The Link

Attempts to produce a pilot training device date back to World War I, but no system proved workable until Edwin A. Link came up with his unique, patented machine in the early 1930s.

The Link Trainer was mounted on a pedestal and would simulate the pitch, roll, dive, and climb motions of actual aircraft. The student pilot manipulated the controls in the "cockpit," while an instructor, seated at a nearby desk, watched as an automatic recorder traced the trainee's "course" on a map. Slipstream simulators and a rough air generator added realism. Most of Link's first sales went to amusement parks, but, after Army Air Corps pilots suffered a series of deadly accidents, the Air Corps bought six Link Trainers to help teach pilots instrumented flight.

Eventually, the US bought thousands of the "pilot makers" as it geared up for World War II.