



On the 28th of May, 1906 - not long after the great quake and fire - [George R. Lawrence](#) sent an "airship" aloft. His aim was to capture how San Francisco appeared at that time.

His airship, in reality, was a series of Conyne kites - believed to be nine, in all - which carried a camera attached to the bottom kite. Simon Baker, using photos from the U.S. National Archives, tells us [how that worked](#):

Above, a train of nine Conyne kites is sent aloft to raise a camera which hangs suspended below the bottom kite. Each kite is attached to the main line by its own short line and is prevented from becoming entangled with it by a light bamboo rod.

Suspending a camera, on the bottom kite, Lawrence took his pictures from about 1,000 feet above San Francisco. He sold these for approximately \$125 each (in 1906) dollars, making about \$15,000 in sales around the world.

In the foreground, we see San Francisco Bay. At the back of the image, on the right, we see the Golden Gate. (Neither the Golden Gate Bridge nor the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge existed in 1906.)

The Library of Congress, where this image is maintained, provides more details:

*Photograph of San Francisco in ruins from Lawrence Captive Airship, 2000 feet ** above San Francisco Bay overlooking water front. Sunset over Golden [Gate]. Photographic print, gelatin silver, 18 x 48 in.*

Click on the image for a greatly enhanced panoramic view.

** Some accounts tell us that the camera was suspended 1,000 feet in the air. Other accounts reference the distance as 2,000 feet.

Credits:

Library of Congress, digital ID: ppmsca 07823

Image, described above, online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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City in Ruins - San Francisco, 1906

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