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THE MILITARY AIRSHIP;  
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BY

LESTER L. MILLER, JR.

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## FOREWORD

The balloon was designed by Francesco de Lama, an Italian friar, during the Seventeenth century but it was not until 5 June 1783 that a Frenchman named Montgolfier successfully lofted a balloon to approximately 6,000 feet in height. On 15 October of the same year a Mssr. deRozier achieved the first manned flight. The initial United States ascent took place on 24 June 1784. The first use of a balloon during wartime occurred when Mr. James Allen piloted one for the Federal side on 9 June 1861. The first successful aerial reconnaissance was made on 3 August of that year. Throughout the balance of the Civil War observation balloons were used by both the North and South.

In 1892 a balloon section of the United States Army's Signal Corps was formed under the direction of Brigadier General Adolphus W. Greely, Chief Signal Officer. A captive-type balloon was used in 1898 during the Spanish-American War for spotting Spanish troops near Santiago, Cuba. In 1902, Brigadier General Greely formed a balloon detachment to replace the section. The French introduced the concept of artillery spotters who technologically advised gun crews where to lay indirect fire. These balloon crews worked in captive balloons which were anchored in place and had telephone wires strung from the balloon baskets. Although pilots did not wear parachutes in 1914, balloon crews did. During 1915 Germany unleashed the Graf Zeppelin on England in a series of bombing raids.

Balloons had a shared impact along with airplanes on aerial developments and artillery philosophy at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. In July, 1915, the first military aviation unit, the First Aero Squadron, arrived for duty followed shortly after by the Third Aero Squadron. These units used aircraft to make aerial reconnaissance and fire control possible. Their airfield was a pasture on the site of the present airfield. During May, 1916 Captain F.B. Hennessey of the Field Artillery witnessed kite balloon tests at the Goodyear Plant at Akron, Ohio to check on their application for the branch. Military testing began at Fort Bliss, Texas in October, 1916. Company A, First Balloon Squadron, was formed at Fort Sill on 24 September, 1917. Balloon number "K-3" was first lofted on 26 September. The Fourth Aero Squadron arrived the same day. Construction of an airfield was begun on 8 August 1917 and was activated on 10 September 1917. It was named in commemoration of Lieutenant Henry Post who had been killed while attempting to establish an altitude record in 1914. The following year the School for Aerial Observers was founded. On completion of this two-week course the students attended the Air Service School which was located at the airfield. Upon graduation they were usually picked up by the Signal Corps which controlled the Air Service. In the fall of 1918 an agreement was reached with the Signal Corps and a joint seven-week course was begun for flying cadets and artillery observers. During World War One there were only two courses offered at Fort Sill. In addition to the Air Service program the School of Fire conducted an Artillery Officer's course to prepare artillerymen for combat in Europe. In 1921 an Air Service Observation Course was introduced but was discontinued the same year. An aerial observation unit was part of the Battery Officer Course but was discontinued after the 1921-22 school year. This was the last such course until an organic air observation course was approved on 10 December 1941. From 1942 to July, 1953 a great variety of officer, warrant, and enlisted personnel courses were offered at Henry Post Field.

Throughout most of this period balloons were in use at the Fort. The balloon hangar was constructed in 1934.

As war clouds loomed on the horizon, the United States Congress authorized a blimp fleet for coastal patrols and anti-submarine drills in 1940. Balloons were used for general low-altitude purposes throughout WWII. On 30 June 1962, the final two airships still in use were retired from service. The United States was the only nation still using lighter-than-air vehicles at the time.

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"Five thousand balloons, capable of raising two men each, could not cost more than five ships of the line; and where is the prince who can afford so to cover his country with troops for its defense as that 10,000 men descending from the clouds might not in many places do an indefinite deal of mischief before a force could be brought together to repel them?"

Benjamin Franklin

PERIODICALS CITED

UF1      Antiaircraft Journal  
C7

U1      Army Quarterly  
A85

UF3      Artilleristische Rundschau  
A85

UF7      Bulletin de Renseignements de l'Artillerie  
F81

U1      C. & G.S.S. (Command & General Staff School) Quarterly, Review of  
R4      Current Military Writings, Military Review

UA600    Canadian Army Journal  
A71

UE1      Cavalry Journal  
C2

UF1      Coast Artillery Journal  
C7

UF1      Field Artillery Journal  
F6

UD1      Infantry Journal  
I6

D767    Intelligence Bulletin (USAFPOA)  
I65

U1      Journal Military Service Institution  
M6

U1      Journal of the American Military Institute  
A4

UF1      Journal of the Royal Artillery  
W8

U1      Journal of the Royal United Service Institute  
J7

E171    Magazine of American History  
M18

VE1      Marine Corps Gazette  
M3

D743 Military Report on the United Nations  
U6

D770 O.N.I. Weekly  
05

UB323 Recruiting News  
A32

UA560.1 Reserve Officer  
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