

1950

Book Reviews

Recommended Citation

Book Reviews, 17 J. AIR L. & COM. 371 (1950)

<https://scholar.smu.edu/jalc/vol17/iss3/10>

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BOOK REVIEWS

FLIGHT INTO HISTORY: THE WRIGHT BROTHERS AND THE AIR AGE; by Elsbeth E. Freudenthal; University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1949. 268 p., \$3.75.

Appearing less than six months after the return of the Kitty Hawk plane to America, Elsbeth Freudenthal contributes to the current interest in the lives of the Wright brothers. She not only provides us with additional insight into their genius, but she also, through her scholarly and human treatment of the materials with which she worked, whets the appetite of the reader for more information on these brothers whose invention has revolutionized history.

Miss Freudenthal in her biography had access to the Chanute papers. Coupled with her already extensive background on the business, science, and industrial aspects of aviation,¹ Elsbeth Freudenthal gives us a picture of the Wright brothers between 1902 and 1911 that attempts to bring out their relationship with the men of science and others interested in the development of an airplane. She explains the Wright brothers' reticence, their attitudes toward their contemporaries, and their relationships with Chanute in terms of their trying to keep secret their invention in order to capitalize on it.

As the inventors of the first man-carrying, powered and controlled heavier-than-air craft and as aeronautical engineers and scientists, they had worked out the problems of aerodynamics that had baffled the world's greatest scientists; they felt that they had a right to the rewards that were theirs by the right of invention. They considered their potential customers to be the armed forces of the United States and the other countries of the world. They felt that their competitors both in the United States and abroad who were trying to master the problems of flight might, with the secrets that they had discovered, prevent them from reaping the awards that were theirs.

According to Freudenthal, the Wright brothers' ambition was not to gain great wealth. Rather it was to gain for themselves recognition as the pioneers of flight and financial independence sufficient to carry on their work of research and study in aeronautics.

This biography does not pretend to give us a complete picture of the Wright brothers. It attempts to explain their motivations and activities during the years of the first decade of the twentieth century. It concerns itself primarily with their efforts to establish aviation as a business, and to establish themselves in the aviation business.

Another recent biography which concerns itself with this period of their lives is that by Fred C. Kelly. In his *The Wright Brothers*² published in 1943, he as a newspaper man gives considerable thought to that fascinating public relations problem of how and why the world failed to grasp the significance of one of the greatest news stories of all times, the flight at Kitty Hawk.

¹ *The Aviation Business, From Kitty Hawk to Wall Street*. New York, Vanguard Press, Inc., 1940. 342 p. \$3.

² Kelly, F. C. *The Wright Brothers; a Biography Authorized by Orville Wright*. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1943. 340 p. \$3.50.

Each of these biographies, however, clearly shows that the problem of determining the essence of the genius of these two inventors is not the simple one that Americans have been inclined to consider it. Perhaps, a definitive biography of the lives and times of the Wright brothers will appear in the next decade or two after scholars have had access to the Wright brothers' papers which have recently been given to the Library of Congress and will be freely available to scholars after 1960.

To stimulate the scholar and the biographer to come to serious grips with these native American inventors who revolutionized history are the unanswered but the very fundamental questions of biography: What was there in their family, their native town of Dayton, their boyhood, and their relationships with each other that produced this fruitful genius? What was there in the American scene of 1875 to 1910 that was conducive to the development of such abilities? One might even ask if the more highly specialized and the more highly regulated and controlled way of life today (yes, even the present status of aeronautical control and regulation) stifles men of the stuff of the Wright brothers. [At any rate a thorough-going appraisal of the lives and times of the Wright brothers might not only solve the biographical and literary questions the Wright brothers have created, but might also, by providing an insight into the recent past, make our understanding of the present clearer.]

FREDERICK B. TUTTLE*

AIR TRANSPORTATION, by G. Lloyd Wilson, and Leslie A. Bryan, Prentice-Hall, 1949. 665 p. \$7.65.

A new book in the dynamic field of air transportation is bound to be news, especially since textbooks are not published in a loose-leaf form which permits of constant revision. **AIR TRANSPORTATION**, by G. Lloyd Wilson and Leslie A. Bryan is bound to have been examined extensively by this time by those interested in this subject.

The book includes chapters on those areas which might be called "standard" such as history of air transportation, air traffic control, the domestic airline system, and so on, but it also covers either for the first time, or in more extensive fashion than has been done previously, many new subjects which have become more and more prominent as air transport has developed. Nonscheduled services, airline tariff publication, coordination with ground transport, air carrier liability, aviation insurance, and foreign carriers are chapter titles or partial titles which draw interest.

The historical chapters are very complete presenting a detailed account of the beginnings of aviation, the development of different types of aircraft, and the personalities involved. The material on airport traffic control, the civil airways system, and airway traffic regulation are clearly presented and the diagrams which are included are well-chosen. A greater use of diagrams might have been in order in a segment which lends itself to this sort of presentation.

Three chapters are given over to a discussion of the routes and characteristics of the certificated trunk and feeder lines and the nonscheduled

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services as well as the foreign and territorial services of carriers domiciled in the United States. From time to time the authors make recommendations as to changes in the laws governing the carriers or in the policy of the Civil Aeronautics Board in administering the laws.

The domestic and international airmail system is discussed and the presently-important problem of subsidization is touched on. The transport of passengers, cargo and express, both foreign and domestic, the construction of fares and rates, state, federal and international regulation, and federal aid are among the subjects treated.

One of the main points of strength of the book is the conciseness of its presentation. The authors do not labor their points in tiresome fashion, nor do they beat the last bit of substance out of every subject. In some cases the discussion might have been lengthened: for example in the chapter on insurance, the question of the dollar cost to an airline for insurance on its passengers and on its aircraft would be of much interest to students. However, the brevity of the presentation is to be commended.

The main point of weakness of the book is one shared by all books and is not unique with this one: it is out-of-date on publication. Air coach transport has come forward so recently that it is barely mentioned in *AIR TRANSPORTATION*. The subsidy problem, while dealt with, might have been given fuller treatment had the authors had the benefit of recent books and reports dealing with that problem. The route pattern and the manner in which the Civil Aeronautics Board has handled it might also have been considered to a greater extent. The most commonly heard criticism of the book is one which can easily be remedied; it involves the 1947 and 1948 dates on the maps found in the pocket inside the cover. Since the Board issues these maps periodically it should not be difficult to replace them with later issues.

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