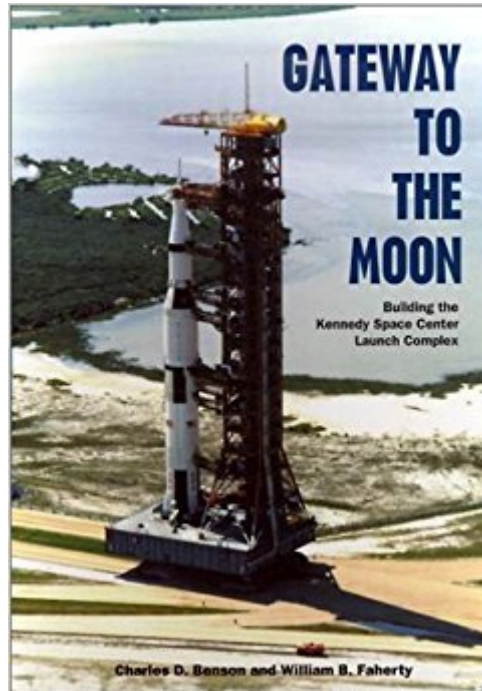




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Gateway To The Moon



Synopsis

"The one thing for which this century will be remembered 500 years from now was: This was the century when we began the exploration of space."-- Arthur M. Schlesinger

Tributes to Moonport: A History of Apollo Launch Facilities and Operations

A thorough account of the complex scientific, engineering, and managerial efforts that undergirded the astounding events that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration carried out."--Journal of American History

Another simply superb NASA official history. . . . Construction, administration, and technology are carefully interwoven in an unusually candid and frank treatment of the history of America's first lunar launching facility."--Aerospace Historian

Gateway to the Moon presents the definitive history of the origins, design, and construction of the lunar launch facilities at Kennedy Space Center, the terrestrial site of one of the greatest national adventures of the 20th century, humanity's first trip to the moon. It includes archival illustrations and diagrams of locations, personnel, and equipment, from aerial views of sandy, undeveloped Cape Canaveral to some of the first photos of the mobile launchers and crawler-transporters. Filled with the sense of wonder and pride that the earliest U.S. space achievements inspired, the book focuses on launch complexes 39A and 39B, the gigantic assemblies from which the Apollo-Saturn vehicles departed for trips into space, and on the massive eight-acre Vertical Assembly Building (renamed the Vehicle Assembly Building) and the attached Launch Control Center--some of the most awesome buildings ever constructed. It also analyzes the technological and governmental interactions necessary to ensure success of the launches. Originally part of Moonport, one of the volumes of the NASA History Series, the book is based on extensive interviews with participants in the space program and wide access to official documents, letters, and memoranda; in addition, the authors air criticisms directed at the Kennedy Space Center team and treat in detail mistakes in launch operations and conflicts within the program. Written for a general-interest audience, with jargon and acronyms translated into everyday language, the book offers a faithful account of technology in service to humanity. Charles D. Benson, a retired colonel of the U.S. Army, is the coauthor of the official history of the Skylab orbital workshop. William B. Faherty, director of the Museum of the Western Jesuit Missions in Hazelwood, Missouri, retired professor of history at St. Louis University, and archivist emeritus of the Midwest Jesuit Archives, is the author of 25 books, including the historical novel *The Call of Pope Octavian*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Though volumes on the space program are legion, Benson and Faherty's 1978 title takes a different tack by tracing the building of the Kennedy Space Center launch complex itself. Originally part of a series by NASA, this includes interviews with many of the key players, as well as pix and design schemes. A nice addition to traditional space flight collections. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book, along with its "other half", "Moon Launch" (the two books are a set, one being the continuation of the other, although this fact is not obvious when reading the books' descriptions) tell the story of the Apollo moon program (of which I was a part) in a very unique way -- from its beginnings, through the tough design and decision-making stages, to its failures and successes. If you lived in the Cape Canaveral area during the late 60's and early 70's, or if you worked for NASA or one of its contractors during that time, you will find plenty of details in these books to bring back memories that you might have lost forever. The emphasis on contractor roles, technical details, and historical details make these books different from any others I've ever seen about the Apollo program. You'll learn, for example, how and why the VAB was built the way it was built, how the decision to use a mobile launcher and crawler was based on a similar machine used in Kentucky to mine coal, and how much of the technology required for the program had to be invented, developed, and tested "on the fly.". After reading the book, you'll be amazed that we put a man (actually several men on several missions) on the moon in such a short time.

This book - along with its companion Moon Launch! are the definite account of the mammoth undertaking that was the establishment of Kennedy Space Centre in the 1960's. Everything about KSC and its environs is on an epic scale, and these scholarly but very readable works bring to life the day to day management decisions, tensions, inter-center conflicts and eventual unanimity that was a hallmark of NASA in its greatest era of expansion. Highly recommended.

In 1978 Charles D. Benson and William Barnaby Faherty published "Moonport: A History of Apollo Launch Facilities and Operations" as NASA Special Publication-4204. It was an outstanding history of the design and construction of the lunar launch facilities at Kennedy Space Center. Of "Moonport," a reviewer in the "Journal of American History" said in 1979, "The authors had access to official documents, letters, and memoranda, and they have apparently consulted all the relevant historical, technological, and scientific secondary materials...all the involved historians obviously spent considerable time studying and intellectually digesting technical reports and manuals in order to give their lay readers such lucid accounts of highly complex procedures and operations...it is important to public knowledge to have professionally trained historians employ historical methods to explain significant events and place them in a meaningful historical context. Here is a broad lesson...that contemporary society can ill afford to ignore." "Moonport" has been out of print for many years, and commanding a high price on the second-hand book market, but now it has been reprinted in a convenient paperback version. "Gateway to the Moon" contains the first half of the text of "Moonport," chapters 1-14 of the earlier work. For anyone interested in the race to the Moon, this book is a must read!

It seems that today, when a space shuttle is launched, or a rerun of an Apollo Saturn V is launched, the Kennedy Space Center launch complex construction achievement is taken for granted. The media today skips the history of developing the launch complex. This book chronicles the history of KSC, and includes histories of cost overruns, labor problems, design problems, and even political battles. Many people who grew up during the Apollo era can recall the newspaper stories, however, if you were too young to have read these stories in the 1960's, this book is a great summary.

I have been interested in NASA and the Moon Program in particular and have built a small library of astronaut biographies, mission control biographies and a few chronicles of engineering of the vehicles. This book is interesting that it covers a different topic - the Kennedy Space Center. It is written as a history and does feel a little bit "official" in parts with details of contracts that probably

most don't care too much about. I think it would have been great if the book had been edited down to about half of its 320 page size.

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