

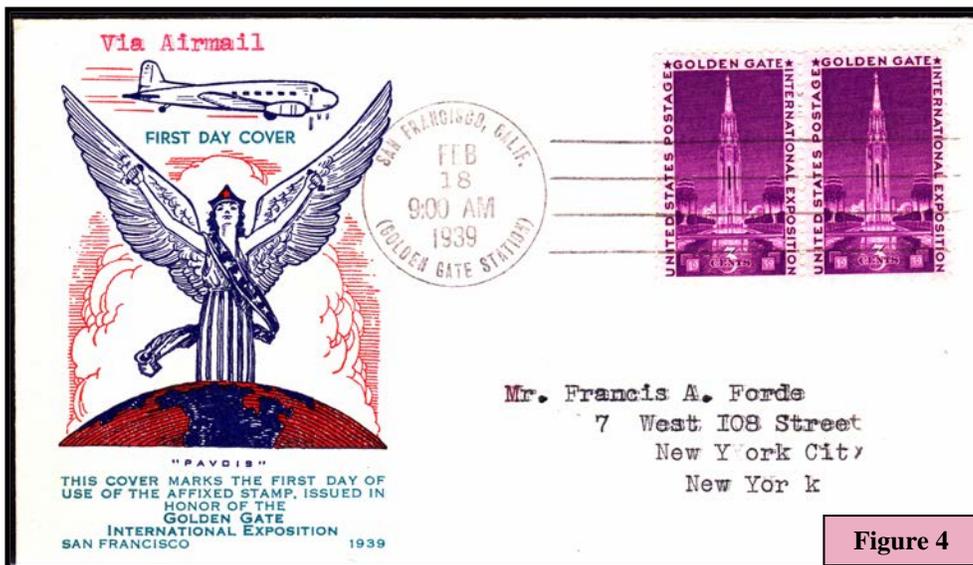
How Did I Get from a 1859 Navy Ship to the Golden Gate Bridge and Trans-Pacific Flights? by Phil Fettig

One of the most rewarding results from researching philatelic items to write for our newsletter is that you never know where you may end up. I know a lot of you believe I only think about Navy Submarines, but that is not true. However, I do have an interest in ships named after Florida and related locations. When I recently noticed a postcard on eBay with a 1909 USS PENSACOLA cancellation I got excited as that is a really early date. Cancellations for mail leaving ships first appeared in 1909 to document the crews departing on the Great White Fleet's "Around the World" cruise. **Figure (1) on Front Cover** shows the message side of the card along with the September 2, 1909 cancellation. I have to admit not knowing what type of ship this PENSACOLA was so research was in order. I found that she was the first of five U.S. Navy ships to be so named. The fact that totally amazed me was that this PENSACOLA was a screw powered steamer built in 1859!

She fought in the Civil War taking part in blockades in the Gulf of Mexico. By the time this card was mailed in 1909, this tired old ship was serving as a "Receiving Ship". That means it was stripped down and stayed moored in one spot to be used as a floating barracks for sailors staying short term in the area. In this case, the writer was notifying a lady friend of his pending departure on a world cruise on board a Navy Battleship. **Figure (2) on Front Cover** is the other side of the card and shows the U.S. Naval Training School on Yerba Buena Island in San Francisco Bay. Since I didn't know anything about either the school or island, I kept looking and that is where it got really interesting for me.

During the 1930s several events made the need for additional space on or near the island to become apparent. Commercial seaplane flights were making longer trips and the planes were getting bigger. The Navy needed more space and a location for a possible celebration of the completion of the Golden Gate Bridge in the future needed to be located. This resulted in a dredging project that added approximately 400 acres to a rocky shoal area near Yerba Buena Island which was named Treasure Island. This man-made island became the home of the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition

Figure (3) on Front Cover shows a postcard view of the Exposition. **Figure (4)** is a first day cover of Scott 852, the stamp issued February 18, 1939, to honor the expo. The cancellation is from the special Golden Gate Station. **Figures (5) & (6)** are 2 examples of the labels or stickers that were privately designed for the exposition. Now, go back and look at **Figure (3) on Front Cover**



again and look for the large seaplane at the right. It is a Pan American Clipper aircraft which was built by Boeing. These sturdy aircraft were the workhorse that moved the mail in the mid to late 1930s and part of the 1940s. The flights that traveled across the Pacific from San Francisco left from the terminal at the exposition. **Figure (7)** shows a cover flown on route FAM19-1 to Auckland, New Zealand on July 12, 1940. It is back stamped from Auckland on September 18, 1940.



Figure 5

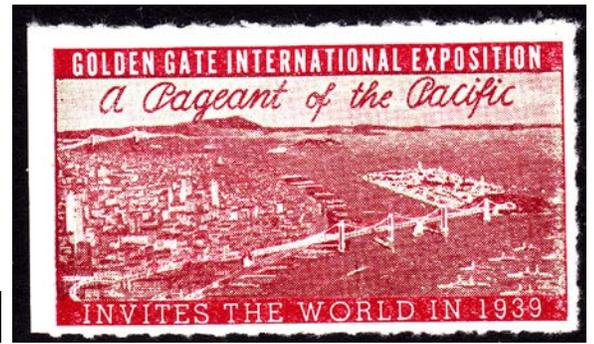


Figure 6

Figure (8) shows a 1966 view of U.S. Naval Station, Treasure Island, CA. If you compare the view to that of **Figure (3) on Front Cover**, there is evidence of some of the original buildings and structures from the 1939 exposition. The base was selected for closure in the 1990s during the same process in which we lost Naval Training Center, Orlando. Both bases were turned over to civilian commercial use.



Figure 7

So ends my journey, one that traveled back to the Civil War and up to the present. Projects like this can be a challenge – hopefully you might give this a try and see where some philatelic object can take you. Now the only question refers back to the original postcard. I wonder, did Miss Lucy write back soon to Sailor Carl before he went off to find new girlfriends in other ports?

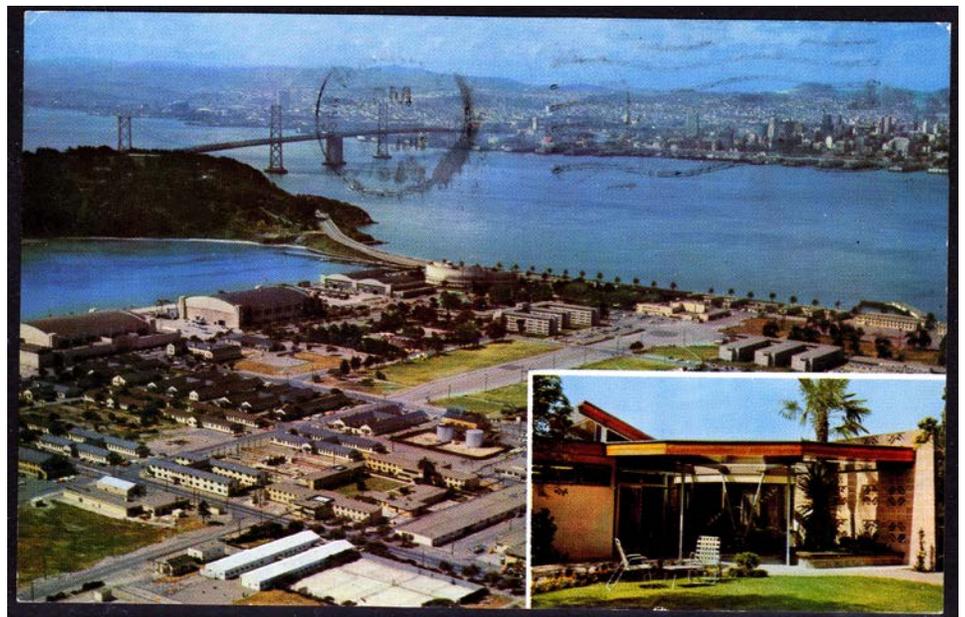


Figure 8