

Philippines International Airmails up to 1941

This exhibit shows the development of airmail services from the Philippines. Starting with the first international flight in 1925, the period of coverage ends with the entry of Japan into the war on 7 December 1941.

The Philippines is best known in aerophilately as the Asian terminus for the Pan-Am Clipper Transpacific service from San Francisco. However, airmail from Manila to Europe is more interesting. Because there were only occasional flights connecting Manila to the Asian mainland, most mail was carried by sea to either Singapore or Hong Kong to be carried by regular flights to Europe.

The exhibit is divided into two sections. Section 1 deals with the development of mail services travelling westward to Europe or to destinations in Asia or Australia. Section 2 shows mail which went across the Pacific. Both sections are treated chronologically. Most covers in the exhibit were carried by regular commercial air services. Some development and pioneer flights are important to the story: covers carried on such flights were philatelically inspired, so the exhibit tries to show letters which continued in the normal mail to other destinations.

Section 1 - Travelling Westward.

Almost all of this mail went by sea to either Singapore or Hong Kong, before commencing the flight. This gave rise to many interesting aspects: endorsements in Philippines to ensure which route and whether by British Imperial or Dutch KLM airline; and markings in Singapore and HK such as onward air transport (AV2 markings) and censorship. To add further spice, Philippine airmail rates depended on whether the item was sent to Singapore or to HK.

The rates are quite involved for mail travelling westward. Little documentary evidence has survived to confirm the rates or the dates of effect, because of the wartime destruction of the Manila General Post Office and its archives. The philatelic literature has no description of rates to Europe before 1936. The exhibitor has analysed rates on surviving covers to deduce eleven separate rate structures for airmail to Europe, over six time periods from the first airmail to Europe in 1933 until the air route to Europe ceased in 1940.

Subsection	Period	Pages
Pioneer international flights	1925-33	2-8
French Airlines	1933	9-14
All airmail via Singapore	1933-36	15-28
Special flights from Manila	1935-36	29-34
Choice of Singapore or HK, pre-WW2	1936-39	35-63
WW2 mail and disruptions	1939-41	64-87

Section 2 - Travelling Eastward across the Pacific.

This Section has less variations than Section 1, because Manila was a major port on the route. The first Pan-Am Clipper flight across the Pacific departed Manila on 2 December 1935, and stopped at Guam and Honolulu on its way to San Francisco. As well as mail to the United States, the exhibit shows covers to Guam, Hawaii, and elsewhere in the Americas.

Forerunners	1931-35	88-90
1P 50c rate	1935-37	91-102
1P rate	1937-41	103-113
WW2 mail via US to Europe	1939-41	114-122
WW2 mail via or to Manila	1939-41	123-128

Mail to Europe could be carried across the Pacific and then the Atlantic. This became the main route to Europe by mid-1940, but the exhibit has covers by this route before World War 2.

General Notes

Subsections show related items. On the first page of each subsection, a summary is shown on a shaded background. The origin, date and destination of each cover is shown in a consistent way.

The exhibit contains many scarce items. Although 90 covers have a scarcity of 10-or-less known, **a thick red border is reserved for covers of major importance.**

The Philippines currency was 100 centavos to 1 Peso, abbreviated to **c** and **P**.

1 U.S. cent = 2 centavos.

Rates had various components. **Airmail by Pan-Am** was in 15g units. **Airmail by non-US carriers** was in 5g units from late 1934. **Letter (or foreign) component** to non-USA was 12c (16c to mid-1936) for first 20g, and 6c (8c to mid-1936) for each extra 20g. **Registration** was a flat fee of 20c.

References

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