

# Cover Story

## A Postcard from Berlin

by Robert J. Fisher

I am rapidly filling those pesky empty spots in my set of German albums. But rather than lower my standards of philatelic quality by expanding to DDR (East Germany) I found a little-known subject in my Michel catalog. First, I had to translate the German text in the few pages describing the subject. “Halbamtliche Flugmarken” turned out to be “Semi-Official Flight Stamps”. The stamps listed were all unique, unusual and expensive.

The stamps were all air mail and covered the time period from 1912 to 1933. They are considered to be semi-official because they were either privately printed designs or were overprints of obsolete air mail stamps. All of the stamps were issued to raise funds for some organization and were limited to flight events lasting a short time and were supported or authorized by the German postal authorities.

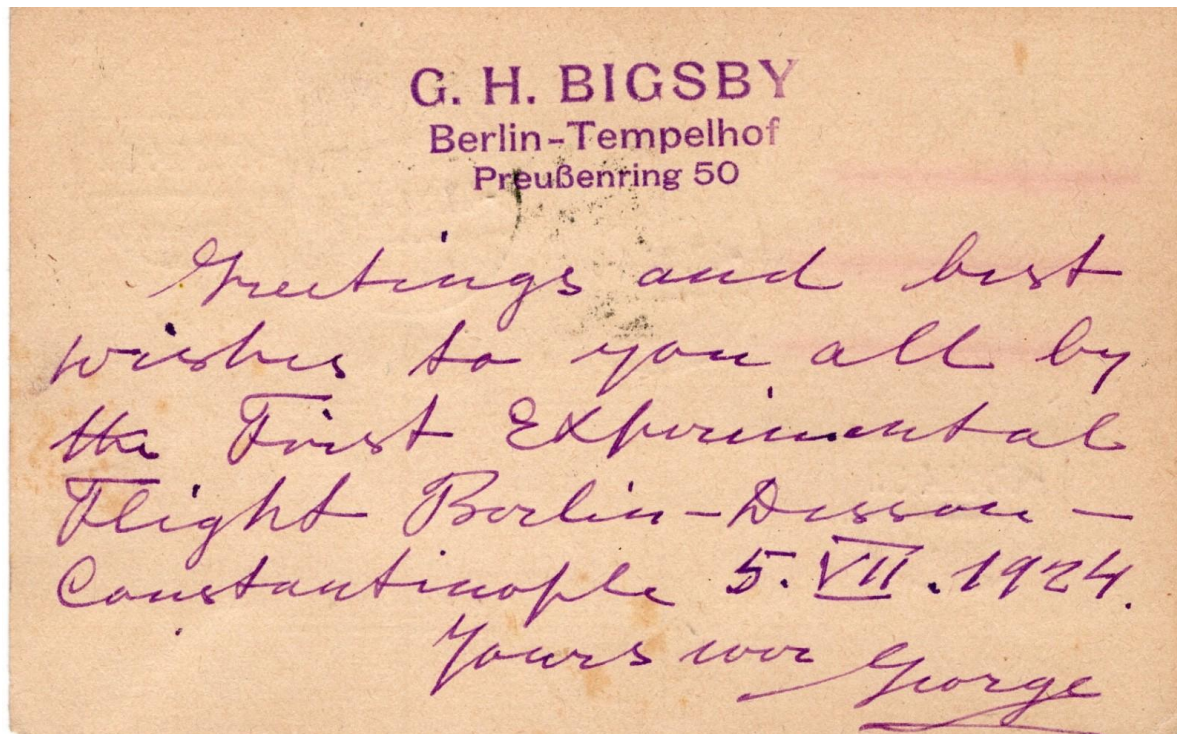
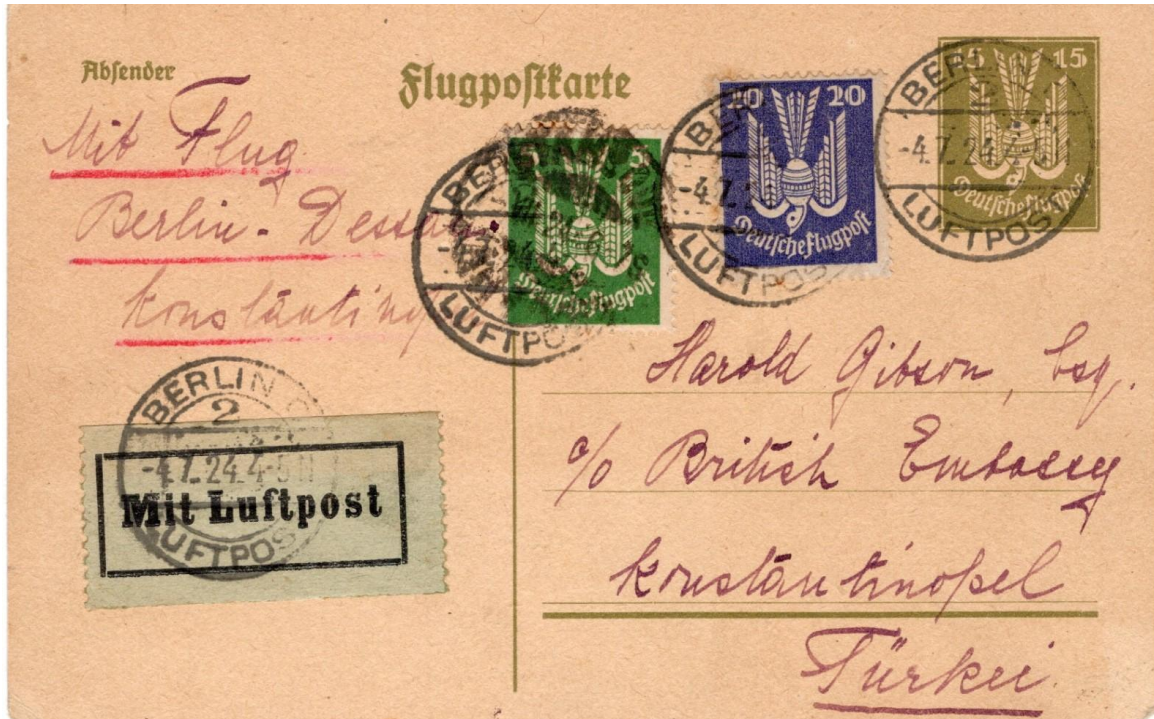
One of those special flights was an experimental flight of a Junker G23 aircraft from Berlin to Angora (now Ankara) Turkey. Special stamps and envelopes were created for the flight by Junker Aircraft Mfg. I was able to obtain a stamp MNH and a cover used during that flight of 5 July 1924. Since the event was supported by the Post Office all of the mail had to be postmarked at the Berlin Tempelhof Post Office the day before the flight. Because this was legitimate air mail, regular cards and letters were included for the flight.

While I was excited to add those items to my collection, a targeted search for other items yielded another gem. I was able to purchase a regular postcard that was sent on the flight. It was just a postcard with a short message on the reverse. The message side had a hand stamp for G. H. Bigsby, Berlin – Tempelhof. This tweaked my curiosity and found that George Bigsby was a “clerk” at the British embassy in Berlin. The card was addressed to Harold Gibson c/o the British embassy in Constantinople (**see image on front cover**). While there is little information about Mr. Bigsby, I found a great deal of information about Harold Gibson.

Mr. Gibson was born to British parents in Moscow and was educated there and in Britain. He was fluent in Russian and other languages and was eagerly accepted when he joined MI-6 (the foreign office of British intelligence) in 1917. He traveled extensively around Europe acting as a “clerk” in many different embassies and eventually became Head of Station in Constantinople and in other embassies of Europe. He became a spy master, building intelligence networks throughout Europe from Riga, Latvia, to Constantinople and from

Moscow and Odessa to Prague. He was able to escape from Prague as the Germans were arriving on March 15, 1939.

He continued his career with British Intelligence during the war and after in the cold war. He retired to Rome with his Russian wife and was found at home dead under suspicious circumstances in 1955. Typical Soviet efficiency to tie up a loose end with a bullet.





**Special stamp and card from the flight**



**Type of plane used for the flight**

*Editor's note: Amazing what a little research can glean from a simple inexpensive postcard.*