

First Gander Tower Administration Building

This is an article from the "The War Illustrated", published in Britain every 10 days or so to support the war effort during World War two.

On page 295 of volume 5, no 113, of 29 November 1941 there was a nice one-page item on the Ferry Command in Gander.

November 29th, 1941 *The War Illustrated* 295

Flying the Atlantic Is Ferry Command's Job



LOCKHEED HUDSONS getting ready to take off on their transatlantic hops from a Newfoundland airfield.

CRossing the Atlantic in an aeroplane, which, only a few years ago, was such a hazardous feat, is now a routine job. Indeed, some R.A.F. pilots look upon Atlantic ferrying as a rest from operational flying. A pilot officer, in a recent broadcast, gave two main reasons why flying the Atlantic is now such a comparatively simple job. "First," he said, "because America is building and supplying us with fine aircraft. Secondly, because each flight is planned to the last detail."

The A.O.C.-in-C., R.A.F. Ferry Command, Canada, takes delivery of American-built aircraft from the Flight Ferry Command of the U.S. Army Air Corps and is responsible to the Air Council for their delivery in Great Britain.

From the factories in Canada or America the planes to be delivered to Britain are taken to Newfoundland, where the real business of ferrying starts. Pilot and navigator are informed by the meteorological experts of weather conditions right across the Atlantic. The captain of the aircraft then decides whether and when he will take off. Next, the aircraft, which is under an armed guard, is examined in every detail, the petrol tanks are filled, and after a final conference with the weather experts the crew is ready to take off.

The coast of Newfoundland is left behind and the aircraft climbs rapidly through the clouds to a great height where there is no moisture in the air to ice up the wings and airscrews. As soon as it is dark the navigator checks his position by the stars, the automatic pilot is plugged in, and the crew settles down for the night. The navigator is the only one with much to do. The remainder read or talk and there is plenty of food and drink to sustain them on the trip.

The average duration of the trip is about ten hours. Eventually the aircraft makes its appointed landing on the other side of the ocean. As the pilot officer remarked: "It's satisfying to descend through a hole in the cloud and find yourself in exactly the right spot at the right time. It's a grand feeling."



Above, the control desk in the control tower of a Newfoundland airport. The O.C. control tower watches an incoming aircraft through his glasses.



Above, right, an R.A.F. corporal maintaining communication between the home airport and a home-bound machine.



FERRY COMMAND is responsible for the organization of the service which flies aircraft built in N. America across the Atlantic to Britain. Above, a Lockheed Hudson winging its way across the vast expanse of the ocean. Above, right, an R.A.F. corporal maintaining communication between the home airport and a home-bound machine.

Photos, British Official. Crown Copyright

Here is a zoom on the inside of the tower:



Gander was an important subject in 1941 as this was the second time it was covered in an article in *The War Illustrated*. There was an earlier one in January but being a 2-page spread, it is presently hard to scan.

The photo below from the 1950 *Atlantic Guardian* give a close-up of the working area nary a computer in sight, even many aircraft to control at a given moment.



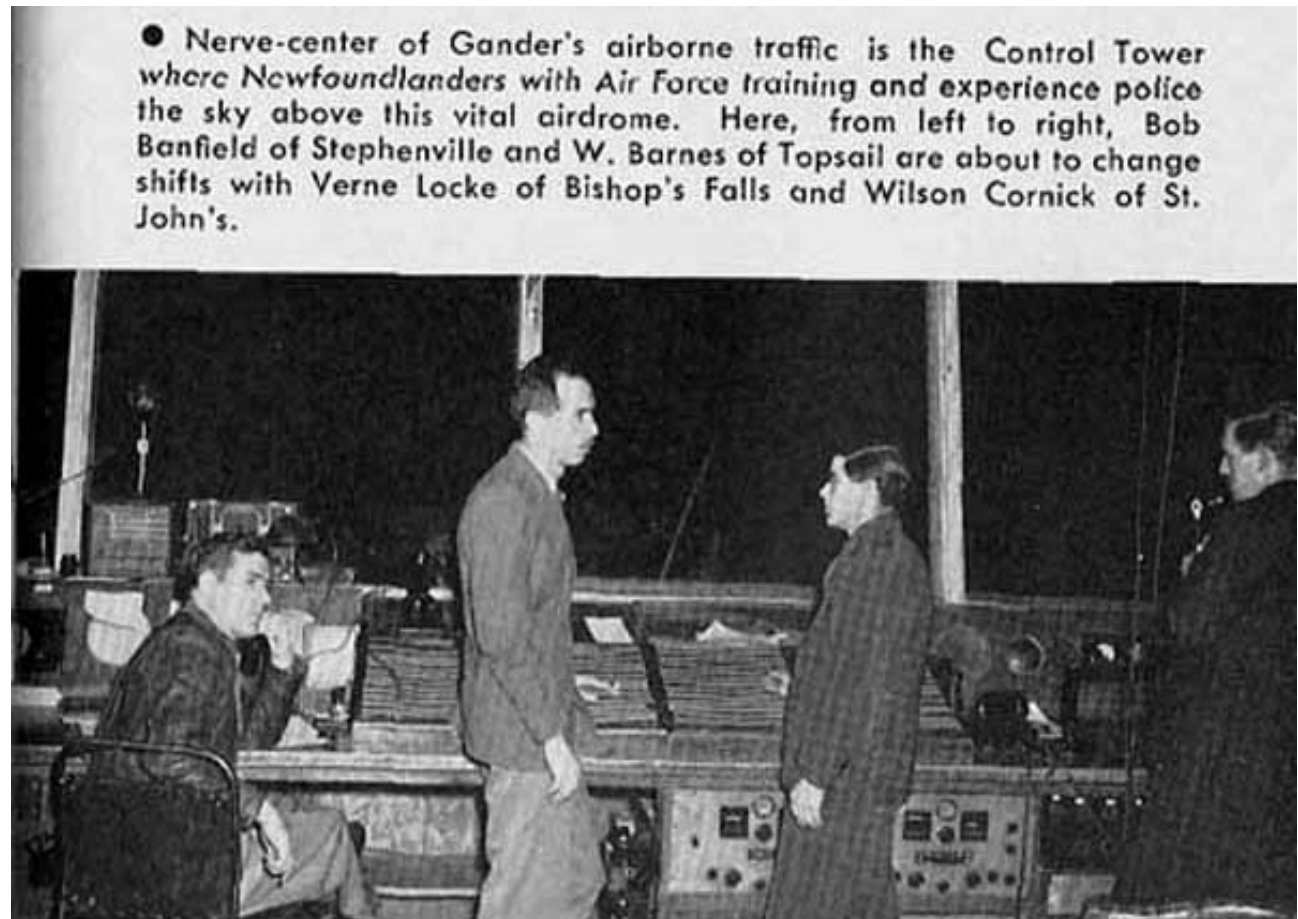
The tower can be seen on the top of the Administration Bldg:



The tower by the old terminal (former Ferry Command hanger 21-22 complex) is shown below in two photos courtesy of Carol Walsh:



Here is another 1950 Atlantic Guardian photo:



These old control towers of wood, glass and a few radios don't look like much by modern standards, but they were manned by well-trained people. These folks could help a few Hudsons start the trans-Atlantic adventure in 1940 or later in the war to herd off a hundred or so B-17 Flying Fortress or B-24 Liberator bombers in a single batch without batting an eye.

Luckily this tradition has been maintained over time. Just asked the crews and passengers of the gaggle of airplanes who were very happy to drop in for a few days on a certain September 11.