

THE EAGLE

THE U.S. 6¢ EAGLE AIR MAIL STAMP OF 1938

ARIPEX 2012

MESA, AZ

EXHIBIT PLAN

1. PEDIGREE OF THE EAGLE
2. PRODUCTION
3. DISCOVERY OF THE IMPERFORATE EAGLE
4. FIRST DAY USE
5. AN EAGLE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR
6. NATIONAL AIR MAIL WEEK
7. USAGE
8. END OF THE EAGLE

Over 50 Years of Study Becomes an Exhibit



Dramatic Pre-Printing & Pre-Perforation Fold-Over

In early 1938 the upcoming celebration of National Air Mail Week (NAMW) and the general dissatisfaction with the current 6¢ airmail stamp led to the design and issuance of the “Eagle” on May 14th. Two first day cities were selected; Dayton, Ohio as home of the Wright Brothers; and St. Petersburg, Florida site of that year’s convention of the American Air Mail Society.

Public interest in the new stamp and in NAMW was high and resulted in most towns and cities across the United States participating in the celebrations — regardless of the existence of a local airport! President Franklin Roosevelt was very interested in the design of the stamp and approved the final model himself before it was put to production.

It is the goal of this exhibit to illustrate how the Eagle was designed, produced and used in everyday use as well as show how it helped to promote airmail service in the later half of the 1930’s with an emphasis on first day uses.

Exhibit Highlights

- ◆ Marginal Markings: Chromed “C” Indicator — All Blue “C’s” Are Shown with Original Research.
- ◆ Marginal Markings: Chromed “C” Indicator — the **First Showing of the “Small Red C”**, Unique to Plate #21840.
- ◆ Ultramarine Color Error Used on Unique “Railway Express Agency” Cover from Mission, Texas.
- ◆ Only Surviving/Recorded Pre-Date Use — All Others Were Confiscated by the Post Office Department and Presumably Destroyed.
- ◆ One of Six Presentation Panes Prepared at St. Petersburg. Marked as “sold” but was in Fact a Gift Paid for by the American Air Mail Society. None were prepared at Dayton, Ohio.
- ◆ Many Discovery FDC Cachets Shown.
- ◆ Examples of all Reported Unofficial FDCs.
- ◆ Unique Commercial First Day Use from St. Petersburg. None Reported from Dayton.
- ◆ Earliest Known and Only Surviving Use of Horizontal Imperforate Block. One of Six Prepared by the Discoverer of the Error (40 Panes) and is the Only One Reported in 40 Years.
- ◆ Over 10,000 Towns Participated in National Air Mail Week (NAMW) and the Exhibit Presents Some of the More Important Events Such as the Two “Interrupted Flights” and the Award-Winning Cachets from the National Contest (Including the Junior Contest).

Rarest of them All

With the Eagle being issued the day before, Sunday May 15, 1938 was the first day that the Eagle was available in cities outside of Dayton and St. Petersburg. That morning Frank Zeltmann, a Brooklyn, New York postal clerk was setting up his stock of the new Eagle airmail stamp to sell to customers on the first day of National Air Mail Week and found forty panes of the Eagle that had no horizontal perforations. Zeltmann put the forty panes aside and called his friend Lester Hoffman, also a stamp collector. After realizing that it would take \$120 to buy the forty panes, and they did not have enough money to complete the purchase, they called New York stamp dealer Charles J. Demuth. Demuth arrived and they purchased all 40 panes.

Before leaving the Brooklyn Post Office, Hoffman and Demuth decided that they should create a souvenir of the find and took the middle 20 stamps from one of the panes, leaving the top and bottom strips with selvage and plate information. Separating the 20 stamps into four blocks of four and two vertical pairs, they applied them to No. 10 envelopes that had been specially prepared for the start of



Earliest Known Use, May 15, 1938 of the Horizontally Imperforate Eagle.

National Air Mail Week. Zeltmann took the covers and had them cancelled and cacheted on a handback basis — creating six covers of the Earliest Known Use of the Imperforate Eagle.

Coincidentally, Zeltmann had a competitive exhibit “Used Airmail Stamps of the World” at the American Air Mail Society’s convention held that weekend in St. Petersburg — where the Eagle was issued!



Only Recorded Pre-Date Use
Denver, Colorado May 13, 1938
(digitally cropped)

What’s Not Here

Die Proofs: A small die proof first appeared at auction in 1977 and could be one of the complete set of proofs pulled for the Philatelic Truck exhibit in 1939. It has not reappeared since. No large die proofs have been reported in private hands.

P.O.D. Announcement Card: No announcement card was sent by the P.O.D. The first announcement card was sent by the P.O.D. for the ½¢ Prexie issued 5 days after the Eagle.



Left-hand pane inscribed “Fifth Sheet Sold at St. Petersburg, Florida, May 14, 1938...” and signed by several dignitaries.



“Ultramarine” Eagle use with Railway Express Agency, Mission, Texas cancellation.
(digitally cropped)

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