

Pioneer Mail Flights, Semi-Official Air Post, and Air Mail Development in Canada, 1918-34.

The **purpose of this exhibit** is to study the development of air mail within Canada through pioneer flights and the semi-official air post from 1918 to 1934. A few exhibited covers show how the Post Office Department (POD) replaced the semi-official post with contracted air mail from 1927 on.

Importance. The first pioneer air mail flights in 1918 were single experiments by World War I pilots. After the war, planes opened huge unexplored areas of Canada for natural resource development without the expense of building roads or railways. Air mail provided speedy communication to those remote locations. Canada's northern expansion and its first nine years of air mail service simply would not have happened without those risky private initiatives.

The POD committed no funds for early air mail since planes often crashed. From 1924 to 1934, it allowed 15 adventurous airlines to sell semi-official air mail "stickers" to cover flying costs. Once routes proved successful, the POD began contracting air mail services in 1927. To help pay for the high cost of flying, the first Canadian 5¢ air mail postage stamp was issued on September 21, 1928.

Required Postage. In addition to semi-official stickers on cover backs, the POD required first-class domestic postage (per ounce) on the face:

Jan. 1918-June 1926: 3¢ (2¢ postage, 1¢ war tax).
 July 1926-June 1931: 2¢ postage.
 July 1931-1934: 3¢ (2¢ postage, 1¢ war tax).
 Registration 5¢ until July 15, 1920. 10¢ after.

Other rates are noted with the covers.

The **development is chronological, studying various stages**, from one-off pioneer flights, through unpredictable service on short routes in remote areas, to successful expansion across Canada.

The **treatment is aerophilatelic**, including good coverage of pioneer flights, most semi-official destinations, many airline handstamps, a variety of users, some multiple rates, a fine representation of commercial covers, maps of routes, photographs of planes and pilots, and ephemera. A few details about each airline's semi-official stamps are included.

Research includes handbooks, articles, newspapers, company records, government publications, and archival documents. New information verified in primary sources is spotlighted with a blue book. 📖

The **condition** of some material is fine, but many commercial covers were torn open roughly in mining camps and makeshift offices.

Rare items. Of the 260 items exhibited, 58 (22%) are rare (12 or fewer known, reported, or recorded). They are **mounted on red card stock**.

EXHIBIT PLAN

1. One Time Pioneer Air Mail Flights, 1918-28.
2. Erratic Service: Eight Airlines flying to Rouyn, Quebec, and the Red Lake area, Ontario, 1924-28.
3. Reliable Air Mail: Western Canada Airways and the First Post Office Contracts, 1926-28.
4. Aggressive Growth: Western Canada Air, 1928-30.
5. Four Short-Lived Airlines in the West, 1927-31.
6. Replacement of Semi-Official Air with POD Contracts: Commercial and Canadian Airways, 1929-34.



Patricia Airways and Exploration Co. third issue semi-official with two overprints. Surplus stock flown by successor Patricia Airways Limited from Narrow Lake to Sioux Lookout, Ontario, on September 19, 1928.



Western Canada Airways semi-official on cover from Red Lake, Ontario (postmark December 3, 1927) to Montreal (backstamp December 7, 1927).