

# US-DISPATCHES SENT FROM MIAMI TO EUROPE

By Jo Bach

CHECKING OUT THE NUMBERS of flown U.S. dispatches on the LZ-127 GRAF ZEPPELIN Chicago Flight unveils an interesting point. The specialized catalogues Sieger and Michel list the numbers of flown U.S. covers for all flight legs except Miami-Seville and Miami-Friedrichshafen. Are the numbers lost or were no numbers recorded for Miami dispatches sent by the zeppelin to Seville or Friedrichshafen?

The Miami dispatches to Europe are the rarest U.S. dispatches although the values listed in the zeppelin mail catalogues do not reflect the fact. While the catalogue values for Miami dispatches to Europe are only marginally higher than the other U.S. dispatches from New York/Friedrichshafen, Akron and Chicago, collectors report that it may take years until a Miami dispatch to Seville or Friedrichshafen comes on the market. We know that they exist, but obviously in low quantity.

The U.S. Postal Bulletin Number 16258, issued September 22, 1933, gave information on rates and handling of U.S. zeppelin mail for the GRAF ZEPPELIN Chicago Flight. For mail dispatched from Miami, the bulletin stated only two rates and legs: Miami-Akron for 50 cents and Miami-Chicago, also 50 cents. The flight legs Miami-Seville and Miami-Friedrichshafen were not even mentioned. Rates for zeppelin mail intended for the return flight to Seville and Friedrichshafen were published for Akron and Chicago dispatches, but not for Miami dispatches.

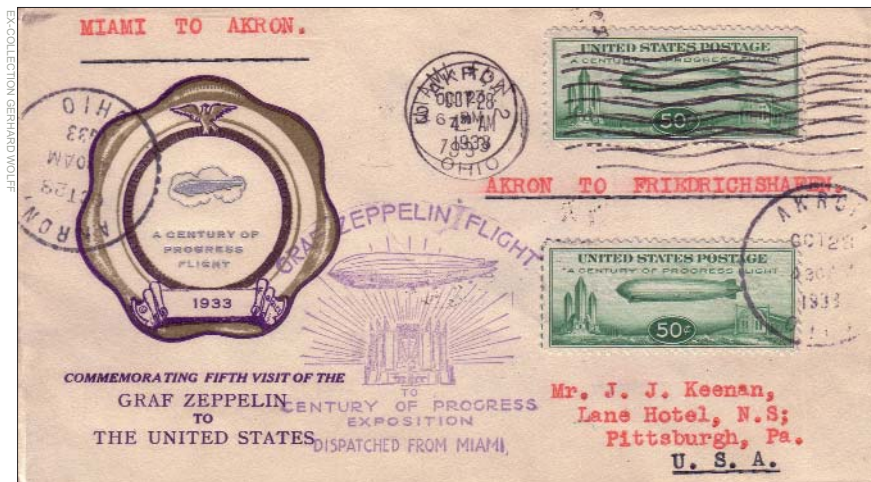
The same information was published by F. W. von Meister, the representative of Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH in New York: According to the *Airmail Information in connection with the voyage of the «Graf Zeppelin» to Chicago*, U.S. mail from Miami will be carried either to Akron or Chicago, and U.S. mail intended for the return trip to Seville and Friedrichshafen will only be carried from Akron or Chicago.

Some more detailed information was given by W. W. Howes, Second Assistant Postmaster General. On September 21, 1933, Howes signed an information letter about the *Graf Zeppelin special round flight (reference No. 137/97(Graf)-Cy/Bo)* with the same rate and leg information stated above, but in addition he pointed out a special handling procedure for Miami dispatches:

*It is to be specially noted that letters and postcards to be dispatched by the return flight should be sent only to Chicago or Akron.*

So it was clearly intended that Miami was not handling return flight mail to Seville and Friedrichshafen. This answers the question of the missing numbers of flown zeppelin mail on the Miami-Europe legs. These were simply not official published legs for U.S. zeppelin mail. It would be interesting to know why Miami was intentionally excluded from handling return flight mail.

Since Miami was only handling U.S. mail to Akron and Chicago, any zeppelin mail from Miami intended for either Seville or Friedrichshafen was treated as mail for Akron or Chicago, as they were the only two permitted and published legs.



**Miami-Akron-Friedrichshafen** *Combination cover of the Miami-Akron flight and in addition the Akron-Friedrichshafen flight paying 50 Cents per flight.*

Following the published instructions, mail sent from Miami to Europe could be dispatched as combination mail, sent first to Akron or Chicago for the 50 cent rate and then sent from there on the return flight to Seville and Friedrichshafen for another 50 cents. Only a few covers are known that were sent that way, most addressed to Mr. J. J. Keenan. This combination mail was sent Miami-Akron and Akron-Friedrichshafen with \$1 postage paying 50 cents for each flight. These covers bear clear routing instructions for the Miami-Akron and the Akron-Friedrichshafen flights following precisely the published information.

The illustrated cover was flown first Miami-Akron where it was off-loaded and received an Akron arrival postmark of October 25 (on the reverse). The cover remained at Akron while the zeppelin made the Akron-Chicago-Akron round trip. The second 50 cents zeppelin stamp was postmarked at Akron on October 28, 1933, and the cover made the zeppelin flight from Akron via Seville to Friedrichshafen.

## WEB-STORY

Philip Silver reported already in 1976 about a \$1 zeppelin rate for mail sent from Miami to Europe that was not announced in advance but was accepted at post offices (*The Aero Philatelist Annals*, Vol 20 no 1: pages 44-46). It is questionable if such a \$1 rate existed. Rather, it is the sum of the two necessary rates to get zeppelin mail from Miami via Akron or Chicago to Europe. If such a rate existed, then Miami had to handle mail not only to Akron and Chicago, but also directly for Seville and Friedrichshafen. This was obviously not the case as the following two covers show.

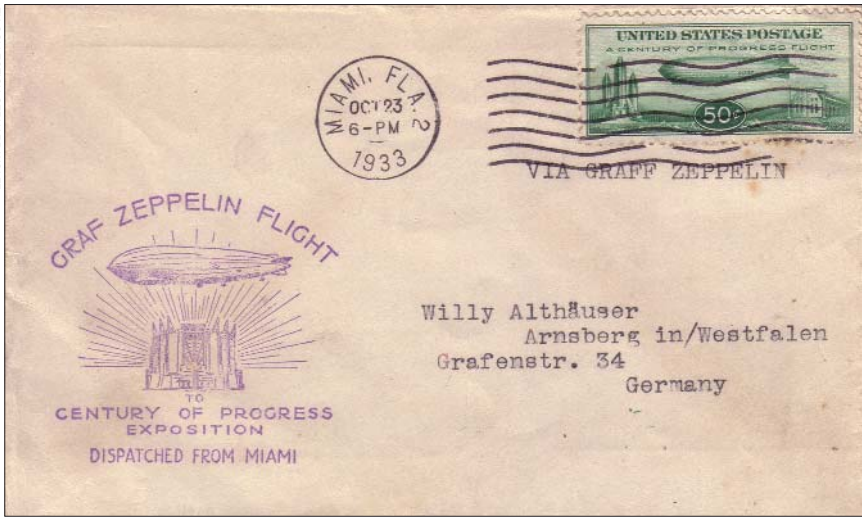


**Miami-Seville** Cover with clear routing instruction on front. Chicago transit and November 1 Seville machine arrival postmark on reverse.

As per the routing instruction, the illustrated cover was intended for the Miami-Seville leg. Since no such leg was announced and Miami was not handling such mail, the cover was treated as Miami-Chicago mail. The cover was therefore flown by zeppelin from Miami via Akron to Chicago. At Chicago, the cover was offloaded while the zeppelin flew back to Akron. After the item was postmarked at Chicago, it was sent by surface to Akron to be put back on the zeppelin for the Akron-Seville zeppelin flight.

Not only the unusual routing instruction (*Miami-Spain*) and the way this cover traveled are interesting, but also the postage: The cover is franked with only 50 cents (Scott C18).





**Miami-Friedrichshafen** Cover without any specific routing instruction but Chicago and green Friedrichshafen postmarks on reverse.

*Via Graf Zeppelin* is the only routing instruction on this illustrated cover, therefore it was apparently not intended for any specific leg on the Chicago Flight. It was the postmaster's decision to send this cover by zeppelin from Miami to Chicago rather than from Miami to Akron. At Chicago the cover was offloaded, postmarked and forwarded by surface to Akron to connect there with the zeppelin for a second zeppelin flight, the return flight from Akron via Seville to Friedrichshafen.

In terms of handling and transportation, there is no difference between the Miami-Seville cover from the previous page and the Miami-Friedrichshafen cover illustrated here, except only that one was sent to Seville and the other to Friedrichshafen. However, the lack of a precise routing instruction makes the second cover quite interesting. The 50 cents paid the zeppelin flight to Chicago, so the handling at Miami was clear: The cover was sent like the other 12,206 covers by zeppelin from Miami to Chicago, and that was it. The cover received no special handling or treatment at Miami. The decision to forward the cover from Chicago to Akron for the zeppelin return flight from Akron via Seville to Friedrichshafen was, therefore, made at Chicago. The decisive criteria was obviously the German address. Postmaster Howes had published that mail for the return flight should be sent to Chicago or Akron since Miami was not handling return flight mail. ■