

Activity IN Ballooning



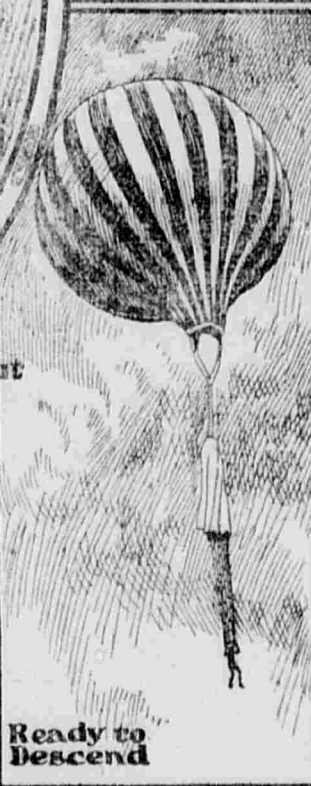
Leo Stevens, American Aeronaut

THE present season promises to be a lively one for aeronauts and aeronautics. Although the usual experiments in air navigation were carried on by the French and British war departments most of the glory of achievement last season was won by civilian enterprise. The United States government—always a bit conservative in the matter of ballooning—seems to have waked up to the possibilities of air travel. It has gone so far as to establish a flying corps as a regular branch of the army. An order for three new balloons of the gas bag pattern has been placed with Leo Stevens, the veteran ascensionist and balloon maker, and as soon as they are delivered at Omaha—probably early in May—a series of experiments will be made.

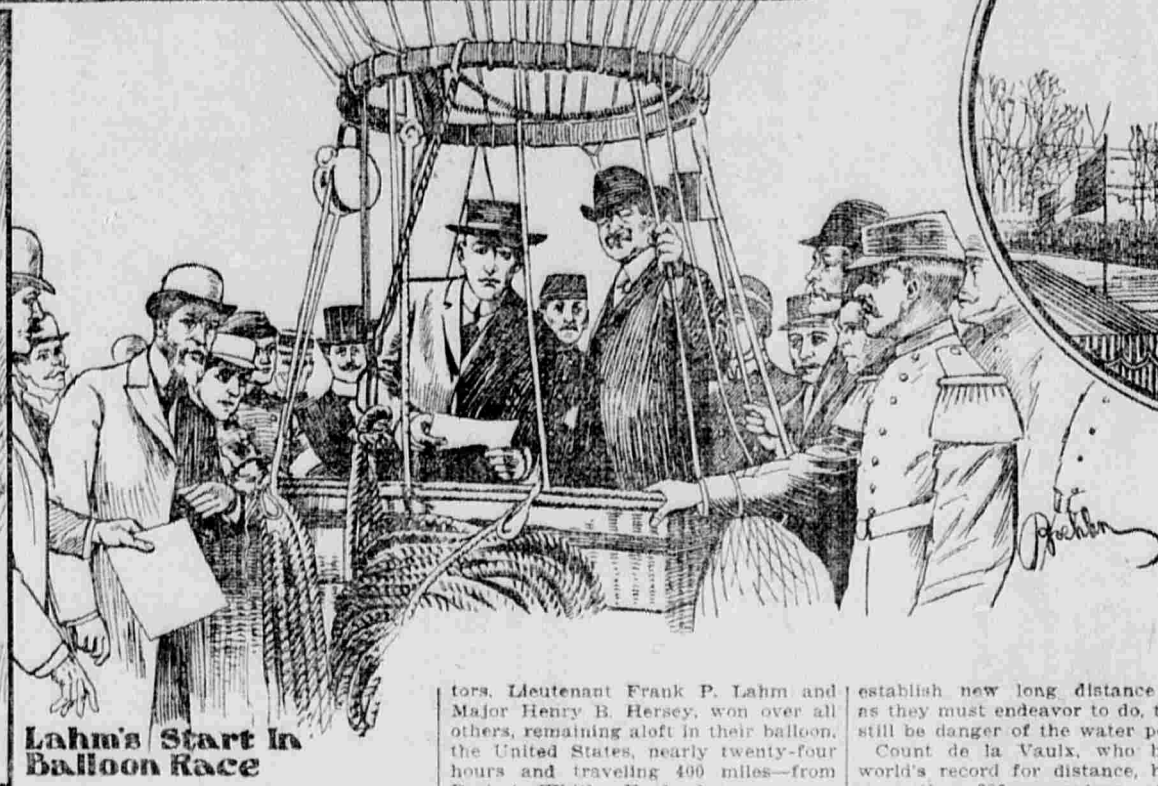
At first thought it is rather disappointing that the government has made no advance in substituting some one of the numerous widely exploited airships of recent times for the old fashioned gas bag. The fact is, the government has become weary of the repeated failure that has followed every trial of a new principle and has also grown correspondingly wary. It has not forgotten that once upon a time congress appropriated \$50,000 for an airplane that promised for certain to go—and didn't. It took it only about ten seconds to fall with a smash that was perfectly convincing—so much so,



Filling the Balloon with Gas



Ready to Descend



Lahm's Start in Balloon Race

Indeed, that congress has been exceedingly shy of aerial fliers ever since.

Of course the gas balloon is a different proposition. It has been shown to be useful in many ways, and there are possibilities still awaiting demonstration. The European military departments have kept right at it, and Uncle Sam is not averse to a modest exploitation now and then. The present season will witness a more extended course of experiment than has ever yet been undertaken. The largest of the balloons constructed by Leo Stevens will have a capacity of 78,000 cubic

feet of gas and will cost about \$12,000. These new balloons are intended for signal work, and experiments with bombs and high explosives will also be made with them.

But Uncle Sam is not the only one who is interested in balloons this year. The greatest aeronautic congress ever held will assemble at Norfolk during the Jamestown Tercentennial, and St. Louis has been selected by the Aero club as the point at which will be held the international balloon races in the contest for the James Gordon Bennett prize of 1907.

In the last international balloon race, held in Paris, two American competi-

tors, Lieutenant Frank P. Lahm and Major Henry B. Hersey, won over all others, remaining aloft in their balloon, the United States, nearly twenty-four hours and traveling 400 miles—from Paris to Whitby, England.

Count Henri de la Vaulx took the long distance record away from St. Louis in 1900 by making a balloon voyage of 1,200 miles. Since the summer of 1859 it had been accredited to John Wise, who sailed from the Mount City and after a flight of 1,150 miles landed safely in Jefferson county, New York.

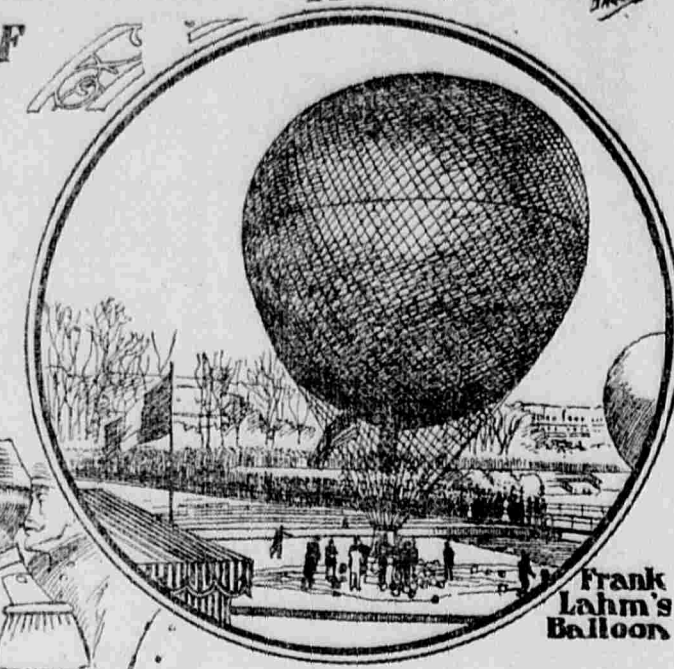
Count de la Vaulx, it seems, has relatives in St. Louis, and he has made frequent trips to that city. For that reason he was an ardent advocate of the Mount City's advantages as a point for the international races. He pointed out its special qualification of being such a long distance from the great bodies of water, but if the contestants

establish new long distance records, as they must endeavor to do, there will still be danger of the water peril.

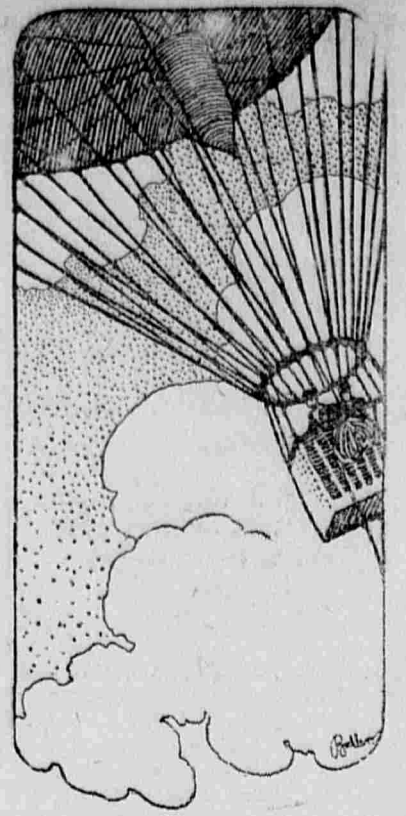
Count de la Vaulx, who holds the world's record for distance, has made more than 300 ascensions, at least a hundred more than has Leo Stevens, the American expert. He has traversed fully 25,000 miles of the upper atmosphere and in all has been in the air about sixty days. He has had as companions in his ascents more than 1,000 persons, a hundred of them being women. He also has the record for remaining longest in the air—forty-one hours—while assisting in scientific experiments over the Mediterranean. The greatest altitude ever reached by the count was four and a half miles.

There are many students of aerial navigation who do not look for any further development of the gas bag type of airship. Sir Hiram Maxim is

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS INVESTIGATING AND ANOTHER INTERNATIONAL RACE IS COMING OFF



Frank Lahm's Balloon



ton claim to have been witnesses of these marvelous feats. It is asserted that the driver of the machine had perfect control of it, moved up and down as he willed and that the strong air currents did not complicate the direction of the apparatus. Trees were circled, fields were passed over in every direction and the inventors were able to bring their contrivance to earth without any sudden jar, showing that it was under their control.

The secrecy connected with the discovery is not reassuring, but it is maintained by friends of the brothers that they expect to sell their invention for a great sum to a foreign government and cannot afford to risk publicity. Santos-Dumont is so confident of the worthlessness of the claim that he has challenged the Wrights to compete for the prize of \$50,000 offered by the London Daily Mail to the owner of the first airship that shall travel from London to Manchester, a distance of 185 miles. At latest account, the brothers had not accepted the Frenchman's challenge.

Now the situation in the United States resolves itself into a competition between the contestants for the government prize at the Jamestown exposition and the St. Louis competitors. The principle of successful aerial navigation is involved. While the round balloon will be used exclusively at St. Louis, there is a division in the ranks of the flying machine men. Some of them insist on the aeroplane idea and that alone, and others are satisfied with the combination of the gas bag and the motor. Santos-Dumont, who has been devoted to the combination theory, has recently gone over to the other side.

S. Y. JOHNSON.

Cautchouc in Cuba.

In describing the cultivation of a hardy variety of rubber tree in Cuba, a writer in the National Magazine of Cuba says that it is advisable to plant the small trees about six meters apart.

In this way, at the age of 15 to 20 years the trees having reached a height of say 30 feet, do not interfere with minor cultivations.

While the trees are reaching maturity, the grower can raise beans, kidney beans, nuts or cassavas, ma-

langa, cotton and maize. The pine-apple will make a profitable interpolated crop.

The cautchouc requires no cultivation, the grass and the vegetation assist the young plant, and when older the shade eliminates all useless grass-

es and herbs. The tree can be tapped at the fifth year, but more satisfactory results will be attained by waiting until the sixth year, and then, instead of abstracting two or three pounds of juice, it is prudent to take no more than one to one and a half pounds, ac-

cording to the development of the tree; an average of one and a half pounds would be very reasonable.

If methodically handled, the rubber tree is extremely long-lived, and from eighth to tenth year the tree will produce about six pounds annually, and

still remain in condition to give service many years to come.

"When do you expect to begin working the mine?"
"As soon as we get through with the public."—Judge.

The Other End of It.

Customer—Who is that lady your clerks are treating with so much deference?
Bookseller—That? Oh, that's Mrs. Laytest. She is one of our six best buyers.—Puck.

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