

Transcontinental Air Mail and Issue of 1928



Poway Stamp Club

Presented Oct 10, 2023

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Ron Couchot

Background: Initial Government Period:

Washington-Philadelphia-New York

(and return daily)

May 15, 1918 USPOD

bi-planes with pilots from
the War Dept

24¢ per oz. w/ Special
Delivery (Sp Del)

(Note: No Sunday Delivery)

Rate ended July 13, 1918



May 31, 1918

First rate reduction to increase demand

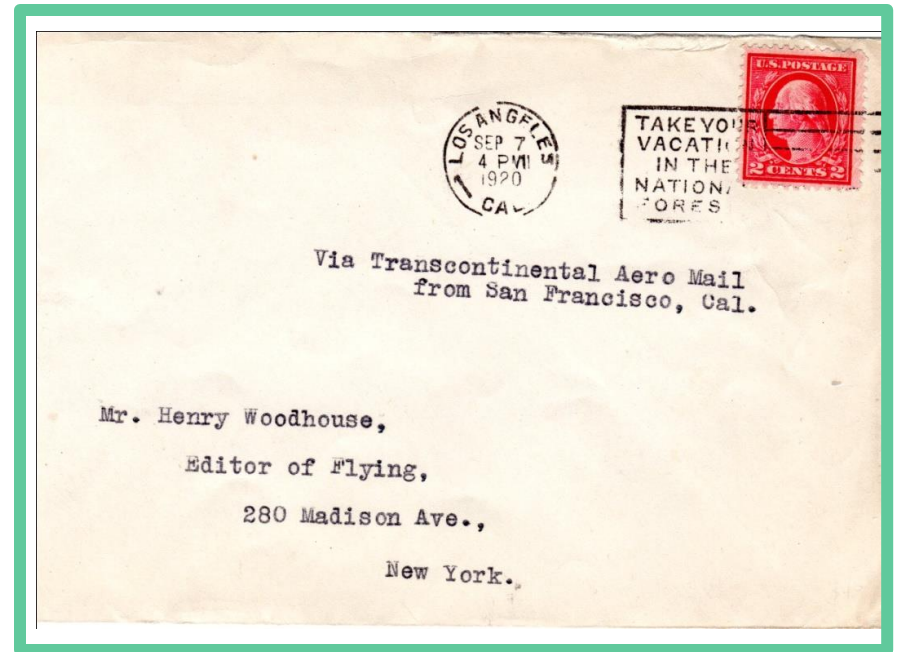
July 15-December 14, 1918, (POD)

Rate Change 16¢ per oz. w/Sp Del

Initial Government Period, cont'd

On December 15, 1918, the rate was reduced again to 6¢ per oz. No Special Del and remained static until July 13, 1919.

On July 18, 1919, the PMG amended the PL&R that aeroplane is first class mail shall be 2 cents per oz.



September 7, 1920

AMENDMENT TO POSTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

OFFICE OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

ORDER NO. 3336

Washington, July 18, 1919

Effective this date, the Postal Laws and Regulations are amended so that paragraph 2 of section 399J shall read as follows: Mail carried by aeroplane shall be charged with postage at the rate of 2 cents an ounce or fraction thereof. Such mail shall consist of matter of the first class, including sealed parcels not exceeding 30 inches in length and girth combined. No special aeroplane postage stamps will be required on such mail; any stamps good for postage may be used.

A. S. BURLESON, Postmaster General.

Flying Limitations

- Most aircraft were open cockpit.
- Navigation methods were rudimentary (Piloting only).
 - Daytime flights Route charts required following Roads, Railroads, Rivers and other landmarks.
 - Nighttime flights included some celestial, but with cloud cover and fog obscuration this was not reliable.
- RDF was crude and lacked reliability.
- Early attempts at nighttime mail flights included the use of bonfires and oil pots limited visual range.
- Reliability and Schedule was very important to USPOD.

Government Route (Transcontinental):

First Government Zone

July 01, 1925- January 31, 1927, New York—
Chicago-New York (Zone established). 2¢ per
oz. First Class Rate with 8¢ per oz. Zone fee.

July 01, 1925- July 31, 1927, Chicago-New York
(overnight) 10¢ per oz.

Intermediate stops included: Bryan, OH;
Cleveland, OH; and Bellefonte, PA.

Government Route

Three Zones were established:

July 01, 1924-January 31, 1927

New York-Chicago

Chicago-Cheyenne, WY

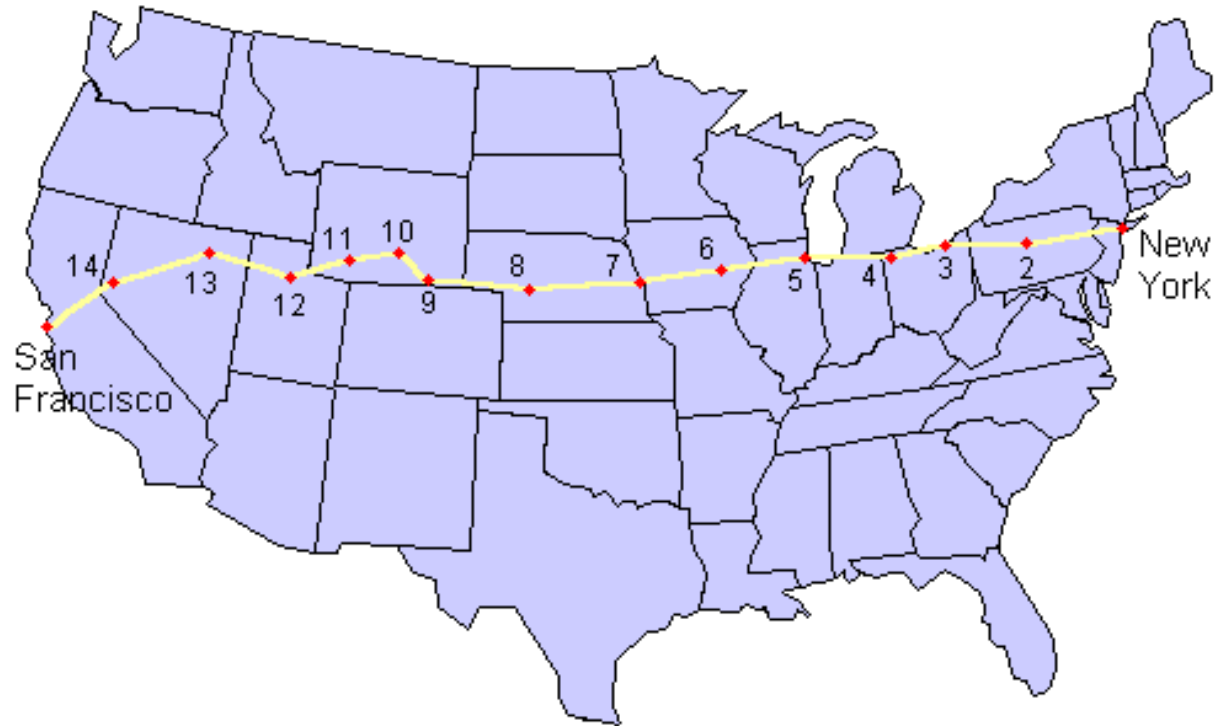
Cheyenne-San Francisco

Zone Rate set at 8¢ per oz., per Zone

and *air mail no longer “...in addition to...”*

Transcontinental (NY-SF) Air Mail Route

Scheduled Stops



2. Bellefonte, PA 3. Cleveland, OH 4. Bryan, OH 5. Chicago, IL
6. Iowa City, IO 7. Omaha, NE 8. North Platte, NE 9. Cheyenne, WY
10. Rawlins, WY 11. Rock Springs, WY 12. Salt Lake City, UT
13. Elko, NV 14. Reno, NV

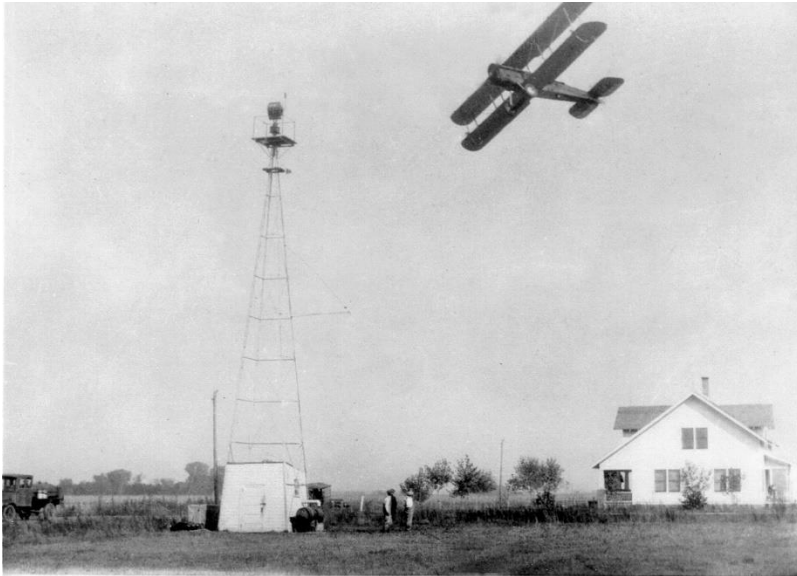
Publicity Photos (1924-25)

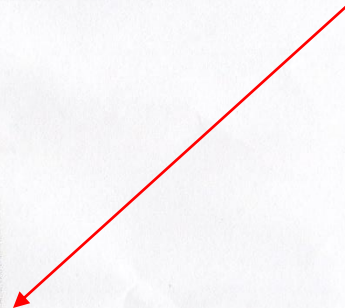
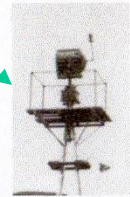
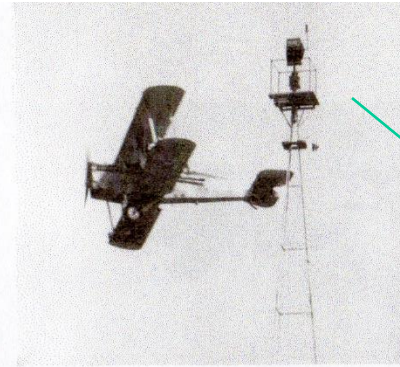
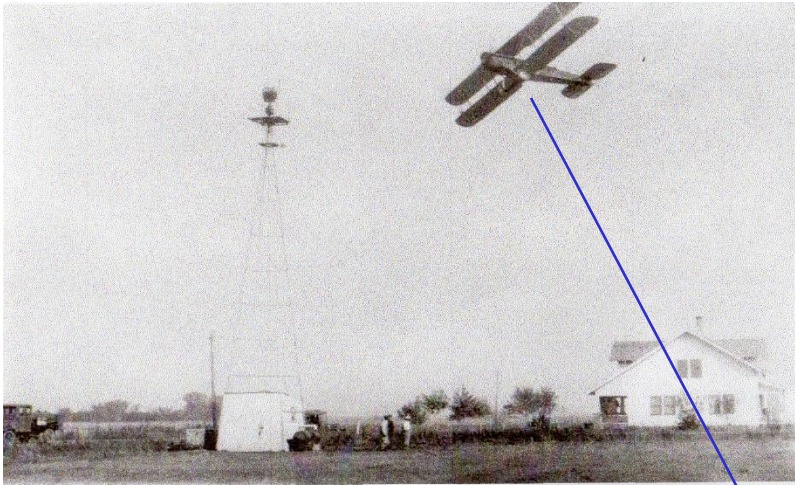
Col. Paul Henderson, 2nd Assistant PMG (Division of Air Mail Service) publicity photo of the transcontinental air mail service.



In November 1924, the PM sent a roll of film to the Airway Keeper of the 8,859ft (USGS survey) Pilot Hill, Wyoming

January 1925, Carl F. Egge, the Supervisor of Air Mail Services, hired Omaha commercial photographer, Nat M. Dewell, to take some photos of the Beacon at Wann, Nebraska.

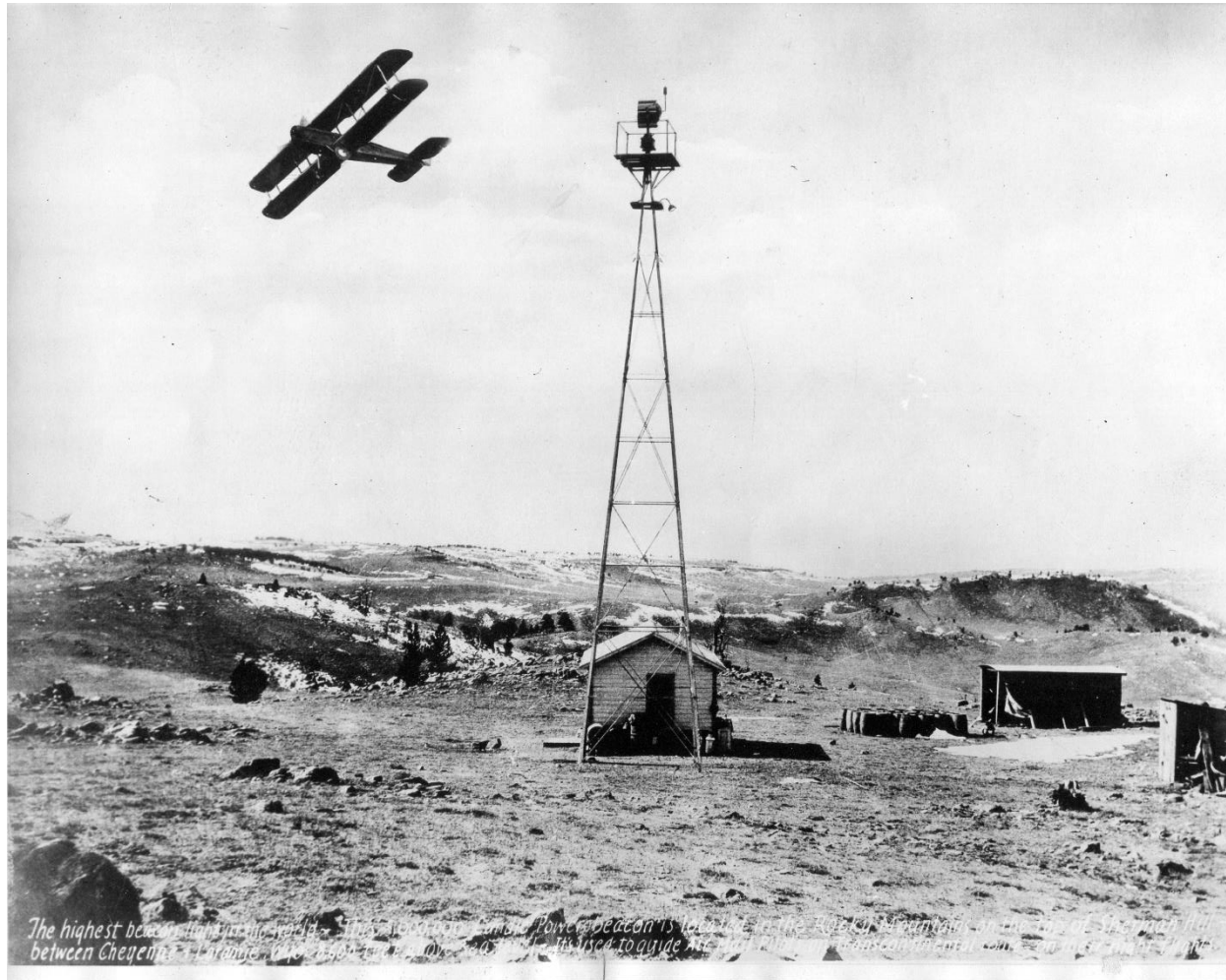




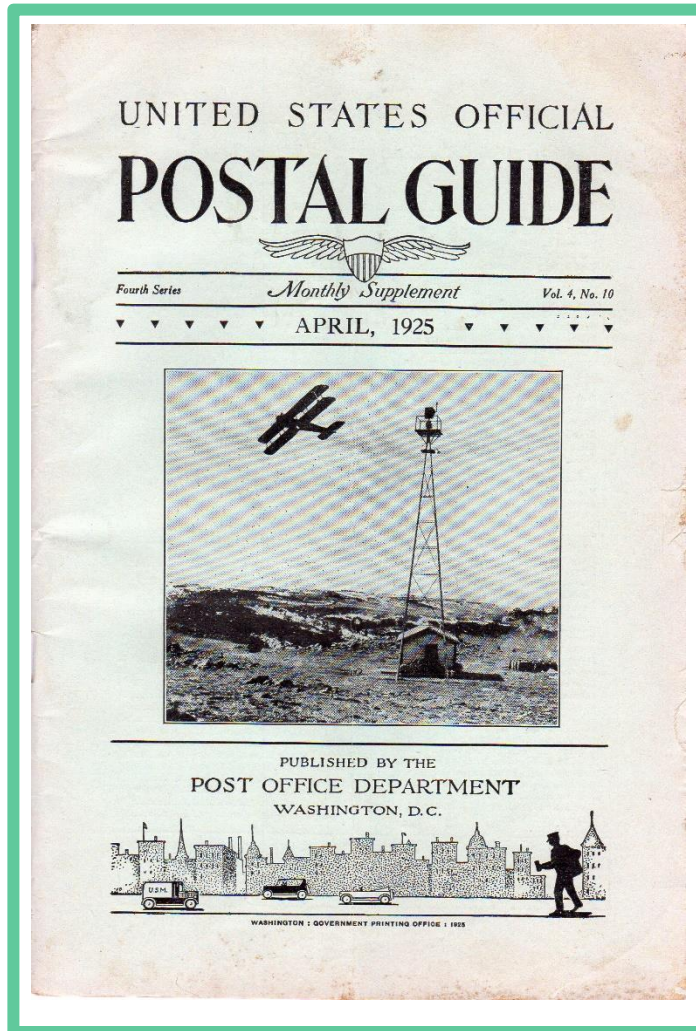
- How the composite was accomplished.

Composite Photo

(using Pilot Hill Landscape)



United States Official Postal Guide



Monthly Supplement
April 1925

Used as Advertising

- Aero Digest June 1925
- Aviation Dec 22, 1924

JULY, 1925 AERO DIGEST three cents-five



THE U. S. AIR MAIL—AND GOODYEAR

THAT 1,900 mile beacon-lit stretch of the U. S. Air Mail route blazes nightly as an announcement that the era of aerial transportation is here! It's the greatest white way, over which roar the planes carrying heavy cargoes of valuable correspondence. "... snow, nor rain, nor wind, nor night, can stay the pilot in his flight."

Nor want of dependable rubber equipment. For Goodyear provides the U. S. Air Mail Service the same source of supply that has assisted the military and commercial airmen to maintain their progress. Goodyear agrees with farsighted Post Office authorities that aerial transportation is even now ready for wider use in the commercial world. Goodyear is ready to help in any way possible. Goodyear makes everything in rubber for the airplane; balloons and airships of every size and type. Write Goodyear, Akron, Ohio, for any information you want.

The GOODYEAR RUBBER CORPORATION, a subsidiary of The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, holds the U. S. patent and manufacturing rights of high-strength-cord tires, and is ready to build duplicate models of all tire types for any requirements of commercial service or national defense.

GOODYEAR
AVIATION EQUIPMENT

Say you saw it in AERO DIGEST.

AVIATION
The Oldest American Aeronautical Magazine

DECEMBER 22, 1924 Issued Weekly PRICE 10 CENTS



The world's highest beacon—on the Air Mail route between Cheyenne and Laramie.

VOLUME XVII

SPECIAL FEATURES

NUMBER 25

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN AIR RACING
WORLD SPEED RECORD BEATEN IN FRANCE
THE TENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE N.A.C.A.
NEW LINCOLN STANDARD SPORT PLANE DESCRIBED

GARDNER PUBLISHING CO., Inc.
HIGHLAND, N. Y.
225 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

Carrier payments and passenger encouragement were the keys to success.

The Kelly Air Mail Act of 1925/1926

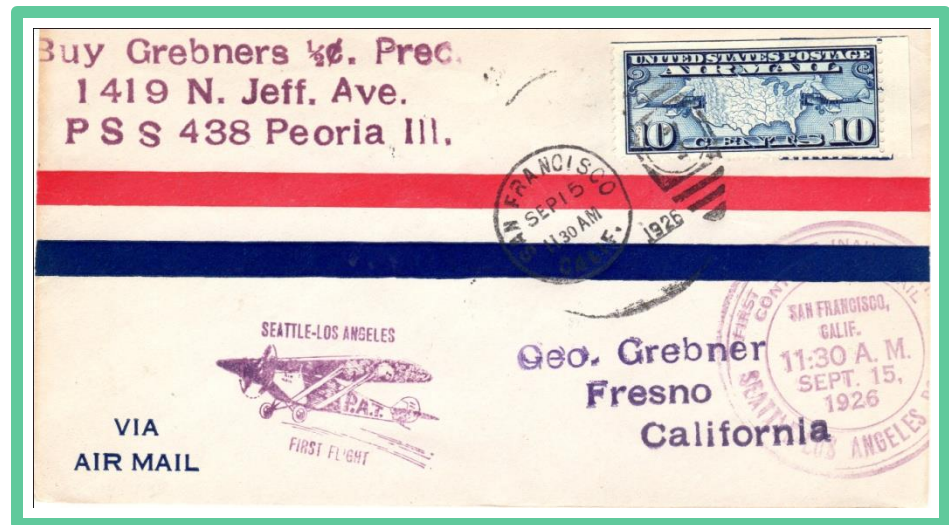
- Provided \$ 3.00 per lb for the first 1000 miles.
- Plus 30¢/ lb for each additional 100 miles.
(10¢ per ½ oz. POD received \$ 3.20 per lb,
at 5¢ per oz. only collected \$ 0.80 per lb.)

Contract Air Mail (POD Order 3817 of Jan 19, 1926)

Initially CAM Routes were primarily feeders to the Government Transcontinental Routes. CAM Carriers received 80% of the monies derived from the sales of the air mail stamp.

February 15, 1926 - January 31, 1927

Contract Air Mail carriers paid @ \$3.00 per lb. Initially, CAMs fed the scheduled intermediate stops on the Government Operated Transcontinental Air Mail System. These rates were in addition to the Government Zone charges:



Rates: 10¢ on routes \leq 1000 miles
15¢ on routes between 1000 and \leq 1500 miles
20¢ on routes $>$ 1500 miles

Contract Air Mail

1926-1927

CAM-1 10¢ per ½ oz.
≤ 1000 miles
(July 1, 1926)

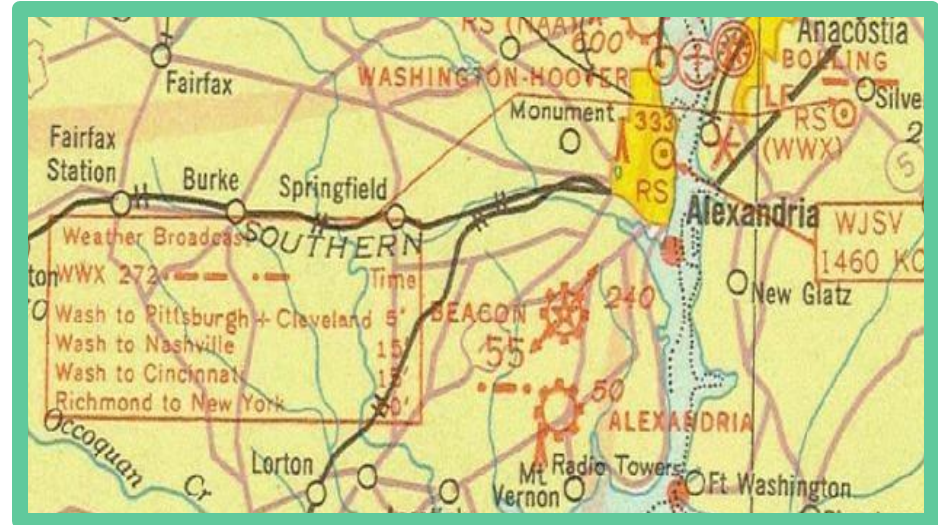


CAM-3 (Springfield to
Chicago) and CAM-17
Chicago to New York 10¢
(September 10, 1926)



U.S. Air Mail was quickly becoming a commercial failure.

- Most carriers were going bankrupt or on the verge of failing
- Air mail was used primarily by business and financial institutions to shorten its “float time.”
- Rates were complex with CAM and Transcontinental Route.
- More aggressive marketing was necessary to increase the mail volume by the public.
- A new domestic air mail **Uniform Rate** was established: 10 per ½ oz.



Nav Chart showing Beacon locations



The Beacon Airway

developed for nighttime flights

- *Simplicity of design and reliability were the precepts.*
- *1923-24 Cheyenne, WY to Chicago, IL.*
 - 289 Flashing gas beacons were installed
 - 5 Terminal Landing Fields
 - 34 Emergency Landing Fields and Support Logistics
- *1924 Airway extended from Chicago, IL to Cleveland, OH and westward from Cheyenne to Rock Springs, WY.*
- *1925 extended again from Cleveland, OH to New York and Rock Springs, WY to Salt Lake City, UT and ultimately to San Francisco, CA.*

Uniform Rate Period (less complex)

February 1, 1927, a “Uniform Domestic Air Mail Rate” was established.

- 10¢ (cents) per ½ ounce rate from Posting to Destination.
- Combined both the former “Government Route” (the Transcontinental) and the various feeder “Contract Routes.”
- The uniform domestic air mail rate concept continued until the formal disestablishment of the domestic airmail (May 1, 1977).

Beacon Airway Technology

Landing Field

Tower was standard 50 ft. windmill structure.

36 in., high intensity gas beacon
(500,000 c.p.) @ 3 rpm

Visibility ~ 130-150 miles

Emergency Field

18 in., high intensity gas beacon
(50,000 c.p.) @ 6 rpm

Visibility 60-70 miles (on clear
nights)

Placement

Beacons placed at 24 - 30 mile
intervals.



Beacon Airway Landing Field

Beacon with location

13B (westbound at the thirteenth field of the leg) marker allows the pilot to determine the position of the aeroplane on the chart.

A double-headed concrete arrow (not shown in this photo) points East and West as a further navigational aid.



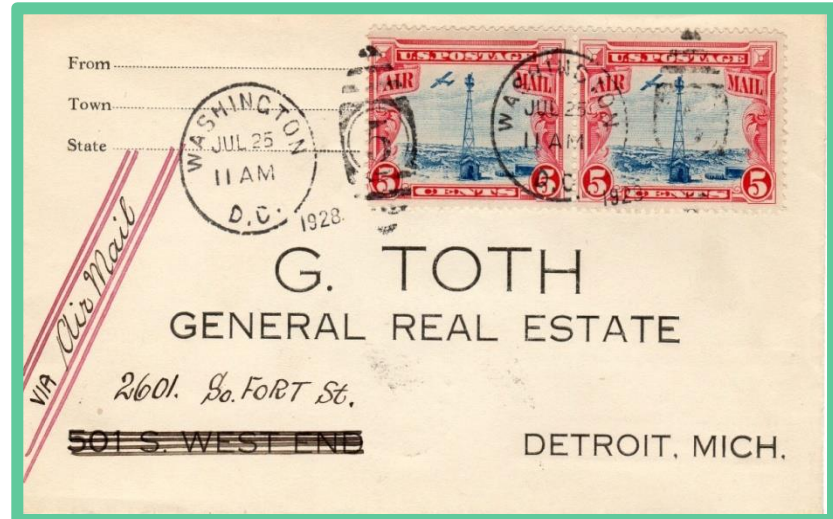
Once approved, this imaginative, colorful Beacon air mail stamp had its issue date set as July 25, 1928.



It was hoped that this 75% rate reduction (5¢ per oz. v. 10¢ per ½ oz.) would save the air mail system by a subsequent increase in volume flown.

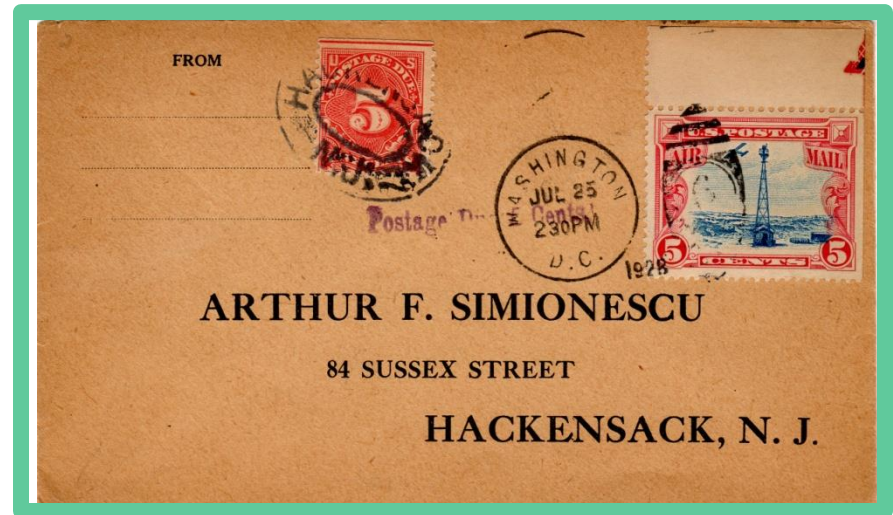
First Day of Issue, July 25, 1928

10¢ per ½ oz. (10 gms) domestic air mail rate would still be in effect for 7 days.



First Day of Issue

10¢ per ½ oz. Domestic
air mail rate
demonstrated by 5¢
postage due.



Unofficial First Day
Cover not fully paid,
but not noted by POD.
(hand back)



First Day of Issue to Belgian Congo

6¢ Domestic air rate to
Exchange Post Office,
Varick St., NY, NY
5¢ surface rate via London –
Antwerp – Boma, to
Elizabethville, Belgian
Congo.

Franking was sufficient for the
5¢ return to sender
surface postage.

Note: Air mail service within
Africa required total
paid of 17¢.

Approximately 54 days were
required from posting to
delivery.



First Day of Issue to China

10¢ per ½ oz. Domestic air mail rate to Seattle, WA.

20¢ paid ½ oz. ≤ 1.0 oz.

5¢ per oz. Surface rate to Shanghai, China, onto destination.¹

Under paid 1¢ not noted.



¹ U.S. Official Postal Guide, July, 1928, Government Printing Office, Wash., D.C.

Late Rate Usage

Machine
cancel
on back
side
verifies
late use.



July 30, 1928, two more
days until 5¢ rate is
in effect.



Last Day of Rate (July 31, 1928)

Commercial use
for $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. \leq 1.0
oz. required
20¢ postage.



First Day of 5¢ Rate, finally!

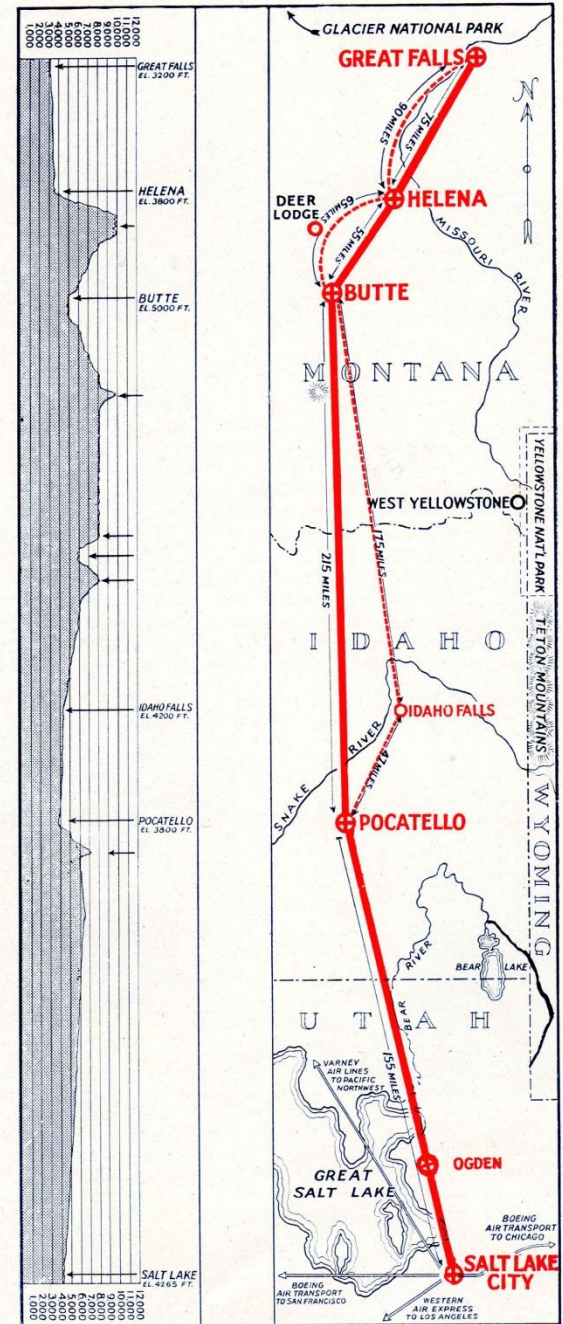
The 5¢ rate was a 75% reduction in air mail rate ($\leq 1^{\text{st}}$ oz. and 10¢ for each additional oz. or portion thereof).



Demonstrating a combination of First Day of Rate and First Flight of CAM 26.



This route extended from Great Falls, MT to Salt Lake City, UT tying the northern region to the Transcontinental Route.



Domestic Use (wrapper)

Franking \$ 1.75

5¢ ≤ 1st oz.

10¢ each add'l oz.

or portion
thereof.

Package
weighed

17 ≤ 18 oz.



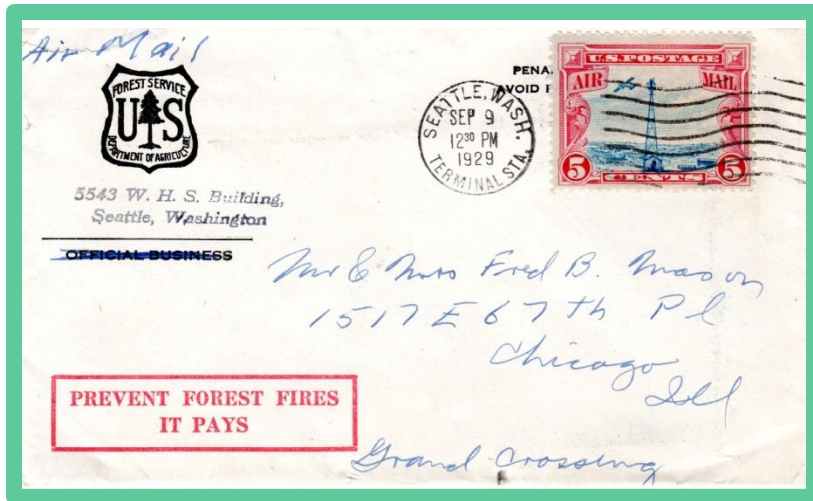
Air Mail Special Delivery

U.S.S. *Melville* transiting Panama Canal



When mailing on-board a U.S. Naval Ship, domestic rates apply.

Domestic Usages



The Government
“Penalty Envelope”
only paid first class.
The Beacon was
added to provide Air
Mail service.

Honolulu Registered Cover
required surface transport to
the Mainland and was Air
mail to destination. Three
day delay noted on cover.



Sea Post (American Flag)

The posting from this ship only occurred one time. This was during the trip of the *SS President Fillmore* to Cuba.

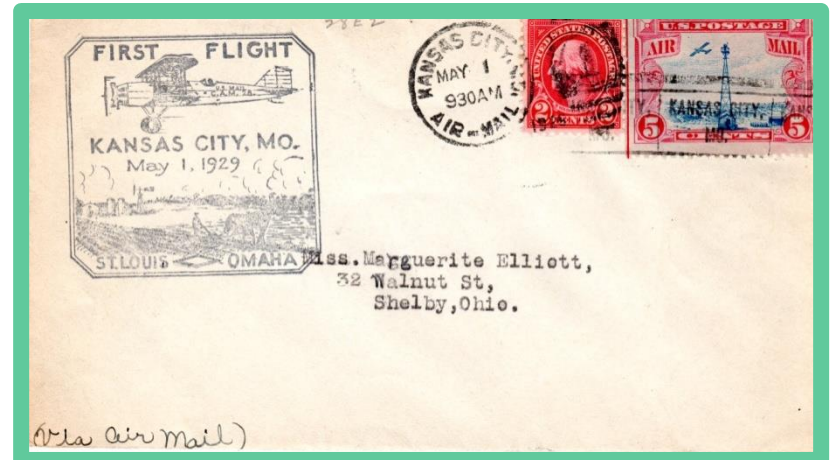
Note: Posting from American Flag shipping lines required U.S. domestic postal rates.



Domestic Overpayment



The early domestic uses of the Beacon can be found with first class postage affixed and the air mail postage being in addition to. The November 1928 Monthly Supplement of the U.S. Postal Guide stated that, ‘... domestic air mail rate included the first class...’



Heavy air mail was discouraged



Greater than 2 oz. \leq 3 oz., thus 25¢ total.

Note: 5¢ \leq 1st ounce and 10¢ for each additional oz. or part thereof...

Greater than 3 oz. \leq 4 oz., required 35¢ total franking.



Combination Air-Surface-Air rate to London/Continent

Normal Domestic Air

5¢ ≤ 1.0 oz

10¢ 1.0 ≤ 2.0 oz.

Combination Rate

air-surface to

London/Europe

4¢ (1st oz.)

8¢ (2nd oz.)

12¢

10¢ (5¢ per oz. surface to London)

Air Supplement Italy

8¢ (4¢ per oz.)

Total paid 25¢, cover short paid, but not
noted, by 5¢.



Air Mail within Europe

- 2¢ First Class Edgewater,
NJ to New York, NY.
 - 5¢ Surface to London
 - 4¢ Air mail to Hamburg
 - 15¢ International
Registration Fee
 - 5¢ Avis de Réception
(**A.R.**) return receipt
(**Fee Paid**)
-
- 31¢ Total



(backside)

Demonstration Flights



Graf Zeppelin World flight, 1929

Letter rate \leq 1.0 oz \$3.50 Zeppelin fee + 5¢ U.S. air mail fee (\$ 3.55).

This cover was under paid but not recognized by the postal clerks (this was common for these flights).

Foreign Usage

This cover originated in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The three pence (3d), equivalent to 6¢ U.S., paid the surface rate to New York. The Beacon then paid the air mail rate to its final destination.



Foreign application of the Beacon stamp to provide air mail service within the United States.



Packet Boat surface to S.F., CA, and air to destination

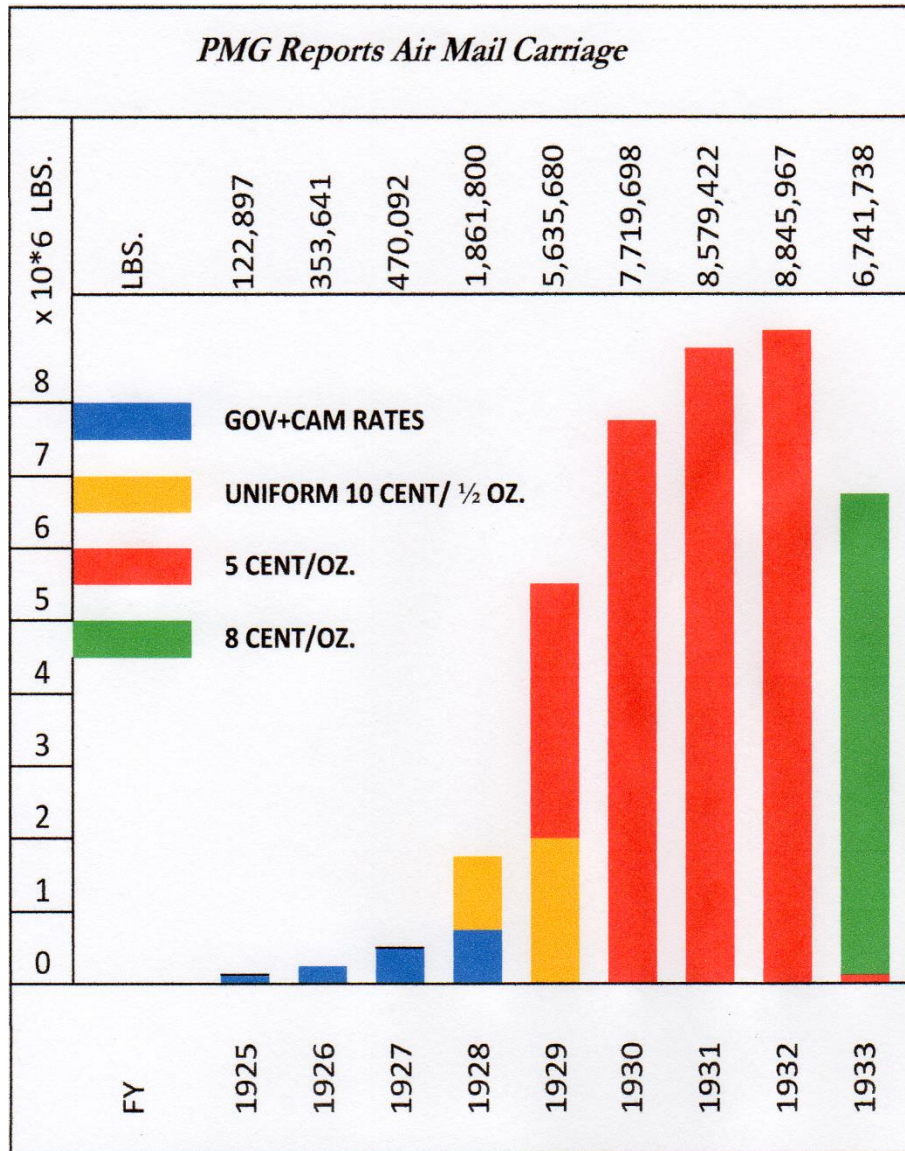
Sandy Point to St. John's, Newfoundland, Boston to L.A., rail to Pasadena, CA.

The 5¢ per ounce (20 grams) only lasted a short time. The new rate of 8¢ (60% increase) for the first oz., and 13¢ per each additional oz. went into effect on July 6, 1932. Thus ended the “Beacon” era. But, the stamp retains its popularity to this day.



The Effect of Air Mail Rates

FY YEAR	RATE	MILES	POUNDS
1918	24¢/16¢ per oz. SD	21,389	20,373
1919	6¢ per oz. no SD	194,986	263,144
1920	July 17, A.M. 1 st class rate	648,400	601,803
1921	A.M. 1 st class rate	0	0
1922	A.M. 1 st class rate	0	0
1923	A.M. 1 st class rate	0	0
1924	June 24, Some 2¢	1,853,231	1,714,333
1925	July 25, 2¢+8¢	2,501,555	265,729
1926	2¢ + 8¢/Zone/oz.	396,345	3,000
1927	10¢ /½ oz. Uniform	2,805,781	473,102
1928	5¢ per oz. Uniform	5,585,224	1,861,800
1929	5¢ per oz. Uniform	10,212,511	5,635,680
1930	5¢ per oz. Uniform	14,939,468	7,719,698
1931	5¢ per oz. Uniform	21,381,852	8,579,422
1932	5¢ per oz. Uniform	32,202,170	8,845,967
1933	8¢ per oz. Uniform	30,471,878	6,741,788



5-cent Rate and Beacon stamp saved Domestic Air Mail

- The Beacon stamp and rate had an increase of 150% the first year.

References (a brief bibliography)

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Questions ?

Beacon site construction

