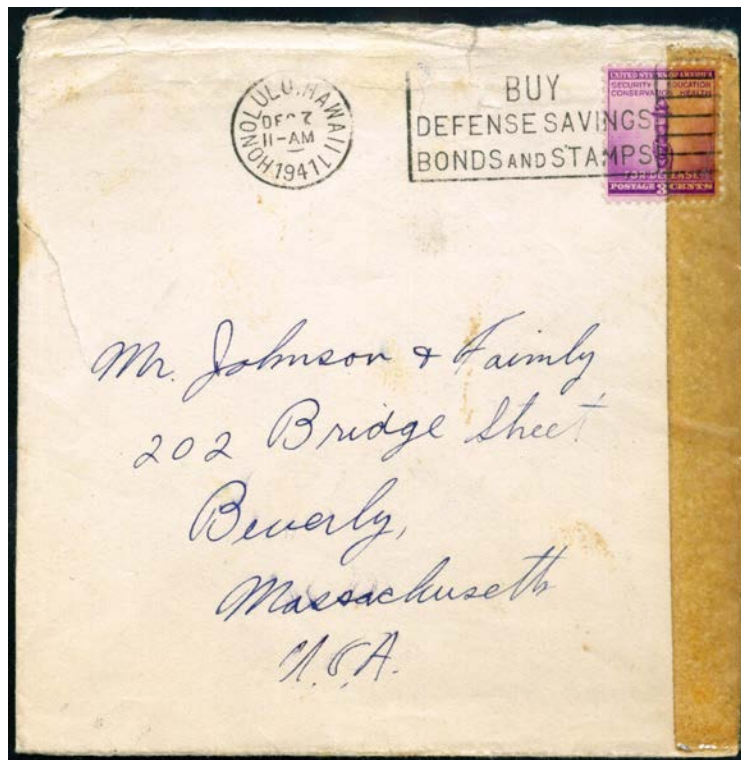


December 7, 1941, Retrospective and Remembrance
(by Ken Lawrence, Dec 7, 2015)

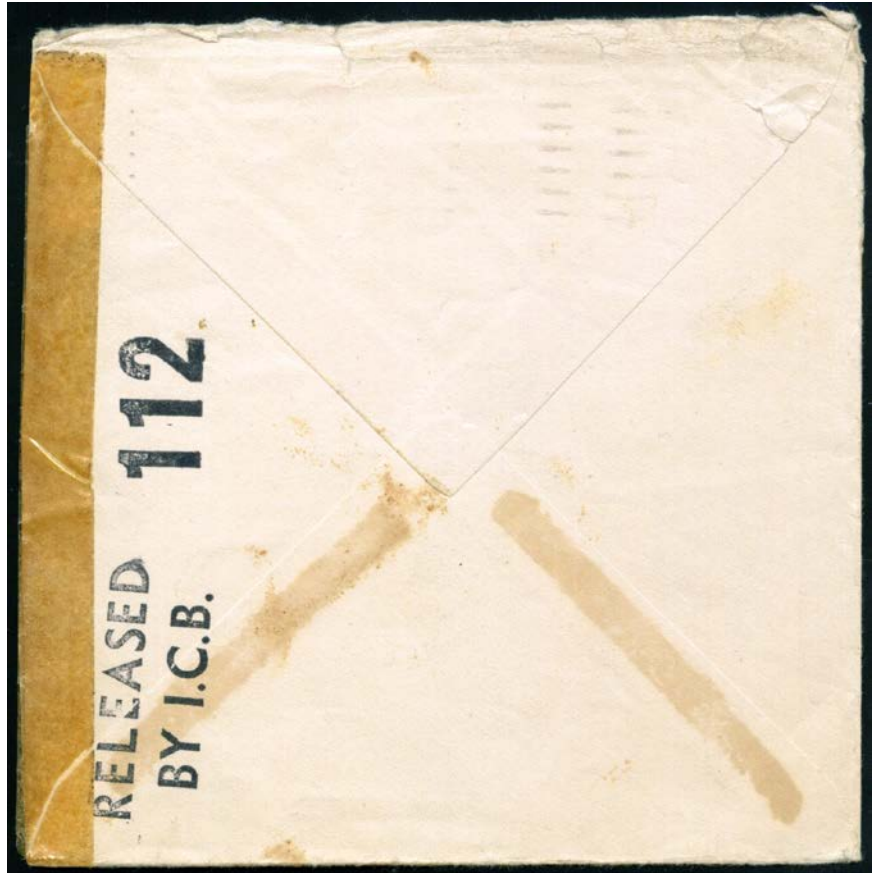
Today we



1 Pearl Harbor postal history



This cover is one of a small handful I have observed that were genuinely canceled at Honolulu on December 7, 1941. The second wave of Japanese bombers had completed their attack approximately one hour before the 11-AM time shown in the cancel.



Back side. Civil censorship of mail, indicated by the Information Control Branch examiner's marking, began at Hawaii on December 13, the earliest date that civilian surface letters were released for transport to the United States mainland.



The enclosed Christmas card.

2 Pearl Harbor postal history



This cover, mailed four days later, probably accompanied the December 7 cover from Hawaii Territory to California by ship. It's a useful comparison reference for authenticating machine-canceled December 7 covers from Honolulu, of which I have recorded only four.

One machine-canceled December 7, 1941, at Honolulu was the 9-AM cover from Randy Neil's Presidential Series postal history exhibit that Nutmeg sold in 2009. I don't recall the time imprint on the second one, which an APS member showed me several years ago. Bob Hohertz has another, franked with a 1½¢ stamp and 9-AM in the date slug.



Back side, showing the I.C.B. censor marks.

3 Pearl Harbor postal history



Here is a second December 11 cover, this one franked as air mail and struck with a HONOLULU, HAWAII N.Y. PEARL HAR. BR. duplex cancel at the shore-based Navy Yard post office after being passed by a Navy censor. Military censorship had begun in some locations before December 7, and became regulation at all locations as soon as the United States was at war. The red pencil endorsement is frequently seen on covers handled by the air mail section of the Honolulu post office.

This cover was probably transported on a December 19 Clipper flight from Honolulu to San Francisco, the first air mail transport after civil censorship of mail began.

On the *Frajola Philamercury Board* last February 3 (2015), Michael Schreiber posted images of a December 17 registered cover from the USS *Pennsylvania*, flagship of the commander in chief of the U.S. fleet, (in drydock during the Japanese attack), to Washington, which was carried on that flight.

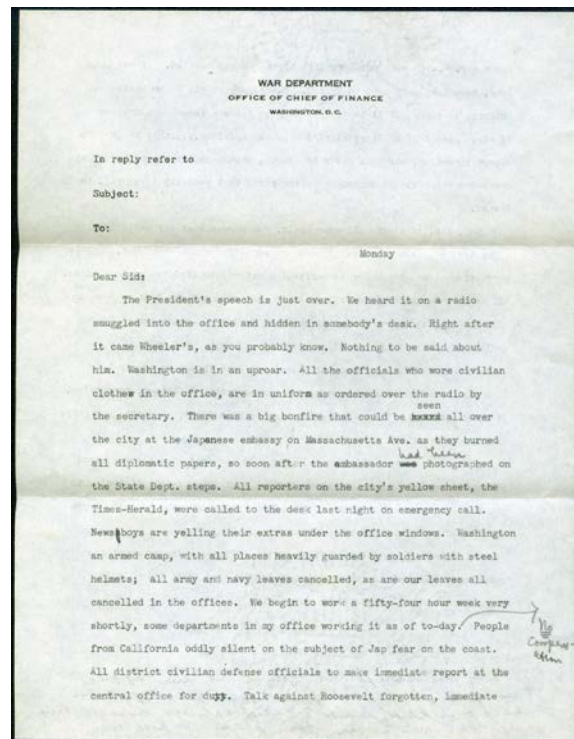
Meanwhile at Washington

4 Response in Washington



This December 8 official business War Department envelope has 3¢ postage because it enclosed

a private letter from Audrey Beller, an economics student who had a clerical job in the Office of Finance, to her (probably high school and synagogue) hometown friend (maybe relative?) Sidney Soloway, who was a student at Harvard University.



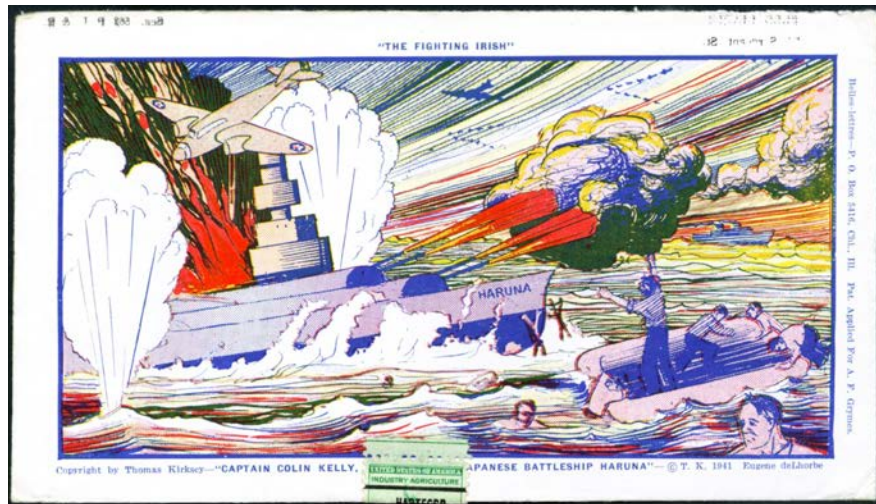
Beller wrote to Soloway on December 8, shortly after FDR had addressed a joint session of Congress to ask for a declaration of war against the Empire of Japan:

The President's speech is just over. We heard it on a radio smuggled into the office and hidden in somebody's desk. Right after it came Wheeler's, as you probably know. Nothing to be said about him.* Washington is in an uproar. All the officials who wore civilian clothes in the office, are in uniform as ordered over the radio by the secretary. There was a big bonfire that could be seen all over the city at the Japanese embassy on Massachusetts Ave. as they burned all diplomatic papers, so soon after the ambassador had been photographed on the State Dept. steps. All reporters on the city's yellow sheet, the Times-Herald, were called to the desk last night on emergency call. Newsboys are yelling their extras under the office windows. Washington an armed camp, with all places heavily guarded by soldiers with steel helmets; all army and navy leaves cancelled, as are our leaves all cancelled in the offices. We begin to work a fifty-four hour week very shortly, some departments in my office working it as of to-day. No compensation. People from California oddly silent on the subject of the Jap fear on the coast. All district civilian defense officials to make immediate report at the central office for duty. Talk against Roosevelt forgotten, immediate issue war. Dates with soldiers last night sad and worried. . . .

*U.S. Senator Burton K. Wheeler was a New Deal Democrat from Montana, but an anti-Semitic

isolationist who had opposed Lend-Lease and all U.S. intervention in the war until the Pearl Harbor attack. He supported the declaration of war by saying, “The only thing now is to do our best to lick the hell out of them.”

5 First World War II American War Hero



Japanese aircraft attacked American forces in the Philippines a few hours after the Pearl Harbor attack, launching a campaign that ended with the surrender of Bataan on April 9 and Corregidor on May 6, 1942.

On the third day of battle (December 11 in the Philippines, December 10 in Hawaii and the United States) Captain Colin Purdie Kelly Jr. took off from Clark Field in his B-17C Flying Fortress on the first American bombing mission of the war. His squadron's mission was to attack a Japanese convoy that was landing troops and equipment at Vigan and Aparri. The December 13 *New York Times* reported:

A Florida-born West Pointer, Captain Colin P. Kelly Jr., 26 years old, who helped even the score that the Japanese ran up at Pearl Harbor when he planted three bombs on the Japanese battleship Haruna, paid for the sinking of the ship with his life.

One sentence in a communiqué issued by Lieut. Gen. Douglas MacArthur, commander of the United States Army Far Eastern Forces, paid posthumous tribute to the young Army flier:

“General MacArthur announced with great sorrow the death of Captain Colin P. Kelly Jr., who so distinguished himself by scoring three direct hits on the Japanese capital battleship Haruna, leaving her in flames and in distress.” . . .

The War Department in Washington announced that the 29,330-ton Haruna was sunk Wednesday, north of Luzon.

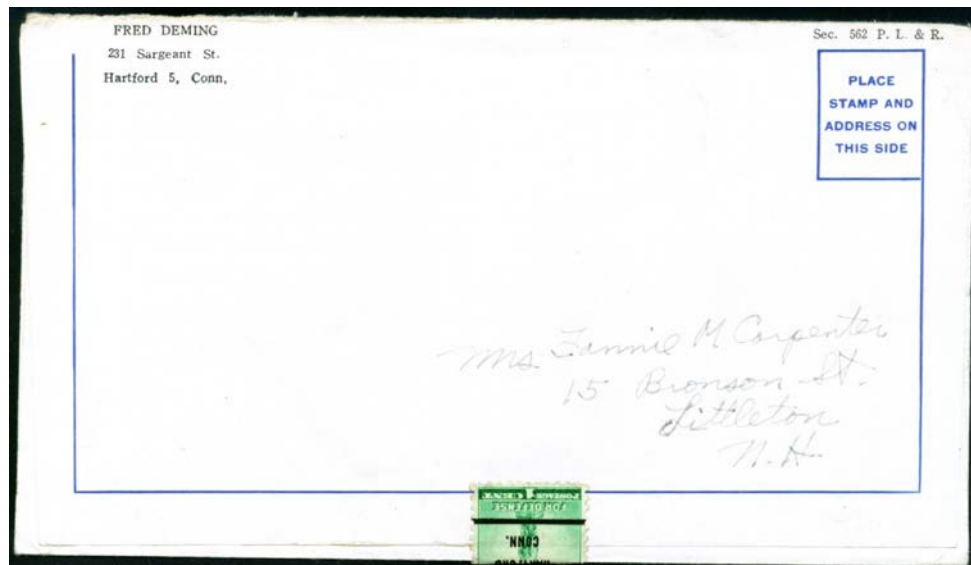
Kelly was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. The December 21 *Times* called him “the Number One American hero in the Second World War.” Quoting the citation:

“En route to his home air field upon completion of his mission, his airplane was set upon by an attack of two enemy fighters. This officer ordered his crew to bail out.

“Six men saved themselves thereby, but Captain Kelly, the last to leave the burning plane, was killed in the resulting crash.”

This seldom seen Belles-lettres patriotic cachet, one of the first to be published after America went to war, pictured Kelly’s heroic feat over the caption “CAPTAIN COLIN KELLY, JR., SINKS THE JAPANESE BATTLESHIP HARUNA.”

Kelly was surely a gallant hero who had fought bravely and saved all but one other member of his crew at the sacrifice of his own life, but he had not sunk the battleship *Haruna*, which had not been in Philippine waters. He had actually bombed the heavy cruiser *Ashigara*, making one hit that barely damaged the ship. Nevertheless Kelly’s legend grew. A widely told tale held that he had crashed his crippled bomber into the enemy ship.



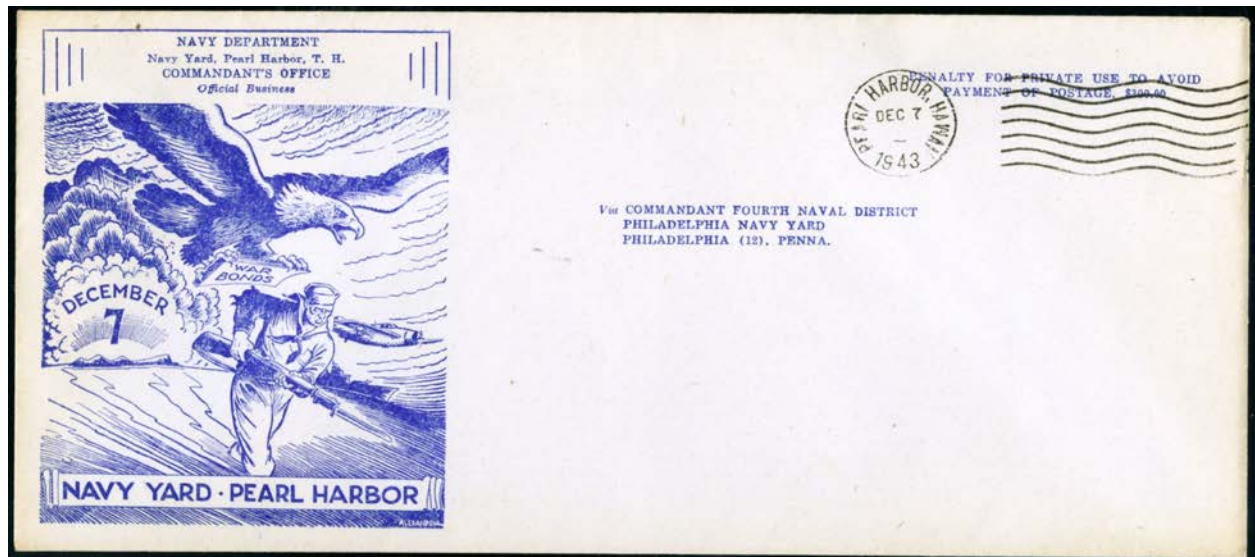
The postal side of the cover has the corner card of Fred Deming, a patriotic cachet publisher and servicer. A precanceled 1¢ stamp paid bulk rate third class postage. Although it lacks a dated postmark, the zone number in Deming’s return address is evidence that it was mailed some time after that system was introduced as a measure to compensate for the loss of experienced mail sorters to enlistments in the armed forces and to the military draft. The purpose of zone numbers was to make sorting schemes easier to perform by hastily trained substitutes, a wartime postal history innovation in many American cities that was retained after the war ended.

6 Commemorating Pearl Harbor



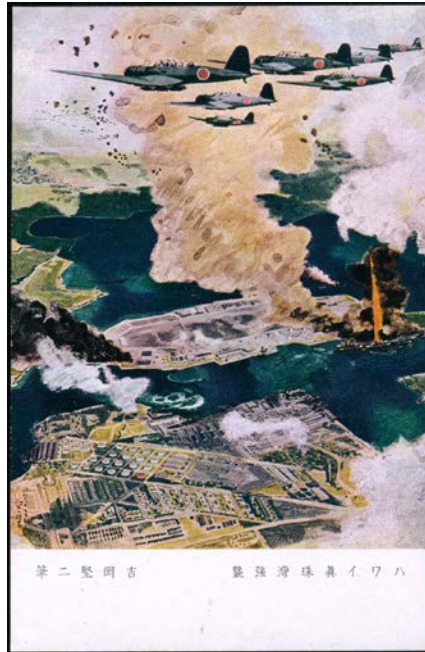
On December 8, 1942, Japan commemorated the first anniversary of the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Hong Kong with these semi-postal stamps.

7 Commemorating Pearl Harbor



By the second anniversary on December 7, 1943, the tide of war in the Pacific had swung in favor of the United States and our Allies. This cacheted cover from the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard commandant to his Philadelphia counterpart recalled the date as a rallying cry in support of the war effort and to promote the purchase of war bonds.

8 Commemorating Pearl Harbor

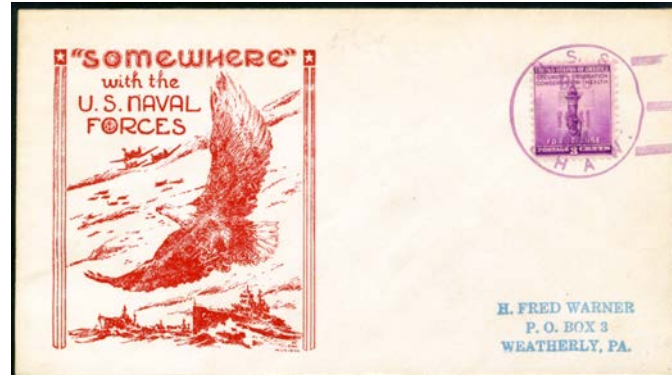


Japan also commemorated the second anniversary of its Pearl Harbor success. This picture postal card is one from a set of three published by the Ministry of Communications and printed by the Cabinet Printing Bureau: “Pearl Harbor Attack” illustrated by Yoshioka Kenji, “Capture of Anti-Aircraft Position at the Wong Nai Chung Gap, Hong Kong” illustrated by Koiso Ryohei, and “Surrender of British Troops at Singapore” illustrated by Miyamoto Saburo.



Postal side of the pictorial card. The December 8, 1943 (Showa Era 18th year) Okazaki cancel commemorates the Great East Asia War.

9 Pearl Harbor December 7 Navy ship cover



This patriotic cover is canceled U.S.S. SHAW DEC 7 1941 AM. The destroyer USS *Shaw* was at Pearl Harbor on that date and was crippled by three Japanese bombs. The magenta ship cancel is genuine, but it was struck contrary to regulations at a later date.

In his December 2011 *American Philatelist* article “U.S. Naval Ship Cancels of December 7, 1941,” Frank M. Hoak III wrote:

The **USS *Shaw* (DD-373)** was in drydock YFD-2 at Pearl Harbor on December 7 and took three direct bomb hits, causing fire throughout the ship. At 0925 the order to abandon ship was given. In a letter dated January 24, 1981, Alan C. Hawkins, the Navy mail clerk aboard *Shaw* on December 7, stated that he did not cancel any mail that day as the post office was destroyed in the attack. Mr. Hawkins also stated in his letter that the post office was not re-opened until January 1942 when he was released from the hospital.

“Yes I was mail clerk on the *Shaw* on that day and No it is very doubtful if any mail was canceled on that exact date as too many things had top billing. There may have been mail post dated Dec. 7, 1941 such as on Dec. 8 or whatever as an afterthought on some ships which would have been very easy. However I can assure you that there was no mail canceled on Dec. 7, 1941 on the USS *Shaw* as the post office was destroyed and I as the one and only person authorized at that time was hospitalized as a result of the attack.

“The post office was not reestablished until I was out of the hospital, about one month. All mail official or otherwise was handled through the post office at the Navy Yard Pearl Harbor on a temporary basis.”

All of the dozen or so known *Shaw* covers have two things in common. One is that all the cancel strikes are directly on the stamp with red ink, and the other is that the name William R. Welch of Seattle, Washington is stamped on the reverse side of each cover. USCS [Universal Ship Cancellation Society] records indicate that he was a member at about this time.

John Johnson showed a second December 7 *Shaw* cover with a different cachet, and Hoak illustrated a third in the December 1988 *Pearl Harbor Study Group Newsletter*. Hoak included his again in the May 2008 *USCS Log* and in his 2011 *American Philatelist* article. Additional backdated December 7 covers with Pearl Harbor ship cancels pictured in those references

include U.S.S. SCHLEY DEC 7 1941 A.M. PEARL HARBOR HAWAII and (USS *Enterprise*) U.S. NAVY WAR DECLARED — both obviously struck after that date — and others I shall discuss shortly that are less flagrant.

The expert consensus holds that no legitimate contemporaneous December 7, 1941, covers exist from ships located at Pearl Harbor on that date. But a plausible reason why several exist without an evident intent to deceive is because after December 7 Navy ship mail clerks were ordered to quit using postmarkers that named their ships and thereafter to use only generic U.S. NAVY devices, so they might have regarded sending last-day cancels of the old devices as a harmless way to satisfy collectors' requests.



The back side of my USS *Shaw* cover has a March 5, 1942, arrival postmark of Weatherly, Pennsylvania, showing approximately when the cover was actually canceled.

10 USS Shaw at Pearl Harbor

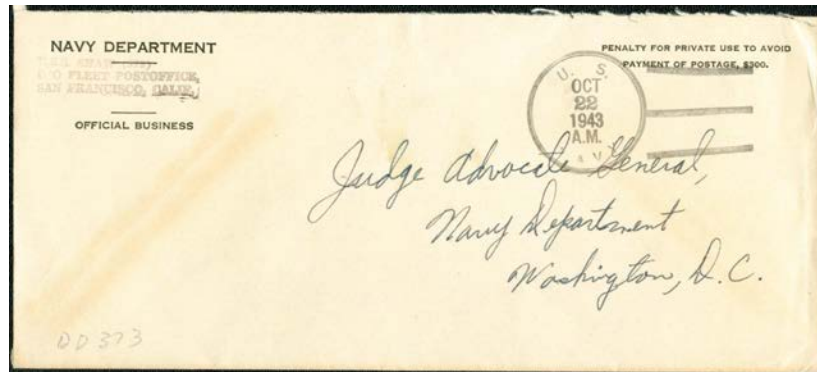


This photo of *Shaw* exploding from bombardment illustrates dramatically the improbability of mail being processed aboard the ship on December 7.

Shaw had been out of the water in a floating drydock. One bomb hit the port wing of her bridge and two penetrated her forward machine-gun platform. As fires spread through the ship, the forward magazine blew up in a spectacular explosion that sank the dock.

After temporary repairs at Pearl Harbor, *Shaw* departed for San Francisco on February 9, 1942. Repairs were completed at Mare Island, including a new bow. She returned to Pearl Harbor on August 31. She participated in many Pacific battles, and was awarded eleven battle stars.

11 Genuine USS Shaw ship cancel after Pearl Harbor attack



This October 22, 1943, USS *Shaw* official mail cover to Washington has a regulation U.S. NAVY ship cancel without the name of the ship in the postmark.

For now, this will be the final item from my collection on this thread, but in the past I have posted images and descriptions of air mail covers that were carried on the *Anzac Clipper*'s flight from San Francisco that was diverted to Hilo during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and a surface mail cover brought from Wake Island aboard the USS *Wright* and canceled at Pearl Harbor December 8. In my personal opinion those are among the most impressive and most important postal history mementoes of that fateful event.

Before discussing doubtful items, next are some genuine covers in other collections that are among the grandest Pearl Harbor survivors.

12 Genuine Pearl Harbor December 6 Navy ship cover



This December 6 USS *Nevada* cover was first pictured and reported by Don McPherson in the

June 1967 *USCS Log*. He had obtained it after addressee (and former USCS president) Royal C. Hendricks died. McPherson wrote:

You will notice that this cover bears a 6 December 1941 date and it went down with the ship. I can't understand why it didn't leave the ship on the afternoon of the sixth, but it could be that the mail clerk forgot to change the A.M. to P.M. when he cancelled it. One way or another this cover saw Davy Jones locker.

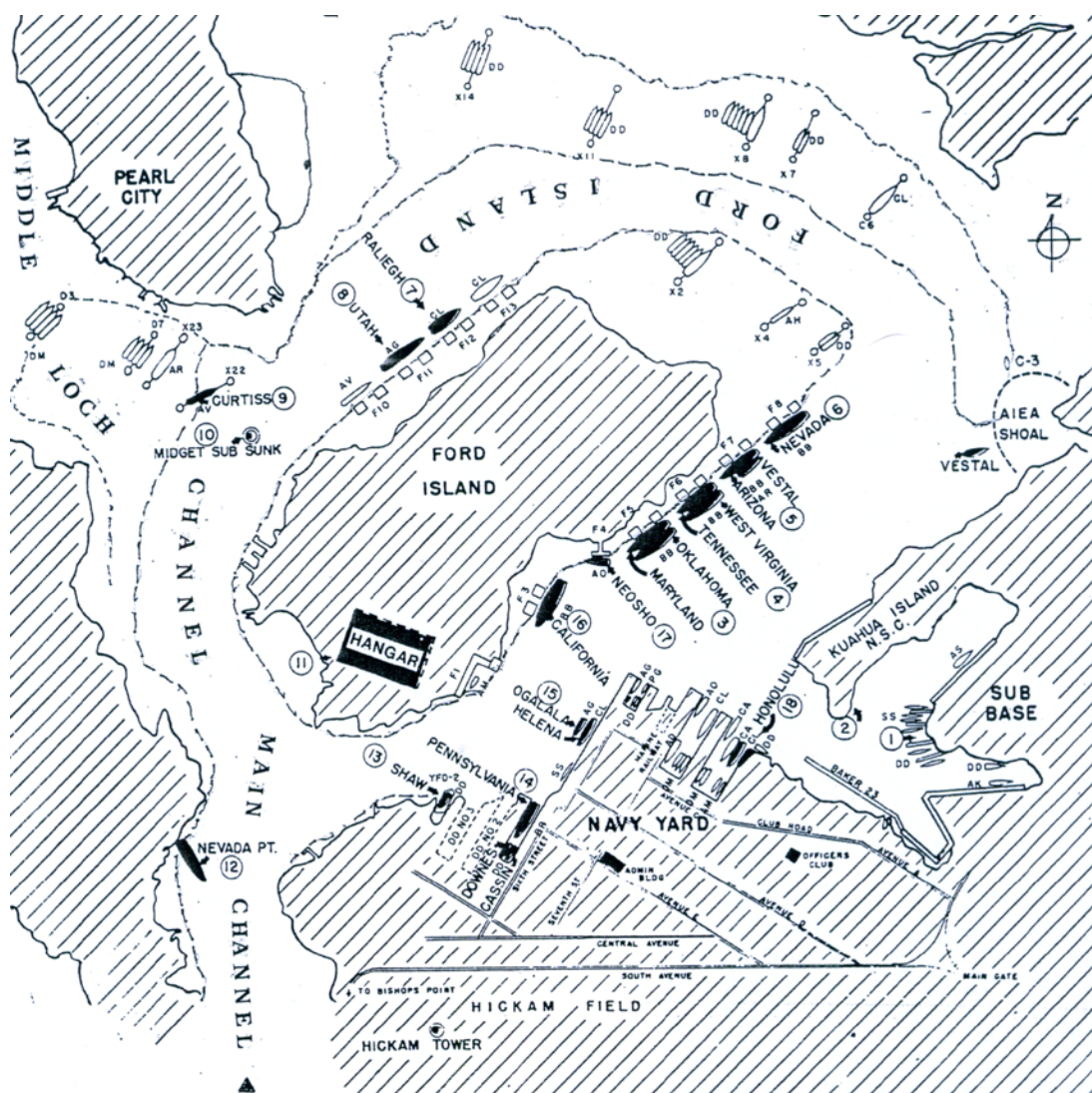
It was salvaged and mailed on 9 February 1942 and delivered the next day according to Mr. Hendricks. The rubber stamp notation on the cover read: "This letter is forwarded in the condition it was received at this post office, Post Office Inspector."

This cover is far from the best looking cover that I own, but it is one that can say, "I was there."

The cover was more recently pictured by Frank M. Hoak III in the May 2008 *USCS Log*, credited to James Myerson, and in Hoak's December 2011 *American Philatelist* article.

A second December 6 cover salvaged from the *Nevada* was pictured by Lt. Cmdr. Charles T. French USN (Ret.) in the September-October 1988 *Pearl Harbor Study Group Newsletter*. Today that cover is in Scott Trepel's collection. A third is in Steve Berlin's *The Devil's Mail* exhibit.

13 Location of Pearl Harbor ships on December 7



This map of the deployment at Pearl Harbor on that dreadful date shows that *Nevada* began the morning berthed at the number 6 position, at the northeast end of Battleship Row aft of *Arizona*. She was hit by a torpedo at her berth, while her gunners shot down four Japanese planes. Despite the damage, she had steam up and an unobstructed path to the channel without needing to be tugged. As she attempted to escape to open water, she was struck by five bombs from the second wave of Japanese attackers. She was grounded at position 12, near the southeast exit from the bay, to avoid blocking the passage after the battle, while her guns brought down three more attack aircraft; 60 of her men were killed and 109 were wounded.

Nevada was eventually refloated on February 12, 1942, and returned to Puget Sound, Washington, for overhaul and modernization. In October she returned to duty. She later provided support fire for the Normandy landing in France, at Iwo Jima, and at Okinawa. She ended the war with seven battle stars.

Besides the December 6 USS *Nevada* cover, a December 7 letter written by William Czako aboard the cruiser USS *New Orleans* to his sister Helen has been widely publicized by the Legacy Project as a mailpiece that originated on a Pearl Harbor ship that day. This is the text as transcribed at the gilderlehman.org website:

December 7, 1941
Pearl Harbor, TH
U.S.S. New Orleans
Dear Sis:

It is now 9:05 Sunday morning and we've been bombed now for over an hour. Our anti aircraft guns are yammering and every so often a bomb strikes so close as to rock this ship. Again a bomb. We're helpless down here in the Forward Engine Room because our main engines are all tore down. We're trying to get underway if possible. We were just struck by a bomb near the bow. We're fighting back as much as possible because we have no power to load our guns, no power circuits to fire them. It is all being done by hand. This seems to you like a nonchalant letter but it's the straight dope. There is only a handful of us down here as most of our men are ashore on Liberty. They really caught us sleeping this time. For a ship being in a Navy Yard for overhaul, we're putting up a good fight. The first officer has come down here now to take charge. We've lit off all the boilers that are not out of commission and are trying to get underway so that we will not be altogether helpless by laying alongside the dock and be a stationary target. Those bombs are getting closer – God grant that they do not hit that loaded oil tanker that is lying right across from us. Ten million gallons of fuel oil would bathe this ship in an inferno of fire. There are destroyers laying near us and three other cruisers. They must be the targets including us. I am on the interior communications telephone and I can hear the various stations screaming orders at one other. A man just brought us our gas masks. We have four engines but we can at the best only use 2. We're getting steam up though. The firing of the guns have abated somewhat but we've received orders to get underway as quickly as steam can be raised. The firing has continued. Wave after wave of bombers must be coming. We've figured that some aircraft carriers must be the source of these fast dive bombing planes. We've been struck several times now but fortunately there are no casualties as yet. It seems funny to be writing like this when it may be your last. I've never figured it to be like this. The next bomb may be our last but I will keep writing until I am told to stop or am given another job. Some battleships that are tied up to the piers near the Fleet Air Base are reported to be afire. It seems that the airbase was their first objective and the battleships were just too close to that field. We were really caught short this time. ...There is another lull and only sporadic bursts from our pom poms. Preparations to get underway are still continuing. It seems impossible with all that machinery tore up but still we'll do what we can. The order has come now to secure from general quarters. We were under fire for nearly two hours and I'm going to sneak up to topside to see what happened –

If authentic, the letter is a precious relic and ought to be a museum piece, but none of the sites that promote it have displayed the actual letter, nor an envelope, nor provided details about the sailor and his family. Perhaps those are reasons why it wasn't included in the National Postal Museum's exhibit of war letters a few years ago.

Despite the letter's harrowing story, *New Orleans* suffered no significant damage from the Japanese attack. She served in many legendary Pacific engagements and was awarded seventeen battle stars for war service, among the most decorated ships of World War II, exceeded only by the USS *Enterprise* (twenty) and USS *San Diego* (eighteen).

14 December 7 Pearl Harbor cover at the National Postal Museum



The NPM website does show this December 7, 1941, Honolulu cover, along with Cheryl Ganz's story about it:

Private John R. Rion inadvertently left a mark on postal history by mailing an envelope from Honolulu, Hawaii, postmarked on December 7, 1941, the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

On December 6, 1941, Rion dropped an oversize envelope at the Honolulu post office, destined for his business partner back home in Perry, Iowa. Rion and his friend operated a barbershop. The envelope contained a photograph of a lovely young Hawaiian woman in a grass skirt with floral leis but no message. No message was necessary. Life in "paradise" suited Rion, who spent his days cutting hair, trimming mustaches and beards, and shaving his fellow servicemen.

The next morning – December 7, 1941 – the Honolulu post office cancelled Rion's envelope at 8 a.m., the exact time that Japanese torpedo planes struck nearby Pearl Harbor and the unprepared U.S. Navy battleship force. The harbor filled with flames and smoke as Japanese bombs sank five of eight battleships and destroyed other ships and combat planes. Over 2,400 Americans died. The unprecedented air raid led to America's

declaration of war on Japan and the mobilization of American troops to the Pacific front.

Rion served in action in Hawaii, Mariana Islands, and the Ryukyu Islands before receiving an honorable discharge and returning to Perry, Iowa (northwest of Des Moines), to continue barbering for fifty years. He died in 2006, and his estate donated this historical cover to the National Postal Museum. This envelope is one of the very few surviving examples documenting this defining moment in world history.

I have recorded one other December 7 cover canceled by that Oahu duplex device, addressed to a local Honolulu post office box, with a 930 AM time slug, which I believe is genuine and which has a recent APEX certificate. It was probably canceled and boxed as soon as it deposited in the mail. Chip Briggs posted another example, canceled with an 8 AM time slug, and addressed to Canada, as his favorite purchase in 2014.

That brings my December 7, 1941, Honolulu cover census total to seven, including the one at NPM. I am eager to receive additional reports.

Not included in that count is a cover canceled with a DEC 7 8AM 1941 AIEA HAWAII duplex marker, which is the most improbable one of which I'm aware. Aiea is a suburb of Honolulu on the shore of Pearl Harbor. The cover is unaddressed and purely philatelic with unusual postage (a 3¢ Hawaii Territory commemorative, a 1919 3¢ Victory stamp, and a block of ½¢ Nathan Hale stamps) and a printed cachet "Commemorating the 154th anniversary of the ratification of the Constitution by the State of Delaware, the first to do so. This cover is being posted at Hawaii, one of the farthestmost possessions of the United States. 1787 Dec. 7 1941." It was illustrated in the May 1989 issue of the *Pearl Harbor Study Group Newsletter*, credited to Albert J. Schwalm. Todd Ronnei, citing Larry Sherman's catalog of World War II patriotic covers, has shown that it's a fake created by William Sunner of Brooklyn, New York.

One item I would like to see: The 1,000-page book *Sunday in Hell: Pearl Harbor Minute by Minute* by Bill McWilliams quotes from a December 7-8 letter that Navy wife Joey Border sent to her family at Bremerton, Washington, which he says was flown to San Francisco December 10 on *Philippine Clipper* — the Martin M-130 flying boat that was strafed by Japanese attackers at Wake Island before evacuating Pan American Airways personnel from Wake — and was postmarked December 13 at Bremerton. That is the first I've read that any mail was carried on that flight, and that any mail went from Hawaii to the mainland so early after the attack.

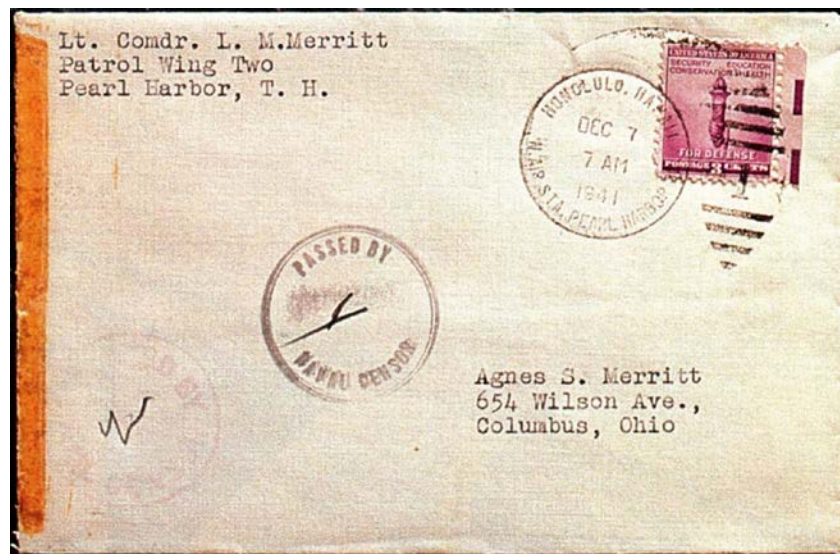
15 December 7 cover from Pearl Harbor Naval Air Station post office



The Philatelic Foundation certified this December 7, 1941, cover as “a genuine usage” in 1991 for Robert G. Metcalf. Metcalf’s 50th anniversary article about it, “A Philatelist at Pearl,” was the cover story of the December 1991 *American Philatelist*. The sender, Lieutenant Commander Lester M. Merritt, had been a USCS member and a well-known philatelist in Columbus, Ohio, his home town.

In his 2008 and 2011 articles, Hoak expressed doubts as to whether Merritt had actually posted letters to his wife in time to have been serendipitously canceled at the Pearl Harbor Naval Air Station post office an hour before the Japanese attack began.

16 Analysis of December 7 Navy ship covers

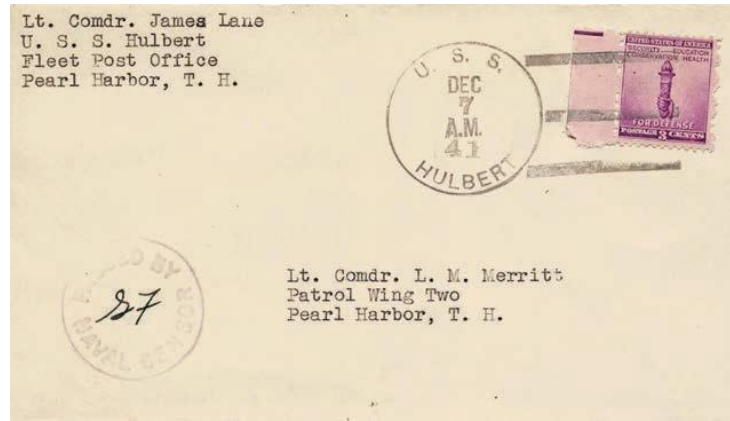


This twin to the previous letter was illustrated on the front cover of the December 1991 *American Philatelist*. At that time it was owned by Columbus stamp dealer Stan Bednarczyk. Thus at least two covers from Merritt to his wife have identical December 7 cancels.

Metcalf wrote, “According to Bednarczyk, these two covers were the only ones postmarked

December 7, 1941, in Merritt's collection." But Hoak observed that Merritt had also managed to collect covers struck with December 7 cancels of Pearl Harbor ships.

17 Analysis of December 7 Navy ship covers



The seaplane tender USS *Hulbert* might have been the first ship in the Pearl Harbor fleet to open fire on the Japanese attackers, yet this cover, evidently addressed to Merritt on the same typewriter as the covers from Merritt to his wife, has a U.S.S. HULBERT DEC 7 A.M. 41 cancel.

Hulbert gunners shot down one torpedo plane, helped bring down a dive bomber, and damaged several other enemy aircraft. She received two battle stars for war service.

18 Analysis of December 7 Navy ship covers



The destroyer USS *McFarland* was engaged in anti-submarine maneuvers off Pearl Harbor during the attack, yet here is a fourth Merritt cover with a DEC 7 1941 A.M. postmark. Observe that the Navy censor mark and censor's initials match those on the *Hulbert* cover.

Besides Hoak's circumstantial evidence that I have summarized here together with his illustrations, I would add these points of analysis:

Military mail clerks were sworn to obey all postal laws and regulations, and were bonded. Violators were subject to the same penalties as civilian postal workers. Nevertheless, my old friend Bob Rawlins pointed out that many Navy mail clerks were members of USCS or its larger competitor the American Naval Cancellation Society (which ceased to exist a few years after the war) or both, and sometimes bent or ignored the rules to satisfy fellow members' requests. Besides Bob's point, it seems to me that enlisted men assigned to military post offices, both ship- and shore-based, might have felt obliged to provide services requested by a superior officer even if they had been disinclined to flout regulations. For all these reasons I concur with Hoak's skepticism about the two covers from Merritt to his wife.

McFarland was awarded two battle stars for war service.

19 Analysis of December 7 Navy ship covers



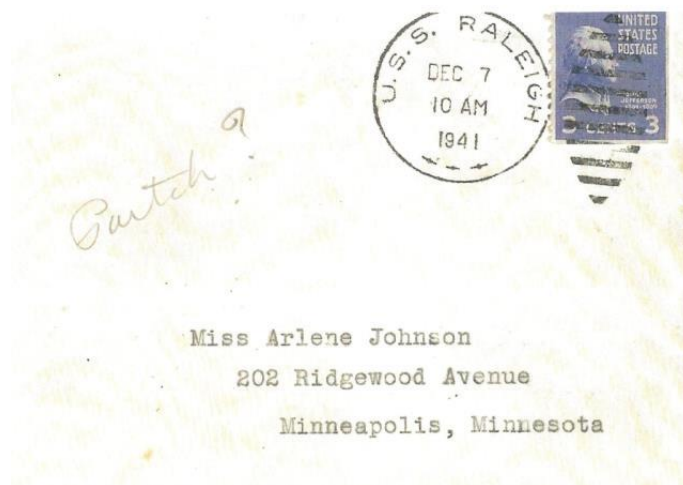
Two December 7, 1941, proof strikes of USS *Pennsylvania* postmarks on this envelope lend evidentiary support to my speculation that the date reflected the last setting on those devices before they were replaced, and that later strikes with the date unchanged showed only that postal clerks did not bother to correct them before providing favor cancels. John Johnson illustrated this cover in the December 1988 *Pearl Harbor Study Group Newsletter*, and Hoak credited it to Dave Green in the May 2008 *USCS Log*.

An unaddressed 6¢ air mail stamped envelope struck with the same U.S.S. PENNSYLVANIA DEC 7 A.M. 1941 cancel, properly described as backdated, recently sold on eBay for \$100.

The battleship *Pennsylvania* was in drydock at Pearl Harbor on that date. A bomb struck her starboard side and destroyed a gun mount, killing its crew, but the major damage occurred when the torpedo tube of the adjacent destroyer USS *Downes* was blown into her forecastle. On December 20 she departed for repairs at San Francisco, and returned to duty on March 30, 1942. She served throughout the Pacific, the only battleship to participate in every amphibious

operation from May 4, 1943, through February 10, 1945, and was awarded eight battle stars for war service. Two of her 14-inch guns are on permanent outdoor display at the Pennsylvania Military Museum in Boalsburg, a sight worth seeing for visitors to the American Philatelic Center in Bellefonte.

20 Analysis of December 7 Navy ship covers



Steve Henderson reported and illustrated this December 7 USS *Raleigh* cover in the February 2004 *USCS Log*. It is unusual in that the cancel was struck in advance, not afterward. Hoak wrote in the May 2008 *Log* that the cover “has been verified by RALEIGH crewman A.F. Patch in a 1995 letter to USCS Member Steve Henderson in which Mr. Hatch indicates that he mailed the letter on Saturday, 6 December 1941 with the understanding that it was to be dated the next day (December 7th) then sacked to be taken ashore on Sunday. He received the letter back a few days later.”

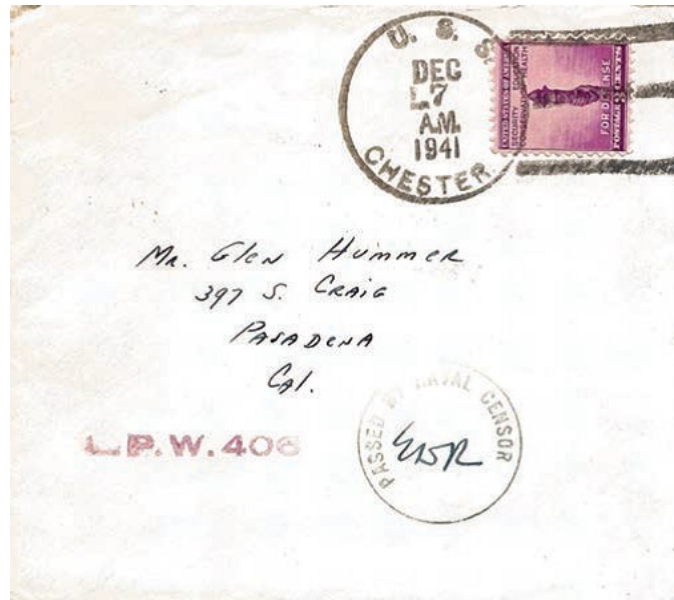
(I think what this meant was that the mail clerk had already dispatched the December 6 mail and had advanced his postmark slugs to DEC 7 10AM when the sender turned in his letter. The clerk explained that the day’s mail had already gone; the sender said, “No problem, send it tomorrow”; the clerk canceled it and bagged it. Afterward, the mail clerk penciled the name of the man he thought had sent it, found him, and returned the canceled envelope, which had not been posted.)

A second cover with an identical December 7 Raleigh cancel on a 1½¢ Martha Washington stamp (frequently used to send holiday greeting cards without added personal messages at the unsealed third class rate) from the collection of Albert J. Schwalm was illustrated in the August-September 1990 issue of the *Pearl Harbor Study Group Newsletter*. It too was evidently canceled one day in advance, and then returned to the sender by the ship’s mail clerk after the attack.

A Japanese torpedo hit the light cruiser *Raleigh* portside amidships. While the crew struggled to keep her from capsizing, her gunners downed five enemy planes. After temporary repairs at Pearl Harbor she departed for Mare Island on February 21, 1942. After overhaul she returned to duty

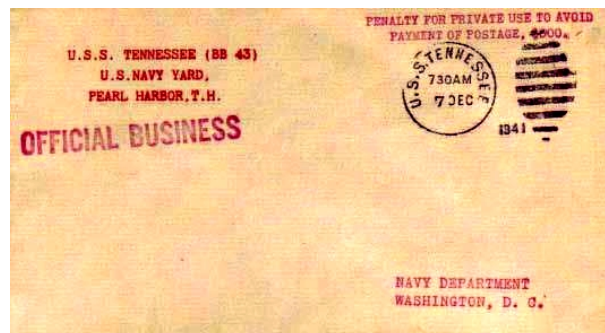
on July 23. *Raleigh* served in the Aleutian campaign and in the South Pacific; she was awarded three battle stars.

21 Analysis of December 7 Navy ship covers



This December 7 USS *Chester* cover appeared in Hoak's 2011 *American Philatelist* article, but he expressed no opinion about it. I have no reference for comparison, but on its face it looks genuine and I see no cause to question its legitimacy. *Chester* was returning from Wake Island, part of the task force that included USS *Enterprise* after delivering fighter aircraft to the atoll's defense force. If not for adverse weather, the task force might have reached port on December 6 and the carrier *Enterprise* might have been sunk, but those ships were about 215 miles west of Hawaii when the attack on Pearl Harbor began. *Chester* served throughout the Pacific and was awarded eleven battle stars for war service.

22 Analysis of December 7 Navy ship covers



On the front page of the February 1995 *USCS Log*, Bob Rawlins pictured a duplicate of this USS *Tennessee* cover. In his article "TENNESSEE December 7, 1941 Cover Real or Fake?" he

proved that it was a fake, not a backdated favor, and asked readers to help him discover its origin. In the November 2008 *Log*, Rawlins pictured this cover credited to Carl Ganong in his article “Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds, Part X, Glenn Dye covers continued,” which told the sorry saga of Dye’s extensive business creating fraudulent covers after Hoak had written in the May 2008 *Log*, “It is now well established that the fake TENNESSEE Type 6 duplex postmark . . . was the creative work of Glenn Dye of New Jersey. Dye featured a TENNESSEE Type 6 cancel dated December 7, 1941 for sale in his 1948 sales publication.” Hoak pictured a third fake December 7 *Tennessee* cover in his *Log* article but made no mention of any of them in his December 2011 *American Philatelist* article.

Neither Rawlins nor Hoak explained how Dye had made these fakes. In my opinion he had acquired, either as a favor or by theft, a genuine obsolete duplex hammer that had last been used in the early 1930s, replaced by a standard Navy ship three-bar rubber canceler and a machine canceler. His problem was the year slug; the 41 digits are not original to the device.

Hit by two Japanese bombs, the battleship *Tennessee* was trapped between mooring quays and the sunken USS *West Virginia*. She could not be extricated from her berth until ten days after the attack. Following preliminary repairs at Pearl Harbor, she was fully restored and upgraded at Puget Sound. She returned to duty on February 26, 1942, for training operations at San Francisco. Her most significant Pacific operations came later in the war, during the invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. She was awarded ten battle stars for war service.

Literature records at least two other outright fakes: Hoak pictured a fraudulently altered USS *Arizona* cancel that had been offered for sale on eBay in this May 2008 *USCS Log* article, and the August 1985 issue of *Japanese Philately* reported and illustrated a cacheted souvenir 41.7.12 “first flight” cover ostensibly carried by the leader of the first assault wave and canceled on the flagship carrier *Akagi*, an ostentatiously obvious fantasy.

23 Analysis of December 7 Navy ship covers



Hoak pictured this item in his May 2008 *USCS Log* article, which he captioned “Figure 6: Cover from USS *Breeze* with two strikes of the cancel on 7 December 1941.” His text said:

The late Don McPherson had two copies of this USS BREESE cancel on an exhibit page many years ago. One of these is shown as Figure 6. The current location of the BREESE cancels are unknown at this time. They were the product of Leslie Miller at Pearl Harbor; the comments written on the covers suggest that these were the only two covers done. Mr. Miller awkwardly writes on one of his covers, “These two covers all that exist L — as of this date are last of ships regulation cancel”, “Censor goes into effect tomorrow Leslie” and “keep these covers”. The possibility of these cancels being struck that day is extremely remote but no specific information has been located.

Unless the second is significantly different, I don’t see why it makes much difference. This is really an envelope with two proof strikes of a cancellation device, not a piece of mail. Readers of Hoak’s 2011 *American Philatelist* article would not have realized this because all he showed there was one cropped postmark. It’s a reminder of the difference between collecting Pearl Harbor ship cancels and collecting Pearl Harbor postal history.

The destroyer *Breese* was not damaged during the attack, but her alert gunners began firing at 0757 and kept up a sustained anti-aircraft defense until the last of the enemy planes departed. They were credited with hits on several aircraft and with damaging at least one midget submarine. On December 26 she left the harbor with mail and orders for other ships. She provided rescue service at the Battle of Midway, and swept for mines in many of the important South Pacific engagements, and at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. She received ten battle stars for war service.

24 Pearl Harbor postal history retrospective: final points

Hoak concluded his exploration of the Navy ship covers with this observation: “While the vast majority of the December 7, 1941 cancels from the Pearl Harbor ships were creatively inspired — some with philatelic intent and others simply to commemorate the events of that horrific and heroic day — they were still produced in small enough numbers that they are eagerly sought by collectors around the world.”

The market bears him out despite their illegitimacy, but to date the literature on these covers has been almost exclusively confined to studies by Navy ship cancel collectors, not by postal historians or specialists in Japanese philately. Partly for those reasons I expect that additional ordinary December 7 mail canceled at civilian post offices in Hawaii remains to be reported, though I agree with Cheryl Ganz that genuine covers are rare.

Next year will mark the 75th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which plunged our country into a war that had begun in Asia in 1931, spread to Africa in 1935, and to Europe in 1939 (or earlier if your benchmarks include occupation of the Rhineland, the Civil War in Spain, the Anschluss, and the Sudeten capitulation).

Perhaps the countdown to next year’s diamond observance of Japan’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor will bring forth related postal history material that collectors have not yet seen. That would be a special bonus for New York 2016 if the exhibition planners include remembrance in the program.

For myself it's probably time to wind down this adventure, but it has been an appropriate challenge for me as a grownup war baby. I was conceived as a direct consequence of Pearl Harbor. My parents hastily courted during the two weeks after war was declared, became engaged at a family holiday season gathering, and married in January 1942 before my father went off to war. I was born in Chicago while he was stationed in Hawaii awaiting deployment of his field artillery unit to New Guinea.