

4¢ Prexie Postal History

by Richard Pederson



Figure 1. 4¢ Prexie sheet stamp, Sc. 808

The 4¢ value in the Presidential Series of 1938 (see Figure 1), hereinafter called the Prexies, depicts the fourth President of the United States (1809-1817), James Madison. William K. Schrage designed the stamp based on a photograph of an F. William Sievers bust of Madison in the Rotunda of the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, Virginia.

Prior to becoming President, Madison, as one of our Founding Fathers, was a member of the Continental Congress and participated in the Constitutional Convention in 1787. He was elected as a United States Representative from Virginia and served in that capacity from 1789 until 1797. Madison is known as the "Father of the Constitution" as he devised the system of checks and balances between the three branches of the U.S. government, the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches and, later, helped frame the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, the "Bill of Rights."

Madison and his good friend Thomas Jefferson helped create the Democratic-Republican party which later evolved into today's Democratic party. He served as Secretary of State under Jefferson until elected President in 1808. As President, Madison led the country through the War of 1812 with Great Britain. The war started when the U.S. declared war on Britain because, during its ongoing war with France, Britain impressed American sailors into the British navy, despite the declared neutrality of the U.S. During the war, the British attacked the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. and burned the Capitol, White House and other buildings, before being repelled. The war was officially ended in December 1814 by the Treaty of Ghent but, due to the slowness of communications at that time, the Americans defeated the British in the Battle of New Orleans in early 1815.

The 4¢ Prexie is relatively easy to locate on cover or parcel as a multiple or in combination with other stamps and solo uses are also relatively easy to find, especially on post cards. It was issued in



Figure 2. First Day Cover (FDC) for 4¢ Prexie with Harry Ioor cachet.

sheet format on July 1, 1938 (Figure 2) and was in continuous use until after 1956, when the last delivery of 4¢ stamps was made to post offices. An electric eye version of the 4¢ was released on October 28, 1941 (Figure 3), and a horizontal coil was issued on January 20, 1939 (Figure 4, next column). Although the 4¢ Prexie was replaced by the 4¢ Abraham Lincoln stamp in the Liberty series on November 19, 1956, some were used into the early 1960s to pay the 4¢ first-class rate, which became effective on August 1, 1958, and



Figure 3. Electric eye FDC with Fidelity cachet,



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remained in effect until the end of the Prexie period.

Prior to the first day of issue, the Post Office Department sent out announcements to prospective purchasers of First Day Covers (FDCs), an example of which is pictured in Figure 5.

Domestic and international solo uses of the 4¢ are primarily found during the latter part of the Prexie period when it was used on domestic first-class mail and for international postal cards or post cards. During the time it was in use, possible solo

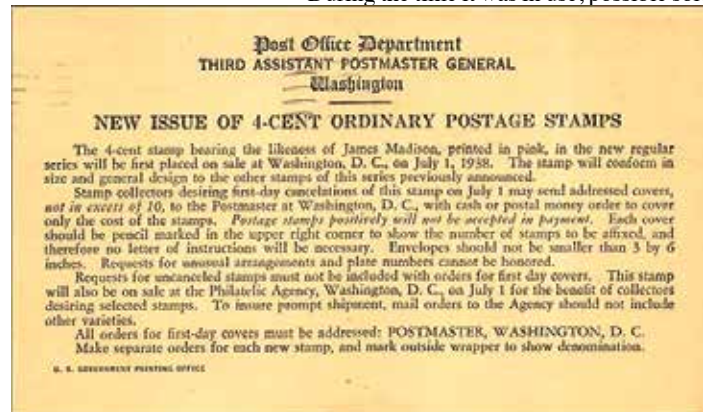


Figure 5. 4¢ announcement card.

rate and rate/fee combinations for the 4¢ Prexie included the following:

1. A first-class domestic surface letter weighing up to 1 ounce, a rate in effect from August 1, 1958, through January 6, 1963 (Figures 6 and 29).
2. A double weight first-class local letter, at a carrier post office, weighing greater than 1 ounce and less than or equal to 2 ounces, a rate in effect through March 25, 1944 (Figures 7 and 31).
3. A double weight first-class local letter at a non-carrier post office weighing greater than 1 ounce and less than or equal to 2 ounces, a rate in effect through July 31, 1958.
4. A first-class domestic (including territories and possessions) air mail post card, a rate in effect from January 1, 1949, through July 31, 1958 (Figures 8, 9 and 10).
5. The third-class rate for books and catalogs weighing more than three ounces and less than or equal to four ounces, a rate in effect through December 31, 1948 (Figure 32).
6. The domestic fourth-class library rate for an item weighing up to one pound, a rate in effect from January 1, 1949, until the end of the Prexie period (Figure 11).
7. A single piece of bound printed matter weighing up to one pound mailed locally or in zone 1 or 2, a rate in effect from July 1, 1939, through March 25, 1944.
8. A single piece of business reply mail paying the 3¢ first-class rate and 1¢ business reply fee, a rate in effect through June 30, 1957.
9. UPU printed matter weighing up to 2 ounces, a rate in effect from August 1, 1958, through June 30, 1961.
10. UPU surface postal cards and post cards, a rate in effect from November 1, 1953, through June 30, 1961 (Figures 12 and 13).

[Note: for the purposes of this article, I will consider the Prexie period to last until the end of 1962. Deliveries of some Prexies were made to post offices until 1959 and many post offices still had some Prexies in stock into the early 1960s, so they are frequently found on non-philatelic mail until then.]

A somewhat scarce domestic solo use is one paying the domestic first-class rate that went into effect on August 1, 1958, an example of which is pictured in



Figure 6. 4¢ solo paying the domestic first-class rate. The cover was mailed from Hillsboro, Oregon to Salem, Oregon on June 21, 1959, and has a duplex cancel saying "PRAY FOR PEACE."

Another somewhat scarce domestic first-class solo use is shown in Figure 7. The double weight local letter was mailed by the Kane County Tuberculosis Association on November 26, 1941, within Aurora, Illinois, a carrier post office.



Figure 7. 4¢ solo paying double the 2¢ first-class local rate.

The easiest to locate domestic uses are those involving mailing post cards via air mail. The 4¢ post card air mail rate was in effect from January 1, 1949, through July 31, 1958. Beginning October 1, 1946, the first-class rate to/from U.S. APOs, territories and possessions was the same as in the continental U.S. The Figure 8 post card was mailed on March 7, 1950, from Charlotte, Amalie in the U.S. Virgin Islands to Lancaster, Pa. at the air mail post card rate. Figure 9 pictures a post card mailed on October 5, 1953, from APO 1 in Germany to Portage, Wisconsin. The final example of this rate is pictured in Figure 10, a post card mailed on January 30, 1952, from Wake Island to Honolulu in the Territory of Hawaii. Although not marked air mail, the 4¢ Prexie paid the air mail rate and it was likely sent by air mail.



Figure 8. Solo paying the 4¢ rate on a post card sent from the Virgin Islands to the U.S.

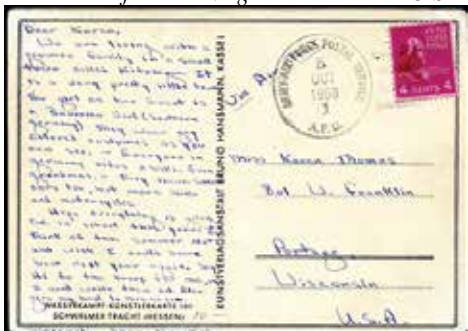


Figure 9. Solo paying the 4¢ rate on a post card sent from APO 1 in Germany to the U.S.



Figure 10. Solo paying the 4¢ rate on a post card sent from Wake Island to the Territory of Hawaii.

Figure 11 pictures the front of a stapled Annual Report for the town of Searsport, Maine for the fiscal year of 1951. The solo 4¢ Prexie paid the basic 4¢ library rate for an item weighing up to one pound, a rate that was in effect from January 1, 1949, through the end of the Prexie period.

Solo use of the 4¢ Prexie are fairly easy to locate on postal cards mailed at the 4¢ Universal Postal Union (UPU) surface rate that was in effect from November 1, 1953, through June 30, 1961. Figure 12 shows the front and reverse of a QSL card mailed October 5, 1954, from an amateur (ham) radio operator in Cleveland, Ohio to another ham radio operator in Juba, Sudan, confirming that he had picked up the signal from the ham radio in Sudan.

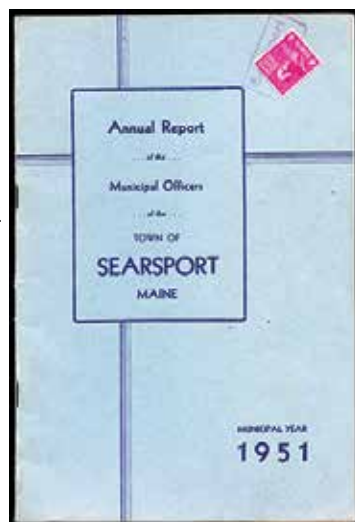


Figure 11. Annual report for the town of Searsport, Maine mailed at the 4¢ library rate.



Figure 12. QSL card mailed from Cleveland, Ohio to Juba, Sudan at the 4¢ UPU international surface post card rate.

A second example of the international surface post card rate is pictured in Figure 13. The post card was mailed on September 29, 1955, from Chicago, Illinois to Yokohama, Japan.

The next item is a kind of quasi solo use, although it is illegal. The cover in Figure 14 has a bisected 4¢ intended to pay the 2¢ local rate. The cover, which has an August 27, 1940, Bethel, Vermont duplex cancel, is almost certainly a philatelic creation that was likely handed back to the originator. Although bisects were illegal at the time, they



Figure 13. Post card mailed from Chicago, Illinois to Yokohama Japan at the 4¢ UPU surface post card rate.

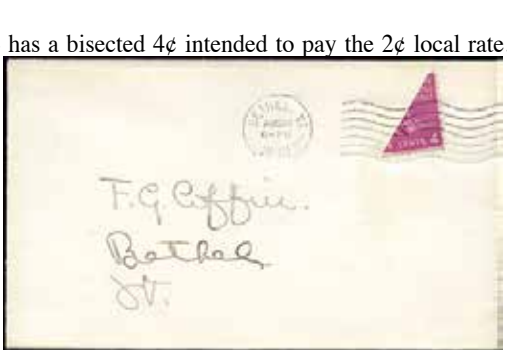


Figure 14. Philatelic creation with bisected 4¢ used to pay 2¢ local letter rate.

were occasionally tolerated by the post office if there was a shortage of the needed denomination but, in this instance the cover was most likely favor cancelled.

The 4¢ Prexie is often encountered on domestic mail, either as multiples or in combination with other stamps. First, I will show some examples where multiples of the 4¢ pay a postal rate or a rate and fee combination.

The Figure 15 cover, which has a pair of 4¢ Prexies, is marked "Air Mail" and has an American Export Lines corner cord with the sender's name, Capt. Charles R. Walther, written above. It appears the cover was posted aboard ship and then placed in the mail and received air mail service to New York City where it was censored upon arrival. Although there is no dated postmark, due to the censor marking and an 8¢ air mail rate that was only in effect from March 26, 1944, through September 30, 1946, the cover was likely mailed during war time in 1944 or 1945 when censor markings would have been applied.



Figure 15. Pair of 4¢ used to pay 8¢ air mail rate for cover from an American Export Lines ship to New York City.



Figure 16. Pair of 4¢ used to pay the UPU surface rate for a double-weight letter mailed from New York City to Cameroun in West Africa.

The cover pictured front and reverse in Figure 16 was mailed on May 16, 1946, from New York City to Elat, Ebolowa in Cameroun, West Africa where it was received on July 10, 1946. It has two 4¢ Prexies that combine to pay the 8¢ UPU surface rate for a double weight letter. The rate for UPU surface letters was 5¢ for the first ounce and 3¢ for each additional ounce until October 31, 1953.

The Figure 17 cover was mailed on May 20, 1945, from APO 6 in Bacolor, Luzon, Philippines to the Army War Bond Office in Chicago, Illinois, where it was received on May 31st. Three 4¢ Prexies paid the 12¢ required for a double weight concession air mail letter, a rate extended to service personnel overseas.



Figure 17. Three of the 4¢ used to pay the 12¢ required for a double-weight concession air mail sent from Luzon in the Philippines to Chicago, Illinois



Figure 18. Three of the 4¢ used to pay the 12¢ required for a double-weight domestic air mail letter sent from Boston to Los Gatos, California.

The domestic 6¢ air mail rate lasted from January 1, 1949, through July 31, 1958. Figure 18 shows a cover mailed on February 19, 1954, by a well-known stamp dealer, Jack E. Molesworth, from Boston to Los Gatos, California. Three 4¢ Prexies pay the 12¢ required for a double-weight domestic air mail letter.

Another double-weight concession air mail letter is pictured in Figure 19. At the time this cover was mailed from APO 408 in Bad Neuenahr, Germany to North Troy, New York, on May 25, 1945, the air mail rate



Figure 19. Four of the 4¢ used to pay the 16¢ required for a double-weight concession air mail from APO 408 in Germany to North Troy, New York.

was 8¢/ounce, so a double-weight letter required 16¢, which was paid by a block of four 4¢ Prexies. The 8¢ air mail rate was in effect from March 26, 1944, through September 30, 1946.



Figure 20. Six of the 4¢ used to pay the 24¢ required for a four times weight domestic air mail letter mailed from Washington, D.C. to Wichita, Kansas.

The Figure 20 air mail cover was mailed from Football at Harvard in Washington, D.C. to Wichita, Kansas on October 27, 1949. Possibly containing football tickets, the cover required 24¢ in postage, the amount needed for a four times weight domestic air mail letter at that time. Postage was paid by a block of six of the 4¢ Prexie, a nice use that is currently the second largest reported multiple of the 4¢ on cover.

Figure 21 shows the front and reverse of a registered letter with return receipt



Figure 21. Front of Registered letter with return receipt requested mailed from St. Louis to Hanibal, Missouri with four of the 4¢ Prexie combined with other postage to pay the 21¢ required.

Figure 21.
Reverse of
Registered letter
whose front is
seen on page 28.



requested that was mailed on September 21, 1942, from St. Louis, Missouri to Hannibal, Missouri. The cover contains 21¢ in postage that is paid for by a block of four 4¢ Prexies, a 3¢ Prexie and a 2¢ For Defense issue. The 21¢ covered the 3¢ first-class rate, 3¢ return receipt fee and 15¢ registration fee for an item with an indemnity value less than or equal to \$5.

A 15¢ air mail rate to Europe, except the Soviet Union, was in effect from November 1, 1946, through June 30, 1961. The Figure 22 air mail cover was mailed from Hollywood, California to Worthing, Sussex, England on August 23, 1954. Three 4¢ Prexies and a 3¢ Prexie combined to pay the 15¢ rate.



Figure 22. Three 4¢ Prexies and a 3¢ Prexie combine to pay the 15¢ air mail rate to Europe.

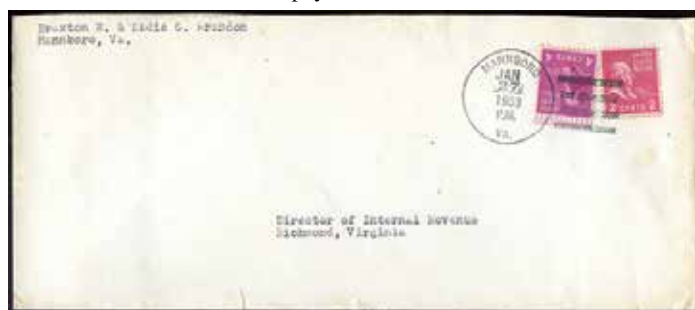


Figure 23. Double weight domestic letter with single 4¢ and 2¢ Prexies combining to pay the 6¢ rate.

Figure 23 pictures a double weight first-class cover that was mailed from Mannboro, Virginia to Richmond, Virginia on January 27, 1953. Single 4¢ and 2¢ Prexies pay the 6¢ required for a double-weight first-class letter.

In 1951, the air mail rates to and from U.S. territories and possessions were the same as mail sent from the U.S. The Figure 24 cover was mailed from San Juan, Puerto Rico to Lima, Peru on October 24, 1951. From November 1, 1946, through June 30, 1961, the air mail rate to South America was 10¢, which was paid by a 6¢ air mail envelope uprated with a 4¢ Prexie.



Figure 24. 4¢ Prexie uprating a 6¢ air mail stamped envelope to pay the 10¢ required for an air mail letter sent from Puerto Rico to Lima Peru in South America.

A 6¢ domestic air mail rate was in effect prior to March 26, 1944. The censored Figure 25 air mail cover was mailed from Hilo, Hawaii to



Figure 25. 4¢ Prexie uprates a 2¢ stamped envelope to pay the 6¢ air mail rate on a censored letter from Hilo, Hawaii to San Francisco, California.

San Francisco, California on April 23, 1943. A 4¢ Prexie uprated a 2¢ stamped envelope to pay the 6¢ air mail rate.

Another censored cover is shown in Figure 26. The cover was mailed from Los Angeles, California to an international destination at the 5¢ UPU surface rate that was in effect through October 31, 1953. It is marked with a sticker that says "RETURNED TO SENDER BY CENSOR," either because of the content or since there was no mail service to the intended destination. The 5¢ UPU surface rate was paid with a 4¢ Prexie and the 1¢ stamp from the 1936 Army issue picturing George Washington and Nathanael Greene.



Figure 26. 4¢ Prexie and 1¢ Army issue combine to pay the 5¢ UPU surface rate on a censored letter that was returned to the sender by the censor.

An international air mail rate for post cards, to all countries except Canada and Mexico, was established on June 1, 1954, and this rate remained in effect until June 30, 1961, near the end of the Prexie period. Figure 27 shows an air mail post card sent from St. Paul, Minnesota to Berne, Switzerland at that rate. The post card was mailed on July 5, 1955, with the 10¢ in postage made up by a 4¢ Prexie and a 6¢ air mail stamp.

Next is an unusual certified mail cover. Certified mail began as a service in June 1955, towards the end of the Prexie period. The initial fee for certified mail service was 15¢ and the Post Office Department issued a stamp to pay that fee on June 6, 1955. Figure 28 pictures a certified mail cover mailed on May 29, 1956, from Salem, Oregon



Figure 27. 4¢ Prexie and 6¢ air mail stamp combine to pay the 10¢ air mail post card rate on post card sent from St. Paul, Minnesota to Berne, Switzerland at that rate. The post card was mailed on July 5, 1955, with the 10¢ in postage made up by a 4¢ Prexie and a 6¢ air mail stamp.

Next is an unusual certified mail cover. Certified mail began as a service in June 1955, towards the end of the Prexie period. The initial fee for certified mail service was 15¢ and the Post Office Department issued a stamp to pay that fee on June 6, 1955. Figure 28 pictures a certified mail cover mailed on May 29, 1956, from Salem, Oregon



Figure 28. Front of cover with 4¢ Prexie and three 15¢ certified mail stamps pay 3¢ first-class rate, 31¢ return receipt fee, and 15¢ certified mail fee.

Figure 28. Reverse of cover whose front is pictured on page 30.



to Grand Ronde, Oregon and then forwarded twice, first to Medford, Oregon and then to Lexington, Missouri, before being returned to the sender. It has backstamps indicating that it arrived in Grand Ronde on May 31st and Medford on June 9th. There is also a June 18th date stamp on the front, presumably the date the letter was returned to the writer from Lexington because the intended recipient was "Unknown." The 4¢ Prexie and three 15¢ certified mail stamps paid the 3¢ first-class rate, the 15¢ certified mail fee and the 31¢ fee for a return receipt showing the delivery date, delivery address and to whom the delivery was made. The certified mail receipt attached to the reverse is not filled out as the delivery was never made.

I will conclude with some examples of the 4¢ horizontal coil on cover. The cover shown in Figure 29 uses a 4¢ Prexie to pay the first-class rate that went into effect on August 1, 1958. This cover, which was mailed from Washington, D.C. to Tucson, Arizona on



Figure 29. 4¢ horizontal coil solo paying the domestic first-class rate on a letter from Washington, D.C. to Tucson, Arizona.

February 1, 1960, has special meaning to me since it was mailed by my great aunt to my maternal grandmother. My grandparents vacationed in Tucson every winter as my grandfather was a farmer and had emphysema, so my grandparents left cold northern Iowa for the warmth of Arizona and drier air that they felt helped my grandfather. I remember my aunt had coils of the 4¢ Prexie that she used on letters for years, extending well into the 1960s.

The Figure 30 cover is a first flight cover from Houston to Washington, D.C. It was mailed on mailed September 5, 1944, using a pair of the 4¢ Prexie coil to pay the 8¢ air mail rate that was in effect.



Figure 30. Pair of the 4¢ horizontal coil paying the 8¢ air mail rate on a 1944 first flight cover from Houston, Texas to Washington, D.C.



Figure 31. 4¢ horizontal coil solo paying the local first-class rate on a double-weight letter sent within Chicago, Illinois.

The envelope in Figure 31 was mailed locally within Chicago, Illinois on October 19, 1942. The solo 4¢ Prexie paid the 4¢ required for a double-weight local letter.



Figure 32. 4¢ horizontal coil solo paying the rate for a book or catalog weighing more than three ounces and less than or equal to four ounces.

The final cover I'll show is also likely the scarcest use of those covered in this article. The solo 4¢ Prexie is on an envelope sent by a music publisher in Chicago to a band director in Geneseo, Illinois at the third-class 1¢ per ounce rate for books and catalogs. The enclosed book or catalog would have weighed more than three ounces and less than or equal to four ounces. The rate was in effect until December 31, 1948, which helps determine the time frame in which the envelope was mailed as third-class cancels do not include dates.

If you have any interesting 4¢ Prexie usages you would like to share or have any comments, clarifications, or corrections, please send them to me at rich@pedersonstamps.com or by mail at 15312 Gammon Green Walk, Midlothian, VA 23112.

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