

THE NEWFIE NEWSLETTER
of the Newfoundland Study Group of BNAPS

Number 17

May/June 1988

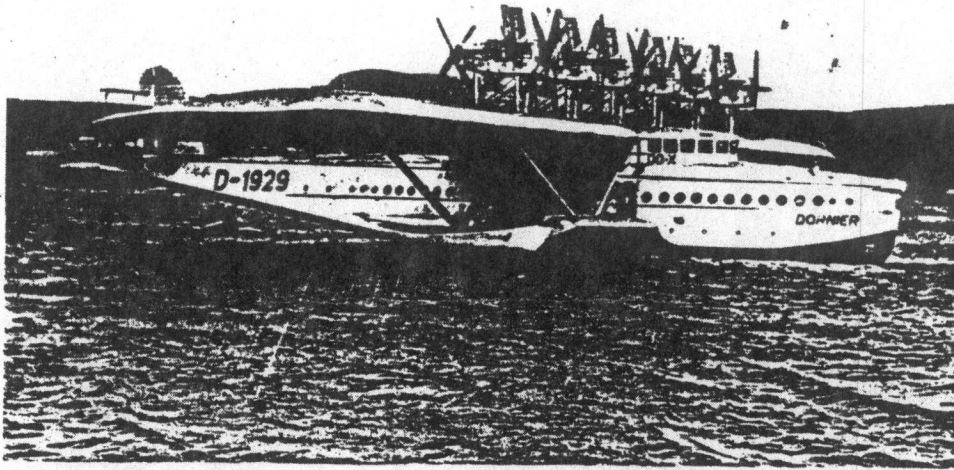
THE DORNIER DO-X FLIGHT OF 1932
by Bert Warr, Jr.

This article deals with the flight of the German flying boat, The Dornier DO-X, especially as it pertains to the Newfoundland leg of this flight in May of 1932. Some mention is made of the earlier flights to the Americas via Africa and its subsequent return to Europe, but the main emphasis is on the flight to Newfoundland.

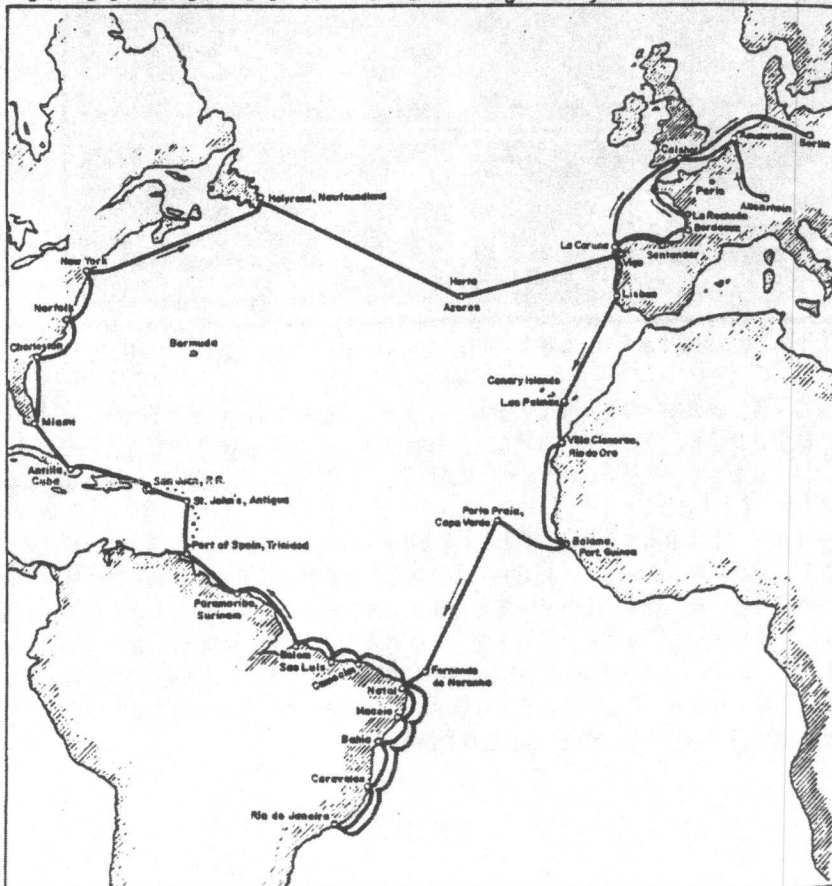


The complete setting, a block of four

The Dornier DO-X was built and designed by the famous German engineer, Dr. Claude Dornier. He is known for building the famous flying boats, "Dornier WAL", which were used by VonGronau on his many world flights. Due to restrictions of the Versailles Treaty on Germany limiting military buildups, the DO-X had to be built outside of Germany. Construction of the huge plane took place at Altenrhein on the Swiss side of Lake Constance, and began in 1928. The plane only took one and a half years to complete and she was ready for her first flight on July 12, 1929. This first flight was conducted on Lake Constance by the test pilot Richard Wagner with no problems.



Photograph of Dornier DO-X taken May 20, 1932 at Holyrood, C.B.



Map of the Europe - Panamerican flight 1930 -1932

On October 21, 1929 the plane set a new record for number of passengers carried by one aircraft, when she flew 169 passengers on another test flight, piloted by Captain Horst Merz.

The D0-X was quite a large aircraft with an overall length of 130 feet and a wingspan of 160 feet. She was powered by 12 Curtis "Conqueror" engines and she had a lift capacity of about 50 tons. Her crew of 14 was large, however this was a large plane, almost like an ocean liner with wings!

First Transatlantic Flight:

The D0-X lifted off Lake Constance on November 5, 1930 to begin her first transatlantic flight en route to North America. The plane was commanded by Captain Christiansen and piloted by Captain Merz while U.S. Navy Captain Clarence H. Schildhauer copiloted the craft. The job of the navigator as well as postmaster for the flight was carried out by a Captain Niemann. This plane had her own onboard post office for handling the various dispatches while on the flight.

The plane arrived at Lisbon the next day and due to a fire which destroyed the canvas coating of her left wing was delayed two months while repairs were carried out. She left Lisbon in January of 1931 for Africa where she ran into further problems with the tropical climate. She finally arrived in Rio De Janeiro on June 20, 1931 and after several flights along the coast of South America and the West Indies she landed at Miami in the U.S.A. on August 22, 1931. Her final flight of the year took place on August 27, 1931 when she landed at New York City. Here her engines were overhauled by Curtis-Wright, the manufacturer of the engines on the D0-X. It was hoped that officials of Pan American Airways would place orders for the giant flying boat, however this did not happen and the plane spent the winter of 1931-32 in a hanger at Glenn Curtiss airport. On the Morning of May 19, 1932 she left New York on her return across the Atlantic for Germany, but not before a scheduled landing for refueling on the east coast of Newfoundland.

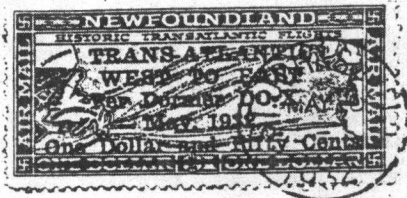
Arrival of the D0-X in Newfoundland:

It was hoped by her commander to alight off the Narrows at St. John's to refuel for the trip across the Atlantic. Adverse weather conditions in Freshwater Bay forced him to change his plans so he decided to put down at Holyrood in Conception Bay some 25 miles west of the city. Again weather conditions forced another change in plans. Fog, at Holyrood forced him to land at Dildo Arm, Trinity Bay a further 25 miles west. The next morning the D0-X took on enough fuel to fly to Holyrood, where she took on a further 7000 gallons for the transatlantic crossing.



Scott C12 DO-X cover addressed to Freising, Germany tied by St. John's, May 19, 1932 cancel. There is no backstamp.

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ENGLAND.

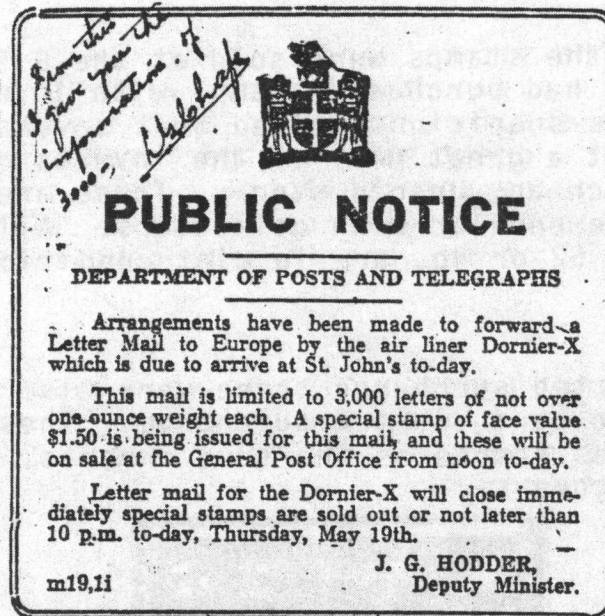
Fire Dept.



Commerical DO-X cover to London, England, tied by St. John's May 20, 1932 cancel. There is no backstamp.

The Newfoundland DO-X Stamp:

On the morning of May 19, 1932 the following notice appeared in "The Daily News", a St. John's newspaper.



A special stamp of \$1.50 face value was issued by the Newfoundland Post Office for use on covers posted on the DO-X. This was done by surcharging the \$1.00 blue airmail printed by Perkins, Bacon & Co. on watermarked paper with a red surcharge in 5 lines. The surcharge reads "TRANS-ATLANTIC / WEST TO EAST / Per Donier DO-X / May, 1932. / One Dollar and Fifty Cents" and a long line to obliterate values and the bottom of the stamp. The stamp was surcharged in a setting of a block of four (2x2). The printing was carried out by the king's printer, "Commercial and Trade Printers," D. R. Thistle and Company, Proprietors. The sheets of 100 of the \$1.00 airmail were broken down into blocks of 4 and surcharged and placed on sale at the G.P.O. on Thursday May 19, 1932.

The sale of this stamp caused considerable interest amongst the general public and on the morning the stamp went on sale at the G.P.O. a considerable line-up formed on Water Street at the main entrance of the building, waiting to buy the stamp. My grandfather, who was 13 at the time, was in this line-up and saw a business opportunity unfold. He began to run errands to buy coffee, donuts, papers, etc, for many of the people in the line-up and made enough money to purchase two blocks of four of the DO-X stamp. This was a considerable sum in the days of the depression (8 x \$1.50 = \$12.00).

A large number of the stamps were retained in mint condition by the purchasers and not used on mail carried on the flight.

Inverted Surcharges:

Throughout the day the stamps were sold at the G.P.O. some people noticed they had purchased stamps with inverted surcharges. Apparently there was suspicions raised that several postal officials had bought a great many of the inverts as they had the opportunity to search any unsold stock. These are relatively scarce and are quite popular with collectors. All known copies, estimated at around 52 or so, are in mint condition.

Slanted Surcharge:

Along with the inverted surcharge there were also several blocks with what appears to be a slanted surcharge. These are not common but are not as scarce as the true inverts. Several are known used on DO-X covers.



Single of Scott #C12 with slanting surcharge!

Newfoundland DO-X mail:

Not all the stamps issued were used on covers of this flight, nor was the maximum of 3,000 letters reached either. The first day of issue of the stamp, May 19 1932, saw the most covers serviced, with an estimate of about 1371 posted at St. John's. On May 20, 1932 there were an estimated 418 covers posted at St. John's and apparently are considerably scarcer.

Not all of the covers bear the specially surcharged stamp as some have been seen with the unsurcharged \$1.00 stamp and a 50¢ stamp (Scott C11 and C10) or three 50¢ stamps (Scott C10) or just a single unsurcharged \$1.00 (Scott C11). Despite the abnormal frankings all covers, were treated normally and delivered to their proper destinations. All are quite scarce and very few exist. There have also been a couple of covers seen with a block of four of the surcharged stamp. This is an overfranking of \$4.50, however they make a nice souvenir and are extremely scarce.

Some covers bear a Harbour Grace postmark of May 19, 1932 usually backstamped of the covers. It is believed that an agreement reached between the postmasters at Harbour Grace and St. John's allowed officials to place \$1.50 in cash inside the covers and

when picked-up by the daily mail van and transported to St. John's had the special stamps affixed by postal employees.

Between 20 and 40 cards and covers either with or without the special stamp were posted at Holyrood, C.B. on May 20, 1932. These are fairly scarce, but are not that uncommon.

Arrival of Mail in Europe:

It is apparent that the majority of the mail landed in London was not backstamped with a London receiver. Covers marked return to sender and roundtrip covers usually bear a London May 25 or May 26, 1932 receiver. Covers addressed to Locations outside of London also rarely have backstamps.

All mail sent to Berlin generally received the Berlin backstamp of May 26, 1932. However covers addressed to Germany but locations outside Berlin rarely have backstamps.

Of the few covers addressed to Portugal, some which were offloaded at Vigo, Spain rarely received the May 25, 1932 backstamp. Those offloaded at Southampton almost always have the May 28, 1932 receiver.

Covers to destinations outside of Europe are extremely scarce, however a few do exist, some being addressed to India, and almost certainly offloaded at Southampton.

On-board Mail:

As the DO-X carried its own post office some covers and postcards were dispatched by the crew. There are a small number of covers which bear the Newfoundland specially surcharged stamp tied by Holyrood, C.B. May 20, '32 broken ring cancel, 3 x 2 mark (Scott #C33) German stamps cancelled by the DO-X date stamp, and bearing the large rectangular cachet "AMERICA - EUROPA - FLUGSCHIFF - DO-X". It is believed that 5 of these were made, and are known to exist.

There are also various cards or covers which bear no stamps at all, but have a two line cachet "AFFRANCHISSEMENT PERCU 6RM" (covers) or "... 4RM" (cards). These are usually dated between May 19 and May 21, 1932 and it is believed that about 30 to 50 of these exist.

There is also one cover known with the Newfoundland surcharged stamp tied May 20, 1932 Holyrood, C.B., 3 x 2 mark German stamps (Scott #C33) and Spanish stamps tied by Vigo, Spain May 22, 1932. There may be more of these and they are usually addressed to Mr. Ernest Brombeis on board the DO-X. These are scarce.

The DO-X Returns to Europe:

At 3:25 a.m. on the morning of May 21, 1932 the giant flying boat lifted off the waters of Conception Bay and headed east for the Azores. She arrived at Horta, the chief city in the islands, later that same evening. The next day she flew on to the European mainland.

Putting down at Vigo, Spain that afternoon May 22, 1932, she put off some mail here and took on a few covers for England and Germany. She landed at Calshot, England the next morning and from here flew the final phase of her Europe - PanAmerican flight the next day, arriving in Berlin on May 24, 1932.

The DO-X then went on a tour of Germany and Switzerland which lasted until November of 1932. Her last flight took place on September 5, 1933, a mail flight from Passau, Germany to Altenrhein, Switzerland, her home base on Lake Constance.

DO-X Air Mail Checklist:

Mint Stamps

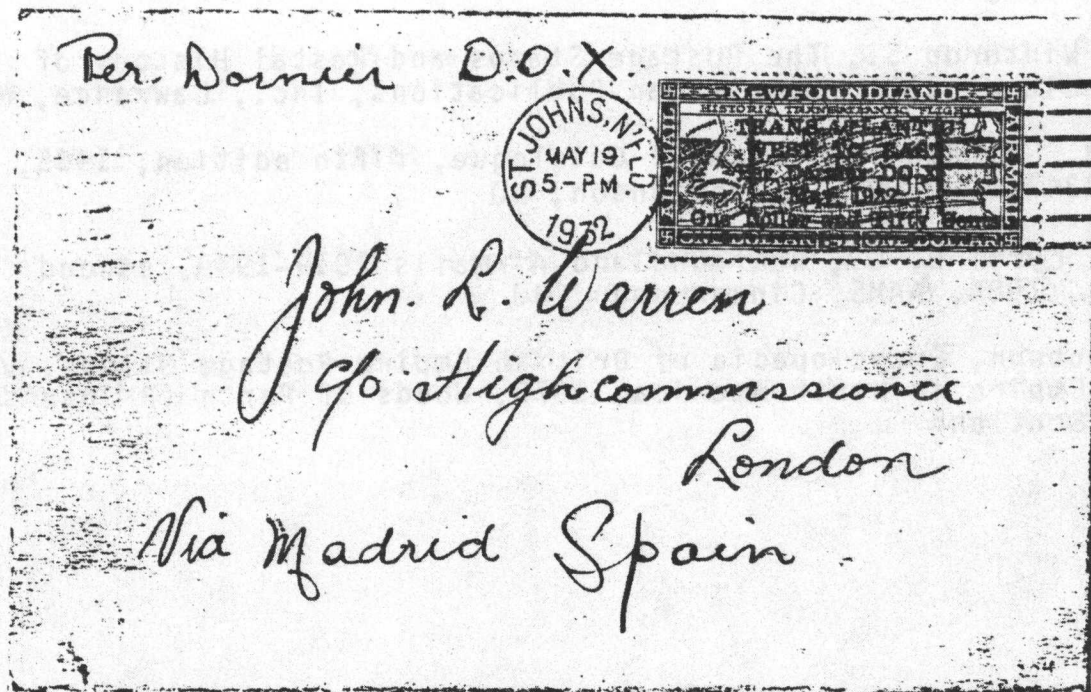
- * 8,000 prepared by surcharging \$1.00 blue (Scott #C11)
- * May 19, 1932 Day of issue 12:00 Noon G.P.O. Water Street
- * Possibly 52 or so inverted copies
- * Several blocks of 4 with slanting surcharge

Airmail Covers

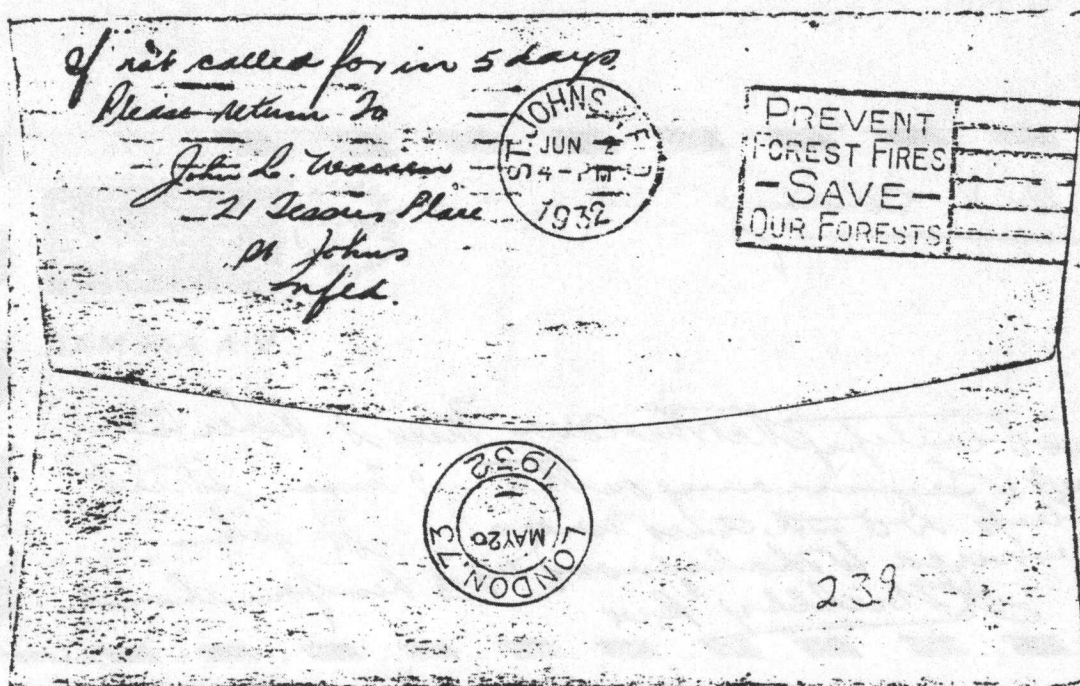
- * Covers dated St. John's May 19, 1932 approximately 1371
- * Covers dated St. John's May 20, 1932 approximately 418
- * Covers dated Holyrood, C.B. May 20, 1932 approximately 20 to 50?
- * Covers and Cards without stamps PERCU 6RM or 4RM Between 30 and 50?
- * Total Mail of between 1700 and 1900 items

Composition of the Mail

- * Covers to the U.K. cancelled May 19, 1932 estimated at 750?
- * Round trip covers to U.K. May 19, 1932 estimated at less than 300?
- * Number of covers to U.K. backstamped May 25 or 26, 1932 unknown but very small
- * Mail to Germany on May 19, 1932? very small, around 200
- * Covers to U.K. cancelled May 20, 1932 estimated at 285?
- * Round trip covers to U.K. May 20, 1932 estimated at 75?
- * Mail to Germany on May 20 1932? small around 50?
- * Holyrood, C.B. mail? scarce 20 to 40?



D.O.-X cover cancelled May 19, 1932



Reverse of same cover with London, May 26, 1932 receiver
Also St. John's June 2, 1932 receiver

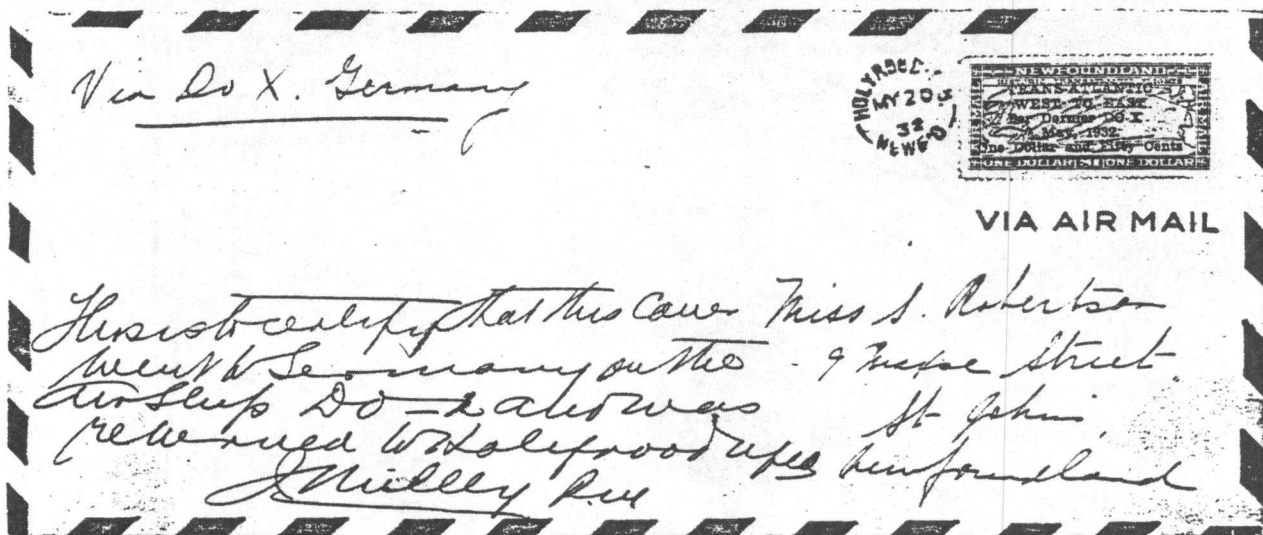
Bibliography:

Boggs, Winthrop S., The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Newfoundland, 1975, Quarterman Publications, Inc., Lawrence, Ma.

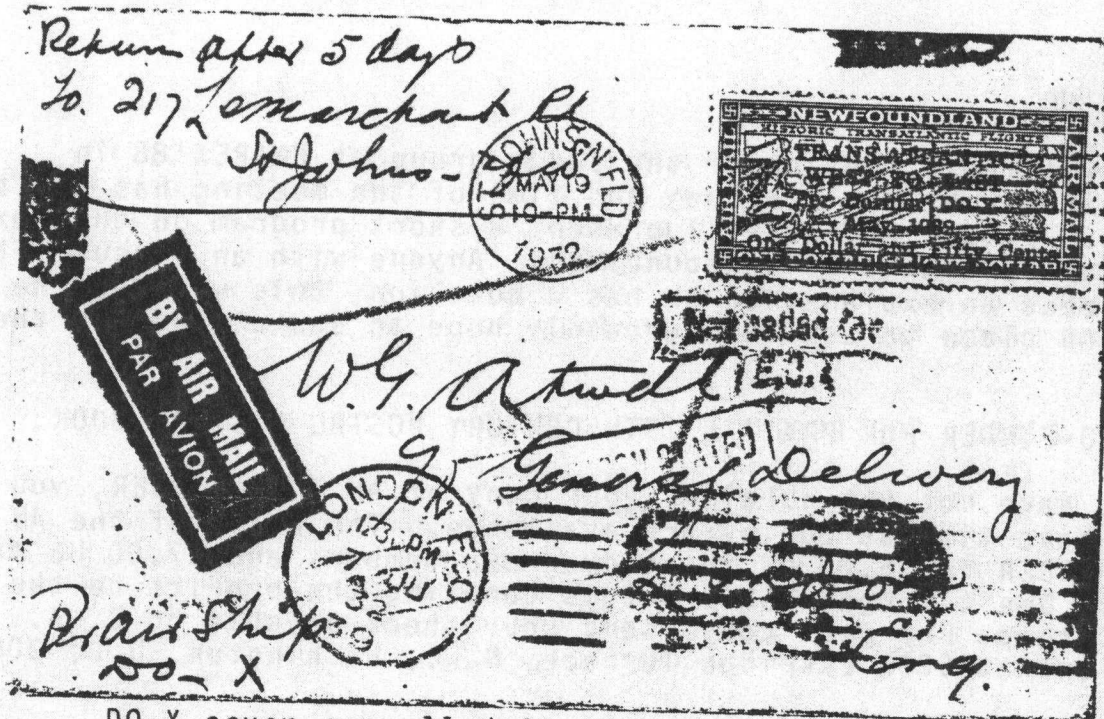
A. A. M. S., American Airmail Catalogue, fifth edition, 1985, pages 2347-8, 2358-9, Cinnamonson, NJ

Harmer, Cyril H. C., Newfoundland Airmails 1919-1939, second edition, 1984, AAMS, Cinnamonson, NJ

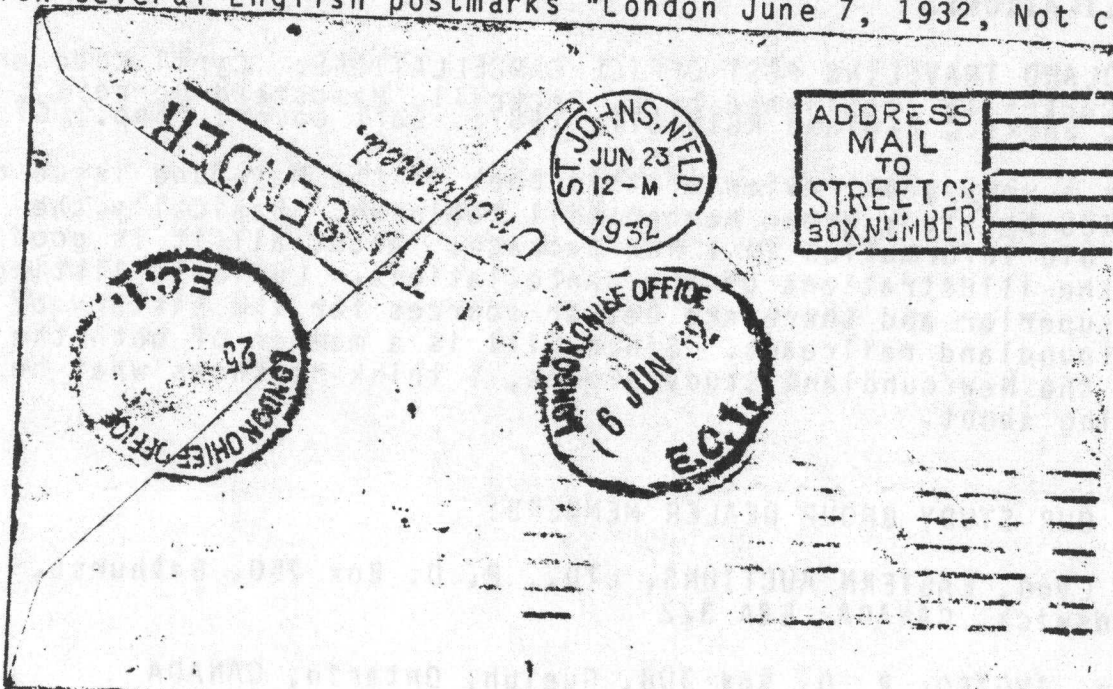
Lowe, Robson, Encyclopedia of British Empire Postage Stamps, vol V, The Empire in North America, 1973, Woods of Perth (Printers), Perth, Scotland



Specially surcharged stamp not tied to cover by Holyrod, C.B.
May 20, 1932 cancel but certified by local postmaster



DO-X cover cancelled St. John's May 19, 1932
with several English postmarks "London June 7, 1932, Not called



Reverse of same cover with "London Chief office, May 25, 1932
receiver" and St. John's June 23, 1932 backstamp.

BNAPEX'88

There will be a meeting of the study group at BNAPEX'88 in Virginia Beach, Va. The day and time of the meeting has yet to be set. Palmer Moffat will present a short program on the Boxed and Oval Postmarks of Newfoundland. Anyone with an unusual item that needs an explanation or has a question, this will be the time and place to ask it. Certainly hope to see all of you there!

AN INFO-FINDER FOR PRATT'S 19TH CENTURY POSTAL HISTORY BOOK:

If you have not yet obtained your copy of AN INFO-FINDER, you still have time as copies are available. The price of the AN INFO-FINDER is \$5.00 US to study group members and \$7.00 US to others. Don't forget Bob Pratt is donating the profits to the study group. For your copy, send your check payable to C. A. Stillions at 5031 Eskridge Terrace, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

NEW PUBLICATIONS:

NEWFOUNDLAND TRAVELING POST OFFICE CANCELLATIONS; Cyril Kidd and Philip Cockrill; published by P. Cockrill, Hampstead Norreys, Newbury, Berks., England RG16 0TT; 1987; soft cover; 56pp.; L7

There is a very good review of this book in the May-June issue of BNA TOPICS by study group member Bill Robinson. Basically the book is old information in a new package. About all it is good for is the illustrations of the cancellations. Ludlow's listing is far superior and there are better sources for the history of the Newfoundland railroads. Since Bill is a member of both the TPO and the Newfoundland study groups, I think he knows what he is talking about.

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