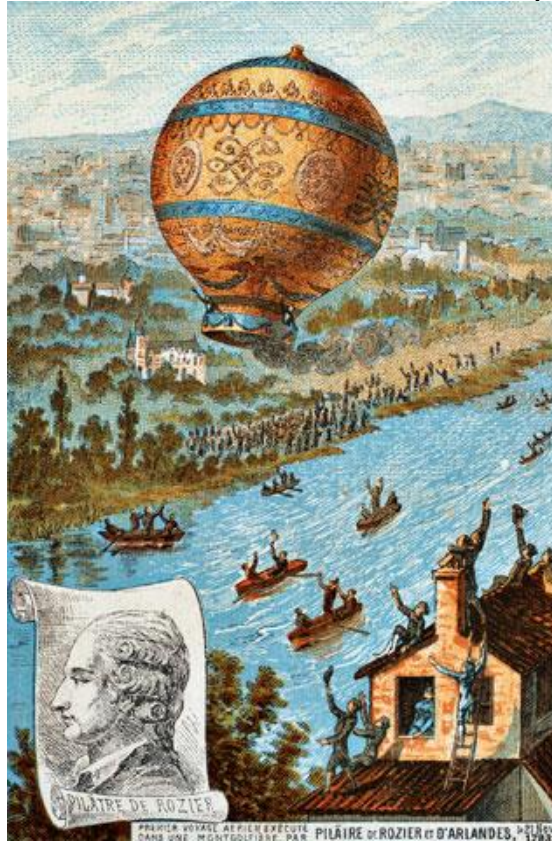


A Short History of Ballooning

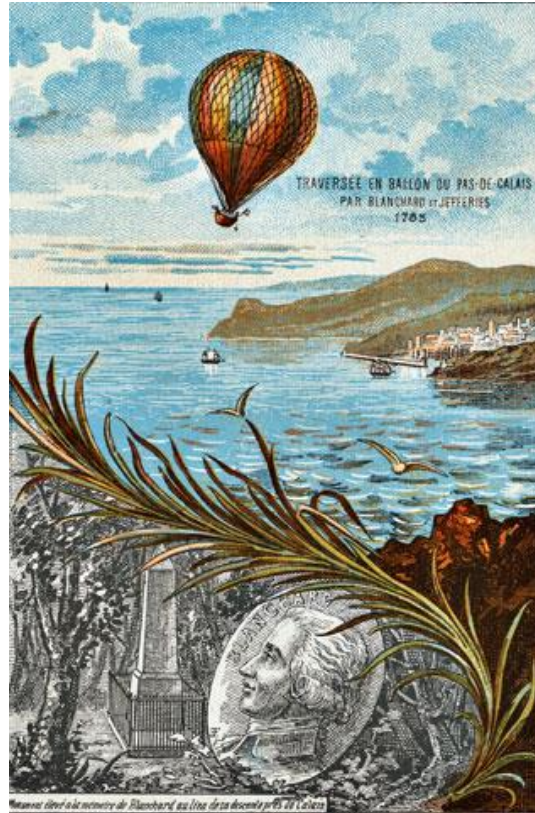
The caged duck looked down as the hot air balloon drifted away. Above the duck, a balloon, constructed of paper and fabric, provided the lift necessary to carry aloft the duck and its companions, a sheep and a rooster. Never before had a human, let alone a duck, flown in a balloon. The first passengers in a hot air balloon were a duck, a sheep and a rooster.



The year was 1783, a milestone year for aviation—the dream of flying had finally been realized. On October 15 of that year, a few months after the duck's historic flight, a balloon launched in France and rose to the end of its 250-foot tether. It stayed aloft for 15 minutes and then landed safely nearby. A month later, De Rozier and a companion, flew untethered to 500 feet and traveled about five and a half miles in a 20-minute flight—the first "free flight" made by man.

Designed by the Montgolfier brothers, Joseph-Michel and Jacques, the balloon was heated by a straw fire that later caused the balloon to catch on fire. But the Montgolfier brothers, undaunted, went on to design other balloons, including the first successful balloon that was unmanned (and un-ducked, for that matter).

Although these early, comparatively crude balloons were a far cry from today's high-tech contraptions, the science of ballooning and sending humans aloft had begun. In the years to follow, humans had access to the skies like never before, and with the advent of hydrogen ballooning, even the sky seemed to offer no limit. What follows is a brief outline of some of the major milestones in ballooning:



1785—First Across the English Channel: In the early days of ballooning, crossing the English Channel is considered the first step to long-distance ballooning. Two years after his historic first balloon ride, De Rozier attempts the crossing. De Rozier's experimental system consists of a hydrogen balloon and a hot air balloon tied together. Tragically, the craft explodes half an hour after takeoff. This double balloon helium/hot air system, however, remains among the most successful designs for long-distance ballooning. This same year, French balloonist Jean-Pierre Blanchard and American John Jeffries become the first to fly across the English Channel.

1793—First Flight in North America: On January 9, Jean-Pierre Blanchard makes a 45-minute flight from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Gloucester County, New Jersey. George Washington is present to see the balloon launch.

1794 to 1945—First Use in Wars: From the U.S. Civil War through World Wars I and II, balloons come into play as tools for warfare, surveillance, transportation, and communication.