

# Scribblings



...from the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library

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## Russian Air Fleet Labels

by John H. Bloor, RMPL member



1. ODFV Central Council, first issue, April 1923. 1 ruble red on yellowish (toned) paper.



2. ODFV Central Council, seventh issue, March 1924. 25k red and black on white paper.



5. ODFV Northwest region (Petrograd, Leningrad), first issue, April 1923. 5 ruble yellow, purple, and brown on white paper.



6. Zhmerinka, OSO Aviakhim, first issue, 1932. 3k green on white paper. Issued to raise funds for construction of the "Airplane named after First All-Ukraine Rally of Young Pioneers".



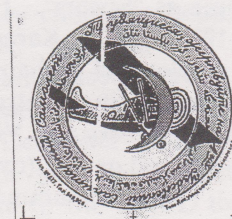
3. Aviakhim Central Council, first regional issue, August-September 1925. Red and Black on cream paper, on value indicated; printed in Odessa. Text reads: "Workers of the World Unite // RSFSR // Create Your Air Fleet"



4. OSO Aviakhim Central Council, first issue, February 1927. 10k red and black on thick, yellowish paper. The central design is the OSO Aviakhim emblem.



7. Gomel, ODFV, second issue, November 1932. 15k black on pink paper. Slogan in Byelorussian: "For collection of funds for construction of the Airplane named after the System of Agricultural Cooperation of BSSR".



8. Samarkand, OSO Aviakhim, third issue, 1930. Pritula (1997) lists this as black on toned paper. This copy is red, light blue, and dark blue on toned paper. There appears to be a preprinting paper fold. The slogans are in Uzbek and Russian and they read "For collection of funds for construction of the first ambulance aircraft of Uzbekistan".

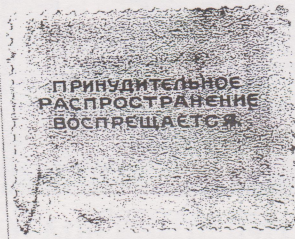
When the Russian revolution began in 1917, WWI - the first war in which heavier-than-air craft played a significant role - was just ending. Useful airplanes were less than 14 years old. Over the next six years, "old" Russia disintegrated and, with considerable pain and travail, the "new" USSR emerged. This new federation needed airplanes for both military and civilian aviation but had little money to pay for their construction. It was also important to make citizens aware of the importance of aviation for a modern Russia and to begin the training of boys and girls to become future members of the Red Air Force.

Societies to promote these goals were established in the Republics that comprised the USSR. The following history of these societies is primarily from Pritula (1997). The principal group was the ODFV (ОДВФ; Society of Friends of the Air Fleet), formed in 1923. In about August, 1925, the ODFV merged with society Dobrokhim to form the association *Aviakhim* (Aviation and Chemistry) which in 1927 was reorganized to become OSO *Aviakhim* (Society for Assistance to Aviation and Chemistry). These societies had multiple organizational levels, from the central council in Moscow down to committees in individual departments in cities. Each level was expected to contribute toward the collective goals of the organization.

The ODFV bylaws gave approval for the preparation and sale of stamps to raise the needed funds. Examples of these stamps are shown above (Figures 1-8). They were issued by the ODFV councils at all levels. The first was released in April, 1923 and new designs and types continued to appear at least into the early 1930s. The majority were



issued between 1923 and 1928.



9. Back of label shown in Figure 2, showing the text: "Compulsory Distribution Prohibited".

Although they were sold through the post offices and were often attached to letters and packages and canceled by the post office, purchase of air fleet labels was voluntary and their use on mail was not obligatory. Several issues had inscriptions on the reverse stating that compulsory distribution was prohibited (Figure 9). Circular #503 of SW Postal and Telegraph Department of August 4, 1923 ordered the managers of postal establishments " ... to use the following scale for attaching [air fleet] stamps to mail and receipts. ... For all postal transactions from 25 to 100 rubles, 1 ruble stamps should be attached to mail; from 100 to 200 r., 2 ruble stamps; from 200 to 500 r., 3 ruble stamps; ..." To emphasize the voluntary nature of this charge the circular also said " ... If a sender refuses to pay the collection duty, letters shall be accepted on common terms. ODVF stamps shall be canceled by post office stamps, but not considered as part of payment for mailing." In view of official statements such as this, Pritula's argument that these are "postage and charity stamps" (i.e. semipostals), is less than convincing. These labels are an interesting and important

part of early Soviet aviation history but it is doubtful that they are postage stamps.

There are various estimates of the number of different Air Fleet labels. Aronson shows forty eight of them. Reynolds gives 117 major catalogue numbers but includes some war charity and war loan issues, "miscellaneous labels", and Dereluft baggage labels (Dereluft was started in May 1922 as the first Soviet airline. It was operated by a Soviet-German company between Moscow and Königsberg and later extended its route to Berlin). Nicklin's list has sixty two numbers and he states that " ... about a hundred varieties ... have been emitted." Spears' tabulation includes " ... more than 220 labels, post cards, receipts and seals ... ". Finally, Pritula states that " ... 828 stamps have been catalogued. 610 of the stamps are separate issues, 181, their varieties, and 37, variations of the issues." I have at least two labels and several paper varieties that are not included in his catalogue, suggesting that there may be others that have escaped listing. There is also minimal information about the quantities of each design issued. Nicklin states "The quantities issued varied from several hundred to many hundred thousands ..." but provides no basis for these estimates.

The bibliography includes all the publications that I know of in English about these labels. Speers (1968) states that he knows of no additional ones prior to that time. Pritula (1997) mentions only Speers (1968), misspelling his name as "Spears". He also refers to a "... reference book "Stamps of Voluntary Collections for Building Aircraft (1923-1937)" by Yu. Karasin and Yu. Turchinsky, published in Moscow, but does not give a bibliography. I suspect that other articles and perhaps books in Russian exist on this subject. In most cases the listings are arranged first in order of the issuing entity (central council, republic, region, etc.) and then in chronological order. Individual labels are not priced but Speers and Vitula both use relative value (rarity) scales ranging from "A" (value up to \$5.00) to "F" (over \$100 - Speers) or "G" (over \$250 - Vitula). The majority of the items have rarity values of A, B, or C (up to \$20.00).

This brief summary provides an introduction to these lovely and interesting fund-raising labels. There is more to be learned about them but the combination of a western lack of familiarity with Russian, the size of the country, and the time that has passed and change that has occurred since they were issued will make study of primary documents difficult. Covers showing appropriate usage of the air fleet labels are very scarce. If you would like more information please feel free to contact me.

#### Bibliography:

- I. Aronson, H.L. "Aerophilately. XII. Aviation Propaganda Labels". Russian American Philatelist #15, January 1944.
- II. Reynolds, John H. "Russian Propaganda Labels for Aviation". This was "Published in association with 'The British Society of Russian Philately': Secretary John Barry Esq" October 1957; 44 pages. A typewritten list of which few copies were distributed.
- III. Nicklin, John W. "Russia: The Air Fleet Stamps", Aero Philatelist Annals. Two articles. October 1958, pages 39//50; April 1963, pages 101-103
- IV. Speers, Fred W. "Russia: Air Fleet Labels, a revised listing". Aero Philatelist Annals. A series of four articles. January 1968 (vol XV, #3), pages 57//68; April 1968, pages 95//112; July 1968, pages 19//28; October 1968, pages 49//53.
- V. Pritula, V. "Post and Soviet Air Fleet Stamps", (1997). This is a catalogue of these stamps, in Russian, with color illustrations. There is a separate English translation by the author which lacks the illustrations.

### News From the RMPL...

#### RMPL CLOSED

The Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library will be officially closed on Monday, November 11th for Veteran's

Day; Thursday, November 28th for Thanksgiving; Tuesday, December 24th for Christmas Eve; Wednesday, December 25th for Christmas; Tuesday, December 31st for New Years Eve; Wednesday, January 1st for New Years



Day. Some of the Volunteers show up on days when we are officially closed to get work done while no one is around. Should it be necessary for you to use the library facilities on any of the above days, please call 303-759-9921 to see if anyone is planning to be present and how long they plan to stay.

## SECOND SATURDAY AT THE RMPL

Second Saturday at the RMPL programs continue to have good attendance. On any given Second Saturday you will find 10 to 20 persons at the RMPL for the 9:00 AM instructional program. The coffee pot is working overtime and the "donut fairy" has made the expected magical appearance. If you haven't attended one of these, you should make the effort to attend. Get here early because the parking lot fills up fast.

The Second Saturday at the RMPL for November 9th features a program by George Snyder - "Early Aircraft on Stamps and Covers".

The December 14th Second Saturday at the RMPL will be a program by Frank Bocovich - "Christmas Seals"

We look forward to seeing you at one, or both, of these presentations. This is a great time to introduce a friend to the benefits available through the RMPL.

We are always looking for persons willing to do a Second Saturday presentation. There are many openings in the 2003 calendar year at this time. Why not share your knowledge with the other members. To volunteer, call Don Beuthel at 303-755-9328.

## DONATIONS CONTINUE

The library has been fortunate to receive donations at the rate of several a week for several years. Most of these donations range in size from an empty stock book all the way to 30 or so boxes full of price catalogs, auction catalogs, periodicals, books, and stamp supplies.

Two of the larger literature donations in the last few months have come from the estate of Raymond Dickey in Pueblo and from Warren Bower of Iowa.

Dickey's son-in-law contacted the library from Pueblo. We asked RMPL Pueblo member Mike Maselli to take a look and let us know how much material was being offered. Mike not only took a look, he loaded all 28 boxes into his van and drove it to Denver! Dickey specialized in Canada, so his literature collection included runs of Canadian periodicals and specialized catalogs, among other things. Much of the material will be on the shelves soon.

The executor of Warren Bower's estate contacted RMPL Vice President Jim Kilbane to find out if we would be interested. Of course, we were. The literature collection was shipped to us in a dozen boxes. Bower was a member of many philatelic societies, and his specialties were U.S. postage dues, parcel post, the dead letter office, Chicago postal history, and cancellations and postal history in general. Again, many quality items will be added to the library collection. Duplicates, as usual, will be offered for sale on the internet to help pay the bills.

Another major recent gift came from Dr. John

Bloor. John is active in the Denver area philatelic circle and is a good friend of the library. He gave us a Pentium III (that's a good one) computer which is now available for use as internet access for library patrons.

Other donations the past several months came from Nancy Robitschek, Nelson Empleton, V. Wilhelm Von der Heydt, Charlene Plowman, Maury Pautz, Glen McKinsey, Bill Hilbert, Gary Hendren, Herman Axelrod, Robert L. Brown, Paul Graitge, Tom Millensifer, Roger Cichorz, Greg Frantz, Estate of Raymond Dickey, Alaska Collector's Club, Jim Hogbin, Waren Bower Estate, Thomas Moss, Dave Weisberg, Bob Wolfe, Mark Silberman, Jan Marie Belle, Glenn Mallory, Lewis Bussey, Colin Spong, John Bloor, Leslie Reingold, Bill Dunn, Mort Turner, Jim Lays, Lawrence Newman, Morgan Sonsthyagen, Thomas Pollard, Jack Willard, Friends of the Western Philatelic Library, Donald G. Beuthel, Carl Anderson, Jeff Modisett, Tim Bartshe, Eddie Hackstaff, Charles McClure, Neil Clark, Robley Rhine, Bill Dunn, and Jack Willard

Keep those donations coming. We don't care if they're large or small, we appreciate every one.

Many times materials just appear on the tables or on the counters, and we have no idea who the donor might be. We thank those anonymous donors, also.

Remember that the RMPL has a 501 (C)(3) public charity status with the IRS. This means that donors of material to the RMPL may deduct the fair market value of the donated items should they choose to itemize their deductions on their income tax. In order that the fair market value of your donations can be used on your 2002 tax return, we must receive the donation before the end of the year - note we will be closed on December 31st. Now is the time for you to look through your accumulations of philatelic materials and donate to the RMPL the items that you don't need anymore. We have even been known to accept contributions of money.

We continue to accept all types of material related to philately. If you live out of town and wish to donate, ship the items to the library. If you are in the local area bring the items to the library during our normal library hours. If you can't bring the material to the library, call at 303-759-9921 and we will try to make arrangements to pick up your donation.

## RMPL SLIGHTLY AFFECTED BY T-REX CONSTRUCTION

If you use I-25 going South to get to the RMPL you should be aware that the East Evans Exit off of I-25 is closed. You will have to get off at Colorado Blvd. going South and make a left turn on to Evans going East. Other than the construction related congestion on I-25, it is still easy to get to the RMPL.

## WEATHER WARNINGS

With the weather the way it has been for the past year this announcement may seem ridiculous to some of you but --- We could be facing inclement weather conditions at any time during the fall and winter months.



In bad weather conditions, our main concern is the safety of our Volunteers. If road conditions are such that it would be dangerous for our Volunteers to get to the library or to get home, we will close.

Remembering that conditions vary greatly across the Metropolitan area it would be wise to call the library at 303-759-9921 to check to see if we will be open.

### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Our membership list shows a very slow but steady growth. Each renewal period we lose a member or two, but generally we get more new members than we lose.

We are pleased to report that the following

people who have joined the library in the last two months:

Joseph D. Smith                      Robert R. Schermerhorn  
James D. Fredlund

Some of the members of RMPL will be receiving a first, second, or third renewal notice with this issue of the Scribblings. After the third notice members are moved to the inactive list and will no longer receive Scribblings and other membership benefits.

As you renew, remember that anything above the basic minimum membership rate of \$15 per year is considered a contribution by the IRS and may be used as a deduction when figuring your income tax. We urge that you respond promptly and generously.

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

*"Come and enjoy the activities"*

November, 2002		December, 2002	
Mondays	Open 10-4	Mondays	Open 10-4
Tuesdays	Open 10-4	Tuesdays	Open 10-4
Wednesdays	Open 10-4	Wednesdays	Open 10-4
Thursdays	Open 2-8	Thursdays	Open 2-8
Fridays	Open 10-4	Fridays	Open 10-4
Saturdays	Open 10-4	Saturdays	Open 10-4
Nov 2 - Meeting - 10:00 AM Scandinavian Collector's Club		Dec 6 - RMPL Volunteers Dinner - details later	
Nov 2 - Meeting - 1:00 PM Topical Philatelists In Colorado		Dec 7 - Meeting - 10:00 AM Scandinavian Collector's Club	
Nov 6 - Meeting - Aurora Stamp Club - 6:30 Trading 7:30 Meeting and Program		Dec 7 - Meeting - 1:00 PM Colorado Postal History Society	
Nov 9 - Second Saturday at the RMPL - 9:00 AM George Snyder - "Early Aircraft on Stamps"		Dec 14 - Second Saturday at the RMPL - 9:00 AM Program by Frank Bocovich "Christmas Seals"	
Nov 9 - Meeting - 10:00 AM Mexico/Latin America Philatelic Group		Dec 14 - Meeting - 10:00 AM Mexico / Latin American Philatelic Society	
Nov 9 - Meeting - 2:00 PM Universal Ship Cancel Society U. S. S. Colorado Chapter		Dec 14 - Meeting - 11:00 AM Rocky Mountain Aerophilatelists	
Nov 11 - RMPL CLOSED - VETERAN'S DAY		Dec 14 - Meeting - 2:00 PM Universal Ship Cancellation Society U.S.S. Colorado Chapter	
Nov 13 - Meeting - 7:00 PM Denver Germany Stamp Club		Dec 24 - RMPL CLOSED - CHRISTMAS EVE	
Nov 16 - Meeting - 10:00 AM Postmark Collectors Club, Colorado Chapter		Dec 25 - RMPL CLOSED - CHRISTMAS DAY	
Nov 16 - Meeting - 1:00 PM - RMPL Kid's Stamp Club		Dec 28 - Meeting - 10:00 AM RMSS/RMPL Exhibiting Workshop	
Nov 23 - Meeting - 10:00 AM ROMPEX/RMPL Exhibiting Workshop		Dec 28 - Meeting - 2:00 PM China Stamp Society	
Nov 23 - Meeting - 2:00 PM - China Stamp Society		Dec 31 - RMPL CLOSED - NEW YEARS EVE	
Nov 26 - Meeting - 7:30 PM Rocky Mountain Stamp Show Committee		Jan 1 - RMPL CLOSED - NEW YEARS DAY	
Nov 28 - RMPL CLOSED - THANKSGIVING			

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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.

#### RMPL Board of Directors

President: Donald G. Beuthel    Vice-President: Jim Kilbane    Secretary: William S. Dunn    Treasurer: Robert Blatherwick  
Members at Large: Sergio Lugo - Ron Mitchell - James L. Ozment - Maury Pautz - John H. Willard