



The 1929 A-101 version of the American Eagle with water-cooled Curtiss OX-5 engine and high-pressure tires. Front cockpit was covered over for better performance when flown solo, a common practice at the time.

YESTERDAY'S WINGS

THE American

■ ■ The American Eagle A-1 was one of several models of generally similar design and construction that appeared in the 1925-1927 period, when the cheap World War I surplus trainers were beginning to wear out and open up the market to new production. The Eagle was a three-seat biplane with two passengers seated side by side in the front cockpit with a pilot behind them. The fuselage and tail were welded steel tubing and the wings were wood, all fabric covered. The landing gear was of the divided axle type with rubber shock cord. The wire wheels, which had no brakes on the early models, used high pressure tires and a steel tail skid was standard equipment. The initial models of the Eagle used the ubiquitous 90 h.p. Curtiss OX-5, a water-cooled war-surplus type that was available at low prices in such quantities that it was used to power new production aircraft as late as 1930.

No model number was assigned to the biplane when it appeared early in 1926. It was just "The American Eagle," which sold for \$2,445 with the OX-5. The price was between \$500 and \$900 more if the power plant were a Wright-Hispano A or E, 150 and 180 h.p. war-surplus models commonly known as the "Hisso." The use of a model number didn't begin until late 1927, and even then no distinction was made between versions with different power plants.

Like some of the current Beech and Piper products, it was hard to distinguish the Eagle from some of its contemporaries at a casual glance. Close exami-

nation, however, revealed considerable detail difference, much of it aimed at reducing costs to the buyer. Frills were kept to a minimum and some of the refinements of other designs were eliminated in the interest of economy and ease of maintenance. Old-fashioned round flying wires were used instead of more expensive streamlines, the separate (and hard to rig) upper wing center section was eliminated in favor of a simple rigid cabane truss to which the outer wing panels and landing wires were attached directly, and the cowling around the OX-5 or Hisso was limited entirely to flat-wrap sheet metal instead of stampings to reduce tooling cost.

The 1926-1927 models had ailerons on the upper wing only. The stick forces were reduced somewhat by the use of large aerodynamic balances that came to be called "Elephant Ears" in later years. This feature was eliminated in 1928 when ailerons were used on both wings in the interest of improved control. As the state of the art advanced in the late 1920's, the American Eagle kept pace, acquiring such convenience features as airwheels and brakes, steerable tail wheel, and improved cockpit comforts. Other than the deletion of the balanced ailerons, the major appearance change resulted from replacement of the surplus water-cooled engines with air-cooled radials. A variety of these became available at about the same time and had great effect on the cost of the airplane. A 120 h.p. French Anzani boosted the price to \$4,800 while a 125 h.p. German Siemens sold by Ryan



The 1929 A-129 American Eagle with airwheels and the light-weight Kinner K-5 engine that gave this model the nickname of "Anteater."

Eagle

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increased it to \$5,825. The slightly older Wright J-5, with 220 h.p., put the top price of \$8,400 on the *Eagle*. Those pilots who already had engines left over from a previous plane could buy the *Eagle* without a power plant for \$2,385, \$600 under the 1928 price of the OX-5 model.

In 1929 the A-1 became known as the A-129, meaning the 1929 version of the A-1 which, because of accumulated improvements, rated a new Approved Type Certificate (ATC). Initially, there was still no distinction by power plant, but the A-129 designation soon settled on the Kinner-powered model and the OX-5 version became the A-101. In the same year, a bare trainer version, the A-229, was introduced. This was virtually the A-129 with a narrower fuselage and a one-seat front cockpit. The major outward difference was the use of an upper wing center section with outward-sloping struts.

As the OX-5's began to disappear, the most popular replacement engine for *American Eagles* was the new 90-100 h.p. Kinner K-5. Since this was 115 pounds lighter than the OX-5, not counting radiator, water, and associated plumbing, it had to be installed farther ahead of the firewall to maintain proper balance. This lengthened the nose by only a foot, but it seemed much more and quickly earned the Kinner-powered *Eagle* the nickname of "Anteater."

Like many of its contemporaries, the American Eagle Aircraft Corporation succumbed to the depression, but not without a fight. Unable to cut the

\$4,895 price of its 1930 Kinner model, the company resorted to such gimmicks as offering a \$1,500 flying course free with the purchase of a plane. Finally, the heavy and relatively clumsy biplane was dropped in favor of a last-ditch effort with a two-seat ultra-light monoplane called the *American Eaglet*. However, even this could not sell in the nonexistent depression market and the name *American Eagle* passed into history.

The following figures are for the 1929 OX-5 version of the A-101, but they could be applied to such OX-5-powered contemporaries as the *Air-King 28*, the *Command-Aire 3C3*, the Kreider-Reisner (Fairchild) KR-31, the Lincoln-Page LP-3, the *Monarch*, the *Pheasant H-10*, the *Swallow 90*, the *Thunderbird W-14*, or the *Waco GXE* with a very small degree of error. □

AMERICAN EAGLE SPECIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

Span	30 ft.
Length	24 ft. 6 in.
Wing Area	300 sq. ft.
Empty Weight	1,227 lbs.
Gross Weight	2,057 lbs.
High Speed	101 m.p.h.
Cruising Speed	85 m.p.h.
Climb	575 f.p.m.
Service Ceiling	12,000 ft.
Range	425 mi.
