



THE MAPLE LEAF AIRLINE

Trans-Canada Air Lines / Part Three: The Post-War Years

In the concluding part of his major series on the history of Trans-Canada Air Lines, **MAURICE WICKSTEAD** explains how the end of the Second World War ushered in a golden age for Canada's state-owned carrier, which rapidly expanded its domestic and international services with the most modern propliners before entering the jet age in 1960

THE DELIVERY OF Trans-Canada Air Lines' first three Douglas DC-3s late in 1945 heralded significant improvements to domestic and regional services. Availability of the type was limited until wartime Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) squadrons were disbanded, after which TCAL's total DC-3 fleet climbed to 30 examples over the next couple of years. The first TCAL DC-3 service took place on November 1, 1945, between Toronto and New York, one of several bilateral routes enabled by newly issued US Foreign Carrier Permits. Other cross-border destinations included Boston, Chicago, Cleveland and briefly, Duluth in Minnesota. Several new domestic points were also added, most notably across the Prairies, while Toronto—Winnipeg could now be routed directly across the Great Lakes, and the addition of the DC-3 to the fleet permitted Vancouver to be reached straight across the Rockies from Calgary.

In May 1948 one of TCAL's DC-3s was involved in an unfortunate incident, which led to the airline being brought before the courts. Preoccupied with the let-down into Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, the DC-3 pilot unwittingly overflew a mink farm, advised in a Notam, causing the animals to run amok. An attempt to sue the airline was dismissed, however, on the basis of passenger safety being of more importance.

With a full complement of DC-3s in service, TCAL's Lockheed 18s were retired in October

1948, their last scheduled route being Toronto—North Bay—Porquus Junction—Kapuskasung. While awaiting arrival of its own Canadair North Star four-engined propliners, TCAL was loaned six unpressurised examples from the RCAF, these first appearing on the transatlantic run on April 15, 1947, flying from Goose Bay to Prestwick in 8hr 39min. From June that year Shannon in Ireland became an alternate refuelling stop.

NORTH STAR INTO SERVICE

In 1947 almost 16,000 passengers were carried across the Atlantic by TCAL, helping towards a modest surplus of \$136,000. Deliveries of TCAL's own pressurised North Stars commenced in early October 1947, with one of these aircraft involved in a dramatic rescue shortly afterwards. Westbound out of Prestwick, a TCAL North Star picked up a distress call from American

International Airways Boeing 314 flying-boat NC18612, *Bermuda Sky Queen*, dangerously low on fuel after battling gale-force headwinds en route to Newfoundland. TCAL Capt Steve Albulet located the stricken aircraft and guided it to an ocean alighting close to weathership *Ocean Station Charlie*, 500 miles (800km) east of Gander, Newfoundland, to where the 62 passengers and crew were transferred. The Boeing was ultimately sunk as a hazard to shipping.

TCAL's long-held aspiration of serving the Caribbean became a reality on May 1, 1948, with the inauguration of a twice-weekly service non-stop to Bermuda via Nassau and Kingston, Jamaica, flown by North Star CF-TFR. From December 2 the same year Barbados and Trinidad were added to the regional network. With the Atlantic routes now functioning satisfactorily, it was expected that TCAL would turn towards the

With its Rolls-Royce Merlin engines roaring and its distinctive steerable nosewheel turned to starboard, Trans-Canada Airlines Canadair North Star CF-TFJ, fleet number "210", is marshalled to its parking spot after another flight. In 1947 TCAL North Stars set three world records: Montreal—London in 10hr 30min; Shannon—Montreal in 12hr 57min and Vancouver—Montreal in 6hr 52min.

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