

DANIEL STARER

All these photocopies are  
from the Pan Am installations at  
Pointe de Chene, New Brunswick.

The Moncton Museum has negatives.  
Would you like photographs of any  
shots?

PAN-AMERICAN CLIPPERS

Shediac's contribution to aviation history did not end with Balbo's visit. From 1932-1934, a seaplane detachment from the Royal Canadian Air Force flew coastal patrols out of the famed resort area. In 1937, radio beam facilities were established, permitting radio equipped Royal Canadian Mounted Police aircraft to combat rum-running and smuggling boats operating on the Atlantic Coast.

Shediac's reputation as an ideal landing spot for seaplanes once again gained international recognition when, on July 19th, 1937, the Pan-American Clipper III, piloted by Captain Harold Gray, landed on Shediac Bay. Concluding a 900 mile non-stop journey from west to east, Captain Gray's surveys showed that trans-Atlantic flights were possible.

Shediac eventually became a regular stop on the airline's service from New York to Southampton, England, via Botwood, Newfoundland. Pan-American established a base on the Point du Chêne wharf that included moorings in sheltered water, a floating dock with a gangway to the pier, an administrative building, and a wireless station.

From 1937 to 1939, many celebrities, including Queen Wilhemina of the Netherlands, actors Bob Hope and Edward G. Robinson, and Rear Admiral Leahy of the U.S. Navy, flew on the Pan-American Clipper Ships and landed for a short time in Shediac. Pan-American interrupted its trans-Atlantic service at the beginning of the Second World War, but resumed once again in 1942 and maintained it until 1945. By then, flying boats were becoming antiquated as airlines would soon use land facilities almost exclusively.

## Balbo's Armada

On July 13th, 1933, Italian General Italo Balbo Minister of Aviation in Mussolini's Cabinet, and an armada of twenty-four Savoia Marchetti S-55 flying boats landed on Shediac Bay. The fleet, having left from Orotello near Rome, was on its way to the Century of Progress Exhibition in Chicago as part of a goodwill tour marking the tenth anniversary of Fascism in Italy. This was the first massed flight of aircraft ever to cross the Atlantic.

Over 15,000 spectators came to watch the aeroplanes land on Shediac Bay. The moorings stretched out a mile and a half, from Lower Shediac to Pointe du Chêne. Balbo was so impressed with the excellent facilities that twelve days later, while flying back to Italy, the flotilla returned to the waters of Shediac Bay. This was the only location visited twice by Balbo's armada.

To celebrate his historic visit, Balbo took part in a special ribbon cutting ceremony renaming Shediac's Pleasant Street Balbo Avenue. However, Balbo Avenue lasted only a short time. It was changed back to its original name during World War II, as the townspeople decided that they did not want to commemorate the enemy.















