



**American Aviation Heritage  
National Historic Landmark Theme Study Update  
Spring 2004**

Few technological advances have transformed the American economy, society, culture, and national character as the development of powered flight. Our nation's leadership in both civil and military aviation set the foundation for the twentieth century to be an American century. With the 100th anniversary of the first powered flight in 2003, the preservation of properties nationally significant in the history of aviation is an important goal for the future education of American citizens. However, while many aircraft, rockets, and spacecraft have been preserved in museum settings, many sites, structures, buildings, and objects associated with this story are not protected for future generations.

To ensure that this important part of our nation's heritage is preserved and protected the National Park Service and the United States Air Force are partnering to prepare a Theme Study on the history of American aviation to identify the sites, districts, buildings, structures, and objects that best illustrate or commemorate key events in the history of this nationally significant historical theme.

Since the theme study was launched on March 10, 2003, at a public event at the Huffman Prairie Flying Field, the National Park Service has worked with a variety of partners to complete the following tasks.

- ***Wright Brothers National Memorial: Site of the First Controlled Powered Flight.*** This Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan is based on National Park Service materials at the Wright Brothers National Memorial and other sources related to the Wright brothers. The lesson was written by Brenda K. Olio, a former National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers staff member.

Available at [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/index.htm), the lesson helps students:

- to describe the status of human flight experiments at the turn of the 20th century.
- to determine why the Wright brothers chose the Outer Banks of North Carolina to conduct their flight experiments and how conditions in this region impacted their efforts.
- to describe the challenges faced by the Wright brothers during their flight experiments and how they overcame them to achieve controlled powered flight on December 17, 1903.
- to examine how the Wright brothers' historic accomplishments at Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina have been commemorated, and,
- to research efforts to commemorate important people and events in their own community

- ***Aviation: From Sand Dunes to Sonic Booms: A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary.*** The National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places and Regional Offices, in partnership with Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, United States Air Force, U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO), proudly invite you to explore the history of American aviation. In celebration of a century of flight, this travel itinerary highlights more than 100 listings in the National Register of Historic Places--historic aircraft, airfields, research and testing facilities, aeronautical and engineering research laboratories, military installations, space launch sites and control facilities--that tell the stories of the significant people and events that made the United States the world's leader in aviation. This itinerary will be launched in November at [www.cr.nps.gov/nr](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr).
- ***Access Aviation Related National Historic Landmark documentation on Line.*** To help Americans learn about the places in their neighborhoods and across the country that helped to define the first century of flight, the National Park Service has digitized information on over 20 National Historic Landmarks. This documentation, crafted over a 30 year period, establishes a foundation for subsequent research on the history of American aviation. Go to [www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/themes/themes.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/themes/themes.htm) and follow the link to aviation related properties.
- ***United States Air Force Academy, Cadet Area National Historic Landmark Nomination.*** Over the last year, the Academy has been working with NPS staff to craft a National Historic Landmark nomination for the Cadet Area of the Academy. While separately funded, this project helps to recognize the national significance of the Air Force and its mission.
- ***United States Air Force Academy, Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan.*** NPS in partnership with the Organization of American Historians is preparing a Teaching with Historic Places lesson plan to highlight the history and architectural significance of the Academy. A draft outline has been prepared and is under review by NPS.
- ***Lincoln Motor Company Plant, Detroit, Michigan: Withdrawal of Designation Study (NHL 1978)*** Automobile manufacturer Henry M. Leland resigned from Cadillac in 1917 after William C. Durant hesitated to focus his plans on the war effort. He established this plant in 1918, and here he produced Liberty engines, "one of America's greatest contributions to the aviation during the war." Most of the buildings on this 62 acres facility were recently demolished. The National Park System Advisory Board's Landmarks Committee will consider the withdrawal of designation in May 2004.
- ***Rocket Engine Test Facility, Cleveland, Ohio: Withdrawal of Designation Study (NHL 1985).*** Located on NASA's Lewis Research center, the Rocket Engine Test Facility is nationally significant because of its contribution to the development of the lightweight, regeneratively cooled hydrogen engine. Hydrogen fueled rocket engines were important in providing the additional lift necessary to reach the Moon as part of the Apollo program. These types of engines helped power Centaur and Saturn rockets and the Space Shuttle. Identified as part of NPS' Man in Space theme study, the site was demolished to make way

for an airport runway expansion project.

- ***College Park, Maryland Airport National Historic Landmark Nomination.*** NPS sponsored the preparation of a National Historic Landmark nomination. The facility began as the training site for the first military pilots in the U. S. Army. Wilbur made 55 flights at College Park, including his last record-setting flight, 46 miles per hour over a 500 meter course. In addition to flying training, Army pilots also conducted experiments in radiotelegraphy, photography, automatic weapons firing, signaling systems, and bombing devices. On August 12, 1918, the College Park field became the Washington terminus for the first U.S. Post Office commercial airmail service. On this site Americans took experimented with wireless radio communications, made the first reported nighttime landing with the aid of acetylene lamps on the ground and developed the first radio navigational aides for all weather flying. Evaluation of the property's historic integrity suggested that the conversion of the site from a grass field to concrete runways, in addition to the absence of substantial surviving resources from the pre World War II period of significance had compromised the site's physical integrity such that it no longer had the ability to convey its association with the first quarter century of powered flight. NPS has decided not to present this nomination for review by the National Park System Advisory Board.