

The Invention of Airplanes

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From *Tar Heel Junior Historian* 46:1 (fall 2006). Images may differ from those in the original article.

Have you ever tried to invent a machine? Wilbur and Orville Wright tried to invent a flying machine, and they succeeded.



Orville Wright and Wilbur Wright. Image courtesy of the State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History.

It started when the brothers were little. Their father gave them a toy flying machine. Orville and Wilbur experimented and made more of them. This was just a start to inventing airplanes. When they grew up, they continued to learn about flying machines and to experiment. They tested many of their airplanes in Kitty Hawk. The Wright brothers, who lived in Ohio, picked Kitty Hawk because the area was windy and had sandhills that would make a good cushion if they crashed. There were no trees and not many people. On December 17, 1903, Orville completed the first sustained powered airplane flight off Kill Devil Hills.

The airplane is an important invention in state—and world—history.

Airplanes have affected North Carolina because they save a lot of time in travel. Airplanes can get people to special medical care that is in faraway places. It used to take people a long time to travel from North Carolina to someplace across the sea, because they had to go by ship. People can get to faraway places faster in airplanes than by using horses, wagons, trains, cars, or ships.

Since people can travel faster, they can go places that they probably would not have gone without airplanes. People fly to other countries and experience their cultures. Before airplanes, immigrants usually could not go back to their home countries after they moved to countries such as America. Now we can go almost anywhere that we want and see family members and friends. I flew to California and Kansas to visit my relatives. I probably would not have been able to go if we did not have airplanes.

Airplanes have disadvantages. With airplanes, you can drop bombs on other countries instead of just shooting little guns. Bombs dropped from airplanes kill many more people, and North Carolinians have lost loved ones in wars. On September 11, 2001, terrorists flew airplanes into the World Trade Center in New York City and into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Many people died. Since then, we have higher security in airports, and

people are scared. To stop terrorism, we are fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many people from North Carolina are in our military. Some get killed. These are all bad things related to airplanes.

The airplane that made that first 1903 flight is in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and a replica is at the North Carolina Museum of History. Airplanes have changed over the years, but the Wright brothers' invention has impacted people in North Carolina in many ways. Airplanes save a lot of time in travel, and we can see places that we probably would not ever have been able to see. Because of airplanes, more people are killed in wars and terrorist attacks.

The Wrights made an important invention that has altered the lives of people not only in North Carolina but in the whole world.



**Emily Camplejohn (far left) won first place in the elementary division in the 2006 Tar Heel Junior Historian Essay Contest. She was a fourth-grader at Generations Homeschool, Raleigh, and a member of the Legacy Legends junior historian club, Jan Deckert, adviser. The contest asked students to write about inventors or inventions with North Carolina ties that have had the greatest impact on history.*