

# Correctly Paid & Overpaid Mail By Air

By A. D. Jones

Stories abound regarding the first few months of regular scheduled air mail in the United States, it's aircraft, it's pilots and the mail which was flown. However, far less has been written about the ways in which the first three United States air mail postage stamps were used.

It has been rumored that mail franked at the surface rate was flown, in order to fill the mail bags during the 24¢ (Scott C3) period, from May 15, through July 14, 1918, but no tangible proof of that has been found. Only the tales passed down from the collectors of that time have survived the time test.

## THE POSTAL BULLETIN

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XXXIX. WASHINGTON, MAY 14, 1918. NO. 11651

### ORDER OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.

**OFFICE OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.**  
WASHINGTON, MAY 7, 1918.

No. 117.

It is hereby ordered, July 21, 1917, for the delivery of mail and parcels of orders to be delivered by air mail to all offices and agents as shown in the annexed schedule.

A. S. BURLINSON,  
Postmaster General.

**OFFICE OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.**  
WASHINGTON, MAY 11, 1918.

Section 2076. The Postmaster General, in his discretion, may require the payment of postage on mail carried by aeroplane at not exceeding 21 cents per ounce or fraction thereof.

1. Mail carried by aeroplane shall be charged with postage at the rate of 21 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 10 inches in length and 6 inches 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."

2. Mail for dispatch by aeroplane shall be accepted for registration upon the payment, 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 packages (outside of inner registered sacks) and dispatched to its destination in accordance with the regular regulations for registering such packages. (See No. 1164.)

A. S. BURLINSON,  
Postmaster General.

**POST OFFICES DISCONTINUED.**

Effective May 15, 1918.

FLORIDA.  
Brazosville, Orange Co., 1834 and 2330.  
Holt to Madison, Indian and records to Oklawaha, 111347.

MISSISSIPPI.  
Kokoa, Rapides Co., 6244. Mail to Orleans, 111347 and records to New Orleans, 111347.

WASHINGTON.  
Post Office, Rapidan Co., 1113. Mail to Brewster, Supplies and records to Spotsylvania, 111347.

**RAILROAD SERVICE CHANGED.**

WEST VIRGINIA.  
11507. From May 11, 1918, Terry is employed on the line from New River, Prichard and Wright, at McHenry Hill, 111347.

**POSTMASTER COMMISSIONED.**

FRANKLIN, N. Y.  
May 13, 1918.

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

May 13, 1918.

Joseph David Rogers, Alameda, Ala.  
Vernon B. Gresham, Berry, Ala.  
Alta C. Smith, Cove, Ala.  
Wendell B. Francis, Milton, Ark.  
Martha B. Evans, Summit, Ark.  
Richard A. Smith, Summit, Ark.  
George L. Echeles, Chattanooga, Ohio.  
Alfred A. Miles, Hamilton, Idaho.  
William P. Robertson, Carlsbad, N. M.  
Daisy A. Saylor, Manhattan, Kan.  
Carl B. Saylor, Lawrence, Kan.  
Tom J. Saylor, Lawrence, Kan.  
Edwin A. Long, Saint Joseph, Mo.  
Anna M. Saylor, Saint Joseph, Mo.

Postal Bulletin No. 11651 dated May 14, 1918, stating the rate(s) for mail to be carried by air mail.

In fact, very little, if any, of the early United States air mail was short paid—the postal clerks seem to have had a special eye to keep that from happening. But, there are bound to be a few exceptions, as with any other regulated events.

Other stories have been related about bricks being placed in the air mail bags to increase the weight and thereby justify the use of the Air Mail Service. Personally, I have yet to see a brick with any (air) mail postal markings on it, or any other postal markings, for that matter. Most of the mail carried in the first few weeks and months of the Air Mail Service was either correctly franked, or overpaid.

These instances of overpayment were probably due to a misunderstanding of the air mail postage rates by a few of the periodicals of the time (see next column), or simply overpaid as a matter of convenience, which sometimes happened when postal stationery was used.

The hard evidence of these two methods of "padding" the air mail bags has thus far been elusive. But, I will be the last to admit that it could not have happened.

Post Office Order No. 1443 of May 11, 1918, announced by Postal Bulletin No. 11651 of May 14, 1918 (shown above) states that "Mail carried by aeroplane shall be charged with postage at the rate of 24 cents an ounce or fraction thereof, of

### Aerial Mail Stamp Proposed

In connection with the opening of the aerial mail route, it has been suggested that the Post Office Department issue a new stamp for this special service, which will perform a function similar to the special delivery stamp, for it will cause the letter to which it is affixed to be sent by the aerial mail. The present plan is to sell the stamp for 24 cents, which with the regular postage will make the cost for an ordinary letter 27 cents. It will be cheaper and quicker than a night letter by telegraph.

It is understood that no decision regarding the issuing of this stamp has as yet been made by the postal authorities, although the matter is said to be under consideration.

1148 AERIAL AGE WEEKLY, March 11, 1918

### 24-CENT STAMP FOR MAIL BY AIR Minimum Letter Postage on Letters by New Service Will Be 27 Cents

COINCIDENT with the opening of the first aerial mail route between New York and Washington on April 15 there will be issued a new stamp. This stamp will perform a function similar to the special delivery stamp, for it will cause the letter to which it is affixed to be sent by the air service. The present plan is to sell the stamp for 24 cents which with the regular postage will make the cost 27 cents. It will be cheaper and quicker than a night letter by telegraph.

The Post Office Department is at work on designs for the new stamps. It will be possible, Postmaster-General Burleson believes, to deliver the mail despatched from here by aeroplane in New York office buildings three hours after the mail closes in Washington.

At the start only one aeroplane will be despatched each way a day. Mail probably will close about 11 o'clock, making it possible for business men to answer their morning letters and get the answers delivered by 2 P. M. It is the belief of the officials that hundreds of business firms will avail themselves of the service.

The mail aeroplane will make one stop, at Philadelphia, but even with this it is believed that the trip between New York and Washington will be made in two hours, leaving one hour for the sorting and delivery of the mail carried.

The Post Office Department's Postal Bulletins were not very accessible to the average person, so the rate for sending an item by air mail was, many times, left to the interpretation of others. Two such interpretations are shown here, the first from Flying magazine and the second from Aerial Age Weekly. Both of these periodicals could be easily obtained by the general public.

which 10 cents shall be for special-delivery service." The same Bulletin also included a notice from the Second Assistant Postmaster General, which stated, in part, that items could be mailed... at Washington, Philadelphia and New York for any city in the United States or its possessions or postal agencies." This is not what was stated in Flying or Aerial Age Weekly. Therefore, it is no surprise that the postal patrons overpaid many items of mail that was flown.

Further, the Post Office Department held to the same mailing stipulations through the reduction of air mail rates from 24 cents per ounce to 16 cents per ounce and to 6 cents per ounce (the last eliminating the special-delivery service).

Following are examples of correctly paid and overpaid items, using all three of the first series of air mail stamps, on

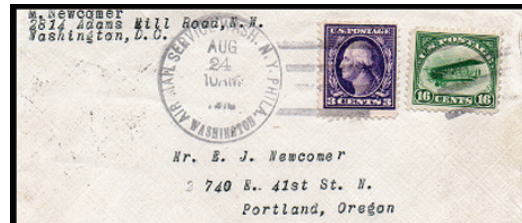
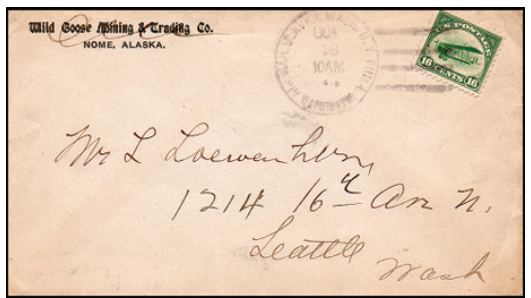
air mail flown from the three principle cities to cities not on the air mail route.



Correctly paid (24 cents) letter and post card from Washington, D.C. to Leicester, Massachusetts and Jersey City, New Jersey.



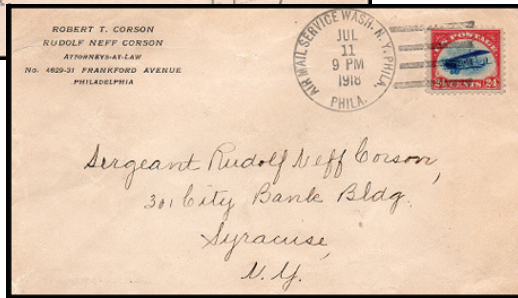
Correctly paid (16 cents) letter from Washington, D.C. to Seattle, Washington.



Overpaid post card from Washington, D.C. to New Haven, Connecticut.

Overpaid letter and post card from Washington, D.C. to Portland, Oregon and East Hiram, Maine.

Correctly paid (24 cents) letter from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Syracuse, N.Y.

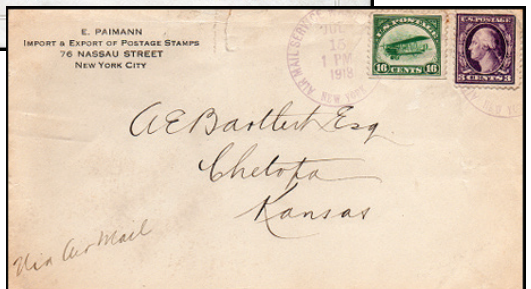


Correctly paid (16 cents) letter from Philadelphia, Pa. to Canton, Ohio.

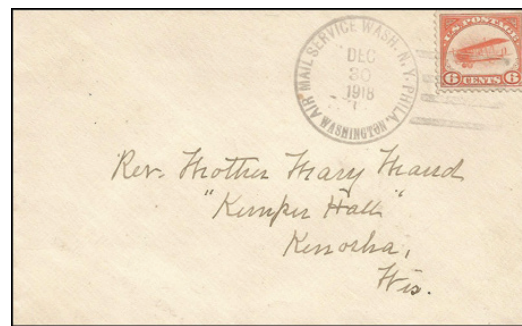
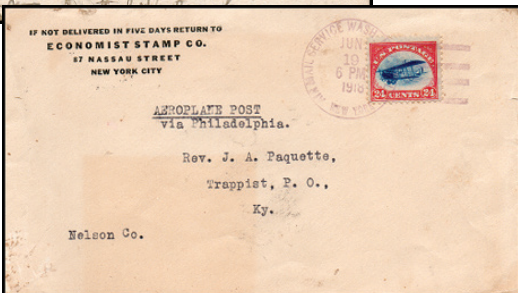


Overpaid letter from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Chelsea, Massachusetts.

Overpaid letter from New York, New York to Chelota, Kansas.

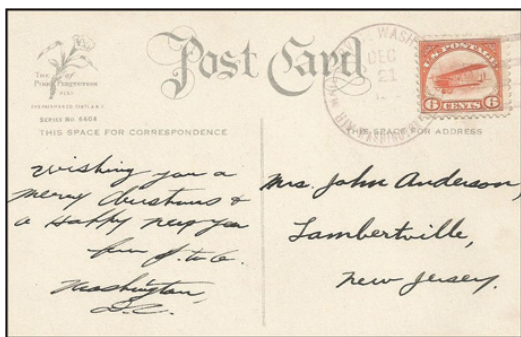


Correctly paid (24 cents) letter from New York, New York to Trappist, Kentucky.



Correctly paid (6 cents) letter from Washington, D. C. to Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Correctly paid (6 cents) post card from Washington, D. C. to Lambertville, New Jersey



Overpaid letter from Boston, Massachusetts to New York, New York, with a 1 cent postal stationery envelope that



may have been handy at the time. Only the 24 cent stamp was required, the 1 cent indicia on the envelope paid for no service, or rate.



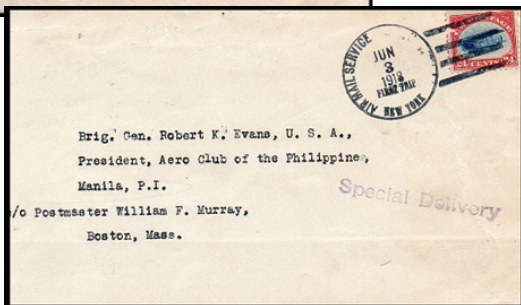
Overpaid letter from Washington, D.C. to West Lynn, Massachusetts.

This letter should rank with the royal family of overpaid early air mail items. The 24 cent air mail stamp paid for the entire



trip and special - delivery service. No other postage was required. However, the sender also added 3 cents postage (apparently for surface service from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to New Kensington, Pennsylvania), plus the addition of a 10 cent special - delivery stamp (again, apparently for the surface service).

Correctly paid (24 cents) letter from New York, New York, via Boston, Massachusetts, to Manila, Philippines.



Seventeen covers and cards do not provide absolute proof that underpaid or surface rate covers were not carried by airplanes during the period of the first series of United States air mail stamps (May 15, 1918-July 18, 1919).

Nor does the absence of a brick, with or without postage stamps or postal markings, provide proof positive that they were or were not flown.

However, the combination of a serious attempt to locate

both examples, plus the evidence of researching many articles and books written about these two ways of justifying early United States air mail has brought forth no hard evidence of the tales from the past about such occurrences.

To that end, an invitation to any / all air mail collectors (or anyone else, for that matter) to provide any solid proof to the contrary, will be cause for a follow-up article to be written to publicly proclaim their existence.