

PRESS RELEASE – for immediate release – Oct. 17, 2014

From: The Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum, 204 S. Main

RE: Special Program and two new Special Exhibits: Wichita Aviation

Program Featuring: Aviation historian & author Edward H. Phillips

Sat & Sun Oct 25 & 26

Aviation historian & author Edward H. Phillips presents programs on Saturday, October 25th & Sunday, October 26th at 2pm celebrating a special aviation exhibit at the Wichita- Sedgwick County Historical Museum. Programs are free and open to the public.

On Saturday, Phillips discusses the dawn of Wichita aviation 1911-1929.

Sunday's programs include the history of Travel Air and Walter Beech, the genesis and production of the Type R "Mystery Ship" racing monoplane and the air races of the 1920s and 1930s.

Edward H. Phillips has researched and written eight books on the unique and rich aviation history that belongs to Wichita, Kansas. Phillips holds degrees from the University of North Dakota. He is a pilot and advanced ground instructor. He has worked for Beech Aircraft Corporation, Piedmont Airlines and is as a writer for Aviation Week and Space Technology magazine.

SPECIAL EXHIBITS OPENING: Walter Beech Air Race Trophies & Celebrating the "Mystery S"

"Celebrating the "Mystery S"

Featuring Film footage taken at the Wichita Airport circa 1930

One of the legendary racing planes of the era rolled out of Wichita's Travel Air plant in 1929. It was the result of an experimental project conducted in a restricted area of the Travel Air plant by a few employees who designed and built the plane in their spare time. Travel Air called its plane simply the Model R, but the Wichita newspapers, in reporting rumors of Walter Beech's secret racing plane, dubbed it the "Mystery Ship" or "Mystery S."

The special low-wing monoplane exceeded its designers' expectations. It easily won the 1929 National Air Races in Cleveland, outdistancing all of the other entrants, including, military fighters, with an average speed of nearly 195 mph. Its red and black paint scheme was a sensation. Its reliability and spectacular performance with a top speed of 230 mph resulted in increased sales for Travel Air. The "Mystery S" had earned its place in aviation history.



Travel Air logo:

"Walter Beech Air Race Trophies"

Featuring 12 Trophies

Walter Beech, a giant of aviation, began as a pilot at the dawn of the air age and ultimately created some of the era's most successful airplanes. Beech promoted these at what some termed "Aeronautical Rodeos". The air shows, tours, and races that occurred in the 1920s emphasized speed, reliability, safety, and aircraft design, rather than stunts and acrobatics. The sport of air racing continued in earnest into the 1930s. Pilots at the controls of Wichita made airplanes, including Swallow, Travel Air, Cessna, Stearman, and Beech models, won race after race in American and international competition and stimulated sales for the airplane companies.

Even in the darkest days of the Great Depression, enthusiastic fans turned out to watch their favorite pilots compete. These men – and increasingly, women – who loved speed, glory, and the thrill of going up against the best fliers of the day, inspired aircraft designers to develop powerful specialized planes that pushed the limits of technology, imagination and style.

Submitted by Eric Cale, Museum Director, contact: ecale@wichitahistory.org

Venue: Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum, 204 S. Main, Wichita, KS 67202

Contact: 316-265-9314, wichitahistory.org

Museum Hours: Tuesday – Friday 11:00 am to 4:00 pm; Saturday & Sunday 1:00 to 5:00 pm.

Regular Admission Charge: Adults \$ 5.00, Children under 12 years \$ 2.00; under 6 free

Supported in part by the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County Kansas

OUR VISION: To provide a world class Museum experience, advancing the understanding and exploration of the rich historical and cultural heritage of Wichita and Sedgwick County Kansas.