

Too Cold for Me – Antarctic Philately

by Tom Broadhead

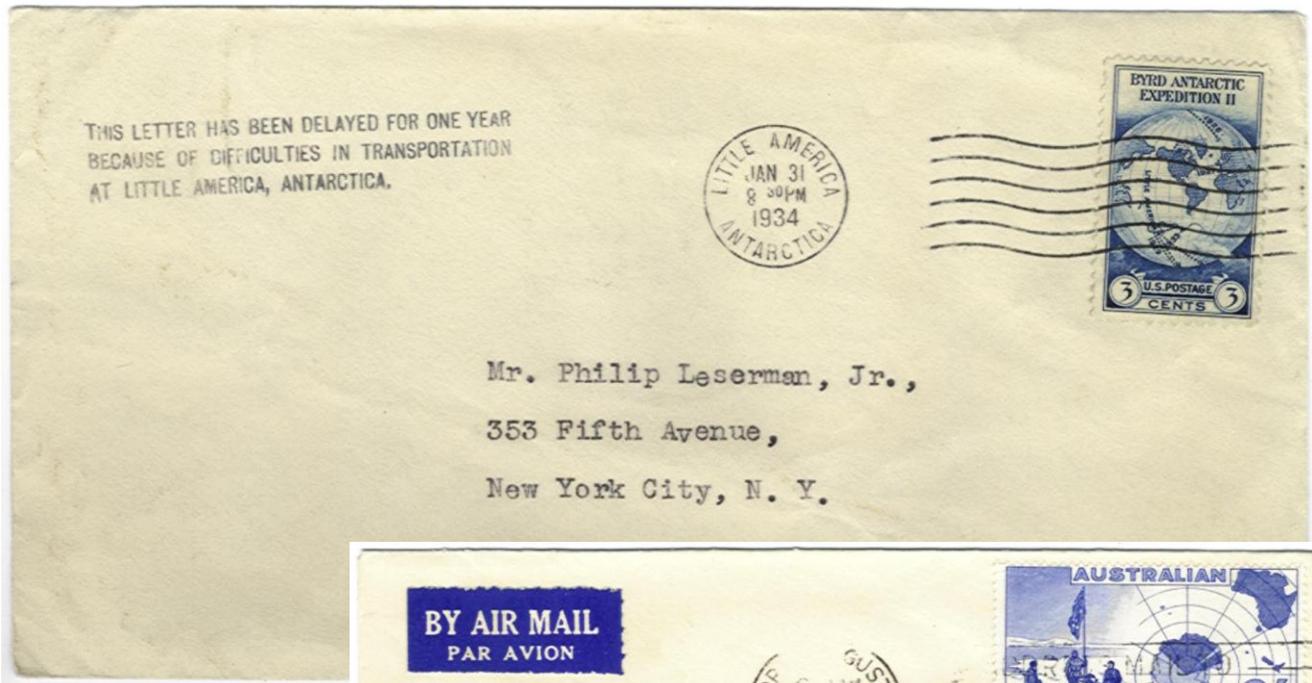
I don't like cold weather and still remember being terrified many years ago when the nighttime temperature in Knoxville dipped to 24° below zero! That is a good Antarctic temperature. On that frigid continent, the average annual inland temperature is -24° F and the average annual coastal temperature is about -15° F, but can get as high as $+48^{\circ}$ F. The record low, set on July 21, 1983 was a whopping -129° F. Still, people from many nations live and work there, and many countries – including the United States – have postal services.

The envelope below, mailed from the early U.S. settlement at Little America has a lot of historical

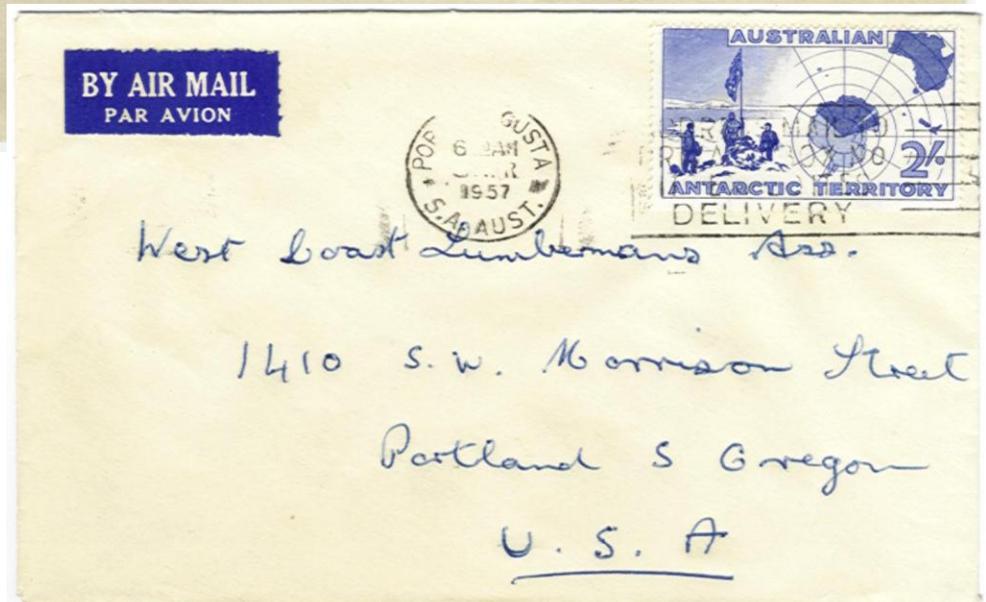
YEAR BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSPORTATION AT LITTLE AMERICA, ANTARCTICA.” The back of the envelope has a San Francisco, California transit mark dated March 25, 1935 – I hope that the original letter wasn't urgent. Most likely the delay was caused by bad weather.

Many other countries also sent explorers to Antarctica, and eventually the continent was divided like a pie into areas of control by 12 nations: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, USSR, United Kingdom, and the United States.

The envelope below was mailed in Australia using a stamp (Scott L4) issued in 1957 for its bases in



and philatelic interest. Located on the Ross Ice Shelf, Little America was established by naval aviator Richard E. Byrd in 1929, and bases were established there by Byrd in 1933-1935, 1939-1941, and 1946-1948. The 3c blue stamp (Scott 733) commemorating Byrd's second Antarctic Expedition was issued in 1933. On this letter, it was cancelled on January 31, 1934 at Little America, but the black handstamp at upper left says “THIS LETTER HAS BEEN DELAYED FOR ONE



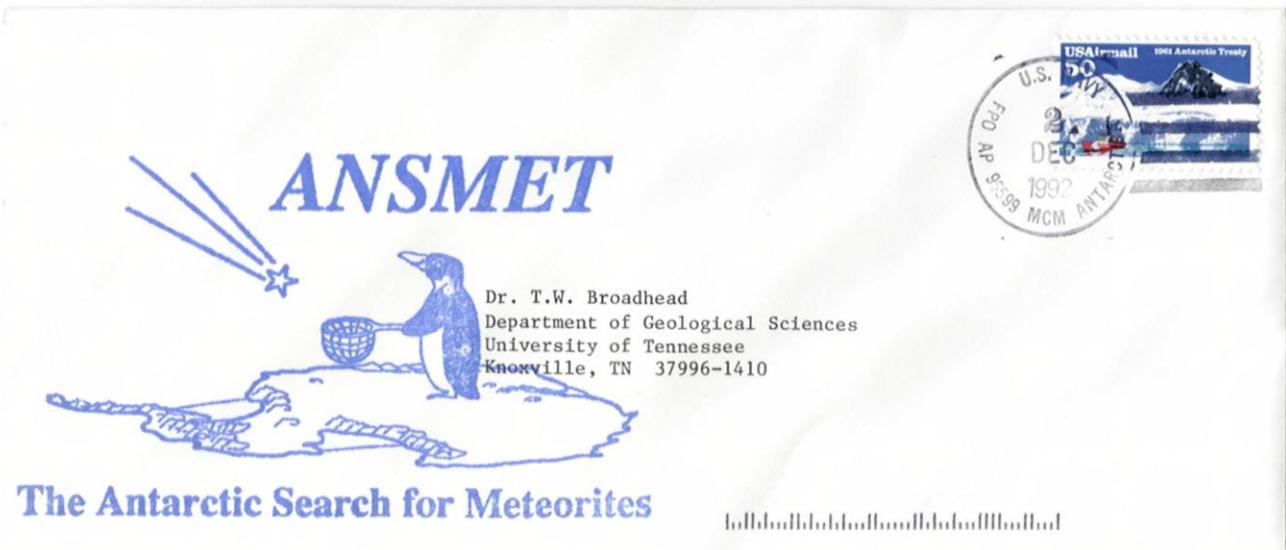
Antarctica. In 1959, however, those countries and several others signed the “Antarctic Treaty,” in which they agreed that it would remain a politically

neutral region outside of the ownership of any country and that its use would be for international scientific study. The treaty became effective on June 23, 1961.

The present United States naval base is at McMurdo Station, established in 1956 and located on Ross Island, the farthest south solid ground in Antarctica that is accessible by ship. One very interesting feature at McMurdo is "Scott's Hut," a building erected in 1904 by the party of British explorer Robert F. Scott, who later lost his life in his quest to be the first to reach the South Pole. Inside of

ANTARCTICA" dated December 2, 1992. The blue cachet is a handstamp showing a penguin standing on Antarctica and holding out a net to catch a falling meteorite. ANSMET is the acronym or abbreviation for the project – "The Antarctic Search for Meteorites."

Prior to the signing of the Antarctic Treaty, some countries issued stamps showing their areas of occupation or influence in Antarctica. The card below the Australian stamp (Scott 276) showing a large area – almost 30% of the continent as Australia's interest region. The card is cancelled at



Scott's Hut are the perfectly preserved provisions and supplies last used nearly 100 years ago.

Among the scientific projects conducted out of McMurdo are weather studies, investigations of the world's ozone layer, and meteorites. Each year researchers from U.S. and other nations collect meteorites from the ice fields – with less than 2 inches of average precipitation a year, burial in snow is not a problem.

Some of my geology colleagues have collected meteorites in Antarctica, and one mailed me this interesting cover in 1992. The stamp is the U.S. 50c airmail (Scott C130) of 1991, which commemorated the 30th anniversary of the implementation of the Antarctic Treaty. It is postmarked "U.S. NAVY – FPO AP 96599 MCM



Mawson Camp, Australian Antarctic Territory on February 16, 1955. Although the card says this is the first day of issue, the Scott Catalogue gives November 17, 1954 as the date of issue. I'm not sure which is correct,

I'm too busy thinking about staying warm!