

Covers to and from the Panama Canal Zone (A Philatelically Dead Country) to and from Other Philatelically Dead Countries (1904-1979)

1. **Background:** The Panama Canal Zone was created by treaty in 1903 between the newly birthed nation of Panama and the United States. The treaty gave the U.S. sovereign power over a 10-mile strip of land between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The Panama Canal was built within this 10-mile strip. The Canal Zone operated an independent mail system from June of 1904 until 1979. This exhibit will highlight covers to and from the Canal Zone to and from fellow Philatelically Dead Countries.

What Constitutes a Philatelically Dead Country? It is a country or entity that experienced one of the following events:

- A. An absolute monarchy overthrown e.g. Imperial Russia became Soviet Union
- B. Overthrow of or withdrawal of colonial rule e.g. India independence
- C. Annexation into another country e.g. Soviet annexation of Latvia
- D. Joining of two or more political entities e.g. Creation of the United Arab Republic
- E. Occupation or control by an external entity e.g. Nazi occupation of France
- F. Dissolution of a large political entity into smaller countries e.g. Austria-Hungary Empire
- G. Small entities existing with special rights existing within a larger country e.g. The Canal Zone or Treaty Ports China.

2. **Organization:** The exhibit highlights covers to and from 106 philatelically dead entities organized by continents.
3. **Importance:** Along with the historical drama of the tide of history from 1904-1979, there is much philatelic history that helps illustrate this story. In just 7 frames one can see the major changes in history in 75 years. This is especially true for the many imperial empires which had no idea what the future held for them.
4. **Personal Study:** This exhibit allows me to combine my passions of study of: A.) the Panama Canal Zone, B.) Twentieth Century world history and C.) World Geography. As an adult my collecting interests have certainly coincided with my historical interests.
5. **Condition:** The conditions of the materials vary greatly. Many covers are more than 100 years old and spent decades in the non-air-conditioned Canal Zone. Some are in remarkably good condition.
6. **Rarity:** **Rare or difficult to find covers have a bold red frame.** The first cover exhibited is rare and difficult to find as it is a cover going to Imperial Germany from a postal system that was hastily organized, had three varieties of hand overprinted stamps and had been operating fewer than two weeks. Others covers may have common postage, but are to or from locations that rarely corresponded with the Canal Zone. The Canal Zone population peaked during construction (1904-14) at 62,000 civilian and military personnel and their families. During normal operations the population was around 35,000. Most of the mail was to the U.S. or Caribbean islands. There was very little correspondence from entities such as the German colony of Southwest Africa, the Free City of Danzig or Portuguese Congo.
7. **Goals:** My goals are three-fold. The first two goals are to tell and illustrate the massive historical changes that took place between June 1904 and September 1979. In these 75 years we see the collapse of many large imperial countries, an outburst of nationalism and creation of new countries, the rise of fascism, communism and other totalitarian governments, the end of colonial rule in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and more. Many if not most of these changes result in a potential exhibit of covers from a philatelically dead country. The third goal is to show family and friends a small part of my collection being used as both a philatelic and historical lesson.