

Eastern Province Postal History

By: Willie King

Note

The two red bars applied to the VIA AIR MAIL markings on the envelopes shown on pages 12 to 14, indicating the termination of air transmission, were probably applied in London. This obviously affects the stated routings.

These markings, known as 'Jusqu'a Airmail Markings' were studied by Ian McQueen and detailed in his books:

Jusqu'a Airmail Markings (A Study) 1993, Published by W.A.Page FRPSL, ISBN 0951464329

Jusqu'a Airmail Markings (A Study) 1995 Supplement, Published by W.A.Page FRPSL, ISBN 0951464337 & ISBN 9780951464328

Saudi Arabia

Eastern Province Airmails 1936-1942

An agreement was signed in May 1933 between the Saudi Finance minister and the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL) gave them the concession to search for oil in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

A new subsidiary Californian Arabian Standard Oil Company (CASOC) was assigned that task. CASOC and many of their employees were based almost half way round the world from the potential oilfields in the Eastern Province – 170 degrees of longitude!

Communications between company HQ and their field staff and, that staff with family members was clearly was going to be important.

Whilst airmail was developing rapidly on land routes in the mid-1930's the problems of crossing either the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans still had to be resolved.

This exhibit traces the development of airmail communications which had to cross either the Atlantic or the Pacific oceans and to avoid war zones.

Employee mail was organized by the company and the return address was their office in Bahrain. Also note the manuscript notations on front of envelope recording the charge paid by employees (Rupees/Annas/Pies – sheets 5-12)

- 1936>1939** : It was 1938 before oil was actually found in Arabia so initially only a few geologists and drillers were present and mail was taken to Bahrain to join the airmail route. Mail by air was flown to Paris then by ship to New York and Air mail across USA. (Sheets 2-4)
- Early 1940** : War in Europe closes the air route via Europe and mail is rerouted. (Sheets 5-7)
- 1940>41** : Pacific Airmail route is preferred via Hong Kong and even New Zealand. (Sheets 8-12).
- Nov. 1941** : Saudi require outgoing mail to be routed through PO in Al Khobar.
- Nov 1941** : A scarce letter via Al Khobar PO - just before Pacific route closes in December 1941 (Sheet 13)
- Jan 1942** : Airmail route crossing from Khartoum to Lagos becomes the route of choice (Sheets 14-16)

- Key Events :**
- April 1935 : Drilling began on 1st well
 - March 1938 : Oil struck In Arabia – well No 7.
 - Sept. 1939 : WWII begins in Europe
 - June 1940 : France Falls and Italy Joins War
 - Oct. 1940 : Italian Aircraft from Rhodes bomb Bahrain and Dhahran.
 - April 1941 : Coup in Iraq who join Germany. Al Habbaniyah airport closed
 - Dec. 1941 : Japan attack Pearl Harbour and Hong Kong.
 - 1942 : Oil field activity curtailed until 1945. Families and most staff evacuated.
 - Sept. 1945 : First oil shipment from Arabia.

- Refs :** Airmail Operations During WWII by T.H. Boyle, Published by American Air Mail Society
Contributors noted are R. Beith & W. Colley.
Random Notes - Journal of Arabian Philatelic Assoc.
ARAMCO & its World. Official company history

Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

August 1935 : Sea Mail To Kansas City via Bahrain

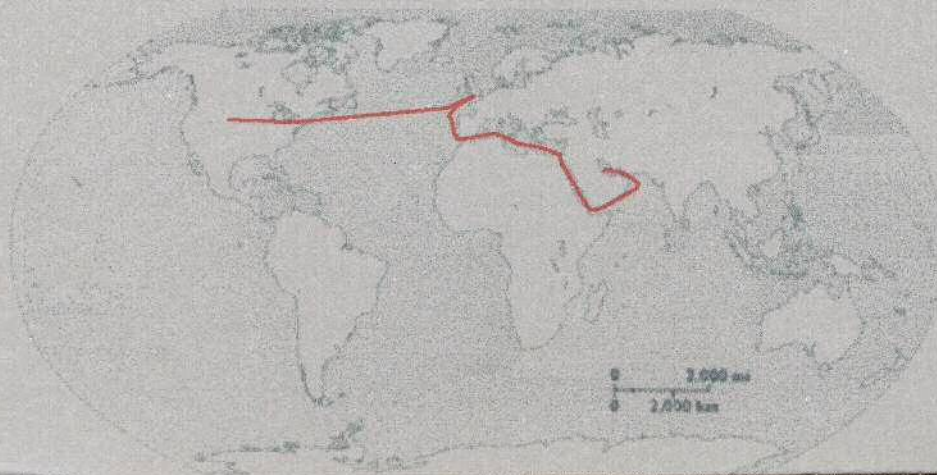
Cancel : Bahrain 12th August 1935

Rate : 3 Annas 6 Pies

Route Instruction "Seamail" by sender

Note fully explained return address

**Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by sea
probably via Suez Canal and Grat Britain
to New York and then on to Kansas City**



M. H. Wilson
Calif-Arabian S.O. Co.
Al Khober
Saudi Arabia
Via Bahrein Island
Persian Gulf.



Mildred Brown

1409 Walnut St.

Kansas City, Missouri

U. S. A.

SEAMAIL

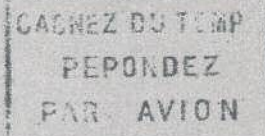
Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

July 1936 : To California via Bahrain and Paris

Cancel : Bahrain July 18th 1936

Rate : 9annas 6 Pies

Route Mark : Paris Avion 24-VII-1936 (on reverse)

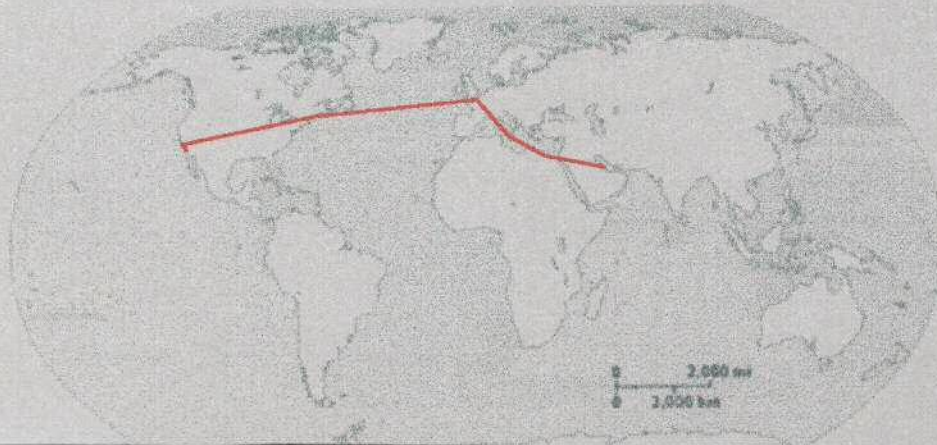


Route Instruction "Par Avion : New York to San Francisco" was probably applied by the oil exploration company – Californian Standard Oil Company.

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by air to Paris

By sea to New York

By air to San Francisco and then to Redondo Beach in Los Angeles



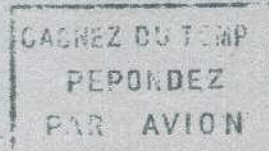
Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

January 1937 : To California via Bahrain and Paris

Cancel : Bahrain January 9th 1937

Rate : 9annas 6 Pies

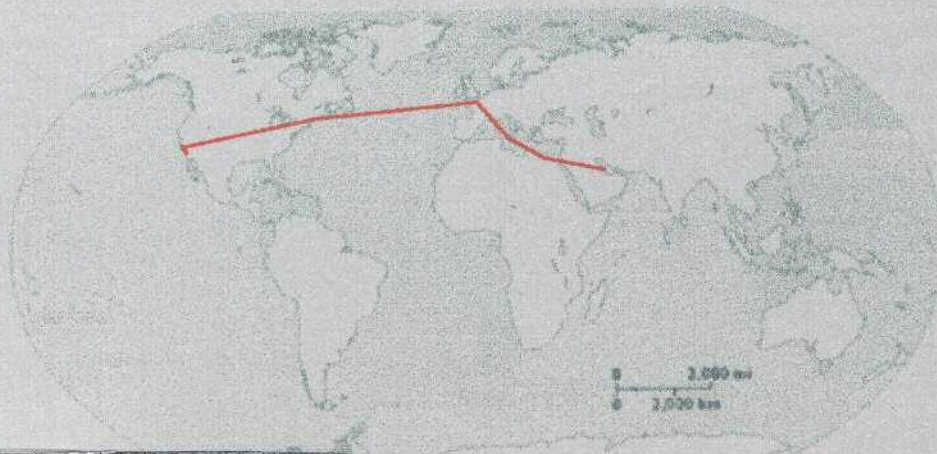
Route Mark : Paris Avion 15-I-1937 (on reverse)



Route Instruction "By Imperial Airways Ltd Via Bagdad & London" was written by the sender – R. A. Bramkamp of CASOC.

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by air to Paris
By sea to New York

By air to San Francisco and then to Banning, just east of Los Angeles



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

November 1937 : Sea Mail To California via Bahrain

Cancel : Bahrain November 4th 1937

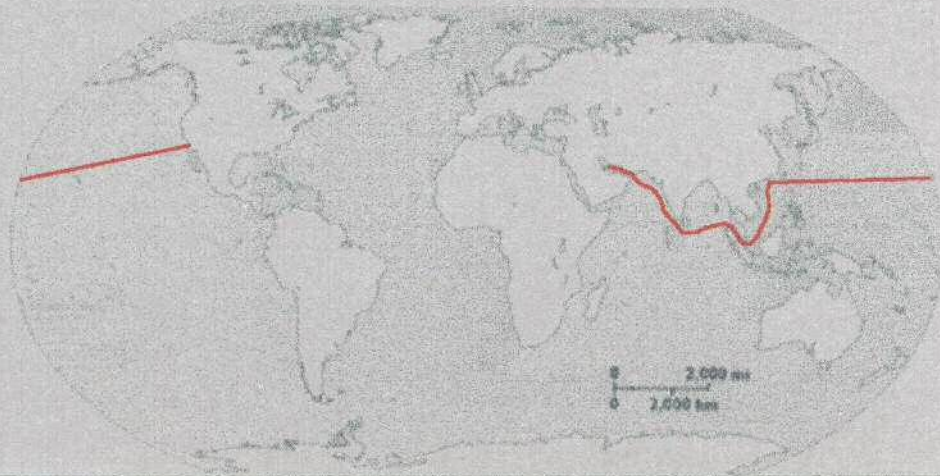
Rate : 3 annas 6 Pies

Route Marks : Taft, California Jan 6th 1938 and on reverse on 11th and 18th January
Bakersfield 11th? and Maricopa 18th? + two purple 'Unclaimed' marks.

Route Instruction "Regular Mail" ie by sea mail by sender - M Scott, Al Khobar Saudi Arabia.

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by sea probably via Bombay and via far east to California.
Then to Taft, a town about 50 miles north of Los Angeles, not found there they tried Bakersfield to the east
and finally Maricopa just south of Taft.

Sea Mail Transit time to California ~ 8 weeks.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

November 1938 : Air Mail To California via Bahrain

Cancel : Bahrain illegible but manuscript February 16th 1938

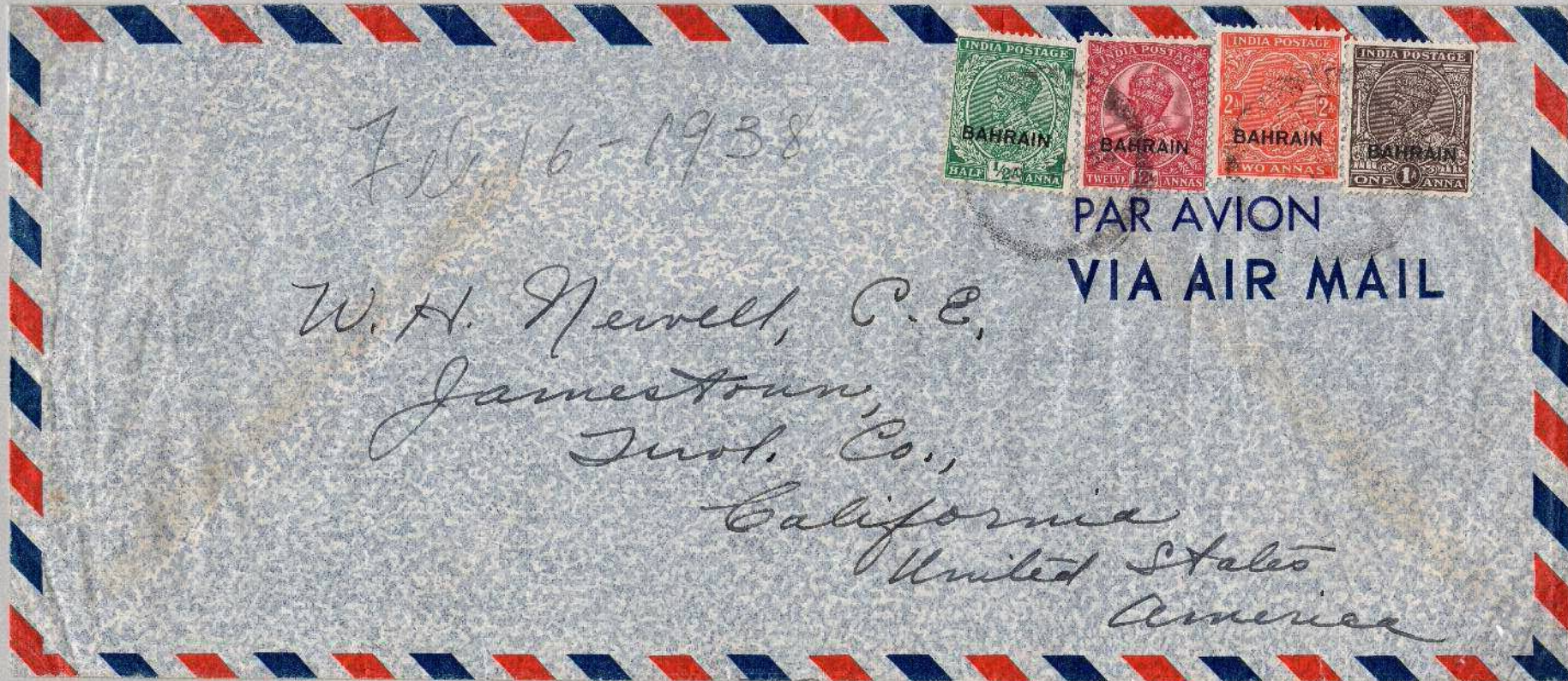
Rate : 15 annas 6 Pies

Route Marks : Received Jamestown March 1938 on reverse.

No routing Instructions



Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by air via Europe. Jamestown is outside San Francisco on route to Yellowstone National Park



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

December 1938 : To Dutch East Indies via Bahrain

Cancel : Bahrain December 1938? Donaldson Type 8

Rate : 9 Annas 6 Pies

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by air to Batavia



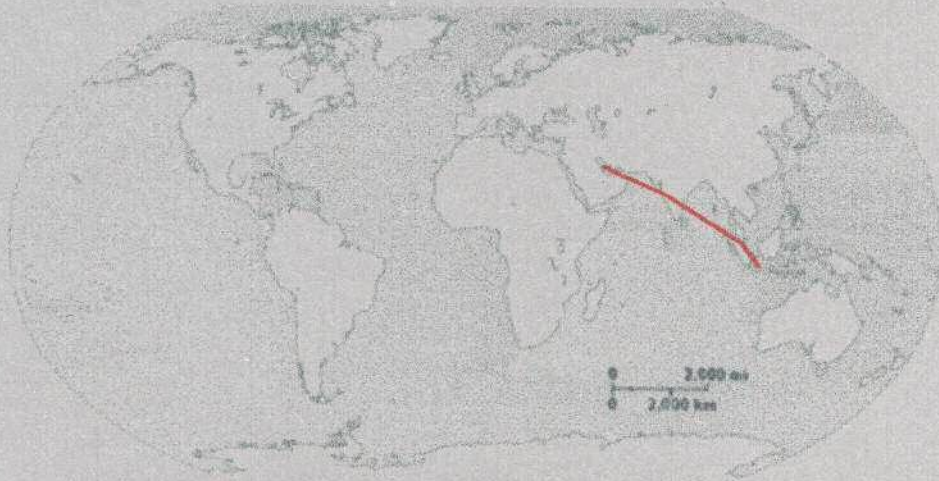
Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

December 1938 : To Dutch East Indies via Bahrain

Cancel : Bahrain December 1938 Donaldson Type 8

Rate : 9 Annas 6 Pies

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by air to Batavia – now Jakarta.
KLM flew mail regularly to Dutch East Indies from 1934



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

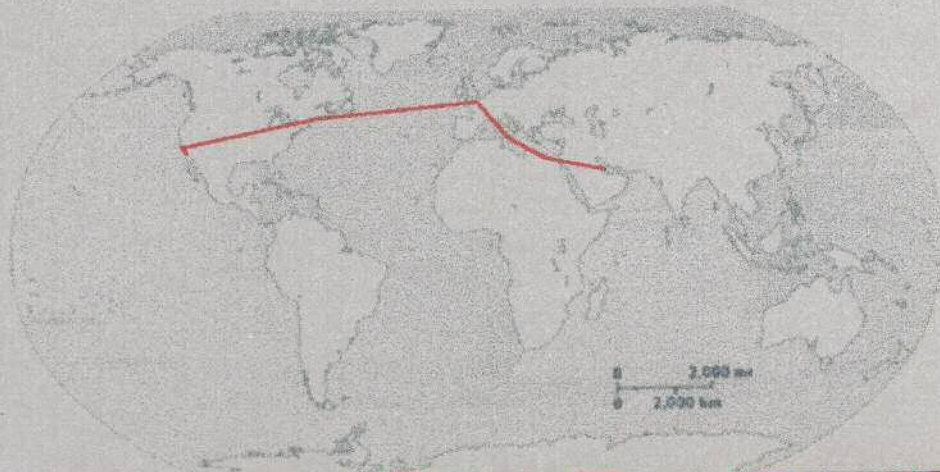
May 1939 : To California via Bahrain and Europe

Cancel : Bahrain 7th May 1939

Rate : 9 annas 6 Pies

Written instructions added : *'Europe and America'* VIA AIR MAIL
Implying only those sections were expected to be by air.

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by air to Europe
By sea to New York, by air to San Francisco



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

December 1939 : To Oregon via Bahrain and Europe

Cancel : Bahrain December 1939

Rate : 1 Rupee 5 annas 6 Pies

This increase in rate would appear to be associated with the introduction of the Trans-Atlantic clipper flights which began in late June/July 1939 between New York and Southampton and New York and Marseilles.

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then by air to Europe, Trans-Atlantic Clipper and by air across USA



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

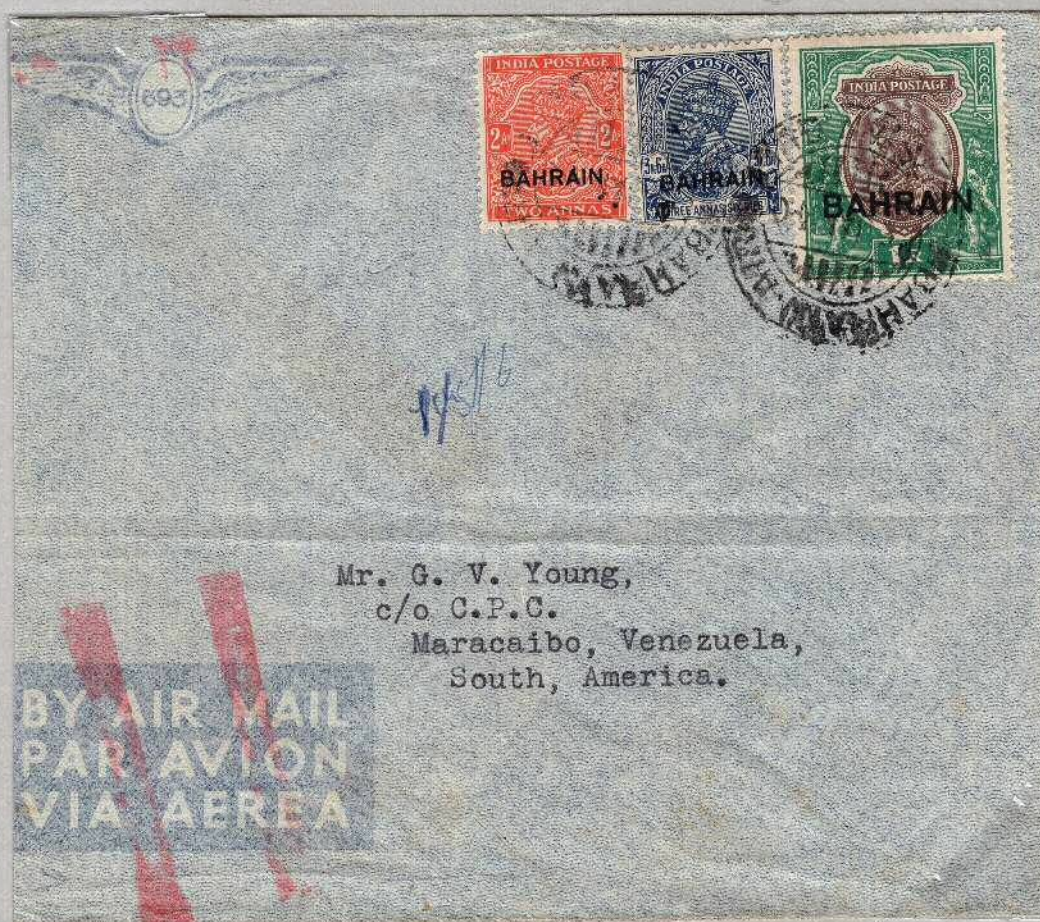
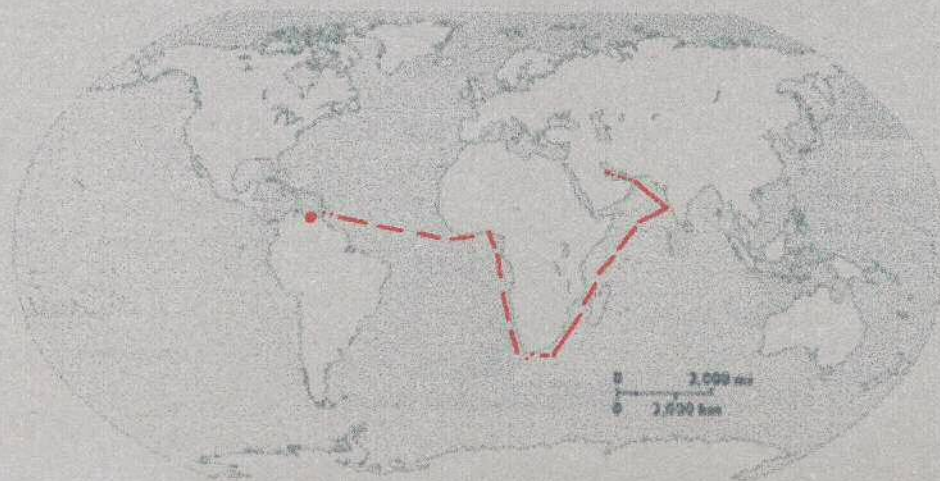
January 1940 : To Venezuela

Cancel : Bahrain 6th January 1940

Rate : 1 Rupee 5 annas 6 Pies

Although the Trans-Atlantic clipper rate was paid the air mail was cancelled as indicated by the twin red bars.
The transit time of 47 days is indicated by a receipt stamp on the back of 22nd February 1940

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then unknown, however
a possible sea route is indicated to avoid WW II hostilities in the Mediterranean.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

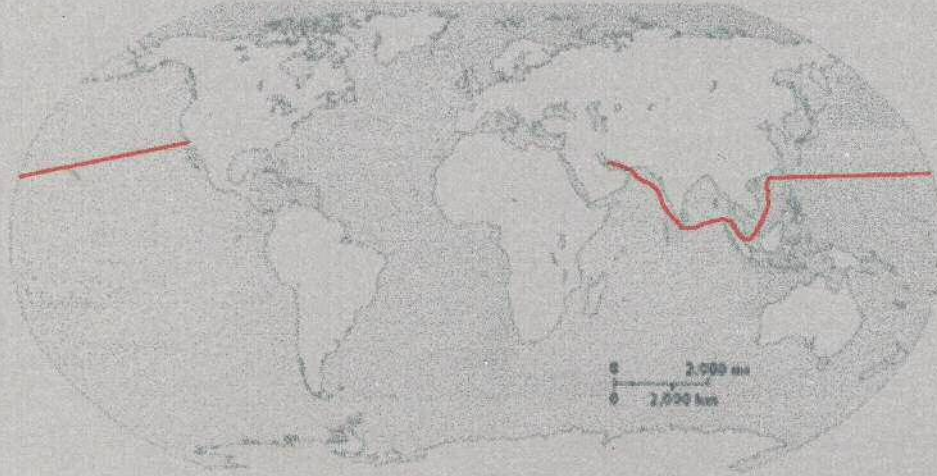
January 1940 : To California

Cancel : Bahrain 11th January 1940

Rate : 1 Rupee 5 annas 6 Pies

Although the Trans-Atlantic clipper rate was paid the air mail was cancelled as indicated by the twin red bars.

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then unknown, however probably by sea mail via Far East to avoid WW II hostilities in the Mediterranean.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

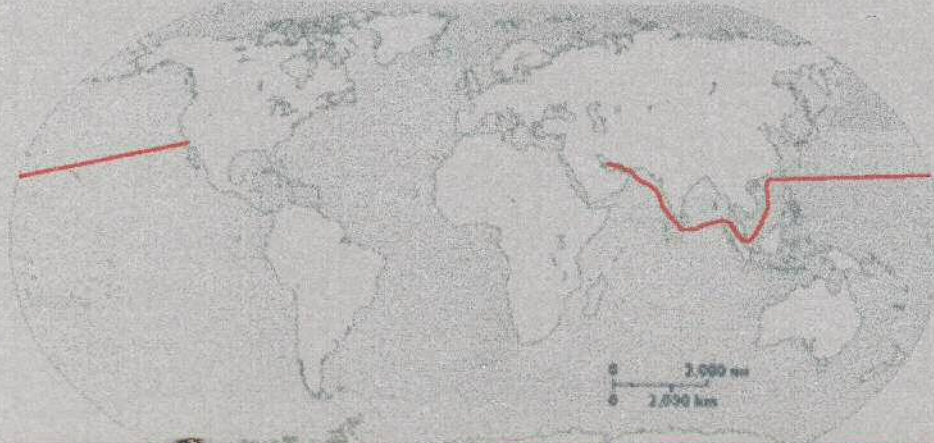
February 1940 : To California

Cancel : Bahrain 5th February 1940

Rate : 1 Rupee 5 annas 6 Pies

Although the Trans-Atlantic clipper rate was paid the air mail was cancelled as indicated by the twin red bars.

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain and then unknown, however probably by sea mail via Far East to avoid WW II hostilities in the Mediterranean.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

June 1940 : To Texas via Hong Kong

Cancel : Bahrain 30th June 1940

Rate : 2 Rupees 11 annas 6 Pies

Following the closure of the Trans-Atlantic clipper routes the mail was now directed
"Via India & Hong Kong to USA"

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain, then by 'Horseshoe Route' to Bangkok.
To Hong Kong where it was censored and dated July 4th 1940.

Then by the Trans-Pacific Clipper to San Francisco.

Finally it was flown to Texas where it was received on July 20th – a 21 day transit.

It was cancelled in Taft and redirected to Alice about 60 miles away.

Both towns not far from the Gulf of Mexico coastline in south of Texas.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

July 1940 : To California via Hong Kong

Cancel : Bahrain July 1940

Rate : 2 Rupees 11 annas 6 Pies

"Via India - Hong Kong - USA"

Note rate 2-11-6 and directions in same handwriting as cover to Texas

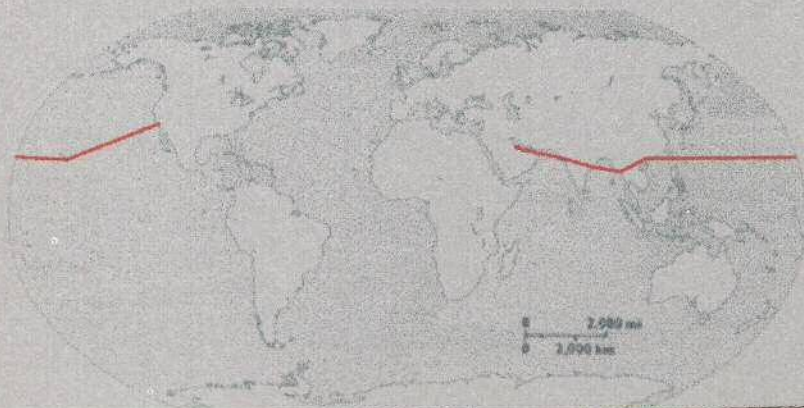
- rate & route instructions apparently appended by CASOC agent.

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain, then by 'Horseshoe Route' to Bangkok.

To Hong Kong where it was opened, censored and dated July 25th 1940.

Then by the Trans-Pacific Clipper to San Francisco.

La Habra is South of Los Angeles



**OPENED BY CENSOR
HONG KONG**



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

August 1940 : To California via Hong Kong

Cancel : Bahrain 5th August 1940

Rate : 2 Rupees 11 annas 6 Pies

Note the 8 annas Mail Lorry is very scarce .

“Via China Clipper”

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain,
purple Bahrain Censor – very scarce as normally only used on westbound mail
then by ‘Horseshoe Route’ to Bangkok.

To Hong Kong where it was again censored and dated August 19th. 1940.

Then by the Trans-Pacific Clipper to San Francisco and on to Los Angeles.

Manuscript on reverse notes received Sept. 9th.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

November 1940 : To California via Hong Kong

Cancel : Bahrain November 1940

Rate : 2 Rupees 11 Annas 6 Pies

"Pacific Clipper via Hong Kong"

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain,
by 'Horseshoe Route' to Bangkok.

To Hong Kong where it was dated November 27th. 1940 prior to being censored by censor 47.
Then by the Trans-Pacific Clipper to San Francisco and on to Fullerton near Los Angeles.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

February to July 1941 : Around the World?

Cancel : College Station Texas 10th February 1941

Bahrain 2nd July 1941

Rate : Unknown as stamp missing

Question What route from Texas to Bahrain?

It was then censored twice on way back to California via South Africa

Route : College Station : Post mark February 10th 1941 over Air Mail sticker.

Route to Arabia – Via Hong Kong ? Justification : Only open Route Feb 1941

Mr Gentry had gone or not returned from leave so following cachet applied Under S African tape

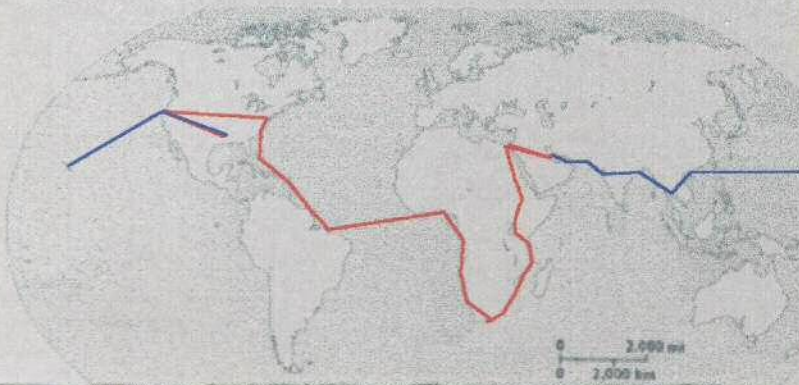
“Dispatched by Air to
Exchange Office”

Note delay of 3 months could easily be explained until Bahrain Cancel

Which is UNDER the British triangular C16 censor – India or Egypt? I thought India

Then to South Africa?

Arrived in California where redirected to Texas – well El Paso is in Texas!



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

August 1941 : To California via New Zealand

Cancel : Bahrain 6th. August 1941

Rate : 2 Rupees 15 Annas 6 Pies

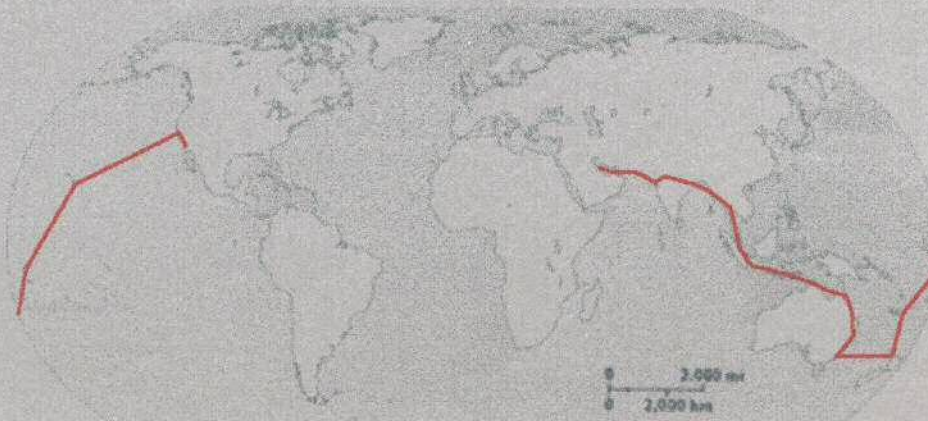
Includes the very scarce 12 annas Clipper Mail Plane

Via B.O.A.C. to Auckland
Pan American Airways
to Sanfrancisco

Scan of second cachet on reverse of cover

Route : Company Launch to Bahrain,

by 'Horseshoe Route' to Calcutta where probably censored then via Bangkok, Singapore Darwin, Brisbane and Sydney to Auckland. Then by Trans-Pacific Clipper to San Francisco finally to Los Angeles where manuscript receipt for Sept 5th. 1941. Transit time 30 days.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

**November 1941 : To California via Hong Kong
Via Bahrain, Singapore and China Clipper to California**

Cancel : Al Khobar 13th November 1941

Rate : 30½ Guerche + Tax

Rate for ½oz Trans-Pacific Clipper route via Singapore

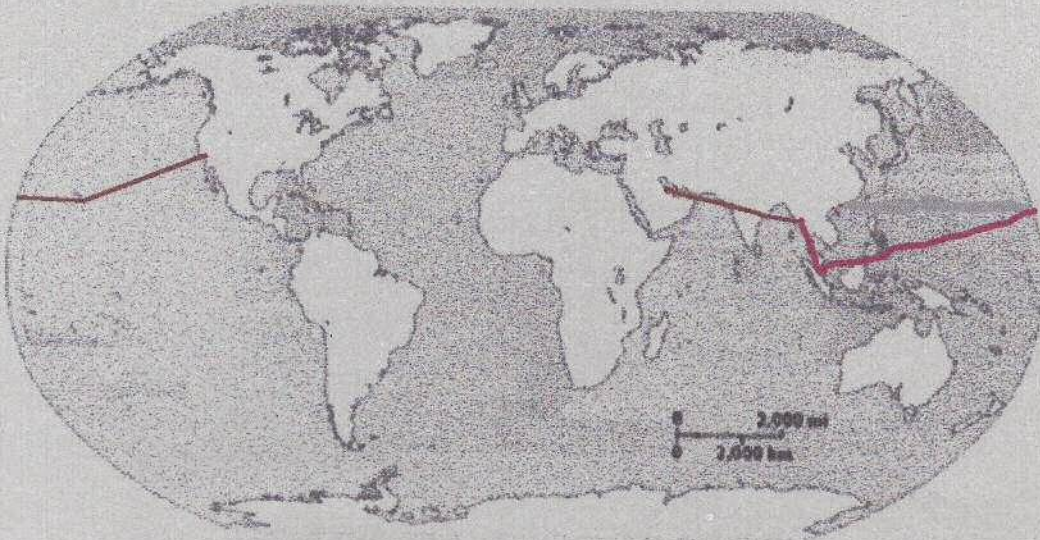
Very scarce usage as Casoc 'instructed' to use Saudi instead of Bahrain mail from November
Trans-Pacific airmail route closed down on 7th December 1941.

(Actually last 'Pacific' clipper left Singapore on 30th November)

Censor : "Examined by 1575"

Route : Boat to Bahrain and then BOAC to India and Singapore

Pan Am clipper across the Pacific to San Francisco



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

January 1945 : To Scotland via Lagos and USA?

Cancel : 27th January 1945 American Base Forces APO 816 (in Bahrain)

Cancel is APAI type 3

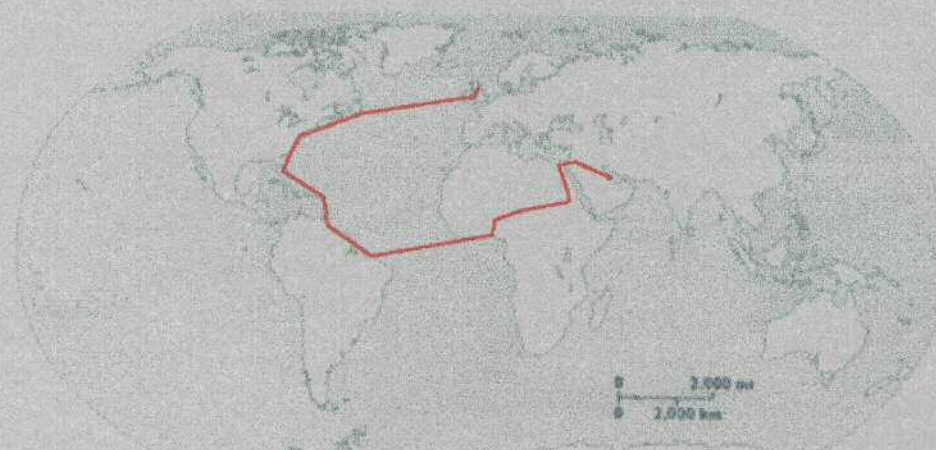
Rate : 6ct + 24ct added = 30 Cents Air Mail USA to Scotland

There are reports that the American Forces mail could be used by Aramco Employees from American Army Post Offices in Basra and later in Persia. However APO 816 transferred to Bahrain on June 14 1944 and a formal return address cachet appeared for a "Civilian Employee". The first date recorded by APAI is Sept 1944. These were ALL in the standard 6 cent envelopes. This unusually was a family letter to a Scottish address. However it is the correct air mail rate for USA to UK.

This unusual cover is recorded in Arabian Philatelic Journal *Random Notes No. 58 p14*.

Route : The route is probably as follows : Company Launch to Bahrain, by 'Horseshoe Route' to Cairo, Khartoum, then land bridge across to Lagos, then by Trans Atlantic Clipper to South America, West Indies up to New York and then back across the Atlantic to Scotland.

Censor : Transparent US censor 'OPENED BY U.S. EXAMINER' and Passed by Base 0751 Army Examiner.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

April 1945 : To Seattle from Egypt

Cancel : 8th April 1945 Heliopolis

Note return address is Arabian American Oil Co. Dhahran via Bahrein Island
And may be from oil worker on a short local leave.

Route : The route is probably as follows from Cairo to Khartoum, then land bridge across to Lagos, then by Trans Atlantic Clipper to South America, West Indies and up to New York.

There is no evidence the shorter route via UK was yet open.

Censor : Egyptian censor tape and two different Egyptian censors and also transparent US censor 'Examined by 30724 with purple gable end cancels 1 and 15.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

June 1945 : To Oregon using APO

Cancel : 4th June 1945 American Base Forces APO 816 (in Bahrain)

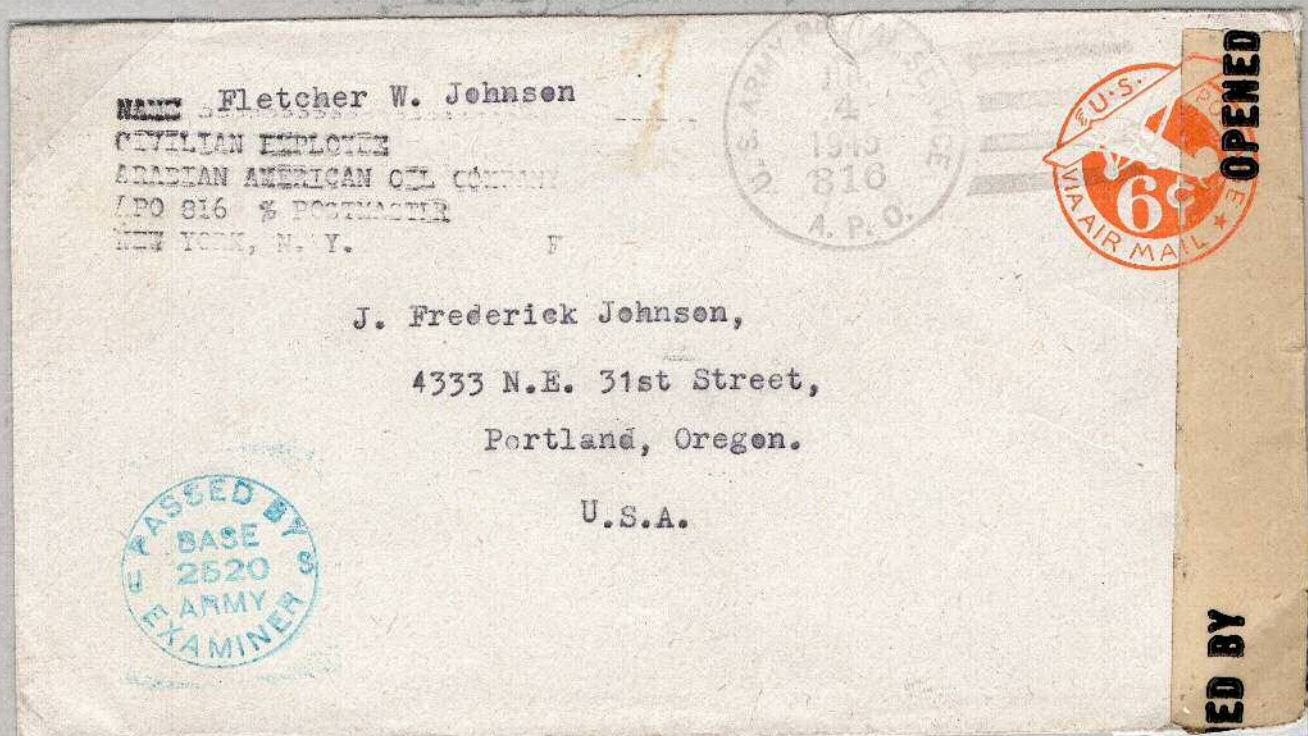
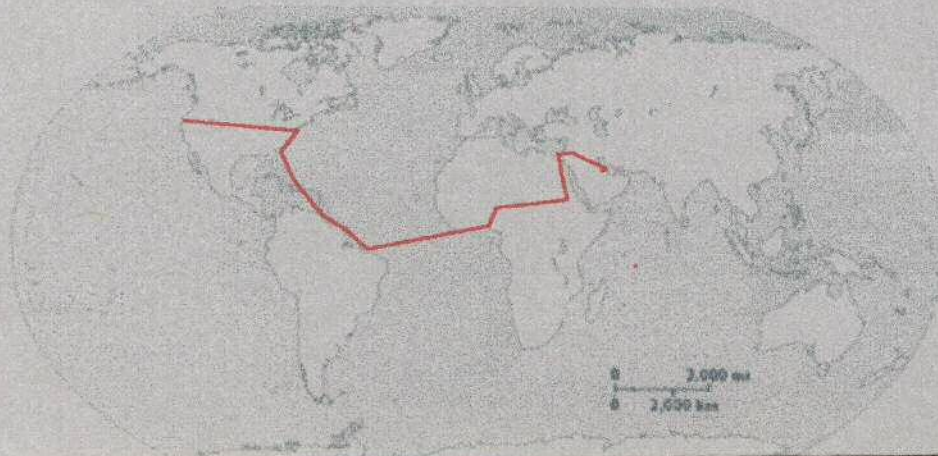
APAI cancel Type 2 Reads US Army Postal Service and APO only

The 816 forms part of the central date slug.

Rate : 6ct USA internal rate

Route : The route is probably as follows : Company Launch to Bahrain, by 'Horseshoe Route' to Cairo, Khartoum, then land bridge across to Lagos, then by Trans Atlantic Clipper to South America, West Indies up to New York and then on to Oregon.

Censor : Transparent US censor 'OPENED BY U.S. EXAMINER' and Passed by Base 0751 Army Examiner.



Saudi Arabia : Eastern Province Postal History

June 1945 : To California using APO

Cancel : 4th June 1945 Army Base Forces PO 816 (in Bahrain)

APAI cancel Type 3

Rate : 6ct USA internal rate

Route : The route is probably as follows : Company Launch to Bahrain, by 'Horseshoe Route' to Cairo, Khartoum, then land bridge across to Lagos, then by Trans Atlantic Clipper to South America, West Indies up to New York and then on to California.

Censor : Transparent US censor 'OPENED BY U.S. EXAMINER' and Passed by Base 2538 Army Examiner.

