



## DC-4 SkyMaster Airmail Postal Material 1946 thru 1958



*By J. Thomas Nichols*

**Illustrated History of the  
DC- 4 SkyMaster Aircraft Design  
Used on United States Airmail Postal Material  
Between 1946 and 1958**

by

*J. Thomas Nichols*

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## PREFACE

I started collecting worldwide stamps at an early age and in my early forties began focusing on mint United States stamps. But it wasn't until I retired that I became an avid collector of United States postal material from the 1940s. I choose the 1940s for two reasons: it was the period of world history that most interested me and there was still a wide range of material that could be collected at a nominal cost. The fact that I was born in the 1940s also played a part in my decision.

The wide range and variety of postal materials using the DC-4 SkyMaster image—everything from single stamps, special issued covers, air letters, stationary envelopes and the first U.S. Airmail coil stamp—became a special interest that led to the creation of this illustrated publication.

It is hoped that this publication might inspire others in their philatelic pursuits to begin collecting postal material of their favorite time period or that deals with a favorite subject.

## Facts About This Publication

The intention is to identify and illustrate the various ways that the DC-4 SkyMaster plane image was used in the design of a wide variety of United States postal material issued between 1946 and 1958.

Normally the word “Skymaster” is written with a lower case “m” but in this publication a capital “M” is used in order to place emphasis on “SkyMaster” and to set this publication apart from others.

No references are made to errors that may have been made in the issuing of any DC-4 SkyMaster postal material.

For each item there will be an image and description.

For ease of reading a large Font size is used throughout the publication.

Sheet counts were supplied by the United States Engraving Division of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

No monetary value has been assigned to any of the material.

For the most part the postal material is presented in issue date sequence.

All images of first day covers, first flight covers, stamps, stationery envelopes, booklets, plate blocks, Air Letters, and sheets etc. in this publication are taken from the actual item in the personal collection of the author unless noted with a single “\*”: these items are taken from the public domain of the internet and are not part of the author’s collection.

Many of the images have been reduced in size in order to fit on the page.

The first day, first flight, and first route covers are just a small sample of the various types of covers that were created in celebration of a particular stamp or stationery envelope.

No references are made to the Scotts® proprietary numbering system for any of the postal material in this publication.

Two DC-4 SkyMaster airmail postal Stationery Envelopes from the Panama Canal Zone are included in this publication. The United States exercised jurisdictional rights up to 1979 over the Panama Canal Zone and managed the production of postal Stationery Envelopes and stamps for the Panama Canal Zone.

**All suggestions, corrections, and additions are welcome and should be emailed to [stamps1940s@gmail.com](mailto:stamps1940s@gmail.com) to the attention of Tom Nichols.**

## A Brief History of the DC-4 SkyMaster Aircraft

In 1938 the Douglas Aircraft Company produced a four-engine transport about twice the size of the DC-3. They also developed a single DC-4E that could carry 42 passengers by day or 30 by night when outfitted sleeping accommodations that included a bridal suite.



The DC-4E proved too expensive to maintain and was abandoned in favor of the more practical DC-4 which was not put into commercial service until 1946.

Douglas built 1,241 of the DC-4s and its military counterparts including the R5D for the Navy. During the war C-54s flew a million miles a month over the rugged North Atlantic—more than 20 roundtrips per day. A special VC-54C, nicknamed the "Sacred Cow" by the White House press corps, became the first presidential aircraft. It was ordered for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After World War II commercial airlines placed more than 300 civilian DC-4 transports into service. These DC-4s, along with C-54s converted for civil use, carried more passengers and mail than any other four-engine transport. Some were still flying in 2014.

**\*DC-4 Image taken from the internet**

## OVERVIEW

This publication chronicles the in-flight image of the DC-4 SkyMaster plane that was used in the design of one of the longest running series of airmail stamps and stationery ever issued in the postal history of the United States. It appeared on more than 20 types of postal material issued in a twelve year period between 1946 and 1958.



Over 7.2 billion stamps as well as tens of millions of stationery envelopes and Air Letters were issued making the iconic image one of the most recognized airmail designs of all time.

The DC-4 SkyMaster Plane symbolized reliability and speed, the epitome of those qualities at the time. The DC-4 SkyMaster plane in-flight image on all U.S. airmail stamps and stationery has the plane flying from left to the right.

In addition to all of the DC-4 SkyMaster postal material issued for use on United States airmail, the United States also issued two DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes for usage in the Panama Canal Zone in 1949 and 1958. The in-flight image of the DC-4 SkyMaster on the Canal Zone stationery has the plane flying from right to the left.

All variations of the DC-4 SkyMaster design will be explored starting with the large plane design version of 1946 and then the smaller plane design of 1947. Next will be the first Air Letter issued in 1947 followed by the first ever U.S. airmail coil stamps in 1948. Finally, the change in background color seen on postal stationery issued in 1958 will be illustrated.

The publication also examines the different ink printing methods used on the Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Plane stamps as well as various postage rate changes along with revalued stationery and other interesting aspects of the various DC-4 SkyMaster stamps and stationery issued over the years.

The DC-4 SkyMaster had its maiden flight on February 14th, 1942 and soon after became the workhorse of the U.S. military and its allies during WW II. After the war it played a crucial role in the Berlin Airlift of 1948-1949. It quickly became one of the primary planes used in airmail delivery and the commercial aviation sector worldwide.

The large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp was first issued in 1946 which heralded one of the most sweeping rate reductions in U.S. airmail history.

This reduced the prevailing rate from 8¢ to 5¢ and for many of the U.S. Territories, such as Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico the reduction was doubly significant. This was doubly significant since mail to those territories took weeks to arrive unless sent via air. The rate reduction was of course a considerable savings when sending parcels and mail via air.

On November 1, 1946 "uniform" international airmail rates were introduced. The uniform rates were 10¢ in the Western Hemisphere, 15¢ to Europe, and 25¢ to the rest of the World. Rates were per 1/2 oz to international destinations. Stamps specific to these new rates were not issued until almost one year after the introduction of the rates. This meant that either the 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamps or the discontinued Transport stamps had to be used to make up the rates.

The DC-4 SkyMaster stamp's impressive "Carmine" color alerted postal sorting clerks that the letter or parcel was airmail and in need of rapid dispatch to the airmail facility.

## Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp

In August of 1946 President Harry S. Truman signed an Act of Congress that reduced the domestic airmail rate from 8¢ to 5¢ per ounce. This was the largest rate reduction in United States airmail history. Even though the new Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp was issued on September 25, 1946, the reduced rate did not become effective until October 1, 1946. Therefore 3¢ of additional postage had to be applied until the new rate became effective 7 days later.

396,669 First Day covers were issued from Washington D.C.



Large 5¢  
DC-4 SkyMaster  
Plane Plate  
Block and single  
Stamp.



A total of 864,753,100 stamps were issued in sheets of 50 using the Rotary Press Method of printing. The stamp is perforated 11 X 10½ and the stamp color is "Carmine". There were 32 different plate block numbers used in the printing process.



A sheet of 50 Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamps. The retail cost of a single sheet of these stamps was \$2.50 in 1946. This sheet #23486 was printed on August 15, 1946 for release for sale on September 25, 1946. There were 388,958 plates printed with the 23486 plate block number.





Four Plate Blocks from same plate # 23490 from each corner of the plate which makes up the four sheets from the plate, the plate was printed on 08/19/1946.



Plate Block from  
the upper left  
corner of plate  
# 23490

Plate Block from  
the upper right  
corner of plate  
# 23490



Plate Block from  
the lower left  
corner of plate  
# 23490

Plate Block from  
the lower right  
corner of plate  
# 23490

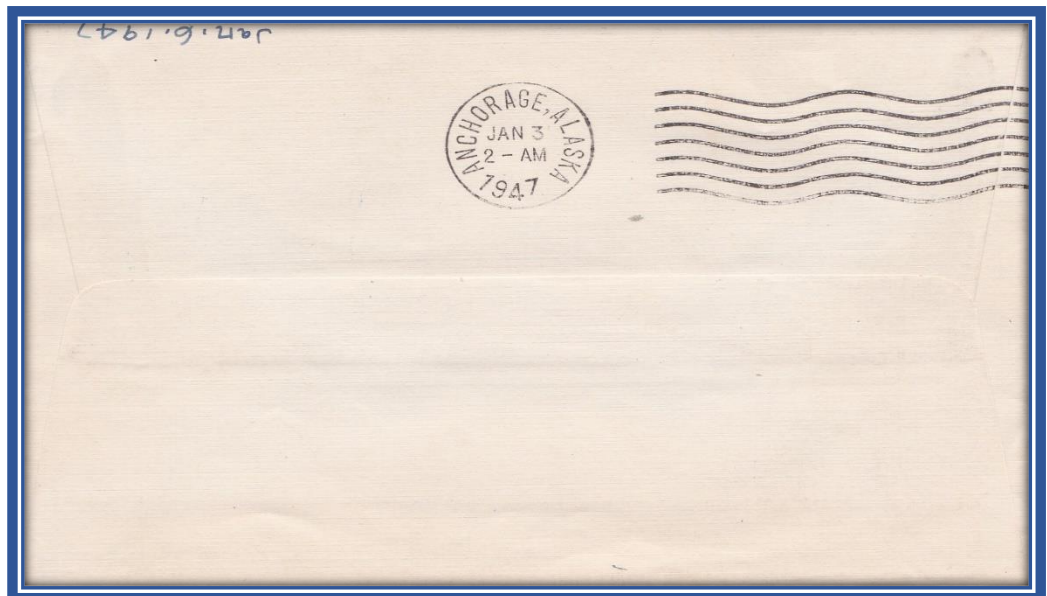
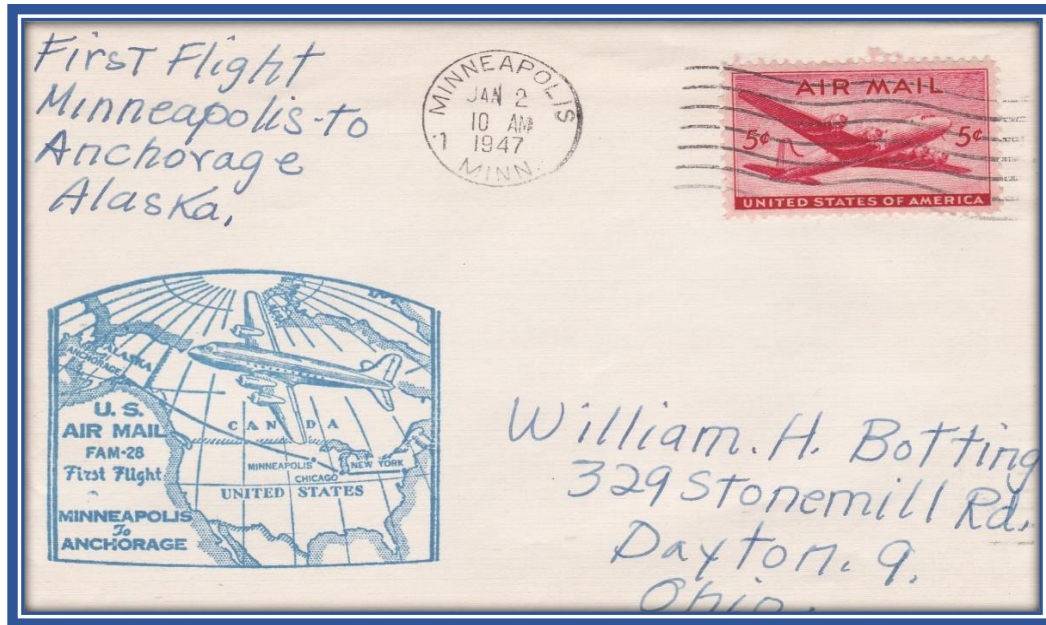




On October 1, 1946 the new domestic airmail rate of 5¢ went into effect, known as the **"Nickel Air Mail Stamp"**. There was no need to add an additional 3¢ in postage. This new rate stayed in effect until January 18, 1949 at which time the airmail rate went to 6¢.



A First Flight Cover (FFC) with Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp. The Flight originated from Minneapolis, Minnesota postmarked January 2, 1947 10 AM, to Anchorage, Alaska postmarked on January 3, 1947 at 10 AM. There were many FFC created from many cities, this is an example of one.





### The “Nickel Air Mail Stamp” Promoted During National Air Mail Week

According to figures received at the Post Office Department from Air Mail Field offices throughout the country Nickel air mail is fast becoming the Nation’s mailing habit.



Based on reports from 30 of these offices, which handle 75% of the air mail business, 91,638,840 pieces of mail were handled during the first 15 days of October under the new 5¢ rate, as against 72,454,680 the first half of September, a jump of 19,184,160 or an average increase of 26.48%.

The largest percentage gains were counted at Cheyenne, Wyo., with 53.51%; Nashville, Tenn., 47.71%; Los Angeles, Calif., 42.96%; Newark, N.J., 43.97%, and New York, N. Y., 35.04%.

About 11% of the total 5-cent large DC-4 SkyMaster stamps that were issued were used in the first 15 days of October 1946 under the new airmail rate.

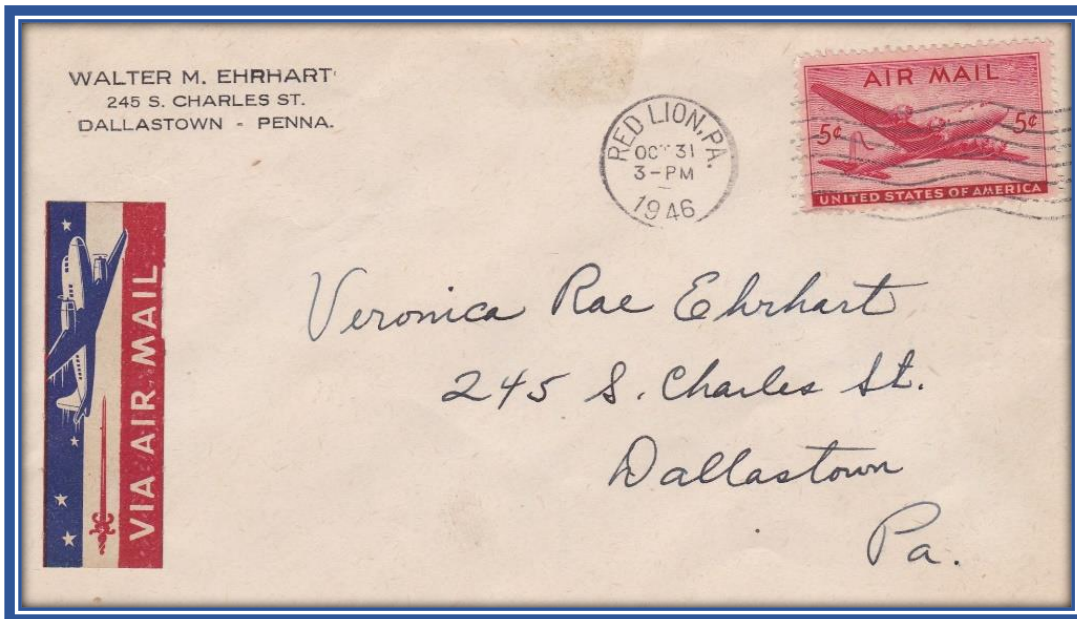
Postmaster General at the time, Robert E. Hannegan, said: Experience has proven that an increase in volume will be a direct result of a lower airmail rate. We are confident that this will be true of “**Nickel Air Mail Stamp**”.

The response to 5-cent airmail has been most encouraging, Mr. Hannegan added, and I am sure that in the days ahead we can look forward to an unprecedented growth in this vital and dynamic field of mail transportation.

**\* Article and Image taken from the “Air Post Journal” of November 1946**



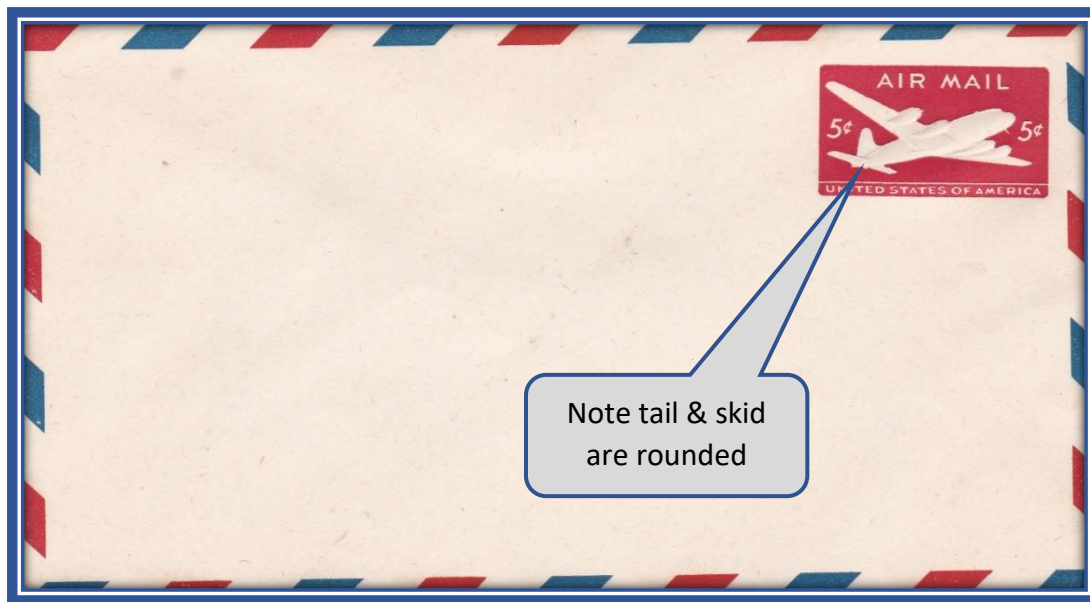
A regular domestic Airmail sent with a Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp. Both front and back of envelope are shown. Letter was sent during National Air-Mail Week October 27 to November 2, 1946.



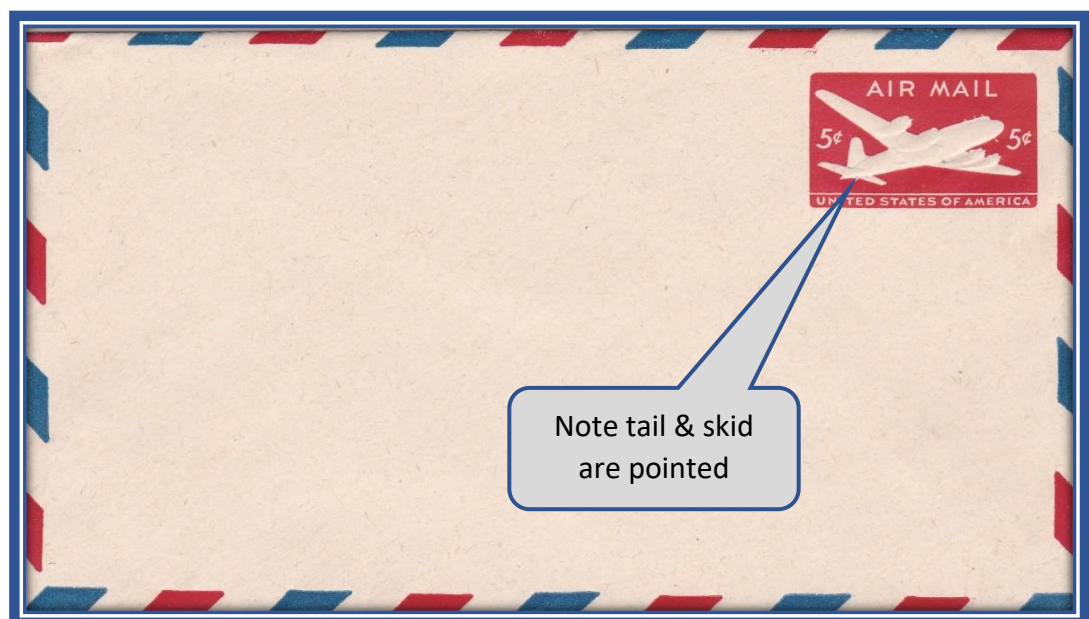
## 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes

A 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Airmail Stationery Envelope was also issued from Washington, D.C. on September 25, 1946. The same stamp design that was used on the large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster airmail stamp was also used on the embossed 5¢ stationery envelope.

There were two different printings of the envelope: one was printed on an O'Connell machine "Type 1" 21½ mm high, the plane's tail tip and tail skid are rounded. The second printing was on a Harris rotary machine "Type 2" 22 mm high, the plane's tail tip and tail skid are pointed. The envelopes are size 13.

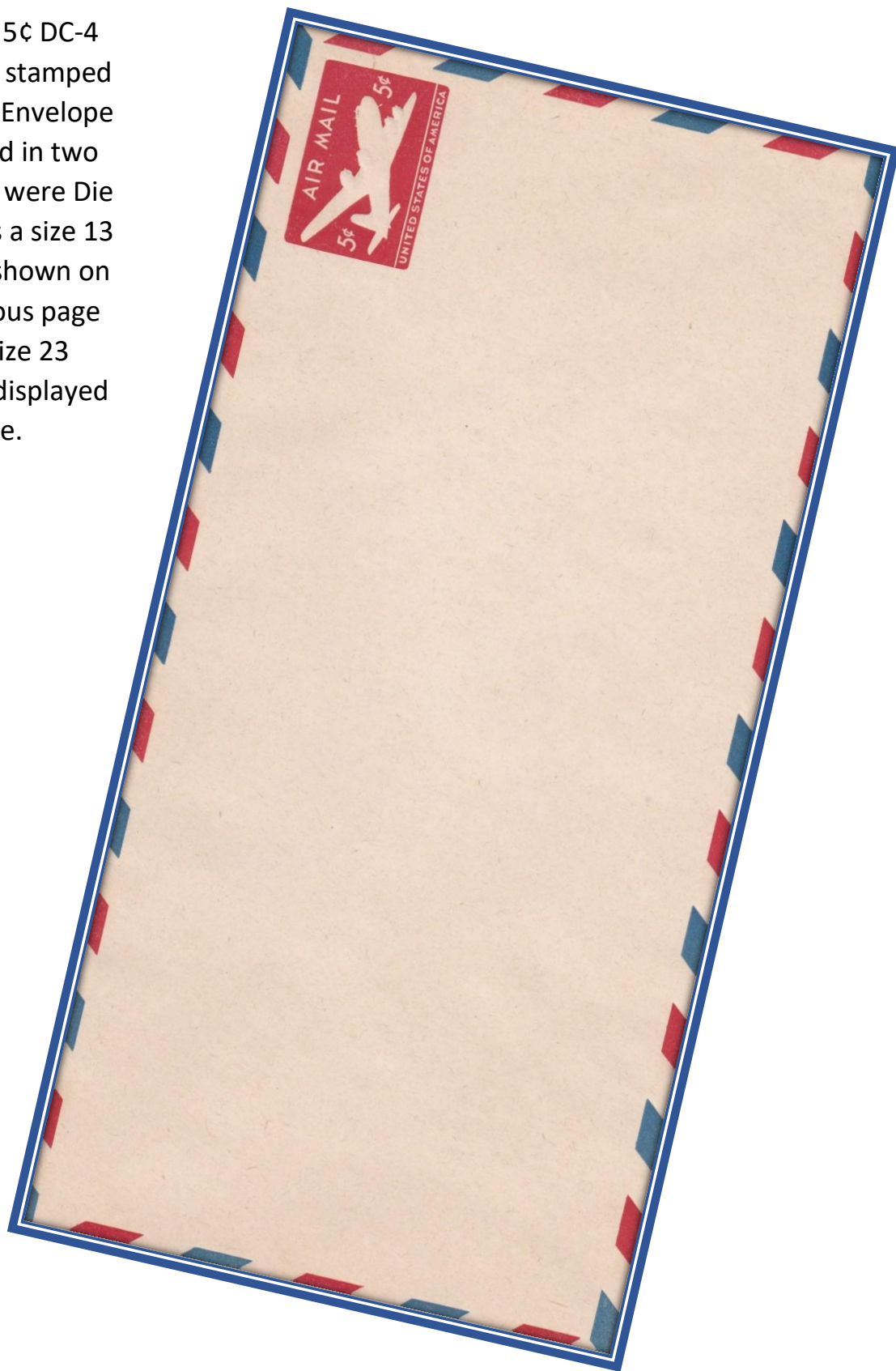


"Type 1"  
21½ mm  
high.



"Type 2"  
22 mm

The 1946 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamped Stationery Envelope was issued in two sizes, both were Die 2. One was a size 13 envelope shown on the previous page and a size 23 envelope displayed here.





A dual first day cover that has the Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp on a 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Airmail Stationery Envelope, both were issued on September 25, 1946. This is one of the few occurrence were a stamp and a Stationery Envelope with a similar stamp design were issued on the same day.



On October 1, 1946 the new domestic airmail rate of 5¢ went into effect, known as the “**Nickel Air Mail Stamp**”. There was no need to add an additional 3¢ in postage.

## Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp

On March 26, 1947 the United States Postal Service introduced for the first time a smaller design of the 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp making it more suitable for stamp rolls “coils”, that are used in stamp vending machines. Future issues were made available in booklets.

There were 971,903,700 stamps issued in sheets of 100 utilizing the Rotary Press Method of printing and 342,634 First Day Covers issued. The stamp is perforated 10½ X 11 and the color is “Carmine”. There were 8 plate block numbers used in the printing process.



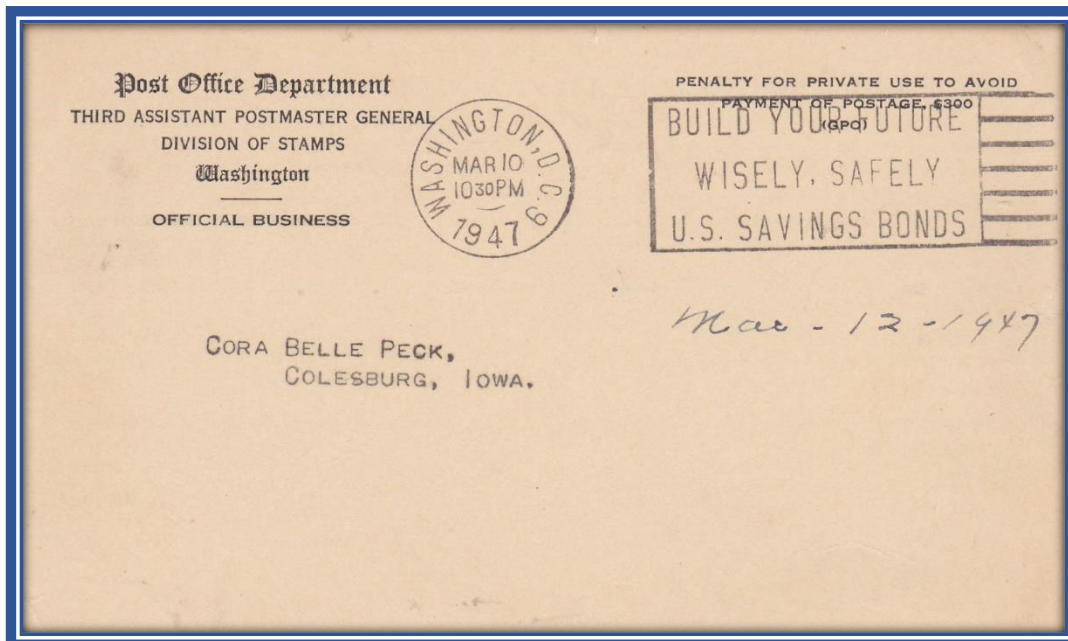
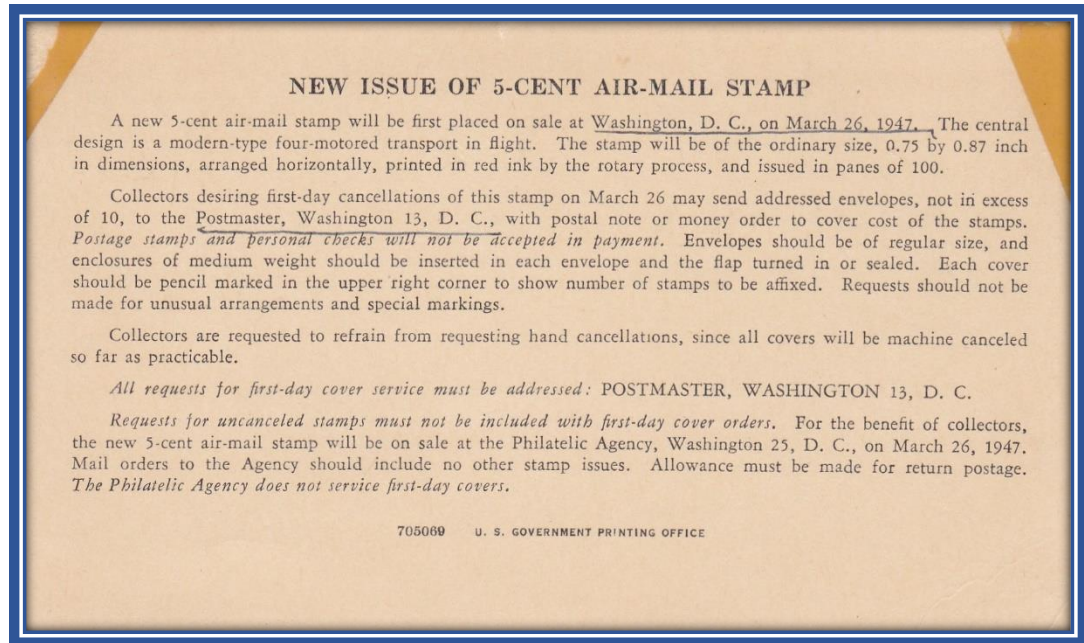
Small 5¢  
DC-4 SkyMaster  
Plane Plate Block  
and stamp.



First Day cover commemorating the Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp  
issued from Washington, D.C.



New issue announcement sent by the U.S. government printing office for the Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster air-mail stamp to take place on March 26, 1947. These type of announcements with instructions were sent out to registered collectors so they could send their request for first-day cancellations covers.





A sheet of 100 Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Plane stamps. The retail cost of a single sheet of these stamps was \$5.00 in 1947. This sheet # 23581 was printed on February 10, 1947 for release for sale on March 26, 1947. There were 592,678 plates printed with the 23581 plate block number.





Four Plate Blocks from same plate # "23580" from each corner of the plate which makes up the four sheets from the plate. The plate was printed on 02/10/1947.

Plate Block from  
the upper left  
corner of plate  
# 23580



Plate Block from  
the upper right  
corner of plate  
# 23580



Plate Block from  
the lower left  
corner of plate  
# 23580



Plate Block from  
the lower right  
corner of plate  
# 23580



A Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp on a First Flight cover postmarked on April 16, 1948 at 7 AM. The flight was from Lawton—Fort Sill Oklahoma to Wichita Falls, Texas postmarked April 16, 1948 at 10 AM. The send to address is Baltimore, Maryland.





## DC-4 SkyMaster 10¢ Air Letter

The Aérogram, also known as an Air Letter Sheet, was popularized during the Second World War years 1939 – 1945.

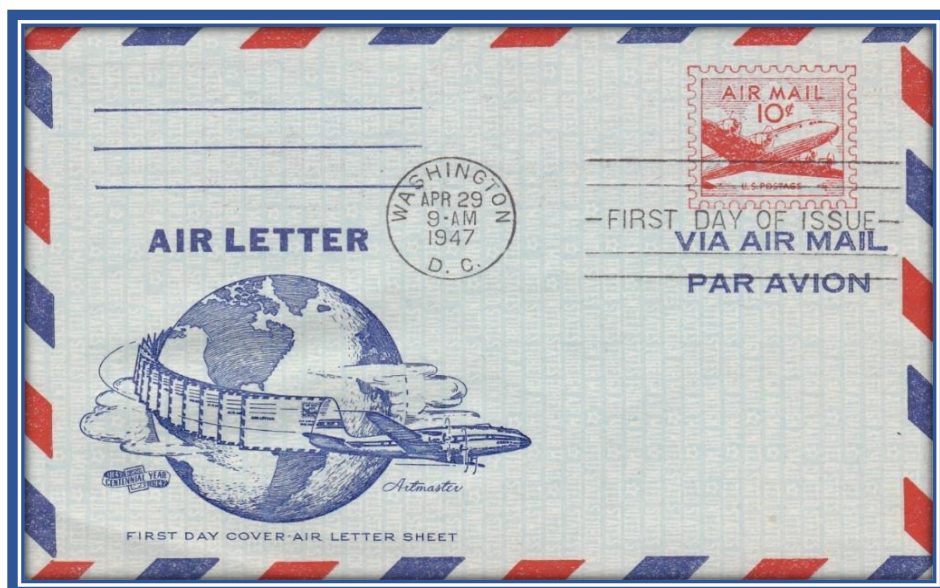
It wasn't until April 29, 1947 that the United States Postal Service for the first-time entered the scene with its own Air Letter Sheet.

The imprinted Small 10¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp image was used for 11 years on Air Letters until it was updated with a jet airliner image on September 10, 1958. The U.S. issued a total of 25 different Aérograms through 1999. The production of Aérograms in the U.S. has since ceased.



An Aérogram (also called Aérogramme or Air Letter) is a thin lightweight piece of foldable and gummed paper in which the letter and envelope are one and the same.

The Small 10¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Air Letter Sheet First Day of Issue was from Washington, D.C. on April 29, 1947.

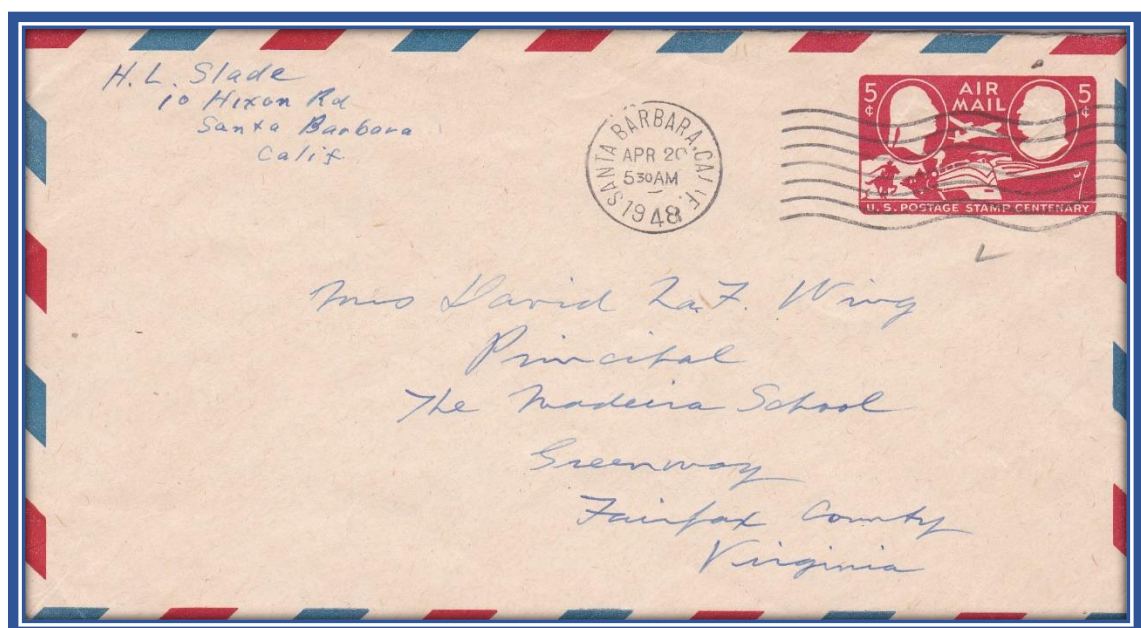


## Mail Carrying Modes of Transportation 5¢ Stationery Envelopes

The United States Postal Service issued a 5¢ Postal Stationery Envelope from New York, N.Y. on May 21, 1947 commemorating a century of the first stamp issued by the United States Government. The embossed stamp had several illustrations of mail carrying methods, one of which was the DC-4 SkyMaster plane.



A domestic airmail cover with a 5¢ embossed stationery envelope commemorating a century of the first stamp issued, postmarked April 20, 1948. The airmail was sent from Santa Barbara, California to the “The Madeira School” in Greenway, Virginia.





There were two printings of the 5¢ stationery envelope with illustrations of mail carrying methods, including the DC-4 SkyMaster plane. One printing was Flat Bed Press “Type 1” stamp which is 21¾ mm high where Franklin’s head is small, and the second printing was Rotary Press “Type 2” stamp which is 22¼ to 22¾ mm high where Franklin’s head is larger.



Type 1  
21¾ mm  
high.



Type 2 22¼  
to 22¾ mm  
high.

A 5¢ Postal Stationery Envelope commemorating a century of the first stamp issued by the United States Government. Note the 6¢ revalued mark in red that was added to the left of embossed stamp in order to make up for the current 6¢ airmail rate in 1952.



**\*Cover image taken from the internet**



## Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Coil Stamp

On January 15, 1948 the United States Postal Service for the first time in its history issued an airmail coil stamp with horizontal perforations of 10. It featured the Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster coil stamp in its traditional Carmine color.

A total of 33,244,550 stamps were issued in coils of 500. The printing process used plate block numbers 23716 and 23717. The \$25 retail cost of a roll, a considerable sum for 1948, limited its use to corporations and organizations.

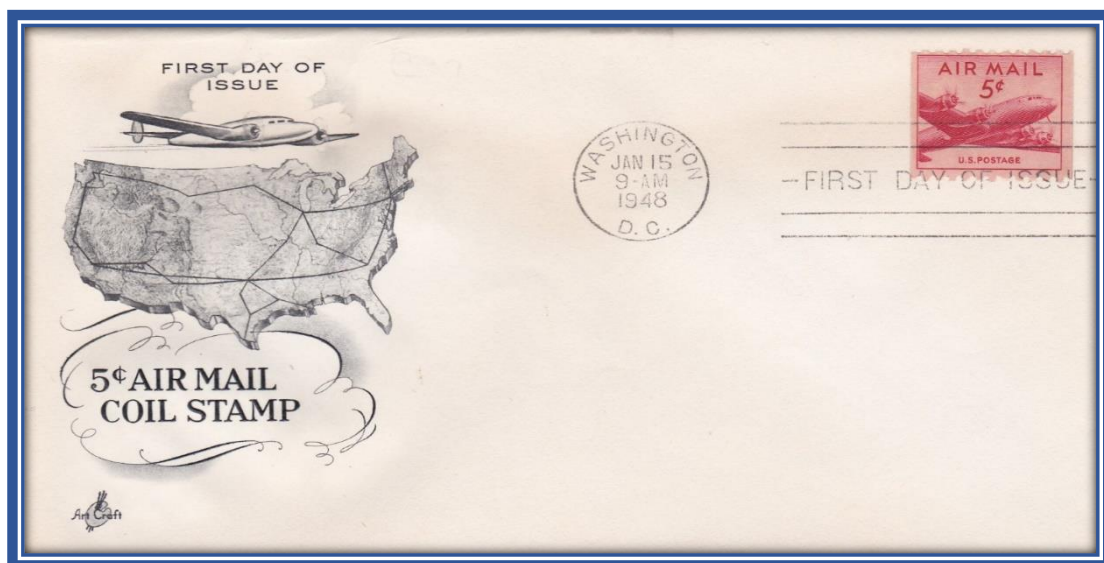
The rolls weren't compatible with most vending machines of the period which also limited the stamps usage by the average person on the street.



Small DC-4 SkyMaster  
Pair Coil 5¢ Stamp

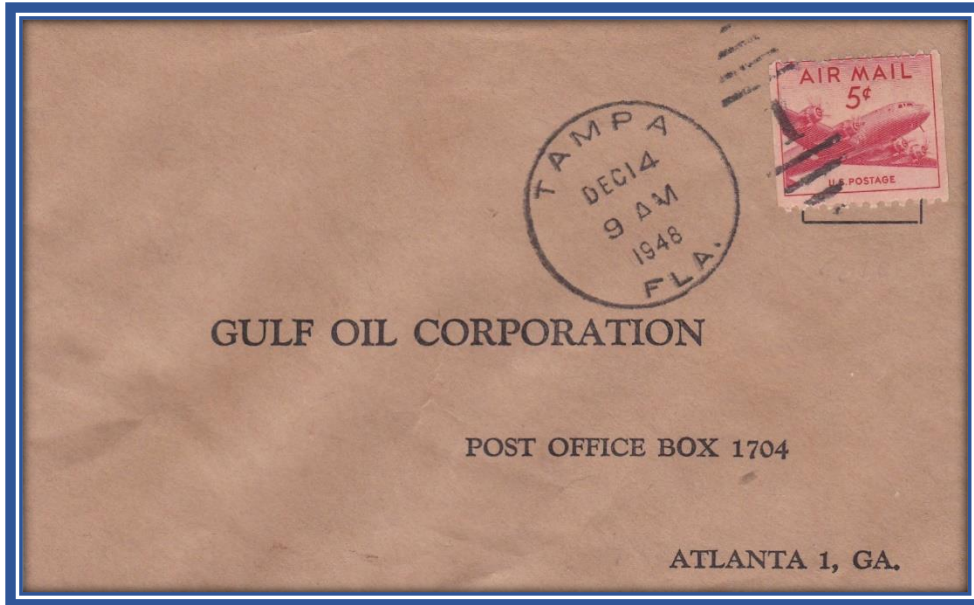


Small DC-4 SkyMaster  
Line Pair Coil 5¢ Stamp

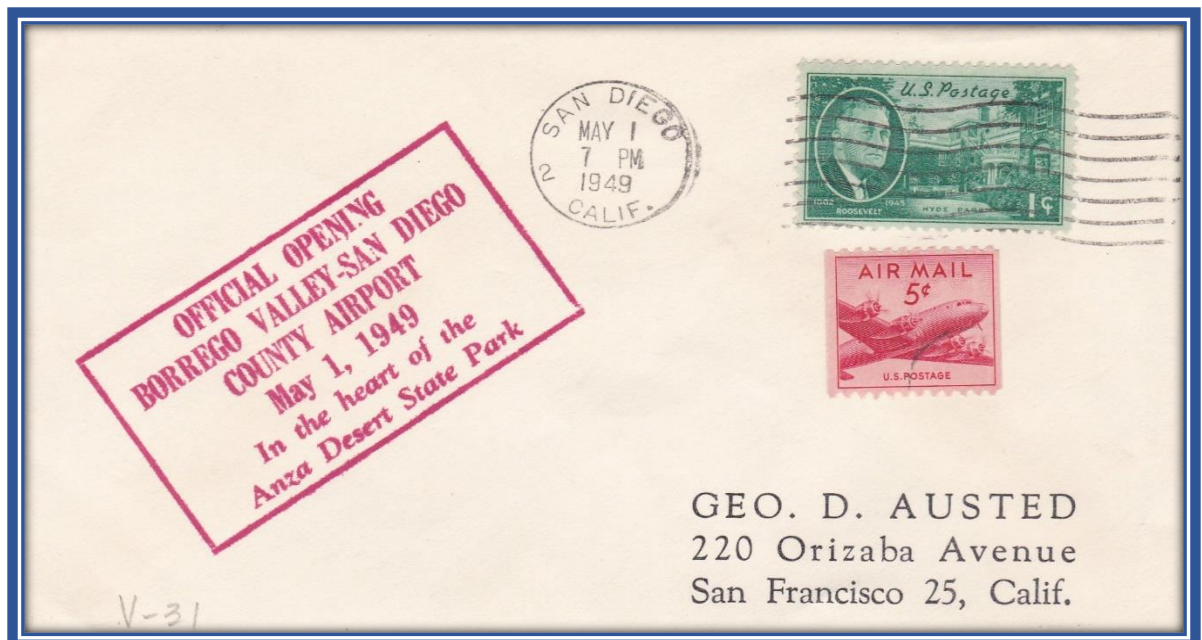


A total of 192,084 First Day covers were issued from Washington, D.C.

A domestic airmail cover with a 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Coil stamp, postmarked December 14, 1948. The airmail was sent from Tampa, Florida to the Gulf Oil Corporation Atlanta, Georgia.



A domestic cover with a 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Coil stamp, postmarked May 1, 1949 celebrating the opening of the Borrego Valley - San Diego county Airport. With the new Airmail postage rate of 6¢ effective January 18, 1949 additional postage of 1¢ had to be added to the envelope.



## Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp

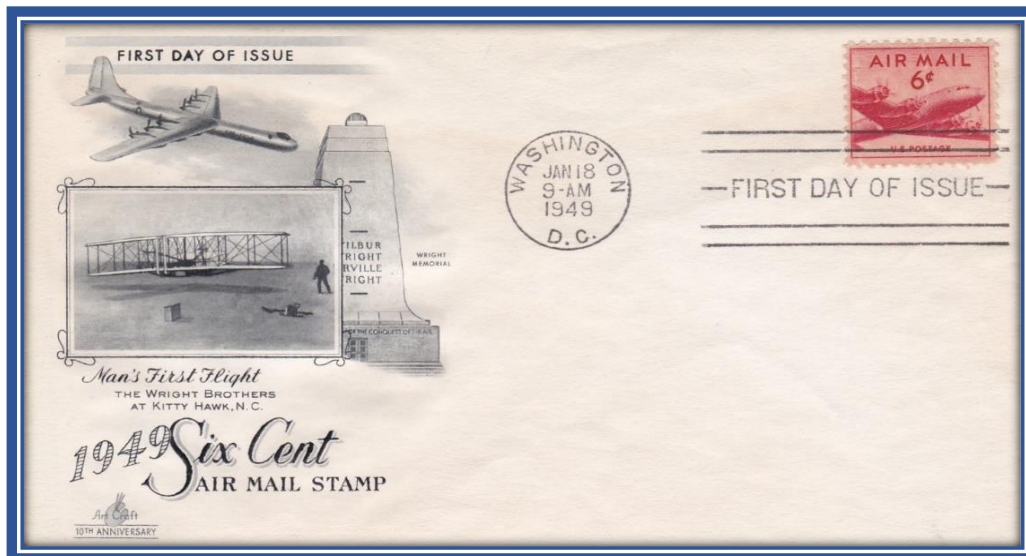
On January 18, 1949 the United States Postal Service issued a Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp to conform with the rate increase from 5¢ to 6¢. Some 5,070,095,320 stamps were issued using 21 plate block numbers in sheets of 100 perforated 10 ½ by 11. Both “Dry” and “Wet” printing methods were used. The “Dry” method utilized paper with a 5-10% moisture content which produced a sharper image. The “Wet” method used paper with 15-20% moisture content which caused the ink to spread, thus producing a lighter and not as sharp of an image. Starting in the late 1950s all stamps were being produced using the “Dry” method.



“Wet” Printing Method Plate  
Block #'s went up to 24909



“Dry” Printing Method Plate Block #'s  
started at plate # 25316



266,790 First Day covers of the Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster were Issued from Washington, D.C.



A sheet of 100 Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamps. The retail cost per sheet of these stamps was \$6.00 in 1949. This sheet was printed using the “Wet” paper printing method. The “Wet” Printing Method Plate Block #'s went up to 24909.

The sheet illustrated here is plate block number 24031 and was printed on January 31, 1949, some 708,774 plates were printed with the 24031 plate number.



Four Plate Blocks from same plate # 23978 from each corner of the plate which makes up the four sheets from the plate. The plate was printed on 11/17/1948 and was printed using the "Wet" paper printing method.

Plate Block from  
the upper left  
corner of plate  
# 23978



Plate Block from  
the upper right  
corner of plate  
# 23978



Plate Block from  
the lower left  
corner of plate  
# 23978



Plate Block from  
the lower right  
corner of plate  
# 23978





A sheet of 100 Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamps. The retail cost per sheet of these stamps was \$6.00 in 1949. This sheet was printed using the “Dry” paper printing method. The “Dry” Printing Method Plate Block #'s started at 25316.

The first “Dry” printing of the Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Plane stamps was on December 8, 1955.

The sheet illustrated here is plate block number 25414 and was printed on April 23, 1956, some 128,212 plates were printed with the 25414 plate number.



Four Plate Blocks from same plate # 25340 from each corner of the plate which makes up the four sheets from the plate. The plate was printed on 12/20/1955 and was printed using the “Dry” paper printing method.

Plate Block from  
the upper left  
corner of plate  
# 25340



Plate Block from  
the upper right  
corner of plate  
# 25340



Plate Block from  
the lower left  
corner of plate  
# 25340



Plate Block from  
the lower right  
corner of plate  
# 25340





A First Flight Cover with a Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp, mailed from Moultrie, Georgia postmarked June 25, 1949 - 8:30 AM and flown to Atlanta, Georgia a distance of 199 miles and was postmarked June 25, 1949 - 4:30 PM. The letters destination was Crestwood, Kentucky some 433 miles from Atlanta.





A Highway Post Office (HPO) First Run cover with four Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamps postmarked November 2, 1949. The HPO route is from Greensboro, North Carolina to Florence, South Carolina. The delivery address is Roslindale, Massachusetts. Four 6¢ stamps suggest an airmail service at some point although 24¢ in postage seems a bit of overkill for domestic delivery; perhaps the letter was extra heavy.



Highway Post Office, built on a bus chassis, was a noble experiment in the 1940s. Their function was to allow postal clerks to sort mail enroute to a general destination. This provided a faster level of service than could be provided by sorting mail at stationary points and then moving it in closed bags to the destination post office.



The era of the highway post office bus was short lived, spanning the years from just prior to World War II to the early 1970s. The concept of sorting enroute in buses failed for exactly the same reason that the railway post offices failed. Both did well in serving cities and towns along a comparatively straight line. But by the late 1950s, America was no longer built along straight routes. Staring in the 1970's this type of distribution was hauled by trucks.



*FDR puts mail into HPO bus mail slot*

**\* HPO Bus & FDR images taken from the internet**

## Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Coil Stamp

On August 25, 1949 the United States Postal Service issued a horizontal coil perforated 10 Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster airmail stamp. A total of 260,307,500 stamps were issued using 10 plate block numbers and the Rotary Press Printing Method.

Like the 5¢ coil issued in 1948 the 6¢ coil was not widely used by the general public because it could only be purchased in rolls of 500 at a cost of \$30 per roll.

Due to the limited use of 5¢ and 6¢ coil stamps on domestic regular mail, non-commercial covers from the period are considered a rarity by some collectors.



Pair Small DC-4 SkyMaster  
Coil 6¢ Stamp



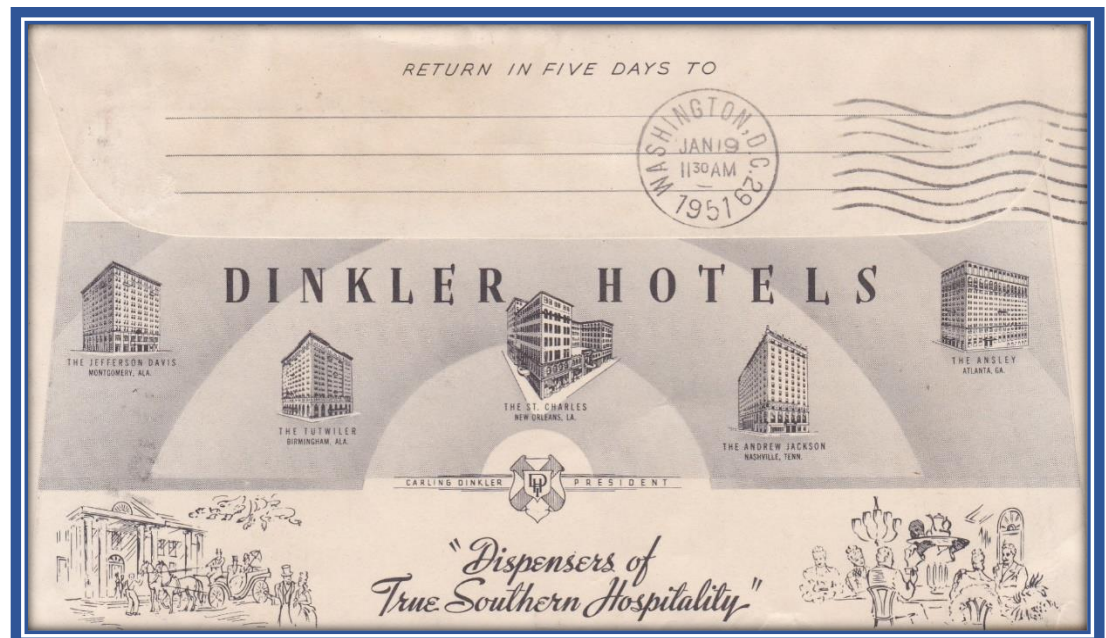
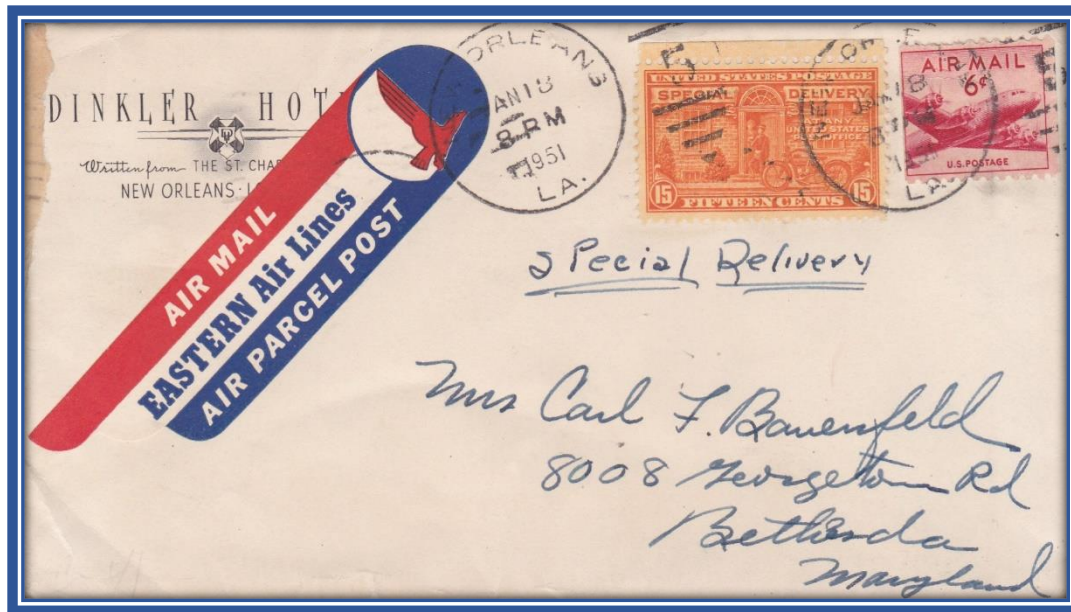
Line Pair Small DC-4  
SkyMaster Coil 6¢ Stamp



240,386 First Day covers utilizing the 6¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster coil stamp were issued from Washington, D.C.

A 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Coil stamp with a 15¢ Motorcycle Messenger Special Delivery stamp with a postmark of January 13, 1951. The air mail/special delivery letter was sent from the Dinkler Hotel New Orleans, Louisiana via Special Delivery Eastern Air Lines Air Parcel Post to Bethesda, Maryland. Postmarked Washington D.C. 01/19/1951.

On the reverse side of the envelope is an illustration advertising the Dinkler Hotel System.





## Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Booklet Stamp

On November 18, 1949 a Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp was issued in booklet format for the first and only time. Both “Wet” and “Dry” methods were used utilizing 12 plate block numbers. The booklet was priced 1¢ above the 72¢ face value of the stamps and was one of the last two booklets ever issued at 1¢ above the face value.



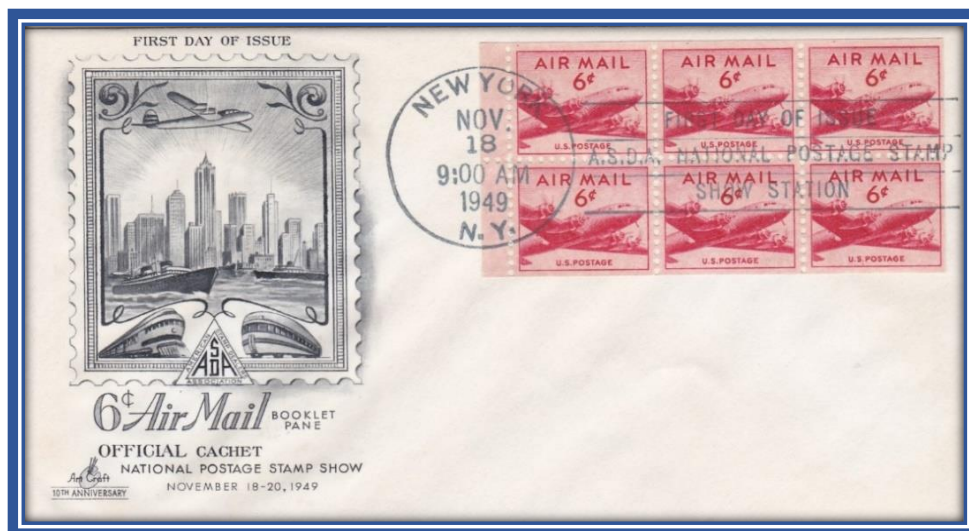
Booklet of 12  
Small DC-4  
SkyMaster 6¢  
Stamps.



6¢ Pane DC-4 SkyMaster “Wet” Printing



6¢ Pane DC-4 SkyMaster “Dry” Printing

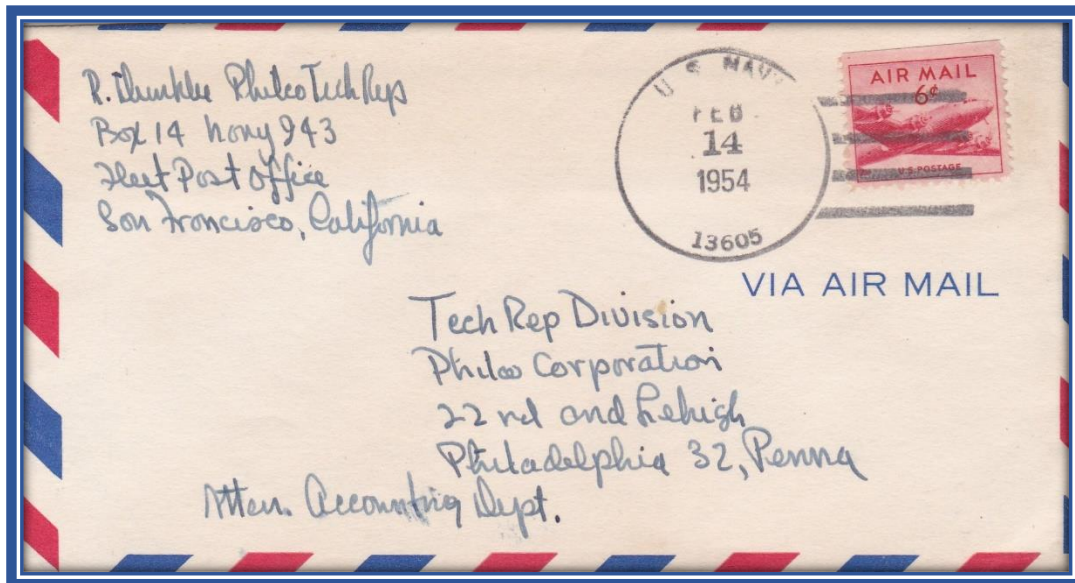


First Day cover of the Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Booklet stamp was issued from New York, N.Y. There were 5,070,095,200 stamps printed using the Rotary press printing process.



An airmail cover with a Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster booklet stamp as postage. The letter was sent from U.S. Naval Air Station Agana, Guam to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The letter is from a Philco Tech Rep. on Guam to the Philco Corporation to the attention of the Accounting Department in Philadelphia. The letter was postmarked Valentine's Day February 14, 1954.

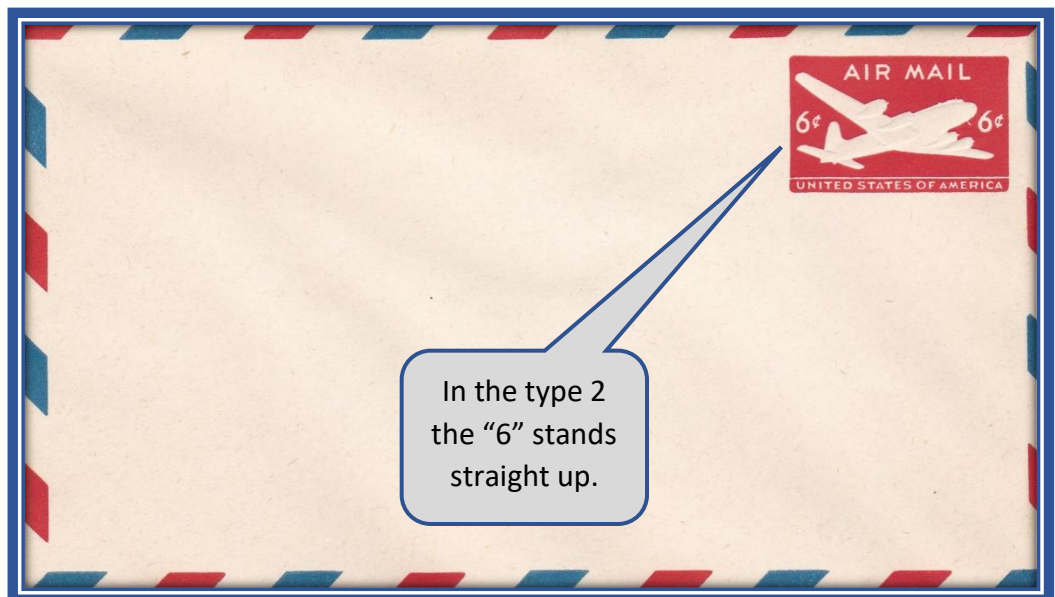


## 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes

On September 22, 1950 the United States Postal Service issued a 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope. Two die types as described below were used.

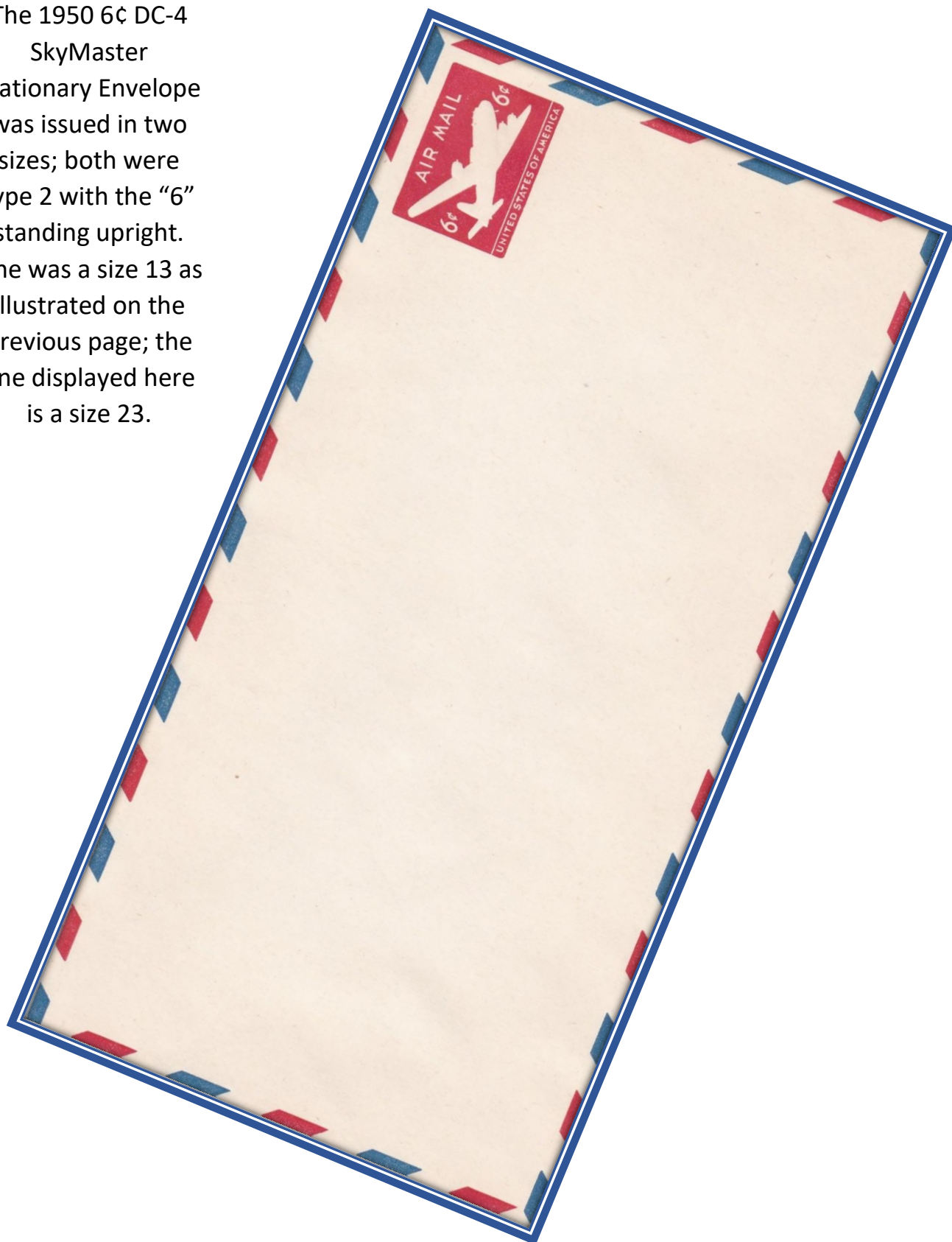


In the type 1  
the "6" leans  
to the right.



In the type 2  
the "6" stands  
straight up.

The 1950 6¢ DC-4  
SkyMaster  
Stationary Envelope  
was issued in two  
sizes; both were  
type 2 with the “6”  
standing upright.  
One was a size 13 as  
illustrated on the  
previous page; the  
one displayed here  
is a size 23.

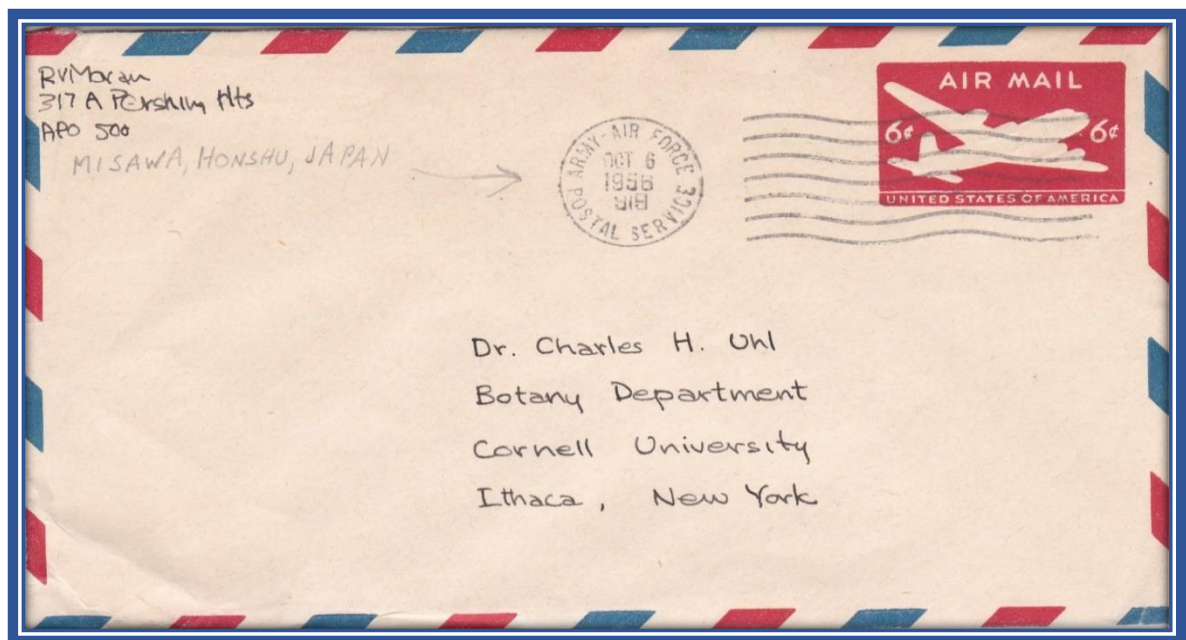




A 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster First Day of Issue embossed Stationary Envelope postmarked September 22, 1950 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



A regular airmail cover using the 6¢ SkyMaster Stationery Envelope.



## Revalued 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes to 6¢

In order to support the airmail postage rate of 6¢ in 1951 and 1952 the United States Postal Service applied revalued mark to a 1946 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes. There were several variations of the revalued 5¢ envelope which are shown here and on the next couple of pages.

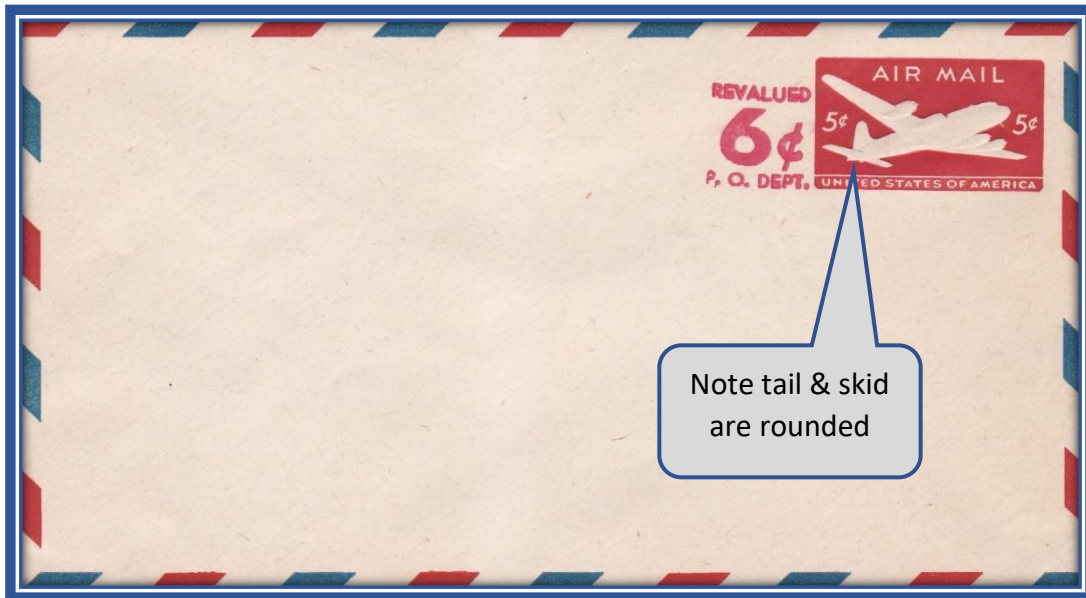
1951 Type 1 6¢ revalued mark is cross-hatched, and plane's tail tip and tail skid are rounded.



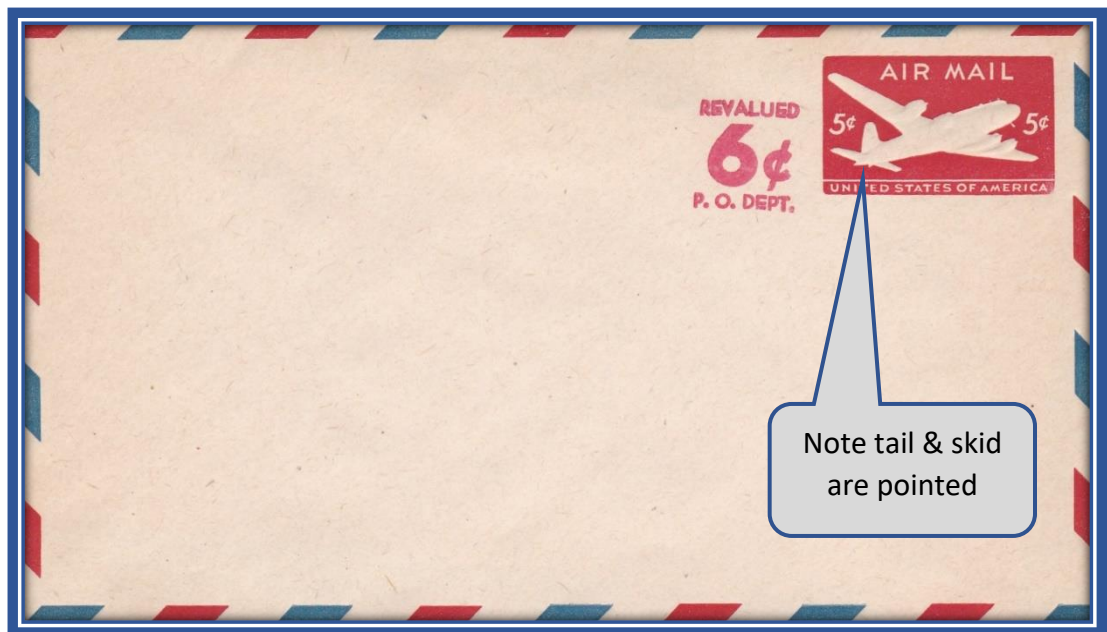
1951 Type 2 6¢ revalued mark is cross-hatched, and the plane's tail tip and tail skid are pointed.



1952 Type 1 6¢ revalued mark is solid, and the plane's tail tip and tail skid are rounded.



1952 Type 2 6¢ revalued mark is solid, and the plane's tail tip and tail skid are pointed.





The 1952 5¢ DC-4  
SkyMaster  
Stationery Envelope  
with a solid 6¢  
revalued mark was  
issued in two sizes; a  
size 13 envelope on  
the previous page  
and a size 23  
envelope displayed  
here.



To support the airmail postage rate of 6¢ in 1952 the United States Postal Service applied a revalued stamp mark of 6¢ to a 1947 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes.

“Type 1 Hard Rubber Die” 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster with a solid 6¢ revalued mark and the plane’s tail tip and tail skid are rounded .

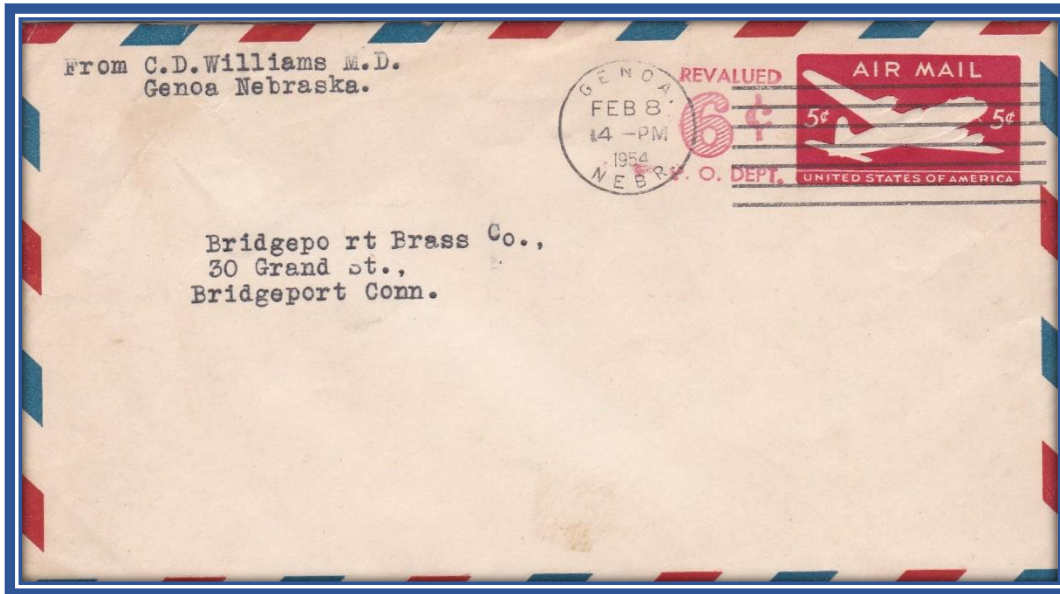


“Type 2 Hard Rubber Die” 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster with a solid 6¢ revalued mark and the plane’s tail tip and tail skid are pointed.



The Hard Rubber dies made soft, weak and blotchy impressions and were eventually replaced with steel dies.

In order to support the airmail postage rate of 6¢ in 1951 a 1946 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope Type 1 with a 6¢ revalued cross-hatched mark was used. Airmail letter was sent from Genoa, Nebraska to Bridgeport, Connecticut postmarked February 8, 1954.



A First Flight Cover going from Bradford, Pennsylvania postmarked July 25, 1949 3:00 PM to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania postmarked July 25, 1949 4:30 PM.





## Updated 10¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Air Letters

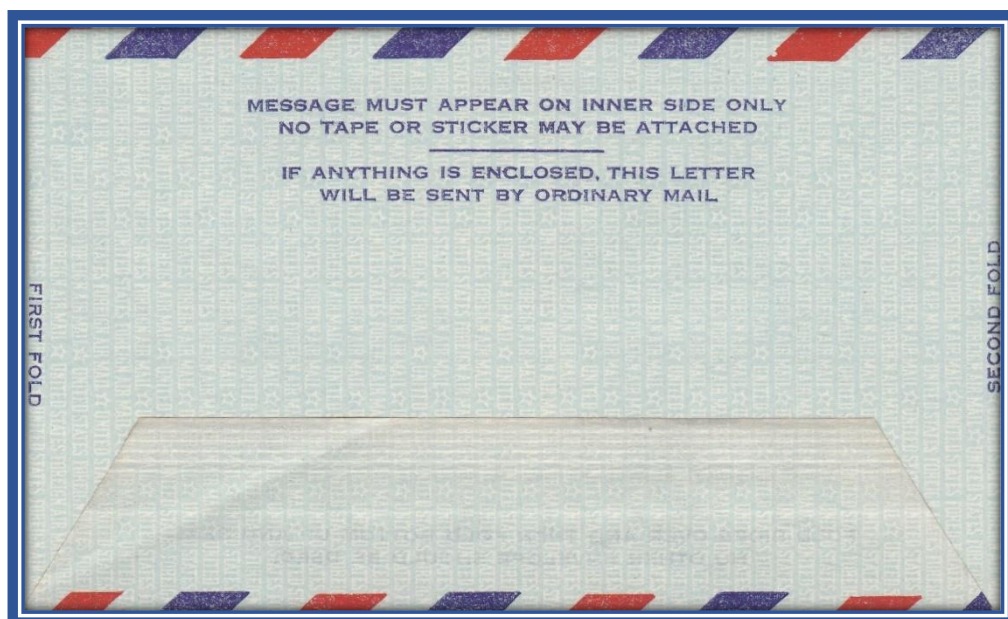
In 1951, 1953 and 1955 additional Air Letter Sheets were issued with an imprinted stamp of the Small 10¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Plane.

In 1952 the Universal Postal Union Congress (UPUC) in Brussels, Belgium required that all Air Letter Sheets be called “Aérogramme” effective July 1, 1953, thus requiring a change in the production of United States Air Letters.

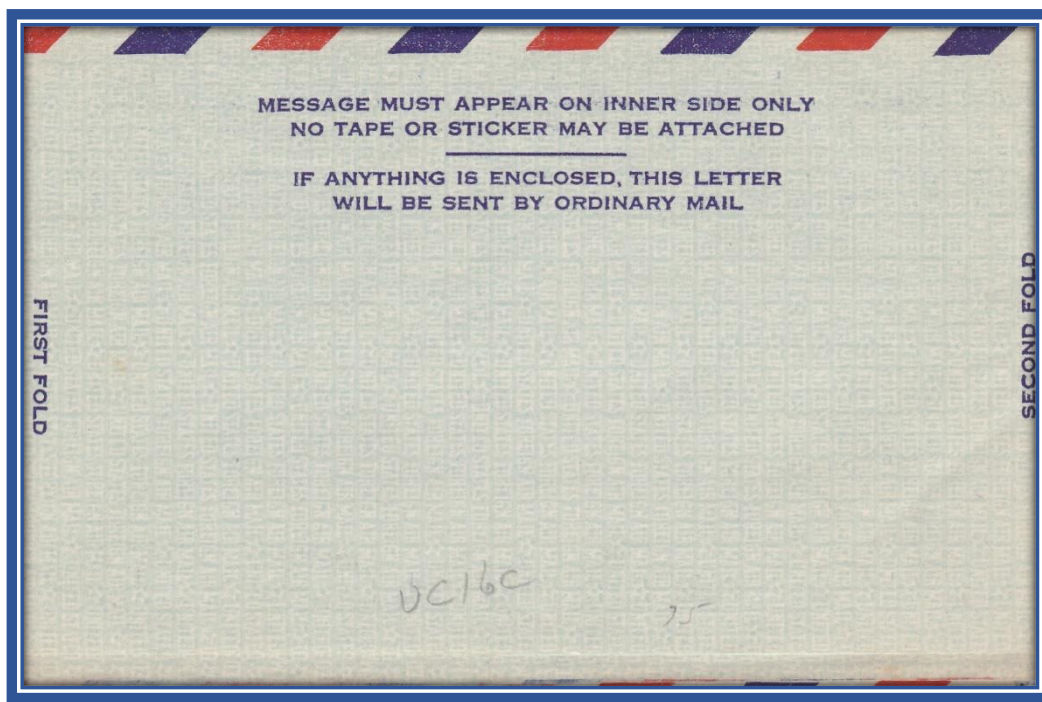
Issued on July 25, 1951—“**AIR LETTER**” is printed on the front of the Air Letter in bold letters—4 lines of instructions are printed on the back of the Air Letter.



An Aérogram (also called Aérogramme or Air Letter) is a thin lightweight piece of foldable and gummed paper in which the letter and envelope are one and the same.



Issued on January 2, 1953—"AIR LETTER" and "AÉROGRAMME" are printed on the front of the Air Letter in bold letters—4 lines of instructions are printed on the back. The word "Aérogramme" was applied to the "Air Letter" in order to comply with the (UPUC) requirement effective July 1, 1953.



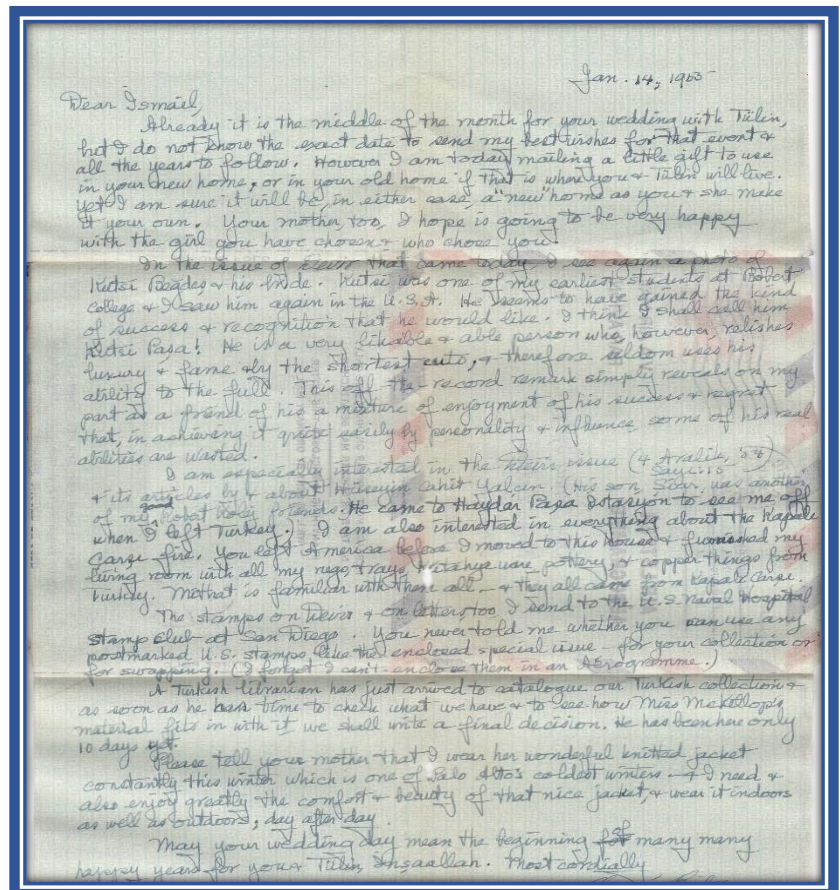


A mailed Air Letter/Aérogramme postmarked on January 13, 1955, was sent from Palo Alto, California to Osmanbey, Istanbul and postmarked in Istanbul on January 18, 1955. A total of 5 days to travel half-way around the world, not bad for 1955.



This version of the Air Letter/Aérogramme was Issued on January 2, 1953.

Inside letter portion of an Air Letter/Aérogramme.





Issued on January 5, 1955—"AIR LETTER" and "AÉROGRAMME" are printed on the front of the Air Letter in medium print—3 lines of instructions are printed on the back.



## 7¢ Blue DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes

In order to keep pace with the current 7¢ airmail rate on July 31, 1958 the United States Postal Service issued a 7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamped Stationery Envelope from Dayton, Ohio. This was the first time that another color (Blue) was used instead of the traditional “Carmine” that was used as the background for the embossed DC-4 SkyMaster stamp. There were 143,428 First Day Covers issued.

**This issue marks the last time that the DC-4 SkyMaster iconic plane image would be used by the States Postal Service on domestic United States airmail postal material.**



The blue 7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamped Stationery Envelope was issued in two sizes; a size 13 envelope displayed on the previous page and a size 23 envelope displayed on this page.





## 1¢ Surcharge On 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes

In order to support the new airmail rate of 7¢ in July of 1958, the 1950 6¢ SkyMaster Stationery Envelope was stamped with a 1¢ green surcharge.

There were two working die types used to produce the 1950 6¢ SkyMaster Stationery Envelope, type 1 and type 2. Both types were stamped with the 1¢ green surcharge and are shown here. Three envelope sizes were produced 12, 13, and 23.



In the type 1 the "6" leans to the right. Envelope size 13.



In the type 2 the "6" is standing upright. Envelope size 13.

The type 2 with the “6” standing upright was produced in a size 12 envelope.



A 1950 type 2 6¢ SkyMaster Stationery Envelope with a 1¢ green surcharge stamp. The cover is highlighting the inauguration of jet age air mail service first flight from New York's Idlewild air mail field postmarked December 10, 1958 8:30 AM to Miami, Florida air mail field postmarked December 10, 1958 1:30 PM.



The type 2 with  
the "6" standing  
upright was  
produced in a size  
23 envelope.



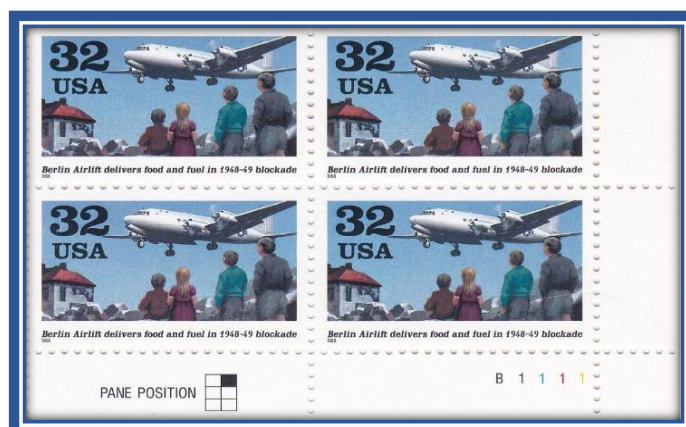
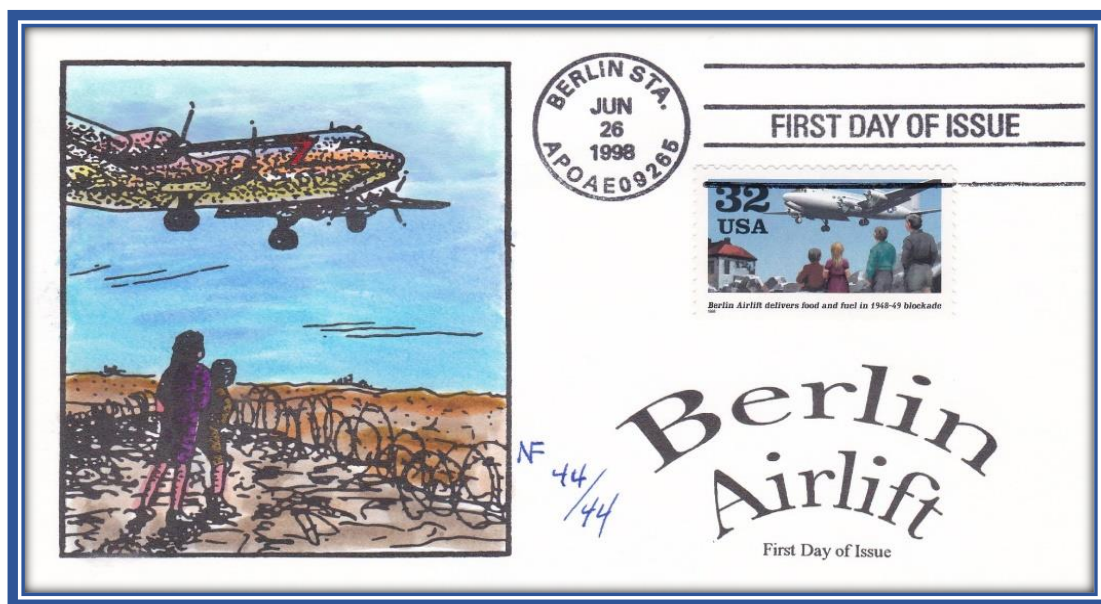


## Berlin Airlift

While not the iconic DC-4 SkyMaster image as seen so far, the DC-4 SkyMaster image was used again in 1998 but this time on a United States non-airmail stamp commemorating the 1948 Berlin Airlift. The United States Postal Service issued the 32¢ stamp on June 26, 1998.

Starting on June 24, 1948 the Soviet Union blockaded all rail, road, and canal access routes to Allied-controlled West Berlin. The allies responded by setting up a series of airlifts to deliver food and supplies to West Berlin. The Soviets lifted their blockade on May 12, 1949. The DC-4 SkyMaster Plane played a major role in breaking the Soviet Union's blockade.

There were 30,000,000 stamps and 137,839 First Day covers issued. The Stamp is Perforated 11.2, and the printing process used was "Photo Gravure".



### **The DC-4 SkyMaster Triumphs:**



The **"Berlin Candy Bomber"** was actually Colonel Gail "Hal" Halvorsen an American Air Force pilot, who flew the DC-4 SkyMaster during the 1948-1949 Berlin airlift. After befriending German children, he began dropping small bags of candy tied to handkerchief parachutes as he flew food and supplies into Berlin, which was isolated by the Russians. Word of the **"Berlin Candy Bomber"** soon spread throughout the military and back to the U.S. where soldiers, school children and candy companies started sending candy of all types to Halvorsen to drop to the German children as he wagged his wings to signal when the plane unloaded its sweet cargo. He was also known as **"Uncle Wiggly Wings"**.

**\*Picture of Colonel Gail "Hal" Halvorsen and write-up taken from the internet**

## 6¢ & 7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelopes Panama Canal Zone

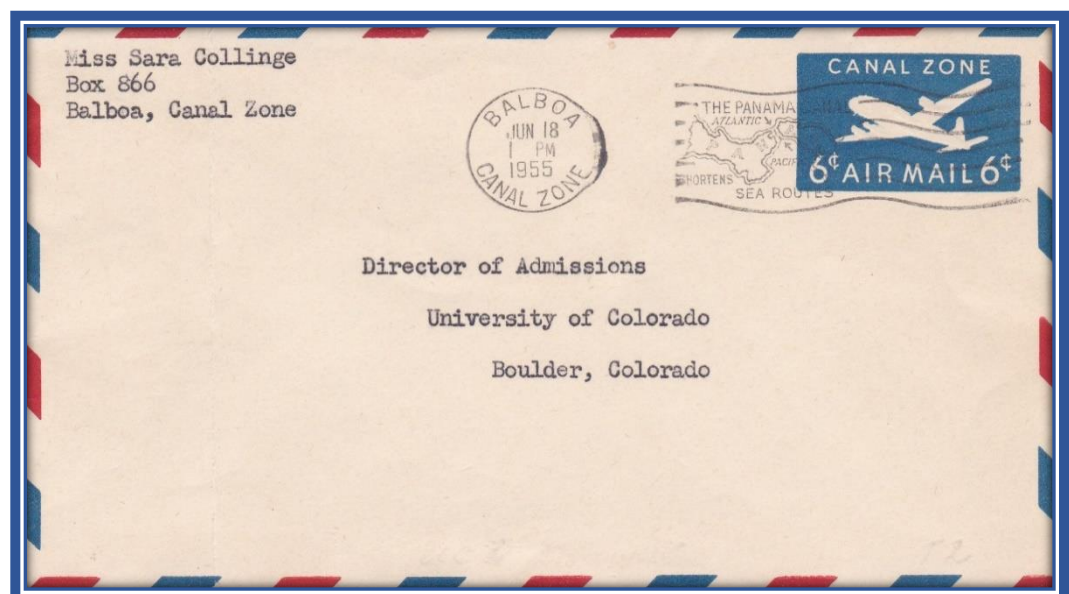
Two airmail Stationery Envelopes were produced for the Panama Canal Zone using the DC-4 SkyMaster plane design. They were authorized under the jurisdiction of the United States over the Panama Canal Zone. The Stationery Envelopes were produced by the International Envelope Corporation, Dayton Ohio - USA.

The first issue a 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster embossed stamp envelopes with a (Blue) background and the in-flight plane flying from right to the left.

A total of 4,400,000 Stationery Envelopes were produced.



First day of  
Issue January 3,  
1949.



Regular mail  
sent on June  
18, 1955.



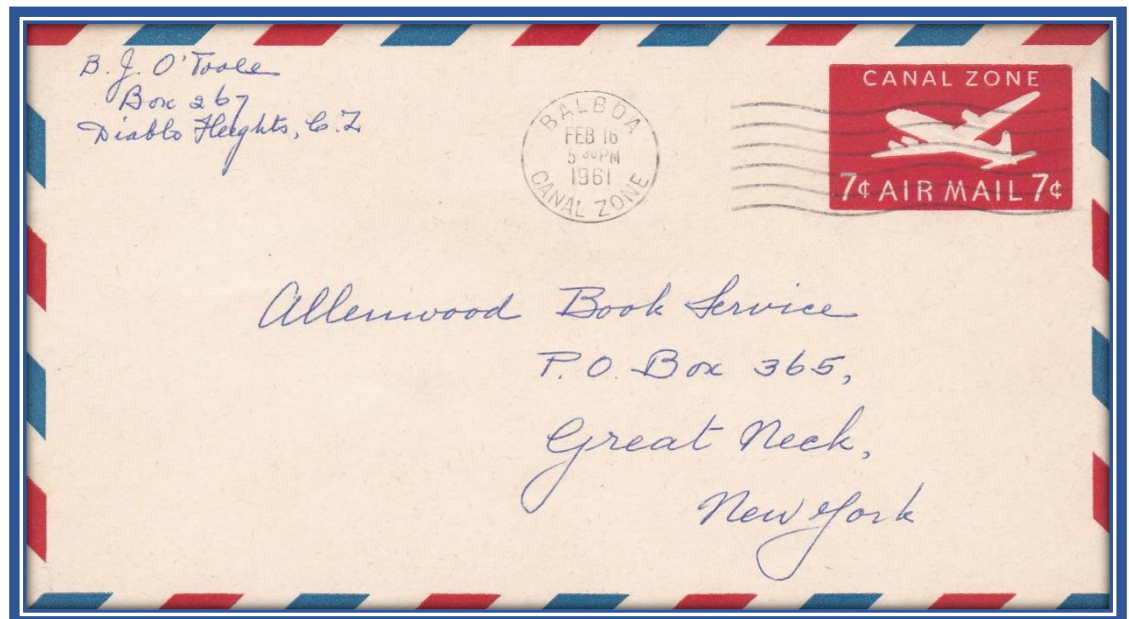
The second Stationery Envelope issued for the Panama Canal Zone was a 7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster embossed stamp envelope with the traditional “Carmine” background color. The image of the in-flight plane is shown flying from right to the left.

A total of 1,000,000 Stationery Envelopes were produced.



First Day of  
Issue November  
1, 1958.

Airmail sent  
from Box #  
267 Diablo  
Heights,  
Canal Zone to  
Great Neck,  
New York.



## Summary of DC-4 SkyMaster Postal Material Issued

Summary of United States DC-4 SkyMaster Postal Material Issued		
Type of Postal Material	Description	Date Issued
Stamp	5¢ Large DC-4 SkyMaster	September 25, 1946
Stationery	5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Embossed Envelope	September 25, 1946
Stamp	5¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster	March 26, 1947
Air Letter	10¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster Air Letter	April 29, 1947
Stationery	5¢ Commemorating the centenary of the first stamp issued by the U. S. Government	May 21, 1947
Coil Stamp	5¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster	January 15, 1948
Stamp	6¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster	January 18, 1949
Coil Stamp	6¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster	August 25, 1949
Booklet Stamp	6¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster	November 18, 1949
Stationery	6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Embossed Envelope	September 22, 1950
Stationery	5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Embossed Envelope with 6¢ revalue mark in red	1951
Air Letter	10¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster Air Letter	July 25, 1951
Stationery	5¢ Commemorating a centenary of the first stamp issued by the United States Government with 6¢ revalue mark in red	August 29, 1952
Stationery	5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Embossed Envelope with 6¢ revalue mark in red	1952
Air Letter	10¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster Air Letter	January 2, 1953
Air Letter	10¢ Small DC-4 SkyMaster Air Letter	January 5, 1955
Stationery	7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Embossed Envelope with a "Blue" background color	July 31, 1958
Stationery	6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Embossed Envelope with 1¢ surcharge in green	August 1, 1958
Stamp	32¢ stamp to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift	June 26, 1998

Panama Canal Zone Airmail DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Issued		
Type of Postal Material	Description	Date Issued
Stationery	6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Embossed Envelope Panama Canal Zone with a “Blue” background color	January 3, 1949
Stationery	7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Embossed Envelope Panama Canal Zone with a “Carmine” background color	November 1, 1958



## Production of the DC-4 SkyMaster Stamps

### Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp:



The U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing began the planning and design for the new Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp on May 29, 1946. The actual model of the plane was designed from a photograph of the current C-54 modern-type four motored transport plane in flight.

One Work Order was created by the Engraving Division to produce the following stamp:

- Regular Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster
- **Booklet Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster (production of this stamp was canceled)**

The final stamp design was completed on June 7, 1946 with approval on June 25, 1946. The size of the stamp was .84" x 1.44".

The Die design was started on July 1, 1946, submitted for approval on August 7, 1946 and approved on August 8, 1946 by Robert E. Hannegan Postmaster General for the first day of sale on September 23, 1946.

### Production Team:

Designer: Victor S. McCloskey, Jr.

Vignette (Picture): Charles A. Brooks

Lettering & Numerals: John S. Edmondson

Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp 1946 Series					
Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed	Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed
23489	08/15/1946	388,922	23484	08/15/1946	388,924
23485	08/15/1946	388,958	23486	08/15/1946	388,958
23487	08/19/1946	286,720	23488	08/19/1946	233,673
23489	08/19/1946	280,720	23490	08/19/1946	233,675
23491	08/21/1946	236,548	23492	08/21/1946	236,547
23493	08/21/1946	134,181	23494	08/21/1946	134,181
23495	08/26/1946	90,449	23496	08/26/1946	92,586
23497	08/26/1946	90,450	23498	08/26/1946	103,090

Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp 1946 Series					
Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed	Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed
<b>23503</b>	09/11/1946	92,586	<b>23504</b>	09/11/1946	51,148
<b>23505</b>	09/11/1946	103,090	<b>23506</b>	09/11/1946	53,700
<b>23507</b>	09/17/1946	51,149	<b>23508</b>	09/17/1946	53,700
<b>23509</b>	09/19/1946	47,556	<b>23510</b>	09/19/1946	47,550
<b>23515</b>	09/24/1946	50,849	<b>23516</b>	09/24/1946	50,858
<b>23517</b>	09/24/1946	50,949	<b>23518</b>	09/24/1946	42,100
<b>23523</b>	09/30/1946	42,100	<b>23524</b>	09/30/1946	3,900
<b>23525</b>	10/03/1946	3,900	<b>23526</b>	10/03/1946	50,849

A little known fact about the Large 5¢ Skymaster 1946 series stamp. At one point the U.S. postal service was entertaining the ideal of issuing the Large 5¢ Sky Master stamp in a booklet format. The production process to create and issue the booklet stated on September 4, 1946 but was canceled by 10/25/1946. A total of four plate numbers were scheduled to be used.

Booklet Large 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp 1946 Series					
Plate #	Date Canceled	# Plates Printed	Plate #	Date Canceled	# Plates Printed
<b>23499</b>	09/24/1946	0	<b>23500</b>	09/24/1946	0
<b>23501</b>	10/25/1946	0	<b>23502</b>	10/25/1946	0

### Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp:



The U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing began the planning and design for the new Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp on December 9, 1946. The size of the stamp was the major change in the design.

Two Work Orders were created by the Engraving Division to produce the following stamps:

- Regular Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster
- Coil Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster

The final stamp design was completed on January 21, 1947 with approval on January 21, 1947. The size of the stamp was .75" x .87".

Two Die designs were started around January 15, 1947, submitted for approval on February 2, 1947 and approved on February 12, 1947 by Robert E. Hannegan Postmaster General for the first day of sale on the following dates:

- Regular Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster - March 26, 1947
- Coil Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster – January 15, 1948

### Production Team:

Designer: Victor S. McCloskey, Jr.

Vignette (Picture): Charles A. Brooks

Outline Frame : Axel W. Christensen

Lettering & Numerals: Axel W. Christensen

Small 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp 1947 Series					
Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed	Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed
23580	02/10/1947	592,677	23581	02/10/1947	592,678
23582	02/10/1947	310,563	23583	02/10/1947	310,564
23586	02/19/1947	265,341	23588	02/19/1947	265,340
23590	02/19/1947	116,192	23591	02/19/1947	116,192

There were two plate numbers used in the printing of the 5¢ coil stamps 23716 and 23717. A total of 66,489 rolls were printed, each roll contained 500 stamps.



### Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp:



The U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing began the planning and design for the new Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp on October 7, 1948. No change in the design except for the rate of the stamp.

Four Work Orders were created by the Engraving Division to produce the following 4 stamps:

- Regular Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster
- Coil Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster
- Booklet Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster
- “Dry Printing” Regular Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster

The final stamp design was completed on October 13, 1948 with approval on October 14, 1948. The size of the stamp was .75” x .87”.

There were several Die designs that were started on October 14, 1948, submitted for approved on November 2, 1948 and approved by Jesse Monroe Donaldson\*\* Postmaster General for first day of sale on the following dates:

- Regular Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster – January 1, 1949
- Coil Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster – August 25, 1949
- Booklet Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster – November 8, 1949

The first “Dry Printing” of the Regular Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster version of the stamp was not until December 8, 1955.

### Production Team:

Designer: Victor S. McCloskey, Jr.

Vignette (Picture): Charles A. Brooks

Outline Frame : Axel W. Christensen

Lettering & Numerals: John S. Edmondson

**\*\* Note – Jesse Monroe Donaldson was the first letter carrier to become a Postmaster General. He served as Postmaster General from 12-16-1947 to 01/20/1953.**

Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp 1949 Series “Wet”					
Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed	Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed
<b>23973</b>	11/01/1948	949,921	<b>23974</b>	11/01/1948	592,678
<b>23975</b>	11/01/1948	310,563	<b>23976</b>	11/01/1948	310,564
<b>23977</b>	11/17/1948	664,624	<b>23978</b>	11/17/1948	1,037,626
<b>23979</b>	11/24/1948	1,037,627	<b>23985</b>	12/01/1948	792,361
<b>23986</b>	12/01/1948	708,773	<b>24031</b>	01/31/1949	708,774
<b>24042</b>	02/09/1949	914,904	<b>24043</b>	02/09/1949	914,904
<b>24550</b>	10/25/1951	922,625	<b>24551</b>	10/25/1951	922,028
<b>24858</b>	09/18/1953	485,030	<b>24860</b>	09/18/1953	612,770
Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp 1949 Series “Dry”					
<b>25316</b>	12/08/1955	687	<b>25340</b>	12/20/1955	415,173
<b>25341</b>	12/20/1955	415,173	<b>25413</b>	04/23/1956	128,211
<b>24414</b>	04/23/1956	128,212	<b>25421</b>	05/07/1956	30,227
<b>25422</b>	05/07/1956	30,228			
Brooklet Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp 1949 Series “Wet”					
Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed	Plate #	Date Printed	# Plates Printed
<b>24141</b>	08/22/1949	1,055,154	<b>24142</b>	08/22/1949	1,055,153
<b>24263</b>	08/09/1950	743,585	<b>24264</b>	08/09/1950	743,586
<b>24564</b>	11/26/1951	667,241	<b>24565</b>	11/26/1951	667,23
<b>24908</b>	01/13/1954	132,466	<b>24909</b>	01/13/1954	132,466
Brooklet Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stamp 1949 Series “Dry”					
<b>25317</b>	12/08/1955	200	<b>25318</b>	12/08/1955	200
<b>25359</b>	01/10/1956	58,262	<b>25360</b>	01/10/1956	300,328
<b>25376</b>	02/21/1956	300,330	<b>25377</b>	02/21/1956	58,263

There were 10 plate numbers used in the printing of Small 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster coil stamp the plate numbers were: 24116, 24117, 24122, 24123, 25169, 25170, 25171, 25172 ,25173, and 25174. A total of 520,615 rolls of stamps were printed, each roll contained 500 stamps.

## **Production of the DC-4 SkyMaster Stamped Envelopes**

### **5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope**

The U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing began the planning and design for the new 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope on August 6, 1946. The actual model of the plane was designed from a photograph of the current C-54 modern-type four motored transport plane in flight and the 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp.



One Work Order was created by the Engraving Division to produce the following Embossed Stationery Envelope:

- 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope

The Stationery Envelope design was completed on August 21, 1946 for the first die and September 10, 1946 for the second die. Approved by Robert E. Hannegan Postmaster General for the first day of sale on September 25, 1946.

### **Production Team Die 1165:**

Designer: Victor S. McCloskey, Jr. and William K. Schrage

Lettering & Numerals: Axal W, Christensen

Engraver : Benno Basch

### **Production Team Die 1169:**

Designer: Victor S. McCloskey, Jr. and William K. Schrage

Lettering & Numerals: John S. Edmondson

Engraver : Benno Basch

Die # 1165 – Harford Press - Rolls 2391, 2392

Die # 1169 – Harris Press - Rolls 2393

These first time rolls were made for Stamped Envelope Embossing dies.

The embossing dies were sent to the International Envelope Corporation Dayton, Ohio – USA to produce the Stamped Envelopes.



### 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope

The U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing created a work order on October 27, 1948 for the new 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope. The actual design of the embossed stamp on the envelope did not change except for going from 5¢ to 6¢.



The same die 1165 that was used on the 5¢ envelope was also used on the 6¢ envelope. The only physical change was made to roll 2392 the “5” was removed and the “6” was engraved by hand and approved by D.B. McLeod.

There was no original master die for the 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope. The Die # 1165 – Harford Press - Rolls 2392 was updated.

The first 6¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope was sold to the public on September 22, 1950.

#### Production Team Die 1165:

Designer: Victor S. McCloskey, Jr.

Modeled: William K. Schrage

Lettering & Numerals: Axal W, Christensen

Engraver : Benno Basch

The updated embossed die was sent to the International Envelope Corporation Dayton, Ohio – USA to produce the Stamped Envelopes.

### 7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope

The U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing began the planning and design for the new 7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope in July of 1947. The actual model of the plane was designed from a photograph of the current C-54 modern-type four motored transport plane in flight and the 5¢ DC-4 SkyMaster stamp.



This was the first time that a different background color other than “Carmine” was used in the design of image of the DC-4 SkyMaster plane on the stationery envelope . One Work Order was created by the Engraving Division to produce the following Embossed Stationery Envelope:

- 7¢ DC-4 SkyMaster Stationery Envelope

The Stationery Envelope design and die were completed in July of 1958 and approved by Robert E. Hannegan Postmaster General for the first day of sale on July 31, 1958.

#### Production Team:

Designer: Victor S. McCloskey, Jr. and William K. Schrage

Lettering & Numerals: John S. Edmondson

Engraver : John S. Edmondson

The embossing die was sent to the International Envelope Corporation Dayton, Ohio – USA to produce the Stamped Envelopes.

## Closing

Considering the vast number of stamps, plate blocks, booklets, sheets, first day covers and the like issued each and every year covering any number of subjects one can easily get lost in the philatelic world of collecting, researching and studying the history of it all.

After years of collecting I began concentrating on the one area that sparked my interest the most—postal material designed with the in-flight DC-4 SkyMaster plane. I found going that extra mile to find as much of the associated material as possible to be highly rewarding.

It seemed that the little red airplane found in nearly every stamp mixture one comes across had been largely overlooked by the Philatelic community. The long span of twelve years in which the material was produced, and the historical importance of the era spurred this collector into compiling an illustrated history to capture it all.

Perhaps the effort put into this collection of DC-4 SkyMaster materials will encourage others to select their favorite stamp or era and begin a stamp collecting adventure of their own. One thing for sure, it beats watching TV.

So, find that single stamp with that special personal appeal and start exploring its history—there just might be a DC-4 SkyMaster adventure waiting like there was for me.

Happy Collecting! **Tom**



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## **Stamp Glossary**

**Aérogram or Aérogramme:** A postage-paid air letter sheet with gummed flaps that is written on and then folded to form an envelope. Aérograms or aérogrammes are normally carried at less than the airmail letter rate. No enclosures are permitted.

**Airmail Stamp:** Stamp issued specifically to prepay postage for mail carried by air.

**Army Post Office(APO):** An official United States post office established for use by U.S. military units abroad. An army post office (APO) or military post office is set up to distribute mail to and from military personnel. The APO is indicated by numbers during wartime to prevent revealing personnel locations.

**Block:** A unit of four or more unsevered stamps, including at least two stamps both vertically and horizontally. Most commonly a block refers to a block of four, or a block of stamps two high and two wide, though blocks often contain more stamps and may be irregularly configured.

**Booklet:** A unit of one or more small panes or blocks (known as booklet panes) glued, stitched or stapled together between thin card covers to form a convenient unit for mailers to purchase and carry. The first officially issued booklet was produced by Luxembourg in 1895. For some modern booklets of self-adhesive stamps, the liner (backing paper) serves as the booklet cover.

**Cachet:** In French, cachet means a stamp or a seal. On a cover, the cachet is an added design or text, often corresponding to the design of the postage stamp, the mailed journey of the cover, or some type of special event. Cachets appear on modern first-day covers, first-flight covers, and special-event covers.

**Coil:** Stamps processed in a long single row and prepared for sale in rolls, often for dispensing from stamp-vending and affixing machines. Some coils, including most U.S. coils, have a straight edge on two parallel sides and perforations on the remaining two parallel sides. Some coils are back printed with sequence or counting numbers.

**Covers:** An envelope or piece of postal stationery, usually one that has been mailed. Folded letters that were addressed and mailed without an envelope and the wrappers from mailed parcels are also covers.

**Die:** The original engraving of a stamp design, usually recess-engraved in reverse on a small flat piece of soft steel. In traditional intaglio printing, a transfer roll is made from

a die and printing plates are made from impressions of the transfer roll. When more than one die is used in the production of an issue, distinctive varieties are often identifiable.

**Embossed envelope:** A stamped envelope or postal stationery envelope (PSE) with a printed or embossed indicium indicating the prepayment of postage. It is a form of postal stationery.

**First-Day Cover (FDC):** A cover bearing a stamp tied by a cancellation showing the date of the official first day of issue of that stamp.

**First-Flight Cover (FFC):** Known by the acronym FFC, is mail that has been carried on an inaugural flight of an airline, route, or aircraft, normally postmarked with the date of the flight and often the arrival destination proving it was actually carried on the aircraft and may have a special flight cachet and/or an arrival postmark. Because many first flight covers are essentially made as collectables they can be considered philatelic mail though others consider them to be postal history.

**First-Run Cover (FRC):** A cover bearing a stamp tied by a cancellation showing the date of the official first run of a letter sent via the Highway Post Office (HPO).

**Highway Post Office (HPO):** Portable mail-handling equipment for sorting mail in transit on highways (normally by truck). The last official U.S. HPO ran June 30, 1974.

**Line pair:** A pair of coil stamps with a printed line between them. Stamps produced on a flatbed press have a line from the guideline between panes. Stamps produced on a rotary press have a joint line from the space where ink collects between the sections of curved rotary plates.

**Mint:** A stamp in the same state as issued by a post office: unused, undamaged and with full original gum (if issued with gum). Over time, handling, light and atmospheric conditions may affect the mint state of stamps.

**Pane:** The unit into which a full press sheet is divided before sale at post offices. What a post office customer may refer to as a sheet of stamps is more properly called a pane. Most United States full sheets are divided into four or more regular panes or many more booklet panes before they are shipped to post offices.

**Pair:** Two unseparated stamps.



**Perforations:** Are small rows of holes punched between stamps to make them easier to separate. A perforation gauge is used to measure the number of holes or teeth within two centimeters. If a stamp has 11 perforations in 2 cm, it is said to be “Perf 11.”

**Plate block:** A block of stamps from the corner or side of a plate including the selvage bearing the number(s) of the plate(s) used to print the sheet from which the pane was separated. Some stamp production methods, like booklet production, normally cut off plate numbers. In the United States, plate number blocks are collected normally as blocks of four to 20 stamps, depending on the press used to print the stamps. When each stamp in a pane is a different design, the entire pane is collected as the plate block.

**Plate number:** Numerals or an alphanumeric combination that identifies the printing plate used to print postage stamp images. In the United States, plate numbers on sheet stamps often appear in the corner side margin of the paper. Plate numbers on coil stamps were commonly trimmed off until about 1980; since then the number appears on stamps at specific intervals. Booklet plate numbers are often found on selvage attached to the pane.

**Postal Stationery:** Postcards, envelopes, cards or any other covers which bear imprinted or impressed stamps on them.

**Postmark:** Any markings on a postal item, such as a cancellation, which records the date and/or origin of its connection with the postal service and its transit through the mail system.

**Revalue Mark:** A mark that revalues the cost of a letter or postal stationery. The mark will show the new denomination of the letter or postal stationery item.

**Sheet:** A sheet of stamps is a unit of stamps as printed, usually on large sheets of paper that are sold at post offices.

**Surcharge:** An overprint that changes or restates the denomination of a stamp or postal stationery item.

**Type:** A basic design of a stamp or a set of stamps.

**Vignette:** An engraving, drawing, photograph, or the like that is shaded off gradually at the edges so as to leave no definite line at the border

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## “The Nickel Airmail”



All suggestions, corrections, and additions are welcome and should be emailed to [stamps1940s@gmail.com](mailto:stamps1940s@gmail.com) to the attention of Tom Nichols.