



Smithsonian
National Air and Space Museum

Walter Wellman Photographs

2010

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Walter Wellman Photographs
Identifier:	NASM.1986.0157
Date:	(bulk 1910)
Extent:	0.05 cubic feet ((1 folder))
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Paul Liscomb, Gift, 1986

Preferred Citation

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Restrictions

No restrictions on access.

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Biographical / Historical

Walter Wellman (1858-1934) was an American journalist and explorer who attempted unsuccessfully both to reach the North Pole and to cross the Atlantic Ocean by powered airship. Born in Ohio, Wellman founded a weekly newspaper in Sutton, Nebraska, when he was 14, and later founded The Cincinnati Evening Post in 1879. For many years, he was the Washington correspondent for the Chicago Herald. He wrote of his many aerial and exploring adventures for the newspapers, including his 1891 claim that he had identified the exact spot where Christopher Columbus landed in San Salvador. Walter Wellman made his first attempt to reach the North Pole by land in 1894, leaving from base camp at Virgo Harbor, Danes Island. In 1898, Wellman headed north to Franz Joseph Land to search for the missing Swedish balloonist Salomon August Andrée and crew who had disappeared the year before in an attempt on the pole. In the spring of 1899, Wellman tried again to sled to the pole; again he failed. After these two sledding expeditions, Wellman decided that the best approach to the North Pole was by air. By 1906, he had raised the necessary funds to construct an airship, airship hangar, and base camp at Virgo Harbor.

Unfortunately, his airship expeditions in search of the geographic North Pole were also unsuccessful; his first airship flight in 1907 only covered twenty miles, while his second attempt in 1909 covered only forty miles. During this latter (and final) attempt, Walter's brother Arthur Wellman managed the expedition's base camp on Dane's Island. After learning that Robert Peary and Frederick Cook both claimed to have reached the North Pole in 1909, Walter Wellman abandoned his own efforts. In 1910, Wellman tried for his last aviation milestone, attempting a transatlantic crossing in his airship America. He was not successful.

Scope and Contents

This collection includes two photographs on postcards. The first is of Wellman-Vaniman airship America. The second shows (left to right) Murray Simon (?) - navigator; Walter Wellman - explorer and journalist; Melvin Vaniman - designer of America and chief engineer on flight over Atlantic; Jack Irwin - radio operator on America; and Frederic Aubert and Louis Loud - engineers.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Aeronautics
Airships
Transatlantic flights
Wellman-Vaniman America

Types of Materials:

Photographic postcards

Names:

Vaniman, Melvin
Wellman, Walter, 1858-1934.