



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Thaddeus S. C. Lowe Family Photographs Collection

Allan Janus

2018

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Thaddeus S. C. Lowe Family Photographs Collection
Date:	(bulk 1862-1895) 1862-1965
Identifier:	NASM.2011.0025
Creator:	Lowe, Thaddeus S. C.
Extent:	0.49 Cubic feet (2 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Thaddeus S. C. Lowe Family Photographs Collection contains material from the post-Civil War activities of aeronaut Thaddeus Sobieski Constantine Lowe, his wife, Leontine Augustine Gachon Lowe, and their family.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Lance Ferm, Gift, 2011

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Allan Janus, 2018.

Preferred Citation

Thaddeus S. C. Lowe Family Photographs Collection, Accession 2011-0025, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Thaddeus Sobieski Constantine Lowe (1832-1913), was a balloonist, the Chief Aeronaut of the Union Army's Balloon Corps, a self-trained scientist and engineer, and an inventor and entrepreneur. He was born in Jefferson Mills, New Hampshire on August 20, 1832. After leaving his local grammar school, Lowe educated himself in chemistry and meteorology. Lowe built a portable laboratory and traveled on the lecture circuit, lecturing on scientific subjects and giving public demonstrations. In 1855, Lowe married Leontine Augustine Gachon, a French actress; they eventually had ten children. Lowe acquired his first balloon in 1856, and

first achieved public notice with a series of ascents in Ottawa in 1858. In 1859, Lowe developed plans for a transatlantic flight with his giant "City of New York" (later renamed "Great Western") balloon, though the attempt was never made. With the coming of the Civil War, Lowe offered his services as a balloonist to the Union Army. His reconnaissance operations were appreciated, but disputes over pay caused him to resign in 1863. Lowe developed and patented the water gas process for the production of hydrogen gas, and invented a series of ice-making machines. Lowe moved to California in 1887 and eventually settled in Pasadena, where he built ice plants and founded a bank. With David J. Macpherson, Lowe began the construction of the Pasadena and Mt. Wilson Railway. By 1899, Lowe had suffered financial setbacks and his fortune was lost. Thaddeus S. C. Lowe died at the age of 80 in Pasadena on January 16, 1913.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of Lowe family photographs, including portraits and mounted stereographs of Lowe, his wife Leontine Augustine Gachon Lowe, and their children. The collection also includes a folding leather wallet album of carte de visite portraits of Lowe, Leontine Lowe, and their children. There are two albums of photographs from a world cruise made by Leontine Lowe, circa 1889, including photographs of India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), China, Japan, Egypt, Palestine, and Greece. The images are round Kodak No. 2 photographs. The album pages have been dismantled. Besides family photographs, there are also photographs from the Civil War, including a Mathew Brady studio image of Lowe's Balloon Camp at Gaines' Hill during the battle of Fair Oaks, June 1, 1862, showing Lowe in the basket of a balloon held by Union soldiers; a portrait of Lowe with his father, Clovis Lowe; and a stereograph of one of Lowe's portable hydrogen generators. Photographs of Lowe's other business ventures include photographs of Lowe's Pasadena and Mt. Wilson Railway, later known as the Mt. Lowe Railway, and of a visit by Charles William Eliot, President of Harvard, to Pasadena and Mt. Wilson, April 1892, and a mounted photograph of a Lowe designed coke furnace in operation at the San Francisco Coke & Gas Company. Besides the photographs there is a letter from General Andrew A. Humphreys (Lowe's commanding officer) to Lowe, dated July 23, 1862.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged by subject matter.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Balloons
- Civil War, 1861-1865
- Mt. Lowe Railway
- Railroads
- Travel

Types of Materials:

- Cartes-de-visite
- Correspondence
- Photographs
- Stereoscopic photographs

Names:

Lowe, Leontine Gachon
Lowe, Thaddeus S. C.

Container Listing

Photographs, Letters, Ephemera

Box 1, Folder 1	Thaddeus S. C. Lowe portraits
Box 1, Folder 2	Lowe Family photographs and stereographs
Box 1, Folder 3	Photograph - "Camping in the Petrified Forests of Arizona"
Box 1, Folder 4	Civil War photographs
Box 1, Folder 5	Lowe's Reverberatory Coke Oven - photograph
Box 1, Folder 6	Pasadena and Mt. Wilson Railway - photographs
Box 1, Folder 7	Charles William Eliot visit to Mt. Wilson - photographs, 1892
Box 1, Folder 8	Letter to Lowe from Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys, July 23, 1862
Box 1, Folder 9	Ephemera; newspaper article, 1962-1965
Box 2, Folder 1	Carte de visite wallet album
Box 2, Folder 2	Leontine Lowe World Cruise photo album pages
Box 2, Folder 3	Leontine Lowe World Cruise photo album covers
Box 2, Folder 4	Lowe family portrait
Box 2, Folder 5	Portrait of Thaddeus S. C. Lowe with his brothers

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