

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN SEMI-OFFICIAL AIR MAIL STUDY GROUP

(a division of the
British North America Philatelic Society)

Robert W. Marcello, Editor



MEMBERS VOICE OPINIONS ON PROPOSED CHANGE

By a margin of two-to-one, those of you who responded to the inquiry in the March newsletter -- about changing our name to Air Mail Study Group or staying Semi-official Air Mail -- voted to stay with the name, "semi-official."

Good opinions were expressed on both sides of the issue, and in a few cases, somewhere in between. For instance, Murray Heifetz said he had no objection to a change in the name, "...if it will lead to more participation."

Basil Burrell voted to keep the focus on semi-official air mail, but also suggested we include relevant information that followed the era of semi-officials. He said he would like to see a list that shows "...the old and new names for the same places."

Basil offered the following examples. He asks that other members contribute to this list of changed names:

Flin Flon became Schist Lake
Long Lake became Wadhope
Pickle Lake -- Pickle Crow
Pine Ridge -- Gold Pines
Rice Lake -- Bissett
Rolling Portage -- Hudson
Slate Lake -- English Brook
Waterways -- Fort McMurray;
and Woman Lake became Jackson Manion.

HUDSON - ROLLING PORTAGE

(Have we identified these places correctly?)

Trelle Morrow said he favored expanding the scope of the study group to include "...the Post Office air mail issues and related flights, which complement that period." He went on to explain, "I collect air mail of Canada generally, so I am interested in the various aspects, first flights, rates, courtesy covers, related photographs and so on."

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Members Voice Opinions (cont'd)

Dick Malott said he preferred to see the study group stay focused on semi-official air mail, because "...there is a great amount of research to be done in this area."

Dick brought up the possibility that an allied study group might be established for other areas of Canadian air mail. He suggested that perhaps he could undertake that area as he develops his Government flight material.

Active participation needed

Jeff Daneman voted for changing to Air Mail Study Group. "One strong argument for a change," he said, "was expressed by you in the newsletter -- more active participation."

Most respondents clearly recognized the current need: To succeed in our goals, we must have more active participation by more members of the group. (Please note: We're a fairly informal bunch, so we'll not be sending engraved invitations.) If you have been inactive in the past, you can take an active part in the study group now. Why not think about what especially interests you concerning Canadian semi-official air mail, and send us your comments, questions, photos, stories.

Perhaps Jeffrey Ward's comments represented the feelings of the majority as well as any. He wrote, "I collect covers, stamps, etc., from the Yukon. I joined this study group because it deals with semi-official air mail of Canada. As you know, there are two issues from the Yukon. I have declined larger groups because I felt that the semi-officials, and the two Yukon semi-officials in particular, would get lost in the 'Big Picture' of air mail. So, I would like us to stay as we are."

A satisfactory balance

Because most of us want the group's name and purpose to stay unchanged, we shall continue to be called the Canadian Semi-official Air Mail Study Group. But be assured, we will not discourage anyone's interest relating to aviation or to Canadian air mail in general. Rather than draw a small circle to shut out others, we'll draw a large enough circle to encompass all who wish to be an active part of the study group; in doing so, we'll try to strike a satisfactory balance that truly represents the interests of our members.

But as we progress in the next couple of years, let us be guided by one uncomplicated and fundamental thought: The main emphasis in this study group ought to be on Canadian semi-official air mail.

WHERE ARE THE USED 1918
UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS
DONATION STAMPS?

The "donation stamp" pictured here, although not exactly a semi-official airmail, is undeniably a member of the family. Perhaps we could call it a cousin. The dramatic scene depicted -- a burning airship under attack from biplanes -- is strikingly similar to the aerial battle shown on the 1918 Aero Club stamp (Scott CLP1).



In 1971, when the Cornelius collection of Canadian airmails was being sold at auction in Toronto, auctioneer J.N. Sissons speculated that the donation stamp (lot 78) might have been an essay of sorts, and that the design may have been adopted for the Aero Club stamp. Although the central design does not commemorate a particular downing of a zeppelin by a plane, it apparently does honor all of the aviators who performed those feats.

When the United Empire Loyalists issued their donation stamp in 1918, the acknowledged purpose was to help raise money for the Canadian Aviation Fund. Pilots were recruited for the Royal Flying Corps, and aid was given to War Relief.

The stamps sold for a donation of one dollar apiece. They were not issued for use on any special airplane flight. Designed by a person named "C. Allen," the stamps were printed in blue, on white paper, by the British American Bank Note Company Ltd., Ottawa. They come rouletted on all four sides. Beyond that, we know little about the stamp.

To collectors of Canadian "back-of-the-book" air mail, the donation stamp is intriguing because of the unknown factor -- what we don't know about it. The stamp is illustrated in the 1934-35 edition of Ian C. Morgan's Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Airmail Stamps. Accompanying the illustration is a brief note, saying, in effect, only that the stamp "has been found." The note ends by asking, "Has anyone seen it on cover?"

Today, some 58 years after Ian Morgan's inquiry, we are still asking the same question.

Unexpected revelation

Careful reading of page 59 in the study group's 1985 Report on Canadian Semi-official Airmails reveals some information

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Where Are the Used Donation Stamps? (cont'd)

that might be overlooked, but which turns out to be quite unusual and unexpected. No one had reported seeing even a single instance of the donation stamp used on cover! That revelation is even more astonishing when one considers the known factors.

In the same manner that the Canadian semi-official air mail stamps were used, such donation stamps or labels were permitted by postal regulations to be included on mail, if placed on the reverse side of envelopes and the regular Canadian postage was affixed on the address side. The Canadian semi-officials of every issue and airline company exist used on covers; even one used London-to-London stamp on cover has survived.

Where are the legitimately used covers bearing United Empire Loyalists donation stamps?

One could speculate that perhaps the stamps were intended to be saved as souvenirs by members of the public who bought them. But look at the suggestion printed near the bottom of the stamp: "Lick the Stamp to Lick the Hun." Where else but onto an envelope to be mailed would one stick a freshly-licked propagandistic stamp? After all, propaganda is ineffective if not disseminated.

Perhaps the people who purchased these donation stamps in 1918 felt that anything worth a dollar was too valuable to send off on an envelope, which most likely would end up in a wastebasket.

Almost 74 years have passed since these stamps were issued. In all that time, someone must have seen and saved a cover or two with the donation stamps on them. Where are they? It defies logic to conclude that no United Empire Loyalists donation stamps saw use on covers.

Can anyone in the study group shed a little more light on the subject?

-R.W.M.

NEW CAS REPRESENTATIVE CHOSEN FOR FIP COMMISSION

Congratulations to study group member Murray Heifetz, who was chosen to represent the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society (CAS) on the International Federation of Philately's (FIP) Commission for Aerophilately.

Murray replaces Major R.K. Malott, who served in the position for eight years. (Dick Malott will stand by as the alternate representative.)

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LONDON-TO-LONDON

FANTASY?



Is Canada's greatest air mail rarity just another label, a whimsical fancy? You might think so, if you saw the story by L.N. Williams in the March 11 issue of Linn's Stamp News, about the London-to-London "cinderella."

A friend of mine happened to be in the process of selling a London-to-London stamp (Scott CLP6) when the story appeared in Linn's. My friend told me that his prospective customer saw the article, and was swayed enough by it to get cold feet about investing thousands of dollars in a "cinderella."

Some words carry connotations or have hidden nuances lurking in the shadows. In the stamp world, "cinderella" is one of those words. It implies that no matter how attractive or interesting the particular item appears to be, its value is superficial in comparison with "real" stamps.

L.N. Williams is a distinguished British philatelist and writer of note. I'm sure that he didn't intend to slight the significance of the London-to-London issue in any way. (He writes a column for Linn's, called "Cinderella Scene"; the London-to-London stamp probably seemed to be an appropriate candidate.) Williams is free to call them as he sees them, but in this instance I believe that he is hammering a square peg into a round hole. It doesn't fit.

The London-to-London stamps were printed under government supervision. Not many "cinderellas" can boast of that claim. From the early 1930s, specialized catalogues have recognized the legitimacy of the London-to-London issue.

More important, by far, is the fact that two courageous men lost their lives in attempting to complete a flight fraught with peril. We ought not to trivialize what happened to them in September 1927 by labeling the London-to-London stamp a cinderella. The fate that Captain Tully and Lieutenant Medcalf met in the icy depths of the Atlantic was no fantasy.

-Bob Marcello

STUDY GROUP MEETS IN VANCOUVER AT BNAPS CONVENTION

Our study group enjoyed a successful seminar at BNAPEX '91, thanks to Mike Painter of Vancouver. Mike served as chairman for the meeting on August 29, and also spoke about the Junkers aeroplane pictured on the semi-official air mail stamps of Canadian Airways. Twenty persons attended the one-hour session.

Mike opened the meeting with greetings from Bob Marcello. He announced that Bob's inquiry in the March newsletter resulted in a majority of respondents indicating that they wished to stay with the present name of the group, rather than change to embrace a broader area of aerophilately. A short discussion ensued, but no strong opinions were expressed. It was suggested that anyone with further thoughts on the matter should write to Bob.

Audience captivated

During his presentation on the Junkers, Mike talked about how these planes were involved in several important events in the history of Canadian aviation. He also pointed out that Junkers flew in Canada for some 30 years (a length of service made possible by continued flights after the end of semi-official air mail in 1934).

Basil Burrell, who attended the session, later wrote to say that he felt the meeting was "a huge success." He said Mike's presentation captivated the audience, as information unfolded about Junkers, the pilots who flew them, and problems encountered during the "old" days.

After Mike spoke about the Junkers, a general discussion took place and Bill Topping was invited to talk about some of the interesting material in his exhibit.

Bill's exhibit included a block of 16 stamps (8 x 2) of Yukon Airways & Exploration Company. Because the block is eight stamps wide, Bill believes it most likely indicates that the stamps were printed in sheets of 80, not 50 or 100 as listed in several catalogues.

A choice of colors

Bill said some of the so-called "proofs" and "color trials" of semi-official air mail stamps probably were produced without authorization from the companies. He told of one instance where

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Study Group Meets in Vancouver (cont'd)

a collector had remarked to the printer that he thought the stamps were done in an uninteresting color; on the collector's next visit he was shown stamps in several other colors! Some of these unauthorized printings eventually showed up on the market.

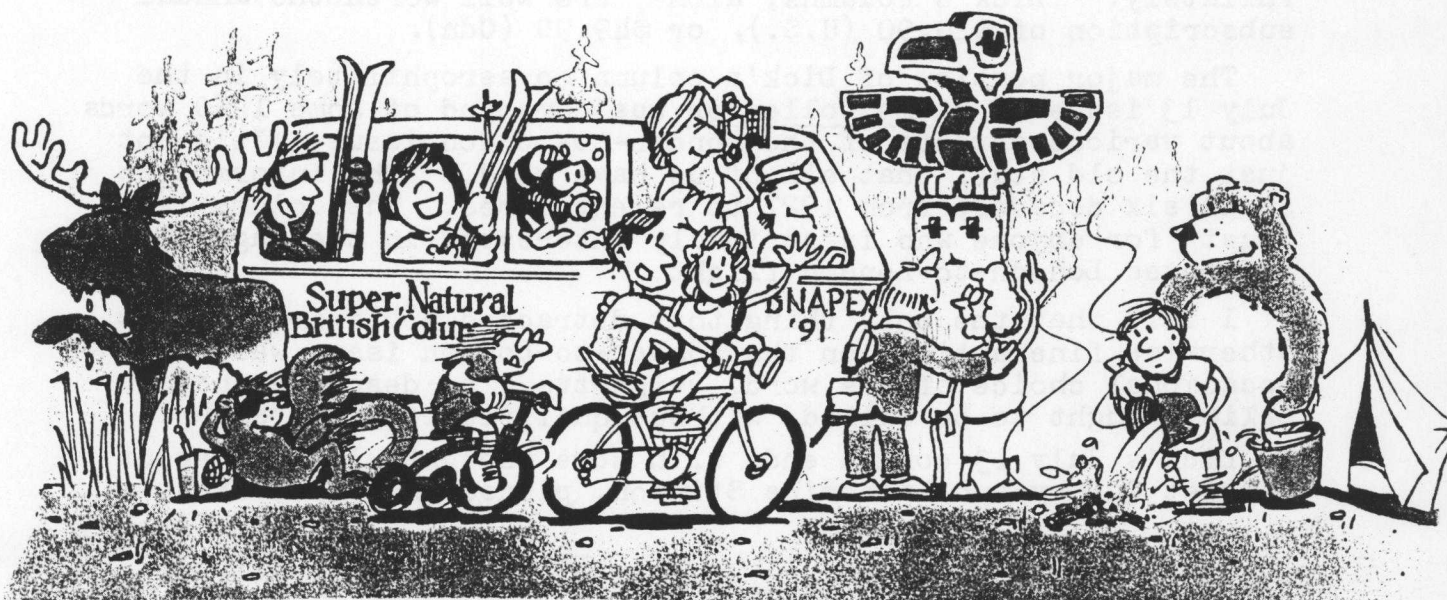
Bill spoke briefly about the covers of Klondike Airways, and expressed doubt that more than a handful had actually been flown. He said that genuine covers would be limited to those with backstamps of destinations in the Klondike region.

A couple of articles about A.C. Roessler, which Bruce Perkins had shown to Mike Painter, were handed out. The group was pretty much in agreement that a large number of Roessler covers never were flown. Nevertheless, most believed that Roessler at least had been useful in drawing attention to and recording various flights.

The meeting of the Semi-official Air Mail Study Group easily filled the hour allotted, and discussion amongst some of those present continued in the hotel corridors for another half hour.

Unexpected bargains

Bob Lee's auction of the first part of the Topping collection took place on September 1. Some unexpected bargains came up in the better material; for example, a Moose Jaw Flying Club mint strip of five went for a hammer price of \$1100.



CANADIAN AEROPHILATELY WIDELY PUBLICIZED

In 1991, anyone interested in Canadian aerophilately could find plenty of reading material to whet his appetite if he looked. Philatelic publications in both the United States and Canada carried articles for all tastes. Whether seeking information in the rarefied atmosphere of the pricey London-to-London issue, or at the nearer-to-earth, affordable level of first-flight covers of the late 1930s, you wouldn't be disappointed. There was, and is, a lot of information around to enjoy.

A few comments on a sampling of aerophilatelic articles seen this year...

Very well-publicized in special write-ups in several stamp papers -- including Stamp Collector in the U.S. and Canadian Stamp News on the other side of the border -- a rare London-to-London stamp provided drama at the high end of the scale. Consigned by an American who wished to remain anonymous, the rarity was offered for sale in June at Vancouver, by Ron Leith Auctions.

Another fascinating story about the London-to-London stamp appeared in the March 11 issue of Linn's Stamp News. Written by L.N. Williams, the article was flawed (in my opinion) in only one respect -- by the use of the term, "cinderella," to describe the highly-prized London-to-London semi-official air mail stamp.

Well-documented and presented with style, "Air Canada and Canadian Air Mail -- A Celebration of the Developmental Years," by Major R. K. Malott, was featured in the May 1991 issue of The American Philatelist, the monthly journal of the American Philatelic Society. The nine-page story was full of information about the 1937-39 flights, and included many photos.

Dick Malott also authors an excellent column, called "Aerophilately Today," which made its debut in the May 18 issue of Stamp Collector, the weekly newspaper "For People Who Love Philately." Dick's columns, alone, are well worth the annual subscription of \$29.90 (U.S.), or \$49.90 (Cdn).

The major portion of Dick's column on aerophilately in the July 13 issue of Stamp Collector was composed of some 1250 words about various aspects of the London-to-London issue. It's not just the old stuff that all of us have read. The information spans six decades, from 1927 to recent times. The column is a "must" for anyone who is seriously interested in the saga of the attempted London-to-London flight.

I felt that the only thing that detracted a bit from Dick's otherwise fine article on the London-to-London issue was his occasional choice of the word, "vignette," to describe what I believe ought to be called, without qualification, a "stamp."

Dick's July 13 column ends with some thoughtful words about Harriet Quimby and Katherine Stinson, pioneering aviatrixes.