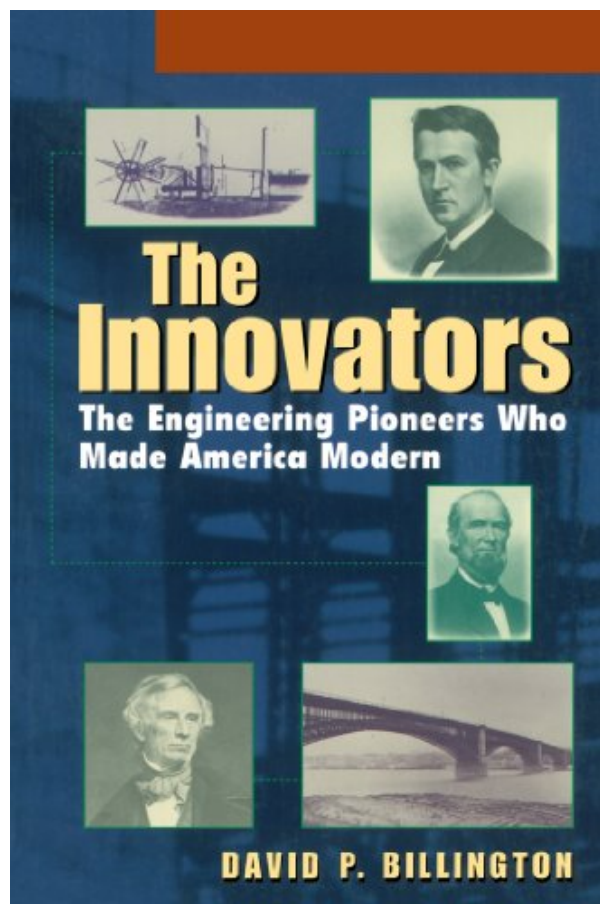
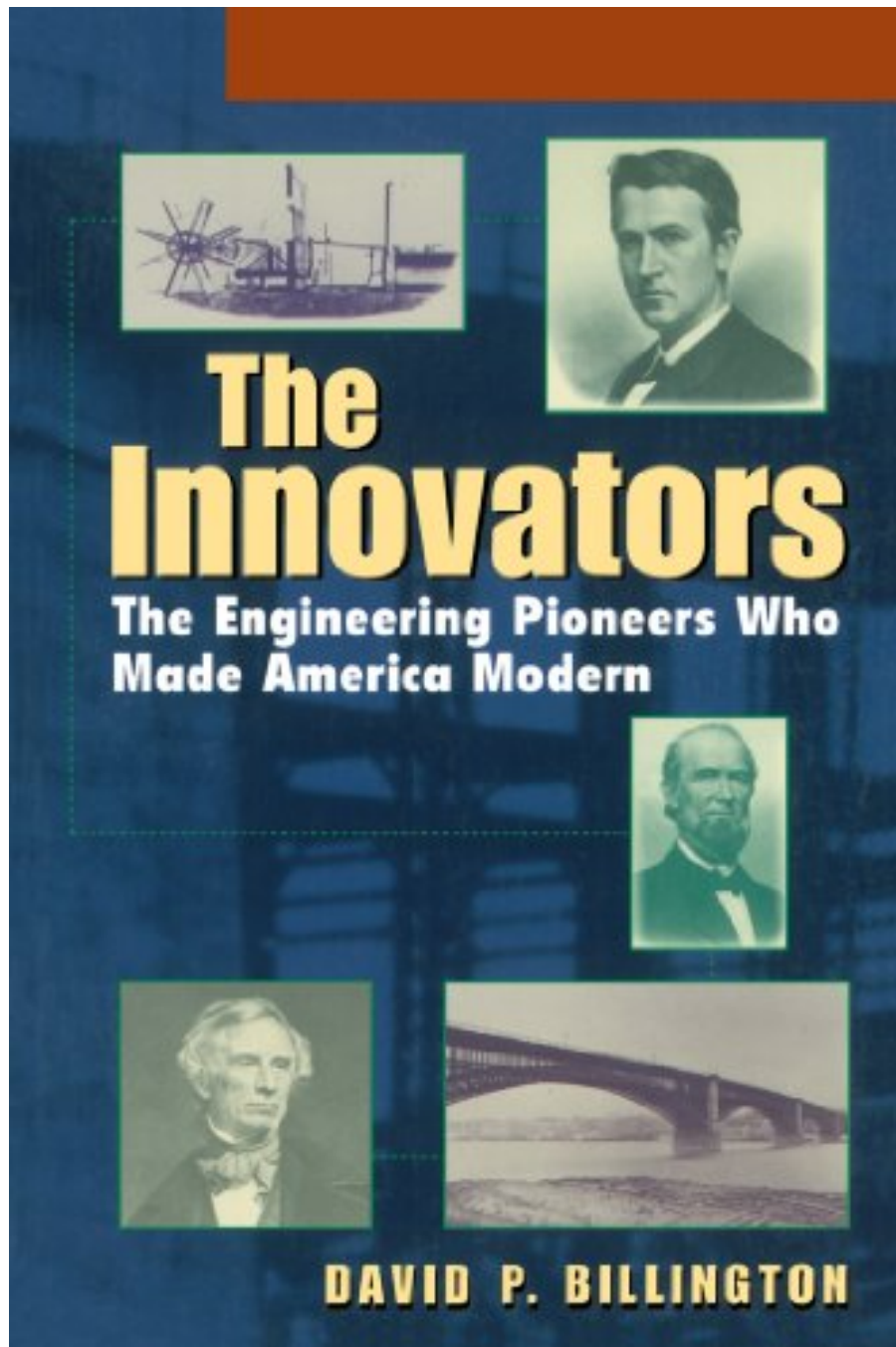


**THE INNOVATORS: THE ENGINEERING
PIONEERS WHO TRANSFORMED AMERICA
BY DAVID P. BILLINGTON**



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Amazon.com Review

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Written from an engineering perspective, this fascinating book emphasizes the innovations that were truly basic to U.S. industrialization. The author uses a three-sided view to describe American engineering history: what great engineers actually did, the political and economic conditions within which they worked, and the influence that these designers and their achievements had on the nation. Billington explores the scientific basis of engineering through elementary formulas that also include the social issues of regulated loads, visually striking forms, acceptable risks, environmental issues, and the production of wealth.

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A richly illustrated introduction to the engineering triumphs that made America modern

In this age of microchips and deep space probes, it's hard to imagine life before electricity or passenger trains. An astonishing series of engineering innovations paved the way to the twentieth century, and transformed America into the world's mightiest industrial power. *The Innovators* tells the exciting story of the engineering pioneers whose discoveries so dramatically altered commerce, industry, and world history. The book takes readers into the workshops of America's early engineering geniuses, explaining how they came up with their ideas and later applied them in the marketplace. Devotees of history and technology will appreciate the finely drawn profiles of America's technical wizards, from the famous--including Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamboat; Samuel F.B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph; and Thomas Edison, inventor of the first electrical power network--to the lesser known, such as J. Edgar Thompson, who built the Pennsylvania Railroad.

* From the author of the critically acclaimed *The Tower and the Bridge*

* Features over 80 illustrations of the engineers and their inventions

DAVID P. BILLINGTON (Princeton, New Jersey), a professor of civil engineering at Princeton University, is the author of *The Tower and the Bridge*, and *Robert Maillart's Bridges: The Art of Engineering*, which won the 1979 Dexter Prize as the outstanding book on the history of technology.

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neatly sketched vignettes of inventive engineers

By G W Thielman

Professor Billington presents a neatly sketched vignettes of engineering pioneers in America. The book is well illustrated and the engineering calculations readily accessible to the lay reader. My interest while reading *The Innovators* was rather uneven -- some chapters seemed far more engaging than others, but this may have been a consequence of greater familiarity with some technologies compared to others. Nonetheless, the short biographies put human faces behind many of the technical innovations we take for granted today. Too much contemporary reporting focuses on either political intrigues or scandal. As Jean Henri Fabre observed "history records the names of royal bastards, but cannot tell us the origin of wheat." *The Innovators*, by contrast, presents a compact distillation of modern engineering that would benefit the technically trained and the lay public alike.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

not quite as good as the sequel

By Mike Garrison

This book is part of a planned series on the history of engineering in the United States. As such it's pretty remarkable for just existing. Most people seem to think that engineering is just application of formulas, and that anybody with a calculator would come out with the same answer to any particular engineering problem. Billington attempts to show that this is not so, and that certain key engineers have essentially created the modern world of today.

However, this book (planned to be the first of four) is not as readable as book two (*Power Speed And Form*). I think the problem can be demonstrated in the section about steel. In order to describe steel, he first goes back to the process of creating pig iron, then describes wrought iron, and finally the Bessemer process for steel. Then he highlights Andrew Carnegie for taking the Bessemer process and turning steel into a commodity (that he mostly controlled).

This is just a much more disjointed story than, for instance, the story of the invention of the telephone or the airplane in the second book. Even though this book is called "The Innovators", very few of the people he highlights made the kind of individual breakthroughs that the Wright Brothers made.

Perhaps this book should have been called "The Adaptors", as it really was mostly about engineers in the US adapting technologies pioneered in England and taking them well beyond what the English had done.

This reads like a college textbook -- informative, detailed, and something most people will not read unless it is on a required reading list. In contrast, the second book read more like something from The History Channel, with more of a purpose of making it enjoyable to read as well as being just as informational.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By Frankie

Arrived in good condition very satisfied with purchase.

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