

Finding Aid to the Vern Roberts Photograph Collection

Roberts, Vernon, 1896-1953

Vernon Roberts Photograph Collection, 1908-1932

5 copy photographic prints

Collection number: Photo 459

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OVERVIEW

Links: Finding aid to the [Vernon Roberts Papers](#)
View collection on [Digital Horizons](#)

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Copied from originals loaned by Kenneth Roberts, 1996 (Acc. 2456).

Property rights: The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

Copyrights: Copyright to images in this collection remain with the creators.

Citation: Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo (item number)

BIOGRAPHY

Vernon L. (Vern) Roberts was born January 29, 1896 to Lee A. and Grace Roberts on the family farm near Fargo, N.D. After graduating from Fargo High School he enlisted in 1917 in the Army Air Corps and took his flight training at Kelly and Brooks fields in Texas. During World War I he was a pilot instructor, serving until April 1919. He returned to Fargo and worked for his grandfather Charles A. Roberts, a contractor. But he wanted to return to flying and he joined with Earl Reineke, founder of WDAY, to purchase an airplane and do barnstorming with a Curtis JN-4D 'Jenny' airplane. They later formed Reineke Aircraft Company. The company went out of business in 1922 when their plane crashed at Carrington, N.D., although Roberts escaped with only minor injuries.

Mr. Roberts married Henrietta Wilke of Wimbledon, N.D. on Oct. 17, 1922. They settled at Bemidji, Minn. where they purchased a mercantile business. But a year later Roberts was back barnstorming. After crashing two more airplanes they returned to Fargo where he resumed flying from his parent's farm, then called Roberts Field in what is now southwest Fargo. Roberts became involved with others in the early aviation industry in Fargo and flew the first air mail from St. Paul, Minn. to Fargo and on to Winnipeg, Manitoba. In 1927 he flew for the Fargo Aero Club and was involved in air races between 1928 and 1933.

Mr. and Mrs. Roberts moved to Moline, Illinois where he was a test pilot for Mono Aircraft Corp., became manager of the Moline Airport and general manager for Moline Air Service for eleven years. At the time of his death he and his son Kenneth operated Moline Engine Service. He died April 20, 1953. Henrietta Roberts died July 23, 1993 at Moline.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The five photographs were copied from a number of images found in the scrapbooks of Vern Roberts that were loaned to the Institute for Regional Studies for copying. There were more images in the scrapbooks than were copied, due to cost considerations. The original prints and scrapbooks were returned to the Roberts family. The Roberts scrapbooks and other papers were processed as Manuscript 1514.

There are two images of Vernon Roberts by an airplane, one from 1932 and the other undated, although likely from early 1920s. There is also an image of an airplane taking off from a rural area, when the first air mail was flown to Winnipeg in 1922. The final two copy prints likely are of postcards of a Mr. Knabenshue in a flying machine at the state fair in Fargo (1908) and Lucky Bob St. Henry flying an airplane at Mandan, N.D.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
1	'Aviator St. Henry at Mandan, N.D.'
2	'Knabenshue, N.Dak. State Fair, Fargo, 1908'
3	'The Good Will Air Mail to Winnipeg from Fargo, July 15, 1922'
4	Vern Roberts seated in airplane cockpit
5	Vern Roberts standing in front of airplane by propeller, Sept. 1932