

My visit to Aerophilately 2022

A memory to be treasured

By Piyush Khaitan

Aerophilately 2022 was held at the American Philatelic Center (APC), Bellefonte, Pennsylvania U.S.A. between Friday - Sunday, November 4-6 2022. I was fortunate to attend the show for the entire duration. This is the third such event organized by the American Air Mail Society (AAMS) with the previous shows in 2007 and 2014. The timing was fantastic as it also coincided with the centenary of the American Air Mail Society and was celebrated with a cake cutting, beverages and hors d'oeuvres on Friday.



Centenary of American Air Mail Society - Cake

The APC is a very large facility housed in former match factory. It hosts a massive library, gift shop, lots of wall displays, expertising center and spaces for seminars and exhibitions. I would like to go back someday and spend a week just browsing through their library.



Library & Reading room.



Inverted Jenny – Tapestry on the wall 4'x4' approx.



Stamp perforating machine.



Holocaust stamp project.



The AAMS is perhaps the most active Air Mail society in the world and publishes the Airpost Journal, conducts regular auctions, conducts physical and zoom meetings, organizes conventions, and publishes a plethora of literature.



American Air Mail Society Badge

Aerophilately 2022 was extremely well organized with a 200+ frame competitive event with 8 frame and 1 frame exhibits. The superb standard of exhibits was clearly visible given the high caliber of exhibitors and jury. This naturally resulted in a number of Large Gold and Gold medals being awarded. It was really exciting for me to see exhibits prepared by so many collectors and researchers who's books I refer to constantly as background material for my own collection. Prominent exhibitors included the who's who of American Aerophilately like Dr. Murray Abrahamson, Brian Callan, David Crotty, Alfredo Frohlich, Cheryl Ganz, James Graue, A.D. Jones, Jon Krupnick, Jerzy Kupiec-Weglinski, Seymon Melamed, Ray Simrak, George Struble, Bradley Wilde & Ratomir Zivkovic, all of whom won Large Gold (90 points or more) for 8 frame exhibits. Additionally, special awards were provided by prominent auction houses like H.A. Harmer, Schulyer J. Rumsey, Robert A. Siegel who were the main sponsors and by Cheryl Ganz.



Exhibits on display



Zeppelin collectors group photo.



Workshop in progress

spoke at length about the show which promises to be a grand affair, and I encourage all of you to plan well ahead for this one.

Socializing and networking was given prominence as well. The show hotel, the Best Western, had a hospitality suite that was kept open from 7 pm onwards every evening. There was a cake cutting and light cocktails and pizza on Friday, and the Banquets and Awards Dinner on Saturday. All the people there were so very nice, and they made sure I got a ride to and back from the show and other events every day and never had to eat a meal alone throughout. This helped me get to know many air mail collectors with whom I plan to keep in touch.

There were several dealer stalls with specialized airmail dealers bringing their finest stock, and prominent auction houses present as well. Much to my surprise, I was able to pick up some interesting Indian Airmail related material.



Dealer Bourse

All delegates were gifted a book 'Mail in the Air – Writings about Aerophilately' containing eight well written pieces about various aspects about Air Mail published specially for the occasion. The three days had non-stop day long events talks on Aerophilately. For me hearing Ken Sanford, David Crotty, Ken Lawrence, Dan Gribbin and others speak was an education. A book signing event was organized where four authors (Ganz, Krupnik, Kupiec-Weglinski and Ball) were there to launch and sign books written by them. We also had a curtain raiser for Boston 2026 International Exhibition by Yamil Kouri the Commissioner for the 2026 event. He

The Banquets and Awards Dinner was held at the Marriott Toftrees Golf Resort. A surprise for everyone was to be entertained by Dan Gribbin, the AAMS vice president, on his guitar throughout the cocktail hour. This was followed by the Awards Ceremony and the Sit-Down dinner. The speeches started with a welcome by Stephen Reinhard (show chairman), and then the keynote by Cheryl Ganz. Ms. Ganz is a Smithsonian Institutional Curator Emeritus and authority on Airship Mail (one of my favorite topics), having authored many books on the subject. She spoke about the efforts made to align jury and evaluation criteria for airmail exhibits with special requirements of the subject which are a little different from regular exhibiting. She then went into the main theme 'Seven reasons why you should collect air mails'. The talk presented a very interesting perspective and made a lot of sense to me. Finally, there was the awards ceremony which went off with much cheering and goodwill.



Keynote speaker



Cocktail Reception



Gala Dinner

One of the big surprises for me was the 'Grand Clearance' of surplus books by the AAMS. They had literally hundreds of books strewn about in the reception and were encouraging delegates to take home as many as they liked for free. I have never seen anything like it and was fortunate to get the 3 vol. American Air Mail Catalogue (6th Edition) and about 6-7 other very useful books.



Books distribution

Bellefonte has a proud association with U.S. Airmail service and a display was mounted on the wall inside with several iconic and rare memorabilia on display. Also, outside the building, by the serene river there was a memorial stone dedicated to Pioneer Flyers of America.



Airmail History of Bellefonte



Dedication Stone – outside the APS



The author outside American Philatelic Center

I returned to Chicago on Sunday evening very tired but extremely satisfied after perhaps the best 3 days I ever had at a stamp show. I do hope we do not have to wait another 7 years for the next event.