Wright Brothers.

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- **Born:** April 16, 1867
- **Birthplace:** Near Millville, Indiana
- **Died:** May 30, 1912
- **Place of death:** Dayton, Ohio

Orville Wright (1871–1948) and Wilbur Wright (1867–1912) were two American brothers. They are credited with inventing and building the first successful airplane. Extremely bright children, the Wright brothers became inspired by flight at a young age. When they were just children, their father bought them a toy helicopter. Although it was just a toy, Orville and Wilbur were fascinated. When Orville dropped out of high school in 1889 to start a printing business, Wilbur joined him. They later opened up a bike shop. It was there that the boys gained important mechanical knowledge that would influence their work with aircrafts.

Orville Wright; Wilbur Wright; Wright Brothers on porch of house, Dayton, Ohio (Wilbur on Left) Library of Congress

Wilbur Wright and Orville Wright; Wright brothers first

Flight Experiments

The Wright brothers, inspired by the efforts of other professionals, finally began their own flight experiments in 1896. Orville and Wilbur concluded that the missing part in what they referred to as "the flying problem" was control. Wilbur began observing birds in flight. Through his observations, Wilbur noticed that the birds would change the angle of their wingtips in order to make their bodies roll to the right or left. He decided that this would be a good method to help their flying machines turn. This technique was called "wing warping" and was an important component of their aircraft.

In 1900, the brothers journeyed to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, an area known for strong winds. There, they began three years of manned gliding experiments. In early 1903, the brothers applied for a patent for a "Flying Machine," convinced they were finally onto something. Later that same year, on December 17, 1903, the brothers completed the first successful

successful flight in Kittyhawk, North Carolina. Library of Congress

flight. With Wilbur at the helm, the aircraft flew for a total of 59 seconds at 852 feet.

Success and Government Contracts

Despite having achieved something that had never been accomplished, the Wright brothers were not met with appreciation. In addition to many members of the press, their fellow flight experts were hesitant in believing their flight claims. In 1908, Wilbur travelled to Europe in order to spread the word and hopefully garner more support. Eventually, Wilbur's efforts were successful, and the Wright brothers became famous overseas.

While Wilbur was in Europe, Orville had begun talks with the United States Army. He hoped to win the first ever government contract for a military plane. In 1909, after many flight demonstrations, the Wright brothers were successful, selling the airplane for $30,000. Wilbur completed all of the army's requirements: a two-seated airplane, able to fly with a passenger, for an hour at an average speed of 40 miles per hour.

Later Life and Legacy

After their success with the U.S. Army, the Wright brothers established the Wright Company in 1909. A factory was set up in Dayton, Ohio, complete with a flying school and a test flight field. Not long after, in 1912, Wilbur Wright died of typhoid fever. Orville continued to lead the company for many years and went on to serve on the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. The Wrights continued to face skepticism on whether or not they were the first to build a successful plane. Despite this, their contributions have lived on and are felt today. Many features of their original design still used in modern airplanes.

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