

Synopsis of “An Air Mail First in Milwaukee”

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Note: A condensed version of this article targeted at non-collectors was published in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Fall 2025, pp. 6-7, with the title “An Airmail First.” The magazine is a publication of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Significance/
Objective: This article brings to light an event that may have been unique in the history of the postal service: A pick-up of mail by an airplane from a downtown post office. I discovered the details of this event by researching a single cover in my collection. It was one of more than 100 covers that I picked up at a Rasdale auction in May 2024, many of which I showcase in another article that I submitted for this competition titled, “The ‘Golden Age of Flight’: An Airmail Collector’s Wonderland.”

This event occurred in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on August 1, 1928, the first day that a lower airmail rate went into effect. The article begins by highlighting the excitement that the lower airmail rate generated across the United States and then zeros in on the events in Milwaukee that included a giant talking mailbox and a parade down Wisconsin Avenue featuring two folding wing Fairchild (not “Fairfield” as spelled in the article) planes. I have a hard time imagining such an event generating much excitement today.

I thought the history of this event would appeal to a broader audience, so after this appeared in the *APJ*, I submitted a slightly different version to the editor of the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*. The main difference was the introduction: I removed references to how the reduction in the airmail rate was promoted in places like Atlanta, Georgia and Bellingham, Washington. The editor knew a version had previously appeared in the *APJ*. The topic appealed to the magazine staff, and the article ran in the Fall 2025 issue. It was about 500 words shorter than the *APJ* version and included two images instead of eight.

Originality: I could not find an article on this event in another publication. After news reports appeared in *The Milwaukee Leader* on August 1 and 2, 1928, it appears to have been forgotten. The two photos of Fairchild planes in downtown Milwaukee (Figures 6 and 7 in the article) were buried in the photo archives of the Milwaukee County Historical Society (MCHS), and to my knowledge, this is the first time they have appeared in print.

Research: My primary sources of information were Newspapers.com and the MCHS. Another helpful resource was the Canada Aviation and Space Museum.

Technical: The article is illustrated with eight images with informative captions. Citations are included in the text.

Synopsis Date: September 25, 2025.