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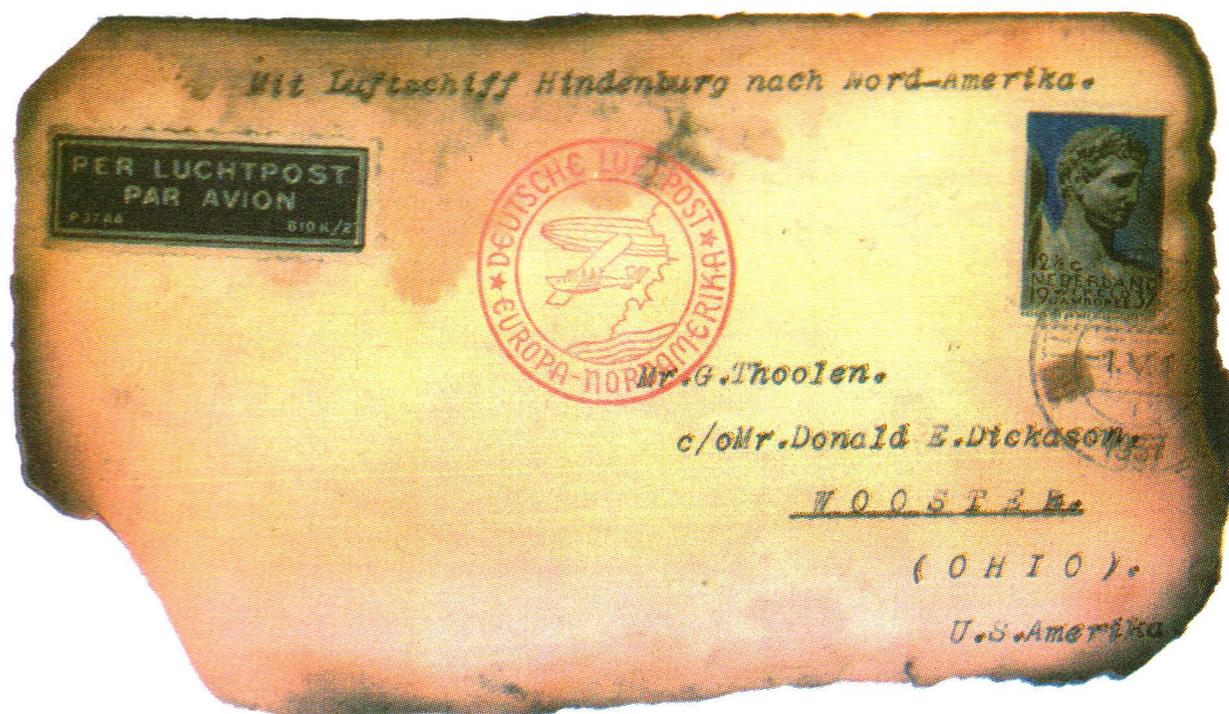
Hindenburg Crash Cover Brings Record Price!

On April 16, 1994, my good friends and fellow dealers, Douglas Uzakewicz and Laurence Rech of Philatelic Pathfinders in Jericho, NY paid \$9,500 plus 10% commission at a Weiss Philatelics auction in New York City for one of the

357 pieces of mail which was salvaged from the charred wreck of the zeppelin *Hindenburg*. The huge 810-foot German airship had crashed and burned in a lightning storm upon landing at the U.S. Naval Station at Lakehurst, NJ

on May 6, 1937, claiming 58 lives, after an otherwise routine flight from Frankfurt.

The \$10,450 total tag represents the highest price ever paid at auction for a *Hindenburg* crash cover. I had the opportunity to interview Doug Uzakewicz right after the purchase. As a specialist dealer in Boy Scout topical material, he explained, "This cover is one of the most sought after in Scout philately."



The burnt edges on this cover are a testimonial to the *Hindenburg* conflagration.

Cover Story By FRED SCHMITT

He continued, "Seventeen covers originating in the Netherlands were recovered from the wreck. They are known as the Thoolen holding, in that they are all addressed to G. Thoolen of Wooster, OH. We paid the record price for this particular piece because it is the best preserved example of the group."

Then Doug went on to point out the Scout connection: "Interestingly, all of these covers were franked with the 12½ ¢ high value of the Netherlands 1937 Boy Scout stamp, commemorating the World Jamboree which was held that summer in Vogelenzang, Netherlands."

At press time Philatelic Pathfinders already had resold the prized cover to an anonymous Boy Scout topical collector for an undisclosed price.

The cover has been authenticated by well known zeppelin philatelic specialist Arthur Falk and carries his certificate. Falk is recognized in zeppelin history circles for his excellent book, *Hindenburg Crash Mail: The Search Goes On*, published in 1976, which is the source on the subject. At the time of publication, Falk had estimated that only about 80 covers were in collector's hands. More have been found since and no doubt others will turn up. Falk wrote, "The thrill of discovering such a valuable and historic piece of postal history should certainly be sufficient motivation for the collector."

Airship's Last Flight Recounted

By MICHAEL ROOT

The brief life of the *Hindenburg* began in 1933 when it was christened after the recently departed German president, Paul Von Hindenburg. At that time it was the most efficient and luxurious airship in the world. It measured 803 feet long and had a diameter of 135 feet. Because of its size, the *Hindenburg* was able to hold more hydrogen, the gas which kept it aloft. More hydrogen meant a greater passenger and cargo capability; and this promised a substantial financial role in rebuilding Germany's economy.

The *Hindenburg* was powered by four diesel engines. The engines were equipped with monster wooden propellers, each measuring 21 feet. It had a maximum cruising speed of 84 miles per hour.

All the amenities found on board first class ocean line travel were included on the *Hindenburg*. Passengers were housed in a two-tiered hull that was constructed into the superstructure. Gourmet meals were served during flights. The passengers enjoyed 25 luxury cabins, a bar and lounge area, a smoking room, plus baths and showers.

The first few years of the *Hindenburg* proved very fruitful. Brandishing a swastika on its tail fins, it became a useful propaganda tool for rising Nazi Germany. It was hoped that this airship would be a testimonial to the new Germany.

The *Hindenburg* began its fateful last flight on May 3, 1937. On board were several Americans traveling on business. Edward Douglas represented General Motors. Joseph Spah, a well-known enter-

tainer of the era, was also on board.

Ernest Lehmann, a high-ranking official of the German Zeppelin Corporation, was also on board. It is believed that he was travelling to America to discuss threats of potential sabotage to the *Hindenburg* that had been received at the German embassy in Washington, D.C. An alleged note from a Miss Kathie Rauch of Milwaukee, Wisconsin to the German embassy stated that the *Hindenburg* would be destroyed while on a visit to another country. A year earlier, a bomb had been discovered while the *Hindenburg* was loading on the ground in Rio de Janeiro.

As a precautionary measure, the airship was searched by the German S.S. Passengers were instructed to turn in all matches and cigarette lighters. After the search,

the *Hindenburg* was released for takeoff. 97 people, including 36 passengers and 61 crew members, began their flight into the history books.

A mail drop was conducted over the city of Cologne. Sacks of mail, all cancelled with the *Hindenburg's* in-flight cancel were parachuted down to earth. The remainder of the flight was essentially uneventful until the morning of May 6, when the airship approached its final destination of Lakehurst, NJ. A headwind out over the Atlantic delayed the airship's arrival from 6 a.m. to an anticipated evening arrival.

Finally, the giant airship reached the east coast of America. It cruised over New York City on a sight-seeing run. As it flew over Ebbets Field, a baseball game between the Brook-

Continued on page 230



The majestic *Hindenburg* viewed on an earlier flight over New York City.

Doane Cancels, Alternative to Stamp Woes

By JOHN L. LESZAK

Postal history collecting has its origins in the minds of do-it-yourselfers. When the filling of spaces with post office-fresh new issues becomes monotonous, some collectors get an itch to re-search new collecting interests. If these postal historian pioneers didn't do their own thing, philately on the

whole would be rather bland.

If you're tired of collecting stamps, or worried if a stamp truly has original gum, then try collecting cancels! The quest for cancels will take you out of the lines at the philatelic window — and into a whole new world.

One particular cancel that is challenging, yet attainable, is called a "Doane" by postal historians. It's not called that because your back is apt to go out looking through tens of thousands of covers in an effort to find an example; rather, the cancel is named after Edith R. Doane, a pioneer postal historian, who did extensive research into this type of cancel.

signates the classification of the post office of origin.

The Doane-style cancel first appeared in 1903. The rubber stamp with changeable rubber date type was certainly an innovation from the old-style metal hammer cancellation devices. Some examples have been noted as late as the 1930s.

From the meticulous labors of Edith R. Doane, an



Figure 1

Doane cancels are unique in that they were one of the first standardized rubber-stamped cancels issued by the Post Office. They are easily recognizable by their distinct format. Each has a circle at the left with the name and state of the post office, plus the date. The unique characteristic of Doanes is that they have four killer bars to the right of the date, rather than the standard three (see Figure 1). Within the bars is a numeral. The numeral de-

terminates an entire facet of collecting has evolved and her research has not gone unrewarded. In fact, a catalog of Doane cancels has been published. The work has been edited by Richard W. Hellock and is entitled *United States Doanes; A Catalog of Doane Cancellations Used in United States Post Office*.

Hellock's work is a postal historian's dream come true. He gives a history of the cancel device, complete with numerous examples. The cancels are then organ-

ized by state with listings of known cancels provided. He even anticipates what percentage of state cancels are yet to be discovered. This is refreshing, because it indicates that there are thousands of Doane examples to be unearthed, allowing postal historians hours of searching enjoyment.

Each state listing provides the name and address of a state coordinator. New finds and varieties are reported to the coordinators

and the catalog can be routinely updated.

No one will ever get rich collecting Doane cancels, but the task will provide hours of enjoyment and mental stimulation. Ask your favorite postal history dealer for a copy of Hellock's catalog and you may start a Doane collection almost immediately. Good strikes can be had on picture postcards which are often obtained for a modest cost at any show or stamp store's "miscellaneous" box.



Sheridan, PA Doane cancel.



Burkittville, MD Doane cancel.

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APS AIA

...Hindenburg

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lyn Dodgers and the Pittsburgh Pirates was called to a halt so that the fans in the stadium could watch the majestic Hindenburg fly overhead.

At 7 p.m., the Hindenburg approached Lakehurst. The captain, Max Pruss, radioed to the ground crew that he was starting his descent. Landing cables were dropped for the ground crew. On the ground, well-wishers waited — among them, Joseph Spah's wife and three children.

The Hindenburg came to a complete stop at 7:19 p.m., silhouetted in a surrealistic backdrop of the setting sun. Rainwater had soaked the back end of the airship so that it was descending faster than the front. About 200 feet off the ground, Captain Pruss gave an order to adjust this problem by sending crewmen to the front of the ship. Their weight would even things out.

It was 7:21 p.m. when the main mooring cables were dropped to the ground. Suddenly, at 7:23, a small blue flash appeared inside one of the gas bags. There was a popping sound and in an in-

stant the Hindenburg was engulfed in a bright orange flame from the highly combustible hydrogen. The seven million cubic feet of hydrogen aflame consumed the back end of the airship in an instant. The ground crew froze for a moment in horror and then quickly ran for cover.

As the hull of the airship crashed to the

ground, the passengers scrambled for their lives. A rain of burning fabric and molten metal came down upon them.

Joseph Spah used his acrobatic training and clung to the hull of the airship as it descended in flames. When it was about 40 feet from the ground, he jumped, landing feet first; he suffered a minor leg sprain. Edward Dou-

glas was not as fortunate and was listed among the dead. Captain Pruss survived, but was severely burned over 70% of his body.

In a few moments, the era of air travel by zeppelin had come to an end, leaving the charred and twisted metal superstructure of the Hindenburg and 58 people dead in its wake.



The Hindenburg aflame at Lakehurst, New Jersey. The entire airship was consumed by fire in less than 40 seconds. Photo: UPI/Bettman.