

Hot air balloon makes surprise visit at Hotchkiss Grove

By Jane Peterson Bouley
Special for the Review

A hot air balloon participating in an international race made a surprise landing at Hotchkiss Grove on Monday, September 4, 1933 about 11:45 p.m. The pilots were Lt. Commander T.G. W. Settle and Lt. Charles H. Kendall of the United States Navy, who were the defending champions of the James Gordon Bennett balloon race.



PICTURES OF THE PAST

Jane Bouley

The two pilots left Chicago on Saturday and traveled 52 hours covering 750 miles before letting down in a clearing amongst some trees at the Grove owned by Homer Griffing. Attorney Frank J. Kinney attested to their landing and telegrams were

dispatched to racing officials and naval authorities.

The four-by-five foot gondola and balloon were guarded by the Branford Police and the Branford Battery, Connecticut National Guard, and transported the next morning to the naval hangar at Lakehurst, New Jersey.

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Photo by Melville Baisley

Only a few people were on hand to see a Navy hot air balloon descend at Hotchkiss Grove on September 4, 1933.

and found the rope draped across his windshield. He took several photographs and was given the balloon's flag for his hospitality. The Baisley family corresponded with the pilots for many years.

Settle and Kendall were brought to Branford Lunch for their first meal in three days, remaining until 2:30 a.m. Most people in Branford were still unaware of the unusual event and only about 30 people stopped by,

including 20 young revelers on their way home from a party at the Pine Orchard Club.

After their meal in Branford they were taken to the Sea Cliff Hotel in Morris Cove as the guests of John Sullivan, Selectman John Cogan and Jimmie Cogan, where they stayed most of the night sharing the story of their adventure. They returned to Branford the following day and spent time at the Baisley home.