

January-February 1988

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN SEMI-OFFICIAL AIR MAIL STUDY GROUP

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Robert W. Marcello, Editor



AN INTRODUCTION

This summer I found that I had reached a point where I could offer some input to the BNAPS Canadian semi-official air mail study group, if there still was one. (Thirteen years had gone by since I'd been involved with the old group.) So I wrote to Haughton Sanguinetti, who was active in the group in 1975 and was editor of the 1985 Report of a 20-year study by BNAPS air mail study groups; and I wrote to David York, the chairman of the 1985-86 group. I soon found myself being enthusiastically invited and encouraged by them to head the new study group!

Although several of you have met me, most of our study group members have not. Joseph Berkovits was one who didn't know me, and he suggested, "...in all respects it would be proper to give a profile sketch of yourself, in order to get to know you better."

For almost 20 years, I've collected and been interested in Canadian pioneer and semi-official airmails.

A lifelong resident of Massachusetts, I studied at the Massachusetts College of Art and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

During the past 24 years, I've run a small printing office for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I'm also a part-time stamp dealer, who began in 1952 at age 15. I plan to retire early from state service (within six years), and go into the stamp auction business.

In addition to the BNAPS, APS and RPSC, I'm a member of the Canadian Stamp Dealers' Association (since 1970), and belong to the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society.

Besides Canadian stamps, some of my interests and hobbies include golf, music and old cars.

I look forward to working with our new BNAPS study group, and am confident that 1988 will be an interesting and rewarding year for all of us.

— Bob Marcello
BNAPS 2636

OUR HERITAGE AND THE FUTURE

J.N. Sissons, who was generally recognized at the time as dean of the Canadian dealers, called it "...undoubtedly the finest collection (of Canadian airmails) ever formed ... Many of the items to be sold are unique and some of them are offered at auction for the first time."

On the block that evening of October 6, 1971, at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto, was the major portion of the John C. Cornelius collection of Canadian airmails. All of the "goodies" were there: the only known London to London cover, and the mint corner sheet margin copy illustrated in Holmes' catalog; one of only two known unused \$1 black Grand Army of Canada stamps, and another, tied to a flown cover; other scarce flight covers, proofs, sheets; the Moose Jaw Flying Club stamp on a flown cover, plus an unused pane of five ... Here was an entire auction sale, offering the best from what was truly a fascinating era of Canadian aerophilately.

It was a wonderful opportunity. Even for 1971, the prices realized were very reasonable. Total realization for the 358 lots sold was only \$43,460 (Canadian). I bought some good items, but looking back now, wish I hadn't been so conservative. Everything was a good buy then.

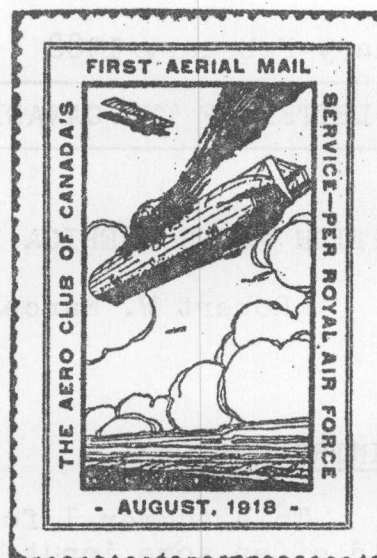
I believe it was Bob Jamieson who made an announcement during intermission. He said that gathered in the auction room that evening were probably 30 or so of the most devoted collectors of Canadian semi-official airmails, and suggested it might be a good idea to collect the names and addresses of everyone there, so we could keep in touch and possibly form a study group.

I feel somewhat the same way at this point, about our new study group. Separated in some cases by thousands of miles, and coming from diverse backgrounds, we share a common bond: collecting and studying Canadian airmails. By sharing whatever information we might have or discover, we'll all benefit from the experience, whether novice or expert. More importantly, our efforts now may help philatelists in the future who study this fascinating specialty.

In his 1974 book, Canadian Special Airmail Stamps on Flown Covers, Chester S. Forrest observed: "The BNAPS has a study group devoted to Canadian S/Os. It is a new group and shows promise of becoming very important."

He was right. The group accomplished a great deal.

Let's hope that renewed interest and activity within our 1988 study group will add not only to our individual knowledge and enjoyment, but also lead to enhanced appreciation of Canadian aerophilately by those enthusiasts who will follow us in time.



LONDON TO LONDON UPDATE

Haughton Sanguinetti was particularly interested in seeing that errors in published articles and catalogs be given some space in our first newsletter; especially concerning Canada's greatest air mail rarity, the 1927 London to London stamp. This update is dedicated to him. Without Mr. Sanguinetti's generous encouragement and enthusiasm, our group never would have gotten off the ground.

The "Readers' Opinions" page of Linn's Stamp News (Oct. 5, 1987) had a condensed version of a letter in response to an interesting story by Larry McInnis in the July 27 issue, about Canadian air mail. (See copy headed "Misinformation.") His story contained several inaccurate statements which needed further comment.

After commenting, I reflected upon how incorrect information finds its way into stories like the one by Mr. McInnis. It can happen when relying on only one or two reference books and accepting everything in them as truth, or not digging deeply enough while searching for facts.

Unfortunately, for instance, the 1987 and 1988 Scott Specialized Catalogues of Canadian Stamps (in color) incorrectly picture and describe the London to London stamp (Scott CLP6) as violet and yellow, instead of the correct colors, green and yellow. This is one example of what I termed "misinformation ... available in catalogs commonly accepted as gospel."

In December, I wrote to the Editor/Publisher of the Scott Canadian catalog, at The Unitrade Press (Toronto), to advise about the color misdescription. Hopefully, this will be corrected in the next edition of the catalog.

Conjecture, due to lack of solid information, can often add to confusion about some of these specialized airmails. David York mentioned in his August 1986 newsletter that Sissons' sale of the Jack Myers collection, in January 1986, had one of the rare London to London stamps. He said, "Two copies (additional?)

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Misinformation

The interesting story about Canadian airmail (Linn's July 27, page 24) by Larry



The green and yellow 25c London to London semi-official Canadian airmail stamp (Scott CLP6) is one of four mint copies known to exist of the 100 printed.

McInnis contains several statements which need further comment.

Misinformation is available in catalogs commonly accepted as gospel.

Unfortunately, some of that incorrect information found its way into his story.

Mentioning back-of-the-book Canadian airmail issues, he states, "Only those who have a copy of the Canadian-published *Scott Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps* or the *Specialized Postage Stamp Catalogue* have access to a listing ..." It just isn't true.

There are several good, early catalogs around: *Holmes' 1968 Specialized Philatelic Catalog of Canada and BNA*, *Sissons 1978 Standard Catalogue of Canada* and the *Sandria 1966 World Airmail Catalogue*.

All list the semi-official airmails of Canada.

McInnis said in his story that the Capt. B. Peck flight from Montreal to Toronto began July 7, 1918. I believe the trip took place in June 1918.

Regarding the London to London flight: The stamp is not violet and yellow; it's green and yellow. The mistake in his story is due to relying solely on information in current catalogs.

Unfortunately, the 1987 and 1988 *Scott Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps* (in color) incorrectly picture and describe the stamps as violet and yellow.

If not absolutely sure, writers should find out. Without reliable facts, misinformation is inadvertently disseminated and perpetuated.

Robert W. Marcello
Boston, Mass.

London to London Update (cont'd)

were sold in early summer by Cherrystone in New York ... Does anyone have the details on that sale? According to Linn's (4/14/86), four mint copies exist, and one used copy on cover. Can anyone confirm or deny these numbers are still valid?" He concluded, "I also noticed another London-to-London in the Maresch Auction -- the 4th copy auctioned this year ... It is definitely different than the copy in the Sissons Auction in January. How many copies are really out there???"

There are definitely at least four unused copies known to exist, not three as sometimes stated. And there is one used copy on cover. Each copy can be identified by appearance, particularly centering and perforations. For the sake of keeping track of the stamps described in this article, let's call them copy A, B, C, etc.

Copy "A," on cover

First, the cover is unique. It was in the Court of Honour at CAPEX '78. It sold in Sissons' October 1969 sale for \$4750 (CDN) and again in his October 1971 "Cornelius" sale for \$3500 (CDN). Tape, covering the address on the cover, was subsequently removed. In November 1979, the cover sold at Sissons again, the highlight of the Ed Richardson collection of Canadian airmails. It opened at \$9500, and sold on the floor for \$30,000 (CDN). I believe it was Allan Steinhart who remarked at the time that this was "...a record price for a Canadian cover with a slogan cancel." The buyer of the cover still owns it today.

Copy "B"

The well-centered, mint, upper right corner sheet margin copy, illustrated in Holmes' catalog, went in Sissons' October 1969 sale for \$3750 (CDN). Sissons sold it again, as part of the Cornelius sale in 1971. It brought only \$2700. Mr. Sissons expected bidding on the floor for this lot, but no one advanced the opening bid. Sissons waited a few long moments, then sold it, saying something like, "Well, you all had your chance. It's locked up now." (I was very conservative. I had set a top bid of \$2600 in my catalog for the lot, but was amazed that the stamp brought only \$2700.) I believe that the lucky buyer that evening still owns the stamp today. It was on exhibit in June at CAPEX '87, and looks as great as it did in 1971.

Copy "C"

There was another unused London to London stamp at CAPEX '87, on consignment at one of the dealers' booths. This was the copy which sold at Sissons in January 1986, from the Jack Myers collection. It has a certificate from the Royal Philatelic Society of London, is centered F-VF to the bottom right, and has several faults, including a tear at the bottom. It sold for \$6950 (CDN) during the week at CAPEX.

Copy "D"

The Maresch sale in September 1986 also had a faulty copy for sale. The day before the auction, there was no opening bid on the book. I flew to Toronto to be at the sale, to bid. The lot

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London to London Update (cont'd)

opened and sold, "to order," for \$8000 (CDN), plus 10%. (This was the third time I went to Canada to bid, unsuccessfully, on a London to London stamp.) The stamp is centered almost VF, to the right, and has a broken (at the top) vertical crease and some missing gum.

Copy "E"

The confusion about the "two" copies for sale by Cherrystone in N.Y. in early summer of 1986 was quickly cleared up when I contacted Cherrystone Stamp Center recently. They very kindly sent me the catalog with prices realized for that sale, and explained: "We offered and sold only ONE of those items, not two. When we advertised the auction, LINN'S erroneously inserted two photos of the same item; hence the confusion. Glad to be of help." The stamp is centered F-VF, to the lower left.

Now for the rest of the story. Are you ready for this? The stamp in the Cherrystone sale brought \$22,000 (U.S.), including the 10% buyer's premium. Wow! That's a record price for an unused London to London stamp. And it's not perfect (the perfs are a bit ragged at the bottom). For that kind of money, perhaps the buyer should have won two stamps.

As mentioned earlier, every one of these stamps can easily be identified by centering and perforations, since each of the known copies has its own distinctive appearance. Perhaps in a future issue of this newsletter, we can provide a photocopy showing all known London to London stamps, together on one page. Despite the seemingly difficult logistics, it can be done.

Copy "F"?

Take a close look at the illustration of CLP6 in Scott. Disregarding the violet color, it appears to be a photo of an actual stamp. But the perfs and centering (just Fine at the bottom) show it to be none of the previously mentioned copies. Is this a photo of perhaps a fifth unused copy?

When and if a sixth unused copy comes on the market, it will be BIG news. I'm waiting, but not holding my breath. It certainly looks like four -- or possibly five -- unused stamps, and one used on cover, is the extent of the supply. Anyone searching for another copy will have difficulty locating it. Except for the several known remaining stamps, I believe all others were on covers disappearing into the sea with the doomed flight in 1927.

Postscript: Shades of The Baron Munchausen

A Canadian dealer, who should know better than to tell preposterous stories in an attempt to impress, recently told me that he has a very rich client in Europe, who not only owns a mint London to London stamp, but has a used copy on cover as well!

I didn't have the heart to deflate the dealer's story by citing facts, but during the past 60 years the only known London to London cover was the one sold in 1979 from the Richardson collection, and the buyer and current owner is a well-known Canadian.

PROGRESS REPORT, JANUARY 1988

Over 60 introductory letters were sent to prospective semi-official air mail study group members. We have 14 members now, and expect a couple more to join shortly.

Several requests were received for BNAPS membership applications, and they were sent out promptly.

Press releases about our group were sent to Stamp Collector, Linn's Stamp News and Stamps Magazine. Barry Krause, who evidently writes a stamp column for the Los Angeles Times, requested information about the BNAPS and our study group, so we'll likely get some publicity there as well.

Haughton Sanguinetti and I have sponsored a classified ad which will run for a year in BNA Topics. It invites other BNAPS members to join the study group. After a year, we should have a good indication of how many BNAPS members are serious about the semi-official airmails.

I wish to take this opportunity to publicly credit and sincerely thank Haughton Sanguinetti and David York, for their help and support during the transition connecting the 1985-86 group with our present one. Haughton, especially, has been supportive since the beginning, and is a constant source of inspiration.

— Bob Marcello

FIRST IN FLIGHT

Beginning with the first attempt at manned flight, there was controversy. Claims of successful flight were met with counterclaims of earlier success.

Even today, there's a group of devoted enthusiasts in Bridgeport, Conn., trying in vain to get official recognition that Gustave Whitehead made the first controlled and sustained airplane flight in Connecticut in 1901, two years before the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk. They have news clippings describing the flight, and eyewitness accounts as well.

Nothing will satisfy them, short of concession from the Smithsonian Institution and relocation of the historical monument at Kitty Hawk, from North Carolina to Connecticut.

It appears to be a lost cause.

— R.W.M.

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Ed Richardson, of Texas, sends congratulations and his very best wishes to all, on the organization of our new group.

Peter Kennedy says his airmails are identified by a Canada Specialized catalog; he'd like to use Scott's only, but he's in a quandary with Scott numbers. He asks, "Is there any way to issue cross index numbers?"

I'd suggest writing the other numbers in each of my two catalogs, but that won't guarantee 100% reliability. For instance, some illustrations in the '88 Scott are misidentified (look at CL4,6,7,8,11,12 and 13).

Has anyone in our group made a complete cross index of the semi-official airmails, and if so, would you let us know, and also send Peter a copy?

More than a few respondents sent messages of encouragement. For instance, from Ed Christman: "Glad to get your note saying that the BNAPS semi-official air mail group is being reactivated. That's great news!"

Ed mentioned a good idea: "I'll also contact one other semi-official collector and urge him to join."

Jim Miller asks, "What does a 'commercially used' Yukon Airways cover look like? I've never seen one, and wonder if they exist, or are they all first flight covers, or Roessler type philatelic inspired covers? If one or more might exist amongst the readers, how about a photocopy printed in a future bulletin?"

Good questions. Anyone want to tackle this?

Jim also mentions Scott CL4,6,7,8. He says, "Something seems wrong with the descriptions ... also ... CL4 is wrongly photographed ... I haven't seen the 1988 edition yet, perhaps this has been corrected."

Don't bet the grocery money on it. The '88 Scott has more mistakes. Based on the descriptions, the Elliot-Fairchild stamp illustrated as CL6, CL7, is actually CL8 (background of swastikas); the Jack V. Elliot stamp illustrated as CL8 is CL7 (swastikas); and the perforated stamp pictured as CL3 is CL4. There are other misidentified illustrations.

Without getting into completely revising Scott's catalog, let's just say that this all tends to be challenging.

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Letters and Comments (cont'd)

Mike Painter, of Vancouver, writes: "Has there been any publication in regard to plating Semi-officials? Because these were printed by a variety of firms and apparently without much quality control of the sort that security printers exercise, it looks as if a majority of the stamps have minor distinguishing marks that identify their position on the sheet.

"For example, I have a strip of four of the Klondike Airways stamps and note that the stamps have dots between the 2 and the 5 in the value tablets. The top stamp has a dot in the right tablet. The second stamp has a dot in the left tablet. The third stamp has dots in both tablets. And the bottom stamp has no dots in the tablets. I don't know if this pattern was constant for all strips.

"I've noticed other stamps with apparently constant plate flaws that would identify their position. Being a somewhat newcomer to Semi-officials, I'm not sure if all this has been reported somewhere already or would make an interesting area of study for the Group."

Identifying constant varieties should make a very interesting area of study for our group. Can anyone answer Mike's opening question? We hope to hear more from our members on this subject.

The dots Mike describes are very tiny, and do appear to be constant. I inspected several panes and each had the dots exactly as described. However, each variety occurs only once in a strip of four, so none would be scarcer than any of the others.

Does anyone have a Klondike pane without these varieties?

MINE IS AS DESCRIBED.

Your editor would appreciate seeing the Canadian air mail story in Linn's, April 14, 1986, if anyone has a copy. (I missed it somehow, and then gave away my old papers.)

FOR THE RECORD

The two illustrations of the London to London stamp, on pages one and three of this newsletter, picture the same stamp (which we call Copy "C" in the London to London Update) from the Jack Myers collection.

THE DON WADE EXPEDITION

Fantastic as it may seem, some 50 years after the disappearance of Amelia Earhart, there's a man in Georgia planning to lead an eight-person, \$50,000 expedition to the Pacific early this spring to search for the Earhart plane and the covers carried on the flight. His name is Don Wade.

He asked to hear from anyone interested in his expedition, and also wanted to hear from anyone who could add to his research. An aviation buff, I wrote to him in December, offering some information from a World War II textbook for pilots and navigators, Marine and Air Navigation, which had a brief account (quoted here) of what went wrong, blaming the disappearance of the aviatrix's plane to inadequate navigation.

Let's go back in time, and see what happened ...

"...the two most famous losses of airplanes in the Pacific (to date, 1944) have been the disappearance of Amelia Earhart, with her plane and navigator, in July 1937, and the heroic episode of Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker and his companions who survived 21 days in rubber rafts in the autumn of 1942. Both accidents were due to inadequate navigation.

"Instance after instance of successful navigation under difficult conditions passes uncelebrated, but when unsuccessful navigation results in a wreck, the story is likely to become known ...

"Miss Earhart and her navigator (Fred Noonan), flying almost the last leg of an amazing around-the-world flight, with relatively easy stages to Honolulu and California ahead, failed to find the tiny dot of Howland Island, where a United States Coast Guard cutter waited to assist them, and were lost somewhere in that tremendous ocean area. The following brief explanation of the case is based on contemporary newspaper reports, there being no more authoritative source in this instance:

"To save weight the plane did not carry standard 600-meter sending equipment. When by short-wave radiotelephone from the plane the people on the cutter learned that gas was running low and Howland Island was proving impossible to find, valuable time was lost in an attempt to get the plane's radio bearing from the ship by 600 meters. Finally a crude bearing on short wave was obtained when the plane's navigator whistled into the microphone, but the null point (where the received signal is no longer heard) of such a sound is less exact than that of a mechanical buzz. Little information was received to guide the search, and when the first Lexington and other naval vessels made a spectacular emergency run from California, planes and ships found no trace of the wreck on the sea or the atolls.

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The Don Wade Expedition (cont'd)

"Not only was the radio navigation imperfect; apparently Miss Earhart's navigator had underestimated the difficulty of finding an island -- as have others before and since -- and his dead reckoning and celestial navigation were inadequate also. Over an ocean, piloting counts for little."

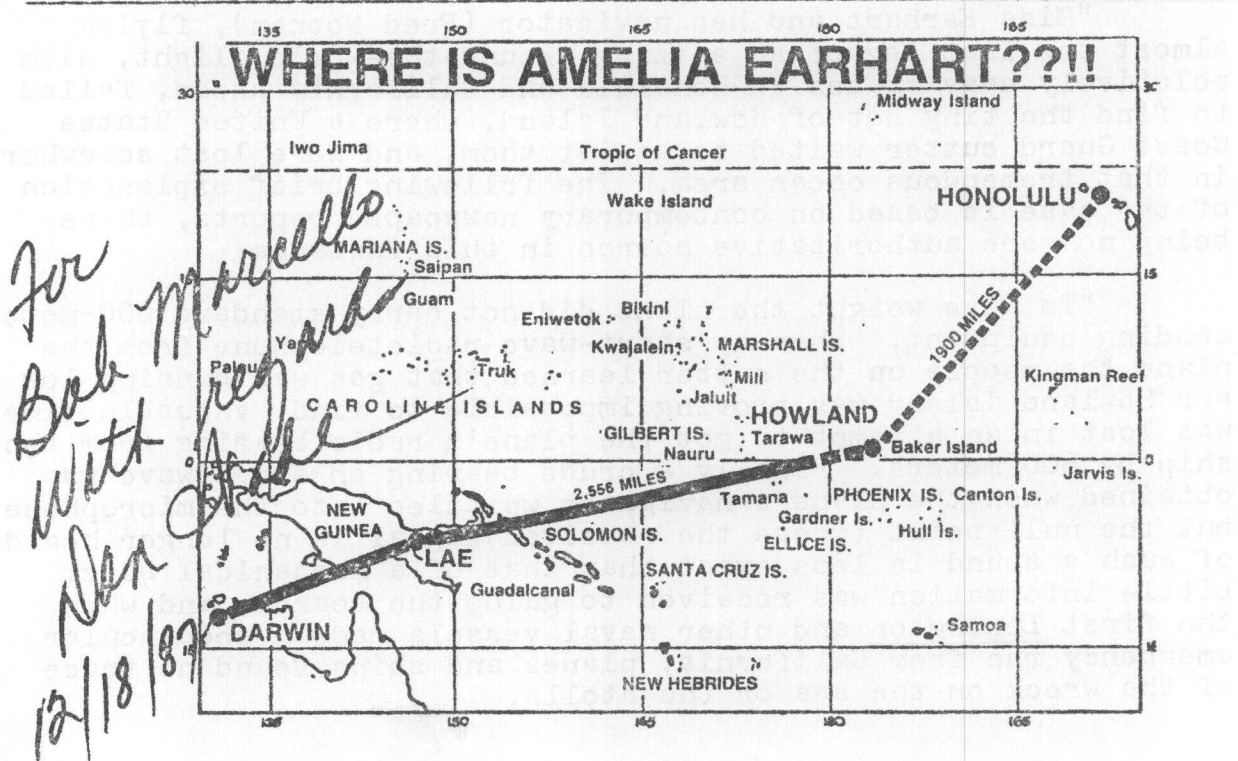
Don Wade believes that the Earhart plane made a forced landing on uninhabited McKean Island, in the Phoenix Islands (now part of the Republic of Kiribati), and it is there that he and his team will begin their search.

Don says he honestly believes they will be successful.

Individuals desiring to participate in the expedition are invited to request an application from him. Potential contributors are asked to send a check or request additional information. Don's address is:

Don Wade
560 Campbell Hill
Marietta, Georgia 30060
tel. (404) 426-7883

- R.W.M.



And Where Are Those 5,000 FDCs?

THE CAS AND US

The Canadian Aerophilatelic Society (CAS), a chapter of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada (RPSC), was organized in 1986, "to promote aerophilately in Canada." A relatively new organization, the CAS already has about 100 members. (I joined in July 1987.)

Recently, I received a thought-provoking letter from a CAS member who has an award-winning collection of Canadian semi-official airmails. I had invited him to join BNAPS and our study group. He wasn't a BNAPS member because, as he explains, "I am not a BNA collector, except where it happens to coincide with BNA aerophilately; and a reading of the BNAPS publications over the past several years has not revealed sufficient activity in my field of interest to warrant joining BNAPS."

He also brought up a problem about joining our study group: potential competition or diversion of effort with the CAS. "We had hoped that all collectors (of Canadian semi-officials) ... and other Canadian aerophilatelic groups would join the CAS and thus give us a total access to the pool of expertise in this field." He continues, "In consideration of this as a current process, how does this relate to the virtue of a separate BNAPS study group. Would it not be of equal value, perhaps greater, if this effort to generate a specific semi-official study group were done by you through the CAS?"

Although no competition or thought of detracting from CAS activities was intended by me or any members of the BNAPS study group, he has made a good point. However, it should be emphasized that the CAS, "the new kid on the block," was organized in 1986 and our BNAPS air mail study groups have been established and active for many years -- they have become tradition. Is the CAS inadvertently putting the cart before the horse?

I explained to the gentleman (incidentally, he's decided to join our study group) that I would be delighted to work with anyone interested in Canadian semi-official airmails, and will gladly share any available information concerning aerophilately. I hope that our study group agrees, in principle.

The newly-formed CAS could be viewed by some as an attempt to compete with and if not eliminate, at least overshadow the long-established air mail study groups of the BNAPS; however, I don't see it that way. As a member of the RPSC and BNAPS, as well as the CAS, I feel that interest in Canadian aerophilately would only be enhanced by increased activities by study groups and interested philatelists, no matter where their affiliations lie. But it would be unfair to the BNAPS to expect us to disband a study group because another group in another society seeks to establish a monopoly.

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The CAS and Us (cont'd)

Although the CAS and our new BNAPS study group have similar areas of interest (the semi-official airmails), the CAS seems to be more concerned with very recent air flights and related subjects, and the preservation of the Canadian War Museum; our BNAPS air mail groups have been mainly focused on pioneer and pre-1934 semi-official air mail, although I'm trying to bring a few other interesting early flight-related stories (not necessarily BNA) to our newsletter.

The situation right now is that the names of some of the fine people who were members of previous BNAPS air mail study groups are conspicuous by their absence from our current group's membership list. Their names can now be found in the membership roster of the CAS. I wish that these people could feel comfortable as members of both the CAS and our BNAPS study group, but suspect that this will not be the case.

Anyone have any thoughts on this?

— R.W.M.

Well, after a few sputters and bounces, we got our first newsletter off the ground -- and it actually flies! (Your comments and input are earnestly welcomed.)

It's time to push the old plane back into the hangar now.

Bob Marcello

—Your Editor.

***** Deadline for material for the March-April issue is Feb. 26.