

Early Aviation History of Lac du Bonnet

continued from inside

Residents of Lac du Bonnet worked for, and with the air and ground crews and remember this part of their past history.

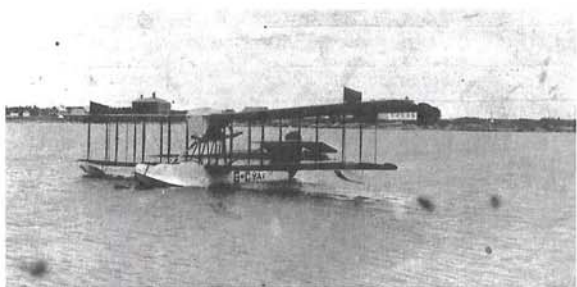
Throughout the 1920's, 30's and 40's, companies such as Western Canada Airways (later called Canadian Airways) Starratt Airways, Wings Limited, Canadian Pacific Airlines, Central Northern Airways, Trans Air, and other commercial and private operators, used Lac du Bonnet as their base of operations.

Throughout the following years other airlines followed the "Pioneers" in providing air service to the remote areas of Canada from the Lac du Bonnet Airport. They were A&V Air Service, Wendigo Wings, Air Park, Rotorways and Whiteshell Air Service. Today, Provincial Helicopters and



Bellanca Aircruiser CF-BTW, one of only 12 Built. Used extensively in Manitoba.

- Courtesy H.P. Smith Collection



HS2L Flying Boat, first aircraft to land at Lac du Bonnet.

- Courtesy Thea Anderstedt

Adventure Air carry on the tradition.

Eighty years later, the Manitoba Government continues their summer operations from the original location.

From our past history, one can see that aviation played a significant role in the cultural, economic and social life of our community. The Vickers Vedette is a significantly unique aircraft to remind us of our past and will further enhance the cairn (erected by the Lac du Bonnet Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee 2012) already in place that commemorate the existence of RCAF Station Lac du Bonnet.



Canadian Airways Junkers CF-ATF Based at Lac du Bonnet 1940, now in National Aviation Museum, Ottawa. Picture taken at Bissett, pilot Matt Berry.

- Courtesy H.P. Smith Collection



Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee
Phone 204-345-8916 • vergo@mymts.net
Lac du Bonnet, Manitoba, Canada

www.lacdubonnetheritage.ca

Celebrating Lac du Bonnet Aviation History



M.G.A.S. Vickers Vedette CF-MAC used on Forest Fire Patrol 1932-1937. Last Vedette to operate in Manitoba.

- Courtesy H.P. Smith Collection

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- Prepared by Gord Emberley CM



R.C.A.F. Vedettes at Lac du Bonnet 1930.
- Courtesy H.P. Smith Collection

The first recorded use of Lac du Bonnet as a base of operations for an aircraft is July of 1922 when the Canadian Air Force (pre RCAF 1924) was conducting aerial survey work in the area. Western Canada Airways followed in 1926 and the RCAF in 1927.

In 1924 Canadian Vickers of Montreal designed and built the Vedette flying boat for the RCAF and they operated a number of these aircraft out of Lac du Bonnet until 1933. The Vickers Vedette is significant in that it was the first Canadian designed and built airplane in Canada.

Due to the "depression of 1929" and the transfer of the Natural Resources to the provinces, there was a cutback in Civil Operations and layoffs of RCAF personnel. In

1932, following negotiations between the Dominion Government and the Province of Manitoba, the RCAF turned over four Mk.II and one Mk.VA Vedette flying boats to the province for the sum of \$1.00 each with the proviso that the Manitoba Government would employ ex RCAF pilots who has been released from active service. This was the start of the

Manitoba Government Air Service and the construction of its main base of Operation and Maintenance in Lac du Bonnet.

Later another Mk.II and a newer Mk.V Vedette were added to the fleet. The last of the seven Vedette aircraft to fly was registered CF-MAG and it was withdrawn from service in 1937. The service history of the Vedette and its pilots and engineers is well recorded in the annals of Canadian aviation accomplishments.

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M.G.A.S. Headquarters Building, Beaver and Otter Aircraft in foreground.
Background - C.P.R. Station and Imperial Oil Storage Tanks 1958.

- Courtesy H.P. Smith Collection



Vickers Vedette CF-MAG being burned
near Cormorant Lake 1937 after being written-off.

- Courtesy H.P. Smith Collection