

## Chapter Seven: The Wright Brothers and Weather Forecast



The Weather Bureau Office in Kitty Hawk Photo: National Park Service

A second Weather Office was set up at the Kitty Hawk Life Saving Station from January 2, 1875 to 1904. It was established for the purpose of facilitating the repair of the telegraph line connecting Cape Hatteras and Cape Henry.

At the time the Wrights were looking for a site for their experiments, Kitty Hawk consisted of a few houses, a post office, a U.S. Lifesaving station to aid shipwreck victims, and a U.S. Weather Bureau station. According to Weather Bureau records obtained by the Wrights, Kitty Hawk was the sixth-windiest station in the country in 1903. After receiving assurance from local residents that the surrounding area offered wide open flat beaches, tall sand dunes, and privacy, the brothers decided that this would be the best place to test their glider.

When the Wright Brothers received weather data from the US Weather Bureau and found Kitty Hawk had the winds they were looking for, they wrote to the weather office at Kitty Hawk. Joseph J. Doshier at the Kitty Hawk Weather Office answered the Wright Brother's letter and had a good relationship with them for three years. Orville walked to the Kitty Hawk Weather Office late in the afternoon of December 17, 1903 and sent a telegraph to his father detailing the successes of the day.<sup>18</sup> U.S. Weather Bureau Observer, Doshier maintained a good relationship

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<sup>18</sup> Stick David, *Outer Banks of North Carolina*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1958

with the Wright brothers for three years during their tests. In fact, the telegraph which alerted the world to the historic first flight came from the Weather Bureau. Orville walked to the Kitty Hawk Weather Office late in the afternoon of December 17, 1903 and sent a telegraph to his father detailing the successes of the day.

Letter from the Weather Bureau Office in Kitty Hawk, that Orville Wright wired his father to announce the successful flights of Dec. 17, 1903.<sup>19</sup>

Mr Wilbur Wright  
Dayton Ohio

Dear Sir,

In reply to yours of the 3rd, I will say the beach here is about one mile wide clear of trees or high hills, and islands for nearly sixty miles south. Conditions: the wind blows mostly from the North and Northeast September and October which is nearly down this piece of land. Giving you many miles of a steady wind with a free sweep. I am sorry to say that you could not rent a house here. So you will have to bring tents. You could obtain frame.

The only way to reach Kitty Hawk is from Manteo Roanoke Island N.C. in a small sailboat. From your letter I believe you would find it here like you wish. Will be pleased at any time to give you any information. Yours very respectfully

JJ. Doshier

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<sup>19</sup> Letter, Library of Congress