

Quebec Aviation Hall of Distinction

ROMÉO VACHON



- French-Canadian bush pilot
- Canada's first licensed pilot engineer
- 1937 McKee Trophy winner
- Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame inductee
- Quebec Air and Space Hall of Fame inductee

Joseph Pierre Roméo Vachon was born in 1898 in Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce, Que., and is the most recognized of the flying Vachon brothers. He served as an engineer in the Royal Canadian Navy from December 1917 until his discharge in 1919, shortly after the end of WWI. In 1920, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force and earned his mechanic's licence the following year, which he insisted be issued in French.

That same year, he joined Laurentide Air Service at Lac-à-la-Tortue, Que., and became the base air engineer. He participated in numerous fire-detection operations as a mechanic and navigator. On January 6, 1923, he obtained his commercial pilot's licence from the flight school operated by General Motors in Dayton, OH and two months later, his Canadian licence. Roméo Vachon thus became the first French-Canadian bush pilot and Canada's first licensed pilot engineer.

From 1925 to 1928, he joined the Ontario Provincial Air Service, then Canadian Transcontinental Airways which was starting a mail service along the St. Lawrence. Piloting a Fairchild FC-2W, he made the first mail deliveries between La Malbaie, Sept-Îles, and Anticosti Island as well as starting a passenger service between Rimouski, Montréal, and Toronto.

On April 13, 1928, Vachon was one of the first to arrive, in a Fairchild FC-2, and help with the rescue of the crew of the Bremen, a Junkers W 33, recently forced to land on Greenly Island near Labrador, following the first east to west crossing of the Atlantic.

After a short stint at Saunders-Roe, he returned to Canadian Airways and in 1932, became a manager and set up new aerial transportation facilities in Labrador and Newfoundland to service the mining industry. He was awarded the McKee Trophy in 1937—Canada's highest award in the civil aviation sector—for his contribution in developing commercial aviation in northern Quebec.

At the age of 42, he joined Trans-Canada Airlines (TCA) and became station chief at the newly built airport in Dorval in 1940. After serving with the Department of Munitions and Supply during WWII, he returned to TCA and became station manager, superintendent of maintenance, and finally, regional director.

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