

College Park Aviation Museum Tour

June 23, 2022



Twelve souls ventured into Prince George's County to learn about the early days of aviation. The adjacent airport was built by the Wright Brothers and is the world's oldest continuously operating airport. Savannah Laury, our tour guide, explained that the museum displayed many planes that set records for being the first of their kind and represented the origins of early aviation. These



early planes looked like they were made of metal but were in fact covered with painted canvas. The first plane we saw was the Wright-B, a 2-seater made with

many bicycle parts. The wing struts were flexible to allow the pilots to steer it. Savannah also told us that each night one of the Wright brothers would sleep in the hangar with their plane(s) to prevent others from stealing their designs.

The next plane we saw was the Curtiss "Jenny," originally designed for the Army to be used in WWI but became the first "Air Mail" carrier. It was designed with ailerons (flaps) to





control the plane's movement which became a standard for the aircraft industry.

We also saw a prototype helicopter that was built for the navy (but was never used), the first closed cockpit plane, the first plane made out of metal, and the first open cockpit plane to fly over the North Pole. Finally, we were shown the machine gun that was used to test its synchronization so that it could fire through a turning propeller in flight and the first aerial photography camera.



Then Dave Gross gave a talk on Jewish pioneers in aviation. We learned that his grandmother saw Wilbur fly around a racetrack in Vienna in 1909 and that the first person to fly in Australia was a Jew by the pseudonym of Harry Houdini.

After that we decamped to Looney's pub in College Park. The next oldest person there appeared to be about 23. Once our cholesterol readings topped 300, we left and regrouped at the JCC. It was a great way to spend a rainy day together.