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*Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives*

### John and Charles Wise Ballooning Collection - Scrapbook 3

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[[Column 1 SLIP-CUT ARTICLE]]

## ACCOUNT OF THE BALLOON ASCENSION AT ST. JOHNSBURY

To the Editors of The Caledonian:

By your request I furnish the following account of my 190th aerial voyage, made from St. Johnsbury, Vt., on the 25th of September, 1856. The inflation of the airship, "Young America," was commenced at 12 o'clock M., and completed at 3 1-2 o'clock P. M., and in ten minutes after was launched into the ethereal ocean above. The ascent was rapid- not less than 25 feet per second, which, in a breeze of 30 miles per hour, brought upon the Balloon a strong current of air acting from above downwards as well as in its horizontal direction. This made the ascent unpleasantly cold. At 4 o'clock and ten minutes, I had attained an altitude of about 2 miles, which was far above the clouds, then floating in the air in large but detached masses. Although the topography of the country viewed during the time of ascension was beautifully checkered with hill and dale, mountain and valley, flats and table lands, water falls and ponds, all basking and playing in the rich verdure of Vermont soil, accompanied with musical intonations springing from the action of the wind upon the forest trees intermingled with the cymbal strains of the river torrents, this was but the introduction to the lighting of Alladin's lamp.--

When I had reached an altitude of several thousand feet above the clouds, at 4 o'clock and 15 minutes, there appeared a more beautiful sight; all around me was formed a horizon of clouds- clouds illuminated with a dazzling brilliancy- a brilliancy of prismatic colors, and the horizontal cloud scene was enhanced by the projecting peaks of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. There they looked at me, over the cloud scene, with a physiognomy indicating their eternal stability, and a frown of contempt at the "Young America" for daring to look down upon them. There they stood, all the time elose [sic close] at hand as it were, whether viewed from above or below the clouds, the Peak of Mount Washington apparently raising its summit when I lowered, and lowering its summit when I rose; and all through this cloud ocean were openings, and these openings formed irregular galleries through them showing the world beneath from the world above. The deep, precipitous defiles and caverns formed of these openings, with here and there a deep curtain of gossamer cloud through which the landscape below was visible, gave the scene an air of enchantment.--

These bewitching scenes caused me to blunder several times in my reconnoiterings of the lower world with a view to a place of descent, and twice brought me over vast forests. Upon my third rise above the clouds I got a glimpse of Connecticut River and the Portland & Montreal Grand Trunk Railroad.--

Here I saw a number of villages through the cloud openings, the most conspicuous of which was Lancaster, having some architectural projections, also the river, which dazzled in the valley like a serpentine band of crystal. The railroad bent away from the river near where I crossed it, and [sic] like a long, slender worm, threaded its way through the mountain valleys. Here I determined to effect a landing, but by the time I had dropped below the clouds, the "Young America" had overshot the mark. I could not reach the earth before passing the bounds of clear land although I made the greatest effort, even until the Balloon's descent had reached a maximum point. Now there remained [sic] but this alternative, either to go fifty miles further, or make for one of two clearings that lay before me, a little to the N.E. of Stratford peaks. These two peaks reminded me of historical pyramids, they stood so distinct and so regularly formed; one of them seemed to be built of



terraces or steps somewhat dilapidated;--

[[Column 2 NEW SLIP-CUT ARTICLE]]

Mr. Wise's Balloon Ascension on the Fourth of July.

We have just perused a letter from Mr. Wise, the Aeronaut, to Mr. Kinny, of this place, concerning his contemplated ascension on the fourth of July. The only particular of general interest, is that the Balloon will be much enlarged over the original plan, in order to enable the aeronaut to use coal gas. The enlargement will occupy twelve or fifteen days.

This letter is written from Bath, New York, May 14th, Mr. Wise's residence being at Lancaster, Pa. By the way, we notice in the Farmer's Advocate published at Bath, that the day following the date of the letter, Mr. Wise was to make an ascension at that place. This is the announcement:

THE BALLOON ASCENSION.--To-morrow, Thursday, promises to be a great day in Bath. From all that we can learn, we should judge that there will be a literal outpouring of the people of this region to witness the grand spectacle of the aerial ascension of the distinguished American aeronaut, John Wise. The enclosure in which the process of inflating the balloon will take place has been erected, and every preparation for the ascension has been made to warrant its triumphant success. Come one, come all.

We shall give a full report of this voyage as soon as received.

We have no doubt that the ascension at this city with all its attendants, will constitute one of the finest and most satisfactory popular entertainments our people have ever enjoyed. To Mr. Wise much credit is due for making so long a journey, for which he receives barely a sufficient sum of money to defray his expenses. He should be greeted by every citizen of the community with a most cordial and enthusiastic welcome. Nor can we forget the claims of Mr. Kinney upon our citizens for their patronage, and all necessary assistance and encouragement. His expenses alone, aside from the time occupied and the thousand inconceivable troubles, will amount to a heavy sum. Unless he should receive the most liberal patronage and aid, he cannot but lose money by the undertaking. His enterprize will be the occasion of bringing thousands to this city, not only from this immediate vicinity but many other distant points in the State connected with us by our present facilities of travel. He should not be permitted to want and "aid and comfort" to insure him in getting up the necessary preliminaries.

The balloon will be inflated and started from a large enclosure, which will hold several thousand persons.--

An impression prevails with some that the ascension can be as well witnessed outside of this enclosure as within. We advise them now that they labor under a sad mistake. The most interesting portion of the entire spectacle is only to be seen inside, during the inflation of the balloon, and the management of the Aeronaut preparatory to his departure from "mother earth." We wish to advise those who desire to see this entire exhibition, that as the price of a ticket will be small, they will cheat themselves very badly by staying outside to save their few dimes, and depending on what they may see after the balloon and car get above the enclosure.

As soon as Mr. Wise completes his aerial voyage, he proposes to return to this city and deliver a course of lectures upon "Aeronautics". He is a gentleman of fine scholarship, versed in all the leading and important sciences of the day, and thus enabled to demonstrate, at least to illustrate by their dependence and connection, any proposition in aerial navigation, Mr. Wise has published in the form of large volume the

ablest treatise upon his favorite subject, with which we have any acquaintance. He anticipates the time when ballooning will be reduced to a practicable art- when by this medium navigation may be rendered as certain as upon water. However, this may turn out, we have been assured that his lectures are highly interesting and full of instruction. We hope arrangements will be made to secure the delivery of a course of his lectures.

[[NEW SLIP-CUT ARTICLE]]  
The Sky King. [[Star hand drawn]]

On seeing John Wise make his one hundred and thirtieth Ascension in a baloon. [[sic]]

Thou fearless navigator of the sky,  
So very tow'ring in ambition;  
Thou lov'st the hundredth story of the world,  
But we prefer the kitchen.  
The realm of boundless space is thine,  
And Wise-dom be its appellation;  
Since Wise thou hast gone up a host of times,  
And ne'er came down a fool in degradation!

[[Column 3 NEW SLIP-CUT ARTICLE]]

Immediately after the shower in the afternoon it was officially announced that the balloon excursion, as well as the fireworks, was postponed to Monday. Mr. Wise, Jr. who had met with some unanticipated delays, expressed so great a desire to go up, that the Committee of Arrangements assented and rendered him every necessary assistance. The chains, stakes, and other fixtures were immediately conveyed to the Common, and a posse of thirty policemen were detailed to maintain order. At about half-past six the inflation of the new and magnificent balloon. "Young America," was commenced and completed. At 7 o'clock the chains and ropes which held the great silken globe to the earth were cast off, as soon as Mr. Wise had entered the car, and the balloon rose gracefully and beautifully amidst the shouts of the admiring thousands. The cheers were returned by Mr. Wise who bowed his thanks, at the same time waving a small American flag. The ascent was almost perpendicular until the balloon reached an altitude of several hundred feet, when it took an easterly direction and floated above the city, giving to all a view of the magnificent globe. Getting into a different current of air the æronaut and his beautiful car turned and went away in a southerly direction, rising higher and higher and floating into the distance, growing less and less until it appeared no larger than a man's hand, and faded and melted into the waning light of the dying day. DESCENT OF THE BALLOON.

The balloon descended at ten minutes past eight o'clock, on the land of Hon. B.V. French, in the southerly part of the town of Braintree. The descent was a gradual one. Mr. Wise, Jr. selected the spot, and so made his arrangements as to engage the notice of some boys, whose services he requested in holding on to his anchor-rope the while the balloon came to the ground. This duty the youths performed manfully. Mr. Blake, of the firm of Blake, Barnard & Co. Agricultural Warehouse and Seed Store, Merchants' Row, in this city, discovered the balloon when at some distance from the place where it descended, and thought it was on fire- which apprehension was caused by the escape of the gas. Mr. B. followed the course of the æronaut in his wagon, and was also present at the descent. Mr. Wise was anxious to proceed to the city

on the instant, but at the earnest solicitation of Mr. Blake he was prevailed on to accept his hospitality for the night; and so heartily did his entertainer and his friends do their duty, that Mr. Wise declared that, should it ever be his fortune to ascend again in the vicinity, he would make Braintree his stopping place.

The descent is described by those who witnessed it, as a very imposing sight, and was much heightened by the fear of fire, which we have already noticed. The balloon and car were placed in Mr. Blake's wagon, and carried to that gentleman's residence. They arrived in the city this morning, by the cars, at 7 o'clock.

Mr. Wise, at the time he landed, and for some time after, complained of the cold, which was very severe, even at an altitude near the earth. His hands and feet were chilled as if by intense frost; but these inconveniences were soon overcome, and the intrepid voyager is in capital health and spirits this morning.

In this connection we are sorry to say that thousands of our citizens were much disappointed in not seeing the balloon at all. Intelligence had been given out that the ascent had been postponed, and very generally circulated. The notification given by rumor, and town crier, did not reach many of our citizens, and thousands from the country had departed to their homes- all of whom feel much disappointment because of their failure to see the grand feature of the day's proceedings.

It will be seen by a notice elsewhere that we are to have another ascension on Monday

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