

THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS



Vol. XVI, No. 4

April 1969

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THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS



Vol. XVI, No. 4
April 1969

Henry M. Goodkind, Editor

Philip Silver, Assistant Editor

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UNITED STATES

Washington, D. C. 1918 First Flight

Mail Flew To Philadelphia & New York May 16, 1918

Elsewhere in this number, Mr. Kendall C. Sanford again writes about a possible mistake on the design of the 10-cent 1968 air mail commemorative stamp issued for the 50th anniversary of the first U. S. air mail service (Scott C74). What about the colors on the tail of the Jenny plane that first flew the mail in 1918? Were they correctly depicted 50 years later in the 1968 stamp?

A Flock of GAMA Written Mistakes

If a mistake had been made with the design, this happens to be one out of many. I have kept a file, trying to contain about everything written last year for GAMA (shortened name used for the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of Air Mail). There are many articles from stamp papers and journals, U. S. Post Office Department releases, reports in newspaper stamp columns, newspaper articles, popular magazine stories and two books. In most all cases, the authors are journalists, *not philatelists*; a few are students of early aviation.

Also, the 1968 writers, with few exceptions, appear not to be familiar with the stamps and covers since they had been issued and used in 1918.¹ This lack of philatelic experience and knowledge resulted in a number of "boo-boos." Perhaps leading the parade was the U. S. Post Office Department press releases that called the 1918 plane a "Jenney," after 50 years incorrectly adding an "e" to the *Jenny*. Not many stamp writers caught this "boo-boo" and corrected it. Even the respected "New York Times" wrote about the "Jenney."

Consequently, the newer collector interested in the U. S. 1918 air mail stamps and covers could possibly be misled and now have much false information that should be pointed out and then set straight. In a future article, I plan to do this.

Washington, D. C. First Trip Covers

From a philatelic point of view, whether the 1918 plane's tail colors were red, white and blue, or reversed in the 1968 design is interesting but not of great philatelic and postal history significance. There is a far more important matter; this concerns the covers cancelled Washington May 15, 1918 First Trip (Figures 1-2-3).

There has been a difference of opinion about these covers. Some maintain the May 15, 1918 Washington, D.C. mail was sent to New York and Philadelphia by train late in the afternoon of that same day, after the plane had crash-landed just a few miles outside of Washington. On the other hand, for 50 years, most air mail specialists accepted the statements in some of the specialized air post catalogues that the covers cancelled May 15, 1918 in Washington, D.C. were flown to Philadelphia and New York the next day — May 16, 1918.

A book by Capt. Benjamin B. Lipsner was published in 1951. He was the U. S. Post Office Department Superintendent of Airmail when the first flights took place in 1918. On page 22 of the book, "The Airmail. Jennies To Jets," the following passage is found in reference to the events of May 15, 1918:

1. AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS April 1968. "My 50 Years With the First Air Mail Stamp" by H. M. Goodkind.

"...I arranged to have the mail sent on to Philadelphia and New York by train..."

The author of this book resides in Chicago, Ill. and has maintained an interest in aero-philately. He knows a number of Chicago air mail collectors and keeps in contact with them. Consequently, when a statement comes from such a qualified source — the one in charge of the first 1918 air mail — it should not be questioned, as some Chicago air mail collectors maintain.

Reading the 1968 articles, it seems apparent that many writers had used the book, "The Airmail. Jennies To Jets," for a source of information.

Therefore, there is a philatelic controversy about the air mail from Washington, D.C. on May 15, 1918.

The Amount of The May 15, 1918 Washington Mail

If and when one refers to the older air mail specialized catalogues, he will find always recorded that the May 15, 1918 Washington, D.C. mail was flown on May 16, 1918. Also, the catalogues have stated the amount of mail carried; this has been accepted as correct. Philatelic students, when writing about this history,² use the statistics found in the air mail catalogues. It is as follows:

May 15, 1918 Wash-NY	3,000 pieces of mail
Wash-Phila	600
Wash-Other Points	3,000
Total	6,600

May 16, 1918 Wash-Phila-	
NY-Other Points	1,300
Total	7,900 pieces of mail

These two matters of confusion with the actual date of the first flight with the mail from Washington, D.C. and the amount of mail carried on either May 15 or May 16, 1918 were discussed at great length in the May 1968 "Gibbons-Whitman Stamp Monthly." A portion of this article is quoted as follows:

2. AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS April 1962. "Washington To New York, May 15, 1918 First Trip Cancellations" by Philip Silver.

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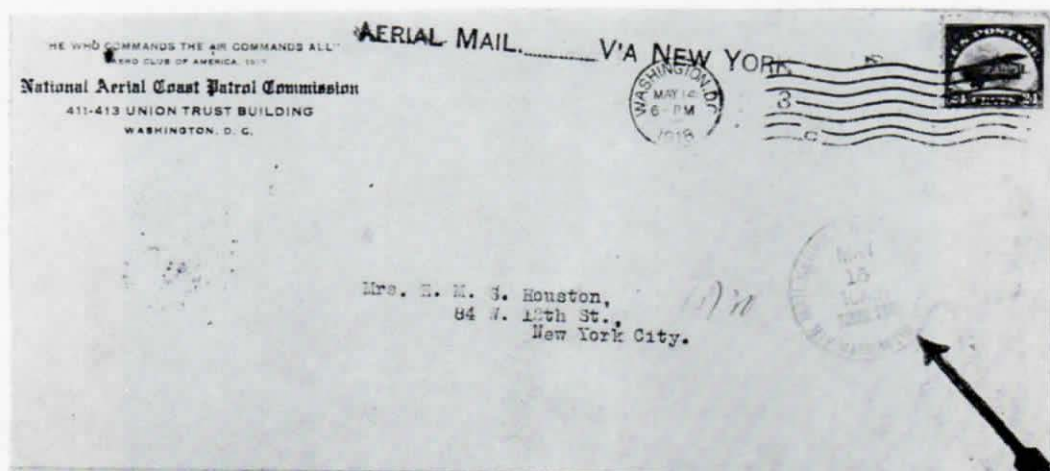


Figure 1. The only cover known with a May 14, 1918 Washington, D.C. cancellation. (There is a second known May 14, 1918 cancellation from New York to Washington). The arrow points to the May 15, 1918 first flight cancellation. Oddly enough, this is the scarce "10 AM First Trip" postmark. (All photos by Boutrelle)

Precisely what happened to Lieutenant Boyle's mail after the forced-landing in Maryland; and how it was delivered, first to Philadelphia and then to New York, is, well—let me phrase it in the words of a salty aero-researchist: "... This drama of the first airmail has a brave and imposing cast, but a hell of a confused plot ..."

Pursuit of Specialists

... Here, and around the world, are many thousands of airmail stamp and cover collectors. The hobby became a pursuit of specialists as early as the 1920s. There are distinguished aeronautical societies—specifically for philatelic experts, for aircraft scientists, for aero-historians and, now, space-planners. The saga of Lieutenant Boyle's cargo of mail, and its fate on that bright May 15th of 1918, may now be a mere blip on the electrograph of historical progress. But I have the feeling somehow that it is important; and the records I have examined, drawing on many of these sources as a reporter and writer, reveal only ...

VERSION ONE: In a book covering the early history of the U.S. airmail, Captain Lipsner relates how Lieutenant Boyle phoned him from a place near the Waldorf, Md., forced-landing, explaining there had been a fault in his compass. Boyle said he was having the mail loaded into a car for return to Washington. Lipsner says he then arranged to have the mail dispatched to *Philadelphia and New York by train*.

VERSION TWO: In another book which extensively quotes both Lipsner and Lieutenant Culver (the pilot assigned to the May 15 Philadelphia-New York leg of the flight), Culver phones Lipsner to say the mail flown by Boyle from Washington had not arrived. Lipsner says in all the confusion he forgot to advise Culver about Boyle and his plane going down in Maryland. Lipsner then explains that the mail was trucked to the train station (presumably back to Washington), and is on its way to *Philadelphia by rail*. Culver breaks off the conversation with the terse remark that he hears a mail truck coming and must get moving to New York.

VERSION THREE: In a standard reference work on 20th century United States stamps, the author states Boyle's mail was returned to Washington by truck to be held for the trip the next day (May 16). This writer, however, refers to Lieutenant Webb (pilot on the New York-to-Philadelphia run) as "Torry," and calls the New York City postmaster, "Patton."

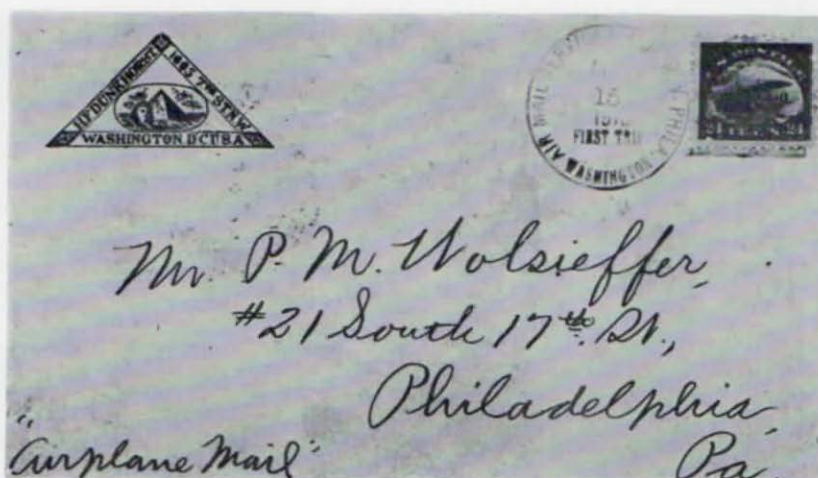


Figure 2. Washington to Philadelphia with a May 15, 1918 First Trip cancellation.

VERSION FOUR: The first edition of a pioneer airmail cover catalog states that Boyle's mail was trucked back to Washington from Waldorf, Md., and held for the outgoing flight the next day (May 16). This flight, the account continues, also resulted in failure and in desperation the mail finally was placed on a northbound train.

VERSION FIVE: Another, and decidedly updated, airmail catalog says Boyle got into

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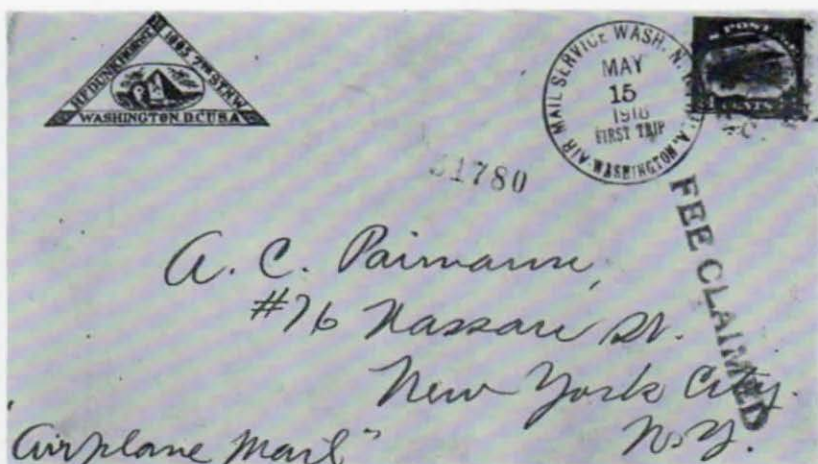


Figure 3. The same Washington stamp dealer also mailed a cover to New York. This cover has the same cancellation as Figure 2.

trouble by following, in flight, a railroad line which led out of Washington to the south, instead of the Washington-to-New York rail line which goes roughly north). This account does not indicate how Boyle's mail was transported back to Washington after his landing 25 miles south of the city. It does, however, say this mail was added to 1,330 other pieces flown out the next day (May 16) by Lt. J. C. Edgerton (the Philadelphia-to-Washington pilot of May 15), who then brought the whole shipment safely from Washington to Philadelphia.

Plane Over Race Track

The latter account does not relate how the combined mail of May 15 and May 16 ultimately moved from Philadelphia to New York after Edgerton completed the first leg of the trip. But at this point the May 17 (early morning) edition of the *New York Times* picks up and describes a plane piloted from Philadelphia by Lt. Torrey Webb appearing in the sky over Belmont Park race track on the afternoon of May 16 and landing safely on the dot of 2:58 p.m.

The *Times* story states that Webb carried 118 pounds of mail from Washington and five pounds from Philadelphia—a total of 3,490 pieces. It continues, saying Post Office Department officials attributed the "heavy delivery" from Washington to the fact the mail which should have arrived on May 15—but did not come in because of Boyle's mishap—had been added to the May 16 shipment.

The story further specifically mentions the arrival, in the delayed delivery, of the letter President Wilson autographed for the Red Cross benefit auction and the one Postmaster General Burleson wrote to the publisher of the *Times*, acknowledging the newspaper's appeal back in 1835 for faster mail service.

I feel certain the *Times*, in the interest of news coverage and for promotional purposes because of the Burleson letter, watched closely for arrival in New York of the delayed first-day Washington mail. So this story would seem to conclude a very garbled mystery . . . Except for one dangling point. . .

Virtually all reference works agree that Boyle carried 6,600 pieces of mail when he took off from Washington on the morning of May 15. The disbursement—also in general agreement—was: 300 pieces for Philadelphia, 3,300 for New York, and another 3,000 pieces for points beyond New York. It then seems a total of 6,300 pieces of Washington mail would have been received at Belmont Park on May 15 if Boyle had not force-landed in Maryland.



Figure 4. The scarce May 15 First Trip 10 AM cancellation. This cover is addressed to the well-known philatelist, Julius Caesar Morgenthau, the uncle of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of Treasury.

Newspaper's Account Accurate?

But the *Times*' story states only 3,490 pieces finally arrived—including both the mail of May 15 and also May 16. In a past career as a newspaperman I covered many stories along with *Times* reporters. They are competent and they seldom flub the facts. So I am inclined to go along with the newspaper's statement noting the amount of mail and how it was brought to New York.

Accounting for the disparity in total pieces for the two days, there is a distinct chance part of the first day's shipment actually was dispatched to New York by rail during the late afternoon or the night of May 15, and the rest held for Edgerton's flight the following day. There would, at first, seem to be small purpose to this split-out—except, the beady eyes of Congress and the press were focused on the big event. Having the whole first day's mail from Washington roll into New York by train could have been disastrous.

Very probably the only arrival in New York at all in the midafternoon of May 15 was the 350 pieces of mail carried from Philadelphia by Lieutenant Culver in plane Number 38275. The *Times* says he waited futilely at the Bustleton airfield for Boyle until 2:20 p. m. Then he took off, landing at Belmont Park at 3:37, long after the fanfare and the speeches were over.

Today this may sound like unbelievable confusion for a couple of short hops in an airplane. But the flight problems were appalling.

Compounding The Confusion

The author of the foregoing article in the "Gibbons-Whitman Stamp Monthly" is George Henhoeffter and the title of the article is "Wings of Destiny — U. S. 1918." One will note that near the beginning of the quoted portion of his article, he identifies himself "as a reporter and writer," and near the end as a "newspaperman."

It seems to me an unfortunate omission that the "Gibbons-Whitman" author did not tie in the sources from which he quoted his five versions. I and other specialists can fairly accurately guess the reference sources being quoted and check whether the 1968 repetition was correctly quoted as originally written.

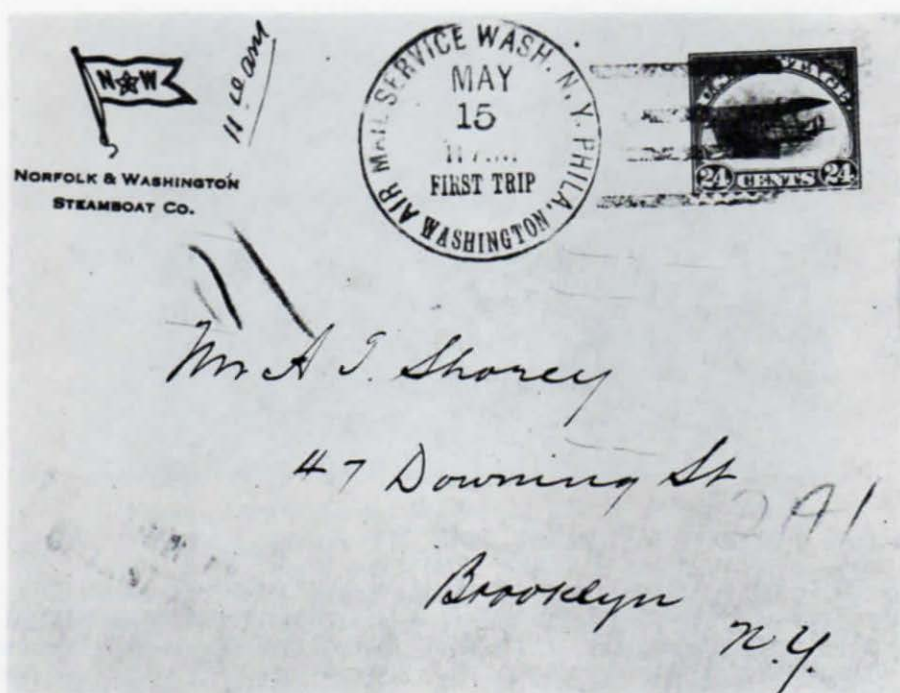


Figure 5. The very rare Washington/ May 15/ 11 AM First Trip cancellation. It probably was mailed too late to make the May 15, 1918 flight.

The outstanding weakness, however, in this "Gibbons-Whitman" article is the total lack of any philatelic evidence.

Reference has been made previously to Capt. Lipsner's memory. I now shall quote an entirely different version from the pilot who flew the first air mail from Washington, D.C. to Philadelphia and New York in 1918.

On November 10, 1928, just ten years after the first flights, James A. Edgerton wrote a letter from which the fourth paragraph is quoted:³

"For your information, I was also lucky enough to carry the first out-bound mail from Washington to Philadelphia on May 16th. This was due to the fact that the northbound flight of the 15th was incomplete due to the pilot becoming lost. As this mail was of a souvenir type, the Post Office Department held it over until the 16th."

Now, I shall produce philatelic evidence to show that Lt. James A. Edgerton was absolutely correct, with the hope that there will be no more arguments about the May 15, 1918 Washington, D.C. covers among aero-philatelists.

The Philatelic Evidence

In his April, 1962 article² on the Washington, D.C. May 15, 1918 First Trip cancellations, the Assistant Editor of the AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS, Philip Silver, lists seven different types of cancellations found on Scott C3 covers as follows:

3. Karl B. Weber Reference Collection, The Philatelic Foundation, 22 East 35 Street, New York, N.Y.

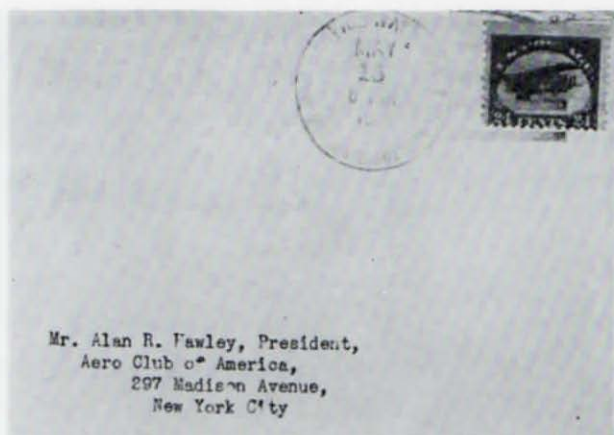


Figure 6. A cover with a Washington/ May 15/ 6 PM/ 1918 cancellation.

- Type 1* MAY/15/1918/FIRST TRIP (See Figures 1-2-3)
- Type 2* MAY/15/10AM/FIRST TRIP (See Figure 4)
- Type 3* MAY/15/11AM/FIRST TRIP (Error) (See Figure 5)
- Type 4* MAY/15/3PM or 4PM or 6PM or 7PM/1918 (See Figures 6-7)
- Type 5* MAY/16/1918/FIRST TRIP (Error) (See Figure 8)
- Type 6* MAY/16/1918
- Type 7* MAY/16(hour)/1918

Also, I would like to quote from a very useful portion in Mr. Silver's April, 1962 article:

"Departure Time Very Important... the chronology of events, which took place on May 15, 1918 and May 16, 1918, is considered of extreme importance. For some events, we are in possession of recorded facts; for others, however, educated conjecture will have to be substituted from philatelic evidence."

There is confusion over the time of departure of the plane from the Polo Grounds in Washington, D.C. on May 15, 1918. I have in my possession a copy of the U. S. Post Office Department Postal Notice⁴ as follows:

*"Aeroplane Mail Service
Washington, D.C., May 11th, 1918*

"Aeroplane Mail Service will be established May 15th, 1918 between Washington, Philadelphia and New York, one round trip daily except Sundays.

"... Until further notice the aeroplanes will leave Belmont Park, N. Y. and Washington, D.C. at 11:30 A.M. Postmasters shall inform the public of the closing of the mails..."

In analyzing the seven types of Washington, D.C. cancellations, Mr. Silver gives them a chronological designation, which I shall also use. *Type 1* cancellations are on those pieces of mail that were in the mailbags that flew from Washington, D.C. on May 15, 1918. The plane with this mail crash-landed at Waldorf, Md. shortly after takeoff.

4. "United States. The 24c Air Mail Inverted Center of 1918" by Henry M. Goodkind. Handbook #1 of the Theodore E. Steinway Memorial Publication Fund, The Collectors Club, 22 East 35 Street, New York, N.Y. 10016. Pages 5 and 11.

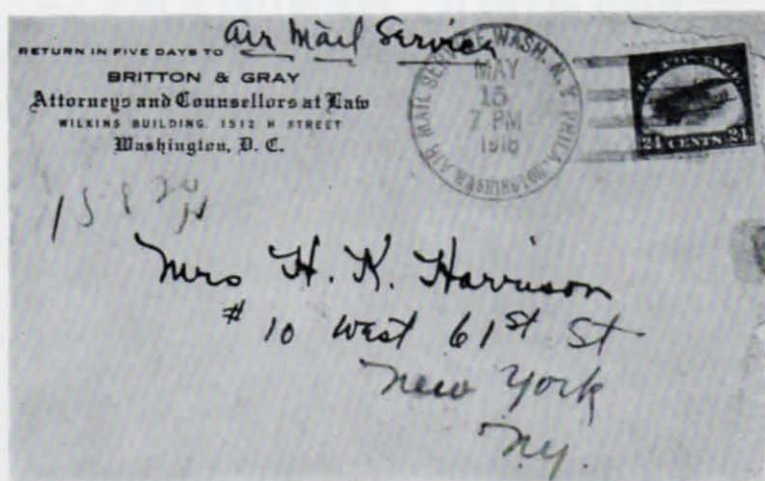


Figure 7. Cover cancelled Washington/ May 15/ 7 PM/ 1918.

The most difficult to account for are the scarce covers having the Type 2 "10 AM" cancellation. Were these in the May 15th, 1918 mailbags? Some believe that mail cancelled 10 A.M. was too late. I agree with Mr. Silver that these few "10 AM" covers were the last ones cancelled and were put into Lt. Boyle's plane at the Polo Grounds. But no records so far have been found to support our opinions.

May 14, 1918 Covers

May 14, 1918 in Washington, D.C. is an important historical date. It was the day on which the one sheet of one hundred with the inverted centers (Scott C3a) was bought in a branch post office in our nation's capital. The purchaser made an important statement, when he later wrote about his experiences and the events on May 14, 1918. He wrote⁴:

"Early on the morning of May 14, I went to the branch post office nearest my employment to purchase some of the new twenty-four cent airmail stamps to be used to send covers to my friends in New York and Philadelphia."

This indicates what a great many stamp collectors and dealers had done. They bought the stamps on May 14, 1918 and prepared their covers. Incidentally, in the May 1968 "Gibbons-Whitman Stamp Monthly" article on the top of page 293, a Scott C3 Type 1 cancellation cover is illustrated. The cover's corner card is "W. B. Hibbs & Company/ Hibbs Building/ Washington, D.C." This is one of the covers, W. T. Robey, the purchaser of the error sheet (Scott C3a), mailed. The employer to whom he refers was W. B. Hibbs & Company, stockbrokers in Washington. The caption failed to identify the illustrated cover as one sent by the purchaser of the Scott C3a sheet. Also, there was no reference to a backstamp on the cover Mr. Robey mailed.

One has to be careful in using the word "unique." But the Figure 1 cover in my collection is unique — so far. It seems that most of those who sent first flight covers, either from Washington or New York, waited until the announced day of the first flight, May 15, 1918, to mail their covers. Just one

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Figure 8. The rare error cancellation May 16/ 1918 / First Trip.

person is so far known to have mailed his cover in Washington, D.C. on May 14, 1918 (see Figure 1).

Notice on the illustration that the *Type 2* cancellation was hit below the 24-cent stamp on the Figure 1 cover.

Washington-Philadelphia May 15, 1918 Covers

It is accepted as reliable that there were only 300 covers with the *Type 1* May 15, 1918 cancellation that flew from Washington to Philadelphia. One of them is illustrated (Figure 2). Most all of the mail went on to New York.

Figure 3 is almost a companion piece to the Washington-Philadelphia first flight cover. The same Washington stamp dealer sent covers to other dealers in New York and Philadelphia.

May 15, 1918 10 AM and 11 AM First Trip Covers

The Washington *Type 2* cover with 10 AM is scarce. Why only a few covers had been cancelled like this is not officially known. As mentioned before, one can only theorize about the reason for a "10 AM" cancellation.

The "11 AM" *Type 3* cancellation is rare. I found the first one about eight years ago⁵ and a second one was found a little more than three years ago. Until 1961, a "Washington/ May 15/ 11 AM/ First Trip" had been unknown. I share Mr. Silver's opinion that this is an error cancellation.

The essential point to stress here is that all covers with the *Type 1* Washington cancellation definitely were in the May 15, 1918 mailbag, and probably *Type 2* cancellation covers. But from *Type 3* through *Type 7*, all this was mail that could only fly on the following day — May 16, 1918. Philip Silver's *Type 4* cancellations also are relatively recent finds. He was the first to record one in this magazine in 1958⁶.

5 AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS Vol. IX No. 4 and Vol. XIII, No. 3.

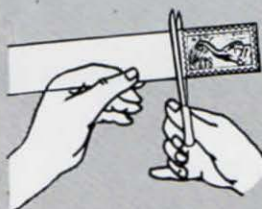
6. *ibid.* Vol. VI, No. 2.

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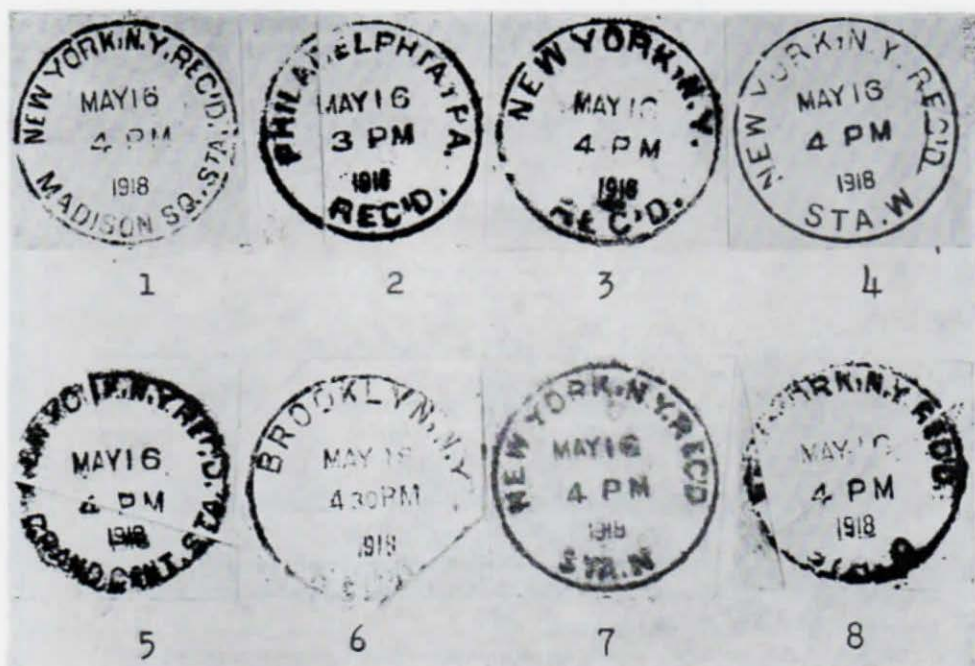


Figure 9. THE EVIDENCE! The eight backstamps seen on the Figures 1 to 8 covers. Each backstamp is numbered to correspond to the illustration on which it is found. For example, backstamp No. 4 is on the Figure 4 cover. All postmarks bear the same date—May 16, 1918 and the same time of receipt in New York—4 p.m., except Brooklyn which is a half hour later.

May 16, 1918 Cancellations

The first error cancellation recorded almost 50 years ago and the one most widely accepted as the scarcest is the *Type 5* cover. This is shown in Figure 8. The story behind this has been repeated so often that I see no purpose by a further repetition now.⁷

This May 16, 1918 First Trip error cover is a key piece. No one can question its date of mailing.

The *Type 6* and *Type 7* covers are not illustrated, because those in my collection with a May 16, 1918 cancel are not backstamped with a New York receiving marking.

Backstamps Are THE EVIDENCE

The philatelic evidence is plainly seen in the eight postmarks shown in Figure 9. *Every cover, whether the cancellation is dated May 15, 1918 or May 16, 1918, has the same date and time New York backstamp.* There is one exception — the Philadelphia backstamp. This is dated May 16, 1918 and timed 3 p.m. The others are New York all timed 4 p.m. and Brooklyn 4:30 p.m.

Let us assume that, as Capt. Lipsner wrote in his book, the mail was sent by train from Washington to New York after it was returned to the Washington post office on May 15, 1918. The assumption seems to be that the mail was put

7. "The First Air Mail Stamp of The United States" by Henry M. Goodkind. *The Collectors Club Philatelist* Vol. 30 (1950) No. 6.

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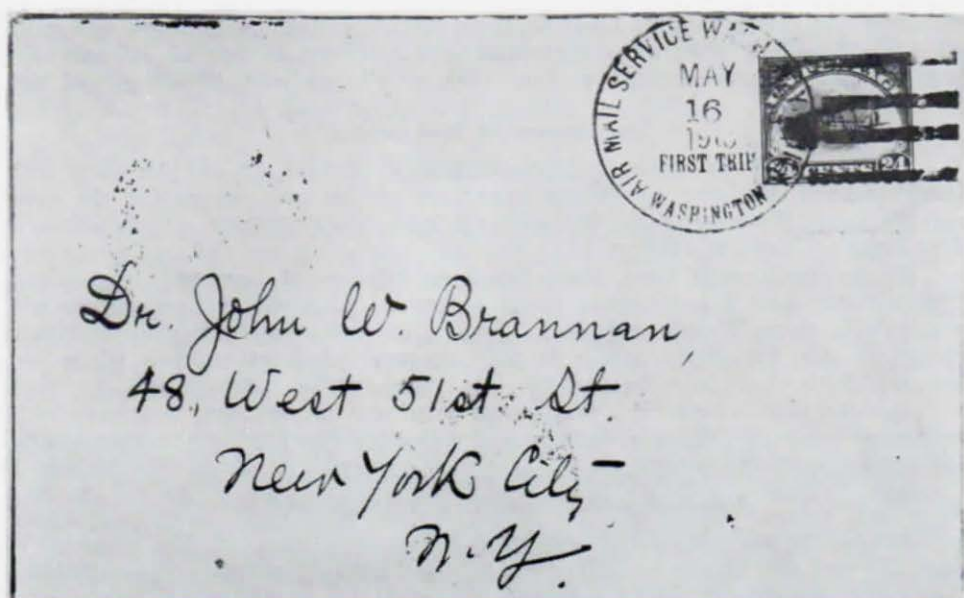


Figure 10. One of the 350 pieces of mail flown May 15, 1918 from Philadelphia to New York. In the upper right corner is the New York backstamp, showing that this mail did fly on May 15, 1918.

on a late afternoon or early evening train from Washington, D.C. for Philadelphia and New York. *If so, the Philadelphia and New York backstamps must read May 15, 1918 and be timed from about 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.*

Also, let's assume that the mail was despatched late in the day of May 15, 1918 from Washington to Philadelphia and New York. Perhaps it reached the New York post offices so late that the receiving postmarks were not applied until the morning of May 16th. But as late as 3 p.m. in Philadelphia and 4 p.m. in New York. Absolutely impossible! *Q.E.D.*

MEETING NOTICES

Every month except July or August

Chapter No. 1 — New York, N. Y.

Meets second Thursday each month at 8:00 P. M. in the Collectors Club, 22 East 35th St., New York, N. Y.

Chapter No. 5 — Philadelphia, Pa.

Meets third Thursday each month at 8:00 P. M. in the Liberty Federal Savings & Loan Assn., 202 North Broad St., Philadelphia, Pa.

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This controversy should cease forever. It should only be brought up again when a Chicago or some other aero-philatelist produces a May 15, 1918 Washington First Trip cover with a New York or Philadelphia backstamp of the same day.

The Amount Of Mail Carried

In the "Gibbons-Whitman Stamp Monthly" article, the author cites different sources that give conflicting quantities of the total amount of the mail carried from Washington to Philadelphia and New York by Lt. Edgerton's first flight of May 16, 1918.

Up to the present time, there has been no way of resolving this. Both Philip Silver and I have spent many hours in old archives that were made available to us in Washington, D.C. So far, no luck with finding any written record of this first flight mail. It may be some place other than where we looked. Both of us hope to continue this search in the future.

Lacking official records, I shall continue to use the statistics that have been published for many years in the air mail catalogues and which I again list in the beginning of this article.

Philadelphia-New York May 15, 1918 First Trip

In quoting the part I did from the "Gibbons-Whitman Stamp Monthly," near the end one sees some references to the mail that flew on May 15, 1918 from Philadelphia to New York. No one so far has questioned that it was very small with only 350 pieces of mail.

Here again with this mail, there is philatelic evidence. Look at Figure 10; this shows exactly when the air mail from Philadelphia to New York arrived at the New York Post Office. (H.M.G.)



R.F. Overprints

A genuine cover with one of the scarcest types (Scott CM7). Many fake covers are being sold here and abroad.

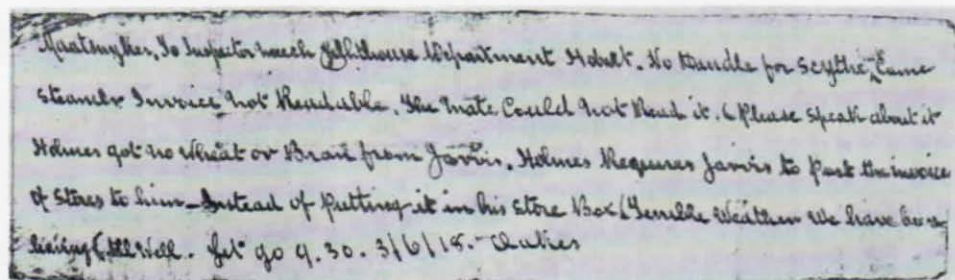
Watch out! The genuine covers have to have a French sailor's name, rank, and Naval address, also French Navy censor markings, and the address has to be to the U.S.A. or Canada, nowhere else.

Tasmanian Pigeon Service

By FRANK E. ADAMS

The search for something unusual, to the philatelist, is a continuous thing and not always rewarded. When such an item is found, all the time and effort that went into the search is forgotten and the hunt for another elusive item is on.

This writer has always been interested in Pigeon Grams whether officially flown or fulfilling a service that was not otherwise available. About a year ago, in a lot of covers, etc., received from England I found the Pigeon Gram pictured with this article.



The dealer could not supply any information at the time regarding the service performed or guarantee that it was authentic.

I decided to find out what the background on this Pigeon Gram was myself, so I wrote to the Lighthouse Department in Hobart, Tasmania, hoping that someone would receive the letter and reply. In less than a month, I received an aerogramme from a Mr. J. D. Williams, Regional Comptroller of Shipping and Transport, in Hobart, giving the entire history of Pigeon Service, which was not connected with the Post Office Department.

It seems that in 1891, a lighthouse was established on Maatsuyker Island, about eighty miles southwest of Hobart. Then in 1906, a lighthouse was established on Tasman Island, about forty-three miles southeast of Hobart. Since the lighthouse steamer would be visiting these islands only at quarterly intervals, it was necessary to have some means of communication during the intervals in order that the lighthouses could advise the Department of their needs. Hence introduction of pigeons.

Tenders were called annually for the provision of pigeons by local fanciers and racers, which resulted in a different contractor almost every year. Twelve pigeons were sent to each island every quarter by the lighthouse steamer. Any pigeons left over from the previous batch were released, as they tended to lose their homing instinct near the end of a three month period and stayed on the island, where they became such a nuisance that they had to be destroyed.

One pigeon was released with a message at a time unless hawks were known to be in the area. If that were so, more than one would be released carrying the message.

When a bird returned to the home loft, the owner immediately carried the message to the Lighthouse Department. Mr. Williams further states that the fresh water supply on the islands was maintained by catching rainwater that drained from the roof of the station.

The message on my Pigeon Gram was flown from Maatsuyker Island on June 3, 1918. Now I am on the hunt for a message carried from Tasman Island, so that I can have my tale completed.

All service of this nature was discontinued in 1930 when radios were installed. Mr. Meech, who signed the message on my Pigeon Gram, was known to be a lighthouse keeper. Two of the keepers are still living but neither have any of the Pigeon Grams. Mr. Williams advises me that he has not been able to find any others.

If anyone can supply further information about Pigeon Grams or their story, I would be appreciative of hearing from him.



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See Pages 88, 100 and 107
For List of Air Mail Handbooks On Sale

UNITED STATES

A "Tail" Of Three Colors

By KENDALL C. SANFORD

In my article "The 50th Anniversary U.S. Air Mail Commemorative Stamp" in the July, 1968 number, I reported what appeared to me at the time to be an error in the order of the tail (rudder) colors of the "Jenny" on the 50th Anniversary stamp. Now, I am not so sure. Further research has revealed that the rudder colors on the stamp could be correct — and then again they could also be in error.

When we submitted the stamp design to the U. S. Post Office Department, we supplied them with the information we had received from Captain Lipsner, that the colors were red, white and blue with red toward the front of the plane. The writer has since learned, from a source in the Post Office Department closely connected with this stamp, the reason the colors were switched on the actual stamp.

Oldtimers' Memories

When the Post Office Department sent the design to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Department instructed the Bureau to "check out" the rudder colors. The Bureau checked with Paul Garber of the Smithsonian's National Air & Space Museum. Mr. Garber had actually witnessed the start of the 1918 Air Mail Service. According to his recollection, as well as the Museum's records, the blue color was toward the front on the 1918 Jenny, exactly the opposite of what Captain Lipsner had told us. The Bureau took Mr. Garber's word for it; that was the way the stamp was printed.



In an effort to determine for sure what the correct order of the colors was on the 1918 air mail service Jenny, the writer decided to ask the few people

still living, who were connected with the beginning of our air mail service. Dr. George L. Conner was Deputy Second Assistant Postmaster General in 1918.

Perhaps because fifty years tends to dull one's memory, particularly about unimportant things, or more likely because Dr. Conner was not directly connected with the 1918 air mail service, he cannot recall the order of the rudder colors. In trying to be helpful, Dr. Conner asked Paul Garber about this. I need not tell you what the answer was.

Major Reuben H. Fleet, in 1918, was in charge of training the Army pilots for the new air mail service, and ferried¹ Jenny No. 38262 into Washington on the morning of May 15th. Major Fleet says that the colors on the stamp are correct and gives the following reasons:

"The specifications provided blue forward. They were changed both by the Army and Navy in 1918 (too late for these airplanes), and changed back again in August 1919, to blue forward. The reason was that the rudder was often damaged at its rear, and the red was easier to match than the blue in repair; also was less likely to damage or fingerprint."

R. C. 'Tex' Marshall was an early Jenny pilot. But he, too, cannot recall the order of the rudder colors.

William P. McCracken was Assistant Secretary of Commerce in 1918, and prior to that had been a Jenny flight instructor in the Army. The writer interviewed Mr. McCracken in his Washington law office. He reminisced a bit

-
1. An aviation term meaning to fly a plane empty to position it for a regularly scheduled flight.

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In conjunction with their co-sponsorship of the new United Nations 20 cent air mail stamp, issued on April 18, 1968, AERO PHILATELISTS has again produced an attractive brochure to honor the occasion. Limited to an edition of 300, the 8½" by 11" brochure contains both a first day cover of the new stamp and a mint single. Pertinent information as to the design and production are included in the text. The brochure is available for \$2.00, with all net proceeds being donated to UNICEF.

Still available are a small quantity of the 1959 United Nations brochures containing examples of three air mail postal stationery items issued on September 21 of that year. Price: \$2.00.

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FOR BOOKS ON AIR MAILS

See Pages 88, 100, 107

and showed off a photo album of Jennies at Army airfields in Texas. But like the others, he could not recall which way the rudder colors were.

Old Photos And Pictures

Because the eyewitnesses do not agree, or cannot recall at all, the writer checked other possible sources. Two of these are men who paint and draw pictures of the early airplanes, including the Jenny. Joe DeMarco draws pictures of the First World War military planes, thus having detailed information and data on them. He did a considerable amount of digging in response to my inquiry. While he is not sure, his finding indicate that the trailing edge stripe was blue on the May 15th Jenny.

Charles Hubbell, the well known illustrator of the early air mail planes, guesses that the stamp is correct, but cannot provide any basis for his guess. He, too, suggested that the writer contact Paul Garber at the Smithsonian.

Next, I consulted "Aircraft Camouflage and Markings 1907-1954,"² the section dealing with National Markings, British and Allied Aircraft, 1914-1918. From this excellent publication, I learn that beginning in 1917, the rudder stripping of the Army planes followed U. S. Navy practice, which was blue on the forward stripe.

Another excellent reference is "The Curtiss JN-4,"³ which confirms that the U. S. national markings from May 17, 1917 provided for blue on the forward stripe. However, in January 1918, the order of the rudder stripes was reversed to put blue at the trailing edge. This arrangement remained standard until August 1919, at which time the 1917 arrangement was readopted. But, not all of the 1917 Jennies were repainted with 1918 markings; the use of spare parts with one marking on an airplane with the other was not at all uncommon.

The next reference checked was "United States Military Aircraft Since 1909"⁴ which coincides with the explanation given in "The Curtiss JN-4." Of course since both books were published in Great Britain, there is the possibility that one author used the other work as a reference.

The writer has also uncovered some recent correspondence between Captain Ben Lipsner and the Post Office Department's Public Information Office which provides an important clue in our mystery. In a letter of November 25, 1968, Captain Lipsner advised the Post Office Department that he believed the order

2. Bruce Robertson, *Aircraft Camouflage and Markings 1907-1954*. Harleyford: Harleyford Publications Ltd., 1956, pp. 51, 53 & 54.

3. Peter M. Bowers, *The Curtiss JN-4*. Leatherhead, Surrey: Profile Publications Ltd., p. 10.

4. F. G. Swanborough, *United States Military Aircraft Since 1909*. London & New York: Putnam, 1963, p. 26.

THE HAWKER STAMP OF NEWFOUNDLAND

By Henry M. Goodkind

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of the rudder colors on the commemorative stamp is incorrect and explained the reason why.

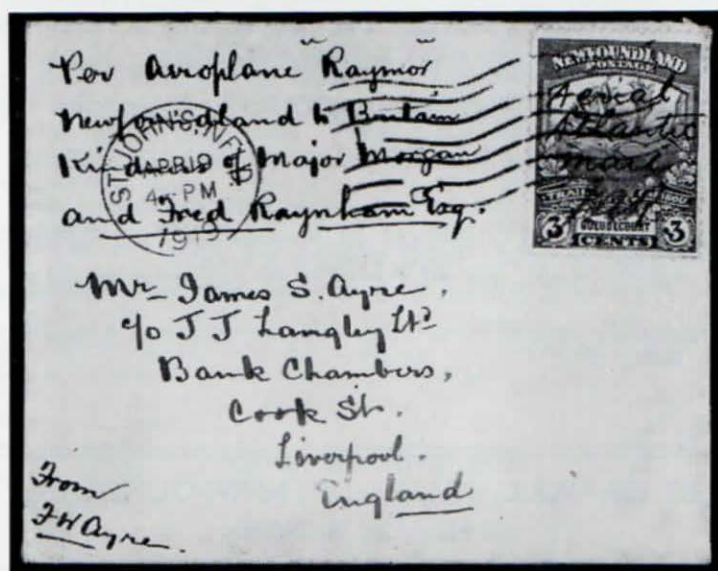
On January 7, 1918, the Army Signal Corps issued Specification #24102-A which called for a blue forward stripe, white center and red trailing. But this was superseded by Specification #24102-B on March 12, 1918, which specified exactly the reverse — red on the forward and blue on the rear stripe!

Memories Cause Confusion

On the basis of all the conflicting information, how does one arrive at a conclusion? This is obviously quite difficult. Which sources are the most reliable? Mr. Garber is a very knowledgeable person and was an eyewitness at the May 15, 1918 inauguration of the Air Mail Service. But could he be wrong? He has not yet provided any proof.

The explanation given by Major Fleet sounds logical enough, but the writer questions its reliability. After all, Major Fleet also maintains that the Jenny used on May 15, 1918 was the model JN-6H, in spite of the fact that all the photographs of the period definitely establish that it was the JN-4H.

Captain Lipsner's is the first concrete evidence that has yet been provided. As superintendent of the Air Mail Service for much of 1918, and thus being involved in the day-to-day operation, he can probably better recall the Jenny's rudder markings than any person still living. For these reasons, the writer still believes that the rudder colors of the Jenny on the 50th Anniversary commemorative stamp are in error. Any information which might shed additional light on this matter will be most welcome.



One of the very few covers bearing the manuscript "Aerial Atlantic Mail" stamp prepared for the Martinsyde trans-Atlantic attempts from Newfoundland in May and July, 1919. One of the great air post rarities sold at auction by H. R. Harmer, Inc. of New York in late February, 1966.

Book Reviews

New Zealand, The Great Barrier Island 1898-99 Pigeon Post Stamps by J. Reg Walker, deceased; edited and annotated by Henry M. Goodkind, editor of the "Collectors Club Philatelist" and Horace L. Chisholm, editor of "Philately From Australia." 100 pages. 70 illustrations. Paper cover. Handbook No. 22 of the Theodore E. Steinway Memorial Publication Fund, The Collectors Club, 22 East 35th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016. Price \$5. postpaid.

Having collected these stamps but not having the opportunity to secure all the information I wished, this book is of particular interest to this reviewer. A number of possible errors in other writings have been corrected, while matters that I did not understand have now been explained.

The nine chapters of Part I are devoted to the history of Great Barrier Island, the circumstances surrounding the tragic shipwreck on the coast of the Island which resulted in the first Pigeon Post, the details of the establishment of the Fricker Agency for a regular service, the opposition and the establishment of a rival service.

Part I is well illustrated with pictures including copies of original letters written by the men involved.

Part II comprises eleven chapters devoted to the eight stamp issues. Care has been taken to illustrate all of the various printings, varieties, counterfeits and the flimsies. Mr. Goodkind has plated some of the stamps. Cancellations, always of interest to the specialist, are illustrated and described in detail. A checklist and a pricelist are included. The pricelist, of course, will no doubt soon become obsolete, but represents values of today.

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Part III, the Appendices and Bibliography, is concerned with the catalogue of the stamps, the counterfeits, imperforates of the Agency stamps, and bibliography by Mr. Goodkind. Appendix D by Mr. H. L. Chisholm of Melbourne, Australia describes and illustrates the Commemorations of 1948 and 1949.

This reviewer believes the highest praise is due to Mr. Chisholm for sending Mr. Walker's manuscript to Mr. Goodkind, to Mr. Bernard D. Harmer of New York, Mr. Cyril H. C. Harmer of London, Mr. William H. Miller, Jr. of New York for all their contributions; and to Mr. Henry M. Goodkind, the editor of this magazine, for his more than four years work preparing and checking the original manuscript with many other sources before submitting it to the Steinway Memorial Publication Fund for publication as Handbook No. 22.

The illustrations throughout the book, numbering 68, are of excellent quality, while the narrative is not only informative but most interesting.

(Frank E. Adams)

Aeronautica. Objets d'Art, Prints, Airmail by W. T. O'Dea. 55 pages (5 7/8" x 5 7/8"), 20 color plate illustrations, paper cover. Published by H. M. Stationery Office, London, England. Obtainable for \$1 (U.S.) from the British Information Services, 845 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

This attractive and interesting booklet was published in 1966. But it has just come to this reviewer, when it was sent to me as a gift for my personal air mail library by a New York professional philatelist.

It should interest most every aero-philatelist. It sets forth a short history of flights from its earliest known days. It's also well written. Most of the material illustrated and described seems to be based on that in the famous Penn-Gaskell air mail collection in the Science Museum, Kensington, London, England. When I was a budding air mail collector before World War II, the late Miss Penn-Gaskell's collection was known as one of the leading ones in the world. And in those times, there were some great general air post collections here and abroad. Miss Penn-Gaskell was a famous aero-philatelist. She was the first lady elected to sign the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists and also the first aero-philatelist to become a R.D.P. (Now there are three — this reviewer and Francis J. Field of Sutton Coldfield, England).

The air mail stamp collector will be interested mostly in the later section of this booklet along with the very fine color illustrations. Commencing with the 1870 Siege of Paris balloon mail, air mail stamps and covers are shown. The highlights are Plates 17 and 18, showing such items as the Newfoundland Hawker and Alcock-Brown covers, and the U. S. Buffalo Balloon stamp of 1877. Plate 18 illustrates in color ten air post stamps, including our 1927 Lindbergh Flight commemorative (Scott C10).

Plate 20 is for the Rocket Mail enthusiasts. They'll love what is shown.



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New York auction sale
March 25, 1969 Robert A. Siegel Inc.

The British Information Services here in New York City was contacted by this reviewer; a supply of this fine booklet is still on hand. (H.M.G.)

Techniques of Philately by L. N. and M. Williams. 134 pages, 16 page illustrations, clothbound. Published by William Heineman, 15-16 Queen Street, London, W.1, England. Price 30/ (\$3 U.S.).

During the twenty-three years of my editorship of the AERO PHILATELISTS periodicals, I would estimate that a "how-to-do-it" book on stamp collecting in English has been published almost every year. Thus, one wishing to learn how to properly enjoy collecting stamps is very well served.

No one that I can think of matches the output of such books as the Williams brothers of England. Being good journalists, having a readable style, and many years of philatelic experience, the Williams brothers have more than done their duty.

The trouble seems to be that there are not enough readers of such instructive books. Philatelic editors can attest to this. So many inquiries are received for information, as if what is desired either is unknown or remains buried in some obscure, old journal. This is not so. Most times, the information sought is plainly set forth in a Williams brothers' book or a catalogue's introductory notes.

It appears to me that the time has come for a book on "Read A Book on Stamp Collecting."

There is much good advice and common sense in this latest work. It is practically all British. But this is not a great liability because of the close association between American and British philately. (H.M.G.)

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



....., 19.....

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REFERENCES

Each applicant is requested to furnish two references preferably philatelic.

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2. NAME

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EXTRACTS FROM BY-LAWS, ARTICLE III—MEMBERSHIP

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