

Flashback

Open Cockpit



Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin's flight over Lake Constance in Germany in 1900 marked the true beginning of the airship era. The Hindenburg explosion in May 1937 signaled the end. In between, dirigibles saw service as transports and military weapons. The US Army bought its first dirigible, powered

by a thirty-horsepower Curtiss engine, from Thomas S. Baldwin in August 1908. Lt. Frank P. Lahm (shown here in the rear seat of US Signal Corps Dirigible Balloon No. 1), Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge, and Lt. Benjamin D. Foulois were the first three pilots checked out on the eighty-foot-long airship.