

Background on Shediac and Pointe du Chene
for Follett research:

The town of Shediac, in New Brunswick, Canada, which is one of the three Maritime Provinces (the others are Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island) is one of Canada's oldest coastal resort areas. Settled by Acadian French (the "Evangeline" people) and English/Scots, its harbor provided a safe one running in from Northumberland Strait, a body of water about 20 miles wide and forty long, an arm of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Shediac Bay is horseshoe-shaped and resembles rather strikingly that of Corpus Christi, Texas.

It has a yacht marina and wharf but its port is actually to the east of the bay at Pointe du Chene, three miles by road and one by water from the actual town. At Pointe du Chene (Oak Point in English) there is a large fishermen's wharf which was built originally as a railroad terminal to meet ferry steamers from Prince Edward Island and freight and passenger ships out of the St. Lawrence and North Shore Nova Scotia in sailing days. It was built in 1853 and extended several times later. The railroad tracks have been removed for some ~~20~~ years. Accompanying pictures will show the shape of the facilities as they are today and were in Pan-Am days.

The village of Pointe du Chene was settled first as a stevedoring community but, because of its magnificent sand beaches came to be a major summer resort destination after the railway began running in 1859. The wharf was begun in 1853 to accommodate the little European and North American Railway which was intended to carry inland people from Canada and the U.S. to ports of departure for Europe at Shediac and Halifax, N.S. and or Charlottetown, P.E.I. by ship.

in the present century, starting around 1915, Pointe du Chene attracted well-to-do summer people who built large cottages somewhat on the style of Cape May, N.J., and indeed The Point is something of a smaller version of that once-famous resort.

The water in Northumberland Strait is the warmest north of Cape Hatteras in N. Carolina because the strait is shallow and warms quickly in late spring. There are, near the approaches of the wharf, great stretches of hard sand at low tides and beyond... about a mile east of the wharves....there are great sand dune beaches that stretch for miles and are, in fact, some of the best soft sand stretches on salt water in all of North America, not unlike the Pacific strands near San Diego and "Anne of Green Gables" shores on the north side of Prince Edward Island.

On the north shore of Shediac Bay are the oldest Acadian settlements in the district, dating from 1760's. On the western shore, for a stretch of some four miles, yeomen and merchants from London and Yorkshire settled, beginning in 1785, alongside Americans who fled the Revolution, remaining loyal to the British crown and known in Canada simply as "The Loyalists."

If Pointe du Chene has some resemblances--or had more so 30/40 years ago--the atmosphere of a smaller Cape May, then the Town of Shediac had and still has something of the look of a colonial coastal town in South Carolina or Georgia. It still boasts the Shediac Inn where the pilots and crews and execs. of Pan-Am stayed. It was built around 1850 at which time there were some five hotels because vessels in sailing days brought summer people from central Canada and the railroad brought them from other Canadian provinces and seaboard United States. The inn is seen in accompanying pictures. (I am not able to reach better ones at my country place at the moment.)

In turn, Shediac which once was extremely busy port with deal lumber for Britain and Europe, for fish export...Shediac calls itself the "Lobster capital of the world" (Capital d'Homard du Monde) and in other days shipped 100,000 tons of potatoes^{yearly} to places as distant as the farthest West Indies, East Coast U.S.A. and through the canal after 1914 to the Pacificis some 15 miles from the regional transportation and distributing centre of Moncton which has about 100,000 residents and an international (when needed) and national airport. It was already active in Pan-Am days for land-based aircraft. The airport is about eight miles from Shediac Bay.

When the flying boats of Pan-Am gained altitude over Shediac Island, half a mile from the Pointe du Chêne wharf, they could offer a fine view of much of Prince Edward Island, one of the loveliest pastoral, still fully-farmed, islands on the continent (or in the water beside it). As well, passengers could see the huge Gulf of St. Lawrence and if the path went a few miles northward before heading to the Atlantic and over N.S., they could get a glimpse of historic Gaspé peninsula at Quebec's eastern tip.....The flight path would be over the Magdalen Islands (les Iles Madeleine) en route to Gander or Botwood in Newfoundland which in Pan-Am's time was just ending its career as a British dominion and become the tenth Canadian province.

When facilities such as offices, waiting rooms and storage sheds were erected for Pan-Am, they could be served by railway and automotive transportation. The end of the wharves were a Mecca for strollers who could walk from the village which was about a quarter mile back along the jetty. Watching the flying boats coming in for landings and later taking off was one of the thrills of the period. They slipped down gracefully but lumbered away on take-off, taking long runs out of the protected bay before rising off Cap Brulé and over the sprawling lobster-packing plants at Cap Binet and over Barachois and past Cap Pelé en route to P.E.I. If the drift were slightly southeastward, the passengers would see the huge wharves at Cape Tormentine where the world's largest ferries (literally today because they are massive ice-breakers) ply between mainland New Brunswick and P.E.I. with its vast potato fields and golf courses and sand dunes as high as those in coastal Brittany.

When Pan-Am flew, the yacht marina was at Shediac town but now, while it remains and is enlarged, the larger and poshest is within the breakwater at the Pointe du Chêne wharf. (technically, the name should be Pointe au Chêne (point of oak trees) but somewhere along the way got corrupted.)

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An unique feature of Pointe du Chéne village is that most of the land is owned by the Church of England diocese and the land rented to residents and cottagers. This is a holdover from the days when the Anglican church was a state church in Canada and was granted such tracts to support parishes, in this case St. Martin-in-the Wood at Shediac Cape, immediately across the mile-wide bay from Pointe du Chéne .

From the Pt. du C. wharf in 1938/39 the high white steeple of the Catholic church, established at GrandeDigue (Big Dyke literally) in 1768 at a place called Grande Digue. The French explorer Nicholas Denys had been there a century earlier. The church, a landmark, is about about three miles up the bay and harbor and marks its northern limit.

The copied pages should provide a little more detail concerning actual operation of Pan-Am.

My regards to Mr. Follett. Will he be doing this much research for each of the Pan-Am flying boat stops?

J.E.B.

Then,

This fellow
sent info. on some
subjects I didn't
request. Here it
is anyway

Don