

## The U.S. Airmail “Map” Stamps and a 1933 Usage

By Patrick Crosby

The glossy photo postcard shown of busy California Street in San Francisco raises some interesting points about airmail (or air mail) covers to Europe in 1933. 10¢ would get a letter or card by airmail to Europe, so why is a 3¢ stamp added? The card was mailed to Germany, so why is there a Paris, France, handstamp? Does the blue “Par Avion / By Air Mail” label mean anything more than the obvious? (Yes.) Does the purple pencil marking in the address area indicate forwarding? (No.)



The 10¢ U.S. airmail stamp (Scott C7) on the featured postcard was the first issued of three airmail stamps in a set – “Map of the United States and Two Mail Planes” or simply the “Map” airmail stamps. These were issued in 1926 and early 1927.



The 10¢ blue stamp was issued to cover the domestic airmail letter rate up to one ounce for a distance up to 1000 miles, while the 15¢ brown stamp (Sc. C8) was for 1000 to 1500 miles. The 20¢ green stamp (Sc. C9) was for more than 1500 miles, a rate that was never used. Domestic airmail was through Contract Air Mail (CAM) routes, and the longest CAM route was 1,099 miles (Seattle/Los Angeles). The 20¢ stamp was issued January 25, 1927, and six days later the method of calculating domestic airmail postal rates was simplified to 10¢/½ ounce on the CAM routes in the continental U.S. regardless of distance.

On January 18, 1933, when the featured card was mailed, there were no special international or domestic airmail rates for cards, and letter rates were required. The postage rate for domestic continental airmail letters was 8¢ for the first ounce (and 13¢ for each additional ounce!). For international mail items to Europe 10¢ for the first ounce (15¢ for each additional ounce!) paid for airmail service within the

continental U.S. and then airmail service to either London, England, or Paris, France. These were the only two European airmail destinations at the time for U.S. airmail. That is why the (translated) “Paris North Station – Plane” handstamp was applied in transit. The 10¢ rate also included surface mail service from London or Paris to the item’s European destination.

But the sender wanted this card to continue onto Germany by airmail to the nearest airport as possible to Hamburg, Germany. A 3¢ postage surcharge was required for airmail service from London or Paris to a European destination airport that handled mail. The 3¢ added stamp was “thumb” canceled, not uncommon.

That the sender wanted and paid for airmail service on as much of this card’s journey as possible is also emphasized by the blue “Par Avion / By Air Mail” label, which also reads “Form 2978”, used to denote airmail all the way. This particular label served as a required endorsement, instead of writing something like “By air mail from France”.

The destination street address for this card is “Eilbecktal 56”, but this is not in Wandsbek (a rural borough north of Hamburg) which a German postal clerk knew. So he crossed out “Wandsbek” and added “Hmb Ws” in purple pencil, short for the “Hamburg-Wandsbek” district of Hamburg where the address is located to this day. So the card was not forwarded, the clerk just made an address correction.

The International airmail rate shown on the featured card was in effect for less than 2 years, 5 months. The three values of the airmail Map stamps were used into the mid 1940’s. A year ago I paid \$17.50 for this bit of postal history. And what is so important about the message that the fastest service possible was paid for? Nothing really. It seems Rudi is just sending many greetings from himself and others named.

#### **References:**

*U.S. Army Carries the Air Mail 1934*, by Tom Reyman (Nevada Stamp Study Society, Post Boy, January 2021, pp.6-7) [Tom gives background on the CAM routes and the drastic changes that occurred the year after the featured card was mailed.]

*Scott 2019 Specialized Catalog of United States Stamps and Covers* (Sidney, OH: Amos Media, 2018)

Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz and Henry W. Beecher, *U.S. International Postal Rates, 1872-1996* (Portland, OR: CAMA Publishing Co. 1996) esp. pp.102, 103 and 142 [available from APS]

Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz and Henry W. Beecher, *U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-2011* (Bellefonte, PA: American Philatelic Society, 2011) [available from APS]

Google Maps ([google.com/maps](https://www.google.com/maps)) [free!]

**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.