

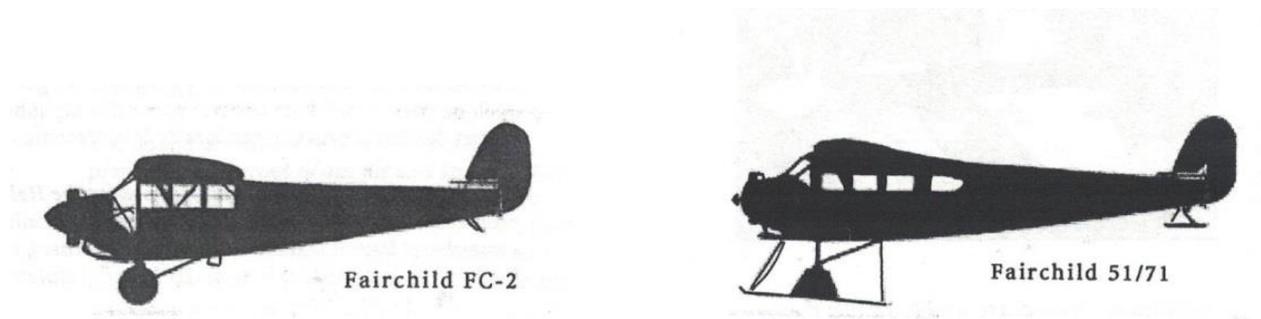
Beyond the Sunset #7

By George Fuller

The second Fairchild FC-2 monoplane acquired by the Canadian Department of National Defence was flown from the manufacturer's airfield at Farmingdale, New York to Rockcliffe airport, Ottawa in late October, 1927. It was piloted by Squadron Leader John Henry Tudhope. The aircraft was an early version of the FC-2 with the three longeron rear fuselage that inspired the sobriquet "Razorback". Assigned to airmail experimental flying for the Post Office Department it was registered G-CYYT. Although it was officially "taken on strength" on 4th November 1927, by then it had already been put to work.

On Tuesday, 1 November the new FC-2, painted silver overall with black lettering and piloted by Tudhope, with passengers J. A. Wilson, Controller of Civil Aviation and Major David Barry of the Royal Canadian Engineers, took off from Rockcliffe for a new destination. After a 70 minute flight they made the first aircraft landing at the federal government airport at Saint-Hubert, Quebec. The first 2000 foot runway had just been completed and the only building on the site was a 50 by 50 foot temporary wooden hangar. The visitors were greeted by a small party that included the engineer in charge of construction, J. A. Adam and City of Montréal Department of Public Works engineer J. L. Dansereau. After a brief inspection they flew back to Ottawa.

The experimental program to expedite delivery of mail carried by trans-Atlantic passenger ships to and from St. Lawrence River ports had begun earlier in the year. With the Pointe-au-Père pilot boat "Jalobert" linking ship to shore, selected mail was flown between Rimouski, Quebec and Montréal by flying boats. Completion of a rudimentary airfield at Rimouski made it feasible to use more efficient and economical land-planes.



On Friday, 5 November Squadron leader Tudhope in G-CYYT brought mail from Ottawa and Montréal to Rimouski for forwarding to the outbound White Star "Megantic". In the following week he was back in Rimouski to pick up mail from the inbound Canadian Pacific Steamships "Montnairn" on November 11th. Saint Hubert airport's first airplane continued in government service for many years. In early 1931 its "Razorback" fuselage was changed to the newer four longeron configuration. The original 220 h.p. Wright J-5 radial engine was replaced with a 300 h.p. Pratt & Whitney Wasp Junior A. It thus became a Fairchild 51A, taking on RCAF number 627 and an overall yellow colour. During World War II it was released by the government and taken over by Austin Airways with the new civil registration CF-BVY.

Eventually in late 1947 it was withdrawn from use. Its wings, empennage and floats were used to convert Austin Airways Fairchild 71B CF- BVI into a Fairchild 51/71. In this form it survived until July, 1949 when it was wrecked in Northern Ontario. The remains of BVI were salvaged in 1962 by Northern Aircraft Services of Port Stanley, Ontario. Their eventual disposition should be investigated. Meanwhile it is encouraging to know that a reproduction of a "Razorback" Fairchild FC-2 is being built by the Canadian Aviation Heritage Centre at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, Québec.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Fuller". The ink is dark and the signature is centered on the page.

Sources:

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