

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Aug. 4, 2015

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State Historical Society Publishes Story of South Dakota Aviation

PIERRE, S.D. — From the barnstorming era to the Space Age, the state's colorful aviation heritage is the focus of the latest issue of "South Dakota History," the quarterly journal of the South Dakota State Historical Society.

The centerpiece of the Summer 2015 issue is an article by Steven J. Bucklin, professor of history at the University of South Dakota, titled "Fly-over Country?: A Glimpse of South Dakota through Its Aviation History."

South Dakotans had their first experience with "flying machines" at the 1911 South Dakota Stock Growers Association convention in Rapid City, where the Curtiss Exhibition Company, owned by aviation pioneer Glenn H. Curtiss, provided thrilling entertainment. Later, in the wake of Charles A. Lindbergh's visits to Sioux Falls and Pierre after his heroic solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927, entrepreneurs looked to aviation as a means to stimulate South Dakota's economy. By the mid-1930s, federal, state and local officials saw the need to regulate and promote the new industry along with providing essential aviation infrastructure.

Bucklin consulted state government records, interviewed notable figures such as former Gov. William J. Janklow (a licensed pilot), and read extensively in historic newspapers in the course of his research. Much of the author's source material and most of the article's illustrations were found in the State Historical Society's archival collection at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

"We enjoyed the opportunity to provide Professor Bucklin with some of the resources he needed to write an insightful article on such a fascinating topic," said Matthew T. Reitzel, manuscript and photo archivist for the State Historical Society-Archives.

Bucklin holds B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of South Dakota and a Ph.D. in history from the University of Iowa. He is the author of several books and articles on South Dakota and on United States diplomatic history.

A subscription to "South Dakota History" is a benefit of membership in the South Dakota State Historical Society. For information on membership, call (605) 773-6000. Individual issues may be purchased for \$10 plus tax and shipping by calling (605) 773-6009.

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Education. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.