

This Day in History... October 2, 1933

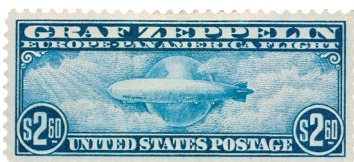
The “Baby Zepp”

On October 2, 1933, the Century of Progress airmail stamp, affectionately known as “Baby Zepp” was issued. It sold poorly at the time and 90% of the stamps were destroyed, leaving a relatively small number available today.

In the 1920s, Germany’s Luftschiffbau Zeppelin company offered to build the US a dirigible as payment for debt from World War I. America agreed, with the stipulation that the airship had to prove itself in a transatlantic journey. On October 16, 1924, the LZ 126 arrived in New Jersey. This was the start of *Graf Zeppelin* flights between the US, South America, and Europe, with mail carried to all stops along the way.



This stamp was issued on this day in 1933.



The three zeppelin stamps issued in 1930

The US postmaster general decided to issue a new set of stamps specifically for mail carried on these flights. The new stamps would subsidize the flights. Three zeppelin stamps were issued in 1930. The fourth was issued in 1933 to help pay for the *Graf Zeppelin* flight to Chicago. At the time, the city was holding the Chicago World’s Fair, titled “A Century of Progress.”

Held on the shore of Lake Michigan, this gigantic fair celebrated the 100th anniversary of Chicago’s incorporation as a village. It featured outstanding science and industry exhibits and was a great economic aid to Chicago during the Great Depression.

On August 18, post office officials agreed to issue the 50¢ stamp, with 42½¢ from each stamp to go to the Zeppelin Company. Because its face value was much lower than that of the previous Zeppelin stamps, #C18 became known as “Baby Zepp.”

Victor McCloskey Jr., a Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) employee, designed the new stamp. It pictures the *Graf Zeppelin* flying over the Atlantic Ocean. On the left is the federal building, representing the World’s Fair. The image on the right shows a zeppelin hangar in Friedrichshafen, Germany, where the flight started.



Restoration of Fort Dearborn issued for the Century of Progress

The BEP had just six weeks to produce and distribute the stamp so mail could travel by steamer to Germany and then return back to the US on a special flight. It was issued in five US cities on different days. The first city was New York, on October 2, and the last city was Chicago, on October 7.

On the Century of Progress flight, for which the #C18 stamp was issued, the *Graf Zeppelin* traveled from its home base at Friedrichshafen, Germany, to Brazil. The great airship then traveled to Miami, Florida, where it was supplied with more hydrogen. Another refueling stop was made at Akron, Ohio before the Graf reached Chicago. At each destination, huge crowds greeted the dirigible. The *Graf Zeppelin* arrived at the fairgrounds on October 26. After circling the air over the expo for two hours, it made a brief 25-minute landing and then took off for Akron, Ohio.



Federal Building at Chicago stamp issued for the Century of Progress

In spite of its attractive design and historic significance, #C18 sold poorly in 1933. Eventually, 90% of the stamps were destroyed – leaving a mere 324,000 for modern collectors.

The *Graf Zeppelin* aircraft was later grounded when the Hindenburg exploded on May 6, 1937. However, during its service, the *Graf Zeppelin* established an incredible performance record. It made 590 flights, including 144 ocean crossings, and covered more than one million miles. It carried over 13,000 passengers and 235,300 pounds of mail and freight.

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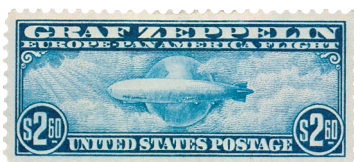
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