

Finding Treasures

Some say this is the “most fun” airmail stamp to collect on cover.

Fred Schmitt



Those of us who, like me, are serious about pursuing and purchasing large holdings of old covers and correspondences are always expecting to be surprised. Why?... because we are actually being constantly surprised at what we find in an old shoebox or perhaps among a stack of seemingly inconsequential covers that are part of a family wartime correspondence.

Stories of “finds” abound in this hobby. Our good friend, Michael Rogers, whose *Reminiscences* column appears each month in this magazine, has found that stamp collectors and dealers, alike, never tire of reading the stories of people making these finds.

Let's take, for instance, the pretty little five-cent Beacon airmail stamp from 1928—a stamp specifically issued to pay the new and lower five-cent domestic airmail letter rate that went into effect

on August 1st of that year. First day covers of this stamp are relatively scarce—all of them are franked with not one, but two, of the five-cent Beacon because the first day of issue was July 28 and the old 10-cent rate was still in effect. (Above, lower right.)

But take a second look at this first day cover. At the lower left is the signature, authenticated, of Dr. Hugo Eckener, the great developer, proponent and pilot of German lighter-than-airships like the Graf Zeppelin. Suddenly, an ordinary FDC becomes a piece of history—worth around \$300!

This kind of item is a legitimate “find”—something generally found in a stack of more common covers. The rule of thumb, of course, is: *never fail to closely examine the seemingly common covers one runs across.*

The five-cent Beacon airmail is a popular stamp to collect both on and off cover. It is beautifully-designed, striking in ap-

pearance, and was issued during the romantic era of early air mail and air travel. One can build a very nice specialized collection of the postal history surrounding this stamp because, during the late 1920s and into the 1930s, all sorts of “firsts” were happening with the airmail services. First flights (like the one from San Juan, P.R., to Miami, Fla. above) can have the appearance of a show-stopper! And countless airports were opening up—some of them important to the future of flight—which caused commemorative covers to be produced.

A good friend of ours recently acquired more than 300 five-cent Beacon airmail covers. He placed all of them into eBay auctions and, over the span of a month, he sold over 85% of them. Lesson: *colorful, fun stamps on cover can generate a high demand.* ☒