

ICELAND PHILATELIC MAGAZINE

An independent journal for collectors of Iceland stamps and postal history



The Postal History of United States Forces in Iceland in World War II

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Preface (including acknowledgements)

The genesis for this work was the listing of postmarks of the American Forces as printed in the pages of Facit^{Ref 1} catalogue. I couldn't agree with the dates, the number of cancellations I had in my small exhibit was much greater than the list and it was time for a revision. What now appears in Facit as published in April 2021 is a summary of the chapters that follow. This copy includes **highlighted** corrections to Facit as a result of post publication discoveries.

Whilst the research for this is of recent times, my collecting of military postal history goes back a few decades. I started with British Commonwealth Forces and then recently decided the history would not be complete without including American material.

I'll say it up front – I did find it rather boring! The covers pretty much looked the same and normally lacked stamps. However, under the surface, there was more to interest me. There is little published on the subject and my go-to reference, Facit, was strangely out of date. Hopballe & Eliasson^{Ref 2} wrote "Island postalt set I perioden 1939-45" and I was suddenly aware of a whole new world of material and with that, a burgeoning interest. It was no longer boring!

Over the years there have been about half a dozen exhibits of this material. George Sickels (US) was stationed in Iceland during the war years, and he did some tremendous research to accompany his material. He had several articles published in the Posthorn. Angus Parker was a pioneer military postal history collector from the UK and more recently Dr David Kindley (also from the UK) had an extensive collection, now disposed of.

This article brings together all my knowledge of the postal activities of the US Forces in Iceland in World War II 1941 to 1945. However, it will never be the last word on the subject. I encourage you to challenge my assumptions and come up with your own research to see if you can improve on what I have written.

All the mistakes and omissions are of my own making. I have tried to make it correct but be assured there will be errors to find.

I must acknowledge, with grateful thanks, those that have encouraged, assisted with illustrations, proofread or have otherwise made this project possible. My longtime friend and mentor Wilbur Jonsson, Jay Smith, Michael Schumacher, Ellis Glatt and Raymond Cobussen. As the companion to this article is the new listing in Facit, Gunnar Lithén the editor-in-chief. My wife has painstakingly proofread the draft.

Finally, whilst this is Part 2 of a two-part account of the Allies in Iceland, it is published first in order to coincide (more or less) with the publication of the 2022 Edition of Facit Special.

Notes on language and dates

Where possible I use the correct Icelandic spellings of place names. This sounds a strange thing to say but both the British and the Americans were lazy with Icelandic spellings, not using accents and sometimes changing letters where there was no English equivalent. Sometimes *ð* was changed to *th* and *p* changed to *th*, sometimes *p*. This is understandable but a little disrespectful.

I have tried to use the American format for dates i.e. Month/Day/Year. This is the way most cancels were written, but it wasn't always the favoured convention of the soldiers writing the letters.

Rarity

With respect to US Army covers, in recent times I have been logging all covers that I have seen in order to gauge rarity. This is a relatively unrepresentative sample as it tends to over-emphasise the rarer markings. In each section of this piece of research I will qualify my rating to give the collector some idea of likely rarity. I have also tried to gauge rarity using the following scale:

Rarity Rating	Qualitative Assessment	Quantitative Assessment
R1	Common	>999 probably exist
R2	Less Common	100<999 probably exist
R	Rare	10<99 known examples
RR	Very Rare	2<9 known examples
RRR	Possibly unique	1 known
*	Not known but probably exists	0

Table 1 Rarity

Background to the US Involvement in Iceland ^{Ref 7}

To protect its lifeline to America, Britain, through the office of the then First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, decided on April 28th, 1940 to unilaterally invade Iceland. This had been opposed by the Foreign Office but supported by Admiralty and the War Office. The deal was done. 'Force Sturges', as it was called after its commander Colonel Robert Sturges, entered Reykjavik Bay on the morning of May 10th, 1940. This was not a popular move in Iceland, either among the general population or with the government, who saw their neutrality as very important in the light of fierce nationalism. It is worth noting that at this time Iceland was under the Danish Crown, but since 9th April 1940 when Germany overran Denmark, had been self-determining.

Taking a pessimistic view of Britain's chances of survival, the Icelandic government had, as early as mid-July of 1940, approached the US Department of State concerning the possibility of Iceland coming under the aegis of the Monroe Doctrine and in September and December. The question was again raised. In Iceland it was apparently expected that by a simple declaration by the United States to the effect that Iceland lay within the Western Hemisphere, and therefore within range of the Monroe Doctrine, would make the presence of foreign troops unnecessary. If a garrison was required, it was thought that the American troops, being those of a non-belligerent power, would not draw German attacks. Once Iceland was accepted as part of the Monroe Doctrine Area it was hoped that a favourable trade agreement could be arranged with the United States.

In the early days of May 1941, the Nazi propaganda machine was winding up its threats and accusations over Spain and Portugal and the Portuguese Government desired to evacuate to the Azores, another important Atlantic staging post. In a list of 17 areas, arranged in order of urgency, which the War Plans Division submitted to G-2 on May 7th, the Azores were given 2nd place whereas Iceland was down in 16th. That a declaration of war by Germany would follow the landing of American troops in either the Azores or Iceland, whether by invitation of the respective governments or not, was regarded by the War Dept planners as almost certain. Sending troops to the Azores was more easily justified as a measure in the defence of the Western Hemisphere than a

move to Iceland. However, on 20th May 1941 Germany invaded Crete. British losses and setbacks in the Mediterranean were becoming acute and there was the potential for the garrison in Iceland, consisting of some 20-25,000 troops, to be redeployed. This was the time when German intentions were going East rather than West so the situation in Iceland and the threat to trans-Atlantic convoys had eased somewhat. On May 22nd, 1941. Roosevelt directed the Army and Navy to be ready within 30 days to forestall an attack on the Azores by getting there first. On May 27th President Roosevelt, in declaring an unlimited national emergency, promised all possible assistance in getting supplies to Britain and "other measures were being devised". Between May 29th and June 3rd there was a flurry of discussions, reports and diplomatic envoys all concerning how the US could best help Britain. This resulted in a decision to send American Forces to Iceland rather than anywhere else. Churchill, amongst others, rejoiced as this was the first step to take up arms in support of the Allies.

United States Marine Corps

The Marines Depart

The 6th Marines were stationed at Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California and at the newly opened Camp Elliott, north of San Diego, California. They had received early warning in May 1941 for a possible move over to the East Coast to join the 1st Marine Division for operations in Europe. On May 31st the reinforced 6th Marines embarked in San Diego with orders to report to the Commanding General I Brigade (Provisional), Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic Fleet. At the time they thought they would be going to the Azores and packed accordingly!

They arrived in Charleston on June 15th and the next day were amalgamated with other Marine units already in the area. The 1st Marine Brigade (Provisional) consisted of Brigade Headquarters Platoon; Brigade Band; 6th Marines (Reinforced); 2nd Battalion (10th Marines); 5th Defense Battalion; Company A, 2nd Tank Battalion; 2nd Medical Battalion; Company C, 1st Engineer Battalion; 1st Platoon, Company A, 2nd Service Battalion; 3rd Platoon, 1st Scout Company and Chemical Platoon. This represented 4,095 Marines, the most populous unit being the 5th Defense Battalion responsible for anti-aircraft and coastal defences. I should mention here that the 'defense battalions' were a term invented by the USMC to pacify the anti-war lobby. It was while they were in Charleston that they learned that their intended destination was Iceland and as a result the downtown stores were bought out of cold-weather gear for the trip north. They departed Charleston on June 22nd, 1941 in a convoy of 25 ships, arrived in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland on June 27th and departed for Iceland on July 1/2.

The convoy north consisted of 25 vessels including two battleships, USS New York and USS Arkansas, and two cruisers, USS Nashville and USS Brooklyn.

Transit Mail

There must have been a volume of mail from the journey north dropped off at Charleston and at Placentia Bay. My first cover (**Fig 1**) is from a member of the Marine Band, PFC Johnston. This has been posted after departure from Placentia Bay and received the FIFTH DEFENSE BATTALION – FLEET MARINE BRIGADE (Prov.) handstamp dated July 3rd. The 6c postage paid the airmail rate from the point of landing (normally Boston) on to Pennsylvania. This was before the introduction of free postage for serving troops which was April 1st, 1942. I have not seen any other battalion handstamps on Iceland Mails. There is no indication here of how long the letter took to return to the States, as I imagine it went to Iceland first.

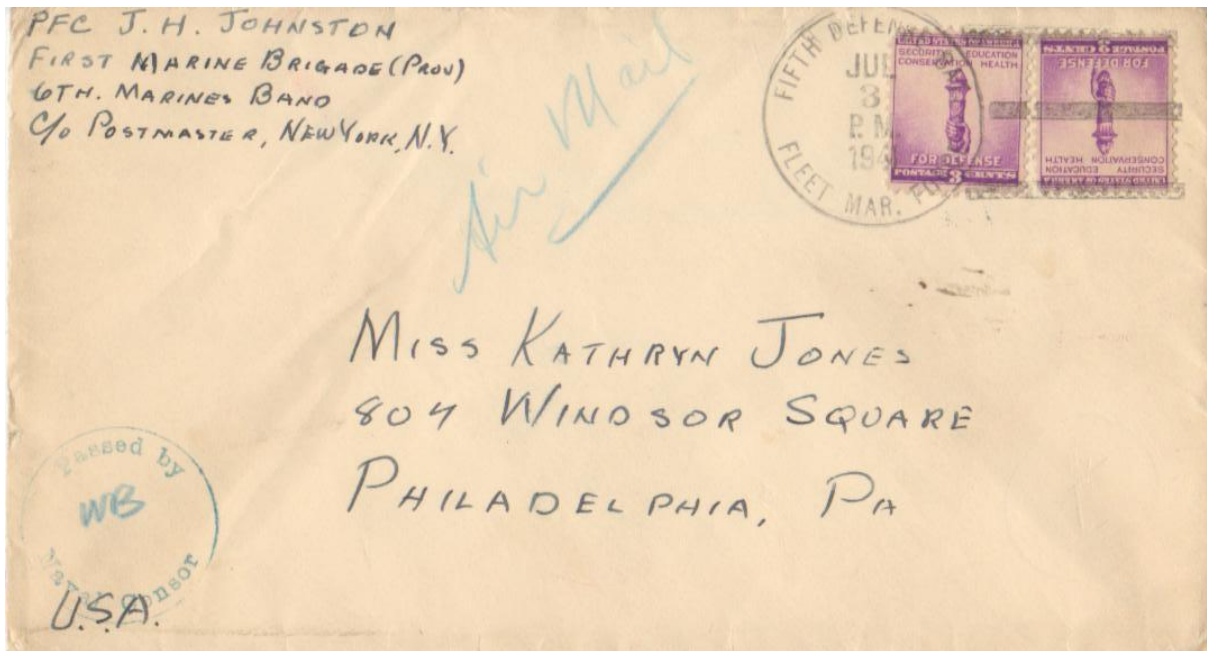


Fig 1 Mailed from the convoy en route to Iceland

Arrival in Iceland

The convoy reached Reykjavík on July 7th (**Fig 3** below). The initial Brigade mail was collected by the Brigade post office aboard and dispatched via US destroyers for delivery at Argentia in Newfoundland or at Boston (for example, **Fig 2** below). The official postage rate fixed for the Iceland detachment, once ashore, required the sender to pay an extra 12c for the Iceland postal system as no such service was available through military channels. However, no such letters are known to me and I suspect that mails were effectively suspended until July 10th.

On July 10th the postage rate for the US was set as 3c for surface mail and 6c for airmail. From then on, all mail was sent by ships of the US fleet.

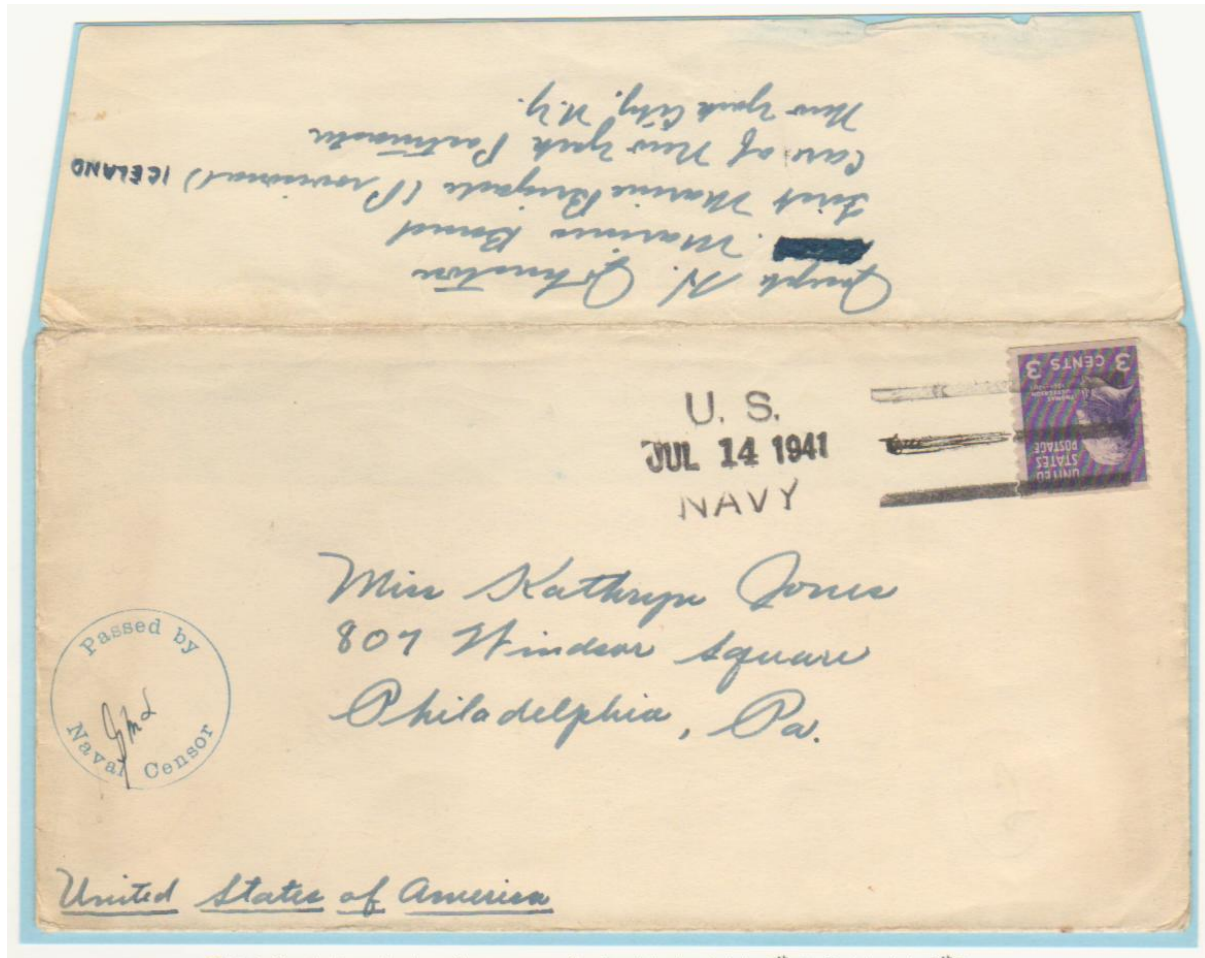


Fig 2

This letter is inscribed on the reverse "arrived Iceland July 7th, left ship July 9th".

Cancelled on board on 14th July and passed by Naval Censor.

The cancel 'belongs' to the USS Biddle and as a result can be found from other theatres supporting the Marines.

This period leading up to August 5th was quite difficult for the Marines as they tried to get their stores ashore. Due to lack of handling facilities nearly everything had to be manhandled – at least twice. The Marines didn't know about the 14' tide and lot of stores were washed out to sea in the first day. Working 24 hours a day for 4 days 1,500t of stores were unloaded and moved into recently vacated camps previously belonging to the British. The British lent the Marines all their equipment for 10 days to cover the period of disembarkation. The accommodation consisted of the ubiquitous Nissan huts, with an extra layer of insulation on the inside and tied down with barbed wire strainers on the outside to guard against ferocious North Atlantic gales.

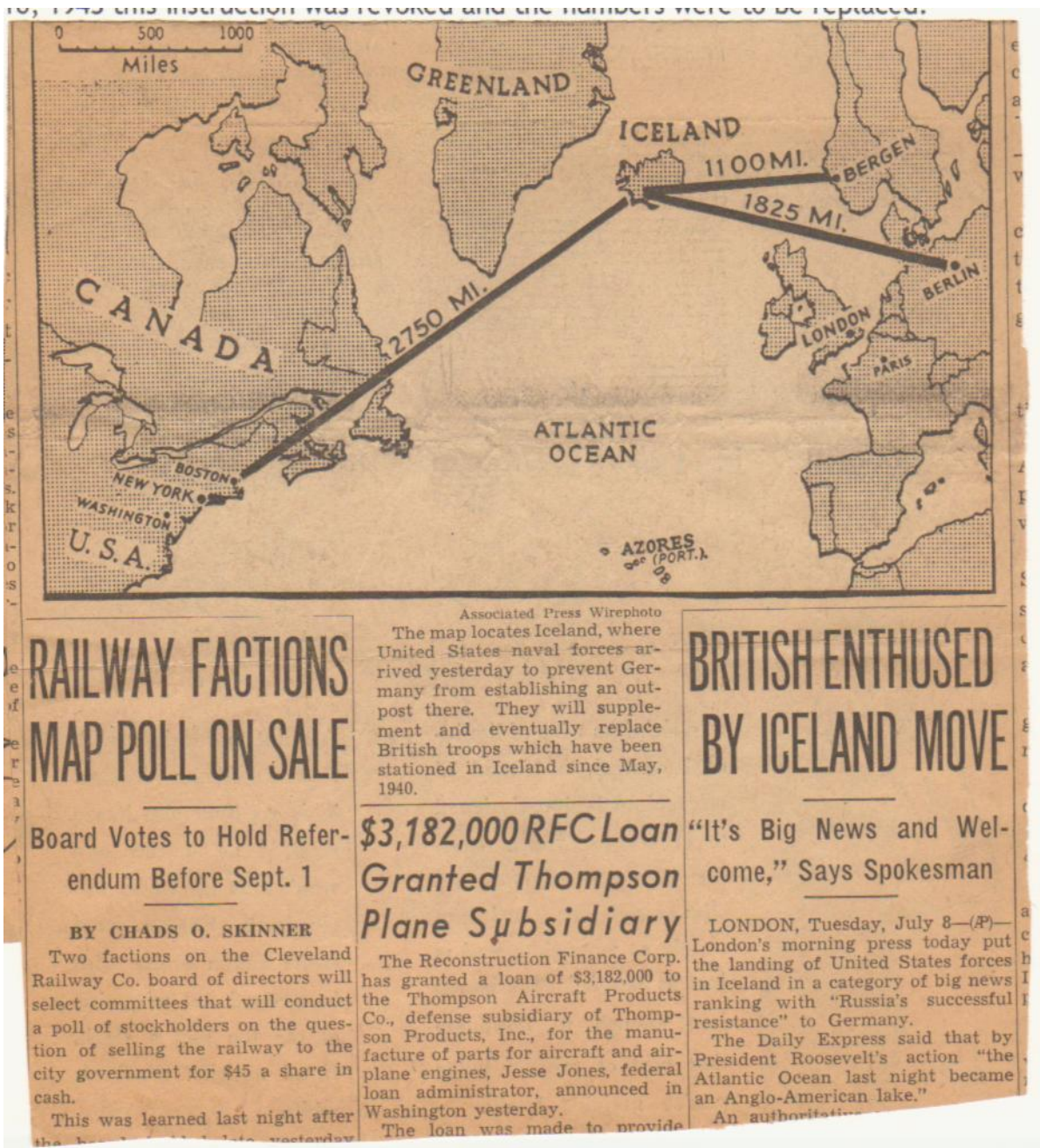


Fig 3

This contemporary article from the Cleveland News of July 8th announces the American arrival in Reykjavík

No stamps available

One feature of this period, and to a lesser extent, the entire mission in Iceland, is the lack of postage stamps that could be purchased at the Brigade Post Office. Unless the marine had a private supply of stamps, he couldn't put stamps on his letters, but I assume he paid his 3c or 6c over the counter as he didn't have free postage unlike his British counterpart.

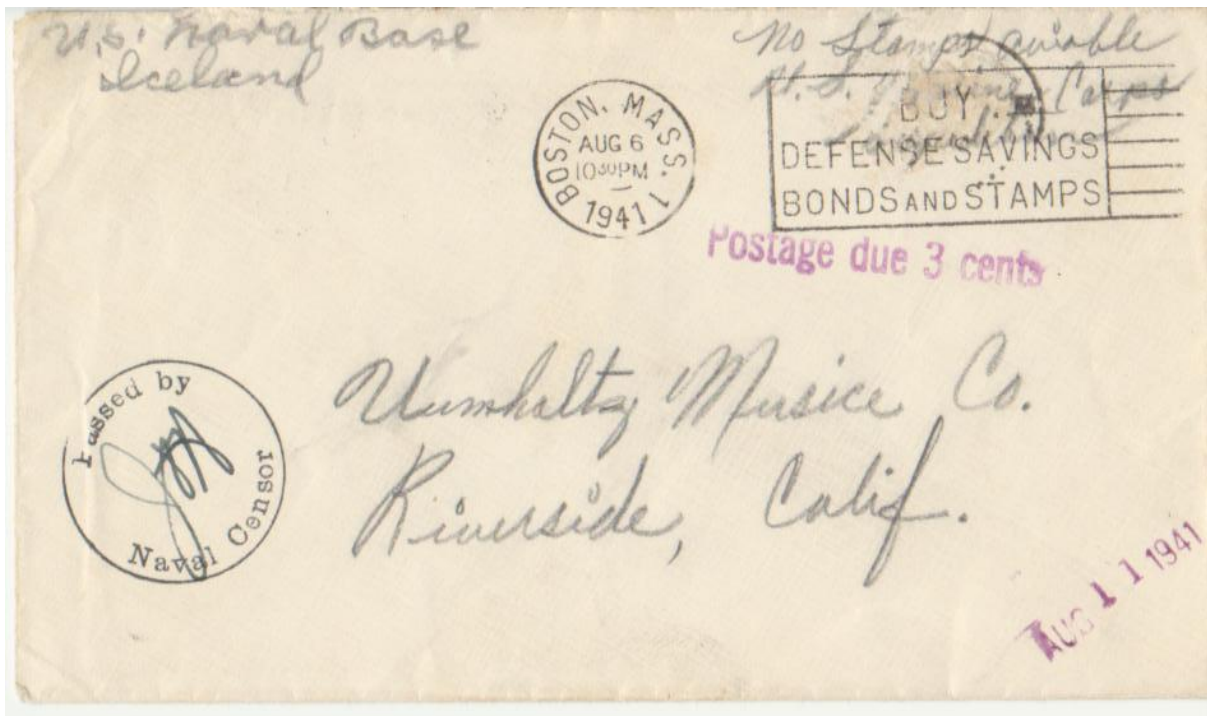


Fig 4 Letter inscribed 'No stamps available US Marine Corps'.

The sender has re-used an envelope but has had no stamps. For it to be received in Boston on 6th August it would possibly have been posted around 25th July. It has been stamped 'Postage Due 3 cents' but this was probably not collected. Return address says, 'US Naval Base Iceland'.

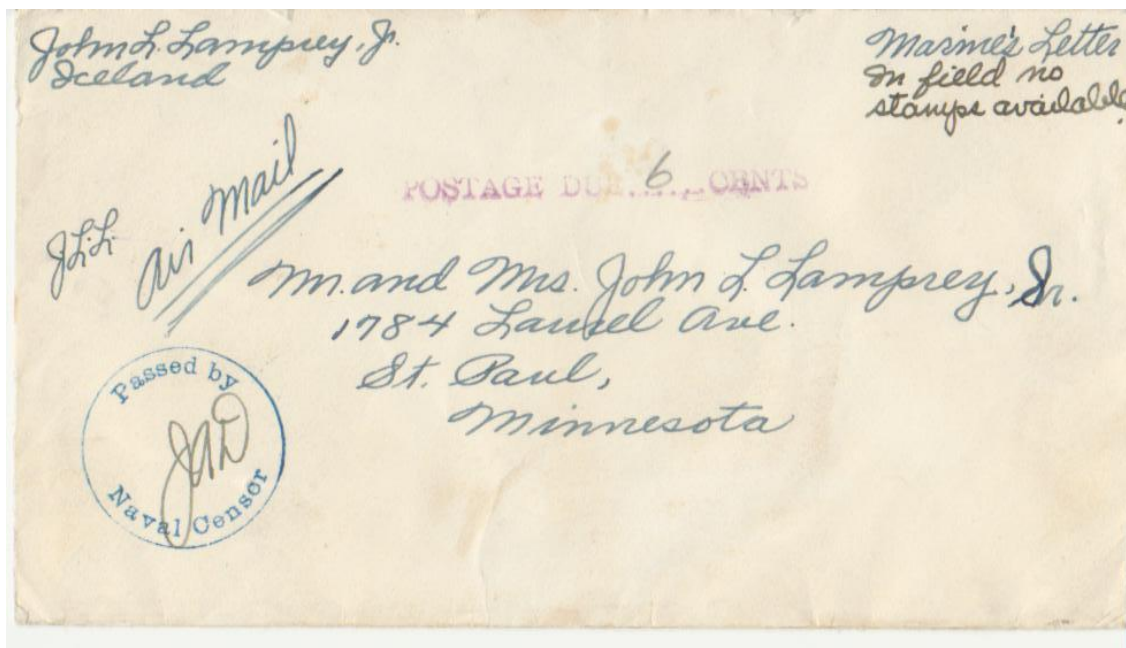


Fig 5

Letter inscribed 'Marine's Letter In Field no stamps available'.

'Passed by Naval Censor' Handstamp and also inscribed Air Mail.

Backstamped, very unusually Newport RI on July 28th 1941.

Allowing 8-10 days for passage this would mean it was posted in Iceland on about July 19th.

POSTAGE DUE 6 CENTS added per the airmail rate but probably not collected.

Establishing Camp

Brigade headquarters was established in the same camp where the 6th Marines HQ was located – Camp Lumley near Reykjavík. 1st Battalion occupied two adjacent camps, Victoria Park and Camp MacArthur some 10 miles up the road from Reykjavík near Álafoss. The 2nd Battalion were located at Camp Baldurshagi. The 5th Defense Battalion served as an air defense unit with the mission of protecting the city, the harbour and the airfield from German attack. In late September the 3rd Battalion was moved to Camp Brautarholt near the entrance to Hvalfjörður, the naval base for the Iceland Defense area.

All these camps were previously British Commonwealth camps, but the Marines quickly set about building more Nissan huts as winter was fast approaching. This activity quite incensed the Marines. They had not gone through all the military training to build Nissan huts for the US Army!

Setting up the Post Office

The post office was set up in a Nissan hut at Camp Lumley. An eyewitness account (ref 9) confirms that the first official day of operation of the post office on shore was August 5th. The official military postal records state August 17th. Fewer than 100 covers were cancelled on the ‘first’ day. There was a batch of covers sent from the US for the purpose of receiving the first day cancel but they didn’t reach Reykjavík till August 8th and were cancelled the following day.

Postmarks and Cachets

Marking	Period of use		Notes	Rarity
	from	to		
First Marine Brigade Circular Handstamp M-D-Y	Jul 29, 1941		No time in cancel, used on 1 st day Also missing from between the bars of the duplex “US MARINES ICELAND” and two fleur-des-lys Fig 6	RRR
First Marine Brigade Circular Handstamp M-D-T-Y	Jul 30, 1941	Feb 20, 1942	FDC’s have the date Aug 5, 1941 but these prepared covers arrived late from the US. Fig 7	R1
Marine’s Mail Rectangular cachet	Aug 30, 1941	Feb 3, 1942	Known as a “Blue Box” but the ink can be blue, later black Fig 10	R
Fifth Defence Bat. – Fleet Mar. Force Circular handstamp	July 1, 1941	July 9, 1941	Transit cancel on Marine Mail en route to Iceland. (1 known) Fig 1	RRR
Circular Registered handstamp	July 30, 1941	Jan 7, 1942	Inscribed “FIRST MARINE BRIGADE (PROVISIONAL)” Fig 14	RR

Table 2 USMC Postmarks

For the period of the Marines being in Iceland, the collector really only has the one postmark to find. This is first found used on July 29th, 1941 and the one example known to me came to market in 2009

in the Angus Parker^{Ref 3} collection auctioned by Cavendish in the UK. Interestingly, the bars of the duplex do not contain the words "US Marines Iceland" and two fleurs-de-lys. The purple colour also matches the first "Blue Boxes" – see below.



Fig 6 The earliest known use of the First Marine Brigade Provisional postmark.

By the next day the additional wording and time was added to the postmark (fig 7). Special services markings are also found. These are all the same format and are REGISTERED (see fig 13), PARCEL POST and M.O.B. which stands for Money Order Business. These last two have only been found as souvenir usage and the Registered mark has only been found on a maximum of 10 covers.



Fig 7 Last day of the post office off-shore

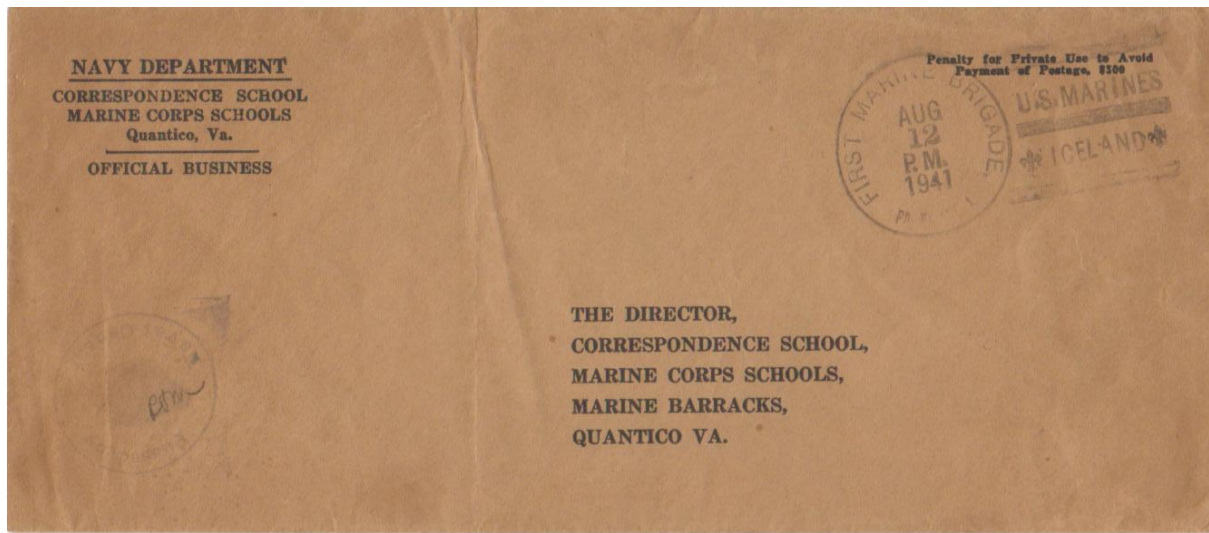


Fig 8
Interesting Navy Department Official Business
Envelope dated August 12th to the Marine Barracks in Virginia.
No backstamps but censored

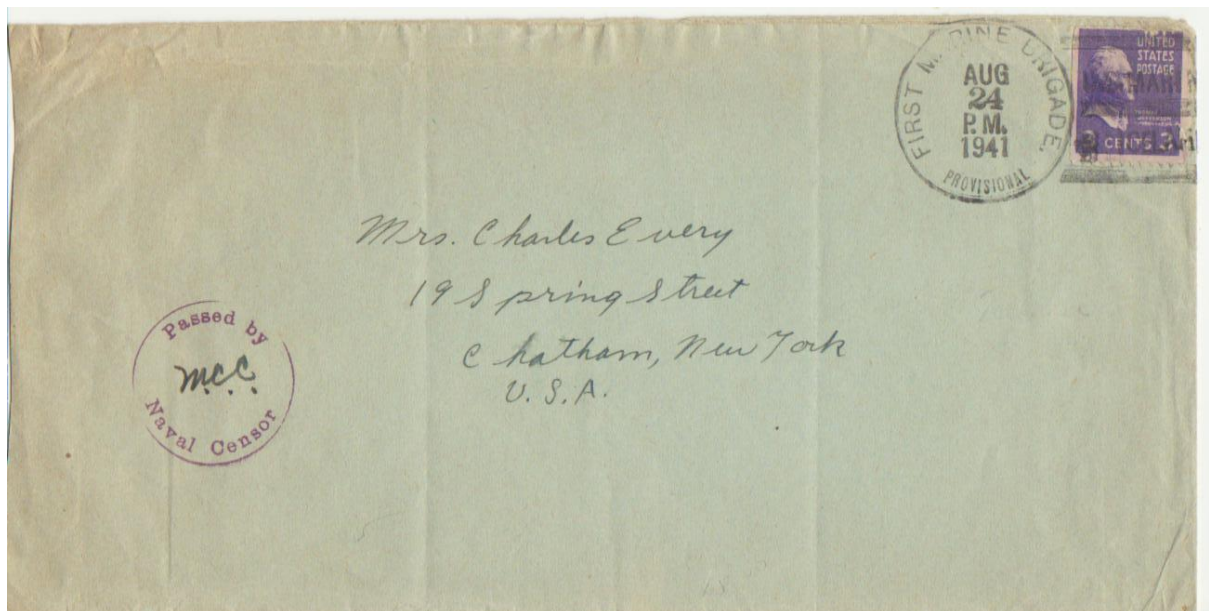


Fig 9
Some stamps at last! Aug 24, 1941
This cover uses a 3c stamp – the correct rate for surface mail.
No inscription from the serving marine as was usual but censored by the
Naval Censor in the normal manner

The 'Blue Box' Endorsement

So, with very few stamps available and free franking not yet introduced, the Brigade Post Office decided to introduce the 'Blue Box' endorsement (Fig 10)^{Ref 8}. Its purpose was really just to replace the manuscript inscriptions that came in many forms – "Marine's letter – no stamps available" or "No stamps available – US Marine Corps" etc. The earliest known date of use is Sept 5th, 1941 but it is only found on mail from Brigade HQ. It was known as a 'blue box' because one of the ink pads was blue. Other colours are purple and black.

It nearly always appears with a normal brigade handstamp over the top. This frank is one of the rarest of all American postal markings in WW2.

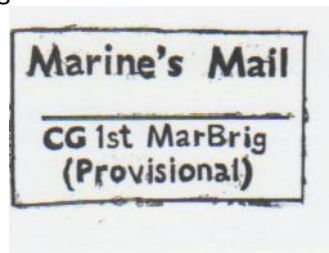


Fig 10 The Blue Box

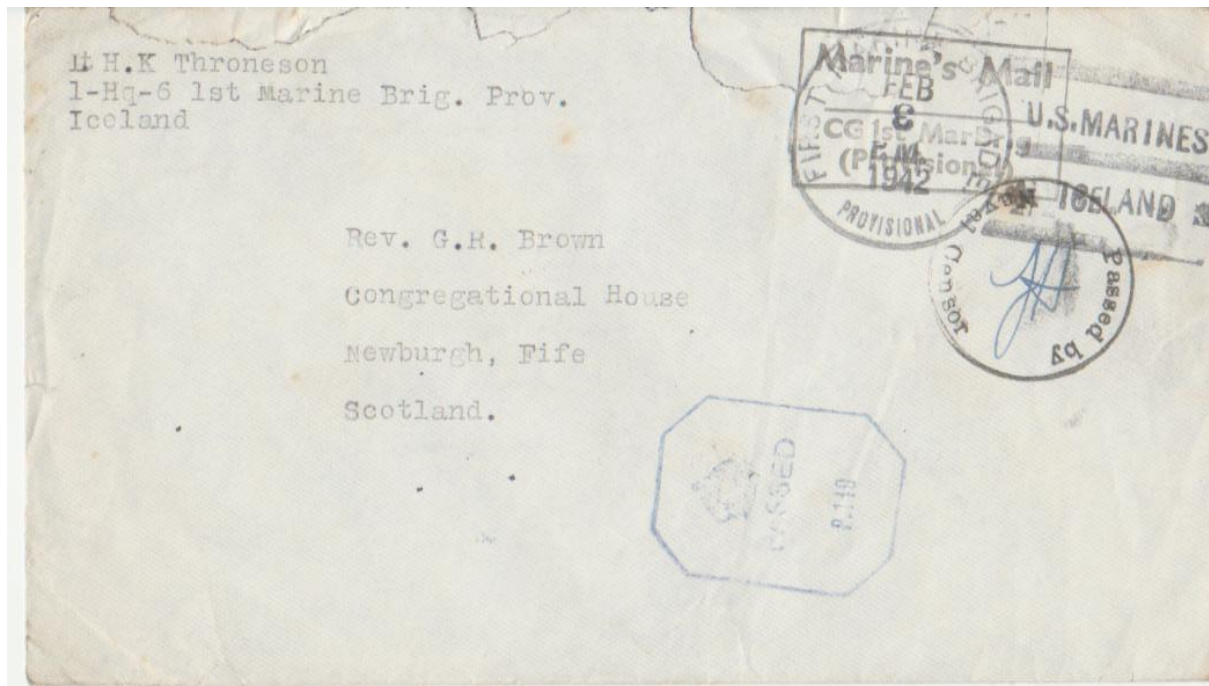


Fig 11

An example of very late use of this frank (much later than 25.11.1941 by Sorensen) Feb 3, 1942 from 1st Marine Brigade to Scotland with US Naval Censor and British censor markings.
Note the reversed '3' in the date stamp.

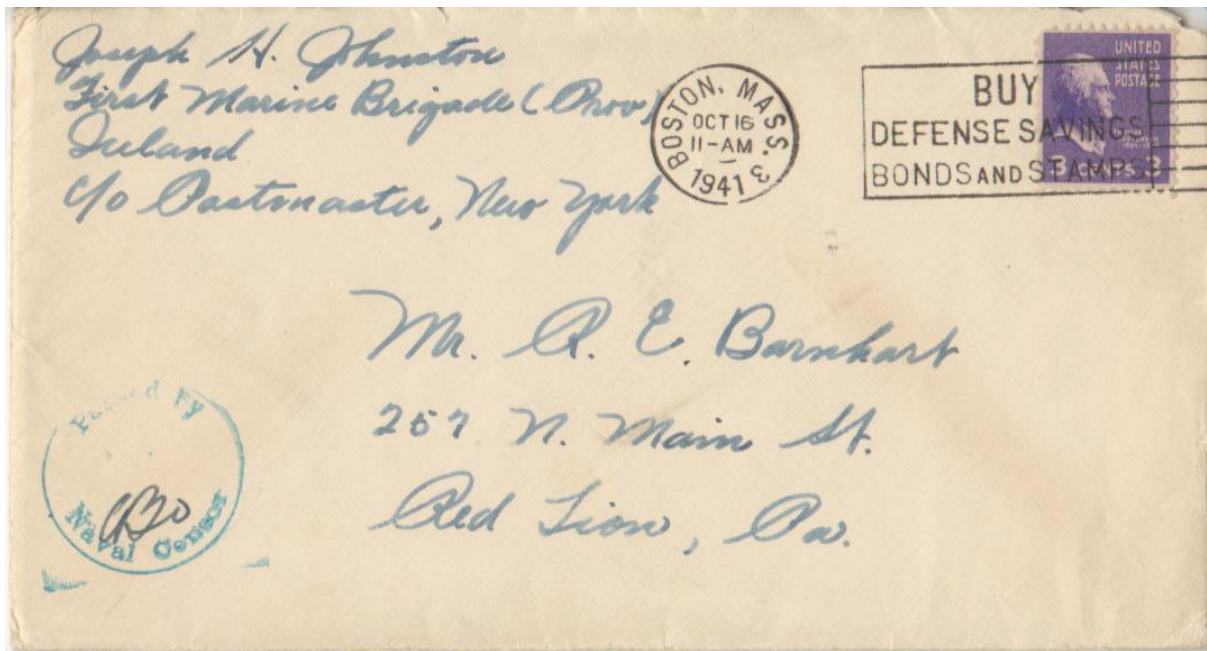


Fig 12

This cover still has its contents so that we know it was written on 4th October and received in Boston on 16th October. In his letter PFC Johnston says "Thanks a lot for the stamps. I can really use them because, as yet, I haven't been able to get stamps. We were just writing and sending the letter without postage, hoping they would get through. Lately I have been lucky because Kay and my family have been sending me postage".

This explains how he has been able to put stamps on his mail.

Registered Mail

Registration was another service provided to the Marines, though examples of use are very rare.

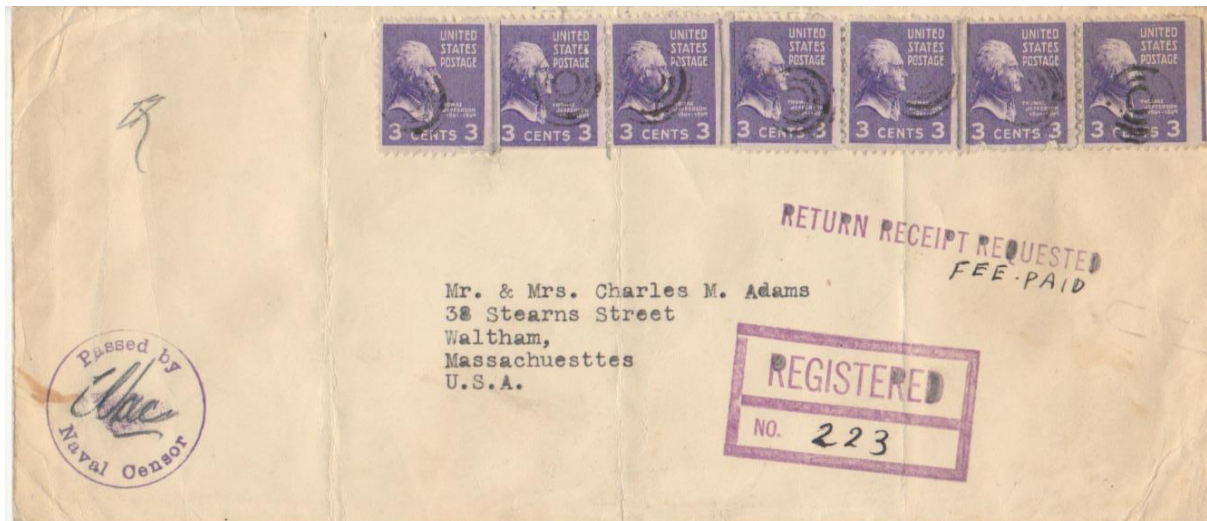


Fig 13 A registered letter from the Marine Corps.

FIRST MAR. BRIGADE (PROVISIONAL) REGISTERED postmark, here used on a cover from Iceland (16th October) USS Badger 18th Oct, New York 5th Nov., Waltham 6th Nov.

Registration numbers started on 1st July – the start of the fiscal year.

RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED and m/s 'fee paid'. Boxed REGISTERED cachet.



Fig 14 Reverse of the cover shown in Fig 13

Marine Censorship

All mail was censored using the same circular, Passed by Naval Censor device (whether one or, more likely, multiple copies of the same) with the censoring officers' initials in the middle.

Christmas in Iceland

With winter putting a complete halt to training exercises outside, boredom was a real problem for the Marines. No wonder that they wrote home so often. Christmas was a spot of excitement in the very dark days of an Icelandic winter.



Fig 15

The enclosed letter reads: "Dear Mabelle: I am glad to be able to send you this cover from Iceland and hope that it makes a welcome addition to your collection. If you would also like an airmail cover from here by way of England and Portugal I would be glad to take care of it on this end. The cost is three krónur fifty which is about fifty cents of our money. Best wishes for the New Year." Strictly against regulations of course. But it did relieve the boredom. To the US via the UK the correct rate 1.1.1940-31.12.1942 was 45aur. Cover censored in the UK by civilian censor.

It is very rare for Icelandic stamps to be on USMC (indemnity) mail and is rarer than the blue box.

Home we go.

The Marines had completed their task of building camps and huts for the US Army to occupy and it was time to return Stateside. There was a war to fight in the Pacific. In January 1942, the brigade received orders to begin moving home. The 3rd Battalion departed 31st January and the 1st and 2nd Battalions with attachments from other brigade units embarked on 8th March.

Finally, the brigade headquarters and the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines and its attached units departed Iceland at 0800hrs on March 9th, 1942. The weather was cold, wet and windy. Typical really. The last day of operation of the post office onshore is sometime in the last week of February and there is no record of a date later than February 20th shown below.

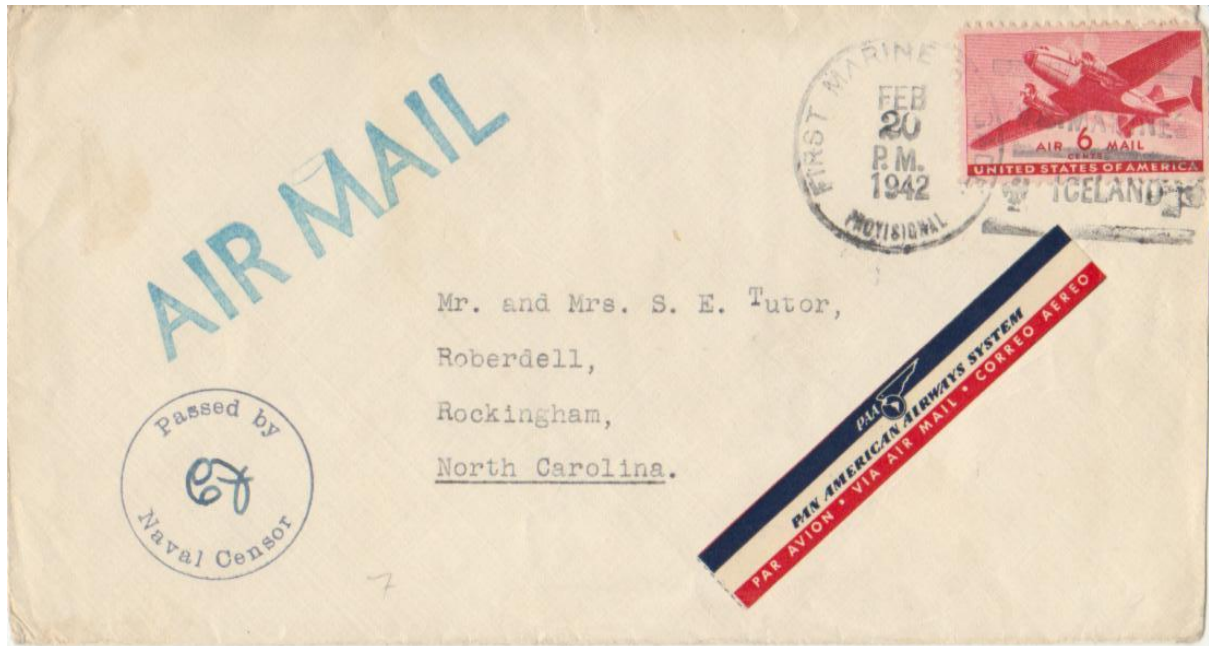


Fig 16
Latest date known to me, Feb 20th, 1942 from the Brigade Headquarters

I would like here to acknowledge the help of Major Ted Bahry USMC (ret) in reviewing this chapter on the US Marines Corp both from a postal history and a military standpoint. References to further reading on this subject are listed at the end of the publication.

United States Navy

I should start here by stating that US Navy mail that can be proven to originate in Iceland is much rarer to find than USMC or US Army mail. Perhaps the ratio is 100:1 when comparing APO mail to Navy mail but I suspect it's more like 500:1. I have recently read in the auction catalogue for the collection of Angus Parker that he only found 5 items of Navy mail in 40 years of collecting.

The main reason is that without an Iceland-specific endorsement (listed below), Navy mail is silent on origin. Normally there are few clues such as unit or office numbers. The date stamps are just that – date only, apart from US Navy. So, proving use in Iceland is not easy.

Cancel Classification

Classification of Navy cancels (Hopballe & Elíasson)	
H	Hand cancel 32-35mm dia circular date stamp (CDS) with 4 horizontal killer bars
M	Machine Cancel
SL	Straight line (no circle)
Text in Upper Circle (or line)	
1	U.S.
2	U.S.NAVY
3	Blank (<i>includes * U.S. *</i>)
4	U.S.S.
Centre (M=month, D=day, Y=year, N=APO number, M/D month and day on same line, T=time)	
1	M-D-Y
2	M-D-T-Y
3	M-D-Y-T
4	M-D-Y-NOBI
5	M/D-T (Machine cancel 8150 dated 1942)
6	Y-M-D-T
7	T-M/D-Y (Machine cancel USS Melville 1942?)
Text in Lower Circle (or line)	
1	NAVY
2	U.S. NAVY
3	Blank
4	Ship Name (e.g. ALCYONE)
5	Y (Machine cancel 8150 dated 1942)

Table 3 Navy cancel classification

General Cancellations

These cancellations were applied to mail from serving US Navy personnel and were used at various shore bases and ships – both visiting and permanently or semi-permanently based in Iceland. There is an almost endless variety and as noted above, the problem is one of associating the item with Iceland. Very few ships were permanently based in Iceland and all cancels are dumb. This is not an exhaustive list. There is no difference between a cancel used on shore or on ship.








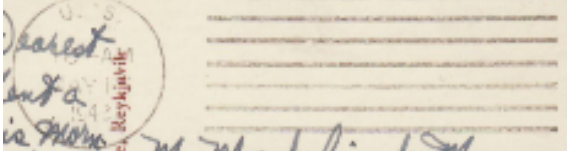
Cancel type	Illustration	Notes
H-1-1-1		
H-1-2-1		
H-1-6-1		
H-3-2-1		
H-4-3-4		USS Alcyone was in Iceland Sep 16, 1941 to Oct 5, 1941
H-3-1-3		USS Vulcan Sep 28, 1941 to Apr 26, 1942 and Nov 18, 1942 to Apr 6, 1943
M-1-7-1		USS Melville ? to Nov 18, 1942
M-1-7-1		Unknown ship May 14, 1942 Possibly USS Melville

Table 4 General Navy cancels

Navy Censorship

All mail seems to have been censored (apart from official). The censor stamps come in all shapes and sizes – I have not attempted to classify these as yet – perhaps this is a project for the future?



NOBI

The Naval Operating Base, Iceland (NOBI) was formerly established on Nov 8, 1941, well after the arrival of American troops on July 7th, 1941. The US Fleet was based at Hvalfjörður along with the British Navy. The naval base anchorage was a key feature of the Iceland Defence Area and was in deep water. The fiord was closed by an anti-submarine net and the gate tended by a small British vessel.

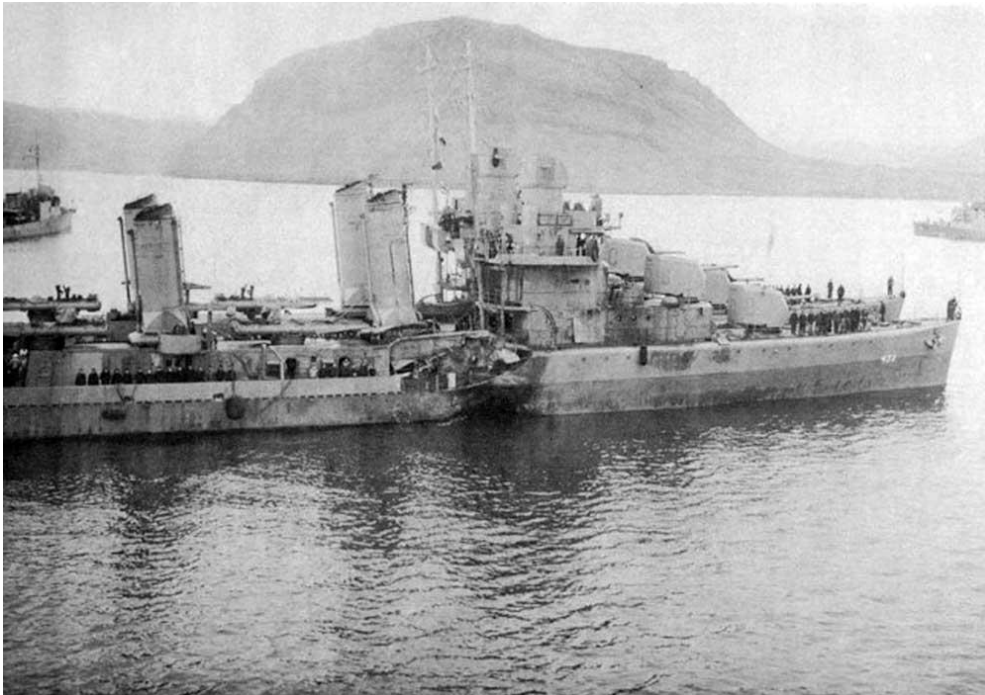


Fig 17 USS Kearny tied alongside a sister ship in Hvalfjörður anchorage

On October 17, 1941 the first US troops were killed in WWII when the USS Kearny was torpedoed west of Reykjavík

Apart from fuel bunkering, ammunition stores and the like, there were a number of large wharves. I am not aware of significant on-shore repair facilities but rather these were provided by repair ships and floating docks.



US Navy Endorsements, Postmarks and Markings				
NOBI	Opening Date	Closing Date	Navy Operating Base Iceland Located in Hvalfjörður	
	May 14, 1942	July 30, 1945	Anchorage and shore facilities jointly operated by British and US Navies	
Endorsement/ Cancel	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
H-1-4-1 (with NOBI replacing time)	March 1942	April 23 1942	Very rarely seen commercially used.	R
Registration handstamp	Jun 23, 1942	Mar 2, 1943	Cancel inscribed NAV.OPERATING BASE.ICELAND BR	RR
				
NOBI Handstamp H-1-4-1			Registration handstamp	
Endorsement: NOBI	Sep 12, 1942	May 30, 1943	With US Navy cancellation (any type)	R2
Endorsement: US Marine Detachment NOBI	Aug 2, 1942	Aug 27, 1943	A few USMC men stayed behind in Iceland with the Navy for the remainder of the war	RR (4k)

Table 5 NOBI cancels and endorsements

The CDS with the NOBI replacing time was unauthorised and short-lived. It is only recorded being used in March and April 1942, with most use noted on philatelic mail. I would say that commercial mail with this cancel warrants a RR rarity rating.

It is thought that the NOBI cancel was unauthorised and was withdrawn as it didn't meet with the censor's approval.

I should note here that whilst all NOBI endorsements have an accompanying US Navy cancellation, there are as many types of these as there were ships and shore bases. Unless there are some distinguishing features, the Navy post office clerks have done a good job of keeping the cancels neutral.

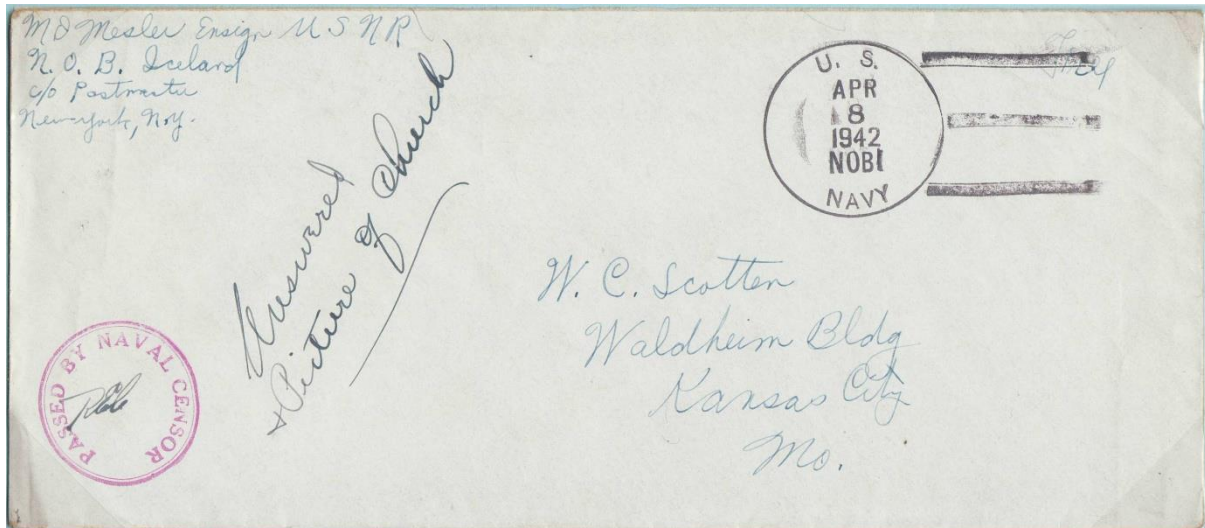


Fig 18 Cover to illustrate both the H-1-4-1 NOBI date stamp and the NOB Iceland endorsement

The US Marine Detachment was first noted by Sickels and it took me a very long time to find another example. At this time, I have no information as to how many Marines remained in Iceland after the return of the main contingent to the United States in February 1942. Nor do I know when these last few Marines finally left Iceland. They could of course, have rotated in and out.

Fleet Air Base

The Chief of Naval Operations directed that a base be constructed for the operation of one squadron of patrol planes near Reykjavík. This base was to consist of housing and administration facilities, repair facilities, and seaplane ramps, and was to be designated as a fleet air base.

The first contingent of American civilian contractors to reach Iceland consisted of 133 men, who arrived on October 29, 1941. The original intent had been to use all these men on the construction of the fuel-oil facilities; however, 48 of them were sent immediately to begin the air base. I should say here that in addition to the American civilian contractors, Icelanders were also employed to work on building and maintaining the facilities.

The Fleet Air Base was commissioned on January 21, 1942.

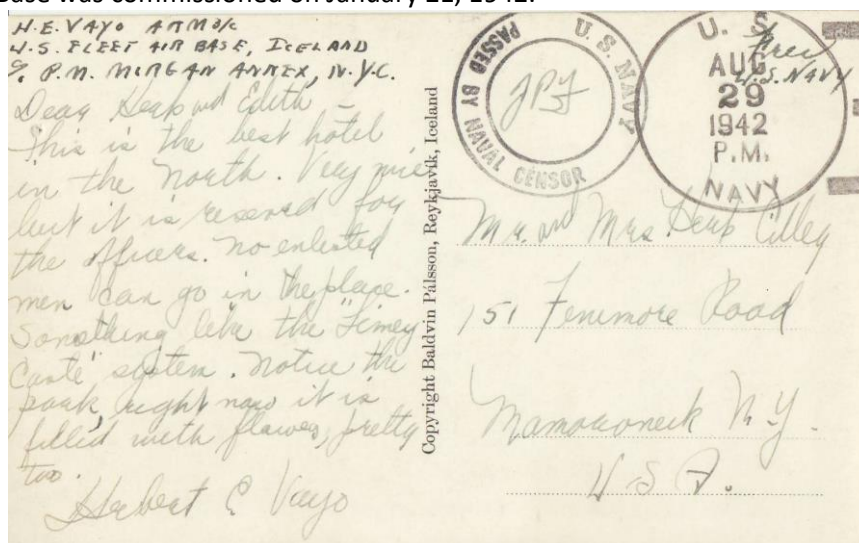


Fig 19 Picture postcard with a Fleet Air Base inscription



Fig 20 Reykjavík airfield in 1944

No cancellations exist but endorsements are seen on letters dated between Mar 27, 1942 and May 31, 1943. From August 1943 the base was redesignated Navy #101. Sometimes the endorsement will be USNAF #101 which stands for the US Navy Air Facility. The return address on such mail is c/o Fleet Post Office, New York, NY or c/o Postmaster, PM, Morgan Annex, NYC. The cancellation is the neutral US Navy cancel, of various types.

As with other US Navy Mail, this mail is hard to find.

Fleet Air Base	Opening Date	Closing Date	Reykjavík	
	Jan 21, 1942	July 31, 1943	Later designated Navy 101 V-Mail not known	
Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Endorsement: Fleet Air Base <i>sometimes just FAB</i>	Mar 27, 1942	May 31, 1943	With Navy handstamp	RR
Registration handstamp				*

Table 5 Fleet Air Base endorsements

Navy 101


NAVY 101	Opening Date	Closing Date	Reykjavík	
	Aug 1 st , 1943	Feb 2 nd 1945	Previously designated Fleet Air Base	
Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Navy 101 Registration handstamp	Jul 15, 1944	Aug 21, 1944		RR
 Navy 101 Registered handstamp				
Endorsement: Navy 101	Aug 1 st , 1943	Feb 2 nd 1945	With Navy handstamp	R
Endorsement: Navy 101			V-Mail	RR
Endorsement: Navy 101 USNAF			With Navy handstamp USNAF=US Navy Air Force	RR
Endorsement: USNATS Navy 101	Oct 19, 1943		With Navy handstamp USNATS=US Navy Air Transport Service	RR
Endorsement: Marine Barracks Navy #101	Aug 1, 1943	Nov 14, 1944 (?)	With Navy handstamp	RR

Table 6 Navy #101 cancels and endorsements

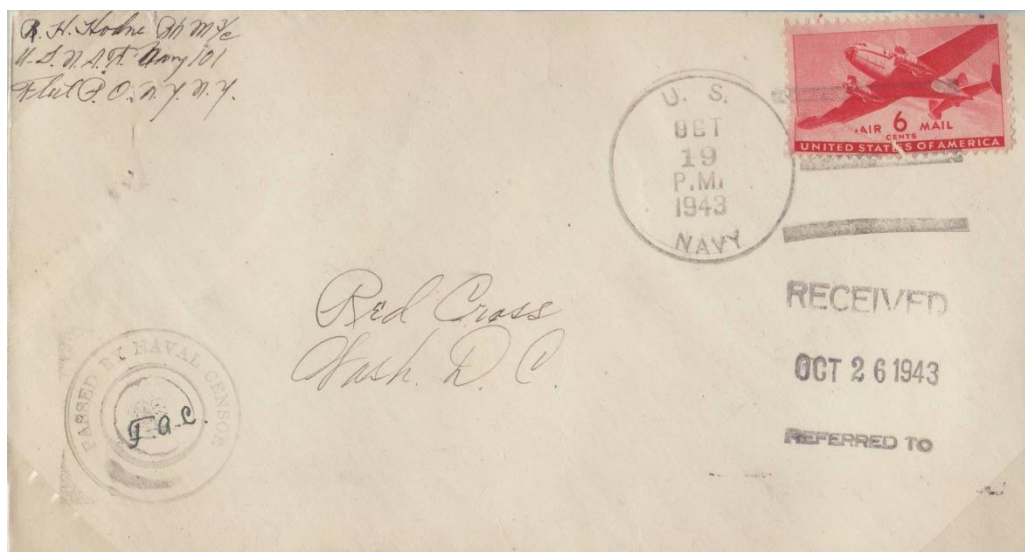


Fig 21 USNATS Navy #101 endorsement



Fig 22 Endorsed Marine Barracks Navy #101

Navy 102



Fig 23 Falcon landing, Hvalfjörður, Iceland, against a stadium-wall of snow-capped mountains, officers from USS WICHITA, flagship of the Iceland fleet, take a couple of hours off duty to compete with one another in a softball game. The Nissan Hut showing in centre-field is the enlisted men's canteen where they can obtain American beer for 15 cents a can.

On the southern shore of Hvalfjörður, at Hvammsvík, was situated the navy's depot for ammunition and deep-sea mines as well as a Recreation Centre for the American sailors. The original name for this camp was Falcon Camp or Falcon Field. I have seen it spelt Falcom on an endorsement and referred to as Falcolm. As can be seen in the photo above, rather a bleak location!

With only three examples known to me, and two of these are impossible to read dates (refer the Sickels collection^{Ref 4}), it is difficult to give a date range for use here. Return to sender address is Fleet PO, New York, NY. Cancellation, as with other Navy covers, will be the neutral US Navy cancel.

NAVY 102	Opening Date	Closing Date	Hvalfjörður	
			Falcon Camp – Rest camp located at the ammunition dump	
Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Endorsement: Falcon Camp NOBI	Nov 22, 1942		With Navy handstamp	RR (3 known)

Table 7 Navy #102 endorsements

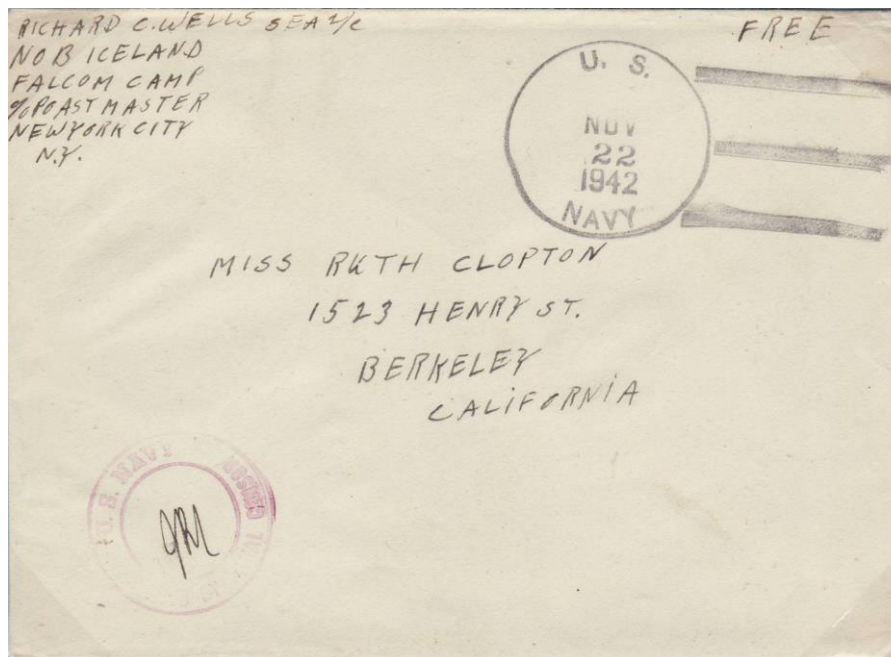


Fig 24 NOB Iceland Falcon Camp endorsement

Navy 25

On the north shore of Hvalfjörður on the land known as Miðsandur and Litli-Sandur, the Navy Construction Battalions built a base and large fuel depot. Mail with the endorsement Navy 25 is accompanied with the neutral US Navy Cancel.

NAVY 25	Opening Date	Closing Date	Hvalfjörður	
	Sep 20.1943	Jan.1944	Naval Fuel Depot Also had men from 28 th NCB (4 officers and 273 men). Redesignated NCBMU 586	

Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Endorsement: Navy 25	July 17, 1943	Nov 8, 1943	With Navy handstamp	RR
Endorsement: Navy 25	Dec 16, 1943		V-Mail	RR

Table 8 Navy #25 endorsements

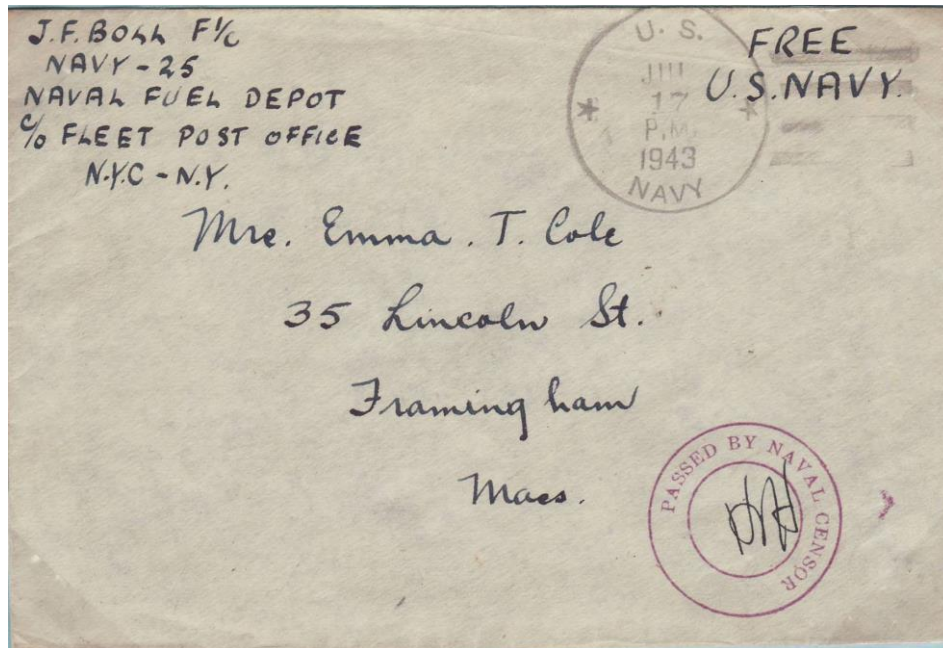


Fig 25 Navy 25

9th Navy Construction Battalion

Section 1

The arrival on August 18, 1942, of the 9th Construction Battalion (section 1), comprising 704 enlisted men and 17 officers.

In Iceland, Section One constructed four bomber airstrips for the United States Army and the Fleet Air Base (Patterson and Meeks Field, Keflavík), built a Navy Fuel and Salvage Depot (Hvalfjörður), a camp for the United States Army (Fossvogur), and a 52-tank fuel farm with a total capacity of 28,500 barrels of aviation gas (Reykjavík airfield) and 440,000 barrels of oil (Hvalfjörður).

The return address on mail was very often inscribed NOB, Iceland (Navy Operating Base, Iceland) prior to the assignment of 8055.

Please note that my note in Facit Special 2021 was in error. Section 2 was actually located in Nicaragua at this time.

Navy 8055/9 th NCB	Opening Date	Closing Date	Fossvogur, Keflavík, Reykjavík	
	Aug 18 th .1942	Sep 6 th .1943	8055 was assigned to section 1 of 9 th NCB. V-Mail not known	

Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Endorsement: 8055	Nov 21, 1942	Apr 1, 1943	With Navy handstamp	R
Endorsement: 9 th NCB	Sep 7, 1942	Nov 12, 1942	With Navy handstamp	R
Registration handstamp	Oct 2, 1942	Dec 31, 1942	With Navy handstamp and a straight-line 8055	RR

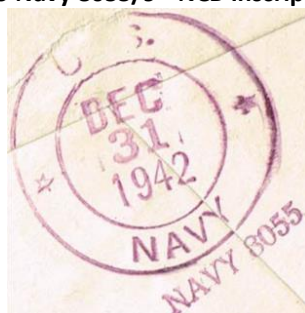
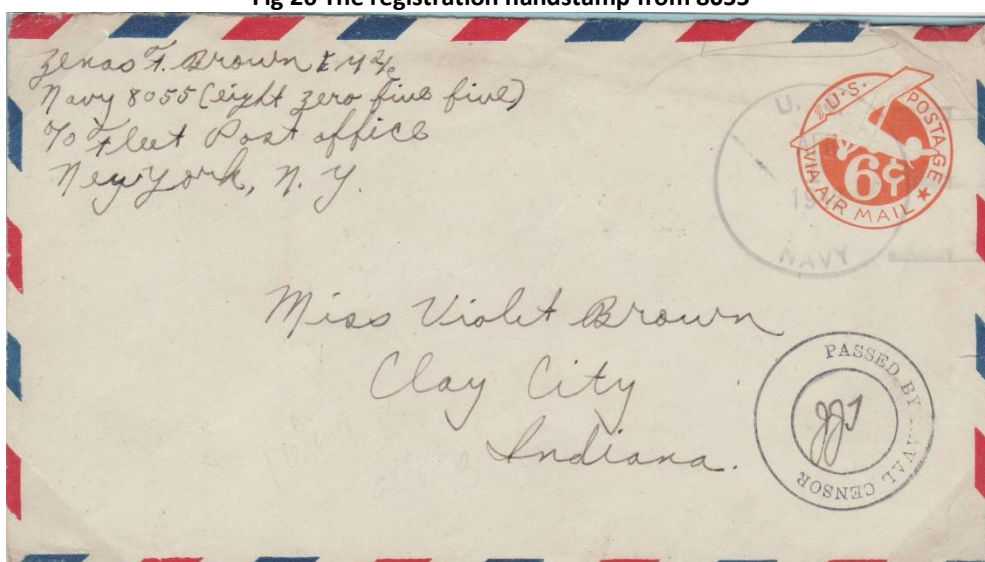
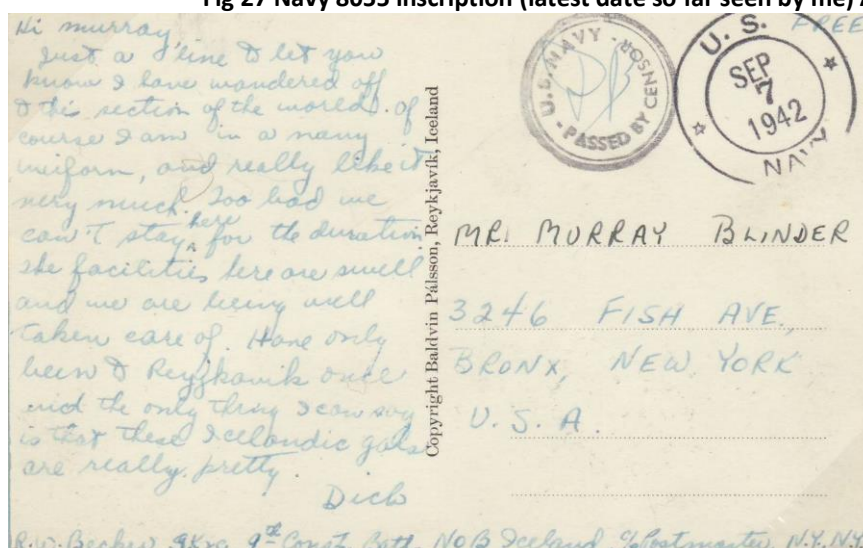
Table 9 Navy 8055/9th NCB Inscriptions

Fig 26 The registration handstamp from 8055

Fig 27 Navy 8055 inscription (latest date so far seen by me) Apr 1st, 1943Fig 28 9th NCB NOB Iceland inscription on this card Sep 7, 1942

28th Navy Construction Battalion

The first detachment arrived Dec 4, the second detachment Dec 22, 1942 and departed Oct 2, 1943. 4 officers and 273 men were split off to assist at Hvalfjörður from Sep 20, 1943. Note that the naval ammunition depot had been commissioned October 28, 1942.

Navy 8150 28 th NCB	Opening Date	Closing Date	Keflavík and Hvalfjörður	
	Dec 4, 1942	Oct 2, 1943	Keflavík Meeks Field runway construction and then from Sep 20 to Oct 2 nd , 1943 at the Fuel Depot, Hvalfjörður. No registration facilities.	
Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Endorsement: 28th NCB	Mar 30, 1943	Sep 21, 1943	With Navy handstamp	R
Endorsement: Navy 8150	Feb 2, 1943	April 19, 1943	With Navy handstamp	R
Endorsement: 28th NCB	Feb 17, 1943	Aug 30, 1943	V Mail	RR

Table 10 Navy 8150/28th NCB Inscriptions

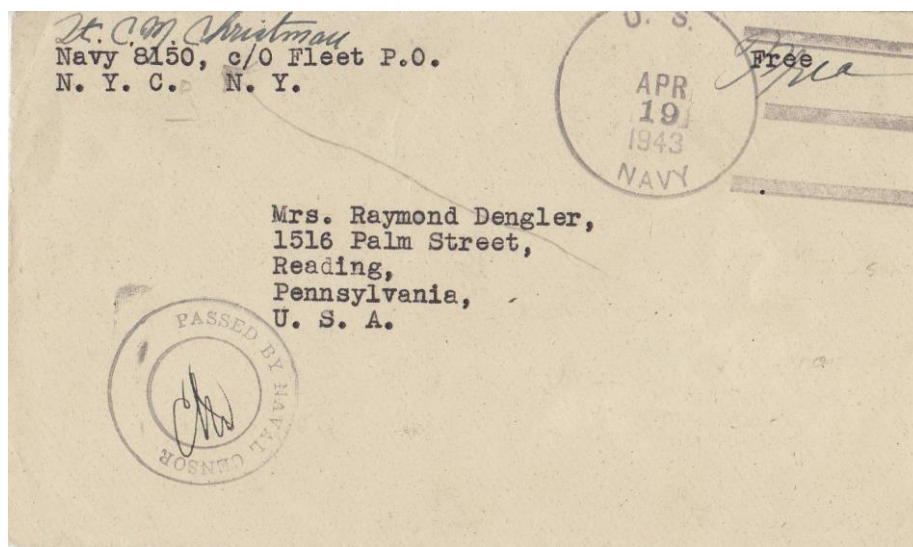


Fig 29 Endorsement Navy 8150 (latest known to me) Apr 19, 1943



Fig 30 Endorsement 28th NCB (Latest known to me) Aug 30, 1943

VP84

VP84 was a PBY bomber patrol squadron stationed at Reykjavík airfield and the adjacent float plane moorings in Skerjafjörður. Their primary function was the protection of convoys and their ability was to seek and destroy German U Boats. The aircraft used were Catalinas, specifically type PBY5As, which are either a land or a sea plane as needed. Note here that PBY comes from *The Consolidated PBY {P-Patrol, B-Bomber, Y-Consolidated Aircraft Company}*.



Fig 31 Catalina type PBY5A

The Squadron had previously been based in Argentia Naval Air Station, Newfoundland, from June 1942 to November 1942. The Squadron travelled to Iceland in two echelons: the first group went by air arriving on November 1st and the remainder followed by sea, transported on board the USS

Vulcan. This later group arrived in Reykjavik on November 18th, 1942. The USS Vulcan had left Placentia Harbor, Newfoundland on Nov 14th.

At this time, Reykjavik airfield was base for two US Army squadrons – P38 and P40 and two RAF Spitfire squadrons. The army units kept two planes in the air 24 hours a day. Remember here that although by this time US Forces had taken over from the British Army on the ground, there were still joint air operations. The RAF had responsibility for convoy protection from British home waters to Iceland whilst American Forces (either the Army Air Forces or the Fleet Air Arm) did the same for convoys between Iceland and US/Canadian waters.

In identifying American military covers from Iceland, two things need to line up. One is that the endorsement is of a unit that actually was stationed in Iceland, and the other is the date stamp that coincides with the unit being in Iceland. With VP84 the dates are all-important as the unit was also in Newfoundland and Greenland. To confuse things even further, despite being in VP 84, some air crew used “Fleet Air Base” as an endorsement rather than VP 84.

There is also a complication in that US Navy pilots flew the Catalinas back to the States for overhaul from time to time. So even though VP84 was stationed in Iceland between Nov 42 and Oct 43, individuals could go back to the States for a month and covers mailed during this time could originate from all sorts of places en route, not just Iceland.

VP84 was not the first patrol squadron based in Iceland as it replaced an earlier unit that left its planes behind. George Sickels has cited (ref 5) VP73 also being there. However, it seems that only VP 84 used this as an endorsement on mail. For the record, VP73 was based in Iceland from Aug 9, 1941 to Oct 1942. As an aside, Squadron VP84 claimed the sinking of 6 U-Boats whilst stationed in Iceland.



Fig 32 Wheeled Catalina over Iceland

VP84	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location: Reykjavík airfield and adjacent Skerjafjörður float plane base	
	Nov 1, 1942 Ech 1 Nov 14, 1942 Ech 2	Oct 2, 1943	US Naval Air Squadron VP84	
Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Endorsement: VP84 or Patrol Squadron 84	Dec 11, 1942	Mar 9, 1943	With Navy handstamp. 3 return addresses noted: Postmaster, Morgan St Annex, NY, NY Postmaster NY; NY Fleet Post Office, NY, NY	RR
Endorsement: VP84	Mar 5, 1943		V Mail	RRR

Table 11 VP84 Inscriptions



Fig 33 Patrol Squadron 84 endorsement

Comtaskforce 24

This was a naval task force organised by the Commander-in-Chief Atlantic Admiral EJ King to support the defence of Iceland. It commenced in June 1942. I have only seen one cover (Fig 34 below).

Comtaskforce 24	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location: Reykjavík airfield and adjacent Skerjafjörður float plane base (TBC)	
	June 1942	?	One example seen.	
Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Endorsement: Comtaskforce 24	July 2, 1942		With Navy handstamp.	RRR

Table 12 Comtaskforce 24 Inscriptions

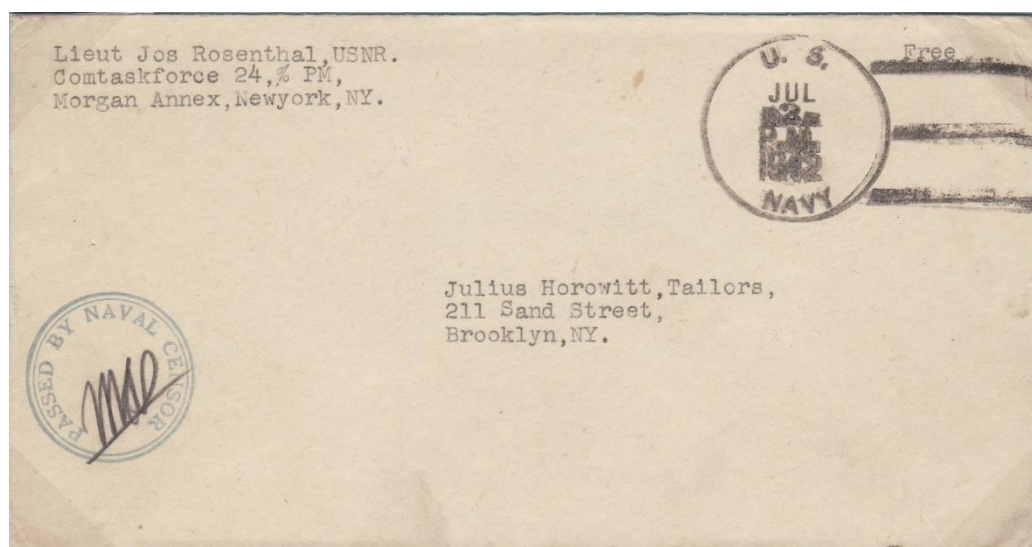


Fig 34 Comtaskforce 24, July 2, 1942

Patrol Plane Base

I believe that this must be a variation of the Fleet Air Base endorsement. The date of the one cover in the David Kindley^{Ref 6} collection in March 1942 predates VP84.

More examples are needed to confirm this endorsement.

Patrol Plane Base	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location: Reykjavík airfield and adjacent Skerjafjörður float plane base	
	?	?	Not confirmed as a separate unit. One example seen.	
Endorsement /Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Notes	Rarity
Endorsement: Patrol Plane Base	Mar 24, 1942		With Navy handstamp.	RRR

Table 13 Patrol Place Base Inscriptions

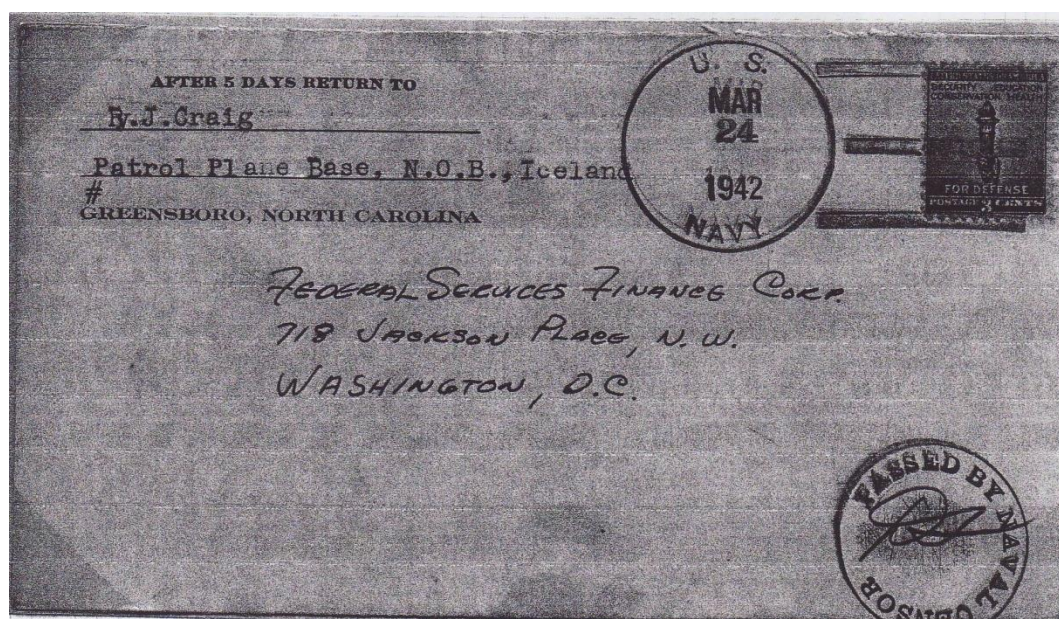


Fig 35 Patrol Base endorsement

United States Army

Introduction to APO cancellations

The Cancellation Classification I use is after Hopballe & Eliasson^{Ref 2} and adapted for the further variations that I have discovered.

I have then surveyed all the covers in my possession, in dealers' stock and scans I have been sent. This numbers some 448 covers. I think there is a large bias towards the rarer numbers (e.g. 611-614) as it is natural for collectors to obtain examples of these rather than the commoner numbers for which they already have several copies and haven't, perhaps till now, looked at all the differences.

It is interesting to compare the number of covers for each APO:

APO Number	Number of covers in my database
5	58
610	76
611	6
612	24
613	21
614	9
810	78
860	173
888	1
1028	-
1266	-
8581	-

Table 14 Comparison of cover numbers from each APO

Please note that my survey does not include illustrations in previously published papers and books. So, for instance, for APO611 the number above is 6 but in the chapter on APO 611 below, the total number of covers known from APO 611 is 13.

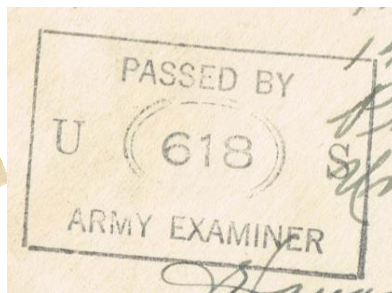
Classification of APO cancels

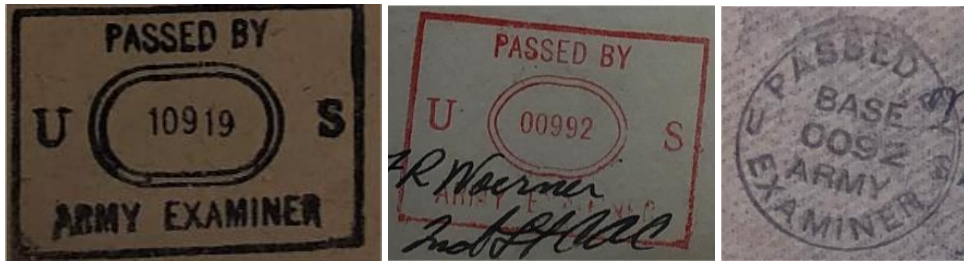
Classification of APO cancels (Hopballe & Elíasson)	
H	Hand cancel 32-35mm dia circular date stamp (CDS) with 4 horizontal killer bars
M	Machine cancel 20-22mm dia with 7 wavy killer bars
Text in Upper Circle	
1	AMERICAN BASE FORCES
2	AMERICAN BASE FORCES A.P.O.
3	AMERICAN BASE FORCES A.P.O. number
4	U.S. ARMY
5	U.S. ARMY POSTAL SERVICE
6	A.P.O.
Centre (M=month, D=day, Y=year, N=APO number, M/D month and day on same line, T=time)	
1	M-D-Y-T
2	M-D-N-Y
3	M-D-Y-N
4	M-D-T-Y
5	M-D-Y
6	N-M-D-Y
7	M/D-T-Y
8	M-T-D-Y
9	T-M/D-Y
Text in Lower Circle	
1	A.P.O. (middle)
2	A.P.O. (offset to left)
3	A.P.O. and number
4	Blank
5	A.P.O. (offset to right)

Table 15 APO Cancel classification

Army Censorship

Censorship of mail was imposed on US civilian, naval and military personnel assigned to the Iceland bases. Since the APO number and location of the offices had been released to the public, some philatelic mail was processed through APOs uncensored. Censorship ceased the day after hostilities ended in Europe i.e. 8th May 1945, although there are exceptions to this.





Censorship markings on mail from the Iceland bases are known in the form of manuscript notations and handstamps. Handstamps occur in two distinct design varieties: boxed ovals and circular base censor marks. 3-digit boxed ovals come with numbers in the 600 series and 5-digit boxed ovals come with numbers between 00800 and 00999, 00600 to 00799 and 5 numbers in the range 10919 to 10971. Circular base censor handstamps are known on some 1942 US Army covers from Iceland. These are in the ranges 60 to 99 plus 855 and 872. The numbers seen are also shown in Appendix 1.

US Army Post Offices in numerical order.

APO 5

Although an Anglo-American agreement called for the prompt relief of British forces and US Marines by US Army units, the dispatch of American infantry was delayed by shortages of equipment and trained personnel and by Federal legislative restrictions on conscripted personnel serving outside the United States.

Eventually the US 5th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General Charles H. Bonesteel, was selected for duty in Iceland and on July 27th 1941 the first echelon of Army troops (1100 men and 30 aircraft) sailed in two elements from New York and Norfolk with the 1st Battalion (less two companies) of 5th Division, an aviation engineer unit, and miscellaneous support troops. The 33rd Pursuit Squadron with some 30 aircraft was embarked aboard the carrier USS Wasp and, although not carrier-trained, flew off the deck when the convoy arrived at Reykjavík on August 6.

The second echelon of the 5th Division sailed from New York on September 5th, 1941 with the 10th Infantry Regiment, 5th Engineers, 46th Field Artillery, and service units aboard troopships Heywood, William P. Brook, Harry L. Lee, and Republic. This convoy arrived on the night of September 15-16th.

Additional Army units were deployed to Iceland in 1942. The 2nd Infantry Regiment of 5th Division sailed from New York on Feb 26th and arrived on 3 March 3rd. The 11th Infantry Regiment of 5th Division sailed April 7th and arrived April 21st. The 188th Infantry Regiment was detached from the 30th Infantry Division, left New York on August 5, and landed in Iceland on August 24. A week later the 759th Light Tank Battalion arrived. Engineers, artillery, antiaircraft, and other supporting units were also provided.

It is widely reported in philatelic literature on this subject, that United States Infantry Divisions were served by their own separate Army Post Offices. However, as we have seen above, although the main elements of the 5th Division arrived in August and September 1941, APO 5 was not opened till April 1942. Even then, as is shown in the table below, no examples of APO 5 postmarks are known before early May 1942. Until that time, personnel used APO 810 that opened in July 1941 at the Iceland Base Command HQ at Baldurshagi.



Fig 36 A cover sent by a member of the 10th Infantry who had arrived Sept 15th, 1942 used with an APO 810 machine cancel and 810 return address in the period before the opening of APO 5.

The 5th Division accompanied by APO 5 served in Iceland till the end of July when they were redeployed to the UK arriving Aug 9th, 1943. I cannot be more precise that this. Some sources have APO5 closing July 5th, and George Sickels has August 15th, but I think that the actual last day for mail from Iceland would be at the very end of July 1943.

APO	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location/Notes
5	April 1942	Late July 1943	Baldurshagi. Used at 5 th Infantry Division post office
Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Rarity
H-5-1-2	Jan 4, 1943	Jun 1, 1943	R1
H-5-1-3	June 3, 1942	July 6, 1943	R1
H-5-4-2	Jul 31, 1942	Feb 11, 1943	R1
H-5-4-3	Jul 7, 1942	Jul 15, 1942	R1
M-4-7-2	Aug 24, 1942	Jan 21, 1943	R1
M-4-7-3	May 5, 1942	Jul 18, 1943	R1
Registered (1k)	July 24, 1942		RRR
V-Mail (2K)	May 1943	June 1943	RR

Table 16 APO 5 cancel information

APO 5 H-5-1-3	APO 5 H-5-4-2	APO 5 H-5-4-3	APO 5 M-4-7-2




			
APO 5 Latest date	APO 5 M-4-7-3	APO 5 Registered	

Table 17 APO 5 cancel illustrations

Analysis of cancel types by date and use

Quarter	Q1.42	Q2.42	Q3.42	Q4.42	Q1.43	Q2.43	Q3.43	Q4.43
H-5-1-2								
H-5-1-3								
H-5-4-2								
H-5-4-3								
M-4-7-2								
M-4-7-3								

Table 18 showing use of APO 5 cancel types over time

Cancel census

Cancel type	Earliest date	Latest date	Examples	% of total	
H-5-1-2	Jan 4, 1943	Jun 1, 1943	2	3	Combined hand cancels 50%
H-5-1-3	June 3, 1942	July 6, 1943	8	14	
H-5-4-2	Jul 31, 1942	Feb 11, 1943	7	13	
H-5-4-3	Jul 7, 1942	Jul 15, 1942	11	20	
M-4-7-2	Aug 24, 1942	Jan 21, 1943	16	29	Combined machine cancels 45%
M-4-7-3	May 5, 1942	Jul 18, 1943	9	16	
Registered (1k)	Jul 24, 1942		1	1	Combined other: 5%
V-Mail (2K)	May 1943	June 1943	2	4	
Total			56		

Table 19 showing APO 5 cancel use by percentage in a sample of 56 covers

Discussion

Even though I am told that APO 5 opened in April 1942, my first examples are dated May 1942. Unusually these are from the machine – most APO's seem to have had hand cancels first. M-4-7-3 was then mutilated (seemingly with a blunt instrument) to produce M-4-7-2, with the APO number removed and this always looks dirty. Additionally, I should note that the date on both the machine cancels is poorly inked and often difficult to read. But the machine cancels do seem to be used as often as the hand cancels.



With the hand cancels, H-5-1-3 was used first from June 1942. The War Dept ordered all overseas APO numbers be removed from all cancelling devices with effect from July 1st, 1942 till March 9th, 1943.

Fig 37 H-5-1-2 With APO number removed

H-5-1-2 (Fig 37) came into use from Jan 1943 but is very rarely seen despite the date range for the two covers noted above. I have many covers with cancel H-5-4-3 but over a very tight date range. I can find little rhyme or reason in all this.

Covers cancelled with the APO 5 postmarks are not hard to find, with the exception of registered and V-Mail. However, it may be worthwhile to look out for early and late dates for the various cancel types as I feel I have only just scratched the surface.

APO 610

This is the first of the 600 series APO numbers I am looking at. From the start of postal operations in Iceland, all US Army mail from the 300 odd bases spread out across Iceland, was handled through APO810. This APO changed its number to APO860 in May 1942, but nevertheless, there was still only one main office serving Iceland Base Command.

From May 1942 five other APO numbers were allocated to Iceland. 610 was reserved for the purpose- built new Meeks Field in Keflavík and when the air base became operational in April 1943, so did the Army Post Office. Remember here that unlike the British Army, the American Army has its own Air Force. Navy personnel were based at Keflavik, notably a Navy Construction Battalion, and after the base was completed, the US Fleet Air Force also used it. Although their post all went through Navy postal channels, it could be worth keeping an eye out for Navy mail that used APO610.

Meeks Field was a purpose-built facility. When the Americans first deployed to Iceland it was obvious that the airfields being used by the British were not adequate for the tasks in hand. Reykjavík airfield was too small, its runways fine but any area off the hardened runways and taxiways was liable to swallow planes whole! Kaldadarnes, whilst being a purpose-built facility, was unfortunately very prone to flooding and in 1943 it was decided to abandon this base. The other airfields – Akureyri and Búðareyri, did not serve the Reykjavík area.

Meeks therefore became a very important base for the Americans. When long-distance flying became more established and Air Transport Command and Ferrying Command two very well-oiled machines, Meeks was an essential staging post for the air route across the North Atlantic.

Meeks and Patterson Fields

Construction work on the main ferrying and transport airfield, **Meeks Field** was started on July 2, 1942 by the Army Corps of Engineers and was taken over in August by the 9th NCB (see the Navy section above). A B-18 Bolo bomber, carrying high-ranking officers and their guests, made the first landing at Meeks Field on March 24th, 1943. All major construction, including four 6,500 ft (2,000 m) runways was completed by the end of July 1943. Meeks became headquarters for Iceland Base Command. Its long runway was used for ferrying of multi-engine aircraft on flights between the US and the UK. The major American military units at Meeks Field were:

- 824th Engineering Battalion (Aviation) (February 1942 – August 28th, 1943)
- 342nd Composite Group
HQ located at Meeks Field, Squadrons operated from Patterson Field, (September 11th, 1942 – March 18th, 1944)

- 14th Det, North Atlantic Wing, Air Transport Command (ATC Station #14), (August 28th, 1943 – August 1st, 1944)
- Iceland Base Command (June 16th, 1942 – March 24th, 1947)
- 2nd Service Group, March 29th, 1943 – October 1st, 1945
- 14th Air Service Squadron, October 1st December 28th, 1945
- 1386th Army Air Force Base Unit (August 1st, 1944 – February 18th, 1946)

Army Engineers were also set to work on construction of **Patterson Field** (Originally Svidningar field) as the satellite airfield to Meeks was soon named. Completed before Meeks became operational, the first planes of the Eighth Air Force began coming through Patterson on their way to England, early in July 1942, when two of its three runways were in use. With the opening of Meeks, it was primarily used by Iceland Base Command as a fighter base by the 342nd Composite Group for air defence. However, it remained in use by ATC as an overflow base for ferrying single-engine aircraft on the North Atlantic Transport Route due to its short runways and congestion at Meeks.

The names of Meeks and Patterson were of two young pilots who were among the first American flyers to be killed whilst serving in Iceland.



Fig 38 Patterson Field under construction June 15, 1942

APO	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location
610	ca April 20, 1943	March 27, 1947	Keflavík (Meeks Field)
Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Rarity
H-5-2-1 (1k)	Oct 2, 1943		RRR

H-5-3-1	Jun 7, 1943	Jun 20, 1944	R1
H-5-5-1	June 26, 1944	June 29, 1944	R1
H-5-5-3	Aug 26, 1943	Jan 4, 1945	R1
H-5-6-1	May 1, 1943	Feb 14, 1947	R1
M-4-7-2 (1k)	Aug 20, 1945		R1
M-4-7-3	Oct 10, 1945	Oct 11, 1945	R1
Registered	June 15, 1943		RR
V-Mail	April 22, 1943	Nov 10, 1944	R

Table 20 APO 610 cancel information

		
APO 610 H-5-5-1	APO 610 H-5-6-1	APO 610 H-5-5-3
		
APO 610 M-4-7-2	APO 610 M-4-7-3	APO 610 Registered

Table 21 APO 610 cancel illustrations

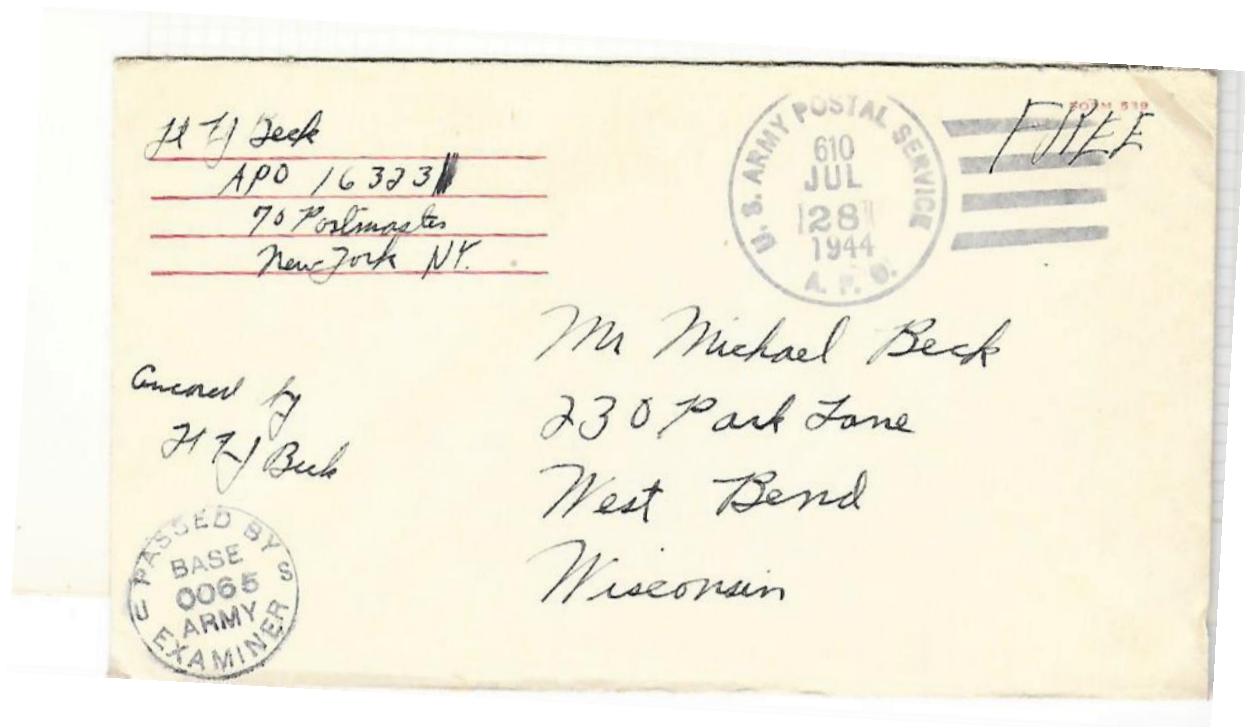


Fig 38 APO 16323 transiting APO 610 H-5-6-1

Analysis of cancels types by date and use

Quarter	Q1.43	Q2.43	Q3.43	Q4.43	Q1.44	Q2.44	Q3.44	Q4.44	Q1.45	Q2.45	Q3.45	Q4.45	Q1.46	Q2.46	Q3.46	Q4.46	Q1.47
H-5-2-1																	
H-5-3-1																	
H-5-5-1																	
H-5-5-3																	
H-5-6-1																	
M-4-7-2																	
M-4-7-3																	

Table 21 showing APO 610 cancel type use over time

Cancel census

Cancel type	Earliest date	Latest date	Examples	% of total	
H-5-2-1 (1k)	Oct 2, 1943		1	1	Combined hand cancels 81%
H-5-3-1	Jun 7, 1943	Jun 20, 1944	25	33	
H-5-5-1	June 26, 1944	June 29, 1944	2	3	
H-5-5-3	Aug 26, 1943	Jan 4, 1945	13	18	
H-5-6-1	May 1, 1943	Feb 14, 1947	20	26	
M-4-7-2 (1k)	Aug 20, 1945		1	1	Combined machine cancels 5%
M-4-7-3	Oct 10, 1945	Oct 11, 1945	3	4	
Registered	June 15, 1943		1	1	Combined other: 14%
V-Mail	April 22, 1943	Nov 10, 1944	10	13	
Total			76		

Table 22 showing APO 610 cancel use by percentage in a sample of 76 covers

Discussion

The April 1943 date for the opening of the office at Meeks Field, Keflavík is close to date of the direction from the War Dept (March 9th) that reversed the decision to remove APO numbers from cancels. So, it is no surprise that the three types used early in the life of the office all had numbers in the centre of the cancel. I should also note that type H-5-5-3 came into use in Aug 1943 with the number inserted in the outer circle, presumably ordered after the War Dept directive to include APO numbers in the cancel again. I do find it odd that a type M-4-7-2 exists with the APO missing and yet not used till Aug 1945. This seems very strange indeed. Perhaps it was a short-term replacement for the M-4-7-3 machine cancel that wasn't working for a short period.

These raw numbers suggest that the machine cancel use is a small fraction of the hand cancel use. This is partly explained by the late introduction of the machine (1945) but even so, this tells me that the postal clerks favoured the hand cancel. Perhaps the machines did not perform very well, or that the changing of the date was difficult. V-Mail use is high, no surprises there.

APO 611

APO611 is the most difficult office to find an example from.

Although allocated in May 1942, number 611 was opened in September that year at Borgarnes. From what I understand, the opening date coincides with the opening of the base hospital there. Not many of the offices moved, but APO 611 was an exception as it was moved to Kaldarðarnes air base near Selfoss. This was because the base hospital was moved to match the complement of men at Kaldarðarnes. As I have written elsewhere (ref 10), despite being a large and important base serving both the RAF and the USAAF, Kaldarðarnes was abandoned in mid-1943, due to flooding from the adjacent river Ölfusá. As a result, APO611 was also closed.

Kaldarðarnes did not really exist except as an air base. Selfoss was the nearest town with a population of 1350.

APO	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location
APO 611	Sep 16, 1942 Late Jan, 1943	Late Jan, 1943 Aug 18, 1943	Borgarnes Kaldarðarnes air base
Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Rarity
H-5-1-2 (1 k)	Feb 8, 1943		RRR
H-5-3-1 (?k)			*
H-5-3-2 (3k)	May 8, 1943	June 26, 1943	RR
H-5-4-2 (3 known)	Feb 8, 1943	Feb 10, 1943	RR
Registered (1k)	Apr 7, 1943		RRR
V-Mail (1K)	April 26, 1943		RRR

Table 22 APO 611 cancel information

The relatively short duration of the opening and possibly lack of knowledge about the location of the office have contributed to the scarcity of mail from APO611 (6 examples or 1.6% of my sample).

Also, as I discuss below, under hospitals, use at Borgarnes was very rare to non-existent prior to the arrival of the 72nd Station hospital in January 1943. None of the covers I have seen are dated earlier than February 1943. At Kaldarðarnes, the establishment of the 11th Station pre-dated the 72nd V-Mail and registration use known.

	
APO 611 H-5-4-2	APO 611 H-5-3-2 (611 reinstated in centre and a break in the outer frame)
	
APO 611 H-5-1-2 with break in outer frame	APO 611 Registration

Table 23 APO 611 cancel illustrations

Analysis of cancels types by date and use

Quarter	Q3.42	Q4.42	Q1.43	Q2.43	Q3.43	Q4.43
H-5-1-2						
H-5-3-1						
H-5-3-2						
H-5-4-2						

Table 24 showing use of APO 611 cancel types over time

With so few examples of each cancel type known, it is not meaningful to make observations about relative rarity. The type H-5-3-1 is listed by Hopballe & Eliasson but I have not seen an example myself.

The first two cancels used had the APO number removed from the circumference in compliance with the War Dept instruction. I shall note here that the H-5-1-2 cancel has a piece missing from the outer ring.

With the War Dept instruction to reinstate APO numbers, H-5-3-2 then put back 611 into the middle, replacing the time. This cancel shows the same break in the frame.

Relating hospitals to postal services

Very many covers have endorsements relating to medical personnel and therefore add another dimension to collecting American Military Mail.

The 72nd and 92nd Station Hospitals both arrived in August 1942. I should explain that Station Hospitals rendered general medical and surgical treatment for those areas where there were sufficient military populations to justify their maintenance, but not sufficient to justify General Hospitals. They were usually located at most Posts, Camps, and Stations for hospitalisation of local personnel. The 92nd, with 75 beds, began operating in September at Reykjaskóli near the head of Hrutafjörður on the north coast of Iceland. **The 72nd, a 50-bed unit, was scheduled for Borgarnes about thirty miles north of Reykjavik but, because of a variety of construction**

difficulties, did not get into operation until the beginning of January 1943. By then changes in troop dispositions had made a hospital at Borgarnes unnecessary, and the unit was moved later in January to Kaldaðarnes, where air activity was increasing. The 75-bed 14th Station Hospital and the 500-bed 49th both reached Iceland in September 1942 and went into operation the same month. The 14th was at Seyðisfjörður on the eastern coast; the 49th enlarged a 200-bed hospital plant taken over from the British near Akureyri on the north coast, the second largest city in Iceland and the site of a large seaplane base. The 15th Station hospital, another 75-bed unit that also arrived in September, began operating at Búðareyri, about forty miles south of the 14th, in November. The 75-bed 192nd Station Hospital arrived in October and was attached to the 168th Station at Reykjavik until its own hospital plant at Höfn on the southeastern coast was ready in January 1943.

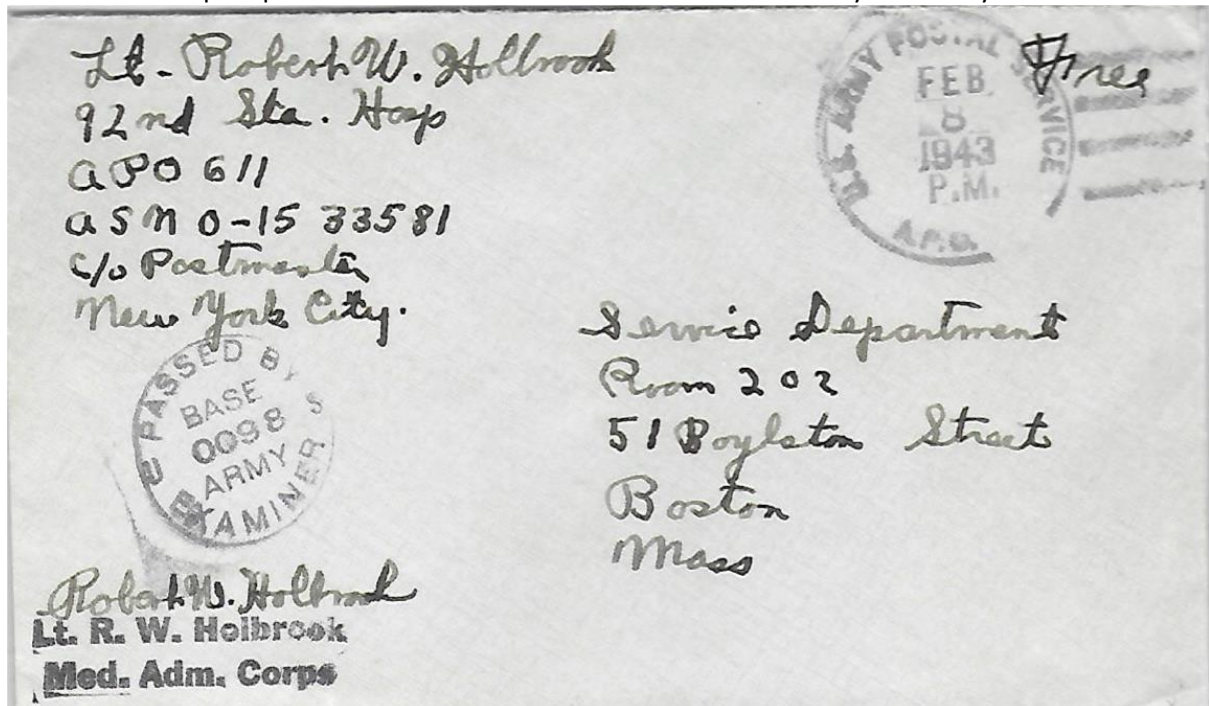


Fig 39 From the George Sickels collection. The 92nd hospital was located at Reykjaskóli at this time. It was relocated to Álafoss on the outskirts of Reykjavík in June 1943. It is a mystery to me how the 92nd Station hospital and APO 611 can be connected in this way at this time, as this cover might suggest.

The 11th Station, meanwhile, had shifted from Kaldaðarnes to Reykjavik to replace the 168th. It was joined there by the 72nd Station hospital on 19th August. Crucially this is one day after APO611 was closed at the airbase. In my opinion, no coincidence.

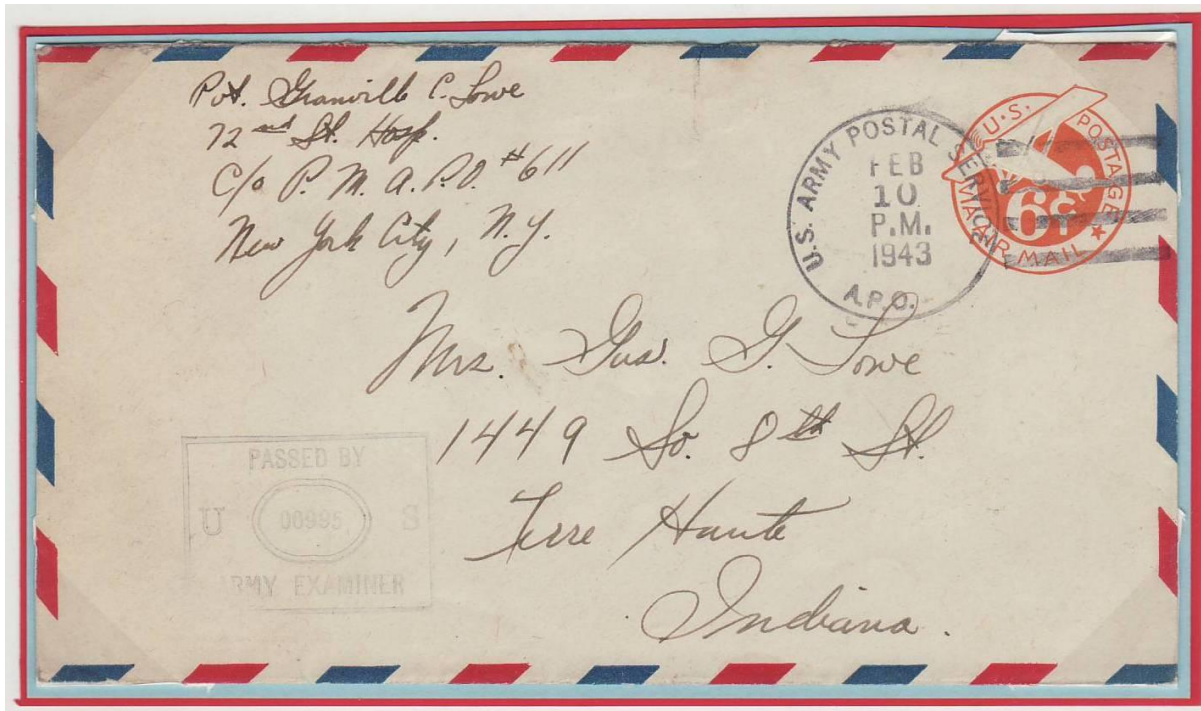


Fig 40 APO 611 H-5-4-2 dated Feb 10, 1943 with endorsement from 72nd Station Hospital, shortly after its establishment at Kaldaðarnes.



167TH STATION HOSPITAL, at Alafoss, Iceland, showing hot springs used to heat buildings.

Fig 41 Photograph of 167th Station Hospital, Álafoss

The strength of the Medical Department in Iceland rose from 749 at the end of 1941 to 2,959 a year later. By the end of 1943 the total number of officers, nurses, and enlisted men of the Medical Department had declined to 1,163 and was down to 429 by the end of 1944. T/O bed strength went through a corresponding expansion and decline, from an initial to a peak of 2,600 in October 1942, declining to 400 by the middle of 1944.

APO 612

Akureyri was the American army's Northern Sector HQ. After Reykjavík, Akureyri had the largest concentration of military forces in Iceland and had a wide range of facilities. It had an airbase that served British Commonwealth, Norwegian and American air crew. It had a deepwater anchorage and port facilities, the American Army Camp occupied the former British Army base and there was also a winter warfare school where a lot of the instructors were Norwegians (see Fig 43 below).



**Fig 42 Eyjafjörður (Akureyri) showing HMS Norfolk moored near to USS Ranger (with aircraft on deck)
October 1943**

Finally, it was the headquarters for the Coastwatch, an inter-service Anglo-American organisation to keep lookout on the Coast of Iceland for enemy activity. As such, there is also a wide variety of material available to collect.

The Icelandic population of Akureyri in 1940 was 5,942 (ref 11)

APO	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location
APO 612	Sep 2, 1942	Oct 21, 1943	Akureyri
Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Rarity
H-5-1-2	Jan 11, 1943	Jan 25, 1943	R
H-5-3-2	May 7, 1943	May 12, 1943	R
H-5-4-2	Sep 11, 1942	Dec 9, 1942	R
H-5-5-2	Sep 23, 1942	June 26, 1943	R
H-5-6-1	May 19, 1943	Sept 8, 1943	R
H-5-6-2	May 17, 1943		RRR
H-5-8-2	Sep 23, 1942	Dec 22, 1942	R
Registered (1K)	Dec 22, 1942		RRR
V-Mail	Mar 4, 1943	Jun 9, 1943	RR

Table 25 APO 612 cancel information


		
APO 612 H-5-5-2	APO 612 H-5-3-2 (APO offset bottom of circle, number in centre)	APO 612 H-5-6-1 (APO centred bottom of circle, number in centre)

Table 26 APO 612 cancel illustrations

Analysis of cancel types by date and use

Quarter	Q1.42	Q2.42	Q3.42	Q4.42	Q1.43	Q2.43	Q3.43	Q4.43
H-5-1-2								
H-5-3-2								
H-5-4-2								
H-5-5-2								
H-5-6-1								
H-5-6-2								
H-5-8-2								

Table 27 showing use of APO 612 cancel types over time

Cancel census

Cancel type	Earliest date	Latest date	Examples	% of total
H-5-1-2	Jan 11, 1943	Jan 25, 1943	2	8
H-5-3-2	May 7, 1943	May 12, 1943	3	12
H-5-4-2	Sep 11, 1942	Dec 9, 1942	7	28
H-5-5-2	Sep 23, 1942	June 26, 1943	4	16
H-5-6-1	May 19, 1943	Sept 8, 1943	4	16
H-5-6-2	May 17, 1943		1	4
H-5-8-2	Sep 23, 1942	Dec 22, 1942	2	8
Registered (1K)	Dec 22, 1942		1	4
V-Mail	Mar 4, 1943	Jun 9, 1943	1	4
Total			25	

Table 28 showing APO 612 cancel use by percentage in a sample of 25 covers

Despite the size of contingent based in Akureyri, the number of covers found with the endorsement or postmark APO 612 is small (less than 6.5% of my sample). As with 611, 613 and 614, no machine cancel was supplied to this office, though it did have V-Mail and Registration. Interestingly, American servicemen based in Akureyri had no other opportunity to post their mail. The US Navy had no land-based postal facilities here and the British FPO 304 that had been in Akureyri ceased operation Aug 22, 1942. This reflects the takeover date of American Army units from their British counterparts in Akureyri. In any event, Americans couldn't use FPO304 and there was no RAF FPO to replace it.



**Figure 43 Akureyri winter warfare school
(private photograph)**

I conclude that there was a large volume of mail transferred from Akureyri to Reykjavík for processing otherwise APO612 would be more common.

A lot of the different cancels were used concurrently, so there are not many conclusions to be drawn. As with other offices in the 600 series, the first cancels used had the 612 erased (5-4-2, 5-5-2, 5-8-2). Then the War Dept rescinded its order and 612 reappeared in the cancel in the middle (5-6-1, 5-6-2, 5-3-2) and finally a new cancel (5-6-1).

V-Mail and Registration is seldom found.

APO 613

Militarily, Seyðisfjörður was important as it was the departure port for the Russian convoys. As such, it had an army detachment providing anti-aircraft cover for the deep-water mooring. For Iceland, Seyðisfjörður was one of the larger fishing villages on the East coast and an important place in its own right. In 1940, the population of Seyðisfjörður was 903.

One incident late in the war brought Seyðisfjörður into the news. The SS El Grillo was a British oil tanker sunk by a German air attack in East Iceland on February 10, 1944. The steam ship was armed with anti-aircraft guns and depth charges. It was carrying a cargo of bunker oil. While it was at anchor at Seyðisfjörður, it was attacked and heavily damaged by three German Focke-Wulf Fw 200 Condors coming from occupied Norway. The captain of the ship decided to scuttle the ship to prevent further damage to other ships in the area.

APO	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location
APO 613	Oct 5, 1942	Oct 21, 1943	Seyðisfjörður
Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Price
H-5-1-2 (1k)	Sept 23, 1942		1400
H-5-3-2	June 10, 1943	Sep 15, 1943	1400
H-5-4-2	Oct 29, 1942	Apr 22, 1943	1400
H-5-5-2	Jan 30, 1943	Apr 22, 1943	1400
Registered			Not known
V-Mail (1k)	Jan 7, 1943		*

Table 29 APO 613 cancel information



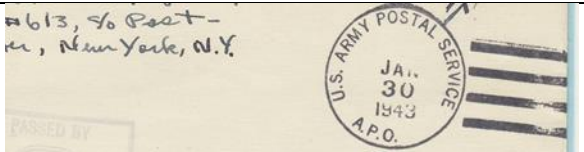
		
APO 613 H-5-4-2	APO 613 H-5-3-2	APO 613 H-5-5-2

Table 30 APO 613 cancel illustrations

Analysis of cancel types by date and use

Quarter	Q1.42	Q2.42	Q3.42	Q4.42	Q1.43	Q2.43	Q3.43	Q4.43
H-5-1-2								
H-5-3-2								
H-5-4-2								
H-5-5-2								
V-Mail (1k)								

Table 31 showing use of APO 613 cancel types over time

Cancel census

Cancel type	Earliest date	Latest date	Examples	% of total
H-5-1-2	Sept 23, 1942		1	5
H-5-3-2	June 10, 1943	Sep 15, 1943	8	38
H-5-4-2	Oct 29, 1942	Apr 22, 1943	5	24
H-5-5-2	Jan 30, 1943	Apr 22, 1943	3	14
Registered			0	0
V-Mail	Jan 7, 1943	Jun 5, 1943	4	19
Total			21	

Table 32 showing use of APO 613 cancels by percentage in a sample of 21 covers

The sample size of only 21 covers (5.5%) of the total makes it dangerous to draw too many conclusions other than the rarity of mail from APO 613. As to be expected, the first types of cancel (5-1-2, 5-4-2, 5-5-2) all had the APO number removed and the last cancel has 613 in the middle replacing the time. So, no new cancels were produced after the initial issue and it is possible that only one cancel was used with the order of the slugs changing over time. I have one cover endorsed APO 613 but postmarked APO 860. I suspect a lot of mail ended up postmarked at the IBC post office.

APO 614

APO 614 was based at the fishing village of Búðareyri on the East coast of Iceland. It became the US Eastern Sector HQ. To give an indication of size, the Icelandic population of Búðareyri at this time was 46.

Just a digression to talk about names. Whilst all literature on the subject has the base named as Búðareyri, the village is more commonly known as Reyðarfjörður, the fjord on which Búðareyri sits. The British had opened postal facilities here, and just to confuse, the British base was called Reyðarfjörður. FPO305 was open here 21st March 1940 and closed 22nd August 1942 some 3 months after the arrival of American forces. Finally, on names, Reyðarfjörður joined Eskifjörður and Neskaupstaður in 1998 to form the new municipality of Fjarðabyggð.

Previously occupied by the British who built a large hospital here, the port was protected by anti-aircraft batteries and a jetty that was used as a sea-plane base. Interestingly, 'C' flight of 330

Squadron RAF was based in Reyðarfjörður and was sometimes used to transport mails to Reykjavík. For more information on 330 Squadron see the chapter on Norwegian Forces. The aircraft used were Northrop N-3PB and Consolidated PBY Catalina seaplanes.

A note on the opening dates for APO 614. In the table below I have added a second date line for when the office reopened in 1945. The endorsement reads 557 (or 1) MHSP that I believe stands for Medical Hospital Ship Platoon.

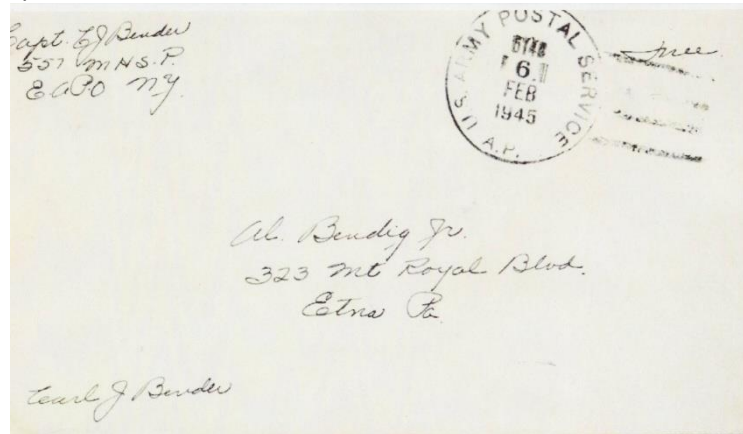


Fig 44 The late use of 614 in 1945, after the war in Europe had ended and therefore without censorship. The cancel type is unique to this period (day precedes month) This copy belonged to Larry Sherman and it is illustrated in an email to Ted Bahry in 2009 along with an explanation.

APO	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location
APO 614	May 7, 1942	Aug 18, 1943	Búðareyri
	Jan 31, 1945	? >Feb 6, 1945	Búðareyri
Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Rarity
H-5-1-1 (1k)	Apr 12, 1943		RRR
H-5-1-2	Oct 10, 1942	Mar 20, 1943	RR
H-5-3-2	Jan 15, 1943	June 1, 1943	RR
H-5-4-2	Jun 1, 1942	Jan 15, 1943	RR
Registered	Not known		
V-Mail	Not known		

Table 33 APO 614 cancel information




		
APO 614 H-5-1-2 (APO offset bottom of circle)	APO 614 H-5-1-1 (APO centre bottom of circle)	APO 614 H-5-3-2 (APO offset bottom of circle, number in centre)

Table 34 APO 614 cancel illustrations

Analysis of cancel types by date and use

Quarter	Q1.42	Q2.42	Q3.42	Q4.42	Q1.43	Q2.43	Q3.43	Q4.43
H-5-1-1								
H-5-1-2								
H-5-3-2								
H-5-4-2								

Table 35 showing use of APO 614 cancel types over time

Cancel census

Cancel type	Earliest date	Latest date	Examples	% of total
H-5-1-1	Apr 12, 1943		1	11
H-5-1-2	Oct 10, 1942	Mar 20, 1943	3	33
H-5-3-2	Jan 15, 1943	June 1, 1943	3	33
H-5-4-2	Jun 1, 1942	Jan 15, 1943	2	23
Total			9	

Table 36 showing APO 614 cancel use by percentage in a sample of 9 covers

With only 9 covers known to me (2% of my sample), conclusions on this sample size are again potentially non-representative.

No registration or V-Mail is known.

Initially the APO number was deleted from the bottom with the day, month, time and date in different orders (H-5-1-2, H-5-4-2), then the number was inserted into the centre replacing the time (H-5-3-2) and then finally a new cancel was produced with the APO central at the bottom (H-5-1-1).

One of my covers has the endorsement "15th Station Hospital" and is dated Jan 25th, 1943. The 15th Station Hospital was a 75-bed unit that had arrived in September 1942 and began operating here in November 1942. In June 1943, with fewer troops needed on the East Coast, the hospital unit was moved to Akureyri and combined with the 49th Station Hospital.

Another example I have seen is an inter-unit official cover sent to APO 860 dated Jan 15th, 1943 with a cancellation in red (H-5-4-2).



Fig 45 The unique (so far) example of APO 614 H-5-1-1 with an interesting destination. HMS Dundonald was the Special Operations Executive training facility for British spies

APO 810

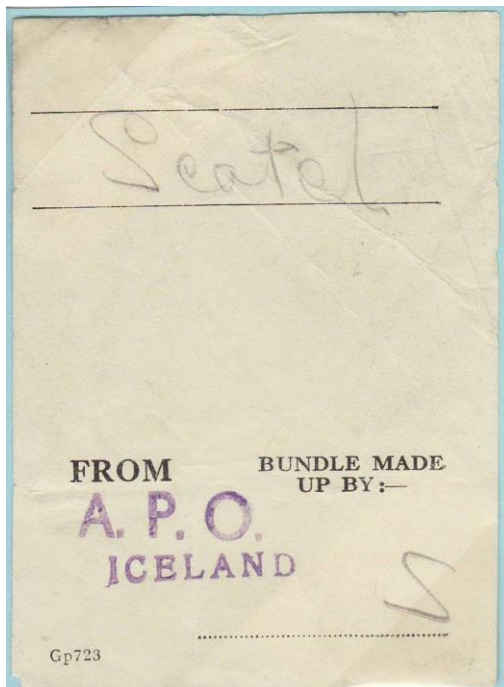


Fig 46 Sorting chit for Seattle probably from either APO 810 or APO 860

APO 810 was the Iceland Base Command Post Office and was situated at the main army camp at Baldurshagi, Reykjavík. It was established prior to arrival in Iceland on board the USAT American Legion whilst still at sea en route to Reykjavík.

There is no dispute regarding the opening date of this office. However, some research by George Sickels has shone some light of the transfer date from APO 810 to APO 860. Some references have April 29th as the closing date and the Iceland Base Command Unit history gives the closing date as May 15th. IBC Memo #98 with the heading address as 810 is dated May 12th and IBC Memo #99 is dated May 14th with APO 860 as the heading address.

APO	Opening Date	Closing Date	Location
APO 810	July 27, 1941	May 13, 1942	Baldurshagi, Reykjavík (Iceland Base Command Post Office)
Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Rarity
H-3-1-4	July 27, 1941	April 29, 1942	R1
M-1-7-3	Jan 17, 1942	May 13, 1942	R1
M-1-9-3	Mar 28, 1942	Apr 18, 1942	R2
Registered	Nov 13, 1941	Dec 18, 1941	RR
V-Mail	Not used at APO 810		-

Table 37 APO 810 cancel information

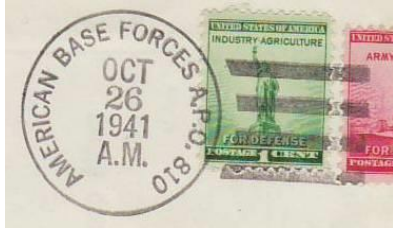


		
APO 810 H-3-1-4	APO 810 M-1-7-3	APO 810 Registered

Table 38 APO 810 cancel illustrations

Analysis of cancel types by date and use

Quarter	Q2.41	Q3.41	Q4.41	Q1.42	Q2.42	Q3.42	Q3.42
H-3-1-4							
M-1-4-3							
M-1-7-3							
M-1-9-3							

Table 39 showing use of APO 810 cancel types over time

Cancel census

Cancel type	Earliest date	Latest date	Examples	% of total
H-3-1-4	July 27, 1941	April 29, 1942	49	63
M-1-7-3	Jan 17, 1942	May 18, 1942	20	25
M-1-9-3	Mar 28, 1942	April 18, 1942	6	8
Registered	Nov 13, 1941	Dec 18, 1941	3	4
Total			78	

Table 40 showing APO 810 cancel use by percentage in a sample of 78 covers

If cancels 810 and 860 are combined, as they are the same office, then the mail from Base Command represents 56% of the total mail from Iceland to the States. If I take just the APO 810 cancels, this is 18% of the total sample.

H-3-1-4 was used as manufactured i.e. with the APO number on the outside of the circle. This was used right through till closure of the office. There is a lot of cancelled-to-order philatelic mail using the APO 810 hand cancel. The main reason for this was that, as I have said in my introduction,

Iceland was the first overseas theatre for US Forces and this attracted a lot of interest from philatelists in the States.

The two machine cancels M-1-7-3 and M-1-9-3 (Fig 45 below) seem to be used more or less concurrently with the only difference being the top to bottom order of the removable slugs. I suggest that two machines were used rather than one (due to the amount of mail being postmarked) but more recorded examples would confirm my supposition.

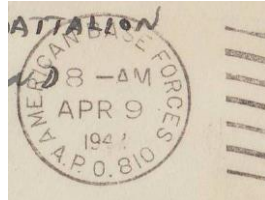


Figure 47 M-1-9-3 Apr 9, 1942

APO 860

APO 860 was opened at Camp Tripoli rather than the previous location of Baldurshagi where APO 810 had been. Camp Tripoli was west of Melun in Reykjavík and was a combination of the previously British camps of Camberly and Crownhill.

As we have seen above, this office served the whole of Iceland until April 20th, 1943 (when APO 610 opened), it handled almost all the mail and accounts for 40% of my sample.

As a consequence of volume and the complexities of managing the removal and subsequent replacement of APO numbers in the cancels, the number of cancel variants is large.

APO	Opening Date	Closing Date	
APO 860	May 14, 1942	July 30, 1945	Camp Tripoli, Reykjavík (replacing APO810 as Iceland Base Command Post Office)
Cancels	Earliest recorded	Latest recorded	Rarity
H-5-1-1	Feb 19, 1943	Apr 18, 1943	R1
H-5-1-2	Jul 15, 1942	Feb 19, 1943	R1
H-5-1-3	May 14, 1942	Dec 29, 1942	R1
H-5-3-1	April 28, 1943	April 20, 1944	R1
H-5-3-2	May 8, 1944		RR
H-5-6-1	Apr 28, 1943	Sep 26, 1945	R1
H-5-6-2	June 6, 1943	Oct 8, 1943	R1
H-5-6-5	Feb 5, 1945	June 9, 1945	RR
M-4-7-1	Nov 1, 1942	Nov 11, 1943	R1
M-4-7-3	Oct 21, 1943	July 21, 1945	R1
M-4-9-3 (2k)	Aug 2, 1944	May 25, 1945	RR
M-6-7-4	Oct 20, 1942	Oct 23, 1943	R2
M?	?	?	RRR CDS Removed from machine and just wavy lines used. Letter inscribed APO 860
Registered	Oct 15, 1943		RR
V-Mail	Nov 7, 1942	Jan 30, 1944	R
Cachet	MISSENT TO APO 860		RR
31 st Ferrying Squadron Endorsement seen with APO 860			RR

postmark dated May 31, 1943			
10 th Base PO (2k) Endorsement on cover only	May 25, 1943	April 10, 1945	RR

Table 41 APO 860 cancel information

APO 860 H-5-1-3	APO 860 H-5-1-2	APO 860 H-5-1-1
APO 860 H-5-6-2	APO 860 H-5-3-1	APO 860 H-5-6-5
APO 860 H-5-3-2		
APO H-5-6-1 (APO# replaces time in centre)	APO 860 M-6-7-4	APO 860 M-4-7-1
APO 860 REGISTERED	M-4-7-3	Missent to APO 860

Table 42 APO 611 cancel illustrations

Analysis of cancel types by date and use

Quarter	Q2.42	Q3.42	Q4.42	Q1.43	Q2.43	Q3.43	Q4.43	Q1.44	Q2.44	Q3.44	Q4.44	Q1.45	Q2.45	Q3.45
H-5-1-1														
H-5-1-2														
H-5-1-3														
H-5-3-1														
H-5-3-2														
H-5-6-1														
H-5-6-2														
H-5-6-5														
M-4-7-1														
M-4-7-3														
M-4-9-3 (2k)														
M-6-7-4														
M?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Registered														
V-Mail														

Table 43 showing use of cancel types over time

APO 860 had more different types of cancel issued to it than any other office by some margin.

Cancel census

Cancel type	Earliest date	Latest date	Examples	% of total	
H-5-1-1	Feb 19, 1943	Apr 18, 1943	6	4	Combined hand cancels 57%
H-5-1-2	Jul 15, 1942	Feb 19, 1943	22	14	
H-5-1-3	May 14, 1942	Dec 29, 1942	15	10	
H-5-3-1	April 28, 1943	Apr 20, 1944	6	4	
H-5-3-2	May 8, 1944		1	0	
H-5-6-1	Apr 28, 1943	Sep 26, 1945	28	16	
H-5-6-2	June 6, 1943	Oct 8, 1943	11	7	
H-5-6-5	Feb 22, 1945	Jun 9, 1945	3	2	
M-4-7-1	Nov 1, 1942	Nov 11, 1943	16	11	Combined Machine Cancels 40%
M-4-7-3	Oct 21, 1943	July 21, 1945	52	22	
M-4-9-3 (2k)	Aug 2, 1944	May 25, 1945	2	1	
M-6-7-4	Oct 20, 1942	Oct 23, 1943	5	2	
M?	?	?	1	0	
Registered	May 12, 1942	Oct 15, 1943	2	1	
V-Mail	Nov 7, 1942	Jan 30, 1944	5	2	
Cachet	MISSENT TO APO		1	0	

	860				
31st Ferrying Squadron Endorsement seen with APO 860 postmark dated May 31, 1943	31st Ferrying Squadron Endorsement seen with APO 860 postmark dated May 31, 1943				
10th Base PO (2k) Endorsement on cover only	May 25, 1943	April 10, 1945			
Total			173		

Table 44 showing use by percentage in a sample of 173 covers

Hand cancels (nearly 60% of usage)

The first cancel used was a hand cancel type 5-1-3. Only one cancel seems to be used at this time, although there seems to be some late use contravening the orders (up till December 1942). Then on July 1st comes the War Dept diktat to remove the numbers and so type 5-1-2 comes into being. Used between February and April 1943, a new cancel, type 5-1-1, is brought into use with the APO centralised at the bottom. Then on March 9th the War Dept instructs APO numbers to go back into the cancels. Type 5-1-1 becomes 5-6-1 and sometimes 5-3-1, 5-1-2 has the time removed and becomes 5-6-2, and sometimes 5-3-2 depending on where the number is placed. Perhaps there were two types - 5-1-1 and 5-1-2 cancels originally.

Later on type 5-6-5 is made and brought into service due to volume of mail.

Please note that type H-5-3-2 is a new discovery not shown in Facit. This accounts for all 8 variations of the APO 860 hand cancel.

Machine cancels (40% of usage)

I have found 5 types of machine cancellations. The first type used was 4-7-1. As this was issued after the War Dept instruction, no APO number is present in the cancel. 4-7-3 replaced it, my first example is October 1943 but over time I expect to find earlier examples. 4-9-3 was used concurrently with 4-7-3. Whether that means there was another machine or not I have yet to find out. With only two copies of 4-9-3 it is difficult to say.

Type M-6-7-4 is a different type altogether. It was recognised by George Sickels and I confirm that it is much rarer than M-4-7-1 that was used concurrently.

Please note that there is a mistake in the Facit listing. In the table of APO cancels M-4-10-3 in Facit (page I-364) is M-4-9-3 here.

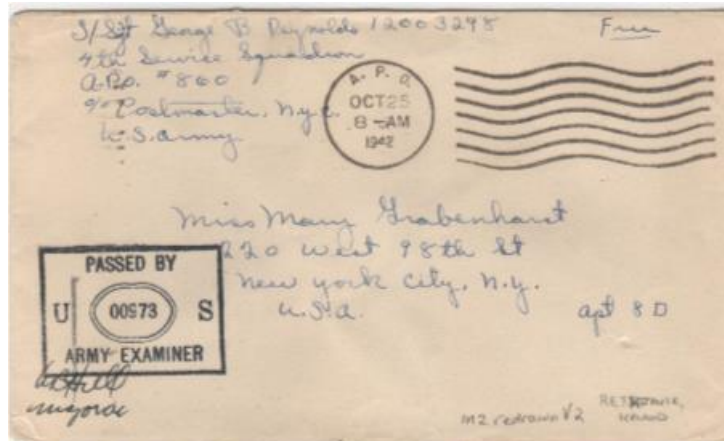


Fig 48 M-6-7-4 Oct 25th, 1942

Type M? Is different again. I only have one example - there is no circular date stamp (CDS), just the wavy lines. This is not noted by Sickels and must be something of a rarity. With no CDS we can't say when this was used.

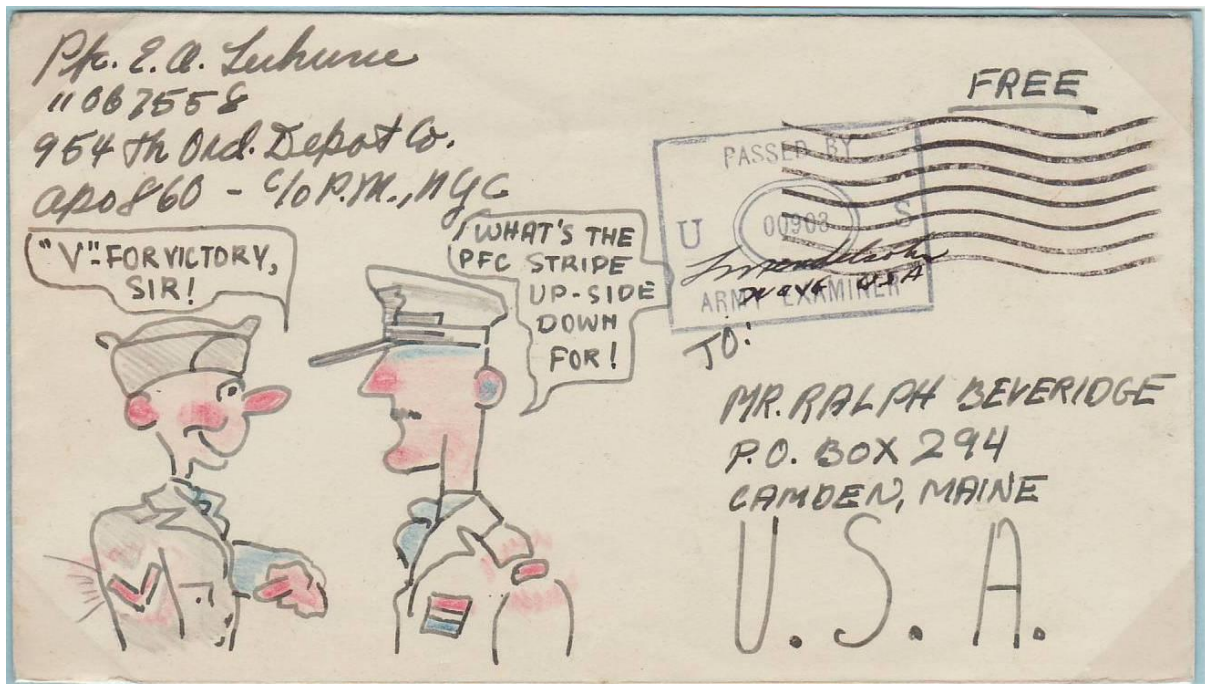


Fig 49 Type M? on this highly decorative patriotic cover. This is not noted by Sickels and must be something of a rarity. With no dater we can't say when this was used.

Examples of registration are rare but I am surprised there were no more V-Mail examples in the sample. In my collection I have examples of V-Mail envelopes from APO 860, used when the microfilm machine was out of order.

The "MISSENT TO APO 860" cachet shown above is on a V-Mail cover sent to Iceland



Fig 50 APO 860 Registered CDS on a parcel wrapping (reduced)

10th Base Post Office

George Sickels was the person who uncovered this rare endorsement. He writes on his exhibit page "A little known fact is that this Base Post Office was activated in Reykjavík on May 25th, 1943 and operated until April 10th, 1945. According to Frank Nabors, an APO 860 Postal Officer from Jan 1944 to Sep 1945, the BPO did not have its own cancelling device." His exhibit contains the following letter.

FRANK W. NABORS
POSTMASTER
MAY 1944 - SEP 1945

April 24, 1974

George W. Sickels
1769 Colgate Place
Union, New Jersey 07083

Dear Mr. Sickels:

APO 860 and 10th Base Post Office was in the same building and as well as I remember now, I believe we used only APO 860 cancelling device for our one set up together with 10th BPO in the address.

Capt. Robert A. Stretch was from New Jersey somewhere but I don't remember what town.

Fig 51 Letter in the Sickels collection confirming 10th Base PO

I have managed to find a second cover with the 10th BPO in the return address.

Temporary APO Assignments

Temporary APO assignments		Inscription on cover only. In transit from US to Iceland.
#	Moved to	
APO 888	APO 810	Sep 1941 (3k)
APO 1028	APO 860	No cancel. Perhaps 4 examples known April 1942 to mid-May '42. 11 th Infantry
APO 1266	APO 612	No cancel. Known Sep 1942
APO 8581	APO 860	Dec 1942 ??? Needs more evidence

Table 45 List of known temporary APO's

The temporary APO numbers are extremely difficult to find. George Sickels noted that they are the most elusive of Iceland APO's.

The temporary numbers existed for the duration of the journey to Iceland and as soon as the troops went ashore, they then used the Iceland Army Post Offices. Whilst at sea, they will of course, have Navy postmarks.

Of course, the mystery is why only these three numbers were assigned. Why not more? Why this few? There could be more yet to be discovered but the process is hindered by the lack of official records. The record for APO 888 says "not assigned".

APO 888 could have been used on the reinforcement convoy that left New York on Sep 5th, 1941. The second echelon of the 5th Division with the 10th Infantry Regiment, 5th Engineers, 46th Field Artillery, and service units aboard troopships Heywood, William P. Brook, Harry L. Lee, and Republic. (ref 7) This convoy arrived on the night of 15-16 September, but this is pure supposition on my part.



Fig 52 APO 888 registered cover with APO 810 CDS

APO 1028. George Sickels has a copy in his collection and mine is illustrated in Facit. Both have the same curious censor mark and have a dumb Navy cancel. My example is cancelled April 10th, 1942 and George's April 17th, so they are the same convoy. One is endorsed 11th Infantry and the other 2nd Infantry. As the 11th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Division sailed April 7th and arrived in Iceland April 21st (ref 12), I ascribe APO 1028 to the 11th Infantry.

I HAVE ARRIVED SAFELY AT MY DESTINATION.
MY NEW ADDRESS IS:-

Co. "D" 5th Medical Bn. APO #1028
(Company, Battery etc.) (Regt. or other Organization)

C/O POSTMASTER, New York, New York

NORMAL SIGNATURE *Alvin Sterling Jr.*

TYPE Sterling Alvin Jr. 38041132
(Last Name) (First Name) (Initial) (Serial No.)

Fig 53 APO 1028. These change-of-address cards were filled out just before leaving the States. From the collection of George Sickels.

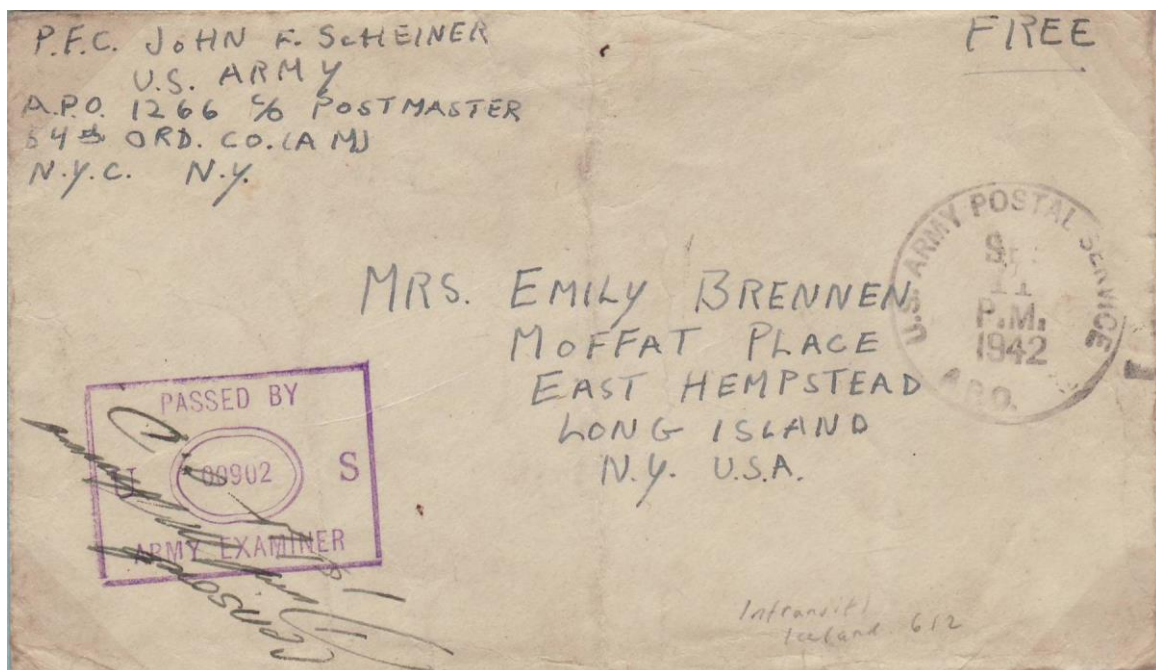


Fig 54 APO 1266 endorsement on this cover dated Sep 11th, 1942 00902 5-digit racetrack censor
APO 612 H-5-4-2 cancel

This breaks my 'rule' about transit mail having Naval cancellations.

Combined Forces Operations (Coastwatch)

This was a joint operation, initially between mostly Royal Navy personnel with some British Army and one Coastwatch station being the responsibility of the Royal Norwegian Navy. With the arrival of the Americans some duties were handed over, but I am not certain to what extent. All the covers I have seen are addressed to the US Army in Akureyri. 43 coastal settlements (Ref 13), whether large or small, had a three-man unit assigned to it. They worked an 8-hour shift each, 365 days of the year and were billeted with local residents. They had a radio call with Reykjavík once a day unless something important turned up. Their duty was to report weather, shipping movements, sighting of planes and anything suspicious. (BBC Archives). At regular intervals the personnel were moved to different locations.

The weekly report from the Coastwatch stations was sent to the US Army office at Glerargata, Akureyri. An example is shown below. It would appear that they were always sent by registered post and delivered using the Icelandic Post Office system. All the examples I have seen (4 so far) have been in War Dept Official “penalty” envelopes.

So far, I have seen envelopes from Neskaupstaður, Blönduós, Þórshöfn and Framnes (Seyðisfjörður). Other Coastwatch localities ^{Ref 12} were Þingeyri, Vopnafjörður, Patreksfjörður, Raufarhöfn.

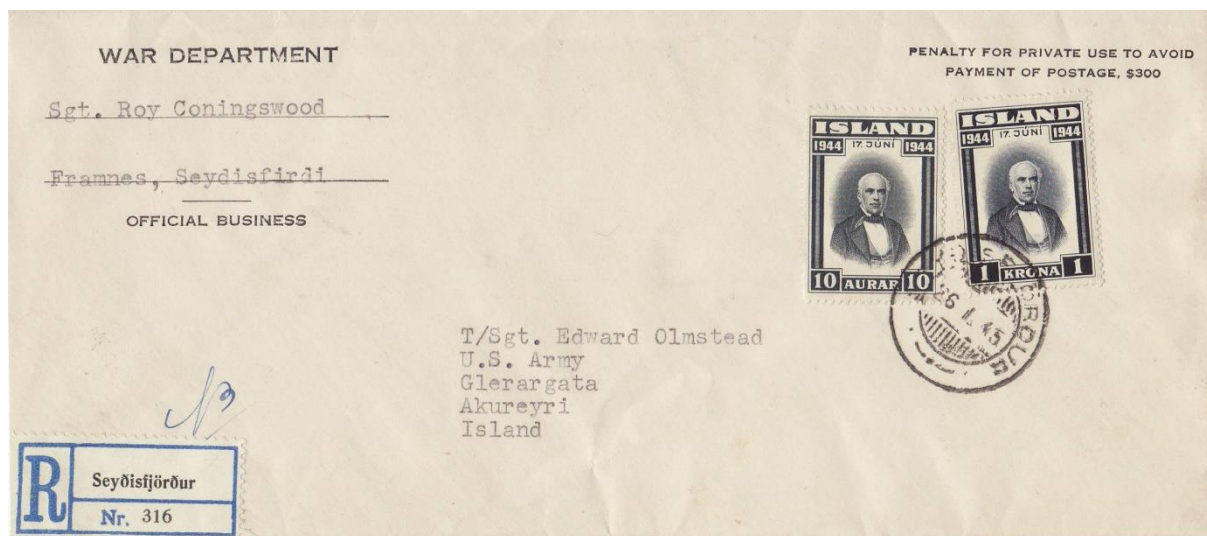


Fig 55 Coastwatch, Seyðisfjörður to Akureyri

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Appendix 1

List of Censors known used in Iceland

3-digit censors								
Censor #	APD	APD		Censor #	APD		Censor #	APD
600	810			644			688	
601	860	810		645			689	
602	810			646			690	
603				647			691	
604	860			648			692	
605	860	810		649			693	
606	810			650			694	
607				651	5		695	
608	810			652	5		696	
609	860			653	5		697	
610				654			698	
611				655	5		699	
612	810			656	5			
613				657	5			
614	810			658				
615				659				
616				660				
617	810			661	5			
618	810			662				
619				663				
620	810			664				
621				665				
622	810			666				
623				667				
624	810			668				
625				669				
626				670				
627				671				
628				672				
629				673				
630				674				
631				675				
632				676				
633				677				
634				678				
635				679				
636				680				
637				681				
638				682				
639				683				
640				684				
641				685				
642				686				
643				687				

Table of 3-digit censors with known usage

5-digit sensors

Censor #	APO	APO	Censor #	APO	APO	Censor #	APO	APO
00800	860		00600			10919	610	860
00801	610		00601			10963	860	
00802			00602	610?		10965	860	
00803	610		00603	860		10969	860	
00804			00604	860		10971	860	
00805			00605	860				
00806			00606					
00807			00607	860				
00808	610		00608					
00809	610		00609					
00810			00610					
00811			00611	860				
00812	610		00612					
00813			00613					
00814			00614					
00815	610		00615					
00816	610		00616	613				
00817			00617					
00818			00618	860				
00819			00619					
00820	610		00620					
00821			00621					
00822			00622					
00823			00623					
00824			00624					
00825	610		00625					
00826			00626					
00827			00627					
00828	610		00628					
00829			00629					
00830			00630					
00831			00631					
00832			00632					
00833			00633					
00834			00634					
00835			00635	860				
00836			00636					
00837			00637	610				
00838	860		00638					
00839			00639					
00840			00640	860				
00841			00641					
00842			00642	860				
00843			00643					
00844			00644	860				
00845			00645	860				
00846			00646					
00847			00647	860				

Table of 5-digit sensors with known usage (1 of 4)

00848			00648				
00849			00649	860			
00850	860	5	00650				
00851			00651	860			
00852	860		00652	860			
00853	860		00653				
00854	860		00654				
00855			00655				
00856	860		00656				
00857	860	610	00657				
00858			00658	610			
00859	860		00659	610			
00860			00660				
00861			00661				
00862			00662				
00863			00663				
00864			00664				
00865			00665				
00866			00666				
00867			00667	860			
00868			00668				
00869			00669	860			
00870			00670				
00871			00671				
00872	612		00672				
00873			00673				
00874			00674	860			
00875			00675				
00876	610		00676				
00877			00677	860			
00878	612?		00678				
00879	610		00679	860			
00880			00680	610			
00881	612		00681				
00882			00682				
00883			00683	610			
00884			00684				
00885			00685				
00886			00686	610			
00887			00687				
00888			00688				
00889	860		00689	860			
00890			00690				
00891			00691	860			
00892			00692				
00893			00693	860			
00894			00694	860			
00895			00695	860			
00896			00696	860			
00897			00697				
00898	860	613	00698				

Table of 5-digit sensors with known usage (2 of 4)

00899			00699	860				
00900	612		00700					
00901	612		00701					
00902	612		00702	5				
00903	612	860	00703					
00904	612		00704					
00905	612		00705					
00906	860	612	00706					
00907	612		00707					
00908	612		00708					
00909			00709					
00910			00710					
00911	614		00711					
00912			00712					
00913			00713					
00914			00714					
00915			00715					
00916	613		00716					
00917	613		00717					
00918	613		00718					
00919	613		00719					
00920	860		00720					
00921	860		00721					
00922	860		00722					
00923			00723					
00924			00724					
00925			00725					
00926			00726					
00927			00727					
00928			00728					
00929			00729					
00930			00730					
00931			00731					
00932			00732					
00933			00733					
00934			00734					
00935			00735					
00936			00736					
00937			00737					
00938			00738					
00939			00739					
00940			00740					
00941			00741					
00942			00742					
00943			00743					
00944			00744					
00945			00745					
00946			00746					
00947			00747					
00948			00748					
00949			00749					

Table of 5-digit sensors with known usage (3 of 4)

00950			00750					
00951	5		00751					
00952	5		00752					
00953			00753					
00954	5		00754					
00955			00755	5				
00956			00756					
00957			00757					
00958	5		00758					
00959	5		00759					
00960			00760					
00961	5		00761					
00962			00762					
00963			00763					
00964			00764					
00965			00765	5				
00966			00766					
00967			00767					
00968			00768					
00969			00769					
00970			00770					
00971			00771					
00972	860		00772					
00973	860		00773					
00974	860		00774					
00975	860		00775	5				
00976	860		00776					
00977			00777					
00978			00778					
00979	860		00779					
00980	860		00780					
00981			00781					
00982			00782					
00983	5		00783					
00984			00784					
00985			00785					
00986	860		00786	5				
00987			00787					
00988			00788	5	611			
00989			00789	5				
00990			00790					
00991			00791					
00992	860		00792					
00993			00793					
00994			00794	5				
00995	611		00795					
00996								
00997								
00998	860							

Table of 5-digit sensors with known usage (4 of 4)

Base censors

Censor #	APO	APO	APO	APO	Censor #	APO	APO
60	810				855	610	613
61	860				856		
62	860	10 th BPO			857		
63	860				858		
64	611	5			859		
65	610	860	810	5	860		
66					861		
67					862		
68					863		
69					864		
70	5				865		
71					866		
72					867		
73					868		
74					869		
75					870		
76					871		
77					872	5	
78					873		
79					874		
80	610				875		
81					876		
82					877		
83					878		
84					879		
85					880		
86					881		
87					882		
88					883		
89					884		
90	612	1266			885		
91	614				886		
92	613	612			887		
93					888		
94					889		
95	5				890		
96	5				891		
97					892		
98	611	860	614		893		
99	860						
100							

Table of Base censors with known usage