

Celebrating 50  
Years of Airmail  
Service to  
Bermuda:  
A FDC Cover from  
1975 and Maybe  
One from 1925?

Michael L. Wilson  
Philatelic Gathering  
March 15, 2025

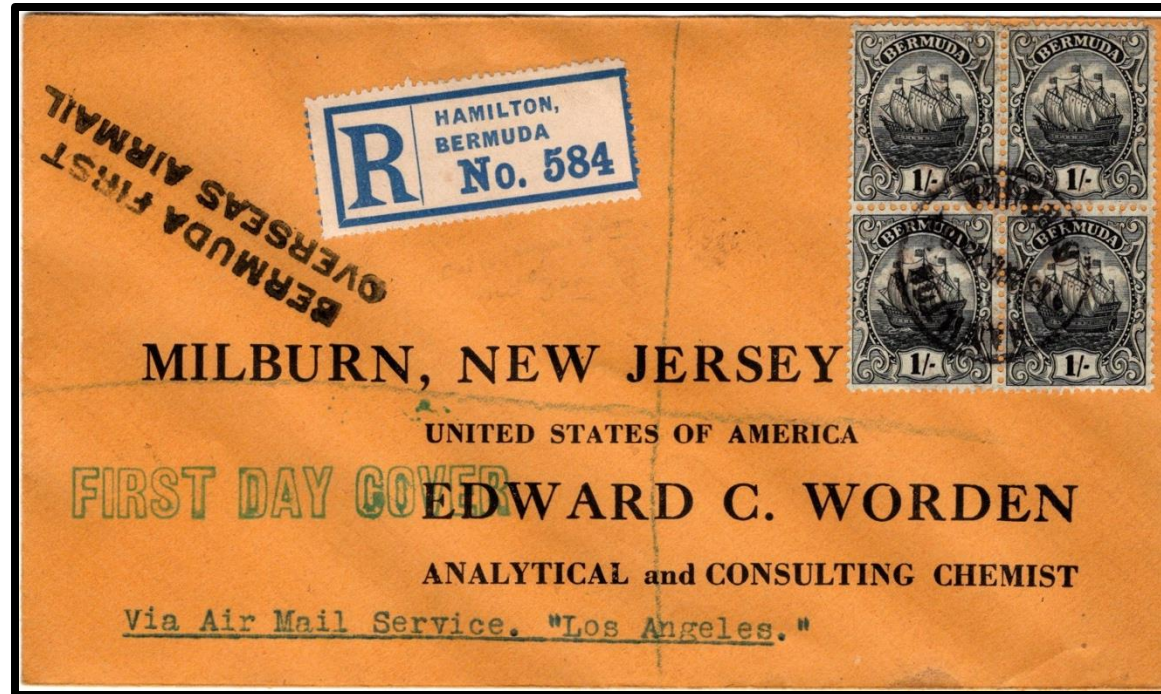
# Cover that Started My Journey

Registered w/ blue  
crossed lines

“BERMUDA FIRST  
OVERSEAS AIRMAIL”  
cachet

“FIRST DAY COVER”

Backstamped New  
York, 4/24/1925;  
Milburn NJ  
4/25/1925



Postmarked 4/13/1925

Block of 4 1-shilling  
“Caravel” (required  
postage & registry fee  
= 5-1/2d) (Scott  
48a/SG 51a)

Questions:

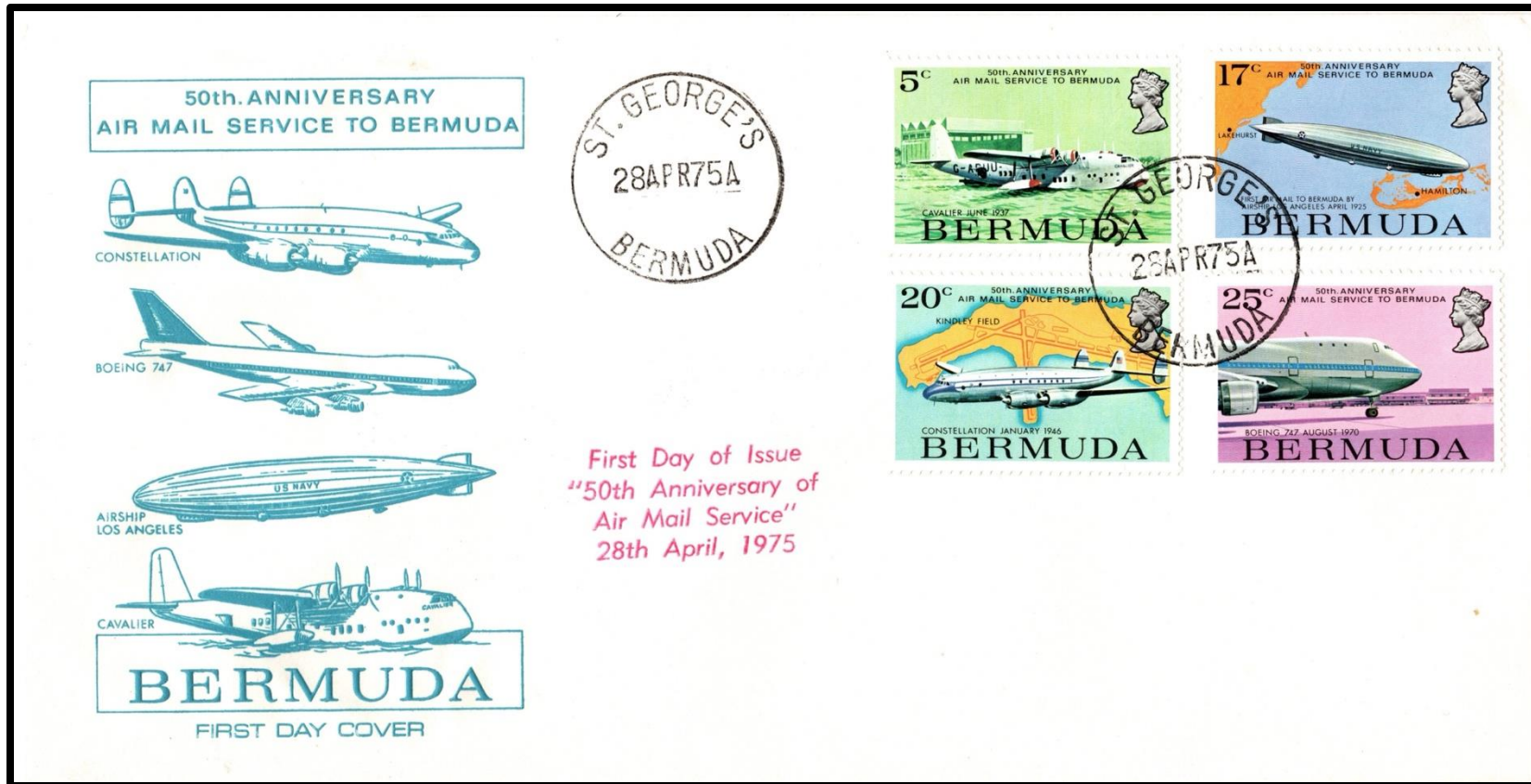
What was the story  
of the *Los Angeles* &  
*Bermuda*?

Is this really a FDC?

Edward C. Worden: First  
day cover (FDC) pioneer

“Via Air Mail Service, ‘Los Angeles’”

# 50 Years of Airmail Service to Bermuda, 1975



Issued 4/28/1975:

5-cent - June 1937 regular airmail service by flying boats *Cavalier* and *Bermuda Clipper*

17-cent - April 1925 flight of airship *USS Los Angeles*

20-cent - January 1946 transition from flying boats to land-based airplanes

25-cent - August 1970 dawn of Boeing 747

# Stamps Designed by Geoffrey Osborn

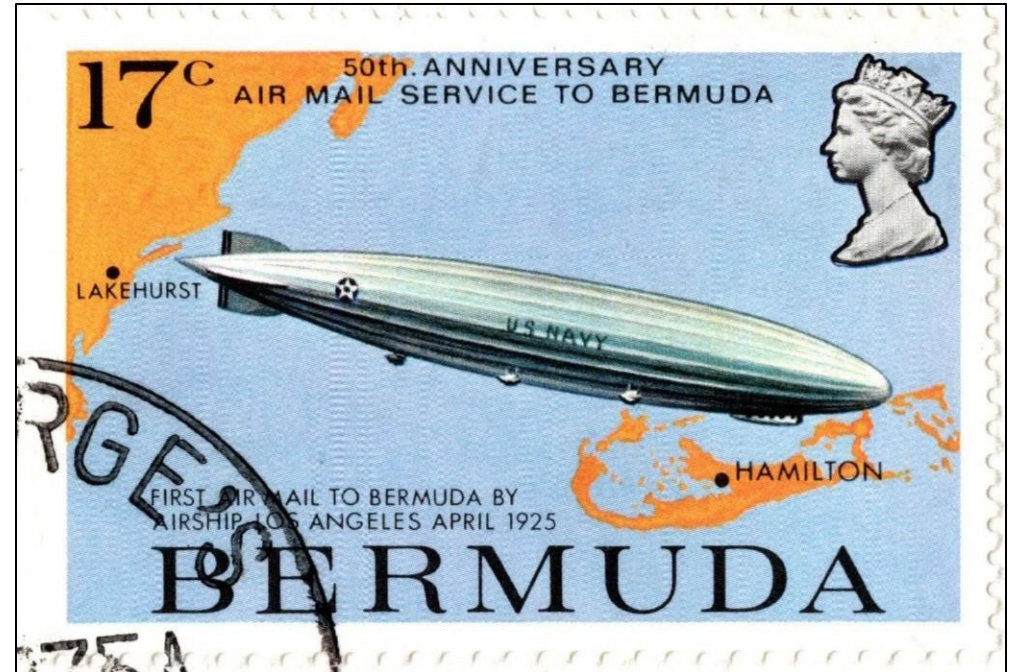


Osborn's design from 1971 as printed in *British Caribbean Philatelic Journal* April 1975

*Key differences:*

*4c vs. 17c  
denomination*

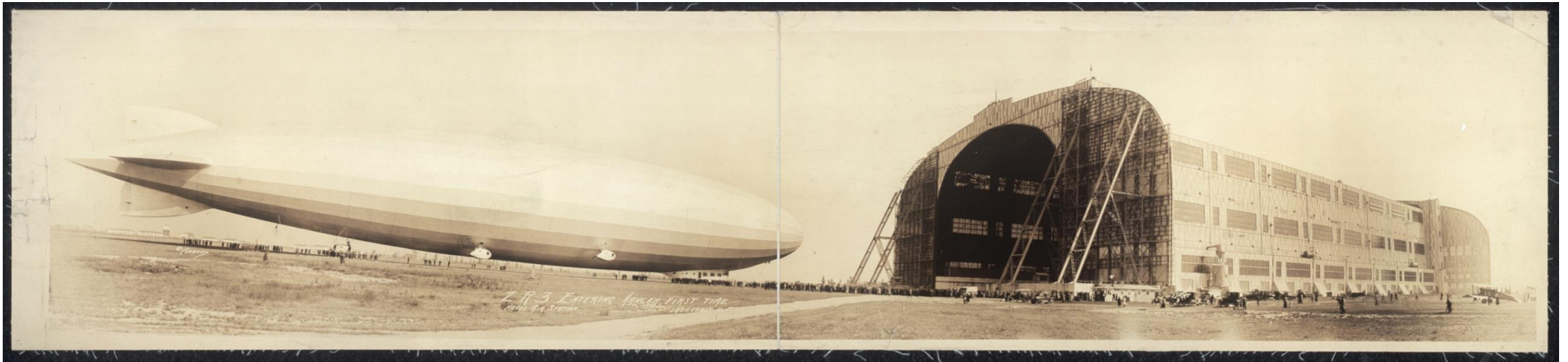
*First flight/first  
airmail Feb.  
1925/Apr. 1925*



Stamp as issued in 1975

Osborn, an avid stamp collector, served on the Bermuda Government Stamp Design Advisory Committee, 1970-71. He was a World War II Royal Air Force bomber pilot and was honored on a 2018 Bermudian stamp.

# USS *Los Angeles* Arriving for the First Time at Hangar in Lakehurst, New Jersey



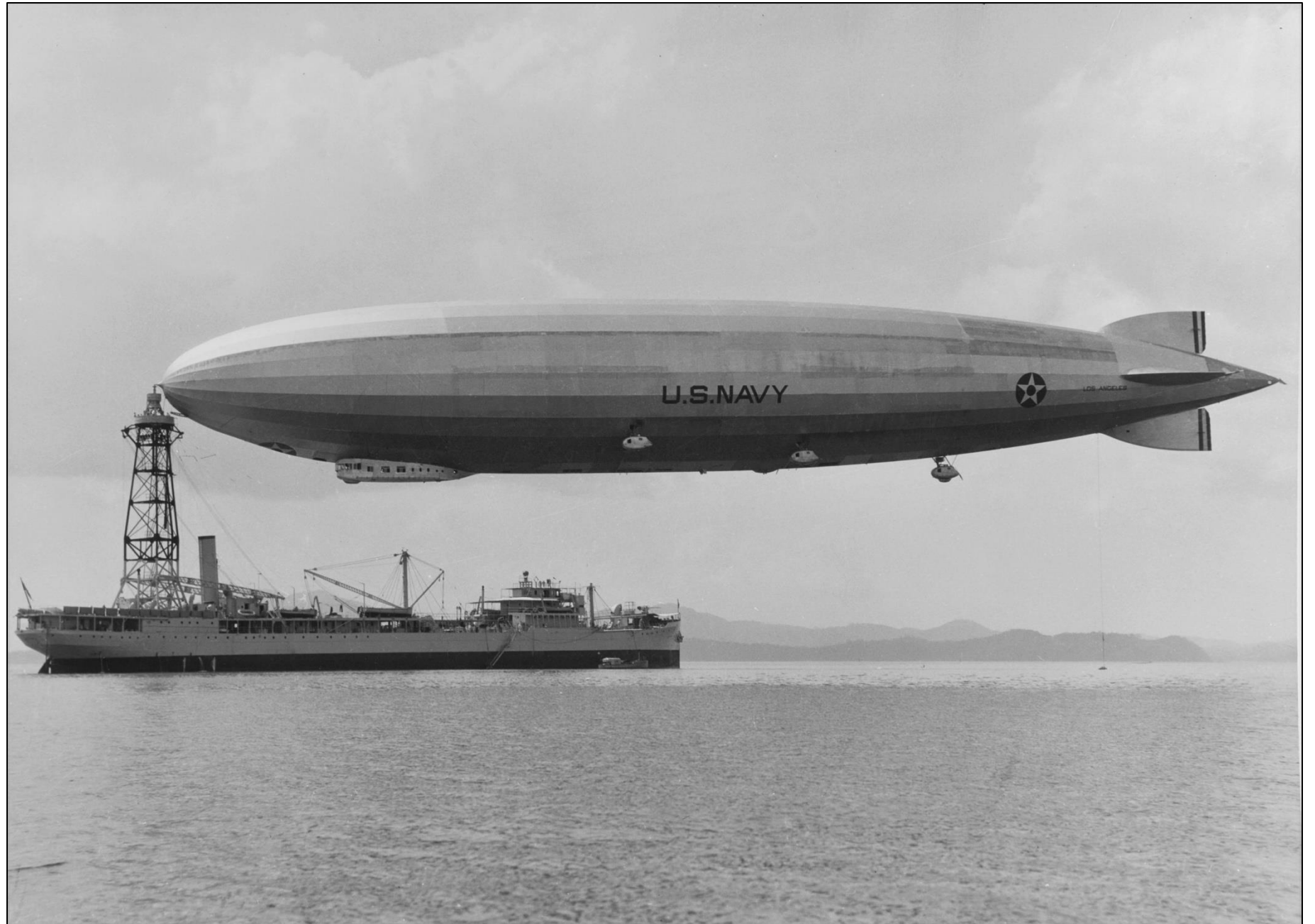
- Built by German Zeppelin Company as part of World War I reparations
- Delivered to U.S. Navy October 1924
- Dismantled in 1940
- Only one of four airships operated by the U.S. Navy that did not end in a disaster

**After series of shakedown flights (including one to view a total solar eclipse), U.S. Navy decided to make first flight to Bermuda between 2/16-26/1925 (weather dependent)**

# USS *Patoka*

With no mooring facility in Bermuda, the Navy outfitted the USS *Patoka* as a supply vessel.

Photo shows *Los Angeles* moored to the *Patoka* circa 1931.



# USPOD Announced Plans for Mail to Bermuda

## The Postal Bulletin

Published daily, except Sundays and legal holidays, by direction of the Postmaster General, for the information and guidance of officers and employees of the Postal Service

VOL. XLVI

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1925

NO. 13702

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### AIRSHIP LOS ANGELES TO CARRY MAIL FOR BERMUDA FROM LAKEHURST, N. J.

SECOND ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL,  
*Washington, February 16, 1925.*

By arrangement with the Navy Department, 200 pounds of fully prepaid letters and post cards for Bermuda will be carried by the airship *Los Angeles*, which is expected to leave Lakehurst, N. J., about February 19.

Letters in their usual and ordinary form must be paid at the rate of 2 cents for each ounce or fraction thereof, and post cards must be paid at the rate of 2 cents each. No more than 200 pounds of mail will be carried, and if a quantity in excess of that weight is received, only the first 200 pounds at hand will be dispatched.

Letters and cards must be plainly marked on the face "Air mail by airship *Los Angeles* from Lakehurst, N. J.," as letters and post cards for Bermuda not so marked will not be included in this special dispatch.

Postmasters will cause letters and post cards to be distributed so as to reach New York as the exchange post office concerned, at which post office the mail will be prepared and labeled for ultimate dispatch from Lakehurst.

PAUL HENDERSON,  
*Second Assistant Postmaster General.*

# Cover Carried on *Los Angeles's* First Bermuda Flight

*Los Angeles* took off afternoon of 2/20/1925 w/200 pounds of mail

Arrived Bermuda 12 hours later

Bad weather prevented airship from mooring



After cruising over island for 6 hours, mail was dumped overboard, backstamped 2/21/1925 and delivered.

Since the airship never moored, no mail was carried back from Bermuda, but...



# ...Even It Had Moored, No Mail Would Have Been Ready!

Bermuda GPO made no provisions for mail to be carried back until April

*Royal Gazette and Colonist Daily*

4/1/1925

In view of the projected second visit of the "Los Angeles" to Bermuda, it is to be hoped that should the airship be favoured with better weather conditions on her next arrival and a successful mooring made, our post office authorities will have made arrangements for a mail from Bermuda. Requests from stamp collectors in many parts of the world have offered sums of money for mail by the "Los Angeles". Our treasury has an opportunity here of reaping an harvest from the sale of special stamps.

4/7/1925

There is every likelihood that she will bring a mail, and we are in a position to state that many people in the United States who have friends here intend to take advantage of this air mail service. Whether our post office authorities here have been able to make arrangements for sending a mail on the return trip, we are unable to say. Should an opportunity be offered, it is needless to say that many will take advantage of this unique way of sending a mail. A novel way of extending Easter Greetings to friends abroad!

\* \* \*

4/16/1925

We are informed that if the ship comes to its moorings on this occasion arrangements will be made to send a mail by her but the following posting rules must be observed:—

All mail matter must be marked "Via Airship Los Angeles".

All letters in those cases where a quantity is being sent must be tied up in bundles which must bear on the outside the address of the sender as well as that of the receiver.

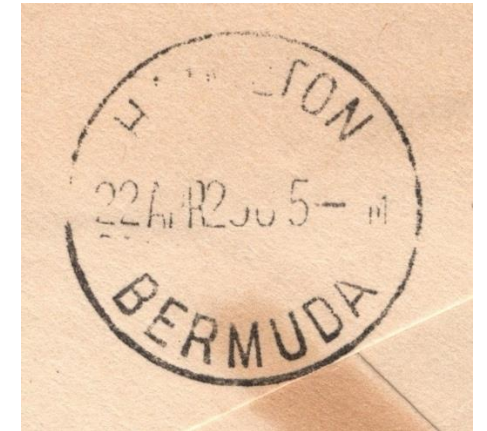
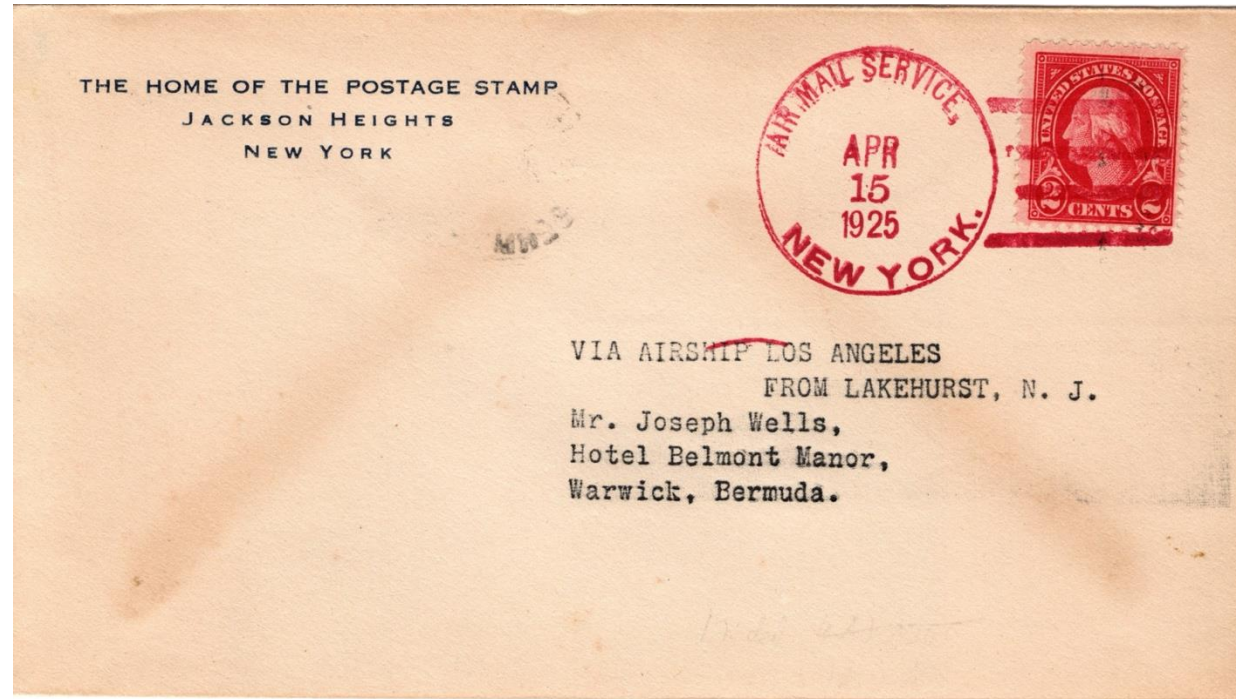
This mail must not be posted in the ordinary foreign boxes but must be handed in at the windows at the G.P.O. to the clerk on duty.

Normal rates of postage will prevail.

# *Los Angeles* Departed Again for Bermuda on 4/21/1925

Again carried 200 pounds of mail to Bermuda

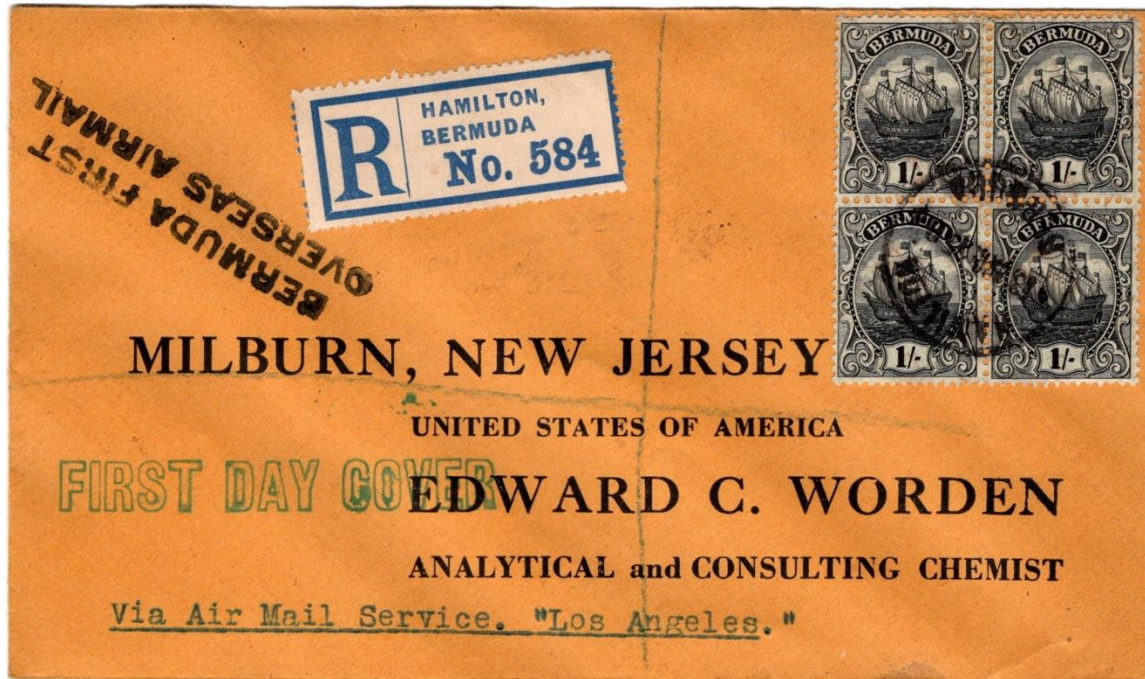
Moored with the *Patoka* and carried 200 pounds of mail back from Bermuda



Most covers to Bermuda postmarked 4/15/1925 since the airship was scheduled to leave 4/16/1925 but delayed to 4/21/1925 due to weather and mechanical problems. Cover backstamped Hamilton, 4/22/1925

Departed Bermuda 4/23/1925 around lunchtime, arrived Lakehurst 5:00 a.m. 4/24/1925; return flight took 20 hours - versus 14 hours in February - because of headwinds

# Among the Covers Carried Back



Was 4/13/1925, the postmark on cover, the FD of issue for this stamp?

# Stamp in Question Went Through Three Printings

De La Rue printed all 3 runs in black ink

3<sup>rd</sup> printing (Scott 48a/SG 51a) on a different paper than 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> (Scott 48/SG 51), which have an unambiguous green hue

1<sup>st</sup> run: 24,690 received in Bermuda on 5/9/1910 with FD of issue 3/26/1912

2<sup>nd</sup> run: 50,400 received on 11/19/1912

3<sup>rd</sup> run: 46,680 received on 4/28/1919  
Bermuda. Scott and SG both list issue year as "1925" but no specific date



Scott 48/SG 51

Scott 48a/SG 51a

**Was 3<sup>rd</sup> print run first issued for use on 4/13/1925?**

# Who Knows?! But I Think It Was...

## Exhibit A - The Man

Edward Worden (1875-1940), astute collector:

- Member of the APS & charter member of the AAMS; pioneer in the field of FDC collecting
- Lived in Millburn, New Jersey, just west of New York City, where the comings & goings of the *Los Angeles* were major news
- Worden certainly knew of the plans for the *Los Angeles* to carry mail to Bermuda
- Even though the Bermuda GPO did not confirm *Los Angeles* would carry mail back until circa mid April 1925, Worden must have anticipated it based on February trip

# Exhibit B - The Spend & The Stenographer

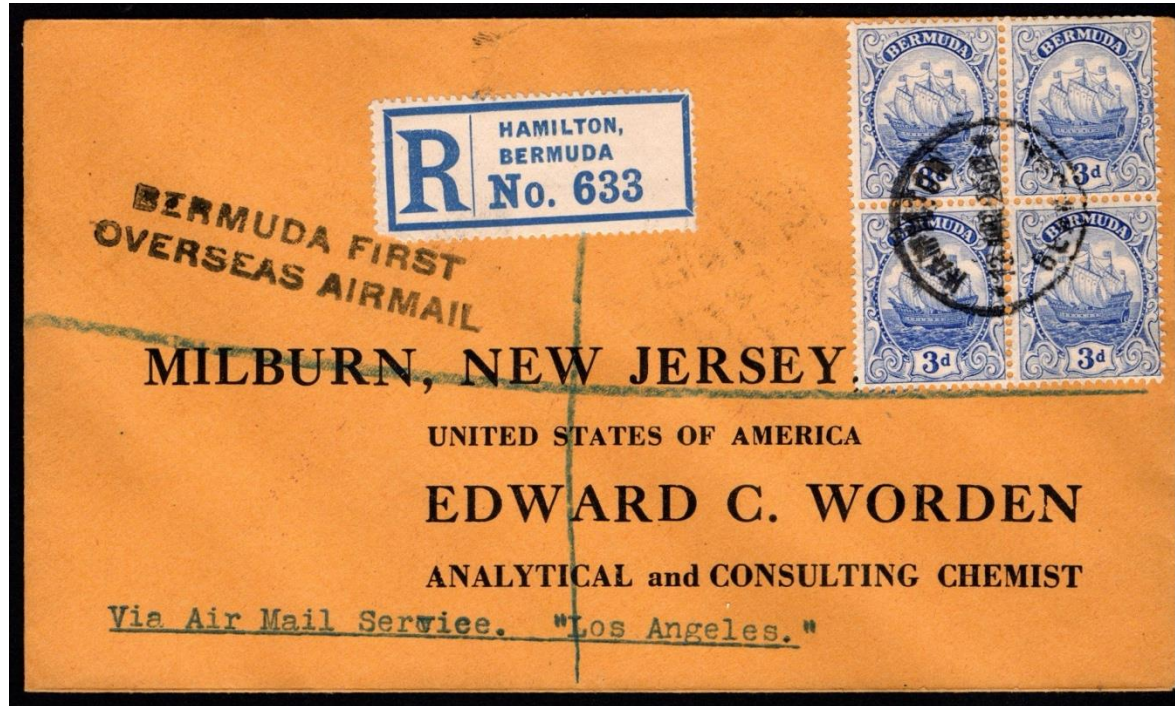
*Royal Gazette, 5/22/1925*

“Many residents of St. George’s are doubtless rather annoyed that they did not avail themselves of the opportunity to send mail to be despatched by the Los Angeles on her first trip from Bermuda to the States. The few who did have reaped a good investment on their original outlay, as latest advices show that the price to-day is \$7.50 with every prospect of that figure being much exceeded shortly. **Mr. Worden Milburn** [sic], a New York broker, is probably a happy man to-day. **His original outlay of £50 in Bermuda stamps**, at to-day’s value is roughly \$16,000, as envelopes bearing £1, ten shillings and stamps of all values safely reached their destination, **the stenographer** who posted them we hear, being inclined to regret not posting a few in her own interest, but thought at the time 50 cents were safer invested in ice cream.”

## Takeaways from Exhibit B

- Spent £50 on stamps for the *Los Angeles* flight, the equivalent of \$4,300 today – was he given advanced notice as a preferred customer?
- Who was the stenographer? Perhaps she had good connections in the GPO & was privy to its plans, not only for mail on the *Los Angeles* but for the release of the 1-shilling stamp?

# Exhibit C - Another Worden Cover



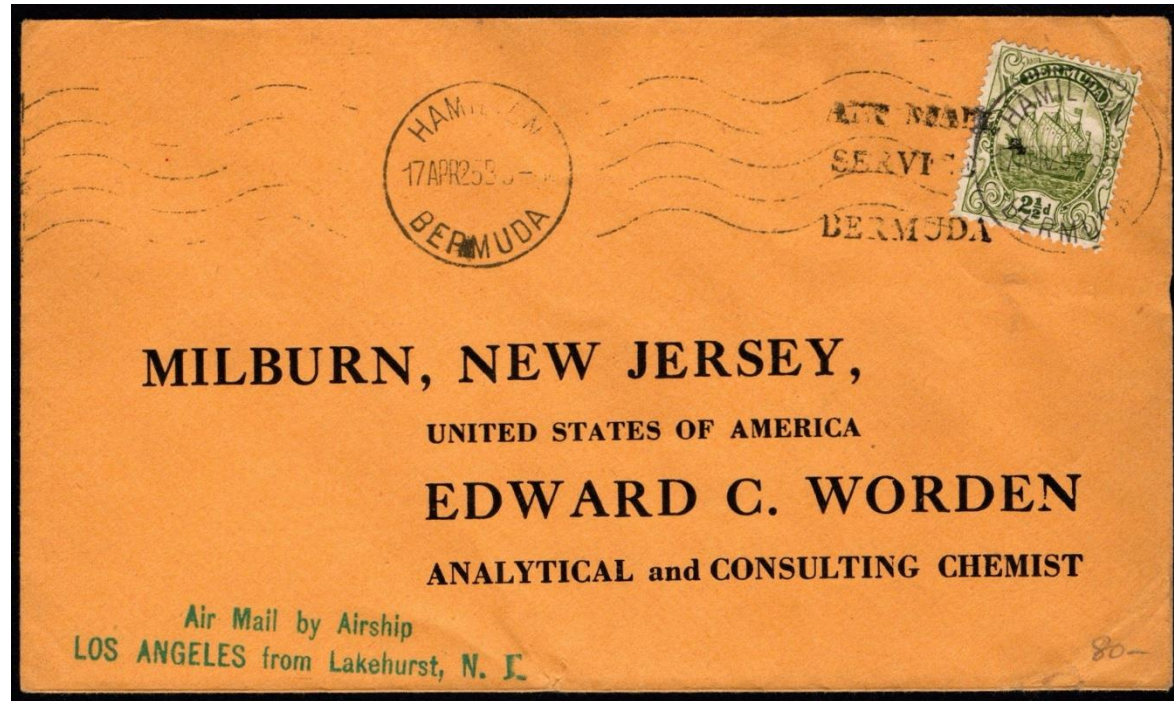
Backstamped New York, 4/24/1925; Milburn NJ 4/25/1925



Similar looking cover franked w/ block of 4 3-pence Caravel stamp issued in 1924, same postmark date (4/13/1925) but no "FIRST DAY COVER" mark



# Cover Postmarked 4/17/1925, After GPO Announcement

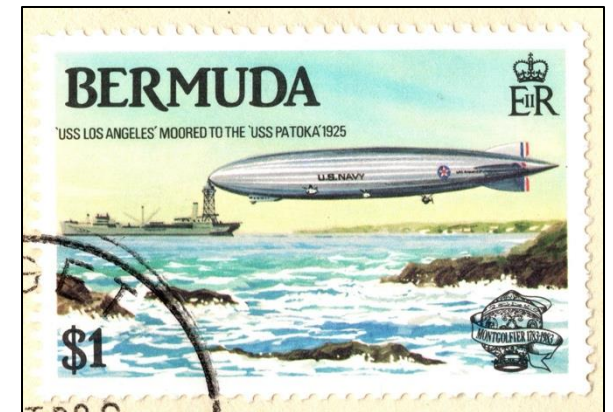


Example of other cachet with typical poor strike:

“Air Mail  
Service  
Bermuda”

2-1/2d rate paid for regular mail service Bermuda to the U.S.

# But Whether or Not a True FDC, the *Los Angeles* Made a Big Impression in Bermuda



USS *Los Angeles*  
moored to the  
*Patoka*

# Epilogue

- 4/21-22/1925 trip was *Los Angeles's* final one to Bermuda
- *Los Angeles* never did make a trip to England
- Fixed wing aircraft eventually superseded the rigid airship
- While the *Los Angeles* has been honored on two Bermudian stamps, it has never appeared on a U.S. stamp (and probably never will)
- Only airship to appear on U.S. stamp: the *Graf Zeppelin* (thrice in 1930 & once in 1933), with most revenue going to the Zeppelin Company