VARIABLE DENSITY TUNNEL, NASA Langley Research Center. Called the VDT, this facility is considered the most significant of NASA's ground-based historic properties. Spurred by European supremacy in aircraft design, a 1915 congressional bill established the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) and the laboratory in Hampton (1917). The United States began to surpass European technology with the VDT in 1921. It was a closed flow wind tunnel inside a large pressure tank of riveted and welded 3-inch thick steel plates. This permitted scaled model tests at up to twenty times atmospheric pressure, which corresponded to full-scale aircraft conditions. The data obtained, still useable, led to the development of American and commercial aircraft that have dominated the world’s airways ever since. Obsolete and gutted by fire, the exterior vessel has been relocated, preserved, and interpreted in a permanent exhibit at the NASA Center in Hampton.