



Sabretache

THE OFFICIAL
JOURNAL OF
THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

w w w . c m h s . c a

On Nov.21st,1783 two human passengers were lifted high above Paris in a wicker basket dangling beneath a huge balloon filled with hot smoke. Once airborne they set about feeding bundles of straw into a onboard fire pit and applying wet sponges to the flaming embers landing on the salon's surface. Two brothers Joseph and Jacques Montgolfiers were obsessed with the dream of human flight. The 25 minute flight covered a distance of nine kilometers and among those witnessing the event was Benjamin Franklin . He referred to the flight as “ a discovery of great importance....Convincing the sovereigns of the folly of wars may perhaps be one effect of it.” He was very wrong about that.

On April 2 , 1794 France established the world's first air force, the **Compagnie d' Aerostiers**. The Committee of Public Safety ordered tests on the balloon technology. **Nicolas-Jacques Conté** led the research, refining balloon shapes and materials, and also testing and improving a hydrogen production process. This culminated in a series of ascensions, viewed by leading figures on the Committee, who passed an Act creating the Aerostatic Corps . The corps consisted of a captain and a lieutenant, a sergeant-major and sergeant, two corporals and twenty privates. All these men were required to have skills relevant to ballooning, such as carpentry. And chemistry. The Corp was envisioned to have three roles: reconnaissance, signalling and the distribution of propaganda.

The new corps brought one balloon (**the “L'Entreprenant”**) to join French forces. The first military use of the balloon was on 2 June, when it was used for reconnaissance during an enemy bombardment by the Austrians. On 22 June, the corps received orders to move the balloon to the plains of Fleurus, in front of the Austrian troops. This was achieved by twenty soldiers who dragged the inflated balloon across thirty miles of ground.

On the morning of June 26th, the French commander Gen. Marlot, ascended high above the battlefield of Fleures. He remained airborne for the duration of the battle, carefully observing the deployment of Austrian Forces and redeploying his troops to counter their movement with orders which were dropped to the ground attached to sandbags. While the defeated Austrians accused the French of violating the rules of war, the French acknowledged the important role the balloon played in the victory. They compared an army without a balloon ato a “duelist fighting blind-folded.”

The “Compagnie” was quickly expanded but did not always have success. In September 1796, they were at the **Battle of Würzburg** when the French Army was defeated, and the entire company was taken captive with its **balloon L'Intrépide**, which is now on display at a museum in Vienna.

In 1798, the company joined the Napoleonic Campaign in Egypt. On arrival, they decided to initially leave the ballooning equipment on their ship. This was destroyed in the **Battle of the Nile** by the British, and the company was assigned to other duties. Upon Napoleon's return to Paris in 1799, he ordered it disbanded. Observation balloons would not be deployed over another battlefield until the American Civil War.



A panel showing troops hauling the balloon to the “Battle of Fleurus”



CMHS Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on

**Tuesday,
March 20th.
2018**

7:00 pm

At the
Petty Officers' Mess
HCMS Tecumseh

Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on
Tuesday, March 20th., 2018
19:00 (7:00 pm)

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.

Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:

Introduction of guests, Minutes of last meeting Correspondence, Membership report Treasurer's report, Old business / New business Break, Show & Tell
The President, **Allan Ross** would like to invite everyone to remain after the meeting for an informal time of fellowship.

In June of 1861 **Professor Thaddeus Lowe** was appointed Chief Aeronaut of the newly formed Union Army Balloon Corps. Intellectually curious and driven from a young age, Lowe had almost no formal education but demonstrated an appetite for learning which hinted at his future career as an inventor. At the age of 18 he attended a lecture on the subject of lighter-than-air gases and was very impressed. Over the course of the next decade, Lowe devoted himself to balloon aviation, and became a prominent builder of balloons and showman.

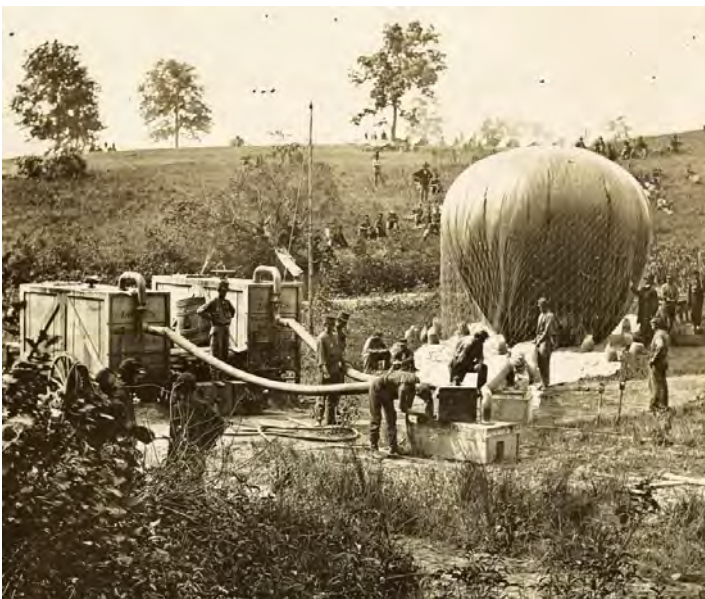
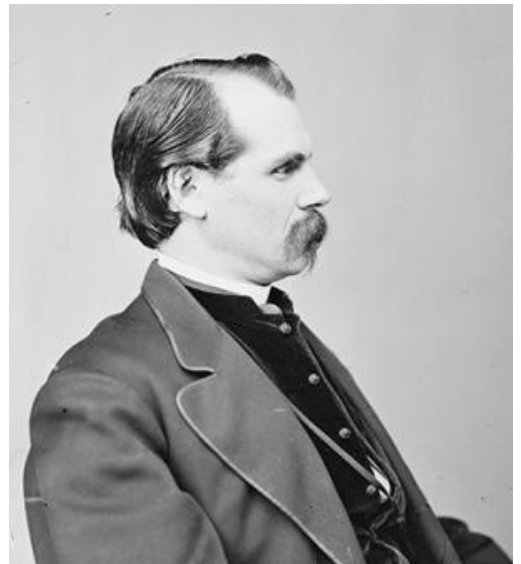
In April, 1861, Lowe intended to make a test run from Cincinnati, Ohio to Washington, D.C. He took off on April 19, just a week after the fall of **Fort Sumter**, but instead of heading due east towards Washington Lowe's balloon was blown way off course, eventually landing in Unionville, South Carolina. There, he was arrested on suspicion of being a Northern spy. When he finally convinced the Confederate authorities of his innocence he returned to Cincinnati, only to be immediately summoned to Washington. The government was in fact interested in his experimental balloons as a means of gathering intelligence. In June of 1861, Lowe demonstrated for **President Lincoln** how useful his balloons could be when combined with new electric telegraph technology. On the 11th of that month, from a height of 500 feet above the National Mall in Washington D.C., Lowe transmitted to the President: "This point of observation commands an extent of country nearly 50 miles in diameter. The city with its girdle of encampments, presents a superb scene. I have pleasure in sending you this first dispatch ever telegraphed from an aerial station, and in acknowledging indebtedness for your encouragement for the opportunity of demonstrating the availability of the science of aeronautics in the military service of the country."

Little more than a month later, Lowe and his balloon were in action during the **First Battle of Bull Run**, after which Lincoln approved the formation of the Union Army Balloon Corps, with Lowe as Chief Aeronaut (at a colonel's salary). Lowe's principal contribution to the militarization of balloon technology, and its use in the field, was the portable hydrogen gas generator, which

allowed the balloons to accompany the army wherever they were needed. Made of a rugged material that could withstand the wear and tear of active campaigning, Lowe's balloons could also be inflated in a very short amount of time. They were a sensation in Washington, and many prominent military and political figures accompanied him on his ascensions. He eventually built a total of seven balloons and twelve generators for the war effort.

The Union Army Balloon Corps served with distinction throughout McClellan's Peninsula Campaign of 1862, providing valuable intelligence, directing artillery fire and even conducting experiments with air-to-ground telegraph communications. On Nov. 7, 1862 McClellan was replaced by Gen. Burnside who preferred to rely on the traditional "eyes on the ground" intelligence provided by the cavalry.

Burnside's failure to recognize of potential of military observation balloons was not shared by his European counterparts. France re-established military aeronautical corps in 1877 and was quickly followed by Germany in 1884. Great Britain acquired its first balloon in 1879. Ironically it was originally produced for the Union Army Balloon Corps by none other than Professor Thaddeus Lowe.



Minutes of last meeting / Calgary Military Historical Society

Meeting held on February 20, 2018 at the Petty Officer's Mess, HMCS Tecumseh

1. Meeting called to order at 7:27 PM. 18 members in attendance.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting.

Discussed no correction. Barry E. moves that the Previous Meeting Minutes be accepted. Seconded by Bob M. Approved.

3. Newsletter. No issues or concerns. Member Bob M. moves that the Previous Meeting Minutes be accepted. Seconded by Susan E. Approved.

4. Treasures Report. Report by Floyd S. Lists of monies collected from book auctions, donations etc. Listing of expenditures. Floyd reports, with last month expenses, a decrease over January balance. Member Mike C. moves that the Treasures report be accepted as reported. Seconded by Brian H. Approved.

5. Membership Report.

Report by Floyd S. Total 44 members (2 Life, 2 Hon, 40 Regular). Member Mike C. moves that the Membership report be accepted as reported. Seconded by Susan E. Approved.

6. Correspondence: - None

7. Announcements:

- Black History Month event at Military Museums. "Before Glory" lecture and film screening with Anthony Sherwood, Thursday, February 15, 2018
- Lord Strathcona Moreuil Wood anniversary display. Will include Lt. Gordon Flowerdew's VC on loan from Framlingham College in England. Indra Ross involved with display.

8. Old Business. None

9. New Business:

- AACCA Easter Gun Show, BMO Center, March 30/31, 2018. CMHS has a promotional table.
- 2nd Annual Calgary Militaria Show, Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Center, June 16, 2018. Now booking tables. Contact Martin U.

BREAK

10. Ticket book auction & Book Raffle:

- Book raffle donation by Martin U. "Women at War in World War II" by Brenda Ralph-Lewis

11. Show and Tell:

- Floyd S. - WWI Iron Cross w ribbon in original paper envelope.
- Alan R. - Cap & Collar badges Manitoba 14 Can Res. Batt., Tibet medal bronze class to Coolie Jaihaj Simboo, Supply & Transport Corp.
- Martin U. - US 10 Cavalry Machine Troop tunic, Mexican Border War & Punitive Expeditions 1910-1919.
- Al D. - US 105 Howitzer Casing, WWII mother & widow memorial crosses.
- Barry E. - WWI leather map case marked Riley & McCormack Calgary.
- Alan Mac. - Discusses trip to England, highlight IWM Duxford & the 2018 Duxford Air Show.
- Mike C. - Medal group to Harry W. C. Hughes, Royal Naval service 1894-1945, retiring a Vice Admiral, group includes a QSA Navy with 3 bars and a DSO 1915 on HMS Dreadnaught.
- Bob M. - Selection of medals including 2 French Legion of Honor, Russo/Japan War medal, Laos Order of the White Elephant.
- Darryl K. - Belgian medal unknown, Randall Model 1, 1960's Knife
- Brian H. - Book - "United National Medals and Missions" by Lawrence H. Borts and rare not issued Organization of American States (OAS) medal.
- Gary M. - Discusses last issue article, Fred A Bagley.; 2 books - "The Great Adventure : How the Mounties Conquered the West" by David Cruise & Alison Griffiths and "March of the Mounties" by Sir Cecil E. Denny.

12. Adjournment:

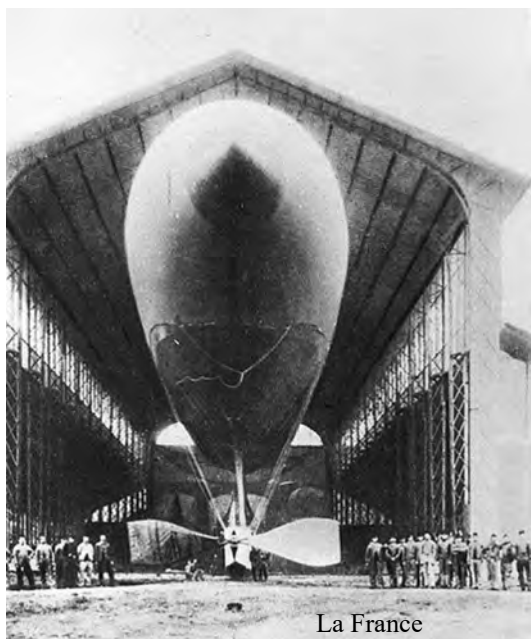
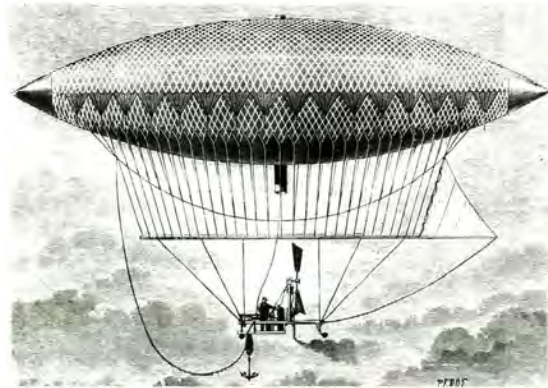
David G. calls for motion to adjourn. Member Susan E. moves to adjourn. Seconded by Floyd S. Approved.

Meeting Adjourned. 20:25

Military interest in aeronautics was not, however limited to the observation balloon. In the mid-19th century, a new type of balloon with the potential capability of navigation through the sky under its own power was introduced. The dirigible balloon, unlike observation balloons with either drifted with the wind or were held in place by cables, were equipped with rudders for steering and onboard engine to power the craft.

Jules Henri Giffard, a French engineer and inventor, built the first full-size airship — a cigar-shaped, non-rigid bag that was 143 feet (44 meters) long and had a capacity of 113,000 cubic feet (3,200 cubic meters). He also built a small 3-horsepower (2.2-kilowatt) steam engine to power a three-bladed propeller. The engine weighed 250 pounds (113 kilograms) and needed a 100-pound (45.4 kilograms) boiler to fire it.

The first flight of Giffard's steam-powered airship took place Sept. 24, 1852 — 51 years before the **Wright Brothers' first flight**. Traveling at about 6 miles per hour (10 kilometers/hour), Giffard traveled almost 17 miles (27 kilometers) from the Paris racecourse to Elancourt,. Strong headwinds forced the return flight to be cancelled.



La France

The first airship to return to its starting point was a vast improvement over earlier models. **Charles Renard** and **Arthur C. Krebs**, inventors and military officers in the French Army Corps of Engineers, built an elongated balloon, *La France*. It was 165 feet (50.3 meters) long, and it had a capacity of 66,000 cubic feet (1,869 cubic meters). A battery-powered electric motor propelled *La France*. The motor drove a four-bladed wooden tractor propeller that was 23 feet (7 meters) in diameter. The airship also had a rudder and elevator, a sliding weight to compensate for any shift in the center of gravity, and a heavy guide rope to assist in landing. The first flight of *La France* took place on Aug. 9, 1884. Renard and Krebs landed successfully at the parade ground where they had begun—a flight of 5 miles (8 kilometers) and 23 minutes in which they had been in control throughout. During 1884 and 1885, *La France* made seven flights. Although the batteries limited its flying range, the airship demonstrated that controlled flight was possible if it had a sufficiently powerful lightweight motor.

On July 2, 1900 Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin introduced a revolutionary new dirigible design. The 420 ft. craft utilised a rigid internal aluminum support



structure enclosing 17 separate hydrogen gas cells. Although his first design, designated LZ-1, was declared "unsuitable for neither military or civilian purposes" by a government commission, von Zeppelin persevered, finally achieving success with his third design, designated LZ-3 in 1907. The craft was purchased by the German military in 1908 and used for training.

World War 1 gave the world its first opportunity observe and evaluate the military effectiveness of the airship. Observation balloons were deployed in great numbers by both sides and again proved their ability to direct artillery fire with accuracy. The allies quickly realized that their small fleets of semi-rigid dirigibles were too slow and vulnerable to be deployed as offensive weapons. They were re-assigned to naval operations where they excelled in antisubmarine warfare.

Although German Zeppelins did achieve some success early in the war, advancement in anti-aircraft weapons and the introduction of incendiary ammunition fired from the machine guns of high flying airplanes soon drove them from the sky. By late 1916, surviving zeppelins were withdrawn from offensive duties and were replaced by large, multi-engine aircraft designated as bombers and, in the end, the battlefield was

lifted into the sky on the wings of the airplane.

The destruction of a zeppelin. Although aircraft were unarmed at the start of the war, a French pilot successfully destroyed a zeppelin by flying above it and dropping grenades on it..

