



Press Release

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AIAA and AHS Recognize Location of VS-300 Development as a Historic Aerospace Site

ALEXANDRIA, VA – On Friday September 28, 2013, the site of the first successful helicopter in America was recognized as a Historic Aerospace Site. The recognition by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) and supported by AHS International was at the Igor I. Sikorsky Memorial Airport in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Between 1938 and 1943, Igor I. Sikorsky Memorial Airport (then known as the Bridgeport Municipal Airport) and the adjacent Vought-Sikorsky aircraft plant were the site of the development of the first practical helicopters flown in the United States. There, Igor Sikorsky and his team pioneered the VS-300 helicopter, which made its first flight on September 14, 1939. It was developed into the XR-4, which was also completed, flown and tested there; the first flight was on January 14, 1942. The XR-4 was the first helicopter accepted by the U.S. military and the first helicopter to be mass-produced anywhere. Vought also used the airfield during World War II for aircraft development, including the first flight of the Vought XF4U (Corsair).

These two adjacent sites witnessed the design, construction, testing and public demonstration of both helicopters, including the first world helicopter performance record set in the United States. The development of these two aircraft sparked a revolution in aeronautical design, as they established the conventional configuration of helicopters with a single main rotor and single auxiliary anti-torque tail rotor. They demonstrated that helicopters were not only practical, but were also viable civil and military aircraft. This confirmed the suitability of helicopters for volume production, and placed the helicopter in the public consciousness to the degree that by 1943, the United States was experiencing a “helicopter craze,” with literally hundreds of entrepreneurs seeking to imitate Sikorsky.

The follow-on XR-5 and XR-6 helicopters were also designed here, although there were built and flown after the company moved to its current Bridgeport plant location.

It should also be noted that just a few weeks after Sikorsky Aircraft received the first production contract for the first American helicopter, the XR-4, the American Helicopter Society was also formed,

with the founding meeting held at the Stratford High School in February 1943. AHS was born with the American helicopter industry and remains a central part of the global helicopter technical community today.

With 35,000 members, AIAA is the world's largest professional society devoted to the progress of engineering and science in aviation, space, and defense. AIAA established the Historic Aerospace Sites Program in 2000 to promote the preservation and dissemination of information about significant accomplishments made by the aerospace profession. AHS International partnered with AIAA for this award.

The American Helicopter Society (AHS) International is the world's premier vertical flight technical society. Since its inception in 1943, AHS has been a major force in the advancement of vertical flight. The Society is the global resource for information on vertical flight technology. It provides global leadership for scientific, technical, educational and legislative initiatives that advance the state-of-the-art of vertical flight.

A pdf version of this press release, photos and more information are also [available](#).

AHS International – *The Vertical Flight Technical Society*

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