

100 Most Significant Aircraft of the Past Century

The list of aircraft deemed the most significant of the past century is both fluid and organic. The criterion for selection is based on the magnitude of effect a particular aircraft had on the development of aerospace technology, socio-cultural impact, or historic event. While some selected aircraft may have been built in production runs numbering in the thousands, others may have been one of prototypes, concept only designs, or even flights of fancy. Selected aircraft may have been hugely successful either economically or aeronautically or they may have been singularly judged as complete failures for their designed missions. It is the intent of the selection committee to pose this question to the community of historians and aviation enthusiasts until final selection is made on May 17, 2002 when we will publish the final list. Until then we invite your input, comments and suggestions. For now, enjoy our Chicago Centennial of Flight Commission 100 Most Significant Aircraft of the Past Century poll and look forward pictures soon to be posted. Aircraft are generally listed chronologically by period; the Birth of Aviation, the Aircraft of World War One, the Golden Age of Flight, the Aircraft of World War Two, The Jet Age, and the Era of Aerospace.

1903 - Wright Flyer The **Wright Flyer** was the finest example of the application of the scientific method to research and development. The Wright flyer conquered the three primary challenges identified by two brothers Wilbur and Orville Wright; wing which could develop sufficient lift to carry itself, a power-plant, and a pilot; a craft able to be controlled in three dimensions, and an engine powerful enough to sustain flight.

1906 - Airship LZ-2 The Airship LZ-2 designed and built by Ferdinand von Zeppelin first flew on January 17, 1906 and established passenger service for over 35,000 tourists by 1914.

1906 - Santos-Dumont Bis The 1906 No 14-bis designed, constructed, and piloted by the accomplished Brazilian aerialist Albert Santos-Dumont won the Aero Club de France prize for powered heavier than air flight of a distance greater than 100 meters. This flight galvanized the continent in a flurry of experimentation and development.

1906 - June Bug Glenn Curtiss, F.A.I., winning the first American Air Trophy, offered by "Scientific American."

1907 - Voisin Biplane The 1907 Voisin Biplane was built by two brothers, Gabriel and Charles Voisin in Billiancourt, France. A pusher box kite-biplane similar in design to the Wright Brother's Flyer Model III, it was the first European aircraft to fly for over one minute.

1907 - Bleriot No. VII The 1907 Bleriot No. VII monoplane, designed and built by Louis Bleriot was first flown in France in April 1907. This futuristic design featured a fully cantilevered wing, forward mounted tractor engine, fully skinned fuselage, tail mounted stabilators, and a standard vertical stabilizer and rudder, recognizable today as the first modern plane.

1908 - Antoinette The 1908 Antoinette designed and built by Leon Levavasseur was the first aircraft to successfully maneuver using wing mounted ailerons. It was recognized as one of the finest aircraft at the 1909 Reims Air Meet. On June 5, 1909 the Antoinette became the first monoplane to fly for over one hour.

1909 - Bleriot No. XI Never satisfied with stagnant technology, constantly in a state of research and development, and not to be outdone by the Antoinette, Louis Bleriot designed his 1909 No. XI and became the first man to fly across the English Channel in an airplane.

1910 - Breguet Biplane The 1910 Breguet biplane designed and built by Louis Breguet and based on his aircraft featured at the 1909 Reims International Air Meet, found ready customers for its standard tail, tractor engine, and biplane wing configuration. This design was to remain the recognizable silhouette of aircraft for the next two decades

1911 - Curtis Mono-hull Seaplane The 1911 Curtis mono-hull seaplane become the first aircraft engaged in an air sea rescue when pilot Hugh Robinson took off to recover a downed pilot in Lake Michigan.

1912 - Deperdusin Monocoupe The 1912 Deperdusin French built monoplane, the first aircraft of monocoupe construction, became the first 100 mile per hour airplane at the Chicago Air Meet of 1912 and won the Gordon Bennett Cup at a speed of 108.2 mph.

1913 - Sikorski Bolshoi The 1913 Russian four engine Bolshoi becomes the first giant of the sky. Designed and built by Igor Sikorsky the Bolshoi is first constructed as a sixteen-passenger airliner and became the world's first heavy bomber early in WWI.

1913 - Farnborough B.E. 2 The 1913 Farnborough B.E. 2, a tractor biplane, was intentionally designed to be the world's first inherently stable aircraft.

1914 - Benoist XIV January 1, 1914 the first scheduled airline service began with a Benoist XIV flying boat carrying passengers between Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida.

1915 - Fokker E-III The 1915 Fokker E-III became the first true fighter aircraft with the adaptation of a sighted machine gun firing through the arc of the propeller by means of a synchronizing system, which interrupted the flow of bullets as the propeller blades passed by.

1916 -Curtis-Sperry Radio Controlled Bomber September 12, 1916 the first radio controlled aircraft was flown. The product of collaboration between Glenn Curtis and Lawrence Sperry the aircraft was designed as a guided bomber with a munitions payload of 308 pounds.

1917 - Sopwith Triplane The 1917 Sopwith Triplane was designed and flown with the intent of securing true air superiority in war. After three years of conflict faster, higher, and more maneuverable proved the pilots' axioms altitude is everything and speed is life.

1918 - Junkers CL-I Arriving too late to change the outcome of the war, the 1918 Junkers CL-I took flight as the worlds first operational all metal, armored, cantilevered wing,

monoplane ground attack fighter. This formidable aircraft was fully covered with corrugated iron.

1919 - Vickers-Vimy IV On June 14, 1919 a Vickers-Vimy IV was the first aircraft to cross the Atlantic Ocean. It covered the 1,800-mile distance from Newfoundland to Ireland in 16.5 hours.

1920 - Dayton-Wright R.B. Monoplane The Dayton-Wright R.B. monoplane was built in 1920 to compete in the Gordon Bennett Cup Race. It was the first fully enclosed cockpit monoplane with retractable landing gear. The aircraft also included a new invention by Orville Wright; split wing flaps so it could fly at a slower speed during landings.

1922 - Farman Sailplane On August 18, 1922 A Farman sailplane became the first glider to fly by circling in the lift of a thermal and soar.

1923 - de Havilland D.H.-4Bs On June 27, 1923 two de Havilland D.H.-4Bs performed the first air-to-air refueling over San Diego, California.

1924 - Douglas World Cruise On September 28, 1924 two Douglas World Cruises, the City of Chicago and the New Orleans completed the world's first circumnavigation by aircraft.

1925 - Curtis RC3 In 1925 the Curtis RC3 models one and two won both the Schneider Cup and Pulitzer Trophy on two continents with speeds of 232.57 and 248.98 mph.

1926 - Goddard Rocket On March 16, 1926 Robert Goddard successfully launched the first liquid fueled rocket at Auburn, Massachusetts.

1927 - Ryan NYP Monoplane On May 21, 1927 Charles Lindbergh became the first pilot to successfully fly non-stop from New York to Paris in the Ryan NYP monoplane. Powered by a Wright radial engine, the flight took 33 hours and 30 minutes.

1929 - OPEL In 1929 the worlds first rocket powered aircraft took flight in Germany. The OPEL was designed by Friedrich Stamer in order to self-launch and return to land by gliding. This concept of flight has demonstrated numerous applications over the years.

1930 - Taylor Cub In 1930 the Taylor Cub was introduced as an affordable tandem aircraft easily flown by the average man or woman.

1931 - Lippish Delta The world's first delta winged aircraft took flight in Germany in 1931. Designed and built by Alexander Lippish the aircraft featured flaps, elevons, and two outboard rudders.

1931 - Piccard Helium Balloon Auguste Piccard set an absolute altitude record of 51,775 feet in a balloon of his own design in 1931 at Augsburg, Germany.

1931 - Laird Super Solution Built in Chicago in 1931 by the Laird Aircraft Company the Super Solution piloted by Jimmy Doolittle won the Bendix Trophy in the National Air Races.

1932 - Gee-Bee Super Sportster R-1 The Grandville Brother's Gee-Bee Super Sportster R-1 became the ride of choice for Jimmy Doolittle as he becomes victorious in the Thompson Trophy Air Race of 1932.

1933 - Boeing 247 The 1933 Boeing 247 began service as the world's first modern airliner. Built as a stressed skin fully monocoque twin-engine cantilevered low wing monoplane the 247 established the look of all airliners to come.

1934 - Martin 130 China Clipper The Martin 130 China Clipper went into service for Pan American Airlines in 1934. Passengers flew in the same luxury afforded by the world's finest ships.

1935 - Howard DGA -6 The Howard Aircraft Company of Chicago, Illinois model DGA -6 known as Mr. Mulligan was flown by Chicagoans Harold Neumann and Ben Howard to victory in both the 1935 Thompson and Bendix Trophy Air Races.

1936 - Dr. Zarkoff's Spaceship The first rocket powered craft capable of interplanetary travel as seen by millions of moviegoers in 1936 Flash Gordon piloted Dr. Zarkoff's spaceship each Saturday afternoon at theaters across America inspiring youngsters everywhere.

1936 - Beech Staggerwing In 1936 Walter Beech, introduced the Staggerwing to America executives as the first true personal executive transport aircraft of general aviation. It was fast, comfortable, and exquisite.

1937 - De Havilland D.H.91 Destined to never to fully reach its potential as a passenger liner, a victim of WWII, the De Havilland D.H.91's sleek lines and four engines place it among the finest aircraft ever made.

1938 - Boeing 314, The Boeing 314 flying boat known as the Yankee Clipper began international passenger service with Pan American Airlines in 1938, providing unsurpassed comfort and service in the sky.

1938 - Junkers Ju 87B Stuka The 1938 Junkers Ju 87B Stuka dive-bomber traces its heritage back to the Junkers ground attack aircraft of WWI. This formidable aircraft delivered the crushing blows of blitzkrieg during the early days of WWII.

1939 - Hawker Hurricane Designed in 1934 by Sidney Camm the Hawker Hurricane valiantly defended Winston Churchill's Island Fortress during the Battle of Britain in 1940.

1940 - Russian Ilyushin II-2 The 35,000 Russian Ilyushin II-2 Shturmovik built and flown during the Great Patriotic War successfully defended the Motherland from the marauding tanks and ground troops of an Eastern Front blitzkrieg that proved impossible against these aircraft.

1941 - Boeing B-17 The Boeing B-17 four-engine heavy bomber flew in every theatre during WWII. Over the generations it has become the legendary icon of long range daylight strategic bombing. Capable of enduring extreme battle damage, the crews knew if there were any way to get back to base the B-17s would do their job and get them home safely.

1942 - Sikorsky R-4 Helicopter January 14, 1942 the first flights of the Sikorsky R-4 helicopter took place. The R-4 was the first operational single rotor practical helicopter.

1943 - North American P-51 Designed on a napkin to bolster the defenses of the English steeped in the battle of Britain the North American P-51 proved to be not only a great defensive aircraft but singularly the aircraft of choice to escort American bombing crews deep into Europe. The P-51 known as the Cadillac of the skies is recognized as the American fighter.

1944 - Lockheed Constellation First placed in service with the military as a transport aircraft in 1944, the Lockheed Constellation flew for decades after WWII with the armed forces and airlines around the world.

1944 - Messerschmitt 262 Built in Germany and put into service in 1944 the Messerschmitt 262 was the world's first operational jet powered fighter. Employed too late to make a difference in the outcome of the war, the 262 became the benchmark for fighter performance.

1945 - Douglas C-47 (a.k.a. DC-3) The Douglas C-47 first flew as the civilian airliner known as the DC-3. However as a military transport the C-47 carried the bulk of time sensitive supplies and personnel for the Allies during WWII. Eisenhower once said he wished he could pin a medal on the aircraft for the war could not have been won without it.

1946 - Northrop B-35 Flying Wing A design far ahead of its time, the Northrop B-35 Flying Wing had a top speed of 500 mph a range of 1000 miles.

1946 - Cessna 140 Cessna Aircraft established its line of high wing personal aircraft in 1946 with the introduction of the Cessna 140. The Cessna 140 would be parent to a series of aircraft including the 120, 170, 150, 172, 152, 175, 177, 180, 182, 185, 201, 206, 207, and 210.

1947 - Bell X-1 Rocket Plane, Glamorous Glennis On October 14, 1947 the Bell X-1 rocket plane piloted by Chuck Yeager broke the speed of sound in level flight. Through the data gained by research conducted with this aircraft and technology developed from its systems U.S. air superiority was maintained for decades.

1948 - V-2 Rocket Powered Guided Missile In the hands of American scientists, Germany's Vengeance Weapon Two, the V-2 rocket powered guided ballistic missile continues to provide a valuable research and development platform for space exploration and defense in the United States.

1949 - Grumman Panther Grumman Panther began service in 1949 as the U.S. Navy's first carrier based jet fighter and went on to distinguished service in Korea.

1950 - MiG 15 The Russian built MiG 15 appeared as the first operational jet over Korea flown by North Korean pilots and Russian military advisors beginning in 1950.

1951 - F-86 Super Saber North American F-86 Super Saber sought air superiority in the Korean Conflict flying into service with the USAF on December 18, 1950.

1952 - Boeing B-52 Stratofortress On April 15, 1952 the Boeing Aircraft Company flew the first B-52 Stratofortress. The Buff went on to a career lasting over fifty years with the USAF.

1953 - Poberezny Homebuilt In 1953 Paul Poberezny, a Wisconsin Air National Guard pilot built his first personal homebuilt aircraft for recreational flying and established the Experimental Aircraft Association with some local friends and aviation enthusiasts.

1954 - Lockheed XF-104 Starfighter The XF-104 takes its first flight on February 7, 1954 and goes on to establish a line of Lockheed Starfighters, which owned the sky as the fastest and highest flying fighters for over a decade.

1954 - de Havilland D.H.-106 Comet On May 2, 1954 the Havilland D.H.-106 Comet took flight as the first operational jet airliner flying the BOAC route between London and Johannesburg

1954 - Scandinavian Air Lines Douglas DC-6B In 1954 the 450-year-old dream of a Northwest Passage between Europe and Asia was realized with the first scheduled flight by a Scandinavian Air Service Douglas Aircraft DC-6B flying a trans-polar route between continents.

1955 - Bell UH-1 Helicopter The Bell UH-1 helicopter made its first flight in 1955. Over the next 47 years the Huey proved to be not only a magnificent weapons platform transporting the U.S. Air Cavalry but also served as an historic lifesaver, evacuating injured soldiers and civilians in both war and peace.

1955 - Boeing 707 On October 13, 1955 Pan American Airlines ordered its first jet planes for American passengers, establishing the jet age in America.

1956 - General Dynamics B-58 Hustler On November 11, 1956 the General Dynamics B-58 Hustler made its first flight and continued on to become the world's first supersonic long range strategic bomber.

1956 - Cessna 310 Songbird Every Saturday morning youngsters across America eagerly watched the adventures of Sky King as he flew his Cessna 310 Songbird through the air to defend the weak and innocent. Songbird and Sky King were inspirational to a generation of aviation enthusiasts.

1957 - Simons' Helium Balloon On August 19, 1957 D.G. Simons piloted a balloon to an altitude of 101,516 feet

1957 - Sputnik On October 4, 1957 Russia won the race to space, by placing a Sputnik satellite in orbit around the earth. The Sputnik was delivered to space atop an ICBM missile.

1959 - Lunik II On September 12, 1959 Russia launched its spacecraft Lunik II. It impacted the lunar surface on September 13th.

1959 - X-15 Rocket Plane On September 17, 1959 the X-15 rocket plane made its first flight. The X-15 excelled in its ten-year research career seeking speed and altitude in search of space. The X-15 series of aircraft went on to an altitude of 67 milers.

March 6, 1960 - Tiros I On April 1, 1960 the first weather satellite was launched by the United States. The Tiros I relayed data by radio to the ground.

1960 - Lockheed U-2 On May 1, 1960 a Lockheed U-2 high altitude reconnaissance, plane piloted by Colonel Francis Gary Powers was shot down over Russia.

1960 - VTOL Hawker P. 1127 The first flights of the experimental VTOL Hawker P. 1127 took place on November 19, 1960. Further development of the 1127 lead to its recognition as the Hawker Harrier, also developed and built in cooperation with McDonnell Aircraft.

1961 - Vostok I Space Capsule On April 12, 1961 the Russians scored first again by sending a man into orbit around the earth. Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin rode atop an ICBM in a Vostok I capsule.

1962 - Puffin On May 2, 1962 the world's first human powered airplane, the Puffin flew for a distance of over one half mile in England.

1962 - Telstar I July 10, 1962 the world's first communications satellite orbited the Earth.

1962 - Mariner II On December 14, 1962 the U.S. Spacecraft Mariner II passed 21,000 miles from the planet Venus and radioed data about Venus' atmosphere to Earth.

1963 - Boeing B727 On the 9th of February 1963 Boeing Aircraft flew its first 727 airliner.

1963 - Learjet The First Learjet, a seven passenger executive jet, flew for the first time on October 7, 1963.

1964 - Saturn Five Launch Vehicle The Saturn Five Launch vehicle was launched for the first time on May 28, 1964.

1964 - Sisu-1A H. Parker flew his Sisu-1A sailplane 1000 kilometers on June 6, 1964.

1964 - Syncom III October 10, 1964 the Syncom III orbiting communications satellite relayed live television images and sound from the 1964 Olympics from Tokyo to the world.

1964 - General Dynamics F-111 The General Dynamics F-111 made its first flight on December 21, 1964. The F-111 was the world's first variable geometry aircraft.

1964 - SR-71 Blackbird The very next day Lockheed's SR-71 Blackbird made its maiden voyage. To this day the Blackbird is recognized as the world's fastest and highest flying aircraft.

1965 - Gemini Spacecraft The Gemini Series of spacecraft provided research and development in the areas of technological application, crew management, extra-vehicular space operations, and human factors, leading the way for man to achieve flight to the moon.

1966 - Surveyor I The American spacecraft Surveyor I is launched to the moon on May 30, 1966. After its nearly quarter-million mile journey the craft makes a soft landing on the surface of the moon and transmits television images back to Earth.

1966 - Starship Enterprise An international crew Boldly go where no man has traveled before on their weekly explorations aboard the Starship Enterprise weeknights on NBC-TV in 1966.

1967 - Cosmos Space Capsules Two Russian Cosmos Spacecraft performed the first rendezvous and docking in space on October 30, 1967.

1968 - Apollo 8 Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders leave the Earth to orbit the Moon aboard their Apollo 8 capsule. They orbited the moon ten times on their 6-day mission December 21-27 1968.

1969 - Boeing 747 The Boeing 747 took flight for the first time on February 9, 1969. Capable of carrying hundreds of passengers at a time over intercontinental distances the 747 established the concept of the jumbo jet.

1969 - Grumman Aerospace Lunar Excursion Module July 16, 1969 Neil Armstrong landed the Grumman Aerospace Lunar Excursion Module on the surface of the moon fulfilling a dream of mankind.

1970 - Concord The first commercially viable supersonic airliner Concord, built jointly by the British and the French takes flight in 1970

1972 - Easy Riser The Easy Riser first flies as a foot launched hang glider then evolves with the adaptation of a light weight 2 cycle gasoline engine into the first modern ultra-light aircraft. For the first time man can now fly like the birds.

1973 - Martin X-24 The Martin X-24 lifting body flies for the first time on August 1, 1973 conducting research leading to reusable spacecraft.

1975 - Rutan Vari-Eze The 1975 Rutan Vari-Eze demonstrated both non-traditional design and construction methods in a light weight, swift, composite, canard with a pusher prop.

1977 - Voyager space probes NASA launches the Voyager space probes. Exploring the sun's planetary system for nearly twenty-five years Voyager I and II have now become the first artifacts to leave the solar system and still transmit data to Earth.

1977 - Icarus On August 23, 1977 cyclist Bryan Allen powered and piloted the first man-powered aircraft capable of completing a figure eight around a one mile closed course. This flight led to others crossing the English Channel and between Aegean Sea islands.

1981 - Columbia STS On April 12, 1981 the Space Transportation System Columbia lifted off from its pad at the Kennedy Space Center. The era of the Space Shuttle had truly begun.

1986 - Scaled Composites Voyager Over a period of nine days from December 14-23, 1986 Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager piloted the Scaled Composites Voyager on the first non-stop unrefueled circumnavigation of the earth in an airplane.

1990 - Hubble Space Telescope Placed in Earth Orbit by a space shuttle in April 1990, the Hubble Space telescope provides terrestrial bound astronomers and all mankind with a view of the infinite radically changing our understanding of the universe with distant images of stars and galaxies billions of years old.

1995 - Boeing 777 The Boeing 777, completely developed using modern digital information and design systems is the most modern airliner in the skies today. The wide body aircraft features fuel-efficient quite engines, a fully glass cockpit, and fly by wire systems.

1996 - International Space Station The International Space Station built by partners from around the world and Boeing Aerospace now orbits the Earth every ninety minutes at an altitude of 250 miles, providing a platform for scientific research and development in space.

1997 - Cirrus SR-22 The 1997 Cirrus SR-22, designed to be the next generation of general aviation personal aircraft features composite materials construction, an electronic cockpit with 21st century instrumentation, and ballistic recovery system for passenger safety.