

FLYING A VAGUELY FAMILIAR FAVORITE

**Four-Seat Aeronca Sedan
Is A Rare Treat For
The Pilot Seeking It Out.**

By Curtis A. Davis

IT WAS A bright and sunny Sunday morning when I bounced my bones into the municipal airport at Gallatin, Tenn. A bright orange Super Cub is amazingly conspicuous, especially when it is bounced into a strange airport under the critical eyes of the local pilot gentry. To hide my embarrassment I crawled out of the Cub and into the hangar to engage in one of my favorite sports, Tire Kicking and Fabric Thumping.

I was well rewarded, for not only were there lots of tires to kick and virtual acres of fabric to thump, but tucked away into a corner was a beautifully maintained Aeronca 15 AC Sedan. I knew it was an Aeronca Sedan because I very cleverly read the large placard provided by the manufacturer on the instrument panel.

After making a few inquiries about the airplane, I got back into the Cub and partially restored my injured pride by getting it off the ground without crashing and burning. Back at the more familiar territory of the home airport I began to ask about the Aeronca Sedan and found to my dismay that very few pilots had heard of it, much less flown it.

This ignorance about what appeared to be a very nice four-place airplane fed my curiosity and led me to contact the owner of the plane I had seen, Mr. William C. Fiscus. Arrangements were made for me to fly down one Sunday to see him and fly the airplane, and a couple of months later found yours truly once again in Gallatin.



Mr. Fiscus had the airplane on the ramp and was running his preflight when I landed. Very little time was wasted in exchanging pleasantries and we got down to the business at hand.

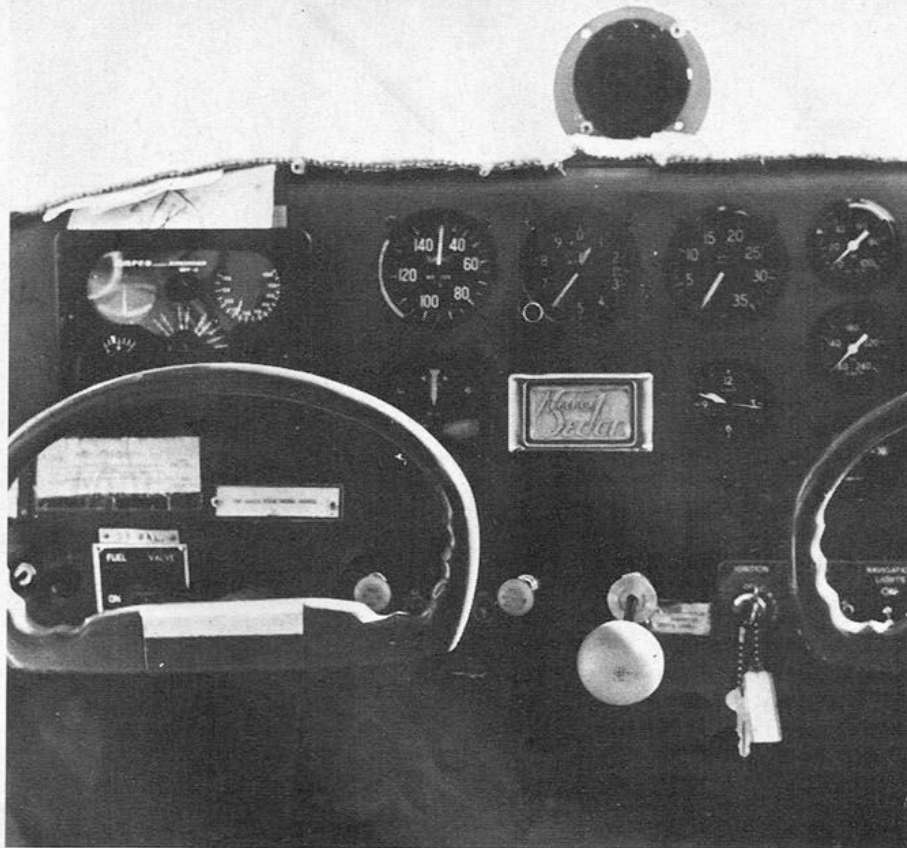
Aeronca Sedan 1119 Hotel carries serial number 49 and was built in 1948. She was delivered on the 6th of March that year, and has known only three owners. Both previous owners obviously loved the airplane, as does Mr. Fiscus. It has never been used for anything except personal transportation, and all papers and documentation from the delivery from the factory to date have been kept on the plane. Everything on the airplane is original with the exception of the seat covers, tires and fabric.



A WALK-AROUND inspection of the ship reveals her lineage. The empennage especially hints strongly at the Aeronca line, and it is only the obviousness of the four seats that keeps a stranger from assuming that it is one. The gear and the shape of the windshield also point out that this is the big brother of the familiar Chiefs and Champs. The size of the rudder and vertical stabilizer attracts immediate attention and hints at the excellent ground handling characteristics.

The plane is powered by the ubiquitous Continental 145. The engine occupies a truly cavernous space, and it is hard to realize that there really are six cylinders in there rather than four. The battery is located in the engine compartment, just under the aft motor mounts. The mags, starter, generator and other essential bits and pieces attached to the rear of the engine merely emphasize the room under the cowl. The Continental swings a McCauley fixed-pitch prop of 76 in. diameter.

Construction is conventional, with a heavy gauge tubular steel fuselage and all metal wings. The fuselage has a triangular cross section, and is faired into an oval shape through the use of wooden formers and stringers. Fabric covers the plane from the firewall aft. ➔





AERONCA

The wings are braced by single struts and contain 18-gal. tanks that carry the full fuel supply.

Entry is gained through a single door on the right, and as in all high wing aircraft some difficulty is encountered, especially for women in skirts. Once inside, however, there is plenty of room. The left seat is adjustable over a large range and easily accommodated Mr. Fiscus' 6 ft. 2 in. frame. I am about the same size and was comfortable in the right seat so long as I had my feet resting lightly on the rudder pedals.

The right seat is not adjustable and any other position led to bumping my knees on the lower edge of the panel or interfering with the free movement of the wheel. Rear seat room is very good, and I was able to sit comfortably without having my knees crushed by the seat in front of me. The 120-lb. baggage area is behind the rear seat and can only be loaded by reaching through the cabin and over the rear seat.

The panel on this particular plane is basic, containing only a turn and bank indicator, airspeed indicator, tachometer, oil temperature and oil pressure gauges, ammeter, magnetic compass and clock. All the instruments are located in the center of the panel and can be read easily from either seat.

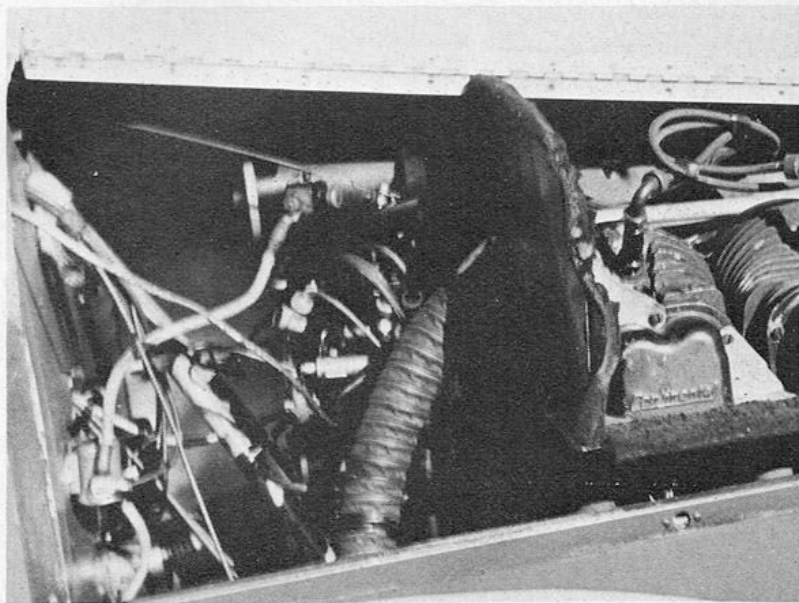
The flight controls fall, as they say, readily to hand and all the switches

are placed conveniently along the bottom of the panel. Toe brakes are mounted on the left set of pedals only. Trim is fed in by the familiar overhead crank; on this plane trim is very sensitive. Small movements of the crank make large corrections in the trim and it is easy to add too much trim until you get used to it.

Start up is completely conventional. Full rich mixture, throttle cracked and carb heat off. The plane had been sitting for over a month before this particular flight, but the engine fired instantly when the starter handle was pulled.

ON THE WAY TO the run-up pad we had a chance to see if that huge rudder really made a difference. It did! All you had to do was wag it a little and the plane responded. Since it has a fully steerable tailwheel to boot, it would take a real dunderhead to have trouble on the ground.

The weather couldn't have been better if we had ordered it special from California. Runway temperature was in the neighborhood of 50 deg. F and the wind was calm. With three of us aboard and full fuel the Aeronca broke ground in about 300 ft. Best rate of climb is 600 fpm at an indicated 70.



Five minutes later we were trimmed up and hitting an indicated 105 mph at 2150 rpm. Unfortunately time did not allow us to make speed tests at the optimum altitude, but there should be at least 10 mph more in the plane when cruising at 7500 ft. or so.

The Aeronca has a good solid feel to it in the air. The controls are smooth and control pressure is light. Response to any movement is immediate. A few 360's and some 720 deg. power turns proved the plane is straightforward in her actions and a real pleasure to fly. There was only the beginning of late morning turbulence during the flight, but all indications were that the Sedan would be very stable in rough air.

Visibility forward, back and down is excellent. With some leaning forward, visibility into the turns is better than average. You can't see a thing above and to the rear, of course. The plane is comfortable and long trips should be a pleasure, not torture. Cabin noise level is good; normal conversation possible between front and rear seat passengers was easily carried on.

Mr. Fiscus has used the plane for many cross-countries, and says he gets 7.5 gph out of it consistently. With 34 of the 36 gal. useable, this gives a range of close to 400 mi. with a 45-min. reserve.

Before heading back to the field to run some landings we did the stall sequence, power on and off. By this time the plane had been so conventional that I was sure there were no surprises left. Entry to the first stall found me sitting very complacently waiting for the break, which never came. When the airspeed hit 45 indicated. One Nine Hotel just saucily flipped her tail up and resumed flying. By forcing it, you can get a definite

break, but it requires a higher than normal entry speed and you had better get the wheel in your lap in a hurry. Once the break is achieved normal recovery will bring you straight and level with a minimum of altitude loss.

Okay, so it flies very nicely; how about landings? Back to the field we went to try a couple; "conventional" again just about sums up landings. Downwind and base are flown at 70 mph; on final bring it down to 65, go over the fence at 60 and grease her on at 55. Three-point or wheel landings come easy with this bird and the owner says he uses either, depending on his mood.

If you have to land over the proverbial 50-ft. obstacle you had better brush up on the old slip, because there are no flaps out there to help you get rid of that altitude in a hurry. Once on the ground she'll stop in about 450 ft. without any vigorous braking. If you stand on it the Aeronca will really stop.

BACK AT THE hangar when we started checking over the performance figures we found that the manufacturer had supplied distance figures for takeoff and landings over a 50-ft. obstacle only. The company apparently assumed that if you weren't confronted with a barn or oak tree immediately after lift off you had it made and who cared how many feet of ground run you took. Takeoff at gross over that obstacle is 1383 ft. Landing over the same obstacle will take 1769 ft. at gross.

Engine	Continental
Bhp @ rpm	145 @ 2700
Propeller	McCauley
type	fixed-pitch
Gross Weight, lb.	2050
Empty Weight, lb.	1192
Useful Load, lb.	862
Luggage, lb.	120
Passengers	4
Fuel Capacity, gal.	36
useable gal.	34
Consumption, gph	7.5
Range, st. mi.	400
Oil Capacity, qt.	8
Cruise speed, mph	105
Stall, mph	45
Takeoff roll (est.)	600
Takeoff, over 50 ft.	1383
Landing roll (est.)	450
Landing, over 50 ft.	1769
Best Climb, sea level, fpm	600
Best Rate of Climb speed	70
Service Ceiling, ft.	12,000
Absolute Ceiling, ft.	14,500

Unfortunately the Aeronca Sedan was built so strongly that it didn't take the bush pilot types long to find out that a 200-bhp engine could be tacked on the front with engine mount modifications only required. The resulting performance must be something to behold. With its rugged gear and large control surfaces, this has proved to be an excellent bush plane.

Mr. Fiscus looked for a year before he found One Nine Hotel, and he thinks the effort was well worthwhile. They are increasingly hard to find. Should you be lucky enough to find one flying and in good condition, expect to pay between \$3,000 and \$4,000, if you can talk the owner out of it. Outstandingly maintained examples will run you higher, of course.

The Aeronca Sedan is not a speedster and if you travel mostly for business you can soak up everything said here as interesting but irrelevant. But if you are the type who flies for the joy of it, have to cart the family around with you, and expect never to fly coast-to-coast to win a bet, then this could be the plane for you.

Easy to fly, basically simple and straightforward in manufacture, economical to operate, the Sedan fills the needs of the flying family of four to a T. Had it appeared on the scene a little later than it did, the era of the Everyman pilot perhaps would have come a lot closer. The Aeronca Sedan easily could have carved a niche in history as the Piper Cub of four-place airplanes.



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