

Little-Known Pearl Harbor Ships – without postal facilities –

Background: Most collectors are familiar with the larger Pearl Harbor ships—those that had their own post office and cancellation device. But there were many others present, smaller little-known Navy, Coast Guard, Army, and civilian ships that did not have postal facilities. These ships are the focus of this exhibit.

More than a place, Pearl Harbor was an event, and on December 7, 1941 attacking Japanese planes also bombed and strafed other nearby locations, which included ships near the channel entrance at the Section Base at Bishops Point, and at Honolulu Harbor. The lesser-known ships at these locations, both military and civilian, were of a diverse type ranging from tugs and net tenders, yard oilers, dredges, civilian freighters, and even a derrick barge. Mail associated with any of these vessels is seldom seen. This exhibit currently has examples from all of these ships for which a cover is known to exist, however new discoveries are still possible.

Several covers in the exhibit are unique, representing the only known example. Some are the first covers found for a known Pearl Harbor ship. In a few cases, the ship itself is a new discovery, identified through original research, along with the associated cover(s).

Purpose and Scope: To present covers from Pearl Harbor ships that did not have onboard postal facilities. It includes rare covers from Navy, Army, and civilian ships not usually seen in other exhibits.

Importance: How mail was handled for these little-known Pearl Harbor ships is unexplored territory for collectors. Many were working vessels with a small crew, all lacking postal facilities, which makes cover examples especially scarce. Despite this problem, for the Navy ships especially, this exhibit provides a first glimpse of how they handled mail.

Treatment & Organization: The exhibit focuses on three general locations where Navy ships and other vessels were moored at the time of the attack. It begins at [Pearl Harbor](#) itself, then moves to the [Section Base at Bishops Point](#), and finally to [Honolulu Harbor](#). Examples include little-known Navy, Coast Guard, Army, and civilian ships that did not have an onboard post office at that time.

- Each page has a **Gray Box** stating the general location of the ship, and whether military or civilian.
- Important or scarce covers have a double-line border. A **Light Gold Box** is used to mark new cover discoveries.

1 Pearl Harbor Navy Yard – Located just across from Battleship Row, this was the general location of Navy tugs and other yard craft, including the small yard oilers.

2 Section Base at Bishops Point – The Navy coastal minesweepers, net tenders, and patrol craft were based here.

3 Honolulu Harbor – Coast Guard vessels were based here, as were Army tugs, Army Engineer vessels, and various commercial civilian ships.

