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Transkript: Otto-Lilienthal-Museum

Personal

July 7, 1896

Jas. Means Esq
York Harbor, Me.

Dear Sir.

I received your interesting letter of June 18 just as I was beginning a course of experiments in the desert sand hills 30 miles from here. Some of the newspapers found us out however and I have sent you their accounts which are of course more or less inaccurate. I had provided two machines. One a Lilienthal and the other a multiple winged affair of my own which could be altered so as to group the surfaces in various ways. The experiments were only preliminary; for the purpose of developing steadiness and safety, on the lines which I have advised here to fore.

The Lilienthal apparatus proved cranky, although involving little risk to the man, and we finally broke it past mending. My own apparatus is more compact and steady, and seems to promise to be quite safe and easily managed. At any rate my assistants

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made some 150 to 200 jumps, during the two weeks we were in camp, say from 30 to 100 ft. in length or over, and not the slightest accident occurred. I shall now proceed with the construction of two or possibly three machines, to pass from the toboggan stage of air jumping to some attempt at soaring. We may not accomplish much, but we can try again.

I quite agree with you that all theories thus far presented for soaring flight are inadequate. My own, which is to form the second part of the paper published in your annual, may be equally so, but I shall endeavor to support it by a practical experiment. I find that there is a vast difference between experimenting with models and with full sized machines with a man on them, as the wind is constantly changing in trend, in direction and in force, and gliding becomes an acrobatic exercise. One of the machines I expect to build is to attempt to do away with the necessity for this.

All this, of course, is for your private information and not for publication.

Yours Truly

O. Chanute