

Dreams Come True: The Story of the First Flight

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The Story So Far...

Wilbur Wright from Dayton, Ohio receives a letter from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. He and his brother, Orville, decide to go to this remote place to practice with a flying machine!

Chapter Two: The Adventure Begins

On the morning of September 5, 1900, the house at 7 Hawthorn Street was in an uproar! Everyone was busy getting Wilbur ready for his trip to Kitty Hawk. It was decided that he should go on ahead, and Orville would join him later. Orville would tie up any loose ends around the Wright Cycle Company. The brothers wanted to make sure that everything would run smoothly in their absence.

The Wrights' younger sister, Katharine, helped pack Wilbur's things. She made sure that he had plenty of clean, white starched collars. Even though her brother was going to what she considered the ends of the earth, Katharine wanted him to look respectable! She stopped packing

for a moment and thought of her proper, quiet brother doing who knows what in that funny-looking machine in some far-off place with such a strange-sounding name. But she knew the trip would do him good. And she knew her brother. Wilbur was always careful and wouldn't take any unnecessary risks.

Affectionately, she tucked a jar of her homemade jelly in as a treat.

Wilbur and Orville packed up the parts to their flying machine for the trip to Kitty Hawk. Once there, Wilbur would put the machine together while he waited for Orville. Most of the machine had already been constructed. Wilbur had cut and steamed into shape ash wood for the ribs of the wings. Yards of white, shiny, sateen fabric had been cut and sewn into panels to cover the wings. They had used Katharine's sewing machine for the job.

The flying machine was a glider—it had no engine. Wilbur firmly believed that before an engine could be placed in a flying machine, the problem of how to balance and control the machine had to be solved. And the only way to solve the problem, he reasoned, was to practice flying. Hours and hours of practice and

experimentation would be needed to understand fully how to control the machine once it was in flight. But no flying machine had ever stayed in the air more than seconds at a time. No one had succeeded, although many had tried.

Wilbur and Orville had designed and built a glider that was like nothing that had come before! They had even come up with a novel way to give their flying machine a means of lateral control. It was called “wing-warping.”

Wilbur had thought of this method one day while he was waiting on a customer in the bicycle shop. He had taken a bicycle inner tube out of its long box, and as he was talking to the customer, he absentmindedly began to twist the ends of the rectangular box in opposite directions. As his fingers twisted the box, an idea took shape in his mind. Using his keen imagination, Wilbur saw the cardboard box become a flying machine with a top wing connected to a bottom wing just like the sides of the inner tube box. If the wings of a flying machine could be twisted in the same way as the cardboard box, then the machine would have lateral control. The wood and fabric of the wings would be pliable enough to bend without losing their stiffness. By gum, it would work!

The brothers had tested this theory by constructing a glider model with a five-foot wingspan. The model used their principle of wing-warping. They flew the model like a kite. It worked! This toy-like glider served as the basis for their full-size flying machine.

Katharine finished packing Wilbur’s things and went downstairs to find her brothers. They were, as usual, deep in a heated discussion. The topic of this

discussion was how best to pack the boxes of parts.

“Not that way, Orv... this way!” Wilbur was talking loudly.

“No, do it like this!” Orville’s voice was even louder.

Katharine smiled. Someone who didn’t know them might think they were actually fighting, she thought. But she knew that these kinds of discussions, though they could get loud, would actually end in a better solution to the problem at hand than either brother could have come up with on his own.

The next evening, Wilbur set out for Kitty Hawk.

“Will, hurry! You don’t want to be late for your train!” Katharine called out as she came down the stairs.

“Everything’s ready,” Wilbur said.

“Finally!” Orville added with a touch of humor.

“I’ll miss you,” Wilbur said, hugging his sister.

“Make sure you write,” Katharine instructed.

“Well, I am off to Kitty Hawk!” Wilbur said. “Once I get to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, it’s only 30 or so more miles to Kitty Hawk. It should only take a few days to get there.”

Little did Wilbur know that it was not going to be so easy to get to Kitty Hawk!

Next... Chapter Three: **Where, Oh, Where Is Kitty Hawk?**

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