

COMMERCIAL ZEPPELIN MAIL

1928 - 1937

Purpose - Present a thorough coverage of commercial zeppelin mail illustrating the development and postal history of the Graf Zeppelin and Hindenburg transatlantic airmail services.

Importance - The zeppelins flew scheduled transatlantic airmail for five years during which heavier-than-air craft could not yet fly across the Atlantic on a regular basis. The extensive display of commercial mail seen in this exhibit shows the contribution these airships made to an important chapter of airmail postal history.

Selection Criteria - Genuine business, personal, and passenger mail carried by the Graf Zeppelin and Hindenburg is shown exclusively - No example prepared by or for a collector or dealer is included.

Coverage - Zeppelin flown letter mail (letters and post cards), printed matter, commercial papers, sample merchandise, parcel wrappers, post office documents, and passenger mail - Postal history aspects are emphasized: routes, rates, markings, mail handling, and the methods of dispatch.

Special Features - An extensive selection of commercial foreign dispatches, a range of special services used in connection with zeppelin flights - express mail, pneumatic mail, Hamburg streetcar mail - incorrect and experimental cachets - disruptions in the commercial routes because of revolution and civil war.



Representative Business Mail Flown by Graf Zeppelin to South America

Personal Study - German Post Office Bulletins, U. S. Postal Bulletins, and other contemporary sources were researched to elucidate the covers shown - Undocumented postal procedures and rates were analyzed using the commercial covers themselves as primary documents.

Scarcity - Only a small portion of the material available today is non-philatelic - This scarce commercial mail is increasingly in demand and difficult to acquire.

The most significant items are flagged with a ribbon in the colors of the Zeppelin Company.

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Preparations for Commercial Zeppelin Service

In 1928 and 1929 Graf Zeppelin long-distance flights demonstrated the zeppelin potential for transoceanic service. Flights in 1930 and 1931 surveyed and tested the commercial route to South America, which opened in 1932.

Demonstration Flights 1928 to 1929 - The Graf Zeppelin was built to show the airship's potential as an intercontinental carrier - Flights across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans proved that the zeppelin could carry mail and passengers over long distances much more reliably and comfortably than the airplanes then available.

For the convenience of passengers, a post office was opened on board the zeppelin in 1929.

Survey and Trial Flights to South America 1930 to 1931 - A flight to Brazil and the United States in 1930 surveyed potential transatlantic routes - Three trial flights to Brazil in late 1931 perfected the routes and procedures for the commercial service which opened in March 1932.

Mail Carried on the Early Zeppelin Flights - Nearly all mail on early flights was created by stamp collectors or dealers - This chapter shows several kinds of scarce non-philatelic mail flown by the airship before commercial service began.

Passenger Mail - Postcards written on board with full messages describing the flight.

Commercial Advertizing - Businesses taking advantage of the well-publicized flights to promote their products or make international contacts.

Non-Philatelic Personal Mail - Non-collector messages sent by zeppelin to relatives or friends across the ocean, sometimes celebrating a birthday or wedding.

Commercial Airmail - Business or personal correspondence flown by chance, even though the German Post Office not yet contracted the zeppelin to fly normal letter mail.

1928 - FIRST LONG DISTANCE FLIGHT OF THE GRAF ZEPPELIN

Flew overnight over Germany, the Netherlands, and Great Britain.

Zeppelin	Friedr.	Friedr.
	2 Oct	3 Oct

News Reporter Lady Drummond Hay - Passenger postcard written on board.

"It will be an experience to sleep on the Zep tonight!"

Dropped by Zeppelin Officials at Würzburg
The post office on board was not open yet, so mail sent by passengers was dropped at the cities along the route.

Postage RM .15 post card surface rate paid before drop.





Leipzig Trade Fair Promotion - Postage RM 2.00 transatlantic zeppelin card.

Zeppelin Lakehurst Friedr.
29 Oct 1 Nov

RETURN FLIGHT

Photocopy of reverse



Commercial Advertising - Cotton broker in Texas sends greetings to a cotton mill in Germany - U.S. zeppelin post card rate 50¢ airmail, 3¢ surface.

The 4900 mile route was the same distance as Brazil, so the flight has been seen as a precursor to the commercial flights to South America - The on-board post office first opened on this flight.



First Drop Mail from the On-Board Post Office - Written by passenger Joseph Joos at 10:30 on the first morning of the flight, posted on board, and dropped by zeppelin officials over Rome - Postage RM 1.00, the post card rate for this flight.



Card to Athens with On-Board Postmark - Non-philatelic personal message to a German acquaintance at a small business in the Greek capital - One of three known items with the on-board postmark sent to Athens - Note: Formerly listed as Athens drop mail, recent research indicates delivery by surface from Er Ramle to Athens instead.

Flight turned back because of motor failures - Mail held for successful flight on 1 August.



On-board postmark applied at Friedrichshafen

Red cachet for delayed flight

Non-Philatelic Card with Long Personal Message - German mail had to be sent under cover to Friedrichshafen, where the on-board postmark was struck - Postage RM 2.00 transatlantic card.



Austria - Personal Message between Family Members - Postal agreements allowed the zeppelin postage to be paid in Austrian currency - Postage 3.50 schilling zeppelin transatlantic card, .24 surface card.



Mourning Letter Accepted at Frankfurt against Regulations - Should have been sent under cover to Friedrichshafen instead - Postage RM 4.00 transatlantic letter.

1929 RETURN FLIGHT FROM NORTH AMERICA



Passenger Mail Describing Flight - Posted on Board - Postage RM 2.00 transatlantic post card.

For the return flight, only mail posted on board received the blue German cachet for the America Flight - Other mail received the purple American cachet for the Flight around the World.

Non-stop flights across Siberia, the Pacific, and the Atlantic further demonstrated the zeppelin capacity to cover great distances in the proposed commercial service.



Flown across Siberia and the Pacific Ocean - Long personal message covers both sides of the card - Postage RM 4.00 for zeppelin card from Friedrichshafen to Los Angeles.



Birthday Greetings from Japan - Flown across the Pacific to Los Angeles - Postage 1.00 yen airmail, .06 yen surface card.



Family Greetings Flown across the Atlantic Ocean - Postage 60¢ zeppelin airmail, 5¢ air from Chicago to New York.



Passenger Mail from the Last Leg of the Flight - Posted on board the leg from Lakehurst to Friedrichshafen - RM 4.00 letter rate paid in error - Postage RM 2.00 transatlantic card.

Written by Dr. Jeronimo Megias, the Spanish observer on the flight, as the zeppelin passed over the coast of Spain.

SURVEY AND TRIAL FLIGHTS TO SOUTH AMERICA

1930 Survey Flight - Triangular route to Brazil, the United States and back to Germany.

Outbound flight explored the zeppelin's ability to cross the South Atlantic and tested mooring facilities at Seville and Recife - Brief stop at Rio to exchange passengers and mail.

Return flight via the U. S. confirmed Graf Zeppelin was too small for regular service in North Atlantic.

1931 Trial Flights to Recife. Prototypes to perfect the routes and procedures for the 1932 commercial service.

German Post Office continued the high postage rates and cumbersome procedures used for earlier collector-oriented flights.

Brazilian Post Office promoted these flights as carriers of commercial mail to Europe.

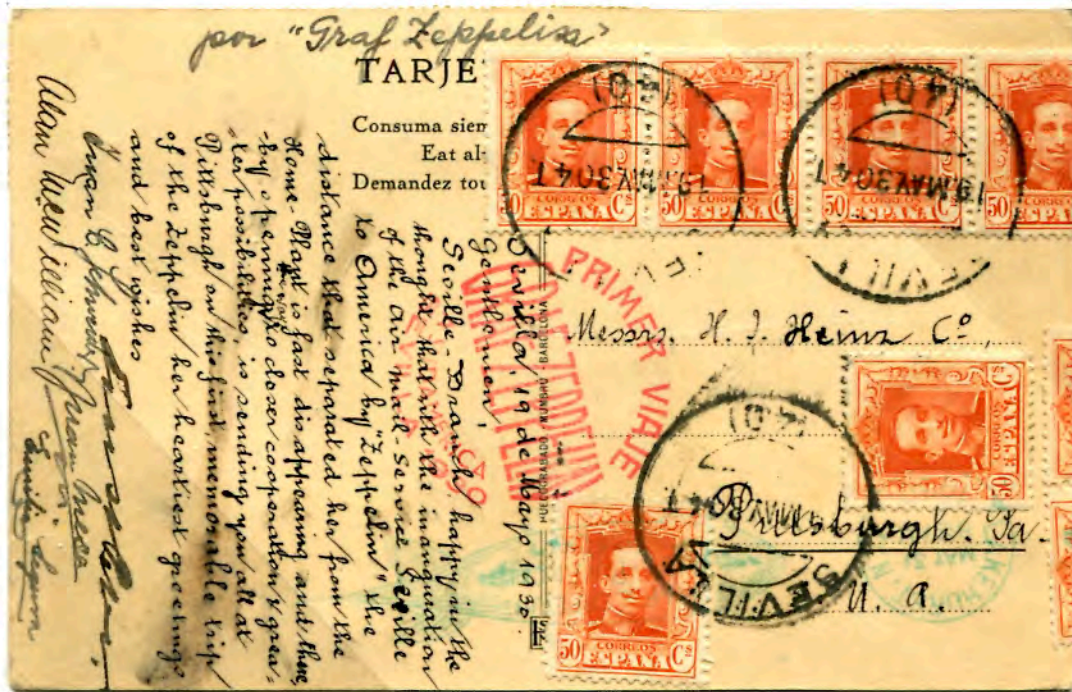


Netherlands Commercial Letter - From the Amsterdam branch of a Brazilian coffee exporter to the home office in Santos - Postage 2.20 gulden for 20 grams zeppelin airmail, .12½ surface.

A rare example of business mail carried before the commercial service opened.



Commercial Advertising - Card promoting the Leipzig Trade Fair sent to a potential client in Brazil - Postage RM 2.00 transatlantic post card.



Spain - Mail loaded on zeppelin during stop at Seville - Greetings from the Seville office of the H. J. Heintz to the company headquarters in Pittsburgh - Postage 8 pesetas zeppelin airmail postcard to Lakehurst (5 pesetas on back).



Brazil - Personal Message from Zeppelin Passenger - Post card purchased on the outbound flight and mailed after the landing at Recife - De facto postage to Europe for this flight was 5\$000 zeppelin airmail, 300 surface.



Argentina - From a German Expatriate - Personal message to her uncle in Baden-Baden - Flown on airplane connecting flight from Buenos Aires to Recife - Postage 1.50 pesos airmail, .05 surface.



Personal Message on Card to Germany - A couple send best wishes by Graf Zeppelin "From your new Country Estate, after a wonderful dinner" to a friend in care of Romanoff Caviar in Hamburg.



Personal Letter from Same Correspondence - Addressed in same handwriting to an associate of the Romanoff Caviar Company in Hamburg - Red "Mit Luftpost" marking for delivery by airplane to Hamburg after zeppelin arrival.

Non-philatelic use of \$1.30 Graf Zeppelin stamp to pay zeppelin letter rate to Europe.

Three flights to Recife in autumn 1931 tested the proposed commercial route further. At Recife mail was exchanged with local airlines for transport within South America.



Passenger Mail - Post card written and posted on board by passenger Herbert Siebel. Postage RM 2.00 for transatlantic zeppelin card.

FIRST 1931 RETURN FLIGHT



Mail from Member of the Ground Crew - "During the landing maneuver I functioned as interpreter. I am still hoarse from shouting." - Postage 2\$500 zeppelin airmail, 200 surface card.



Birthday Greetings to Buenos Aires - Long personal message from two well-wishers - Postage RM 2.00 for transatlantic zeppelin card.

Postage Due on Arrival - Receiver was charged 10 centavos postage due for the *poste restante* (general delivery) fee - Blue letters "CW" are the initials of the addressee.

SECOND 1931 RETURN FLIGHT

	Rio	Recife	Friedr.
Condor	24 Sep	25 Sep	
Zeppelin		25 Sep	28 Sep



Personal Mail Routed via Condor-Zeppelin Airmail Service - Condor airline connection from Rio to Recife - Postage 7\$500 airmail (3 x 2\$500 per five grams), 400 surface.

Reduced Rates for Special Classes of Mail

Special classes of mail were allowed on zeppelin flights for the first time on this flight - Printed matter, business papers, samples without value, and mixed sendings were carried at reduced zeppelin rates.

DRUCKSACHE

Per Graf Zeppelin
3. Süd Amerika Fahrt



Herrn J. G o e d h a r t ,

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BUENOS AIRES
Argentinien

Reduced Rate for Printed Matter (Drucksache) - Business mail sent from a Dutch supplier of German diesel motors - Weight 50-100 grams - Black crayon "2" indicates double weight - Postage RM 2.00 = 2 x 1.00 per 50 grams.

„ROLLO“ N.V.
ALEXANDERSTRAAT 10
DEN HAAG.

Return address on back.



Carrier Cover Endorsed "Zum Südamerikaflug" (For the South America Flight) - In 1931 German zeppelin airmail had to be forwarded under cover to Friedrichshafen or Berlin to be flown to South America - Domestic postage .15 letter, .30 registration.



Uruguay - Business Letter to a Company in Germany - Boxed marking shows weight and airmail fee - Weight 4 grams - Postage .45 airmail, .08 surface.

Heavy Letter Weighing Fifteen Times Single Weight.



Multiple Copies of Zeppelin Overprinted Stamps - Weight 70 to 75 grams - Zeppelin postage 37\$500 = 15 times 2\$500 per 5 grams - Surface postage 400 for first 20 grams plus 3 times 200 each additional 20 grams was overpaid as 4 times 400 = 1600.

For accounting purposes in Brazil, airmail fees were paid with separate stamps.

Registered mail was allowed for the first time on the third 1931 flight.



Brazil - Registered Mail from Machine Manufacturing Company - Postage 5\$000 airmail (2 x 2\$500 per 5 grams), 1\$000 registration, 400 surface.



Argentina - Registered to Germany - Generic zeppelin cachet added on arrival in Germany on Argentine registered mail only - Postage 1.08 pesos airmail = 6 x .18 per gram, .20 registration, .12 surface.