

INVENTORS

The Wright Brothers

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, men had dreamed about flying. The Greeks had their mythical story about Icarus and his wax wings.
2. In the 1400s, Leonardo da Vinci had been among the first to draw a model of an airplane.
3. In 1891, a German named Otto Lilienthal built a powered glider that cleared the ground, then crashed, killing him.
4. Finally, in 1903 the Wright Brothers changed the world forever with their first successful powered flight.

THE PEOPLE

1. Wilbur Wright was born April 16, 1867. Orville was born on August 19, 1871.
2. The two brothers did everything together — they lived together, played together, worked together, and in fact thought together.
3. Although sons of a clergyman, they rejected the church.
4. Neither received a high school diploma. Wilbur didn't show up for his commencement exercises.

5. They weren't interested in balloons or gliders, just heavier-than-air flying machines that could carry a human being, bank to either side, climb, descend, and steer right and left.
6. Wilbur died of typhoid fever on May 29, 1912, at the age of 45; Orville died January 30, 1948, at age 76 of a heart attack,

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. The first flight of the Flyer lasted 12 seconds. It rose 10 feet in the air and travelled 120 feet. It was the first time in history a machine carrying a human had lifted itself up into the air by its own power and landed intact. At the time, Wilbur was 36, Orville 32.
2. On the last flight of the day, Wilbur piloted the Flyer 852 feet and remained airborne for 59 seconds. The craft never flew again and today resides in The Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.
3. The next year, the Wrights flew a new Flyer near their dairy farm in Dayton, Ohio.
4. When the Wrights were 42 and 38, they owned airplane manufacturing plants in both France and the

United States. They had contracted with the army for a plane that could fly 125 miles and carry two passengers.

UNIQUE INFLUENCE

1. All successful flight is built on the foundation established by Wilbur and Orville Wright.
2. In just 66 years, heavier-than-air flight went from a 12-second flight over Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, to an eight day journey to the moon and back.
3. Between the Flyer and the Eagle there was the first flight across the ocean, the first flight across the nation, the first flight to circumnavigate the globe, the first passenger flight, the first jet, and more.
4. The Wrights' amazingly successful flight was probably the greatest accomplishment by that unique category of 20th-century American inventors, including Edison and Ford, who relied little on formal education. They educated and trained themselves.
5. Because the Wrights' sole consuming passion was the airplane, humankind was finally able to experience a dream that it had shared for centuries.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Wilbur was reluctant to talk. Once, he slowly rose to his feet during a gathering and said, "I know of only one bird that talks — the parrot. And it is not a good flyer."

One of the secrets of the Wright's success was their ability to develop a wing design that worked. "We saw that the calculations upon which flying machines had been based were unreliable," they said. "And that all were groping in the dark... we decided to rely entirely on our own investigations. We had taken up aeronautics as a sport. We reluctantly entered upon the scientific side of it, and we soon found the work so endlessly

fascinating that we were drawn into it deeper and deeper."

The brothers tended to answer technical questions with pat responses, such as, "The airplane stays up because it doesn't have time to fall."

When Wilbur died, his father read a eulogy. It said in part, "In memory and intelligence, there was none like him. He systematized everything. His wit was quick and keen. He could say or write anything he wanted to ... but he was modest."