

UNSUNG HEROINES 2023
St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church and Pro-Cathedral



**Katharine Wright (1874-1929),
Right Hand to Brothers Wilbur and Orville, Suffragist**

Have you heard of Katharine Wright? Her brothers, the Wright Brothers, have lived on in history as pioneers in aviation. Were they First in Flight? I think so, although some French historians might disagree. Wilbur and Orville had the brilliance, guts and vision that earned them the laurels for the first piloted, powered flight in human history, in 1903.

This was a huge project, of course – a project not supported with government funds or family fortune. Katharine was the manager, PR person, fundraiser and the face of the Wright Aeronautical enterprise among the big wigs, crowned heads and celebrities of the time. Her brothers were shy and lacked the bonhomie needed to properly promote their fledgling (literally) company.

Katharine was a college graduate (Oberlin), unlike her brothers. She was active in many civic organizations and a suffragist. She organized the practical side in the development of the first airplane, which entailed thousands of dry runs and failed attempts in North Carolina, at Kitty Hawk. How would Orville or Wilbur have nurtured their start up, and

brought it to fruition, without Katharine to go out and make the pitch in the world of commerce and politics?

Katharine was charming, but also brilliant, dedicated and far-seeing, like her brothers. She was acknowledged at the time as the Number Three Moving Force in their company, along with Orville and Wilbur. But somehow, her contribution was left out as time went by and history was written.

Wilbur died prematurely, and Orville became more dependent on Katharine, as years went by and the bright spotlights of fame faded. Katharine, however, found the will to move on. At the age of 52, she married an old college friend, Henry Haskell. An estrangement with Orville ensued. He relented at the very end – he made it to her deathbed to say goodbye. She enjoyed married life, albeit for only three years, before a sudden bout of pneumonia brought her stellar life to an end.

Submitted by Suzan Frazier