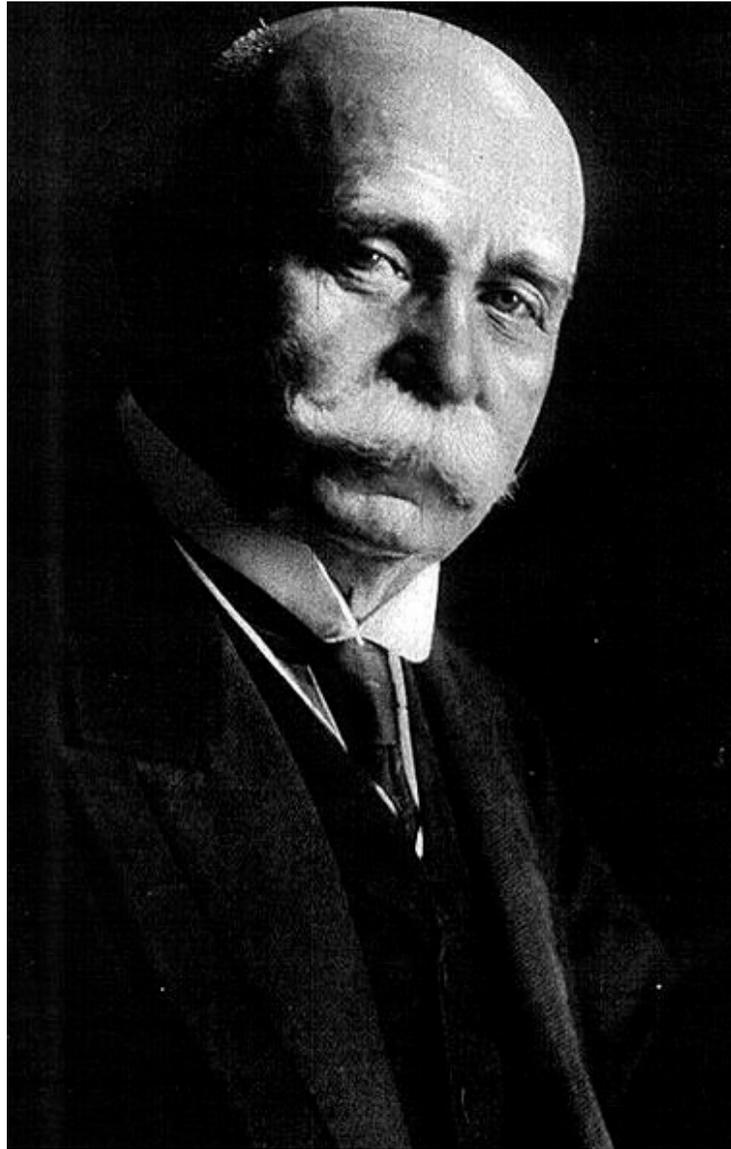


Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin



8 July 1838 – 8 March 1917

Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin

Personal and Family Life

The eldest of three children, Ferdinand Adolf Heinrich August Zeppelin was born in Konstanz, in southern Germany, near the western shore of Lake Constance (Bodensee). With his siblings he was schooled at home by private educators. He lived in the Konstanz home until his death.



*Graf Zeppelin house and Schloss Church as seen from Lake Constance
Photo by Philipp Hertzog*



Monument to Graf Zeppelin in Konstanz

On August 7, 1869 he married Isabella Baroness von Wolff, with whom he had one daughter, Helene. Graf Zeppelin passed away in Berlin on March 8, 1917.



Isabella Countess of Zeppelin (nee Baroness von Wolff)

Education and Military Career

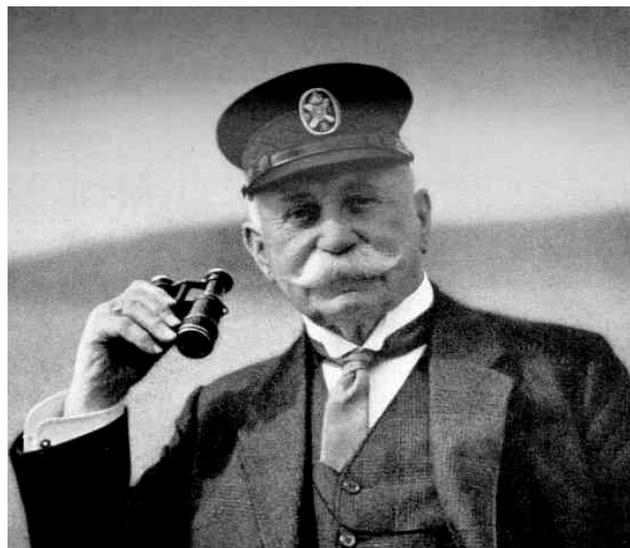
In 1853 Count Zeppelin went to Stuttgart where he attended the Polytechnicum. In 1855, at age 17, he entered the military school in Ludwigsburg, and started his military career in 1858 as a lieutenant in the Württemberg Army. That same year he was granted a leave of absence so that he could study science, engineering and chemistry.



Captain Graf Zeppelin, Adjutant of the King of Württemberg – ca. 1865

In 1863 Graf Zeppelin traveled to the United States where he was an observer for the northern troops of the Union Army of the Potomac during the Civil War. He later joined an expedition to the source of the Mississippi.

He retired from the German army in 1890 with the rank Lieutenant General.



The Airships

While in the United States, Zeppelin visited the balloon camp of Thaddeus Lowe in Virginia. The two shared their fascination for lighter-than-air flight, but due to the restriction on “fly-alongs” imposed on Lowe’s operations, he referred Zeppelin to his assistant, the German aeronaut John Steiner, in Poolesville, Maryland. It was here that Graf Zeppelin made his first flight.

Upon his return to Germany, Zeppelin dedicated himself to the idea of developing guidable balloons. After leaving the German Army in 1891, he dedicated himself to the development of airships. After years of experimentation with different construction materials, power plants, propeller designs, etc. he finally built his first airship, the LZ-1, which made its maiden flight on July 2, 1900.

Over the years Graf Zeppelin continued to improve the design of his airships. At the time of his death in 1917, he had built over 80 airships. After World War I, the manufacture of German airships was shutdown provisionally by the Treaty of Versailles. The resurgence of airships in the 1920’s was led by Graf Zeppelin’s successor, Dr. Hugo Eckner.



Statue of Graf Zeppelin at Graf-Zeppelin-Haus before the Säntis in Friedrichshafen



Graf Zeppelin's funeral in Stuttgart, March 12, 1917



Graves of Graf Zeppelin and his wife Isabella in Stuttgart's Pragfriedhof