

Swift as an Arrow: The Story of Thomas Benoist, Pioneer American Aviator

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no Roosevelt, he felt obligated to endorse Hoover's reelection despite knowing that he would not win.

Delgadillo's epilogue notes how Hoover tried to use a 1950 speech to portray White as a conservative. White's long political career provides plenty of fodder for agreement and disagreement for readers on all points of the political spectrum. Delgadillo's balanced account avoids passing an overall judgment on White's politics and provides an accessible reminder of a bygone political tradition—one worthy of additional research.

Swift as an Arrow: The Story of Thomas Benoist, Pioneer American Aviator, by Melody Davis and Gary R. Liming. Chesterfield, MO: Mindwings Press, 2017. vi, 306 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. \$26.95 paperback.

Reviewer Janet R. Bednarek is professor of history at the University of Dayton. She is the author of *Dreams of Flight: A History of General Aviation* (2003) and *America's Airports: A History of Municipal Airports in the United States, 1918–1947* (2001).

Thomas Benoist was one of numerous young men, many from the Midwest, enthralled with the new technology of the airplane and determined to make it his life's work. Unlike most, Benoist actually found a way to make something of a living as an aircraft builder, parts supplier, and exhibition pilot/manager. Authors Melody Davis and Gary R. Liming trace the history of Benoist's company from its origins in 1909 in St. Louis, Missouri, to its end following the founder's untimely death in 1917 in Sandusky, Ohio. Benoist is perhaps most remembered for his role in establishing the first passenger-carrying airline in the United States, which operated for about three months between St. Petersburg and Tampa, Florida, in 1914.

This work would appeal mostly to those interested in the very early years of the aircraft industry in the Midwest. Benoist's story could offer some broader context to demonstrate just how wide open aviation was in its pioneering years. One early history of aviation in Iowa, for example, names a dozen or more young men who also sought to find fame and fortune in the pioneering years of aviation.

Swift as an Arrow also shows how midwestern cities, such as St. Louis and Sandusky, figured prominently in early aviation history. It could have benefited from a larger comparative context—for example, comparing Benoist (born in Missouri in 1874) with Glenn Martin (born in Iowa in 1886), both of whom started in aviation at roughly the same time, yet with vastly different levels of success.