

SYNOPSIS
Cinchona Missions of World War II
Colombia & Ecuador
(1942 — 1945)

Purpose & Scope: World War II postal history Exhibit covers operational existence (1942–1945) of WW II Cinchona Missions in Colombia & Ecuador by using covers to philatelically trace wartime missions. Each year of the Mission activity is illustrated by Mission members' postal history & travels with philatelic information of wartime rates, routes & censorship. End of the Missions is shown by final postal history & epilogue.

Philatelic Importance: Shown are postal artifacts of a little remembered government agency, Board of Economic Warfare (BEW), & postal covers of Mission expeditions sent & received during their Mission deployment. Exhibit represents the only known significant collection of direct postal history of Cinchona Missions known to exhibitor.

Historical Background Information on Cinchona Mission. Following the 1942 Japanese invasion of Netherlands Indies & the cinchona tree plantations, all anti-malarial quinine sources were deprived to Allied nations. As World War II spread, more Allied troops fell to malaria than Japanese bullets. By the end of 1942, Army Air Corps projected that, without a sufficient supply of quinine, 40% of all Allied casualties would be from malaria. A new source of quinine from cinchona trees was desperately needed.

Knowledge & Personal Study of the Cinchona Missions: The exhibitor acquired correspondence intact & uncatalogued as part of a large lot of personal correspondence spanning several decades. Through personal research, the postal & philatelic history of both the little-known Cinchona Missions & the Board of Economic Warfare was recognized, analyzed, arranged & fully developed for exhibition purposes. Reconstruction of the expertise, activities & interconnections of participants, the connection of each to specific places & times, the analysis of the rates, routes, markings & historical context of sender & recipient was done without the benefit of any prior philatelic study of the postal history of either the Mission or the BEW. Results of affiliated research into archival wartime data sources, participants' archived diaries & letters, botanical history, nineteenth & twentieth century colonial economics, & biographical searches for obscure participants are contained within the presentation of the exhibit. The exhibit does not discuss other BEW activities & responsibilities related to materials such as rubber & minerals.

Material Availability/Rarity: Highly limited because exhibit's postal history material was obtained through deaccession of personal correspondence from the W.C. Steere family donation of professional papers to New York Botanical Garden library. It would be unlikely that a complete, contemporaneous postal history from Cinchona Mission participants could be assembled outside of this exhibit. Condition of material is as found with minor treatment for presentation purposes.

Exhibit Organization:

- ❖ Title page & Prologue: Introduction to Cinchona & need for mission before events of 1942.
- ❖ Mission: Cinchona. Covers arranged chronologically & by expedition showing progress of Cinchona Missions & BEW from 1942 through the end of the postal history in 1945.
- ❖ Epilogue of Cinchona Missions.

References for judges' review:

Introduction to Cinchona Missions:

<https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/botany/about/historical-expeditions/cinchona-missions> (one page)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinchona_Missions (one page)