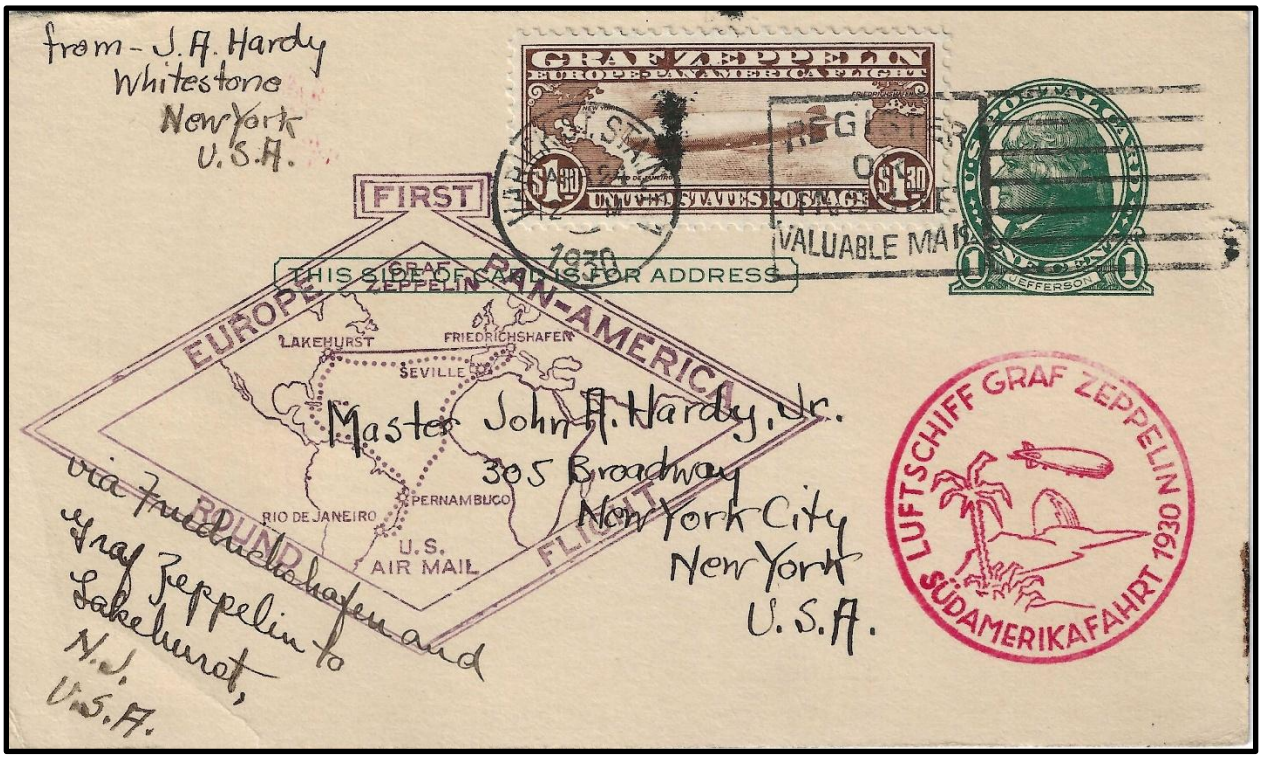
Delving into Postal History

A Zeppelin Postal Card by Robin E. Rowand



I purchased this postal card back in June 2021 for $375. I wanted it for the use of the $1.30 Graf Zeppelin stamp. What I received was a very interesting story filled with history. A father, John A. Hardy, Sr., bought a Jefferson, green on buff, die I postal card (UX27) and attached the $1.30** Graf Zeppelin stamp (C14) which shows the Zeppelin flying among the continents. He indicated for the postal card to go "via Friedrichshafen and Graf Zeppelin to Lakehurst, N.J. U.S.A." as per the news article below about the stamps and flight.

An article published in *The Yonkers Herald* (NY) in the Thursday, April 17, 1930 issue entitled "Graf Zeppelin Stamps," explains this. The article reads:

> *"Postmaster Kiely of New York has announced that the Post Office Department is about to issue three special Zeppelin air mail stamps of 65 cent, $1.30, and $2.60 denominations, for use on letters and post cards carried on the Graf Zeppelin on its Europe-Pan America round trip flight to be made early in May. These stamps are to be placed on sale later this month. In connection with this first Europe Pan-America round trip flight from Friedrichshafen, Germany, by way of Seville, Spain, and*

Pernambuco, Brazil, to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, thence back to Pernambuco, thence to Lakehurst and return to Friedrichshafen by way of Seville, arrangements have been made for sending both from Friedrichshafen to Lakehurst and vice versa ordinary letters not exceeding one ounce in weight, and post cards mailed in this country and prepaid with United States stamps. A special cachet will be used on such letters and post cards dispatched by the Graf Zeppelin from both Friedrichshafen and Lakehurst. The rates (postage and air mail fee) for dispatch from New York to Friedrichshafen by the ordinary means, thence by the Graf Zeppelin to Lakehurst (via Seville-Pernambuco-Rio de Janeiro-Pernambuco) and from Lakehurst by the United States domestic air mail service to the office of destination in this country are $2.60 for each letter and $1.30 for each single postcard. Articles should be marked "Via Friedrichshafen and Graf Zeppelin to Lakehurst." The rates (postage and air mail fee) for dispatch by the dirigible from Lakehurst to Seville or Friedrichshafen are $1.30 for each letter and 65 cents for each single postcard. Articles for this dispatch may be addressed for delivery in this country or any European country and should be marked "Via Graf Zeppelin, care Postmaster, Lakehurst, N. J. Such of these articles as are addressed for delivery in this country will be sent back from Germany by the next steamer and will be dispatched from New York by the United States domestic air mail service, when practicable, to the office of destination. The Zeppelin also will carry mail from Friedrichshafen, Seville, Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro to other foreign countries on which the postage rates must be prepaid with stamps issued by each country concerned. The necessary foreign stamps may be purchased and full information obtained from the special representative of the Graf Zeppelin in this country, F. W. Von Meister, 578 Madison Avenue, New York."

The Graf Zeppelin stamps were produced for this special flight as indicated on the stamp itself. The nice thing about C14 is the stamp's background which displays a cropped map charting the transatlantic route connecting Europe and the Americas, displaying key stops at Friedrichshafen, Rio De Janeiro and New York City.

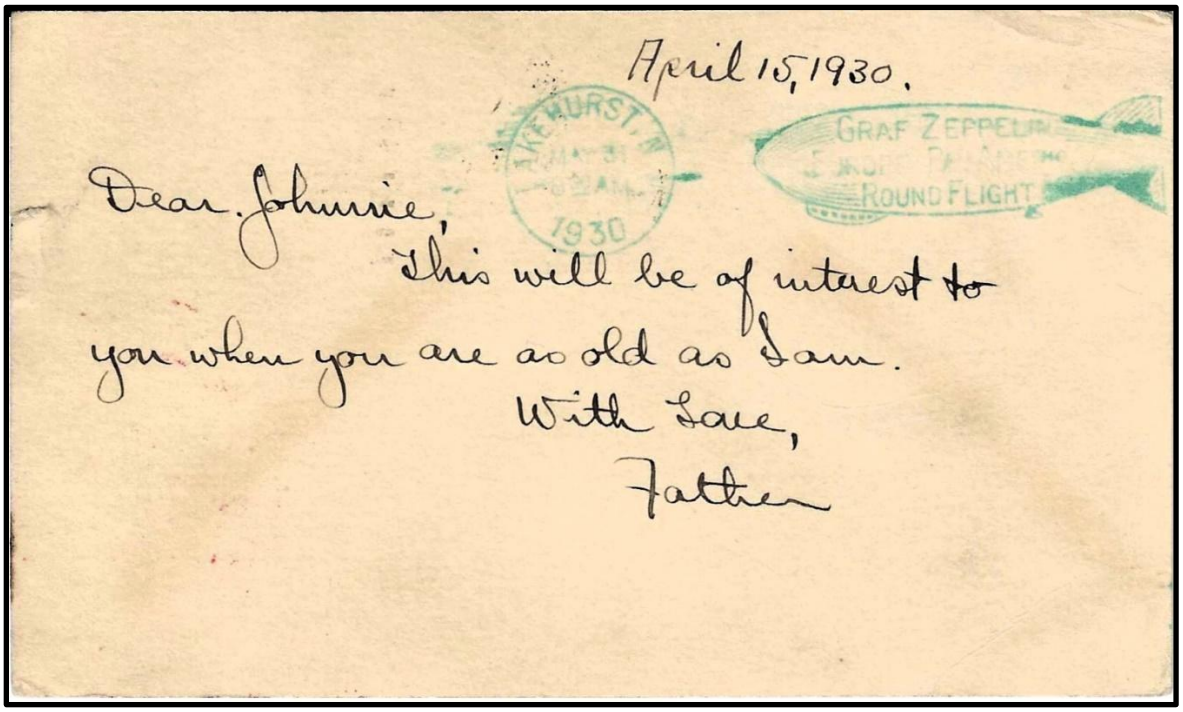


The father placed his return address of Whitestone, New York, which is a residential neighborhood in Queens and mailed the postal card. It received an April 24, 1930 postmark at the Varick Street Station (Manhattan) with the "REGISTER OR INSURE VALUABLE MAIL" slogan cancel. The Varick Street Station canceled the postal card and applied the distinctive purple diamond cachet, reading "First Europe Pan-America Round Flight" with the triangular route. (The red *Südamerikafahrt* (South American journey) marking commemorates the flight.)

As per the newspaper article, all the covers for this historic flight were then forwarded by steamer to Friedrichshafen, Germany, to be flown on the Graf Zeppelin. It undertook its Europe-Pan America flight from its home base in Friedrichshafen in southern Germany on May 18, 1930, to Seville, Spain; to Pernambuco (modern day Recife), Brazil; to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; to Lakehurst, New Jersey; to Seville, Spain; and back to Friedrichshafen, Germany, arriving on June 6, 1930, flying over 29,000 km round trip. The green transit postmark shown on the reverse of the postal card indicates it arriving in Lakehurst on May 31, 1930 at 8:22 am.

After the flight ended, Germany returned the mail by ship to the United States where it was placed in the regular U.S. mail stream for final delivery to Master John A. Hardy, Jr., at 305 Broadway in New York City.

The message on the reverse of the postal card reads: *"April 15, 1930. Dear Johnnie, This will be of interest to you when you are as old as I am. With Love, Father."* Apparently, Father was a stamp collector and wanted to encourage his son to take an interest.



Delving into their genealogical history briefly, I found in the 1930 U.S. Census, John A. Hardy (30 years old) living in the 3rd Assembly District of Queens with his wife Barbara W. (29 yr old) and his son John A. (2 4/12 yr old) and daughter Anne R. (7/12 yr old) with two servants (a maid & a cook) from Northern Ireland at his father George F. Hardy's house (valued at $125,000 in 1920, would be $2.5 million today) on 162nd Street. John was listed as a Civil Engineer.

I found an engagement article in the Tuesday, February 25, 1926 issue of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* about John & Barbara's wedding plans. The article reads: "The engagement of Miss Barbara Wyndham Harrison to John Alexander Hardy, son of George F. (Fisk) Hardy of Whitestone, L. I., has just been announced by Miss Harrison's parents, Dr. and Mrs. D. A. Harrison, also of Whitestone. Miss Harrison attended the Cathedral School of St. Mary's and was graduated from Smith College in 1922. Mr. Hardy attended Stuyvesant School, Warrenton, Va., and graduated from Dartmouth in 1922."

The postal card was addressed to 305 Broadway which is an office building in Tribeca, presumably where John, Sr. worked. At one time the architecture firm of Marcus Contracting Company and architect George F. Hardy had offices in this building. So, either John worked for Marcus Contracting or for his father George, which was more likely. Anyway, John, Sr. desired that the postal card be delivered to his office and not to his house.

About his father George: in the AP (Associated Press) article about his 1947 death, George was listed as the "designer of pulp and paper mills who in 1938 was credited with designing the country's first mill for making newsprint from southern pine at Lufkin, Tex., died Thursday night."

It is interesting what a little research by a retired librarian can uncover.

[** Converting that $1.30 in 1930 to 2026 dollars is $26.23!]