

March 1991

Box 961, Boston, Mass. 02103

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN SEMI-OFFICIAL AIR MAIL STUDY GROUP

(a division of the
British North America Philatelic Society)

Robert W. Marcello, Editor



TO CHANGE, OR NOT TO CHANGE...

If you read BNA Topics regularly, you've seen this familiar theme: "Join a study group." There's a reason for the constant urging. The society realizes that study groups are the life-blood of the BNAPS. To stay strong and healthy, the BNAPS needs a lot of members in its study groups. And to thrive, the BNAPS needs study groups that are active.

With the well-being of our study group in mind, a person in the BNAPS hierarchy has suggested that we might want to consider changing our name to "Air Mail Study Group." The change would widen our focus and permit more BNAPS members to join our ranks.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to such a change. One obvious advantage to having more members in our group is that we could be stronger, perhaps more active.

The greatest disadvantage for present members would be that the change might result in our losing the group's concentration on semi-official air mail. Stated simply, we could obscure our focus by becoming too general. As things are now, we have a distinct and interesting specialty to study.

I leave it to our members to decide. Shall we change to "Air Mail Study Group" or shall we stay "Semi-official Air Mail Study Group"? Consider the possibilities and then give me your opinion. The next newsletter will report the consensus.

-R.W.M.

WHY A STUDY GROUP?

Aerophilatelists join our study group for a variety of reasons... As you might expect, most want to learn more about their specialty. Others join to make contacts. And some wish to share their discoveries and knowledge with the rest of us.

The study group is a forum where members can ask questions, offer advice, and give opinions. The primary focus is on Canadian semi-official air mail, but we are not limited to that topic exclusively. Several members are interested in various aspects of aviation, as well as in air mail in general.

Probably the most visible part of the study group is its newsletter, which is mailed to all members of the group, BNAPS officers, the BNAPS Library and, occasionally, to prospective study group members.

The purpose of our newsletter is to unite members and keep the group informed. The newsletter reflects the interest and activity of the group. To succeed, we need your comments, letters, and stories. Clear photocopies of interesting items are always welcome, especially when they show a stamp, variety, or cover that will help to illustrate your comments.

Mutual benefits

Realizing fully that active study groups are essential to the vitality of the BNAPS, the society assists its present 23 study groups in several ways. One is by encouraging the study groups to conduct seminars at the most important BNAPS event of the year -- the annual convention.

Held in a different area of the U.S. or Canada each year, the annual BNAPS convention is keenly anticipated by members who enjoyed being at others in previous years. It provides not only an opportunity to learn more about your field of interest, but also a fine chance to meet and enjoy fellowship with other BNA specialists.

No specialist should settle for collecting alone, in virtual solitude, when the benefits from participating with others in a study group are so obvious.

SEMI-OFFICIAL AIR MAIL GROUP

MEETS AT GALVESTON

by Basil Burrell

The meeting of the Semi-official Air Mail Study Group at BNAPEX '90 in Galveston, Texas was held on Saturday morning, October 20. About 15 BNAPS members assembled at 11:45 in the Sam Houston room of the Tremont House to hear moderator Bob Jamieson's presentation. He showed photocopies of some rare and unusual stamps, and discussed the stamps, their origin, and present ownership.

Some of what Bob showed us included:

1. A pane of 10 of the red and blue Aero Club of Canada (Scott CLP3), showing variations in the printing above the plane that create the white space between the sky and red background.
2. Illustrations of individual stamps of CLP3, showing varieties such as, weakness in design between "A" and "U" of AUGUST, broken dollar sign at lower right, white dot after "T" of FIRST, white dot before "A" of AERIAL, streaky sky below tail of aeroplane, and dot over "U" of CLUB.
3. Scott CL10, shown with dot over "O" of ELLIOT. Then a pair of same with partial perf and dot on lower stamp. And a strip of five with the dot variety shown on the fourth stamp down.
4. A sheet of 10 of the Fairchild Air Transport Limited (Scott CL12), in which every stamp is tete-beche with another stamp. Only three complete sheets are known.
5. A couple of sheets of 10 (CL12), with the left five stamps in the correct position and the five stamps on the right inverted.
6. Patricia Airways & Exploration overprints in green and red, large type "Special Air Service/Sioux Lookout/and/Red Lake District/5 Cents," in which the third "o" in Lookout is malformed.
7. Sheet No. 13 of PA&E overprinted in green, large type, "Special Air Service..." with the malformed third "o" in Lookout.
8. PA&E illustration of the "RED LAKE" overprints in ascending and descending positions, both right side up and inverted.

(continued next page)

Air Mail Group Meets at Galveston (cont'd)

With this volume of material to ponder and drool over, we had a good discussion with lots of questions and answers. I did not think to have my tape recorder going and I regret that.

Dick Malott's exhibit, showing eight frames of Pioneer Air Mail, was breathtaking. It started with a balloon message and went on from there. Dick also showed 10 frames of Crash Covers from all eras.

Ed Christman and Maurice Hewitt exhibited seven frames and eight frames, respectively, of Semi-official Air Mail Stamps and Covers. Seeing two such exhibits, I am not sure now which one included the elusive "FED" handstamped overprint on PA&E. I'd have missed seeing it if I hadn't been talking with Ed and asked him about it.

Our study group was well-represented at BNAPEX '90. Out of 138 frames, or 17% of the exhibits, 23 showed semi-official air mail material.

UPDATING THE '85 REPORT

This year a good project for our group would be to begin updating the 1985 Report. (For those of you who are unfamiliar with the '85 report, it is a 65-page compilation of information about Canadian semi-official air mail -- the result of a 20-year study by BNAPS air mail study groups. Photocopied pages are available at cost, plus postage.)

-R.W.M.

ASTRONAUTS GROUNDED FOR VIOLATIONS

U.S. astronauts David Walker and Robert "Hoot" Gibson, both of whom were scheduled to command shuttle flights in 1991, were grounded July 9, 1990 for violating a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) rule that bars astronauts from participating in risky activities -- including skiing and parachute jumping -- while in training for a mission. Gibson had been involved in an aircraft collision during an air show two days earlier in which the other plane's pilot was killed. Walker was cited for a number of flight-related infractions. They were the first U.S. astronauts ever pulled from flight assignments for disciplinary reasons.

Source: September/October 1990 issue of Final Frontier (The Magazine of Space Exploration); Minneapolis, Minnesota. Reprinted by permission.

Frank Kendle, who is interested in mining as well as semi-official air mail, says, "I believe a good source of information can be obtained from old prospectors and miners. I have asked several older miners about various flights or for any information they might have put away in old trunks."

A "tip of the hat" to Frank, for finding the following story and sending it to the study group.

RED LAKE WAS THE CRADLE OF MINING AVIATION

by Donald Parrott

The idea of flying prospectors and supplies into the field occurred to John E. Hammell in 1925, when he engaged the Ontario Provincial Air Service branch of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests to fly 15 tons of supplies, seven men and a woman cook from the railroad to Red Lake, a distance of 100 miles.

Hammell had agreed to option the Howey Gold discovery to Dome Mines of South Porcupine, which company had to clear, strip and trench the ore veins for samples to determine the average gold content per ton. (Howey Gold was the pioneer operator in the Red Lake camp, and put the Red Lake area on the mining map.)

One of the six pilots of the Provincial Air Service at about that time was Harold A. Oaks, who was also a graduate mining engineer. Oaks formed Patricia Airways & Exploration Co. in 1927, and bought a new Curtiss Lark aircraft, which he flew commercially to earn revenue.

John Hammell then formed the Northern Aerial Mineral Exploration Co. in 1927, for which company Oaks later flew as chief pilot.

Faster than canoe

Still another air service that took shape in the gold rush to Red Lake, came with the formation of Prospectors Airways, when Lloyd Rochester and his partner, Bobby Cockeram, came to Sioux Lookout in September of 1926, and flew into Red Lake in one hour. That was a trip that usually took about six days by canoe, or by fast dog team in the winter.

Cockeram had been to Red Lake twice by canoe, and became fully convinced that flying saved a lot of time.



H. A. (Doc) Oaks was one of the pioneers in air service for the mining industry in the Red Lake area of Ontario.

(continued next page)

Red Lake Was the Cradle (cont'd)

As he had never flown before, he readily agreed when Rochester suggested that they buy an aircraft, and form a company to prospect and earn revenue.

Prospectors Airways was thus born in 1927, and among its pilots were Clarence Tuer, of Haileybury; Peter Graham, of New Liskeard; and a British pilot, Glyngaurd Burge.

They bought a new Fairchild 51 aircraft from Fairchild's factory in Newark, N.J., and named it "Prospector." In the following year, they followed that up with purchase of two DeHavilland Moths.

Rochester, who had been a pilot in World War I and was a graduate in mining engineering from McGill University, Montreal, flew one of the Moths and Cockeram, who had persevered to get his pilot's licence, flew the other.

Made history

They made many notable contributions to mining aviation history in Canada until they were absorbed some 36 years later by Kerr Addison Mines.

Dominion Explorers Airways was formed in 1927, and in the following year Sioux Lookout became the busiest air base in Canada, as the flying base for Western Canada Airways, Northern Mineral Explorations, Dominion Explorers, Patricia Airways, the air branch of Consolidated Mining and Smelting, and the Ontario Provincial Air Service forestry patrol branch.

By 1936 Red Lake had become one of the busiest airports in the world during the summer months, with over 100 landings and takeoffs daily from the 35 float-equipped aircraft based there.

In 1937, to add to its laurels, Red Lake handled 50% more air freight than any other airport in the world.

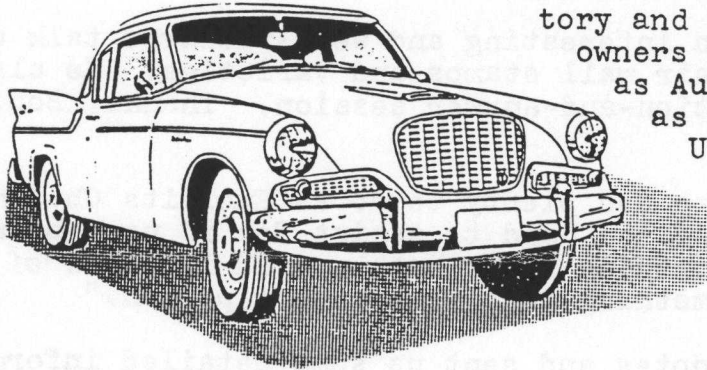
Donald Parrott is a retired operating engineer from Thunder Bay, Ontario.

This story appeared originally in the Dec. 27, 1987 issue of The Northern Miner, Toronto, Ontario.

Reprinted by permission.

DISCOVERING A SIMPLE TRUTH

A highlight of my summer came the week of July 15-21, when Studebaker aficionados from around the world convened in Massachusetts for the 26th International Meet of the Studebaker Drivers Club. (The SDC is an organization with about 13,000 members interested in Studebaker history and vehicles.)



Studebaker owners traveled from as far away as Australia and Great Britain, as well as from throughout the U.S. and Canada, to attend the festivities. I was fortunate to be able to enjoy some of the activities, since everything was taking place practically in my back yard!

Shiny Studebakers cruised the local roads for a week. Fun and fellowship flourished, though for many participants the meet was serious business. In fact, this Studebaker conclave was not unlike a big stamp show. Similarities abound. The Studebaker events included a bourse, club auction, "swap meets," an exhibition, judging and, of course, an awards banquet.

What we value most highly

These days it's not surprising to hear hobbyists stress the importance of acquiring objects of value. We know that classic cars and scarce stamps are valuable "things." But when we look back over the years spent in a hobby -- any hobby -- it can be a surprise to find that what we value most highly are our memories. The highlights remembered best, and most clearly, about our hobbies often are the people we've met and the places we've visited. (If you are dubious, ask members who attended the BNAPS convention in Galveston what they enjoyed best about BNAPEX '90.)

Sooner or later, while immersed in our hobbies, we discover a simple truth: Participating with others is more satisfying than collecting in solitude.

People, and the events that bring them together, breathe life into a hobby.

-Bob Marcello

BNAPEX '90 - THE BNAPS CONVENTION

We thank the members of our study group who helped to make the Semi-official Air Mail Seminar on October 20 at Galveston a success. Thanks also to study group coordinator Jon Johnson, BNAPEX '90 chairman Vic Willson, and the countless other BNAPS members who spent many weeks involved in planning, arrangements, and logistics for the annual convention.

Bob Jamieson gave an interesting and well-received talk on Canadian semi-official air mail stamps and varieties. He also conducted a strong question-and-answer session. Thanks, Bob, for a job well done!

Although Ed Christman had plenty to do as Exhibits Chairman for the convention, he was on hand to assist Bob if need be and to help ensure that everything ran smoothly. Ed is proof of the saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy person."

Basil Burrell made notes and sent us some detailed information about the meeting (see page 3), for interested members who were unable to attend.

Jim Davis was available prior to BNAPEX '90, if anyone in the group wanted help in planning for the seminar. (Jim says he's had an easy job so far as assistant chairman of the study group.)

New faces

Four BNAPSers (not yet members of our group) seen visiting the semi-official air mail meeting were: "old-timer" Jack Wallace, from Vancouver; Ed Harris, from Calgary; Del Benbow, from Fort Worth; and John Wannerton, who came all the way from South Africa to be at the convention.

Air mail exhibits

Congratulations to our study group members who exhibited at BNAPEX '90... Maurice Hewitt and Ed Christman were each awarded a Silver-Bronze medal for their fine exhibits of Semi-official Air Mail Stamps and Covers.

Major Richard Malott received a Gold medal for his exhibit of Pioneer Airmails. (This was an exhibit that Ed Christman unabashedly described as "sensational.") Dick Malott also won a Silver medal, for his exhibit of Crash Covers.

The next convention

It's not too soon to begin plans for BNAPEX '91 at Vancouver, August 29-31. Volunteers are invited to step forward to join the committee for our study group's seminar at the 1991 convention. Anyone wishing to give a talk or presentation at the meeting should contact Bob Marcello now.