



# Smithsonian

*National Air and Space Museum*

## Basil Lee Rowe First Day Air Mail Covers

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2020

National Air and Space Museum Archives  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Air and Space Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Basil Lee Rowe First Day Covers
<b>Date:</b>	1927-1957 (bulk 1928-1931)
<b>Identifier:</b>	NASM.XXXX.0487
<b>Creator:</b>	Rowe, Basil Lee
<b>Extent:</b>	0.05 Cubic feet (1 folder)
<b>Language:</b>	This collection is predominantly in English, with some Spanish language materials.
<b>Summary:</b>	This collection consists of first day air mail covers collected by pilot and philatelic enthusiast Basil Lee Rowe, predominantly during his career as an airline pilot for Pan American Airways (PAA) in the Caribbean area in the period 1927-1931. Collection includes covers carried by Charles A. Lindbergh in his Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis" during his tour of the Caribbean in February 1928, and covers autographed by many of the early airline pilots who carried them, including Cy Caldwell, Edwin Musik, Caspar D. Swinson, Charles R. Parmelee, and Rowe himself.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Basil Lee Rowe via Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences, Gift, 1965, NASM.XXXX.0487

### Related Materials

See related collection [Basil Lee Rowe Collection, NASM.XXXX.0019](#) .

### Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Melissa A. N. Keiser, 2020.

### Preferred Citation

Basil Lee Rowe First Day Air Mail Covers, Acc. NASM.XXXX.0487, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

No restrictions on access

### Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Basil Lee Rowe (1896-1973) enjoyed a long and successful career in aviation, initially as a military exhibition pilot, barnstormer, air racer, charter operator, flight instructor, aircraft salesman, and rumrunner, before moving to the West Indies to start an airline, the short-lived West Indian Aerial Express, bought out by Pan American Airways in 1928. Rowe became a pioneering senior pilot for Pan Am, flying with them for 28 years before his retirement in 1956.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection consists of first day air mail covers collected by Basil Rowe, predominantly during his career as a pilot in the Caribbean area. Most of the air mail was carried by West Indian Aerial Express (WIAE) or Pan American Airways (PAA) between Florida and islands in the Caribbean or Caribbean ports in Central and South America. Some of the first day covers are autographed by the pilots of the flights (including Cy Caldwell, Edwin Musik, Caspar D. Swinson, Charles R. Parmelee, and Rowe himself) or other noted aviators such as Dean C. Smith, or public officials such as Theodore Roosevelt III, then Governor of Puerto Rico. One group of covers were carried by Charles A. Lindbergh in the Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis" during his tour of the Caribbean in February 1928. Following the covers is an annotated price list; note that not all items listed are part of this collection. Also included at the end of the collection are PAA forms used by two non-PAA pilots for flights inbound to Miami, Florida, from Havana, Cuba, in July 1931: James Goodwin Hall in his Lockheed Altair "The Crusader" (r/n NR-15W), and Frank M. Hawks in his Travel Air Mystery Ship "Texaco 13" (r/n NR-1313).

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## Arrangement

Air mail covers are arranged in chronological order; documents appear following the covers at the end of the collection.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Air mail service
- Air mail stamps -- United States
- Airlines

Names:

- Lindbergh, Charles A. (Charles Augustus), 1902-1974
- Pan American Airways Corporation
- Pan American World Airways, Inc.
- West Indian Aerial Express

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## Container Listing

Box 109 (Shared), Folder 1	First Day Covers, 1927
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 1, Item 1	<a href="#">Key West, Florida (USA) to Havana (Cuba), October 19, 1927</a> Notes: On October 19, 1927, the first Pan American Airways flight from Key West, Florida (USA) to Havana (Cuba) was made in the Fairchild FC-2W "La Nina" chartered from West Indian Aerial Express; cover has been signed by WIAE pilot Cy Caldwell.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 1, Item 2	<a href="#">Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) to Port-au-Prince (Haiti), December 5, 1927</a> Notes: Starting December 1, 1927, West Indian Aerial Express, using their Keystone Pathfinder "Santa Maria," inaugurated service from their base at Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) east to San Juan, Puerto Rico (USA), and west to Port-au-Prince (Haiti) and Havana (Cuba). Cover has been signed by WIAE pilot Basil Rowe.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 2	First Day Covers, 1928
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 2, Item 1	<a href="#">Lindbergh "Spirit of St. Louis"; Santo Domingo to Havana Flights, February 6-7, 1928</a> Notes: These covers were carried by Charles A. Lindbergh in the Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis" between Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) via Port-au-Prince (Haiti) to Havana (Cuba) during his tour of the Caribbean in February 1928.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 2, Item 2	<a href="#">"Air Mail Greetings" to Lindbergh, February 8, 1928</a> Notes: "Air Mail Greetings" sent between Key West, Florida (USA) and Havana (Cuba) during Charles Lindbergh's visit in the Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis" to Havana during his tour of the Caribbean in February 1928. Covers have been signed by Pan American Airways (PAA) pilot Edwin Musick.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 2, Item 3	<a href="#">West Indian Aerial Express (WIAE) Service to Santiago de Cuba (Cuba), February 20-24, 1928</a> Notes: Beginning February 20, 1928, West Indian Aerial Express, using the Keystone Pathfinder "Santa Maria," added service to Santiago de Cuba (Cuba) to their existing westbound route between Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) via Port-au-Prince (Haiti) to Havana (Cuba). Eastbound service on this route connected to San Juan, Puerto Rico (USA). Covers have been signed by WIAE pilot Basil Rowe.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 2, Item 4	<a href="#">San Juan, Puerto Rico (USA) to Havana (Cuba), October 15, 1928</a>

Notes: On October 15, 1928, Pan American Airways inaugurated air mail service between San Juan, Puerto Rico (USA) and Havana (Cuba). Cover has been signed by pilot Basil Rowe, former WIAE pilot now employed by PAA.

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 2, Item 5

[Port-au-Prince \(Haiti\) to New York, New York \(USA\), October 16, 1928](#)

Notes: On October 16, 1928, Pan American Airways inaugurated air mail service between Port-au-Prince (Haiti) and New York City (USA). Cover has been signed by ex-WIAE pilot Basil Rowe, flying the ex-WIAE Keystone Pathfinder "Santa Maria."

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 2, Item 6

[Pan American Airways, Miami to Atlanta Service \(C.A.M. 25\), December 1, 1928](#)

Notes: On December 1, 1928, Pan American Airways inaugurated service on US contract air mail route (C.A.M.) 25 between Miami (via Jacksonville), Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia.

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 3

First Day Covers, 1929

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 3, Item 1

[Pan American Airways, Miami to Puerto Rico Service \(F.A.M. 6\), January 9, 1929](#)

Notes: Pan American Airways, who had been awarded the contract for U.S. foreign air mail route (F.A.M.) 6 between Miami, Florida (USA), Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Puerto Rico (USA) inaugurated service on January 9, 1929. Covers in this group are either signed by PAA pilot Basil Rowe, or addressed to Rowe.

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 3, Item 2

[Pan American Airways, Miami to Nicaragua Service \(F.A.M. 5\), May 15-16, 1929](#)

Notes: First air mail flight from Managua (Nicaragua) to Miami, Florida (USA), part of U.S. foreign air mail route (F.A.M.) 5, on May 15, 1929; signed by PAA pilot C. D. [Caspar Dorman] Swinson, and addressed to Rowe.

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 3, Item 3

[Cristóbal, Canal Zone \(USA\) \[Panama\] to Guayaquil \(Ecuador\), May 17, 1929](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 3, Item 4

[Colón \(Panama\) to Miami, Florida \(USA\), May 22, 1929](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 3, Item 5

[Cristóbal, Canal Zone \(USA\) \[Panama\] to Bogota \(Colombia\), June 21, 1929](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 3, Item 6

[Mérida, Yucatan \(Mexico\) to Miami, Florida \(USA\), June 30, 1929](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 3, Item 7

[Miami, Florida \(USA\) to Georgetown \(British Guiana\) \[Guyana\], September 12, 1929](#)

Box 109 (Shared), Folder 3, Item 8	<a href="#">Honduras to Miami, Florida (USA), September 21, 1929</a> Notes: Signed by PAA pilot S. J. Williamson.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 3, Item 9	<a href="#">Cozumel (Mexico) to Mérida, Yucatan (Mexico), November 13, 1929</a> Notes: Signed by PAA pilot Basil L. Rowe flying Pan American Airways (PAA) Sikorsky S-38B (r/n NC304N).
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 3, Item 10	<a href="#">St. Petersburg, Florida (USA) to Miami, Florida (USA), December 14, 1929</a>
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 4	First Day Covers, 1930
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 4, Item 1	<a href="#">Guatemala to Miami, Florida (USA), March 21, 1930</a>
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 4, Item 2	<a href="#">Cristóbal, Canal Zone (USA) [Panama] to Miami, Florida (USA), April 30, 1930</a> Notes: Signed by Charles A. Lindbergh.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 4, Item 3	<a href="#">Cristóbal, Canal Zone (USA) [Panama] to Caracas (Venezuela), May 5, 1930</a>
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 4, Item 4	<a href="#">Dean C. Smith, Panama Canal Zone to Miami, Florida (USA), May 14, 1930</a> Notes: Covers in this group for a flight from Cristóbal, Canal Zone (USA) [Panama] to Miami, Florida (USA) are signed by Dean C. Smith, a pilot on the first Byrd Antarctic Expedition (B.A.E.) of 1928-1930, possibly as he was on his way home from Antarctica to the United States.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 4, Item 5	<a href="#">Brownsville, Texas (USA) to La Guaira (Venezuela), November 29, 1930</a> Notes: Signed by PAA pilot E. G. Shultz.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 4, Item 6	<a href="#">Cristóbal, Canal Zone (USA) [Panama] to Miami, Florida (USA), December 3, 1930</a>
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 5	First Day Covers, 1931
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 5, Item 1	<a href="#">San Juan, Puerto Rico (USA) to Maturin (Venezuela), February 10, 1931</a> Notes: Signed by PAA pilot F. V. Clark and several dignitaries, including Theodore Roosevelt III, Governor of Puerto Rico.
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 5, Item 2	<a href="#">Colón (Panama) to Port of Spain, Trinidad (British West Indies) [Trinidad and Tobago], February 11, 1931</a> Notes: Signed by PAA pilot Charles R. Parmelee, flying Pan American Airways (PAA) Sikorsky S-38B (r/n NC-309N).
Box 109 (Shared), Folder 5, Item 3	<a href="#">Maracaibo (Venezuela) to Port of Spain, Trinidad (British West Indies) [Trinidad and Tobago], February 12, 1931</a>

Notes: Signed by pilot PAA F. V. Clark, flying Pan American Airways (PAA) Sikorsky S-38B (r/n NC-9137).

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 5, Item 4

[Maracaibo \(Venezuela\) to Port of Spain, Trinidad \(British West Indies\) \[Trinidad and Tobago\], February 12, 1931](#)

Notes: Signed by PAA pilot Charles R. Parmelee.

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 5, Item 5

[San Salvador \(El Salvador\) to Nassau \(The Bahamas\), June 27-29, 1931](#)

Notes: Signed by PAA pilot E. G. Shultz.

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 5, Item 6

[San Salvador \(El Salvador\) to Caracas \(Venezuela\), July 1, 1931](#)

Notes: Signed by PAA pilot F. V. Clark.

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 5, Item 7

[Cienfuegos \(Cuba\) to Kingston \(Jamaica\), November 19, 1931](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 5, Item 8

[Miami, Florida \(USA\) to Cienfuegos \(Cuba\), November 20, 1931](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 5, Item 9

[Miami, Florida \(USA\) to Nuevitas \(Cuba\), December 4, 1931](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 6

First Day Covers, 1937-1957

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 6, Item 1

[Belo Horizonte \(Brazil\) to Rio de Janeiro \(Brazil\), March 19, 1937](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 6, Item 2

[Sacramento, California \(USA\) to Coral Gables, Florida \(USA\), April 3, 1940](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 6, Item 3

[Seattle, Washington \(USA\) to Miami, Florida \(USA\), June 20, 1940](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 6, Item 4

[Pan American World Airways Direct Route, New York, New York \(USA\) to Nassau \(The Bahamas\), February 21, 1957](#)

Notes: Inauguration of Pan American World Airways direct service between New York, New York (USA) and Nassau (The Bahamas) on U.S. foreign air mail route (F.A.M.) 5.

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 7

[Rowe Air Mail Covers Price Listing](#)

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 8

[Flight Documents, Inward Manifest of Airplane, Havana \(Cuba\) to Miami \(Florida, USA\), July 1931](#)

Notes: Pan American Airways "Inward Manifest of Airplane" Customs declaration forms used by non-PAA pilots for flights inbound to the United States (Miami, Florida) from Havana, Cuba.



Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 8, Item 1

J. Goddwin Hall [sic, James Goodwin Hall], Lockheed Model 8-D Altair  
"The Crusader" (r/n NR-15W), flight from Havana (Cuba) to Miami  
(Florida, USA), July 20, 1931

Box 109 (Shared),  
Folder 8, Item 2

Frank M. Hawks, Travel Air Model R, Serial R-2004 (Mystery Ship,  
Mystery S) (J-6) "Texaco 13" (r/n NR-1313), flight from Havana (Cuba) to  
Miami (Florida, USA), July 23, 1931