An amazing thing happened in the early 1900s. People learned to fly. The Wright brothers made the very first flight in North Carolina. It lasted 12 seconds and they flew 120 feet. That short flight changed the world.

Even before this historic first flight, people around the world, including Kansans, were trying to build flying machines. It took a lot of failed attempts before one got off the ground. A few years after the Wright brothers’ flight, Kansan Albin K. Longren made an airplane. He tried it out in a field near Topeka. It worked!

Air Capital of the World

Several early Kansas pilots formed their own companies. Longren opened Kansas’ first airplane business in Topeka. Wichita is home to several airplane manufacturers, such as Cessna Aircraft Company; Boeing, Inc.; Learjet; and Hawker Beechcraft. It is known as the “Air Capital of the World.”
Albin K. Longren and other aircraft builders showed off their skills at county fairs and air shows. These barnstormers thrilled the crowds with acrobatics. Famous pilot Charles Lindbergh (pictured at left) was also a barnstormer in Kansas.

This photo shows the first airplane ever built in Wichita. What do you think the people in the photo were thinking or saying at the time this photo was taken?