



Photo
Essay
Collection

**1909 —
An Illustrious Year:
As Seen Through the
Austro-Hungarian
Collection of the
Canada Aviation
Museum**

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Photo Essay Collection



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A Few Words on the Collection

The Imperial and Royal Austrian Aeronautical Association owed its origins to an association formed in 1887 in Vienna, the glamorous capital of Austria-Hungary. Its stature and influence having grown over time, the Association was granted, around 1909, the use of the prestigious prefix *k.k.*, meaning Imperial and Royal, which it kept until the collapse of Austria-Hungary in 1918. Revived after the First World War, the Association survived with increasing difficulty until 1957, when it closed its doors.

In 1964, the first Curator of the Canada Aviation Museum, Kenneth M. Molson (1916–1996), acquired some of the Association’s material at auction — hundreds of pre-1914 books and magazines in German, French and English, as well as about 1 500 photos. This priceless collection became the core of the Museum’s library and photo collections — the largest and best of their kind in Canada.

“Almost as He Pleases in the Air” — Wilbur Wright in France

By late August 1908, at Le Mans, some local wit had adapted a popular song to take advantage of Wilbur Wright's difficulties with the local weather:

*C'est très facile
De voir voler Orville;
C'est bien plus dur
De voir voler Wilbur.*

Another song that made the rounds in the city's hotels was based on a well-known nursery rhyme:

*Frère Wrighte,
Frère Wrighte,
Dormez-vous,
Dormez-vous,
Sortez la machine,
Sortez la machine,
Allez donc,
Allez donc.*

Interestingly enough, Frère Jacques was a real person but not a real monk. Born to a peasant family in eastern France, Jacques Beaulieu (1651–1719) was one of the most celebrated although not the most successful bladder stone surgeons of his time.

In the spring of 1908, to finalize the sale of their patents and rights for France, Wilbur and Orville Wright (b. 1867 and 1871) were asked to demonstrate their biplane and to train three pupils. Wilbur left in May. Forced to rebuild his airplane and harassed by the press, he finally took to the skies on 8 August 1908. The skeptical French airmen who showed up near Le Mans were shocked as Wilbur easily circled the racetrack — twice. The French were beaten. This news was splashed across the press, and thousands of people came to see the American fly.

Wilbur was joined by Orville and their sister Katherine (b. 1874) in January 1909. The trio soon moved to southwestern France. Wilbur flew often, as princes and kings watched in awe. By the time the Wrights returned home in May, it seemed as though the world belonged to them. Stung by the Wrights' success, the French worked feverishly to match their achievements. Within months, the Wrights would be all but pushed to the sidelines.

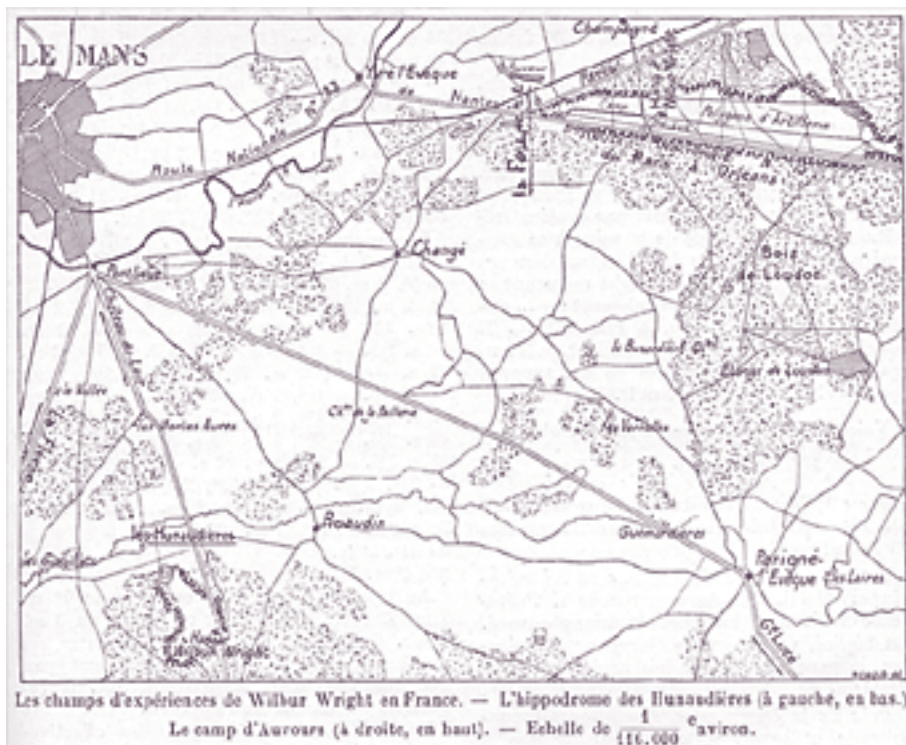


A tall, tanned and thin man who looked like a mechanic, Wilbur Wright made quite an impression on the French aviation community. Such people, often wealthy or opinionated, were deeply puzzled by this American who did not drink, smoke, swear or speak French. (1909-02-01 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, L'Aérophile, 1 December 1908, p. 469)

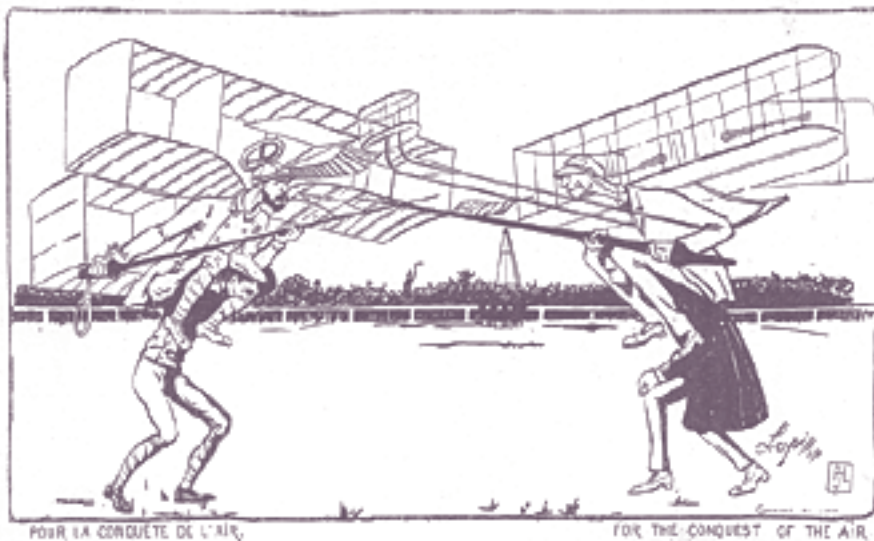


During his nine-month stay at Le Mans, Wilbur operated from two locations. He took off only a few times from the racetrack near Les Hunaudières. Starting in August, however, Wilbur made more than a hundred flights from a more spacious artillery range near Auvours.

(1909-02-02 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue de l'Aviation, 15 September 1908, front cover)



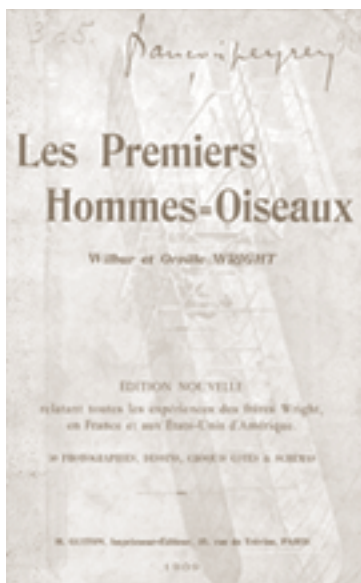
(1909-02-03 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, L'Aérophile, 1 October 1908, p. 381)



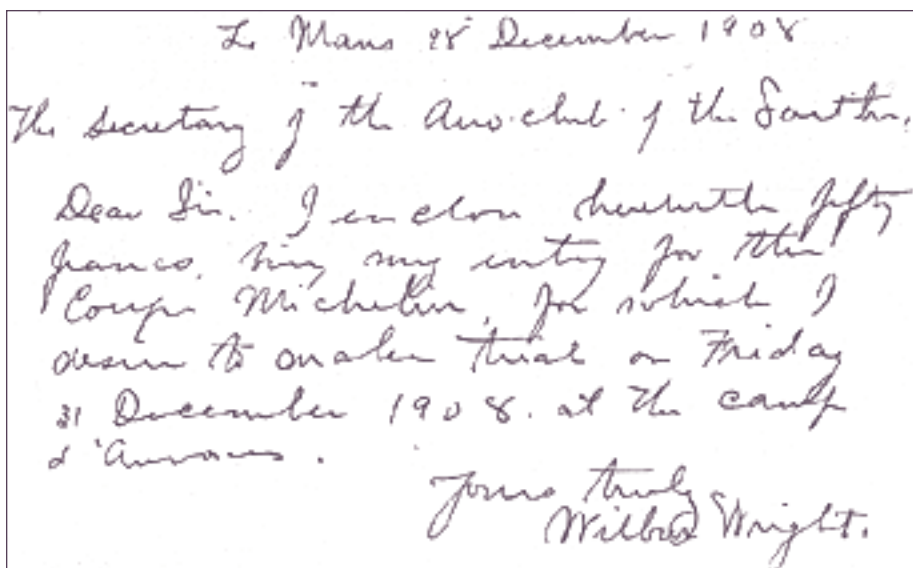
In the fall and winter of 1908–1909, French periodicals like L'Aérophile, La Revue aérienne and La Revue de l'Aviation published many articles on the unstable Wright biplane and its pilot, on the right. Many favoured the more gentle Voisin flown by Henry Farman (b. 1874), seen on the left. (1909-02-04 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 10 December 1908, p. 128)



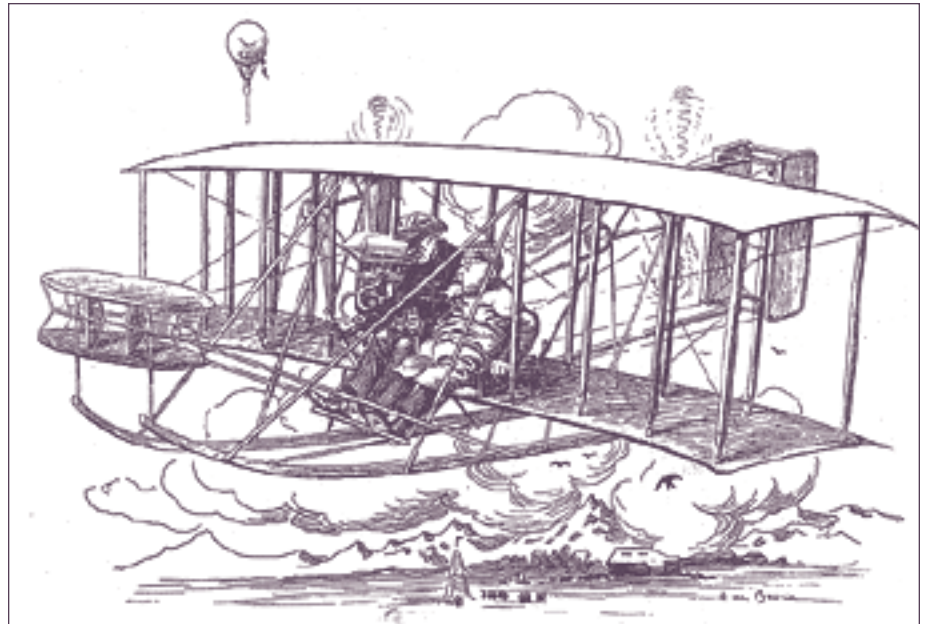
The Wright Flyer two-seat biplane that Wilbur flew in France was a greatly improved version of the airplane in which he and his brother Orville made history's first sustained and controlled flights in a powered airplane, on 17 December 1903. (1909-02-05 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. W 6.9)



The updated edition of Les Premiers Hommes-Oiseaux: Wilbur et Orville Wright, signed by author François Peyrey (b. 1873), was published in January 1909. This respected aviation journalist included a detailed list of all flights made by Wilbur near Le Mans in 1908. (1909-02-06 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, Les Premiers Hommes-Oiseaux: Wilbur et Orville Wright, front cover)



The year's most famous flight, on 31 December, lasted two hours, twenty minutes. As he landed, Wilbur knew he had won the 1908 Michelin cup, a closed-circuit distance competition he had entered on 28 December. This short note is a facsimile of Wilbur's entry. (1909-02-07 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, L'Aérophile, 15 January 1909, p. 38)



Wilbur trained three pupils near Pau during the winter of 1908–1909. He also took up a few people, including the minister of Public Works. A member of the French Chamber of Deputies is seen here, looking somewhat nervous, during a flight on 20 March.

(1909-02-08 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, L'Aérophile, 15 April 1909, p. 171)



King Edward VII (b. 1841), wintering nearby at Biarritz, France, with his entourage, visited Pau on 17 March 1909. He is seen here second from left, wearing a bowler hat. The royal group was there when Wilbur first took up his sister Katherine. (1909-02-09 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue de l'Aviation, 1 April 1909, front cover)

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In France as the year 1908 came to a close, every pilot and aviation periodical had come to recognize that Wilbur Wright (top row, centre) was the one true master of the air, an eagle who soared above them all. His accomplishments and flying skills fired their imaginations.

(1909-02-10 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue de l'Aviation, 15 December 1908, front cover)



The first cross-Channel flight by an airplane occurred in 1909, almost 125 years after the first such crossing — on 7 January 1785 — of a balloon piloted by Jean-Pierre Blanchard (1753–1819), the world's first professional aeronaut. The oars and propeller Blanchard had put on board the balloon to control its course proved useless. Loss of height caused by gas leaks forced him to toss them — and much of his clothing — into the Channel. (1909-03-01 CAvM, *Aérostation - Aviation*, p. 47)

“The Dawn of a New Age for Man” — The *Daily Mail* Cross-Channel Flight Prize

On 1 January 1909 the *Daily Mail*, one of the most flamboyant newspapers of its time, announced the creation of a £1,000 (US\$5,000) prize for the first crossing of the Channel by an airplane. This prize — one of many sponsored by the paper — was the brainchild of its owner, Lord Northcliffe (b. 1865), the most powerful and eccentric press baron in Great Britain.

By the middle of 1909, three competitors were declaring themselves ready to attempt the crossing. This trio of wealthy sportsmen was representative in various ways of a new breed of pilot that would soon dominate the world of aviation. A British pilot living in France, Henry Farman (b. 1874) made the first cross-country flight in Europe in October 1908 — a stunning 27 kilometres (17 miles). Count Charles de Lambert (b. 1865), a Russian aristocrat, was taught how to fly at Le Mans and Pau, France, in 1908–1909 by Wilbur Wright. Arguably the man to beat, Hubert Latham (b. 1883) was a Frenchman of British descent. Although lacking in experience, he was full of enthusiasm.



Henry Farman, one of the great pioneers of aviation, and a great athlete who loved racing, in August 1909 on board his first design. His companion is identified only as “Mrs X.” His father was the affluent Paris correspondent for two London newspapers. (1909-03-02 CAvM, The Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. PF 2.2)



Being photographed did not distract Orville Wright (b. 1871), on the right, and the Count de Lambert from their discussion. The latter's interest in flying dated back to 1894, when he bought a glider from the great German pioneer, Otto Lilienthal (1848–1896). (1909-03-03 CAvM, The Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. G 14)



A favourite of crowds, Hubert Latham loved speed, travel, adventure and big-game hunting. This son of a wealthy ship-owner from Le Havre had floated across the Channel from London to Paris, as a passenger in a gas balloon, in February 1905. (1909-03-04 CAvM, neg. no.14850)



Latham chose the small seaside resort of Sangatte near Calais, France, as his headquarters. His elegant Antoinette IV was delivered by train and assembled by mechanics of the Société Antoinette. Latham flight-tested it three times on 13 July 1909 before a small crowd.

(1909-03-05 CAVM, The Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.12)



So that every aspect of the attempts would be reported upon instantly, The Daily Mail installed Marconi radiotelegraphy stations at Sangatte and Dover (England). The buildings at Sangatte near the antenna were part of an unsuccessful Channel tunnel project.

(1909-03-06 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. Latham-5)



Damage to the airplane caused by a hard landing followed by bad weather grounded Latham for days. There was little that he or Léon Levavasseur (b. 1863), seen below, the brilliant designer of the advanced Antoinette monoplanes, could do but wait.

(1909-03-07 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 25 July 1909, p. 430)



(1909-03-08 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 25 July 1909, p. 431)



On 19 July the weather cleared. Latham climbed aboard his airplane and took off. Little more than ten kilometres (six miles) from shore, the Antoinette engine stopped and Latham had to execute a sea landing. Lighting a cigarette, he patiently waited to be rescued.

(1909-03-09 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.22b)



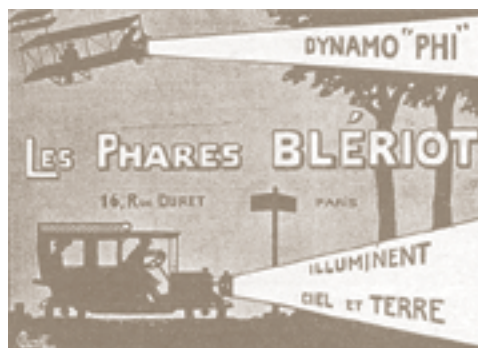
Latham's naval escort, the French torpedo boat Harpon, was near him within minutes, and lowered a boat to pick him up. Steaming toward Calais, Latham and a couple of friends could only reflect on his bad luck. People waiting at the harbour gave him a thunderous welcome.

(1909-03-10 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.22c)



Learning of Latham's failure, Louis Blériot (b. 1872), an unlucky pilot and prosperous maker of ethylene lamps for automobiles, joined the competition. A closed-circuit flight of 47.3 kilometres (29.4 miles), performed on 3 July, had convinced him that the Channel flight was feasible.

(1909-03-11 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 25 May 1909, advertising section)



(1909-03-12 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, Encyclopédie de l'Aviation, April 1909, Supplement, p. vi)



*In the meantime, Blériot won a cross-country prize sponsored by the Aéro-Club de France. The small Blériot XI monoplane he flew on 13 July had recently been fitted with an engine designed by the Italian mechanic Alessandro Anzani (b. 1877), seen on the right.
(1909-03-13 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. G 10)*



*Blériot, his wife, and mechanics moved to Les Baraques, near Calais, on 21 July. He hobbled along using canes, his left foot having been badly burned a few days before. On the morning of 25 July, the weather cleared and the Blériot XI took off toward England.
(1909-03-14 CAvM, La Vie au Grand Air, 21 August 1909, supplement)*



Waving a large French flag, Charles Fontaine, a journalist from Le Matin — the fourth largest paper in France — may have guided Blériot to the Northfall meadow behind Dover Castle, where he landed. The 38-kilometre (24-mile) cross-Channel flight had lasted 37 minutes. (1909-03-15 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, Comment Blériot a traversé la Manche, front cover)



Newspapers and magazines in France and across Europe splashed the news across their front pages. Some publications showed the Blériot XI, its wheels and propeller damaged while landing. Others apparently used photos that had been doctored in various ways. (1909-03-16 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Vie Automobile, 7 August 1909, front cover)



Cartoonists lost no time in drawing portraits of Blériot. This no-nonsense mining engineer with a drooping moustache à la gauloise gave the French masses a hero who was completely their own. A family man with five children, Blériot was no angliche dandy.

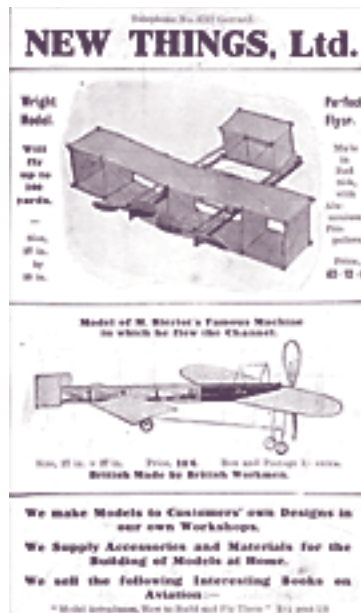
(1909-03-17 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 10 August 1909, p. 470)



(1909-03-18 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 10 August 1909, p. 469)



(1909-03-19 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 10 August 1909, p. 467)



Blériot's new-found fame did not go unnoticed. The makers of a leak-proof fountain pen, for example, asked him to endorse their product. As well, many people and a few armies ordered Blériot XIs, thus saving Blériot-Aéronautique from probable bankruptcy. (1909-03-20 CAVM, The Aero Manual, advertising section)



Although devastated by Blériot's crossing, Latham decided to make a second attempt. A new machine with a different control system, the Antoinette VII, had arrived at Sangatte on 22 July. Familiarizing himself with the airplane took time, but Latham was soon ready to make his crossing. (1909-03-21 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.18)



*Latham took off for a trial flight on the morning of 27 July 1909. The Antoinette VII was behaving correctly, but the weather was cloudy. Latham decided to fly to England anyway. Once again, French navy ships kept an eye on him.
(1909-03-22 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.13)*



*Latham was less than two kilometres (one mile) from England when the airplane's engine failed. Try as he might, Latham could do nothing but land in the water. Heartbroken and slightly wounded, he was picked up by a small navy ship. Henry Farman and the Count de Lambert decided against attempting a flight.
(1909-03-23 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.22a)*



In 1906, the American press baron James Gordon Bennett (b. 1841) also sponsored the first annual distance competition for balloons. These races proved very popular with wealthy amateur balloonists like Charles Stewart Rolls (b. 1877), co-founder of Rolls-Royce. Balloons were able to cover huge distances. In 1910, the winner landed north of Chicoutimi, Quebec — 1 900 kilometres (1,175 miles) from its starting point. The exhausted crew wandered lost for days, before coming across a group of trappers.

(1909-04-01 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, *Aeronautics*, December 1910, p. 216)

“This Never-To-Be-Forgotten Meeting”— The First International Airplane Meet at Rheims (22 to 29 August 1909)

In early November 1908, soon after Henry Farman (b. 1874) ended the first cross-country flight in Europe at Rheims, the gifted aeronaut and vice-president of the Aéro-Club de France, Count Henry de La Vaulx (b. 1870), flew his gas balloon near this industrial city. Noting that the surrounding fields appeared perfectly suitable for flying, he soon conceived the idea of holding a large airplane meet at Rheims.

Initial discussions revealed a great deal of interest, and the decision to hold a meet was announced around February 1909. The chairman of the local organizing committee, the Marquess Melchior de Polignac (b. 1880), head of the well-known champagne producer, La Maison Pommery, played a crucial role in obtaining the co-operation of the many aviation associations of the time.

Early on, organizers decided to include a variety of speed and distance events — all but one sponsored by local champagne-makers — in this first international air meet. About thirty-six airplanes were entered in the competition. Observers believed that the most interesting race of the meet would be the first Coupe internationale d’Aviation Gordon Bennett.



The Count de La Vaulx started out as a traveler and explorer. He circled the globe in 1894–1895 for example but a balloon flight in 1898 was a revelation. His best performance was a 1 925-kilometre (1,200-mile) odyssey that took him from Paris to Kiev (Russia, now in the Ukraine) in 1900. (1909-04-02 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue de l'Aviation, 15 December 1906, p. 7)



Officially known as the Grande Semaine d'Aviation de la Champagne, the air meet was held near the site of the Bétheny racecourse, north of Rheims, from 22 to 29 August 1909. Pilots from all points of the compass were quick to express an interest. (1909-04-03 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue de l'Aviation, 1 March 1909, front cover)



Organizers of the Rheims international air meet did all they could to ensure its success. Preparations were extensive, as was advertising. Heavy rains before opening day, however, briefly threatened to turn the airfield into a sea of mud.
 (1909-04-04 CAVM, La Vie au Grand Air, 21 August 1909, front cover)



Louis Paulhan (b. 1883) was the hero of the first half of the Rheims air meet. This former airship mechanic in the French army had won his airplane, an engineless Voisin, at a model competition. Paulhan later formed a model-making company to pay for an engine.
 (1909-04-05 CAVM, La Vie au Grand Air, 4 September 1909, p. 165)



Windy conditions did not prevent Paulhan, inexperienced as he was, from flying his tail-first biplane. The crowds loved it. On 24 August, he was one of the few pilots who dared to fly when French President Armand Fallières (b. 1841) visited Bétheny.
 (1909-04-06 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. E 18)



President Fallières is seen here, wearing a bowler hat and carrying a program under his arm, as he listens to a short presentation at the hangar of the Société Ariel, the recently-established official maker of Wright airplanes in France. (1909-04-07 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. PF 1.2)



Understandably enough, Louis Blériot proved extremely popular with journalists and the huge crowds that attended the meet. He entered two Blériot XII-type airplanes. The prototype, a low-powered machine, flew well but proved quite slow. (1909-04-08 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. B 1.49)



Hubert Latham (b. 1883) did very well at Rheims. He came second in the speed and closed-circuit distance competitions sponsored by the Champagne region and the city of Rheims. Better still, he won the altitude competition with a dazzling climb to 155 metres (510 feet). (1909-04-09 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.20a)



Latham, who flew two Antoinettes at Rheims, is shown here overflying the stands. The machine in the foreground is a French-built Wright biplane, entered by the Société Ariel and flown by one of their people, the highly professional Eugène Lefebvre (b. 1878). (1909-04-10 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.20c)



Before he discovered aviation, Lefebvre worked in the refrigerating industry in Russia and Algeria, a French territory. This engineer did not win an event but he was always among the leaders. His daring demonstration flights drew gasps and cheers from the crowds. (1909-04-11 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. W 6.5a)



Worried by the wind, Count Charles de Lambert (b. 1865) did not fly too often at Rheims. His best performance and a personal record was a fourth-place finish on 26 July 1909, in the closed-circuit distance competition sponsored by the Champagne region and the city of Rheims.

(1909-04-12 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. W 6.15a)



The Wright biplane in the foreground belonged to the Count de Lambert. The other machine was one of two entered by Paul Tissandier (b. 1881). This accomplished sportsman and aeronaut owned the world's finest collection of ballooning ephemera and memorabilia.

(1909-04-13 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. W 6.15b)



The Voisin biplane flown by Étienne Bunau-Varilla (b. 1890) at Bétheny was a recent high school graduation present from his father — publisher of the Paris paper Le Matin, and a key player in the coup that led to the secession of Panama from Colombia in November 1903.

(1909-04-14 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. PV 4)



More than half-a-dozen Voisin tail-first biplanes took part in various events at the air meet. The airplane on the right was flown by a wealthy Chilean named José Luis Sanchez Besa (b. 1879). Little is known about this pilot, who handled himself well but was not among the leaders.
(1909-04-15 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. V 5.22)



Although overshadowed by more flamboyant pilots, Henry Farman did very well at Rheims. He won the closed-circuit distance competition, and set a world record. Farman also won the so-called passenger prize when he completed a ten-kilometre circuit with two passengers.
(1909-04-16 CAVM, La Vie au Grand Air, 4 September 1909, front cover)



*Unwilling to risk his biplane or show its power, former motorcycle racer Glenn H. Curtiss (b. 1878) made only qualification flights before the Gordon Bennett cup. On 28 August this American flew to victory, establishing a world speed record at the same time.
(1909-04-17 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. C 1.2)*



*The Rheims air meet was an extremely successful event, attended by huge crowds. Pilots set no less than fifteen world records in speed, distance and altitude competitions. Indeed, the meet signaled the beginning of systematic aviation records registration.
(1909-04-18 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Vie Automobile, 4 September 1909, front cover)*



G.-H. Laignier, author of Le Livre d'Or de la Grande Semaine d'Aviation de la Champagne, was a member of the organizing committee of the Rheims air meet. The copy of the book currently held by the Canada Aviation Museum — one of only sixty printed — was given to the president of the Aero Club of America, seen below, Cortlandt F. Bishop (b. 1870).

(1909-04-19 CAvM, Le Livre d'Or de la Grande Semaine d'Aviation de la Champagne, front cover)



(1909-04-20 CAvM, Fly, April 1909, p. 5)



“Stealth” materials were known even before 1914. Some people in Austria-Hungary, Germany, France, and Russia tried to make airplanes less visible, using translucent, celluloid-based materials. Moreau Frères created a minor sensation at the international aircraft exhibition held in Paris in late 1913, with an airplane covered with a translucent material called Émaillite. It was displayed in the stand of Émaillite-maker Leduc-Heitz et Cie.

(1909-05-01 CAvM,
Austro-Hungarian Collection,
neg. no. S 52b)

“Perfect Workmanship and Superb Design” — The First International Aircraft Exhibition in Paris (25 September to 17 October 1909)

An airplane exhibition was held at the Grand Palais in Paris from 24 to 30 December 1908 in conjunction with the annual automobile show. Its success was such that a group of prominent French aviation representatives decided in February 1909 to use that same site for a stand-alone exhibition devoted exclusively to aviation.

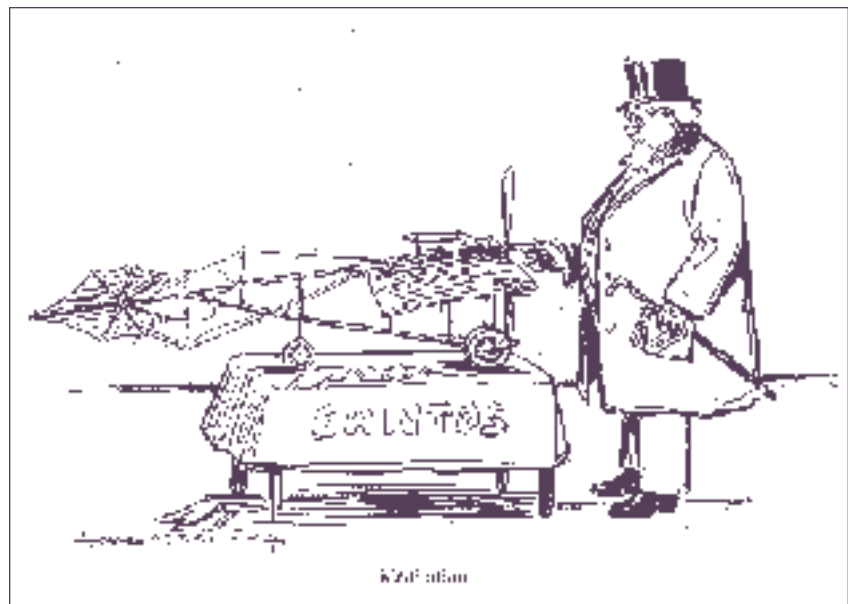
To help organize this world premiere, they formed an association of companies involved in aviation. For president of the association and chief organizer of the show, the group elected an industry leader: the talented engineer and well-liked pilot, Robert Esnault-Pelterie (b. 1881). Various government ministries gave the project their full support.

Airplanes would of course dominate the display area, but there would also be engines, accessories, historical displays, and a large number of stuffed birds. No expense was spared to make visitors feel comfortable, including the use of elegant and restful decorations, arrangements and colours throughout the Grand Palais.

The Exposition internationale de la locomotion aérienne, as it was called, opened its doors to the public on 25 September 1909 and closed three weeks later on 17 October.



The elegant style and sheer size of the Grand Palais — a steel-and-glass Art Nouveau building completed in 1900 near the Champs-Élysées in the heart of Paris — made it an ideal venue for a prestigious event like the world's first international airplane show.
 (1909-05-02 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue de l'Aviation, 1 October 1909, front cover)

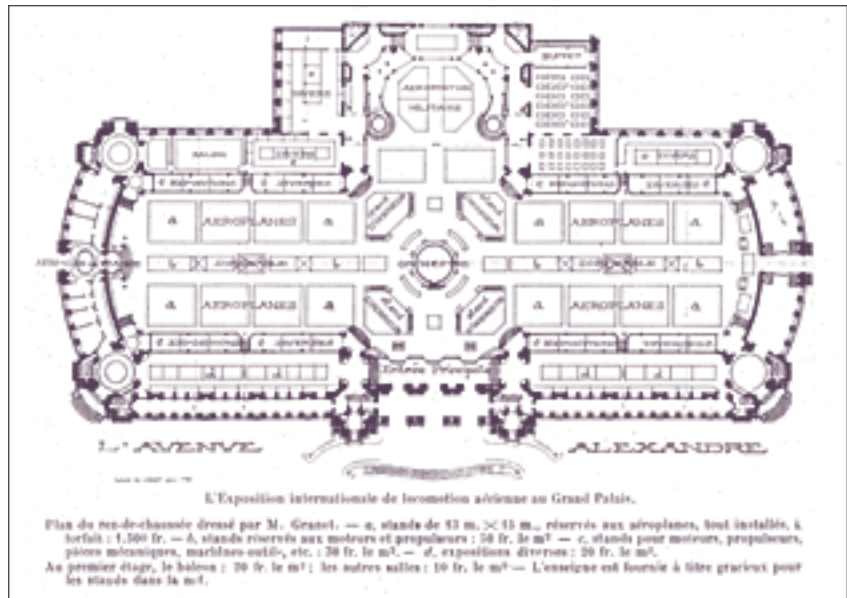


French President Armand Fallières (b. 1841) opened the exhibition on 25 September 1909. One of the airplanes he would have seen at the Grand Palais was the world's smallest practical airplane, first flown on 6 March 1909: the Santos-Dumont No. 20 Demoiselle.
 (1909-05-03 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 10 October 1909, p. 603)



The Demoiselle was the one truly successful airplane designed by Alberto Santos-Dumont (b. 1873), a Brazilian of French descent and the son of a wealthy coffee grower. Placed in a corner of the Usines Clément-Bayard stand, it attracted a great deal of attention.

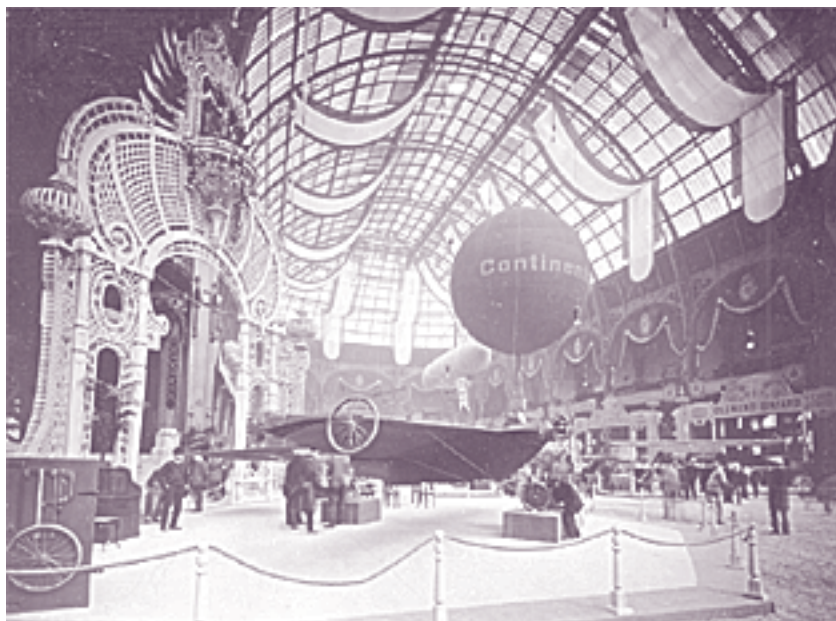
(1909-05-04 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 71)



The Blériot XI flown by Louis Blériot (b. 1872) on 25 July 1909 across the Channel — arguably the most famous airplane in the world — was proudly displayed at the very centre of the Grand Palais, in the area originally planned for an orchestra. (1909-05-05 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, L'Aérophile, 15 July 1909, p. 331)



Two biplanes — a French-built Wright and a Henry Farman in the foreground, on the left and right of the Blériot XI; and two monoplanes further back — an Antoinette to the left and a Robert Esnault Pelterie to the right — were in the stands of honour placed around the Blériot XI. (1909-05-06 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Vie Automobile, 9 October 1909, front cover)



*Robert Esnault-Pelterie first flew the prototype of the REP II bis on 8 June 1908. This airplane was one of the first to be fitted with a hydro-pneumatic shock absorber, designed — like its engine — by its pilot, at the Établissements Robert Esnault-Pelterie.
(1909-05-07 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 15)*



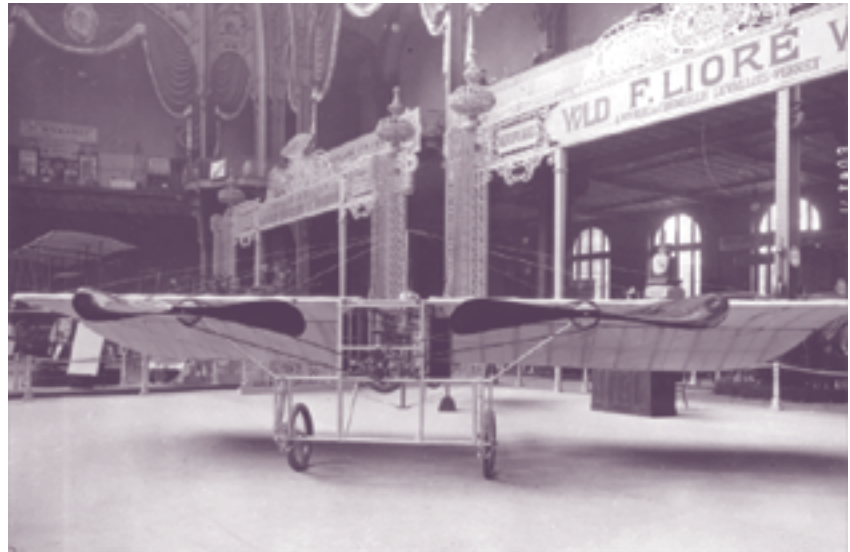
*Already well known and respected by pilots who, like Blériot, swore by its propellers, the Ateliers de construction Louis Chauvière also displayed a little-known airplane they had built to the specifications of Spanish engineer A. Ponteado.
(1909-05-08 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 20)*



It was the hope of the Aimé-Salmson autoplane's designers that their unique-looking aircraft would be able to rise vertically into the air, fly like a conventional airplane and land, also vertically, on any small piece of ground. (1909-05-09 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. EX 22)



Stranger still was the de Dion-Bouton airplane with its four propellers and ten half-wings, seen here with some engines made by the Établissements de Dion-Bouton. A great automobile pioneer, the Marquess Albert de Dion (b. 1856) had co-founded the Aéro-Club de France in 1898. (1909-05-10 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 23)



The recently-completed Lioré (WLD) airplane — WLD meaning Witzig-Lioré-Dutilleul — had yet to fly when it was put on display at the Grand Palais. Its two chain-driven propellers, powered by a single engine, set it apart from other monoplanes at the exhibition. (1909-05-11 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 54)



In its stand, Hanriot et Cie displayed a well-constructed if conventional-looking monoplane. The company's head, René Hanriot (b. 1867), was a popular pilot who had raced for French car-maker Darracq and possibly Benz, a better-known German rival. (1909-05-12 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 59)



The Grégoire-Gyp monoplane and Gyp engine were designed by engineer and car maker Pierre-Joseph Grégoire (b. 1876). The name Gyp may have been partly inspired by the pseudonym of Countess Sibylle-Gabrielle de Martel de Janville (b. 1849), a right-wing anti-semitic, anarchist, writer and society figure. (1909-05-13 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 62)



One of the few foreign exhibitors at the Grand Palais was a now-forgotten Spaniard, Antonio Fernandez (b. 1876). A lack of technical expertise did not stop this ladies' tailor from convincing the organizers of the exhibition that his Aéral biplane was well worth showing. (1909-05-14 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 60)



*A replica of the Montgolfier hot-air balloon in which two Frenchmen made the very first free flight in history, on 21 November 1783 over Paris, can be seen behind the Antoinette engine of the Antoinette monoplane, on display near the centre of the Grand Palais.
(1909-05-15 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 5)*



*Exhibitors had every reason to be pleased when they removed their airplanes from the Grand Palais at the end of the 1909 exhibition. The show had been tremendously successful. France had demonstrated to the world that she remained Queen of the Air.
(1909-05-16 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Vie Automobile, 30 October 1909, front cover)*



(1909-06-01 CAvM,
neg. no. 1134)

Before he moved to Montreal in 1911, Gustave Pollien (b. 1890) worked for airplane manufacturers at Port-Aviation. This craftsman built a biplane that flew many times before crashing in October 1913 at the Montreal Polo Club. Pollien built a second airplane in the spring of 1914. It was related to Caudron biplanes, like the one in the bottom photo, flown by Étienne Poulet (b. 1890) at an international air meet held near Vienna in June 1914.



(1909-06-02 CAvM,
Austro-Hungarian Collection,
neg. no. C 4.1)

“Trying to Make up for Lost Time” — The Two-Week Paris Meet at Port-Aviation (7 to 21 October 1909)

Impressed by the number of articles published on the Rheims air meet by early August 1909 in the aviation press, the management of Port-Aviation decided to hold their own large air meet in October. It was high time, they thought, that Parisians be offered a spectacle worthy of their city.

Port-Aviation, located within the limits of a village 15 kilometres (9 miles) south of Paris, may have been the very first purpose-built airport in the world. Commonly known as the Juvisy airfield, it was officially inaugurated on 23 May 1909. The competitions held on that day had been somewhat disappointing, since only one airplane — a Voisin biplane flown by Léon Delagrangé (b. 1873) — took off and performed two short flights, dodging unruly crowds on both occasions.

The October meet, with its twelve events, would be another thing altogether. So much work was done to improve the site that the two-week meet, scheduled to last from 3 to 17 October, actually opened a few days late, on 7 October, closing on 21 October. Thirty-six or so pilots would be there.



Located close to a train station and a main road, Port-Aviation provided numerous services to both pilots and visitors. There were hangars, restaurants, a repair shop and bars. A nearby park satisfied the needs of tennis players and anglers. (1909-06-03 CAvM, The Aero, 21 September 1909, p. 287)



The oddest race at Port-Aviation was a prize for slowness, given to the pilot who took the most time to complete three circuits. Louis Paulhan (b. 1883) won the prize with his Voisin. He also finished second in the main event — the fastest lap — sponsored by the Paris municipal council. (1909-06-04 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. V 5.3)



*French President Armand Fallières (b. 1841) visited Port-Aviation on 14 October. The weather was as bad as it had been in August, when he attended the Rheims meet. Yet again, one of the few who braved the gusty winds in flight was Paulhan. President Fallières congratulated him.
(1909-06-05 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. PF 1.1)*



*Hubert Latham (b. 1883) was so busy with other engagements that he did not really compete at the Paris meet. He did, however, fly a number of times in mid October. A ground crew is seen here moving the fuselage of his Antoinette across the muddy field.
(1909-06-06 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.23)*



Well-organized and attended by huge crowds, the Paris meet did not witness many new achievements. A number of largely-unknown pilots joined the competition. The Voisin biplane entered by André Duval and Raoul des Vallières is seen here in the foreground.
 (1909-06-07 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. V 5.10)



Tail-first designs proved very popular during the early days of aviation. Guillaume Busson (b. 1885), for example, flew a Witzig-Lioré-Dutilleul (WLD) biplane at the Port-Aviation air meet. This fledgling aviator may have damaged his airplane later on.
 (1909-06-08 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. W 1.1b)



One of the pilots whose performance showed the most improvement over the previous few months was Jean Gobron (b. 1885), son of the president of the Gobron car company. He did very well at Port-Aviation, with three wins and two second-place finishes.

(1909-06-09 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. V 5.11)



Gobron is seen here winning an event on 7 October, the first day of the meet. The competition was the Mrs Paul Quinton Prize, given for the shortest time over a distance of two kilometres. This victory gave Gobron the only world record set at the Paris air meet.

(1909-06-10 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Vie Automobile, 16 October 1909, front cover)



No one did better at the meet than Count Charles de Lambert (b. 1865), who won six of the twelve events with his two Wright biplanes. What really caught the public's imagination, however, was his planned yet unannounced flight over Paris — the first-ever by an airplane.

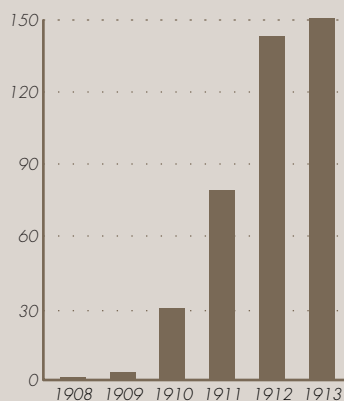
(1909-06-11 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. W 6.12a)



On 18 October, a Wright biplane left the field and headed north. It overflew many landmarks until, above the Eiffel Tower, the Count de Lambert turned around. Relieved to see him land, the crowd went wild as Wilbur Wright (b. 1867) shook the hand of his former pupil.

(1909-06-12 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. W 6.14)

Casualties of Early Powered Flight



Progress in aeronautics did not come without a price. Statistics are incomplete, but in the five years between September 1908 and December 1913 more than four hundred pilots and passengers lost their lives in aircraft accidents.

“The Possibilities of Flight Appear To Be Almost Illimitable” — A Few Highlights from the Final Years of the Belle Époque

As 1909 came to an end, powered flight had reached a certain level of maturity. The airplane could no longer be thought of as a mere toy.

The next four-and-a-half years, from January 1910 to July 1914, proved even more important. The number of aircraft and engine manufacturers increased by leaps and bounds. Their engineers produced the first streamlined airplanes and high-power engines. Series production of many types began in Europe and the United States for both civilian and military users. Water-borne aircraft, float planes and flying boats, also made their first appearances.



The French Army was one of the most air-minded in Europe. Approximately sixty airplanes were on display near Versailles on 9 May 1910, when King Alfonso XIII of Spain visited the airfield. A mass fly-by accompanied by stunt-flying later in the day proved highly popular.

(1909-07-01 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. F 2.37)

Aviation fever spread throughout the world. Pilots vied with one another in ever more impressive record-breaking flights. They flew faster and climbed higher. Aerial rallies and cross-country races pushed airplanes and their pilots to their limits. Many people died — and the worst was yet to come.

The assassination of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, on 28 June 1914 caused a series of diplomatic crises. Political alliances fell into place, and the resulting four-year war would change the world forever.



In September 1910, France held its annual army manoeuvres in Picardie, north of Paris, and for the first time airplanes were present. Hubert Latham (b. 1883) made a few observation flights with this Antoinette monoplane. He also took his Grégoire Coccinelle with him. (1909-07-02 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. A 3.16)



The odd-looking Fabre monoplane was the world's first true seaplane. Its pilot, Jean Bécue, was moving fast in the harbour at Monaco on 12 April 1911 when a breeze pushed him toward the rocks of Monte Carlo, Monaco. Bécue swam easily to shore, but the aircraft was wrecked. (1909-07-03 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. F 1.3a)



The Paris-Madrid race — arguably the first long-distance airplane competition — was sponsored by the most published paper in France, Le Petit Parisien. Jules Védrines (b. 1881) was the only one to complete the race. He is seen here on 26 May 1911, flying above a train station in Madrid. (1909-07-04 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. B 1.31)



In September 1911, Le Petit Journal sponsored the first aerial journey in the French empire. Flying a Breguet biplane loaned by the manufacturer, Henri Brégi (b. 1888) and a journalist spent a month travelling across Morocco. The airplane is seen here overflying Fez. (1909-07-05 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. B 5.24)



*Although rare, women flyers did very well. Belgian Hélène Dutrieu (b. 1877?), for example, won the annual closed-circuit distance competition sponsored by the magazine Fémina. Her December 1911 flights set women's world records for both distance and duration.
(1909-07-06 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. PD 7)*



*The Balkan War of 1912–1913 was the first in which airplanes were used by both sides. Two Bulgarian officers looked on as one of their Farmans flew over Adrianople, a city defended by Ottoman troops. The airplane's pilot may have been a foreign mercenary.
(1909-07-07 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. F 2.33)*



Maurice Prévost (b. 1887) was flying a Deperdussin (on the right) on 16 April when he won the 1913 Coupe internationale d'aviation maritime Jacques Schneider at Monaco. The Morane-Saulnier piloted by Roland Garros (b. 1888), on the left, was the only other machine to complete the race.

(1909-07-08 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. D 1.1)



The same power and superb streamlining of the Deperdussin monoplane allowed Prévost to win the 1913 Coupe internationale Gordon Bennett held at Rheims on 29 September. For the first time in history, an airplane exceeded a speed of 200 km/h (125 mph).

(1909-07-09 CAVM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. D 1.19)



Garros had accomplished an even more impressive feat on 23 September 1913, when he crossed the Mediterranean: a 730-kilometre (455-mile) non-stop odyssey that took him to the French protectorate of Tunisia in North Africa. His Morane-Saulnier landed with only a few drops of fuel left.

(1909-07-10 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. M 8.10)



(1909-07-11 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, La Revue aérienne, 10 October 1913, p. 548)



*Marcel Georges Brindejonc des Moulinais (b. 1893) won the 1913 Coupe Pommery, given for the longest flight in a straight line. After journeying from Paris to Warsaw on 10 June, he chose to return home with a 5 000-kilometre (3,100-mile) tour of many European cities.
(1909-07-12 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. M 8.11)*



*On 19 August 1913 at an airfield near Paris, Adolphe Pégoud (b. 1889) shocked a group of onlookers by jumping out of an airplane with a parachute designed by a Mr Bonnet. They cheered this world premiere as Pégoud came down and landed — in a tree.
(1909-07-13 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. B 1.26)*



*A number of countries organized experimental airmail flights in the early days of aviation. On 15 October 1913 Lieutenant André Ronin flew a mailbag to Bordeaux, France, for delivery to a ship leaving for South America. The minister responsible is listening to his explanations.
(1909-07-14 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. G 9b)*



*Over the years, aircraft exhibitions were held in a number of European and North American cities. The Expositions internationales de la locomotion aérienne held in Paris remained among the most spectacular.
(1909-07-15 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 22)*



In December 1913, one of the great competitions of the age was concluded. Emmanuel Hélen (b. 1883) and his Nieuport won the Coupe Michelin — a closed-circuit distance competition — by covering an astonishing 16 097 kilometres (10,003 miles) over a period of thirty days.

(1909-07-16 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. N 2.10)



France believed that winning the 1914 Schneider trophy would be relatively easy; however, on 20 April, British pilot C. Howard Pixton confounded the experts. His Sopwith Tabloid won the race and set a new world speed record over a distance of 300 kilometres.

(1909-07-17 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. S 7.1b)



American designer Lawrence Sperry (b. 1892) won an international safety competition with his presentation of the first practical autopilot on 18 June 1914. Parisian witnesses gasped as his Curtiss flying boat flew by with Sperry's hands held high, away from the controls. His mechanic stood on a wing. (1909-07-18 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. C 1.3)



On 28–29 June 1914, Werner Landmann (b. 1892) set a new world endurance record. Alone in an Albatros biplane, he circled Johannisthal airfield near Berlin for 21 hours, 50 minutes. Only days later, this record was broken when another German pilot, using the same airplane, remained aloft for 24 hours, 12 minutes. (1909-07-19 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. PL 5.3)



*Otto Linnkogel (b. 1891) suffered a similar heartbreak. On 9 July 1914, he lifted off at Johannisthal and climbed to 6 600 metres (21,650 feet). A few days later, a fellow German beat his world record by reaching 7 860 metres (25,790 feet). Neither record was officially accredited.
(1909-07-20 CAvM, Austro-Hungarian Collection, neg. no. Pl 8)*