

Abstract

This article attempts to add to the history of early aviation in the US by focusing on a specific aircraft accident and the context in which it occurred. The context is the beginning of airmail service characterized by: the hazards associated with flying in those early times, the lack of a formalized accident investigation process, and the seeming insensitivity to the loss of life. This article will report on the information gathered to create the context, evaluate the accident circumstances against modern accident information, and will describe a mock investigation conducted by a college class investigation team using the historical information that was provided. The reader will note that the bibliography is quite dense; its purpose is to provide scholars with the locations of important source information for future historical investigative efforts.

The article begins at a time in this country when there were no airlines, and many airplanes that were being used were military retreats. To set the stage for this accident, it is first necessary to plunge deeply into the early history of airmail, to its beginnings.