

A glimpse at early post-war Gander - a Collier's article

During the Second World War, Gander was a key to success. After the war, it was just as important for civil aviation. This Collier's article from 03 May 1947 talks about these civil operations.



It gives for example the cost of carrying a passenger which was 9 1/2 cents per mile - must be "slightly" higher today! There is great praise for the terminal in hangar 21, and for Mr JM (Jim) Eaton, vp from American Overseas Airways, who coordinated the conversion. It also mentions the "Ground Controlled Approach" installed by Pan-Am.

But even in 1947, only two years after the end of the war, there was already speculation about loss of revenue and passengers because longer-range aircraft could eventually overfly Gander. One almost wonders if authorities of the time were preoccupied by this strategic consideration to come or spent more time on managing day to day operations.

Gander in 1947 had an operating DEFICIT of \$750,000 - more things change, more they seem the same!

GANDER AIRPORT, NEW-FOUNDLAND: This is the Gateway to the Old World and the New, one of two major airports on which the security of North Atlantic flying depends. The other is Shannon, Eire, nearly 2,000 miles to the east over the ocean. Perhaps in five years, de luxe, extra-fare club planes will jump the entire 3,500 miles between New York and London without intermediate landings for fuel at Gander and Shannon.

They could do it now, by cutting down the revenue-producing pay load of passengers and cargo, adding more fuel and increasing the tariffs. But the international air lines prefer to stop at this oasis in the Newfoundland wilderness and tank up for the flight to Ireland or the 1,100 miles that separate Gander from New York and thus carry more passengers at the present rate of 9½ cents a mile.

If all scheduled New York-London flying becomes nonstop, Gander and Shannon will continue to serve the smaller, slower planes, the air freighters and the private air yachts. These outposts will always be held in warm regard by the masters of the big air liners as the first to provide refuge in either the Old or New World in the event of trouble, for Gander and Shannon lie on the great-circle route, and thus bracket the shortest distance between New York and London.

Gander airport was created 10 years ago, while the international air lines were still thinking of using flying boats for transatlantic travel. The original plan was to build a great seaplane base on Gander Lake with a supplementary airport on the adjoining plateau.

The main base was to be called Gander, after the lake; but shortly after work began, the plans were revised, the original decision was reversed and the land base was made the chief airport.

When you drop in on this halfway house of the world lying 120 miles northwest of St. John's, the capital city, you wait in the spacious lounge of the Terminal Building while your plane is being refueled and the first thing that strikes you is that people laugh and talk a lot at Gander. Particularly is this true after planes arrive from Berlin, Copenhagen, Oslo, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Rome, Prague and Vienna. Their passengers at first look for someone to order them around, tell them what

The Terminal Building is a reconverted R.A.F. hangar held over from the war. Along one side of the lounge are the offices of the eight companies flying the Atlantic through Gander—American, Pan American and Trans-World Air Lines; British Overseas Airways, Trans-Canada Air Lines, Air France, KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines and Scandinavian Airlines Systems (representing Denmark, Norway and Sweden).

Restaurants seat 300 people and meals are served at all hours. There are snack bars, liquor bars and movies to help pass the time when weather delays flights, and overnight accommodations. The telephone and cable connects to all parts of the world and there is even a hospital, named as a memorial to the renowned Doctor Banting, discoverer of insulin, who died in an air crash near Gander early in the war.

All this may be news to the thousands of American airmen who passed through Gander in bombers and transports en route to and from war and to the Americans who used the airport when it was first opened for civilian flying in October, 1945. If you landed at Gander then, you found that the only housing available were the military huts and hangars left behind by the Air Forces. One hangar, filled with old, rickety furniture, became the waiting room.

Military huts scattered all over the field were pressed into service as sleeping quarters for travelers forced to remain overnight. A number of these huts were fitted with double-tier military bunks and when you got up in the morning you faced a long walk to the dining hall, a converted noncommissioned officers' mess, where you lined up for breakfast. Passengers arriving late at night were forced to sit up in the drafty hangar huddled in blankets. The present all-in-one Terminal is indeed an enormous improvement and most of the credit must go to Mr. J. M. (Jim) Eaton, vice-president of American Overseas Airlines who co-ordinated the entire job of modernization, with the Newfoundland government and the air lines contributing to its upkeep.

The new passenger Terminal is only the first step in the reconversion of Gander to peacetime needs. The new radar and radio blind-landing system—Ground Controlled Approach—has been installed by Pan American World Airways, and the

