

The LZ 127

by Howard Grenzebach



In 1933 a German airmail Zeppelin stamp was overprinted with the words, "Chicagofahrt Weltausstellung 1933" issued in conjunction with the flight of the Graf Zeppelin (LZ-127) to the Chicago World's Fair that year. It was the first time a Zeppelin had visited the United States in four years. The stamp was issued and the flight to Chicago was made on the condition of the U. S. creating a corresponding American stamp for the occasion.

This created some controversy at first as it would be the fourth Zeppelin issue and was

deemed unnecessary. The post office and President (Roosevelt) objected, but, eventually gave in and the American stamp was designed. That stamp was the now familiar Century of Progress 50¢ Zeppelin, commonly known as the "Baby Zepp".

The cover was mailed on board during the flight from Rio de Janeiro in Brazil to an address in San Francisco. Even though the cover came out of Brazil, a German stamp is used because it has been mailed through the German post office ("on board the Graf Zeppelin" is noted in the return address), not the Brazilian post office.



This piece of mail was received by the U. S. post office located in the Chicago "Century of Progress" World's Fair and, presumably, forward on to the San Francisco address.

Hugo Eckener was the pilot of the Graf Zeppelin and a very vocal opponent of the Nazis. He was saved from Nazi persecution by an intervention from Hindenburg on his behalf.

Eventually, Hitler declared Eckener "persona non grata" and left him alone for the rest of the Third Reich era.

When he approached Chicago he decided to make a transit around the city so the residents could see the now famous airship. Being aware of American sensibilities towards the new German government he chose to fly the ship clockwise around



the city so the swastika on the port side of the tail fin faced away from the residents watching the passing ship and only the tricolor German flag could be seen on the starboard side until, of course, the airship landed in Chicago for a 25 minute stop. On its way to the "Windy City" the Graf Zeppelin also made stops in Miami, Florida and Akron, Ohio (for a visit to the Goodyear-Zeppelin Company). After leaving Chicago the Zeppelin made a second stop in Akron then onto Seville, Spain and Friedrichshafen, its home port.