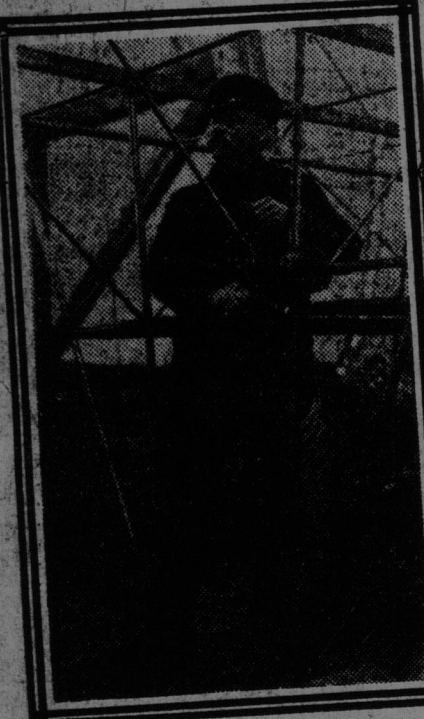


# TO THE POLE BY AIRSHIP



Wellman at the Wheel

Some fine day in August, if present plans do not miscarry, Walter Wellman, one of the most persistent of American Arctic explorers, will set out for the North Pole in an airship. This is by no means his first attempt to reach the apex of our planet. In 1894 and again in 1898 he invaded the frozen North, and, where he did not get within sight of the Pole, he did discover new lands and otherwise contribute to the world's knowledge of this region. Both of these exploring expeditions were, however, conducted on the regulation plan—that is, by means of stanch vessels that could defy the ice and supplemented by the dog teams which are well nigh indispensable to explorations in the Arctic.

Wellman was not very strongly impressed by the project of the ill-fated Andree for reaching the Pole in an ordinary free balloon of the spherical type, which must obviously be at the mercy of the winds, but from the time that the dirigible or steerable balloon first proved its practicality for long flights, he was imbued with an ambition to trek northward via the aerial route—the one untrodden pathway to the Pole, and the one which it seemed might be free from the obstacles which have rendered baffling the other highways during all these years of polar campaigning. It was in the year 1903 that Wellman first formulated definitely in his mind his daring scheme for cruising to the North Pole in an airship and sending back the news of his victory by means of that twentieth century innovation, wireless telegraphy.

Practical work began at once and the following season, the summer of 1906, saw the Arctic airship America a reality, and a balloon house with the necessary incidental repair shops, etc., established far within the Arctic Circle and at a point as near to the Pole as it was practicable to establish a permanent human habitation. At first it was hoped that flight for the Pole could be arranged that summer, but it was soon seen that everything was so new and untried that the entire "open season" of two and a half months must be given over to preparations and the in-

stitution of permanent headquarters. With a working base provided, the Arctic aeronaut and his aids went northward the following year, the summer of 1907, filled with hope that they could make their impatiently awaited dash for the Pole. However, unkindly fate vetoed the project by providing weather conditions which no aerial craft could combat. This was particularly discouraging because Wellman knew that business engagements would keep him in the United States during the summer of 1908 and the weather handicap of 1907 meant that the project must be put off until 1909. However, a brief respite in the gales of 1907 did permit Wellman to make a 30-mile voyage in his airship that clinched his faith in the flyer and has made him all the more confident of the outcome this year if he but has reasonable weather conditions—something more auspicious than the terrific summer of 1907.

In speaking of his unique project, just before setting out for the North, Mr. Wellman said: "The object of our proposed aerial cruise is not merely to reach the Pole, but also to gain knowledge of the unexplored region lying about it. If the America were simply to pass over this unknown area, the observations as to land or water masses, ice conditions, the weather characteristics of the region, etc., would, I think, be of immense value. We believe that our airship, with its ability to motor more than 2,000 miles on the supply of fuel we shall carry, has at least a fair chance to navigate from our headquarters directly to the Pole."

"The distance from our headquarters to the Pole is 715 statute miles. Once at the Pole we should be able to go with the most favorable wind toward any part of the land which surrounds the Arctic Sea. The greatest distance from the Pole to land is 1,600 miles, while the shortest dis-

tance is 535 miles and the average distance is in the neighborhood of 700 miles. At the outset of our dash toward the Pole we can certainly count upon the assistance of a favorable wind because we will not set out from Camp Wellman until we have such favorable wind. However, even if the wind proves generally unfavorable after we leave the permanent balloon station the project is yet possible of accomplishment.

"In order that our effort may be crowned with success it is only necessary that the America shall carry us somewhere near the Pole, because we are going prepared to make the remainder of the journey to the Pole and back again by sledging. The America can proceed with her engine power for 120 hours, traveling continuously at a speed of 15 miles per hour. The average wind of the Polar Ocean in July and August is 10 miles per hour. If we are so unfortunate as to have a wind of average force blowing directly contrary to our course throughout the entire time of the voyage, we could still make headway at the rate of eight miles per hour, which would allow in the 120 hours' travel permitted by our fuel supply a distance covered of about 960 miles. Now, as I have mentioned, it is only 715 miles from our base of supplies to the Pole.

"Granting these most unfavorable conditions we would find ourselves at the Pole with our fuel well nigh exhausted, but

The Balloon House



"America" Leaving Shed

there is every reason to believe that our airship would remain in the air several days longer with a large chance that in that time the winds would carry her as a free drifting balloon far toward some land, and of course any land would mean safety for our crew. Even should this alternative fail we would have no reason to be discouraged, for we have not put all our eggs in one basket or in two baskets, for that matter. We still have recourse to the sledging scheme. We go prepared not only for the summer and autumn, but with provisions enough to enable us to remain in the North, if need be, the entire winter, sledging back the following spring, which is the season when Arctic travel may be pursued most favorably.

One important factor in favor of Wellman's success this season is that he will not be compelled to lose much time in experimental preliminaries. On the other hand, he has a readiness carefully planned and fully equipped headquarters. This base of supplies, known as "Camp Wellman," is located on Dunes Island, Spitzbergen, an uninhabited and unclaimed country. Here is a huge steel framework 35 feet high and more than 200 feet in length, securely anchored and braced to withstand the severest Arctic blasts. It is but necessary to spread an acre of sail cloth over this skeleton structure and there is provided a balloon house that is adequate for all practical purposes. Ma-



Interior of the America

Interior of Balloon House and Top of Inflated Airship

chine shops and other incidental structures are all in place, having been constructed during the past few years—grouped within a stone's throw of that rugged monument which marks the spot from which Andree set out on that tragic first attempt to reach the Pole by the aerial route. This balloon station and the airship itself were provided by the investment of the Chicago capitalists who backed Mr. Wellman's aerial project at the outset, but the whole installation was this year turned over to the explorer as a gift and his present quest is made with his own funds supplemented by the contributions of several men who are ambitious that an American shall best explorers of all other nationalities to the Pole.

While, as has been explained, Wellman has headquarters ready to hand in the Arctic, the airship must be transported from Paris, where it has been since the last attempt at a Polar cruise, and a variety of other equipment must be assembled. For one thing, a complete new gas-making plant is to be installed to provide lifting power for the gigantic balloon. This new hydrogen plant involves the transportation to Dunes Island of 110 tons of sulphuric acid and 70 tons of iron shavings. This paraphernalia, the airship, and finally, Mr. Wellman and the members of his party are being transferred from Tromsø, North Norway, to Dunes Island, by the motor ship Arctic, which will have to make several of these ferry trips ere everything is assembled at the base of supplies.

This motor ship Arctic which is playing so important a part in Mr. Wellman's present preparations is herself an object of no mean interest. She was launched only this past spring and is a three-masted schooner of 450 tons burden, built especially for ice navigation and of great sailing power. She is also fitted with a petroleum motor, which makes her independent of her sails if need be, this motor giving the vessel a speed of seven miles per hour without the use of sails. She carries a crew of 12 men. When the Arctic discharges her final cargo at Spitzbergen the denizens of the far North will see a very different airship from that which Wellman brought to this outpost of civilization several years ago. Melvin Vaniman, the chief engineer of the expedition, has occupied the interim in making many improvements in his craft. The most important of these

is found in the installation of a second complete motive system, separate and distinct from the one originally installed. This extra engine power is insurance against accident, and will double the speed of the airship if both motors are operated at the same time, as they may be without interfering with one another.

The "America," which the adventurous Walter Wellman relies upon to land him at the Pole, is a dozen times as large as any of the dirigible balloons with which Americans are familiar through the exhibitions given in recent years at county fairs and military tournaments. It is not so large as the German giant of the air with which Count Zeppelin recently sailed 900 miles to the consternation of all Europe, and especially Great Britain, but it is twice as large as the French airships regarding which newspaper readers have heard much. Expressed in solid figures the America is 154 feet long and 62 feet in diameter at her greatest girth. She will lift nearly 10 tons. From the cigar-shaped gas bag of the America is suspended a steel car 110 feet in length.

This car will be pretty lighted when the ship sails poleward. Here will be stationed Aeronaut Wellman and his party. Considerable space must be given over to the two motors of 8-horsepower each for driving the ship through the air and yet more space is taken up by the all-important supply of gasoline. Some 1,200 gallons of the gasoline is stored in a round steel tank, a foot and a half in diameter, which extends the entire length of the car, and thousands of pounds in addition are stored in every available nook and corner so that all told the America will carry upward of three tons of this precious fuel.

This is by no means all of the cargo of the pioneer airship. Fully as important as anything that has been mentioned are the 10 sledges, sledges and fully equipped life boat—practical life preservers designed to enable the aeronauts to make their way homeward should their craft leave them shipwrecked on land, ice or water. Then there are provisions for 10 months in this crowded space, tools for making huts out of the heavy balloon fabric in the event of disaster to the airship, and finally, a formidable array of scientific instruments of all kinds for making and recording observations of all kinds.

No mention of the premier Arctic airship would be complete without reference to one feature the like of which has never been possessed by any other sky craft. This novelty, which could be used only over the ice fields where there are no houses, electric wires or other obstacles is known as the "equilibrator." This ponderous tail of the airship weighs 1,200 pounds. When not in use it is drawn up under the car, but when needed it can be let loose and dragging over the ice, serves as a powerful brake to prevent the airship from being swept out of her course by contrary winds. The odd thing about it is that this Yankee invention serves a double purpose, for the interior is stuffed with provisions for the use of the balloonists. The stuffed serpent is waterproof so no harm can come to the food even though the retarder be dragged through icy seas.

## THE WEATHER

Do not grieve about the weather; It won't make much difference whether You are pleased with it or not. You can't stop it if it rains. And you know all your complaining Will not make it cold or hot.

Better take it as you find it; If it's bad, try not to mind it; Just enjoy it if it's good. Fair and foul days bring their measure Equally of joy and pleasure. If you live them as you should.

So, then, do not sit repining. Though the sun may not be shining. Make your smiles all the time. Banish all your melancholy. And you'll find your life so jolly. You'll be glad you read this rhyme.

## JAPAN'S FORESTS

Years ago Japan saw the need of preserving the forests, and at the present that country is supplying much timber to America, more especially to the various railroad companies, which have had difficulty in obtaining certain kinds of timbers needed in the construction of railway coaches.

The greatest blessing in the matter of natural productions that exists in China is the bamboo. To recite the different uses to which it is put would cover reams of paper. It is thought that over 80 varieties of bamboo exist, and it can be properly termed the national plant.

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