"Why Pay Extra? Promotion of the Use of Airmail by Government and Industry prior to WWII."

By Arthur Groten
I. The Earliest Days

Earle Ovington at Bleriot’s flying school in Pau, France. The poster stamp for the school is on the back of the photograph.
Ovington in Glenn Curtiss’s bi-plane at the 1911 Chicago International Air meet.
Ovington took this photo of the Garden City Aerodrome from his Bleriot.
Ovington’s personal copy of his appointment as the first official U.S. airmail pilot.
The St. Louis Post ran this photo of Ovington receiving the first bag of official airmail on 9/23/11.
PMG Hitchcock handed the mailbag to Ovington on 9/25.
Doubleday, Page & Co., publishers in Garden City, foresaw the importance of these demonstration flights.
The first regularly scheduled route, between Washington and New York, commenced on May 15, 1918. Ovington wrote to his wife about it.
The USPOD reports the commencement of New York to Chicago route.
II. Federal Government Promotion

1928 Michigan schedule
USE the AIR MAIL to SAVE TIME

SALES LETTERS—All Air Mail communica-
tions receive special attention.

ORDERS—Quick action helps to hold con-
tents. Air Mail saves delay.

WARRANTS—Delivered safe and
quickly.

COMBAT COMPETITION—keep pace with
times by using fastest letter service.

NIGHT LETTERS—a substitute for tele-
grams. Air Mail speeds urgent mes-
sages.

GENERAL AIR MAIL INFORMATION

NATURE, WEIGHT and SIZE—Any mailable matter, ex-
ccept that liable to damage from freezing, will be accepted
to fly by airplane, including sealed parcels not exceed-
ing 84 inches in length and girth combined with weight not
in excess of 50 pounds.

RATE and DESTINATION—10 cents for each HALF ounce
or fraction thereof, is the present flat rate of postage on mat-
ter carried in whole or in part by airplane, regardless of
distance, to any point in the United States. If destination is
not an air mail port, such postage includes cost of transpor-
tation to and from air mail routes (over which it is carried
as far as possible by airplane). Note: After August 1, 1928,
the rate will be 5 cents for first ounce and 10 cents for each
subsequent ounce.

STAMPS—Special air mail stamps, issued for payment of post-
age on air mail (but not usable on other mail) are
preferred, but ordinary stamps may be used; for example,
five 2-cent stamps, two 5-cent stamps, etc. (Do not add 2c
for ordinary postage.)

PREPAYMENT of POSTAGE on AIR MAIL—The postage
on Air Mail should be fully prepaid in order to expedite its
handling. Port paid domestic Air Mail in-

tended to be carried by airplane shall, if it bears at least 10
cents postage, be rated with the deficiency and dispatched as
intended by the sender, the amount due to be collected on
delivery of the matter. When less than 10 cents is paid, it
will be sent in the ordinary mail.

MARKING and MAILING—Air Mail should be conspicu-
ously marked, on envelope immediately below the stamps,
above the address, “Via Air Mail.” Envelopes of distinctive design,
as illustrated below, have been approved by the post office
department and are helpful in distinguishing air mail, but
even though preferred, are not necessary. Air Mail may be deposited in any mail box or chute.

ENVELOPES of Dis-
tinctive Design

The envelope shown at right has been approved and adopted
by the Post Office Dept. Ask your local postmaster about them.

The outstanding and distinctive feature of the envelope con-
ists of a border containing an air mail emblem and letters
interchanging spaces between the two. The color of the envelope is
white, and blue border, printed on both face and back, enables clerks to “read” quickly your letter and assure
that it is registered and accompanies applicable
charges. These envelopes may be used for
AIR MAIL ONLY.

SPECIAL DELIVERY—The use of special delivery stamps,
in addition to the Air Mail postage, will insure prompt and
exceptional delivery upon arrival at office of destination.
The fee should be posted in red on a corner of the page or
envelope. The fee of 3 cents is required when a return receipt is
desired. (The limit of indemnity by the Post Office
Department for registered mail is $100.) All registered mail for dispatch
by airplane must be securely sealed against inspection.

C.O.D. and INSURED SERVICE—Collect-on-delivery and
Insured Mail (third and fourth class matter exclusively),
notwithstanding the parcels are sealed, will be accepted for
delivery at regular Air Mail postage rates. The collect-on-delivery and insurance fees, and the limit of
insurance indemnity ($100) are the same as are now fixed for
regular transportation of that particular class of mail.

REGISTRY SERVICE—Air Mail of any kind or value will be
accepted for registration upon prepayment of proper
amount of postage, the fee for which, in addition to the
regular air mail postage is 15 cents for value up to $50, and
20 cents for value from $50 to $100 and an additional fee of
three cents is required when a return receipt is
desired. (The limit of indemnity by the Post Office
Department for registered mail is $100.) All registered mail for dispatch
by airplane must be securely sealed against inspection.

FORWARDING—Air Mail to a person who left the address
given may be re-addressed and re-mailed without additional
postage, and it will go to the new address (if to advance) by air.

TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES—for mail sent by United States
Air Mail for dispatch to foreign countries, add 8 cents for
each half ounce or fraction thereof in addition to the post-
age necessary for ordinary mail to the country of destination.

ON LETTERHEADS
Use of the Air Mail color scheme on letterheads will pro-
vide increased effectiveness of Air Mail letters by showing
such transmission even after envelope is discarded.

LABELS
Labels designed according to the standard Air Mail color
scheme are very desirable for use on packages. Such labels
are available at some Air Mail offices. Envelopes for
Air Mail packages and issue those being given the immediate
attention to which they are entitled.

1928 New York schedule
with general airmail
information.
U.S. Air Mail Schedules

TRANSCONTINENTAL ROUTE
From New York, N. Y. - To San Francisco, Calif.

OVERNIGHT ROUTE
From Chicago, Ill. - To New York, N. Y.

ALSO

CONTRACT AIR MAIL ROUTES

Time Saved is Money. Save a Day Use the Air Mail.

List of States and Air Mail Rates from the Chicago, Ill., Standpoint.

OCTOBER 1, 1926

ARTHUR C. LUEDER, POSTMASTER,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.
The Chicago postmaster took ads in local playbills to promote airmail service.
Cards issued by the Moline, IL postmaster for distribution to his clients.
Secretary of State Herbert Hoover paid the air fee rather than use his free franking privilege.
This stereo view card of an air mail plane notes, on the reverse, the 10¢ rate.
American Airlines blotter announcing the new 5¢ rate.
USPOD leaflet explaining the new rate structure.

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE

REDUCED AIR MAIL POSTAGE

Air Mail Postage has been reduced to

5c for First Ounce
and 10c for Each Additional Ounce
to any point in the United States and its possessions regardless of distance.

This is a reduction of 75% on a letter weighing one ounce and a reduction of more than 50% on mail weighing over one ounce.

Under this new rate the postage on a letter weighing one ounce or less is five cents. An envelope with three or four sheets of ordinary weight paper will come within this limit.

A letter weighing two ounces requires 15c postage, three ounces 25c postage, etc., ten cents being added for each additional ounce.

On a package weighing a pound the postage is $1.55 instead of $3.20, and a two-pound package $3.15 instead of $6.40, as heretofore, etc.

For the ordinary letter weighing one ounce or less, this new rate gives all of the advantages of air mail for only three cents more than the cost of sending a letter by ordinary first class mail.

(over)
Air mail etiquettes often note the current rate.
USPOD air etiquette booklets promoted the new 6¢ rate.
Other etiquettes promoted the speed of air mail.
Many cities used these machine cancels: “Air Mail Saves Time.”
The method of carriage was at the discretion of the postmaster. Thus the request for “whichever is quickest.” It wasn’t always air mail.
The hand stamps on these covers attest to the postmaster’s discretion.
Sometimes the quickest wasn’t the safest.
III. Special Events and other quasi-official promotion

Lindbergh was a major promoter of the use of air mail after his historic 1927 flight.
Private entrepreneurs offered to build airports for smaller towns.
Special conferences on establishing airports were held around the country.
Curtiss-Wright’s headquarters were at the Grand Central Air Terminal in Glendale, CA in 1931.
Oakland [CA] municipal airport issued a self-mailing 14-page brochure on their services in 1928.
Many of these cards were produced by cities around the country to announce their new air services.
Commercial air events were very popular in the inter-war years. Poster stamps were often used to promote them.
In addition, there were air meets that often included air races.
Prior to the 1938 National Air Mail Week, local Air Weeks were held as at Miami in 1929.
An unusual USPOD mimeographed cachet for National Air Mail Week, 1938.
A variety of unusual events were staged to celebrate NAMW.
Hal Burnett, of WBBM, Chicago, sending off his round-the-world record disk.
Initial press release for Burnett’s plan.
Hand stamps were the simplest form of private advocacy.
A beautiful meter slogan, clearly promoting air travel.
Air mail stationery began as hand-drawn. Preprinted envelopes show a myriad of designs.
The folding Airgram was first introduced by Varney in 1927.
In addition to the USPOD etiquettes, there were many private ones.
Hotels often prepared special air etiquettes for their patrons.
Airlines promoted their services with air etiquettes as well as air baggage labels.
Notes that some even refer to their particular route designation.
And, of course, there were leaflets and brochures as well.
The promotional activity was demonstrably successful.