

## From the Tri-Weekly Standard\_1852\_10

### M. PETIN'S ACCOUNT OF HIS ASCENSION FROM BRIDGEPORT, OCT 7, 1852

Having been employed by the Citizens of Bridgeport to make a Balloon Ascension upon the 7th of October, 1852, as an additional attraction at their Agricultural Fair, I resolved to avail myself of this opportunity to experiment with horizontal sails, similar to those I propose for my Aerial Ship. Accordingly, my Balloon, the "Washington," had attached to it a boat twenty feet long to which were fitted two horizontal poles or masts, each carrying a triangular sail, by which means was formed an aerial vessel.

Inside the boat there were four persons, viz., Mr. Such of East Bridgeport, and Mr. Dufour, as passengers, my assistant Gustave and myself, and in addition 600 pounds of ballast. The wind was north-west and the sky overcast.

The hour of ascension had been fixed at 3 o'clock; and fifteen minutes after that time we rose from the ground, amid the thundering shouts of the vast multitude of not less than 20,000 people, who had assembled to witness the spectacle. After the excitement of the first few moments was over, I began to direct the management of my sails, and had the satisfaction of beholding my noble balloon implicitly obey their arrangement, burning to the right or to the left, or advancing at the word of command. Our maneuverers were watched by the crowd below; and when again adjusting our sails we drove forward in a direct course before the wind, we left behind their applauding shout, the last token of their satisfaction and delight, which still comes back to me with pleasure and consolation after my subsequent misfortunes.

We were in full sight of New Haven, and when entering the higher regions we passed from the view of the world below. The clouds seemed to open before us and we shot swiftly up and through them, enveloped in a vast halo of light, which was now bursting through, when the sun and our balloon were the only

objects to be seen in illimitable space. On the luminous rolling mountains of cloud beneath, was projected the long dark shadow of the balloon, traveling swiftly forward. In those regions of "Everlasting Silence," no work of ours broke the stillness. Entranced by the sublimity of the spectacle, we stood motionless, involuntarily yielding to its influence, when, suddenly, by a breaking of the clouds below, as by the shifting of a magic curtain, the scene changed. Down -- down -- thousands of feet through the opening glittered the blue waters of the Sound spread like a map below us, with its Islands, its vessels, its steamboats and now and then a tumbling fish. Far in the distance was the Connecticut shore, from which we had come; and we saw with surprise that we had already traversed the Sound in its greatest width, (35 miles) and more than half of its length, when the land, which had hitherto been hidden by the clouds, suddenly flew under us, and by looking down upon it we could see that we were driving with astonishing swiftness directly for the open sea. I pulled open the valve at once to its utmost extent, in order that we might descend as rapidly as possible, for now the ocean was in full view before us, - and we at the same time fell 400 lbs. of ballast to lighten our fall. But though our descent was rapid, our onward motion was more so. The land seemed to fly from beneath us, and the Ocean to press forward; we were already over it, and the sky announced a storm. I threw over the remaining 200 pounds of ballast and rapidly asked my companions if they could swim, and whether they would prefer to descend rather than drive out to sea. They all responded in the affirmative. I opened the valve again, and a wave received us into its bosom.

The boat was submerged in an instant, and we all four disappeared under the surface. In a few moments we had again risen and were clinging to the net work of the balloon, encouraging each other with the expectation of safety. The bal-

loon was sufficiently inflated to sustain us much longer than our strength was likely to hold out, and our only hope was that we might be seen and assisted from the shore, as the inhabitants in the vicinity must have seen our descent. It was then half past four; -- we had made eight miles or more in a little over an hour.

Our situation was beginning to be decidedly disconcerting as the minutes dragged by like hours and no help was in sight. We determined, however, to keep up our spirits, and to die singing rather than lamenting, as became those who should perish with their harness on their backs, engaged in fighting for the conquest of the air. At length, however, a man appeared in sight on the shore. We shouted with all our might, and he disappeared. Others were soon on the beach in active motion and but a short time had elapsed before a small object in the distance came bounding toward us. It was a boat and at least we were saved. Soon we heard the cries of those on board, as they pulled vigorously at their oars. Nearer and nearer they came, and now their strong arms have seized us and we are in their midst. We found we were four miles from shore, having been an hour in the water.

I was obliged to abandon my beautiful balloon, with streaming eyes and a bursting heart, and I took the road to Southampton. The sailors undertook its preservation; but all they could do was to draw it ashore, where by the storm of the succeeding night, it was soon covered with three or four feet of sand and torn to pieces.

Thus terminated this most recent experiment in aerial navigation, but not the last. The battle is gained -- the conquest of the air is certain.

Balloons will hereafter traverse the air as aerial ships, furnished with sails -- as necessary for their complete equipment as a boat with oars

E. PETIN, Bridgeport, Oct 11, 1852