

# US-DESTINATION COVERS FROM THE 1933 ROMFAHRT

By Bob Wilcsek

IN AN ARTICLE FROM *IL COLLEZIONISTA* (ISSUE 1958/9), Piero Gall explains that mail dispatched from Rome to South America from the 1933 Romfahrt was placed in sealed bags which were not opened in Friedrichshafen. This explains why no German markings are found on Italian mail destined for South America via connection to the second South America flight of 1933.



**Figure 1** Both flight cachets are the common variety on US destination mail from the 1933 Romfahrt.

However, mail posted from Rome and addressed to the United States, regardless of which leg it flew on the Romfahrt, fell under the terms of a separate German postal agreement with the U.S. It was bagged separately, opened at Friedrichshafen, and then returned to the U.S. by way of Brazil via the 2nd Südamerikafahrt of 1933. This explains why U.S. addresses make up the overwhelming majority of mail carrying both the blue Italian wolf flight cachet and the green “scrolls” cachet from the 2nd Südamerikafahrt of 1933 in addition to a Friedrichshafen routing stamp.

## WEB STORY

It appears that some very small amount of Rome Flight mail addressed to the U.S. was placed in the sealed bags to South America with other Italian mail, thereby receiving only the circular blue Italian wolf flight cachet. We must then conclude that this is actually a scarcer variety of mail than items with both flight cachets, as the presence of both cachets indicates proper mail handling while articles dispatched from Rome and addressed to the U.S. with only the Italian cachet creates a new, different variety of mail.

While technically correct, this analysis will likely never gain acceptance as reflected in prices, as the misguided belief that items with both flight cachets represents something unusual or irregular is unlikely to ever be eclipsed by the truth, that items with only one flight cachet are the real rarities.

An example of the common variety is given in Figure 1. It was posted from Italy to the U.S. via the 1933 Romfahrt and correctly received both flight cachets. It has the round, green Friedrichshafen routing stamp of “30 May 33-14” on the reverse indicating an opened bag at Friedrichshafen. But the real rarity is shown in Figure 2 below:



**Figure 2** This is the real rarity. Try finding one cover addressed to the U.S. with only one flight cachet. The handwritten endorsement at the bottom, “Via Rio Di Janeiro” was almost certainly added by a postal clerk upon receipt in Rio.

The cover shown in Figure 2 was posted from Greece to the U.S. and it received only the Italian flight cachet. It has no German routing stamps, as Gall says we should expect for sealed-bag mail to South America. Since both covers are registered and addressed to New York, the markings on the reverse of both covers are identical, including the Rome “17-18” 29 May 33 roller stamp, South American forwarding stamps and the US receiving registration stamps of New York, June 29, 1933. The only difference between the backs of these two covers is the presence of the green Friedrichshafen routing stamp on the Italian cover with both cachets, which is not present on the Greek cover.

If we reverse Galls analysis and argumentation, the conclusion is that we should expect to see only the Rome Flight cachet on Rome Flight mail being addressed to South America and the flight cachet of the 2nd Südamerikafahrt should not appear on such mail because of the sealed mail bags. Figure 3 shows the rare exception with both flight cachets on mail addressed to South America.



**Figure 3** Another real rarity: Both flight cachets on mail addressed not to the USA, but to South America.

Both flight cachets on Rome Flight mail are considered attractive and rare, but to identify the true exceptions of such rare mail requires a sharp postal historical analysis: And it turns out then that a common looking cover with only one flight cachet beats them all. Non of the two varieties are listed in the catalogues, but both are necessary to complete the collection. ■