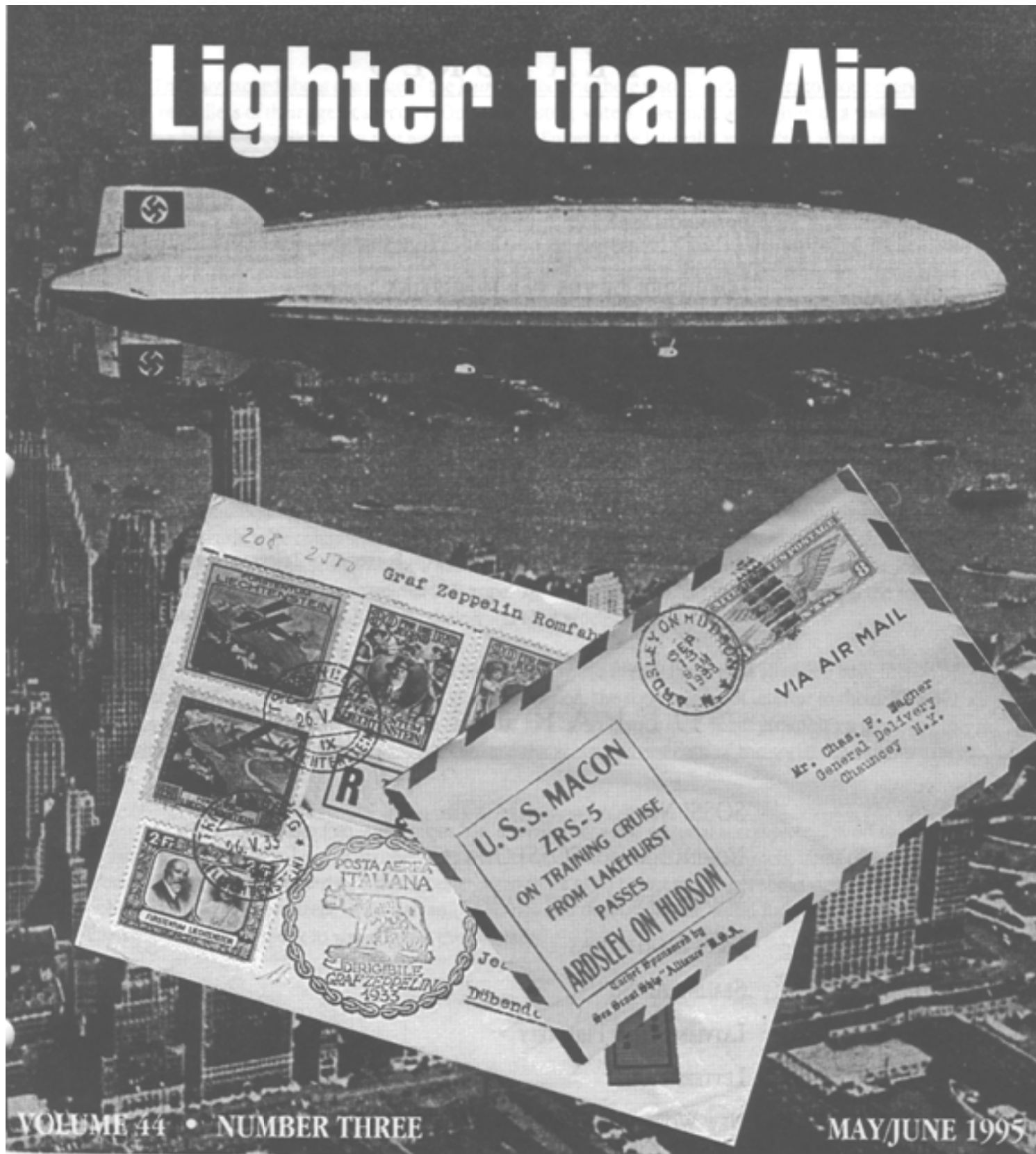


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Lighter than Air



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LIGHTER THAN AIR

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF SCOUT ZEPPELIN MAIL

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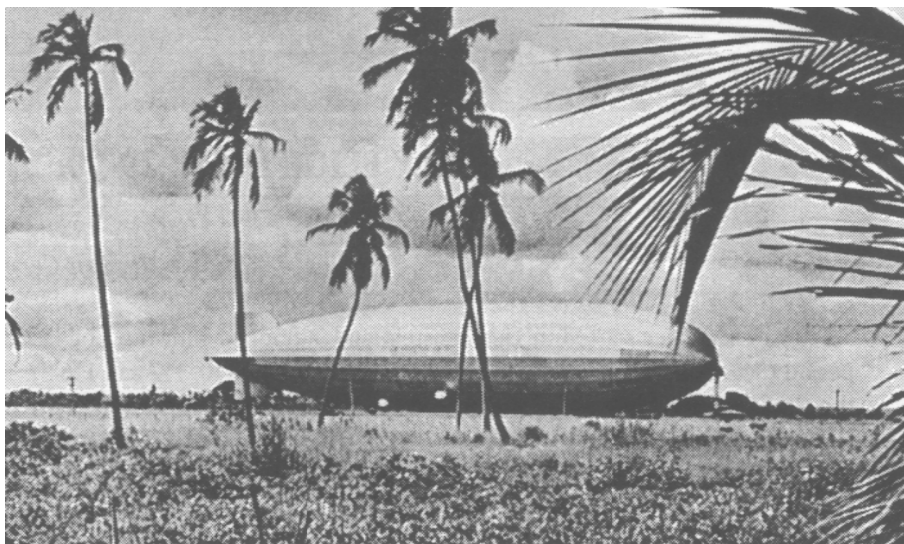
The idea of a rigid lighter than air craft started around the turn of the century in Europe. The leader of design and promotion was a German, Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin (left), whose name became synonymous with this type of airship.

The idea of carrying mail in Zeppelins did not start in earnest until just before the First World War in Germany, and just afterward in the United Kingdom. There was some mail carried for the military during the war, but this service was very limited. The United States had its first Zeppelin mail in 1924. It is interesting that the birth of the both Zeppelin mail and of the Scouting movement took place in very nearly the same time period. It was only a matter of time before nationally issued Scout stamps and Zeppelin mail service would come together to form one of the rarest and least seen segments of Scout Philately.

The Scout movement had very little postal history in during the first twenty years of the Zeppelin's use as a mail dispatcher. It is not surprising, then, that it was not until 1931 that we see the first record of these covers. The Graf Zeppelin (pictured below in Brazil) was an 800 foot leviathan which travelled the world extensively. Due to its longevity and extensive worldwide use, the Graf Zeppelin cancels are the most varied and prevalent of the Zeppelin cancels. Conversely, the Hindenburg cancels, particularly those from the infamous "crash flight" of 1937 are the most exotic and sought after of the Scout Zeppelin mail.

The examples of Scout Zeppelin mail which follow are, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive collection of Scout Zeppelin covers ever assembled in a single published study. They have been kindly lent for publication by collectors from around the world, and their generosity has made this feature possible. We begin with examples from the 1931 flight season, and conclude with the most famous Zeppelin mail of all, Scout World Jamboree stamps cancelled on the Hindenburg on its world famous last flight in 1937.

Though the Zeppelin era and its mail service were short lived and sometimes tragic, the artifacts of era remain elusive and sought after even as we approach the millennium.



Graf Zeppelin in Brazil

SWISS FLIGHT AUGUST 27, 1931

(AAMC number Z-169; Sieger number 123)

The World Rover (a program for older Scouts) Moot (camp) was taking place in Switzerland. A special canceler (CH-002) was used for this event from July 27, to August 5, 1931. A specially printed Zeppelin card was prepared using then current Swiss airmail stamps (Scott's #C3, C5 and C12; Michel's #179, 180 and 191) of that time. They were all canceled in black with the Rover Moot canceler on August 1, 1931. The card was forwarded to Germany where it was held for the flight Swiss flight from Friedrichshafen, Germany to Lausanne, Switzerland. The card received the onboard cancel on August 8, 1931 in black. There is a red flight cachet applied to the card. The card arrived at Lausanne on August 27, 1931 thus completing its trip on board the Graf Zeppelin. The first link between Zeppelin and Scout mail is the 1931 Rover Moot cancel otherwise this would have been just another flight cover.



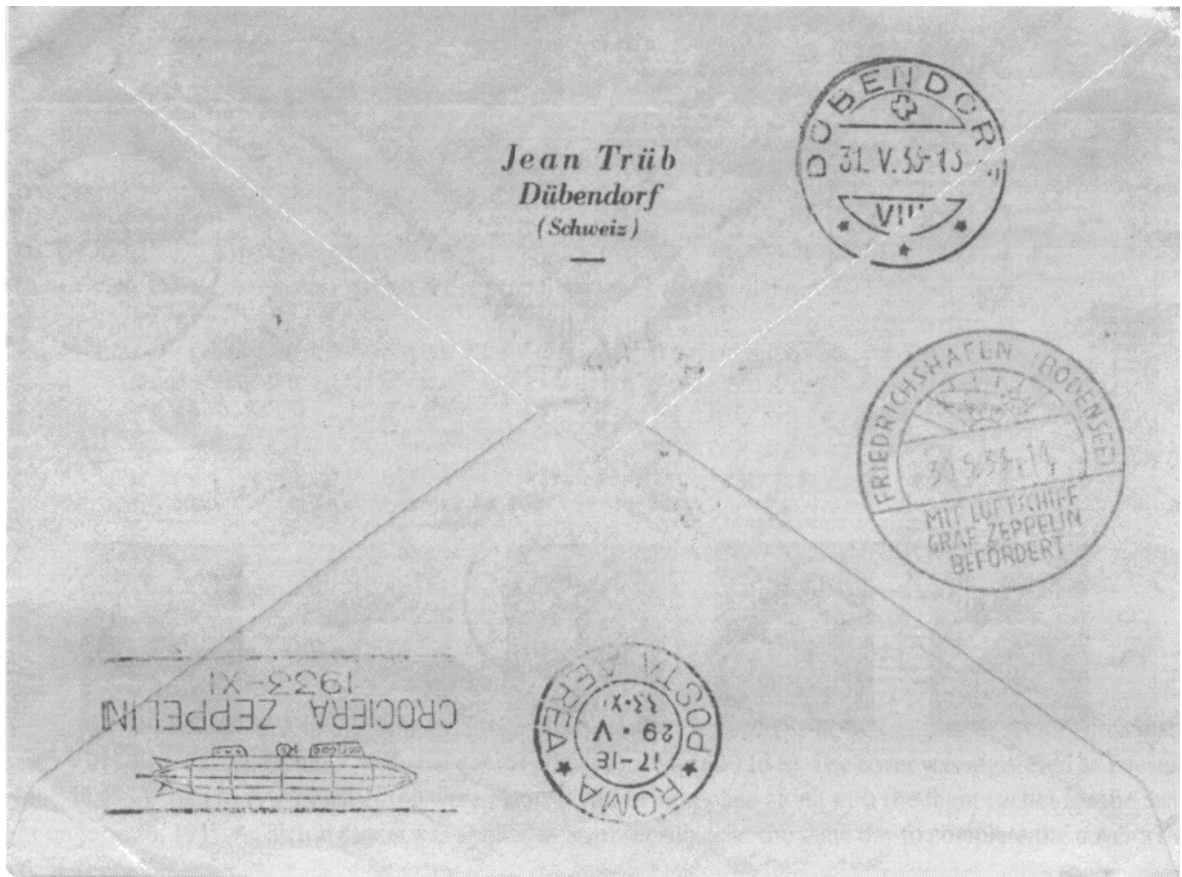
ITALY FLIGHT MAY 29-30, 1933

FACING PAGE

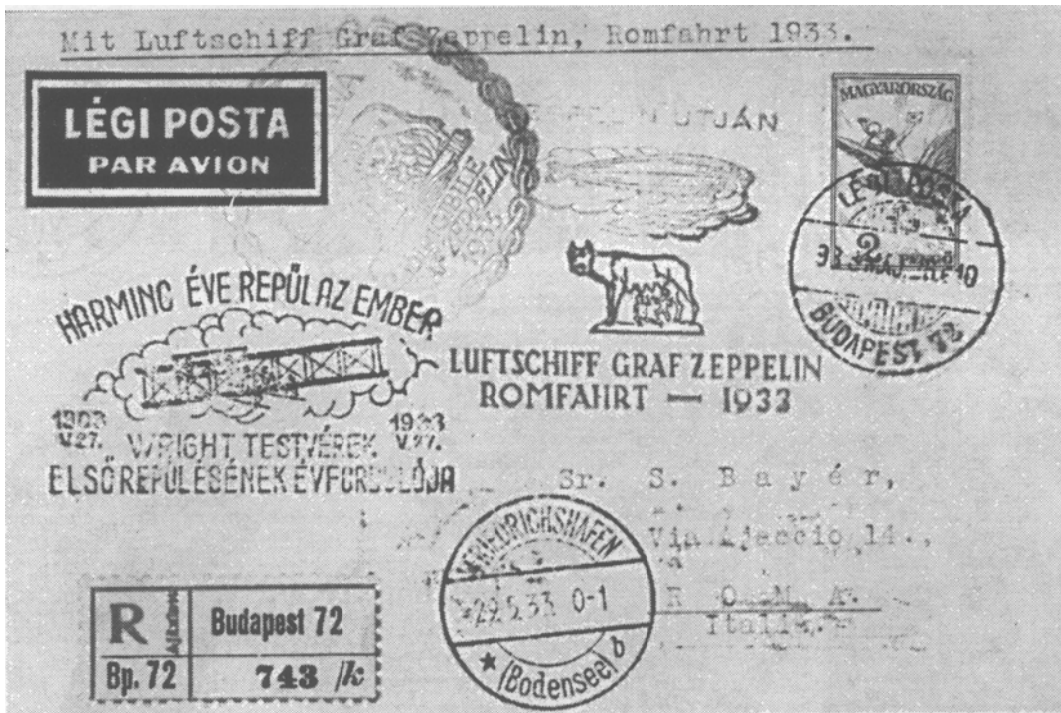
(AAMC #Z-213; Sieger #208) • *Italian-German Leg*

This cover started in Liechtenstein and is franked with the Children's Welfare set and other stamps of the period (Scott's #B11-B13, 107, C3 and C4; Michel's #107, 110, 112 and 116-8). The flight was the 1933 Italian Flight by the Graf Zeppelin. The cover is registered and first canceled in Triesenberg, Liechtenstein on May 26, 1933. It then traveled to Zürich, Switzerland by plane as noted by the cancel on the front upper right corner. The next stop was Rome, Italy where it received the special Italian flight cancellation on the back and the flight cachet on the front. The final stop on the Zeppelin flight was Germany where an onboard cancel was applied on the back. It was then forwarded to Dübendorf, Switzerland arriving on May 31, 1933. The use of the Scout stamps of a Zeppelin cover is very rare.

ITALY FLIGHT MAY 29-30, 1933



ITALY FLIGHT MAY 29-30, 1933



ITALY FLIGHT MAY 29-30, 1933

FACING PAGE

(AAMC #213; Sieger # 207B) • *German-Italian Leg*

This is the most unusual of the Scout Zeppelin covers. This card started its trip in Budapest, Hungary. It was franked with a single airmail stamp (Scott's number C22) was registered and canceled on August 26, 1933. It received a special commemorative cachet for the 30th of the Wright Brothers first Test Flight on May 27, 1903. It then went to Germany and received a transit cancel at Friedrichshafen on May 29, 1933 and the flight cachet for the German-Italian leg of the flight. It was flown to Rome where it received the Italian flight cachet as a transit marking (Sieger #208). On the back of the card is affixed an example of the Proof strip of the Special Stamps that were going to be issued for the Fourth Boy Scout World Jamboree in Hungary. The strip was tied by the special Italian Zeppelin canceler for this flight as a receiver dated May 29, 1933. The Proof strip was not applied for postage, for it had no postal validity. It was there as an example of the new stamps to the collector to see. The cancel tying the strip to the back of the card was just a stroke of luck, but making this for sure a Scout related Zeppelin cover of the most unusual type.

SAAR FLIGHT JUNE 25, 1933

(AAMC #Z-214; Sieger #217)



This cover is again franked with Liechtenstein Children's Welfare set as well as four different Airmail stamps (Scott's #B11-B13, C1, C2, C4 and C5; Michel's #108, 109, 111, 113, and 116-8). The cover was registered at Triesenberg on June 19, 1933. Sent to Friedrichshafen were a transit cancel as applied along with the flight cachet for the Saarland Flight on June 25, 1933. An arrival cancel was applied at Saarbrücken, Saar the same day to complete the cover's ride on the Graf Zeppelin.

1933 FOURTH SOUTH AMERICA FLIGHT

(AAMC # 203; Sieger #223)



This cover is the most Scout related Zeppelin cover seen to date. A registered Hungarian cover franked with a single of the 20 Filler value (Scott's #483) from the set for the Fourth World Boy Scout Jamboree as well as 4 other values (Scott's #471, C27, C32 and C33). It has the special Jamboree Registry label; the stamps are tied by the Jamboree canceled d (H-006d) on August 1, 1933. The cover was flown from the Jamboree by the Hungarian Air Scouts as noted by their glider flight cachet in the center of the cover. A special Hungarian cachet is imprinted under the registry label which says "by way of Zeppelin." The next leg of the trip was by airplane to Berlin. This is noted by the flown marking in the lower center of the cover and the zeppelin Berlin transit cachet at the lower right side of the cover as well as a Berlin transit cancel at the top of the cover. The final leg of the cover is noted by the Zeppelin flight cachet at the lower left of the cover. This ties the Jamboree registry label. This is a most remarkable Scout Zeppelin Cover.

1933 SEVENTH SOUTH AMERICAN FLIGHT

FACING PAGE

(AAMC # Z206; Sieger #232B) • September 16 - 26, 1933

The cover is franked on both the front and back with multiples of the Fourth World Jamboree Stamps (Scott's #481 - 5) from Hungary. It was canceled in Budapest on September 11, 1933 and forwarded to Germany arriving on September 13, 1933 where it received a transit cancel in Berlin as well as the a shuttle cachet on the back for Berlin. The regular airmail marking is on the front of the cover in the lower left hand corner. The Zeppelin flight cachet is there as well. A Hungarian marking for the Zeppelin mail is at the center of the cover. The cover was then flown by the Graf Zeppelin to Brazil where a receiving cancel was applied to the front on September 19, 1933. This cover shows the most spectacular usage of the 1933 World Jamboree stamps,

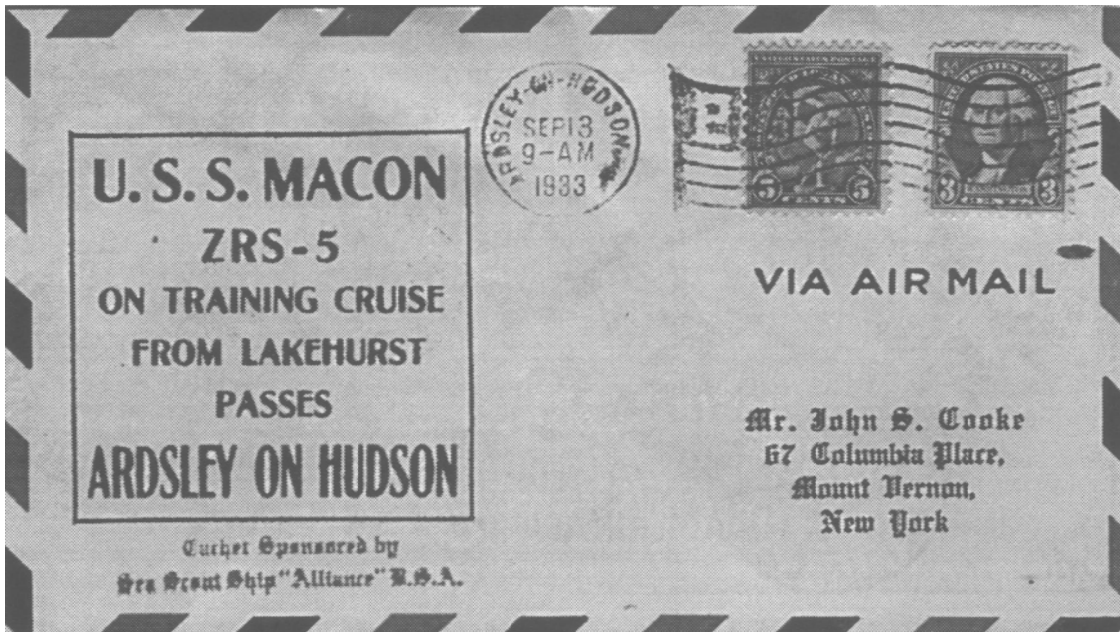
1933 SEVENTH SOUTH AMERICAN FLIGHT



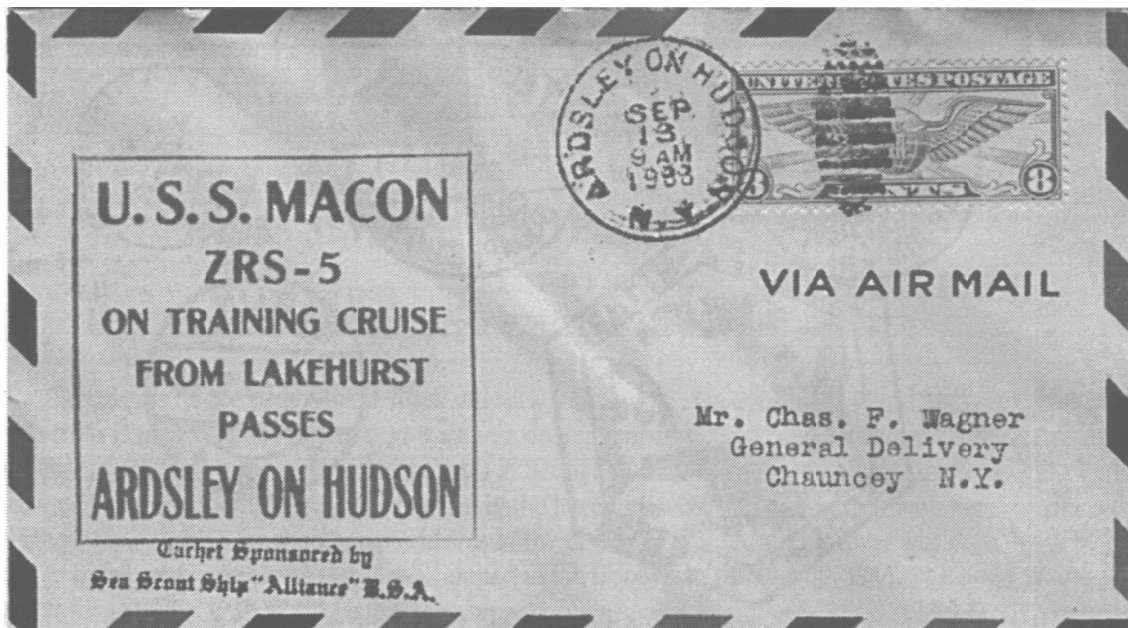
TRAINING FLIGHT OF THE U. S. S. MACON

September 13, 1993

Though these covers were not flown on the any of the Zeppelins, they are closely related to them and have been added to this article to give a more rounded outlook to the collector of these interesting covers, This was a training flight from the U. S. Naval Air station at Lakehurst, New Jersey up the Hudson River. These four covers were sponsored by the Sea Scout Ship Alliance, B. S. A.

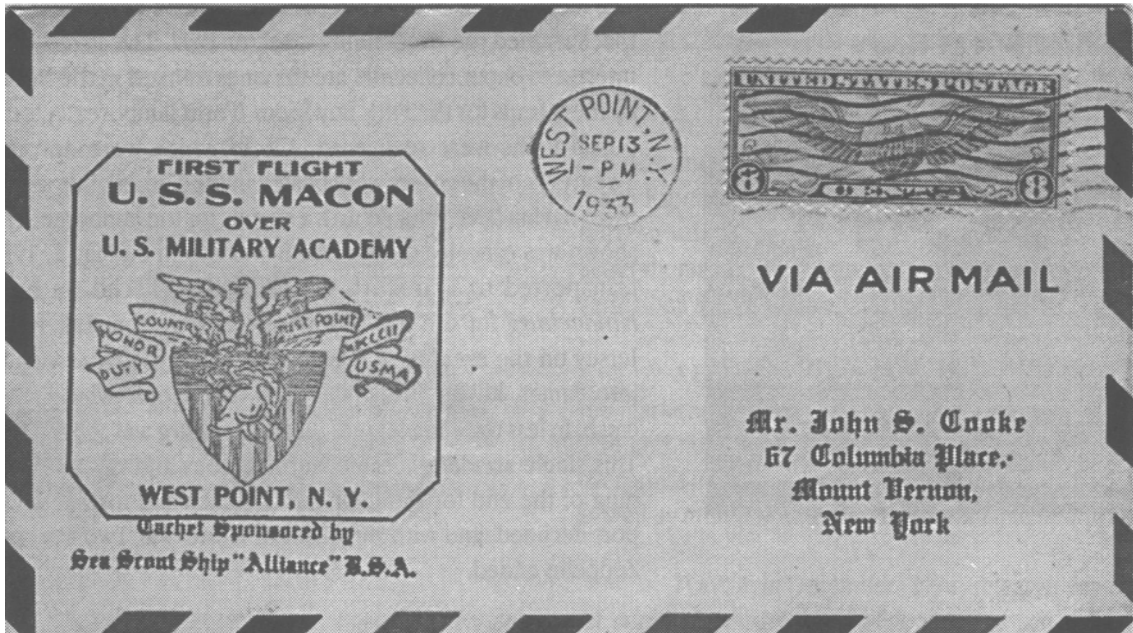


These covers are reversed covers on the cachets of blue and green, The green printed box with its wording is canceled at Ardsley on Hudson at 9:00 AM by a duplex canceler and the other with the box and its wording in blue with a machine canceler.

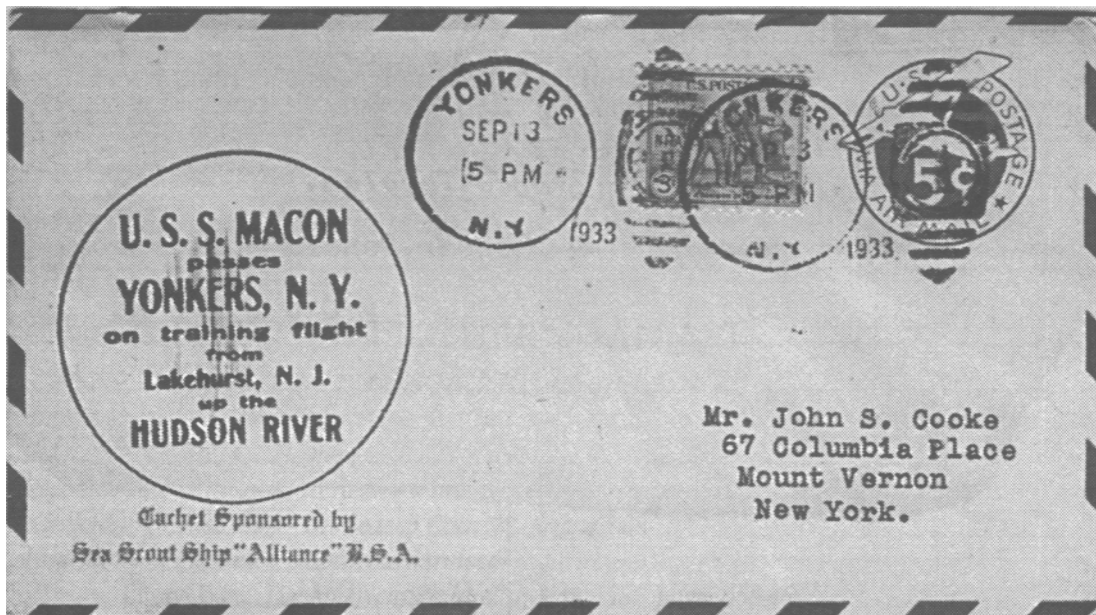


TRAINING FLIGHT OF THE U. S. S. MACON

September 13, 1933



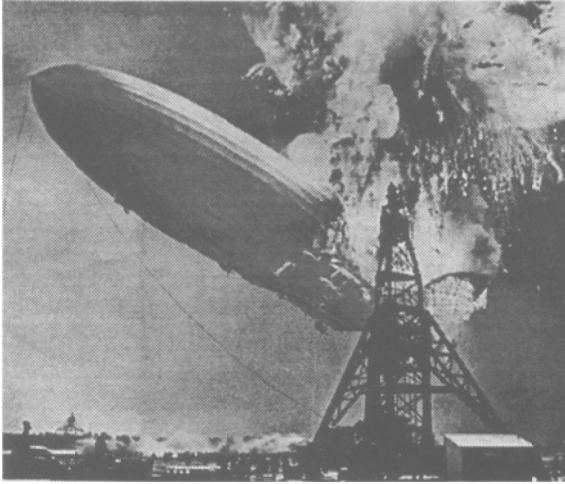
This cover was at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, The cachet is printed in black with the Academy's coat of Arms in pale red. It was canceled at West Point at 1:00 PM that day.



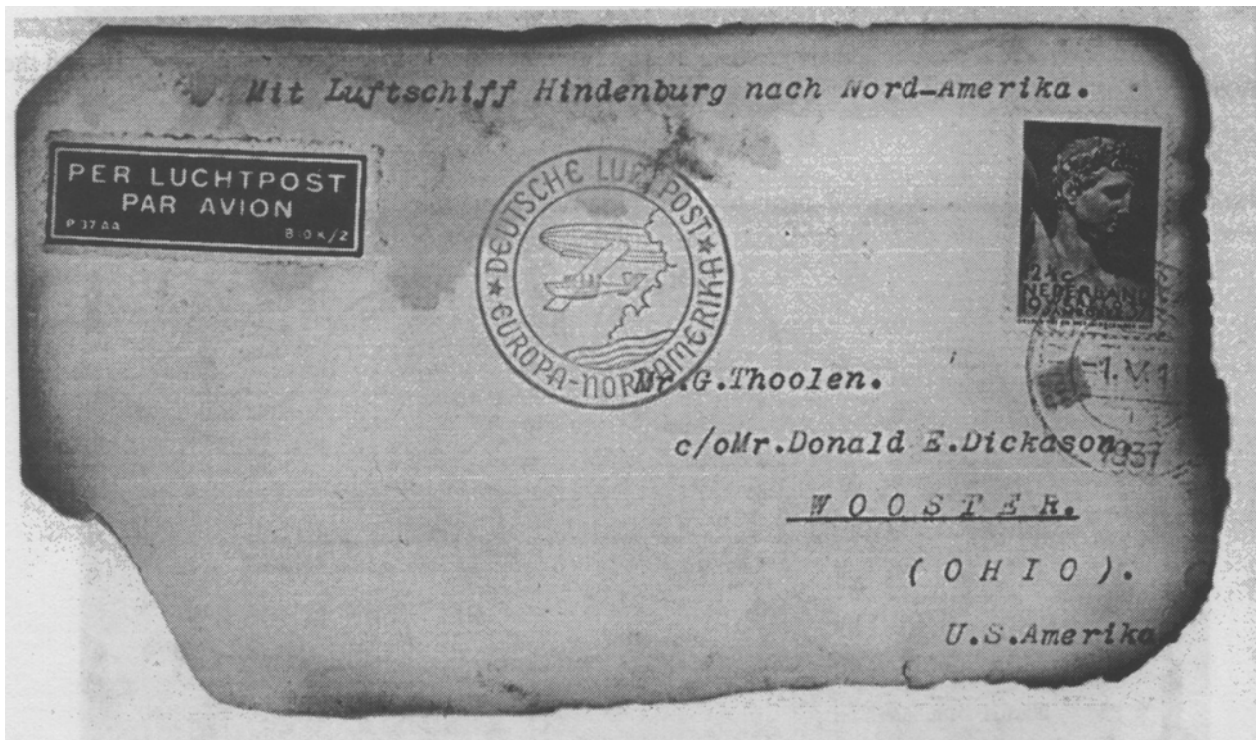
The last cover to this flight was at Yonkers, New York. This cachet is printed in blue with the sponsors wording in magenta. Canceled at 5:00 PM with a duplex canceler at Yonkers.

THE HINDENBURG CRASH FLIGHT

(AAMC #Z432a; Sieger #454)



The most famous of all Scout related Zeppelin covers are the pieces that survived the *Hindenburg* crash of 1937. The covers that are of interest to Scout collectors are the ones franked in the Netherlands by the stamps for the Fifth Boy Scout World Jamboree. A total of 357 postal items were recovered, 176 of which were not canceled. Twenty-six of the covers were posted in the Netherlands with twenty-three having been franked with a stamps for the Jamboree. The cover shown was canceled at Rotterdam-Waalhaven on May 1, 1937, then transported to Frankfort, Germany and placed on board the *Hindenburg* for the trip to America. It arrived at Lakehurst, New Jersey on the evening of May 6, 1937 when the *Hindenburg* burst into flames, killing 36 people, Sixty two people survived the crash. In less than one minute the *Hindenburg* was totally destroyed. This single accident became world famous and marked the beginning of the end for the Zeppelin. The demand for Zeppelin transport declined, and with the onset of World War Two the age of the Zeppelin ended.



Many thanks for the collectors who shared their treasures with us. Thanks also to the many philatelic writers that gave us the reference material used to write this article especially Cheryl Ganz who took the time to forward copies of her articles. There are other Scout related Zeppelin covers in the hands of collector and it would be most welcome if they would share their treasures with the rest of us. Please contact me at the Journal if you would like to share your information with us.

LIGHTER THAN AIR

Reference Books and Articles

•

American Air Mail Catalogue (AAMC), Volume One, Zeppelin Posts Chapter

Zeppelin Post Catalogue, Hermann Walter Sieger

Hindenburg Crash Mail - The Search Goes On, Arthur Falk

How Many of the Dutch Dispatches Survived?

Cheryl Ganz, *The American Philatelist*, May, 1987 pages 458-460

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Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue, 1995

Michel Europa-Katalog West (Western European Catalogue)

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