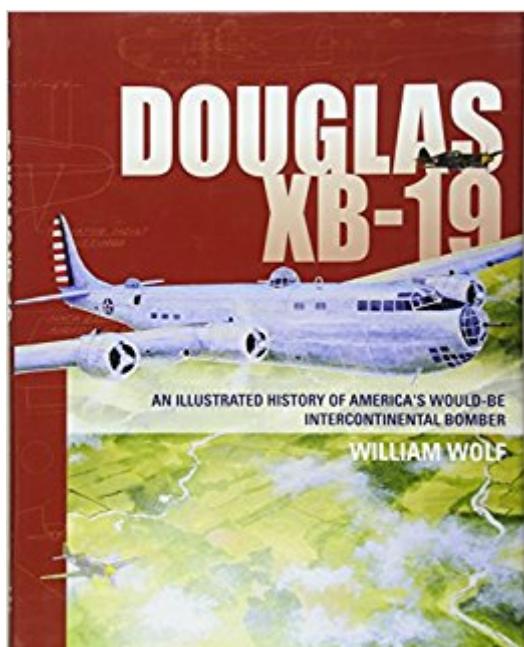


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Douglas XB-19: An Illustrated History Of America's Would-Be Intercontinental Bomber



Synopsis

In 1935, the intent of the Army Air Corps was to build a potential intercontinental bomber, a "Guardian of the Hemisphere"; they granted Donald Douglas a contract to build the world's largest bomber. Over the past 75 years, there have only been a few magazine articles on the gigantic Douglas XB-19 bomber, usually showing it in photos dwarfing the aircraft around it. Since the XB-19 project was top secret and there was only one example, there is little information remaining for researchers. William Wolf presents this enigmatic bomber, a "Flying Laboratory" that was the precursor to America's first intercontinental bomber, the Continental B-36 Peacemaker. Wolf has used original Douglas and Army Air Force documents and very rare (as few were needed for one bomber) Erection & Maintenance Manuals in this history, which also includes never-seen-before photos and color profiles. This volume is a must for the aviation historian, enthusiast, and modeler.

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Customer Reviews

William Wolf is a retired dentist whose consuming 45-year passion is WWII air combat and aircraft, having over 25,000 books and magazines, 1,000s of downloaded CDs, and three miles of microfilm on WWII in his library.

The aviation world owes William Wolf a large thank you for writing this book, it is truly an awesome book. For the longest time, if you wanted to find out about the XB-19, you could Google all day and not find much. With the publication of this book, a major hole in the history of American aviation has

been filled, Thank you Mr. Wolf, the Aviation community will forever be indebted to you. Like the inside flap says "This volume is a must for the Aviation historian, enthusiast, and modeler."

I became aware of the B-19 from the writings of air power advocate Alexander de Seversky, who in 1942 and again in 1946 declared that the B-19 should have replaced the B-17 and B-24 as the main US heavy bomber of WWII. This claim is superficially plausible:-- The B-19 had exactly three times the wing area of the B-17 and (given a similar development history) could have taken off at about 200,000lbs from a long concrete runway. Crew training expenses (a big share of total costs) would have been the same. The overhead weight of crew and equipment would have been the same. A single B-19 would have replaced 3 or 4 B-17s.-- The B-19 was designed right from the start to have large powered gun turrets, much more roomy than the ones shoehorned into the B-17. The 37mm guns in the prototype had too low a velocity to be of use, but the turrets could easily have accommodated at least 2 20mm Hispanos instead of the feeble 12.7mm Brownings in the B-17. The B-19 might actually have been the "self-defending bomber" the Air Corps wanted the B-17 to be.-- The B-19 could have carried a useful stick of 2000lb or 4000lb bombs. Experience during the war showed that the 500lb and 1000lb bombs dropped on Germany by B-17s were too small to destroy heavy jigs and machine tools in factories. Production often started up again after the rubble was cleared away. On the other hand:-- Douglas ran wild with the available space and weight and included too many unnecessary features (a pelorus for taking bearings on lighthouses?) but these would surely be omitted in the production models.-- A plane three times the size of the B-17 logically needed three times the power, around 15,000hp. To get this out of 4 nacelles requires 3600hp engines. The prototype started out with 2000hp R-3350s and later got 2600hp V-3450s (twin V-12s like those on the He 177). This aircraft should have been designed with at least 6 engines.-- development and testing was glacially slow. Douglas accepted a development contract that was far too small and lost a lot of money on the prototype. Clearly the management was more interested in cranking out SBDs for the Navy and DB-7s for France at big profits. It is a little harder to see why the Air Corps was unenthusiastic. Probably they were so bruised by the difficulty of getting funding for B-17s before Pearl Harbor that they regarded the B-19 as an X-plane right from the start. So it is best to regard the B-19 as a possible alternative to the B-29, not the B-17 and B-24. The B-29 never needed its advanced features (pressure cabin, unmanned turrets) against Japanese opposition. The B-19 might have been a faster/cheaper/better alternative for the limited function of defeating Japan, but wouldn't have had the long postwar career of the B-29/B-50/KC-97.

If you've bought the "Ultimate Look" works by Dr. Wolf you're used to large volumes with a lot of reproduction of archival material such as pilots notes, erection manuals etc. - If your expecting that...you'll be disappointed. In fact "Ultimate look" is conspicuous by its absence. What you do get for 119 pages is an excellent survey and examination of the XB-19 from predecessors, conception and competition to it's final days. Also described is how the B-19 influenced future designs during it's short "operational" life, as part of that, Dr. Wolf added some articles written by some of the principals involved with the aircraft. The bibliography is somewhat sparse but Dr. Wolf did a yeoman job with what little information is available after 82 years when there has been little continuity or interest in by the companies/organizations involved in keeping data for an aircraft that was very quickly outpaced by production aircraft literally only a few months after it flew. While I disagree with Dr. Wolf about CW management in regards to the R3350, his discussion of its development makes for interesting reading when keeping contemporary events in mind. If you like to nit-pick there's at least one photo caption faux-paux, and a case could be made that there a few redundant charts...in other words, nothing that impacts on the overall quality of this book. The XB-19 had slipped comfortably in obscurity, now known only to relative few. Like the B-18 and B-32, Dr. Wolf has given the XB-19 to another generation of historians and aviation buffs.

Great stuff here! The XB-19 is an almost unknown aircraft so it's great to see it get such a detailed and loving treatment as Wolf has supplied. There's ample photos and detailings of this giant airplane. This reference is a great tool for a model maker and for an aviation buff. I'm glad I bought it!

An excellent book on a virtually unknown aircraft. Also some superb commentary on the times, and the mindset of the people involved in Army aviation in the WWII and pre-war years. A must have book for serious aviation enthusiasts.

All books by this author are OUTSTANDING - and this is no exception - seller great also!

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