

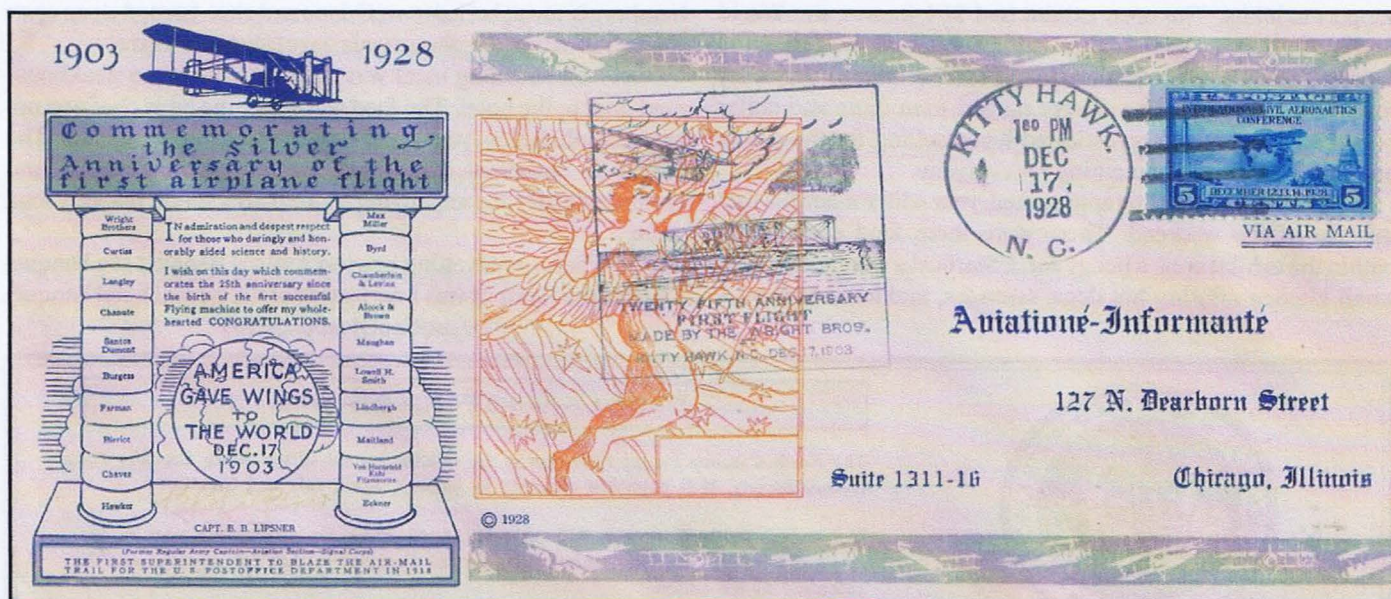
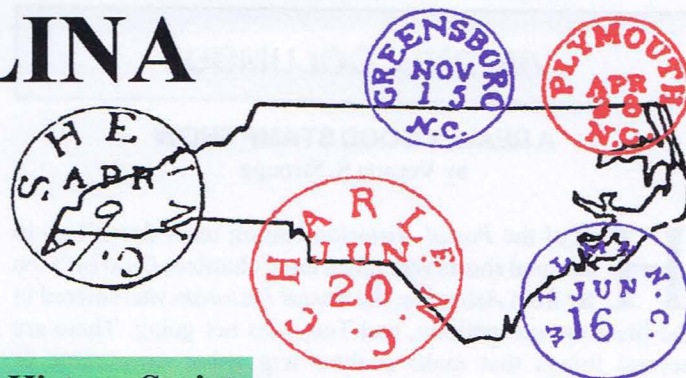
# NORTH CAROLINA POSTAL HISTORIAN

The Journal of the North Carolina Postal History Society

Volume 22, No. 3

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Whole 84



**TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CACHET OF THE  
WRIGHT BROTHERS FIRST FLIGHT**

Affiliate #155 of the American Philatelic Society





## VISITING COLUMBUS,

### A REALLY GOOD STAMP SHOW

by Vernon S. Stroupe

Half of the *Postal Historian* editing team doesn't go to national shows very often, but Columbus, Ohio isn't too far from Asheville, the *Postal Historian* was entered in the literature competition, and Tony was not going. There are several things that make a show trip either memorable or forgettable: transportation, the accommodations, the facilities, food, the dealers, and the exhibits.

The flight from Asheville to Cincinnati to Columbus on Quite Slick Airways and Pretzel Delivery Company was uneventful and got us there by show opening time. Our favorite hotel chain was less than 50 yards directly across the street from the entrance to the exhibit hall. The exhibit facility is part of a recently built two block long complex anchored by a Hyatt Regency hotel on the far end, complete with mall type food court. Between the Hyatt and the exhibition area is a rabbit warren of meeting rooms and ballrooms.

The show was a huge mixture of bourse (164 dealers), exhibits, society and association booths, auction areas, and support exhibits. The open exhibit had 864 frames; the World Series of Philately had another 139 frames, and the Literature section had 69 entries. It was enough to keep anyone very busy for a very long time. The dealers ranged from dime and dollar booths to auctions of sophisticated items selling for thousands of dollars. There was something for everyone.

When lunch time approached, your editor made his first mistake of the weekend. There were three food concessions within the exhibit area: a hoagy bar, a Starbucks wanna-be, and a small kitchen offering hot dogs, sausages, and hamburgers. A

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selection of the latter produced the World's Worst hamburger by any definition. Imagine, if you can, a large, thin piece of hamburger meat, boiled to well done and char-burned on an open flame. All of the following meals were eaten elsewhere.

The evening meal was taken at a Japanese steakhouse next door to the hotel. The food was good, the table chef was not as accomplished as your local guy, but he got the job done. The maitre-de entertained the tables by singing in Japanese and enthusiastically accompanying himself on a small, but very loud drum.

Saturday evening was the Awards Banquet at a banquet room in the Hyatt. It was a caricature of the typical hotel banquet (continued on page 13)



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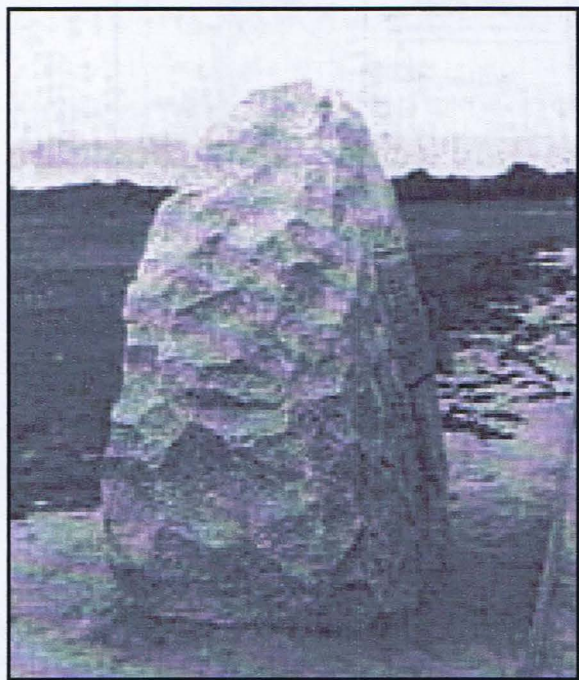
## THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WRIGHT BROTHERS FLIGHT

by Vernon S. Stroupe

By 1928 the realization of the momentous occasion which occurred in 1903 had sunk into the conscience of the American public. Prior to World War I, the 1903 event was treated almost as a circus sideshow performance. The Wright Brothers tested later models of their aircraft, but did so in quasi-secret. But by 1928, the U.S. Army had proven the usefulness of aircraft in WWI, and general aviation was awakening in America.

The planning of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration was done by the International Civil Aeronautics Conference which met in Washington, D.C., and the National Aeronautics Association of the U.S. provided a six-foot granite boulder to be placed on the site where Orville Wright's plane cleared the ground on the first flight. It bears the following inscription:

**THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL FLIGHT OF AN AIRPLANE  
WAS MADE FROM THIS SPOT BY ORVILLE WRIGHT  
DECEMBER 17, 1903 IN A MACHINE DESIGNED AND  
BUILT BY WILBUR AND ORVILLE WRIGHT. THIS  
TABLET WAS ERECTED BY THE NATIONAL AERO-  
NAUTICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE USA DECEMBER  
17, 1928 TO COMMEMORATE THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVER-  
SARY OF THIS EVENT.**



The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary cachet was planned by Henry B. New, Postmaster General of the U.S., who informed Frank A. Pierson, publisher of the Washington Daily News of the event. He described the event as a special cachet which would be mailed from Kitty Hawk with a special cancellation. He said that a large number of requests for such a cancellation had been made to the Kitty Hawk postmaster.

As Kitty Hawk did not have facilities for handling an airmail type aircraft, the mail was processed there and taken

overland to Norfolk where it entered CAM Route 19 which was flown by Pitcairn Aviation and piloted by Dick Merrill.

The dignitaries for this event left Washington on a train which took them to Norfolk, where they transferred to buses. The bus cavalcade took the celebrants to the end of the improved road, where they transferred to automobiles for the rest of the trip to Powell's Point. From there they took boats to Kitty Hawk where they were met by a second fleet of cars for the remainder of the trip to Kill Devil Hills. Approximately 3,500 people made this arduous trip, including Orville Wright, Amelia Earhart, Senator Hiram Bingham, Secretary of the War Dwight Davis, and Capt. B.B. Lipsner, the first superintendent of the U.S. Post Office Air Mail Section.

The boulder was covered with a white parachute which was ceremoniously removed by Mary Byrd Saunders and Florence Ballard of Elizabeth City. As they did so, the band from the Norfolk Naval Station played the National Anthem and a sailor released a flock of homing pigeons which circled and swooped until they headed for home. The entire entourage then reversed course and made their way back to Norfolk.



Figure 1 - Official Cachet

The official cachet (Figure 1) is a simple rectangular box, 49 x 50 mm., with an inscription, a line drawing of the Wright plane at the bottom which is overflowed by a tri-motor aircraft. The very attractive cachet (see cover) was produced by a high quality printing company in New Castle, Indiana, the closest post office to the Wrights birthplace, Millville. It was printed in dark blue, gray, and silver with an orange cartouche of Icarus added (Figure 2). Some of the covers are signed in green by Capt. Lipsner, which Regency Auctions describes as a facsimile. The reverse of the cover bears the following endorsement in green:

This is to certify as a member and guest of the International Civil Aeronautics Conference, called by President Calvin Coolidge, to mark this first quarter century of human flight; I accompanied Hon. Orville Wright from Washington, D.C. To Kill Devil Hill, N.C. On the entire pilgrimage I carried this commemorative cover and finally mailed it personally at the place and on the date as postmarked. (Signed) B.B. Lipsner



Capt. Lipsner was so admired that a gladiolus was named for him by A.E. Kunderd, and advertised on a post card (Figure 3) with a reproduction of the commemorative cover. It is a pretty fair assumption that A.E. Kunderd was also the owner of the printing company which produced the cachet.

Sources:

*Raleigh Times*, 17 December 1928

National Park Service Internet site



Figure 2

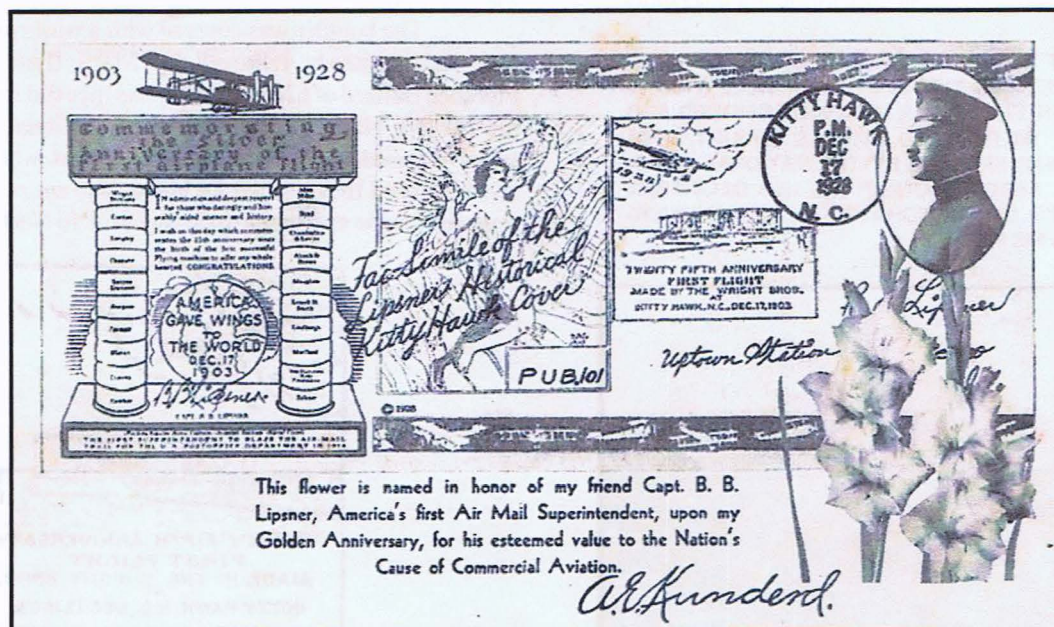


Figure 3

## Kitty Hawk, Derivation of the Name

by Scott Troutman

Since I first went to Kitty Hawk in 1960, I always assumed the name was for some small local hawk. And the story most often given by locals is that the name derives from swarms of small mosquito hawks that lived in the area. The name became "Skeeter Hawk" and later Kitty Hawk. But I do not believe this is where the name came from.

The area appears on maps as early as 1730 under the name Chicke-hawk. This may have been an old Indian name. Hawk was the Indian word for goose, coming from the Indian interpretation of the noise a goose makes (its honk). Chicke-hawk may refer to the huge flocks of Canadian geese that migrate

annually into the area.

Another local legend is that the original name was Killy-hawk. This was a combination of an English slang term "killy" meaning the kill of a waterfowl and the Indian term hawk or haunk for goose. The Indians used a term "Fum a Killy Haunk to a Killy Haunk", meaning from the first goose kill to the first goose kill to represent a years passing. Early deeds in the recording books at Currituck County give descriptions such as "Beginning at Killy Honk Bay" or "Beginning at Killy Hock Bay". In time the name was re-expressed as Kitty Hawk.



# A Postmaster Alters History at Kill Devil Hills

by Scott Troutman

This December 17th will mark the 100th Anniversary of the Wright Brothers historic achievement of powered flight. A friend of my fathers, Stan Schwiker, has spent the last five years building a replica of the Wright Flyer which he hopes to fly on that historic date. There will no doubt be many celebrations of Orville and Wilbur's work at Dayton, Ohio (their home base), at Kill Devil Hills (the place where they worked out the airfoil that made their flying machine work) and at Kitty Hawk (where the flight took place).

It is curious that it was not the government, or aviation associations which built the first monument to the Wright Brothers. Rather it was the citizens of Kitty Hawk, who witnessed the first flight lead by the former postmaster of the town. They gathered on top of the taller of the two dunes known as Kill Devil Hills and placed some stones to mark the place where the Wright Brothers began in earnest their work. Years later the Wright Brothers Monument would be constructed at this spot.

In 1900 there was no town of Kill Devil Hills, and so Orville and Wilbur set up at the tiny nearby village of Kitty Hawk, staying originally with the postmaster's family. This was not coincidence, but rather because it was the postmaster's husband who had steered them there. Kill Devil Hills would come into political existence in 1938.

This narrative then is in three sections. In the first I will go into the history of the name Kill Devil Hills. There are several tales associated with the name and they are part of the lore of the state. In the second section, I will discuss Captain William J. Tate, the postmaster's husband (and a former postmaster), and how it was that the Wrights managed to find Kill Devil Hills. And in the third section I will look at some postal history and commemorative postmarks associated with the town.

## Kill Devil Hills - The Place and the Strange Name

If you had gone with a local fisherman in 1900 to the Kill Devil Hills you wouldn't have seen much. They were a pair of large sand dunes, the highest about 300 feet high. They weren't the highest dunes around, as even then Jockey's Ridge nearby was at least twice as large. But unlike the bare sand of Jockey's Ridge, the Kill Devil Hills were covered in sea oats and other grasses, with a few yaupon bushes around the base. And the wind blew at them straight off the open sea.

But why did these two hills have this odd name? There are several possible explanations, and I will give them all.

The most fanciful tale, a folk tale to be sure, involves a local fisherman who made a pact with the Devil and then double crossed him. The tale begins with a greedy fisherman who consults an old hag who lived near Nags Head woods. The hag arranged a meeting with the Devil and they worked out an agreement. When the full moon's silver light quenched sea and shore and the sands were left in darkness of a winter night, the fisherman and the Devil would meet on the higher of two grassy hills nearby. There the fisherman was to receive a bag of gold that

would never empty and he would confirm his dark promise, that at his death the Devil was to receive his soul.

It was some weeks before the planned meeting, and as the fisherman thought of the torments of hell, awful fears gripped him. But he was unwilling to forego the promised gold, and he began to plan how to get the fortune and cheat Satan on his bargain.

Each night thereafter, the fisherman stole from his hut with a shovel in the dead of night, climbed to the top of the hill, and began to dig. Down and down, deeper and deeper he dug. At last, the day before the meeting was to take place, he reached the bottom of the hill where he struck quicksand as he had hoped. His work nearly done, he covered over the entrance to the shaft with leaves and brittle branches and made neat work of his trap.

The night for the rendezvous with the Devil fell dark and stormy; and at midnight in the midst of a crashing thunderstorm, the fisherman again crept silently from his hut and hastened to keep his appointment with Old Scratch. He climbed up the dune from the west side of the hill to the mouth of the cavity. The Devil approached from the seaward slope and halted on hearing a hoarse cry from the fisherman 'Throw me the bag of gold, and come shake hands on our bargain!'

The Devil, strangely unaware of the plot, threw the bag of gold into the fisherman's hands, then rushed forward to place his hands on the fisherman's brow to mark the sign and seal that would insure for his own the fisherman's soul. The brittle twigs broke beneath his tread, and down into the deep shaft the Prince of Darkness plunged - straight into the treacherous quicksand at its depths, while the fierce lightning flashed and awful rolls of thunder resounded. The fisherman wasted no time and pushed the loose sand into the hole. "I have killed the Devil", joyfully the fisherman cried; and so proud of his clever trick was he that he spread the news far and wide. And if you believe him the Devil lies under Kill Devil Hill.

Well, that is a good story, but it is just that. A more likely possibility is that the name came from a local rum said to be able to "Kill the Devil". In one case this was linked to rum from Medford, Massachusetts which was said to have been served by one of the natives at a bar near the base of the hills. A ballad, now lost, is said to have been sung locally called either "The Ballad of Medford Rum" or the "The Ballad of Kill Devil Hills".

Other stories of the rum go back to William Byrd of Virginia who came into the area around 1728 as part of a surveying crew to establish the state line between Virginia and North Carolina. He was said to have run into some local rum fit to "kill the Devil" in the vicinity of the sand hills.

Another plausible story was related by Capt. William J. Tate, with whom the Wright Brothers stayed. Tate's tale goes as follows:

"The flotsam and jetsam cast up by the ocean along this fringe of coast constituted, in the olden days of Kitty Hawk and Nag's Head, a large part of the income of many families living on these banks. In fact, watching the shores was an occupation



which sometimes paid good dividends."

"About 1804, so the story goes, a vessel was cast up by the storm very near Kill Devil Hills, and this ship was beached so high that when the storm had subsided, it could be unloaded of its cargo. Right here was the first instance where the native coast man came in contact with an insurance agent. The agent thought that the cargo could be trans-shipped, and bring more money than to sell it at a regular wreck-rate sale, which was then the custom. The cargo was then unloaded and piled up on the beach above the reach of high water, and guards were put on to protect it.

"The bales and bundles of goods began to disappear, and the agent accused the guards with disloyalty. The guards told him that the devil was getting the goods, that bundles were disappearing right before their eyes, with no one around to help them. The agent heard of a man named Devil Ike, who lived nearby who feared neither God nor the Devil, and who, if he were hired as a guard would put a stop to the goods disappearing. Devil Ike was made head guard. That night he noticed a bundle start off seemingly of its own volition. He followed it and getting in front of it, found a line attached. Following the line, he found a pony with a man on his back.

"Now Devil Ike was torn between his loyalty to his employer and his native people. He cut the line, fired his old blunderbuss, and told the offender to get to hell away and never come back. The man knew Devil Ike and paid heed. In his report to the insurance agent, Devil Ike said 'I killed the Devil when you heard me shoot last night'. This happened right at the foot of Kill Devil Hill, and thus the hills got their name."<sup>1</sup>

### **Captain Tate and the Wrights Coming to Kitty Hawk**

To conduct their experiments on airfoil design the Wright Brothers needed a place with strong and steady winds. They wrote the Weather Bureau in Washington, D.C. asking where the winds were the steadiest. The Weather Bureau replied Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

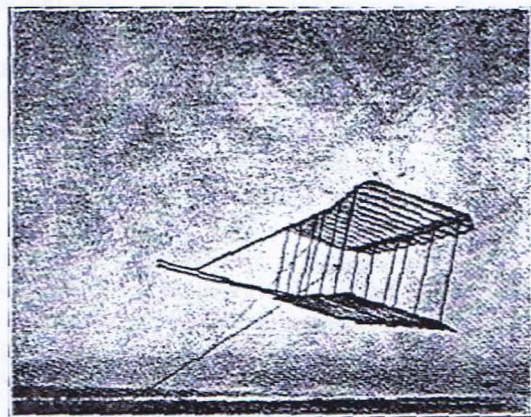
Wilbur Wright wrote a short but direct letter to the postmaster at Kitty Hawk asking about the topography of the land and stating that he and his brother were planning some experiments in scientific kite-flying and were looking for a place where a level plain without shrubbery could be found. They enclosed a self addressed stamped envelope to aid in getting a reply. At that time Mrs. Addie M. Tate, wife of Captain William J. Tate, was the postmistress. Her husband had been postmaster until he had gotten a government job (probably with the Life Saving Station) and he still helped his wife as the unofficial assistant postmaster. Captain Tate wrote the reply to Wilbur's letter, giving a good description of the country. It so impressed Wilbur that he did not go into any further correspondence on other possibilities, but rather made his preparations to go to Kitty Hawk.

Leaving Dayton, Ohio with their first glider in a kit form, Wilbur stopped over in Norfolk, Virginia, where he intended to get 20-foot spars of white pine for the wing spars for the planned 1900 glider. Failing to find any, he had to content himself with 16-foot ones. This incident is responsible for the fact that Mrs. Tate had the honor of sewing the cloth covering of the first 1900 glider

on her sewing machine at Kitty Hawk. A letter of Orville Wright's elaborates:

"The word 'built' is hardly correct. 'Assembled' would be a better term. All the parts were built in Dayton and shipped to Kitty Hawk, excepting four spars, which were made and shipped from Norfolk. The ribs, struts, hinges and end bows were all built complete at our shop in Dayton. The wing coverings were also cut and sewed in Dayton, but on account of Wilbur's inability to get 20-foot spars at Norfolk, a change was necessary in the coverings. I remember he said this work was done on Mrs. Tate's sewing machine."

Wilbur arrived at Elizabeth City, N.C. on September 9, 1900 with his kit for the "kite" and asked how to get to Kitty Hawk. He was told there was probably no way to get there until the following week as he had just missed the weekly supply boat. Fretting, he found a Kitty Hawk waterman named Israel Perry living on a miserable little flat-bottomed schooner named the "Curlique". Perry was loquacious and soon convinced Wilbur he could get Wilbur to Kitty Hawk. Wilbur decided he would go on ahead and let the kite catch up with him later.



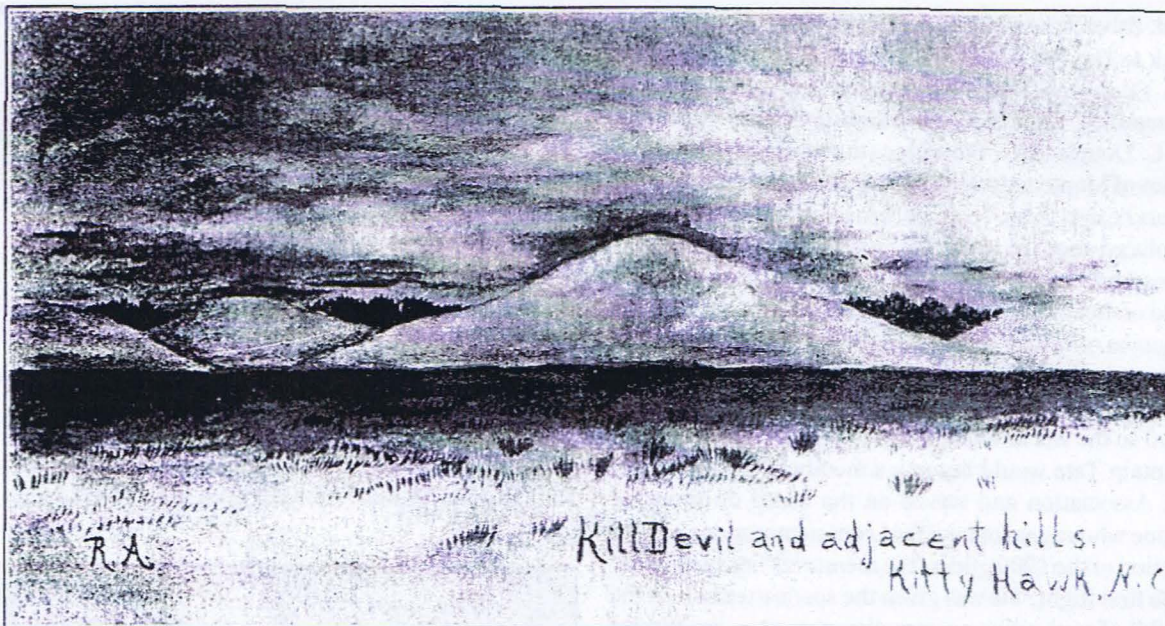
**The First Wright Machine of 1900**

The next morning the "Curlique" left Elizabeth City for Kitty Hawk. The wind was fair, and all went well until mid-afternoon, when they were met by a strong headwind, and they were forced to run for cover in smooth water up the North River. They laid up for a day, and Mr. Wright had the misfortune to watch Perry and his crew prepare a meal. Finding that none of them were advocates of the maxim "cleanliness is next to godliness", Wilbur passed on all the food that was offered.

The wind finally broke at 3 p.m. on the 11th and they started again for Kitty Hawk. They made Kitty Hawk at 9 p.m. and Wilbur stayed on the boat all night sleeping on the deck. In the morning a boy, Elijah W. Baum, came and took him to Captain Tate's. Elijah Baum would become postmaster of Kitty Hawk in 1914 taking over for the Tate's and having the job for 15 years.

Tate, hearing a soft knock, opened the door of his "humble domicile" to find a man with hat in hand, who introduced himself very quietly as Wilbur Wright of Dayton, Ohio. Wilbur, an obvious tenderfoot, told of his trip, the privations on board "Curlique" and the fact that he had not eaten in 48 hours. The Tate's were mostly amused at his tales of the boat trip, but were appalled that he hadn't eaten in 48 hours and quickly fixed him a breakfast of bacon and eggs. They didn't have to ask if he





**Kill Devil Hills as the Wright Brothers knew them**

enjoyed it.

Wilbur needed a place to stay, so he asked Mrs. Tate if they could take him on as a roomer. She was concerned Mr. Wright would want more than she could deliver, but after he remarked that "I should be considerate enough to subordinate myself to your system so as not to entail any extra hardship on you. I'll be satisfied to live as you live.", she was won over.

Wright did have one concern and that was water. A cystem or surface well was used by the Tates, and Wilbur asked that they please boil one gallon each day for his usage. Wilbur had a fear of dying of typhoid fever. It was well grounded as, ironically, he died of typhoid in 1912.

The remainder of the week Wilbur rested up and explored Kill Devil Hills and the Kitty Hawk Lifesaving Station with Capt. Tate. His equipment arrived on September 17th. Wilbur and Mrs. Tate assembled the glider in the Tate's front yard. Orville Wright arrived on September 28th, and shortly thereafter they set up a large tent they called home between the Tate's and the Coast Guard Station.

The first 1900 machine was used both as a manned kite and a glider. They found its lifting power was inadequate and when they left, the glider was left stuck in the sand at Kill Devil Hills and given to Capt. Tate. Tate and a neighbor carried it back to his house, where it was taken apart. The fabric was use by Mrs. Tate to make "sateen" dresses for her two little daughters Irene and Pauline.

When the Wrights returned in 1901 for the second season they were greeted by the girls in their dresses made from the first glider. The new 1901 machine they brought was nearly twice as large as the first one and was used as a very successful manned glider, going airborne some 300 feet off Kill Devil Hill. By the end of the season they could land it without the wings touching ground.

In 1902 they arrived with a third machine. It made about 1,000 glides down Kill Devil Hills. They were perfecting their technique of warping the wings to achieve lift and were certain

they could achieve powered flight the next season.

Each year the Wright brothers expanded their living quarters and by 1903 the hanger and living quarters "had become quite a pretentious affair" by Outer Banks standards. The brothers worked "like beavers" overcoming all manner of problems with the new flying machine. Shafts broke, propellers



**Captain William J. Tate**



weren't right, drive chains caused problems. Several trips had to be made back to Dayton.

On December 17th, the decision and the final hour arrived. Assembled from the Coast Guard Station were J.T. Daniels, W.L. Dough, A.D. Etheridge (the telegraph operator), W.C. Brinkley of Manteo and John Moore an 18 year old boy from Nags Head and Capt. Tate. The machine was gotten out of the hanger and placed upon the track on a level plain near the hanger; the motor was started and warmed up; Orville Wright stepped in and took hold of the controls, clipped the restraining wire, and the machine began to run along the track. After a 40-foot run, it arose of its own power in free flight, soared along a distance of 120 feet from where it left the ground and was landed by Orville without mishap. And so the world was forever changed.

Captain Tate would become a member of the National Aeronautic Association and served on the board of directors. He was the one who organized the first commemorations of both the construction of the 1900 glider (the memorial was in his front yard) and the first flight. He was given the spade used to turn the first shovel full of earth when construction started on the Wright Brother's Memorial in 1931 on the higher of the Kill Devil Hills. He retired after a 30 year career in the government, his last assignment being Supervisor of Aids to Navigation on the Intra-Coastal Waterway between Virginia and the Albemarle Sound. His home at Kitty Hawk, where so much history had happened, burned down just prior to the 25th anniversary celebration in 1928. I think the building at the Wright Brothers Visitors Center is about where it stood. Capt. Tate moved to Coinjock.

#### Some covers from Kill Devil Hills

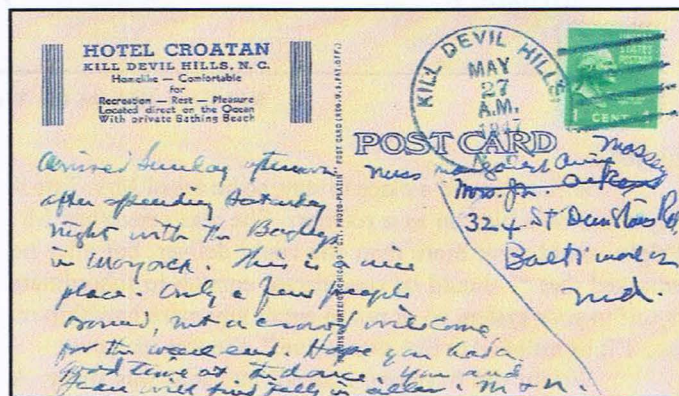
The Kill Devil Hills post office opened on January 8, 1938 with Irene L. Twilford as postmaster. I suspect this may be Irene Tate, the girl who wore the dress made out of the first Wright glider, but cannot prove it.

Many thanks to Tony Crumbley who provided many of the covers shown.



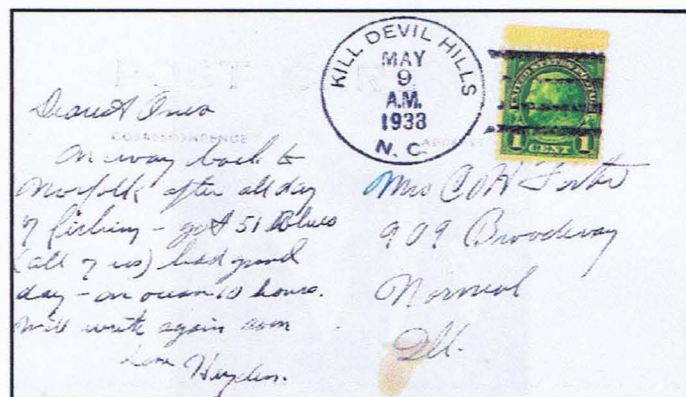
Cover 2.

Same canceller used in 1938 on a cover with cachet for National Air Mail week, May 15-23, 1938.



Cover 3.

Postcard postmarked with larger 34 mm four bar canceller. Route 12 was now open to Kill Devil Hills and the first hotels like the Hotel Croatan were establishing the town as a beach resort.



Cover 1.

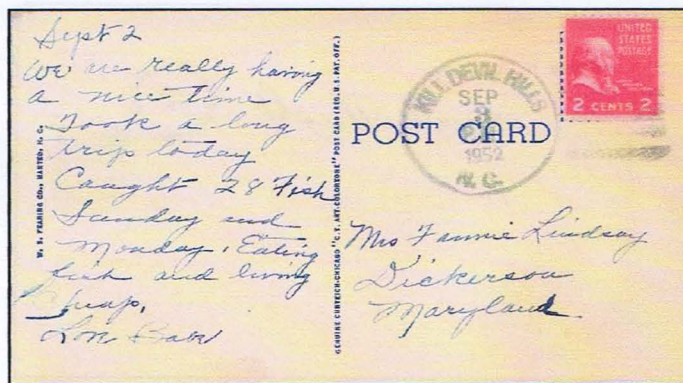
Earliest cover the author has seen from Kill Devil Hills. This post card reports that the sender had caught "51 blues" [bluefish] in a days fishing on the ocean. This 32mm four bar killer canceller was apparently the first used and examples are found of it as late as 1938.



Cover 4.

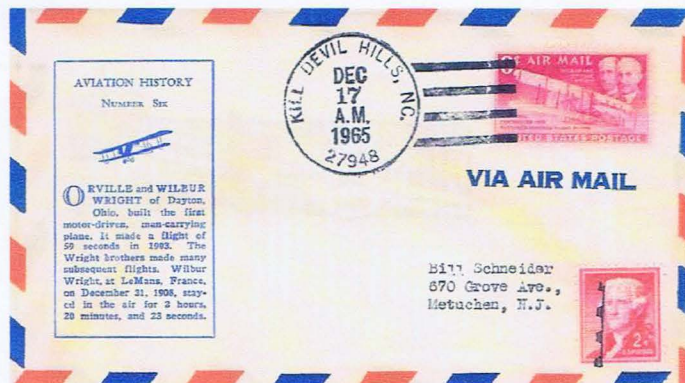
January 1950 four bar cancellation with cachet of Wright Brothers Memorial. This 33mm canceller has Kill and Devil much closer together. This canceller is also known used in 1951.





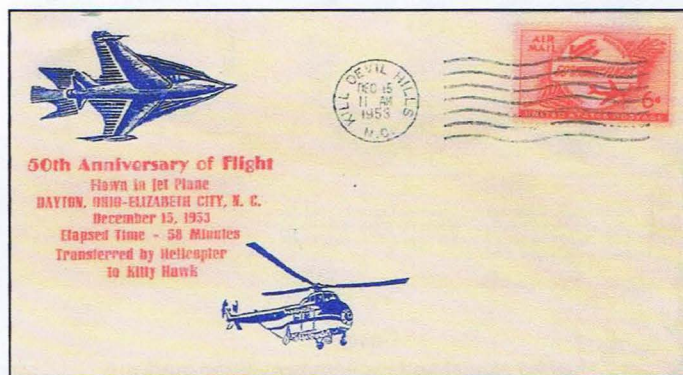
Cover 5.

Sept. 3, 1952 strike of a different four bar killer 32mm.



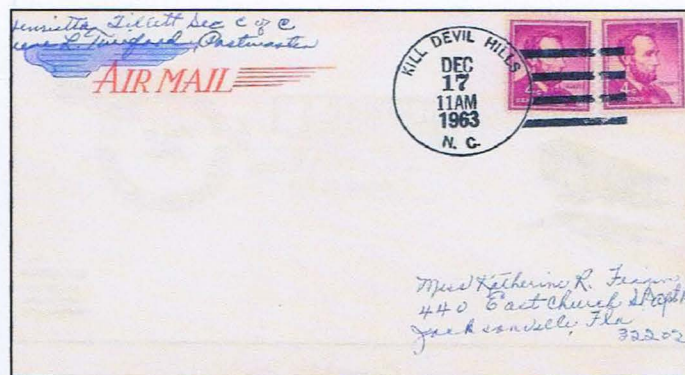
Cover 8.

New 32 mm four bar cancel on airmail envelope with cachet concerning the Wrights. Cancelled on the 62nd anniversary of the flight, it appears to have been part of a set on aviation history.



Cover 6.

Small machine cancel associated with 50th Anniversary of Flight celebrations. This appears to be a Dail 6 International Machine cancel. This cancelling device may have been brought in especially for the celebrations. Cachet for a special flight from Dayton to Kitty Hawk by jet and helicopter.



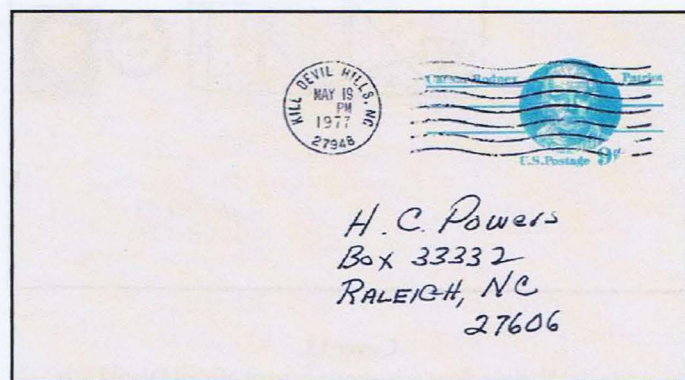
Cover 9.

1963 four bar cancel on air mail envelope signed by Irene R. Twilford the postmistress on the 60th anniversary of the first flight. 32mm canceller.



Cover 7.

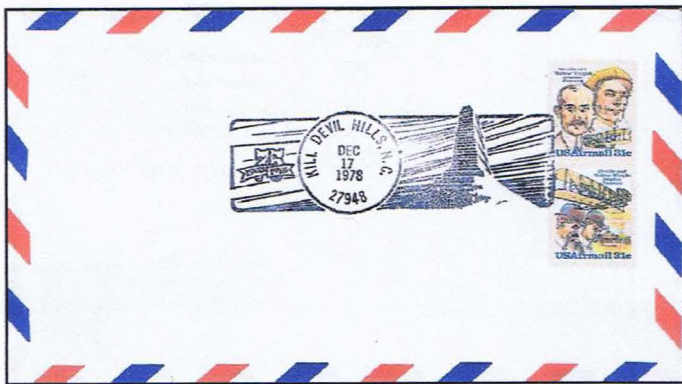
Different cachet for 50th Anniversary of Flight Celebration.



Cover 10.

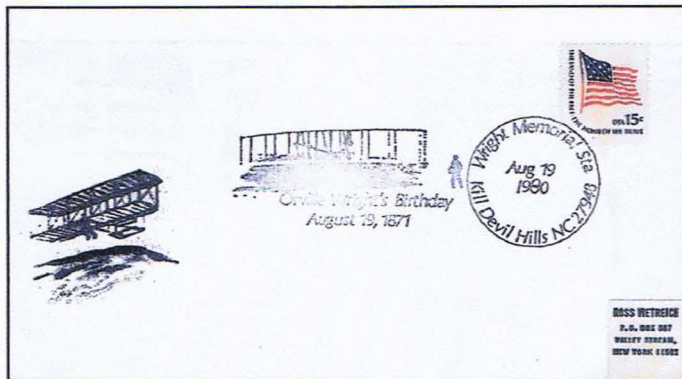
1977 postal card cancelled with the International Machine cancel minus the time slug.





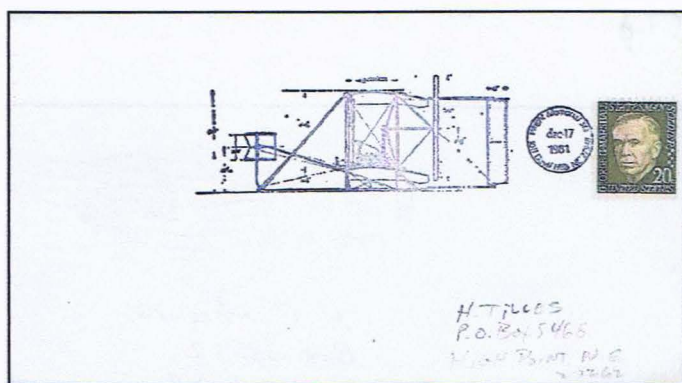
Cover 11.

1978 75th anniversary of the first flight cancel used at Kill Devil Hills. The cancel shows the Wright Brothers Monument and an airmail envelope with pair of Wright Brothers air mail stamps issued earlier that year at Dayton, Ohio.



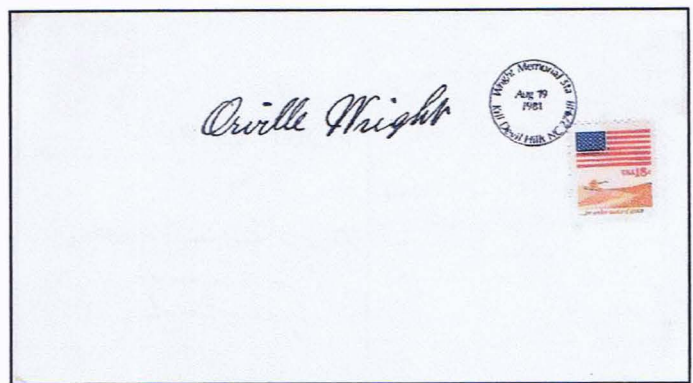
Cover 12.

1980 Kill Devil Hills cover with special Wright flyer cancel marking the 109th anniversary of Orville Wright's birth on August 19, 1871.



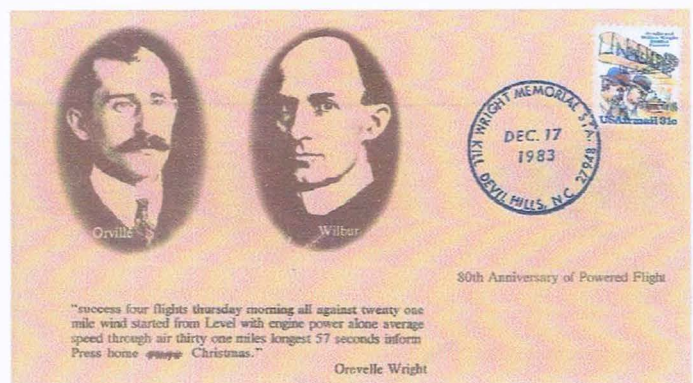
Cover 13.

Special Wright flyer schematic cancel of Kill Devil Hills on cover commemorating the 78th anniversary of the first flight in 1981.



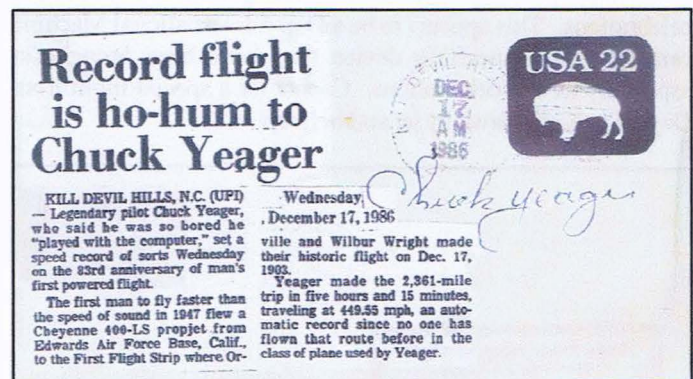
Cover 14.

Special signature of Orville Wright cancel also used on 78th anniversary of the first flight.



Cover 15.

Special cancel and cacheted envelope marking the 80th anniversary of the first flight.



Cover 16.

1986 Kill Devil Hills cancellation on postal stationery. Chuck Yeager set a flight record going from Edwards Air Force Base in California to Kitty Hawk in 5 hours and 15 minutes. Though bored by the trip, Yeager did sign this cover.

#### Bibliography

1. *Wings Over Kill Devil and Legends of The Dunes of Dare*, by Catherine Albertson.

Note: *Wings Over Kill Devil* was a memoir published originally by Capt. William J. Tate in 1928 as a brochure given out at the 25th anniversary of the first flight on Dec. 17, 1928.



# A. C. Roessler's Carolina Connection

by Tony L. Crumbley

Albert C. Roessler was one of America's most innovative philatelists. We can thank him for much of the early first day covers and early flight covers. Roessler was born in Newark, N.J. in 1883, moved to Colorado at an early age and by 1903 was operating a mail order stamp business in Denver. In 1908 he returned to New York to become a stamp dealer, printer and philatelic author. By 1910 he had moved to East Orange, NJ, an address he used until about 1940.

Roessler was, among other things, a very prolific printer. He printed a large variety of airmail envelopes and cachets. On November 14, 1924 the Post Office Department announced the first airmail envelopes approved by the post office – this was a double bar of red and blue. Roessler prepared at least six varieties of these envelopes for use in his pursuit of covers. The earliest use of these by Roessler is March 20, 1925.

By 1928 Roessler was in his hey days of philately. On May 1, 1928 the first flight from the Greensboro - Winston-Salem - High Point on the New York to Atlanta route was scheduled. Roessler had envelopes posted for this flight. Figures 1, 2 and 3 show covers from these three cities. The Winston-Salem cover, Figure 1, is addressed to A. C. Roe in Greensboro and has a printed return address of A. C. Roessler. A. C. Roe was a name Roessler used frequently on his addressed covers. Note the distinct handwriting on the other two envelopes. Also note the consistent indentation in the red bar just under the body of the plane.



Figure 1



Figure 2

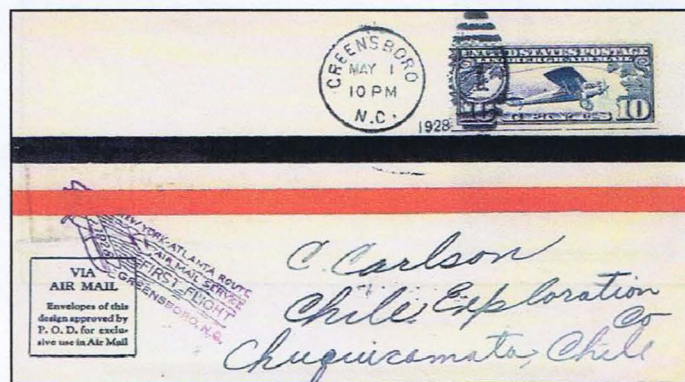


Figure 3 - Notice address to Chile

On May 2, 1928 Roessler had posted a card from Kitty Hawk with an image of a monument placed in Kitty Hawk that year commemorating the construction of the first airplane. It's not clear if this is the day the monument was erected but the author's speculation is Roessler was in Greensboro on May 1 – indicated by Figure 1 being addressed to him there and then went on to Kitty Hawk to post the May 2 cards.

Two types of Kitty Hawk cards were produced. Those with 10 cent Lindbergh stamps were flown cards (Figure 4) and those with 2 cent stamps were unflown cards. In an ad Roessler offers these cards along with unpostmarked examples. Figure 6 is a copy of his flyer offering these cards.



Figure 4

On December 12, 1928 the post office issued two stamps commemorating the International Civil Aeronautics Conference being held in Washington, DC from December 12 – 14. On December 17, 1928 the 25th anniversary of the Kitty Hawk flight was celebrated in Kitty Hawk – Roessler was there.

The cover in Figure 7 was posted from Kitty Hawk on December 17 and has the official cachet of the 25th anniversary of flight as well as the printed cachet Roessler used for the aeronautics stamp. Figure 8 is similar, however, it is a card that is blank on the reverse.





Figure 5

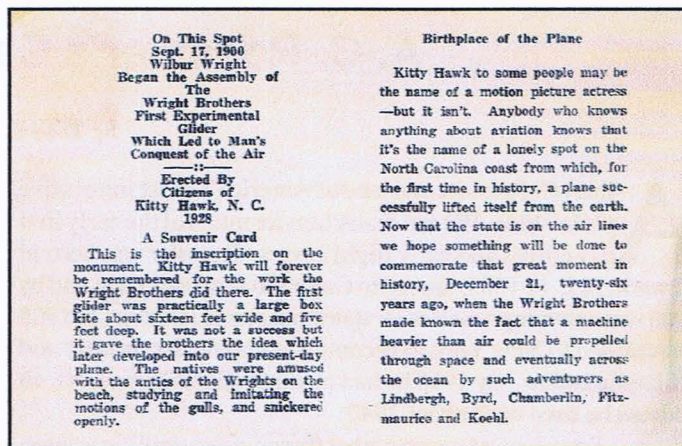


Figure 5 (reverse)

**STAMP NEWS**

**Kitty Hawk**  
 You are hearing quite a bit about this place, aren't you? Did you know that we started working for the new Kitty Hawk stamp which will come out December 12, 13, 14 over a year ago? At that time we did the best we could by getting out a special postcard which shows the monument erected to the Wright Brothers at K. H. Also has suitable printing on the reverse of card. These have 10c Lindbergh stamp and were carried by plane. Postcard, Kitty Hawk and backstamped New York ..... \$1.00  
 Same as above, but autographed by the P. M. at Kitty Hawk ..... \$1.50

Same with 2c stamp, not carried by airmail but interesting to all collectors. This card might be used to precede your K. H. stamp page.....\$0c

Figure 6



Figure 7

With all of Roessler's creativeness, there was a dark side. He was a prolific producer of forged and bogus philatelic items. Roessler was found guilty of selling bogus Graf Zeppelin overprints and was sentenced to 3 years in prison for this. His time was suspended but he had to serve probation. We do not know most of the fake items created by Roessler. There were many including fake postmarks. Along with his other Kitty Hawk

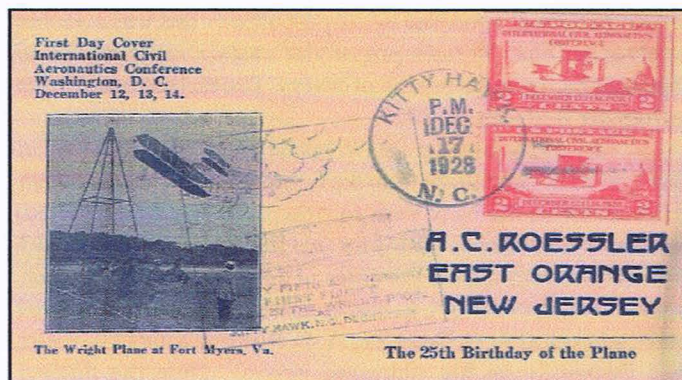


Figure 8

creations, Roessler created fake precancels of Kitty Hawk for the 2 cent and 5 cent International Civil Aeronautics Conference stamps. It consisted of the words "Kitty Hawk" surrounding a circle that contained the letters "N.C." The overprints were applied both normal and inverted. He marketed these as "unusual precancels." The post office did nothing to prevent the sale of the fraudulent items. Roessler sold these to collectors for 10 cents each or 40 cents for a block of four. The author has seen examples of the 2 cent aeronautics stamp and images of the 5 cent but none have been seen on covers as this would have been highly illegal. Kitty Hawk did not issue precancels until 1932.



Figure 9



# Thinking Aloud

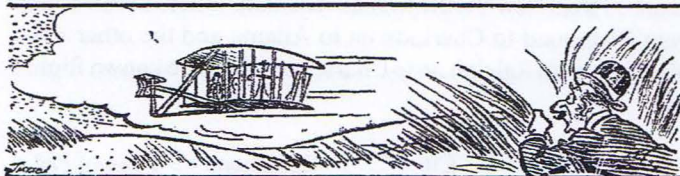
Reporter's  
Life Not an  
Easy One

By PAUL GALLICO

Manteo (N.C.) - You may long for the life of a reporter. It is not all beer and skittles. Sometimes there ain't even any skittles. And newspapers are downright suspicious and ungrateful.

Consider the sad case of a Mr. Salley, some forty years ago last month, May 6, 1908, to be exact.

Brother Salley, who was a pinch hitter for regular reporter Fred Essary of the Norfolk Landmark, went crawling about on his tummy that day in the sand dunes of Kill Devil Hill,



at Kittyhawk, some twelve miles from here, to avoid having his pants filled with buckshot, as reporters were discouraged in Kittyhawk at that time.

Reporter Salley saw a most wondrous sight that day. And having seen it, he went buckety-buckety on horseback to Manteo to the home of 33 year old Alpheus Drinkwater, the officer in charge of the Weather Bureau and Coast Guard station at Manteo. Mr. Drinkwater had a telegraph wire, the only one on Roanoke Island, and could work it. There reporter Salley whipped up a lead that went like this:

"May 6, 1908. To: W.F. Bullock, Times Bldg., N.Y., The Herald, N.Y. Essary, per Salley. The Post, Washington. The Leader, Cleveland.

Wright Brothers, the aeronauts, now at Kill Devil Hill here made their first flight in their new aeroplane this afternoon. Although but a test flight it was successful in every respect, the machine under perfect control of its two makers traveling for a distance of 1,000 ft.. Apparently it could have blown a thousand times as far as easily as not. It was made to light with ease and perfect safety."

All that Mr. Salley had was the scoop of the ages. Was this received with huzzahs by the editors? Not so you could



notice it. The eminent Herald, then edited by James Gordon Bennett, accused reporter Salley of being a thumping liar, to which the reporter replied plaintively: "Stories you are getting from Mantel are accurate. Should you wish to substantiate correctness of my information, wire Mr. Drinkwater, officer in charge of weather bureau service here, or Capt. Jesse Ward, keeper of the Kill Devil Life Saving Station. Big fakes have been concocted in Norfolk. If you want anything about me personally, wire S.S. Nottingham, Editor Norfolk Landmark.

Reporter Salley did no better in Cleveland. The astute editor there refused to pay for the file, and telegraphed Salley, "Cut out the wildcat stuff, we can't handle it."

By now Brother Salley was burning. He replied, "Where did you get idea that I have been filing wildcat stuff? Am not in the habit of filing such material. Good story today. Wrights now making records."

But nobody would believe him.

Finally the Herald sent down its own reporter, Byron R. Newton, who later became Commissioner of Queens, to investigate the nonsense. And when Brother Newton filed an eye-witness account of this machine that flew with an engine and two propellers, the Herald promptly suspended him for six weeks for quite obviously being sozzled on the job. Not until he collected a half dozen affidavits did the Herald apologize, reinstate him and finally print the story.

All of this is of the record, and the records exist. Alpheus Drinkwater, now 73, and still manning the lone telegraph wire that binds Manteo to the mainland, has all of the yellowed copy of the original stories filed on man's first powered flight, and the acid exchange of telegrams with the luckless reporters.

You can see them and read them should you decide to pay a visit to this fascinating community, I did.

*Reprinted from the Norfolk Landmark, ca. 1948.*

## COLUMBUS (continued)

fare: pre-wilted lettuce salad with spicy vinaigrette dressing, and a tepid prime rib with a very good horseradish sauce which was served as we finished the prime rib. The advertised dessert of a chocolate raspberry tart looking and tasted more like carrot cake. Everyone at my table kept reminding each other that the \$45 price tag paid for the banquet hall and included tip.

Our president, Dick Winter, who is a Luff Award recipient, presided over the presentation of the prestigious Luff awards for this year, and did a very credible job of it. A goodly sprinkling of NCPHS members were present at the show. Beside Dick Winter we saw Harvey Tilles, Jay and Bonnie Smith, David Dale, and John Allen.

The Sunday morning Writers Breakfast was the award venue for the literature competition, and the *Postal Historian* received a Vermeil. The critique a few hours later revealed that it is only a few points shy of reaching the gold level.

Immersing ones self in the World Series of Philately competition is a rich experience. It is satisfying to know that some collectors can dream of impossible things, and then have the patience, drive, vision and perseverance to make them happen.

The return flight on Everyones Airlines and Pretzel Pushing Company took double the intended time of three hours due to a storm that closed the Charlotte airport for an hour, causing a three-hour delay in travel. How does that happen?

All-in-all, it was an excellent show, and APS is to be congratulated, but Columbus has a way to go before it is a prime convention center.



# Official Government Airmail Flights from North Carolina

by Tony L. Crumbley

Perhaps one of the smallest sections of airmail covers to be discussed will be flights conducted under federal authority by the Signal Corps of the Army, the Post Office Department or other federal agencies. By far, most airmail service within the state has been conducted by private air carriers.

In total, there are four incidents of mail being carried by government agencies in North Carolina. In most cases in other states, this would have happened when regular mail service was disrupted for some reason – weather related or disaster related or for experimental reasons. In the case of North Carolina, except for the 1934 Army Emergency Service, our incidents have been related to ceremonial events.

The first such event took place on December 17, 1928 – the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wright's flight in Kitty Hawk. The Post Office Department authorized a special flight of mail from Kitty Hawk. Service was performed by the contractor for Contract Airmail Route #19. Dick Merrill, a famous pilot, was at the controls of the plane which flew a total of 27,400 pieces of souvenir mail. The majority of the cachets applied to this mail were black but a few were magenta.

designed stamps, as well as created a scandal around his activities with postage stamps. In early 1934 he canceled all contracts with airmail carriers in the nation. For reasons that are totally unclear, he felt the need to renegotiate new contracts. From February 19 – 21, 1934 the mails were carried by the Army Air Corps. In many cases, serviced covers can only be identified by time and date of postmarks. A few of North Carolina's covers did receive a private cachet. The following is a list of all possible first flights by the Army Air Corps in North Carolina. They consisted of flights on Route 19 from New York to Miami. The mails took two routes – one from Richmond to Charlotte on to Atlanta and the other from Washington to Raleigh on to Charleston, SC. The known flights are:

Date	Cat. #	City	Direction	Time of PM
Feb. 19	19 J	Raleigh	South	11:30 PM
Feb. 20	19 K	Raleigh	North	4:40 AM
Feb. 19	19 W	Greensboro	South	10:00 PM
		a - Winston-Salem dispatch		
		b - High Point dispatch		
Feb. 19	19 X	Greensboro	North	10:00 PM
		a - Winston-Salem dispatch		
		b - High Point dispatch		
Feb. 21	19 Y	Charlotte	South	9:00 PM
Feb. 21	19 Z	Charlotte	North	9:00 PM

The number of covers carried on these flights that have remained today for collectors are very limited. Those illustrated in Figures 3 through Figure 6 are the only ones that have ever been seen by the author.

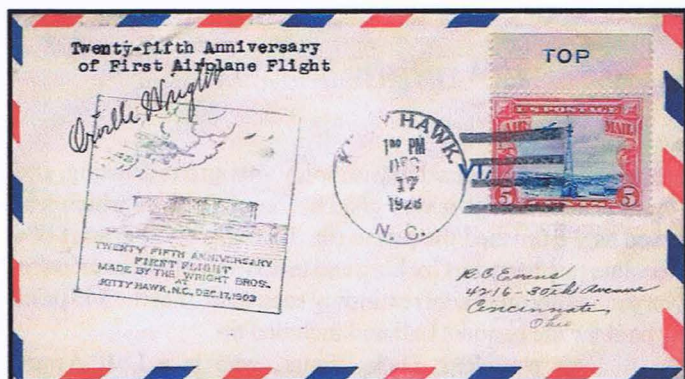
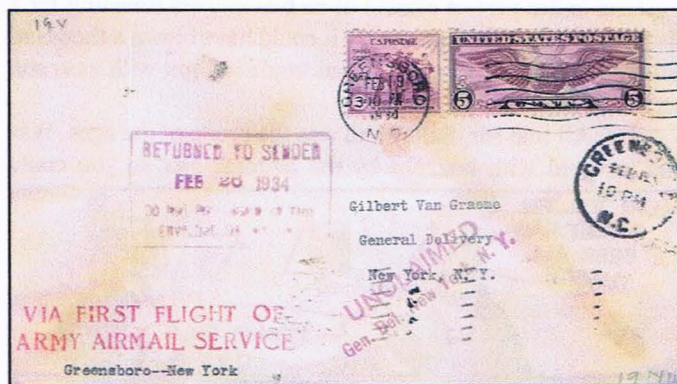


Figure 1 - Signed by Orville Wright



Figure 2 - Newly Issued Aeronautical Commemoratives

President Roosevelt can take credit for the second government flight. Without a doubt, President Franklin D. Roosevelt has done more for philately than perhaps any other president. He issued a variety of unusual collector based stamps,



Figures 3  
Greensboro to New York - North





Figure 4 - Greensboro to Atlanta - South

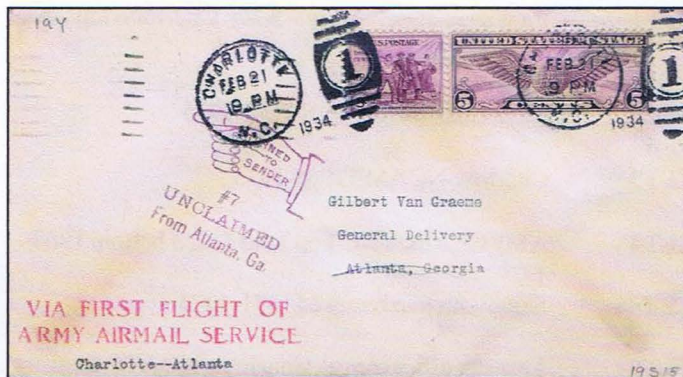


Figure 5 - Charlotte to Atlanta - South



Figure 6 - Charlotte to New York - North

The third example of government service occurred on October 12, 1937. From October 11–16, 1937, (Figure 7) North Carolina celebrated “First All North Carolina Flights.” Virtually every city of any size throughout the state participated in this event. Only one of the flights was, however, an official flight. On October 12 the Post Office Department authorized an official cachet to be used from Kitty Hawk since the airport was too small for a regular Eastern Airlines plane to land. Pilot Dick Fell flew a small plane from Kitty Hawk to Raleigh where the mail was transferred to regularly scheduled flights.

There are those who feel this “All North Carolina Flight” was a test for what would follow the next year throughout the nation. In 1938 the Superintendent of Airmail Service, Charles P. Graddick, promoted a nationwide observance of the first National Airmail Week. It was his hope this celebration would increase the

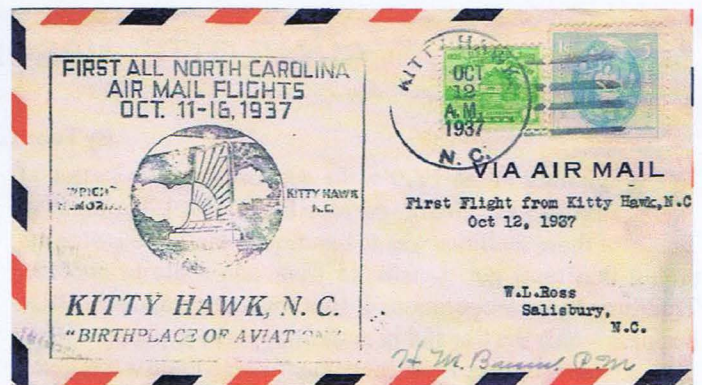


Figure 7

use of airmail. A new 6 cent bi-colored stamp was issued for the event and postmasters throughout the nation were encouraged to create cachets and arrange for airmail service – many cities that never before and never since had mail carried by airplane from their community. Of all the mails that were carried, only that from Kitty Hawk was considered official.

On May 19, 1938, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first airmail service, pilots W. J. Griffith and John D. Driskill flew two planes from Kitty Hawk carrying the mail. This was the fourth official mail.



Figure 8

An official special flight cover from Kitty Hawk with the purple cachet that was applied along with the newly released 6 cent airmail stamp. (Figure 8).



Figure 9

Dayton, Ohio did not participate in the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary first day services other than to have this cachet printed for National Airmail Week. (Figure 9) Strong feelings remain today over the role each state played in the first flight.



# CHARLOTTE AIRPORT MAIL FACILITIES

By Tony L. Crumbley

Beginning in the 1920's, the post office set up station at airports was called the Air Mail Field (AMF). The function of these facilities was to handle the mail at the airports seeing that mail got transferred from one route to another. Traditionally these operations did not conduct normal post office business – only the transfer of mail from plane to plane.

In November 1956, the name Air Mail Field was ordered changed to Airport Mail Facility. In 1959 the Post Office Department initiated a reorganization program under which the AMF was placed under the jurisdiction of the local postmaster.

AMF postmarks are found on covers during the 1920's. The only AMF to operate in North Carolina was in Charlotte. The Charlotte AMF was one of the later to open. The facility began operation on October 15, 1954 at Douglas Municipal Airport. Prior to that date, the mail had been worked by the RPO Transfer Office – later the RPO Terminal.

The original workforce consisted of 16 men. In late 1965 it still employed 16 men. In March 1959 it went under the jurisdiction of the Charlotte postmaster.

By 1965 the Charlotte AMF was serving 84 arrivals and departures daily. A weekly average of 7000 pounds was on loaded and 7500 pounds offloaded. The AMF personnel also emptied the drop box in the terminal lobby.

On August 17, 1969 the Charlotte AMF moved from the terminal to a new location on Police Club Road at Douglas Municipal Airport. By January 1970 dispatches of 12 tons of mail were being done by a staff of 37. A contract station at the airport was being operated separately in the airport terminal building conducting regular post office business.

On March 11, 1975 the AMF was converted to an air transfer office with all mail distributions being handled by the general mail facility.

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| CLT 1  | First used opening day – AMF Charlotte top – NC bottom 1954-1956                                |
| CLT 2  | AMF Charlotte NC PTS 1956-1975  |
| CLT 3  | Charlotte NC AMF 1963-1975  |
| CLT 4  | AMF Charlotte NC Top Tour 1, 2, 3 bottom 1963-1975  |
| CLT 4a | Same with tour removed 1971-1975  |
| CLT 5  | Transfer office cancel, Charlotte, NC ATO Registry Tour 1, 2 or 3 at top, USPO at bottom 1976-? |



CLT-2 Delta First Flight to Los Angeles, 1 Aug. 1958



CLT-2 Eastern First Flight to Chicago, 1 Apr 1959



CLT-3 Jet Air Mail Service via AM-8, 224 Apr 1966



CLT-3 Jet Air Mail Service via AM-98, 1 Aug 1967



# ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NORTH CAROLINA POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The North Carolina Postal History Society held its annual meeting at 2:30 PM, Saturday, 26 July 2003, at CHARPEX 2003 in Charlotte, NC. President Winter provided a summary of the society's financial condition, which is satisfactory, stating that it has improved during the past year due to the generosity of its members. The current membership is 87 as reported by the Secretary-Treasurer at the Board meeting.

*Postal Historian* editor Vernon Stroupe was unable to attend the meeting. Unexpectedly, he went to the hospital for treatment of pneumonia. President Winter expressed the hopes of all that Vernon would soon recover. He continues to do an outstanding job to bring a high quality journal to the members. President Winter gave a report of the status of the society's journal and indicated that the editor had a good backlog of articles for future journals. The entire year is being devoted to articles about North Carolina airmail collecting interests in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first manned flight at Kitty Hawk in

1903. When the year is finished, the journal will return to more balanced subjects.

Two new directors were elected to the Board of Directors for a three-year term. The new directors are Harvey Tilles and Vernon Stroupe, a current board member whose term is ending. Board members Ruth Wetmore and Alan Vestal, whose terms also were ending, are retiring after many years of service to the society.

The society will meet again next year at CHARPEX 2004 about the same time in the summer.

After the short, business meeting, the President introduced Clyde Jennings, who traveled to the show from Florida to be Chief Judge and accepted our invitation to speak to our members. At 87, Clyde is as energetic and enthusiastic about our hobby as ever. His talk, which could be likened to philatelic "sea stories" was very pleasant and clearly displayed his enthusiasm.

## Board of Directors Meeting

**July 26, 2003, Charpex, Charlotte**

Attending: John Allan, Bill DiPaolo, Allan Vestal, Ruth Wetmore, Richard Winter. Guest: Harvey Tilles

President Winter opened the meeting with an expression of concern for Journal Editor Vernon Stroupe who was recently hospitalized. Minutes of the last meeting were accepted as written.

Treasurer Bill DiPaolo reported as follows:

For year to date:  
Income: \$1479.60  
Expense: \$337.51  
Bank Balance: \$3277.63

In the absence of Mr. Stroupe, President Winter presented a brief report on the Journal reporting that there was currently a substantial backlog of articles for the publication. John Allan suggested that since there was a backlog and since finances were good, perhaps the size of the Journal could be increased. A general discussion of content ensued concluding with appreciation for Editor Stroupe and his work on the publication.

Treasurer reported membership at 87 with no significant collection problems.

President Winter then reported on some Society projects:

1. AUCTION: Starting slowly, the Society held its first auction starting slowly with 16 lots. The second auction is underway with 25 lots. Plans are to continue and grow the auction. Insurance has been purchased in the event of any auction related loss.
2. WEB SITE: Preliminary discussions are underway for the development of a Society web site that would provide access to the State of North Carolina's postal history database. The biggest issue is expense.

Officers nominated and elected for 2004 were:

President – Richard Winter  
Vice President – Harvey Tilles  
Sec/Treasurer – Bill DiPaolo

John Allan moved the election of these officers and Ruth Wetmore seconded. The election was unanimous.

It was announced that the next annual meeting would be once again at CHARPEX in July 2004 in Charlotte.

A general discussion took place focusing on the postal history database and web site. A motion to adjourn was made by Allan Vestal.



CALLING ALL MEMBER CYBER-FILES  
 THE *POSTAL HISTORIAN* HAS COMPILED A  
 MEMBERSHIP E-MAIL DIRECTORY  
 PLEASE SEND YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO

EDITOR VERNON STROUPE  
 at  
 vss@charter.net

## NEW MEMBERS

No New Members are  
 Reported this Quarter

## 2001 SUSTAINING MEMBERS

W. Bryson Bateman  
 Maurice Bursey  
 Terry Chappel  
 Tony L. Crumbley  
 Warren Dixon  
 J. Ron Edwards  
 John T. Hardy, Jr.  
 Roger Hinshaw  
 W. Clary Holt  
 Charles Jackson, DMV  
 Michael Kelley  
 Bonnie and Jay Smith  
 Carolyn Stillwell  
 Vernon S. Stroupe  
 Robert Taylor  
 Harvey Teal  
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 Richard Weiner  
 Richard F. Winter  
 North Carolina Department of Archives

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**Bold type indicates a new or changed address**

**YOUR CLASSIFIED AD CAN  
 BE HERE IN THE NEXT ISSUE !!!**