

American Airlines airmail to and from Gander

The envelopes below could quite easily cause some confusion because they mention American Export Airlines (AEA), American Overseas Airlines (AOA) and the American Airlines System (AA).

From 1945 American Airlines operated AOA, as the name implies, for its trans-Atlantic operations, becoming the US's first land-based civilian European service, using DC-4 airplanes. AOA was formed by the merger of the American Airlines international division with a separate company, American Export Airlines. AOA later used DC-6's, Lockheed Constellations and Boeing 377 Stratocruisers for its trans-ocean flights.

AOA crews quite often already had experience with Gander before their civilian trans-Atlantic service, because one-half of AA's fleet had been turned over to the military Air Transport Command during the war, very often using the C-54, which was a military version of the DC-4.

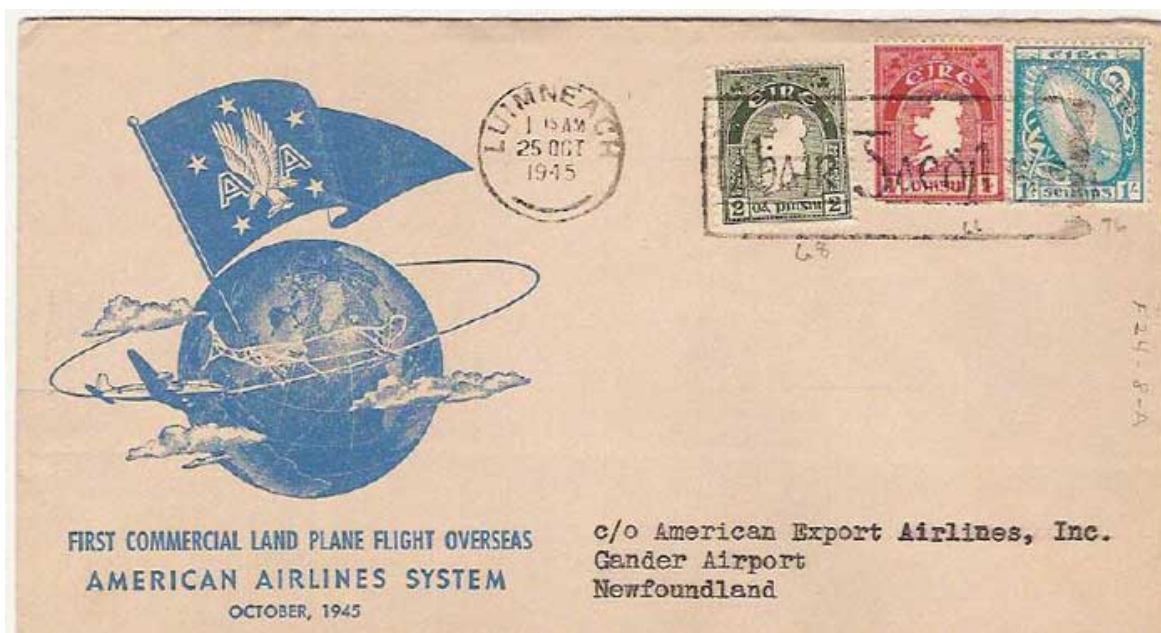
Gander to New York City



New York City to Gander



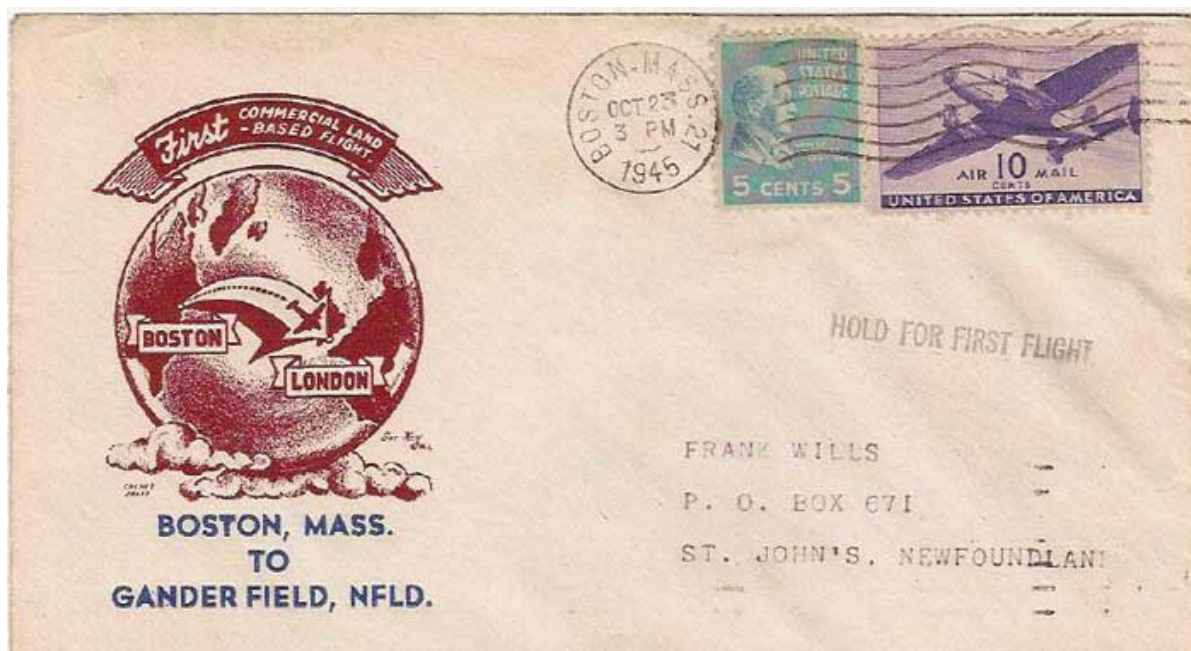
Shannon to Gander



Boston to Gander



Boston to Gander (2)



It is interesting to note that even in 1945, Gander Airport was still called Gander Field.

Those interested in philately may know that the United States Post Office Department designated any contract airmail route flown between a foreign country and the US as a "Foreign Air Mail" route. The Foreign Air Mail routes became known as FAM's. FAM-24 was awarded to American Overseas Airlines, which thereby permitted the transport of the above envelopes (which are called "covers" by philatelists.)

FAM-24 had a great number of subsections but these AOA round-trip flights originated basically in Boston, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia or Washington with London and then certain European capitals as final destination. But they all went through Gander.



AOA DC-4 "City of Copenhagen"

AOA had a ticket counter in the Gander terminal, the second one on the left as one came in from the ramp – but it didn't last long!

In 1948 AOA was sold to Pan-American, considered by some as the greatest mistake of American Airlines legendary president, CR Smith.

American Airline would not serve Europe again for over 30 years.