

## Eye Spy

Reconnaissance using a camera in a hot air balloon began as early as the Civil War. However, reconnaissance missions increased during World War I, after Wilbur Wright and photographer L.P. Bonvillain took the first picture from an airplane in 1908.

As aviation advanced, so did aerial photography. In the early 1920s inventor Sherman M. Fairchild developed a practical, high-speed aerial camera with a between-the-lens shutter for his surveying and mapping business. Unhappy with taking photos from an open cockpit, Fairchild designed the Fairchild Cabin Monoplane (FC-1) with an enclosed cockpit and large windowed cabin.

By World War II spying on the enemy

with camera-equipped aircraft became standard military practice. Here are two examples of aerial cameras from that era. The large camera is a 1941 Fairchild K-3B with a Ross 8-1/4-inch f/4.2 lens. Mounted inside the aircraft, it was designed for both vertical and oblique photography and could be operated manually or electrically. The smaller camera is a 1942 Folmer Graflex K-20 with a Kodak 161-mm f/4.5 lens. A handheld, manually operated model, it made 4-by-4-inch images on roll film and carries Navy Stock Number 18-C-174.

The military still employs aerial cameras to sneak a peak, though high-resolution satellite imaging has become the reconnaissance workhorse. —Kathleen L. Witman

