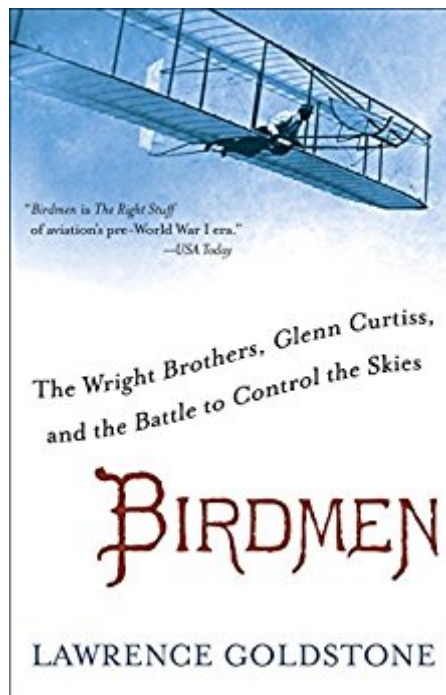


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Birdmen: The Wright Brothers, Glenn Curtiss, And The Battle To Control The Skies



Synopsis

From acclaimed historian Lawrence Goldstone comes a thrilling narrative of courage, determination, and competition: the story of the intense rivalry that fueled the rise of American aviation. *Birdmen* tells the feud between this nation's great air pioneers, the Wright brothers and Glenn Curtiss, was a collision of unyielding and profoundly American personalities. On one side, a pair of tenacious siblings who together had solved the centuries-old riddle of powered, heavier-than-air flight. On the other, an audacious motorcycle racer whose innovative aircraft became synonymous in the public mind with death-defying stunts. For more than a decade, they battled each other in court, at air shows, and in the newspapers. The outcome of this contest of wills would shape the course of aviation history—and take a fearsome toll on the men involved. *Birdmen* sets the engrossing story of the Wrights' war with Curtiss against the thrilling backdrop of the early years of manned flight, and is rich with period detail and larger-than-life personalities: Thomas Scott Baldwin, or "Cap" Tom—as he styled himself, who invented the parachute and almost convinced the world that balloons were the future of aviation; John Moisant, the dapper daredevil who took to the skies after three failed attempts to overthrow the government of El Salvador, then quickly emerged as a celebrity flyer; and Harriet Quimby, the statuesque silent-film beauty who became the first woman to fly across the English Channel. And then there is Lincoln Beachey, perhaps the greatest aviator who ever lived, who dazzled crowds with an array of trademark twists and dives—and best embodied the romance with death that fueled so many of aviation's earliest heroes. A dramatic story of unimaginable bravery in the air and brutal competition on the ground, *Birdmen* is at once a thrill ride through flight's wild early years and a surprising look at the personal clash that fueled America's race to the skies. Praise for *Birdmen* "A meticulously researched account of the first few hectic, tangled years of aviation and the curious characters who pursued it . . . a worthy companion to Richard Holmes's marvelous history of ballooning, *Falling Upwards*." "Time" "The daredevil scientists and engineers who forged the field of aeronautics spring vividly to life in Lawrence Goldstone's history." "Nature" "The history of the development of an integral part of the modern world and a fascinating portrayal of how a group of men and women achieved a dream that had captivated humanity for centuries." "The Christian Science Monitor" "Captivating and wonderfully presented . . . a fine book about these rival pioneers." "The Wall Street Journal" "[A] vivid story of invention, vendettas, derring-do, media hype and patent fights [with] modern resonance." "Financial Times" "A powerful story that contrasts soaring hopes with the anchors of ego and courtroom." "Kirkus Reviews" "A riveting narrative about the pioneering era of aeronautics in America and beyond . . . Goldstone

raises questions of enduring importance regarding innovation and the indefinite exertion of control over ideas that go public.â Publishers Weekly (starred review) From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I enjoyed Goldstone's outlook in general but was slightly put off by his criticism of Wilbur Wright's defense of his patents. The Wright brothers showed the way and did it on their own dime. They deserved a pioneering patent status for their contribution. Still, I'm always pleased to read a well researched book on the Wright brothers. I would recommend it to those who are interested in early aviation history.. .

I think it was Mark Twain who said "A patent is just a license to sue." And sue the Wright Brothers did. How ironic that they did so to their own detriment, to that of the man they should have worked with instead of against, and to the fledgling industry they started. Of course they were not unique - Thomas Edison waged his patent wars in the same era.

I thought this book would be about the accomplishments of the Wright Brothers and Glen Ciurtiss. In reality, it focused on the legal actions and lawsuits that they took against each other. I feel it downplayed the Wrights' accomplishments. I much prefer David McCullough's book "The Wright Brothers." Overall a disappointing read.

Very interesting to be able to view the Wright Brothers in all of their legal efforts to protect their patents on aviation and allowing the competition to progress while they stayed stuck to their original designs. They gave aviation what it needed to move forward and simply watched it pass them by.

Fascinating history with patent issues that are relevant to anyone starting a business, today. Being first isn't as important as being the best.

Arrived timely, book in good condition. Well written story of brilliant minds and monumental egos.

A remarkably good book. This single volume holds an encyclopedia on early aviation! Extremely well referenced it is easy to follow.

This is a pretty fascinating look at the very earliest days of aviation. I came out of this looking at the Wright brothers, who I always considered sort of heroes of mine, in a much different light. Far more interested in protecting their patents than advancing the technology of flight, they wasted years zealously trying to impede the progress of anyone else who tried to fly. While Glenn Curtiss and others were sharing ideas and technologies, the Wrights considered themselves the discoverers and sole custodians of aviation. This is a well written and informative book that I would recommend to anyone interested in this subject. Be prepared, however, to find yourself rooting against Orville and Wilbur, something that I never considered I would find myself doing.

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