

Dr. Hugo Eckener

(1868 – 1954)



Hugo Eckener was born on the 10th of August, 1868 in Flensburg, (Schleswig-Holstein Region), Germany, on the Baltic Sea near the Danish border. In spite of having been only an average student as a youth, by 1892 he had earned a doctorate “magna cum laude” in psychology.



Hugo Eckener's birth home in Flensburg, Germany

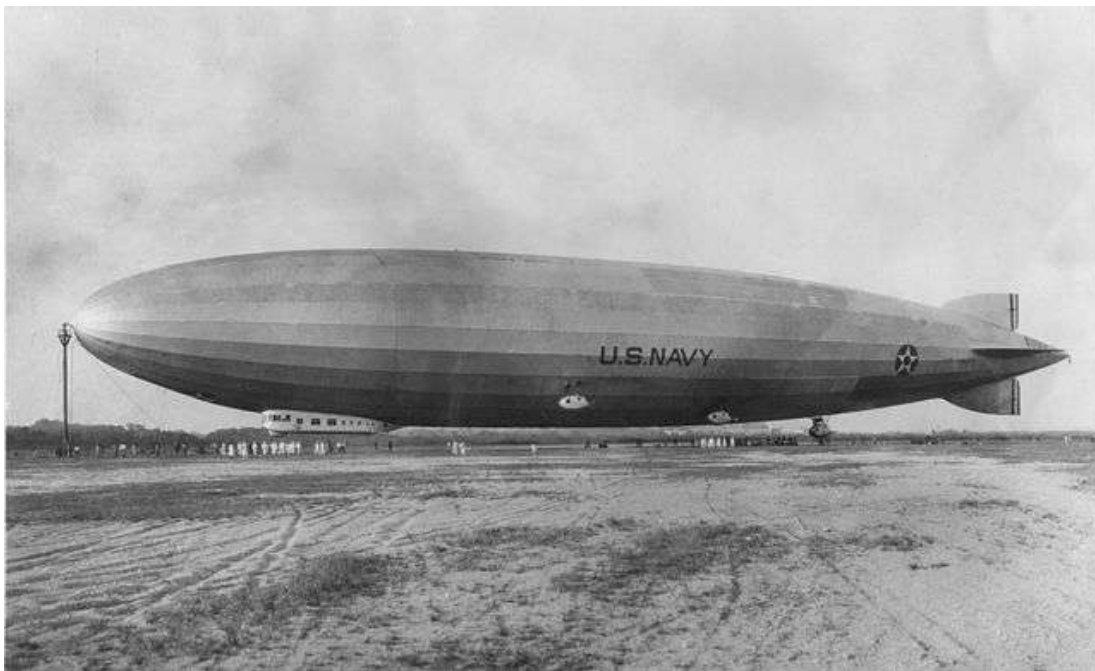


Detail of the front door of the home which is now a restaurant

Initially Eckener worked as a journalist in his home town for the *Flensburger Nachrichten*. In 1905 he became the correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in Friedrichshafen, to where he had moved.

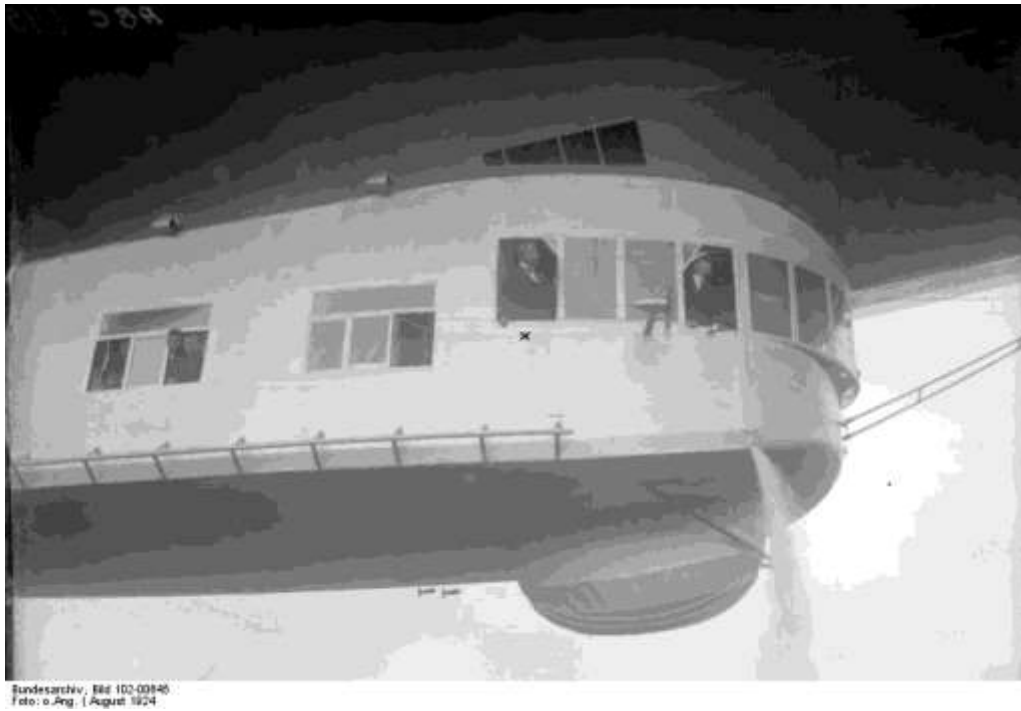
He had been assigned to cover the maiden flights of the LZ-1 and LZ-2. Eckener criticized the performance of both airships, but he spoke highly of Count Ferdinand Zeppelin's dedication to the design and development of airships. By the fall of 1908 Eckener was working for the Zeppelin Company, on a part-time basis, as a publicist. His interest in airships grew greatly and he joined Zeppelin on a full-time basis. By 1911 he had obtained his airship pilot's license.

Following the death of Count Zeppelin in 1917, Dr. Eckener became the new general director of the Zeppelin Company. After the First World War, Germany and the Zeppelin Company were banned from building airships large enough to meet the needs of a trans-Atlantic service as envisioned by Eckener. However, his lobbying efforts resulted in authorization to build the LZ-126 – the U.S. Navy's ZR-3, christened the *USS Los Angeles*.



The LZ-126 (ZR-3) – USS Los Angeles

Under Eckener the company went on to build the *Graf Zeppelin*. Dr. Eckener piloted the ship on its most memorable voyages – the 1st intercontinental passenger airship flight, the 1st round-the-world flight by an airship in 1929 and the Polar expedition flight of 1931.



*Dr. Hugo Eckener (marked with an X) test flying the LZ 126 – US Navy's ZR3 (the USS Los Angeles) – in August 1924 before delivery in October 1924
Photo: Bundesarchiv Bild 102-00645*

With the rise of the National-Socialists Dr. Eckener, who did not hide his dislike for the Nazis and criticized the regime openly, was removed from the Zeppelin Company which was nationalized. After the war he was in conversations with the Goodyear-Zeppelin Company regarding a project to build large rigid airships, however, the project was dropped.

He died in his home in Friedrichshafen on the 14th of August, 1954.



*Dr. Hugo Eckener on the
Time Magazine Cover Sep 16 1929*