

# VINTAGE AIRPLANE™





# *Fred Clark and Bud Roger's* Paramount Cabinaire

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An unusual cabin biplane From 1929  
is back after 50 years.

by H.G. Frautschy

As a relatively young man, I'm still amazed by the fact that "new" old airplanes are still showing up for the first time on the modern fly-in circuit. Fred Clark (EAA 260092) of Deland, FL and Bud Rogers (EAA 83099, A/C 1243) of Sanford, FL have brought one of the past's most rare antiques back to the skies.

The Paramount "Cabinaire" was the result of the collaboration of Walter Carr and Joseph Behse. The two Michigan aviators saw the need for an airplane that kept the passengers out of the slipstream, enclosed in a sumptuous cabin.

Walter Carr was a pioneer aviator who soloed in 1914 using a Curtiss Pusher. He soon progressed to exhibition flying, showing off the new-fangled flyin' machines to the public. During the Great War he flew Jennys as an instructor for the U.S. Signal

Corps. His aviation experience continued after the conflict when he bought his own Jenny and barnstormed around the country, eking out a living. In 1919, domestic life beckoned, and he married a young lady named Edith from Saginaw, MI.

As the years passed, Edith made it clear that she wished Walter would settle down and live in one location, so he decided to set up a fixed base operation at the Saginaw airport.

All the time he spent flying passengers convinced Carr that if aviation were to progress, with the general public being flown on a for-hire basis, airplanes needed to be more comfortable. Certainly he was not the first to realize this - Eddie Stinson saw the same need, as did many others during the 1920's. Carr wanted to convert his philosophy into hardware, so he approached some local men of substance

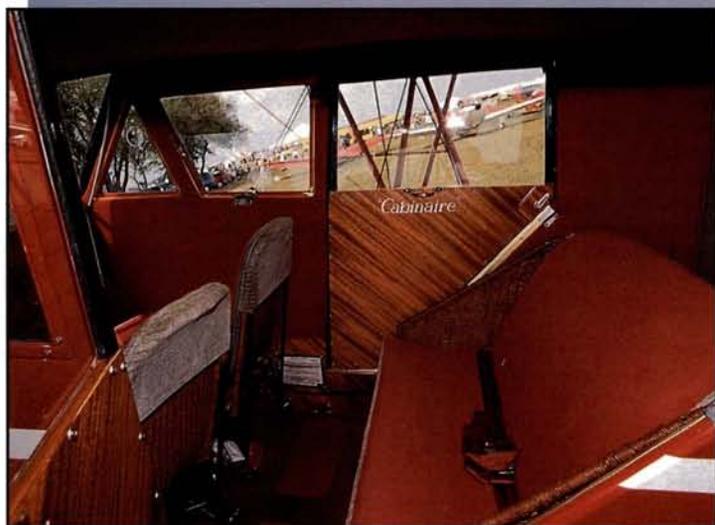
- two brothers, Walter and Edward Savage, and John Coryell, all from the local area. The four men came to an agreement that spelled out the establishment of CSC Aircraft of Saginaw, MI.

Carr's idea for a cabin airplane would come to being as a three-place high wing monoplane powered by an OXX-6. Tipping the scales at 1660 lbs, the "Maiden Saginaw" wanted a lot from the Curtiss engine, and apparently did not enjoy outstanding flight characteristics, requiring the touch of an experienced pilot. Unfortunately for Walter, the project never got past the prototype stage, and only one of the aircraft was ever built before CSC Aircraft folded.

Carr wasn't lacking for work at this point. The Great Depression was still four years away, and he was busy flying as the Chief pilot for Northern



Jim Koepnick



Mike Steineke



(Opposite page) Fred Clark and Bud Rogers have brought back the Paramount Cabinaire, an unusual cabin biplane built in 1929 in Saginaw, MI. Fred had owned the airplane for over 20 years, patiently collecting parts and pieces needed for the restoration over that time. Bud became a partner in the airplane as the restoration was undertaken.

(Top) The distinctive wing and cabin arrangement of the Paramount Cabinaire is shown off in this view.

(Above, right) When Walter Carr decided to build the Cabinaire, he wanted a cabin with excellent visibility. The seats feature a steel tube frame with wicker backs and seats, and fabric upholstery. The model 165 had a four-place cabin, and a rather spartan instrument panel dominated by a Consolidated style instrument cluster, flanked with an altimeter and airspeed indicator.



Mike Steineke



Jim Koenig

**Conceived by Michigan aviator Walter Carr and intended for the budget minded businessman or for charter work, the Paramount Cabinaire received its Approved Type Certificate a week after the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The economic uncertainties of the time shut off the market possibilities for the Cabinaire, and the company folded in 1931 after the death of company president Joe Behse.**

Airways, most often flying a route between Detroit, Saginaw and Bay City. He still had his fixed base operation at Saginaw, flying charters and flight instructing with his trusty Travel Air 2000. His fortunes and experience both served him well, for in 1927 the Warner Aircraft Co. of Detroit was looking for a pilot to test fly their new engine. The new "Scarab" series put out 110 hp, and was targeted towards

the same pilots and aircraft who were flying behind the war-surplus Curtiss OX-5 with its 90 hp. The OX-5 in Carr's Travel Air was pulled, and the new 110 hp Warner put in its place. Over 150 hours of flight time was put in by Carr with his Travel Air, helping to proof test the engineering in what would become one of the Golden Age of Aviation's more well known powerplants.

All that time spent by Carr in the Travel Air helped gel an idea in his mind. If the Travel Air was such a sweet flying machine, why not make it a cabin job? With one of those new Warner engines, it could be a real money-maker, just the ticket for those charters to the big city, or as an economic form of transportation for a growing businessman.

Capital was still needed though, and the man who would provide it was a fellow aviator, albeit a rather well heeled one. Joseph E. Behse was heir to the Modart Corset factory fortune, and had learned to fly in the military towards the end of WW I. He never made it overseas, with the War ending before his orders came through. Back home in Saginaw, he worked in the family business until it was sold in 1927 to another company.

Behse put his money to work by backing Walter Carr's new venture, which may have already had a prototype flying. The exact history of the first Cabinaire is a bit foggy, with some discrepancy as to when exactly the first airplane was built. The configuration of the airplane has never been in doubt, however.

The biplane featured a cabin roofline that did not incorporate the upper wing. Instead, the upper wing was mounted above the cabin, supported by a set of short cabane struts. A single pair of "N" struts braced the wing structure, with a push-pull aileron actuating rod extending from a bell-crank in the lower wing to the ailerons mounted on the upper wings.

The Paramount Aircraft Corp. was incorporated at the end of the summer in 1928. Carr was fortunate to be the recipient of the S/N 1 Warner "Scarab" engine, no doubt as partial or full payment for his services during flight testing of the new engine. It would serve as the engine in the first "Cabinaire," and it appears that his Travel Air also gave its very best to the project as well.

The actual wings and tail surfaces of Carr's 2000 were put to use, as was the basic fuselage. The upper longerons were reworked to extend the cabin roofline, creating a three-seat airplane with plenty of room for the two passengers to enjoy the sights while the pilot took them to their far off destination.

As is often the case with a new airplane, there were lessons to be learned, and the first airplane may have been reworked into the second Cabinaire, S/N 2. As 1929 progressed, Paramount Aircraft figured they had a good thing going, for they sold their first airplane. The early Cabinaires all had the same basic layout, including a Warner 110 hp engine and a neat NACA low-drag cowl, which Carr hoped would stream-

line the airplane enough to negate the extra drag of the biplane's brace wires and wings.

Four more 110 hp examples of the Cabinaire were built, including S/N 5, which received a CAA Group II approval a four-place airplane. The next version of the airplane put the lessons of the first five into practice. More power was needed for the Cabinaire to be a true four-place airplane, and a revised wing and landing gear configuration (used in the earlier production versions) was incorporated.

The extra power came from a Wright J6-5 (R-540) which pumped out 165 hp with its 5 cylinders. The new version of the Paramount product was to be known as the Cabinaire 165. The late fall of 1929 was certainly a "good news/bad news" time for the company - the Cabinaire 165 received its Approved type Certificate, No. 265, on November 2, 1929. But the stock market crash only the week before gave everybody in business the jitters, and put them all on edge as far as the future was concerned.

NC-17M was the seventh Cabinaire built, and the first of the "165" series. Carr and Behse gamely worked at promoting the Cabinaire, but the market for the airplane barely existed. Only two more were ever sold, (including the rebuild of S/N 3, which created S/N 9) even after the two men set out to prove the airplane's worth in the 1930 Ford Reliability Air Tour, a cross-country event that saw 18 entrants.

The Cabinaire placed 15th, not a particularly great showing. By the fall of 1930, as the Air Tour was winding up, Carr let Behse know he was leaving Paramount Aircraft. Sales were going nowhere fast, and he didn't see how they would improve.

Joe Behse continued as president, but not for long. A small two place floatplane was designed by Ralph Johnson, who had done the engineering calculations on the Cabinaire. It was named the Paramount Sportster. The 110 hp Warner Scarab once again made an appearance on a Paramount airplane. Unfortunately, the Sportster was around for only slightly over one month. First flown in April 1931, it crashed in the Saginaw river on May 16, 1931, carrying Joe Behse and mechanic Whitney Merritt to their deaths.

Sometime after the Ford Reliability Air Tour, S/N 7 was bought by Erie Island Airlines, hopping passengers around the Put-In-Bay area. They flew the airplane until just after WW II, when it was sold to a company in Wisconsin. Relatively inactive, the wings were damaged in a hangar fire, and it later was bought and moved to a museum in Sarasota, FL. There, Fred Clark bought the remains of the plane during the mid '70s.

He continued to collect parts as he found out about them, and was particularly helped by President Bob Taylor of the Antique Airplane Association, who had some parts, as well as Dave Clewanger, who had at one time owned the

airplane and was able to come up with an engine mount and a few other odds and ends.

Bud Rogers is also part owner in the Cabinaire, and he and his wife Lillian did much of the restoration work. New wings had to be rebuilt, since the originals were damaged in the previously mentioned hangar fire, and Bud's wife Lillian helped with the stitching chores.

The fuselage required work as well, including all new wood. It was decided that an original Wright J6-5 was to be used, putting the airplane in its original configuration. The distinctive look of the Cabinaire finally was seen by Antique enthusiasts at Sun 'n Fun '95. More than one of us had to take a peek in "U.S. Civil Aircraft" by Jos. Juptner to refresh our memories about this particular airplane. Fred and Bud were kept busy asking questions all day about the Cabinaire and the Curtiss Robin they have re-engined with a Buick V-8.

The Cabinaire 165 didn't make it as sales were concerned, but as a temple-scratching, "I wonder what that is" antique, it's a rousing success. Thanks to Bud Rogers and Fred Clark, the rare cabin biplane with the wing above the fuselage will be puzzling fly-in attendees for some time to come!

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Mike Steineke