

When our teacher asked us to participate in National History Day, many topic ideas came to mind. We wanted to choose one that would be interesting, researchable, and fit the theme "Turning Point in History". Being avid travelers, the concept of flight stuck out. We knew that the Wright Brothers made a lot of contributions to the world, but we wanted to conduct some preliminary research to be sure. Through our initial readings, we were confident that the Wright Brothers would be interesting and be considered a "Turning Point in History".

With our topic selected, the research began. Through our school we took a fieldtrip to the local archives. We knew that we would have access to a lot of primary sources there, so prior to the trip we focused on utilizing all available secondary sources. The archives provided us with "The Published Writings of Wilbur and Orville Wright". This primary source became the foundation for our project as we were able to understand how they created their Flyers and the impact the France Flight had on their success. Upon advancing to the state competition, we decided to try and speak with experts in the field. While visiting the Experimental Aircraft Association Museum in Oshkosh, WI we interviewed two museum docents regarding their opinions on the Wrights' impact on history. After months of failed attempts, we were finally able to interview two Curators at the National Air and Space Museum. They gave us invaluable insight on not only the development of the Flyer, but the lasting impact the Wrights' had on travel, commerce, and the military. We personally interviewed Lester Rentmeester, a local WWII pilot who met Orville Wright in 1947. He helped us understand the more immediate impact of the Wrights' successes.

Through our research, we were able to get a hold of many newspaper articles, photos, and diagrams of the Wright Brothers' work and concluded that we could incorporate many of these primary sources into an interactive website. Through this presentation category people could not only read our own interpretations, but view the Wright Brothers' work themselves.

The invention of a successful flyer opened a whole new door in regards to transportation for mankind. The Wright Brothers were the ones who opened that door. They built upon other inventors' original ideas and eventually created realistic and sustainable, flight. All of their successes could be considered "Turning Points in History" however one specific event from our research sticks out as the true turning point. In August, 1908 Wilbur was in Le Mans, France to prove to the French Government that he had a realistic Flyer. Prior to this flight, many people throughout the world saw the Wright Brothers as fakes. After seeing Wilbur's successful flight on August 8th, 1908 the world truly believed in the Wright Brothers and their Flyer's capabilities. This single event was the "Turning Point in History" that allowed them to revolutionize the world of flight. From there, flight truly "took off".