

To Mr. Peter L. Jakab
Air & Space/Smithsonian magazine
MRC 513, P.O. Box 37012, Washington, DC 20013

Dear Mr. Jakab, it is remarkable that the article, “The Wright Brothers & The Invention of the Aerial Age” published in your May 2021 issue, which contains so many historic errors and propaganda, was ever allowed to grace the pages of *Air & Space Smithsonian* magazine. It should be noted that world class propaganda must first be forged by world class research; a step which is sadly missing from this written discourse on fraudulent history. Perhaps a few words of true historic enlightenment is in order.

In your article you wrote, “...the actual airplane that made those [December 17, 1903] historic first flights...”

However, Wilber Wright described their 1903 ‘flyer’ in an article titled, “The Experiments of a Flying Man”, published in the February 4, 1904 magazine *The Independent*, some 48 days after his reported ‘flight.’ Wilber Wright reported, “One of the propellers was set to revolve vertically and intended to give a forward motion, while the other underneath the machine and revolving horizontally, was to assist in sustaining it in the air.”

By Mr Wright’s own report, the glider you have on display is clearly NOT THE SAME CRAFT! Is it even possible that Mr. Wright forgot where he and his brother placed the propellers on their glider? History shows that the brother’s Wright at times set their test craft on fire after failed attempts. Is that what happened to the actual glider they attempted to fly down slope on December 17, 1903? When confronted with this problem of aircraft identification Wilber simply claimed that the article was not written by him. Yet the records of the Library of Congress confirmed it was written by Wilber Wright! You may wish to do just a bit more research on that aspect of history before continuing to display “the actual aircraft”.

In your article you wrote, “With the tools used to design and build the first airplane, each critical step of their inventive process is revealed...”

In your article you also wrote, “Every airplane that followed incorporates its essential design elements.... Their pioneering approach to aircraft design is still the foundation of modern aeronautical engineering.”

So... let’s have a look at some aviation history made by the men who actually invented the aircraft and “their inventive process” and “their pioneering approach to aircraft design.”

1- George Cayley has been called, as have others, “the father of aviation” for discovering the principles governing flight noted as the forces of, weight, lift, drag and thrust, which act upon heavier-than-air flying craft and combined allow all aircraft to fly. This was the beginning of true aeronautical engineering when in 1799 Cayley wrote down the requirements for a fixed wing aircraft necessary for propulsion, control in all directions, and systems designed for lift. These are the discoveries from which all modern aircraft rely upon including the “cambered wing” which was also discovered by Cayley. If anyone may be recognized as discovering or inventing the airplane the first on the list must surely be George Cayley. NOT THE BROTHER’S WRIGHT!

2- In 1827 George Pocock pulled a carriage using kites, testing their capability to move heavy objects. BEFORE THE BROTHER’S WRIGHT!

3- Jan Wnek of Poland conducted his glider work in splendid isolation. History records that he began his full-scale glider construction in 1866 after testing his designs on smaller models based as many before him on the flight of birds. His glider, built of ash wood covered with linen painted with varnish, was named *Loty* (flyer). Control would come from twisting the wings (wing warping**) and control ties attached to his feet. BEFORE THE BROTHER’S WRIGHT!**

4- In 1868, well before experimenters flew manned powered aircraft, Matthew Piers Watt Boulton known to historians as a scientist-philosopher patented his aileron system. Most modern aircraft use an aileron system for lateral control and stable flight. His system as designed could be controlled by an operator or by a “pendulum control device” or in modern terms a “single-axis autopilot”. He had earlier (1864) published a scientific paper titled, *Aerial Locomotion* in which he described in technical detail several flight ideas including his idea of an aileron for flight control. NOT INVENTED BY THE BROTHER’S WRIGHT!

5- In 1870 Francis Wenham **designed and built the world's first wind tunnel that could be used to test the effectiveness of wing designs.** BEFORE THE BROTHER'S WRIGHT!

6- Alphonse Penaud (1850-1880) designed and built several models in order to explore aeronautics in fixed wing, helicopter, and ornithopters. His full-scale design had many innovations including an enclosed pilot cabin, an undercarriage that could be retracted after the craft left the ground, elevators electrically operated and **twin propellers which rotated in opposite directions which nullified torque caused by a single propeller.** NOT INVENTED BY THE BROTHER'S WRIGHT!

7- Engineer Thomas Moy's (1823–1910) interests in aviation began with balloons: it would not take long for him to become infatuated with fixed winged flight and the possibility of heavier-than-air craft. As an early member of the Aeronautical Society of Great Britain he was active in presenting original scientific papers on flight. NONE OF WHICH WERE WRITTEN BY THE BROTHER'S WRIGHT!

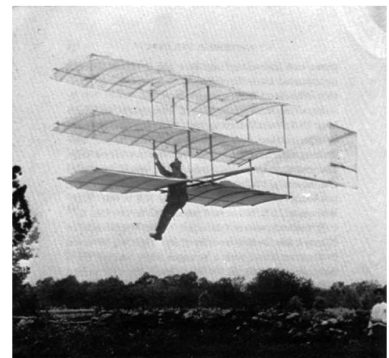
8- Dr. Tom Crouch, of the National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C., (yes your Dr. Crouch) stated that **the Wrights were not the first to use or even develop wing warping: "...wing torsion ... was first applied in practice by Edson F. Gallaudet in his 1897 craft,** tested on Long Island Sound and now on public display at the NASM." You read that correctly; "on display at the NASM!" Is it anywhere near the Wright glider? Dr. Crouch continues, "Edson Fessenden Gallaudet was a pioneer in the field of aviation, **being the first person to experiment with warped wings in 1896.**" NOT INVENTED BY THE BROTHER'S WRIGHT! This however did not stop the Wrights from acquiring a patent which included the method on May 22, 1906!

9- Smithsonian Institute Secretary, Astronomer Samuel Pierpont Langley, **ran a series of engineering tests to acquire data on how a moving air stream created lift forces** as it passed over different wing shapes from 1887 to 1891. BEFORE THE BROTHER'S WRIGHT!

10- The summers of 1896 and 1897 found Octave Chanute (1832-1910) and his team working hard on glider designs at his "flyer camp" on the shore of Lake Michigan. BEFORE THE BROTHER'S WRIGHT! Those years saw Augustus Moore Herring (1867-1926) flying a Chanute glider. (See below, left) Compare if you will to a later unmanned glider built by the brother's Wright in 1900, (See below, middle) three years later, AFTER writing to Octave Chanute about the work Chanute was doing with wing design in 1897!

In a letter from Octave Chanute to Wilber Wright, Chanute wrote, *"I am afraid, my friend, that your usually sound judgment has been warped by the desire for great wealth."*

11- On April 6, 2013, Dr. Tom Crouch wrote about the Press visit to Gustave Whitehead's home during the fall of 1897. "In October 1897 a reporter for *The New York Herald* interviewed Whitehead at his boarding house at 130 Prince Street, where he saw two flying machines. The first was a tri-plane hang glider (See below, right) clearly based on a similar craft designed the year before by the brilliant Chicago (bridge) engineer Octave Chanute and his assistant, Augustus Moore Herring, and flown by Herring in the dunes ringing the southern shore of Lake Michigan in the summer of 1896, and again in 1897." FLYING BEFORE THE BROTHER'S WRIGHT!



Clearly the airplane was NOT invented by the brother's Wright or for that matter, any one individual!

Dr. Albert F. Zahm, Ph.D., Director of the Aeronautical Laboratory for the U.S. Navy wrote, *"All the World can of course say the Kitty Hawk machine was the first to fly from a monorail launching track, aided by a wing-holding assistant, as reported in 1903. It was not the first power-plane invented or patented; nor the first designed with aileron or wing-warping control; nor the first to taxi or make sustained flight with a pilot."*

And now, if I may, perhaps a few notes on the well-known image ‘reportedly’ taken on December 17, 1903. History records that the picture was first published in *The Century Magazine*, which began publishing in 1881, in its September 1908 issue under the title “The Wright Brothers’ Aeroplane” nearly five years after the ‘flight’. Remember there were no aviation experts or Press representatives on hand to verify these gliding ‘flights’.



The shadow of the craft is directly below indicating a high Sun angle. That is not possible in the month of December as reported by the Wrights, but it is completely relative to the Sun angle during the summer months which is exactly when the brother’s Wright returned to Kitty Hawk to “make a few more test flights.” Soon after those 1908 ‘flights’ the brother’s Wright released their ‘1903 December’ photo!!! THE BROTHER’S WRIGHT LIED ABOUT THE DATE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH! Sun angles being what they are, I am certain a bit of scientific inquiry, performed by the fine people at our space agency NASA will settle this matter.

It is perhaps also interesting to learn that the engine parts on display at the Smithsonian along with the ‘glider’ for 1903 are not the original engine ‘flown’ on the displayed craft. The engine on display was built in 1916 reportedly from some of the original parts, other engine parts and a completely new flywheel and crankshaft; just a bit of historic slight-of-hand on the part of the museum. It is well past time for an honest display of this not so historic glider now on display at the Smithsonian. AND, where is the propeller underneath the machine?

Wilber Wright wrote, “*We made the art of flying possible, and all the people in it have us to thank.*” **In your article you wrote, “As a piece of engineering, it is meticulously thought through in every detail.”**

Perhaps a closer look at the “engineering” is in order. Remember, no one has ever tested the ‘glider’ you have on display at the Smithsonian, other than the ‘reported’ test flight by the Wrights themselves; so let’s go to the test flights of modern day pilots and engineers for the answer.

In 2003, the *Associated Press* out of El Segundo, California, reported on the problems encountered by pilots attempting to fly replicas of the Wright ‘Flyer’ number 1. “Aviation experts... have found the Wright stuff — in the hands of modern pilots ... — is a little wrong.”

“Piloting ‘Flyer I 1903’ is like balancing a yardstick on one finger, two at one time. If you lose it, it goes — quickly, said Professor Fred E. C. Culick ...” who had analyzed the craft in 1985 along with Henry R. Jex. “I’d say it was almost a miracle they were able to fly it”, said Jack Cherne.” “Using that data, they created a computer flight simulator that shows **the plane to be so unstable, it is nearly impossible to fly.**” “Every pilot, his first try, crashed the simulator. It took less than a second”, said Capt. Tim Jorris.” “**I thoroughly cannot imagine the Wright brothers, having very little experience in powered aircraft, getting this airborne and flying,**” said Major Mike Jansen.” “Modifications will include A computer feedback system will assist the pilot. ‘We want the experience, but we don’t want to kill ourselves’, Cherne said.”

Remembering the many who did in fact die flying a Wright ‘aircraft.’ Dare we speculate that the closer the modern replicas came to the original ‘flyer’ the more difficult it became to actually getting these replica’s into the air.



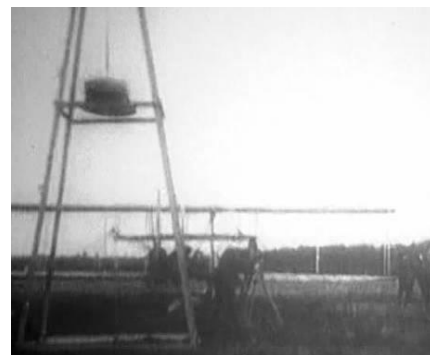
Let us not forget that the first man to die in an aircraft crash, died in a Wright craft flown by Orville Wright!
Several more would end their lives attempting to fly one of the most dangerous 'aircraft' ever built.

Historic aviation writer Susan Brinkman wrote, "Wright replicas and reproductions still have problems flying – famously made apparent to the world during the '100th Anniversary of Flight' events at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on December 17, 2003, despite years of preparation. The 'painstakingly accurate reproduction' of the Wright Flyer, built 'at a cost of \$1.2 million', travelled down a 200 foot long wooden launching track and **lifted six inches into the air for one second before twisting and ploughing its right wing into the sand**, causing the large crowd assembled to groan." It does not get much clearer than that. Flight it was not!

Writing in his work *The Wright Story*, Joe Bullmer, author and aeronautical engineer, made it clear that the Wright craft were not controllable during 1904 and 1905 when witnesses from the Press were watching and reporting. After an extensive study of their early "powered aircraft" Bullmer wrote, "Indeed, as they found out in 1904 and 1905 none of their earlier vehicles were even capable of executing turns."

The Wrights wrote about their glider flights of 1904 as published in *The Century Magazine*, September 1908, "The Wright Brothers' Aeroplane." "In the spring of 1904 ... the new machine was heavier and stronger ... When it was ready for its first trial, every newspaper in Dayton was notified, and about a dozen representatives of the Press were present. ... When preparations had been completed ... **The machine, after running the length of the track, slid off the end without rising into the air at all.** Several of the newspaper men returned the next day, but they were again disappointed. **The engine performed badly, and after a glide of only sixty feet, the machine came to the ground.**" There had been however, some good news for the brother's Wright. There were no members of the Press on that beach on December 17, 1903!

In your article you wrote at least one historic piece of truth, "The Wright brothers didn't simply build a craft to get off the ground."



You are quite correct as history shows their glider needed to glide downhill on a rail, steadied by one of the brothers, or later throw into the air by the drop of a 1,600 pound weight before getting a few inches off the ground as late as 1908. And that is not a "powered takeoff" by any measure.

In your article you also wrote, "...the machine that gave us our wings..."

Dr. Crouch, a Wright supporter from the National Air and Space Museum wrote that, **the gliding flight in the photo was "probably not" sustained!** In other words **what is seen in the photo is a glide and not a powered flight and that the glide did not go very far despite what was reported by the brothers' Wright.** It should be recalled that not a single individual ever signed an *affidavit* attesting to seeing a Wright brothers flight at Kitty

Hawk in 1903 – none! The only reported witness, John T. Daniels later wrote in 1933, “**They carried the machine up on the Hill and Put her on the track, and started the engine ... and he went about 100 feet or more...**”

Wilber Wright wrote, “*We honestly think that our work of 1900-1906 has been and will be of value to the world, and that **the world owes us something** as inventors.” “**I am only interested in building and selling airplanes. Let others amuse themselves with races if they want to.**”*

In your article you wrote, “...it represents a pivotal step in the creation of our modern world and humanity’s need to achieve and explore.”

In your article you also wrote, “...you learn who the Wright brothers really were and what about them enabled Wilber and Orville to achieve success where others had failed.”

The answers are rather easy to explain. The brother’s Wright were ruthless business men who took credit for the work of others and then black-mailed the Smithsonian in order for the museum to display their handy work taken from many others.

The brothers’ Wright first major attack on the entire aviation industry to establish their ‘claim’ of flight priority (other than the patent they ‘acquired’) came in 1909 when they filed an injunction against all other aviation pioneers in America. Australia aviation historian John Brown reports, “In 1909, all winged, heavier-than-air aircraft in America were grounded by injunctions obtained by the Wright brothers to protect their patent. If an aviator wanted to continue flying his own aeroplane, he was required to buy a Wright License which cost more than \$25,000. The only other legal option was to buy the Wrights’ canard biplane-pusher prop invention, which most were unwilling to do...”

If there was any single primary cause which set back and gravely hindered aviation development in the United States as it was entering its second decade it was the Wright’s legal actions against all aviators in the nation which grounded all fixed-winged aircraft research across the entire country. **It would take a world war and nearly a full decade before American aviation could begin to claim to have recovered from their devastating attack on early aviation by the brother’s Wright.** With their legal attacks the Wrights historically became the greatest impediment to American aviation in its entire history. Needless to say that fact is never taught in America’s grade schools as it would put a rather large and accurate black stain on the myth of the iconic Wrights and their ‘gifts’ to aviation. What was it that Wilber Wright said? “*I am only interested in building and selling airplanes.*” That cut throat businessman certainly proved he was sincere about that.

In your article you wrote, “When the Wright Flyer was first put on public display at the Smithsonian in 1948...”

In 1948 the Smithsonian went into a secret agreement with the Wright estate agreeing to lie about the Wright claim of first flight if they could acquire the ‘flyer’ for display. For many years this secret agreement was denied by the Smithsonian. It is now part of the historic record and it is as much a disgrace today as it was when it was signed on November 23, 1948 by Harold S, Miller representing the Wright Estate and Dr. Alexander Wetmore then secretary of the Smithsonian Institute and as was written “for the United States of America.”

“Neither the Smithsonian Institution nor its successors nor any museum or other agency, bureau or facilities administered by the United States of America, by the Smithsonian Institution or its successors, shall publish or permit to be displayed a statement or label in connection with or in respect of any aircraft model or design of earlier date than the Wright Aeroplane of 1903, claiming in effect that such aircraft was capable of carrying a man under its own power in controlled flight.”

When the conspiracy by the Smithsonian and Wright supporters to deny history was finally uncovered it invoked a response from Whitehead researcher Lester Gardner on March 21, 2014. “A Smithsonian conspiracy to deny Whitehead flew first – ahead of the Wrights – is now provable. A never-before-known, direct connection between denying Whitehead flew first and the designing of the ‘Contract’ with Smithsonian, including the label on the Wright Flyer has been ‘unearthed’. This is a game-changer that establishes exactly how Whitehead’s claim was deliberately, secretly, and effectively denied, all these years. **It involves plotting behind the scenes, by**

Smithsonian curators and influential friends of Orville Wright, to provide Orville permanent credit that he did not deserve, without regard for historical facts. It worked for 70 years.”

It would take nearly half a century for the *New York Times* to finally report to its readers that the Wrights did not make a powered flight on December 17, 1903. The credibility of the brothers' Wright was about to take a major historic hit from “the so-called paper of record”. On December 17, 1951 some three years after the death of Orville Wright, the *New York Times* reported, “...**the brothers only ‘glided’ off Kill Devil Hill that day. Their first real flight came on May 6, 1908.**” This was far too little and far too late.

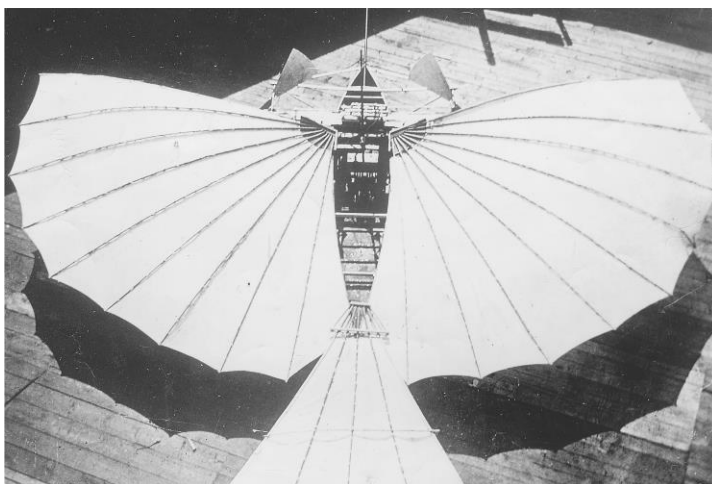
If the pages of *Air & Space Smithsonian* magazine are to eventually become relevant then history must be served, and those who actually did the work that was falsely credited to the brother's Wright must be corrected and accurately reported and respected, no matter who did the work! To that end I humbly direct you to a gentleman named Gustave Whitehead, and the four documented and fully reported flights he made on August 14, 1901, flying his craft Number 21 named the “*Condor*”, nearly a year and a half BEFORE the brother's Wright made their ‘reported’ downhill glide off Kill Devil HILL.

April or May 1899 – ½ mile powered manned test flight (uncontrolled) w/steam engine at Schenley Park, Pittsburgh, ended in crash into a building, 20-25 feet high. (Witnesses: Darvarich, Devine, Ritchey, Johns)

August 14, 1901 – **First documented powered manned controlled aircraft flights.** Four powered manned controlled aircraft flights. 1: 50 feet high to ½ mile. 2: 200 feet high to 1-1/2 miles, flown at Fairfield, Connecticut and 3: ½ mile. 4: 1-1/2 miles, flown at Stratford, Connecticut. (Witnesses: Schweikert, Harworth, Howell, Ciglar, Lanye)

September/October 1901 – Several short powered manned controlled test flights at Fairfield, Connecticut, 5 feet off the ground, 400 feet flight. (Witnesses: Lesko, Schweibert, Werer, Steeves)

January 17, 1902 – **Two long distant powered manned controlled test flights** over Long Island Sound at 2 and 7 miles in fully controlled circles flown up to 200 feet. (Witnesses: Pruckner, Koteles, Gluck, Savage)



Allow me to introduce to you Mr. Gustave Whitehead and his aircraft “The Condor.”

When confronted in 1945 with evidence that Mr. Whitehead had flown many months before the brother's Wright, Orville Wright contemptuously stated, "[The] flight was only reported on the back page of a local newspaper." Even if true this would not in any way have diminished the historic effort by Whitehead. In point of historic fact Mr. Wright lied as Whitehead's flights were reported in newspapers across the United States and several countries around the world! (See below)

June 8, 1901, *Revue Universelle et illustre*, **France**; August 20, 1901, *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, **United Kingdom** and *The London St. James Gazette*, **United Kingdom** and *Yorkshire Evening Post*, **United Kingdom**; August 21, 1901, *Portsmouth Evening News*, **United Kingdom**; August 23, 1901, *Lichfield Mercury*, **United Kingdom**; August 24, 1901, *Tamworth Herald*, **United Kingdom**; September 1, 1901, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, Tweede blad, **Netherlands**; September 27, 1901, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, **Netherlands**; October 5, 1901, *Adelaide Chronicle*, **Australia**; October 6, 1901, *Le Journal de L'Acetylene*, **France**; October 10, 1901, *Deutsche Zeitschrift fur Luftschiffahrt*, **Germany**; October 1901, *Illustrierte Aeronautische Mitteilungen*, **Germany**; November 22, 1901, *La Correspondencia de Espana*, **Spain**; November 23, 1901, *La Correspondencia de Espana*, **Spain**; November 26, 1901, *El Defensor de Cordoba*, **Spain** and *La Opinion*, **Spain**; December 1901, *Revue Universelle et illustre*, **France**; January 5, 1902, *Le Journal de L'Acetylene*, **France**; January 22, 1902, *The Daily News*, Perth, **Australia**; February 1902 and *L'aeronaute*, **France**; April 1902, *Wiener Luftschiffer-Zeitung*, **Austria**; April 1, 1902, *Le Temps*, Paris, **France**; April 9, 1902, *Falkirk Herald*, **United Kingdom**; May 31, 1902, *Brisbane Courier*, Brisbane, **Australia** and *The World's News*, Sydney, **Australia**; June 4, 1902, *Auckland Star*, **New Zealand**; June 14, 1902, *West Australian*, Perth, **Australia**; July 8, 1902, *Kalgoorlie Western*, Argus, **Australia**; March 10, 1903, *Bruce Herald*, Milton, **New Zealand**.

And for the record: the Whitehead flights in 1901 were reported in the Wright's own local Dayton newspaper. But when the Wrights sent their local paper a telegram claiming to have flown on December 17, 1903 the paper refused to print the story believing to be, shall we say, UNTRUE!

On a separate point, Alexander Graham Bell, yes the famous one was an aviation history buff. Mr. Bell collected articles on early flight history, including many articles on the flight work of Gustave Whitehead. Mr. Bell gave his collection to the Smithsonian, which is still in the collection – you might want to have a look at it.

I sincerely hope the staff at the *Air & Space*/*Smithsonian* magazine look well into the actual history of early flight and finally give credit where credit is long overdue. Sadly, I do not expect the *Air & Space*/*Smithsonian* magazine to do this as it would appear that the Smithsonian would rather hang their hat and our history on a false narrative in order to hold on to a piece of falsely constructed history, than present to the American people, and indeed the world a bit of actual history.

Never the less, I do feel that at some time in the very near future the truth will in fact be told, and it will be to the great discredit to all those who at this time chose to stand on the side of dishonest reporting of a distorted and fictional history, rather than write about the actual early history of flight.

In your article you wrote, "...able to intimately examine this world-changing invention..." That is not possible, and will remain that way until the Smithsonian displays one of the two replicas of the aircraft designed and successfully flown by Gustave Whitehead on August 14, 1901.

The Smithsonian had a photo of Mr. Whitehead next to his aircraft on the wall at the Smithsonian. Below is a statement that none of Mr. Whitehead's aircraft ever flew. That is an historic lie, and that lie needs to be corrected at the earliest time possible – like TODAY! The only question is: Do the people who operate the Smithsonian have the courage to correct this historic error or will the work need to be completed by those not associated with the Smithsonian? Only time will tell.

Sincerely

R. Michael Gordon