LA POSTA: A JOURNAL OF AMERICAN POSTAL HISTORY

Website: *www.la-posta.com*

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COVER: Our cover illustrates three covers carried on 1918 airmail flights against a backdrop of the National Postal Museum's famous photo of US Army personnel loading mail bags at Potomac Park in Washington DC prior to the first scheduled flight to Philadelphia on May 15, 1918. It is intended to call attention to Tom Clarke's article relating the full circle story of U.S. airmail service.

La Posta: A Journal of American Postal History is published six times a year with issues mailed on or about the 20th of February, April, June, August, October and December. Persons desiring information on manuscript submittals or subscription should e-mail or write La Posta c/o All About Mail, 33470 Chinook Plaza, Suite 216, Scappoose, OR 97056

or

Telephone in Australia: 612-6645-1829

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

U. S. A. - $25.00 per annum (6 issues)
CANADA - $33(US) per annum
OVERSEAS - $37.00 per annum surface
- $60.00 per annum airmail

August - September 2006
Volume 37, Number 4
Whole Number 220

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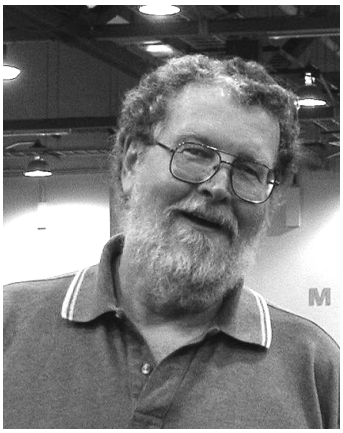

From the Depths of an Austral Winter

Our calendar says its late July and I see images on the tellie from the East Coast of the US, London and Paris showing people cooling-off at the beach, splashing about in swimming pools and dipping themselves in city fountains. There is a heat wave in North America and Europe. Here in the subtropical antipodes, we have a few high clouds, a line of thunder showers moving north well off the coast, and a mid-morning temperature of 20C (68F). The nights are cool this time of year, but the days are usually sunny and warm. Our heat wave weather will return soon enough.

Cath and I had an interesting trip to the U. S. in May. The floor auction of Montana and Washington territorials in Spokane was well supported. All but 29 of the 434 lots sold and the gross realization was nearly fifty per cent higher than I had estimated. I was personally very pleased to see so many old friends from the Pacific Northwest and enjoyed the chance to meet several new La Posta subscribers. For anyone interested in prices realized from Subscribers' Auction 76, the winning bids are posted on our website at: www.laposta.com and scroll down the page to the announcements heading for the proper link.

Aside from scampering about in the Pacific Northwest, my main activity this austral winter has been to complete the finishing touches on a book dealing with the subject of U. S. Army censor markings during the 1941-1942 period of World War II. The ground work on this project was published as a series of articles in La Posta between 1992 and 1996. Many kind readers took the time to send me updates and new information, and I have been accumulating new information through valuable contacts with people possessing far greater expertise in the various geographic areas of WWII Army activity than my own.

The book—tentatively entitled *Passed by Army Censor*—contains 18 chapters. Arranged on a chronological and geographic basis it begins with censor marks used at the 1941 Lend-lease bases in Newfoundland, the Caribbean and Greenland-Iceland. Subsequent chapters focus on U. S. Army & Air Corps forces in Alaska, Hawaii, the Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. With American entry into the war, U. S. Army forces began deploying overseas in rapidly growing numbers to Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, the South Pacific, the Middle East and the China-Burma-India theater. Army censor marking practices in each of these regions are the subject of separate chapters. The book concludes with censorship in Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa.

All in all, it's been a very interesting project. I've had a lot of great assistance and encouragement from many knowledgeable collectors and postal history students. I believe that the book will make a useful contribution to the growing body of literature on the subject of WWII postal history. James Lee has graciously agreed to serve as my publisher for this project and interested parties should watch for his announcements of its availability this fall.

La Posta with Wings

Tom Clarke and Richard Martorelli have independently provided us with two wonderful articles for this issue that compliment each other in terms of content. Tom addresses the subject of airmail postal service in the United States from an overall historic perspective focused on the events of his beloved Philadelphia. We see the dramatic rise of a new transport technology that allowed mail to move long distances with great speed. From coast to coast, airmail strengthened ties among families and friends and eventually helped knit a single society from the disparate regions that comprise the nation. But the story didn't end there as Tom clearly illustrates. Other emerging technologies gradually rendered the unique importance of airmail communications passé, and then the postal service decided that "all" first-class mail should be airmail. The story takes us full circle. It's a great postal history yarn, and I think you will enjoy it as much as I have.

Rich Martorelli's focus is on special delivery. In his article "When it absolutely, positively has to be there …", Rich traces the ins and outs of this special postal service and its close links with airmail in the United States. Using the same deft touch and copious illustrative material we have come to associate with Martorelli's other recent works in our pages; he leads us through a highly interesting primer on the special delivery service that just might open up new collecting interest for some La Posta readers.

Rounding out our current issue we have Dan Meschter continuing his seminal series of biographies of US Postmasters General, Bob Collins discussing and illustrating some modern Alaska collectable covers, Robert Rennick continuing his ground-breaking series on Kentucky post offices, David Lingard introducing us to Auburndale, Florida—a town "destined to become prominent", Michael Dattolico relating the tale of 4th class and registered mail from the American post office in China, Paul Petosky highlighting the cranberry farm centennial in Whitefish Point and Dale Speirs introducing us to some entertaining postal workers' slang terms.

Cath and I hope you enjoy this—our 220th number in this long-playing romance with United States postal history. Why not give some thought to joining our merry band of La Posta authors and share your interests with our readers in a future issue?

Richard W. Helbock

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(For a Listing of ALL U.S. State Postal History Societies see the Empire State Postal History Society)— http://www.esphs.org/usphsoc.html
Michigan [Peninsular State Philatelic Society, Michagan's Postal History Society] — http://home.earthlink.net/~efisherco/
Mobile Post Office Society — http://www.eskimo.com/~rkunz/mposhome.html

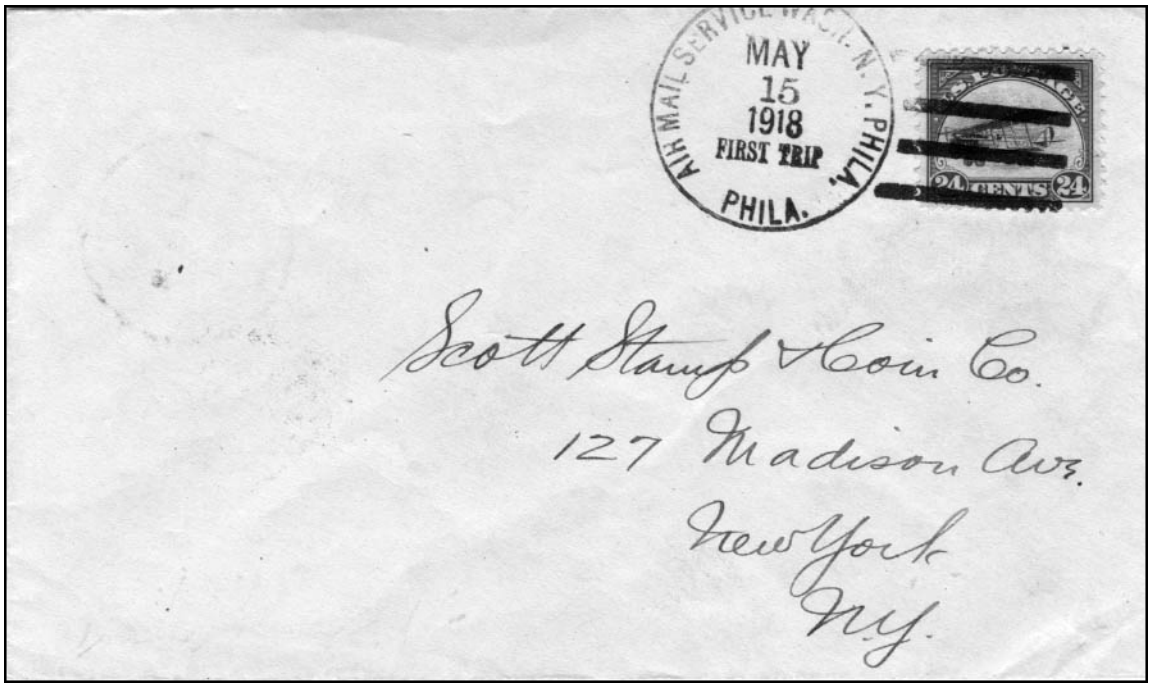


Figure 1 *A nice first day cover of the new airmail system, picked up in Philadelphia (Bustleton) and carried to New York, sent to the men who would not call this C1, but C3 after December's stamp was issued. It is one of only 293 flown from Philadelphia, two of which are known without the* ***FIRST TRIP*** *slug in place.*

Air Mail, Full Circle

by Tom Clarke

As a teen, airmail was so intriguing. To see an airmail letter that had come so far so fast and arrive among all the purple Jefferson stamped regular letters was a kick. To ask at the post office for a last minute airmail stamp for a holiday card for a distant aunt seemed almost a rite of passage, but to receive airmail from overseas, nothing short of breathtaking.

Now, too many decades later, there's still foreign airmail but domestic airmail is a ghostly shade of the past. Today's alternatives to what passed for airmail are bewildering. There are several express companies (i.e., private airmail and package enterprises), perplexing letter and parcel categories with an equally puzzling range of costs. Such prices!, and almost all with an implied promise of near instant delivery.

Who collects airmail? Most postal history collectors ignore it—it's for 'airmail people'. Yet we approach the 100th anniversary (2011) of the first pioneer efforts to speed the written message through the air. That's 95 years ago currently, and there are an awful lot of history lessons and mail sacks within that span.

Looking back to the 1970s when the writer began to collect, he wonders why fellow collectors who stopped at 1900 didn't add a decade to their collecting for each additional decade that passed. That would mean 'classic' postal history would now encompass the first third of the 20th century too, which indeed includes the classic period of airmail activity.

Emphasis here is given to the first decade, the classic age, the first steps and missteps, the first stamps, though it continues after a fashion to domestic airmail's demise in 1977. There is a purposeful lean toward Philadelphia's experience, since we usually express best what we know.

Extent and Content

Airmail's story is an amalgam of geography, economics, politics, engineering, and derring-do. Setting aside the pioneer flights of 1911-1918, the formative days of government airmail between 1918 and 1927 have a very attractive and compact complexity. The rates overlap with seeming conflicted evidence. Juicy stuff for a researcher.

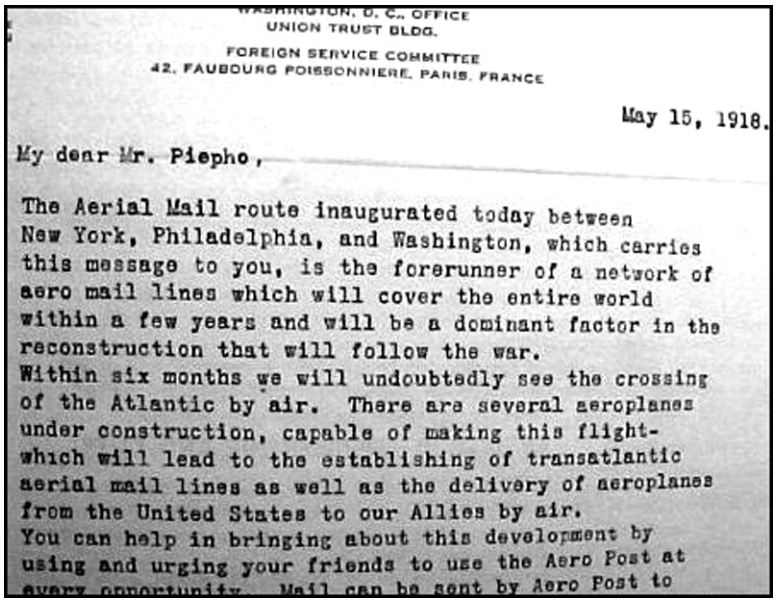
The remaining 50 years are full of experiments, war, and amazing techno prowess illustrated by interesting cachet covers carried by more and more powerful jet planes till, ultimately, their success will bring down the curtain on the very need for domestic airmail.

The American Air Mail Society publishes the five volume *American Air Mail Catalog*. They refer to the 1918-45 era as the Developmental Period and the years following, simply the Modern Period**.**

> The early stages of the developmental period were characterized by pioneer efforts and experiments in many parts of the world. In the United States we saw the beginning of regular point-to-point air service and the creation of a vast network of air routes. . . . The last years of the era showed the whole system stressed by [World War II] and the remarkable efforts to work around the chaos.

The Modern Period has lots of geographic interest and place names, and massive numbers of flights everywhere in the world, in huge planes that would frighten a flyer of 1912.

The Developmental Period features experiment, many errors, political chicanery, and unsteady progress. This era's first decade has to be every airmail collector's favorite. It's got classic stamps and postmarks, heroic individualism, many beginnings and much confusion, but unspoken effort to create a masterpiece from raw stone.


WASHINGTON, D. C., OFFICE
UNION TRUST BLDG.

FOREIGN SERVICE COMMITTEE
42, FAUBOURG POISSONNIERE, PARIS, FRANCE

May 15, 1918.

My dear Mr. Piepho,

The Aerial Mail route inaugurated today between New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, which carries this message to you, is the forerunner of a network of aero mail lines which will cover the entire world within a few years and will be a dominant factor in the reconstruction that will follow the war.
Within six months we will undoubtedly see the crossing of the Atlantic by air. There are several aeroplanes under construction, capable of making this flight- which will lead to the establishing of transatlantic aerial mail lines as well as the delivery of aeroplanes from the United States to our Allies by air.
You can help in bringing about this development by using and urging your friends to use the Aero Post at every opportunity. Mail can be sent by Aero Post to

Figure 3 *This enclosure in a first day C3 cover states the League's goal: to sensitize people to what air mail and air travel could do to civilize the planet: "a network of aero mail lines...cover the entire world...a dominant factor in the reconstruction that will follow the war." Their dreams were one war ahead of history.*

Before the classics were the pioneer flights, beginning in 1911. Mail flew here and there on short hops around the world. No man is a prophet in his own country, so too in America where our leaders were slow to pick up the practical as well as martial uses of flight. Teddy Roosevelt was the first president to fly (as you might expect for such a progress-oriented man). But it was individuals and local clubs and a handful of defiant army officers who saw beyond their superiors' shortsightedness.

Private pioneer 'aeroplane' flights, 1911-1918

Air shows, air rides, air races, and even *airmail* became part of an unplanned 'conspiracy' to spread the joys and possibilities of aeroplanes. The Aerial League of America formed to spread the gospel to anyone who would listen.

Figure 2 *September 1911 marks the beginning of US airmail. This cover is one of the first official (non-commercial) group flown, using POD devices, at the International Aviation Tournament at Garden City and Mineola, Long Island, NY. This cover is minimally reconstructed from a slightly damaged item.*

Interestingly, many of the American experimental airmail flights between 1911 and 1918 took place in suburbs and across small town America, not to or from big cities. Of course, that's where the wide open spaces were.

String-and-wire, biplane experiments were publicity-seeking get-exposure events. The Post Office permitted special cancel status to many of them. As a Philadelphia postal history devotee, this writer is always curi-

ous to know why there were no pioneer routes into or out of philosophical, scientific, and legalistic Philadelphia.

Official Airmail, the Army-Post Office, 1918-21

Finally, after all preparations were ready and the new red and blue airmail stamps were prepared (Scott C 3), the first flight taxied down the runway under the watchful eye of no less than President Wilson himself. The three cities to be first officially connected by a government airmail route beginning that May 15, 1918 were Washington, New York, and Philadelphia. The program was not only a philatelic success but also a financial one. Businesses and individual citizens alike were captivated with the thought of sending and receiving mail by air. The mail went faster and the government made a profit.

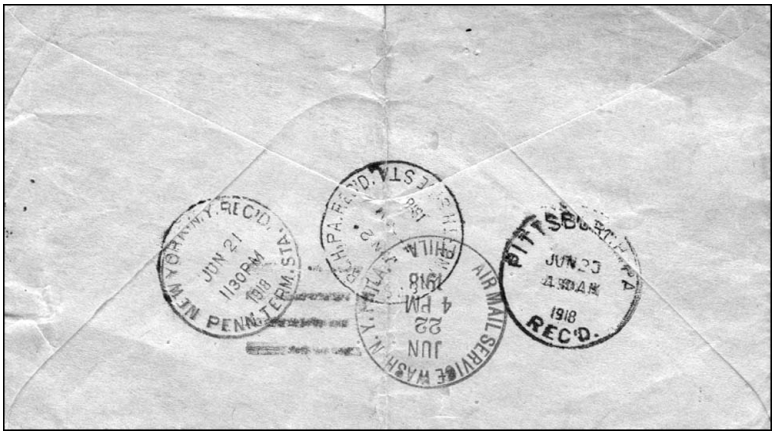


Figure 5 *A wonderful accumulation of markings on the back of a cover with a classic type 1 magenta cancel from Washington on Jun 21, 1918 (no time slug). It mistakenly flew to New York (!) OR did it take the train all the way, and for what reason? Was the weather too bad to land that summer-solstice day? The Pennsylvania Terminal Station backstamp reads 11:30 PM. It was flown back to Philadelphia by plane again where it received a black obliterator cancel as a backstamp the following day at 4 PM (so late!). Then it was back aboard a train for Pittsburgh where it arrived the next day, the 23rd at 4:30 AM. Finally, it was forwarded onto Pittsburgh's Ninth Street Station by, it appears, 1 PM. Not the quick, quality airmail service PMG Burleson had in mind.*

Between May and December 1918, public imagination was fired by the ongoing war in Europe and the contribution of the Army Air Corps pilots, even the discovery of the 24 cent upside down Jenny sheet of stamps. Let's not forget indefatigable dealer A. C. Roessler and the Aerial League of America who between them probably proselytized a quarter of the country with their airmail covers and messages.

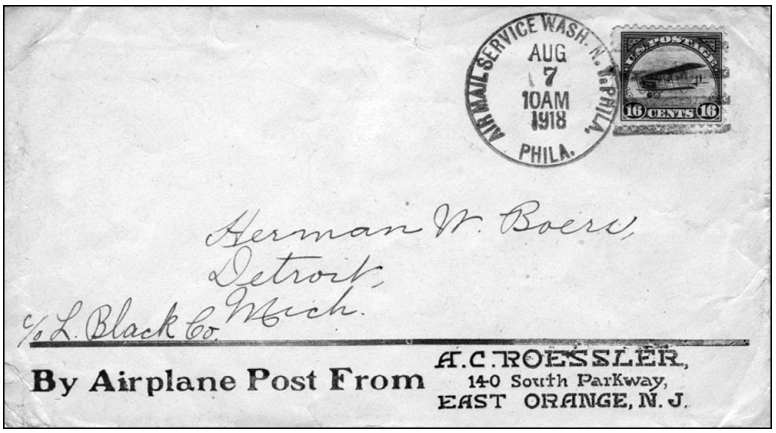


Figure 4 *A. C. Roessler covers blanketed the airmail fraternity during the 'classic age' before 1927. They are a cliché for early airmail but they are valid memorials to the growth of US airmail. This item from Aug 7, 1918 is not 'philatelic' aside from the fact that the man was in love with philately.*

The 'buzz' was airmail and people sent keepsakes through the air to one another. The Army loaned pilots, mechanics, and planes to the POD (and this during wartime) and despite malfunctions, some 92% of the mail intended for flight actually found their destinations (the other 8% went by truck and train).

Two months after the first air mail in May, the rate was reduced to 16 cents (C 2, July 15) in the hope of encouraging further public support. On December 15, by removing the mandatory special delivery from the rate, the airmail rate descended to six cents (C 1). The quickly declining rates and the accruing experience gained using the barely adequate Jenny bi-planes meant America was successfully limping along toward its goal of trans-continental flights over the next few years.

Early long distance flights

Reminiscent of the 1850's dream of uniting the East Coast with the new state of California and her gold with a transcontinental railroad, before the first year of airmail flight concluded, plans were laid for a long distance route to the Pacific. On December 18, 1918, an experimental flight to Chicago, the transcontinental first leg, was made.

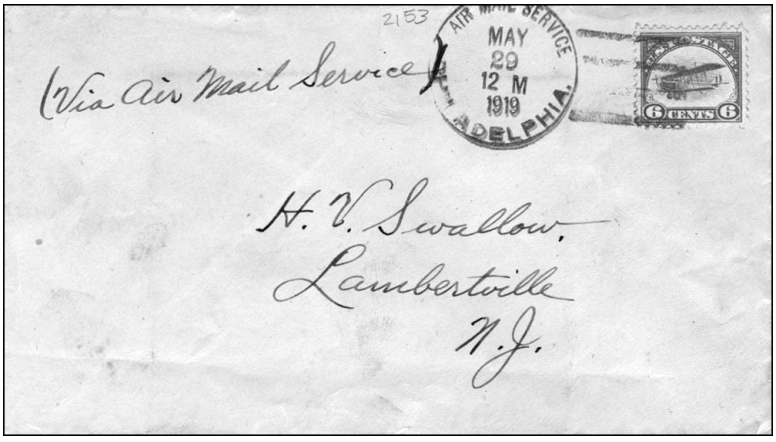


Figure 6 *A 6c orange airmail stamp took this cover cancelled in Philadelphia (at Flying Dutchman Field, to Lambertville NJ only 20 or so miles away, so no doubt it went the long way via New York City and back. It is dated May 29, 1919, and is in black not magenta ink, a regulation promulgated in February of that year.*

The first segment was from Long Island to Bellefonte PA, (current home of the APS and APRL). But mishaps prevented the New York mail from meeting up with the next relay plane so the second plane took off for Cleveland anyway. It too had navigation problems and missed the airport. Several minor wrecks ensued but the Cleveland segment's mail finally flew on to Chicago.

Whereas the NY-Chicago train took 18 hours, postal officials were determined to cut that in half with airmail. Only a handful of the letters flown in this first attempt west had modified airmail cancellations as witnesses. Quickly, these early transcontinental leg experiments will be postponed indefinitely due to the inadequacies of the plane of choice, the De Haviland DH-4.

On May 15, 1919, the first anniversary of the first airmail flights, the Cleveland-Chicago route was inaugurated, and by July 1, 1919, the more difficult New York-Cleveland segment was underway. Limited East-West mail had become a reality. The result of this for the rest of the country was to cut mail transit by a total of 24 hours to the west coast.

On August 16, 1919, a more westerly segment was developed with the inauguration of the St. Louis-Chicago feeder line into the transcontinental route. For more northerly citizens, on August 10 an experimental flight proved Minneapolis-St Paul was reasonable too, so by November 29 it carried mail back and forth once per day.

Stretching all the way westward, in early September 1920, experimental flights landed at Omaha, Cheyenne (where an air

Figure 7 *This letter was sent from Chicago to St. Paul on December 8, 1920, but bears a six cent C 1 for postage. The writer asks for "Airplane" service. Even though it was flown on one of the two new feeder routes to the fledgling trans-continental route, there was no 6 cent rate at the time. So, maybe the letter was overweight by 2 extra ounces? Or, perhaps the writer simply was unaware of the space available system which had taken effect 18 months previous which required only 2 cents for air service? Or, since the Minneapolis route was barely 10 days old, maybe the writer was insistent that this letter indeed fly, and not take the chance of there being a lack of space?*

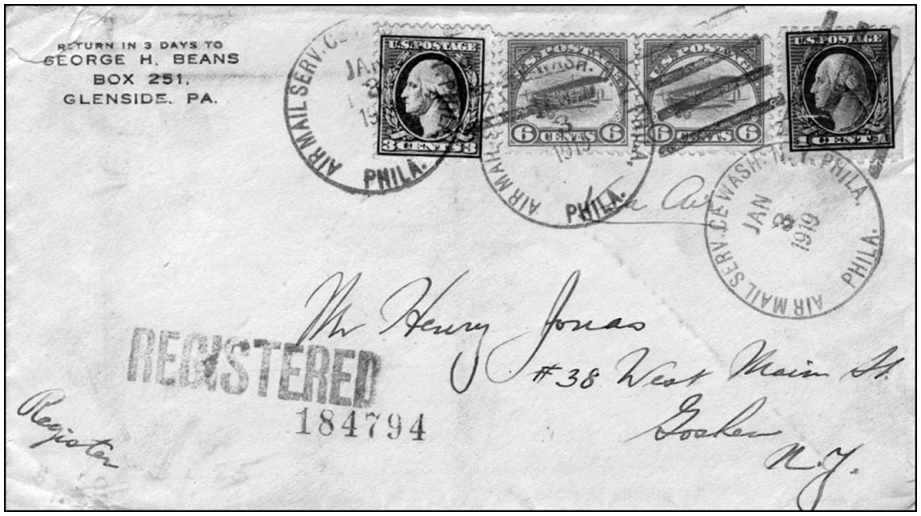


Figure 8 *Not only airmail, but registered too; this cover dated Jan 3, 1919, uses one of the pair of airmail stamps to partially pay the 10 cents registration fee.*

mail cachet was applied), Salt Lake, Elko, Reno, and San Francisco. This only two years and four months after air mail began between New York, Philadelphia, and Washington.

Parallel to these feats of raw aviation was the deployment of experimental radio stations across the country to relay weather and other airmail information, in reality it was the birth of a nationwide emergency communication system. Note that the first commercial station, KDKA in Pittsburgh, broadcast the first program, the election results of Warren G Harding's victory, in early November 1920. The post office was on the technologic cutting edge!

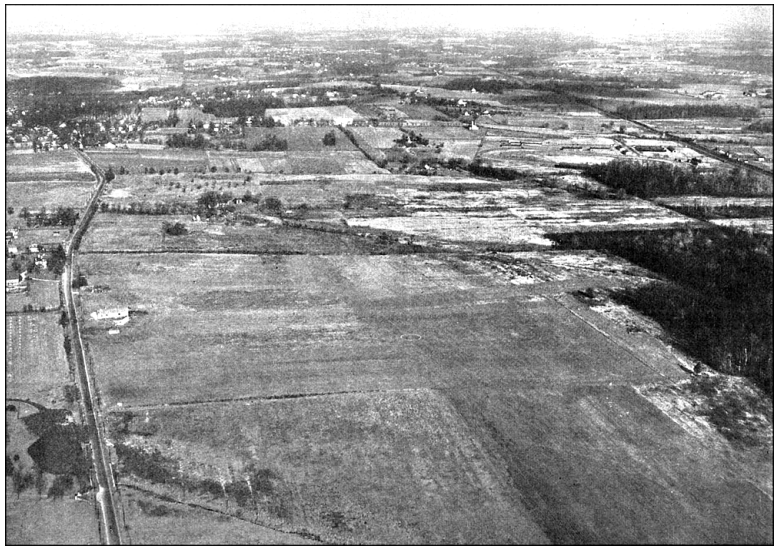


Figure 9 *Dutchman - Flying Dutchman Airport, between the Bustleton and Somerton neighborhoods, was 12 miles north of Philadelphia, in the suburbs, or rather farmland, as shown here in 1930. Starting after World War II, the migration to the suburbs began to consume Northeast Philly as everywhere else, and by the 1960's, the old Dutchman was just a mass of streets, basements and back yards.*

Finally, on September 10, 1920, daily flights of the transcontinental airmail service went into operation, New York to San Francisco, except Sundays and holidays. In February 1921, a record of 33 hours, 20 minutes San Francisco to New York (flying with the prevailing winds) was set. This included the San Francisco-Reno segment flown at night at 18,000 feet, and an all night flight by pilot Jack Knight —standard bearer of the American Air Mail Society still. This record beat the old combination air plane-train record of 72 hours.

At the end of three years of airmail experience there were four routes:

- New York to San Francisco, 2630 miles
- New York to Washington, 195 miles
- St. Louis to Chicago, 270 miles
- Chicago to Minneapolis-St. Paul, 360 miles

Quite an achievement.

Philadelphia's experience, I

Philadelphia's airmail experience began the first day, May 15, 1918, at Bustleton's suburban Flying Dutchman Airport, 12 miles from center city. This is where government airmail planes touched down on their way to New York from Washington and vice versa. The Dutchman was also the designated mail plane Repair Facility, doubtless because it was at the center between the two other points.

During the initial 14 months of airmail, two types of airmail cancels were employed by the Philadelphia Post Office clerks there. The first is the classic **AIR MAIL**

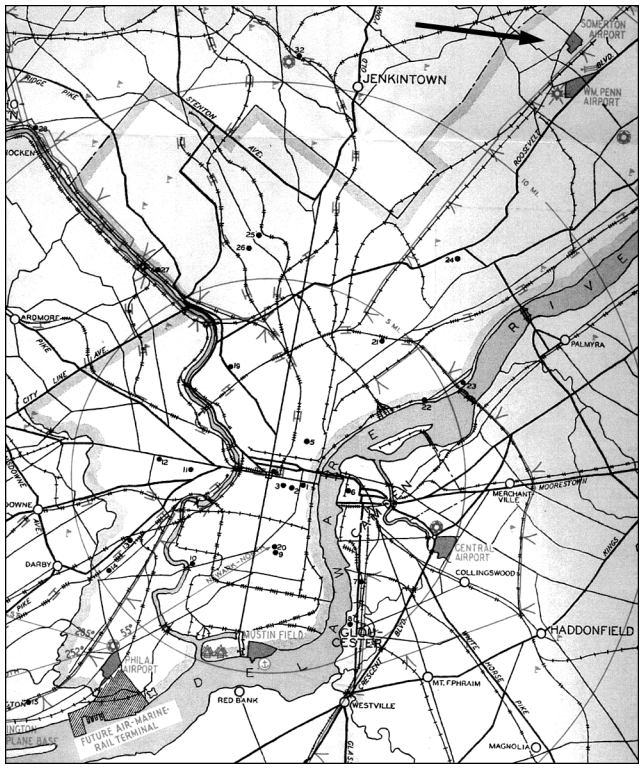


Figure 10 *A map of Philadelphia in 1930 which shows primitive airport locations, all of which were sod-surfaced, except for the future (1929) Central Airport outside of Camden NJ, Philadelphia's official Air Mail Field during the '30's. Note the "Future Air-Marine-Rail Terminal", opened in 1940, and today Philadelphia International Airport. The Flying Dutchman here is termed "Somerton Airport" in the far northeast (arrow).*

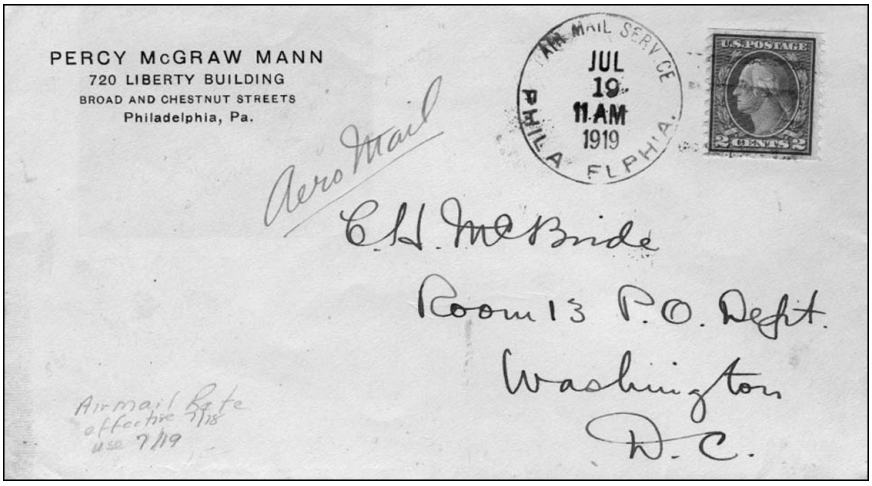


Figure 11 *Dealer Percy McGraw Mann created thousands of collectible covers during his lifetime. This two-cent cover is dated the day after the airmail premium was abolished and all first class mail allowed to be sent by airplane — on a space available basis. However, this did fly since it was canceled with the second type of marking stating that it would receive* ***AIRMAIL SERVICE***

SERVICE WASH. N.Y. PHILA. / PHILA., with **FIRST TRIP** beneath the date *(see figure 1*). The **FIRST TRIP** slug was then removed and did not reappear for the two rate decreases of 16 and 6 cents.

The second type of cancel **AIR MAIL SERVICE / PHILADELPHIA.**, was distributed on approximately May 17, 1919. It seems to have been expressly made to accompany the two cents Space Available rate that PMG Burleson devised at that time. It is less common than the first type: and its use ended sometime after July 18, 1919, after two months service, when formal airmail flights ended by Act of Congress on June 30, 1921 (see *figure 11*).

The Cost of Airmail?

During airmail's first year Postmaster General A. S. Burleson saw the wisdom of using airplanes for speeding all mail, not just airmail. We see this principle gathering speed in the three stages of declining airmail rates in 1918: from 24 cents (May 15), to 16 cents (July 15), to 6 cents (December 15), though this last rate had the 10 cent special delivery fee subtracted from it.

Burleson's game was to entice more patrons to use the new service to help pay its way, reminiscent of the call 80 years before for "penny postage" in England. The bold assumption then was that a lower fee would simultaneously generate greater use and thus increase revenue, which it certainly did. The same demand prior to 1845 precipitated the 5 cent flat postage rate (a penny's equivalent) in the US, which also bequeathed a rapid expansion of mail use in the country, and profits.

On July 18, 1919, fifteen months after airmail began, PMG Burleson made a momentous far-sighted decision which is the basis for the title of this article. He concluded that the best use of an air mail service was to speed all first class mail. In the face of common sense, he simply abolished the premium for airmail. Airmail would converge with first class mail and the two cents rate. Any letters would be included on a mail plane, provided there was sufficient space available. Thus, no need for special premium-based postage stamps or special cancels.

Jump ahead three generations and realize that the thinking in 1977 will be identical to Burleson's logic. A decision will be made that mail speed is paramount in every case, not just for letters people are willing to pay an airmail premium for, but for every piece of letter mail. Once the plan is adopted, domestic airmail service will again cease, the same as in 1919. We will have come full circle.

Figure 12 *Scotts C 3, the first airmail stamp pictured the Curtiss 'Jenny' famed for ability in war. These planes had a difficult time keeping up with the rigors of day to day airmail service in every kind of weather.*

First Stamps

Many collectors of Airmail are also hearty lovers of the lore of airplanes too, their technologic struggles, new designs, and watershed improvements. Airplane design is essential to understanding early airmail, so the first airmail set shows the World War I Curtis JN4H "Jenny" bi-plane, converted to carry airmail. In the sec-

Figure 13 *The Scott C 6 shows the tragically inept De Haviland DH-4, sufficient to help win the war in Europe but its engine, carrying capacity, speed, and altitude were not good enough for airmail service.*

ond airmail set of 1923, the 24 cent stamp (C 6) shows what became the workhorse of early US Airmail, the rapidly aging and repair-prone De Haviland DH4 two-winger.

Odd that the first airmail stamp set issue dates were not taken into consideration when Mr. Scott et al. were creating the 1919 *Scott Catalog*. C3 should obviously be C1 and vice versa, except that they knew that the collectors of the day surely liked orderliness for the little spaces in their albums. There wasn't anyone around to argue with the Scott's to the contrary. 'Postal History' wouldn't see the light of day until writers like Harry Konweiser in the 1930s and Robson Lowe in the 1940s and '50s helped develop it into a discipline.

Death and Transfiguration, 1921-1924

Despite PMG Burleson's seemingly draconian space available decision, and following a pilot's strike over the absence of hazardous flying condition regulations, mail planes resumed flying government airmail routes across the country during 1921 as previously.

Realize that such flights would only take place in daylight hours, since pilots had to rely on visual landmarks to navigate. After nightfall, the mail would be loaded onto rail cars to travel overnight until another plane could take over at daybreak. Night flight would have to be conquered for airmail to be a lasting success. Oddly enough, a looming, traumatic crisis will devastate at first, then permit the POD sufficient time to seek a proper solution.

Following the Republican's Harding landslide elections of November 1920, and in a grievous display of penny-pinching, a new conservative, very money-conscious Congress cut off all funding for government airmail beginning July 1, 1921. Though not quite dead, this action meant that the American airmail service was certainly on life support. The POD quietly continued to operate the space available concept while Post Office officials who favored airplane mail siphoned money here and skimped there. Postal officials are always keenly conscious of the time elapsed in mail transit, airmail would certainly not be forgotten.

Given congressional orders, cuts had to be made, meanwhile repositioning funds for future requirements. In preparation, The POD as of June 1, 1921, a month in advance, killed the original New York-Washington route. And as of July 1, 1921, the two feeder routes into Chicago, the one from St. Louis and the other from Minneapolis-St. Paul were also history. Abandoned also was Bustleton Field (a.k.a. the "Flying Dutchman" Airport), where De Havilands were repaired. Five other eastern and mid-west air fields were cut too.

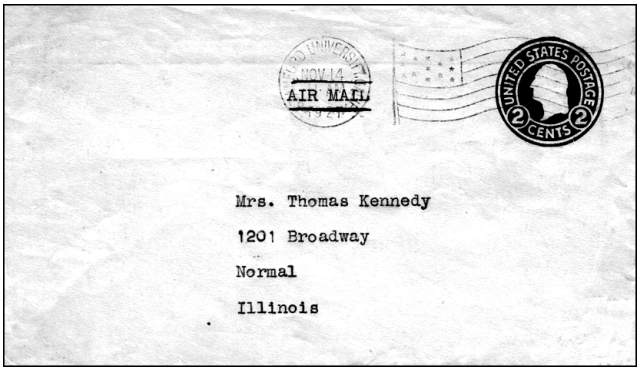


Figure 14 *From Stanford University in CA May 14, 1921 to Normal IL, how much of a chance did the sender take if he /she had to get it quickly to Illinois? The AIR MAIL request for space available on a plane may have worked, but without a back stamp, we can only guess.*

The rationale by the new POD heads was to concentrate the money into the transcontinental route itself. Congress, in addition, decided that the test run of space available air carriage (the two cent rate) for all mail would terminate in favor of a new issue of premium value airmail stamps. The new 6, 16, and 24 cent stamps would pay for the revamped transcontinental air service in preparation.

Recall the catchword of the then current Vice President, soon to be president, Calvin Coolidge: "The business of America is business". So, lemons into lemonade, Congressional budget tightening forced the POD to reorganize with the thought in mind to cut fat and ultimately "privatize" airmail. Our government generally always has wanted to relieve itself of the burden of operation where private enterprise is able to do the job.

Recall the 1790's repeated requests for independent stage coach and horseback carrier contracts to run the US mail between towns.

Airmail progress and innovation did in fact continue. By November 1921, ten permanent radio stations had been installed along the future New York-San Francisco route to transmit weather forecasts. Parachute flares were installed under planes to light up open fields in an emergency. Searchlights were tower-mounted across the United States, 10 to 30 miles apart, depending on the terrain.

Pilots flew at 200 to 500 feet so they could navigate by roads and railroads. By the end of 1921, the number of planes in service had grown to 98. The Airmail Pilots Association was established in 1922, and on July 16 of that year the Airmail Service could brag that it had completed one year of flying without a fatal accident. Meanwhile, the goal of corporate control of mail planes inched along. As it was in the early days of stagecoach transport of mail between towns, so too in the 1920's and later: contracts would be offered to whatever company or person could carry the mail following POD guidelines at the lowest bid.

After the seeming airmail limbo of 1921 through 1924, a full fledged airmail again gained Congressional adherents and sponsorship in slow moving Washington. Mail distribution by air (but not *airmail*) continued and experiments with night flying continued. Throughout this three year hiatus from classic airmail, there were demonstration flights and handfuls of flights over prospective routes, always experimenting.

Philadelphia's Experience, II

In Philadelphia, like all other cities, during the period from 1921 to 1924, postage rates for letters flown by planes required only (as they would by train or truck) the nominal two cent first class rate stamp. Such letters received only standard post office cancellations so, and unless there are manuscript requests on the face for airmail carriage, these covers would be indistinguishable from truck or train delivered mail.

Sporadically over the years 1921-24, certain specially sanctioned airmail cancels did appear. For Philadelphia a charity flight event cancel was authorized by the Post Office Department for November 14 (to 15?), 1921. It is the **"WILLIAM PENN" SPECIAL AIRMAIL** , four bars duplex handstamp. It was used to help raise funds for the Philadelphia Welfare Federation Fund and less than 100 covers were carried, many fewer survive.

There were experimental flights west to test radios and other equipment. Between February 26, 1923 and March 27, 1924, the POD worked diligently to finalize the best day-night flight paths. Survey flights also tested runway lighting systems and search lights, but few covers are known to memorialize these efforts. For instance, the May 15, 1923 San Francisco East-West flights probably carried only four pieces of mail.

Though south of the New York-Chicago-Cheyenne-San Francisco transcontinental flight line as adopted, at least two associated cover types are known associated with Philadelphia. One is a combination manuscript-handstamp receiving mark *Philad'a* (ms) / **REC'D MAY 19 1923** / *NOON* (ms), and the second is a two line handstamp **BY U. S. AIR MAIL / TRANSCONTINENTAL** noting the delayed transcontinental experimental flight of August 24, 1923. There must be others from Philadelphia as from collectors and enthusiasts

Figure 15 *A nice early transcontinental letter from Wyoming to Philadelphia: marked* ***BY U.S. AIR MAIL / TRANSCONTINENTAL*** *in teal on July 30, 1924, the first month of service. Two added handstamps seen on other covers may be official: CONNECTING WITH… either ocean and beyond. They could easily be patriotic postal propaganda for the new service. The backstamp reads August 4, a trip of five days. The 24 cents stamp indicates it used all three legs of the service at 8 cents per leg.*

all across the country who were thrilled to have an envelope flown by a rugged aviator who was part of an important national testing process.

Trans-continental Airmail, 1924-1927

With new allies in Congress at long last, the POD could plan for the resumption of airmail service. It prematurely released the new set of airmail stamps —surely to build up drama. Unlike the first three stamps issued, in declining values 24, 16, and 6 cents over a short seven months (C 3, 2 and 1), these three would be a true set of stamps issued together only days apart in mid-August 1923. The new denominations would be 8, 16, and 24 cents (C 4-6). However, since airmail service was not quite in place, postmasters at the 16 proposed air route post offices were ordered to delay selling them until the appropriate time.

Thirty days of trans-continental day and night test flights proceeded into the spring of 1924. Finally, sales of the new stamps were given the go ahead on June 16, and regular daily, transcontinental, day and night, New York-Chicago-Cheyenne-San Francisco airmail service resumed on July 1, 1924. Transcontinental mail, like the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s, was a breathtaking concept. The job was hardly as grueling as the seven years it took to unite the Atlantic and Pacific by rail. By air the system developed off and on over the three years from July 1, 1921 to July 1, 1924.

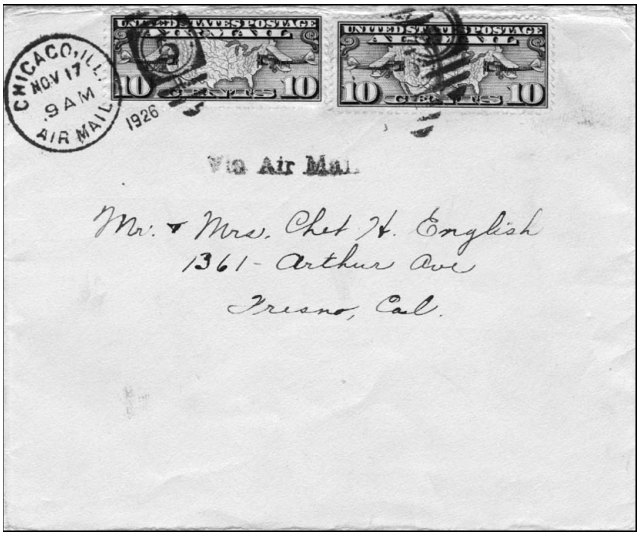


Figure 16 *Two map stamps on a November 17, 1925 cover tell us it took two CAM legs to get this letter from Chicago to Fresno CA.*

Pilots were able to fly the New York to San Francisco route in 34 hours. But despite the success of the revived US airmail, the government was adamant that private business should assume operations, and sooner rather than later.

Having to pay a premium for transcontinental airmail service went against the principles established by former PMG Burleson, whose ideas were two generations ahead of the times. Whereas he would prefer airmail to be a free and rapid extension of first class mail service, the new transcontinental rate was to be eight cents for each of the three legs across country, as necessary. This equaled a twelve times (24 versus 2 cents) premium to send a birthday note from Los Angeles to Boston, but it went quickly.

For those requiring overnight service, thanks to the experiments of the previous few weeks and years, beginning July 1, 1925, a special supplement of two cents could be added to the standard eight cents rate (a total of 10 cents) to fly a letter specifically at night on the New York to Chicago leg.

Figure 17 *With only eleven days to go before the deadline, the POD was still testing the Night Flying of pilots before offering the overnight service to patrons for and additional two cents over the standard eight cent rate. It left at 10 AM and arrived at 8 PM. Note that this was a daytime test of a nighttime procedure!*

Contract Air Mail (CAM)

Now it was time to begin to get the air service off the back of the Federal government. Like clockwork, in July 1925, individuals and corporations were encouraged to submit proposals to fly the mail. At first, contractors were to be paid at about 80% of the postage of the mail carried, but almost immediately that was amended to be a fixed rate per pound of mail.

Though the proposed routes envisioned by postal planners would cover most of the US, strangely Philadelphia was not to be one of the CAM contract cities. This, despite the fact that it was the second largest city in the

Figure 18 *A bank cover use to California using the New York-Washington route. A 16 cent airmail cancelled September 16, 1918 at midnight —**12M; b**eing nighttime, the letter had to await daylight to fly north. The sleepy clerk completely missed the green stamp with his magenta ink and had to use a black inked cork or something similar to kill it. Prior to trans-continental mail, the trip would be mostly by train. The Philadelphia transit mark at 3 PM suggests something held the letter up since the trip was about a hour by air. It then had to catch a series of trains to get to the Pacific. Without a Roseville backstamp we can guess at a 3-4 day trip?*

land at the time. It must have been ruled out due to its proximity to New York City, which railroads could bridge in a few hours. Such mail is termed "off-route" airmail.

By November 1925, the route contracts that were accepted were

- Boston to New York
- Chicago to Dallas-Fort Worth
- Chicago to St. Louis [Lindbergh's route]
- Elko to Pasco (San Francisco)
- Salt Lake City to Los Angeles
- Seattle to Los Angeles

In January, 1926, additional contracts were issued for:

- Detroit and Chicago to Cleveland
- Chicago to Minneapolis-St. Paul
- Pittsburgh to Cleveland,

Soon there was a rapid increase in other CAM routes.

Note that the many of these first takers were in the industrial heartland, today's 'rust belt'. At the inauguration ceremony of the Detroit (Ford Motor Company) to Cleveland route, none other than Henry Ford himself attended. This was the first CAM to go into operation, February 15, 1926, though it was numbered CAM 6.

Ford's mail planes were the ones he was already using to ferry spare parts for his automobile assembly plants. Soon he began to manufacture planes too. In 1927, the Ford Company produced the famous three engine Trimotor, nicknamed the "tin goose", one of the first all metal planes. It was also the first plane designed primarily to carry passengers (12) rather than mail. It could fly higher and faster (up to 130 mph) than the competition and was sturdy enough to reassure the public about flying safely.

The 1925 bill that had instituted CAM flights was the Kelly Bill, soon the Air Mail Act of Feb 2, 1925. It called for a 10 cent per ½ ounce rate up to 1000 miles. The Post Office had a lot of time to design the definitely distinctive, wide 10 cents map stamp. It was first sold a year later on February 13, 1926 (though the rate had been effective from the first).

Figure 19 *Map airmails of 1925-1926.*

Soon to follow were the convenient 15 cents stamp (September 26, 1926) for a ½ ounce over 1000 miles, only in effect for 4½ months (until February 1), and the same 4½ months later, a 20 cents stamp (January 25, 1927) of the same design. It would pay for double (one ounce) letters beginning February 1, 1927.

Philadelphia's experience, III

In 1925, Philadelphia's Navy Yard initiated the first leg to Boston on June 9-10 of the aborted MacMillan Arctic Expedition Flight. More than 1,000 pounds of mail was marked with a four line hand stamp: **AIRMAIL / Phila.-Boston / VIA / MacMillan Expedition**. Such was the attraction of so many to anything air borne.

As mentioned, no CAM routes were initially designated for Philadelphia, despite its importance and size. However, for historical and celebratory reasons, in mid-1926, CAM will come. However, there are no doubt Philadelphia origin and destination letters that flew on every newly established CAM flight the previous year. They are labeled by collectors as "off-route" covers. They do not come with special markings or cachets, and were sent to the indicated air terminal point by train or truck as ordinary mail.

End of Government Airmail

While the CAM flights were taking to the air at 10 or 15 cents per letter per leg, government transcontinental service continued with its costly three-headed Zone rate. At least when a CAM letter had to use one of the government legs to its destination, only an extra nickel was calculated, but for each leg required.

The cost of three Zones was at times complicated to figure, since letters could be handled first by the Contract Air Mail airline, then handed off to the government's transcontinental service, or vice versa. The tab was pricey but banks particularly liked any form of airmail. They were joyful for the ability to clear checks rapidly and thus reduce the 'float', the time between a check being cashed and the bank receiving credit for it.

CAM operations were well underway by February 1926. Next came the seminal Air Commerce Act, which was to lay the groundwork for the aviation industry to come. It was signed by President Coolidge in May 1927. It further heightened interest in commercial aviation and required safety inspections, licenses, etc. But primarily it lured business interests into aviation and spurred commercial contracts to carry airmail, many times a ruse to attract a lucrative new source of income: paying passengers.

But new airplane designs were needed for these services. The old De Havilands, despite gaining rigid, welded steel frames from Boeing, literally couldn't carry the increasing load. Boeing and Douglas aircraft companies went to work at the Post Office's behest and manufactured mail planes that had greater carry capacity, greater altitude to cross the Rockies, and greater speed and range.

These new bi-planes appeared quickly. The Boeing 40A in May 1926, and the Douglas M-1 at about the same time took over the Eastern long haul mail business, which left the faulty De Havilands to handle the west coast deliveries. This was soon to end when they were replaced, and the government's trans-continental adventure came to a close, on July 1 1927. Simultaneously, the main POD Repair Depot for the De Havilands closed at the Bustleton airport and the elderly planes were advertised and sold.

Figure 20 *Boeing's 1925 Model 40A mail plane was their first to carry passengers, with room for two people in a tiny cabin, and of course cargo space for mail. Twenty-four of the mail planes built were ready to fly on July 1, 1927, when they assumed the former trans-continental route between San Francisco and Chicago.*

Figure 21 *One of two new mail planes, the Douglas M-1 was built to POD order to replace the faulty De Havilands beginning in May 1926.*

One year after the first CAM contracts were advertised, at long last, in November 1926, the POD posted ads for contracts to assume control of the remaining transcontinental routes, those of New York to Chicago and Chicago to San Francisco. Successful bids were accepted from Boeing and others and as of June 30, 1927, the Post Office Department was, on paper at least, out of the airmail flying business. The occasion must have brought forth statements similar to that of Andrew Carnegie, who proclaimed when he at last sold his steel giant in 1901, "Hooray, I'm out of business!"

In real terms, airmail would still be flown by the Post Office Department between New York and Chicago until August 31, 1927, after which all would be in the hands of private business, though under Federal regulations of course.

Philadelphia's Sesquicentennial, 1926

In 1926, while large parts of the country were enjoying a rebirth of airmail, the Sesquicentennial celebration in Philadelphia brought forth various official commemorative cacheted covers for the special flights from Philadelphia. Many of these are entrepreneurial and "philatelic" rather than genuine personal or business correspondence. And some of these covers were not properly canceled with standard town marks, but they are nonetheless considered airmail collectibles since they did fly over the routes indicated.

These cancels and cachets include the CAM 13 route between Philadelphia and Washington on July 6, 1926. These covers abound due to the influx of visitors to the celebration. This route was superseded on October 10 by CAM 15, regular flight service between Philadelphia and Washington and now extended to Norfolk VA.

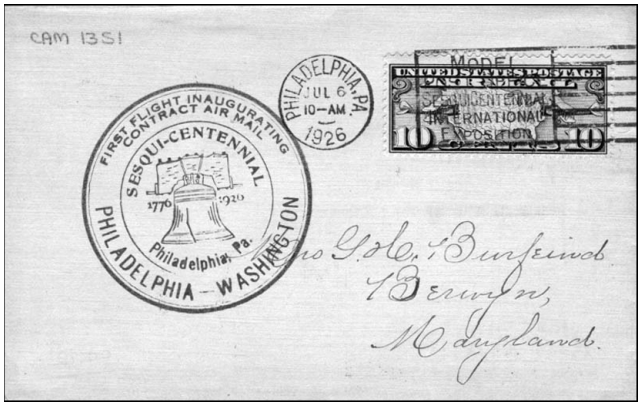


Figure 22 *CAM 13 was an Sesquicentennial feature at the fair from July through October1926; passenger service to Washington, provided by the Philadelphia trolley and bus company, Rapid Transit.*

On July 16, ten days after the CAM 13 inauguration, a special Souvenir Historical Flight marked the beginning of a Scheduled Daily Passenger Airline, CAM 15, between Philadelphia and Washington. This service developed compliments of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Air Service, a corporation well used to moving bodies. Its parent was the humble 'PRT', Philadelphia Rapid Transit, the bus and trolley company of Philly, consolidated some 20 years before.

In September, the National Air Races Special Service Connection for one week was joined to New York's transcontinental airmail. The Air Races were held on the Sesquicentennial Grounds between September 4th and 11th. This was the *first twice-a-day* airmail service between any two cities in the United States. There were no Philadelphia inauguration cachets for the evening mail north, but New York applied a special cachet to both northbound and southbound flights using the same time slug. At least 14 flights were made until September 10 at 8:30PM.

The Sesquicentennial's First Flights, Special Events, and Commemorative cachets were an inspiration. They attracted collectors and sparked excitement with good reason. The cachets instructed and helped crystallize an era of creative, high spirited and mostly good times, full of devil-may-care aspirations. They represent the rapacious urgency with which American courage and ingenuity were now conquering the air. Planes joined with automobiles, refrigerators, and radio sets as topics of evening discussion. They are witnesses to a "jazzed" decade that was shortly to suffer a crushing blow on Wall Street.

The year 1926, rich in Philadelphia airmail lore, ended with the famed British aviator and apostle of flight Sir Alan Cobham. His "Demonstration Souvenir Historical Flight", New York City to Washington DC via Milburn NJ and Philadelphia occurred on December 2-3. His cachets proclaimed: **COBHAM FIRST UNITED STATES OVERLAND FLIGHT / ... / D.H."MOTH" AIRPLANE**.

The flight's purpose was to impress Congressmen and any ordinary folk that happened along. His wife, Lady Gladys, accompanied him in the De Havilland *Moth* biplane and he underscored his point by circling Washington the next day on the 4th. Just prior to traveling to the US, he expanded his reputation by making a round trip to Australia of 26,000 miles.

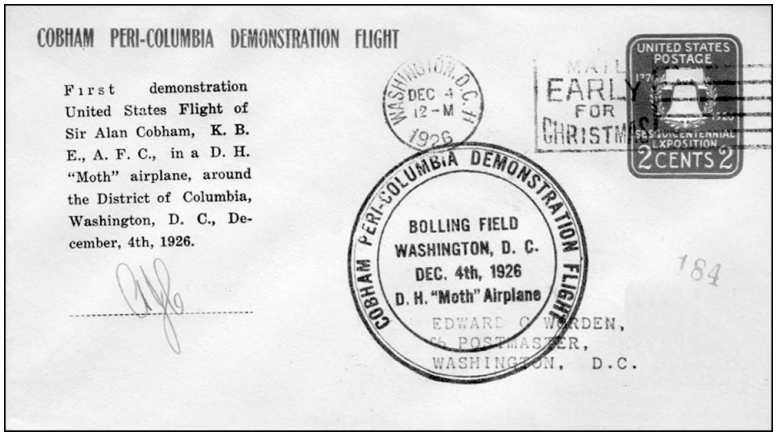


Figure 23 *Sir Alan Cobham flew on to Washington where he circled the capital, then initialed many cacheted envelopes such as this one, furthering the flying cause.*

From the dreams of experimenters, dare devils, Army pilots, and postal bureaucrats, and in the face of Congressional obstinacy, and lagging aircraft design, airmail was born. Born hesitantly, but drawing instant acclaim, it was nevertheless shortly struck down — for valid reasons.

Forward thinkers had had visions of airmail revolutionizing business and personal communication. Mail had already been in a preliminary battle with the telephone for a good 20 years already. With dogged persistence, and skill, and aerial bravado, airmail in the end beat the politicians and telephone operators, and glitches, and climatologic forces.

Flat Rate Airmail, 1927

The complicated triple transcontinental "Zone Rates" of eight cents per leg of an airmail trip were replaced on February 1, 1927. The new flat rate of 10 cents per ½ ounce paid for a point to point letter traveling anywhere the United States. As mentioned, the 20 cent map stamp was to facilitate full ounce letters.

As these stunning stamps were being sold across post office counters, Charles Augustus Lindbergh was preparing to fly the Atlantic on May 20-21, 1927.

The jubilant hysteria surrounding that flight of derring-do prompted the POD three weeks and a day later, on June 18, to release another new 10 cent blue airmail stamp, the Lindbergh commemorative, showing the *Spirit of St. Louis* and its North Atlantic route. It was completed in record time with engravers and printers no doubt working nights and weekends to capitalize on the extravaganza of emotion.

Figure 25 *On May 1, 1928, a year after the Lindbergh phenomenon, Philadelphia was connected (at Bustleton PA) to the world by a third CAM route, CAM 19, New York to Atlanta, which combined the old 13 and 15 routes. Philadelphia was the stop on the first leg. The attractive rainbow cachet shows beneath it the official handstamp with the Philadelphia slug missing.*

Figure 24 *In 1928, this cover was sent from Milwaukee to Philadelphia. Where was the purple handstamp* ***AIR MAIL / FROM CHICAGO*** *stamped? Chicago, on receipt, prior to sending to the train? Philadelphia, after opening the Chicago mail bag?*

After nine full years, three of which had been consigned back to the drawing board, the government succeeded, and then went voluntarily out of the airmail business. These nine years laid down a path that expanded the use and speed of the US Mail. The American populace was proud and enthusiastically endorsed the required ups and downs as necessary for progress.

Back to the Future

Into the 1930s and beyond, there will be continued expansion of airmail routes, routes reaching out to Canada, the Caribbean, South America, the Pacific, and finally to Europe. Rates will decrease and increase,

there will be investigations which discover scandal, then war pressure, and all along fantastic new planes will be conceived. But above all, there will be a growing glut of ordinary mail that will ultimately confirm the Burleson's goal of air access for all letter mail, at no premium. That will have to wait till the 1970's.

Following . . .

1) the debut of Contract Air Mail (CAM) flights in February 1926; and

2) the flat rate plateau for airmail which was finally reached in early 1927, of 10 cents per half ounce; and

3) the final conversion of government airmail over the entire New York – San Francisco transcontinental route on September 9 to private hands (and the last New York - Chicago leg run on September 30, 1927),

the modern airmail system had arrived. The impetus CAM flights gave to aviation led directly to the institution of airline travel for paying passengers.

Improvements in plane design, engines, higher altitudes and greater distances all played their part. The Ford Tri-motor, the Boeing 40A, and the Douglas M-1 were the initial rungs in the ladder to success of today's jumbo jet airliners (which carry the lion's share of all interstate mail and packages, whether USPS or Emery, or UPS, etc.).

Figure 26 *Pictured is the author's father as an 18-20 year old at the Flying Dutchman field in the mid 1930s. He poses proudly with a bi-plane which one of La Posta's experts may be able to identify. The Flying Dutchman today is covered with tract homes and strip malls.*

Philadelphia's experience, IV - Camden NJ

During the Roaring Twenties, Philadelphia had no true terminal for air flight, a glaring problem for a major city. By comparison, small Mid West towns proudly flew airmail with accompanying cachets and special cancels, and local Midwest sons such as Charles Lindberg flew the mail.

The Sesquicentennial of 1926 in the former capital brought forth an air travel interest to hundreds of thousands, even millions. Pressure built for an expanded and modern air terminal for the Quaker City. Bustleton's Flying Dutchman, a dozen miles to the north of center city, had been handling CAM 15 flights since the Sesquicentennial closed, but that didn't matter. City Fathers decided not to invest in <u>any</u> of the half dozen local landing strips.

It was an unconnected event that also took place in 1926 that would be essential to Philadelphia's airmail story. During the sesqui-celebration, on July 1 and 2, more than 100,000 Philadelphians and New Jerseyites toasted the opening of the first bridge to span the lower Delaware. They all walked across the new Delaware River Bridge (including an 87-year-old Civil War veteran in full uniform) and President Coolidge personally dedicated it the next day.

And so, it was not to Pennsylvania at all that City Fathers looked for their airport but across the Delaware to little Camden, New Jersey, home of RCA records! There, 4½ miles from central Philadelphia —thanks to the new Delaware Bridge, the lynch pin in the decision— they built or brought up to standards a V-shaped dual landing strip, hangers, cafeteria, administration offices, and all the primitive accoutrements of the day.

It was the Flying Dutchman Air Field that operated the Philadelphia stop on the New York to Atlanta CAM 19 route. CAM 19 superseded CAMs 13 and 15 on September 1-2, 1928, and was hosted by Pitcairn Aviation Inc., an up and coming name in early aviation.

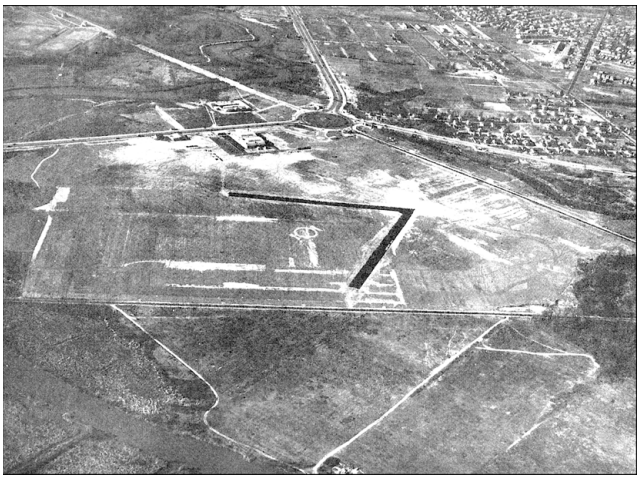


Figure 27a *A photo of Central Airport shortly after its inauguration in September 1929. The flat sandy New Jersey soil was an asset at the time.*

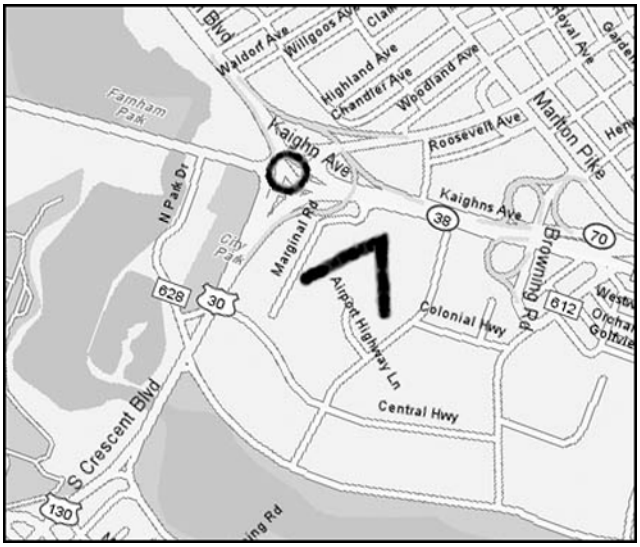


Figure 27b *Today the same site is covered by endless homes and light industry. Note the modern flyways where a simple circle and one paved road existed in the 19 30's. Such was the 'hustle and bustle' at Philadelphia's main airport 75 years ago.Of course, the pair of runways indicated has long since been bulldozed and built upon.*

At long last, on September 15, 1929, with fanfare, Central Airport opened for business just outside of Camden (today, Merchantville NJ). The first airmail flight of CAM 19 landed; on September 21, the first 'Philadelphia' airmail took off on the Dedication Day of the Philadelphia-Camden Central Airport. It will remain Philadelphia's air hub for the next 12 years.

The late postal researcher and long time RPO fellow John Kay reported that: "I can remember about 1930 going with a friend to Camden to see the planes, and I watched them unload mail from Ford Tri-motors and Curtis Condors."

An excerpt from the *Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of New Jersey* (American Guide Series), 1939, suggests the extent of activity at the Central Airport. Airline terminals represented there:

- United Airlines (western route)
- Transcontinental & Western Air
- Eastern Airlines
- American Airlines

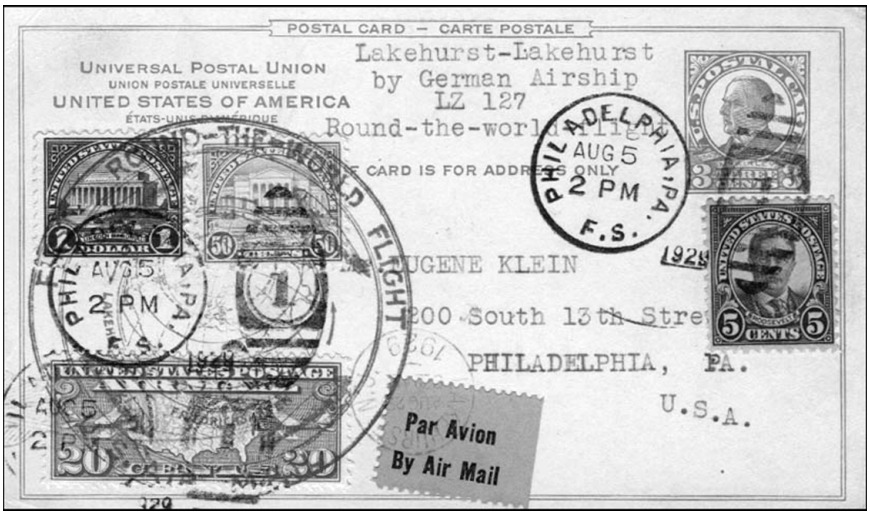


Figure 28 *A round trip LZ 127 Zeppelin Round the World publicity flight, posted from Philadelphia August 5, 1929. The card with a hefty $1.78 postage was sent by dealer Eugene Klein, who created collectibles for future sale. It's a further indication of the flying mania that gripped the world in the '20s.*

Camden's Air Mail Field postmarks from opening day, September 15/ 21, 1929, to the dedication of South Philadelphia's own Municipal Airport on June 19, 1940, must therefore be considered part of Philadelphia's own postal history.

All airmail dispatch fell under the aegis of the Railway Mail Service, which had earlier been given the responsibility of operating all transiting (connecting) mail operations. These included Railway Post Offices and Rail Terminals (which were born when Parcel Post began in 1913), Railway Transfer Offices, and now Air Mail Fields.

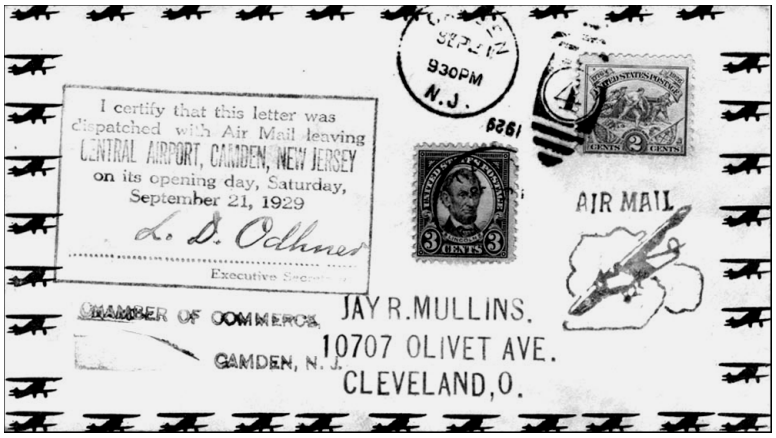


Figure 29 *The official dedication cachet for Central Airport, Camden NJ on September 21, 1929. Note the upside down year slug. It must have been a tense time stamping those 100 or so covers!*

According to John Kay:

> To show how the RMS ran the airmail, I can remember back in the 1930s, when I ran the New York & Pittsburgh [RPO]. If there was bad weather at Newark AMF we would be told that so many men and so much airmail would be put on [the train] at Newark. We would make [mail distribution] case and pouch rack space available for about six men from Newark AMF, who would come on and distribute mail until North Philadelphia [Station], and then get off and deadhead back to Newark.

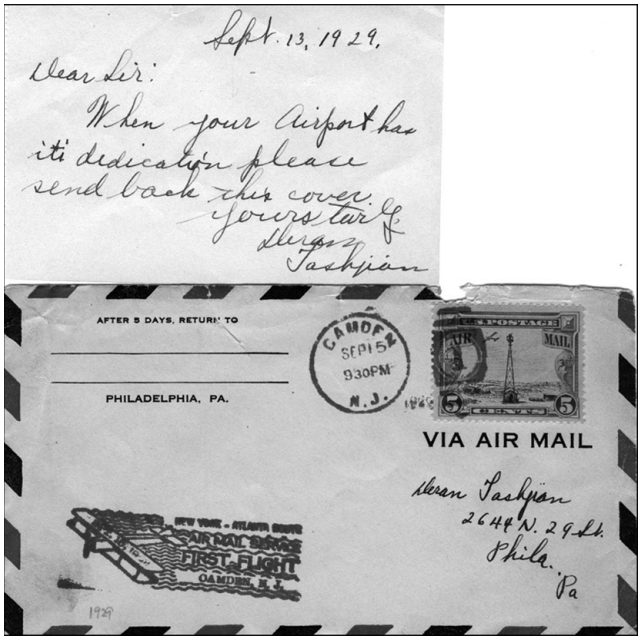


Figure 30 *On Aug 1, 1928 the 'beacon' stamp was released when the airmail rate decreased by 50%. Here it is used for the first flight into Central Airport south from New York to Atlanta (CAM 19), six days before the first outward flight of a plane originating at the Camden field (and this the purpose of the September 21 official dedication. CAM 19 used to land at Bustleton, but was transferred to Camden on this first flight day.*

Airmail Events from 1928 to 1940

Between 1928 and 1940, airmail became relatively routine. After all, Air Mail was 'socially correct'! CAM routes multiplied and the festivities over the tenth anniversary of airmail in May, 1928, strengthened airmail's power. The world was undergoing dramatic political changes, airplane innovation and new air records continued to be set, barnstormers continued to attract thousands, and everyone wanted to take a ride in the sky for a hefty 50 cents or a dollar.

Progress dominated, and allowed PMG Burelson's key principle to reign again: the domestic airmail rate was cut in half from 10 cents to five cents on Aug 1, 1928. The classic red and blue beacon and plane jumbo stamp heralded the event.

Figure 31 *A fine propaganda piece by the USPOD, informing all that writing air mail letters is au courant, perfectly acceptable at all levels of society. It also stresses that extra ounces stuffed into an envelope will cost a premium.*

Airline service across the country grew quickly. New aircraft were introduced that could carry both mail and passengers, in particular the Curtiss T-32 Condor and the 15-seat Tri-motor. Planes became more comfortable with the addition of heating and cooling. Regularly scheduled day and night service was common.

Flying also became easier for the crews with the introduction of the Sperry autopilot and dual flight instruments. Planes could fly longer distances. Overseas airmail routes (FAMs) were introduced as early as 1920, but in 1935, on an airmail flight across the Pacific, a Martin M-130 made a 59-hour flight from San Francisco to Manila in the Philippines. Amazing progress.

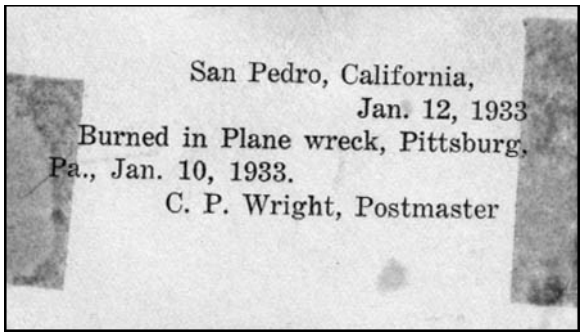

San Pedro, California,
Jan. 12, 1933
Burned in Plane wreck, Pittsburg, Pa., Jan. 10, 1933.
C. P. Wright, Postmaster

Figure 33 *An interesting enclosure offering the San Pedro postmaster's brief explanation of the airmail mishap.*

Wrecks

Sometimes planes crash or just tip over. If they are a mail plane, there is a special effort made to salvage the mail as well as pilot and passengers. Mail that survives is invariably marked in some way on the envelope or nowadays, on the outside of a plastic pouch. The post office takes pride in getting the mail through one way or the other.

Of course the dates and times of cancellation have to coordinate with the accident time, and some sort of evidence must be provided to prove it was actually at the accident scene.

Wreck mail is a specialty for some collectors. Here is one such Philadelphia-related cover that has survived since its ordeal in 1931, along with a clipping and a card from the destination postmaster in San Pedro CA.

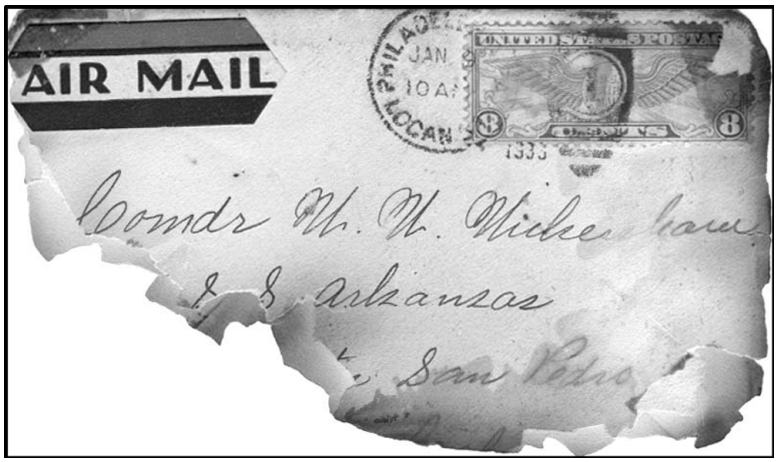


Figure 32 *On January 9, 1933 someone posted a letter from Logan Station to Cmdr. W.W. Wickersham aboard the USS Arkansas in San Pedro CA. Unfortunately a crash and a fire at Pittsburgh PA all but destroyed the communication.*


JENDERS GET SINGED MAIL

100 Airmail Letters are Returned from Wreck in Pittsburg

Charred remains of airmail letters burned in an airplane wreck at Pittsburgh, Pa., January 10, were received in San Pedro yesterday by 100 navy men and local citizens.

The letters, mailed from New York and other eastern cities, in most instances still bore sufficient address to reach their destinations although there were some on which the addresses were entirely destroyed, Capt. C. P. Wright, local postmaster declared today. The majority of the damaged mail which arrived in San Pedro was directed to the navy.

Although the accident occurred Tuesday, the mail was received yesterday, at 10 a. m. and was distributed before 2 p. m. by the local office. Printed explanations of the damaged mail accompanied each parcel distributed.

Figure 34 *A clipping describing the crash and distribution of letters, mainly sent to naval personnel in San Pedro, close to the Naval Station at Long Beach.*

Fluctuating Rates 1928-1944

The 10 cent flat rate replaced the '10 cents per ounce for the first 1000 miles' rate of February 15, 1926 through January 31, 1927. Then beginning on February 1, 1927 through July 31, 1928, the rate was simplified to 10 cents per ½ ounce anywhere in the US. Finally, on August 1, 1928, the prevailing 10 cents per ounce rate was reduced to 5 cents per ½ ounce. However, 10 cents would be charged for each additional ounce (see the poster). Weight was still a factor in 1928 and heavier items were discouraged through high cost.

At last a stable rate, five cents. It will last until Depression costs force a 60% increase in 1932, to eight cents (plus the high penalty for excess weight). The eight cents rate will be crushed by the Black scandal hearings in the Senate. Following them, in June 1934, the rate is reduced 25% to six cents. The eight and six cent rates warranted the purple and orange wide flying globe stamps respectively. The six cent rate remains in effect a full 10 years, when civilians will be asked to pay an extra two cents more or less as a war tax. Soldiers and sailors stateside still could pay only six cents.

Quantities of new CAM routes and connecting spur routes began to fill the skies and the POD rosters. These flights at first invariably included paying customers going to visit Aunt Sue, that is after all where commercial air carriers had learned to make their big money. But the events of late 1929 would cast a dismal shadow over flying as it will with all other aspects of life.

The Wall Street crash and resulting Great Depression meant fewer passengers, but meant more people had more time on their hands, and a variety of philatelic interests blossomed. Not the least of these were civic events connected with flying, These provided cachets, more air races to entertain, and Army Air Corps flights to impress.

Philadelphia events before the war

In Philadelphia, a handful of events were captured with cachets. This experience no doubt is mirrored across the country. Other things were on people's minds, not the glad times of the twenties. To mention a couple:

- The return of the Richard E.Byrd Expedition was welcomed with a cachet on July 1, 1930. Later on Oct 25, 1930, the precursor to TWA began flying a New York-Los Angeles inaugural flight as **CAM 34**, Transcontinental and Western Air Inc.

Figure 35 *Hog Island is where hundreds of Liberty ships were rapidly built during WWI, and the 'hoagie' sandwich (='Hog-gies', the Hog Island workers' nickname) indicates the way the diligent workers ate while they worked.*

- This curious item from the depths of the Depression probably marks the beginnings of the 1938 D. Wilson-1940 Philadelphia Municipal Airport. **HOG ISLAND / Philadelphia Airport / Dedication Jan. 21, 1931 / Greater Eastwick Improvement Assn**.

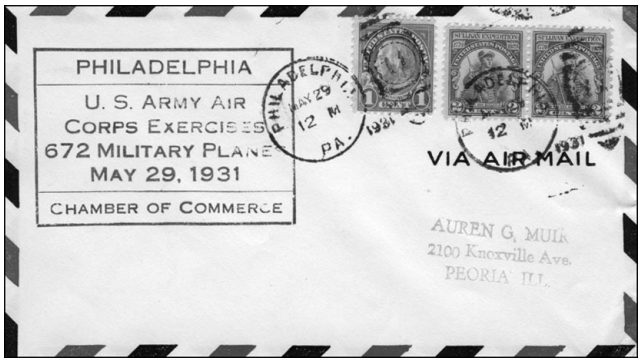


Figure 36 *An air letter sent to Peoria IL perhaps by a Chamber of Commerce member to a collector friend, or maybe an old air corps buddy who fought with him in 'the big one'. The 672 planes, if they truly were present must have made a astonishing sight and incredible sound. At today's gas prices, what would it cost to keep 'em all flying for just one hour?*

- Army airmen spread the Army word at air races such as **PH—A / U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS / EXERCISES / 672 MILITARY PLANES / MAY 29, 1931 / CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**. Whether they got any recruits out of these shows is questionable, but it would have been an exciting experience.

- On September 12-3, 1931, The **AMERICAN LEGION AIR MEET / Sponsored by / GEORGE H. IMHOFF POST / SEPT. 12 and 13 / 1931 / PH—A CHAMBER OF COM-**

MERCE thrilled the crowds, no doubt even those who hadn't worked in months

• On January 10, 1933 the **Aero Club of PENNSYLVANIA** issued a handwritten (duplicated?) cachet marking the 140th Anniversary of the 1793 first balloon ascent, from Philadelphia across the Delaware to New Jersey. The 1933 commemoration didn't use a balloon however, but one of those odd autogiros (more later). With it, the original balloon route could be copied exactly. The covers were mailed at touchdown from Clementon NJ.

• **AM 19** , the Army Emergency Flight from New York to Miami, but these can only be identified by carefully coordinating postmarks and backstamps. The initial flight was on February 19, 1934 and then through to early May.

• An experimental glider flight made headlines: the **First Official Lustig Sky Train Flt** between New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, on Aug 2, 1934.

Cities across the nation created similar event covers by the hundreds, many of which were connected with air(mail) developments.

The Scandal and Army Air Corps Mail

The Hoover administration wasn't doing much to solve the grave problems afoot in the land during their four years so the people chose Franklin D. Roosevelt in a landslide victory.

Hoover appointed Walter F. Brown as his Post Master General, who thought that much of the airmail system was inefficient and costly. He wanted to change postal policy. Former Assistant Secretary of Commerce MacCracken assisted because he was now an airlines lobbyist. The resulting Air Mail Act of 1930 gave Brown near dictatorial powers over air transport.

• Airmail carriers (usually small planes) would now be paid up to $1.25 per mile just for having a cargo capacity on their planes of a certain size, whether or not they actually carried any mail! So there was no incentive to carry mail at all. An airline could easily get additional revenue by carrying passengers, so they had the incentive instead to use larger planes better suited for carrying people.

• Another provision said that any airmail carrier that had flown mail for two years or more could exchange its CAM contract for a "route certificate", guaranteed good for 10 years.

• And a third provision, which was the most vexing to many, gave the PMG the power to "extend or consolidate" routes whenever he deemed it to be "in the public interest."

Within two weeks of the law's signing, at the so-called Spoils Conference, Brown unilaterally consolidated airline routes down to only three. These evolved into United Airlines (the northern airmail route); Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT) and Western Air Express merged to form Transcontinental and Western (TWA) (the middle route across the US); and American Airways (the southern route). Competition ceased.

Brown awarded bonuses if the airlines carried increased passenger loads, and even more money if they bought larger aircraft powered by more than one engine and were equipped with two-way radios and navigation aids.

CAM Corruption?

After FDR's victory, Senator Hugo Black (D-AL, later Supreme Court Justice) formed a committee to investigate this airmail scheme. In January 1934, he began hearings in which Brown and the large airlines were shown as greedy and corrupt. Black called the process of giving contracts "spoils" and said the business had gone to friends of the Hoover administration.

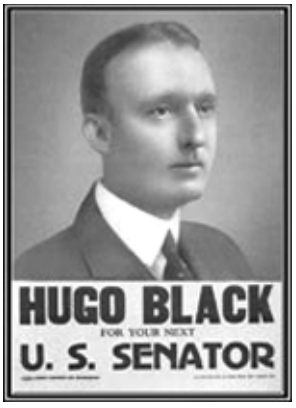


Figure 37 *Senator Black of Alabama (later Supreme Court Justice) fought what he saw as collusion and fraud between former PMG Brown and the airline industry. At the cost of competition, Brown did create a more efficient air service.*

However, during Brown's tenure, there was efficiency. Aircraft had decreased the cost of carrying mail and it fell dramatically. In 1933, expenses averaged 54 cents per mile within a system of 34 CAM routes spanning 27,000 miles.

Serious questions were raised over the legality of the contracts, so on February 19, 1934, President Roosevelt canceled all CAM contracts. In the meantime he ordered the Army to fly the mail—after all, they had done so in 1918-19.

PMG Farley reduced the airmail route system to 9,000 miles to cut costs but these changes proved a disaster. Inexperienced army pilots were killed flying aircraft that had no landing lights or navigation instruments like those mandated for civilian aircraft. By March 10, 12 pilots were dead in 66 crashes or forced landings. Costs to fly the mail quadrupled, rising to $2.21 per mile.

On May 8, Roosevelt and Farley resumed private CAM airmail, but with conditions attached. In particular, no airline that had held a contract before the government takeover could still operate. To circumvent these rules, the airlines simply changed their names. American Airways became American Air Lines, Northwest Airways became Northwest Airlines, Eastern Air Transport became Eastern Air Lines, and Transcontinental and Western changed to Trans World Airlines, and Boeing Air Transport became United Air Lines. Ah, politics.

Still not satisfied, on June 12, 1934, Senator Black introduced what became the Air Mail Act of 1934. Its main stipulation broke up holding companies that owned both aircraft manufacturing and airlines. The government would re-set airmail contracts, routes, and schedules, fix airmail payments; regulate the airways across the US through the Federal Aviation Commission, and license pilots.

1930's Developments

Mention must be made of the highly commercialized and short-lived Graf Zeppelin stamps issued on April 19, 1930. They were rapidly withdrawn from circulation on June 30, 1930, following the Pan-American Europe flight in May. Based on the legs flown, the stamp values of 65 cents, $1.30 and $2.60 were spectacular and a boon to stamp collecting. They are in the realm of foreign air service rather than domestic air mail, our concern here.

The little brother to the foregoing three issues, the 50c Century of Progress stamp released at the World's Fair in Chicago, was issued October 2, 1933, again in honor of the Graf Zeppelin. One major difference since 1930 however, is that this trip was simultaneously an American celebration and a continuing triumph for the German Nazi Party.

It was elected to power nine months earlier. The stamp paid for special flights between Akron, Miami, Chicago and Germany.

Two years later in 1935, another airmail plateau will be reached when the China Clipper carries passengers and mail to Hawaiian Territory, the Philippines, and beyond to China itself. The 25 cent blue Trans-Pacific issue shows the Clipper flying west from the sunrise and America.

But returning to domestic air mail, the next hurdle will be an inadvertent reach back to the past. In 1934, following the scandals and insinuations of impropriety at the POD, the authorities decided once again to recognize the value of air mail service when combined with special delivery. However, this time the special delivery aspect was no longer the come-on it had been with the air service of 1918.

Figure 38 *On August 30, 1934, this philatelic FDC was sent from Chicago to Akron. The stamp was appropriately released at, and this cover sent from, the American Air Mail Society Convention held in Chicago.*

Standard air mail was wonderfully expeditious and sped up normal first class delivery to distant points by at least a day or two. Still, certain items absolutely, positively had to get there 'yesterday'. Thus, for convenience sake, the blue Great Seal of the United States Air Mail-Special Delivery (CE1) stamp appeared across counters on August 30, 1934. The six cents air mail rate plus the 10 cent special delivery rate make up the otherwise odd 16 cent denomination.

Perhaps the creative PMG James Farley, or stamp collector Franklin Roosevelt himself, felt the Great Seal deserved better than a monotone of color. On February 10, 1936, shortly after FDR's second inauguration, and 18 months after the original CE1, CE2 was re-issued, but now it was a eye-catching blast of red and blue. It

could never be construed for any other current denomination, similar to the 24 cent Jenny and the 1928 airplane-and-beacon stamp.

Experiments and Trials

In the engineering realm, in Philadelphia and elsewhere, the POD and interested entrepreneurs continued to improve planes. The Pitcairn firm who sponsored CAM 19, then had it taken under PMG Brown, was still interested in aircraft and mail. Their new concept was the *autogiro*, already used for the first balloon ascent anniversary in 1933.

They were small airplanes with stubby wings and a non-powered helicopter-like overhead prop. Without an engine, the overhead prop would not hover. Instead, forward motion was made by way of a standard propeller that caused the overhead rotary blades to spin. This provided additional lift and required only a short distance to taxi and take off. These vehicles flew as part of the Eastern Airlines system.

They were part of the celebration of the new, gargantuan Philadelphia Post Office on May 25, 1935. The **FIRST IN-BOUND AIR-MAIL DISPATCHED / FROM CAMDEN,N.J. LANDING ON ROOF / OF NEW PHILA. GENERAL POST OFFICE / VIA AUTOGIRO** made its debut. The post office now claimed to be the first rooftop post office (for the autogiros), with rail, light rail, boat, truck, car, and pedestrian access.

Another governmental experiment was coded as Route 1001. It proposed to speed mail even faster by not having to land. Using a old time flying circus trick, a plane with a catch arm swept low to capture mailbags sus-

Figure 39 *On May 25, 1935, amidst Depression casualties on every corner, the Philadelphia PO opened to great fanfare. Autogiros flew to the roof, train, trolleys, truck and cars all had easy access to this major edifice. Many who had spent years working on it would now join the unemployed.*

Figure 40 *Philadelphia Municipal Airport officially an AMF, replaced the Philadelphia-Camden Central Airport as the area's major airport on June 19. 1940. Note the faulty July handstamp, corrected by the owner returning the cover for the proper June date. The Camden airport had two 1000 foot runways, this one starts with three 5000 feet and one 4500 feet long.*

pended from a rope strung across two very high "goal posts". This would allow non-stop mail pickup and delivery service similar to the catch arms on trains. All American Aviation Inc. handled this trial which included Philadelphia in the test on May 14, 1939.

All American Airways Company made 23,000 mail pickups this way along two routes out of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and won a contract to continue the service for 10 years. By the summer of 1941, the line was serving more than 100 locations and picking up some 400,000 pieces of mail each month. All American could not get the Civil Aeronautics Board to extend the service across the country so it was a declining enterprise which finally closed its pickup doors in 1949 in favor of a passengers-only policy.

On July 6, 1939, yet another experimental Route, 2001, was inaugurated. It was another experimental shuttle service via autogiro from the roof of the four year old Philadelphia GPO to the nearby Central (Camden) Airport, and return. The contract was Eastern Air Lines. Three round trips were necessary due to the maximum of 150 pounds of mail per load. The shuttle was later suspended as unprofitable.

With Europe at war now, on October 13, 1939, Philadelphia officially begin mail delivery to and from Camden's Central airport via Philadelphia's 'Rooftop Post Office' at 30th and Market Streets. A Hutnick event cover cachet reads: "Unique Roof Postoffice - First Day Postal Service ... Will operate in conjunction with the Autogiro Mail Shuttle Line Between the Postoffice and Central Airport, Camden, New Jersey". (Others say this service was eventually to send mail directly to Wash-

Figure 41 *In the early '40's, fifteen foot high letters spelled out PHILADELPHIA that no pilot could miss and what look to be DC-3's sit at attention for this photo. Not many cars compared to today, this county like airport has been transformed into Philadelphia International.*

ington DC. Perhaps the DC portion of the service developed during wartime, or perhaps it was dropped as a luxury we couldn't afford?

When autogiro shuttle service passed into history is not precisely known. Was shuttle service ended in, say, 1940, because of war jitters and economies, or as late as mid-1942 when superfluous flights were suspended, or…?

Philadelphia AMF, 1940

After many years of anticipation, on June 19, 1940, Philadelphia's very own Air Mail Field was born. It was the existing Wilson-Metropolitan ("Southwest") Airport, ultimately Philadelphia International Airport in south Philadelphia. The region's primary artery for air traffic was transferred back across the Delaware River.

Camden AMF was terminated June 20, 1940, one day after Philadelphia Municipal Airport's own AMF was established. According to the *American Air Mail Catalogue*, on June 19, 1940, the Philadelphia AMF opened with a work force detailed from the 30th Street Terminal RPO. By November 1, it had become a permanent installation administered by the Railway Mail Service with ten clerks. John Kay:

When war came things changed. Around mid-1942, the air field itself was closed because there was an ammunition loading installation for ships bound for Europe at Fort Mifflin, located alongside the air field. Sabotage from the air was a real possibility. The mail service kept its name Philadelphia AMF, but it operated out of the Philadelphia railway terminal. They used their own supervisors and sent their mail bags to Northeast Philadelphia Airport, which remained in operation. After the war the AMF staff returned to Southwest Airport.

Revised Route 5 to Miami (the former AM 19) came along with the transfer. On July 20, 1940 Eastern Airlines officially changed its Designated Field from Camden to Philadelphia. As happened the year before, all covers canceled at Philadelphia AMF were erroneously canceled July 20 instead of June 20, and as the year before, any covers returned to the AMF were properly re-canceled.

World War II

The advent of the war stopped most of life in its tracks. Philadelphia had a problem probably similar to other large military-related cities. For its long-awaited Southwest / Municipal / Mayor S. Davis Wilson Airport, the most expansive place was in far south Philadelphia, where few people lived due to its extensive marshes. Nearby were the Philadelphia Navy Yard, the Marine barracks, and the US Naval Hospital.

After Pearl Harbor was attacked in late 1941, attention to sneak attack and sabotage was ever present. And so flights into the fledgling Philadelphia airport were forced to close for the duration. Approaching airport aircraft might really intend to drop bombs and spies

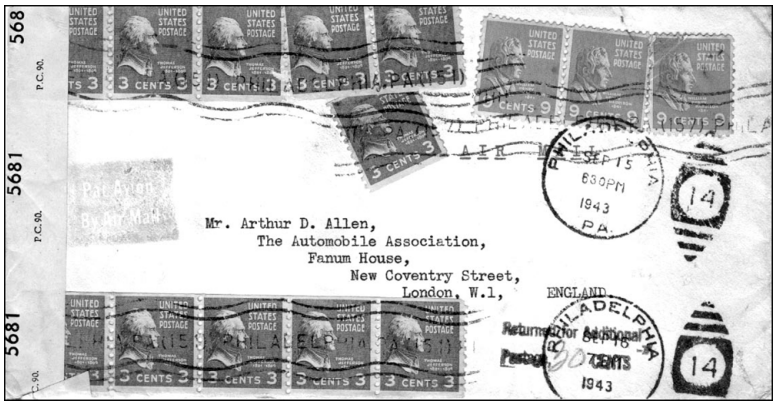


Figure 42 *Ostensibly a priority mail item, this September 15, 1943 letter was flown to England along with military mail. But to the Automobile Association? Perhaps some corporate bigwig needed a wartime favor. It was a double letter so it was returned for 30 more cents postage.*

could gain valuable information from flying nearby. Northeast airport, close to the old Flying Dutchman would stand in for Municipal until the war's end.

There was little philatelic activity during the war aside from fascination with APO addresses maybe; the POD issued few new designs. Priority mail that had to fly overseas went via military plane, many CAM and FAM planes like ships were requisitioned for the war effort leaving a skeleton force for mail work at home. Besides, rationing severely limited aviation and all other fuels.

Apparently only one event is associated with Philadelphia at this time, and that was a glider flight whose cachet reads: First Delivery Flight of the XLRA-1 Transport Glider to the Navy Yard from Baltimore. This was cancelled at 7PM on May 6, 1943. This was military mail.

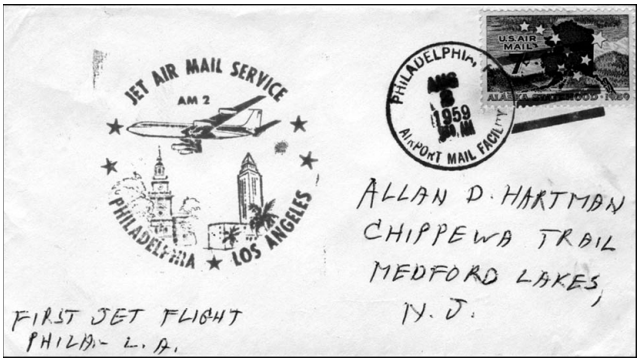


Figure 43 *The first jet out of Philadelphia was a TWA jet for Los Angeles on August 2, 1959. It's a sloppy cover but it did fly the route (AM 2) like it says.*

Post war times

In Philadelphia, the first important post-Hitler civic act for many Philadelphians was the re-dedication of the Municipal Airport six weeks after the European war's close. The cachet reads: **PHILADELPHIA - /Port of the Air World / AVIATION WEEK / JUNE 23 - JULY 1** and **Dedication Day, June 26, 1945.** Airmail returned to normal and improved in efficiency.

CAM flights resumed with expanded routes that brought passenger service and a faster mail response than ever before the war. Many of the common names that lasted for fifty or more years are gone now. New names took their places, other were swallowed in corporate takeovers in the last two decades after deregulation.

By 1947, domestic U.S. airmail covered 43,411 miles whereas railroad mail service had declined. From 1956 to 1961, the number of mail trains was cut in half to 1,300, and by 1968 there were just 46 trains carrying mail. By comparison, CAM and FAM planes flew 2.2 billion pieces of airmail but 17 billion pieces of first class mail to 500 cities and towns.

Jet planes entered the airmail service in early 1960s. Philadelphia's first jet flight was TWA service from Philadelphia to Los Angeles on August 2, 1959 (AM 2).

By the late 1960s, the Post Office had begun to bag airmail with regular first class mail, consolidating the two categories of mail. In early 1965 the Philadelphia Air Mail Facility had grown to 116 persons. By mid-1969, 153 served the 342 daily flights in and out of Philadelphia with an average dispatch of 13.8 million pounds of airmail and 23.3 million pounds of first class outbound mail. The distinction between airmail and standard first class mail had already become blurred. PMG Burleson would shake his head with an 'I told you so' pride to see that aircraft had such an impact on mail dispatch.

FAM

Foreign Air Mail flights resumed after the war with a vengeance and routes multiplied. Middle East oil and the tentacles of American global business were a major cause, and travelers who had heard war stories and wanted to see different places for themselves made an impression too. Together they made these routes possible. American planes were seen in capitals everywhere and collectors were there to monitor and gather cacheted covers as a mark of their country's unique, far reaching economic might.

Figure 44 *An exotic cachet shows that this letter will fly to Bombay on FAM 27 with a stopover at Lydda, Palestine and be returned to the sender. It was sent under cover from St. Albans, NY, to be held at the Philadelphia AMF for departure day. Note the postage twenty-five cents to go half way around the world. Today that would barely send a greeting postal up the street to grandma.*

The planes naturally carried mail, which helped grease the wheels of international business and lead toward today's globalization. The first FAM flight after the war from Philadelphia was American Airlines to London on Nov 23, 1945. An example to Bombay from January 5, 1947 is illustrated.

Beginning of the end

In Philadelphia and no doubt all other cities, ordinary letter mail was deemed impractical for airmail field personnel to handle, so responsibility for non-airmail was transferred to the General Post Office at 30th Street in 1971.

Four years later in 1975, all first class mail was upgraded to air dispatch mail. This means that first class mail would be sent via plane if distance mandated it and if air transport were available. Shortly, airmail rates themselves would be discontinued.

By October 1975, there were 12,000 daily flights that carried 1.3 billion pounds per year.

So what's a collector of airmail to do in a field of overwhelming numbers yet declining complexity? The American Air Mail Society has this answer:

> In an era like the present when air service has become the norm and fewer contemporary first flight covers are available, reworking the material of the developmental period in newer ways opens limitless possibilities.

Carrying the mail by air during the previous 50 years had succeeded to such an extent that airmail as we'd known it became obsolete. The specific measure, ironically, was announced on airmail's sixtieth birthday in 1978. From that point on, all mail would be sent by plane, for that was obviously the fastest and most convenient way to move tons of mail matter.

Between October and December 1975, the airmail rate was made to coincide with first class rates. Domestic airmail stamps disappeared again, as happened in 1919. But PMG Burleson was not all knowing.

He could not foretell that the gains achieved by streamlining airmail with first class mail, the commonsense goal he had set for the country, would one day fall to a more potent force. And for this power, not even the US Postal Service need apply.

Most of us were ignorant of it just ten years ago: the sly, quiet, overpowering force that will eventually do away entirely with all physical mail is eMail. How many have you the reader sent in the past week. Multiply that by today's 39 cents first class rate. The USPS is about to starve to death.

And now for more irony. During the month of November 1975, halfway into the conversion period of domestic airmail to first class-by-air mail, a young fellow called Bill created a name for his new hi-tech start up company. That name? "Micro-soft".

P. S. Human Nature

On the chart you can see the final transition away from domestic airmail as a category. Between 1974 and 1975, the domestic airmail rate stood at 13 cents. On October 11, 1975, air mail rates decreased for two months to 10 cents, to coincide with standard 10 cent first class mail rate.

On December 28, 1975 through May 1, 1977, first class rose to 13 cents, but air mail service was included for mail going long—beyond truck driving—distances. However, human nature being what it is, sufficient people felt that "airmail" would get the message through faster. Yet there was no airmail, per se, any more. Nevertheless, to satisfy clientele, the POD issued a 17 cent illusory, redundant, domestic airmail stamp to satisfy those patrons who wouldn't accept airmail's demise. Presumably the most cynical patron with distant relatives could comprehend the new system by May 2, 1977.

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First Class Airmail Letter Rates

May 15, 1918 - Jul 13, 1918	24c / oz, incl. Spec. Delivery
Jul 15, 1918 - Dec 14, 1918	16c / oz, incl. Spec. Delivery
Dec 15, 1918 - Jul 17, 1919	6c / oz, no Spec. Delivery
Jul 18, 1919 - Feb 15, 1926	2c / oz, space available basis
Jun 30 / Jul 1, '24 -Jan 31, '27	8c per Zone used
Jul 1, 1925 - Jan 31, 1927	10c / oz overnight NY to Chicago
Feb 15, 1926 - Jan 31, 1927	10c / oz per CAM route used to 1000 mi; 5c/oz for each added gov't Zone
Sep 15, 1926 - Jan 31, 1927	15c / oz each CAM over 1000 mi
Feb 1, 1927 - Jul 31, 1928	10c / ½ oz uniform rate CAM, gov't, or combination
Aug 1, 1928 - Jul 5, 1932	5c / oz plus 10c per add'l oz
Jul 6, 1932 - Jun 30, 1934	8c / oz, plus 13c per add'l oz
Jul 1, 1934 - Mar 25, 1944	6c / oz
Mar 26, 1944 - Sep 30, 1946	8c / oz, civilian wartime rate
Oct 1, 1946 - Dec 31, 1948	5c / oz
Jan 1, 1949 - Jul 31, 1958	6c / oz
Aug 1, 1958 - Jan 6, 1963	7c / oz
Jan 8, 1963 - Jan 6, 1968	8c / oz
Jan 7, 1968 - May 15, 1971	10c / oz
May 16, 1971 - Mar 1, 1974	11c / oz
Mar 2, 1974 - Oct 10, 1975	13c / oz
Oct 11, 1975 - Dec 27, 1975	10c / oz, Air & First Class merger
Dec 28, 1975 - May 1, 1977	13c / oz, first class rate, air incl.
Dec 28, 1975 - May 1, 1977	17c / oz, redundancy rate

Domestic airmail post card Rates

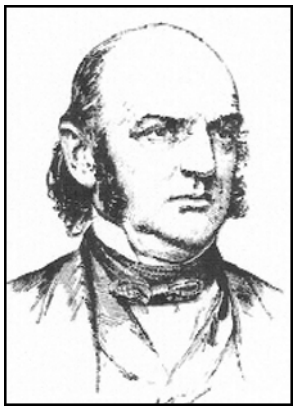
to Dec 31,1949	none	standard post card rate
Jan 1, 1949 - Jul 31, 1958	4c	new rate class begun
Aug 1, 1958 - Jan 6, 1963	5c	
Jan 7, 1963 - Jan 6, 1968	6c	
Jan 7, 1968 - May 15, 1971	8c	
May 16, 1971 - Mar 1, 1974	9c	
Mar 2, 1974 - Oct 10, 1975	11c	
Oct 11, 1975- Dec 27, 1975	7c	standard postcard rate rate merger
Dec 28, 1975- May 28, 1978	9c	standard postcard with air service included
Dec 28, 1975- May 1, 1977	14c	"Air Mail rate" (discouraged redundancy rate)

POSTMASTERS GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

XXII. Alexander W. Randall, 1866-1869

by Daniel Y. Meschter

President Andrew Johnson didn't have to look far to replace William Dennison when he resigned as Postmaster General on July 16, 1866. It was a simple matter to appoint Alexander Randall, the incumbent first assistant who strongly supported Johnson in his disputes with the Radical Republican bloc. It was only the second time that a first assistant was elevated to Postmaster General, but it would become a more common practice in the future.



Alexander William Randall

Just when Randall took office to succeed John Kasson as First Assistant Postmaster General is not clear. Kasson was elected to Congress from Iowa in the October 12, 1862 election and Montgomery Blair accepted his resignation on October 22nd. Blair, however, then appointed Kasson a special agent in the Post Office Department the same day to perform essentially the same duties he would have carried out had he continued as first assistant, plus preparing for the Paris Postal Conference in May 1863 to which he was to be the United States' delegate. It was not urgent, therefore, for Blair to name a successor until Kasson stepped down as special agent on March 4, 1863. Meanwhile, Randall was in Rome serving as Minister to the Papal States and either was appointed while still in Rome or upon his return from Italy that spring.

Alexander Williams Randall was born on October 31, 1819 in Ames, New York, a village about forty-five miles west of Albany. He was the son of Phineas Randall, a native of Massachusetts, Harvard graduate, and lawyer who moved to the Mohawk Valley in 1818. Alexander finished his secondary education at the well-regarded Cherry Valley Academy and read law in his father's office before being admitted to the bar as soon as he reached legal age[1]. That same year, 1841, he moved to Prairieville, now Waukesha, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee where he established a law office with his brother Edwin. His father joined him there some years later.

Randall, however, preferred politics to law and soon switched his loyalty from the Whig Party to the territory's growing Democratic majority. As a Democrat he swiftly progressed from Waukesha postmaster, county attorney, delegate to the territory's first constitutional convention at which he urged a separate referendum on the issue of black suffrage, to member of the State Assembly. However, both the Constitution of 1846 which he helped write and his suffrage proposal were rejected by the voters. He shifted his political loyalty again in 1855 when the Republican Party nominated him for attorney general. Failing in that, the newly elected Republican governor appointed him a circuit court judge for Milwaukee. When the governor's administration collapsed due to malfeasance in office, Randall's sterling reputation and Democratic background threw him into the forefront of the 1857 gubernatorial election. He was elected by a razor-thin majority to the first of two terms and a permanent place in Wisconsin history. With the secession of the southern states and the outbreak of the Civil War, he spoke out for Unionism in noble phrases. Although he was not successful in everything he proposed as governor, he avoided the mistakes Dennison made in Ohio under similar circumstances and raised fifteen infantry regiments, ten artillery batteries, and three cavalry units. His ambition after leaving office was a high-level military appointment, but Lincoln named him to a diplomatic post in Rome instead and, on his return, to First Assistant Postmaster General.

As first assistant, Randall served twelve or fourteen months longer under Montgomery Blair and then almost two years under Dennison during which he gained a thorough knowledge of the Post Office Department's organization and hands-on experience managing postal operations few Postmasters General had before taking office. Meanwhile he became a strong supporter of Andrew Johnson. He played a key role in the National Union Convention in 1866 at which Johnson attempted to create a fusion of Democrats and moderate Republicans to promote a temperate Reconstruction policy and support the rights of minorities. Two years later he testified for the defense at Johnson's impeachment trial. He was ready and well-prepared to take over when Dennison resigned to protest Johnson's intemperate

reactions to his Radical Republican opposition. Johnson appointed Randall Postmaster General on July 25, 1866 to serve out the rest of his term.

Randall proved to be a competent administrator more interested in tying up loose ends and improving the efficiency of postal operations than introducing new innovations. Among his first priorities was the reopening of post offices in the southern states to continue, as he thought, Dennison's plan for reestablishing postal service in the South. Dennison oversaw the reopening of about 2,778 offices by the time he resigned on July 15, 1866 and Randall another 456 from then to November 1st[2]. The majority of these, of course, were in the larger cities and towns that could provide competent postmasters and clerks, preferably untainted by southern loyalty, and at least temporary quarters pending the construction of new post offices where needed. Randall observed that most of the five or six thousand post offices remaining in the South had been "suspended" by Blair's May 1861 order, but not "regularly discontinued" in the usual sense, either (1867 Report, p. 21). Further, the Treasury auditor for the Post Office Department reported that these offices had failed to file returns during the intervening five years and recommended they be formally discontin-ued to allow him to close their postmasters' accounts on his books. Altogether, Randall discontinued 6,111 post offices at one fell swoop, the majority of which were in the South, in effect "balancing the books" with respect to the southern post offices and, in his view, returning everything to normal. After this he reported re-openings as the establishment of new post offices in the usual course of business. In the meantime, he noticed that the salaries of the clerks and laborers in the Post Office Department had been frozen during the war while their cost of living doubled due to war time inflation. He recommended their salaries be raised and Congress readily acceded.

Managing the transcontinental mails was more complicated. On August 15, 1866, pending completion of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway to connect with the Union Pacific at Council Bluffs, Randall ordered the California mails routed to the continuous rail link via St. Louis to Junction City, Kansas and thence by stage via Denver, a route over which one or two San Francisco mails arrived in New York City in nineteen days, a new record. With the completion of the Chicago and Northwestern to Council Bluffs and the Union Pacific driving for North Platte, on November 13th he ordered all California mails routed via Chicago and Omaha (1866 Report, p. 4). These alternate routes allowed mail to be diverted to the Smoky Hill route when Indian depredations in early and mid 1867 prevented normal operations over the Platte River route and precluded service entirely on the Northern Route from St. Paul to Helena, Montana. In the absence of a southern route, Randall ordered the route from La Mesilla (New Mexico) to Tucson extended to Los Angeles. By the next year the Wyandotte line was completed to Hays City, Kansas and the Union Pacific to Cheyenne while in California the Central Pacific was 90 miles out of Sacramento heading for the high Sierras (1867 Report, p. 14).

In the meantime, the Railway Mail Service was slowly increasing from 18 routes in 1867 to 26 in 1868 with new lines being opened as rapidly as the construction and consolidation of major intercity railroads allowed. In the east rail links made possible through mails from both Washington and New York to Chicago and others to Cincinnati and St. Louis. Of especial importance, the Southwestern Route, a 1,280-mile all-rail line from Washington to New Orleans via eastern Tennessee over eight connecting railroads, had an average transit time of 3¼ days for about a third of its daily southbound trips in 1867 (1967 Report, pp. 11-12).

Randall's annual reports indicate he had considerable concern about the rates of pay and the weights of mails on railroad routes. In his 1867 Report (pp. 6-10) he used existing rate legislation as a basis for circulating a "railroad weight circular" to every railroad carrying mail to report the weight of all mails carried in both directions to and from every station on their lines for thirty consecutive days. His objective was the "systematic revision and readjust-ment of the rates of pay on railroad routes . . ., based upon returns of the weight of the mails conveyed and the accommodations provided for mails and agents of the department," in accordance with existing legislation. He did succeed in adjusting rates on railroad routes where the data justified, but he deferred evaluation of an act of Congress amending the existing railroad rate legislation proposed by a "committee on mail service" appointed at a national railroad convention to his successor, John A.J. Creswell (1868 Report, pp. 8-10).

Meanwhile, Randall was overseeing important developments in foreign mail operations including inauguration of service to China (1866 Report, p. 7-8). Dennison observed in his 1865 Report (p. 5) that there had been no progress in negotiations with European nations on the basis of the resolutions adopted at the

Paris Postal Conference, but that conventions with Venezuela and Columbia only awaited preparation of formal documents. A convention with Italy was ratified in 1866 and negotiations opened with Brazil to formalize the new service inaugurated in October 1865. Earlier in July 1865 Great Britain served notice to terminate the Treaty of December 15, 1848 simultaneously with the expiration of its mail subsidy contract with the Cunard Line on January 1, 1868, together with assurances of its desire to enter into a new convention on a more liberal basis (1866 Report, p. 6). Almost certainly on the basis of these assurances, Randall and his chief of the Foreign Mail Service outlined a new convention more than a year before the termination date.

Pending formal negotiations with the British Post Office in May and June 1867, Randall took this opportunity to establish enlarged postal facilities with reduced and uniform rates to the Continent as well. In the meantime, the French government invited Randall to send a special delegate to Paris to negotiate a new postal convention between the United States and France (1868 Report, p. 17). Fortuitously, John A. Kasson failed in his campaign for nomination to the 40th Congress and was available following the adjournment of the 39th Congress on March 3, 1867. Randall arranged for his appointment as a special commissioner on April 5, 1867 primarily to proceed to Paris in response to the French invitation and incidentally to negotiate new postal conventions with Great Britain, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the North German Union, and Italy, all subject to the approval of the Postmaster General (1867 Report, pp. 15-17). His choice for this assignment, of course, was based on his former in-house experience as a first assistant postmaster general, delegate to the Paris Postal Conference, and former member of Congress. He had notable success in his meetings with the other six nations; but his mission to the French almost predictably failed, the French post apparently being unwilling to accept the more liberal provisions and improved procedures in the conventions being approved by virtually all other nations. Randall thereupon gave notice of termination of the existing convention, effective February 1, 1869, but had little hope negotiations in the interim would succeed before he left office.

The features of the convention Kasson concluded with Great Britain on June 18, 1867, to take effect on January 1, 1868, included reducing the international letter rate by half from 24¢ to 12¢ U.S., removing restrictions on printed matter and samples, making prepayment of postage optional with a penalty charged for unpaid letters on delivery, and limiting transit fees on letters in closed mails to one-half the interior rate or 1½¢ in the United States and one-half penny in Great Britain. It was further provided that each country would be responsible for conveying their mail dispatches to the other on "well appointed ships, sailing on stated days, and [paying] the owners of such ships for the conveyance of the mails which it despatches (sic)." A major setback was dividing the postage on international correspondence equally between the countries of origin and receipt instead of each retaining all the postage it collected as the United States proposed. The British Post Office, however, exercised its option to terminate the new convention after only one year, as of December 31, 1868, and sent a representative, the famed novelist Anthony Trollope, to Washington to negotiate a new agreement which, it turned out, contained only minor amendment. The new conventions with the nations other than France were substantially alike except for details peculiar to each country such methods of transportation, routing, standard weights, and monetary equivalents. Kasson's mission to Europe was a great success in obtaining broad acceptance of many of the provisions and processes that would be universally adopted in the General Postal Union still in its planning stage.

Lastly, Randall showed an unusual degree of objectivity in how the Post Office Department should be financed. Most of his predecessors with the notable exceptions of Meigs and McLean, to a greater or lesser degree held to the theory that the Post Office Department should be self-supporting, that is to at least break even if not generate a surplus, and Aaron Brown took offense when the Senate demanded to know what changes in the law would make the Post Office self-sustaining. Even Blair realized the surpluses in 1863 and 1864 occurred only after effect was given to Treasury credits for free matter.

In justification of $1,550,000 Congress appropriated in 1866 to subsidize the California overland mail and the steamship service to China and Brazil in addition to the deficiency appropriations it started enacting in 1841 and allowances for the exercise of the franking privilege by government offices since 1847, Randall wrote, "It has always been an erroneous theory in the history of the postal service of the United States that it was established on the principle of wholly defraying its own expenses out of its own revenues; or, in other words, on the principle that it should be self-supporting," and concluded that the postal service "has done more to aid in developing the resources of the country than anything else

except the cultivation of the soil" (1866 Report, p. 15)[3]. It was his view that the postal service was in the national interest and that "it would not do" to demand that "that no mail route shall be opened, or post office established, until the business on the proposed route or of the proposed office shall pay all expenses." He returned to the subject in his last report in which he discussed how postal deficits, especially as a proportion of revenues had decreased steadily from the record deficits in 1859, -60, and -61 to a mere 3.3% of revenues in 1868 and actually yielded a 3.7% surplus in 1867, notwithstanding the service being much greater. He concluded that "The idea that the Post Office Department can be self-sustaining, in the present condition of the country, is absurd." (1868 Report, pp. 29-30)

Randall, however, did not mean that the Post Office should never become self-supporting. Rather, he viewed the economic development of the United States as a work in progress during which it was unreasonable to assume that the postal service would pay for itself. Instead of the new legislation its proponents advocated, Randall decided that the rapid growth of the postal service since the last reorganization of the Department by the Act of July 2, 1836[4] justified a new plan of organization he said he would prepare and submit to Congress for its approval. With only three months left in office Randall had little time to prepare anything as complex as a departmental plan of organization let alone submit it to Congress. What was more, it took his successor, John A.J. Creswell, more than three years to write *An Act to revise, consolidate and amend the Statutes relating to the Post Office Department* and get it through the Congress[5].

Randall stepped down at the end of Johnson's term of office upon the inauguration of U.S. Grant on March 4, 1869. He then took a lengthy trip across Asia; but time was running out when he opened a law practice in Elmira along New York's southern border with Pennsylvania. He died there on July 26, 1872 at the age of 52, only three years after leaving public life.

Endnotes

1 See Vexler; *National Cyclopedia,* v. 2, 1899, p. 458; *Appleton's Encyclopedia of American Biography,* 1888-1901; and Burg, Robert W., "Alexander Williams Randall," article in *American National Biography* for biographical sketches of Alexander W. Randall.

2 Randall's *Annual Report of the Postmaster General,* November 26, 1866, Serial 1286; November 26, 1867, Serial 1327; and December 3, 1868, Serial 1369 are cited in the text by "(Year [of] Report, page number."

3 The Act of September 9, 1841, 5 Stat 461 appropriated $497,657 "to enable the Post Office Department to meet its engagements and pay its debts." The Act of March 3, 1845, 5 Stat 739 appropriated $750,000 annually to make up Post Office Department deficiencies.

4 5 Stat 80.

5 Act of June 8, 1872, 17 Stat 283.

Figure 1 *is a letter mailed in 1886 just after the expansion of the special delivery service, franked with Scott# E1, with the restrictive inscription "...at a special delivery office".*

"When it absolutely, positively has to be there…"

By Richard Martorelli

"Getting there fast" has long been a part of the American culture, and has always been the goal of mail delivery. The construction of post roads and waterways, the development of stagecoach routes and the Pony Express, the expansion of railroads, automobiles and airplanes all served to help move the mail faster. In the early 1840's, a number of private companies provided competition to the US Post Office Department (USPOD), organizing and running both inter-city and intra-city services. These efforts were well received by the population, and took away significant business, and revenue, from the Post Office. To prevent this from continuing, the US Congress, in 1845, gave the USPOD a monopoly right to deliver first class mail (letters and postcards) and to control use of the mailboxes at the point of delivery. While this did not inherently cause more delays in the mail system, the removal of competition certainly didn't spur on premium-grade service; after all, what choice did the public have?

At the Lisbon UPU conference in 1885, authorization was given for international special delivery service. Starting in April 1886, an extra fee equivalent to $0.06, paid in advance, would be charged for this service. In March 1885, the US Congress instituted a domestic special delivery service, which was put into operation in October 1885 by the USPOD. For the extra 10 cents fee, paid by the newly issued Special Delivery stamps, the mail (initially only letters/postcards, but later expanded) was sent out for immediate delivery to a person's address once it was delivered to the nearest Post Office. The special delivery messengers who made the delivery were usually young teenage boys, and were not employees of the Post Office. They were paid 8 cents of the fee, and the auxiliary marking "Fee claimed by office of first address" noted this payment. This fee sharing structure remained the same until 1925, when different rates for service were inaugurated for different weights of packages. When started on October 1, 1885, the special delivery service was available only at post offices with a population of 4,000 or more; this provision limited service to 555 out of about 4,000 first-class post offices then existing. A year later, special delivery service was extended to all first class post offices. ***Figure 1*** illustrates a letter mailed in 1886 just after the expansion of the special delivery service. It is franked with Scott# E1, with the restrictive inscription "...at a special delivery office". Both Boston and Bangor were included in the initial list of special delivery cities. Until 1907, only the special service-inscribed stamps were accepted for payment of the special delivery fee; in that year, the POD started to allow definitive or other valid stamps to be used, as long as the inscription "Special Delivery" was on the envelope or package. ***Figure 2*** is an envelope mailed in the mid-1920s with the special delivery fee paid by regular usage stamps.

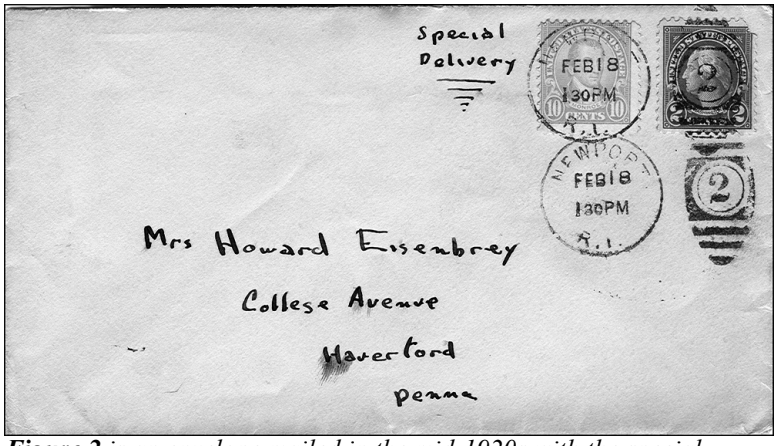


Figure 2 *is an envelope mailed in the mid-1920s with the special delivery fee paid by regular usage stamps.*

The next big leap forward in speed relevant to this tale is the introduction of the airplane to mail service in 1918. From May 15 thru July 14, the rate on the New York-Philadelphia-Washington route was $0.24/oz, which included $0.10 for special delivery service. From July 15 thru December 14, the rate was reduced to $0.16/1st oz and $0.06/additional ozs, still including $0.10 for special delivery. From December 15, 1918 thru July 17, 1919, the rate was reduced to $0.06/oz, and the special delivery fee was eliminated as part of the basic airmail charge. There was no official airmail service again until 1924, when the night-and-day flying government service was established between New York and San Francisco. Government and Contract Air Mail routes were initiated over the next several years and varying rates for routes and weights of air dispatch were created. If special delivery service was desired for an airmail letter, the sender had to prepay the additional fee. Starting in August 1927, the POD issued regulations that the use of airmail stamps as postage or in payment of special fees on ordinary mail was "exceedingly objectionable and not approved, and every effort should be made to confine to airmail". The Post Office consistently took the position that special-service stamps were only to be used for that service, as was initially the case with special delivery service. ***Figure 3*** is a specially printed envelope from 1929 with red and blue stripes, wording for airmail and special delivery, and $0.15 postage using service-specific stamps. The Post Office's policy also surfaced in the handling of red-and-blue lozenge border envelopes, originally intended for airmail letters, when used for first class mail. ***Figure 4*** illustrates three different rate examples from the 1960s. On two of the envelopes, the "Via Air Mail" inscription is obliterated, and a non-airmail stamp paying the current 1st class rate is applied on all three. Nonetheless, the POD applied postage due markings, stamps or meter tapes. These envelopes also show three distinctly different advisory markings that "The use of Air Mail envelopes for other than Air Mail is not permitted". The limitation on use of service-inscribed stamps was an issue again in 1970, when the $1.00 Airlift parcel stamp of 1968, originally good for any mail, was restricted for use on airmail only and in the late 1980's when collectors wanted to use excess service-inscribed Transportation coil stamps on first class mail.

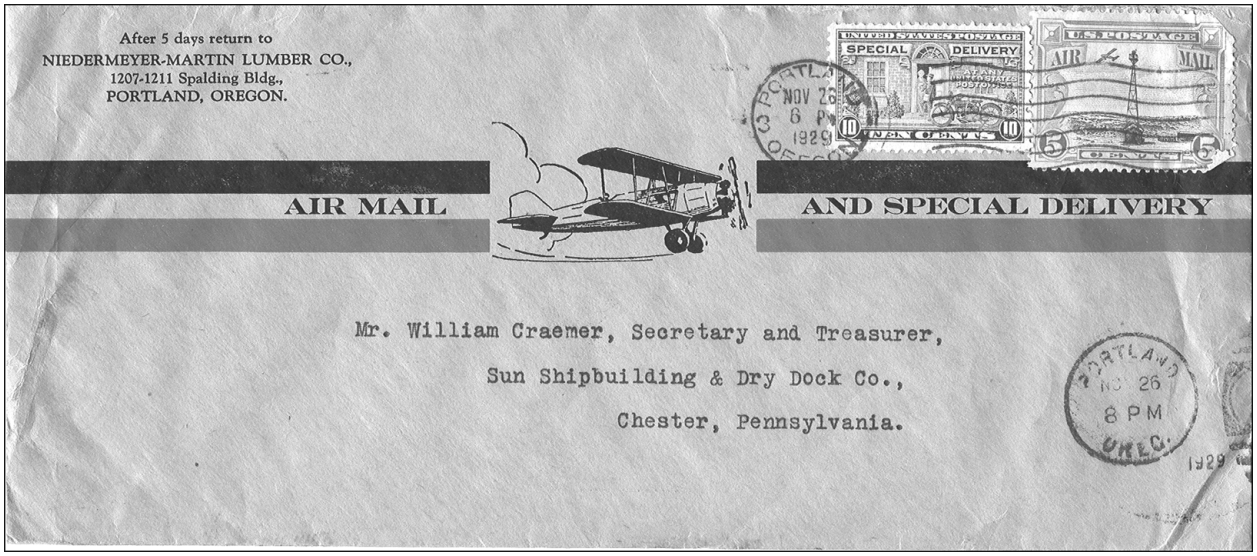


Figure 3 *is a specially printed envelope from 1929 with red and blue stripes, wording for airmail and special delivery, and postage using service-specific stamps.*

Figure 4 *illustrates three different rate examples from the 1960s where the POD applied postage due markings, stamps or meter tapes for misusing airmail envelopes.*

The two means of increased delivery speed discussed above were often combined, and combined postage for them was conceived, and designed by President Franklin Roosevelt. He used the Great Seal of the United States as the basis for the US's first combination airmail special delivery stamp. It had a $0.16 face value, with $0.06 for 1 oz. of airmail, effective July 1, 1934, and $0.10 for the first class special delivery fee, up to 2 pounds. Both of these rates were in effect until 1944 (May and November, respectively). Approximately 9.2 million of the first version of this stamp (US Scott#CE1) was printed in a blue color consistent with other special delivery stamps, and was issued on August 30, 1934. Consistent with its position on service-inscribed stamps, the UPSOD stated that this stamp was not to be used to pay registration or COD fees, or for airmail postage in excess of the first ounce. ***Figure 5*** shows two uses of this stamp, paying for the first ounce of airmail on a single weight and a double weight letter. The additional cost for the 2nd ounce of airmail on the double weight cover was paid using ordinary postage

When Roosevelt was inaugurated in March 1933, he appointed James A. Farley, his campaign manager and friend, as the Postmaster General. Starting shortly afterwards, from April 1933 through August 1934, Postmaster Farley presented gifts of complete sheets of unsevered, imperforate and ungummed stamps of new issues to President Roosevelt, other government officials and friends. Farley always paid for the face value of the postage, but obtained them in a format that was not available to the general public or collectors. Public furor resulted, and Roosevelt directed Farley to stop the practice. As a way to satisfy collectors, the 20 stamps that had been specially created by Farley were reprinted in the same format and sold to the public only in Washington, DC from March to June 1935. These stamps are referred to as "Farley's Follies" and are listed as US

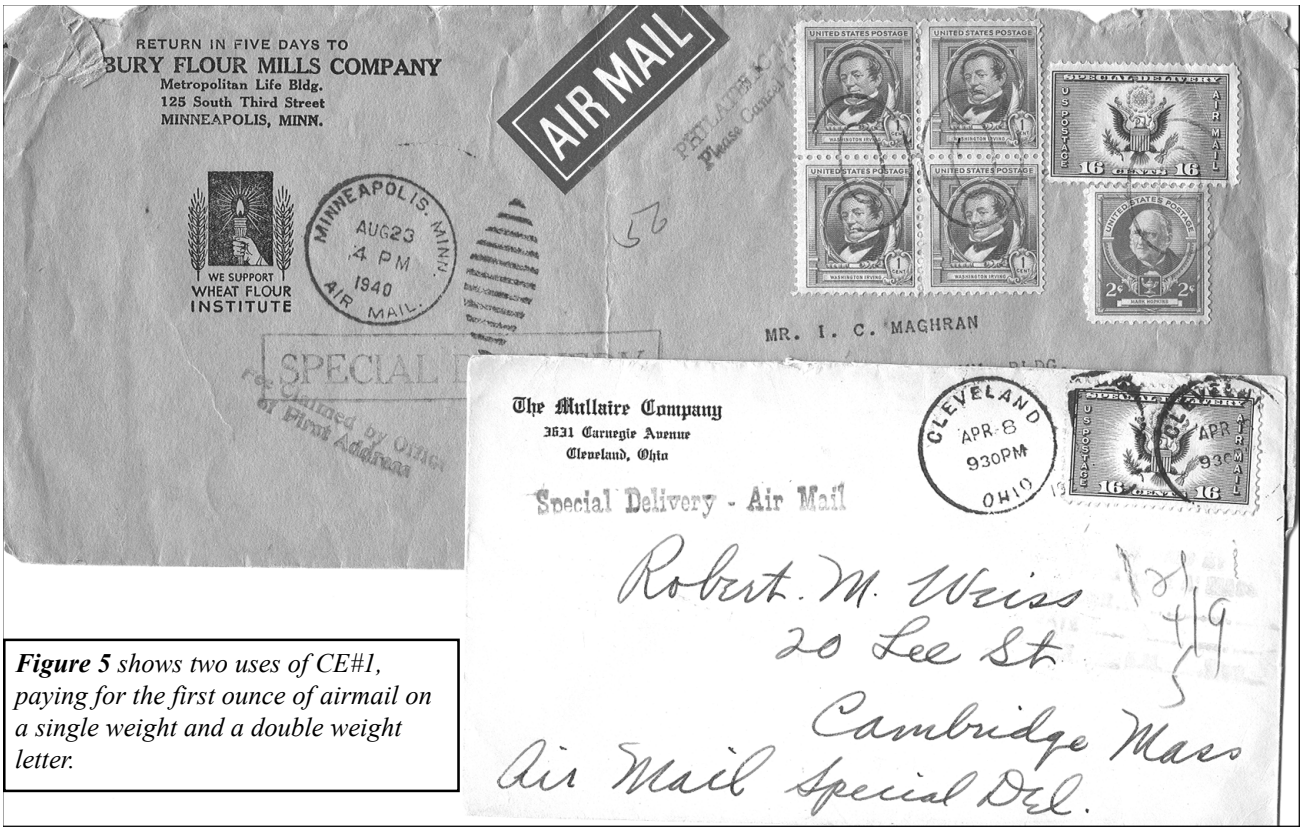


Figure 5 *shows two uses of CE#1, paying for the first ounce of airmail on a single weight and a double weight letter.*

Scott #'s 752-771, with 1.4 million of #771, the imperforate blue Airmail Special Delivery stamp, being printed. After these stamps were removed from sale, the POD had them gummed and perforated, and entered into the system for use as the regularly issued stamps. ***Figure 6*** shows both a FDC as well as an actual use of the 1935 reprint.

The last version of this design, US Scott#CE2, was issued in February 1936, in a bi-colored stamp using red to signify "airmail" and blue for "special delivery", with multiple printings totaling 72.5 million stamps. I have read different reasons as to why this stamp was issued, including the old chestnut "to make it easier for postal employees to recognize". Personally, I think this stamp was issued in the two colors to distinguish it from the 1934 version that was part of the controversy of the "Follies".

As noted above, the $0.16 value of the combination airmail special delivery (AMSD) stamp was strictly apportioned by the POD to $0.06 for the first ounce of airmail, and $0.10 for the first-class special delivery fee for up to 2 pounds, as shown in the 1942 (top) cover in ***Figure 7.*** With America's entry in to World War II, on December 25, 1941, a reduced airmail rate of $0.06 per ½ ounce was approved for use on mail between military personnel serving overseas and the continental United States (CONUS). The middle

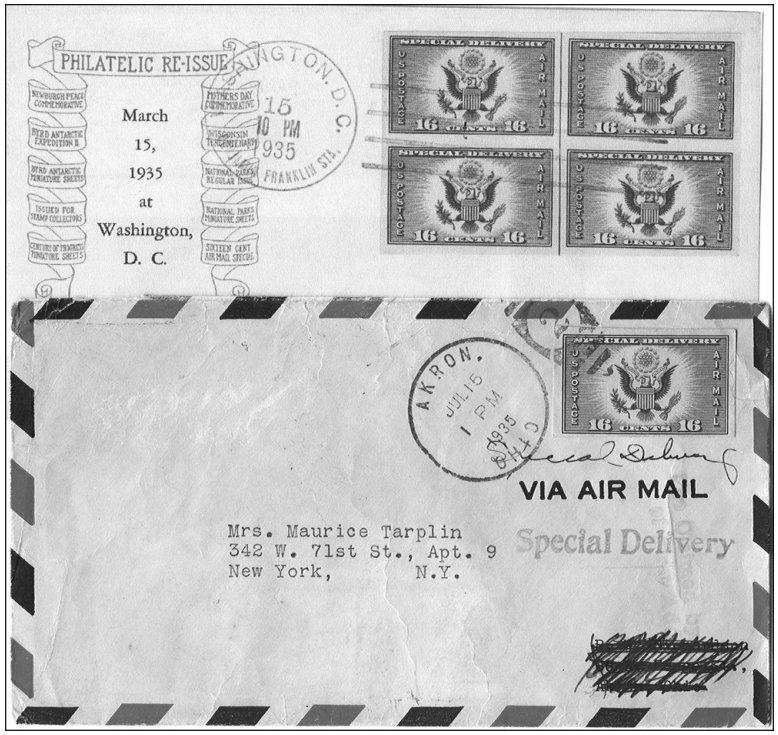


Figure 6 *shows a FDC of the Farley reprint #771as well as an actual use in 1935.*

Figure 7 *illustrates uses of CE#2 on civilian mail, WWII overseas military concession airmail and domestic double weight mail.*

cover in ***Figure 7*** shows a 1943 usage of a single bi-color AMSD stamps from the *USS Henry T. Allen* AP30/APA15 (the former trans-Pacific passenger liner *President Jefferson* operated by the Admiral Oriental Line) while in port at New Caledonia, Pacific Ocean; if sent by an ordinary civilian, the postage rate would have been equivalent to $0.40 per ½ ounce. While inside the United States, however, military personnel were subject to the same airmail rate as civilians. When the letter weight exceeded 1 oz, additional postage at the $0.06/oz was required. The bottom cover in ***Figure 7*** is franked with $0.22 postage for 2 ounces of airmail, with a 6 cents Transport paying for the second ounce.

The POD maintained eternal vigilance over the proper use of the 1936 bi-color AMSD stamp. ***Figure 8*** illustrates two cases where mail was charged additional postage because of improper uses. The bottom envelope in the illustration is franked with a $0.16 bi-color AMSD and a $0.25 Pacific Clipper airmail, totaling $0.41. Special Delivery service to foreign countries was $0.20 in addition to postage, and had to be prepaid. Since the $0.20 special delivery fee was not totally prepaid, POD marked the envelope "Not in Special Delivery/Insufficiently Prepaid", and disallowed the $0.10 of the AMSD stamp allocated to the special delivery fee. This left the envelope with valid postage of $0.31. The required rate

Figure 8 *illustrates two cases where mail was charged additional postage because of improper uses of the airmail special delivery stamp.*

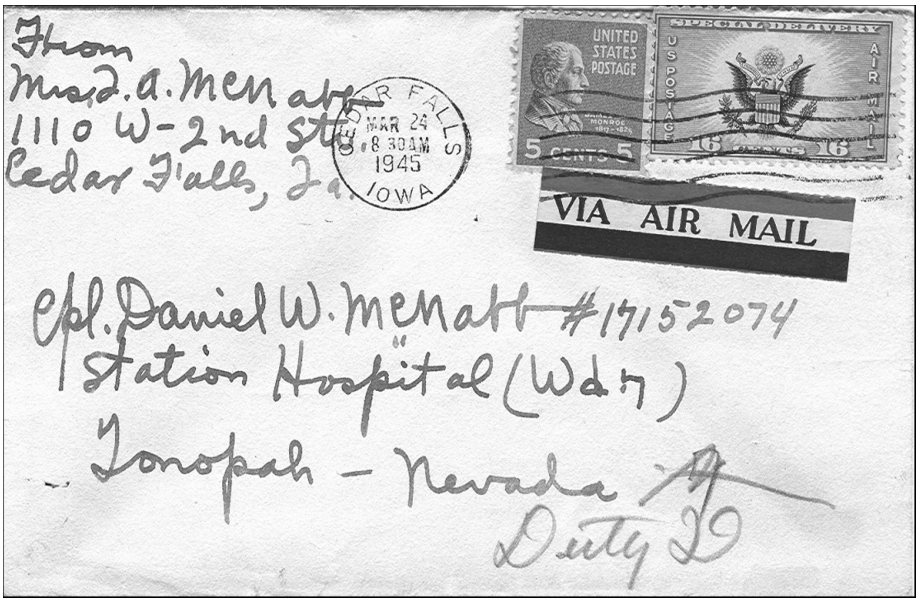


Figure 9 *was mailed in 1945 and franked with CE#2 and a 5 cents Prexie to pay the increased $0.08 1-ounce airmail and $0.13 special delivery fees.*

for 1936 Zeppelin flights was $0.43 for ½ ounce to Europe, which included air service within CONUS. This envelope was marked $0.12 postage due, which was paid by the 12 cents 4th Bureau stamp.

For the bottom envelope shown, the sending business knew that the envelope was two ounces in weight. To make sure there was enough postage, the company franked it with two of the bicolor #CE2 stamps. Nonetheless, it was assessed postage due when delivered. Why? The POD regulations explicitly stated that the AMSD stamp was valid to prepay only the first ounce of airmail. Payment for any additional ounces had to be made using other (regular or airmail) stamps, as in ***Figure 8***. The POD ignored the second AMSD stamp, and without additional stamps on the envelope, charged it $0.06 postage due and collected it from the addressee, as indicated by the mute Boston cancels on the pair of 3 cents postage due stamps.

The primary period of use for the combination airmail special delivery stamp ended in 1944. In March, the domestic airmail rate increased to $0.08 per ounce. Nonetheless, military personnel and others eligible to use the airmail concession rate could still use the single stamp franking until November, when the special delivery rate increased to $0.13 for the first-class special delivery fee for up to 2 pounds. No one had an exemption for this rate increase, and the combined $0.16 rate was no more. The stamps itself, however, remained valid for postage. The envelope in ***Figure 9*** was mailed in 1945 and franked with the 16 cents bi-color and a 5 cents Prexie to pay the $0.08 1-ounce airmail and $0.13 special delivery fees. Since ordinary postage could be used to for prepayment of either of these, theoretically, the 16 cents stamp was still treated as contributing only 10 cents towards the special delivery fee, with 3cents of the Prexie making up the difference. An even later use of the stamp in 1952 is shown in ***Figure 10***. In January 1952, the special delivery rate had been increased to $0.20, and the domestic airmail rate had changed to $0.06 in 1949. Therefore, the cost of a 1-ounce airmail special delivery letter was $0.26. This envelope bears 6 cents of commemorative stamps and a 16 cents #CE2, leaving it at 4 cents postage due. For practical purposes, it does not matter which part of the service provided was short paid, but, in theory, it was the special delivery fee. The 6 cents airmail allocation of the AMSD stamp was correctly paid for that service, but the $0.20 special delivery fee was underpaid by the 10 cents special delivery allocation and the 6 cents of other postage. I continue to look for other late uses of

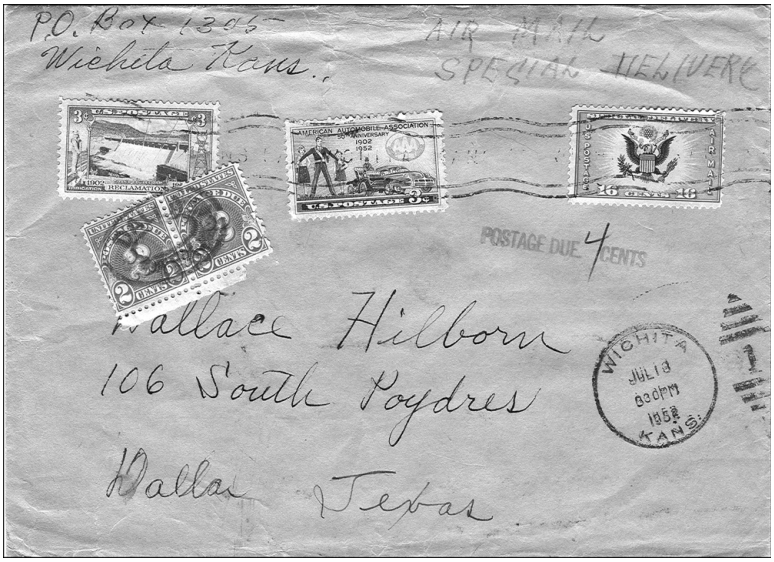


Figure 10 *is a late use of CE#2 from 1952 paying the $0.20 special delivery fee, and the $0.06 domestic airmail rate.*

the CE1 and CE2 stamps to see if the POD maintained the strict position represented by the top postage due envelope in ***Figure 8***.

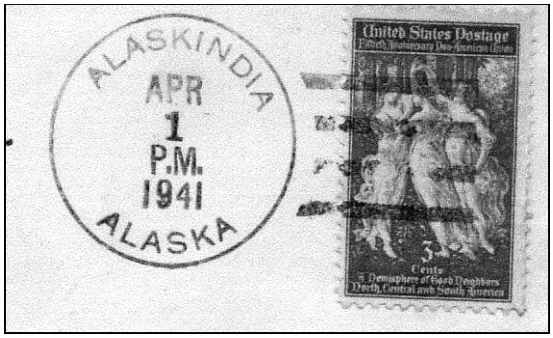
Fast mail delivery in today's world has entirely new dimensions. Companies such as Federal Express, in the spirit of their predecessors, introduced services that challenged, and changed, the USPS in providing customers with choices about next-day delivery services. Email with attached pdf files can almost instantly transmit information around the world at any time, with minimum cost or effort. But, for all of that speed, I would still rather have a letter with stamps and cancellations in my hand.

MODERN Alaska Collectable Covers

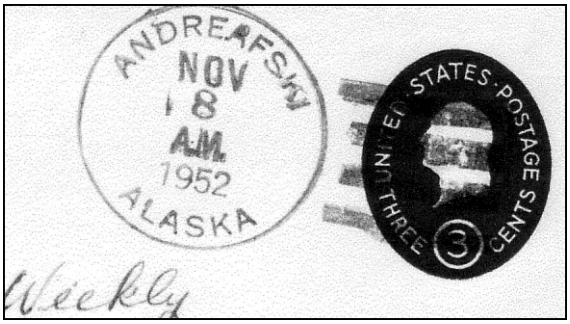
By Bob Collins

Alaska is a state where even newer postal markings can be very collectable. Many of the Alaska towns and camps had an active post office for just a few months or a few years. Here are but a few of the numerous examples:

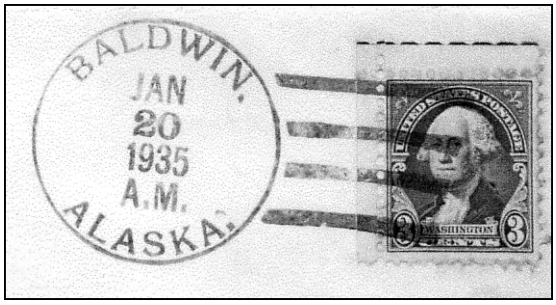
Alaskindia was a post office that served the Wrangell Institute, a school for native Americans located just south of Wrangell. The post office operated from 1938 to 1945.



Andreafski was the first post office name chosen for the new site of Saint Marys Catholic Mission when that school was moved from Akulurak near the mouth of the Yukon. The post office was established in 1951, but its name was changed to Saint Marys in 1956.

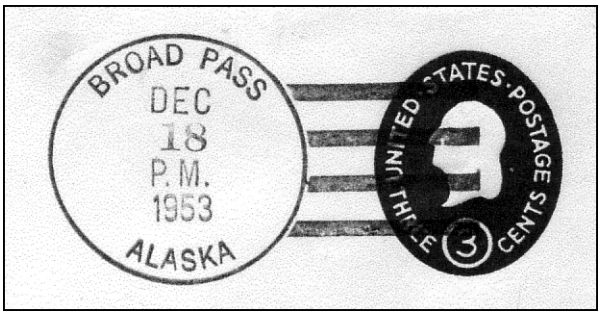


Baldwin post office was opened in 1931 in the village of Elephant Point. The village had a population of about 100 mostly Eskimo residents in 1930 and was located on a sand spit on the south coast of Eschscholtz Bay just south of the 75-mile long Baldwin Peninsila. The post office was closed in 1936.



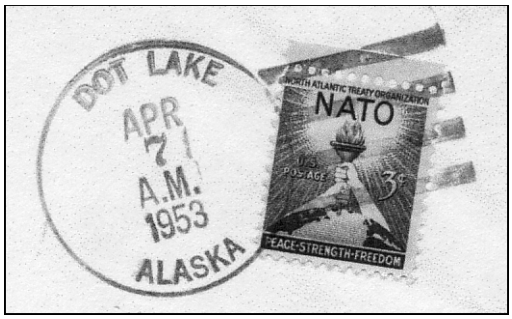
Big Lake was basically just a general store in Alaska's far north. Mail servixe was only once-a-month and most of the year the mail was transported by dog-sled over a 28-mile trail through the Brooks Range.

Broad Pass was a siding on the Alaska Railroad at Mile Post 304.3. There was a population of about 20 living there in the early 1950s, but all jobs were dependent on the railroad. A post office operated in the community from 1951 to 1954.

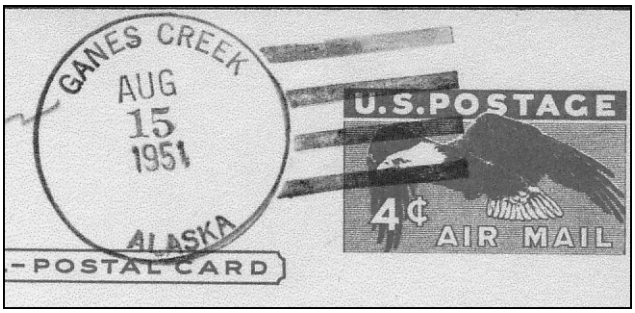


Buckland was an Eskimo village and trading post located on the Buckland River on Seward Peninsula. In the 1930s the village had a population of just over 100 and a post office operated from 1935 to 1940. The latter day Buckland post office succeeded the Baldwin office at Elephant Point some distance from this site.

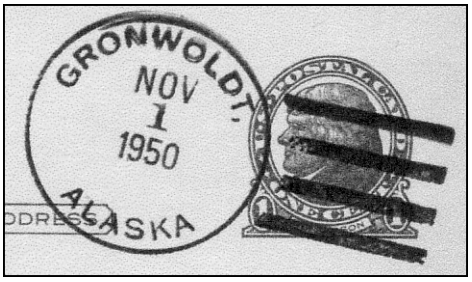
Dot Lake was a village on the Alaska Highway, forty miles northwest of Tok, in the early 1950s. There were about fifty residents dependent upon tourist traffic and a nearby emergency airfield. A post office operated there from 1952 to 1954.



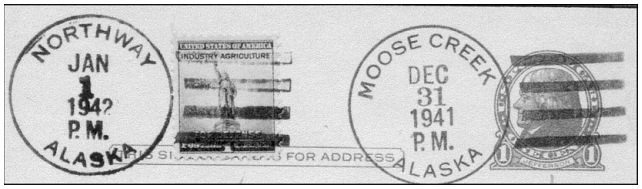
Ganes Creek was a mining camp in the Innoko River District located about five miles sotheast of Ophir. The camp was originally established about 1908 and named for Thomas Gane, a prospector who made the original gold discovery here in 1906. For reasons unknown, a post office was authorized in August 1951 but it was quickly closed by October of that year.



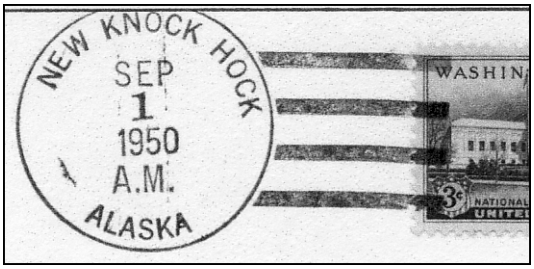
Gronwoldt post office was located on Susitna River about 35 miles northwest of Anchorage. Details of the nature of this community are unknown, but the post office functioned from November 1950 to the end of November 1951.



Moose Creek post office was established at Northway, a village that grew up next to an airfield built in 1941 to beef-up military facilities in Alaska. The office was opened in July, but it was renamed Northway on January 1, 1942.

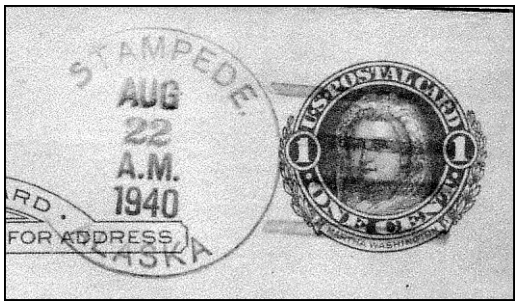


New Knock Hock was an Eskimo village of about 120 on the Black River in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in the early 1950s. An early village name Knockhock had been abandoned in favor of this new location. A post office operated here from 1950 to 1952.



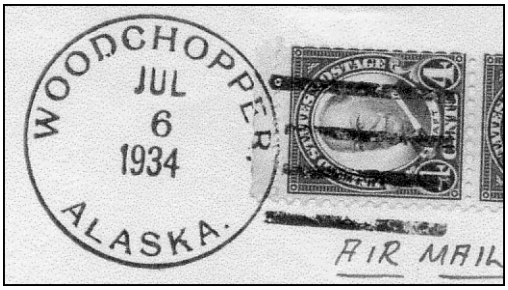
Ohogamute post office served another Eskimo village on the Yukon River. This village was 22 miles southeast of Marshall and had a population of 75 when the postmaster filed his application for a new post office. The office functioned only from 1936 to 1938.

Stampede was a mining camp originally located on Stampede Creek in the Kantishna Hills. The post office was established in 1939. In 1941the gold gave out at the original site and the camp moved about four miles west to Little Moose Creek, but retained the post office name until it was closed in 1944.

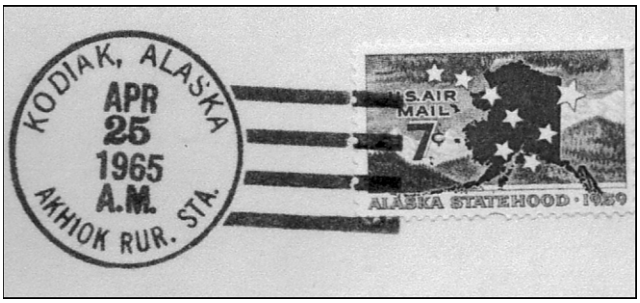


Unuk was a mining camp on Unuk River north of Burroughs Bay, about fifty miles northeast of Ketchikan. a post office operated here in 1949 and 1950.

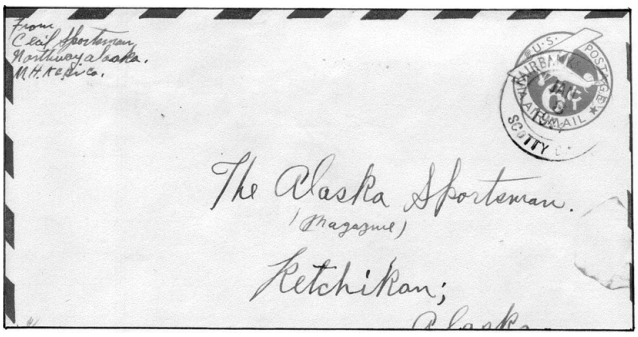
Woodchopper was a mining camp on Woodchopper Creek located 55 miles north of Circle. The camp was originally founded about 1907. A post office opened here in 1919 and the postmaster reported a population of 50 would be served. The office closed in 1923, but in 1932 it was reopened. It finally closed again in 1936.



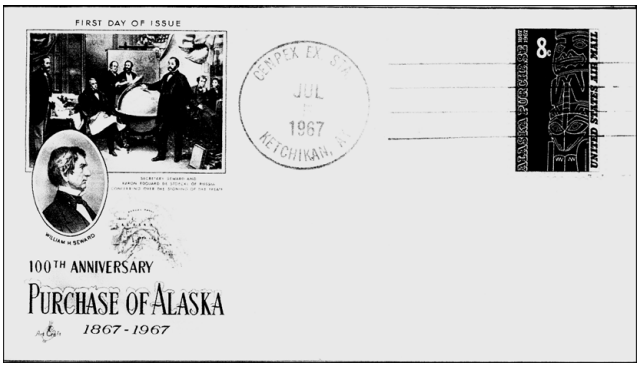
There are many branch post office facilities that were only active for a short time period and one can form a very nice collection of these items. But I warn you,

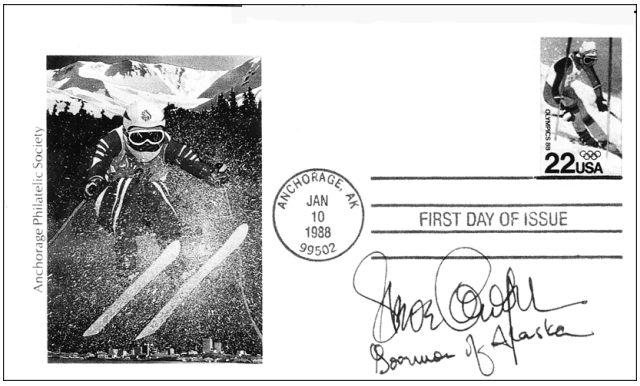


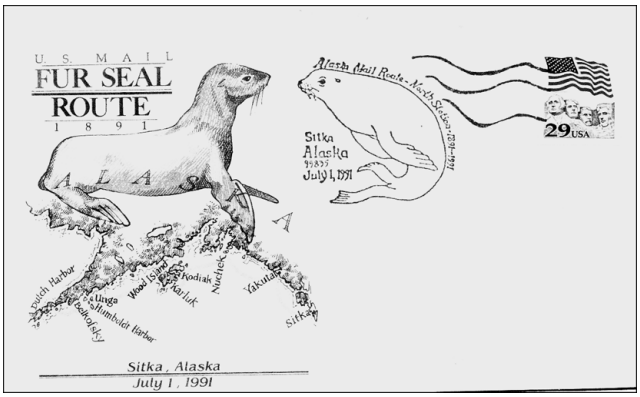
postal markings for some of these branch offices, like many other post offices in Alaska, are almost impossible to find. Just try to find an example of the Scotty Branch of Fairbanks which was only open from December 1943 to February 1944.



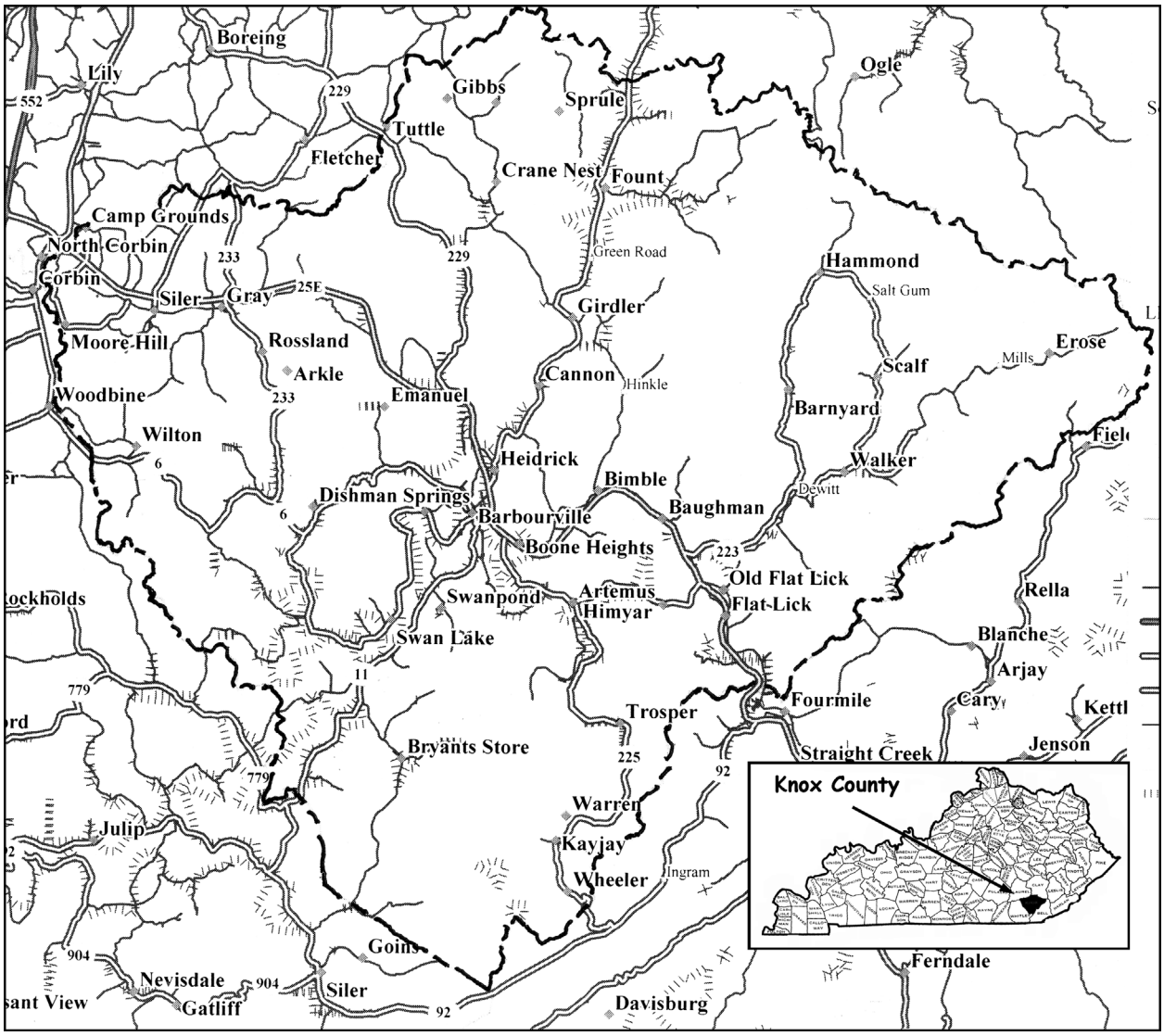
There are also many cachet covers for all kinds of historical events. The following four illustrations depict but a sampling of these:







To Be Continued



Knox County, Kentucky Scale 1:250,000

The Post Offices of Knox County, Kentucky

Part 1

By Robert M. Rennick

Kentucky's forty-first county, Knox, was created by legislative act on December 19, 1799. Its original 2,300 square mile area, the upper Cumberland River watershed, was taken exclusively from Lincoln County. It 1805 it gained 150 square miles from Madison County and, for the next sixty years, lost territory to Clay, Rockcastle, Whitley, Harlan, Laurel, and Bell Counties in succession, reaching its current 388 square miles by 1882.[1]

There remains some controversy over the county's name source. For years it's been accepted that the county was named for General Henry Knox (1750-1806), George Washington's chief artillery officer in the Continental Army and later his first Secretary of War. But, with no evidence to support this, twentieth century historians like Elmer Decker have contended that the famed Longhunter, Scottish-born Revolutionary War veteran, Indian fighter, and co-builder of the Wilderness Road, James Knox was the probable name source. This was based, as Decker pointed out in his manuscript history (Pp. 16-7), on a claim in a letter written on November 18, 1848 by Robert Wickliffe who also reminded us that James Knox was a state senator from Lincoln County at the time Knox County was established.

Knox County lies in the mostly forested southern part of the Eastern Kentucky Coal Field. Over ninety three per cent of the county is drained by the main channel and tributaries (Stinking, Brush, Fighting, Richland,

Little Richland, Indian, Flat, and Little Poplar Creeks) of the Cumberland land River. Less than seven per cent (in its northern section) is drained by the Collins Fork of Goose Creek, in the Kentucky River's South Fork watershed, acquired from Madison County in 1805.

With the arrival of the L&N Railroad's main (or Cumberland Valley) line in 1887-8, Knox's early subsistence economy was superseded by commercial enterprises like coal mining, timbering, and, later, gas production. Two spur lines (the Cumberland and Manchester between Heidrick and Manchester, and the Cumberland—later the Artemus-Jellico Railway—up Brush Creek) were developed to ship coal via the main line to Blue Grass and other markets. In recent years the extractive industries have been replaced as the county's main economic support by some manufacturing—principally of industrial sealants, furniture, clothing, roofing materials, food service equipment, wire and fiber products, and small water craft. Superseding the railroad as the county's main means of access to the rest of the region is Ky 11 and the four lane US 25E. Some 32,000 Knox residents were counted in the 2000 Census.

This essay will deal with the eighty one post offices that ever operated within Knox's present boundaries. Offices will be located by road miles from downtown Barbourville, the county's more or less centrally located seat on the Cumberland River (102 road miles sse of downtown Lexington) or with reference to other offices in their respective river valleys.

The fourth class city of **Barbourville,** with a 2000 population of about 3,600, centers just above the mouth of Richland Creek, near the site of Richard Ballinger's pioneer tavern, a major travelers' stop on the Wilderness Road. It was most likely named for James Barbour, the Virginia-born pioneer, who offered thirty eight of his five thousand acre landholding for the new county's seat.[2] The local post office was established on April 1, 1804, with Richard Henderson, postmaster. The town's growth was slow and uneventful till, with the arrival of the L&N in 1888, it became the county's main loading point and was incorporated in 1890.

Barbourville balloon cds dating from mid-1860s.

West Virginians, often wondering if there was any connection between their town of Barboursville, east of Huntington (which, like their Barbour County and its seat Phillipi, between Charleston and Morgantown, were named for Philip B. Barbour) and the Knox County seat, are reminded that their town's name has a medial "s". Yet, for many years in the nineteenth century Knox Countians pronounced their town's name with the "s", and for a few years around the turn of the twentieth century the post office's name was even spelled that way.

Three as yet unlocated post offices may have operated briefly in the 1820s but are not recalled by contemporary Knox historians. It's almost certain that one of them was not even within the present county limits. The earliest was **Camplin's** which operated between June 15, 1824 and October 1827, with William and Jeffrey Camplin, its postmasters. **Upper Flat Creek,** between 1826 and 1831, was probably somewhere on this four mile long stream that heads just east of the Whitley County line and joins the Cumberland two miles below the mouth of Little Poplar. Samuel Wilson is said to have been the first of its two postmasters. **Wherretts,** operated by Peter Wherretts between 1829 and 1830, may have been in the vicinity of Cumberland Ford, the fore-runner of Bell County's Pineville.

The village of **Flat Lick,** now extending for about two miles along US 25E north from the Cumberland River and the L&N tracks to a point about eight miles ese of Barbourville (via Ky 930 and 225), is near the site of the county's oldest settlement. Identified by name at least by 1763 in pioneer journals and on John Filson's 1784 Kentucky map, it was a strategically located travelers campsite where three historic roads from the north came together as the main route to Cumberland Gap. The name derived from a local salt lick on a three acre flat rock, since grass covered, long visited by large game and the Indians and white men who hunted them. By 1800 the site had been settled by Revolutionary War bounty warrantees(Arthurs, Walkers, Woodsons, Pogues, Bakers, Horns, etc.) and in that year was a contender with the Barbourville site for the county's seat.

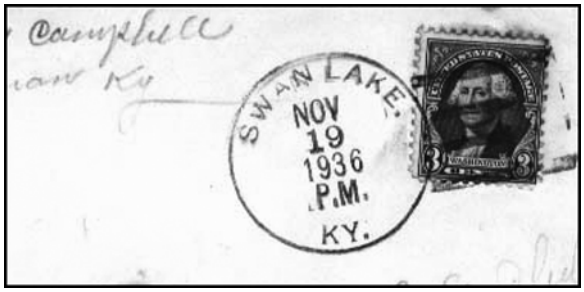
The vicinity's first postal service may have been provided by an office inexplicably called **Rome,** established by Owen R. Moyers on September 24, 1840. It

was moved to and/or renamed **Flat Lick** on April 5, 1848 by Ambrose Arthur. Since the Civil War a distinction has been made between **Flat Lick** and **Old Flat Lick**, the settlement's original site through which the Cumberland River flowed until, in 1862, its course was shifted by severe flooding. By the 1870s **Flat Lick** at both sites was a fairly thriving village of mills, stores, and travelers rests and had become the commercial center of the upper Cumberland valley. **Flat Lick** grew up around the L&N depot that opened in 1888, just below the mouth of Sandy Branch, and between one and 12 miles south of the several sites of the still active **Flat Lick** post office in Old Flat **Lick.**[3]

In the April 29, 1750 entry in his diary, the noted explorer Thomas Walker mentioned that less than a mile from his cabin, near the west bank of the Cumberland River, was a large pond (one fourth of a mile long and two hundred yards wide) often visited by wild water fowl. This feature was rediscovered some twenty years later by Daniel Boone who is said to have named it Swan Pond. It's not known for sure where the pond was located. Edmund Lee's 1856 map and Lloyd's 1863 map show it on the west side of the Cumberland opposite the mouth of the three mile long stream now known as Swan Pond Creek. But some area residents think the pond was on the east side of the river, by the creek itself. In any case, it's long gone. Contemporary maps show a relatively recent man-made Swan Pond nearly two miles up the creek. But that's not it.

Wherever it was, the pond gave name to the **Swan Pond** post office. This was established on October 30, 1850 at an unknown site, with Spencer H. Tuggle, postmaster. It closed in November 1851 but reopened, again site unknown, on December 9, 1862 and operated till February 1874. The office was re-established again, but as **Swanpond** on July 14, 1921, with Jonathan L. Blair, postmaster, to serve a village of some 125 residents at the mouth of Swan Pond Creek, three miles south of Barbourville (via the present Ky 11). It closed for good in 1933.

To confuse matters even more there was a community and post office called **Swan Lake** on Ky 459 overlooking the river from the west. This was one mile south of Walker's cabin (since 1931 the Dr. Thomas Walker State Historic Site), five road miles southwest of Barbourville. This sounds like Walker's and Boone's Swan Pond, for a Swan Lake, as such, has never been found. It's most likely that only one such area feature bore this specific name. Anyway, the **Swan Lake** post office was established on March 2, 1911, with Maggie Terrell, postmaster, less than half a mile west of the mouth of Swan Pond Creek, and lasted till 1951.



William H. Brafford (1818-1890), a Barbourville lawyer and onetime postmaster (1845-6) and later (1865-1870) a (Knox) County Attorney, opened a store and hotel probably at the mouth of Lynn Camp Branch of the East Fork of Lynn Camp Creek, some eight miles west of the county seat. As **Brafford's Store**, a local post office was established on June 8, 1868 with Brafford himself as postmaster. From February 7, 1887 till it closed in January of the following year it operated as **Brafford Store.** By this time it was serving a village and neighborhood of some one thousand residents, several mills, stores, and hotels.

Soon the vicinity was also being served by an L&N station called **Rossland** (possibly for the descendants of pioneer Hugh Ross). The authorization for a post office called **Rossland** on February 17, 1908, with James T. Morgan, postmaster, was rescinded in August of that year.

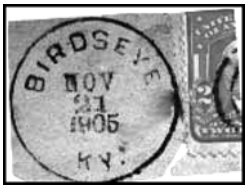
Sometime in the early nineteenth century a store was opened by a Bryant at or near the mouth of Four Mile Branch of Little Poplar Creek. [4] By the middle of the century the Bryant family had moved it a mile or so away.[5] On September 6, 1873 Minor Bryant (1819-1885), then the storekeeper, established the **Bryants Store** post office probably on the road between Stony Fork (of Little. Poplar) and Swan Pond Creek, some six miles south of Barbourville, where it served a community called **Poplar** Creek with mills, other stores, shops, and other businesses. Probably by 1909 and cer-

tainly by 1912 the office and store had been moved to the road that became part of Ky 11, just north of Little Poplar toward King, and nine miles by that road south of Barbourville. After a short distance move by Eliza Fuson in 1924 it was serving **Fuson Store.** Most recently the post office and store have been on Ky 1809, just north of the mouth of the Little Poplar tributary of Hubbs Creek.

Other Little Poplar Creek Post Offices

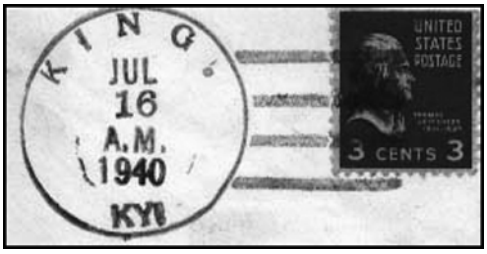
Little Poplar Creek heads two miles north of the Whitley County line and extends for about eight miles to the Cumberlan1two miles below the Whitley County line near Gausdale. It's to be distinguished from (main) Poplar Creek, which also joins the river from the east, but wholly in Whitley County (see below). Five post offices, including Bryants Store, served the Little Poplar watershed.

Samuel F. Mattock's family name was first proposed for an office near the upper end of Little Poplar. But it opened, on September 17, 1889, as **Middlepoint.** It's not known what it was the middle point of.



On October 15, 1892 it was moved over a mile and renamed **Birdseye** by postmaster William D. Engle. When it closed in late 1914 it was on Little Poplar and (the present) Rte. 1809, 22 miles above Bryants Store and about 10%$_z$ miles south of Barbourville. One can attempt to trace **Birdseye** to the regional coal bed and the recently established Jellico and Birdseye Coal Company mine on Whitley County's Cane Creek.

On the road (now Ky 11) between Little Poplar and the mouth of Bull Run (of the Cumberland River), six miles southwest of Barbourville, were the sites of the **King** post office. This was established on January 31, 1902 by John E. King whose family name replaced his first proposed name lane **Star.**[6] For years the community it



served was also known as **Kingtown** for John's many local relatives. When it closed in 1951 the post office was at the junction of 11 and 1809, half a mile north of Little Poplar.

The short lived (August 14, 1905 to July 15, 1909) and aptly named post office of **Pine** was operated by C.B. Williams to serve a locality called (in his Site Location Report) **Poplar Creek.** Since it's believed to have been somewhere between Bryants Store (four miles west of it) and Lunsford, and 2 ½ miles south of Lay (then up Little Brush Creek), it's more likely to have been on a branch of one of Little Poplar's tributaries, possibly Catron Branch of Hubbs Creek. Nothing else is known of it.

Hubbs, an even shorter lived (December 24, 1925 through July 1928) post office was operated by Mat S. Girdner at the (head) forks (Bain and Catron) of the 2 ½ mile long Hubbs Creek that joins Little Poplar just south of Bryants Store's most recent post office site. The Hubbs family, through William, a post Civil War landowner on Little Poplar, were descendants of John Hubbs, a Knox County Revolutionary War pensioner.

Indian Creek Post Offices

According to an early tradition, a band of Cherokees had a camp just north of Dishman Springs, probably in the Paint Hill area, on the banks of what's now the Helton Branch of Big Indian Creek. Sometime later, a dozen or so white families settled in that vicinity, but within a short time they were attacked by Indians and completely wiped out. Their blood was used to paint the rocks and trees of the nearby hill as a warning against further white encroachment. Thus we have Paint Hill and nearby Painted Gap. Some two miles south, Helton joins Big Indian Creek which, with its main stream, Indian Creek, and Little Indian Creek which joins the latter half a mile from the Cumberland, are also said to have been named for the massacre.[7] Two post offices served the Indian Creek valleys.

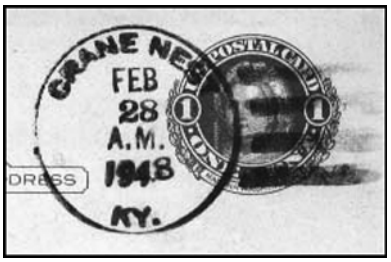
The **Indian Creek** post office was established on January 23, 1874 with John A. Campbell, postmaster, and served two stores and a flour mill at two neighboring sites near the Indian Creek-Big Indian Creek confluence.

When it closed in L937 it was at the junction of the present Ky 6 and 633, four miles from the river and seven miles west of Barbourville.

Another post office was just below the mouth of Indian Creek (probably on the present Ky 459), six miles southeast of the Indian Creek post office and nine miles below Barbourville. First postmasters John T. and Ollie Williams' proposed name **Cumberland** gave way to **Lindsay** for another Knox County family, and the office operated from August L6, 1893 through September 1925.

Richland Creek Post Offices

Richland Creek heads just south of the Clay-Knox-Laurel Counties convergence and extends roughly south for about twenty three miles to the Cumberland River at the southwest corner of Barbourville. It's paralleled by Ky. Rtes. 1803, 229, and 6. The first two post offices in this valley—Crane Nest and Jarvis Store—were established on the same day, July 13, 1874.[8]

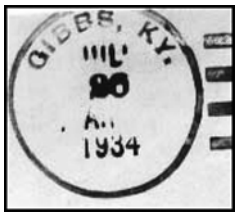


The **Crane Nest** settlement, at the mouth of Hubbard Branch, about ten miles north of Barbourville, and on (the present) Ky 229, was the center of a late nineteenth century timber producing area whose products were shipped from here down the creek. The first postmaster was John Stubblefield. Though the Post Office Department and government map makers have always spelled the name without a terminal "s", Local people have always sounded it Cranes. According to tradition, someone is supposed to have found a crane's nest in the vicinity, an unusual occurrence, for these long-necked, long-legged water birds were quite rare in this part of the country. The office was suspended in September 1980.

On Ky 229, some three miles down Richland from Crane Nest, at the mouth of Jarvis Branch, and half a mile below (north of) the mouth of Knox Fork, a succession of Jarvises (Samuel H. was the first) operated a store and post office. Till 1894 the office was **Jarvis' Store**; from 1894 to 1952 it was **Jarvis Store**; from 1952 to November 1963 it was simply **Jarvis;** and from 1963 to 1988 it was **Jarvis CPO.**

Just below the head of the five mile long Knox Fork (and on the present Ky 229) were the several vicinity sites of the **Knox Fork** post office. This was established on April 22, 1887 with William R. Williams, its first postmaster, who was succeeded in February 1888 by Samuel H. Jarvis, who had earlier established the Jarvis Store post office, 3 ½ miles southeast.

The short-lived (April 1 to December 5, 1891 and inexplicably named Odds was somewhere in the Richland valley between Jarvis Store and Baileys Switch on the Cumberland Valley (L&N) Railroad. John C. Clouse, its only postmaster, had first proposed the name **Richland** for it.



James W. "Jim" Gilbert established a post office on the 2 and 3/4 mile Long Billies Branch of Richland but, according to county historian Sot Warren, when he learned that **Gilbert** was already in use for Kentucky post offices (as Gilberts Creek in Lincoln County and Gilbertsville in Marshall County) he called his **Gibbs.** It opened on August 4, 1902 with his wife Lizzie E. as its first postmaster. Having occupied several vicinity sites on Billies, it closed in 1974 at the mouth of Sassers Branch, on (the present) Rte. 1803, three miles north of Crane Nest.

The **Tedders** post office, named for his family by its first postmaster John L. Tedders, was at three sites on Richland, two-three miles below its head and thirteen-fourteen miles north of the Cumberland River at Barbourville. It operated between October 5, 1909 and 1983.

Another Knox family, perhaps that of Henry Minks (ne 1877), gave its name to the **Mink** post office at some site in the Richland watershed, possibly on Hunting Shirt Branch. Postmaster Jesse L. Parker's Site Location Report places it two miles west of Richland, three miles south of the Blackwater post office, four miles west of Crane Nest, and 3z miles east of the Knox Fork post office. Other maps of that time show it also three miles southwest of Gibbs and 22 miles east of Tuttle. It was operated between April 26, 1905 and early April 1920 by Jesse and Ni1a B. Parker. [9]

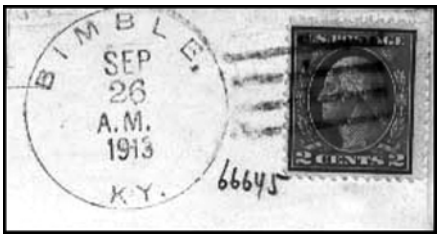
Between August 15, 1919 and September 15, 1927 Garfield Gilliam maintained the **Garrich** post office 3 ½ miles up the Middle Fork of Richland. It was about where the old US 25E (now 1232) meets the new four lane 25E, 2.8 miles (by the four lane) northwest of Baileys Switch

and six miles from Barbourville. Gar, the first name proposed for the office, was in use in Wayne County. Could the name then have combined Garfield's and Richland?

Post Offices on Little Richland Creek

This stream, mostly paralleled by Ky 11 and the C&M Railroad, extends for about eleven miles to join the main Richland channel near the L&N's Cumberland Valley Line, just north of Heidrick. Five post offices served its watershed, white a sixth, **Bimble,** began there and soon moved to Fighting Creek.

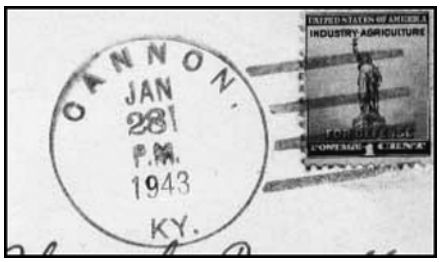
The active **Bimble** was established on January 24, 1898 in first postmaster Daniel C. Hawn's store just below the head of Little Richland, near the site of the present **Hinkle** post office, on the east side of then Kellys Fork (now Hawn Branch-?), eight miles northeast of Barbourville.



The preferred name **Hawn** was replaced by **Bimble,** it's said, for Will Payne's prized oxen Bim and Bill. At the end of 1902 the office closed. It was reopened on July L5, L905 in William Dozier's store, about a mile south, at the head of Fighting Creek, 5z mutes east of Barbourville, with Annie Maude Dozier (later Moneyham), its next postmaster. It was moved in 1930 half a mile down Fighting, and again in 1933 another half a mile down. Around 1940 it was again moved, to Loss R. Yeager's store at its present site at the junction of old US 25E and Ky 1304, 3 ½ miles east of Barbourville. For some years this site was also called **Yeager** until confusion with Yeager Station near Pikeville led to an April 12, 1966 US Board on Geographic Names decision in favor of the exclusive use of **Bimble.**

Bimble's first site, at the mouth of Payne's Creek (of Little Richland) was again served by a post office, the short-lived (July 10, 1915 through August 1917) **Payne.** With John R. Patterson, its only postmaster, it (like the creek) was named for one or more area landowners.

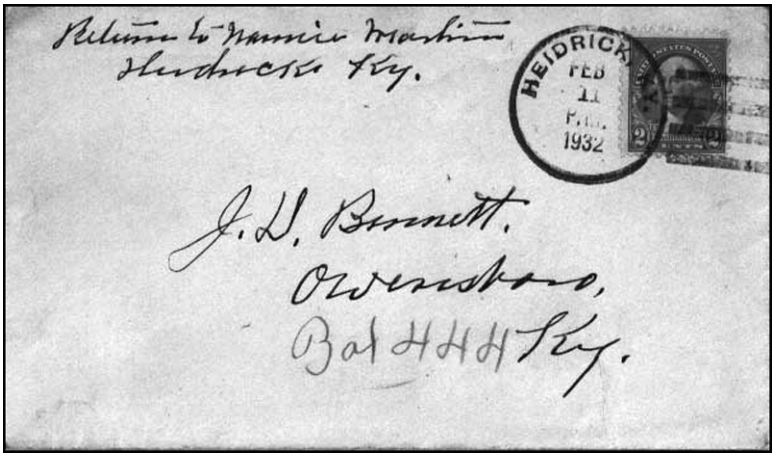
From April 1926 till the present, the site was again served, by the Hinkle post office. This office had been established the same day as **Payee,** probably at the head of Hinkle Branch of Stinking Creek's Road Fork, some three miles northeast. Sarah Mills was the first postmaster and the Hinkles were another Knox County family. Fannie Allen *moved* the office, she said in her Site Location Report, to a site closer to her home and because no one at the first site was capable of continuing it there.



Cannon, another active post office on Ky 11 and Little Richland, was established on May 29, 1901 by Henry L. Cannon (ne February 1845) and named for his family. Yet the name has also been attributed to the cannon set up near there during the Civil War by Union militia to halt General Felix Zollicoffer's approach to a salt works during his march on Barbourville. From its outset the post office served the area called **Sinking Valley** for the local school and church, and in 1917 the **Cannon** name was applied to a station on the newly opened C&M Railroad through the Little Richland and Collins Fork valleys. The office is now at the mouth of Dancey Branch near the Sinking Valley Church, 3 ½ miles northeast of Barbourville.

In 1916, to ship coal to distant markets, Charles C. Heidrick of Brooksville, Pa. completed his twenty three mile long C&M (Cumberland and Manchester) Railroad from Manchester (Clay County) to a junction with the L&N's Cumberland Valley line called **J.R. Allen** in the community of **Highland Park.** Here he located his roundhouse and switchtrack and renamed the junction **Heidrick.** On March 4, 1920 Ben Herndon established the **Heidrick** post office just west of the C&M tracks and two miles up Richland and Little Richland Creeks from the Cumberland River. In 1926 the C&M was sold to the L&N which has maintained it ever since. The **Heidrick** post office now serves a fair sized village which extends for nearly a mile on both sides of Ky 11 from the relocated US 25E at Barbourville's northeastern limits to Little Richland.[10]

In Godfrey Jackson's store at or near the mouth of the 1%$_2$ mile long Little Rich land tributary of Trace Branch, another short-lived post office was established, on March 19, 1926. Jackson's proposed name **Pennsy,** for his store, gave way to **Tracebranch,** and his wife Effie was post-



A depression-era four-bar postmark from Heidrich, Kentucky.

master till it closed in late September 1928. The branch, which also gave its name to this extant community, was named for an old Indian trace that followed its course.

Collins Fork Post Offices

Collins Fork extends for nine miles in Knox County and ten miles in Clay County to join Goose Creek (one of the two head forks of the Kentucky River's South Fork) just above Garrard. It's paralleled by Ky 11 and the C&M branch of the L&N Railroad.

The first post office that's believed to have served the Knox County's Collins Fork watershed was **Payne's.** Named for one or more area families, it was established on July 13, 1874 by flour mill owner button Jones somewhere between the Richland and Little Richland Creeks. In 1881 it was moved by storekeeper Louis Henderson Jones two miles northeast to a site on Collins (possibly in the vicinity of the later **Green Road** post office), three miles east of the Jarvis Store post office to serve his and another store, several mills, and other businesses. In January 1888 Jones had the office name changed to **Girdler** for the descendants of James Girdler (1751-1842), a Pennsylvania-born Revolutionary War veteran, who later lived and died in Pulaski County, Kentucky. [11]

In the summer of 1895 Tyre Y. Marcum moved the **Girdler** post office two miles down Collins (north) to the mouth of Hammons Fork where it replaced Columbus Troutman's earlier (November 27, 1891 through October 1893) **Hopper** post office (named for the descendants of Blaggrove B. Hopper, an antebellum landowner) and assumed the **Hopper** name. By the time the C&M had arrived in 1916 the **Hopper** community had a sawmill, factory, stores, shops, churches, and a school. In January 1907 Fountain Fox Rowland (1858-1937), a Laurel County native and local storekeeper who had married Nancy Ann Hopper in 1883, became postmaster. By May 1916 he had accepted the job as the C&M's local station agent and moved his office to the

tracks. On the twenty first of the following tenth he had the office renamed for himself. The **Fount** post office closed in 1974.

On April 28, 1899 Millard Hibbard re-established the **Girdler** post office three miles up Collins (south) from Hopper-Fount. By February 1915 it was midway between Collins and Little Richland, four miles south of Hopper-Fount. It still serves a school, stores, and a sawmill at the junction of Ky 11 and 1304, 6'z miles northeast of Barbourville.

On the 7 ½ mile long Hammons Fork, maybe at the mouth of its Shop Branch, four miles east of Hopper, was the short-lived (February 18, 1896 through January 1897) and inexplicably named **Abel.** Sarah E. Jones was its only postmaster.

Another short-lived post office (March 29, 1906 to February 15, 1907) was on Jones Fork of Hammons, two miles above Abel and six miles east of Hopper. Sole postmaster Isaac Mills' first proposed names **Abel** and Sal were replaced by **Williams,** also underived

The 4 ½ mile long Bull Creek joins Collins from the northwest just below (north of) Fount. At several sites on, and at the mouth of, Bull's Upper Turkey Branch was **Sprule.** This office, begun by Leander D. Jarvis

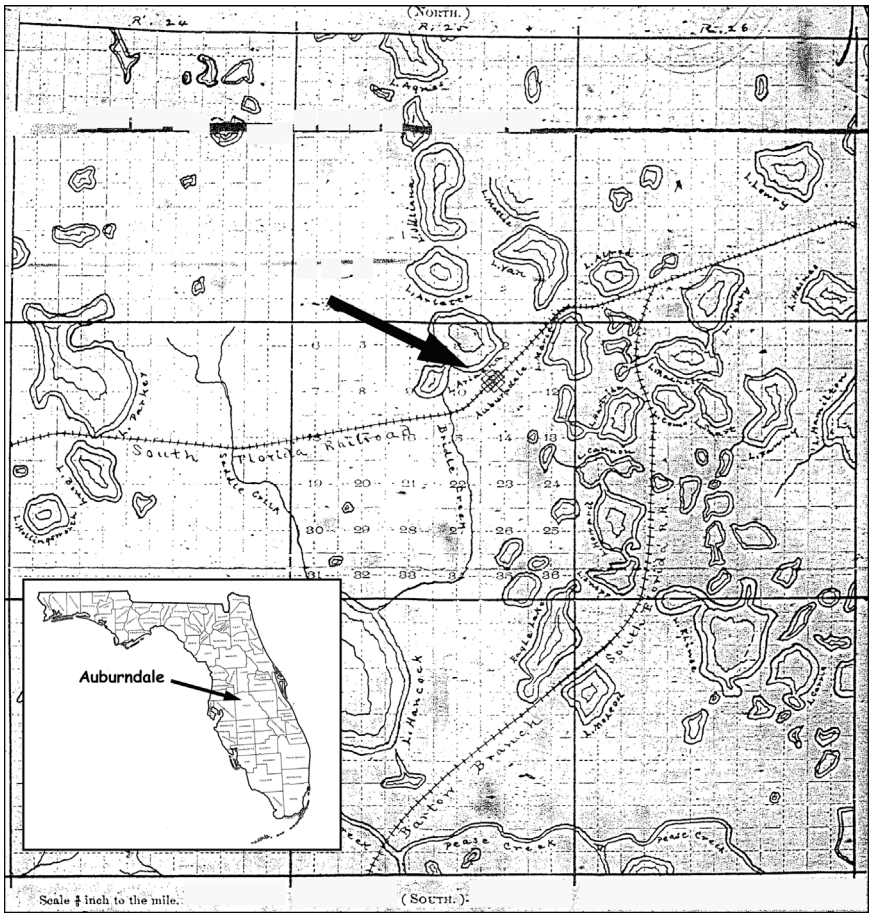
[*to be continued*]

NOTE: All postmark illustrations courtesy of the Postmark Collectors Club, Margie Pfund Memorial Postmark Museum and Research Center Collection.

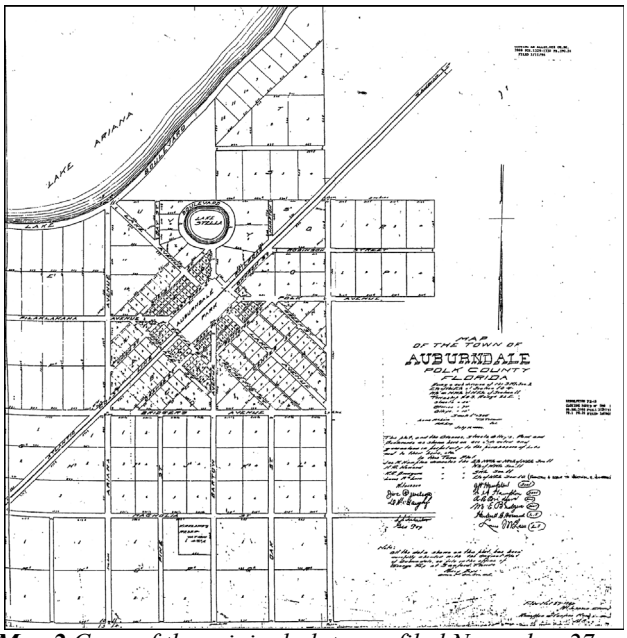
Auburndale, FL, "Destined to become prominent"

By David C. Lingard

The story of Auburndale, like so many Florida towns, is a story of the railroad. This railroad belonged to Henry B. Plant and the South Florida Railroad. Henry Plant completed the S.F.R.R. from Kissimmee to Tampa in late 1884. This route traveled across North Polk County. (*map 1*) Several communities sprang up along the new railroad in Polk County almost overnight. Among the new Polk County towns that began were to the west Acton (Post Office opened June 2nd, 1884) and Lakeland (post office opened May 20th 1884), to the east Davenport (originally called Horse Creek, post office opened March 3rd, 1884) and Haines City (post office opened Feb. 25th 1885). Directly in the middle was Auburndale (*map 2*). The name Auburndale was coined by Mrs. R.M. Pulsifer, wife of the Vice Pres. of the S.F.R.R. Mrs. Pulsifer suggested the name from Auburndale, Mass.



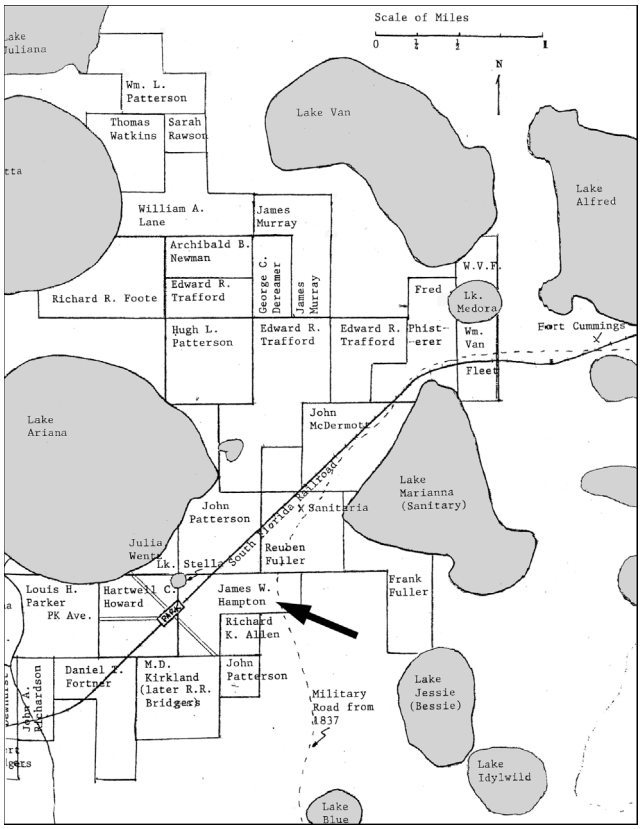
Map 1 *This map was filed by the first Auburndale postmaster as part of his Geographic Site Report to the Post Office Department. The arrow (added) shows the location of Auburndale on the South Florida Railroad. Inset map added.*



Map 2 *Copy of the original plat map filed November 27, 1885, with the Clerk of Courts, Polk County, Florida.*

The post office application, dated May 19, 1884, stated the village of Auburndale had 12 families and the proposed post office would serve 200 people nearby. The first postmaster was James W. Hampton who had settled in the area in 1882 and owned a large piece of land (*map 3*). In addition to his duties as Postmaster he also ran the local hotel, appropriately named the Hampton House. Mr. Hampton and Mr. Hartwell C. Howard donated part of their homesteads to the Railroad in order to construct the first depot.

The little community of Auburndale began to grow. *Webb's Historical, Industrial, & Biographic, Florida,* in 1885 wrote that, "Auburndale has a most desirable location…the town having just started, has but a small population as yet, but in view of the fine location and other advantages must soon settle up…the town is destined to become prominent." The little village continued to grow because of the close proximity to the railroad, which would bring new residents, tourist and pro-



Map 3 *Original state land grants circa 1890, Auburndale, Florida. Arrows indiates the location of James Hampton's property.*

vide easy transportation for farmers, particularly citrus growers. Many hundreds of acres of citrus were planted nearby. In a personal letter datelined Nov. 25, 1885, a new resident, wrote to a cousin, Mrs. Elisha Conklin, back in New York that:

> Auburndale is a new place you may not know where it is located…the South Florida Railroad connects the two places (Sanford & Tampa)…and we are quite pleasantly located…the oldest settlers say that they have never had a frost to kill the most delicate plant…There is a town not quite two years old but has already two hotels, two dry goods and one drug store, a building used for church on Sunday and school during the week, beside several dwelling houses and a great many more that are being built… Most people who locate buy a few acres of land and plant oranges, lemons, limes, bananas, mangoes, pineapples and guavas. They raise sugar cane and a great variety of vegetables… I can see three handsome lakes from my window. They are teaming with fish and the forests have plenty of wild game. We have had some delicious venison since we came and the beef is as good as at home… People living here seem very contented and happy…

The letter ends with a note that "I shall be quite content to remain (in Auburndale)." (*figure 1*)

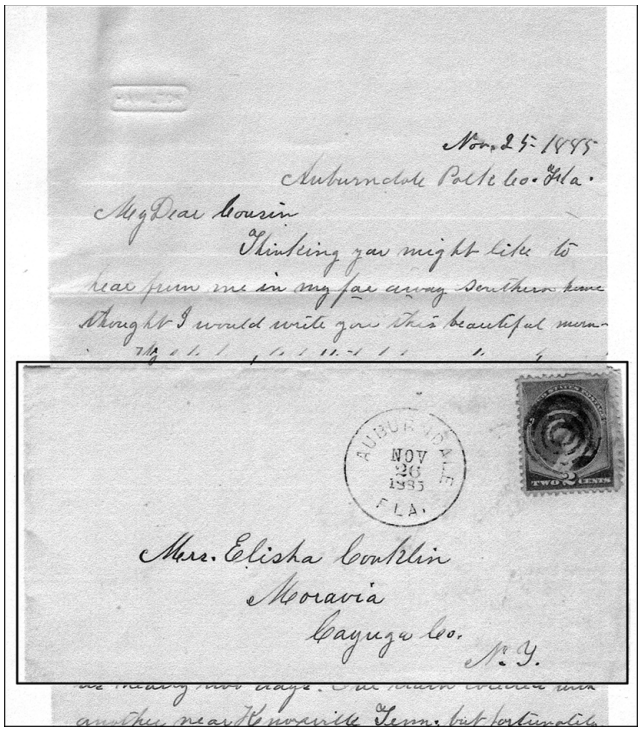


Figure 1 *An early resident writes her cousin about life in Auburndale in November 1885.*

That contentment was probably short lived however, because just as things were beginning to pick up for Auburndale circumstances changed drastically. A devastating freeze occurred in 1885/86 that killed all citrus trees in the area. A local newspaper, The *Bartow Courier Informant*, in an article dated May 4, 1887, tried to put things in a positive light when it stated, "that business of the place is quiet at present, but the indications are that at no distant day, this will become a town of considerable importance. That was not to happen, at least not yet. Things were about to get worse, much worse. The disastrous freeze of 1885/86 was followed by a yellow fever scare that severely hampered all business in the state. Land values collapsed and bankruptcies were common. Many people left. In 1889, a survey done by the Florida State Board of Health found only 42 people still living in Auburndale. Yet somehow, the little village of Auburndale managed to survive and started to grow again.

The post office and the postmasters were very important to small communities such as Auburndale. In a time before 24 hour cable news networks, the internet, and even the phone, the post office was your lifeline to the outside world. It is hard for us to imagine today, but the post office and the mail was central to almost everyone, especially businesses. When a postmaster left, they would be sorely missed in the community. A Feb. 15, 1899, *Bartow Courier Informant* article stated, "Mr.

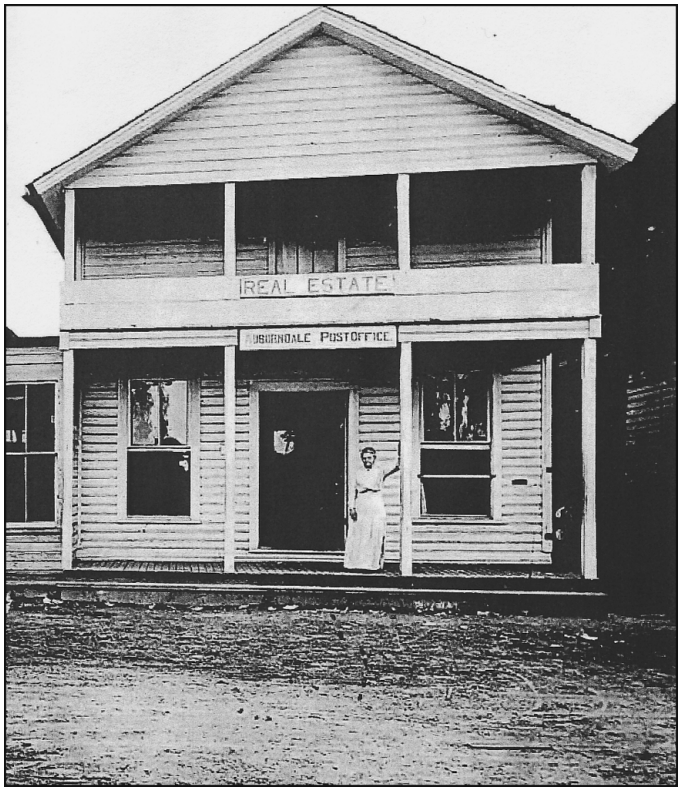


Figure 2 *Auburndale post office occupied this two-story building in 1911 or early 1912.*

A.H. Zachry—the fourth postmaster—has tendered his resignation…it is safe to say that every patron of the office is sorry of his move, for he has been courteous and accommodating. His conduct won the good will of every one." The postmaster who replaced him seemed to be of considerable means as stated in a July 11, 1900, *Bartow Courier Informant* article. "Postmaster (William A.) Sands has recently sold 5,000 acres to a turpentine firm, who will erect stills at Sanataria and Raymond." (note, that both Sanataria and Raymond would have their own post offices for a little while)

As the town of Auburndale grew, tensions began to rise because of the small size of the post office. A Dec. 12, 1908 newspaper article printed a letter from a winter resident which said, "I only stay here part of the year, but it really it makes me, as well as other winter residents mad every time we have to go into our little insignificant cigar box of a Post Office. We Learn our Postmaster gets it for nothing….why don't he make a place or use some of the vacant buildings…..we have determined along with the year round residents to make a big kick (complaint) to the Post Office Dept. at Washington and see if they will not have something done." Postmaster Sands quickly responded and wrote in the Dec. 17, 1908 newspaper, "There are 2 vacant buildings in town, one is large enough for a grain warehouse, the other too far removed from the center of business…He wants me to make a place…whoever heard of a Postmaster of the 4th class getting sufficient income to erect a building for his office?…the public is not materially inconvenienced by the size of the office, for the (public)side of the cabinet is larger in comparison than the Postmasters and it is behind the cabinet where the work is done!"

Well, it seems that Postmaster Sands won out for a time, because it would be for the next postmaster—John McLain—to move the Post Office. He moved the post office to much larger quarters in late 1911 or early 1912 (*figure 2*). Unfortunately this new post office would soon burn down in one of two disastrous Auburndale city fires. The first fire occurred in Nov. 1912. A newspaper article stated, "A fire destroyed many businesses of Auburndale including the Post Office." A Jan. 30, 1913 newspaper article recorded the loss as follows," J.P. McLain Postmaster and stationary and cigar store, loss of $500, no insurance." The post office eventually moved to new quarters, which was called the Triangle Building (*figure 3*). That proved to be a fortuitous move, because another, more severe fire swept the business district in Nov. 1913. A newspaper article on Nov. 27, 1913 stated that, "the entire business section of Auburndale was

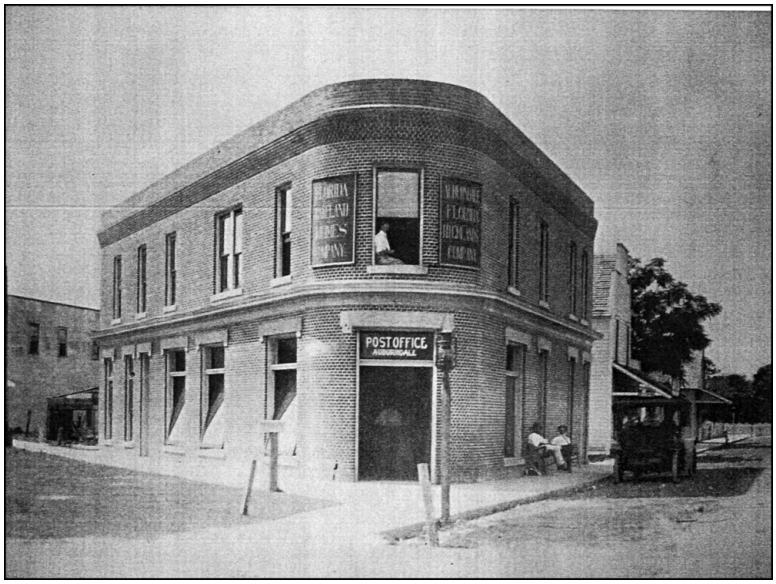


Figure 3 *Auburndale's Triangle Building became home to the post office after fire destroyed its earlier quarters.*

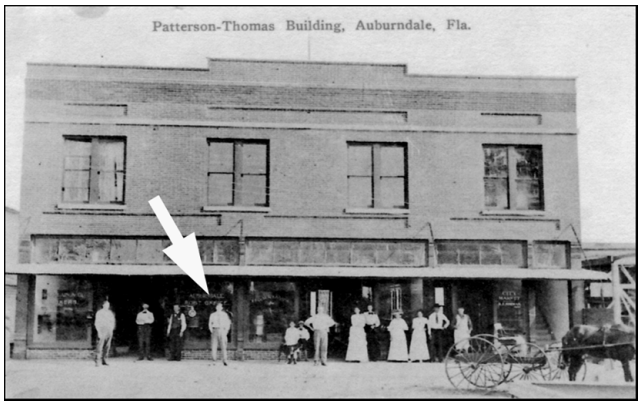


Figure 4 *The Auburndale post office was located in the Patterson-Thomas Building for a time in the early twentieth century. Arrow indicates postmaster.*

Figure 5 *This building housed the post office during the 1940s and 1950s.*

reduced to ashes last night, with the exception of the State Bank building" (Triangle Building). This building is still in use today.

The post office and Auburndale overcame these setbacks and continued to prosper. The post office moved to several locations (*figures 4 & 5*) before locating at its current site. Citrus growing and citrus processing plants sprang up and employed many people. A large trucking firm sprang up and many smaller industries began to flourish. Auburndale has grown from a small village to a vibrant community nestled between Winter Haven and Lakeland.

Following are a couple of unusual items about the Auburndale Post Office. From establishment in 1884 through 1956, there were three women among the twelve Postmasters. The first woman and third Postmaster, Mrs. Naomi Thorpe, served five years from October 10, 1891 until January 28, 1896. This was very unusual in early Polk County history. Nine Polk County Post Offices when they closed, would send their mail to Auburndale. These communities were: Nettie, Green Pond, Morse, Sanitaria, Wahneta, Tilson, Raymond, Fitzhugh, and Blanch.

The Auburndale Post Office was officially opened on June 2nd, 1884 and has remained opened continuously until the present day serving the citizens of Auburndale and the nearby community.

A listing of the Postmasters & Postmistresses of Auburndale is provided in *table 1*. Note that personel records from the National archives stop in the 1950s.

Table 1 *A listing of Auburndale postmasters up to 1956*

Hampton, James W.	06-02-1884	until	06-24-1886
Watkins, Thomas B.	06-25-1886	until	10-09-1891
Thorpe, Mrs.Naomi	10-10-1891	until	01-28-1896
Zachry, Alfred Henry	01-29-1896	until	02-08-1899
Sands, William A.	02-09-1899	until	07-23-1911
McLain, John H.	07-24-1911	until	03-30-1914
Jones, James P.	03-31-1914	until	10-06-1921
McLain, John H.	10-07-1921	until	05-12-1927
Meadows, Charles H.	05-13-1927	until	02-13-1928
Allen. Ralph C.	02-14-1928	until	07-14-1936
Orchard, Mrs. Mansell A.*	07-15-1936	until	03-31-1954
Keefer, Ruth A.	03-31-1954	until	05-18-1956
Wickey, Alfred A.	05-18-1956	until	?

*name change to Mansell A. Warner on 11-01-1953

Figures 6 and 7 illustrate post cards and covers bearing Auburndale postmarks dating prior to 1920.

Figure 6 *Three 19th century Auburndale covers.* ***(top)*** *Dated Feb 19, 1886, with a fancy target killer with cut crossroads.* ***(center)*** *Dated June 24, 1884, a different postmark style with same cancel.* ***(bottom)*** *Feb 14, 1894 datestamp with cork grid killer.*

Figure 7 *Three early 20th century post cards bearing Auburndale postmarks.* ***(top)*** *A type 3 Doane postmark dated Apr 28, 1906. The Doane number—although not distinguishable here—is a "4" indicating that Auburndale's postmaster received a compensation of between $300 and $400 in 1905.* ***(center)*** *A 4-bar postmark of Aug 19, 1910.* ***(bottom)*** *A Columbia machine cancel dated Jan 19, 1919, ties a 2-cent red paying the war rate.*

Registered And Fourth-Class Mail From China 1900-1901

By Michael Dattolico

They were the American Minutemen of a different generation. Whereas the citizen-soldiers of 1775 were rebels fighting for freedom against tyrrany, the marines and soldiers of 1900 rushed to save Americans from fanatical rebels in China. It remains one of history's most obscure ironies.

Many historians view America's military involvement in Boxer Rebellion as an appendage or side-show of the Philippines Insurrection. The emergency that arose in north China in 1900 took Americans by surprise, and the resultant military advance to Peking that summer was marked by urgency and haste. Logistically, it was a campaign operated on a shoestring, relegating such essentials as regular mail service to a secondary priority for a time. The situation was rectified in September, 1900, when postal stations were established for military personnel by veteran Railway Mail Service clerks at three locations. After operating efficiently for eleven months, one might assume that examples of mail from U.S. troops in China is plentiful. Unfortunately, the opposite is true.

Why is military mail sent during the Boxer Rebellion so scarce? One reason is the small size of the U.S. military forces sent there. In the peak month of September, 1900, the United States Army had 189 officers and 4,636 enlisted men ensconsed at Taku, Tientsin and Peking. The presence of Marines pushed the total over 5,000, but they returned to their ships and the Philippines in early autumn. By December, 1900, American forces had been reduced to 90 officers and 2,000 enlisted men and by May, 1901, only 5 officers and 160 enlisted soldiers remained. During the same period, almost 70,000 soldiers served in the Philippines (December, 1900) and a large presence occupied Cuba, making the China relief force seem almost miniscule by comparison.

Weather was a significant factor in the postal history of the Boxer Rebellion. The soldiers and marines from the Philippines went from a wet, tropical setting into a dry, drought-stricken country which debilitated the most hardened veterans. When they finally became acclimated to the heat, a frigid north China winter forced the soldiers to adjust to new weather extremes, leaving many prostrate. The winter weather also closed Taku harbor, the primary mail outlet, forcing the American command to rely upon the Imperial Chinese Post Office for assistance. For part of the winter, American mail was routed through Shanghai which further disrupted postal service to north China.

The nature of the troops themselves may have been a factor in the reduced volume of mail. The soldiers sent to China were regulars, many of whom were career men with few ties to civilian life, and they had been overseas for two years. The 9th Infantry had fought in Cuba and the Philippines without a break before sailing for China, while the 14th U.S. Infantry had been in the Philippines since the summer of 1898 (*figure 1*).

Finally, the sudden transfer of men from the Philippines and the United States to China caused mail disruptions. Months sometimes passed before men in China received

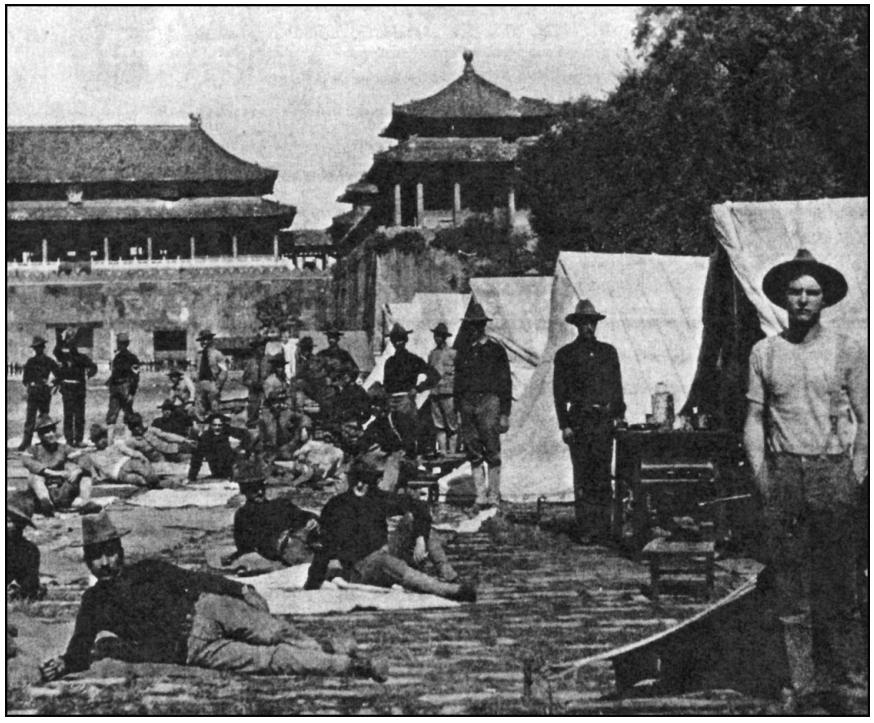


Figure 1 *Photo taken of 9th U.S. Infantry troops in Peking, August, 1900. This overworked regiment served in China from July, 1900, until May, 1901. A company of this unit remained as the U.S. legation guard until 1905. Many surviving examples of American military mail from China were sent by men of this regiment.*

mail which had been addressed to their former Philippines locations, only to be rerouted to China after long delays.

If examples of regular mail from American troops in China are seldom seen, registered and other classes of mail are especially elusive. Noted postal historian Al Kugel did ground-breaking research on such mail, which was published by The Military Postal History Society in the early 1990s. The MPH Society's *Bulletin* Volume 32, No. 1, featured Kugel's detailed information on known registered covers processed through U.S. military postal stations in China. Kugel's research on periods of canceler device usage, locations where specific markings were applied, and accurate, extensive data on other aspects of the Boxer Rebellion comprise the vast bulk of knowledge used by students conducting postal history research (*figures 2-4*).

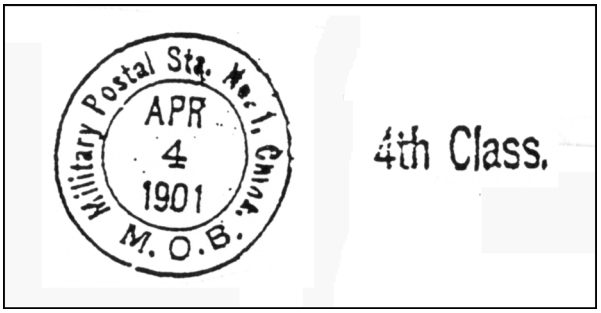


Figure 4 *The military stations in China provided the same services as those offered at post offices in the United States. They included money orders and 4th-class mail.*

Even most rarely seen are examples of 4th-class mail from the China military stations. Until recently, only two examples had been recorded. Shown as *figure 10*, however, is a newly identified 4th-class cover sent as a soldier's "gift" which was mailed from Peking during the American occupation. Not only was it sent as 4th-class matter, it was processed as registered mail from Military Station No. 1, Peking, to an addressee in Texas.

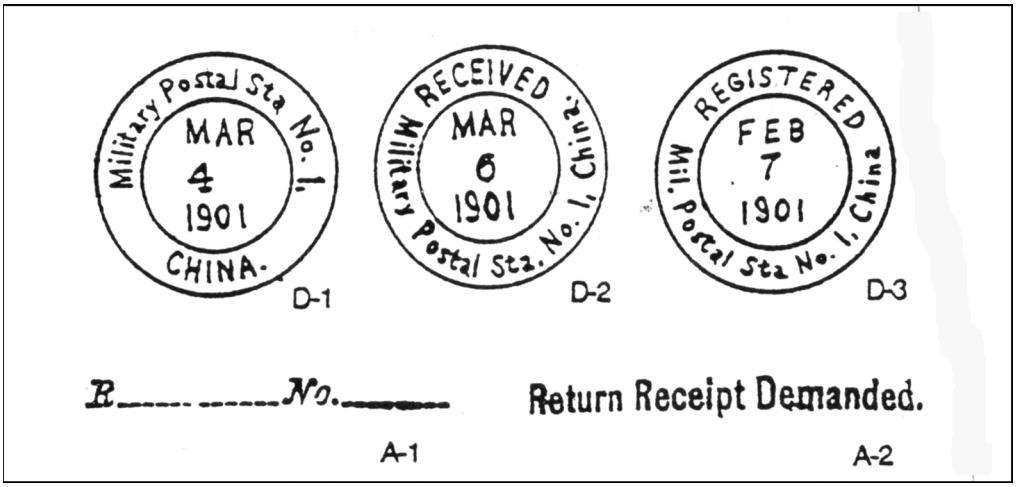


Figure 2 *Cancellations affixed on registered mail at U.S. military postal stations in China, September, 1900 through July, 1901.*

Since overseas military stations offered postal services to military personnel at the domestic U.S. rates, the cost of sending this item is noteworthy. The sender was charged twenty-one cents. Since the registry rate was eight cents, the remaining thirteen cents was charged to pay the 4th-Class rate.

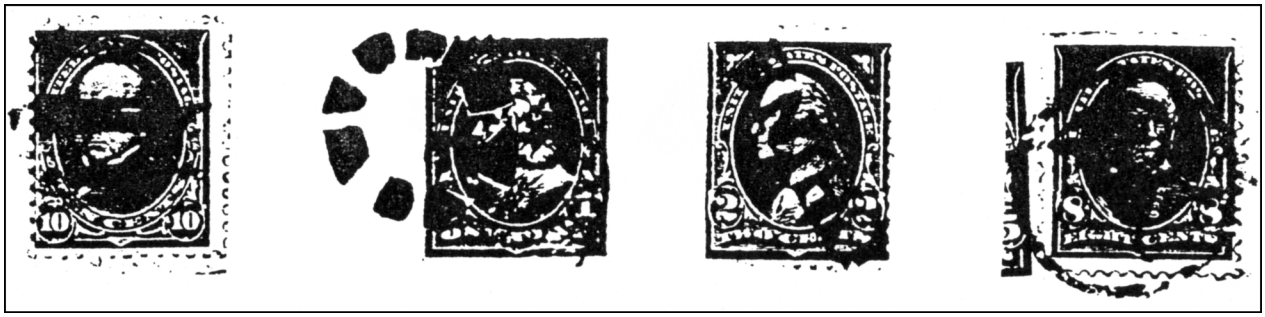


Figure 3 *Killer markings seen on registered mail processed at Peking, Tientsin and Taku, China military postal stations. From left: three thick bars, wedged cartwheel, the word CHINA in bold caps and an encircled capital "R".*

Seventeen registered covers have been recorded, with pertinent details about each documented by Kugel. Examples of several are presented here for viewing *(figures 5-9)*.

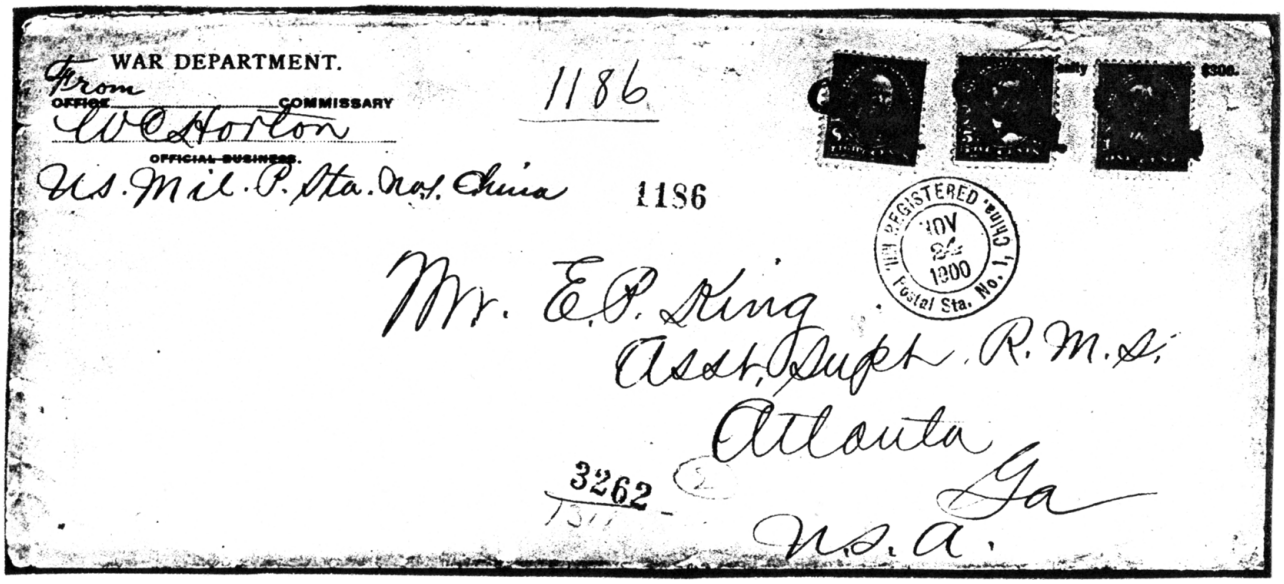


Figure 5 *War Department official envelope sent registered to E. P. King, Assistant Superintendent, Railway Mail Service, in Atlanta, Georgia. A Type D-3 double circle cancellation is shown on the cover, and the large "CHINA" straightline marking is shown on each stamp. The Railway Mail Service's 4th Division headquarters were located in Atlanta. Henry Robinson, the superintendent of the military postal stations in China, was detached from the 4th Division.*

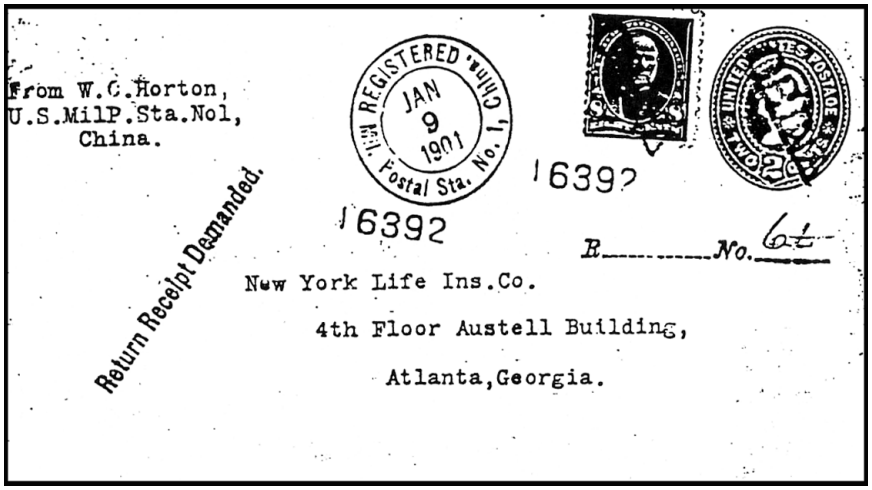


Figure 6 *Registered cover postmarked with a Type D-3 double circle datestamp. It bears a Type A-1 auxiliary marking and the only recorded example of the Type A-2 "Return Receipt Demanded" auxiliary marking. Two bold "CHINA" killer markings have cancelled the stamps. (Courtesy of Al Kugel).*

Figure 7 *Registered letter posted at Military Station No. 1, Taku, China, on April 26, 1901, to New York. The stamps were struck with the circular "R" killer device. (Courtesy of Al Kugel).*

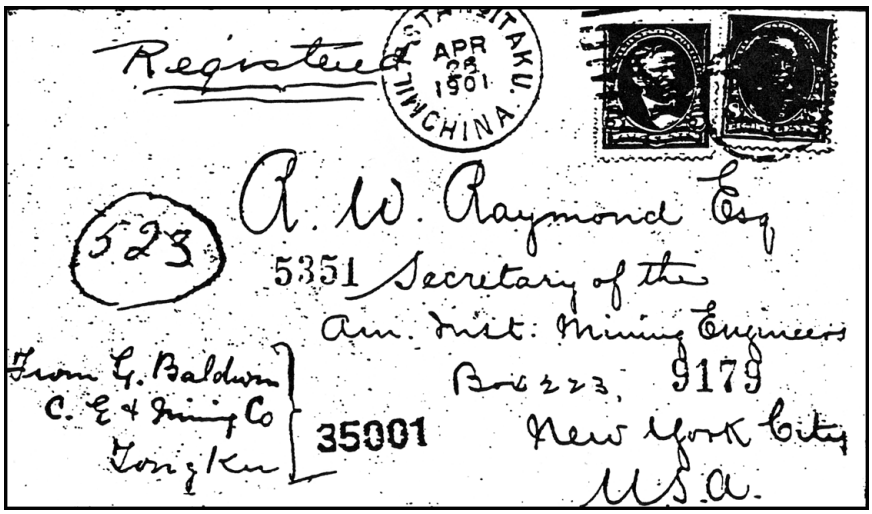


Figure 8 *Registered letter sent from a sailor aboard the U.S.S. Monocacy to San Francisco on July 1, 1901. A Type D-3 double circle registery cancellation and straightline Type A-1 marking is shown along with a regular military postal station cancel. This is the latest registered cover handled at the American postal stations. Military Station No. 1, China formally ceased operations on August 15, 1901.*

In 1901, the 4th-class rate of postage paid for the mailing of matter not of the first or third-class categories consisting of:

> ...other flexible materials and any matter which is not in its form or nature liable to destroy, deface or otherwise damage the contents of the mail bag or harm the person of anyone engaged in the postal service... are rated as fourth-class and subject to the rate of one cent per ounce or fractional part thereof....

Fourth-class mail was subject to inspection and permitted the transport of myriad paper items. They included quantities of envelopes, blank bills and letter heads, blank cards and cardboard materials and similar things. Other commonly sent paper goods which qualified for the 4th-Class rate were flexible patterns, letter envelopes, letter paper without printing and decks of playing cards.

But a plethora of other items could be sent at the 4th-Class rate of postage. According to postal directives that existed then, "...merchandise, models, ornamental paper sample cards, samples of ores, minerals, seeds, cutting bulbs, roots, "scions" (twigs used for grafting), original paintings in oil or water colors...."

Whatever was sent weighed nearly a pound and, given the size of the cover itself, must have been a dense, substantial item. Of special note is the officer's endorsement on the cover, something not required on regular 1st-class soldiers' mail from China. This may have been required for soldiers sending 4th-class mail. Since the verifying officer was a doctor and the individual was at the U.S. hospital in Peking, it provides insight into the statuses of people treated at that facility. The sender of the parcel clearly identified himself as a soldier, although it's not known whether he was a patient or a

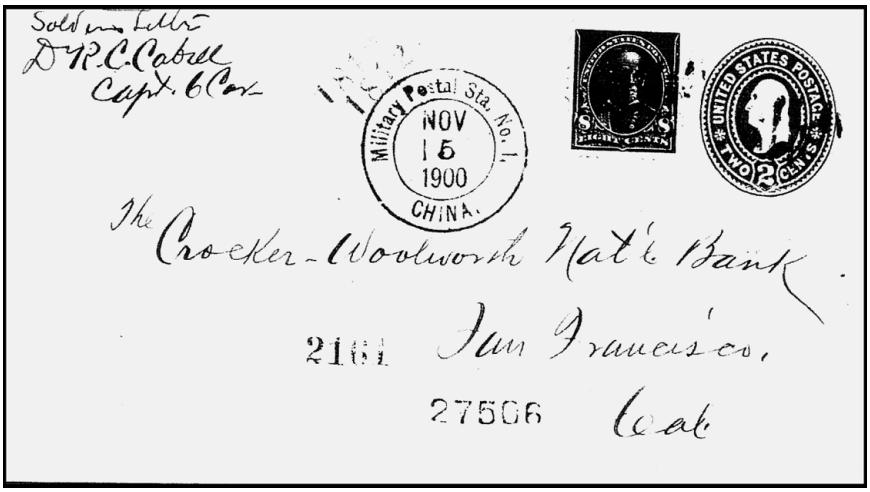


Figure 9 *Registered cover mailed November 5, 1900, showing usage of double circle datestamp D-1 to San Francisco destination. Earlier data indicated that the latest use of the D-1 device was April 19, 1901. That information has been revised to show the latest recorded usage being April 26, 1901. (Courtesy of Al Kugel).*

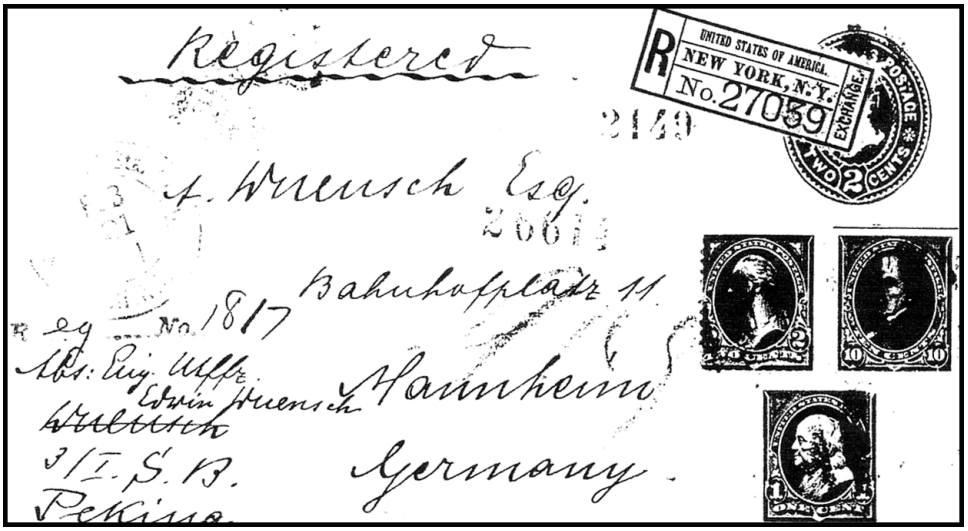


Figure 10 *Registered letter mailed from Military Station No. 1, Peking, to Germany. Thirteen cents postage paid the registry fee of eight cents, plus five cents for postage. This documented registered letter was mailed February 21, 1901. (Courtesy of Al Kugel).*

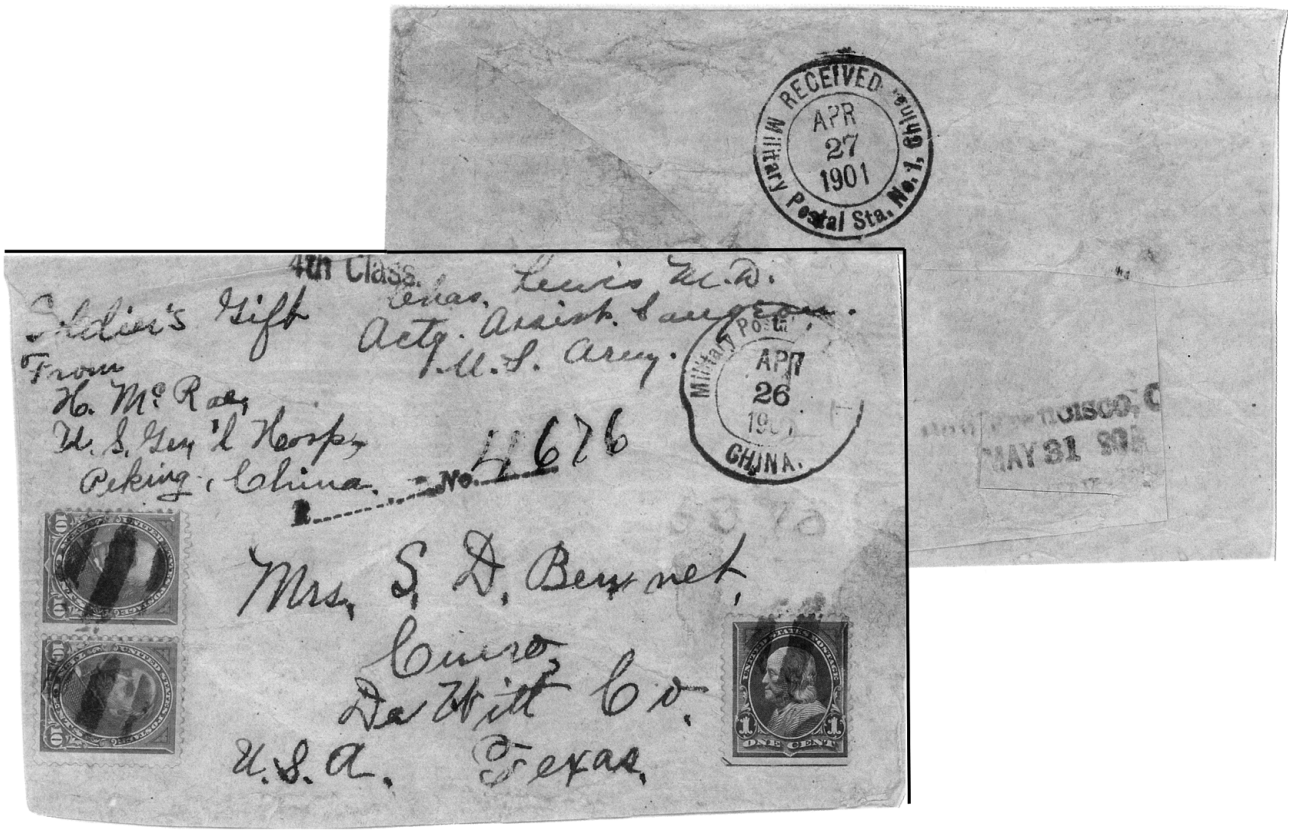


Figure 11 *Front and back of registered 4th-class envelope mailed from Peking, China on Saturday, April 26, 1901, to Cuero, Texas. The double circle postmark D-1 is shown, along with registry marking A-1 and the rare 4th-Class cancellation. Only two other 4th-class covers have been recorded from China during the Boxer Rebellion. The back shows the double circle "RECEIVED" marking dated Sunday, April 27, 1901. This marking was applied at Tientsin. A San Francisco cancellation is seen at lower right. The "RECEIVED" postmark is scarcely seen; only three others have been recorded.*

corpsman. But since diplomats and their staffs, missionaries, mining engineers and other non-military personnel in Peking also required medical services, doctors likely treated civilians at that facility.

The envelope was postmarked at Military Station No. 1, Peking, on Saturday, April 26, 1901. It was handled by the military postal station at Tientsin on Sunday, April 27th, as evidenced by the scarce "RECEIVED" marking shown on the back. (Figure 11). A San Francisco marking dated May 31st is also visible.

The appearance of this previously unrecorded Boxer period registered, 4th-class cover is proof that there is still material to be found and identified. Discoveries of exciting material awaits us.

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The Nixie's Bum

by Dale Speirs

Introduction

Recently, while doing some postal history research, I came across the 2003 edition of the USPS "Glossary Of Postal Terms" (USPS Publication #32), that lists the terminology used in its operations. Most terms are technical, defining various acronyms and machine names or procedures. Some are esoteric, such as "a decouvert", which means international mail transiting across the USA from one foreign country to another (such as Canada to Mexico) in unsealed containers. What really caught my eye were the slang terms classified as "informal" but which are an official part of USPS nomenclature. I combined a batch of these terms into a monologue you might hear on a post office loading dock. Read it through and see if you can guess the content before looking at the definitions.

"I was sorting the hot case so the letter carrier wouldn't complain he had to go stuck, when the nixie clerk asked me to dress the rack. I grabbed the bum and gave it the elbow and eyeball. I found a bulkie from a flag pole, a fletter, and a chunk. Having done that, I went over to the facer and sorted the smiles and frowns. One of the carriers came back into the depot and said she had to do a lot of fingering as she went lawn crossing."

Definitions

Bulkie: A regular-size envelope that contains an object making the mailpiece non-machinable (such as a pen, film roll, or thermometer). The envelope must be culled to protect both mailpiece and machine.

Bum: A bundle of empty sacks or pouches.

Chunk: A small parcel.

Dress the rack: To hang empty sacks or pouches on a sorting rack.

Elbow and eyeball: To open and examine the interior of a presumably empty sack to ensure that it does not contain mail trapped inside.

Fingering the mail: Checking the addresses on mail between delivery stops on a carrier route before selecting mailpieces for the next stop.

Flag pole: An overseas military post office that performs the functions of a domestic sectional center facility.

Fletter: A mailpiece that can be classified as letter-size mail but could also meet the standards for and be mailed as automation flat-size mail.

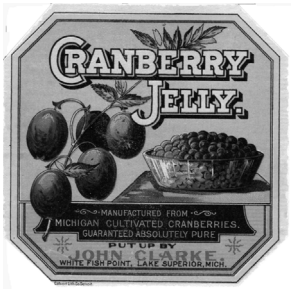
Hot case: A special distribution case in a delivery unit for last-minute sorting of mail. The letter carrier collects this mail before leaving for his or her route.

Lawn crossing: The practice of taking a shortcut across the customer's lawn during delivery. It is permitted unless it is hazardous or the customer objects.

Nixie: A mailpiece that cannot be sorted or delivered because of an incorrect, illegible, or insufficient delivery address. A nixie clerk specializes in handling this mail.

Smiles, frowns, and upside-downs: The accidental deviations from the uniform alignment of envelopes on a facer-canceler or letter sorting machine. When the back of the envelope faces the machine operator, it is either a smile (flap makes a V) or a frown (flap is inverted): when the address side faces the machine but is inverted, the envelope is called an upside-down.

Stuck: having more mail than can be completely distributed prior to scheduled dispatch or letter carrier leaving time, as in "go stuck"



Original label

Modern label

130th Anniversary of the Centennial Cranberry Farm at Whitefish Point, MI

by Paul E. Petosky

The 100th Anniversary of our Great Nation on July 4, 1876, was also the establishment of the Centennial Cranberry Farm at Whitefish Point, MI by John Clarke, my great granduncle.

July 4, 2006, marked a tradition that has taken place for 130 years, and also a special occasion for the cranberry industry for Michigan. The Centennial Cranberry Farm was purchased by John Clarke from the U.S. Government at Whitefish Township in 1876, and has been in the same family for 130 years. Mr. Clarke chose the name "Centennial" as the year 1876 was our nation's one-hundredth birthday and he wished to commemorate it in that manner.

Circa 1911

John Clarke selected this area to grow cranberries for a number of reasons. Being located on the shore of Lake Superior offers superb frost protection because of the temperature moderating influence of this large body of water. Also, the farm's sandy soil is very acidic in which cranberries thrive.

Fresh cranberries have always been produced there since the farm's inception. During the late 1800s and the early 1900s there were 18 other cranberry growers in the nearby area with small acreages. These growers sold their cranberries to Frank House. Because this farm is located on the shore of Lake Superior, the cranberries were shipped out by boat to places like Chicago and Saint Louis, MO.

John Clarke built a dovetail-notched home from large square-cut timbers which is still standing today on the farm. This building is also the original building that housed the Whitefish Point Post Office, which was established on September 24, 1877, with Sylvester P. Mason as its first postmaster. The Whitefish Point Post Office opened just six years after Whitefish Point was settled in 1871 as a landing for the then abundant lumber supplies and as a commercial fishery. Permanent residents received their mail from Sault Sainte Marie. During the summer months, mail was delivered by boat three times a week. In severe winter weather, dog teams hauled the mail twice a month. During the early years of the post office, my great grandfather, James M. Clarke hauled the mail and passengers by stagecoach to the various locations in and around the Whitefish Point area. James M. Clarke was a brother to John Clarke.

John Clarke later started a cranberry farm at Vermilion which is seven miles west of here. He then sold the original farm and home to his half-brother, Frank House. Frank married Sarah Jane "Jenny" Gough, the local school teacher, who was raised in Pickford, MI which is about 80 miles southeast of here. All three of these people, John, Frank and Jenny, were originally from Meaford, Ontario, Canada.

Frank then enlarged their house to accommodate his family of eight children. George was the youngest of Frank and Jenny's children and was Loren's father. Loren House and his wife, Sharon, are now the current

owners of the Centennial Cranberry Farm. A plaque is displayed designating this site as a Michigan Centennial Farm. John M. Clarke, the original owner of the Centennial Cranberry Farm died in 1914 at the age of 67.

A few years ago, under a brushy area, they discovered some of the original "native" vines that have been there for over 100 years. These vines still produce cranberries. For more information on the Centennial Cranberry Farm check over their website at: *http://www.centennialcranberry.com/History.htm*

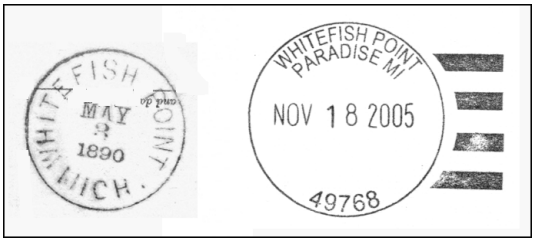
The original Whitefish Point Light Station was built prior to the actual settlement of Whitefish Point in 1871. Assistant Land Surveyor James Piper was sent to Whitefish Point to select a site for the new light station, and arrived on April 3, 1847, laid-out a 115.5 acre site consisting of cranberry bogs and sand dunes for the station. Construction of the station began in the summer of 1848.

James A. Starr was appointed the first keeper of the Whitefish Point Light on October 10, 1848, but somehow decided to resign his commission and was replaced by James B. Van Rensalaer. The light was lit during the opening of the 1849 navagation season.

Whitefish Point post ffice, circa 1907.

In the 1930s the Whitefish Point Post Office moved two miles Southeast from its original location on the Centennial Cranberry Farm to Dutchers Grocery Store.

Postmasters that served at the Whitefish Point, MI Post Office (Chippewa County) are listed in *table 1*. The Whitefish Point Post Office discontinued operation on February 15, 1974, along with zip code 49798; with mail service to Paradise, MI 49768.



An 1890 Whitefish Point postmark and the last day of use postmark of the Whitefish Point-Paradise, MI (dual city) postmark.

Table 1 Postmasters of Whitefish Point, MI Post Office

Sylvester P. Mason	September 24, 1877	September 14, 1879
Charles W. Endress	September 15, 1879	November 21, 1880
Ezekiel M. Baker	November 22, 1880	October 9, 1881
Charles J. Linke	October 10, 1881	May 1, 1883
John Clarke	May 2, 1883	January 24, 1893
John M. Greig	January 25, 1893	March 1, 1907
Jennie House	March 2, 1907	March 31, 1916
Abigail Clarke	April 1, 1916	June 16, 1918
Mrs. Lula Guenther	June 17, 1918	April 20, 1936
Frank P. Pickett	April 21, 1936	January 3, 1940
Mrs. Esther O. Pickett	January 4, 1940	February 23, 1942
Thomas W. Brown	February 24, 1942	August 4, 1942
Mrs. Rena W. Morris	August 5, 1942	March 16, 1949
Joseph P. Kingsbury	March 17, 1949	January 14, 1955
Albert Gillingham	January 15, 1955	September 9, 1958
Roy Dutcher	September 10, 1958	February 15, 1974

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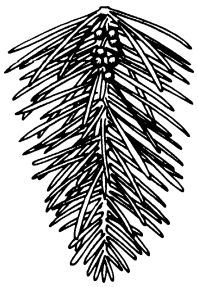

I am seeking information, covers, postcards, or photos of the Spruce Production Division—a U.S. Army unit that logged spruce trees in Washington & Oregon for airplane construction during WW I.

The camps were based in coastal counties, and may be addressed "Camp 4", or "S.T. Camp 2/48th Sqd. S.P.D." or similar.

Will buy, or would appreciate copies or jpegs.

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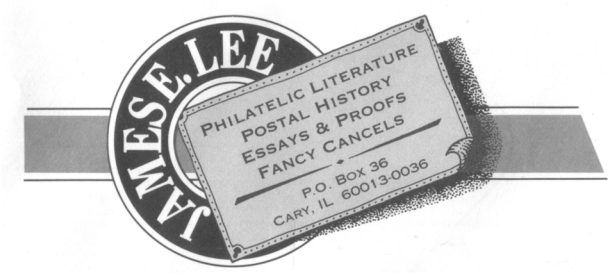

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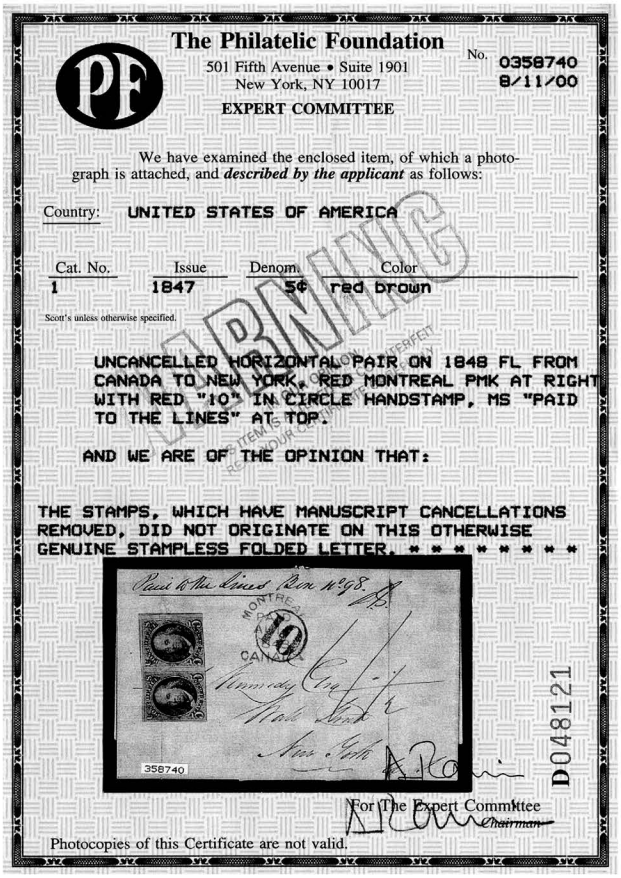

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