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Interesting Gander envelope 1949

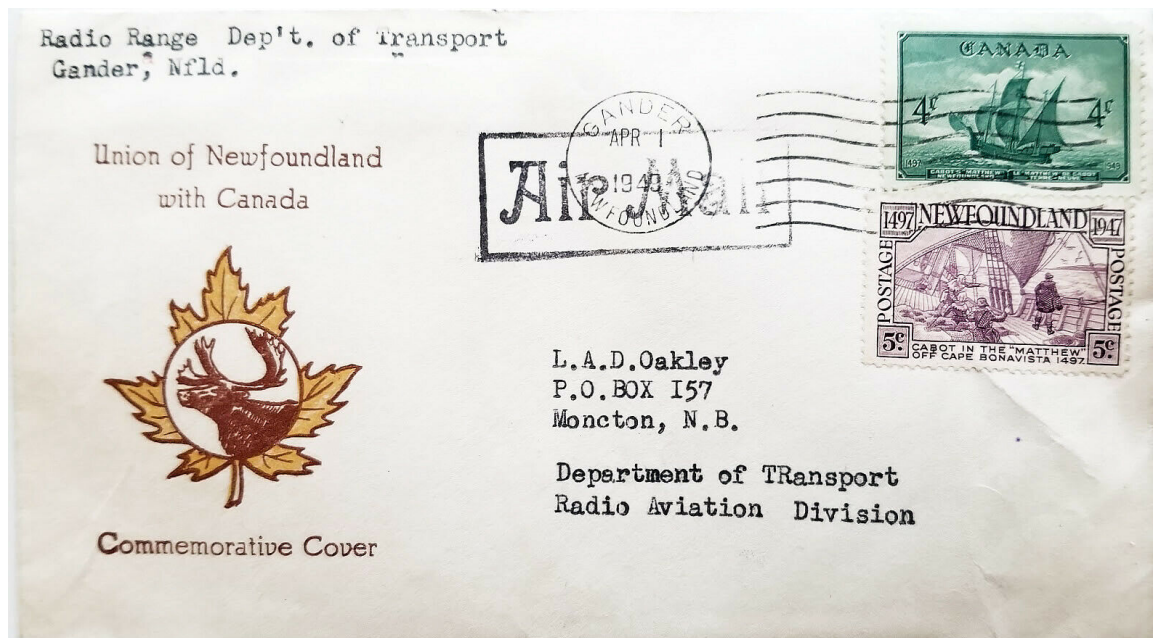
(by Robert G Pelley 2021-10-27)

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The envelope shown below merits consideration for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was a "Commemorative cover" postmarked Gander 01 April 1949. And no, it was not an April Fool's joke. It commemorated the historic union of Canada and Newfoundland, which then became the country's tenth province.

The date of 01 April was however slightly off. The union came into force the day before, technically at 23h59. As shown in the terms of union below at article 50, it became legally binding "immediately before the expiration of the thirty-first day of March, 1949".

50. These Terms are agreed to subject to their being approved by the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland; shall take effect notwithstanding the Newfoundland Act, 1933, or any instrument issued pursuant thereto; 50. These Terms are agreed to subject to their being approved by the Parliament of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland; shall take effect notwithstanding the Newfoundland Act, 1933, or any instrument issued pursuant thereto; and shall come into force immediately before the expiration of the thirty-first day of March, 1949, if His Majesty has theretofore given His Assent to an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland confirming the same. Signed in duplicate at Ottawa this eleventh day of December, 1948.

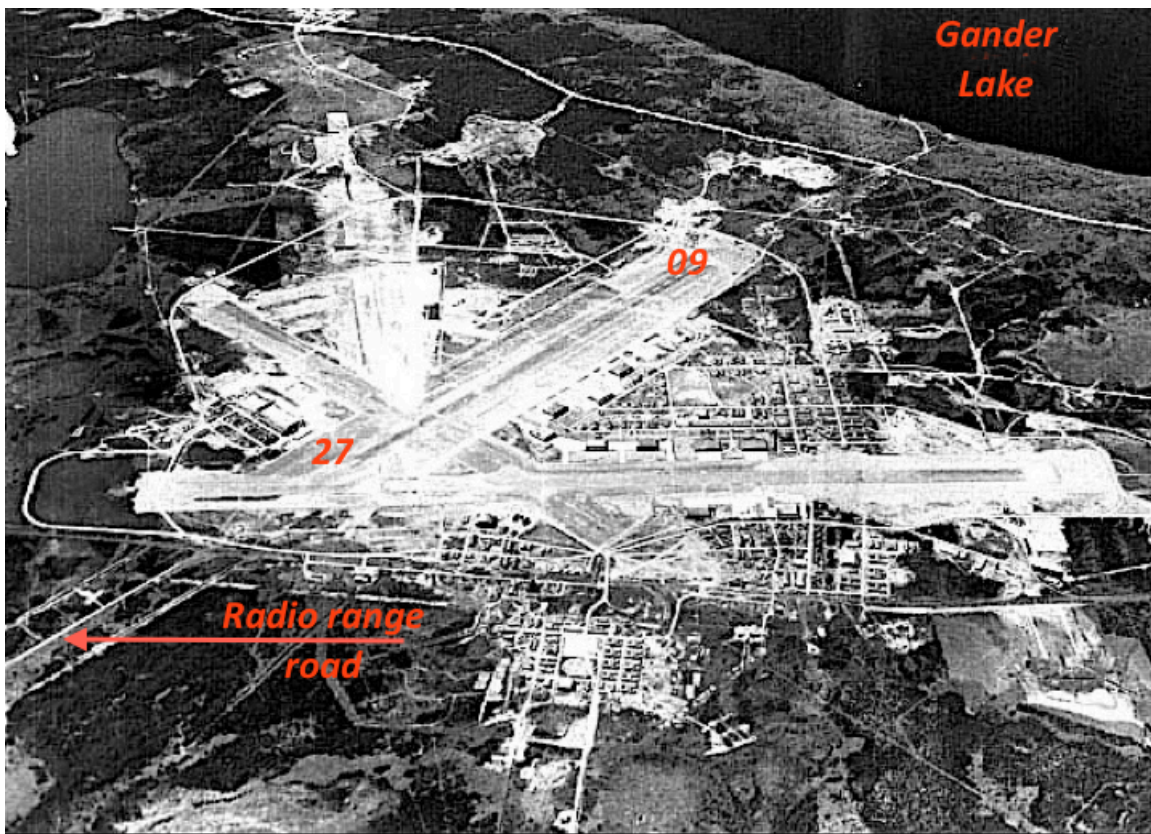


One might wonder if it was or not a coincidence that the two stamps on the envelope are related to John Cabot, who was at that time thought to be the first European to visit Newfoundland in 1497. If so, it was a nice touch indeed.

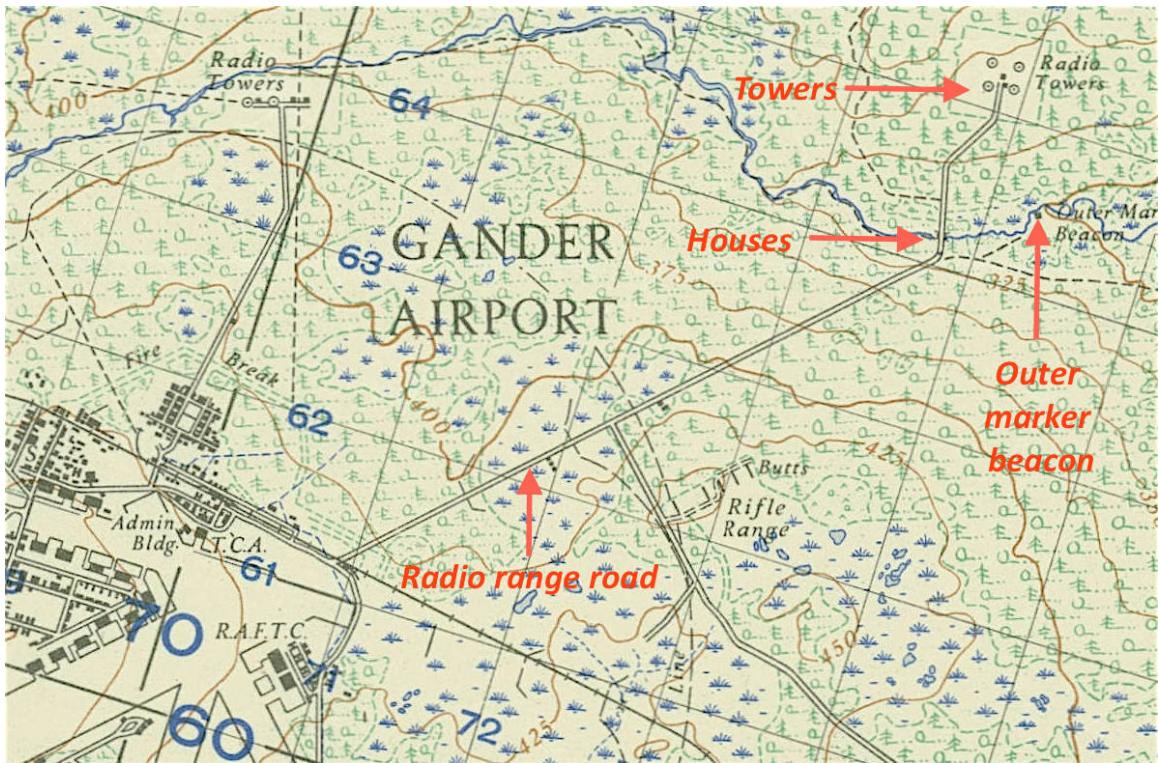
But the most interesting aspect is the return address : Radio Range, Dep't of Transport, Gander, which would seem to be a very rare item to see today.

"Radio Range" refers to the radio transmission system to guide aircraft to the main runway. In old Gander, this referred to runway 09-27 as shown below. The radio facility extended north-west of the airport, with an "outer marker" at the furthest end.

A similar line went roughly south-east, with an outer marker just across Gander Lake.



At the northern end of Radio range road, as seen in the following map, there was a number of radio transmission towers with small associated buildings, which were occupied on a rotating basis during certain periods of its history and as required on others, probably according to the reliability of the equipment used over time. The envelope could have come from there.



On the map can be seen a place where Radio range road crosses a small stream, indicated as "Houses". The buildings were of a very varied construction, in some cases the minimum needed to keep a roof over one's head. But in Gander in the late 40s and early 50s, the rapid commercialisation of air traffic meant that housing was at a premium. Even old anti-aircraft gun emplacements were taken over.

This site in the early 1950s was occupied by seventeen people of which around ten were in their teens or younger. No family with the addressee's name appeared to live there. The names of people ho lived in the Radio Range area over the years can be seen at this address:

<http://bobsganderhistory.com/gene7.pdf>

General information on how "Range range" flying is carried out can be seen here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Low-frequency_radio_range