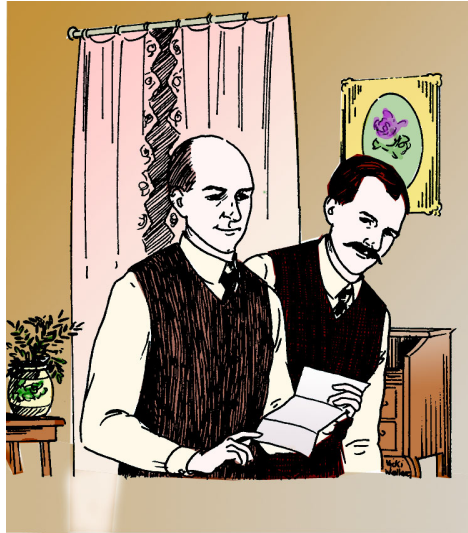


Dreams Come True: The Story of the First Flight

By Mary Maden

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Chapter One: The Letter

Something exciting was always going on at the white frame house at 7 Hawthorn Street. This August day in 1900 was no different! A letter had come all the way from a remote place called Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, to the house of Bishop Wright and his family in Dayton, Ohio.

Wilbur Wright hurriedly opened the envelope. The thoughtful young man's hands trembled slightly with anticipation as he unfolded the letter and began to read:

"Mr. J.J. Doshier of the Weather Bureau here has asked me to answer your letter to him relative to the fitness of Kitty Hawk as a place to practice or experiment with a flying machine, etc.... This in my opinion would be a fine place; our winds are always steady....

If you decide to try your machine here & come I will take pleasure in doing

all I can for your convenience & success & pleasure, & I assure you you will find a hospitable people when you come among us."

Signed,
William Tate

Wilbur Wright showed the letter to his younger brother Orville. "I am convinced that Kitty Hawk is the best place for our experiments," Wilbur said. "It meets all of our requirements. It offers a safe place for practice. There aren't any hills or trees, and the wind is stronger and more constant than anywhere else."

"This Tate sounds like a helpful, friendly fellow, too," added Orville.

"Then Kitty Hawk it is!" Wilbur declared.

The two brothers looked at each other. It was starting to sink in. Finally, what had been a dream since childhood was becoming a reality. They were going to try to do what everyone said couldn't be done. They were going to try to fly!

Wilbur and Orville Wright had been interested in flight since they were young boys. Their father had once brought home a toy helicopter. They had never seen anything like it. A rubber spring lifted the toy into the air. The brothers couldn't wait to try out this tiny flying machine!

"Look! Look, Orv, it flies!" Wilbur had shouted.

"It flies just like a bat!" Orville had laughed.

The boys called their new toy the "*bat*." The two brothers were fascinated by the toy helicopter and played with it so much it wore out. So, the clever boys built another *bat*. Their copy of the toy flew just like the original.

"I bet we could make a really big bat," Orville said one day.

"Maybe so," Wilbur replied. "I think it could be done."

Wilbur worked hard to build another, much larger toy. But the larger *bat* did not fly. Wilbur was upset that he had failed.

"Why didn't it fly?" Orville asked his older brother.

"I don't know," Wilbur replied, scratching his head thoughtfully. "But I sure would like to find out."

"One day you will, Will!" Orville joked.

Wilbur laughed, but the failure bothered him. He didn't give up easily!

Orville and Wilbur never completely lost their interest in flight. But as they grew into young men, their interest turned to other things. When Wilbur was 22 and Orville was 18, they opened a print shop. They even published their own newspapers.

While the Wrights worked in their print shop, a new craze was sweeping the country—bicycling. Everyone wanted a

bicycle. Seeing an opportunity, the brothers opened a bicycle repair shop. Soon, the Wrights began making and selling bicycles, too.

The bicycle shop was doing fairly well, but Wilbur was feeling a little restless. In 1896, Wilbur read an article about Otto Lilienthal, who had died in a gliding accident. Lilienthal was a German glider pilot. He had been trying to fly for twenty-five years. Wilbur was sad to read about Lilienthal's death. But the article sparked an old interest—flying!

Over the next three years, the brothers maintained an interest in flying. But for Wilbur, that interest turned into a passion. He read everything he could find on the subject of flight. In May 1899, he sent away to the Smithsonian Institution for pamphlets and books. He wrote to an experimenter in the field of aeronautics, Octave Chanute, a respected engineer who was considered the foremost expert on flying. The more he read, the more Wilbur began to believe that flight was possible. The Wright Brothers decided they would build a flying machine! But they needed to find a suitable place to experiment with their machine. Wilbur wrote to the National Weather Bureau asking about locations with plenty of open space and steady winds. Wilbur carefully folded the letter from Mr. Tate. They had found the place they were looking for. Now they knew just where they were headed!

But could Wilbur and Orville imagine what adventures awaited them in a strange land of wind and sand called Kitty Hawk?

Next... Chapter Two: **The Adventure Begins**

Quality Serials by Mary Maden

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