

*The Airway to Everywhere: A History of All American Aviation, 1937 - 1953.* W. David Lewis and William F. Trimble. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988. Pp. 193. Illustrations, index, biblio. \$27.95 cloth).

All American Aviation owed its birth in large part to a technological creed, commonly held in the years between the world wars, that the age of flight heralded a new and beneficent era in human development. The company initially based its enterprise on this distinctly democratic rationale, as it brought air mail service to the small towns of Appalachian Pennsylvania and West Virginia — a region ignored by the trunk airlines.

All American — which eventually became Allegheny Airlines and ultimately evolved into USAir — was formed in the mid-1930's. It used a unique pickup system that allowed a swooping aircraft to hook and reel in mail bags and other cargo without having to land. The pickup was the invention of the company's founder, Dr. Lytle S. Adams, a Kentucky-born dentist turned inventor who was preoccupied with the democratization of air travel. But Adams lacked a thorough understanding of business strategy and the ability to attract working capital. He was succeeded by wealthy Richard C. DuPont, who became the guiding force behind All American's success as a carrier of air mail.

It was DuPont who won the company's first contract with the Post Office Department in 1939 to fly routes linking Pittsburgh with communities in rural western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Using rugged Stinson Reliants flown by skilled and courageous pilots, All American established an exemplary record for safety and dependability. By 1945, the company's routes had expanded to include points in Ohio, New York, Maryland, and Delaware.

Flying the mail through the hills and hollows of Appalachia gave rise to colorful legends but earned All American meager financial reward. At the end of World War II, therefore, the company asked the Civil Aeronautics Board to allow its planes to carry passengers as well as pick up mail. The CAB denied the request, arguing that picking up the mail literally on the fly, at

low levels, was still too risky to be done with passengers aboard.

Under the leadership of President Robert Love, who joined the company in 1946, All American reluctantly abandoned the pickup system in favor of becoming a passenger-carrying feeder airline. It continued to serve the same region, however, and the democratic element that it had brought to commercial aviation lingered. The firm changed its name to Allegheny Airlines in 1953, and remained a vigorous regional carrier for nearly two decades before absorbing a number of other regionals to form USAir in 1979.

Lewis and Trimble's book is interesting and well organized. It makes a valuable contribution to both aviation and business history. Historians of technology also will find it worthwhile, not only for the new light it sheds on the heretofore unremarked pickup system but for its discussion of how All American used technology to "democratize" aviation. Finally, because of the airline's indelible regional character, this book will help to round out state and local histories for much of the mid-Atlantic area.

*Pennsylvania State University*

Michael Bezilla