

"Naval Covers" for AFDCS Chapter 56

USCS "Log" and www.navalcovermuseum.org

"A Naval Cover is any envelope, postcard, or other postal medium that is mailed from or somehow related to a navy ship, location, or event. Beginning in 1908, post offices were established on board U.S. Navy ships and each ship had one or more postmarks to "cancel" the stamps used on the cover. The postmark, or cancellation, would usually have the ship's name and the date that the cover was cancelled.

Starting in the 1930's, covers with printed designs, called cachets, began appearing and established a large following. Many different cachets were designed and sent to various ships to be cancelled and mailed. Some cachets were designed for a specific ship while others were generic (perhaps for a holiday or commemorating an historical event) and sent to many different ships. World War II severely curtailed the creation and distribution of cachets and while covers with cachets are still created today, the phenomenon has never regained its pre-war level of enthusiasm."

Navy covers sometimes also include covers associated with Coast Guard ships, Army Transport Ships, or Civilian ships such as Passenger Liners or Merchant Marine vessels.

Naval covers are often divided into "Sailor's Mail" or "Philatelic Navy Covers"

Sailor's Mail.....Sailor's Mail is pretty much what it says. Letters written from Navy personnel aboard ship or from Naval bases. These can be identified either by the postmark or the return address. Sailor's Mail can be cacheted or decorated, but is more often plain envelopes or postcards.

Philatelic Mail..... Covers submitted for cancellation primarily for collecting and not for correspondence. Some collectors are adamant about only collecting "Sailor's Mail", but most collector's cross back and forth.

Different areas of collecting Navy covers

1. Special posts such as Free Mail.
2. Censored Mail
3. V Mail--- no examples
4. Specific Ship..... Collector's may want covers on a ship they served on, or their father served on, and with the coming generation will add that their mother served on. For example here are covers from the USS Texas BB 35 which commissioned in 1914; Please note that the postmarks change during the life of a ship, and this is an important factor in the value of a cover. There are several catalogs published by the USCS to identify the various cancels according to size and shape of the cancellation dies.
5. Type of ship, for example Nuclear powered submarines, Hospital Ships.
6. Geographic Location, such as the Panama Canal, Crossing the Equator, or a specific Navy Yard.
7. Specific Dates such as the Anniversary of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Navy Day (October 27)
8. Single Day or Longer term events such as Great White Fleet covers. The Great White Fleet was the fleet of American war ships sent around the world by President Teddy Roosevelt to promote American Naval Power.
9. Navy Official Mail
10. Sunk Mail and other tragedies
11. Special Cancels to denote Launchings, Commissioning's or Anniversaries
12. Space Covers connected to Navy recovery ships
13. Polar Covers
14. FDCs with Naval Themes
15. FDCs postmarked on naval vessels.
16. Unofficial First Days postmarked in ship post offices.
17. FAKED U/O FDCs canceled aboard a naval ship