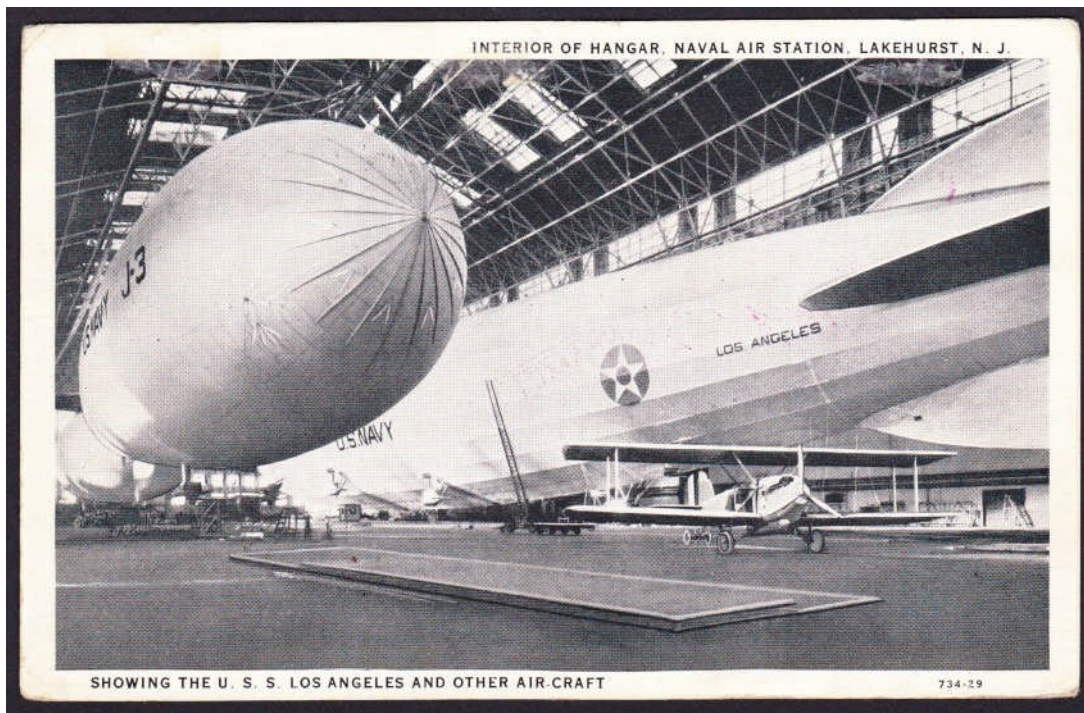


A 65¢ Graf Zeppelin on Postcard

By Patrick Crosby

In the June 2017 issue of *Post Boy* Stan Cronwall tries to interest members so inclined to collect zeppelin stamps. It stirred my interest to dig deeper into the only zeppelin cover I have, and I have discovered other usages I would like for my collection. But there is no cheap way out.

After World War I Germany was forced to make war reparations to the allied nations to cover their costs. Germany paid with cash, most of their fleet of ships, all of their submarines, their airships, their colonial empire, and otherwise. The debt to the United States was \$800,000 and a deal was eagerly accepted by the U.S. which included that the German dirigible maker Luftschiffbau Zeppelin would build and deliver (as a test of range and airworthiness) an LZ-126 airship. The company was the world's premier builder of dirigibles and it had been originally started by Count Ferdinand von Graf Zeppelin. On October 16, 1924 the airship was successfully delivered to the U.S. Naval Air Station at Lakehurst, New Jersey, and immediately christened *Los Angeles*. It was part of the U.S. Navy, became the most successful U.S. dirigible ever, and was one of the few to ever live to be decommissioned. The *Los Angeles* is seen on the view side of my postcard (below), an appropriate image for the address side.



The *Graf Zeppelin* airmail issue (Scott C13-15) was for the postage of cards and envelopes for portions of a round trip transatlantic flight of the newer, larger LZ-127, named *Graf Zeppelin*.

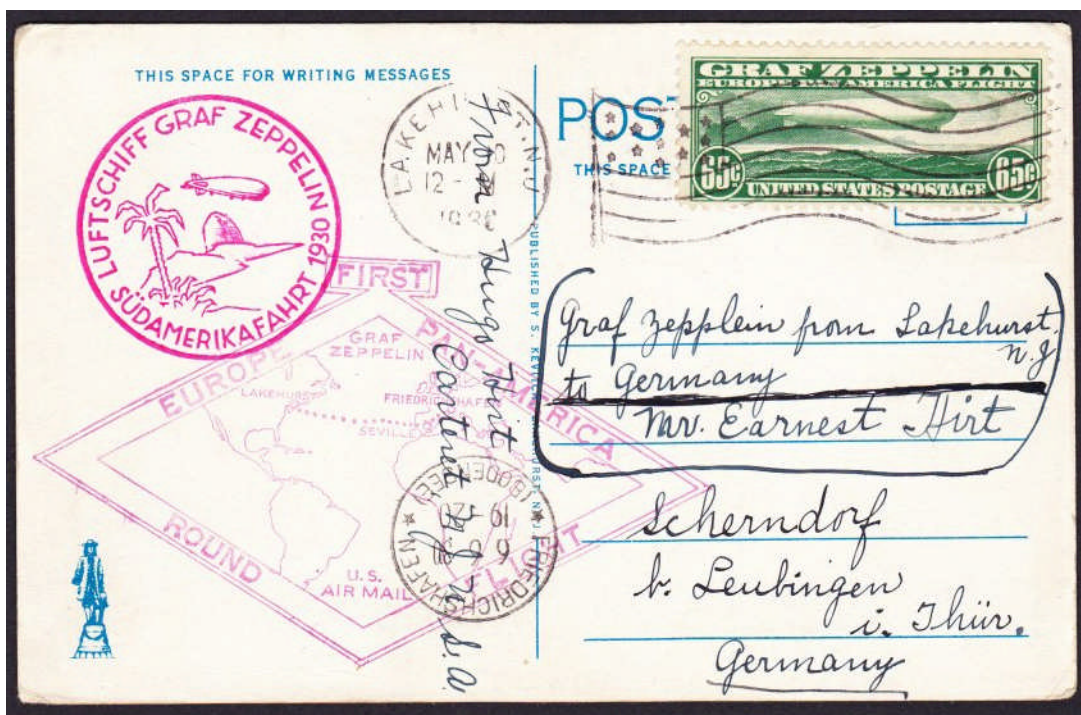
The 65¢ stamp (Scott C13 as on my cover) was mostly used on postcards and government postal cards for either the return (eastbound) flight or a portion of the preceding westbound flight. The *Graf Zeppelin* had been built in 1928 and had already flown transatlantic flights and a globe circling flight beginning and ending in Lakehurst, NJ. But this was to be the first Europe-Pan America round trip flight.

Collectors could send their covers for either eastbound or westbound portions or for the round trip under cover to the Varick Street Station post office in New York City, NY. For the westbound flight, which began in late May, 1930 in Friedrichshafen, Germany, U.S. cover orders were handled and assembled by Varick Street and sent by steamer to Germany. These covers usually bear postmarks with various dates from the Varick St. Sta. N.Y. post office or Washington, DC. Many of the Washington, DC cancels are postmarked the first day of issue of the Zeps, April 19, 1930, which really boosts their philatelic value. The airship stopped in Seville, Spain, Pernambuco, Brazil, Rio de

Janeiro, Brazil, then back to Pernambuco before flying to Lakehurst, NJ. After a few days layover the return flight began in early June, stopping in Seville but not including any stops in South America.

For those wanting covers only to be included on the return (eastbound) portion of the flight, the covers could also be sent to Lakehurst, NJ. Like my postcard, these covers usually received a Lakehurst, NJ, American Machine Co. flag cancel, the only flag cancel found on this zeppelin flight. These are sought by collectors of machine and flag cancels in addition to other collectors and thus have more demand than those showing most other cancels. These Lakehurst flag cancels show 5 different date/time combinations in their cancel dials from May 30 to June 2, 1930. My card shows May 30, 12-M (noon) and is the earliest and the most common.

Most of the covers gathered in New York and Lakehurst were addressed for delivery back to the U.S. and the postage entitled the senders to receive their covers back via sea mail to New York then by domestic air, if practicable, to the addressee. However, some were addressed to other countries and for those to European countries no additional postage was required. My card was addressed to Leubingen in the German state of Thurengia.



As is usual, my cover has a Received postmark from Friedrichshafen of June 6, 1930 and a red cachet promoting the airship builder. The U.S.P.O.D. applied a purple diamond cachet of an Americas/ Europe/ Africa map showing the route flown for the eastbound flight with a dotted line - from Lakehurst, NJ to Seville, Spain, to Friedrichshafen, Germany. The westbound and round trip flight cachets show the same purple map with more dotted lines since they included stops in Brazil.

Those covers that were shipped back to New York for U.S. delivery after completion of the flight were marked with a New York, NY, light green Received cancel which included a zeppelin design with the words "Europe-Pan America Round Flight" inside the design. A similar Received marking was used on covers ending their eastbound flight in Lakehurst. My postcard does not have this marking since it was addressed to Germany.

The legacy of this flight lives on for stamp collectors far beyond the desirability of the three *Graf Zeppelin* stamps. Together with the earlier 1927 Lindbergh solo flight across the Atlantic and the 1929 *Graf Zeppelin* round-the-world flight, the 1930 Europe-Pan-America flight is credited with creating interest in flight covers which expanded into collecting all types of covers and cancels by the mid to late 1930's.

The *Graf Zeppelin* began flying regular passenger service between Europe and South America in 1932 and then on May 6, 1937 the zeppelin *Hindenburg* burst into flames in Lakehurst, NJ killing 36 of 97 passengers and crew and one ground worker. All further flights of the *Graf Zeppelin* were canceled and in 1940 the airship was dismantled. It had been in service for nine years with 650 flights, 147 of these across the Atlantic, always carrying mail. She flew over a million miles (the only airship to do so) without any harm to its more than 13,000 passengers.

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Patrick Crosby is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal cards, especially used, including first days; the 1886 Grant Letter Card (or Sheet); UC16, the first U.S. aerogram; and postal history on business or picture post cards.