



# Book of the Month

## ***The Wright Brothers* by David McCullough**

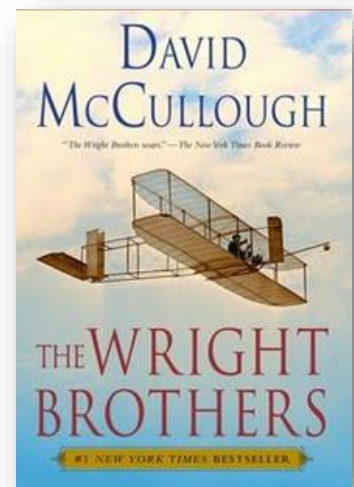
### **Book Review by Steve Turner, Friends of the Starkville Library Board Member**

What makes a great book? A gripping story, unique and compelling characters, and, perhaps, a universal lesson. *The Wright Brothers* by David McCullough has all this, in addition to an amazing record of the beginnings of a technology that would transform the globe into a more reachable place.

The story begins with an unassuming family in Dayton, Ohio. Milton Wright, the father, and Susan, the mother, had three children, Wilbur, Orville, and Katharine. Though fame would descend on Wilbur and Orville, Katharine would be an important player to their success and the first woman to fly in their plane. Milton, a minister, would instill a quest for learning and the associated discipline in the children for discovering new insights. Finally, the brother's bicycle shop enabled them to develop and master the necessary mechanical and technical skills to turn discovery into action and product.

The turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century in the United States held extraordinary activity in the development and practical application of technology to change and improve the lives of ordinary citizens. Telephones, electricity, automobiles, and a host of other inventions would transform transportation, communication and almost every aspect of human activity. But the greatest challenge lay in the mystery of flight. The beauty of flying birds and insects had long fascinated some of the most brilliant minds, including Leonardo DaVinci. To replicate the ability of birds to fly and build a machine to carry men across vast distances was considered impossible. It would require a coordinated combination of knowledge (physics and aerodynamics) and engineering rarely found in the history of mankind. This is where Wilbur and Orville Wright blasted upon the scene. With no formal education beyond high school, they attacked the challenge of flight with a relentless focus, determination, and talent.

David McCullough, an accomplished writer with a history professor's attention to detail, brings the who, what, where, how, and why of the development of the airplane to life. It is a tale everyone should read. The brothers took mechanical aviation from the ground to the sky in a decade (1900-1910) and birthed a



technology that provides each of us the ability to shrink geographic distances into shorter time periods, enabling important advances in science, engineering, business and leisure.

From Dayton, Ohio to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, to Paris, France, Wilbur and Orville remained centered on mimicking the flight of birds with wood, cloth, and metal. After conquering flight, they developed propulsion, maneuvering, and the capacity to carry increased loads. All the time, they stubbornly remained committed to showing the world that machines can fly.

*The Wright Brothers* was published in 2015 and most book reviews are of recently published books. But classic books, like their reviews, are not constrained by time. If you want to be energized and inspired by a story of entrepreneurship and the American spirit, *The Wright Brothers* should be your next read.

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