

Loss of USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1), 3 September 1925

Source: www.history.navy.mil

On 2 September 1925 USS *Shenandoah* left her base at Lakehurst, New Jersey, to begin a flight to the Midwest. This voyage was one of a series of publicity trips by the Navy's airships that were intended to enhance public support for Naval Aviation, but which also kept the dirigibles away from the Fleet and reduced opportunities to serve with the operating forces. *Shenandoah's* journey was planned to take her to an air show at St. Louis, Missouri, then north to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and return by way of Dearborn, Michigan.

During the early morning darkness of 3 September, *Shenandoah* was flying over southeastern Ohio when she abruptly encountered violent atmospheric conditions. Powerful air currents buffeted her so severely that her crew was unable to maintain control. Rising rapidly above her pressure height, then falling and rising again, her hull structure was overstressed amidships, breaking the airship in two. *Shenandoah's* external control car and two engine cars fell free, carrying the dirigible's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Zachary Lansdowne, and several other men to their deaths. The stern section came down nearby, while Lieutenant Commander Charles E. Rosendahl and several men were able to fly the bow section to ground as a free balloon. In all, twenty-nine of those on board survived.

Shenandoah's crash was the nation's most dramatic aviation disaster yet. Fourteen trained crewmen had been killed and a valuable Navy asset had been lost. Criticism, both public and professional, was intense. Though the remaining dirigible, USS *Los Angeles* (ZR-3), operated safely for several more years, and new airships were designed to be much stronger than *Shenandoah*, her mid-air breakup had forcefully demonstrated the threat that weather presented to lighter-than-air craft. Less than a decade later, storms would cause the loss of the new, much larger and more capable airships *Akron* (ZRS-4) and *Macon* (ZRS-5), bringing an end to the Navy's brief experiment with rigid airships.

Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 46108 LCdr. Charles E. Rosendahl, USN, circa 1930



Lt. Cmdr.. Charles E. Rosendahl,
USN

Photo # NH 46110 LCdr. C.E. Rosendahl at christening of USS Akron, August 1931



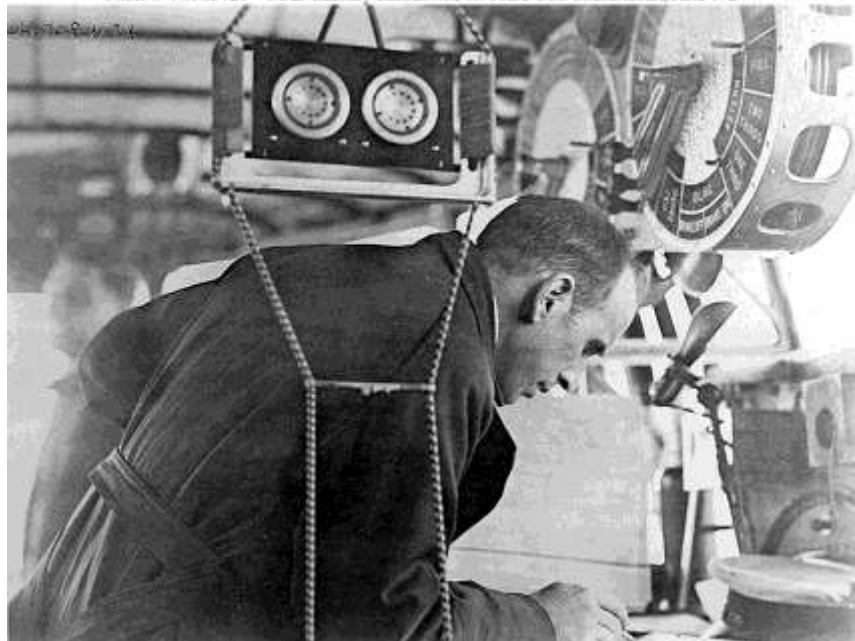
Lt.. Cdr.. Rosendahl USN at USS *Akron* christening. 1931

Photo # NH 85129 LCdr. Zachary Lansdowne in 1924



Lt.. Cmdr.. Zachary Lansdowne,
USN

Photo # NH 85128 LCdr. Zachary Lansdowne on board USS *Shenandoah*, June 1924



Lt Cmdr Lansdowne , USN in the ZR-1 control car, laying
out a course. 1924

Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 98997 USS *Shenandoah*'s wrecked after section, September 1925



Wreckage of *Shenandoah*'s after section, surrounded by sightseers, soon after the airship crashed in southern Ohio.

Photo # NH 42038 Wreckage of USS *Shenandoah*'s rear section, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, shows the port horizontal and upper vertical tail fins in the right center

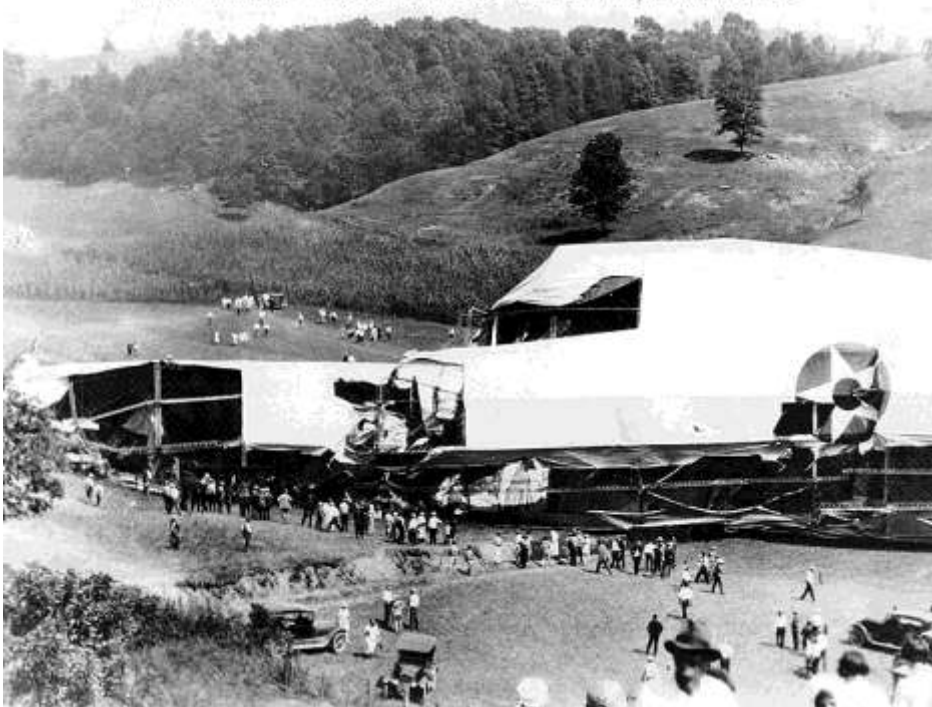
Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 42033 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, shows the port side horizontal tail fin, with the airship's name just below and in front of it

Photo # NH 42026 After section of USS Shenandoah's wreck, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, shows the after section's port side, forward of the tail fins

Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 42031 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, shows aft along the port side of the after section, with the port horizontal tail fin in the distance

Photo # NH 42039 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah's rear section, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, looks directly aft from in front of the after section, with Shenandoah's top national star marking in right center

Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 42042 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah's rear section, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, taken from off the after section's starboard front end, with the tail at the left and the top national star marking at right.

Photo # NH 42030 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, Shenandoah's top national star marking in left center and one of her five engine cars in the right foreground..

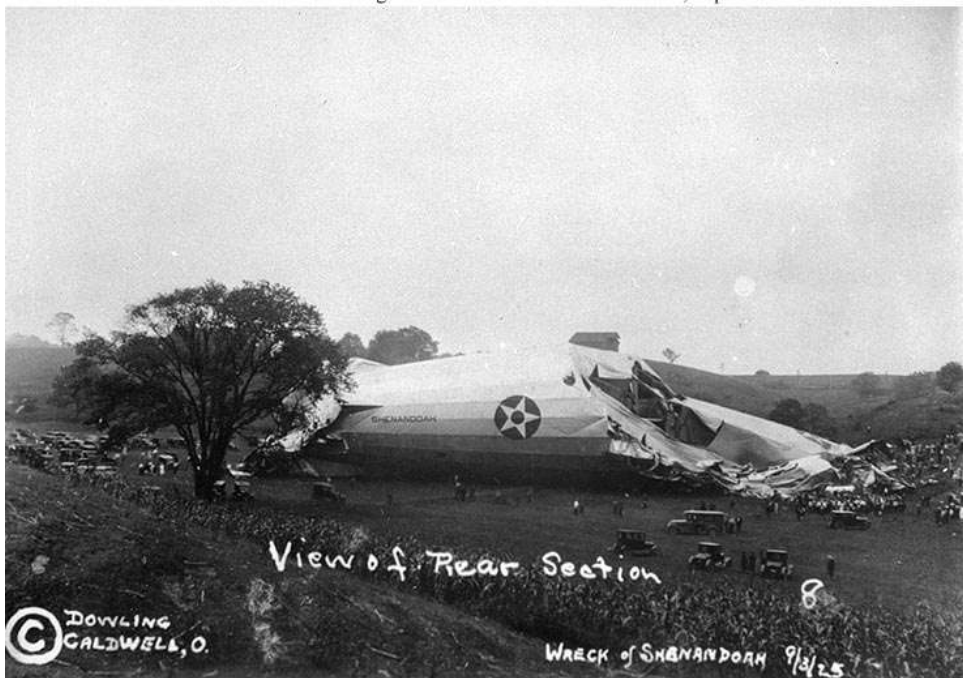
Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 42032 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, with Shenandoah's top national star marking at right.

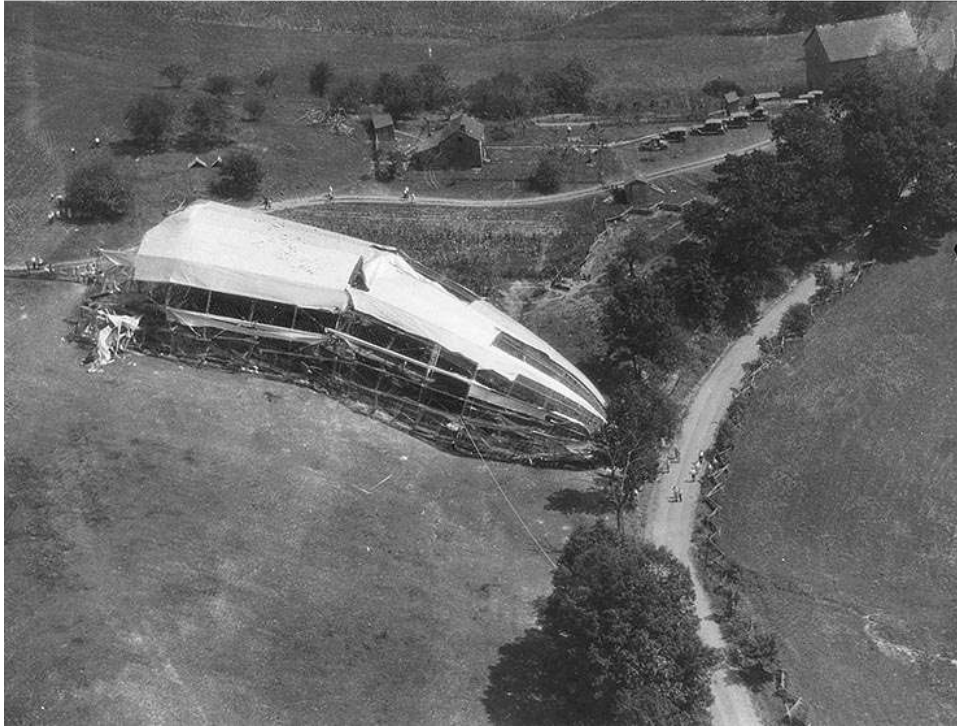
Photo # NH 42040 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah's rear section, September 1925



Wreckage of the airship's after section, view shows the entire after section, from off the starboard side, with the remains of the tail fins at the left.

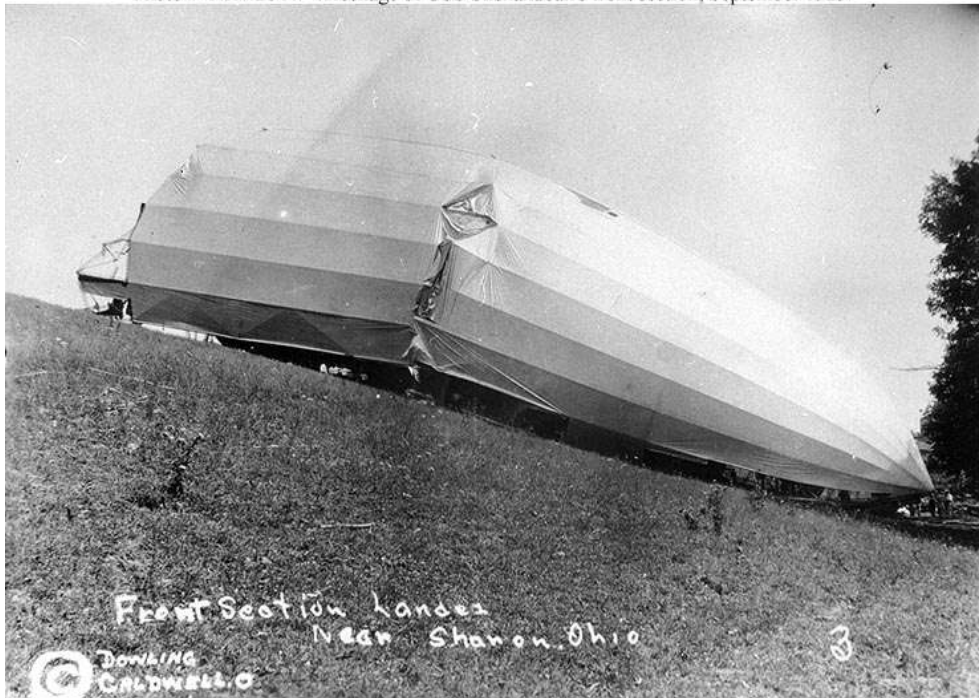
Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 98998 USS Shenandoah's wrecked bow section, September 1925



Wreckage of Shenandoah's bow section on a southern Ohio farm soon after it crashed.

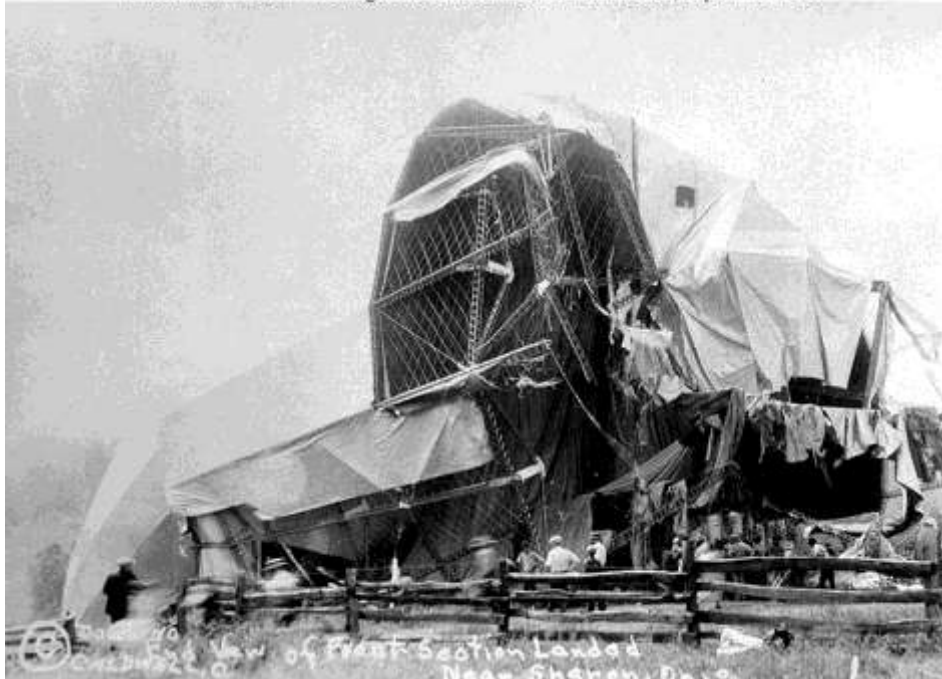
Photo # NH 42044 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah's front section, September 1925



Wreckage of Shenandoah's bow section, shows the forward section off its starboard side.

Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 42041 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah's front section, September 1925



Wreckage of Shenandoah's bow section, view shows the forward section's port side, from off its rear end.

Photo # NH 42043 Wreckage of USS Shenandoah's front section, September 1925



Wreckage of Shenandoah's bow section, view shows the forward section from off its port side.

Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925

Photo # NH 42037 Wreckage of USS *Shenandoah*, September 1925



Though the inscription on the photograph states that this view shows *Shenandoah*'s control car, the structure in the center more closely resembles one of her engine cars.

Photo # NH 42034 Wreckage of USS *Shenandoah*, September 1925



Local residents examining some of the airship's wreckage, soon after she crashed in southeastern Ohio.

Images of the USS *Shenandoah* (ZR-1) – Lost 3 September 1925



Men working on the airship's wreckage, possibly during salvage efforts
some time after the crash.