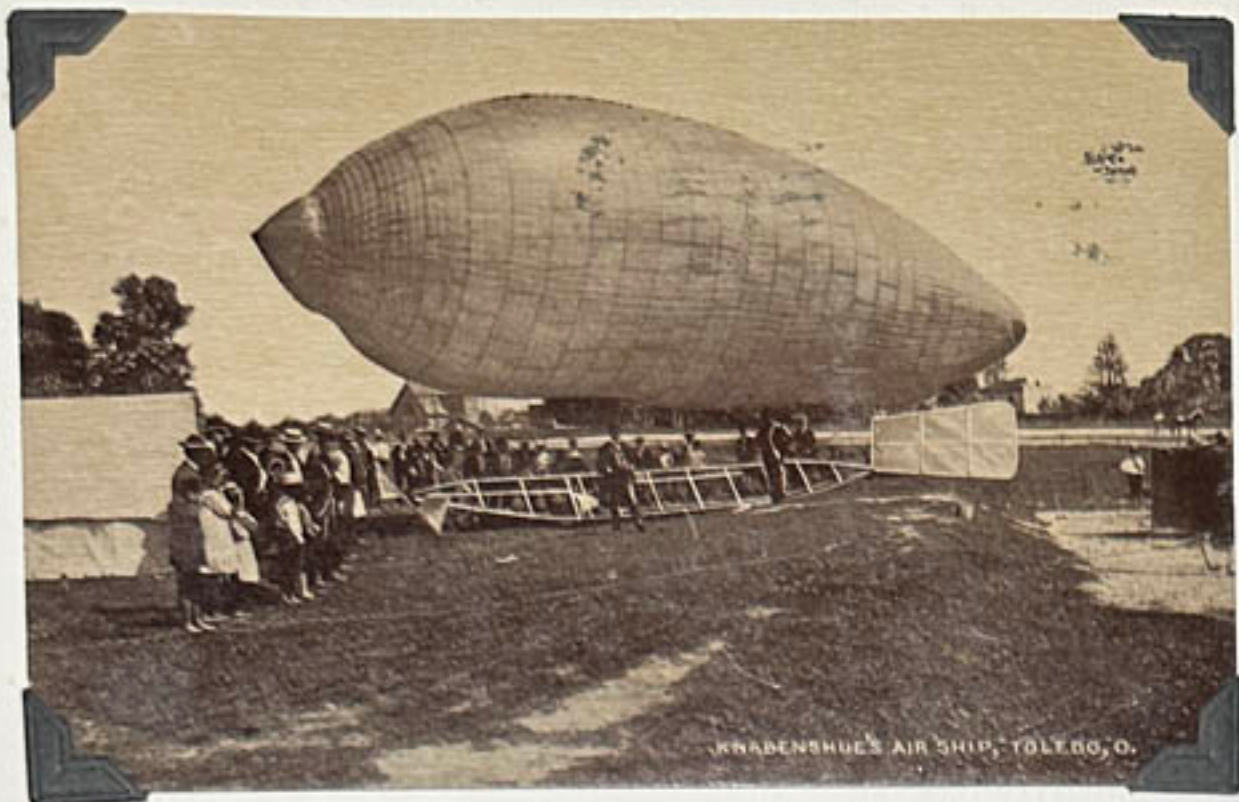




Postmarked Toledo, Ohio, February 11, 1910

Melvin Vaniman Builds 'Goodyear Akron'

By Fred Boughner

While Zeppelin, Eckener, Schutte-Lanz and others were building and flying lighter-than-air ships in Germany in the early 1900s, a man named Melvin Vaniman was busy at the same task in the United States.

Vaniman's original airship "Akron" was not a dirigible but a blimp . . . that nonrigid airship without internal support for the gas bag. It looked like a 258-foot long sweet potato but was capable, or so Vaniman hoped, of standing the rigors of an Atlantic crossing.

As a sidelight, this first Akron was often called the "Goodyear Akron" since F.A. Seiberling — its principal backer — was at that time president of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.

The familiar Goodyear blimps are still with us in 1974, but they are just that: "blimps" and not dirigibles. Vaniman's craft was the first Goodyear blimp.

On the morning of July 2, 1912, Vaniman and his crew of four launched the Akron without incident, flew over nearby Atlantic City and headed out over the Atlantic bound for Europe.

About a half-mile off shore while flying at 1,000 feet in clear weather, the Akron suddenly burst into flame. The car of the blimp fell away from the bag quickly plummeted into the ocean, killing Cmdr. Vaniman and 11 on board.

Many theories were advanced for the Akron disaster: air got into the gas bag; the rays of the sun caused the gas to expand and the bag to burst; flames had somehow reached a gasoline tank. Whatever the reason, the Akron was to be the first in a long series of American airship disasters.

In 1923 the USS Shenandoah, built by the Navy as the first dirigible using helium instead of hydrogen, was finished and commissioned. It was a huge ship — 600 feet long.



The USS Macon was constructed by the Navy in 1933 and was allowed to carry official post. The light-than-air ship "fell" to the water off Point Sur Feb. 12, 1935.

To the Navy had been assigned the job of building the rigid-style craft in those early days.

The Shenandoah's philatelic history is one of privately carried mail, most of which was created by eager cover collectors. In its flights from Lakehurst to Fort Worth, San Diego, Seattle and other destinations it carried no official government post.

While flying over southern Ohio in September 1925, the Shenandoah ran into a violent storm, broke into three pieces and fell to earth. Fourteen men perished with the ship and some public clamor was heard about dirigible safety.

Six years later, the Navy launched the USS Akron, the namesake ship of Vaniman's original craft. It was larger than the Shenandoah — 785 feet long — and was designed to carry and launch five fighter planes nested in its huge hull.

Through the efforts of Second Assistant Postmaster General W. Irving Glover, again at the behest of cover collectors, the Navy finally agreed to let the Akron carry official mail.

Just as Vaniman's first "Akron" had perished off the New Jersey coast, so too did its namesake. During an electrical storm off Barnegat Light on April 4, 1933, the Akron came down — smashed and twisted. Though there were three survivors, this time 73 men went to their deaths. The clamor was

though it made some test and exhibition flights using hydrogen, never "got off the ground" as far as commercial usage was concerned.

Public and political feeling in the U.S. were against both the concept of the dirigible and the supplying of anything to the new National Socialist party in Germany that might be construed as military aid. The new Graf never flew in international service.

This new helium gas, unlike hydrogen, was inert. It would not react with other chemicals, would not burn and would not explode. It was, in those days, a very rare commodity. Prior to World War I, the price of



These airmail stamps were part of a series issued for use on mail carried on the first Europe-Pan American round-trip flight of the Graf Zeppelin in May 1930.

helium had risen as high as \$3,000 per cubic foot.

The U.S. was, and is, one of the prime sources of helium. It is found in Texas, New Mexico and Kansas primarily, with limited quantities in Utah and Colorado.

The government controls the production of this inert gas. Though its cost today is but a few cents per cubic foot, its close control dates back to the Hindenburg disaster.

When that ship exploded at Lakehurst, Congress placed a ban on further U.S. dirigible construction. It also limited the use of helium to airships operating in the United States only or between the U.S. and other countries. These edicts doomed the rigid dirigible.

In April 1940, the Nazi party, then in control of Germany, dismantled the LZ-127 Graf and LZ-130 "second" "Graf Zeppelin" for their raw material.

Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin's dream was finished. Even his superb Graf Zeppelin was no more. Allied bombing raids completed the destruction of the hangars and works at Friedrichshafen.

The era of the dirigible — once so bright and promising — had come and gone in the short span of a single generation.

★ The Navy constructed a sister-ship to the Akron in 1933 and named it the USS Macon. Like the Akron, it also was allowed to carry official post.

Less than two years later, on Feb. 12, 1935, the Macon rather mysteriously fell into the sea. There were no reports of an explosion or fire; it simply came down on the water off Point Sur. Later reports blamed some tricky wind shifts for damaging the stern of the vessel. All but two men were rescued.

You may remember that the USS Los Angeles continued to fly until it was decommissioned in 1932. But the Los Angeles, the only major "American" dirigible to live until retirement, had been built by the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin, and not by U.S. builders.

America's history of making and flying dirigibles was, unlike the later German record, filled with one major disaster after another.

Although the Americans gave up on the rigid airship, the Germans did not. Shortly after the Hindenburg calamity in 1937, the Germans began to build a "second" Graf Zeppelin, the LZ-130. It was built for helium, not hydrogen, and it was completed in 1938.

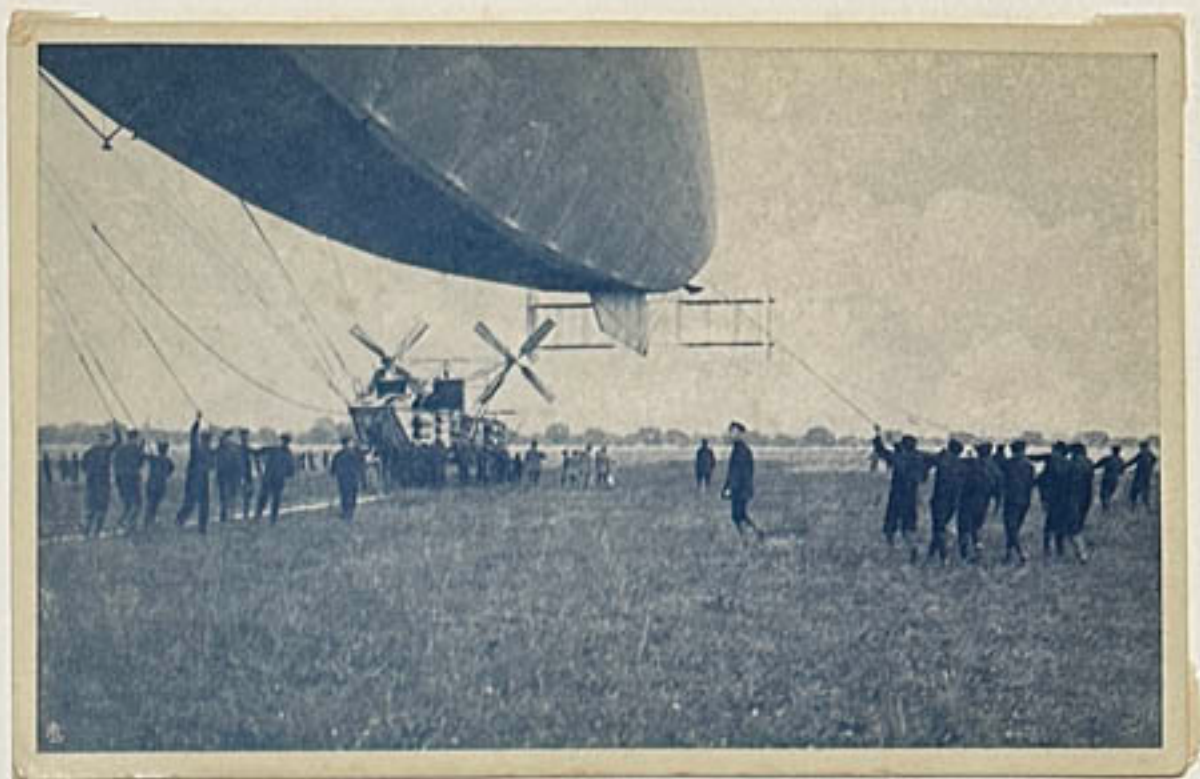
By the time the "second Graf" was ready to fly, the U.S. had refused to supply helium to the German nation. The LZ-130,

"AKRON"

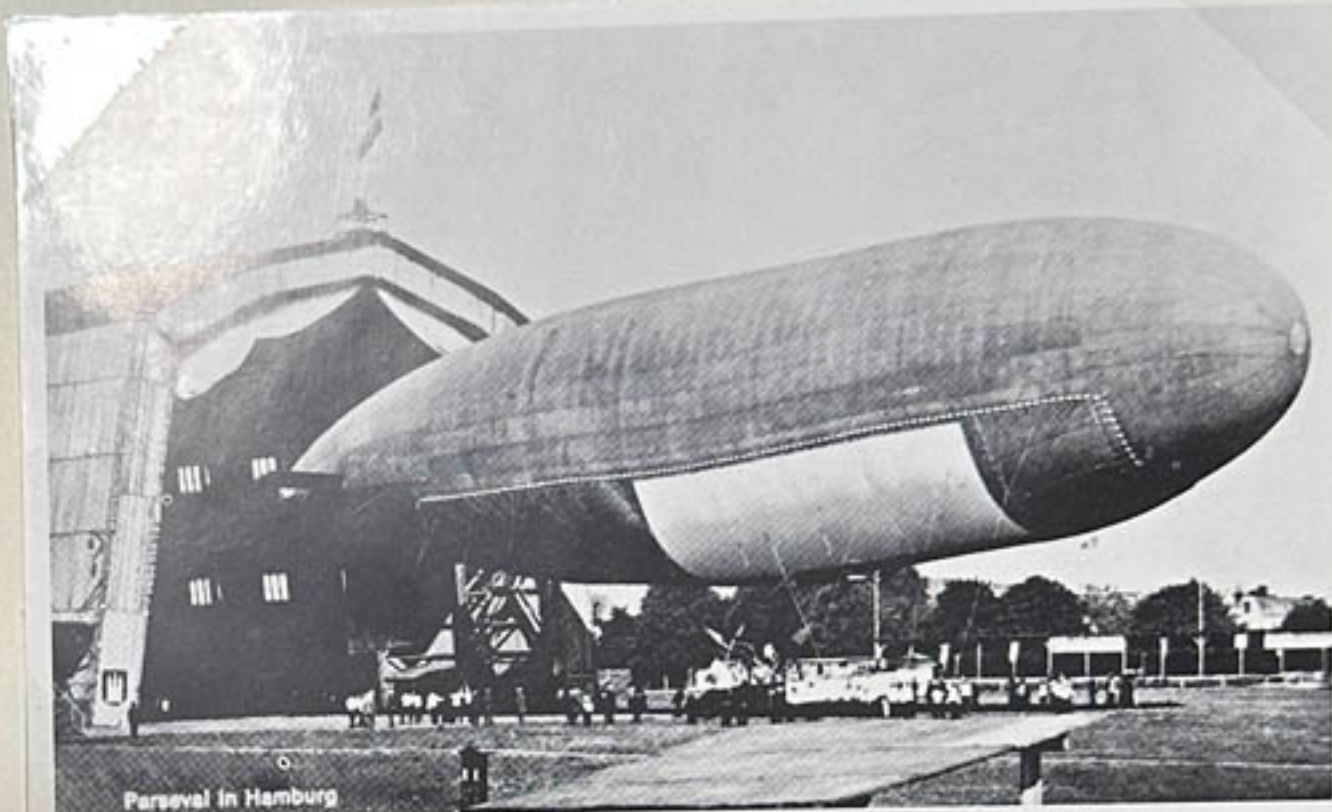
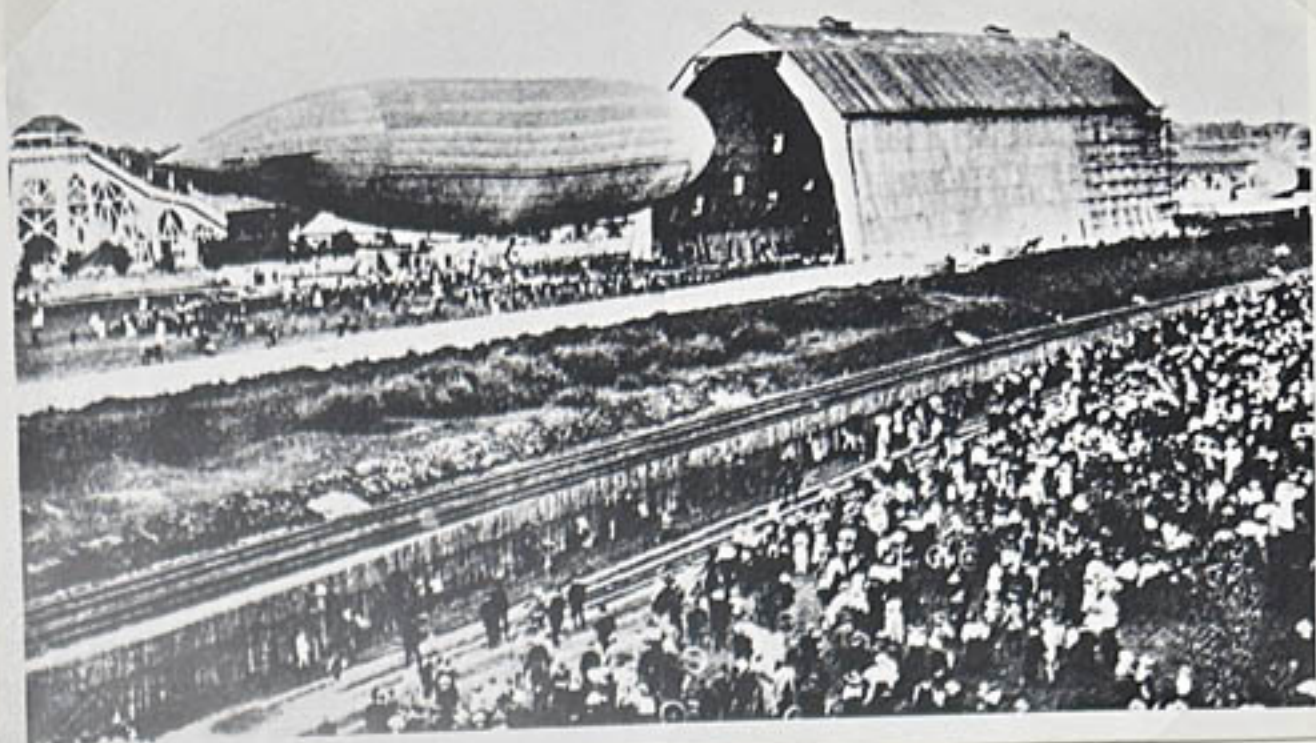
Length, 258 ft. Weight of Bag 5,000 lbs. Maximum H.P. of Engines, 317 H.P.
Diameter, 47 ft. Cubic Capacity 40,000 ft. Carries 1540 Gallons gasoline.
Length of car 185 ft. Weight of car 6,000 lbs.

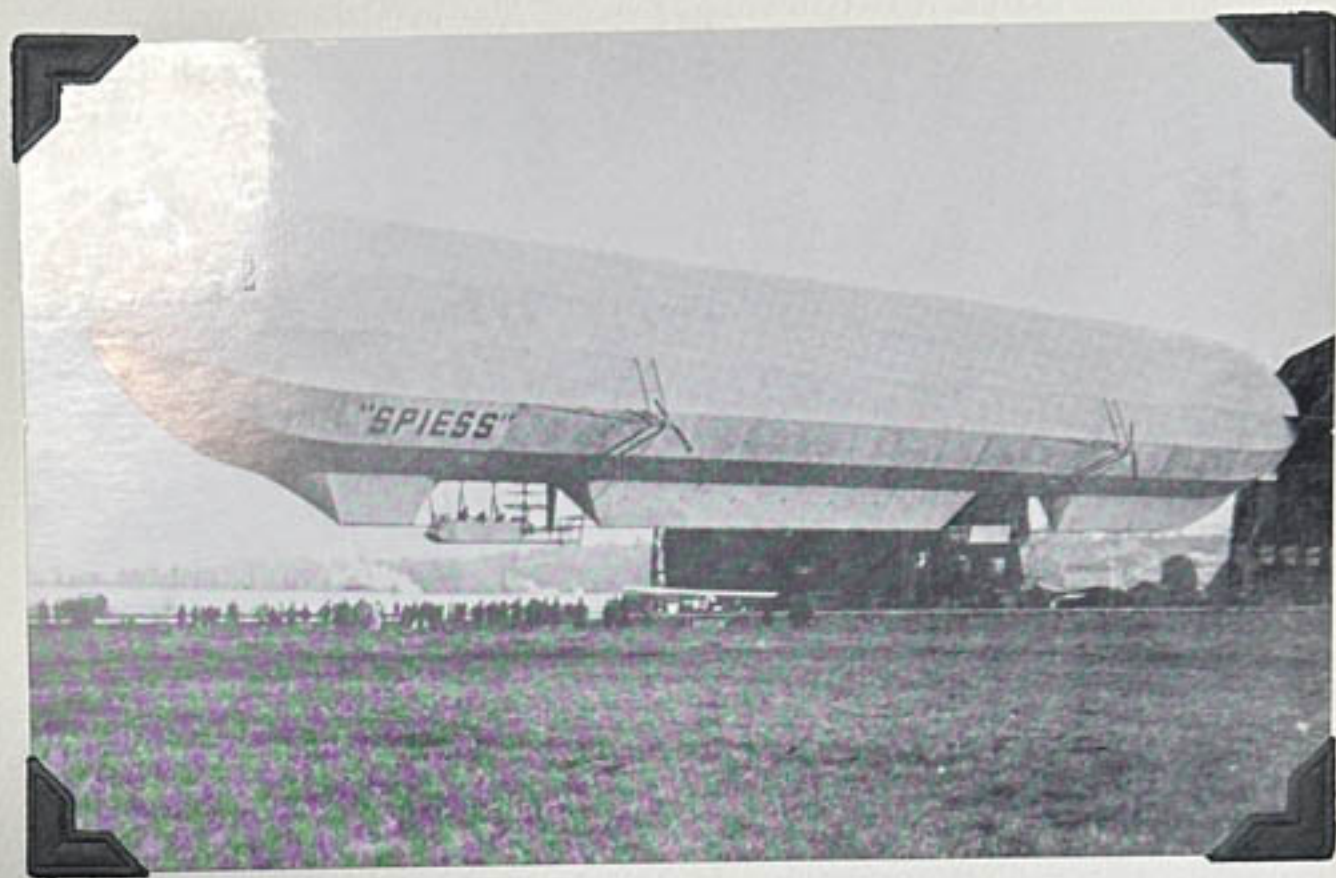
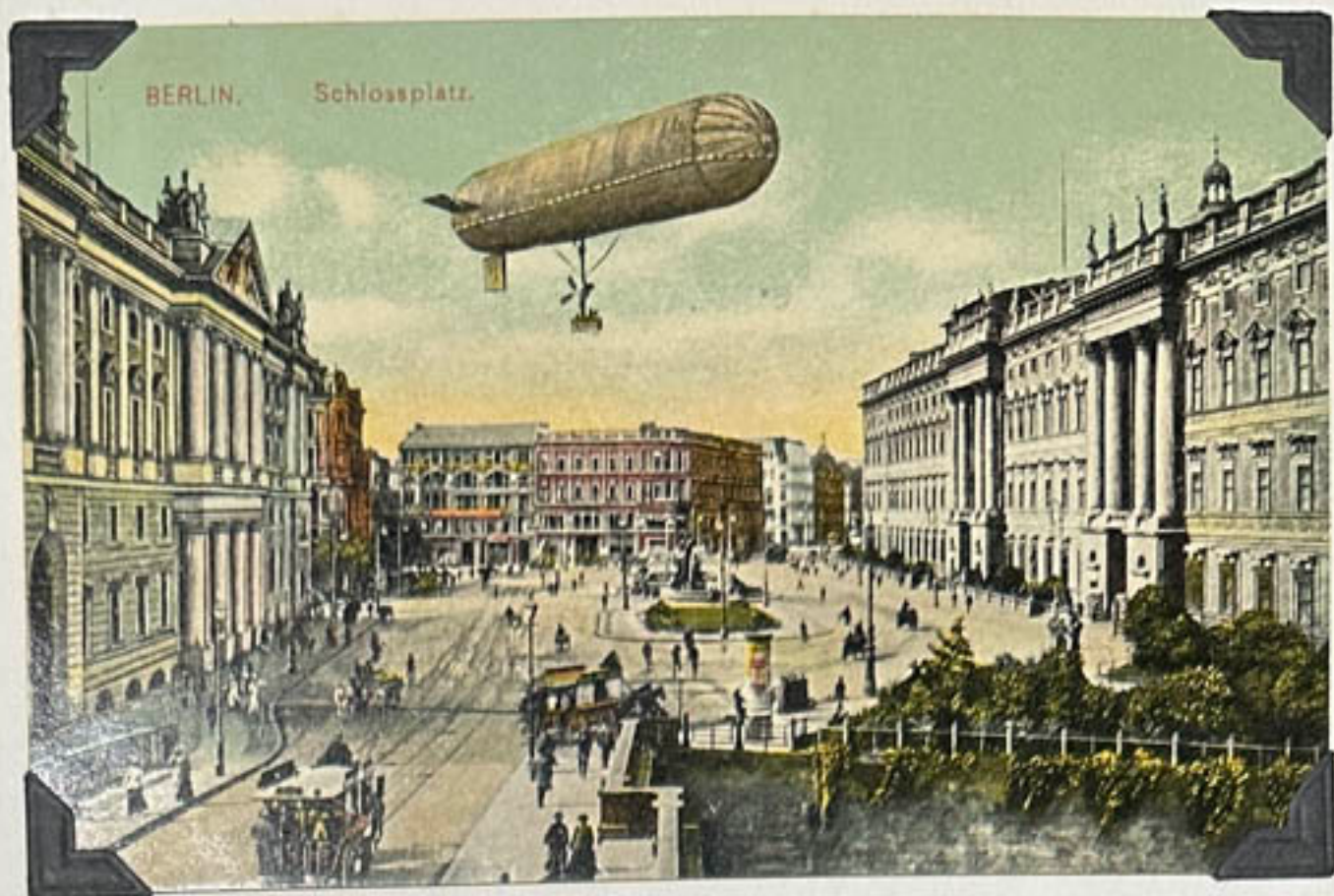


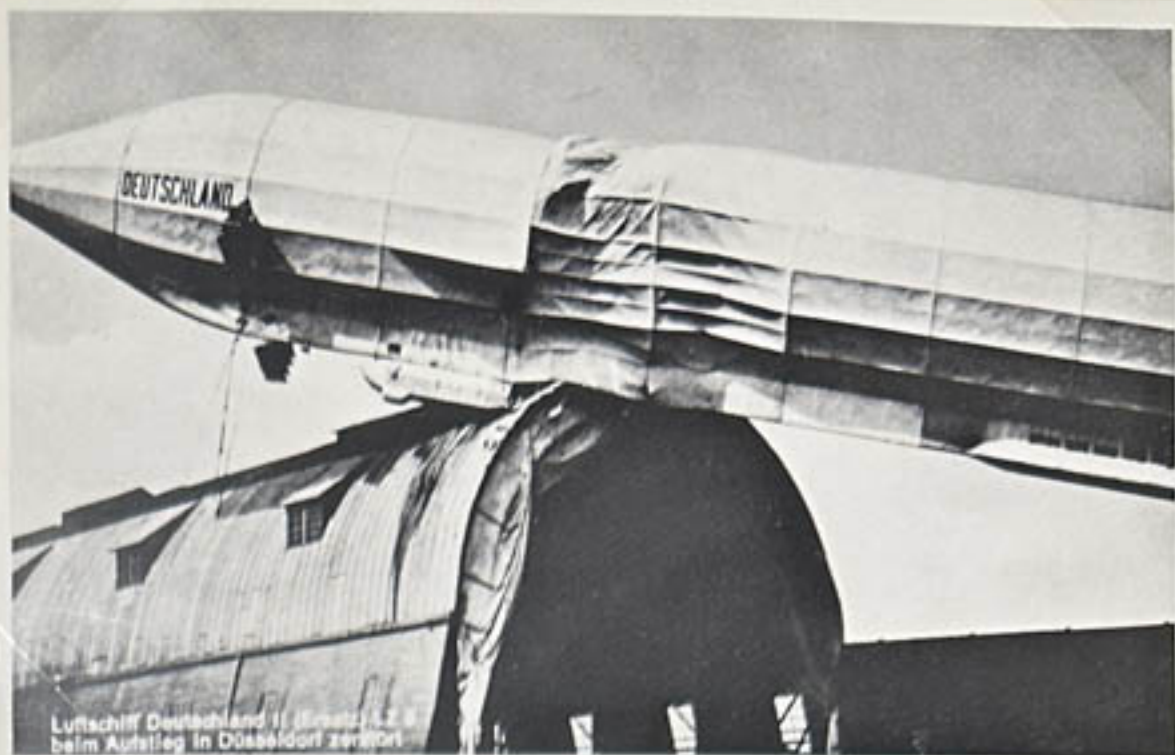
In this airship Melvin Vaniman, his brother Charles and three companions ascended at Atlantic City, N. J., on July 2, 1912 to start their second attempt at a trans-Atlantic crossing. The airship exploded at 500 ft. in full view of thousands of spectators. The five men fell to their deaths.



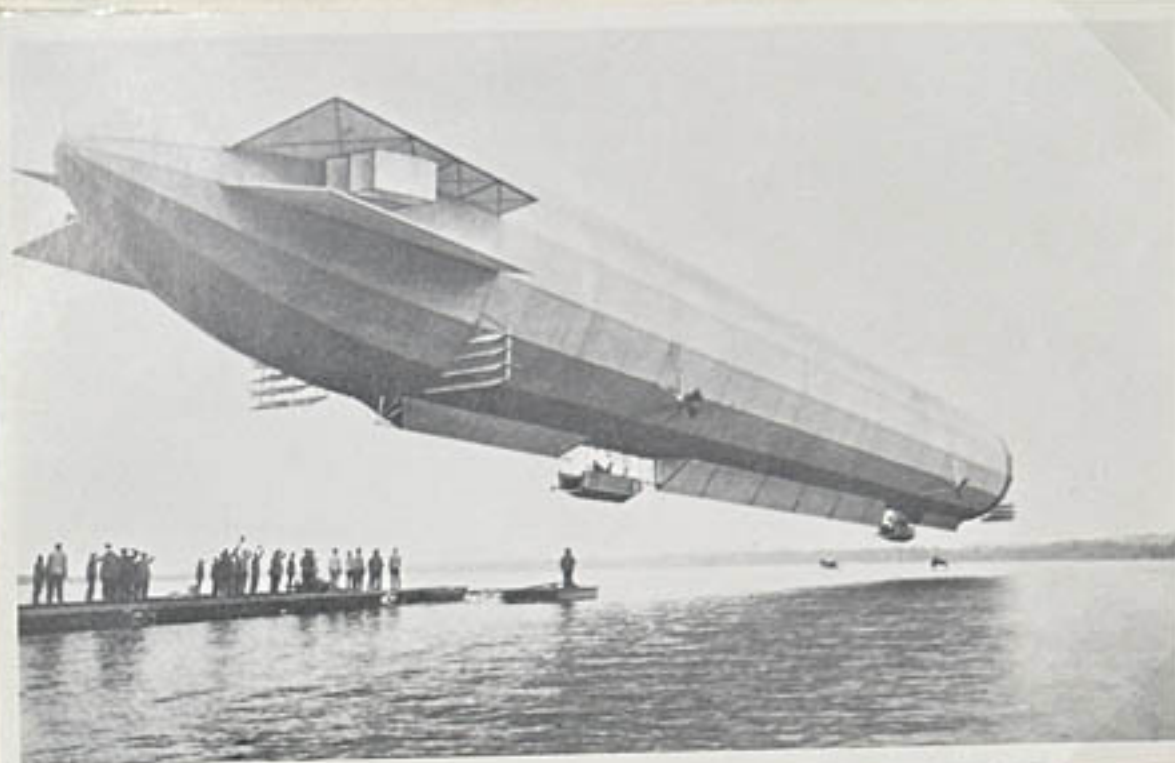
Parseval VI in München.







Luftschiff Deutschland LZ 126 beim Aufstieg in Düsseldorf zerlegt





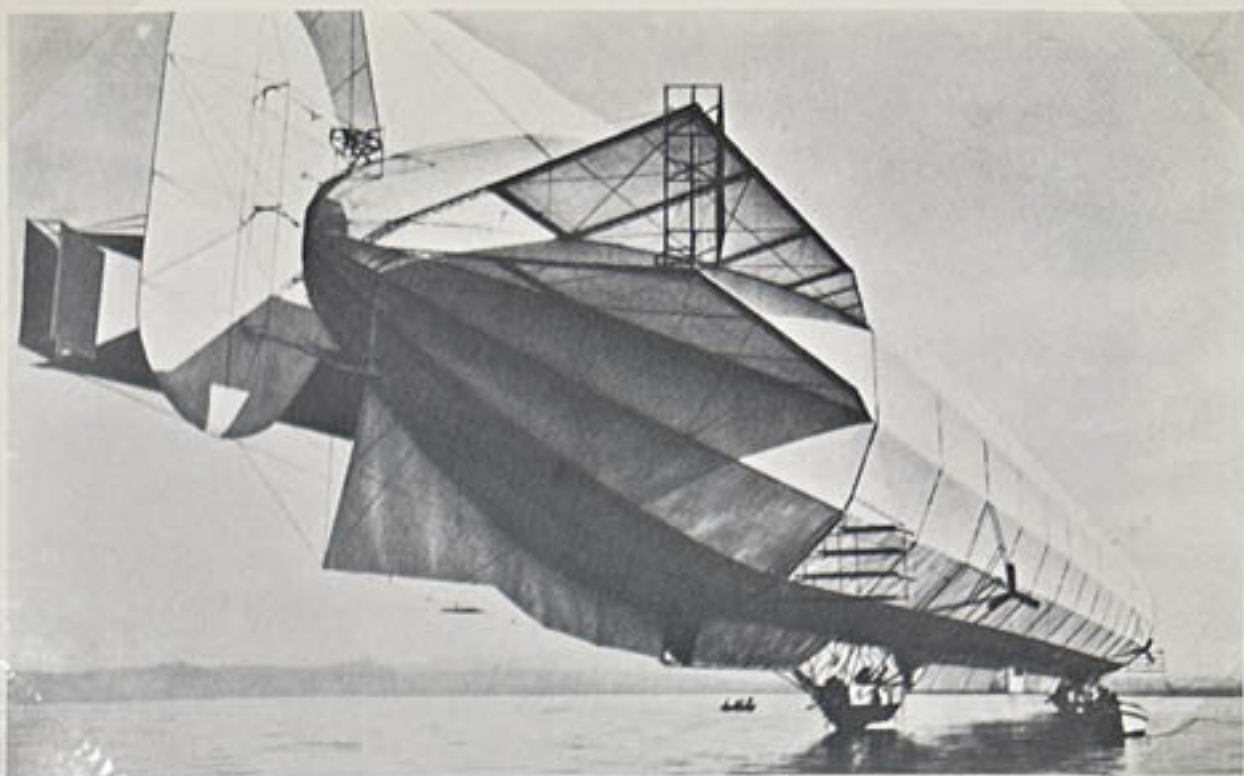
Der misslungene englische Fliegerangriff
auf Cuxhaven
25. Dezember 1914.



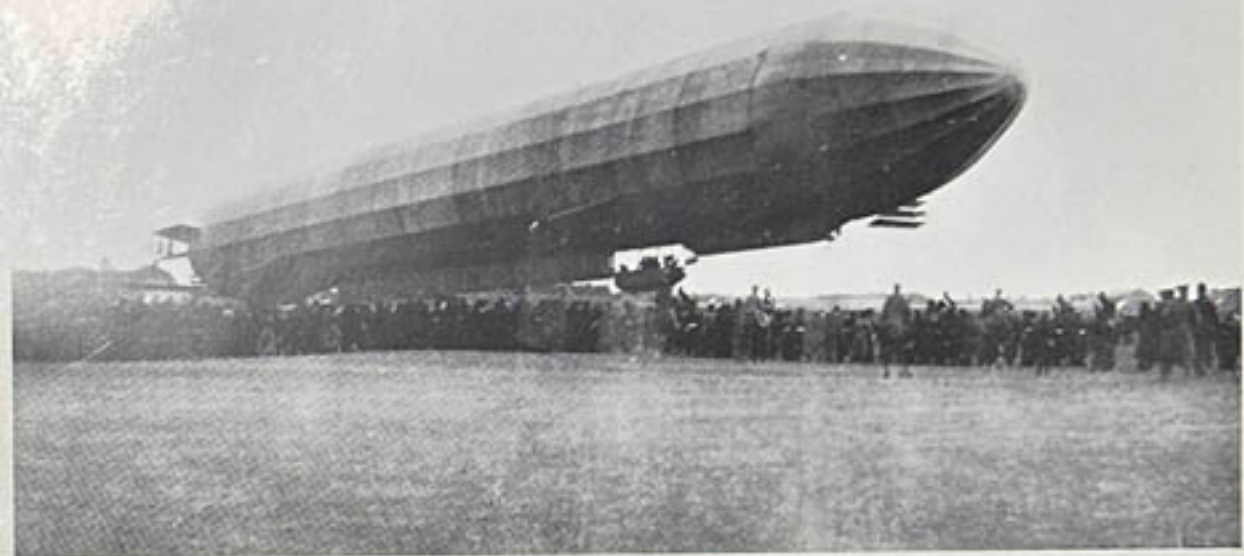
Zerstörung des Marine-Luftschiffes b. II
17. Oktober 1918

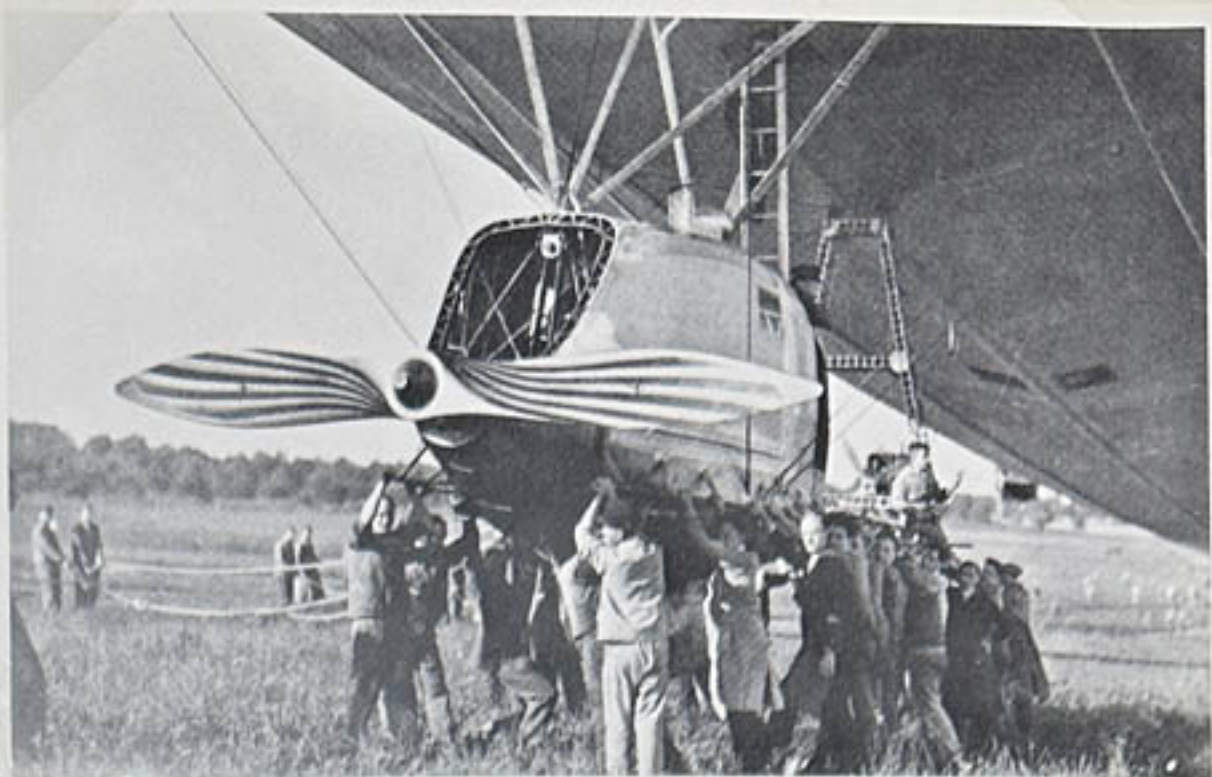
Luftschiff Zeppelin
im Jahre 1900 über Köln.





Reichsluftschiff „Z. 1“ in München
Landung des Grafen Zeppelin auf dem Oberwiesenfeld
am 2. April 1909







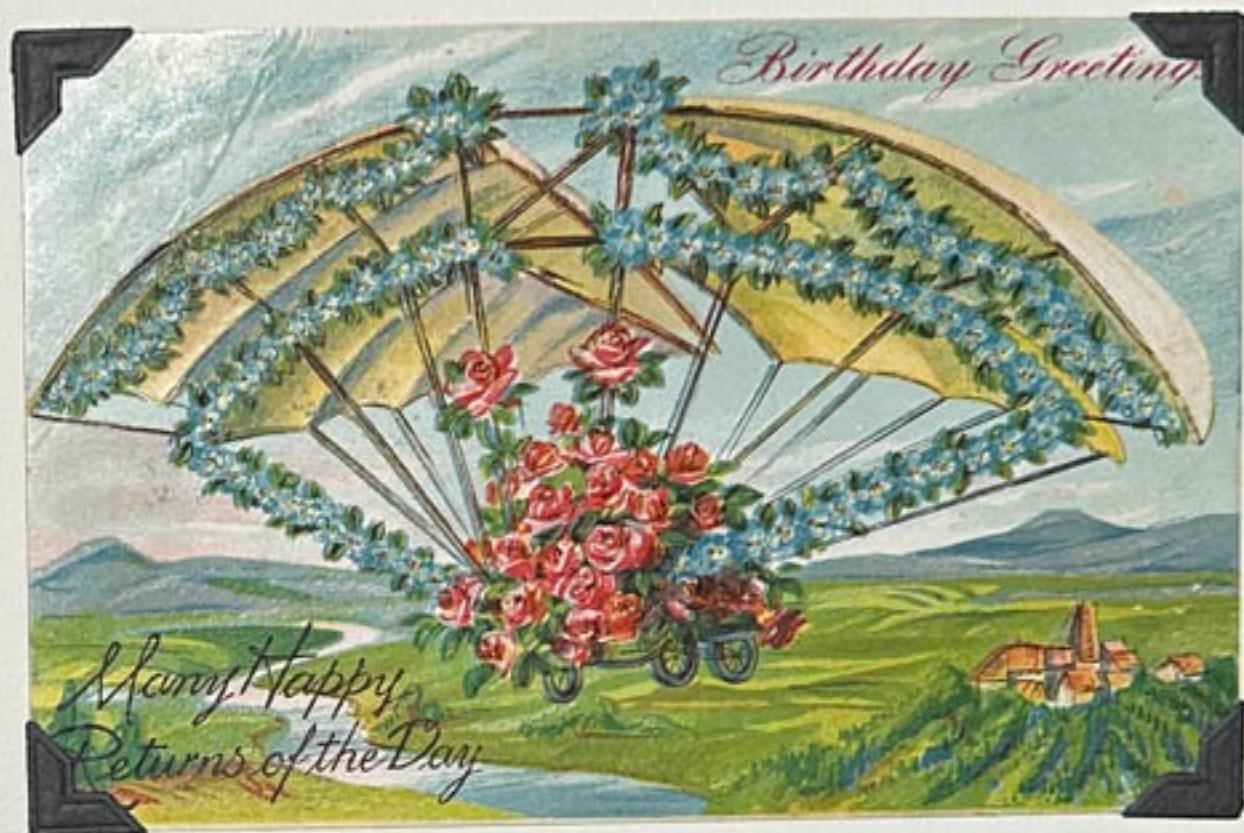
Gary H. Green

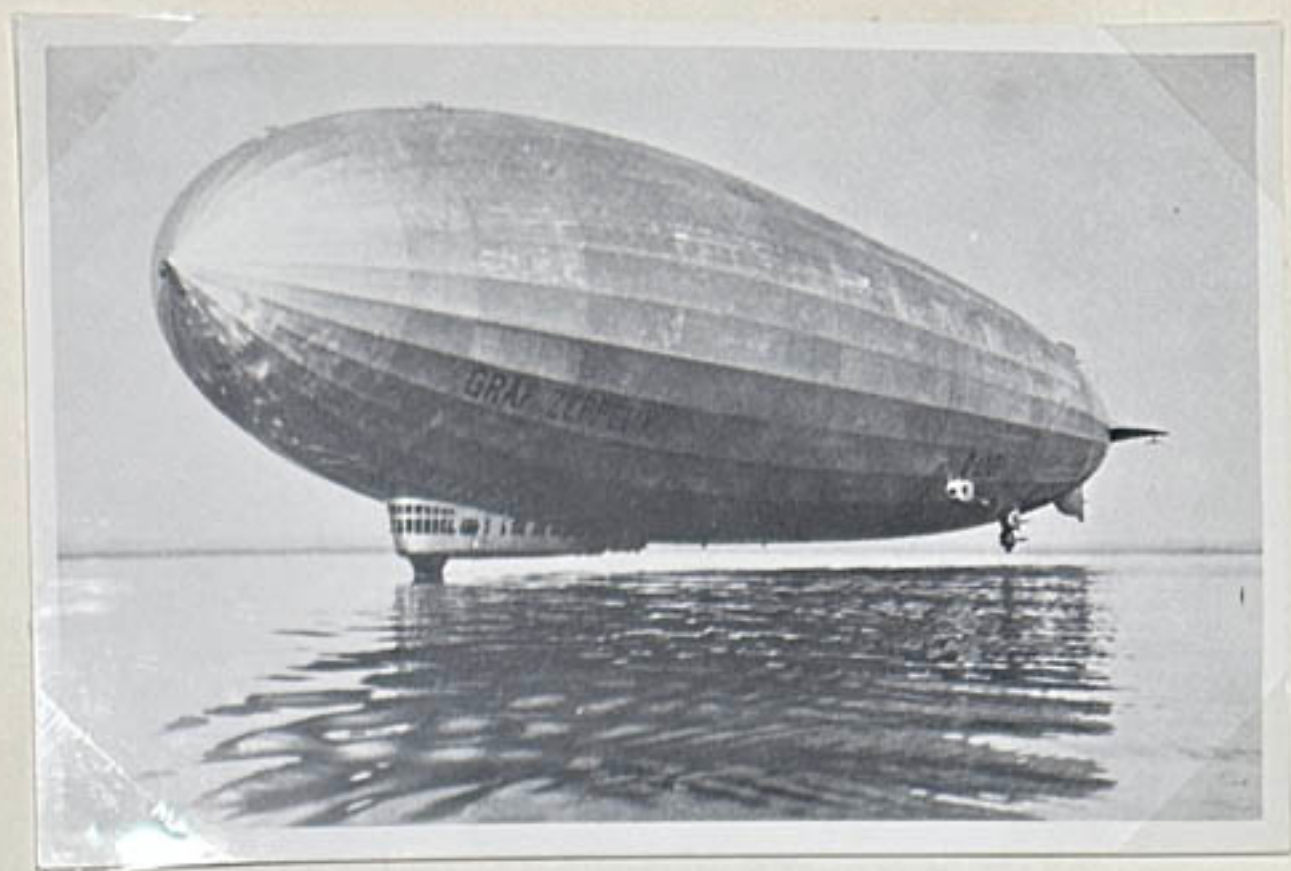
Driven by dreams of flight, Count Zeppelin launched airships for his beloved Germany.

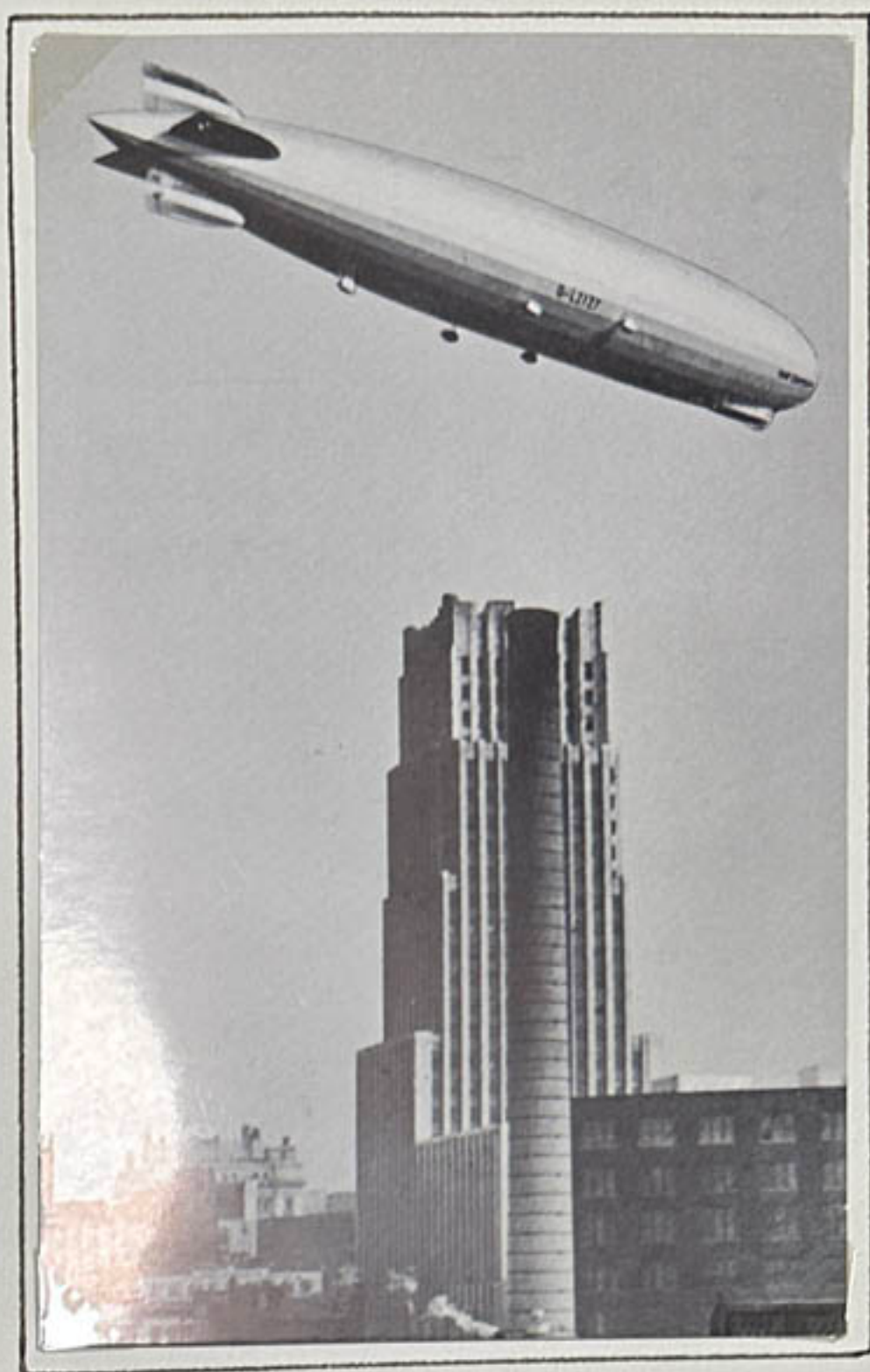




1910







The "Graf Zeppelin", built in Germany in 1928, made numerous overseas flights including this one showing the airship over Akron on its way to Chicago in October, 1933.

Length: 790 feet
Diameter: 102 feet

Graf Zeppelin 'tried and proved' by '28 Atlantic ocean crossing

By Steven R. Reynolds

A dirigible was launched on Sept. 18, 1928, in Friedrichshafen, Germany, that was to become the most famous and successful airship the world has ever known—the "LZ-127 Graf Zeppelin."

The Zeppelin people wanted to prove that commercial airships would be practical on transcontinental and around the world flights, carrying passengers, mail and cargo.

The airship's first trial run was a successful three-hour and 12 minute flight. It was pronounced airworthy in every respect.

Statistics of the Graf Zeppelin are:

Length—776 ft.

Diameter—100 ft.

Gas capacity—3,700,000 cu. ft.

Power—5,530 HP Maybach engines.

Range—7,030 miles.

Cruising speed—70 m.p.h.

Less than a month later, on Oct. 11, 1928, the "Graf" made its first flight across the Atlantic Ocean to Lakehurst, N.J. The crew of 40 and 20 passengers were the first transatlantic passengers in the history of aviation.

The 6,188 mile flight was made in 111 hours. The return flight took 71 hours and 12 minutes, with a full load of passengers. The "Graf" was now tried and proved.

After several flights over Europe the "Graf" returned to the United States to begin its cruise around the world. On Aug. 7, 1929, the Graf Zeppelin left Lakehurst with 14 passengers who paid \$9,000 each. The official time for the trip of 19,500 miles was 21 days, seven hours and 28 minutes, although only 263 hours and 43 minutes were spent in actual flight. The cost per mile for each passenger was \$42.17.

In 1931 the "Graf" explored the Arctic Regions and aided science by mapping unknown areas and recording scientific data.

A visit to Russia called attention to the possibilities of this form of airmail travel. The Russian Post Office issued stamps (illustrated) in 1931 to help raise funds for "Klim Voroshilov" and "Pravda," the contemplated Russian dirigibles.

The Graf Zeppelin made a special visit to the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, Ill. The trip was made via South

America and in addition to being the ninth flight to South America during 1933, it marked the fifth anniversary of the ship and the 50th transatlantic crossing.

Oct. 2, 1933, was the first day of issue of the U.S. 50c Zeppelin shown on cover in connection with this report. Regular transatlantic flights were made during the next six years, many to South America.

When the Hindenburg burned in 1937, the Graf Zeppelin was withdrawn from service and later dismantled. It had made 590 flights, spent 17,000 hours in the air, cruised over 1,000,000 miles, crossed the ocean 144 times and carried 13,110 passengers without a fatality.

Bibliography: "Dirigibles That Made History," by David C. Cooke, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962; "Giants In The Sky," by Richard Norman, Children's Press, Chicago, 1967; "The Zeppelins," by Edwin P. Hoyt, Lothrop Lee and Shepard Co., New York, 1969.

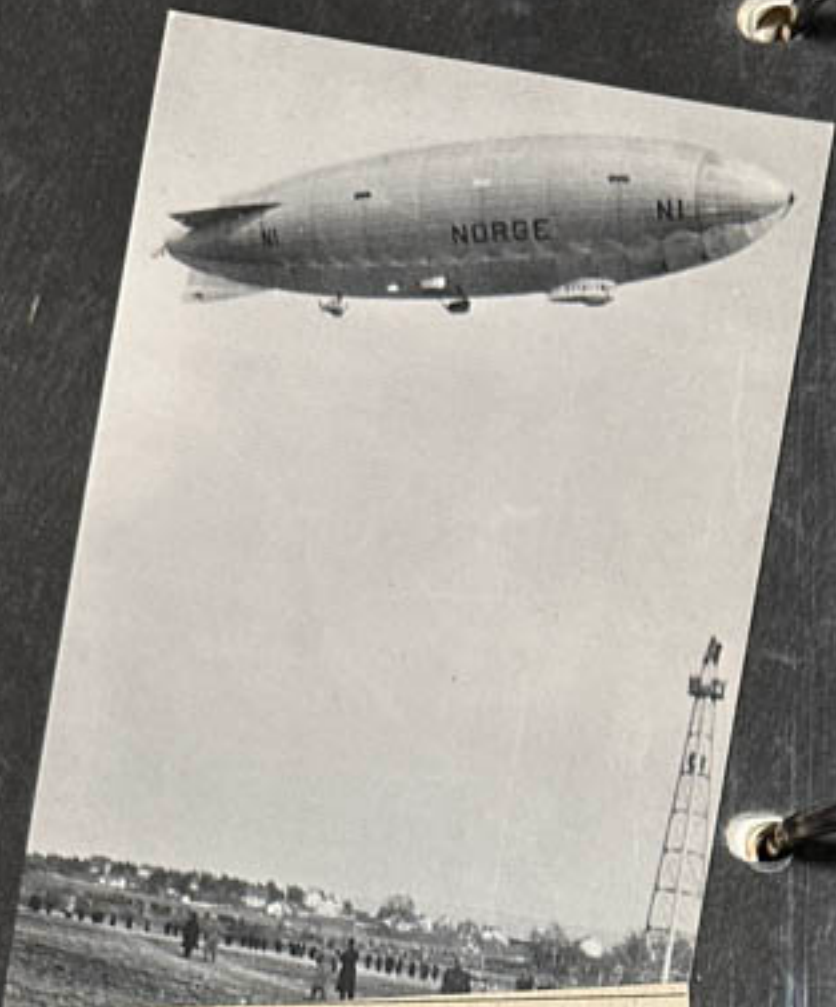
(Editor's Note: The author of the foregoing article, Steven R. Reynolds, is 13 years of age and one of the most active members of the Memphis Stamp Collectors Society, Memphis, Tenn. He won the Alfred R. M. Diggles award for the best exhibit by a junior member of the society at MEMPHEX '73 held last December.)



Round-the-world cruise cover marking the Graf Zeppelin flight which began Aug. 7, 1929, at Lakehurst, N.J.



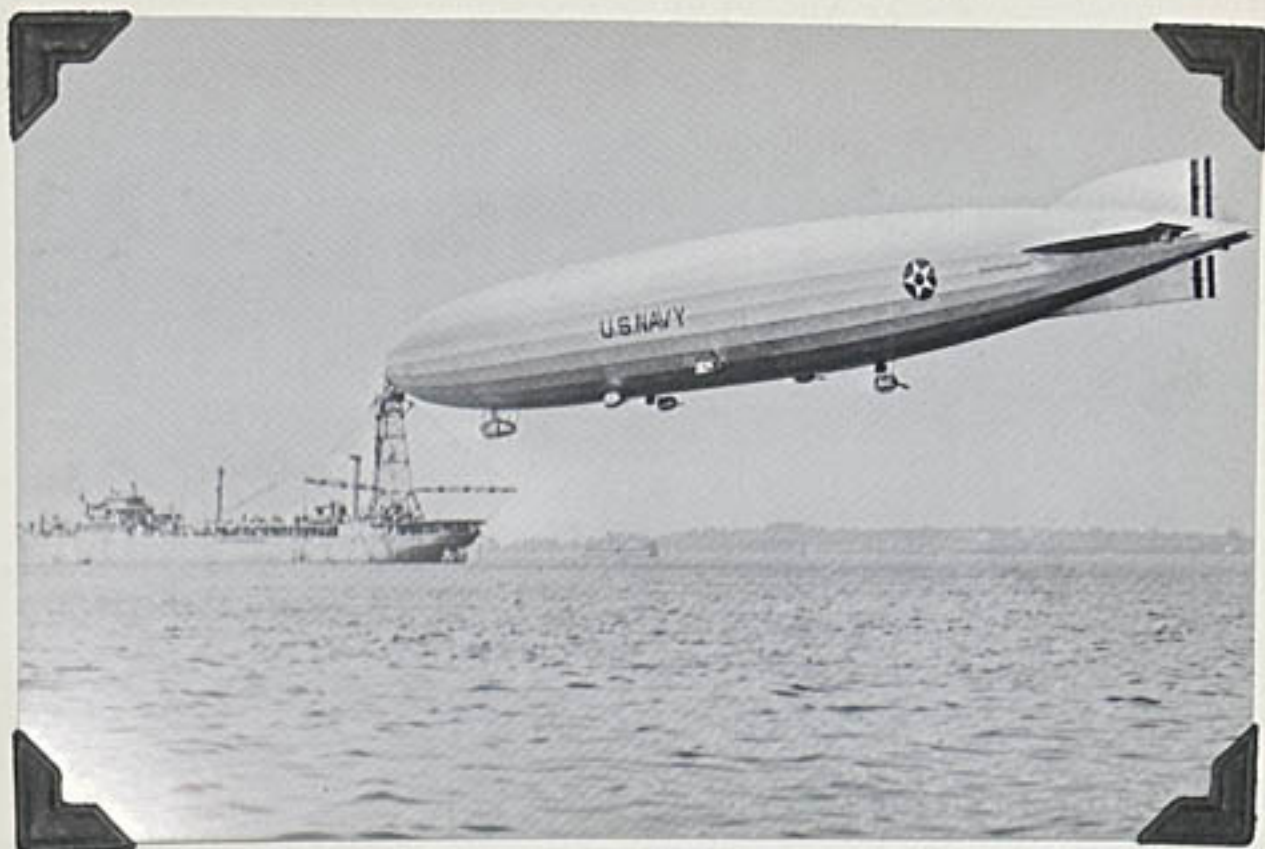
Condor-Zeppelin cover



Graf Zeppelin's 1929 Global Flight

First day plus 11, and first globe girdling flight of the Graf Zeppelin is this cover, franked with a complete set of U.S. airmail stamps available at that time, plus the 13c and 14c definitives then in use, and the airmail-related 2c and 5c Aero Conference pair at lower right. What a cover this would have been, had the sender been able to

post it a few days earlier (July 25) on the first day sale of that 5c beacon! It is a shame, also that he used seconds (straight edged copies) of the Lindbergh and 15c airmails; use quality stamps on your covers; you can always replace mint items in your album. But on a cover, that's it from now on—no second try!



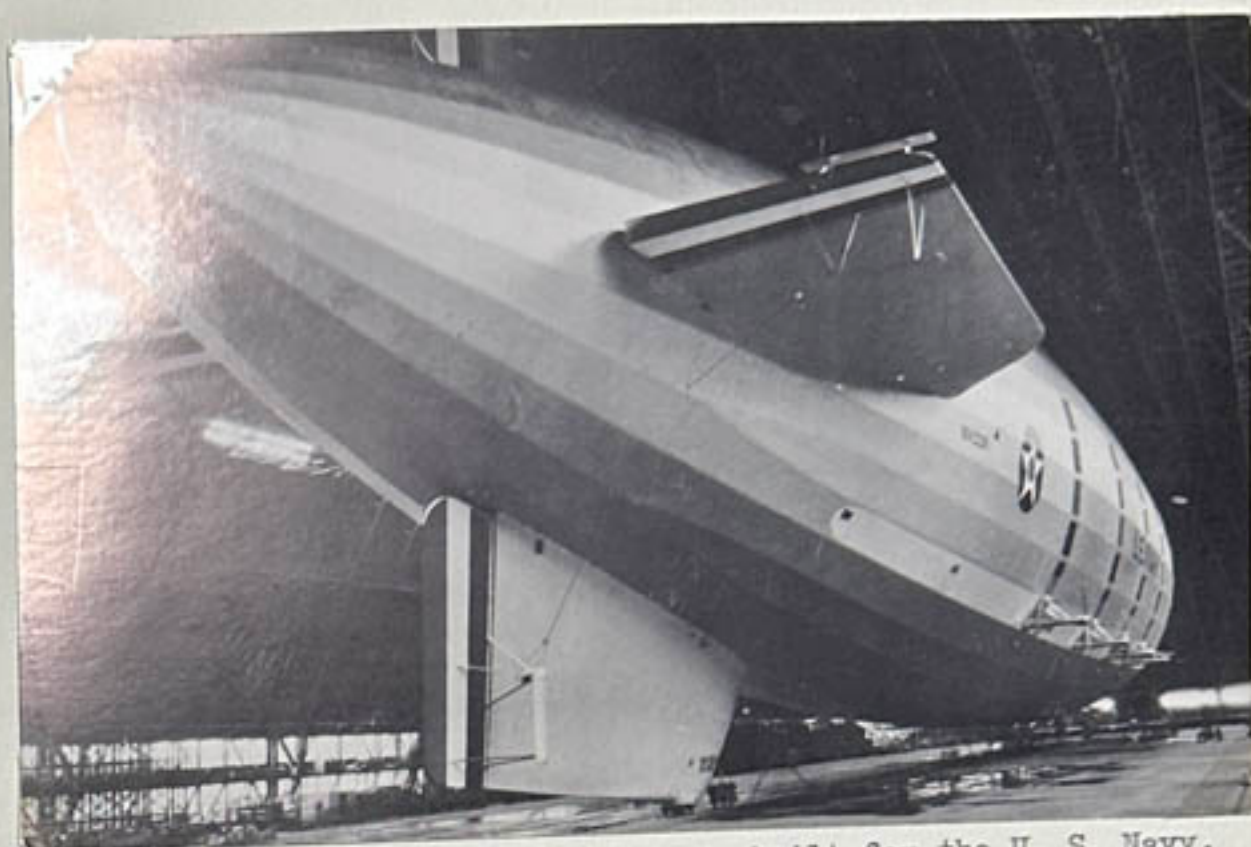
" SHENANDOAH"
 ZR-1, built by U.S. Navy,
 launched August 20, 1923.
 First Naval airship, moored
 to U.S.S. Patoka.



H.M.A. R-100, British Air-
 ship. Crossed Atlantic on
 July 29, 1930, 79 hours to
 Montreal. Length: 709 feet.



RIGID AIRSHIP "AKRON": This dirigible, built in 1931, was 785 feet long, helium capacity of 6,500,000 ft. It was designed for military purposes and included in the lower hull was a hanger deck with five scout planes. On April 4, 1933, the Akron encountered a violent line squall and was lost at sea with 74 of its crew of 78.



RIGID AIRSHIP "MACON": Goodyear built for the U. S. Navy, and sister ship of the Akron, was launched and made its original flight in Akron, Ohio, on April 21, 1933. Later it was based at the U. S. Naval Air Station, Moffett Field, California. Returning from maneuvers with the U. S. fleet, in the Pacific, on Feb. 12, 1935, the Macon suffered damage, settled into the sea, off Point Sur, California, and subsequently was destroyed. Of the 80 aboard, all were rescued but two. This view shows the Macon in the Goodyear airship hanger, Akron, Ohio, which is the largest of its type in the world.

AIR MAIL

U. S. S. MACON



WITH
COMMANDER A. T. CLAY
— ABOARD —



FEBRUARY
— 1935 —



*Miss L. Laine Lloyd
114 E. Second St.
Bendee, Washington*

AIR MAIL

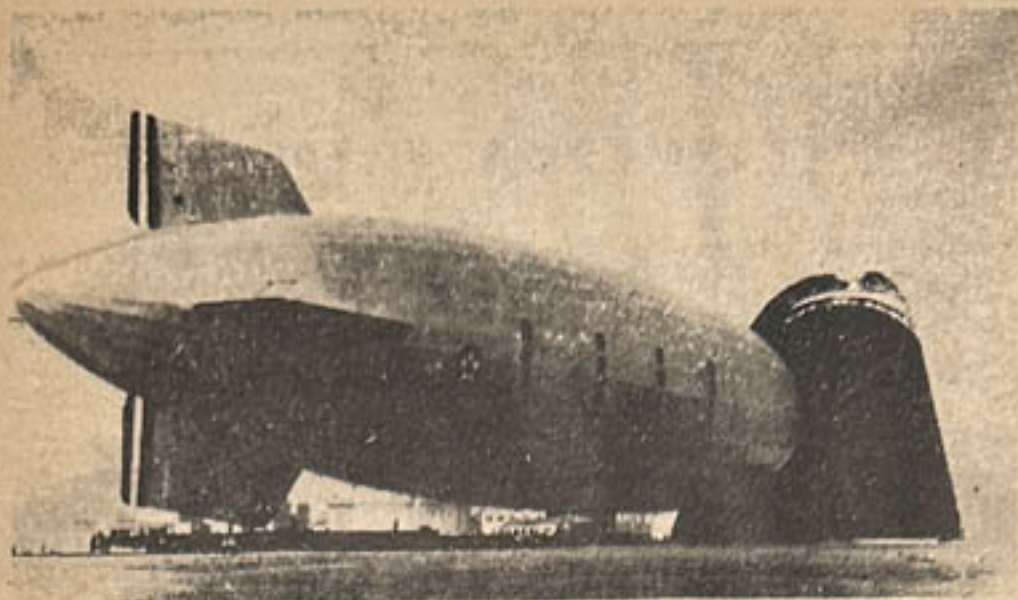
Cancelled day before destruction off Point Sur,
California



Hindenburg



THE END OF AN ERA
MAY 6, 1937



The USS Macon, the largest and last zeppelin the United States ever made, is shown at the entrance of the huge hangar at Sunnyvale, Calif. The hangar doors are more than 200 feet tall.

Hangar One Housed Ill-Famed Zeppelin

SUNNYVALE, Calif. - One of the most awesome hangars in the world is here at the U.S. Navy's Moffett Field.

They call it Hangar One and there probably will never be another like it.

THE GIANT gun-metal gray rounded structure is the longest hangar in the world, measuring 1,138 feet. Eight football games could be played simultaneously in it because it is 308 feet wide as well.

It is so tall - 198 feet - that rain clouds form near the ceiling where owls nest.

Still, it was barely large enough for the incredible airship it housed.

BUILT AT A cost of \$1.75 million in 1931-32, Hangar

One is now used by 1,200 Navy personnel who study submarine detection. It is occupied as well by 24 training aircraft.

But 40 years ago it played a dramatic, short-lived role as the home of what many hoped to be the dazzling eyes of the nation's first line of defense.

Hangar One was the home of the biggest silvercoated zeppelin the United States ever made - the USS Macon.

UNFORTUNATELY, the Macon was destined for disaster that permanently ended any speculation that such airships would rule the skies - as H. G. Wells predicted - or even have a place in them.

During World War I, the

world's military forces had been impressed with Germany's use of the zeppelin, developed by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin.

The zeppelin is a lighter-than-air dirigible with steel rings and girder structure inside a mammoth bag or envelope which give it an elongated, cigar shape.

INSIDE ARE a series of bags like peas in a pod.

They are filled with helium or hydrogen.

The zeppelin travels by motor-driven propellers and can be guided.

It has space in an outside gondola as well as inside the bag for both cargo and passengers.

THIS RIGID configuration contrasts to the blimp, a gas-filled envelope which keeps its shape from pressure inside. It only has passenger and cargo space in its outside gondola.

Germany used zeppelins for 50 bombing raids over England during the war and for startling, massive, intercontinental cargo deliveries.

The U.S. Navy was convinced that zeppelins were meant to become part of the fleet of any first-rate naval power. They could carry bigger loads than any airplane. They had fantastic long-range endurance because of fuel storage space.

THEY HAD great promise as observers, being both faster and more efficient than ocean cruisers.

Moreover, the United States had limitless stores of nonflammable helium which was unavailable to Europeans who used the highly flammable hydrogen.

The United States wanted such airships to patrol the vast lengths of ocean coast, since radar had not yet been perfected.

IN THE 1920s, the Navy made arrangements to acquire five rigid airships. Four were to end in tragedy.

On a training flight in 1921, the airship the United States was buying from England blew up, killing 16.

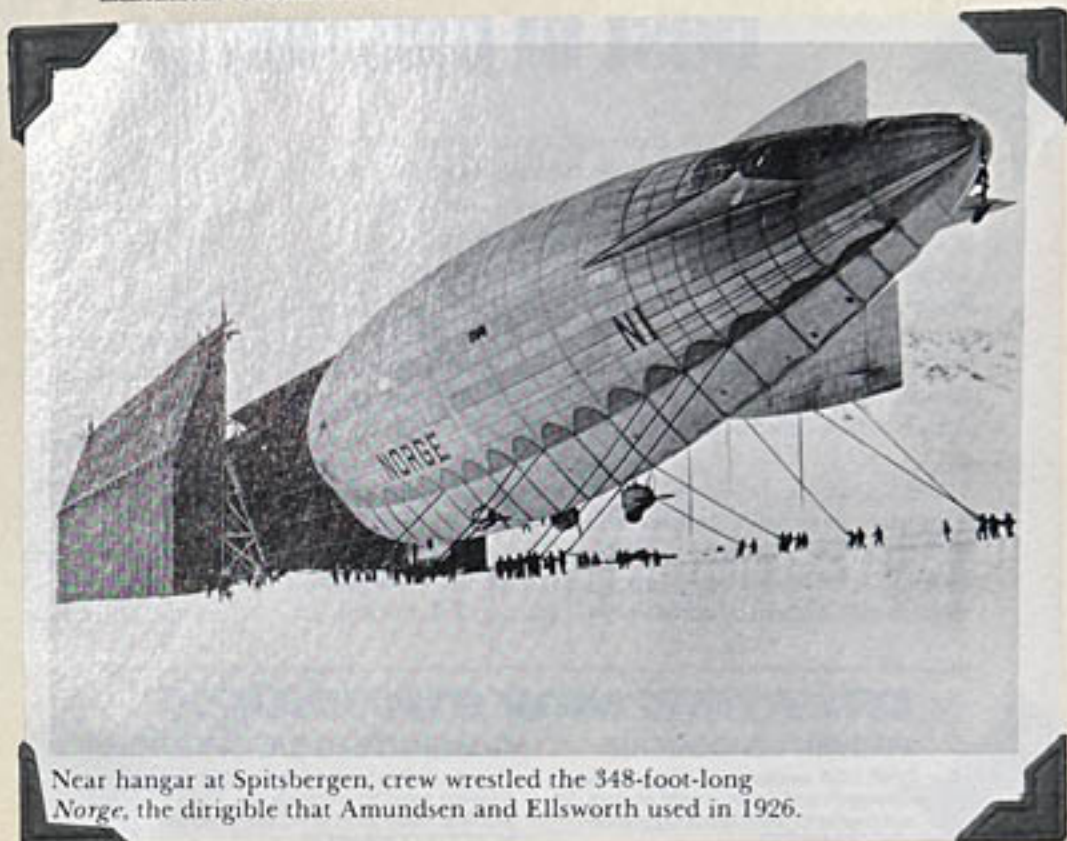
The second, U.S.-made, served little more than a year before a storm broke it into three pieces in flight in 1925 and 14 crewmen were killed.

THERE WAS great support for the airships but the defense project also had severe critics. People joked that you could shoot one out of the sky with a single rifle bullet.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST AIRSHIP, THE "AKRON"



Cruising range at 50 M.P.H. 10,580 miles. Eight engines, 4,480 horsepower, located inside ship's hull. Provision made for storage within hull of 5 airplanes, storage compartment being 75 feet long and 60 feet wide. Twelve separate gas cells, total 6.5 million cubic feet. Speed (maximum 84 M.P.H.), 785 feet long, 132.9 feet maximum diameter.



Near hangar at Spitsbergen, crew wrestled the 348-foot-long Norge, the dirigible that Amundsen and Ellsworth used in 1926.

Voyages spéciaux 1936 du Zeppelin vers l'Amérique du Nord.

De juin à octobre 1936 une série de voyages spéciaux du Zeppelin «L Z 129» sera effectuée de Francfort à Lakehurst (New York). La traversée aérienne de Francfort à Lakehurst ne dure que 3 jours; après un ou deux jours d'arrêt à Lakehurst, voyage de retour en 2 jours et demi. Prix du passage Francfort — Lakehurst RM. 1000.—.

Voyage No.	Francfort sur le Mein départ	Lakehurst arrivé	Lakehurst départ	Francfort sur le Mein arrivé
3	le 19/20 juin	le 22/23 juin	le 23/24 juin	le 26/27 juin
4	le 29/30 juin	le 2/3 juillet	le 3/4 juillet	le 6/7 juillet
5	le 10/11 juillet	le 13/14 juillet	le 14/15 juillet	le 17/18 juillet
6	le 5/6 août	le 8/9 août	le 9/10 août	le 12/13 août
7	le 15/16 août	le 18/19 août	le 19/20 août	le 22/23 août
8	le 17/18 sept.	le 20/21 sept.	le 21/22 sept.	le 24/25 sept.
9	le 26/27 sept.	le 29/30 sept.	le 30 sept./1 ^{er} oct.	le 3/4 oct.
10	le 5/6 oct.	le 8/9 oct.	le 9/10 oct.	le 12/13 oct.

Susceptibles d'être modifiés sans préavis

Demandez notre prospectus spécial pour
les voyages vers l'Amérique du Nord

Pour renseignements et billets

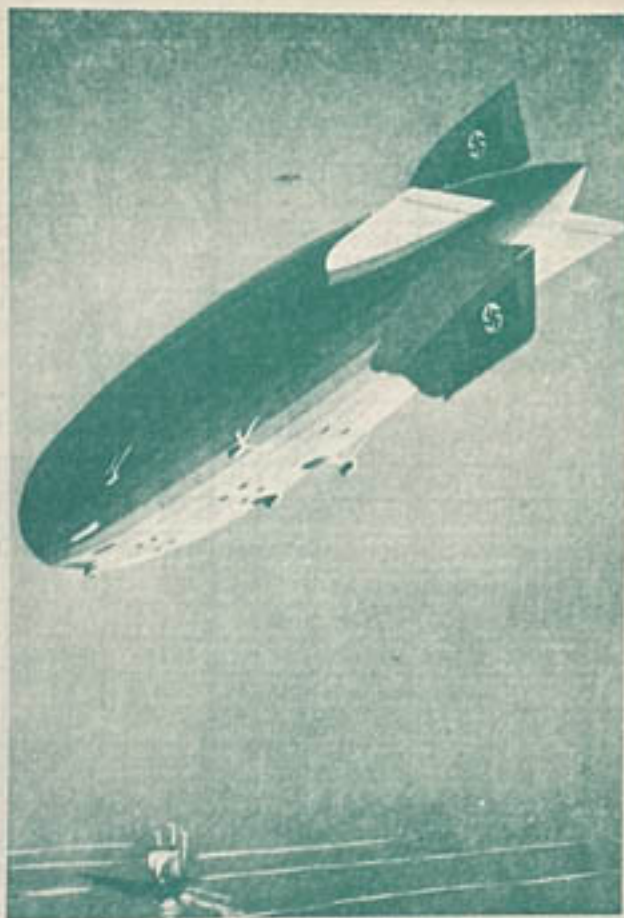
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et Tarifs

des SERVICES TRANSATLANTIQUES de la

DEUTSCHE ZEPPELIN-REEDEREI

Edition juin 1936

Susceptibles d'être modifiés sans préavis



The morning after the afternoon before found the mighty Zeppelin "Hindenburg" a horrible burned out skeleton of just such of her bones as would not burn. This unusual photograph was made by

a private pilot who had the ill luck for his engine to conk out near the crash, and the good to have his small aerial camera on board — and loaded for business. Upper left dark area is a wing strut.

THE ZR-3 (LOS ANGELES)

1924

First zeppelin flight from Friedrichshafen, Germany, to Lakehurst, N.J., in 1924, by the zepp ZR-3. The U.S. had given the designation ZR-3 to the zeppelin that was built as the LZ-126 by the late Count Zeppelin's famous airship company. The ZR-3 was constructed in Germany as a war reparations payment to the U.S. It was later christened the "Los Angeles" after its arrival in the U.S. on Oct. 15, 1924, the date backstamped in New York on the cover and card below.

Mit Luftschiff Z. R. III. ab Friedrichshafen.



First Zeppeline trip from Friedrichshafen (Germany) to Lakehurst, N. J., U. S. A.



Mit
Luftschiff Z. R. 3
befördert

Mit Luftpost

Mr. J. Amort
134, Hendrix Str.
Brooklyn, N. Y., U. S. A.

From Editor "The Airpost Stamp" GEORGE H. JAEGER, Libau, Latvia.



Sender:

E. Thormann
33 Rotkehlchen Weg
Breslau-Zimpel
Deutschland:

Mit Zeppelin
" Von Hindenburg "
nach Nordamerika

Mr.

E. Dressler

3282 32nd Str.

ASTORIA N.I. N.Y.

U. S. A.





Hugo Linneer



An das
Syndicato Condor Ltda.
Caixa Postal 190
Rio de Janeiro
Brasilien

Via Airship "HINDENBURG"
From: FRANKFURT /MAIN, GERMANY
to: LAKEHURST, N. J., U. S. A.



Mr. John S. Cate, 3505 Decatur Ave. Bronx, N.Y.C.

First Day Cover



Herrn Alexander H a r t d e g e n

a/c. Banco Germanico da America do Sul
Caixa Postal 856

Rio de Janeiro
Brasilien

Mit
deutscher
Luftpost!

MIT LUFTPOST
PAR AVION
BY AIR MAIL



Airmail envelope mailed in New York on May 11, 1936, and delivered May 14th at Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, by the Hindenburg.



German airmail stamp of 1936 showing LZ-129, the Hindenburg.



German Airmail Stamps issued
July 5th, 1938 to commemorate the
centenary of the birth of Count
Zeppelin.



Russian Airmail Stamp
of 1930, showing airship over
Dnieprostroy Dam.

Herr Gilboren!

Sehr geehrte!

Frau

sehr lieblich

Ludwigshurg

Gartenplatz 3.



Mit Luftschiff LZ 129.

Herrn

Karl Otto L o s h n e r

E s c h w e g e .

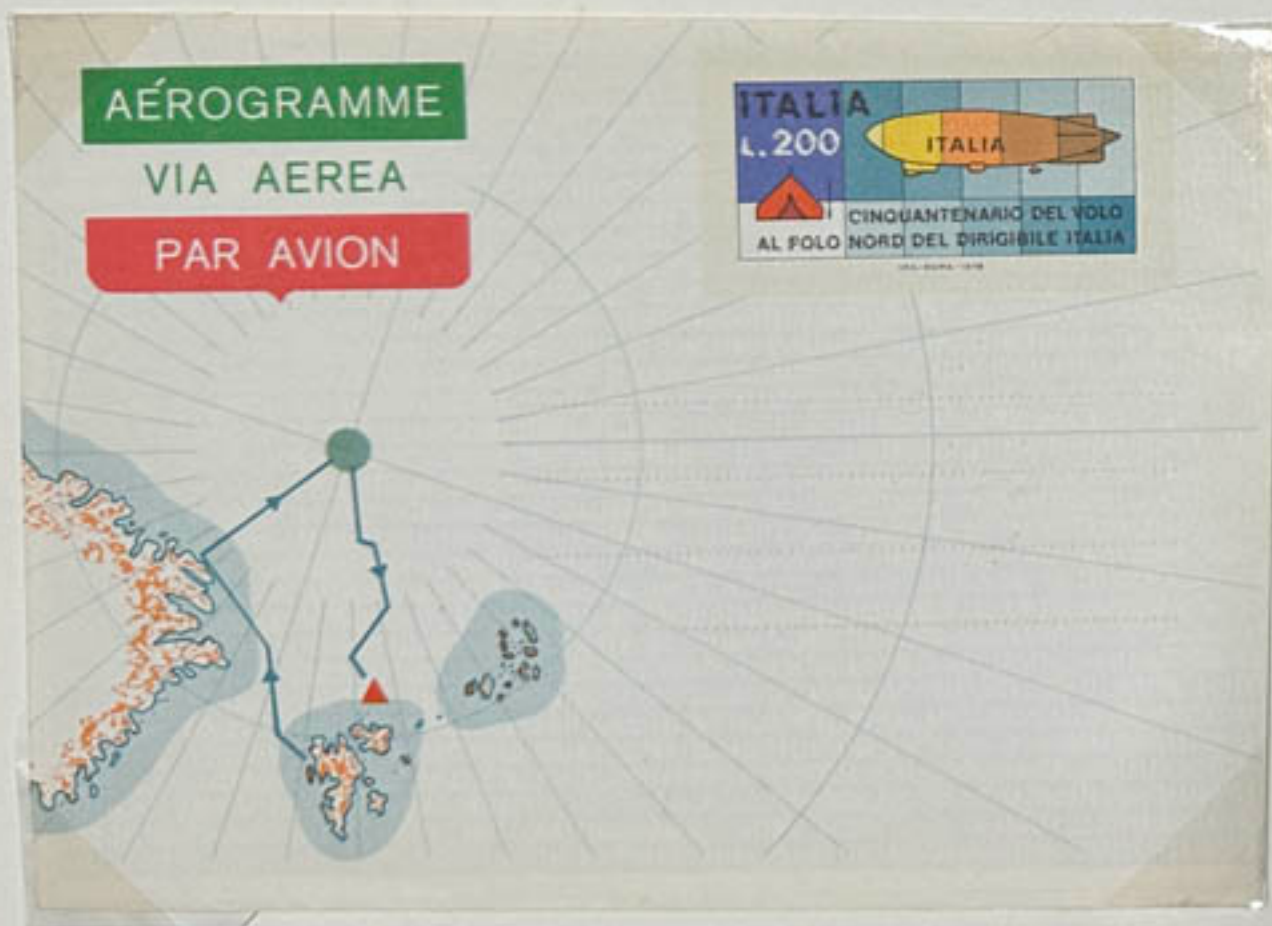
Dünzbacher Str. 5.

Mit
Luftschiff LZ 129
befördert





It was one of the most engaging and remarkable men in the history of aviation, a Brazilian dandy named Alberto Santos-Dumont who wed a dirigible to the newly invented internal combustion engine. By 1900 Santos-Dumont had built a total of fourteen gasoline powered airships. Here are two 1929 Brazilian stamps honoring Dumont.



Lutz Helfricht
H. Duncker Str. 22
D-5230 Soemmerda



PAR AVION
LUFTPOST
AIR MAIL

Peter Bressler
6601 Forestview Dr.
Arlington, TX 76016
USA

ZEPPELIN-



**BRIEFMARKEN - EINE
ERINNERUNG
MIT ZUKUNFT**



DRUCKSACHE
FALLS UNZUSTELLBAR, BITTE AN ABSENDER ZURÜCK!



Dr. Dürr Graf Zeppelin Dr. Eckener

Dieser Brief mit der Nummer
wurde mit dem Luftschiff „EUROPA“ befördert.
Die Beförderung ist nachstehend
durch den Abdruck des Bordstempels bestätigt.
Der Beleg wurde nach der Landung des Luftschiffes
bei der Deutschen Bundespost eingeliefert.



Der Pilot

Erich Selhordt



DRUCKSACHE

Firma
Hermann E. Sieger
Venusberg 32-34
Postfach 11 60

7073 Lorch / Württemberg

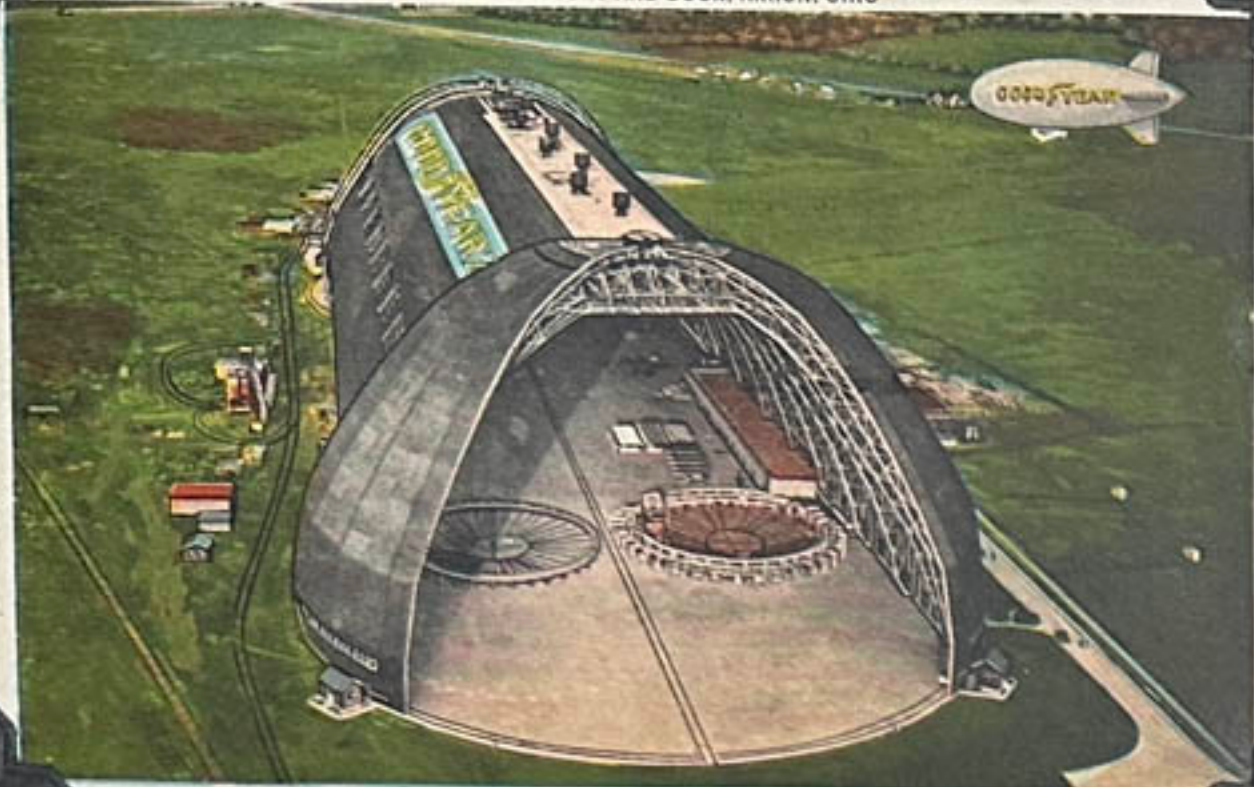
80. DEUTSCHER PHILATELISTENTAG
33. BUNDESTAG DES BUNDES
DEUTSCHER PHILATELISTEN e. V. 
MANNHEIM, 24. - 28. Oktober 1979







THE GOODYEAR-ZEPPELIN CORP'S. AIRSHIP FACTORY AND DOCK, AKRON, OHIO



Moffett Field





Mr. F.L. Garrett
Platteville
Colorado

DEC 5 - 1931

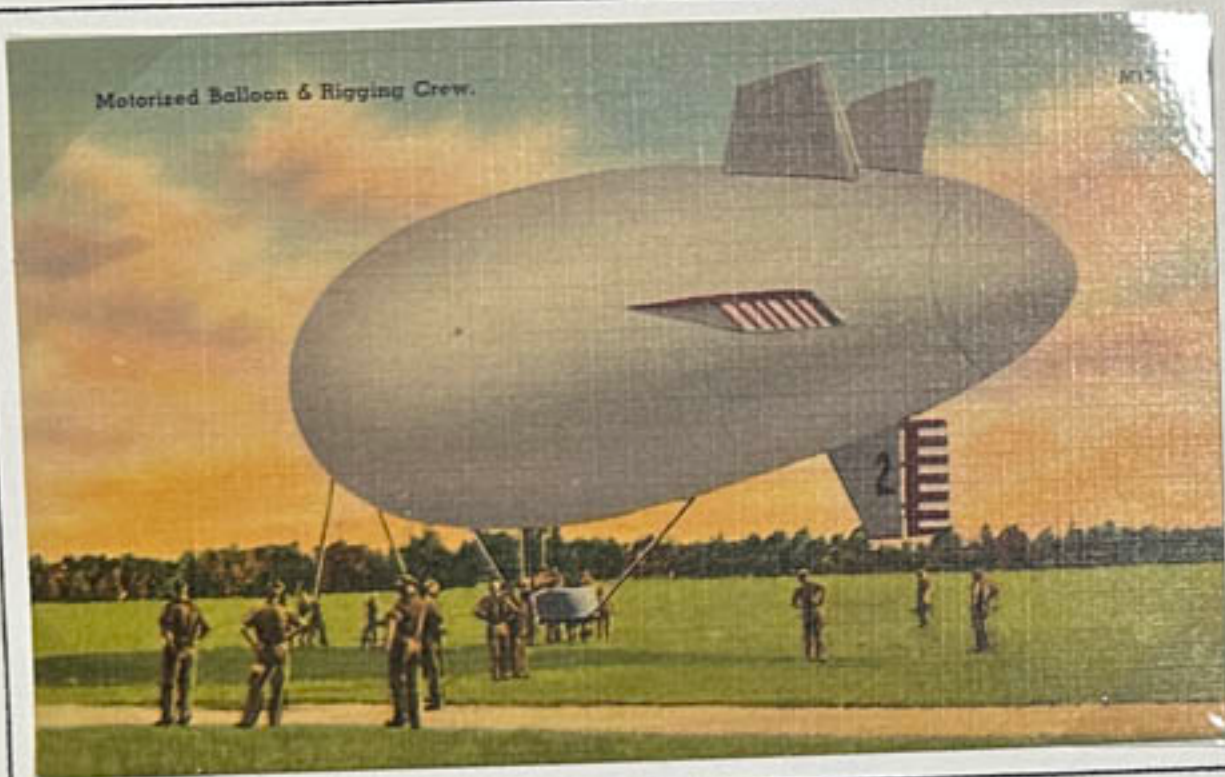


- VIA AIR MAIL -

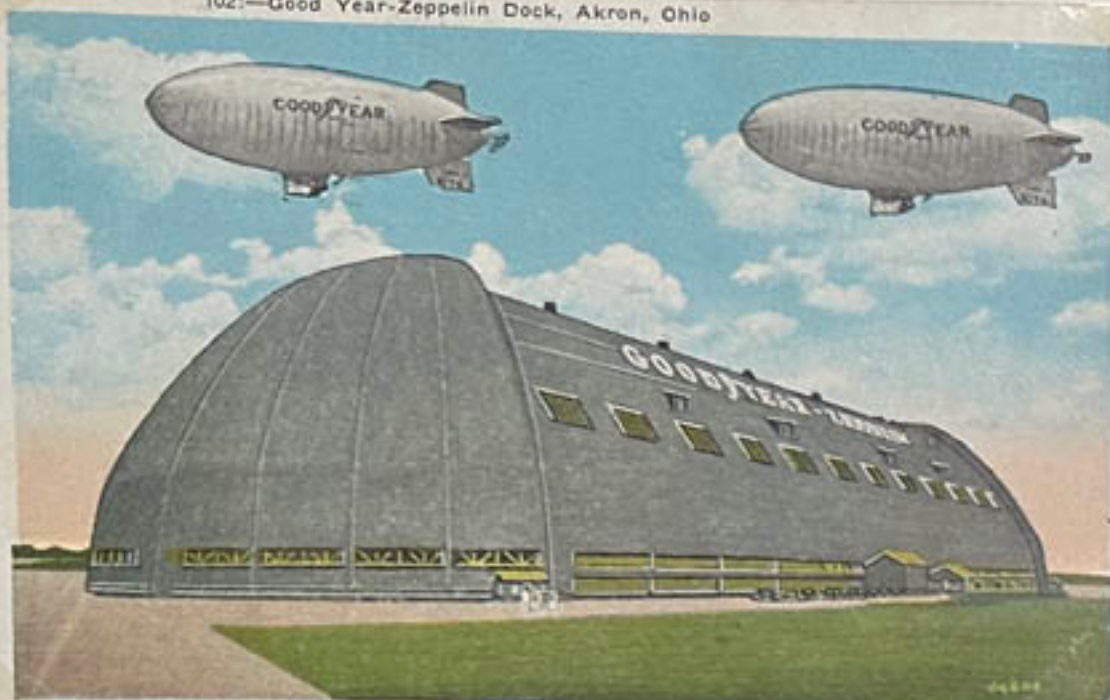
Jack Kincaid
1342 Keeler Ave.
Bartlesville Okla.



Motorized Balloon & Rigging Crew.



102:—Good Year-Zeppelin Dock, Akron, Ohio



GOODYEAR AIRSHIP FACTORY AND DOCK

The length is 1175 feet between dock doors, width is 325 feet, and the height from the floor to the top is 211 feet, Card is dated 1936.

D. C. 44—MacArthur Causeway connecting Miami and Miami Beach, Fla.



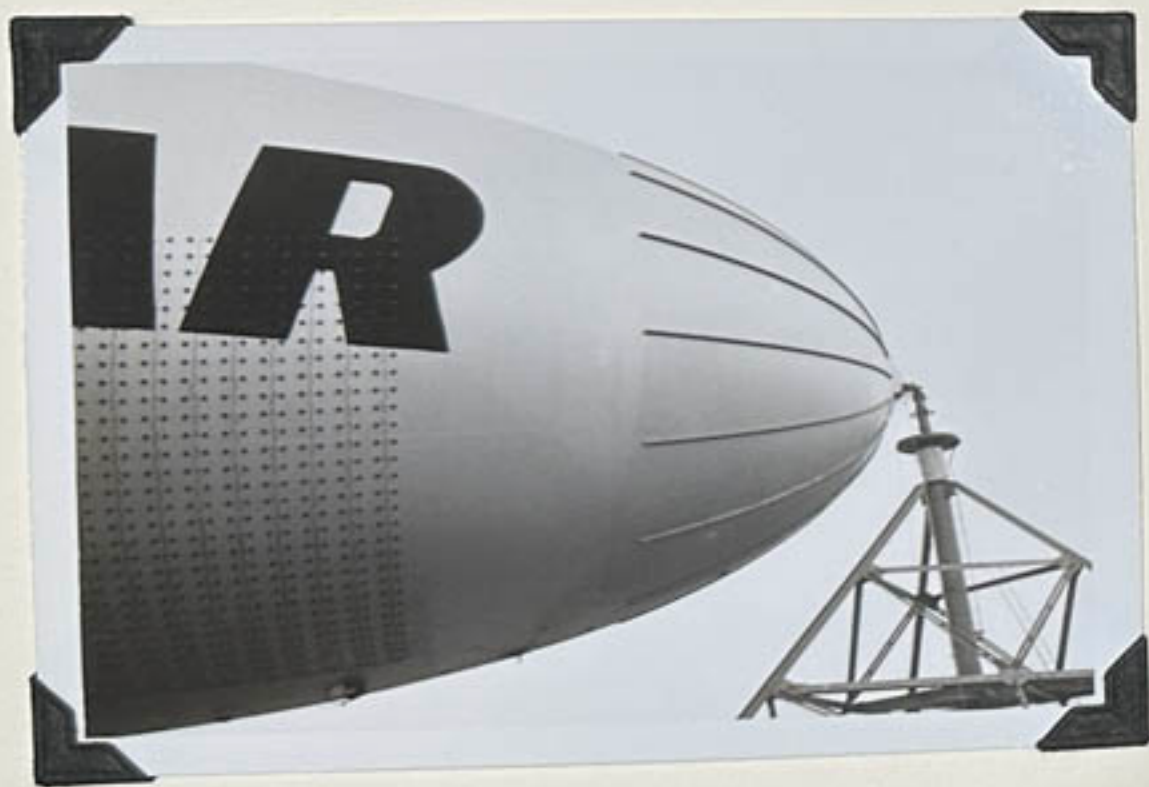






Columbus, Texas, 1976







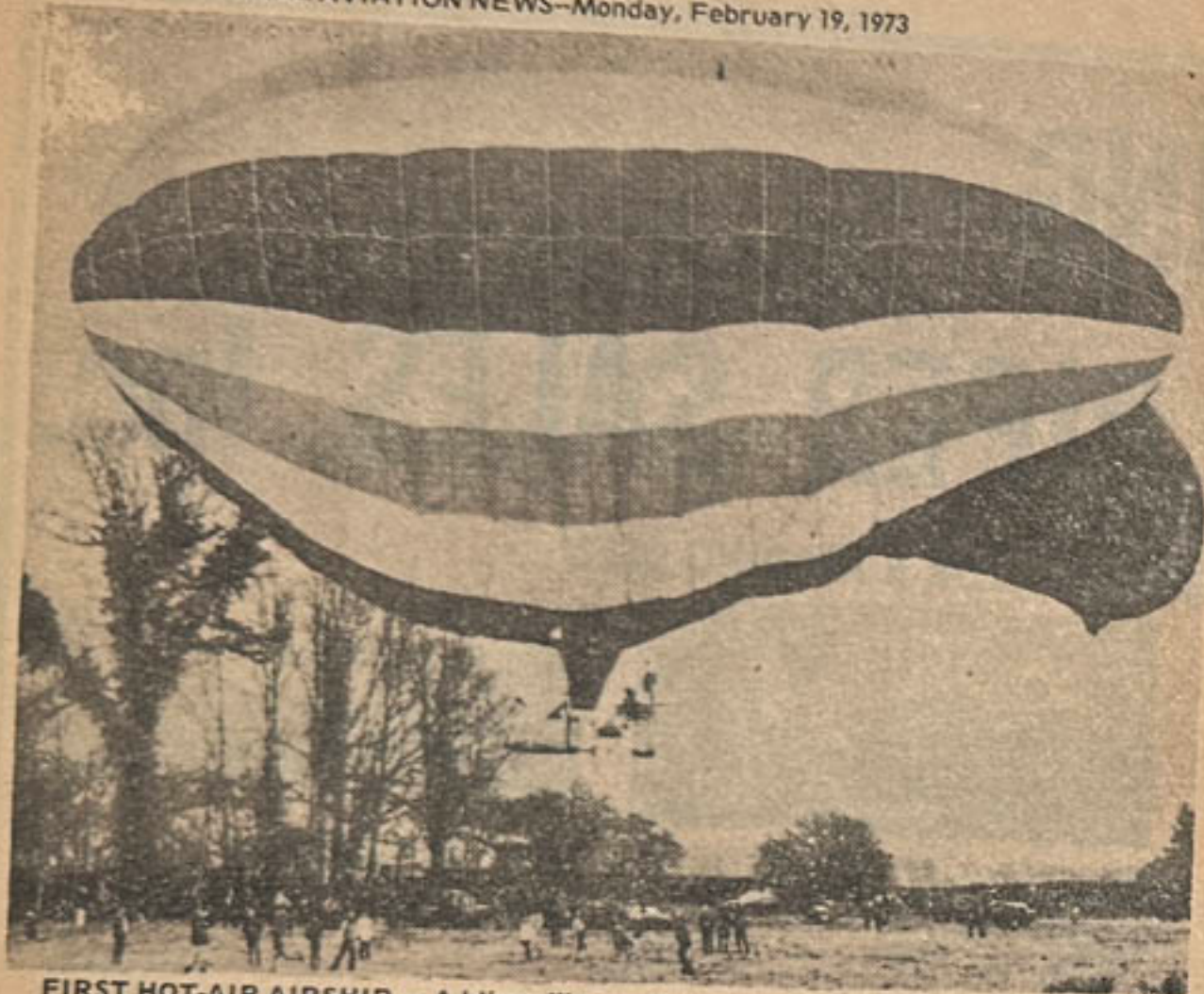
ARIZONA



ARIZONA



HOUSTON



FIRST HOT-AIR AIRSHIP — A blimp-like craft described as the world's first hot-air airship rises from a field near Newbury, England, on its public maiden flight. It measures 100 by 60 feet when inflated, but it can be folded up to fit in a car trailer. It sports an air-inflated rudder and a Volkswagen engine which powers a five-foot propeller. The builders, Cameron Balloons of Bristol and Littlemore Engineering of Oxford, predict big exports.