

PHILATELIC BULLETIN



Sarasota Philatelic Club

2025

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President:	Patricia Stilwell Walker
VP Operations:	Liz Hisey
VP Programs:	Mark Issacs
Treasurer:	Dan Walker
Secretary:	Jack Harwood — acting
Editor:	Vincent Centonze
Directors:	Vacant 2 Dick Murphy

2025 BOOSTERS

Frank Blum	Bill DiPaolo
Mariano DeLise	Dawn Hamman
Barbara Noah	John Hamman
Phil Billard	Liz Hisey
Al Light	Bob Inderbitzen
Pat & Dan Walker	Jim Mazepa
Peter McCann	Dick Murphy
Gisela Weinland	Vernon Mayer
Phil Leber	Yamil Kouri
Mark Isaacs	David Landry
Jack Seaman	Larry Smith
Joe Reichenbach	Roy Smith

The Amazing Story of Lisandro Garay and His Contribution to Philately

By Vincent Centonze

The item shown in Figure 1 is a Honduras carmine 50 centavos (c) airmail stamp issued on 6/5/29 (Scott C13C). The stamp features a monoplane over a small portrait of Honduran aviator Lisandro Garay. For collectors of Honduras, this beautifully engraved stamp is a welcomed change from previous Honduras airmail stamps, which were typographed regular issues overprinted and surcharged for airmail. On the same day the Garay stamp was released, Honduras also released the basic stamp surcharged in the amounts of 5, 10, 15, and 20 centavos for semipostal use (Scott CB1 – CB4). Figure 2 shows a first-day cover franked with the basic Garay airmail stamp along with the semipostal stamps sent locally within the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa. The cover was addressed by Garay; other similar covers are known.

Lisandro Garay is a Honduran national hero, but he wasn't always one. Rather... I should say that he wasn't, until he was, then he wasn't, now, finally, he is again. If that sounds confusing, it's because Garay's career was one of ups and downs. He was born 7/5/1899, in San Sebastian, Honduras.¹ Before he was an aviator, Garay worked as a teacher, carpenter, automobile mechanic, and driver.² He was an enthusiastic, ambitious, and intelligent young man. Prospects for such a talent as his were limited in Honduras. Therefore, in 1920, he emigrated to the U.S. by faking that he was from Puerto Rico so that he could meet the citizenship requirement, and he enrolled in the Metropolitan Police Aviation School in New York City to learn about radios, mechanics, and aviation.³ The U.S. Navy took over the school in 1922, so Garay joined the Navy as an aviator and learned to fly seaplanes. He became a U.S. citizen in 1925 despite his initial ruse of being from Puerto Rico.⁴



Figure 1. Lisandro Garay airmail stamp of 1929.

Stamp Quiz



Welcome to this month's Stamp Quiz. Here's a hint: this stamp was issued on July 12th, 1974. It is part of an extended set with values that were issued between 1973 and 1978. It is perforated 14 and was printed by photogravure for the frame and

engraving for the vignette. If you think you know the answer, send your guesses to me at: centonzevincent@gmail.com. Good luck!



Figure 2. Garay airmail stamp and four airmail semipostal stamps on a local overfranked philatelically inspired first day cover sent by Garay.

Continued on next page



The Prez Sez ...

Fourteen members and guests enjoyed the talk by Jim Mazepa about this favorite things—I enjoyed the variety of reasons items became his “favorites”. Also, he showed a few famous stamps, because we don’t necessarily have to own our favorites, do we!

Thanks to Babs Noah we enjoyed cookies with our stamps. After the formal program, members looked over items that our guests had brought with the aim of giving advice about what they had and what options they had for selling or donating. We would like to make such an activity a regular part of each meeting.

In December we will have a Holiday Party at Liz Hisey’s house.

Drinks will be provided, plan to bring a dish to share. More details in next month’s Bulletin.

Next Meeting

November 4th –5:30 PM

Fruitville Library

Topic/Speaker:

Phil Leber will give a talk titled “The Post Office Dept. vs. The Telegraph – The Battle for Communications Supremacy”

The Amazing Story of Lisandro Garay and His Contribution to Philately (cont.)

After he was discharged from the Navy in 1926, he continued flying as a barnstormer across the U.S., using old WWI planes that he purchased with some friends.⁵ Garay was an excellent pilot, and barnstorming shows drew large crowds.



Figure 3. President Miguel Paz Baraone definitive of 1931.

Garay had become famous in his home country because of his flying exploits and was commissioned a Captain in the Honduran air force. In 1928 he returned to Honduras to popular acclaim and received a medal from Honduran President Miguel Paz Baraone for being the first Honduran to become a pilot in the U.S.⁶ Figure 3 shows the 1c black brown stamp from the issue of 1931 with a portrait of Baraone (Scott 298). While he was in Honduras, because of his fame, he made friends in high places. Garay also made some notable local flights. Figure 4 shows a first-flight cover postmarked 9/3/29 from San Pedro Sula to Tegucigalpa, a distance of about 160 miles. The cover is signed by Garay and the postmaster general and addressed to Mariano P. Guevara, a Honduran politician. Also, in February 1929, U.S. Foreign Contract Air Mail Route number 5 (FAM-5) was inaugurated to provide service from Miami to Cristobal in the Panama Canal Zone. On 10/4/29 the first international air mail from Tegucigalpa was dispatched by domestic air mail to connect with the FAM-5 at Tela, on the northern coast of Honduras. This first flight from Tegucigalpa to Tela may have been piloted by Garay. Figure 5 shows a first-flight cover from Tegucigalpa to New York. It is addressed to Garay, care of the Honduran Consul General in New York.

According to the *American Air Mail Catalogue*, the first flight occurred on 9/27/29; however, the cover in Figure 5 is postmarked on 10/4/29.⁷

In 1929 Garay told friends of his idea to fly nonstop from the U.S. to Honduras, and several of them, including the editor of the Honduran newspaper *La Tribuna*, decided to sponsor Garay and raise funds to purchase an airplane.⁸ Garay wasted no time in making his plans. He selected a Bellanca *Pacemaker* aircraft, which would be given the name of *Lempira*, a 16th century chief of the indigenous *Lenca* people and a Honduran national hero who is portrayed on several Honduran stamps.⁹

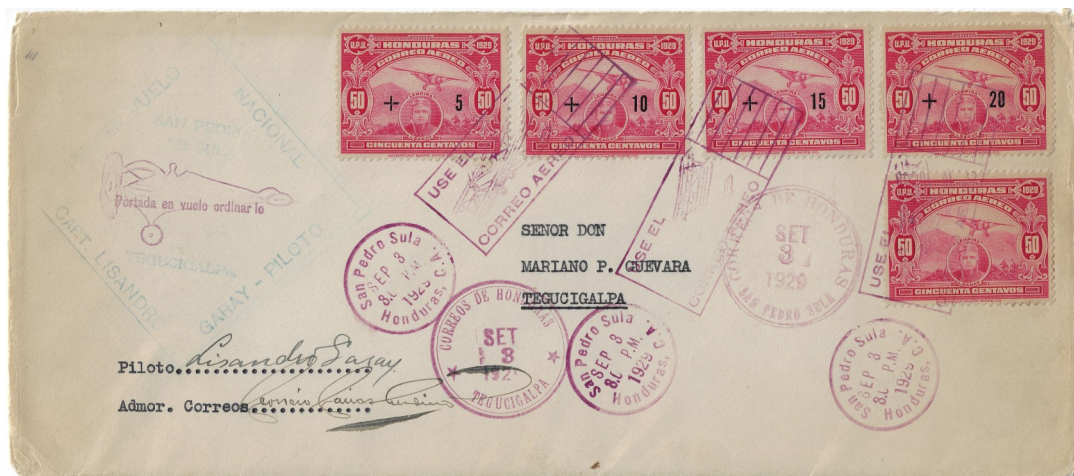


Figure 4. First-flight cover postmarked 9/3/29 from San Pedro Sula, on the north coast of Honduras, to the capital city, Tegucigalpa. The cover is signed by Garay.

Continued on next page

The Amazing Story of Lisandro Garay and His Contribution to Philately (cont.)



Figure 5. First-flight cover from Tegucigalpa to New York, addressed to Garay, care of the Honduran Consul General in New York.

Figure 6 shows the 20c dark blue stamp from the definitive issue of 1927 with a red “1929 á 1930” overprint featuring Lempira (Scott 275). The Honduran government also became involved from the outset in 1929 because after Garay made known his plans to name the aircraft the *Lempira*, the Garay stamp was issued showing a Bellanca Pacemaker and bearing the proposed name. While the basic stamp was issued to honor Garay and promote the upcoming nonstop flight, there can be little doubt that the semi-postal surcharged stamps were issued to raise funds for the endeavor. Over U.S. \$25,000 was collected (almost half-a-million dollars today) entrusted to the Honduran Ambassador in Washington.¹⁰ Covers are known franked with the Garay semi-postal stamps, sent from the *Comité de Aviación Pro Garay* to stamp dealers including Victor Weiskopf and Kalenik Lissiuik, presumably selling the stamps in bulk quantities.

Meanwhile, back in Honduras, from the time they gained independence from Spain in 1821 there was a seemingly endless cycle of revolts and counter-revolts. In an unprecedented peaceful transfer of power, Vicente Mejía Colindres became president on 2/1/1929 after defeating Baraona in the election.¹¹ Despite the fair election, Colindres had no sooner taken office when new threats of revolution emerged from a political enemy, General Gregorio Ferrera, who had been fomenting unrest since 1925.¹² Ferrera had been in exile in Guatemala since the previous civil war, where he could keep close tabs on events unfolding in Honduras.¹³ With a new president in place, Ferrera saw an opportunity to take over the government. Because of the unstable situation and concern by the government, when Garay attempted to access the funds to purchase the *Lempira*, the Honduran Ambassador initially refused to release the money. The Ambassador insisted that Garay should do his patriotic duty and hand the funds over to the government to purchase weapons. However, Garay argued against it; the Ambassador relented and released the funds to Garay. Garay hurriedly purchased the aircraft in late 1930.¹⁴ With Honduran government approval, Garay announced that his non-stop flight would take place on 6/8/31.¹⁵ The Honduran government must have realized the propaganda value of the flight because despite its reluctance to release the funds, the embassy confirmed that Garay would attempt the nonstop flight; he would fly from Wilmington, Delaware, over the Caribbean, Mexico, and Guatemala.¹⁶ Although Garay succeeded in purchasing the aircraft, his refusal to relinquish the funds was a strike against him in the eyes of the Honduran government.

In April 1931, General Ferrera launched his new all-out insurrection against the government from Guatemalan territory.¹⁷ This created more problems for Garay. Now that he had purchased the *Lempira*, the government ordered him to bring it to Honduras for use as a bomber against Ferrera's forces. Once again, Garay refused, claiming the aircraft was not suitable as a bomber. This time the Honduran government accused him of cowardice and refusal to obey orders.¹⁸ Fortunately for Garay, fate intervened and Ferrera's rebel troops were defeated by government forces in June 1931.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the damage to Garay's reputation was done. That same month, the Honduran embassy informed the U.S. government that Garay's diplomatic passport was to be revoked because he was to be subjected to a court-martial in Honduras.²⁰



Figure 6. 16th century tribal chief, Lempira, after whom Garay's aircraft was named, shown on a 1931 stamp.

The Amazing Story of Lisandro Garay and His Contribution to Philately (cont.)

The U.S. complied with Honduras' demands and issued an order forbidding Garay to fly the *Lempira*. To add insult to injury, the Honduran embassy hired another pilot, Wilfred Reid, a Canadian World War I flying ace, to fly the *Lempira* to Honduras.²¹ Therefore, Garay did what any self-respecting aviator aspiring to greatness would do... he stole the aircraft from its hanger in Delaware and flew to New York's Floyd Bennet field where he secretly refueled and departed for Honduras. On 8/9/1931, despite the danger of being arrested upon his arrival in Tegucigalpa, Garay began his non-stop flight to Honduras.²²

After Garay absconded with the aircraft and began his flight, the Honduran Embassy reported to the newspapers, "serious charges, based on alleged disobedience of orders are pending against Captain Garay in Honduras."²³ Garay was now a wanted man by both the Government of Honduras and the Delaware police.²⁴

Unfortunately, the flight did not go well for Garay. When he reached the coast of North Carolina, he flew into a hurricane and crashed landed in the ocean. Incredibly, he managed to break the glass windshield, crawl out of the inverted aircraft in heavy seas, and cling to the wreckage for 36 hours before being rescued by the Brazilian vessel S.S. *Biboco*. The saying that "every dark cloud has a silver lining" is true because this made the hapless Garay the first pilot to be rescued at sea.²⁵ Figure 7 shows a photo of the *Biboco*. A news dispatch reported his survival on 8/11/1931 as follows:

*HONDURAN FLIER, GIVEN UP FOR LOST, RESCUED AT SEA
SAVANNAH, GA... THE U.S. SHIPPING BOARD STEAMSHIP BIBOCO, WHICH IS REPORTED HAVING RESCUED
THE HONDURAN FLIER, LISANDRO GARAY, WHO LEFT NEW YORK ON AN ATTEMPT TO COMPLETE A NON-
STOP FLIGHT FROM NEW YORK TO HONDURAS (sic). UNHEARD FROM IN MANY HOURS HE WAS GIVEN UP
FOR LOST, BUT THE SHIP HAS RADIOED THE NEWS OF THE RESCUE AT SEA. THE "BIBOCO" GAVE NO POSI-
TION, BUT REPORTED IT WAS MAKING PORT AT SAVANNAH WITH THE RESCUED FLIER. B-AUG/11/31*

The *Biboco* took him to Savannah, Georgia, where he received a hero's welcome. It was thought that he was killed, and when the news broke that he was rescued at sea, he became an instant celebrity throughout America and Europe. Shortly after his rescue, he returned to his house in New York and was honored at a banquet offered to him as recognition for his valor and tenacity.²⁶

Regrettably, his incredible survival and rescue at sea did nothing to assuage the feelings of the Honduran government. Regarding the charges pending against him, Garay was either unaware or decided not to take them seriously. After he was rescued, he denied that he faced possible court-martial in Honduras and said he would return to Honduras with no fear of adverse action.²⁷ Garay could not have been more wrong; despite his renewed hero status, he was arrested the next month. Through Honduran government subterfuge and forged documents, the U.S. arrested Garay and deported him back to Honduras, where he was immediately taken into custody and interrogated.²⁸ Garay refuted accusations of being disloyal to Honduras. Because he still had popular support as well as friends in the government, he was ultimately released, though forbidden to leave the country. He remained in aviation for twenty more years, and taught flying to Honduran flight students.²⁹

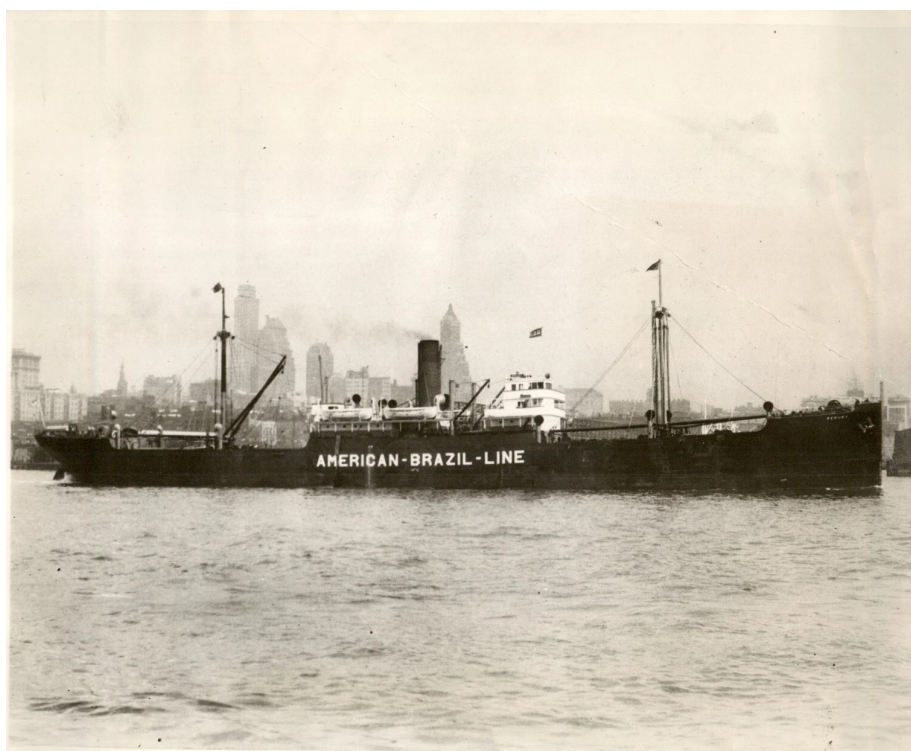


Figure 7. The Brazilian steamship S.S. *Biboco* rescued Garay after a harrowing 36 hours at sea, clinging to his floating aircraft. It took him back to a hero's welcome in Savannah, GA.

Garay's story has an inglorious ending. After retiring from aviation in 1952, he struggled to survive and ended up living in poverty. In the late 1970s, Garay was finally permitted to move back to the United States, where his children lived. By 1997 he was living at a nursing home in Las Vegas, Nevada. He died there at the age of 98 on 2/15/97, from complications arising from pneumonia and was buried in his Honduran pilot's uniform and flight cap, at the Veterans Cemetery in Boulder City, Nevada.³⁰

Continued on next page

The Amazing Story of Lisandro Garay and His Contribution to Philately (cont.)

History has been kind to Lisandro Garay, and he is now considered a Honduran hero. Figure 8 shows a photo of Garay taken in 1928 and his Bellanca Pacemaker aircraft, the *Lempira*. I don't believe that there are yet any modern Honduras postage stamps depicting Garay, I suspect that will happen eventually. Yet for us he has already left a rich aerophilatelic legacy. (Note: There was a book written about Garay, published in Honduras in 2003, titled *de la adversidad a la gloria: una biografía de Lisandro Garay (from adversity to glory: a biography of Lisandro Garay)* by José Reina Valenzuela. Unfortunately for non-Spanish speakers like me, it is only available in Spanish.)



(Left) Figure 8. Captain Lisandro Garay in 1928 and his Bellanca Pacemaker aircraft, the *Lempira*. The *Lempira* was salvaged from the sea when Garay was rescued, but, regrettably, was later destroyed in a fire.

References

1. Wikipedia. *Lisandro Garay*. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisandro_Garay (Accessed 10/5/25)
2. Soto, Tulio R. "Honduras Forgotten Hero." *Latin American Aviation Historical Society website*. <http://www.laahs.com>. As cited in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, (September 2007), Vol. XXIII (3), pages 24.
3. Wikipedia. *Lisandro Garay*.
4. Soto, as cited in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 24.
5. Internet Archive Wayback Machine. *Honduras – Historical Review*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150403024158/http://clacsec.lima.icao.int/CLAC-RH/RH-honduras.htmk> (Accessed on 10/5/25)
7. *American Air Mail Catalogue Volume 3, 6th ed.* American Air Mail Society, 2004. Page 41.
6. Sota, as cited in in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 24.
8. Internet Archive Wayback Machine. *Honduras – Historical Review*.
9. Sota, as cited in in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 24.
10. Ibid. Page 24.
11. Wikipedia. *Vicente Mejia Colindres*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vicente_Mej%C3%ADa_Colindres. (Accessed 10/5/25)
12. University of Central Arkansas – Government, Public Service, and International Studies College website. *Honduras (1902 – present)*. <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/western-hemisphere-region/honduras-1902-present/> (Accessed on 10/5/25)
13. Wikipedia. *Gregorio Ferrera*. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorio_Ferrera. (Accessed 10/5/25)
14. Sota, as cited in in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 25.
15. Internet Archive Wayback Machine. *Honduras – Historical Review*.
16. Ibid.
17. Wikipedia. *Gregorio Ferrera*.
18. Sota, as cited in in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 25.
19. University of Central Arkansas – Government, Public Service, and International Studies College website. *Honduras (1902 – present)*.
20. Internet Archive Wayback Machine. *Honduras – Historical Review*.
21. Sota, as cited in in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 25.
22. Internet Archive Wayback Machine. *Honduras – Historical Review*.
23. "Await Word of Acosta Hop." *The Brooklyn Eagle*, 10 August 1931, page 1.
24. Sota, as cited in in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 25.
25. Internet Archive Wayback Machine. *Honduras – Historical Review*.
26. Sota, as cited in in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 25.
27. "Flier Clung 35 Hours To Plane's Tail in Sea." *The Brooklyn Eagle*, 13 August 1931, page 3.
28. Sota, as cited in in *The Canadian Aerophilatelist*, page 26.
29. Ibid. Page 26.
30. Ibid. Page 26.

Sarasota Philatelic Club

PO Box 20625 Bradenton, FL 34204

www.sarasotastampclub.com



APS Chapter 353

For information: sns-exhibits@comcast.net