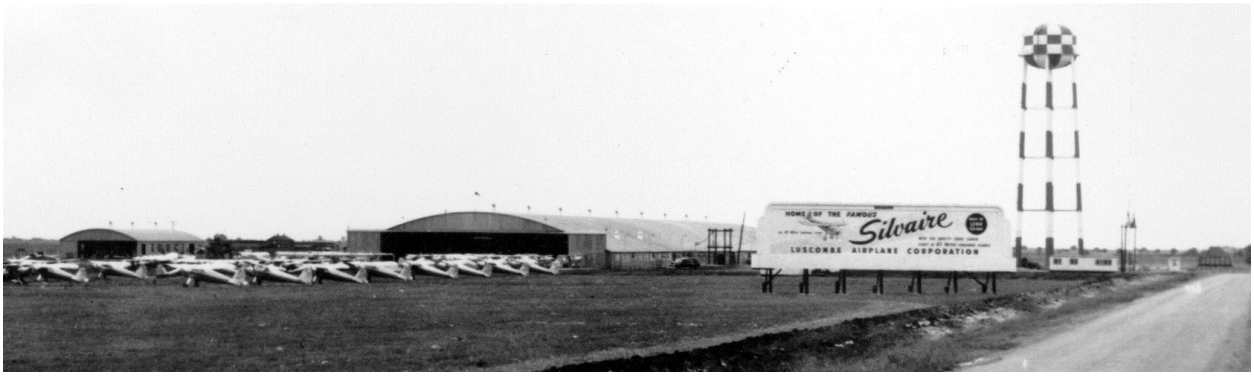
Luscombe Days

The purpose of this writeup is to capture events in the history of the ESY Garland site from its farmland beginning, thru it's use by Luscombe, and finally to ownership by TEMCO.



Looking South from Jupiter Road

Timeline and Significant Events

- Jan 1939 - Leopold H. P. Klotz buys enough stock in Luscombe to challenge Don Luscombe's role as President and Chairman of the Board of Directors
- April 1939 - Don Luscombe forced to resign and sold his stock to a proxy for Klotz
- April 1941 - Announcement of Luscombe School of Aeronautics opening of a branch at 3407 Commerce Street, Dallas, TX
- September 1942 - Dallas branch of Luscombe School of Aeronautics closed
- October 1944 - Klotz comes to Dallas to find a new location to replace Trenton, NJ
    - Dismissed proposal to build factory site at Redbird Airport south of Oak Cliff
    - Decision made to begin negotiations on agricultural land near Garland
- December 1944 - Klotz becomes President of Luscombe
    - Formal decision made to move to Dallas (Klotz had a personal fondness for Dallas)
    - Obtained options on 460 acres near Garland; subsequently options were taken to increase the site to about 700 acres
    - Obtained options for buildings at 1408 Camp Street in Dallas (I can't find Camp St on a Dallas map, but one comment on the web said it was renamed to San Jacinto Street)
- March 1945 - Dallas Times Herald article stating that arrangements for immediate construction of a hanger for a postwar Luscombe factory and airport are being made in Dallas. It will be across the road and on the west side of Continental Motor's military tank engine factory (the Kraft plant at Shiloh and Forest). Luscombe has already leased space at 2508 - 2510 Camp for production of war contract items
- August 1945 - **first Dallas-made aircraft is completed**; Model 8D, s/n 1925, tail number NC33335

- September 1945 - employment at the downtown and Garland plants exceed 300
- October 1945 - a new blue trim is available. An “S” surrounded by a diamond became standard rather than the maroon “S” surrounded by a circle used on the prewar Models 8C and 8D

Luscombe Silvaire “S” styles - old and new

- October 1945 - s/n 1934 was completed, the first aircraft to use all Dallas-made parts
- April 1946 - first metal wing prototype (NC45869) enters flight testing
- May 1946 - production rate averages 9 aircraft per day
- June 1946 - production rate averages 13 aircraft per day
- September 1946 - 800 employees on day shift, 400 employees on evening shift
- October 1946 - order backlog drops below 200, down from a high of 2000 in January. A 3-day long sales meeting w/ Luscombe Distributors held in Dallas where some thought the lightplane boom had passed and that they needed the current production rate at the beginning of the year. Production running at 15 per day
- November 1946 - approximately 400 persons permanently laid off, night shift operation shut down, and production rate cut to 6 ½ per day
- December 1946 - production rate 5 per day
- January 1947 - two week factory shutdown
- Springtime 1947 - a cost analysis on one 65 HP 8A aircraft showed net profit was $44
- March 1947 - announcement of price cuts made possible by increased efficiency (one example: 85 HP standard model with metal wing reduced to a list price of $2495 which was a $500 reduction)
- June 1947 - assembly line shutdown from 6-20-47 thru 7-4-47 to allow deliveries to catch up with production
- October 1947 - first public showing of the new 4-place Model 11A (aka the Luscombe Sedan) at the Texas State Fair
- November 1947 - due to large investments in the Model 11 and T8E cash position becoming critical
- December 1947 - Model 11, NX2727K, lost during spin testing resulted in:
    - Delayed receiving type certificate (previously planned to occur Jan 1948)
    - All production work on Model 11 stopped; employees either transferred to Model 8 production or were laid off
- May 1948 - tentative approval from CAA (type certificate); changes from that version to the final version would be aircraft owners responsibility

- December 1948 - several suppliers put Luscombe on a C.O.D basis
- March 1949 - decision made to sell all company-owned demonstrator aircraft in an attempt to raise cash
- March 1949 - company fails to make payroll
- June 1949 - employees agree to continue to work w/o pay in an attempt to save the company
- Xxx 1949 - at some point in 1949 the company tried to help the cash flow problem, Luscombe contracted to stamp aluminum parts for the Lynbrook "Magic" dishwasher
- Xxx 1949 - last aircraft to roll out of the factory was s/n 6729
- June 1949 - suit for receivership filed in the 101st District Court against Luscombe by Maheu's Airport Inc. of West Mint, Maine
    - Only about 80 employees showed up for work on Monday the 25th; the previous week there had been 200 employees
    - The court found Luscombe insolvent and appointed a trustee to make a recommendation to the court on July 27 (Elijah Crippen)
- July 1949 - Trustee report filed with the court. Key points/recommendations:
    - Luscombe should continue operating under some reorganization plan
    - The corporation should sell some of its property and service rights
    - Crippen warned that reorganization appeared to be contingent on a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and on the possibility of selling some of its nonproductive assets
    - Too much capital tied up in land, tangible rights to one or two airplane models, supplies, and service rights
    - Suggested selling 90 - 250 acres of the 480 acre plant site
    - Luscombe should try to sell the producing water well on the property to the city of Garland to alleviate Garland's water shortage and Luscombe's cash shortage
    - Note that Luscombe had unfilled contracts for about $250,000 with the Navy Air Material Command, Boeing, and Consolidated Vultee. The report stated that filling these would require $120,000 for labor and materials to fill, yet cash on hand is now less than $10,000
    - Given that a demand for parts existed from about 6,000 owners of Luscombe airplanes, the report recommended continued production
    - Assets were listed as $815,273 and liabilities, including undelivered orders and overtime payments, at $692,363
- July 1949 - I.R.S. files suit alleging that Luscombe had not paid taxes, nor had income tax and social security withholdings been paid since January 1948. The total asked for in the suit was $83,194
- August 1949 - court hearing gave Luscombe 30 days to reorganize
    - Luscombe attorney Paul Carrington presented to the court four possibilities if Luscombe could have more time:
        - Boeing would take over management of Luscombe in exchange for buying $140,000 of preferred Luscombe stock
        - TEMCO of Grand Prairie, Texas would be offered a similar deal as Boeing
        - Sale of most of the 480 acre plant site
        - Sale of manufacturing rights of the 2-place Luscombe Silvaire (glm: this is the 8 series) valued at $300,000
- October 1949 - Trustee authorized a small staff be retained to maintain plant security and fill orders for parts. **Production has ceased**

- February 1950 - court approval of TEMCO's plan to reorganize the bankrupt Luscombe Aircraft Corporation
    - H. L. Howard, general manager of TEMCO approved as president of the reorganized Luscombe Company by the court (Judge Atwell)
    - TEMCO planned to build a small crop duster and to pursue a military contract for several hundred small liaison airplanes
    - The court stripped Klotz of all interests in the Luscombe Company.
- March 1950 - TEMCO has six nearly-completed airplanes left on the assembly line when production ceased in 1949 (five 8F and one T8F)
    - TEMCO began converting the T8F to meet the projected military evaluation criteria
    - TEMCO purchased another T8F from a distributor and began converting it as well in order to have two airplanes for the military flight tests
    - May 1950 - Cessna wins the military trials eventually becoming the L-19 Bird Dog; this airplane is essentially a Cessna 170 that has been converted from four place seating to a tandem two place seating configuration. TEMCO returns it's two aircraft to Dallas and subsequently they were sold.

Luscombe T8F

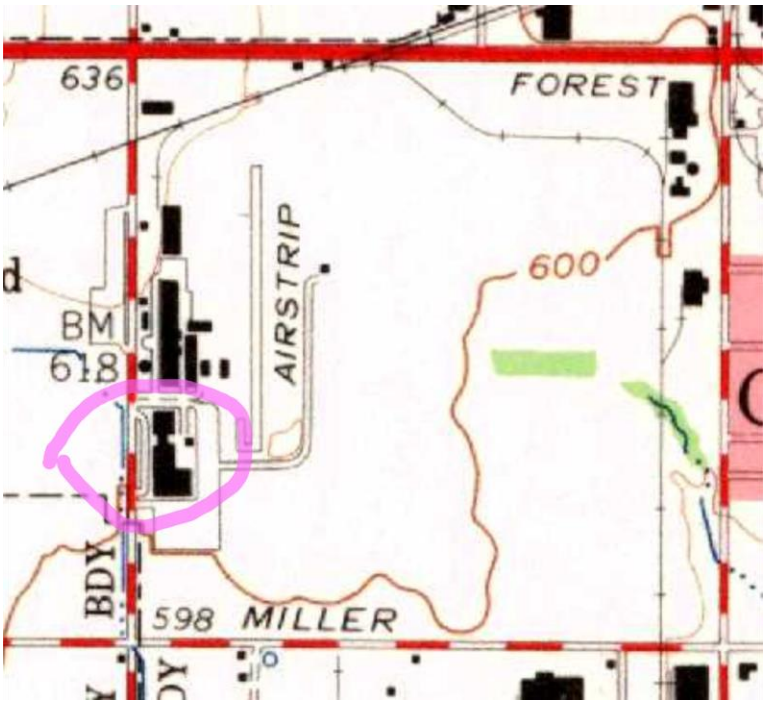
- Xxx 1950 - TEMCO reassesses production possibilities for the Luscombe factory without the military contract
    - TEMCO decides on a limited production run of the 8F model to determine if enough demand existed to sustain continued production
    - All aircraft activities to be consolidated to the Luscombe factory. This included moving the Swift assembly line to Garland
- September 1950 - a 2000 ft. all-weather runway completed near the Luscombe plant; it was capable of handling a DC-3. All Swift sales and service operations transferred to the Luscombe plant
- December 1950 - start of sub-contract work for the B-36 at the factory (door assemblies and elevator assemblies)

- December 1950 - TEMCO management decides to discontinue all personal aircraft as of the 12/31/50
    - During 1950, 22 Silvaires and 5 Swifts left the factory
    - Remaining at end of year were 14 Swifts and 28 Model 8F. These were all sold over the coming months; last Swift left in Oct. 1951 and the last Silvaire in Nov. 1951
- September 1952 - employment reaches 300
- April 1953 - stockholder's meeting in which a merger of Luscombe Airplane Corporation and TEMCO Airplane Company (the parent company) was approved. **At this point the Luscombe Company founded by Don Luscombe in 1934 ceased to exist.**
- January 1955 - TEMCO sells to Otis Massey all Silvair Model 8 production rights, tooling, and equipment. By February all items have been moved to Fort Collins, CO
- October 1956 - TEMCO returns the Model 11A Type Certificate to the FAA for cancellation; assembly jigs and tools were sold to a scrap dealer

This concludes the Luscombe involvement in the history of the Garland site. Don Luscombe died January 10, 1965

Luscombe family gravesite

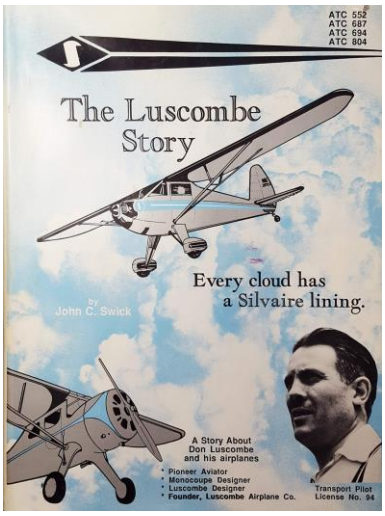
On a personal note… my first program at E-Systems used the Luscombe hanger for parts storage, beginning in the fall of 1982; that program was ironically, a general aviation program (FSAS). The hanger was torn down sometime around 1983 or 1984. The runway was taken up around the same time. For about a year-long period, beginning in Nov. 1982, a portion of this program was housed in the old Rad Lab building. Getting to that building required driving on the runway and we all had a special color (yellow) inside parking pass (the number on mine was "1"). In order to transport items between the main buildings and the Rad Lab, Carter Porter and I had permission from security to carry anything (parts, printouts, tapes, etc.) between the buildings using our personal cars. No property pass, list, or signatures required - just load up, call security as a heads-up, and go.



1959 USGS Topo Map showing the Luscombe runway and buildings

The above topo map has the first buildings most ESY employees will recognize enclosed by the violet-colored marker line. Notice the visitor parking area in front of buildings 551/552. Notice also the railroad tracks at the top of the image.

More detail about this time frame can be found in this book which was the source for much of the above information:



"The Luscombe Story", by John C. Swik
copyright 1987, ISBN 0-943691-00-1. I have a copy of this book, signed by the author. It is excellent

Aircraft Information and Photos

This section contains information primarily of interest to pilots and aviation buffs. It comes from a variety of sources including my experience in flying and owning the Luscombe 8. When looking at photos, remember that these airplanes are some 75 years old, so don't expect to ever find one in as-delivered configuration or paint scheme.

Luscombe Model 8 Production 1945 - 1951 with my comments added

Model	Qty	Comments
8A	2892	Continental A-65, no electrical system*
8A Special	95	Continental A-65, wing tanks
8A Sky Pal	151	Continental A-65,
8D	11	Continental A-75, no electric system
8E Deluxe	911	Continental C85-12, two 12.5 gal wing tanks, electric starter, generator, lights, and battery
8E Special	127	Continental C85, no electric
8F Deluxe	270	Continental C90, electrical
8F Special	59	Continental C90, no electrical
T8F	73	Continental C90 (Deluxe has electrical, Special does not)
T8F Sprayer	35	
TEMCO 8F	44	
Total	***4668***	

*The Continental 65 HP was a very popular light plane engine. This engine lacked the ability to accept an electric starter or a generator; because of this, few small aircraft had any electrical items (the magnetos used for the ignition do not require a power source i.e. a battery). The weight of just the battery consumed a large portion of the available payload; when you add a wind-driven generator to get a way to charge the battery you've added even more weight AND added a large amount of drag (thus losing both payload and performance/speed). To get a mental picture of this generator, visualize a car generator/alternator with a model airplane propeller attached, hanging between the main landing gear

mounts on the bottom of the fuselage. Remember that no electrical means no lights; thus, no flying at night. Personally, I never missed the lack of an electrical system.

Continental opposed aircraft engines

A-65 – four-cylinder, 65-horsepower
A-75 – four-cylinder, 75-horsepower
C-75 – four-cylinder, 75-horsepower
A-80 – four-cylinder, 80-horsepower
C-85 – four-cylinder, 85-horsepower
C-90 – four-cylinder, 90-horsepower

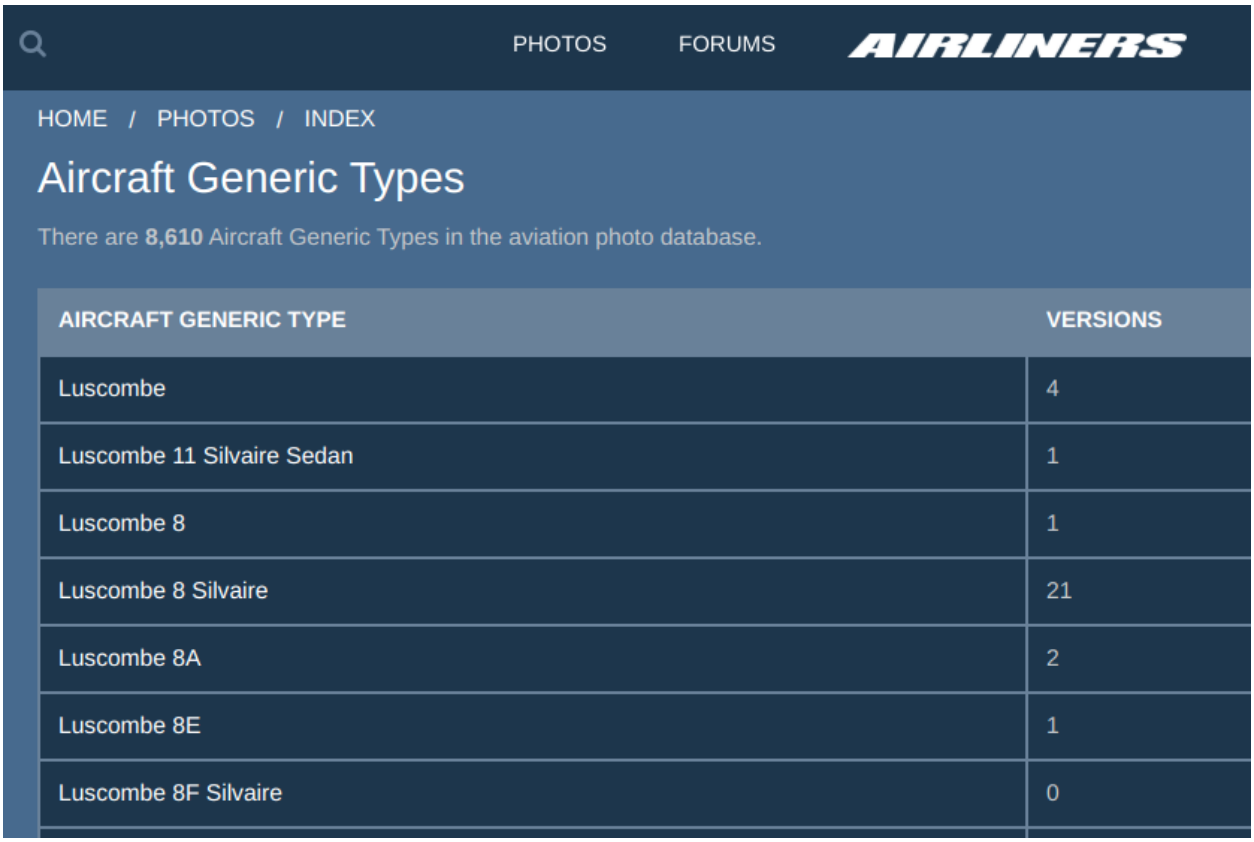
Model 8A, serial number 3400, metal wing, 2 wing fuel tanks, 75 HP

Model 8A, serial number 3400 - before repainting

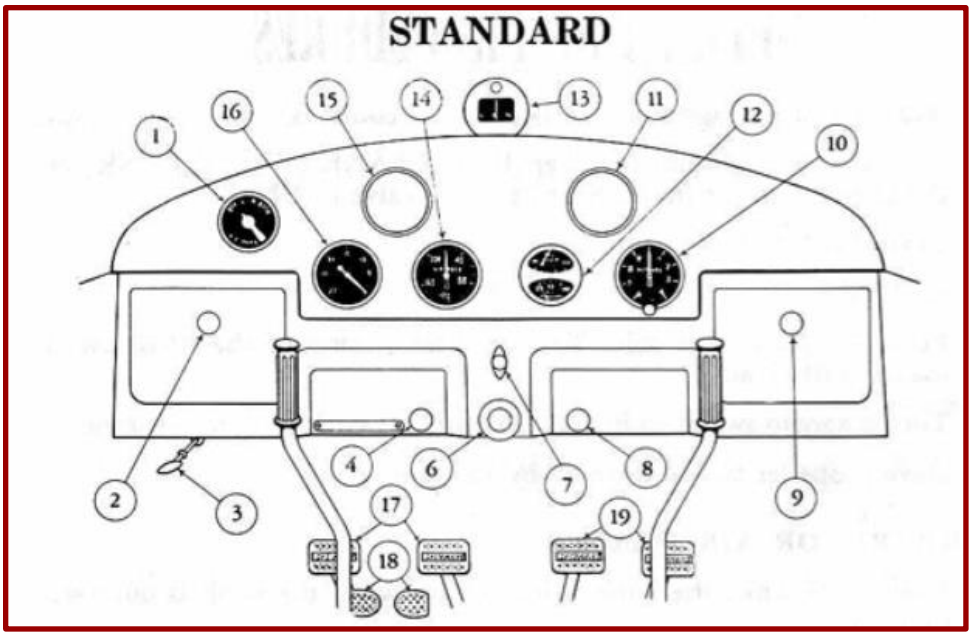
Luscombe 8A, fabric wing, single fuel tank in fuselage, 65 HP

Nameplate installed on rudder

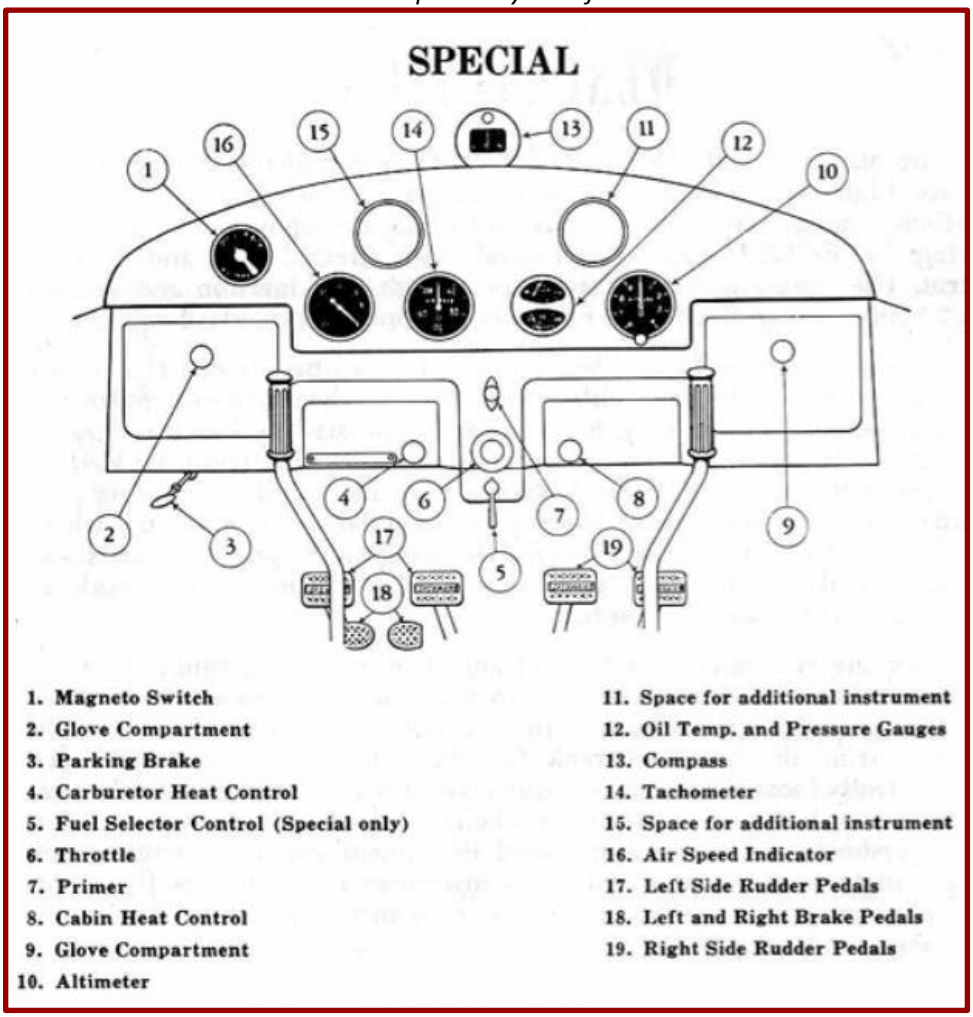
An excellent source for photos of aircraft of many types can be found at https://www.airliners.net/. On their aircraft index pages, the listing of Luscombes currently begins around page 101 https://www.airliners.net/index/aircraft-types/101



Screenshot of Aircraft Type Index page on airliners.net website



Standard Model Silvair Instrument panel layout - from Owners Manual



Special Model Silvaire Instrument panel layout - from Owners Manual

Note the in the figures above showing the instrument panel layout:

- Lack of a mixture control; the 65 HP engine did not support this
- Brakes are heel brakes and are only on the pilot side. The brakes are operated by cables running from the pedals to each main gear wheel (no hydraulics)
- No keyswitch; on a similar note, Luscombe's did not typically come with key locks in the doors either

Updated Interior of 8A that still maintains much of the original flavor

NARCO Omnigator VTR-1

Radio from the early 1950's which, for many years, was typical for Luscombe's that actually did have a radio. Its size allowed it to be installed in the panel space taken by the pilot-side glove box - simply remove the glove box and door, then bolt the radio mount/chassis in its place. A power supply was installed in the cargo area behind the seats plus interconnects wiring.

Auto license plate

Luscombe 11A Sedan

And finally since some did come out of the Luscombe factory…

TEMCO Swift GC-1B