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JANUARY, 1954

THE AERO
PHILATELIST ANNALS

★ ★ A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE ON AERO-PHILATELY ★ ★

This Issue Features:

- ETHIOPIA
THE FIRST (1929)
AIRMAIL STAMPS
- MARKET SURVEY
AIR MAILS
- FREE FRANCE
SOUVENIR SHEET
USED AS A LETTER

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JANUARY



1954

THE PHILATELIST AERO ANNALS

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The First Air Mail Issue of ETHIOPIA

Preface

It seems to us that the true collector of anything is always fascinated by the lesser known, the more distant or mystical. This, of course, applies to stamp collecting, although the mass might collect United States issues solely for their market stability. Yet we find many more intrigued by stamps from far-away places than an United States stamp, whose theme is so well known.

Air mail within Ethiopia and from that country has a certain magnetism. The story of the first air mail stamps from Ethiopia (still called by its old name "Abyssinia" by a few in philately) reads in parts like an adventure story. Their supply was always small. But judging by their current selling price of less than \$2 a set, the demand also must not be great. Certainly with a total printing of 11,500, the current retail price is low. A stamp from the United States, British Commonwealth or France with less than 12,000 issued would be a stamp collector's rarity available only to those with a very liberal stamp budget.

But there are very few air mail stamp collections lacking a set of Ethiopia Sanabria No. 1-10 or Scott C1-10. Although many own this set, it seems probable that only a very few know the story behind these stamps.

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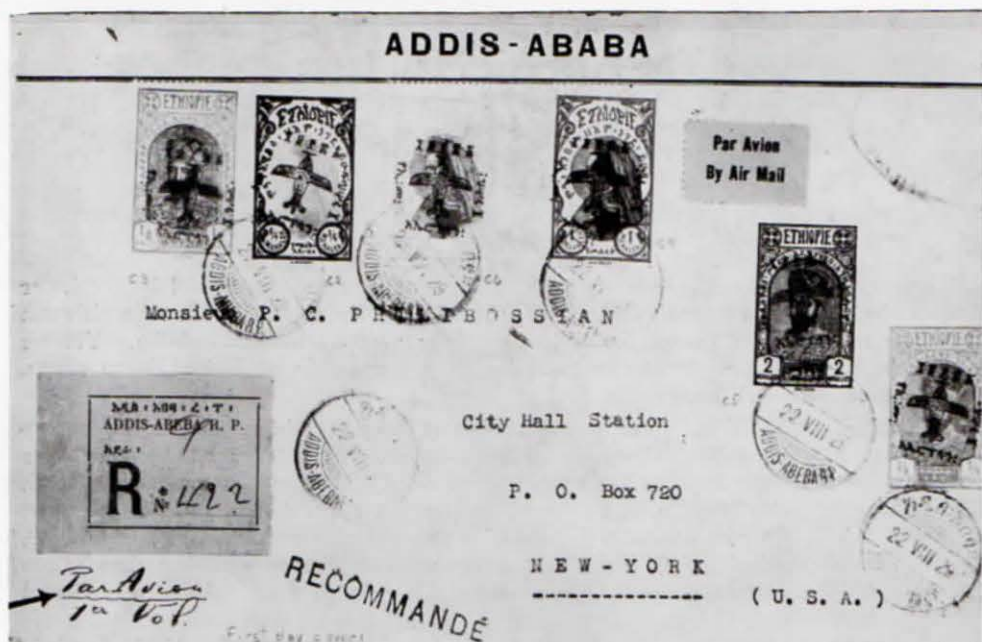


Fig. 1 A "first day" cover dated Aug. 22, 1929 from Addis Ababa. The only backstamps are the New York, N. Y. registry dated Jan. 17 and 18, 1930, showing close to five months delivery. In manuscript in the lower left is the "Via airmail/1st flight" notation. But there is no Djibouti, French Somaliland nor Dirre-Daoua backstamp showing that this cover probably went via surface means. Nevertheless, a first day cover is scarce. From the Luff Collection of the Philatelic Foundation.

The Exact Date of Issue Not Known

Some maintain that these stamps are not air mails in the true sense because they never did this specific postal duty. Instead they were a commemorative issue in character made simply to mark the acquisition of two airplanes by Ethiopia. With the possession of these, Ethiopia had hoped to inaugurate an air mail service at a future date.

This article hopes, with one exception, to clear up most of the mysteries about this issue. Much has been written about the stamps ever since their first appearance (see Bibliography). As this is examined, you will see that some previous writings will have to be dismissed as false while others can be accepted as authoritative.

It is true that when the stamps were first placed on sale, there are no records of any air mail service in Ethiopia. So the contention about not being air mail stamps is correct. But the issue remained on sale and in use for almost two years. We shall show many air mail usages within that period so that the first air stamps of Ethiopia did lots of air mail duty. *They are air mail stamps.*

The one mystery remaining is their exact date of issue. Most all the sources consulted disagree on this. All agree, however, that the date "August 16, 1929" is incorporated into the box-like overprint. Some have erroneously taken this to signify that August 16th was the date of issue. This is not so. This August 16th date is a commemorative one included in the overprint simply to mark the date of the arrival of the first airplane Ethiopia ever owned.

The more authoritative sources stated that due to mechanical difficulties, the first flight took place *after* August 16, 1929. But when? Here no one agrees. For instance, Harry E. Huber, generally accepted as an accurate writer on New Issues for the old



Fig. 2 A first flight cover dated Dec. 26, 1929 from Addis Ababa to Dirre-Daoua with the specially prepared etiquette for this inaugural flight.

"Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News" wrote in that publication:—"Placed on sale at Addis Abeba(*) on August 17, 1929, the stamps were used principally on mail dispatched by rail to Djibouti on August 20th". While Douglas Armstrong in the British "Air Post Collector" quoted from "the Official Circular" published by the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephone of Ethiopia under the date of August 16th 1929 as follows:

"... These stamps will be placed on sale during ten days only, as from tomorrow the 17th instant at the flying ground, and also over the post office counters.

"The use of these stamps will only be accepted on correspondence leaving by the mail train on Tuesday August 20th."

Now here is a tough knot to untie. Both "Scott Monthly Journal" and "Stamp Collecting" quote from a letter of the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, which should tally in all respects with that office's Circular. But here is what the Minister wrote:

"... These stamps were available for postage only one day, for the post leaving on the 24th of August. They were sold in sets at the post office windows for several days".

Some years ago there was an air mail column under the byline "Airpost Specialist" in "Weekly Philatelic Gossip", which in 1935 wrote:

"The Plane left Djibouti, French Somaliland on August 18th, 1929, at dawn, and arrived near Addis Ababa at 1 p. m. The stamps bear an overprint suggestive of arrival on the 16th, but the plane suffered some difficulty enroute which delayed arrival two days."

(*)The more accepted way of spelling the name of the capital is Addis Ababa.

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Fig. 3 The backstamp of Dirre-Daoua on the cover shown in Fig. 2.

Next the leading air mail catalogs were consulted. Sanabria gives the date of issue as August 16, 1929. The old Scott (1946 edition) stated that the stamps were on sale from August 16th to 26th. D. Field (1934) gives the data exactly as the columnist, "Airpost Specialist" in "Weekly Philatelic Gossip", leading us to speculate that this British catalog was the source for "Airpost Specialist". The authoritative Champion (1930 edition) has the following text notes:—"The series was issued to commemorate the arrival at Addis Abeba of the first aeroplane owned by the Abyssinian Government. The 2,500 † sets were on sale from August 17 to 26 at the Addis Abeba and aerodrome Post Offices; they served for franking covers irregularly conveyed by the aeroplane from Addis Abeba to Dessie and Dire-Daoua (Abyssinia) and to Djibouti (Somali Coast)".

Therefore one sees that each reference source consulted specified a different date between August 16 and 24 as the first day of sale. Even the P. T. T.'s Official Circular disagrees with an official letter from the head of that Ministry. Some wrote of a flight from Djibouti, French Somaliland to Addis Ababa, although most sources maintain the first flight went the other way from Addis Ababa to Djibouti. It is our opinion that if there was a flight in August, 1929, it must have been from Ethiopia to Somali Coast and not the other way. Our reasons are two. First of all, if Ethiopia had bought a plane, the logical starting point would be from her capital. And secondly, the few covers that we examined with an August, 1929 date are all cancelled at Addis Ababa.

Although the exact first day of sale cannot be determined, the first day of use may be. Fig. 1 shows one of the few "first flight" covers examined. It is cancelled Addis Ababa August 22, 1929. This is the earliest date seen so far, although earlier ones might exist. This cover is in the famous "Luff Reference Collection", property of the Philatelic Foundation. If you know the history of this Collection, this cover takes on added significance. But look in the lower left corner. There is a two-line manuscript note: "Par Avion/1er Vol.," which means "By Air Mail 1st Flight". In those days it was customary to backstamp air mail to show its quick transit, whether the letter was registered or not. The cover is addressed to New York. The route would have been air mail from Addis Ababa to Djibouti, where it would have been backstamped, if flown. But there is no such backstamp. The only markings on the back are the N. Y. arrival date, January 17 and 18, 1930. This cover may have flown but it lacks the proof that it did.

There is another factor which causes doubt about air mail back in August, 1929. Harry E. Huber wrote the following in "Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News":

"There is no regular air mail service in Ethiopia. Occasionally one of the Government planes is sent to Djibouti, and then a mail is taken. Three days are required by rail, and only a couple of hours by air. At Addis Abeba an intricate system is used for announcing the arrival or departure of mails, by the display on the staff, of a flag of a certain color. In the same way, the dispatch of air mail is indicated".

† Others state 1,500 sets.



Fig. 4 Another cover flown Dec. 26, 1929 on the first flight from Addis Ababa to Djibouti.

Some Confusion

Although the exact first day of sale and flight seems still undetermined, there is no doubt that the date "August 16th, 1929" on the overprint is only a commemorative marking the arrival of the first airplane in Ethiopia. It does not necessarily follow that the plane left this very same day with mail.

But if you enjoy reading a bit more philatelic confusion, we shall quote from the lead page in the British "Stamp Collecting" of April 19, 1930:

"Abyssinian Airs

"Interesting light is thrown upon the circumstances of the special issue of the air post stamps made by the Ethiopian Government last year by a recently published account of the aerial adventures of Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Sibour.

"Flying a Gypsy Moth plane from England, they reached Abyssinia, but experienced great difficulty in securing the necessary permission to proceed. Entrance to the country was only granted by the Negus on the condition that the Ethiopian flag was painted on the machine and on the conclusion of the trip, King Tafari was given an opportunity to purchase the machine. This option the King decided to exercise.

"During their stay in Abyssinia, the travellers were invited to carry out an air expedition to Lake Tana, where 30,000 troops were engaged against rebel forces. This was successfully accomplished in company with M. Mailet, a French pilot engaged by the King to take charge of the Abyssinian air force of two planes. Bombs and pamphlets were dropped.

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"On their return to Addis Ababa, the Vicomte and Vicomtesse were presented with a gold coin, specially struck to commemorate the occasion of their visit.

"Then the Vicomte and Vicomtesse were allowed to proceed to Djibouti.

"We gather that the stamps were of a similar character to the Souvenir Coin that the proceeds of their sale went some way towards defraying the purchase price of the Vicomte de Sibour's Gypsy Moth plane".

A correction was not long delayed because in "Stamp Collecting" of May 10, 1930, Mr. Francis J. Field, one of Britain's best known air mail dealers, wrote the following "Letter to the Editor":

"Abyssinian Airs

"Sir: Your informant regarding aviation events in Abyssinia appears to have confused both dates and machines.

"The air commemorative series was issued last August on the arrival of the first aeroplane in the country. This was a French machine, piloted by a Frenchman from Djibouti. A second machine was apparently imported soon afterwards. One of these machines crashed in December, when the passenger, the King's uncle, was killed.

"The Moth aeroplane, piloted by the Vicomte Sibour, did not arrive in the country until this spring, and as the privilege of entry was granted conditionally that the King had the right to purchase the Moth, it was returned to him after flying the original owners to French territory.

"Thus the medal was struck to commemorate the arrival of the *third* machine, and the stamps issued for the first one about six months earlier. I enclose a photograph of the Official Stamp Declaration, dated August 1929 to prove the point".

The inclusion of these "Stamp Collecting" articles has been done to indicate several points. First of all, one can properly say that this long-established weekly British magazine "drew a very fast conclusion". But that was the mood of the time. Collectors failed to understand this first Ethiopia air mail issue. It seemed ludicrous to the western philatelist that a country should issue a long set of ten stamps for the acquisition of just one airplane. Many were prone to condemn just awaiting any opportunity to sound off. This spirit has not died, and you and I know ever so many of the present day writers who seem to relish pouncing on a new issue without good reasons and only with a superficial knowledge. The second point to stress is the actual importance to Ethiopia for the ownership of its first airplane. The Sibour affair shows how desperately Ethiopia wanted to have a few planes for air transport and mail, and to what extreme lengths it resorted to try to secure one. One also must remember the time in history. Ethiopia was beginning to be threatened by that bully Dictator, Mussolini. It, therefore, had to strive strongly to build up its defenses in the new "Air Age".

The Air Mail Flights

At this point, we believe that we shall prove when the air mail service commenced. It was not in August, 1929. *The first flight took place on December 26, 1929.* This is shown in Figs. 2 and 3, which show the front and a part of the back of a cover flown from Addis Ababa to Dirre Daoua. Notice the air mail etiquette on the bottom of the cover (Fig. 2). The last line reads: *1er service or first service* in English. Although this cover is not registered, it carries the "Dirre Daoua" backstamp of December 28, 1929 (Fig. 3), substantiating our contention that all air mail, registered or not, was back-stamped in those days.

Huber wrote in "Mekeel's" that the first flight took place on December 29, 1929 when a mail consisting of 229 registered letters, 352 ordinary letters and 110 post cards was flown to Djibouti in a Pothé airplane piloted by M. Maillet, a French aviator. Huber's date is three days late. The first Addis Ababa-Djibouti flight was on December 26, 1929, the very same day as the Addis Ababa-Dirre Daoua flight. Illustrated is a

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cover proving this (Fig. 4). It is cancelled Addis Ababa December 26, 1929. It was sent registered to New York, but notice the large two-line handstamp in the upper left corner reading "Addis-Abeba DJIBOUTI". The two covers shown in Figs. 2 and 4 definitely show when the first flight took place. Both are postmarked *December 26, 1929*, and with their cachet and etiquette offer the concrete proof needed to show that the mail went via air.

The First Printing

The present day aero-philatelist notices throughout the past writings on this set many points in disagreement. Some sources wrote of a first printing of 1,500 sets. Others give this figure as 2,500. The Official Circular of the P. T. T. states *1,500 sets* and this is the amount that must be accepted. Furthermore, some past writers were prone to criticize a printing of 1,500 complete sets as entirely too small, and implied that this was done deliberately to further philatelic speculation and profit. We happen to disagree. Ethiopia at that time did not have a great need for many stamps. Huber shows the *total mail carried was 691 pieces* on the first flights in December, 1929. Never having experienced air mail before, the Postal Ministry in Addis Ababa had no way of foreseeing the demand.

As it turned out, along with the philatelic demand, 1,500 sets was far too few. Many wrote of the issue being sold out on the first day of sale in August, 1929. There is no reason to doubt this. But immediately more sets were overprinted. This, in our mind, shows that if philatelic profit was the motive behind this issue, no additional printings would have been made.

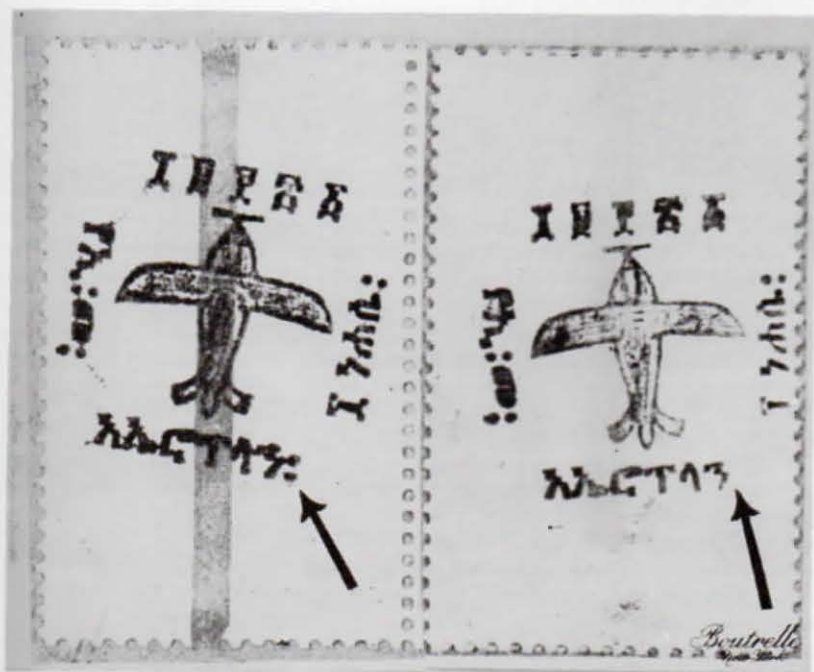


Fig. 5 Left: The type of the overprint of the FIRST printing showing the colon. This item is a stamp with the sheet margin both bearing the overprint. Right: A sheet margin of a stamp with the more common "Second Printing", lacking the colon. From the Luff Reference Collection.

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Fig. 6 Samples of the First Printing overprints and the cachet for the first flight, never used, on the Official stationery of the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones. This historical item is in the Luff Reference Collection.

Later Printings

Most all of the reference sources consulted write of a "Second Printing". None specify the dates of the re-issue, but almost all agree that the "second" printing followed immediately after the first.

Fortunately for the philatelist, the scarcer FIRST printing can be distinguished without difficulty. On the First printing a colon (:) was placed on the bottom line of the overprint at the righthand side. This is shown clearly in Fig. 5. The enlarged overprint shown on the left in this illustration has the colon where the arrow points. But the other overprint shown at the right of Fig. 5 has no colon. This is the constant mark of all printings except the first.

Once again we cannot rely on past writings to determine the amounts re-issued. Such reliable writers like Huber and Field wrote of a second printing of 1,000 complete sets. Air mail catalogs, as Sanabria and Scott, give the amount of the second printing as 10,000 complete sets. Neither the writers nor the catalogs document their sources for this information. But we believe that we can explain this discrepancy. At first, it might

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Fig. 7 A cover flown in March, 1930 showing a later use of the stamps.

seem like a typographical error because 1,000 sets and 10,000 sets can be confused with ease in print. This is not so. "The Air Post Collector" has one sentence in its long article that mentions additional printings in September, 1929. This is the key.

It is our belief that after the first printing of 1,500 sets, there was more than one later printing. What actually happened was that more stamps were overprinted to meet the demand as it arose. It is probable that a second printing followed immediately after the first in August, 1929. This could have been the 1,000 sets that Huber mentioned. But then came a third, fourth, perhaps even a fifth and sixth printing. Until the stamps were taken off sale in 1931, the sum *total of all the later printings was 10,000 complete sets*, which tallies with the catalog text notes. No official papers of the Ethiopian P. T. T. have been found giving any data about the later printings. So our theory cannot be proved but it is offered as the most likely explanation.

Based upon these calculations, you have the figures of the first and the later printings, which is as follows:

First Printing.....	1,500 sets
Later Printings.....	10,000 sets

Colors of the Overprint

When a stamp is overprinted, the color of the ink used for the overprint must be selected with care so that it can be seen and read clearly, being distinguishable against the

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Fig. 8 The Rome, Italy backstamp on the cover in Fig. 7. The cancels are dated Addis Ababa March 15, 1930 and Rome, Italy March 19, 1930.

color of the basic stamp. So the set of ten had to be overprinted with two different colored inks. The $\frac{1}{8}$ m, $\frac{1}{4}$ m, 1 m, 4 m, 1 th and 3 th were overprinted with *violet*. The $\frac{1}{2}$ m, 2 m, 8 m and 2 th received a *red* ink.

But this plan was not carried out consistently. The complete set of ten can be found either with a violet or red overprint. The cover shown in Fig. 2 is franked with the whole set in a red overprint, while the illustration, Fig. 7 is a cover with the set all in a violet overprint.

As to the red and violet overprints, they seem to exist in about equal amounts and are valued at about the same price. But the issue comes with the overprint in *three other colors*—blue, green and black, all of which are much scarcer than the red and violet.

Blue Overprint

This blue overprint seems to be little known. It is not listed in Sanabria along with the red, violet, green and black. Mention of it, however, is found in the "Air Post Collector" (Vol. 2 No. 2) as a "*scarce trial impression in blue known on the $\frac{1}{2}$ mehalik stamp*". We have not seen this blue overprint nor know of its existence in this country. The closest colors that we were able to locate in our search was on the first page of the Ethiopia air mails in the Luff Reference Collection shown here as Fig. 6. In the center on an Official Letterhead of the Ethiopia P. T. T. are two impressions of the overprint outlined in red pencil and notated No. 1. To the left in the corner is a $\frac{1}{8}$ mehalik stamp. All three overprints have the colon, showing that these are the first printing. The top overprint and the one on the stamp are more purple than violet color. There is very little disclosed about this item. All that we do know is that it was sent by the Minister of Posts to Mr. John N. Luff when he was head of the Scott Stamp & Coin Co. They are reputed to be trial impressions. This is probably so because of the rectangular hit shown at the right of Fig. 6 outlined in red pencil as "No. 2". This is an example of the *cachet* planned to be used on the first flights in August, 1929. It reads:—"First Flight Addis-Ababa Djibouti, August 1929". This never was employed adding much evidence to our theory that the first flights did not come off until December, 1929. But the placement of this cachet, never used, on this sheet also lends more substantiation to the fact that all the hits on Fig. 6 are trial impressions.

Black and Green Overprints

A limited number of sets, the exact number is unknown, come with both a black and green overprint. They are rather scarce and the prices in the Sanabria catalog correctly reflect this, pricing the black and green at about ten times the red or violet.

It is alleged that the black and green overprints were made to oblige collectors, a contention that cannot be proved but might be disproved. The black and green overprint could have been trial impressions, just like the blue, which later came upon the philatelic market. Both overprints are found on cover. The writer's collection has one

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of each and more are in collections of members of Aero Philatelists. Douglas Armstrong in his "Air Post Collector" article had the following to say as quoted:

"Although the green and black overprints have been officially recognized, it is understood that these were really struck at the instigation of a local philatelist by an obliging post office employee".

Some further light is thrown upon the black and green overprints in the December 7, 1929 number of "Stamp Collecting" when a Whitfield King and Co. Bulletin was reported. This long-established British firm has been considered a very reliable source for information on New Issues. They wrote:

"... it might interest you to know that we have seen a pane of 25 of the $\frac{1}{8}$ mehalik with the overprint partly in violet and partly in *green*, so that there are two horizontal rows of five, *se-tenant* showing the two colors of overprint... We think the green overprint must be rare, as the pane we have seen shows that the violet ink apparently ran dry and in changing over to the green it starts with a mixture of the violet and green until in the last three rows the overprint is quite green".

This account, written so shortly after the issue came out in 1929, refutes the belief that the black and green overprints were made to oblige collectors. You cannot judge Ethiopian printing work or technique by Washington or London standards. It is very possible that as more of these air mail stamps were being supplied, the red and violet inks became exhausted. And so to complete the issue, other colors such as black and green had to be used for the overprinting.

The Printing Technique

Most of the past writings agree upon the method used to apply the overprint. This was done by handstamps (probably rubber). They were cast from a metal die which had been engraved. The type used for the Amharic letters is a movable one made by slugs as in regular typography.

They are two different types of overprint. The first was used on the original run of 1,500 sets so easily distinguished by the colon. (Fig. 5). Incidentally this type measures about $\frac{1}{2}$ mm. less from top to bottom than Type 2 used for the later printings. Type 2 is the one without the colon, and is more plentiful.

Errors and Varieties

Because the overprint is a handstamp, it was applied in all manner of means. Consequently the overprint is found hit on every denomination in the set with different varieties and errors. The article in the "Air Post Collector" contains two long tables listing each variety known. The four main groups are these:

- a. Inverted overprint
- b. Double overprint
- c. Overprint sideways
- d. pair, one stamp without overprint

Usually in evaluating overprints, it is customary to consider all such errors as deliberately made to oblige philatelists. In this instance, however, some of the conservative British writers regard *all the varieties as genuine errors*. Whitfield King points out that the errors "came from the original post office stock and there is no reason to suppose that they 'were made to order'. They exist for the most part in very small numbers and in several instances are unique".

It is our opinion that many seem too prone to condemn by taking a narrow rather than a more broad-minded view of some of these minor listings. A locally executed job, such as this overprint, was no doubt done by unskilled and poorly trained people. Nor can too much be assumed about their education or literacy. It would seem so logical,

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therefore, to find such help applying the overprint in all manner of means. But the critic then asks why were not all the errors in overprint rejected rather than being put on the market? Perhaps the supply of basic stamps was short and to reject too much as waste would have shortened the supply needed.

The End of the Issue

This set of the first Ethiopian air mails was a provisional. Until a definitive set arrived from Paris in 1931, these stamps served for occasional flights from Addis Ababa to Djibouti or Dirre Daoua. Fig. 7 shows a cover flown in March, 1930. It was cancelled in Addis Ababa March 15th and is addressed to Rome, Italy. The backstamp (Fig. 8) shows the Rome arrival mark dated March 19th. Four days from Addis Ababa to Rome!

These stamps were pioneers, pathfinders. Issued primarily as a commemoration of the arrival of the first airplane in Ethiopia, they remained on sale until about June 17, 1931, just two months short of two years. This writer has a friend now living in Ethiopia, who is in charge of an oil refinery of one of the major petroleum companies. Thanks to the groundwork laid by the first air mail issue of Ethiopia, correspondence arrives from him via air mail in three days time from Dirre Daoua to New York.

There are some very ardent collectors also who prefer the stamps of the less popular countries, especially those who produce their own stamps. Here one finds ever so many philatelic paths and the competition for the material is not so severe. Take this first air mail set of Ethiopia, for instance. Perhaps you now own a set. It is probably the more common later printing. Try to find a set of the scarce first printing of 1,500 sets. Then see how many different colors of overprints you can secure. There is the red, violet, black and green. Next try to find some of the errors. Add to this some of the flight covers. Maybe you will be the first to find a genuinely flown cover dated in August, 1929. See if you can find covers used close to the time when the stamps were withdrawn from sale in 1931. Most of the covers this writer owns or has seen are philatelic. A commercial cover dated 1929 or 1930 is a real collector's item. If you should be tempted to build such a collection, you will find that your total investment will probably not exceed the price of a complete set of U. S. Columbians.

It must be conceded that this issue has not been a "collectors' favorite". This is proved by the 1930 Scott Air Post Stamp Catalogue that priced the complete set of ten at \$16.50. The current Sanabria catalog prices this set at \$2.50 for either the red or violet overprint. The set price has declined steadily since its issuance. There might be other reasons, but we attribute it solely to a lack of interest. It certainly is not due to forgeries or reprints. *None* are known of Ethiopia San. 1-10. We believe that it offers some a great opportunity to seek what they like out of philately, namely—to get a lot of stamps without a great expenditure. It could be that the first air mail issue of Ethiopia is a potential philatelic gold mine. (H. M. G.)

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THE AIR MAIL STAMP MARKET

Preface

In viewing the current market of air mail stamps, one has a very helpful index for practical use. Specific reference is to the recent sale at auction of a leading air mail collection. It has been a good many years since one of the top air mail holdings has been sold.

As instances of great air stamp collections, the award-winning ones from the 1936 and 1947 International Philatelic Exhibitions come to mind. Most all of the collections that garnered the top honors in the air mail sections at the 1936 TIPEX have been dispersed. Two collections shared the top air mail award at 1947 CIPEX, that of Sir Lindsay Everard and our own Oscar R. Lichtenstein. In the fall of 1953 the collection of the late Sir Lindsay Everard was sold.

The heirs of the late Sir Lindsay Everard decided to dispose of the collection at auction sale. The auctioneer chosen was H. R. Harmer Co., international stamp dealers and auctioneers. We can only guess that the collection was so vast and comprehensive that Harmer decided not to auction it as an unit, but to divide it into two parts, something quite unusual with philatelic properties. The American portion, outside of Canada and Newfoundland, was sold by Harmer's New York branch while the rest of the world with British North America was handled by Harmer's London office.

The advantage gained by the interested collectors in such a two-part sale, is that one can judge air mail prices in an *international market*. Using the Everard collections as a base, one need not view market conditions solely from prices on this side of the ocean. One also must take into consideration the demand here and abroad. The results might have been different if the American section had been auctioned off in London while the other countries had been offered in New York. The obvious assumption was that Newfoundland air stamps would be in better demand in London than in New York, while Honduras seems to do better over here. As for France, Germany and other non-British lands, the air mail stamps may have realized better prices if sold over here, although judging by the prices realized, this is doubtful.

It is our intention to forego a long, detailed account of the prices of stamps or sets country by country. One who is interested in this can obtain from the H. R. Harmer Co. a list of prices realized in the Everard sales at their announced sale prices for same. Rather it is planned to use these auctions as a more general base, viewing aero-philately in its more important segments as the prevailing market conditions appear to exist at this time.

The Market Survey

Unused (Mint) Stamps. This appears still to be the most popular way of collecting air mail stamps, unused by complete sets. It is true that used on and off covers have grown in popularity in recent times, but little evidence is observed of their making any marked inroads upon the demand for mint sets. Consequently, the market is moving up. On the average, prices of unused sets seem to be 20-30% higher than in the 1949-52 period.

Although air stamps have been printed under modern methods, condition still is an all-important factor for mint stamps. Since well-centered copies are generally available, any compromise with quality decreases the price drastically. For example, a well-centered o. g. set sells for \$10.00; the similar set a bit off-center will fetch but \$5 or \$6, while a broken set or one with poorly centered copies arouses practically no demand.

With air mails, the line still seems firmly drawn against mixed sets. Nobody will touch this same set of ten with some copies mint and some used. It must be one or the other. Having complete sets mixed by one totally mint and another completely used is not as bad, but it is not desired under present market conditions. Some sets are better mint, others used. So a collector fares best under present circumstances if he continues on one method of collecting rather than interchanging them.

MARKET SURVEY

One should not misconstrue this. A very good collection can be practically all mint or all used. But here and there, a mint collection can show some interesting cancellations or some covers. Similarly, if a used collector wishes some errors or varieties that are only known unused, he need not worry. Therefore, the foregoing reference was to what some call "the off the board" air stamps which should generally be collected in one condition, and not intermingled with mint and used.

Used Off Cover. The demand has slackened and prices are down considerably from those of a decade ago. We attribute this to the abuses with fake cancellations. The state of this market is interesting especially in view of the thorough and general upward revision of used prices in the 1954 Scott Catalogs. As our reviewer stated (AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS, Vol. 2, page 61), the Scott change was a step long overdue. Scott seemed for the first time to gauge used prices by themselves, and not set them automatically at a percentage of the unused. One observing prices at auction sales will notice that the demand for used off cover is not as strong as in the past nor in comparison to mint or covers.

Used On Cover. The market is following a general trend, which exists in all branches of philately. Cover collecting has become very popular. This used to be far more prevalent in Europe than over here. Now the demand in the United States seems equally strong. From the earliest 19th Century down to the very latest air mail, collectors are seeking stamps on cover.

In its 1953 edition, the Sanabria Air Post Catalogue extended its scope to include prices of many air mail stamps on cover. This was an important move because if one attempts to gauge cover prices by the used column in most catalogs, he will find them insignificant. One consulting Sanabria cover prices will find them on page after page, double, triple or quadruple of the mint and used sets. The general accuracy of Sana-

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MARKET SURVEY

bria's cover prices is shown in auction realizations. If anything, Sanabria's prices of stamps on cover are on the low side.

Flight Covers. Judging by the Everard and a few other recent auction sales, flight (non-air mail stamp) covers are not in strong demand over here. Mr. B. D. Harmer, in the course of the Everard sale here in New York, paused to remark on this. The strength of the flight cover market is in the early pioneers, pre-World War I stage. However, one hears that there is a better market for this material in Britain and on the European Continent than in the United States.

Semi-Official Stamps. The recent indication of the great strength in this specialty seems to have taken many by surprise, although those who had followed air mails for years had expected it. Non-Scott listed air mails are in big demand; mint, used or covers.

Immediately following the Everard sale here in New York, H. R. Harmer sold a COLOMBIA collection from South America. The bulk was items listed and priced only by Sanabria. From the first 1919 issue down through the Consular Overprints, spirited bidding was evident on every lot. The result was high prices, often close to the catalog price!

The same pattern is evident on stamps such as the French and German Semi-Officials, the New Zealand Pigeon Post issues and Switzerland's 1913 stamps. Less than a year ago, a fine collection of French Guiana's T. A. G. stamps was sold at auction by The Mercury Stamp Co. of New York. The prices realized were very high.

Canadian Semi-Official stamps are eagerly sought. Current prices are quadruple or more over those of ten years ago. We remember the Dr. Cole collection sold at auction by F. W. Kessler in 1939. Let us illustrate the uptrend of these Semi-Officials by comparing a few of the 1939 Cole with the 1953 Everard auction prices, which had been picked at random.

(Continued on Page 90.)

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MARKET SURVEY

Country	San. Cat.	1939 Cole	1953 Everard*
Canada	301a	3.50	44.00
Canada	301b (cover)	47.50	75.60
Germany	512, 515, 522	27.00	72.80
New Zealand	1, 2, 4	26.00	44.00
Russia	6	110.00	359.00
Switzerland	9	10.25	44.80

Errors and Varieties. This group is difficult to describe as a unit. There is no doubt that over-exploitation in errors and varieties in the past caused a severe depression in this market. History shows that prices in boom times soar far too high and, of course, when prices break, the drop is far too sharp.

Errors and varieties are in small demand, but equally they are in short supply. So a lack of demand will depress prices sharply, but let only two or three specialists seek these minor catalog numbers, and the prices must go up. The trouble has been that few discriminated with errors and varieties. They are all regarded in the same way. Many alleged that they are "so much junk" tailored only for wealthy collectors' pocketbooks. *This is a completely untrue and unfair generalization.* AERO PHILATELIST's publications, time and time again have stressed in their research articles how many countries like Ethiopia, Honduras, Nicaragua or Paraguay had to supply air mail stamps for expanding aviation service on short notice. A rush job done by inexperienced help under old-fashioned printing techniques was bound to produce mistakes. Many air mail errors were made unintentionally. Others were made for philatelic sale. Sometimes a country will go through what we call an "error and variety stage". Venezuela did that from 1940 to 1945. The result is that the market is flooded with such material, the supply far exceeding the demand. Uruguay, on the other hand, is different. An inverted overprint on Uruguay (Sanabria No. 2a) is just as liable to happen as with our own 1918 center inverted on the 24-cent red and blue air mail. Try to buy Uruguay San. 2a from a dealer's stock. It is doubtful if any have it on hand. So when this scarce Uruguay error comes up at auction, there is a strong demand for it.

Again to prove our point, let us take a few instances picked at random and compare the 1939 with the 1953 auction prices.

Country	Sanabria	1939 Cole	1953 Everard
Bolivia	8a	30.50	10.50
Bolivia	13	95.00	55.00
Brazil	27a	30.00	60.00
Ecuador	7	177.50	220.00
Honduras	7b	100.00	160.00
Mexico	6 (cover)	105.00	190.00
Mexico	14	41.00	50.00

Essays and Proofs. Let us be factual about this group; one needs more than "a few dollars" to collect essays and proofs. Obviously, both the supply and the demand is very small. But they fit each other closely. Sometimes there are only two copies known of a certain proof or essay with three collectors seeking a copy. The resultant price will establish new highs. Again one cannot generalize. Most of us know what desirable pieces of property proofs of an United States air mail are. But France and Monaco seem to have been rather liberal with the distribution of its essays and proofs of their post-war air stamps. The same can be said of their favor sheets, "the DeLuxe Presentation Sheets." These are bringing a small fraction of their prices of five or more years ago. As both the Dr. Cole and Everard collections had proofs, a few prices for comparison can be taken at random.

* English £ prices have been converted into dollars at the \$2.80 rate.

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Country	San. No.	1939 Cole	1953 Everard
Austria	PP 1-3	20.00	56.00
Belgium	PP 20-22	52.50	50.40
Newfoundland	PP 13-15	36.00	59.00
Newfoundland	PD 20-24	66.00	154.00

New Issues. Whether unused, used on or off cover, the more recent stamps from the 1943-53 period are very weak when they are sold at auction. At present, the demand is far smaller than the supply. Reference is not to the few new issues that have a "bad odor" about them, but the regular recent stamps.

Furthermore, the chaotic and complicated status of so many international currencies as an aftermath of World War II affected stamps as well as money. The decline in value of the French franc, the Italian lira, the Mexican peso or the Spanish peseta has been reflected in these countries' stamps of recent times. For instance, one bought the 1947 Mexico 20 pesos air mail at the time of issue when the peso was worth about 20 cents or at a face value of \$4.00 U. S. By 1950 the peso had dropped in value to approximately 11 cents, reducing the face value of this stamp to \$2.20. A stamp collector cannot be expected to anticipate the fluctuations of foreign exchange. Sometimes foreign currencies rise in relation to our dollar.

Another depressing influence on the prices of New Issues of recent years is the *real worth* of certain foreign currencies. For example, the French franc is quoted at the *official rate*, which often has been way over the *open market rate*. Had the collector bought his new stamps at a price based upon the higher official rate or the lower open market price? Even at this very moment what is the real worth of stamps from "Iron Curtain" countries? The lei of Roumania, for instance, is quoted at \$.0893 U. S. currency. This probably is a fictitious value. The same could apply to the Hwan of South Korea or the Chinese dollar.

So if one pays 50 cents for a new 5 lei Roumania air mail, he has no more assurance of its stability than if he bought Korean hwans or Russian rubels at the official rate for speculation. But one should regard this situation in a realistic sense and not become discouraged. A veteran aero-philatelist remembers back when issues like the first airs of Czechoslovakia, France C1-2, the Mexico University set, the Newfoundland Labrador set and the New Guineas were selling similarly at auction as the 1943-53 issues are now. One must make a choice between buying new stamps as they come out at a new issue service price or waiting to buy them later when their prices are rising. But don't try to outsmart yourself by "picking the winners" or trying to buy only those new issues that will increase in value in the near future. In this connection, we may relate a personal experience.

A few years back, we were visiting at the office of one of the oldest and finest New Issue dealers. A potential customer walked in and explained that he was prepared to spend thousands of dollars. Of course the dealer solicitously led him to a seat. Then the prospective client explained that he only wanted to buy stamps that would be worth at least double their present price ten years from now. The old-time dealer looked at this party carefully and said with a very polite manner:

"Mister, if I knew what stamps would double in price, do you think that I would sell them to you or put them in my stock? Sorry, but I must decline your business!"

Postal Stationery. This has become the fastest growing branch of aero-philately due almost entirely to the new Air Letter Sheets, which have become very popular. The market is exceedingly strong. It might amaze you, as it did us, to see the Colombia Air Letter of 1923 (Sanabria AL2) list priced at \$25, sell at the October, 1953 H. R. Harmer auction for \$45.

At the risk of coming under some criticism, we would like to add a word of caution on the present very popular aero-postal stationery, especially the Air Letters. It is new and unseasoned, just as air mail stamps had been thirty years ago. At the turn of the

MARKET SURVEY

century, postal stationery was popular. Then interest in it waned. Next came cut-square collecting. This also lost a general appeal except for a few ardent specialists. Albums and catalogs dropped their postal stationery sections.

Stationery offers collectors mounting and display problems. Furthermore, one can handle adhesive stamps far more easily, compactly and cheaper than postal stationery. A dealer in stamps has less expense in handling and shipping them than with stationery. Air letter Sheets involve these problems and we hope that no one will take offense at this mention.

Expensive Air Stamps. We all read in stamp paper articles that are written from time to time bemoaning the passing of the "big" collector. It is maintained that with our present economy, the wealthy collectors are no more. The rare and expensive stamps are, therefore, no longer in strong demand. Collectors can afford only to buy the medium and lower-priced stamps. The peculiar part of such articles is that they have been written mostly by dealers who should know their trade and the stamp market.

One can take the 1953 Everard sales as an example to refute the contention that the rare and expensive stamps are difficult to sell and no longer find buyers. Anyone who attended these sales witnessed spirited bidding, both from the floor and the book with the mail bids. The rare and expensive Colombia, Mexico, Newfoundland and Honduras stamps not only sold at new high prices, but they attracted more than one or two bidders.

It is our view that if people in the United States can spend \$100,000 for a modern French painting, or \$50,000 for a piece of antique furniture, there are stamp collectors who can and will pay \$1000 for a used Hawker, \$1900 for a Martinsyde cover and \$2500 for a mint DePinedo of Newfoundland. Also the 24-cent invert of U. S. seems to establish a new high every time a desirable copy is sold at auction. The price is now close to \$4500.

Conclusion

The market for air mail stamps is moving up. After the end of World War II prices moved down. 1954 prices are far above the recent lows. Any reputable, long-established dealer in air mails will admit that all dealer stocks of air mail stamps are low. Evidence is clear that the demand is now growing greater than the supply. The aero-philatelist in United States must realize that the prices of air mail stamps had been moving down while our cost-of-living index was spiraling upwards. So even in 1954 great opportunities exist to purchase air mail stamps in a favorable market.

Dealer overhead has risen sharply. A stamp dealer in 1954 pays higher rent, salaries, printing and mailing costs. This must be passed on, even if the demand for stamps did not increase.

And so aero-philately at present shows all indications of soundness. Furthermore, as far as one can prophesy with any sort of accuracy, the future seems bright. Air mail stamps, especially those from 1920 to 1940 period have seasoned. Collectors and dealers alike know values better. Experience had created more confidence, more faith. Something unforeseen could happen to reverse this situation, but until that happens, we can be very happy with such an enjoyable hobby that so many seem to share.

CATALOG AND BOOK REVIEWS

Scott Catalogue, 1954, Part 2

As far as this reviewer can determine, there have been no additional listings of air mail stamps in Volume 2 of the 1954 Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue, which covers Europe, Africa and Asia. This is a disappointment because we believe that there are quite a few air mail issues that qualify for inclusion in Scott. We would like to mention a few out of many that come to mind.

CATALOG AND BOOK REVIEWS

For instance, in 1947 the Portuguese colony of Timor overprinted its 1938 air mails with the word **LIBERTACAO** in black. This was done to mark this island's liberation from the Japanese. The set was regularly issued. This reviewer knows of two instances where these stamps, both mint and on covers, were obtained directly from the post office in Dilly, the capital, both in good-sized quantities and at face value. Yet this set is not even mentioned in Scott.

Then there are the German "Inselpost" stamps, used by the Nazi Military Forces in the last war. They were legitimate in concept and use, far more than many stamps now Scott-listed. They are knocking at the door, so to speak, now being in the Tentative Listing section at the end of this book. We hope to see them listed in the 1955 edition.

Another example is the 1932-34 Lithuania Triangle issues. We believe that if the editors of Scott had studied the interesting article in our "*Aero Philatelist News*" of June 1, 1953, these stamps would have been accorded a Scott regular listing rather than being treated as Scott has done for many years.

So instead of seeing legitimate air mail stamps added in Scott, we find that we have lost one air mail issue on final count because Lebanon C29 to C32 have been deleted. We cannot be happy with this score.

The trend of air mail prices, as the case with Volume 1, shows a strong move upwards. Some examples of this follow.

Afghanistan's 1948 set has been raised from \$18 to \$24 mint and from \$22.50 to \$27.50 used. The 1940 Spitfire set of Cameroons climbs from \$60 mint to \$80 both mint and used. Curacao's long set of 1947 goes from \$82 to \$103, while the used price goes up about \$25. The semi-postal official air mail of Cyrenaica has been raised to \$85 from \$50 mint and is now priced at \$100 used. Similarly No. CBO1 of Eritrea, Italian Somaliland and Tripolitania show the same price adjustments. Ethiopia's 1946 issue moves

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CATALOG AND BOOK REVIEWS

from \$7.75 to \$10 mint and from \$9 to \$11.75 used. Saar C12 jumps from \$1.20 to \$3.50 mint, and from \$1 to \$3 used. Spain CB6 has been raised from \$5 to \$8 mint, \$6 to \$10 used, and the 1950 stamp from \$6 to \$10. The scarce first air mails of St. Thomas Islands has been increased \$5 in price from \$22.50 to \$27.50. The 1948 set of Trieste takes a big jump, from \$27.50 to \$40 mint and from \$23.50 to \$28.50 used. There are many other similar increases, too numerous to itemize.

Just as with the Part 1, the pricing of air mails shows a laudable effort to have them as accurate as possible. In this respect, the job was well done.

Viewing this catalog from an over-all point of view as well as taking into consideration the immensity of the task, no one should blanketly criticize the Scott catalog. It represents a good, competent job. That does not mean, however, that it is free from many mistakes, full of inconsistencies and in need of revisions from beginning to end. But the editors of Scott have shown their willingness to continually strive for improvement. The pace at times might disappoint us, but that does not blot out the realization that each edition of Scott evidences marked improvements, a most healthy sign. (*Stanley R. Rice*).

Les Aerostats Poste 1870-71

This 219-page, illustrated book is written by J. Le Pileur. Published by Comptoir des Timbres, Paris, France, but the price is not stated.

Our library contains many books, pamphlets, catalogs and articles in both French and English on the Balloon and Pigeon Mail from the Franco-Prussian War period. This latest work seems to us to be the "last word" on this specialty. No other work is as long and detailed, especially since it is greatly expanded on the author's previous work.

Mr. Le Pileur, one of the leading authorities on Balloon Montés, has penned the most thorough and accurate history yet attempted. Although written in French, its maps, charts, tables, illustrations and presentation should not prove too much of a handicap to an interested American collector.

We fail to see how, after Mr. Le Pileur's book, any one else would consider publishing another book on the French 1870 air mails. It is hoped that future aero-philatelic works coming from France will treat the lesser-known items such as France's first air mail stamps and the 1910-12 period when some of the more interesting Semi-Officials were used.

Silombra's Air Post Catalog

The 1954 or 8th edition of the Jean Silombra Air Mail stamp catalogue has been received from France for review purposes. Other than that the latest edition, though showing a consistent effort at tightening its composition, is yet a swollen 668 pages, there are no radical differences between this and the immediate previous editions. Regrettably this reviewer cannot state the price of this latest edition as it does not appear on the copy received. Nor are we told if the catalog is sold through an agent in this country.

It is always difficult to estimate the worth of a catalogue while yet avoiding a carping or destructively critical viewpoint. Yet to gloss over a review is to cheat one's readers who may and probably do, perhaps foolishly, rely too entirely on one reviewer's opinion. To accept without reservation the opinion of even the most knowledgeable critic is to leave the door open for later disillusionment.

So it is with this in mind that we nevertheless state that we found many signs of inconsistent and poor editing in the new Silombra Catalogue. Appreciating, as we do, the Homeric difficulties that face the editor of any stamp catalogue—and the thanklessness—an editor nevertheless has certain moral duties. One of the more important of

these—if not the chief one—is the constant perusal and check of the world's philatelic publications with the idea of making continual additions, corrections and revisions of the catalogue in the light of the latest research findings. To shirk this is to be content with a static catalogue which is, in the end, no catalogue at all but merely an ever-changing price list. This constant weeding and cultivating, we feel, is not being done by the Silombra editors. Else how explain the inaccuracies concerning a random example—the 1947 archeological set of Honduras?

In the listing for this set Silombra states some six years later that it exists perf 12½. There is also a notation of the number of stamps of each value that were issued following their creation by the now defunct Hamilton Bank Note Co. The facts, however, are that the normal set was issued perf 11 x 12½. There are, it is true, perforation varieties of this set in the vertical perforations only. All horizontal perforations are consistently 11 and only 11. Thus it would not be possible to explain Silombra's curious insistence ever since the appearance of this set that it is perf 11½.

Point 2 concerns the numbers issued of this set. Since stamps of this set were overprinted in 1951 in creating the Honduras U. P. U. set, quite obviously with the Hamilton Bank Note Company no longer in existence, remainders of the basic set had to be used for the creation of the U. P. U. issue. Silombra does state the numbers issued of the U. P. U. set but does not subtract these figures from the numbers issued of the Archeological set. It should be pointed out that an article on this set appeared by Mr. Irving I. Green in the May, 1952 issue of the "Collectors Club Philatelist". In this article, Mr. Green quite definitely stated that remainders of the Archeological set were used in creating the U. P. U. set for reasons of economy. Hence our inference that little, if any, checking of pertinent articles on air mail issues is being done by the Silombra editors.

(Continued on Page 96.)

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CATALOG AND BOOK REVIEWS

Equally baffling is the lack of cover prices. A realistic air mail catalogue simply has to take into consideration the often manifold difference in value between a used airmail stamp and that same stamp used on cover. Where an issue is short-lived, used specimens on cover may be and often are worth many times a used specimen off cover. Yet in most cases, Silombra's prices for used stamps are consistently below the cost of mint specimens. Consider the 1920 Czech sets or Uruguay No. 1 as prime examples.

Silombra also insists on including stamps which were not truly airmail issues such as the U. S. 1928 Aero Conference set. If the editors choose to include such stamps, we do not find it too great a fault but is it unreasonable to ask them to indicate in some manner that such sets are included because the editors believe these stamps may be of interest and not imply that they are true airmails?

There are other strange errors of omission and commission. The Lindbergh booklet is unlisted. And after all the research that has been done on the RF overprints, we find Silombra still listing these under France, not United States. Why? If the American scholars, for example, Goodkind in the *"Aero Philatelist News"*, is wrong, French philatelists must bring forth evidence to show that these are not United States issues.

Inasmuch as there are several airmail stamp catalogues, it appears to us that the conscientious editor of one would jealously examine the other catalogues for discrepancies, note same and then check exhaustively. While this may be done in some instances, there is a curious indifference in many other instances judging from the end results. Silombra, for example, blithely states that the 1939 Haiti set depicting Pierre de Coubertin was issued in the amount of 75,000 sets, yet Silombra catalogues a mint or used set at 5,000 francs. Why should a set so large in issue and with a small face value be worth approximately \$15, mint or used? Obviously the answer is that nothing like 75,000 sets of these stamps are in existence. After remainders were destroyed, the number shrank to the neighborhood of 6,000 sets if memory does not desert this reviewer.

On the credit side, the Silombra Catalogue, for all of its patent and unchanging faults, is not without merit. It is strongest, of course, in the information it concerns on issues of France and her Colonies. Almost invariably prices and amounts issued are shown for imperforate varieties, essays, proofs and de luxe sheets. Moreover, we suspect the values quoted for these varieties are highly realistic since the French demand realism of prices from all of their various cataloguers. No other country has as many.

The printing of the catalogue is on a dead white paper which makes for easy reading. There are a liberal number of well-reproduced cuts and the setup of the catalogue is so simple as to make a knowledge of French almost totally unnecessary. Less attention is paid to varieties than one might desire but as an added compensation, prices for the pioneer flight covers of each country are in many cases noted. (*Ira Seebacher*)

THE AIRMAIL BAG

(Under this heading a regular feature will be run with correspondence from Members. Names in full will be used unless a contrary request is specified when a correspondent will be identified by initials only. Nothing unsigned will be used.)

In reference to your article (AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS, October, 1953 page 69) that the "Broken Wing" variety of the 1926 Philippines' Madrid-Manila issue is position No. 89, I would like to make the following correction. The position of this variety, when it was listed by the Sanabria and Scott catalogs, was No. 87 as located by the late Mr. Walter Bruggmann of Manila, and not No. 89 as you wrote.

When I was breaking up the Carlos Hess Jr. collection for sale, I discovered that Mr. Bruggmann was wrong about position No. 87. The question to determine was this:—does the variety come on position 88 or 89? At that time, there was available a sheet of 81 (9X9) of the 4 cts. It was like this because the straight-edge copies had been removed from the original sheet of 100. Mr. Goodkind and I checked this sheet, and were of the opinion that the correct position of the "Broken Wing" was No. 89.

Henry Kraemer, New York, N. Y.

THE AIRMAIL BAG

The previous mistake made in locating the "Broken Wing" variety at position No. 88 instead of its correct No. 89 was due to the wrong calculation that the straight-edged copies removed from the 4 cts. sheet had been at the right. Actually the straight-edges on this sheet had been on the left, and at the top.

The U. S. Bureau of Printing and Engraving printed the stamps in sheets of 400 subjects, which in turn were divided into four panes of 100 each. Consequently, each pane of 100 has the two straight-edge margins in different locations.

Illustrated is a portion of the bottom two rows of the sheet on the photo sent by Mr. Kraemer, locating the variety at position No. 89, exactly the same as on the 2 cts. as shown in the last number of this magazine.



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In 1950 and 1951, AERO PHILATELISTS distributed to its members and then sold to the public two exceptionally informative handbooks on some of the most interesting and historical air mail stamps ever issued. A small supply is still available for any one interested. When ordering, please send cash to:

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AERO PHILATELIC SHOWCASE

Souvenir Sheet

Used As A Letter

Illustrated here is the front and back of the 1942 Souvenir Sheet of the FREE FRENCH FORCES IN LEVANT. On the Sheet (Fig. 1) are *seven* cancellations and one cachet, which reads:—

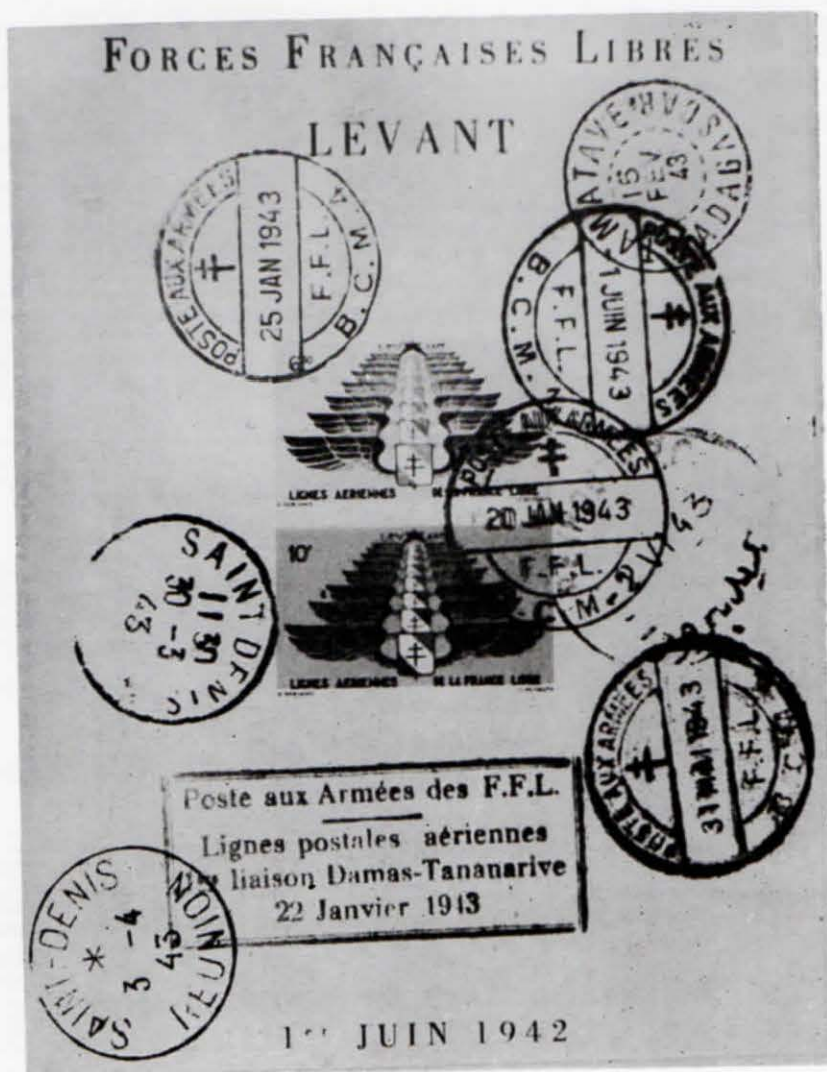


Fig. 1 The Souvenir Sheet with its 7 cancels and special cachet.

AERO PHILATELIC SHOWCASE

"Free French Army Post/Air Mail Lines/1st Flight Damascus-Tanarive (Madagascar) January 22, 1943."

On the back of this Sheet (Fig. 2) are the address, the message, air mail etiquette, registration label and censor marks. How many other Souvenir Sheets are known with a similar use? There must be very few.

This Souvenir Sheet is listed in Sanabria as French Levant No. 10, but in Scott as Syria MC8. During the last War, some of the Free French Armed Forces were active in Syria and that part of Asia Minor. Just as in other French Colonies, the Free French issued and used their own stamps to distinguish them apart from the home government under Petain's rule. Which country name is correct?

It is our view that the Sanabria country name of "French Levant" is better than Scott's under Syria. We have noticed that too many collectors, none too advanced in philately, have had trouble locating these Free French stamps in Scott. It never occurs to them to look under Syria nor is there any hint in that catalog advising the collector of how to find them. We were consulted by one collector who was looking for their listing in Scott under "France—Offices in the Turkish Empire. Levant." And we could understand this person's confusion.

But returning to the Souvenir Sheet itself, it is not often seen postally used and, of course, very rarely in this particular manner.



Fig. 2 The back of the Sheet used for the address and message.

(Photos by Boutrelle)

Editorial

AN UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL

The firm of H. R. Harmer, Inc. needs no introduction to any collector of stamps. The following was run in the Harmer auction sale catalogs of October 26 to 28, 1953 held in New York, N. Y.

A WORD

ON AIR STAMPS IN GENERAL AND THIS AUCTION IN PARTICULAR

Air Stamps in general.

The collecting of air stamps necessarily cannot go far back. The first air stamp proper was issued in 1917 and even a quarter-of-a-century ago the total air stamps issued were nominal compared with today's listings.

In the earlier stages, air stamps were collected along with normal postage stamps, and it was still some time before they became appreciated as a section of philately that worthied collection on their own.

Aero-philately, once started however, increased by leaps and bounds and suffered perhaps from over-exploitation in the years prior to World War II.

An excess of errors, some accidental but far too many intentional, left pockets of privileged persons well-lined and with this a distaste in the mouths of the followers of the hobby.

A reversal was bound to occur and did. Collectors sold and fresh collectors were not found to take their places. More recently however, due to the efforts of aero-philatelic groups in this country—and to a far lesser degree overseas—very serious attempts have been made to clarify many issues of doubtful authenticity and today there is no doubt that infinitely more is now known about the earlier air post issues than was before.

This re-vitalization of interest in aero-philately has already shown its effect and will do so more as the efforts of these groups bear fruition.

We feel therefore that aero-philately which has already seen a boom and a depression is now progressing upwards, morally and financially, to its rightful level between these two extremes.

It is unusual to find such text notes in a stamp dealer's auction catalog. Now let us examine the above more closely to see why it can be regarded as a testimonial to AERO PHILATELISTS Inc. You read that Harmer times the decline in air mail around the time of World War II. A reversal of this trend followed, and it is recorded that more recently a re-vitalization has set in.

AERO PHILATELISTS Inc. came into existence at the end of World War II in 1946. What we started out to accomplish with nothing but high hopes has been admitted as an achievement by one of the world's leading commercial stamp organizations.

Harmer's brief but factual history of air mails explains precisely why AERO PHILATELISTS Inc. was organized. Throughout the days of "hard times" for air mails in this country, the real enthusiasts never lost confidence. To a great many of us, aero-philately was primarily a hobby or a pastime. Not looking for profit in something that is basically a pastime, we met together in 1946 recognizing the need for an organization devoted exclusively to air mail stamps. At the very first meetings, the founders decided upon one firm policy above all others. In time this has almost become our motto. It was called THE SEARCHLIGHT OF TRUTH. This, as it began operating, took air mails out of the "dark ages" into a stage of light and knowledge.

But to operate a SEARCHLIGHT OF TRUTH successfully is not as easy as it sounds. One has to know the difference between truth and falsehood. The one who listens to gossip, to rumor mongers or who indulges in these, never will understand how to operate THE SEARCHLIGHT OF TRUTH. Thieves work mostly in the dark and at night. Light dispels darkness. Yes, it is that simple.

EDITORIAL

Harmer's words constitute a challenge to us. It is a mandate that AERO PHILATELISTS Inc. maintain and continue to improve upon their seven-year record of accomplishment. "Dark days" will visit us again, if we become complacent or tired. Conceit about our achievements so far will cause a setback. We cannot prosper heaping self-praise upon ourselves, handing each other tin medals or complimenting each other at testimonial dinners.

In another section of this magazine, the current market in air mail stamps is discussed, and the comments are based to a great extent upon the realizations of the lots in both Harmer auction (New York and London) sales of last October. What do they manifest? That ours is a story of actions, not words.

So now we arrive at a crucial point in our history. AERO PHILATELISTS Inc., which is an organization of both air mail stamp collectors and dealers, has been instrumental in restoring the confidence in our specialty. It should never again become a fad. Therefore, it behooves every member to keep his faith in the stamps he enjoys collecting as long as philately in the United States endures. Besides it requires that many enthusiastic members keep working for our organization. And forever we must keep bright THE SEARCHLIGHT OF TRUTH.

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THE FIRST TEN COUNTRIES

To Issue Air Mail Stamps

Aero-philately happens to be older than many think. The common belief regards air mail stamps starting about 25 years ago. But they date back much further than that, some now being close to 50 years old.

If one confines air mail collecting to government-issued stamps listed in a catalog like Scott, then here is the list of the first ten countries to issue air mail stamps.

No.	Country	Scott Cat. No.	Date of Issue	AP Article(*)
1.	Italy	C1	May 22, 1917	APN II/8
2.	Austria	C1-3	March 30, 1918	APN II/19
3.	United States	C3	May 13, 1918	APH (1950)
4.	Hungary	C1-2	July 4, 1918	APN III/18
5.	Newfoundland	C1	April 12, 1919(†)	APH (1951)
6.	Tunisia	C1	April 20, 1919	
7.	Switzerland	C2	April 30, 1919	APN IV/6:V/11
8.	Colombia	C1	June 18, 1919	APN I/10
9.	Japan	C1-2	October 3, 1919	APN VI/4
10.	Germany	C1-2	November 10, 1919	

In a technical sense, the above list is not correct. For example, mention is made of United States C3 only, not C1 and C2 which were issued in July (C2) and December 1918 (C1) before Nos. 5 to 10 on the list. Also Newfoundland's C2, not on the list, came out in June 1919 before the last three stamps on the above list.

Semi-Officials

Many others in our ranks maintain that air mail stamps go back to the 19th century, citing some historical items as the United States Buffalo Balloon stamp and the New Zealand Great Barrier Island Pigeongram stamps. Such stamps were not issued, sold or used under an 100% government monopoly. Therefore they are listed as Semi-Official stamps. They have become very popular air mail collectors' items, all being listed and priced in "the Sanabria Air Post Catalogue". So here is a second list.

No.	Country	San. Cat. No.	Date of Issue	AP Article(*)
1.	United States	501	June (?) 1877	APA I/1
2.	New Zealand	1-8	1898-99	
3.	France	501	August 14, 1910	
4.	Germany	501-9	February 18, 1919	APN VII/2
5.	Sweden	501	September 1, 1919	
6.	Argentina	501	September 14, 1912	
7.	Great Britain	501	February 11, 1913	
8.	Switzerland	1-11	March 9, 1913	APN I/12

(*) This column refers to AERO PHILATELISTS Inc.'s publications as follows:

APN....AERO PHILATELIST NEWS
 APA....AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS
 APH....AERO PHILATELIST HANDBOOK

The reference APN II/8 signifies that "The Aero Philatelist News" Volume II, No. 8 has an article on Italy's first air stamp.

(†) The date in "Scott's Air Post Stamp Catalog" is wrong. The "Hawker" stamp was not issued on May 18, 1919.

(Continued on Page 104.)

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THE FIRST TEN

9. New Guinea	501-2	1913(**)	APA I/2
10. Canada	501	August 26, 1918	

Some comments also are in order on the second list. Liberty was taken to group the Germany and Switzerland issues. For instance, the Swiss Pioneer Flight stamps were issued periodically from March 9th to September 28, 1913, while the German stamps were issued individually during 1912, 1913 and 1914. Listing each of those stamps separately would have crowded all the others off the list. Also a country was listed only once. This kept an item like the United States "Vin Fiz" stamp (San. 502) off the list, although it was used in 1911 and would be No. 4 on the above listing. The same applies to France San. 502 of 1912.

With the exception of No. 10 on the Semi-Official table, all of the stamps were issued before the No. 1 on the first list.

It is the opinion of many collectors that the NUMBER ONE stamps are the most desirable ones. This is certainly true of postage stamps and indications are strong that the same situation exists with air mail stamps. So these two lists may be helpful.

The catalogs can supply only very brief text notes about these early stamps. Consequently, the interested collector will be curious about these air stamps and may want to read more about their history and production. The AERO PHILATELISTS' publications can supply information on most of these stamps, so that the final column was placed on each list. Notices can be found in this magazine instructing one how to order our older publications.

(**)The exact date of issue is not known since they were prepared but not used. Their sale may have preceded Nos. 7 and 8, but it is more probable that the New Guinea Zeppelin Expedition stamps were distributed after March 1913.

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