

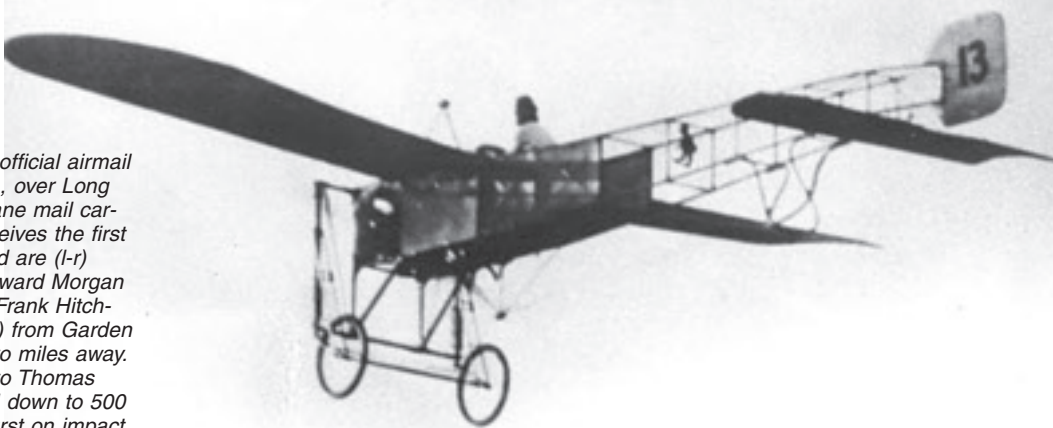
Going Postal



Ovington at the start of flight to Mineola, N.Y.



Stamp, issued in 1971, with a B-2-like image.



The US Postal Service's first official airmail flight came on Sept. 23, 1911, over Long Island. Here, the first "aeroplane mail carrier," pilot Earle Ovington, receives the first bag of airmail. Others pictured are (l-r) New York City Postmaster Edward Morgan and US Postmaster General Frank Hitchcock. Ovington took off (inset) from Garden City and rounded Mineola, two miles away. Ovington (once an assistant to Thomas Edison) brought his Bleriot XI down to 500 feet and tossed the bag. It burst on impact, but letters and postcards were retrieved and delivered. Airmail survived as a distinct service until 1975, when it became part of first-class mail.