

Captain Brian Peck and the First Canadian Airmail Flight

Canada's first postal flight was initiated by the Aero Club of Canada. Two members of the Aerial League of the British Empire, G. Lighthall and E. Greenwood contacted the Postmaster General in Ottawa and convinced him to send mail with Captain Brian Peck on his flight. The event took place before an official government policy on air postal service had been established, but the flight had been authorized by the Post Office Department.

In the summer of 1918, Captain Brian Peck was the first pilot in Canada to transport mail by plane from Montreal to Toronto. Originally from Montreal, but based at a Leaside aerodrome squadron in Toronto, Captain Peck decided to use the occasion of an airshow in the Montreal area, recruitment and to visit family and friends there. At the same time, he would transport the mail. The airfield in Montreal was the Bois Franc Field (later renamed Cartierville Airport) located off Bois Franc Road. Multiple air manufacturing facilities were at the airport in the 1940's the most notable became Canadair later bought by Bombardier. This airport was decommissioned in 1988.

Captain Peck and his passenger Cpl, E.W. Mathers, also carried freight on board his Curtiss JN-4 Canuck: Scotch, by the case load - prohibition was still on in Ontario and he was carrying it back for a friend. The plane was so heavy that it could not fly above 12 metres. The plane left Montreal shortly before noon and burned so much fuel Captain Peck had to stop in Kingston for more – no aviation fuel was available and after filling with gasoline and taking off he had engine problems and needed to land in Deseronto where he was able to replace the gasoline with aviation fuel. He arrived at Leaside at 4:55PM.

Approximately 120 letters were carried and stamped with the special cachet: *Inaugural Service Via Aerial Mail Montreal 23.6.1918*. The date, was, in fact incorrect, since the flight took place on June 24 as it was delayed by weather.

Scarcer items can be identified by a background in blue matte.

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An example of the Camp Leaside postmark from 3 weeks prior to the flight. It may not have been used as possibly the office was closed when the flight arrived, so the Toronto post office was used with a 19 timestamp.



This is a picture of the mailbag that was used to carry mail from Montreal to Toronto. (Leaside)