

THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS



Vol. XIII, No. 2
October 1965

*** Contents**

French Guiana (Henry M. Goodkind) The 1921 T.A.G. Air Mail Issues	29
Annual Convention and Dinner AERO PHILATELISTS Saturday, November 20, 1965	30
Index to Volume XII, July 1964-April 1965 AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS	38
United States (Albert Philip Cohen) The Air Mail of May 15th 1918	39
Editorial (H. M. Goodkind) Questionable Judging	51
United States (Philip Silver) Last Day of Use; The 24c Air Mail Stamp of 1918	53

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THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS



Vol. XIII, No. 2
October 1965

Henry M. Goodkind, Editor

Philip Silver, Assistant Editor

FRENCH GUIANA

The 1921 T.A.G. Air Mail Issues

These fascinating air post stamps are listed in all the specialized air post catalogues, but not in the standard ones such as Scott, Gibbons and Yvert & Tellier. Sanabria lists them as French Guiana Nos. 1 to 11 and all have high catalogue prices ranging from a low of \$150 to a high of approximately \$1000. Obviously, these issues are very scarce. When they are offered occasionally in an auction sale in New York, London or on the European Continent, they realize full Sanabria Catalogue prices and sometimes even more.

These pioneer air mails are collected by only a few, who can afford them; the demand for them for many years exceeds their limited supply.

Crude Productions

With the growing modern trend of collecting stamps for the attractiveness of the designs, it is remarkable that these French Guiana "uglies" generate the interest they do. Of the thousands upon thousands of air mail stamps, we

Call To

The 19th Annual Convention of

AERO PHILATELISTS

On

Saturday November 20, 1965

2 P. M.

At

The Collectors Club

22 East 35th Street, New York, N. Y.

19th Annual Dinner

6:30 P. M.

Chambertin Restaurant

348 West 46th Street, New York, N. Y.



Fig. 1. Sanabria Type 1. (All illustrations by the courtesy of the Philatelic Foundation, New York, N. Y.)

can think of no others that can match their unattractive appearance. Furthermore, their colors are very drab.

But often a stamp's crudeness appeals to a more mature philatelist. It is believed that this is true with these French Guiana airs.

French Guiana is a relatively small colony in South America, best known as a penal colony. A good portion of it is still undeveloped dense jungleland. One can readily see that any local printing is far behind that in the highly industrialized countries. Consequently, as these 1921 air post stamps were printed locally, one must expect very amateurish workmanship.

Four Different Designs

As noted in Sanabria, there are four designs. Sanabria Type No. 1 is the crudest of the four (Fig 1). Type No. 2 is a little better (Fig. 2).

The only design with some slight eye-appeal is Sanabria Type No. 3, the long upright stamp with a Hermes Head, a motif so popular on postage stamps in the early days, as with Austria and Greece. But if one examines all the stamp designs with Mercury on them, the one from French Guiana seems to be the poorest (Fig. 3).

The fourth design bears some resemblance to the second one. But here again Sanabria Type No. 4 is no beauty (Fig. 4).

Not Much Literature

The specialist in these stamps will be very disappointed when he seeks some good reliable literature. There is nothing to speak of outside of the text notes in the specialized air post catalogues. Even the French one, the old *Champion*, has only three pages about these stamps.

Many would like to know about the printing of these stamps. A search over some years in the large Collectors Club Library in New York City revealed not one source for this information. There are articles in French, En-



Fig. 2. Sanabria Type 2.



Fig. 3. Sanabria Type 3.

glish and a few other languages; not one reveals anything more than is found in the air post catalogues.

The largest piece that we have ever seen was a block of four. It is known from the catalogues that the printing was done from a woodblock engraved by hand by letter press (typography). But what about the size of a sheet?

The printing presses in French Guiana logically must have been small ones. Perhaps since a block of four is the largest multiple seen, only four stamps were printed at a time. A few photographs examined of Sanabria Type No. 3 reveal two stamps *tete-beche* on a miniature sheet. This offers a clue that perhaps the printing was a "work and turn" process. Sanabria No. 4a and No. 8a are for *tete-beche* pairs. But no reason has been offered to explain why some of the other nine stamps are not also found *tete-beche*.

Due to the scarcity of the material, no plating work has been done, in the sense that anything has been written. Perhaps an individual collector or stamp dealer did some work on the sheet reconstruction. But if he did, the information was not made available through publication. Also, we know that as vast as the philatelic library at the Collector Club is, many French periodicals are missing. Perhaps some French philatelist did go into the technical details of these air mail stamps and its publication escaped us. If, however, no studies have been made, at this time it seems very doubtful if the missing knowledge can be supplied. The issues now are almost 45 years old. Considering their scarcity, students interested in their printing are unable to assemble sufficient material to pursue this work.

The Four Issues

As stated before, Sanabria lists eleven of these 1921 French Guiana air mails. But Champion lists only nine. In our opinion, the former is correct. Both catalogues say that all the stamps were sold to the public at the post offices.

Sanabria lists two stamps with its Type No. 1 design as well as two with the Type No. 2. Type No. 3, the *Hermes Head*, has three stamps, and Type No. 4 has the same number in Sanabria.

All eleven are known used on cover along with the regular French Guiana postage stamps (Fig. 4). The practice of treating the special air mail stamps as an extra tax was rather prevalent in the early years of air post. The regular postage stamps prepaid the letter rate; for air mail one had to add the special air stamps as a surtax for speedier delivery.

Postal Use

The first issue, Sanabria Nos. 1-2, were placed on sale July 8, 1921 (Champion notes July 9th, one day later) for a hydroplane mail service between Saint Laurent and Cayenne, the capital of French Guiana.



Fig. 4. Sanabria Type 4 shown on a piece of a cover with the regular French Guiana postage stamp, which was obligatory.

For the flight from Cayenne to Saint Laurent, Sanabria Nos. 3-4 also were issued on July 8, 1921 (here both Sanabria and Champion agree on the first day).

Later on, early in September, 1921 three new stamps with the Hermes Head design, Sanabria Nos. 6-7-8 were put on sale. Later in this same month, Sanabria Nos. 9-10-11 all with the Type No. 4 design were placed on sale. Both of these September, 1921 issues are found used from Cayenne to St. Laurent or from St. Laurent to Cayenne. As for Saint Laurent or St. Laurent, both spellings are found. In French, it is "Saint Laurent" and in English "St. Laurent." But the 1930 edition of Champion, that is in both English and



Fig. 5. The first page of the TRANSPORTS AÉRIENS GUYANAIS booklet.

one on which most of the T. A. G. air mail stamps were used. A ticket on this flight cost 300 francs. The flight covered a distance of approximately 275 kilometers (190 miles). Also, 15 kilos of baggage was permitted.

The other flight was a longer one of 550 kilometers (342½ miles) to Inini and that cost 550 francs.

In smaller type towards the bottom is the announcement of the air mail service. It says that there is a regular schedule between Cayenne, St. Laurent and Inini by the T. A. G. and also a connecting correspondence from Cayenne with planes coming from France.

The bottom portion of page 2 (Fig. 6) mentions extensions to the lines and in preparation a service to Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana (Surinam) and Georgetown, British Guiana. Finally, the TRANSPORTS AÉRIENS GUYANAIS "is going to make aviation links with Brazil, Venezuela and the Antilles."

The next two pages are illustrations that deserve comment; they are convincing examples of advertising for air travel back in 1921. The first one (Fig. 7) shows four hydroplanes flying over the rapids and jungle where people are travelling by native canoe. The legend reads: "In several hours, actually, the Transports Aériens Guyanais assures perfect traffic."

The other (Fig. 8) depicts the natives struggling to move a canoe in the swiftly moving rapids, and it says: "The many difficulties faced during long days." Obviously, air travel was the answer to that.

The fifth page is all small text. It, therefore, need not be illustrated. The following is an English translation made by the writer with the aid of "Cassel's New French-English Dictionary":

Aviation In Guiana

"Guiana, among our Colonies, is one which has the most natural resources,



Fig. 7. Page 3 of the T.A.G. booklet.

and one can admit that it is the place in the world richest in gold; the sun producing in equal abundance precious wood, rubber trees, etc.

"The sole obstacle faced in reaching these rich resources is the complete absence of a means of communication, which prevents any practical method of working in the forests, making it impossible for re-evaluating, the transport of personnel and general supervision.

"Before the coming of aviation to Guiana, the only means available to transport labor was most primitive, crossing over trunks of trees and carriage along rivers by black natives who had to have great strength and endurance to contend with the swift currents, to get out and push while working in extremely dangerous, fast flowing rapids. But in spite of the skills of these black boatmen, a great number of canoes capsized each year in the trips up and a greater number again in the trip down, which happens to be the particularly dangerous one.

"Besides these hazards, one has to contend with both fatigue and fever, 3 to 6 weeks being required to complete a journey this way, by the winding of the river, of distances not exceeding, as a bird flies, from 200 to 250 kilometers.

"Under such conditions, one can see why all serious cultivation of the forests for lumber is impossible. No businessman would venture to risk his capital in such an enterprise over which he had no control and which he could not regularly inspect.

"Now, by means of our regular transportation service, by air, all this has changed; the dangers from the river have been bypassed; aviation permits a fast and easy trip, affording one the chance of supervising the work



**de nombreuses difficultés
surgissaient pendant
de longs jours.**

Fig. 8. The fourth page of the T.A.G. booklet.

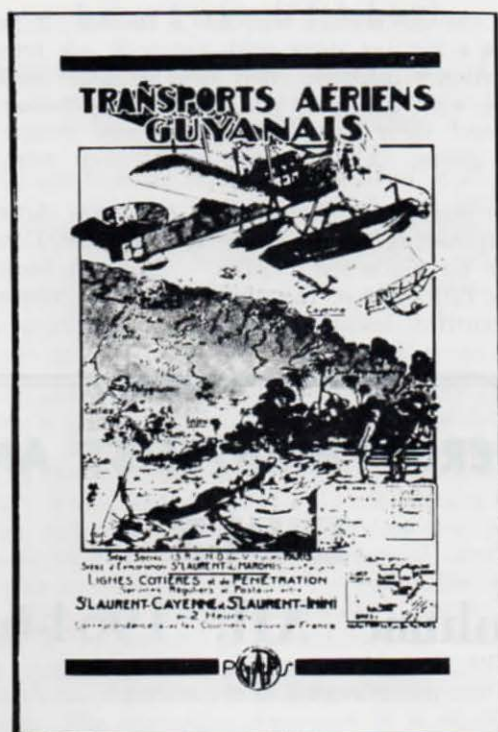


Fig. 9. The sixth and final page.

and inspecting what is going on, and making practical plans under the most favorable conditions with health and comfort assured.

"In a land as this, travel by air is the one with real security. The trip, instead of taking 3 to 6 weeks, is now made in about 2 hours.

"The use of air transport should eventually bring to French Guiana a new lease on life and show that at last its rich natural resources can be put to the fullest use.

"The *Society of Air Transport Guiana* promises to put into use, when needed, new routes and operate them in accordance with the economic needs of the region.

"We also have an objective to help France develop her colonies and the countries neighboring on Guiana, the French leaders have placed their complete confidence in the use of aviation in those sections of the land where there is no competing railway service, no highways nor river boats."

The sixth and final page in this little booklet put out by the T.A.G. Company is Fig. 9. This depicts some of the Company's seaplanes in flight. Below the plane is a map of French Guiana and beneath this some travellers by land enviously watching the planes flying overhead. The small print on the bottom repeats some of the statements set forth on the second page (Fig. 6). To the right of this, which is very indistinct in the illustration, is a map of the airline routes.

Relation To Aero-Philately

Reading this little advertising booklet full of hope and promise, it is

hard to believe that the air service was not a success; it lasted less than two years. But this was a similar story with air mail, air travel and air freight in the years of aviation's infancy. Our own country in 1921 certainly was facing its difficulties with air mail and air transportation. Men were risking their fortunes and their lives to get this new means of transportation and communication going. All over the world they were not successful in the beginning.

But the air post stamp and the air mail cover are the surviving historical souvenirs of the interesting times after World War I had ended. Maybe these French Guiana air mails are "uglies." For our taste, we'd rather own some of them than a full sheet of the 1965 stamp that was selected by a panel to have the most beautiful design. (*H.M.G.*)

THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS

INDEX

Volume XII, 1964-65

(Compiled by the Editor)

Aero Philatelist Annals, Index to Vol. XI (July, 1964 to April, 1965)	15
Aero Philatelist's. Report of the 18th Annual Convention in 1964 (William N. Mead)	67
Aero Philatelist's. Officers & Directors 1964-65	56, 92
Bohn, Richard S. Memorial Award. Francis J. Field of England 3rd Recipient	5, 55
Philip Silver 4th Recipient	93
Bolivia, The First Air Mail Stamps of 1925 (Ludwig Horn Flach)	85
Colombia, "The Air Post of Colombia." Letter by Eugenio Gebauer	34
Egypt, Marc Pourpe, 50 Years Ago (Jean Gravelat)	1
Field, Francis J., 3rd Recipient R. S. Bohn Memorial Award	5, 55
French Africa, Free. Commercial Air Mail Covers During World War II (Ben Hamilton)	105
Germany, 1913 Liegnitz Semi-Official Air Mail Stamp (R. H. Shradly, M.D.)	57
See <i>Zeppelin</i>	
Papua, The First Air Mail Issue. Earliest Known Dates of Use (Harry A. Holman)	31
Peru, 1935 Lima Commemorative Issue. Counterfeit First Day Covers (Henry M. Goodkind)	80
Reviews of Books and Catalogues	11, 83
Saudi Arabia, Horizontal Pair Imperforate Between, Scott C3a (J. Philip Roy & G. T. Guzzio)	65
Silver, Philip, 4th Recipient R. S. Bohn Memorial Award	93
Turkey Air Fund Stamps (Editorial) (H. M. Goodkind)	29
United States, 5c Beacon Air Mail Stamp of 1928 — Parts 3, 4 and 5 (Henry M. Goodkind)	17, 39, 73
Counterfeit "May 15, 1918 First Trip" Cancellation (Philip Silver)	97
1918 27 Cent Rate Covers (Philip Silver)	7
Private Airgrams (Philip Silver)	35
The "Grounded Eagle" Stamp of 1938 (Philip Silver)	69
Zeppelin, Count In The American Civil War (H. M. Goodkind)	63

UNITED STATES

The Air Mail of May 15, 1918

By ALBERT PHILIP COHEN

Prophecies of things to come usually are made of gossamer generalities that by the nature of their vagueness can be applied to a wide variety of events. Nostradamus amazed the world with his prophetic verities. Mother Shipton foretold the coming of many of today's actualities — submarines, aeroplanes, etc. — to come a cropper with her rhymed prognostication:

“That the world to an end will come
In the year of eighteen hundred and eighty one.”

In the following article, which appeared in the May 25, 1918 issue of *The Scientific American*, is an evaluation of the historic air mail flight of May 15, 1918. Unfortunately, this article is unsigned. This account relates of the impending success of the air mail service.

The portent that World War I (1914-1918) might not be the last is significant. We especially call your attention to the last few paragraphs and note that this was written in 1918. That the commercial development of the airplane will lead to greater exploitation of this medium for its war potential was farsighted indeed. This 1918 article anticipates the use of aircraft as a means of carrying passengers, freight and in carrying of the mails.

The proximity of the date of its publication May 25, 1918 to the first flights of May 15, 1918 shows the timeliness of this summation and the historical evaluation of its meaning. *The Scientific American* is to be congratulated for the accuracy of its reporting and the value of its clairvoyance.

OUR WINGED POSTMEN

Completing Our Postal Progress with First Aerial Mail Route Between Washington and New York

“Air mail service is at last a reality with us. On Wednesday, May 15, last,



Fig. 1. Belmont Park, New York, N. Y. May 15, 1918. The plane leaving the famous racetrack with the mail for Washington, D. C. via Philadelphia, Pa. (H. M. Goodkind collection)

the first trip was made by an airplane carrying mail between Washington, D. C., Philadelphia and New York City, thus firmly establishing the air mail service as an American institution and placing us on a par with other leading nations which have either inaugurated similar systems or made all the necessary arrangements for aerial mail following the termination of hostilities. The idea is by no means new; several times in the recent past it has been brought before our government only to be neglected and forgotten through lack of necessary funds. Test flights have been made in the past, but even these, successful as they have been, failed utterly to bring forth the required appropriations from Congress. But the past is past and now we are to have as a permanent institution a fast mail service between cities already mentioned, with airplanes as the carriers and military aviators as the postmen.

The Early Beginnings Of The Postal Service

"Far from being a latter-day institution, the postal service in some form or other dates back to the distant past. We are told by historians that the Persians under Cyrus had mail service in the sixth century before Christ.

"At that time mail was handled by couriers who were provided with the finest and best groomed horses in the empire for just that purpose, so important was a rapid and positive means of communication considered by the ruling body. Roads were marked with posts, and relay stations were established at suitable intervals, perhaps every 25 miles. Obviously, the relay arrangement was resorted to, so that a rider took over and carried the mail to still another station, and so on. For the most part the mail matter comprised dispatches, although some merchandise was carried which might be compared with our present parcel post. In order that no pieces of mail matter might be lost a most elaborate recording system was employed.

HEADQUARTERS FOR

EARLY AERONAUTICA from 1800 & up (official Balloon ascension leaflets, prints, letters, etc.)
1870/71 PARIS SIEGE BALLOONS
PIGEONGRAMS, PELLICULES
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For 35 years we have been known as the primary source to many collectors both here and abroad. If you have not done business with us, it will pay you to acquaint us of your requirements now, as we are breaking up a fabulous collection at present.

BELHAM EXCHANGE

Box 119, Ridgewood 27, N. Y.



Fig. 2. The Polo Grounds, Washington, D.C. on May 15, 1918 shows the plane taking off for Philadelphia and New York. Among those watching in the left foreground are President and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson. This Washington to New York plane crashed shortly after this photo was taken. (H. M. Goodkind collection)

"Darius, the last king of the Persians, was the first postmaster of record. Before ascending the throne he was in charge of the elaborate and extensive postal system that connected all portions of the extensive Persian empire with the government seat.

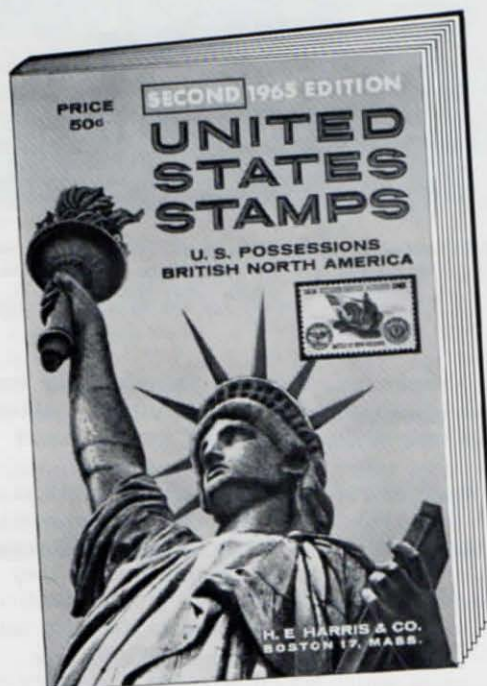
"Then came the Romans. Having constructed a wonderful network of military roads extending from Scotland to Egypt and everywhere on the continent of Europe and even penetrating far into Asia, it is quite natural that they should have established sooner or later an elaborate postal system. And they did. Couriers were employed in relays, and following the earlier Persian practice the system was only employed by the State: letters and merchandise were not carried for private individuals.

"Like much of the earlier civilization which we admire, the postal system of the Romans passed out of existence with the fall of their empire; at least, there does not seem to be evidence of the operation of such a system until the reign of Charlemagne, who in 807 A.D. established a postal service within his realm. But this reform, together with the culture which flourished during his reign, was again lost with the dissolution of his empire.

"So much for the earlier history. Suffice it to say that during the Middle Ages isolated postal systems persisted here and there and were successful in their limited way. For instance, universities in several of the States of Europe established and maintained postal facilities, among them being the University of Paris. The students employed runners who, by operating under prescribed schedules, relayed each other and carried mail matter to distant parts of what is now France and Germany. At about this time Marco Polo, the Venetian traveler, reported that letters were carried by riders on horses throughout the Chinese Empire. He estimated that there were then some 10,000 post offices and 200,000 horses involved in the postal service of the Celestial Empire.

"The English postal system was the forerunner of our own, and its past history is therefore of interest to us. Perhaps the most striking feature of early postal service in England is the fact that the government used the post office as a means of taxation, with little or no regard for the advantages gained by facilitating correspondence among the people. As a result of this policy — we are told by Daniel C. Roper, writing in his work 'The United States Post Office' —

New US/BNA CATALOG!



2,818
VERY LATEST
PRICE CHANGES
IN THE
**BRAND
NEW**
SECOND 1965
EDITION

**HARRIS US/BNA — AMERICA'S MOST
WIDELY USED U. S. CATALOG**

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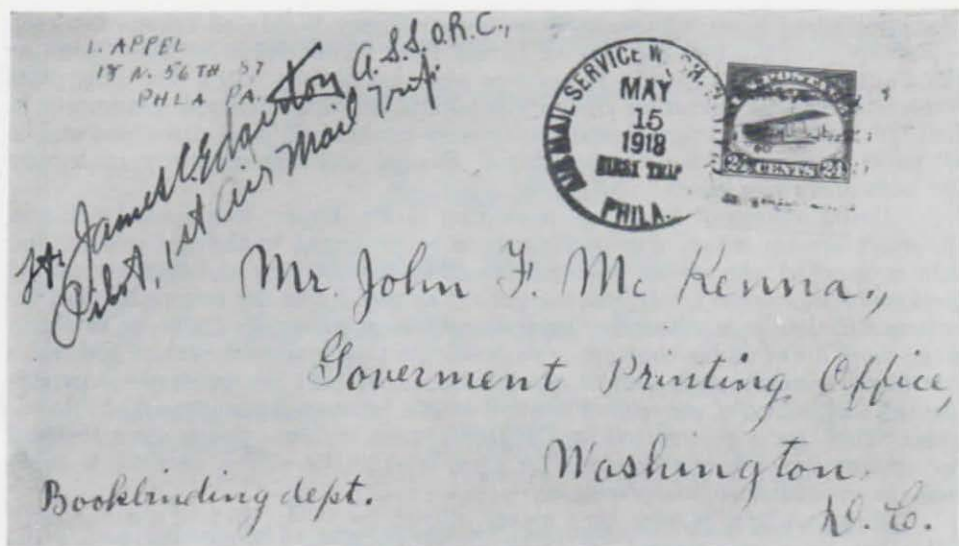


Fig. 3. A first flight May 15, 1918 cover from Philadelphia to Washington, D. C. autographed by the pilot, Lt. James C. Edgerton. This shows the correct spelling of his name. (Philip Silver collection and photo by Boutrelle)

the efficiency of the mail service in England was at a low ebb at the time of the American Revolution.

"John Palmer, the manager of a theater at Bath, was the reformer whose agitation made the government see the shortsightedness of this niggardly policy. He received the favor of Camden and Pitt, and was finally permitted to carry out his proposals. Coaches designed especially for speed were built and placed in service, good horses and armed guards—robberies had been quite frequent up to that time—were provided, and regularity was insisted upon. As a result, correspondence that had been going by private means was restored to the government posts and the revenue of the English post office doubled again in ten years more, when a period of stagnation set in preceding the era of steam transportation and modern postal reform.

"Our own postal service originated with the communications between colonists here and their relatives and friends abroad. Masters of ships leaving England for America would undertake for one penny each to see letters safely delivered across the ocean at some reputable tavern or coffee-house where the addressees could call for them. This practice seems to have been profitable, for there were installed in certain coffee-houses in London, receiving bags for letters which were collected by shipmasters before sailing, and carried on board their ships.

"In 1672 the first step was taken toward a domestic post for connecting the several colonies. The first official route established in America was between New York and Boston. The pioneer postman had to travel through the trackless forest, and it was part of his duty to mark the trees for travelers who might wish to follow him. Mail was carried in divers bags, in order to keep together all pieces for a given destination. However, this service was soon abandoned, and for more than a decade no attempt was made to establish a regular post road in America.

"The first successful postal system established in any of the colonies was

that of William Penn, who in 1683 appointed Henry Waldy of Tekonay to keep a post and 'supply passengers with horses from Philadelphia to New Castle or the Falls of the Delaware.' It appears also that shortly after this time, posts were in successful operation from Philadelphia to every civilized community in that Quaker colony. Soon postal routes were established in all directions and to all parts of the more densely populated colonies, and horses shortly made way for horse-drawn coaches.

Postal officers of that time, according to Mr. Roper, took special pride in the coach service, which was very much to be preferred to the mail riders, and sulkies by which the service was maintained in the outlying and sparsely settled sections of the country. It was the policy, as rapidly as the volume of mail increases sufficiently or whenever there was sufficient passenger traffic, to establish stage-coach lines under contract. To facilitate this improved service assistance was given to roadmakers and to coachmakers. In 1811 the government experimented with a line of government-owned stages between Baltimore and Philadelphia. This line was operated by the Department at less expense than the cost for contract service; but Congress for reasons of public policy, declined to sanction the extension of this principle.

Mail was first carried by a steam railway in 1834. But it was not until 1838 that a law was passed declaring all railroads to be post routes, and the traveling railway postoffice did not come until 1840. There followed a period of transition from the stage-coach to railway transportation. At first steam-railway service was far from satisfactory, because railroads had not yet got into the stride which has brought them up to present day standards. After a while, however, the many difficulties began to disappear, and soon the railroads and the postal service became strongly affiliated.

AIR MAILS

We are breaking up an almost complete AIR MAIL Collection up to 1940 — including many Rarities — de Pinedo, R. Smith, Colombia, etc. Scarce Officials of Canada, Germany, Switzerland etc. Practically all regular stamps or sets (some used or on Covers) from the Whole World.

Please write about your particular interest or Want List.

We are interested in buying specialized collections of AIR MAILS, or by country etc., etc.

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Initial Flight		
Airplane Mail Service		
New York---Philadelphia---Washington		
THOMAS G. PATTEN POSTMASTER NEW YORK, N. Y.	BELMONT PARK WEDNESDAY MAY 15TH, 1918 11.30 A. M.	COUNTERSIGNED <i>R. H. Mac.</i> MAJOR, J. M. A., S. C. U. S. ARMY
TRAIN LEAVES PENNSYLVANIA R. R. STATION, THIRTY-THIRD STREET & EIGHTH AVENUE, AT TEN A. M. SHARP, DIRECT TO BELMONT PARK		

Fig. 4. One of the few surviving Admission Cards to Belmont Park for the first air mail on May 15, 1918. (H. M. Goodkind collection and photo by Boutrelle)

"With more extensive railroad systems our postal service reached out to every part of the country. With better and higher-speed locomotives, the postal time between cities was soon reduced from days and many hours to but a few hours and minutes.

"In more recent times other means of transportation have figured in our postal service. The automobile has shared to no little extent, both for rural delivery and for local work in large centers. In the former case the small automobile had been a veritable boon to the rural postman, particularly since the introduction of parcel post with its numerous pieces of merchandise which convert the mail carrier into a sort of expressman, as it were. In large centers the motor truck has done its work well for the postal service by carrying mail bags between railroad stations and main post office and branch post offices.

"Even the motorcycle has figured in our postal service, superseding the ordinary bicycle which is still largely employed for city mail collection. With a side car attached, the motorcycle affords an ideal and inexpensive vehicle for the rural mail carrier.

And Now The Airplane Post

"Having proved so effective in the course of almost four years of war, not only for observation and battling purposes but also for bombing, which after all, is nothing more than a weight-carrying feat over varying distances, the airplane has won world-wide recognition. Men, far-seeing men, have given much thought to the airplane. 'What are we going to do with our thousands of military airplanes when once hostilities cease?' has been a much mooted question with many leaders of nations. And they have not had far to seek for an answer; for it is self-evident that if an airplane can fly hundreds of miles with a cargo of bombs in all kinds of weather and under the most adverse conditions, surely the same machine can be made to fly with a cargo of mail or light merchandise or passengers in times of peace. War is only a passing condition after all, and such an invaluable means of transportation as the airplane

can and must be adapted to more peaceful pursuits when normal conditions again obtain among nations.

"So we lead up to the aerial mail carrier, which has already received much attention in Europe. Indeed, rumors reach us from Germany that the Central Empires have established aerial mail routes between important centers, and specific mention is made of that between Vienna and Lemberg,* a journey requiring something like 17 hours by express train as contrasted with 7 hours by airplane. In Italy there is an aerial mail service between Rome and Turin,** with a saving of time no less noteworthy. In England and in France plans are understood to be well under way for post-bellum air routes.

"But it has remained for these United States to inaugurate the first aerial mail service really worthy of the name, between New York, Philadelphia and Washington. While we are not strictly the first nation to establish an aerial mail service, to be sure, we undoubtedly are the first to inaugurate a regular mail service through the air operating on a rigid schedule and opened to the public. In a practical sense, therefore, we are the first; and as the pioneers we may well be proud to lead in what is bound to be the ultimate means of rapid transportation.

"On May 15th last, as we stated earlier in this article which has led through the gradual development of mail transportation in order better to appreciate what the aerial mail carrier means, Lieut. Torrey H. Webb of the Aviation Section, S. C. U. S. A., in the presence of 300 officials and spectators left Belmont Park with the first mail carrying airplane or 'postplane' from the New York end, bound for Philadelphia where a relay awaited him. This event definitely established our first regular mail service through the air, operating on a rigid schedule and open to the public. Belmont Park is an ideal field for our postplane service, because it is but a short distance out of New York City on the Long Island Railroad, and formerly was an important race track. In fact, on the very same field, the first international meet in America was held in 1910 and such famous aviators as Grahame-White, Le Blanc, Moisant, Brookins and Latham participated. (See Fig. 1).

"According to schedule, Lieutenant Webb jumped into the cockpit of his powerful biplane and a few moments later, or 11:30 a.m., took to the air with his mail cargo. A machine similar to his was on hand and ready in case of trouble of any kind. Two sweeps about the field gained him sufficient altitude and at the same time assured the proper working of the engine. Ten minutes after leaving the field the machine had vanished from view. The matter-of-factness with which the flight started—the total absence of that incessant tinkering which we generally connect with air flights, was totally lacking—gave everyone supreme confidence.

"At about the same time Lieut. George L. Boyle was leaving Potomac Park, Washington, D. C., also bound for Philadelphia with a plane carrying a large pouch of mail destined for the Quaker City and New York. His start, which was somewhat delayed, was made in the presence of a notable gathering, including the President and members of the Cabinet. (See Fig. 2.)

"But luck was not with Lieutenant Boyle this day, and he soon experienced trouble which compelled him to come to earth some twenty-five miles out of Washington, breaking the propeller in so doing. Washington and Philadelphia

*This is Austria's air mail service that began operating on March 30, 1918 between Vienna, Krakow and Lemberg and for which Austria Scott C1-3 were issued. (A.P.C.)

**This is the first official air mail in the world. Italy on May 20, 1917 used Scott C1 for air mail between Rome and Turin. But it was not a regular scheduled service as the United States 1918 air post was. (A.P.C.)

were notified and a special mail truck was sent to the airman's relief. The mail which he was carrying, including a letter to the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN from its Washington office, was returned to the capital and forwarded the following day by postplane.

"It is evident that precautions were not taken to avoid such a failure at the Washington end, as was the case at Belmont Park. It seems that an extra machine would have saved the situation.

"Meanwhile Lieutenant Webb sped over the landscapes, waterways and cities of New Jersey, arriving at the relay field in North Philadelphia at 12:30. There he transferred his cargo of mail to Lieut. J. C. Edgerton* who took to the air six minutes later, heading for Washington. The flight from New York to Washington, after deducting the six minutes intermission in relaying, was made in three hours and twenty minutes, Lieutenant Edgerton* landing successfully at Potomac Park at 2:50 P.M. The time of flight, however was not quite up to the 95 miles-per-hour speed called for by the schedule. Howard Culver, who was to act as the relay for the Washington plane, upon hearing of the mishap decided to carry the Philadelphia mail to New York, and he landed at Belmont Park after an uneventful flight at 3:37 P.M., or in one hour and thirty-seven minutes after the start.

The First Postplane

"The machines employed in the inauguration of the air mail service are modified Curtiss biplanes, equipped with single 150 horse-power Hispano-Suiza engines. Among the apparent changes in design are the exhaust pipes of the

*The name is Edgerton, not Edgerton, as shown on the illustration, Fig. 3 cover, which this pioneer pilot autographed. (A.P.C.)

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engine which instead of turning up and exhausting above the planes are led straight along the fuselage to a perforated and tapering end, much after the fashion of the Spad scout employed on the western front. Another innovation for the Curtiss machine is the auxiliary gasoline tank mounted in the center and just below the top plane.

"Instead of having two cockpits, the postplanes are provided with one cockpit to the rear, just clear of the trailing edge of the top wing, and a roomy compartment forward for mail bags, which is covered by a hinged metal hood held closed by straps. It is understood that the War Department furnished twelve of these large training planes for mail purposes, each with a carrying capacity of 300 pounds, and that larger machines with a capacity of 600 pounds are to be used at a later date.

"Lieut. Webb carried two pouches containing 2,457 pieces of mail to Philadelphia, while Lieut. Culver brought to Belmont Park a pouch containing 350 letters, 200 for distribution in New York and 150 for points beyond.

"In addition to the machines which the War Department has placed at the disposal of the postal authorities, all the aviators employed in the service have been detailed from the ranks of flying airmen, as the military men feel that the newly commissioned fliers will acquire valuable training in piloting the big mail carriers over long cross-country flights. And in this way they are certainly right. The experience is bound to prove a tremendous asset in the subsequent military activities of these airmen.

"It is understood that emergency fields are to be established at Baltimore, Md., Havre de Grace, Md., Wilmington, Del., and at either Princeton or New Brunswick, N. J. In the event of trouble the aviator will either try to make the nearest emergency field or land wherever possible; whereupon the mailsacks will be rushed by motor truck to the nearest railroad station, thence sent forward in care of a courier.

How To Send The Mail Via The Sky Route

"The rate of postage for the airplane mail between New York, Philadelphia and Washington is 24 cents an ounce or fraction thereof, which includes special delivery service in all cases, and books and parcels bearing this rate of postage may be accepted for dispatch by airplane when the combined length and girth measurements do not exceed thirty inches.

"A distinctive stamp has been issued for this class of mail. It is of 24-cent denomination and measures $\frac{7}{8}$ " long by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch high, and depicts an airplane of the type being used in the mail service, in full flight. In a curved line of Roman capital letters above the airplane appear the words U. S. Postage, and in a straight line below the picture is the word Cents, with the numerals "24" within circles in both lower corners. The border design is red, the airplane blue, forming with the background the National colors of red, white and blue. While it is preferable to use the distinctive stamp, any letter or parcel meeting the requirements may be accepted when the proper amounts of postage in any denomination is attached thereto and the piece of mail is plainly marked Airplane Mail.

"The airplane mail between cities concerned leaves every week day unless it is found impossible to dispatch the mail by airplane on account of heavy rain or dense fog, in which event the mail is forwarded and specially handled on a train leaving the city at about the same hour as would the airplane. Information as to whether dispatch will be made on any day may be had by telephone inquiry at the main postoffice or the more important of the sub-stations. In Washington letters have to be at the main post office before 10:45 A.M. to

catch the airplane leaving at 11:30, while in New York letters have to be at the main post office by 10:00 A.M.

Answering The Question: What Shall We Do With War's Airplanes?

"The New York-Philadelphia-Washington postplane service is, we sincerely hope, more than an experiment; and the authorities have assured us that it is not only going to be a permanent institution, but that it is the forerunner of many other similar aerial routes to be established in the near future. Points separated by large bodies of water, points separated by high mountains and precipitous valleys, remote points—all these are sooner or later to be served by postplanes. Why? Because the well-known rule which says that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, was never truer than in the case of aerial mail; and there are many places between which a round-about journey by train or boat requiring many hours and even days can and must be reduced to a matter of hours and minutes by the postplane.

"Here, then, we have the answer to the problem of the peaceful disposition of battleplanes, bombing planes and reconnaissance planes after the war. They will be converted into carriers of merchandise and passengers and mail, bringing distant peoples into closer relations by reducing to a great extent the present factors of time and distance which are the hand-maids of surface travel.

"There is still another point of view with which to regard the subject—and a very important one. This war—our hopes and those of our Allies to the contrary notwithstanding—may not be the last. And if it be not the last, then the next war needs must be far more deadly than the present conflict; and among other features will be the development of aerial fleets on a colossal scale. So in time of peace we shall have to prepare for war, and we shall have

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to train thousands of airmen and have always ready many thousands of airplanes.

"Germany has taught us how this can be done. Before the war Germany had constructed and was using a dozen or more Zeppelins for ostensibly peaceful pursuits, such as passenger-carrying and the rapid transportation of light merchandise. Came the war, and in a few months Germany, through her foresight and through her absolute lack of ideals, was able to send these Zeppelins over English towns, raining death and destruction from the skies. The peaceful cargoes of by-gone-days had been replaced by bombs and machine guns, almost over night, so to speak.

"The same thing may happen again. A nation may again attempt to take her neighbors unawares, by turning her commercial planes into warplanes over night. So, viewed in its broadest aspect, the airplane postal system has not only a highly commercial value, but it is a potential weapon of defense when an unscrupulous antagonist suddenly releases thousands of airplanes to raid our cities and our homes, and strike at the heart of the nation.

"In the meantime, the aerial postal system exists with us."

**LETTER FROM THE WASHINGTON OFFICE OF THE
"SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN" SENT BY THE
FIRST AIRPLANE MAIL**

To the Editor of the Scientific American:

During the period of over seventy years in which the *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* has been published, the methods of communication from one part of the country to another have undergone many radical changes. Back in the 40's mail matter was still distributed in many parts of the country by mail coach and by pony postal riders and even in canal boats. The delivery of letters by railroad was carried on in the 50's with considerable precision, but the time required to deliver letters to remote sections of the country often consumed many days or even weeks. During the 50's, the electric telegraph had become an established fact, eliminating the element of time in the transmission of messages. This form of communication was extended in 1866 by the laying of the first successful Atlantic cable which closed the ocean gap between this continent and Europe. During the early 80's, the most sensational advance of all was accomplished when human speech was transmitted over a wire.

Then, a decade or so later, the world learned that communication had been established, independently of the cable, by way of the ether; and so, in due course, the dream of aerial transmission between the Old and the New Worlds became a fact.

Since that time no radical change of method has been introduced in the transmission of mail matter, although the time element has been reduced owing to the improved facilities, increased number of railroads, more powerful locomotives and faster steamers.

This letter conveys to you our greetings. It is the first time a letter has been forwarded from one point to another in the United States by regular aerial mail service. It marks the beginning of a new epoch in the mail service of our country.

Yours faithfully,

Washington, D. C.
May 15, 1918



Fig. 5. The interesting letter sent to "The Scientific American" enclosed in the first flight cover of May 15, 1918. This letter was published like this in the May 25, 1918 article.

The "Scientific American" Received A First Trip Cover

Illustrated in *The Scientific American* article of May 25, 1918 is a cover mailed to them from Washington, D. C. to New York, N. Y. on the first flight of May 15, 1918. Of course, because of the law then in force about illustrating stamps, the copy of Scott C3 (Sanabria No. 1) was obliterated.

The magazine also published the letter enclosed in this first trip air mail cover. (See Fig. 5).

Editorial

Questionable Judging

For a long time, some experienced aerophilatelists in the United States have been critical of the judging of the air mail section in the large international philatelic exhibitions held abroad. Reference is not to the exclusive air post international shows. In a general sense, the European judges of air mail have inclined on occasion towards favoritism, overrating their own foreign exhibits when in competition with those from America.

One can complain and criticize. But often this is difficult to tie down and pinpoint. Fortunately, a gold medal air mail collection was sold in a London, England public auction sale in October, 1965 and this affords us the opportunity to demonstrate one of the best examples of judging abroad.

A great international philatelic exhibition was staged in London, England in 1960. *The highest prize for the air mail section was a gold medal. In this British exhibition, two gold medals went to air mails.* This was entirely unjustified because the American exhibit was far, far superior to the other one. There was just no comparison, although the air mail section judges had two exhibits share the top honors.

Specifically, the American exhibit was that of Thomas A. Matthews. Shortly after the 1960 London international stamp show, this collection began to be dispersed at public auction sales in New York City. It was sold over a period of three years by two different leading New York auction houses. *The entire Matthews' collections required seven parts with seven separate large-sized auction catalogs. The entire sales totalled over 5,000 individual lots.*

The other 1960 gold medal winner is the one just recently sold at auction in London. *The air mail stamps in this amounted to 435 lots, less than one tenth of the American competitor.* (From our knowledge of the collection sold in London this year, several outstanding pieces were missing.)

To do a complete job, one could write pages analyzing and comparing country by country the two exhibits that shared the top honors in 1960. Space limits prevent this. But one need cite only a few examples, and the best one, in our opinion, is the United States and Possessions. These were in one complete Matthews' auction sale consisting of 232 lots. By stark comparison, the other gold medal winner had only 28 U. S. lots. There were just a few U. S. Possessions in the foreign exhibit, while Matthews' Canal Zone and Philippines were the finest ever seen.

Take the leading United States air mail item, the 24c inverted center of 1918. The Matthews copy was exceptional, so that consequently it established the record price of \$15,500. There was nothing to fault the copy in the other gold medal exhibit except that it was not in the Matthews' class.

The Matthews' exhibit also had the greatest air mail rarity, the *Black Honduras* that established the record auction price for all the 20th century stamps. The rest of Matthews' Honduras lacked only a few items. *The exhibit from abroad had not one Honduras air mail stamp.* As a matter of fact, the latter had no Nicaragua, Guatemala, Salvador or Panama. But what a showing the Matthews' exhibit made of these Central American countries.

The same was true of South America and Mexico. Matthews' Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela represented as strong a display of South American air mails as we have ever seen. The other gold medal collection had some outstanding Colombia, but very little from all the other Latin American nations.

Europe, Africa and Asia revealed the same situation. Rather than continue

this comparison, one can repeat that when sold later at auction, one exhibit consisted of over 5,000 lots while the other had only 435.

These remarks should not be misconstrued. The 1960 gold medal collection from abroad is a dandy one that we greatly admired. But we speak about its lesser rank only in comparison with the Matthews' exhibit. When the foreign exhibit was not in competition with Matthews, it was the best and rightly deserved the 1961 Grand Award in The Hague, Holland. But we want to hammer away the point that these two exhibits were not even remotely on a par.

Furthermore, were this 1960 judging an isolated or an occasional occurrence, there would be no justification for these remarks. But the truth is that this has been going on in Europe for years and still is continuing.

One hoped with the formation of FISA that the judging of air mails in European stamp shows would be better and fairer. But unfortunately, this has not happened. The 1960 London experience was repeated again in Vienna, Austria this year. Incidentally, there was not one American on the WIPA 65 international jury judging the air mail section, and as our report in the July 1965 number of this magazine disclosed, this was a large, worldwide section.

Yes, this editorial carries a message. International stamp shows are an important part of the philatelic picture. The awards carry a lot of prestige and they receive worldwide publicity, not only in the stamp press but in the regular newspapers read by millions. Consequently, better and fairer judging of air mails is needed right now. An injustice, such as the one clearly demonstrated in the 1960 London air mail competition, never should be allowed to be repeated. As a frequent judge in international philatelic exhibitions and also as a gold medalist in international competition, this writer comments on this situation with the proper credentials. (H. M. G.)

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UNITED STATES

Last Day of Use — The 24c Air Mail Stamp of 1918

By PHILIP SILVER

In the "Dworak Specialized Catalogue of U.S. and Canadian Air Mail Covers,"* there is a section devoted to *Rate Change Covers*. Listed therein are the first and last days of the various United States air mail rates from 1918 to 1928. For the 24c air mail stamp of 1918, the first date of the 24c an ounce rate is given as May 15, 1918. Curiously enough, the last date of this rate is given as July 7, 1918.

This is rather surprising since one might expect, in a section devoted to rate changes, that the editor would be aware of such an important date. Perhaps, because the question was left unanswered, those, who specialize in the 1918 air mail stamps and covers, were forever left to fend for themselves in determining the last date of the 24c an ounce air mail rate.

Recently, the writer noticed the following listing in a current auction catalogue:

"✉ 24c S.E. tied magenta Jul. 15 (last trip 24c rate) . . ."

It is conjectural whether the auction catalogue describer was aware of the omission of the last date of rate usage for the 24c stamp in the Dworak catalogue. Even had that date not been omitted, the auction catalogue referred to above nevertheless might have used July 15, 1918 as the last date of the 24c air mail rate. Unfortunately, there are many who prepare auction catalogues, write books and stamp articles, who are not thoroughly grounded in the information required for an accurate and complete presentation of their subjects.

A Source For Information

In the instant case, there is no possible justification for such misleading information. In "Scott's Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps," there appears this note on page 247 of the 1965 edition which reads as follows:

"Rate of postage was reduced to 16 cents for the first ounce and 6 cents for each additional ounce, which included 10 cents for immediate special delivery on *July 15, 1918*, (italics ours) by Postmaster General's order of June 26, 1918."

Thus, if the effective date of the 16c rate was July 15, 1918, obviously it could not also be the last date of the 24c rate. Indeed, on page 261 of the same 1965 edition of "Scott's Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps," the listed date for a first flight cover bearing the 16c stamp of 1918 is given as July 15, 1918.

One might, accordingly, reason if the first date of the 16c rate was July 15, 1918, then the last date of the 24c air mail rate would be July 14, 1918. Such a simple solution appears to be so patently obvious, one wonders why the Dworak catalogue editors overlooked it.

No 1918 Flights On Sundays

There is a special circumstance, however, connected with early air mail flying in 1918. Planes were scheduled to take off from New York, Philadelphia

*"Dworak Specialized Catalogue of U.S. and Canadian Air Mail Covers," Second Edition, published by the Gossip Printery, Holton, Kansas.

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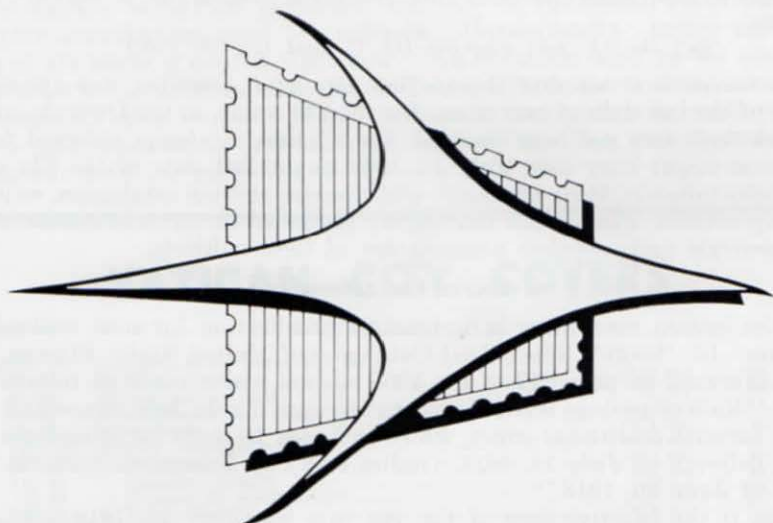
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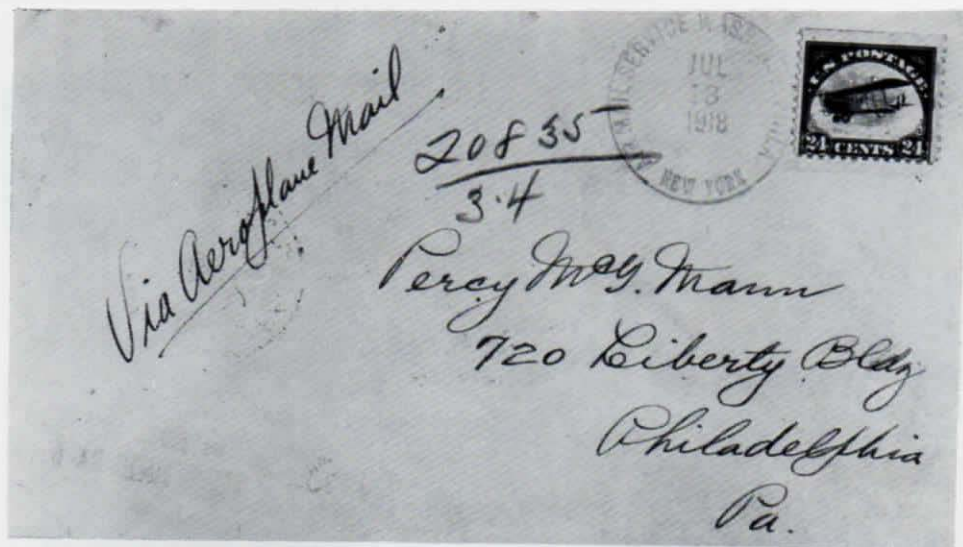


Fig. 1. Cover postmarked July 13, 1918 but not flown until July 15, 1918. Thus, it is overpaid eight cents. (Photos by Boutrelle)

and Washington, weather permitting, from Monday through Saturday. *There were no flights on Sundays.*

A glance at a 1918 calendar shows that July 14, 1918 was a Sunday. *Ipsso facto*, there was no flight scheduled for that day. The last date of the 24c rate was Sunday, July 14, 1918; no covers can exist flown on that day. Possibly, a postmark of July 14, 1918 may be found on a 24c cover. But, this would only indicate that the letter was picked up and cancelled on that day, not that it was flown.

So by deduction, the last date of possible and correct actual usage of the 24c stamp must be *Saturday, July 13, 1918*. The writer is fortunate to have found, after many years of searching, two covers each postmarked July 13, 1918. But, even that dated marking is not a measure of positive proof that the covers flew on that day.

Postmarked But Not Flown On The Last Day Of Use

As an example, examine the cover shown in Fig. 1. It is postmarked New York, July 13, 1918 with the air mail handstamp. However, this cover has two backstamps:

- (1) New York, N. Y./Hudson Term. Sta./July 13, 1918/11.30 A. M.
- (2) Philadelphia, Pa./Rec'd./July 15, 1918/4 P. M.

As has been mentioned by the writer in previous articles, flights left from the New York and Washington terminals of the air mail route between those two cities at 11:30 A. M. The mail was scheduled to leave from Philadelphia at 1:30 P. M., after connecting with the northbound flight from Washington or the southbound flight from New York.

Since the Fig. 1 cover was received at the Hudson Terminal Post Office station in New York at 11:30 A. M. on July 13, 1918, it obviously could not have made the 11:30 A. M. flight from the New York air terminal. So, the fact that the handstamped postmark is July 13, 1918 does not mean that it actually flew on that date. What probably happened is that, having missed the Saturday,

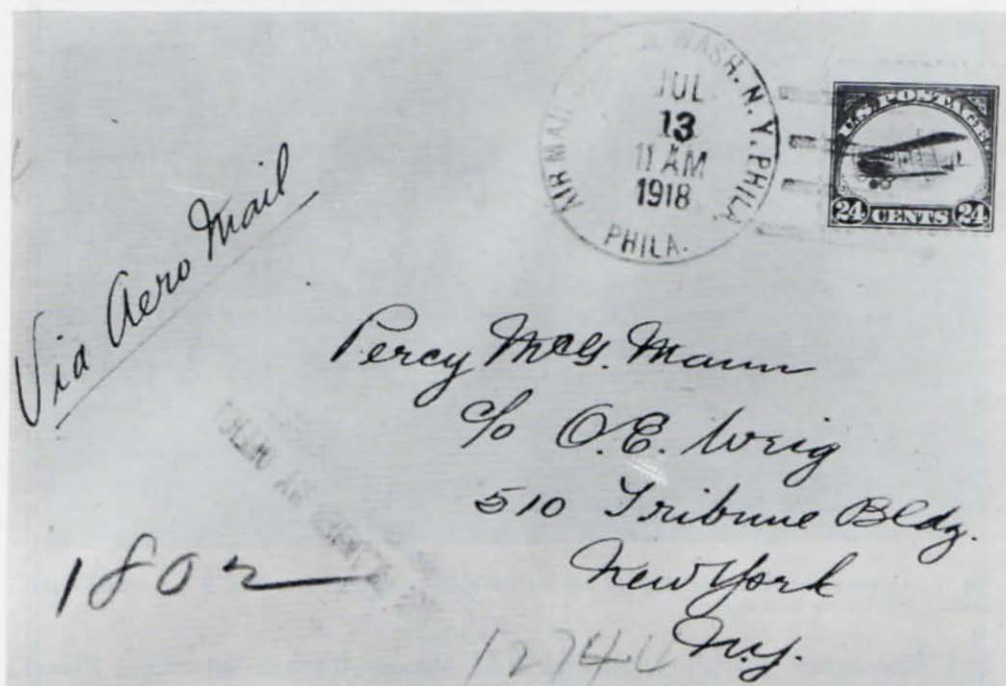


Fig. 2. A cover, both postmarked and flown on July 13, 1918, the last date of proper use of the 24c air mail stamp. (Both illustrated covers from the author's collection)

July 13, 1918 flight, it was held for the flight on Monday July 15th as evidenced by the Philadelphia receiving backstamp.

This Fig. 1 cover, addressed to Mr. Percy McG. Mann, Philadelphia, Pa. started out to be a last date of rate usage. Actually it ended up by becoming a cover overpaid by eight cents, since when it finally was flown on July 15, 1918, the rate had been reduced to sixteen cents for the first ounce.

Last Day Of Use Cover

The example shown in Fig. 2, however, is a properly flown cover on the last day of use of the 24c an ounce rate, a truly scarce item. Note that is postmarked July 13, 1918/ 11 A. M./Philadelphia. It arrived at the air field in time for the scheduled 1:30 P. M. northward flight to New York.

The Fig. 2 cover is backstamped New York/ July 13, 1918/5 P. M. Covers have been noted with arrival backstamps as early as 3:30 P. M. and as late as 5:30 P. M. Therefore, we may be reasonably sure that this example postmarked July 13, 1918 and addressed to the ubiquitous Mr. Mann was flown on July 13, 1918. As such, this Fig. 2 cover represents a last date of usage cover at the 24c an ounce air mail rate, one of the few that have survived for philatelists' possession.

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Australia

- 1920 "Ross Smith," mint miniature sheet, also the stamp used on cover

Colombia

- 1919 2c on cover; 2c with serifs on cover; 2c o.g. strip of three, one stamp with serifs.

France

- 1928 "Ile de France" mint set; used set on cover; mint set with wide spacing

Greenland

- 1932 Semi-official — Franck Expedition — 10 ore brown red, unused

etc., etc., etc.

Italy

- 1933 Balbo triptych sets of 20 pairs on covers, single without overprint
1933 "Volo di Ritorno" triptych mint, Official 1933 "Servicio di Stato" triptych mint and on cover

Mexico

- 1929 The set of seven perf. values and the two imperf. values in pairs
1935 Earhart mint and on autographed cover

- 1939 Sarabia, mint block of four

Newfoundland

- 1919 Martinsyde Manuscript overprint on cover
1919 Martinsyde, overprinted set of four
1919 Hawker mint and on cover
1927 De Pinedo mint and on autographed cover
1930 Columbia mint and on cover

Philippines

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