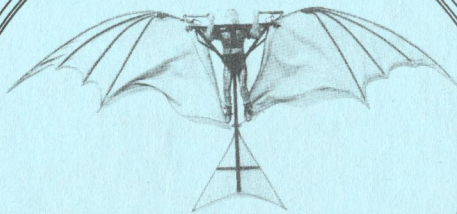


The Illustrations

- A. First Crossing of the English Channel: Blanchard and Jeffries (7 Jan. 1785).
- B. A Leonardo da Vinci Design for an Aircraft (about 1490). Photograph from a model made in the Smithsonian Institution.
- C. Five-balloon Aerostate Flotilla of Eugène Goddard (about 1850).
- D. Henson's Proposed Air Liner, 1842.
- E. Orville Wright at Fort Myer, Va. (9 Sept. 1908).
- F. British Caricature on Military Aeronautics (late 18th century).
- G. Francesco de Lana's Proposed Aerial Vessel, 1670.
- H. Projectile Trains for the Moon: Jules Verne, *From the Earth to the Moon*, 1873.

THE
COLONEL
RICHARD GIMBEL
AERONAUTICAL LIBRARY

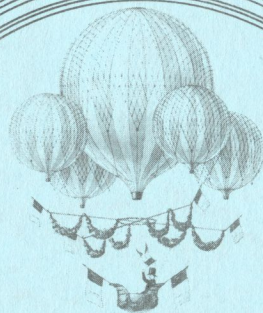
USAF ACADEMY



Colonel Richard Gimbel (1898-1970) was a grandson of the founder of the Gimbel department stores. He served in Europe with the Army Air Forces during World War II, and concluded his military career as Professor of Air Science at Yale University, retiring as an Air Force colonel in 1953. He subsequently was made Curator of Aeronautical Literature at the Yale University Library and served in this capacity until his death.

A Gimbel family tradition of active and enthusiastic support of philanthropic and cultural activities was carried on by Colonel Gimbel throughout his life. He was also a noted bibliophile. In addition to his aeronautical history resources, he assembled major collections concerning Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, and Thomas Paine. There were other minor gatherings as well. The aeronautical collection was transferred to the Air Force Academy Library in 1971, and it is now in the process of being cataloged for use by faculty, cadets, and other scholars.

The Gimbel Library, which is housed in a secure and humidified area, comprises an amazing array of items pertaining to the history of flight. Five-thousand-year-old seals carved from semi-precious stones and used to make clay tablets, and some of the first printed allusions to flying document man's earliest dreams of flight. There are drawings, rare commemorative medals, and other books about early experiments with wings, initial balloon ascents, first parachutes, kites, pyrotechnics, historic aviation flights, imaginary voyages in space, and primitive rockets which contribute to a kaleidoscope of the history of man's aeronautical triumphs. Early flight manu-

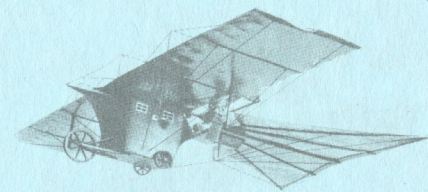


als, catalogs of aircraft equipment, and other materials relating to airships, military aviation, and air accidents record the technological progress and problems of modern aeronautics. Remarkably too, several most unusual media in the Gimbel Library convey the depiction of aeronautical events – chinaware artifacts; bookends; snuff boxes; bowls; clippings; fans; military insignia; model airplanes; match boxes; playing, greeting, and post cards; postage stamps; children's games and toys; and even valentines!

French and English editions predominate among the approximately 7,000 books in the Collection which encompasses more than a dozen languages. Eight books are priceless incunabula (books printed before 1501) and one-fourth of the editions in the Collection were printed before 1850. Many of the books, in addition to their aeronautical significance, are bibliographic treasures because they are superb examples of fine book binding, printing, illustration, and typography.

One of the many exciting and fascinating topics extensively covered in the Gimbel Collection is the idea of imaginary voyages in space. Speculations on this theme abound in numerous editions, including Roger Bacon's treatise on wonders of the world *De Mirabilibus Mundi* (1542), Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Paltock's *Peter Wilkins*, and several works by Jules Verne.

Autograph enthusiasts can scrutinize with great interest the more than 250 autographs, holographs, and inscriptions in the Collection. There are many important letters written by pioneers of flight: Blanchard, Bleriot, Langley, Lunardi, Montgolfier, Pilatre de Rozier, Santos-Dumont, the Wright brothers, and Count Zeppe-



lin. There are also extremely rare handwritten manuscripts from the Siege of Paris (1870-1871).

The Gimbel Library is greatly enriched by approximately 5,000 prints, portraits, and views, and includes engravings, etchings, woodcuts, lithographs, and drawings – in black-and-white and in color. The prints are grouped in 49 portfolios, making a truly unique pictorial history of aeronautics, and containing such headings as "Blanchard and Lunardi," "Kites," "Parachutes," "War Balloons," "Japanese Prints," "Aeronautical Cartoons," "Posters and Playbills," "Sheet Music," "Moon Material," and "Currier and Ives." A superb example of fore-edge painting is a special prize.

Although Colonel Gimbel had intended the historic first flight of the Wright brothers to be the original terminal point of his aeronautical collection, he later expanded his holdings to include the post-1903 period – including the accomplishments of Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart, and also juvenile works, aeronautical fiction dealing primarily with the World War I era, and concluding with materials about the American lunar landing.

With a total of more than 20,000 items, the Gimbel Library is a comprehensive record of aeronautical history. To this collection we have added approximately 500 rare books that were already in the Academy Library collection and about 400 items donated by Richard Upjohn Light. Items are also being added by purchase and exchange. These additions contribute to the goal of making the Gimbel Library definitive in the era prior to heavier-than-air flight. A printed catalog is a goal for the future.