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POSTAL NEWS

Washington, DC: Michael Hotovy
202.636.1245
michael.j.hotovy@usps.gov

National: Sara Martin
202.268.8386
sara.a.martin@usps.gov
usps.com/news



United States Postal Service Celebrates 100th Anniversary of United States Air Mail Service

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Postal Service celebrates the 100th anniversary of the beginning of regular airmail service with a Forever stamp. This stamp celebrates the courage of the pioneering airmail carriers and the foresight of those who fostered the new service and made it a success.

The first-day-of-issue ceremony for the blue United States Air Mail Forever stamp, pictured above, took place today at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum. Followers of the U.S. Postal Service's Facebook page can view a video of the ceremony at [facebook.com/USPS](https://www.facebook.com/USPS). News about the stamps can be shared with the hashtags **#AirMailStamps** and **#USAirMail**.

"The stamp we're here to celebrate is a beautiful reminder of the imprint of United States Air Mail on today's world," said U.S. Postal Service Vice President of Supply Management Susan Brownell who dedicated the stamps.

Brownell spoke of how this groundbreaking service is credited with establishing the foundation for America's modern-day aviation industry. "The Wright brothers opened this country's eyes to what could be possible," she added. "Fifteen years later, with the first airmail flights, the Post Office helped turn that possibility into reality."

Joining Brownell to unveil the stamps were Dr. Bill Harris, Deputy Director, Air Force History and Museums Policies and Programs; Elliot Gruber, Director, Smithsonian National Postal Museum; and Nancy Pope, Head Curator, Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

Harris spoke of the history of aviation, noting the significant contributions of the early pilots. "Challenges

would be great,” he said. “But this didn’t dampen the spirits of the pilots who innovated and experimented daily with tactics and landing procedures. After all, what cargo could be more precious than letters to loved ones!”



A second stamp, red and pictured left, will be issued in College Park, MD on Aug. 11, 2018. The stamp will commemorate United States Air Mail as an official function of the Post Office Department.

Both stamps, printed in the intaglio print method — a design transferred to paper from an engraved plate — depict the type of plane typically used in the early days of airmail, a Curtiss JN-4H biplane. The biplane was also featured on the 24-cent stamps originally issued in 1918 to commemorate the beginning of regularly scheduled airmail service.

The stamp design evokes that earlier period. The stamp designer and typographer was Dan Gretta; Greg Breeding was the art director.

Background

On May 15, 1918, in the midst of World War I, a small group of Army pilots delivered mail along a route that linked Washington, Philadelphia, and New York City — initiating the world's first regularly scheduled airmail service. The blue stamp, released May 1, 2018, commemorated the pioneering spirit of the brave pilots who first flew the mail in the early years of aviation.

The United States Post Office Department, the predecessor to the U.S. Postal Service, took charge of U.S. Air Mail service later that summer, operating it from Aug. 12, 1918, through Sept. 1, 1927. Airmail delivery, daily except Sundays, became part of the fabric of the American economy and spurred the growth of the nation's aviation industry. The red stamp commemorated this milestone.

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For airmail service to succeed in the early days of flight, the Post Office had to develop profitable routes, such as between New York and Chicago, and establish the infrastructure for safely making night flights. It set up lighted airfields and erected hundreds of airmail guide beacons between New York and San Francisco so that by 1924 regularly scheduled, transcontinental flying was possible, day and night.

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The United States Air Mail stamp is being issued as a Forever stamp that will always be equal in value to the current First-Class Mail one ounce price.

Stamp ideas welcome

The public is encouraged to submit stamp suggestions. Visit the [Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee](https://www.usps.com/citizens-stamp-advisory-committee) website for details on the stamp selection process and instructions for submitting suggestions in writing. Due to the time required for research and approval, ideas for stamp subjects should be received at least three years prior to the proposed release. Each submission should include pertinent historical information and important dates associated with the subject.

Customers may purchase the United States Air Mail Forever stamps, along with other philately at The Postal Store at usps.com/shop, by calling 800-STAMP24 (800-782-6724) and at Post Office facilities nationwide. A variety of stamps and collectibles also are available at ebay.com/stamps, on the official US Postal Services webpage.

Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 120 days to obtain first-day-of-issue postmarks by mail. They may purchase new stamps at local Post Office facilities, at The Postal Store usps.com/shop or by phone at 800-STAMP-24. They must affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others and place them in envelopes addressed to:

United States Air Mail Forever Stamps
USPS Stamp Fulfillment Services
8300 NE Underground Drive, Suite 300
Kansas City, MO 64144-9900

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for postmarks up to a quantity of 50. For more than 50, customers are charged 5 cents each. All orders must be postmarked by Aug. 29, 2018.

Ordering First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamps and stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the *USA Philatelic Publication* and online at usps.com/shop. Customers may register to receive a free *USA Philatelic Publication* online at usps.com/philatelic.

Philatelic Products

The following Philatelic products are available at usps.com/shop.

- 477700, United States Air Mail Stamps, \$0.50
- 477706, Press Sheet with Die-cut, \$60.00.
- 477710, Digital Color Postmark Keepsake, \$11.95.
- 477716, First-Day Cover, \$0.94.
- 477721, Digital Color Postmark, \$1.65.
- 477730, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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