

An Air France Constellation runs off a Gander runway

(by Robert G Pelley, 2017-11-14)

<http://bobsganderhistory.com>

The last website article gave the details of an accident where a Seaboard and Western DC-4 ran off a runway in early winter 1955. It was rebuilt and put back in operation by the maintenance crew in Gander.

<http://bobsganderhistory.com/SWGenevaAirTrader.pdf>

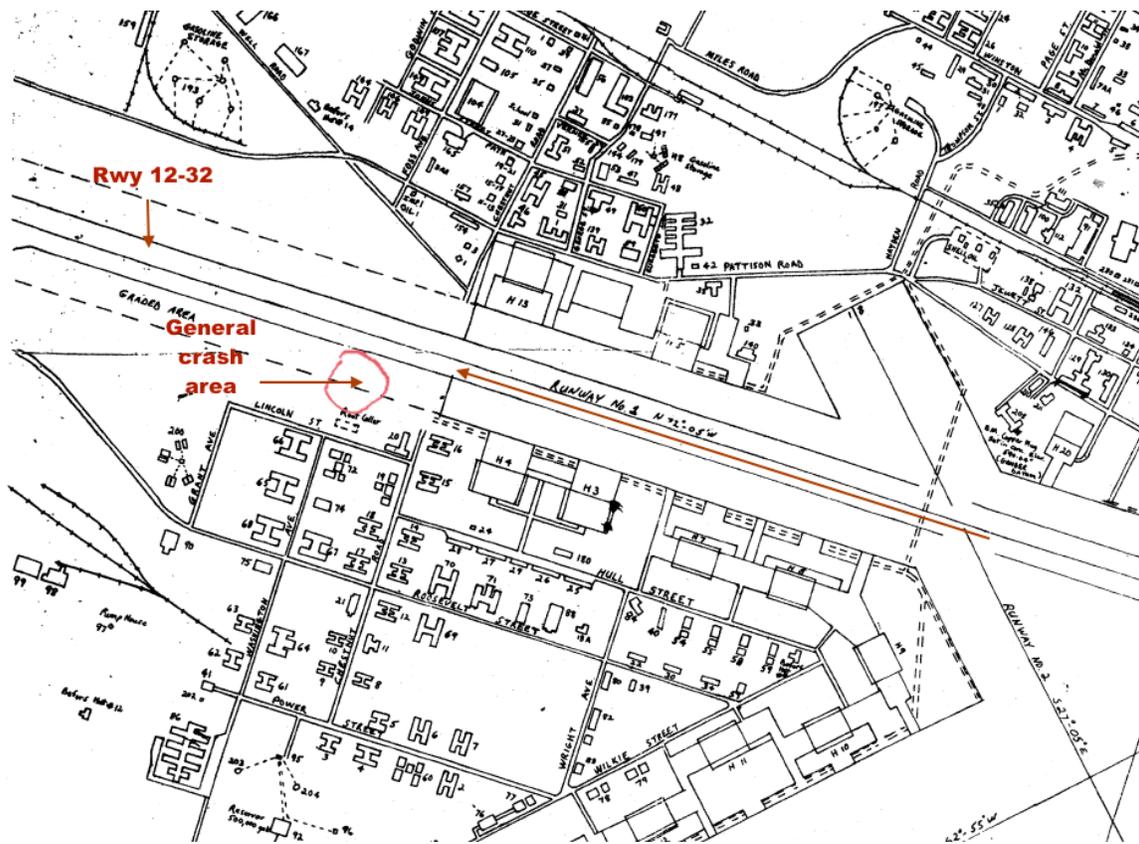
But an Air France airplane was not quite so lucky the year before, in a somewhat similar accident in the summer. There was no formal inquiry and no official accident report. However, the two websites from France listed at the end of the article provide quite enough information to give us an excellent understanding of the event.

At 21h45 local time on 25 August 1954, the aircraft, flown by Captain Casse and co-pilot Roger Saoul, started its approach to Gander in good weather. Using a standard approach, the four engine aircraft landed normally from the east onto runway 32.

It was a Lockheed L-749 Constellation with the French registration F-BAZI. The flight number was AF075, on a run Paris – Shannon – Gander – New York – Mexico City.

This aircraft had been taken over from the manufacturer at Orly airport on 02 June 1947 and had flown 17036 miles at the time of the accident.

After touchdown, when the captain reversed the thrust on the engines as per normal procedure, the aircraft started to veer to the left. Despite several corrections such as gentle braking, attempting to turn the nose wheel and adding power on engines 1 and 2, the aircraft continued to the left down the runway. It overran and straddled a ditch, losing its undercarriage.



While all 9 crewmembers and 58 passengers were evacuated safely, the aircraft was damaged beyond repair.



(photo Tom Pelley, Air France employee)



(photo by Jean-Richard Saoul)

The following damage was noted:

- right landing gear pushed up into the flaps
- left landing gear pushed into the wing
- nose wheel driven into the fuselage
- props (Curtiss Wright 850.2C20) and hubs bent
- engine nacelles very probably damaged
- fuselage bent downward

Department of Transport personnel examined the situation on 26 August and declared that the crew of F-BAZI had respected current regulations, that the crew and passengers got out safely and that there were no third-party damages. DOT therefore declared its investigation completed.

The approach to Gander Airport was normal and the aircraft was under control until touchdown. No technical anomalies were found on the aircraft and all piloting techniques were normal.

In terms of possible causes, pilot reports indicated that on leaving Orly, the aircraft was quite difficult to maneuver during a turn to the right. As well, at the time of landing in Gander, the runway was wet and a 90° lateral wind was blowing to 16 knots, which could have been a contributory factor.

An examination of the aircraft by Air France led to the conclusion that the cost of repairs would be greater than the value of the airplane and that repairs would take over a year. It was therefore considered a write-off and because it was not insured, Air France decided to take the following action as soon as possible:

- dismantling of certain parts for immediate workshop analysis in Orly
- dismantling of certain assemblies, with temporary storage in a vacant hanger in Gander, before later analysis in Paris
 - props and related control systems
 - wheels, brakes and lines
 - nose wheel and steering system

The airplane lost its registration in May 1955 and was sold to TransOcean Airlines. Final destruction was carried out in September 1960.

Main sources of information:

http://aviatechno.net/constellation/suivi_matricule.php?mat=F-BAZI

<http://www.baaa-acro.com>

(NB: On occasion clicking on the websites in this article does not function. If so, please copy and paste in a new web browser page.)