

German and Austrian Internees in the Açores (May 1916 - October 1919)

The seizure of German ships in Portuguese harbors caused Germany to declare war on Portugal on March 9, 1916. In May 1916, a camp for detainees was established within **Forte São João Baptista** (Fort St. John the Baptist), located in the city of Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira Island, Açores, Portugal.



View of the Forte São João Baptista above the city of Angra.

The camp housed 678 (official number on April 4, 1918) men, women and children, along with some POW's held in Portugal and territories. The first 80 camp internees were transferred from Portugal on the Portuguese ship *S.S. Sagres* (ex-German ship *S.S. Taygetos*) arriving on the Island on April 30, 1916. The great majority of the internees were made up of crew members of German ships seized in Portuguese ports, along with businessmen and their families. Detainees, coming from other Azorean Islands, Madeira, and Cape Verde were also interned in August 1916. Internees from Portuguese India, Angola, and Mozambique, and other colonies arrived in 1917.

The camp was administered by a delegation of the **Portuguese Red Cross** office in Lisbon under the direct authority of the **Military Command of the Açores**. The earliest correspondence bore no camp marking, but rather a single handstamp, "**Commando Militar dos Açores**". Later mail showed an increased variety of markings from the camp as well as from agencies handling this mail. The exhibit references these.

Shortly after Portugal's entrance into the war, military censorship was established in Portugal and its Colonies on June, 1916 (decree No 2465). Postal and censorship markings used by the various agencies are shown throughout the exhibit until the camp officially closed in October, 1919.

All correspondence sent or received by the detainees at the Angra camp obligatorily passed through the Portuguese Red Cross camp representatives. Outgoing mail was then forwarded to its destination through the regular postal system. The Red Cross postal stationery cards inscribed "**Porte Franco**" or "**Franc de Port**" (postage free) were used from June 1916, until supplies were exhausted around April 1918. Covers were also sent from the camp however, few examples of this usage exist because censorship of enclosed letters slowed delivery tremendously.



First Handstamp Used by the Military Authorities in the Camp

COMMANDO MILITAR DOS AÇORES

COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX ROUGE
GENÈVE
AGENCE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

First military camp marking.

Geneva Red Cross marking.



Card sent to Vienna, Austria by August Schmidt, a barber aboard the ship "Wurzburg" interned in São Vicente, Cape Verde on April 20, 1916 transferred to the camp at Angra on August 20, 1916, repatriated on October 29, 1919 to Germany.

Earliest recorded mail from the camp.

Card written on May 28, 1916 but did not arrive in Germany until January 26, 1918. The card is showing the "Commando Militar dos Açores" marking in brown and the purple marking of the "International Red Cross / Geneva Agency for Prisoners of War"



Second Handstamp Used by the Military at the Camp

In June 1916, a second camp marking was created to conform to the 1911 orthographic changes in the Portuguese language; "COMANDO" now spelled with a single "M". This military camp marking was used until the end of the war.

COMANDO MILITAR
DOS
AÇORES

Portuguese Red Cross postal stationery cards were issued to all internees from June 1916, until supplies were exhausted in late 1918. Under the UPU agreements, provisions were made providing free franking privileges for prisoners of war and interned civilians.

FRANC DE PORT

Card written on June 24, 1916 by August Schmidt, a 32 year old barber on board the ship "Wurzburg" to Hanover, Germany. He was interned in São Vicente, Cape Verde Islands on April 20, 1916 transferred to the camp in Angra August 6, 1916. He was finally repatriated to Hamburg, Germany on August 29, 1919.



Card written on October 16, 1916 to Gravenhage, Holland by 22 year old Klaus Borchers seaman on the ship "Schiffbeck" apprehended on April 20, 1916 in Lisbon and transferred to the camp in Angra on May 1, 1916.

First Camp Identification Marking

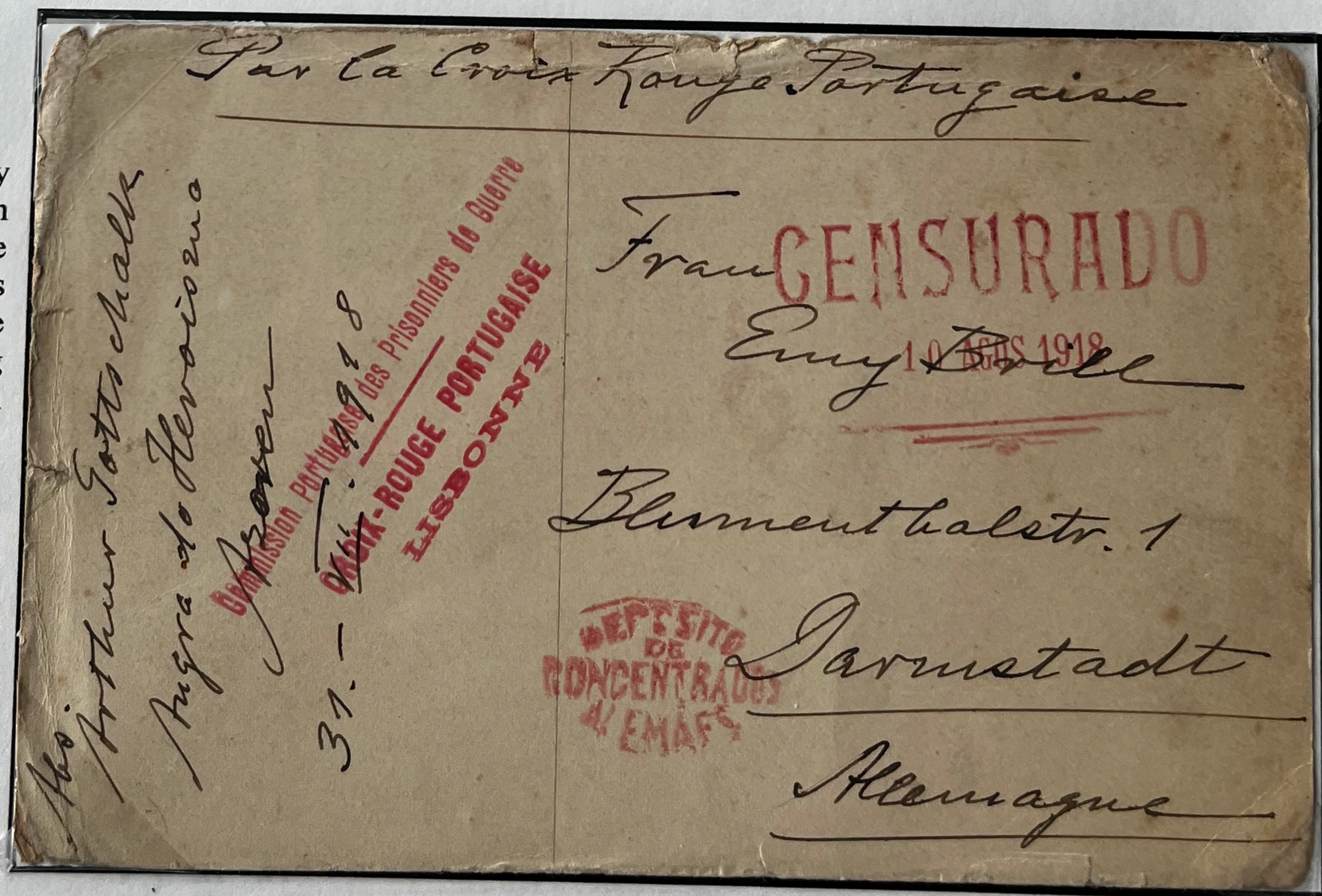
The first type of camp identification marking “**Deposito / de / Concentrados / Alemães**” appeared shortly after the camp opening lasting a very short time.



Card sent to Seville, Spain receiving a Lisbon transit marking November 1916. Message reads “Mom, I hope that you are all in good health, I am fine, when sending packages send it through the Red Cross in order to avoid paying any charges.”

Card written on July 31, 1918. The reason for the very late usage of this marking is unknown because the second camp marking had been introduced in June of 1916.

Arthur Gottschalk born August 2, 1871 was a merchant interned in Lisbon April 21, 1916 transferred to Angra May 1, 1916



Second Camp Identification Marking Limitation of Internee Mail

This is the second and most common camp identification marking, which was used until the camp closure. These two cards were written on consecutive days, showing a continuation of an ongoing message, verifying that internees were allowed only one message card per day. These markings are found in green, violet, or red.



These two cards were written on December 12 and 13, passed the camp censors on December 14 & 15, 1916, and received the Lisbon censor markings on December 26, 1916



Camp Censorship Marking

This was the only censorship marking used at the camp. It exists in red, lilac, and green. Censorship was officially abolished in Portugal as of April 26, 1919, as evidence shows, mail continued to be censored in the camp late into 1919. Letters from POW's and internees are quite scarce, as censorship was much slower relative to the use of postal stationery cards.

GENSURADO

Commission Portugaise
des
Prisonniers de Guerre
LISBONNE.



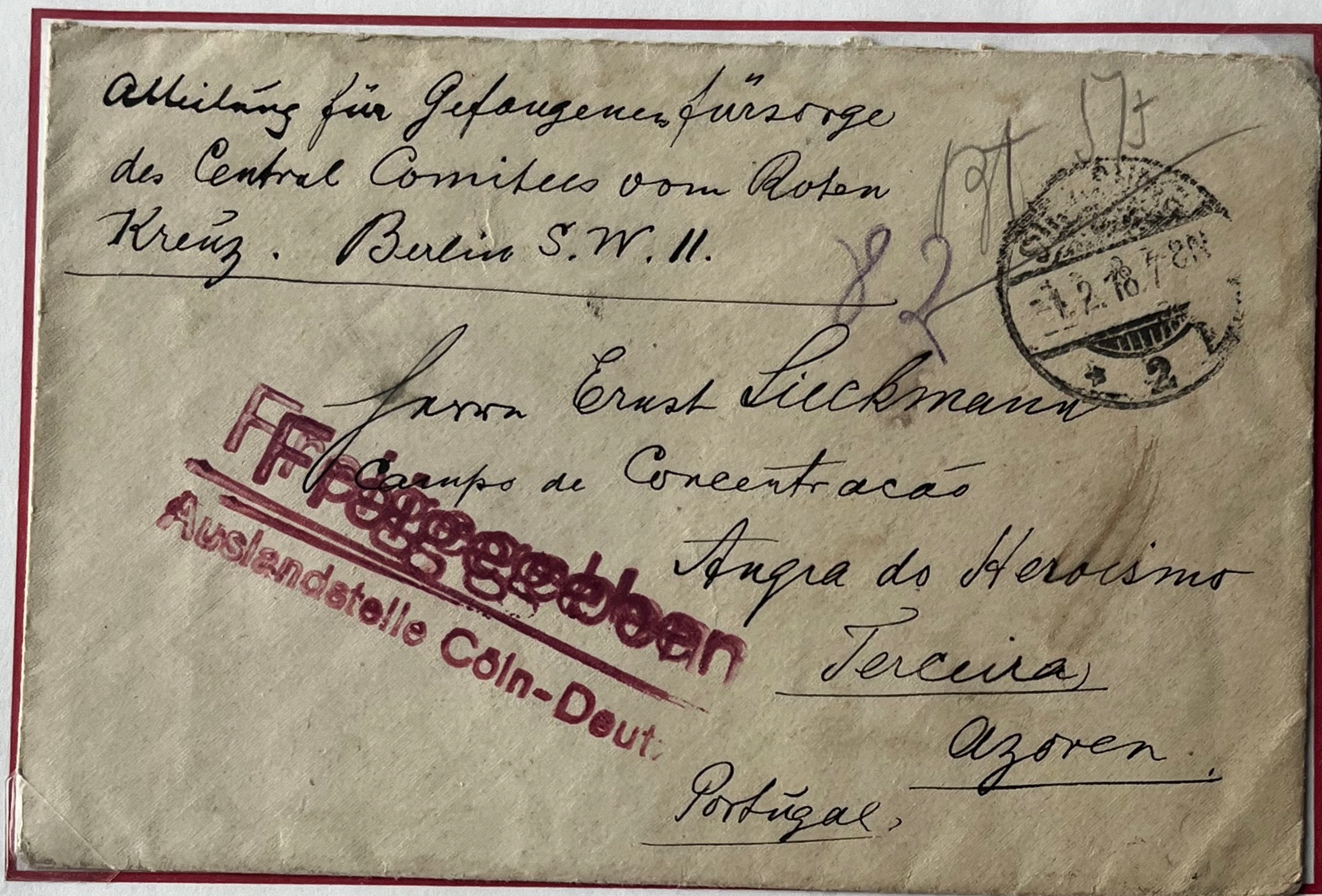
Letter sent to the International Bureau for Peace in Berne, Switzerland routed through the Portuguese Red Cross in Lisbon.

The following markings were applied by the various agencies: "Commission Portugaise des Prisonniers de Guerre" "Delegação da Comissão de Prisioneiros Angra do Heroísmo" French Overt censor marking with sealing tape "Controle Postal Militaire".



Inbound Mail Showing Camp Censorship

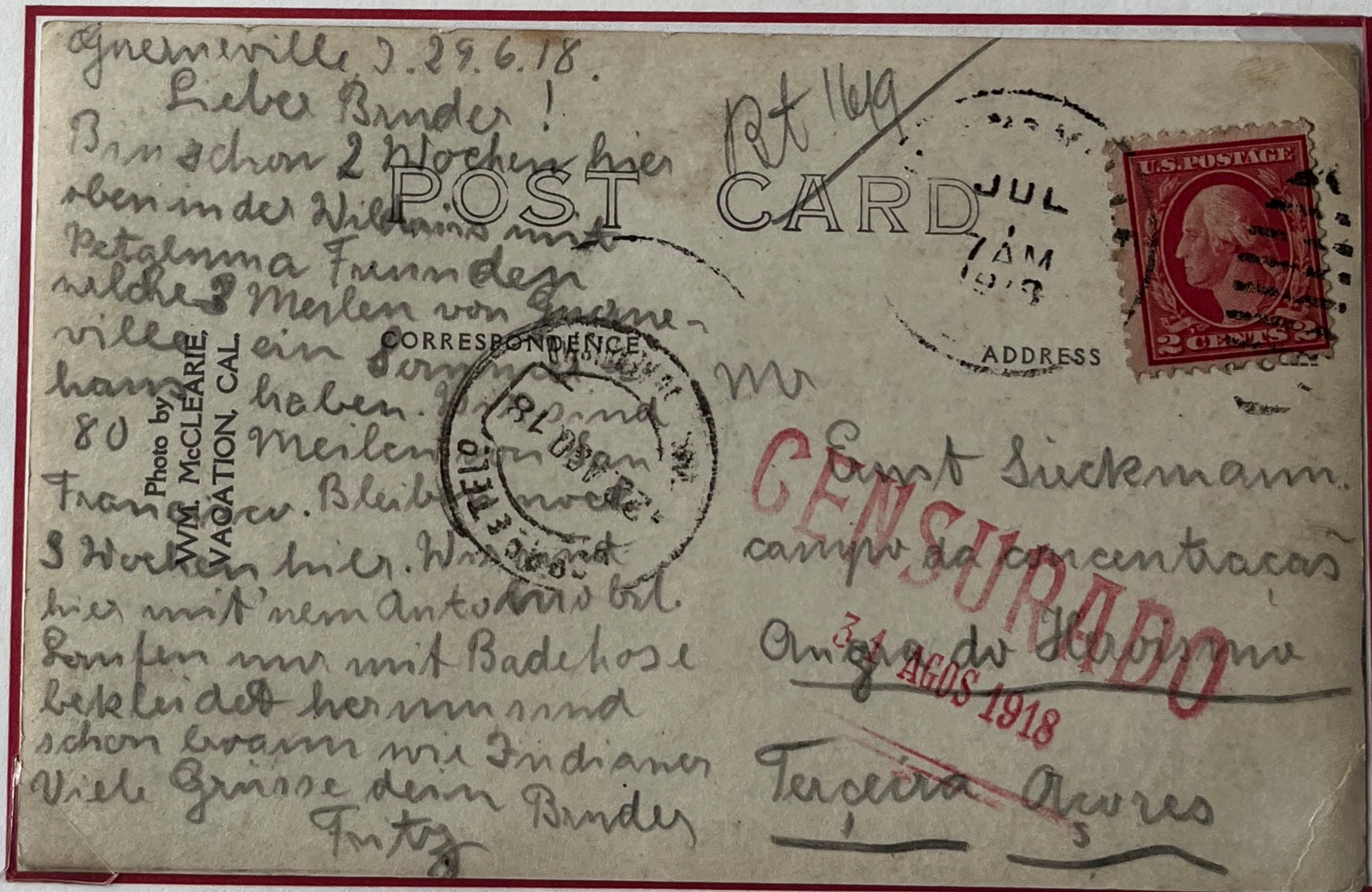
Letter sent to Ernst Sieckmann from the Central Committee of the Berlin Red Cross arriving at the camp on May 2, 1918



GENSURADO

Ernst Sieckmann was a 24 year old merchant living in Funchal, Madeira apprehended on April 20, 1916 transferred to the camp at Angra on August 6, 1916

Card sent from USA on July 1918, to Ernst Sieckmann, arriving at camp on August 31, 1918, from his brother living in California.



The Message reads "Dear brother, I've been here in the wilderness for two weeks with friends from Petaluma. These friends have a vacation house 3 miles from Guerneville. We are 80 miles from San Francisco. I will stay here for another 9 weeks. We are here with an automobile. We have only our bathing suits and are tanned like Indians. Best regards, your brother Fritz."

Lisbon Censorship

A decree mandating censorship in Portugal was established in June 1916. The actual practice commenced about July 26, 1916 with censorship offices located at the two main post offices, Lisbon and Porto. The censorship group always consisted of three men, one had a military background, one was a postal clerk, and the third had knowledge of foreign language. All Portuguese mail had to be first censored in either Lisbon or Porto.

Card written on August 7, 1916 by Max Wilde to Hamburg, Germany, arriving at the Lisbon censors' office on September 30, 1916. Handwritten "Internado" (internee).



Card written on September 14, 1916 by Friedrich Tamm to his aunt living in New York City.

Friedrich, 36 - year old, 1st Officer on the ship "Sardinia" interned at the adjacent island of Faial on May 1, 1916 arriving at the camp in Angra on August 30, 1916.

Marking applied by the post office upon arrival in the USA.

No charge for postage Prisoner
of War Mail New York, N. Y.

Free Franking Adhesive Stamp

Free Franking Adhesive stamps were only applied at the Lisbon Red Cross office.

Commission Portugaise
des
Prisonniers de Guerre
LISBONNE.



DELEGAÇÃO
DA COMISSÃO DE PRISIONEIRO
ANGRA DO HEROISMO

Portugal was the first UPU member Country to issue a Red Cross Stamp in December, 1890.



The envelope shows all of the markings from the Prisoner of War Commission offices of Angra, Lisbon, and Geneva backstamped "Comando Militar dos Açores" marking.

This is the one of 5 recorded letters originating from the Angra camp bearing this stamp.

Free Franking Adhesive Stamp with O/P in Green

Free Franking Adhesive stamps used by the Portuguese Red Cross overprinted in green. These stamps were only applied at the Lisbon Red Cross office.

Comissão Portuguesa
de
Prisioneiros de Guerra

Commission Portugaise
des
Prisonniers de Guerre
LISBONNE.



DELEGAÇÃO
DA COMISSÃO DE PRISIONEIRO
ANGRA DO HEROISMO

Red Cross Stamp Overprint in green used by the Portuguese Commission for Prisoners of War valid from 1916 until the commission was disbanded in 1919.



The Envelope shows both the local Red Cross Cachet of Angra do Heroismo and of Lisbon. Censored in Lisbon, the "CENSURA - 16 October 1916 - No. 42" was applied to the sealing strip inscribed "Aberto Pela Censura". On the reverse is also the cachet of "Comando Militar dos Açores". *This is one of three known letters originating from camp at Angra bearing this stamp with the Green overprint.*

D.C.A. Marking
 Abbreviation for Deposito de Concentrados Alemães
 "German Internee Camp"

D.C.A.



Card written by Georg Oeser, to Berlin on July 27, 1918, born in 1876, a merchant interned in Lisbon and transferred to the camp at Angra on May 1, 1916

These are two of seven known cards bearing this marking.

This card was written on June 24, 1918 going to Berlin.

The reason for the additional 2 centavos stamps is unknown. As an internee, no additional postage would have been necessary.



Inter Island Usage

This is a very rare usage of a card written in Portuguese to a German living in the neighboring Island of Faial. The Red Cross Delegation / Angra do Heroismo, were the official representatives for the Portuguese Red Cross in Lisbon. The post office circular date cancel is characteristic of Portuguese postal markings. The message in this card verifies that people were transferred from the Island of Madeira either to the camp at Angra or to neutral Spain.

DELEGAÇÃO
DA COMISSÃO DE PRISIONEIROS
—
ANGRA DO HEROISMO



Otto Schroder was chief telegraph officer at the telegraph station in the city of Horta Island of Faial. He was interned in Horta on May 1, 1916 transferred to Angra on August 30, 1916 repatriated to Hamburg on October 29, 1919



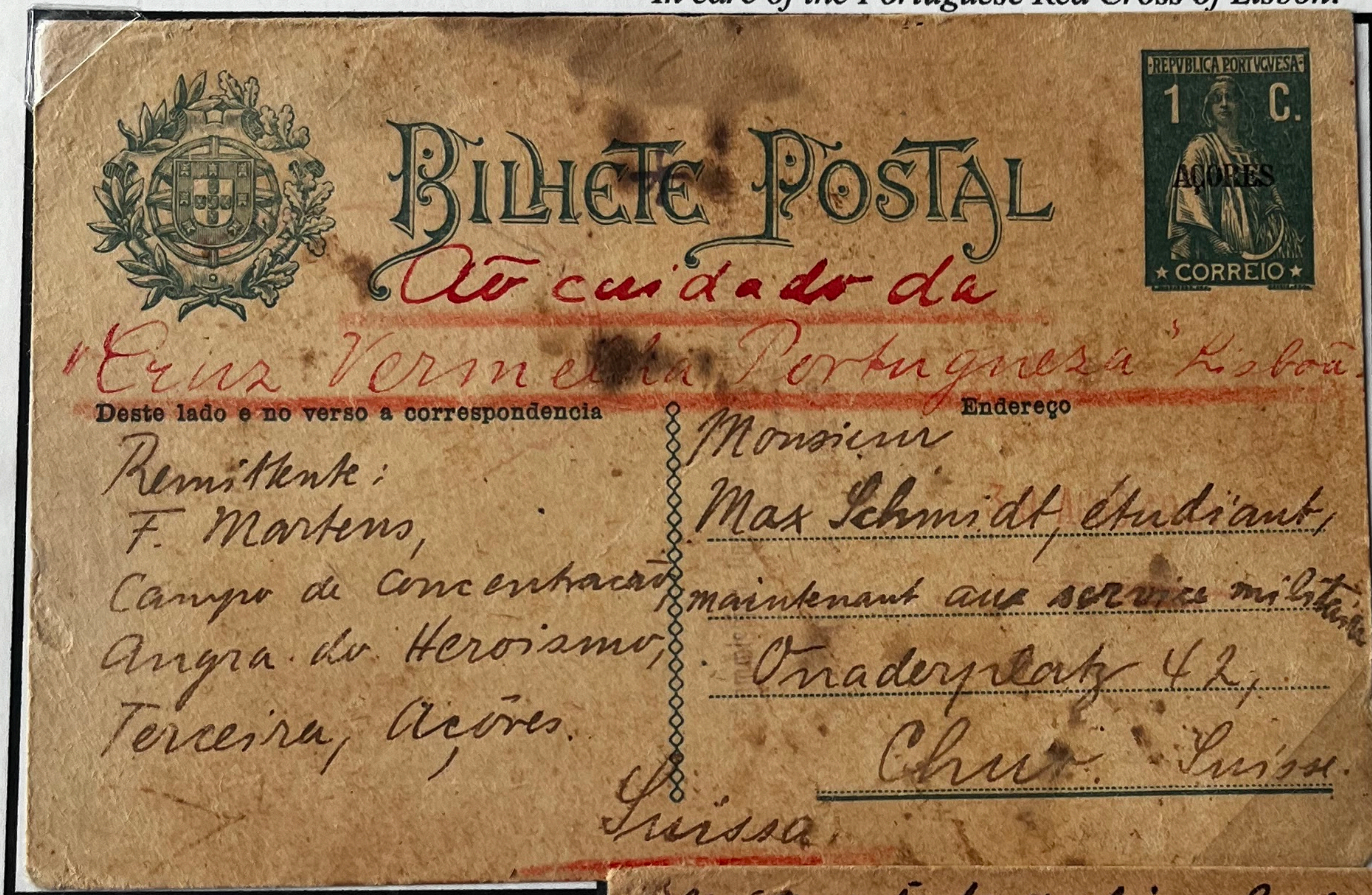
Card sent from an internee Rudolf Carl 24 years old wireless operator at the Telegraph station in the city of Horta at the neighboring Island of Faial, he was interned in Horta on May 1, 1916 and transferred to the camp at Angra on August 30, 1916. Card sent on September 19, 1916. Exerts from the postcard: *"We heard that there are some unhappy people, especially in reference to their personal furnishings. Is it true? The families from Madeira brought all of their furnishings. They were surprised how little we brought. Pity that the instructions weren't any clearer. Are you coming here or going to Spain?"*

Usage of Açores Outdated Postal Stationery Cards

Having exhausted the supply of Portuguese Red Cross free franking postal stationery cards, the camp authorities pressed into service the Portuguese 1¢ "Ceres" postal stationery card overprinted AÇORES. These cards were distributed to the internees after becoming obsolete when the domestic rate was raised to 2¢ on March 10, 1918. The cards were used at the Angra camp until the end of the war.

*Ào cuidado da
"Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa" Lisboa.*

"In care of the Portuguese Red Cross of Lisbon."



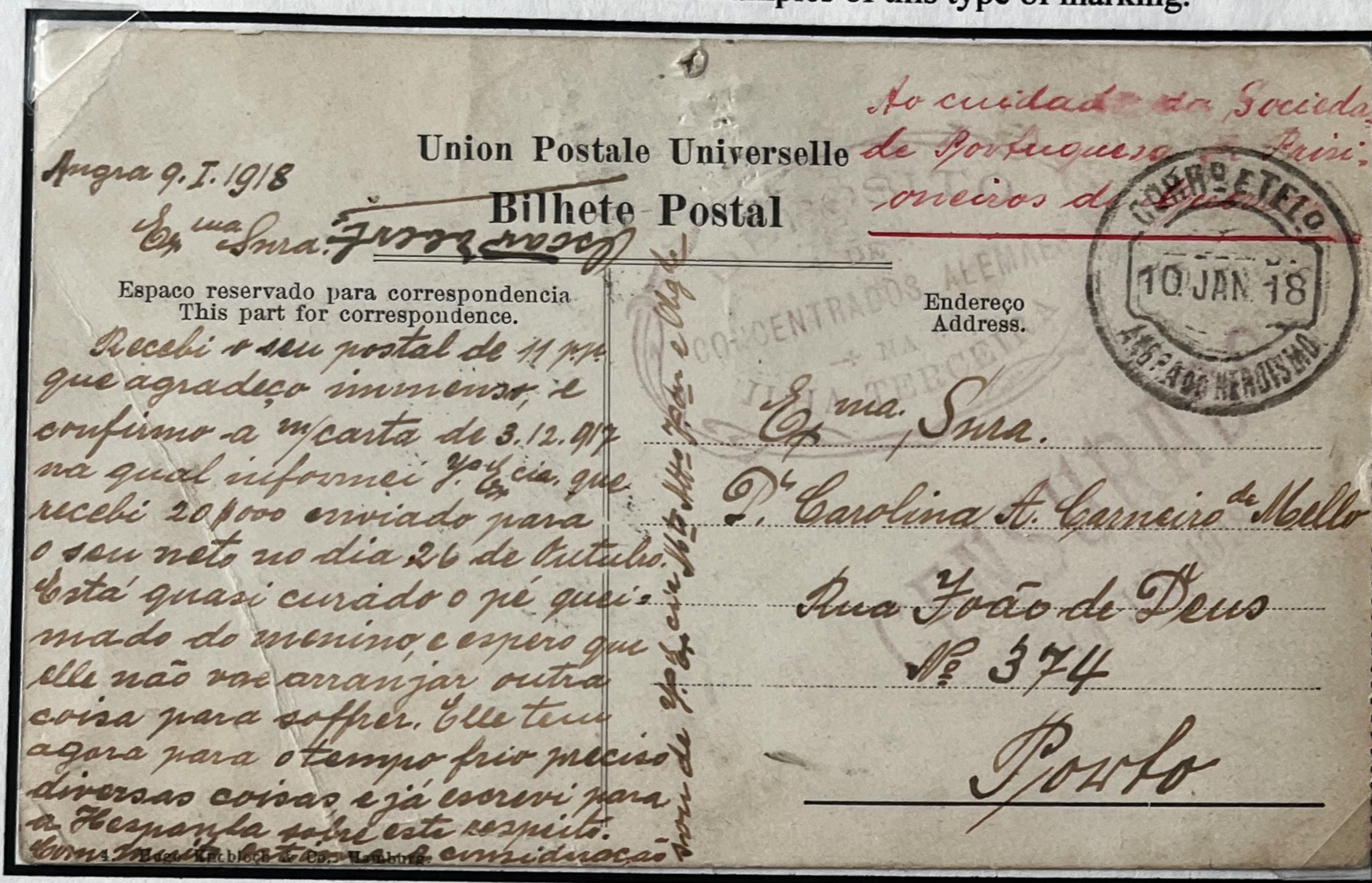
Card written in French on August 14, 1918 to Switzerland. The internee 22 year old Friedrich Martens, was interned in Luanda, Angola on March 16, 1916 transferred to the camp at Angra on October 26, 1917.

Card written in English on April 29, 1919 to Willy Eidtmann living in Germany from his brother Otto a 22 year old sailor aboard the ship "Ingbert" interned in Luanda, Angola on February 25, 1916, transferred to the camp in Angra on October 26, 1917, repatriated to Hamburg on October, 1919.



Manuscript "In Care of Red Cross"

Rather than the officially issued Red Cross postal stationery card, a picture postcard was used. To insure that the card would receive free franking the writer included, in manuscript: "In care of the Portuguese Society for the Prisoners of War". This is one of few known examples of this type of marking.



So cuidado da Sociedade de Portugueses de Prisi. meiros de Guerra

Picture post card written in Portuguese dated January 10, 1918, to Porto, Portugal. It is possible that this card was written by the camp Doctor acknowledging the receipt of money from Carolina de Mello for her interned grandson. The message also includes a statement about the improved health of the young man.

*South - West - Africa
Prisoner of war Service*



Portuguese 1¢ postal stationery card overprinted Açores from Ewald Baericke written on January 15, 1919, passing the camp censors one month later February, 1919 to a POW interned at Camp Aus, SWA. The postcard has a Cape Town transits d/s April 4, 1919 and SWA circular censor h/s, and a SWA arrival d/s April 1919.

Ewald a 32 year old merchant, interned in Angola on April 20, 1916 transferred to Angra camp on November 30, 1917.

Mail from Internee (Pre and Wartime)

Fritz Koltze was a 26 year old retail clerk living in Mozambique who was suspected of being a German activist, put under a watch list and captured aboard the ship "Zieten" interned in Lourenço Marques on April 30, 1916, transferred to Lisbon on April 30, 1916 and finally arriving at the camp in Angra on November 30, 1917.



Example of two cards sent from Fritz Koltze to his family in Germany. The first card dated October 10, 1915 from Mozambique, Portuguese East Africa. The second card dated October 29, 1918 from the camp in Angra.

Latest Known Mail Usage

The war was generally considered to have concluded with the signing of the "Conditions of Armistice with Germany" on November 11, 1918. Censorship ended in Portugal in April 1919, but continued in the Açores until October 1919. By late October, 1919 the last internees at Angra were repatriated on the German steamer "Lothar Bohlem" arriving in Hamburg on November 11, 1919.

Rare usage of the 2¢ postal stationery card



This is the last known message dated September 3, 1919 to Germany from Arthur Heitz. Previous to this discovery the last known correspondence was dated June 16, 1919.

Arthur Julius Heitz 22 years of age was a telegraphic operator in the neighboring Island of Faial, apprehended on May 1, 1916 transferred to the camp at Angra on May 30, 1916, repatriated to Hamburg on October 29, 1919