

## AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Review

# STEARMAN MODEL 4 SPEEDMAIL



Product Information		
<b>Publisher:</b> <a href="#">Golden Age Simulations</a>		
<b>Description:</b> Add-on aircraft.		
<b>Download Size:</b> 25 MB	<b>Format:</b> Download	<b>Simulation Type:</b> FS2004+Golden Wings
<b>Reviewed by:</b> <a href="#">Gene Davis</a> AVSIM Sr Staff Reviewer - November 11, 2006		

### Overnight Shipping Will Cost Ya!

Back in the early 20's and into the late thirties, a lot of the mail was delivered via the Stearman Model 4 aircraft. It was a trusted and reliable machine that helped create one of the most dangerous jobs in the world for that time. Pilots would journey into the sky with little or no regard for themselves with only one goal in mind, getting the mail where it needed to be.

The folks over at Golden Age Simulation have brought forth a new version of an old favorite to our virtual world and

## Test System

### Computer 1:

Intel Core Duo E6600  
 2GB Dual Channel Ram  
 ATI X1600 PRO 512  
 CH Flight Yoke & Peddles  
 Saitek X52 Flight  
 Controllers  
 Track IR 3 W/ Vector EXP  
 Patchberri Flight Panel

### Computer 2:

P4 3.0 800 FSB W/HT  
 2GB Of Corsair Ram  
 ATI X1600 PRO 512  
 Saitek Cyborg 3d Joystick

### Flying Time:

12 hours

you to can try and experience what those pilots of yesteryear experienced all without the danger and a pause key.

## Installation and Documentation

Purchase and installation is done through the Flight One wrapper system and it is important to know that this aircraft package does include a scenery set. I breezed through the installation process without checking what was really included and it was only by accident that I discovered this scenery was included. The scenery installs into your add-on directory and is called airmail, so it is important to add it to your scenery library via MSFS.

As for documentation, I didn't look for any! There is documentation though, located in each of the aircraft folders is a history of each aircraft and its performance specs. I was a little surprised that there wasn't more information on Airmail Services and more history on the included liveries, that would have been a nice touch.

## Gives A Whole New Meaning To Express Air!

Once the product is installed, you will find a total of three different aircraft in your hanger as well as an added scenery set for Durango Airmail services. The included aircraft are the Junior Speedmail 4D, the Junior Speedmail 4E-SC1 and the Senior Speedmail, all developed in highly detailed aircraft models. The different models match those of their real world counterparts. The liveries are accurate to that of the services they flew for and in total there are two liveries for each model; American Airways, Western Air Express, NC663K, STANAVO, and Royal Canadian Airmail.





The Royal Canadian Airmail is a rare find and was the first airplanes of this type to fly over Canada. All of these models are either still flying or are in museums which is good considering their age. I would have liked to have seen more in the way of a history of each of the planes, to have known where their home bases were and where they flew, that would have made creating realistic routes much easier. I did do a web search for the plane itself and I was able to find a good deal of information.

I have always been fascinated with bi-planes especially the Stearman line and if you have ever had the privilege to see one fly or to simply hear one you will know what I am talking about. They are magnificent aircraft and with several other packages available out on the net for free you might ask yourself, what makes this one stand out? Well, I have to tell you that the price tag is only \$15.00 and you get an aircraft that represents an era from the early part in our aviation history that pays tribute

to the pilots who flew and died doing a tough job. I couldn't help but think how cold it must have been and how easy it could have been to lose one's bearings in bad weather with nothing more than a compass and poorly drawn maps. As you climb aboard the Speedmail Stearman make sure to pay close attention to the pilot's workspace. See how confined it was and how lonely it may have actually been.

Each aircraft is magnificently detailed and relatively easy on system performance. Walking around the different planes you will find a multitude of compartments, the traditional slew of moving parts and an animated pilot with flapping scarf. Though I found after flying the plane, the pilot smiles all the time; doesn't he know that there are a lot of bugs up there!



Flying the Model 4's is a trip, with the included sound file from Aaron Swindle that brings the 300hp and 450hp engines to life in this add-on simply needs to be heard to experience it. Starting the plane on a cold morning and turning her out onto the airstrip will take you back in time as you throttle the engines forward and the Stearman Model 4 takes to the skies. You can literally feel the power of the engines and the wind in your face; I know turn off the fan located behind my monitor, but what can I say? I like Bi-Planes! Known as some of the fastest and most stable aircraft of their time, the Model 4's love to fly and that is what they were made for!

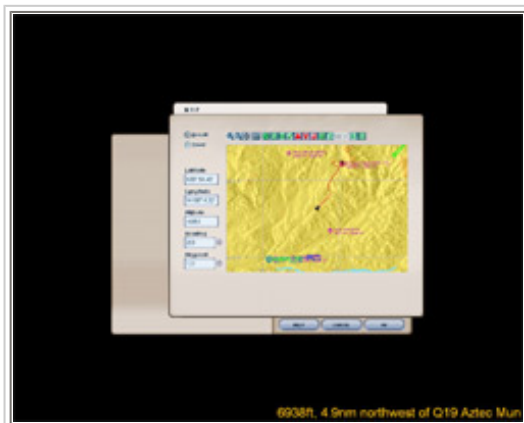
### **Durango Airmail Services**

I have often read that being an airmail pilot back in the 20's and 30's was perhaps one of the most dangerous jobs of the time. Survival rate was low because of the conditions the pilots were forced to fly in, many times it didn't matter how bad the weather was the mail had to go out!



It is only fitting that the aircraft package come with a scenery set that can serve your virtual airmail plane. Transported back in time you will find yourself at Durango Airmail Services in Colorado; be sure to check out the other Speedmail planes parked there as well as the vintage cars and buildings.

## Test Run

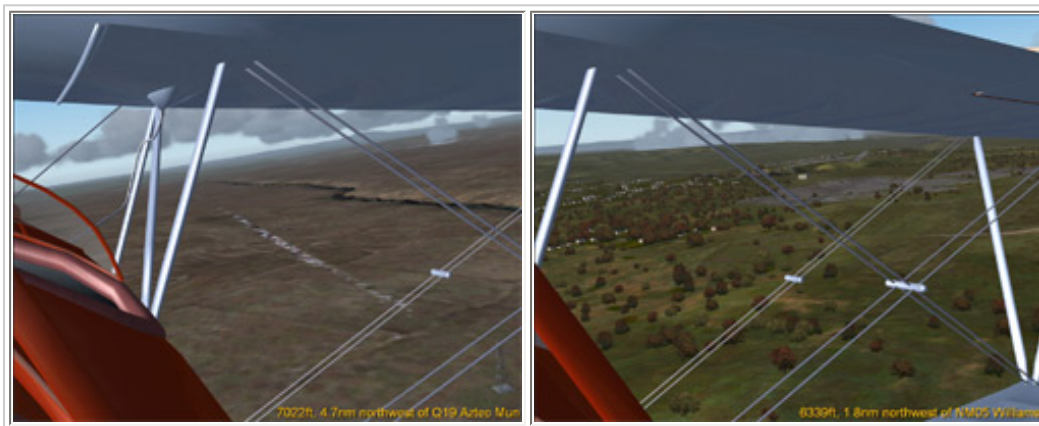


For my test run, I decided to start my flight at Durango Mail Service and pick an airstrip that would be relatively easy to get to. Taking a quick look at my in-flight map, I found that Four Corners Colorado was almost southwest from the mail service center, but the challenge was not to just take off and fly south but to find another way to navigate there.

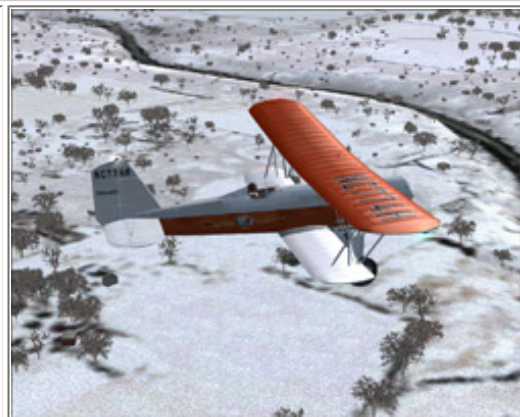
After firing up my Stearman Model 4E Sc1, I taxied up to the mail truck waiting at the distribution center and then moved out onto the runway. Once airborne, I took a quick look around to find a river and power line towers running off in a southerly direction. Deciding on the power lines I followed them across the valleys, all the time not looking at my map. I knew generally where Four Corners should be, but wasn't a 100% sure.

As I continued southward I came to a fork in the road, the power lines that is, one set of lines broke off and went west. Watching the river below near the power lines, I decided to continue southward rather than take the turn to the right. My guess paid off, after about 10 more minutes of flight I could make out what I thought to be a town ahead and guess what, it was Four Corners!

I spent a good portion of my flight hugging the ground just so I could make out landmarks, roads and rivers and the Stearman just moved right along until it was time to turn the engine off.



After flying that route once in good weather I figured I should try while it was snowing and the visibility was bad. Getting up into the air and finding the power lines wasn't a problem but I quickly became disoriented while trying to keep my bearings. I found myself instinctively wanting to climb and get away from the ground, but the problem was I had no real visibility at higher altitudes. I managed to maintain a constant southerly heading but when it was time to get back below the clouds, I found that I had fallen way off course and in an attempt to find those power lines, I managed to clip one with my wing ending my flight. I couldn't help but think about what it must have been like for the real pilots and how quickly things can go wrong.



## VFR All The Way!



The cockpit on the Stearman Speedmail planes are very basic. Staying true to the era there are just a set of basic instruments, rpm gauge, fuel gauge, a few other and of course the most important is the compass! It is from the cockpit where you will do most of your work. Keeping the engine running and making sure you have enough fuel is crucial as you don't have any fancy navigational equipment. You will be spending a lot of time looking over the side and keeping the compass straight and trying to stay on course.

As I was flying I made an effort to cheat, I tried bringing up the GPS. It wasn't there and I really liked that! It gave me the opportunity to make decisions based on what I saw outside, not from what I saw on an instrument; just what it must have been like back in the old days of mail service.

## The Model 4 and Golden Wings plus FS2004

I immediately found a home for this package and it was in my Golden Wings edition of FS2004, as that is where all my vintage aircraft now go and I have to say that I really like flying back in the golden days of flight!

For those of you that don't know what I am talking about, Golden Wings takes FS2004 and transports it back in time to the 1930's, replacing modern textures and concrete runways with grass strips and farm land, thus making this

add-on a no brainer for MSFS 2004 and Golden Wings.

I had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with Golden Wings and the Stearman Speedmail package while waiting for my copy of FS-X and I have to say that I truly enjoyed the experience and even now after I have FSX, I still find myself jumping back to GW and the Stearman for quick little shots across the country side.

The Durango scenery fits nicely into Golden Wings and I recommend that you try it out if you haven't!

## In The End

Do you need this airplane? That is a question only you can answer. If you have a love for this golden age of flight, then it is a must have. I like what Golden Age has done and they have produced a very nice product. You really need to take a look at this one.

### What I Like About the Stearman

- The era of flight
- Capturing history

### What I Don't Like About the Stearman

- Should have been more historical liveries
- Lack of history on the actual air mail carriers

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