

# Michigan Time Traveler

An educational supplement produced by Lansing Newspapers In Education, Inc. and the Michigan Historical Center.

## KIDS' History

### History Flies in Michigan

It's the 100th anniversary of powered flight, and the Time Traveler traces Michigan aviation history back more than 100 years!

### Michigan's First Flight

Wilbur and Orville Wright made their famous first powered, controlled flight on December 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. However, Michigan's first flight took place five years earlier.

August Herring built models of flying machines as a boy in Georgia. Later, he built gliders while working in Chicago. In 1897 he moved to St. Joseph, Michigan. He built a motorized biplane glider and flew it on a Lake Michigan beach on October 22, 1898. Herring continued to try to improve the aircraft, but a fire destroyed his work in 1899. Four years later he moved to New York, where he started the first company to make airplanes for sale.

So, why are the Wright brothers in our history books instead of Augustus Herring? First, while people saw Herring's flight, the only photograph taken was of his landing. Many years later when proof was needed, there were no pictures of the plane in the air. Second, Herring controlled his plane by shifting his body weight. The Wright brothers used mechanical controls for their flight. Third, Herring believed that there was much more to be learned before flights would be successful and reliable. He hesitated to say that he "flew." He said that he achieved an "airborne condition." The phrase did not attract the media's attention.



Planes have served the military since their invention. These C-17 Globemaster IIIs transport cargo such as trucks, tanks, helicopters, artillery and weapons, take paratroops to their destinations and bring back injured troops. U.S. Air Force photo: Staff Sgt. Suzanne Jenkins



Students view a wooden propeller from an OX-5 aircraft engine, circa 1918, at the MSU Museum, East Lansing. You can visit the special exhibit, *100 Years of Flight: Pioneers and Barnstormers* at the museum until February 8, 2004. Photo: Judy Smyth, MSU Museum



Lansing Newspapers In Education (NIE) provides Lansing State Journal newspapers and supplemental teaching materials for area classrooms at little or no cost to the schools. The newspaper becomes a "living textbook," providing students with timely and relevant topics for discussion in class and at home.

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### Building for Flight

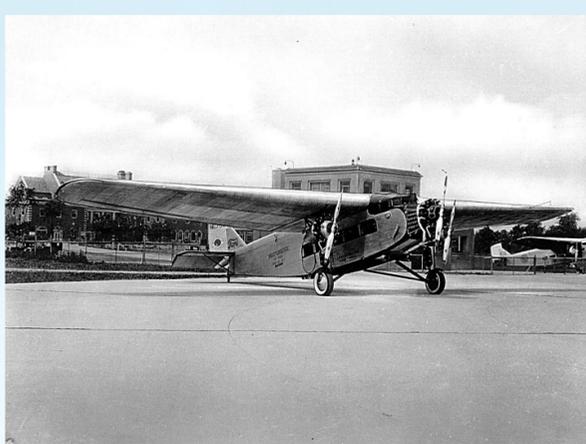
Airplanes interested automaker Henry Ford. During World War I his Ford Motor Company built Liberty engines for planes. In 1925, he bought the Stout Metal Airplane Company and set up an Airplane Development Division at Ford Motor Company. Ford would become the first company to produce airplanes on an assembly line. Most planes were still being built of wood, but Ford believed the plane of the future would be made of metal. In 1926 his company produced the Tri-motor, a three-engine plane nicknamed the "Tin Goose" because it had a corrugated metal fuselage. The Tri-motor was the world's first successful passenger plane; it carried 12 customers seated on wicker chairs. Tri-motors also carried cargo, explored remote areas and did crop-dusting, fire-fighting and advertising. A military version carried troops. In 1929 the Tri-motor made its most famous flight—Admiral Richard Byrd flew over the South Pole with a pilot and three other passengers.



Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh. State Archives photo

In 1926 Henry Ford built Ford Airport in Dearborn. It was the world's first modern airport. It installed the first paved runway in the world in 1928. Nearby, Ford built the Dearborn Inn, the world's first "airport hotel."

During World War II the Ford Motor Company built gliders for the military in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It built a huge plant in Willow Run to produce the B-24 Liberator Bomber. Charles Lindbergh came back to Michigan to work with Ford on the design of the bomber.



Ford's Tri-motor aircraft was photographed at Ford Airport in Dearborn. Photo: State Archives

### The Business of Flying

Airplanes carry passengers, mail and cargo. The business of aviation also includes crop dusting, fire-fighting and aerial photography. In 1923 Talbert "Ted" Abrams formed the Abrams Aerial Survey Corporation in Lansing. He took photos of farms and towns for customers. He provided governments, the military and industry with photos for mapping. He is called the "Father of Aerial Photography." Abrams also designed equipment and planes especially for aerial photography. The Abrams Planetarium at Michigan State University is named for him. The company is still a world leader in aerial surveying.



Mid-Michigan residents see a Curtiss-Wright biplane on the East Side Race Track (now the Red Cedar Golf Course) around 1912. State Archives

### At the Michigan Historical Museum

- Visit the Arsenal of Democracy gallery. Tour it at [www.michiganhistory.org](http://www.michiganhistory.org) before you come.
- Look up and see a photo of Michigan from space as you leave the 1957 Auto Show Gallery.

The Michigan Historical Museum, 702 W. Kalamazoo Street, is located two blocks west of the Capitol in downtown Lansing. Museum admission is free. Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m. The museum telephone hotline: (517) 373-3559. The museum is part of the Michigan Historical Center, Department of History, Arts and Libraries. Visit us on the Web at [www.michiganhistory.org](http://www.michiganhistory.org).



BIG History students from Elliott Elementary School in Holt visit the Michigan Historical Museum's Arsenal of Democracy gallery to see a large wall mural of the B-24 bomber assembly line and an aircraft engine built by Buick.

### A Base of History

When the U. S. Army needed an air base in Michigan, it leased, then later purchased, land near Mt. Clemens from Henry B. Joy. The manufacturer of the Packard automobile, Joy also built airplane engines. He tested his cars and planes on the land he called "Joy Aviation Field." The Army named the new field for Lt. Thomas Selfridge.

Lt. Thomas Selfridge's job was to evaluate planes that the U.S. Army might purchase. On September 17, 1908, he was at Fort Myer, Virginia, to test the Wright brothers' new *Military Flyer*. He and Orville Wright flew the plane, but it crashed while they returned to the field to land. Wright was badly injured. Lt. Selfridge died. He was the first United States military person to die in powered flight.

Selfridge Air National Guard Base is known as "The Home of Generals." More than 150 generals spent part of their careers there. Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, the most famous airman of World War I, trained at Selfridge. Detroit-born Charles Lindbergh, who made the first nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean in the *Spirit of St. Louis* in 1927, was at Selfridge in 1924. Today Selfridge Field serves forces from the Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

### Things to Do

- ✦ Make an aviation newspaper page. Cut out news and feature stories about aviation to paste onto a newspaper-size sheet of paper.
- ✦ Start a stamp collection with the 37¢ "First Powered Flight" stamp issued in April 2003.
- ✦ Read Governor Jennifer Granholm's proclamation of the Centennial of Flight Celebration Months. Go to "Proclamations" at [www.michigan.gov/gov](http://www.michigan.gov/gov).
- ✦ Click on "Enshrinees" to read the stories of Michigan aviation history heroes at the Michigan Aviation Hall of Fame, [www.michiganaviation.org](http://www.michiganaviation.org).
- ✦ Comments or suggestions? Write to [TimeTraveler@michigan.gov](mailto:TimeTraveler@michigan.gov).

### A Future in Flight

Would you like to work in the aviation industry someday? There are ways to get involved with flight now. These students are members of the Civil Air Patrol. The missions of CAP include emergency services, aerospace education and cadet programs.



Photo: Kay McLaughlin

Boys and girls can join the cadet program after they complete sixth grade. Cadets wear uniforms, learn leadership skills and tour aviation facilities. They design and build hot air balloons or model airplanes in CAP's aerospace education programs. In the photo, cadets participate in a squadron rocket launch in a field south of St Johns. Go to [miwg.cap.gov](http://miwg.cap.gov) for more information about CAP.

Some Michigan schools take part in Rockets for Schools. In this program student teams construct model rockets. They compete to see whose rocket can lift a payload, such as an egg, into the air. The Michigan competition is held in Muskegon in spring. For more information, see [www.muskegon-isd.k12.mi.us/mathscience/rockets/](http://www.muskegon-isd.k12.mi.us/mathscience/rockets/).