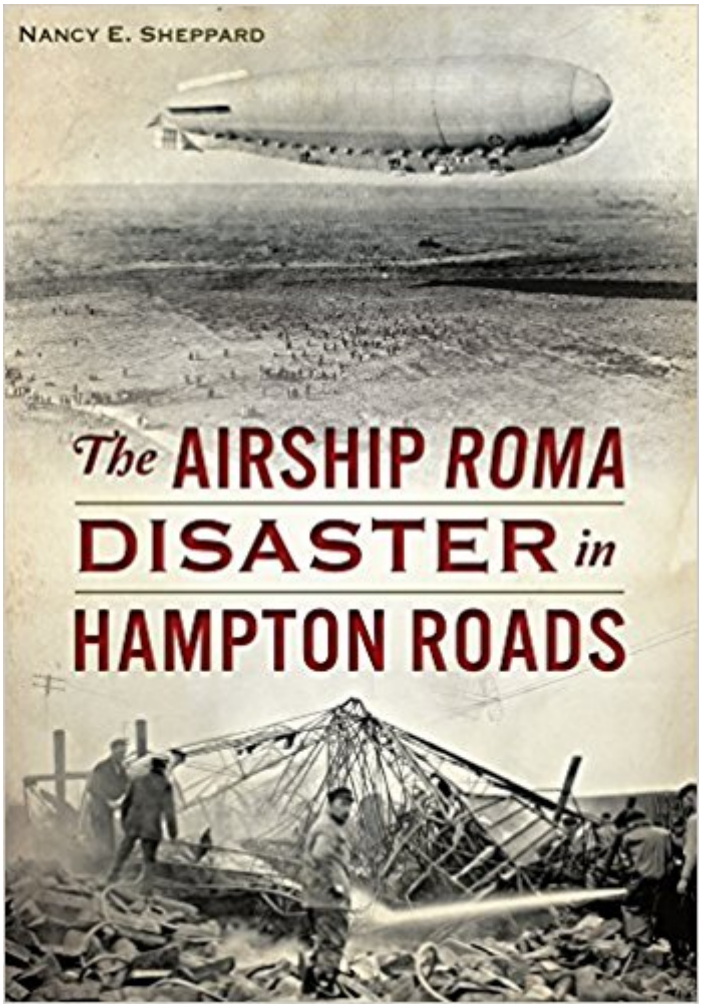
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Airship ROMA Disaster In Hampton Roads, The



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Synopsis

In March 1921, Major John G. Thornell and his crew were detailed to Italy to procure a new experimental airship for the United States Army Air Service. Stationed at Langley Field in Hampton, the ROMA never lived up to expectations despite being heralded as the future of military innovation. Tragically, it crashed and erupted in a ball of fire in 1922, claiming the lives of thirty-four of the brave men aboard. Author Nancy E. Sheppard reveals the forgotten, harrowing story of one of the last great airships and those who sacrificed for the promise of a new era in aviation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Sheppard, a Hampton Roads native who studied history at ODU, does an excellent job of telling Roma s story. Her worthwhile book is extensively researched, drawing on many eyewitness accounts as well as official records and other sources, and lavishly illustrated, including many pictures never before published." "Timothy J. Lockhart, The Virginian-Pilot" " --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Nancy E. Sheppard is a writer and historian of her native Hampton Roads, Virginia. She received her education in history from American Military University and Old Dominion University. Over the past four years she has been devoted to discovering and telling the story of the U.S. Army Air Service dirigible ROMA and her crew. Aside from her research and writing, Sheppard is a tireless

advocate for the awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders and special needs family members in the military community.

Finally, a book on the ROMA - and long overdue! I've been familiar with the ROMA, her crew, and her tragic loss my entire life. My grandfather flew on at least two of her flights, including the one to Washington, but amazingly had been assigned to take up another ship the day the ROMA crashed. However, he knew just about everyone on-board and lost many close friends. I grew up hearing stories of the ROMA so I can tell you from first hand knowledge that Nancy Sheppard's "The Airship ROMA Disaster in Hampton Roads" is right on the mark! It's an absolutely outstanding book - extremely well written, honest, factual - a fast paced, emotional ride from start to finish. Call it years of research, a labor of love, a personal commitment, but whatever the case, she did herself proud, honoring the memory of that great airship and crew, and the ultimate sacrifice made by so many - I highly recommend! Lest we forget!JNG, Colonel, USAF (Ret)

I bought this book because I am very interested in airships and their stories. If you, like me, are interested in lighter than air craft, you should buy this book. It tells the story of the Roma, an airship built by Italy for the US army. The Roma was a semi rigid ship, and before Sheppard's book I didn't know what that meant. Now I do, as Sheppard goes into detail on how the Roma was built, and how it was operated. I learned a great deal about airships from this book.Sheppard also tells the story of the men who flew the Roma, and she is a good enough storyteller that I felt like I got to know them. Shppard also goes into the story of the bureaucracy that tried to fly the Roma, and makes it clear that the crew didn't fail the ship, the people giving them their orders failed. For example, why, when it was known that hydrogen will explode and helium won't, was the Roma filled with hydrogen? Sheppard will let you know.Anyone who has had to deal with a job where they are asked to do thinks they know won't work will understand the story of the Roma. As a history it is very good. As a story of people it is better. I recommend it highly.

An absorbing page-turner which reads like fiction, but regrettably is not. Ultimately a tale of heroism, and of tenderness among comrades who did not forget.The Hindenberg explosion is well remembered, but not the Roma. When I was a child, adults would utter the name only in lowered voices -- the same voice they used in alluding to the Great War or the 1919 flu epidemic. They got on with life. But this story deserves to be remembered, and this capable book does it justice.Aviation buffs in partcularhave a rewarding read awaiting them.

In a word: BRILLIANT! This book brought the Roma alive for me, and gave humanity to its valiant crew. I've studied the Roma myself for many years and even located the exact spot where she crashed, and located the pathetic marker commemorating the crash, the marker, which is in fact, no longer even located at the actual crash site, and even the marker, where it is now, is inaccessible to the public! I did not know the Virginia Attorney General in his eulogy on Feb 24, 1922 had promised a worthy, grand memorial. It is a travesty that the memorial was never built. A real shame. The Roma and her crew deserve a true memorial. Anyway, the book is wonderful and If you've any interest in Airships, or US Aviation history in general, this book belongs on your shelf. It's an easy read, and you really can't put it down once you start it. Big thumbs up!

The Airship Roma Disaster in Hampton RoadsProving that local histories can be a rewarding read when researched well and presented in scholarly fashion. While making the US Navy a career for over 22 years and being stationed in the Hampton Roads area for many of them, I was pleasantly surprised when I happened upon Nancy E. SheppardÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book. I was surfing through the books section on and, as usual, one of my surfing terms brought this interesting chapter of local history to my attention. I had never heard of the Roma disaster.Sheppard has placed quite a few black and white photos in the book. I like a book with pictures that illustrate the subject being presented. She has provided prose that color in the background of the story bringing the Roma tragedy and the people involved to life. Essential characters are given a thorough background which is an indication of the depth of research Nancy has provided and the care she has given in presenting the story.The Roma story starts in Italy when the United States military accepts it from the Italian military. Lighter-than-air aircraft were becoming an important segment of the countryÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s future defense plans. Roma was part of that future. In Italy the aircraft was disassembled and crated for shipping by ocean liner. Uncrating it in Hampton Roads was a carefully orchestrated evolution that was not without its own travails. Getting it into the air was another story in itself. In the end Roma and some of its crew flew into disaster and history.Nancy Sheppard has provided us with a look into the lives, the fortune and the misfortune of Roma and the airship program and those attached to it. I hope she continues writing and would be happy to see her bring to light other local histories. Any history buff will not be disappointed by reading this book.Nuts to Butts: Anecdotes from a Career in the US Navy

The story flows smoothly, which make it an entertaining read. This is an excellent historical

narrative. I recommend it to local Hampton Roads history enthusiasts. This text is also of interest to aeronautic engineers and naval architects, because it is a window to the history of these professions.

The book is a fascinating and touching account of personal experiences and sacrifices of aviation pioneers and their families and loved ones.

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