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The Wright Brothers

Orville and Wilbur Wright also know as The Wright Brothers, were American inventors who were recognized with constructing and inventing the world’s first successful airplane. However, in 1899, before the invention, Wilbur wrote a letter to the Smithsonian Institution requesting information regarding former flight experiments. Before they began their designing, they observed birds. In conclusion, they noticed that birds changed the shape of their wings to turn. Therefore, the brothers used this technique to create the wings on their plane. During the years leading up to 1903, the Wright Brothers ventured to the Outer Banks, North Carolina, specifically Kitty Hawk and Kill Devil Hills to perfect their gliders and test different ones out.[[1]](#footnote-1) They finally realized that in order to get the plane flying high, an elongated wingspan must be added. After countless times of disappointment, the brothers started to become pessimistic and Wilbur remarked, “Man would fly, but not in their lifetimes.” Nevertheless, the Wright Brothers did not give up. Eventually, they studied how propellers worked and decided to design a motor and strengthened the aircraft so it would be sturdy enough to hold the motor. This aircraft was known as the Flyer. In order to help the Flyer launch, they made a downhill track to help it gain speed.[[2]](#footnote-2)

On December 17th, 1903, The Wright Brothers finally accomplished the first successful, powered, piloted flight ever. Then, in 1904, the first flight lasting more than five minutes happened on November 9th. All of their hard work, dedication, and determination paid off! The brothers allowed people to fly with them since 1908, and in 1909, the United States Government bought its first airplane for $25,000 and they gave them a bonus of $5,000 since it flew faster than $5,000.

On the other hand, a “patent war” began when the Wright Brothers patented their invention. After numerous tried to patent it, they finally succeed in 1906, as they were granted U.S. Patent 821393 for a “flying machine,” powered or not. However, in 1908, Glenn Curtiss infringed their patent and did not pay licensing fees to the Wrights after he sold an airplane to the Aeronautic Society of New York. But, that was not the only violation against their patent that came about. Unfortunately, all of these lawsuits damaged the reputation of the Wright Brothers. Before they were called a hero, but then critics were saying that they should have worked more openly during this invention process and they “retarded” the development of aviation. After their victory, however, they started the Wright Company, and started to make a lot of money off of their planes. These planes were used for cargo at first but then they trained 115 pilots between 1910 and 1916 to fly people around. On the down side, by 1913, there was a total of 11 deaths due to their planes, so people began to question their safety. As time went on, the planes became more safe and secure and people began to trust their design. On a side note, another debate occurred because both Ohio and North Carolina take credit for the Wright Brothers and their life changing inventions. Ohio took credit because they developed and built their aircraft there, but North Carolina because Kitty Hawk, in the Outer Banks, because that was the site of the first powered flight. Therefore, Ohio accepted the slogan “Birthplace of Aviation” which is on their license plates and North Carolina adopted the slogan “First in Flight.”

Even through all the struggles and mishaps the Wright Brothers faced, they accomplished an important part of not only America’s history, but internationally as well. The world seemed so big and not able to be traveled before, but because of the brothers, it became more interconnected than ever before.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. The Wright Brothers, The Henry Ford, last modified 2003, <http://www.hfmgv.org/exhibits/wright/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. History of Flight- The Wright Brothers, About.com Inventors, last modified 2012, http://inventors.about.com/od/wstartinventors/a/TheWrightBrother.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wikipedia, “Wright Brothers,” Wikipedia, last modified 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wright\_brothers [↑](#footnote-ref-3)