

End of Zeppelin Airmail

In 1937 the zeppelins lost the South Atlantic letter mail franchise to Deutsche Lufthansa - The crash of the Hindenburg in May ended all commercial zeppelin mail and passenger service.

FIRST TO THIRD 1937 SOUTH AMERICA FLIGHTS

Permanent Loss of Letter Mail Franchise to South America - The airmail franchise for South America was lost to Deutsche Lufthansa in January - The zeppelins carried only heavy items and mail posted on board during their 1937 flights to Brazil.



Passenger Card Mailed on a "Non-Postal" Flight.

Written on first Graf Zeppelin outbound flight - Postmarked on return flight which delivered it to Germany.

Postage RM 1.25 airmail, .15 surface card.

Cachets not used on board in 1937.

Flown by both the Hindenburg and the Deutsche Lufthansa Catapult Service.

Posted by a passenger on board first Hindenburg return flight to Frankfurt.

Addressed to Uruguay and flown on the next DLH catapult flight to South America.

Rubber cachet "☆" for 116th DLH catapult crossing, arriving 5 April in Montevideo.

The Frankfurt post office should have cancelled the stamps, but failed to do so.



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DESTRUCTION OF THE HINDENBURG



Post Card Recovered from the Wreck at Lakehurst - Officially sealed and delivered by hand to Carl Schuecker in South Bend, Indiana - Portion of personal message visible at left.

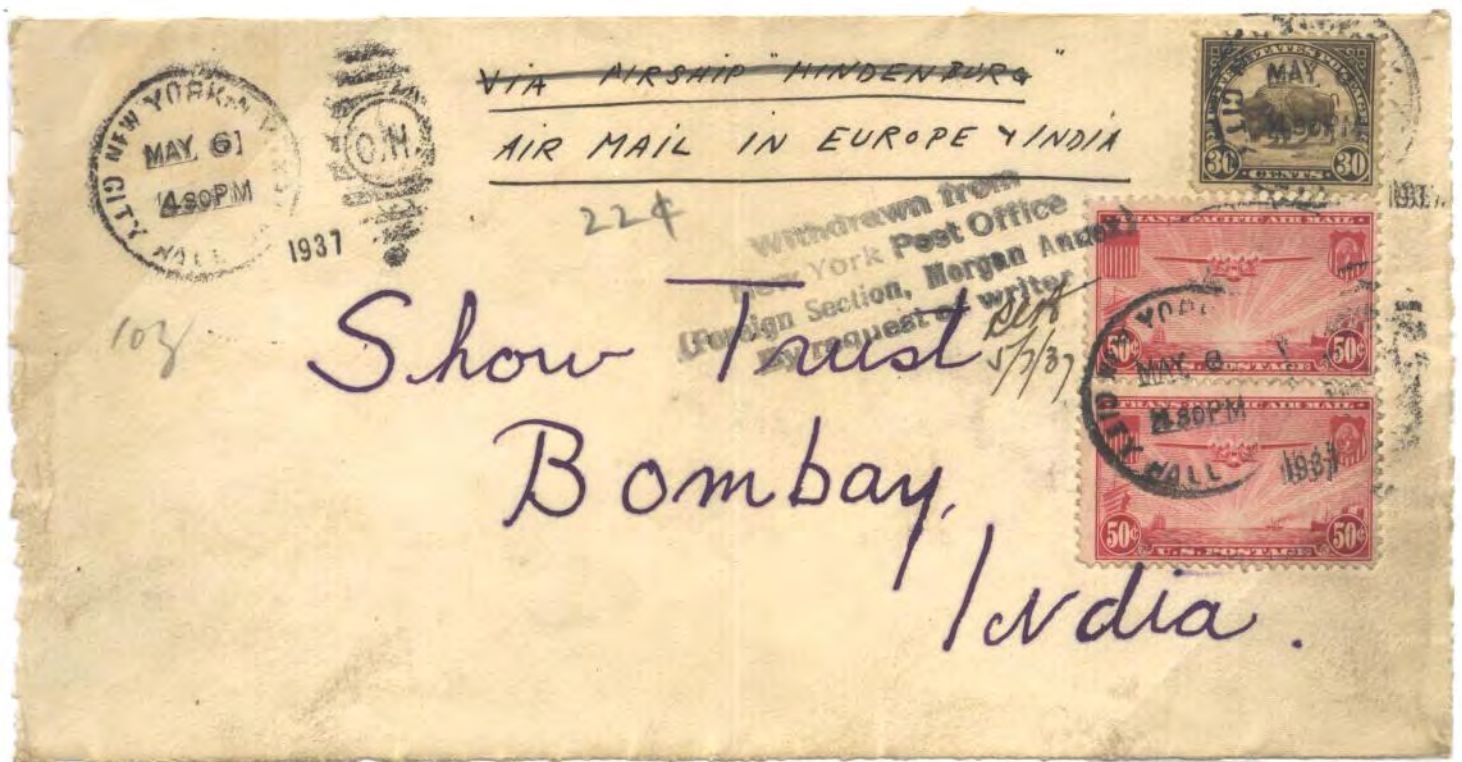
The card was part of the last consignment of commercial zeppelin mail, since the loss of the airship led the German government to cancel all further scheduled zeppelin flights.

Postage Due not Collected - Insufficient postage paid, RM .60 instead of .65 = .50 zeppelin airmail, .15 surface card. Marked "T 10c" (Taxe 10 gold centimes), equivalent to U.S. 2¢ due. The amount due does not appear to have been collected.

No Return Flight because of Hindenburg Disaster - Most mail for the return flight was sent by ocean steamers to Europe - Senders could choose to have their mail withdrawn instead.



Dispatched on Steamer S.S. American Farmer - Routed by Hindenburg and postmarked on the morning of the crash - Postage paid 40¢ zeppelin.



Letter to India Withdrawn by Request of Writer - Black marking and postal clerk's initials show the letter was withdrawn from airmail service - Originally directed by Hindenburg across the Atlantic and by air from Germany to India - Postage paid \$1.30 = 2 x 40¢ per half ounce zeppelin, 2 x 3¢ airmail in Europe, 2 x 22¢ airmail Europe to India.

No Return Flight because of Hindenburg Disaster
Carried by S.S. American Farmer to Europe

Frankfurt am Main
pneumatic mail
timestamps

May 17 at
7:11 p.m.
7:18 p.m.
7:32 p.m.

Time 21 minutes



Express Mail Delivered by Pneumatic Mail within Frankfurt am Main - Three pneumatic mail timestamps show rapid delivery through the city - Postage paid 40¢ zeppelin, 20¢ express.



Flown by French Airlines from Europe to Gabon in French West Africa - By Air France to Dakar and by l'Aéromaritimes Dakar to Port Gentile - Forwarded within Gabon - Postage paid 43¢ = 40¢ zeppelin, 3¢ airmail within Europe.

The unused zeppelin postage was applied to airmail beyond Europe - Total postage 28¢ = 3¢ airmail in Europe, 20¢ airmail France to Gabon, 5¢ UPU surface.

End of Commercial Zeppelin Flights - Only three of the sixteen flights to Brazil scheduled for 1937 actually took place - All zeppelin mail and passenger services to North and South America were discontinued immediately after the Hindenburg disaster.



Posted on Board the Final Graf Zeppelin Flight from Brazil - Postmarked 6 May, the day of the Hindenburg disaster - The Graf Zeppelin was returning from South America on the day of the crash - After the flight, she was withdrawn from service, bringing commercial zeppelin airmail to an end.

CONCLUSION

When the zeppelin era ended in 1937, the Graf Zeppelin and Hindenburg had carried the regular mails on sixty-three of their voyages to the Americas - For five years the zeppelins had provided scheduled transatlantic airmail service at a time when heavier than air craft could not yet fly across the Atlantic on a regular basis - The extensive commercial use of the zeppelin mail services seen in this exhibit shows the contribution these airships made to an important chapter of airmail postal history.