



Before Amelia: Women Pilots in the Early Days of Aviation

Eileen F. Lebow

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Before Amelia is the remarkable story of the world's women pioneer aviators who braved the skies during the early days of flight. While most books have only examined the women aviators of a single country, Eileen Lebow looks at an international spectrum of pilots and their influence on each other. The story begins with Raymonde de Laroche, a French woman who became the first licensed female pilot in 1909. De Laroche, Lydia Zvereva, Melli Beese, Hilda Hewlitt, Harriet Quimby, and the other women pilots profiled here rose above contemporary gender stereotypes and proved their ability to fly the temperamental heavier-than-air contraptions of the day.

Lebow provides excellent descriptions of the dangers and challenges of early flight. Crashes and broken bones were common, and many of the pioneers lost their lives. But these women were adventurers at heart. In an era when women's professional options were severely limited and the mere sight of ladies wearing pants caused a sensation, these women succeeded as pilots, flight instructors, airplane designers, stunt performers, and promoters. This book fills a large void in the history of the first two decades of flight.

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