

What event does this photograph show?



The photograph has led to an enjoyable correspondence between Peter Dance, Terry Judge, Ian MacDonald, Christ Hargreaves, Georg Topple, and Sheldon Benner.

The original photo is in the City of Toronto Archives, (Fonds 1244, Item 4631).

It recently appeared on various Wikimedia pages, where it illustrated accounts of the first Canadian airmail service at Leaside aerodrome in Toronto.

At one time the site <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LeasideAirExpressEaton%27sPackages.jpg> used the photo with a comment: *Date 1918 (despite the 1928 notation on photo).*

However, there are many accounts of the First Air Mail Flight in Canada, by Captain Brian Peck from Montreal to Leaside aerodrome in 1918. He did not carry parcels for Eaton's!

The image was uploaded by Wikimedia Commons User and Administrator who is a Toronto resident. It seems that he/she read the 1918 account at the English Wikipedia article for Leaside, and mistakenly connected the image with that in a well-meaning attempt to apply a meaningful description!

But what precisely does the image show?

1918 saw the beginning of both a twice weekly air mail service between Montreal and Toronto in May, and a daily except Sunday air mail service between Montreal and Toronto on the 1st October 1918. But photos taken to show the start of airmail services generally emphasize the mail bags. Since there are no mail bags, it doesn't appear to be the start of one of these air mail services either. (There is also no headrest behind the rear cockpit. Most mailplanes of the period had them.)

Sheldon has checked the original print in the Toronto Archives, and there was no additional information there.

The description of the photo on Wikipedia has now been changed to, "The first regular air express mail delivery in 1928".

But there are still questions as to when was the photograph taken, which type of aircraft is shown, who is the pilot, and what exactly was the event?

If anybody can provide any information about this photograph, please send it to the editor: Chris Hargreaves, 4060 Bath Road, Kingston, Ontario K7M 4Y4.