

A Very Rare Gander Envelope

(by Robert G Pelley, 2015/11/05)

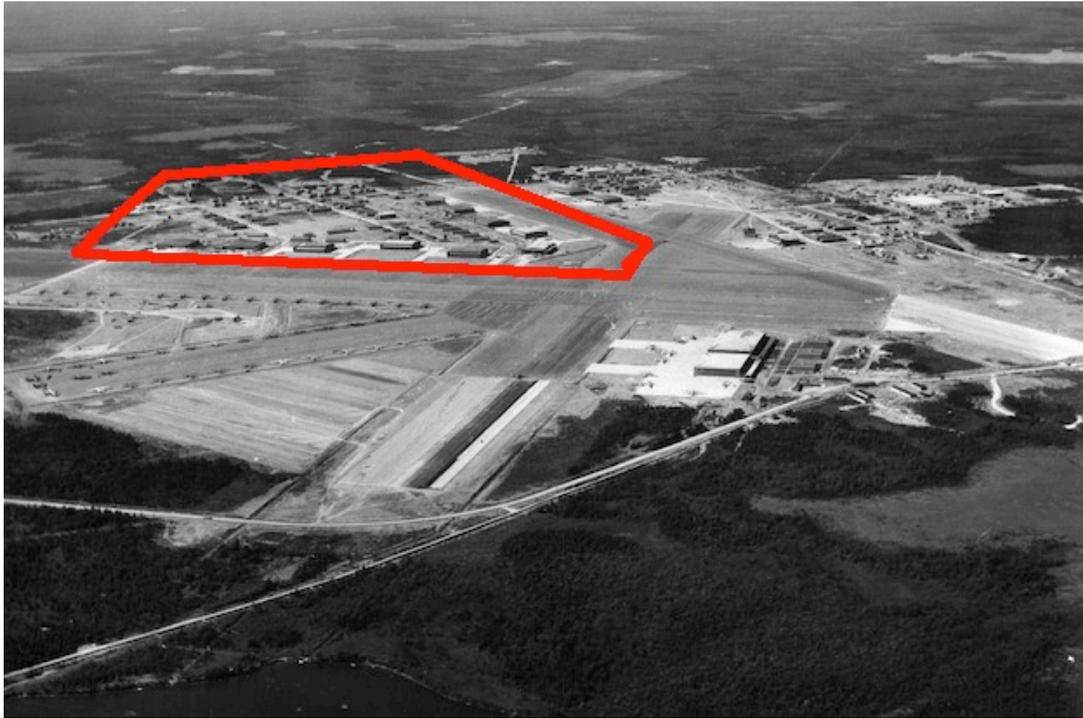
The story of the USAAF Base in Gander is already the subject of an article on this website. Very briefly, on 09 March 1941, the first American weather personnel of 8th Weather Squadron, under Captain Clark Hosmer, arrived at "Gander Field" to support the later arrival of the US 21st Reconnaissance Squadron.

Five weeks later, on 20 April, USAAF operations were initiated in Gander with the arrival of Lt. Bleyer and Lt. Lawrence as an advance party of the 21st Reconnaissance Sqn, flying a B-18 Bolo. During this same time frame, longer range B-17Cs of the USAAF 41st Reconnaissance Squadron started flying mid-Atlantic anti-submarine patrols from Gander.

Given the expected deployment in short order of these and other US and Canadian forces, on 01 April, Gander had therefore been taken over by the RCAF from civilian authorities.

Gander was beginning to become overcrowded

Therefore the planned construction of a separate zone for American-led operations became a priority. This zone, basically in the southwest corner of the airport, became known as the "American side" – a name that stuck long after the departure of US forces, from the time civilians occupied the buildings until they were torn down in the 50s.



The American United States Army Air Force area was officially established 09 May 1941.

During the Second World War the Americans had a very developed sense of the dramatic. Hollywood knew how to make movies to support the war effort and generally speaking, no occasion was missed anywhere to underline the importance of the war effort and to increase moral.

One such moment was the official opening of Base Gander which was marked by the emission of a commemorative "First Day Cover"



As can be seen by the 801-C postmark, the envelope was posted from Gander.

It is interesting to note that the Americans were not shy about announcing this opening of a wartime base, even though war not declared until seven month later, after the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor on 07 December.

The main article on the American base in Gander can be found here:

<http://bobsganderhistory.com/ab.html>