

“Speed” Holman, An Aviator

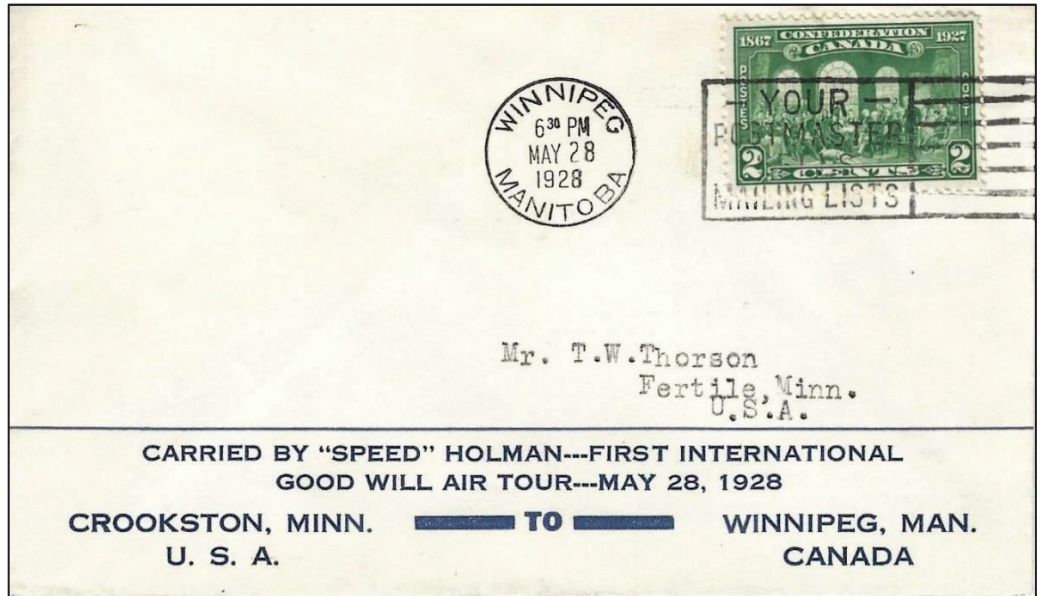
By Tom Reyman

Following World War I, there were many surplus military aircraft available for purchase at very low prices. Some planes were bought by former military pilots and others who began using them to display their flying skills as “barnstormers” at county fairs, airplane races, and stunt flying demonstrations. Charles “Speed” Holman at 19 years old acquired a war surplus Curtiss JN-4 “Jenny” airplane when his father purchased one for him. He quickly learned how to fly the plane and, because of his “dare devil” personality, developed into one of these stunt pilots who gained a widely known reputation for his flying abilities.

Holman was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota and showed natural ability as a pilot with his airplane. In the early 1920’s, he flew in many of the air races that were scheduled around the U.S. Midwest. He also performed aerobatic stunt flying at the many annual county fairs. When Northwest Airways was able to secure a U.S. Post Office contract in 1926 to fly mail Contract Airmail on CAM 9, Holman was selected to be the company’s first pilot. He also became the company’s Operations Manager in 1927 when the airline added passenger service. In 1928, true to his “dare devil” ways, he challenged the existing record of 1,111 consecutive inside loops by reaching 1,112 loops. He pressed on and, after five hours, had reached 1,433 inside loops. This record stood for 22 years!

He continued to fly and entered many air races, winning the 1927 New York to Spokane Air Derby and the 1930 Thompson Trophy Race. During an air demonstration at the new Omaha, Nebraska airport on May 17, 1931, Holman was killed when his plane crashed during a dive.

The cover on the right was issued to commemorate the “Good Will Tour” that Holman made from Minnesota to Winnipeg, Manitoba in May of 1928, an international flight, Canada to U.S. It is listed in the Air Mails of Canada and Newfoundland as AMCN # 2829.



References:

- The Air Mails of Canada and Newfoundland; Sixth Edition of the American Air Mail Catalog, Edwards Brothers, Ann Arbor, Michigan; 1997, Pgs. 100-101.
- <https://Historynet.com/aerobat-speed-holman.htm>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_W. "Speed" Holman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_W._)

Tom Reyman is a Nevada Stamp Study Society member whose collecting interests are U.S. FAM covers, general Air Mail covers, Canadian Semi-Official Air Mail stamps and covers, and Cape Breton (Nova Scotia) covers.