

## St. Lucia Airmail, 1929/30

Airmail in the Caribbean developed in the late 1920s with routes first established between the U.S.A. and Cuba, Puerto Rico and The Bahamas.

In September 1929 the Foreign Airmail Contract (FAM) route No6, which the United States Post Office had awarded to Pan American Airways, was extended from San Juan, Puerto Rico to Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, via the Leeward and Windward Islands.

Other territories in the region were gradually included in the air mail routes operated by either Pan American Airways or the New York, Rio and Buenos Aires Airline.

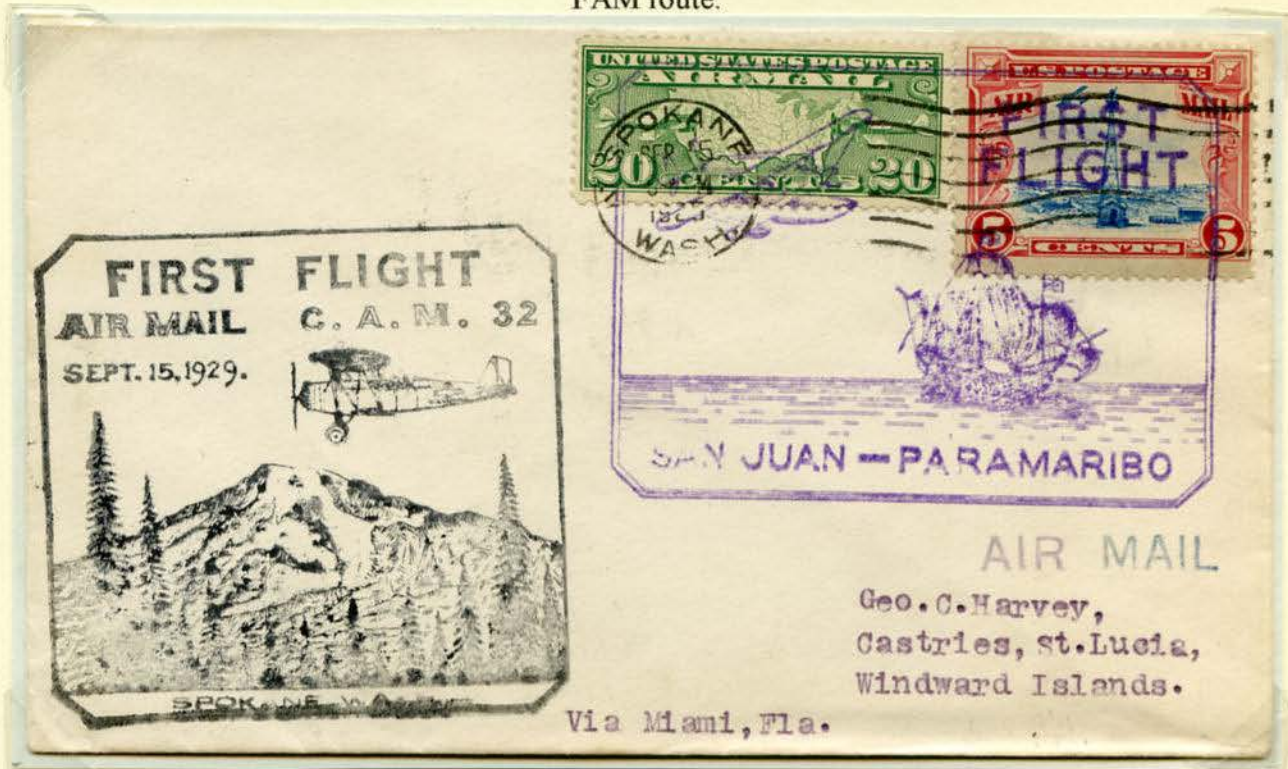
This exhibit shows how St Lucia was involved in the developing air mail system.

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# First Southbound Flight

## Double First Flight Covers

Internal air mail routes were being expanded in the USA at this time and enterprising collectors tried to get covers flown on the first flight of an internal route connecting with the first flight of a FAM route.



First flight of CAM 32 from Spokane to Pasco and Seattle.  
 Thence by CAMs 5; 18; 30 and 25 to connect with FAM 6 in Miami.



First flight cover of CAM 19 from Camden NJ. To Atlanta GA. And then by CAM 25 to Miami where it was transferred to FAM 6.

## First Southbound Flight

Posted in Norwich, Connecticut on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1929 and carried on internal mail flights CAM 18 and 25 connecting with the first flight of FAM 6 extension.

It is unusual for covers posted elsewhere in the United States not to be re-marked at Miami and/or San Juan



Covers intended for the extension flight of FAM 6 would have been held in Miami and postmarked again there on 20<sup>th</sup> September before being sent on to San Juan.

This cover bears the first flight cachet and a Castries datestamp of 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

## First Southbound Flight

### Trans-shipment cover

This cover is from The International General Electric Company of Porto Rico, addressed to Bogota, Colombia, and is annotated "via Barbados".

It was posted in San Juan on September 13<sup>th</sup> and held there awaiting the southbound flight. The cover bears the first flight cachet.



The cover was off-loaded at Castries and sent by boat to Barbados where it was backstamped on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. It then went by ship to Baranquilla, on the Colombian coast, where it arrived on October 11<sup>th</sup> and thence overland to Bogota where it arrived on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

Trans-shipment covers from this flight are unusual.

## First Southbound Flight

### Intermediate points of call

Stops on the route included Saint Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands and Saint John's, Antigua.

At all stops mail was exchanged.

Cover to Castries from Saint Thomas, with a machine cancel.

The flight cachet must have been carried on the aircraft as it ties the stamp.



There were fewer than 150 covers from Antigua to Saint Lucia and they did not have the flight cachet applied.

## First Southbound Flight

### Southbound from Saint Lucia

To mark the introduction of air mail, the Colonial Postmaster had a special canceller made.

It read "Castries / 1<sup>st</sup> / air mail / St. Lucia"

This was used to cancel the stamps with the datestamp applied elsewhere on the cover.



One of 318 pieces addressed to Trinidad



One of 50 covers flown from Castries to British Guiana.

No covers from St. Lucia to Paramaribo have been recorded

Stamps printed by De La Rue & Co. on multiple script CA paper, perforated 14.

## First Northbound Flight

### Northbound to Saint Lucia

To mark the introduction of air mail

The Colonial Postmaster introduced a special cachet.

The aircraft left Paramaribo on September 25<sup>th</sup> and called at Georgetown and Port of Spain, where it was delayed by a fault.



Only 97 pieces were addressed to St. Lucia.

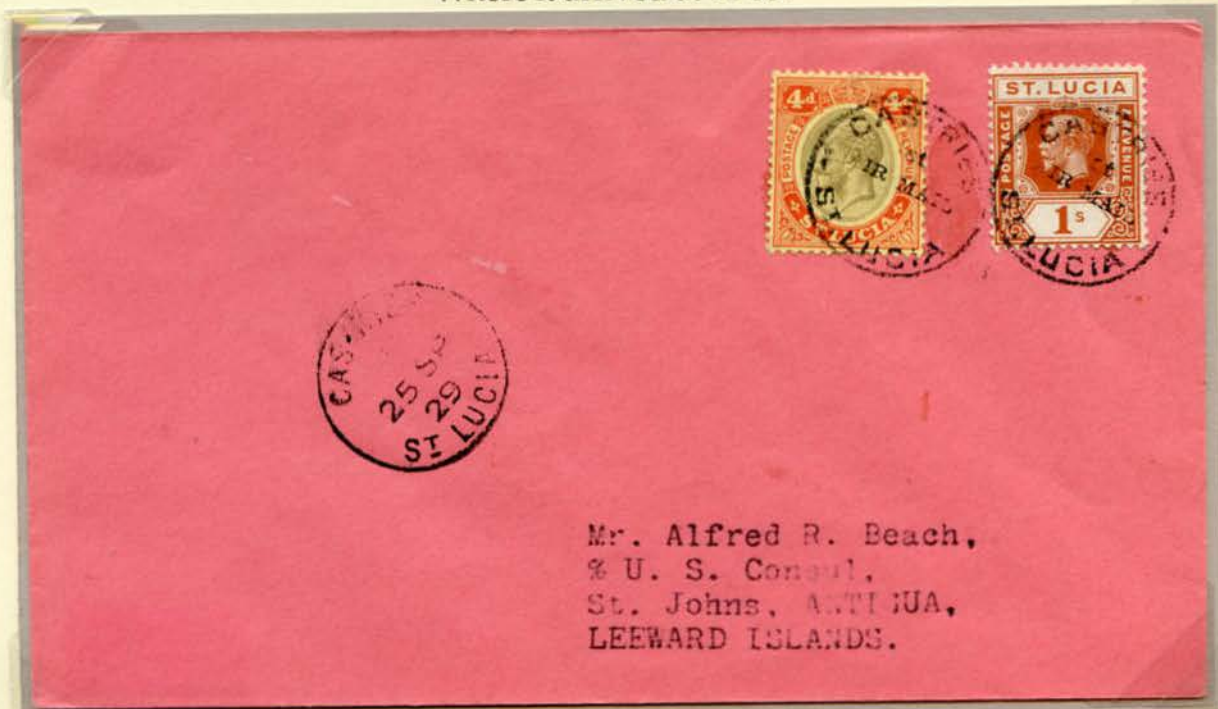


266 covers are recorded from Port of Spain to Castries.

## First Northbound Flight

### Northbound from Saint Lucia

The aircraft from Trinidad, now piloted by Jack Tilton arrived at Castries at 8-40 and after exchanging mail left for Antigua. Where it arrived at 11-55.



The initial air mail rate to Antigua was 1/4d but some letters were carried for 8d. which was the rate to American Islands.

The rate to Antigua was reduced to 8d in November



## First Northbound Flight

### Northbound from Saint Lucia

A total of about 1900 items were loaded at Castries to northerly destinations.



Cover to San Juan, one of 541, but signed by the pilot, Jack Tilton.



Only 22 items addressed to Havana were carried on this flight.

# Cachet

## Special canceller used as a cachet

As a means of marking air mail the Colonial Postmaster removed "1<sup>st</sup>" from the canceller and used it as a cachet on airmail letters between October and December.



Southbound cover to British Guiana,



Latest known cover bearing the cachet, 13<sup>th</sup> December to New York.

## First Flight from Bahamas

### First air mail from The Bahamas.

FAM 7 from Nassau to Miami was initiated on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1929 but from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1930 it became possible to send mail to Saint Lucia by a transfer to FAM 6 at Miami.

The cover has the cachets for the first flight to St. Lucia and also the first daily flight to Miami, 1930.



This registered cover was initially datestamped 1st January 1929 and then corrected to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1930.

It has a transit stamp of San Juan for 4<sup>th</sup> January and a Castries arrival date of January 5<sup>th</sup>.

The cover was returned to Dr. Hess in Nassau, arriving on January 20<sup>th</sup>, Having passed through New York on January 16<sup>th</sup>.

# First Northbound Flight

First air mail by NYRBA line.

Incoming mail from British Guiana and Trinidad.  
This flight arrived at Castries on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1930.  
The flight originated in Buenos Aires on February 19<sup>th</sup>.  
and had four changes of aircraft on the way north due to crashes.



# First Northbound Flight

First air mail by NTRBA line

First NYRBA flight from St. Lucia

24<sup>th</sup> February 1930

Carried in Sikorsky S-38, "San Juan", serial NC944M,

piloted by Captain Cobb,

to Miami, where it was impounded by the United States Postal Authority.



Although NYRBA had a contract with St. Lucia to carry mail to New York they had no authority from the American postal authority to carry mail within the U.S.A. so this cover was impounded at Miami.

Covers from this flight are known as "outlaw covers".

## First Flight from Haiti

First air mail by NYRBA line from Haiti.

7<sup>th</sup> March 1930.

The cover was cancelled at Port Au Prince on 6<sup>th</sup> February to await the flight which left Miami on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

There is a Castries arrival mark for February 8<sup>th</sup>.



Only a small number of covers were flown on this stage of the flight which then inaugurated the first southbound dispatch of mail from St. Lucia by NYRBA.

## First Flight from Barbados

Only air mail by NYRBA line from Barbados

8<sup>th</sup> April 1930

This cover was carried on a route proving flight from Barbados  
via St. Lucia to the United States

At this time ships of the United States Navy were on a courtesy visit to Barbados  
and many sailors took the opportunity to send air mail letters back home.



Only 44 items are recorded addressed to Saint Lucia.

The aircraft was a Consolidated flying boat named "Cuba"; serial NC660M,  
flown by Captain Sewell.

The proposed route was never developed  
as NYRBA was absorbed by Pan American on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1930

## First Flight from Montserrat

### Delayed air mail from Montserrat.

20<sup>th</sup> June 1930.

A flight by NYRBA line from Montserrat was scheduled for June 1930 but due to bad weather it did not take place.

The covers which had been prepared for the flight were then held over at the G.P.O. in Plymouth.



On 24<sup>th</sup> February 1931 H.M.S. Dorsetshire called at Montserrat and the Captain was persuaded to allow his Fairey F III floatplane to carry the held over mail to the ship's next port of call at St. Kitts.

The mail was then forwarded from St. Kitts.

Only 19 items are thought to have been addressed to St. Lucia very few of which were registered covers.