

Finding Treasures

America's stamps used from the Orient—nice postal history!

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A block of four of Scott No. K3, the Shanghai 6-cent overprint on the three-cent Washington-Franklin stamp (upper left), might look a bit plain at first glance, but it's a pretty rare little item—and something recently found in a cover box at an antique show, of all places. It got me to thinking: just how scarce are uses of United States stamps on mail coming from the Far East? Wouldn't an assemblage of them make a nice little collection?

I went on a hunt—first in my own cover boxes, and then at two local stamp shows and, finally, on good ol' eBay. What I found were covers that spanned a 60+-year period telling the story of Americans in the Far East—whether there as tourists, business people, or in the military.

Our presence in the Far East dates

back, of course, to the mid-1700s—but things began to get serious in the mid-1800s when the Chinese government allowed foreign governments to establish full-scale diplomatic colonies in Shanghai and Peking, the capital. Quite unpopular with many Chinese, this foreign presence nevertheless was good for high-level trade. The foreign presence even led to a revolutionary movement (the Boxer Rebellion, circa 1900) to get them removed. I might add, by the way, that covers relating to the Boxer Rebellion, no matter their origin, are extremely scarce—mainly because, during the height of the uprising, the Chinese cut off all foreign legations and other facilities from communicating with their home countries.

It all makes for wonderful philately—and one can still find old covers mailed from China using U.S. stamps from relatives, associates, and others. Some, like the 1887

use from Shanghai to Venezuela (lower right), are rare and worth hundreds.

Note the cover in the middle—U.S. Navy vessels would make up their own cancels and, when in a foreign port, their postal clerk would apply a “localized” postmark.

Also note the postcard mailed to Shanghai from U.S. offices in the Philippines, in 1903, a U.S. possession.

At upper right, a U.S. 10-cent Bank Note stamp is used from the U.S. diplomatic offices in Peking on a cover to Oneida, N.Y., via San Francisco.

The Russian postcard at lower right was mailed to Chicago from Shanghai in 1916, during the beginning stages of World War I

These intriguing covers and postcards span a great amount of American and world history—one key reason they're sought after! ✉