



ELIZABETH "ELSIE" GREGORY MACGILL

1905-1980, Engineer

First woman aircraft designer in the world

During World War II, Elizabeth "Elsie" Gregory MacGill became a living example of the many social and economic changes taking place in Canada. As the first woman aircraft designer in the world, she was best known for producing the Hawker Hurricane. As a Chief Engineer for the Canadian Car and Foundry Company, Elsie designed a series of adaptations to prepare the Hurricane to fly in cold weather.

Elsie supervised up to 4,500 workers in the production of 2,000 Hawker Hurricane fighter planes. She also designed the Maple Leaf trainer, which may still be the only plane to be completely designed by a woman. Her role in this successful project brought her several engineering awards. In March 1953, the American Society of Women Engineers made her an honorary member with a medal and named her "Woman Engineer of the Year." She was later awarded the Centennial Medal by the Canadian government in 1967. The Ninety-Nines, an international organization of women pilots, awarded her the Amelia Earhart Medal in 1975, and in 1979, the Ontario Association of Professional Engineers presented her with its gold medal.

Elsie was born in Vancouver and died in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

OCTOBER 2011

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

WOMEN IN CANADIAN MILITARY FORCES:
A PROUD LEGACY



Status of Women
Canada

Condition féminine
Canada

