

THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS



Vol. XIII, No. 4
April 1966

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THE AERO PHILATELISTS ANNALS published quarterly each year by Aero Philatelists, 22 East 35th St., New York, N. Y. 10016, a non-profit corporation, chartered in New York State. Distributed free of charge to all members of Aero Philatelists, Inc. Back numbers, when available, for sale at \$1.00 each.

THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS



Vol. XIII, No. 4

April 1966

Henry M. Goodkind, Editor

Philip Silver, Assistant Editor

RF OVERPRINTS

A New Booklet Reveals Official French Records

This started out as a short book review of a new booklet, whose details are as follows:

La Naissance des Surcharges "R.F." de la Poste Navale Francaise 1943-1945. (The Birth of the "R.F." Surcharges on the French Naval Posts 1943-1945) by Henry C. Dupont. 12 pages. Paper cover. Published by L'Echangiste Universel, 67 Bischwiler, France. Price 3.75 frs. (80 cents U. S.).

Having written eight articles on these RF markings in addition to a 62-page book,* one can understand my great interest in this new work.

**RF Overprints on United States Air Mail* by Henry M. Goodkind. Theodore E. Steinway Handbook No. 5 published by the Collectors Club, 22 East 35 Street, New York, N. Y. 10016. 64 pages, 75 illustrations. Price \$2.

While working on this booklet, I began making notes. Also, my English-French dictionary was used to properly understand all that was written. When finished, I found that my notes covered more than ten handwritten pages.

Then, I began trying to extract, prune and edit for a short book review. But so little was found that deserved to be omitted or digested that the practical decision was reached to make this an article, rather than a book review.

Furthermore, I did not know the author. Henry Dupont, when I wrote my book in 1957. We began corresponding in 1960; since then we have met twice in Europe and have developed a fine friendship. Any inspiration I have given to my friend in France is a source of deep personal satisfaction.

The State of Confusion

Henry Dupont commences with the following statement:

"There is no chapter of philately in our country (France) more controversial than the 'R.F.' surcharges applied by the French Fleet Post Office on the United States 6-cent air mail stamp (Scott C25, Yvert #26)." Henry Dupont, you can say that again!

Having collected and studied these RF surcharges since I secured my first cover in 1944, I, too, have written about them in the hope of dispelling confusion and have them better understood in America. I admit some success; that both the Scott and Sanabria Catalogues revised their listings after my book appeared was very encouraging. Furthermore, many collectors and dealers have come to accept the results of my research. But unhappily, there have been some diehard stamp dealers, who still insist upon selling RF stamps and covers that I do not consider genuine. Many auction sale catalogues describe RF lots with the words, "sold as is." In my view, mint copies, certain bogus types and fake covers should not be sold, "as is," or any other way.

Mr. Dupont sees the same problem in France. Here, then, is the first conscientious attempt in France by any philatelist to seriously study the subject. The job was done by gaining access into the official archives in the French Ministry of Marine in Paris and seeing what was there. The records were then compared with what had been written. Henry Dupont uses and quotes only one source, my book. Join me in seeing what Mr. Dupont wrote.

The French booklet has three chapters with subdivisions—an introduction, *the First Period* of use of U. S. air mail stamps without any surcharges and *the Second Period* when the RF markings were used.

March 18, 1943 Directive

The first document found was a directive dated March 18, 1943. This gives instructions for the handling of air mail letters of the French Navy to America and other foreign lands. It sets rates, tells how the stamps are to be procured and used; how the stamps are to be cancelled. Also, it directs the way mail is to be dispatched for the air mail service.

The stamps mentioned in 1943 are those of *Algeria*. Mr. Dupont believes that this March 1943 directive marks the start, the birth of French naval air mail that eventually gave rise to the RF overprints.

My book does not mention this March 18, 1943 directive; I did not know of it. But I did show covers used early in 1943 by the French Navy with U. S. stamps to prepay the 6-cents air mail fee, when some of the French Navy's ships were over here being repaired in the Brooklyn and Philadelphia Navy Yards. The French sailors and officers were accorded the same mailing privileges as the United States Armed Forces. Ordinary postage went free; air mail was 6-cents an ounce against the higher 8-cent air mail rate for civilians.

The Dupont studies in this part, in my opinion, do not take into considera-

tion that French Navy air mail at that time is found with Algerian, as well as with United States, and also with British postage stamps. Of course, Mr. Dupont is correct when he concentrates on this North African directive, because the later use of RF markings was confined to the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean both off and in North Africa. The point I make is that the precedent for the French to be allowed to use United States postage stamps and mail facilities had been established early in 1943, when the French ships were over here in the United States for repairs. *RF was not overprinted on Algerian stamps, only on U. S. stamps.*

Chapter One

This chapter heading is "The First Period." Its title in English is "Use of 6-cents stamp without surcharge." It begins with significant extracts by Mr. Dupont of a French Navy directive dated November 14, 1943. The author attaches a great deal of importance to the findings of this directive. There is no question; it is good to know of it.

The November 14, 1943 directive's Article No. 1 speaks of an agreement made by the French with the Chief of the U. S. Military Posts for mail to America. Mr. Dupont footnotes that this agreement has been lost. Both of us regret this.

Article No. 5 states that the U. S. stamps will be sold to the French postal agents under the same conditions as French stamps. Unfortunately, nothing more is set forth. As a student of RF markings and French Naval Posts during these War years, I always wondered how accounts were kept. I have not been able to see any. The U. S. officials just did not hand over sheets of U. S. air mail stamps to the French; some control must have been kept. Such information is important to know. I would suggest that Mr. Dupont dig

Colombian Airmails

THE handsome, 15-album specialized collection of Eric Leupin of Cali, Colombia, will be auctioned in May. C1 and C1a on first flight covers. Compania Colombiana de Navegacion Aerea and Scadta issues. Consular overprints. Government issues in blocks, sheets. Errors, perf. and wmk. varieties. Ask for catalog.



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This is HMG's Type 5 and Mr. Dupont's Type III of Algiers, the one that has been mostly widely counterfeited.

further on this; he might find some records, showing how the U. S. stamps used by the French Navy were kept.

Instruction 737/PN/Eq was issued by the French Navy on November 14, 1943. It outlines how the U. S. air mail stamps should be used and cancelled, after the sender wrote his letter. If Mr. Dupont did nothing else, the disclosure of this information is very important.

In my search of records, I never could locate Order No. 737/PN/Eq. My RF book illustrated and discussed order No. 523/PN/Ep dated June 22, 1944. (Mr. Dupont also found this in the French archives and comments upon it in his second chapter.) This June 22, 1944 directive refers to "Circular 737/PN/Ep of Nov. 9, 1943." I suspect that this is the same one as Mr. Dupont's find of 737/PN/Eq of November 14, 1943. I do not think that because the one reads "/Eq" and the other "/Ep," nor that one date is November 9th, the other November 14th means too much. I do not attach too much importance to these two small discrepancies.

This, therefore, is a great find. My book clearly stated that the June 1944 directive had referred to a November 1943 directive, which could not be located. Mr. Dupont found it; now we know what it contains. Wonderful!

Directive 737/PN/Eq plainly states that postal agents for the French Navy and the ships' F. P. O.'s are not to cancel the U. S. stamps. This only is to be performed in the French Central F. P. O. in Casablanca. From this, Mr. Dupont assumes that this regulation was continued throughout the later period, when the RF markings were used, until their end. There is no reason to doubt this. If a practice for handling mail proved successful, very likely the operation was continued.

Final Chapter

This last part covers what Mr. Dupont designates as "the Second Period" with the "use of the 6 cents stamp with surcharge."

Reaching this caused me great excitement, but then a letdown. The opening paragraph states that "the first instruction given to the French Bureau of Naval Posts to surcharge the 6 cents U. S. air mail stamp with 'R.F.' has not been located despite long and serious searching in the archives of the Department of Marine."

One of the essential keys to the RF story, therefore, is missing. You cannot blame Mr. Dupont. He tried hard to find it; it was not in the records in Paris.

But it appears to me that Mr. Henry Dupont makes the same mistake that other French philatelists have done. They take a purely nationalistic view.

Actually, one cannot speak of a French, United States or British Navy. *During World War II, it was an Allied Task Force made up of naval ships of all types from all three navies.* The Allied Task Force operated and fought as a unit. This is why the French sailors and officers were accorded the same postal privileges as those of the United States and Great Britain. My book shows mail from French sailors also with British stamps.



This was shown as Fig. 3 on page 32 of Vol. X, No. 2 of this magazine. It is from the destroyer "l'Algerien," not from the naval base in North Africa, Algiers. Notice how all the postmarks, cancellation and censoring tally with the instructions in the French Navy's directives, that Mr. Dupont published.

A second essential factor must be stressed. *The French did not authorize the RF surcharges; the United States Fleet Post Office did.* The United States ordered the French, when using our mailing facilities, to mark their air mail to America for identification purposes. *The French had to carry out our order.*

It is not known if the United States FPO specifically ordered that the French air mail to America be identified by surcharging the initials "RF." I suspect that we did not. The French chose this RF designation. We only asked for an identification of French mail. The French decided upon "RF." Here is the reason.

The U. S. Navy probably would have been satisfied with the simple "F" (for France) or any other distinctive marking. But for all Frenchman fighting to liberate their beloved France occupied by the Nazi Germans, the Republic of France (R.F.) was their ideal. In France, during the German occupation, French stamps deliberately had had the RF removed. "*Republique Francaise*" must be restored. This was their goal. This is why I think that the French in North Africa chose the initials "RF."

Furthermore, it never had been and never will be permitted that any foreign nation, *without specific consent and approval*, overprint a stamp of the United States of America. The RF's are the one exception.

Why the RF's Were Ordered

Other specialists have offered some complicated and incorrect theories as to the reason the U. S. Navy in North Africa ordered the French Naval mail to be identified. It had nothing to do with censoring nor monetary controls.

At the bottom of page 12 in my book, the reason is given. Since what was written and published in 1958 did not seem to universally clarify and explain the reason, it seems practical to spell it out again in a different manner. Incidentally, Mr. Dupont does not try to explain it.

In 1943, when the French Naval ships were sent to the United States for repairs, there was a lot of "fraternizing" between the American girls and the

French sailors. I, personally, witnessed this. Being active in the New York U. S. O. in the winter of 1943, we arranged entertainment for many a lonesome French sailor, friendless and thousands of miles from home in a strange big city.

Official records show that the "Richelieu" had a wartime compliment of 1,946, the Cruiser "Gloire" 764 and the "Emile Bertin" 705—a total of 3,355. There were also smaller ships here, so that an estimate of 4,000 French sailors in New York in 1943 seems conservative.

After repairing and refitting, the French Navy returned to North Africa later in 1943. Many friendships made in America were not forgotten; a number of French officers and sailors wrote to their American girl friends, some almost every day.

For proof of this, look at the names on RF covers; the great majority are "Miss" or "Mrs," not "Mr." The rest of the names are mostly "Mr. & Mrs." because married couples in New York, as Mrs. Goodkind and myself, had entertained some of the French Navy during their stay over here.

Futhermore, when the French Navy returned to North Africa, the build-up of U. S. Armed Forces there had been very great. Therefore, the air mail facilities from North Africa to America were overtaxed.

The U. S. Military in North Africa complained about the slow delivery of their air mail back home. I know one, who at the time was a high officer on General Eisenhower's staff in North Africa. His wife's letters from New York took three or four days. But his letters to New York required five days or a week to reach her. He had been using the A. P. O., because he was with the U. S. Army.

Someone advised him for a faster delivery home to switch to the Navy, the F. P. O. He did; it worked. His letters now reached his family in about four or five days.

But the faster delivery with the F. P. O. did not last. This began to take as long as the A. P. O. air mail. Consequently, an investigation was made. The F. P. O. was swamped with air mail letters for America. In addition to a great increase of our own mail, the French were sending a large volume.

A practical decision was reached. Our own Military must have priority, especially since we were servicing and flying the air mail. In order to insure this priority, the French were ordered to identify theirs.

New Orders Found

Extracts are made of Directive 523/PN/Ep of June 22, 1944, which I had previously mentioned. It is interesting to see that this still is in the French archives. Mr. Dupont found a new directive, not known to me, No. 190/PN/Ep dated January 15, 1945. This was issued by the Director of Naval Posts to France. The revealing information therein is the disclosure of how the Director of Naval Posts in Algeria instructed the Naval Post Bureau in Oran to handle correspondence for the United States and Canada franked with the 6-cent U. S. air mail stamp.

Further directives were found in the Paris archives that confirmed all the previous ones.

Application of the Surcharges

There now comes a passage in this French booklet that thrilled me. In italics it is stated that *all mint stamps with R.F. surcharges are not genuine*. All the directives found by Mr. Dupont show that the RF marking was applied later, never by the sender affixing the stamp to his cover.

In my 1958 book, I had expressed serious doubt about the genuineness of all mint copies. This was the one statement that philatelists, especially stamp



The cancellation date reads November 13, 1944. This large circular type is Mr. Dupont's Type II of Oran. The records show that "l'Algerien" was in Oran from October 29 to December 4, 1944.

dealers, in France and America questioned. Time and again I was told that I was wrong about mint copies. My stock answer has been to invite those holding the opposite view to write for this magazine, which I promised to publish. Not one word in refutation ever has been written.

Finally, substantiation of my opinion that mint RF copies are not genuine has come from France in this Dupont publication.

How The Mail Was Handled

The next two and a half pages are extremely important. They tie down and establish exactly how the French sailors were instructed to handle their mail. This had never been previously spelled out in the explicit detail, as Mr. Dupont does it. It adds to our information and, in turn, sets forth some data that had not been accurately stated in my book.

Mr. Dupont in eight paragraphs shows just how a letter was handled, as follows:

1. The sender writes on the cover his name, rank, ship, "Post Navale Francaise" and also "via air mail." He buys the U. S. 6-cent air mail stamp (or postal stationery) from the Chief Mail Clerk aboard his ship. (The French word is "vaguemestre," which my dictionary gives as "baggage-master.") The sender affixes his stamp and returns the envelope to the Chief Mail Clerk (vaguemestre).

2. Before the final posting, the large cachet with an anchor reading either "Marine Francaise or Marine Nationale — Service a la Mer" is hit upon the envelope, but not upon the stamp. If marked on the stamp, it is a mistake.

3. The mail is bundled and then sent to the nearest French F. P. O. in French Africa. In some instances the mail was transmitted to the local P. T. T. service, who, in turn, dispatched it to the Naval Bureau.

4. This describes in detail the procedure for French censoring.

5. The surcharge "R.F." was then applied by hand in a type that was available in the Naval Bureau.

6. The stamp was immediately cancelled "Poste Navale." Here comes mention of "retard systematique," for which I have to supply a literal English translation. I think this means "Delayed Mail" or "Mail Held for Later Delivery." With this delayed mail, the cancellation had to be hit at the corner of the RF stamp for identification.

7. Correspondence was next sent by the regular P. T. T. civilian service to the Central Bureau in Casablanca (Main FPO for all French North Africa).

9. The Central Bureau at Casablanca turned over the French naval mail to the United States F. P. O. where it underwent U. S. censoring. Thus, Mr. Dupont points out, each cover should bear both French and U. S. censor marks or tapes.

There have been exceptions, which Mr. Dupont overlooked. Some RF mail was not censored by us in North Africa, *but in New York City*. See in my book the covers like Fig. 32. Also, Figs. 28 and 29 shows British, not U. S. censoring, on mail from the battleship "Richelieu."

In his comments in this section, the French author stresses that the RF surcharge was applied always after the stamp was affixed, not where a letter was posted. This is correct.

Identification of the Origin of the RF Surcharges

This part is the most difficult and complicated. It is now seen that the orders from the French Naval Posts specified that the "RF" markings were not to be applied, when mailed aboard ship, but upon arrival at an F. P. O. in

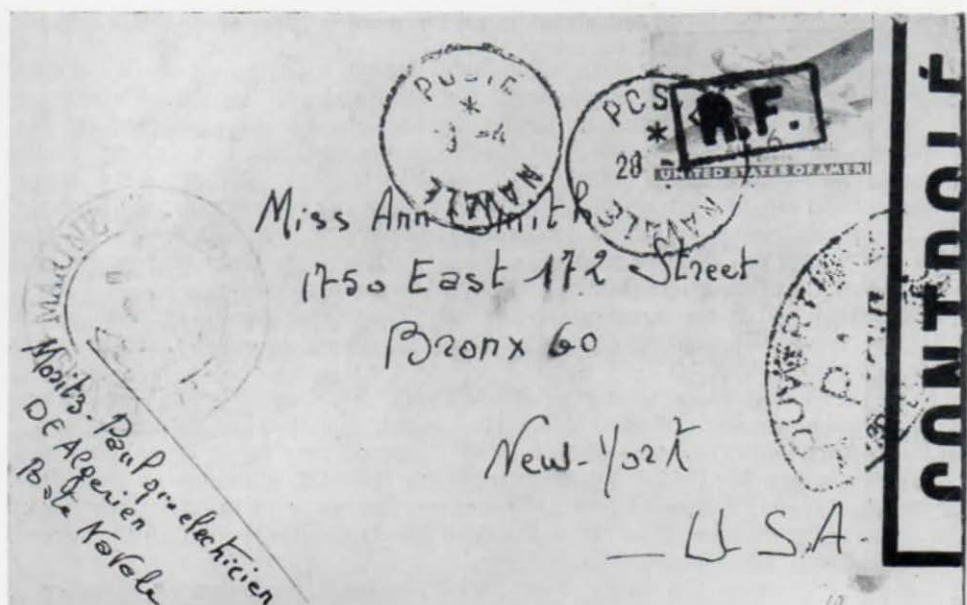
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This cover with HMG's Type 7 and Mr. Dupont's Type VI, which he identifies as Marseilles, is the scarcest type of RF overprint. The log shows that "l'Algerien" was in Marseilles from April 4 to 6th, 1945; again on April 9th; and the last time in April, 1945 on the 19th and 20th. There are two "Poste Navale" markings. The one to the left seems to be dated "April 3, 1945." (It could be an "8," not a "3" but this is very doubtful.) The cancellation on the stamp is dated "April 28, 1945." A cover like this clearly shows the difficulty faced with the identification of the RF types at a specific French naval base F.P.O.

a Naval Base. This had always confused me. In the Appendix of my book, I tabulate where mail from one ship by the same correspondent had as many as six different types of RF. It seems logical, therefore, that one could not identify a certain type of surcharge (and there are many pronounced variations) with a specific locale. Here I have been corrected. Yes, evidence in this French book now shows me to have been wrong about this.

Another matter confused me. Mr. Dupont, not in his booklet but in letters to me, has set me straight. This concerns my later article in this magazine *AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS*, Vol. X, No. 2, October 1962). These RF covers were sent from *L'Algerien*, a French destroyer. I had incorrectly identified them as from Algiers, the North African naval base.

Mr. Dupont wrote as follows on pp. 9 and 10 of his booklet:

"... as we see by the order of June 22, 1944, correspondence sent to a Naval Bureau, which could not be censored before the departure of the mails, had to be held, put in a bundle and then dispatched to the Central French F. P. O. in Casablanca. It is this Bureau that censored the mail and also applied the 'RF.' This explains how we find the Casablanca type 'R.F.' on mail from other Naval Bureaus like Algiers, Oran, Bone, etc. This explains why the Americans found the same type 'R.F.' used from different naval bases."

"Main problem in identification of the 'R.F.' types is with the delayed mail (retard systematique)."

"In order to properly identify a type, one must know a ship's movement; one must know the nearest base with a F. P. O. where the correspondence was dispatched, according to postal regulations."

Testing the French Information

The booklet concludes with some hand-drawn illustrations of RF types, very similar to those shown in my book, and the Scott and Sanabria Catalogues.

Ten types are illustrated, but only Types I to VI are identified by Mr. Dupont. His Type VII is the third most common one found out of my twelve different RF types. Here I have to fault Mr. Dupont. He gives no indication whatever as to how he identifies his Algiers, Casablanca, Oran, Birzerte, Bone, and Marseilles types. Furthermore, there are four types unidentified. Were there ten naval bases with French F. P. O.'s? Or were there only six? This essential information should not have been omitted.

There are other matters that I cannot follow. There are stamps on covers with two types of surcharges, such as Dupont's Types I and II. What is his explanation for this?

At this point, I am trying to follow, with Mr. Dupont's kind assistance, the movements of some of the ships. He has sent me those of the "Richelieu" and "L'Algerien." For instance, I have a cover from the "Richelieu" cancelled September 28, 1944. I looked up where the battleship was on that date. It was in Algiers, the naval base. Therefore, the cover (Fig. 23 in my book) should have the Algiers Type RF. I look in Mr. Dupont's booklet and it agrees; it is his Type III identified as "Alger."

Now, I examine the cover, Fig. 24 of my book, cancelled on October 3, 1944. At that time, the "Richelieu" was in Toulon, according to the records Mr. Dupont sent me. But the RF on Fig. 24 is still his Type III of "Alger." Is this due to "retard systematique?" Also, could one of Mr. Dupont's unidentified four types be from Toulon?

Another matter is not as yet explained. In my book, I show a number of covers with both a French "Poste Navale" cancellation and another of the "U. S. Navy." For instance, Figs. 15A and 15B, and Fig. 26 are such examples. I find no explanation for the U. S. Navy cancellation.

But in doing this checking, I did come upon one interesting matter, thanks to Mr. Dupont. Fig. 29 is a cover illustrated in my book cancelled February 7, 1945 from the "Richelieu" with the tombstone British censor marking. The battleship's log shows that the "Richelieu" was in Gibraltar from January 25, 1945 to February 13, 1945. This most likely explains this British censor marking.

Checking further on my Fig. 29 cover, I got lost. It was my Type 4, the third most common one, or Mr. Dupont's unidentified Type VII. How was the French sailors' mail handled in Gibraltar? Was it sent to Casablanca? If so, according to Mr. Dupont's findings the U. S. should have censored it. But Fig. 29 has two RF's, my types I and 4, or Mr. Dupont's Type I of Casablanca and his Type VII, unidentified.

Conclusion

Mr. Henry Dupont of France has started something with his booklet. Now I shall, as he suggests, have to study many "RF" covers to see how their cancellations and types tally with the records he uncovered in France. He is right when he said that the "delayed mail system" complicates matters. But it explains the big time gap between two cancellations on many covers.

The trouble now is the Atlantic Ocean. In France, there are some informative records of the French Navy during World War II for use on air mail to America. Consequently, most of the "RF" covers remained here in collections, as the mail came here. Besides, it takes time to translate from French into English. In other words, it would be much more practical if Mr.

Dupont and I were nearby, to work together.

But at this point, independently, Mr. Dupont and I must proceed with further research. He should re-examine his identification of the Types, especially his Type VII. He has to document his identification showing clearly, for example, how Type III is from the Algiers naval base, while Type IV is from the Bone F. P. O.

On my part, I have to check many covers to see if the French Naval postal directives do help in this identification. There should be a rather general pattern. Mr. Dupont and I agree that there will be exceptions, because not every mail clerk exactly followed the instructions. Therefore, this may be explained by human error.

As I said previously, at last, a dedicated French philatelist did some important research on these "RF" overprints. Bien fait, mon ami, Monsieur Henri Dupont! (*H. M. G.*)

Obituary

Albert Philip Cohen 1910-1966

Corresponding Secretary and a member of the Board of Directors of AERO PHILATELISTS since 1961, as well as the President of the New York Chapter from 1962 until his death on February 22, 1966 does not begin to convey an accurate idea of the innumerable services Albert Philip Cohen had rendered to our organization.

Albert Philip Cohen was British born—in London on April 30, 1910. He came to the United States in 1922 and resided in New York City. He went into business here, and at the time of his death was the president of the National Gasket & Washer Manufacturing Co. Inc. of New York, N. Y.

His two favorite stamp collections had a British affiliation. He formed a collection of the U.K. 1911 London-Windsor Coronation Flight and the India 1911 Allahabad First Official air mail. These were displayed at the Collectors Club and also the latter was exhibited in the recent international air post exhibitions in Belgium, Holland and West Berlin. It won a silver medal each year.

He just liked to collect anything and everything—stamps, covers, cartoons, old books, maps, prints and pictures. His knowledge of Shakespeare was exceptional. He spoke so quietly; no one ever recalls him raising his voice.

AERO PHILATELISTS was not the only stamp organization in which he was a member and rendered service. He was an active member of the Collectors Club. He was the mainstay in the formation of the American branch of the Cinderella Stamp Club. A good part of its growth over here was due to him. He liked the Essay-Proof and the Judaica Historical Society's meetings here at the Collectors Club.

Attempting to describe his work with young underprivileged boys is like trying to pour a quart bottle into a cocktail glass. He, along with his wife, Esther, adopted thousands of boys all over the world. The intense interest he showed in this, as well as the time and money spent, is incredible. He never bragged about this; in fact, he seldom even mentioned it.

To write that Albert Philip Cohen will be missed is an understatement. Besides his wife, he is survived by his mother, a brother, sister and a son by a previous marriage. (*H. M. G.*)

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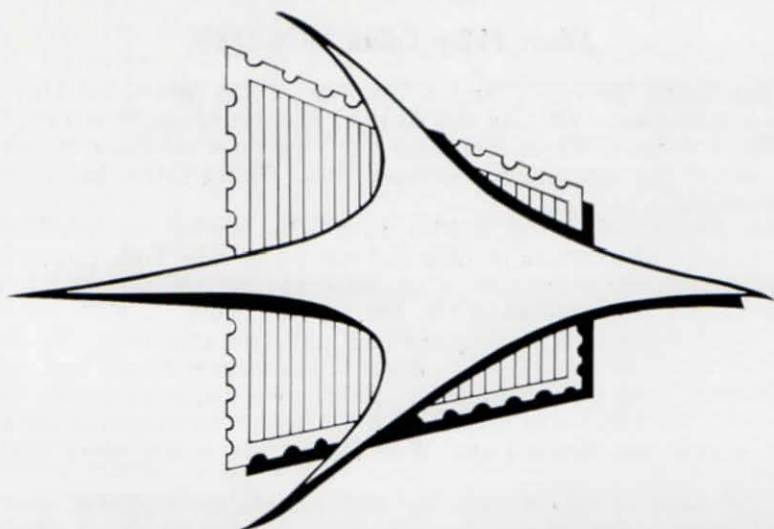
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9 Famous International Judges

A panel of nine judges, five from overseas and four from the United States, was announced by Herbert Rosen, Executive Director for AEROPEX, to be held from June 10-12 at the Americana Hotel in New York City:

- Herbert J. Bloch* (New York, U. S. A.): Head of the Friedl Expert Committee; Chairman of Judges for "Curiosa," Holland 1961 as well as for "Luposta," Germany 1962.
- Ilia Braunstein* (Brussels, Belgium): President of the Societe Aerophilateque Belge; Member of the F. I. S. A. Presidium; recipient of the Bohn Memorial Award 1966.
- Henry M. Goodkind* (New York, U. S. A.): Member of the Expert Committee of the Philatelic Foundation; recipient of the Lichtenstein Memorial Award 1963 and the Bohn Memorial Award 1962; Signer of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists; Editor of the "Aero Philatelist Annals" and the "Collectors' Club Philatelist."
- H. R. Holmes* (Lymington, England): Immediate Past President of the Royal Philatelic Society, London; former Curator of the British Museum; Signer of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists; Member of the Expert Committee of the Royal Philatelic Society.
- Alvaro Bonilla Lara* (Santiago, Chile): Editor of "Chile Filatelico;" recipient of the Lichtenstein Memorial Award 1965.
- Stanley R. Rice* (Greenwich, Conn., U. S. A.): Past President of Aero Philatelists; Treasurer of the Philatelic Foundation.
- Ira Seebacher* (Roslyn, N. Y., U. S. A.): Past President of Aero Philatelists; Authority on topical and sports philately.
- Hermann W. Sieger* (Lorch, Germany): Publisher of the Sieger catalogues; authority on Zeppelin and other air mail.
- Laslo Steiner* (Budapest, Hungary): Member of the International Association of Philatelic Experts (AIEP); General Secretary of the National Federation of Hungarian Philatelists; Member of F. I. S. A. Presidium.

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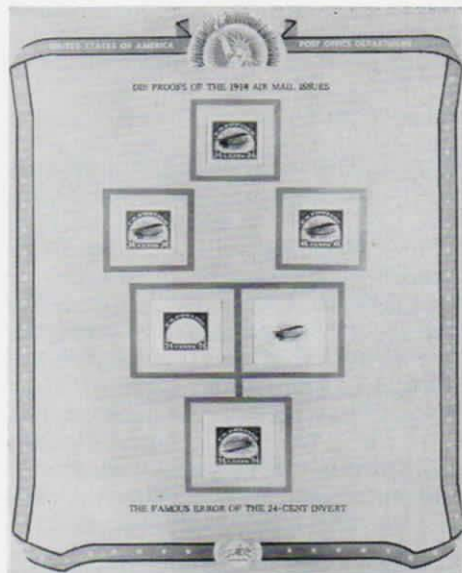
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Sensational Attraction

The most sensational exhibit, and one which will be the center of attraction of the forthcoming International Air Mail and Aerospace Exhibition, AEROPEX, being held at the Americana Hotel from June 10-12, will be a single frame dedicated to the famous 24c inverted center 1918 air mail stamp of the United States.

At least eight copies — on loan from different collectors — will be on display, in addition to the only existing die proof sheet of the Post Office Department of Washington, D.C. This latter display will also feature the other two 1918 air mail stamps, as well as separate proofs of the 24c stamp showing the frame and the plane separately (see illustration).

Taking into consideration the fact that this stamp has sold at recent auctions for between \$15,000 and \$18,000,



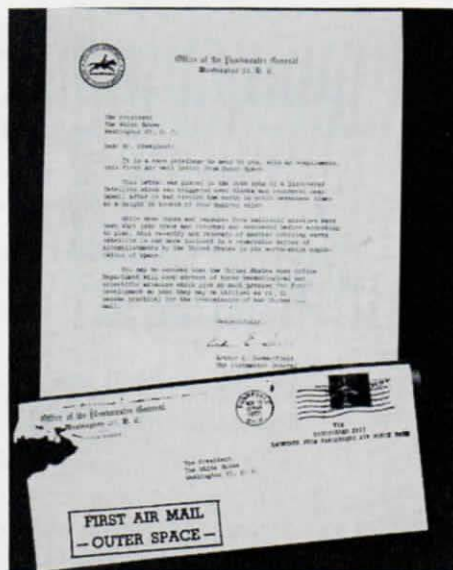
and also that this die proof is the only one in existence, the value of this unusual one frame is set at around \$250,000.

Of course, this unique display of the 24-cent air mail invert will be specially guarded at AEROPEX. But in any case, since Henry M. Goodkind, the outstanding authority on this specific item, has registered each copy by plating the complete sheet of 100, each stamp can now be readily recognized whenever it comes on the market.

The story of this unique stamp is one that every collector dreams about, but seldom realizes as an actuality. On Tuesday, May 14, 1918, a Washington, D.C. stamp collector made a routine visit to his local post office to purchase some of the new 24c air mail stamps to be used on the first New York-Philadelphia-Washington air mail route. He was told that only a few of these stamps were on hand. Examination by the collector revealed that these stamps on hand were poorly centered.

Since the postal clerk told him that additional stamps were expected later in the day, at noon, the collector decided to return. When he did, and once again asked for the new 24c air mail, the clerk, totally unaware of the historic printing error, casually handed him a full sheet — of inverts! The collector almost fainted, but somehow managed to pay the \$24 cost and to ask clerk for additional sheets.

An examination of all the 24c sheets at this post office, and a subse-



gent frantic search of all the post office branches in Washington, D.C., as well as all in New York and Philadelphia, failed to turn up any additional sheets with inverted centers. In less than a week, the complete sheet was sold for \$15,000 to Col. E. H. R. Green.

First Letter Recovered From Outer Space

The first mail recovered from Outer Space is a letter enclosed in a capsule on board Discoverer XVII that was successfully launched by the United States Air Force at 12:43 P.M. PTS on November 15, 1960. This is addressed to President Dwight D. Eisenhower at The White House, Washington, D.C., from Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield. It states in part:

"It is a rare privilege to send to you, with my compliments, this first Air Mail letter from Outer Space. This letter was placed in the nose of a Discoverer Satellite which was triggered over Alaska and recovered after it had circled the earth in orbit seventeen times at a height of four hundred miles."

The initial plan was to recover the capsule on the seventeenth pass around the world. After the thirteenth pass, however, due to the excellent performance of the vehicle, a decision was made to extend the duration of the test. Therefore, on the thirty-first pass, after traveling approximately one million miles, the capsule from "Discoverer XVII" was released from the orbiting satellite at 2:30 P.M. PST.

The existence of this first mail recovered from Outer Space has been unknown until now. President Dwight D. Eisenhower has graciously consented — through the cooperation of Mr. Irwin Heiman, the well-known New York City stamp auctioneer — to display this prized letter for the first time at the forthcoming AEROPEX Exhibition. (Illustrated on the bottom of page 99.)

MEETING NOTICES

Chapter No. 1 — New York, N. Y.

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

Chapter No. 5 — Philadelphia, Pa.

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

No meetings are held during July or August

Members, friends, guests, and all interested collectors
are cordially welcome

Book and Catalogue Reviews

(The first two reviews are reprinted by permission from the COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST, bi-monthly magazine of the Collectors Club, 22 East 35 Street, New York, N. Y. 10016.)

United States. The 5c Beacon Air Mail Stamp of 1928 by Henry M. Goodkind. 62 pages, 90 illustrations. Collectors Club Handbook Number 19, published under the auspices of the Theodore E. Steinway Memorial Publication Fund (1965). The Collectors Club, 22 East 35th Street, New York, N. Y. 10016. Price \$2.00.

This is an interesting exposition into the history, manufacture and use of an inexpensive air mail stamp. It illustrates the principle that a common stamp can merit the attention of serious philatelic investigation and that much profit can be gained from it. The fact that this was a two color stamp done with the old printing method — a two separate flat-bed operation — served to invite endless variations in its manufacture. A perfect example of this stamp is difficult to find.

Mr. Goodkind enumerated the plates used. Also he tabulates the engravers, siderographers and platemakers engaged in its production.

Of particular interest is the section on plates and their varieties. Illustrated are worn plates, recuts, scratches and the amazing "Blue Moon," "Open Door," and "Worn Tower" varieties. Plate flaws produced comic "plane dropping a bomb," one in blue, the other in red. Nothing is missed; there is a plane "shooting a rocket," a plate variety.

Poor registration and shifts give us the plane flying in all imaginable direc-

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tions. Poor centering in this stamp reminds us of the late Stephen G. Rich, who had a collection of badly centered stamps. He would have prized the Beacon air mail for this. They are awful.

The thoroughness of Mr. Goodkind's research is illustrated by mentioning the extent of his inquiries. Proofs, essays and a wide variety of covers are shown together with those illustrating multiple rates, special flights, and use with foreign stamps. A comprehensive chapter on cancellations and precancels is most illuminating.

Mr. Goodkind states: "There was one primary object in writing this article. It was to demonstrate what could be done with a specialized collection of a single stamp, and a relatively common one, at that."

"It is believed, however, that all of the more important aspects of this one air mail stamp have been covered."

We agree with this statement. (*Albert Philip Cohen*)

The National Aeronautical Collections. Tenth Edition, 1965 by Paul E. Garber. 152 pages. Profusely illustrated with 16-page Index. Paper cover. Published by The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Price \$2.00.

This is a fine, detailed description of our National Air Museum in The Smithsonian Institution. Its author is the museum's Head Curator and Historian.

After a short foreword about the history of the museum, this book commences with brief references to man's first attempt to fly back in ancient times. It proceeds with a good digest of the history of aeronautics and accompanied by many illustrations of flying machines, their inventors and pilots. The illustrations are the best part of this book.

As an aero-philatelist of many years, this reviewer has read a number of books on aeronautics to gain a good historical background about the air post stamps he collects. This 1965 book is not as comprehensive nor as detailed as some of the others. Nevertheless, even with its shorter passages, it is still comprehensive and accurate.

Also, one must realize that since this is the history of our National Air Museum, most of the text is devoted to American aviation with fewer or sometimes no references to foreign achievements. For instance, in describing T. C. Lowe's military balloon observations during the Civil War, no mention is made of the presence of a young aeronaut sent here by Prussia to study Lowe's balloon flights. This was Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who later built and flew his airships based upon much he had seen and learned in the United States.

This omission is understandable, because in our National Air Museum, one looks for some memorabilia from Professor T. C. Lowe, which were well described. But Zeppelin's relics logically should be in a German museum and, therefore, outside of the scope of this book. There are, however, many factual, although short, references to a number of foreign aeronauts and their machines such as the Brazilian, Santos-Dumont; the German, Otto Lilienthal and the French, Bleriot.

There is one inconsequential slip in this book. This reviewer noticed it, because for years he has puzzled over the correct spelling of *air mail*. He has seen it spelt as one word (*airmail*), hyphenated (*air-mail*), or as two words (*air mail*), our preference, because this is the spelling on our stamps. On page 54, one finds both "air mail" and "air-mail." This is not the first time that this inconsistency was observed; "The New York Times" and "Life" magazine did the same a few years ago.

This book is recommended to any collector interested in aero-philately for helpful historical background material. The hundreds of illustrations alone make this a book well worth having. It is an excellent substitute for a visit to the museum in Washington, D.C. From personal experience, this reviewer spent a half-day there a few years ago; after reading this book, he realizes how much he missed. It is hoped to make another visit to the National Air Museum soon along with this book as a handy guide. (H. M. G.)

The Lonely Sea & the Sky, The Autobiography of Francis Chichester. Published by Coward-McMann Inc. 352 pages, illustrated. Price \$6.95.

We shall always be indebted to Commander Sir Walter Windham R.N. for having written his "Waves, Wheels, Wings." (Hutchinson, London). In his book this air pioneer gave us a firsthand account of his activities in organizing the history-making, "Allahabad-Naini flights" and the "Coronation flights" both in 1911.

Now, Francis Chichester allows us to share with him all the excitement and suspense of his many adventures, especially the exploits and perils of his pioneer flights. Mr. Chichester is remembered best philatelically for his flight in June, 1931, from New Zealand to Australia across the treacherous Tasman Sea; also his dangerous long-distance solo flight from Australia to Japan in July, 1931 is known to flight cover specialists. Largely self-taught, he flew also from England to Australia. He improvised navigation aids and rebuilt his tiny plane when disaster hit.

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He migrated from England to New Zealand, where he worked as a gold prospector, farmer, coal miner and amateur boxer. He served with the RAF as a navigation expert during the last World War.

Most collectors' knowledge of their aero-philatelic covers is sterile and barren, restricted to the impersonal listings found in catalogues. In this book, we feel the vital human quality of trial and error, and eventually of achievement, as well as the striving that makes possible the accomplishment of finding and traversing new horizons. This book is recommended to all, admiring the indefatigable and indomitable will of a man who has assailed the elements and won. (*Albert Philip Cohen*)

Schweizerischer Luftpost-Katalog, 1965 edition. Edited and published by the Schweiz Aero-Philatelistenverein, Zurich, Switzerland. 225 pages. Illustrated. German text. Paper cover, ring binder.

Our member, Roland Kohl, sent us a copy of this latest Swiss air mail catalogue. It is clearly printed and neatly thumb-indexed into fifteen different categories. These are:

1. Index 2. First flights 3. First direct express and night flights 5. Foreign societies' first flights 5. Swiss society's first flights 6. First Jet flights

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It is written in German, but is not difficult to follow due to very clear illustrations and orderly listings. For a thorough knowledge of Swiss air mail, this catalogue is highly recommended. (R. H. Shradly M.D.)

The Postal Markings of Spain. Billig's Handbook on Postmarks, Volume 13 by Theo. Van Dam. 74 pages, 264 illustrations and 6 maps. Paper cover. Published by Fritz Billig, 168-39 Highland Avenue, Jamaica, N. Y. 11432. Price \$4.00.

Mr. Theo. Van Dam of New York is a young man, who has impressed the Metropolitan philatelic circles with his enthusiasm and knowledge of Spanish stamps. He is commencing to record this. It is fortunate because practically nothing about Spain has been written in English, especially after the early Classic issues. Up to now, if one wanted some information about Spain, he had to consult philatelic literature written in Spanish. If you cannot read this language, this it not easy, as this reviewer can attest.

In this 74-page book on the postal markings of Spain, slightly more than two are given to air mail. But this is not a fault. Spain has used the same air mail cancellation since she introduced her first air post stamps in 1920. There has been no great variation, and few changes in the "correo aereo" cancellations.

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Fourteen different air mail markings are described, while nine are illustrated. At this book's end, a short reference is made to the special commemorative cancellations used on issues like the Red Cross, Goya and Columbus in the 1920's and 1930's.

In his bibliography at the end, I notice that Mr. Van Dam did not mention Vol. 1, Number 1 of the AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS. In the first number of this magazine, I wrote about these special commemorative cancellations used on air mail. The information was based on that furnished me by the well-known Spanish philatelist, the late Manuel Galvez of Madrid.

One of the main purposes of my 1953 article was to call attention to the widespread practice of selling Spanish air mail stamps with counterfeit cancellations. For example, the 1930 Goya issue is scarce postally used; the stamps on flown covers are rare. Therefore, fraudulent cancellations are plentiful.

Some notes about these counterfeit cancellations in this book would have been useful. But this omission, although regrettable, does not affect the overall worth of Mr. Van Dam's book. It is a fine reference work and should arouse interest because of the growing popularity of Spanish philately. (H. M. G.)

Rocket Mail Catalogue. Second Supplement to Billig's Catalogue, Volume 8 by Dr. Max Kronstein. Published by Fritz Billig, Jamaica, N. Y. Sales Agent HJMR Co., P.O. Box 2368, Miami Beach, Fla. 33140. Price \$3.50.

Fritz Billig tells me that this marks his finale as a philatelic book publisher. Many will join me in regretting this, because for more than twenty-five years Mr. Billig has brought out some fine reference works. As most know, he is a stamp dealer. Besides, to publish literature shows an extra devotion to philately. Especially commendable with most Billig books is that they seldom were on very popular subjects. Thus, the profit motive was not what compelled Mr. Billig to publish his literature.

Rocket mail, when I first collected, was not even considered a "Cinderella" of aero-philately, it was practically a joke. Because all the rocket flights were private experiments, any adhesives issued and used never got into a standard catalogue. Being private labels, I often heard them referred to as "rockets" rather than "rockets."

But thanks to the space flights and the astronauts, rocket mail now assumes the same status that the U. S. Local Stamps have in U. S. philately. Not being government mail nor official stamps, no one can find out about rocket mail and stamps in the catalogues. Consequently, this book is useful because it fills a gap.

Calling it a "catalogue," however, is a misnomer; there are no prices. This is too bad, because I would have liked to have had some indication of the present market on this rocket material.

There is another criticism. The English is quite involved; it does not make for easy reading and clear understanding. It is unfortunate that some helpful editing had not been done. These, however, are lesser faults. The important matter with this booklet is that it supplies original information, not to be found in any other English-language works. (H. M. G.)

UNITED STATES

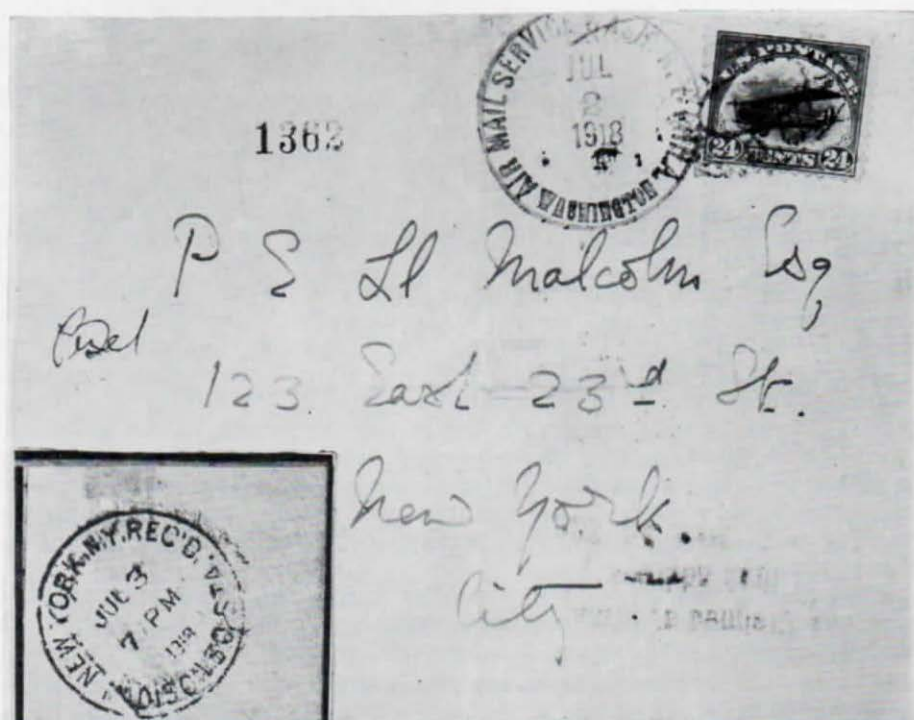
The Special Delivery Markings

On 1918 Air Mail Covers

By WILLIAM H. MILLER, Jr.

This article is written as an attempt to correct certain misconceptions arising from a lack of understanding of the special delivery markings on United States air mail covers during the 1918 period. We readily admit that, when we first became interested in these air mail covers, our own lack of knowledge of these markings led to erroneous conclusions. That others have shared the same experience is indicated by the occasional appearance of mistakes about special delivery markings in various other philatelic publications.

The first United States air mail stamp (Scott No. C3, Sanabria No. 1) was issued on May 13, 1918, to pay the 24-cent per ounce rate established for mail carried by airplane. The first flights on this new air mail service took place on May 15, 1918, between Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New York. Effective July 15, 1918, the rate was reduced to 16 cents; the second United States air mail stamp (Scott No. C2, Sanabria No. 2) was issued to conform to the new rate. The 16 cent rate was in effect until December 15, 1918, when it was reduced to 6 cents.



Cover showing the special record number in the upper left corner. The insert in the lower left corner is of the backstamp of the receiving office. (Photos by Boutrelle)

Included in both the 24-cent and 16-cent rates, as established by Congress and the subsequent orders of the Postmaster General, was a 10-cent fee to be applied for special delivery service. With the advent of the 6-cent rate, special delivery service was no longer accorded to mail carried by airplane. Thus, it was only during the seven-month period from May 15, 1918 to December 15, 1918, that all air mail also included special delivery mail. From this resulted the various special markings, the subject of this article.

Before opening this discussion, it might be interesting for the reader to note here that our first two air mail stamps provide the first example in United States postal history where stamps have been issued for a dual postal role. They accounted for, not only the prepayment of the air mail rate, but also the special delivery fee as well. On no other occasion has a special service fee been incorporated into either first-class or air mail postage.*

It should be emphasized at the beginning that the delivery of all air mail letters, upon their arrival at the receiving post office, operated entirely under the long-established structure of the special delivery service. A letter posted by air during the period under consideration received the usual special delivery markings at the receiving office; it was finally taken to the addressee by a special messenger.

It becomes important, therefore, to understand the operation of the special delivery service. For that purpose, a brief summary of this follows to help understand the markings found on air mail covers.

Special Delivery Service

Special delivery service was instituted in the United States on October 1, 1885, in order to provide a means for faster delivery of mail, if the sender so desired. Under the original instructions to the post offices, as promulgated by the Postmaster General, the following procedures were to apply.

Upon receipt of special delivery mail, the receiving post office was to immediately apply a receiving mark to each letter showing the date, time and office of receipt. Next, the letters were to be numbered and recorded in a book specifically kept for that purpose. The mail was then given to the special messengers who were dispatched to deliver it. Upon their return, the messengers would note in the recordbook the delivery, or reason for non-delivery, of the letters entrusted to them.

These instructions formed the basic structure for the operation of the special delivery system, and the markings developed from them survive, in some instances, up to the present time. In the ensuing years following the establishment of the system, great latitude was allowed the various post offices in working out their own procedures to best expedite the speedier delivery of mail. Both this latitude along with the experience gained, as the system developed and matured, resulted in widespread differences among the individual post offices and their substations in the methods used. This further resulted in the large variety of the basic markings used in the various post offices—*intriguing to the special delivery enthusiast, but often confusing to one unfamiliar with this area.*

From this description of the post office operations, let us return now to the air mail covers of the 1918 period, and to a specific examination of the backstamps, record numbers and other special markings.

The Receiving Postmark

The great majority of covers carried by air mail in 1918, during the

*In 1934 and 1936, a 16-cent air mail special delivery stamp was issued (Scott CE1-2), carrying both the inscription "air mail" and "special delivery."



This cover shows both the special delivery record number and a distinct "Fee Claimed" marking.

period of the 24-cent and 16-cent rates, bear the most fundamental of special delivery markings—the receiving backstamp. These are the most varied in types of the markings—from the circular die handstamp of the smaller post offices to the cancelling machine types employed where the volume of special delivery mail was particularly high. Many offices used the three or four-line rubber handstamp, with its essential information as to time of receipt written in manuscript in its proper place. This handstamp, usually found in magenta, is most familiar to air mail collectors on covers addressed to the Boston area.

Then, there was the clock face receiving mark, often black in color, also found in various sizes, with its hands indicating time of receipt.

Although the great majority of the backstamps are found on the back of covers, the handstamps, clock markings, and occasionally others, are found on the front as well. These marks are of great importance to the air mail collector, because the knowledge of the time of arrival of a letter at a post office is often essential in determining whether, and on what date, a letter was flown. In itself, this is a large topic, which, although of great significance, is beyond the scope of the present article. It will have to await a later date for exploration. It is only important to note that the presence of these backstamps is due to the special delivery nature of the early air mail.

The Record Numbers

As indicated previously, the record numbers were a means of tabulating the special delivery letters received at a particular office. While the original instructions did not so specify, later regulations directed the numbering to be carried out on a quarterly basis. These instructions, too, were modified by experience. In the larger offices, numbering often was kept on a daily basis. There is, unfortunately, no classification possible here. Each office did as it saw best. Thus, one finds an air mail cover addressed to New York on June 3 bearing the number "57136," and a second one addressed to the same city on June 6 with the number "211." The covers merely went to different substations, which used their own numbering systems.

As to the method of numbering, many offices made use of a consecutive numbering device. These were also often offices, where the numbering system

was based on a longer term, and higher numbers may be expected. But many offices continued to do their numbering in manuscript.

Again classification is difficult. One finds automatic numbering devices as well as manuscript from different branch stations in the same city. Incidentally, where a one digit or two digit numbers or initials are found just beneath the record number, these are the identification marks of an individual special delivery messenger.

Around the year 1915, the record numbers began to be discontinued in various offices. Thus, by 1918, the collector will find air mail covers both with and without a number, depending entirely upon whether they were still being applied in the office of receipt. The majority of 1918 covers seen by this writer, do still bear a number.

The record number is perhaps the greatest trap for the air mail cover collector. It is often incorrectly assumed that this number relates in some way to the air mail service, as some past writings on the 1918 air post stamps have stated. To the contrary, it has nothing whatsoever to do with air mail. The number is not an indication of the quantity of covers carried on a particular day's flight, as many seem to believe. Indeed, it was only after the letter had left the air mail phase of its voyage that the number was even applied. Furthermore, the absence of a number is emphatically not an indication that a cover did not fly. Such an absence merely signifies that numbers were not being applied to letters delivered from a particular office, which had discontinued this practice before 1918.

One final word of caution with reference to the special delivery numbering device. The registry system of the United States Post Office also applies numbers to registered mail entrusted to it. These numbers are applied at the sending offices, not at the receiving post offices, which apply the special delivery numbers. Confusion arises at times in the minds of collectors between these two numbering systems. We merely wish here to caution collectors against mistaking a registry with a special delivery number, and visa versa. All registered mail always will bear a number, as well as the usual notice of registration. As previously explained, not all special delivery mail will be found with numbers during the 1918 period. Air mail collectors tend sometimes to confuse those special delivery numbers that are found with registry numbers. Also, they mistakenly assume that a cover has been registered merely because it bears a number.

"Fee Claimed" Postmark

A brief word about the various "Fee Claimed" markings often found on air mail covers of 1918. Again we find a wide variety of such markings, the most common of which is "Fee Claimed At Office Of First Address." While the special delivery specialist has a field day with the many types of this postmark, the air mail collector need not be too concerned with this marking.

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"Fee Claimed" is merely an accounting indicator that a specific post office is to be credited with the delivery, or attempted delivery, of a letter. In most instances, this will be the receiving post office of the addressee on the letter.

It is interesting to note here that, if a delivery attempt is made but fails, due to one of many reasons, the special delivery status no longer exists; the letter is treated as any other first-class mail matter. If the letter should be forwarded, for example, it will not receive special delivery treatment in the next post office to which it is sent. Once again, on 1918 air mail covers the marking "Fee Claimed," or one of its variants, may not be present. There is no particular significance from an air mail point of view to be attributed to its presence or absence.

"Special Delivery" Notation

One marking that may arouse interest on air mail covers is that of the actual "Special Delivery" notice sometimes found on the front of a cover. This is the only marking that was not applied by the receiving office, being affixed either privately by the sender or publicly by the sending office.

In the early days of special delivery service, such a marking was quite uncommon. It was assumed that the special delivery stamp would be sufficient notice to postal authorities of the special nature of the letter. In March of 1907, however, regular postage stamps were permitted to be used for payment of the special delivery fee, provided that a letter was marked "Special Delivery." After that date, such a marking became more common on all special delivery mail. On the air mail covers of 1918, however, rarely is this marking found. Presumably, the 1918 24-cent or 16-cent stamp was considered sufficient notice of the special delivery service to be provided.

The Absence Of Markings

Mention should be made of one troublesome post office in connection with the various markings discussed. That office was Washington, D.C. Unfortunately for air mail collectors, Washington, D.C., a terminus on the first air mail route, was one of the post offices, which by 1918, consistently did not apply any of the special delivery markings. We have mentioned throughout this article that the evolution of the service left many gaps. Washington, D.C. is one. Fortunate is the owner of a 1918 air mail cover with Washington, D.C. backstamps. They do exist, but they are far from common.

In conclusion, the writer would like to emphasize that, in dealing with the air mail covers of the 1918 period, and more particularly with reference to the special delivery markings on those covers, we are confronted with a minute period in the history of the special delivery service. Also, as we have noted, that period was one of change. If the reader has looked for categorization, he will have found none. The local nature of the application of the special markings prohibits any attempt at such a scheme of classification. It is hoped, however, that a broad enough outline has been presented to prevent misunderstandings about markings found on the 1918 air mail covers, and that those markings will not be allowed to further confuse inquiries into the basic understanding of the operations of the first United States air mail system.

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BELGIUM

December 3, 1930 Was The First Day Of the Belgian Congo Flight Stamp

By DR. ALBERT C. BAUGH

In the July 1965 number of this magazine (Vol. XIII, No. 1), there was an article about the first day of sale of the Belgian air mail stamp issued in 1930 for the special flight from Belgium to Leopoldville, Belgian Congo (Scott C5, Sanabria No. 5). The author, Mr. Henry M. Goodkind, showed where in various catalogues, four different dates of issue were listed.

The article concluded that based upon inquiry from aero-philatelic students in Belgium, the correct first day of sale was December 3, 1930.



(Photo by Boutrelle)

The illustrated cover is in my collection. The three cancellations all are dated "Brussels December 3, 1930." This cover, therefore, substantiates December 3, 1930 as the first day of issue.

As seen by the rectangular cachet, this cover was on the special Congo flight. It has two backstamps — Leopoldville, December 15 and Elizabethville, December 16, 1930.

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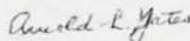
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