



THE NEWFIE NEWSLETTER

of the Newfoundland Study Group of BNAPS

Number 14

November/December 1987

NEWFOUNDLAND
by Charles Jenny

From the North there came a message to a distant, sunny clime,
'Twas a message from the icebergs to the fig-tree and the lime;
Others followed, bringing tidings, causing silent joy or mirth,
Or perchance they told of sorrow, of some dear one gone from earth.
Times it seemed as if warm currents from that far Atlantic isle,
Had swept southward, brightening nature, bringing to her face a smile;
Then it seemed as if its bleak wind, flying fast o'er dale and hill,
Sought to pierce the golden tropic with a gruesome sense of chill.
From the date of fifty-seven, every message came in state,
And each bearer of a message, wore the livery of its date.
First the shamrock and the thistle blazoned on a field of white,
And the name, St. John's, Newfoundland, circling round from left to
right;
Then there came a page who bore the coronet in octagon,
Quartefoil, with the same motto as its brothers, elder born.
Later there came new devices, whispering of Atlanta's tanks,
Cod and seal with iceberg background, and a schooner off the banks.
In all the colors of the rainbow, were these pages who were sped,
With their tidings from Newfoundland, to a land with sunlight wed.

Many years have faded in the dimming memories of the past,
Each new generation rising, scarcely thinking of the last;
Long-forgotten are the tidings which those messages once told,
And the writer and the reader long have changed from life to mould.
But those little bits of paper, that as passports served them then,
Still are treasured and hold places of great honor among men.
While the thoughts they served to carry, over sea and over land,
May have gone from us forever, by stern fate's unjust command,
Still we see the seal and cod-fish, and the full-rigged fishing-smack
On the pages of our album, and they bring old memories back.(1)

(1) THE CANADIAN PHILATELIST, London, Ontario, Vol.II, No.7, March 25, 1893,
page 1.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Member Alan Selby won a gold medal at FLOREX 87 for his exhibit of "Newfoundland, The First Cents Issue." FLOREX is the annual convention of the Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs and was held November 6-8 in Orlando, Florida. Congratulations Dr. Selby.

NEW MEMBERS

John Piercey
27 Raymond Heights
Corner Brook, Newfoundland A2H 2S2

David A. Stark
14734 Elmira Court
Woodbridge, Virginia 22193

COMING EVENTS

NIAGARA FRONTIER STAMP EXPO '88, McKinley Park Inn, Blasdell, NY, April 22-24, 1988, Richard Hedley General Chairman

NAPEX '88, May 28-30, Sheraton National Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, Spring meeting of the BNAPS Mid-Atlantic regional group

BNAPEX '88, September 8-10, 1988, Virginia Beach Resort and Convention Center, Virginia Beach, VA, annual convention and exhibition of the British North America Philatelic Society

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THE HALIFAX AIR MAIL FLIGHT OF 1921-22
by Bertram C. J. Warr, Jr.

This article deals with the attempted flight in November of 1921 from Botwood, Nfld to Halifax, N.S. and the specially surcharged stamp issued by the Newfoundland Post Office. In so much as this attempted flight was made within a couple of years after the first transatlantic crossing from Newfoundland to Europe by Alcock and Brown, there was great interest by the local population of being involved in any venture which included the airplane. It also helped to bring the sparsely populated outport areas of the Dominion in contact with St. John's, the Capital, and the rest of the world, by providing a service which was essentially non-existent during most of the winter months throughout most of Newfoundland and Labrador.

THE FLIGHT. On November 15, 1921 a notice to the following effect appeared in THE DAILY NEWS, a St. John's newspaper"

"Persons wishing to avail of the opportunity to forward letter mail to Canada, United States, Great Britain or European countries by aeroplane, will be given an opportunity to do so by a mail which will be closed at the General Post Office on Saturday evening, the 26th of November, at 9 o'clock. The mail for this special service will be 5000 one-ounce letters.

A special stamp costing thirty-five cents will be affixed to each letter on presentation at the General Post Office wicket after 9:00am on the 16th inst.

The Department of Post of Telegraphs will not be responsible in any particular for the non-delivery of the mail.

signed W. W. Halfyard
November 15, 1921 Minister of Posts & Telegraphs"

The notice also stated that the maximum amount of 5000 one-ounce letters would be carried by express train to Botwood on or about the 27th of November and from there to Halifax via aeroplane.

The flight was to be piloted by Major F. Sidney Cotton, an Australian pilot, who had been contracted by the Newfoundland government to fly the mail to Halifax. If the flight was successful it was hoped that this would lead to further flights and mail contracts. Cotton teamed-up with a Newfoundlander, Captain Sydney Bennett, an ex-RAF pilot.

The mail received at the post office between November 16 and 26, was sent via train from St. John's to Botwood on the 27th as announced. It was hoped that the proposed departure for Halifax could take place on November 30th.

The first plane intended for use by the aviators, a four-seat Martinsyde, was put out of commission when a ski broke through thin ice and considerable damage was done to the aircraft. Their backup plane, a DeHavilland-9, required modifications and preflight testing before attempting the flight to Halifax. This set the airmen back ten days. The next attempt at takeoff was made on the morning of December 10th at 10:40am. The two aviators took off with no

problems but about two hours out of Botwood developed engine trouble and had to set down on Deer Lake. Deer Lake is about 95 miles west of Botwood on the Humber River. The trouble with the engine required parts having to be sent by train from Botwood.

With the engine repaired the flight could resume, however more bad luck struck the seemingly jinxed flight. Cotton, while trying to start the engine, was struck by the propellor and seriously injured. He had to be taken to St. John's by train where he spent several weeks in the Hospital.

With the injury to Cotton the proposed flight attempt ended and all the mail was sent via rail to Port-Aux-Basques for transport by steamship, the S.S. KYLE, to N. Sydney, N.S. and then by rail to Halifax. Apparently the mail was held at Morris Arm until January 28, 1922 in hopes that a second attempt would be made once Major Cotton recovered from his injuries. This did not occur and the mail reached Halifax and was backstamped on 4 February 1922.

THE STAMP. The rate of thirty-five cents per one-ounce letter, made the choice of the Postal Officials fairly easy as to which stamp to surcharge for this special flight. The only 35¢ stamp available was that of the 1897 Cabot set, Scott no. 73, the red carmine Iceberg, perforated 12, on unwatermarked paper and printed by the American Banknote Company of New York.

The original order for this surcharge called for 5000 stamps to be overprinted and this was carried out at the offices of THE ROYAL GAZETTE in St. John's. The 50 sheets of 100 were broken down into 200 panes of 25, 5 x 5. The surcharge consisted of three lines in black "AIR MAIL / to Halifax, N.S. / 1921." as illustrated below.

AIR MAIL
to Halifax, N.S.
1921.

The type was so badly set for this surcharge that no less than 6 varieties appear on each pane of 25. These will be described later in detail. About 10 days after the announcement in the DAILY NEWS, orders began to pour into the Post Office, mainly from international dealers trying to buy up large numbers of the mint stamp. These amounted to slightly more than 25,000 stamps. Since just about all stamps from the first printing had been used on mail to be carried on the flight, the Post Office decided to overprint an additional 90 sheets. As in the first printing, the sheets were broken down into panes of 25. However this time the ink used differed from that of the first printing in that it was a lighter, greyish black. The Minister of Post and Telegraphs cut down all orders from the international dealers and apportioned all of the stamps accordingly.

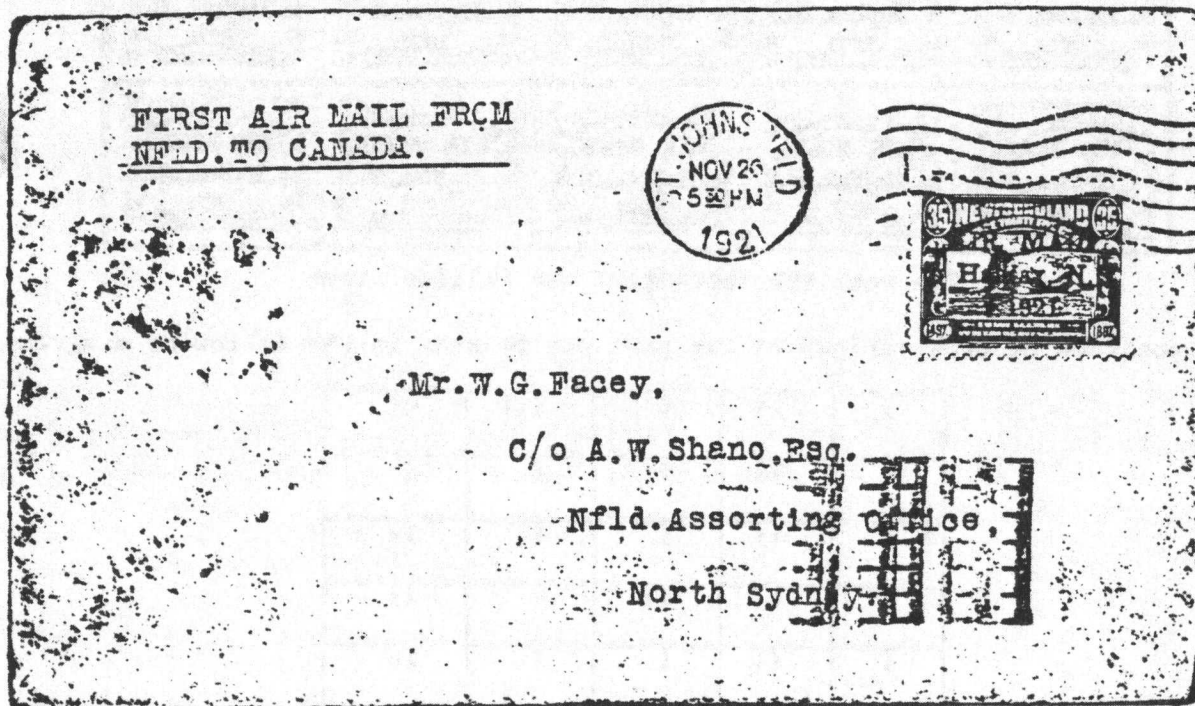
The stamps were first used publicly on November 16, 1921 and were applied by the postal clerks to the special mail to be carried on the flight. At first there was little interest from the public, probably because of the relative

high rate of 35¢ per one-ounce letter. However, by the closing date of November 26 all of the mail allotted for the flight had been received and late mail had to be refused.

THE VARIETIES.

Scott No.	Variety	Description	Number in Pane
(A) Wide Spacing, 2 3/4mm space between AIR and MAIL			
C3	i	No period after 1921	10
C3a	ii	Period after 1921	7
C3i	iii	No period after 1921 and first l of 1921 below f of Halifax	1
(B) Narrow Spacing, 1 1/2mm space between AIR and MAIL			
C3ii	iv	No period after 1921	10
C3iii	v	period after 1921	7
C3iv	vi	No period after 1921 and first l of 1921 below f of Halifax	1

As one can see varieties iii and vi are the two scarcest as only one of each occurs on each pane of 25.



Scarce Newfoundland Halifax cover franked with Scott no. C3i; tied with St. John's machine cancel 26 November 1921. Less than 560 copies exist with this variety and there are very few on flight covers.



The complete setting of the Halifax stamp

The position of each variety on the pane can be seen in the following diagram.

i	ii	i	iii	vi
v	ii	v	i	i
i	ii	i	i	iv
i	v	ii	v	ii
i	ii	i	i	iv

THE INVERTS. Of the total 560 panes of 25 surcharged, there were four panes of 25 inverted in error. There was a slight variation in each pane so that any single inverted stamp can be allocated to the original pane from which it came. These positions are described as follows:

- (a) well centered overprint,
- (b) overprint centered to the right,

- (c) centered low, perforations pass through year date,
(d) centered low, year date completely on next stamp below.



Unused block with inverted overprint

The inverts have the same six varieties as do the normal stamps and in the same proportions. To find the relative positions just invert the pane layout used above.

HALIFAX AIRMAIL CHECKLIST

MINT STAMPS

- Two printings of surcharge carried out at offices of THE ROYAL GAZETTE at St. John's using a three line surcharge in black on 35¢ Iceberg stamp of 1897, Scott no. 73.
- First printing consisting of 5000 stamps, 200 blocks of 25.
- Second printing consisting of 9000 stamps, 360 blocks of 25, overprinted in light greyish black ink.
- Four panes of 25 inverted, each varying slightly from one another.
- All panes have six distinct varieties, the quantities of each are tabulated below.

Variety	Number in pane of 25	First Printing	Second Printing	Total less inverts	Inverts
(A) 2 3/4mm space between AIR and MAIL (wide)					
i	10	2000	3600	5560	40
ii	7	1400	2520	3892	28
iii	1	200	360	356	4
(B) 1 1/2mm space between AIR and MAIL (narrow)					
iv	2	400	720	1112	8
v	4	800	1440	2224	16
vi	1	200	360	556	4
Totals	25	5000	9000	13,900	100

AIRMAIL COVERS.

- 5000 covers carried, cancelled St. John's between November 16th and 26th, 1921.

-Earliest known dated cover is 16 November 1921, all other dates between November 16 and 26 are known on cover except November 19 and 20, Saturday and Sunday.

-A small number of covers were added at Botwood between December 6 and 9 and were franked with the special stamp.

-The total mail of slightly more than 5000 pieces was taken to Norris Arm, Nfld. and placed on a train to Port-aux-Basques for furtherance to Halifax, where it all ended up on February 4, 1922.

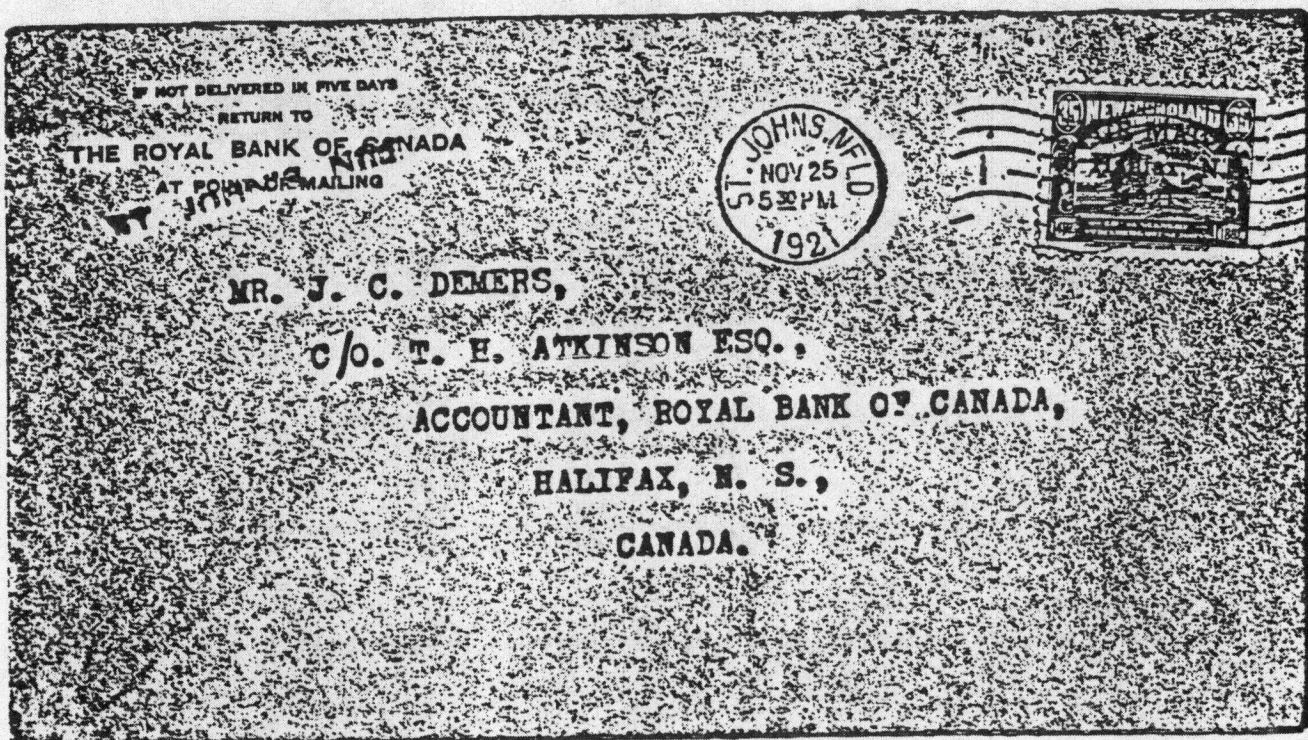
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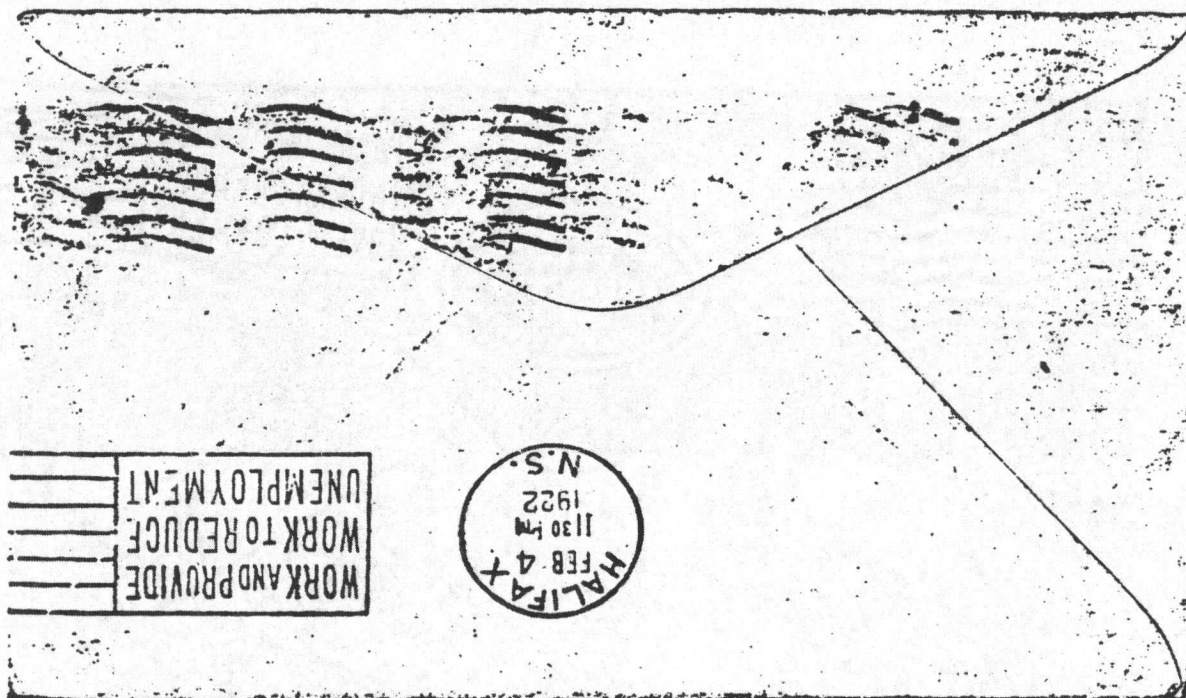
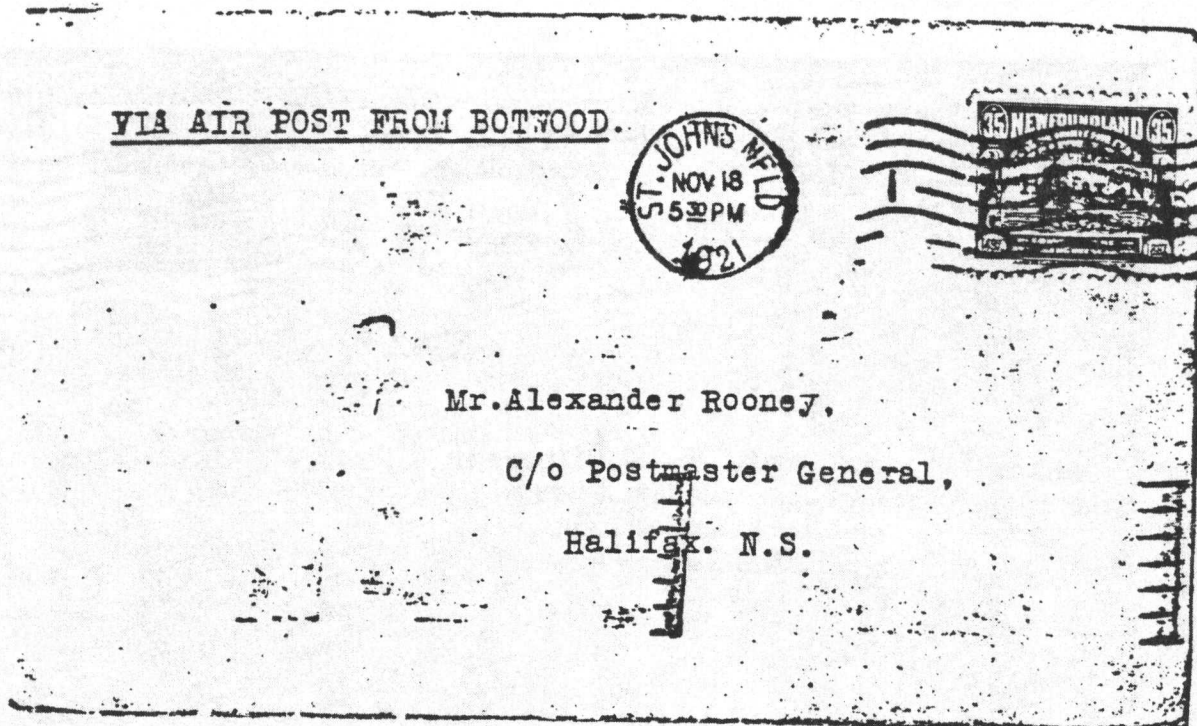
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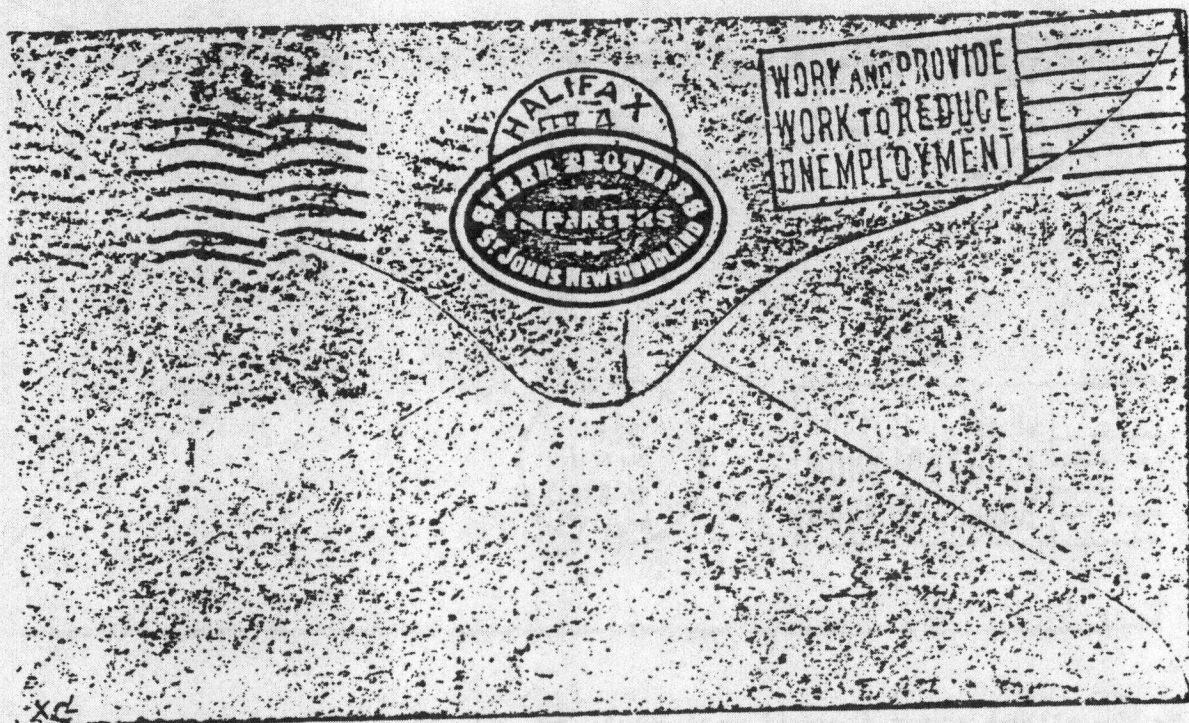
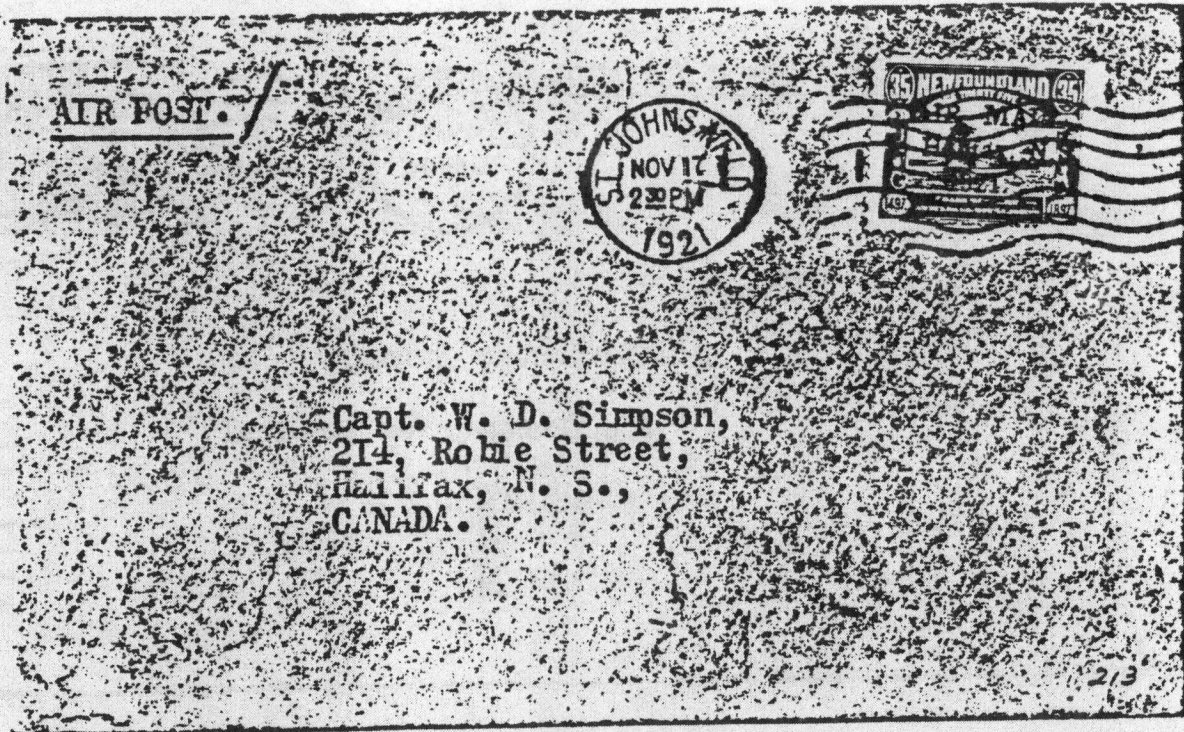
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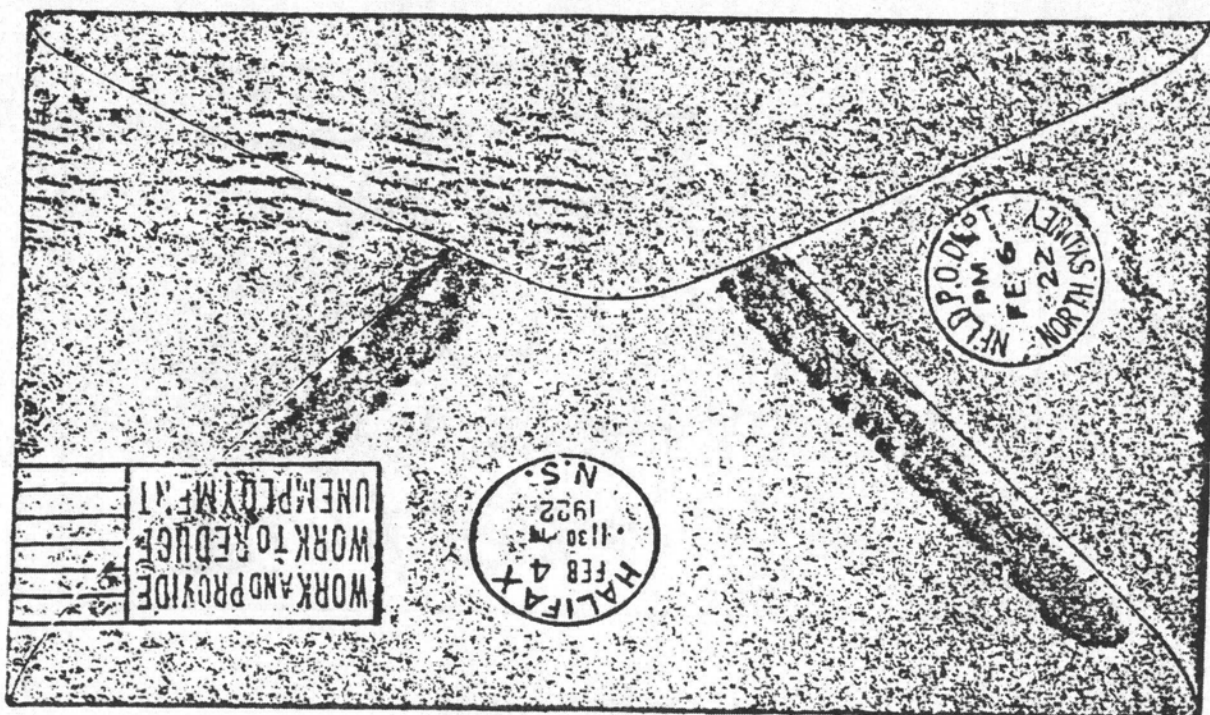
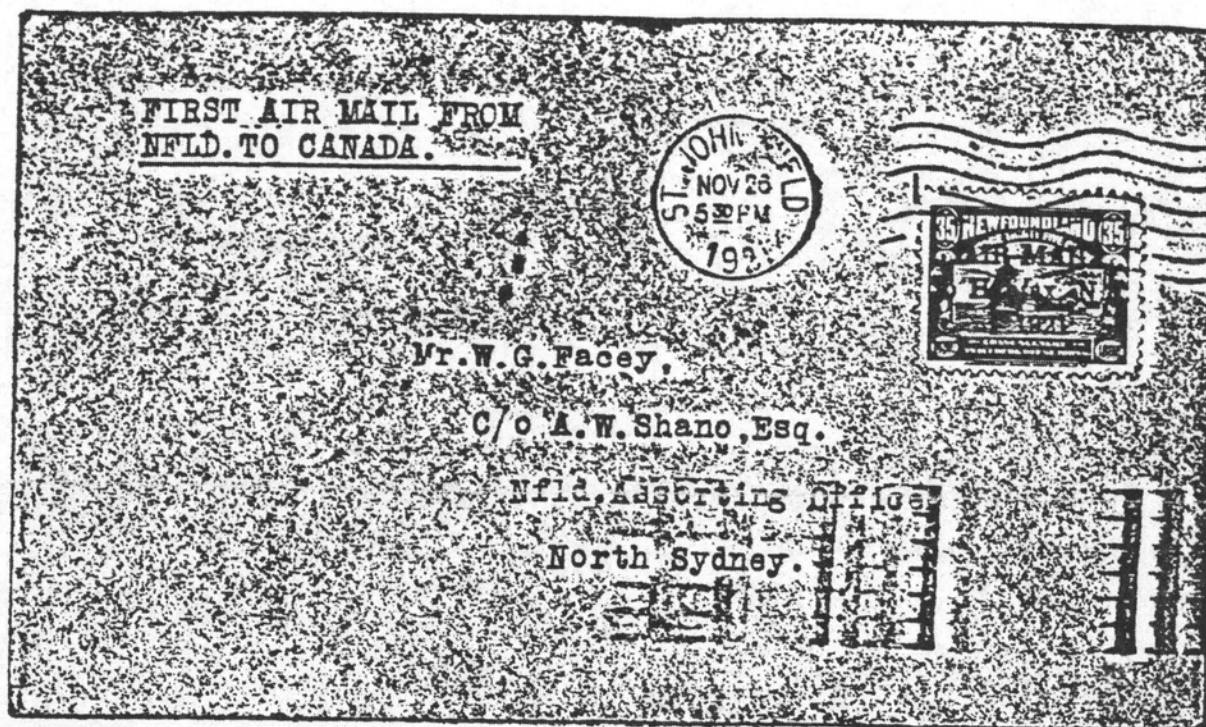
Scott no. C3111 on Halifax air mail cover, tied by St. John's machine cancel 25 November 1921.



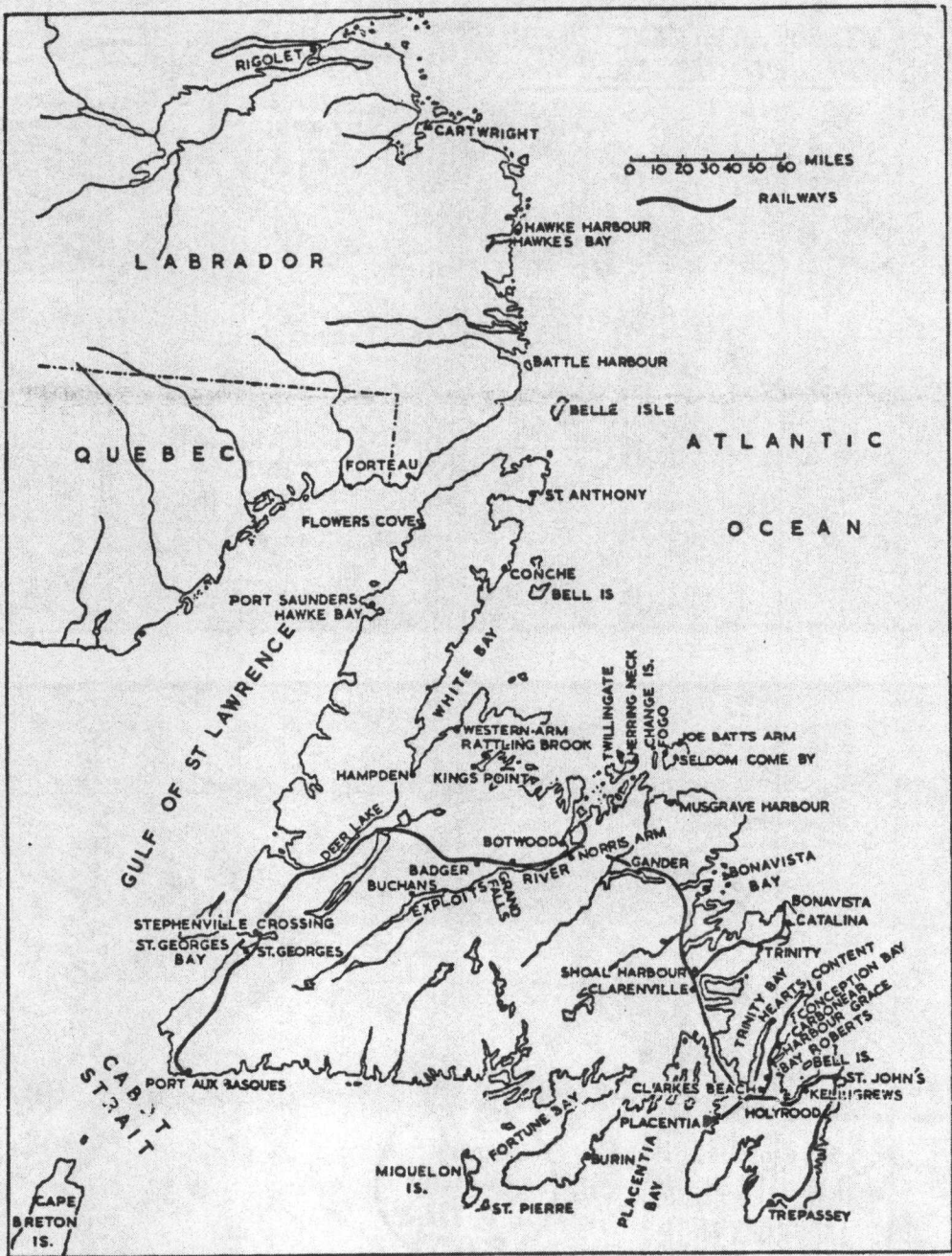
Newfoundland cover franked with Scott no. C3, tied by St. John's machine cancel 18 November 1921.



Scott no. C3a on Halifax air mail cover, tied by St. John's machine cancel 17 November 1921.



Scarce Newfoundland flight cover franked with Scott no. C31v, tied by St. John's machine cancel 26 November 1921. Less than 560 copies exist with this variety and very few are on flight covers.



Map of Newfoundland