

## **Engineering Project: The Wright Brothers**

### **Introduction**

Should historians of the twenty-fifth century try to select a couple of events of great moment in the twentieth century, they would probably narrow the choice to include the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and man's landing on the moon. Should chroniclers want to determine which of the two events was more important, they would have to take into account the happenings of the intervening centuries. Had there been a nuclear war? Had humankind solved its energy problems? Was man using celestial space? In either case, the historian would pick between two events made possible largely by a major technological enterprise and most importantly the invention of airplane as one of the main events in the history. The Wright brothers are considered to be American heroes. They are the icon of the American culture. As a matter of fact, they are known to be experts in the brand recognition long before the media has started to heighten the business and the industry of the first flight centennial. Wright brothers are some of the famous people in the whole world. Their popularity goes with the same rank as that of the Presidents of the United States of America such as Lincoln and Washington as far as their public awareness is concerned. The Wright brothers namely Orville and Wilbur are known for their awesome and significant invention of the airplane which is the powered and controlled on December 17, 1903. It has to be understood that although the Wright brothers were not the first aircraft but their contribution is huge enough as they were the first to invent an airplane that can be controlled and which has led to making fixed wing flight entirely possible. Since the success of the invention has been realized, the lives of the Wright brothers have changed drastically not just in terms of their financial capabilities but as well as their popularity (Howard, 1988).

Up to this date, these brothers are still known in the whole world. Even a kindergarten student would know who invented the airplanes when asked. But then again, the road travelled in order to achieve such success is not an easy thing to do. As a matter of fact, the brothers have experienced lots of problems and barriers in their quest to achieve the success that they have eventually achieved with lots of patience and hard work. In this regard, it is but proper to study and determine the different stages of the Wright Brothers' lives in order to fully comprehend everything about them.

### **Early Life**

The townsite passed into American control in 1795, following a decisive victory in which General Anthony Wayne defeated Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. It took its name from General Jonathan Dayton, one of its founders, who had been among the signers of the U.S. Constitution. Its location was promising, for it lay at the confluence of three rivers: the Mad, Great Miami, and Stillwater. This made it a natural center for trade. The first settlers came from Cincinnati, fifty miles to the south. One Wright ancestor, John Van Cleve, had gained the unfortunate distinction of being the only white man to be killed by Indians within Cincinnati's city limits. His widow, Catharine, remarried and soon became one of the first residents of Dayton, arriving in 1796. Her son Benjamin later became the town's first postmaster, its first school-teacher, and its first public librarian. Within the surrounding Montgomery County, he also was the first county clerk. His marriage in 1800 was the first to be recorded in that county. John's sister, Margaret Van Cleve, stayed in Cincinnati. She married an innkeeper named George Reeder and had a daughter, Catherine. In 1818, when she was seventeen years old, this girl married a farmer named Dan Wright (Ash, 1974).

The children of this marriage included Milton Wright, born in 1828. He became the father of the Wright brothers Orville and Wilbur. Milton Wright developed a strong interest in genealogy. He traced his own family name to John and Olive Wright, who had purchased an estate in England's Essex County in 1538. Samuel Wright, the first in the family to emigrate to America, was a Puritan who came to Massachusetts in 1636. Two centuries later, Milton was literally born in a log cabin. Dan and Catherine were living in Indiana; this state had joined the Union only a dozen years earlier, while Rush County, the site of the cabin, had only recently been organized. Religion played a central role in the family's life. The father, Dan Wright—he never accepted being called Daniel—became a serious believer in 1830. He embraced abstinence; in a community where most men drank corn liquor routinely, he did not allow alcohol to pass his lips. He grew corn but refused to sell it to the local distillers, even though they were often ready to buy at the highest prices. Young Milton became a sincere believer as well. Milton's mother shared his father's strong convictions.

When he was eight years old and under her influence, Milton began to pray regularly and to attend church, where he listened attentively to the preaching. Then in 1843, at age fourteen, he was working in the family cornfield when he found himself called by God. He later wrote of “an impression that spoke to the soul powerfully and abidingly,” bringing “a sweet peace and joy never known before.” He went on to pursue a career in the church, and he was not alone. All three of his brothers made similar commitments to the ministry. Dan Wright had refused to join an established church. He vigorously opposed slavery, but could not find a local congregation that shared this belief with sufficient enthusiasm (Cragg, 1983).

His son Milton also took time in making his own commitment. Then in 1846, as Milton was turning eighteen, an itinerant preacher whom he much admired led him to the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. Here was a church to suit the religious attitudes of a frontier community. There was little emphasis on ritual; congregations were free to adopt any form of baptism they wished. Basic decisions concerning the church did not come down from a pope, but were settled by vote at a conference. Bishops did not hold their posts for life, but were elected to four-year terms at these same conferences. Church doctrine was strongly against alcohol and slavery, while emphasizing the importance of a moral life. Milton continued to work on the family farm, earning a little extra money by teaching in local schools. He also became increasingly active within his new church, preaching his first sermon in 1850, on his twenty-second birthday. Three years later he was invited to join the local church governing body. During that same year he entered Hartsville College, which was run by the United Brethren. Although he attended classes for only a year before illness forced him to drop out, this background qualified him for ordination as a minister, which took place in 1856. He was very much at an age where he could begin to think about marriage, though for several years this was as far as he went. He began by falling in love with a neighbor's daughter. He did not propose, deciding that she was not right for him, but to the end of his life he remembered her with the fondest of thoughts. But in 1853, soon after entering Hartsville, he met his future bride, Susan Koerner. She was two years younger than him and very shy, which made for a prolonged courtship. Her father had grown up in Saxony, a part of Germany.

He had migrated to the United States in 1818, and it says much about German militarism that he left to avoid being drafted, in a time when the wars of Napoleon were at an end. He joined the United Brethren soon after arriving in Indiana. Susan took his religious commitment as her own, experiencing her own call to faith and joining the Brethren in 1845, at age fourteen. In 1857, recently ordained, Milton Wright accepted an invitation to join a mission in Oregon. Local churches there were organized into groups called circuits; he was to travel from one to the next, preaching at each in turn. He asked Susan to marry him and accompany him to that distant land. She gave him her commitment but not her hand, declaring that she was not about to leave Indiana and would wait for his return. For Susan this brought a fiancé and the prospect of an eventual marriage. Moreover, she had plenty of time to make up her mind, without being pressed by an ardent and eager lover. For several decades, settlers in Conestoga wagons had been making their way westward along the Oregon Trail. However, in 1857 it was possible to reach that territory using steam power. Milton's odyssey began by railroad to New York, followed by steamship to Panama. A new railroad line, which had entered service only two years earlier, now crossed that isthmus. Reaching Panama City, he took another steamer to San Francisco, stopping along the way in Acapulco, which he described as one of the "sorry towns." At San Francisco, another ship carried his party onward to Portland. He was in Panama only briefly, but it was long enough to catch malaria. He recovered slowly, but although he expected to ride the circuits of the Willamette Valley, for a time he was too weak to do so (Anderson, 2004).

## **Childhood**

Milton Wright and Susan Catherine Koerner had seven children in which two were the infamous Wright brothers. It was in the 1867 when Wilbur Wright was born and Orville was born in 1871. The passion for the airplane has not been developed in the early days of their lives. Until one day, when their father came home from work and had in his hands an airplane toy made of paper and bamboo primarily. The Wright brothers played with it until it broke. Apparently, to save more money the Wright brothers just created a copy of the airplane toy their father gave them and played with it. With this in mind, the Wright brothers had become interested in the process of creating airplanes. It cannot be denied that since the family of the Wright brothers were often moving, it has become hard for the children to actually develop and establish lots of friendship with the cities they lived in. Hence, the parents are giving the children lots of toys to play with. Apparently, this situation has led the Wright brothers to explore and expose their real intellect and potential. In psychology, it can be said that the environment where the children are exposed to shaped them into becoming someone (Combs, 1979).

For example, if the children are exposed in a violent environment there is a huge tendency that they will become violent too sooner or later in their lives. However, in the case of the Wright brothers, the toys that were given to them by their father had enabled them to become the best that they can be and has actually sparked their artistic and creative talent which has led into the development and creation of the first aircraft that can be controlled. Since they received a helicopter from their father, the Wright brother has become even more determined to create the same toy which is now being used in travelling all around the globe. Thus, the influence they have in the society up to this date (Crouch, 2003).

## **Success**

The invention of the airplane has contributed a great success in the Wright brothers. However, some problems occurred along the way such as friendship turned sour and patent fights. It is undeniable that success can be a problem to a lot of people as envy might get in the way. But then again, the Wright brothers have been very open with their experiments and research. It took them lots of trial and error until finally they are able to succeed in getting the results that they have always wanted. Even though they have taken the road less travelled in the field of engineering and has actually pioneered in the three axis aerodynamics they have been very sharing with their experience and their invention. Up to this date, the aviation and air flying has become one of the important aspects of transportation in the whole world and that is because of the Wright brothers.

## **Conclusion**

With all the foregoing, it cannot be denied that the Wright brothers have made an impact not just in the society but as well as the economic aspect of the country. It is good to know that the interest of the Wright brothers for airplanes was ignited. Had not for it, the world today would not be experiencing a very good way and method of transportation through air flying. It is in this regard that the Wright brothers have actually contributed to the economy and it is but right to remember them as history icon. Until now, there are lots of people that are trying to follow the footsteps of the Wright brothers and are doing their best to improve the aviation and air flying industry. Years and months from now, the air flying experience will improve dramatically and the air flying experience will definitely be something to look forward too.

## **References**

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