

# America's Archives

Often enchanting stories of historic documents and artifacts (including sometimes ones that are postally related)—and how things that may have once seemed rather ordinary can turn out to be important treasures. On other occasions, they immediately become artifacts of history the minute they were created.

## Canadas Semi-Official Airmails

Covers having to do with the early air mail services around the world are constantly growing in demand—none more than the intriguing airmail covers flown by the various bush pilot companies in northern Canada in the 1920s and 1930s. Called Canadian Semi-Official airmails, they are covers from the various flights of 17 different companies—whose seaplanes flown by young bush pilots delivered mails under government edict.

The Canadian government actually allowed these companies to issue their own stamps and charge postage for mails carried from mining camps, hunting lodges, and small settlements in remote places like the Yukon Territory to more established, civilized cities farther south.

These semi-official airmail on-cover uses are highly sought after. Though relatively scarce, they're usually easy to spot: they generally are franked with BOTH a semi-official airmail company stamp and also one or more Canadian postage stamps.

A use from September 1926 of a cover flown by the Northern Air Service from Rouyn to Haileybury. Both stamps are tied by an official Canadian postmark. Value: \$200+



A cover flown by the Elliott-Fairchild Air Service Drop letter registered cover from Red Lake to Winnipeg on April 21, 1926. Value: \$400+



Western Canada Airways 1927 cover flown from Snake Falls to Red Lake. Note the very scarce 1927 Lindbergh label. Rare and worth more than \$400.

Patricia Airways 10c stamp. Genuinely used on cover clipping with March 28, 1928 cancel. Rarely seen used. Value: \$50.00



Noorduyn Norseman. The first Canadian-designed bush plane, similar to ones used by the "semi-official" airlines in the great North Country in the 1920s-30s (Courtesy Canadian Aviation Museum).

Bush flying began as aerial reconnaissance for spotting forest fires. Laurentide and other paper companies hired ex-RNAS pilot, Stuart GRAHAM, in 1919 to fly forest-fire patrols over the St Maurice valley. Using two war-surplus Curtiss HS-2L flying boats, Laurentide extended their patrols from Lake-of-the-Woods to James Bay.

These early operations were succeeded by a general air service, Laurentide Air Service Ltd, which carried out operations in both Québec and Ontario, including the first regular Canadian air-mail, passenger and freight service from Haileybury, Ont, to Rouyn, Qué (1924). Laurentide ceased operation in 1925 and from then to 1927 the major bush-flying organization in Canada was the Ontario Provincial Air Service, established in 1924 and devoted almost entirely to forestry operations.

Bush flying transformed upper Canada. Aircraft services became available to trappers and missionaries as well as to geologists and surveyors—and most important, the mails. It was the bush pilots who formed the companies who founded the Canadian Semi-Official airmail services which began flying the mails in 1924 under government edict.

Fred Schmitt's

## PERSPECTIVE

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If you're a movie buff and have seen the 1963 motion picture, *55 Days At Peking*, starring Charlton Heston, David Niven, Ava Gardner and John Ireland, you could grasp the significance of the little postal card shown on the previous page. Or if you remember your studies in history class in school about the Boxer Rebellion at the turn of the previous century, as a philatelist you may realize that the postal history relating to this piece of Chinese history can be worth some cash.

Eight foreign nations had large walled-in communities in the Chinese capital—and China's rebellious Boxers wanted them out. Major battles took place and their communities in Peking were besieged. Consequently, the mails from these legations were interrupted and became, in essence, "adversity mail," and thus, very valuable to collectors.

A lady we know has a cover cancelled in Manila, Philippines, on May 6, 1942, the day of the fall of Corregidor to the Japanese forces. It's rare and valuable and simply a piece of her family correspondence kept for decades.

Could you possibly have some interesting, even significant, "history" in your attic or garage? One often never knows until one explores what's hidden away. Great postal history is always turning up. If it does for you, **Call us!**