



THE FLYING W IN CANADA

THE BELLANCA AIRCRUISER IN THE GREAT WHITE NORTH

With the advent of ever-larger and more capable transport aircraft in the 1930s, mining companies and bush operators in the more remote regions of Canada were quick to see the benefits of a rugged, economical aerial workhorse for their transport requirements.

PETER MARSHALL chronicles the use of the Bellanca Aircruiser in Canada



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

ABOVE By the start of the 1930s, the aircraft designs of Giuseppe Bellanca had established a reputation for reliability and ruggedness, largely thanks to the achievements of the Wright-Bellanca WB-2, named Columbia. It had set an endurance record of more than 51hr aloft in April 1927, followed by a transatlantic flight that June; it also set other long-distance records until its destruction in a fire in 1934.

MAIN PICTURE Showing to good advantage the Aircruiser's distinctive lower stub wings and "lifting struts", which gave rise to its nickname "The Flying W", CF-AWR is seen here on floats. It was operating the Radium Silver Express service for the Eldorado Mining Company, for which W. Leigh Brintnell's Mackenzie Air Service provided aircrew and maintenance.

PHILIP JARRETT COLLECTION



WHEN AVIATION PIONEERS planned their adventurous transoceanic hops of the late 1920s and 1930s, more often than not they visited

New Castle, Delaware, on the USA's east coast, where Italian-born Giuseppe Mario Bellanca had located his small aircraft factory. The speed and efficiency of his designs were far superior to those of most of his contemporaries such as Stinson, Curtiss, Cessna and Fairchild. As a result, a Bellanca aircraft was the first choice for many early long-distance flights. All of the manufacturers of the day were keen to establish new world records to promote their products, which were proving difficult to sell during the Great Depression.

Charles Lindbergh originally opted to acquire Wright-Bellanca WB-2 *Columbia* for his attempt on the first solo flight across the Atlantic, but Bellanca's financial backer and partner, Charles Levine, felt that a better-known pilot like Clarence Chamberlin would garner bigger headlines. Lindbergh, famously, bought a Ryan monoplane instead and *Columbia* came second, crossing the Atlantic a month after Lindbergh's historic flight. Although the Bellanca machine had set a non-stop and endurance record by flying from Long Island to Germany, nothing could touch the public awareness and appeal of Lindbergh's solo effort.

THE FLEDGLING TRANSPORT MARKET

In the meantime, thanks to lucrative air mail contracts and increasing public interest in aviation, the fledgling airline business was developing quickly. Many manufacturers started to cater to the air carriers' demands for faster aircraft capable of moving large payloads on frequent scheduled services. Bellanca, supported by the DuPont millions after an agreement signed with the industrial giant in 1927, built a few more innovative one-off designs for record flights before turning his attention to the burgeoning transport aircraft market.

By mid-1929 Bellanca's CH-200 six-place high-wing cabin monoplane of 1928 had evolved into the re-