

A.T.C. #16  
(11-27)  
STINSON "DETROITER", SM-1



*Fig. 61. The beginning of Braniff Airways, one Stinson "Detroit" SM-1 and 3 employees! Paul Braniff pilot, first scheduled flight June 20, 1928.*

The spring-board to fame and fortune for many and disaster for some, this "Stinson", model SM-1, was the first of the illustrious "Detroit" monoplanes. All of the previous "Detroiters" that were built by Stinson Aircraft had been the model SB-1 cabin biplanes. The biplane version was popular to an extent, had sold quite well for about two years and had managed to pick up quite a little worldwide fame for the type, but the monoplane configuration with its decided advantages was destined to replace it very shortly.

An "SM-1" monoplane of this early type, actually the very first one built, was flown by "Eddie" Stinson in the 1927 Ford Air Tour and he brought her in to a rousing first place win. There were 14 entries in the "tour" that year and Leonard Flo came in 6th with another "Detroit", but it was of the SB-1 biplane type. The tour-winning monoplane was then modified for long-distance flying and became the well known "Pride of Detroit". The "Pride" was flown by Wm. S. "Billy" Brock and Edw. F. Schlee across the Atlantic Ocean in the course of their "2/3rds around the world" flight. This hazardous flight was ended in Tokyo, Japan on Sept. 14, 1927 more or less by popular demand. Their stalwart ship, shown here, was shipped home by boat to the relief of all, including the intrepid

pilots who by now realized the folly of their undertaking at this particular time.

Paul Redfern, the courageous one, also used one of this early type on his ill-fated flight to So. America, about which many conflicting and controversial stories still exist. On Aug. 25 of 1927 Paul Redfern flew his heavily loaded "Detroit", the "Port of Brunswick", out of Brunswick, Georgia on his way to Rio de Janeiro. In due course he lost his way and finally crash-landed in the jungle thicket of British Guiana. Some ten years later, after 13 expeditions into the jungle wilds to solve the mystery of his disappearance, the remains of his airplane were found in the impenetrable jungle, but could not possibly have been brought out. There was a reliable eye-witness to the "falling of the great bird" however, thus possibly proving once and for all that he did crash and perish in the jungle.

The "American Girl", also shown here, was another well-known Stinson "Detroit" monoplane; it was flown by Geo. Haldeman and the comely Ruth Elder across the Atlantic Ocean, or nearly so. They had to crash-land in the sea near the Azores Islands. Luckily, they were picked up by a nearby steamer and brought in to safety in Oct. of 1927. From these few incidents alone we can gather that



Fig. 62. Stinson "Detroit" SM-1 "Eddie" Stinson's first monoplane which won the Ford Air Tour of 1927, then flew two-thirds around the world as the "Pride of Detroit".

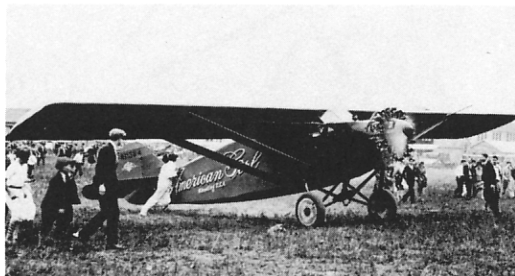


Fig. 63. NX1384 at Roosevelt Field, L. I., N. Y. Oct. 10, 1927. Ruth Elder looking out of cockpit.

the "Detroit" monoplanes were kept very busy making history and 'twas said that just about every one built was off on some sort of record flight!

The type certificate number for the Stinson SM-1, as shown here in the various illustrations, was issued in November of 1927. In it's basic form, the SM-1 "Detroit" was a 6 place fully enclosed, strut braced, high wing semi-cantilever monoplane that was powered with the 9 cylinder Wright "Whirlwind J5" engine of 220 h.p. These few early models of the "Detroit" monoplane had the same type of split-axle landing gear that was used on the SB-1 cabin biplane, but the later version of the SM-1 had a wide tread out-rigger type undercarriage, using "oleo" shock absorber struts. Thirty six of these "Detroit" mono-

planes were reported built in 1927, built on the average of one or two a week. A good many of these, possibly the bulk of them, were used for some sort of record-flight or attempt. 1927 was a very eventful year in the annals of aviation history and the "Detroit" monoplanes contributed often and eagerly.

The SM-1 monoplanes were buxom, rather large and almost awkward looking but they delivered a good performance and handled surprisingly well in spite of their size. There was one of these that hauled Sunday passengers to "see the city from the air" out of a little two-by-four pasture airport on week-ends, and we often wondered and even marvelled how this could be possible! But many stories heard since, would seem to indicate that a good "Stinson Pilot" was indeed a special breed of man and could really perform many wonders with this airplane.



Fig. 64. Early air-lines and progressive business houses were attracted to utility and performance offered by the Stinson "Detroit".



*Fig. 65. This SM-1 "Detroit" was Eddie Stinson's personal airplane, with it he logged many miles in promotion trips about the country.*

"Eddie" Stinson, just "plain-folks" with an ever-ready smile was one of our best known pioneering pilots, a true "early bird" and he was considered by most as the "master aviator". He had such a tremendous amount of flying time and experience, which actually dated back to 1912. Oddly enough, he was taught to fly by his sister, the well-known Katherine Stinson; Marjorie Stinson, his other sister, was also an accomplished pilot.

No "Stinsons" have been built now for well over a decade, but there are still plenty of them flying about the country in various models, some are over 30 years old by now! The Stinson monoplanes of this early period were built at the Northville, Mich. plant throughout 1927 and 1928, later moving to an enlarged plant with adjoining airfield in Wayne, Mich. For a descriptive discussion of later developments in the SM-1 series, see chapters for A.T.C. #74, #76, #77 and #78, all in this volume. The next development following the SM-1 was the SM-2 "Junior Detroit", see chapter for A.T.C. #48 in this volume.



*Fig. 66. The later version of the 1927 "Detroit" now had "oleo" landing gear.*

Listed below are specifications and performance data for the "J5 Whirlwind" powered Stinson "Detroit" model SM-1; span 45'10", chord 84", wing area 292 sq. ft., airfoil "Stinson" (Mod. M-6), length 32', height 8'3", empty wt. 1970, useful load 1515, payload 805, gross wt. 3485 lb., max. speed 122, cruise 105, land 55, climb 750, ceiling 14,000 ft., gas cap. 90 gals., range 700 miles. Price at factory was \$12,000 to \$12,500. The fuselage framework was built up of welded chromemoly steel tubing, heavily faired to shape and fabric covered. The wing framework was built up of spruce spars and wood built-up ribs, also fabric covered. There were two fuel tanks, one placed in each wing root flanking the fuselage. The fabric covered tail-group was also built up of welded steel tubing, the fin was ground adjustable and the horizontal stabilizer was adjustable in flight. Wings were wired for navigation lights, inertia type engine starter, metal propeller, and wheel brakes were standard equipment. Pontoons for operating off the water were \$2500 extra. For descriptive discussion of the Stinson SB-1 cabin biplane, see chapter for A.T.C. #24 in this volume.