

# The 24 ¢ “Jenny”

*(A study of the first United States airmail stamp after 100 years)*

**History:** In 1918 Congress appropriated funding and authorized Postmaster General Burleson to spend an amount not to exceed \$100,000 for the purchase, maintenance and operation of aeroplanes for an experimental mail service between such points as the Post Office may determine. Bids were placed for five planes in February 1918 which were needed as the basic equipment for the new proposed service. These were to be delivered in the future to the U.S. Post Office. The new airmail route was selected between Washington, D.C and New York with an intermediate stop in Philadelphia. The new airmail rate was established at 24¢ and included Special Delivery. It has been documented that the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) started work on the design and engraving before all the authorizations were signed.

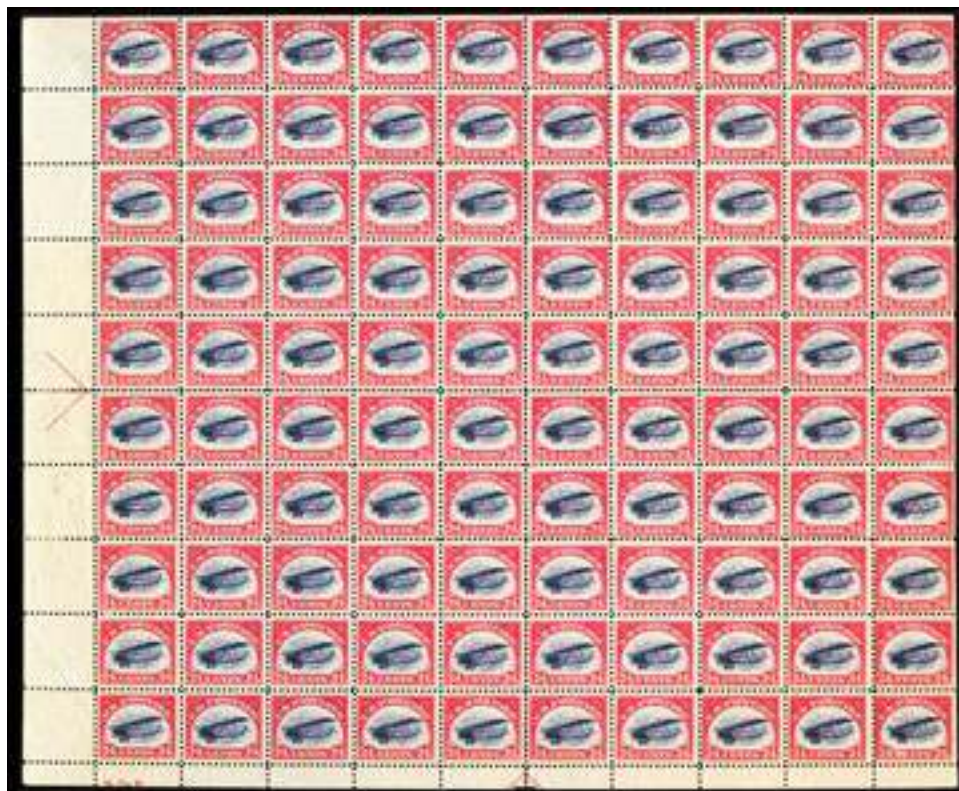
In March of 1918, Otto Prager (Second Assistant Postmaster General) signed an agreement with the U.S. Army Signal Corps to use army pilots and planes the first year of operation or until the Post Office was in a position to completely take over the airmail operation. Major Ruben Fleet was assigned the responsibility to equip and man the new airmail service. He was assisted by Col. Edward Deeds and Capt. Benjamin B. Lipsner. They selected four of the six pilots. Second Lieutenant Stephen Bonsai Jr., First Lieutenants, Howard Culver, Walter Miller and Torry Webb. The Post Office selected Second Lieutenants, James Edgerton and George Leroy Boyle, both of which were inexperienced pilots but had political connections.

The Army immediately placed an order with the Curtiss Aeroplane Motor Co. for 12 new planes to be used by the Signal Corps for the new airmail routes. Six planes were Curtiss JN-4HM types, and six planes of the R-4LM models. The “M” in the description indicates the planes were modified to carry mail. ***The J and N series initials were the basis of the plane’s nickname “Jenny”.*** The JN-4HT was originally a training model with dual controls, with a seat up front for the student and a seat behind for the instructor. The JN-4-HT panes had the forward seat removed and replaced with a covered compartment for the airmail. The pilot flew the plane from the exposed/open second seat subject to the elements, but the airmail would be protected and dry. Curtiss manufactured the planes at its Garden City, NY plant. They shipped the unassembled planes in wooden crates on May 13, 1918 to Hazelhurst, NY. The six planes were serial-numbered: 37944, **38262**, 38275, 38276 and 38278. On May 9, 1918 the serial numbers were given to the BEP so the number **38262** was included on the fuselage of the first airmail stamp. The first pane to fly the airmail from Washington, D.C. had this number.

Continuing sections in this presentation will address the **Production of the “Jenny” first Airmail Stamp**, and **Printing flaws, Early Flight cancellations**, and unusual **Flown flight items. We hope you enjoy and find interesting / educational this compilation.**

# Production of the first airmail stamp

The 24¢ “Jenny” airmail stamp was not only valid for the new airmail service but was also valid for regular postage. Likewise, regular U.S. postage was also valid for the new airmail service. The stamp was printed in a patriotic color theme of red and blue on a white background. All of the work on the stamp was performed by the BEP. Clair Aubrey Huston was the chief stamp designer for the BEP. Although there is no official record of when Huston began designing the new airmail stamp, it is rumored that he may have started before May 4, 1918. Edward Weeks engraved the frame and lettering. Marcus W. Baldwin worked on the vignette and Weeks also made a contribution to the vignette and is thought responsible for inclusion of the serial number “38262” in the final stamp design.



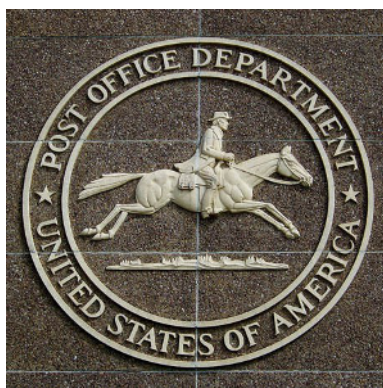
The red, white, and blue airmail stamp was designed, engraved, approved, and in production in record time. By the time President Woodrow Wilson had signed the measure into law on May 10, 1918, veteran Bureau craftsman including Claire Aubrey Huston (designer), Edward M. Weeks (frame engraver), and Marcus W. Baldwin (vignette engraver), had all but completed their work.

Printing of the frame plate, 8492, on the un-watermarked paper began on Friday, May 10. The next day saw the blue vignette plate, 8493, added. Ample supplies were available for delivery to the Post Office by Monday, May 13, and by the afternoon the new stamp went on sale at the Washington main post office.

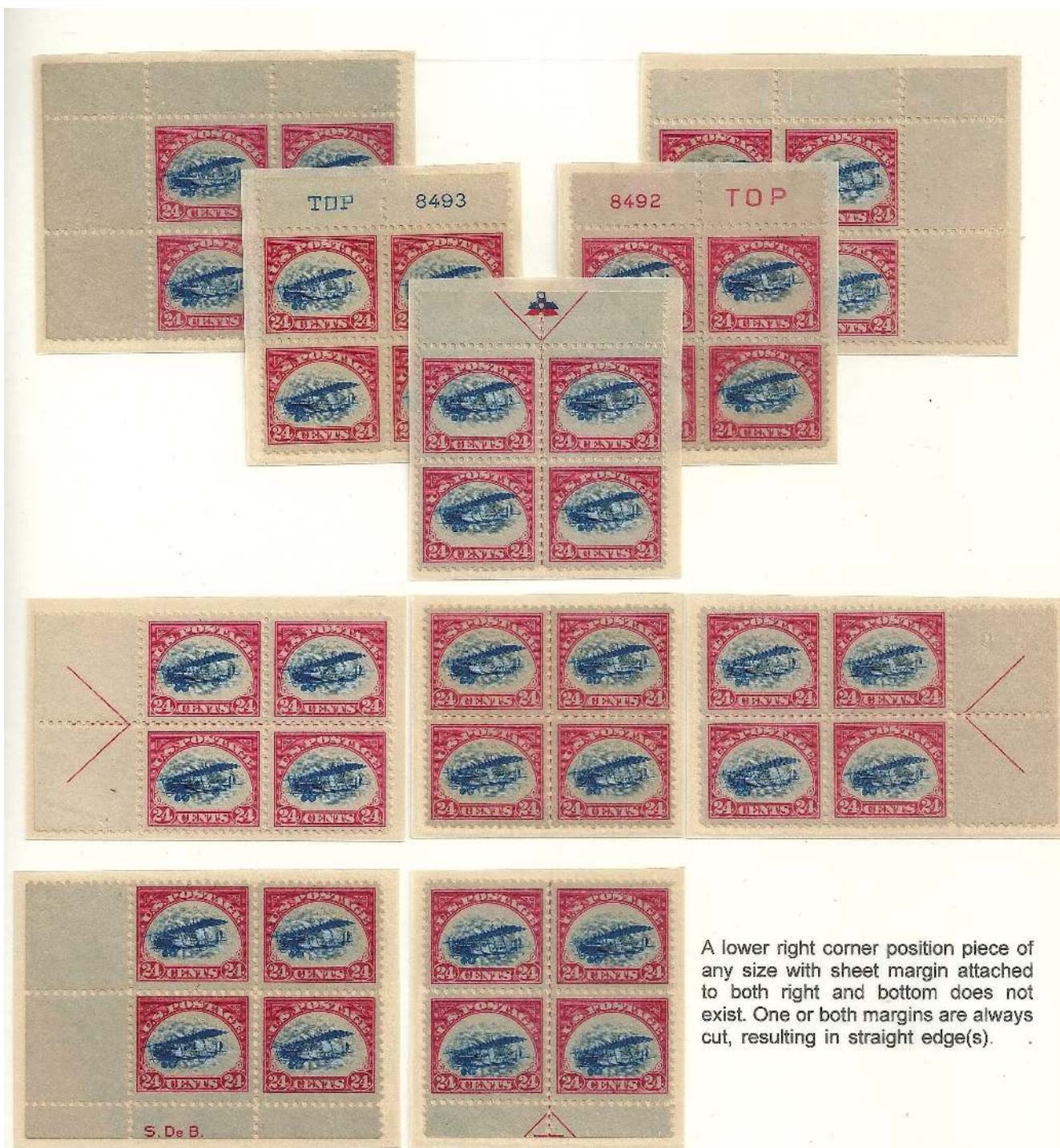


From the First Sheet to be for sale in Philadelphia on May 14, 1918, as acquired by Joseph A. Steinmetz, First President of the Aero Club of Philadelphia and Chairman of the arrangements committee for the May 15 Bustleton airfield inauguration and ceremonies.

Ample supplies were on hand by May 14 in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York for the Inaugural flights to take place on May 15, 1918. By coincidence, the plane number 38262, which appears on the printed stamp, was also the plane number on the first flight from Washington, piloted by Lt. George L. Boyle, one of six Curtiss planes acquired for these inaugural ceremonies.







A lower right corner position piece of any size with sheet margin attached to both right and bottom does not exist. One or both margins are always cut, resulting in straight edge(s).

Presented here are various collectable position blocks. Those with bottom margin are first printing only, while the right side block with arrow is the least seen. The centerline block occurs on all printings. Vertical and horizontal line blocks also exist.





These full top margin strips of twenty are from the very short run second printing variety, having the added word TOP in blue. As with the first printing, the press run of about 350 sheets per day probably lasted no more than two days production.

The upper margin was retained throughout the entire process, after the blue TOP was added, for inspection purposes. Those having the right side also attached include eleven examples (strips and full sheets), while those with left margin include only five recorded items in full strips or sheets.



Only the absence of the word TOP, in the margin to the immediate right of plate # 8492, can differentiate the second from the third and final printing types. Both have the upper and one side margin attached. Only about thirty-five examples are recorded in total, counting plates of twelve and larger multiples.

The Zeppelin cover presented here is the only verified example of the blue TOP only printing noted on cover, located over a four decade study. The plate block of twelve is from the collection of the late Henry M. Goodkind, an early specialist of the 1918 airmail issues.





The third and final printing was initiated with the addition of the word TOP in red, to the right of plate number 8492. In this manner inspectors could spot any sheet which lacked either word TOP and reject it. Actually, this was a somewhat redundant situation, as the same safeguard already existed with the plate numbers.

The above top plate strip of ten stamps shows the left margin in place, as does the postally used plate strip of eighteen on piece. That item is cancelled August 21, 1923, the first day of issue for the 24 cent value of the 1923 airmail series.

Both margin cutting types are known with the third printing, being the top with left intact as well as the top with right side intact. The latter is extremely rare, with only two known.



Not qualifying as the true **Fast** plane variety, the plate block of twelve shown here on the left page has a pronounced vignette shift. The Jersey City, New Jersey precancelled plate has the cancel reading both down and normal, not unusual for a large block. Both plates of twelve, as well as the plate strip of six on cover, are third and final printing varieties.





Three sheet sources are known where copies show the popular **Grounded** plane variety. Typically, the lower rows of stamps in the sheets of 100 have the greater vignette displacement, and many copies in upper rows would not be considered the acceptable variety, with the wheels of the plane cutting in to the word CENTS.

All three original sheets (none exist intact any longer) had the bottom sheet margin attached, and are from the first printing. Only about one dozen multiples still exist, all being blocks of four. The centerline block shown here is the only copy known of that position piece.

Except for those known used on the July 1, 1924 flight covers, shown later in this exhibit, only two copies are known with postal cancel. The earliest, also with shift to the right side, is presented here.





The new airmail issue was printed in a two step process by "Spider" press, with the red frame first. Realigning the sheet for the blue vignette was not always precise, and imperfect registration often occurred, even on copies in the same sheet.

The bottom straight edged strip of four here shows the plane landing from right to left, while the strip of six has the plane taking off.

The most dramatic vignette shifts to the frame produced the popular **FAST** and **GROUNDED** plane varieties. Such strong shifts to the top and right side are not known.





NASSAU STAMP CO.  
116 NASSAU ST.  
NEW YORK N. Y.



VIA AIR MAIL

Nassau Stamp Co.  
c/o Postmaster,  
Reno, Nevada.



With minimal collector interest in copies of the first airmail stamp showing vignette shifts for many years after issue, notable dealer Jack Kleeman of the Nassau Stamp Company decided to use copies on covers for the July 1, 1924 first transcontinental night flights. Examples of the popular "Grounded" plane variety were sent from the New York departure point to six different western air fields along that route, including the terminus at San Francisco.

How many covers were prepared in total is not known, but the latest survey, in October, 2005, includes three each to Salt Lake City and Elko, two each to Reno and Rawlins, and single copies to Rock Springs and San Francisco.

No other card or cover is presently recorded with the true variety of "Grounded" plane used as payment, although at least two used copies off cover are known.

NASSAU STAMP CO.  
116 NASSAU ST.  
NEW YORK N. Y.

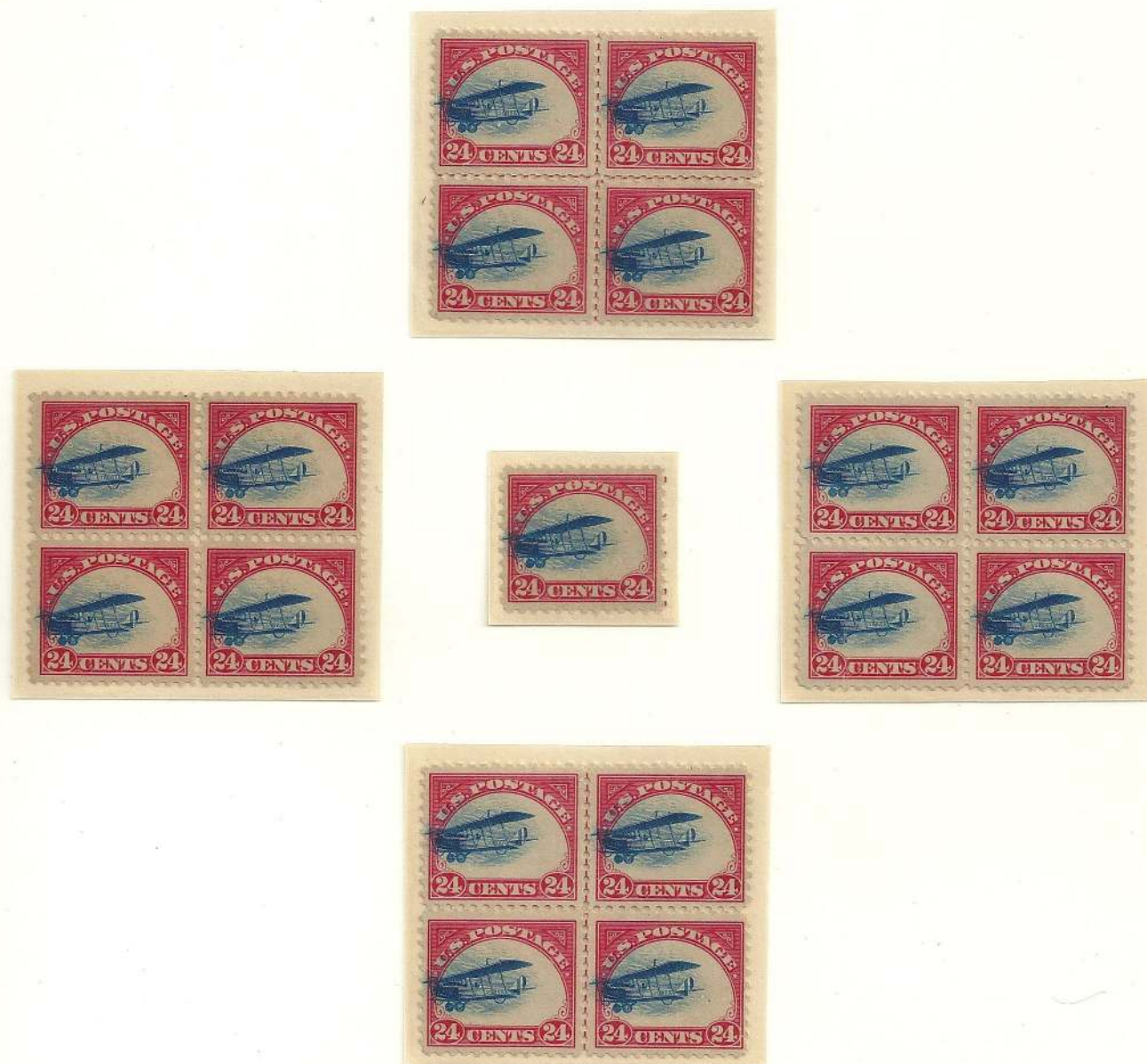


VIA AIR MAIL

Nassau Stamp Co.  
c/o Postmaster,  
Salt Lake City, Utah.







The dramatic **FAST** plane variety, with the wing tip actually extending beyond the outer left frame, is believed to have originated from a single sheet source. As with other vignette shifts, popularity with collectors was minimal for many years after their appearance, but extremely sought after today.

Four blocks are recorded, all presented here, as well as about twelve single copies. Every copy recorded by this student is without gum, possibly lost many years ago to humidity or other poor care by the original owner.

Two examples, with not quite as dramatic a shift, are known on cover and are presented later in this exhibit. Whether the original source comes from the first printing is not presently known, as copies showing any margin still attached are yet to be recorded.



Aerial Mail  
Via  
New York



Mr. Franklin Allen,  
Greenfield,  
Mass.



Postally used examples of any vignette shifts are highly collectable. All copies presented here show that displacement to the left side, although none qualify as the true **FAST** plane variety.

The May 15, 1918 first flight cover, which was flown from Washington to New York, has the most dramatic vignette shift on inaugural flight noted to date, in any vignette direction.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing was extremely busy printing War Bonds and many other documents but was able to produce enough sheets of the new Jenny airmail stamp to have them available for sale May 14, 1918 in all three cities.



William T. Robey

William T. Robey, of Washington, D.C., was aware that the new stamp was being printed on a spider press and, being bi-colored, would take two separate printings in the press. The first would be the outer carmine frame, then after drying the blue center (vignette) would be printed. That situation would allow the possibility, however remote, to have the center printed **upside-down**. This had occurred years before in 1869 and in 1901. Robey was on the lookout for another.

Having gone to the New York Avenue post office branch early morning of May 14 Robey was shown several sheets of the new airmail issue, all normal but poorly centered. He was informed that more would be available around noon, so he returned and the clerk, unaware of any printing mistake, showed him a full sheet of 100 stamps with the Curtis Jenny plane positioned upside down, as well as the outer margin plate number inverted. Robey knew immediately he was being offered, for the face value of \$24, an inverted Jenny sheet.



William T. Robey knew that his purchase was a valuable item, but was concerned that more inverted center sheets might appear and weaken any value for his. He began making inquiries to several of the most prominent dealers and collectors of the era, receiving cash offers as low as \$500.



WASHINGTON STAR PHOTO

**EUGENE KLEIN**

On May 19, 1918 Robey met leading dealer Eugene Klein of Philadelphia who made an offer of \$15,000, and several days later the transaction was complete.

Klein immediately sold the intact sheet to Colonel E. .R. Green, a very wealthy and eccentric collector. In addition, Klein convinced Green to let him break up the sheet of 100, retain some position blocks and begin selling others to interested collectors. Ranging in price as singles from \$175 to \$250.



Position "79"



Feint "79" in lower right corner

No photographs of the original intact sheet were made, but Klein did pencil a number for each stamp position on reverse of all stamps, from #1 to #100.

CABLE ADDRESS "KLEINSTAMP" TELEPHONE "WALNUT 770"

**EUGENE KLEIN**  
**RARE POSTAGE STAMPS**  
1318 CHESTNUT STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

MEMBER OF THE JURIES OF THE CHICAGO 1911 AND  
NEW YORK 1913 INTERNATIONAL PHILATELIC EXHIBITIONS.  
HONORARY MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK STAMP SOCIETY.  
LIFE MEMBER OF THE JUNIOR PHILATELIC SOCIETY LONDON  
AND THE SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE DE TIMBROLOGIE PARIS.

MAY 14, 1918.

FRED J. MELVILLE,  
14, SUDBOURNE ROAD, BRIXTON,  
LONDON, S. W., ENGLAND.

AIRPLANE MAIL.

WASHINGTON--PHILADELPHIA--NEW YORK.  
MAY 15, 1918.

FIRST FLIGHT.

STAMPS PUT ON SALE HERE AT 12 NOON. SALE STOPPED  
AT 4 P.M.

WITH KINDEST REGARDS

K/P

*Eugene Klein*

OPENED BY



FRED J. MELVILLE,  
14, SUDBOURNE ROAD, BRIXTON,  
LONDON, S. W.,  
ENGLAND.

Klein unknowingly reported the discovery of the sheet of inverted air mail stamps when he mentioned that the sale of stamps was stopped at 4 PM. The sales stopped so that post office personnel could inventory their stock to make sure that no other errors would be released. This is the only candid report of the discovery of the inverted stamps known to exist.



CABLE ADDRESS "KLEINSTAMP" TELEPHONE "WALNUT 770"

EUGENE KLEIN  
RARE POSTAGE STAMPS  
1318 CHESTNUT STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

MEMBER OF THE JURIES OF THE CHICAGO 1911 AND  
NEW YORK 1913 INTERNATIONAL PHILATELIC EXHIBITIONS.  
HONORARY MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK STAMP SOCIETY.  
LIFE MEMBER OF THE JUNIOR PHILATELIC SOCIETY LONDON  
AND THE SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE DE TIMBROLOGIE PARIS.

MAY 20, 1918.

SPECIAL DELIVERY REGISTERED

W. T. ROBEY,  
1420 HARVARD STREET, N. W.  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

DEAR SIR:

CONFIRMING OUR TELEPHONE CONVERSATION AT 4.30  
P. M. , I WILL TAKE YOUR SHEET OF INVERTED CENTER  
24C AIRPLANE STAMPS FOR \$15,000, WHICH YOU AGREED  
TO DELIVER AT MY OFFICE TOMORROW.

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR ARRIVAL AT ABOUT  
NOONTIME, <sup>to-morrow</sup> AS STATED.

VERY TRULY YOURS,

*Eugene Klein*

K/P



This is the letter confirming the sale of the inverted center stamps from Eugene Klein to William T. Robey.



As of 2016, only six blocks of four stamps remain intact.

Shown is the only block of four of the Inverted Jenny showing the inverted plate number – 8493.



Colonel Edward Howland Robinson Green, his wife Mabel, and the gift locket he had presented her. It was an encapsulated Jenny Invert stamp (position 9 from top row of sheet)



Immediately following the discovery and sale of the sheet with inverted centers, emphasis was placed on preventive control. Minor oddities, not considered errors, still occurred and reached the public, but probably would not have been cause for rejection by inspectors, and were of minor concern by postal officials.



Paperfold when ink applied, leaving blank area when open.



Insufficient plate wiping of the blue ink applied.



Foreign matter between inked plate and sheet, separating later and leaving a blank impression. One example on frame ink, one example on vignette.



Excess moisture on paper when the vignette was printed, resulting in an unusual "exploding" plane production.



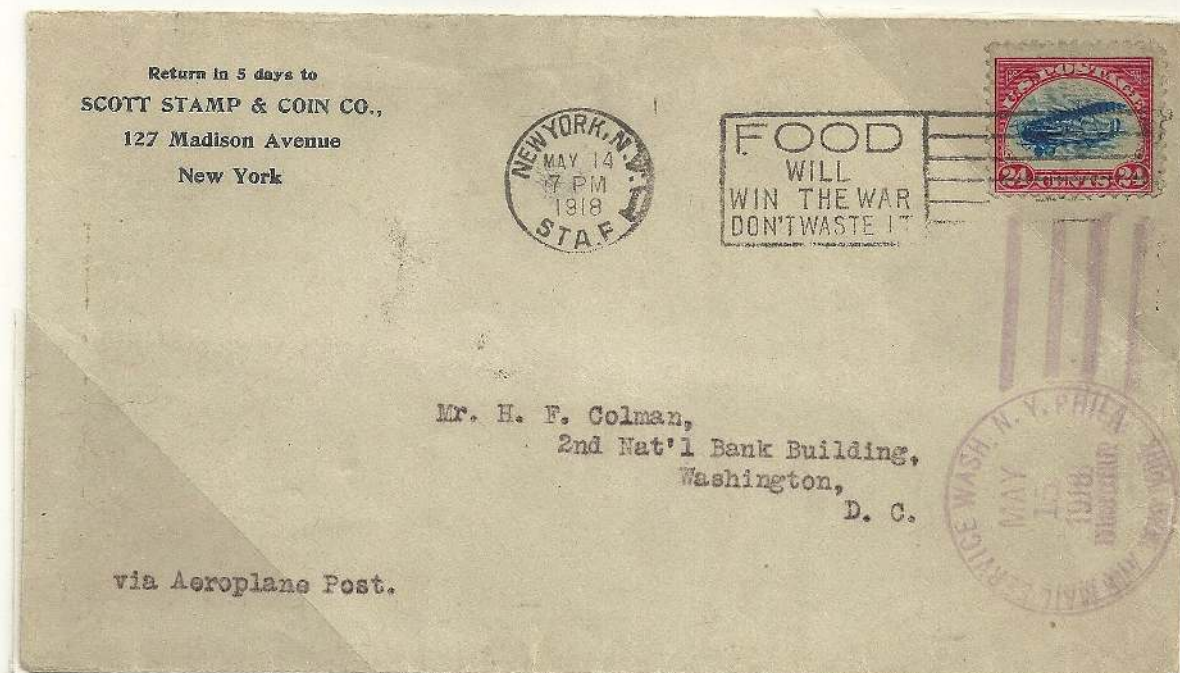
Erratic placement of the printed and gummed sheet when set for perforating.



The new **JENNY** stamp was the first postal issue of the world to have mandatory dual service, those being both airmail and special delivery. Designed and printed in haste, it is a matter of record that supply was available in the three inaugural cities of Washington, New York, and Philadelphia on May 14, prior to the first trips.



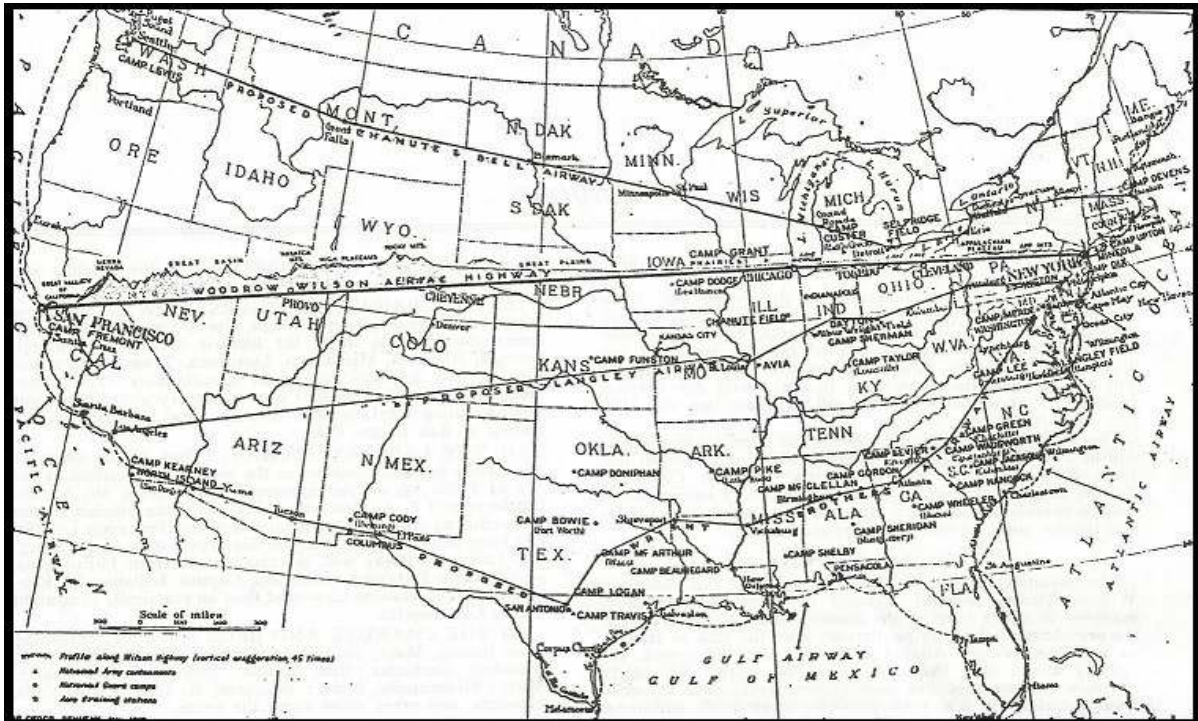
Only six covers are recorded with May 14, 1918 cancels bearing the new stamp. All were held over to be flown on the 15th, except for the Philadelphia to New York example presented here. It was also signed by Captain Benjamin B. Lipsner, First Superintendent of the Aerial Mail Service, many years later. Both copies sent from New York are from the Scott Stamp Company.





## 100 YEARS OF SCHEDULED AIR MAIL SERVICE - - THE IDEA AND THE PLAN

While pioneer air mail flights were still being flown in 1916 “without expense to the Department”, **THE IDEA** of a transcontinental air mail service was conceived. Congress appropriated funds from the Steamboat and Power Boat Service for an “aeroplane service”. Bids were invited for “suitably constructed aircraft”, but only three bids were received. Those bids were rejected because the manufacturers were unable to build the planes within the specified time and all were rejected (re: Second Assistant Postmaster General's report for the years 1918 – 1927, page 1).



By 1917, three coastal and four transcontinental air mail routes had been proposed to train Army, Navy and Postal pilots in cross-country and night flying (re: “Flying” magazine, December 1917, page 948).

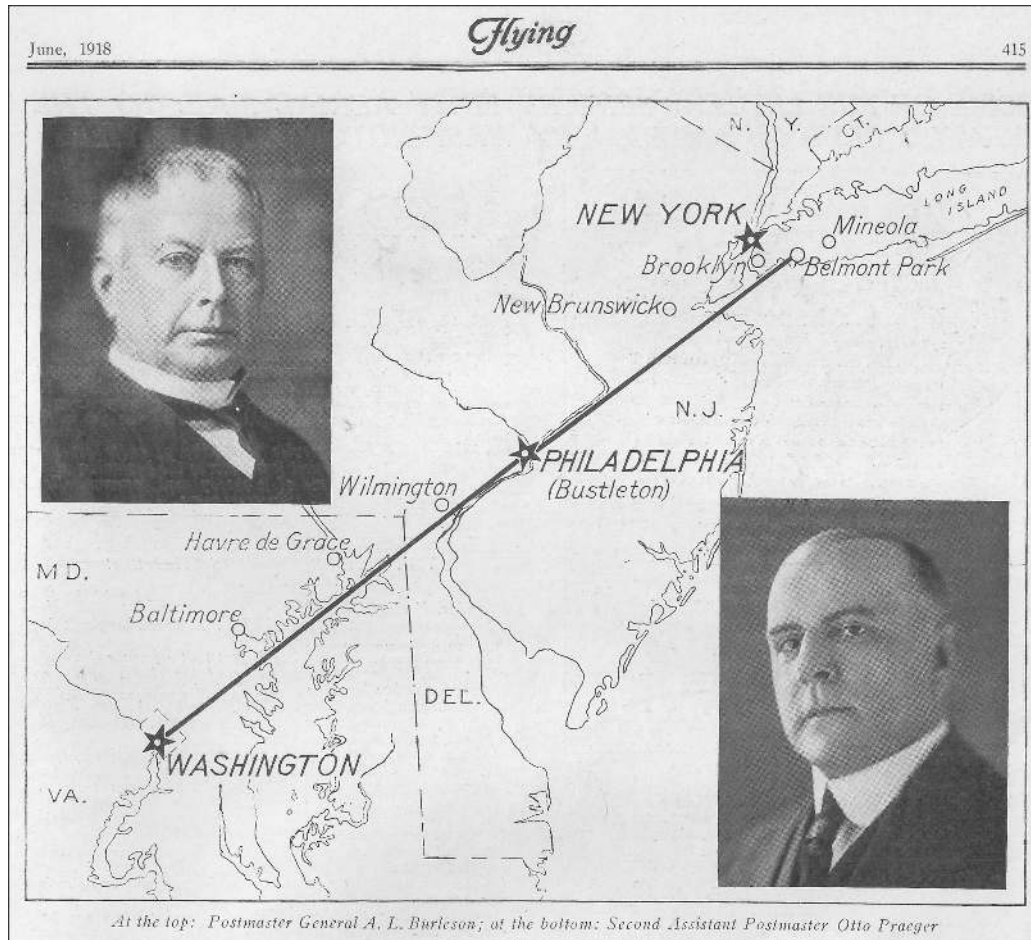
**THE PLAN** was to use one or more of these routes to carry mail by air.

The coastal airways - Pacific Airway; Gulf Airway; Atlantic Airway (selected as the initial system)

The transcontinental airways - Chanute & Bell Airway; Wright Brothers Airway; Langley Airway. Woodrow Wilson Airway (selected as the transcontinental airway)

The Washington (Potomac Park) – Philadelphia (Bustleton Field) – New York (Belmont Park) air mail route (part of the Atlantic Airway, from Bangor, ME to Key West, FL) was the origin of the United States' first scheduled air mail route. It was used as a test bed for flying mail, until funds, equipment and personnel were available to turn it westward and into a transcontinental air mail route.

Note: With two other airways, the Gulf Airway (Key West to Brownsville), and the Pacific Airway (San Diego to Seattle), the Atlantic Airway formed the Coastal Airway system, though the last two airways would not provide scheduled service for many months.



This map shows the main three cities of departure, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New York as well as the emergency landing sites at Baltimore and Havre de Grace, MD, Wilmington, DE, New Brunswick, NJ and Brooklyn and Mineola, NY. The map was "Released by Office of Information, P.O.D. May 11, 1918 for afternoon papers of May 15 and morning papers of May 16."



# THE POSTAL BULLETIN

Published daily, except Sundays and legal holidays, by direction of the Postmaster General, for the information and guidance of officers and employees of the Postal Service.

VOL. XXXIX.

WASHINGTON, MAY 14, 1918.

NO. 11651

## ORDERS OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.

OFFICE OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,  
WASHINGTON, May 7, 1918.

ORDER No. 1417.

Order No. 1553, dated July 28, 1917, forbidding delivery of mail and payment of money-orders to the MAJESTIC SQUARE COMPANY, and its officers and agents as such, at Adel, Iowa, is hereby revoked.

A. S. BURLESON,  
Postmaster General.

### Signatures To Official Correspondence.

OFFICE OF FIRST ASST. P. M. GEN.  
WASHINGTON, May 9, 1918.

In handling Departmental correspondence it has recently been noticed that frequently important communications from post offices relating to matters of policy, disciplinary cases, promotions, reductions, and changes in the personnel, requests for allowances, etc., are not signed by the postmaster, which suggests that possibly the matter has not been brought to his attention.

In order that postmasters may be fully informed of the action of their supervisory employees, and that the Department may know that important matters relative to the administration of their offices are receiving their careful consideration, they will in the future personally read and sign all letters and recommendations to the Department affecting the policies of the office, or relating to matters of discipline, additional assistance or increased allowances for any purpose, and promotions, reductions or other changes of any character in the personnel above the automatic grades. Such correspondence may be signed by the assistant postmaster or other designated employee only during the protracted absence of the postmaster.

Attention is invited to Sections 264 and 287, Postal Laws and Regulations.

Registration Of German Alien Females.  
MAY 12, 1918.

Postmasters:

## ORDER OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.

OFFICE OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,  
WASHINGTON, May 11, 1918.

ORDER No. 1443.

Effective May 15, 1918, the Postal Laws and Regulations are amended by the addition of the following as Section 399½:

Sec. 399½. The Postmaster General, in his discretion, may require the payment of postage on mail carried by aeroplane at not exceeding 24 cents per ounce or fraction thereof. (Act of May 10, 1918.)

2. Mail carried by aeroplane shall be charged with postage at the rate of 24 cents an ounce or fraction thereof, of which 10 cents shall be for special-delivery service. Such mail shall consist of matter of the first class, including sealed parcels not exceeding 30 inches in length and girth combined. The postage on aeroplane mail shall be fully prepaid with special aeroplane postage stamps or with ordinary postage stamps. When the latter are used the mail should be indorsed "By aeroplane."

Effective May 15, 1918, Section 577, Postal Laws and Regulations, is amended by the addition of the following as paragraph 2:

3. Mail for dispatch by aeroplane service will be accepted for registration upon the prepayment, by postage stamps affixed, of a registration fee of 10 cents in addition to the aeroplane postage. Such registered mail will be inclosed in registered package jackets or inner registered sacks and dispatched in iron-locked pouches, in accordance with the registry regulations covering such dispatches. (See Sec. 399½.)

A. S. BURLESON,  
Postmaster General.

## AEROPLANE MAIL SERVICE.

OFFICE OF SECOND ASST. POSTMASTER GENERAL,  
WASHINGTON, May 11, 1918.

Aeroplane mail service will be established May 15, 1918, between Washington, Philadelphia and New York, one round trip daily, except Sundays. Letters and sealed parcels, the latter not exceeding 30 inches in length and girth combined, may be mailed at Washington, Philadelphia and New York for any city in the United States or its possessions or postal agencies.

The rate of postage will be 24 cents per ounce or fraction thereof, which includes special-delivery service. Postage may be paid by affixing either the distinctive aeroplane stamp or its equivalent in other postage stamps. When the latter are used, the mail should be indorsed, "By aeroplane." Mail by aeroplane may be registered by prepayment of 10 cents' registry fee in addition to the postage.

Until further notice the aeroplanes will leave Belmont Park, New York, and Washington, D. C., at 11:30 a. m. Postmasters should inform the public of the closing of the mails and the points from which aeroplane mail may be dispatched. Letters for the arial service mailed too late for aeroplane dispatch will be given the most expeditious dispatch by other means, including special delivery.

OTTO PRAEGER,  
Second Asst. P. M. Gen.

## POST OFFICES DISCONTINUED.

Effective May 15, 1918.

### FLORIDA.

Eatonville, Grange Co., 123513 and 233080. Mail to Maitland. Supplies and records to Gainesville. [11 may]

### LOUISIANA.

Koko, Rapides Co., 49246. Mail to Osborn. Supplies and records to New Orleans. [13 may]

Effective May 31, 1918.

### WASHINGTON.

Port Columbia, Douglas Co., 71172. Mail to Brewster. Supplies and records to Spokane. [13 may]

## RAILROAD SERVICE CHANGED.

### WEST VIRGINIA.

116507. From May 11, 1918, Terry is embraced for supply on this route between Prince and Wright, at McCreery RR. Sta. [11 may]

## POSTMASTERS COMMISSIONED.

### PRESIDENTIAL.

May 13, 1918.

A. C. Jefferson Johnson.  
Name previously given as  
Jefferson Johnson, Austin, Tex.  
FOURTH CLASS.

May 13, 1918.

be Joseph David Rogers.....Aimwell, Ala  
e Vonnie E. Gerald.....Myrtle, Ala  
e Alta C. Elliott.....Cove, Ark  
e George E. Hartin.....Mitchell, Ark  
e Martha B. Evans.....Prim, Ark  
e Clara Ingmire.....Stamford, Colo  
e George L. Eveleth.....Castleford, Idaho  
e Minnie A. Miles.....Herman, Idaho  
e Agnes R. Maxwell.....Oakdale, Ill  
e William T. Roberts.....Martinsburg, Ind  
e Daisy A. Bestor.....Grimes, Iowa  
e Carl B. Herley.....Lowmont, Kans  
e Tom J. Slusher.....Flat Lick, Ky  
e Katherine A. Long.....Saint Leonard, Md

Postal Bulletin Volume 34 No. 11651 was issued on May 14, 1918. This document, under the direction of A. S. Burleson, the Postmaster General, informed post office staff that: "...Mail carried by aeroplane shall be charged with postage at the rate of 24 cents an ounce or fraction thereof, of which 10 cents shall be for special delivery service."

The bulletin goes on to state that both "special aeroplane postage stamps... or ordinary postage stamps" would be accepted.

Included in this bulletin was a notation prepared by Otto Praeger, the Second Assistant Postmaster General. He explained the following:

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

"...aeroplanes will leave Belmont Park, New York, and Washington, D. C., at 11:30 a. m."



The general public could view the first scheduled air mail flight leaving Washington, from the banks of the Potomac River. However passes were needed to gain access to Potomac Park and to the landing field.



The temporary pass issued to (Daisy) Marie Thomas, Secretary to Second Assistant Postmaster Burleson and later to become the wife of the first civilian U. S. Government air mail pilot, Max Miller



Second Assistant Postmaster General Burleson, Washington Postmaster and President Woodrow Wilson waiting for the start of the first scheduled air mail, Washington – Philadelphia – New York.





President Woodrow Wilson talking with U. S. Army Signal Corps Major Reuben Hollis Fleet upon Fleet's arrival at Potomac Park with the plane, #38262, that 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. George Leroy Boyle would use for his flight to Philadelphia, PA.



After Major Fleet arrived with the airplane that Lieutenant Boyle was to fly to Philadelphia, the Army Signal Corps ground crew loaded the mail into the forward compartment that was originally intended for a second aviator.





Lt. Torrey Webb receives a celebratory watch from the Hamilton Watch Company. Each of the pilots flying the first day's mail between Washington, DC, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New York City received a Hamilton Watch.



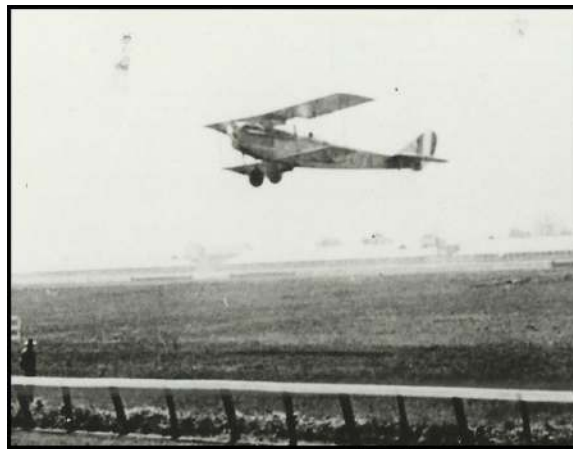
Lieutenant Torrey Webb poses with a bag of airmail before it is loaded into his Curtiss Jenny JN-4B airplane on the morning of May 15, 1918.

Boyle was delayed in leaving due to an oversight in refueling his aircraft. After it was determined that the plane had not been refueled (an embarrassment to all, especially in front of President Wilson), fuel for the plane was obtained and Boyle positioned his plane for take off.



2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. George Leroy Boyle's taking off from Potomac Park in his aircraft (#38262) for Philadelphia, PA, the first scheduled air mail flight.

Boyle experienced the problem of getting off course and landed at Pomfret, MD, east of Washington, to get directions. After taking off again, he crashed near Waldorf, MD, only a few miles away. Though the plane was not able to fly (propeller and wing damage), it was repairable and was carried back to Potomac Park by truck.



U. S. Army Signal Corps 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Torrey Webb taking off in plane #38278 with the southbound mail from New York to Philadelphia, PA.



**PILOT'S DAILY REPORT.**

Plane No. 35262 Date 5-15-18  
 Temp. 70°  
 Weather Fair  
 Condition of field good soft g. b. Boyle  
 (Pilot)

TRIP.		TIME.	
From—	To—	Started.	Landed.
1. N. Y. Phila.	Phila. N. Y.		
2. Phila. Wash.	Wash. Phila.	11.45 A.M.	8.40 P.M.

Mark "X" after any of the following questions NOT found O. K.  
 Does engine lack power? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine hesitate when accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine misfire? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any leaks? Gas \_\_\_\_\_ Oil \_\_\_\_\_ Water \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does carburetor spit? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (a) In normal flight? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) In accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any tendency to turn? Right \_\_\_\_\_ Left \_\_\_\_\_  
 Is balance correct? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Water temperature normal? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any excessive vibration? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any strange noise? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are instruments recording? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Landing gear \_\_\_\_\_ Tires \_\_\_\_\_ Skids \_\_\_\_\_  
 Structural parts? \_\_\_\_\_ Fuselage \_\_\_\_\_ Wings \_\_\_\_\_

Note.—Use other side for forced landings, time lost, causes of delay, remarks, etc.

Remarks:  
 In leaving Washington relied on compass and veered from proper course. When aware of this fact landed near farm house to ascertain position. Here three people gave their different ideas of direction but said I was 35 or 40 miles south West of Washington. Unable to rely on this information and not confident of compass I took off and landed near Waldorf Md. Purpose was to ascertain from Post Office my real position. Landed in good looking large field. Field was soft however and machine nosed over after having made good landing, slightly tail low. Propeller and \_\_\_\_\_ were broken. Otherwise ship O.K. Reported by phone immediately to Major Giet and started with mail to Wash. by automobile. Machine repaired by mechanic sent from Wash. Took it back, and arrived Wash. 8:5 PM.

**PILOT'S DAILY REPORT.**

Plane No. 31941 Date May 15, 1918  
 Temp. Clear  
 Weather Clear  
 Condition of field good Lt. Culver  
 (Pilot)

TRIP.		TIME.	
From—	To—	Started.	Landed.
1. N. Y. Phila. ✓	Phila. N. Y. ✓		2.15 3.37
2. Phila. Wash.	Wash. Phila.		

Mark "X" after any of the following questions NOT found O. K.  
 Does engine lack power? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine hesitate when accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine misfire? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any leaks? Gas \_\_\_\_\_ Oil \_\_\_\_\_ Water \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does carburetor spit? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (a) In normal flight? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) In accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any tendency to turn? Right \_\_\_\_\_ Left \_\_\_\_\_  
 Is balance correct? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Water temperature normal? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any excessive vibration? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any strange noise? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are instruments recording? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Landing gear \_\_\_\_\_ Tires \_\_\_\_\_ Skids \_\_\_\_\_  
 Structural parts? \_\_\_\_\_ Fuselage \_\_\_\_\_ Wings \_\_\_\_\_

Note.—Use other side for forced landings, time lost, causes of delay, remarks, etc.

**PILOT'S DAILY REPORT.**

Plane No. 38778 Date May 15/18  
 Temp. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weather Clear  
 Condition of field good Lt. J. H. Webb  
 (Pilot)

TRIP.		TIME.	
From—	To—	Started.	Landed.
1. N. Y. ✓ Phila. ✓	Phila. ✓ N. Y. ✓		11.29 12.58
2. Phila. Wash.	Wash. Phila.		

Mark "X" after any of the following questions NOT found O. K.  
 Does engine lack power? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine hesitate when accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine misfire? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any leaks? Gas \_\_\_\_\_ Oil \_\_\_\_\_ Water \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does carburetor spit? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (a) In normal flight? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) In accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any tendency to turn? Right \_\_\_\_\_ Left \_\_\_\_\_  
 Is balance correct? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Water temperature normal? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any excessive vibration? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any strange noise? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are instruments recording? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Landing gear \_\_\_\_\_ Tires \_\_\_\_\_ Skids \_\_\_\_\_  
 Structural parts? \_\_\_\_\_ Fuselage \_\_\_\_\_ Wings \_\_\_\_\_

Note.—Use other side for forced landings, time lost, causes of delay, remarks, etc.

Pilot Daily Reports for May 15, 1918 for Lt. Boyle, with reverse showing additional comments referencing flight problems, Lt. Culver and Lt. Webb.



# Curtiss Again Makes History



The first regular aerial mail service between New York and Washington was started May 15th, 1918. Curtiss machines were used.

Lieutenant George L. Boyle left Washington in first Curtiss mailplane with Postmaster-General Burleson's official opening letter; President Wilson cancelled and autographed aeromail stamp.

Lieutenant Howard P. Culver took Boyle cargo, Philadelphia to New York, in one hour ten minutes. Mail Lieutenant Torrey H. Webb carried from New York to Philadelphia reached capital in Lieutenant James C. Edgerton's plane three hours twenty minutes

later. Flying time, Washington to New York, since reduced to two hours fifty minutes.

Aerial postal service in United States first started by Postmaster-General Hitchcock in 1911, flying in Curtiss biplane, Nassau to Mineola, L. I. In 1912 Mr. Hitchcock licensed ten Curtiss flyers to carry mail; tests then made in New York, Georgia, Texas, Arkansas, North Carolina. Hugh Robinson, Curtiss pilot, delivered mail along Mississippi River from Minneapolis, 375 miles.

Washington at 2:50 p. m., flying 133 miles from Philadelphia in one hour and twenty-six minutes.

2—The start of the first aerial mail service from Potomac Park, Washington.

4—Lieutenant Edgerton arrives in Washington with the first mail from Philadelphia.

5—Lieutenant Webb leaving Belmont Park on the first trip of the New York-Washington Aerial Mail Route.

6—Lieutenant Culver handing his bag of mail over to New York Post Office officials after flight from Philadelphia to Belmont Park, New York.

7—Lieutenant Henri Farre, official aviation artist of the French government, presents Lieutenant Webb with a good luck horseshoe, just before the inaugurating flight.

8—Postmaster Patton of New York, Aero Club, and City officials wishing Lieutenant Webb Godspeed.

9—A close-up view of one of the Curtiss machines made for the Aerial Mail Service, showing mail-carrying compartment.

NOTE—Photos Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 are copyrighted International Film Service.

Photo No. 3 is copyrighted Cineast Studio. Photo No. 8 is copyrighted Central News Photo.



The Postmaster of New York, N. Y.,

EXTENDS TO YOU A MOST CORDIAL INVITATION TO BE PRESENT AT THE

Inauguration

OF THE

Airplane Mail Service between New York and Washington

THE FIRST AIRPLANE CARRYING UNITED STATES MAIL WILL LEAVE BELMONT PARK EN ROUTE TO WASHINGTON AT  
ELEVEN THIRTY A. M. ON WEDNESDAY, MAY FIFTEEN, NINETEEN EIGHTEEN

A PROMPT RESPONSE TO THIS INVITATION IS RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED AND A CARD OF ADMISSION  
WILL BE FORWARDED TO YOU

ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE WITH THE LONG ISLAND RAILROAD COMPANY FOR A TRAIN TO LEAVE PENNSYLVANIA  
RAILROAD STATION, THIRTY-THIRD STREET AND EIGHTH AVENUE, AT TEN THIRTY A. M.,  
ON MAY FIFTEENTH, DIRECT TO BELMONT PARK

NOT TRANSFERABLE

227

ADMISSION CARD—TO BE PRESENTED AT GATE

Initial Flight  
Airplane Mail Service  
New York---Philadelphia---Washington

THOMAS G. PATTEN  
POSTMASTER  
NEW YORK, N. Y.

BELMONT PARK  
WEDNESDAY  
MAY 15TH, 1918  
11.30 A. M.

COUNTERSIGNED  
*R. H. Webb*  
MAJOR, J. M. A., S. C.  
U. S. ARMY

TRAIN LEAVES PENNSYLVANIA R. R. STATION, THIRTY-THIRD STREET & EIGHTH AVENUE, AT TEN A. M. SHARP, DIRECT TO BELMONT PARK



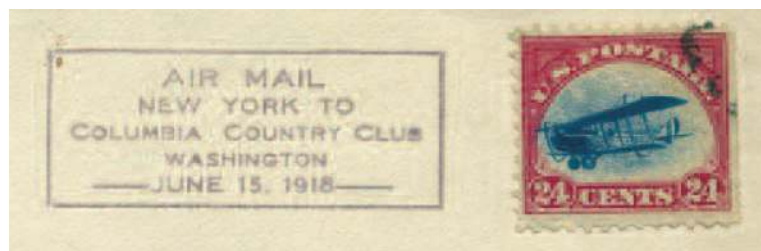
Original invitation and admission card for the New York departure. Pilot Lt. Torrey H. Webb carried 144 pounds to Bustleton, the Philadelphia terminal.

Patten & Lt. Webb

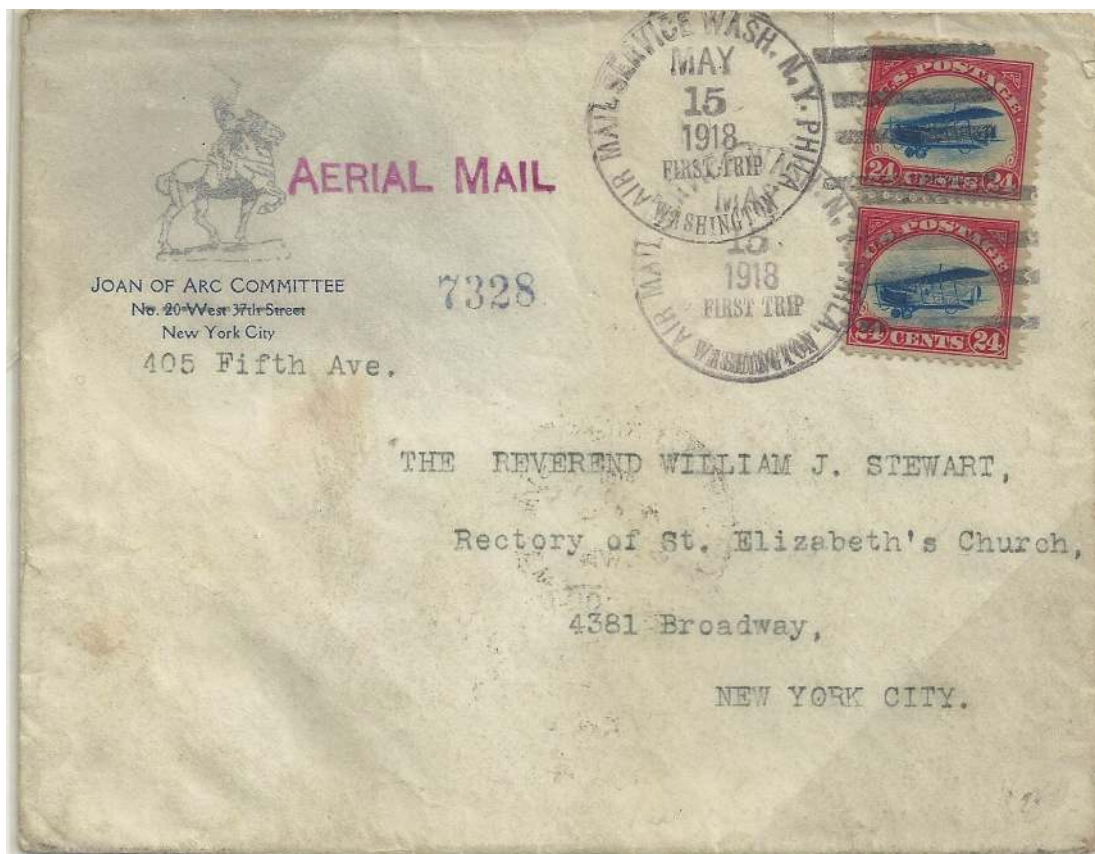


# Early Flight Cancellations

Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York all had distinctive circular cancels with a bar killer that was hand-applied by Post Office employees prior to placement on any of the first airmail routes. There are many variations of colors used in the first flight cancels. In addition, there are different dates and times that were placed or re-placed by Post Office personnel in the modified cancels to reflect changes.



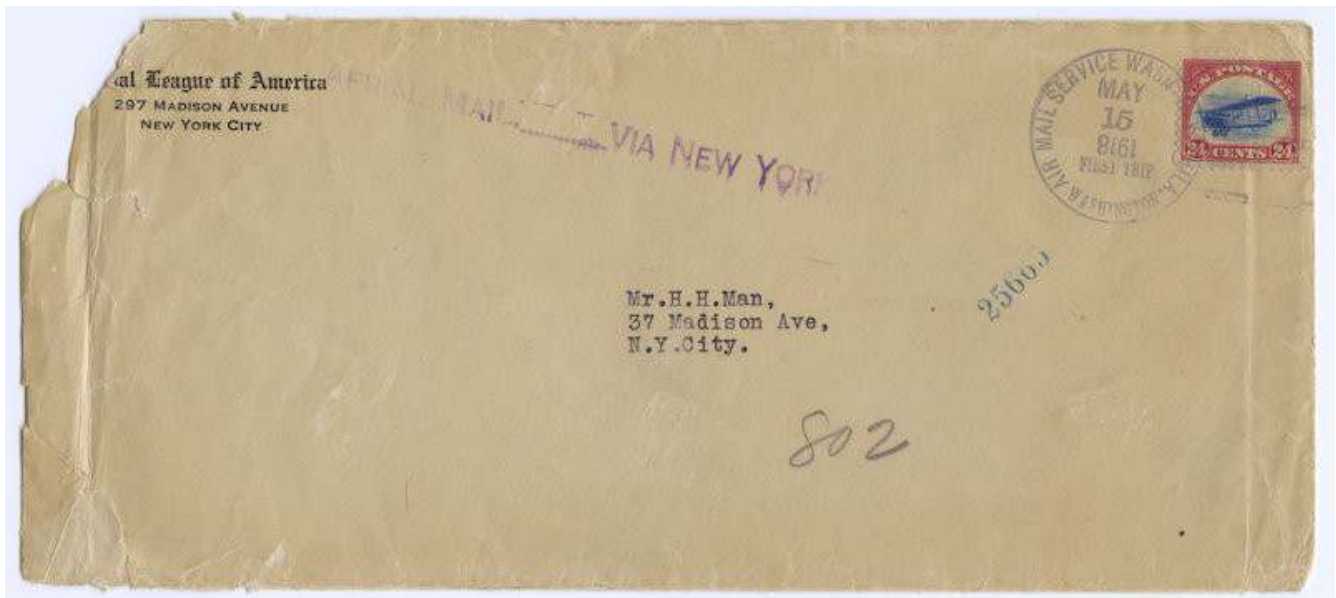




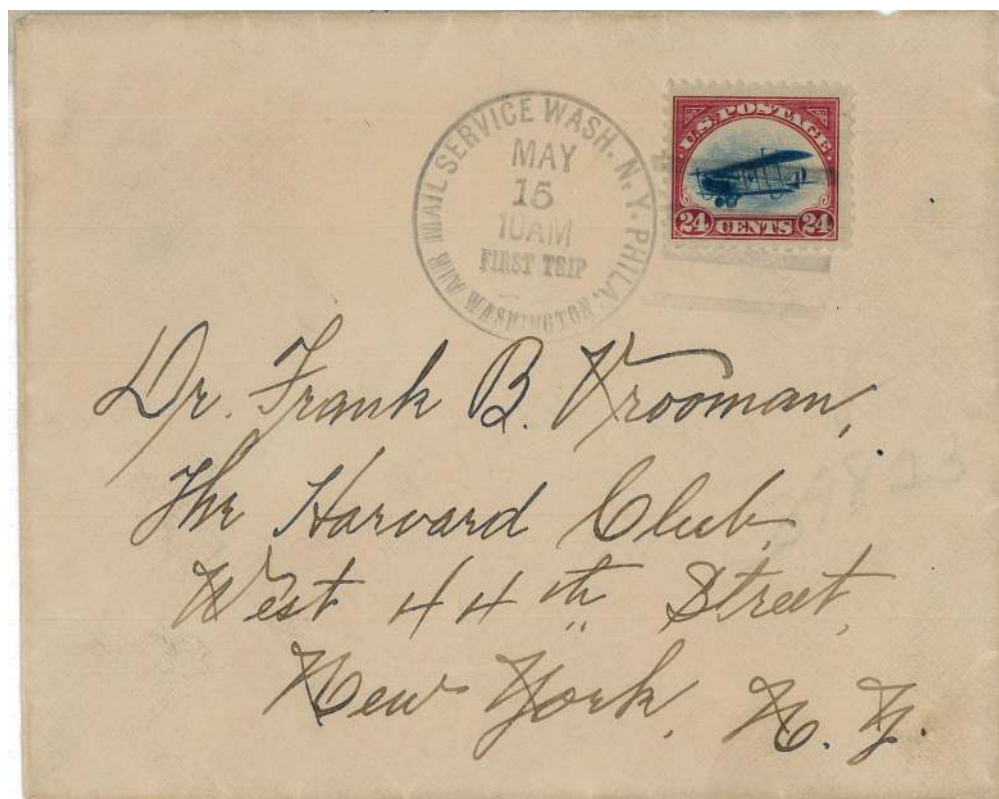
May 15, 1918 Washington to New York with "AIR MAIL SERVICE WASH. N.Y. PHILA" with "FIRST TRIP" cancel variety.

Very few covers are recorded on the May 15, 1918 first flights bearing two copies of the new air mail issue. Five examples are known having been mailed from the Joan of Arc Committee in New York, but sent from Washington to New York and Philadelphia.





Numerous cancels were used on the Washington to New York dispatch. The above item shows the May 15 FIRST TRIP cancel variety with inverted year date. The cover below shows the May 15 FIRST TRIP with the 10 AM time slug.





J. LEO KOLB  
REAL ESTATE & INSURANCE  
923 NEW YORK AVE. N. W.  
1237 WISCONSIN AVE. N. W.  
WASHINGTON



Miss Frances M. Baker,

Belle Avenue,

Bayside, L. I.

Washington to New York route with 11 AM -FIRST TRIP- and 2 PM without FIRST TRIP cancel varieties .

The Republican  
SPRINGFIELD, MASS.



H.R. Lloyd,

25 Nassau Street,

Springfield,

Mass.

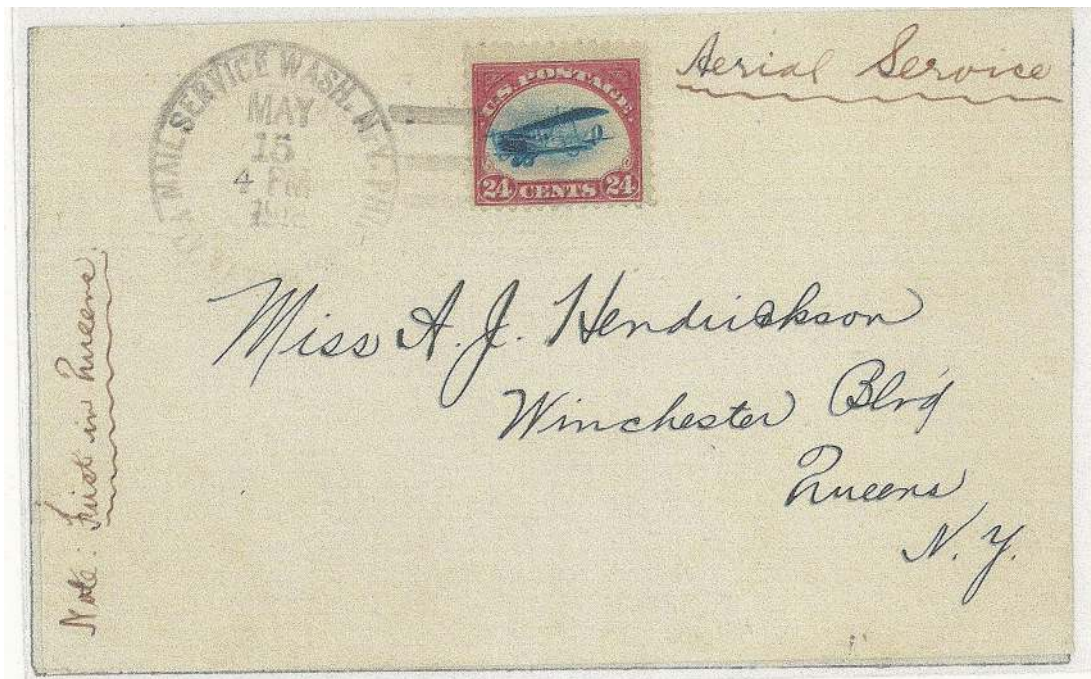
109816

OFFICE  
OF FIRST ADDRESS

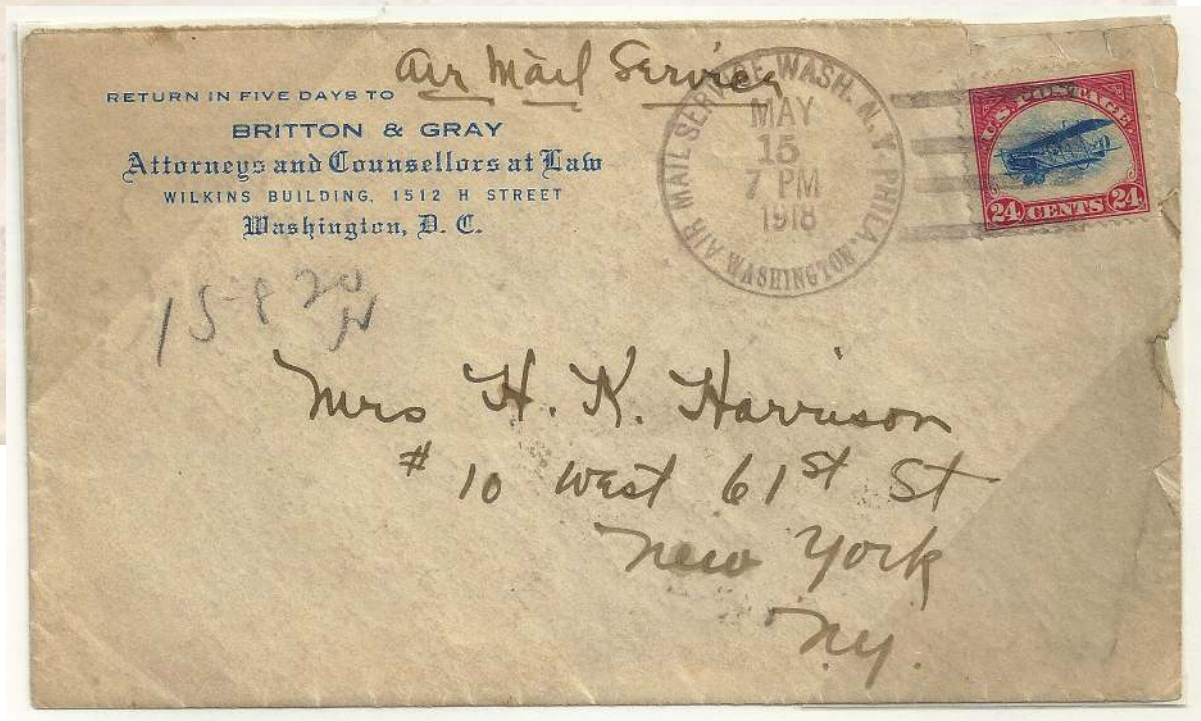




Washington to New York 3 PM and 4PM cancel varieties.







Washington to New York 5 PM, 6 PM and 7 PM cancel varieties.



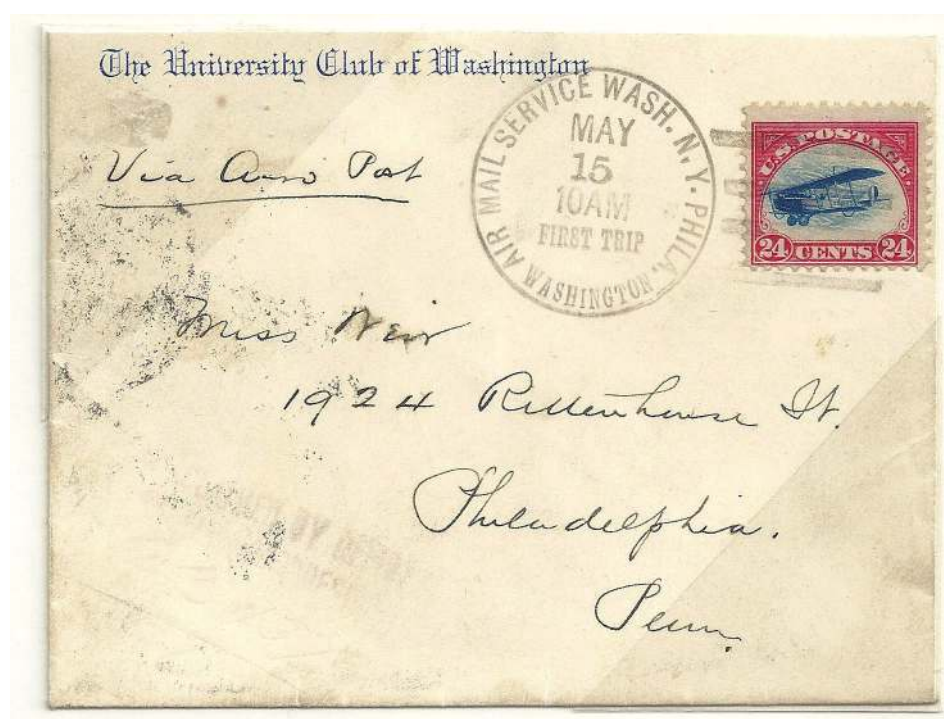
Washington to New York 10 PM and 11 PM cancel varieties.







Above is the Washington to Philadelphia FIRST TRIP with private "AERIAL MAIL SERVICE" label. Below is the Washington to Philadelphia with 10 AM cancel variety.







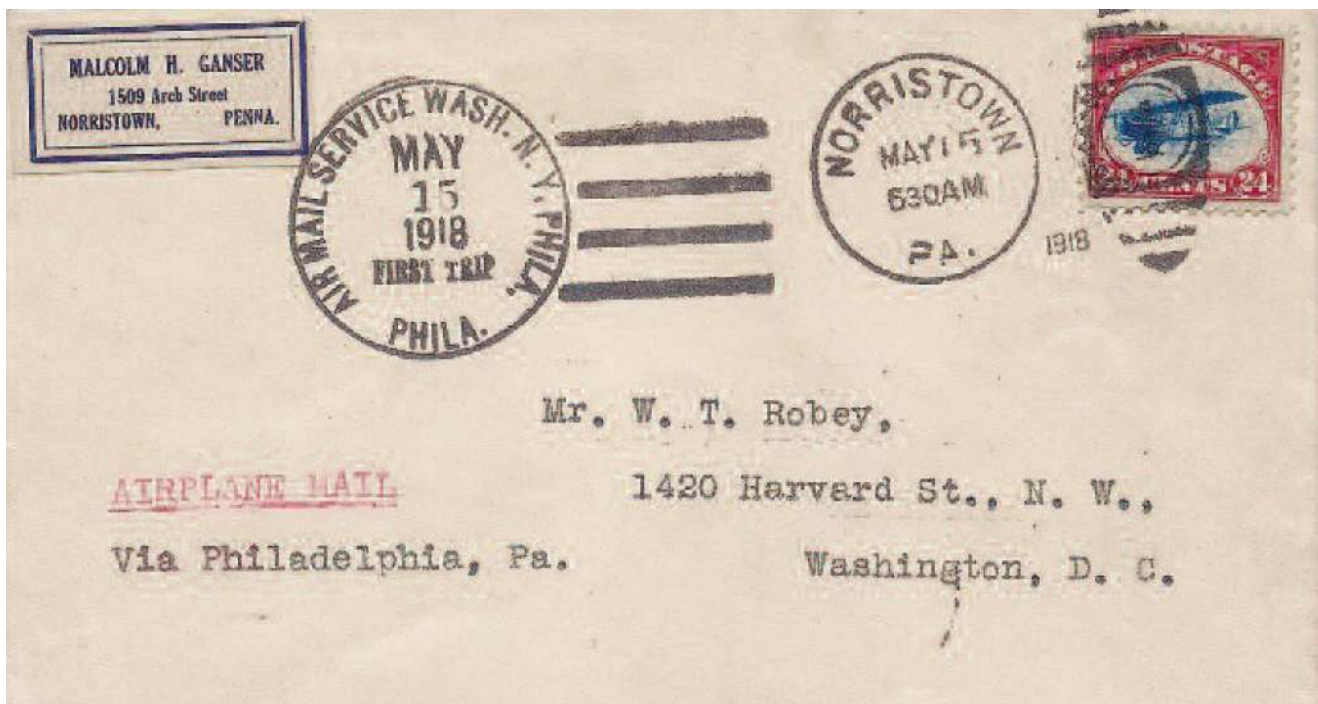
Washington to Philadelphia showing the 7 PM time slug. **This is a recent discovery not currently listed.** The bottom cover is the Washington to Philadelphia 9 PM cancel variety.







Above is only cancel variety from Philadelphia to New York with "FIRST TRIP". This item also shows the two types of labels. The example below shows a combination cancel – Morristown PA. And the May 15 "FIRST TRIP" Philadelphia to Washington.





The top cover shows the Philadelphia to Washington May 15 large "1918" year date cancel variety.

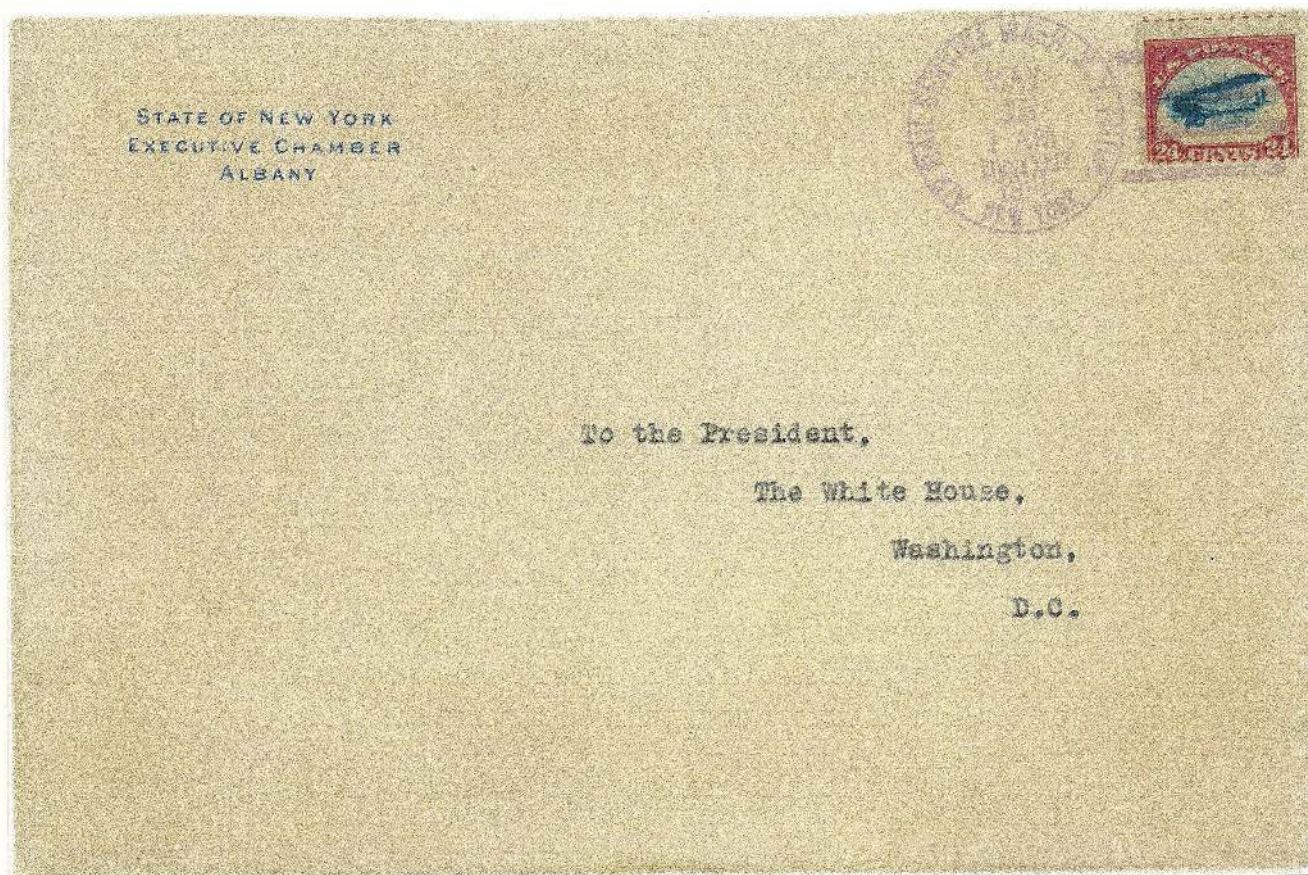
The example below shows the "FIRST TRIP" cancel from New York to Philadelphia. This is the only cancel variety from the New York to Philadelphia route.







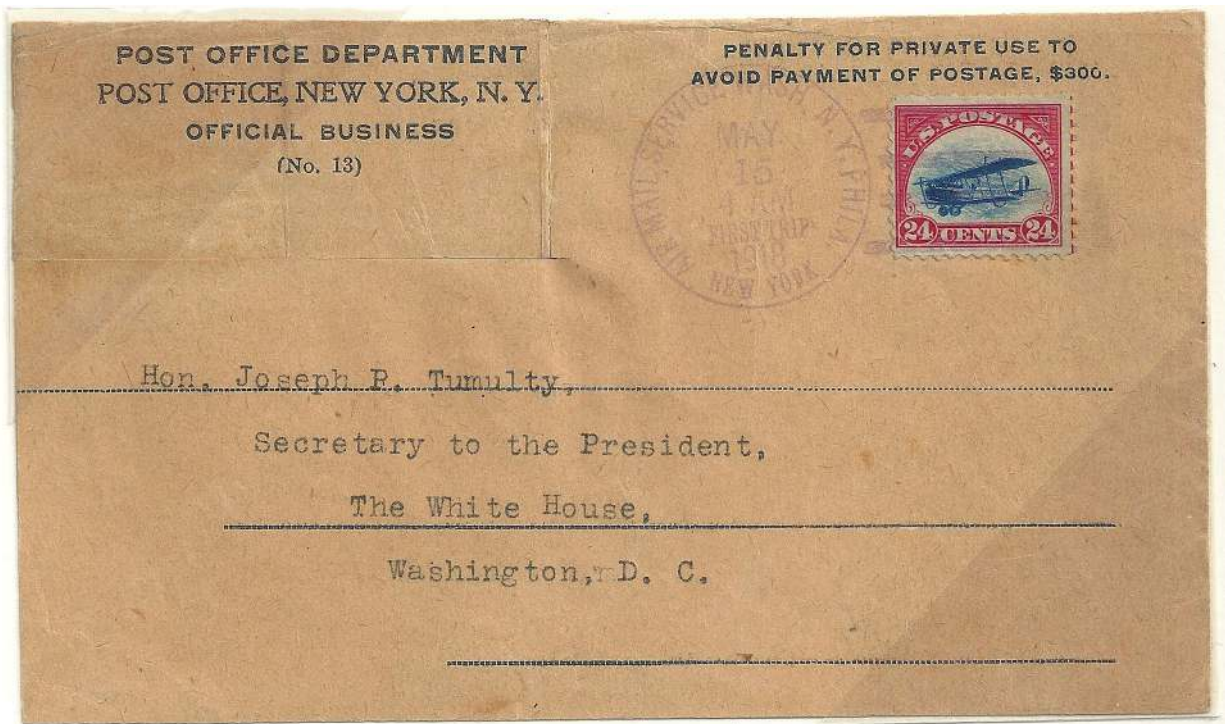
New York to Washington with accepted 24 cent regular postage with private label. The cover below shows New York to Washington cancel variety with the 1 AM "FIRST TRIP".







New York to Washington 2 AM and 4 AM cancel varieties.







Well documented in philately, this folded complete wrapper to President Wilson contained a new copy of **Frontiers of Freedom** by Secretary of War Newton D. Baker.

The book weighed twenty-three ounces and was sent at a mistaken rate of 27 cents per ounce, based on a handwritten notation below existing postage (23 x 27 cents/\$6.21). To pay this rate the missing postal issue at top would have been a 3 cent value. The correct rate for twenty-three ounces would have been \$5.52, so there was an overpayment of 69 cents.

Two cancellation varieties are present, as shown, and no other flown item is recorded to contain either one, and no other variety of cancellation from any departure city is known with an 8 AM time slug.

Twenty-five copies of the new airmail stamp are attached, being the largest amount known on any May 15 example. Among those is a block of eight, also being largest block recorded.

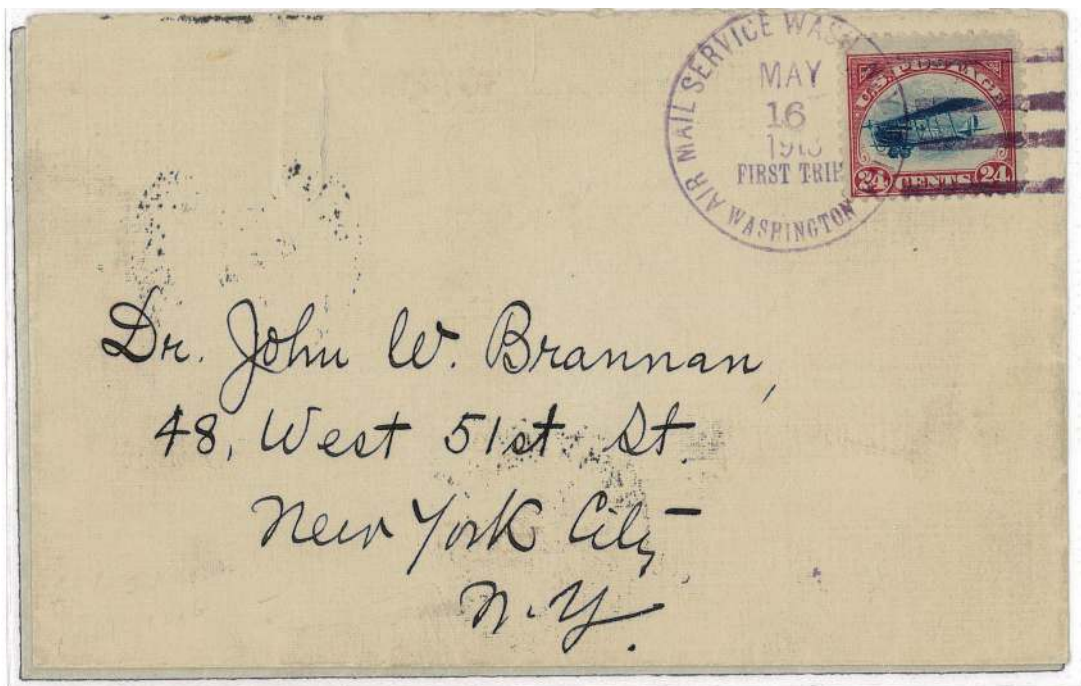


President and First Lady



The President and First lady attended the Washington May 15, 1918 ceremonies at the Potomac Park Polo Grounds. Lt. George L. Boyle carried the departed mail, while Lt. James C. Edgerton came with mail from Philadelphia and New York. Major Reuben Fleet, placed in charge of the new service, is shown with the President.





Lt. Boyle crashed near Waldorf, MD. on the May 15 Washington to Philadelphia trip. Mail was collected and returned to Washington. The following day this mail was combined with additional postings from Washington and flown on May 16 by Lt. James Edgerton. Cancel varieties showing with and without "FIRST TRIP" as shown.





# PILOT'S DAILY REPORT.

Plane No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date May 16<sup>th</sup> 1918  
 Temp. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weather Clear  
 Condition of field Good Lut. P. Bonsal  
 (Pilot.)

	TRIP.		TIME.	
	From—	To—	Started.	Landed.
1	N. Y. ✓ Phila. ✓	Phila. ✓ N. Y. ✓	11.29	
2	Phila. Wash.	Wash. Phila.		

Mark "X" after any of the following questions NOT found O. K.

Does engine lack power? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine hesitate when accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine misfire? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any leaks? Gas \_\_\_\_\_ Oil \_\_\_\_\_ Water \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does carbureter spit? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (a) In normal flight? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) In accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any tendency to turn? Right \_\_\_\_\_ Left \_\_\_\_\_  
 Is balance correct? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Water temperature normal? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any excessive vibration? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any strange noise? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are instruments recording? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Landing gear \_\_\_\_\_ Tires \_\_\_\_\_ Skids \_\_\_\_\_  
 Structural parts? \_\_\_\_\_ Fuselage \_\_\_\_\_ Wings \_\_\_\_\_

Note.—Use other side for forced landings, time lost, causes of delay, remarks, etc.

2209

5/16/18  
 Lut. Bonsal, telephoned had forced landing at Bridgeton N. J. So. of Phila. said he dispatched mail via train to Wash. & Phila. 17 lbs in all at 3 PM. Said he would telegraph Phila. to help him out.  
 Please get plane number as I did not get these cards in time.  
 Ed Edgerton

# PILOT'S DAILY REPORT.

Plane No. 38274 Date May 16, 1918  
 Temp. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weather Highly overcast  
 Condition of field Good Edgerton  
 (Pilot.)

	TRIP.		TIME.	
	From—	To—	Started.	Landed.
1	N. Y. ✓ Phila. ✓	Phila. ✓ N. Y. ✓		
2	Phila. Wash.	Wash. Phila.	6:40 AM	8:30 PM

Mark "X" after any of the following questions NOT found O. K.

Does engine lack power? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine hesitate when accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine misfire? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any leaks? Gas \_\_\_\_\_ Oil \_\_\_\_\_ Water \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does carbureter spit? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (a) In normal flight? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) In accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any tendency to turn? Right \_\_\_\_\_ Left X  
 Is balance correct? None heavy (Champion)  
 Water temperature normal? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any excessive vibration? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any strange noise? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are instruments recording? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Landing gear \_\_\_\_\_ Tires \_\_\_\_\_ Skids \_\_\_\_\_  
 Structural parts? \_\_\_\_\_ Fuselage \_\_\_\_\_ Wings \_\_\_\_\_

Note.—Use other side for forced landings, time lost, causes of delay, remarks, etc.

2209

Remarks: This mail left N. Y. with P. Bonsal, was returned to Bridgeton field. H. Miller left field at 5:45, but returned at 6:30 because of engine trouble. I left field with this mail at 6:40 P.M. and after a good trip arrived at Polo Field at 8:30 P.M.  
 Altitude - 6500 to 7000 feet.  
 Weather - Overcast with some haze.  
 Wind - Fairly strong quartering headwind.  
 Visibility - 4 mi.  
 Compass course - 250° average.  
 Prop Rev - 1425 average.  
 16/18

Pilot's Daily Reports for May 16, 1918 referencing Bonsal's crash at Bridgeton, New Jersey and Edgerton delivering mail to the Polo Field.





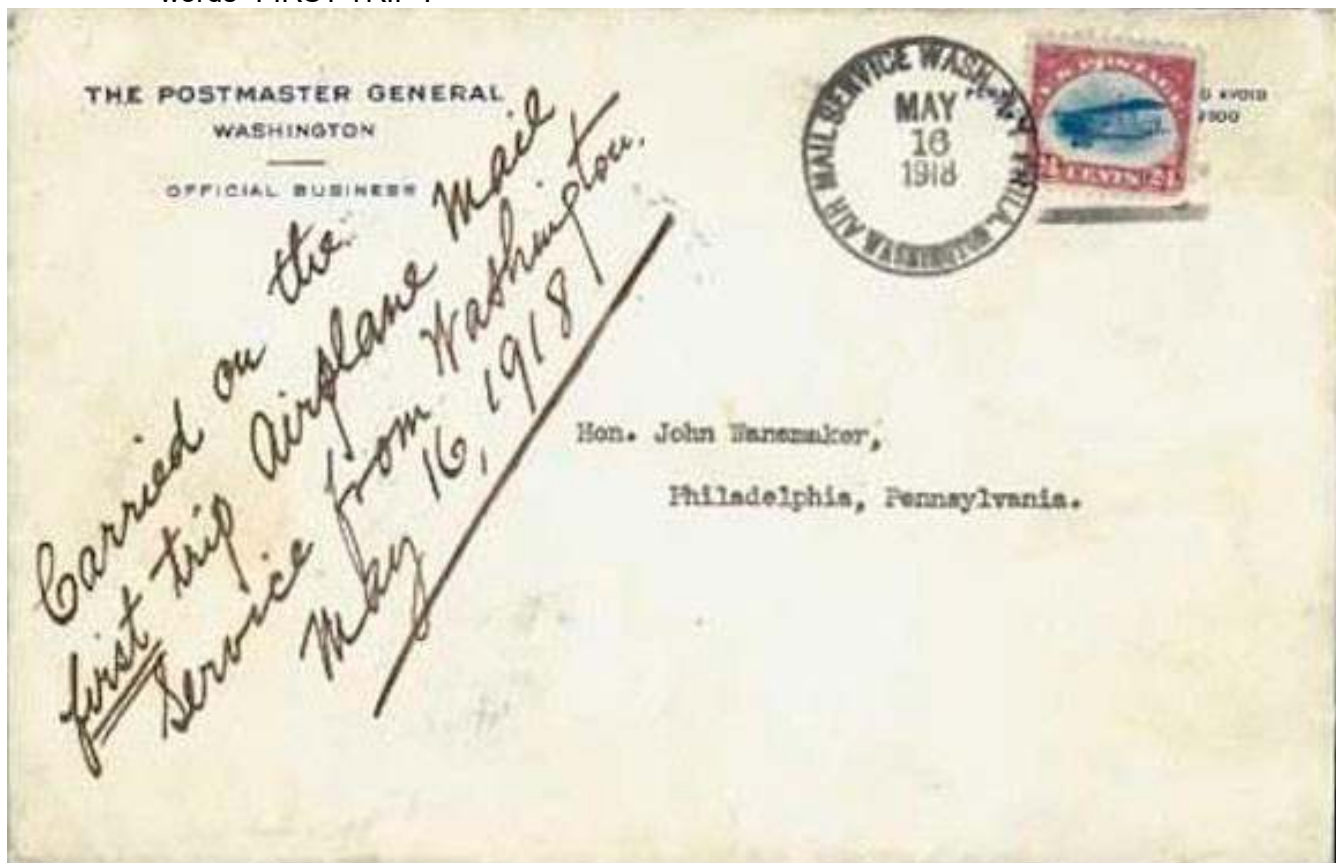
These examples show the Washington to New York 9 AM and 10 AM cancel varieties. Both of these covers have an additional 3 cents postage added which was not necessary. Rate confusion was apparent with the new early airmail.



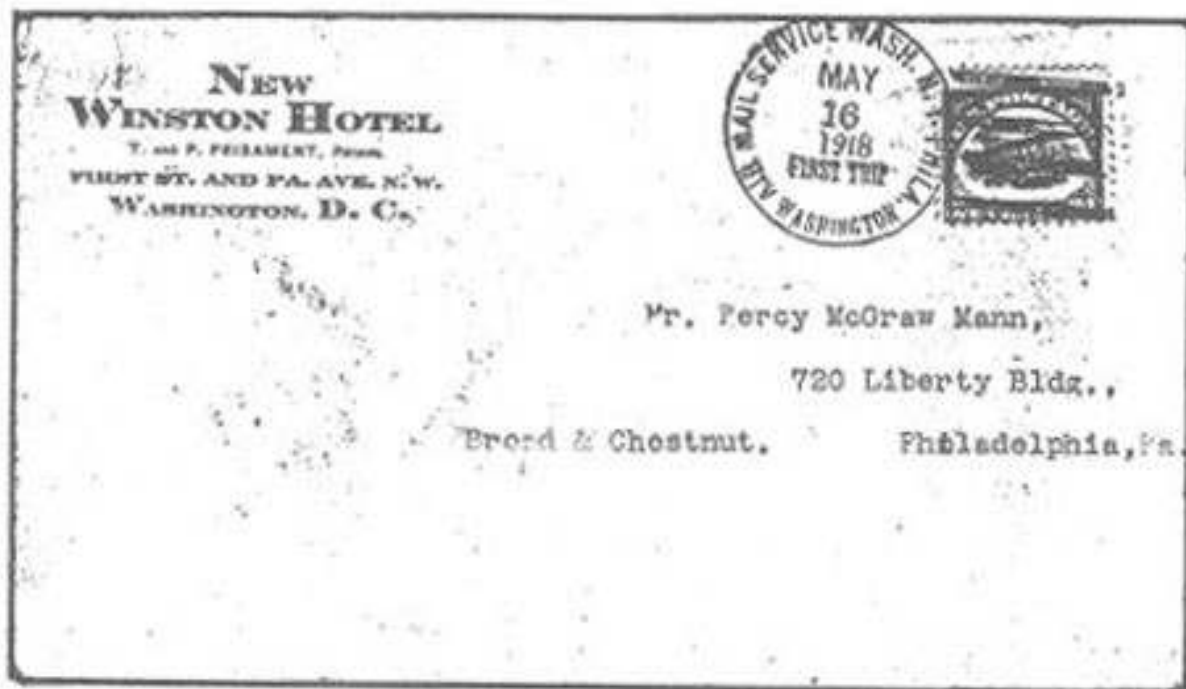




Washington to New York 11 AM time slug. Lt. Edgerton flew the mail from Washington to Philadelphia on May 16. This example does not include the words "FIRST TRIP".







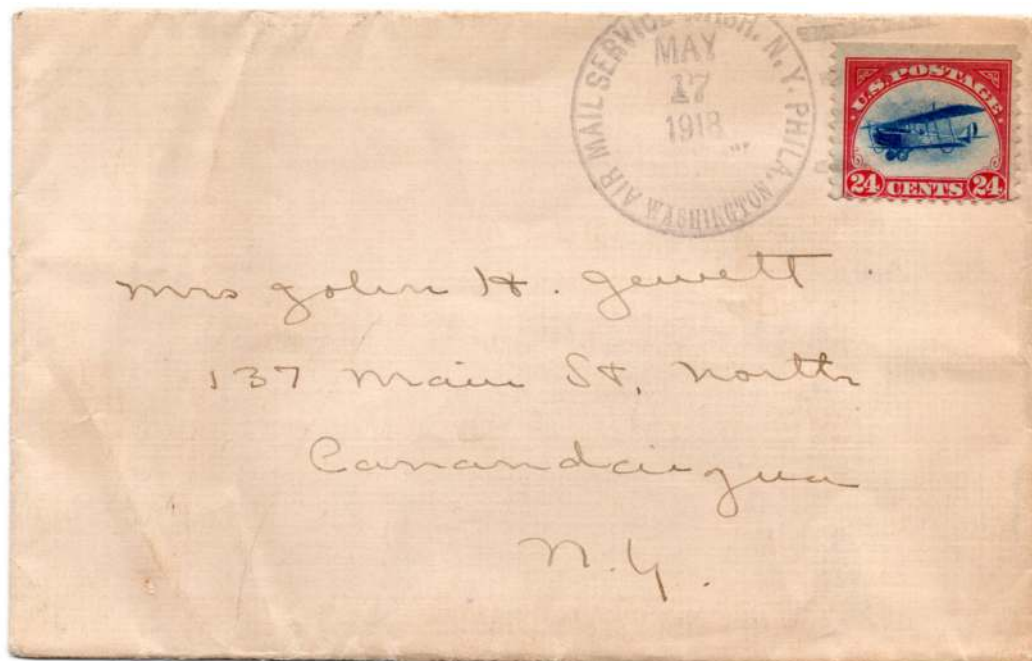
Washington to Philadelphia May 16 "FIRST TRIP" and 9 AM cancel varieties.







Edgerton and Boyle's aircraft being readied for flight.



Lt. George L. Boyle was given a second chance to fly the mail on May 17, 1918. Lt. James C. Edgerton escorted Boyle from Washington to a point 30 to 40 miles north, near Baltimore, Maryland. Boyle signaled Edgerton that he was on course and Edgerton returned to Washington. After Edgerton departed, Boyle lost his bearings, and followed the Chesapeake Bay shoreline to Cape Charles, Virginia, over 200 miles south of his intended destination. He took off again, flying north, but ran out of gas and crashed at the Philadelphia Country Club, damaging his plane. The mail was driven to Bustleton Field and forwarded to various destinations.



**PILOT'S DAILY REPORT.**

Plane No. 38274 Date May 17, 1918  
 Temp. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weather Fair  
 Condition of field Good Lt. J. Edgerton

TRIP.		TIME.	
From—	To—	Started.	Landed.
1. N.Y.	Wash.		
2. Wash.	Wash.	11:30	12:15

Mark "X" after any of the following questions NOT found O. K.  
 Does engine lack power? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine hesitate when accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does engine misfire? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any leaks? Gas \_\_\_\_\_ Oil \_\_\_\_\_ Water \_\_\_\_\_  
 Does carburetor spit? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (a) In normal flight? \_\_\_\_\_  
 (b) In accelerating? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any tendency to turn? Right \_\_\_\_\_ Left X  
 Is balance correct? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Water temperature normal? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any excessive vibration? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Any strange noise? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are instruments recording? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Landing gear \_\_\_\_\_ Tires \_\_\_\_\_ Skids \_\_\_\_\_  
 Structural parts? \_\_\_\_\_ Fuselage \_\_\_\_\_ Wings \_\_\_\_\_

Note.—Use other side for forced landings, time lost, causes of delay, remarks, etc.

Remarks: Left field Potomac Park at 11:30 with Lt. Boyle, accompanying him to within ten miles of a point on course opposite Baltimore. Left field at elevation of 3000'. Left Boyle at 7000'. in offshore breeze blowing. Corrected course ten degrees to West of north.  
 Altitude - 7000'  
 Visibility - Offshore very good  
 Compass course 330°  
 Weather - Clear  
 Lt. Boyle warned I was headed on correct course when I last saw him.

Edgerton Daily Report with notations on back indicating he accompanied Boyle on May 17, 1918 before Boyle's crash.

BELL PHONE, WALNUT 5021 KEYSTONE PHONE, RACE 3622  
 PHILADELPHIA, PA., May 18, 1918. SUPPLY 191

M. S. Aero Mail Service. - Major Fleet.  
 Arcade Building, 14th Street, DU.  
 Washington, D.C.

TO JAMES TESTEN & COMPANY, DR.  
 MOTOR TRUCKING CONTRACTORS

ROOM 310 NEED BUILDING MEMBERS 1213 FILBERT STREET  
 PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

May 18 For use of two 8 ton trucks to haul the wreck of Lieut Boyle's plane from Woodlands park to Bustleton. Lieut Boyle's machine bears number 38274.

Truck #123 8 hours.  
 275 1/2 @ \$5.00 \$137.50

This hauling authorized by phone from your Lieut. Woodland.

Above bill for trucking wrecked plane #38274 from Woodlands park to Bustleton field is correct.

H. F. Culver,  
 1st Lieut. A.S.S.P.C.,  
 Officer in Charge Bustleton Field

Boyle's plane

The invoice above, dated May 18, 1918, indicates that two trucks were required - one for the fuselage and one for the wings - to return Boyle's crashed plane to Bustleton Field.





Bearing both size etiquettes, these May 15 examples were sent from Washington to Philadelphia and from Philadelphia to New York. Located 135 miles from the Belmont Race Track in New York and 90 miles from Washington Polo Field, the Philadelphia Bustleton Field handled all mail successfully flown between New York and Washington, acting as a transfer point.

The cover posted in Washington had been sent back to that field following Lt. Boyle's mishap and was sent on the next day with pilot Edgerton. Lt. H. Paul Culver flew the cover posted in Philadelphia to New York on May 15 without incident.





AERO CLUB OF PENNSYLVANIA  
MORRIS BUILDING  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.



SPECIAL  
AERO MAIL  
NEW YORK  
VIA PHILA. TO  
WASHINGTON

Mr Joseph a. Steinmetz.  
President Aero Club of Pa.  
% Mr Wallace Greene  
Mc Gill Building  
Washington.  
D.C.

AERO CLUB OF PENNSYLVANIA  
MORRIS BUILDING  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.



Miss M. E. McFadden,  
% Aerial Age,  
280 Madison Ave.,  
N.Y. City.

Mailed from Philadelphia, these covers were sent on the May 15 flights bearing the smaller known etiquette alone. The copy to Joseph Steinmetz in Washington has the etiquette reading correctly in flight direction, while the sending to Miss M.E. McFadden should have had the other small etiquette attached, reading "WASHINGTON, VIA PHILA. TO NEW YORK".

Only about 350 cards and covers left Philadelphia for New York (about twenty pounds), while the plane to Washington carried over seven times as much mail.



PERCY MCGRAW MANN  
POSTAGE STAMPS FOR COLLECTIONS  
720 LIBERTY BUILDING  
BROAD AND CHESTNUT STREETS  
Philadelphia, Pa.

SPECIAL  
AERO MAIL  
NEW YORK  
VIA PHILA. TO  
WASHINGTON



*C. H. McBride, Esq.*

*123 The Ontario Apt.*

186103

**REGISTERED**  
**RECEIPT REQUESTED**

*Washington*

*388 D.C.*



Second day service of May 16, from Philadelphia to Washington, the three regular issues paid the 10 cent registration fee. There was no added charge for the requested return receipt, which would be sent back to Mr. Mann after the arrival and signed by C. H. McBride.

On this flight, pilot Max Miller, who was the first civilian to be hired by the U.S. Air Mail Service, got a late start at 5:15 PM but returned minutes later with ignition problems. Lt. James C. Edgerton got approval to continue the delivery, but did not get aloft until 6:30, with sunlight quickly fading.

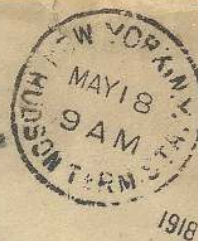
Having wired the Polo Field at Washington in advance, automobiles were lined up at arrival for lighting, although some officers complained about this reckless attempt.

With a near perfect landing, Edgerton went on to say, "What if men never took a chance? Anyhow, the flight fired the imagination of the entire service, morale was boosted — it was worth a gamble."

Consequently, this cover received airmail handling, special delivery, registration, return receipt, two departures, two different pilots, and a nighttime arrival.



ARTHUR DE SOLA MENDES  
142 WHITEHALL BLDG.—BATTERY PLACE  
NEW YORK



Mr. H.F. Colman,

509-7th St., N.W.,

Washington, D.C.

Via U.S. Aerial Mail

The rate period of 24 cents lasted from May 15 thru July 14, 1918, although July 14 was a Sunday and mail was held until July 15. These commercial uses were flown from New York to Washington during that period. Neither has a Washington receiver mark, a common practice in that city, but would have received the special delivery service upon arrival. The June 20 mailing would have been held over until the following day due to the later posting.

Both covers are franked with copies of the new stamp from the first printing, evidenced by the bottom margin part arrow and lower left corner copy with the initials S. De B., the siderographer Samuel DeBinder. (position 91)

Theodore H. Ames  
71 Christopher Street  
Montclair, N. J.



By Aeroplane Mail.

William A. Johnson,

% Fitch, Fox & Brown,

1333-7 Street N.W.,

Washington, D.C.

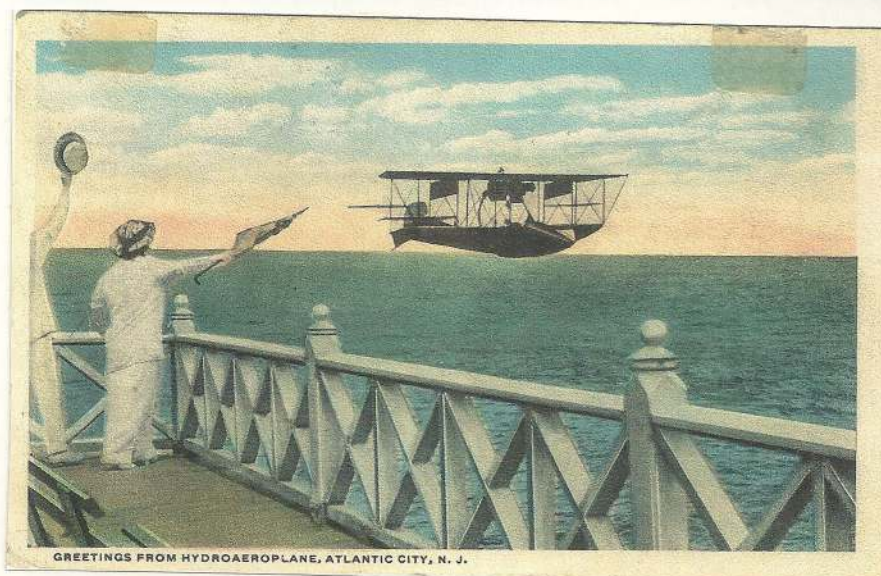




Picture post cards were not sent by the new air mail service at a reduced rate, and this unusual example was franked with thirteen cents extra postage. Posted on Saturday, May 18, 1918, at 4 PM, too late for that days flight, it would be held over until the following Monday, May 20. There were no flights on Sundays.

All three postal issues were applied and cancelled in New York on the 18th. It was flown to Philadelphia on May 20, and finally received in Atlantic City at 6 PM that day. The pasted on newspaper account from May 15 was tolerated, but was, technically, not to be allowed. Perhaps the receiving postal official allowed the attachment because of the excess postage paid.

Actually, the postage costs were not a consideration by the sender, as three cents would have taken the card to Atlantic City (about 125 miles) by train in less time than being held over until May 20 to fly to Philadelphia (about 95 miles) and on to Atlantic City (about 60 miles). Obviously, to have the card "FLY" was desired!



(Reverse side—reduced)



AEROPLANE MAIL



E. M. SPERLING, Esq.

725 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK CITY

With ample postage to cover four ounces weight, this oversize cover was posted on the first Monday of the new airmail service, May 20, 1918. From the first printing, the lower left corner block shows the initials S. De. B. It was flown on May 21, with the New York backstamp reading 5:30 PM.

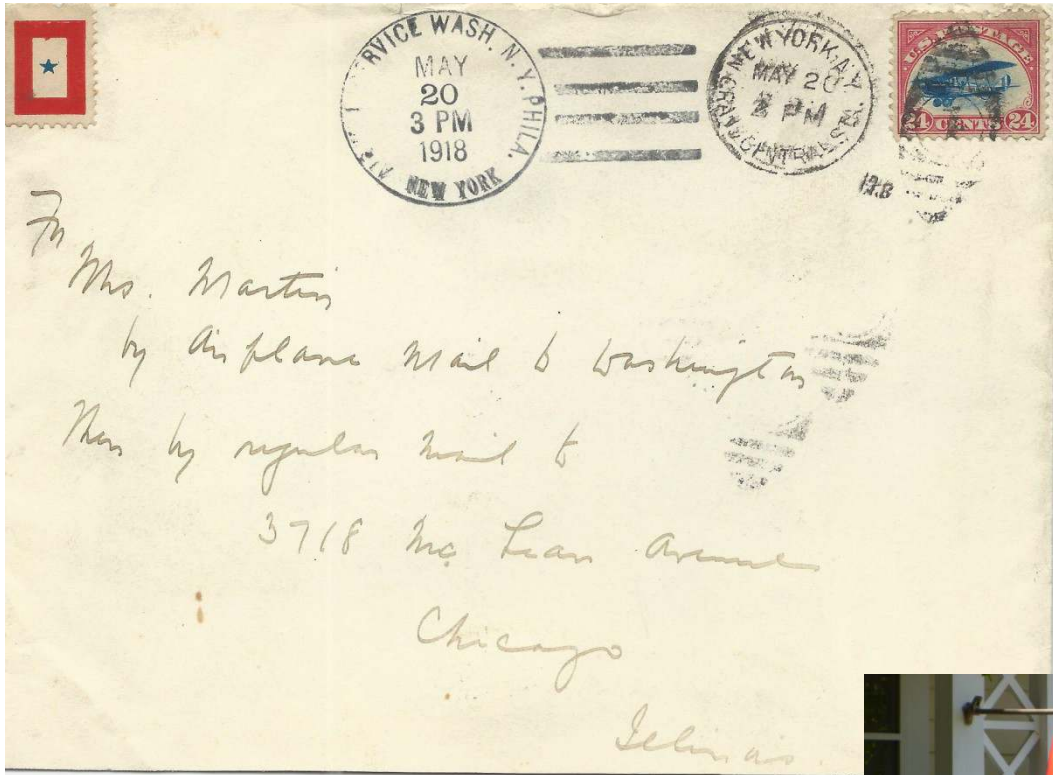
UNITED STATES SHIPPING BOARD  
EMERGENCY FLEET CORPORATION  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.



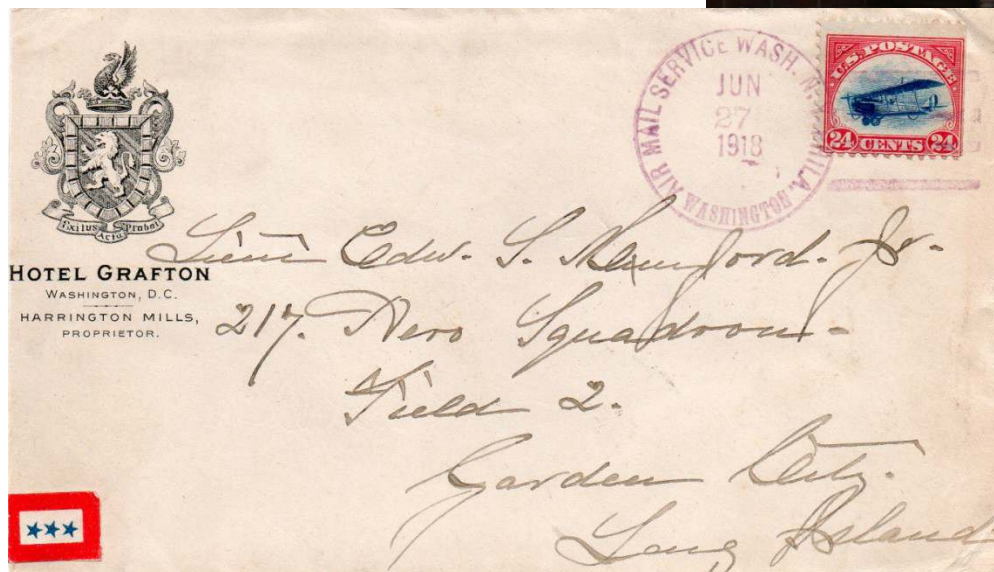
*143482*  
Mr C W Le More  
Admrs 1<sup>st</sup> Breg - N. Y. C.  
Park Ave & 34<sup>th</sup> St  
N.Y.C.

Following the July rate decrease to sixteen cents for the first ounce and six cents each additional ounce the first issue block of four would actually be ample postage for fourteen total ounces plus two cents additional.

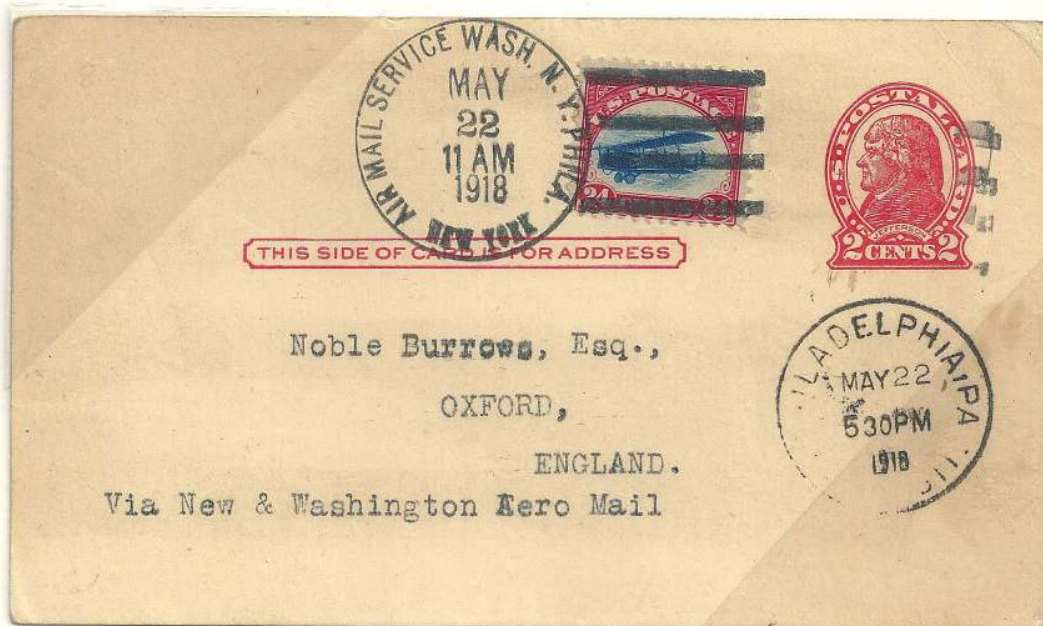




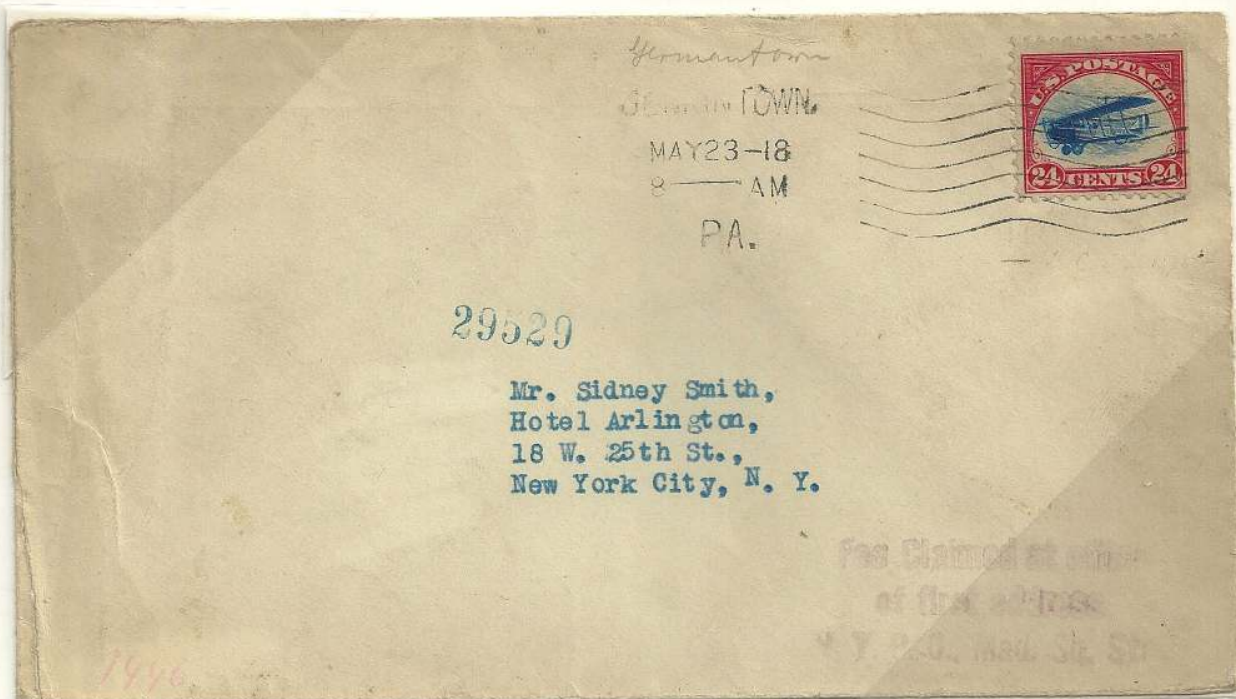
During World War I, red and white flags with blue stars were flown from porches and hung in the windows of homes to indicate the number of loved ones serving in the armed forces. Using similar etiquettes on mail was also widely practiced. This custom is also used today, as seen by the flag at right that flies from the porch in a small town in Maryland.







Overpaid by 2 cents, this postal card was destined for Oxford, England. Flown to Philadelphia, then by train to catch ship service across the Atlantic. The built in special delivery fee of 10 cents would see no service in England.



Posted in Germantown, Pennsylvania May 23, 1918, the sender failed to request airmail service on the cover and it received only surface delivery. Special delivery service was still provided upon arrival in New York.





1328 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK

3540  
29



NOT CLAIMED BY OFFICE  
OF FIRST ADDRESS

Mr. Herrick A. Raynor,  
Real Estate Trust Co.,  
Broad & Chestnut Sts.,  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Only two examples of the popular **FAST** plane variety are recorded on cover, with both presented here. Each is a commercial use during the proper 24 cent rate period, which was reduced to 16 cents effective July 15, 1918.

Not showing as dramatic a vignette shift as many off cover copies, the wing tip does extend beyond the outer frame line. Both show straight edge on top, indicative of first printing, with upper margin having been trimmed away.

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS  
ATLANTIC DIVISION



U. S. GENERAL HOSPITAL, No. 1  
GUNHILL ROAD, THE BRONX, NEW YORK CITY

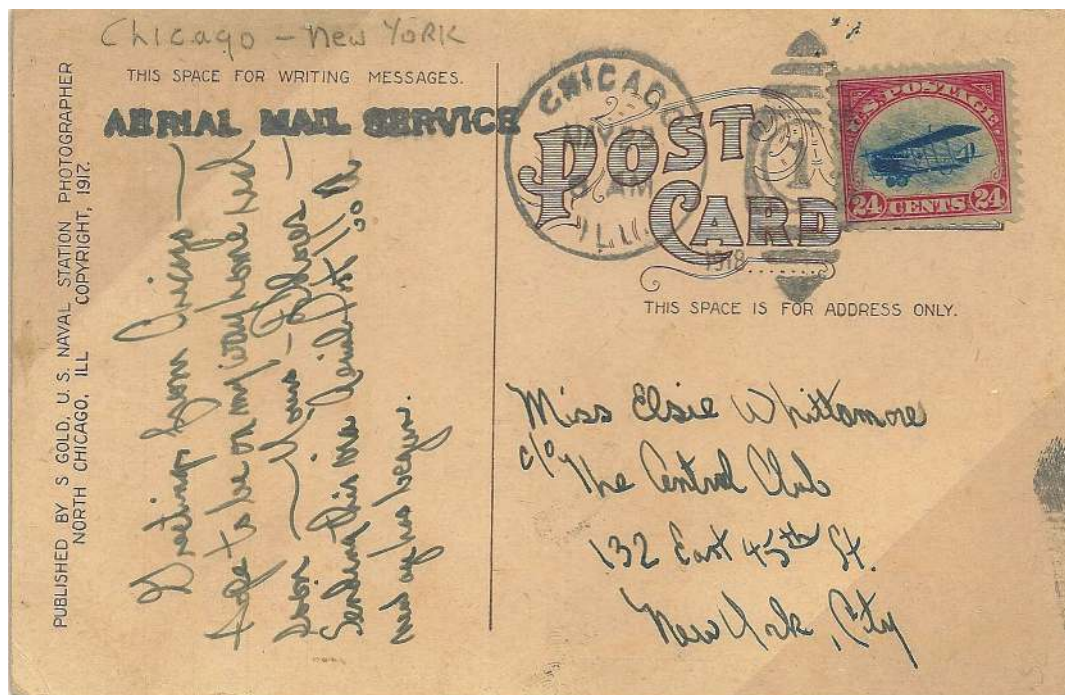


Mr. Austen T. Sackett,  
Field Director, Am. Red Cross,  
U.S.A. Gen. Hosp. # 1,  
Gunhill Road, Bronx, N.Y.

Not Claimed at Office of  
First Address.  
N.Y.P.O. Williams Bridge

3142





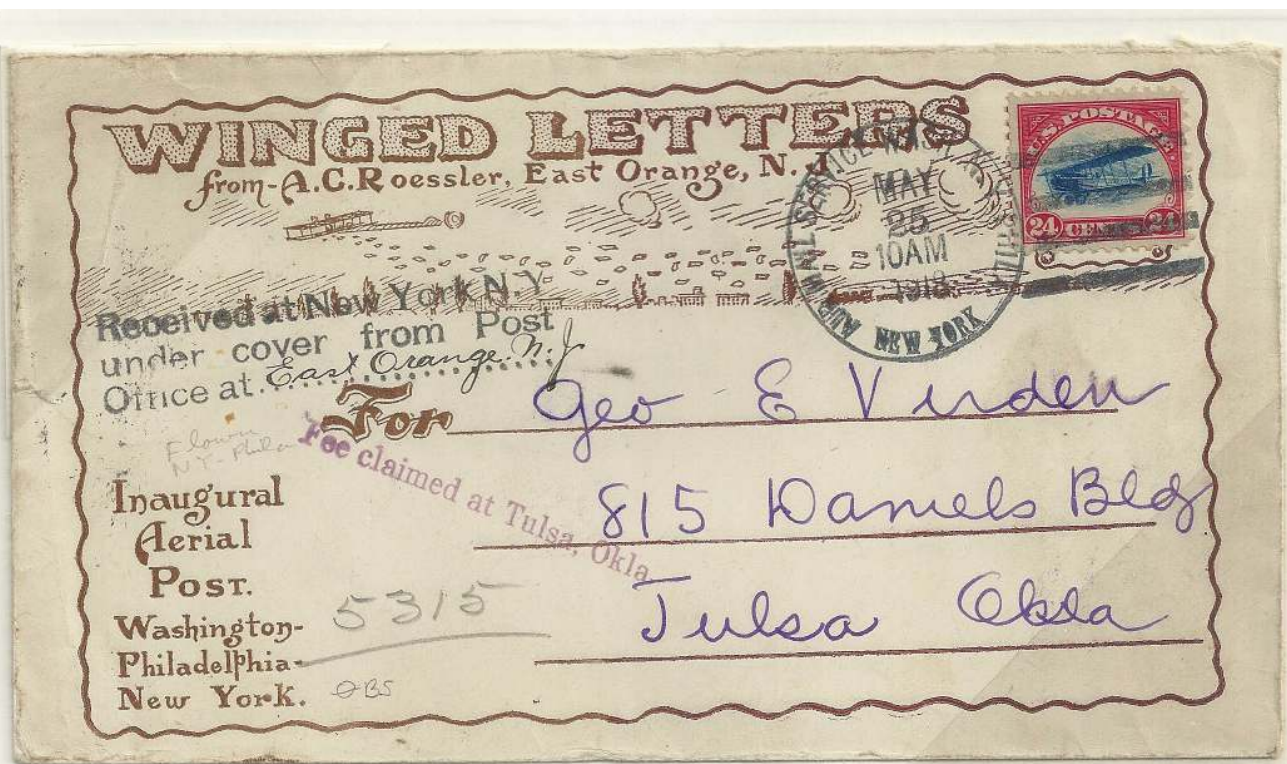
Having received her flying license at age 18 in 1912, and sworn in May 11, 1918 as the first women airmail pilot, Katherine Stinson was asked to fly an experimental route from Grant Park field in Chicago to Garden City, New York on May 17, 1918.

Bad weather postponed the flight until Thursday, May 23, and for a record setting ten hours and ten minutes she continued on, relying heavily on the tracks of the Erie Railroad. She was forced to make a landing outside of Binghamton, New York due to strong headwinds and lack of fuel.

After three attempts she became airborne and on May 31 made it to the Garden City landing strip. She received the Aero Club of America Award which further endeared her as "America's Sweetheart of the Air" and "The Flying Schoolgirl".

Only sixty pieces of mail were carried, with the rate of only three cents because it was an experimental flight. The new 24 cent stamp was the only airmail stamp available and this card is the only one reported with that stamp.





Colorful dealer A. C. Roessler prepared both of these late May, 1918 covers using his famous "Winged Letters" envelopes. Both were posted early enough on each day, May 25 and May 31, to be carried on flights on those days. The Tulsa, Oklahoma example was forwarded by train after arrival in Philadelphia, while the Charleston, South Carolina cover had air mail service to Washington.

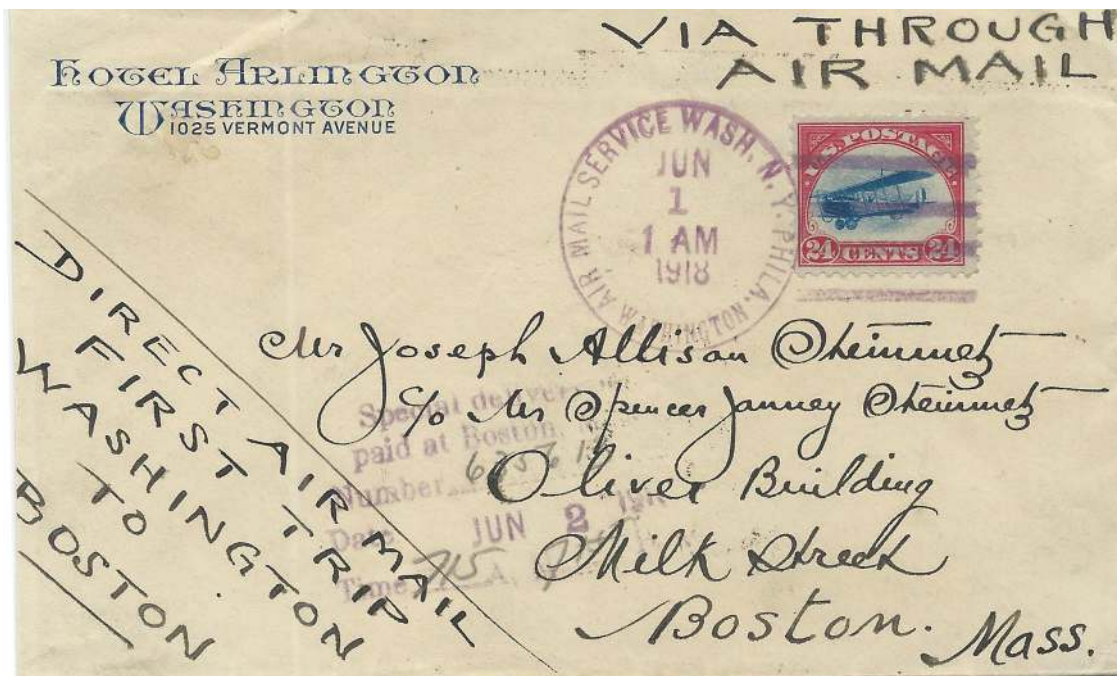
Although not as pronounced a vignette shift as the other varieties, the cover presented below shows a rather strong shift to the right side of the frame, as well as the constant dropped "l" in "PHILA" in the circular date stamp.





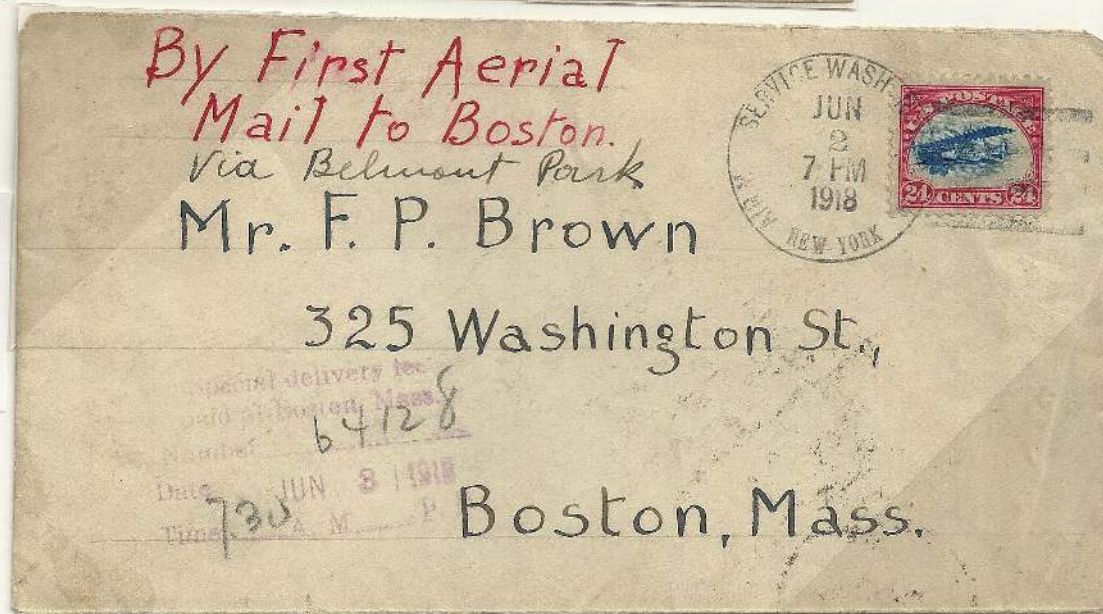


Lt. Stephen Bonsal



An experimental flight was scheduled for June 1, 1918 from Washington, D.C. The flight was to connect with the New York to Boston extension at Aviation Field No. 1 in Mineola, New York. Mail were carried at the 24c rate. The cancel was similar to the May 15 variety with the date changed. Lt. Stephen Bonsal flew the first leg to Philadelphia. Mail was then carried by Lt. E.W. Kilgore on to New York with Lt. Bonsal as his passenger. Upon arrival in New York, mail was dispatched except for items destined for Boston. That mail would be held until June 3 for a planned New York to Boston flight.





Posted with good intentions on the afternoon of June 2, 1918, both examples here were to be flown on the first experimental flight from New York to Boston on June 3. The assigned pilot, Lt. Gustave Vanelle, a French military aviator, was chosen by Postmaster Burleson as a gesture of Franco-American wartime solidarity.

Unfortunately, the plane crashed upon takeoff with Lt. Vanelle suffering minor injuries. Orders were then given to Lt. Torrey Webb to make the flight on June 6, who left Belmont Park at noon in a Curtis R-4. Battling rainstorms and stopping once for directions, he landed safely in Saugus, Massachusetts shortly after 3 PM.

Much of the mail for the June 3 departure was not held over and was sent by rail, including both presented here. This is confirmed by the Boston June 3 special delivery receivers. Neither the 29 cent example nor the 24 cent example was flown.



After several failed attempts by Lt. Gustave Vannelle of the French Army on June 3, an experimental flight was finally completed on June 6 from New York to Boston. Various cancel varieties have been reported.



Two cancel varieties are shown on the same flight cover. The stamp is canceled with the complete New York cancel having all three cities listed without "FIRST TRIP" along with another cancel variety that was applied having the city names removed.



Cancel variety with "WASH. AND PHILA." removed and "BOST" inserted ahead of N.Y.



HEADQUARTERS PHILIPPINE DEPARTMENT,  
MANILA, P. I.

July 22, 1918.

My dear Mr. Woodhouse:-

I return the envelope as requested in your letter of June 3rd.

Please accept my thanks for the very complimentary remarks you were good enough to make about my work for the Aero Club, which I know is more than I deserve, but which it is still very pleasant to receive.

I hope later to do more and better work than in the past for the same cause.

Very sincerely and cordially yours,

*R. K. Evans*

R. K. EVANS.  
Brigadier General, U. S. Army.



Brig. Gen. Robert K. Evans, U. S. A.,  
President, Aero Club of the Philippines,  
Manila, P.I.

c/o Postmaster William F. Murray,  
Boston, Mass.

Special Delivery

This cover, sent to the Philippines, supports the post office regulation stating that the new air mail stamps were valid in the United States, its territories and possessions without additional postage. Cancel variety with "WASH. N.Y. PHILA." removed.





Mr. J. Murray ~~Antels~~  
Bennett Bdg  
Massan St.  
81197  
New York —

Scheduled for a June 8 departure, this experimental flight was delayed until June 11, 1918. Pilot Lt. Torrey H. Webb carried 64 pounds of mail at the current 24 cent rate. Also on board was Boston Postmaster William Murray, who was quoted as saying, "I have had a wonderful day, full of life, action and thrills." However, according to Pilot Webb, "Visibility was zero, and I just skimmed over telephone poles all the way."

Most covers were backstamped in New York on June 11, as above, but the lower example was sent on by rail, arriving in Philadelphia at 1 AM on June 12 and Germantown Station at 4 AM. (Note the "Landed" plane vignette above and position 91 from the original sheet of 100, with initials, below.)

C. F. Schell  
48 Ash St.  
Braintree, Mass.

By Aero Mail



Mrs. J. W. Bramwell  
4931 Rubicon Ave  
Germantown  
Pa.

9074



Harry A. Carpenter  
Department of the Interior.  
BUREAU OF MINES.



Mr. James M. Glass  
Washington Junior High School  
Clifford Ave.,  
Rochester  
N.Y.

6439

FEE CLAIMED BY OFFICE  
OF FIRST ADDRESS

Official mail was not exempt from the air mail fee, if such service was desired. This June 10, 1918, sending from the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Mines was sent from Washington to New York, then on to Rochester by train. The **FEE CLAIMED.....** refers to the special delivery service, included with the postage.

Form 14-16

WAR INDUSTRIES BOARD

WASHINGTON

Received by GSB at

Brookfield Center, Conn.,

on Saturday, July 13, 1918,

at 10:40 a.m.

Mr. George L. Bryan,  
Brookfield Center  
Connecticut



OFFICIAL MAIL  
NALTY 24 CENTS 24 E. \$300.

Posted within several days of the new reduced rate (16 cents), this official letter from the War Industries Board was sent as a souvenir "from the clouds". Lacking any backstamps, it would have flown to New York, then by train to Connecticut.



23980  
Mr. H. H. H. L.  
The New York Label & Box Works  
511-519 East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street  
2570-518 E. 73<sup>rd</sup> St. New York.

A firm part of American culture during the late 19th and early 20th Century, black bordered (mourning) covers generally brought news of a death or condolence to the loved ones. This unusual example, posted June 28, 1918, was flown from Washington to New York.

WAR INDUSTRIES BOARD  
WASHINGTON

B. H. BARUCH  
CHAIRMAN

IN YOUR REPLY  
REFER TO

July 10, 1918.

Dear Mr. Bryan

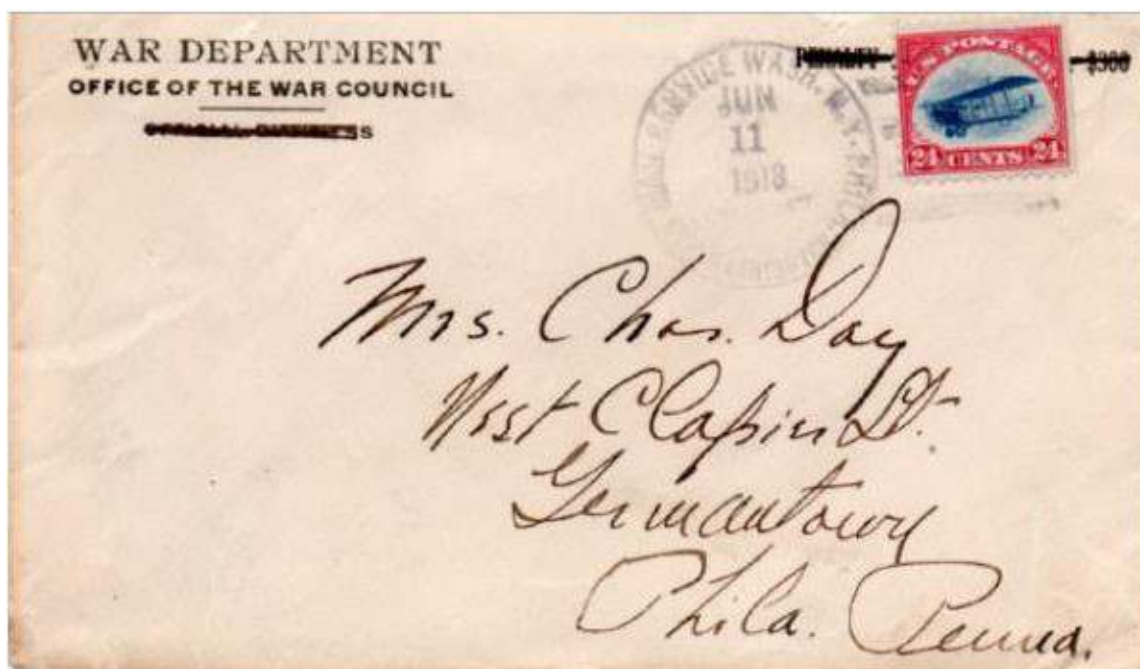
I have just heard of that  
wonder scrap book of yours and that if any  
the one thing I don't lack is a scrapbook  
from the clouds so I am giving myself the  
pleasure of adding this little note to  
contribute to your collection

Sincerely

Brookfield Center

The beautifully hand written letter enclosed in  
the War Industries Board cover. (reduced 50%)





When used for other than government business, users of penalty envelopes were required to affix the same amount of postage as for other (civilian) correspondence. Note that the bottom cover originated from the office of the Second Assistant Postmaster General, which was responsible for the Air Mail Service.





AIR MAIL  
NEW YORK TO  
COLUMBIA COUNTRY CLUB  
WASHINGTON  
— JUNE 15, 1918 —



*Mr. Fred McLeod,  
Columbia Country Club,  
Washington, D.C.*

As part of a Red Cross benefit to raise funds for the war victims, one hundred covers prepared by the Aero Club of America were dropped on the Columbia Country Club at Chevy Chase, Maryland, on June 15, 1918.

Leading golfers of the period were on hand, including Walter Hagan, and the covers were flown on the normal daily run from New York to Washington, then transferred to a special plane. With the approval of Second Assistant Postmaster General Otto Praegar, Captain Adolf C. Weidenbach flew them to the Country Club and from about fifty feet deposited them on the eighteenth green.

Young ladies gathered the mail and delivered them to the members present for a cost of \$1.24, which included airmail postage and one dollar for the Red Cross. Many were discarded, with only five examples presently recorded, several lacking the "Thank You" card enclosure. All examples have the Red Cross Label on the reverse.

Captain Weidenbach, who changed his name to Charles Andrew Willoughby, had a distinguished yet controversial career, including Chief of Intelligence under General MacArthur during World War II.

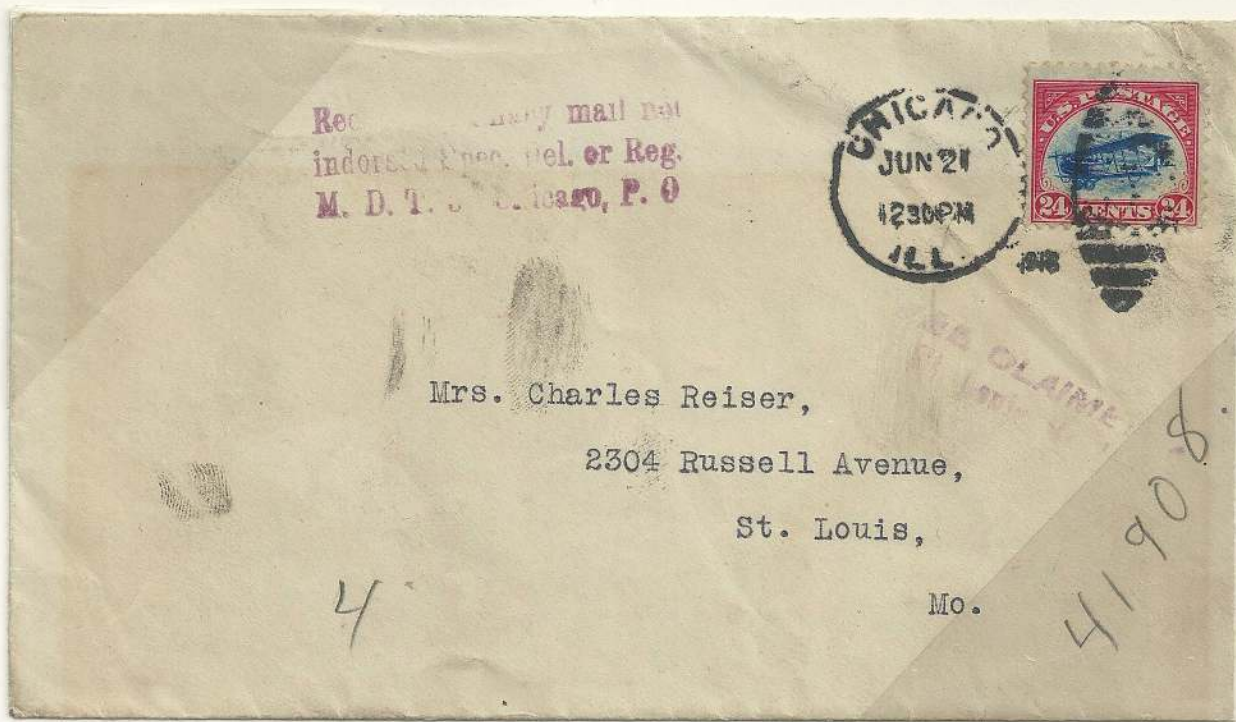
*Mr. Fred McLeod*

PERMIT ME, PLEASE, IN THE NAME OF THE WOODLEY PARK  
AUXILIARY, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CHAPTER, AMERICAN RED CROSS,  
TO THANK YOU FOR A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR CAUSE MADE TODAY  
THROUGH THE AIRPLANE MAIL SERVICE.

MRS. HENRY B. SOULE,  
CHAIRMAN.

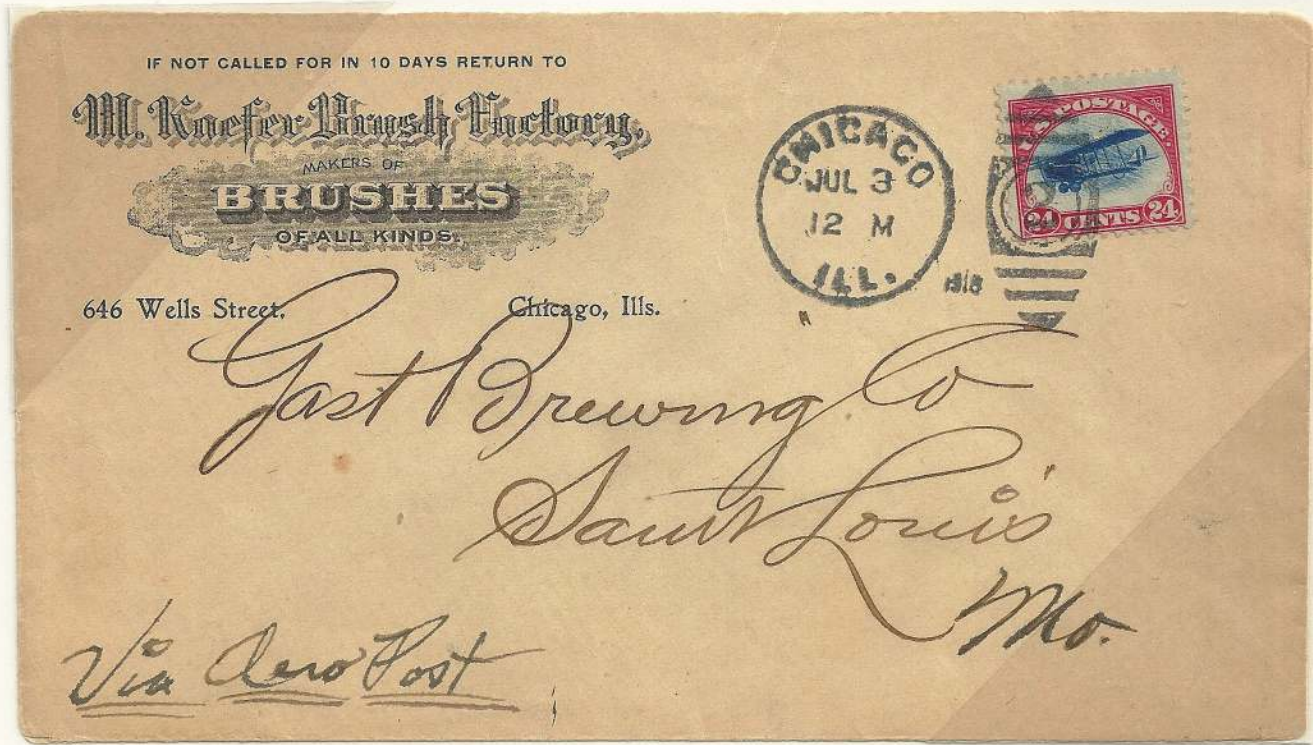
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
JUNE 15, 1918.





The initial success of the new airmail prompted the Post Office officials to talk of future routes almost immediately, and not only the aviation press, but several dealers of the period "jumped the gun" in anticipation.

Some enthusiastic readers took these notices and ads to heart, particularly on a Chicago to St. Louis route, and posted mail for that service, which in the months following the May 15 flights, did not yet exist. The airmail rate was still 24 cents, but no such service to St. Louis would exist until August of 1920.







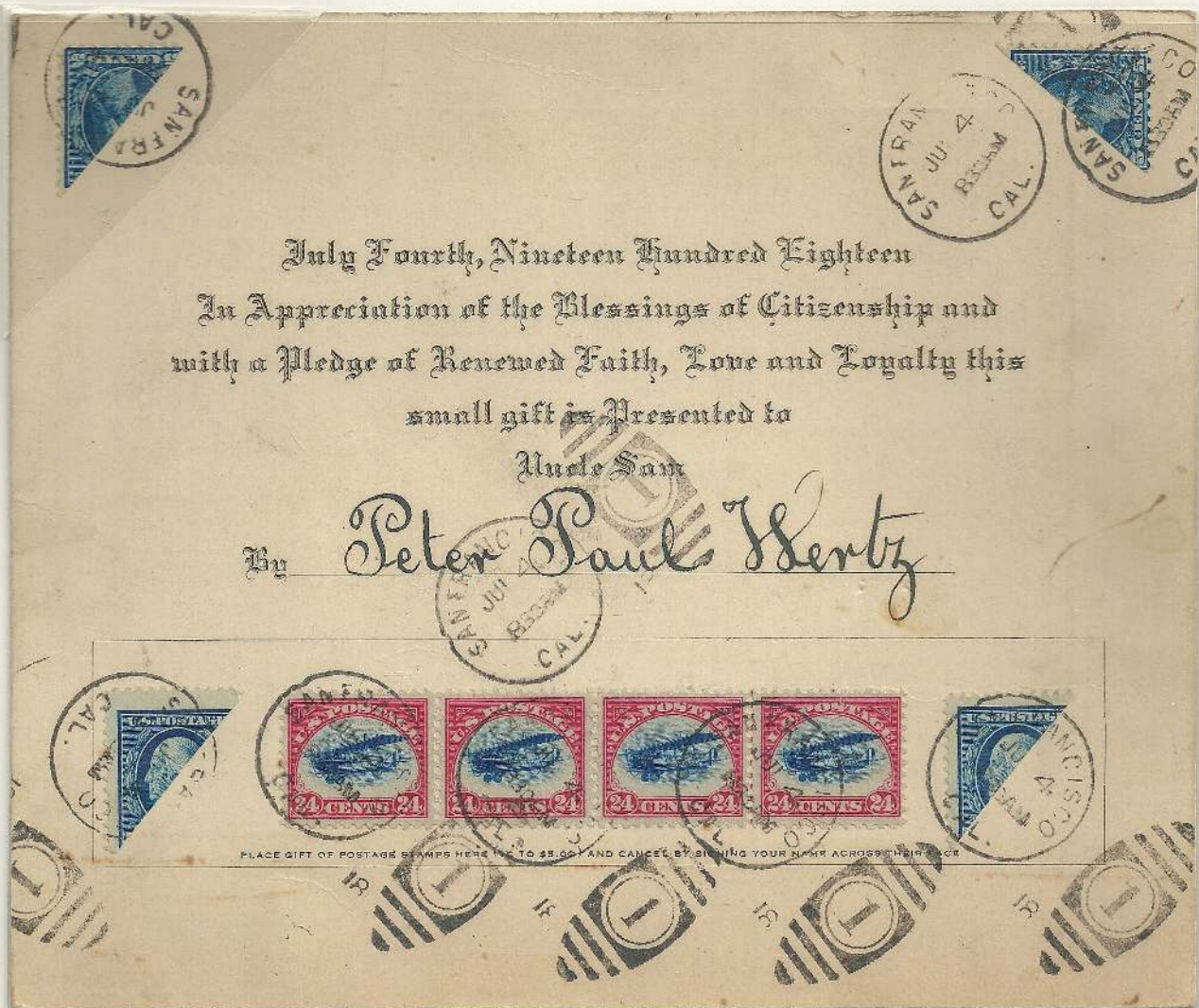
The new 24 cent **JENNY** was the first postal issue ever to have a mandatory dual service, with both air mail and special delivery. Many covers prepared for the early May flights of 1918 were inspired by stamp collectors and those who desired mail which had been sent "Via Aeroplane", notwithstanding the high postage cost over ordinary surface mail (three cents plus special delivery, if desired).

On rare occasion the sender also desired registration, at the added fee of ten cents, as displayed earlier on a May 15 First Flight cover. The Post Office had issued a special stamp for that purpose in 1911. Although discontinued in May of 1913, use was allowed until supplies were exhausted.

The cover presented here, mailed from New York to Washington on June 4, 1918, is the sole example noted where the desired registry fee was paid by a copy of that 1911 issue during the 24 cent air mail rate period. Reverse markings include a June 5 circular hour "clock", with arrow showing a 5 PM delivery. Return receipt was not requested, although that was a free service at the time.







THE SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, JULY 4, 1776  
 In Commemoration of the 142nd Anniversary  
 of the United States of America  
 Compliments of Savings Department of  
 Anglo-California Trust Company, Bank, San Francisco

A most unusual use of the 24 cent **JENNY** airmail, along with two 5 cent regular issues, in actually defacing unused postal issues as a patriotic gesture. The Anglo-California Trust Company, Bank of San Francisco provided these patriotic cards to their patrons on July 4, 1918, and prompted them to attach postal issues as a souvenir. Mr. Wertz went the extra step and, instead of signing across the stamps, had them cancelled at a local post office on that date.

The \$1.06 postage applied therefore received no mailing service, so even more proceeds would be produced for those patriotic needs, as the Great War required.



**THE PLAINFIELD STAMP CLUB**



Meets every Saturday  
night at 313 W. Front  
St. Visitors welcome.  
come and get acquainted



Rev. G. Julius Hoppner

204 E. Oak St.

Norristown

Pa.

Aeroplane  
Service

claimed by owner for  
first address

Two late uses of the 24 cent stamp, while the rate was still in effect. Both mailed July 11, 1918, the same day the new airmail stamp (16 cent green) was to go on sale, with the reduced rate beginning July 15. Both were sent surface mail only, even though "Aeroplane Service" was requested on the 26 cent overpaid example, which was mailed too late in the day for the New York departure and went by train.

The Falmouth, Massachusetts cover shows a strong vignette shift to the upper right.

W. H. Butterfield  
Falmouth, Mass.



Mr. Roland B. Pendergast,  
1916 Biltmore Street,  
Washington, D.C.

Please forward,



OFFICE OF THE  
ENGINEER COMMISSIONER,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

BY  
AIRPLANE



Prof. Frank P. McKibben,  
817 St. Lukes Pl.,  
So. Bethlehem, Pa.

FEE CLAIMED BY OFFICE  
OF FIRST ADDRESS.

Both of these commercial mailings were posted on July 14, 1918, and early enough for the afternoon flight from Washington. However, July 14 was a Sunday, and no flights took place on that day of the week. Also, the new and reduced rate to 16 cents per ounce was to take effect the next day, July 15, 1918.

Consequently, these two covers were held over until the flight on Monday, July 15, and actually overpaid the rate by 8 cents. Special delivery was still included, being built in to the new fee, at the same rate of 10 cents per sending.

The new 16 cent green airmail stamp had gone on sale on July 11, in preparation for the new rate, but the general public was not always given ample notice.

**THE NEW WILLARD**  
PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, 14<sup>TH</sup> AND F STREETS  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

F. S. HIGHT, PRESIDENT.

WRITING ROOM

*Via Airplane*



14557  
Number  
Date JUL 16 1918  
Time 1 P.M.  
Mr. W. O. Hastings  
Co. Marden, Orth & Hastings Corp.  
225 Purchase St.  
Boston, Mass.



# American Air Mail Society

Founded 1923

*Dedicated to the documentation, preservation, advancement and promotion of aerophilately worldwide through education, study, research and services.*



The American Air Mail Society (AAMS) is the second oldest aerophilatelic society in the world, presently with about 800 members world-wide. It is a non-profit organization, qualified under the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code as tax-exempt.

The Society promotes aerophilately through its publications, member auctions and an annual meeting held at major local and national stamp shows. It also holds a major airmail show every four or five years at the American Philatelic Society headquarters in Bellefonte, PA.

One most important contribution by the Society has been it's set of the American Air Mail Catalogue which covers all areas of aerophilately.

The AAMS is a member of the International Federation of Aerophilatelic Societies (FISA). **AAMS Membership & Benefits** AAMS membership is open to all who have an interest in or passion for air mail or aerophilately. Membership includes a subscription to the Airpost Journal, the official monthly publication of the American Air Mail Society.

Acknowledgment: Thanks to the following AAMS members for their contributions to this presentation; A.D. Jones, Joe Kirker, James O'Bannon and Pat Walters.

