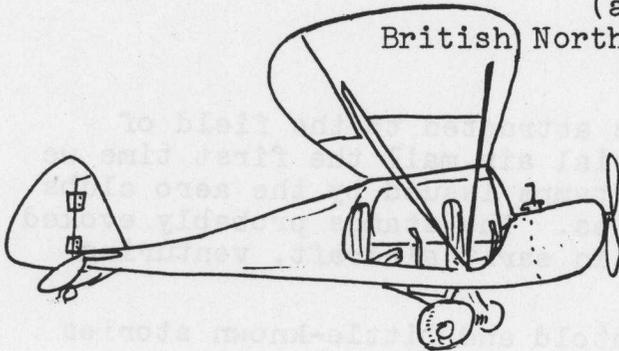


(a division of the
British North America Philatelic Society)



MIDSUMMER PROGRESS REPORT

I am happy to report that most of the members we had in 1992 have rejoined this semi-official air mail study group in 1993. In view of the confusing period we experienced last year, I consider this reaffirmation by a majority of loyal members to be a significant step. Let us now continue to go forward.

I also am pleased to report that Wayne Standley, of Shelburne, Massachusetts has agreed to serve as the new vice-chairman for this study group.

Although he considers himself to be a relative beginner in the study of semi-official air mail, Wayne tells us he has "...a good basic collection of stamps and covers, but nothing outstanding." His main collecting interest is the People's Republic of China.

In addition to his new role as vice-chairman of our study group, Wayne also serves as a co-chairman for the newly organized New England chapter of the China Stamp Society.

I welcome Wayne's emergence, and I am confident that his willingness to assist will help to strengthen our study group.

Bob Marcello

Chairman/Newsletter Editor

CANADIAN BUSH PILOTS -- PIONEERS OF THE AIR

By Mark L. Lowell

Many of us most likely were attracted to the field of Canadian pioneer and semi-official air mail the first time we set eyes on those fascinating stamps issued by the aero clubs and private air service companies. The stamps probably evoked pleasant images of bush pilots in early aircraft, venturing toward the horizon.

I think that quite a few untold and little-known stories about early Canadian air mail are still out there somewhere. And I believe that those stories may be in danger of disappearing quickly; most of the remaining individuals who were involved in one way or another with the semi-official flights would now be well into their seventies and eighties. I hope that our study group can find and preserve for the future some of the memories and stories that still exist about early Canadian air mail.

My question right now is this: Where are the sources for more information about the semi-official air mail era?

I hope that my question will spark some interest among members now. With that in mind, I offer a few thoughts about the early days of aviation in Canada...

Pioneers of the air -- God bless them! How does one begin to describe them? They were people with vision, determination, and an intense love for what they were doing. And they had the ability to do it. It was a big order and one that has been filled throughout the ages.

Today they are those persons who ride skyrockets to the moon -- and then get out and walk around.

Seventy years ago they were men and women who flew leftover World War I airplanes around Canada's northland. It took dedicated people to tackle a region that could get cold enough to congeal oil in a running engine, with weather that could change in minutes from balmy to vicious. It would be kind to call the conditions primitive.

Despite the problems, those pilots created a network of routes that looked like a spider's web when laid on a map of northern Canada. They were the pioneers that carried the semi-official air mail.

The usual transportation to those difficult destinations had been by dog team, by foot, by boat, and in some areas by

horseback. With the introduction of aircraft, what had taken days and weeks was reduced to hours. An example was the trip between Skagway and Whitehorse. During the '98 gold rush, the trip took weeks. In the early 1940s, I took the White Pass & Yukon Railroad from Skagway to Whitehorse; the trip took 12 hours. On October 25, 1927 Andrew Cruikshank flew the 110 miles in one hour and 10 minutes.

The speed with which mail, passengers, and supplies could be carried was the main factor that opened up the vast areas of northern Canada. Air travel is even stronger today, and is used almost as easily as going by taxicab.

I am sure that a multitude of interesting stories about early Canadian flights is out there, just waiting to be told. Is anyone in our study group able to help find the stories?

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Just what the doctor ordered

Shortly after we received Mark Lowell's article, "Canadian Bush Pilots -- Pioneers of the Air," a fascinating story arrived at your editor's mailbox, from Haughton Sanguinetti. The two articles complement each other nicely, to form the main focus of this issue of your newsletter. They are presented here, back-to-back.

Recalling "The Early Days of Flying," Haughton tells a story that, I'm sure, will capture the attention and interest of all of our readers.

-R.W.M.

Member seeks contacts

Kenneth G. Mitchell wrote to say that he is actively seeking material and would welcome contact from any other member.

You may write to Mr. Mitchell at 56 Downswood, Carlton Road, Reigate, Surrey, ENGLAND RH2 0JH.

Changes of address

Mark L. Lowell (summer address, and until October 31):
c/o Mrs. Florence Mewhiney; RR 4, Box 46; Havelock, Ontario;
CANADA K0L 1Z0.

Mike Painter (new address, as of June 16):
1692 - 133 A Street, South Surrey, B.C., CANADA V4A 6H5.

THE EARLY DAYS OF FLYING

By Haughton E. Sanguinetti

I recall the first few years that I was interested in flying. I flew open cockpit airplanes, both in and around Boston and also in Toronto. It was cold, flying then. That was in 1928.

In that year, I persuaded The Boston Evening Transcript to install in its Saturday Evening Edition a page on stamps. I went around and got contracts for ads in that page. There were only four stamp stores in the city, but I managed to get contracts with eight stamp dealers in various cities, including a contract from H. E. Harris & Co.

Stamps issued

Also in 1928, I discovered that semi-official air mail stamps were issued in Canada to pay for carrying letters in the "rough country." The Canadian government did not subsidize air mail, but paid private air service companies to carry letters through the bush.

My cousin, Suzan Reid, was a member of the Semi-Official Air Mail study group. She really did not collect the semi-official airmail stamps, but was interested in seeing that they were studied. Suzan was the widow of R. G. "Doc" Reid, who used to be a dentist in Toronto. He gave up his profession to be a pilot in the Ontario Provincial Air Service.

Dawn of bush flying

The Ontario Provincial Air Service was started in 1924 and consisted of 13 Curtiss HS-2L flying boats. Eighteen more were purchased by the government air force between 1921 and 1924, and these airplanes were mainly used at the very dawn of the era of bush flying in Canada. (See pages 2 and 10 in the book by C. A. Longworth-Dames, for photos of the Curtiss HS-2L flying boat.)

"Doc" Reid was principally engaged in searching for fires in the wilderness and in mapping the Ontario bush. For several years, he remained in northern Ontario. Two of his children were born in the Arctic Circle. I remember my cousin telling me that the wife of the manager of the Hudson Bay Fort helped her. The manager's wife was an Indian, and she did a good job; the Reid children remained in the bush for the first few years of their lives.

Originally, before certain modifications were made to the H. flying boat to permit the carrying of more goods and passengers, the hull contained two cockpits. A double cockpit was

situated just beneath the front of the elevated engine and carried the crew, consisting of pilot and engineer, who sat side by side before a dual yoke that bore two great black wheels like the steering gear of an automobile. Way out in the nose, was a single cockpit in which was the seat of the aerial observer. Sometimes the aerial camera was located there.

Forced landings

In those early days of bush flying, the mechanic who was in charge of the maintenance of the flying machine usually flew with the airplane. This was because forced landings in some backwoods lake were fairly regular. Without an air engineer along to repair a malfunctioning engine the pilot would have a long walk back to his base -- if, indeed, he did manage to return. The mechanics did not just wave good-bye and good luck, but went along with the pilots.

First patrol

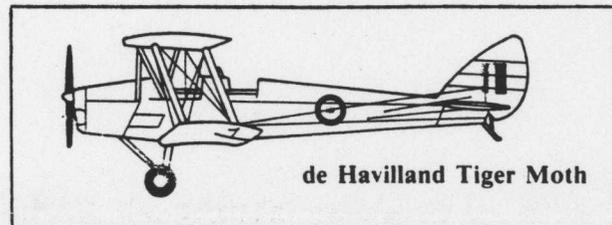
In June of 1919, pilot Stuart Graham carried out what is generally conceded to be Canada's first aerial forestry patrol, for the Saint Maurice Forestry Protection Association of Quebec. This flight marked the real beginning of commercial bush flying in Canada.

During 1922 and 1923, the Forestry Branch of the Department of Lands and Forests entered into a contract with Laurentide Air Service of Grand Mere, Quebec to carry out fire patrols in the northern sections of Ontario.

Tragedy strikes

In 1935, pilot R.G. "Doc" Reid and observer N. "Red" Cross were flying over the bush near Port Arthur, Ontario in a de Havilland D.H. Moth, when the airplane

suddenly plummeted to the ground. It seems that Doc Reid, seeing the approach of questionable weather up ahead, scribbled a note to Cross, inquiring if he wanted to continue with his observations or if they should return to their base. It is thought that Doc Reid partly rose from his cockpit seat to pass the message over to Cross, and in so doing, nudged the control stick with his knee; or else the airplane encountered an "air bump" that tossed the pilot out of the airplane. Reid fell to his death. Cross, sitting in the front cockpit, had to ride the airplane to a fatal crash in the muskeg. Neither man was wearing a parachute.



de Havilland Tiger Moth

