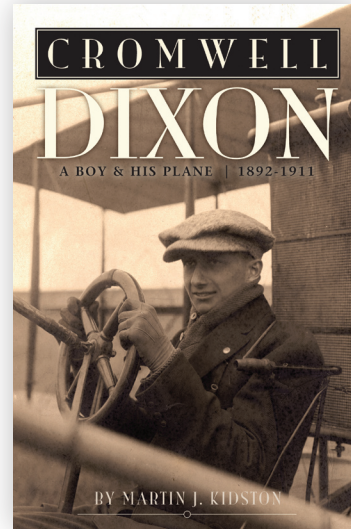


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“Cromwell Dixon’s tragically short life story is a tale of pure courage and skill that biographer Kidston handles with fondness, empathy, and a historian’s reverence for detail.”

—Tom Harpole, *Smithsonian Air and Space* magazine

AVIATOR CROMWELL DIXON SUBJECT OF PBS HISTORY DETECTIVES EPISODE

PBS’s popular program History Detectives enlists the help of Helena reporter and author Martin J. Kidston to solve a nearly 100-year-old mystery.

In an episode scheduled to air Monday, July 19, at 8 pm on Montana PBS, the team looks into the history surrounding a swatch of fabric found in Nebraska. The piece of cloth, signed by 19-year-old aviator Cromwell Dixon in 1911, may be one of the few artifacts stemming from his short history as a young pilot.

Kidston penned the first book on the life and tragic death of the young aviation pioneer – “Cromwell Dixon: A Boy and His Plane” (2007, Farcountry Press).

At age 19, Dixon became the first pilot in history to fly over the Continental Divide. He made the landmark flight over the Rocky Mountains from Helena to Blossberg in 1911, a triumph that made news around the country. Just two days later, while performing an exhibition flight for the state fair in Spokane, Washington, a sudden and violent crash took young Dixon’s life.

For nearly a century, the accomplishments of the bold and audacious young aviator have been little more than a whisper in Montana history. But with the approaching 100th anniversary of his record-setting flight—and his untimely death—the life story of this remarkable prodigy is finally emerging.

Hailed as a mechanical genius in 1907 at the age of 13, teenage inventor Cromwell Dixon built and flew airships in Ohio before signing on with the famous Glenn Curtiss in New

York and flying the world's first airplanes. At the time, he was the youngest licensed pilot in the nation.

The History Detectives program, produced in New York, explores the complexities of historical mysteries, using investigative techniques, modern technologies, and plenty of legwork to give new—and sometimes shocking—insights into our national history.

Producers contacted Kidston in February, after learning of the fabric's possible ties to Dixon's escapades as a young pilot. The episode was shot at various locations in Grand Island, Nebraska, including the home of the woman who owns the artifact.

Kidston says, "The film crew was a lot of fun and showed genuine interest in Dixon's story. I look forward to seeing how they pulled it all together."

About the Author

Martin J. Kidston graduated from the University of Montana–Missoula in 1997 after serving in the Marines. He lives in Helena, where he works as a newspaper reporter for the Helena Independent Record and as a freelance writer. He is the author of *From Poplar to Papua: Montana's 163rd Infantry Regiment in WWII*, and coauthor, with Barbara Fifer, of *Wanted! Wanted Posters of the Old West*.

For an interview, contact author Martin Kidston at 406-202-0955.

Praise for *Cromwell Dixon: A Boy and His Plane*

"...an impassioned and meticulous account...A terrific read."

—DEIRDRE MCNAMER, author of *Red Rover* and *Rima in the Weeds* and professor of creative writing, University of Montana–Missoula

"The aviator's brief existence is explained to the reader with sensitivity, ingenuity, and compassion."

—BRIAN D'AMBROSIO, *New West*

"The book is an educational, but not stuffy, look at turn-of-the-20th-century life in America with details about clothing, transportation (remember, the auto was in its infancy, too) and the amazing, rapid-fire changes that affected society and government, along with individuals. It reads like a novel while packed with facts."

—CHRIS RUBICH, *Billings Gazette*

"Cromwell Dixon was a boy aviator in name only; he was mature beyond his years. He saw America, and Montana, from a rare vantage point high in his aeroplane. Cromwell participated in the shaping of aviation's beginnings, when all flying was stunt flying; he tested himself and his plane to tragic limits. Kidston explores with sensitivity and creativity the fast-paced life of a forgotten hero."

—RICHARD SIMS, director of the Montana Historical Society

About Farcountry Press

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2010, award-winning publisher Farcountry Press specializes in photography books, children's series, and regional history titles nationwide. www.farcountrypress.com, 800.821.3874