

Scribblings

...from the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library



Vol. 11 - No. 4

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July - August, 2003

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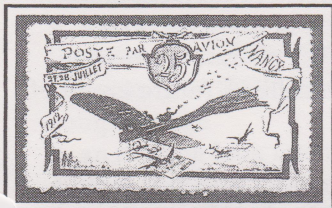
E-mail - rmpl@qwest.net

A highly collectible Cinderella field...

AN INTRODUCTION TO SEMIOFFICIAL AIRMAILS OF THE WORLD

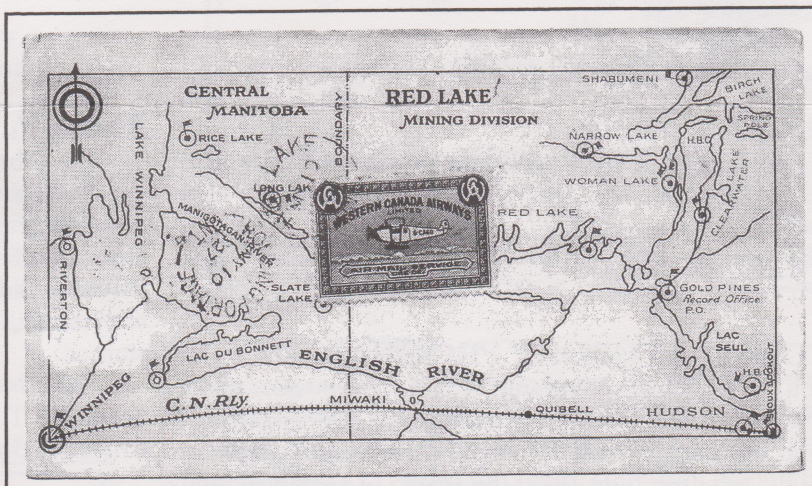
by John H. Bloor, RMPL Member

Semiofficial airmail (SOA) stamps have often been considered "Cinderella's" - that is, stamp-like objects, but not real stamps. Although they have been listed in many catalogues, most of the major catalogues used today (including Scott, Gibbons, and Michel) list only a few SOAs or none at all. For this reason, many collectors don't know that these stamps exist although they are often quite rare, particularly on cover, because of low printing numbers, limited distribution, and losses over time. However, many airmail collectors consider them to be highly collectible and view them as the first airmail stamps issued by many countries.



France (1912). Flight from Nancy to Luneville

The early pre-official airmail issues of some countries are divided into pioneer issues and SOAs. Pioneers are usually earlier than SOAs for a given country and generally were issued as publicity for a single demonstration flight sponsored by a local aeroclub. However, stamps listed as SOAs for one country would have been considered pioneer issues from other countries, making the distinction somewhat artificial. The important thing to remember about all of these stamps is that they were not official issues of the country but that most or all of them were approved by the government for use on mail that also carried official (non-air) franking. Most flown covers bearing SOAs or pioneers required them for carriage on the flown part of their travel. The government-issued stamps were needed to pay the postage for transmission of the cover from the end of the flight to the addressee.



Back of Western Canada Airways cover postmarked Red Lake, Ontario, May 10, 1927 showing the airline's route map and one of their SOA stamps. The Canadian government required that SOAs be applied to the backs of the envelopes.

Some collectors consider flown covers franked with SOAs to be primarily philatelic and hence not worthy of serious collecting or exhibiting. Others realize that, while they are philatelic souvenirs of the flights, they are also important historical documents recording the early postal experiments which led to our current system of airmail. Either way, they are a scarce, often attractive, and frequently underpriced (based on scarcity) type of paper ephemera that helps us recall early pilots, routes, flights, aircraft, and transport companies.

So how do you know if something is a semiofficial or pioneer airmail? While it is fairly easy to separate official and semiofficial stamps, it is harder to tell air meet labels from SOAs.

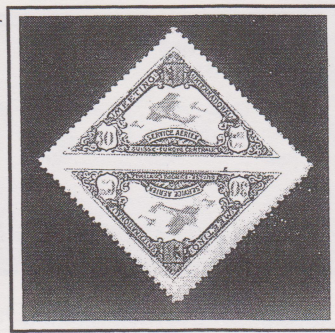
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Great Britain (1933). For Great Western Railway mail service between Cardiff and Plymouth.



Germany (1912) For a special flight from Gotha to Erfurt.



Switzerland, 1925. International Aviation Meeting.



French Levant (1918). For Military Postal Service mail from Constantinople to Bucharest.

The best reference sources are the specialized airmail catalogues (most now out-of-print) and some modern, country-specific catalogues. Nicholas Sanabria was a dealer in New York City who specialized in airmails. For many years he issued a catalogue of world airmails (official and semiofficial) that was also his price list. This has become the most widely accepted general reference on SOAs although the prices are out-of-date and the information, at times, is questionable. The last, complete issue of this catalogue was published in 1966 and has become the "bible" of aerophilatelists. Other world aerophilatelic catalogues that list SOAs include those by Jean Silombra, Théodore Champion, Kalenik Lissiuik and John Nicklin, Francis J. Field, and Donald Dickason. Most of these ^ including Sanabria (1966) ^ are available at the RMPL or can be borrowed from the American Philatelic Research Library. Specialized country catalogues that include partial lists of pioneers and SOAs include those published by The Amateur Collector (Switzerland), Silombra and Naudet (both France), Unitrade (Canada), Michel (Germany), Edefil (Spain and Spanish Civil War), and others.

I'll tell you more about these and other SOAs in future articles that will appear occasionally in future issues of "Scribblings".

News From the RMPL...

RMPL CLOSED

A reminder that the RMPL will be closed Friday and Saturday, July 4th and 5th for the Independence Day holiday.

The Library will also be closed on Thursday night, July 31.

SECOND SATURDAY PROGRAMS

You're missing something if you have not taken advantage of these monthly meetings. They begin at 9 AM and are usually over by ten so there is still plenty of Saturday left for you to take care of errands and gardening. The donut fairy usually makes an appearance, and the coffee pot will be perking. Add in good folks like you and you have the perfect recipe for a pleasant hour.

July 12: COLORADO SLOGAN CANCELS

Don Beuthel will show his "Colorado Machine Slogan Cancels." From the first one in 1915 through the present day, there have been more than 300 such cancels, some quite scarce. There's a story behind every one.

August 9: PARK TO PARK HIGHWAY TOUR

Local historians Lee and Jane Whiteley will recreate a 1921 tour through twelve national parks. Starting in Denver, the Whiteleys will take us through Rocky Mountain National Park, then Yellowstone, Glacier and others. The tour will end at Mesa Verde and return to Denver. Those who have seen this presentation say that it is most enjoyable.

RMSS A HUGE SUCCESS FOR RMPL

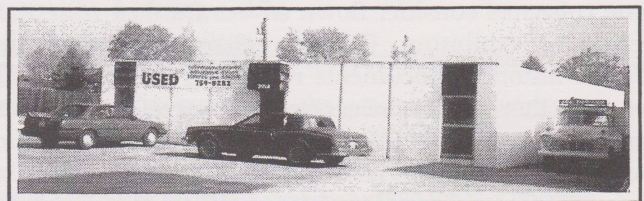
The library did a land office business during this year's Rocky Mountain Stamp Show in May. Our 9th Annual Silent Auction set a record, with total prices realized of \$2,800. We sincerely thank everyone who placed a bid and hope everyone walked home with some bargains! We also thank all of those who donated stamps.

The "Nickel Books" at the RMPL table were very popular. The chairs in front of the table were filled with collectors during most of the show.

HAPPY TENTH BIRTHDAY RMPL

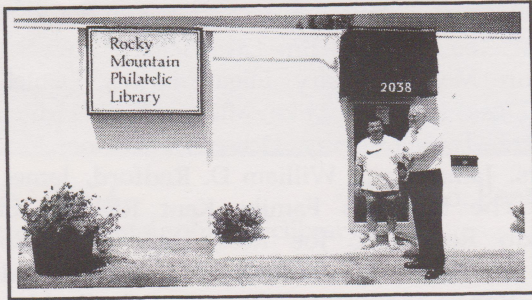
Celebration, Part I

All RMPL members will soon be receiving an invitation to a 10th birthday celebration buffet banquet to be held at Mount Vernon Country Club on July 31st. As they say on tv when a series is being promoted, "This is an event you will not want to miss!"



May, 1995. The future library building was a used furniture store.

The enormous success the library has enjoyed during its first ten years is something that requires a special celebration.



August, 1995. After months of hard work by folks such as Sergio Lugo and Bill Dunn, the library is ready for visitors.

Besides the good food and good company, there will be:

- a video presentation with highlights of RMPL history
- some very nice door prizes
- a one frame exhibit emphasizing the library's mission as the philatelic center of the Rocky Mountain West
- a short program to honor the roll of volunteers over the years. especially Ellengail Beuthel who has taken us from the humble card catalog into the computer age
- an exciting look into the future of the library
- other surprises guaranteed to make the evening a delight

Celebration, Part II

Sunday, August 3rd from 1-4 PM there will be an open house at the RMPL. Members and the general public are invited to join us for a program at 2 PM that will remind all of us how the library was started, how it got to where it is today, and what the future holds. There will also be refreshments.

Mark your calendars...

RMPL 10TH BIRTHDAY BANQUET

JULY 31st 6 PM
MOUNT VERNON COUNTRY CLUB

RMPL 10TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

AUGUST 3RD 1 - 4 PM
AT THE LIBRARY

AURORA STAMP CLUB SHOW (APEX)

SEPTEMBER 6 & 7
BUCKINGHAM SQUARE

YEP! THAT'S ONE OF SAM'S

By Bill Dunn

Anybody that has been around the Denver philatelic scene for more than 20-25 years will recognize the instigator of this cover immediately - Sam Schlesinger. In the early and mid thirties, Sam was a salesman for a wallpaper and paint company in Chicago. He and Polly, being newlyweds in the midst of a nationwide depression, had little money for frivolous things like stamp collecting.

But Sam, being an enterprising young man, figured out a way to have his cake and eat it, too. He had all kinds of wallpaper samples and a postal guide that named the post offices in the U.S. So, having made a template in the shape of a #6 envelope, he cut out the wallpaper, folded it, enclosed it in an outer envelope, and sent it to a post office that had a name that had some relevance to the wallpaper, asked for a cancel and a return in an SASE.

In this case, the silver stars in the wallpaper are reflected from the cancel from "Silverstar, Montana". There used to be lots of these around, but seldom seen now. Is it worth anything? Not really, but I was willing to part with a buck, just for the sentiment alone. I'd give a buck for any that you find, too. I was one of thousands of Sam's admirers.



NEW MEMBERS

Once again, it is a pleasure to list the names of people who have joined the library in the last couple of months. We urge them to visit the library often. It provides wonderful ways to enrich the stamp collecting experience. We are proud to welcome:

Francisco Gallegos, Denver, CO

Jay D. Tebo, Las Cruces, NM (Philatelic Literature)

Joseph L. Yrisarri, Denver, CO (U.S.)

Bradley B. Horton, Houston, TX (U.S. Postal Cards)

Julie Verhagen, Denver, CO (Postcards and Related Material)

Alfredo Rodriguez, Gran Canaria, Spain (Cuba, British Colonies, Worldwide)

Craig Buhlman, Boulder, CO (U.S., Revenues, State Ducks, Beer, Indian Reservation)

Norm Miller, Parker, CO (U.S., Postal, Air Mail, Special delivery, Revenue, Documentary 1847 - 1970)

Edward H. Jarvis, San Francisco, CA (Luxembourg)

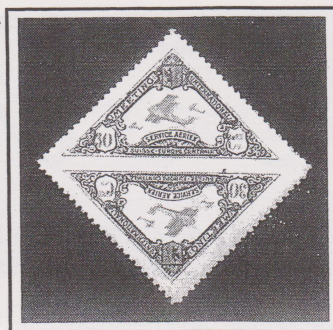
Andrew Kelley, Denver, CO (U.S. Washington-Franklin, St. Lucia)



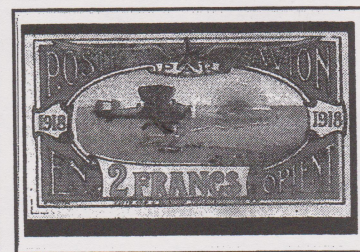
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