



**Austin, Cleared for Takeoff: Aviators,
Businessmen, and the Growth of an American City
(Jack and Doris Smothers Series in Texas History,
Life, and Culture)**

Kenneth B. Ragsdale

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Austin, Texas, entered the aviation age on October 29, 1911, when Calbraith Perry Rodgers landed his Wright EX Flyer in a vacant field near the present-day intersection of Duval and 45th Streets. Some 3,000 excited people rushed out to see the pilot and his plane, much like the hundreds of thousands who mobbed Charles A. Lindbergh and *The Spirit of St. Louis* in Paris sixteen years later. Though no one that day in Austin could foresee all the changes that would result from manned flight, people here—as in cities and towns across the United States—realized that a new era was opening, and they greeted it with all-out enthusiasm.

This popularly written history tells the story of aviation in Austin from 1911 to the opening of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in 1999. Kenneth Ragsdale covers all the significant developments, beginning with military aviation activities during World War I and continuing through the barnstorming era of the 1920s, the inauguration of airmail service in 1928 and airline service in 1929, and the dedication of the first municipal airport in 1930. He also looks at the University of Texas's role in training pilots during World War II, the growth of commercial and military aviation in the postwar period, and the struggle over airport expansion that occupied the last decades of the twentieth century. Throughout, he shows how aviation and the city grew together and supported each other, which makes the Austin aviation experience a case study of the impact of aviation on urban communities nationwide.

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Paul Butler:

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