

the IRELAND privateer

Only 10 of these small amphibians were built before both plane and manufacturer vanished from the scene, scuttled by the great depression

■ The appeal of the small amphibian for the sportsman pilot has always been great, but the industry has never been able to come up with one that had the right combination of structural simplicity, low power, and low cost to make a significant dent in the lightplane market. This is no reflection on the capability of the industry: it has been a major problem since Glenn Curtiss invented the hull-type amphibian in 1912. While a few designs over the years have come close to the target, the basic requirements of a strong, waterproof, and buoyant hull, retractable landing gear, lateral-stability flotation, plus the need to keep the propeller out of the water and the spray pattern, have presented a tough problem for the designer. Some of the problems diminish as the airplanes get bigger—there have been more “big” amphibians than small ones—but most of them remain to keep the land-and-water plane in the “special purpose” class, with an appropriate price tag.

One of the first serious attempts at a modern personal amphibian was the Ireland P-2 Privateer of 1930. The fact that only 10 were built was no reflection on the design—the great depression not only wiped out most of the premium-price airplanes then on the market but very nearly scuttled the industry as well.

After building the P-1 prototype with a 90-hp Wright Gypsy engine, Ireland Aircraft, Inc., of Garden City, Long Island, N.Y., came out with an improved production version, the P-2. Fitted with a 110-hp Warner Scarab air-cooled radial engine mounted above the hull to drive a pusher propeller, the P-2 was a side-by-side, open-cockpit two-seater. A unique variation from the classic single-engine flying boat layout was the use of tubular booms to support the tail surfaces. This feature saved both weight and drag by permitting the use of a short hull.

The composite construction was interesting. The hull had a wood frame with sheet-aluminum skin screwed on. The fabric-covered wings and fixed tail surfaces used wooden spars and stainless-steel ribs in one of the first commercial aircraft applications of this new material. The airfoil was the high-lift Curtiss C-72. The movable tail surfaces were welded steel tubing with fabric cover.

As with many airplanes before and since, much of the equipment was extra, in spite of an initial \$5,800 price tag. (That amphibian premium was unavoidable; the four-place Cessna A-W landplane, with the same engine, was selling for only \$6,900, as described in the Jan. 1971 *PILOT*.) A starter, a 10-pound anchor with 50 feet of rope, a fire extinguisher, a first-aid kit, and cockpit and engine covers were standard. Dual controls cost \$50 extra, brakes were \$100, and there were other extras such as lights, additional color, etc.

The P-2 also found itself with an identity problem. By the time it was ready for production, the depression had forced a reorganization of the company, so Ireland Aircraft became Amphibians, Inc., with the same plant and management. Though the company brought out an improved, three-place P-3 model Privateer, with 215 hp and an enclosed cabin, the design did not win any further orders, and the airplane and the firm soon vanished from the scene. □

Ireland Privateer P-2 Specifications And Performance

Wingspan (ft)	30
Length (ft)	28
Wing area (sq ft)	198
Powerplant	Warner Scarab, 110 hp
Empty weight (lb)	1,403
Gross weight (lb)	2,100
High speed (mph)	95
Cruising speed (mph)	78
Landing speed (mph)	42
Rate of climb (fpm)	650
Ceiling (ft)	10,000
Range (mi)	300
Price	\$5,800

by PETER M. BOWERS /
AOPA 54408

The structural simplicity of the Ireland P-2 Privateer is quite evident here.

Wings are wire braced, and the main wheels rotate 180 degrees aft and upward to get clear of the water, just as on the 1946 Republic Seabee.

The most unconventional feature of the Privateer was the use of a short hull with the tail surfaces mounted on steel tube booms.

Author's photo

