

The Cover Story

Before Alan Sheppard - "Monkeys, Mice & a Chimp" by Phil Fettig

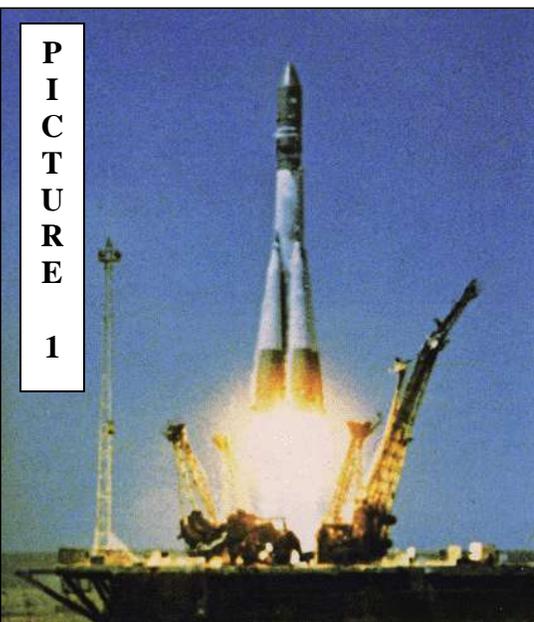
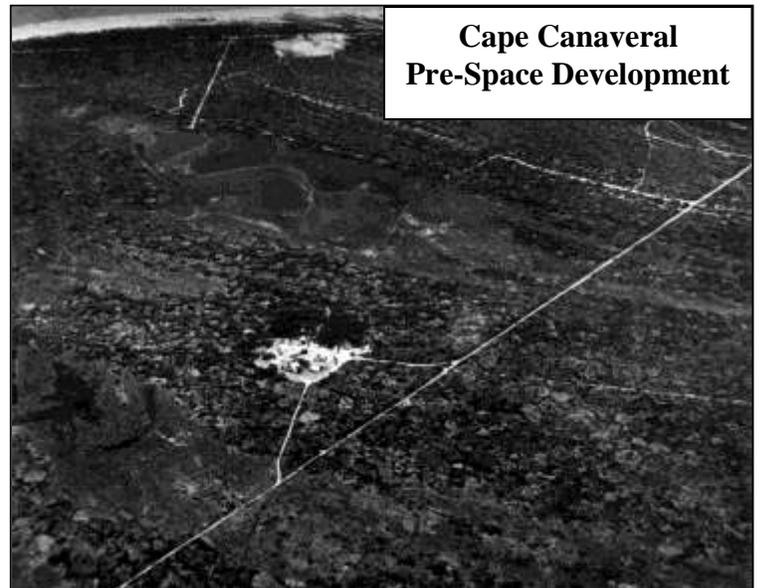
Long before Alan Shepard became the first American to fly in space during his May 1961 flight, the U.S. had sent a number of animals on test flights. In addition to testing rockets and equipment necessary to get man into space the most important consideration, bringing the astronaut home alive, had to be proven.

By no means is this article meant to tell the whole story of the American effort, nor show all the possible covers available. My intention is just to show a few examples of one of most popular topical collecting areas - The Space Program.

In 1949, the U.S. launched two captured German V-2 rockets, each with a Rhesus Monkey onboard. Albert I perished when the first rocket failed on ascent. The second test was considered a flight success. Albert II probably did not consider the landing as good since he did not survive a failed parachute hard landing. During the 1950's other flights were made, some with animals onboard, some successful and others were not.

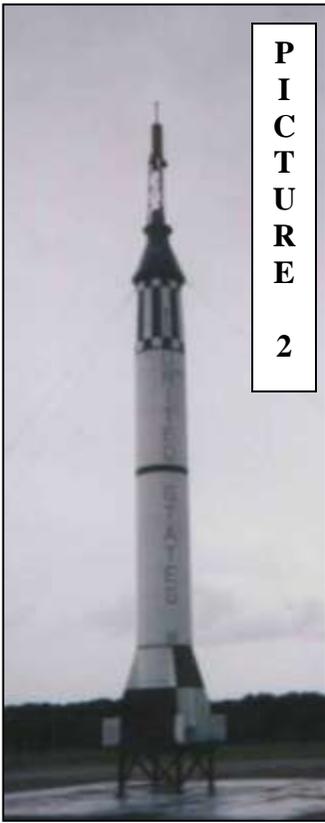
On October 13, 1960, the U.S. tested the first flight of the Atlas rocket and made a successful flight with three mice in the nose cone. Sally, Amy and Moe traveled 5,000 miles over the Atlantic and landed safe in the nose cone. They had a supply of peanuts to munch on while waiting to be picked up. Figure (1) shows a Sarzin cover commemorating the flight.

The next flight example carried no animals, but prepared for man. On December 19, 1960, the first Project Mercury flight took place to test the Space Capsule. Figure (2) is another Sarzin cover with a Port Canaveral cancel from the flight which reached 130 miles up and 235 miles downrange. The flight was considered a success in every respect.



My final example, figure (3), is a cover showing Ham, the chimp who flew in a Mercury Capsule. He performed tasks with levers to prove that operations could be performed in space. The flight portion was a success, however the landing took place further away from the recovery ship than planned and rough seas caused water to leak into the capsule. Helicopters from the closest ship recovered Ham and his "ride" before it sank.

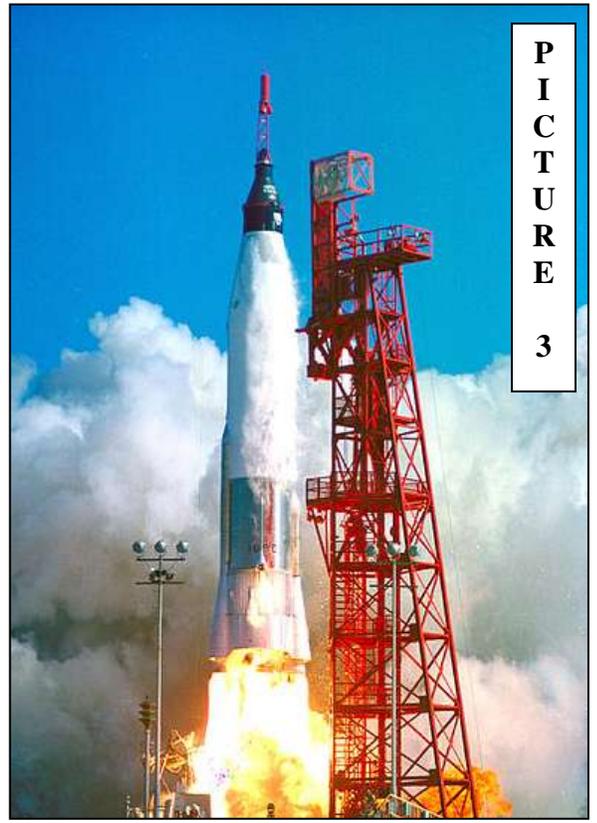
One last note - you might remember the excellent movie "The Right Stuff". In the movie the original seven Mercury Astronauts are portrayed not being happy about the use of monkeys for testing purposes. Actually, this is not surprising since all the astronauts were highly trained military test pilots who were used to being on the cutting edge of whatever the job was.



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[Editor's Note: The first human spaceflight took place on April 12, 1961, when cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin made one orbit around the Earth aboard the *Vostok 1* [Picture 1] spacecraft, launched by the Soviet space program. The United States space program was more cautious. The U.S. became the second nation to achieve manned spaceflight with the suborbital flight of astronaut Alan Shepard aboard *Freedom 7* as part of Project Mercury. The spacecraft was launched on May 5, 1961 on a Redstone rocket [Picture 2]. The first U.S. orbital flight was that of John Glenn aboard *Friendship 7* [Picture 3], launched February 20, 1962 on an Atlas rocket.]

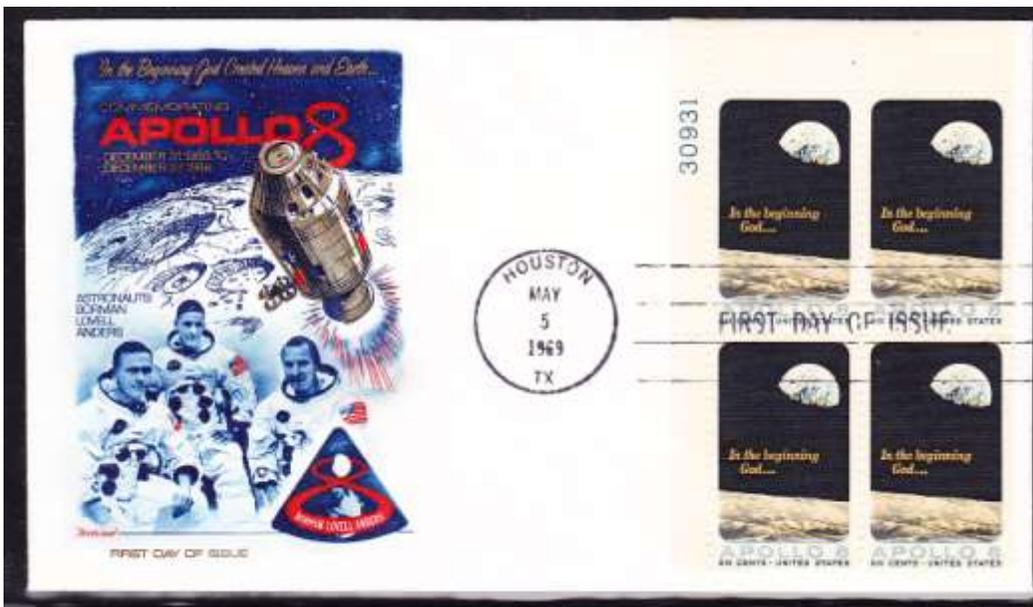


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A Little Something..... by Phil Fettig



This first day cover of Scott 1371, the Apollo 8 stamp is not an expensive or rare item.

It is however, a very attractive and popular stamp. This cover, with a plate block of 4 is a common Fleetwood cachet.

All of this proves you don't have to spend a fortune small or large to add something nice to your collection!