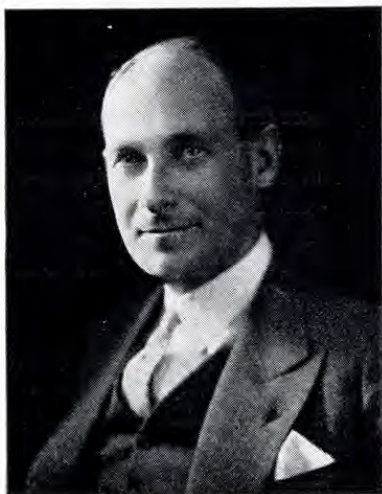


# Aviation and Philately

based on the  
*Norman Serphos Collection*



Norman Serphos



BY FRANK L. WILSON

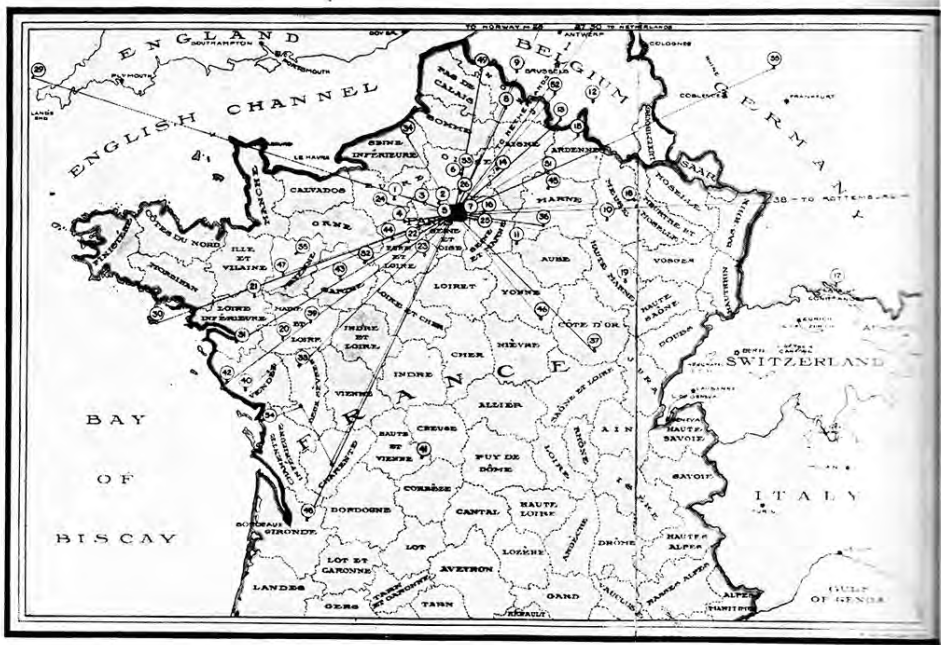
*The* milestones in the advance of the air service of today are marked by definite collector's items that have been preserved among collections of air covers and airmail stamps, many of which are unique and priceless museum pieces, because in the early pioneer stages, planes were able to carry only very little mail and in many cases flying weather did not permit them to even assemble a bag of mail. As a result aviators carried only a few letters in their pockets.

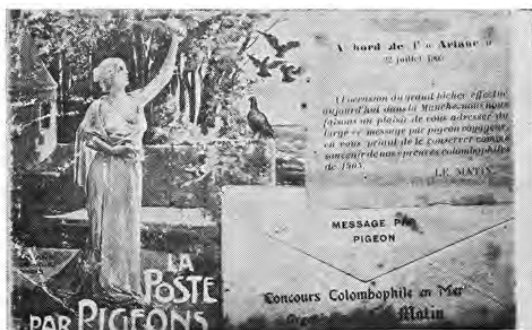
These items when pictured in chronological order definitely portray the strides made in the development of the aeroplane and of aviation. Each piece with its story of trial, effort, romance, success and frequently defeat weaves closer than fiction the real unfoldment in the achievements by man in conquering the airplanes of the world. Some of these items are but souvenirs of man's efforts at accomplishment while others bear the marks of actual triumphs. No museum of aviation is complete without the evidence portrayed by the covers which have been so intimately connected and associated with man's struggle for supremacy of the air, and no collection of such historic pieces is complete without the printed evidence that accompanies and ties in with these collector's items. Newspapers and magazines throughout the country have seized upon each event in its true light and have recorded the happenings for posterity. These published accounts place their finger definitely upon each step in the progress of aviation and are brother to the cover or item which is so intimately associated with this progress. There are collections today formed with such

correlated printed evidence which, if brought together in one grand museum enterprise and display, will picture more truly and graphically than any other evidence the rapid strides of man's supremacy of the air with all its glamor and romance, its trials and tribulations, its successes and failures and its far reaching benefits to this age.

To illustrate some of the phases in the progress of aviation, we have drawn upon the Norman Serphos collection for items, both covers and printed material, as tangible evidence of specific events that have transpired to promote such progress. The Serphos collection comprises some seventy volumes containing approximately 3500 items. Not only are the covers well written up, but there has been added various printed matter relating to the events at which these covers were actually flown, so that such a collection, besides containing outstanding pieces of flown covers is replete with broadsides, souvenirs, newspaper illustrations and news items, post cards and other material, which are very helpful in verifying the cancellations, backstamps and signatures on the covers of these famous flights.

In the early phases of air flight planning, dreamers built machines on paper — machines that were supposed to pierce the upper air and soar like birds, and many of the dreamers watched day by day from their casement windows hoping that their dreams and aspirations might come true. This visionary attitude crystalized in the practical airplane sketches by the famous Leonardo da Vinci





One of the "Le Matin" Pigeon Post envelopes affixed to a souvenir postcard—July 22, 1905.

whose fanciful flying machine proved to contain plans for motors and wings of the efficient airplanes of today.

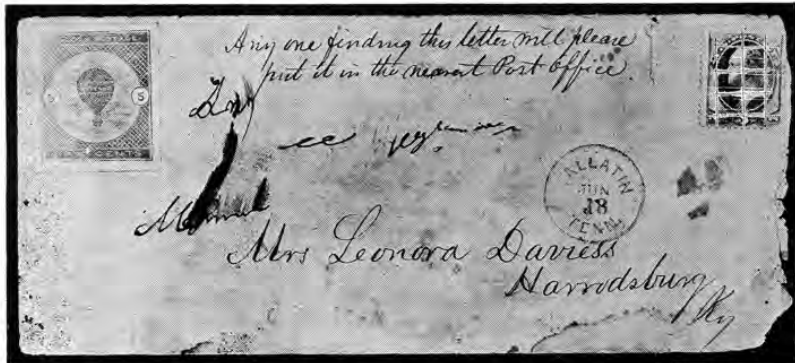
Aeromail or airmail, if we can classify it as such, existed long in advance of the machine age for be it known unto man that the first harbinger of glad tidings was the pigeon which in biblical times brought back to the Ark the bit of olive branch attesting to the patient Noah that land was near and the days of flood were at an end.

Early rulers of nations found the pigeon the fastest means of communication between the Palace and the outposts of the Kingdom. Pigeons were used in the thirteenth century as important carriers by the kings of Egypt, and six centuries later pigeons were used during the siege of Paris to carry reply messages back to the besieged, having been sent out from Paris in balloons used for the first time during the siege of that city.

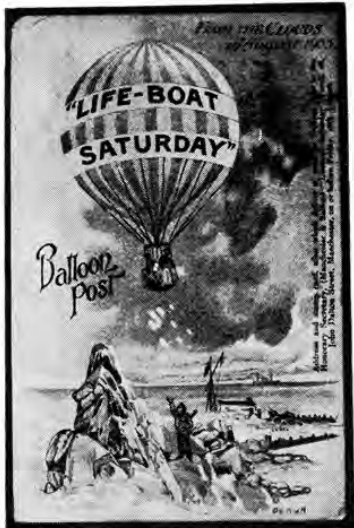
The pigeon post of Great Barrier Island, near New Zealand, carried its first message May 14, 1897. The Great Barrier Pigeon Air Service continued until 1908 when the newly laid cable took its place. Special stamps were issued in July 1899—the first adhesive stamps that carried mail through the air. These stamps are collector's items, especially for those who collect Air Post or Airmail stamps.



Left: The address side of a postcard advertising the Dresden Pigeon Photo flight. Right: Card showing photograph taken over Dresden by camera attached to carrier pigeon. These cards were sold at the Dresden Fair. May 3, 1909.



Above: Cover carried by Prof. Samuel Archer King when he flew in his balloon "Buffalo" June 18, 1877. The balloon flew over Buffalo, N. Y. Attached to the cover in the upper left hand corner is one of the "Buffalo Balloon" stamps.



Left: Card carried on the second "Lifeboat Saturday" balloon post on August 29, 1903.

In 1905 a special *Pigeon Post* was organized, the pigeongram was written on thin paper folded and attached to either the leg or under the wing of the pigeon. On arrival the message was removed and placed in a small envelope affixed to a special souvenir card and then forwarded to the addressee. One of these pigeongram "Le Matin" cards is in the Serphos collection. It is dated July 20, 1905 and was flown from the deck of the SS *Ariane* off the coast of France, to the pigeon cote at Cherbourg. Pigeons were also used to carry messages during the siege of Przemysl during the World War of 1914-15.

First in line of man made and controlled appliances for air delivery and service is the lighter-than-air balloon. The first known letter of record was carried in 1793 when Jean Pierre Blanchard on January 9th rose in a balloon from the Philadelphia Prison courtyard. The letter was written by President George Washington and carried by pilot Blanchard to Woodbury, N. J., fifteen miles distant where the balloon grounded.

The first known real transfer of mail by air occurred in 1859 when the American Express Company placed a small bag of mail in a balloon at St. Louis on a scheduled flight to New York City. The balloon floated over Lake Ontario and in casting out ballast to maintain the buoyancy of the balloon it was found necessary to also cast out the bag of mail. The bag of mail floated ashore near

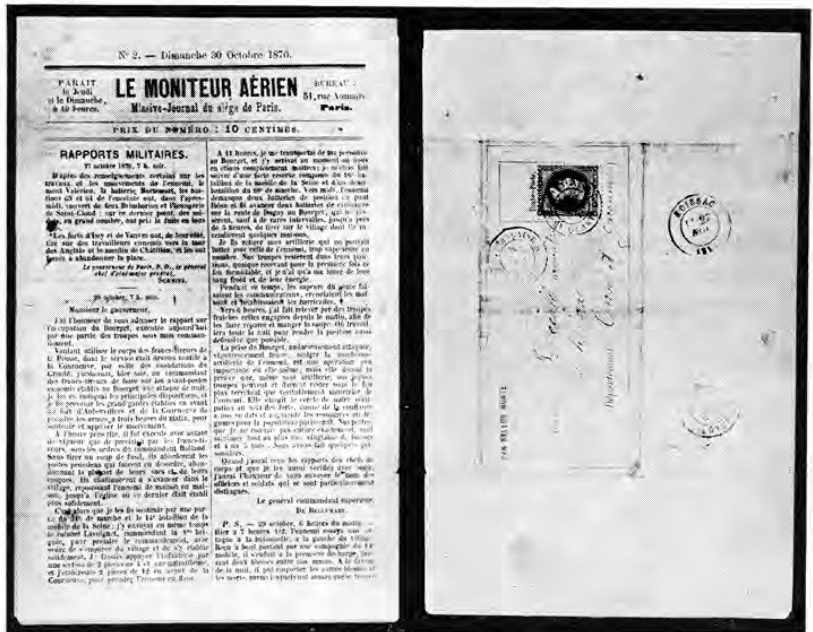
Oswego, New York and was forwarded to New York City. It is not believed any letters were saved from this flight.

During the siege of Paris and Metz in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 balloons were constantly made use of in carrying mail out of the city and over the enemy lines to the surrounding country. *Balloon Montes* were ballons that were flown by pilots who volunteered from the French Army. *Balloon non Montes* were so-called free balloons that carried no pilots. Messages on these flights bear the names of *Balloon Montes* and *Balloon non Montes*. The first Paris balloon was released September 23, 1870 and the last January 28, 1871. There are quite a number of pieces shown in the Serphos collection of these *Balloon Montes*, as are practically all the varieties of letters and newspapers used during the siege.

The letters during the siege of Metz were on tissue paper 10 x 5 cm. and are known as *Papillons*. The first was sent September 5, 1870 and the last October 2, 1870. The messages were usually attached to small parachutes tied to silk or paper balloons.

On October 18, 1897 Captain Godard ascended in the balloon *August Polich* in Germany and carried special cards on which were a photo of the pilot and a rectangular cachet in violet. The cards were handed to the postmaster on landing and mailed to the addressees.

In the Serphos collection there is shown an 1887 Hamburg local stamp issued for a balloon flight at Hamburg, one of the earliest stamps picturing a balloon. The stamp is cancelled and may have been used on one of the earliest balloon mail flights. There is one entire volume in the collection devoted to the balloon post, containing some of the most important items in this branch of air service.



A copy of Jouaust's Letter Journal of Paris issued during the siege and carried out of Paris by balloon.

In the course of airmail evolution, various methods of air transportation were employed. So that we may follow these more clearly the various classifications have been followed in this development. In addition to the use of Pigeon Post and Balloons outlined above, we include the classifications of Dirigibles, Zeppelins, Airplanes, Gliders, Autogyros, Seaplanes and Rockets.

## Dirigibles

While various successful balloon flights were being made in Europe, the motor driven balloon or dirigible was developed. Santos-Dumont, after building some six different airships finally flew around the Eiffel Tower to win the 125,000 franc prize offered by the Dela Meurthe. No mail was carried, but the event gave impetus to other countries in the development of dirigibles.

Covers from the French flights of the dirigible "Ville de Paris" over the Seine and around the Eiffel Tower, by the "Patrie" and the "Clement-Bayard" are shown in the Serphos collection.

The first known message released from a dirigible balloon in flight was from the "Pax" which rose 1400 feet above Paris on September 2, 1902. The Brazilian pilot Augusto Severo and his mechanic Saché were killed when the "Pax" exploded and crashed in the Avenue du Maine. There are only two of these colorful leaflets known to exist and both are in the Serphos collection.

The first trans-Atlantic dirigible flight was made by the R-34, British airship which left East Fortune, Scotland, July 2, 1919 and reached Roosevelt Field, Long Island, July 6th after being in the air 108 hours. The return trip to Pulham, England was made in 75 hours. A package of 14 letters was dropped overboard near Selwar, Nova Scotia.

The earliest attempt in the United States to use a dirigible for mail transportation was the Vaniman-Goodyear Airship *Akron* when Melvin Vaniman and his party of six planned a flight to Europe. The ship crashed at Atlantic City, July 2, 1912. The next dirigible was the *U. S. S. Shenandoah* (ZR-1) which made a mail-carrying trans-Continental trip from Lakehurst to the Pacific Coast and return in October 1924. The *U. S. S. Los Angeles* (ZR-3) made her first trans-Continental trip in May, 1932, and the *U. S. S. Macon* in March, 1934.

In discussing the collection with Mr. Serphos, he told me of a very interesting experience, showing how important it is that newspaper records and other data on important flights be kept. Mr. Serphos stated he had written an article



Cover carried by the "U. S. S. Shenandoah" from Lakehurst to Bar Harbor, Me., on the occasion of the Governors' Conference, July 3, 1925.

on the dirigible *U. S. S. Macon*, concerning its ill-fated crash, stating that due to bad weather the ship was forced down and the explosion did not occur until the ship was close to the earth. A collector who read the article wrote him that when the *U. S. S. Macon* crashed it was not due to bad weather as Mr. Serphos had written but rather to an explosion on board. Mr. Serphos went through his records and produced the newspaper clippings of the report of the Commander of the U. S. Fleet of the Pacific wherein he stated that at the time of the crash the visibility was very poor with a low ceiling and a rough sea. After this explanation, the collector had to apologize, even though he was aboard one of the ships of the fleet at the time of the crash.

## Zeppelins

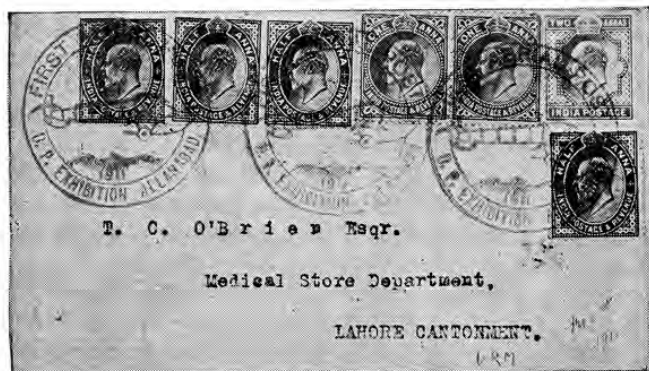
The first record of mail being carried by a dirigible was July 1909, when the Zeppelin ZR II made her first trip from Friedrichshafen to Cologne. Cards were dropped overboard on this trip, four of which are known to exist. On August 5th a second trip was made and cards were likewise dropped overboard during the trip, the latter cards were of a different color. These trips were the forerunners of many similar flights by German Zeppelins.



**Cover carried on the first flight of the Zeppelin "Hindenburg" from Germany to the United States, May 6, 1936.**

Four albums of the Serphos collection are devoted to early Zeppelin flights and two albums to the Ocean flights of the Zeppelins. Cards dropped from the *Hansa*, the *Viktoria Louise* and other Zeppelin ships together with printed records of the flights and pictures make these volumes outstanding records of this memorable achievement in lighter-than-air craft. The patent for the first Zeppelin was granted August 31, 1895 in Stuttgart, Germany and a photostat copy of this patent and design of the ship is also included in the collection.

The second trans-Atlantic Zeppelin flight was the sailing, from Friedrichshafen on October 12, 1924, of the LZ-126 or ZR 3 which was delivered by Germany to the United States in accordance with the Versailles treaty and later became the *U. S. S. Los Angeles*. This was the first airship of the Zeppelin type to make the crossing. 18,000 pieces of mail were carried. The first crossing by the *Graf Zeppelin* was in October 1928, and the first North American crossing of the *Hindenburg* was in May 1936, during the *Third International Philatelic Exhibition* at New York City. With the wrecking of the *Hindenburg* at Lakehurst in May 1937, the Zeppelin trans-Atlantic Service was discontinued. It has now been supplemented by the Pan American Clipper service.



Cover carried on the world's first official air flight. Flown in connection with the United Provinces Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition held at Allahabad, February 18, 1911.

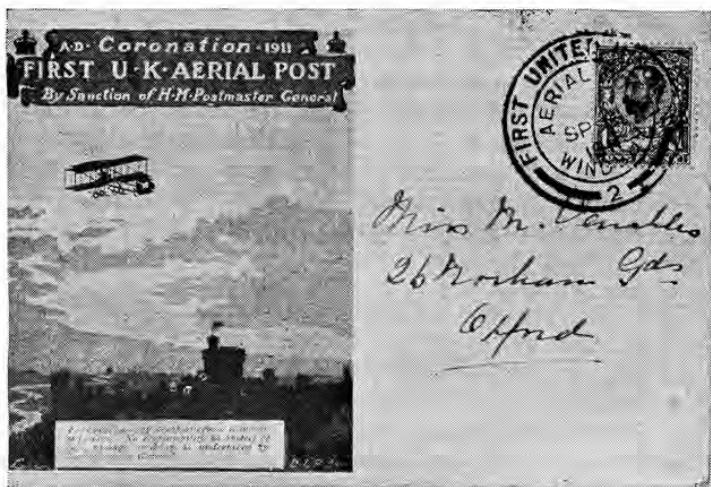
## Airplanes

The advent of the Wright Brothers in flying their first real aeroplane powered with a four-cylinder gasoline motor at Kill Devil Dunes on the coast of North Carolina in 1903 awakened the world to the possibilities of aviation for use in both peace and war. Though the flight of the *Kitty Hawk* lasted but twelve seconds, its success stimulated the great nations of the world in making every effort to develop this means of rapid transportation.

The early experimental flights made in England, France, Germany and Italy were made in an effort to overcome the rapid progress of similar flights made in the United States.

The very early experimental period from 1909 through 1911 produced flights by famous pioneers who carried occasionally a few covers that are now of vital interest in aeronautics, as well as great rarities for collectors.

The period 1909 to 1911 proved so successful that countries throughout the world vied with each other in developing airplanes and engines which could make distance flights, and the experimental period of 1912 through 1916 brought about a great development in sustaining and endurance qualities. Aviation by



Cover carried on the first official flight between London and Windsor Castle, September 9-16, 1911.

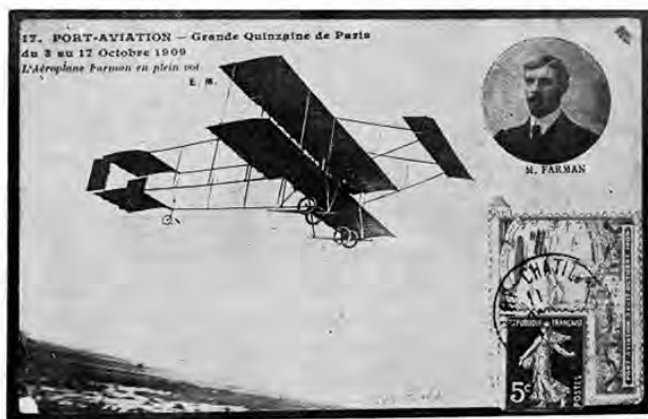


that time had progressed to the point of attempted long flights over the sea as well as land, culminating in the successful flight of Alcock and Brown who made the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 1919.

The World War was a direct cause in further development, and forced the nations to spend the necessary money and time to perfect planes and further the rapid development of aviation.

Mail was not carried by plane under its own power until 1911, although actual plane flights were made in 1909 and 1910, during which periods plans for carrying mail began to take definite form. In November 1910, a Curtiss land-plane was scheduled to fly from a specially constructed platform on the stern of one of the vessels of the Hamburg-American Line, but the propeller of the plane was damaged and the flight did not take place. The plane was to fly back to Governors Island with mail from the ship when it was fifty miles out to sea. Thus, through an accident America was deprived of the honor of being the first country to have mail carried in an airplane.

The first definite flight on which mail was carried was at Allahabad, India on February 18, 1911 during the Indian Arts and Crafts Exhibition when permission was obtained from the authorities by Captain Windham to permit H.



Cover showing the photograph of Pilot Farman and the Farman bi-plane in flight. This cover mailed at the Port-Aviation Meet, Chatillon on October 23, 1909.

Piquet, a French pilot to carry souvenir cards from the exhibition grounds to Naini. Over 6,000 cards were carried during the exhibition.

The second mail carrying flight was in August 1911, at the time of the coronation of King George V when 130,000 pieces of mail were carried between London and Windsor Castle. During the same month, Jules Vedrines made a mail-carrying flight from Issy les Moileneaux to Deauville, France. The German pilot Hoffman carried a bag of the *Berlin Morning Post* from Berlin to Frankfurt, and on August 9th mail was carried by plane at the military aviation meet at Bologna, Italy.

Thirteen volumes of the Serphos collection are devoted to the World Pioneer flights and include many outstanding pieces, some of which are the only known covers carried. In this early period of development, we find many well known names of aviators who demonstrated their flying ability in France. Cards in the Serphos collection show flights made by such famous aviators as Glenn Curtis, Wilbur and Orville Wright, M. Sommer, H. Farman, Louis Bleriot, Otto E.

## Frank L. Wilson

Lindpaintner and others, as well as cards and covers flown at the various air meets which marked the proving grounds for early models of air craft.

The first airmail flights in the United States were made at the Garden City Estates, Long Island during the International Aviation Meet held September 23 to October 1, 1911. Earle E. Ovington flew the first pouch of mail from the field post office to Mineola, a distance of seven miles. During this meet, the official record shows that 43,247 pieces of mail were carried in all. The Serphos covers bear the signature of Ovington in the upper left-hand corner.



Cover carried on the first airmail flight in the United States, at Garden City, Long Island, N. Y., September 23-30, 1911. This cover is autographed by the pilot Earle Ovington.

From 1911 to 1918, exhibition flights were conducted from one end of the United States to the other and each flight was made with the approval of a local postmaster or the Federal Post Office Department. The United States leads in the number of pioneer airmail flights and they stand as a monument to the foresight of Postmaster General Frank H. Hitchcock of the Taft Administration whose faith in the development of airmail has proved to be so well founded.

Four volumes of the Serphos collection are devoted to the pioneer flights of the United States, and included in these volumes are the choice pieces which go towards cementing not only the types of plane development in American aviation, but records of achievement among the *Early Birds* who did so much in building the American supremacy of the air and commercial flying. Tied in with the sequence of covers in the collection are printed pictorials and news items of the flights, thus giving a word picture as well as an actual cover record.

The American Pioneer period ended when the United States Government issued its airmail postage stamp at the time the first governmental airmail service was established on May 15, 1918, between Washington, Philadelphia and New York. The rate of postage was fixed at 24 cents per ounce or fraction thereof, which included special delivery service. A distinctive 24-cent stamp in red and blue was issued to meet this requirement in postage and first placed on sale May 13, 1918 at Washington, D. C.

During the succeeding six years, airmail lines were opened up in almost every important section of the country. The first semi-successful attempt at a non-stop trans-Continental flight was made by Lts. Kelly and Macready in a T2 plane from San Diego on October 11, 1922, flying to Indianapolis. The first trans-Continental airmail line between New York and San Francisco was opened on July 1st, 1924.

The second stage of development in American airmail came with the so-called "Governmentals" or government controlled routes, and this ended when mail-carrying contracts were turned over to private contractors and operators. On February 15, 1926 the first C. A. M. (Contract Air Mail) route was opened. This contract was awarded to the Ford Motor Company for two lines, one flying between Detroit and Chicago and designated C. A. M. 7 and the other flying between Cleveland and Detroit designated as C. A. M. 6.

These important steps in the commercial advancement of aviation have been carefully followed in the Serphos collection. Twelve complete volumes of flown covers and printed records are devoted entirely to the C. A. M.'s and of these, five volumes are devoted to covers which have been autographed by the pilots.

From 1919 on, there have been many notable flights which have added to the tryouts and development of the airplane or "aeroplane." Many of these flights of course were stunt flights, but almost all of them helped in the development of aviation.

### Historic Flights

1919 also saw the start of many notable historic flights. The Navy Curtiss flying boat, the NC-4 was the first to successfully cross the Atlantic Ocean under its own power. Leaving Trespasy, Newfoundland, May 16th, 1919 under the command of Lieut. Albert C. Read it reached Lisbon on May 27th, after a stop at the Azores for refueling. On May 30th, the boat left Lisbon for Plymouth, England, where it arrived the following day.

The first really successful trans-Atlantic flight was made by Captain John Alcock and Lieut. Arthur Whitten Brown, who left St. John's, Newfoundland, June 14th, 1919 in a Vickers-Vimy bomber. After a flight of 16 hours and 12 minutes they landed at Clifden, Ireland to win the *Daily Mail* Prize of £10,000 for the first non-stop trans-Atlantic flight. Newfoundland surcharged the regular 15c 1897 stamp "Trans-Atlantic Air Post 1919 One Dollar" and the Alcock-Brown covers bear these stamps.



Cover carried on the first flight from England to Australia November 10, 1919 by Captain Sir Ross Smith. The Australian Government issued a special stamp for this flight which was affixed to the mail at Melbourne and cancelled "First Aerial Mail," Great Britain to Australia. Received Feb. 26, 1920.



Cover carried on the Amundsen North Polar "Maud Expedition" flight of June 3, 1922. Cover bears the red rectangular label inscribed, "North Pole Amundsen Expedition, Air Mail."

Sir Ross Smith made the first flight from London to Australia during 1919, leaving London in November 1919, and arriving in Port Darwin, Australia December 10th, a flight of 28 days.

The first North Polar flight was made by Roald Amundsen and Lincoln Ellsworth during May and June 1925, two planes—the N-24 and the N-25—being used. Special "North Pole Mail" cards were sold to help cover the cost of the flight. The N-24 was wrecked in landing among the floes and the N-25 was forced down on the sea near North Cape of Nordostland, June 17 and later towed to Kings Bay, Alaska. The cards were postmarked "Kings Bay, May 18, 1925."

In 1925, Lieutenant-Commander Richard E. Byrd carried a series of postcards over the North Polar regions on the MacMillan Polar Expedition. This flight carried Byrd within 11 degrees of the Pole and was made from the Air Base, June 10, 1925. The following year the Italian dirigible *Norge* under the command of General Umberto Nobile, carrying Roald Amundson and Lincoln Ellsworth as observers, left Rome, Italy, on April 10th. The first stop was made at Pulham, England, thence to Leningrad by way of Oslo where a stop of three weeks was made to allow completion of the hangar at Kings Bay. The *Norge* arrived at Kings Bay on May 7 and on May 11 sailed out over the Polar regions



Postcard carried on the experimental flight between Kenilworth and Muizenberg, Union of South Africa, December 30, 1911.

to land on the snow at Teller, Alaska on the morning of May 13, having passed over the North Pole. By a remarkable coincidence, Commander Byrd and Floyd Bennett were at Kings Bay while the *Norge* was being refueled, and on May 9th, two days previous to the sailing of the *Norge*, flew their large monoplane over the North Pole, the first men ever to fly to the North Pole. The *Norge* carried covers and 91 of these completed the Ciampino-Teller flight via the North Pole.

In 1927, the first pilot to officially carry mail across the Atlantic Ocean was Commander Richard E. Byrd. In the three motored Fokker monoplane *America*, Commander Byrd set out from Roosevelt Field with George Noville, Bernt Balchen and Bert Acosta on June 29, 1927, bound for Paris. Due to rain and fog, the airplane was forced down near the beach at Ver-sur-Mer, France. The covers bear the postmark of New York, dated June 21 and the arrival postmark of Ver-sur-Mer dated July 2, 1927 (2-7-27).



Cover carried on the non-stop trip Bermuda flight by Roger Q. Williams, Capt. J. Earroll Boyd, relief pilot, and Harry P. Connor, navigator, June 29-30, 1930. The plane used on this flight was the veteran Ballanca monoplane "Columbia."

To execute an ocean flight was the ambition and hope of almost every important pilot or aviator, and this covers one of the most adventurous periods in the development of aviation. The flights of these pioneer pilots across the ocean correspond to the voyages made by Columbus, Magellan, Drake, the Cabots and other intrepid explorers. This test of endurance for both plane and pilot produced many failures and caused many a sad ending of carefully planned flights. The most notable of all was the loss of the famous French War Ace, Nungesser and his co-pilot Coli who attempted the flight from Paris to New York. They were lost somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean and French, English and American governments made fruitless searches for them. The Serphos collection has a cover, a memento of this search, carried by the Nungesser-Coli Search Expedition in their vain attempts to find the aviators.

Covers carried on these ocean flights have been the goal and ambition of many collectors, but in most cases only a few have become their proud possessors. On some of the early flights no covers were carried, while on others only a few. On later ocean flights, however, the number of covers carried has been much



Cover carried on the Trans-Tasman flight between New Zealand and Papua to Australia on June 23, 1934 by Commander C. T. P. Ulm.



Cover flown on the "Round the World" flight of the United States Air Force March 17, 1924.

greater as planes and engines were made much more powerful. In the Serphos collection there are eleven volumes devoted to ocean flights and some of the choicest items carried across the seas are to be found in these volumes. There is the Alcock and Brown cover, the Hawker, the de Pinedo, the Newfoundland-Columbia, the Earhart, the Byrd and a whole flock of others that would quicken the pulse and warm the heart of any collector.

Previous to the Byrd official flight, Charles A. Lindbergh flew from New York to Paris in a Ryan monoplane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*. Lindbergh left New York on May 20, 1927, flying over Newfoundland and Ireland and landing at Le Bourget Field, Paris the following evening, covering the 3,610 miles in 33 hours and 29 minutes. No mail was carried, but this epoch flight marked the beginning of an interest in aviation in the United States and a spontaneous and rapid growth in the collecting of airmail stamps and covers. In commemoration of the achievement the United States issued a special 10-cent airmail stamp which pictured the *Spirit of St. Louis* in flight between the new and old continents. This stamp was first placed on sale June 18, 1927 at St. Louis, Mo., Detroit, Mich., Little Falls, Minn., and Washington, D. C. Beginning July 20th and continuing through October 23, Lindbergh toured the United States and in consequence, cover collectors gathered together a sizeable array of souvenir cacheted covers marking his various stops. From December of the same year to February 1928, Lindbergh flew on a good will tour of Central America



A cover carried on the Howard Hughes record flight around the world, July 10, 1938 in 3 days and 19 hours. Stops were made at Paris, Moscow, Yakutsk, Fairbanks on return to New York.

and the north coast of South America, arriving back in St. Louis on February 21st, where he received a grand reception of national importance. Two volumes in the Serphos collections are devoted to Lindberghiana consisting of 150 pieces, including not only 40 to 50 covers from the Good Will tour of the United States, but 20 to 25 covers as a result of his Good Will tour through Central and the northern portion of South America.

Other notable flights during 1927 took place on the Pacific Coast. In June Arthur C. Goebel and Lieut. W. V. Davis USN won the Dole prize for flying between San Francisco and Honolulu, and two weeks later Lieuts. Lester G. Maitland and Albert F. Hegenberger USA made the first non-stop naval flight across the Pacific from Oakland to Honolulu. The first plane carried one cover and the second carried three covers. Covers from both flights are in the Serphos collection.

An officially sanctioned flight was made by Captain Kingsford-Smith in May 1928. He took off from the Oakland, California airport with three companions, Keith V. Anridson, co-pilot, Charles P. T. Ulm and William A. Todd, navigators, in a tri-motored Fokker airplane *Southern Cross* May 31, 1928 flying to Sydney, Australia by way of Honolulu, the Fiji Islands and Brisbane. It is believed that three covers were carried on the flight.



Cover carried on the survey flight of the Pan American Airways San Francisco-Hawaii, April 17, 1935. Carried on the Pan American "Clipper."

On June 24, 1930 Kingsford-Smith flew the *Southern Cross* from Port Marcock, Ireland to Harbor Grace. No mail was carried on the Atlantic Ocean flight, but a few letters were carried from Newfoundland to New York City, one of these being in the Serphos collection.

Commander Richard E. Byrd was first to fly over the South Pole. This was accomplished on November 29th, 1929. With Byrd were Bernt Balchen, pilot and Harold June and Ashley McKinley, cameramen. About 20 covers were carried over the Pole and all signed by Byrd or Balchen.

The French pilots Dieudonne Coste and Maurice Bellonte were the first to return the non-stop visit of Lindbergh when they flew their plane the *Question Mark* from Paris to New York September 3, 1930. No official mail was carried.

## Seaplanes

The earliest recorded seaplane service was the Italian Trans-Adriatic Naval Airpost Service in 1918-19 formed during the World War, in which Italian naval planes made a number of flights across the Adriatic Sea. On July 12, 1916 Austrian naval planes made a test flight across the Adriatic Sea from Cosada. A cover carried on this flight is in the Serphos collection.

On April 9, 1923 a seaplane (F. A. M. Route No. 3) airmail route was established between New Orleans and Pilottown, La., for expediting mail by overtaking departed vessels from New Orleans. The next regular seaplane route was opened between Seattle, Wash., and Victoria, B. C., September 25, 1925.

The Clipper service, first of which was the Oakland-Hawaii-Manila route was opened November 22, 1935 and this extended later to Macao and Hong Kong. In June 1937 the New York-Bermuda Clipper service was officially opened and in 1940 both the New York-Azores and the San Francisco-New Zealand Clipper routes were inaugurated, demonstrating the wonderful development in the flying power of the seaplane.

The *Bremen* left Baldonnell, Ireland April 12, 1928 with Baron Guenther Von Huenefeld, and Captain Herman Koehl accompanied by Major James Fitzmaurice for New York, but was forced down at Greeneley Island, Nfld., after being lost in the fog off the Banks. This is the first recorded aerial crossing west to east. One letter was carried, and is in the Serphos collection.

The first airmail brought from Iceland and Greenland to Canada was in August 1930 by Captain von Gronau in the *Dornier-Wal*. Flying from List, Germany the flying boat made stops at the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland and Queensport Harbor, Nova Scotia. Mail was delivered to the postmaster at Halifax by Captain von Gronau, and then the boat continued directly to New York City.

In the development of airmail and the airplane many flights of special interest have taken place all in the interest of speed and safety. Incoming mail on ocean steamers was speeded by ship-to-shore flights. Clarence D. Chamberlain completed the first ship-to-shore flight carrying mail July 31, 1927 when he flew from the deck of the *U. S. S. Leviathan* off Fire Island to the New Jersey shore. An improvement in takeoff was demonstrated August 23, 1928 from the deck of the *S. S. Ile de France* by the use of a catapult arrangement. This service was continued until September 11th when the plane was forced down at sea 400 miles from Paris on its way to Cherbourg. Pilot and mail were rescued, although the plane was lost.

On land several attempts at picking up mail during flight were made. The first non-stop aerial pickup with the Tuxhorn device was made September 18, 1928 on a flight from Chillicothe, Mo. to St. Louis, Mo.

## Gliders

The glider has been made use of in delivery of mail from through-flight service planes to way points, but so far such service has not been found very practical. In demonstration of glider service Frank M. Hawks guided his glider on its first trans-Continental flight from San Diego, March 29th, 1930, landing in New York April 6th. The towing plane was piloted by Duke Jernigan, Jr.



On August 2, 1934 the first official Lustig Sky Train with plane towing three gliders flew from New York to Washington, the first glider landing at Philadelphia, the second at Baltimore and the third at Washington. Covers were carried in each event. Many cards and covers carried on these important glider flights, both in America and abroad, are in the Serphos collection. In fact, two volumes are devoted to this service.

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Attempts have also been made to shorten the time of round-the-world flights, the most outstanding of which was made by Wiley Post and Harold Gatty in the *Winnie Mae* flying from Mineola June 21, 1931 by way of Harbour Grace, Chester, Hanover, Berlin, Moscow, Nova-Sibirsk, Irkutsk, Blagovestchensk, Khabarovsk, Nome, Edmonton and back to Mineola where they arrived on July 1st, 1931. The record stood until 1938 when Howard Hughes completed the trip in 3 days and 19 hours. Mail was carried on both flights.



Cover carried on the Air-Train Mail, May 19, 1935 from Habana to United States by Pilots O'Meara and Du Pont.

The autogyro has been demonstrated successfully in the delivery of mail and its use on short flights and spot delivery is of particular interest. The first long-distance use of the autogyro was made by Captain Lewis A. Yancey, flying from Miami to Havana on January 24, 1932. He carried a few covers, one of which is in the Serphos collection.

Attempts to shorten the trans-Continental flying time by means of Stratosphere flights were made by Wiley Post during 1935 in the *Winnie Mae*. Four attempts were made, each one covering a greater distance, but it was not until 1940 that commercial use was made of high flying when the new TWA *Stratoliners* succeeded in cutting the time of coast-to-coast flying to almost 12 hours.

### Rockets

The use of rockets in quick delivery of mail has been in the minds of experimenters for several years and many attempts to use the rockets for mail delivery have been made. Notable among the experiments were those conducted

in the Hartz Mountains, in New Zealand, Cuba and the United States. However, the results to date have not been satisfactory due to insufficient propelling power for sending the rockets any great distance.

On many of these trials special covers were prepared and special poster stamps used. Covers carried on such rocket flights make an interesting historical addition to any collection of air covers, for they mark the beginning trials of "speeding up the mails" which at some future date may develop into a commercial asset. In the Serphos collection much material on the historical aspect, and also many actual covers carried on these trials have been assembled. In fact there are three whole volumes devoted to the subject, practically as complete a record of these events as is possible to gather together.

### *In Conclusion*

In the preparation of this article much credit is due to Norman Serphos for his counsel, and for the use of his magnificent collection of "Aero Philatelic" covers for illustrations and record. In the above article we have mentioned but a few of the many outstanding covers in his collection which is without doubt the greatest and finest general collection of Pioneer Air Post of the world as it contains practically all of the covers carried on outstanding flights in every branch of aviation. Its value lies not alone in the value of the covers carried on famous flights, but also for its historical data which gives almost a complete picture of the early progress and development of flight by air.

It is also opportune at this time to make mention of the fine work accomplished by members of the American Airmail Society in the 1940 edition of their catalog and record of airmail covers and stamps, the catalog that every collector of airmail covers and every student of aviation should have in his private library. The formation of this catalog took many months of effort by the editors of the various sections as well as their assistants who all did their work without compensation. Here, in one book, has been collected the data and history of practically every flight the world over which has helped in the advance of aviation, the expansion of the network of air lines, dedication of airports and the trials and tribulations of human endeavor in this vast field of air exploration.

The illustrations of covers shown in this article are through the courtesy of the publishers of the *American Air Mail Catalogue*.