

North Carolina Aviation Facts and History Sheet

- In 1873, the first documented airplane in America was built by Henry Gatling outside Murfreesboro.
- On Dec. 17, 1903, Orville Wright achieved the first powered, sustained, heavier-than-air flight at Kitty Hawk. The flight lasted 12 seconds and covered a distance of 120 feet.
- In 1907, Levi Paul of Davis was the first person in the world to get a helicopter to lift off the ground when his helicopter lifted four feet into the air.
- On May 14, 1908, the first passenger flight took place in a Wright plane at Kitty Hawk. Wilbur Wright was the pilot, and Charles Furnas was the passenger.
- In 1913, Tiny Broadwick of Oxford became the first woman to parachute from a plane.
- On May 2, 1928, a monument celebrating the first flight was unveiled at Kill Devil Hills.
- North Carolina has 74 publicly owned airports and more than 300 privately owned airports.
- If the runways from the state's 74 airports were laid together end to end, they would equal a two-lane highway that stretches from Manteo to Murphy (about 610 miles).
- Each year, about 2.6 million airplanes take flight and land in North Carolina.
- There are three major airline hubs in North Carolina, and more than 47 million passengers fly in and out of the state each year.
- Commercial and general aviation brings in about \$11.8 billion to the state each year.
- Commercial and general aviation accounts for about 88,400 jobs in North Carolina.
- North Carolina has 13,993 certified pilots and instructors.
- 8,223 registered private, corporate and government aircraft are based in North Carolina.
- Gregory Peck's character in the WWII movie "Twelve O'Clock High" was based on the experience of Frank Armstrong Sr. of Hobgood.
- Steve McQueen's character in the WWII movie "The Great Escape" was based on the experiences of pilot John Dortch Lewis of Goldsboro.
- The WWII movie "Memphis Belle" was based on the plane piloted by Robert Morgan of Asheville.
- The character "Trapper John" in the television show "M.A.S.H." was derived from the experiences of Dr. John Lyday, a former airman from Greensboro.