

# Scribblings

...from the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library



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Some were legal, some were not...

## SEMIOFFICIAL AIRMAIL STAMPS OF GREAT BRITAIN

by John H. Bloor

Although the British postal service has never issued an airmail stamp, British semiofficial airmails (SOAs) are a different story. Beginning in 1913, 50 semiofficial airmails have been issued by companies in Great Britain. The last one appeared in 1983, making it probably the most recently issued SOA in the world. There are also some airmail labels issued during the British mail strikes in 1962 and 1971 (Figure 1). Although these are usually



Figure 1. Strike post airmail labels issued during the British mail strikes of 1962 (left) and 1971 (right).

classified as locals (*Catalogue of British Local Stamps* by Gerald Rosen, 1978?) rather than SOAs, I believe that they fit well into an SOA collection. Most British SOAs and strike post labels are readily available at reasonable prices, even on cover.

The first British SOA was issued by the Robert Sinclair Tobacco Co. During "Flying Week" (February 11-18) in 1913, this dark green stamp (Figure 2) was used on parcels of tobacco flown by B.C. Hucks between Gosforth Park (Newcastle-upon-Tyne) and the nearby towns of Seaham Harbour and Blyth. The stamp, used on a piece of tobacco wrapper, is one of the scarcer British SOAs.



Figure 2. Semiofficial airmail stamp issued by the Sinclair Tobacco Co. in 1913.

The Post Office Acts governing the postal monopoly in Great Britain are similar to the private post statutes that prohibit private companies from carrying first class mail in the United States. An exception to the Acts

allows railways to carry letters up to 2 oz. to "expedite delivery" and to charge an additional 3d for this service. Many railways developed railway letter services under

this exception. In 1933 the Great Western Railway (GWR) began a passenger air service and used its planes to carry some railway letters. Since the Acts don't specify



Figure 3. Semiofficial airmail stamps issued by British European Airways in 1951 (left), 1957 (center), and 1964 (right).

how a railroad carries the mail, the post office eventually agreed that this new railway air service was legal.

The GWR was succeeded by the Great Western & Southern Air Lines (which did not issue stamps) and they, in turn, were replaced by British European Airways (BE

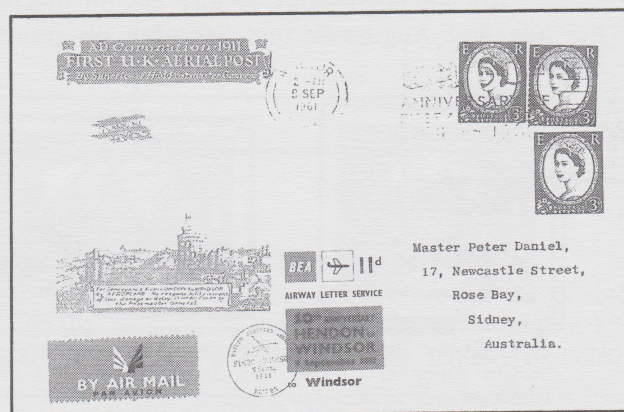


Figure 4. Card flown over the route of the first British aerial post on the 50th anniversary of the original flight. The card includes a reproduction of the cachet from the 1911 flight. A BEA semiofficial airmail stamp commemorating the flight pays the postage for the airway letter service.

(*The Railway and Airway Letter Stamps of the British Isles, 1891-1971* by H.T. Jackson, 1979). Presumably this

continuity allowed these specific airlines to carry mail within the limits of the Post Office Acts. The Airway Letter Service of BEA and, later, British Airways, was the longest running private airmail service in Great Britain. Between 1951 and 1988 it issued 41 different stamps (Figure 3) including one commemorating the first British aerial post between Hendon (London) and Windsor, September, 1911 (Figure 4). Cambrian Airways, a part of BEA, issued stamps on December 2, 1961 having the same design as those issued by BEA on October 4, 1961, but with the name "BEA" replaced by "Cambrian Airways" (Figure 5). The Airway Letter Service ended in 1988 when it became uneconomical (Airway Letters of the United Kingdom by Peter Lister, 1994).



Figure 5  
Similar stamps issued by BEA in 1961 (left) and Cambrian Airways in 1964 (right).

Prior to WWII, several other companies issued stamps (Figure 6) and briefly carried mail, claiming ignorance of the legal niceties. These include International Airlines Ltd., Provincial Airways Ltd. (Westcountry Air Service), and Portsmouth, Southsea & Isle of Wight Aviation. Because these services were illegal (since these were not railway companies), the post

office soon stopped them. Although some authors do not consider these stamps to be British semiofficial airmails, they did prepay airmail postage, albeit illegally and for only a brief period. The choice of whether to include them in your collection is yours to make. These flights and stamps are discussed extensively in The Air Mails of British Isles (Redgrove, 1940) which also expostulates about the beginnings of the GWR airmail service.

There is much more to know about the airmail stamps of the British Isles than the editor will permit me to include. The books cited here will give you a good start on learning about them.



Figure 6  
Semiofficial airmail stamps issued by International Airlines Ltd. (left, 1933), Provincial Airways Ltd. (center, 1933) and Portsmouth, Southsea, & Isle of Wight Aviation Ltd. (right, 1934). All were illegal mail services.

For additional information, John Bloor may be contacted at; [bloorj@concentric.net](mailto:bloorj@concentric.net)

## News From the RMPL...

### RMPL CLOSED

The library will be closed on Saturday, July 3rd and Monday, July 5th for the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

### SECOND SATURDAY AT THE RMPL

Art and archeology history are on the menu for the July and August Second Saturday programs at the library.



Left: Stamp artwork by Alphonse Mucha. Right: Mayan Ruins at Copán, Honduras. Both topics are scheduled Second Saturday programs.

On July 10, Jim Uhrlaub will present "Alphonse Mucha, Czech Stamp Designer." Mucha (1860-1939) became famous in 1894 with an advertising poster for world-famous actress Sarah Bernhardt. He had an enormous impact on art at the turn of the century.

Then on August 14, Bob Quasius will show "History of Copán through Stamps." The Mayan civilization developed and flourished from 465 AD until 820 AD in Copán, now in Honduras.

Attendance continues to be excellent at the Second Saturday programs. Presentations begin promptly at 9:00 AM. Coffee and donuts are provided at no charge. Everyone is welcome.

### THANK YOU FOR DONATIONS

The following people made contributions to the library in April and May. We thank them very much. Every contribution is important.

Herman Axelrod, Tim Bartshe, William H. Bauer, Nick Bede, Don Beuthel, Brian J. Birch, John Bloor, Robert L. Brown, Joe Coston, Thomas M. Crawford, G. Derksen, Peter Ditlow, Pat Dowling, Sue Dunn, David Eisen, Arthur J. Faix, Nolan Flowers, James D. Fredlund, Bob Friedman, Frances Gomez, Eddie Hackstaff, Jack Harlan, David Heflin and Michael & Linda Suter Gibson.

Also, Sergio Lugo, Glenn Mallory, George Matson, Susan D. May, Dasa Metzler, Ron Mitchell, Steve Pace, William M. Plachte, Bill Rapp, Robley Rhine, Roger Rydberg, Scandinavian Collector's Club, Roger G. Schnell,

M.D., Richard K. Smith, JoAnn Stipanovich, Joseph Surprenant, Tri-County Stamp Club of Sidney, NY, Mark Vainer, John Wright and Jim Yost.

### SILENT AUCTION RESULTS

The annual silent auction at the Rocky Mountain Stamp Show in May realized more than \$4,200, a record amount. More than two-thirds of the lots sold, also a record. It is an understatement to report that this has put big smiles on members of the board and our many volunteers.

Two things contributed to the success.

The quality of stamps and postal history that has been donated to the library has increased substantially over the last several years, so Auction Manager Norm Camara was able to assemble the best auction we have ever offered. Norm, incidentally, has already started work on the 2005 Silent Auction. His expertise and hard work are invaluable.

Also, participation was at an all-time high. We thank everyone who took the time to bid and hope you are well satisfied with your winnings.

### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

We are pleased to report that the following people joined the library in April and May:

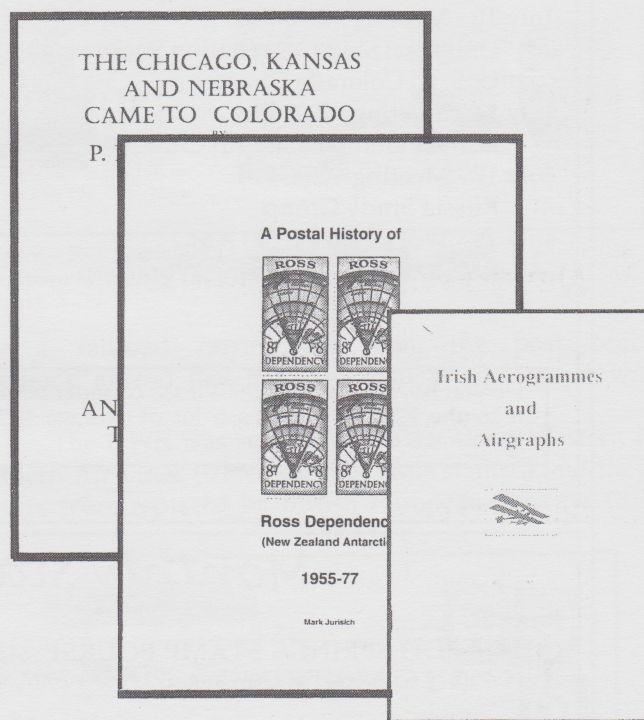
- Bill Bassett, Austin, TX - Collects Mexico Revenues, World Air Mail, Telegraph Stamps, Latin America
- John C. Clement, Denver, CO - General collector
- Dave Horan, Golden, CO - Collects U.S., Europe, Canada, Australia
- Patrick C. Barber, Littleton, CO (Junior Member) - Collects U.S. mint singles
- John B. Elsey, Garden City, KS - Collects U.S. Stamps
- Arthur R. Jaeger, Boulder, CO - General collector before 1965
- Malcolm Barton, Denver, CO - Collects the world
- Christopher D. Hoff, WheatRidge, CO - Collects all U.S. including U.S. classics
- Janice Prater, Denver, CO

### NEW BOOKS

Here are some of the books which have been added to the shelves recently:

- A Century + Ten of D&RGW Narrow Gauge Freight Cars, 1871 to 1981 by Robert E. Sloan, 2000
- The Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska Came to Colorado by P.R. "Bob" Griswold, 2003
- A Diary of the Final Cruise of the RMS St. Helena to Tristan da Cunha: January 15-28, 2004 by Ted Cookson, 2004
- History of the U.S. Postal Service: 1775-1984 by Rita L. Moroney, USPS Publication, 1985
- Images of America: Five Points Neighborhood of Denver by Laura M. Mauch, 2001
- Irish Aerogrammes and Airgraphs by William J. Murphy, 1998

- I Rode the San Juan by P.R. "Bob" Griswold, 2003
- It Happened in Colorado by James A. Crutchfield, 1993
- Masonic Cacheted Covers compiled by Robert A. Domingue, 1981
- The Morrison Branch of the Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad by P.R. "Bob" Griswold, 2003
- The Playground Trail: The National Park-to-Park Highway: To and Through the National Parks of the West in 1920 by Lee Whiteley and Jane Whiteley
- A Postal History of Ross Dependency (New Zealand Antarctic): 1955-77 by Mark Jurisich
- Printing History of Plates used for Production of the First Bureau Issue, 1894-1903 (B.I.A. Research Paper #9) compiled by Wallace Cleland, 1995
- "Skiing Mailmen of Mountain America: U.S. Winter Postal Service in the Nineteenth Century" by E. John B. Allen, Ph. D., from *Postal History Journal*, No. 90: February 1992.
- Stamp Collecting for Dummies by Richard L. Sine, 2001
- Texas on Stamps by Jon L. Allen, 1996



### 2005 SCOTT CATALOGUES AVAILABLE

The new Scott Catalogues are on the shelves at the RMPL as soon as they are released. Volume 1, with the United States and Possessions, United Nations and countries of the world A-B arrived in mid-April, and Volume 2 followed in May.

Including the U.S. Specialized and the 1840-1940 Classic Specialized, there are eight catalogs issued between April and December each year by Scott.

Scott Catalogues are the most popular books in the library, so we make an extra effort to make sure the most current ones are available for reference.

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

"Come and enjoy the activities."

~~ Daily Hours ~~

Monday.....10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Tuesday.....10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Wednesday.....10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Thursday.....2:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Friday.....10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Saturday.....10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Closed Sundays and Holidays

### July, 2004

July 3 thru 5 - **CLOSED**

4th of July Weekend

July 7 - Meeting - Aurora Stamp Club

6:30 PM Trading; 7:30 PM Meeting and Program

July 10- Second Saturday at the RMPL - 9:00 AM

Program by Jim Uhrlaub

"Alphonse Mucha, Czech Stamp Designer"

July 10 - Meeting - 10:00 AM

Mexico/Latin America Study Group

July 10 - Meeting - 2:00 PM

Universal Ship Cancellation Society

U. S. S. Colorado Chapter

July 14 - Meeting - 7:00 PM

Denver Germany Stamp Club

July 17 - Meeting - 2:00 PM

Russia Study Group

July 24 - Workshop - 10:00 AM

RMSS/RMPL Exhibiting Workshop

Do you have extra postage? Please consider donating it to the RMPL. It takes a lot of postage to mail *Scribblings* every month.

### August, 2004

August 7 - The Aurora Stamp Club will have its annual summer picnic at the Adams County History Museum. Call Cliff for details and directions. 303.364-5471

August 11 - Meeting - 7:00 PM

Denver Germany Stamp Club

August 14 - Second Saturday at the RMPL - 9:00 AM

Program by Bob Quasius

"A History of Copán (Honduras) through Stamps"

August 14 - Meeting - 10:00 AM

Mexico / Latin American Study Group

August 14 - Meeting - 11:30 AM

Rocky Mountain Aerophilatelists

August 14 - Meeting - 2:00 PM

Universal Ship Cancellation Society

U.S.S. Colorado Chapter

August 21 - Meeting - 2:00 PM

Russia Study Group

August 26 - Meeting - 7:30 PM

Rocky Mountain Stamp Show Committee

August 28 - Workshop - 10:00 AM

RMSS/RMPL Exhibiting Workshop

August 28 - Meeting - 1:00 PM

China Stamp Society

## Monthly Stamp Show Schedule...

June 26

**COLORADO SPRINGS STAMP BOURSE**, 6450 North Academy Blvd. (Exit I-25 at Academy Blvd., then go south).  
20th Century Classics, Pat Dowling, (719) 598-7307, www.20thonline.com

July 16 - 17

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN STATES POSTCARD SHOW**, Jefferson County Fairgrounds Auditorium West 6th Av at Indiana St, Golden, CO (Indiana AV Exit from 6th Av - South on Indiana. Turn right on frontage road and follow the signs)  
Contact: Erwin Engert

There are no shows scheduled in August. **See you at APEX**, September 11, 12, 2004, Buckingham Square Shopping Center

*Scribblings* is published bimonthly by the Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library, 2038 So. Pontiac Way, Denver, CO 80224.

The Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library is a chartered Colorado nonprofit 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 and *Scribblings* Editor: Ron Mitchell - Operations Manager: Don Beuthel - Vice-President: Jim Kilbane - Corresponding Secretary: Robert Brown - Recording Secretary: Maury Pautz - Treasurer: Robert Blatherwick - Members at Large: Tim Bartshe - Sergio Lugo - James L. Ozment - Steve Schweighofer - Jack Willard (Emeritus)