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**SI VOUS DÉSIREZ DE L'INFORMATION EN FRANÇAIS SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE D'AÉROPHILATÉLIE,
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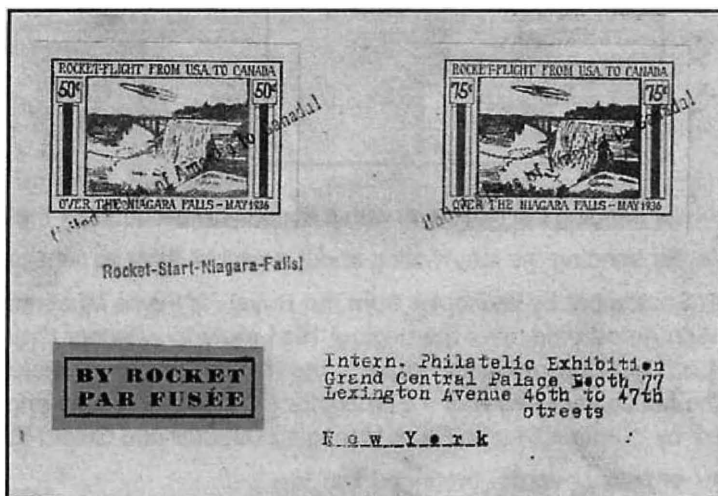
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CANADIAN ROCKET MAIL

1936 - Gerhard Zucker



Gerhard Zucker (1908 – 1985) was a German businessman and rocket engineer, who was particularly interested in the potential of transporting mail by rocket. He performed experiments in Germany in 1933; in England, Scotland, and Italy in 1934; and in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland in 1935. He sometimes produced special stamps for mail to be carried on these flights. Some of the flights were successful - some weren't.

In 1936 Zucker was invited to the United States, and there were proposals for the dispatch of rocket mail between the United States and Canada during the Third International Philatelic Exhibition (TIPEX 1936) at the Grand Central Palace, New York. However, before he left Germany, Zucker was arrested by the Gestapo who were suspicious about his contacts with the English government. To keep the commitments to TIPEX, Karl H. Hennig, Sr. a Hamburg, Germany dealer and booth holder at TIPEX, agreed to take everything to New York. A series of 10 rocket stamps were sold at TIPEX, as were covers with a pair of 50c and 75c rocket stamps affixed and addressed to *Intern. Philatelic Exhibition, Grand Central Palace Booth 77, Lexington Avenue, 46th-47th Streets, New York*.

There are various accounts as to whether or not a rocket was shown in New York, whether Hennig tried to avoid publicity in New York, how Hennig's name was spelt, and what happened to the rocket. There are also different theories as to why the rocket flights across Niagara Falls never took place.

An authoritative account seems to be a letter from Robert Schoendorf in Don Amos's papers in the CAS library:

Dear Mr. Amos:

Re your query of March 29: Karl Hennig, Hamburg, Germany, brought over a launching rack and a rocket which was displayed at his booth at the Intl.Phil.Exhibition 1936. I remember this very well as I assisted him at his stand as an interpreter. He tried to get a permit to fire the rocket, but the time was too short for this.

During World War II Gerhard Zucker served in the Luftwaffe. After the War he lived in West Germany, where he became a furniture dealer. He continued his rocket experiments until, at a rocket demonstration on May 7, 1964 on the Hasselkopf Mountain near Braunlage, an accident occurred which killed three people. This accident led to a ban on civilian rocket research in West Germany.

For more information about Gerhard Zucker's TIPEX covers, see: *Air Mails of Canada and Newfoundland*, Section 20 - Astrophilately in Canada - edited by Reuben Ramkissoon.

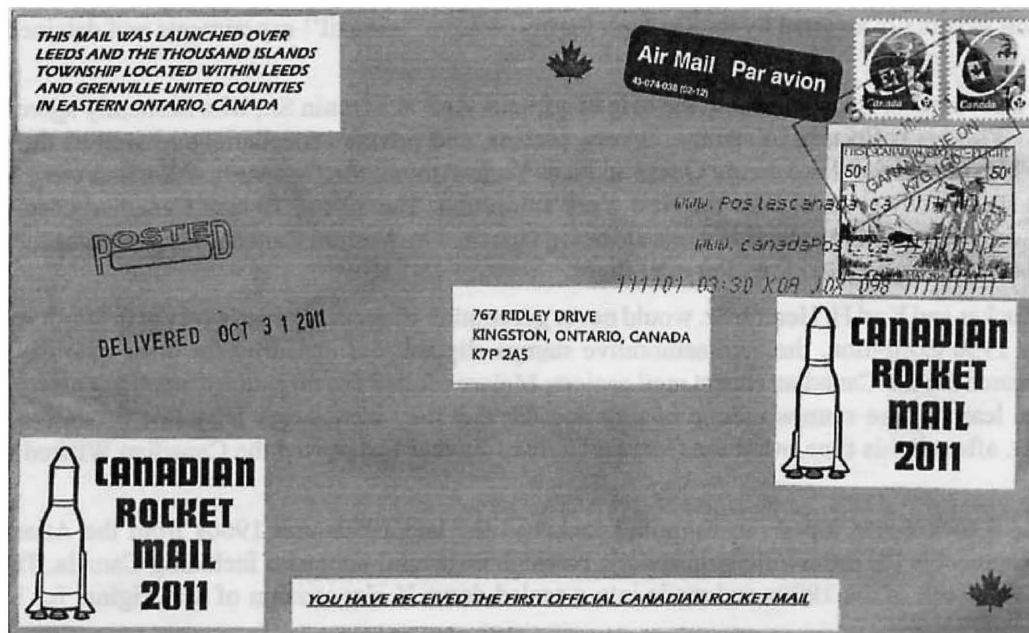
For more information about his rocket flights, see: *Rocket Mail Flights of the World to 1986* by Dr. Max Kronstein, AAMS Publications. (Details at www.americanairmailssociety.org)

My thanks to Don Fraser, George Dresser, and Hans Steinbock for a most enjoyable discussion of some photographs of Zucker's stamps that Don brought to BNAPEX 2011.

Chris Hargreaves

CANADIAN ROCKET MAIL

2011 - Ashley McIsaac



ROCKET STAMPS FLOWN AFTER 75 YEARS

By Wilfred Ashley McIsaac

It is a chilly Monday morning on October 31st, 2011 in Leeds and the Thousands Islands township located just inside Leeds and Grenville united counties in Eastern Ontario, Canada. Two cars travel slowly down an old country road kicking up dirt and small rocks while leaving a cloud of dust in their wake. The four occupants' view is obstructed by a towering corn field on all sides; the tall stalks of corn appearing to be well past their harvesting time. The congested farmland eventually leads to an open plain as the road heads off into the direction of a tattered World War Two hangar. They cautiously make their way onto the forgotten airfield and towards the south-west corner of the property. After gradually coming to a stop near the center air strip, the four gentlemen step out of the vehicles and onto the cracked aerodrome tarmac. The driver of the first car's name is Wilfred Ashley McIsaac and he immediately reacts with a smile to an unusually cool breeze coming up from the south as it brushes across his face. At that moment McIsaac turns towards the three men and begins to speak "Today gentlemen, rocket mail is coming to Canada".

The rocket carrying mail with Canadian postage lifted off from the Gananoque aerodrome in Eastern Ontario at 10:15am on October 31st, 2011. A four foot 7.5 inch high-powered ARCAS rocket from Aerotech in the United States was the launch vehicle that day. ARCAS weighed approximately five pounds and used a solid fuel motor delivering 18 pounds (80 newtons) of thrust.

Once the rocket reached an estimated 2500 feet in altitude a large 36" nylon parachute deployed returning the entire unit back to the aerodrome unharmed. The lift off and landing was captured on film by an on-board "gopro" camera which was strapped to the exterior of the rockets body.

When the rocket was safely recovered, McIsaac hurried to retrieve the contents inside. Seven commemorative letters with 1936 "First Canadian Rocket Flight" stamps were collected from inside the protective payload bay and immediately forwarded to the nearest post office in the city of Gananoque, Ontario. From this point they were simply delivered by more conventional means of transportation to local media outlets and museums.

Continued

ROCKET STAMPS FLOWN AFTER 75 YEARS by Wilfred Ashley McIsaac continued

The 75 year old rocket mail postage had an unusual history involving Adolf Hitler and the Gestapo security forces of Nazi Germany. The stamps along with a specialized rocket were to accompany a German born business man and rocket engineer by the name of Gerhard Zucker to the Third annual Philatelic Exhibition at the Grand Central Plaza in New York City. Zucker had developed a rather dubious name for himself in the Fatherland and the United Kingdom during the early 1930s after sporadically launching rocket mail in several places throughout Europe with limited success. He was eventually arrested by the Gestapo for his creative "airmail" experiments and detained in Germany indefinitely.

Not to be discouraged, Zucker enlisted the help of a friend, Karl H. Hennin Sr., who hesitantly agreed to take over the operation. With his collection of stamps, covers, cachets, and private cancellations as well as the rocket itself, Hennin made his way across the Atlantic Ocean to New York. Among the German's collection were a series of 10 rocket stamps specifically produced for the New York exhibition. The 50 and 75 cent Canadian postage depicted a rocket flight over Niagara Falls as well as a missile being launched in Western Canada. The later was the one McIsaac choose to use on his October, 2011, rocket mail flight.

Gerhard Zucker and Karl H. Hennin Sr. would never get another chance to launch a rocket in North America again. After the May 1936 exhibition, the commemorative stamps slipped into obscurity for three quarters of a century. During his research for the Canadian rocket mail project; McIsaac found the forgotten Canadian postage on eBay and was thrilled to learn of the stamps unique history and the fact they were never launched because no rocket was available. Now, after all this time, what the German Gerhard Zucker had started the Canadian Wilfred Ashley could finally finish.

The ARCAS rocket was a popular sounding rocket in the late 1950s and 1960s from the Atlantic Research Corporation responsible for improving atmospheric research in several countries including Canada. The rocket was duplicated by Aerotech in the 1990s and made into a scaled down 1/2 size version of the original for high powered rocket enthusiasts.

McIsaac constructed the rocket over the spring in 2011 with plans to launch at some point in June or July. Launch sites were difficult to find and the summer soon turned into fall with still no launch scheduled. At this point rocket mail was the furthest thing from Wilfred Ashley's mind while he was more concerned with getting at least one ARCAS all-up test in before the end of the year.

Wilfred Ashley had launched a modified Arrcaux high powered rocket from Aerotech at a commemoration for the military and for the Avro Arrow, in Prince Edward county in 2010. He knew how difficult it could be to find launch sites in the area. Before last years launches of his A2-R13 rocket at the Picton airfield, McIsaac hadn't built or launched a high powered rocket since 1997. Also, letting local airports know of when and where you are launching your rocket (so they can issue a warning or no-tam) has to be co-ordinated with the launch day and weather of-course. Back then McIsaac was launching rockets at the Gananoque aerodrome on a regular basis with as many as 10 launches in two years. For a variety of reasons, after 1998 Wilfred Ashley packaged up his rocket equipment and didn't make another launch attempt until last years November 11th commemoration at the Loch-Sloy Business Park in Picton.

Continued



Wilfred Ashley McIsaac and the ARCAS high-powered rocket with 'gopro' camera mounted to the side.

ROCKET STAMPS FLOWN AFTER 75 YEARS by Wilfred Ashley McIsaac continued

After finally speaking with the owners of the Camden Aerodrome in Camden East, Ontario, and the Gananoque Airport near the Thousand Islands, McIsaac was given permission to launch his rocket at either location. The easy choice was the airfield in Gananoque located just inside Leeds and the Thousands Islands township; a sprawling country side community of vast farm land and very few trees which was not the case at Camden.

What also made the Gananoque launch site so interesting was how the airfield was officially in Leeds and the Thousand Islands township while the surrounding property along Sand Hill road belongs in Leeds and Grenville. With this being said, when McIsaac stepped out of his car and felt the south/western breeze, he surmised that if he wanted his rocket to return safely to him, the flight path would most definitely have to be navigated over the united counties of Leeds and Grenville. After lift-off the 10-15 kilometre/hour wind continued to co-operative and in the end helped guide ARCAS back to the airfield in Leeds and the Thousand Islands township.

McIsaac's earlier experiences at the aerodrome from the 1990s helped him in predicting the wind patterns. Once he realized the winds were blowing in a favourable direction, all Wilfred Ashley had to do was place the rocket in the right patch of sky and the rest would be up to mother nature sort of speak. The rocket came in for a perfect landing, and the on-board video confirmed that McIsaac had guessed right.

The cross winds that day were certainly on Wilfred Ashley's side assisting in Canada's first successful rocket mail experiment and recovery in Eastern Ontario.

I have plenty of faith in god and believe anything is possible in this world. Maybe on that morning Mr. Zucker was looking down on me and had the winds co-operate with the launch. After all, he must of been relieved that his stamps were finally being delivered after all this time.

Wilfred Ashley McIsaac

To see the film of the rocket's launch and flight, go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnsBBrCicro

For more information about Ashley's rocket flights, go to: www.youtube.com/user/artkickstart/featured

For more information about the hobby of building rockets, check out: www.sigmarockets.com



The ARCAS rocket lifts off from the aerodrome in Gananoque, Ontario carrying the Canadian 'rocketmail' experiment on-board.



Canadian rocket mail moments before touching down at the Gananoque aerodrome.

Editor's Note: When Ashley researched Rocket Mail in Canada before the flight on October 31st, he did not find any references to completed flights. He did, however, find the Canadian Aerophilatelic Society website.

When Ashley and I corresponded after his flight, I sent him a copy of the "Rocket Mail in Canada" section from *The Air Mails of Canada and Newfoundland*. Ashley then discovered that there had been some earlier mail carrying rocket flights in Canada.

The last flight listed in *AMCN* was in January 1987. If anybody knows about any mail carrying rocket flights in Canada since then, please send information to the editor: Chris Hargreaves, 4060 Bath Road, Kingston, Ontario K7M 4Y4. (Email: hargreavescp@sympatico.ca)