

# COLLECTING AIRMAIL



American Air Mail Society

# Collecting Airmail



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## Welcome to Collecting Airmail

Cheryl Ganz

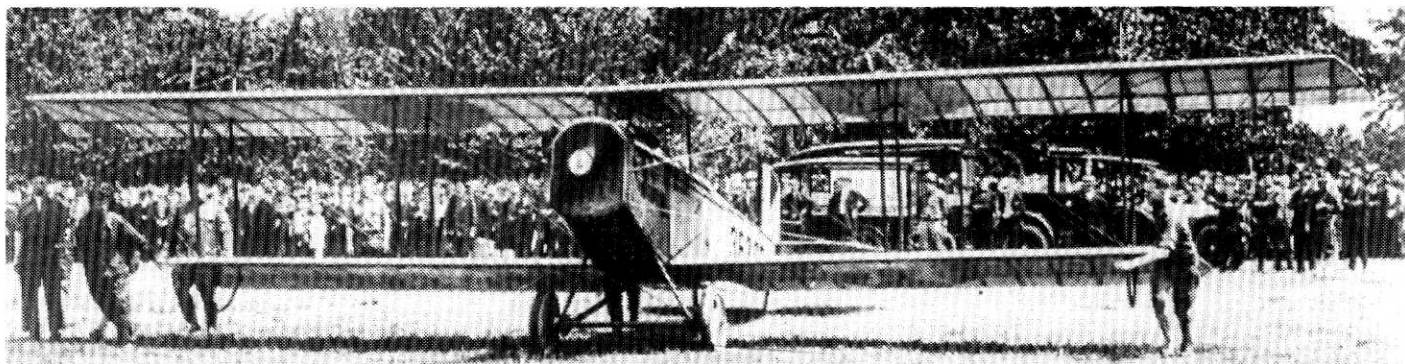
Airmail collectors, or aerophilatelists, come from all walks of life throughout the world. They all share a passion for aviation and its impact on worldwide communications. Many are pilots, work in the aircraft industry, serve in aviation in the armed forces, or have other direct connections to flight. Others were stamp collectors as children and returned to philately, now seeking a specialty that offers new challenges and knowledge. Some are advanced philatelists of a specific country who wish to research the rates and usages of the airmail stamps of their area of specialization. Yet others began collecting coins or postcards or antiques and discovered that in airmail collecting there is a greater opportunity to meet fellow collectors, exhibit collections, write about discoveries, and share enthusiasm. Museum curators and aviation history buffs find new approaches to their subjects in aerophilately. Whatever influences you toward collecting airmail, you will find great rewards; this area of concentration offers plenty of room for you to create a specialization that is tied to your interests or pursuits. This is a hobby full of fun and great, creative people!

*Front Cover:*  
Detail from an  
embossed air post  
stamped envelope.  
This stationery  
series was issued  
from 1929-1944.

*Collecting Airmail* was designed to help you enter the field of airmail collecting by having leading American aerophilatelists write about their own collecting interests. The authors share a passion for aerophilately, and together we hope these essays offer an overview of airmail collecting and an inspiration to novice collectors seeking expanded horizons.

Have a great time as you pilot your way through *Collecting Airmail*. The contents in this guide offer only an introduction to the possibilities of airmail collecting. The sky is the limit! Use your imagination. The members of the American Air Mail Society hope to meet you soon during one of your layovers!

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provides an overview of the chronological time frames for this past century of flight: <i>The Pioneer Period to 1918</i> <i>The Developmental Period, 1918-1945</i> <i>The Modern Period after 1945</i>	
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exposes you to some of the means of transport that have become collecting areas of specialization: <i>Lighter than Air</i> <i>Via Balloon, Via Zeppelin</i> <i>Heavier than Air</i> <i>Via Glider, Via CAMS, Via FAMS, Recovered Mail, Via Rocket</i>	
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provides additional knowledge, resources, and information on how to become a member of the dynamic American Air Mail Society (AAMS): <i>Glossary, About the Authors, The American Airmail Society</i>	→



## Preparing for Take Off

One could make a winning case for aviation as the greatest achievement of the 20th century. With flight came the instant realization that with it went communications. Freed from the inherent constraints of all modes of surface travel, communications transported by air – airmail – provided a quantum leap in the advance of mail delivery, and with it the pace of all facets of human life.

Airmail is the philatelic and postal historical reflection of the development of aviation and its effect on world communications. Consider the development of aviation itself and one can find it reflected in the mail that was flown:

The path . . .

the limited flights of the pioneers, with special demonstration flights sanctioned to carry souvenir “airmail,” whose successes inspired . . .

The development of aircraft in all forms, becoming increasingly fast, range-capable, and reliable, thereby making possible . . .

The air carriers, from regional to national, international, intercontinental, and transoceanic; and at every step, from the hesitant first to the confident final, there was – airmail!

Airmail, the actual flown documents, is the foundation of aerophilately. It was

not always the standard that it is today, but a premium service requiring the payment of special postage rates, often reflected in the airmail stamps that have been issued world-wide since early in the game. Special airmail markings applied to the airmail, the transit times reflected in dispatch and arrival postmarks, and the airmail postage rates all indicate the means of flight and the route taken. The world for the airmail collector is as wide and deep as one wishes to make it. The choice is unlimited. Consider . . .

- The development of the early routes, continuously being extended to reach new regions, nations, and continents.
- The major efforts made to advance airmail delivery by hours or even minutes.
- The contributions of the Zeppelins and flying boats, aviation dinosaurs which made transoceanic airmail a reality before land-based airplanes had that capability.
- The evolution of air transport service networks, interconnecting with one another to cover the world.

The world of airmail, all of which is a product of less than one century, offers the collector almost limitless choice. Much of it is yet untapped, still waiting to challenge the initiative and creativity of an airmail collector – an aerophilatelist!

For further insights into this fascinating world of philately, read on . . . →

### *What is Airmail?*

*James W. Graue*

*Above:*

Taking off with the mail in Washington, D.C. on May 15, 1918. (National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution)

Cover collecting is a wide open field and an extension of stamp collecting. A “cover” is an envelope that has seen postal service. Many have “cachets,” a

rubber stamped or printed impression or label placed on the cover descriptive of the event for which it was mailed. Collecting airmail covers can be as

### *Collecting Covers*

*Jonathan L. Johnson, Jr.*