

Third Reich Study Group Bulletin

THIRD REICH STUDY GROUP Devoted to the Study of the Postal History of Germany 1933-1945

VOL. XLIII No. 2 (Whole No. 171) 2009

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Ich haff' einer Kameraden. Einen bessern findst du mit.

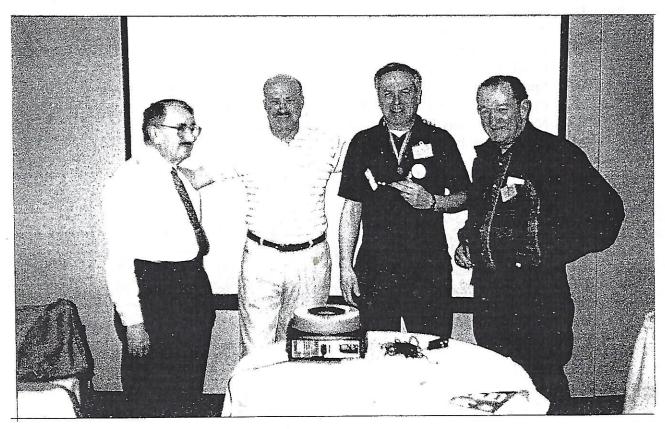
STUDY GROUP NOTES

VOLUME XLIII

John W. "Jack" Painter - it is our sad duty to inform you that Jack Painter, one of the founders of the TRSG, passed away on March 20, 2009. Born in Philadelphia, Jack started to specialize in German stamps while in college until drafted into the Army in 1951. After basic training he was sent to the Counter Intelligence Corps at Fort Holabird, Maryland. After completing a year of Investigation and German language studies he was transferred to the 66th C.I.C. Group in Stuttgart. Returning home upon his discharge in 1954 he completed college and in 1956 returned to Germany as a graduate student at the University of Munich. Upon graduation he returned to Philadelphia, got married and eventually went to work for the U.S. Customs Service. His interest in Feldpost began in 1962 at the Balpex show when he purchased three registered Feldpost covers. He asked G.P.S. President Col. Halle what the three numbers in the Feldpost cancel meant. Col. Halle said he didn't know but that the numbers changed frequently. In 1966 Jack was promoted and moved to Washington, D.C. where he began to research Feldpost records using the microfilmed captured German documents at the National Archives. In 1964 Jack and Ben Beede formed the Third Reich Study Group of the G.P.S. With Ben as Director and Jack as Editor, they began to publish quarterly bulletins for a small but enthusiastic membership. By 1969 the requirement for frequent business travel put a severe limit on the time available for the TRSG so Jack resigned as Editor and was replaced by Jim Duffy. However, he continued to contribute articles for the bulletin and garnered many awards for his Waffen-SS postal history displays. In the late 1970s Jack began to write a detailed history of Feldpost operations on the western front and several sections were published in our bulletins. During a TRSG meeting at Nojex in 2002 we discussed with Jack the idea of completing and updating his research for a special publication. He agreed and in 2004 we published his German

The photo below, taken during a meeting at NOJEX 1995, shows TRSG stalwarts (L to R) Ben Beede, Jim Lewis, Myron Fox and Jack Painter.

Feldpost Operations in the West, 1940-1944. Jack will be missed and our sympathies go to his family.



German POWs in North America Camps in Oklahoma

by Jim Lewis

The Office of the Provost Marshal General located POW camps in Oklahoma because its guidelines mandated placing the compounds away from urban, industrial areas for security purposes, in regions with mild climate to minimize construction costs, and at sites where POWs could alleviate an anticipated labor shortage. The first German POWs arrived in Oklahoma in May1943 and were housed at Fort Sill, McAlester, Stringtown, Fort Reno, Camp Alva and Camp Gruber. At least two dozen sub-camps were established, and temporary camps were set up in many farm areas. The camps at Fort Sill, McAlester and Stringtown had been constructed a year earlier as internment camps for Japanese-Americans, who were shipped elsewhere when the need to house POWs arose. The camps varied in size: Fort Reno consisted of one compound, Camp Alva five. In autumn 1944 officials obtained use of vacant dormitories built for employees of the Oklahoma Ordnance Works at Pryor. In August of that year a unique facility opened at Okmulgee when army officials designated Glennan General Hospital to treat prisoners of war and partially staffed it with captured enemy medical personnel.

After the prisoners arrived, outposts to house temporary work partes from base camps opened. The Geneva Convention of 1929 permitted use of POWs as laborers. Armories, school gyms, tent encampments and newly constructed frame buildings accommodated these detachments. Clothed in surplus military fatigues stenciled "P.W.", German soldiers picked row crops and cotton, harvested wheat and broom corn, manned the Santa Fe Railroad's ice plant at Waynoka, cut underbrush and timber in the basin of Lake Texoma, served as hospital orderlies, and worked on ranches.

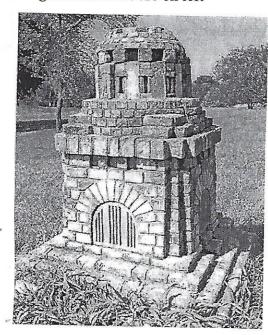


Fig. 1) Aerial view of Camp Alva. The water tower (painted white) is in center of camp. The POW compounds are on right side of photo while the administration and guard barracks are on left

During1943, more than 4,000 acres of spinach were harvested in Muskogee County. Prisoners also worked at a rock quarry located three miles from Camp Gruber. The stonework was used for several camp projects, and the prisoners were allowed to use the rocks for crafting artwork in the prison compound.

Fig. 2)German POWs at Camp McAlester used small stones and pebbles to build this miniature castle similar to those found in the Black Forest.

The German prisoners were paid 10 to 80 cents per day for working, the amount depending on rank. They didn't receive cash, but could use the coupons to buy toiletries and beer at PX-type stores at their prisons. Most of the prison camps had bands, orchestras and vocal groups. Soccer was a popular pastime, and many POW teams were near professional quality.



The prisoner of war program did not proceed without problems. Records indicate that eighty escapes took place, but authorities recaptured all fugitives. One prisoner sneaked away from his job at the rock quarry. He decided to return to camp, but the guard, not believing he was a POW, told him to go home. The German replied that he would like to go home but he lived too far away. After checking with the main post, the guard let the prisoner in. At Camp Tokawa in November 1943, hard-core Nazis held a kangaroo court that found Johanne Kunze guilty of informing on a fellow prisoner. He was then beaten to death by five POWs. These five were subsequently arrested for murder and tried in secret at Camp Gruber. They were found guilty and sentenced to death. Three months later the five were hanged at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. At Camp Alva, a maximum security camp for Nazis, several disturbances occurred and in July 1944 a guard fatally shot a prisoner who was attempting to cut through the barbed wire fencing.

After the war was over the POWs returned to Germany and many became professionals, bureaucrats and businessmen. They remembered how they had been treated and trusted the United States after that. Many former POWs came to the U.S. during the 80s and 90s and always visited the sites. In 1985 a group visited the Tonkawa camp site and the local VFW invited them to a pot-luck dinner, where the veterans visited with each other and swapped stories about the war.

Fig, 3) Air mail letter sent from Göppingen, Germany to a POW in Camp Gruber, Oklahoma I August, 1943 has manuscript "Taxe percué" (postage paid) for 80 Rpf.

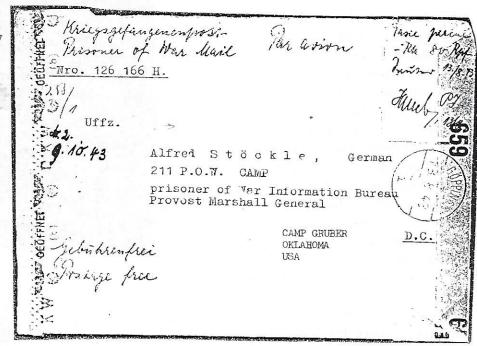


Fig. 4) Letter sent from Klosterreichenbach, Germany to a POW in Camp Tonkawa, Oklahoma in January, 1945 has manuscript "Retour" (Return) and hand stamped "Repatriated",



Lisbon P.O. Box 512

by Ron Morgan

In August, 1940 the British travel agency Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd announced a method for persons wishing to communicate with friends in Enemy Countries, or Territory in the occupation of the Enemy. Letters must omit the sender's address and could contain nothing but matters of personal interest. Each letter had to be placed in an open, unstamped envelope fully inscribed to the addressee, who should be asked to address any reply to the sender care of Caixa Postal 506, Lisbon Portugal. The open envelope containing the letter had to be placed in an outer stamped envelope and sent to Thos. Cook & Son Ltd., Berkeley Street, Piccadilly, London, W.1 together with a the postal fees. Also required was a memorandum, plainly written, containing in block characters the name and full address of the sender in an open addressed envelope for the forwarding of a reply.

While this scheme worked well for most countries, Thos. Cook & Son began to have problems with poor handwriting and/or the use of pseudonyms on Polish mail sent via P.O. Box 506. So, a new P.O. Box 512 was established in Lisbon specifically designated for Polish mail. The office of the Chief of Staff in liaison with the Polish Red Cross maintained a detailed file of names, pseudonyms and addresses, which were based on index cards submitted by intended recipients. Shown below is a cover sent to Julian Tokar's address in Krakau, General Gouvernment on January 28, 1942. The backside shows the sender address as Stefania Meyer, Caixa Postal 512, Lisbon Central, Portugal. The cover shows sealing tape and examiner hand stamps applied when this letter was opened and examined at the Munich censor office (Code 'd').

Lisbon Box 512 was closed on June 20, 1942 after it was learned that letters from Germanoccupied countries addressed to post boxes in Lisbon were being returned to senders by German censors with a warning about maintaining contact with enemy countries.



Covers to U.S. Possessions

by Bob Ferguson

During the National Socialist era, U.S. possessions/territories included:

Alaska

Hawaii

American Samoa

Puerto Rico

Canal Zone

U.S. Virgin Islands

Guam

Mail from Germany to any of these territories is scarce. The following are the only two I've found.

Fig 1) Postcard from Oberammergau, 6. August 1934 to Canal Zone.

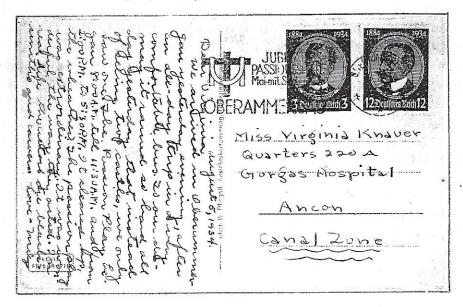
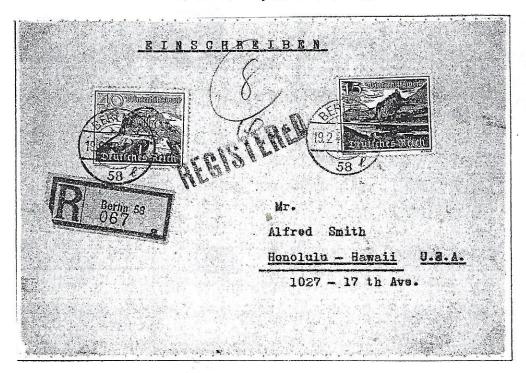


Fig. 2) Registered cover from Berlin 58, 19 February 1940 to Hawaii

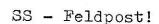


Waffen-SS Feldpost: 31st SS Division "Böhmen und Mähren"

by John Painter

The cover shown below was mailed from the Panzer Grenadier School in Beneschau (Bohemia & Moravia) by a soldier in training at this facility on February 5, 1945. The war had, however, taken such a drastic turn that most training facilities were being converted into combat units. Such was the case of this training school. At the end of January 1945 the SS High Command, under direction of the OKW, ordered that all training units in Bohemia be formed into a new SS Division and given the number 31. By mid-March the units, reformed into divisional organization including SS Grenadier Regiments 78, 79 & 80, moved out of their billets in Bohemia and marched toward the front for the final battles of the Third Reich. The division post office was designated FpA 31SS and assigned Fp.# 27578 and Kenn 707.

The 31st SS Division served with the 17th Army of Army Group Center covering Silesia. This formation, while numbering over 8,000 men, was at best only worth a regiment. It lacked heavy weapons and the ability to fight as a cohesive unit because of inadequate training and insufficient communications equipment. However, it served its purpose in that it allowed a mobile regular division to be moved out of the line to be held in reserve so that it could be used in critical areas. Nothing is known as to how many members of this division survived Russian captivity.





Familie



Gustav Seeburger

(16) Worms a/Rh.

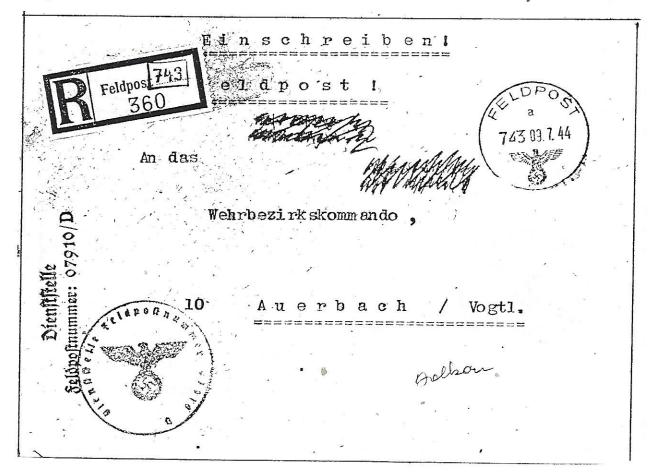
Gaustrasse 24

COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 133rd Fortress (Festungs) Division

by Jim Lewis

POST C	FFICE	REGIMENTS		ΓS	AUXIL
TACT.	KENN	G	RENADIER	ARTY	UNITS
133	743	733	746	133	133

Formed in the winter of 1943-44 on the island of Crete in the eastern Mediterranean when Fortress Brigade Crete was upgraded. The P.O. had originally been assigned to the 164th Fortress Division that served on Crete before being reformed and sent to North Africa in the summer of 1942 as the "164th Light Africa Division". In July 1942, the "164th Light Africa Division" with auxiliary number 220 was assigned Fp.# 16550 and Kenn 946. This division was later destroyed in Tunisia. The 164th Fortress Division was designated the 133rd Festungs Division in February 1944. It's auxiliary number changed to 133 with the original post office unit (Fp.# 02476) and Kenn 743 now designated FpA 133. The grenadier regiments had been part of the 713th (Static) Division that included units from the older age groups. In the spring of 1944 the 733rd Grenadier Regiment was evacuated to the mainland and incorporated into the 41st Infantry Division. In late December 1944 or January 1945, the 133rd Fortress Division was disbanded as such and redesignated the 133rd Fortress Area.



Cover sent to Military Sub-District Command in Auerbach in July 1944 from Fp. # 7910 (Battalion I of Grenadier Regiment 733) via P.O. 133 (K-743).

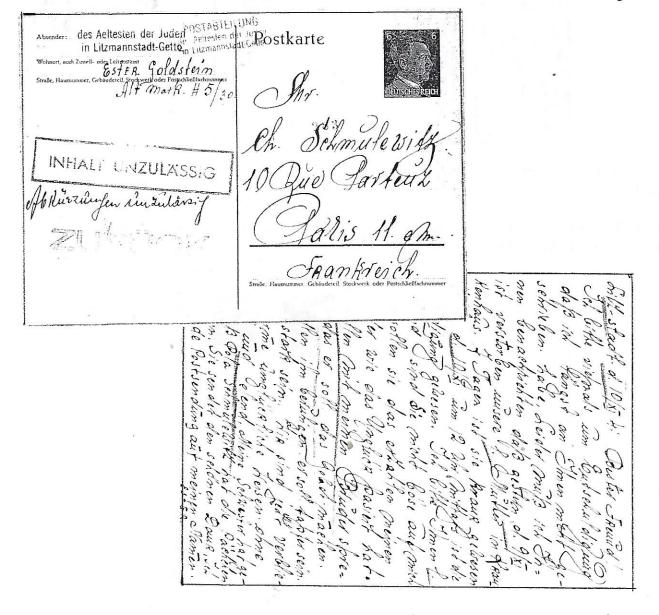
Rejected by Censor - Inadmissible Mail

by Phil Miller Postal Card from Litzmannstadt Ghetto

Part IV, Sec. 10 "The offices established for examination of communications service have the right to exclude communication or mail completely or partly from transmission or forwarding without indication of reason."

Shown below is a postal card mailed to Paris from the Litzmannstadt Ghetto in November, 1941 that was rejected by German censors. Cards from the ghettos were first processed by an organization of Jewish Elders within the ghetto that handled internal affairs, including mail. The hand stamp "des Aeltesten der Juden in Litzmannstadt Getto" translates as "the committee of Jewish elders of the Ghetto". The additional handstamp "POSTABTEILUNG" is for the postal section of the committee..

All such mail was routed through German censors before entry into regular mail channels. The card has a one-line boxed "Inhalt unzulässig" (contents not permissible) cachet. "Zurück" indicates that it was returned by German censors. The manuscript notation "Abkürzungen unzulässig" (abbreviations not allowed) was also added as the reason for rejection. The actual reason may have been the written contents. Note that the examiners have underlined abbreviations and other text on the message side.



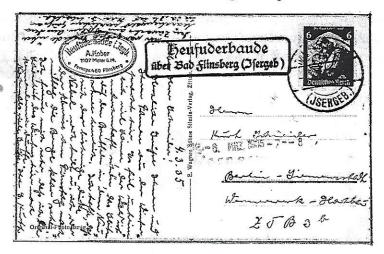
My Special Collection # 3: Postal Substations (Poststellen)

by Bob Ferguson

Finding material for this collection has proved harder than I expected. So far I have only located 43 covers posted at substations. The following are four examples:

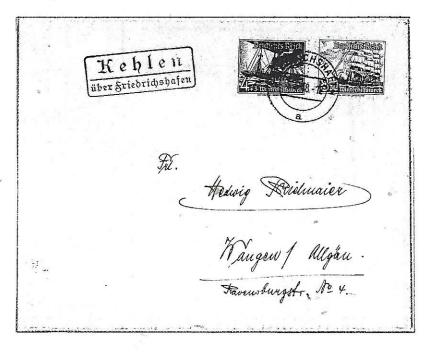
1.) Substation: Heufuderbaude über Bad Flinsberg (Jsergeb.) [RPD-Bezirk Breslau] Cancel: Bad Flinsberg (Jsereb), 4 Marz 1935 nach Berlin.

The postoffice index indicates that Bad Flinsberg has a postal van route.



2) Substation: Kehlen über Friedrichshafen [RPD-Bezirk Stuttgart] Cancel: Friedrichshafen, 5 Mai 1938 nach Wangen/Allgäu.

The postoffice index does not show a postal van route for Friedrichshafen; apparently it was discontinued before May 1944



TRSG

3.) Substation: Konstantynow am Bug über Biala-Podiaska [Distrikt Lublin] Cancel: Biala-Podiaska, 3 September 1940 nach Warthrücken.

The postoffice index indicates that Biala-Podiaska had a postal van route.



4) Substation: Daisbach über Michelbach (Nassau) [RPD-Bezirk Frankfurt/Main] Cancel:Michelbach (Nassau) Land, 19 August 1933 nach Rotenburg (Fulda).

The postoffice index does not show a postal van route for Michelbach (Nassau); apparently it was discontinued before May 1944



More on the Emergency Information Cards of World War II by Rainer Lütgens

No. 2

The following are interesting items from my collection. The first two shown below were distributed through offices of the Nazi Party.

In Fig. 1, the official handstamp of the office in Hannover's Horst-Wessel Platz bears the authenticating signature of some local official and, in Fig 2, initials have been added in pencil below the word "Geprüft" (Examined). Quite why this was thought necessary on mint cards being hurriedly given out to anxious local citizens is something of a mystery. Perhaps they simply wanted to emphasize the Party's role in this emergency service.

Fig. 1

Deu	thich schreiben!
Eilnachrid	cht
An 1	
Raum für Prüf-oder Beglaubigungsvermerk	
you Deutset	io
	(Straps and Recombinator) Fernsprecher Nr.
Horst-West Hard	oder über (Rufatimmsc)
	Fernsprecher Nr

	Dei	uflich schreiben!
//	chricht - Krme	
Raum för Prüf- oder Be	glaubigungsvermer	(13a) Bundlens on lold
	1	Aring benystry 4 (Strose and Hausnimmen)
	*	Fernsprecher Nr. (Rufnummed)

Fig 2

The card shown as **Fig. 3** bears a single-line handstamp just below the address that reads "gesprochen". This means that the message on the reverse side of this card sent to someone in Coburg on March 1, 1945 was first telephoned through to the number "3513" given at the foot of the address section - a nice illustration of the priority given to items sent through this special emergency service

Fig. 3

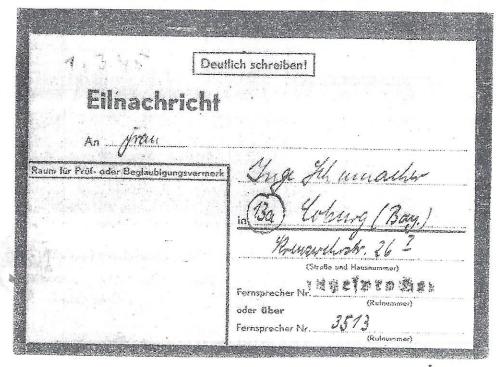


Fig. 4 is an ordinary 5 Rpf. postal stationery card posted in Dresden on March 23, 1945 has been converted into an emergency postcard by adding a red border done by crayon and the word "Eilnachricht" in manuscript. The extra 1 Rpf stamp was, of course, unnecessary.

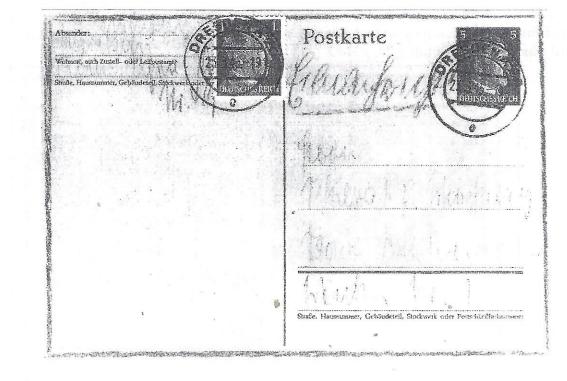
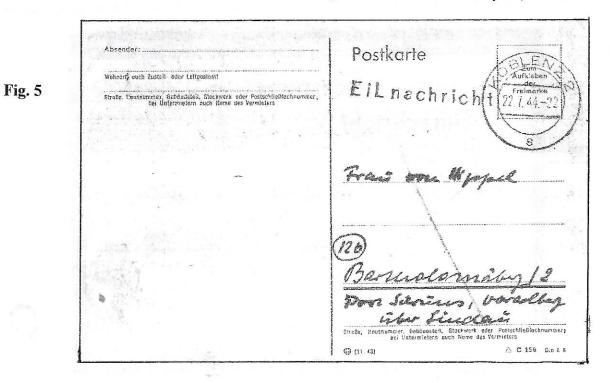


Fig. 4

(Whole Number 171)

Fig. 5 is another improvised Eilnachrichten card converted by the simple process of superimposing a cross, in red crayon, over the address and applying a one-line handstamp reading "EiLnachricht" in blue ink. This card was posted in Coblenz on July 22, 1944.



The final card **Fig. 6** is most unusual. It seems to be a wartime version of a 'Get to Know Germany' card printed for use as a Feldpost card by a transport company of some kind in Cologne. The bottom left corner has been printed for a Feldpost address while the word 'Feldpost' in Gothic type appears at top center. Used for its intended purpose it would be a rare item (has anyone seen another?). However, it is rarer still because some postal official, presumably in Cologne, converted it into an Eilnachrichten card by adding a border and the words 'nach Terrorangriff' in red crayon. This card was posted on October 28, 1944.

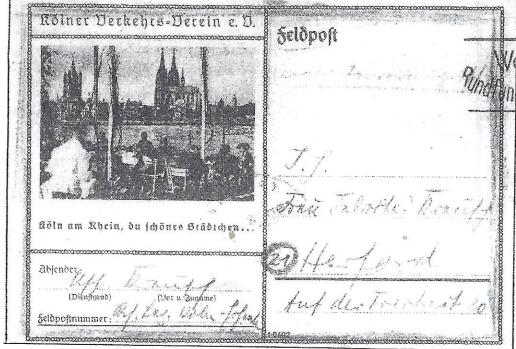


Fig. 6

Note: This article was first published in News Sheet 134 of the Third Reich Study Group (U.K.) and appears here (with minor changes) with their kind permission.

TRSG

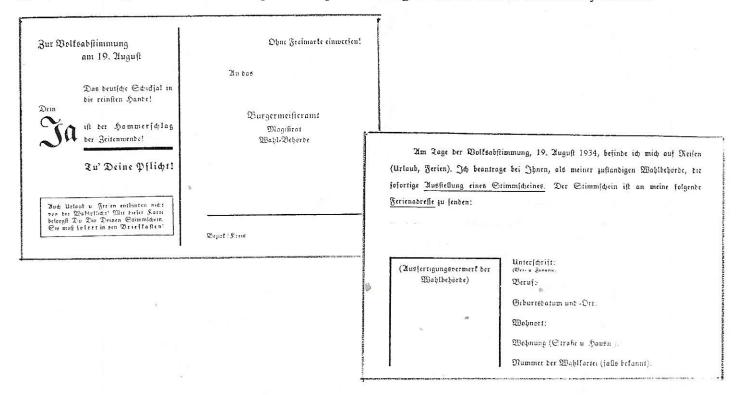
Hitler's First Plebiscite

by John Rawlings

Germany's venerable President von Hindenburg died on 2 August, 1934 at the age of 87. Barely three hours after his death it was announced in Berlin that on 1 August the German cabinet had approved a law combining the offices of Chancellor and President, creating for Adolf Hitler the new title of Führer and Reichs Chancellor. It also substituted an oath of allegiance to Hitler in person, which was to be taken by all officers and men of the armed forces in place of the former oath to Germany and the constitution. This was the act that finally guaranteed Hitler's dictatorship and it was, of course, entirely illegal. Hindenburg's personal political testament, which probably recommended the adoption of a constitutional monarchy, was suppressed, almost certainly by Hitler himself. Even Hitler's own 'Enabling Act' of March 1933 specifically forbade him to meddle with the presidency. However, no one objected and on 19 August, Hitler's usurpation of power was approved by 90 % of the German people in a plebiscite in which some 95 % of the registered voters went to the polls.

No postage stamps or postmarks commemorated this first of Hitler's plebiscites but at least one item of postal interest exists. It's timing suggests either a degree of administrative efficiency unimaginable today or a hint of the precognition which seems to have been needed at this and other subsequent Nazi plebiscites. As only 17 days elapsed between the death of Hindenburg and the plebiscite day, it seems incredible that the local voting authorities could have designed, printed, publicized and distributed the card shown below within this short period of time to registered voters who would be away on holiday on 19 August .

The front of the card employs both flattery and exhortation, assuring the voter that "Germany's Fate is in Good Hands", that a yes vote is "A Hammer blow at this Turning Point in time" and urging him to "Do Your Duty". On the back of the card, space was provided for the potential voter to fill in their holiday address, sign and complete other personal details. This card could then be sent free of charge to the appropriate voting office and forms required for postal voting would be sent to the holiday address.



TRSG Map: The General Government in November 1939

by Kelly Stefanacci

Before incorporating the District of Galicia (after the Russian campaign of 1941), the General Government included an area of 94,000 square kilometers. Its borders lay originally on the rivers Bug and San, and from 1940, when the district of Ostrow Maz was separated from the district Zichenau, on the river Narew. This area was divided into four zones: Warsaw, Radom, Lublin and Krakau. As Warsaw had put up such a heroic resistance to the German invaders, Hitler demoted the former capital of Poland to a district capital and made Krakau the capital of the General Government.



The 5 Pfennig Postal Cards

by Bob Ferguson

The Michel Ganzsachen catalog lists considerably fewer 5 Pfg postal cards (local rate) than the 6 Pfg postal cards used for intercity rate .

The following are four examples of less common 5 Pfg postal cards used correctly.

Fig. 1) Card P238 posted in Halle on August 14, 1937

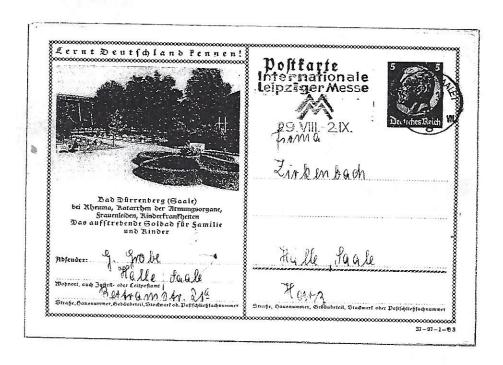


Fig. 2) Card P283 posted in Dazig-Oliva on January 16, 1940

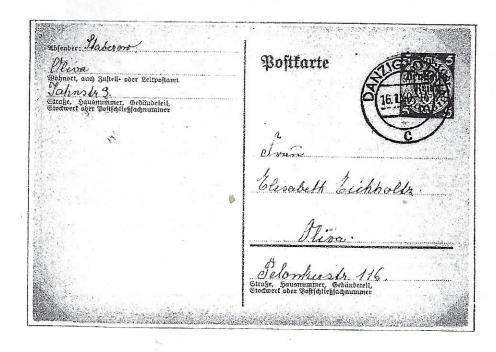


Fig. 3) Card P311 posted in Halle on June 12, 1943

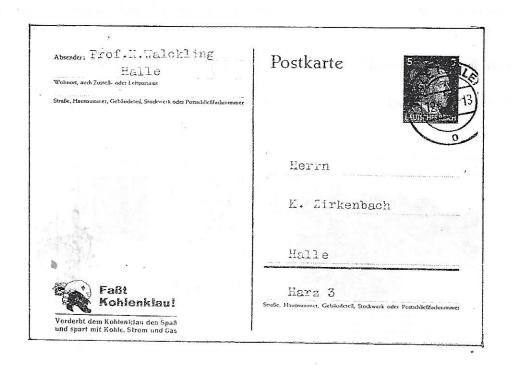
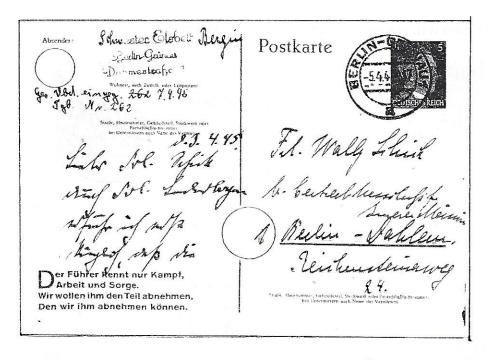


Fig. 4) Card P313 posted in Berlin-Grunau on April 5, 195



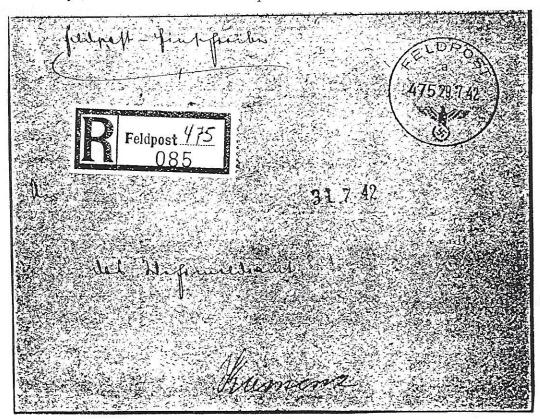
COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 39th Infantry Division

by Jim Lewis

POST (OFFICE	-247.64	REGIMENT		AUXIL
TACT.	KENN	G:	RENADIER	ARTY	UNITS
139	475	113	114	139	139

Formed in northwest Germany in the summer of 1942, this division consisted of Poles and other non-Germans. It was soon transferred to Holland, where it performed garrison duties on the Schelde until being transferred to the southern sector of the Easter Front in early 1943. The division post office was assigned Fp. # 02657 as a mailing address and Kenn 475 as a coded identification in lieu of its tactical FpA 139.

The 39th Infantry Division was heavily engaged and by October 1943 had suffered such heavy losses in the lower Dneiper campaign that it was reduced to battle group strength. It had to be dissolved in November 1943 with the remaining troops sent to other units. The division post office was transferred to the 244th Infantry Division and renumbered FpA 244.



Cover sent to Relief Agency Office in Kamenz in July 1942 from Fp. # 02444 (Panzer Jager Kompanie 113) via division P.O. 139 (Kenn 475)

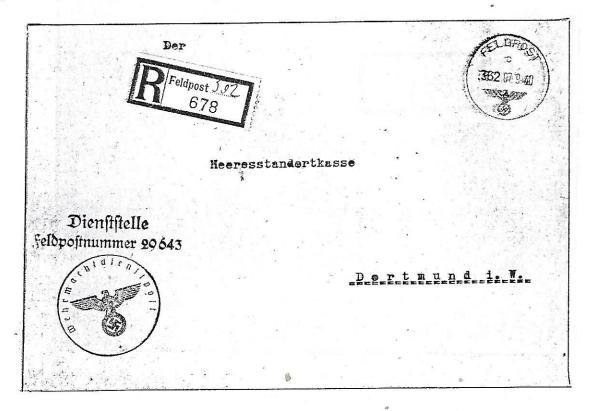
COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 393rd Infantry Division

by Jim Lewis

POST C	FFICE	REGIMENTS				AUXIL
TACT	KENN	INFANTRY			ARTY	UNITS
393	362	662	663	664		393

The 393rd Infantry Division, formed in March 1940 (8th Wave) in the General Government. The P.O. was assigned Fp.# 35893 as a mailing address and Kenn 62 as a coded identification for registered mail in lieu of tactical FpA 393

This division consisted of older reservists and was intended for Line of Communication duties. It served in the L. of C. areas during the French campaign. After the conclusion of the western campaign Germany de-mobilized most of the divisions consisting of reservists. This was done so that these men could return to their civilian jobs to aid the war effort. The 393rd Infantry Division was disbanded late in 1940. The Feldpost office (FpA 393) including Fp.# 35893 was transferred to Administrative Area Headquarters (Oberfeldkommandantur) 372 in Warsaw.



Cover sent to Army Garrison Office in Dortmund in September 1940 from Fp. # 29643 (Stab und Stabs Batterie/leicht Beobachtung Abteilung 16) via Post Office 393 (K-362).

Special Cancels:

Founding and Anniversaries of the General Government by Bob Ferguson

The numbering scheme for these cancels is in Julius Bochmann's "Katalog der Deutschen Gelegenheitsstempel".

Krakau # 1: "Amtsantritt Des Generalgouverneurs, 7 November 1939"

Uniform Text: "Ein Jahr Generalgouvernment, 26 October 1940"

Krakau # 4, Lublin # 2, Radom # 3, Warschau # 2

Uniform Text: "Zwei Jahr Generalgouvernmen, 26 October 1941"

Krakau # 8, Lemberg # 2, Lublin # 5, Radom # 5, Warschau # 4

Lemberg # 1: "Ubernahme Des Distrikts Galizien, 1 August 1941"

Krakau # 13: "Drei Jahr Generalgouvernment, 26 October 1942"

Lemberg # 3: "Ein Jahr Distrikt Galizien, 1 August 1942"

Krakau # 19: "Vier Jahr Generalgouvernment, 26 October 1943"

Krakau # 23: "Funf Jahr Generalgouvernment, 26 October 1944"









COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 349th Infantry Division

by Jim Lewis

POST C	FFICE	REGIMENTS				AUXIL
TACT	KENN	INFANTRY			ARTY	UNITS
349	755	911	912	913	349	349

The 349th Infantry Division was formed in November 1943 (21st Wave). The post office of the disbanded 217th Infantry Division (that had been virtually destroyed near Kiev in Russia) including Fp.# 22241 and Kenn 755 became FpA 349.

Upon completion of training the division was sent to the Army Group Center on Eastern Front in April 1944. In July 1944 the division was an element of XIII Army Corps encircled at Brody during the massive Soviet summer offensive. The 349th Infantry Division was destroyed near Zloczow and subsequently disbanded.

A new 349th Volksgrenadier Division was created at Stablack Maneuver Ground on November 11, 1944 using personnel & equipment of the partially formed 567th Volksgrenadier Division. The new post office unit FpA 1567 and Fp.# 48970 were reassigned to FpA 349 along with Kenn 349. Upon completion of training the 349th Volksgrenadier Division was sent into action on the Eastern Front. It went into action in East Prussia in early 1945 and continued fighting there until the end of the war.



Cover sent to Military Records Office in Dresden in December 1943 from Fp. # 28472 (Battalion II/Grenadier Regiment 911) via Field Post Office 349 (K-755).

NAVY LOG

by Martin Lynes Auxiliary Net Layer 'Genua' - Feldpost # 33271

Like most major navies, the German Navy during WW II acquired a considerable amount of mercantile tonnage to supplement its regular warships. Vessels taken over were placed into service as armed merchant cruisers, escort vessels, mine destroyers, net layers, cable vessels, etc. Following mercantile practice, most of these trawlers were coal burning.

This letter sheet sent to a firm in Hamburg has a "mute" machine cancel.

THIRD REICH POSTAL RATES

Bohemia & Moravia - Underfranked Local Letter by Bob Ferguson

Posted 23 October 1940 at Prag P.O. 25 Local letter rate: up to 50 grams weight = 80h. This letter underfranked by 20h.

Portomarke added at Prag P.O. 36 on October 24, 1940 Postage due = 30h (1.5 x deficit)

