

UNITED NATIONS POSTAL HISTORY - THE FORERUNNER PERIOD (1942 - 1951)

PURPOSE

The purpose of UN postal history collecting is to document, through postal evidence, development of the UN's organs and agencies, and the temporary sites they occupied before completion of UN Headquarters in 1952. In addition, the early UN period contains a wide variety of meters, cancels, postal markings and indicia, which makes this collecting area extremely interesting and challenging. As most official UN mail bore no stamps and subsequently few were sought out by collectors, As a result, examples of many early sites and meter cancelations are quite scarce, and to this date, some known UN office locations have never been observed on official correspondence.

The "forerunner" period of United Nations philately runs from 1942 through October 23, 1951. Most collectors date the beginning of this period from the Declaration By United Nations, signed on January 1, 1942, in which the term "United Nations" was first applied to the Allied Powers in World War II.

FORERUNNER METERS AND METER SLOGANS

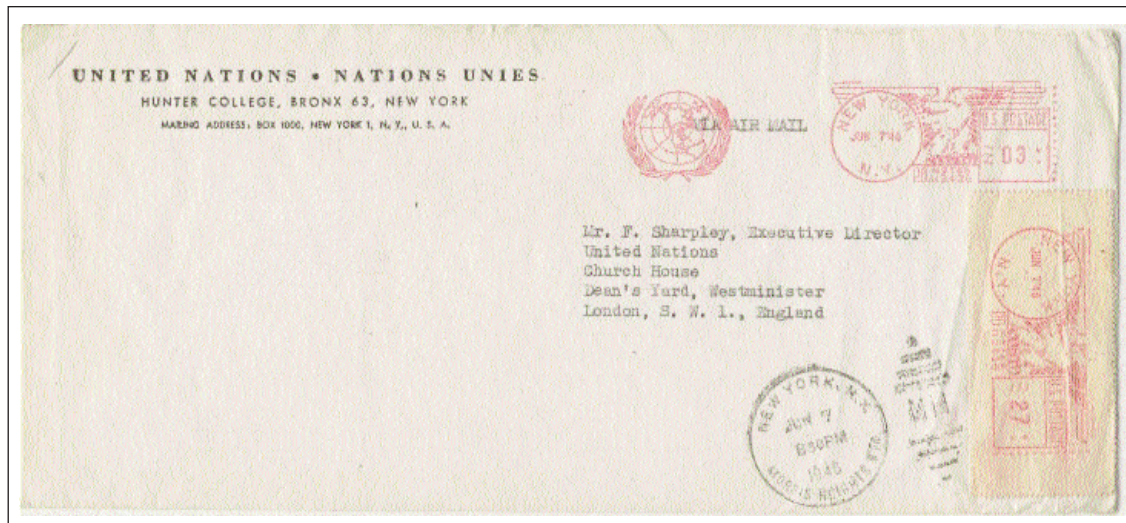
The bulk of official UN service mail from Headquarters sites around New York City was franked with Pitney Bowes meter machines. In February 1946, the Pitney Bowes firm offered the United Nations a metering machine with a specially designed imprint. Although the example imprint was never adopted for use, five additional meter slogan imprints were subsequently adopted and used by the UN during the forerunner period.

The five slogans types are listed with specific machines and known periods of use on the table I.



UNITED NATIONS POSTAL OPERATIONS

Until the opening of the United Nations Post Office substation at the newly opened Secretariat building on January 3, 1951, no special UN cancel existed for Manhattan or Bronx UN sites. Mail posted from these locations received ordinary U.S. Post Office cancels when franked with stamps or bore one of the Pitney Bowes meter impressions described above. The UN maintained Box 1000 at the New York General Post Office ("New York 1", located at 8th Avenue between 32nd and 34th Streets) until October 30, 1946. A central mail facility operated at Room 6218, 350 Fifth Avenue (62nd floor, Empire State Building), just a few blocks from the GPO. As a result, even while the UN was at Hunter College, most cancelled mail received a "New York 1" postmark.



The first substantial New York site for the UN was at the temporarily vacant Bronx campus of Hunter College. The stay lasted only from March 1946 until August 15, 1946, when the premises had to be vacated to make room for Hunter's new, larger, post-war class. While at Hunter College, the UN used P.O. Box 1000 at the New York City General Post Office in Manhattan. This probably insured better postal service.

Forced to vacate its Hunter College offices, the UN leased part of Sperry Gyroscope's plant at Lake Success, New York, about 25 miles from Manhattan. The move was made between Friday, August 16, and Monday, August 19. The first mail dispatched from the new site was on August 20, 1946, using PB 113436/GN. The "NEW YORK N.Y." townmark had been changed to "GREAT NECK, N.Y." The machine was located in a screened off section of the Great Neck Post Office, that being the facility serving Lake Success. By October 1946, this site's UN staff had moved to the UN's temporary headquarters in Lake Success.

During the period when the bulk of the UN staff was stationed at the Lake Success site, several additional smaller facilities operating in and around Manhattan in support of the UN mission. Additionally other UN agencies, such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had branch offices in the city. To support the mission, many Country delegations also found temporary quarters in and around Manhattan prior to the construction of the UN at the Turtle Bay site adjacent to the East River. Finding philatelic record of these delegations and agencies during these early years of the UN is an extreme challenge. In nearly 40 years of collecting, this writer has seen less than a handful of most and in some cases such pieces have been recorded in the literature as unique. The table II below provides a comprehensive overview of the various locations of the early UNO and the various Pitney Bowes meter machines and slogan indicia used at those locations.

With the subsequent relocation to Manhattan in 1951, there no longer was a Lake Success branch of the Great Neck Post Office and the townmark "GREAT NECK, N.Y." again had to be used for the few remaining staff left to close out the Lake Success offices. In parallel, the UNPO substation, which is part of the U.S. Postal Service, was established in the basement of the new United Nations Complex to service all mail emanating from the UN Organization. The UNPO continues in operation to this date, and official UN mail mostly still bear the Pitney Bowes meters and modern indicia like these forerunner pieces. When the UNPA began issuing its own stamps on October 24, 1951, they replaced the U.S. stamps used at the substation with the UN postage stamps, and cancels of a special design replaced all of the existing cancels and meters from the forerunner period.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barnes, W., Britain, The League, and the U.N. a Philatelic Study, Koln/Kent, 1987.

Gaines, A., United Nations Philately, R&D Publications, 1980-1997.

Robinson, Norris G., Postal History of the United Nations, UNOP, New York/Cologne, 1985.

Wawrukiewicz, A., Beecher, H., U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-1993, CAMA Publishing Company, 1994.

Wawrukiewicz, A., Beecher, H., U.S. International Postal Rates, 1872-1996., CAMA Publishing Company, 1996.

Table I - Forerunner Meters and Period of Usage

Slogan Type	Pitney Bowes Machine	Dates of Usage
SLOGAN I: [1 die known]	(I) PB109534 PB108314	05/10/43 - 11/20/43 12/04/43 - 10/10/46
SLOGAN II: [1 die known]	(I) PB113436 PB115515	03/25/46 - 11/05/46 01/18/46 - 12/16/46
SLOGAN III: [2 dies known]	(I) PB115515 PB126118 (II) PB108314	01/15/47 - 11/28/47 12/15/48 - 06/08/49 03/04/47 - 07/07/47 03/28/49 - 01/09/50
SLOGAN IV: [3 dies known]	(I) PB108314 (II) PB115515 PB126118 (III) PB116728 PB150815 PB138421	02/24/48 - 10/21/48 12/02/47 - 12/09/47 12/19/47 - 12/07/48 12/11/47 - 03/30/48 04/16/48 - 08/26/48 10/28/48 - 01/14/48
SLOGAN V: [4 dies known]	(I) PB108314 PB182488 (II) PB126118 PB186897 (III) PB138421 (IV) PB163706 PB162110 PB180705	05/01/50 - 12/15/50 12/26/50 - 10/09/51 01/18/50 - 05/22/51 07/16/51 - 10/18/51 01/12/50 - 12/13/50 02/23/50 - 09/11/50 09/27/50 - 11/03/50 03/24/51 - 05/14/51

Table II - UNO Offices located In NYC

Pitney Bowes Machine	Location	Dates	Notes
PB109534/NY:	UN Information Office, 610 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan.	Spring 1943 - November/December 1943	
PB108314/NY:	UN Information Office, 610 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan.	November 1943 - October 30, 1946	Replaced PB109534 in November-December 1943.
	UN Downtown Mailing Center, 62nd Floor, 350 Fifth Avenue (Empire State Building), Manhattan	October 30, 1946 - January 1948.	
	Mail Room, 405 East 42nd Street, Manhattan	January 1948- August 17, 1950.	
	Mail Room, 3rd Basement, Secretariat Building	August 18, 1950 - June 1951.	
PB113436/NY:	Hunter College (Bronx Campus)	March 25, 1941 to August 15, 1946.	NEW YORK, NY" town mark because UN used P.O. Box 1000, New York 1" as its mailing address.
PB113436/GN:	Sperry Building, Lake Success, Nassau County.		Changed town mark when UN moved from Hunter College. Lake Success was served by Great Neck post office.
PB113436/LS:	Sperry Building, Lake Success, Nassau County and New York City Building, Flushing Meadow Park, Queens County (for General Assembly).		In use until early November 1946. Changed town mark when UN Lake Success branch of Great Neck post office was created on September 23, 1946. As the postal unit for the General Assembly operated as part of the Lake Success branch, the LAKE SUCCESS town mark still was used.
PB115515/LS:	Sperry Building, Lake Success, Nassau County and New York City Building, Flushing Meadow Park, Queens County (for General Assembly).	November 1946 - until early December 1947	
PB116728/LS:	Sperry building, Lake Success, Nassau County.	November 14, 1947 - used until mid-April 1948.	Installed as second machine to handle increased mail volume.
PB 126118/LS:	Sperry Building, Lake Success, Nassau County.	December 12, 1947. Used until late May 1951	Replaced PB115515 Used until UN left Lake Success.
PB 150815/LS:	Sperry Building, Lake Success, Nassau County.	February 1, 1948. Used until early October 1948.	Replaced PB 116728 in April 1948.
PB138421/LS:	Sperry Building, Lake Success, Nassau County.	Early October 1948. Used until December 13, 1950.	Replaced PB150815
PB151461/NY:	Room 1003, 1600 Broadway, Manhattan. (Department of Public Information Film Distribution Center)	May 11, 1950 to December 31, 1950.	
PB162110/LIC:	43-02 Ditmars Boulevard, Astoria, Queens County.	Installed November 14, 1949. Used through November 1950.	Possibly replacing PB163706, as the two machines used the same slogan die and known dates of use do not overlap.
PB151461/NY: PB163706/LIC:	47-39 Austel Place, Long Island City, Queens County (storage facility for documents and other printed matter).	Installed March 18, 1949 used through October 1949.	UN lease on this space expired October 31, 1949, and the facility was moved to 43-02 Ditmars Boulevard. No known use after Oct-49
PB180705/GN:	Sperry Building, Lake Success, Nassau County.	Installed December 14, 1950. Used March to late May 1951, when UN left Lake Success.	When Long Island City mail center was closed, bulk mailings were made with this machine.
PB182488/NY:	Mail Room, 3rd Basement, Secretariat Building.	December 1950 - October 1951.	Second machine installed at this site.
PB186840/NY:	Mail Room, 3rd Basement, Secretariat Building.	June 1951 - October 1951.	Third machine installed at this site.
PB186897/NY:	Mail Room, 3rd Basement, Secretariat Building.	June 1951. Used into October 1951.	Replaced PB 108314
PB 152077/NY:	World Health Organization's Liaison Office to UN Headquarters, Empire State Building, 350 Fifth Avenue.	August 10, 1948 to December 7, 1948.	It appears that this machine was leased by WHO for its own mail.
PB 136561/NY:	Chinese Mission to the United Nations, Empire State Building, 350 Fifth Avenue.	December 13, 1950 to March 26, 1959	leased by the Chinese Mission to the United Nations