



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

John Steiner Balloon Ascension Ambrotype

2019

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	John Steiner Balloon Ascension Ambrotype
Date:	1857
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0617
Extent:	0.05 Cubic feet (1 quarter-plate ambrotype)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This quarter-plate ambrotype made by an unknown photographer shows the balloon ascension by John Steiner at Erie, Pennsylvania, on June 18, 1857.
Digital Content:	Image(s): John Steiner Balloon Ascension Ambrotype

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Robert L. Drapkin, Gift, 1985, NASM.XXXX.0617.

Processing Information

Arranged and described by Allan Janus, 2000, and encoded by Melissa A. N. Keiser, 2019.

Preferred Citation

John Steiner Balloon Ascension Ambrotype, Acc. XXXX.0617, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Professor John H. Steiner emigrated from Germany in 1853 and quickly established himself as a daring aeronaut. Steiner's flight in 1857, the first attempt to fly to Canada across Lake Erie, made him famous. Due to adverse weather conditions, Steiner eventually was forced to jump into the lake and was rescued by the crew of the steamer *Mary Stewart*. His balloon was later found, in tatters, having successfully made it to Canada without its pilot. During the Civil War, Steiner served as a balloonist for the Union forces with Thaddeus S.C. Lowe's Balloon Corps. As a civilian in 1863, Steiner gave a tethered balloon ride to German officer, Ferdinand von Zeppelin, who was on leave as a military observer with Union army. Years later, after

Count Zeppelin's rigid airships had flown over the cities of Europe, Zeppelin recalled his flight with Steiner as his inspiration.

Scope and Contents

This quarter-plate ambrotype made by an unknown photographer, shows the balloon ascension by John Steiner at Erie, Pennsylvania, on June 18, 1857. The scene pictured is the first attempt to fly to Canada across Lake Erie. This ambrotype, which shows men ringing the balloon as it is inflated outdoors, is thought to be the earliest dated photographic image of a balloon ascension in the United States.

Arrangement

Single item.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Balloon ascensions
- Balloons -- pre-1900

Names:

- Steiner, John H,