

The World's Capital - The United Nations Headquarters

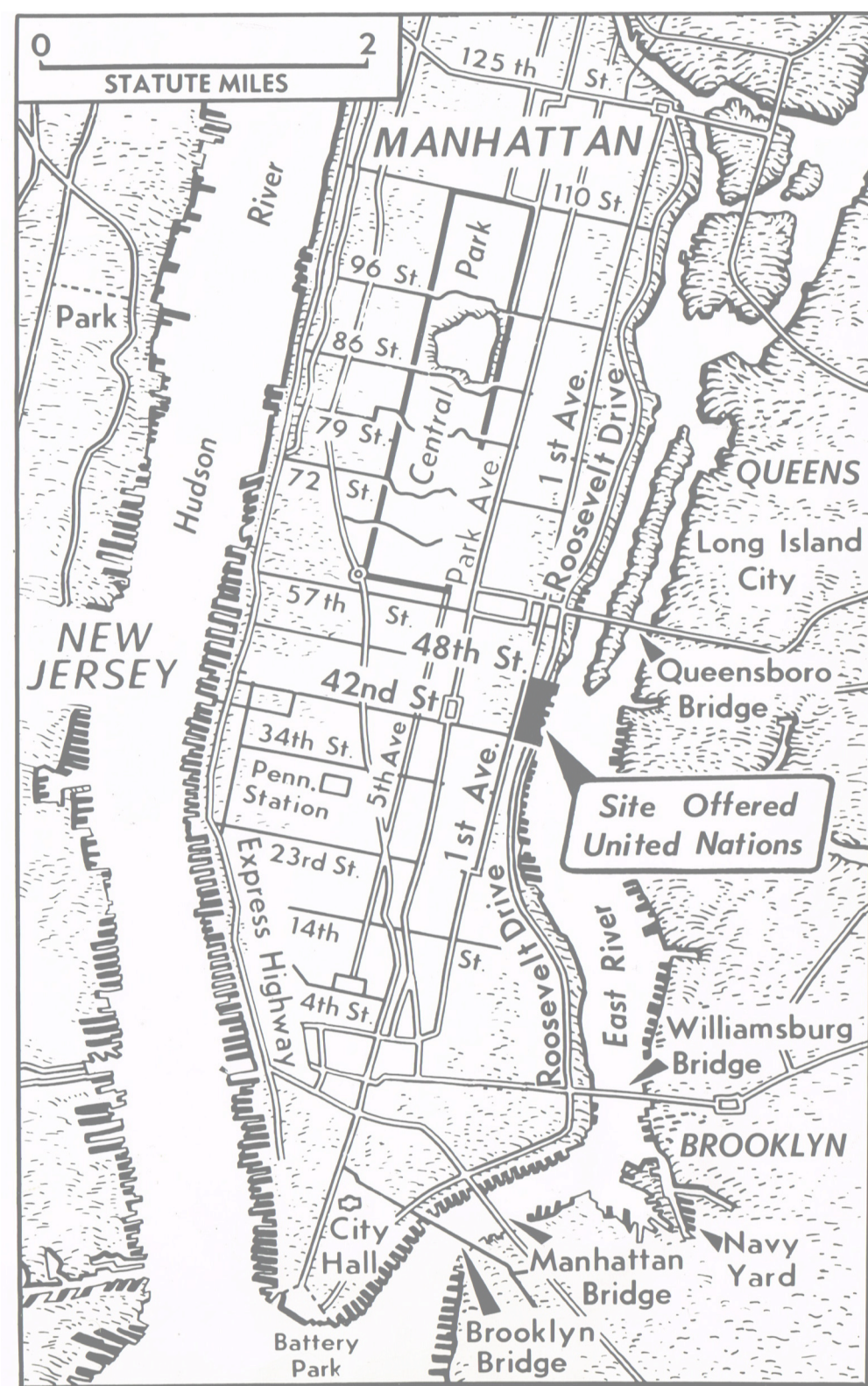
Introduction

This Display Class exhibit is a historical study of the development of the United Nations (UN) Headquarters. Commencing with the struggles of the fledgling organization at temporary sites, to the agreement for a permanent headquarters on Manhattan's East Side. The exhibit takes us on a unique journey into the events that created the UN as we know it today. We begin with the initial concept for a permanent home, continue with the history of site planning and selection, and conclude with the actual construction and occupancy. The exhibit captures all of these aspects as they transpired through the use of postal items and related ephemera from the time period. The story of the building of the World's Capital is both fascinating and at times, bizarre. Take a moment to learn the interesting stories behind the making of the iconic UN Headquarters.

Basic Facts: The UN building complex sits on an 18-acre site stretching along the East River of Midtown Manhattan from 42nd to 48th Streets, in the Turtle Bay neighborhood. Though it is in New York City, the land occupied by the UN Headquarters is considered international territory. Its borders are First Avenue (west), East 42nd Street (south), East 48th Street (north) and the East River (east). Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Drive passes underneath the Conference Building of the complex.

The Exhibit Plan

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 - Steel
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 - Great Masterpieces from Renowned Artists
- The Cornerstone Ceremony
- Opening of the United Nations Headquarters and the Grand Celebrations
 - The First United Nations Day Ceremony at Permanent Headquarters
 - The First General Assembly Meeting at its Permanent Home

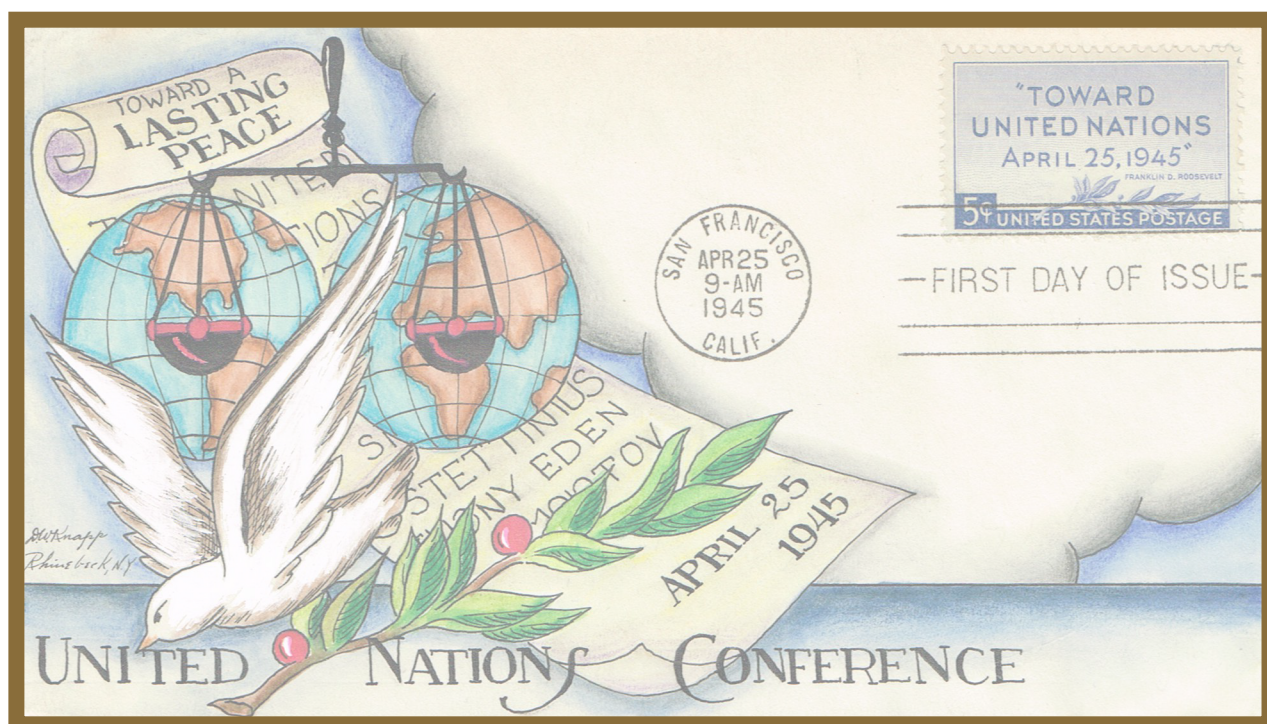


Map of proposed Headquarters site at Turtle Bay. Associated Press Photo from New York Times newsprint archives.

From San Francisco to Turtle Bay

United Nations Conference on International Organization (UNCIO) - April 1945

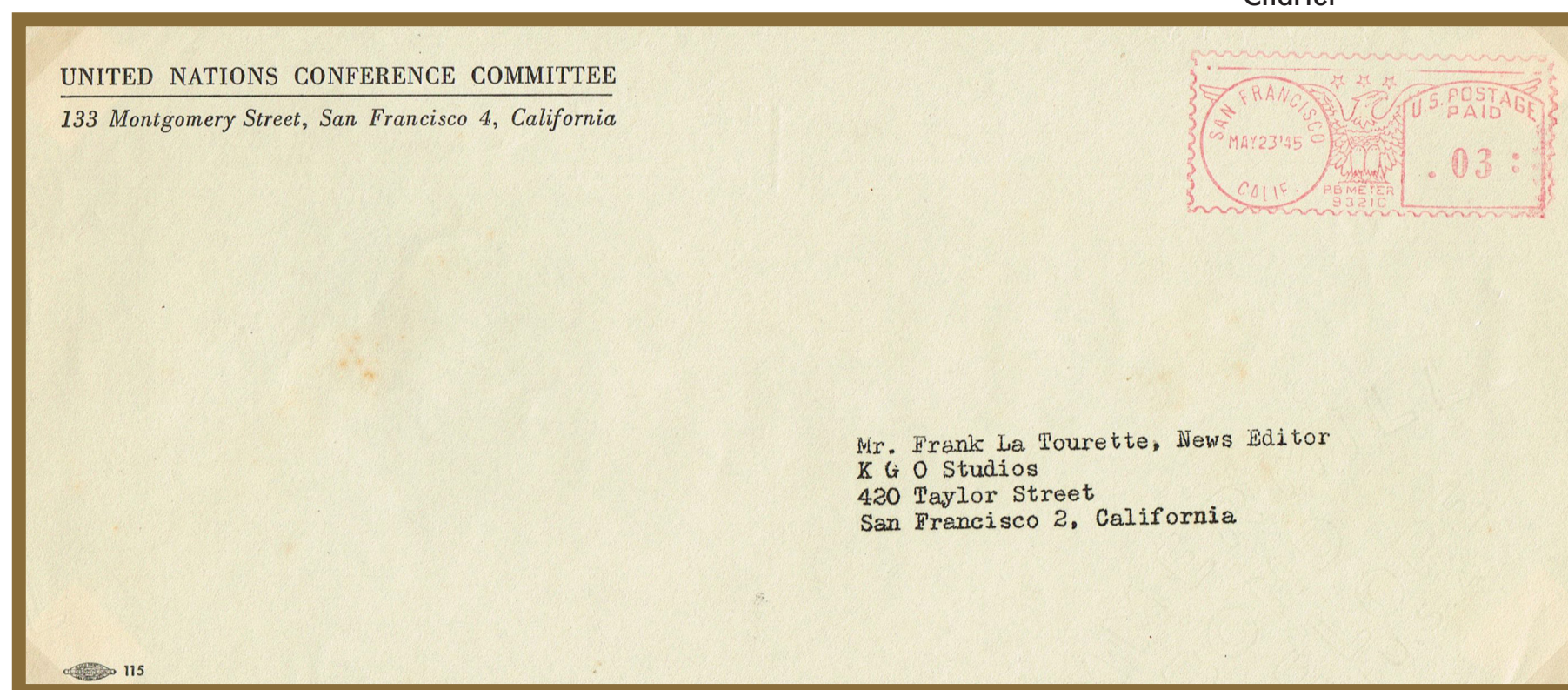
The United Nations Conference on International Organization convened in San Francisco, CA. on April 12, 1945. Sixty-one nations participated with the principle goal of the meeting to develop the Charter of the United Nations. The meeting took place at the War Memorial Hall. The Conference concluded with the signing of the United Nations Charter on June 26, 1945. During the meeting it was decided that the first UN General Assembly meeting should convene later that year in London. Discussions included setting up a temporary headquarters for both the Secretary General and the UN Secretariat staff in New York City, and the facilitation of the new organization. In the midst of the conference uninvited delegations from Philadelphia and South Dakota came to San Francisco in an attempt to "pitch" their visions of a Permanent Headquarters in their cities. Their efforts did not sway the State Department officials at the conference who were in favor of either a San Francisco or New York location for the home of the United Nations.



Hand-painted Cachet honoring the UN Conference - Dorothy Knapp 1945



Cordell Hull - Father of the United Nations. US Representative to the UNCIO and chief architect of the UN Charter



Service cover from the United Nations Conference Committee in San Francisco, CA.

One of Two Recorded.

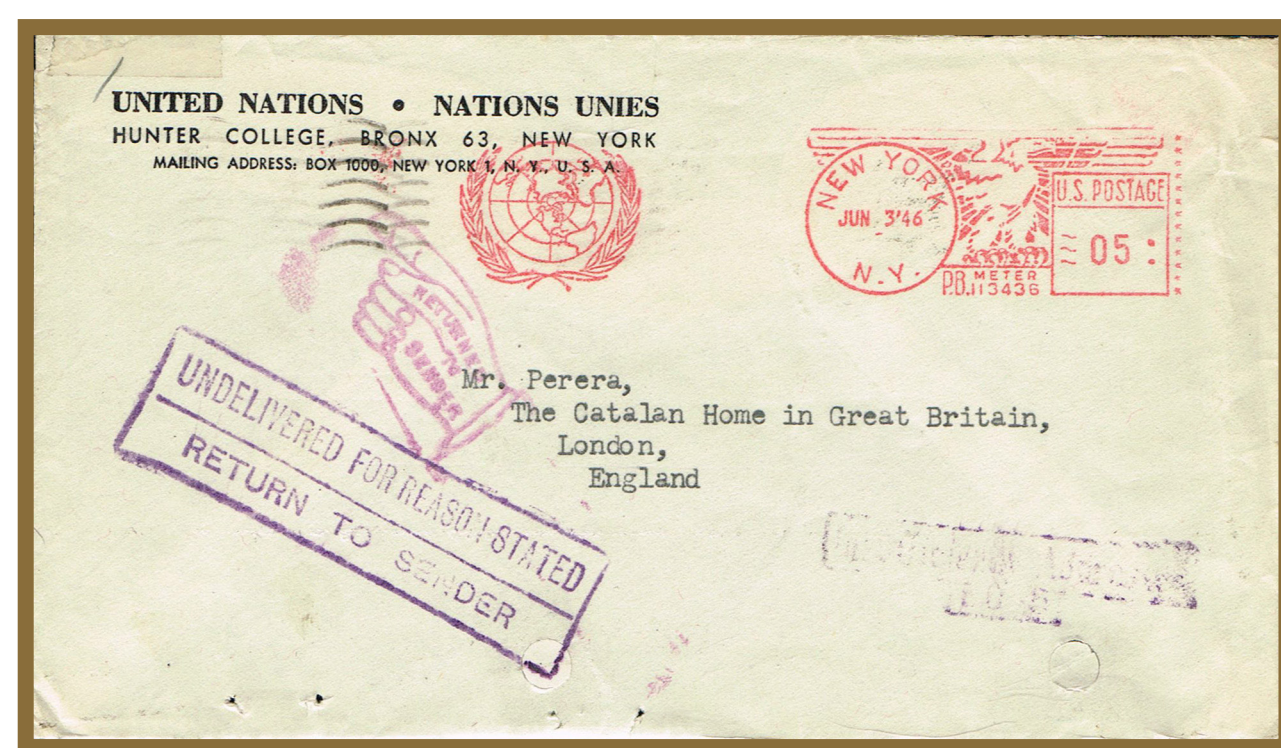
The first substantial New York site for the UN was at the temporarily vacant Bronx campus of Hunter College. The stay lasted only from March 1946 until August 15, 1946, when the premises had to be vacated to make room for Hunter's new, larger, post-war class. While at Hunter College, the UN used P.O. Box 1000 at the New York City General Post Office in Manhattan. This probably insured better postal service.

UN Temporary Headquarters in New York City - Hunter College 1946

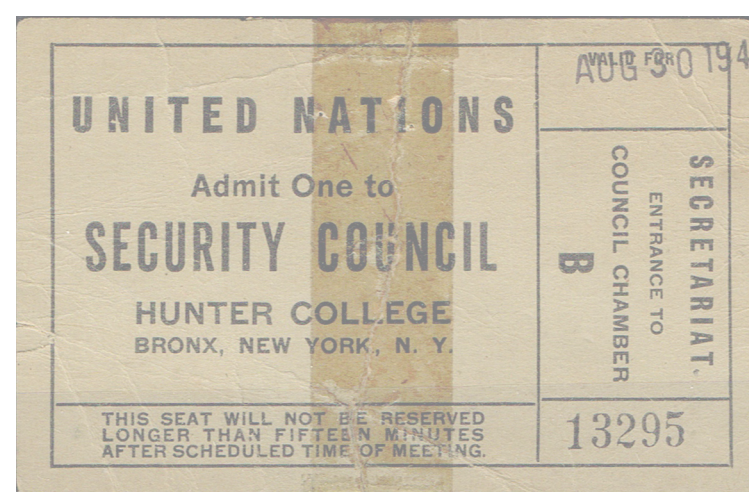
Even before the Preparatory Commission had completed its work in London, and before the General Assembly had formally ratified those recommendations on the structure, the Secretariat had found its first "home" in Suite 8H of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York. From January 1946, through April (shortly after the move to Hunter College), this was the Office of the Secretary-General. The Headquarters Planning Commission was first located here, and some other Secretariat staff used the premises until June 1946.



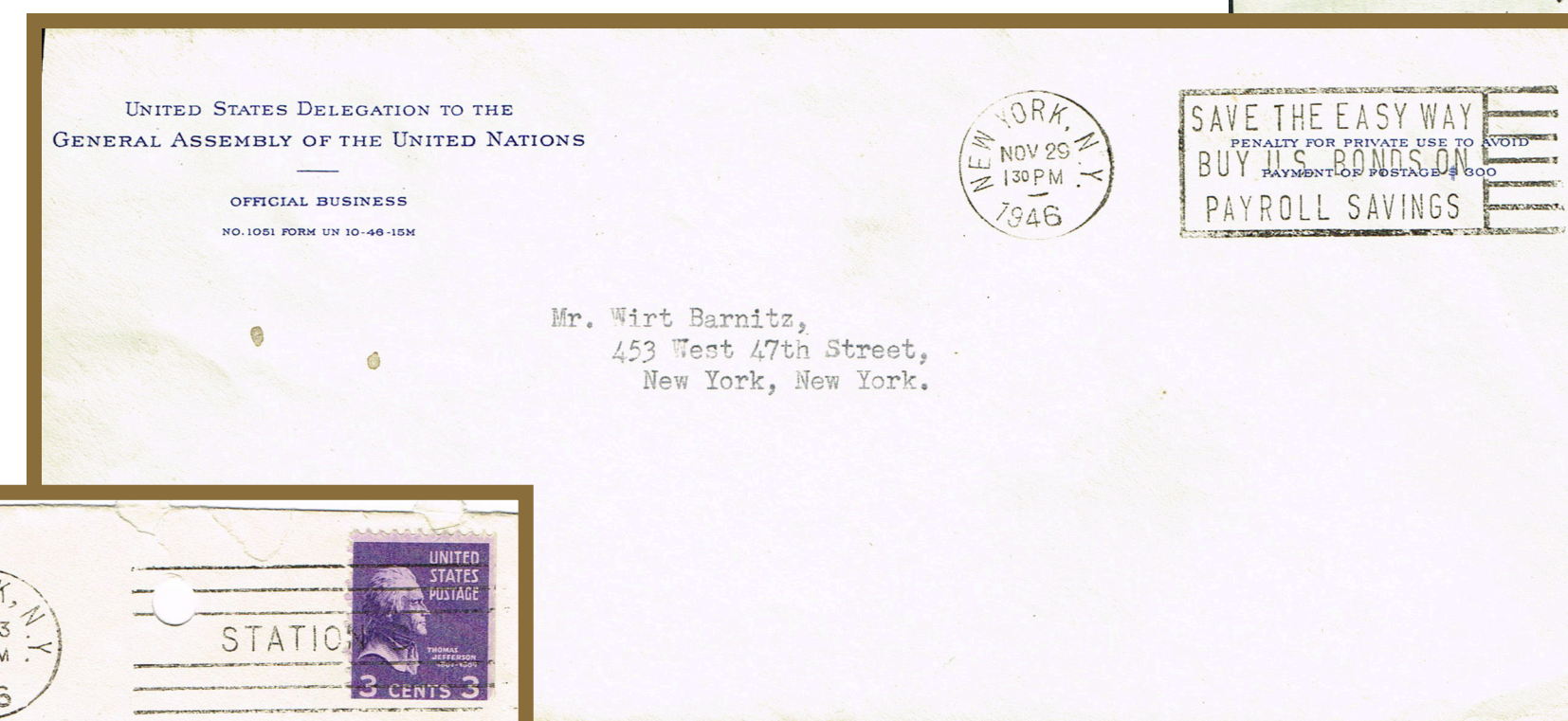
Special cachet honoring the opening of the Security Council Meeting at Hunter College in March 1946.



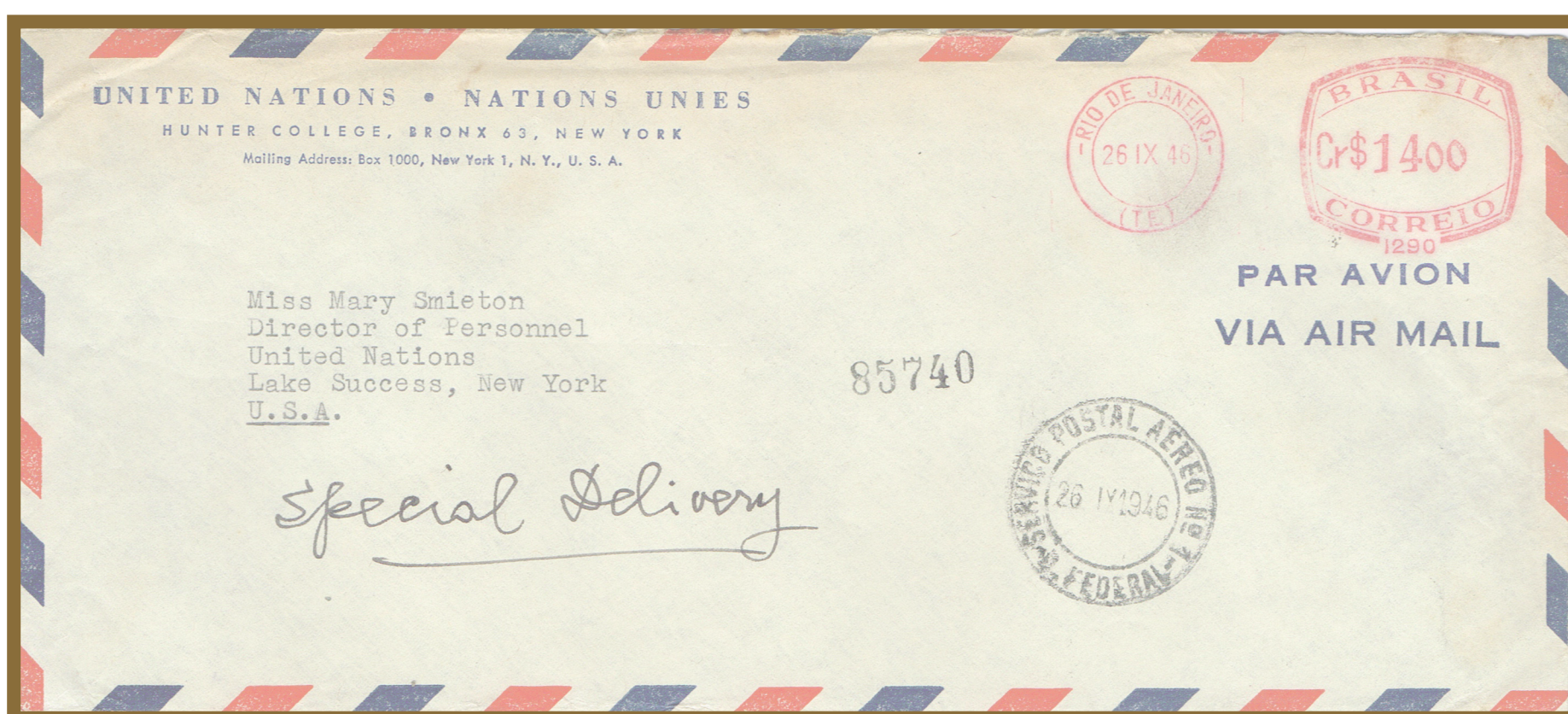
Outgoing letter from UN offices at Hunter College to London, England bearing special UN meter slogan type II with provisional UN emblem.



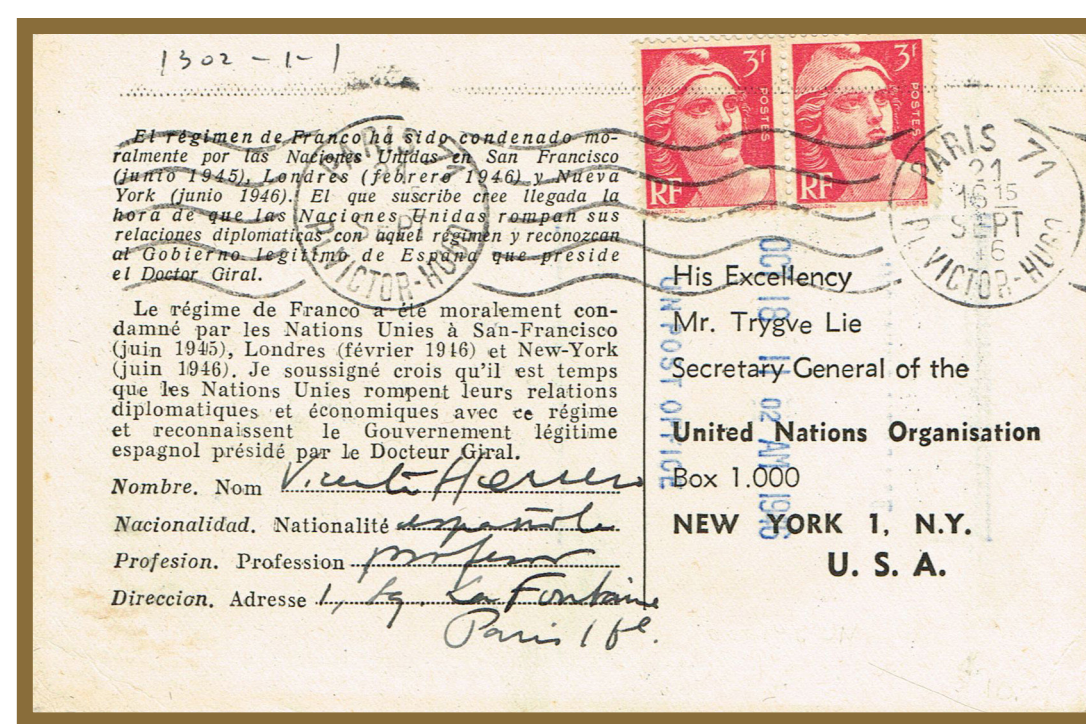
Official entry ticket for UN Security Council Session scheduled for August 30, 1946.



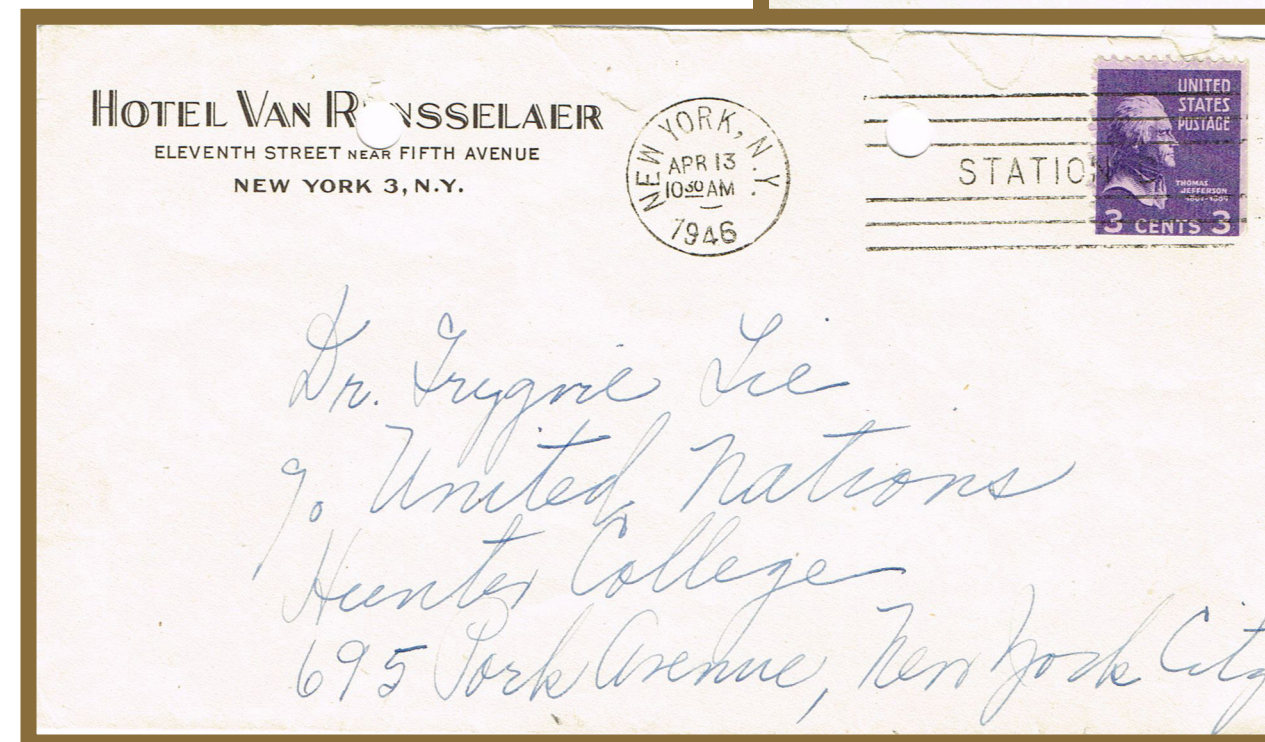
Mr. Wirt Barnitz, 453 East 47th Street, New York, New York.



Incoming service cover bearing Hunter College letterhead. From Brazil via airmail special delivery.



Political protest card denouncing General Franco's regime in Spain addressed to Secretary-General Lie bearing scarce UN Post Office receipt imprint.

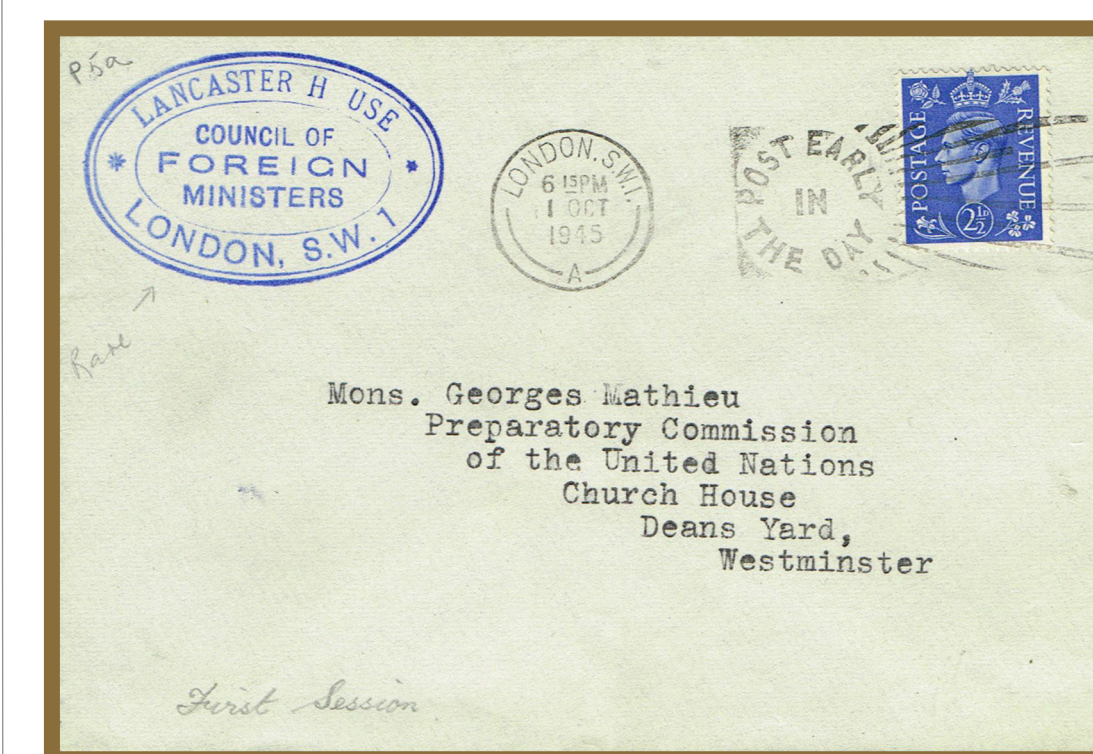


Incoming letter to Dr. Trygve Lie, the first Secretary-General of the United Nations, sent in error to the Hunter College Manhattan location during its first month of operation.

London General Assembly - January 1946

After the San Francisco Conference, the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations was given the task of putting together a working organization. The Commission met in San Francisco on June 27, 1945, and again in London from August 16, 1945, to December 23, 1945. During its time in London, the Preparatory Commission was bombarded by groups of headquarters supporters vying to gain favor with the Commission's sub-committee tasked with finding a permanent home for the organization. Delegations from Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and even South Dakota descended on London to court the delegates assigned to the sub-committee and to present their arguments why their cities were the "Best" location for the United Nations home.

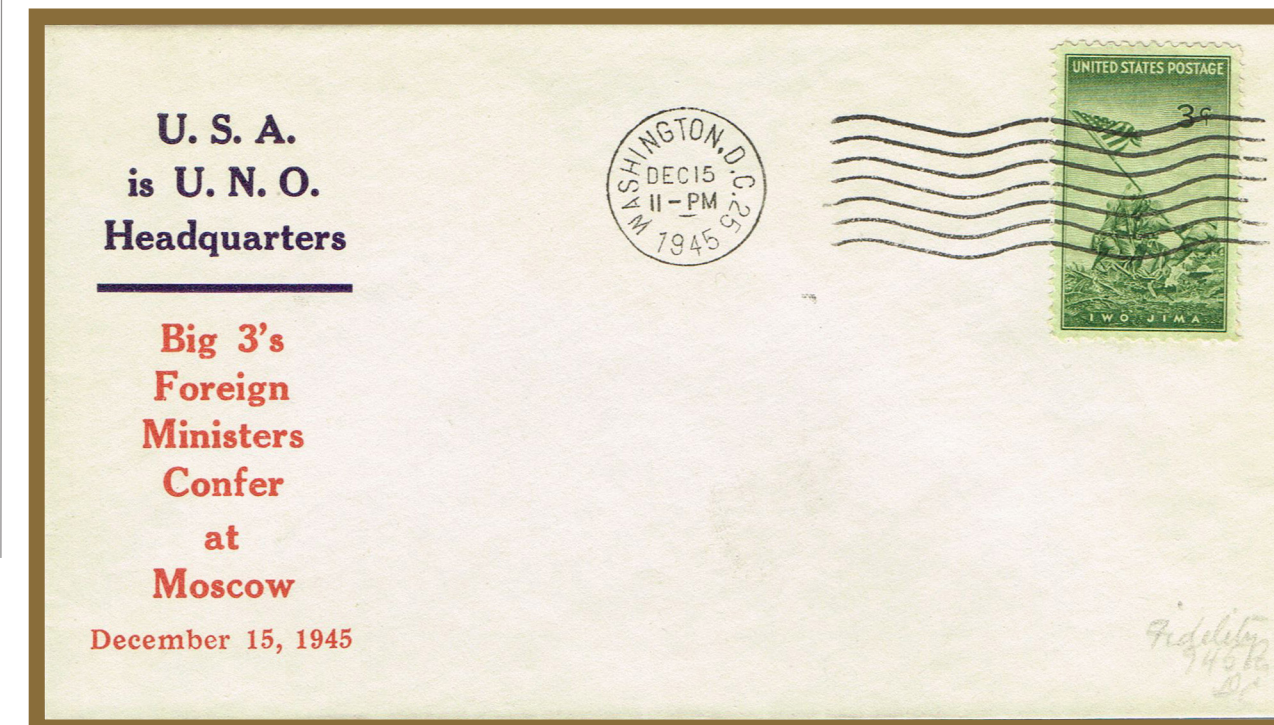
The Interim Committee for the Selection of a Site for the Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations was appointed by the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations with the adoption at its fourth Plenary Meeting, December 23, 1945 of the report of Committee 8. The Interim Committee appointed an Inspection Group to inspect and report on proposed sites in the United States of America. It was composed of representatives of China, France, Iraq, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. At its first meeting, December 29, 1945, the Inspection Group elected Mr. Stoyan Gavrilovic' (Yugoslavia) as its Chairman.



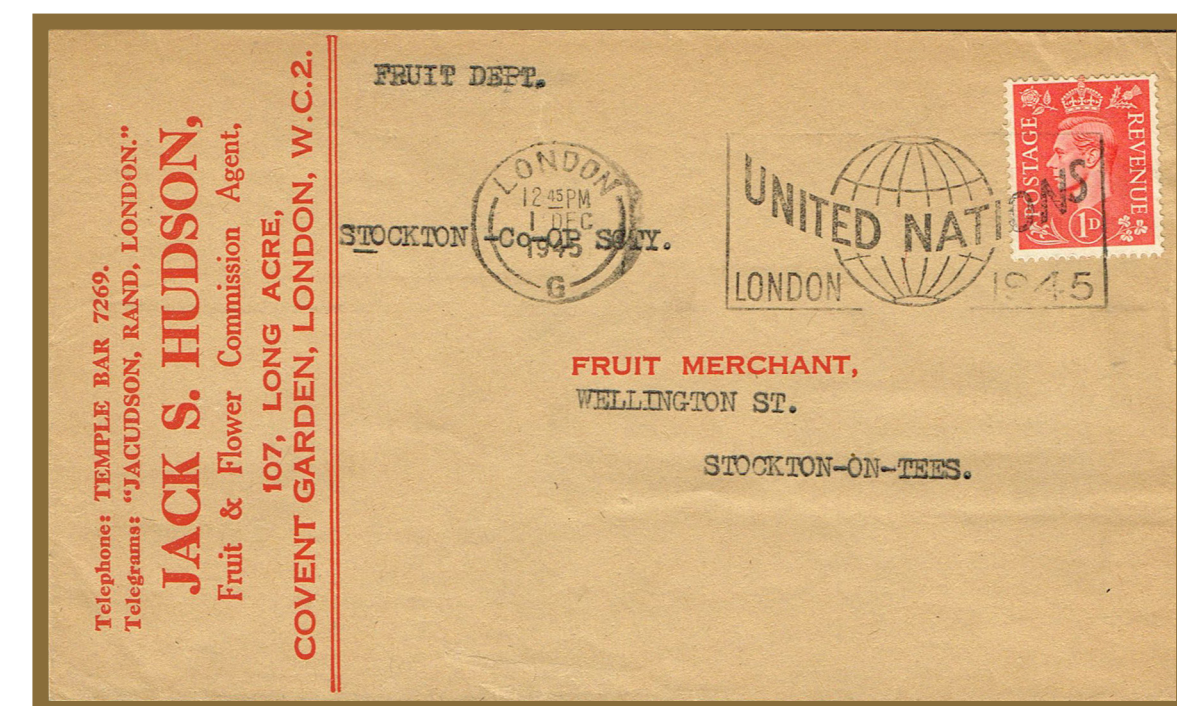
During the first General Assembly in London the United States made an invitation to permanently host the United Nations. The issue of the United Nations Headquarters was discussed and a key vote was taken which passed a resolution to accept the offer of the United States. So began the long and arduous task of finding a suitable location that was acceptable to the key member nations of the UN.

The Permanent Headquarters Committee was established as an ad hoc Committee upon which each member of the General Assembly had the right to be represented by Resolution No. 26 (I), adopted at the eighteenth Plenary Meeting, January 26, 1946. Mr. Eduarde Zuleta Angel (Colombia), was elected Chairman at the first meeting of the Committee.

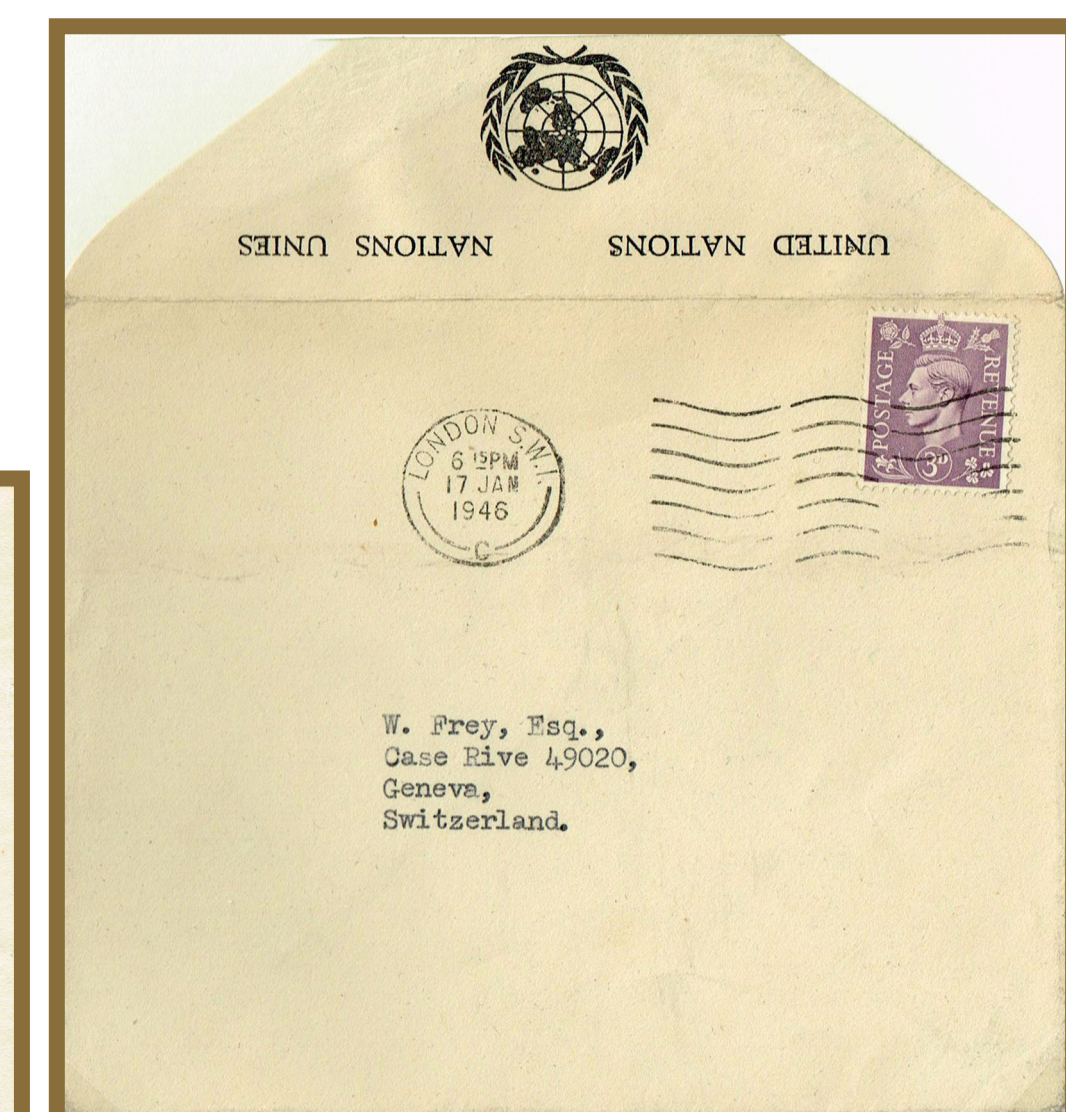
As we shall see, the decision to locate the United Nations in New York City was made in London by the General Assembly at its first session on February 14, 1946.



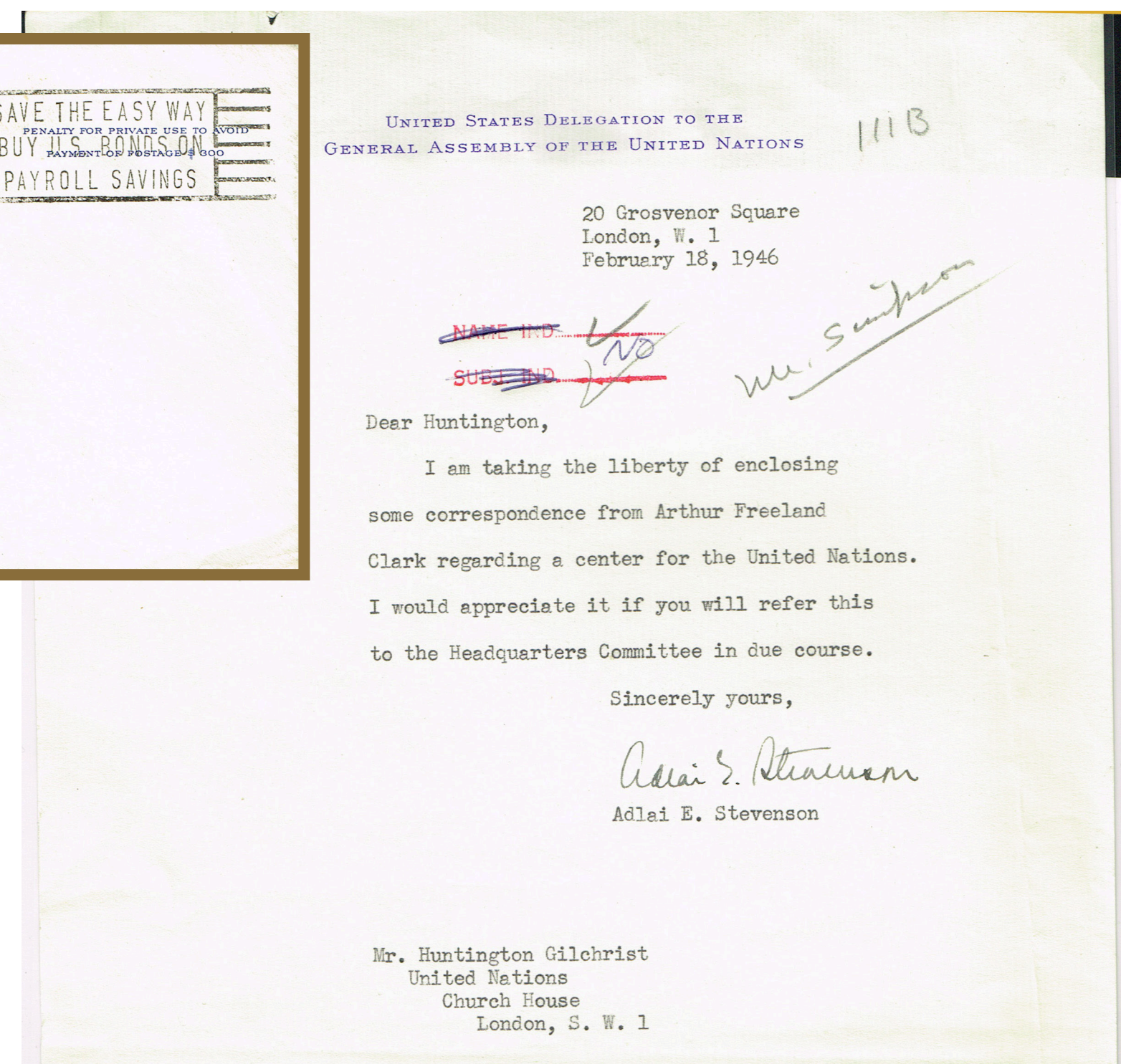
Propaganda Cachet in support of bringing the UN to the United States



In anticipation of the intended opening date of the Assembly, the British Post Office put into use on December 1, 1945, a special slogan cancel. Its creation was the direct result of efforts by Mr. Vernon Duckworth Barker, U. N. Press and Publicity Officer, and Lord Noel Baker, Temporary Chairman of the U.N. Preparatory Commission. Period of Usage was December 1, 1945 - January 19, 1946. Usage as late as January 24, 1946 is known.



The United Nations Secretariat was officially formed on January 19, 1946. It remained partially in London at Church House, Westminster Yard across the street from Central Hall, through 1946.



ABOVE and RIGHT: Letter from US Ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, US Delegation to the General Assembly, conveying a message from Mr. Arthur Freeland regarding the desire to host the United Nations Headquarters.

Mr. Huntington Gilchrist, United Nations Church House, London, S. W. 1