

Jules Henri Giffard (1825 – 1882)

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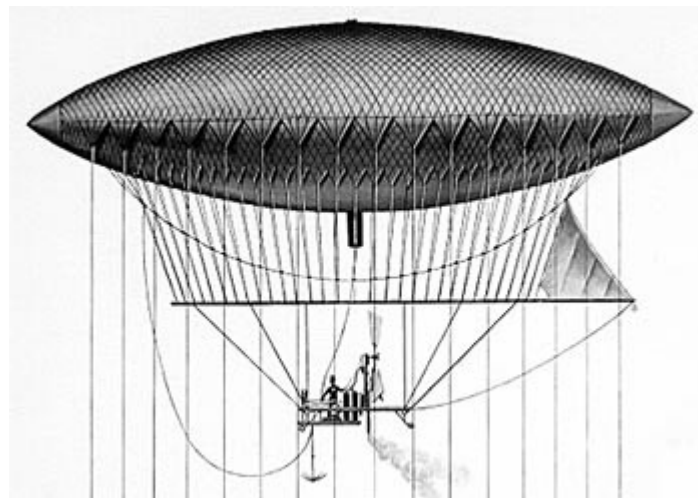
French inventor of the first passenger-carrying powered and steerable airship, called a dirigible, built 1852.

The hydrogen-filled airship was 43 m/144 ft long, had a 2,200-W/3-hp steam engine that drove a three-bladed propeller, and was steered using a saillike rudder. It flew at an average speed of 5 kph/3 mph.

In the early 1850s Giffard, an engineer, began to experiment with methods for steering balloons, and then built his airship. On 24 Sept 1852 he took off from the Hippodrome in Paris and flew to Elancourt, near Trappes.



Giffard went on to build another airship 1855, and a series of large balloons. This was funded by money from other inventions, such as an injector to feed water into a steam-engine boiler to prevent it running out of steam when not in motion.



Giffard's Steam Airship, 1852

The first steam balloon was constructed by Frenchman Henri Giffard in 1852, and produced promising results. His second machine, tested in 1855, was unstable, however, and crash-landed on its first flight. It was not until 1872 that anyone was able to produce a full-scale machine that improved on Giffard's design.