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THOUGHTS ON THEMATIC EXHIBITING

Don Overstreet

Let's say you're one of the majority of the population that doesn't collect postage stamps and by some lucky coincidence you find yourself, both physically and philosophically, attending a well-run stamp show with all the trimmings of an auction, a dealer bourse, and a fabulous selection of philatelic exhibits. You've never seen such a thing! Look at all those stamps and envelopes with lizards on them! Or look at this one with all those variations on the "Return To Sender" handstamp! Who would have thought you could make such an amazing presentation about all of the post offices that aren't there anymore in some out-of-the-way county in Oregon? Welcome to the world of philatelic exhibiting, and in this particular view, the world of *thematic* exhibiting.

Stamp collectors may be among the most fortunate of hobbyists in the sense that the ways one can pursue an interest are many and amazingly varied. Whether putting together a traditional by-the-catalog-numbers album of a certain country's issues or mapping the routes of early mail carriers in newly created nations, there is often a uniquely personalized approach to the effort that can result in tremendous satisfaction and almost endless challenges. For every person's interest, they can say they do it that way because it's enjoyable and pleasing for them and others who collect that way.

The reasons someone collects in a particular way don't matter. The individual's method of putting an organizational framework to use and calling it his or her hobby is really the most important thing. That is, until you show it to someone else. Whether a fellow collector, your brother-in-law, co-workers or your new potential life partner, everybody seems to reserve the

right to weigh in on your choice of a pastime and either has an opinion or just comes out and passes judgment one way or another. "You collect WHAT?" "I have a trash bag full of that stuff if you want it!" "That's sooo cool!" We've all heard these kinds of remarks. So, why would anyone want to emerge from the anonymity of the household den and put up an exhibit?

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Let's see. I'll spend lots of money and time, put together a selection of some of my favorite stamps and covers and then write a detailed narrative of how they all fit into a thematic story.

Then I'll put the pages I've created into plastic sleeves and take them to a stamp show and let the world look at them? Certainly, because, if I think highly of what I've done, I'll want others to take a look, too! But I won't use everything from my topical collection, no matter how nice they are, because that's not what constitutes a philatelic exhibit, and clearly not a thoughtful *thematic* exhibit.

A person can be a philatelist without being an exhibitor, but in order to put a successful exhibit together one must certainly have a high degree of philatelic knowledge. To take the point a thematic step further, one must combine knowledge of stamps with an expertise in a particular topical area to create a story that ties everything together so that even someone who isn't a stamp collector [Yet!] can have a bit of a journey and arrive at the end of the exhibit with the thought, "Hey, that's really interesting!" In one sense it's just this reaction that either the would-be or the veteran exhibitor is trying to elicit. We become something of an entertainer when we exhibit, and as anyone who's been on stage knows, there's nothing like applause.

Exhibits may be simple or complex, one frame or many. Frames are usually sixteen pages, so it's a fairly broad selection of material that can coherently take up ten or more frames. The one-frame exhibit is a category unto itself, not unlike the short story. The aim of the exhibitor is always to share an interest, but it is not always done in the context of a competition where judges evaluate the efforts, score points and present awards and give the exhibitor advice on how to improve the presentation with the idea that the next time they may either win an award or a higher level of award. Many stamp shows with exhibits include a non-competitive section where collectors simply put their thematic story on display.

Let's take a look at an award-winning thematic exhibit. **Tom Current**, one of the founders of the Northwest Philatelic Library, created an 80-page exhibit he called "The Harp - From Cradle to Cloud." Tom won a Special Award and a Multi-Frame Silver Award from the American Topical Association, the sponsoring organization. Tom chose the harp as his subject because he was an avid student of the instrument and was able to assemble an impressive selection of material that he arranged in such a way as to tell the history of the instrument, feature many different players and composers, and illustrate a diverse group of cancellations, postmarks and cachets.



Tom chose to begin his exhibit with an introductory page showing six stamp images arranged around a statement about harps [Figure 1 on the next page]. Not all thematic exhibits need to begin this way, but it's a perfectly acceptable format and an effective way of establishing the thematic nature of the story. Tom then moved on to a very important aspect of the exhibit, the Exhibit Plan [Figure 2].


This Plan is the organizational framework around which the various elements are arranged: written material that serves to develop the story the exhibitor is telling, stamps that illustrate the text or covers that show a postal history element. If the Plan describes a part of the story in textual form then it must show a related philatelic item. In Tom's presentation, a lot

of ground is covered in a few pages relating to the history of the instrument in different parts of the world [Figure 3]. We see that the harp has many forms and musical traditions, and that, in fact, angels play harps! Many of the pages feature stamps, covers and postal markings of Ireland, as is only fitting where the harp is a national symbol.

THE HARP

From Cradle to Cloud





The harp is a musical instrument with --


- (a) strings attached at an angle to a hollow sound chamber with openings;
- (b) with sound produced by vibrations of taut strings,
- (c) induced by plucking or pressing of fingers on the strings.

From the cradle of civilization in Sumeria and Mesopotamia, harps have produced beautiful sounds for appreciative audiences of one to many.

It is the instrument of heaven but can be hell to play: cumbersome, finicky, expensive, difficult to learn, and worth the effort.



Freak transfer to back of stamp (Eire)





Coat-of-arms harp in low left quarter

Figure 1
Introductory Page: “The Harp – From Cradle to Cloud”

From Cradle to Cloud

Harp Exhibit Plan

- | | |
|--|---|
| I. Unframed Harp (pp 1-10) | <u>Unframed</u> -see pg 6, color proof |
| II. Lyre (limited Harp) (pp 11-16) | Pg 8 roller slogan datestamp |
| III. Framed Harp (pp 17-21) | <u>Lyre</u> -pg 12 Greek Bklt, strap |
| IV. Celtic Harp (pp 22-23) | makes lyre realistic |
| A. Boru Style (pp 24-28) | <u>Lyre bird</u> , maxi-card, pg 15 |
| B. Angelic Style (pp 29-30) | <u>Framed</u> - "Muesta" (SPECIMEN) |
| C. Propaganda (pg 32) | <u>Designer proof</u> , signed, pg 18 |
| See "Mermaid" pg 29 (handstamp 1808) | SPECIMEN <u>postcard</u> pg 22 |
| and pg 30 (handstamp 1810) | <u>air letter</u> , SPECIMEN, pg 23 |
| V. Coats-of-Arms (pp 33-37) | <u>Brian Boru Harp</u> , Trinity College, |
| VI. Pedal (concert) Harp (pp 38-44) | <u>Dublin</u> , pg 25 (Harp maker pg 26) |
| VII. Harpists (pp 45-49) | "Muster" (Specimen), maxicard |
| VIII. Composers of parts or | pg 49 overprint, AMG FTT, Irish |
| solo music for harp | propaganda labels |

"Mermaid"

Pg 32 - outstanding items

Angelic style postal handstamp, dated Aug 11, 1808, type used in period 1808-1814, item sent to London.

Pg 33 - Angelic style, dated Jan 27, 1810, folded letter sent Athlone to Dublin
Coats of Arms: Typically Queen Elizabeth, with Boru Harp, a few variations.

Pg 37 - Political propaganda, One penny Irish 10d, forerunner examples, 1867 Fenian--1967 commemorative reprint, 1912 proposed Imperial Union, and 1907-16 Sinn Fein propaganda labels.

Harpists: Napoleon's Empress, Ben Franklin, Harpo Marx, Beaumarchais, Gustav Charpentier, Madame Recamier, courtesan, Paulina Liederbuch, Jose Asumcion Flores.

Composers: Much research was required to determine which composers have composed parts or solo music specifically for the harp. The most useful was *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 1980 edition.

Other **references** used were:

Harp and Harpists, Roslyn Rensch, 1989, 329p; *The Harp*, Rajka Dobronic-Mazzoni, 1989, *Grafici zavod Hrvatskie*; *Irish Life and Culture*, XVI *The Irish Harp*, Joan Rimmer, Mercier Press, Cork, Eire, 2nd editio.

Figure 2

The Exhibit Plan: A Roadmap to Telling the Story

IV. Irish Harp

1. **Boru Style**, most common style in use and on stamps, especially in the Queen Elizabeth II coat-of-arms. The style is based upon the Brian Boru harp.

(King) **Brian Boru**



“Brian Boru” harp

Oldest surviving such harp, 15th or 16th century, on display, Trinity College, Dublin



Figure 3

History of the Harp in Different Parts of the World: Ireland

Throughout the exhibit, Tom follows his Plan carefully, typically letting the philatelic material, called “elements,” tell the story without lots of explanatory text. Some of the more obscure lines of connection do need a few words to lead the viewer to the relevant aspect, such as the tiny images in the coats of arms. Much of the selection of elements and their arrangement are based on decisions about the goals of the exhibit. If a person is more interested in sharing his or her collection in a general way, then many of the ‘rules’ won’t necessarily apply, whereas anyone who wants to stand a chance of winning awards in larger competitions must follow very closely the guidelines of the sponsoring organization.

For the exhibitor who would like a step-by-step guide to winning awards, *Thematic Exhibiting* by Wobbe Vegter [2010] is probably the most comprehensive. This thin volume is packed with information in great depth and makes reference to all pertinent rules and regulations of various international judging organizations. While Vegter’s objective is still to have fun with exhibiting, he makes it clear that there is an art to the process, which means the exhibitor is going to have to be most creative but within the bounds of what is expected.

Among the many ideas in *Thematic Exhibiting*, one of the most important is understanding the complex interaction between expertise and the enthusiasm for and knowledge of a particular subject. Tom Current’s harp exhibit shows how a knowledgeable collector goes about identifying and obtaining interesting elements within his topical area. If one is a sharing kind of exhibitor, the material doesn’t have to be so very rare and expensive. If one is going for the gold, however, the elements for the exhibit must be of a very high level in terms of rarity, condition, and philatelic interest while at the same time adhering to the structure of telling a coherent story along the lines of the exhibit plan. One must be able to demonstrate a broad philatelic and subject area expertise.

Gathering appropriate elements for a thematic exhibit could take a lot of time and money. This is not the thing for the casual collector on a budget if one has aspirations of winning medals! Once committed to the idea of creating an exhibit, the exhibitor must prepare to devote more than an ordinary share of time to finding things that fit into a really first-rate story and presentation. Relationships with philatelic dealers should always be cultivated, but when one decides to exhibit, these connections become even more important. We would all like it if dealers called us first with really good stuff, but that’s where the willingness to part with some serious money comes in to bring together perhaps hundreds of top quality stamps, covers and ancillary items. While the monetary value represented in an exhibit should never be the first consideration, it goes without saying that thousands of dollars can easily be spent before the collector is finished with the accumulation phase.

As important as material is, a valuable source of information to tap is the group of fellow collectors, even if they aren’t doing topical collections or exhibits. Conversations with judges at the major or local stamp shows can be very instructive, if only to learn what *not* to do! Someone who is getting started with an exhibit should look at many finished ones to see what it takes to tell the story, look good and win awards.

I’d like to think I could put together a nice presentation about the history of violins in a thematic exhibit. Finding stamps with violins and related material was what got me back into

stamp collecting some years ago after a long period when the collection took a back seat to other pursuits. It just seemed too easy. There was a small item in *The Strad* magazine about a new issue of stamps from Belgium that included a booklet pane featuring J.S. Bach, a violin, a harpsichord and a couple of other items [Scott 1817a]. It was issued on the occasion of the opening of the Musical Instrument Museum in Brussels. Not long after the magazine article, I saw a notice of a stamp show here in Portland and went there to see if anyone sold that kind of thing.



At the show I was introduced to Judy Packard, a local dealer who specialized in topical new issues. I showed the article to her and her immediate response, “Oh, I’ve got that,” was the beginning. Only a few dollars to get started and by now my violin “area” has expanded to include performers and composers both on stamps and on cover. It wasn’t long after, while having a chat with Tom Current at a meeting of the Oregon Stamp Society, that I discovered a way one could expand a collection. It happened that we were talking about our pursuits in music and Tom described his harp exhibit and I told him about trying to find stamps with violin-related images. Since Tom had acquired numerous items for possible use in his exhibit that turned out not to fit, he offered to sell the remainders to me, and in one friendly transaction I found many of the issues that now form parts of my own topical pastime.

During a Metro show in Portland a few years ago, I had the pleasure of being part of a conversation with Tom and another musical topical collector, Cathy Osborne, who was then the U.S. secretary of the Philatelic Music Circle. This was a British organization [sadly no longer with us] devoted to all manner of musical subjects and it turned out we were all members. Tom had brought his harp exhibit along to show to Cathy; it was the first time I’d seen the entire set of pages.

Here I should mention that the elements [stamps, covers and ancillary materials] one has accumulated don’t all necessarily belong in an exhibit. Vetger discusses the basis for judging the appropriateness of material for an exhibit. For me as an example, this would mean that stamps issued by Sharjah that have images of Ludwig van Beethoven should not be included in a thematic exhibit on the history of the violin since it is primarily a Western European musical tradition I would be illustrating. Beethoven wrote lots of music for the violin, but Arabic and African cultures simply don’t have much connection to him.

If I were to go forward with creating a thematic exhibit on the history of the violin, I would still want to find quite a lot more in the way of materials other than stamps. While I have managed to find a number of covers that relate to the violin, both commercial and personal, some of the covers in the general collection are first day of issue types and aren’t really the best thing for the exhibit that aims to win awards.

On the other hand, the commercial cover with five copies of Germany Scott 1808 is more like it. Here we have an example of an item sent from a specialist bookseller in the violin trade in Germany to the owner of a violin shop with stamps commemorating the career of the

violinmaker Mathias Kloz [reduced in Figure 4]. The stamp design shows steps in the carving of a violin scroll. A Grand Slam cover if ever there was one!



Figure 4
A commercial cover supporting the historical theme of the violin.

My exhibit on violins is still on the drawing board, and for now I'm still gathering ideas and material, but getting the concept together, i.e., the story, and deciding how it might proceed is the first stage for anyone. When it comes together, I will have a number of fellow collectors to thank for their advice and example, Tom Current being the first. I'll probably start with a local show and go in with an exhibit that aims to compete but not sweep anyone off their feet with my first effort. Who knows? Getting one done will be a satisfying accomplishment, and the variations on the theme, as they say in music, could be the most interesting part.

[Note: A variety of literature references are available to guide the thematic exhibitor in addition to that mentioned in the essay. These are available at Northwest Philatelic Library. Included would be: Randy Neil's *The Philatelic Exhibitors Handbook*, 3rd revised and updated by Ada Prill [2006]; "Adventures in Topical Stamp Collecting," *ATA Handbook No. 133* by Griffenhagen and Husak [1997]; and the American Philatelic Society's *Manual of Philatelic Judging*, 6th [2009] also available from the APS website. Each publication devotes targeted attention to the thematic exhibit.]

Don Overstreet is a certified violin maker whose stamp collecting interests include Germany and the Philippines, with occasional forays into Spain, the U.S. and worldwide airmail. In an aerospace family, these flights of fancy were encouraged and early on the friendly pursuit of stamps was a regular thing. After the usual collecting dormancy, Don was captivated by the designs on many foreign stamps that featured images of violins, composers and players of stringed instruments, and the new area became a true topical collection. This is his first appearance as a writer in the philatelic area.

U.S. SECURITY GRILLS: A REFRESHER

Charles Neyhart

If you've dabbled in early U.S. stamps, you are likely familiar with the concept of **grills**, small dot-like impressions embossed in the stamp paper arranged in rectangular grid form best seen from the back of the stamp. Grills were used for only a short time, but grill patterns changed often. Grills are conventionally referred to sequentially by letter – 'A' for the earliest through 'I' [and sometimes 'J'] and 'Z' which represents an outlier in this chronological system. Not coincidentally, grills became progressively smaller in overall size over time. Each grill created a new stamp variety with a unique catalog number.

Some grills are among the rarest U.S. stamps. The 1-cent Z grill, of which only two examples are known, is currently catalogued at \$3 million. A 3-cent B grill, also printed in 1868 and of which only four are known, sold for over \$1 million in a 2008 auction.

Seminal research results were first published in 1913, 38-years after the last grilled issue.¹ At that time, questions about grills remained unanswered, principally because proprietary mechanical grilling devices used and production data were not available for inspection and review. Subsequent research, involving some well-known names in philately, have, by necessity, relied on informed conjecture to form conclusions about grills. Even now, points of controversy about grilling survive. These are key procedural questions about grilling. Areas for fruitful discovery may still remain.



E Grill

Stamp catalog coverage of grills is typically limited to nomenclature and classification. There is, however, much more to know and learn to better understand this strange artifact of philatelic history.

THE NEED FOR GRILLS

I'm not certain who caused the use of grills on U.S. stamps: the U.S. Post Office Department or the National Bank Note Co. which held the U.S. stamp printing contract in 1867. There were Post Office Department concerns about the illegal reuse of stamps by removing their cancels. Charles Steel, superintendant of stamp production at National Bank Note Co., invented a grilling process and promoted it to the Post Office Department as a viable means of mitigating the removal of cancels.² Steel's process mechanically broke the surface fibers of the stamp paper allowing a deeper, suffused penetration of the canceling ink, making it

¹ This research was conducted by William Stevenson and published in the *Collectors' Journal*. This was then revised and serialized in *Mekeel's* in 1916. The study was later updated by Lester Brookman and serialized in *Mekeel's* in 1942 [reprinted in 2007-08]. The history and provenance of the 'B' grill, was written by Ken Lawrence and published in *Scott Stamp Monthly* [April 2009].

² Steele's process was originally called "security embossing," but was later changed philatelically to describe the waffle-like grid produced by the process.

difficult to remove the cancel by washing without physically destroying the stamp. Steel “sweetened” his presentation by claiming improved adhesive properties afforded by the grills.

Steele began experimenting with grills during 1867 and on October 22, 1867 was granted patent number 70,174 for his method of embossing postage stamps.³ In August 1867, the Post Office Department amended its contract with National Bank Note Co. to require security embossing [grilling] on stamps prior to delivery and, in exchange, added a premium to the price it paid for stamps. This resulted in a 66 percent increase in the cost of stamp production, 12-cents to 20-cents per thousand.

Grilling postage stamps lasted only seven years but covered parts of three U.S. stamp series: the 1867-68 printings of the 1861 issue, the 1869 Pictorial issue, and the early part of the 1870 issue printed by National Bank Note Co., though not all grill patterns were used on all denominations. There appears to be an after-the-fact consensus that stamp reuse was exaggerated and that the cost of grilling exceeded any revenue protection.

THE GRILLING PROCESS

Most writers believe grills were applied under pressure by a roller cylinder.⁴ The cylinder was covered, directly around and lengthwise, with designs that look like either inverted or upright Vs. The designs on the early experimental grills were recessed below the cylinder surface; for later production grills, the designs were raised above the surface, i.e., cut in relief. The grills produced from the recessed “female” roller cylinder produced a biscuit-shaped grill point that had a pyramid base and rounded top. The raised-in-relief “male” cylinder produced a pyramid-shaped cross grill but with a ridge rather than a pointed top. These two grill types are illustrated in Figure 1. Grill points on the cylinder were approximately 1/32 inch apart on center leaving very narrow ridges between the rows of grill points. This produced the waffle-like grid impressions.

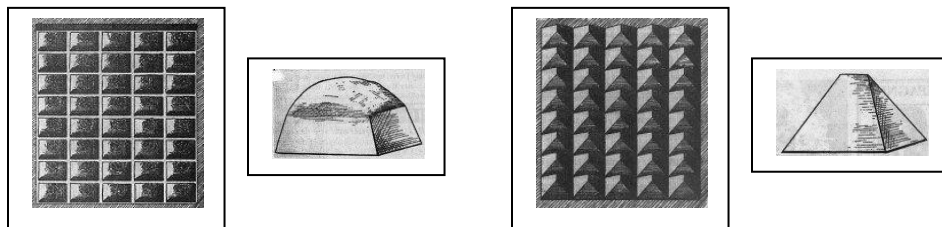


Figure 1. Recessed roller surface and resulting ‘biscuit’ grill (*left*); raised-in-relief roller surface and resulting ‘cross’ grill (*right*). [Brookman, 1942]

³ Entitled “Improvement in the Manufacture of Postage Stamps.” Surprisingly, Steel did not submit a diagram of his grilling machine or its components as part of his patent application.

⁴ Others have suggested that the griller was actually a plate rather than a roller, citing as advantages the relative simplicity of manufacture and use and ensuring consistent registration of the grills.

The grilling machine was likely modeled on the design of the flat bed printing press whereby the grilling cylinder replaced the press pressure roller and a malleable base, probably made of lead, replaced the printing plate. A sheet of printed, gummed and pressed stamps was placed between the cylinder and the base.⁵ After grilling, the sheet was perforated and then pressed for a final time. There were likely two grilling machines used concurrently based on the dates of the various grills.

Grills are described as **points up** or **points down**, referring to the direction of the peak or apex when viewed in relation to the face of the stamp. When the female roller was used for grilling, the pressure against the malleable base forced the paper up into the recessed areas of the roller producing raised biscuits on the face of the stamp and embossing a grid of waffle-like dimples on the back of the stamp. This is points up. A male roller, when pressed onto a sheet of stamps, protrudes and pushes the pyramids into the paper toward the back of the stamp, leaving a grid of cross-ridges at the stamp back. This is points down.



Figure 2. E grill enlarged.

Grills are conventionally identified by counting the number of vertical and horizontal rows of points and by the orientation of the points.⁶ For example, the E grill has 14 vertical rows of points by 15-17 horizontal rows and its points are down. This grill must have 14 vertical rows, no more or no less, otherwise it is not an E grill. [The E grill illustrated on the first page has 14 vertical rows by 16 vertical rows and the points are down. See an enlargement of this grill in Figure 2.]

Steele's original 1867 experiment applied a grill that covered the entire stamp using a recessed female roller. This is the all-over A grill. However, this grill weakened the stamp paper too much for practical use; subsequently, that cylinder was modified by planing off portions of the grill design down to the pits of the recesses directly around the cylinder and lengthwise leaving a series of recessed rectangles - the smaller C grills.⁷

It appears that the Post Office Department did not enforce the grilling provisions of its contract extension until the first quarter 1868 most likely to permit additional time for testing and assuring reliability of the grilling process and the dependability of the machinery under full production conditions. Thus, the early grills [A and C and probably the D and Z] are considered experimental trials and only small quantities were produced and then commingled with regular stamp stock. The Stamp Agent in New York did not record any grilled stamps received in 1867 and the Post Office Department did not pay a premium for the results of the experiments. The Agent reported that slightly over one-half of the stamps delivered in the first quarter of 1868 were grilled and, thus, entitled to the premium payment. This suggests

⁵ The cylinder [approximately 10-inches long and 6-inches in circumference] was mounted perpendicular to the base [around 20-inches deep]; thus, grills were applied across the stamps when viewed in their normal orientation.

⁶ References also often include the horizontal and vertical size of the grid in millimeters.

⁷ Stevenson's original classification scheme did not include a B grill; rather, he added one later. But Stevenson's B grill is now considered a C grill variety from an incompletely erased A grill. What we today call the B grill is discussed later in this note.

that National Bank Note Co. did not commence full-time grilling in accordance with the stamp contract until the middle of February 1868.

In January 1868, National introduced the raised-in-relief male roller cylinder to achieve better penetration of the stamp paper. The first was the Z grill followed shortly thereafter by the D grill on a second grilling machine, i.e., production overlapped. The E grill [February 1868] is a direct descendant of the D grill, the F grill [March 1868] directly descending from the E grill, each successively smaller than its predecessor.⁸ It appears that the late 1867 - early 1868 printings of the 1861 stamp series used increasingly harder and thinner starch-backed paper; thus, applying smaller grills was a way to accommodate any weakening of the paper and probably to speed up the grilling process.

For the 1869 Pictorial stamp series, National had pretty much perfected the grilling process and used the smaller yet G grill on all denominations of this issue.



Figure 3. The G grill used for the 1869 Pictorial series.

The National Bank Note Co. printings of the 1870 issue have been criticized for the poor quality of grilling. These printings often show faint grills or no grills at all. The new Postmaster General, John Creswell, who took office March 5, 1869 just prior to the release of the 1869 Pictorial series, did not share his predecessor's support of grills as a necessary and particularly cost-effective security measure.⁹

Two new grills, both from male rollers, were used concurrently: the H and I, the latter being smaller than the former and both being smaller than all previous grills. Impressions from both grills reveal two states: cross grills [sharpened] and flattened grills [dull]. The H grill has been found on all denominations of the 1870 series; the I grill was used on the 1-, 2-, 3-, 6-, 7-, 10- and 15-cent stamps.

The uneven results from using these two grills suggest that the grilling equipment may have become defective or inoperable, or, as is likely, National wanted to expedite the production schedule. Thus, National may have grilled more than one sheet of stamps at a time or did not actually grill every sheet, probably trying to meet only the bare necessities of the contract.

⁸ Some specialists have postulated that National Bank Note Co. made multiple grill rollers of a particular grill design, much like the use of multiple printing plates for a particular stamp issue. This is often used to explain why a particular grill might have a different number of rows [e.g., the F grill] or produce impressions of different strength or clarity [e.g., the late stage H grill].

⁹ His predecessor, Alexander Randall, was the Postmaster General who had approved grills on the 1868 and 1869 stamps.

National Bank Note Co. effectively abandoned grilling in later printings from this series; the Post Office Department did not intervene in these actions.¹⁰

Continental Bank Note Co. was awarded the U.S. stamp contract in mid-1873 and proceeded to issue, with added “secret marks,” the same designs as National’s 1870 issue, but there was no explicit contract provision that the stamps be grilled. In 1875-76, some Continental stamps were found with what is called the J or “Continental” grill.¹¹ This grill is likely an experiment, and examples may better be considered essays.

THE Z AND B GRILLS

The Z grill made philatelic headlines in 2005 when an 1861 1-cent Franklin stamp with the Z grill was traded for an Inverted Jenny plate block of four in a transaction then valued at \$2.5 million. This is one of only two known copies of the 1-cent stamp with the Z grill – the other is in the Benjamin Miller Collection at the New York Public Library.¹² Actually, the Z grill was applied to six stamps of the 1861 issue that were printed in 1868: 1-, 2- [Black Jack], 3-, 10-, 12- and 15-cents. Only six Z grill examples of the 10-cent and two of the 15-cent are known to exist.



Figure 4. One-cent Z grill stamp

The Z grill raises interesting philatelic questions. The Z grill was made with a male roller and the embossed impression is points down. It was smaller than the D grill, but preceded it in use. What makes the Z grill unique is the orientation of the pyramid ridges in relation to the orientation of the stamp. All other grills made from male rollers show the ridges in a vertical up-and-down orientation relative to the upright position of the stamp. The Z grill ridges, on the other hand, are in a horizontal direction [Figure 5]. It is this distinguishing characteristic that caused William Stevenson to designate this grill as Z because it just didn’t fit readily into his alpha classification scheme.

¹⁰ There is conjecture that National resurrected grilling in 1873 as part of its attempt to retain the U.S. stamp printing contract.

¹¹ Interestingly, Charles Steel became superintendant of stamp production at Continental Bank Note Co. in 1873.

¹² Images of the front and back of the two 1-cent Z grilled stamps and their respective provenances are presented in: “1¢ Blue, Z Grill Census (Scott 85A),” *The Siegel Encyclopedia*, p. 2. This online resource can be found at: www.siegelauctions.com/enc/census/85A.pdf. [You may have to manually open the link after it loads.]

As was its usual business practice and whenever feasible, National re-used roller cylinders to produce successively smaller grills. For example, the recessed A grill roller was mechanically planed to produce the C grill. Likewise, the raised-in-relief D grill roller was converted to produce the E grill, the F grill and probably the H grill as well. Most agree that a separate roller was made for the Z grill. The reason for shifting the orientation of the grill on the stamp sheet is unknown and perhaps inexplicable.

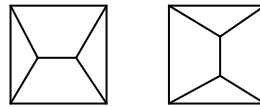


Figure 5. Two raised in relief [male] pyramid cross grill types viewed from above. The cross grill with the horizontal apex is the **Z** grill (*left*). The grill orientation with the vertical apex was used for all other raised-in-relief grills – B, D, E, F, G, H and I (*right*).

The existence of the B grill has been controversial for a long time. Many observers believed and some continue to believe that the B grill does not exist. Instead, they argue that what is called a B grill is in reality a partially erased A grill. That is, when creating the smaller C grill, the A grill roller cylinder was modified by planing off portions of the recessed grill design both around the roller and lengthwise leaving recessed rectangles intended to be the C grills. However, the planing was not done completely to remove the bottom of each A grill impression, thus leaving an abnormal strip attached to the intended C grill. Observers believe this was what Stevenson later added as his B grill. Coincidence or not, this partially erased C grill, which is rare but a genuine variety on its own merit, has the same rectangular dimensions of what we now call the B grill.



Figure 6. The only known four examples of the certified **B** grill on this cover from Mason, Texas to Darmstadt, Germany, postmarked February 19, 1869. The stamps were subsequently removed from the cover and sold individually.

Today's certified B grill, of which only four examples are known - all from a single 1869 cover - could not have come from manipulating a recessed grill roller. It is very different from a partially erased A grill.¹³ Today's B grill has characteristics of a cross grill made from a male roller. The timing of the B grill was probably after the first quarter of 1868, even though it was twice as wide as the then current F grill. The currently accepted method of how the B grill was made was worked out by Elliott Perry in the 1960s.¹⁴ Because it has a points up orientation, the B grill would have been impressed from the back side of the stamp, unlike all other recognized raised-in-relief grills. Based on the small number of surviving copies, the B grill may have been a miscalculation that was quickly abandoned or a one-off experiment.



Figure 7. An enlarged image of the left-hand stamp from the cover in Figure 6. The outlined grid of the B grill can be seen clearly on the face of the stamp.

COLLECTING GRILLED STAMPS

Grills were embossed on U.S. stamps for a short period of time, but they do represent a distinct and out-of-the-ordinary stage of U.S. stamp production. Grill sizes changed regularly and some grills saw very limited use. Many grills are expensive, but not all are rare. There is a sizeable premium for mint never hinged examples.

Grilled stamps are available from dealers and are routinely offered at auction. Some stamps inadvertently find their way into kiloware mixtures. That is because some grill impressions are faint or otherwise difficult to detect at a glance, particularly the H and I grills from the early printings of the 1870 issue. Also, as was National Bank Note Co. practice, printed stamps were mechanically pressed-out both before and after the application of the grill, further masking the grill. Moreover, all denominations of the entire first printing of the 1869 issue were grilled [the more expensive 1875 reprint was issued without grill] and some low denominations of this first printing may be found in mixtures.

¹³ Designating this as the B grill does not fit into Stevenson's chronological sequence but it was probably done so because it was the same size as the partially erased A grill that was first thought to be the B grill.

¹⁴ Perry's hypothesis was that when planing the E grill roller to form the 2mm narrower F grill, it was discovered that there was a space at either the top or bottom margin of the roller that was too large for one row of intended F grills but not large enough for two rows. Thus, what we call the B grill [18 x 15mm] was added to best fill that space on the roller.

Have you checked for grills on your stamps? A Table summarizing the recognized grills is presented below. If you want to use this Table to identify the Scott numbers of grilled stamps, keep in mind that a single stamp design may have been issued with different grills, each with its own Scott number. For example, the 3-cent Washington from the 1861 issue [Scott design A25] was issued with seven different grills with seven corresponding Scott numbers. The Table also reports the identifying sizes of the grills, both in millimeters and in the number of vertical and horizontal rows of points that comprise the rectangular grid of the grill.

You may discover stamps with “odd” grills. Occasionally, a grilling cylinder impressed only a portion of the intended grill on one side of a stamp and the remaining part on the near side of the next stamp. These **split grills** were probably caused by a paper shift in the grill press. Also, stamps can have a **double grill** whereby a sheet of stamps with weak grills is purposefully run through the grill press a second time. Interestingly, the 1-cent Franklin Z grill stamp from the Benjamin Miller Collection is a double grill in which the original grill is faint and angled. Then there is an **end roller grill** which is a thin band of grill impressions from untrimmed portions of the ends of the grill rollers or from a continuous stop row of grills running lengthwise on the roller. These are found fairly regularly on the 1870 stamps.

If you enjoy facets of U.S. stamp production, you will have fun with grilled stamps – not only visualizing the “how,” but, more interestingly, wondering “why.” Good hunting!

THE SUMMARY TABLE IS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE.

U.S. GRILLS

Stamp					Grill Size				Scott Numbers
					Millimeters		Number of Rows		
					Vertical	Horizontal	Vertical	Horizontal	
Grill	Issue	EKU ^A	Shape	Points Orientation ^B					
A	1861	8/13/1867	Biscuit	Up	All over	All over	All over	All over	79, 80, 81
B	1861	2/17/1869 ^C	Cross	Up	18	15	22	18	82
C	1861	11/19/1867	Biscuit	Up	13	16	16-17	18-21	83
Z	1861	1/17/1868	Cross	Down	11	14	13-14	18	85A, 85B, 85C, 85D, 85E, 85F
D	1861	2/2/1868	Cross	Down	12	14	15	17-18	84, 85
E	1861	2/19/1868	Cross	Down	11	13	14	15-17	86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91
F	1861	3/27/1868	Cross	Down	9	13	11-12	15-17	92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101
G	1869	3/20/1869	Cross	Down	9.5	9	12	11-11.5	112-122
H	1870	3/24/1870	Cross	Down	10	12	11-13	14-16	134-144
I	1870	1870	Cross	Down	8.5	10	10-11	10-13	134, 135, 136, 137, 138
J^D	1870	ca. 1875	Cross	Down	7	9.5	9-10	12	156e, 157c, 158e, 159b, 160a, 161c, 162a, 163a, 165a, 178c, 179c

^A These dates are from the [Siegel Encyclopedia](http://www.siegelauctions.com/enc/pdf/1867.pdf) [http://www.siegelauctions.com/enc/pdf/1867.pdf] and cover grills A-F.

^B When viewed from the stamp's face.

^C As noted in the text, the B grill was introduced near the end of the first quarter 1868.

^D The "Continental grills." Although catalog-listed, there is no proof that they were authorized to be issued.

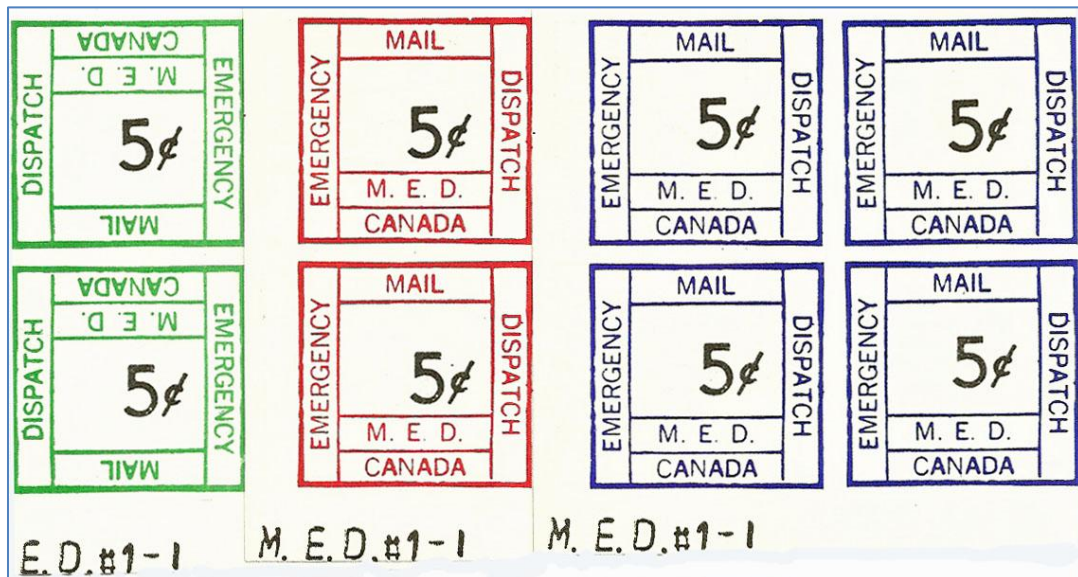
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RESEARCH STUMPER

Every now and then, we are faced with an interesting inquiry. We would like our readers to weigh in on a solution. This is our tenth “Stumper.”

The items in question [shown below] are a set of three otherwise identical panels, surface printed in red, blue and green ink, with the centered 5-cent denomination printed in black ink. Each panel contains four individual items, each bordered by the words: MAIL, EMERGENCY, DISPATCH, and M.E.D./CANADA. Below each panel in black ink is a simulated rubber-stamped imprint M.E.D. #1-1.

These appear every now and then in dealer stock and auction catalogs and their description typically make reference to a Canadian postal strike. Inasmuch as Canadian postal workers, after a June 2011 work stoppage, have recently returned to work under return to work legislation, this might be an opportune time to clarify the provenance of these items.



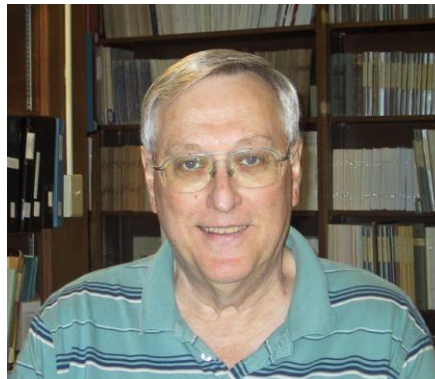
The “stumper” is to explain the source and purpose of these panels.

If you have a plausible solution, please submit it to NPL. We will write it up in a future issue of *Book Reports* and give you full attribution. Document your solution to the extent practicable. The “best” solution will be determined by NPL. Send your solution via email or letter mail at the appropriate address in the table at the end of this issue. [Gloria Neyhart provided the item for this “Stumper.”]

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LIBRARY NEWS & NOTES

- NPL is pleased to announce that **Rich Averill** has been elected to the NPL Executive Board. Rich is a proprietor of **A Stamps** with his brother Don, having learned the trade from long-time Portland dealer Al Soth. He started his collecting around age 8 at the suggestion of the family minister. His personal collecting areas are Japan, Canada, and a specialty interest in the U.S. Prexy issue. Rich's career was in banking management and still does part-time work in the financial area.



- Larry Spray, NPL Director of Sales, wishes thank those who visited his sale tables in conjunction with the OSS Auction. It was fun for all and provided good value to buyers. OSS and NPL will hold a fundraising **SALE on July 30**, the fifth Saturday of the month. All sorts of philatelic supplies, stamps, covers and literature will be available at reasonable prices. **It is a one-day only blowout event that you won't want to miss.** Cash boxes open at 10:00 am and close at 4:00 pm. See you there; it is a great cause!
- Northwest Philatelic Library welcomes contributions of philatelic literature and other philatelic materials as well as direct monetary donations. Outright gifts of cash are used to acquire philatelic literature for the Collection. Donated books and periodicals that fill a specific need are placed directly into the Collection. Books not needed in the Collection are sold or used for other purposes [e.g., youth collectors]. Not surprisingly, common donations to NPL comprise stamps, covers and supplies. With our focus on literature, NPL does not retain a permanent collection of these items, but they are welcome contributions. Significant compilations are consigned directly to an appropriate auction; other similar donations are passed on to youth groups or sold locally to collectors.
- These individuals support our periodicals collection.

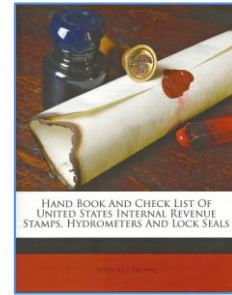
Bill Arbaugh	<i>Coros Chronicle</i>
Fred Bateman	<i>Direct financial support</i>
Ernesto Cuesta	<i>Journal of Cuban Philately</i>
Michael Dixon	<i>American Stamp Dealer & Collector, Flash, The London Philatelist</i>
Robert T. Kinsley	<i>Military Postal History Bulletin</i>
Charles Neyhart	<i>Oregon Historical Quarterly, Precancel Forum</i>
Gloria Neyhart	<i>BNA Topics</i>
Don Overstreet	<i>Der Musikus</i>
Phyllis Redman	<i>Direct financial support</i>
Ron Sumner	<i>Ice Cap News, SOSSI Journal</i>
Janice Weinstock	<i>Air Mail Northwest, WE Expressions, WE Think, Zeppelin Post Journal</i>

LIT ADDITIONS

The following titles have been added, through donation or purchase, to the NPL Collection. [Donors are listed in brackets.]

American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors, **The Best of The Philatelic Exhibitor**, CD, Vol. 1: 1986-1996, Vol. 2: 1997-2009, The Philatelic Foundation, 2011. [AAPE & PF]

J. Delano Bartlett, **Hand Book and Check List of United States Internal Revenue Stamps, Hydrometers and Lock Seals**, United States Revenue Society, 1911 reprinted. [Greg Alexander]



Ray Cartier, **U.S. Space Cover Collecting Handbook** [and color CD], 2011.

James E. Kloetzel, ed., **Scott 2012 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue**, Vols. 1-3, Scott Publishing, 2011.

Auction Catalogs

Cherrystone [Muriel Stieber]

Deborah Friedman Collection of Colombia Air Post, November 7, 2007.

Russia, January 8, 2008

Russia, March 26-27, 2008.

Irwin Rosen Versailles Collection, Part IV, France & French Colonies, June 3, 2008.

Russian Air Post, Featuring the Collection of Dr. G. Ralph Ackerman, June 4, 2008.

Christie's Robson Lowe, **Proofs from the American Bank Note Company**, September 28, 1988. [Charles Neyhart]

H.R. Harmer [Muriel Stieber]

"Roxburgh" Collection of Great Britain and Empire, December 8, 2007.

"South Beach" Collection of Great Britain and Empire, June 6, 2008.

Heritage Auctions, **Ronald H. Cipolla II Collection, How the Post Facilitated Distribution of the Printed Word, 1775-1870**, December 11-12, 2009. [Muriel Stieber]

Nutmeg Stamp Sales, **Specialized Airmail Etiquettes & Airline Tags, Catapults, Zeppelin & U.S. Pioneer Flights**, January 30, 2007.



Siegel Auction Galleries [Muriel Stieber]

The 1918 24¢ Inverted “Jenny,” Siegel, Position 57, November 14, 2007.

Philip T. Wall Collection of United States Postmasters’ Provisionals and Carrier Issues, December 12, 2007.

Jay Hoffman Collection of United States Stamps, May 8-9, 2008.

The 1918 24¢ Inverted “Jenny,” Siegel, Position 21, June 7, 2008.

Alan B. Whitman Collection of Outstanding United States Stamps, 1-3, 2009.

“Whitpain” Collection of United States 1894-98 Bureau Issues, December 2-3, 2009.

The Pony Express, The Collection formed by Thurston Twigg-Smith, December 3, 2009.

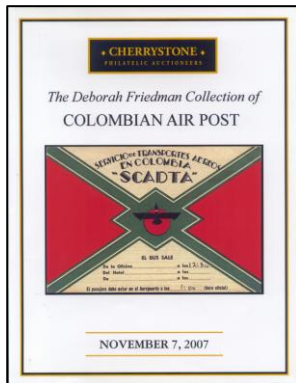
Siegel Auction Galleries [Ralph Nafziger]

Gordon Eubanks Collection, U.S. 1869 Pictorial Issue, March 1, 2011.

“New Amsterdam,” City Dispatch Post, March 2, 2011.

The Wagshal Collection of Classic United States, Part 4, March 2-3, 2011.

The “Andromeda” Collection of U.S. Bank Note Issue Covers, April 21, 2011.



Spink-Shreves [Muriel Stieber]

Edward M. Gilbert Collection, Postage Stamps of Italy and the Italian Empire, January 29, 2008.

Monarch Collection of Great Britain King George V, 1911-1935, May 8, 2008.

Sovereign Collection, Postage Stamps of the British Commonwealth and Western Europe, May 13-17, 2008.

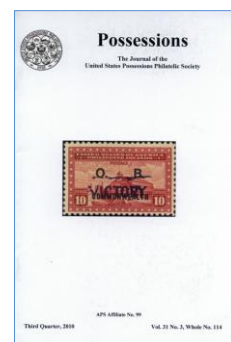
Spink-Shreves, **Rolfe E. Wyer Collection of French Colonies, May 25, 2011.** [Ralph Nafziger]

Journals

Liechtenstudy – 1986-2005 [Muriel Steiber]

Oregon Historical Quarterly – make-up issues [Len Lukens]

Possessions – completed the set [Len McMaster, USPPS].



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JANICE WEINSTOCK'S AEROPHILATELIC LIBRARY A DONATION

Continued from May-June 2011

WAVE 3

USA

American Air Mail Society, **The American Air Mail Catalogue, Section One: Contract Air Mail Routes**, 1st ed., AAMS, 1935.

American Air Mail Society, **The First of Fifty: A History of the United States Air Mail Service in the Year Nineteen Hundred and Eighteen, 50th Anniversary U.S. Air Mail, May 15, 1918-1968**, AAMS, 1968.



American Philatelic Exchange. **The Standard Airpost Catalog, Section One: C.A.M. - Alaska - F.A.M.** Elsie, MI, 1935.

A.M. Anderson & R.E. Johnson, **Pilot Jack Knight**, Wheeler Pub. Co., 1950.

Berkshire Exchange, **The American Catalogue of Air Mail and First Day Covers**, 1st ed., 1927.

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Berkshire Exchange, **The Standard Airpost Catalog ... 1934 Supplement**, 1934.

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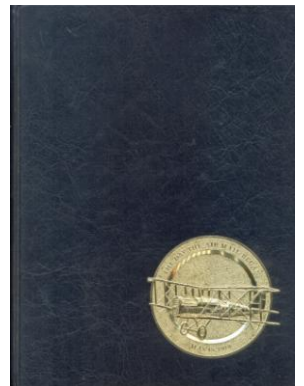
Jim Brown, **Hubbard, the Forgotten Boeing Aviator**, Peanut Butter Pub., 1996.
[Autographed copy]

Emil Bruechig, **The History and Romance of Air Mail Stamps**, 1936.

Emil Bruechig, **Airmails**, 1940. [Autographed copy]

Edith Dodd Culver, **The Day the Air-Mail Began**, Cub Flyers, 1975.
[Autographed copy]

The Dworak Specialized Catalog of U.S. and Canadian Air Mail Covers, 2nd ed., Gossip Printery, 1931.



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Armans Eisen, **U. S. Airmail Stamps**, Ariel Books, 1996.

Don Evans, **Early Air Mail & Aviation in Southern California**, La Posta Pub., 2003. [CD]

Reuben H. Fleet, **Airmail's Odyssey** [Remarks by Major R.H. Fleet 15 May 1968 50th Anniversary – U.S. Air Mail Service].

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Henry M. Goodkind, **United States: The First Air Mail Stamp**, Collectors Club, n.d.



Henry M. Goodkind, **United States: RF [French] Overprints 1944-45 on Air Mail Stamps and Stationery**, Collectors Club, 1958. [Autographed copy]

Henry M. Goodkind, **United States: The 5¢ Beacon Air Mail Stamp of 1928**, Collectors Club, 1965.

Julius Grigore, Jr., **The Aerophilately of the U.S. Army's First Pan American Good Will Flight**, Balboa Shops, 1995.

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James C. Heartwell, **Air Stamp Records**, Airpost Journal, 1942.



Fred A. Hefty, **Hefty's World-Wide Soaring Covers, Part 1: United States of America**, Gliderfila, n.d. [Includes Supplement no. 1] [Autographed copy]

A. Don Jones, **Max, I Didn't Get to Know Him Very Well**, AAMS, 2004.

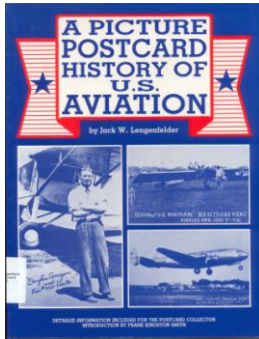
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Joe Kirker, **U.S. 24¢ Airmail Issue – 1918, the Blue Top Only, a Study and Census of Plates and Sheets**, 1st ed., 1997.

Jack W. Lengenfelder, **A Picture Postcard History of U.S. Aviation**, Almar Press, 1989.



K. Lissiuk, **The Historical Air Mail Catalogue, An Authoritative Catalogue of Air Mail Stamps and Historical Covers**, 1930 ed.

Local Post Collectors Club, **A.F.A. Local Post Issues, 1971 to 1985**, Aerophilatelic Federation of the Americas, 1986.

Günter Mair, **Catalogue of Airmail Labels**, Postal Label Study Group of Los Angeles, 1991.

Bruce McAllister & Jesse Davidson, **Wings Across America, a Photographic History of the U.S. Air Mail**, Roundup Press, 2004.

Nolie Mumey, **Epitome of the Semi-Centennial, History of Colorado's Airmail**, Range Press, 1977. [Autographed copy 126/200 copies]

Stephen Reinhard, **U.S. Pioneer Air Mail, 1910-1916, the Exhibit Collection of Stephen Reinhard**. November 1992.

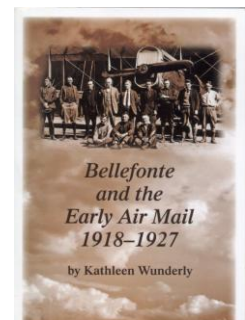
Edward Shenton, **Couriers of the Clouds, the Romance of the Air Mail**, rev. & enlarged ed., Macrae, Smith Co., 1937.

Robert Schoendorf, **Nine Momentous Days: 1911, First U.S. Airmail Service Garden City Estates** [Cover title: **The Pioneer Flights of Garden City Estates, New York: 1911**], Al Zimmerman, 1982.

Dean C. Smith, **By the Seat of My Pants**, Little, Brown & Co., 1961.

Kenneth Tallmadge, ed., **The American Airpost Catalogue**, 1933.

Vi VandenBoom, **Classifying the U.S. "Bi-Plane and Mono-Plane" Slogan Cancels [A Handbook]**, 1979.



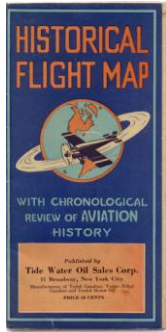
Junius B. Wood, **Homeward Flies the Mail**, Chicago Daily News, 1929.

Kathleen Wunderly, **Bellefonte and the Early Air Mail, 1918-1927**, American Philatelic Society, 2007.

Wayne L. Youngblood, **The Open Skies**, Chartwell Books, 2008. [Airpost Journal editor]

MAPS

Rand McNally. **Standard Indexed and Air Trails Maps of Oregon**, 1929.



Rand McNally. **Historical Flight Map with Chronological Review of Aviation History**, Tide Water Oil Sales Corp., 1929.

United States. Post Office Department, **Air Mail Service: the Transcontinental Air Mail Service**, August 1, 1924 [1 p.: 35 x 27 cm.]

United States. Post Office Department, **Air Mail Service**. Full map of the U.S., with insets of Alaska-Canada, Hawaiian Islands, Trans-Pacific Routes, Trans-Atlantic Routes, Latin America [1 sheet: 20 x 30 cm.]

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IN APPRECIATION

To those generous individuals listed below who have made recent donations of literature and other consideration to NPL.

AAPE/PF

Len Lukens

Charles Neyhart

USPPS

Greg Alexander

Connie Bates Miller

Muriel Stieber

Janice Weinstock

Keith Hays

Ralph Nafziger

Nick Vance

We THANK YOU All for your Support!

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