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Indian State Fires First Official Rocket Mail

from the April 19 issue of the newspaper "STAR OF INDIA": Through courtesy of

STEPHEN H. SMITH

Hon. Secretary Indian Air Mail Society

IT was left to Sikkim (a British Protectorate) nestling amidst the Eastern Himalayas to carry out the first official Rocket experiment, not only for using the rocket as a means of conveying mails across difficult places, but also for the purpose of transporting small parcels of medicines, tobacco, tea, sugar, etc.

This progressive little mountain State has also earned the distinction of being the first country in the world to successfully despatch by means of a rocket, a parcel containing small quantities of such useful articles as medicines, tobacco, tea, sugar, etc. We are not aware of such an experiment having been successfully carried out before in any other part of the world and the achievement is therefore of considerable importance and deserves recognition as such.

The keenest interest in this quick-as-lightning method of transport was taken by His Highness Sir Tashi Namgyal the Maharajah, Mr. C. E. Dudley, the General Secretary, Tashi Dadul Densapa, the Private Secretary, Rai Sahib Faqr Chand Jali, the State Engineer, and also the British Political Officer, Mr. F. Williamson, I.C.S.

With the sanction of the Sikkim Durbar Mr. Stephen H. Smith visited Sikkim early in April and conducted a series of successful experiments, none of the rockets bursting or falling short of their mark. The Durbar also sanctioned the use of four special rocket stamps for use on the various mail and parcel experiments, 2,000 of each kind being printed, by the experimenter (Mr. Smith.)

The following are the details of the various Rocket experiments:—

First Firing—April 7th, from the Gantok Post Office compound to the Durbar High School, 200 items being carried. Rocket fired by Mr. Stephen H. Smith.

Second Firing—April 8th from the Sir Tashi Namgyal Field towards the Post Office, this mail which consisted of six covers and 410 blue cards, was despatched by His Highness, the Maharajah, who afterwards very kindly autographed three cards for the experimenter.

Third Firing—April 8th, this firing was a vertical one, the rocket containing 388

gold cards, was despatched on its journey high into the sky by His Highness the Maharajah, who again very kindly autographed two cards for the experimenter, and granted him permission to have a block made of His Highness' signature to impress on all the items despatched by this means by His Highness.

Fourth Firing—April 9, on this occasion the rocket containing 175 covers was despatched on its rapid journey by Mr. F. Williamson, the British Political Officer from the Dak Bungalow towards the Post Office.

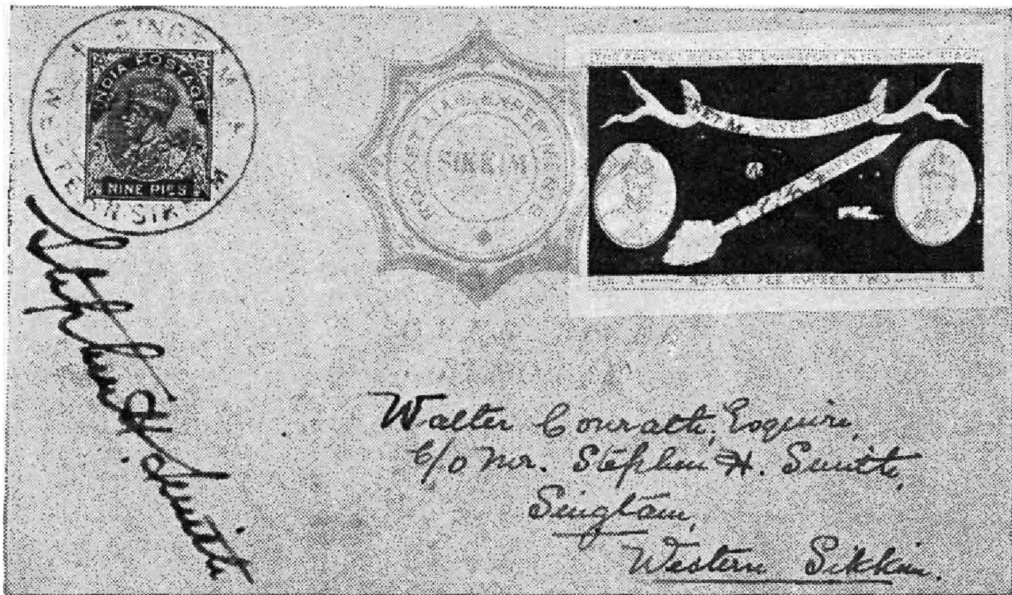
Fifth Firing—April 10, over the River Ranakhali from Surumsa to Ray. The mail rocket which consisted of 158 covers was discharged by Mr. C. E. Dudley the General Secretary. The rocket successfully accomplished its journey.

Sixth Firing—April 10, This rocket experiment was a very important one of the whole series. It may be definitely stated that its successful accomplishment has established a new world record as this was the first time a parcel was carried by means of a rocket. The rocket was loaded with the following articles, all likely to be in great demand during a time of emergency such as floods or landslips, when all means of communication including the telegraph are at a standstill for days or perhaps weeks:— The contents were as follows:—

One bottle of Genasprin; one bottle of Dimol; one tube of Phenosen, one packet of cigarettes, one box of matches, one cigar, one packet of tea, one packet of sugar, one toothbrush, one spoon, one handkerchief, fifty messages "on Sikkim Durbar Service". The Parcel rocket was fired over the River Ranakhali from Surumsa to Ray by Mr. C. E. Dudley, the General Secretary, a prominent Sikkim official. On the Parcel rocket reaching its destination, the river Ranakhali was crossed, and the sealed rocket was opened by Mr. Smith in the presence of Mr. Dudley, Tashi Dadul Densapa and Raj Sahib Faqr Chand Jali, all the articles were perfectly intact.

Seventh Firing—April 10, this firing was again over the river Ranakhali but from the opposite bank, viz, from Ray to Surumsa. The rocket which contained 186 covers was fired by Tashi Dadu Densapa, the Private Secretary. At the conclusion of the above experiments a certificate was handed to Mr. Smith on the 11th by Mr. C. E. Dudley, certifying to the utility of the rocket as a means of

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transport during floods or landslips.

Eighth Firing—April 13, in this instance the mail rocket containing 118 covers was fired by Mr. Smith in Western Sikkim at Singtam over the Singtam River.

Ninth Firing—April 13, this last firing in Sikkim was made at Rungpo, over the River Rungpo, by Mr. Smith. The mail in this instance consisted of 100 covers.

The following is the text of the Certificate given Mr. Smith by Mr. C. E. Dudley, General Secretary of His Highness the Maharajah of Sikkim:

"Certified that Mr. Stephen H. Smith conducted the undermentioned Rocket Mail Experiments in Sikkim by sanction of the Sikkim Durbar. A series of four Rocketgram Stamps for use on the Rocket Mail Experiments was also sanctioned by the Durbar. Two thousand of each kind were printed.

Rocket Mail Experiments

1. April 7th. From Gangtok Post Office to the Durbar High School (Mr. Smith).

2. April 8th. From Sir Tashi Nangyal Field to Post Office. His Highness the Maharajah).

3. April 8th. Vertical Firing, Sir Tashi Nangyal Field. (His Highness, the Maharajah).

4. April 9th. From Dak Bungalow to Post Office. (Mr. F. Williamson, I.C.S. Political Officer.)

5. April 10th. From Surumsa to Ray (mail) (Mr. C. E. Dudley).

6. April 10th. From Surumsa to Ray. (Parcel Mail). (C. E. Dudley.)

7th. April 10th. From Ray to Surumsa. (Tashi Dadul Densapa)

The utility of the Rocket as a means of transport during floods or landslips has been clearly demonstrated, especially in Experiment No. 6, when a rocket conveying medicines, cigarettes, tea, sugar, etc. was shot over the River Ranikhola without any damage to the contents.

Two further experiments, one over the Singtam River, and the second over the Rumpo River are to be conducted on the 13th instant.

C. E. DUDLEY,
General Secretary to His
Highness, the Maharajah of
Sikkim.

GANGTOK,
The 11th April, 1935."

In all these experiments the items carried bore the special rocket stamps as well as various cachets indicating the date, nature of experiment, etc. Photographs of the various rockets' experiments were secured, thereby adding further interest to the historic nature of the first successful official rocket mail experiments.

ERIE, PA. MAY HAVE AIR MAIL SERVICE

Although no official announcement has been made, newspaper reports from Erie indicate that the lake city may soon be given air mail service connecting with revised Route 21 (old route 20) and revised route 14, from Pittsburgh (old Route 11).

Erie has sought air mail connections for some time and according to Congressman Chas. Crosby the postoffice department is now working on plans to allocate funds for the extension, which now looks favorable.

The government maintains a lighted route from Pittsburgh to Erie and the eastern hop from Erie to Buffalo would be made along the regular revised air mail route 21 from Cleveland to Buffalo.

This additional service would greatly expedite the delivery of air mail to and from the AIRPOST JOURNAL, as Albion is located about twenty-five miles from Erie.

Random Notes

by ALTON J. BLANK
East Cleveland, Ohio

COMPARED with 1931 and 1932 the days of sanity have returned in the air mail stamp field. The issuance of unnecessary sets of high value and never used denominations is definitely on the wane. Now and then some backward country arouses itself from its lethargy and sows a few wild oats and the air mail stamp collector suffers. But on the whole the novelty of such experiment has dulled.

Shortlived provisionals are practically a thing of the past. Saner officials have seen to it that a definite air series is provided before the assumption of service. And these definitives are becoming a thing of beauty. Evidently the best of the nation's artists are consulted and truly artistic works are produced. Witness the recent New Zealand emission.

I wonder just what the average collector would choose for his idea of the best looking air mail stamp? Uncle Sam's 16 cents special delivery will surely be near the top of the list. And how about the German Zeppelin issue?

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A good many of the APJ readers may not know it but our worthy Managing Editor is handling the new issue service for the American Philatelic Society. It would pay APS members to get in touch with Walt.

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Here is an idea which the reader can make the most of. If you still possess
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