



International **A**ssociation
for the **P**reservation of
Spiritualist and **O**ccult
Periodicals

Philately & International Mail Order Fraud Professor A Victor Segno And The American Institute of Mentalism Success in the European African Colonies

With Special Thanks to
Philip Deslippe (UC SB)
Larry Harnisch (LA Times)
IAPSOP

(<http://www.iapsop.com/>)

John Buescher
Marc Demarest
John Patrick Deveney

**Cette conférence peut être dangereuse pour votre santé!
La transmission d'Ondes de Succès Segno résiduelles via
Zoom n'a pas été étudiée à ce jour! L'utilisation
d'équipement de protection est recommandée!**

Warning! Avertissement!

Warnung!

**This lecture may be dangerous to your
health! The transmission of residual Segno
Success Waves via Zoom has not been
studied to date! The use of protective
equipment is recommended!**

Segno Meeting of the Akron Collectors Club - 2017



Professor A Victor Segno

- Professor Segno was a self-proclaimed mentalist who for the sum of \$1.00 per month or \$10.00 per year would send his good vibrations (so-called **Success Waves**) in your direction, twice each a day, and your life would improve in numerous areas including health, wealth, love, success, etc., etc.
- He operated out of Los Angeles from about 1900
- To unite his subscribers, he formed the **Segno Success Club**, membership in which was part of his subscription fee
- He claimed to be the creator of the **New Science of Mentalism**, and formed a related organization: **The American Institute of Mentalism**

Professor A Victor Segno: 1870-1940



Success Wave:

Love
Hope
Peace
Wealth
Health
Ambition
Happiness
Influence
Success



Circa 1905



Circa 1920

How Successful was Professor Segno?

- Around 1903 the **Segno Success Club** had 12,000 members, each paying monthly or yearly membership fees
 - Roughly \$120,000 per year or \$2,400,000 in today's dollars
- The **Postmaster** of LA, in a response to complaints about Segno's activities by the Bishop of LA, noted that:
 - Segno was doing nothing unusual relative to the activities of many others at the time
 - Segno was investigated by the Post Office in DC in 1903, and no charges were filed
 - You could not trap one of his Success Waves and scientifically show it was nonsense
 - **Segno was the largest private mailer in LA, sending as many as 6000 - 7000 letters per day and receiving thousands of letters per day**
- With the proceeds from his activities, Segno built a mansion and a publishing office in 1905 in the Echo Park section of LA (near Dodger Stadium) from which he conducted his business activities
- A 1911 report indicates that the **Segno Success Club** had about 70,000 clients. This has **NOT** been confirmed.

The Untouchable Professor Segno (*Evidence insufficient for fraud order*)

Thanks to
IAPSOP

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DOCKET OF FRAUD CASES.

Name: *Segno Success Club and A Victor Segno*
President

Address: *Los Angeles California*

File number: *7616* Case number: *9362-2*

Charge: *Fraud (Sec. 3919 & 4041 R.S.N.S.) mental treatment*

Date called upon to show cause: *June 10/1903*

Date set for hearing: *July 5, 1903*

Continuances:

Mail held temporarily—date: *June 10/1903*

Order holding mail temporarily revoked—date: *June 16, 1903*

Letter containing call and memorandum delivered by postmaster—date: *June 10, 1903*

Amount of mail daily arriving for defendants:

Attorneys for defendants:

Appearances:

Before whom case was heard: *Hon. C. H. Robb.*

Judgment entered: *Evidence insufficient for fraud order*

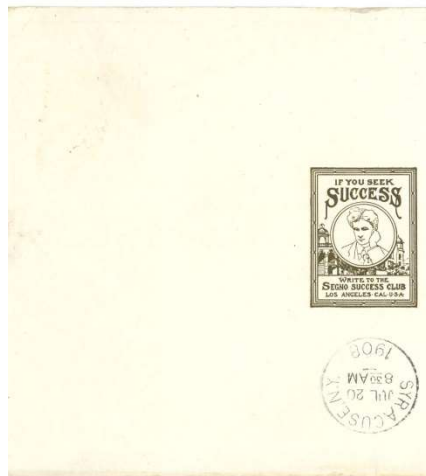
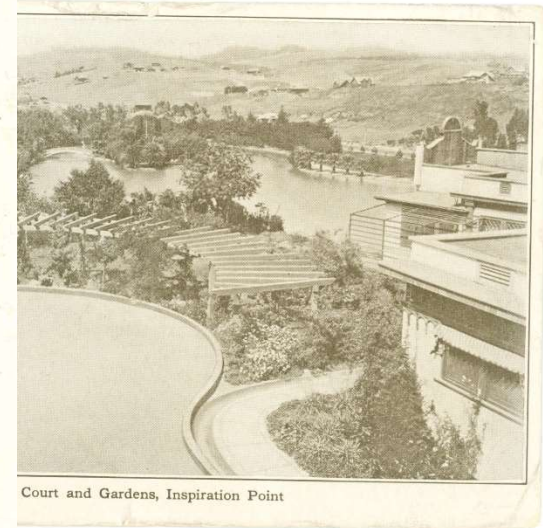
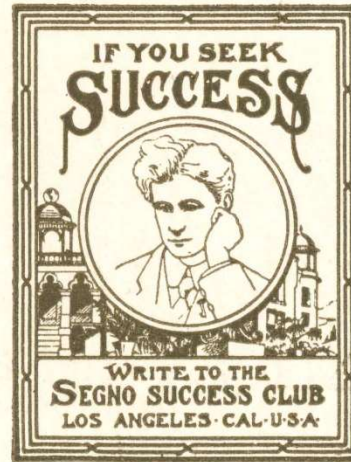
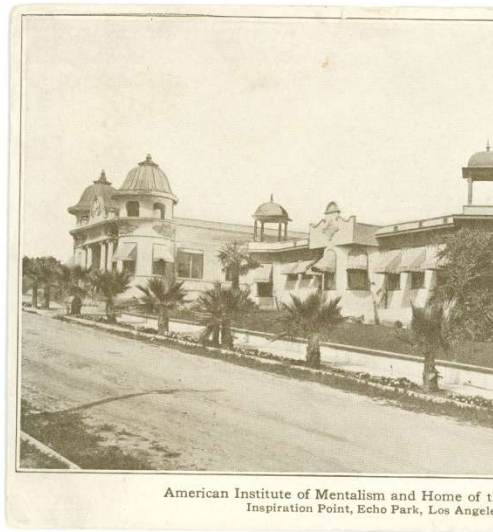
Date: *July 17, 1903*

Fraud order issued—date:

Fraud order revoked—date:

General remarks: *A. Victor Segno appeared at this office & discussed his plan of business before C. H. R. & E. N. T. June 16, 1903.*

The Success of Professor Segno



How Large Were Professor Segno's Operations in Echo Park?

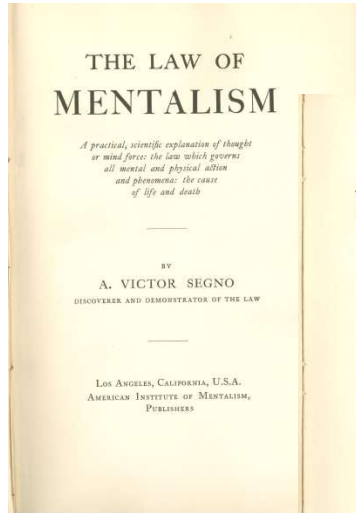


Photos show a staff of 12 people working in his mail room, and an additional 12 people working in his office area in Echo Park. The LA Postmaster claimed that Segno employed 50 Typewriters!

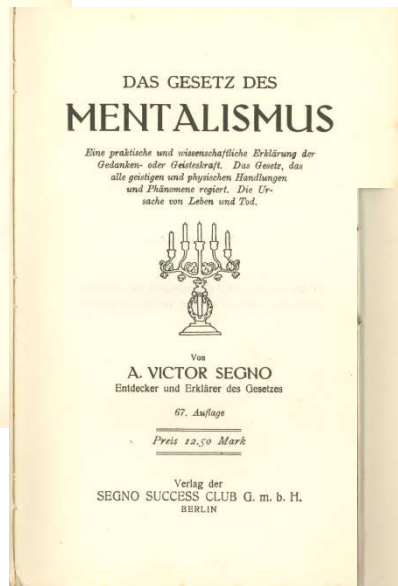
Publications by Professor Segno

- In support of his Success Club and American Institute of Mentalism activities, Professor Segno authored a number of books for his clients which were printed at Echo Park by the **Segnogram Publishing Company**
 - **The Law of Mentalism**
 - **How to Live 100 Years and Retain Your Youth, Health and Beauty**
 - **Life in the Great Beyond; or The Law of Life and Death**
 - **The Secret of Memory**
 - **How to Possess a Perfect Head of Hair**
 - **Into This World and Why**
 - **How to Be Happy Tho' Married** (Professor Segno divorced his wife in 1903; married an employee named Annie Dell Dinsmore and then ran off to Germany with one of his secretaries in 1911.)

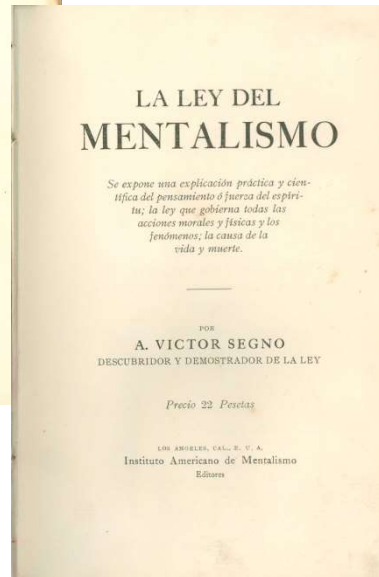
Languages Were Not a Problem Publications in Many Languages



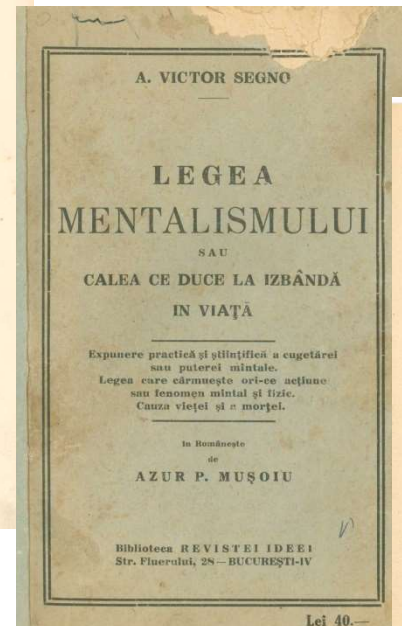
English



German

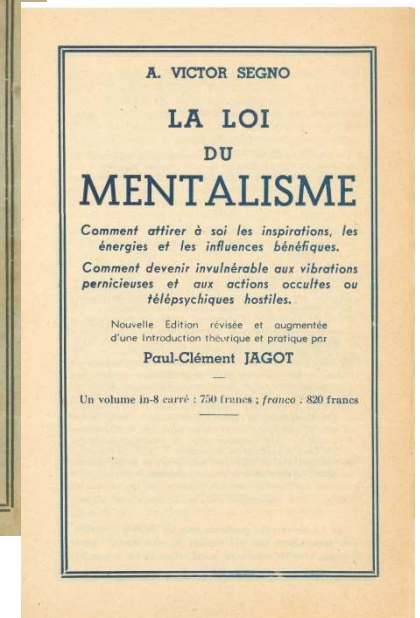


Spanish

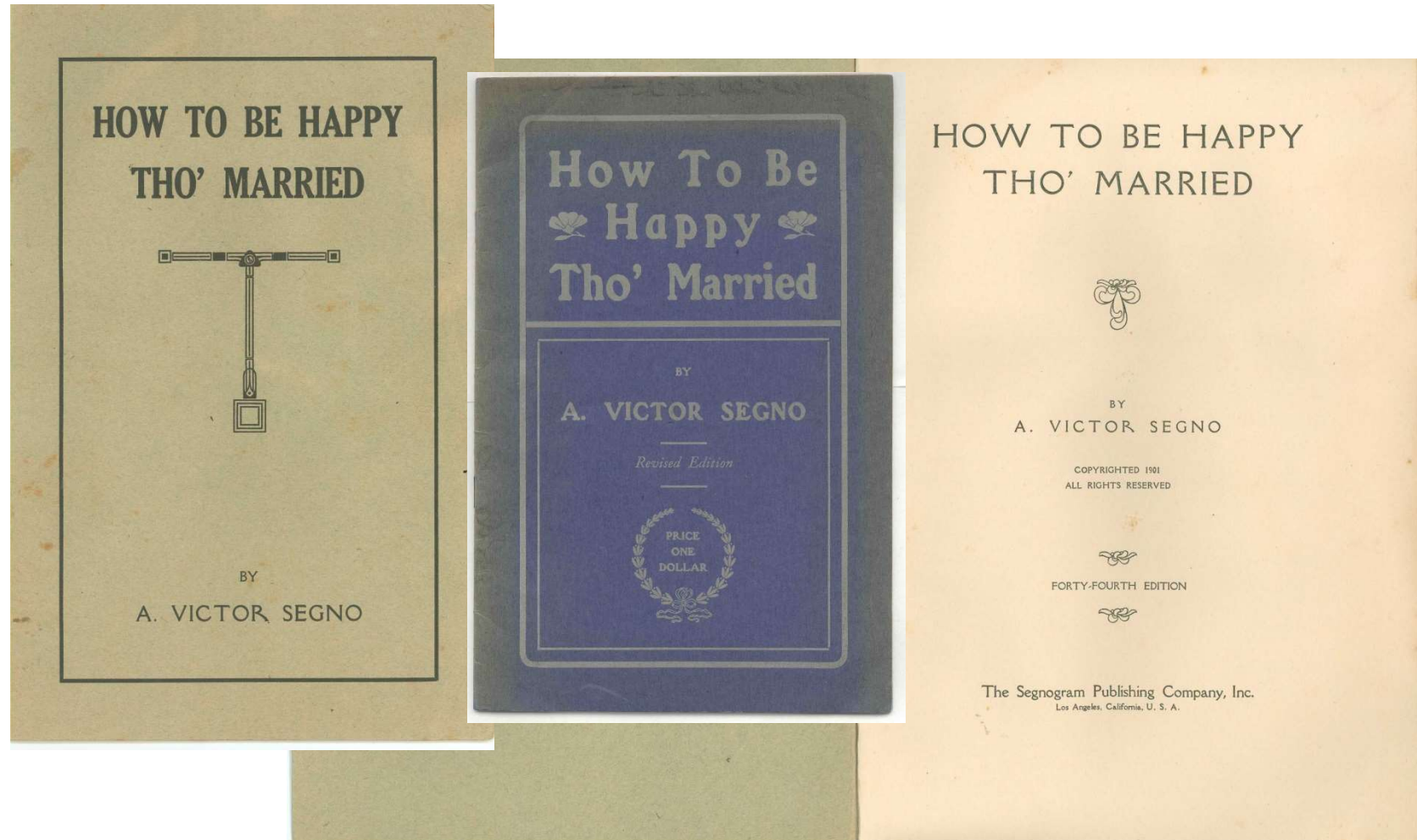


Romanian - 1930

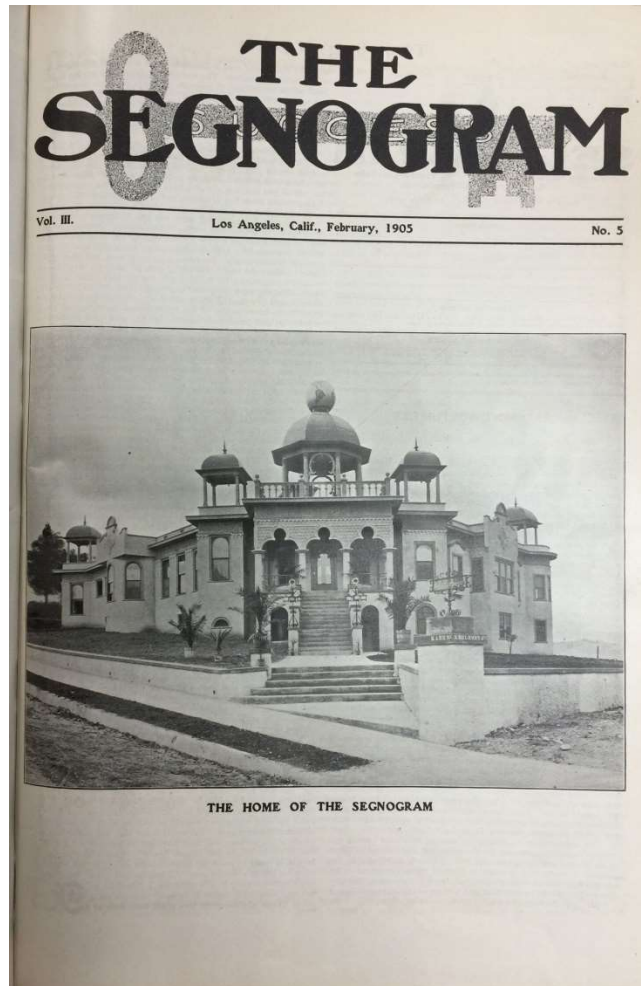
French - 1950



A Favorite Publication of Professor Segno



The House Magazine





Did the Good Vibrations – Success Waves Work?

“You no doubt will be glad to learn that since joining your club I have improved my health, supported myself and little baby girl and made over \$1,000, and risen from a servant to be a proprietor.”

“I consider your Success Club the greatest discovery ever made by man...”

**[Member No. 5515, Coffeyville, Kansas
from promotional material for the Success Club]**

I estimate that membership in the Success Club appeared to be successful for about 50% of the members of the Club.

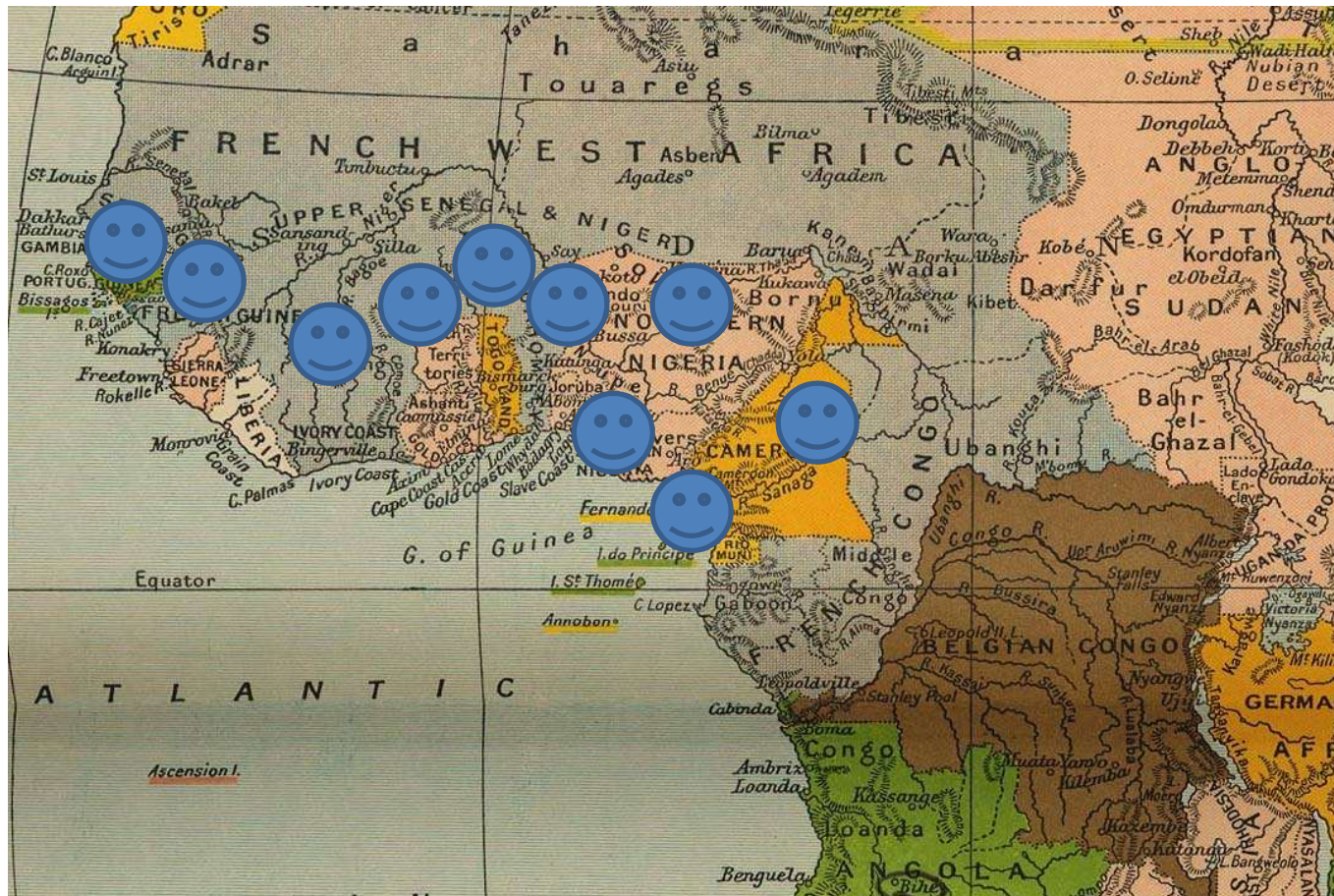
There was a high probability that something good would happen in the lives of many of the members during their membership (New job; investment success, birth of a healthy child (etc., etc.), or they were cured of what was thought to be a significant health issue which was not, or when they had something relatively minor, or they did experience a natural cure of the disease. Similar success was experienced with Homeopathic Medicine at the time. As a species we are easily fooled. Think of the furor that Hydroxychloroquin and Ivermectin caused in our current pandemic, when, in fact, neither drug has shown any efficacy in double-blind placebo controlled studies; nor has Homeopathic Medicine.



Segno's Success Waves Reach West Africa and Beyond

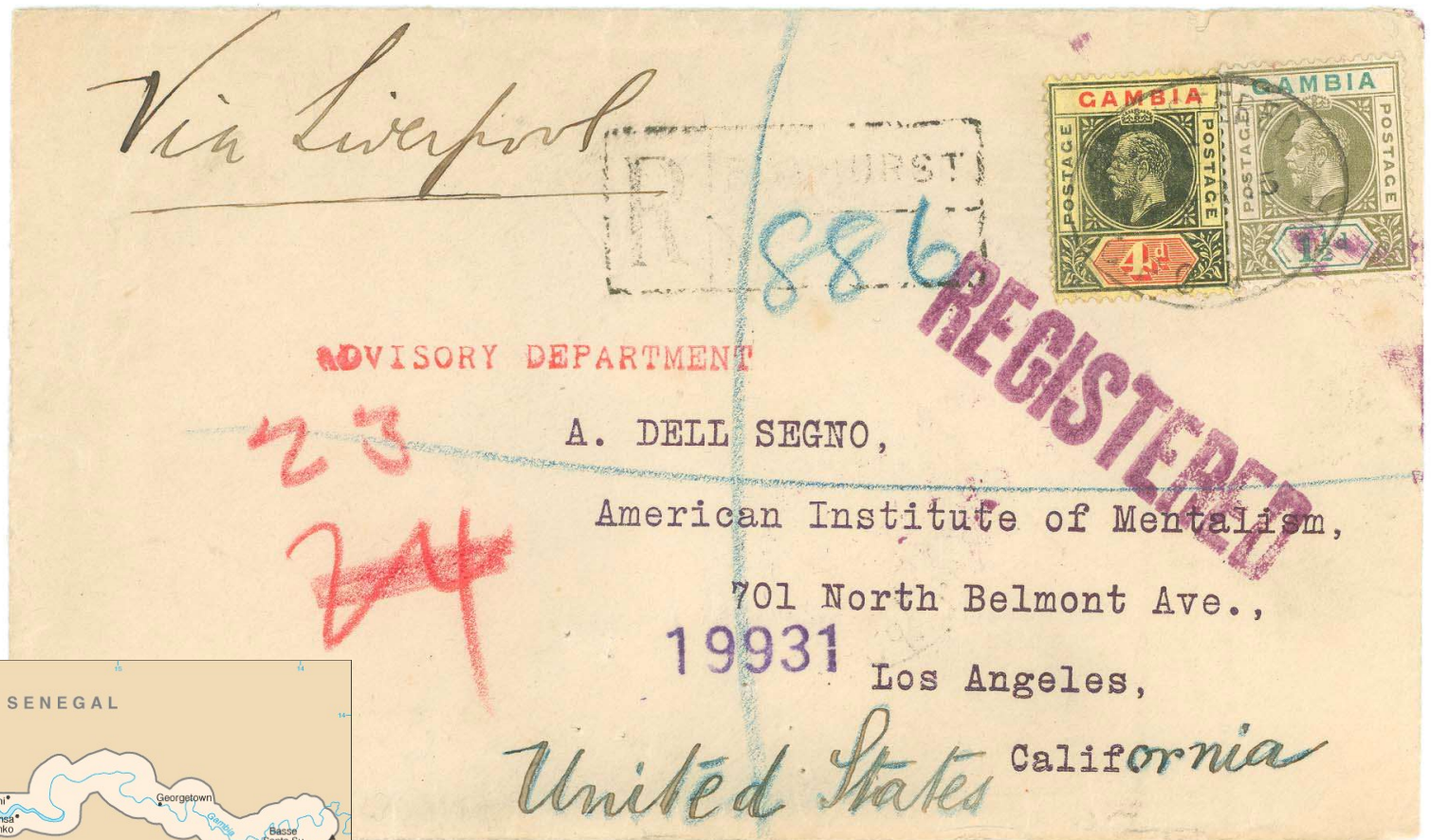
It is important to note that many of the covers are from small, remote villages and not just the colonial capitals and large commercial centers

Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Gold Coast, Togo (German, British-French Occupation), Dahomey, Nigeria, Cameroun and Fernando Po



Bathurst, Gambia

San Francisco Transit April 1915



Freetown, Sierra Leone 1913

The Segnogram Publishing Company

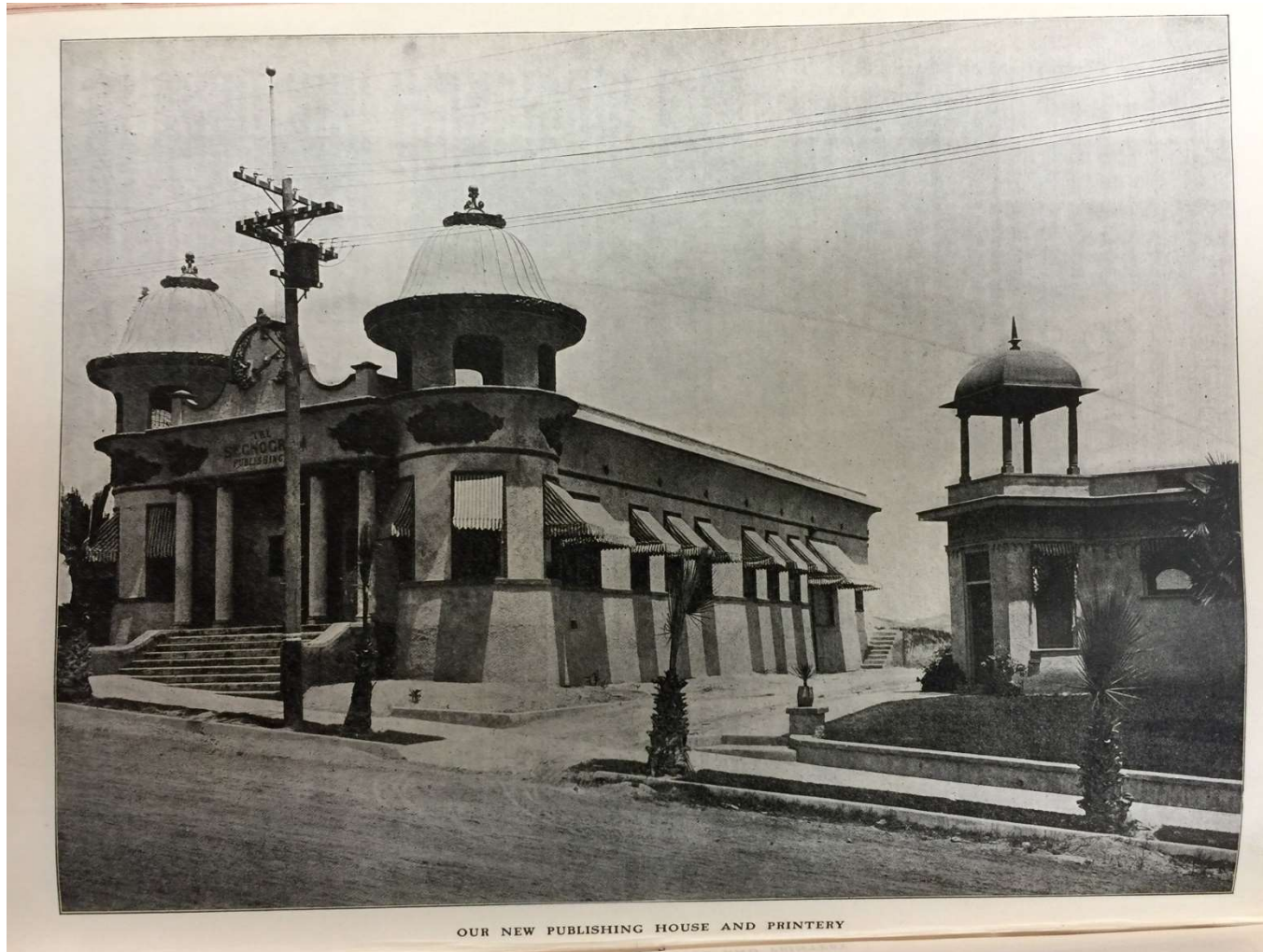


Freetown, Sierra Leone

July 1913

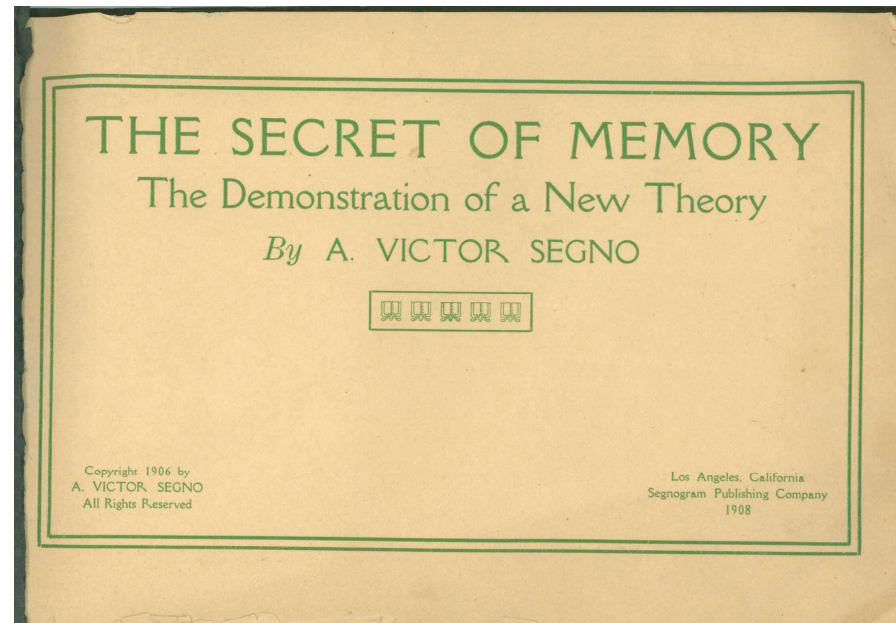
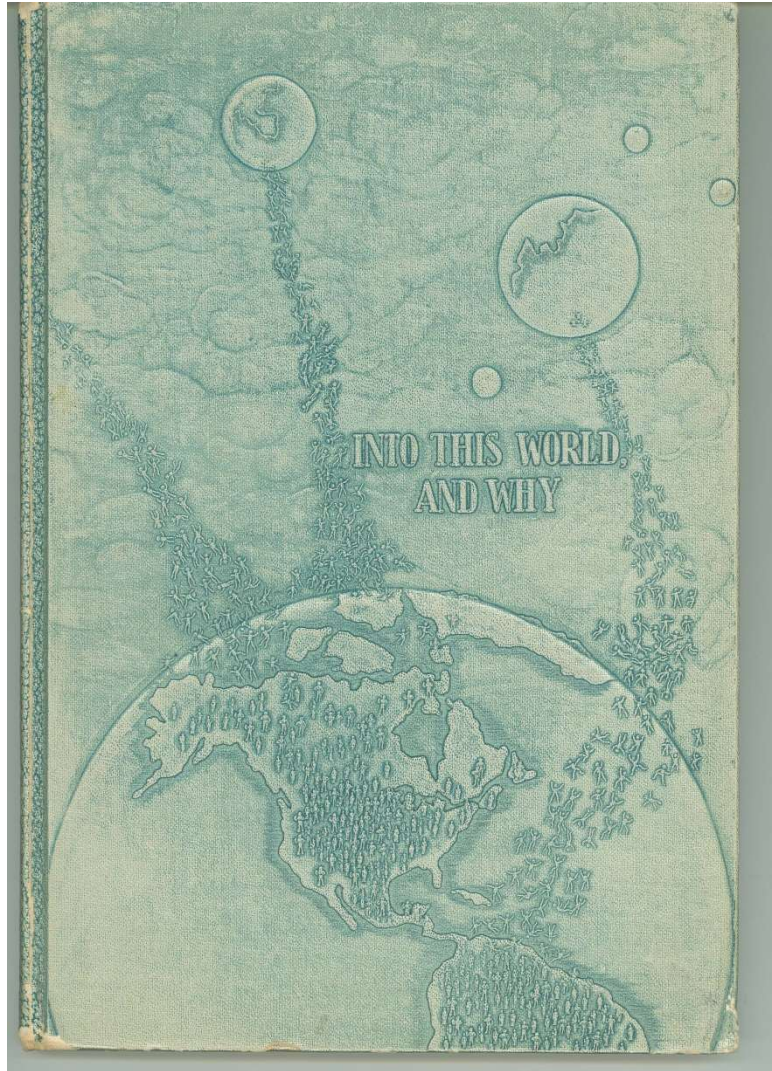


The Segnogram Publishing Company

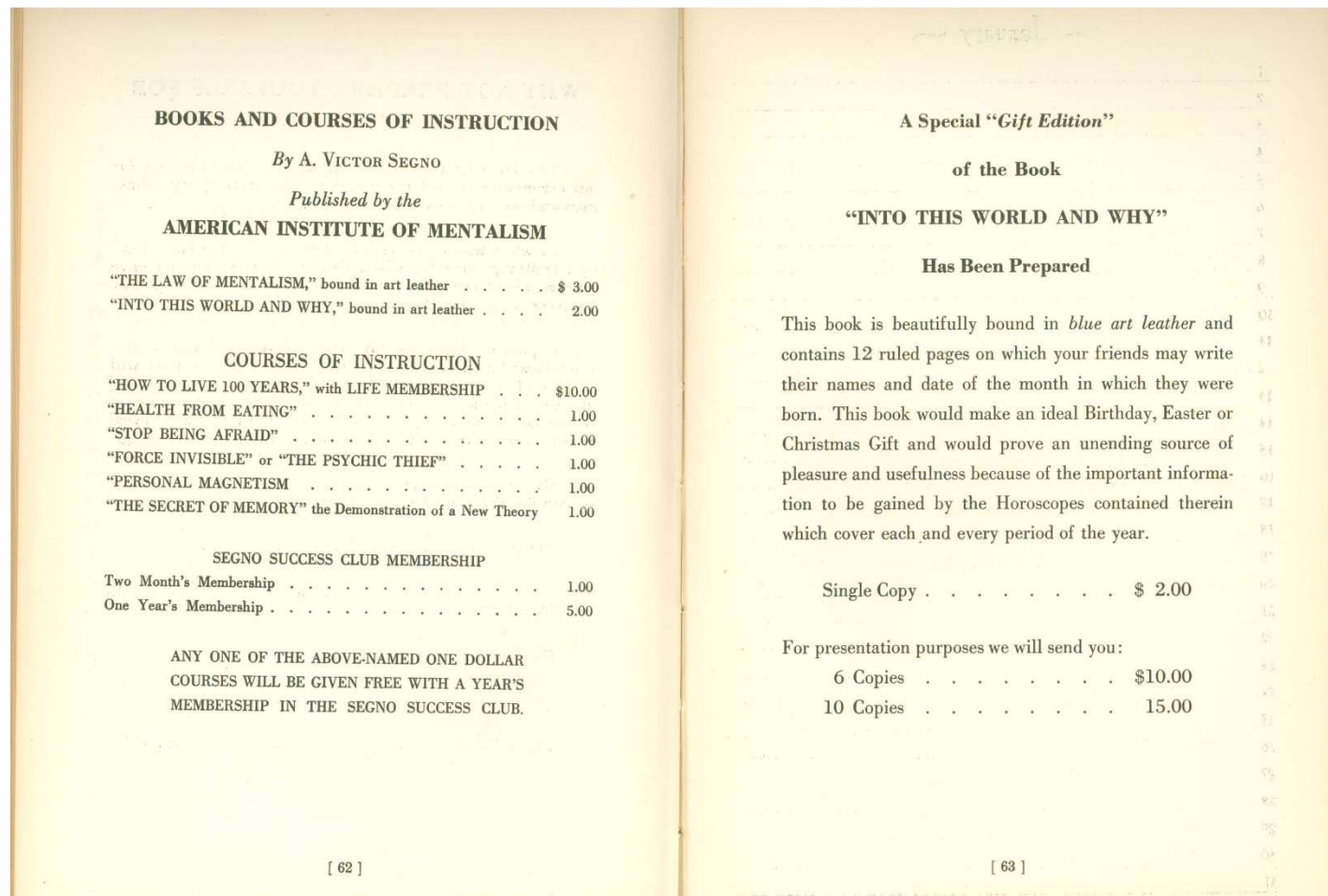


OUR NEW PUBLISHING HOUSE AND PRINTERY

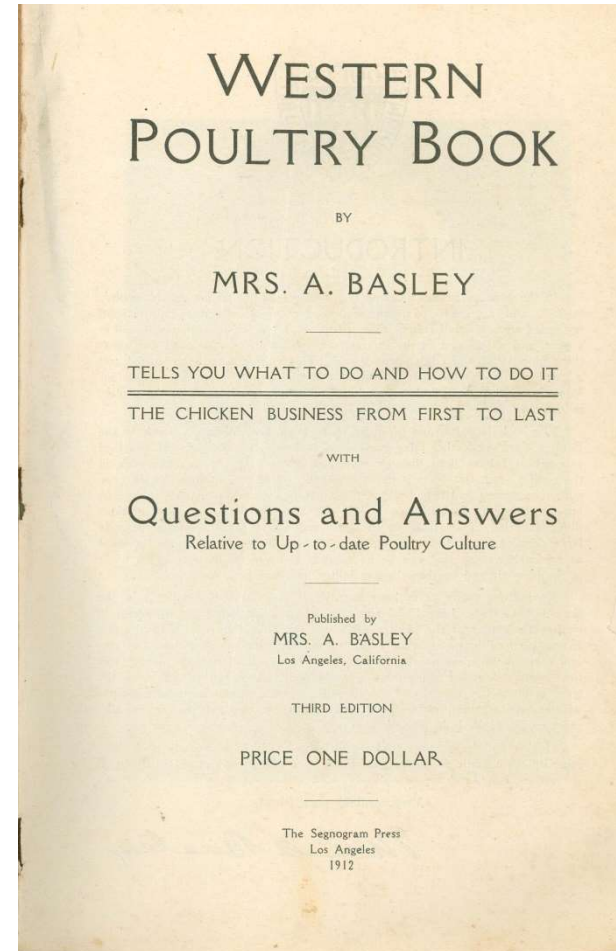
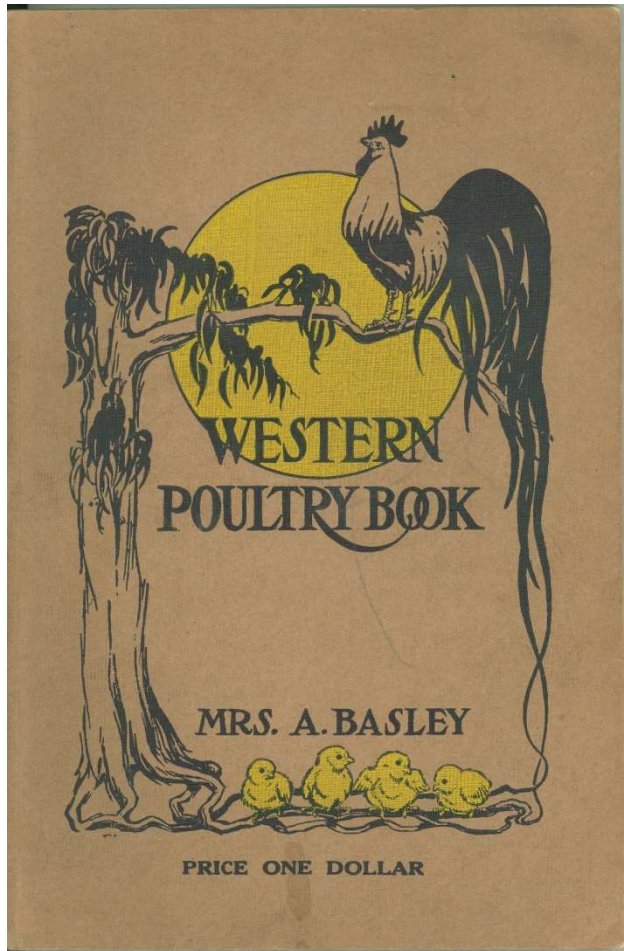
Last Publication: Into This World and Why Also: The Secret of Memory



Offers in 'Into This World and Why'



Contract Publishing Was Part of Segno's Activities



Text Books for the Los Angeles School System were also published!

To



Los Angeles, California,

A circular library stamp from the University of Toronto Libraries. The text "UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARIES" is arranged in a circle around the perimeter. In the center, the number "38" is at the top, followed by the word "OCT" in large letters, and the year "1968" at the bottom.



Grand Bassam – Registered 1923



Segno accepted all monetary vehicles: All currencies, money orders, stamps, etc.

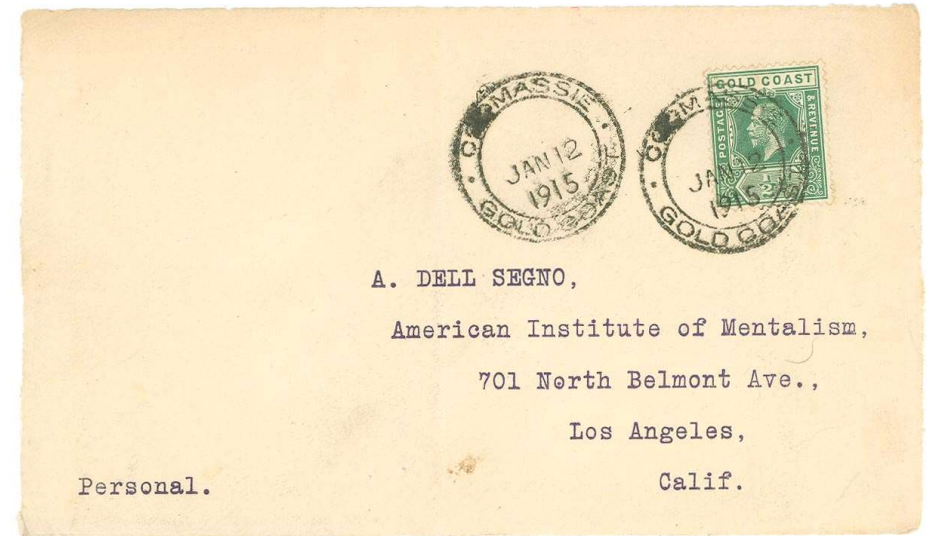


Collection S. H. O. - G. P., phot.

28. - FRANCEVILLE. - Pirogues

Coomassie & Dodouah Gold Coast – 1915 & 1913

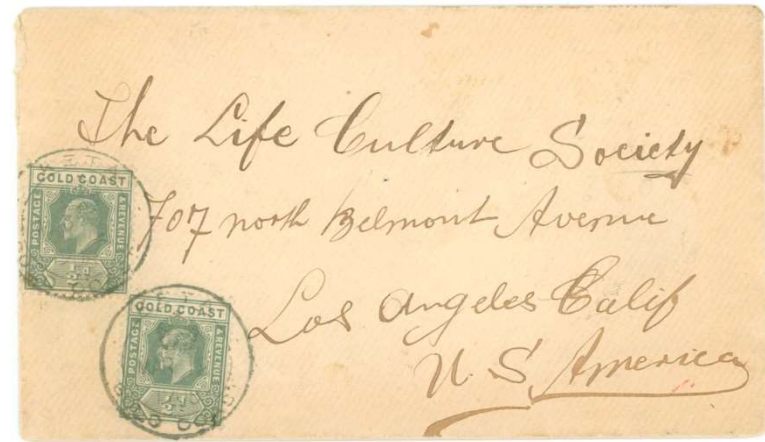
Printed matter rate of ½p posted
Jan 12, 1915 and arrived without
any issues; and same rate, but
invalid and treated by the USPO
at the 2½p rate with 2p unpaid and
4p due equivalent to 8¢ due on arrival.



Relative to the above, why is
Printed Matter being sent to
Professor Segno?
Based on the date and rate,
someone sent holiday
greetings to the Professor!

Kieta, Mar 12, 1908 at 1p Rate(?)

- Small village posting at a 1p rate
- **There was no 1p rate from a British Colony to the USA**
- **Colonialists often assumed there was, and franked accordingly**
- However, there were 1p rates from the British Colonies to Great Britain and colonies, and from Great Britain to the USA
- There are loads of colonial letters from this period franked in error at 1p to the USA which allows for studies on how underfranked mail was handled.
- In this case the Kieta post office did not note the underfranking.
- General observation: When the sending post office fails to recognize an underfranking, letters proceed to their final destination without postage due



This letter is addressed to the Life Culture Society, the entity that prepared the book **“Into This World and Why.”** This is the only recorded letter to this entity noted to date.

The Life Culture Society

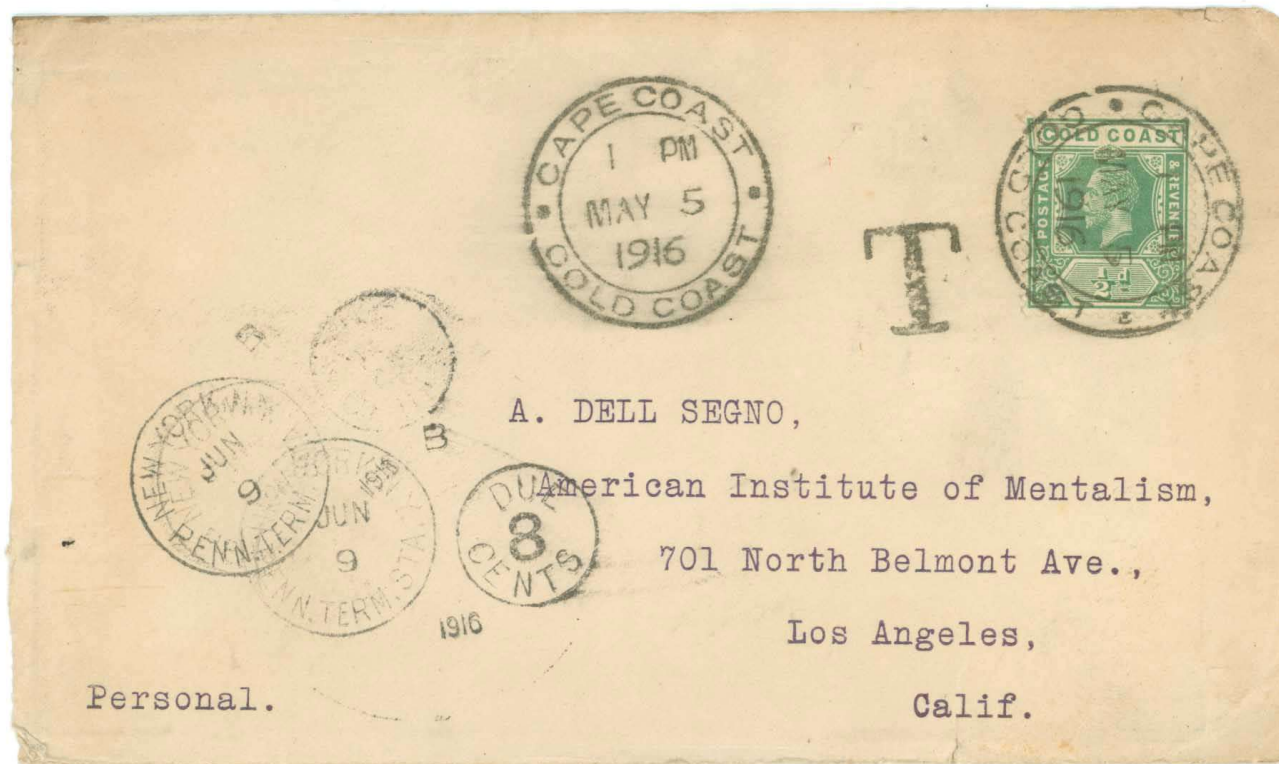


707 north Belmont Avenue



Los Angeles Calif
U. S. America

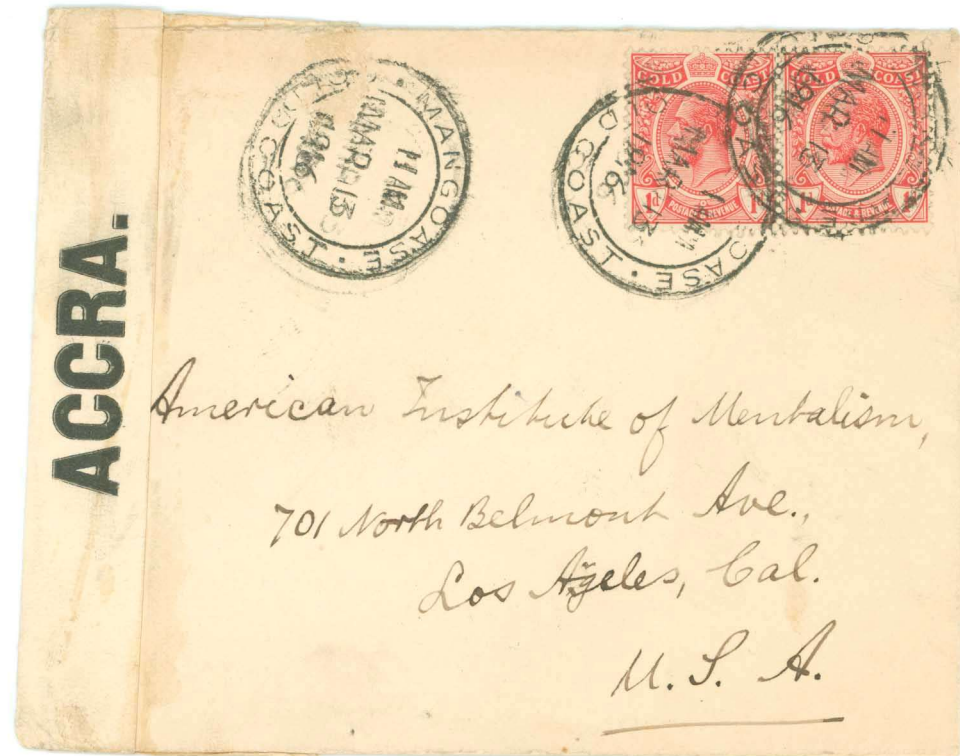
Proper Treatment by all on 1916 Censored Letter Sent at ½d



'T' in triangle applied by origin office, **CENSORED** hand-stamp applied at Accra by employee 'er' and 8¢ marked as due in New York. The study of mail censorship is a topic of considerable study today.

Mangoase, March 15, 1916 at a 2p Rate – Censored at Accra

There was no 2p rate to the USA,
the rate was 2½p. But since the
office at Mangoase did not note
the 1/2p deficiency, the letter
reached the US.



ACCRA.



American Institute of Mentalism,
701 North Belmont Ave.,
Los Angeles, Cal.
U. S. A.



**OPENED BY
CENSOR.**

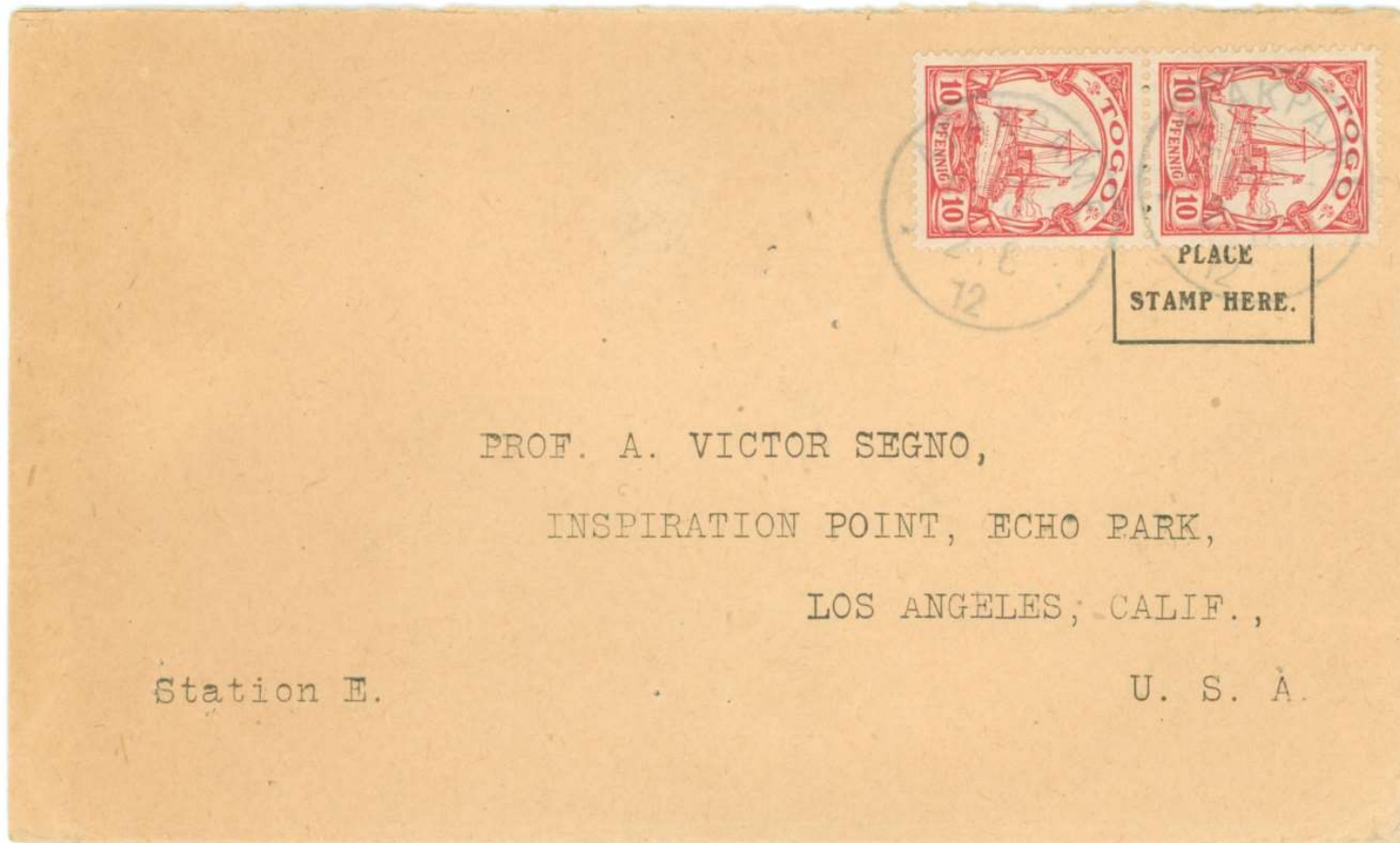
Double Weight Registered Letter From the Village of Dodowa Showing Use of Accra Censor Handstamp and 1p War Tax Stamp - 1919



Proper 2½p Rate From Accura With Censor HS in
Addressed to the Segnogram Publishing Company - 1919



Atakpame, Togo (German) - 1912



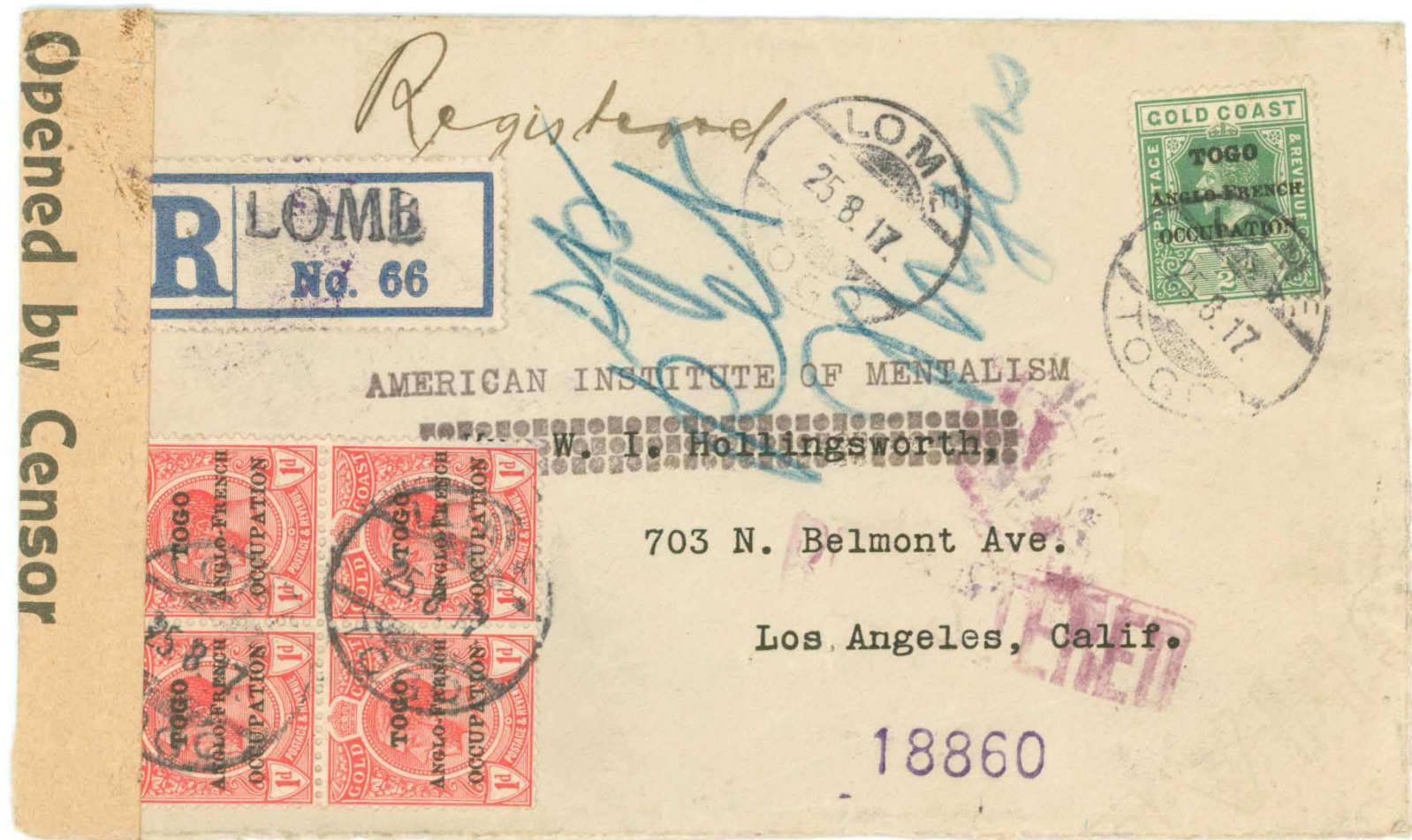
British-French Occupy German Togoland in August 1914

- As part of WWI the British and French forces from the Gold Coast and Dahomey defeated the Germans in Togoland in the Togoland Campaign from August 9-26, 1914
- Togoland was occupied jointly until its partition in 1916
- Photo shows British in Togo



Lome, Togo

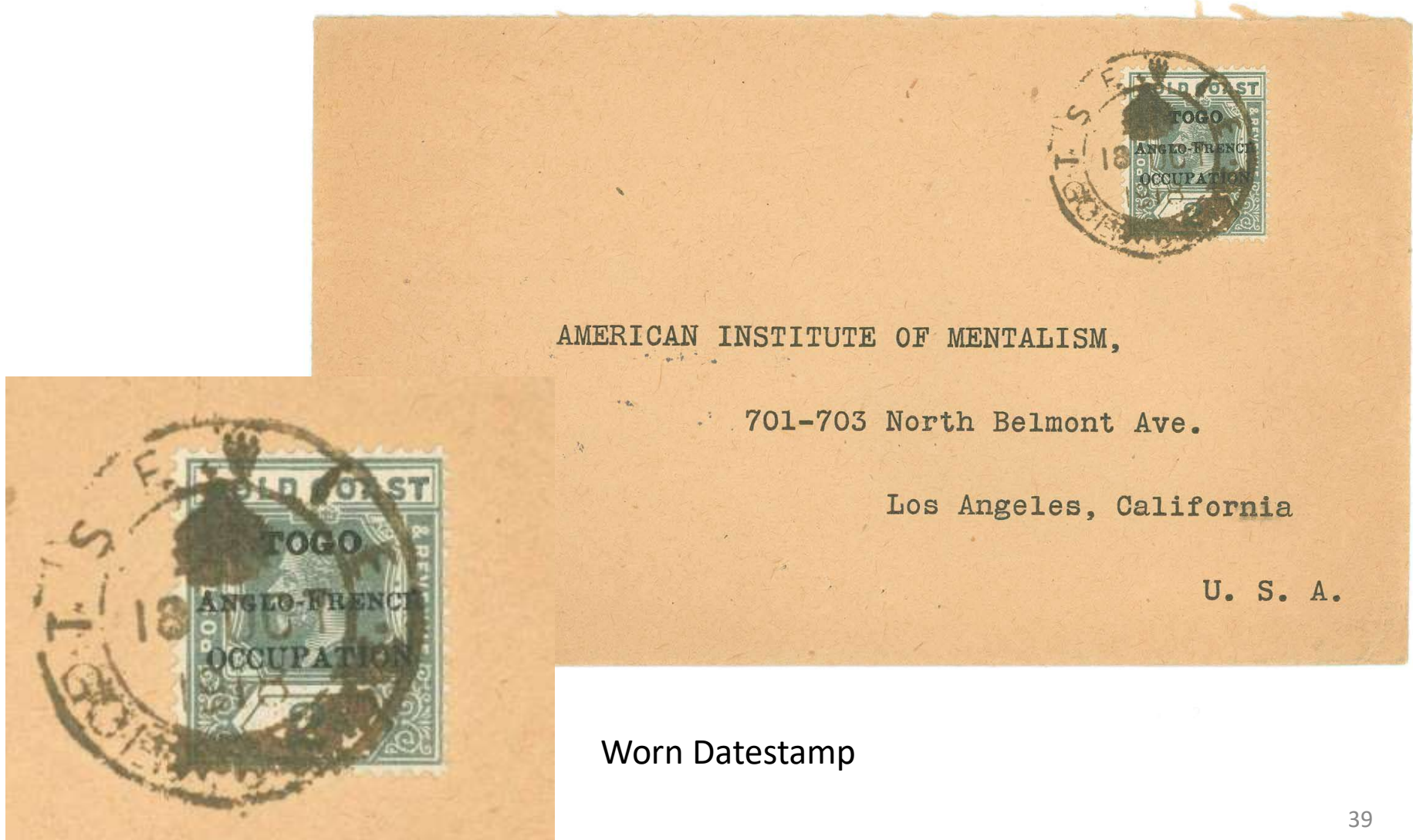
Anglo-French Occupation - 1917



The name of Hollingsworth has been crossed out

Tsewie, Togo (1918)

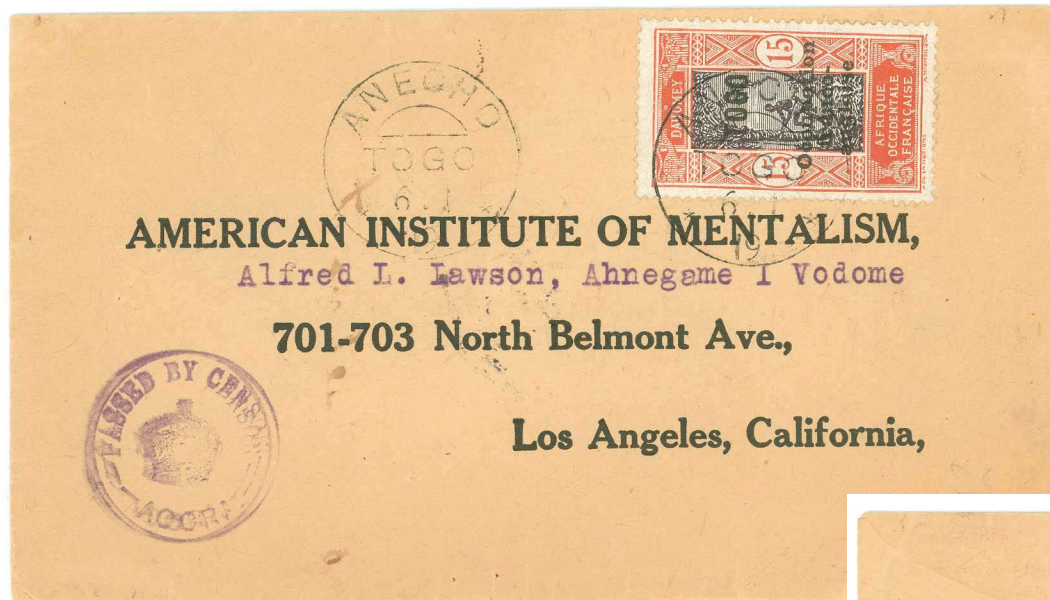
British – French Occupation



Worn Datestamp

Anecho, Togo (1919)

French – British Occupation



Rare PASSED BY CENSOR
ACCRA handstamp

The names Hollingsworth, Lawson and Vodome reflect newcomers to the AIM as Prof Segno faded into obscurity.



Porto-Novo, Dahomey - 1906



Collection LDdV

Via Lagos

Récommandée

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MENTALISM,
Inspiration Point, Echo Park,
Station E,
Los Angeles, Calif.,
U. S. A.

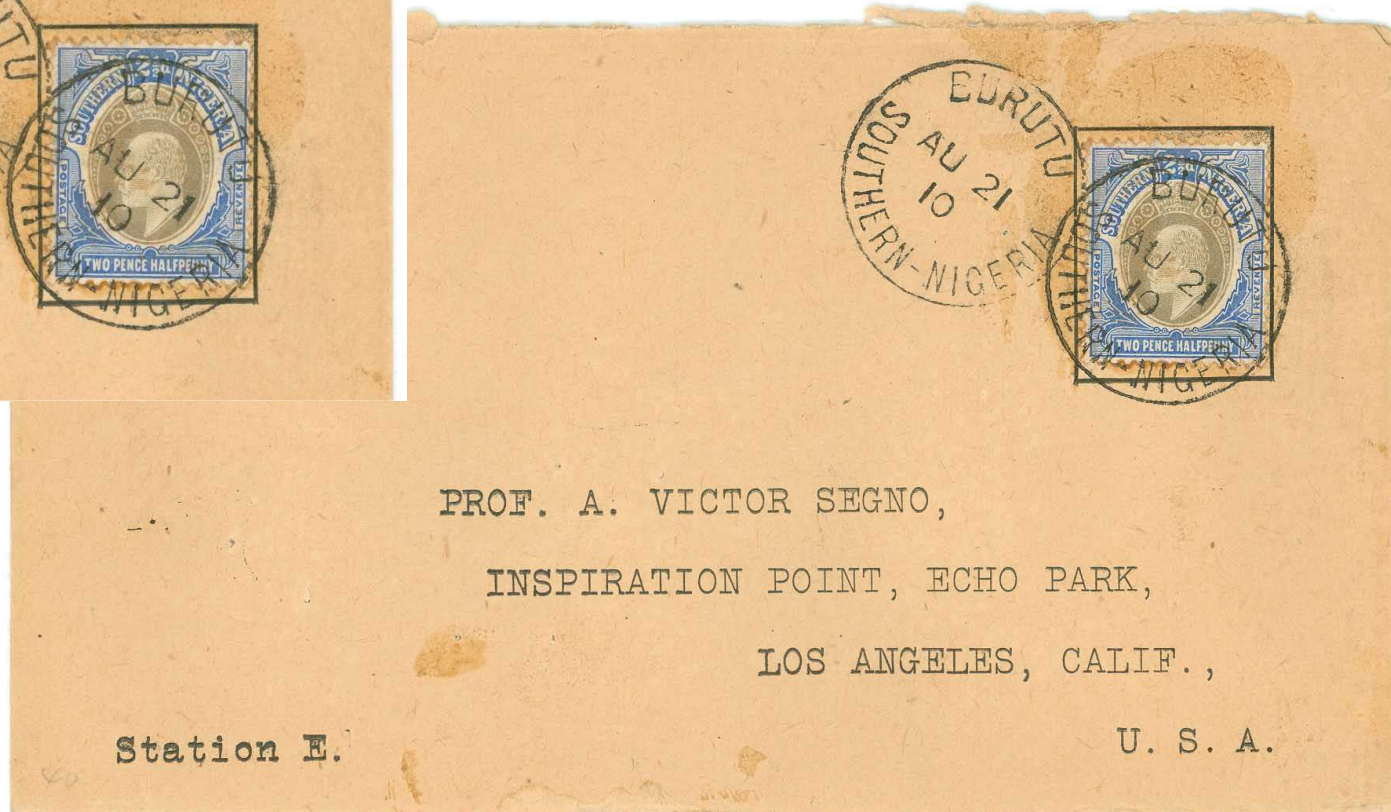
Personal.

11804

Lagos, Southern Nigeria - 1912



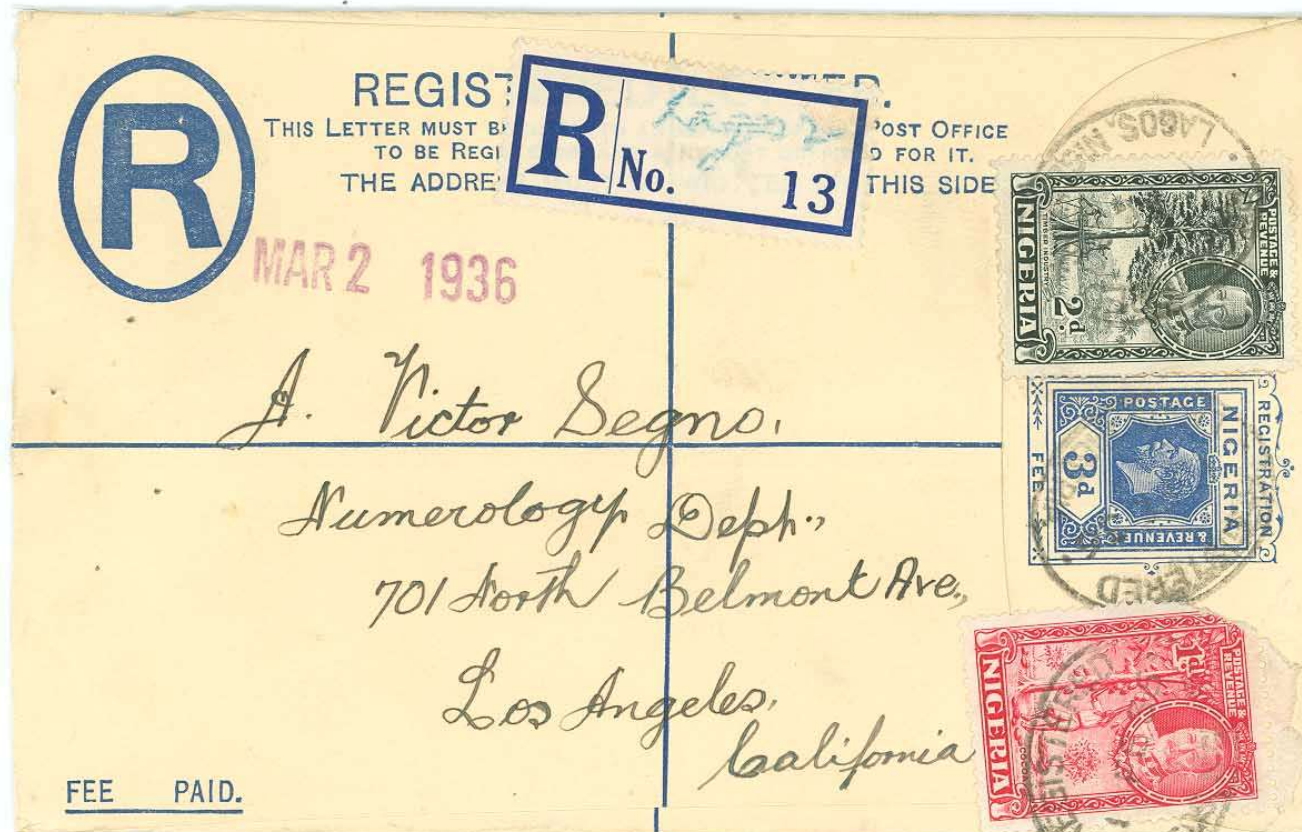
Burutu, Southern Nigeria



Kano, Northern Nigeria (Aug 30, 1913)



Lagos, Nigeria - 1936



Cameroun – French Occupation (1916)



Ebolona, Cameroun – 1917



Registered at 50c with a request for a Return Receipt – manuscript A.R.

Santa Isabel, Fernando Po Double weight Registered





4-JUN 14
SANTA ISABEL
(FERNANDO POO)

MADRID
21 JUN 14
CERTIFICADO

NEW YORK N.Y.
6-30
1914
REG. DIV.

NEW YORK N.Y.
6-30
1914
REG. DIV.

LOS ANGELES
JUL 6
1914
REGISTERED

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425

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TOL

2132

How Did Segno Do It?

- Good advertising at the local level
- Support at the local level
 - Quote from the Gold Coast Leader at Cape Coast from 1904
 - Taken from the Segnogram Magazine of the same year
 - **There are more Segno covers from the Gold Coast than any other country!**

it wished each other good night and parted.

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HAVE CONVICTIONS AND STICK TO THEM.

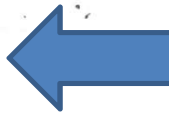
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A man without a policy, without a definite purpose, without a strong conviction of any kind, who believes a little of everything and not much of anything, who is willing upon pressure to relinquish his opinion on any Subject, to abandon any idea he has conceived, whether it be feasible or not, who does not hold on to any one thing tenaciously, will never accomplish much in this world. Men who do things, who achieve results, have strong convictions they believe something in particular, and believe it without reservation. A man who is willing to fight for an idea, to sacrifice everything in order to develop it, has something definite in his life a specific certainty that will bring him out somewhere in the neighbourhood of success.—The *Segnogram*, April 1904.

Printed at the office of the GOLD COAST LEADER Salt Pond Road, Cape Coast, by JOHN D. OTOO.



Thanks to Philip Deslipe

What About the Rest of Africa and Related Areas?

Cairo, Egypt – December 6, 1912

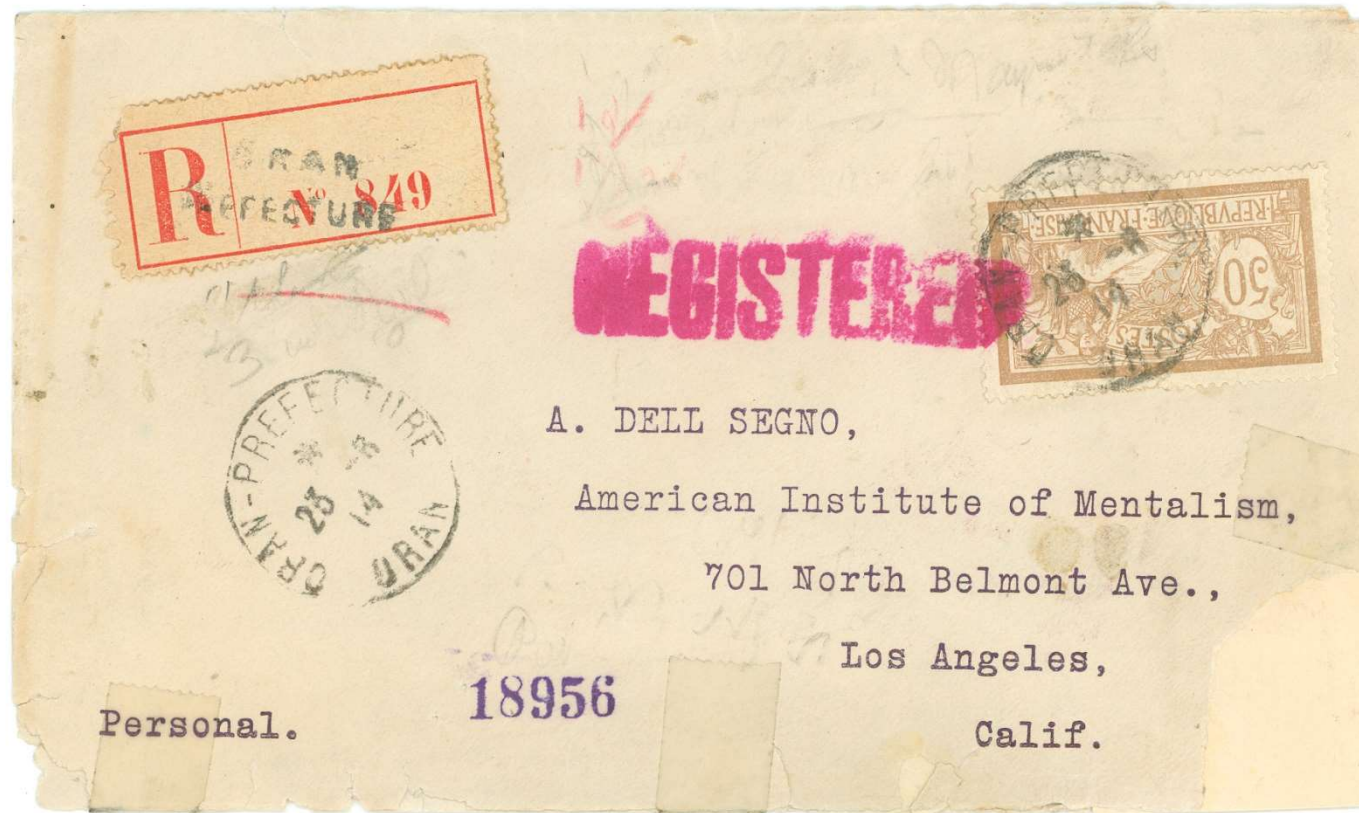


Why was printed matter being sent to Professor Segno?

Alexandria, Egypt - 1907



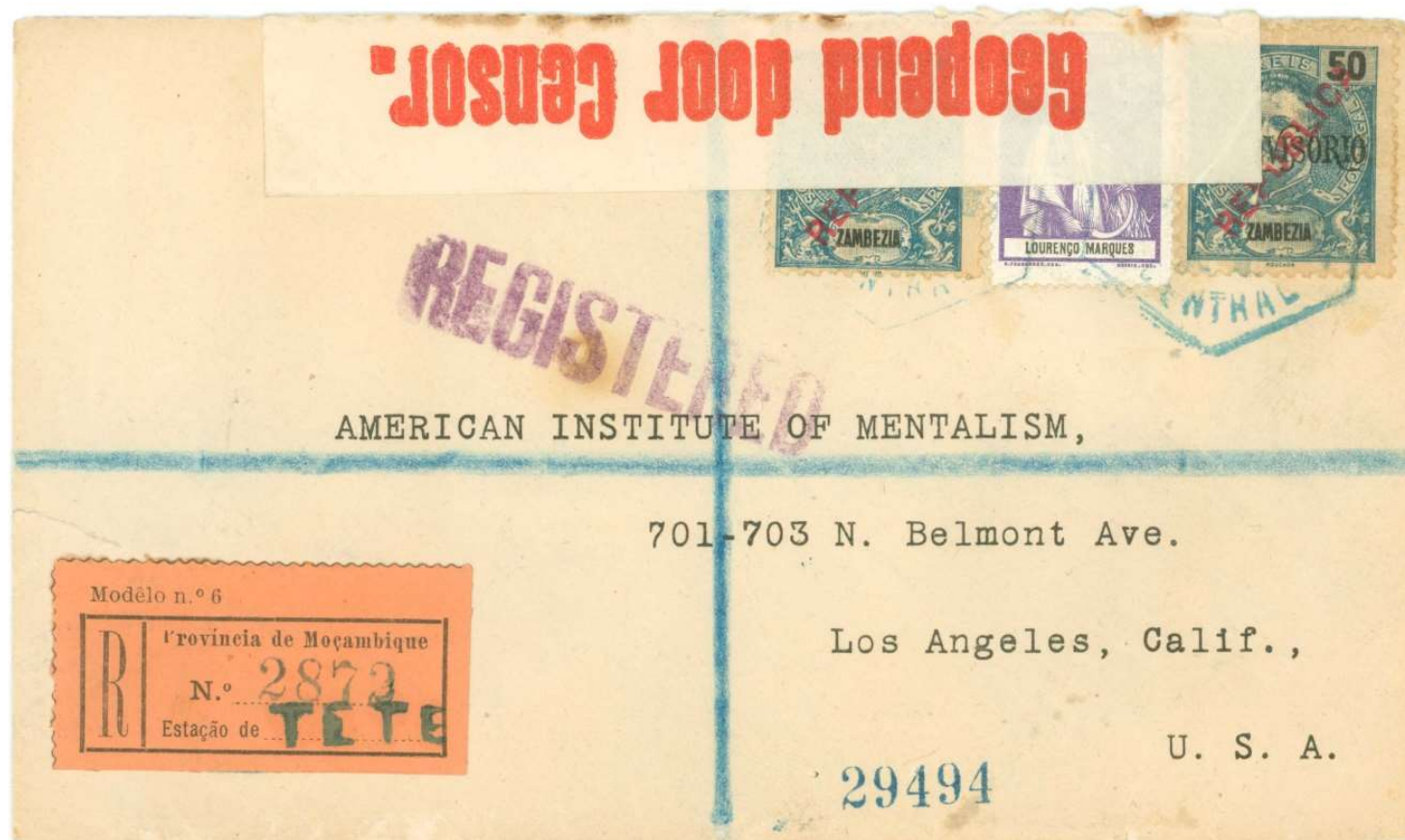
Oran, Algeria - 1914



Saffi, Spanish Morocco – February 4, 1912



Tete, Zambesia – September 1918



Opened by Censor.
99



Penhalonga, S. Rhodesia – March 22, 1905

Earliest Recorded Segno Cover

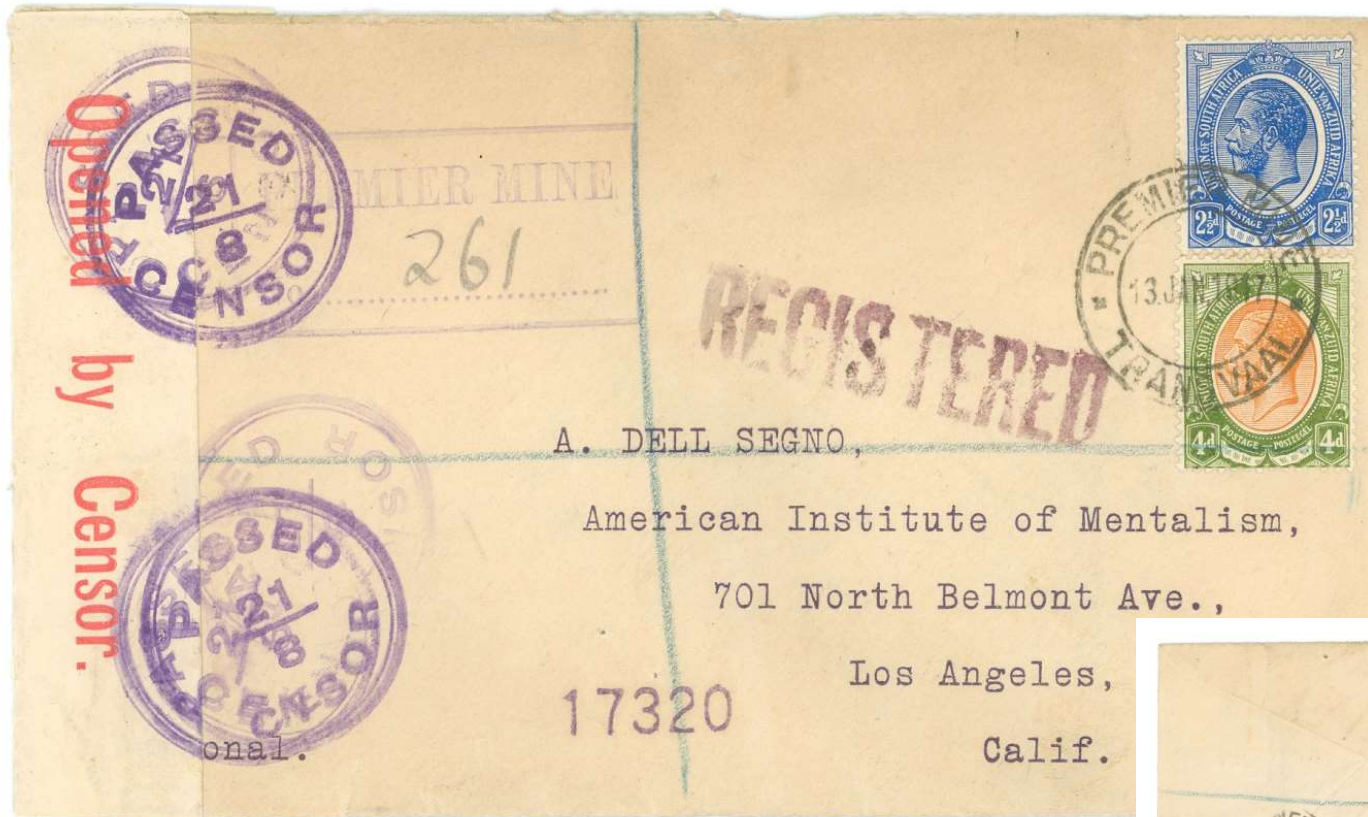


GNO,
MONT AVE.,
HELES, CALIF.,
U. S. A.

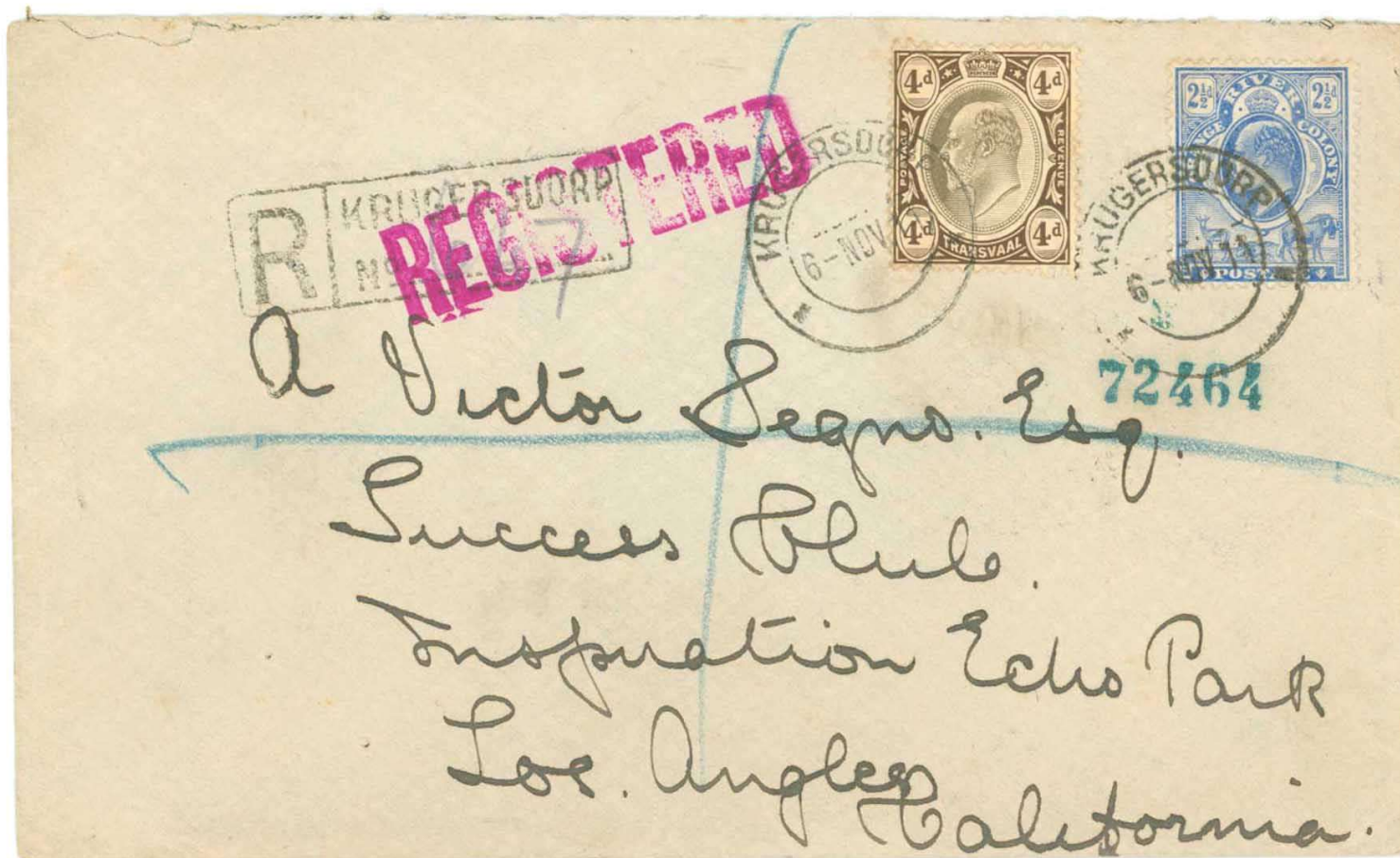
Port Sherstone, Natal, July 21, 1913



Premier Mine, Transvaal – January 12, 1917



Krugersdorp, Orange River Colony 1911

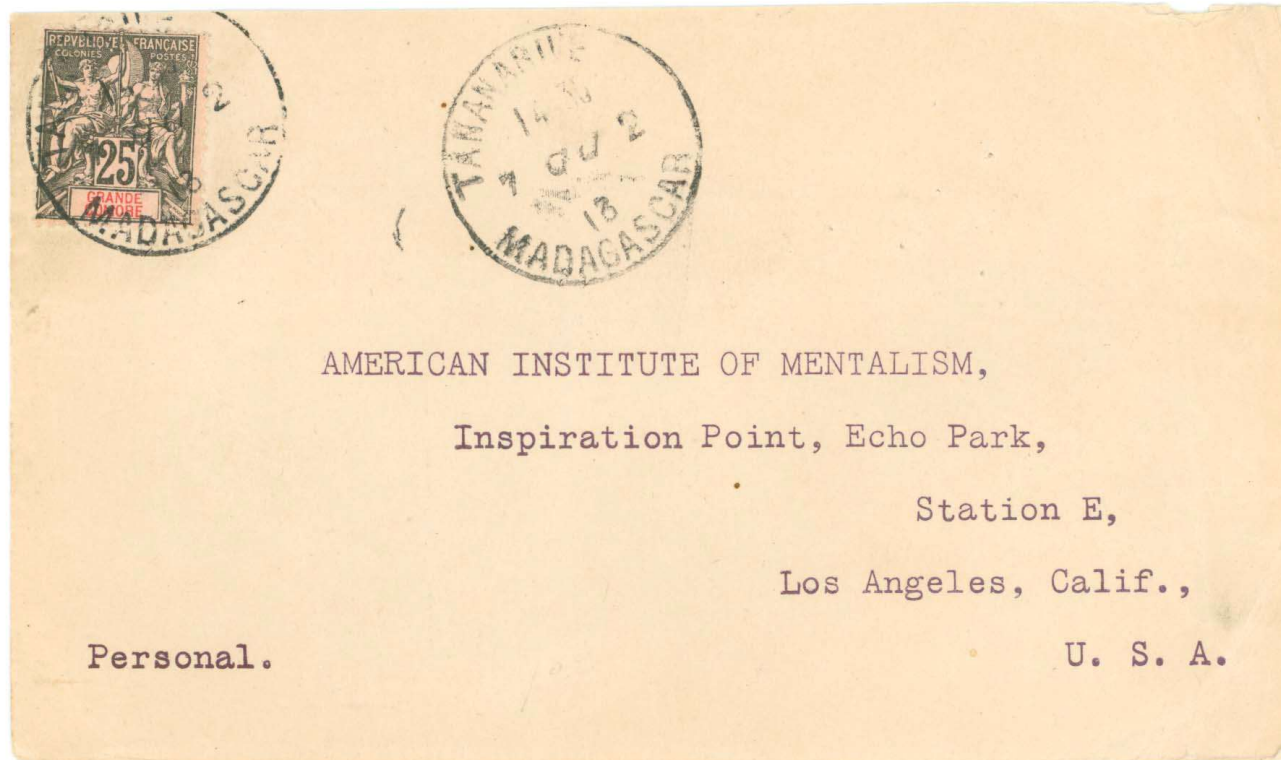


Pretoria, Orange River Colony 1911



Where to Finish? Madagascar!

Tananarive, Feb 7, 1913



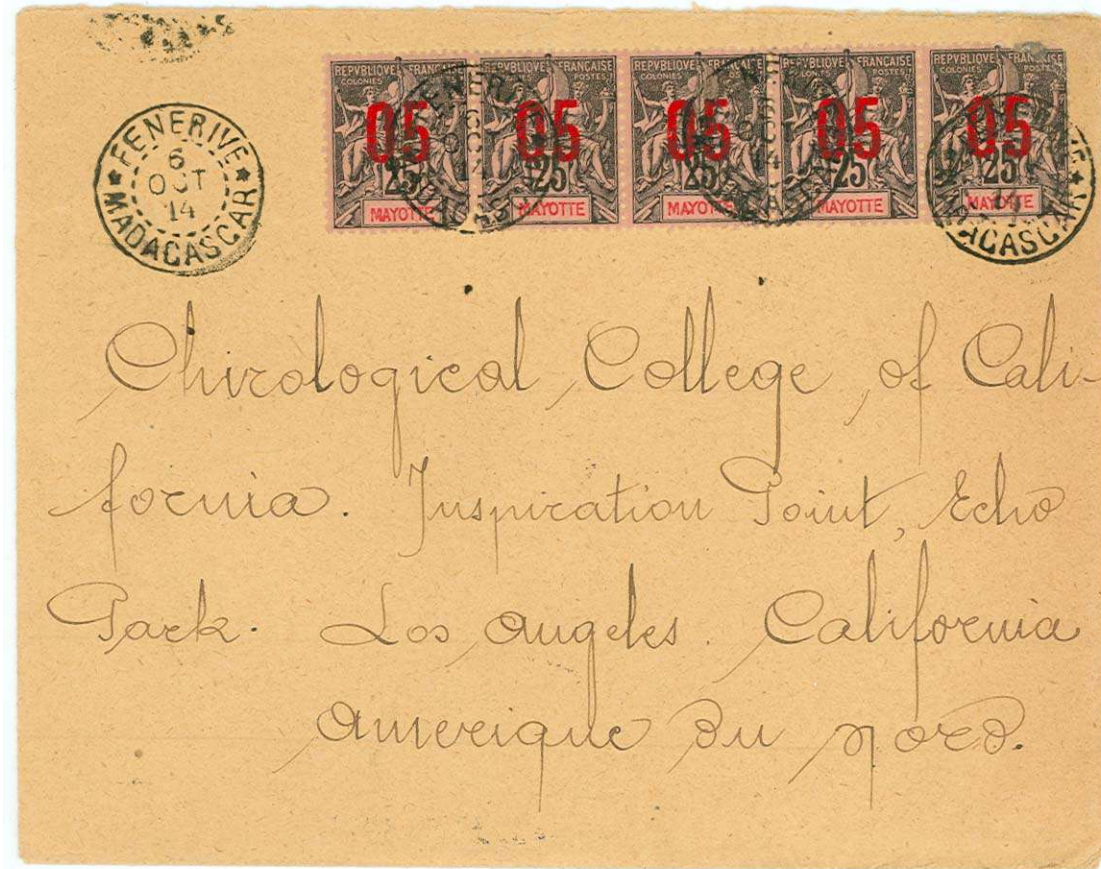
An everyday, most basic Madagascar Group Type cover at the 25c rate from Tananarive (Capital) to the Institute, but note the use of the Grand Comoro stamp which was correct as this entity was part of the colony of Madagascar beginning in 1911.

Tananarive 1914 Colorful Franking

Additional 1c on Reverse



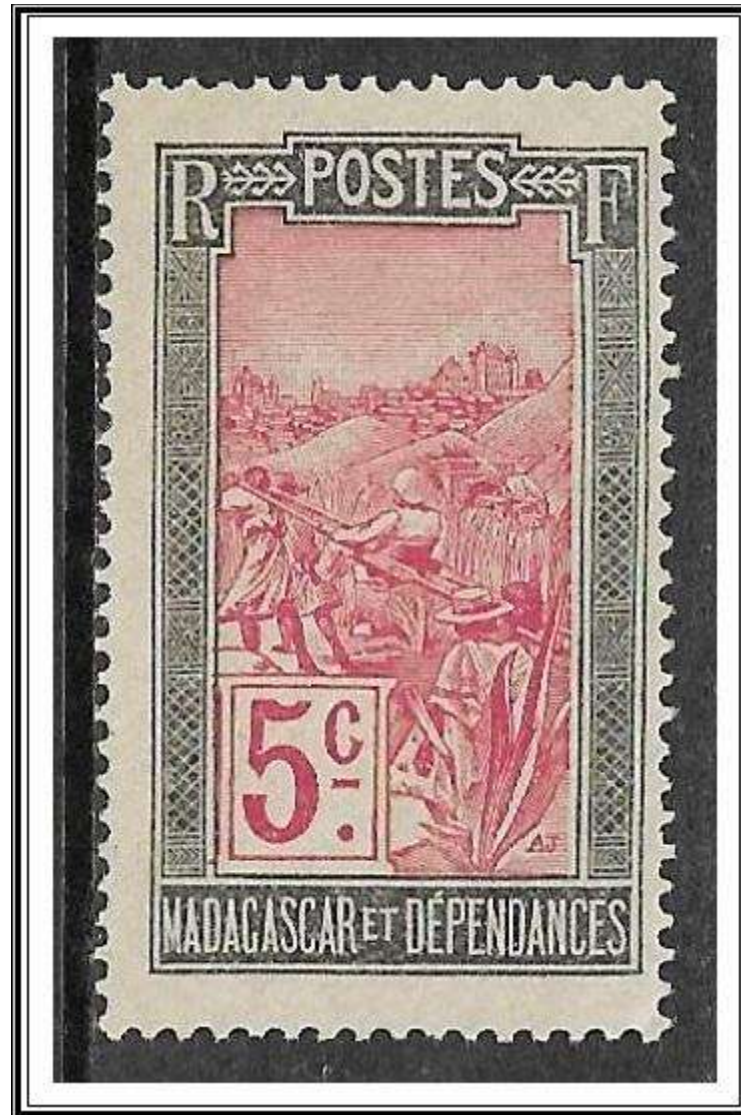
Fenerive, Madagascar to the Chirological College of California in 1914



The Chirological College was the first fraud entity created by Segno in 1900. It was an entity for palm reading and fortune telling, which never amounted to much, yet was never closed. Covers occasionally appear. I have nine.

Fianarantsoa, Madagascar (1912)





Madagascar 84 Numeral Cancel Provided to Newly Opened Offices



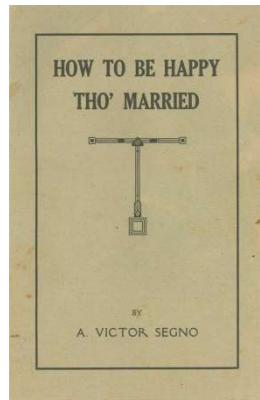
Segno Covers by the Year

Collection is ~250 Covers Strong

Incoming Mail Sold to the Philatelic Trade

Segno Covers – by the year:

1905:	***** (5)
1906:	***** (12)
1907:	***** (29)
1908:	***** (18)
1909:	* (1)
1910:	**** (4)
1911:	***** (18)
1912:	***** (18)
1913:	***** (35)
1914:	***** (18)
1915:	***** (11)
1916:	***** (15)
1917:	***** (11)
1918:	***** (7)
1919:	***** (9)
1920:	* (1)
1921:	(0)
1922:	** (3)
1923:	** (2)
1924:	** (3)
1925:	***** (9)
1926:	***** (5)
1927:	*** (3)
1928:	* (1)
1929:	(0)
1930:	(0)
1931:	* (1)
1932:	(0)
1933:	(0)
1934:	(0)
1935:	** (2)
1936:	** (2)
1937:	* (1)



Comments (GOOD and BAD):

1905: **Segno builds his Echo Park Complex**

1906-1908: **Success of the Success Club**

1909-1910: **Segno marriage to Annie Dell**

Segno begins to fail

1911: **Segnos divorce** and **Annie Dell Segno**
begins to run the AIM as Treasurer

1912: **Segno marries a secretary and moves**
to Berlin to start Success Club branch

1912: **Annie Dell Segno runs the AIM**

1915: **Segno returns to LA a failure**

>1915: **Little is heard of Segno**

1921: **Annie Dell Segno sued by lawyer for failure**
to pay for 1911 divorce

In the 1970's Professor Segno's buildings were demolished to make way for the Lago Vista Condominiums

Google

Address 701 Belmont Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90026



Wouldn't Professor Segno's properties have been a wonderful home for the Museum of the City of Los Angeles? Or the LA Collectors Club and Library?

Segno Success Club – Class of 2012



Uncle Ed Needs Your Help!

- I can not search the cover boxes from every dealer at every show or every website for fraud covers
- When searching for your covers be on the lookout for material from the 1900 - 1935 period addressed to or from:
 - Professor A Victor Segno – Los Angeles
 - A Dell Segno – Los Angeles
 - The American Institute of Mentalism – Los Angeles
 - The Segno Success Club – Los Angeles
 - The Chirological College of California – Los Angeles
 - The New York Institute of Science – Rochester
 - X. La Motte Sage - Rochester
 - Charles S. Clark, Gen. Mgr. – Rochester
 - The Cartilage Company - Rochester
 - The Oxypathor Company – Buffalo or anyplace else
 - Dr. James W. Peebles – Battle Creek
 - The Peebles' Institute of Health – Battle Creek
 - Dr. W. Thompson Bobo – Battle Creek
- **There should be a German Group of Segno covers from and to Berlin circa 1912-1915!**
- E-mail me at edjig@alum.mit.edu with the details
- I am also looking for **EPHEMERA** relating to all of the above





With Special Thanks



Members of the Slide of Fame

- David Steidley – Westfield Stamp Club
- Mark Banchik – Collectors Club
- Gary Loew – Westfield Stamp Club
- Hank Applegate – Hamilton Stamp Club
- Robert G. Stone – France & Cols Philatelic Society USA
- Richard Maisel – Collectors Club
- Greg Shoults – Akron Collectors Club
- Richard Stevens – France & Cols Philatelic Society USA
- Paul Larsen – Collectors Club Chicago
- Leonard Piskiewicz – United States Stamp Society
- Omar Rodriguez – Collectors Club
- Carlos Vergara – Collectors Club Chicago
- Kathy Johnson – Collectors Club Chicago
- Alain Millet – Académie de la Philatélie
- John Hotchner – EF&OCC
- Maurice Hadida - Académie de la Philatélie
- Philip Deslipe – UC Santa Barbara
- Ben Bump – France & Colonies Philatelic Society USA
- Loïc Dufresne de Virel - COLFRA

Mike Mead – Britannia Enterprises

Ronald Gonzales – Hamilton Stamp Club

Henk Slabbinck – European Academy of Philately

John Mayne – France & Cols Philatelic Society UK

Arnold Selengut - BEJCO

Tom Duckworth – Collectors Club

And Many Dealers, eBay and Delcampe

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