

## Aero-philately and the DC-3

By Donald N. Nelson

With a life-long interest in historical aircraft and more than 30 years in building a collection of aero-philatelic material, I have recently devoted full attention to the acquisition of stamps issued world-wide which depict the DC-3, the Dakota, or the C-47 Skytrain. After a search lasting more than two years, I have identified 77 countries with one or more issues that feature this venerable aircraft. The postal services of Curacao, Finland, Japan, the Netherlands East Indies, and Samoa have also issued stamps on which the DC-1 or the DC-2 appear.



Issues depicting the first three of the DC aircraft series include regular postage, air mail stamps, a U.S. postal card, and stamps known as semi-postals. Semi-postals are issued with a surcharge to raise funds for a special cause or for a charity such as flood relief. The earliest known semi-postals depicting DC aircraft are a set of three stamps issued by Japan in 1937 showing the Nakajima DC-2. The DC-2 appeared

again in 1938 on two semipostals issued by the Netherlands East Indies. Close-up views of the nose on both sides of the aircraft make these renderings a most attractive addition to any aero-philatelic collection.

The DC-3 first appeared on a Panama air mail stamp issue of 1937, having no particular relevance to the aircraft but commemorating the 50th anniversary of the fire department.

Regrettably, the U.S., the birthplace of the DC-3, has never issued a stamp for domestic use on which this historic aircraft has appeared. The only U.S. stamp showing the DC-3 is the U.S. Canal Zone air mail issue of 1939 which observes two milestones: the 10th anniversary of the first air mail service to the Zone and the 25th anniversary of the opening of the canal.

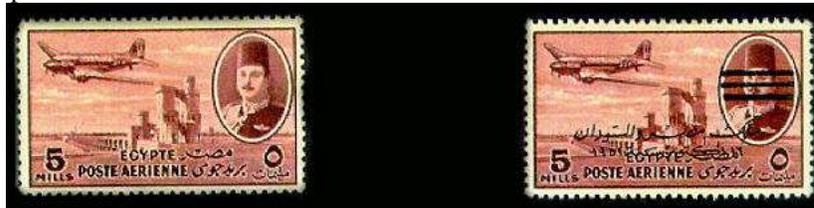
In 1988 the U.S. Postal Service issued a 36 cent air mail post card on which appears a colorful painting of a DC-3 being loaded with mail and in the lower left-hand corner, a drawing of two mail bags with the caption, "DC-3, 1938." Perhaps the year was chosen because in 1938 the U.S. Post Master, James Farley, designated May 15-21, as National Air Mail Week to commemorate the 20th anniversary of air mail service. Also, on October 18, 1938, the



Civil Aeronautics Board exempted nonscheduled carriers from having to obtain a "Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity." This allowed feeder airlines to provide passenger, mail, and cargo service to link smaller communities with major airline hubs - a role for which the DC-3 was well-suited - but which still does not explain why 1938 was a significant year.

Of special interest is the number of countries that have multiple issues of stamps that depict the DC-3. Egypt is the hands-down winner in this category with 54 air mail issues, all of the same design, printed in a series which began in 1947 and ended in 1953. The scene on the stamp is of a DC-3 making a low pass over the Delta Dam with an oval portrait of King Farouk in the upper right-hand corner.

There were two special issues in 1948 commemorating the inaugural flights of the "Services Aeriens Internationaux d' Egypte," from Cairo to Athens and Rome. When King Farouk was overthrown by Gamal Abdel Nasser, in 1953, two stamps of the same design were issued, but without the picture of the king. Later in the year, 24 of the stamps that had appeared between 1947 and 1952 were re-issued with three bars to obliterate the King's portrait.



With 35 stamps issued between 1938 and 1939, Venezuela ranks second in the number of issues that show the DC-3. These stamps are of three different designs in a variety of denominations. Twelve of the stamps portray the aircraft in flight over La Guaira, the Caracas airport; eleven show the plane flying over the National Pantheon located in the Central Plaza of the capital and twelve feature the aircraft over the oil wells that spout from the lake near the western city of Maracaibo.



Between 1941 and 1956, Chile issued a series of air mail stamps on which various types of aircraft appeared. In this group were 15 stamps of different design showing the DC-3. As they are mixed in with the series, they can be identified only by denomination and color. The most striking are the 2-peso issues (rose lake, orange red and red brown). These show a close-up view of the nose and windscreen from the starboard side, showing the whirling propellers of the port engine, and the left wing superimposed on a compass.

Many issues depicting the DC-3 display accurate renditions drawn by talented artists. Others are reproductions of actual photographs, transferred to the engraver's plate and printed in vivid colors. Examples include stamps issued by Turkey in 1954 that feature the DC-3 in three renditions: on the tarmac at two different airports and one in flight. The colors are various shades of blue. Thirty-two countries identify the aircraft by name as either the DC-3, Douglas Dakota, or the C-47.



One of the stamps most coveted by U.S. collectors is the 24 cent air mail "Inverted Jenny" issued in 1918 for use on the inaugural flights of the first official air mail service that began in May of that year. The inverted center error which got the stamp its nickname, occurred when a sheet was fed into the press facing the wrong direction, thus making the airplane appear to be flying upside down. Only one pane of 100 stamps is known to have been printed. In 1978, the Republic of Mali issued a "stamp on a stamp" featuring the inverted Jenny and a DC-3. Printing in red, blue and white, with the large size (40 mm x 40 mm) made it possible to portray the inverted Jenny and the DC-3 in great detail.

Stamps depicting the DC-3 have been issued in all but twelve of the 60 years since the day of the first roll-out on December 17, 1935. It might be assumed that most would have appeared in the 1940s and 1950s when this aircraft was the mainstay in the fleets of almost every airline throughout the world. However, even in the 1960s the DC-3 was still the airplane of choice for the airlines being established by the newly independent countries of the Third World.



In the 1970s and 1980s, the DC-3 was used to commemorate the anniversaries of the more well-established airlines. During the 1980s, a DC-3 stamp was issued by at least one country every year. During the past two years, the air-

craft has appeared again on souvenir sheets in recognition of major historical events. Some examples are the stamps issued in 1993 by the British Indian Ocean Territory and those issued by the Isle of Jersey showing the Dakota as part of a series marking the 75th anniversary of the RAF.



Souvenir sheets featuring the C47 were issued by four countries in the British Commonwealth and by Nicaragua to commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-Day. These souvenir stamps highlight the important role played by the fleet of Skytrains as they carried the battle far behind enemy lines, towing troop-filled gliders and dropping parachutists to capture strategic river crossings and bridges.



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