



U.S. Civil Aircraft Registers

by Robert K. Parmeter

In the late 1960s I began visiting local airports to photograph. It wasn't long before I wanted to know more about each of those planes. While searching through the aviation section of the New York State Library at Albany, N.Y., I came across back issues of the American Aviation Historical Society *Journal*. An early *Journal* issue mentioned the *United States Civil Aircraft Register*, (USCAR), and this led me to discover a set of these a few shelves away.

In that one memorable day, I learned that I shared interests with members of the AAHS and found the answers to many of my aircraft photo questions in the USCARs.

Do you have an old airplane photo that you'd like to know more about or a specific aircraft you want to track down? Would you like a current register or microfiche for about five dollars? The following annotated list of sources may help in the pursuit of information about U.S. civil aircraft.

I — Underwriter's Laboratories Aircraft Register

First list of eight aircraft appeared in *Aviation and Aircraft Journal*, February 1922, p. 160. The system of registration followed the provisions of the 1919 Peace Conference and called for the use of the letter N to be followed by a dash and then four capital letters, including at least one vowel. It was a voluntary system set up by the Underwriter's Lab at the request of the National Aircraft Underwriters Association.

This register eventually included at least 45 registrations. Data given for each aircraft included: 1) Registration letters; 2) name and address of owner; 3) aircraft manufacturer and type; 4) private or commercial use. For example: N-ABCC, Akers Airphoto Corp., Chicago, IL. Avro 504K. Commercial, land use only.

Sources: 1) An article about this register by Edward L. Leiser appeared in *AAHS Journal*, Vol. 28 No. 1, Spring 1983, pp. 19-21.

2) Richard S. Allen. See Appendix for addresses. Has unpublished research including a list that doubles the number of aircraft on the Ed Leiser list.

II — Magazines

A) *Domestic Air News*—U.S. Bureau of Air Commerce. The first issue was December 18, 1926, and it concluded with number 54, June 15, 1929. After that it became *Air Commerce Bulletin*. The Air Commerce Act of 1926 required the registration of all commercial and private aircraft in the U.S. Applications needed to be filed by May 1, 1927, with a \$500 fine for noncompliance. This biweekly magazine began list-

Nieuport Model 83E, two-seat trainer version of the Model 12, taken at Montgomery Airport, NY, in 1929 when owned by my father, Folger Parmeter. It is currently flying weekends at Cole Palen's Old Rinebeck Aerodrome, NY, registered as N680CP. (Photo by Folger Parmeter)

ing licensed aircraft, identified aircraft and licensed pilots in the July 15, 1927 issue. "Identified aircraft" were not to be flown in interstate air commerce nor to carry persons or property for hire or reward. Only a number without a letter prefix was issued for these identified aircraft.

Information for the listed aircraft included: 1) Registration numbers; 2) name and address of owner. In the December 1, 1927 issue they added the aircraft manufacturer and type for each aircraft registration. Beginning with the January 15, 1928 issue, cancellations were also listed, often with the reason noted.

Sources: 1) Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Complete set. Call number TL521. A28.

2) National Air & Space Museum Library, Washington, DC. Complete set.

3) The New York State Library, Albany, NY, Feb. 15, 1928–June 1929.

4) The New York Public Library, N.Y. City, April 30, 1927, through Dec. 31, 1928. (Staff unable to locate issues when I visited in 1987. Issues were there in 1986.)

B) *Air Transportation—The Trade Journal of Commercial Aviation* published in East Stroudsburg, Pa. This weekly began publication with Vol. 1, No. 1, October 22, 1927, and concluded with Vol. 14, No. 12, November 29, 1930, when it became *Aeronautical Industry*. The April 7, 1928 issue included a 20-page list of U.S. aircraft that had been registered with the Department of Commerce. It listed about 1,000 licensed and about another 1,000 identified aircraft in numerical order. Additions, changes and corrections were published in the following week's issues. At least 30 subsequent issues through July 27, 1929, contained these updates.

Just as the April 7, 1928 issue had listed all registrations up to that date so did the August 18, 1928 issue (36 pages), and the January 26, 1929 issue (46 pages).

Information included: 1) Registration letters (including x-experimental); 2) name and address of owner; 3) aircraft manufacturer and type; 4) sometimes the c/n (more often in the January 26, 1929 issue); 5) sometimes the engine manufacturer, type and even engine c/n.

For example: X-2469, Erwin J. Dunham, 16 Hillview Avenue, Hamburg, NY, Dunham 3-place cabin monoplane, mfg. no. 1, Engine-Anzani No. 3402.

Sources: 1) Library of Congress complete set. Call number TL501. A5545.

2) National Air & Space Museum Library, Washington, DC. Complete set.

3) Richard S. Allen, John Underwood and Robert Parmerter have April 7, 1928 and January 26, 1929 lists.

III — Aircraft International Register—

Bureau Veritas, Paris, France. Published annually from 1925 to 1939. The 1925 (No. 1) edition lists only 742 French registered aircraft and their owners. In 1926 (No. 2) and 1927 (No. 3) six other countries are included too, but not the U.S. The 1928 volume is numbered 6, which is puzzling. It does include a U.S. section along with a dozen other nations. The U.S. listing is 50 pages long and includes 304 licensed aircraft with details such as: 1) registration number and date of issue; 2) nature of service (public transport); 3) aircraft manufacturer, model and date built; 4) usually the construction or

serial number; 5) for 46 of those listed modifications are noted in detail; 6) owner's name and address; 7) engine type. For example: C-293, 5/1927, public transport, Waco 9, Advance Air Co., Troy, Ohio, mfd. 1926, c/n 190, reconstructed with metal body, Freddie Lund, Ocala, FL.

There was no U.S. section in the 1930 issue. By 1931 the U.S. section was 17 pages long and included 137 licensed (mostly those registered for international flights with NC marks) aircraft. Twenty-three other nations were included. The data in the listing was reduced and included only: 1) Registration; 2) nature of service; 3) manufacturer; 4) owner's name and address; 5) ATC number. In 1932 only 45 U.S. registered aircraft were included and all of these were owned by American Airways. The last issue to include a U.S. section was 1933. It listed 545 U.S. airline-operated aircraft.

Sources: 1) The N.Y. Public Library, Annex, 521 West 43rd St., New York City, has 1925–1939.

2) Malcolm Fillmore, England, 1931 issue.

3) R. Parmerter, U.S. Section 1928 and 1931.

IV — 1929 Register of Licensed and Identified of the U.S.—

American Bureau of Aircraft, New York City. Published in 1929 in looseleaf format the book contained 270 pages of which 56 pages included registrations. By September 1929 three supplements had been added to the book which sold for \$7.50.

Sources: 1) Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 1929 Call number TL512. A65.

2) William Larkins has microfilm copy, 1929.

V — Licensed Aircraft

A) *Licensed Aircraft, July 15, 1929*. Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce of America, New York. Published quarterly in Washington, D.C. This listed the licensed aircraft registered in the U.S. They were organized state by state and numerically by registration number within each state (including Alaska but not Hawaii). The list was 21 pages long with about 200 aircraft on each page.

Data given for each aircraft included: 1) Registration number; 2) type of license (commercial—C, international—N, restricted—R, federal or state—N (later S), experimental—X; 3) name and address of owner; 4) aircraft manufacturer and model; 5) aircraft type; 6) construction or serial number; 7) year manufactured; 8) engine. For example: C-5493 commercial, Scenic Airways, Grand Canyon, Arizona. Ford 4AT, 14PCLM, #22, 1928, Wright Whirlwind.

B) *Licensed Aircraft, Oct. 15, 1929*—As above.

C) *Licensed Aircraft, Jan. 15, 1930*—As above.

D) *Licensed Aircraft, Apr. 15, 1930*—As above.

E) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, July 15, 1930*—Now the identified aircraft (those having only a two-, three- or four-digit registration number without any letter prefix) were listed. U.S. registered aircraft based in other countries and Hawaii were now included as well as a seven-page separate listing of gliders. An asterisk denoted aircraft registered for the first time. There were 58 pages of licensed aircraft and 20 pages of identified, with about 120 aircraft per page.

F) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Oct. 15, 1930*—As above.

G) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Jan. 1, 1931*—As

above but no longer a quarterly.

H) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, July 1, 1931*—As above.

I) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Jan. 1, 1932*—As above with 81 pages of licensed aircraft and 29 pages of identified, with about 95 aircraft per page. A date that the aircraft license was issued or reissued in the previous year was now included. Autogiros, balloons and gliders were listed together with airplanes; no separate glider section.

J) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Jan. 2, 1933*—As above with one significant change. The listings within each state were alphabetical by owner. This makes it very difficult to find a single N number unless you know which state the aircraft was registered in.

K) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Jan. 2, 1934*—As above with gliders and autogiros listed separately state by state.

L) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Jan. 1, 1935*—As above, except gliders, autogiros, balloons and airships were listed at the end of licensed and identified lists. A license expiration date replaced license issued date. Evidently licensing was for one year, as some of the expiration dates were in late 1934 and all the rest in 1935. There were 65 pages of licensed aircraft and 24 pages of identified aircraft with about 90 aircraft per page.

M) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Jan. 1, 1936*—As above.

N) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Jan. 1, 1937*—As above.

O) *Licensed and Identified Aircraft, Jan. 1, 1938*—As above. There were 139 pages of licensed aircraft and 28 identified with about 70 aircraft per page.

P) *Certificated and Uncertificated Aircraft, Feb. 1, 1939*—As above. They now used the terms certificated (NC ———) and uncertificated (N———).

Q) *Certificated Aircraft, Feb. 1, 1940*—As above except only certificated aircraft were listed.

R) *Certificated Aircraft, Feb. 15, 1941*—As above.
Sources: 1) Library of Congress, Washington, DC (The Registers are catalogued as Aerospace Industries Assoc. of America, Certificated Aircraft), Set 1929–41. Call number TL512. A474.

2) Dept. of Transportation Library, Washington, DC. Set 1929–41.

3) Air Britain. Microfilm copies of set.

4) Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, FL.

5) Harvard Baker Library, Graduate School of Business Administration, Boston, MA. 1932–41.

6) Richard S. Allen.

7) William T. Larkins. Microfilm copies of set.

8) Harvey M. Lippincott.

9) Robert Parmerter. Has 1929, '30, '31, '32, '35, '38, '41.

VI — Weekly List of Licensed Aircraft, Students, Pilots and Mechanics

Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce of America, New York. Published irregularly, despite the title between June 29, 1929 (Vol. 1, No. 1) and at least 1936. It listed the aircraft licensed during the previous several weeks, state by state,



Lockheed 10A Electra, NC14260. After a long career that included use by the USAAF as UC-36A, this aircraft is now on display at Pima Air Museum, Tucson, AZ.
(Art Krieger Photo from R. Parmerter Collection)

using the same format as their quarterly and yearly publications.

Source: 1) The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Has Vol. 1, 1929, Vol. 2, 1930, Vol. 3, 1931, Vol. 8, 1935–36. Call number HE 9925. 46A115.

VII —

A) *The Official CAA Directory of Certificated Aircraft, 1946*. Haddaway-Reed Publishing Co., Texas. It included the same data for each aircraft as the 1929 listing and likewise was organized numerically within each state. It sold for \$75.00 in 1946 (606 pages).

Sources: 1) Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Call number TL512.5 D54.

2) William T. Larkins.

3) Air Britain.

4) Robert Parmerter

B) *Supplements to the Directory of Certificated U.S. Civil Aircraft, 1946*. At least five supplements during 1946. Arranged in three groups: 1) New production and military surplus; 2) changes in certificate data—owner, address, model, engine or corrections; 3) registration cancellation as exported, sold or destroyed.

Sources: 1) Library of Congress. Call number TL512.5. D542.

2) Air Britain.

VIII — Official U.S. Directory of Aircraft Owners—

1947 edition. Air Review Publishing Corp., Dallas, TX. This directory differed in three important ways from the 1945–46 ones. It does not include the c/n of the aircraft listed; it is arranged alphabetically by the owner's name in each state and it uses a code for the aircraft and engine manufacturers and models. This code differs from the code later used in the 1963–1978 Registers.

Additional information in each entry included owner's address, N number, year of manufacture, number of owners and engines and the type certificate of the aircraft. It seems that this directory was only produced for one year—1947.

Sources: 1) Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 1947. Call number TL512. 5.03.

2) Doug Olson, PO Box 6061, Santa Rosa, CA. 1947.

3) Robert Parmerter.

IX — AOPA Listing Service—

(Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association), Washington, DC. This service operated as early as 1953 and as late as 1970. A 1980 letter from AOPA notes that it hadn't been available for some time.

AOPA Listing Service sold computer-generated custom lists to aviation companies and enthusiasts. These were usually lists of one or more specific aircraft types. For example: all U.S. registered DC-3s. Information included: 1) Registration; 2) name and address of owner; 3) aircraft manufacturer and model; 4) c/n; 5) engine manufacturer, model, horsepower and number of engines; 6) year made; 7) month and year last inspected. Numerical codes like those used in the 1963–1978 Registers were used for the information in 3) and 5). For a short time around 1961 the AOPA issued the registration data on separate 3" x 5" cards for each aircraft.

These lists are the source of data in some aviation books that have led people to think that registers such as those produced during 1929–41, 1945–47 and 1963–78 were also done in the 1950s. They were not. I have come across two computer-produced "registers" and they are listed below in sections X A) and X B).

Sources: 1) William T. Larkins. Has registration lists for the period 1953–55 for about 100 different aircraft including most types built by Boeing, Convair, Curtiss, Douglas, Grumman and Lockheed.

X —

A) *Computer printout of U.S. registered civil aircraft, 1957.* AOPA Listing Service, Washington, DC. This large format printout, about 12" x 18" was arranged alphabetically by aircraft manufacturer. It used a code system very similar to

that used by the FAA in the 1963–78 Registers. Data given for each aircraft included: 1) Registration number; 2) owner's name and state; 3) aircraft manufacturer and model; 4) construction number; 5) last date of inspection; 6) year manufactured; 7) engine and horsepower.

Source: 1) Leo J. Kohn.

B) *Computer printout of U.S. registered civil aircraft, 1961.* AOPA Listing Service, Washington, DC. Similar to A) above in size and data provided. It differed in arrangement, as it was numerically by registration within the U.S.

Source: 1) National Air and Space Museum Library.

XI —

A) *United States Civil Aircraft Register.* Federal Aviation Agency, June 1, 1963. First issue of the semi-annual publication that listed all the U.S. registered aircraft. These print versions continued through July 1978. The Register was organized numerically by registration within the U.S. If a registration had a second suffix letter, that letter was not shown. Registers for Jan. 1, 1964/July 1, 1964/Jan. 1, 1965/July 1, 1966/Jan. 1, 1965/July 1, 1965/Jan. 1, 1966, arranged in the same manner.

Data for each aircraft included: 1) Registration number; 2) name and address of owner; 3) aircraft manufacturer and model; 4) construction or serial number; 5) year manufactured; 6) aircraft type (glider, balloon/dirigible, fixed-wing, single- or multi-engine, or rotorcraft); 7) engine manufacturer and model; 8) type of engine (piston, turbo prop, turbojet, turbine air generator or ramjet); 9) type of registrant (individual, club, business, government, air carrier, or dealer); 10) restricted operation (agricultural and pest control, aerial surveying, aerial advertising, glider towing, patrolling, or weather control); 11) experimental operation (research and development, demonstration, amateur, exhibition or racing); 12) month and year of last inspection.

For example: N1W, Thomas Davidson, 3434 N. Station Avenue, Atwater, CA, Nicholas Beazly One, c/n 1, mfd. 1930, fixed-wing, single-engine, Continental C85, piston, individual, experimental racing, last inspected Aug. 1949!

The June 1, 1963 issue contained 1,227 pages with 90 aircraft per page and originally cost \$5.25.

B) *United States Civil Aircraft Register, F.A.A., July 1, 1966.* Some changes were introduced with this issue—the engine manufacturer and model were omitted and the last inspection date was replaced by a status column which indicated whether an aircraft had been inspected in the last 13 months and was therefore eligible or, if no inspection was received, it was classified as ineligible. Horsepower, weight, and maximum speed categories were added. The second suffix letter of a registration was now listed.

It contained 1,480 pages with 100 aircraft per page and cost \$7.00.

C) *United States Civil Aircraft Register, F.A.A.* published semi-annually January 1, 1967, through July 1, 1978. Main differences from above issues were in cost, number of pages and number of volumes per issue. For example: July 1, 1969 issue has two volumes with 1,833 pages, 100 aircraft per page, and cost \$13.25 a set. The last issue, July 1, 1978, was three volumes with 2,440 pages, 100 aircraft per page and cost about \$30.00.

A C NO.: 20-6E

UNITED STATES CIVIL AIRCRAFT REGISTER



FEDERAL AVIATION AGENCY
AERONAUTICAL CENTER
DATA SERVICES DIVISION

JANUARY 1, 1966



D.H.100 Vampire F.3 ex-RCAF photographed at the EAA Convention in Rockford, IL, in August 1962. Registration is N6877D.
(Art Krieger Photo from R. Parmerter Collection)

Sources: 1) The 50 regional Depository Libraries in the U.S. received every unclassified government publication including the *USCAR* and are responsible for retaining the material. Other Depository Libraries around the U.S. may have elected to receive the *USCARs* in either print or on microfiche. Inquire at your local library for a list of the above libraries.

- 2) National Air & Space Museum Library, 1963–1978.
- 3) Library of Congress, 1963–1978.
- 4) Air Britain.
- 5) Numerous aviation enthusiasts.

XII —

A) *U.S. Civil Aircraft Directory*, current, on microfiche. Anacomp, Inc., Oklahoma City, OK. This company produces, under government contract, Register reports each month in five formats:

U.S. CIVIL AIRCRAFT REGISTER BY "N" NUMBER, RIS: AC-8070-1 (Price: \$4.77). This monthly report is in registration number sequence. It contains the aircraft registration number, serial number, registrant's name and address, aircraft make and model code, and type of registrant.

ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF AIRCRAFT REGISTRATIONS, RIS: AC-8070-2 (Price: \$5.01). This monthly report is in alphabetical sequence by the registrant's name. It contains registrant's name, the aircraft registration number, registrant's address, aircraft make and model code, date of certificate issuance, type of registrant, and year of manufacture.

STATE AND COUNTY LIST OF AIRCRAFT REGISTRANTS, RIS: AC-8070-3 (Price: \$5.46). This monthly report is in registration number sequence within the county, within the state,

within the FAA Region. It contains the aircraft registration number, serial number, registrant's name and address, aircraft make and model code, engine make and model code, year of manufacture, airworthiness classification, type of registrant, and record change indicator.

AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURER AND MODEL, RIS: AC-8070-4 (Price: \$5.88). This monthly report is in alphanumeric sequence by make and model code. It contains the aircraft registration number, serial number, registrant's name and address, engine make and model code, and type of airworthiness certification.

U.S. CIVIL AIRCRAFT REGISTER BY SERIAL NUMBER, RIS: AC-8070-10 (Price: \$4.77). This monthly report is in aircraft serial number sequence. In addition to the serial number, the report contains: N number, registrant's name and address, aircraft make/model code, type registrant code, and status code.

These prices are good through 1 October 1989 and are a real bargain.

B) *U.S. Civil Aircraft Directory*, current, on microfiche. I.A.T.S., Insured Aircraft Title Service, Inc., Oklahoma City, OK. This company produces directories every 30 days using FAA registration data. Five different directory arrangements are available: By registration number; alphabetically by registrant; by manufacturer and model; by type (jets, gliders); and by locality (zip code).

Information includes all the categories found in the 1978 *USCAR* plus the date the aircraft was registered to the current owner. The cost is \$50.00 for a single copy of any of the directories or \$200 per year for 12 editions. They can also provide print copies of a single aircraft type, such as the DC-3, for \$25 up to 25 pages, then \$1.00 per page after that.

Sources: 1) Anacomp, Inc., Oklahoma City, OK.

2. I.A.T.S., Oklahoma City, OK.



A Conrad 10,000 conversion of a Beech C18S (ex-C-45F, c/n 7117), now N102G. It was photographed in November 1975 at Concord, CA. I've only traced two other C18S oval-window conversions: N102S and N8181H. (Steve Kraus Photo from R. Parmerter Collection)

Appendix. Addresses are in the order they appeared in the Source sections:

- 1) Richard S. Allen, 13 Aspinwall Rd., Albany, NY 12211.
- 2) Periodical Section, Serial and Government Publication Division, the Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540.
- 3) Information Management Division, National Air and Space Museum Library, Washington, DC 20560.
- 4) The New York State Library, Cultural Education Center, Albany, NY 12230.
- 5) Science & Technology, Room 121, the New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. & 42nd St., New York, NY 10018.
- 6) John Underwood, 2054 West Mt., Glendale, CA 91209.
- 7) Robert Parmerter, 11 Division St., Schenectady, NY 12155.
- 8) Annex of the New York Public Library, 521 West 43rd St., New York, NY 10001.
- 9) Malcolm Fillmore, North Gates, The Mount, Ifield, West Sussex RH11 0LF England.
- 10) William T. Larkins, 175 Clarie Drive, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523.
- 11) Reference Librarian, Dept. of Transportation Library, Dept. of Transportation, Washington, DC 20590. (Inter-Library loan available.)
- 12) Peter J. Marson, U.S. Aviation Research Group, Air Britain, 18 King George VI Drive, Hove, East Sussex BN3 6XF England.
- 13) Director of Media Services, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Regional Airport, Daytona Beach, FL 32014.
- 14) Harvard Baker Library, Graduate School of Business Administration, Folgers Field Rd., Boston, MA 02163.
- 15) Harvey M. Lippincott, Archivist, New England Air Museum, Bradley International Airport, Windsor Locks, CT

06096.

- 16) Doug Olson, PO Box 6061, Santa Rosa, CA 95406.
- 17) Leo J. Kohn, Collect-Air Photos, PO Box 14234, Milwaukee, WI 53214.
- 18) I.A.T.S., PO Box 19527, Oklahoma City, OK 73144.
- 19) Anacomp, Inc., 1220 Sovereign Row, Oklahoma City, OK 73108.

CAUTION: Since the F.A.A. depends completely on the registrant for the information that goes into the aircraft registration file, inaccuracies are inevitable.

The most common problems in the 1963 to current Registers involve:

- A) An aircraft still listed after destruction in an accident or after having been exported.
- B) Missing or inaccurate data such as date of manufacture, model and c/n (especially for ex-military aircraft).
- C) Significant airframe and engine conversions that are not noted.
- D) The address of the registered owner is not necessarily anywhere near where the aircraft is actually located. ■

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Parmerter was born in 1942 and lives with his wife and two sons in Schenectady, NY, where he has been teaching social studies for 25 years. His aviation interests are varied with a very special interest in the Beech 18. He is historian of the Twin Beech Association as well as a member of AAHS and Air-Britain. Please forward any comments, corrections or additions to him at 11 Division St., Schenectady, NY 12155.

