

National Airmail Week of 1938

Let's Retell That Tale Together

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD

The year 1938 brought the world one of its most successful promotions in history – National Air Mail Week, which was celebrated May 15-21. And, in a moment, we're going to ask you to help the Empire State Postal History Society relive that special week.

The occasion was the 20th anniversary of official U.S. airmail, which started in 1918 with those famous Jenny biplanes flying between Washington, D.C. and New York, by way of Philadelphia. Though the amount of mail was nowhere near its eventual peak, of course, it was greater than ever before.

Postmaster General James A. Farley and President Franklin Roosevelt created the event as an opportunity to gain wider support and usage of the Post Office Department's airmail service, according to the American Air Mail Society. The celebration week was preceded with the issuance of a new 6-cent airmail stamp, the attractive bi-colored eagle (Scott C23).

Farley asked that every citizen send an airmail letter during the week. The slogan was "Receive To-morrow's mail today." And people responded.

Communities large and small sought sponsors to create special cacheted envelopes that its citizens could use to send mail. Authorities suggested sending mail to friends, relatives, postmasters or Farley. In California alone, 4.5 million airmail letters and 3,200 packages were posted on May 19, according to the Air Mail Society.

In Massachusetts, famous women fliers, Blanche Noyes and Edith Bernson performed mail duties, as did Alma Harwood in New York. Races with Pony Express riders in Montana and a bicycle cavalcade in New York got press coverage. Oxen carts, reindeer teams, stagecoach and wheel equipped dog sleds moved the mail from the airports and grass strips to post offices in rural Maine. An autogiro performed in Chicago. This was truly a national event.

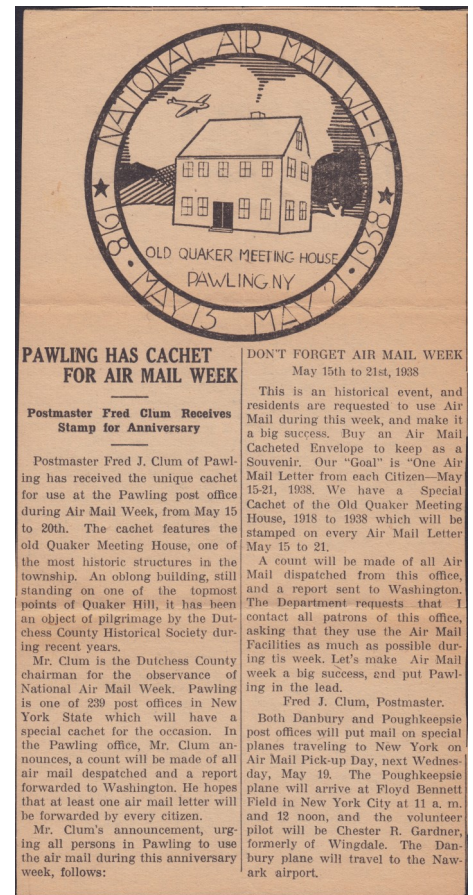
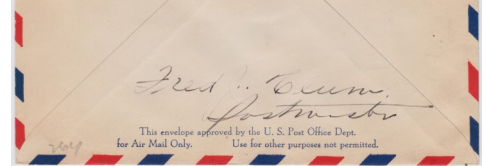
My old hometown of Pawling was among the communities to join in. I have an original newspaper clipping from the time in which Postmaster Fred Clum promotes the town's unique cachet featuring the Old Quaker Meeting House, one of the most historic structures in the township. Shown is one of many NAMW Pawling covers I have collected.

This is where YOU now come in. Editor Jeff Stage and I hope that you can dig out some of your own NAMW covers and send images to us. We'll share them in the pages of an upcoming Excelsior! All we ask is that the come from a New York state community.

Hopefully you can share a few words about the cover. What is the cachet? Who sponsored it? How many were sent? Did the locale actually have regular airmail service or was a special pickup arranged? (A few places didn't even have appropriate landing sites, but arranged for mail to be picked up via a sling system.)



A National Airmail Week cover sent from Pawling to New York City Postmaster Albert Goldman. The back is signed by Pawling Postmaster Fred J. Crum, who enclosed a newspaper clipping about the local event.



Let's Show and Tell

Please participate in the NAMW Show and Tell. Scan your NAMW cover (or maybe two) against a dark background at a high resolution (600 dpi or better) as a SEPARATE jpeg (our editing system cannot interpret PDFs; please do not embed your images among text.) No need to worry about tilts – we can fix those. Please send to charlesdicomo@gmail.com or nyspostal@gmail.com. Suggestion: For a topic slug use something like NAMW and (your NY town).



Excelsior!

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Douglas Penwell: A quick look at manuscript cancellations and what makes them special. Help needed to update state handbook. **Cover.**



Charles J. DiComo, PhD: The simple cover with a 2-cent Jefferson stamp from the Liberty series is a lesson in modern postal history. **Page 3**

Martin H. Joyce III: The author has created a new handbook that explores the deep and interesting history at the post office at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. **Page 4**

Robert Bramwell: The author from the last Excelsior! tells a little more about Franklin's Lists of Letters Remaining. **Page 4**

Release: Learning About Stamps Online (LASO) is a new web-based club designed to bring together collector's from near and far. **Page 5**

Charles J. DiComo, PhD: A Post Office Department check from 1851 shows a signature from the department's top dog, Nathan K. Hall, who had close ties with President Millard Fillmore. The two are buried near each other in Buffalo. **Page 6**



Jeff Stage: A cache of covers (likely) between a man and a woman had the potential of an interesting tale. But, sadly, such

was not the case. **Page 8**

Charles J. DiComo, PhD: National Air Mail Week of 1938 was an incredible national event. Let's remember that success with a show and tell! **Back cover**

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dated from January to June. For applications dated July to December terms are for 1 1/2 years with a fee of \$30 (\$35 for non-U.S. addresses). Advertising is accepted. For ads, please contact the society secretary.

Upcoming Shows

New York October 20
Albany Fall Stamp & Postcard Show, Fort Orange Stamp Club, American Legion Hall, Joseph E. Zaloga Post 1520, 4 Everett Road. Ext., Albany. **Contact:** Mike Krug. <http://www.fortorangestampclub.org/>.

New York November 10
Syracuse Stamp Show. Free admission and parking. Holiday Inn (formerly Maple Wood Inn) 400 7th North Street, Liverpool (off Exit 36 NYS Thruway). Website: <http://syracusestampclub.org/syracuse-stamp-show/>.

Pennsylvania November 15- 16
Postal History Symposium, APRL, APS, and the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, American Philatelic Center, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte. <https://stamps.org/news/c/collecting-insights/cat/postal-history-symposium>.