

Belcher Bits Decal BB-39: Beechcraft 18 Mods 1/48

Background

The Beechcraft Model 18 is one of the most successful light twin aircraft in the world with over 9000 produced. Introduced in 1937, sales of the Beech 18 started slowly in comparison with its main competitor, the Lockheed 12. However, WWII provided a tremendous market for pilot trainers and light transport aircraft and it was used by USAAC as the C-45 and USN as the SNB, both in many variants. Post-war, it was sold to many foreign air forces and continues in civilian service in limited numbers to the present day.

One of the distinguishing features of early aircraft (up to Beech 18C, around 1945) was a straight leading edge and short upper wing nacelles; the ICM C-45F represents this configuration.

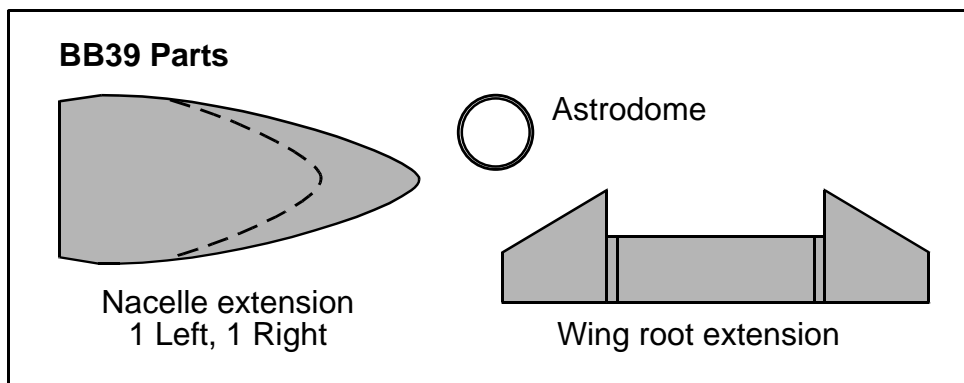
Immediately post-war (starting with the 18D) the wing chord inboard of the engines was increased and swept back to the nacelles. Documentation is missing but this may have come from some attempt to decrease drag. At the same time the upper nacelles were extended to the rear, matching the under-wing nacelles. One reference states that this may be due to the increased diameter of the wheels used with these later versions. It may also be tied in to drag reduction as well; we may never know why but we do know it happened. This resin modification kit is available for the ICM kit which will allow you to model late-model and post-war Expeditors.

Kit Modifications

This conversion set has been designed to allow you to make the necessary modifications without cutting your nice, new kit up too much. However, a bit of surgery is required but it occurs quite late in the build. First, let's deal with the interior of the cabin a bit. Some of the post-war variants (especially RCAF and RCN) were classed as 3N variants which meant they were originally navigation trainers. Reference state that the AT-7 (also a nav trainer) had seats and chart tables for 3 students, but unfortunately I do not have any good info which shows how these were laid out. Since many post-war machines were reconfigured back to general transport roles, I would suggest you just build the interior as per the kit with 5 passenger seats. However, you can add the astrodome on the roof for those schemes where appropriate. If you want to scratch build an entire nav trainer interior, go ahead but I can't help you.

Astrodome (If required)

After joining the fuselage halves at step 13, cut a 0.35" (8.9mm) diameter hole in the cabin roof, centred on the first set of cabin windows.



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Wing Modifications

After the wing is put together at step 38, a section of the needs to be removed. Measure back from the front edge of the cabin floor a distance of 0.35" (8.9mm) and mark a line on the bottom. Use a razor saw and cut back to this line just inside each nacelle, then remove the section, clean up the cut edges and glue in the wing root extension. See the photo below.

The nacelle extensions are marked on the inside, L & R. Clean up the leading edge, fit over the existing nacelle and glue in position. The front of the extension should line up with the panel line about 0.8" back from the nacelle leading edge. Remember that the nacelles of the Beech 18 were canted out 4 degrees from the centreline. When the glue is set, use some filler around the leading edge of the extensions just to smooth out the top contours.

Final Assembly

Glue the astrodome in place over the hole and mask.

Shameless Self-Promotion

A decal sheet covering 7 schemes for the C-45 (2 x RCN, 2 x RCAF, 2 x USMC and USAF) is available from Belcher Bits as BD-29.

References

1. Various internet searches for photos and info.
2. Illustrated parts catalogue, C-45 Expeditor, RCAF
3. Historical Aviation Album, Paul Matt, 1969

