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How We Invented The Airplane: An Illustrated History (Dover Transportation)



Synopsis

It was the realization of a dream as old as mankind. On December 17, 1903, two bicycle mechanics from Dayton, Ohio, achieved the first sustained, powered, heavier-than-air flight in a machine of their own design and construction. This book offers a concise and fascinating history of that remarkable accomplishment, much of it in the words of the inventors themselves. The heart of the book is Orville Wright's personal account, written in connection with an obscure lawsuit filed against the U.S. government. Long forgotten until a typewritten copy was discovered among the Wright papers at the Library of Congress, it is the best, most detailed account of how the Wright brothers succeeded in creating the machine that lifted man into the sky on wings. The brothers first became interested in the problem of flight after reading about the glider experiments of Otto Lilienthal, a 19th-century German engineer. Experimenting first with kites and gliders, they developed a revolutionary wing design that helped solve the crucial problem of maintaining lateral equilibrium. Later, they added a movable rudder that eliminated the tendency of the machine to go into a tailspin. In addition to these critical innovations, the two inventors developed new accurate tables of "life" pressures and an original theory of air propellers. Slowly, methodically, with patience, perseverance, ingenuity, and inspired invention, they solved the problems that had defeated so many experimenters before them. Finally, on a gusty winter day in North Carolina, the Wright brothers flew their little motor-driven biplane off the sand at Kitty Hawk (actually Kill Devil Hills) and into the pages of history. Although the first flight lasted only about 12 seconds and covered barely 120 feet, it was the first time a machine carrying a man and driven by a motor had lifted itself from the ground in controlled free flight. A new era had begun and the world would never be the same again. The achievement of the Wright brothers is placed in historical context in the absorbing and informative introduction to this volume, written by Fred C. Kelly, author of two standard works on the Wrights. Mr. Kelly has also written an illuminating commentary, including fascinating anecdotes about the Wrights, their personalities and later aspects of their career. As an extra bonus, a lively popular account of the Wrights' success, written in 1908 by both brothers, has been included in an Appendix. Enhanced by 76 photographs, including many rare views of the Wrights and their flying machines, this book offers a thrilling reading experience for anyone interested in aviation, its pioneers, or the mechanics of flights.

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Customer Reviews

Well written book about two brothers who had a vision and made it happen. The Wright brothers solved a mystery the of flight that escaped many others before them. What is ignored in the telling of the Wright brothers is the third man who remained in the background, The three worked as a team in all aspects running the businesses and in designing the first powered airplane. Charles Taylor, a self taught machinist, without plans made from scratch the light weight engine they needed; no other manufacturer of engine could provide one. Taylor's machining skill was needed to make the metal parts and the vital light weight engine needed to make flying possible. Because no accurate and detailed notes or diaries were kept during all the activity that went into making powered flight possible Taylor's part in the endeavor was lost.

I liked Tom Crouch's "The Bishop's Boys: A Life of Wilbur and Orville Wright" and when I saw this referenced I bought it. I must say it had real resonance while adding context. It's short and concise and helps you to understand what drove them (even after having read a 600 page biography). I recommend it to anyone who admires the Wright Bros. as I do. I'm not sure if you should read this before or after "The Bishop's Boys" but either way they're both must reads for aviation aficionados. This is a picture book and the illustrations are excellent but you've already seen most (but not all) of them, but I was most interested in the text, you're left wanting more - if only Orville had written an autobiography.

I'm an Aeronautical Engineer, retired from Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, a Division of United Technology Corporation, a pilot with a Commercial rating, and over 55 years of flying experience.....having flown Piper Cubs, T-28's, T-birds, B-47's, F-84's, F-86H's, and Cessna 172's, and 182's....Lots of fun and experiences! The book tells it like it was for two young brothers to invent, and perform for the first time, controlled flight. It was an inspiration to me and to any one. Other customers should obtain this book to share the excitement and model of what can be done if you are dedicated, and willing to 'keep at it'!

Once you read the "How We Invented the Airplane" by Orville Wright, you realize just how closely they depended on the works of Otto Lilienthal to invent controlled flight. Otto was an engineer so the book has engineering equations. After Otto's untimely death, the Wright Brothers were able to take Otto's work and apply it towards inventing controlled flight. I clearly see the difference between "pure research" done by Otto and "applied research" done by the Wright brothers. It is always a struggle as to who should get the credit as applied research cannot succeed without basic research. When you read both books, you realize the credit for inventing flight should go to Otto & the Wright brothers. Suggest reading Orville's book first.

I hate to confess that I didn't even know that the Wright Brothers had written anything later in life. This was so great to read about how Orville Wright and his brother and family really felt about their quest. As co-owner of an aviation restoration company that works on older aircraft, this book meant more to me than most. What I have noticed about most pilots is that except for those who get involved in the military or through chance - most pilots are almost "meant" to fly from the start. It is something that inspires them from the time they are kids. With the cost of flying and owning an aircraft, not every kid pursues his dream, but for Orville and the rest - once they are up in the sky it makes it all worthwhile.

Most excellent! Gives lots of detail of how Orville and Wilbur and their father did it. I would like to make some models of each model, flyer, kite and glider that they talk about in this book.

I love reading about the Wright Brothers and this one is great as it has several photos. A thin book of 87 pages that is kid friendly but adults can enjoy too.

Gift for husband who is a pilot. He enjoyed reading this as it was filled with so much history. I would recommend this to anyone interested in aviation history or the Wright brothers.

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