

## **Expansion of U.S. Airmail to Foreign Destinations (1922-1941), Murray A. Abramson, M.D.**

### **I.) Treatment and Philatelic Importance**

- relative philatelic and historical significance of the subject
- completeness of the material shown in relation to the scope of the exhibit
- difficulty in duplicating the exhibit

From the initiation of regular U.S. transcontinental airmail service until the onset of the U.S. entry into World War II (7 December 1941), the world witnessed a dramatic evolution of commercial air travel. Simultaneously, airmail rates underwent substantial revisions which continued through the onset of World War II. Ultimately, war forced airlines to modify or close many routes. The era had a significant and lasting effect on worldwide airmail service that can still be observed today.

Reminiscent of the complex pre-Universal Postal Union (U.P.U.) period of transoceanic ship mail (1838-1875) to the eventual establishment of the U.P.U. standard rate system, the once complex airmail rate structure (e.g., sanctioned use of mixed franking, highly diverse selection of routes and rates, and the cobbling of agreements between countries to establish new postal routes) gave rise to a simpler standard airmail rate structure which we use today. Few time periods are as influential to all of U.S. and worldwide postal history as pre-World War II airmail postal history.

A complete selection of air routes is demonstrated through a balanced display of exemplary covers. This includes a display of European hub air services (including the extremely elusive U.S. via Italian air service) and non-European air services (including the only known examples of the U.S. to internal Japan air service and the U.S. to Papua New Guinea via Australian airmail using U.S. stamps). This is not to say that every single rate or destination is displayed in this exhibit since there are nearly a near-infinite number of theoretical permutations. However, the more unusual versions (and better condition) of relatively common rates as well as highly elusive rates, routes, or destinations have been included in this exhibit. Please note that first flight, airmail event, and other philatelically inspired covers have purposefully not been included.

This exhibit reflects over 30 years of thoughtfully collecting this specific topic. As a result, the depth and breadth of this exhibit stands above any other commercial U.S. airmail postal history collection covering this significant period of postal history.

### **II.) Philatelic and Related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research**

- items chosen for display and their related comments
- proper analysis of the items chosen
- presentation of new facts (related to the chosen subject)

In addition to the information provided for each cover (e.g., date, place of origin, destination, itemized rate), new and original research using primary sources (conducted and published by the exhibitor) has been incorporated into the exhibit. These annotated references include:

- 1) "U.S. airmail rates to Asia, Africa, and Australia: 1922-1940." *The United States Specialist*, volume 67, number 3 (March 1996), 100-123. [research published prior to the release of the H. Beecher and A. Wawrukiewicz international rate book]
- 2) The First Postal History Symposium (November 3 - 4, 2006), abstract and presentation, *What is Postal History?: The Blount Symposium on Postal History*, "United States Airmail Rates, Routes, and Regulations to Africa, Asia, and Australia" [compilation of research presented at the first Postal History Symposium sponsored by the Smithsonian National Postal Museum]
- 3) "On the Hunt." *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, volume 86, number 6 (November-December 2007), 345-7. [located a ledger at National Archives in Washington D.C. containing the volume of airmail in and out of the U.S. during the late 1920s and 1930s]

- 4) "New Findings Regarding United States Mail Dispatched to Europe for Onward Air Transmission." *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, volume 87, number 3 (May-June 2008), 149-52. [revealed the agreement between U.S. and British post office regarding the acceptance of U.S. airmail for further transmission via the British airmail service]
- 5) The Ninth Postal History Symposium (June 2–3, 2016), abstract and presentation, *How Postal Treaties Influenced Post Office Reforms*, "A Non-Treaty Postal Agreement of the United States Post Office Department with the British Post Office as an early significant step towards the development of United States airmail to European, African, Asian, and Australian destinations" [original research based on primary sources]

### III.) Condition and Rarity

- best available quality obtainable
- importance of the total exhibit and its subject
- relative scarcity of material

It is important to note that most if not all the covers presented in this exhibit experienced global air travel. Thus, substantial wear may be seen due to the challenging conditions given typical mail handling and care received during worldwide transport ~80-100 years ago.

The exhibitor has enriched the exhibit with the more elusive rates, routes, or airmail destinations. While common rates, routes, or destinations certainly exist within the scope of this exhibit, the exhibitor preferentially included the more unusual variations (with better condition). As a result, many covers in this exhibit (acquired over the past 30 years of study) are rarely encountered.

### IV.) Presentation

- general layout
- clarity
- facilitates the understanding

Because airmail rates underwent substantial revisions during 1922-41, this era of postal history can at first appear complex and difficult to understand. Therefore, an effort has been taken to present the exhibit as outlined on the title page. In addition, the viewer is guided through the exhibit with the use of descriptive page headers (that carefully follow the outline) and succinct descriptions under each cover. In most cases, more complex routes are clarified with maps; covers proceed in geographic order of the route, as if the cover were being flown from the U.S. Important general background information is circumscribed. For select destinations, timelines have been specially created (as described on the title page) to aid the viewer in understanding time relative to the rapidly changing rates.

### V.) F.I.P. international exhibition participation list (as well as last participated US National Shows)

- SINGAPORE 2004 - Gold with Felicitations (90 points)
- Washington 2006 - Large Vermeil (86 points)
- EIFRO 2008 – Gold (90 points)
- Aerophilately 2014 – Large Vermeil (86 points)
- ASDA 2014 (non-F.I.P. show, but F.I.P. judging) – Gold with Best of show award, 20<sup>th</sup> century (92 points)
- NY2016 – Gold (92 points)
- Philatelic Show 2017 – Large Gold (93 points)
- Rocky Mountain Stamp Show 2018 – Large Gold (93 points)
- STOCKHOLMIA 2019 – Gold (93 points)

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