

NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN
Meeting held on Zoom, Saturday 22nd February 2025

Letter to a President

Klem Ryan



Samoan Clipper – First New Zealand airmail to the US

Arrival on **26 December 1937** broadcast live and greeted by thousands, including PM Michael Savage

Initially intended as a survey flight carrying no mail, however **departs NZ on 2 January 1938 with 25,134 items of mail**

Savage commemorates the flight by writing a letter and sending a gift to the US president, Franklin Roosevelt



Pan American Airways 'Samoan Clipper' (NC-16734) berthed at Mechanics Bay, Waitemata Harbour, 26 December 1937

Photo credit: Alexander Turnbull Library

Media Coverage

Savage's gift and letter gave the NZ media an additional hook to report the flight, with coverage of both the posting and **delivery in Washington only 7 days after departure from NZ**

Roosevelt's response, acknowledging the gift, was reported in NZ papers on February 24 (after the tragic crash of Samoan Clipper with the loss of her crew)

MESSAGE AND GIFT PREMIER TO PRESIDENT FRIENDSHIP WITH U.S.A

(By Telegraph—Press Association.)

AUCKLAND, December 28.

As a gesture of friendship from New Zealand to the United States of America, a letter of greeting, accompanied by a gift of a New Zealand-made travelling rug, is being sent by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. M. J. Savage, to the President of the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, through the medium of the first trans-Pacific air mail, which will be carried from Auckland by Pan-American Airways' Samoan Clipper. In his recent public utterances in Auckland the Prime Minister has stressed the significance of having on the waters of the Waitemata at one time flying-boats of both Imperial Airways and Pan-American Airways. He has made it clear that New Zealand values highly the air link with the United States, and this sentiment is fully expressed in his message to President Roosevelt, the text of which is as follows:—



*Prime Minister
Michael J. Savage*

PRESIDENT REPLIES AIR MAIL GREETINGS AND GIFT

[PER UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATION.]

WELLINGTON, February 24.
The Prime Minister (Mr Savage) has received from President Roosevelt a personal letter conveying greetings and thanks for the best wishes extended to him by Mr Savage. Mr Savage's letter was included in the first air mail carried by the Samoan Clipper from New Zealand to America, and accompanying it was the gift of a rug. President Roosevelt's letter read as follows:—

"It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge receipt of your holiday greetings sent by the first direct air mail from New Zealand to the United States. The inauguration of this service was indeed a great occasion, and though shadowed by the recent disaster I am sure this new means of communication will tighten still more the bonds of friendship and goodwill between the two countries.

"Thank you also for the rug which accompanied your letter. I shall keep it as a valued memento of your great country.—With best wishes for a happy new year, I am, very sincerely yours,
"Franklin D. Roosevelt."

FLOWN FROM N.Z RUG FOR PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

WASHINGTON, January 8

Pan-American Airways' representative, Mr. William McAvoy, on behalf of the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. M. J. Savage, presented to Mr. Marvin McIntyre, who acted on behalf of President Roosevelt, a steamer rug, flown from New Zealand in seven days over the newly-established route from New Zealand to Honolulu.

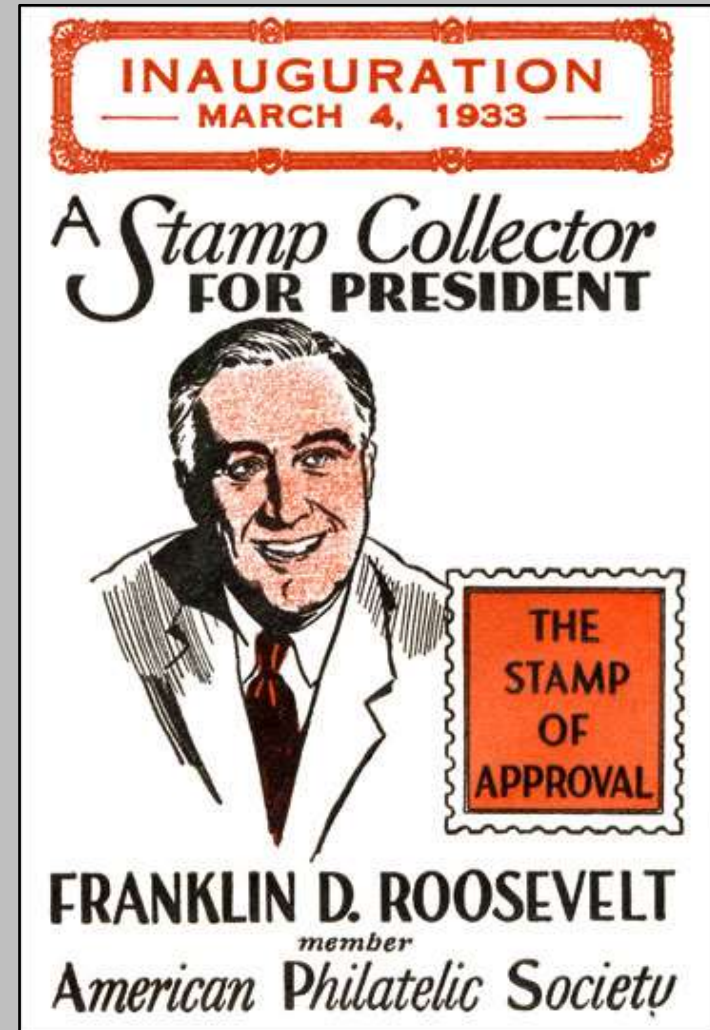
The rug would have arrived even sooner, but adverse weather conditions over the United States slightly delayed its arrival.

The Stamp Collecting President

FDR reportedly asked the State Department to forward interesting mail items to him for his collection - *WH received 3000 pieces of mail per day*

Upon his death, FDR's there was tension between his private collection and Presidential public records

FDR's family commissions H. R. Harmer of New York to auction his collection. Pre-auction estimates valued the collection at \$80,000 USD, with much of the material of relatively low philatelic value. However, high public interest pushed **the total realized to \$228,000, the equivalent of approximately \$1.3 million in 2025**



What of the Savage – FDR Letter and Cover?



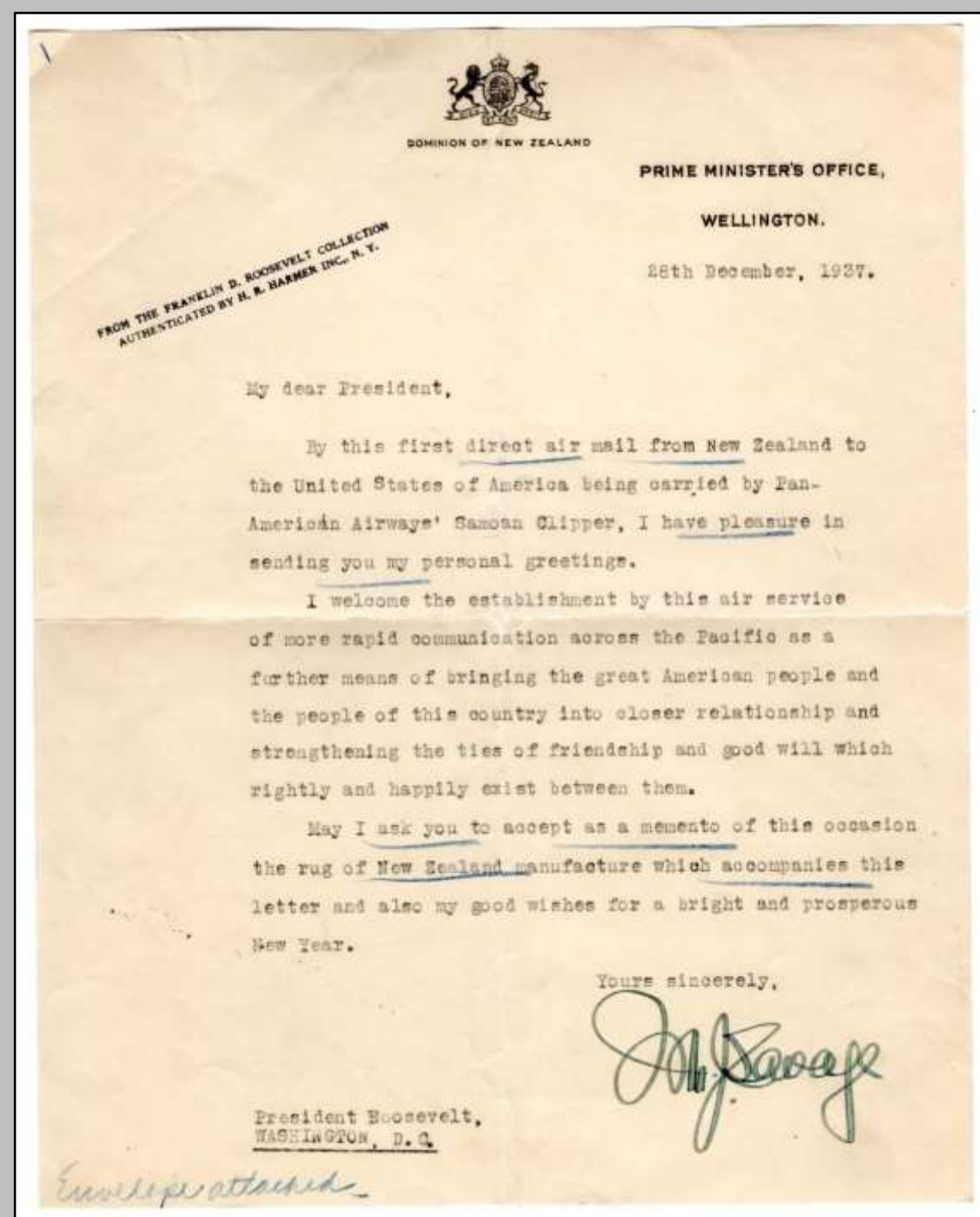
Obverse with transit cancel at San Francisco
6 Jan 1938

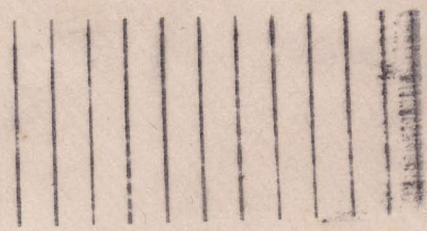
*First Flight Cover addressed to President Roosevelt, Washington
Bearing 4/6 franking, cancelled at Auckland 28 December 1937*

The Letter



FDR with 'Missy' Lehand (undated)
FDR Library





L. A. SANDERSON,

WELLINGTON,

NEW ZEALAND.