

From First Flight to Disaster - Zeppelin *Hindenburg*

Synopsis

PURPOSE:

This exhibit will showcase the history of the most famous (or infamous) rigid airship, *LZ-129 Hindenburg*, through the display of covers and postal history. Construction of *LZ-129* began in Friedrichshafen in March 1932, and by the time she was walked out of the hanger for her first flight on March 4, 1936, she was already recognized as the most luxurious passenger airship ever built. The *Hindenburg* entered service at a time when German airships set the standard for reliable passenger service - the *Graf Zeppelin* had already completed over 250 successful flights throughout the world without a single passenger injury. Although the *Hindenburg* launched with much promise and fanfare, she is best remembered for the fiery end of her 1st trans-Atlantic flight of 1937 at Lakehurst, New Jersey.

TREATMENT:

The demand for flown zeppelin mail by aviation enthusiasts was strong in the two decades preceding the Second World War. Collectors wanted a piece of mail carried on the giant airships, and the cards and covers included in this exhibit show how zeppelin mail was kept as treasured keepsakes. This exhibit includes cards and covers from the *Hindenburg's* first flight that carried mail right up to the final flight that ended in disaster.

RARITY:

Carrying mail was a major source of revenue for the Deutsche Zeppelin-Reederei (DZR, the airline that operated the German rigid airships) and most flights were announced in advance so collectors could arrange to have their mail onboard. For the *Hindenburg's* first mail-carrying flight, over 40,000 pieces were received in Friedrichshafen and loaded on the zeppelin. *Hindenburg* carried almost 1060 kg of mail in 60 mail sacks on its first flight to North America, and over 860 kgs on the return flight. Covers from most of the zeppelin's flights are still readily available in the market. Of the 17,000 pieces of mail carried on the last flight of the *Hindenburg*, just over 360 covers and cards survived the fire and were rescued and processed by the United States Post Office Department. The crash cover included in this exhibit was certified as genuine in 1993 by both The German Philatelic Society (certificate #3/127) and by Dr. Joachim Simon (certificate 51/1993).

REFERENCES (in alphabetical order)

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