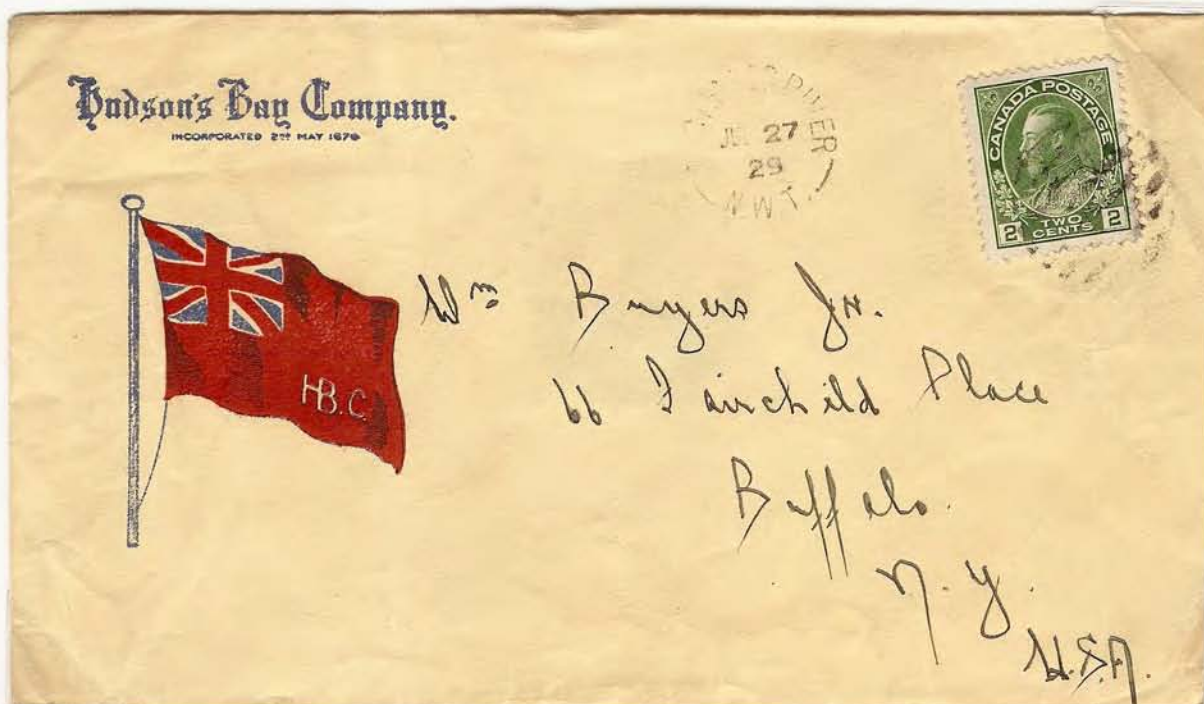


WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—JULY 1929

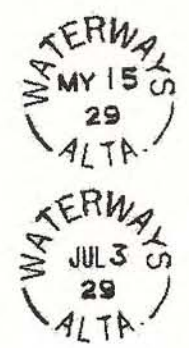


Two covers from Arctic Red River bearing the same date but illustrating different methods of delivery. Top registered self-addressed cover sent back to a philatelist in England, likely used to mail back additional self-addressed covers. Note the time between Arctic Red River and Fort Smith likely indicates that the cover was carried back up the Mackenzie River on the steamer service operated by the Hudson's Bay Company as the postage paid did not include air mail service and there was no Western Canada Airways sticker. Bottom cover is commercial mail from the Hudson's Bay Company post at Arctic Red River bearing a sticker but no transit or receiver markings. It could indicate that the wrong indicia were in the date stamp or that the cover was flown out once it reached a point where air mail service was available, possibly Fort Simpson or Fort Smith.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—JULY 1929



Inbound: July 6 McMurray to Hay River (SM Dickins, Flights 298-301)



Inbound: July 6 McMurray to Resolution (SM Dickins, Flights 298-300)

Covers showing the first summer flights by Western Canada Airways after the trip to Aklavik. Top philatelic cover was supposed to be flown to Aklavik but somehow ended up in Hay River on July 6. It is not clear why this happened or how it was returned.

Bottom commercial cover shows use of the Western Canada Airways sticker on the front, contrary to Post Office Department rules. This cover may have been sent from Waterways on May 15 by the steamer Athabaska River during the spring thaw and eventually returned on July 3 and then carried up to Fort Resolution on July 6.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—JULY 1929



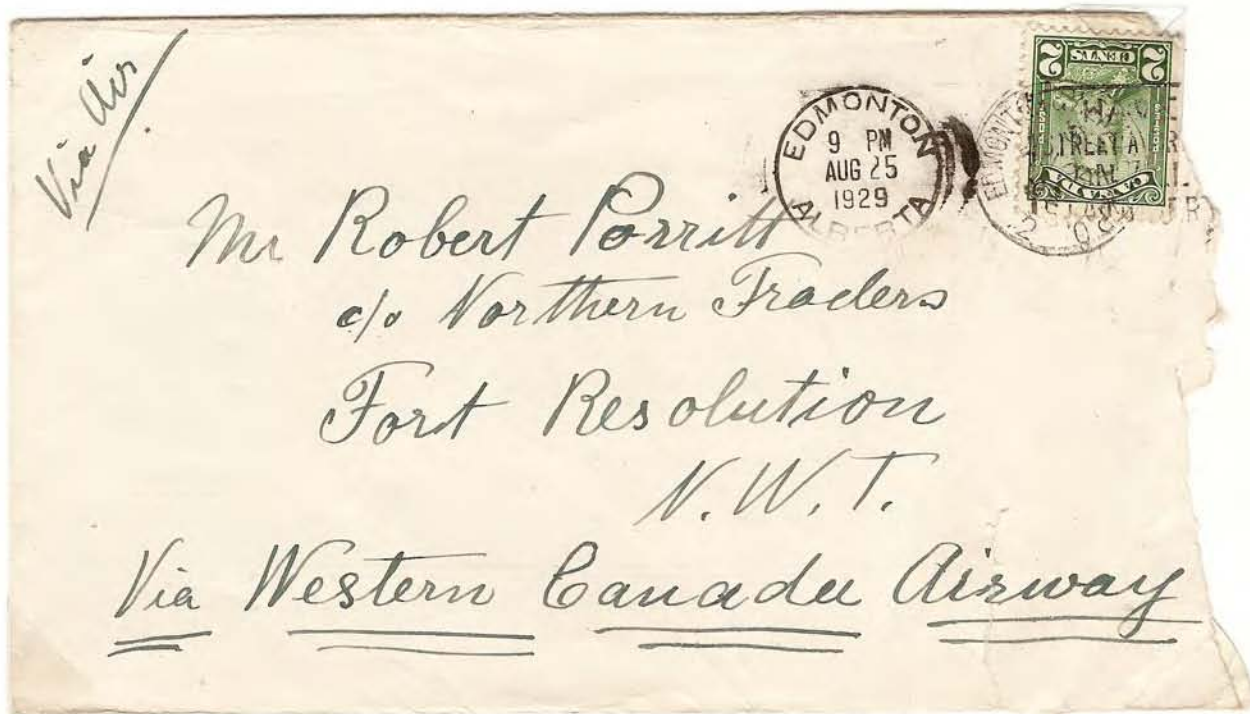
Outbound: July 13 Smith to Cooking Lake (SM Dickins, Flights 328-330)

Commercial cover at letter rate with sticker on reverse from Fort Smith. Flown through to Cooking Lake floatplane base, just outside of Edmonton on a charter trip to pick up a sick member of a judicial party on board the SS *Distributor*.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1929



Inbound: June 13 McMurray to Resolution (SM Dickins, Flights 232-235);
 June 16 Resolution to Simpson (SM Dickins, Flights 238-240)
 Outbound: Aug. 27 Simpson to McMurray (SM Dickins, Flights 375-378)



Inbound: Sept. 5 Cooking Lake to Resolution (SM Dickins, Flights 380-382)

Top philatelic cover flown into Fort Simpson and likely returned on August 27 to Fort McMurray. Bottom commercial cover likely flown to Fort Resolution on September after an engine replacement for the Fokker Super Universal but no receiver as is common on incoming commercial mail.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—AUGUST 1929



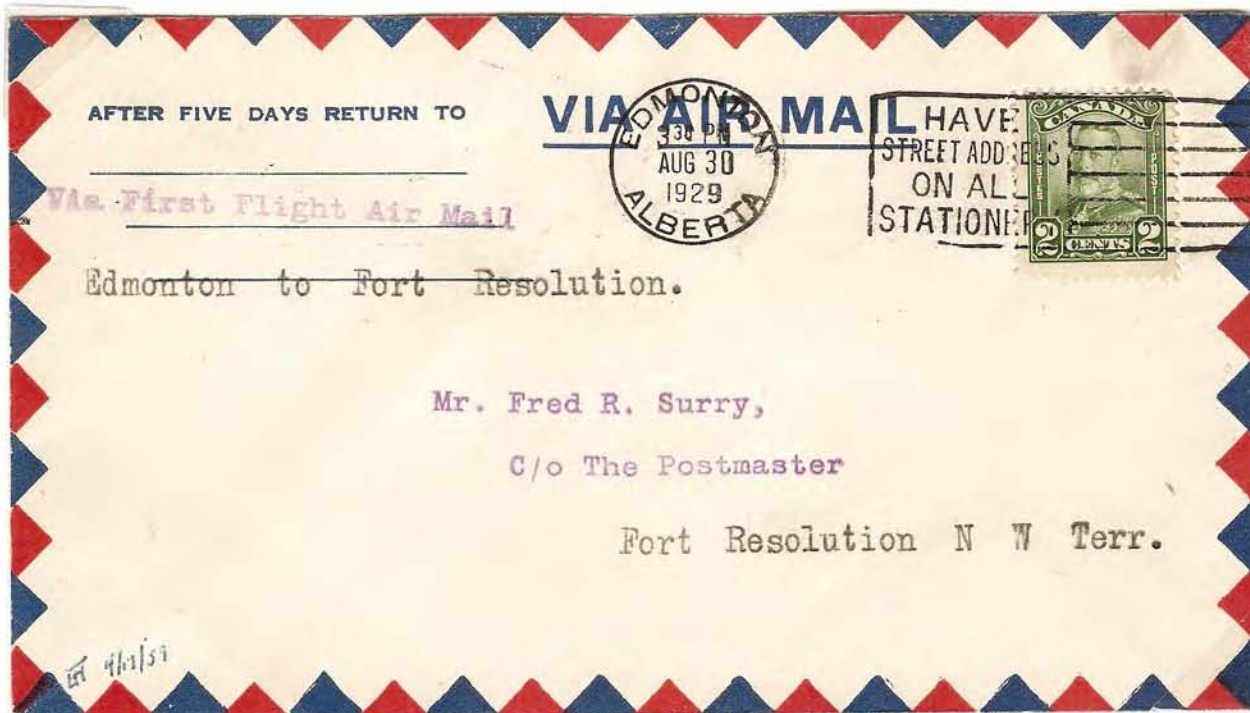
Inbound: June 29 McMurray to Smith (SM Dickins, Flights 262-264); June 30 Smith to Simpson (SM Dickins, Flights 269-272); July 1 Simpson to Aklavik (SM Dickins, Flights 273-278)
Outbound: Aug. 24 Aklavik to Dawson (SK Brintnell, Flight 57)



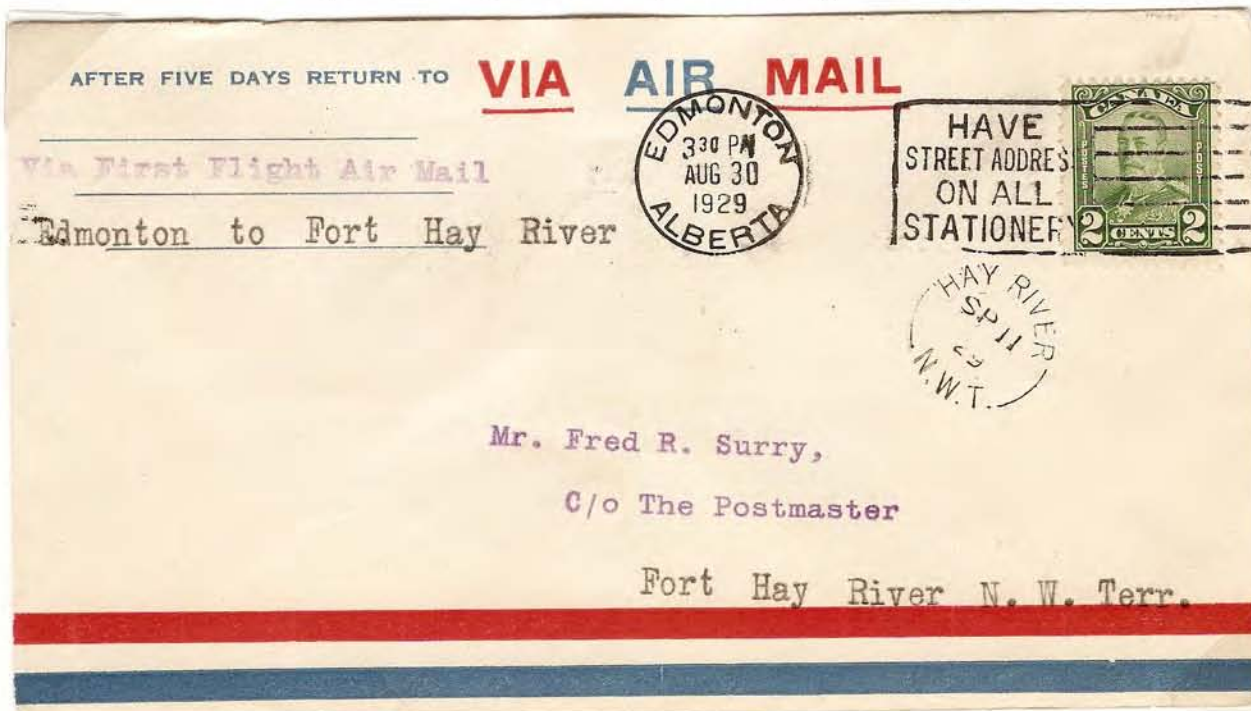
Outbound: Aug. 24 Aklavik to Dawson (SK Brintnell, Flight 57)

Top cover was flown to Aklavik on the summer service and held there for the flight to Dawson. Western Canada Airways Operating Manager Leigh Brintnell took the Fokker Super Universal G-CASK from Winnipeg for a tour and inspection of the Mackenzie River area after G-CASM was damaged while on charter work around Great Bear Lake. He conducted charters around Great Bear Lake including work for Gilbert Labine, the prospector who discovered the Port Radium mine. Both covers were flown on the first flight from Aklavik to Dawson on August 24 as a charter trip for O.S. Finnie, the federal government Director of the NWT. Only 83 covers were carried on this flight. Note that the bottom cover is addressed to F.X. Leger, Edmonton District Superintendent, Post Office Department. Note the very clear Aklavik broken circle (A1) strike at left that may have been added later in January 1930 after the return of the hammer to Edmonton.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—SEPTEMBER 1929



Inbound: Sept. 9 Cooking Lake to McMurray (SM Dickins, Flight 389);
Sept. 10 McMurray to Resolution (SM Dickins, Flights 390-391)



Inbound: Sept. 9 Cooking Lake to McMurray (SM Dickins, Flight 389); Sept. 10 McMurray to Fitzgerald (SM Dickins, Flights 390-392); Sept. 11 Fitzgerald to Hay River (SM Dickins, Flight 393)

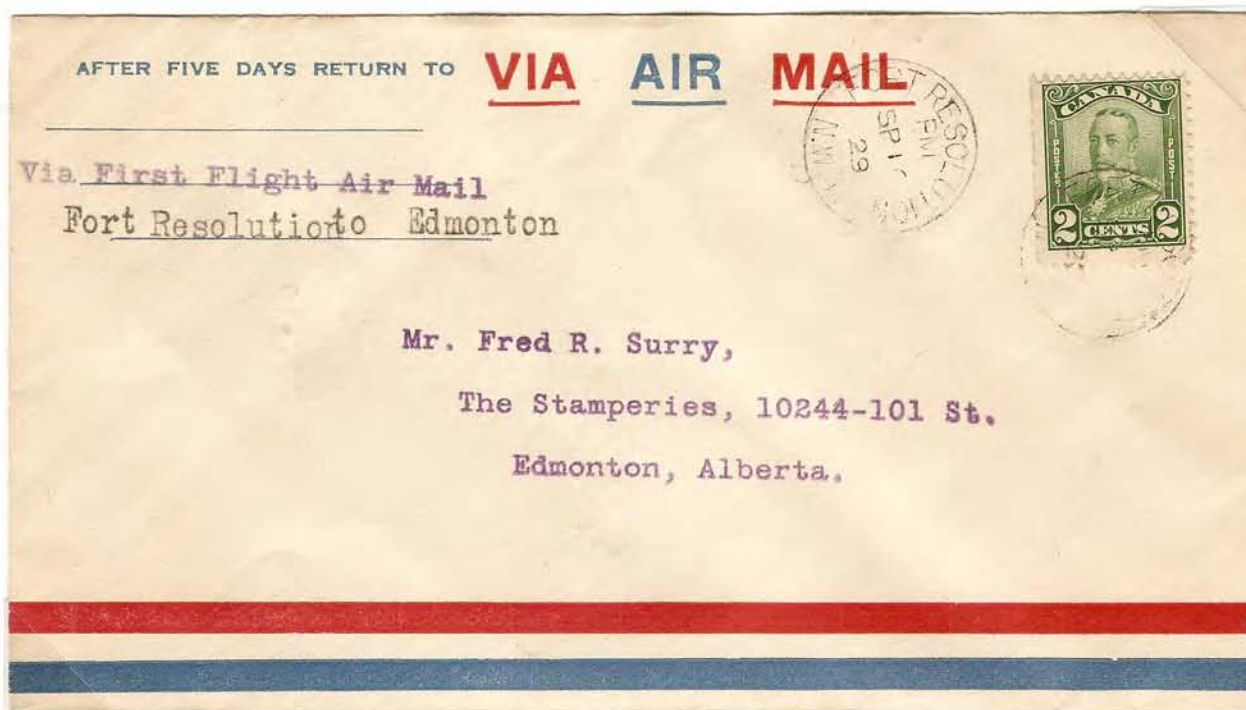
Two philatelic covers from the fall flight service by Western Canada Airways. Both covers prepaid at letter rate and for sticker service. Covers after July are hard to find.

Western Canada Airways opened an office in Edmonton in August 1929 to help serve the demand for services and as an operational base. On August 24, 1929 seven rubber stamps were sent to the new Edmonton office including the date stamp shown above that was prepared on August 19, 1929. These are the first recorded uses of the only date stamp used by the company on mail to or from the Mackenzie region.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—OCTOBER 1929



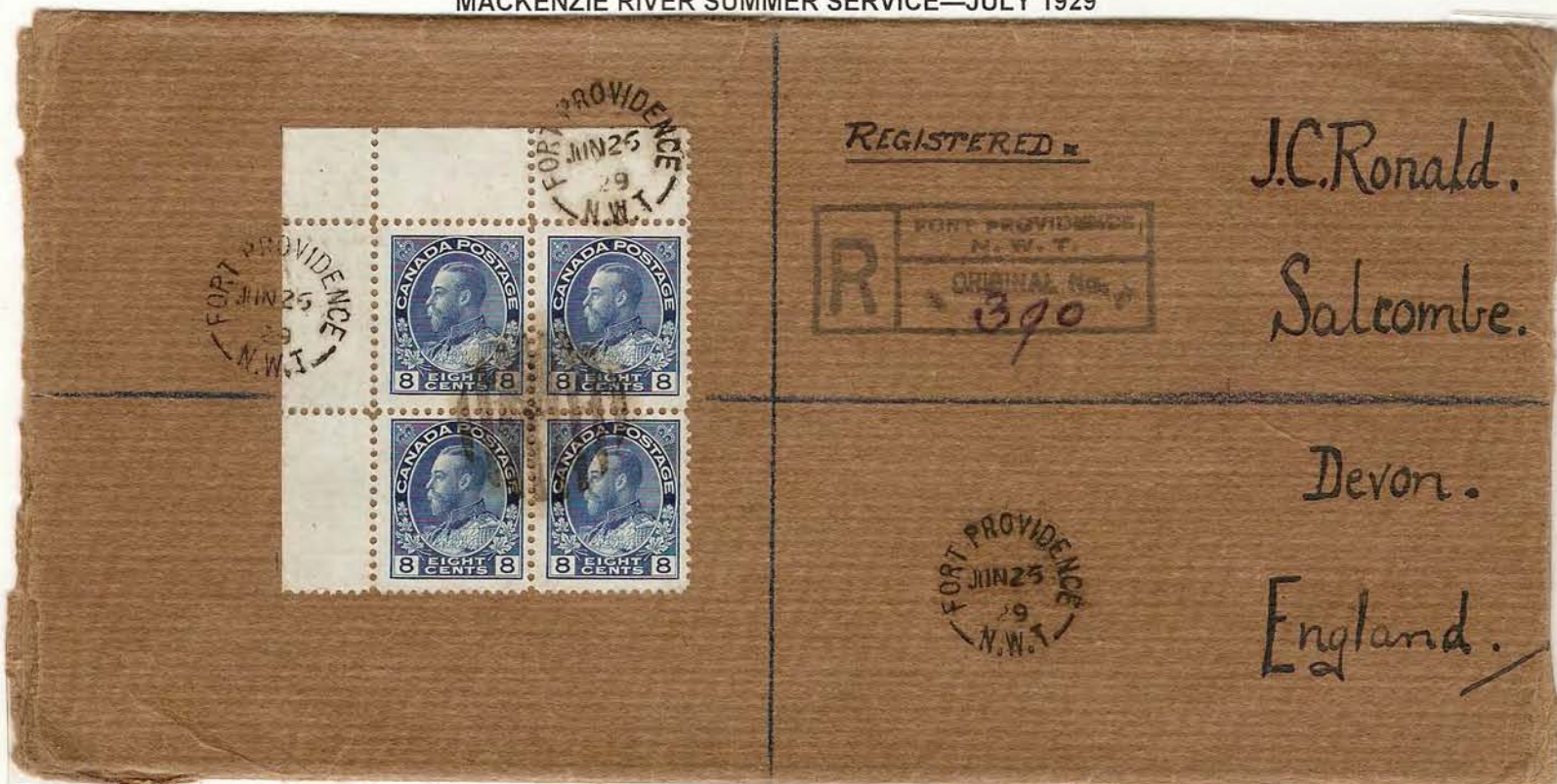
Outbound: Oct. 10 Resolution to Cooking Lake (SM Dickins, Flights 434-436)



Outbound: Oct. 10 Resolution to Cooking Lake (SM Dickins, Flights 434-436)

Two philatelic covers from Fort Resolution likely flown out on October 10 to Cooking Lake float base. Top cover shows last recorded use of circle date stamp B1 while bottom cover shows first recorded use of circle date stamp B2 proofed on September 5, 1929. This circle date stamp was part of a set made for the first regular official flights later in 1929 by Commercial Airways. This cover proves that some of these date stamps may have been delivered prior to those flights. Western Canada Airways was part of the search for the MacAlpine or Dominion Explorers expedition that became stranded near Cambridge Bay. Pilot Dickins with G-CASM was involved with the Search efforts from September 26 to October 10 that interrupted regular scheduled service. The last float flights of the season were made on October 17 with G-CASM.

MACKENZIE RIVER SUMMER SERVICE—JULY 1929



Two overpaid registered covers showing the summer service on the Mackenzie River in 1929. 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. 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.

1929 HBC steamer departures from Fort Smith were delayed a week due to severe ice conditions to the following schedule:

- Liard River—June 4, June 11, June 18, July 9, July 30, August 20, September 3
- Mackenzie River—June 18, July 16, August 27
- SS Distributor—June 25, July 23, August 20



MACKENZIE RIVER SUMMER SERVICE—AUGUST 1929



Two covers carried on the summer steamer service even though on air mail stationary. Neither cover bears a sticker for Western Canada Airways that was needed for it to be conveyed by airplane. The bottom cover posted at Aklavik on August 2, 1929 has the airmail and special delivery stamps invalidated by pencil as these services were not available. Special Delivery was however available in Edmonton as seen from the manuscript "479" in a circle at lower left indicating the number of the item entered into the special delivery log book in Edmonton.

MACKENZIE RIVER SUMMER SERVICE—SEPTEMBER 1929



EDMONTON & DAWSON
VIA AKLAVIK.

EDMONTON
11 AM
AUG 26
1929

HAVE
STREET POST
ON A
STATION

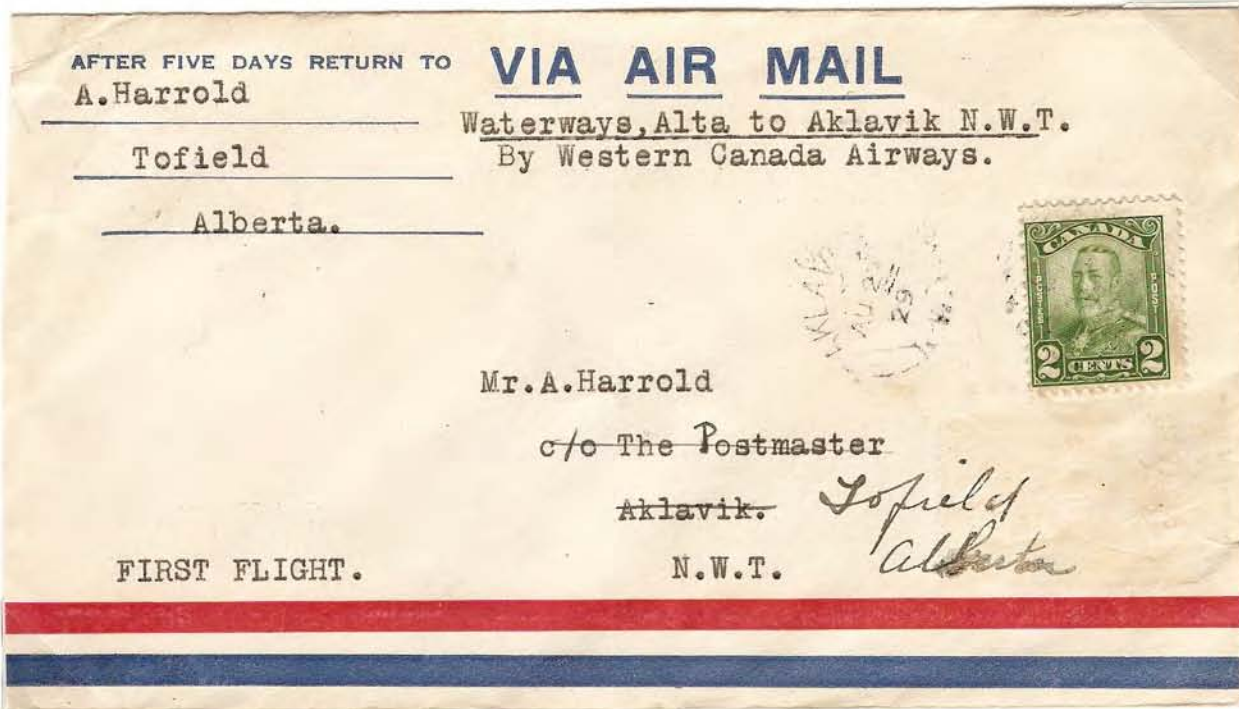
VIA AIR MAIL

R. H. LEANEY
124-25th AVE. WEST.
VANCOUVER
B.C.
CANADA



Three covers carried into Mackenzie River post offices in September 1929 by summer steamer service. If the dates on these covers are correct the steamer arrived in Fort Good Hope on September 12 going downstream to Aklavik where it was reached on September 16. The steamer would have turned around and started upstream arriving at Fort Norman on September 18. None of these covers has any other transit or receipt markings although the middle cover started off in Edmonton on August 26. The Mackenzie River passengers and mail were scheduled to leave Edmonton on August 27 so these items were likely carried on that steamer.

MACKENZIE RIVER SUMMER SERVICE—OCTOBER 1929



Two covers carried on the summer steamer service. Top cover mailed from Aklavik on August 27, 1929 after the only summer flight to that post office. Neither cover bears a sticker for Western Canada Airways that was needed for it to be conveyed by airplane. The SS Distributor arrived at Fort Smith on October 3, 1929 from her last trip down to Aklavik. Mail and passengers were expected to arrive in Edmonton on October 5. There two covers appear to have been part of that mail (Tofield is about 45 miles southeast of Edmonton and would have received mail the same day).

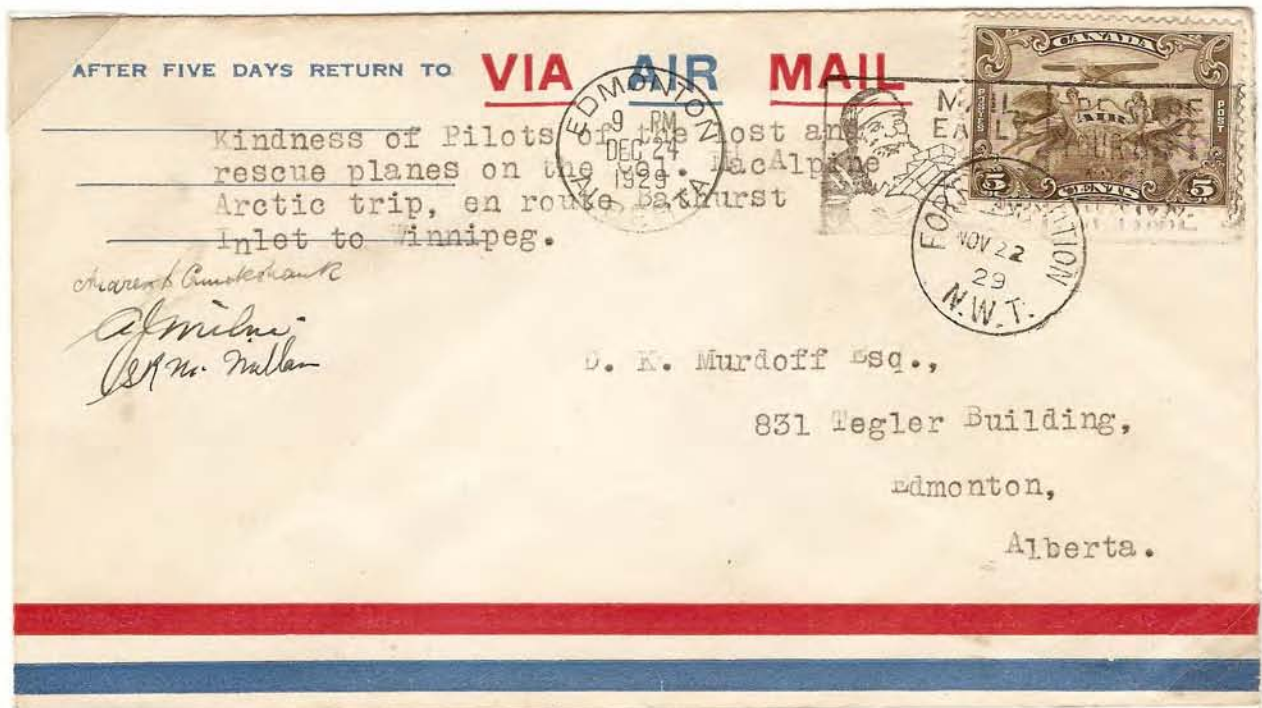
The bottom cover posted at Fort Simpson on August 22, 1929 on airmail stationery did not have a Western Canada Airways sticker so was not carried by air. The cover was marked 10 cents postage due on return to Edmonton, reflecting double the deficiency for normal air mail of the period.

MACKENZIE RIVER SUMMER SERVICE—OCTOBER 1929



Two philatelic covers paying the letter rate to US showing late summer steamer service on the Mackenzie River. The *Liard River* left Aklavik on its last trip of the season on October 6, 1929 and arrived at Fort Smith on October 27, 1929. Passengers boarded the *Canadusa* at Fort Fitzgerald and reached Waterways on November 4, 1929. These two covers were likely carried in on that trip but it is unclear how they were carried out again. The bottom cover from Aklavik likely came out on the first flights carried out by Commercial Airways in December 1929.

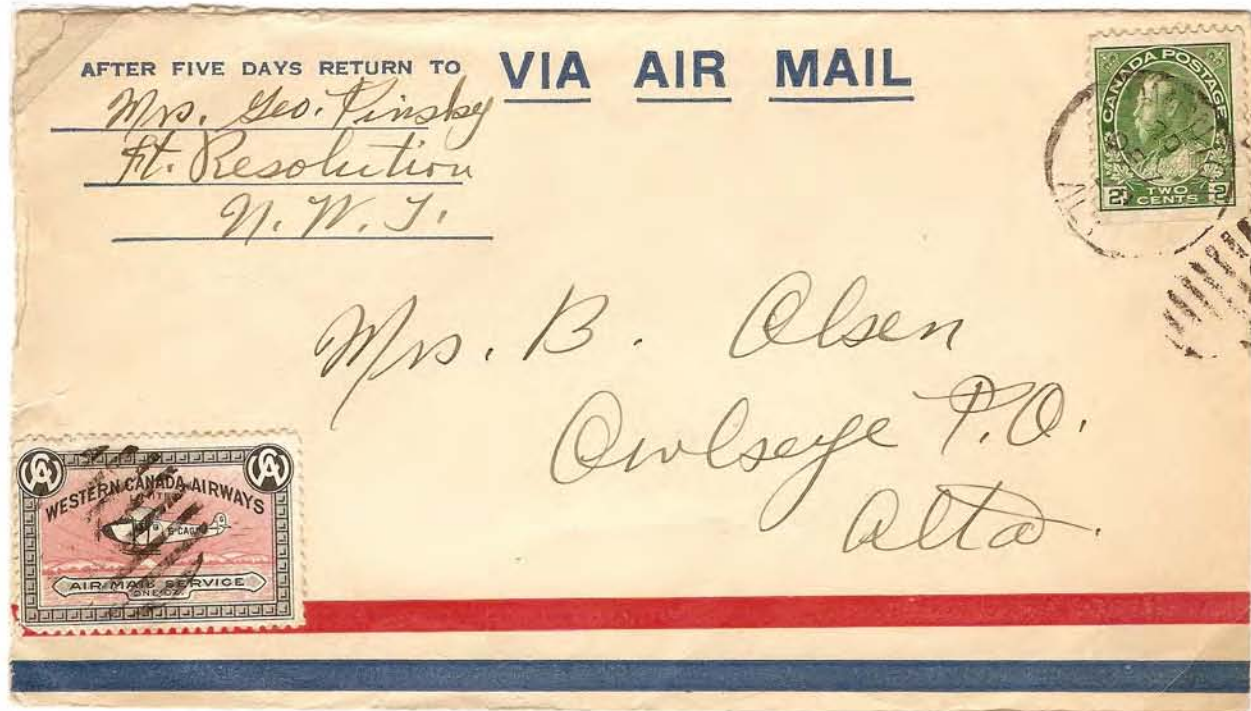
WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1929



Two courtesy philatelic covers sent by Robert Porritt to himself and his manager at Fort Resolution via Northern Traders office in Edmonton. Dominion Explorers, headed by Lt. Col. C.D.H. MacAlpine, planned to carry out aerial mineral exploration from Winnipeg into the North. In September the expedition was stranded on the Arctic coast near Cambridge Bay. An extensive search began involving many aircraft. These covers were carried by Pilot Cruikshank in his Western Canada Airways Fokker Super Universal G-CASQ. Flights were made from Stony Rapids and Baker Lake before the aircraft crashed through the ice at Bathurst Inlet. It was salvaged and continued on with the search when it was flown out to Fort Reliance. These covers were flown in G-CASQ from Fort Resolution as follows:

- November 24-Fort Resolution to Fort Reliance Dominion Explorers Base
- November 25-Propeller from G-CASL taken off and put on G-CASQ
- November 26-Fort Reliance to Aylmer Lake to rescue crew and passengers of G-CASO
- November 27-Aylmer Lake to Muskox Lake to rescue crew and passengers of CF-ACZ
- November 28-Muskox Lake to Fort Reliance
- November 30-Fort Reliance to Stony Rapids
- December 2-Stony Rapids to Cranberry Portage
- December 3-Cranberry Portage to The Pas

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—DECEMBER 1929



Outbound: Dec. 5 Resolution to McMurray (SM Dickins, Flights 7-8);
Dec. 7 McMurray to Edmonton (SM Dickins, Flights 9-11)

Commercial cover from the wife of a fur trader at Fort Resolution. Flown from Fort Resolution on December 5 to Fort McMurray and on to Edmonton on December 7. This is the last recorded use of the Western Canada Airways sticker used on the Mackenzie River route within the proper period of authorization. Winter flights by Western Canada Airways resumed on December 3 after freeze-up and skis were put on the Fokker Super Universal.

WESTERN CANADA AIRWAYS—DECEMBER 1929



Inbound: Dec. 18 Edmonton to McMurray (FL Farrington, Flight 223); Dec. 20 McMurray to Resolution (FL Farrington, Flights 224-226); Dec. 21 Resolution to Simpson (FL Farrington, Flight 227)

Privately carried cover to Fort Providence. There were no stops there so this cover may have been air dropped or held over at Fort Resolution or Fort Simpson for delivery by dog team. Due to the volume of business related to the lead zinc deposits at Pine Point, an extra Fokker plane (G-CAFL) was brought in from Cranberry Portage to Fort McMurray on December 8, piloted by A. Harold Farrington. Only reported cover flown by this aircraft and pilot as part of the Mackenzie River air mail service.

After Western Canada Airways failed to secure the Mackenzie River District Air Mail Service contract in the fall of 1929, the authority to use stickers was withdrawn on December 13. Western Canada Airways continued to operate in the Mackenzie River area. The financial backers of Commercial Airways were charged and convicted of fraud after the crash of the stock market. Commercial Airways was forced to merge with Western Canada Airways in May 1931.

COMMERCIAL AIRWAYS—DECEMBER 1929



Inbound: Dec. 10 McMurray to Chipewyan (AJQ Becker, AKI May)
Outbound: Dec. 10 Chipewyan to McMurray (AJQ Becker, AKI May)

Pilot signed cover (Becker, Burbidge and Glyn-Roberts) carried on the first regular official flight from Fort McMurray to Fort Chipewyan, the first segment of these historic flights. Commercial Airways carried out the flights using four aircraft—three Bellanca Pacemakers (AJQ, AJR and AKI) and one Lockheed Vega (AAL). Five pilots were involved; Cy Becker, Maurice Burbidge, Idris Glyn-Roberts, C. Lumsden, and Wop May. Although most of the philatelic mail was cancelled at Edmonton on November 26 due to the volume received, bad weather delayed the actual departure from Fort McMurray until December 10. The mail was carried forward from and returned to Fort McMurray in stages.

The Post Office Department issued a contract tender for winter and summer mail services from Waterways/Fort McMurray on March 25 as the contract with the Alberta and Arctic Transportation Company was set to expire on October 31. The tender closed on June 7 with Commercial Airways winning the contract. The new contract was to take effect on November 1, 1929 for a four-year period to provide aerial delivery of the mails up to 75,000 lbs. per year from Fort McMurray to the north. This was to involve a minimum of 80 round trips to Fort Smith, 40 round trips to Fort Resolution, 12 round trips to Fort Simpson, and 6 round trips to Aklavik per year for a total of \$45,000. The contract was finally signed on November 25 and a bond for the contract was completed on November 29. The old system of carrying mail by dog team and steamer was replaced with aircraft.

