

Rare Gander Related Patch

We managed to procure an extremely rare patch related to the wartime aircraft traffic through Gander. It is from Consolidated Aircraft and was worn as a breast patch by crews attached to the RAF Ferry Command (RAFFC), flying B-24 bombers made at the Consolidated factory in San Diego for the RAF. These crews flew the bombers primarily from San Diego to Montreal but quite often continued on to England via Gander or the Labrador - Iceland route.



This patch is clearly identified with both Consolidated Aircraft, the RAFFC and the B24. But for me, what associates it the most with the British war effort is the letter "V", given also in Morse code. However, anyone interested in Morse code will see they have it backwards! The V for Victory should be " ...- " and not "-..." which is B.

This V for Victory became an extremely powerful rallying symbol for the Allies. For those unfamiliar with this symbolism, and especially people interested in marketing, communications or social psychology, a quick Internet research would be both useful and entertaining.

In September 1935 Consolidated moved to its new "Building 1", a 247,000-square-foot (22,900 m²) continuous flow factory in San Diego, California. Consolidated became famous during the 1920s and 1930s for its line of flying boats. The most successful was the PBY Catalina, which was produced throughout World War II. The first production PBY Catalina was launched in San Diego Bay in 1936, The XB-24 Liberator prototype first flew in December 1939 and the first production order was from the French in 1940 just before their surrender to Germany. Six of these YB-24 Liberators were designated LB-30A and were then meant to be ferried to Britain.

Consolidated began making the B-24A (known initially to RAF as LB-30s, LB probably meaning "Land Based") in 1941. The first LB-30A made its maiden flight on January 17, 1941. Deliveries of the six LB-30As began in March 1941. These LB-30s were delivered to RAF crews at Montreal for transfer to England. The RAF found that their lack of superchargers and self-sealing fuel tanks made them totally unacceptable for combat over Europe. These six airplanes were then assigned from March 1941 onward as unarmed transports on the Trans-Atlantic Return Ferry Service. This rather unusual airline was established mainly to fly aircrews back through Gander to Montreal to take delivery of the large numbers of American aircraft being built for the British war effort. All armament was removed and a number of crew comfort accessories were added. At the time, they were the only aircraft capable of

flying the 2994-mile nonstop route between Prestwick and Montreal.

This Consolidated-RAFFC badge was probably based on an earlier "normal" company badge:



After 1943, Consolidated merged with another company and the name was changed to Consolidated-Vultee which very shortly after became Convair. The Consolidated-RAFFC badge is therefore extremely rare, having existed only from 1941-1943.