

MARC CASTEL

Inverted Overprints

Newfoundland Air Mail Stamps

Day of Aerophilately, November 2, 2025

Canadian Aerophilatelic Society
BNAPS Airmail Study Group

NEWFOUNDLAND'S OVERPRINTED AIR MAIL STAMPS

Stamp	Date of Issue	Stamp	Overprinted	Where	Inverted	Cat.	Typical Price (normal/inverted)
	April 12, 1919	"Hawker"	200 4 Blocks 10x5? (From 2 Sheets of 100)	Daily News (J.A. Robinson & Co., Ltd.)	0	C1	$20,000
	April 19, 1919	"Martinsyde"	~50 1 Block 10x5 (manuscript) (From Partial Sheet of 100)	By Hand (W.C. Campbell / J.A. Robinson)	0	C1a	$35,000
	June 9, 1919	"Alcock & Brown" "Handley Page"	10,000 400 Blocks 5x5 (From 100 Sheets of 100)	Royal Gazette (The King's Printer)	0	C2	$500
	November 16, 1921	"Halifax Airmail"	14,000 560 Blocks 5x5 (From 140 Sheets of 100)	Royal Gazette (The King's Printer)	125 (5 Blocks of 25)	C3	$300/$5,000
	May 18, 1927	"de Pinedo"	300 6 Blocks 10x5 vet. (From 3 Sheets of 100)	Daily News (Robinson & Co., Ltd.)	0	C4	$20,000
	September 25, 1930	"Columbia"	300 75 Blocks 2x2 (From 3 Sheets of 100)	D.R. Thistle & Co. (The King's Printer & Newfoundland Gazette)	0	C5	$5,000
	May 19, 1932	"Do-X"	8,000 2,000 Blocks 2x2 (From 200 Sheets of 50)	D.R. Thistle & Co. (The King's Printer)	52 (13 Blocks of 4)	C12	$300 / $14,000
	July 24, 1933	"Balbo"	8,000 2,010 Blocks 2x2 (From 201 Sheets of 50)	Robinson & Co., Ltd. (Under the supervision of The King's Printer)	~12	C18	$300 / $20,000

The Flights

The People

The Stamps





DECEMBER 10, 1921
ST. JOHN'S TO HALIFAX
AIRMAIL FLIGHT

COTTON, BENNETT, STANNARD

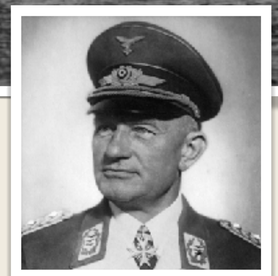


MAY 21, 1932
THE DORNIER DO-X
PANAMERICAN FLIGHT

CAPTAIN FRIEDRICH CHRISTIANSEN











JULY/AUGUST, 1933
THE CROCIERA AEREA
DEL DECENNALE

GENERAL ITALO BALBO





Maj. Victor Sydney Cotton and mechanic J.R. Stannard at Quidi Vidi Lake. 1922.

THE PEOPLE

Maj. F. Sydney Cotton and team

- In late 1920, Australian aviator Major F. Sidney Cotton answered a bold advertisement in *The Aeroplane* magazine: *"Pilots wanted. Plenty of risk – good pay."* The post came from Major Kenneth Clayton-Kennedy, a Canadian promoting aerial seal-spotting in Newfoundland.
- Cotton sailed for St. John's that November, but when Clayton-Kennedy's plan collapsed, he took charge and, with Captain Victor Sydney Bennett, son of former Colonial Secretary J. R. Bennett, formed the Aerial Survey Company at Botwood. Their operations focused on seal-spotting, search and rescue, and limited airmail flights across Newfoundland and Labrador.
- After returning to England to repair his *Westland Limousine III* (G-EARV), Cotton secured financing from industrialist Alan Butler, yet profits remained elusive. By 1923, after years of hazards and poor returns, Cotton closed the venture and left Newfoundland with about $25,000, ending one of the earliest aviation enterprises in island history.



General Post Office

SPECIAL MAIL BY AEROPLANE TO HALIFAX.

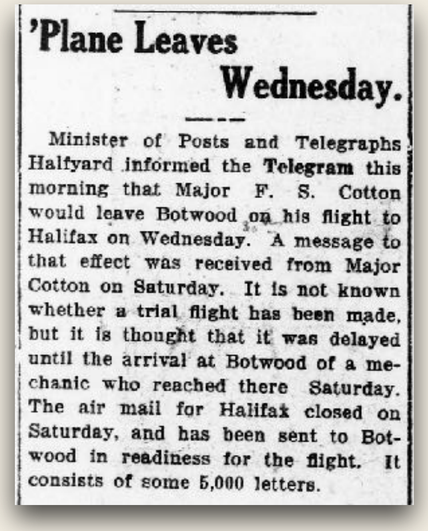
Persons wishing to avail of the opportunity to forward letter mail to Canada, United States, Great Britain or European countries by Aeroplane, will be given an opportunity to do so by a mail which will be closed at the General Post Office on Saturday evening, the 26th of November, at 9 o'clock. The mail will be sent by express from St. John's to Botwood on or about Sunday the 27th and from Botwood to Halifax by aeroplane. The maximum amount of mail for this special service will be 5,000 one oz. letters.

A special stamp, costing thirty-five cents, will be affixed to each letter on presentation at the General Post Office wicket after 9 a.m. on the 16th inst.

The Department of Posts and Telegraphs will not be responsible in any particular, for the non-delivery of this mail.

W. W. HALFYARD,
Minister of Posts and Telegraphs.
Nov. 15, 1921.

GPO Announcement
The Evening Advocate, St. John's, Newfoundland, November 18, 1921, page 8.



'Plane Leaves Wednesday.

Minister of Posts and Telegraphs Halfyard informed the Telegram this morning that Major F. S. Cotton would leave Botwood on his flight to Halifax on Wednesday. A message to that effect was received from Major Cotton on Saturday. It is not known whether a trial flight has been made, but it is thought that it was delayed until the arrival at Botwood of a mechanic who reached there Saturday. The air mail for Halifax closed on Saturday, and has been sent to Botwood in readiness for the flight. It consists of some 5,000 letters.

Departure Notice
The Evening Telegram, St. John's, Newfoundland, November 28, 1921, page 4.

GPO ANNOUNCEMENT

Halifax Mail November 1921

- In the fall of 1921, preparations began for the first airmail flight from St. John's to Halifax. A Newfoundland-to-Halifax airmail service of 1921 was announced on November 15 by Minister of Post and Telegraphs W.W. Halfyard.
- On November 18, 1921 the following notice appeared in THE EVENING ADVOCATE, a St. John's newspaper:
  "Persons wishing to avail of the opportunity to forward letter mail to Canada, United States, Great Britain or European countries by aeroplane, will be given an opportunity to do so by a mail which will be closed at the General Post Office on Saturday evening, the 26th of November, at 9 o'clock. The mail will be sent by express from St. John's to Botwood on or about Sunday the 27th and from Botwood to Halifax by aeroplane. The maximum amount of mail for this special service will be 5,000 one oz. letters. A special stamp costing thirty-five cents will be affixed to each letter on presentation at the General Post Office wicket after 9 a.m. on the 16th inst. The Department of Posts and Telegraphs will not be responsible in any particular, for the non-delivery of this mail.".
- The mail would be flown to Halifax, for which the Aerial Survey Company would receive $1,000, and if successful would lead to further air mail flights.



MARTINSYDE A MK.II / 275OHP RR ENGINE



AIRCO DH.9B / SIDDLEY PUMA: G-EAQP

THE PLANE

Airco DH.9B (G-EAQP)

- The aircraft originally intended for the Halifax mail flight was a Martinsyde A Mk.II, equipped with a 275 hp Rolls-Royce engine, but it was damaged during takeoff forcing Cotton and Bennet to switch plaines to the DH.9B
- The Airco DH.9B was supplied by Clayton-Kennedy for Newfoundland operations.
- Assembled in Botwood and fitted with skis for winter use.
- Powered by a Siddeley Puma 6-cylinder, water-cooled inline engine (~230 hp), known for frequent overheating and poor reliability.



November 16, 1921, First Printing, Halifax stamp in the complete setting of 25. Sheets of 100 of the 35c red NL#73 of 1897, perf. 12, divided into blocks of 25 overprinted "AIR MAIL / to Halifax, N.S. / 1921" Includes varieties NL C3 (x10); C3b (x7), C3d, C3f (x2), C3h (x4), C3j, very few sheets exist. *$4,500*

THE STAMP

Halifax Airmail C3 First Printing

- In November 1921, Minister W.W. Halfyard authorized the Royal Gazette (The King's Printer) to overprint 5,000 of the 1897 35-cent "Iceberg" stamps (NL 73) perf. 12 with "AIR MAIL/to Halifax, N.S./1921".
- 50 Sheets of 100 were split into blocks of 25 and overprinted—few survive in the full original block today.
- Issued Nov 16, 1921, the stamps covered airmail to North America, Britain, and Europe.
- Intended for the 5,000 authorized letters.



November 28, 1921, Second Printing Halifax stamp in the complete setting of 25. Sheets of 100 of the 35c red NL#73 of 1897, perf. 12, divided into blocks of 25 overprinted "AIR MAIL / to Halifax, N.S. / 1921" Includes varieties NL C3 (x10); C3b (x7), C3d, C3f (x2), C3h (x4), C3j, very few sheets exist. *$4,500*

THE STAMP

Halifax Airmail C3 Second Printing

- Overwhelming demand led to a second overprinting of 9,000 stamps, from a further 90 sheets, on November 28, exhausting the supply of 1897 "Iceberg" stamps.
- Of this batch, 1,000 were sold at the GPO counter to local collectors and dealers, while 8,000 went to international dealers who had ordered a remarkable 25,000 copies!

Spacing between AIR MAIL	Dot after 1921	First “1” under Halifax	Unitrade Catalogue	Quantity per Block	Qty Issued First Printing	Qty Issued Second Printing	Total Issued
2.75mm (Wide)	No period	Normal	C3	10	1970	3590	5560
2.75mm (Wide)	No period	"1" under "f" of Halifax	C3d	1	197	359	556
2.75mm (Wide)	Period present	Normal	C3b	7	1379	2513	3892
1.5mm (Narrow)	No period	Normal	C3f	2	394	718	1112
1.5mm (Narrow)	No period	"1" under "f" of Halifax	C3j	1	197	359	556
1.5mm (Narrow)	Period present	Normal	C3h	4	788	1436	2224

THE STAMP

Halifax Airmail Overprint Varieties (NL C3) - 1921

- Poor typesetting by the Royal Gazette led to distinct spacing variants:
  - wide ($2^{3/4}$ mm) and narrow ($1^{1/2}$ mm) between “AIR” and “MAIL”
  - letter alignment variations
  - the presence or absence of the period after “1921”
  - six combinations (NL C3, C3b, C3d, C3f, C3h, C3j)
- Exist on both print batches (5,000 and 9,000)

C3	C3b	C3	C3d	C3j
C3h	C3b	C3h	C3	C3b
C3	C3b	C3	C3	C3f
C3	C3h	C3b	C3h	C3b
C3	C3b	C3	C3	C3f

THE STAMP

Halifax Airmail Overprint Varieties (NL C3) - 1921





Batch 1 for the Halifax Air Mail (5,000)
November 16, 1921, First Overprinting NL C3



Batch 2 for Collectors and Dealers (9,000)
November 28, 1921, Second Overprinting NL C3

THE STAMP

Halifax Airmail C3 Print Varieties

- The first overprint batch on November 16 used fresh inking and high press pressure, producing a bold, deep black impression.
- The second batch of 9,000 stamps, overprinted on November 28, was printed with reduced pressure yielding a thinner, greyish-black lighter overprint.
- This difference makes it easy for collectors to distinguish between the two batches but it creates evermore varieties.

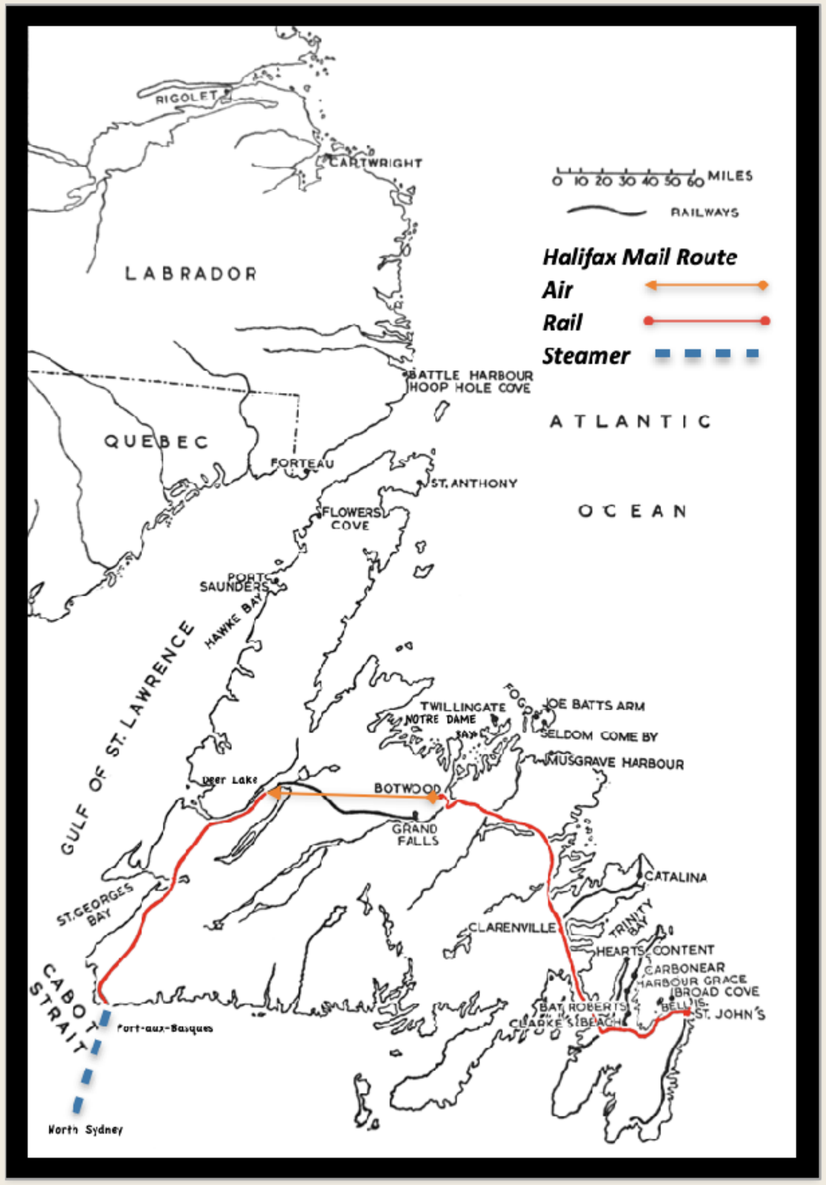


Image source: Adapted from C.H. Harmer, Newfoundland Air Mails, 1984

THE FLIGHT

Attempted Botwood to Halifax airmail flight, Cotton and Bennett, December 10, 1921

- The 805 km flight from Botwood to Halifax was planned for November 30 using a Martinsyde A Mk. II (c/n 215), piloted by Sidney Cotton and Bennett.
- Takeoff failed when the aircraft broke through the ice, damaging a ski.
- They switched to a de Havilland DH.9B, but a severe ice storm delayed departure until December 10.
- Two hours after takeoff, a cooling system failure forced an emergency landing at Deer Lake.
- Parts and their mechanic were sent by train and the following day repairs were made.
- Cotton was injured by the propeller on a hand-swing restart and returned to St. John's by train.
- The mail continued by rail to Port aux Basques, then by the S.S. KYLE to North Sydney, and onward to Halifax, arriving February 4 1922.
- On January 11, Captain Bennett attempted to fly the DH.9B back to Botwood. The engine failed mid-air, and the plane crashed in a bog near Cassandra, 15 miles from Botwood. Bennett and his mechanic survived unhurt, but the DH.9B was destroyed.

THE COVERS

Halifax Flight Covers

- The Mail from St. John's was closed on November 26, 1921 and sent to Botwood by rail. These are estimated to number around 5,000.
- Between the arrival of the St. John's mail and the flight departure on December 10, a small Supplemental Mail was collected at Botwood.
- Upon arrival in Halifax the Mail was backstopped with a Halifax Feb 4, 1922 cds.
- Several hundred Halifax first flight covers survive, valued at $150–500.



Cover posted from St. John's (Nov 25, 1921); arrived Halifax (Feb 4, 1922). (FF-9, 300, NL C3(f)).





First Day Cover from Harbour Grace, with a notable Nov 15 backstamp and rarest horizontal varietal pair (positions 4-5 C3d, C3j), addressed to stamp dealer Rev. Ernest Edward Rusted. (never mailed - no Halifax receiver). The only cover known with a November 16 cancellation.

Image source: Cherrystone Auctions Sale - 0123, Newfoundland Airmail 1919-39 - January 25, 2023, (ex J.C. Vasseur Collection)



THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

The Controversy

- Five blocks of 25 stamps were overprinted upside down on the relief letterpress, producing the inverted varieties.
- 3 blocks from the first printing (out of 200 blocks overprinted, coming from 50 sheets).
- 2 blocks from the second printing (out of 360 blocks, coming from 90 sheets).
- Others were possibly destroyed at source. Regardless, this is a high error rate for a short run.
- Coincidentally, two misprinted blocks quickly surfaced in St. John's by February 1922.
- Yet another unique block with an upright overprint is distinguished by a dramatic slanting overprint, rising from the lower-left corner to the upper-right (C3ix).



Image source: J.C. Vasseur NEWFOUNDLAND AIR MAILS 1919/1939 Part II: Notes 2015

C3a	C3c	C3a	C3e	C3k
C3i	C3c	C3i	C3a	C3c
C3a	C3c	C3a	C3a	C3g
C3a	C3i	C3c	C3i	C3c
C3a	C3c	C3a	C3a	C3g

THE SETTING OF 25

Halifax Airmail Inverted Overprint Varieties

- Poor typesetting by the Royal Gazette led to distinct spacing variants:
  - wide ($2^{3/4}$ mm) and narrow ($1^{1/2}$ mm) between “AIR” and “MAIL”
  - letter alignment variations
  - the presence or absence of the period after “1921”
  - six combinations (NL C3a, C3c, C3e, C3g, C3i, C3k).
- Exist on both Printings (5,000 and 9,000)

Double Error
First Printing



Type II - 1st Printing
Overprint centred vertically but shifted horizontally. With reverse offset of overprint.
(Image: C3a)

Drifting Down



Type III - 1st Printing
Overprint very low, with perforations cutting into "1921". (Image: C3a)

Drifting Right



Type IV - 1st Printing
Overprint low but not cutting into "1921".
(Image: C3a)

Image source: Cherrystone Auctions Sale - 0123, Newfoundland Airmail 1919-39 - January 25, 2023
(Ex Jean-Claude Vasseur Collection)

Single Error
Second Printing



Type I - 2nd Printing
Overprint well centred. Grey-Black Overprint. Second printing. (C3a)



Type II - 1st Printing showing reverse offset of overprint.

Image source: Jean-Claude Vasseur
Newfoundland Airmails 1919/1939 Part II : Notes
2015

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

Four Inverted Blocks Four Distinct Types

- In the First Printing, three blocks of 25 out of 50 blocks (6%) entered the printing press ROTATED 180° and thus received inverted overprints.
- One Block (Type II) exhibits a reverse offset impression, suggesting a paper jam occurred when the previous block failed to eject, subsequently causing a misalignment of the (inverted) block as it entered the press.
- COULD THE JAM HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY THREE SEQUENTIAL ROTATED BLOCKS?
  - All three inverted blocks from the First Printing (Types II, III, and IV) display their own unique overprint misalignment characteristic, but which seem to drift down the block, and to the right
- This would make them double errors (inverted and misaligned).
- IF SO, COULD THIS HAVE BEEN IN ERROR OR PURPOSEFUL, as three sequential inverted blocks (out of 50) would easily be detected and potentially be skimmed off by the printers? Suspiciously two inverted blocks of 25 surfaced soon afterwards in February 1922!
- The Second Printing yielded two normally centred overprint blocks of 25, out of 360 blocks (0.5%) but with the lighter November 28 impression.
- There is a slanted overprint block of 25.

Spacing between AIR MAIL	Dot after 1921	First “1” under Halifax	Unitrade Catalogue	Quantity per Block	Type I Quantity Issued	Type II Quantity Issued	Type III Quantity Issued	Type IV Quantity Issued
2.75mm (Wide)	No dot	Normal	C3a	10	20	10	10	10
2.75mm (Wide)	No dot	"1" under "f" of Halifax	C3e	1	2	1	1	1
2.75mm (Wide)	Dot present	Normal	C3c	7	14	7	7	7
1.5mm (Narrow)	No dot	Normal	C3g	2	4	2	2	2
1.5mm (Narrow)	No dot	"1" under "f" of Halifax	C3k	1	2	1	1	1
1.5mm (Narrow)	Dot present	Normal	C3i	4	8	4	4	4

THE STAMP

Halifax Airmail Inverted Overprint Varieties (NL C3) - 1921

- Poor typesetting led to six distinct typeset varieties.
- First and second printing created more impression varieties.
- Four unique inverted sheets (Types I-IV) over two printings created more offset varieties.
- This provides a rich area for specialty collectors and 10 unique inverted overprint varieties.



Image source: City Stamp Montreal

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

Type IV Block of 4

- C3c, C3a,
- C3c, C3i,



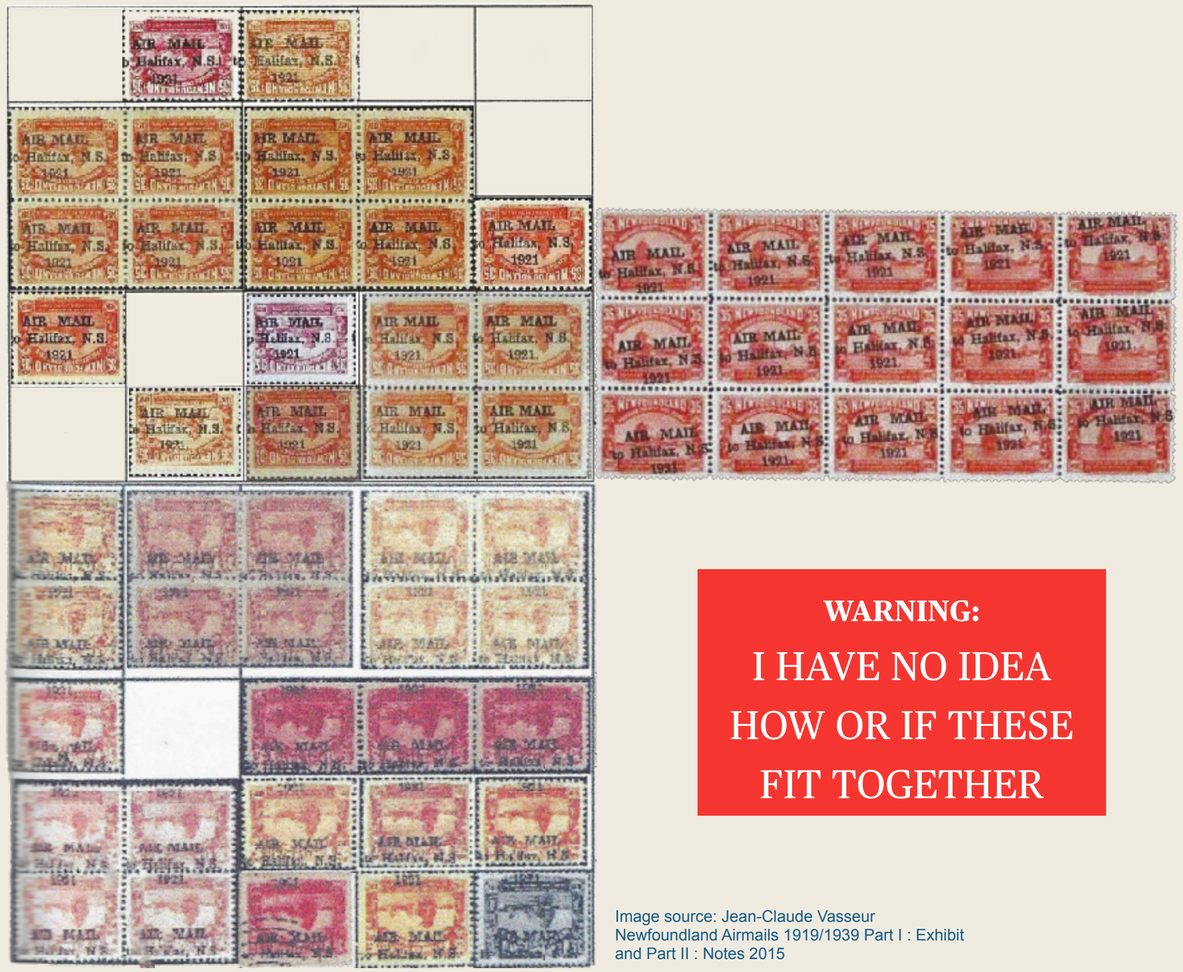
Type IV, Inverted Overprint from FIrst Printing.

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

Recreating the First Printing Inverted Blocks of 25

Type II

Slanted Overprint



Type IV

WARNING:

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW OR IF THESE FIT TOGETHER

Image source: Jean-Claude Vasseur Newfoundland Airmails 1919/1939 Part I : Exhibit and Part II : Notes 2015

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT: SPECULATIONS

Recreating the First Printing Inverted Blocks of 4

- J.C. Vasseur has attempted to recreate inverted blocks of 25 of:
  - Type II and Type IV
  - Could the Type II, III and IV inverted blocks of 25 ultimately come from one Sheet of 100?
- This would add to the case that the entire sheet divided into 4 blocks, stacked and rotated 180º and placed into the feeder sequentially to (intentionally?) produce inverted overprints that could easily be retrieved.



The only recorded example of the inverted Halifax overprint correctly used on cover

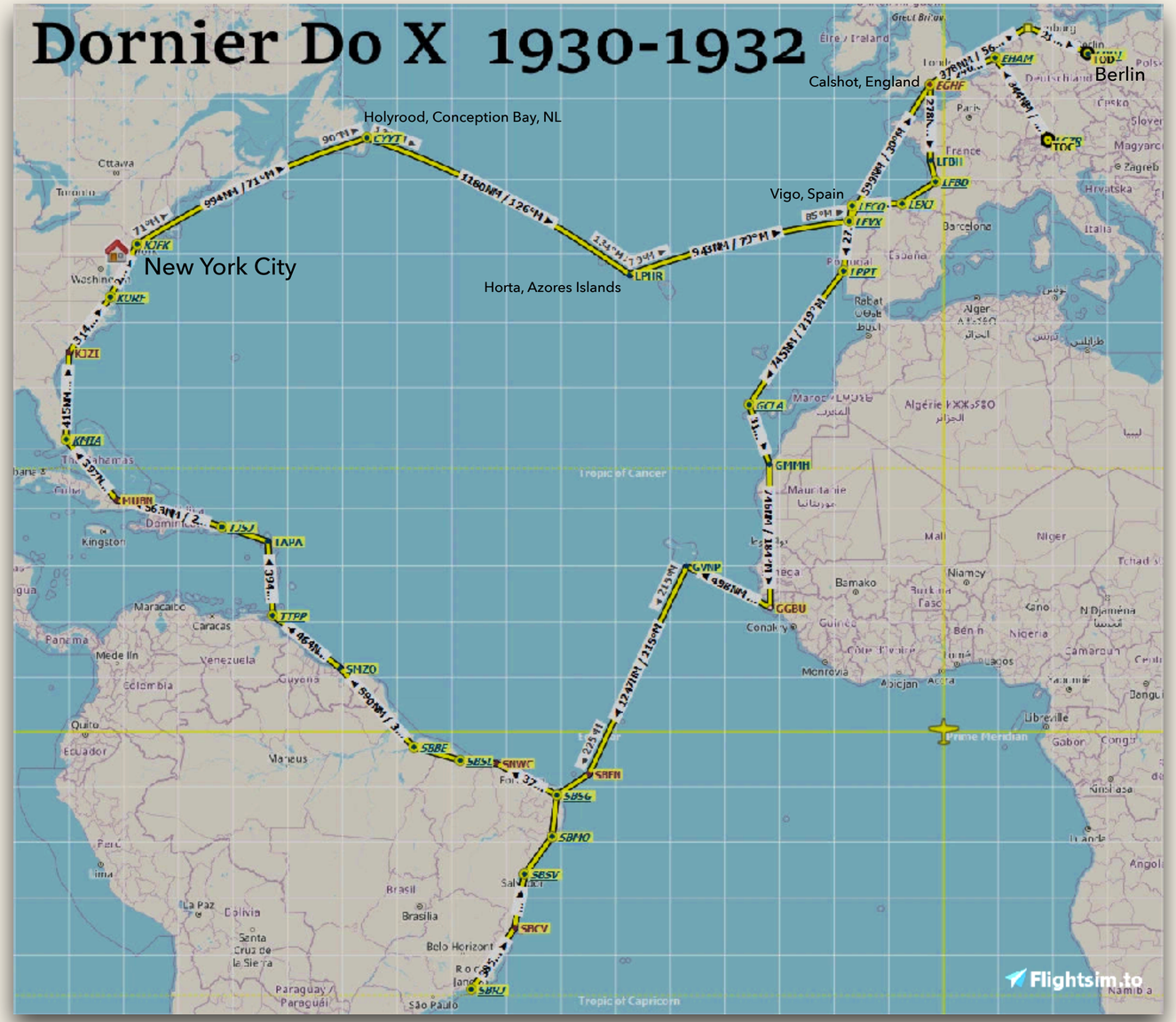
#C3c, 1921 35c Red with "Air Mail/to Halifax, N.S./1921" inverted overprint (Type IV), overprint also split, tied by Nov. 26, 1921 St. Johns duplex on cover to Halifax (Feb. 4, 1922 backstamp); signed H. Bloch and accompanied by 1979 Friedl and 1996 APS certificates. Spink New York, Sale 105, Lot 2633 Sept 13, 2008, $10,200 (Peter Motson Collection)

Image source: Motson, Peter (2016). Newfoundland Airmail Stamps and Air Mail Flights: 1918-1949

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

The Inverted Covers

- Harmer indicates that there are two inverted overprints covers known.
- Vasseur illustrates one created by stamp dealer M.P. Hynes and dated March 20, 1922 and sent via surface mail after the flight.
- One cover offered by Spink New York in September 2008, Sale105, Lot 2633. This cover was posted correctly on November 26, 1921 from St. John's.



https://fr.flightsim.to/file/64326/dornier-do-x-1930-1932-transatlantic-flight-plans

FLIGHT OBJECTIVES

The Dornier Do-X Panamerican Flight Nov 1930 - May 1932

- The German-made Do-X Flugschiff (”flying ship”) began a Panamerican flight from Friedrichshafen, Germany on November 3, 1930.
- Multi-continent flight from Germany through Europe (1930), Africa (1931), South America (1931), Caribbean (1931), and North America (1931-1932), returning via Newfoundland (May 19-21, 1932) and the Azores (1932) to Berlin (May 24, 1932).
- Prove the Do X's design and capability for long-distance seaplane operations.
- Generate global headlines and promote German aviation and the Dornier brand.
- Assess air routes, refuelling stops, and logistics for future transatlantic commercial flights.
- Foster international relations and encourage collaboration in aviation development.
- Introduce the luxury airliner to potential United States customers and investors (but with no commercial success due to the Great Depression).



PUBLIC NOTICE

DEPARTMENT OF POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS

Arrangements have been made to forward a Letter Mail to Europe by the air liner Dornier-X which is due to arrive at St. John's to-day.

This mail is limited to 3,000 letters of not over one ounce weight each. A special stamp of face value $1.50 is being issued for this mail, and these will be on sale at the General Post Office from noon to-day.

Letter mail for the Dornier-X will close immediately special stamps are sold out or not later than 10 p.m. to-day, Thursday, May 19th.

J. G. HODDER,
Deputy Minister.

m19,1i

GPO Announcement in *The Daily News,* St. John's, Newfoundland, May 19, 1932, page 1.

GPO ANNOUNCEMENT

Do-X

- This marked the first west-to-east transatlantic flight by the world's largest flying boat and the GPO was eager to commemorate the event with a special Newfoundland stamp.
- Newfoundland also wished to position itself as a key refuelling stop for transatlantic aviation.
- Only 8,000 stamps were issued for an anticipated 3,000 letters. This would generate much-needed revenue at a time when Newfoundland's economy was in dire straits. (The premium stamp price of $1.50 was a substantial sum during Depression.)
- There was considerable public and collector interest in purchasing the stamp and a long line-up formed on Water Street at the main entrance of the G.P.O. in St. John's. on May 19, 1932 when the stamp went on sale.

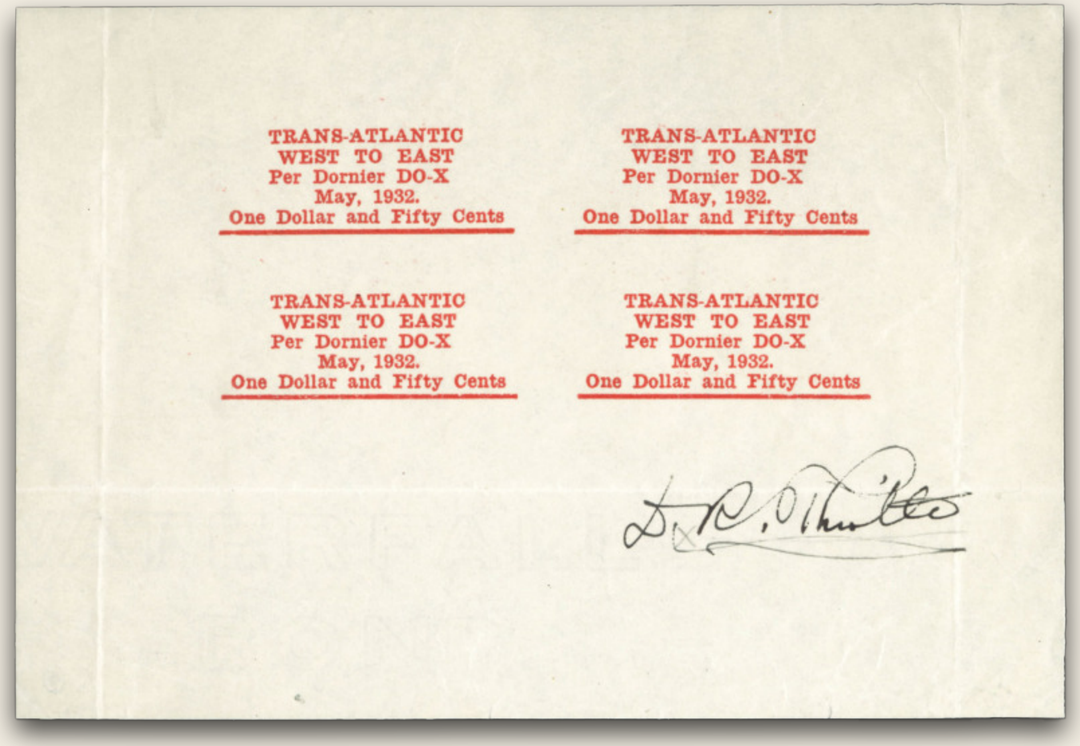


The Do-X Air Mail stamp CL12, May 19, 1932

THE STAMP

Do-X Airmail CL-12

- A special $1.50 stamp was issued by the Newfoundland Post Office for use on covers posted on the Do-X flight on May 19, 1932.
- 200 sheets of 50 of the $1.00 Historic Transatlantic Flights airmail (NL #C11, watermarked) were broken into blocks of four 2x2. (With a strip of 5 remainder).
- Surcharge “TRANS- ATLANTIC / WEST TO EAST / Per Dornier DO-X / May, 1932. / One Dollar and Fifty Cents” was applied.
- The surcharge is constant in all positions.



Proof of the Surcharge setting in red, complete setting of four (2x2) printed on bond paper watermarked “waterfall bond”. Approval signature of D.R. Thistle.

Cherrystone Auctions Sale - 0123 Newfoundland Airmail 1919-39 - January 25, 2023

(ex Jean-Claude Vasseur Collection)

THE STAMP

Do-X Airmail Overprint Setting

- Overprinted in St. John’s by David Rudolf Thistle and Company—who owned the Newfoundland Gazette and served as King's Printer from 1924 - 1954.
- The General Post Office placed the order with very little advance notice, requiring the work to be finished in just a few days.
- Overprinting had to be performed on a small press, only allowing blocks of four stamps at a time.
- The quick, manual process led to differences in centring, alignment, and ink application.
- 8,000 stamps (2,000 blocks) were hastily surcharged and released May 19, 1932—just prior to the Do-X’s arrival in Holyrood, Newfoundland on May 20.



Image source: Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Christiansen

THE PEOPLE

Captain Friedrich Christiansen

- Before WWI he served as a prominent seaplane pilot in the German navy.
- Chief pilot of the Dornier Do-X, chosen for his reputation, steady hand, and technical know-how.
- Later became a senior officer with the Luftwaffe and served as military governor of the occupied Netherlands during WWII.
- After the war, he was convicted of war crimes for his actions during the German occupation of the Netherlands and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment in 1948.

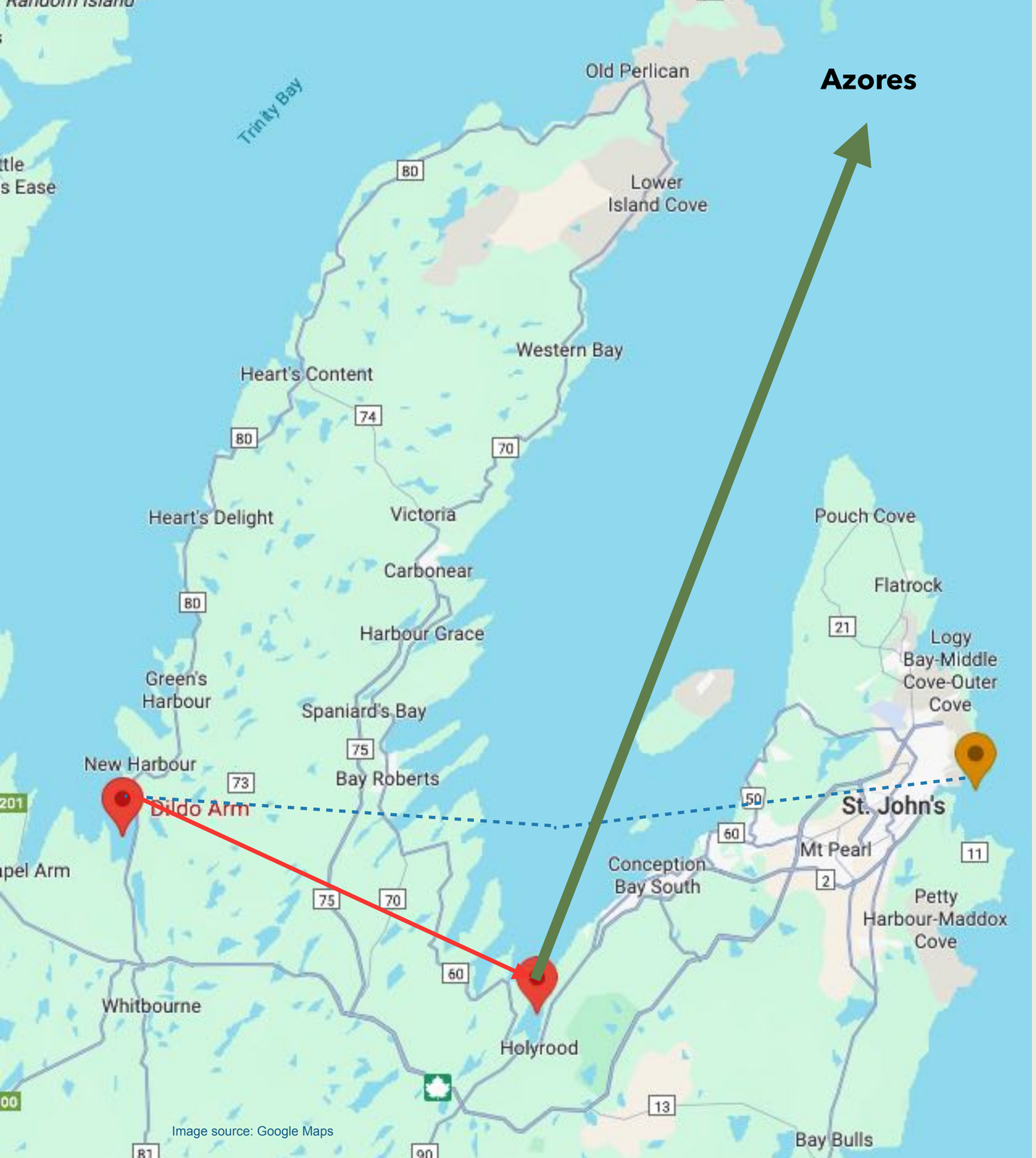


Image source: Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dornier_Do_X

THE WORLD'S LARGEST FLYING BOAT

The Dornier DO-X

- Built and designed by the famous German engineer, Dr. Claude Dornier.
- The largest and most luxurious seaplane of the day, with an overall length of 130 feet and a wingspan of 160 feet.
- Powered by 12 Curtis "Conqueror" engines with a lift capacity of about 50 tons.
- Commanded by Captain Friedrich Christiansen, the plane had a crew of 14 and luxurious passenger accommodation approaching the standards of transatlantic liners.
- The plane had an onboard post office for handling the various dispatches while on the flight, with Captain Niemann acting as postmaster and navigator.



THE FLIGHT

A Change in Plans

- The Do-X departed Glenn Curtiss Airport New York on May 19, 1932, and was scheduled to arrived off the Narrows at St. John's to refuel that evening.
- Poor weather and a severe fuel shortage forced an emergency landing at 6:45 PM at Dildo Arm, Trinity Bay, where locals offered up what little fuel they had.
- The following day at 9:20 AM, with enough in the tank for a short flight, the plane departed for Holyrood, Conception Bay to take on 7,000 gal of fuel for the transatlantic flight, where some 5,000 visitors (some 1,000 brought in by train) met them.
- The Do-X departed for the Azores at 3:25 AM on May 21, 1932, arriving at Horta at 10:55 PM.



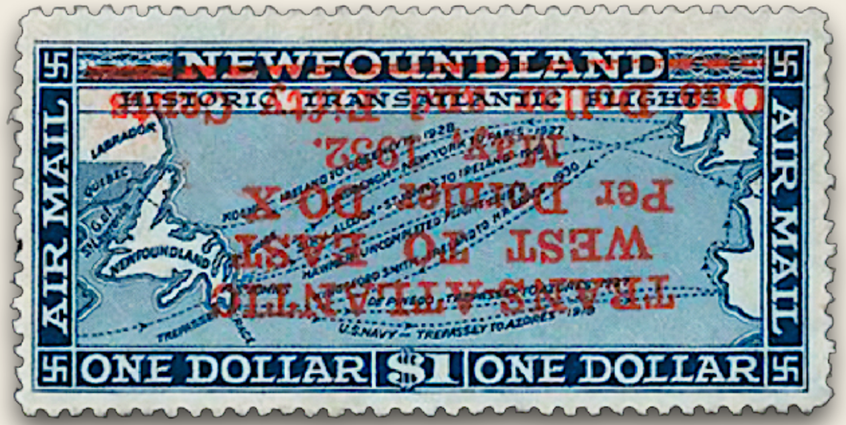
Cover flown on the Dornier DO-X Seaplane from St. John's to London. Posted May 19, 1932 and arriving in London on June 7, 1932. With CDS "ST.JOHNS.N'FLD/MAY 19/10-PM/1932" and "LONDON F.C. 39/12:30 PM/7 JU/32". Inscribed "Via DOX" in pen with blue "BY AIR MAIL/PAR AVION" etiquette. Backstamped in purple CDS "LONDON CHIEF OFFICE/25 MAY 32/E.C.1.", "RETURN TO SENDER/UNCLAIMED" with CDS "LONDON CHIEF OFFICE/6 JUN 32/E.C.1.". AAMC FF-49, NL C12, $700

THE COVERS

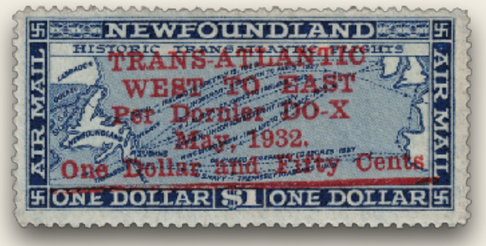
DO-X Flight Covers

Posting Date	Posting Location	Estimated No. of Covers
May 19, 1932	St. John's	~1371
May 20, 1932	St. John's	~418
May 20, 1932	Holyrood, Conception Bay	20-40
On-board Mail	Crew Dispatched	30-50

In all just over 1,800 cards and covers were posted.



Newfoundland, Airmail, 1932, $1.50 on $1 Dornier DO-X Flight, with inverted surcharge. Scott Nos. C12a; $10,600 USD.



Slanted Surcharge variety. $400 USD

Image source: eBay

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

The Controversy

- Of the 8,000 stamps printed, 13 blocks of 4 (52 stamps) out of 2,000 blocks had an inverted surcharge.
- Others had a slanted surcharge.
- It is surmised these occurred due to the rushed nature of the order.
- Long queues formed outside the General Post Office on Water Street to purchase the stamp. Throughout the day, some people noticed they had purchased stamps with inverted surcharges. (Likely fuelling more purchases!)
- It was suspected that postal officials who had access to unsold inventory after the public sale may have deliberately searched through the remaining stock to find and purchase these errors for themselves, knowing they would become highly valuable. (Not surprising given it was the Great Depression).
- All known copies are in mint condition (20-40 examples survive today).
- No inverted surcharged stamps are known on cover.



Image source: Emanuele Mastrangelo 2008. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 (CC BY-SA 3.0)

THE FLIGHT

The Crociera aerea del Decennale July/August 1933

- On July 2, 1933, a mass transatlantic armada, "The Crociera aerea del Decennale", consisting of 25 Savoia-Marchetti S.55X seaplanes, crossed the Atlantic Ocean from Orbetello, Italy, to the Century of Progress International Exposition in Chicago. It was the greatest mass flight in aviation history at the time and served to demonstrate Italy's aeronautical capabilities and celebrate Italian heritage around the world.
- The transatlantic flight was led by Italian fascist-politician Italo Balbo
- On July 8, 1933 the armada landed in Cartwright, Labrador from Iceland and departed for Shediac on July 12th with 24 pieces of unofficial mail. After stops in Shediac and Montreal, Balbo finally arrived in Chicago on July 15, 1933.
- The return journey took them to Shoal Harbour, Newfoundland on July 26th. Bad weather held them up for another 10 days and forced a route change to the Azores, Lisbon and then on to Rome.



Image source: Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italo_Balbo

THE PEOPLE

General Italo Balbo (1896-1940)

- A prominent Italian fascist politician who helped Benito Mussolini's regime come to power in 1924.
- Despite having little aviation experience, Balbo was appointed Under-Secretary of State for Air in November 1926, Minister of the Air Force in 1929 and Italy's Air Force Marshal in 1933.
- Under the Fascist regime, he took a leading role in popularizing aviation in Italy, and promoting Italian aviation to the world.
- Between 1930-31 he led 12 Savoia-Marchetti S.55 flying boats from Italy to Rio de Janeiro. Which was followed up by the Crociera del Decennale in 1933.
- Mussolini, feeling threatened, appointed him Governor-General of Libya in 1933. Shortly after Italy entered the war (June 28, 1940), Balbo was killed by friendly fire at the airfield in Tobruk.



Image source: unknown, 1933

THE PLANE

Savoia Marchetti S.55X

- This was a unique and stylish design with twin flying boat hulls bridged by a cantilevered wing. The cockpit was located inside the wing between the hulls.
- Two Isotta Fraschini Asso 750 W-18 engines were mounted back-to-back above the wing and drove counter-rotating propellers.
- The wingspan was almost 75 feet and the craft was 55 feet in length.
- The craft had a maximum speed of 280 Km/hr and a range of more than 4,000 Km.
- The armada was comprised of 4 squadrons, each with 6 seaplanes and a reserver seaplane of which 20 planes were designated to carry the mail.
- Each plane had a 2 pilots, a mechanic and radio operator.



Cover carried on the Westbound flight of the Decennial Air Cruise to Chicago. Endorsed "Via Italian Air Mail", franked with 5c and 25c, tied by Cartwright, Labrador CDS “CARTWRIGHT / NEW’F / JULY 12 / 33” and sent to Baie Verte, New Brunswick, via Chicago (July 19), arriving on 22nd July in Baie Verte, N.B.. AAMC FF-50.

THE COVERS (CROCIERA AEREA DEL DECENNALE)

Balbo East-West Flight Covers

- On July 8, 1933 the armada landed in Cartwright, Labrador from Iceland and departed for Shediac on July 12th with 24 pieces of unofficial mail.
- After stops in Shediac and Montreal, Balbo finally arrived in Chicago on July 15, 1933.



NOTICE !

An Air Mail has been arranged by the Italian Fleet on its return to Italy via Shoal Harbour. Special Stamps for this Flight are provided, and will be on sale at the G.P.O. 9.30 a.m. Monday, July 24th. Price $4.50 each.

Mail will close at 8 p.m. Monday, but is subject to extension, in the event of planes being delayed.

W. C. WINSOR,
Minister Posts and Telegraphs.

General Post Office, July 22nd, 1933. 1i

GPO Announcement in *The Daily News,* St. John's, Newfoundland, July 24, 1933, page 1.

GPO ANNOUNCEMENT

The Crociera aerea del Decennale

- In anticipation of the armada's historic arrival in Shoal Harbour, the GPO negotiated to have them carry a mail.
- Stamps were available at the St. John's G.P.O. on Sunday July 24, with all mail needing to be delivered to this location by the following day.



THE STAMP

Gen. Balbo Flight CL-18

- Balbo charged $3.75 per letter to transport mail.
- With little time to spare, the Newfoundland Post Office hastily instructed The Kings Printer to overprint 8,000 of the 1933 Air Post 75-cent yellow-brown "Labrador" stamp (NL #C17) with $4.50 below "1933 / GEN. BALBO / FLIGHT" on three lines.
- Sheets of 100 “Air Post” stamps were separated into blocks of 4 (leaving a strip of 10 remainders) and 2,000 blocks were overprinted using 201 sheets (with 10 blocks discarded).
- Overprinting was done by Robinson & Co. Ltd. under the supervision of D.R. Thistle & Co. Ltd, (The King’s Printer).
- 2 perforation gauges were used. C17 perf.$14^{1/4}$ (most common) and C17ii perf.$13^{3/4}$
- Unlike the Do-X stamps, postal authorities attempted to destroy all mis-surcharged stamps.



OVERPRINT SETTING

Surcharge Variations of the Balbo Airmail Stamp CL18

- Pos. 1 - Short left leg in “H” in “FLIGHT”
- Pos. 2 - Blurred marks in lower portion of “E” in “GEN”
- Pos. 3 - Thin left arm in “T” of “FLIGHT” and right tip of line below 1933 just above the left side of “L” of “BALBO”
- Pos. 4 - Break in upper part of first “B” in “BALBO”



THE COVERS (CROCIERA AEREA DEL DECENNALE)

Balbo West-East Flight Covers

- About 1,150 pieces of mail were generated at the St. John's Post Office (perhaps 150-200 by the PO itself acting as an agent for foreign collectors).
- Other covers and crew mail were handled directly by the armada.
- Covers at the GPO were cancelled on July 26, 1933 (Balbo's expected arrival date) by a single St. John's cds and 1078 pieces of mail were placed in mail bags and forwarded by rail to the Shoal Harbour PO.
- Some 60 covers were added to the mail at Shoal Harbour and received a transit cds on July 27 and July 28.
- A supplemental mail exists from Shoal Harbour on August 2 and August 7.
- Covers were then given to the armada crew where they were sorted by destination and numbered.



Newfoundland, Airmail, 1933, $4.50 on $75c General Balbo Flight, inverted surcharge. Mint block of 4 before it was separated into 4 individual stamps.

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

The Controversy

- The King's Printer appointed four "Checkers" to inspect the stamps to ensure that no errors were sold, as they were keen to avoid another embarrassment similar to that of the Do-X stamps of May 1932.
- Checkers were instructed to destroy all mis-surcharged stamps, however, one block of 4 with an inverted surcharge reportedly went undetected ultimately making its way to the public and subsequently was split up into singles as did several partially doubled surcharged stamps.
- Worse yet, one (and likely more) of the inverted blocks torn up by the checkers was clandestinely retrieved from the waste bin and expertly reassembled. At least four of these "torn varieties" were sold to collectors. (Remember it's the Great Depression).



Newfoundland, Airmail, 1933, $4.50 on $75c General Balbo Flight, inverted surcharge. Mint block of 4 before it was separated into 4 individual stamps (Copies 1, 2, 3, 4).

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

The Untorn Block

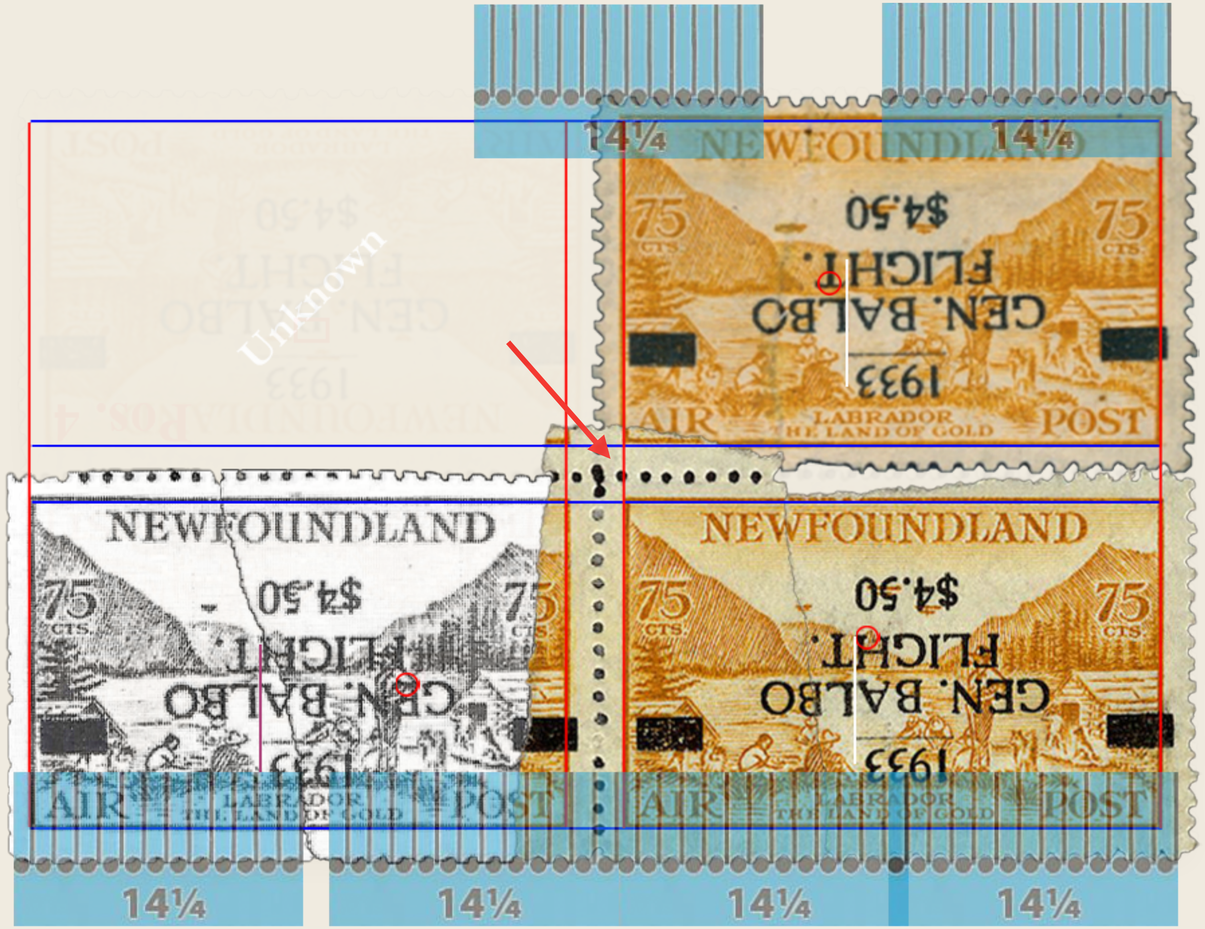
I successfully recreated 1/2 of the Untorn Block using images from auction catalogs and philatelic reference books.



THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

Torn Bits and Pieces

- I then assembled all the known torn inverts, and any bits and pieces I came across in the literature, certificates of authenticity and auction catalogs.
- I then attempted to assemble the bits and pieces to form the one reported torn block.

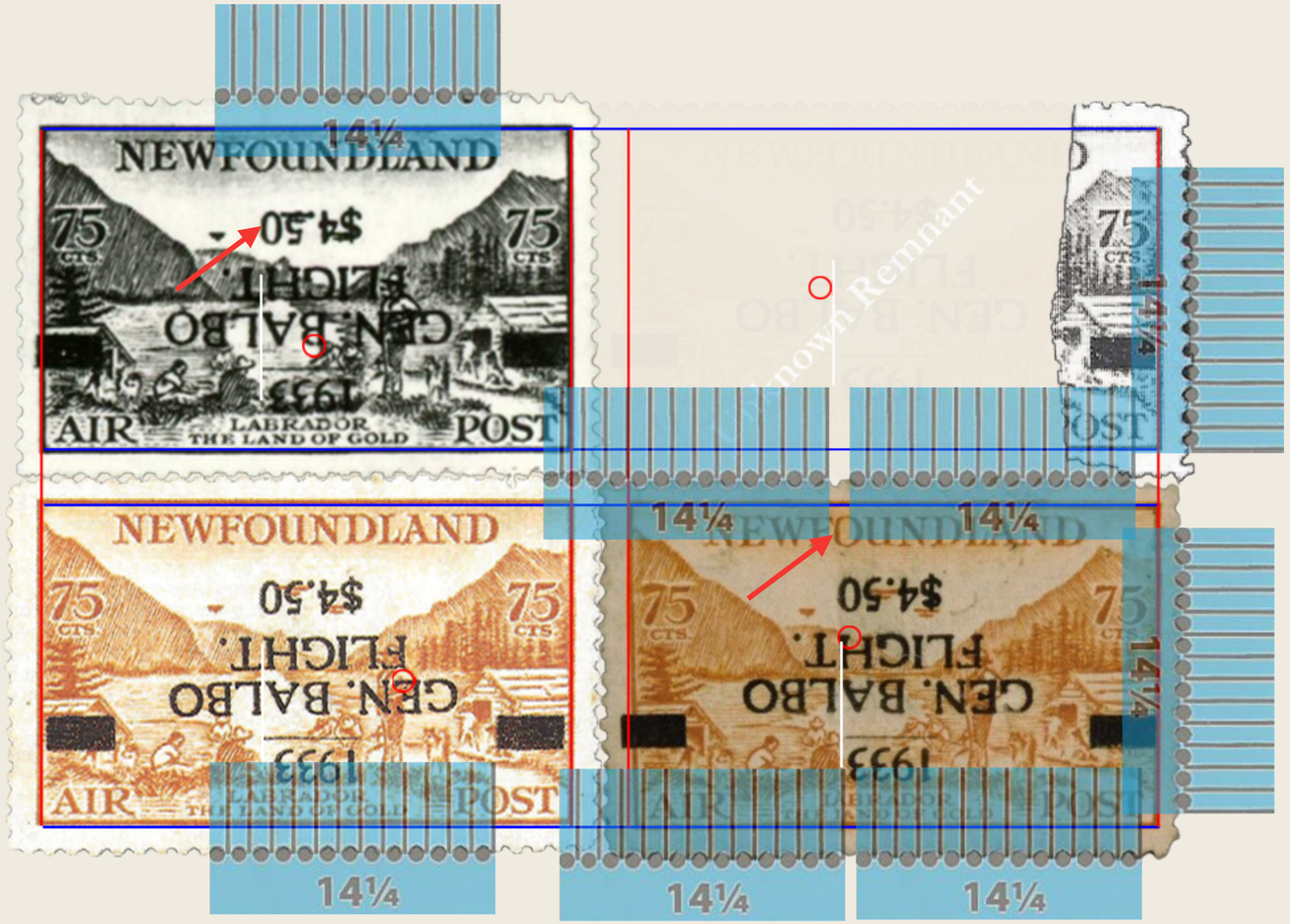


Newfoundland, Airmail, 1933, $4.50 on $75c General Balbo Flight, inverted surcharge. Torn reminds (Copies 5, 6, 7, 8).

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

Torn Block 1

- I was able to reassemble 3/4 of what I believe is the Torn Block described in the literature.
- Individual bits appear to fit together rather well.



Newfoundland, Airmail, 1933, $4.50 on $75c General Balbo Flight, inverted surcharge. Torn reminds (Copies 9, 10, 11, 12).

THE INVERTED OVERPRINT

Torn Remainders

- I was left with three extra allegedly “genuine” torn inverts (some with certificates) and one extra bit.
- None appear to belong together as the perforations did not line up with each other and they did not fit in Torn Block 1.
- One can speculate on their origin:
  - that these belonged to one or possibly several other blocks of inverted overprints retrieved from the “Checkers” waste bin;
  - were assembled from partial bits of the original Torn Block using other stamp pieces;
  - or are forgeries.



The Dangerous Forgery

Newfoundland Airmail, 1933, $4.50 on 75c Balbo Flight, inverted surcharge (C18a), position 3 in the setting of four, beautifully centered and remarkably bright and fresh with barely hinged original gum (we could see no trace of hinging, but the accompanying certificate notes only "mint, OG"; Extremely Fine and choice. Scott $120,000. Expertization: 2010 V.G. Greene Certificate.

This stamp was later deemed to be a forgery and was withdrawn from the Matthew Bennett auction.

THE DANGEROUS FORGERY

Forgeries of the Balbo Airmail Stamp CL18f

- As this stamp commands a high selling price, it is not surprising that many forgeries have appeared on the market.
- Forgeries have been described by H.R. Harmer as early as November 1933, only a few months after the original stamp was issued.
- A report by H.R. Harmer dated November 1933, following an examination of a mint block of 4 inverted Balbos, discusses ways to detect common forgeries.
- Harmer categorizes these into 4 types, one for each position of the upright orientation of the overprint in the block of four.

Type I
Position 1

Type II
Position 2



Type III
Position 3

Type IV
Position 4

H.R. HARMER, NOVEMBER 1933

Forgeries of the Balbo Airmail Stamp CL18f

Type & Position	Genuine Characteristics	Forgery Characteristics
Type I Position 1	"L" of "BALBO" raised and "O" dropped; "H" of "FLIGHT" has short foot at left and is slightly raised; Stop after "FLIGHT" raised; Line of "$" sign if continued vertically cuts through tail of "L"	Both letters practically normal; "H" of "FLIGHT" normal and not raised; Stop normal; Line of "$" sign passes well to right of tail of "L"
Type II Position 2	Both "B"s of "BALBO" normal; "HT" of "FLIGHT" normal position; "$4.50" properly aligned to "GEN. BALBO"	Both "B"s slope backwards and are thicker than normal; "HT" of "FLIGHT" too far left in relation to "AL" of "BALBO"; "$4.50" too far left particularly in relation to "GEN. BALBO"
Type III Position 3	Stop in "$4.50" normal	"FLIGHT" too far left in relation to "GEN. BALBO". Note vertical stroke of "L" and "N" above; "T" and "L" above Stop in "$4.50" distinctly low
Type IV Position 4	Stop after "GEN." over left serif of "I" of "FLIGHT"; Stop after "FLIGHT." immediately under vertical stroke of "B"; Tail of "5" points to centre of stop; "O" in value normal	Stop over centre of "I"; Stop slightly to left; Tail points to bottom of stop; "O" slopes very slightly backwards; Rectangular value obliterators too far apart

“Newfoundland’s Inverted Airmails offer a rich area of study for the advanced aerophilatelist with many opportunities to recreate the iconic blocks and solve enduring riddles”

THANK YOU

