



# Third Reich Study Group Bulletin

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

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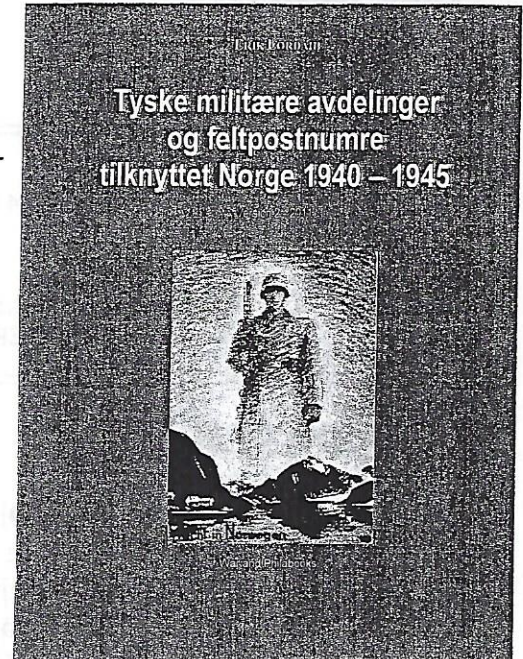




## STUDY GROUP NOTES

**Prosit Neujahr!**- Welcome to another year of study group activities. We're pleased to publish TRSGer Phil Miller's article on German POW camps in his native Nebraska in this first issue for 2012. As always, Ye Olde Ed will be watching the mailbox in the hopes that one of you may have actually sent in an article for our bulletin.

**Feldpost in Norway** - Erik Lordahl, a TRSG member and editor of the Norwegian War and Field Post Society Journal, is author of the new book "*German Military Units and Field Post Numbers in Norway 1940-1945 Version 2/2011*" shown at right. (Sorry, it's in Norwegian only)



**Norbert Kannapin** - we are saddened to report that Norbert Kannapin has passed away. All Feldpost collectors owe him debt of gratitude. Given access to original Feldpost Directories in the West German archives, Norbert was author of the three volume "*Die deutsche Feldpostübersicht 1939-1945*", published in 1982, that provided a complete numerical listing of all Feldpost number identities including all revisions and dates. Norbert and his wife's visit to the U.S.A. in the summer of 1985 included a visit to the New Jersey home of TRSGer Gianluigi Soldati. In the photo below, Herr Kannapin is flanked by TRSG Editor Jim Lewis (left) and G. Soldati during this visit.



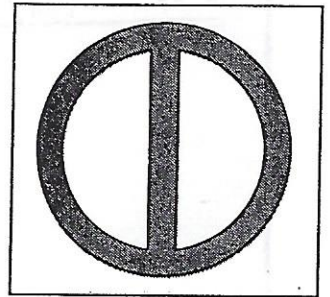
**Cover Illustration:** One of the Feldpost cancels on this cover sent to Versailles in late 1941 ties the very attractive "Ice Bear" sheet sold to raise funds for the Legion of French Volunteers who enlisted to fight alongside Germany and other European nations against Communism. The reprint of a TRSG article on these French volunteers appears on Page 17 in response to those members who have requested more articles about the "legions".



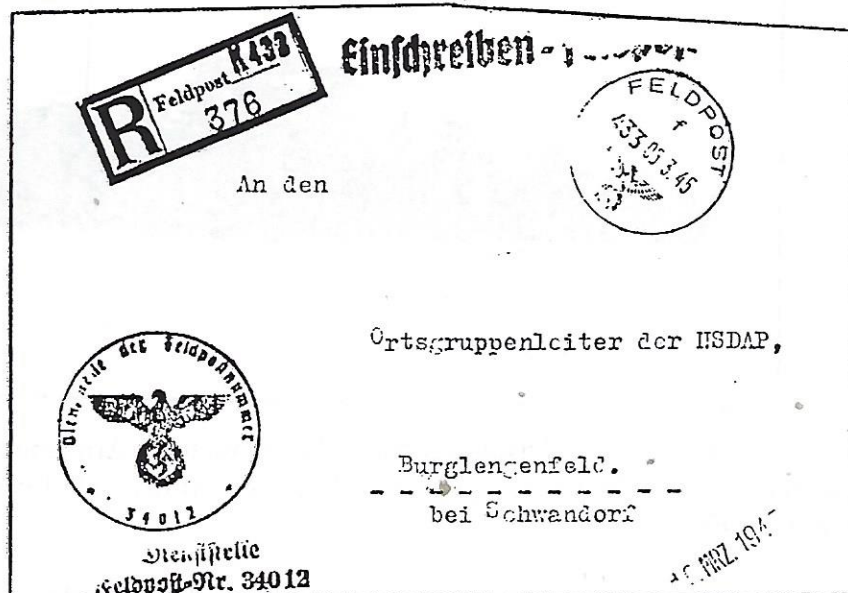
## COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 11th Panzer Division by Jim Lewis

POST OFFICE		REGIMENTS				AUXIL
TACT.	KENN	PANZER	GRENADIER	ARTY	UNITS	
61	433	15	110	111	119	61

Formed in August 1940 from 11th Schützen Brigade and 15th Panzer Regiment from the 5th Panzer Division. P.O. was assigned Fp.# 07865 as a return address and K-433 as a coded identity. The division emblem was a yellow bisected circle. The division was transferred to the Balkans in April 1941 and captured Belgrade. It then invaded Russia with Army Group South where it fought in the Battle of Kiev. It was then sent to Army Group Center for the drive on Moscow. The division suffered heavy casualties during the Soviet winter offensive of 1942-43 but played a major role in halting the Soviets south of Rostov, allowing the escape of Army Group A from the Caucasus. It fought at Kursk and then suffered very heavy losses at Krivog Rog in the fall of 1943. The 11th Panzer Division was surrounded in the Cherkassy pocket in February 1944. It broke out but suffered such heavy losses that it was reinforced with the 416th Grenadier Regiment of the 123rd Infantry Division. It was then sent to southern France to reform and absorbed the personnel of the 273rd Reserve Panzer Division



It remained in southern France and fought delaying actions in July 1944 against the Allied forces that had landed in southern France. It then fought in Alsace, in defense of the Belfort Gap and in the withdrawal from the Saar. It took part in the Ardennes offensive and fought in battles of the Saar-Moselle triangle, where it again suffered very heavy losses. After attacking the U.S. bridgehead at Remagen, it was transferred to Army Group G in the southern sector. It surrendered to the U.S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Army on May 4, 1945.



Cover sent to Nazi Party Group Leader in Burglengenfeld in March 1945 from Fp. # 34012 (HQ of 11th Panzer Division) via P.O. 61 (K-433).



# NAVY LOG

by Robert Dunn

Auxiliary Minelayer 'Linz'- Feldpost # 50932

Dienststelle  
Feldpostnummer M. 50932  
Schiffsklasse  
B.Nr. 134/44

KIEL  
Feldpost  
3

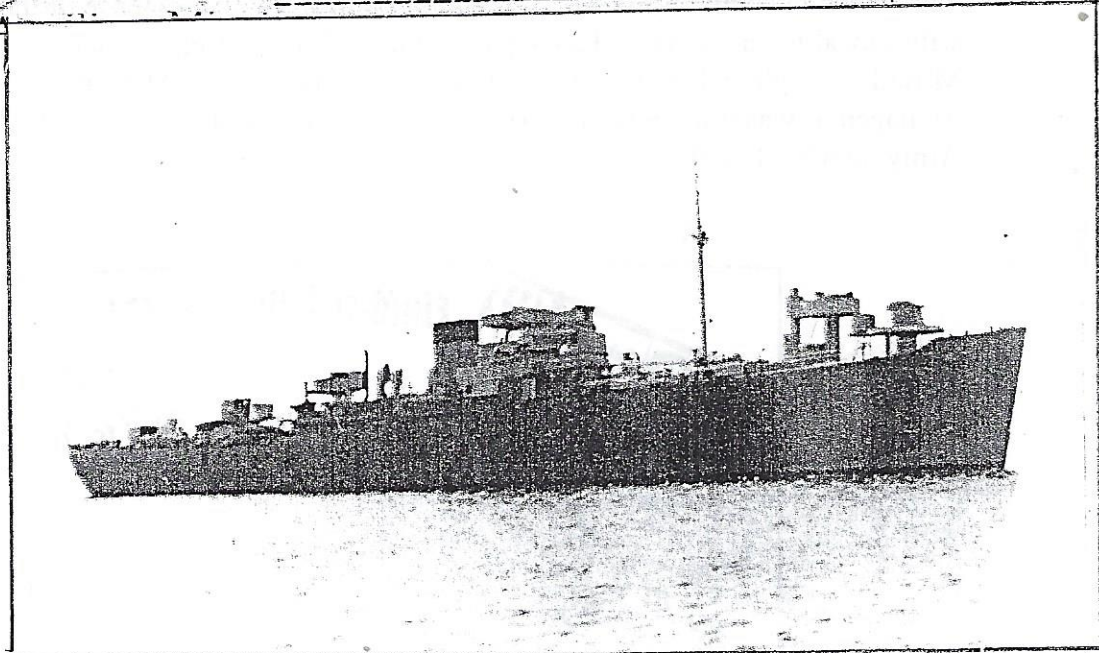
Einschreiben

An ~~den~~

Marine - Oberkommando Nordsee  
Standortkasse

Wilhelmshaven.

3



This ex-merchantman was built in 1940. Displacement: 3,374 gross tons. Armament: two 4.1" AA, two 37mm AA, fourteen 20mm AA guns and 340 mines. At the end of war, she reverted to a merchantman *Empire Wansbeck*.

Cover from 'Linz' cashier's office to North Sea Naval Command in Wilhelmshaven posted in Kiel on March 3, 1944.

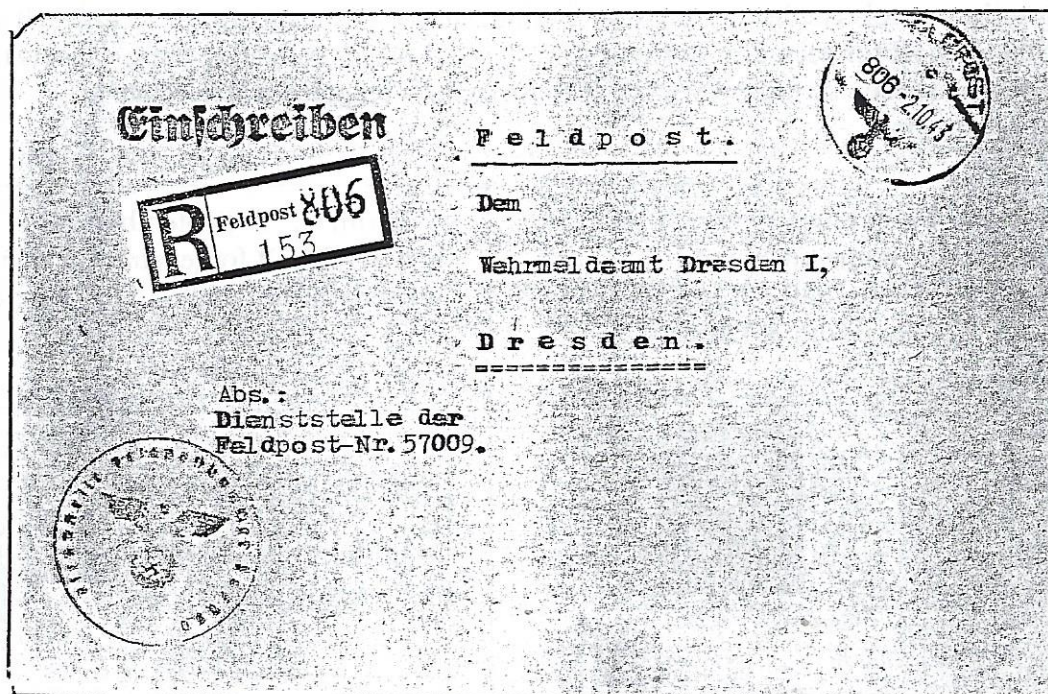


## COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 12th Panzer Division by Jim Lewis

POST OFFICE		REGIMENTS				AUXIL
TACT.	KENN	PANZER	GRENADIER		ARTY	UNITS
2	806	29	5	25	2	2

Formed with Prussian personnel at Stettin in 1921, the 2nd Infantry Division included the 5th, 25th and 92nd Infantry Regiments. Converted to a motorized division in 1936-37, the 92nd Regiment was transferred to the 60th Infantry Division. After fighting in the Polish and French campaigns, the division was converted to 12th Panzer Division in the fall of 1940 and received Panzer Regiment 29. The P.O. was assigned Fp.# 16277 as a return address and Kenn 806 as a coded identity in lieu of tactical FpA 2.

In June 1941 the 12th Panzer Division took part in the invasion of Russia in the northern sector. The division fought in the Minsk encirclement, the crossing of the Dneiper River and the battles of Smolensk and Mga. After suffering heavy losses in the winter of 1941-42, in early 1942 the division was withdrawn to Estonia for re-fitting. Returned to the front, it fought south of Leningrad for the rest of 1942. Transferred to the central sector in the spring of 1943, the division fought at Kursk in July 1943 and later in the battles of the middle Dneiper and Dneister. The division was transferred to Army Group North in January 1944 and distinguished itself during the long retreat through the Baltic States. After Army Group North was driven into the Courland Pocket, the 12th Panzer Division was withdrawn to northern Germany by sea and ended the war at battle group strength in East Prussia.



Cover sent to Military Records Office in Dresden in October 1943 from Fp. # 57009 (Btl.III of Artillery Abteilung 637) via division P.O. 2 (Kenn 806).



## Serienstempel (Series Cancels)

by Bob Ferguson

A total of 424 series cancels were used from 1918 through May 1945 and their use was continued after the war. Many of these cancels were used in a large number of cities over long periods of time - hence the name "series cancel". These cancels were used for special events, anniversaries, requests for donations to causes, instruction, propaganda and advice. The numbers (#) shown below are listed in Julius Bochmann's **Katalog der Deutschen Gelegenheitsstempel**.

First use was at the end of World War I:

(#1) Hilf siegen! Zeichne Kreigsanleihe! (Help Victory! Subscribe to war loans)  
used: 24 September-10 October 1918 in Augsburg, Bamberg, Kaiserslautern, Munchen, Nurnberg and Wurzburg. (Why are almost all in these cities in Bavaria? In particular, why are Berlin and Hamburg missing?)

The last used in the National Socialist era is:

(#424) Kriegswinterhilfswerk 1944-1945/Sinnbild unsere Sozialismus (Wartime WHW-Symbol of our Socialism)  
used: 26 October 1944 - 17 March 1945 in 11 cities.

Through the use of machine cancels on commercial mail the Reichspost instructed its customers on preparing mail for posting, advertized rates for services and urged the use of postal savings and checking, the telephone, airmail, telegrams and postal zone usage.

Collecting series cancels can be as simple as finding one copy of each type or as difficult as trying to find a cancel for each city and year it was used. I prefer collecting these cancels on cover but, to save space, have shown some of those cancels on piece which relate to Reichspost customers.

Altona (Elbe) 2, 24. Februar 1939  
# 102 "Put sender's name on all mail"  
used: 17 June 1922-24, 1930-40, 1942-3  
in Altenburg, Altona, Berlin & Leipzig



Berlin C2, 3. September 1934  
# 97 "Don't forget street & house number"  
used: 28 Juli 1929-55 in 44 cities

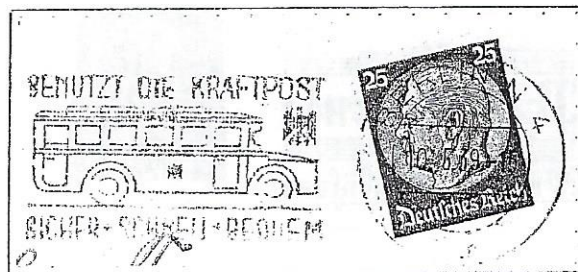




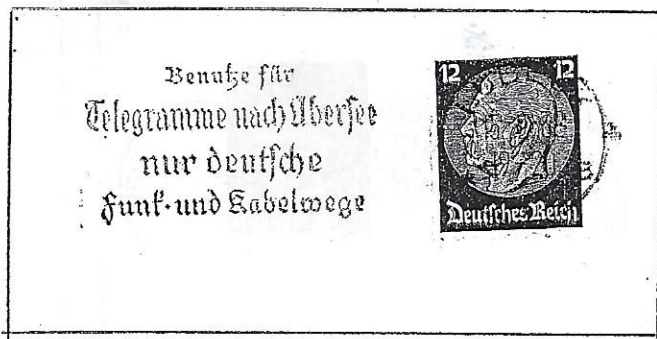
Tilset, 18 April 1935  
 #102 "The telephone saves time and money"  
 used: 2. Dezember 1929- 42 in 156 cities



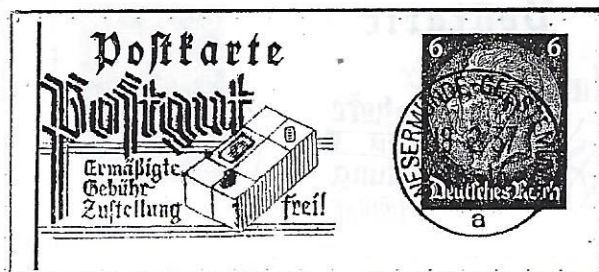
Berlin N4, 10 Mai 1939  
 #113 "Use postal motor bus. Safe+fast+convenient"  
 used: 16 Oktober 1930-40 in 56 cities



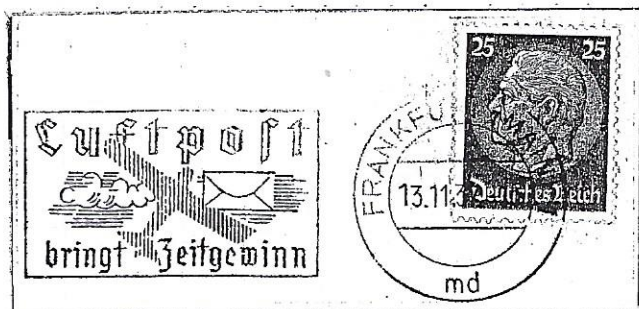
Lübeck 1,15. Februar 1938  
 #168 "Use only German radio and cable routes for overseas telegrams."  
 used: 21. February 1936-39 in 28 cities



Wesermunde-Geestemünde, 18 Februar 1937  
 #193 "Reduced rates for postgut and no delivery fee!"  
 used: 25 Januar 1936-45 in 34 cities



Frankfurt (Main), 13. November 1937  
 #196 "Airmail saves time"  
 used: 25 Januar 1936-44 in 18 cities



Frankfurt (Main), 17. Juni 1937  
 #199 "5 Rpf per word for telegrams"  
 used: 30 Januar 1936-43 in 20 cities





Frankfurt (Main), 13. Oktober 1937  
 #208 "A postal checking account -  
 economical service and fees"  
 used: 4 Mai 1936-45, 1947-49 in 20 cities



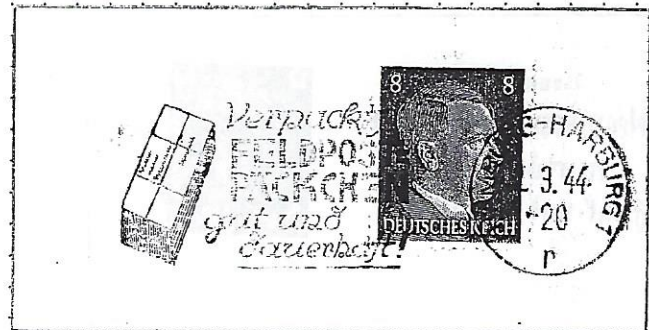
Frankfurt (Main), 19. Juni 1937  
 #259 "Deutsche Luftpost - 250 times over  
 the South Atlantic- June 1937"  
 used: 31 Mai 1-10 July 1937 in 10 cities



Kiel, 29. August 1941  
 #263 "Insure parcels up to 500 RM for a  
 fee of 10 Rpf"  
 used: 17 June 1937-43, 1947-48 in 19 cities



Hamburg 1, 2. März 1944  
 #410 "Wrap fieldpost packages well"  
 used: 22 Dez 1943-45 in Berlin, Elbing, Köln,  
 Stettin, Stuttgart and Feldpost.



Kolberg (Ostseebad), 2. Juni 1944  
 #416 "Always use postal routing number to  
 designate locality".  
 used: 22 March 1944-46, 1948-50 in 53 cities





## German POWs in North America Camps in Nebraska

by Phil Miller

In an effort to alleviate a labor shortage, approximately 12,000 German POWs were housed in the remote areas of Nebraska. The base camps were Scottsbluff (Code 23), Fort Robinson (Code 72), Atlanta (Code 77) and Indianola (Code 81). Construction of Camp Atlanta, the largest camp, began in July 1943 and was completed in three months. After 60 officers and 269 enlisted men of the U.S. Army arrived, the area residents learned that the camp would house German POWs.

Built at a cost of \$2 million, the camp had 70 buildings and nine miles of concrete roads. There were three compounds to house one thousand prisoners each. Within the compound fences were rows of barracks laid out to form company streets. There was a hospital, post exchange, laundry and repair shops. The camp was designed to be self-sufficient, raising and storing foodstuffs, sustaining livestock, in addition to operating a bakery, fire department and 60 vehicle motor pool. The camp hospital was a very busy place, particularly since many German POWs had contracted malaria in Africa and Italy. Of the more than 10,000 German soldiers processed through Camp Atlanta, only two died, both of natural causes.

The main camps and branch camps in Nebraska are listed below

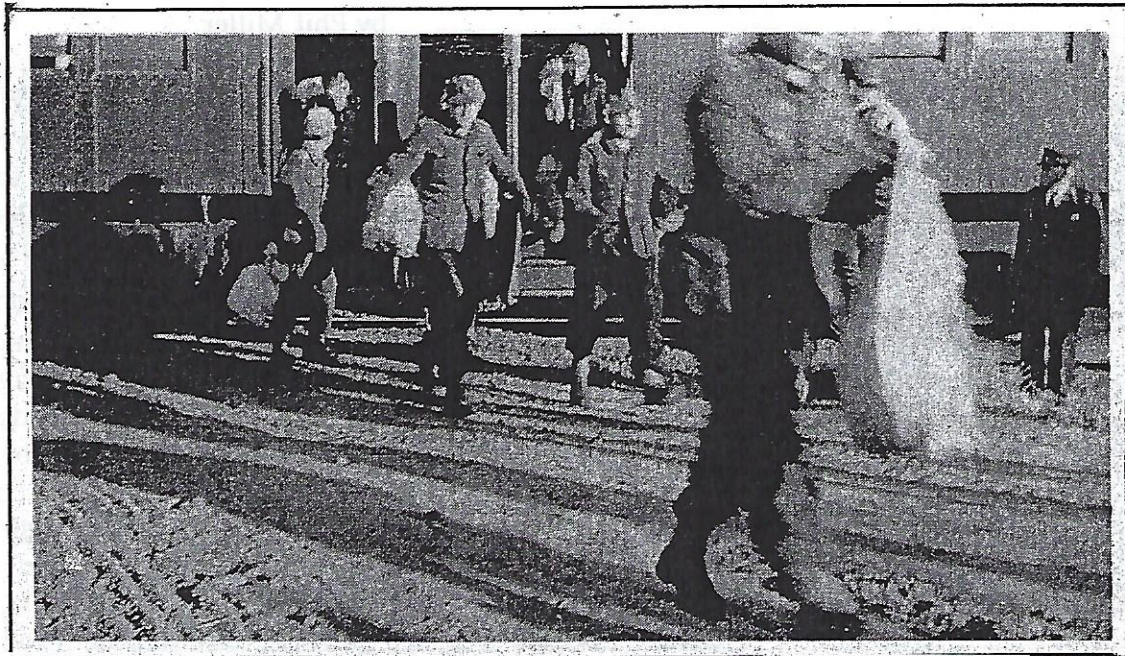
Name of Camp	County	Main Camp	Name of Camp	County	Main Camp
Alma	Harlan	Atlanta	Hebron	Thayer	Atlanta
Atlanta	Phelps	-----	Indianola	Red Willow	-----
Bayard	Morrill	Scottsbluff	Kearney	Buffalo	Atlanta
Benkelman	Dundy	Atlanta	Lexington	Dawson	Atlanta
Bertrand	Phelps	Atlanta	Lyman	Scotttsbluff	Scottsbluff
Bridgeport	Morrill	Scottsbluff	Mitchell	Scotttsbluff	Scottsbluff
Cornhusker	Hall	Atlanta	Ogallala	Keith	Indianola
Crook, Fort	Sarpy	-----	Palisade	Hayes	Indianola
Elwood	Gosper	Atlanta	Robinson, Fort	Dawes	-----
Fisher's Farm	Sarpy	Algona, Iowa	Scottsbluff,	Scotttsbluff	-----
Grand Island	Hall	Atlanta	Sidney	Cheyenne	Scottsbluff
Hastings	Adams	Atlanta	Weeping Water	Cass	Atlanta
Hayes Center	Hayes	Indianola	West Point	Cuming	Clarinda, Iowa

(Note) Fort Robinson had branch camps in South Dakota, Camp Atlanta had branch camps in Kansas, Camp Scottsbluff had branch camps in Wyoming. Fort Robinson Post Cemetery transferred to Camp Butler National Cemetery, Illinois in July 1947.



In early February 1944 railroad cars pulled into a special Atlanta siding and emptied their cargo of 830 German prisoners from the battlefields of Italy, some captured so recently that they were still wearing their dirty uniforms. The first order of the day was chemical "delousing" followed by the issuance of clean prison uniforms.

( Fig. 1 ) A very rare, and at the time illegal, photo of German POWs arriving by Burlington RR at Camp Atlanta. Taken by one of the camp guards, now deceased, the photo was sent by his wife for Camp Atlanta's 60th anniversary in 1993.



At the outset of camp organization, area residents were alerted to watch for any prison escapees. Work garments were marked across the back, on each sleeve and on back of trousers with the letters P.W. In the compounds the prisoners could wear national uniforms which were not marked. Shown on the following page is a letter sent to a resident in the Atlanta area in late 1943 explaining the precautions to be observed. In order to facilitate indoctrination and overcome language problems, a cadre of 250 POWs fluent in English were allowed to transfer to Camp Atlanta from the camp in Concordia, Kansas.

Fig. 2) Back side of letter sheet shows sender as POW in Camp Atlanta (N). Addressed to family in Hannover, Germany, both sides have U.S. Censor 11705 hand stamp and date July 31, 1944. This cover was sent to P.O. Box 20 in NYC which added machine cancel on Aug. 11, 1944. While most incoming POW mail was not censored in Germany, this cover has sealing tape and hand stamp of Berlin office.

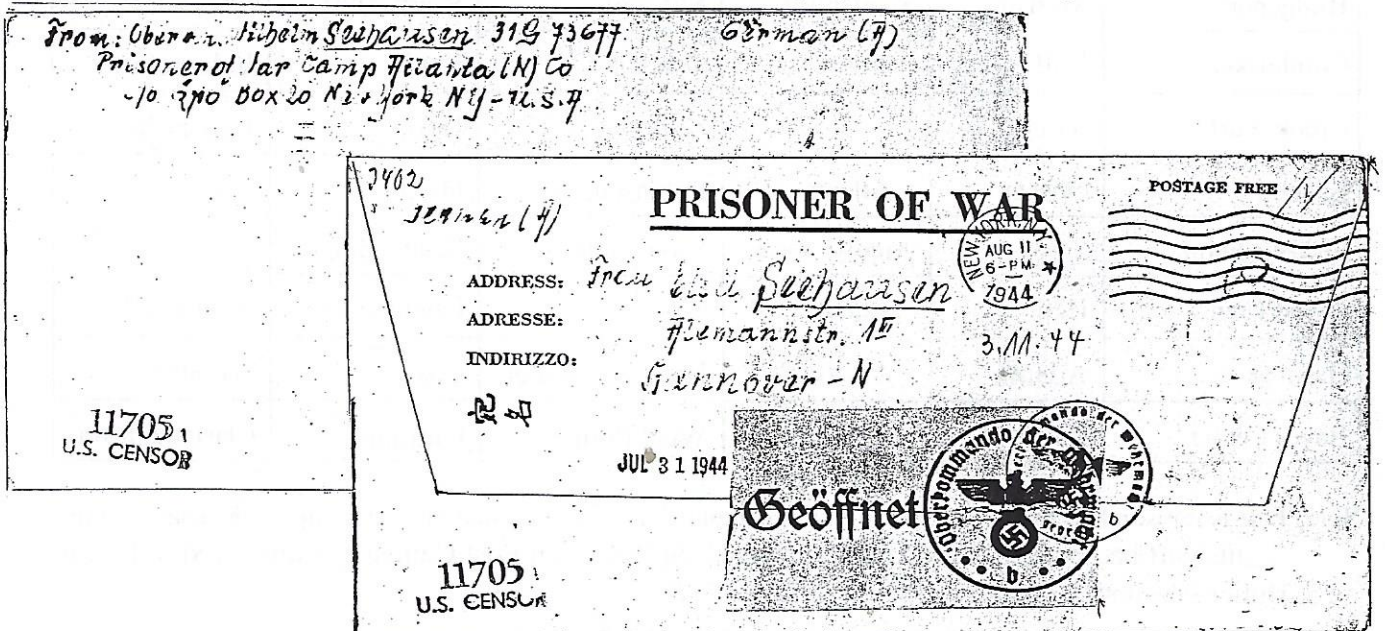
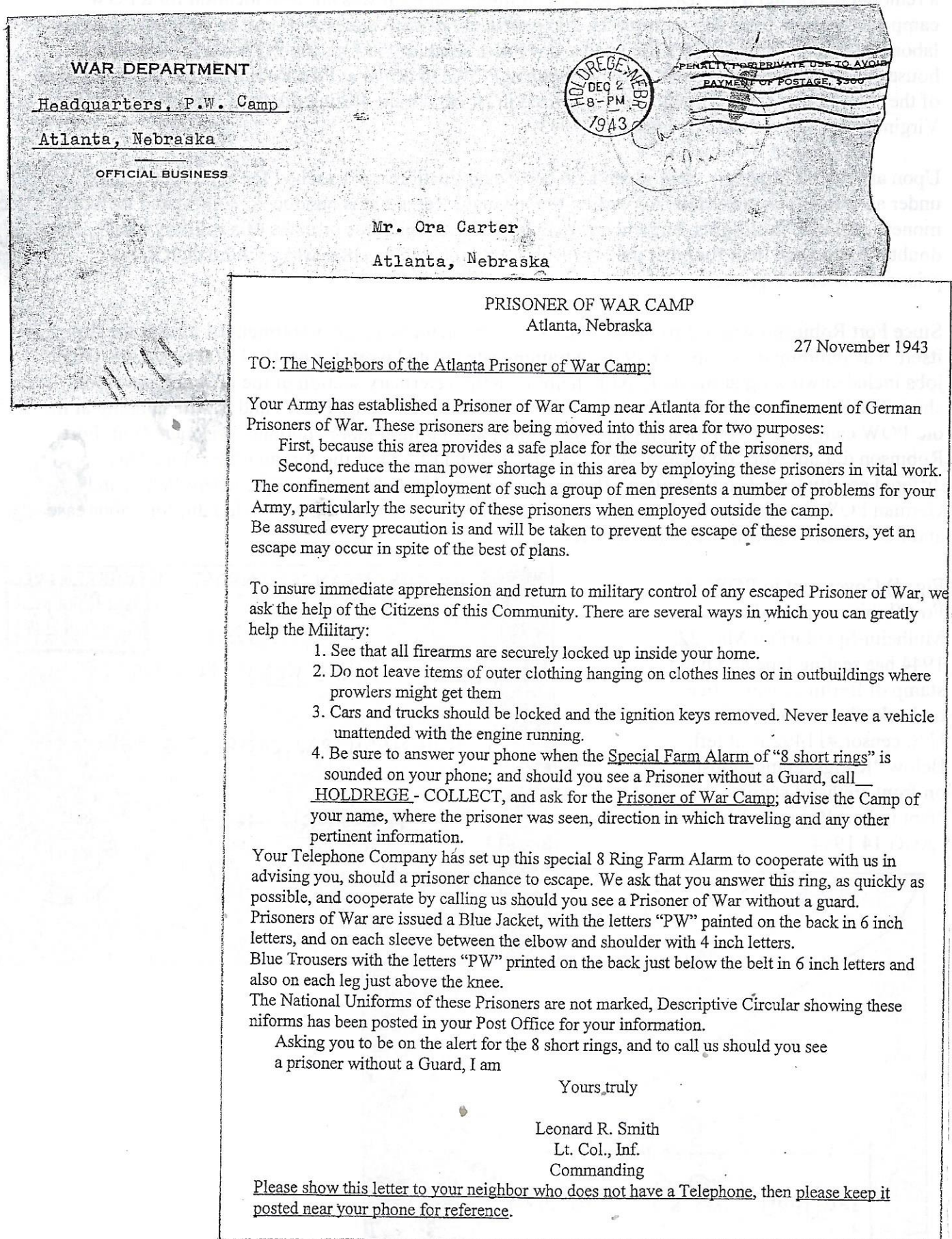




Fig. 3) Letter from Camp Atlanta HQ to area resident concerning security precautions.





Fort Robinson, which had played a major role in the Indian Wars, was nestled in the rolling, pine-covered hills and tall buttes in the northwestern corner of Nebraska. During World War II it served as a remount depot and a K-9 Dogs for Defense training center, It was an ideal location for a POW camp as it was far from any metropolis, had excellent railway connections and an endless supply of labor projects for the prisoners. Located a few miles south of the fort, the POW camp was built to house 3,000 prisoners. The first of these German POWs to arrive at Fort Robinson had been members of the 10th Panzer Division who were captured in North Africa. Riding the train from Northampton, Virginia, they arrived on November 19, 1943.

Upon arrival, all prisoners were given a physical examination and searched for contraband items under an officer's supervision. According to the Guard Regulations handbook, contraband included money, cameras, flashlights, binoculars, weapons, and any pictures or maps of a military nature. No doubt the strangest item found at the Fort Robinson processing center was a Chihuahua in the prisoner's overcoat pocket.

Since Fort Robinson was a thriving military base, prisoners found an assortment of jobs at the fort itself. The remount depot and a K-9 dogs training site created work for nearly 1,000 prisoners. Other jobs included working at the dairy barn, helping in the veterinary section of the post and the wood shop. The horse slaughtering plant at Fort Robinson was manned by POWs and is still standing at the old POW camp site. Even though there was a sharp agricultural labor shortage, prisoners from Fort Robinson did not work on area farms due to the demand of jobs at the fort and the camp. This differed greatly from Camp Scottsbluff, located approximately 80 miles south, where Italian and German POWs worked in the bean and sugar beet fields. Only after the war ended did fort labor ease and POWs start working with area farmers.

Fig. 4) Cover sent to POW at Fort Robinson posted in Mülheim-Speldorf on May 22, 1944 has sealing tape and hand stamp of Berlin censor office on back. Clear tape with U.S. censor #11492 is at left. Below "Kriegsgefangenenpost" on front are hand stamps "Not in Fort Robinson" and "AUG 14 1944".

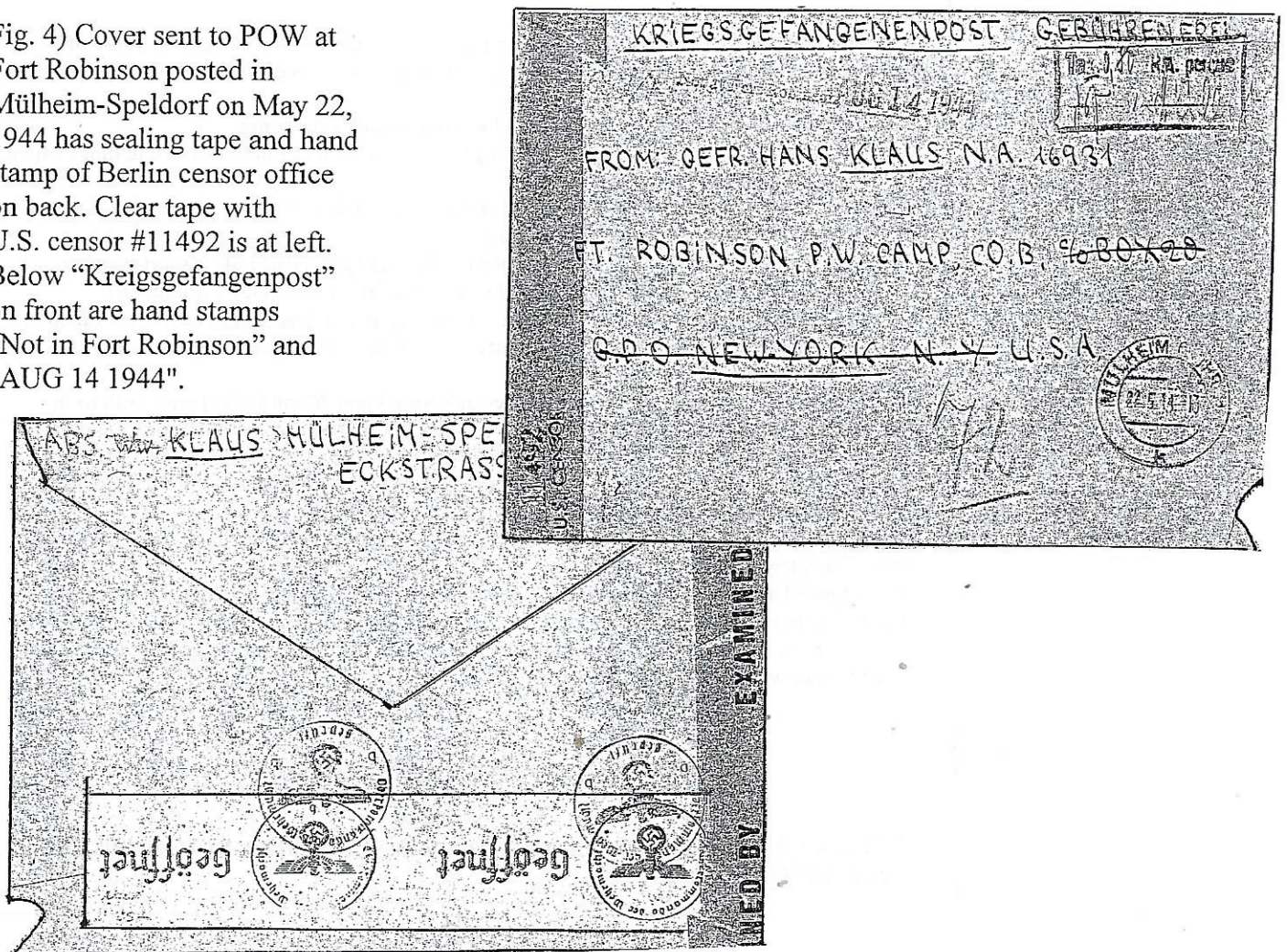
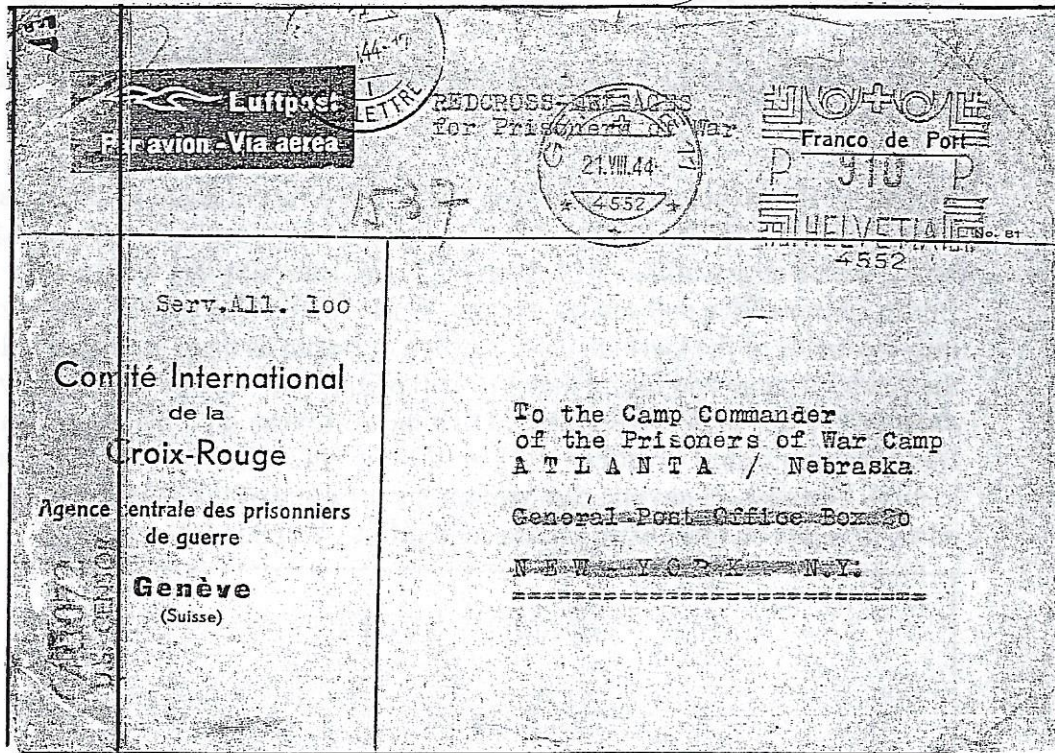




Fig. 5) A Red Cross message sent to Camp Atlanta in Aug. 1944 from Headquarters of International Red Cross in Geneva.

The Geneva Convention dictated regulations for the POW's daily schedule. First call was at 6 a.m. with roll call at 6:30 a.m. Breakfast was served at 6:45 a.m., lunch at noon and dinner at 5:30 p.m. Barracks were inspected every day at 10 a.m. Showers and shaves were required twice a week, and bedding was aired every Friday morning. Religious services for Protestants and Catholics were offered on Sunday mornings.

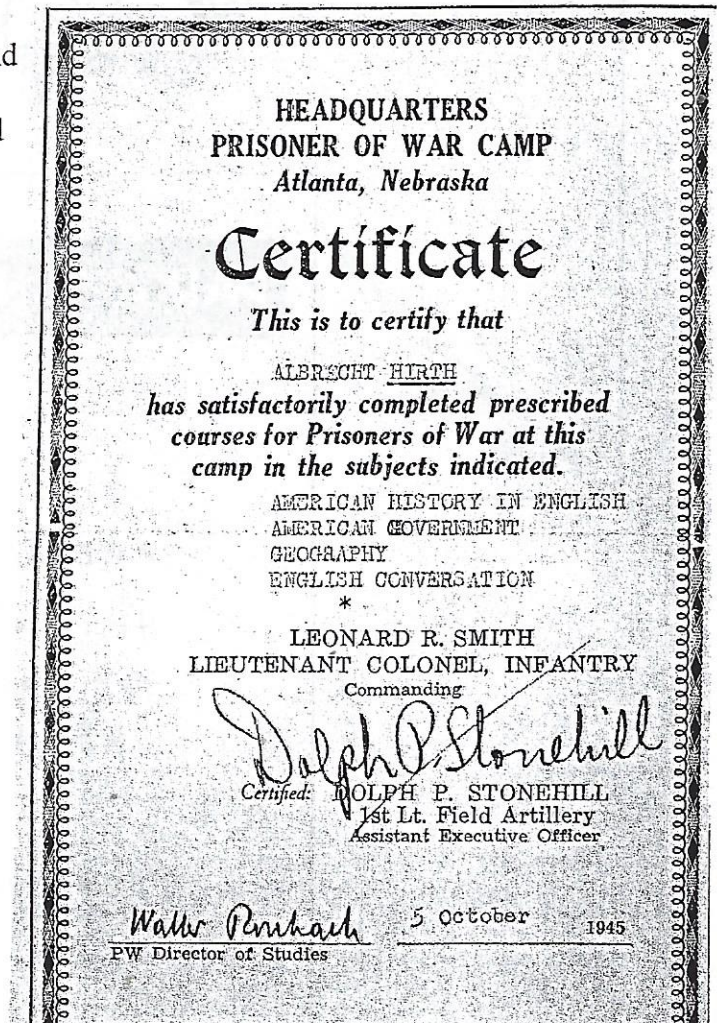


Inside the camps, POWs selected men from their own ranks to cook, clean and carry coal for the pot-bellied stoves that warmed their barracks. Prisoners were allowed regular physical recreation, could attend movies twice a week and had access to libraries. Books which had been banned in Germany were always in demand. Each POW was issued a small German-English dictionary. Courses in English and other subjects were available with certificates given to POWs for those courses completed.

Fig.6) POW certificate from Camp Atlanta.

By December 1945 all of the branch camps had been closed. The American government had become highly sensitive about POWs being used in any job that could possibly be filled by returning military veterans or those leaving the defense industries that were closed. This meant, for example, that all 2,219 POWs still in Camp Atlanta who were not actively working to maintain the camp had little to do. In January 1946, the Nebraska camps were officially closed.

One Camp Atlanta POW decided to return to his place of imprisonment. William Oberdieck, former member of the Afrika Korps, returned to Nebraska in 1949 and took a job with Kimmel Apple Orchard in Nebraska City. He became an American citizen and eventually bought the company.

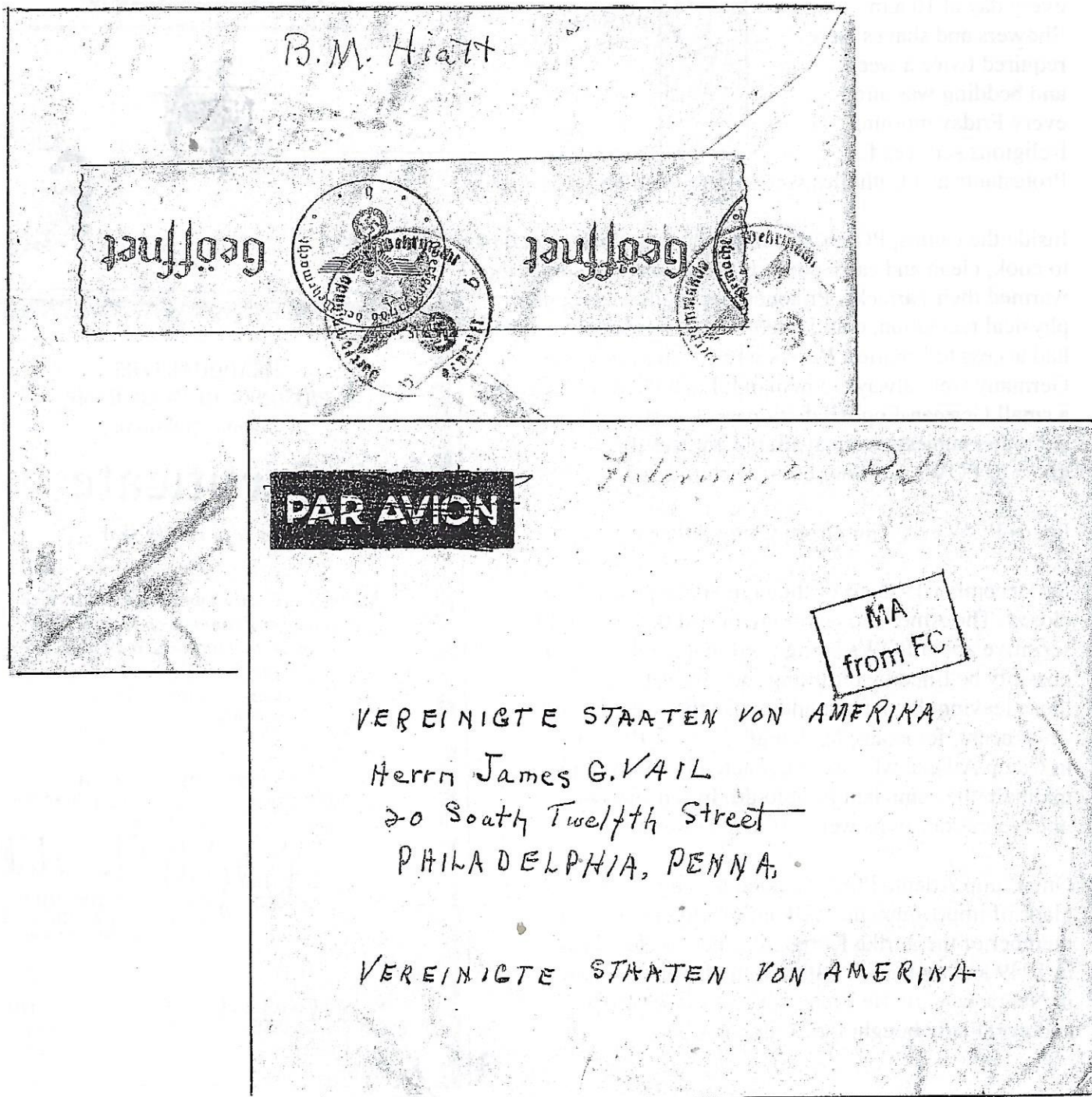




## “MA from FC” Handstamp on Censored Internee Cover

by Bruce Fisher

The cover shown below is addressed to Philadelphia but bears neither postage nor postmarks. On the front side it has the manuscript notation “Internierten Post” (Internment Mail) at top center and a boxed handstamp reading “MA from FC”. The back side has sealing tape and handstamp of the Berlin censor office and sender’s name “B.M. Hiatt”. One obvious question is how did this cover get into the hands of the German censor office in Berlin as there are no postal markings? I researched the sender’s name and found that a Burritt Mills Hiatt wrote a book *Diary of a Quaker Hostage during World War II*. I also learned that the American diplomatic staff in Germany was interned at Bad Nauheim from December 1941 until May 1942 when they were sent home via ship from Lisbon, Portugal. If anyone can explain the meaning of the “MA from FC” marking or have any other thoughts on this cover, please send info to Ye Olde Ed.





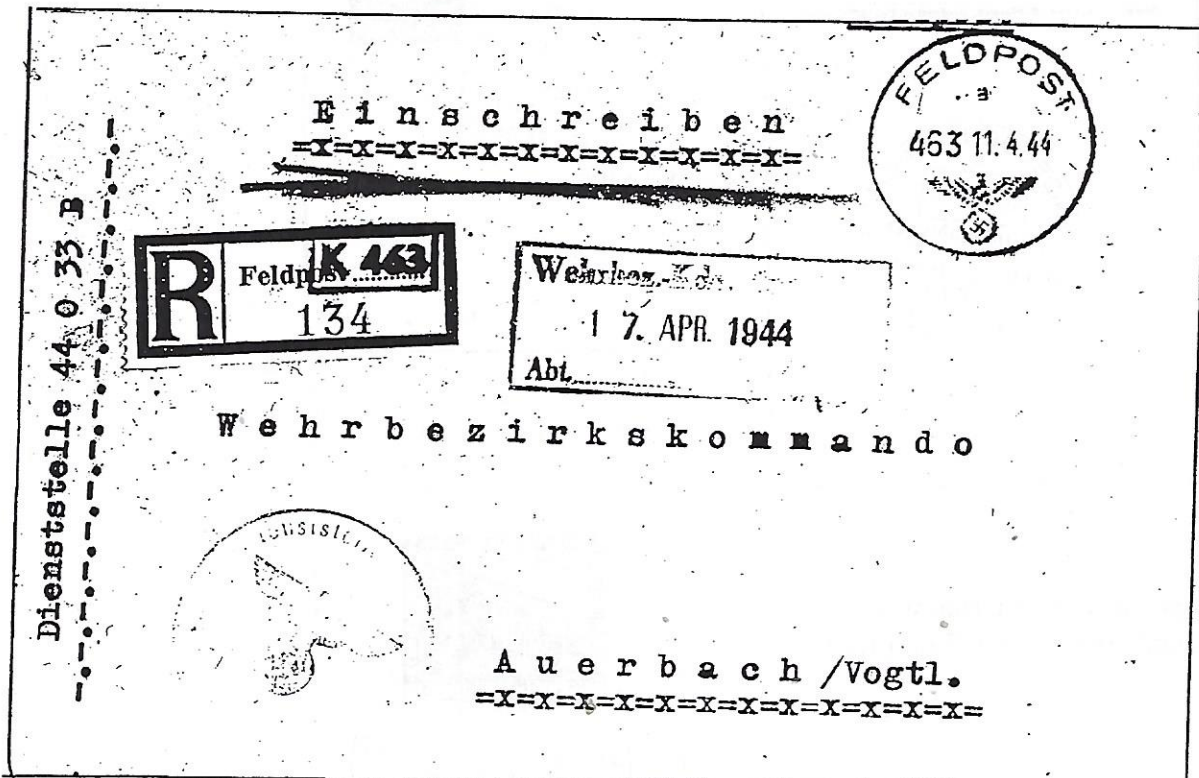
## COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 21st Luftwaffe Field Division

by Jim Lewis

POST OFFICE		REGIMENTS			AUXIL
TACT	KENN	FIELD INFANTRY		ARTY	UNITS
922	463	41 (L)	42 (L)	21 (L)	21 (L)

In 1942 Hitler authorized the formation of Luftwaffe field divisions from excess air force ground personnel, because Göring appealed to him not to release his men to the Army where their “fine National Socialist attitude” would be contaminated. This was a mistake, leading to the commitment of over a dozen inadequately trained Luftwaffe divisions to combat, mostly on the Eastern Front, and cost thousands of lives.

Formed in January 1943, the 21st Luftwaffe Field Division arrived in northern Russia and was assigned to X Army Corps. The P.O. was assigned Fp.# 12188 as a return address and K-463 as a coded identity in lieu of tactical FpA 922. It manned the defenses along the Lovat River south of the Demyansk corridor. The division suffered heavy losses in the retreat from Leningrad the winter of 1943-44. It was engaged in the Lake Ilmen area in February 1944 but held together and was still in action when Army Group North withdrew to the Latvian coast in October 1944. The division finished the war in the Courland pocket.



Cover sent to Recruiting District Headquarters in Auerbach in April 1944 from Fp. # 44033 (HQ./ Luftwaffe Field Regiment 42) via Field Post Office 922 (K-463).



# Story Behind the Cancel: Opera Nazionale Balilla Camps in Germany

by Bob Ferguson

Opera Nazionale Balilla (O.N.B.) was an Italian Fascist youth organization that functioned as an addition to school education between 1926 and 1937 (the year it was absorbed into the youth section of the National Fascist Party). The O.N.B. was created through Mussolini's decree of April 3, 1926 and was led by Renato Ricci for the next eleven years. This organization included children between the ages of eight and eighteen in two groups:

Balilla (boys) and Piccole Italiane (girls) for ages eight to fourteen.  
Avanguardisti (boys) and Giovani Italiane (girls) for ages fifteen to eighteen.

This organization's indoctrination was Italian-ness and Fascism. It's goal was to train youths as "the Fascists of Tomorrow" and it's members would spend summers in camp. In 1937, two German post offices issued special cancels to mark O.N. B. summer camp activities held there.

Berlin # 226 - "Sportlager der Opera Balilla (used 13-20 June 1937)  
 Nideggen # 2 - "Deutschlandlager der Opera Nazionale Balilla 22.7 - 5. 8. 1937."

Fig. 1) Postal card with Nideggen special cancel dated July 31, 1937.

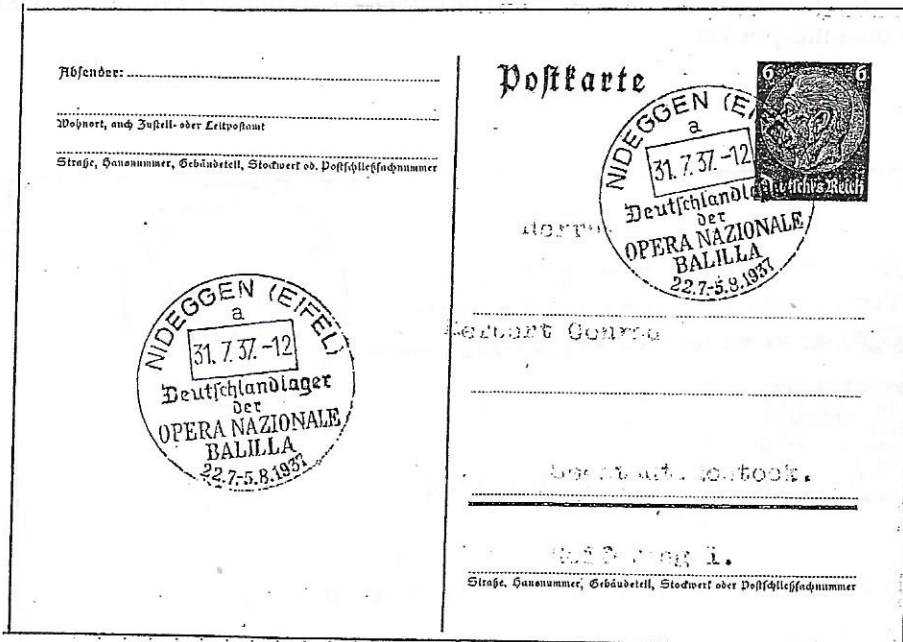


Fig. 2) Special Berlin-Grunewald 1 cancel dated June 17, 1937 on piece.





# French Volunteer Forces on the Eastern Front

by Jim Lewis

The following is a brief postal history of the French volunteer units which served with German forces on the Eastern front.

## Part I - The L.V.F.

On July 7, 1941 a committee of the leaders of various collaborationist groups met at the Hotel Majestic in Paris and jointly launched the "Legion des Volontaires Francais contre le Bolschevisme" Marshal Petain authorized this committee to raise and equip a private "legion" to fight in what was now heralded as a crusade against the Bolshevik menace.

Suspicious of this enterprise, Hitler stipulated that the number of troops not exceed 15,000. In addition, the L.V.F. would be armed only with German weapons and would wear standard field-grey. The only distinguishing feature would be a tri-color shield with "FRANCE" to be worn on the right sleeve.

The first of these volunteers arrived at Bognis-Desbornes barracks near Versailles in late August. They were mostly members of collaborationist groups or ex-soldiers, including many ex-Foreign Legionnaires. Command was given to Col. Roger Labonne, a sixty-year old "desk soldier" with no combat experience.

During Fall 1941 the first groups of volunteers were sent to the German Army training camp at Demba, near Radom in the General Government. They were formed into two battalions with 181 officers, 2,271 other ranks and a German liaison staff of 35. During this time mail from the L.V.F. had the Feldpost privilege and carried an open unit identification. Another 1400 volunteers arrived at Demba in mid-December and formed the basis for a third battalion. Re-designated as the "638. Verstärkt Französisches Infanterie Regiment", the units were assigned Feldpost numbers:

<u>638. Verst. Franz. Inf. Rgt. (1941-42)</u>	
	<u>Feldpost No.</u>
Rgt. Stab u. Stabskp.	00100
Btl. I (1-4 Kp.)	03865 (A-D)
Btl. II (5-8 Kp.)	04385 (A-D)
Btl. III (9-12 Kp.)	05492 (A-D)
Kp. 13	01196
Kp. 14	02732
Kp. 15	47702
Art. Abt. 368 Inf. Rgt.	06376
Kolonne	03279
Reserve Kdo.	46795

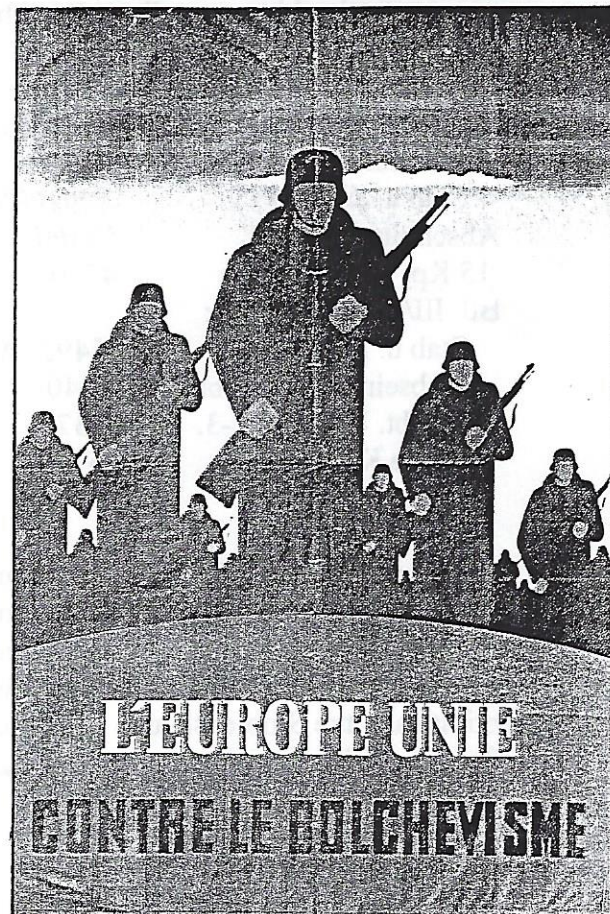


Fig. 1) L.V.F. Recruiting Card



Battalions I & II were sent to the Central front in late October, proceeding by rail to Smolensk and then by truck and on foot where they joined the German 7th Infantry Division in early December in the battle area near Golokovo. During the bitter winter campaign of 1941-'42, the L.V.F. was heavily engaged in the battles in front of Moscow. In February 1942 the II Battalion was over-run during a Russian counter attack near Djunovo and virtually annihilated. Reduced to half it's effective strength, the badly mauled L.V.F was pulled out of the line in March. Colonel Labonne was recalled to Paris and relieved of command.

In the Spring of 1942, Battalion III arrived at Potchinck, southwest of Smolensk and was employed in anti-partisan and occupation duties. Due to a lack of L.V.F replacements, the 638th Regiment was reorganized into two dissociated battalions (Battalion II having been destroyed) with these Feldpost number changes:

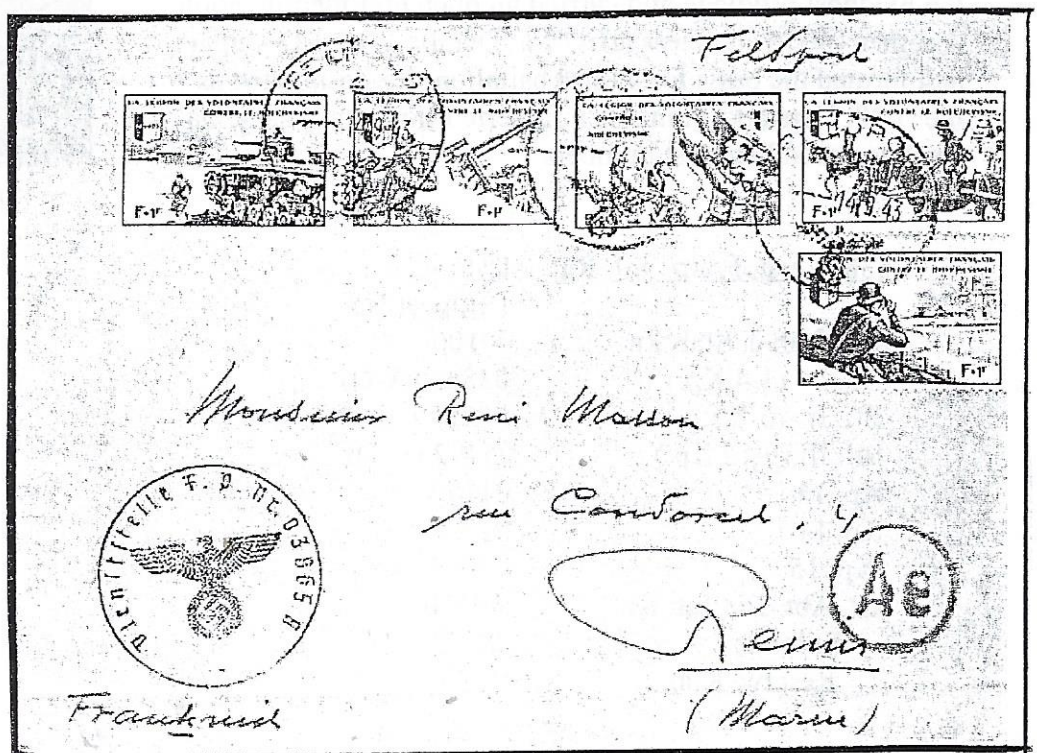
	<u>Feldpost No.</u>
Btl. I/Gren, Rgt. 638:	
Stab u. Kp. 1-4	03865 (A-E)
Abschnitt "Radom"	39360
15 Kp.	47702
Btl. III/Gren. Rgt. 638:	
Stab u. Kp. 1-3	05492 (A-D)
Stabseinheit "Demba"	19440
Art. Abt. U. Battr. 1-3	06376
Reserve Kdo.	46795

Fig. 2) Tri-color Shield on sleeve of L.V.F. soldiers with German uniforms and Weapons circa 1941.



There was no overall French field commandeer at this time. The L.V.F. was out of the front line for the remainder of 1942 and all of 1943. Battalion III took part in anti-partisan operations near Volost during June 1942 and suffered heavy casualties. Battalion I was deployed in anti-partisan activities in the Smolensk area as part of the German 186th "Sicherheit" (Security) Division.

Fig. 3) Feldpost cover sent to France in October 1943 has seal of Fp.# 03865A (HQ of Btl. I/638 Gren. Rgt.). Circular censor stamp "Ae" denotes letter was passed unopened by Frankfurt censor office. The set of five charity labels were sold in Paris to raise funds for the L.V.F. but had no postal validity.





On June 28, 1942 the Vichy government announced that the L.V.F was to be transformed into an officially authorized force designated as the "Legion Tricolore". This force would wear French uniforms and would be available for employment on any front where French interest was at stake. The "Legion Tricolore" was ceremonially inaugurated at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Paris on August 27<sup>th</sup> (the anniversary of the first enlistment in the L.V.F.). In October the french Postal Ministry issued a "Legion Tricolore" stamp depicting a column of Napoleonic grenadiers sweeping forward into battle.



The "Legion Tricolore" was still in training when the Anglo American force landed in French North Africa, triggering 'Operation Anton' - the German occupation of metropolitan France which commenced on November 11, 1942. Shortly thereafter, the OKW decided that a French-controlled force was intolerable and, on December 28<sup>th</sup>, the "Legion Tricolore" was disbanded. It's personnel were allowed to transfer to the L.V.F. These transfers, plus active recruiting within the "Vichy" areas, resulted in a re-organization of the L.V.F in December 1943. Now designated the 638th French Grenadier Regiment, the I & III Battalions were brought together with a reconstituted II Battalion under the 186th Security Division. The new regimental commander was Colonel Edgar Puaud, an ex-Foreign Legion officer who transferred from the Tri-Color Legion.

In January 1944 the L.V.F was in action as a unified force for the first time, taking part in a major anti-partisan sweep (code- named 'Operation Morocco' in honor of Col. Puaud) in the forests of Somry. With a fourth battalion added in April 1944, these feldpost numbers reflect the revised order of battle:

Fig. 4) Legion Tricolore Stamp

. Franz. Gren. Rgt 638 .(1944)

	<u>Feldpost No.</u>
Rgt. Stab	02951
Btl. I (1-4 Kp.)	03865 (A-D)
Btl. II (5-8 Kp.)	34206 (A-D)
Btl. III (9-12 Kp.)	05492 (A-D)
Btl. IV (13-16 Kp.)	03295 (A-D)
Aus. Stab (Btl. II)	56381
Aus. Stab (Btl. IV)	20919
Kolonne	03279
Reserve Kdo.	46795

The Artillery Detachment was disbanded in October 1943, being considered unsuited for anti-partisan type of operations.

To stem the Red Army offensive launched in June 1944, Battalion I of the L.V.F. and various scratch German units were formed into a "Kampfgruppe" which fought a successful delaying action during Ninth Army's struggle to break out of the Russian encirclement at Bobruysk.

By late July the L.V.F. was engaged in rear area duties in the vicinity of Stettin. There, on September 1, 1944, the 638th Regiment was disbanded and it's members transferred to the French Waffen-SS.



## Part II - Waffen-SS Units

On July 22, 1943 it was announced that Frenchmen would now be admitted into the once-exclusively 'Nordic' Waffen-SS. A recruiting office was opened at 24 avenue du Recteur Poincare in Paris. In August an initial contingent of 800 volunteers were sent to Sennheim in Alsace, the main Waffen-SS training center for non-Germans. With the exception of candidates for officer and NCO schools, in November the volunteers were transferred to Waffen-SS advanced training centers in Bohemia.

On July 18, 1944 the Französische SS Freiwilligen Sturmbrigade (French SS Volunteer Assault Brigade) was pronounced combat-ready and dispatched to the Carpathian front. The following Feldpost numbers were assigned:

<u>Franz. SS Frei. Sturmbrigade (1943-44)</u>	
	<u>Feldpost No.</u>
Brigade Stab	47335
Btl. I (Kp. 1-4)	41592 (A-D)
Btl. II (Kp. 5-8)	35411

By August 10th the Assault Brigade was in action at Mielec in the bend of the Vistula River under command of the 18th SS Division 'Horst Wessel'. In less than a week the 1688-man brigade had sustained 137 killed and 669 wounded. The badly mauled Brigade was pulled out of action in late August and sent to regroup at Schwanegast near Danzig.

In September it was announced that the Assault Brigade and L.V.F. were to be amalgamated as the Waffen-Grenadier Brigade der SS 'Charlemagne'. It was further decided to utilize the thousands of French collaborators who had been arriving in Germany as a result of the Allied breakout in France. By November the SS had transferred 7,340 Frenchmen to what was now called the 33rd Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS 'Charlemagne'. The members of this "division", which was actually only a brigade in strength, came from these organizations:

Former Assault Brigade	1,000
Former L.V.F.	1,200
Former NSKK, O.T. etc.	2,000
Former 'Milice'	2,500
Former Naval volunteers	640

Command of the division was given to a German, SS-Brigadeführer Krukenberg while the former L.V.F.'s Col. Puaud was promoted to SS-Oberführer and appointed second-in-command. The division moved to their new depot at Wildflecken in the Rhön Mountains (about 25 miles north-west of Schweinfurt). Those selected for special training were sent to courses in various quarters of the Reich. The remainder spent a miserable winter at Wildflecken, being short on food and fuel. Their equipment was mostly German and Italian 'left-overs'. There were not even enough steel helmets for soldiers who had recently taken a shortened version of the SS oath.

By the middle of February 1945 the division was ordered to join Army Group Vistula which was attempting to stem the Red Army's advance into Pomerania. With this transfer to the field came the assignment of Feldpost numbers:



33. Waffen-Grenadier Division der SS 'Charlemagne' (1944-45)

	<u>Fp. No.</u>		<u>Fp. No.</u>
Stab Deutsches General Kdo	47335	SS-Pz. Jag. Abt. 57	66885
57. SS-Rgt. Stab	66641	SS-Pionier Kp.	64680
Btl. I (Stab u. Kp. 1-4)	41592	SS-Nachr. Kp.	14309
Btl. II (Stab u. Kp. 5-8)	35411	Sanitäts Kp.	66453
58. SS-Rgt. Stab	02951	Veterinar Kp.	64921
Btl. I (Stab u. Kp. 1-4)	03895	Feld-Gend. Tr.	06953
Btl. II (Stab u. Kp. 5-8)	05492	Werkstattzug	13630
SS-Artillerie Abt. 57	00290	Feldpostamt	11498
Inspektion d. Franz. Einheit	55448	Feld-Ersatz Kp.	65920

The division post office (FpA SS-33) used Kenn No.565 from February through May 1945.

The division saw heavy fighting in the Hammerstein-Neustettin sector. The force of a Russian assault on Feb. 25th split the division into three groups. Of these, one group attempted to withdraw under cover of a fog but was caught in a murderous artillery barrage and virtually annihilated. Oberführer Puäud was among the missing. A second group, mainly former "miliciens" (irregulars similar to the 'Black & Tans' in Ireland) attempted a withdrawal westward but by mid-March all had been killed or captured.

The third group, mostly L.V.F. veterans, fell back toward Danzig. During this withdrawal occurred one of the great ironies of the war when the remnants of the 'Charlemagne' Division engaged units of the "Seydlitz" Division, comprised of turn-coat German POWS now fighting on the side of the Soviets. This third group was evacuated by sea to Denmark and worked their way back to the advanced depot at Neustrelitz, 60 miles north of Berlin. Of the 7,000 members of the Waffen-SS 'Charlemagne' Division who had set out from Wildflecken the previous month, only 800 remained.

On March 27, 1945 SS-Brigadeführer Krukenberg paraded his men and absolved those who no longer wished to fight from the obligation to do so. One officer and 300 other ranks elected to call it quits, those remaining took an oath of loyalty to Hitler.

In the early hours of April 24, 1945, this dedicated band of Frenchmen was rushed south to defend Berlin and entered the city just before the jaws of the Soviet pinchers closed. The French were attached to the Danish-Norwegian 11. SS-Freiwilligen- Panzergrenadierdivision 'Nordland', by then reduced to a few hundred. All these volunteers fought with undeniable heroism and terrible loss. Within a week the 'Charlemagne' Regiment was reduced in effective strength to 120 men. Among the ruins of Berlin a handful of Frenchmen, Norwegians, Danes, Belgians and Spaniards fought desperately in a lost cause that had become their own.

*Ed Note: This article first appeared in the October 1978 TRSG Bulletin (Vol. XII, Whole No. 49) and appears here for those current members who've requested information on the "legions".*

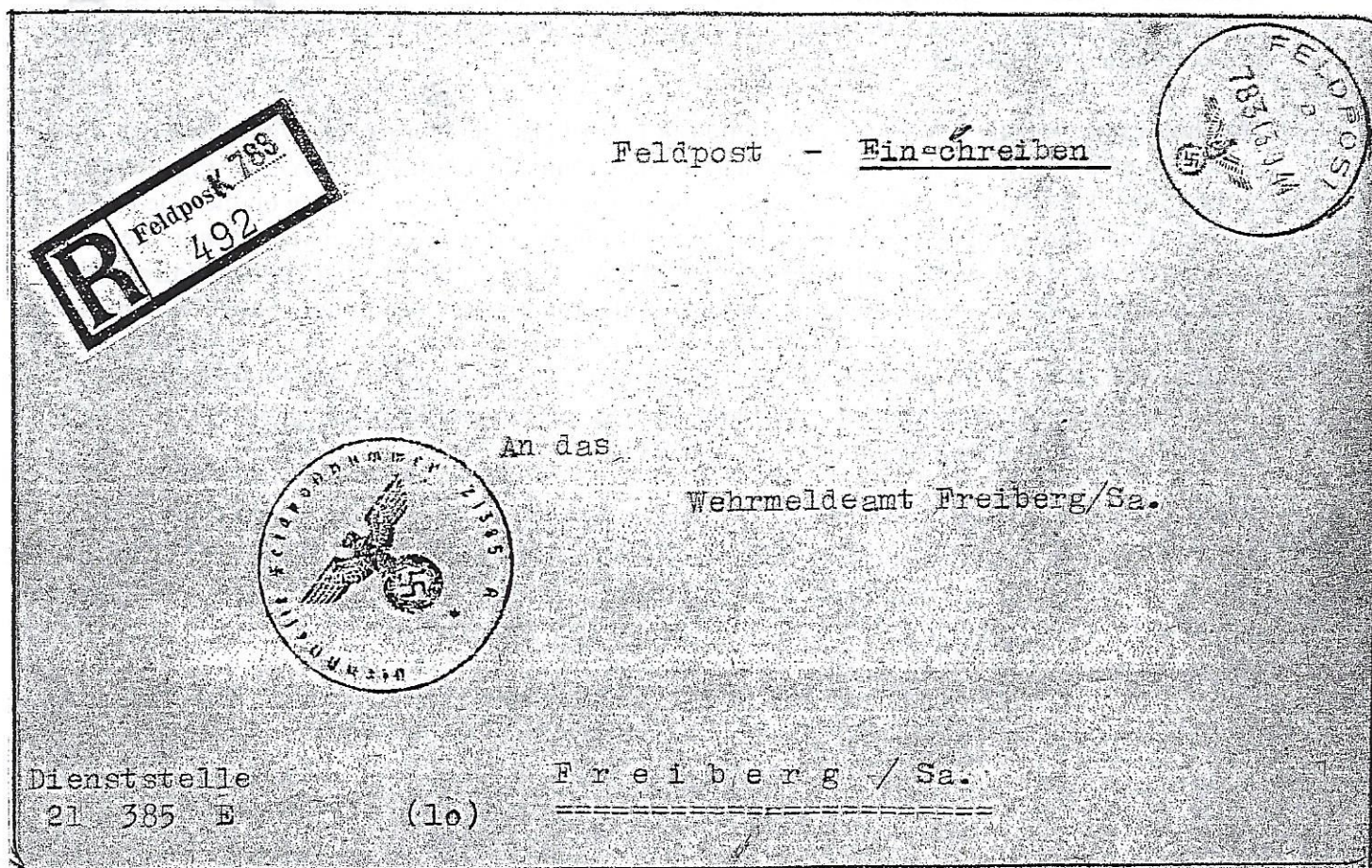


## COMBAT DIVISION PROFILE: 20th Luftwaffe Field Division

by Jim Lewis

POST OFFICE		REGIMENTS		AUXIL
TACT	KENN	FIELD INFANTRY	ARTY	UNITS
920	783	39 (L)	40 (L)	20 (L)

Formed on March 8, 1943 at Troop Maneuver Grounds Munsterlager, the 20th Luftwaffe Field Division P.O. was assigned Fp.# 48464 as a return address and K-783 as a coded identity in lieu of tactical FpA 920. This division was stationed in Denmark from April 1943 to June 1944 and then was transferred to the Italian Front. The division fought in Italy but suffered such heavy losses by September 1944 that it was subordinated to the 26th Panzer Division in October. The remnants of this battered division was withdrawn from combat and sent to Treviso, Italy where it performed rear area duties. The 20th Luftwaffe Feld Division was dissolved early in 1945 and the personnel assigned to the new 155th Field Training Division..



Cover sent to Military Records Office in Freiburg in September 1943 from Fp.# 21385 (Battalion II of Luftwaffe Infantry Regiment 39) via FpA 920 (Kenn 783).



## Story Behind the Cancel: The Venus of Wels

by Kelly Stefanacci

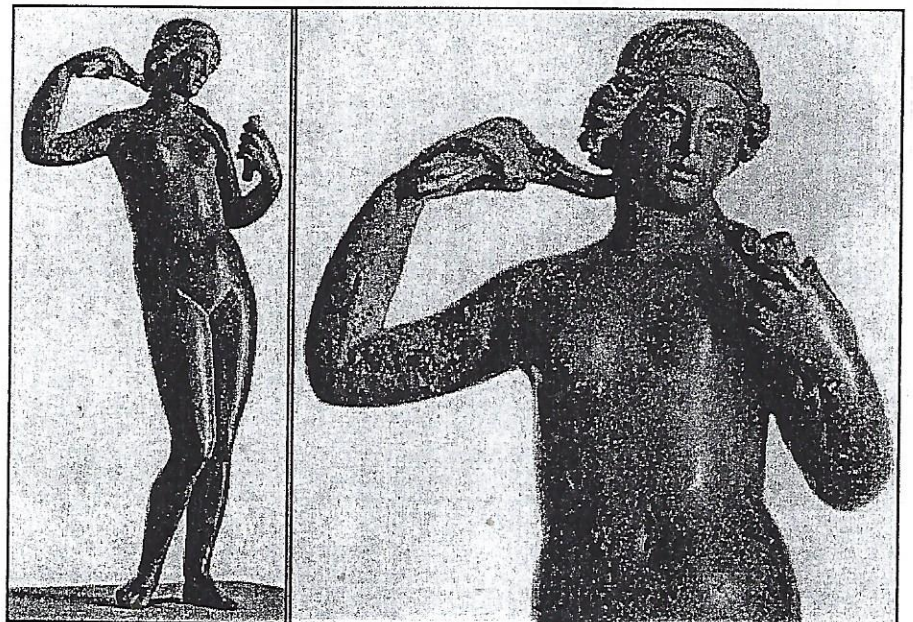
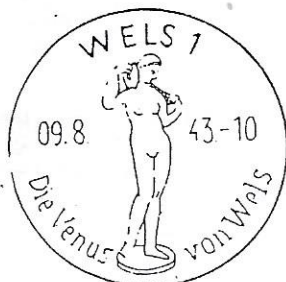
During the reign of Emperor Augustus, the Romans in 15 BC began to expand their empire north. The Celtic Kingdom of Noricum was conquered between 41 AD and 54 AD and, under the reign of Emperor Claudius, became a Roman province. Situated at the junction of ancient trade routes was the small Celtic settlement of Vilabis. Under the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD) the former Celtic settlement was given the status of a city (municipium) and named "Municipal Aelium Ovilava". The city became the municipal center of the region south of the Danube River. In 170 AD a large military division, the "Legio II Italica Pia", was transferred to this region to protect the northern borders from Germanic tribes who constantly threatened the borders. The legion commander was at the same time governor of Noricum and had his seat of government in Ovilava, which had 18,000 inhabitants.

Under the reign of Emperor Caracalla (211-217 AD) Ovilava was made a "colonia" (big city) and the name changed to "Colonia Aurelia Antoniniana Ovilava". In the year 488 AD the Roman province Noricum was abandoned and the flourishing city of Ovilava lost its importance.

The Bavarians settled in the former Roman province around 600 AD and built a settlement in the southeast part of the former Roman city. Leopold VI in 1215 refers to a "Markt Wels" or Market Town of Wels. Wels was given a deed in 1328 by the Hapsburg reign to schedule market days on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

In the intervening years archeologists in Wels unearthed many artefacts from the Roman era. These artefacts, which were eventually displayed in the Wels Stadtmuseum, included the small beautiful bronze standing statuette of the Roman goddess Venus shown below.

On August 9, 1944 the Wels post office issued a special cancel depicting this famous statuette with the text "Die Venus von Wels".





# Third Reich Postal Rates

## Foreign Business Papers (*Geschäftspapiere*)

by Bob Ferguson

Rate Period: 30 January 1933 - 8 May 1945

to 50 gm----- 5 Rpf.

Minimum rate-----25 Rpf. (Business Papers)

Cover with business papers sent from Marktredwitz to U.S.A. on December 9, 1937 has postage of 25 Rpf.

