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When Giants Roamed the Sky: Karl Arnstein and the Rise of Airships from Zeppelin to Goodyear

Eric Brothers

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Karl Arnstein's life was defined by the world wars which shattered Europe. But for these cataclysmic events, his life's work might have been far different. From Zeppelin in Germany to Goodyear in Akron, Ohio, Arnstein participated in the design and development of more airships than any other engineer. He could have been a philosopher or mathematician, but a desire to be practical attracted Arnstein to civil engineering. This knowledge spared him from the horrors of trench warfare, and a favorable impression he made on airship pioneer Count Zeppelin unexpectedly took him from the front to an aircraft factory in Friedrichshafen, Germany. Here Arnstein adapted his analysis of utilitarian structures fixed firmly to the ground to examination of flying structures, the Zeppelins. And it is not just for his contributions to Zeppelin design that Arnstein should be remembered. His story is in many ways the story of airship building in the early decades of the twentieth century. And his legacy endures in the Goodyear blimps which are the tire company's corporate icons and symbols of Akron's important airship heritage. Appendices include a listing of Karl Arnstein's patents, a list of selected writings by Karl Arnstein, and statistics on LuftschiffBau-Zeppelin airships and U.S. Navy rigid airships.

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