Manned aerial balloons were used for gathering intelligence before the modern development of unpiloted reconnaissance aircraft. In these photos, taken by Matthew Brady on 1 June 1862, inventor Thaddeus S. C. Lowe (1832-1913) ascends in his balloon, "Intrepid" to observe the Battle of Seven Pines on the north side of the Chickahominy River in eastern Virginia after he and his team inflate the balloon using gas tanks and a hose. This reconnaissance mission netted important information about Confederate troop buildup and movement by spotting them near Fair Oaks train station.

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