

# 1-Cent Prexie Postal History

by Richard Pederson

The one cent stamp depicting our first President, George Washington, has always been one of my favorites in the Presidential Series of 1938 (i.e., the Prexies). Multiples of the one cent can be used to pay most postage rates, except the few requiring a fractional value. The one cent also appears in sheet, booklet, and horizontal and vertical coil formats (Figure 1).



Figure 1. One cent in sheet, booklet, and coil formats.

During the period of use for the Prexies, stretching from 1938 thru the early 1960s, several solo uses of the one cent were possible. First, and most common, was for payment of the one cent post card rate in effect until January 1, 1952. Figure 2 shows both the front and address sides of a post card mailed on September 29, 1940 from the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair, held from April 30, 1939 thru October 27, 1940. The card, which was mailed to Washington, DC, also bears a 1940 fair cancel.

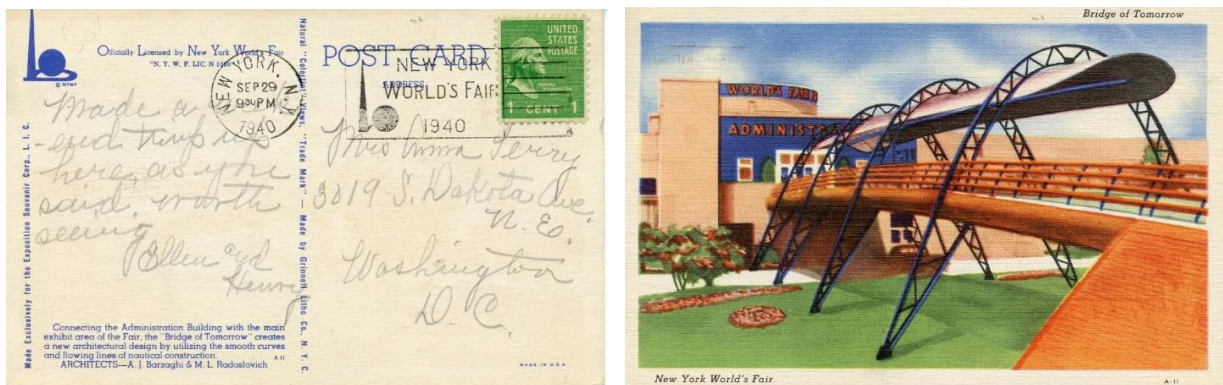


Figure 2. One cent paying post card rate.

Another frequently seen solo use is for payment of the one cent local (drop) rate in effect for non-carrier post offices until January 1, 1952. Figure 3 pictures an envelope sent at the local drop rate on December 23, 1949, and likely contained a Christmas card. Figure 4 shows the front and back of a post card sent by a department store that used the local

drop rate to place an advertising card in each P.O. Box at the East Brady, Pennsylvania post office.



**Figure 3.** One cent paying local drop rate.



**Figure 4.** Advertising sent using local drop rate.

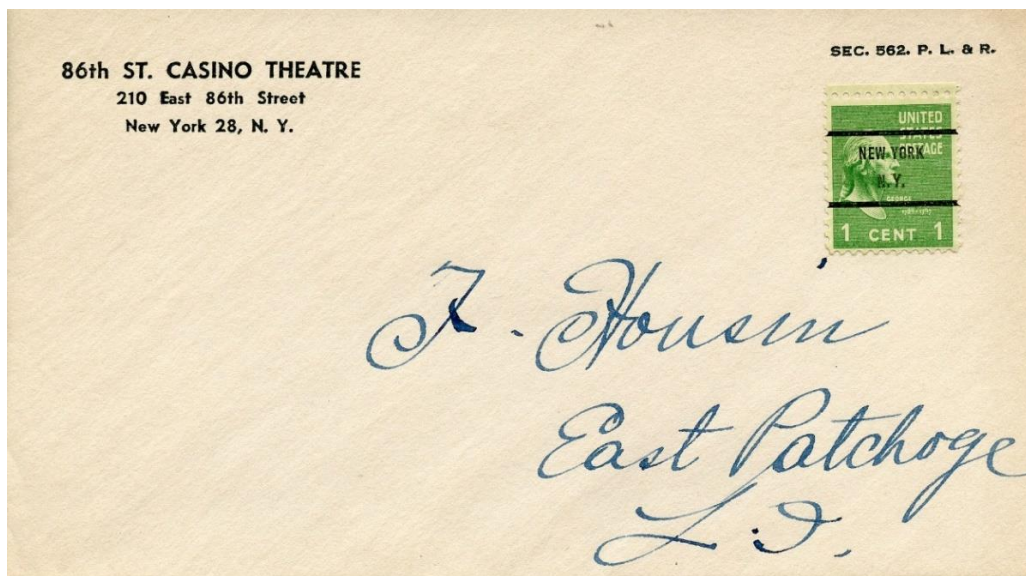
A third, relatively common solo use was to pay the one cent certificate of mailing fee in effect until July 1, 1957. Figure 5 shows the one cent on two certificates of mailing, one to a U.S. destination and one to a foreign address in Yokohama, Japan.





**Figure 5.** One cent paying Certificate of Mailing fee.

Solo uses of one cent Prexies are also often encountered on third-class mail paying the one cent minimum per piece regular bulk/quantity discount rate that was in effect thru February 24, 1949. An example, mailed from the 86<sup>th</sup> St. Casino Theatre in New York City to East Patchoge, Long Island, is pictured in Figure 6. It bears a “NEW YORK N.Y.” precancel and the required “SEC. 562. P. L. & R.” notice at the top right corner.



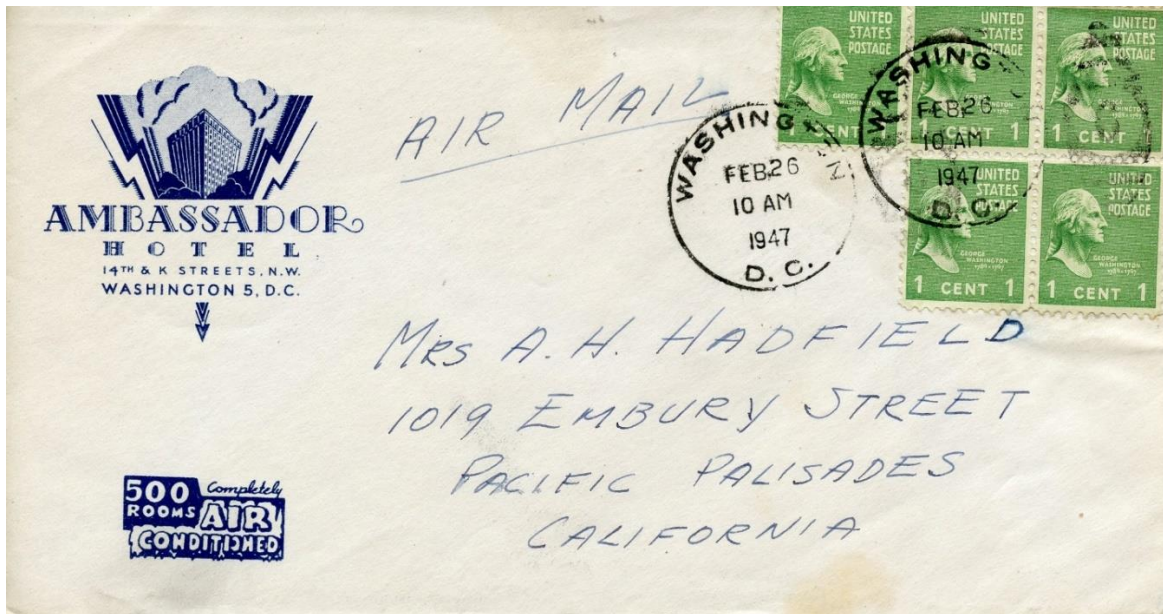
**Figure 6.** One cent paying third-class rate.

Of the examples I have, the final, and most difficult to find, solo use of the one cent Prexie is for payment of the transient second-class rate of one cent per 2 ounces. This rate applied to the mailing of newspapers or periodicals that were marked as “Entered as Second Class” and weighed up to eight ounces, a rate in effect thru March 31, 1952. The Figure 7 example shows a newspaper wrapper with the required marking and mailed from New York City to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Although mailed to Canada, a postal treaty was in effect that permitted mailing at the same rate as applied within the U.S.



**Figure 7.** One cent paying transient second-class rate.

Multiples of the one cent Prexie could also be used to pay a large variety of domestic and international rates. Figure 8 shows a cover containing an advertising corner card for the Ambassador Hotel in Washington, D.C. The advertisement touts the hotel's 500 "Completely AIR CONDITIONED" rooms. The cover, which was mailed on February 26, 1947, uses five 1¢ Prexies to pay the five cent airmail rate for up to one ounce that was in effect in the continental U.S. from October 1, 1946 thru December 31, 1948.



**Figure 8.** Five cent airmail rate.

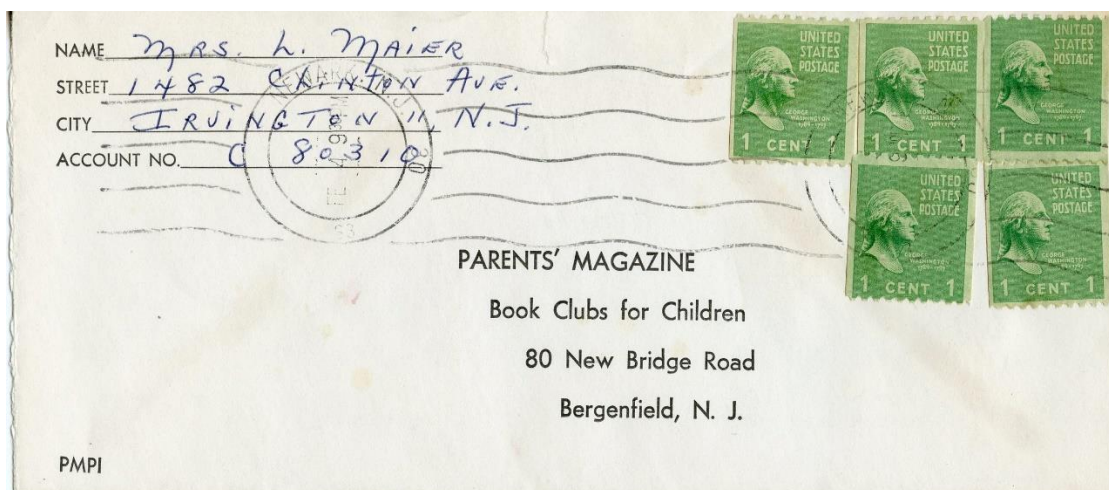


Figure 9 pictures a cover containing five 1¢ Prexies sent from San Francisco to Luebeck, Germany. The five cents in postage paid the UPU surface letter rate in effect thru October 31, 1953.



**Figure 9.** Five cent UPU surface letter rate.

The following cover (Figure 10) also contains five one cent Prexies, but this time they are used to pay the five cent domestic first-class rate that was in effect from January 7, 1963 thru January 6, 1968. This late usage, which was mailed to Parents' Magazine on February 4, 1963, uses five of the one cent vertical coil stamps to pay the rate.



**Figure 10.** Five cent first-class rate.

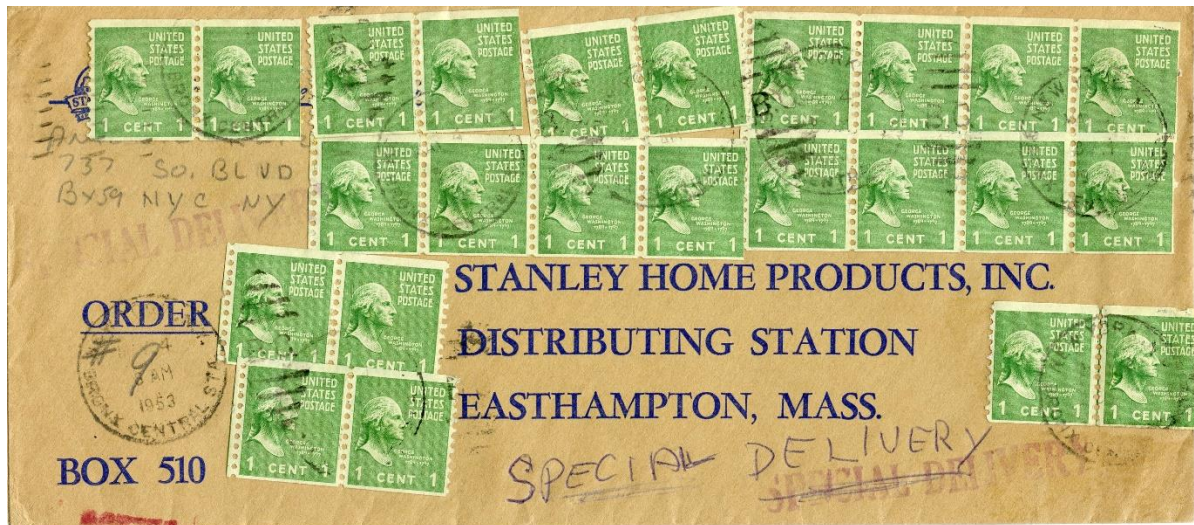
The next cover (see Figure 11) shows 21 one cent Prexies paying the eight cent domestic airmail rate in effect from March 26, 1944 thru September 30, 1946, along with the special delivery fee of 13 cents in effect from November 1, 1944 thru December 31, 1948.



**Figure 11.** Eight cent airmail rate and 13 cent special delivery fee.

The cover in Figure 12 also uses one cent Prexies to pay the special delivery fee but, in this instance, the letter was mailed at the first-class surface rate. The cover contains 22 of the one cent horizontal coil, resulting in a one cent over-payment of the three cent first-class rate in effect thru July 31, 1957 and the 20 cent special delivery fee in effect from January 1, 1952 thru June 30, 1957.





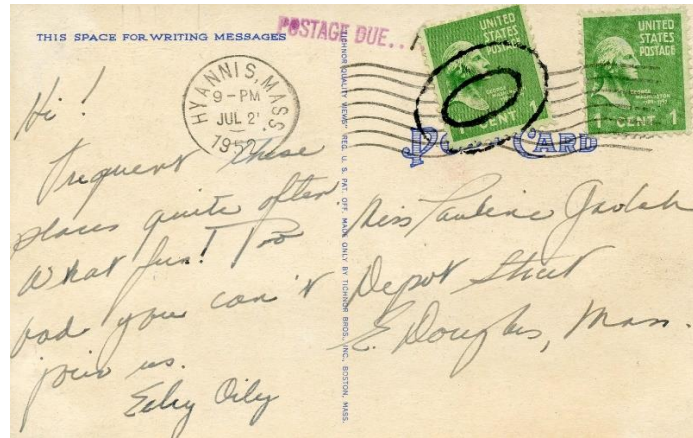
**Figure 12.** One cent overpayment of three cent first class rate and 20 cent special delivery fee.

Greeting cards could be sent in an unsealed envelope at the third-class rate during much of the Prexie era. The unsealed envelope pictured in Figure 13 likely contained an Easter card (as it contains Easter seals on the reverse side) and was sent at the third-class rate of two cents for up to two ounces that was in effect from January 1, 1949 thru July 31, 1958.



**Figure 13.** Two cent third-class rate for unsealed greeting card.

In the example shown in Figure 14, a one-cent Prexie was used to pay the post card rate from Hyannis, Massachusetts to East Douglas, Massachusetts on July 2, 1952. Unfortunately, the rate had increased earlier in the year (January 1, 1952) to two cents, so a one cent postage due charge was assessed to the recipient, which was paid by an additional one cent Prexie that was canceled with a hand stamp after being applied.



**Figure 14.** One cent due on domestic post card.

Another short-paid cover, with the deficiency made up by a one cent Prexie, is shown in Figure 15. In this instance, a post card sent from Austria to Santa Monica, California, was under paid by one cent. The shortage was not marked by the sending post office but was detected upon receipt in Santa Monica and a one-cent Prexie was added and canceled with a Santa Monica hand stamp.



**Figure 15.** One cent due on post card from Austria.

In the two previous short-paid examples, a one-cent Prexie was used to make up the shortage. In the following example (Figure 16), a one cent Prexie was used to mail a post card to Toronto, Canada from Watkins Glen, New York, but the rate in effect up thru October 31, 1953 was two cents. Therefore, the Canadian post office, assessed a two cent postage due charge which was paid by a Canadian two cent due stamp and, as required, was double the one cent deficiency.





**Figure 16.** Two cents due, double the deficiency, on post card to Canada.

Next, several examples are shown of one cent Prexies used with other stamps to pay a rate or combination of rate and fee. In the first (Figure 17), two 1¢ Prexies are combined with a six cent winged globe airmail to pay the five cent UPU overseas surface letter rate in effect until October 31, 1953, in addition to the three cent rate for airmail service in Europe in effect until suspended on December 12, 1941 because of World War II. The letter was sent from the Czechoslovakian embassy in Washington, DC on November 3, 1938 and was transported via the S.S. Queen Mary to Europe.



**Figure 17.** Five cent UPU surface rate plus three cent airmail rate in Europe.

Figure 18 shows another letter paying the five cent UPU surface rate. The letter, carried by diplomatic pouch, was sent from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to a member of the American Legation in Beirut, Lebanon and uses two 1¢ Prexies and a three cent Prexie to make up the five cent rate. The cover has two dated State Department markings, one dated January 14, 1946 on the rear and one dated January 15<sup>th</sup> on the front.



**Figure 18.** Five cent UPU surface rate on mail carried by diplomatic pouch.

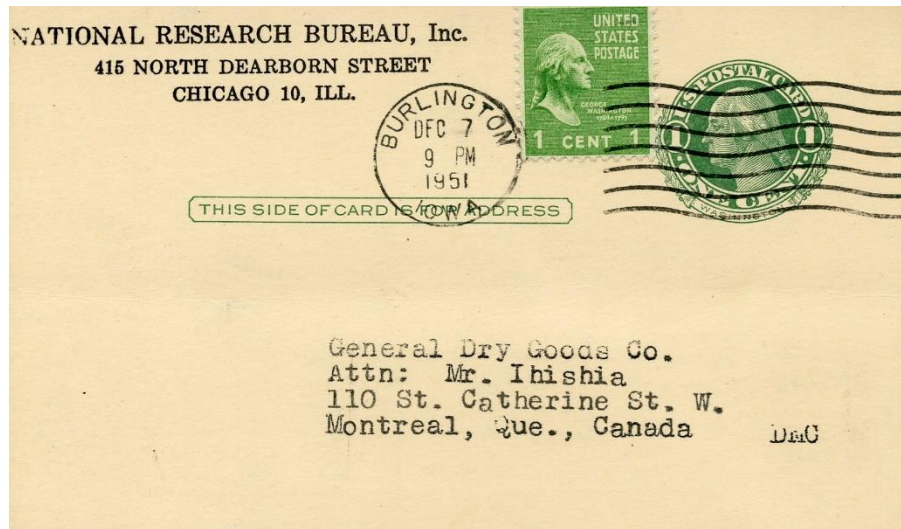
Next, five 1¢ Prexies are added to a letter sent from New York City on January 19, 1954 with a three cent Gadsden Purchase commemorative to Johannesburg, South Africa (Figure 19). The cover was returned to the sender for five cents in additional postage, which was paid on January 22<sup>nd</sup> by the Prexies, satisfying the UPU surface rate of eight cents in effect from November 1, 1953 thru July 31, 1958.



**Figure 19.** Five cents added to satisfy UPU surface rate to South Africa.



Following (Figure 20) is a one cent business reply card uprated with a one cent Prexie to pay the two cent rate to Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The card, which was part of a larger correspondence, was sent on December 7, 1951 (tenth anniversary of Pearl Harbor) to a Mr. Ihishia, a man of Japanese descent who had been relocated to Montreal during WW II rather than being placed in an internment camp.



**Figure 20.** One cent reply card uprated with one cent Prexie.

Figure 21 shows the front and back of a green parcel tag that contains a seasonal greeting on one side and the address on the other. It was sent to New York City at the third-class single piece rate that could be used for unsealed Christmas and greeting cards. It may have had a small bell attached which would have still kept the tag under two ounces, allowing for the one and one-half cent rate per two ounces that was in effect up thru December 31, 1948.



**Figure 21.** Third-class single piece rate.

The next, and most dramatic example of the one cent Prexie combined with other stamps to satisfy a postal rate, is shown in Figure 22. Thirty-eight copies of the one cent Prexie are combined with two 20¢ U.S. map airmail stamps to pay the 80 cents per ounce air mail rate to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil that was in effect thru March 31, 1945. Although the cover, which was posted on July 7, 1939, appears to be short paid two cents, there is no due marking and it is likely two copies of the one cent were below the lower map stamp

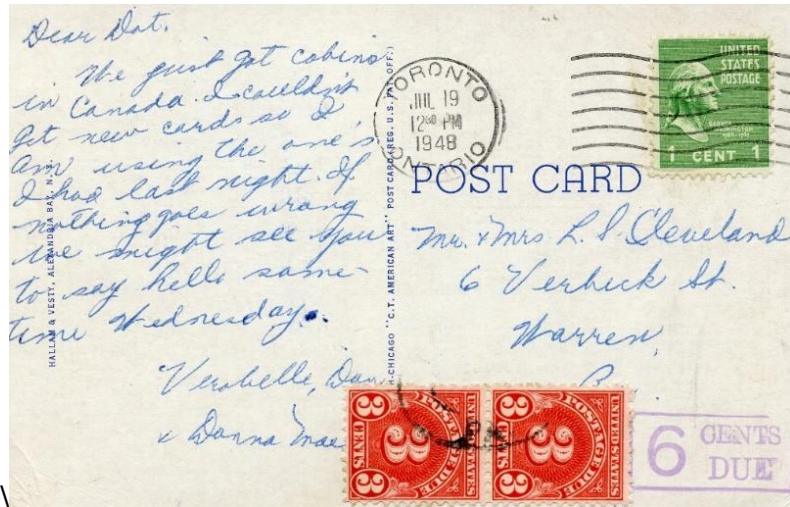
(notice the cancel is incomplete) and either fell off or were removed. Even so, I am not aware of a letter or parcel piece containing more copies of the one cent sheet stamp than this one.



**Figure 22.** Eighty cents per ounce airmail rate to Brazil with 38 one cent Prexies.

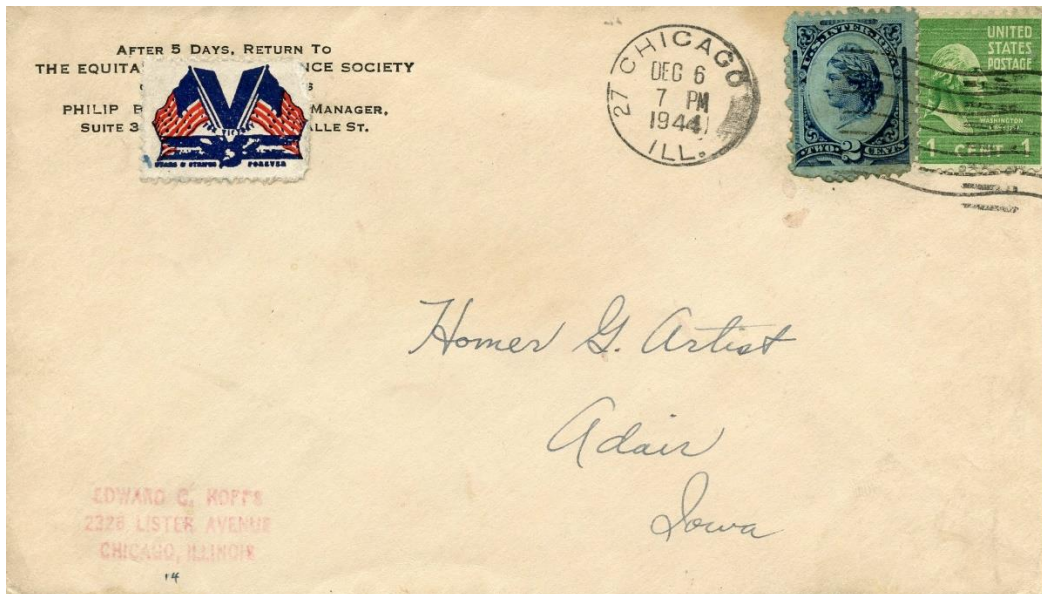
I'll conclude with several items that contain one or more copies of the one cent Prexie and were illegally or improperly paid. First, is a post card that was mailed from Canada to West Haven, Connecticut and contains a single one cent Prexie (Figure 23). Not only was the stamp invalid for use in Canada but it was also under paid as the post card rate, in effect thru October 31, 1953, was two cents. Canada stamped the card as "4 CENTS DUE", double the deficiency, which was paid upon receipt by two 2¢ postage due stamps.





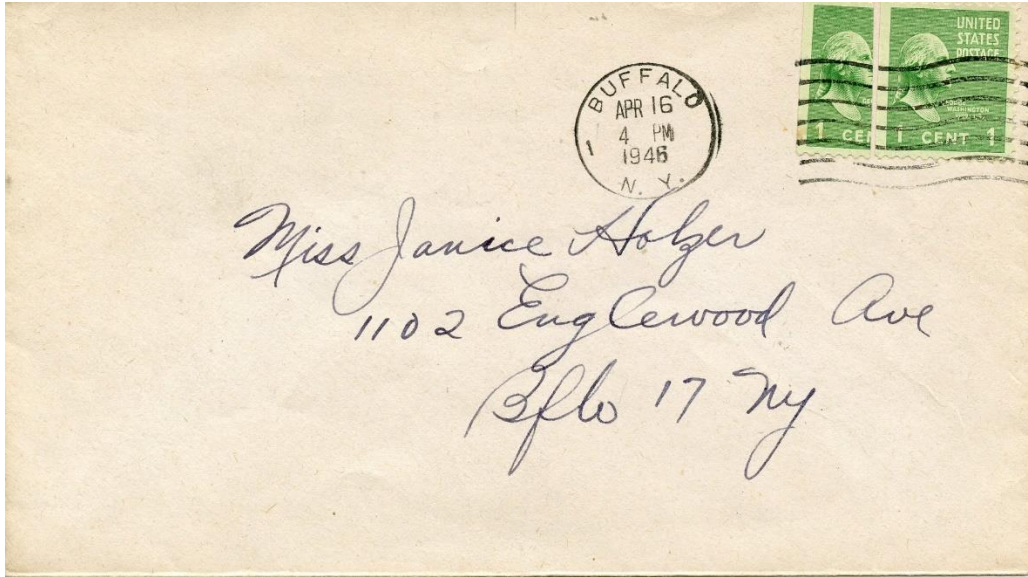
**Figure 23.** One cent improperly used on mail from Canada.

In the next example, pictured in Figure 24, the sender used a two cent revenue stamp and a one cent Prexie to pay the three cent first-class rate in effect thru July 31, 1958. It is not clear if the sender realized that revenue stamps are not valid for postage but, in any case, the letter was delivered without postage due being assessed.



**Figure 24.** Two cent revenue illegally used with one cent Prexie.

The final example (Figure 25), shows a one cent combined with a bisected one cent Prexie to pay the one and one-half cent third-class rate in effect thru December 31, 1948. Bisected stamps had not been valid in the U.S. since the mid-1800s but, once again, the letter made it through the mail without being assessed postage due. It is likely the sender knew the use was improper as there is no return address.



**Figure 25.** Illegal use of bisected one cent.

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