



PHILATELIC BULLETIN

Sarasota Philatelic Club

Poland: General Government Sardine Mail

By James Mazepa, RDP

With the onset of the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, the Polish community in the United States began sending parcels of food and clothing to friends and relatives in Poland. However, the isolationists in the United States invoked the Neutrality Act of 1939 which forbade sending aid to any belligerent country, e.g., England and Germany, which might support their war effort. Based on this Act of Congress, *The Postal Bulletin*, #18060, of October 25, 1940, called for the suspension of parcels to the General Government which was considered part of Germany. Figure 1 shows a clipping from *The Postal Bulletin*.

2025

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Figure 1. Clipping from October 25, 1940, *The Postal Bulletin*, #18060, showing countries to which parcel-post was suspended.

The Germans confiscated much of the food produced in Poland and sent it to Germany or used it to feed Germans who were resettled on former Polish territory. However, the Red Cross and other social agencies sent parcels to the Polish people, primarily through Portugal and Sweden. A major food staple in the parcels was tins of sardines. This proved very practical because of the high nutritional content of sardines: packed in oil, high in protein and calories.

Stamp Quiz



This month's stamp quiz is an Official Stamp and stamps from this series have always been common in packets. Here are a few hints: it's from a redrawn issue of 1957-58. There are two identical issues depending upon watermark; this is the one watermarked multiple stars. Send your guesses to centonzevincent@gmail.com. Good luck!



Figure 2. Card sent from Warsaw to Lisbon.

Continued on next page



The Prez Sez ...

Wishing you Happy Holidays!

Forgot to take my phone/camera to the club Holiday party so can't fill this space with pictures!

Reminder—January meeting is on MONDAY (not Tuesday) January 5th at 5:30 in the Gulf Gate library—**different day of the week, different location.**

Frank Blum will be sharing about Florida revenues.

Hope to see many of you there.

Pat

Poland: General Government Sardine Mail (cont.)

The recipients of these parcels would write postal cards expressing their appreciation. The cards were often sent to “undercover addresses” in Lisbon. Figure 2 shows one such postal card which was sent from Warsaw on January 3, 1944. The 30 groschen postal card identification in Higgins and Gage (H&G) is German Occupation Postal Cards, H&G I-59; in the Michel Ganzsachen-Katalog it is Generalgouvernement, Michel P11. The franking correctly paid the foreign postcard rate from occupied Poland to Lisbon.

The card was sent to Lisbon and forwarded to the sender of the parcel. A fragment of the forwarding sticker is visible on the card. Figure 3 shows the message side on which one can read “*thanks for two boxes of sardines.*” The blue mark is a German invisible writing detection chemical applied by the censor that checks for “invisible” messages.

Figure 4 shows a similar postal card, also sent to Lisbon, this time written in German and sent from Warsaw on December 2, 1943. The 12 groschen card identification in H&G is German Occupation Postal Cards, H&G I-60; in Michel it is Generalgouvernement, Michel P11/02 (with printed date “III.42” in lower left). The card is uprated to the foreign postcard rate of 30 groschen with 8 and 10 groschen Hitler head stamps (Poland, Scott N78 & N79; General Government, Michel 73 & 74, respectively). The 1 złoty Hitler head stamp (Poland, Scott N94; General Gouvernement, Michel 86A) paid the express delivery fee.

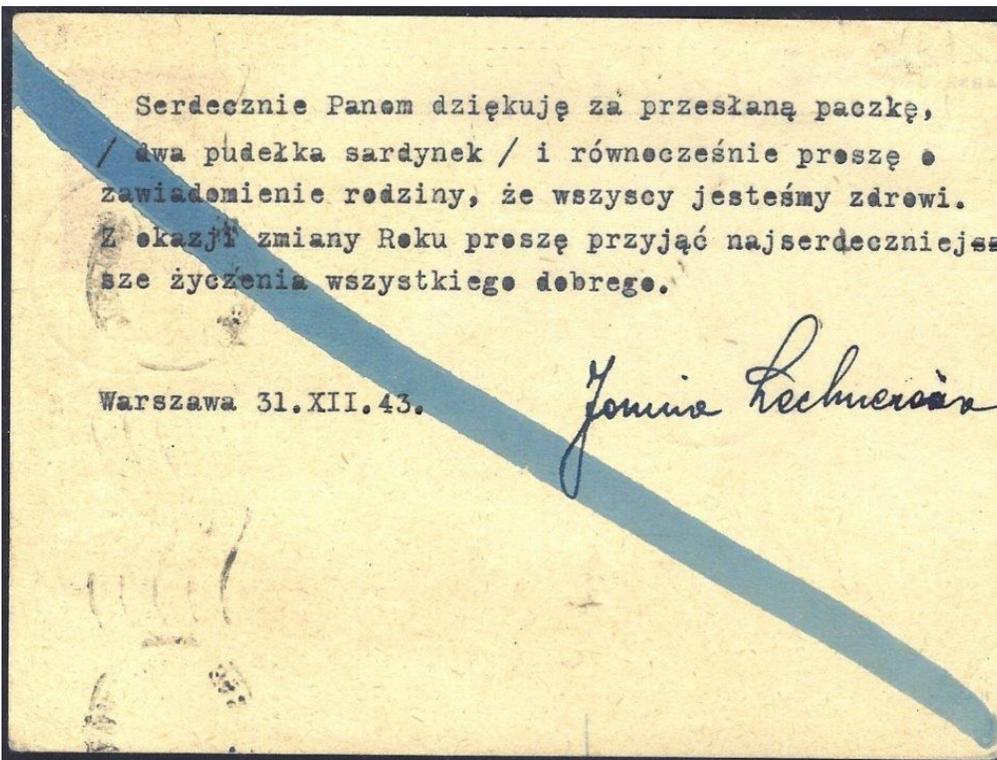


Figure 5 shows the message side, on which the sender thanked the recipient for two boxes of sardines. It also has been treated with the secret writing detection chemical. I have seen other cards that were sent to Sweden. This is the origin of what we now call “sardine mail.” Yet again, here is a fascinating aspect of World War II postal history.

(Left) Figure 3. Message side of the postal card on which one can read “*thanks for two boxes of sardines.*” The blue mark is an invisible ink detection chemical that was applied by the German censor. This would render visible any message written in invisible ink.

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Poland: General Government Sardine Mail (cont.)



Figure 3. Uprated postal card sent from Warsaw to Lisbon on December 2, 1943.

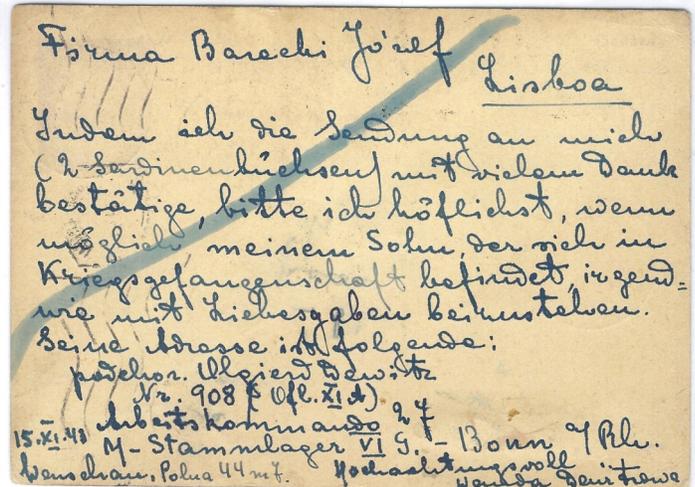


Figure 4. Message side of the postal card thanking the individual who sent a parcel of sardines.

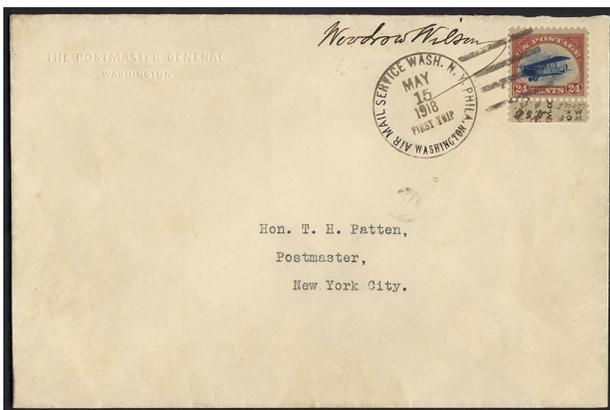
(Editor's note: If anyone would like to know more about secret writing detection on covers, see the article about it in the November 2024 issue of our Philatelic Bulletin.)

Smithsonian Magazine Q&A Letter on Air Mail

Jim Mazepa sent in the following interesting item he read in the November 2025 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine. The writeup was included in *Smithsonian's* Q&A segment.

Q. What made the U.S. Post Office Department decide to start its airmail service so early, before air travel was even common? — **question submitted by Frances Dreyfus of Buffalo, New York**

A. The Postal Service formally introduced its airmail service in 1918. Postmaster General Albert Burleson and Second Assistant Postmaster General Otto Praeger wanted to stimulate investment in aviation, which was still viewed with skepticism. (The first commercial airline had opened in 1914 and closed after just three months.) Through public interest, they hoped to put additional pressure on Congress to fund airmail so they could expand delivery while making it more efficient. A few individual post offices experimented with airmail in the 1910s, but aircraft development didn't really accelerate until World War I. Postal officials turned to the expertise of the U.S. Army and partnered in the first regularly scheduled airmail routes, between the major cities of Washington, Philadelphia and New York, beginning on May 15, 1918. A few months later, the Post Office took over all aspects of airmail service. Ultimately, the Post Office wasn't just delivering mail — it was demonstrating that flight could be fast, convenient and transformative for communication, transportation and American Life — **Alison Bazylinski, assistant curator, Smithsonian National Postal Museum**



First flight cover on May 15, 1918, from Washington DC, addressed to New York Postmaster Thomas G. Patten. The Cover is franked with Scott C3 and signed by President Woodrow Wilson.

Sarasota Philatelic Club

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