

The Stinson model 108-4 Flying Station Wagon
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Larry Westin - 12/22/02
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For many years I have read of references to a Stinson 108-4, but no book I've seen provided anything more than a guess about what changes existed with the model 108-4. David Talley generously provided me with the production records for all Stinson 108 aircraft built. Researching these records I came across the mysterious 108-4; the airplane really did exist.

From the production records provided by David Talley I learned that the model 108-3 was serial number 108-4693. Further research confirmed no other aircraft were built as the model 108-4, there was only one aircraft modified to this standard.

Production records didn't provide a completion date, but it was built during 108-3 production. If the airplane had been delivered as a 108-3 the registration number would have been N6693M. Stinson Division of Consolidated Vultee elected not to use that registration, which was never issued to any Stinson. Instead Stinson used the registration NX149C. Registration NC149C was made available to Stinson as part of a batch reserved for 108-2 aircraft. Normally it would have been issued to serial number 108-3149, but this aircraft was sold in Mexico and allocated the Mexican registration XB-HEJ, so NC149C was available. Since the model 108-4 was not certified the registration used was NX149C.

I requested all the CAA paper work for this aircraft from the FAA. CAA paperwork indicates the airplane was completed on April 4, 1948, just two days after the 108-3 models with serial numbers before and after the 108-4. The aircraft was registered to Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation, Stinson Division, Van Born Road, Wayne, Michigan. The CAA approved the aircraft for flight on April 21, 1948 with certain limitations. CAA operation limitations stated "Certificated for the purpose of testing preparatory to type certificate." Designation is for land or sea. The operation limitation was good for 6 months, expiring on Oct. 21, 1948. So by late April 1948 Stinson was apparently testing the follow on to the model 108-3.

At this time the airplane is listed as having a Franklin 6AGA-190-B13 engine with serial number T-367. I have no information on this specific engine, but suspect it was rated at 190HP. Information I have for the Franklin 6AGA-185-B12 engine shows it to be 185HP, geared at .63 propeller revolution for each engine revolution. Rated horsepower at 3100 RPM.

On December 15, 1948 a Bill of Sale was completed which transferred ownership of Stinson 108-4, serial number 108-4693, to Piper Aircraft Corporation, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania for the sum of "\$1.00 and other valuable considerations." On December 27, 1948 the Stinson 108-4 was officially registered to Piper Aircraft.

Another application for airworthiness certificate appears on April 21, 1949, this time with Piper Aircraft listed as the owner. At this point the engine is listed as a Franklin 6AL-335, with 172HP shown. The 172 is circled and 185 entered next to it. The operations limitations the same as original, purpose to type certificate, with an expiration of April 21, 1950.

No further information is shown in current FAA records until September 19, 1949, when Piper Aircraft wrote a letter to the CAA to cancel the files on two aircraft, 108-3 N6757M, and 108-4 NX149C. Piper indicates both aircraft were dismantled for use as parts.

Two letters from the CAA, one dated September 30, 1949, the other dated October 5, 1949, indicate the CAA did in fact drop the airplane from the register.

Production records provide a few more details. The airplane was a Station Wagon model, the 108-4 prototype, had float fittings, a special engine, special prop, jettisonable doors, and a special instrument panel.

Homepage visitor Sherman Oxford some years back sent me a drawing labeled 108-4, Stinson drawing 108-3001300, Revision J, dated July 26, 1948. It is a side view of a Stinson 108. Obvious difference is in the cabin door, which appears to have a "wind wing" type window not found on other Stinson 108's. Other than the window difference, the door appears identical to the 108-3. Two other changes appear unique to the 108-4 model, the entry step is different than found on the 108-3, and the fabric just ahead of the vertical stabilizer incorporated a zipper. Cannot tell from the drawing just how far the zipper continued. My guess is that the zipper was installed to permit an easier, with far better ability to inspect and or repair the fuselage around the vertical stabilizer.

This is all the information I've been able to dig up on this aircraft. If you can add information, or find any errors with this information, please contact me at the address (either E-Mail or Postal Mail) below.

Good Luck - Larry Westin

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