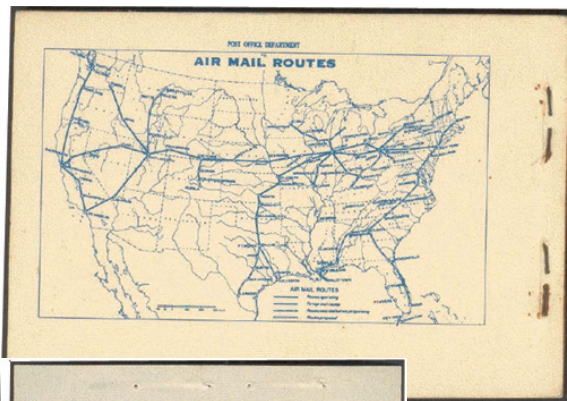
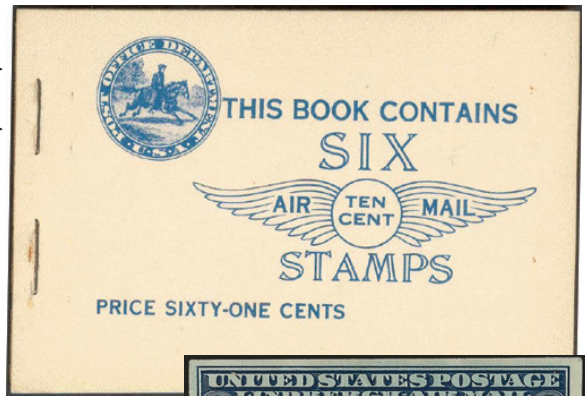


# First U. S. Air Mail Booklet

by Jeremy A. Lifsey



The front and back covers, plus the stamps—of which there were two panes—of the first air mail booklet (Scott BKC1) issued by the Post Office Department in 1928. The pane with bottom tab (right) is from an exploded booklet



that sold for \$8,000 without the Buyer's Premium in the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries June 23 auction of the Philip R. Beutel Collection of Booklets and Savings Stamps.



In 1928, ten years after the first air mail stamp was issued in 1918, the United Post Office Department issued the first U.S. Air Mail booklet. It contained six 10 cent stamps, i.e. two panes of three enclosed between interleaving and two light cardboard covers

and a mailman on a horse, reminiscent of the Pony Express. The back cover shows a map of the United States and air mail routes across the continent.

The pictures on the front and back covers would nicely augment a topical collection of the subjects of the pictures—maps, horses, mail delivery, and emblems.

Though this booklet was issued over 80 years ago it is not particularly rare, nor is it the most valuable booklet. However, there is a variety of this booklet of which it is estimated only four or five exist. It is a variety in which one of the two panes has the tab at the bottom instead of the top. It catalogs at \$13,500 in the 2010 *Scott's Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers*. In the 2001 Scott's Specialized it catalogued for \$11,500.

It has appeared in auctions over the years. Of the three auctions of which I am aware, it sold in two of them over ten years ago for \$16,500 and \$11,550 plus the buyer's premium. One appeared in a 2009 auction but it didn't sell. Was that a sign of the tougher economic times? Or that there was a reserve not met? Or that no one viewing the auction catalog wanted to bid at or near the estimate?

The common booklet, Sc. BKC1, appears quite regularly in both in house and online auctions. Over the past ten years its catalog value has been in the \$250 to \$275 range. That's not much of a change considering that the value of most early United States stamps have moved significantly upward in the past ten years. The booklet generally sells for about one-third to one-half catalog value, depending on condition.

to protect the stamps. The price of the booklet was \$.61, not the \$.60 face value of the stamps. The stamps contained in the booklet commemorated Col. Charles A. Lindbergh's transatlantic flight in May 1927.

United States booklets that were issued 80 years ago were not colorful or picturesque. Compared to the Prestige Booklets of today (Submarines, Old Glory, and Lewis and Clark) they were relatively drab but not completely devoid of character.

This first air mail booklet contained some interesting features. The Post Office Department wanted to promote the new air mail service. Inside the booklet were messages to entice the public to use the fledgling new service. The efficacy of such messages in persuading people to use air mail is somewhat doubtful since the people who bought the booklet were already convinced of the benefits of air versus surface mail, and those who didn't buy it were unlikely to see the messages on the inside covers. Perhaps the messages were intended to reinforce the customer's "wise" decision to send his/her letters by air.

The stamps were attractive, showing Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis monoplane and its flight across the Atlantic from New York to Paris. The covers of the booklet also were attractive. The front cover pictures air mail wings

