

# Detained in Hong Kong and the Ones That Got Away

Exhibit showed blocked mail, mail that were delivered just-in-time and delayed mail before the Japanese Invasion/Occupation of Hong Kong in World War II.

## Postal History

Days before the start of Japanese Invasion of Hong Kong (HK) at 8 AM on 1941 December 8th, all mail that in and out of Hong Kong were severely affected.

## Detained Covers (Rows 1 & 2)

The Japanese chose to detained covers that were franked with stamps of the "enemy countries", i.e. Hong Kong and the British Commonwealth, in the colony from the time of invasion to after their surrender in September 1945. After the war, 7 bags of this detained mail were found and a boxed marking "Detained in Hong Kong by Japanese From December 1941 to September 1945" was applied to these items and then forwarded onto destinations.

## Delivered Covers (Row 3)

Showed mail that made the last transports out of HK. Exhibitor's research showed last eastbound surface transport out of HK carrying mail to US/Canada was on Nov. 29, while last westbound surface transport out of HK carrying mail to UK, including Australia, was on Dec 5. The Pan Am Hong Kong Clipper II was scheduled to fly to Manila on Dec 6, but bad weather delayed the departure until Dec 8. It was then destroyed at its

seaside mooring at Kowloon City on that morning of the Invasion. The last Clipper flight to bring mail to US departed HK on November 30th. (cover below)

## U-turn Covers (Row 4)

Covers franked with stamps from "friendly countries", which the Japanese choose to release to Canton and forwarded to destination after the Invasion had ended. The exhibitor coined the term **U-turn Covers** for these and this information had been published in several articles.

## Research Findings by Exhibitor

Discovery of the exact location where the Japanese took the trapped mail for sorting, at the "Second District Japanese Military Head Quarters", which was the Peninsula Hotel at Tsim Sha Tsui at the tip of the Kowloon Peninsula. 5 covers had been recorded with the first postal marking of the Japanese post office in HK after the Invasion. The earliest was 1942 Feb 10<sup>th</sup> Kowloon PO marking and this cover is shown in exhibit (cover #4). 2 of these 5 are shown in this exhibit. Several other discoveries are shown where magnifiers are present:



## Epilog (last page and a half)

Exhibit closed with an example of the first shipment of mail to Macau after the resumption of mail in 1942 Feb by the occupying Japanese military and also an example from the first shipment of incoming mail from Canton after the Invasion period.

## Plan

Forerunner (pg 2);  
Detained Covers (pg 2-8);  
Delivered Covers (pg 9-12);  
U-turn Covers (pg 13-15);  
Epilog (pg 15-16).

Important items highlighted  
by purple mat

1) Carried on the Last  
Prewar Clipper flight  
from Hong Kong via  
Manila to US

Who would have known that after Nov 30, 1941, there would be no airmail link to carry mail outside of HK to the US. This cover postmarked in HK on Nov 28, 1941 at 1:30 PM.





#### 4) Detained Cover Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 1941

(HK to US, delivered late 1945)

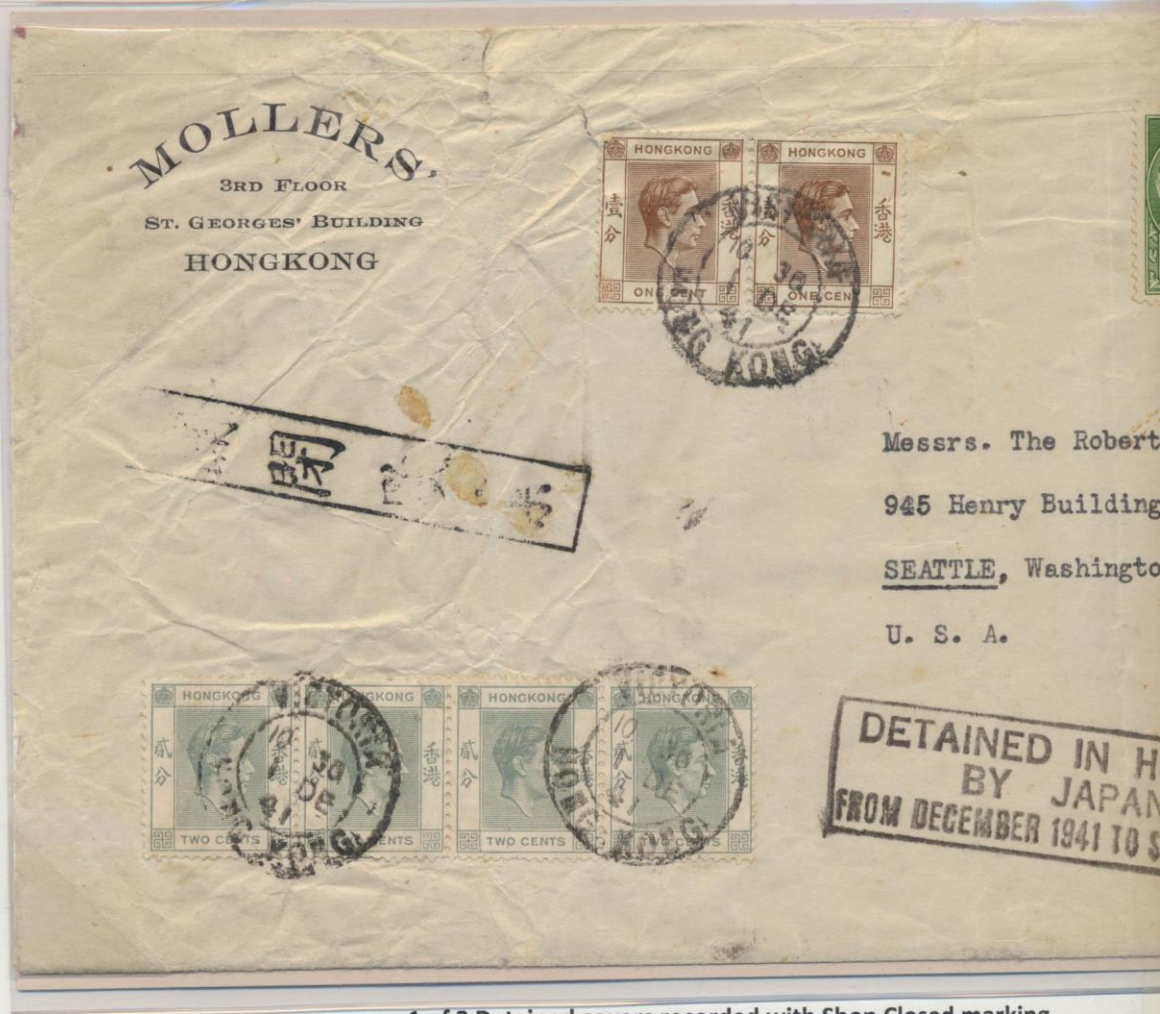
##### Surface rate cover to US

###### Markings:

Victoria HK CDS 1941 Dec 1; boxed Not Opened by Censor (purple); boxed No service (purple); boxed Retour; boxed Shop Closed (in Chinese); Detained in Hong Kong;

Rate: 30c (basic surface rate);

The last transport that left Hong Kong carrying surface mail west bound, including mail to US, left HK on Nov 29. Hence, surface mail that was sent on Nov 29 and later would have missed this ship and were trapped in HK and hence Detained marking was applied after 3 years and 8 months of Japanese Occupation.



1 of 2 Detained covers recorded with Shop Closed marking

#### 5) Detained Cover Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 1941 (transit date in HK)

(Ceylon 1941 Nov by airmail to HK, detained, delivered in Canada late 1945)

##### Transit cover Ceylon to Canada

###### Markings:

Ceylon meter 1941 Nov 15; Victoria HK CDS Dec 2; boxed Not Opened by Censor (purple); marking used to indicate termination of airmail surface (2 thick bars); Detained in Hong Kong; Rate: 1 R (hybrid rate, air to HK, surface to US);

1R hybrid rate was for airmail to HK only, then by surface to US, but the last surface mail carrier had already left HK on Nov 29<sup>th</sup>. 2 bars over airmail label indication service ended in HK.



1 of 2 Detained cover recorded from Ceylon; Only recorded with meter marking



The "Retour" marking indicated that after the start of the Japanese invasion on Dec 8<sup>th</sup>, the HK PO tried to send this item through a different route. But as there were no alternate route possible, the "No Service" marking was applied. The cover was sent back to its sender, but by then the operator had already closed down shop due to the war activities, hence the "Shop Closed" marking was applied.

Several of the covers in this exhibit have the combination of the "Retour" and "No Service" markings indicating the reaction of HK PO to the start of the Invasion.



(copy of back showing Kowloon, Hong Kong, Japanese PO CDS 1942 Feb. 10, Earliest Recorded Japanese PO marking in HK)

#### 6) Detained Cover Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> 1941

(HK to US, delivered late 1945)

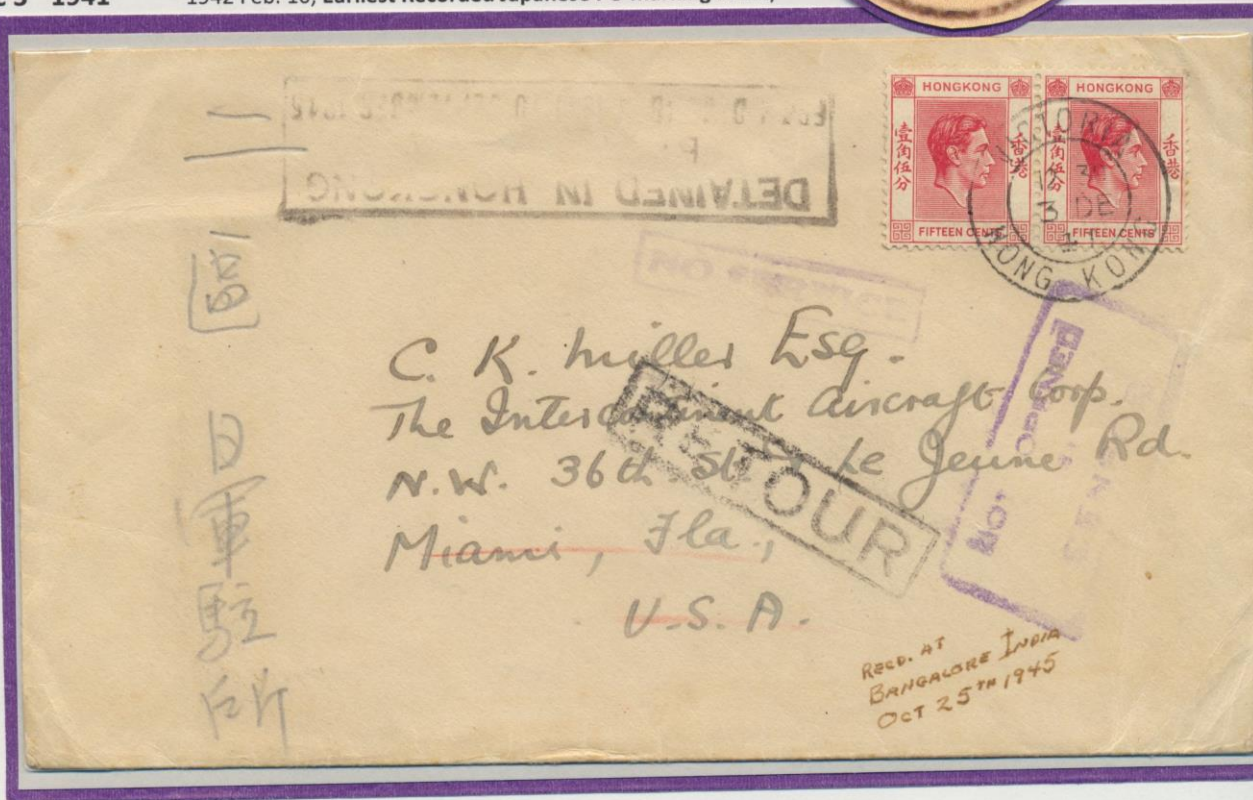
Surface rate cover to US then redirected

Markings: Victoria HK CDS 1941 Dec 30; Not Opened by Censor (purple); boxed No service (purple); boxed Retour; Detained in Hong Kong; Kowloon Japanese HK CDS 1941 Feb 10;

Rate: 30c (basic surface rate);

With manuscript redirection on both front and back:

**Second District Japanese Military Head Quarters.**



Earliest recorded date of Japanese Hong Kong postal marking on cover (shown in insert)  
1 of 4 Detained covers recorded with Japanese PO marking

Discovery cover that pinpointed exact location where Japanese handled Detained mail

9

**7) Detained Cover**

**Dec 4<sup>th</sup> 1941**

(HK to Canada  
delivered late 1945)

Surface rate cover  
to Canada

Markings:

Victoria HK CDS Dec 4;  
Detained in Hong  
Kong;

Rate: 20c (basic  
surface rate to  
Canada);

(copy of second  
Detained marking on  
back)



DETAINED IN HONGKONG  
BY JAPANESE  
FROM DECEMBER 1941 TO SEPTEMBER 1945

1 of 7 Detained covers recorded with 2 strikes of Detained markings

**8) Detained Cover Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 1941**

(HK to Canada delivered late 1945)

Printed matter rate cover to Canada

Markings: Hong Kong Postage Paid 5-cents CDS 1941 Dec 5; Detained in Hong Kong;

Rate: 5c (printed matter rate);

THE CHINA INFORMATION COMMITTEE  
P.O. Box 107, Chungking  
CHINA

DETAINED IN HONGKONG  
BY JAPANESE  
FROM DECEMBER 1941 TO SEPTEMBER 1945

Rev. A. J. Wilson  
299 Queen Street  
West, Toronto  
CANADA



1 of 3 Detained covers recorded with HK Postage Paid marking

**9) Detained Cover Dec 6<sup>th</sup> 1941**

(HK to Canada delivered late 1945)

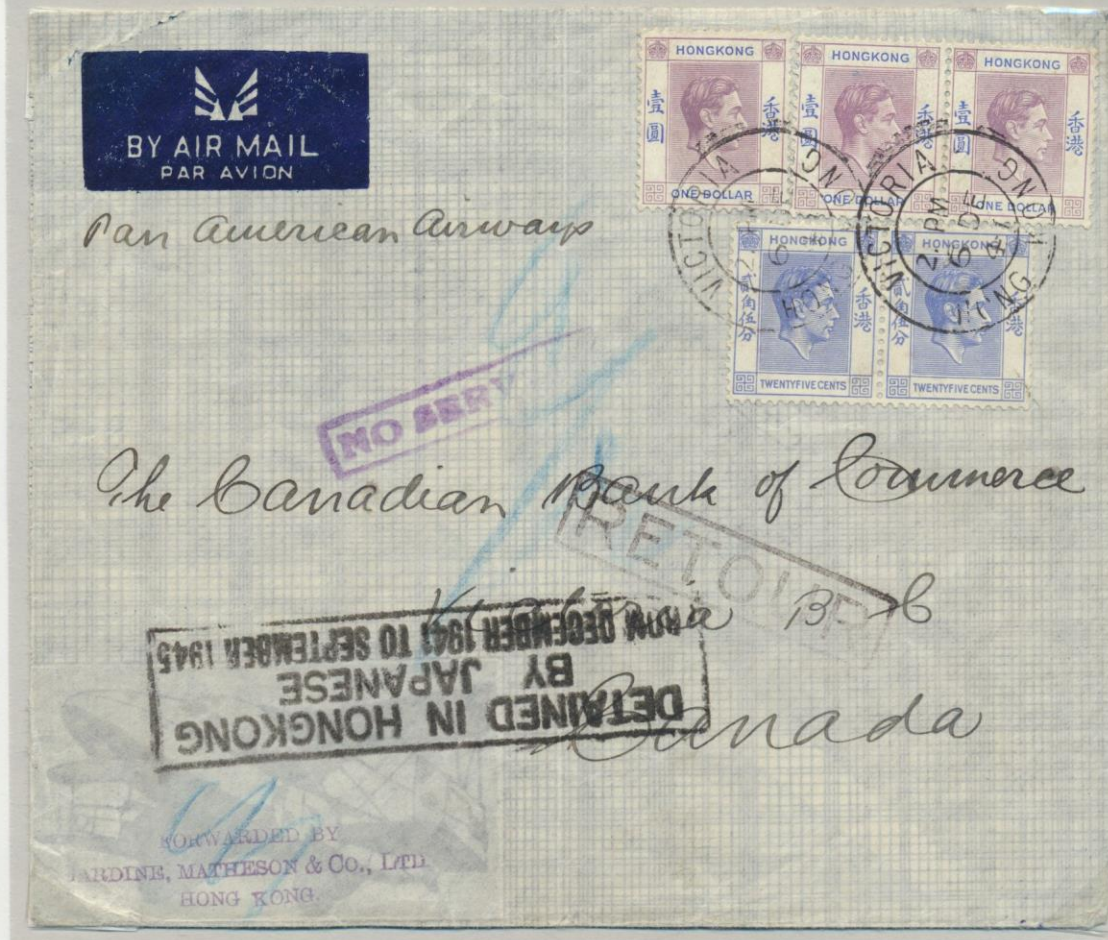
Airmail cover to Canada  
with Forwarding  
Agent's Marking

Markings:

Victoria HK CDS Dec 6;  
boxed No service (purple);  
boxed Retour (purple);  
Detained in Hong Kong;

Rate: \$3.50 (basic airmail  
Clipper rate);

Only Detained cover  
recorded with Forwarding  
Agent's markings



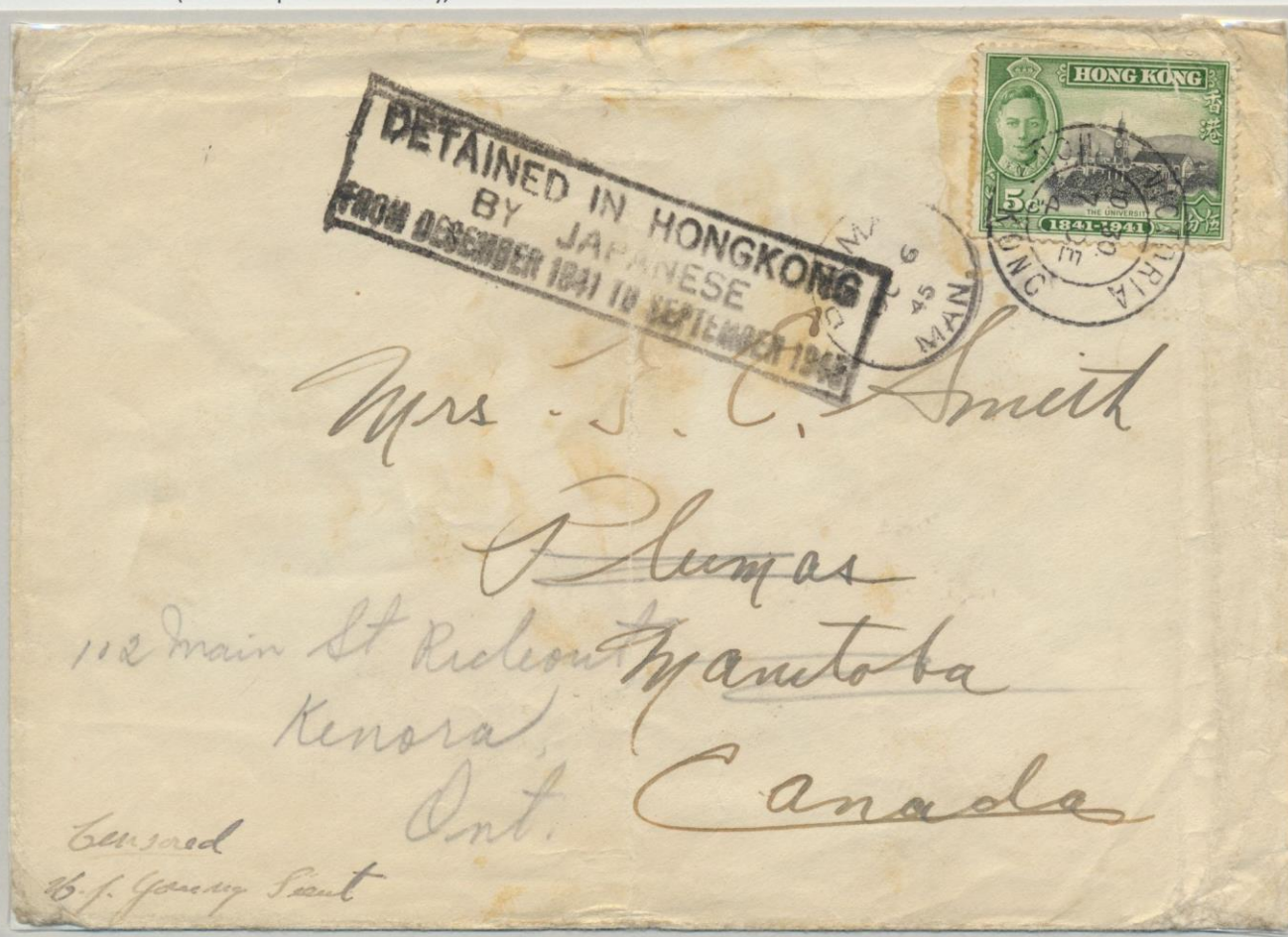
**10) Detained-Cover Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 1941**

(HK to Canada delivered late 1945)

Printed matter rate cover to Canada redirected

Markings:

Victoria HK CDS 1941 Dec 7; Passed by Censor 137 British army marking; Detained in Hong Kong; Winnipeg CDS 1945 Oct 7;  
Rate: 5c (external printed matter);



Censored by Lt. Hugh James Young of the Winnipeg Grenadiers (Canada C-Force), who was then Killed-in-action on Dec 21, 1941, only 2 weeks after this was sent.

1 of 6 Detained covers recorded with a Canadian receiving mark

### 11) Detained Cover Dec 8<sup>th</sup> 1941

(HK to Australia/Canada delivered late 1945)

Airmail cover to Australia (redirected to Canada)

Markings:

Kowloon HK CDS Dec 8; boxed Retour; boxed No service (purple); Detained in Hong Kong (purple); Kowloon Japanese HK CDS 1941 Feb 11;

Rate: \$1.50 (basic airmail rate to Australia);

(copy of Kowloon, HK, Japanese PO CDS 1942 Feb 11 on back)



Discovery copy showing Japanese handled Detained mail

Winner of HK Study Circle's Wilde Cup for New Discovery 1993/4

1 of 4 recorded Detained covers with Japanese marking

Latest recorded cover with Japanese marking on Detained cover

### 13) Detained Cover Dec 10<sup>th</sup> 1941

(transit date in HK)

(Burma to HK, detained, delivered to UK late 1945)

Airmail/Surface cover via HK to UK redirected

Markings:

Rangoon GPO CDS 1941 Dec 6; Victoria HK CDS Dec 10; Detained in Hong Kong (purple);

Rate: 8R (hybrid rate for air to HK via Clipper to US, surface to UK)



2019 Discovery: Cover could only have been carried on regular schedule flight that brought airmail from Rangoon to Chungking and from Chungking to HK. The latter flight was scheduled on the day of the Invasion of HK on Dec 8. No previous evidence had shown that this flight had ever carried mail to HK, until the discovery of this cover together with U-turn cover #26.



## 12) Detained Cover Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 1941

(HK to Australia delivered late 1945)

Airmail cover to Australia

Markings:

Victoria HK CDS 1941 Dec 9;  
Triangular Passed by Censor 126  
British army marking (purple);  
Detained in Hong Kong (purple);  
Rate: \$1.50 (basic airmail rate to  
Australia), 12c overpaid;

Self-censored by Lieutenant  
Colonel J.B. Wilson, Royal Navy.  
Prewar usage of 8c was scarce as  
it was only issued on Nov 1<sup>st</sup>.

9

Discovery: **Purple** ink was used  
on Westbound Detained  
covers, such as to UK/Australia  
(shipped westbound initially  
from HK) and **Black** ink was  
used on Eastbound Detained  
covers for US/Canada. With 3  
examples of purple ink shown  
on this page.



(copy of marking on back)

**Discovery Copy:** (with U-turn  
cover #26) that there was  
one flight that carried  
airmail into HK AFTER the  
start of Invasion

Only Transit cover from  
Burma recorded with the  
1R Hybrid rate

Highest of all Hybrid rate  
cover recorded

1 of 6 Detained Transit  
cover recorded from  
Burma

Co-winner 2019 HK Study  
Circle's Wilde Cup for New  
Discovery

## Delivered Covers

Mail that were able to leave HK before the Invasion

### 14) Delivered Cover Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 1941 (transit date in HK shown in titles)

(Chungking, China via HK to US delivered in 1942)

Incoming airmail  
cover from China  
then by surface to  
US

#### Markings:

Yin Bin CDS 1941 date unclear; Chungking CDS Nov 25 (2 diff. strikes); Victoria HK CDS Nov 28; boxed Not Opened by Censor (blue); marking showing termination of airmail (2 thick bars); Rate: \$1.25 (75c basic airmail rate to HK, surface rate onward 50c);

Carry on last  
eastbound surface  
transport before  
Invasion



### 15) Delivered Cover Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 1941

(Chengtu, China via HK to US delivered in 1942),

Incoming airmail cover  
from China then by surface  
to US

#### Markings:

Chengtu CDS 1941 Nov 24; Victoria HK CDS Nov 28; boxed Not Opened by Censor (purple); marking showing termination of airmail (2 thick bars);

Rate: \$1.25 (75c basic airmail rate to HK, surface rate onward 50c);

Carry on last eastbound  
surface transport before  
Invasion



**16) Delivered Cover Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 1941**

(HK to Canada delivered 1942)

Surface rate cover  
to Canada

Markings:

Victoria HK CDS

1941 Nov 28;

Triangular Passed

by Censor 137

British army

marking

(vermillion);

Rate: 20c (basic

surface rate to

Canada);

Only recorded

strike of Triangular

Passed by Censor

137 British Army

Censor (Canada's

Force-C) in

vermillion

(copy showing

marking on back)



Carried on last eastbound surface transport before Invasion

**17) Delivered Cover Nov 30<sup>th</sup> 1941**

(Shanghai via HK to S. Africa delivered 1942)

Incoming airmail cover from China then by air to South Africa

Markings:

Shanghai CDS 1941

Nov 25; Victoria HK

CDS Nov 30; boxed

Not Opened by

Censor (purple);

A.V.2 (air transit

marking); South

Africa Censor tape;

Rate: \$7.50 (airmail

all-thru rate);

Carried on the

last pre-war

Monday CNAC

flight that carried

mail out of HK



# 18) Delivered Cover Nov 27<sup>th</sup> 1941

(HK to Canada delivered 1942)

Airmail rate cover to Canada

Markings:

Victoria HK CDS 1941 Nov 27; Triangular Passed by Censor 137 British army marking;

Rate: \$3.50 (basic airmail rate to Canada via Clipper);

From Canadian Force-C members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers. Censored by Lt. Corrigan.



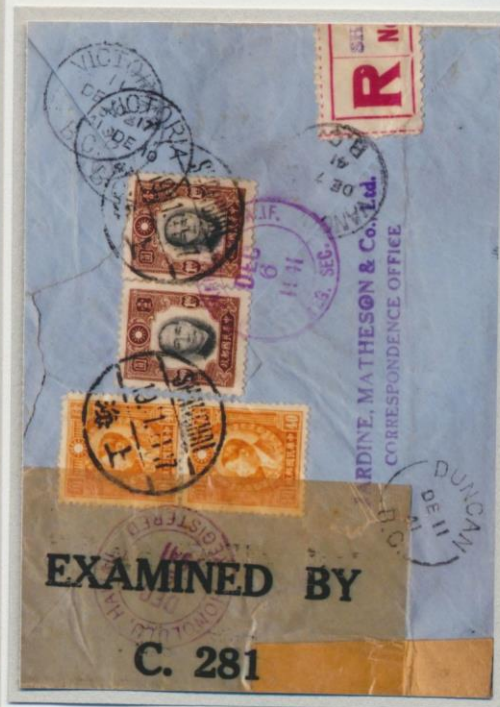
Carried on last Prewar Clipper flight from HK via Manila to US

# 19) Delivered Cover Nov 1941

(Incoming from Shanghai via HK to US delivered 1942)

Incoming registered airmail cover from China then by air to Canada

Markings: Shanghai CDS 1941 Nov 19; Honolulu regist. CDS Dec 4; San Fran regist. CDS Dec 6; Vancouver CDS Dec 7; Victoria CDS Dec 11; Duncan CDS Dec 11; Rate: \$19.80 (3X basic rate airmail all-thru rate); Route: via Steamer from Shanghai; airmail onwards;



(copy of back)

Carried on last Prewar Clipper flight from HK via Manila to US

**20) Delivered Cover Dec 4<sup>th</sup> 1941**

(Szechuan via HK to UK delivered in 1942)

Incoming airmail cover from China, then by surface to UK

Markings:

Kwang Chung 1941 Nov 24;  
Victoria HK CDS 1941 Dec 4;  
boxed Not Opened by Censor  
(purple); marking used to  
indicate termination of airmail (2  
thick bars);

Rate: \$1.25 (75c airmail within  
China, 50c surface);

Cover carried on last pre-war  
westbound surface transport  
out of HK



**21) Delivered Cover (?) Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 1941**

(HK to UK delivered in 1945??)

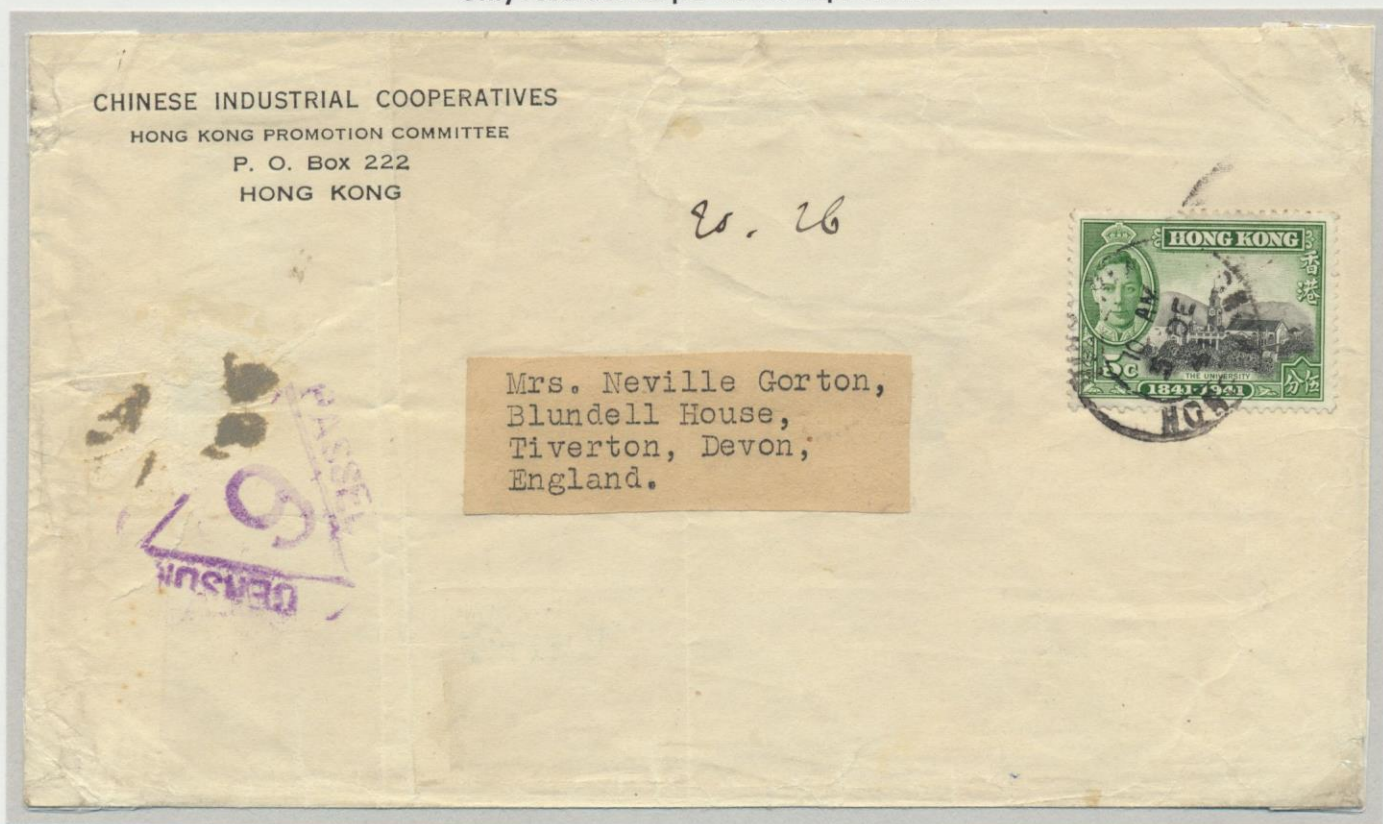
Printed Matter Rate cover to UK

Rate: 5c (printed matter rate);

Markings: Victoria HK CDS Dec 5; Triangular Passed Censor 6 (purple);

The grey material on the left indicated that this must have been stuck underneath another (greyish) cover and it did not receive a Detained marking, as there were no possible means or explanation that this cover would have been transported out of HK before the war. This was Detained and only delivered after the war, but without the Detained marking.

**Only recorded as per above explanation**



## U-turn Covers

Term coined by exhibitor. Showing those covers there were selectively return to Canton after Invasion.

### 22) U-Turn Cover Dec 1941

(date transiting HK)

(Fukien 1941 Oct to US via HK, U-turn to Canton, delivered in 1942?)

Incoming Printed Matter Rate  
cover from China to US  
redirected on arrival

Markings: Ching Fok 1941 Oct 8;  
boxed Retour; boxed No Service  
purple); Not Opened by Censor  
(purple); Canton CDS (partial);  
Rate: 10c (printed matter rate);

No Service and Retour markings  
were present on covers delivered  
to HK during the first week of  
December. Canton marking  
present showing this make the U-  
turn and was sent back to China  
Japanese released this after the  
Invasion.



Earliest U-turn cover start date recorded

### 23) U-Turn Cover Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 1941

(Fukien 1941 Nov to US via HK, made U-turn to Canton, delivered 1943 Mar)

Incoming airmail cover China to US returned to China and delivered

Markings: Fukien 1941 Nov 17; Kweilin CDS Nov 28; boxed Retour; boxed No Service purple); Not Opened by Censor (purple); Victoria HK CDS Dec 1; Canton CDS 1942 Feb 13; Terrytown NY CDS 1943 Mar 9; Rate: \$1.25 (75c airmail to HK; 50c surface elsewhere); Made U-turn to Canton with a transit time of 16 months.



## 24) U-Turn Cover

Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 1941

(Bangkok via HK, U-turn back to Bangkok returned 1942 May)

Incoming Thailand to Manila Surface rate cover returned to Thailand

Markings:

Bangkok CDS 1941 Nov 21;  
Thai 1 in circle censor (purple); slogan postmark (purple); Victoria HK CDS Dec 1; boxed Retour; boxed No Service (purple); HK Censor tape; boxed 118 censor marking (purple); Returned Letter Section Thailand CDS 1942 May 9 (purple); with 2 notes; attached note in Thai: "return to Letterbox 115";  
Rate: 15 st. (surface rate);



Showing Thailand was treated as a "friendly country" and mail returned after Invasion

## 25) U-Turn Cover Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 1941

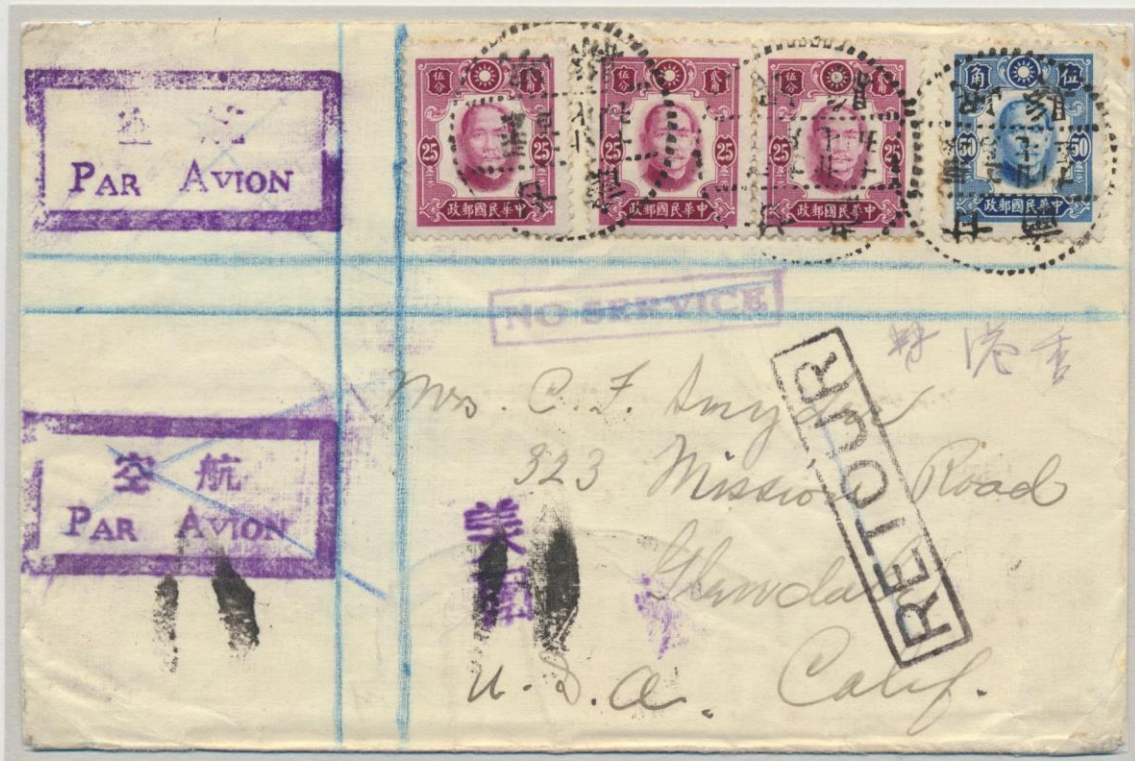
(Kansu 1941 Nov to US via HK, made U-turn to Canton, delivered 1943 Jan)

Incoming airmail cover China to US returned to China and delivered

Markings: Min Hsein 1941 Nov 27; boxed Retour; boxed No Service (purple); Victoria HK CDS Dec 7; marking used to indicate termination of airmail service (2 thick bars); Canton CDS 1942 Feb 14;

Rate: \$1.25 (75c airmail to HK; 50c surface elsewhere);

Handwritten in pencil on back: arrived in Cal. Jan. 1943.



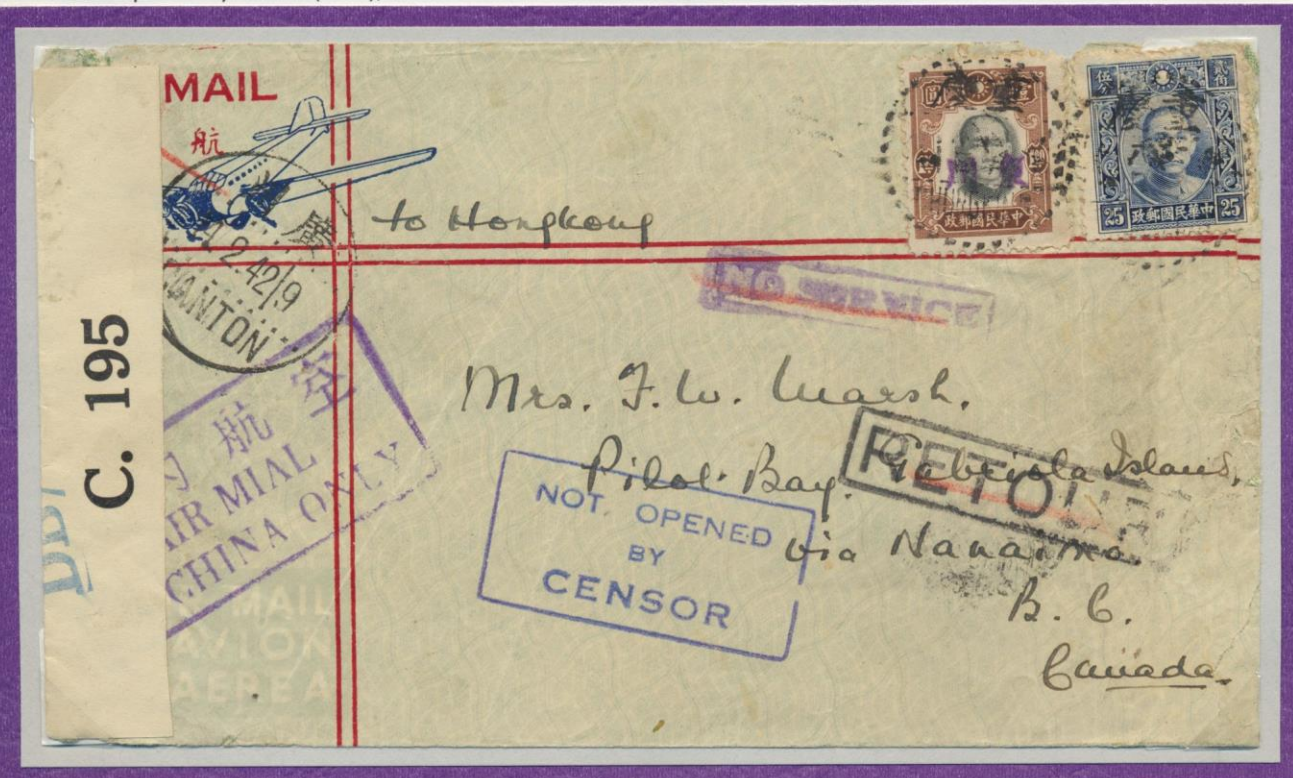
## 26) U-Turn Cover Dec 8<sup>th</sup> 1941

(Chungking 1941 Dec to Canada via HK, U-turn to Canton, delivered 1943 Mar)

Incoming airmail cover China to Canada returned to China and delivered

Markings: Chungking CDS 1941 Dec 8 10 AM; Chungking CDS Dec 8 9-11 AM time in Chinese; boxed Retour; boxed No Service (purple); Not Opened by censor (blue); Canton CDS 1942 Feb 14; Cabriola CDS 1943 Mar 11; Rate: \$1.25 (75c airmail within China, 50c surface);

(markings on back)



**Discovery Copy:** (with Detained cover #13) there was one flight that carried airmail into HK AFTER the start of Invasion  
Co-winner 2019 HK Study Circle Wilde Cup for New Discovery

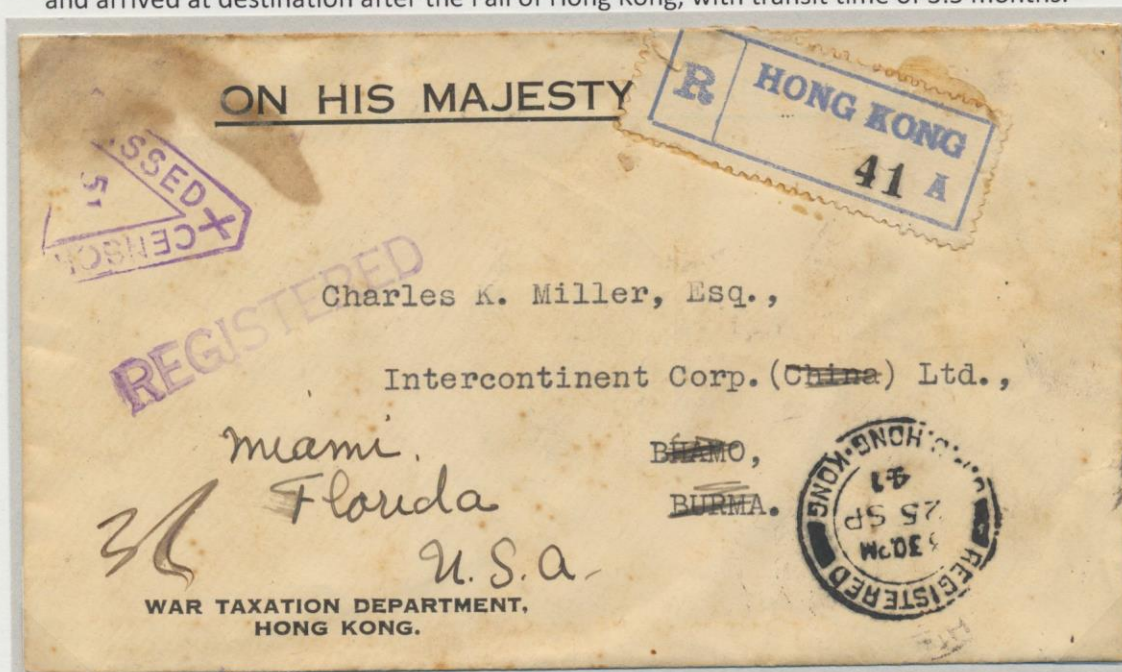
## 27) (Epilog) Delivered Registered Cover that traverse the Invasion

(HK 1941 Sep to Burma registered cover redirected to US, delivered 1942 Jan)

On Service registered cover to Burma redirected to US

Markings: Victoria HK CDS 1941 Sep 25; HK registration label; Bhamo regist. CDS Oct 15 and Oct 16; triangular Burma Censor #51 (purple); NY regist. oval 1942 Jan 3; Miami regist. CDS Jan 5 (purple); Rate: On Service;

Cover that was sent well before the Invasion in SEP, was sent east to Burma before redirected west to US and arrived at destination after the Fall of Hong Kong, with transit time of 3.5 months.



## EPILOG

### 28) Post Invasion First Service to Macau

(HK via Canton to Macau sent 1942 Feb 24, delivered Mar 4)

#### Surface rate cover to Macau

Markings: Japanese HK CDS 1942 Feb 24; Canton Roller (date unclear); Macau CDS Mar 4;

Rate: 20c (basic surface);

Sent on the first mail to Macau after Japanese resumed this postal service.



### 29) Post Invasion First Incoming Service

(Canton to HK sent 1941 Nov 29 delivered 1942 Feb?)

#### Incoming cover from Canton

Markings: Nam Hoi Postal Drawer (red); Tai Liu CDS 1941 Nov 29; Nam Hoi CDS Nov 30; Canton roller 1942 Jan 6;

Rate: 16c (2X basic surface);

Cover sent on the first mail from Canton into HK after Japanese resumed Post Service.

Ex. Peter Shek.

(copy of front)

