

Danish Aviation History - a Paraphilatic View

-By Ray Petersen



The Danes have long been interested in exploration – on land, on the sea, and in the air. This is the first in a series of articles which will document how Denmark has recognized its heavier-than-air aviation through the use of paraphilately. Items used as illustrations in these articles will include Poster Stamps, Covers, Semi-Official Airmail Stamps, Philatelic Labels and Etiquettes, Baggage Labels, Picture Postcards, Postage Stamps, and other Objects or Paper Ephemera. Some of the items illustrated here were issued contemporaneously with the events they represent, others were issued later to memorialize people or events. Other items may have no direct connection to specific events, but depict items related to Aviation.

ELLEHAMMER

The first major aircraft inventor in Denmark was Jacob Christian Hansen-Ellehammer (June 14, 1871 – May 20, 1946) a watchmaker who also worked as an electronics mechanic. But his main interest was inventing. He started his own company in 1898, and designed and built several vending machines and other electrical machines. In 1904, Jacob Ellehammer designed and built his first motorcycle, which led him to make improvements in existing engine technology. He soon set his sights on the newest form of transportation - aircraft design.

In March, 1906, there was an article in the Danish newspaper *Holbæk Amts Venstreblad*. The article's author recounts meeting Ellehammer at some motorcycle time trials in Copenhagen, and asking him about his newest venture – a motorized aircraft. Ellehammer told the reporter that his designs were progressing nicely – he had made some improvements in the power of the engines he was planning to use in his aircraft, and that he was also in the process of building a concrete runway on the island of Lindholm. He was hoping that the runway, as well as his engine improvements, would be ready soon. He promised that the press would be invited down to witness his attempted flight.



The first European flight of a heavier than air craft was by Ellehammer. He first made a tethered flight on June 12th 1906. He later made an untethered flight of 42 meters, on the Danish island of Lindholm, on September 12th, 1906. Frenchman Santos Dumont is frequ-

ently cited as achieving the first heavier than air flight in Europe, in Paris, but Ellehammer's ascent preceded the Dumont flight by more than a month. There was no mail carried on that flight, but the feat was memorialized on a Danish Mærkat poster stamp in 1944, as well as on a Danish postage stamp issued in 1956.

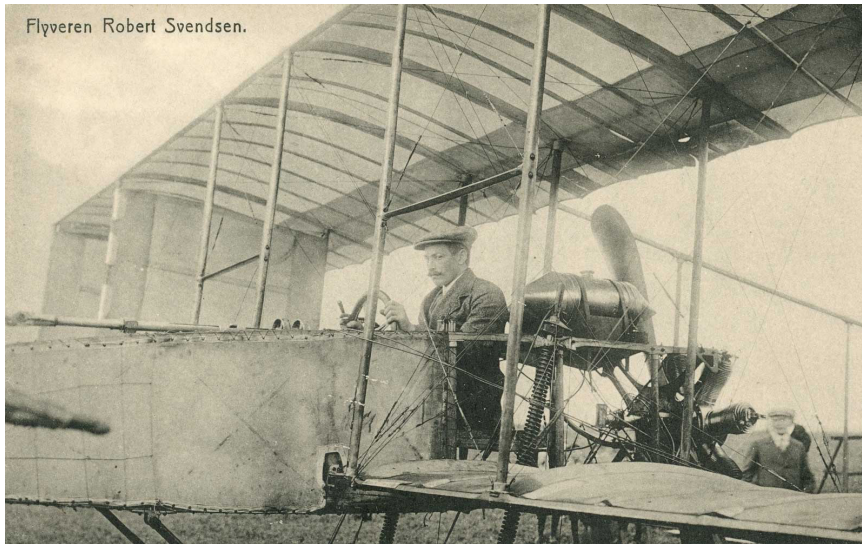


Ellehammer also worked on a coaxial helicopter design which he built in 1912, and there are later photographs showing it actually hovering in the air, however there is no evidence that it actually achieved sustained flight. This craft was depicted on a Mærkat poster stamp in 1944.

Following Ellehammer's successful flight, the Danes continued their work on heavier than air flight, and the practical considerations that the airplane might provide.

SVENDSEN

Charles Robert Edvard Svendsen (December 10, 1884 – July 17, 1938) worked as an automobile salesman, but he was fascinated with airplanes and flight, and was the first person in Scandinavia to obtain a pilot's license (originally called a flying certificate). Robert Svendsen's employer, Gustav Salomensen, had obtained an obsolete airplane from the Voisin brothers in France, for Svendsen to use. Svendsen renamed the plane Dania and made several practice

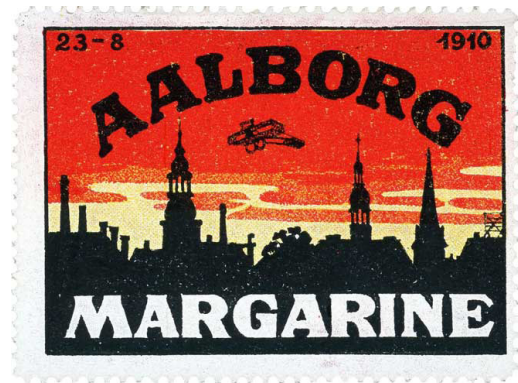


Flyveren Robert Svendsen.



flights. At that time, an area on the Danish island of Amager, known as Kløvermarken, became the center of Scandinavian aviation. On January 5, 1910, Svendsen set a Danish record by reaching a height of 84 feet during a flight there. In July Svendsen decided to enter a prize flight from the Kløvermarken airfield to Limhamn, (Malmö) Sweden. Most of Svendsen's time had been occupied by patching and repairing the "Dania", so the prize money - 12,000 Swedish Krona - probably had something to do with his decision. His plane was in flight-ready condition, and on the morning of the flight he walked over to his plane, started the engine, and flew across the Øresund to Limhamn, and won the prize. There was no mail carried on the flight, but a special stamp was issued for a special flight on the 20th anniversary of the flight and in 1944 a Mærkat poster stamp was issued commemorating Svendsen's 1910 flights. Den Kongelige Porcelænsfabrik (Royal Copenhagen Porcelain) memorialized Svendsen's Øresund flight with a commemorative collector's plate in 1910. The design on the plate was by Christian Thorsen, and there were 251 plates produced.

Robert Svendsen was also the first person to fly across the Limfjord, on August 23, 1910. This feat was noted on an advertising poster stamp issued by Aalborg Margarinefabrik. The stamp shows the skyline of Aalborg, which is east of the Limfjord, with Svendsen's plane flying overhead, with the dates "23 - 8" at top left and "1910" at top right.



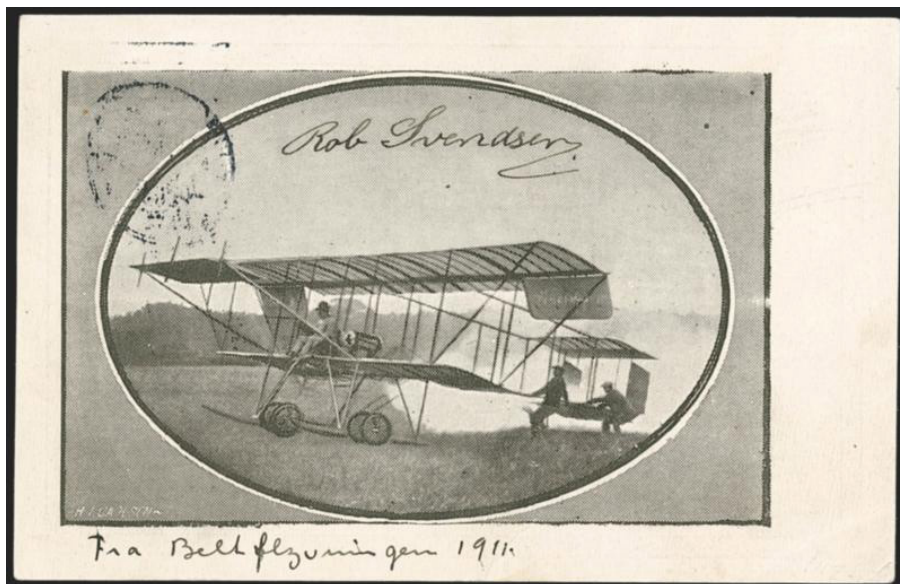
The following year, Svendsen was responsible for another "first" - the first ever occurrence of mail carried by an airplane. On September 1, 1911 Svendsen carried 150 postcards, and several copies of the daily newspaper *Middelfart Avis*, on a flight across the Lillebælt (Little Belt) from Middelfart to Fredericia. The flight was originally intended to be another prize flight, sponsored by a silversmith named Cohr (probably Carl Cohr of Fredericia). The offered prize was a silver trophy crafted by Cohr, but Svendsen was more interested in earning cash.

Svendsen ended up talking to a journalist from the *Middelfart Avis*, who thought that the newspaper could arrange to have postcards printed for the flight, which could later be sold for cash as souvenirs.



There were 300 cards made, with an image of Svendsen's plane printed on the blank side of ordinary 3 øre postal cards. The cards were sold to the public, and 140 were carried on the flight across the Little Belt. The plane Svendsen used was the same Voisin from the previous year, but Svendsen had rebuilt it according to a design from the Anglo-French aircraft designer Henry Farman, so the postcards depicted a Farman style plane. Also carried on the flight were

an additional 10 postcards of a different design, from a previously cancelled flight. All of the cards were autographed by Robert Svendsen. The flight was successful, but Svendsen did not land in Fredericia – he merely tossed the package of postcards and newspapers to the ground there, where they were retrieved for forwarding to recipients via normal methods. But the flight did count as the first “air mail” transport.



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Misc:

Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries
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DPH Trading (Danish Porcelain House)