Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum Opens New
“Fire & Ice: Hindenburg and Titanic” Exhibit

“Fire & Ice: Hindenburg and Titanic,” an innovative new exhibit, opened today at the Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum. The exhibit brings together two marvels of transportation. Titanic and Hindenburg served demands for rapid worldwide communication and transportation. Both operated as the world’s largest mobile post offices. Each in its day promised the fastest possible worldwide mail service. Each offered onboard gentility and opulence. Each met a tragic end.

Titanic was the world’s largest floating post office of its day, and Hindenburg still holds the record as the world’s largest flying post office. This year—2012—the National Postal Museum raises visitors’ awareness of the two giant ships’ postal operations with its new exhibit. And this year—2012—both mark anniversaries. Hindenburg burned 75 years ago, and Titanic sank 100 years ago. The exhibition will be open through Jan. 6, 2014.

Exhibit highlights include a very rare piece of mail sent from Titanic and burnt mail salvaged from Hindenburg. Other items include mail, postcards, menus, photographs, keys from Titanic’s post office and the salvaged postmark device from Hindenburg.

“Although many visitors to “Fire & Ice: Hindenburg and Titanic” will be very familiar with some of the iconic imagery shown, I believe that they will be amazed to see documents, artifacts and photographs that have never been publicly displayed before,” said Cheryl R. Ganz, museum curator for the Hindenburg-related aspects of the exhibit. “These salvaged objects and newly discovered photos bring the story to life in new ways.”

The exhibit is organized into themes that compare and contrast the large, fast, glamorous ships: 20th-century icons, technological advancements, life onboard, mail ships and disaster. Survivor stories portray the human tragedy associated with each shocking disaster: shocks that reverberate to this day.

“This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to reflect on the hundredth anniversary of Titanic’s sinking in the presence of real objects from the ship and her passengers,” said Daniel Piazza, museum curator.
curator for the Titanic-related aspects of the exhibit. “A century later, her brief life and tragic end still haunt and captivate us.”

Visitors will be able to recreate the onboard letter-writing experience by applying a cachet to postcards and mail that identify the item as from the exhibition. Stamps and a postmark are available in the U.S. Postal Service philatelic shop in the museum to post the cards. A booklet available in the museum’s gift shop and online will accompany the exhibit. A virtual edition of the exhibit is available on the museum’s website: www.postalmuseum.si.edu/fireandice.

The National Postal Museum is devoted to presenting the colorful and engaging history of the nation’s mail service and showcasing one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of stamps and philatelic material in the world. It is located at 2 Massachusetts Avenue N.E., Washington, D.C., across from Union Station. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). For more information about the Smithsonian, call (202) 633-1000 or visit the museum website at www.postalmuseum.si.edu.

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