

AMERICAN CLASSICS

N9823B



Irish registered 15AC Sedan. The colour scheme enhances the type's good looks.

Aeronca Sedan

Both Author



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Aeronca Sedan Specification

Dimensions: Wing span 37ft 6in (11.4m); Length 25ft 3in (7.7m); Height 7ft (2.13m); Wing Area 200ft² (18.6m²).
Weight: Gross 2,050lbs (931kg); seaplane gross 2,100lbs (952kg).
Performance: Max speed 120mph (192km/h); Cruising speed at 75% power 105mph (169km/h); Initial rate of climb 650ft/min (198m/min); Range 430 miles (690km).

Floatplane S15AC N1267H.

IN THE YEARS immediately following World War Two, Aeronca sold large numbers of two-seater lightplanes based on the prewar side-by-side Chief and the tandem seat L-3 Defender series. However, by 1947, sales were beginning to slacken off and action was needed.

The result was an economical four-seater, built in the same style as the two-seaters and using the same construction methods with a steel tube fuselage and metal wing. Sales went quite well for a few years, but by 1950 the market had collapsed and Aeronca stopped all light aircraft production, surviving on sub-contract work in connection with the Korean War.

The Sedan was designed to be a rugged utility aircraft, with adequate cabin width for two and length for two rows of seats or a cargo area behind. Power was generally supplied by a 145hp (108kW) Continental C-145-2 which gave almost STOL performance, ideal for bush operations in Alaska and Canada.

A small number of seaplane

models (the S15AC) were built with twin Edo 89-2000 floats. These differed from the landplane version in having doors on both sides, instead of the starboard side only, thus aiding mooring. Skis could also be fitted.

The fuselage was of welded chrome-molybdenum steel tubing, faired to shape with wooden formers and fairing strips, the whole being fabric covered. The result was the most handsome Aeronca fuselage, which was also aerodynamically shaped to give extra lift. Internally, four seats were fitted; the front folding down to give access to the back pair — which could be removed for extra cargo space.

The wings had only a single metal spar of aluminium alloy, and only single struts either side, unlike earlier models. The tips were washed out to reduce their angle of attack and delay stalling of the outer wings. They were covered with Alclad sheet, but the metal-framed ailerons were fabric covered as were the steel tube tail surfaces. A fuel tank was mounted in each

wing root. The main undercarriage legs were tubular tripods, with rubber bungee shock absorbers, and the tailwheel was steerable. Many accessories were standard, but options included wheel pants, radio, and variable pitch or metal propeller with spinner. Crop spraying equipment was also approved.

The prototype Sedan, NX39800, flew for the first time in 1947, to be followed by a development aircraft NC39801. ATC-802 was issued on September 23, 1948 to be followed by 560 production aircraft over the next three years. Initially, the Sedan sold at \$4,795, dropping to \$4,395 in 1948. Production ended when Aeronca gave up lightplane manufacture in 1950.

Aircraft destined for the home market were registered in the block NC1000H to NC1491H, suggesting that at least 60 were exported directly, although well over twice this number eventually went abroad. The largest export market was in Canada where some 90 were registered. Brazil received 19 and India six; Guatemala and Ecuador

bought four each, and two or three were used in Panama, Mexico, Uruguay, Eire, Switzerland, and the UK.

Single examples are known to have found their way to Peru, Bolivia, South Africa (and on to Zambia), Cuba, Colombia, and Bermuda. So far as can be ascertained, nearly 200 Sedans are still registered, though as usual, how many are airworthy is unknown.

The standard engine was the Continental C-145, but 165hp (123kW) Franklin 6A4-165-B3s were fitted to at least 17 aircraft, and another was later fitted with a 260hp (193kW) Lycoming. The 170hp (126kW) Continental O-300 was also eligible.

In general, the Sedan fitted its name — being a viceless aircraft, easy to fly, and safe. Perhaps this was why one was chosen for a record-breaking flight from the west coast to the east coast and back again without landing. Fuel was supplied as the Sedan, named *Sunkist Lady*, flew just off the runway beside a speeding jeep.

