Those daring young men who first delivered the mail...

Eddie Gardner

Early airmail pilot Max Miller
When S. Dillon Ripley took office as the ______ Smithsonian Secretary in 1964, he found a library organization that badly needed an overhaul. A library was part of the original legislation founding the Smithsonian in 1846. It grew rapidly to 40,000?? volumes by the 1860s. But following a terrible fire in 1865 that burned the roof and center core of the Smithsonian Building and another in 1866, the Smithsonian’s library was moved to new fireproof stacks in the Library of Congress in the U.S. Capitol. In ____ , the second Secretary, Spencer Fullerton Baird, re-created the library as the U.S. National Museum Library, a working library designed to support scientific research. From then it grew, amoebic like subdivisions splitting off as the Institution’s research programs enlarged. By 1964, a prospective user could find libraries containing over 430,000 volumes in nearly 80 locations in the Smithsonian, spread among seven cities.

Secretary Ripley signed a ______ that created the Smithsonian Institution Libraries on August ____, 1968, and hired Russell Shank into the new ___________ continued on page 4
In 1918, just ten years after the Wright Brothers’ historic flight, Army Air Service pilots began flying the U.S. mail between Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York. By August of that year, the Post Office Department instead began using civilian pilots who flew specially-built mail planes.

These airmail pioneers flew planes with no instruments. It was a dangerous occupation, filled by a diverse mix of men, many of them flight instructors or former military pilots.

Our cover highlights Max Miller, the first airmail pilot hired by the postal service. He is one of many early airmail pilots featured in the National Postal Museum Library’s photographic collection. His and other pilots’ fascinating stories can be found in the National Postal Museum’s online show, *Fade to Fundamental: Airmail in America*, http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/airmail/

Miller and Eddie Gardner, the other pilot pictured on our cover, flew between New York and Chicago on September 5, 1918. It was an historic test flight between the two cities, aimed at expanding the nascent airmail service. If they could deliver the mail from New York to Chicago in under ten hours, planes could replace trains for speedy mail delivery.

The two pilots were extremely competitive and used telegrams to track each other’s progress as they were also simultaneously tracked by the Air Mail Service. Miller was the first to arrive in Chicago, landing the next day at 6:55 p.m. with Gardner landing the following morning, at 8:17 a.m.

The return trip to New York was uneventful for Miller, but he had radiator problems and failed to return within

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The Ruby Anniversary - continued from page 3  high-level position of Director. Shank wrote “the richness of the libraries’ collection far exceeds my expectations... . The depth of the collections in systematic biology in terms of both age and comprehensiveness makes one feel like a bibliothecal Midas when wandering through the stacks.” Now around 100 staff members make accessible and preserve over 1.5 million volumes and a panoply of electronic databases and journals housed in twenty libraries. 2008 marks the 40th anniversary of Ripley’s organization. The Ruby Anniversary is a fitting time to pause and measure how far we have come, but only for an instant as we prepare ourselves for a bright future of service to the Smithsonian staff and general public.

Our kick-off is April 8, when we have invited our Smithsonian friends to join us for ice cream and cake in the Smithsonian Castle. In June, we will host a symposium and showing of the film “The Curious Mr. Catesby,” which highlights the life and times of Mark Catesby, one of the first British Naturalists to collect the flora and fauna of the New World. His marvelous illustrated publication on the natural history of Virginia, South Carolina and the Bahamas are part of our collection. Starting in May, we will host a series of speakers inspiring us with their thoughts about the future, as we explore the challenges and opportunities offered by the digital environment. The year will end with a grand Ruby Gala in the Donald F. Reynolds Center, which houses the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery.

Ruby is our stone, bright red is our color—watch for details and join us as we celebrate both past and future.

Nancy E. Gwinn
Are you...chicken? Do you have the ferocity of a “Tar Heel”, the “great endurance” of a “Black Warrior”, the fierceness of a “White Hornet” or the “lightning speed” of a “Carolina Blue”? These are just some of the traits of the stock that North Carolina gamecock breeder J.A. Monroe advertised in his 1890-91 catalog of “North Carolina Games”.

Along with the breeds listed above, Monroe advertised two others, the “Eureka” and the “Eslin” which have ties to the Smithsonian and the Washington D.C. area. At the time the circular was printed, the Eureka, “[a] cock of this variety, [was] mounted in the National Museum at Washington.”

The “Eslin” breed was named after a large farm in the heart of Washington, D.C. from the late 1700’s to the mid-1800s. James Eslin bought land in what is now the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood, near 16th Street and Columbia Road, and was noted for his gamecocks. Cockfights were regular sporting events at the farm. (Records of the Columbia Historical Society, vol. 33-34 (1932).

Cockfighting, a controversial activity criticized as a “blood sport” for its perceived cruelty to animals, is also seen as traditional in some parts of the continued on page 9
Early Airmail Pilots - continued from page 3

the required ten-hour time frame. Gardner’s return flight encountered adverse weather conditions, delays, fuel shortages and, luckily, a not-fatal crash, landing in Hicksville, N.Y., just a little short of the final destination of Belmont Park, N.Y. More importantly, he was able to complete the trip in under ten hours. Airmail service to Chicago was born.

Delivering the first airmail was a risky job. There were many forced landings as pilots struggled with the weather and early aircraft. Miller unfortunately perished in a fatal explosion and crash with his mechanic, Gustav Reierson, on September 1, 1920, outside of Morristown, N.J. Witnesses reported that the men threw out the bags of mail prior to the crash. The jettisoned mail was collected and sent on to the post office in New York for distribution. Neither rain nor sleet...

Gardner survived numerous crashes for years during his airmail service, but ironically died flying stunts in 1921 at a county fair in Kansas. A fuller account of “The 1918 race to Chicago” by James H. Bruns can be found

By 1926, commercial contract airlines took over mail delivery, paving the way for daily mail delivery by air, as well as the commercial airline industry. None of these services that we take for granted today would have been possible if not for these brave men who pioneered airmail and aviation.

These are just a few of the stories that can be discovered in the collections of the National Postal Museum Library. With more than 40,000 books, journals, catalogs and archival documents, the National Postal Museum Library is among the world’s largest postal history and philatelic research facilities. The National Philatelic Collection was the basis of the Library when it was established in 1993. One of the largest and most important research facilities for the study of philately and the history of postal services in the United States, the Library collections are also international in scope. In particular, Canada, Great Britain, Germany and France are well represented.

With more than 5,000 books, 6,000 serial titles, manuscript files, photographs and many auction and priced catalogues, the collection also includes major archival holdings, including files from the United States Post Office, the Highway Post Office, the Aerial Mail Service, the Railway Mail Service, and the Panama Canal Zone Post Office.

Of special interest are more than 10,000 photographs from the Post Office Department and from other public and private collections concerning all aspects of mail handling and transportation.

Whether you are a stamp collector or a history buff, or even an aviation enthusiast, the National Postal Museum Library has many intriguing items and stories to discover.
The Caldwell Archive at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum Library is the only remaining visual documentation of the great works produced by Edward F. Caldwell & Co. (N.Y.). Massive in size, this collection contains over 50,000 original photographs and drawings, and 23 microfilm rolls of their account books. The Libraries has received a grant to digitize a significant portion of the images and highlight Caldwell & Co.’s New York commissions, which will increase access to the collection, improve searchability, and preserve the originals from destruction.

Caldwell & Co. was America’s premiere and most prolific producer of lighting and other metal objects during the turn of the 20th century up through the 1940s. Caldwell & Co. illuminated many of New York City’s most significant public and private buildings when much of the city was being electrified for the first time. All Caldwell & Co. objects were custom made, and examples can still be seen throughout the five boroughs, as well as across the United States. Some of their notable New York commissions included Grand Central Terminal, Radio City Music Hall, St. Thomas Church, The University Club, the Waldorf-Astoria and the Bronx Zoo. They worked with the major architects of the day, including McKim, Mead & White, Russell Pope, Richard Morris Hunt, Cariere & Hastings, Babb, Cook & Williard, and Cram, Goodhue, & Ferguson. Their clients included the Fricks, Vanderbilts, Carnegies, Astors, Roosevelts, and Rockefellers. On a national level they received commissions from the White House, the State Department, the Boston Public Library, the Cleveland Museum, and the Detroit Athletic Club.

Jennifer Cohlman

Above: Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh PA, 1905.
Center: Portrait of Edward F. Caldwell. Courtesy of the Caldwell Family.
Below: The East Room, White House, 1903.
North Carolina Games - continued from page 5 United States and other countries. It is referred to in the Monroe circular as the “royal Pit Game”.

Monroe’s guarantee of his stock includes the following comments on care: Any game fowl, by starvation, sickness, ill-treatment and battering around in general ownwheel [sic] fights with all weights and kinds, can be ruined. I do not wish to sell my Games at any price to a person who will batter them around.

He would ship both mature and young fowls singly or in groups, and shipped eggs by express.

The various breeds are described in detail, dwelling on the beauty and fighting characteristics of Monroe’s “noble fowl.” Cassie Mancer

Web

Trade Literature


Seed and Nursery Catalogs http://www.sil.si.edu/digitalcollections/SeedNurseryCatalogs/

Sewing Machines: Historical Trade Literature in Smithsonian Collections http://www.sil.si.edu/DigitalCollections/Trade-Literature/Sewing-Machines/

 Vaughan’s Seed Store, 1899.
It’s a Wednesday afternoon and if you’ve signed up for the Highlights Tour at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History you’re in for a treat, because that’s the day Celia Barteau leads the tours.

Following a 30-year career with the U.S. Navy, Celia began volunteering at the museum over twenty years ago and is now a walking encyclopedia of entertaining and informative facts about the museum’s many exhibits and the people who put them together. Modest and dedicated, Celia sees the tours as a type of ‘report to the stockholders.’ “I want the public to know that we’re taking good care of these materials.”

She grew up in the Chicago suburbs and became interested in museums after spending time in the Field Museum, and later at the Chicago Planetarium. However, she is quick to point out that the Smithsonian isn’t like museums that are mostly exhibit-based. “We’re not just another pretty face,” she says. “Collections, primarily in the sciences, are the big deal here.”

During her tours, Celia tries to share the story of James Smithson’s bequest with her visitors and says that Europeans, who must often pay entrance fees to visit museums, are always surprised that just about everything within the Smithsonian is free.

Celia enjoys the gems and minerals most of all, adding that the Hope Diamond is always a popular stop on the tour. She is looking forward to showing off the diamond next year when the museum celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the donation from Harry Winston.

Catherine Fraser
A Love for the Smithsonian and Libraries Leads to Board Work...

New Libraries board member, Ron Monark, says he joined the board because “it gave me a unique opportunity to combine my love of the Smithsonian with my love of libraries.” A longtime book lover, he still cannot resist the temptation to “rummage through old book stores” when he is traveling.

A Washington, D.C. native who now resides in San Diego, California, Monark is not new to non-profit board work. Since 1989, he has received at least four different board appointments from his alma mater, The College of William and Mary, adding that he generally responds favorably to whatever job comes up and needs to be done.

“While the Libraries’ board doesn’t have the responsibility of the Smithsonian’s Board of Regents, (I believe) we do have a responsibility to contribute any and all ideas on how the Libraries can further the goals and objectives of the Institution and how we can expand the Libraries’ constituencies as well as raise awareness and funds. There is always an excitement that comes with expanding the number of constituencies and users within each constituency.”

When asked why he finds volunteer work so rewarding, Monark replies, “I have been very blessed in my life, starting with the fact that I was the only person of my generation on either side of the family to go to college. I enjoy giving back and always love the moment when I can contribute an idea or inspire someone else to contribute to a worthy effort.”  

Catherine Fraser

The Smithsonian Institution Libraries’ Board is composed of fifteen members from across the United States appointed by the Smithsonian’s Board of Regents. The mission of the board is to help the Library provide information in all forms to scientists, curators, scholars, students and the public at large and to generate visibility and new constituencies for its twenty branch facilities.

Ron Monark strolls the Asia Trail at the National Zoo with New Media Office Head Martin Kalfatovic at Libraries’ “Escape to the Wild Side” event last September. Photograph by Donald E. Hurlbert.
The Libraries celebrates 40 years of service to researchers and the public in 2008. A year of special activities is being planned in conjunction with our 40th anniversary. Stay tuned for details!