FAM 5 INAUGURAL FLIGHT

COVERS & CANCELLATIONS

Exhibited in the Airmail Category by

Armand Cote
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AWARDS

THAMESPEX Vermeil
&
AAPE Award of Honor
FAM 5 INAUGURAL FLIGHT

COVERS AND
CANCELLATIONS

This exhibit displays a variety of covers flown on the inaugural of the Foreign Airmail Route No. 5 in early February 1929 from Miami to the Canal Zone and return. It initiated commercial airmail service by Pan American Airways from Miami to Central and South America. The route became the western segment of what is known as the "Lindbergh Circle" in honor of Charles Lindbergh who was the pilot of the inaugural flight. Lindbergh's involvement led to considerable anticipation and drew a large quantity of covers from dealers and collectors, especially for the return flight (which required a second plane due to the excess volume of mail). The second plane was flown by Ray Merritt and was originally furnished by Pan Am to carry the Republic of Panama mail which the U.S. Post Office Dept. refused to handle. Nevertheless, the second plane was pressed into service to carry the excess Canal Zone mail. It became erroneously known as the "Outlaw Flight" by those who did not realize that it also carried U.S. mail.

Lindbergh's Sikorsky S38a amphibian plane took off from Miami at 6:00 AM on Feb 4 (his 27th birthday) and landed at France Field at 4:00 PM on Feb 6 following two overnight stops as well as numerous other refueling stops. All incoming mail received a Feb 6 Cristobal backstamp. On the return flight both planes left France Field at 6:00 AM on Feb 10. Following three overnight stops they landed at Miami late in the afternoon on Feb 13. All the Canal Zone mail had received a Cristobal Feb 10 cancellation (or Feb 10 backstamp on covers originating at other Canal Zone post offices). The incoming Canal Zone mail received a Miami Feb 13 backstamp; but only the registered Panama mail was backstamped. It should be noted that no mail was picked up or dropped off en-route in either direction.

The exhibit focuses primarily on cancellations and includes examples of covers originating at various Canal Zone post offices. Covers are known from all the post offices in service at that time except France Field. By far the largest quantity of mail originated at Cristobal, with a moderate quantity from the other large post offices all of which had machine cancelling capabilities. The other post offices used hand cancels and, except for Pedro Miguel, put forth very small quantities.

The exhibit is organized into five sections:

- Southbound mail [AAMS F5-1].
- Northbound mail [AAMS F5-2] (Arranged alphabetically by post office).
- Round trip covers. (Envelopes carried both southbound & northbound.)
- Rate examples including post card, 1oz. & 2 oz. letters and registered mail.
- Two-sided covers. (Envelopes re-used on the back side.)

Unusual and scarce items include:

- Canal Zone postage-due on southbound cover.
- SCADTA covers, both southbound & northbound.
- Northbound covers originating from Gatun, Fort Clayton and Coco Solo.
- Northbound covers with destinations England and Canada.

Some scarce items are flagged by highlighting the scarce element in red.

Comments in green add information that is not otherwise obvious.
Southbound Flight (FAM F5-1)

Typical F5-1 cover with proper Cristobal backstamp and with an additional less common Miami hand cancellation.

Originating in New York City; and with additional uncommon Balboa backstamp.
Southbound Flight (FAM F5-1)

F5-1 with additional uncommon Balboa Heights backstamp.

With additional Balboa backstamp. Note the usage of \(\frac{1}{2}\) of a 10-cent stamp as 5-cent postage to make up the correct postage.
Southbound Flight (FAM F5-1)

With additional Coco Solo backstamp; and autographed by both Cristobal Postmaster Bliss and Coco Solo Postmaster Hodge.

FIRST FLIGHT MIAMI TO CRISTOBAL, CANAL ZONE.
FEBRUARY 4, 1929.

Mrs. A. K. McHenry,
Care Postmaster,
Cristobal,
Canal Zone.

Insufficient franking resulting in postage due being assessed at Cristobal.
Registered heavy duty envelope addressed to the Cristobal Postmaster and flown on F5-1. The $4.02 postage suggests that a large quantity of pre-addressed covers were enclosed with sufficient funds and instructions for them to be returned on the northbound flight.
Destination Honduras: An example of a small quantity of F5-1 covers that were forwarded at no additional cost to Latin American and Caribbean locations via surface mail after being processed at Cristobal.

Destination Germany: F5-1 cover flown from Miami to Cristobal then forwarded to Europe by steamship. The 30-cent postage includes the proper 5-cent rate for surface mail to Europe. The "jusqu'à" purple bars require delivery "as far as" the final destination". The German markings reveal that the cover was flown to the airport at Nürnberg!
F5-1 cover addressed to Pan Am pilot Basil Rowe c/o the Pan Am office in San Salvador. It was processed at Cristobal then forwarded without additional cost. It was backstamped and signed by the postal director of El Salvador.
SCADTA F5-1 cover. Following its arrival at Cristobal, the cover was forwarded to Cartagena, Colombia via surface mail then flown to Guayaquil, Ecuador via SCADTA (Sociedad Colombo-Alemán de Transporte Aéreo) a German/Colombian company providing airmail service from points abroad to Colombia. The extra postage is in the form of special "Consular Overprint" 15-cent stamps overprinted "EU" (Estados Unidos, Spanish for United States) which were purchased at a SCADTA office in the USA.
Round Trip Cover

BACK

Back of envelope with F5-2 cachet, cancelled at Cristobal on Feb 10 and flown on the northbound flight. Note the Feb 6 Cristobal backstamp of flight F5-1.

COVER FLOWN BOTH WAYS ON FAM 5 INAUGURAL.

FRONT

Reduced photocopy of F5-1 cover cancelled at Miami on Feb 4 and flown southbound. Note the super-imposed Feb 13 backstamp upon arrival of F5-2 in Miami.
Round Trip Cover

Cover carried as surface mail from San Juan, PR to Miami then flown south to Cristobal on F5-1. Later, after the addition of CZ postage it as flown north to Miami on F5-2 then returned to San Juan via surface mail.

Note the “jusqu’à” purple bars that require delivery “as far as” the final destination.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mails dispatched per:</th>
<th>SIKORSKY N.C. 8000 N.C. 8044 of the AmeriCAN Airways Co.</th>
<th>Date: Feb. 22, 1927</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FROM POST OFFICE AT:</td>
<td>CRISTOBAL, PANAMA CANAL ZONE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDRESSED TO POST OFFICE AT:</td>
<td>MIAMI, FLORIDA</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LETTERS</td>
<td>PACKETS</td>
<td>PARCEL POST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Charles A. Lindbergh - N.C. 1000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Raymond J. Merritt - N.C. 8044</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRISTOBAL</td>
<td>MIAMI</td>
<td>CANAL ZONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGISTERS ENCLOSED</td>
<td>UNDER ROTARY L 13967-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 SACKS TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reduced photocopy of Cristobal waybill identifying both airplanes and noting a total of 689 lbs of mail in 14 sacks to be flown to Miami. It is signed by Lindbergh, Postmaster Bliss and others. Since each plane had a maximum payload of 500 lbs this document proves that both planes were required for carrying the Canal Zone mail. Thus the second plane was erroneously labeled as the “Outlaw Flight”; and there is no way to know which northbound covers were actually carried by Lindbergh.
Typical F5-2 cover franked with the 25c provisional airmail issue on the 2nd airmail stamped envelope ("VIA AIR MAIL" centered). It was posted at Ancon and has the usual Cristobal and Miami backstamps.

Very scarce Feb 8 Ancon cancellation. All other known Ancon F5-2 mail was cancelled on Feb 9. (Also the 52-cent franking satisfies the one-ounce rate.)
Destination England! Cover cancelled at Ancon, carried on F5-2 to Miami, flown on a domestic route to New York, then completed its journey to England by steamship. The 30-cent postage includes the proper 5-cent rate for surface mail to Europe. Note the "jusqu'à" purple bars that require delivery "as far as" the final destination.

Cancelled at Balboa Heights on Feb 9 and flown on F5-2
Balboa Feb 6, 6:00 PM on the 3rd airmail stamped envelope ("VIA AIRMAIL" at the left). Feb 6 was the earliest known date from 1970 to 1997. Prior to 1970 the EKD was Feb 7 (see below). Two earlier dates were reported in 1997: Feb 5 and Jan 20, the latter being used on the steamer-plane service.

Excerpt from 1970 Jack Knight Society "Airlog" revealing the discovery of a Feb 6 UC2, which was then identified as UC2a. (Scott reversed the UC2 and UC2a in 1992.)
Three F5-2 covers on the 2nd airmail stamped envelope to the same printed address; but with three different Balboa Feb 6 cancellations: 10:30 AM, 12M and 6 PM.
Hand-cancelled at Coco Solo on Jan 11, a first day cover of the 25c provisional airmail issue, which was held to later be carried on the Northbound flight as attested by the proper Cristobal and Miami backstamps. It also has the autographs of Postmaster Hodge and John Hambleton, the vice president of Pan American Airways.
The 1st airmail stamped envelope (boxed inscription) cancelled Feb 10 at Cristobal. Note that more than 90% of the FAM 5 northbound mail was posted at Cristobal.

Cancelled at Cristobal and autographed by Postmaster Gerald Bliss.
Flown F5-2 cover cancelled at Cristobal and autographed by Postmaster Gerald Bliss; and enclosing a letter from Bliss to a collector demonstrating his willingness to go out of his way to accommodate philatelists.
Destination Canada! Complex F5-2 cover originally addressed to General Delivery, Halifax N.S. in the name of the original sender, arriving on Feb 16. It was returned to the Kansas City sender on Feb 26 with 5-cent Canada franking via Montreal (Mar 1), Seattle (Mar 6), and Los Angeles (Mar 8), where an additional 5-cent franking was added!
Destination Puerto Rico! Decorative envelope depicting a map of the Caribbean addressed to Pan Am pilot Basil Rowe c/o the Pan Am office in San Juan. Upon arrival at Miami it was flown to New York then forwarded to San Juan by surface mail for no additional postage.
Two covers cancelled at Fort Clayton (one on Feb 7, the other on Feb 8) and carried on F5-2. Note that neither has the blue cachet. Perhaps the blue cachet stamper was not furnished to Fort Clayton.
Gatun cancellation at Noon on Feb 4 only six hours after Lindbergh took off from Miami on the southbound flight!

Cancelled at Gatun on Feb 6.
Pedro Miguel Feb 5 hand-cancellation. Surprisingly, the small Pedro Miguel post office also cancelled northbound mail on Feb 7, 8 and 9!

Cancelled on Feb 7 at Pedro Miguel.
SCADTA F5-2 cover. (Only one other example known, also with the same franking and to the same address.) Originating from either Santa Marta or Barranquilla this cover was flown from Colombia to the Canal Zone via SCADTA (Sociedad Colombo-Alemán de Transporte Aéreo), then flown to Miami on the northbound F5-2 flight.
Example of the 1/2 ounce rate cancelled at Cristobal. Franking includes scarce usage (on FAM 5) of the regular mail stamped envelope having the printed return request.

The airmail rate for letters carried on the FAM 5 inaugural flights was 25-cents for each half-ounce in addition to the regular postage rate of 2-cents for each ounce (or 1-cent for post cards). For example:

- 26c for post cards
- 27c for letters up to 1/2 ounce
- 52c for over 1/2 ounce up to one ounce
- 79c for over one ounce up to 1-1/2 ounces
- $1.04 for over 1-1/2 ounce up to 2 ounces

The registration fee was 15-cents.
Example of the post card rate with a reduced photocopy of the post card face showing Lindbergh arriving at France Field with the incoming mail.
Rate Examples

Example of the one-ounce rate.

Example of the two-ounce rate.
Registered letter cancelled on Feb 8 at Balboa Heights. The $1.02 postage exceeds (by 8 cents) that required for 1-1/2 ounces. The block of four may have been chosen to make an attractive cover. **Note that Feb 8 is a very scarce cancellation for Balboa Heights.**
Rate Example

Example of proper franking for a registered half-ounce (or less) letter mailed from Coco Solo on Feb 9, destination Cuba. Note that the registration fee was 15-cents.

Insufficient postage for the FAM 5 inaugural flight. This letter may have been intended for the 5-cent sea-air service (steamship to New Orleans then flown to the U.S. destination). Scarce usage of the one-cent stamped envelope.
Republic of Panama cover lacking postage but nevertheless cancelled on Jan 12 during Lindbergh's 1928 good will visit and requiring Canal Zone postage due (should have been only 2 cents); then dispatched on the F5-2 return flight 13 months later by franking the back of the cover. Note the usual Cristobal and Miami F5-2 backstamps.

Reduced photocopy of back with F5-2 cachet, cancelled at Balboa Heights on Feb 9 and flown on the northbound flight.
Reduced photocopy of a Republic of Panama Jan 1928 FDC of stamps commemorating Lindbergh's good will visit; then re-used 13 months later on the back to be flown on the F5-2 flight (see below). Note the usual Cristobal and Miami F5-2 backstamps.

Back of envelope with F5-2 cachet, cancelled at Balboa Heights on Feb 9 and flown on the northbound flight.
Rep. of Panama 1928 stamps tied to a Canal Zone 1st issue airmail envelope with the Panama (city) Feb 9 (Outlaw Flight) cancellation. Perhaps to assure that the cover would be carried on Lindbergh’s plane, Canal Zone franking was added to the back and the cover was re-processed at Cristobal on Feb 10 (see below).

Reduced photocopy of the back showing the F5-2 cachet, and cancelled at Cristobal on Feb 10. Note that the back was not re-addressed.