

Scribblings

...from the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library



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ON THE TRAIL OF THE GRAY GOOSE The Airline That Never Flew

By: David Capra and Sergio Lugo, RMPL Volunteers
Marilyn Chang, Librarian, Denver Public Library

Library user (David Capra) to reference librarian (Marilyn Chang): "Have you ever heard of the Gray Goose Airline, because I haven't had any luck in identifying an envelope with their corner card logo in the past 25 years."

Marilyn Chang: "Funny you should ask that, I had a request for some information a couple of weeks ago for the Gray Goose Airline."

David Capra: "Well, in the envelope I happen to have a stock certificate for the Airline, which could be of help in gathering information on the airline."

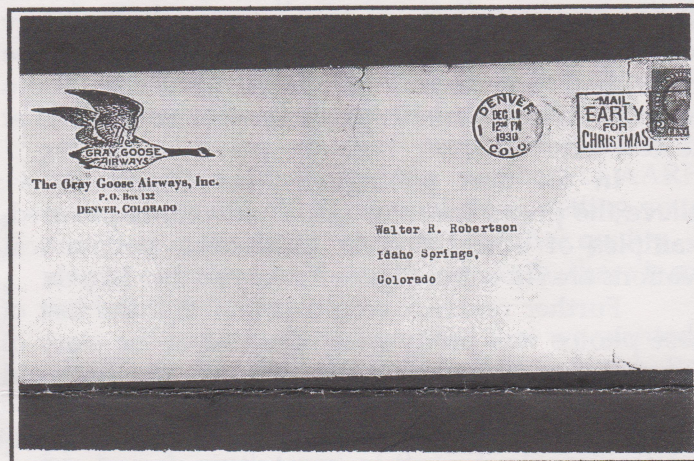


Figure 1: Gray Goose # 10 envelope.

That chance exchange involving a philatelic visitor's (David Capra) tour of the Denver Public Library (DPL), prompted the exploitation of the investigative skills of the reference librarian (Marilyn Chang) of the Ross Barrett Historical Aeronautics Collection at the Denver Public Library in the unraveling of a philatelic and corporate mystery. Armed with the stock certificate, within a week Ms. Chang had unearthed a gold mine of photographs and newspaper articles on the designer and founder of Gray Goose Airways. The story that unfurled was one fascinating chronicle of a self styled inventor and stock promoter in the midst of the Great Depression. Despite at least one successful capitalization drive (and apparently other less successful ones) involving penny ante stocks, the aeronautical designs of this purported aeronautical inventor that were going to carry the "Gray Goose" logo into the air, never did.

In this instance, the story begins with the acquisition of the cover shown in Figure 1. It's an ordinary # 10 envelope, roughly opened at the right margin. But its distinguishing characteristic is the corner card logo for the Gray Goose Airways.

Despite the passage of 70 years since the posting of the envelope, it still contained two stock certificates (see Figure 2), with a par value of \$3.50 each - 35 shares at 10 cent per share - and bearing the signatures of J.E. Caldwell (Secretary) and Olive E. Caldwell (President).

With the name and the Denver postmark as a starting point, Ms. Chang reasoned that there was a good chance that the Caldwell's were residing in Denver at the time and what better place to look than the Denver City Directory of 1930. And sure enough there on page 1157 was Gray Goose Airways at 1024

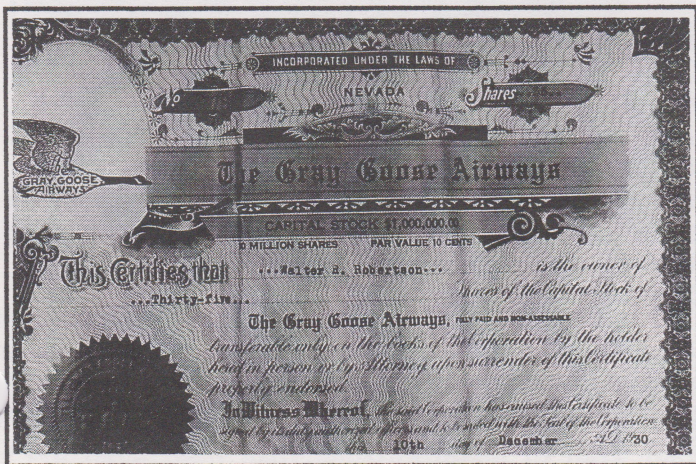


Figure 2: Gray Goose stock certificate.

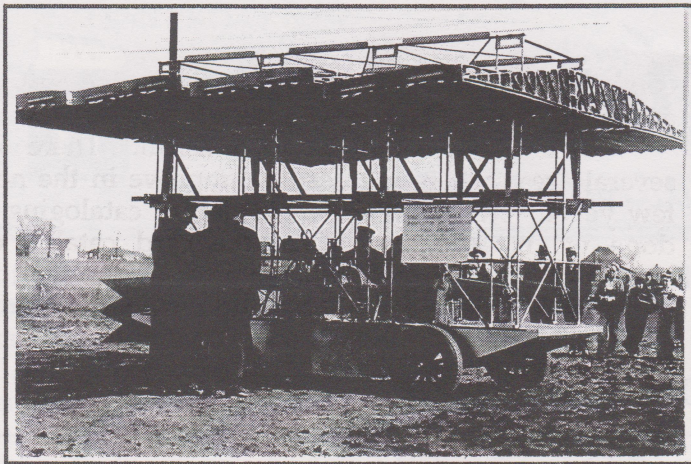


Figure 3: One of Dave's blown up photos.

first of these photographs (see Figure 3) is a notice that due to a mechanical problem, a prototype of the "Gray Goose" (pictured in the background) would not be flown that afternoon. Notations on the photo indicated that the uniformed Denver Fire Chief is at the near left.

In the next photograph (see Figure 4), we believe the proud inventor (J.E. Caldwell) is pictured. Examples of other of Mr. Caldwell's aeronautical creations are shown in Figure 5 and part 2 in March.

Further research would reveal that the last of these photos was pretty much the end of the story of "Gray Goose Airways", but not of the intrepid Jonathan Caldwell. At this point, Sergio Lugo steps in and offers to do a search on ebay's listings for item related to the Gray Goose Airlines. Realistically not anticipating any results, the reader can imagine his amazement when a lot appeared with several "Gray Goose Airways" related items. They included other examples of the ubiquitous cover and stock, a card stuffer, and most importantly two prospectus'. We say most importantly because the prospectus' provided drawings of what the contraption in Figures 3 and 4 was eventually supposed to look like (see Figures 7 and 8 on the next page).

23rd Street, as well as Jonathan and Olive Caldwell of 2301 S. Columbine (pg. 745). Searching further, the City directories revealed residence in Denver from 1928 to 1931.

With that information, in hand, the next step involved double checking the digital photographs contained in the DPL's computer imaging data banks - a short hop for Ms. Chang involving the Otto C. Perry collection of photographs. A word search for the phrase "Gray Goose Airways" unleashed a series of 8 photographs including photos taken on February 15, 1931 at the Gray Goose Airways Shop and Hangar at 4150 Josephine Street, in north Denver. Posted on the

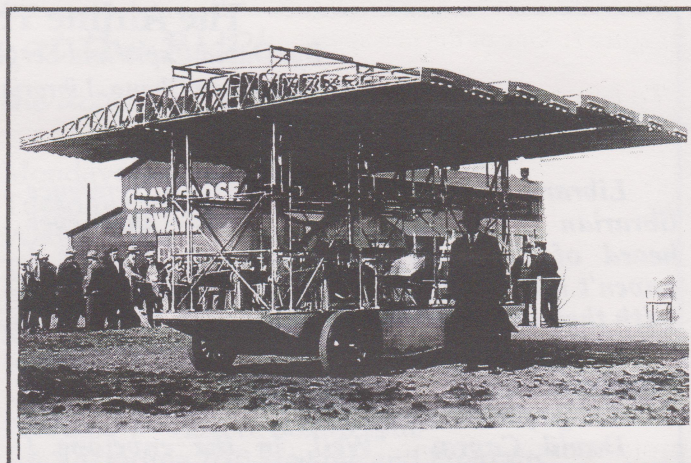


Figure 4: One of Dave's blown up photos.

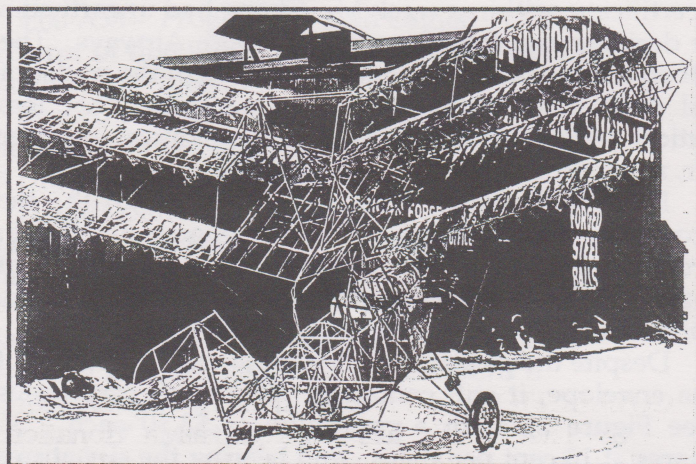


Figure 5: One of the newspaper photos.

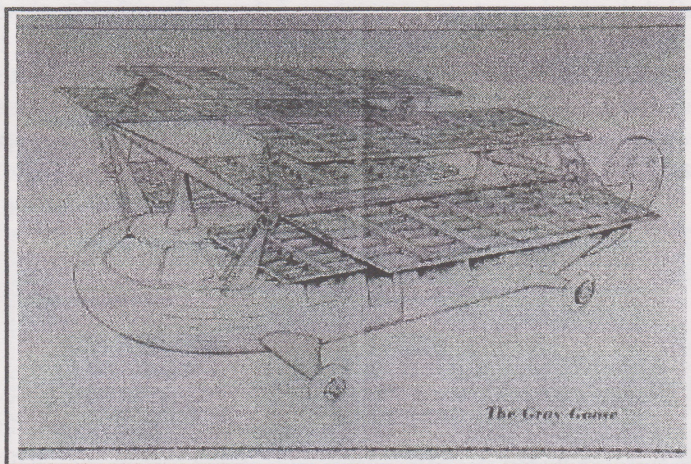


Figure 6: One of the newspaper photos.

Fortunately, the detective and investigative skills of Ms. Chang were to produce even more spectacular results. Reasoning that Mr. Jonathan Caldwell would have attained a certain degree of notoriety in his day in the Denver media, Ms. Chang undertook a search of articles on him contained in local newspapers. While the search was to bear considerable fruit, that fruit was only triggered by events nearly 20 years after the Gray Goose escapade of the early 1930's. According to Denver Post articles of August, 1949, Mr. Caldwell had had a well traveled and checkered career since the days of the Gray Goose workshop in Denver.

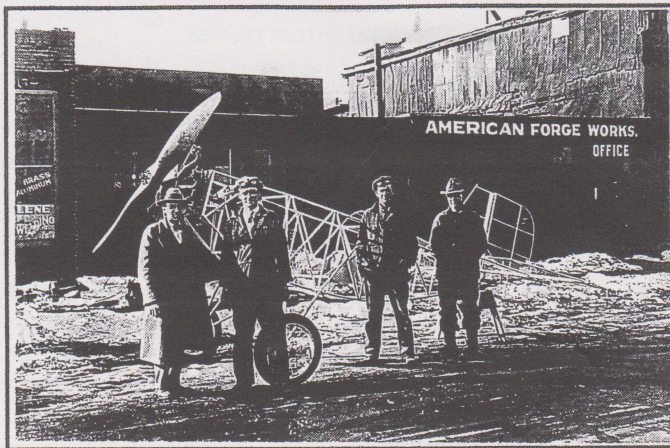


Figure 7: One of the newspaper photos.

To be continued in the March - April issue of "Scribblings"....

News From the RMPL...

A BRIEF LOOK BACK

by Don Beuthel - President RMPL

In 1993 if someone would have told the small organizing group who went out on a limb, that, eight short years later, the RMPL would be in as healthy a condition as it presently is - this would have drawn protests of disbelief and raucous laughter. If someone would have said that in eight short years we would have a steady membership of just under 300, many of whom are members at levels considerably above the minimum level, more laughter would have occurred. If some one would have said that we would have been able to pay off as much as we have on the mortgage on our building, we would get more statements of disbelief. But all of this has been accomplished!

Yes, we have accomplished so much in such a short time that even those of us who are regularly associated with the operation of the RMPL find it difficult to believe. We owe so much to the many generous philatelists from all over the world who have donated the philatelic materials that form our library. Presently we have over 8,000 books and pamphlets (no more than 2 of any publication) that have been cataloged. We have over 40,000 periodicals, no more than two of any issue and these represent over 600 different periodicals. These are organized and readily available for use. We have over 8,000 different auction catalogs for reference. Almost all of this material has come from donations. We thank each and every one who has been kind enough to share with others and help us help the hobby in this manner. Even more important is that the RMPL is being used by area philatelists.

We have been very fortunate to have a staff of steady and dependable Volunteers who now keep the RMPL open for 6 hours per day, six days per week. We have been extremely fortunate to have had a librarian who volunteered to do the job of organizing

and cataloging all of the books making the RMPL a usable and functioning library. We thank each and every RMPL Volunteer for all their dedication. We continue to be an All Volunteer organization and we are most proud of this.

All is not completely wonderful. There are several areas where we need to improve in the next few years. Now that the major job of cataloging is done we need to get all of the card catalog on computer and this work has started. We need to build on our membership base and we have plans for a major membership effort in the near future. There are still too many "closet philatelists" out there who have never heard of the RMPL and we need to reach them so a major PR job is in our near future. We need to try to rid yourself of the burden of paying the property taxes and we will be going back to the State Legislature to remedy this. We need to continue to pay off the mortgage at an accelerated rate and there are plans to accomplish this. We need to build the quality of our library collection and the Acquisitions Committee is working toward this end. We need to get some of the younger people into active roles because some of us have been members of AARP for quite some time. While we will stress getting younger members more active, we won't sacrifice quality. Lest we pat ourselves on the back too much, there is much work still to be done.

When we started we said that we wanted the RMPL to be the philatelic center of the Rocky Mountain area and we feel that we are meeting this goal. With your continued generosity and some more hard work on the part of the entire organization we will continue the progress already started.

RMPL CLOSINGS

As you look through the schedule of activities of the RMPL you will notice that we will be closed for several national holidays - Monday, January 15th for Martin Luther King Day and Monday, February 19th for President's Day.

Baring closures for bad weather we will be open 6 days per week. Because we are concerned for our Volunteers safety we will close when conditions seem to be dangerous. To save a fruitless trip in bad weather call the RMPL first before you leave - 303-759-9921. We will put a message on the phone answering service if we plan to be closed.

COLLECTIONS AVAILABLE

The RMPL has received as a donation a collection of Netherlands and also a collection of Japan. These are available by contacting Bill Dunn at the library. Bill Dunn and Norm Camera have been working through the many other collections that have been donated to the RMPL and have set up some stockbooks of material which are available starting with 5 cent items and up. These are available at the library during our normal library hours.

SECOND SATURDAY AT THE RMPL

We have been pleased that the attendance at the 2nd Saturday programs continues to grow. This must be because the programs being presented are of interest to many of you. We are always looking for program ideas and persons to give the programs. Please let us know what you would like to see.

For the January 13th program, we will be about a month late for the subject. Stan Oliner, recently retired curator for the Colorado Historical Society, will present, "Oh the Horror of that Sunday" - U. S. S. Arizona - 12/ 7/1941. Several who have seen this presentation have assured us that it is

worthy of making a special effort to see.

On February 10th, 2nd Saturday at the RMPL will feature a program by Stuart Silverberg on a rather recent development in philately, "Holograms". Have you ever wondered just how do they make those things? Maybe if you attend you will find out.

These programs are open to all interested collectors, so plan to attend and bring a philatelic friend. The "donut fairy" usually makes an appearance and the coffee pot is always on. We know that 9:00 AM is a terrible time for a meeting, but those who make the effort to attend really enjoy the presentations.

...What's Happening at the RMPL...

"Come and enjoy the activities"

JANUARY 2001

Mondays: January 8, 22, 29 Open 10-4
Tuesdays: January 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Open 10-4
Wednesdays: January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Open 10-4
Thursdays: January 4, 11, 18, 25, Open 2-8
Fridays: January 5, 12, 19, 26 Open 10-4
Saturdays: January 6, 13, 20, 27 Open 10-4
January 1 - RMPL Closed - New Years
January 3 - Aurora Stamp Club
6:30 Trading 7:30 Meeting and Program
January 4 - RMPL Annual Meeting
Board of Directors - 7:00 PM
January 6 - Meeting - 10:00 AM
Scandinavian Collectors Club
January 10 - Meeting - 7:00 PM
Denver Germany Stamp Club
January 11 - Meeting - 7:30 PM
TOPICAL Philatelists In Colorado
January 13 - Second Saturday at the RMPL
9:00 AM - Program by Stan Oliner - "Oh, the Horror of that Sunday" USS Arizona - 12/7/1941
January 13 - Meeting - 10:00 AM
Mexico / Latin America Philatelic Group
January 13 - Meeting - 2:00 PM
Universal Ship Cancel Society
U.S.S. Colorado Chapter
January 15 - RMPL Closed - MLK Day
January 20 - Meeting - 1:00 PM
RMPL Kid's Stamp Club
January 23 - 7:30 PM - ROMPEX Committee
January 23 - 10:00 AM - ROMPEX/RMPL
Exhibiting Workshop
January 27 - Meeting - 2:00 PM
China Stamp Society

FEBRUARY 2001

Mondays: February 5, 12, 26 Open 10-4
Tuesdays: 6, 13, 20, 27 Open 10-4
Wednesdays: 7, 14, 21, 28 Open 10-4
Thursdays: 1, 8, 15, 22 Open 2-8
Fridays: 2, 9, 16, 23 Open 10-4
Saturdays: 3, 10, 17, 24 Open 10-4
February 3 - Meeting - 10:00 AM
Scandinavian Collectors Club
February 7 - Aurora Stamp Club
6:30 Trading 7:30 Meeting and Program
February 10 - Second Saturday at the RMPL
9:00 AM - Program by Stewart Silverberg - "Philatelic Holograms"
February 10 - Meeting - 10:00 AM
Mexico / Latin America Philatelic Group
February 10 - Meeting - 11:00 AM
Rocky Mountain Aerophilatelists
February 10 - Meeting - 2:00 PM
Universal Ship Cancellation Society -
U.S.S. Colorado Chapter
February 14 - Meeting - 7:00 PM
Denver Germany Stamp Club
February 17 - Meeting - 1:00 PM
RMPL Kid's Stamp Club
February 19 - RMPL Closed - President's Day
February 24 - 10:00 AM - ROMPEX / RMPL
Exhibiting Workshop
February 24 - Meeting - 2:00 PM
China Stamp Society
February 27 - 7:30 PM - ROMPEX Committee
Meeting

Scribblings is published bi-monthly by the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library, 2038 So. Pontiac Way, Denver, CO 80224.

Donald G. Beuthel, Editor

The Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library is a chartered Colorado non-profit corporation. Membership subscriptions over that for the annual regular membership, and donations of appropriate philatelic materials, are deductible for U.S. income tax purposes. The RMPL is an Internal Revenue Service designated 501 (c)(3) charitable organization.

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