

To Whom It May Concern:

I should like to voice my opinion in favor of Senator Kevin Kelly's Proposed S.B. No. 739 designating Gustave Whitehead's Airplane # 21 as the State Pioneering Aircraft, to further honor Gustave Whitehead, the "Father of Manned, Power-Controlled Flight". Whitehead made numerous short hops and flights in Bridgeport, Fairfield, and Stratford Connecticut in 1901-1902. These flights were observed by at least a dozen local residents, each of whom signed sworn affidavits. On August 14th, 1901, a newspaper reporter observed Whitehead make a half mile flight, 40 feet in the air, in a field in Fairfield. He documented the flights on August 18th in the Bridgeport Herald, a Sunday newspaper.

I have been studying the Whitehead story for over 30 years. I was inspired to build a full-size flying replica of Whitehead's # 21 airplane after hearing a lecture by Major William O'Dwyer at the Fairfield Historical Society. O'Dwyer published a book entitled, "History by Contract" which exposed a secret contract between the Wright Brothers and the Smithsonian Institution, forbidding the Smithsonian from ever saying that anyone ever flew before the Wrights, or face the loss of the Wright's 1903 airplane. He supplied me with photos and blueprints of Whitehead's plane and I assembled a crew of local men who had heard the stories of Whitehead's flying feats. These men were in their 70's and 80's and had clear memories of stories told to them by their parents and grandparents about Whitehead flights at various locations in Bridgeport, Stratford, and Fairfield. We succeeded in building an extremely accurate reproduction of #21 and actually flying it over 330 feet about 6 feet off the ground at Sikorsky Memorial Airport in Stratford, CT. on December 29th, 1986. We felt that this was very good proof that Whitehead's plane was certainly airworthy. I took this replica to Oshkosh, Wisconsin for the annual Experimental Aircraft Association Fly-In. There I met a group of men from Whitehead's home town in Leuteshausen, Germany. They arranged for me to send my replica to Germany so that they could also build a replica. They also succeeded in flying their replica for over a half mile in 1997.

I was fortunate enough to also meet Ms. Stella Randolph, who wrote a book, "The Lost Flights of Gustave Whitehead" in 1937. She spent more than 40 years collecting information about Whitehead. She interviewed his family, friends, and workers who helped build # 21 airplane. I spent many hours with her discussing her findings, which she felt proved the Whitehead stories.

More recently, John Brown, a pilot, airplane instructor and builder, and aviation historian, has done a great deal of research on the internet as well as work at the Smithsonian Institution. He has uncovered hundreds of newspaper articles from around the world which have reported Whitehead flights in 1901-02. His extensive work has led to "Jane's All the Worlds Aircraft", considered to be the "bible of Aviation", to support the claim the Whitehead was "First in Flight", two years before the Wright Brothers.

In summary, I feel that the Whitehead Airplane # 21 deserves the honor of being called, The State Pioneering Aircraft of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Andy Kosch