

# The Arctic Air Mercy Flight labels: An Alaskan Mystery

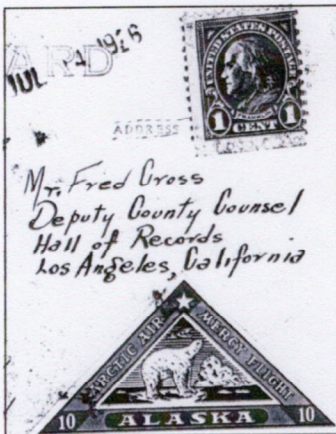


These labels are a great mystery of Alaskan philately. There are 40 varieties, 10 color combinations, 2 paper types, three types of borders, and no one knows where they came from.

The chief speculation has been that they were related to the response to the diphtheria epidemic in Nome in January 1925. But the timing of the events around the epidemic don't work for label production.

They also could have been made for later "mercy flights" of other sorts.

It has also been speculated that they were created for the stamp trade and that there was no "mercy flight" involved.



There is an Alaska postcard with a label and a 1926 date, but the date is not a postmark, and the label is not well tied to the card. So, it is not the best example.

A not great copy of the card is shown to the left.



Another clue is that in April 1925 the following series was issued by Norway to fund a polar flight by Roald Amundsen (Scott 104-110). The vignette of the Norwegian stamps is too close to the mercy flight labels not to have influenced the design of the labels.

The most recent item to come to light was an auction lot of the labels that also included this sales slip. It describes them as supporting mission work in Alaska.

So, it is a mystery. The mystery makes for fun collecting.

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<p align="center"><b>ARCTIC AIR MERCY FLIGHT</b>                  Issued for use of souvenir covers flown on Mission work among the Eskimos                  A memento to the use of the Airplane on Mercy Missions the farthest North in Alaska</p>		