

USPS to Honor Army, P.O.D. Air Service Centennials

by John Dunn

The Postal People have now released the design and background data on the airmail stamp that will be issued on May 1 in Washington, D.C., to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the beginning of regular airmail service. It will be a Forever rate stamp issued in a pressure-sensitive adhesive pane of 20 stamps.

The design itself is an appealing throwback to early U.S. airmail issues. That also includes the print process, as it will be intaglio printed—good news for the many stamp collectors who appreciate the look of the engraved stamps of the past.

Also of interest, this design will be used twice this year. The first stamp, issued May 1, commemorates the pioneering spirit of the brave Army pilots who initiated the world's first regularly scheduled airmail service. An identical stamp, printed in red, will be issued later this summer to commemorate the beginning of airmail delivery through the U.S. Post Office Department, which began in August 1918.

Dan Gretta designed the stamps and was the typographer. Greg Breeding was the art director. They were printed by Ashton Potter



(USA) Ltd. in a total quantity of just 7.5 million stamps. This compares with the 12 million Mr. Rogers and the 35 million Lena Horne commemoratives that were issued earlier this year.

The stamp features a drawing of the type of plane typically used in the early days of airmail, a Curtiss JN-4H biplane. That, of course, also is the plane that is featured on the first U.S. airmail stamps, Sc. 1-3, and on the world-famous U.S. Airmail Invert, Sc. C3a. For background on the Curtiss Jenny and its variations, I turned to Wikipedia. The JN-4H was one of the larger production runs in the Curtiss Jenny series of JN biplanes. The JN started being produced in 1915 and brought together the best features of the model J and N trainers that had been build for the Army and Navy. The early JN-4 planes were ordered by the U.S. Army, and is described as “possibly North America’s most famous World War I aircraft.” None saw combat service and were used primarily for training and some logistics services.

The two-seater JN-4H was the most produced of the JN-4 models, and while described as JN-4H in the USPS release, the first airmail planes would have been the JN-4HM (M for mail). The Jenny on the C3 and C3a is #38262.

