 1 November 1914. The British brought in reinforcements and destroyed most of the German squadron in the Battle of the Falklands. The *Dresden* escaped, was chased by the British to Juan Fernandez Island, and then was scuttled in Chilean waters on 14 March 1915. Ron Genini, Latin America in World War I, <http://worldwar1.com/sfla.htm> (accessed 16 August 2018). The crew of the *Dresden* was interned on the Chilean island of Quiriquina off the Port of Talcahuano for the duration of the war.
7. Vargas, Algunos Apuntes, continued. Agustin Edwards and the London embassy were major factors in development of the TEV and Vargas believed that a complete set of documents related to the embassy's involvement in its development had been sent to the TEV by the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile and lost in a fire. He advised philatelists who had a chance to visit the London embassy to attempt to find a similar set of documents there. While my wife, Paget, and I were in Santiago in early 2006, Ross Towle discovered on the internet that the Archivo General Histórico in that city contained volumes on development of the TEV and advised me to look at these materials. We found that the volumes contained many relevant documents. Most of these were not referenced by Vargas and the volumes likely were either the material Vargas thought was lost in the TEV fire or those that had been sent to the ministry in Santiago from London. Vargas did not refer to documents we found at ARNAD:MFR in volume 1811, which may not have been accessible when he visited the archives.
8. Ignacio Ugarte to Agustin Edwards, list of TEV 1918 needs, 26 November 1917, Volume 652, *Legación de Chile en Gran Bretaña. Correspondencia recibida de Cónsules, Jefes de Misión, Oficinas y Particulares*. Volume 652 (1917) Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile Archivo General Histórico: Fondo Histórico section AGH:FH. AGH volumes, similar to ARNAD, are collections of documents, usually carbon copies, and do not have an author or editor. The AGH has a search engine that lists volumes that contain user specified subject matter. It was available on the web, but does not appear to be now.
9. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 17 April 1917. Volume 652, AGH:FH.
10. Jan Tore Klovland, Navigating through Torpedo Attacks and Enemy Raiders: Merchant Shipping and Freight Rates during World War I. Discussion paper, Norwegian School of Economics (May 2017), SAM 07 2017.
11. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 22 May 1918. Volume 720, *Legación de Chile en Gran Bretaña. Correspondencia recibida de Legaciones de Chile, Consulados, Oficinas y Particulares*, (1918). Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile Archivo General Histórico: Fondo Histórico section AGH:FH.
12. Embassy to Thomas Macdonald, 23 November 1916. Volume 588, *Legación de Chile en Gran Bretaña. Correspondencia enviada a oficinas y particulares de Chile y Gran Bretaña y Cónsules de Chile* (1916). Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile Archivo General Histórico: Fondo Histórico section AGH:FH. (This was in a series of letters sent unsigned by "Private Secretary." Archive book has carbon copies. This particular letter was on Embassy stationery; the letter filled the page leaving no room for even "private secretary.")
13. Documents consulted to determine annual purchasing and shipping costs for material sent to the TEV are listed in Table 5.
14. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 22 March 1917. Volume 652, AGH:FH.
15. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 8 November 1917. Volume 652, AGH:FH.
16. Communications listed in Table 6, regarding attempts to provide rod composition, printing inks, and chemicals to the TEV, were all in volume 588, AGH:FH.

TABLE 5. Documents consulted to determine annual purchasing and shipping costs for material sent to the TEV printing plant.^a

Volume	From	To	Description	Date
527	Agustin Edwards	Ignacio Ugarte	Letter	13 Sep 1915
587	Edwards Edwards	N/A Ugarte	Letter	4 Nov 1915
			Letter	23 Dec 1915
			Expense report	1 Jan 1916
			Letter	5 Jan 1916
			Letter	26 Feb 1916
			Letter	28 Mar 1916
			Letter	31 Mar 1916
			Letter	25 Apr 1916
			Letter	11 May 1916
			Letter	19 May 1916
			Letter	May 1916
			Letter	21 Jun 1916
			Letter	9 Aug 1916
			Letter	19 Oct 1916
649	Edwards	Ugarte	Letter	4 Nov 1916
			Letter	28 Nov 1916
			Letter	13 Dec 1916
			Letter	Dec 1916
			Letter	11 Jan 1917
721	Embassy Edwards Embassy	Ugarte N/A Ugarte	Letter	31 Jan 1917
			Letter	1 Mar 1917
			Letter	25 May 1917
			Report	13 May 1918
			Report	15 Jun 1918
			Report	19 Aug 1918
			Report	17 Oct 1918

^a All documents found in Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile Archivo Histórico: Fondo Histórico section.

TABLE 6. Communications regarding the attempt to provide rod composition, printing inks, and chemicals to the TEV printing plant.^a

From	To	Description	Date
Embassy	Thomas Macdonald	Letter	16 Sep 1916
Winstone & Sons	Embassy	Invoice	21 Sep 1916
Embassy	Thomas Macdonald	Letter	26 Oct 1916
Agustin Edwards	Thomas Macdonald	Letter	30 Oct 1916
	Ignacio Ugarte	Letter	13 Dec 1916

^a All communications can be found in Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile Archivo Histórico: Fondo Histórico section volume 588.

17. "I am sorry to tell you Lieut. Robert Macdonald is very ill after several operations being now five months in the Hospital my son Douglas Macdonald of the Royal Horse Artillery is quite well" (Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 21 March 1917, volume 652, AGH:FH). Robert was running the office on 31 October 1917: "owing to his wound on the right shoulder he is disabled for active service in France therefore he has War Office agreement to return to my Office as on Munitions Work such as the War Loans" (Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 31 October 1917, volume 652, AGH:FH). Robert must have recovered: "While writing I am sorry to tell you, my son Captain R. Macdonald of the 18th London Regiment, has been wounded & captured by the Germans". (Thomas Macdonald to embassy, 21 October 1918, volume 720, AGH:FH). Fortunately, by 2 December 1918 Robert was back in London and doing fairly well (Thomas Macdonald to embassy, 2 December 1918, volume 720, AGH:FH).
18. Edwards to Ugarte, 23 March 1916. Volume 588, AGH:FH.
19. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 9 August 1917. Volume 652, AGH:FH. Thomas Macdonald founded the firm in 1875 and this and other documents suggest he either had an old-school attitude about women's role in the workplace or was neutral about these changes occurring during his career. This statement was the only reference to working women located in written documents, although there are photos showing women operating some of the machinery.
20. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 21 March 1917. Shipping papers could reach the embassy after the shipping date.
21. Guðmundur Helgason, Ships Hit During WWI, *Mexico*, https://uboat.net/wwi/ships_hit/4119.htm (accessed 1 August 2018), indicates the *Mexico* had been mined.
22. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 5 April 1917. Volume 649, *Legación de Chile en Gran Bretaña. Correspondencia intercambiada con la Oficina Proveedora de Especies Fiscales, con la Oficina de Provisión de Especies Valoradas y con la Dirección General de Correos de Chile*, (1917). Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile Archivo General Histórico: Fondo Histórico section AGH:FH.
23. Both Guðmundur Helgason (https://uboat.net/wwi/ships_hit/2355.html, accessed 1 August 2018) and Naval-History.net, in British Merchant Ships Lost to Enemy Action (<https://naval-history.net> /WW1LossesBrMS1917.htm, accessed 1 August 2018), reported the *Galicia* was sunk by a mine on 12 May 1917.
24. Edwards to Ugarte, 25 May 1917. Volume 649, AGH:FH. V. Vargas in *Algunos Apuntes* and *Algunos Apuntes Continued* also indicated that both the *Mexico* and *Galicia* were torpedoed but did not give a source. It is possible that the authors were merely using archaic language: mines were often called torpedoes in the nineteenth century (Wikipedia, s.v. Torpedo, wikipedia.org/wiki/Torpedo, accessed 21 January 2019).
25. Robert Macdonald writing for Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 18 May 1917. Volume 652, AGH:FH.
26. Morris and Bolton, invoice, 21 September 1917. Volume 649, AGH:FH.
27. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 22 October 1917. Volume 652, AGH:FH.
28. Robert Macdonald writing for Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 6 May 1918. Volume 720, AGH:FH.
29. Edwards to Ugarte, 23 March 1916.
30. Embassy to Thomas Macdonald, 14 June 1916. Volume 588, AGH:FH.
31. Edwards to Ugarte, 18 July 1916. Volume 588, AGH:FH.
32. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, letter and proposal, 14 July 1913.
33. Edwards to Ugarte, 1 March 1917. Volume 649, AGH:FH.
34. The documents listed in Table 7, which record the effort to obtain another *taille-douce* press, were found at the AGH:FH.
35. Thomas Macdonald to embassy, 8 October 1918. Volume 720, AGH:FH.
36. Marriage license of John William McDonald [sic] and Julia Verschueren, 28 October 1912 in Antwerp and marriage license of Jacques Verschueren and Desire Vergracht, 14 October 1886 in Brussels.
37. *Michel Europa-Katalog West 2000/2001 (A–K)* (Munich: Schwaneberger Verlag, 2000) and *Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue, Part 4: Benelux*, 3rd ed. (London: Stanley Gibbons Ltd., 1988).
38. *Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue, Part 20: South America*, 3rd ed. (London: Stanley Gibbons Ltd., 1989).
39. Manager of Foreign Department of American Bank Note Company to Jorge Astaburuaga, their agent in Santiago, August 13, 1915. Ross Towle collection of American Bank Note Company documents. Bill Lenarz, *Presidentes Were Not Printed in England*, *The Chile Specialist* 65 (3rd and 4th quarters, 2006):10–15.
40. Undated report on 1917 TEV costs and production, Volume 4711, *Dirección de Especies Valoradas 1915-1922*. ARNAD: Ministry of Finance. I found no other TEV production estimates in the archives for the war years. Thomas Macdonald to Edwards, 25 July 1913.
41. Albert, *South America and the First World War*, 65.
42. Victor M. Berthold, *History of the Telephone and Telegraph in Chile 1851–1922* (New York: American Telephone and Telegraph Company, 1924). G. Chowell, L. Simonsen, J. Flores, M. A. Miller, and C. Viboud, Death patterns during the 1918 influenza pandemic in Chile. *Emerg Infect Dis* [Internet]. 2014 Nov (accessed 24 January 2022). Jeffrey Cronin, Literacy Rates, https://www.hbs.edu/businesshistory/courses/resources/historical-data-visualization/Pages/details.aspx?data_id=31 (accessed 16 December 2018).
43. Ugarte to Edwards, 9 January 1917. Volume 649, AGH:FH.
44. Thomas Macdonald, invoice, 26 March 1918. Volume 721, *Legación de Chile en Gran Bretaña. Correspondencia intercambiada con la Oficina Proveedora de Especies Fiscales y Correspondencia enviada al Jefe de la Oficina de Provisión de Especies Valoradas* (1918). Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile Archivo General Histórico: Fondo Histórico section AGH:FH.

TABLE 7. Documents consulted regarding the effort to obtain another *taille-douce* printing press for engraved stamps.^a

Volume	From	To	Description	Date
588	London Embassy Agustin Edwards Edwards	Thomas Macdonald	Memo	14 Jun 1916
		Thomas Macdonald	Letter	22 Jun 1916
		Ignacio Ugarte	Letter	18 Jul 1916
		Thomas Macdonald	Letter	8 Aug 1916
			Letter	23 Aug 1916
587	R. Hoe & Co.	Thomas Macdonald	Letter	16 Sep 1916
588	Edwards	Ugarte	Letter	19 Sep 1916
			Letter	13 Nov 1916
			Letter	4 Dec 1916
587	Ugarte	Edwards	Letter	9 Jan 1917
649	Ugarte	Edwards	Letter	29 Jan 1917
			Letter	18 Apr 1917
			Letter	4 May 1917
			Letter	14 Jun 1917
			Letter	28 Jun 1917
			Letter	25 Aug 1917
			Letter	29 Aug 1917
			Letter	8 Oct 1917
			Letter	26 Nov 1917
			Letter	26 Nov 1917
			Letter	14 Mar 1918
			Letter	29 Apr 1918
			Letter	6 May 1918
			Letter	7 May 1918
			Letter	May 1918
721	Edwards	Ugarte	Letter	13 Aug 1918
			Letter	19 Sep 1918
			Letter	17 Oct 1918
			Letter	17 Oct 1918
			Letter	17 Oct 1918
720	Belgium Administration des Postes	Madame J. Verschuere	Letter	29 Apr 1918
			Letter	6 May 1918
			Letter	7 May 1918
			Letter	May 1918
			Letter	13 Aug 1918
721	Thomas Macdonald	Embassy	Invoice	19 Sep 1918
			Letter	17 Oct 1918

^a All documents found in Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile Archivo Histórico: Fondo Histórico section.

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Civil Postal Censorship in India during the World War I Era

Robert Gray

ABSTRACT. Postal censorship played an important role in the defense of India from internal threats, as well as supporting the censorship objectives of the British Empire against Germany and Austria-Hungary during the war. Postal and telegraph censorship helped reveal which businesses, individuals, and associations were either trading with the enemy or providing other support. Censors also examined mail of individuals resident in India who were considered a threat to British control of India. While there is a significant amount of written information available for a study on the official view of postal censorship in India, postal artifacts are necessary to obtain a full picture, as they provide physical evidence regarding the actual processes and scope of censorship.

INTRODUCTION

This essay focuses on the censorship of civilians' correspondence in India during World War I. Indian troops served in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The censorship of military correspondence has been previously analyzed.¹ The declarations of war made by Great Britain on 4 August 1914 against Germany and on 12 August 1914 against Austria-Hungary were binding on its empire, including British India. On 5 November 1914, Great Britain declared war against the Ottoman Empire, bringing India into war in the Middle East. Postal censorship played an important role in gathering and controlling information throughout the war. Britain sought to reduce the enemy's economy through a naval blockade and financial sanctions. Postal and telegraph censorship helped reveal which businesses, individuals, and associations were either trading with the enemy or providing other support. Those identified as supporting the enemy were placed on a "Statutory List," created and maintained by the Blacklist Committee of the War Department in London. These lists were given to the censors who stopped the individual or company's telegrams and mail, preventing them from supporting the enemy.² The War Office provided guidance on objectives for both the telegraph and postal censorship for all possessions and colonies of the British Empire.

Postal censorship can be defined as the detaining, inspection, and total or selective removal of portions of correspondence in letters, postcards, parcels and other articles carried by the post office. There is a significant amount of written information available for a study on postal censorship in India, but postal artifacts are necessary to obtain a more complete picture. The former provides insight into the official view of censorship, while the latter provides physical evidence regarding its actual process and scope.

SITUATION IN INDIA

British India was populated by 300 million residents in what are today Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, and the Aden Settlement (now Yemen). It was a governed

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by the viceroy, who was appointed by the British Parliament. The viceroy was advised by a council consisting of prominent individuals whom he had appointed. British India was divided in many ways that severely complicated its governance. These divisions included religious differences, predominately Hindu and Muslim, different local legal systems of over six hundred princely (feudal) states and the areas governed directly by British India, and more than twenty languages. Of these differences, language, in particular, made postal censorship challenging. Censor offices needed experts in the Indian languages and also in Arabic, Persian, European, and Asian languages. The translators of less commonly known languages became a shared staff resource among the censor offices.

India was committed to supporting the war effort both with censorship activities and with its resources, including 1.3 million troops,³ significant funds, skilled and unskilled labor, and strategically important materials for the war effort.⁴ With its army largely overseas, India itself was vulnerable to internal threats. Militant tribes from India's Northwest Frontier Province, German agents in Afghanistan and Persia, violent nationalist groups, and enemy nationals resident in India all presented significant threats to the stability of British rule in India.⁵ Civil postal censorship was necessary, therefore, for both the war effort and for India's domestic security.

The India Post Office was in an excellent position to provide support to the postal censorship program. It served all of British India, including Aden, and operated Indian post offices throughout the Persian Gulf. In addition, it provided international mail for Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, and Tibet. Opening dates of the Persian Gulf post offices were as follows: Persia: Bushire (1864), Bandar Abbas (1867), Linga (1870), Jask (1880), Mohammera (1892), Kuh-Milak-Siah-Zirarat (1906), Chahbar (1913), Henjam (1913), Ahwaz (1915), Abadan (1917), and Maidan-Napthun (1917); Iraq: Baghdad (1868) and Basra (1868); Bahrain (1884); and Kuwait (1915).⁶ Censor offices at Bushire, Karachi, and Bombay examined the mail in this region. In addition, military censorship of civilian correspondence was applied in parts of Persia and Mesopotamia.

During the war, mail addressed to other countries aboard ships that stopped in India (transit mail) was also brought to the censors. Indian mail to the Persian Gulf and the Dutch East Indies was important because these territories held significant natural resources that Britain wanted to deny the enemy. Prewar postal volume in India was about one billion pieces of mail annually,⁷ so for logistical reasons, no attempt was made to censor all mail; those in charge of censorship, pragmatically, focused on international mail and the mail of listed or suspected companies and individuals.

LEGAL BASIS AND ORGANIZATION

The War Office in London set the priorities for the postal censors, who were responsible for detecting any communication

regarding commerce with the enemy; the transfer of funds and securities through neutral countries; the unlawful sale of strategic materials, documents, and papers that contained false reports and propaganda; any breach of the public safety; and any information that might be useful in defeating the enemy, including military secrets or other operationally useful information.⁸ In British India, censor offices—and not the post office—conducted the actual censorship.

The legal basis for censorship predates World War I. It was incorporated into the Post Office Act of 1898/1912, which authorized the post office to intercept, detain, and dispose of postal articles during a declared emergency.⁹ Under the Press Act of 1910, the post office could prevent an entire printing from entering the mails.¹⁰ Laws passed during the war further strengthened censorship authority. For example, rules under the Defence of India Act made it illegal to avoid the censor by carrying letters to circumvent the mail system and prohibited the mailing of anything written with invisible ink.¹¹ Court warrants were occasionally issued to permit the post office to intercept mail received or sent by an individual named in the warrant. The mail was then given to the censor for inspection.¹²

On 10 August 1914, the Department of Commerce and Industries instructed Director General of Posts and Telegraphs William Maxwell to arrange for the interception of the following postal articles: all mail to and from the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, to or from specifically listed persons, between India and the Persian Gulf, and from India to the Dutch East Indies. Until civil censorship offices were opened, this mail was sent to the army general officer commanding at the port cities of Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata), Karachi, or Rangoon (Yangon). The civil censorship offices were established shortly thereafter.

Although Britain had declared war on the Ottoman Empire on 5 November 1914, the Ottoman Empire did not declare war against Britain and its allies until 11 November 1914. The following day, 12 November 1914, the government of India expanded censorship to include all mail from all countries except the British Empire and allied nations. This included stopping of all mail to and from the Ottoman Empire. Also on that day, the deputy chief censor established additional civil censorship offices at Belgaum and Madras (Chennai).

Censors only detained overland mail from Afghanistan and Persia (Iran) for a few days at Robat Kila, near the border of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran, rather than censor it, and then released it for delivery. In April 1915, the post office corrected this censorship gap by arranging to send this overland mail to Karachi for censor review. Additionally, a traveling censor operated between the northwestern border cities of Chaman and Nushki from December 1915 to June 1917, with the post offices on this route holding the mail for his review.¹³

Each entry point to the post office network was thus linked to a censor office. Figure 1 shows the general location of the main censor offices in red. Not all censor offices were operational at the same time. For logistical reasons, the censor offices were



FIGURE 1. Map of British India showing the general location of postal censor offices. (Map created by author.)

probably located near or in the main post offices. In addition to these offices, military prisoner-of-war camps and some civilian detention centers had a camp censor office. There were also censor offices at Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta for the overland mail from Afghanistan and the Persian border. Shown on the map are the route of the traveling censor from Chaman to Nushki and the customs office at Robat Kila, whose role was to delay the mail from Persia.

From 10 August 1914 through the end of 1919, civil postal censorship was the responsibility of Deputy Chief Censor Lt. Colonel Cecil Kaye, in the Criminal Intelligence Department, part of the civilian government. The censor offices at Aden, Belgaum (1915–1916), Bombay, Dhanushkodi (1918–1919), Karachi, Madras, Calcutta, and Rangoon reported to Kaye, who was headquartered at Delhi and Simla. The censors at Bushire, Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta, as well as the traveling censor, reported to local political representatives. The Bombay censor office was the largest and often supported other censor offices with translations and handling overflow postal volume.

CENSORS AT WORK

Of the 1 billion pieces of mail handled by the post office, all but about 55 million were internal, that is, domestic mail. Most

international mail, nearly 30 million pieces annually, was sent between India and Britain. Domestic and Britain–India mail was not subject to routine censorship for logistical reasons as well as to avoid offending the Indian public, which largely supported the war. This reduced the potential annual mail for censorship to 25 million pieces comprising approximately 15 million letters and 10 million newspapers and packets (bulk mail).¹⁴ Before delivering the mail subject to censorship to the censors, the Indian post office sorted it by country of origin and placed registered mail in separate bags to facilitate tracking. The censors further separated commercial and private mail. Transit mail, that is, mail traveling through India-controlled territory but destined for another country, was most likely removed from the ships by postal workers along with the mail to be delivered within India. All mail was brought to post offices for sorting, and mail subject to censorship was brought from there to the censor office.

Indian censorship statistics were reported after the war but are no longer extant.¹⁵ An estimate of the amount of mail examined, however, can be derived using data from territories that did report statistics. Hong Kong and Egypt reported that about 33% of the mail authorized for censorship was opened by censors;¹⁶ the remaining mail was passed without opening. In both Hong Kong and Egypt, the censors achieved the volume reduction by excluding newspapers, advertisements, and commercial mail from recognized businesses. Gibraltar reported that commercial (trade)

mail consisted of 14,400 articles per month with 6 examiners, and private mail had 48,000 with up to 18 examiners. This equated to 92 commercial articles per day per examiner and 102 pieces of private mail per day per examiner. This gives a reasonable estimate of daily workload per censor; it is likely that Indian censors achieved the same throughput. The annual average amount of foreign mail that was not between Britain and India between 1914 and 1920 was about 26 million pieces. The percentage of mail examined by Indian censors is not known, but assuming it was about the same rate as in Egypt and Hong Kong (i.e., 33%), the amount of Indian mail examined can be estimated by multiplying the 33% examination rate by the approximate 26 million pieces of mail. This calculates to about 8.6 million pieces of mail for the Indian censors to examine. Assuming 200 censors working 300 days per year, each censor would have opened and examined 143 postmarked envelopes or pieces of mail ("covers") daily. The War Office report and estimates from detention-camp mail suggest that about 2.5% of the examined postal correspondence contained objectionable material,¹⁷ or an average of about 3.5 pieces of mail per working day per Indian censor employee. The actual censor workload can only be estimated.

To handle this workload, censors were recruited from the military, Indian Civil Service, and various police departments.¹⁸ Recruiting individuals with competency in at least some European, Middle Eastern, and Indian vernacular languages represented a challenge. Most qualified military personnel were needed for the war. It was not common for women and men to work in the same office at this time in India, due to religious and social considerations. Of the 213 censor employees listed in Table 1, 31 were female, 26 of whom were located in Bombay. The tasks and roles of women in the censor offices are not known.

Table 1 summarizes the locations, number of employees, main purpose, and operational periods for the key censor offices that reported directly to the deputy chief censor.¹⁹ Cecil Kaye's report excluded censor offices not primarily engaged in the global financial and trade blockade, notably the offices in Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta, which were focused on Persia and Afghanistan overland mail. It also excluded the censor offices at Belgaum, which had closed in 1916, and the censor office at Bushire, Persia which was the responsibility of the political resident at Bushire. The information in his report would have been provided by the individual censor offices or from staff records kept centrally. These records are not found in the archives.

Censors could choose to pass mail unopened, to open and review mail and marking it passed with a hand stamp, or to redact or stop a piece of mail. Postal artifacts reveal that censor-opened covers were resealed with a censor label or tape and, if appropriate, marked as passed. International registered mail was occasionally resealed with a label and censor wax.²⁰ Descriptions of these practices in archival documents have not been identified, making the postal artifacts essential to understanding the material and physical aspects of how censorship was conducted.

The deputy chief censor provided guidance for handling intercepted mail—that is, mail stopped by the censor. Commercial

letters were forwarded to "special civilian officers" appointed in most major Indian cities to assist in censoring commercial correspondence.²¹ Maps and anything of military interest were given to the Indian Army for analysis, and politically sensitive mail was forwarded to the Indian Political Department. The censor could send mail considered objectionable, such as pornographic or anti-British mail, to the post office's "dead letter" offices for storage or destruction. Mail passed by the censor was returned to the post office for delivery.

If a letter was only partially censored, the offending section would be physically removed, not just obliterated, and the rest of the letter returned to the post office for delivery. It would have been easier for the censor simply to reject the entire letter and send it to the dead letter office. Some censors were apparently willing to take the extra time to remove the offending sentences. Figure 2 (left) is an example of this practice. Figure 2 (right) illustrates the censor hand stamp on the back of the first page of the letter.²² This letter was sent from the Yercaud Civil Camp in 1919.

Each censor office had its own distinct censor hand stamp designs, suggesting that they were procured independently. Given their distinctions, it is always possible to determine which censor office passed a particular postal item. Both numbered and unnumbered censor hand stamps are known from all the censor offices, with the exceptions of Bushire, which had only an unnumbered hand stamp, and Dhanushkodi, which had only numbered hand stamps. The purpose for using numbered and unnumbered hand stamps is not known. Based on postal artifacts, the numbers on the hand stamps do not appear to be linked to a particular country or language. The numbers may have been used to identify the work of specific individual censors. Postal artifacts confirm that the Bombay numbered hand stamps used between January 1915 and August 1916 numbered from 1 to 36. A second series (1916–1919) was numbered from 1 to 86 with numbers 1 to 42 found on regular mail and 74 to 86 found only on prisoner-of-war and civil detention covers. It could be that the greater range in numbers in this series reflected the presence of additional censors.²³ Unnumbered Bombay hand stamps were used between August 1914 and August 1919.

SCOPE OF CENSORED MAIL

The government of India authorized the general censorship of Indian mail on 10 August 1914 and withdrew the authorization with the exception of prisoner-of-war and civil internment mail on 10 August 1919.²⁴ The Bombay censor office was responsible for that mail until the end of 1919. The earliest known World War I Indian cover was handstamped by a censor working in Bombay on 14 August 1914. It was a postcard sent from Germany to India prior to the war and was censored and delivered contrary to the rules at the time.²⁵

Although authorized, British Empire–India mail was generally not censored in India. The War Office recorded that mail from Aden, British Malaya (Singapore, Straits Settlements, Federated Malay

TABLE 1. Key censor offices and locations with employee numbers (gender when known), main purpose, and operational periods.

Censor office and general location	Number of employees ^a	Main purpose of the office ^b	Authorized or operational period during WWI
Aden Settlement (Aden [now part of Yemen]) ^c	10 (1 female)	Transit mail; all mail to and from Aden; India to Aden censored at Bombay	Postal censorship conducted by cable censor 3 Aug 1914–1 Mar 1915; Indian government then controlled postal censorship until 1 Mar 1919 ^d ; reverted to cable censor until 28 June 1919. Operational dates known from postal artifacts Oct 1915–Sep 1918 ^e
Kamran Island and Perim Island (Barim, Yemen)	Not reported	Transit mail entering Aden Settlement on these islands	Authorized 13 Nov 1914 ^f ; ceased operations Jun 1916 ^g
Belgaum (Belegavi, India)	Not reported	All mail to and from India and Portuguese India	Authorized 10 Aug 1914; earliest known censored cover 14 August 1914; ceased operations 31 Dec 1919 ^h
Bombay (Mumbai, India)	105 (26 female)	All European neutral mails; all mails to and from UK; all mails landed at and dispatched from Bombay; letters from enemy aliens in hospitals; foreign correspondence of interned enemy aliens	Political officer Bushire; authorized 27 Oct 1915; ceased operations Mar 1919 ⁱ
Bushire (Bushehr, Iran)	Not reported	Terminal mail to Persia; Persian Gulf mail	Authorized 10 Aug 1914; ceased operations 10 Aug 1919 ^j
Calcutta (Kolkata, India)	13	Mail east of India	Operational 20 Aug 1918; ceased operations 28 Feb 1919 ^k
Dhanushkodi (India)	13	All mail posted south of Madras for Straits Settlements, Ceylon, and Australasia; France and Indochina mail to French Settlements (after May 1918)	Authorized 10 Aug 1914; ceased operations 10 Aug 1919 ^l
Karachi (Pakistan)	21	Certain mails for Persian Gulf; Punjab and North India	Operational 13 Nov 1914; ceased operations 10 Aug 1919 ^m
Madras (Chennai, India)	20	All mail for Straits Settlements, Ceylon, and Australasia, except that dealt with at Dhanushkodi	Operational Sep 1914; ceased operations Jun 1919 ⁿ
Rangoon (Yangon, Myanmar)	33 (4 female)	Mail to and from the Far East	

^a Request of Army Council for Certain Information Regarding Postal Censorship in India. IOR/L/MIL/18702. 14 February 1919, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library.

^b *Report on Postal Censorship during the Great War (1914–1919)* (London: War Office, 1920), sections 428 and 454.

^c M. A. M. Graham, Aden Censor Marks 1914–19, *The Philatelist* (June 1964):214–218.

^d *Report on Postal Censorship during the Great War*, sections 428 and 454.

^e David Feldman Galleries, Geneva, *India: The Topaz Cancellation Collection & India Used Abroad*, auction catalog, 26 May 2014. https://www.davidfeldman.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/186_India.pdf (accessed 11 February 2021).

^f H. Wheeler, Memorandum to Secretary Government of Bombay, 11 November 1914. Appointment by certain local government of an officer to whom objectionable matter bearing on internal security intercepted by military censors should [be] handed over for disposal. PR_000003003817. National Archives of India, New Delhi, March 1915.

^g The War: Censorship Arrangements in Portuguese Territory. Political and Secret Files 1916 P2588/1916. IOR/L/PS/11/107, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library.

^h R. Gray, WWI: Bombay Numbered Censor Stamps, *India Post* 48(2014):92–96.

ⁱ The War: Postal Censorship in Baluchistan [actually Bushire], P 2833/1915, IOR/L/PS/11/95, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library.

^j Manohar Lal, *Postal History of 1. Censorship in Baluchistan and N.W.F.P. 1914–1922*, Indian Censorship 2 (New Delhi: published by author, 1996), 6–7.

^k J. FitzGerald Lee, *Blacklead and Whitewash: A Side-Show of the Great War [On the Indian Censorship]* (Karachi: G. A. Holdaway, 1923), 124. The author was the head censor at Dhanushkodi.

^l Lal, *Censorship in Baluchistan*, 6–7.

^m Wheeler to the Chief Secretary Govt. of Madras, 11 Nov 1914.

ⁿ B. Bennett, WWI: Civilian Censorship in Burma (2) Mail “Passed” Stamps, *India Post* 52(2018):30–33.

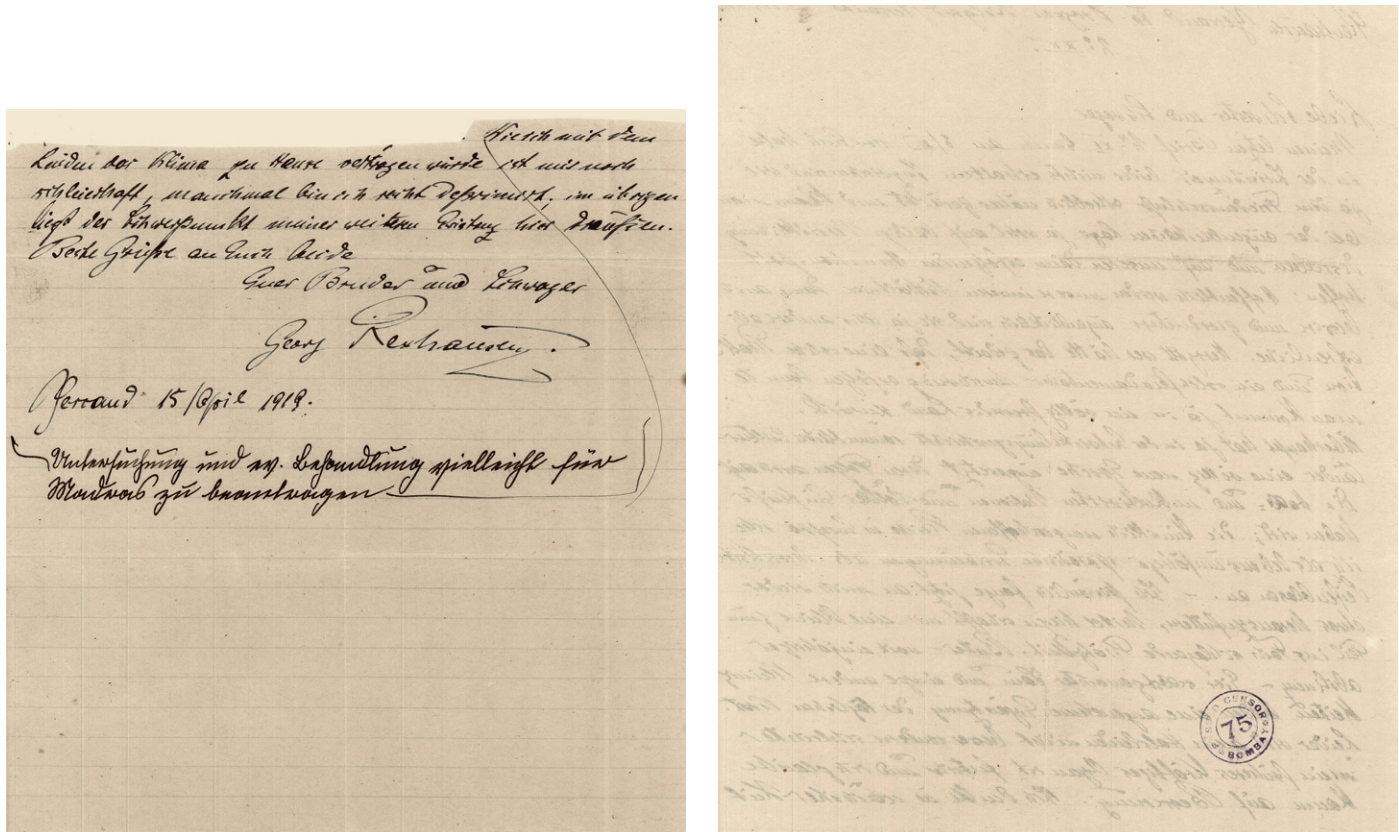


FIGURE 2. Letter sent from the Yercaud Civil Camp in 1919 with a portion cut out (left). The back of the first page of the same letter has a Bombay #75 censor hand stamp (right) indicating it was passed by the censor at Bombay. Courtesy of the Collectors Club. These and all other philatelic images are from the author's collection.

States, and feudatory Malaysian States), Canada (if addressed to an Indian), Hong Kong, Mauritius, and Port Blair (Andaman Islands, India) was censored in India. All Persian Gulf mail was censored, including that under the British Residency (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the Trucial States). British East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and Zanzibar) and Egypt censored some mail to and from India, in contrast with the rest of the empire where India-bound mail was censored in India. Postal artifacts revealed mail from additional parts of the empire that was actually censored in India. These areas included British Somaliland, Brunei, Canada (whether addressed to an Indian or a European), Ceylon, Fiji, and the Seychelles Islands. In addition, mail to India from British possessions formally part of the Ottoman Empire (Cyprus, Egypt, and Sudan), occupied Ottoman territory (Mesopotamia and Iraq), occupied German territory (Papua), and British-occupied Persia was also censored.

Specific reasons for the censorship of British Empire-India mail are not known. However, the two main reasons for censorship—denying the enemy access to trade and preventing anti-British activity in India—explain most of it. Those areas with significant Indian populations were viewed by the government as potential supporters of revolutionary parties including the violent

Ghadar (Revolution) Party. Ghadar Party members were primarily Indians living in Canada, the United States, and Japan whose main strategy was to encourage the mutiny of Indian troops. Thousands of Ghadarites returned to India in 1915 to accomplish this but were intercepted by British authorities. Ceylon had an anti-British riot in 1915, and British Somaliland was in open rebellion prior to the war. Individuals suspected of anti-British activity or otherwise supporting the enemy were listed for censorship regardless of nationality. Postal artifacts document this aspect of censorship, as shown in Figure 3, where an Indian resident's mail was opened and examined. Either the sender or the recipient or both were suspected of anti-British activity. Although the War Office report included Canadian mail addressed to Indians as censored, mail from Canada addressed to European names was also censored. An example of this, mail from Canada with a Bombay censor hand stamp, is shown in Figure 4. A large number of Indians living in western Canada were Ghadar revolutionaries. Several thousand of these Ghadar members returned to India to promote mutiny amongst Indian troops. For the most part this was a failed effort, as the Ghadar members were known to the British and most were arrested upon entry to India.²⁶

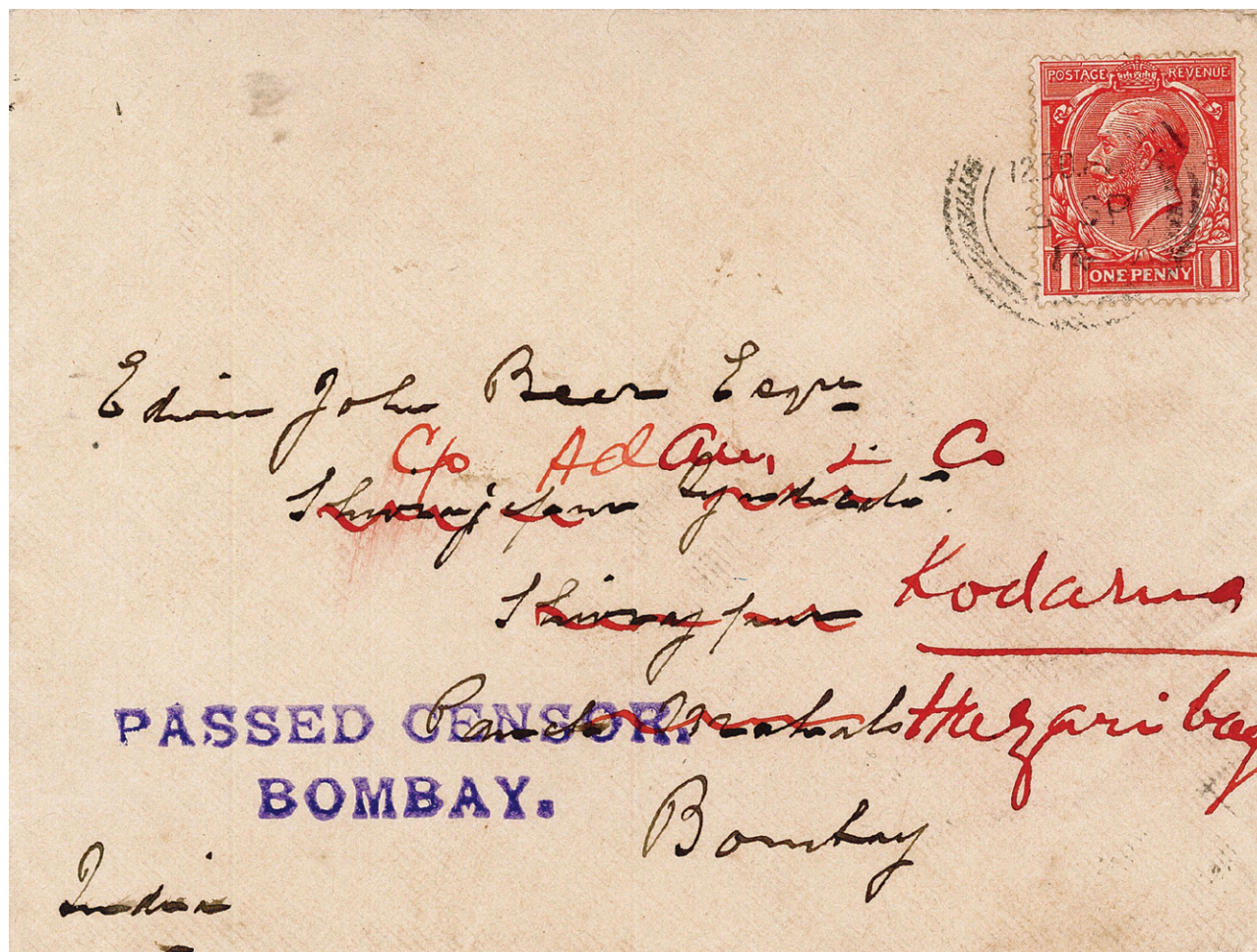


FIGURE 3. A 1915 cover handstamped with “Passed Censor Bombay” from Great Britain addressed to Bombay.



FIGURE 4. Censored cover from Canada to Waltair, India, addressed to a non-Indian. The cover (left) bears a Bombay censor hand stamp which reads “Passed Postal Censor Bombay” with an image of a crown and “No. 1.” The verso (right) shows the censor label used to reseal the cover.

By May 1918, mail subject to censorship included India and transit mail to and from all Allied and neutral nations and their colonies and consulates, mail to or from certain parts of the British Empire, mail from detained enemy nationals in India, military mail not previously censored, and the mail of Indian military and civilians held as prisoners of war.²⁷ *India* for this purpose was defined to include Portuguese India (i.e., Goa), about 400 miles south of Bombay and the French Settlements, which comprised a few towns, including Pondicherry, about 100 miles south of Madras. During the course of the war, Britain's original allies—Belgium, France, Japan, and Russia—were joined by many other countries. Serbia and Montenegro joined in 1914; Italy, Nejd and Hasa, and Ajir (the last three are parts of present-day Saudi Arabia) joined in 1915; Portugal and Romania in 1916; Brazil, China, Cuba, Hejaz (part of Saudi Arabia), Panama, Siam (Thailand), and the United States in 1917; and Armenia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua in 1918. The increase in the number of allies may have created the need to expand censorship, as exempting them would weaken the ability to detect important commercial mail. Italian mail to India was censored when Italy was neutral. When Italy became an ally in 1915, it was granted an exemption from censorship except for mail addressed to Indians. In recognition of Portugal's status as an ally, starting on 15 July 1916 the mail from that country was no longer censored, although censorship of the mail of Portuguese

India continued through the censorship offices at Pangim, Goa, Portuguese India.²⁸ Mail from India to French India, a handful of settlements near Madras, was generally not censored.

The diversity of languages in India required that most Indian mail be censored in that country, where there was sufficient language expertise. India accepted censor reviews, however, conducted in East Africa and Zanzibar, which had large Indian communities and censors fluent in key Indian languages. Censor reviews in Egypt were also accepted because it had an Indian civil servant specifically assigned to Indian mails working at its censor office.²⁹

Some mail of the Allies was treated differently. Although mail from Japan was subject to censorship, it was generally passed by censor but not opened in India because of a lack of translators. Figure 5 is an example of Japanese mail unopened and passed by the Calcutta censor. The scarcity of Japanese translators in India represented a gap in the postal censorship net. When Russia signed an armistice with Germany on 15 December 1917, it was no longer an ally. Mail to Russia from India was after this date forwarded to London for censorship and then returned to India and sent to the dead letter office.³⁰ Figure 6 is an example of suspended-service mail to Russia. The cover was cancelled at Bombay and sent to London, where it was opened and resealed with a British censor label. As it was undeliverable, it was then returned to the Bombay Dead Letter Office for disposal after the war and not to the sender. (Specific rules were set after the war



FIGURE 5. Unopened mail from Japan, handstamped with "Passed Censor Calcutta."



FIGURE 6. Suspended mail addressed to Russia from the bank Comptoir National D'Escompte de Paris, Bombay. The front of the cover (left) shows the address. The verso (right) shows the cover was opened and resealed with a British censor label. There is no "Passed by censor" hand stamp on this cover.

as to what mail would be delivered, destroyed, or handed over to the prize court.) It is not known when the "Service Suspended" hand stamp was applied, as this could have been prior to sending the letter to London or upon its return to India.

All neutral countries were in a strong position to trade with Britain's enemies, making censorship of the mail of neutral nations an important source of information. The British authorities believed Persian Gulf mail was particularly important because of this region's oil resources and the presence of German agents. Before the war, India operated post offices in Basra and Baghdad. These were closed by the Turks. During the course of the war, British-Indian forces removed the Turks from these cities and the army reestablished civil post offices. Wartime covers from Iraq bear markings of military censorship (as opposed to civil censorship) applied by the field censor at Basra.

Persian Gulf mail addressed to India was censored at the point of entry—that is, either Bombay or Karachi. Persian Gulf mail between Indian post offices was initially brought to Karachi for censorship, but in 1915 for the sake of postal efficiency, a censor office was opened at the Persian Gulf port of Bushire. Mail from Bushire to India was censored at Bushire.³¹ Mail transiting through India, including neutral-nation mail, was also subject to censorship. Figure 7 is an example of a transit mail between neutral Netherlands and its colony, Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia), censored at Madras. Neutral nations protested strongly, arguing that neutral transit mail was not subject to censorship under the terms of the Hague Convention.³² The British countered that the Hague Convention rules did not apply during wartime.³³ This dispute was never resolved and Britain continued to censor transit mail during the war.

Censorship was generally not conducted on domestic Indian mail, except for that of listed individuals. Very few examples of this are known. Figure 8 illustrates the front and verso of a domestic cover marked with a Rangoon censor hand stamp and censor label indicating it was opened and reviewed by the censor. The cover was cancelled at R.M.S. (Rail Mail Service) on 12 January 1916 and received at Myaungmya, Burma, on 14 January 1916. These dates indicate there was only a brief delay in the mail from the censor review. It cannot be determined if the sender, the recipient, or both were subject to postal censorship.

CENSORSHIP AVOIDANCE

Undoubtedly, some mail evaded appropriate censorship. Censors reported different techniques being used to this end. Invisible writing (writing that is visible only after reacting with heat, light, or chemicals) was well known, but apparently rarely seen in India, as recorded in the War Office report. Censors reported letters using codes and ciphers, all of which were sent to the deputy chief censor. Another sophisticated approach included the sending of two letters with innocuous but slightly different texts within a few days of each other. The position of the key sentences would have been previously agreed upon; for example, the third sentence in the second paragraph. When the two sentences were read together, the real meaning of the message became apparent. Censors also recorded letters written in Arabic script but phonetically pronounced and understood in German.³⁴

Diplomatic and consular mail was also used to avoid censorship of private commercial correspondence.³⁵ Figure 9 illustrates



FIGURE 7. Transit mail cover sent between two neutral countries and passed by the censor at Madras, India.



FIGURE 8. A scarce example of an opened and censored cover sent and delivered within India. The front of the cover (left) shows an Indian address, and the verso (right) has a censor label and Rangoon censor hand stamp.

an American consulate cover sent from Aden in 1915. The cover does not appear to have been opened, but only handstamped with two censor marks: a military censor translator's hand stamp and the large "P" civilian censor mark.³⁶ Censors may have marked consulate correspondence as passed as a warning to consuls that

their correspondence was not beyond the purview of the censor. There was sufficient censorship of consulate mail that the consulates of Allied and neutral countries made formal complaints regarding censorship delays of their mail. Examples are known from Spain, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States.³⁷

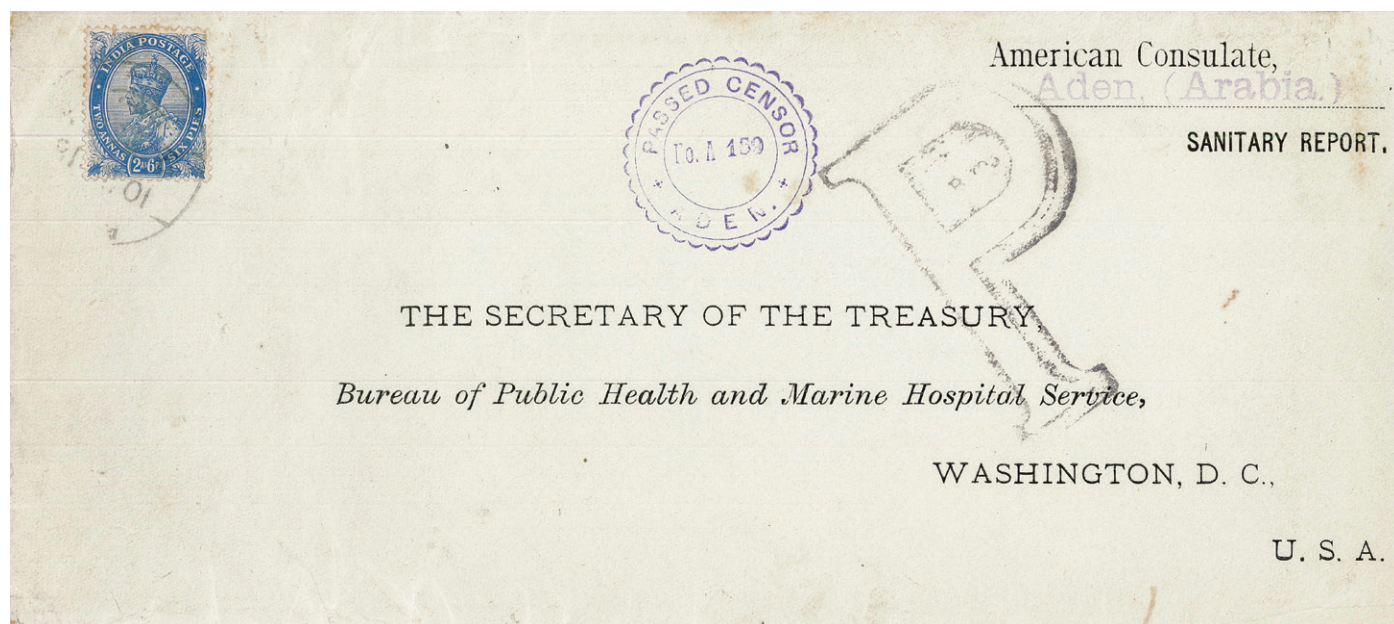


FIGURE 9. Cover sent from the American consulate in Aden to the secretary of the Treasury, Washington, D.C. The cover bears two censor hand stamps but was not opened for inspection.

THE END OF CENSORSHIP

After the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the War Office issued rules that allowed for the disposal of stopped mail throughout the British Empire. As a result, most of the stopped private mail and all prisoner-of-war mail was destroyed either during or shortly after the war. All negotiable financial instruments were turned over to the prize court for payment to the British Treasury. Any personal documents such as marriage licenses and birth certificates were returned to the sender. The War Office ordered examples of propaganda literature sent to His Majesty's Stationery Office, which collected such documents for study, and selected war-related materials to the (Imperial) War Museum, London.³⁸

CONCLUSIONS

Postal artifacts are an essential component in the study of postal censorship. Postal artifacts reveal how mail was opened and resealed, and how it was redacted. Over the course of the war, the Indian government expanded the list of British territories whose mail was subject to censor examination. Postal artifacts also document that listed individuals' mail was censored. The operational details of the censor office remain largely unknown, including the roles of women in the censor offices and the reasoning behind the use of numbered and unnumbered censor hand stamps. A study comparing the number of extant postal

artifacts opened and not opened by censors may provide additional guidance on the percentage of letter mail actually examined by censors.

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The Revolution Will Not Be Mailed: The U.S. Post Office's Role in Antiradicalism during and after World War I

Adam Quinn

ABSTRACT. During World War I, the United States government sought to suppress the activities of union members, socialists, anarchists, and other radicals viewed as disloyal and disruptive to the war effort. In the aftermath of the war, the U.S. government's efforts to quell radicalism reached new heights, including mass raids and deportations headed by the Bureau of Investigation and Bureau of Immigration. The U.S. Post Office Department also played a vital, yet understudied, role in wartime and postwar antiradicalism. Using records from the National Archives concerning the Espionage Act, this paper examines the Post Office's antiradical activities during and after World War I. The Post Office curtailed the ability of individuals, labor unions, and political organizations to communicate a range of dissident ideas through the mail. It also provided evidence for the prosecution and deportation of radicals for unlawful speech. The Post Office played a pivotal role in a period of ideological censorship and persecution that became a turning point for American discourses on loyalty, free speech, and civil liberties.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the early twentieth century, the American labor movement included anti-capitalist activists who advocated for a range of radical ideologies such as anarchism, syndicalism, and communism. The federal government was particularly interested in suppressing anarchists, who opposed both capitalism and government, and anyone the government considered to be "Bolshevik socialists," a broad term that government officials used to describe any socialist who seemed to believe in revolution or sympathize with the Bolsheviks in Russia (the Bolsheviks advocated for withdrawing from World War I, and did so once they were in power). Once the war began, their revolutionary ideologies made radicals natural suspects for sedition, and some radicals openly protested the war. While some radicals (especially in Europe) supported the Allies, viewing the war as an unfortunate but necessary battle against German imperialism, many radicals in the United States considered war to be at odds with their anti-capitalist, anti-nationalist, and, in some cases, pacifist philosophies.¹ These activists communicated their radical philosophies and anti-war messages in lecture halls, on soap boxes, and on factory floors. But mostly, they communicated through the mail.

Mail was central to the organization and culture of radical social movements in the United States. Historians have described the radical press as both "the movement's public face" and its "institutional base."² The press served as the primary means of communicating radicals' ideas, networking to build their communities, and fundraising to support labor and community organizing. In his study of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*, one of the largest Italian-language periodicals to have its second-class mailing privileges revoked by the Post Office Department, historian Andrew Hoyt noted that "publications, and not political

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parties or trade unions, connected thousands of Italian-speaking militants across the Atlantic world. [Publications] facilitated the movement of people and information, the creation of identity, the exchange of money, and the spread of tactics, thereby making possible mass-mobilization for collective action.”³ Historian Kenyon Zimmer described how the radical press created identity and community with the language of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities,” writing that anarchist print culture “created an imagined, text-based transnational community of anarchists, and transmitted the movement’s ideology across space while sustaining collective identities across time.”⁴

Hundreds of radical periodicals formed these text-based communities throughout the United States; many had circulations of tens of thousands, with subscribers in thousands of locations who shared the papers in workplaces, bookstores, and labor halls.⁵ In the late 1910s, the federal government declared the majority of the most popular radical periodicals to be non-mailable, revoked their second-class mailing privileges, and, in many cases, imprisoned or deported their publishers. This history of mail restriction is understudied, with most literature on the “First Red Scare” focusing on raids and mass arrests by the nascent Bureau of Investigation. This paper examines the central role that the Post Office Department played in this period of antiradical mobilization, arguing that its programs of mail control and surveillance helped suppress radical organizations and reshape America’s ideological landscape.

LEGAL PRETEXTS FOR RESTRICTING TEXTS

The federal response to dissidents during and after World War I built on earlier efforts to thwart radicals. On 6 September 1901, President William McKinley was shot by a self-proclaimed anarchist, dying from his wounds on 14 September. On 3 December 1901, his successor, Theodore Roosevelt, delivered his First Annual Message to Congress (what would now be called the State of the Union address). Roosevelt’s message was a fiery polemic against anarchism, describing it as “no more an expression of ‘social discontent’ than picking pockets or wife-beating.”⁶ Roosevelt called anarchists “more dangerous than any other” criminals, their ideology “a crime against the whole human race” and “of far blacker infamy” than even the slave trade.⁷

Roosevelt called for criminalizing anarchist speech, as he proclaimed, “No man or body of men preaching anarchistic doctrines should be allowed at large any more than if preaching the murder of some specified private individual. Anarchistic speeches, writings, and meetings are essentially seditious and treasonable.”⁸ However, most of Roosevelt’s policy proposals focused on anarchist immigration rather than speech. Soon after Roosevelt’s address, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1903. Also called the Anarchist Exclusion Act, this new law empowered the federal government to exclude (deny entry to) or deport immigrants who believed in anarchism. It was the first law to restrict immigration based on political beliefs since the

controversial and short-lived Alien and Sedition Act of 1798. No federal laws were passed in 1903 to restrict “anarchistic speeches, writings, or meetings,” as Roosevelt also had desired, but his association of anarchist speech with sedition and treason would later become entrenched in policy.

On 28 May 1908, during a renewed scare surrounding anarchist connections to recent labor unrest and assassinations,⁹ Congress finally acted against anarchist speech. Congress amended existing obscenity laws that barred indecent or obscene literature (ranging from erotica to information on contraception) from the mail, expanding the definition of obscene or indecent to include “matter of a character tending to incite arson, murder, or assassination.”¹⁰ Anarchism was a philosophy that advocated for a stateless, cooperative form of socialism, and most anarchist publications in the United States advocated for tactics like labor strikes and public protest, not assassinations. In practice, few (if any) anarchist publications demanded readers murder or assassinate anyone, but the Post Office barred general discussions of revolutionary politics and discussions of McKinley’s assassination from the mail. Anarchists had already been punished under earlier obscenity laws: for example, three editors of the anarchist weekly *Firebrand* were arrested in 1897 for including a Walt Whitman poem about lovemaking, “A Woman Waits for Me,” in one issue.¹¹ The expanded obscenity law allowed political speech to be targeted even if it did not involve sexuality or birth control.

Anarchist publications barred from the mail under obscenity laws in 1908 included *La Questione Sociale* (which Roosevelt called “immoral” for opposing government), *Freiheit*, *Volne Listy*, *Sorgiamo*, and *Nihil*.¹² The anarchist press told readers that the Post Office was informally interrupting the distribution of other anarchist publications such as *Mother Earth*, citing reports that many subscribers did not receive mailed issues.¹³ Clearly, there were many newspapers with radical political leanings, but the federal government lacked the resources to take action against most of them. That changed during World War I, when lawmakers connected the control of radical speech (and radical immigration) to a much more urgent problem than indecency: sedition.

After World War I began in Europe on 28 July 1914, the United States government became increasingly concerned about sedition: speech that incited resistance against the government. In December 1915, President Woodrow Wilson urged Congress to pass laws to purge the country of citizens who sought to “bring the authority and good name of our Government into contempt, [and] to destroy our industries,” as “[s]uch creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy must be crushed out.”¹⁴ A year and a half later, in April 1917, the United States entered World War I. The “disloyalty and anarchy” with which Wilson was concerned before became perceived as an immediate threat to national security.

To respond to this threat, the Espionage Act was signed into law on 15 June 1917. The Espionage Act is best known for making conveying information that would aid military enemies a crime. It also made attempting to cause disloyalty a crime, punishable by a fine and/or up to twenty years in prison.¹⁵ Wilson

wanted the act to allow the president to censor the press, but the Senate removed this provision by a one-vote margin.¹⁶ Rather than giving the president authority over what could appear in print, the Senate bill provided the Post Office with control over what could be sent through the mail. Material that could be declared nonmailable included anything that urged “treason, insurrection, or forcible resistance to any law of the United States.”¹⁷

The Espionage Act empowered the Post Office to use a few different methods to restrict such material. First, a publication (or multiple issues of a periodical) could be held pending an investigation. Second, if it was found to be problematic, the publication could be declared nonmailable by the Post Office’s solicitor (the highest legal authority in the agency; in this period, it was William H. Lamar). The Post Office would not accept nonmailable publications from senders and would inform local postmasters not to deliver them. If the publication was a periodical, future issues would be held for review.

After receiving notice that a publication was declared nonmailable, the postmaster general could revoke the sender’s second-class mailing privileges. Second-class mail included newspapers and other unsealed periodicals, which were delivered in bulk at just 1 cent per pound in 1917, and 1.25 cents per pound starting in 1918.¹⁸ Without second-class privileges, publishers would have to pay the first-class mail rate, 48 cents per pound in 1917–1918, and 32 cents per pound starting July 1919.¹⁹ The vast price difference meant having second-class privileges revoked was cost prohibitive for radical publications that relied on working-class subscribers for revenue.

Since first-class mail was sealed in envelopes, it was more difficult for the Post Office to effectively determine whether its contents violated the Espionage Act. The Post Office could obtain a search warrant, typically by focusing on addresses or names associated with a radical organization. After some radicals received tampered mail or never received expected mail, however, they accused postal inspectors of opening sealed mail without a warrant.²⁰

The Post Office’s powers were expanded further on 6 October 1917, when the Trading with the Enemy Act was passed. Although primarily concerned with wartime trade, the act required that translations of foreign language publications discussing the United States or any country involved in the war, or their policies or international relations, be submitted to the Post Office before they could be mailed.²¹ Any publication that did not file such a translation could be declared nonmailable. The Trading with the Enemy Act also made it unlawful to carry or transport any publications that were nonmailable according to either these provisions or those of the Espionage Act. This extended the Post Office’s legal authority beyond the services it provided, by making it unlawful for civilians and private mail companies to carry material that the Post Office declared nonmailable. This act also provided the Post Office with \$35,000 to hire newspaper readers and translators.²²

Finally, on 16 May 1918, Congress passed a set of amendments to the Espionage Act. (These amendments are often separately referred to as the Sedition Act, although postal officials

tended to prefer “Espionage Act” to encompass the original act and the amendments.) The amended Espionage Act made radical publishers more susceptible to mail restrictions and criminal prosecution. First, it allowed for the prosecution of anyone who would “willfully utter, print, write or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States.”²³ This further criminalized dissent and limited people’s ability to be critical of the Espionage Act itself or write about their experiences being prosecuted under it. The expanded Espionage Act also made it unlawful to “encourage resistance to the United States, or to promote the cause of its enemies.”²⁴ Restrictions on encouraging resistance provided further general recourse against dissent, and language concerning the cause of the United States’s enemies provided more specific recourse against publications sympathetic to the Bolsheviks in Russia.

Crucially, this expanded Espionage Act also made it illegal to incite the interruption of production related to the war. This provided the government with additional license to target unions, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW was an explicitly anti-capitalist union that the U.S. government considered both radical in ideology and a threat to wartime industries. The IWW’s 1916 convention passed a resolution declaring the union members to be “determined opponents of all nationalistic sectionalism, or patriotism, and the militarism preached and supported by our one enemy, the capitalist class. We condemn all wars.”²⁵ The union led copper and lumber strikes soon after the United States entered the war and continued to organize strikes throughout the war. This spurred governors and state legislators to call on the federal government to suppress the union for interrupting wartime production.²⁶

The Post Office started suppressing radical publications, such as the IWW’s, immediately with the 15 June 1917 passing of the original Espionage Act, declaring some issues from that very date nonmailable.²⁷ By 25 May 1918, a Post Office memo listed fifty-nine publications as having had their second-class mailing privileges revoked (while many more had individual issues declared nonmailable). Most of these nonmailable publications were attached to a union or radical political party, and the memo labeled most of them “anarchistic” or “Bolshevistic.”²⁸

In addition to restricting the use of the mail, the Post Office provided evidence for Espionage Act investigations headed by other agencies. In the years during and immediately following World War I, 1,500 people were charged under the Espionage Act, and over 1,000 were convicted.²⁹ Of the over 6,300 radicals for whom deportation warrants were executed between 1918 and 1925, 949 were eventually deported under the Anarchist Exclusion Act.³⁰ Due to conceptual overlap between unlawful uses of the mail, criminal offenses under the Espionage Act, and deportable offenses under immigration statutes, the Post Office was pivotal to many criminal and immigration cases involving political radicals. Through its nonmailable verdicts and revocation of second-class mailing privileges, the Post Office also disrupted the primary medium of communication for hundreds of organizations.

NONMAILABLE MATERIALS

The Post Office did not always provide explanations for why it ruled publications nonmailable or revoked second-class mailing privileges. However, correspondence involving the Post Office solicitor, postmaster general, and other government officials occasionally indicated either why a publication was flagged as potentially nonmailable or ultimately ruled to be mailable or nonmailable. These records provide valuable insight into which publications the federal government was targeting and why.

Naturally, some radical publications were declared nonmailable for their perspectives on the war. Problematic publications often discussed America's reasons for going to war and its foreign policy in Russia. For example, an issue of *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, a Yiddish anarchist newspaper, was declared nonmailable because it argued that in Russia the Allies were at war not with Germans, but with the Bolsheviks, quoting the "infamous" Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky on the matter.³¹ An especially common (and legally problematic) criticism of the war was that the working class was fighting a war declared by the ruling class. For example, the Bureau of Investigation suggested that *El Rebelde*, a Spanish-language newspaper associated with the IWW, might be nonmailable due to a passage that was translated as, "Workmen before going to war consider if you have anything to defend in it. If you have nothing let them go who have something to loose [*sic*]."³²

The Post Office often declared publications nonmailable for criticisms of wartime curtailments of civil liberties. Another issue of *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* was nonmailable because of an editorial that criticized the "Alien Anarchist Deportation Bill" (Immigration Act of 1918). The editorial characterized the deportation of anarchists as a violation of the freedoms for which soldiers were fighting, writing that the bill, "in the guise of liberty, actually aims at the opposite, and that slowly, slowly as the war goes on, everything for which millions are fighting will slip from out [of] our hands."³³ Although this editorial framed the war as a fight for freedom, its criticism of U.S. immigration law was still deemed disloyal and therefore unlawful.

The Post Office also regularly targeted writings about Espionage Act legal cases. For example, on 21 March 1918, a federal marshal arrested Ricardo Flores Magón and Librado Rivera for violating the Espionage Act by using the mail to send *Regeneración*, the newspaper of the Mexican Liberal Party (PLM).³⁴ Magón and Rivera were organizers within the PLM, an anarchist-influenced organization that was involved in strikes and uprisings before and during the Mexican Revolution. Documents that the Post Office considered when revoking *Regeneración's* second-class mailing privileges included an English-language flyer from the periodical that called for funds for fourteen arrested PLM and IWW members. Postal inspectors circled objectionable passages throughout the flyer that described the case, characterized it as racist, and criticized the penal and judicial systems of Texas.³⁵ Restricting speech critical of laws and criminal cases diminished radicals' capacity to defend themselves, raise

awareness and funds for their cases, and speak freely about perceived injustices.

Even when the Post Office did not indicate specifically objectionable language, it often seemed to focus on specific organizations or ideologies. When questioned by a socialist about the newspaper *American Socialist* being nonmailable, Solicitor Lamar remarked, "You people advocate international socialism, and international socialism is opposed to national governments, and therefore opposed to the government of the United States."³⁶ However, when pressed further, Lamar refused to say what in particular within the pages of *American Socialist* was nonmailable. The editors had hoped that they could simply remove specific objectionable content, but, instead, the Post Office simply revoked the newspaper's second-class mailing privileges.

In another case in April 1918, Solicitor Lamar ruled that a "blank application form for [IWW] membership" was nonmailable.³⁷ The form in question included blank spaces for personal information and the preamble to the IWW constitution.³⁸ This version of the preamble, written in 1908, openly advocated against capitalism and spoke in favor of unionizing and striking by industry (rather than by trade), but it did not mention anything about the war. This suggests the IWW itself and its ideology may have been targeted, rather than specific disruptive or antiwar speech. This is further evidenced by search warrants for first-class mail sent by or to addresses associated with the IWW. In one case, the Post Office received a search warrant to seize and open 40,000 envelopes of such first-class mail; postal inspectors opened 19,810 envelopes as a result of this warrant.³⁹

These envelopes contained 19,534 copies of the *Daily Bulletin* (also known as the *Trial Bulletin* and *IWW Trial Bulletin*), which raised awareness and funds for IWW members' legal cases.⁴⁰ An internal Post Office Department memo stated that most of these bulletins were ruled to be "nonmailable because they contain a cut of 'The Man Behind the Bars.'"⁴¹ This illustration was used by multiple organizations of a man pointing to the viewer from behind prison bars, with the caption, "Remember! We Are In HERE For YOU; You Are Out THERE For US!" (Figure 1). The same internal memo specified that only the illustration, not the "reading matter," violated the Espionage Act.⁴² Besides its portrayal of a prisoner (which the reading matter also discussed) and its evocation of Uncle Sam, this image does not seem to have any direct relevance to the war. Perhaps identifying an image as nonmailable allowed the Post Office to expedite its search through this massive amount of mail. Or perhaps focusing on an image rather than text provided intentional ambiguity to the ruling.

Solicitor Lamar's reasons for nonmailable status were often vague, but he did not always rule against radical publications. For example, the Chicago postmaster, the third assistant postmaster general, Congressman William Mason, and a civilian contacted Solicitor Lamar with concerns about the May 1918 issue of *Young Socialists' Magazine*.⁴³ However, Lamar found that the issue contained only one, unspecific reference to war and therefore declared it mailable.⁴⁴ Although he did not feel he had the

No. 10 **DAILY BULLETIN** No. 10
 Issued by the Defense News Service, 1001 W. Madison St., Chicago, Ill.
 Chicago, Ill., April 12th, 1918.

THE I. W. W. TRIAL AT CHICAGO

JAIL CONDITIONS WHITEWASHED BY "COMMITTEE"

Prosecutor Nebeker Discovers Another "Conspiracy"

The complaint about unsanitary conditions and unhealthful and insufficient food in the Cook County Jail has been investigated. A committee of fourteen federal grand jurors headed by L. A. Smith of Joliet, Ills; looked into the charges made by the I. W. W. boys, and now everything is all right. This committee, after spending some short time in the grim grey corridors of the jail, and gingerly sampling the food, have reported that the inmates have no reason for complaint whatever. Mr. Smith made a statement to the press "Conditions are as good as



Remember!
 We Are In HERE For YOU;
 You Are Out THERE for US!

that come in through the bars when the windows are opened. When it is known that men are locked up three

igation, and report everything to be in fine shape. No doubt Jailor Davies earnestly desired a report of this kind to keep the real horrors of his jail from reaching the public. But the facts in the case have been unaltered by the statement of this so-called 'committee.' The truth is that conditions in the Cook County Jail are worse than almost any other institution in the country.

The I. W. W. prisoners, it will be remembered, were brought to Chicago from jails in all parts of the United States—from coast to coast. It is utter folly to try to tell these men that conditions in the bastille of Cook County compare favorably with other jails. They know better and can prove it. And a real investigation would bear out their contention.

Nebeker Springs Another Good One.
 Mr. Nebeker, the well known Corporation Trust corporation lawyer in

FIGURE 1. "The Man Behind the Bars" illustration, with green highlight by a postal inspector, *Daily Bulletin*, 12 April 1918. From the National Archives, File #51328, Post Office Records Relating to the Espionage Act, Record Group 28, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

legal authority to declare the magazine nonmailable, a frustrated Lamar bemoaned to New York's assistant U.S. district attorney that it "is not very good material for the youths to read, and [the author] Mr. Pinchet means even more than he says. I do not like the paragraph referring to the IWW and the Bolsheviks."⁴⁵ In another case, the Post Office received multiple complaints about *The Ladies' Garment Cutter*, the newspaper of the Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters' Union. Letters to the Post Office from the War Department claimed the paper "provokes class feeling and a veiled threat of disloyalty"⁴⁶ and said that, although the paper "refrains from saying what it apparently wants to say . . . it means more than mere words say."⁴⁷ However, Lamar found the paper did not violate the Espionage or Trading with the Enemy acts.

In addition to its efforts to control the use of the mail, the Post Office aided other agencies in criminal cases against radicals. For example, the previously mentioned case against Ricardo Flores Magón and Librado Rivera of the PLM grew to a multi-agency project of evidence collection involving any mail related to *Regeneración* and its publishers. The Office of Naval Intelligence

informed the Post Office of a letter intercepted from Magón's wife that indicated that the publishers of *Regeneración* were still mailing the periodical across national borders. Recognizing that "these people are attempting to reach all parts of the world with their propaganda," Naval Intelligence offered to assist "in any way in running them to earth."⁴⁸ The Office of the U.S. Attorney had the Post Office send any materials intercepted from "the Magons [*sic*] or their friends" to their office to help prosecute the Magóns.⁴⁹ Post Office Inspector Cookson was enthusiastic about assisting, sending additional exhibits to aid in Magón and Rivera's prosecution, which he felt would "tend greatly to eliminate such propaganda" in the Southwest.⁵⁰

Magón and Rivera were found guilty on 19 July 1918 and sentenced to twenty and fifteen years in prison, respectively. Magón died in prison from complications related to diabetes in 1922. Rivera was imprisoned until 1923 and then deported to Mexico. Their case was one of many in which the Post Office was instrumental in both prosecuting radicals and restricting mail concerning their cases. Arrests of radical newspaper publishers included Franz Widmer of *L'Era Nova*, Emma Goldman

of *Mother Earth*, Alexander Berkman of *The Blast*, and Luigi Galleani and Giovanni Eramo of the *Cronaca Sovversiva*.⁵¹

REACTIONS TO POSTAL CENSORSHIP

Radicals protested and attempted to subvert the Post Office's suppression. *Il Proletario*, a paper associated with both the Italian Socialist Federation and the IWW, tried to circumvent the Post Office through several means. First, in late 1917, the publishers attempted to mail the periodical without first filing a "true translation" with the Post Office, as the Trading with the Enemy Act required. The Post Office noticed this and rejected the publication from the mail. *Il Proletario*'s editor, Angelo Faggi, then sent the publication through the American Express Company, but this attempt was foiled as well.⁵² In February 1918, Boston's postmaster seized two securely tied bundles of the periodical, wrapped in "American newspapers," containing a total of 300 copies of *Il Proletario*.⁵³ Next, Faggi mailed the periodical through the Post Office, including a "True Translation Filed with the Post Office" disclaimer before any translations were actually submitted. Faggi was arrested by the Bureau of Investigation for mailing these issues, and deported in 1919.

While some tried to circumvent censorship, many also protested it. The Post Office received letters with complaints that it was violating the First Amendment, the definition of nonmailable material was too broad, and/or the solicitor was acting as the editor of all publications in the United States. For example, voters in a mass meeting in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, decided the city should write to the president and postmaster general to demand an end to the "despotic and unconstitutional suppression."⁵⁴

Much of this protest was not even sympathetic to radicals. One pastor, Thomas Woodrow, wrote to the postmaster general saying if socialists "are held back in words and not allowed freedom of expression, they are apt to become more revolutionary in action, which is worse."⁵⁵ This was a prescient point; historians have identified wartime suppression as a spark for more desperate, militant, and violent actions in the late 1910s and early 1920s. For example, anarchists involved in the nonmailable *Cronaca Sovversiva* addressed mail bombs to government officials including Solicitor Lamar.⁵⁶ Even organizations that did not respond with violence still used their suppression as a rallying cry. Figure 2 shows an IWW flyer that lists ways in which the "organization has been foully dealt with," including murder, deportation, being denied the right of free press, and being denied the use of the mails (this flyer was declared nonmailable).⁵⁷

Other members of the public wrote in support of the Post Office. For example, a librarian at Crozer Theological Seminary wrote to Solicitor Lamar, "What the government does is of course right, and we shall be guided accordingly."⁵⁸ Additionally, some concerned citizens, including newspaper publishers, alerted the Post Office to disloyal publications. In September 1917, the *Hartford Times* published an exposé that accused local German-language newspaper *Connecticut Staats-Zeitung* of paying lip service through advertisements for Liberty bonds only to mask

its true anti-American views, including claims such as that the "Allied Nations are only out for Booty [and] the 'war against Autocracy' [is] only an excuse."⁵⁹ William H. Worrell, a philologist at a seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, believed that the *Connecticut Staats-Zeitung* provided "aid and comfort to the enemy," so he sent a copy of the exposé to Solicitor Lamar.⁶⁰

In response to letters of protest across the political spectrum, Solicitor Lamar insisted that his actions were constitutional and that radical publications did, in fact, "handicap the Government in its military interventions."⁶¹ Government actions to suppress radical publications were upheld in the 1919 Supreme Court case *Schenck v. United States* and the 1925 Supreme Court case *Gitlow v. New York*, which both ruled that radical and anti-government speech posed a "clear and present danger" to bring about "substantive evils" and was therefore not constitutionally protected.

THE 1920S AND BEYOND

These Supreme Court rulings against radical speech would not be overturned until 1969's *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, which required a more imminent (rather than abstract) call for violence, revolution, or crime for speech to be unlawful. In the short term, rather than being repealed or overturned, antiradical legislation, such as the Anarchist Exclusion Act, various states' laws against syndicalism or anarchism, and portions of the Espionage Act, gradually fell into disuse.

Records indicate that the Post Office's antiradical activities slowed but continued at least into the early 1920s. For example, letters between the Post Office and the Bureau of Investigation state that copies of dozens of radical publications were pulled from the mail and sent to the Bureau of Investigation throughout 1920,⁶² and the New York-based Swedish socialist newspaper *Folket* was scrutinized by postal officials throughout 1921 (but Lamar's successor, John H. Edwards, ultimately ruled it mailable).⁶³ The National Archives' 1917–1921 collection of Post Office Records Relating to the Espionage Act does not provide a detailed account of the 1920s. Further research in other collections might shed light on shifting dynamics within the Post Office under a new postmaster general and new solicitor in 1921. In lieu of additional primary sources, the secondary literature documents well the general impact of the federal government's campaign against radicalism.

Even though radicals continued to publish their writings, their ideas became increasingly marginal throughout the 1920s. Historian Beverly Gage remarked that, "By the mid-1920s, opposition to radicalism had become a litmus test for entry into American politics . . . the new antiradicalism . . . was more assumed than explained," as activists tried to not sound "communitistic."⁶⁴ This broad shift in American political culture cannot be attributed to the Post Office alone, but the surveillance and censorship of dissident publications during and after World War I seem pivotal.

While antiradicalism may have had a chilling effect on the spectrum of acceptable political opinion, it also spurred free

WITH DROPS OF BLOOD

THE HISTORY OF

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD HAS BEEN WRITTEN

Ever since the I. W. W. was organized in June, 1905, there has been an inquisitorial campaign against its life and growth, inaugurated by the Chambers of Commerce, Profiteers, large and small, and authorities of State and Nation in temporary power.

The Industrial Workers of the World is a Labor organization composed of sober, honest, industrious men and women. Its chief purposes are to abolish the system of wage slavery and to improve the conditions of those who toil.

This organization has been foully dealt with; drops of blood, bitter tears of anguish, frightful heart pains have marked its every step in its onward march of progress.

- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been murdered.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been imprisoned.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been tarred and feathered.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been deported.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been starved.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been beaten.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied the right of citizenship.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been exiled.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have had their homes invaded.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have had their private property and papers seized.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied the privilege of defense.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been held in exorbitant bail.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been subjected to involuntary servitude.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been kidnapped.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been subjected to cruel and unusual punishment.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been "framed and unjustly accused.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been excessively fined.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have died in jail waiting for trial.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been driven insane through persecution.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied the use of the mails.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied the right to organize.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied the right of free speech.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied the right of free press.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied the right of free assembly.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied every privilege guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.
- I. W. W. MEMBERS have been denied the inherent rights proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence—Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.
- I. W. W. Halls, Offices and Headquarters have been raided.
- I. W. W. property, books, pamphlets, stamps, literature, office fixtures have been unlawfully seized.
- I. W. W. as an organization and its membership have been viciously maligned, vilified and persecuted.

FIGURE 2. A flyer published by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) on how their history has been written "with drops of blood." Over a printed background of blood spatter, the flyer includes examples of repression that IWW members faced, such as being denied the use of the mails, being deported, and being subjected to raids, incarceration, and murder. William Haywood, "With Drops of Blood the History of the Industrial Workers of the World Has Been Written" (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1919), Library of Congress, Printed Ephemera Collection, portfolio 18, folder 55.

speech advocates to action. Notably, the repression of the late 1910s prompted the founding of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Still the largest civil liberties advocacy organization in the United States, the ACLU had early victories in the 1920s, including a scathing report on the Department of Justice's postwar antiradicalism that helped spark Senate hearings and prevent a peacetime sedition bill.⁶⁵ Throughout the 1920s, the ACLU was part of a patchwork alliance of civil liberties activists, including radicals, that saw some success in reframing antiradicalism and censorship as excessive. For example, in December 1923, Carlo Tresca, the publisher of the frequently nonmailable Italian-language radical newspaper *Il Martello*, was convicted of obscenity for publishing a two-line advertisement for a book on birth control (though his initial arrest followed complaints from Mussolini's government for an article criticizing the Italian monarchy). Tresca received a 366-day prison sentence, the longest in U.S. history for disseminating information on birth control.⁶⁶ Among Tresca's allies were civil liberties organizations founded in the aftermath of World War I, including the ACLU, the American Birth Control League, and the Workers Defense Union, as well as journalists in established publications such as the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Nation*. A campaign comprising criticism in the press and letter-writing to the federal government succeeded; President Coolidge commuted Tresca's sentence to four months.⁶⁷ Stronger legal protections for radical and "obscene" speech were still decades away, and radicals were still persecuted, but Tresca's case indicates a gradual shift in public opinion toward favoring a free press and free use of the mail.

CONCLUSION

World War I was a major turning point for American policing, protest, and civil liberties. Historians have long studied the roles of activists, courts, and the federal government in the history of dissent, suppression, and fights for free speech during and after World War I.⁶⁸ The Post Office has tended to play a peripheral and passive role in these narratives of suppressing dissent during World War I. Most works on World War I dissent and policing provide in-depth analyses of social movements and institutions, such as the Department of Justice, while mentioning the Post Office only in passing.⁶⁹ Only a few of these works have consulted Post Office sources. As historian Peter Conolly-Smith remarked in his 2009 study of the Bureau of Investigation, the Post Office, and domestic surveillance during World War I, the Post Office's Espionage Act records are a "massive collection often referred to in FBI historiography, but rarely used" themselves.⁷⁰ While Conolly-Smith's work put the Post Office records in conversation with the historiography of FBI surveillance, this essay utilized these rarely-researched records to study the Post Office itself.

This essay contributes to a small but growing body of literature on World War I Post Office censorship, including Donald Johnson's 1962 work on President Wilson and Postmaster Burleson's roles in wartime censorship, Jon Bekken's 1991 overview

of postal censorship in the United States, and Philip M. Glende's 2008 article on the Post Office's actions against socialist *Milwaukee Leader* publisher Victor Berger.⁷¹ Utilizing Post Office records and centering the mail in this narrative makes clear that the Post Office systematically targeted radical publications, leading to struggles over radicalism and free speech being actively fought by, through, and against the Post Office. Considering the earlier history of Post Office antiradicalism alongside Solicitor Lamar's sometimes ideologically driven statements, it also becomes clear that the Post Office was concerned not just with preventing the use of the mail for antiwar speech, but with suppressing a broad range of anti-capitalist ideas and organizations.

By arresting and deporting people for disloyal speech, the U.S. government delimited new boundaries of citizenship, belonging, and obligation that set limits on radical speech. As this essay has shown, the Post Office was an integral part of this antiradical project, as many Espionage Act cases were sparked by, or focused on, evidence collected from the mail. Moreover, the Post Office's own mail surveillance and restriction disrupted radical networks and placed explicit and implicit restrictions on the ideas people could communicate. While the Department of Justice's arrests punished those who communicated radical ideas, the Post Office often prevented these ideas from being communicated in the first place. Together, the Department of Justice and the Post Office Department transformed the American political landscape, demarcating limits to what speech was allowed and precipitating an influential civil liberties movement.

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The Mail of Prisoners of the Great War: Picture Postcards and Aid-Related Cards

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ABSTRACT. The First World War is usually considered to have been a senseless bloodbath characterized by unbridled cruelty. However, the Great War was the first colossal military conflict that took place after the Hague Conventions, introduced in 1899 and amended in 1907 in Geneva. These conventions set major restrictions on the conduct of war, particularly regarding the treatment of prisoners, and all participants either attempted to observe it or at least pretended to do so. Among other obligations, belligerents had to provide captured military personnel with the possibility to correspond frank-free with people in their home countries. The International Committee of the Red Cross oversaw compliance with the restrictions and obligations of the Hague Conventions and its amendments. Because of these regulations and the goodwill of governments and private individuals, the Great War had a humanitarian aspect that can be demonstrated with philatelic evidence, namely the prisoners' mail. Four types of cards will be used: commercial illustrated postcards; formular postal cards with rather uniform messages, sent from captivity; postcards with illustrations created by prisoners themselves, either handmade or printed; and mail related to aid sent to the camps by governments and by private benefactors.

INTRODUCTION

The total number of prisoners of war (POWs) in the Great War exceeded all prewar expectations and is estimated at its peak to have been 8.5 million. Due to mortality and transfer of interned POWs in neutral countries, by November 1918, when the armistice was signed, there were still an estimated 6.5 million POWs, the vast majority of whom were held in camps in Central and Eastern Europe. Russia and Germany each held around 2.4 million POWs, while Austria-Hungary held between 1.2 and 1.9 million, according to differing sources.¹

The treatment of prisoners during World War I was regulated by the treaties of the Hague Conventions introduced in 1899, amended in 1907, and which all belligerents had signed.² Control over compliance with these regulations was, together with many other functions, performed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

There were several reasons for the participants of the war to observe the declarations of the conventions. First, they expected enemy countries to respond in kind toward their prisoners.³ Second, mass media already defined public opinion, and the good treatment of prisoners had a high propaganda value. Third, most warring countries experienced acute shortages of labor, and better treatment of POWs provided certain economic advantages. Finally, the ICRC was influential enough to apply pressure on governments, and various religious organizations, particularly the American YMCA, considered aid to prisoners their moral obligation.

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The Hague Conventions and their emphasis on the “humane treatment” of POWs were quite important to the lives of prisoners, as can be seen in the illustrated postcards, both commercial and produced in the camps, that POWs sent home. Nevertheless, the conventions did not address some issues that emerged during the Great War. For instance, it did not mention the word “torture” and stated only that the POWs “must be humanely treated.”⁴ It specified that POWs must be treated like the soldiers of the captor’s own army; an explicit ban on torture did not appear until the international Geneva Convention of 1929.⁵ In fact, some armies, especially the Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies, tolerated the torture of their own soldiers before and during World War I, so similar treatment of POWs did not directly violate the international law. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that imprisoned soldiers in Russia and Austria-Hungary, and especially soldiers from these countries held elsewhere, were treated worse, in general, than other POWs.

POSTCARDS AS PRIMARY HISTORICAL SOURCES

The regulations of the Hague Conventions included the right of the POWs to correspond with their home countries frank-free; for this purpose, prisoners had to be supplied by their captors with blank postal cards for free or at a nominal price. Usually, the prisoners were allowed to mail between four and eight postcards, as well as two letters per month. However, surviving envelopes rarely have their contents intact, so messages on the numerous remaining postcards are often the main source of information regarding how countries treated their prisoners. In particular, the cards make clear that a sizeable proportion of POWs was treated relatively well and that prisoners of some, though not all, countries received generous aid from their home countries. The cards also suggest that prisoners received better treatment from their captors if they were from countries whose governments, as well as private benefactors, sent substantial aid to their POWs, especially those from Germany and England.

The most common cards remaining today are blank formular postal cards, that is, postal cards with some elements pre-printed, including an indication of postage-free mailing, a return address, and the destination country. Some of these cards also included defined choices for the sender to mark: “My health is good/average/ I am in a hospital,” “I received parcel in good/average/incomplete condition,” “I received last letter on . . .,” and so on. Some formular postal cards had the letters of the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets printed around the message space to help less literate soldiers.

However, not all POWs used formular cards. The war broke out at the peak of the “golden age” of picture postcards. Even before the war, it was common to send picture postcards (PPCs) by mail from new or unusual places to supplement a written message with imagery.⁶ It is surprising that some prisoners preferred

this relatively costly and occasionally difficult-to-procure medium for correspondence, spending some of their allowance to buy or even produce PPCs to send home. This phenomenon can be regarded as historic evidence of local conditions in the camps, the treatment and morale of prisoners, and the prisoners’ attitudes to the host countries. In particular, the humanitarian aspect of captivity, generally overshadowed by the war’s brutality, has been lately the subject of several academic publications, and the illustrated postcards sent by prisoners to families and friends further illustrate this point.⁷

The appreciation of the importance of postcards as historical artifacts emerged by the end of the 1980s.⁸ Nevertheless, these postcards and other postal material related to captivity present certain challenges in comparison to other primary sources. Four particular challenges arise: two related to distinguishing the senders of the cards, and two related to their availability for historical research.

First, in any study of their correspondence, one must remember that the POWs did not have the same legal protections as most internees, and, therefore, must be considered separately. This is important since, in accordance with the Hague Conventions, civilian internees were allowed to send letters and postcards to their home countries and mark them as “mail of prisoner of war.” Usually, civilian internees experienced better conditions than military prisoners: they could seek well-rewarded employment but not be forced to work or punished for minor offences. It is often difficult to distinguish the mail of military POWs from that of internees, however.⁹

In some countries, the internees were kept in special camps. In Britain, internees were sent to the largest British camp, Knockaloe on the Isle of Man. British internees in Germany were assembled in the famous camp at Ruhleben near Berlin, which was exemplary in its treatment of prisoners. In April 1916, the Germans found that due to the size of Ruhleben’s territory, its internees had created an internal postal system—an alleged violation of German postal law giving the state a monopoly on postal services. They discontinued the practice and punished the British postmaster.

The Hague Conventions provided internees with the right to send their correspondence as prisoner-of-war mail—but it did not stipulate, as it did for military POWs, that all such mail could be sent postage-free. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, Russia was the only country that charged internees to post their mail at the going postal rate. Thus, the nonregistered mail from Russia marked “mail of POWs” that was sent by internees was franked, which makes it easily identifiable.

The second challenge in using mailed materials as primary sources addressing the treatment of POWs is the difference between the greater quantity and occurrence of illustrated postcards sent in the mail by enlisted and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) as opposed to that of rank-and-file men, who made up the much larger percentage of POWs. In accordance with the Hague Conventions, officers received substantial salaries; they

could not be forced to work, had orderlies (and therefore plenty of time for correspondence), and they had better living accommodations. Importantly, they were also literate. Unlike officers, in addition to being less likely to be literate, particularly if from certain countries, soldiers worked in the POW camps and did various menial jobs outside of the camp, sometimes working very hard, and did not have much time to write. Almost all British, German, and French POWs were literate, and the proportion of PPCs, as well as other correspondence, from these countries' soldiers was very high. However, the literacy level was uneven in different parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and less than half of Russian, Turkish, and rank-and-file soldiers from some other armies could even write their own names. Not surprisingly, the representation of surviving mail from the officers of these countries is disproportionately high. Unless the rank of the sender (officer or rank-and-file soldier) is indicated in the letter itself, which was generally not required, it is difficult to distinguish illustrated mail sent by officers from that sent by soldiers.

When trying to develop a well-rounded picture of POW life and attention from various states to humanitarian standards and goals, a third challenge is the limited availability of mail from particular ethnic or national groups. While illustrated postcards from POWs in Russia are perhaps the most common on today's market, such mail sent home by Russian prisoners from other countries is much rarer, because of the attitude of the Soviet government to former prisoners, especially if they did not join the Bolshevik party immediately after or even before Russia left the war in October 1917. These former servicemen had seen the Western world, socialized with foreigners, and often learned one or more foreign languages, all of which made them objects of suspicion. Indeed, the Soviet secret service, the NKVD, maintained records on some former POWs for twenty years, until the beginning of the next world war.¹⁰ This suspicion, to cite a well-known example, resulted in the execution in 1937 of a prominent Soviet marshal, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, who was imprisoned during World War I in the officers' camp in Ingolstadt together with French officer and later general, Charles de Gaulle. According to Soviet prosecutors, de Gaulle had recruited Tukhachevsky to work for several Western intelligence services.¹¹

The fourth difficulty is that of locating mail to and from the Ottoman Empire in the global market of collectibles. This is true for most countries that emerged after the end of the world war and the civil war in the Empire—Turkey itself, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, etc. In general, although the Ottoman Empire was a signatory to the Hague Convention of 1907, little information is available on prisoners of war held by the Ottoman Empire (primarily in the region of present-day Turkey) or on Ottoman Turk prisoners of war held elsewhere, particularly those in Russian captivity. The number of Ottoman prisoners, largely Turkish, in Russia was estimated to range between 20,000 and 90,000. These estimates were based not on official Ottoman records, but instead largely on the meticulous and extensive private notes kept by Austro-Hungarian prisoners. The estimated

mortality of Ottoman prisoners in Russia was 43%, one of the highest among all categories of POWs.¹² The difficulty in locating philatelic materials from Ottoman prisoners and from Ottoman prisons means conclusions regarding the importance and use of postcards by prisoners cannot be reached.

CENSORSHIP

In addition to the aforementioned difficulties, to use the philatelic materials as historical sources one has to unravel numerous markings found on POW mail. Obviously, all mail from POWs had to be censored by the captor, and those procedures differed in different countries. For instance, outgoing mail from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires was usually censored locally. In Germany, POW camps fell under the care of local military districts and the censorship of outgoing mail was decentralized. Additionally, the German government introduced a notorious ten-day "quarantine" in February 1915, believing that such a delay prevented the disclosure of time-sensitive information. Quarantined letters and postcards were marked with "F. a." (*Fristgemäß abgefertigt*—dispatched in a timely manner).¹³ Governments of the Entente (Allied) countries (Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, etc.) and the administrations of some camps unsuccessfully protested this German practice both directly, applying similar delays and other methods of reprisal, and also by filing complaints with the Red Cross, but the regulation remained in effect till the end of the war.

In some cases, mail was censored twice: once in the country of origin and again at its destination. Thus, all mail sent to Russia was censored in Petrograd or Moscow and all mail to Austria-Hungary in Vienna or Budapest. In the beginning of the war, Great Britain had censored incoming mail (see, for instance, Figure 1), but by March 1915 the military authority decided that it required too many resources and did not yield enough useful intelligence, and discontinued this practice. (According to David Skipton, a leading authority on postal censorship, however, select correspondence was undoubtedly surveilled.¹⁴) France did not censor incoming mail. As a rule, Germany censored neither civilian domestic mail nor incoming mail from POWs and internees, with the occasional exception concerning prisoners of Alsatian origin due to the region's location and the population's split loyalty between Germany and France. Other countries usually did not censor incoming mail from POWs.

In any case, the senders had to be very cautious; on the one hand, they were not allowed to include any complaints, which had to be addressed exclusively to the ICRC, and on the other, they should not write about their captivity too positively in case word got out and suggested to disloyal servicemen that surrender was an attractive option. As was often the case, the imagery on the postcards conveyed additional meaning.

It may be that in some other cases commercial illustrated postcards were used by early prisoners because of a shortage of formular cards. However, I am aware of only one case when



FIGURE 1. Postcard with a photograph of the town of Freistadt in Austria-Hungary, sent from there by a British prisoner of war, December 1914. The address side has several censor marks, including a British censor mark with letters “P.C.” Here and in subsequent figures, the top and bottom images reproduce the front of the card and the address side, respectively. These and all other photos in this essay are from the author’s collection.

POWs complained about such a shortage; it happened in Italy in the middle of the war.

THE USE OF COMMERCIAL PICTURE POSTCARDS

Despite the availability of formular cards required by the Hague Conventions, some prisoners used picture postcards to correspond with their home countries. The proportion of such postcards varied widely depending on the conditions of captivity, censorship requirements, freedom of movement outside the camps, and so on. For example, while the treatment of German POWs held by the British was relatively good, the number of PPCs sent by German POWs in British camps was disproportionately low because Britain did not allow its prisoners to send uncensored PPCs (see below).

In my rough estimate, based on the process of building my own collection over roughly ten years and the analysis of the offerings on the largest auction websites, illustrated postcards made up to 1–3% of mail sent by prisoners. To my knowledge, illustrated postcards were never provided by camp administrations, though the possibility that they may have been sold in camp canteens cannot be ruled out. In any case, prisoners had to purchase them themselves.

RUSSIA

About 85% of the 2.4 million POWs held in Russia were from Austria-Hungary, and many of them were of Slavic descent. Therefore, PPCs sent from Russian captivity to Austria-Hungary are the most common illustrated postcards on the market. Another reason for their abundance is the fact that about 50% of the prisoners lived outside the camps performing various construction and agricultural jobs, carried identification cards, and were able to use civilian post offices. In these cases, their mail has date stamps from the Russian post. In camps, mail was collected in bags and given no postal markings.

The Red Cross assigned neutral Denmark to handle virtually all mail from Russia to enemy countries, while neutral Sweden handled parcels, money transfers, and other forms of aid. The route via Denmark was very slow because the Russian post was overwhelmed by the amount of prisoners' mail. This mail encountered other delays along its way, including censorship and transfer via the Red Cross, especially toward the end of the war, when it could take up to ninety days to reach its destination. After all, the camps were spread all over the Russian Empire, from central European Russia to the Russian Far East near Vladivostok. Most countries had by then discontinued arrival postmarks, so it's impossible to determine the time in transit unless the recipient marked the arrival date.

The subjects of commercial PPCs available in Russia were extremely diverse: local landmarks, *Grüß aus* ("Greetings from") postcards, landscapes surrounding camp sites, local peoples, and so on. PPCs in Russia were more expensive than in other

countries; the cost of a color postcard could buy about half of a good meal, and the quality of the cards was often very high. Figure 2 shows a PPC signed by a soldier. This is a rare find, since the senders did not have to indicate their rank. The postcard has a light purple Russian censor mark, «Д. Ц.» ("Approved by censor"), the circular red censor mark used in Budapest, and the light blue handwritten initials of the Hungarian censor. (Unlike most other countries, all Austro-Hungarian censor marks had to carry personal identification.)¹⁵

An unusual postcard is shown in Figure 3. At first glance, it is a charity Easter card showing a Red Cross nurse with a boy helping a wounded soldier. In fact, the nurse was the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, who was trained by the Red Cross and indeed worked in hospitals, and the boy was her son, the heir to Russian throne, Prince Alexei. The picture was popular and easily recognizable, and the prisoner, we can speculate, was able to express his pro-Russian feelings without being detected or at least without leaving the Czech officials something to censor. The subjects of the picture are not mentioned in the message nor printed by the publisher.

Some censors missed (or just ignored) obvious hints expressed by prisoners. Thus, a Russian censor should have noticed a hare in Figure 4 which might have indicated the prisoner's desire to escape. This was a popular topic that could be illustrated by other similar pictures; perhaps censors were allowed to perceive them as jokes.

The treatment of POWs by Russian authorities was harshly criticized by Elsa Brändström, the daughter of the Swedish ambassador to Russia, who brought material aid from the Swedish Red Cross to German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners in Siberia. She grew up in Russia, spoke Russian fluently, and became known as the "Angel of Siberia" for her difficult and dangerous work. In the fall of 1915, she reported on the typhoid epidemics in Sretensk, a camp in Siberia 6,500 km east of Moscow where patients lived in a very harsh climate and were left without any medical care and, sometimes, even primitive sanitary facilities. Her reports were widely distributed in world media.

GERMANY

The publicity that the typhoid epidemics in Sretensk received in the world press was somewhat biased, since similar epidemics (typhus) had emerged earlier in February of 1915 in German camps Gardelegen and Wittenberg due to overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions. Although the mortality in completely isolated barracks was very high, the reports of these tragedies in Germany were not spread nearly as wide as in the Sretensk case. It seems that the prisoners of these camps did not dare to write about the epidemic, as might be suggested by the text on the PPC in Figure 5. The sender writes at length about his family in France inserting just one sentence presumably related to the actual situation: "I cannot write about it all."

In Germany, 75% of POWs lived outside the camps, and they definitely could choose to send PPCs as frequently as they

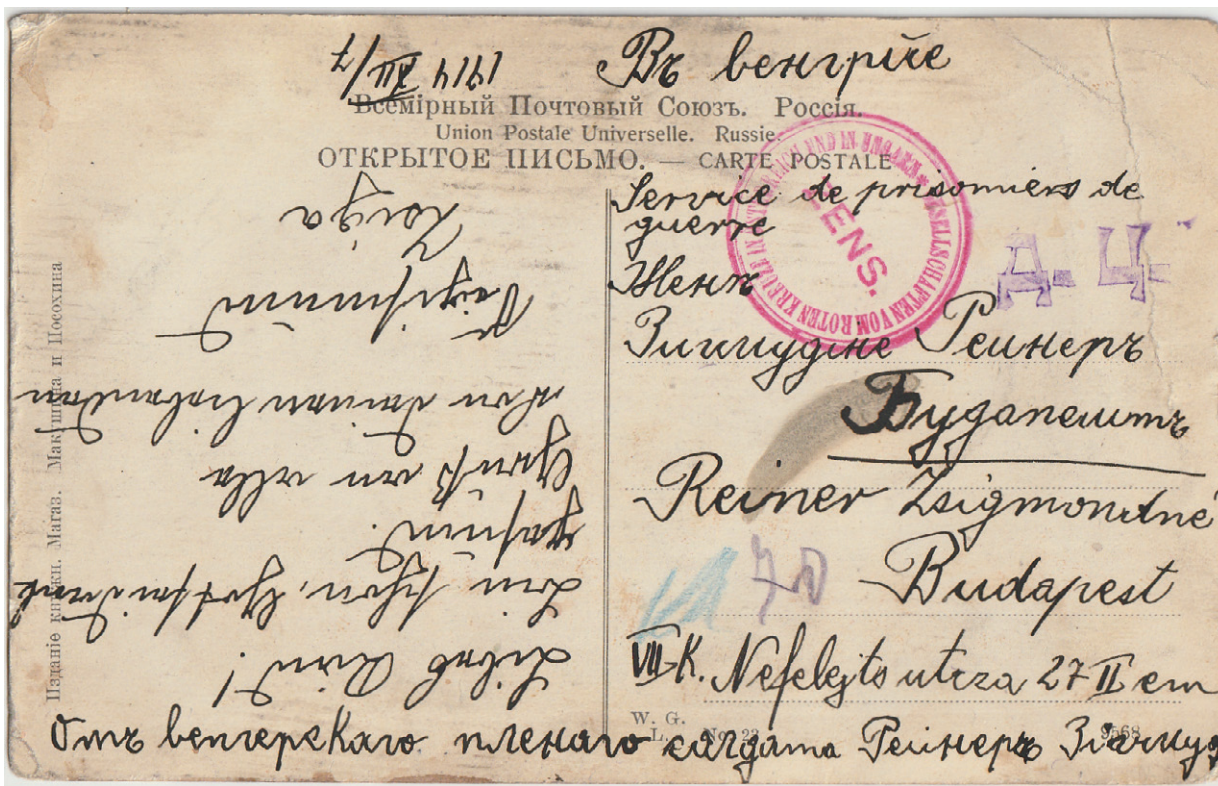


FIGURE 2. Picture postcard with a photograph of the cathedral in Irkutsk, sent from there to Budapest by an Austro-Hungarian soldier in December 1914. Images originally published in *The American Philatelist*, 2014.



FIGURE 3. Postcard with illustration of the Russian empress, dressed as a nurse, and her son, Alexei. It was mailed to Bohemia in Austria-Hungary during March 1916. Images originally published in *The American Philatelist*, 2014.





FIGURE 5. Illustrated “Greetings from Gardelegen” postcard sent to France in March 1915 during the typhus epidemics. “Grüss aus” or “Greetings from” picture postcards were uncommon in illustrated mail from POWs. Images originally published in *The American Philatelist*, 2014.



FIGURE 6. Postcard with a photograph of bunk beds in the prisoners' barracks above a photo of the hospital at the soldiers' camp Ohrdruf in Germany. The postcard was mailed to France, 1916.

liked. However, PPCs in the mail of German prisoners sent from Russia are rather rare; these prisoners preferred to use standard formular cards. The situation of Germans kept in France was very different, and they commonly used PPCs.

Judging by the cards in existence today, German printers seem to have made far more of one type of PPC than any other belligerent countries, namely those portraying camp life. German printers issued a countless number of PPCs showing camps, prisoners of various ethnicities, and their living conditions. These cards mostly served as domestic propaganda and are found used mostly by German military personnel and civilians to domestic destinations. On rare occasions, prisoners sent home such cards to illustrate their lives in camps instead of sending more common views of environs and local landmarks. Figure 6 shows the bunk beds of POWs in the camp Ohrdruf (upper half) and the camp hospital (lower half). This was a camp for rank-and-file soldiers; officers had much more private space, and sick prisoners were treated in hospitals together with Germans. Such postcards with pictures of relatively normal environments suggested that the Germans treated POWs humanely, a notion even more evident in another postcard sent to France from the soldiers' camp at Bautzen and showing the unpacking of food aid (biscuits) received from home (Figure 7).

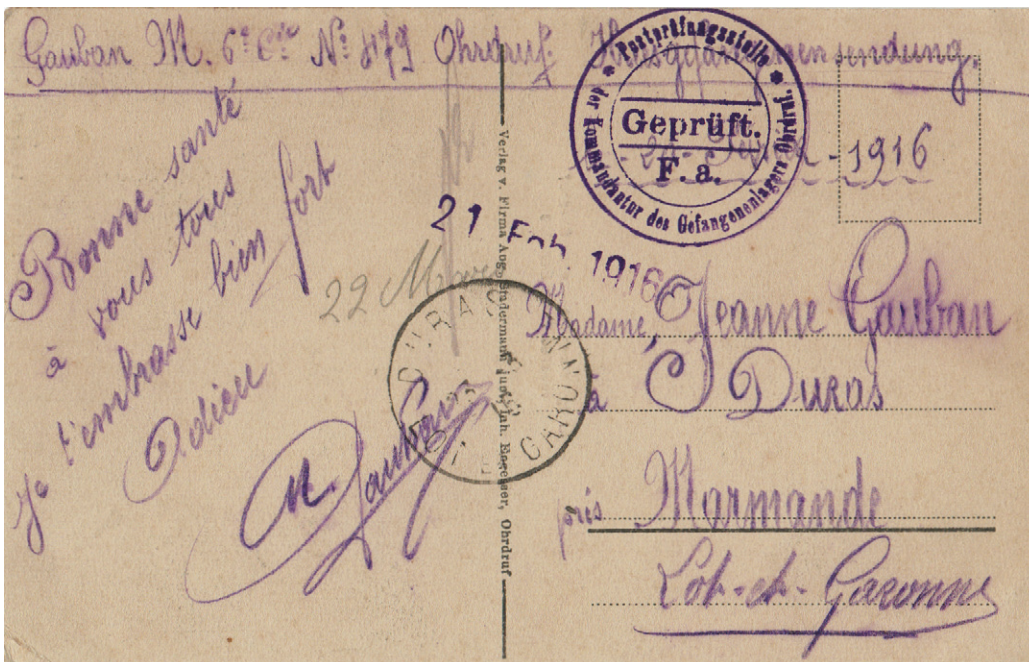




FIGURE 7. Postcard with a photograph showing men unpacking biscuits. It was sent from soldiers' camp Bautzen, Germany, to France, 1917.

Although Russian POWs made up the largest contingent in German captivity, their correspondence is disproportionately scarce. Russian prisoners, especially soldiers, were badly discriminated against, many of them were illiterate, and, most importantly, for reasons suggested above, Soviet families often destroyed their archives to eliminate suspicious materials that

Soviet authorities could interpret as evidence of “non-proletarian element associated with foreigners.”

After being captured, Russian prisoners were transported to Dänholm camp located on the island of Dänholm, an area in the city of Stralsund on the Baltic Sea. Such distribution centers were organized in all warring countries, but they were temporary and

prisoners rarely sent postcards before reaching their final destinations. However, PPCs sent from such distribution centers do exist, such as that mailed in October 1914 by a reserve officer to Moscow (Figure 8). It has a small rectangular German censor mark and the circular stamp of Dänholm officers' camp, but

no "F. a." (dispatched timely, *Fristgemäß abgefertigt*) marking, since at that time it was not yet applied to the mail of POWs. Note that Russia used arrival cancels (as it still does today), and the postcard arrived in just twenty-two days. The sender warned the recipient: "Don't write about anything but private matters."



FIGURE 8. Postcard with a view of Stralsund sent from Germany to Russia. On the back (address side) of the card, German markings are on the right and Russian markings, in red, are on the left.

FIGURE 9. Color postcard produced by chromolithography and showing Steinbach am Attersee. It was sent from Austria-Hungary to Moscow by an imprisoned Russian officer, 1915. A censor blacked out part of the note on the back of the card.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

Like other belligerents, Austria propagandized its civilized behavior toward captured enemy combatants. Figure 9 shows a postcard sent by a Russian officer from Austria-Hungary in August 1915. The government of Austria-Hungary did not have enough housing for imprisoned officers to satisfy the requirements of the Hague Conventions, and it requisitioned resorts and bed-and-breakfasts located in most picturesque places of the country. The text on the postcard below was apparently censored in Russia. Most likely the sender described his stay in Bad Ischl, a famous resort, in an excessively positive tone.

FRANCE

The greatest number of German POWs held at one time by the French is estimated at between 330,000 and 390,000.¹⁶ They were held in more than 400 camps in France and North Africa. For example, the French transferred about 3,000 German POWs to camps in the overseas department of Algeria and the protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia.¹⁷ One such POW sent the postcard in Figure 10 from Casablanca to Germany in early 1916.

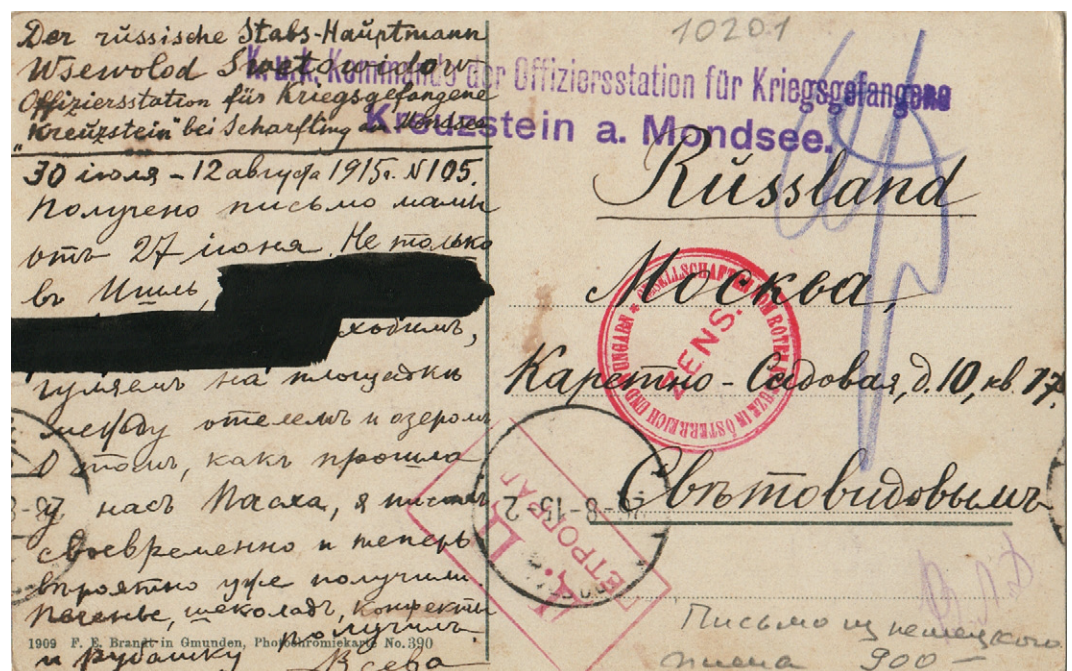




FIGURE 10. Postcard with a watercolor illustration of a Casablanca street sent from Casablanca to Germany by a prisoner of war in February 1916.



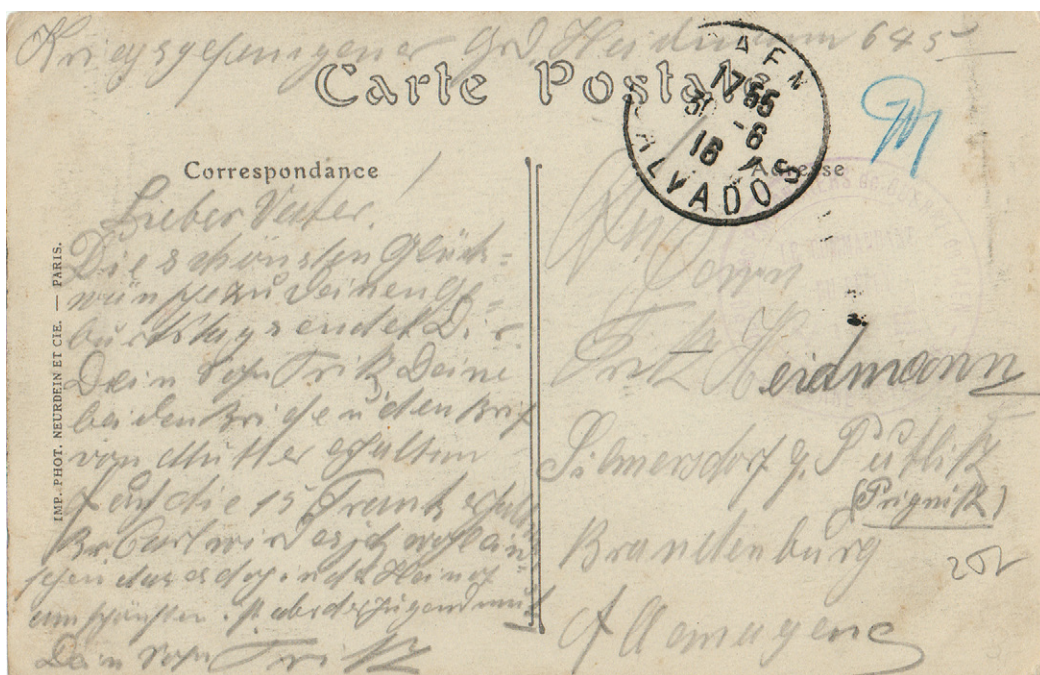
FIGURE 11. Postcard showing a photograph of Castle of Falaise with its place-name scraped off below the photo. A soldier from the camp in Caen sent the card in June 1916. The address section of the postcard has a faint French censor mark (large purple circle) characteristic of mail from France. Images originally published in *The American Philatelist*, 2014.

In general, the treatment of German POWs by the French was much better than that of their comrades captured at the eastern front. Their mail was handled by the Swiss Red Cross in Bern and arrived very quickly. The subjects of the French PPCs are most often views of cities and environs of the camps, and the quality of black and white postcards is usually surprisingly poor.

French censors, like their counterparts elsewhere, had to remove all specifics of potential military installations. Sometimes doing so resulted in useless redaction. Figure 11 shows the castle of Falaise, built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries on the site where William the Conqueror had been born. Although the castle was depicted in every tourist guide, the censor scraped off the name of the place below the image.

OTHER COUNTRIES

In Japan, PPCs were used by prisoners more frequently than formula postal cards, which correlated with their generally good treatment. Prisoners sent picture postcards from Serbia (before its occupation by Austria-Hungary in November 1915), the Ottoman Empire, and the United States of America. Figure 12 shows a rare postcard sent in 1915 by a French officer imprisoned by



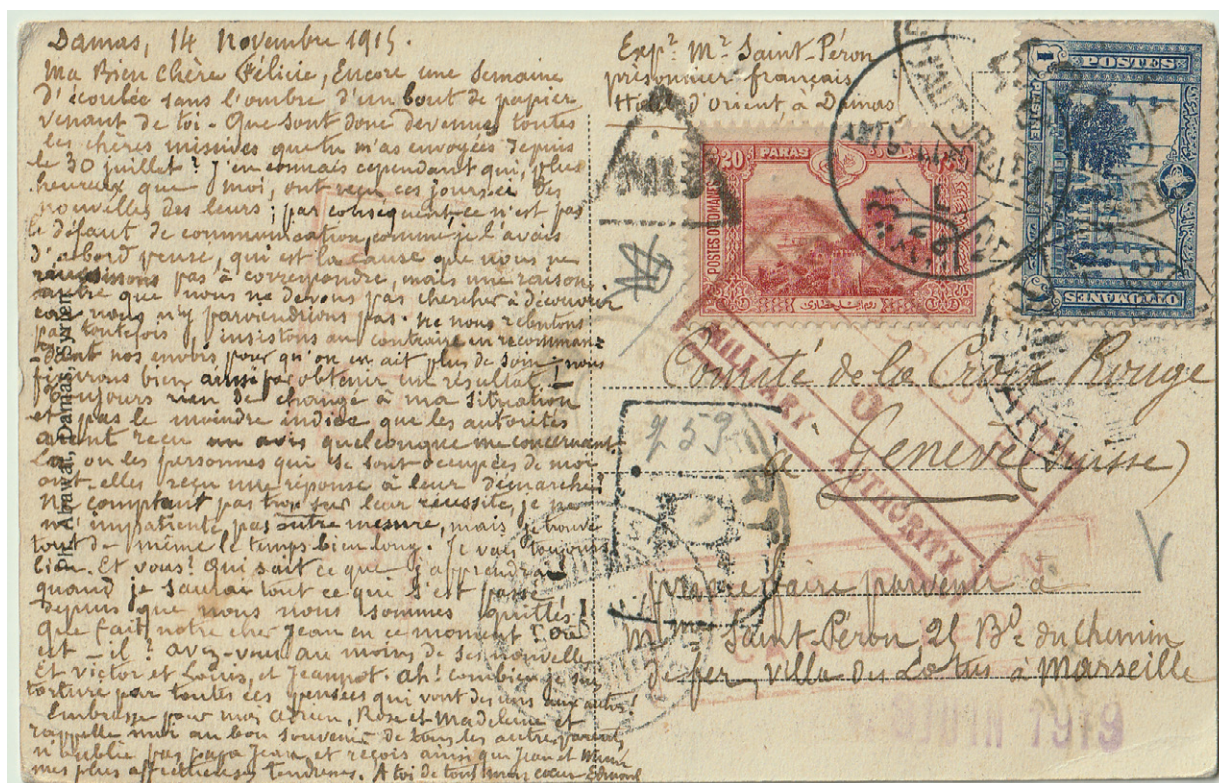
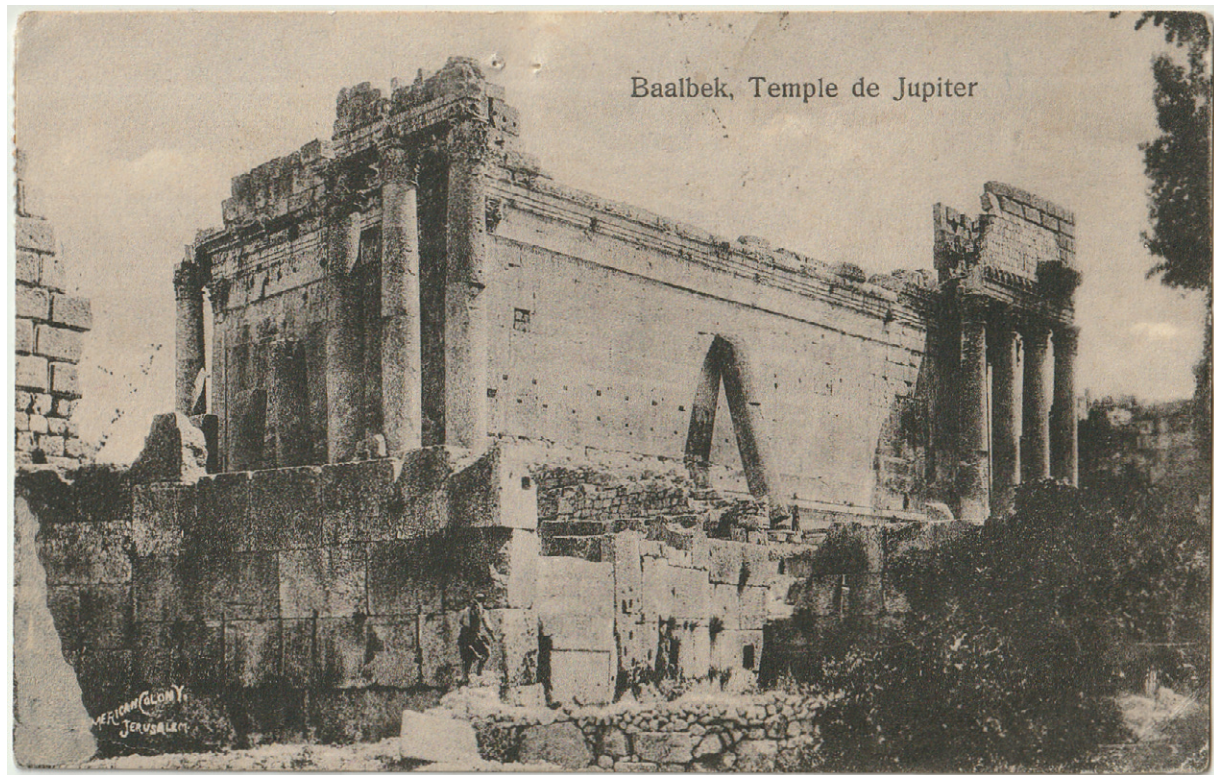


FIGURE 12. Registered postcard with a photograph of the Temple of Jupiter in Baalbek (now Baalbeck, Lebanon) sent from Damascus to Marseille by a French officer in November 1915. The card arrived in June 1919.

the Ottomans in Damascus. For some reason, the postcard was not released by Ottoman authorities until June 1919, about three and a half years after it was written. Such delays were common to correspondence sent from the Ottoman Empire.

ILLUSTRATED POSTCARDS PRODUCED BY AND FOR THE PRISONERS

Besides commercial postcards, prisoners in some countries had access to a printing press and could design and print their own postcards or order them at nearby print shops. Paying for the manufacture of postcards was possible with money that was transferred to prisoners, the rather generous salaries of the officers, and the facilities of charitable organizations, of which the most active was the YMCA. The content of PPC illustrations depended on censorship procedures in individual countries. For instance, all illustrated mail from POWs in Britain had to be sent in special envelopes, and the content had to pass censorship before the envelopes were sealed. As a result, the most common illustrated mail from British camps consisted of personal photographs. POWs in Germany, on the other hand, could send PPCs without envelopes after regular censorship, and imprisoned British soldiers produced many postcards carrying illustrations that displayed their patriotic spirit.

One German camp that had a sizable number of British prisoners was located in Döberitz, very close to Berlin. The first British POWs sent there were roughly 900 sailors from a Royal Naval division captured in Antwerp in 1914. Among these was Cecil A. Tooke, already a recognized professional graphic artist in Britain. One of his postcards is reproduced in Figure 13. The panels of the coat of arms design symbolize hard labor (upper left), camp life (upper right), readiness to fight (bullets in the lower left), and camp punishment (prisoner tied to a pole, lower right). Tooke's postcards were distributed to other camps, in particular Dyrotz, which was near Döberitz. The proximity to Berlin enabled prisoners to print their postcards in the best print shops.

British prisoners produced postcards in other camps as well. The postcard in Figure 14 by an unknown artist, a New Year greeting issued at the end of 1917, was sent from a soldiers' camp in Chemnitz.

German POWs in Japan also created their own cards, despite the abundance of local PPCs in Japan; in particular, they created greeting cards for Christian holidays. Figure 15 shows an example of such a postcard sent from Camp Bando in Japan to Germany as an Easter greeting in February 1918. The camp provided exemplary treatment of prisoners; as a result, 63 prisoners of Bando out of 900 remained in Japan after liberation. Nevertheless, note the use of barbed wire in the right side of the picture, including the oval frame.

POWs had access to printing facilities in many Russian camps and altogether they published more than sixty periodicals in dozens of languages. Sometimes they also printed PPCs, though they are rather rare. Figure 16 shows a postally used PPC which had been sent from Simferopol to Prague in October

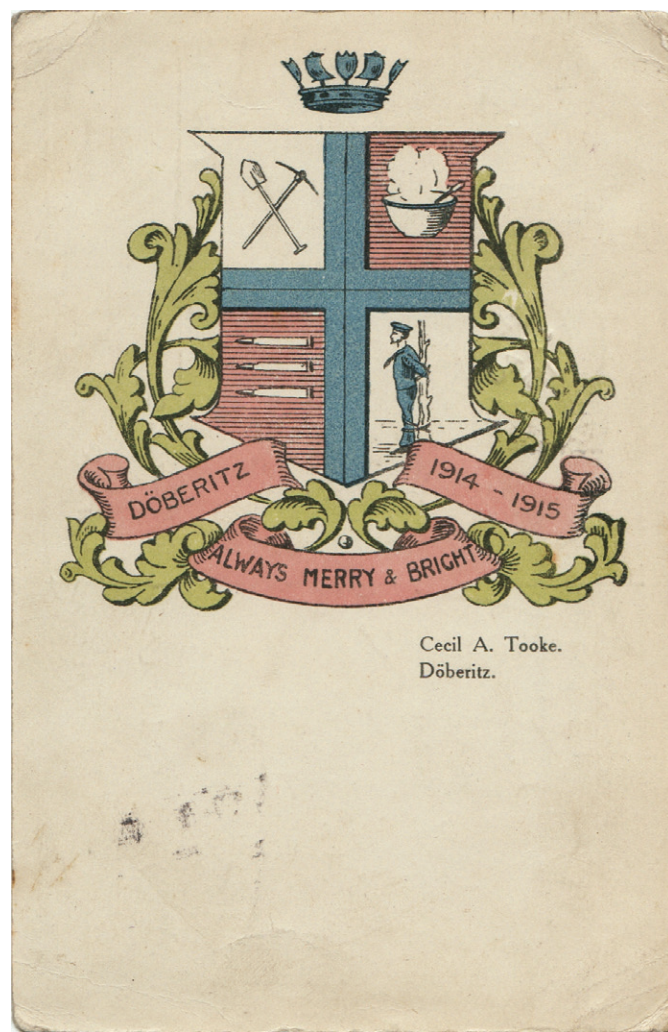


FIGURE 13. Postcard with illustration of a coat of arms by Cecil Tooke, sent from Döberitz (Germany) to Britain, August 1915. The panels of the shield symbolize hard labor (upper left), camp life (upper right), readiness to fight (bullets in the lower left), and camp punishment (prisoner tied to a pole, lower right).

1917. There were no camps in Crimea, but the Russian authorities had sent POW construction crews there to do hard labor, in particular to build roads. The absence of the Russian censor mark on this card was not unusual at that time of political crisis. A postcard with a Christmas greeting printed in the Russian camp at Berezovka is shown in Figure 17.

Besides postcards with impersonal visual content (landscapes, greetings, reproductions of paintings, and so on) prisoners also sent their photographs. They were taken by professional photographers allowed to work in the camps, by professionals outside the camps, or by the prisoners themselves with cameras they had made and that sometimes demonstrated outstanding ingenuity. When photography was not available, some



FIGURE 14. Postcard with printed Christmas and New Year holiday greeting signed by British prisoner William Cunningham, sent from Chemnitz-Ebersdorf (Germany) to York, 1917.

sufficiently skilled prisoners drew self-portraits. One such postcard is shown in Figure 18. It was sent by a sick officer who complained that he received neither correspondence nor money from home.

AID TO PRISONERS

The treatment of prisoners by their own governments to a large extent determined their treatment by the captor countries; the more able and willing a government was to help its captured citizens, the better its citizens would be treated by their captors. A strong argument can be made using Britain as an example: while the government provided generous aid to its captured citizens,

British relief organizations were overwhelmed by private donations from all over the country, and, in the eyes of German authorities, the British deserved the best treatment of all POWs. Russian POWs, in contrast, did not receive any government aid and were treated as second-rate prisoners. A former French prisoner in Germany, George Connes, noted in his memoirs that among the Russians, even the officers starved: "Russian officers who for the most part cannot receive any packages, are strictly limited to this [standard camp] diet," which was insufficient for simple survival.¹⁸ Serbian POWs were also treated awfully both in Austria-Hungary and in Germany, because their country was impoverished, occupied, and could not help at all.

One way to help POWs was to send them money, the form of aid that prisoners often preferred. Money transfers could be sent through the banks of neutral countries (Sweden, for example, in the case of POWs in Russia), and funds were usually released in amounts considered too small to tempt corrupt guards, making it impossible for a prisoner to bribe guards for help to escape. A confirmation of such a money transfer from Germany is shown in Figure 19: here, the Red Cross sent a relatively small amount of 5 rubles, 20 kopeks. For comparison, an imprisoned junior officer received an allowance of 25 rubles per month. It must be noted that German authorities did not allow the sending of food, clothing, and the like to individual prisoners. Although the German public generously supported POWs, all donations had to be submitted to the Red Cross, which distributed the aid. The money was sent to individual prisoners, but the confirmation replies were addressed to the German Red Cross, not to donors personally.

From the very beginning of the war, the Russian government considered its imprisoned men potential traitors. Consequently, all aid to Russian POWs came from private benefactors; the government never spent a single kopek on aid. The Russian military postulated that any food sent to its prisoners would improve the economic situation in the rest of Germany, and, in the beginning of the war, attempted to suppress grassroots efforts to collect private donations for POWs.¹⁹ This situation was reported by newspapers all over the world and cast the Russian government in an unfavorable light.

Despite the active opposition of the Russian government, private citizens and organizations stepped up.²⁰ In an earlier article I described the archive of a Russian doctor who spent at least a quarter of his modest income on parcels for Russian POWs in Germany.²¹ Here is a typical message from a card from his archive:

Dear Madam, I received your parcel No. 1626 with dry bread and pork fat, for which I thank you so very much. I pray the Lord to give you good health and good luck in all your endeavors. I received your parcel on 23/9 and your letter on 14/10 [1915]. I am very glad and thank you once again. I hope you will not leave me without your care. Sergeant Elisei Sakhnov, Camp Gross-Poritsch.

And relatively speaking, this camp was not the worst.



FIGURE 15. Easter greeting postcard printed by German prisoners of war in Japanese camp Bando and sent to Berlin in 1918. On the front, a young woman and man in separate oval-shaped images look out toward distant mountains; the soldier is trapped behind barbed wire. Images originally published in *The American Philatelist*, 2014.

FIGURE 16. Postcard illustrated with a domestic holiday scene above an illustration of a soldier at rest. The image was printed on the blank side of a formular card intended for Austro-Hungarian prisoners; it was sent from Simferopol to Velká Jenč (currently Jeneč), a suburb of Prague, in October 1917.

The generosity of British public toward British prisoners was astonishing: the total amount of private aid was approximately equal to the amount of goods provided by the government. Corresponding receipts with expressions of gratitude are very common. However, not all parcels reached their destinations. Figure 20 shows a reply card from a British POW in Angora (currently Ankara) in the Ottoman Empire who complained that he had never received the parcels.

The supply of aid to French and British POWs held in European countries, especially in Germany, was quite reliable. Some items requested by the prisoners seem to be luxurious when compared to the mass cruelty and harsh treatment of POWs later in the last century, especially during World War II. For example, when French and British prisoners complained about the quality of German bread, their governments contracted bakeries in neutral countries—the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Denmark—to supply the camps with better bread. Figure 21 shows a French cover with an order for bread.

Aware of and hoping to alleviate the situation of Russian POWs, donors from other Allied countries received lists of needy prisoners from the Red Cross and sent supplies. A well-known British benefactor, Miss Ord, used her own printed return receipts





FIGURE 17. Christmas postcard with holiday greeting printed in German on the blank side of POWs' formula card printed in Russian. It was sent from Berezovka in East Siberia to Oberkrain in Austria-Hungary (currently Kranj, Kranjska, in Slovenia), November 1917. The address side of the postcard has a faint Irkutsk censor mark at the bottom. The printed illustration depicts the most common motif found on Christmas cards from Russia: a traditional Russian peasant house covered almost to the roofline with snow.



FIGURE 18. Postcard illustrated by hand and sent from Krasnoyarsk to Budapest in October 1917. Note the absence of Russian censor mark on the back.



FIGURE 19. Receipt of a money transfer to a prisoner of war in Velikokniazheskoe, a Mennonite colony in Southern Russia, in July 1917.

to keep track of which donations had reached their intended recipients. Such receipts are still quite common on the philatelic market; Figure 22 shows Miss Ord's receipts for parcels sent to a Russian POW in Germany, as well as to Italian and Serbian POWs in Austria-Hungary.

Because of strong public anti-German sentiment, even private donors from neutral countries supported Russian POWs. A set of postcards illustrated with Russian motifs, to be sold for the benefit of Russian POWs, was issued in Switzerland. One of these cards is shown in Figure 23.

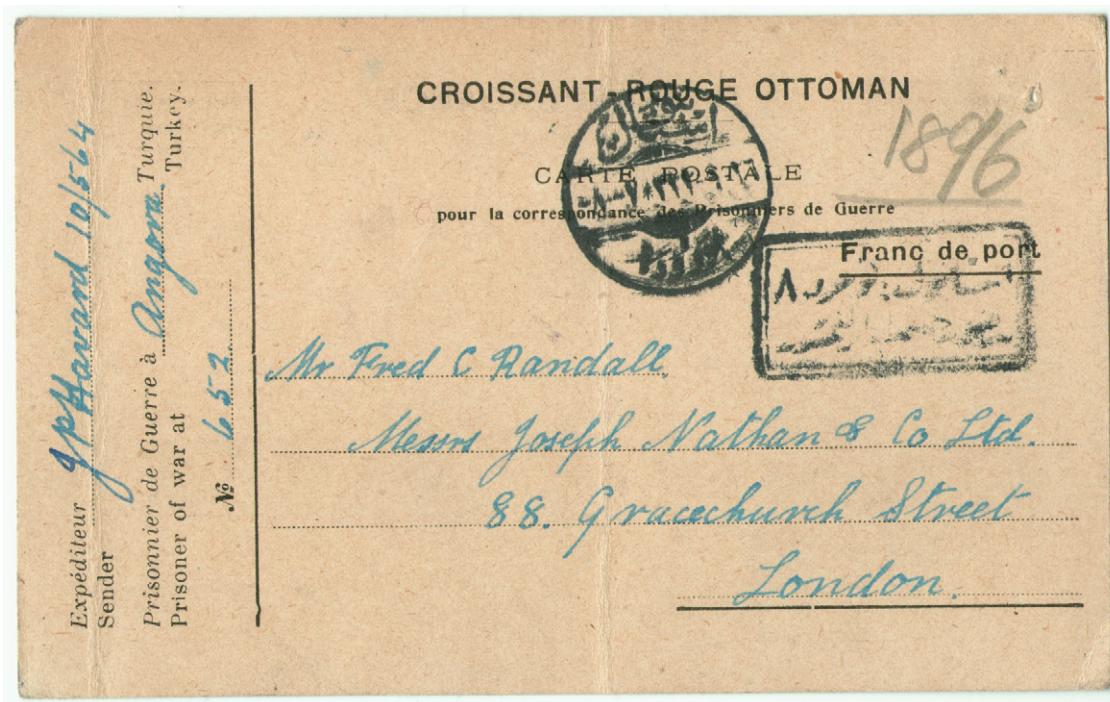


FIGURE 20. Notification of the loss of parcels by a British prisoner of war held by the Ottoman Empire, sent on a card printed by the Ottoman Red Crescent.

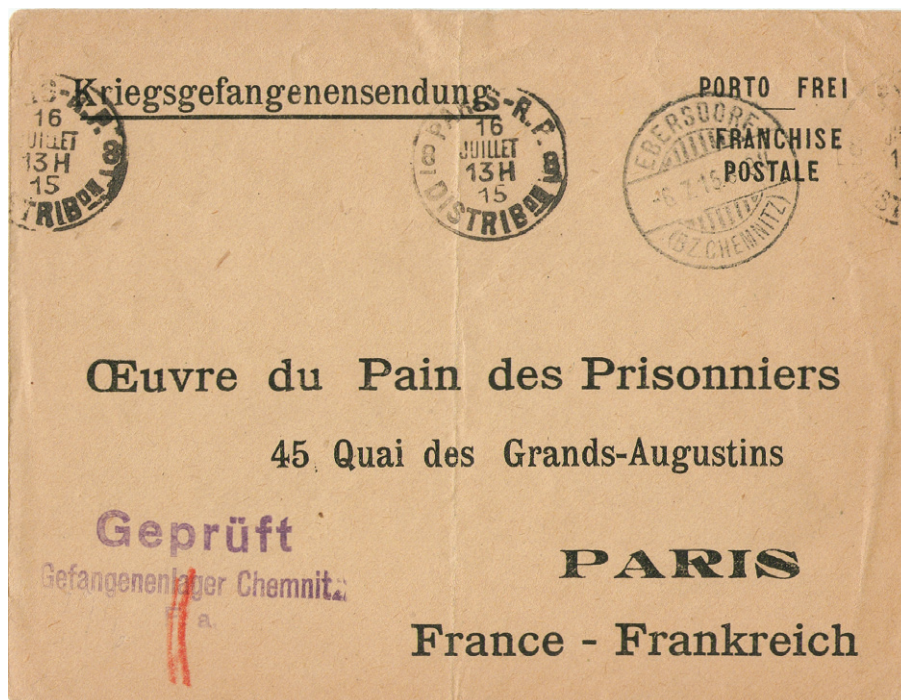


FIGURE 21. Order for bread sent to Paris from Chemnitz camp in Germany for delivery to prisoners, July 1915.

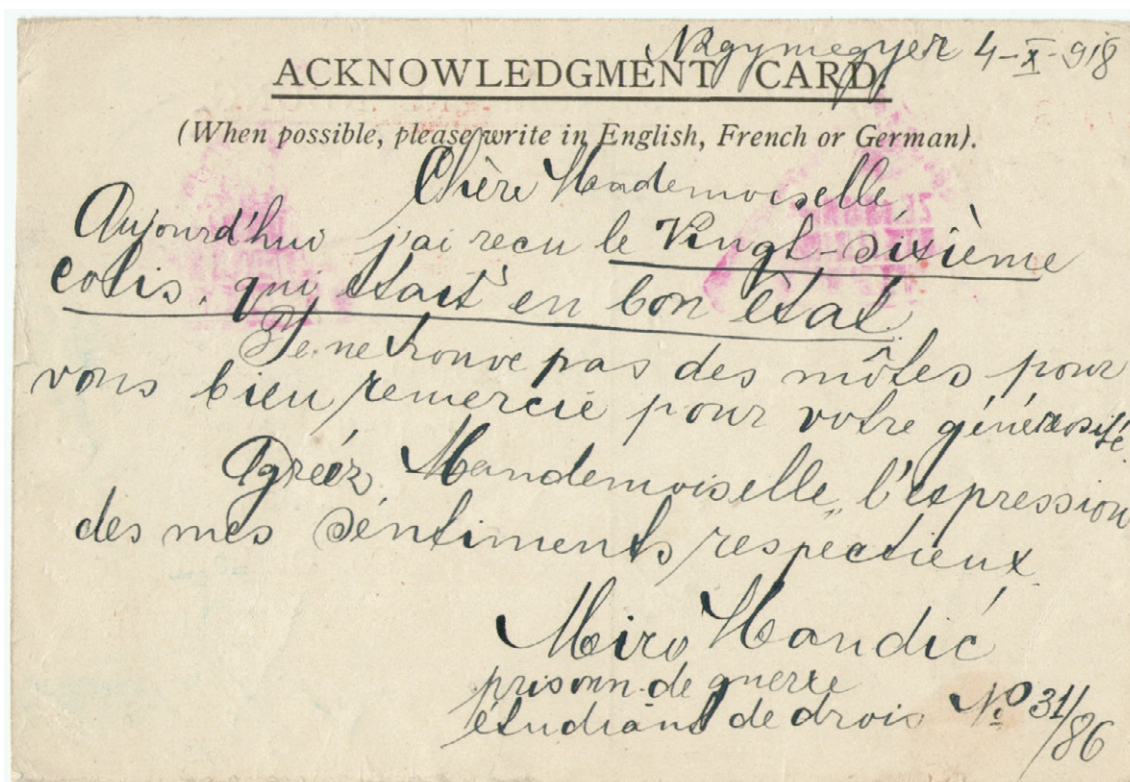


FIGURE 22. A thank you postcard mailed in 1918 to a Miss Ord of County Durham, England, who had previously sent aid to a Serbian prisoner of war.



FIGURE 23. Swiss postcard with an ink drawing of an eighteenth-century Russian church in Olonez province, which was printed for the benefit of Russian prisoners of war. Published by Fretz Frères in Zurich.

Because of the aforementioned restrictions, it is impossible to determine which reply cards sent by German prisoners acknowledged state-issued or private donations. In any case, Germany, and to lesser extent Austria-Hungary, provided substantial aid to their captured servicemen. Reply cards from these POWs were sent to the Red Cross in Switzerland and don't mention any individual donors.

CONCLUSION

Although the violence of World War I is often considered the precursor to, even the rehearsal for, the violence of World War II, I stress one major difference—the attitudes of belligerents toward

their prisoners. Despite all the cruelty, starvation, and punishments, the belligerents of the Great War treated prisoners incomparably better than they did during World War II and strived to observe the rules of the Hague Conventions, including those covering POWs' access to mail and to international organizations that provided humanitarian assistance. Picture postcards sent from POWs demonstrate that in many cases the conditions of imprisonment during the Great War (Russia being a notable exception) complied with the international agreements and were reasonably benign.

The treatment of prisoners changed dramatically after the 1918 armistice. The "War to End All Wars" initiated subsequent conflicts of comparable scale that had no regard for the status of prisoners. The largest civil wars, those in Russia and Turkey, resulted in millions of military and civilian victims. Historian Robert Gerwarth wrote: "It is difficult to suggest that post-imperial Europe was a better, safer place than it had been before 1914. Not since the Thirty Years War of the seventeenth century had a series of interconnected wars and civil wars in Europe been as inchoate and deadly as in the years after 1917–18."²² These conflicts ignored the Hague Conventions and their requirements regarding the status and condition of POWs, but that is a different story.

NOTES

1. General information is taken from the extensive and well-researched web site, 1914–1918, *Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, to which there have been more than 1,100 contributors. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson wrote the introduction. 1914–1918, *Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War*. Berlin: Freie Universität, 2014, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/home/> (accessed 27 May 2018).
For a different estimate of the number of POWs in Austria-Hungary camps at the end of the war, see Verena Moritz and Julia Waliczek-Fritz, *Prisoners of War (Austria-Hungary), 1914–1918*, *Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/prisoners_of_war_austria-hungary (accessed 27 May 2018).
2. Convention (IV) Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its Annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, The Hague, 18 October 1907, International Committee of the Red Cross, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/195> (accessed 6 June 2019).
Formally, the convention would have come into effect only after every signatory ratified it. Since Montenegro and Serbia signed the agreement but never ratified it, the 1907 Hague Convention was observed by all warring countries voluntarily.
3. As an instrument of revenge and enforcement of fair treatment of prisoners captured by the enemy, the warring countries created reprisal camps that had stricter regimes, limited or prohibited correspondence, and worse overall conditions.
4. Hague Convention IV.
5. Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929. International Committee of the Red Cross, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=0BDEDD046FDEBA9C12563CD002D69B1&action=openDocument> (accessed 18 February 2021).

6. Benjamin H. Penniston, *The Golden Age of Postcards: Early 1900s: Identification & Values* (Paducah, Ky.: Collector Books, 2008).
7. See, for instance, Heather Jones, Prisoners of War, 1914–1918, 1914–1918, *Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War* https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/prisoners_of_war_belgium_and_france (accessed 27 May 2018); Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011); John Laffin, *World War I in Postcards* (Gloucester, UK: Alan Sutton, 1988); Alison Rowley, *Open Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).
8. See, for instance, Robert Jackson, *The Prisoners, 1914–1918* (London: Routledge, 1989).
9. The legal basis and conditions of civilians' internment is discussed, for instance, in Ronald F. Roxburgh, *The Prisoners of War Information Bureau in London* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1915).
10. O. S. Nagornaya, Rossiiskie voennoplennye Pervoi mirovoi voiny v Germanii (1914–1922 gg.) [Russian Prisoners of War in Germany (1914–1922)], DSc diss., South Ural University, Chelyabinsk, 2011: 349–354, 372.
11. Yu. Z. Kantor, M. N. Tukhachevskii i Sh. de Goll' v lagere Ingol'shtadt v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny. Neizvestnye stranitsy biografii [M. N. Tukhachevsky and Ch. de Gaulle in the camp Ingolstadt during the First World War. Unknown pages of their biographies], *Izvestiia Ural'skogo federal'nogo universiteta. Ser. 2, Gumanitarnye nauki* [News of the Ural Federal University. Series 2, Humanities] 2014, 130(3):21–33.
12. Yücel Yanıkdağ, *Healing the Nation: Prisoners of War, Medicine and Nationalism in Turkey, 1914–1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
13. Wolter, K. K. *Die Postzensur Handbuch und Katalog Geschichte, Typen der Stempel und Briefverschlüsse mit ihrer Bewertung*, vol. 1, *Vorzeit, Frühzeit und Neuzeit (bis 1939)*. Munich: Georg Amm, 1965: 68–69.
14. David Skipton, coauthor of seminal monographs *Postal Censorship in Imperial Russia* (with Peter Michalove) and *Soviet Clandestine Mail Surveillance, 1917–1991* (with Steve Volis), personal communication (telephone conversation with author), 10 September 2016.
15. Alexander Kolchinsky, Austro-Hungarian Censor Markings on Prisoners' Postcards, *Rossica*, 171(Fall 2018):63–64.
16. Jones, Prisoners of War.
17. Comité International de la Croix-Rouge, *Documents publiés à l'occasion de la guerre de 1914–1915*. Geneva: Librairie Georg, June 1915, 6.
18. Georges A. Connes, *A POW's Memoir of the First World War* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2004), 43.
19. Nagornaya, Rossiiskie voennoplennye, 42–43, 45, 49.
20. Nagornaya, Rossiiskie voennoplennye, 59–67.
21. Alexander Kolchinsky, "God Bless You for Your Kindness!" Postal Cards of Russian POWs during the Great War, *The American Philatelist*, 126(December 2012):1140–1146.
22. Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2016), 7.
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FIGURES must be numbered sequentially (1, 2, 3, etc.) in the order called out; have components lettered consistently (in size, font, and style) and described in captions; include a scale bar or scale description, if appropriate; include any legends in or on figures rather than in captions. Figures must be original and must be submitted as individual TIF or EPS files.

FIGURE FILES must meet all required specifications in the Digital Art Preparation Guide. Color images should be requested only if required.

TAXONOMIC KEYS in natural history manuscripts should use the aligned-couplet form for zoology. If cross referencing is required between key and text, do not include page references within the key, but number the keyed-out taxa, using the same numbers with their corresponding heads in the text.

SYNONYMY IN ZOOLOGY must use the short form (taxon, author, year:page), with full reference at the end of the manuscript under "References."

REFERENCES should be in alphabetical order, and in chronological order for same-author entries. Each reference should be cited at least once in main text. Complete bibliographic information must be included in all citations. Examples of the most common types of citations can be found at SISP's website under Resources/Guidelines & Forms.