

Synopsis of “The ‘Golden Age of Flight’: An Airmail Collector’s Wonderland”

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	Note: A shorter version of this article appeared in <i>The Airpost Journal</i> , July/August 2025 issue, pp. 10-31, with the title, “Mail Theft in the Golden Age of Airmail.”
Significance/ Objective	To highlight the range of aerophilatelic materials produced during the late 1920s and early 1930s, a period known as the “Golden Age of Flight.” The article is based on a subset of more than 100 primarily aviation-related covers amassed contemporaneously by a young boy in Milwaukee named Willard Roberts and his older sister Milo. Included in the collection are first flight covers (domestic and foreign), Lindbergh-related materials, three <i>Graf Zeppelin</i> items, airport dedication covers, and a variety of other covers, including a first day of issue cover, with an aviation theme. The covers were provided to Willard and Milo courtesy of their uncle, Herman C. Pietsch, the assistant postmaster of Milwaukee, and his supervisor, Postmaster Peter Piasecki. The story has a bizarre twist in that in May 1931, “Uncle Herman,” after a postal career of more than 30 years, was caught pilfering money from the mails, found guilty and sentenced to five years at Leavenworth. Despite that, Herman never lost his fascination with air mail as shown by covers from the mid-1940s in the collection.
Originality:	I am not aware of any other article that surveys aerophilatelic materials from the late 1920s and early 1930s. I know for a fact that the collection of Willard Roberts (which I acquired at a Rasdale auction in May 2024) has not been described elsewhere in philatelic literature. The research I did on Herman Pietsch’s legal woes also has not appeared in any publication other than news articles from 1931 and 1932.
Research:	The article required genealogical, social, and philatelic research. I figured out the relationship between Herman Pietsch and Willard Roberts by sleuthing on Ancestry.com. Newspaper searches on “Herman Pietsch” led to articles on his arrest and trial in the <i>Milwaukee Journal</i> , <i>Milwaukee Sentinel</i> , and the <i>Milwaukee Leader</i> . Those same searches uncovered articles describing both Pietsch’s and Piasecki’s activities around the state of Wisconsin. For background on the aviation events and covers, I relied on a combination of the <i>American Air Mail Catalogue</i> (volume 1, 7 th edition); the <i>Aircraft Year Books</i> from 1928 through 1931; the 2025 <i>Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers</i> ; <i>The Postal Bulletin</i> from the time; and a host of news articles from local and national newspapers.
Technical:	The article is illustrated with 40 images with informative captions. Citations are included under “Resources.”
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