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## AIRSHIP TRIP TO NORTH POLE.

Features of Walter Wellman's Latest Attempt In His Dirigible.

### PROVISIONS TAKEN FOR A YEAR

Explorer Expected to Make the Trip In Four or Five Days if Successful. Food For the Expedition Is Carried In Special Guide Ropes.

For several years Walter Wellman, a Chicago newspaper man and magazine writer who recently left Spitzbergen, Norway, in his dirigible balloon bound for the north pole, has been working to carry out his belief that the north pole can be discovered in an airship. He has made two expeditions by sledge and boat into the polar regions and is well acquainted with conditions there. His airship theory grew out of his experience and his study of the progress of aeronautics. After two years of preparation his dirigible balloon, the America, first ascended from Dane's island, Spitzbergen, on Sept. 2, 1907, carrying Mr. Wellman and two assistants, to make a dash for the pole. A furious storm made progress impossible, and the party descended safely on a glacier.

### His First Hunt For the Pole.

The initial expedition of Mr. Wellman in quest of the pole was made in 1894 by sledge and boat from Spitzbergen. He reached latitude 81 degrees. His second trip was made by the same means in 1898-9, when he penetrated to latitude 82 degrees north. Then Mr. Wellman turned his attention to the airship problem. M. Louis Godard, a French expert, was given an order to construct the largest and strongest dirigible balloon in existence. With the exception of the Zeppelin craft, no airship of the balloon type has ever been constructed so large as the America.

Shipped northward from France in the early summer of 1906, the America reached Spitzbergen early in July. It was found to have so many defects that it was sent back to M. Godard's shops to be reconstructed. In the following summer it again reached Dane's island.

Gales and the work of perfecting the details of the airship delayed Mr. Wellman until Sept. 2, when the ascent was made. Owing to the lateness of the season no other attempt was possible in 1907. The America has since been in storage. The inflating of it began on July 31.

### Escaped Disaster Three Times.

In September, 1907, the storm bore the airship three times toward the mountains, but each time the America, by means of its motor power, was able to make a circle and escape impending disaster. Finally Mr. Wellman concluded it was useless to continue so hazardous a journey, and a descent was effected on a glacier half a mile from the sea. The airship had been in the air three hours and a quarter, and its motor machinery never stopped until the order was given to stop it. Mr. Wellman's companions at that time were Melvin Vaniman of Paris, who was chief engineer of the America, and Felix Riesenbergh of Chicago, who was navigator.

Mr. Wellman left New York on May 12 of this year for Spitzbergen, where he has been engaged in completing his preparations for the start he is now said to have made a few days ago. He estimates that under favorable conditions the pole can be reached from Spitzbergen in from two to five days.

Mr. Wellman estimated that his airship America would hold 226,000 cubic feet of gas, capable of lifting 20,000 pounds and retaining its buoyancy for thirty days. His ship and equipment weigh 7,000 pounds and his cargo approximately 8,000.

### Wellman's Companions.

He has with him Melvin Vaniman, a young American, who is his right hand man and has figured much in continental theoretical aeronautics the past year, and a third person whose name is not known in New York.

The explorer had planned to carry 5,500 pounds of gasoline, food and other supplies, enough to last a year; a complete sledging outfit, a large lifeboat and wireless telegraph apparatus. The steel car is 115 feet long, 8 feet high, 3 feet wide and shaped like a V. Its keel is a tank containing 1,115 gallons of gasoline. The ninety horsepower motor drives two twin screw propellers made of steel, eleven and one-half feet in diameter.

The car is divided into fourteen sections of eight feet each. One holds the navigating deck, another the motor and machinery, and the third is where the crew sleeps and eats. Food is carried in specially constructed guide ropes. The hams, bacon, butter and bread stuffed into long leather tubes, six inches thick, serve the purpose of keeping the craft within reasonable distance of the ground.

The airship is made of several thicknesses of fabric, two of cotton and one of silk, which gives the greatest possible strength to the envelope in proportion to lightness.

Mr. Wellman's attempt recalls the Andre expedition of twelve years ago. Andre built a huge spherical balloon, which he expected to steer with a sail and drag ropes. He never returned, and it is believed that he was killed by Eskimos.

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