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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Laird, Emil M. "Mattie"

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placed on all civilian flying. Before this ban was put into effect Laird had booked two exhibition dates during October at county fairs, at Piedmont, Missouri, and Sac City, Iowa. Later in November he suffered a recurrence of his former injuries and went back into the hospital where he remained until March, 1918. After this he again applied for a government Civil Service post in aviation, but before a decision was made the Armistice was signed.

Meanwhile Laird had been building another new plane and had re-established his Chicago firm, the E. M. Laird Company. This new plane, called the "Model S," was designed for sport and exhibition flying, using a 50 h.p. Gnome rotary engine. It was his sixth powered machine and was completed in June, 1919. Soon after it was finished Laird sold it to Billy Burke, who had organized the National Exhibition Flyers in Oklahoma. A few more "Model S" planes were built.

A major turn of events then took place which eventually changed the course of Laird's activities. Billy Burke had a friend in Oklahoma, Jake Moellendeck, who had struck it rich in oil, then moved to Wichita, Kansas. Being aviation minded through Burke, Moellendeck soon played a leading role in establishing Wichita as an early aviation center. Later in 1919 Laird was planning another new plane and Burke induced him to move his operations to Wichita, Kansas, where he and Moellendeck each put up \$15,000. Laird contributed his completed "Model S" planes, machinery, equipment and inventory of materials valued at \$15,000 and this three-member partnership formed the E. M. Laird Company of Wichita to manufacture the new Laird 3-passenger commercial plane, using war surplus Curtiss OX engines. A small factory and flying field were established and the first plane was completed in early 1920. Named the "Laird Swallow," it soon became nationally known and was the first truly commercial plane on the market after World War I. It was a 3-seat-tandem tractor biplane of 38-foot span having a speed range of 38 - 84 mph. A number of them were built and sold.

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