

THE 1929 MACKENZIE RIVER AIR MAILES

Edmonton, Alta.
PHONE
1551

Commercial Airways Limited
HEAD OFFICE: EDMONTON
BASES SHOWN ON MAP LEGEND

Edmonton, Alta.
PHONE
1551

MACKENZIE RIVER DISTRICT

RATES

From Fort McMurray	Passenger	Freight Per Lb.
Fort Chipewyan	\$ 55.00	\$.20
Fort Fitzgerald	65.00	.35
Fort Smith	65.00	.55
Fort Resolution	100.00	.70
Hay River	135.00	.75
Fort Providence	160.00	.85
Fort Simpson	205.00	1.00
Fort Wrigley	240.00	1.3
Fort Norman	280.00	1.65
Good Hope	325.00	2.15
Arctic Red River	375.00	2.50
Fort McPherson	390.00	2.60
Aklavik	410.00	2.70

The above are the rates for ordinary schedule flights on the routes mentioned.

Special flights may be arranged for.

Each passenger is entitled to carry 35 lbs. of baggage free, all in excess of that weight charged accordingly.

All traffic rates listed above are subject to change without notice.

MAP OF
Air Lines to the Arctic
OPERATED BY
Commercial Airways
LIMITED

POINTS OF CALL
LEGEND
AIR BASES

**WINTER SCHEDULE
1929 - 1930**

NORTH-BOUND
Leave Fort McMurray
For Fort Resolution:
Nov. 27; Dec. 4, 11, 18, 25;
Jan. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29;
Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26;
Mar. 5, 12, 19, 26; Apr. 2, 9.
For Fort Simpson:
Nov. 27; Dec. 25; Jan. 22;
Feb. 12; Mar. 6, 26.
For Aklavik:
Nov. 27; Jan. 22; Mar. 26.

SOUTH-BOUND
Leave Aklavik:
Dec. 3; Feb. 25; Apr. 1.
Leave Fort Simpson:
Dec. 5, 28; Jan. 28; Feb. 15;
Mar. 5; Apr. 5.
Leave Fort Resolution:
Nov. 29; Dec. 6, 13, 20, 28;
Jan. 5, 10, 17, 24;
Feb. 1; 7, 14, 21, 28;
Mar. 5, 14, 21, 28; Apr. 4, 11.

On the above flights, the aircraft will stop at intermediate posts. The schedule is tentative, and rigid adherence to it will depend upon weather.

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS:

Mark North-bound Parcels care of "COMMERCIAL AIRWAYS LIMITED, FORT McMURRAY, Alberta," via Northern Alberta Railways' Express—"Air charges COLLECT" or "PREPAID."

Shippers are required to prepay Railway Express Charges to Fort McMurray on North Bound Traffic.

EXAMPLE:

From	JOHN DOE, 411 - 81st AVE., EDMONTON, ALTA.
To	JAS SMITH, Ft. Resolution, N.W.T., c/o COMMERCIAL AIRWAYS LTD., Ft. McMurray, ALTA.
Via N. A. R. Express. "AIR CHARGES COLLECT" (or otherwise)	

Pack parcels securely. Parcels must be kept within the following limit (outside measurements)
12-in. x 20-in. x 60-in.

Add 2-in. to width for each decrease of 12-in. in length.

C. BECKER, General Manager.

This exhibit focuses on the first air mails of the Mackenzie River area consisting of northern Alberta and western Northwest Territories (settlements along the Athabasca, Slave and Mackenzie Rivers). The chronological development of the air mail system is shown including the early air mail flights by Western Canada Airways, use of semi-officials, the first regular official air mail flights by Commercial Airways, and mail carried by mixed methods such as dog team and steamer service.

The introduction and development of air mail service dramatically improved communications in this region from dog team and steamer services, taking several weeks or months, to as little as a day or two by airplane. Although this exhibit covers a huge geographic area, the population served by the Mackenzie River air mails was very small. In 1931 the population of the region served by the Mackenzie River air mail service was less than 5,000. The cost of service to such outposts was high but a vital part of a national postal system.

Some flights are presented using philatelically inspired material if commercial mail has not been located or does not exist. Where philatelic covers are used, special attention has been paid to showing pilot-signed, registered or other unusual material.

The exhibit is generally divided into three parts as follows:

1. **Early Western Canada Airways Flights January-March 1929**—Incoming and outgoing philatelic mail, commercial covers.
2. **Western Canada Airways Sticker Service April-December 1929**—Incoming and outgoing philatelic and commercial mail.
3. **Commercial Airways Flights December 1929**—Incoming and outgoing philatelic and commercial mail.

Some material from the vestige winter and summer mail services during 1929 is also shown to illustrate the important transition that took place and the difficulty in separating out how some items were actually transported.

The material shown includes examples of all the major cancels in use during this period including broken circles, circle date stamps and other types. Both of the sets of circle date stamps used during the December 1929 flights are shown--those prepared and generally used only on philatelic mail and those used on regular commercial mail from the individual post offices. The registration boxes prepared for the philatelic mail on these flights are also shown.

Souvenir mail from philatelists is common and represents a significant amount of the philatelic material available. This is not surprising given the publicity surrounding these events and the high general interest in philately during this period. There was widespread coverage of Mackenzie River air mails starting in August 1929 through the philatelic media and official notices. While philatelic mail from the Mackenzie River air mails reached a peak with the December 1929 first regular official air mail flights, legitimate commercial mail from government personnel, missionaries, fur traders and other residents is very scarce. Several examples of commercial covers are shown including registered mail.

Research presented in this exhibit is based on materials from the Library and Archives of Canada, the Canadian Airways Ltd. collection at the Manitoba Archives and coverage in the Edmonton Journal for the year 1929.

MACKENZIE RIVER POSTAL SERVICE—1928



Two covers carried during 1928 on the pre-air mail service postal system in the Mackenzie River area. Top double-rated first class cover carried up to Aklavik on the second and final winter mail trip by horse drawn sleighs and dog team. No transit or receipt markings, as usual for this type of mail, but the recipient worked for the RCMP at Aklavik. Bottom letter-rated cover carried from Aklavik on the summer steamer service during the first trip of the season that left on July 12 on board the *SS Distributor*.

The Alberta and Arctic Transportation Company, owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, had the contract to carry mail on the Mackenzie River route from 1925 to 1929. Winter service by horses and dogs included 10 trips from Fort McMurray to Fort Smith; 6 trips to Resolution; 5 trips to Hay River; 3 trips to Fort Providence; 2 trips to Wrigley, Norman, Good Hope, Arctic Red River, McPherson and Aklavik; and 1 trip to Herschel Island. Summer service by river steamers included 23 trips to Fort Smith; 7 trips to Resolution; 5 trips to Hay River, Providence and Simpson; 4 trips to Wrigley and Norman; 2 trips to Good Hope, Arctic Red River, McPherson and Aklavik; and 1 trip to Herschel Island. The loads were limited to 250 lbs and there was no requirement to carry anything but first class mail so parcels and newspapers could be excluded.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—JANUARY 1929

AFTER FIVE DAYS RETURN TO **VIA AIR MAIL**
SN Dickins
 Fort McMurray to Fort Smith



AFTER FIVE DAYS RETURN TO **VIA AIR MAIL**
SN Dickins
 Fort McMurray to Fort Resolution



AFTER FIVE DAYS RETURN TO **VIA AIR MAIL**
SN Dickins
 Fort McMurray to Fort Providence



AFTER FIVE DAYS RETURN TO **VIA AIR MAIL**
SN Dickins
 Fort McMurray to Fort Simpson



Mr. T.D. Harrison
 Fort Simpson N.W.T.



Inbound: Jan. 23 McMurray to Chipewyan (SN Dickins, Flight 57), Chipewyan to Smith (SN Dickins, Flight 58);
 Jan. 24 Smith to Fitzgerald (SN Dickins, Flight 59); Jan. 25 Fitzgerald to Resolution (SN Dickins, Flight 60),
 Resolution to Hay River (SN Dickins, Flight 61), Hay River to Providence (SN Dickins, Flight 62);
 Jan. 26 Providence to Simpson (SN Dickins, Flight 63)
Outbound: Jan. 27 Simpson to Resolution (SN Dickins, Flight 64); Feb. 5 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flight 10)

Western Canada Airways was formed in December 1926 to provide services to the Red Lake area of northern Ontario. From 1927 to 1929, operations were expanded to the northern provincial areas of Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. For the Mackenzie Valley area, an office was set up at Waterways in late 1928 and authority was given to carry mail.

Philatelic covers, paid at air mail rate, flown on the first flight down the Mackenzie River and signed by the pilot. The flight started from Edmonton on January 18 but was forced down about 40 miles north and another start was tried on January 20 that got as far as Lac La Biche. On January 22 the plane finally arrived at Waterways. The following day the aircraft was taxied over to Fort McMurray where the flight north began again. Postal Inspector Tom J. Reilly accompanied this flight as far as Fort Resolution to carry northbound mail that had accumulated at Fort McMurray. Reilly established money order business at the Fort Resolution post office during his stay. Dickins described it as "the toughest flight in my experience" with temperatures as low as -62°F and headwinds of 50 mph.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—JANUARY 1929

via First Flight,
Fort Smith, NWT, to
Fort McMurray.



Returned on CASQ
Flights 10



Returned on CASQ
Flight 10

via first flight,
Hay River to
Fort McMurray.



Returned on CASQ
Flights 66-69

via first flight,
Fort Providence to
Fort McMurray.



Returned on CASQ
Flights 10



Returned on CASQ
Flights 12-13

Outbound: Jan. 24 Smith to Fitzgerald (SN Dickins, Flight 59); Jan. 25 Fitzgerald to Resolution (SN Dickins, Flight 60), Resolution to Hay River (SN Dickins, Flight 61), Hay River to Providence (SN Dickins, Flight 62); Jan. 26 Providence to Simpson (SN Dickins, Flight 63); Jan. 27 Simpson to Resolution (SN Dickins, Flight 64); Feb. 5 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flight 10); Feb. 6 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flight 13); Mar. 8 Hay River to Edmonton (SQ Dickins, Flights 66-69)

Philatelic covers, paid at air mail rate, flown on the first flight down the Mackenzie River and returned on various flights as shown above. On the return flight from Fort Simpson on January 27, G-CASN was damaged on landing at Fort Resolution. The propeller and undercarriage were damaged but repaired. The aircraft returned to Waterways without the passengers or mail. Meanwhile, a message was sent out via the radio station at Fort Smith and Western Canada Airways brought in another Fokker Super Universal (G-CASQ) from Winnipeg to Waterways where it was pressed into service to complete this first air mail. Pilot Dickins flew this aircraft to Fort Resolution on February 5 and return to carry out mail and Postal Inspector Reilly. The next day he flew from Waterways to Fort Fitzgerald for the mail from that post office and Fort Smith, and to Fort Resolution, for the remainder of the southbound mail. Note that the Hay River cover was not returned to Edmonton until March 8 (Flights 66-69) on aboard G-CASQ, the southbound portion of the March flights to and from Fort Good Hope.

POSTS

FORT SMITH
RESOLUTION
HAY RIVER
FORT RAE
PROVIDENCE
SIMPSON

Northern



Traders

Limited

POSTS

FORT LIARD
WRIGLEY
NORMAN
GOOD HOPE
ARCTIC RED RIVER
AKLAVIK

First Air Mail
Resolution to McMurray

EDMONTON,
ALBERTA Resolution
Jan - 27-29

Dear Mother,

This is the first air mail from the north
so am sending a note and hope you get it alright,

Will you please send this note back and envelope to
I would like to keep it to remember the first air mail to
the north,

Hope you are all enjoying the best of health, and
every thing is alright; Best wishes to all

Your loving Son

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—JANUARY 1929

AFTER FIVE DAYS RETURN TO

VIA AIR MAIL

Robert Porritt
Fort Resolution
N.W.T.
Canada



Mrs. John, Porritt

Jarvie Farm

Jarvie

Alberta

VIA.
First Air Mail
Fort Resolution to Fort McMurray



Outbound: Jan. 25 Resolution to Providence (SN Dickins, Flights 61-62); Jan. 26 Providence to Simpson (SN Dickins, Flight 63); Jan. 27 Simpson to Resolution (SN Dickins, Flight 64);
Feb. 5 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flight 10)

Commercial cover, paid at air mail rate, flown on the return flight carrying the first airmail from Fort Resolution.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—JANUARY 1929



Outbound: Jan. 25 Resolution to Providence (SN Dickins, Flights 61-62); Jan. 26 Providence to Simpson (SN Dickins, Flight 63); Jan. 27 Simpson to Resolution (SN Dickins, Flight 64);
Feb. 5 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flight 10)

Commercial registered cover, paid at air mail rate, flown on the return flight carrying the first airmail from Fort Resolution. The sender, Robert Porritt, worked for Northern Traders at Fort Resolution and also served as the Western Canada Airways agent for that community.

Western Canada Airways contract with the Post Office Department began on January 16, 1929 and allowed for the following reimbursement for mails carried:

Between Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan—25 cents per pound
Between Fort McMurray and Fort Fitzgerald/Fort Smith—35 cents per pound
Between Fort McMurray and Fort Resolution—70 cents per pound
Between Fort McMurray and Hay River—80 cents per pound
Between Fort McMurray and Fort Providence—90 cents per pound
Between Fort McMurray and Fort Simpson—\$1.10 per pound
Between Fort McMurray and Wrigley—\$1.40 per pound
Between Fort McMurray and Fort Norman—\$1.75 per pound
Between Fort McMurray and Fort Good Hope—\$2.10 per pound

The service was intended to deal with a large backlog of mail at Fort McMurray (over 1500 lbs) for points beyond Fort Smith. Any new mail dispatched on the service was to be at the regular air mail rate of 5 cents for the first ounce and 10 cents for each additional ounce. The Post Office Department ended this arrangement effective March 16, 1929 after the backlog was cleared up and in anticipation of letting a permanent contract for air mail service. Western Canada Airways received a total of \$3,7030.18 for the conveyance of 19,451 lbs of mail northbound and 1,262 lbs of mail southbound for the period January 16 to March 16, 1929.



FORT SMITH, N.W.T. 1029
 JAN 25 1929
 M

Mr. G.W. Linke,

11537 - 91 St.,
 Edmonton,
 Alta.

Air Mail

Outbound: Jan. 24 Smith to Fitzgerald (SN Dickins, Flight 59); Jan. 25 Fitzgerald to Providence (SN Dickins, Flights 60-62); Jan. 26 Providence to Simpson (SN Dickins, Flight 63); Jan. 27 Simpson to Resolution (SN Dickins, Flight 64); Feb. 6 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flight 13)

Cover, paid at air mail rate for mail weighing between 1 and 2 oz., likely flown on the return flight carrying the first airmail from Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith. The Fort Smith mail would have been taken across the portage by horse team to Fort Fitzgerald on January 24 and flown out the following day. There are no backstamps on this cover but the stamps are cancelled with the scarce and unusual first Fort Smith roller. The cover may have contained first flight covers returned under cover to the collector.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—FEBRUARY 1929



Inbound: Feb. 5 McMurray to Resolution (SQ Dickins, Flight 9)

Philatelic cover, paid at air mail rate, and a piece from the back of a cover showing the incoming air mail to Fort Resolution. The date indicia in the Fort Resolution circle date stamp (B1) do not appear to have been changed from the previous day.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—FEBRUARY 1929



Inbound: Feb. 6 Waterways to Fitzgerald (SQ Dickins, Flight 11)

Top philatelic cover paid at air mail rate, flown from Waterways to Fort Fitzgerald. The aircraft could not land at Fort Chipewyan but a mail bag of 15 lbs. was dropped, including this item.

Bottom philatelic cover carried on the same flight flown from Waterways to Fort Fitzgerald.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—FEBRUARY 1929



Large block of postage due stamps (J1) cancelled by the first Fort Smith roller cancel dated February 8, 1929. Likely used to pay the deficiency on incoming air mail carried on Western Canada Airways Fokker Super Universal G-CACD flown from Waterways to Fort Fitzgerald (Flight 11) by pilot Punch Dickins on February 6, 1929. The 15 cent deficiency was doubled to 30 cents and paid for with these stamps serving as a receipt as there is still full gum on them.

A total of 681 lbs of incoming mail were carried on the flight, with 15 lbs dropped from the air at Fort Chipewyan before the plane landed at Fort Fitzgerald where 657 lbs was carried forward to Fort Resolution, leaving about 26 lbs of mail that was delivered at Fort Fitzgerald for that community and nearby Fort Smith.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—FEBRUARY 1929



G.W. Linke,

11537 - 91 St.,

Edmonton,

Alta.



Outbound: Feb. 18 Providence to Resolution (SQ Dickins, Flight 36); Feb. 19 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flight 37-38)

Cover, paid at air mail rate for mail weighing between 1 and 2 oz. carried on the second flight from Fort Providence by Western Canada Airways. The cover is not endorsed for air mail but was obviously carried on these flights. The cover may have contained flight covers returned under cover to the collector.

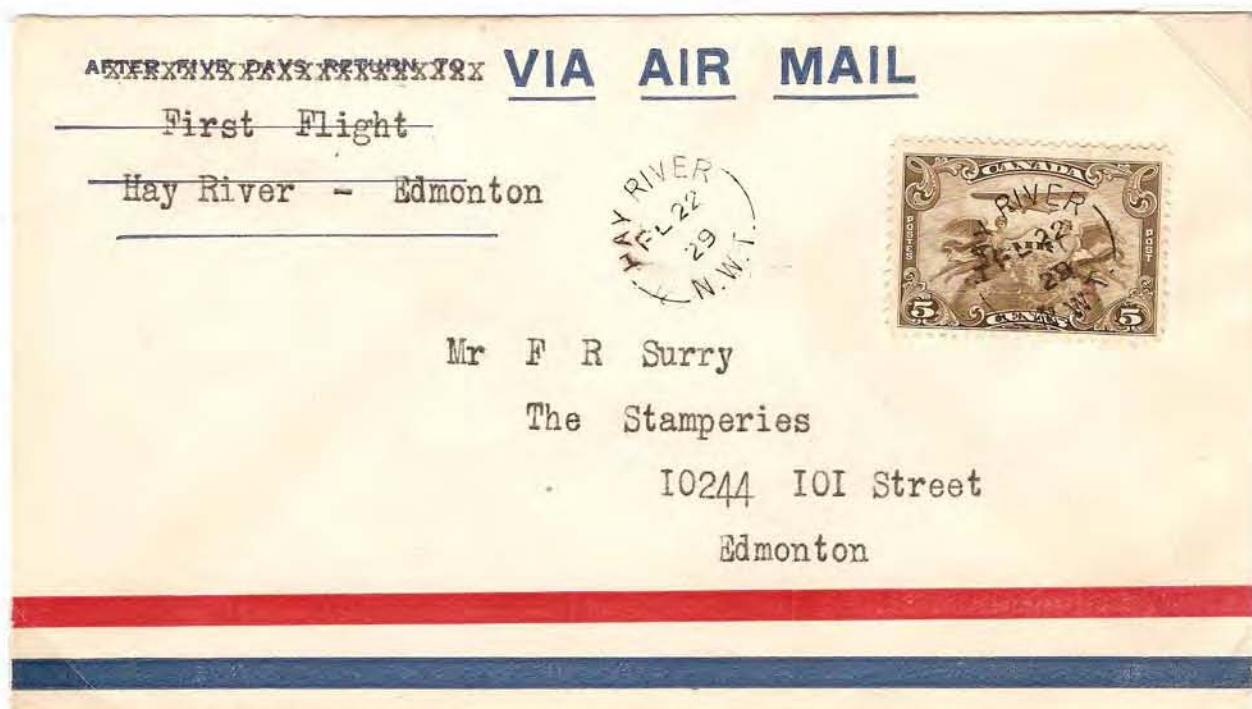
WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—FEBRUARY 1929



Outbound: Feb. 18 Simpson to Resolution (SQ Dickins, Flights 35-36);
Feb. 19 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flights 37-38)

Two commercial covers, paid at air mail rate, from the second flight for outbound air mail from Fort Simpson. The top cover was sent by John W. Goodall, an early farmer at Fort Simpson and later postmaster 1938-45.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—FEBRUARY 1929



Outbound: Feb. 27 Hay River to Resolution (SQ Dickins, Flight 51);
Feb. 28 Resolution to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flights 52-55)

Philatelic cover, paid at air mail rate, from the third trip up to Fort Simpson. The date on the cover from Hay River indicates that it was probably brought in to Hay River on February 17 (Flights 28-32), during the second trip by Western Canada Airways up to Fort Simpson.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—MARCH 1929



Outbound: Mar. 5 Simpson to Wrigley (SQ Dickins, Flight 62);
Mar. 6 Wrigley to Good Hope (SQ Dickins, Flight 63);
Mar. 7 Good Hope to Hay River (SQ Dickins, Flights 64-65);
Mar. 8 Hay River to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flights 66-68)

Registered commercial air mail cover carried on third air mail from Fort Simpson. Only recorded registered cover from Fort Simpson on this flight that went up to Fort Good Hope. This was the first registration box used at the Fort Simpson post office and is not found in the proof books.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—MARCH 1929



Inbound: Mar. 2 McMurray to Fitzgerald (SQ Dickins, Flights 56-57);
Mar. 3 Fitzgerald to Simpson (SQ Dickins, Flights 58-61);
Mar. 5 Simpson to Wrigley (SQ Dickins, Flight 62); Mar. 6 Wrigley to Good Hope (SQ Dickins, Flight 63)
Outbound: Mar. 7 Good Hope to Hay River (SQ Dickins, Flights 64-65);
Mar. 8 Hay River to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flights 66-68)

Two covers, paid at air mail rate, from the flights up to Fort Good Hope. The top cover was sent to an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Good Hope while the bottom item is a self-addressed and signed cover on company stationary to the pilot of the flight. These flights achieved a new farthest north record on the Mackenzie River and across the Arctic Circle. The temperature was -64° F at Fort Good Hope.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—MARCH 1929



Outbound: Mar. 6 Wrigley to Good Hope (SQ Dickins, Flights 63);
Mar. 7 Good Hope to Simpson (SQ Dickins, Flight 64), Simpson to Hay River (SQ Dickins, Flights 65);
Mar. 8 Hay River to McMurray (SQ Dickins, Flights 66-68), McMurray to Edmonton (SQ Dickins, Flight 69)

Two covers from the first flights up to Fort Good Hope. The top cover was paid at the air stage rate from Wrigley and carried all the way back to Edmonton by air. The bottom philatelic cover was paid at the air stage rate and dated at Fort Simpson from the first flight there but not sent south until the return flights from Fort Good Hope, illustrating the haphazard nature of the air stage rate where air mail paid items were given priority.