

From Hoarding to Philately

My lifelong odyssey collecting stamps

David S. Ball, RPSL



I began collecting stamps when I was 8 years old. Shy, introverted, and curious I tore the corners off my parent's mail. I would soak them in the bathroom sink to separate the stamps from the paper. A few nights between wax paper and a paper towel under a heavy dictionary and I was all set.

When I started collecting in 1967 stamps cost a nickel. My best stamp was a used copy of the 3 cent stamp seen above. It had two dates on it, 1869 and 1944. I decided it was from 1869 (and might be worth millions) because 1869 was older.

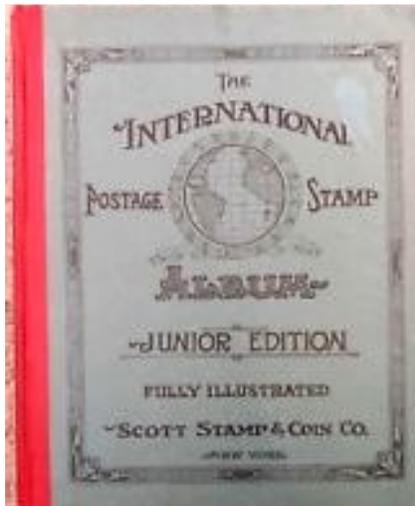
The world was my oyster



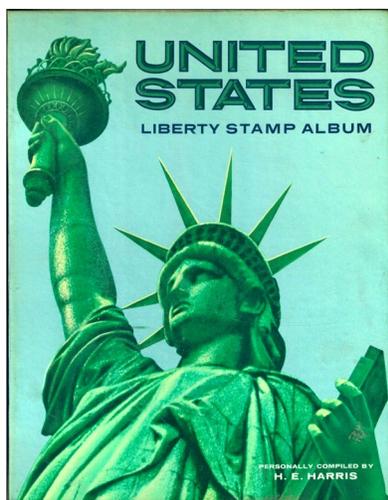
Like many I went through a series of phases. It begins as an accumulator. You are just so pleased to have anything so you collect everything. You get some glassine envelopes and a stock book separating stamps by country. As you might expect, the stamps on approval or items I acquired were often incomplete or “broken” sets missing the higher values. Invariably, as I got duplicates I would imagine they could serve as trades in order to complete my mission to collect every stamp in the world.

As a hoarder I had no catalogs or reference books. I didn’t understand how to differentiate similar appearing stamps and was oblivious to condition. Collecting the world was exciting and overwhelming at the same time. Only later I would realize that the narrower the focus the more knowledgeable a collector is likely to become.

Nothing like falling off a bike to help you focus



Started by Mom in 1947



Started by me in 1967

At age eight I fell off a neighbor's bike and landed in the hospital for a few days. To lift my spirits and help pass the time Dad brought several Hershey chocolate bars. Mom decided to buy me an album for my stamps.

The Liberty album from H E Harris was an inspired choice. It had pictures and not just catalog numbers so young collectors could find where the stamps belonged. It helped me focus down from any stamp in the world to issues from the United States.

It was around that time that she also gave me the album she was given when she was around eight. She was born in Vienna, Austria but was brought to America when the family fled from Hitler and the ensuing Holocaust. Deported, the family was detained in Trinidad off the coast of Venezuela. It was there that she would learn geography by coloring the world maps and put British Colony and other stamps in her Scott International Junior.

My first space cover

When I turned 10 I remember watching the Moon landing on our black & white TV. The year was 1969 and I knew that the rest of my life would be divided between the world before and after that summer day in July. Not long after I was visiting my grandmother in New Jersey.

Ohma took me to a stamp store (they were common in those days) and bought me my first space cover. In my exhibiting Class there is no way to show it but I will always treasure this First Day Cover with a photo cachet of Buzz Aldrin and a stamp of Neil Armstrong.



Over time I began collecting plate, zip, and mail early blocks. I bought Liberty albums for them but having them was ultimately unsatisfying. They taught me nothing, got expensive to obtain, and never increased in value. Although I never spent much on First Day Covers, I suspect those that stopped collecting FDCs felt the same way.



Hibernation



At some point I discovered girls and cars. There was school followed by work. Along the way there was marriage, a career, more school, the military, and two daughters. The stamp album was never far from reach but it didn't come out much. There was always something else to do and other things to spend money on.

Dictionary



hi·ber·na·tion

/ˌhɪbərˈnɑːʃ(ə)n/ 

noun

the condition or period of an animal or plant spending the winter in a dormant state.

"grizzly bears gorge on seeds to prepare for hibernation"

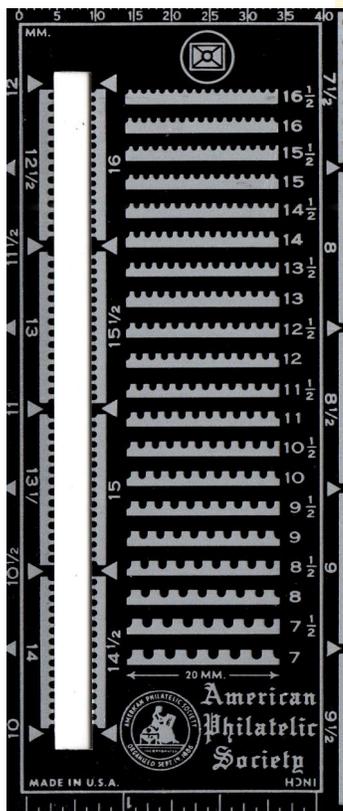
- an extended period of remaining inactive or indoors.
"the fair-weather cyclists are emerging from winter hibernation"



Translations, word origin, and more definitions

Becoming a more serious collector

After about 30 years I moved from the Harris Liberty to the Scott National. There were no longer pictures where the stamps go. Instead, the Scott number was the expectation that the collector would use the perforation gauge, watermark tray, and identification section of the Specialized Catalogue to differentiate flat, rotary, coil and booklet stamps. Although not yet a philatelist, I had graduated from an accumulator to a collector. A modicum of knowledge, a dash of discernment, and a narrowing of focus.



The epiphany and the light bulb



A highlight for a collector is attending a world philatelic exhibition. These are held regularly around the globe but only appear in a particular nation once a decade. For the United States this means a year ending in a 6 or 7.

While attending Washington 2006 I had an epiphany. A Swiss exhibitor was giving a lecture on space themed displays. I had my FDC from the Moon landing but didn't understand until her lecture what her exhibiting was all about.

Astrophilately is the intersection between space and postal history. It uses envelopes postmarked on the date and nearest space events. During her lecture I began sketching out a book that would take three years to write.

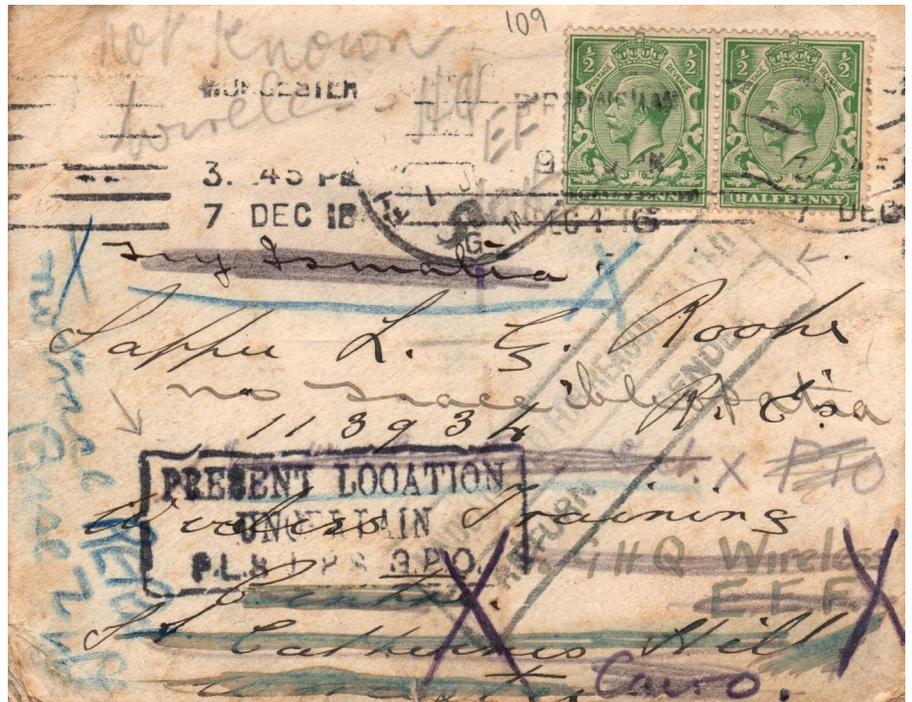
At New York 2016 my exhibit, *Americans in Space*, received a high award. I am already planning to attend Boston 2026. Today I represent the United States for Astrophilately to the world governing body, FIP.



Like many I progressed from accumulator to collector. In that journey I got an album, narrowed my interests, and acquired philatelic knowledge. For some “completeness”, however, is insufficient. Simply collecting is having enough information to fill a page.

The next chapter in my 50 year journey was a shift from stamps to postal history and a focus on exhibition. There are just so many stories one can tell with stamps. They are often printed in the millions (or billions) and usually look the same.

Envelopes, on the other hand, can take quite a story. Consider why every person is unique. We are a collection of all the experiences of our lives. Similarly, every snowflake is a crystalline history of the temperatures, barometric pressures, dust, wind, and moisture of its short life from the heavens to terra firma. What stories might our brave little envelope tell? Sent from Great Britain during the “Great War” to Egypt, it took several detours only to be Returned to Sender.



To understand the postal regulations, routes, rates and auxiliary markings the student of postal history then gathers a philatelic library. To enhance understanding (and find rare material) I began joining specialized societies. After reading them for a few years I began giving back by authoring articles of interest to me.

These days I focus my reading, writing, and collecting around how the item can help tell a story. My first, “70 Years of Flight: Kitty Hawk to the Moon” was shown at CHICAGOPEX 2001 and received a Bronze metal. While my first love was Astrophilately, I have subsequently shown Aerophilately and Polar. Two are currently on exhibit. In March I plan to show 80 pages of envelopes carried by Charles Lindbergh from 1926 -1931. At STOCKHOLMIA 2019 the plan is to show 5 frames of Drift Station mail.



70 Years of Flight: Kitty Hawk to the Moon

At the dawn of the 20th Century controlled powered flight was impossible. Seventy years later the first explorations of the moon were over. Orville Wright lived to see Chuck Yeager break the sound barrier. Benjamin Foulois, the first military pilot, who learned to fly by correspondence from the Wright's in 1910, lived to pin medals on the Mercury astronauts. Edwin Aldrin, a friend of the Wright brothers, watched his son and Neil Armstrong make the first landing on the moon.



This 1949 stamp was issued to commemorate the return of the Wright Flyer to America from England. It pictures the world's first airplane.



The die for this 1969 stamp was taken to the surface of the moon. The stamp shows the world's first spaceship – the Lunar Excursion Module (LEM).

OF ICE AND MEN

BYRD ANTARCTIC EXPEDITIONS I-V



In 1925 Commander Richard E. Byrd led the naval party that accompanied the MacMillan Greenland expedition. His use of polar aviation returned valuable hydrographic, magnetic, and geographical information, including the possible discovery of new territory. His flights, which pioneered the use of the sun compass and shortwave aerial radio, covered more in one day's flight than a month of sledging. Denied permission to make a dash for the North Pole by the Navy he returned the following year with Floyd Bennett and made claim to the first flight over the top of the world. In 1927 he flew the first transatlantic airmail after losing out on the first nonstop New York to Paris flight to Charles Lindbergh.

Byrd ushered in the Mechanical Age of Antarctic exploration from 1928 until his death nearly 30 years later. The postal history of the Byrd Antarctic Expeditions is traced with particular attention to the aerial flights which brought him acclaim and success. Presented are Byrd Antarctic Expedition (1928-1930) [BAE-I], Byrd Antarctic Expedition (1933-1935) [BAE-II], US Antarctic Service Expedition (1939-1941) [BAE-III], US Navy Antarctic Development Project (1946-1947) [Operation Highjump, BAE-IV], and Operation Deep Freeze I (1955-1956) [BAE-V].

REFERENCES

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Bertrand, Kenneth J. | <i>Americans in Antarctica 1775-1948</i> (1971) |
| Byrd, Richard E. | <i>Little America</i> (1930), <i>Discovery</i> (1935) |
| Dufek, George J. | <i>Operation Deepfreeze</i> (1957) |

Lindbergh Flies the Mail: 1926-1931



Scope of the Exhibit

From 1926 until 1931 Charles Lindbergh carried mail by air. When he began, envelopes carried in aircraft were a novelty. Following his transatlantic flight in 1927 interest in aviation exploded. Passenger service blossomed, commercial routes expanded, and Lindbergh himself became the world's first celebrity. Of 120 covers shown 113 were carried by The Lone Eagle on one of his 128 inaugural flights.

Organizational Plan

Section 1	1926	CAM 2	Section 4	1929	FAM 5, 8 & 6
Section 2	1927	New York to Paris	Section 5	1930	FAM 5
Section 3	1928	Horseshoe	Section 6	1931	American Clipper

Difficulty of Material Acquisition

Lindbergh flown covers are not rare. From 1926 to 1931 he flew at least 313,722 (and probably well over a million) envelopes for the Post Office and contract carriers. This is based on an estimate of 40 covers per pound where the number of envelopes or the weights of mail sacks are known. Half of the known envelopes are "horseshoe" covers from 1928. Mail from his Latin American flights represent a greater challenge.

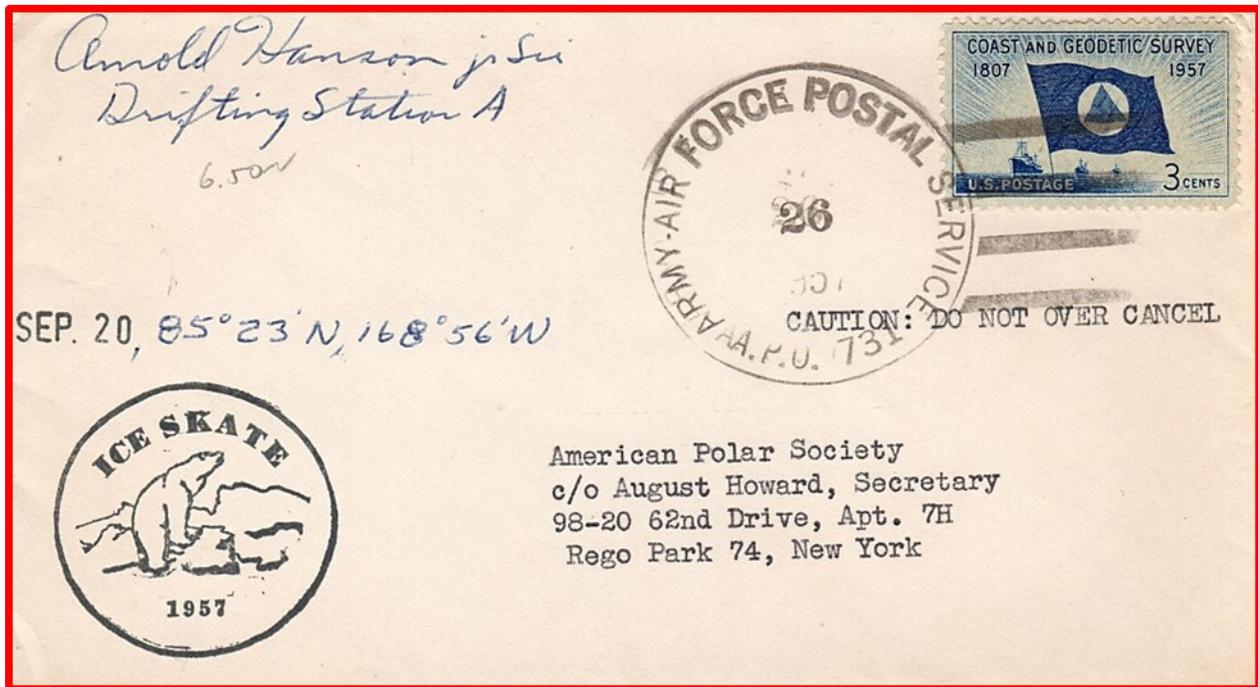
Of the 128 legs flown by Lindbergh for inaugural flights a full third have no data on how much mail was carried. For example, the AAMS 5th Ed. shows no volumes for 17 of the 21 Clipper flights. Of all his inaugural flight only one was unscheduled making the acquisition of covers from that flight difficult. The Leeward Islands Governor asked CAL to carry mail from St. Kitts. Envelopes sent to Paramaribo, St. Johns, Castries, Port of Spain and Georgetown amounted, in total, to 28 envelopes. Three are shown in this exhibit, including a previously uncatalogued cover sent north to San Juan. Highlights are bordered in red.

Soviet and American Drift Stations: 1937-1991

Purpose: Introduce viewers to Postal History from Soviet and US floating ice islands.

Scope: Cold War superpowers operated scientific stations on ice floes and tabular ice bergs. Soviet efforts provided high latitude weather reports as well as original geophysical data continuously between 1937 and dissolution of the USSR in 1991. The US Air Force and Navy, and later the National Science Foundation, conducted extensive research between 1952 and 1974. In addition to climate studies the US military developed the capability to survive and operate in the Arctic.

Important covers have red borders



IGY Scientific Investigator Arnold Hanson conducted research on ice floe ALPHA. The rare cachet was applied on the ice while the postmark was applied at Ladd AFB (APO 731), AK. Unlike Soviet stations, American ice stations did not cancel mail.

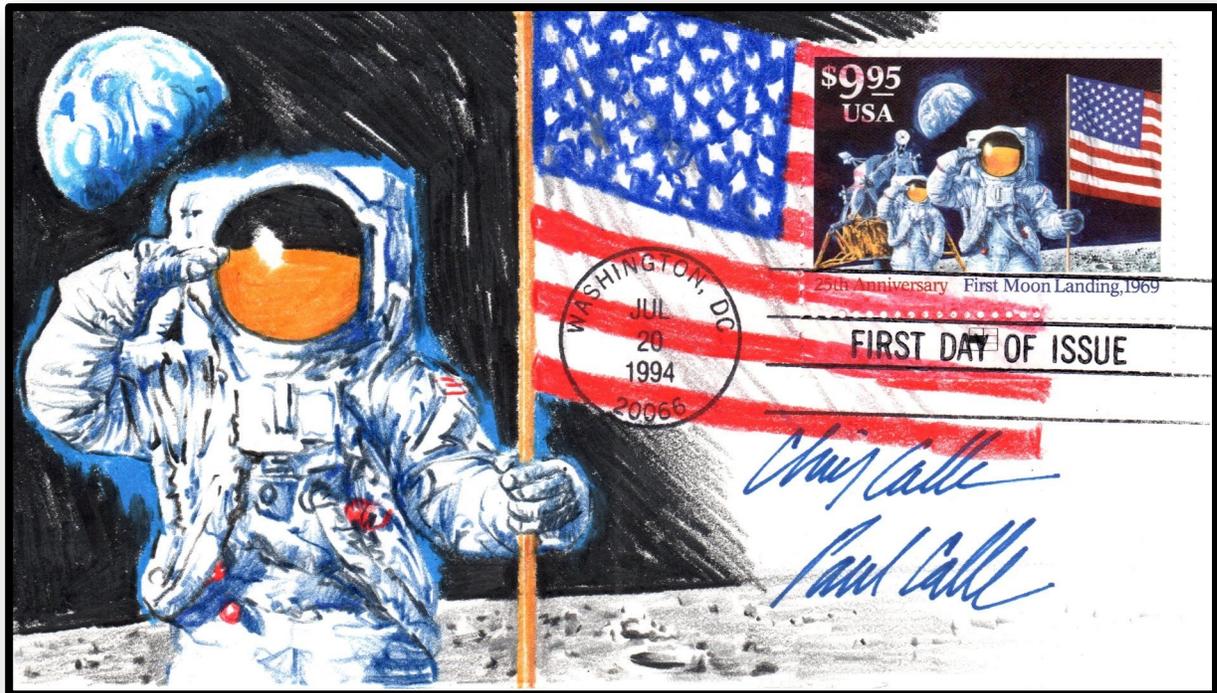
Exhibit Plan:

Soviet Drift Stations			
2-37	North Pole 1-31	38	TOROS-1
American Drift Stations			
39	USN Skijump II	47	Alpha 2 (Charlie)
40-41	T-3 Period I	48-54	T-3 Period III
42-43	T-3 Period II	55-67	T-3 Period IV
44	Alpha	68-80	ARLIS I-VII

Original Space Art

of

Paul & Chris Calle



Purpose

To illustrate the precision and beauty of two of America's premiere space artists.

Scope

All material are original sketches and paintings created by Paul and Chris Calle. When a choice of cachets was available, artwork that most closely replicated the postage stamp was chosen.

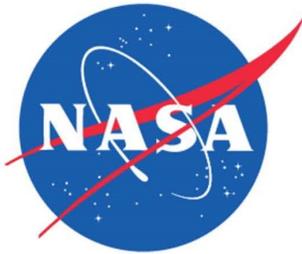
Plan

Project Mercury	1959-1963
Project Gemini	1962-1966
Project Apollo	1961-1975

In 1962 NASA Administrator James E. Webb invited artists to record the strange new world of space. Of the original cadre, Paul Calle, an illustrator of science fiction book covers, joined Robert McCall and six others and began to sketch. As commissioned artists they received \$800 and access to draw a blossoming manned space program. Over the years the NASA Art Program would include the works of pop artist Andy Warhol, photographer Annie Leibovitz, and American illustrator Norman Rockwell.

Paul Calle remained associated with NASA from Mercury through Gemini, Apollo, and the Space Shuttle. Over the years, he helped guide his son Chris to become a serious artist in his own right. Paul would design over 50 stamps for the Post Office Department and the US Postal Service including the Gemini space twins in 1967 and the First Man on the Moon issue of 1969.

Chris collaborated with his father on two space stamps to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Moon landing. He has designed more than 30 stamps for the United States and well over 100 for nations from Sweden to the Marshall Islands. He too is now recognized as an official NASA Artist.



Americans in Space

Projects Mercury, Gemini & Apollo

When President Kennedy proffered the goal of “landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth”, the nation had flown in space once, for 15 minutes. The exhibit traces our nation’s path through three periods of manned space exploration. Project Mercury (1959-1963) mixed monkeys, robots and America’s first space pilots in a Space Race with the Soviets. Project Gemini (1962-1966) introduced computers in orbit, fuel cells to generate electricity, docking two spacecraft and walking in space. The exhibit concludes with the triumphant Project Apollo (1960-1975) which saw a dozen Americans walk on the Moon and program end with orbital *rendezvous* and docking with the Russians.

In keeping with *Federation Internationale de Philatelie* (FIP) regulations for Astrophilately, cancels in this exhibit conform to the principle that the story of the conquest of space is best told postmarked on the date and closest to the entity controlling the event.

Plan	
Chapter 1 Project Mercury	2-32
Chapter 2 Project Gemini	33-75
Chapter 3 Project Apollo	76-128

Significant items have red border

MA-9

USS Kearsarge Machine Cancel

16 May 1963



Postmarked on the Prime Recovery Ship (PRS) and autographed by the astronaut pilot.

Project Mercury flights

LJ = Little Joe
 MA = Mercury Atlas
 MR = Mercury Redstone
 MS = Mercury Scout
 Beach Abort = Capsule escape
 Big Joe = MA development flight
 MR-BD = MR development flight

Project Gemini flights

GT = Gemini Titan
 GTA = Gemini Titan Agena
 Numbers 1-3 in Arabic numerals
 Numbers 4-12 in Roman numerals
 MOL = Manned Orbiting Laboratory

Project Apollo flights

SA = Saturn Apollo
 AS = Apollo Saturn
 Ap = Apollo
 PA = Pad Abort
 QTV = Qualification Test Vehicle
 A = Little Joe II qualification test
 ASTP = Apollo Soyuz Test Project

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

PIONEER ROCKET MAIL 1928-1959



PURPOSE & SCOPE:

This Astrophilately exhibit provides an overview of pioneer rocket mail organized by experimenter. It begins with the world's first rocket mail flight in 1928 by Friedrich Schmiiedl. Key amateur rocket pioneers and their philatelic cargo are shown. The exhibit concludes with America's first official missile mail in 1959.

USE OF COLOR:

Black text displays the experimenter or rocket flight.

Blue text concerns a philatelic aspect of the event.

Red frame denotes a significant item of interest.

ORGANIZATION & TREATMENT:

The covers are generally arranged chronologically, divided into sections corresponding to each experimenter. Each section introduces a new experimenter and shows examples of envelopes flown by rocket arranged by the country in which the flight took place.

Following most successful rocket mail flights, experimenters chose to post the envelopes in the regular mail stream. This required sufficient postage to pay the letter rate. Those that did not enter the government mail service have only cinderella rocket labels.

The material shown has been carried by rocket except when marked as unflown. While items bordered in red are scarce and worthy of particular note, none of the material is considered rare. Instead, it should convey to the viewer the earliest documentation and celebration of a new form of flight.



Sykora cinderella rocket stamp

EXHIBIT PLAN:

I. Friedrich Schmiiedl	1928-35 Austria	VI. William S. Sykora	1935 United States
II. Alan H. Young	1934 Australia	VII. Keith E. Rumbel	1936 United States
III. Gerhard Zucker	1934 Italy, Germany, UK	VIII. Willy O. Ley	1936 United States
IV. Karel Roberti	1935-36 Belgium, France	IX. Antonio V. Funes	1939 Cuba
V. Stephen H. Smith	1935-37 India, Sikkim	X. Miscellaneous	1948-59 United States

In Their Prime

Prime Recovery Ships for US Manned Spaceflight: 1961-1975

