

The Stinson 108 Airliner
<http://www.westin553.net>
By Larry Westin - April 7, 1999
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Until a homepage viewer asked, I never considered the possibility that the Stinson 108 may have been used as an airliner in scheduled airline service. Since the original version of this article I learned of four airlines, which used the Stinson 108 as an airliner. Those airlines are Korean National Airlines, Michigan Central Airways, San Juan Airlines and Niederhauser Airways

Now before you reject this possibility outright you should consider this fact. An even smaller airplane, the Cessna 150, has been used in scheduled airline service. Compared to the diminutive 2 place Cessna 150, the Stinson 108 has three times the passenger carrying capacity!

Korean National Airlines

Homepage viewer Charles Euripides wrote to say that R. E. G. Davis, author of "Airlines of Asia" states that the Koreans flew Stinson 108's. At the time the airline was named Korean National Airlines, which later became part of Korean Airlines of today.

Korean National Airlines began in 1948, so the timing is possible. At that time Korea was just beginning to recover from the devastation of World War II. A startup airline of 1948 in Korea could very well make use of an airplane the size of the Stinson 108.

It has also been suggested that the Stinson's Korean National Airlines used were actually Tri-Motors. Before 1945 the Japanese ruled Korea, and very little Western technology found its way to Korea. It is reported (ATC volume 6) that China received some Stinson model "A" Tri-Motors before WWII, about 1937. Exact quantity not indicated. While it is possible Stinson Model "A" Tri-Motors could have been imported into Korea from China, it seems unlikely to me. Primary reason is that the Tri-Motors would have had to survive World War II in China, and more than 10 years after delivery still be airworthy.

Michigan Central Airways

The above was part of the original article. During Dec. 1999 I learned from homepage visitors David Carpenter, <drcarpenter@sprintmail.com> of another Stinson 108 used in airline service, and this time in the United States! David Carpenter is the current owner of Stinson 108-3 N6264M and provided some basic information about his airplane being used in airline service with Michigan Central Airways. David suggested I contact another individual who had flown the airplane for more details. I learned the following about N6264M's airline career.

"Michigan Central Airways was basically a route authorization that was obtained after

WWII by Turner Aviation (Roscoe Turner), he also got the route that became Lake Central Airlines (then Allegheny and then USAir and now U.S. Airways).

“To keep the route it had to be flown once a year - and by an airline - hence Michigan Central Airways, or Airline. It was flown one year by a Bamboo Bomber (Cessna UC-78 "T-50" military surplus), one year by a Stinson Reliant, and one year by 1948 Stinson Station Wagon 108-3 (NC6264M). The routes were sold about that time to Capital Airlines who flew them with DC-3's and DC-4's out of Detroit (Willow Run Airport-YIP) - the route went from Detroit (YIP) - Flint (FNT) - Saginaw - BayCity - Midland (TRI) - Pellston - Traverse City. Some of the routes were only flown in the summer. The MCA airplanes had no logo on their airplanes - they flew the route with generic airplanes.”

While Michigan Central Airlines may not have been a major airline, as is American, Delta and United of today, it did fly the Stinson 108-3 in airline service!

September 13, 2009 update, an email from Lissa and Steve Smith, <aviatrix9751k@aol.com> who writes to say “Recently we received copies from the FAA of previous owners. Much to my surprise, Ruby was flown in Michigan Central Airlines.” With FAA records Lissa can confirm that the Stinson 108-2, N9751K, which she owns since 8-27-1997, now named "Ruby," was also flown by Michigan Central Airlines.

Thank you Lissa and Steve Smith for the update! See below for Steve Smith, who owns Stinson 108-1 N9068K since since 11-2-1998, now named "Lil' Red." Read how “Lil' Red” also served an airline.

San Juan Airlines

Now it is March 2000 and homepage viewer Jon P. Franklin, <n180tu@interisland.net>, provides additional information about yet another airline who flew Stinson 108's.

“I live in the San Juan Islands of Washington and have a good friend who flew Stinsons for San Juan Airlines of Friday Harbor Wa. In the infancy of his business, Roy Franklin, (no relation) flew 108s on regularly scheduled service between Seattle and the Islands, as well as Bellingham, Anacortes and Skagit county. The time frame was in the early fifties and he flew them until he needed to upgrade to larger aircraft to keep up with a growing demand for his services. I will try to get you some photos if any are still existing and get you a more detailed account in the near future.”

Would really like to see an image or a Stinson 108 in airline service! (I don't have an email for Charles, only a postal address)

Charles Euripides
4508 Willow Croft Ct.
Charlotte, NC 28226

Niederhauser Airways

September 13, 2009 update, Steve Smith owns Stinson 108-1 N9068K since 11-2-1998, now named "Lil' Red." "Lil' Red" was first flown by Niederhauser Airways in Iowa. FAA records confirm that Niederhauser Airways used N9068K in airline service.

See above for Stinson 108-2, N9751K, owned since 8-27-1997 by Lissa, now named "Ruby," was also flown in airline service by Michigan Central Airlines. Thank you Lissa & Steve Smith <aviatrix9751k@aol.com> for emailing the update!

If any viewer can shed more light on the subject of Stinson 108's in airline service, please contact me via email at <westin@westin553.net>.

Fly Safe!

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